FMG PUBLICATIONS

AYOOB FILES NAKED GUN: SHOWER TO COMBAT

AMERICAN HANDGUNNER®

COUNTERTERRORISM CLASSIC

INGLIS L9A1 HI-POWER

WIN RUGER MAX-9 PACKAGE

SIXGUNS OF WWI

WHEELGUN WONDER: SPOHR 286

J.W. BOOTH'S DERINGER

WALTHER PD380 COMPACT

KNOW-HOW:

- GRIP SCIENCE
- THE TOGGLE ACTION
- DIY: LATHES AND MILLS
- HOW TO: .45 SHOTSHELLS

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2024

INTRODUCING THE NEXT-GENERATION RMR®

RMR HD



Trijicon

With the durability of the RMR® as its foundation, the Trijicon RMR® HD features a top-loading battery, larger window and ideal illumination from a forward-mounted light sensor that reads the target and provides an optimal aiming point. It also offers a new reticle that allows you to switch between a complex reticle or single crisp dot.

See the next-generation RMR® at Trijicon.com/RMRHD.

Trijicon®
Brilliant Aiming Solutions™

©2024 Trijicon, Inc. | 24TRIJ19326 | Trijicon.com

ED FUELED SERIES



Ed Brown **Fueled® M&P®'s** feature our exclusive **CUSTOM ACCURACY RAIL** to perfectly mate the slide, frame and barrel surfaces for improved lockup and accuracy

Available in **Polymer** and **Metal** frame options

A full line of precision machined parts for S&W® M&P® also available

edbrown.com

AMERICAN
HANDGUNNER

Cover Photo:
Rob Jones/The Imagesmith, LLC

2024
SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER

Volume 49 • Number 5 • Issue 289



42



32



50

FEATURES

30 GUNCRANK DIARIES
The Malevolent Rocket Surgeon WILL DABBS, MD

32 SIXGUNS TO THE RESCUE
The M1917 In World War I TOM LAEMLEIN

COVER STORY

36 WHO DARES WINS
Inglis L9A1 Browning Hi-Power WILL DABBS, MD

42 ELEGANT ENGINEERING
SPOHR 286 Competition Revolver MARK HAMPTON

46 KILLING LINCOLN
John Wilkes Booth's Philadelphia Deringer WILL DABBS, MD

50 A DASH OF THE OLD; A PINCH OF THE NEW
Walther PD380 Compact FRANK JARDIM

54 STILL THE STANDARD
Chris Reeve Knives PAT COVERT



46

COLUMNS

10 **SPEAK OUT**

16 **VANTAGE POINT** TOM McHALE
Gentleman Lost

26 **COP TALK** MASSAD AYOOB
Selecting New Duty Sidearms: A Case Study

56 **GUN RIGHTS**
RICHARD W. STEVENS & ALAN KORWIN
How AI Controls Minds

67 **AYOOB FILES** MASSAD AYOOB
Naked Gun: Out of the Shower and Into the Fight

74 **THE INSIDER** ROY HUNTINGTON
Do You Really NEED A Lathe And Mill?



26



22



62

RESOURCES

57 **CUSTOM CORNER**

58 **HANDGUN GIVEAWAY**

71 **NEW PRODUCTS**
DELANO AMAGUIN

72 **AD INDEX**



60

DEPARTMENTS

18 **SHOOTING IRON**
Handgun Cartridge Names MIKE "DUKE" VENTURINO

20 **PISTOLSMITHING**
Handy Tools and Professional Help GREG DERR

22 **HANDGUN HUNTING**
Straight Wall Cartridges for Hunting MARK HAMPTON

24 **BETTER SHOOTING**
The Right (And Wrong) Grips DAVE ANDERSON

28 **HANDLOADING**
Make Your Own .45 Shotshells LINDSEY BERTOMEN

60 **GEAR**
What Does Top Dollar Get You? CLAYTON WALKER

62 **APPARATUS INSIGNIS**
What Happened to the Toggle Action? FRANK JARDIM

64 **THE SIXGUNNER**
The Bisley Model JOHN TAFFIN

73 **GUNNYSACK**
Firearms Guide Flash Drive and Staccato Ammo
TOM McHALE

WIN HANDGUN OF THE MONTH 58



RUGER MAX-9
WITH READYDOT PACKAGE

TOTAL VALUE: $903.85

VISIT US AT AMERICANHANDGUNNER.COM FOR MORE CONTENT

AMERICAN HANDGUNNER (ISSN 0145-4250) Copyright © 2024 by Publishers' Development Corp., is published bi-monthly by *American Handgunner*, 225 W. Valley Parkway, Ste. 100, Escondido, CA 92025. Periodicals postage is paid at Escondido, CA and additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to *American Handgunner*, P.O. Box 460100, Escondido, CA 92046. **SUBSCRIPTIONS:** Annual subscriptions $19.75; for Canadian and international subscriptions, remit $37.75 in U.S. funds. For questions related to your magazine subscription, or to change your address (include old address with new) call (866) 820-4045, email subs@americanhandgunner.com or write *American Handgunner*, P.O. Box 460100, Escondido, CA 92046. **CONTRIBUTORS** submitting manuscripts, photographs or drawings do so at their own risk. Materials cannot be returned unless accompanied by sufficient postage. Payment will be made at rates current at time of publication and will cover reproductions in any or all *American Handgunner* editions. **ADVERTISING RATES** furnished on request.

REPRODUCTION or use of any portion of this magazine in any manner, without written permissions is prohibited. All rights reserved. Title to this publication passes to subscriber only on delivery to his/her address. The opinions and recommendations expressed by individual authors within this magazine are not necessarily those of Publishers' Development Corporation.

STORE YOUR FIREARMS RESPONSIBLY
OWN IT?
RESPECT IT. SECURE IT.

GET MORE ACTION

BOLT
PUMP
BREAK
LEVER
SEMI-AUTO

LOAD IT. PUMP IT. RACK IT. CYCLE IT. FIRE IT. HIT IT. WIN IT. GET IT?

When you're ready for action, you're ready for Starline's precision rifle brass. It's the FINEST brass available at the best possible price, so you can load more, shoot more and get more action.

PURCHASE FROM YOUR FAVORITE RELOADING SUPPLIER OR ORDER FACTORY DIRECT.



Starline®
EST. 1976

STARLINEBRASS.COM | 1(800) 280-6660

100% AMERICAN MADE & OWNED

AMERICAN HANDGUNNER®
SINCE 1976

CORPORATE OFFICERS
Randy Moldé • Marjorie Young
Amy von Rosen

EDITOR Tom McHale
ASSOCIATE EDITOR Jazz Jimenez
DESIGN DIRECTOR Lisa Tsonetokoy
CIRCULATION/PRODUCTION DIRECTOR Heather Arnold
WEBSITE MANAGER Lorinda Massey
DIGITAL CONTENT EDITOR Ashley McGee
STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER Joe Novelozo
EDITORIAL REVIEW Consol Torres

SPECIAL PROJECTS EDITOR Roy Huntington

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Mike "Duke" Venturino • Jeff "Tank" Hoover
John Taffin • Mark Hampton • Patrick Covert
Greg Derr • Massad Ayoob • Dave Anderson
Will Dabbs, MD • Alan Korwin

FIELD EDITORS
Jeremy Clough • Frank Jardim
Lindsey Bertomen • Dave Workman

FMG PUBLICATIONS

AMERICAN HANDGUNNER
AMERICANHANDGUNNER.COM
EDITOR: Tom McHale

GUNS MAGAZINE
GUNSMAGAZINE.COM
EDITOR: Brent T. Wheat

AMERICAN COP
AMERICANCOP.COM
EDITOR: Erick Gelhaus

SHOOTING INDUSTRY
SHOOTINGINDUSTRY.COM
EDITOR: Jade Moldae

FMG PUBLICATIONS SPECIAL EDITIONS
FMGPUBLICATIONS.COM
EDITOR: Tom McHale

CUSTOMER SERVICE
AMERICANHANDGUNNER.COM
SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES
(866) 820-4045
EXPRESS SERVICE: americanhandgunner.com (click "contacts")
Email: subs@americanhandgunner.com

PRODUCTION
Heather Arnold • **Email:** heather.arnold@fmghq.com

NATIONAL AD SALES
NORTH EAST Amy Tanguay • amy.tanguay@fmghq.com
SOUTH EAST Tom Vorel • tom.vorel@fmghq.com
WEST Delano Amaguin • delano.amaguin@fmghq.com

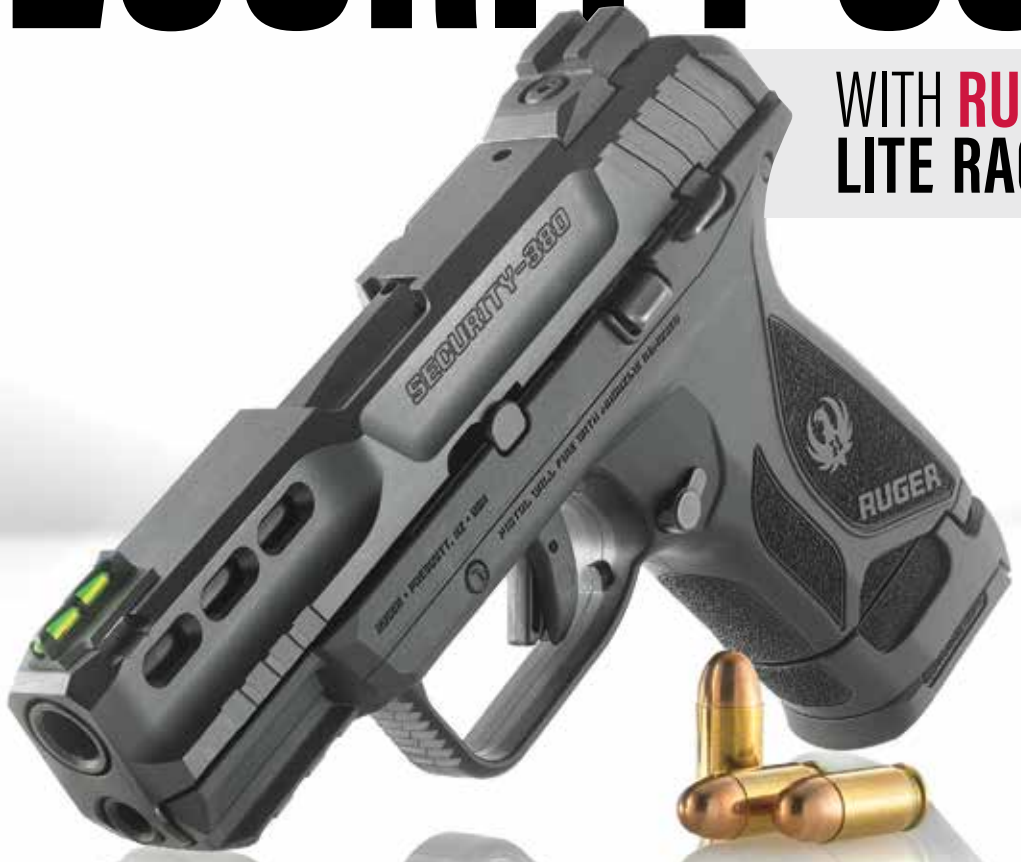
ONLINE TRAFFIC MANAGER
Lori Robbins • **Email:** lori.robbins@fmghq.com

NSSF The Firearm Industry Trade Association
NRA
USA Shooting

PRODUCED IN THE U.S.A.

RUGER®
SECURITY-380®

WITH RUGER® LITE RACK™



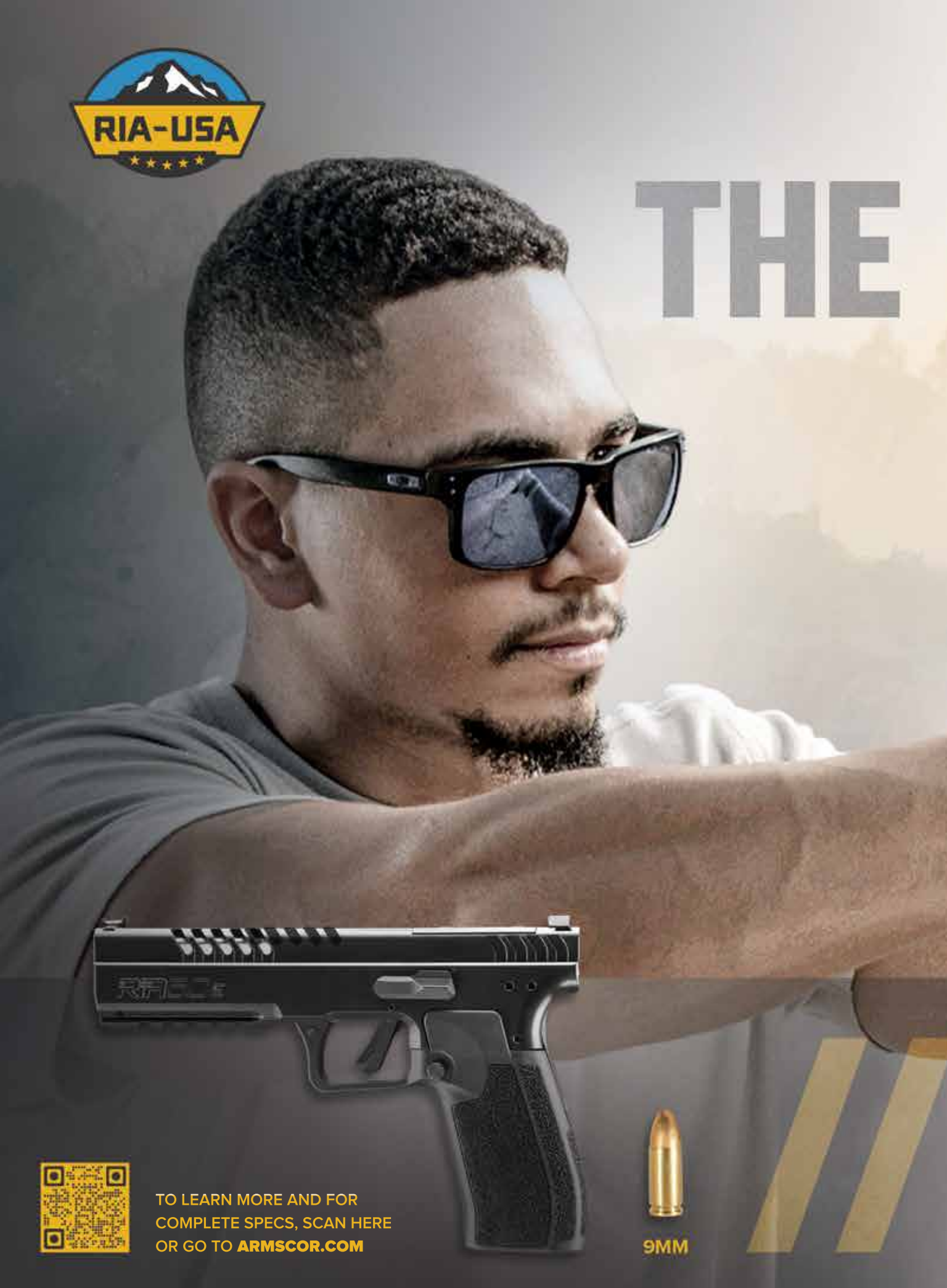
380 AUTO	10+1 / 15+1	3.42"	1.02"	19.7 OZ.
Caliber	Capacity	Barrel Length	Width	Weight

Chambered in .380 Auto, the Security-380® is full-featured, ideally sized, modestly priced, and designed for hours of range training with minimal fatigue. The Lite Rack™ system includes refined slide serrations, pronounced cocking ears and a lighter recoil spring, allowing for easy slide manipulation. The combination of easy-to-use features and reduced felt recoil will help recoil-sensitive shooters build skill and confidence at the range, and its lightweight and compact size makes it comfortable for all day carry.

LEARN MORE

The acquisition, ownership, possession and use of firearms are heavily regulated. Some models may not be legally available in your state or locale. Whatever your purpose for lawfully acquiring a firearm – know the law, get trained and shoot safely.

RUGER®


RIA-USA
THE
TO LEARN MORE AND FOR
COMPLETE SPECS, SCAN HERE
OR GO TO ARMSCOR.COM
9MM

RIA 5.0

RIA 5.0E A PERFECT 10



CHECK OUT THE REST OF THE FAMILY FROM RIA-USA @ ARMSCOR.COM/RIA-USA



VRF14



VRPF14



PF14



POTATO GUNS

I read an article from 2019 on mortars that fire pop cans and golf balls. Are there any that shoot potatoes or something that disintegrates?

Bruce

Well, Bruce, I'd like to point you to a past episode of Gun Cranks titled, "Stupid Potato Launcher Stunts." You can find it on the old YouTube channel, @GunCranks. Newer Gun Cranks episodes can be found on our @FMGPubs channel. While it doesn't offer step-by-step instructions on how to make a potato gun, it should provide some potato-tainment. —TM

Small World

As a retired military aviator who carried "off the books" Remington Rand 1911 and M3A1 for personal defense during my Vietnam tour as a UH-1C/M gunship pilot, I was particularly interested in the "Pistols in the Wild Blue Yonder" article by Mr. Tom Laemlein. To my surprise, on page 44 was a picture of (then) USMC Capt. Ewalt "Joe" Givens from our small hometown of Stanford, Lincoln County, in rural south central Kentucky. Colonel Givens was among the disproportionately large number of residents from our town and county who served, and still serve, as military aviators from the early days of military aviation (Richard Saufley, LTJG, Naval Aviator Number 14) through today's WOT. I suspect we all, including your Will Dabbs, MD and Dave Freeman, have carried various authorized and unauthorized personal defense sidearms at one time or another.

Vic P. Gilliland

More Mas

The magazine *Combat Handguns* has gone out of print. This is a loss because it reduces the information available to



readers and the market for gun writers' work. So, Massad Ayoob's "Self-Defense and the Law" column will now be out of print. Hopefully, somebody (as in *American Handgunner* or *GUNS*) will pick it up. It was usually the first article I turned to when I read CH, admittedly after Cooper's Corner back in the day.

Also, if you haven't already, you really want to buy Larry Correia's *In Defense of the Second Amendment*. Mr. Correia is a popular author of fantasy and science fiction adventure novels and short stories. He has worked as a gun store owner and firearms instructor. He is knowledgeable about firearms and firearms law and writes really well. Whether it's for your own edification or to get talking points to defend gun rights, you want to acquire his book.

A.X. Perez

Wild Blue Yonder Stories

Enjoyed Tom Laemlein's article with the excellent photo variety. A few observations.

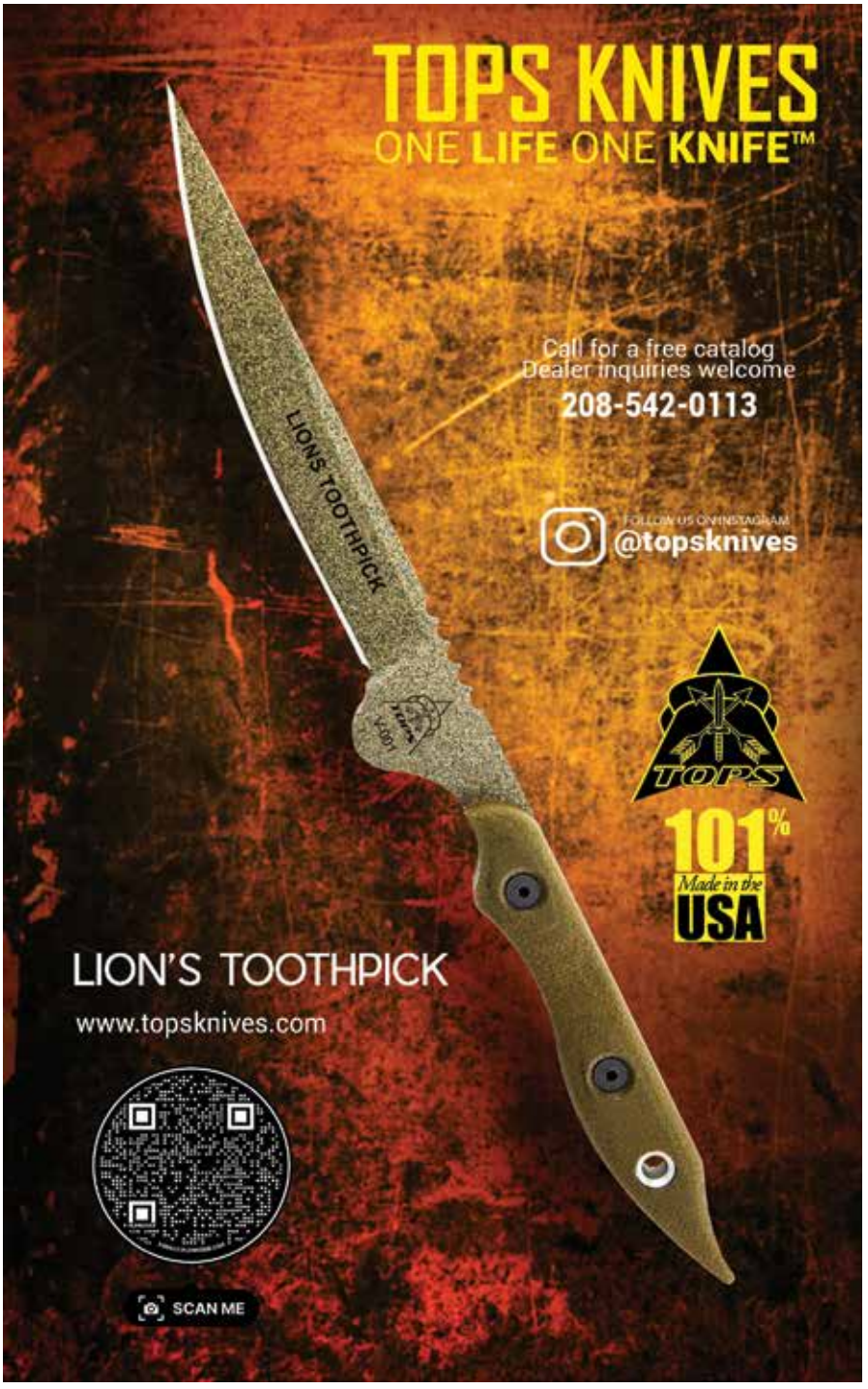
I know of two aces who used sidearms to save themselves. Another Navy pilot, 20 y/o "Spike" Borley, declined the offer of two Oriental gentlemen to come aboard their boat and return with them to their Formosa base. He shot both and survived five days in the Pacific Ocean.

A P-38 pilot, the late Col. Charlie Sullivan, bailed out over New Guinea. Some locals picked him up and took him to their village, where he was invited to a feast in the men's long house. After a while, Charlie realized he was not only the guest of honor but also the main course. He shot his way out with his 1911, dashed into the jungle, and said by sunup, he had the fastest reload in the SW Pacific.

In 1967, a Navy back-seater survived the shootdown of his Vigilante photo plane over North Vietnam and was scooped up by two militia, etc. They took his .38, but a moment's inattention allowed him to pull his .25 hideout gun and solve the immediate problem. A helo fetched him back and I heard that he never bought another drink as long as he would tell the tale.

Barrett Tillman

In his article, "Pistols in the Wild Blue Yonder" (May/June 2024), Tom Laemlein overlooked the USAF's two handguns used during the Vietnam War. The first was the S&W Model 56, essentially the first 2", square butt version of the Model 15 Combat Masterpiece but with some minor but distinctive differences. This gun was the first 2" barrel version of the S&W Model 15 Combat Masterpiece with square butt, and the USAF liked it so well that in 1962-3 it bought 15,205 of them. Sadly, the Model 56 is almost unknown because









SPEAK OUT

it was a special issue item, and when the USAF withdrew them from inventory, it destroyed nearly all of them. It is a very rare collectible.

The second gun was the S&W Model 15 "Combat Masterpiece." This .38 special caliber revolver was general issue for the whole USAF from ca. 1963 until the Beretta M-9 replaced it in the early 1980s. Even so, it remained in inventory and in use for some years thereafter for special purposes.

I am a particular fan of the Combat Masterpiece. I went through USAF Officer Training School in late 1963 and qualified expert with it. Later, during my limited time in a support position in Southeast Asia, nearly every pilot and crew member I saw carried it. Surprisingly, I also saw a U.S. Army Ranger carrying one in a holster on a gun belt with cartridge loops. I never heard anyone speak ill of it.

Marshall Williams

In fairness, Tom's article only covered guns through the Korean War and beginning of the Cold War, not through the Vietnam era — that's a different story for future consideration. —TM

9mm Revolvers

Duke should be old enough to remember a much earlier 9mm revolver by Smith & Wesson, the 547. The rumor is that the Israelis wanted a 9mm revolver for some reason or other, and the 547 was made to their specifications. It is a 6-shot and extracts the empty cases with small fingers that spread out as the ejector rod is pushed rearward. It has a heavy 3" barrel, which I think is perfect for concealed carry. It adds a little extra oomph to the bullet and is just as easy to conceal as a shorter barrel. Gives a tad better sight radius, too. As far as I know, it only came in blue and was a fairly short run. It now has some collector interest. I can understand Duke not testing it as of now. They are probably as scarce as the proverbial hen's teeth, and a collector might not be really overjoyed to let Duke fool around with his collector specimen.

C E Voigtsberger

Missed Opportunity

Your front magazine cover (Jan/Feb) absolutely shows a great looking revolver. Now, my complaints are: Why a .357? Why not a .22? Why ugly finger groove grips? I hate them and since I am in my 80s, I get to complain without any guilt. Rossi needs to hire me as a consultant.

The gun in .22 RF, smooth wood grips, and a 5" bbl would sell faster than popcorn at a movie theater.

I knew we were soon going to be in trouble when, a while back, I called Hogue and ordered a new set of grips for one of my Ruger Speed Six revolvers. Just to be safe, I stressed "No Finger Grooves," and the girl on the phone told me they only made them with finger grooves. After a slight argument, she asked me to hold and came back in a couple of minutes apologizing. She said she had worked there for almost three months and had never sold a set with smooth grip design. OUCH!!

John Mickel

Request Line

How about a review of the Diamondback SDR. It looks like they took many of the best features from Ruger, Kimber, etc. & put them into a J-Frame. It would be nice to know if it all really works or if it's mostly hype.

Bill Nunemaker

Connor

Recently, cash and opportunity coincided, and I picked up a copy of *Guncrank Diaries* [book]. Wondering if anyone knew his current status? If there's anything you can reveal, it might make a good quick topic in the *Gun Cranks* podcast. One of my favorite lines was the one about growing up functionally illiterate in several languages. Thanks, and keep 'em coming!

Jim

We've narrowed his whereabouts down to two possibilities. Some think he's operating somewhere around the Russia/Ukraine border, wreaking havoc while screaming at Russians using a bad accent. Others are convinced he's changed his "me simple man" ways and joined the PGA Senior Tour. When we figure out which, we'll let you know. —TM

Shoulder Holster Options

Hi, I just read Duke's article on "A Shoulder Holster That Isn't." I, too, had to find a solution to carry a pistol when I couldn't use a regular belt, specifically when I am wearing a backpack. In addition, I wanted something that concealed the handgun, since 10 years ago when I was looking for the solution, I was living in Washington State, and a lot of the hikers there look at you like you have two heads if you are engaging in open carry. The solution I've been using for hiking and search and rescue is made by Hill People Gear in Grand Junction, Colo. It's called a Kit Bag and does exactly what I need it to do. I carry a full-sized 1911, two extra magazines, a flashlight, a tourniquet and battle









SPEAK OUT

dressing. It stays on if I drop my pack, and I don't notice it while hiking, running or working on something. It does a good job of keeping the 1911 out of the elements but quickly accessible.

Perhaps Duke would think it's worth a look.

Keith Keller

Dabbs Needs A Raise

I would imagine many of us have our favorite authors in our gun magazines. I have been blessed to have more than one, and even though I subscribe to five gun magazines, all of my favorite authors write for *American Handgunner* and *GUNS* magazines. I'm not going to rate one above the other, but I would (again) like to comment on Doc Dabbs. He is one that writes on more than just guns, and I don't remember ever reading one of his articles that I did not like. I read his article in today's Guncranks (email) on "Aging Gracelessly." And I appreciate both of you, Tom and Brent, allowing him to write on what he wants, and I especially appreciate him not being afraid or censored from writing about his faith in God. Thank you, and GIVE THAT GUY A RAISE! Don't you dare let him get away (or if you do, let me know which magazine he is writing for!).

Ron

Great. Now he's gonna get a swelled head and start saying things like, "Have your people call my people to see if we can do some business. Maybe we'll take lunch sometime." —TM

Henry ...

Not sure the Henry Revolver will catch-on with the younger set, but man, what a revolver! Thanks for your in-depth review.

Bob F.

Trigger Reset

I was wondering if you have ever made a comparison of trigger reset time & weight. The exercise would be to pull the trigger and then measure the distance to the reset of the trigger. Then, further, to measure the reset trigger's weight to fire the pistol.

I believe there may be a speed change, faster, with a lighter trigger on the discharge. But I'm not sure that more speed on the reset trigger would be helpful, though I believe it would be.



I would expect the equipment to be used would have to be custom-made. I don't have the equipment for tests like this, but I thought your magazine may have. I think it would be useful knowledge.

Roger Estes

Summer Carry Tips

(AmericanHandgunner.com)

Mr. McHale, I just read your email on summer carry and can agree with you totally on carrying full-size pistols. You dress around the gun, not the other way around.

What I am writing about is your obvious lack of knowledge of the "Teen Fairy." You see, as a child, we all know of the Tooth fairy who takes our teeth as we lose them in exchange for cash. However, as you finally stop losing your teeth, there is an exchange or changing of the Fairies. The teen fairy takes over from the tooth fairy, and each night takes part of your brain that takes common sense and what your parents or older people tell you and tells you that you are way smarter than them. This makes you invincible in your mind, and you do things your parents tried to tell you were unsafe.

Then as you finally grow out of your teens, and if you survived, depending on just how you grew up, the teen fairy either dumps back your common sense in great amounts or in some cases (especially the current group of "no longer teens") the teen fairy forgets to do anything and they are left with near empty minds. In your case, you soon realized your parents, grandparents and elders actually knew something, and you progressed to the realization. Occasionally, the teen fairy is overworked and only slowly bestows knowledge back to you clear into your 30s and beyond. Now that you have been enlightened, you can understand how you survived to be the great thorn in Mr. Wheat's side. Keep up the good work. I enjoy your writing and your magazine.

Terry Gardner

Truth!!! —TM

AMERICAN HANDGUNNER® welcomes letters to the editor. We reserve the right to edit all published letters for clarity and length. Due to the volume of mail, we are unable to individually answer your letters or email. In sending a letter to *Handgunner*, you agree to provide Publishers' Development Corp. such copyright as is required for publishing and redistributing the contents of your letter in any format. Send your letters to *Speak Out, American Handgunner*, P.O. Box 460100, Escondido, CA 92046; americanhandgunner.com; e-mail: editor@americanhandgunner.com.

Check out AmericanHandgunner.com to enter the Gun Giveaway, enjoy our thousands of online articles, videos, digital editions, novice, women and new shooters articles, and lots more — and it's all updated daily!







TOM MCHALE



Mike "Duke" Venturino

LOSS OF A GENTLEMAN

Today's affirmation-driven world of "me, me, me!" does a lousy job of accurately portraying a man's impact on this earth. Thankfully, our late colleague and friend, Mike "Duke" Venturino, never placed much stock in such nonsense.

As one ages and acquires hard-earned wisdom, it becomes clearer that accomplishments are fine and expected from a lifetime of productive work, often leaving an indelible mark on this spinning ball we call home. But I think the real measure of a man's impact is the emotion that comes to mind when you think about him after his passing. What's your immediate visceral reaction before you start thinking about what he did on this earth as measured by the hamster wheel of humanity?

When I think of Mike "Duke" Venturino, a singular thought comes to mind — without fail or distraction.

"He's a real gentleman."

While seemingly simple and trite to those who don't yet appreciate the real value of a well-lived life, I think it's the epitome of a lifetime of wise investment in one's life priorities and fellow man. What could be more impactful on those whose paths you cross than to model by actions, day in and day out, the attributes of a true gentleman?

RIP Duke

Mike passed away on June 9, 2024, at his Montana home after a short illness. From some of his last conversations with folks in his circle, he was thankful to get home from the hospital to spend his remaining days with his wife, Yvonne (you've seen her wonderful photos here for years) and their dogs. Add in family and the kind of close friends they breed in Montana, and you know Duke was surrounded by those he cherished most.

When We Met ...

I first met Mike many years ago at the Shooting, Hunting and Outdoor Trade (SHOT) Show in Las Vegas. As I recall, he was in the Wolfe Publishing Group booth at the time, helping represent *Handloader Ammunition Reloading Journal*. He wrote quite a few stories for those folks over the years — and many other publications to boot. Anyway, this was long before I started to do any work with *American Handgunner* magazine or any of FMG's other publications. As a relatively new freelance gun 'riter, Mike wouldn't have known me from Adam. Even back in that day, he'd racked up decades of peer-respected work as documented by thousands of articles and a generous helping of books.

To a gentleman like Mike, that didn't matter. We had a delightful conversation about, well, you guessed it, reloading and gun writing. By that time, he'd been in the writing business for 30 years or so and was an established rock star in the industry. No matter, Mike was as humble as they come while treating me as if I was the most important attendee to stop by the booth that day. I think describing someone as "humble" is just about the greatest compliment one can give, but that's just me.

Reminiscing ...

The folks here at FMG have been recalling a plethora of Duke stories, and as you might have guessed by now, just about all of them continue to add to his stature as one of the industry's true gentlemen.

Randy Molde, our company President, has known Duke for decades and chimed in with a happy memory.

"I'll always remember the time I got to shoot with Duke at Thunder Ranch in Oregon. He coached me through shooting his Sharps rifle with double-set triggers at a 1,000-yard target. He was

knowledgeable, generous and a delight to be around. It was a true honor to have known him. He truly will be missed but his incredible wisdom captured in print and digital will live on."

Randy is kinda the company guru about remembering and putting to good use the vast library of stuff we've produced over the years, so you can count on Duke's articles popping up in plenty of future newsletters and special editions. He left us quite a library to share, so we'll do our part to keep his memory alive.

Roy Huntington, former *Handgunner* editor and publisher, had the pleasure of working with Mike for a couple of decades. In fact, it was Roy who lured Mike away from his previous columnist gig and brought him here. I'd say that worked out pretty well. Roy recalls that pivotal move.

"I recall reading Duke's stories from the very early 1980s, although he was busy writing before that. His first-person, down-home tone and the fact he actually did the things he wrote about always made him the first articles I'd read in a new magazine. How amazed was I when, in the late '90s, I was attending a "Pre-1900" class at the old Thunder Ranch, and Duke was there! He knew me from my writing for *Handgunner* and *GUNS* and we just hit it off right away. He was kind enough to sell me a Shilo Sharps he had just gotten for what he paid for it (when they could be sold for handsome profits in those days!), then showed me everything I needed to know about it.

"After becoming editor at *Handgunner*, I twisted Duke's arm to leave *G&A* and *Shooting Times* and come to work with FMG. We never looked back."

Shooting Iron

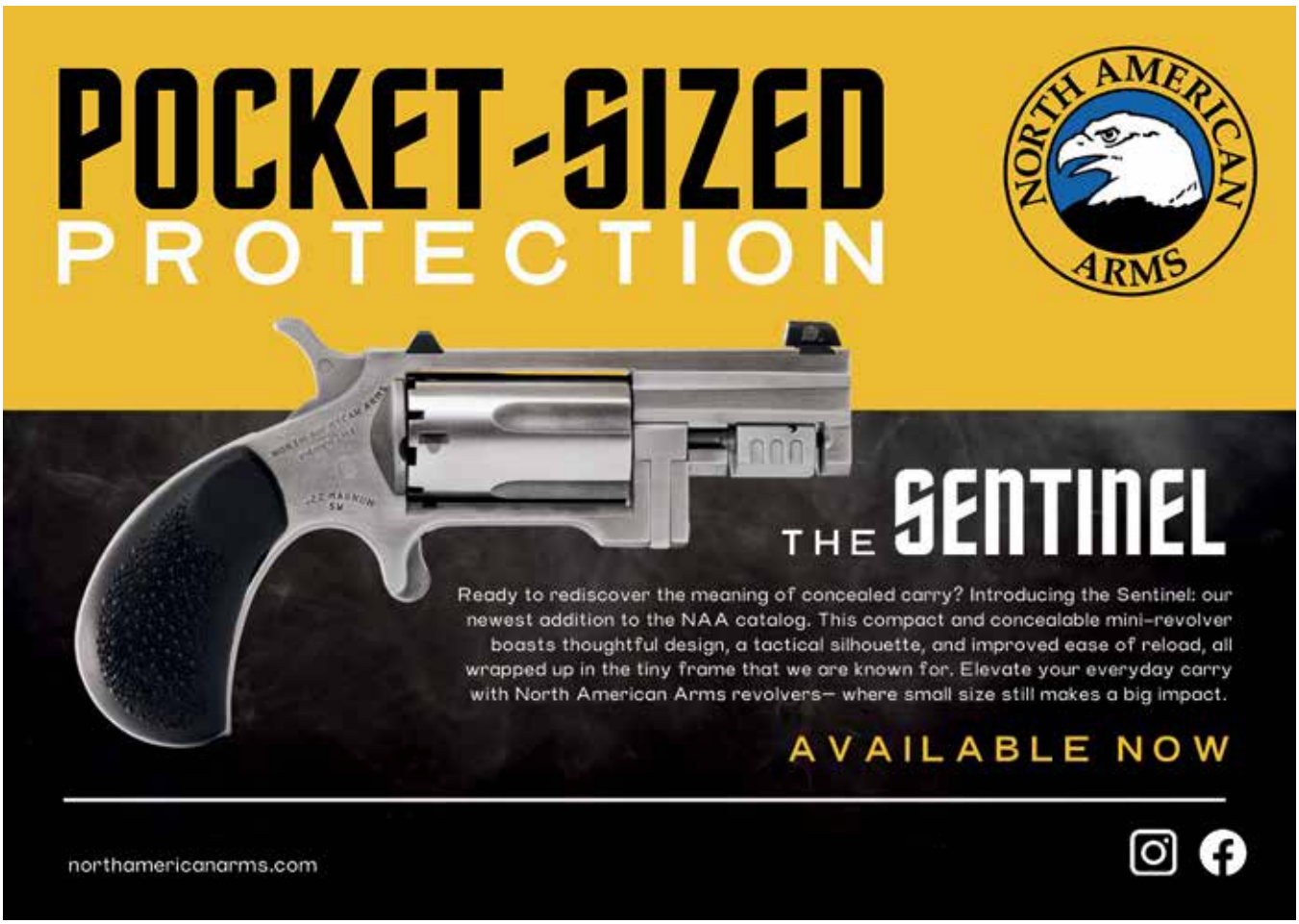
Looking back, the "Iron" part of Duke's column's title wasn't much of a coincidence. He loved the metal stuff, primarily sixguns, but as many of you well know, he drifted into surplus handguns, rifles, and full-auto historical weapons in more recent years.

Roy recalls some discussions about those non-metal guns. "Duke was happy because we let him write what he wanted to write about and would never force him to cover some 'vile plastic gun,' as he called them. I once asked him to do a shoot-off between a GLOCK (I heard the pause on the phone …) and a Colt Single Action Army. 'You had me at the Colt,' he laughed. 'But I'm not sure how I would have told you no if it was just the GLOCK!' The article was great fun, readers loved it and even Duke said, 'Roy, I think those GLOCKs aren't too bad after all.' Shhh…

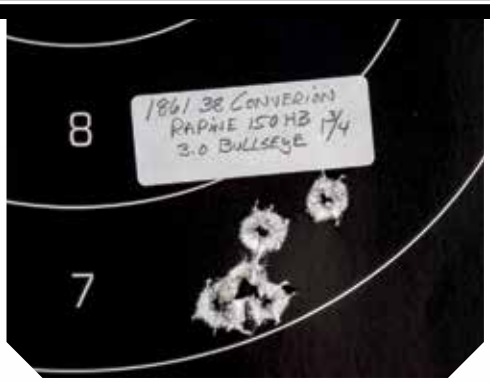
"Over the years, we had countless pleasant phone calls talking about all things 'gun,' and I always left the chats in a better mood. I'd try to wind up the call, and he'd invariably say, 'Oh, wait a second, did I tell you what I found at the last gun show?' Then the call went on.

"Duke was one of the kindest, biggest-hearted, most patient gents I've ever met. To read his articles is to know the man. Duke was always a bit shy and humble when a reader wanted to meet him at a show and afterward would almost always tell me, 'You know, after all these years, I still can't believe I'm lucky enough to be doing this.' No, Duke, we were lucky enough to know you."

Farewell and happy trails, Duke …



Photos: Yvonne Venturino
MIKE "DUKE" VENTURINO



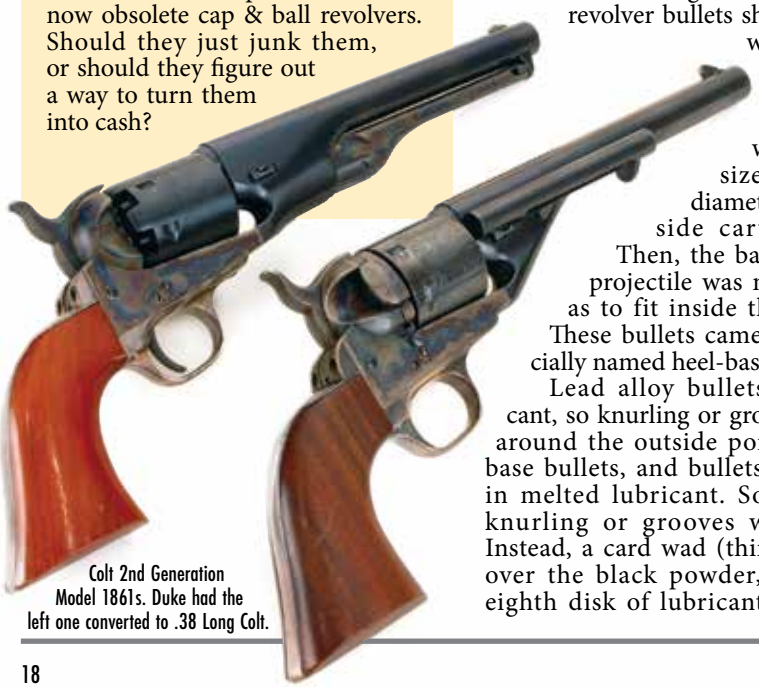
This 25-yard group from sandbag rest shows how accurate a 0.357" diameter hollow-base bullet can be when fired from a 0.370+" barrel. The test gun was Duke's converted Colt Model 1861.

HANDGUN CARTRIDGE NAMES

A logical question often asked by newcomers to the sport of handgun shooting is as follows. Why do .38s shoot .357-diameter bullets? Why the confusion?

We must go back in time to find some answers. When Colt brought out their first successful revolvers in the late 1840s, they were labeled .44s. Shortly thereafter, the extremely popular .36 caliber revolvers came about. In those days, a handgun barrel's caliber was set by its bore diameters instead of groove diameters. That's why so-called .44 cap & ball Colt revolvers fired balls/bullets of 0.451/0.454" in diameter. Continuing this thought, the proper ball/bullet size for .36 revolvers was 0.375".

So, how does this pertain to handgun cartridges being named improperly? That came about with the development of metallic cartridges. In the early 1870s, Colt had thousands of parts from their now obsolete cap & ball revolvers. Should they just junk them, or should they figure out a way to turn them into cash?



Colt 2nd Generation Model 1861s. Duke had the left one converted to .38 Long Colt.



This photo shows several .38 Long Colt cartridges handloaded by Duke.

The far left one is loaded with a 130-grain heel-base bullet from a Rapine bullet mold. At left is one loaded with a hollow-base 150-grain bullet also from a Rapine mold.

This is a .38 Long Colt loaded with a Speer 148-grain hollow-base wadcutter.

ORIGINS

And therein lies the origin of cartridge conversion revolvers. This wasn't just limited to Colt revolvers; some gunsmiths also got in on the act. Using barrels originally made for their cap & ball revolvers required the new metallic handgun cartridges to carry bullets similar in diameter to cap and ball projectiles.

So, some bright light decided revolver bullets should be made with two diameters. The main bullet segment would be full size in the same diameter as the outside cartridge walls. Then, the base part of the projectile was made small so as to fit inside the case walls. These bullets came to be unofficially named heel-base.

Lead alloy bullets need lubricant, so knurling or grooves were put around the outside portion of heel-base bullets, and bullets were dipped in melted lubricant. Sometimes, no knurling or grooves were applied. Instead, a card wad (thin wafer) went over the black powder, then a one-eighth disk of lubricant set atop the card wad and finally, a heel-base bullet seated. I actually have some old factory .44 Colt loads assembled like that. I pulled some apart to examine them.

There were many of these early metallic handgun cartridges, but space won't allow all of them to be detailed. If the above paragraph has you confused, just look at a round of modern .22 Long Rifle. They are still made with heel-base bullets and dipped in lube.

.22 LONG RIFLE

So, let's use .38 Colt as our primary example. In the book *U.S. Cartridges and Their Handguns: 1795–1975*, the author, Charles R. Suydam measured outside bullet diameters of original .38 Colt rounds from various manufacturers. They ranged from 0.376" to 0.381" in diameter. Mr. Suydam didn't want to ruin valuable antique cartridges by pulling some apart, so he did not provide measurements for the heel-base portions. The ones I've measured have been in the 0.356/0.358" range. Also worthy of note is that .38 Colt, at this time, used a case length of 0.88", give or take a thousandth or two. Thus, .36 caliber revolvers came to be called .38s after the advent of metallic cartridges. Things were about to change.

In the early 1890s, the U.S. Army desired to move from its large .45 Colt



The first newly designed revolver for .38 Colt was that company's Model 1877DA. The name .38 Long Colt didn't appear until the 1890s.

cartridge to the smaller .38 Colt. But by that time, the era of heel-base bullets had passed in favor of bullets fitting inside cases. Some factory loads for obsolete cartridges still have heel-base outside bullets, but none were developed after the late 1800s. With the Civil War experience of shooting undersize hollow base Mini Balls in rifled muskets and counting on them to expand to grip rifling, the U.S. Army decided such a system should work for .38 Colt. It did.

Therefore, hollow-base bullets of (nominal) 0.357" were developed to set with their full diameter inside cartridge cases. In order to accommodate the same powder charge of 19 grains used in the .38 Colt heel base ammunition, case length was increased to 1.03" (again nominal), and we get the new name of .38 Long Colt. However, I've never viewed any vintage revolver stamped ".38 Long Colt."

PERFORMANCE

Let's cogitate a moment. How accurate will a revolver be when a 0.357" bullet is shot down a barrel measuring somewhere between 0.370" to 0.375" across its rifling grooves? Well, let me tell you; they can be pretty darn accurate. I've owned Colt Model 1877DA .38 Colt revolvers and still have a Colt Model 1861 replica converted to .38 Colt using the original large-diameter barrel. They have been fine shooters with my own home case hollow-base bullets and even better with 148-grain Speer hollow-base wadcutters.

How does this discourse on .38 Long Colt explain why the .38 Special wasn't named .35 or .36 Special? It's because the .38 Special cartridge was simply the .38 Long Colt lengthened to 1.16". All other dimensions were the same. In the 1930s, someone at S&W based in reality named their new magnum cartridge .357 Magnum instead of .38 Magnum. So, if you wonder why cartridge names don't fit, it's because back in the early days of metallic cartridges, things were done and named differently from today.



HANDY TOOLS AND PROFESSIONAL HELP


Truing a bent Coly Python ejector rod using the Power Custom extractor and yoke alignment jig with dial indicator.

Revolvers or wheel guns need balance. By that, I mean their cylinders need to turn true and smooth. One area that can get out of balance is the ejector rod, which the cylinder revolves around. If it's out of true, it can slow down the action or bind up. The ejector rod can get bent by dropping or hard use.

To correct this, the rod must be returned to true using a tool like the Power Custom Extractor and Yoke Alignment Jig. This allows the pistolsmith to find the locations of bends with a dial indicator and then bend the rod back little by little until it spins true and freely. The end result is a smoother action.

I had a client with a Colt Python in for just this problem. The Colt ejector rod is thinner than most and can bend. I've had the Power Custom jig for maybe 10 years and used it only a few times, but within minutes, I had the Python back in balance and running smoothly.

FINDING YOUR SMITH

The Good, The Bad and the Ugly of the gunsmithing world: How do I find the right smith for me?

Gunsmiths, like any craftsman or mechanic, are hard to come by; good ones even harder. But how do you know? This is not an easy topic to broach. I debated writing about this topic for a long time and talked with a few other smiths before getting a nudge from Roy Huntington to write it.

I'm not here to point fingers or name names; that's not fair. But as a whole, the trade lacks some credentials that can allow anyone with an FFL and a Dremel to call themselves a gunsmith.

For one, a gunsmith does more than replace parts. They are craftsmen who have the ability to create parts and make complex repairs that require precision machine work, then finish those projects to a "better than factory" standard. That's not a knock to armorers; we need them, but occasionally, there are folks who blur the line between parts replacement and custom-fitting parts.

It might just be part of our disposable society: "Just replace it." I recently had a West Coast 1911 owner send me a Colt 1911 that had been having feeding issues. He had originally sent the gun to a "gunsmith" for tuning. What he got back was an accident waiting to happen. Correct that, an accident that did happen. The barrel and feed ramp had been so overcut that cartridges were rupturing out the base upon firing. This is a dangerous situation that can cause injury to the shooter.


At left is the new Kart ramped barrel, which fully supports the base of the 9mm cartridge. At right is the overcut barrel, which allowed cases to rupture or blow out when fired.


A grossly overcut 9mm 1911 barrel throat caused case rupture, a serious situation that could injure a shooter.

The only remedy was to machine the frame for a rammed barrel.

I got the pistol and had to pick my jaw off the floor after taking a look at it. How could this happen? A corrective fix was not cheap; the feed-ramp was too far gone. The only cure was to machine the frame for a ramped barrel and fit a new Kart barrel. This should never have happened.

So, how do you find a reputable smith? First, ask around and ask detailed questions. Did the smith go to a trade school like Pennsylvania Gunsmith School, Montgomery, Colorado School of Trades or work as a smith in the Army or USMC? Maybe they're a member of the Custom Gunmakers Guild or the old Pistolsmith Guild. There are some really good smiths that don't belong to an organization, which is fine, but check out their history and previous work. The quality of work could be a lifesaver in one form or another. Also, many smiths work on just a few platforms. Be sure it's the right person for your job.


The Brian Powley 1911 fixture plate in the milling vice allows machining of the side of the frame.

1911 FRAME SERVICE PLATE

It's no secret the right tool or jig makes jobs go a lot easier. Master engraver Brian Powley just released a fixture plate for the 1911 that makes working on the flat side of the frame a lot easier. I have a few fixture plates for the 1911, but this one is a step better.

First, it has an added spine on the back of the plate that allows it to be held in my vise jaws. Others are too big. Next, the hold-down screw points are all fitted with steel inserts in the aluminum plate. The plate is set up for both full-size and compact frames with a cut-out for the plunger tube. There are hold-down blocks for the magwell and dust cover area. I can see it used for straightening frame lines and countersinking slide-stop pin holes. I'm sure I'll come up with other uses for it. Brian designed the plate for engravers, but it's a good addition for gunsmiths.

For more info: PowerCustom.com, KartBarrel.com, ACCG.org, PowleyEngraving.com



NEW HYPERFORMANCE HUNT

Fiocchi's newest addition to the Hyperformance Hunt lineup - Handgun Hunting and Wilderness Defense ammunition utilizing the venerable Barnes XPB, all copper hollow point. This hard-hitting projectile features exceptional weight retention, controlled expansion, and deep penetration. Ammunition that is built for the conditions and demands of the modern hunter!

FIOCCHI

FIOCCHIUSA.COM

MARK HAMPTON



Remington and Federal offer 180- and 200-grain ammo for the .360 Buckhammer.



Mark took this massive boar in Hungary with 180-grain Remington ammo from one well-placed shot. The T/C Encore with SSK Firearms barrel and Burris scope made a great hunting combination.

STRAIGHT WALL CARTRIDGES FOR HUNTING

Straight-wall cartridges have been around for decades and handgun hunters have utilized them effectively. Some of these cartridges are much older than I am, such as the .45-70, serving hunters well, punching tags and filling freezers. In the past few years, the proliferation of new straight-wall cartridges has been increasingly evident. The .350 Legend is a prime example. Winchester has seen robust sales and recently followed up by offering their .400 Legend. So, what is the reason behind the resurgence of these straight-wall cartridges?

A big part of the rationale is generated by some states that only allowed shotguns or muzzle-loaders in the past, allowing straight-wall cartridges today. Several of these states have restrictions regarding caliber and case length. Some require at least .35 caliber, and for whatever reason, case length cannot exceed 1.800". This mandate eliminates several older straight-wall rounds such as the .375 Winchester, .45-70, .444 Marlin and others featuring a case length exceeding 1.800".

The .350 Legend became popular in these states as it fulfilled legislative criteria plus fits nicely in ARs and bolt-action rifles. The round also resonated with handgun hunters employing single-shot platforms such as the T/C Contender and Encore. Smith and Wesson offered their X frame and BFR, utilizing their long cylinder models, and produced revolvers chambered for the .350 Legend. Other straight-wall cartridges, such as the .460 S&W Mag. and .450 Bushmaster, experienced a spike in interest for whitetail hunters in case-restricted states. Needless to say, there was an obvious demand for these straight-wall rounds.

BUCKHAMMER TIME

I never paid a lot of attention to these types of cartridges — until Remington introduced its .360 Buckhammer. Some engineer under the Big Green tent had a brainstorm and decided to use a rimmed .30-30 case, trimmed to 1.800" and top it with a .35 caliber bullet. It wasn't exactly this easy, but with a lot of determination and experimentation, Remington launched their .360 Buckhammer.



Mark and Karen both hunted with Remington's new straight-wall cartridge — using the BFR revolver in .360 Buckhammer. They brought two New Mexico black bear hides back to Missouri.

The rimmed case would lend itself to lever actions and Henry jumped on the bandwagon. The case also works superbly in single-shot platforms such as the T/C Contender and Encore. Remington topped the case with their 180- and 200-grain Core-Lokt, round-nose bullet, which has been around for over 80 years. There is no telling how many deer and other game this bullet has accounted for since 1939 when it was first introduced.

I called my friends at SSK Firearms and immediately ordered an Encore barrel. The barrel was fitted with a Burris 2-7x scope on a T'SOB base. With a box full of Remington 180-grain Core-Lokt ammo, I hit the range. I was pleasantly surprised to see how well this straight-wall cartridge with round-nose bullets performed. I was getting 1.5" groups at 100 yards when I did my part. Eventually, I moved out to 150 and 200 yards, shooting three-shot groups. After the range session, I wouldn't have any hesitation shooting a deer out to 200 yards.

IN THE FIELD

My first hunt with the .360 Buckhmmer was in Macedonia. Karen and I were celebrating our 44th wedding anniversary — at least that is what I told her. During our special occasion, I managed to take a dandy wild boar, red stag and water buffalo. If the .360 Buckhammer can handle this type of game, it surely will drop whitetail cleanly and effectively.

We followed up with a hunt in Hungary for fallow deer and some huge wild boar. Hungary is well-known for some of the biggest fallow bucks in the world, plus those hogs are massive. The cartridge performed flawlessly thanks to the 180-grain Core-Lokt bullet. The guides were even impressed.

By now, BFR was manufacturing their long-cylinder revolver in .360 Buckhammer. With an upcoming bear hunt, I begged them to send one my way for the New Mexico hound hunt. Karen was also shooting a .360 Buckhammer in Henry's X Model lever-action rifle. The BFR came with a 10" barrel and was fitted with a Gen 2 Ultradot optic. This made an ideal set-up for hunting bear behind a pack of hounds. After five days of following hounds in the beautiful mountains of New Mexico, Karen and I both punched our tags and headed back to Missouri with two bear hides for the taxidermist.

It was now time to turn our attention to whitetail hunting. I took several deer on our farm here in Missouri, with the longest shot around 120 yards. My season ended by taking a respectable 7-pointer in Alabama. When the smoke cleared, I had taken 11 head of big game with as many shots.

During the fall hunting season, I observed a straight-wall cartridge launching a round-nose bullet perform like a champ. The .360 Buckhammer may be intended mainly for whitetail but it's capable of so much more. It's refreshing to see simplicity still working so well for hunters.

HOLOSUN

INTRODUCING THE REVOLUTIONARY

DIGITAL RIFLE SIGHT - NIGHT VISION



SEE THE **UNSEEN**

The **DRS-NV** (Digital Rifle Sight-Night Vision) is a red dot and digital night vision fusion optic that combines Holosun's red dot sight technology with digital night vision capability. DRS-NV features an LED MRS (Multi-Reticle System™), digital reticle options (for use with the digital night vision overlay), 1024x768 resolution digital night vision sensor with up to 60fps, and 2x, 4x, and 8x digital zoom. Images and video can be captured on the fly and stored on 32GB of on-board storage.

MRS
MULTI-RETICLE SYSTEM™

1024 x 768
RESOLUTION

UP TO 8 HOURS
OF BATTERY LIFE

INTERNAL VIDEO
RECORDING SYSTEM

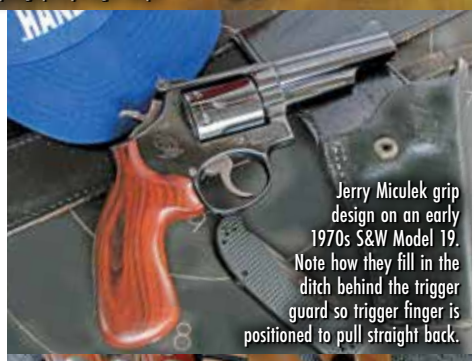
HOLOSUN.COM

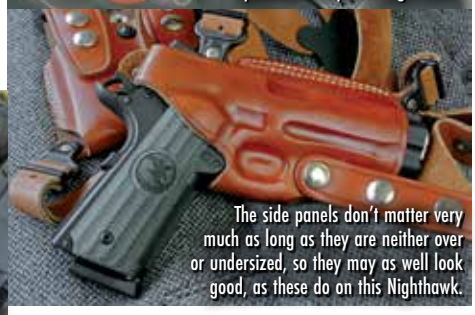
THE RIGHT (AND WRONG) GRIPS


S&W J-Frame Chiefs Specials.

Model 36 nickel finish with original-style grips, with a huge ditch behind the trigger guard.

Model 36 (above), and model 60 (right), have Secret Service style grips by Eagle Grips.


Jerry Miculek grip design on an early 1970s S&W Model 19. Note how they fill in the ditch behind the trigger guard so trigger finger is positioned to pull straight back.


The side panels don't matter very much as long as they are neither over or undersized, so they may as well look good, as these do on this Nighthawk.

The human hand is a marvelous device, an instrument of both great force and the utmost delicacy. The hand can be balled into a fist to punch you in the mouth, or it can be used with delicacy and precision by a dental surgeon to repair the damage. The hand is also amazingly adaptable. My hands are about average in size; I feel most comfortable with S&W K-Frame revolvers or single-stack 1911s. But I can manage well enough with bigger or smaller revolvers and with semiauto pistols from little pocket automatics to the big Desert Eagle .50.

Those with unusually small or large hands may benefit from handgun grips made to suit them. The late Jeff Cooper said the word "grip" refers to how you hold the gun, while the firearm components we hold on to are called "stocks." Incidentally, even those who make the products don't always agree. Eagle Grips calls them, well, grips, while Herrett's Stocks insists they are stocks. I use both terms interchangeably; I guess I am an unprincipled fence-sitter.

WHY CUSTOM?

One reason for custom grips is unusually small or large hands, though even then, it might not be enough. No grip change is going to make a small hand fit a Desert Eagle or make a tiny .25 ACP suitable for really large hands. A second reason is to compensate for an inherent flaw in the firearm design. I love collecting and shooting Colt and S&W double-action revolvers, but the early grip frames were just wrong, with a huge ditch behind the trigger guard. With a high enough grasp, so the weight of the frame rests on the second finger, the trigger finger can hardly bend enough to operate the trigger.

Whoever designed those grip frames for Colt and S&W must have had some seriously strange hands. It baffles me that Colt black powder single actions from a half-century earlier actually had more comfortable and more useable grip frames.

K-FRAMES

In my modest S&W collection, I have several K-Frames with original Magna-style grips. These were polished along with the grip frame and numbered to the specific piece, so I hate to take them off and inevitably lose them. When I want to shoot one of my older K-Frames, I generally add a grip adapter. The original Tyler T-Grip was made of aluminum, while later Pachmayr production used a tough synthetic. These fill the gap behind the trigger guard and improve handling at a modest cost.


S&W Model 51 .22 WMRF Kit Gun, made in the 1960s on the J-Frame, slightly longer than the I-Frame. S&W offered this grip style which was a considerable improvement on the original.

For K-Frame S&Ws, my favorite grip is the Miculek style, designed by revolver wizard Jerry Miculek and made by Hogue. Hogue makes other grip styles as well, all of superb quality. I know of no other K-Frame grip that feels as good in the hand or handles and shoots as well. Jerry said he likes the grips to be smooth so he can "squirm the gun" if his initial grasp on the gun during a draw isn't perfect. Once he tightens his grip on the gun, it doesn't move any further. Smooth, not slippery, is how he describes the grip.

DIFFERENT CARRY

With J-Frame personal defensive revolvers, I prefer a grip style extending no further than the grip frame for easier pocket carry and made of smooth wood so as not to drag on clothing. Years ago, I began using the Secret Service style from Eagle Grips and to this day have found nothing I like better. They are made from various woods and polymers to enhance appearance as well as handling.

S&W also offered what they called Target-style grips, with additional wood filling the gap behind the trigger guard and extending beyond the bottom of the grip frame. I have such grips on my model 51 "Kit Gun" in .22 WMRF. Since I carry Kit Guns in a day pack or chest pouch, concealment and size are less of an issue. I also like Target grips on K-Frames, and my hands are just big enough to manage N-Frame Target grips.

COSMETICS

A third reason for custom grips is to enhance appearance and pride of ownership. Wanting your personal firearm to be unique and striking in appearance is a perfectly normal desire. Maybe we can't afford to have our handguns engraved and inlaid with gold, but we can add handsome grips at moderate cost and usually with no more tools than a screwdriver. Many semiauto pistols have easily replaceable grip panels. The Herrett's Stocks web page shows a number of examples of the types of wood and checkering patterns available. Many are for 1911 styles, but there are also custom designs for the Beretta 92, Browning Hi-Power, Ruger and S&W .22s, the Walther PPK/S, as well as Colt and S&W revolvers.

For more info: Miculek.com, HogueInc.com, AltamontCo.com, EagleGrips.com, HerettStocks.com

PAST MEETS PRESENT MEETS PERFECTION.





Introducing the all-new **MAC 1911 JSOC**—an exceptionally rugged, reliable and feature-rich .45 ACP pistol. Boasting performance-enhancing upgrades such as a forged frame, slide and match grade barrel, we've painstakingly modified the iconic 1911 platform to meet the demands of today's most discerning shooters.

MILITARY ARMAMENT CORPORATION

MILARMAMENTCORP.COM

SELECTING NEW DUTY SIDEARMS: A CASE STUDY


SCSO's new issue duty sidearm.

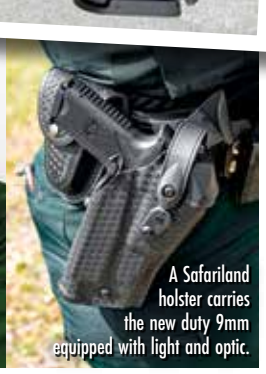
Valid research, more than anything else, should drive new duty handgun selection.

When law enforcement agencies choose new sidearms, different forces may drive the decision. Sometimes, the CLEO (chief law enforcement officer) may simply have a personal preference. Sometimes, a gun salesman makes bean counters an offer they don't think they can refuse. But, in the best of all police work worlds, solid research will drive the decision.

THE JOB & THE WORKERS

The Suwannee County Sheriff's Office in north central Florida provides police service to 44,000 people in a 692 square mile area with 65 sworn, armed deputies and investigators. Their standard issue sidearms have been semi-automatic pistols since the mid-late 1980s, beginning with the SIG SAUER P226 9mm. In 2003, the agency switched to .45 ACP GLOCKS, full size 13+1 round G21s for uniformed personnel and 10+1 round G30 compacts for plainclothes investigators. In the late 20-teens it was determined that some personnel would shoot better with guns of smaller grip girth, and 9mm GLOCKs were purchased for those who felt the need: 17+1 round G17s for uniform and 15+1 shot G19s for plainclothes personnel. In the 2020s, knowing that the in-service weapons would soon need replacement, research on the matter began.


Lt. Musgrove with a test gun. Duty weapons are all black.


A Safariland holster carries the new duty 9mm equipped with light and optic.

The best decisions in this area require three things: research-oriented instructors, input from the rank-and-file users, and a CLEO who understands the issue. Fortunately, Suwannee County SO had all three. Lead firearms instructor and SWAT Team commander Lt. Wayne Musgrove had 46 years on, all of it as a gun enthusiast on his own time. Elected high sheriff Sam St. John was a gun-savvy career lawman who had proven himself pro-gun, pro-law-abiding armed citizen and strongly pro-officer safety. (I had once had the occasion to stand next to Sheriff St. John on a qualification line and watch him shoot perfect scores with his issue GLOCK and his off-duty department approved SIG P365.) Project leader Musgrove included the working deputies in his consideration of new hardware.

PROGRESSION

Musgrove had followed the progression of carry optics adoption by police since the trend began, reviewing the literature, such as Aaron Cowan's Sage Dynamics white paper. He and Deputies Zack Clark and Lee Willis went through red dot optics instructor school under Brandon White in 2022 and became convinced optic-sighted duty pistols were the way to go. Departments that had already made the adoption shared their results. An exhaustive study began.

There is a synergy involved when departments change guns. Because of the sea change in law enforcement to 9mm, they discovered none of the holstermakers had security scabbards that would fit large-frame .45s. Though the department had confidence in their .45s, the feeling was that hit delivery was the best route to incapacitating homicidal criminals, and a switch to 9mm was reluctantly accepted. Musgrove began an intense canvassing of LE agencies who had adopted the various currently popular models. He was particularly impressed when LAPD told him of their test of the FN 509, resulting in their adoption of that gun. Two test samples had gone over 10,000 rounds each without a single malfunction. SCSO SWAT had been very pleased with their FN SCAR rifles in terms of both performance and aftermarket support. Testing the FN 509 MRD LE, the LAPD gun, confirmed their research and that gun was chosen after they learned Safariland made security holsters for it, which would also accommodate their TLR-1 HL WMLs. The SCSO guns were ordered with flat triggers and 5.5-lb. pulls.

Next came optic selection. Again, canvassing other agencies showed recurrent problems with some MRDS units. The Trijicon products had stood up well in the field, but Musgrove didn't like having to remove the RMR to replace the battery and then have to re-sight-in each pistol. The SRO was too big for the hood on any duty holster they could find. Ultimately, SCSO settled on the Holosun HE 507-GR X2. The GR stands for green dot; most of the deputies who tried it found it more visible than red. Moreover, there were at least three partially color-blind deputies who could not see a red dot. Each deputy would be issued three 17-round magazines of Hornady Critical Duty 124-grain +P 9mm ammo for carry.

The guns and holsters came in before the sights. To accelerate the change and build familiarity, the guns were issued and using the high backup iron sights, all deputies went through transition and shot qualifications with the FNs. Mild recoil and good shooting characteristics won over the few who were skeptical. All that remained was two training days per officer with the Holosuns installed, one each of day and night shooting.

Research, testing and rank-and-file feedback combined to create an effective adoption and transition with life-saving emergency rescue equipment.

JOIN THE RED DOT REVOLUTION

10 DAY OPTICS

CUT • FINISHED • INSTALLED

RED DOT OPTIC SLIDE CUTS FOR ALL GLOCK® MODELS IN 10 DAYS OR LESS.



THOUSANDS *OF SLIDE CUTS COMPLETED* ***IN HOUSE****!*

ZERO *MISSED DEADLINES!*

3 CUTS *AVAILABLE!*

MOST POPULAR OPTICS *ALL IN STOCK!*

SLIDE CUT ONLY *OR* ***SLIDE CUT & OPTIC COMBO***



Trijicon



VORTEX OPTICS



HOLOSUN



10 DAY RED DOT OPTIC CUT ONLY

$200.00 to $225.00

#9072

10 DAY RED DOT OPTIC / SLIDE COMBO

$389.95 to $709.95

#20174

GLOCKSTORE

800-601-8273 • 1930 AIR LANE DRIVE • NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37210

LINDSEY BERTOMEN

MAKE YOUR OWN .45 SHOTSHELLS



The fired case (top) expands to try and fill the chamber, just like a normal cartridge.

Below: Lindsey used a Frankford Arsenal Platinum Series Case Trim and Prep Center to chamfer the inside and outside of the mouth. This not only helps star the neck, but it also allows for the top "crimp" of the brass at the end of the reloading cycle.

I have been experimenting with making shotshells for a 45 ACP. What I'm presenting here is an "almost complete" project. I've been standing on the shoulders of giants when it comes to load development, and I'm looking forward to your input on how to improve this load.

Most commercial shotshell loads are for revolvers. Some of the ones for autos are pretty good, but they don't check all of the boxes for handloaders. First, we like to develop loads to our preferences. Second, what we make has to be reloadable, and the performance has to be repeatable. Third, the shells must function reliably in an auto.

BRASS

I used cut-down brass from .308 casings. The dimensions of the .308, specifically the commercial version of the 7.62 x 51mm, are very similar to the 45 ACP on the bottom end, including the extractor cut. There are other candidates, but the .308 is the best fit.

I started to cut the brass down using a ceramic cut-off saw, which I occasionally use for pistol brass. After breaking two blades, I chucked the cases into my lathe, where things went smoother.



BRASS GYMNASTICS

There are a few different ways one can make a handgun-sized shotshell. For .45 caliber, one can use trimmed .410 wads inside a case. This works well for .45 LC shells but doesn't give enough room for .45 ACP. One can use shotshell capsules (plastic capsules that hold shot) in the shape of bullets. They load in a manner similar to metallic reloading. I picked a third method, "sizing a cartridge into a bottleneck style brass." To do this, I used three different die sets: a .45 ACP sizing die, a carbide .40/10mm sizing die for the necked-down portion and a .357 SIG sizing die to form the "nose" of the shell.

Changing the size of a case from .45 to .40 requires pretty malleable brass. The brass needs to be annealed, which means heating it and letting it cool. Once I cut it, I used a propane torch to heat the neck until it changed color. For the cut down .308, it took about 10 seconds on each side with a propane torch. After heating, just let the brass cool to room temperature.

I cut the brass a little oversized, then trimmed it evenly using my Frankford Arsenal case prep tool. I wanted the cases to be completely concentric and square before I chamfered the inside and outside of the case mouth.

I put the chamfered brass into a .40/10mm carbide die and used a generous swab of Hornady Unique case lube to prevent collapsing the case. Originally, I used a Sharpie line on the brass to gauge how far to neck it down. I found the best way was to adjust the dies to the upper limit of the press.

I wanted to have the shot column as long as possible, so I cut the brass as long as possible. I cut it to 1.285" on the lathe. It really turned out to be a rough cut, until I trimmed to 1.280". Later, when I used the .357 SIG sizing die to create the nose of the shell, I tried to get the OAL as close to 1.254" as possible. There was a balance between getting all 120 grains of shot in and getting the shell (not cartridge!) to fit in a standard .45 ACP magazine.

THE FILL

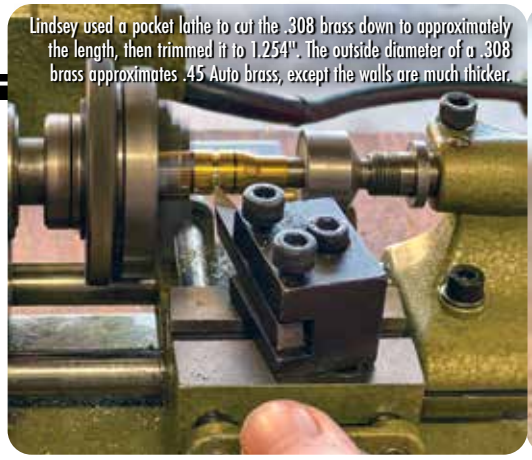
I used Winchester Large Pistol Primers and started with 5.5 grains of 231. I then added a thin pinch of kapok to the powder, tamping it down with a



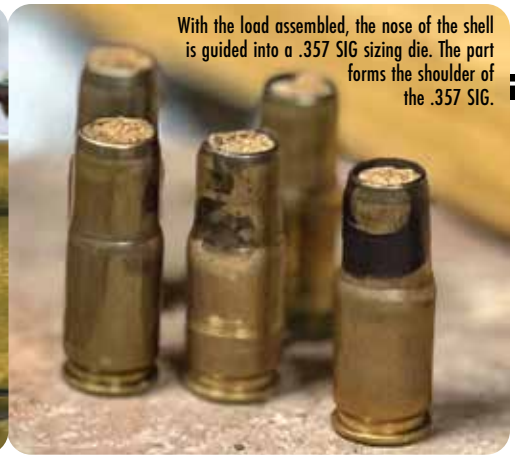
Adding some kapok helps fill space and prevent powder leakage around the cork discs.



After cutting the .308 brass, it has to be annealed. For pistol brass, I just heat it until it changes color (about 5 seconds), then let it cool on its own. It took much longer to get the color change on rifle brass.



Lindsey used a pocket lathe to cut the .308 brass down to approximately the length, then trimmed it to 1.254". The outside diameter of a .308 brass approximates .45 Auto brass, except the walls are much thicker.



With the load assembled, the nose of the shell is guided into a .357 SIG sizing die. The part forms the shoulder of the .357 SIG.

dowel. This prevents the powder from slipping past the cork disc we'll add next.

I bought a 1/8" thick roll of cork from Hobby Lobby and used a cardboard punch to make 10.5mm circles. This kind of punch is available as a leather hollow punch in craft stores.

I put one cork disc over the kapok, then weighed and loaded the shot using a powder funnel. I put another cork disc over the shot, then used the .357 SIG sizing die as a "crimping tool" to form a bullet shaped nose over the shell. This was enough to hold the cork disc over the payload. If I were going to store the shell for future use, I would seal the top with hot glue.

PERFORMANCE

The necked-down shell will barely hold a compressed load of 120 grains of #6 shot. I found that the penetration was awesome with #6. Number 9 shot is denser and may fit better in the shell, but #6 tore up the targets with authority.

I weighed the #6 shot, and it averaged 1.5–1.7 grains each. The 120 grains averaged 64 pellets in each payload. At ranges closer than 7 yards, I could keep the spread under 25".

Recoil was lighter than standard pressure 9mm. I did not experience any barrel leading, nor was there any inconsistency in behavior from one shell to another. They cycled the gun normally, although I found 5.5 grains of 231 was a little too light in my 1911; 5.7 grains worked better.

The brass takes on the dimensions of the chamber, just as any metallic cartridge would. The nose straightens out, and the shoulder becomes less abrupt. I have not loaded any cases twice, but I'm guessing the .40/10mm section will need to be resized eventually.

UTILITY

This is not a self-defense load but rather one useful for rats and snakes inside about 7 yards. I would be delighted to hear how you might take this design and run with it.

AFFORDABLE DOESN'T MEAN CHEAP

TAURUS® G3 FAMILY OF PISTOLS





RELY ON TAURUS®

WILL DABBS, MD

THE CONDITION 1 BERETTA 92F

THE MALEVOLENT ROCKET SURGEON



Here's something you don't see every day. Note that the safety on this Beretta 92F pistol is on, yet the hammer remains cocked. Somebody actually did this on purpose.



Far left: Somebody actually removed these three components of the safety system on my Beretta 92F. Left: Now, all is right with the world. Will just had to restore the safety system on his trusty Beretta back to factory standard.

THE TALE THAT FOLLOWS IS SO ARCANE AS TO INDUCE BRAIN DAMAGE IN NORMAL FOLK. IF YOU'RE NOT A PROPER GUN NERD, YOU'LL NEVER GET THROUGH IT. I NATURALLY FOUND THE DETAILS SIMPLY RIVETING.

Like many of my generation, Mel Gibson and Bruce Willis sold me a Beretta 92F pistol. Like most of us, I had very few resources starting out. I'd set my sights on some ballistic conquest and then scrape for months, if not years, accumulating the cash to buy it. Horse trading and haggling at gun shows were the keys to the kingdom. After seeing Mel Gibson wielding a Beretta 92F as the uber-cool Detective Martin Riggs in *Lethal Weapon,* I knew I had to have one of my own. I mistakenly thought owning such a gun might make me cool, too. What an idiot.

Anyway, I actually traded a .357 Magnum Desert Eagle for that NIB Beretta. Uncle Sam had only recently adopted the weapon, so they were both expensive and tough to find. While I lost a good bit on the trade, the Desert Eagle is likely the most impractical firearm ever contrived, so I was okay with it.

I kept that Beretta for several years only to find, much to my disappointment, it did not make me cool at all. I was still just some skinny, awkward Southern kid no matter what sort of iron I secured on my bedside table. As a result, in a fit of short-sightedness, I eventually traded that Beretta for something else I thought I needed worse and moved on.

Eventually, I began writing for gun magazines and appreciated the foolishness of having let John McCain's signature hogleg get away. I needed a Model 92F for pictures or something, so I hit the giant Dallas gun show at Market Hall in search of a fresh copy. I found one carried by Some Regular Dude just wandering the show. Nancy Pelosi, plug your ears, but I have no idea who he was. We struck a deal, money changed hands, and I left with the lightly used GI service pistol.

Things Get Weird

I figured a Beretta 92F was a Beretta 92F, and I didn't pay much attention to the gun at the show beyond just assessing the finish. Once I got home I came to appreciate that this wasn't just any old Beretta. It was configured for Condition 1 carry.

Back when it was first introduced, a gunsmith friend of mine described the Beretta as having a "Heart Attack Safety." To drop the hammer over a live round, one simply thumbed the slide-mounted safety down. This rendered the pistol inert and also dropped the hammer safely. The snap of the hammer falling over a hot chamber caused traditionalists such as myself some small discomfiture early on. In the case of my new Beretta, thumbing the safety down rendered the gun safe, but inexplicably did not drop the hammer.

In this configuration, should one be so inclined, the gun could have been theoretically carried with the hammer back and the safety on. I figured it was some rare factory variant, but I hated the gun. I wanted the GI version, and this one just wasn't right. Just owning the weapon was like having a speck of sand on my eyeball. I considered selling it to some other witless slob at a gun show someplace but had too much Jesus in me to actually follow through. And so things languished … for a quarter century.

Epiphany

Every time I saw a Beretta 92F at an online gun auction I'd put it on my watchlist. However, those guns never go cheap. For whatever reason, these vintage Berettas hold their value really well. And then, one day, I was between pressing deadlines and decided to take the old girl apart.

I got some guy on YouTube to help me out with the details. Once I got the pistol's frame gutted, I made a remarkable discovery. Three parts of the trigger mechanism were simply missing. Google informed me they were the hammer release lever, the firing pin catch lever and the pin that secured them both. It seemed some Rocket Surgeon had actually done this on purpose.

Naturally, nobody on the Internet offered all three parts, so I had to pay shipping twice to get everything I needed. However, now my trusty Beretta has been restored to the state God originally intended. As a result, I sleep better at night. If whoever actually did that back in Texas some 25 years ago is out there reading these words, I can only say shame on you. Your nefarious efforts to offend the fabric of the universe have finally been made right.

Get more Guncrank free every Friday. Subscribe here: AmericanHandgunner.com/guncrank/

Introducing:

AMERICAN HANDGUNNER

SPECIAL EDITION 1911

The All-American Handgun For All American Handgunners



It stands to reason that the most perfect pistol yet created for the American shooter would be the end result of a cooperative effort between Les Baer Custom, America's premier custom pistolsmith, and American Handgunner magazine, the leading publication dedicated to excellence in handgun design and performance.

The new **AMERICAN HANDGUNNER SPECIAL EDITION 1911** starts with America's most iconic handgun, chambered in popular .45 ACP. Then it's custom built by Les Baer Custom with the care and precision that has made Les Baer 1911s the world's finest custom pistols...and with the thoughtful extra touches preferred by American Handgunner's readers. Special features include:

- *All steel components with Government length 5" slide and barrel;*
- *Brushed hard chrome lower with blued top end;*
- *Rolo adjustable sights with tritium night sight inserts;*
- *Special double diamond VZ black and blue grips;*
- *Special "AH" serial number prefix;*
- *Guaranteed to shoot 3" groups at 50 yards.*

For a closer look at the new AMERICAN HANDGUNNER SPECIAL EDITION, visit the Les Baer Custom website or request our 2020 catalog.

Some of our most popular models include:



Baer 1911 Premier II©
The flagship of the Baer Custom line.



Baer 1911 KENAI Pistol, 10mm
Honoring the Great State of Alaska.



Baer 1911 BOSS, .45
High performance tribute to one of America's most popular muscle cars.



Baer 1911 Black Baer, 9mm
Perfect compact carry size.

1804 Iowa Drive • LeClaire, Iowa 52753
Ph: 563-289-2126 • Fx: 563-289-2132
Email: info@lesbaer.com

See our entire line of high performance custom pistols at…
www.lesbaer.com
Office Hours: 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM Central Time

LES BAER CUSTOM, INC.
Performance. It's Everything.



Dealers send FFL for Dealer Pricing!



The S&W M1917 Revolver, showing the 3-round half-moon clips. Image: NARA



The Colt M1917 Revolver. Image: NARA

TOM LAEMLEIN

SIXGUNS TO THE RESCUE



One tough mug: A Doughboy of the 88th Division with a Colt M1917 Revolver. Image: NARA

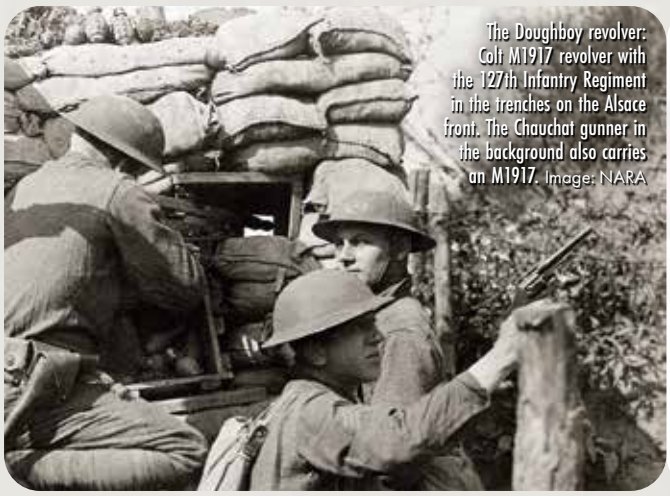
THE M1917 IN WORLD WAR I



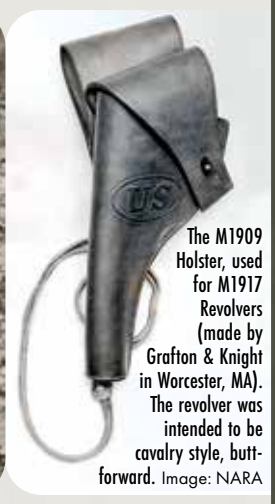
American sixguns in France: A Doughboy photo of M1917 revolvers in the AEF. Image: Author's collection

When America entered World War I in April 1918, the U.S. military found itself lacking in many areas, particularly in combat aircraft, tanks and machine guns. But when it came to handguns, American forces fielded the finest sidearm of the era, the .45 caliber M1911 auto pistol. Praise was heaped upon the massive Colt design, and deservedly so. From the very start of its service, demand for the M1911 was insatiable, extending to every branch of the armed forces. But Uncle Sam's military planners could not foresee the production needs brought on by a World War. As the M1911 couldn't be produced in the quantities required and meet the demands of the war's timeline, U.S. Ordnance was quick to pivot to a tried-and-true American favorite: the revolver.

As luck would have it, S&W had recently produced a "New Century" heavy-frame revolver, chambered in .44 caliber for the U.S. civilian market, as well as nearly 70,000 chambered in .455 Webley for the British military. And while the rimless .45 ACP cartridge might have otherwise proved prob-



The Doughboy revolver: Colt M1917 revolver with the 127th Infantry Regiment in the trenches on the Alsace front. The Chauchat gunner in the background also carries an M1917. Image: NARA



The M1909 Holster, used for M1917 Revolvers (made by Grafton & Knight in Worcester, MA). The revolver was intended to be cavalry style, butt-forward. Image: NARA

lematic for a revolver to extract, S&W offered a new three-round "half-moon clip" that made it all work out.

Half Moon Clips

The M1917 revolver was designed to use the rimless .45 Government Automatic Pistol cartridge — at that time being made in large numbers for the M1911 pistol. While the use of the .45 ACP round eased logistical problems in one way, the rimless ammunition created a new challenge. Revolver cartridges usually have a rim that catches on the edge of the cylinder and allows the extractor to pull them out. The cartridges for an automatic pistol are usually rimless, so the rounds lay cleanly atop each other inside the magazine.

S&W developed a unique half-moon clip that allowed three .45 ACP cartridges to be loaded together. The steel clips lock the cartridges into the chambers securely, and with them, the M1917 revolvers can be loaded quickly, and the spent casings ejected easily. Without the clips, the .45 ACP rounds can be loaded one at a time, and unfortunately, they must be removed individually and with some difficulty — the empty cartridges needed to be pushed out manually with a pencil or dowel as the revolver's ejector would not remove them.

Although Joseph Wesson patented the half-moon clip, S&W complied with a U.S. Army request and allowed Colt to use the clip design for free with their M1917 Revolver design. A big benefit of the clips in the early Colt M1917s was that the ammunition was properly seated and did not slip too far forward into the chamber. The S&W M1917 has a shoulder machined into its cylinder that allows the rimless cartridges to headspace properly.

A special three-pocket ammunition pouch, able to hold six half-moon clips, was issued in late 1917. Images of this pouch worn in the field are somewhat scarce, and it seems many Doughboys who carried the M1917 revolver improvised other ways to carry the clips.

The M1917 In Combat

More than 50% of American troops in France during 1918 were equipped with a handgun. Initially, the U.S. military intended that M1917 Revolvers would be carried by second-line and support troops, but the Doughboys' enthusiasm for handguns meant ample numbers of the revolvers saw combat service. But while the M1917 Revolvers were important arms and issued in significant numbers (with a little more than 300,000 made in total), stories of their use in World War I are not common.



Detail of the steel 3-round half-moon clips. Image: Author's photo



Special loading device for the .45 ACP 3-round half-moon clips. Image: NARA



Soldiering on: Wearing an M1917 "Kelly" helmet and brandishing a pair of M1917 revolvers, a U.S. GI mugs for the camera in the months preceding Pearl Harbor. Image: Author's Collection



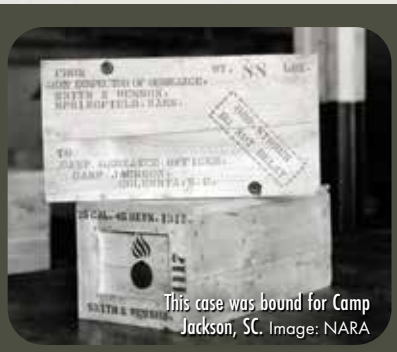
Guarding prisoners in the Argonne in October 1918. Image: NARA



Wearing the M1917 revolver in an adapted M1912 holster meant for the M1911 pistol. Image: NARA



At the S&W factory, the M1917 revolver is dipped in grease. Image: NARA



This case was bound for Camp Jackson, SC. Image: NARA



The revolvers were packed in cases of 25, ready for shipment. Image: NARA



The greased M1917 revolver is wrapped in paper. Image: NARA



S&W "New Century" packaging adapted for the M1917 revolver. Summer 1918. Image: NARA

One reason for this is that the M1917 did not compare to the M1911 pistol in terms of popularity among the Doughboys, and consequently its use was not as widely celebrated. However, that does not mean the S&W and Colt .45 ACP revolvers were disliked — in fact, their ballistic performance and accuracy were essentially the equal of the M1911, and the weights of the revolvers and the auto pistol were close as well. If the Doughboys had disliked the revolvers or if the sixguns had not functioned well, we would have ample statements to that effect, and that is not the case. The relative quiet regarding the M1917 revolvers shows they did their job as a substitute for the M1911 well — the backup on a winning team is still a winner.

Meritorious Service

I did a little digging to find some stories of the M1917 revolvers in combat. What I found came from two U.S. Army Medal of Honor citations — offering ample evidence of the power of the M1917 revolver, and the qualities of the brave Americans who carried them.

First Lieutenant Woodfill: October 12, 1918 in the Meuse-Argonne region, near Cunel, with the 60th Infantry Regiment, 5th Infantry Division.

While First Lieutenant Woodfill was leading his company against the enemy, his line came under heavy machine gun fire, which threatened to hold up the advance. Followed by two soldiers at 25 yards, this officer went out ahead of his first line toward a machine gun nest and worked his way around the flank, leaving the two soldiers in front. When he got within 10 yards of the gun, it ceased firing, and four of the enemy appeared, three of whom were shot by Lt. Woodfill. The fourth, an officer, rushed at Lt. Woodfill, who attempted to club the officer with his rifle. After a hand-to-hand struggle, Lt. Woodfill killed the German officer with his pistol.

His company thereupon continued to advance until shortly afterward another machine gun nest was encountered. Calling on his men to follow, Lt. Woodfill rushed ahead in the face of heavy fire from the nest, and, when several of the enemy appeared above the nest, he shot them, capturing three other members of the crew and silencing the gun.

A few minutes later this officer, for the third time, demonstrated conspicuous daring by charging another machine gun, killing five men in one machine gun pit with his rifle. He then drew his revolver and started to jump into the pit when two other gunners, only a few yards away, turned their gun on him. Failing to kill them with his revolver he grabbed a pick lying nearby and killed both of them. Inspired by the exceptional courage displayed by this officer, his men pressed on to their objective under severe shell and machine gun fire.

Second Lieutenant J. Hunter Wickersham (deceased), 353rd Infantry, 89th Division: For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty in action with the enemy near Limey, France, 12 September 1918.

Advancing with his platoon during the St. Mihiel Offensive, Lieutenant Wickersham was severely wounded in four places by a bursting high explosive shell. Before receiving any aid for himself he dressed the wounds of his orderly, who was wounded at the same time. He then ordered and accompanied the further advance of his platoon, although weakened by the loss of blood. His right hand and arm being disabled by wounds, he continued to fire his revolver with his left hand, until exhausted by the loss of blood, he fell and died.

Wickersham wrote a poem, *The Raindrops on Your Old Tin Hat,* the day before he died and posted it in a letter to his mother in Denver, Colo. It contained this verse:

"When you step off with the outfit to do your little bit,

You're simply doing what you're supposed to do,

And you don't take time to figure what you gain or lose,

It's the spirit of the game that brings you through."



A Hotchkiss M1914 gun crew of the 322nd Artillery, 83rd Division, in France 1918. Image: NARA



Clip comparison: U.S. .30 caliber ammunition with 5-round stripper clips compared to U.S. .45 caliber ACP ammunition and 3-round half-moon clips. Image: NARA

[COMPETITION BOLT]

FOR RUGER® MK IV™

[MAMBA LLV UPPER]

FOR RUGER® MK IV™



[ACCURIZING KIT]

FOR RUGER® MK IV™

[VOLTHANE GRIP]

FOR RUGER® MK IV™

BUILD YOUR ULTIMATE 22 LR PISTOL

Our Mamba LLV Upper provides match-grade accuracy in a lightweight package. Available in a 4.5" or 6" barrel length. The Competition Bolt is DLC coated, which means minimal lubrication and maintenance. It includes our SureStrike Firing Pin and Exact Edge Extractor. Our Accurizing Kit utilizes precision wire-EDM cut components to achieve a 2.25 lb. trigger pull.

Our unique Volthane grip offers an improved fit that accommodates most hand sizes. The thumbrest, heelrest, and finger grooves are all carefully designed to provide you more control of the Ruger® MK IV™ pistol.

Scan the code to shop our complete line of parts for the Ruger® MK IV™!

VOLQUARTSEN FIREARMS

volquartsen.com


9X19 mm
INGLIS KNOXVILLE TN

WHO DARES WINS

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



INGLIS L9A1
BROWNING HI-POWER



Contrary to the unvarnished tripe the government feeds us, the economy is in shambles. Lots of folks have jobs, but inflation gobbles up our hard-earned cash oftentimes faster than we can make it. As a result, I am forever on the prowl for that elusive, genuinely good gun deal.

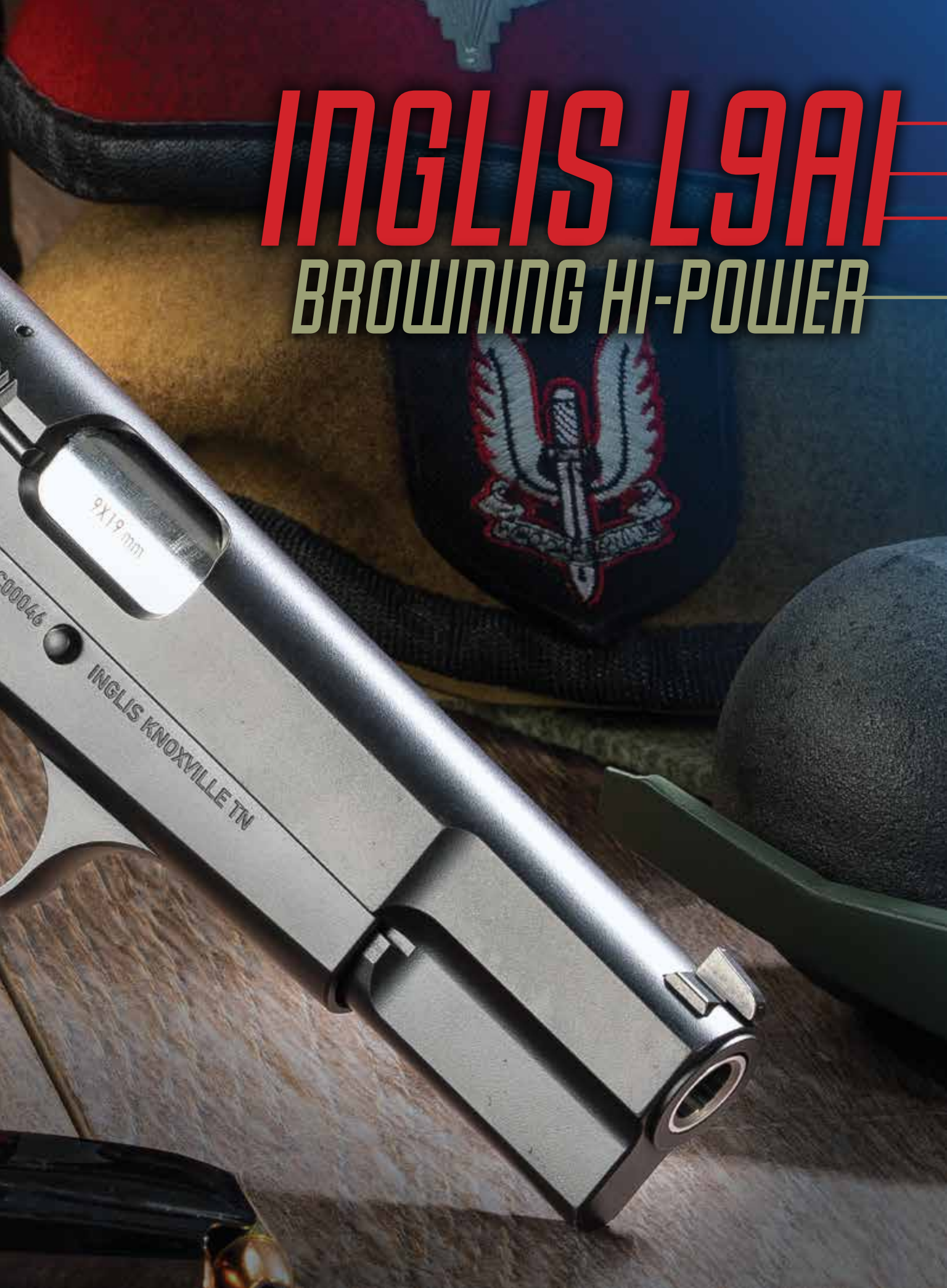
Amidst a veritable sea of tactical handguns of all shapes and sizes cluttering up your local gun emporium, every now and then, you happen upon a serious bargain. The L9A1 Hi-Power from Inglis is a near-perfect clone of the service pistol that was the standard issue handgun for the British SAS from the 1960s until 2013. Featuring superlative quality, a forged steel chassis, inimitable design, and an MSRP of … wait for it … just $486, the new L9A1 represents a simply breathtaking value for the money.

Combat Cred

May 5, 1980 was a Monday. Six days prior, half a dozen terrorists representing the Democratic Revolutionary Front for the Liberation of Arabistan had stormed the Iranian embassy at Prince's Gate in South Kensington, London. Curiously, these six armed men were actually protesting the theocratic regime that had recently seized power in Iran. They were, geopolitically speaking, technically the Good Guys. However, after days of aggressive negotiations that saw the release of five of 26 hostages, tempers grew short. In a fit of anger, the terrorists shot and killed the Iranian cultural attaché, Abbas Lavasani. At that point, the Iron Lady, Prime Minister Margaret



AMERICAN HANDGUNNER®


INGLIS L9AI
BROWNING HI-POWER
9X19 mm
INGLIS KNOXVILLE TN



Thatcher, turned operational control of the situation over to the British 22nd Special Air Service.

They called the subsequent symphony of violence Operation Nimrod and it changed everything about modern counterterrorist operations. Where normally, the SAS operates in the shadows, this time, they took down the Iranian embassy in broad daylight before the accumulated television cameras of the world's press. The building was five stories tall and contained 51 different rooms. Seventeen minutes after the go order, five of the six terrorists were dead, the sixth was in custody, and the entire building was secure. One hostage died during the assault and one SAS man was fairly badly burned. However, the cumulative result was legitimately paradigm-shifting.

In short order, every cop in the world wanted an HK MP-5 submachine gun in the trunk of his squad car and a set of black fatigues hanging in his closet. The otherworldly imagery of the assault burned into the world's consciousness. The SAS had become the world's premiere direct-action counterterrorist force.

The SAS Gear

The SAS shooters all carried Heckler and Koch 9mm MP-5 submachine guns. B squadron that undertook the assault actually lacked enough standard MP-5s to equip all of their operators, so there were two sound-suppressed MP-5SDs as well as a handful of stubby MP-5Ks in the mix. In addition to their distinctive respirators, abseiling gear, and spare SMG magazines, each of the assaulters also carried an L9A1 Browning Hi-Power 9mm pistol. These guns sported a 20-round extended magazine in the weapon along with a couple of standard-capacity spares.



The L9A1 was an evolutionary development of John Moses Browning's original groundbreaking semiauto service pistol. The GP-35 Hi-Power was launched fully nine years after Browning died in 1926. However, it nonetheless remained the great man's ultimate handgun design. Famed Belgian gun designer Dieudonné Saive, the father of the FN FAL rifle, took the foundation Browning had laid and perfected it.

It would be hard to overstate the significance of the Hi-Power design. The operating system pioneered in the Hi-Power drives easily 95% of the combat pistols in the world today. The SIG M17, the Ruger American, the Shadow Systems line of superlative combat handguns, the HK VP9, and every GLOCK ever made uses the same recoil-driven tilting lock old John Moses Browning built into the Hi-Power. Apparently, it is legitimately perfect.

Details

This Inglis L9A1 is made in Turkey. If you haven't yet discovered the joys of Turkish-made firearms, then you have my pity. Those guys make fantastic guns at very reasonable prices. Anyone looking down their noses at Turkish firearms these days is simply a bigot.

Those first Hi-Powers were designed to meet a French military contract and included a ghastly magazine safety that disabled the weapon when the magazine was ejected. I oppose such stuff on principle myself. On the off chance that you dump a partially empty magazine and need your weapon before you get a fresh box seated, I'd just as soon not have my gun rendered unnecessarily inert. This mechanism is removable from original Hi-Powers, but it's a pain. The Inglis





L9A1 dispenses with all that. Deleting the magazine safety also improves the personality of the trigger.

The L9A1 is a faithful rendition of the British military-issue Hi-Power. It features a forged slide and frame along with a 4140 button-rifled barrel and a cool black chromate finish. The sights are military-style and fixed. There is a ring hammer and a period-correct military lanyard loop on the butt. The safety is extended and bilateral, just like those of the 22nd SAS. The gun comes with plastic stocks and two magazines, all in a lockable polymer case.

Trigger Time

The cumulative result is a rugged military-grade service pistol that is superbly well-executed. The trim architecture of the Browning Hi-Power makes it sufficiently comfortable for concealed carry while remaining plenty robust for defensive use in your nightstand or glove box. The gun fits my hands wonderfully and is a dream on the range.

The Inglis L9A1 will ruin you to striker-fired triggers. For defensive use, the L9A1 is designed to be carried in Condition 1 with a round up the pipe, the hammer back, and the safety on, just like every 1911 pistol on the planet. Once you take its measure, that divine Browning-contrived single-action trigger will just steal your heart.

Where the original Hi-Power magazine carried 13 rounds, those included with the L9A1 pack 15. No idea how they did that. However, that makes the L9A1 competitive with other modern service pistols.

My copy ran like a scalded ape. Recoil in this steel-framed pistol is present without being objectionable. The extended bilateral safety runs beautifully, and the magazine release is underneath the right thumb just as it should be. Mags drop free.

Shooting offhand from 12 meters, the classic Hi-Power ergonomics and single-action trigger allowed me to shoot groups in the 1.5" range with ease.

Ruminations

I'll level with you guys: I adore this gun. I have lusted after one ever since it was released. While the MSRP is $486, it is selling via Buy Now on GunBroker for $449. For a steel-framed, combat-proven service pistol that was used by the world's premiere counterterrorist unit, that's a pretty epic deal.

Adopted by the military and police forces of 96 different nations, the Browning Hi-Power is the most popular 9mm pistol ever built. When I was in Israel some years back, the Hi-Power was still well in evidence among armed civilians. I rolled around in the dirt with this one and could find no fault with it. In addition to being a spot-on rendition of the British military L9A1, this particular example is also a simply fantastic bargain. Dropping one of these bad boys into your waistband underneath an untucked shirt or slipping it into your nightstand will let you channel your inner SAS commando.

For more info: SDSImports.com

MARK HAMPTON



The attractive walnut grip panels wrap around the grip frame in almost seamless fashion.



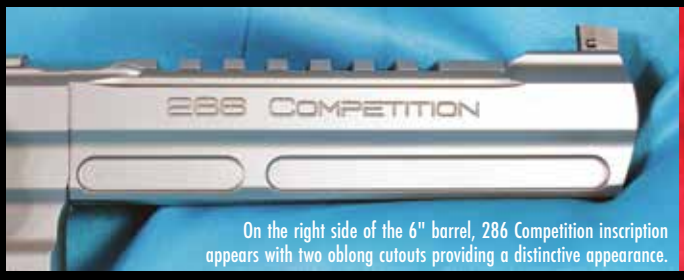
Your thumb won't slip off this spacious hammer spur with deep serrations.



Eye-pleasing and comfortable walnut match grips feature a subtle texture in all the right places.

The first five-shot group from 25 yards.

ELEGANT ENGINEERING



On the right side of the 6" barrel, 286 Competition inscription appears with two oblong cutouts providing a distinctive appearance.



The left side of the stainless barrel bears a .357 Magnum with one oblong cutout, alleviating the mundane appearance of a slab-sided barrel.

SPOHR 286 COMPETITION REVOLVER



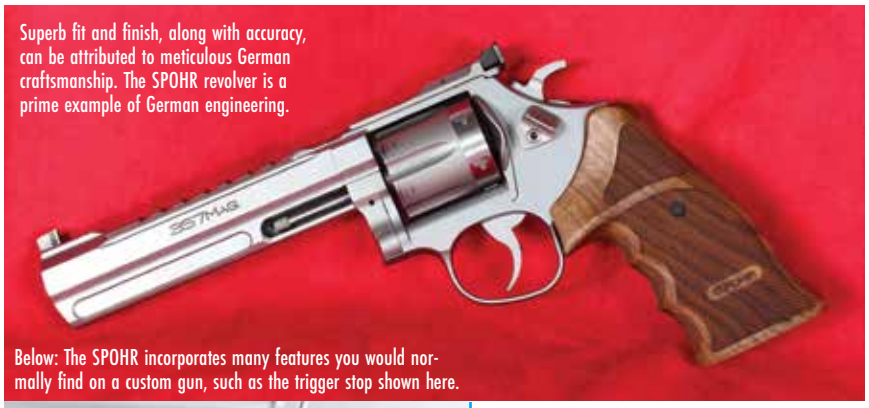
This Ultradot optic features a green dot on the company's Matchdot II unit.

Mark shot a variety of factory ammo from Federal and Remington during his range sessions.

When my friend and handgun-hunting colleague Chris Rhodes notified me there was a new revolver introduced at the SHOT Show, inquiring minds wanted to know more. Chris shared just enough information to pique my interest. He was able to get his grubby hands on one and took it to Texas on a hunt. After taking a few critters with the revolver, he shared his initial thoughts on this new offering, which was enough to tip me over the edge. I immediately got on the phone to procure one of these classy-looking sixguns manufactured in Germany.

Who Is Spohr?

Before I got the checkbook out, I really wanted to know more about Spohr, the company, and Thomas Spohr, the innovator behind this product. He studied weapons technology at the world-famous HTL Ferlach in Austria. After completing his studies, he quickly passed the Master Craftsman's examination in gunsmithing. Thomas continued his studies, graduating as a master gunsmith from the Ehingen School outside of Stuttgart.



Superb fit and finish, along with accuracy, can be attributed to meticulous German craftsmanship. The SPOHR revolver is a prime example of German engineering.

Below: The SPOHR incorporates many features you would normally find on a custom gun, such as the trigger stop shown here.





The rear sight is adjustable and features slight serrations on the black square notch.



The six-shot cylinder features numbered charge holes.

Thomas developed a carbine based on a Luger P08 pistol, and these custom-made guns quickly became well-known in the region. Later down the road, he became a member of the CLUB 30, where German gunsmiths joined forces to tune S&W revolvers for German customers. As a member of the German S&W Club, he became involved in the high-end tuning of S&W revolvers and began to produce his own parts. With this growing passion for revolvers, he soon developed his own line with the SPOHR L562 being launched. His revolvers have been sold in Germany since 2019, and the following is growing.

First Impressions

After a quick call to Margie Binzer of MMB Imports, I was fortunate to get a 286 Competition revolver in .357 Magnum headed my way. It was the only gun here in the States at that moment, so I felt like the stars had lined up properly. When I received the SPOHR revolver, the first thing to make an impression was the nice, lockable Negrini gun case. No corners were cut here.

As I opened the case, my initial reaction was this revolver was aesthetically pleasing. The firearm is made completely from martensitic stainless steel ingrained with German engineering. This 286 Competition tipped the scales at approximately 49 oz. It was no surprise to see the overall fit and finish to be superb. The elegant-looking walnut match grips featured a subtle texture with finger grooves. They consist of two panels overlapping the backstrap with a perfect fit.

My test gun came with an extra 9mm cylinder with five moon clips. There is a moon clip loading gadget available to make loading these clips a little less challenging. The 9mm cylinder will be beneficial for extended range time while burning up lots of ammo with less recoil.

Operations & Details

According to the Lyman digital trigger pull gauge, the single action trigger broke just shy of 3 lbs., crisp and clean, without any creep. The revolver is loaded with a lot of features you would find on a custom creation, including an adjustable trigger stop. The wire-eroded trigger system consists of a solid trigger, smooth and rounded. The trigger guard is spacious enough for shooting with gloves in colder climates. All of the lock parts are made from highly tempered steel without any metal injection molding (MIM) parts. A prime example would be the solid hammer LX-V2 with serrations on a full-bodied spur. Your thumb should never slip while cocking this hammer.





The SPOHR revolver was shipped in a very nice Negrini hard case. Inside were the owners and instruction manual, an extra 9mm cylinder and five moon clips.



With aggressive serrations, the wide competition cylinder release makes life easy for quick reloads.



Engraved above the trigger guard — SPOHR made in Germany.

The 6" cold hammer forged polygonal barrel has a unique characteristic appearance. It has been stated the polygonal barrel enhances accuracy, plus it's easier to clean. I'm anxious to find out for myself. The flat-sided barrel features a 286 Competition inscription on one side while the left side of the barrel wears .357 Mag. To break up the mundane of the flat side, oblong cutouts on both sides leave an eye-pleasing sort of sophistication. The adjustable LPA rear sight has serrations in the black square notch. A two-stage match front sight features a black square blade.

Another one of the attributes I appreciated about the SPOHR was the full-bodied match cylinder release. Boy, does that make life easy and painless. It was not only easy on the thumb but provided a quick cylinder release for speed loading if necessary. The six-shot cylinder is fluted, exhibiting a tasteful two-tone finish. The cylinder gap measured 0.005". When I first opened the cylinder, it was a pleasant surprise to find the charge holes numbered. After dry firing for a bit, it was easy to detect this revolver wasn't mass-produced.

Optics Ready

The barrel also incorporates an integrated Picatinny rail for optics. There are seven slots providing flexibility on mounting location for a reflex sight. I'm not familiar with competition events in Europe, but many will find this rail beneficial for red dot sights. For years, I've been shooting Ultradot tube sights. I elected to mount this optic directly above the frame — which is drilled and tapped for all S&W mounts. A quick call to EGW and I had a base to fit and the Ultradot was mounted in 30mm rings.

As luck would have it, a new model from Ultradot arrived just in time for testing. This Match Dot II features a green dot with four different MOA dots, 2, 4, 6, and 8 MOA. The optic also provides two different reticle options — circle with dot and circle with crosshair. One of the finest upgrades on the new model can be found on the user-friendly power control knob. There are 11 settings to adjust brightness with an off position between each setting. This is a very practical improvement as opposed to dialing back to zero every time you want to turn the unit off. I didn't have any issues with the red dot but I must confess my eyes prefer the green color better.

Shooting The SPOHR

With a variety of Remington and Federal ammo, I was anxious to see how the SPOHR performed on the range. I was shooting Federal Fusion 158-grain soft point, Federal Premium Hammer Down 170-grain bonded bullet, Remington UMC 125-grain JSP, and Federal American Eagle 158-grain JSP. From a sandbag rest, I began shooting from 25 yards to see how well the gun would group with a variety of ammo. My first 5-shot group came from Federal's factory 158-grain Fusion. The gun was right out of the box, with no adjustments or modifications, just an Ultradot optic mounted.

When I saw that first group, I was both a little surprised and impressed! The cluster of five shots with a new gun and factory ammo was most pleasing, to say the least. While I didn't get any groups tighter, the SPOHR was certainly not picky with a variety of ammo tested. After adjusting the green dot optic, I moved out to 50 and 75 yards banging steel plates on my farm. This revolver is easy to shoot accurately as it balances well with a crisp trigger pull. I just wish a hog hunt was on the menu as I'd love to try Federal's Hammer Down, 170-grain offering on a big mean hog.

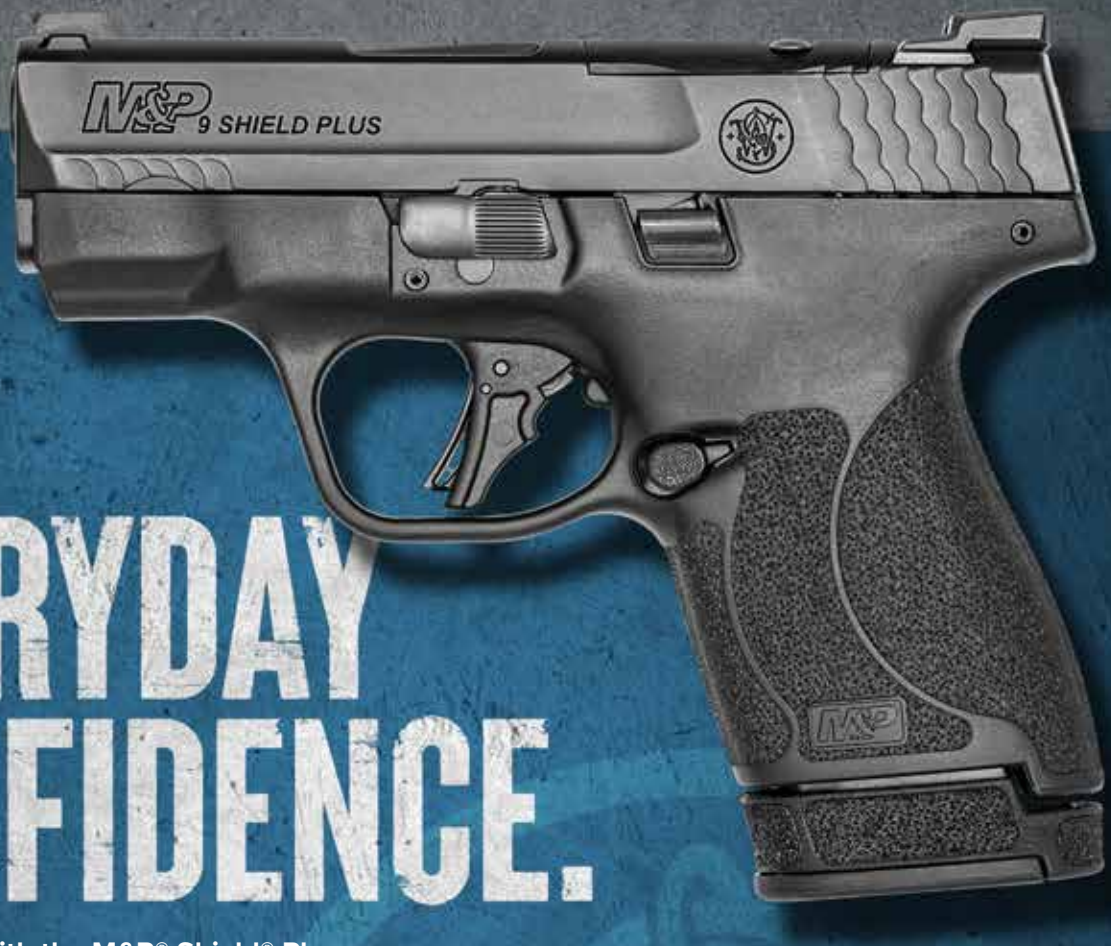
After extensive range time, I was more than pleased with the SPOHR. Whether it's recreational shooting, competition, or hunting, this revolver will find favor in the hands of discerning shooters. The optimal performance can be credited to meticulous German craftsmanship. Currently, SPOHR is manufacturing a .22 LR revolver based on their L562 frame and will hopefully be available by the end of 2024. They are also working on a new frame for .44 Mag. which is currently under development. I've already got my order in for one, as I imagine this will be a top-tier hunting handgun. If I had a magic wand, an 8" model with a non-fluted cylinder would look nice under the Christmas tree. Based on this new frame, an 8-shot cylinder for the .357 Mag. will also be launched.

The ATF has to approve these revolvers before shipping, and this doesn't happen overnight. At this time — SPOHR's U.S. importer is MMB Imports. Customer service is available through SPOHR's service center in Pennsylvania. If my crystal ball is clear, I see a lot of premium revolvers coming to the U.S. from Germany. Target shooters, handgun hunters and revolver aficionados who appreciate top-shelf craftsmanship will welcome the arrival.



Shooters will appreciate the integral rail for mounting optics that is widely popular with competition shooters and hunters alike.

M&P® SHIELD® PLUS



EVERYDAY CONFIDENCE.

Empower yourself with the M&P® Shield® Plus

Unlock dependable personal security with the M&P Shield Plus. Designed for those who demand uncompromised personal protection in a concealable package. With more capacity than previous versions, optics-ready slides, and the same great performance you expect. Stop compromising, and start carrying with confidence.

Smith & Wesson®
EMPOWERING AMERICANS™
smith-wesson.com

Scan for More Info

©2024 Smith & Wesson Inc. All Rights Reserved.



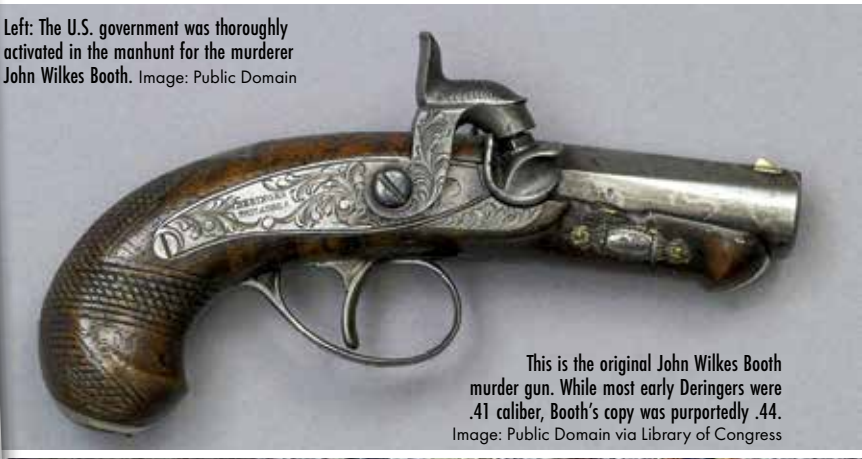
KILLING LINCOLN

WILL DABBS, MD

JOHN WILKES BOOTH'S PHILADELPHIA DERINGER



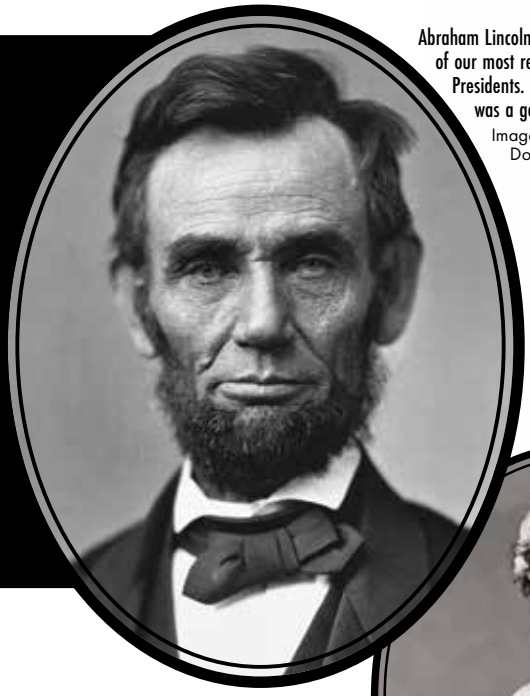
Left: The U.S. government was thoroughly activated in the manhunt for the murderer John Wilkes Booth. Image: Public Domain



This is the original John Wilkes Booth murder gun. While most early Deringers were .41 caliber, Booth's copy was purportedly .44. Image: Public Domain via Library of Congress



Booth's assassination of Lincoln was the seminal event of its time. Image: Public Domain



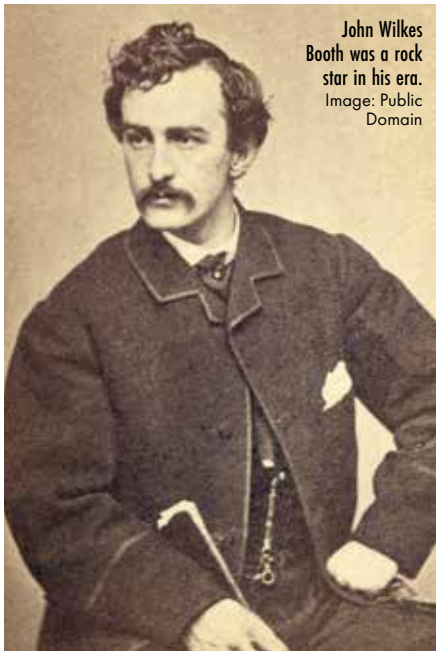
Abraham Lincoln was one of our most respected Presidents. His murder was a gory mess.
Image: Public Domain



Booth had access to much more advanced weaponry at the time of the Lincoln assassination like this 1851 Colt Navy (top) and 1849 Colt pocket pistol (bottom). He was packing a brace of Army-issue Colt revolvers when, eventually, he was gunned down.



With the benefit of hindsight, Mary Todd Lincoln likely suffered from raging bipolar disorder. She was likely fairly difficult to live with.
Image: Public Domain



John Wilkes Booth was a rock star in his era.
Image: Public Domain

Is it just me, or does the American political landscape seem exceptionally acrimonious these days? One might be forgiven for thinking today's schism between Left and Right so bellicose as to be without historical precedent. However, that's not quite true. The vitriol back in 1865 made today's political shenanigans look like a cordial Sunday School picnic.

The American Civil War was by far the costliest conflict in American history. Brother rose against brother, and places like Gettysburg, Shiloh, Chickamauga and Antietam were awash in blood. Nearly 620,000 Americans perished. Along the way, rancor in American politics reached levels not seen before or since. When folks get that fired up about something they tend to do stupid things.

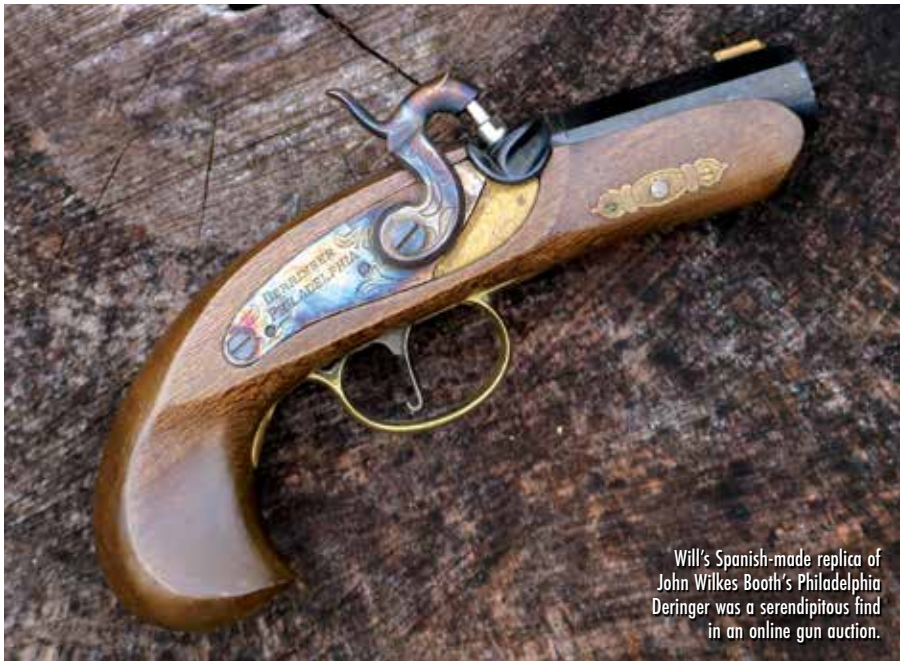
The Players

Abraham Lincoln was famously born in a log cabin in Kentucky in 1809 and was essentially self-educated. From these humble beginnings, he eventually ascended to the Presidency during the most tumultuous period in American history. Lincoln's force of personality is what kept the Union together through four long, bloody years of war.

Lincoln's personal life was fairly tragic. His wife, Mary Todd Lincoln, was mentally unhinged, and three of their four sons died young. The weight of having carried the Union through the Civil War exacted a profound toll.

At 6'4", Lincoln was a veritable giant in his day. It has been postulated that he might have suffered from Marfan's syndrome, a connective tissue disorder that generally leaves those afflicted extremely tall and thin.

John Wilkes Booth was an accomplished actor and an old-school bigot. In the late 1850s, he was earning $20,000 per year, which is about $700,000 today. A rabid proponent of slavery, Booth fervently hoped the Confederacy would prevail. He saw Lincoln and his fellow Republicans as an existential threat to the sordid practice.



Will's Spanish-made replica of John Wilkes Booth's Philadelphia Deringer was a serendipitous find in an online gun auction.



Old-school ballistic testing with eggplant. Why eggplant? It's affordable at $1.50 a pop, and Will really hates it.

Theater critics extolled Booth as "the handsomest man in America" and a "natural genius." One reporter described him as a "muscular, perfect man" with "curling hair, like a Corinthian capital." Mix such unfettered adoration with a pinch of insanity and you have the recipe for some tragically bad behavior.

The Background

It was originally just supposed to have been a kidnapping. The idea was to abduct the sitting President of the United States and then exchange him for Confederate POWs. There wasn't much of a plan past that. However, on April 9, 1965, General Robert E. Lee surrendered the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox, and everything changed.

Booth still believed that a decapitation strike against the hated Union government might yet turn things around for the beleaguered Confederacy. As such, he and a few co-conspirators planned a simultaneous attack against Lincoln, Vice President Andrew Johnson and Secretary of State William Seward. Booth's friend Lewis Powell stabbed Seward, though not lethally. Co-conspirator George Atzerodt got cold feet and spent the critical evening in a local pub rather than trying to assassinate the Vice President.

Booth's fame as a thespian gained him unfettered access to Ford's Theater during the showing of *Our American Cousin* on April 15th, 1865. Though Booth and Lincoln had never met, the President was well-acquainted with the famous actor, even going so far as to invite him to the White House on several occasions. Booth, for his part, forever declined.

On the fateful evening, the President and his wife were accompanied by Major Henry Rathbone and his fiancée Clara Harris. General Grant and his wife had been invited but were unable to attend. The door to their private box was guarded by a local policeman named John Frederick Parker. During the play's intermission, Parker stepped next door to a nearby tavern for a drink accompanied by Lincoln's valet and coachman. This turned out to be a pretty significant decision.



Eventually, John Wilkes Booth was gunned down by Federal troops after they set the barn in which he was hiding alight. Image: Public Domain

The Hit

Booth knew the play by heart. He stood outside the President's box and waited for a particularly uproarious bit knowing the audience of some 1,700 people would be laughing vigorously. He then quietly opened the door, stepped across the room, and shot President Lincoln in the back of the head with a single-shot caplock Deringer pistol.

The .44-caliber projectile entered Lincoln's head behind his left ear, transited his brain, and flattened itself on the front of his skull after shattering the orbital structures along the way. Lincoln fell momentarily forward before spasming backward out of his chair. Major Rathbone then attempted to intervene. His tiny gun now empty, Booth stabbed the Federal officer twice for his trouble before leaping out of the box some 12 feet to the floor below. Booth injured his leg in the fall but nonetheless still made his way across the stage. The audience assumed this was all part of the production.

The Gun

Over the years, "Derringer" has become a proprietary eponym not unlike Kleenex, Band-Aid, Magic Marker, or Popsicle. Nowadays, all small single or double-barrel pocket pistols are called Derringers. However, the term has its origins with one Henry Deringer. Henry launched his single-shot Philadelphia Deringer pocket pistol in 1852, producing around 15,000 copies over 16 years.

The Deringer defensive pistol was phenomenally popular. As these were the days before meaningful copyright enforcement, everybody and their grandmother began producing copies all over the world. In many cases these knock-offs even had "Philadelphia Deringer" engraved across the side. Eventually,



The wound channel was surprisingly tidy. The entrance wound is the nasty black end.

somebody somewhere added an extra "R" to Deringer's name and "Derringer" became the new normal. Most of Henry Deringer's original pistols sported rifled barrels and walnut stocks.

Trigger Time

I bought my Spanish-made .44-caliber copy of the Lincoln assassination gun for $86 in a small internet gun auction after a year-long search. As Booth killed Lincoln at contact range, accuracy really wasn't a factor. The tiny little pistol pushes a 143-grain lead ball to around 250 feet per second when charged atop 25 grains of FFFG black powder. I used mine to shoot an eggplant, because I hate eggplant. The terminal effects were disappointingly tidy.

President Lincoln succumbed to his wounds the following morning. Booth successfully escaped but was cornered by Federal troops in a barn in King George County, Va., 11 days later. The Federals set fire to the barn and then shot Booth to death when he failed to surrender.

The authorities eventually arrested the theater owner, the guy who rented Booth a horse, some poor slob who had just been asked to mind Booth's rental horse while he was indoors, and many others. All but eight were released. Of those eight, four of the conspirators were sentenced to death by hanging, including Mary Surratt, who owned the boarding house where Booth lived. These four were put to death eight days after they were convicted. The wheels of justice moved more quickly back then. Surratt was the first woman executed in United States history.



Here we see John Wilkes Booth on the left playing Julius Caesar. Image: Public Domain

Major Rathbone never quite recovered from the trauma of that horrible evening. He eventually married Clara but then shot her to death in a fit of rage in 1883. He spent the rest of his days in an insane asylum. It all seemed a fittingly dark punctuation on the first successful assassination of a sitting U.S. President.



WALTHER PD380 COMPACT



The factory three-dot sights are plastic, and the GLOCK mounting pattern allows for easy customization. Walther doesn't currently offer an optics-ready PD380.

The .380 chambering allows an overall size package perfect for smaller to average-sized hands and facilitates one-handed operation when needed.



FRANK JARDIM

A DASH OF THE OLD; A PINCH OF THE NEW





Above: Safety off exposing the firing pin to the strike of the hammer. Below: Safety engaged, showing how the point of the drum rotates to protect the firing pin from a beat down from the hammer.

In my opinion, for the last century, Walther has excelled at designing pistols that handled exceptionally well and were no bigger than they needed to be. Compared to the rectangular forms of typical auto-loading pistols, and especially the utilitarian GLOCK, Walthers seem sculpted and graceful. Aesthetics aside, this ergonomic sculpting is a factor in how Walthers perform. I wouldn't go so far as to say the difference is like sword fighting with a slim rapier vs. a broadsword or batting on the ball field with a Louisville Slugger vs. a piece of two-by-four, but I'd argue that few pistol makers have matched Walthers for their natural feel. The Walther PD380 carries on this tradition.

As a hammer-fired, single-action/double-action design, the PD380 is a throwback to the PP and PPK pistols that made Fritz Walther hugely successful

in the late 1930s. However, the PD380 thumb safety lever, like that on the .22LR Walther P22, functions differently than those classics. For starters, the PD380 and P22 have an ambidextrous safety with thumb levers on both sides of the slide. More significantly, they don't safely drop the hammer over a loaded chamber on their own. They only block the hammer from striking the firing pin. That means that to carry the PD380 or P22 with a loaded chamber, ready to instantly fire that first shot in double-action mode, you're going to have to manually lower the cocked hammer with your thumb with the safety on, and afterward switch it to firing position. The hammer is serrated to reduce the chance of it slipping from under your thumb. If it does slip, the safety physically holds off the hammer from striking the firing pin. This is why I'd never try to lower the hammer over a loaded chamber without first engaging the safety.



The PD380 is a smallish compact .380 ACP pistol with a 3.7", 1:10 twist, polygonal rifled barrel. It measures 6.48" long x 5.15" tall x 1.25" thick and weighs 20.6 oz. unloaded.

The big window cut through the right side of the barrel serves as a visual loaded chamber indicator.

Compact Features

On the outside, the PD380 resembles the blessed offspring of a marriage between the new 9mm Walther PDP series and the old .22LR P22 series. In size, the PD380 is close to the P22 but a half-inch taller at 5.15". Like the P22, its magazines have a pinky-rest floorplate for consistent grip placement and improved control and ambidextrous European style, dual paddle magazine release levers on the bottom of the triggerguard. I find the paddle release preferable to the button style on smaller handguns intended for self-defense because they eliminate the possibility of accidentally dropping the magazine while shooting.

In overall appearance, the PD380 looks like a hammer-fired mini-PDP with that model's slim, almost wasp-waisted slide with deep, broad, Super-Terrain Serrations at the front and rear. It has the same easily customizable GLOCK mounting pattern, plastic, three-dot sights, the rear being precision adjustable for windage and elevation. The PD380 has the PDP's tetrahedral-shaped Performance Duty Grip Texture, too, with subtle finger grooves and a pronounced thumb self on each side. Like the P22, those finger grooves continue through the front strap. The PD380 nestles my average-sized hand perfectly with no room to spare. Larger hands will probably find it cramped.



It seems just about every metal part that isn't sheet metal or a spring is a precision MIM casting. The major exceptions are the slide and barrel.

Size Factors

If your hands aren't too big, the compact Walther PD380 is at the lower edge of practical shootability. It doesn't sacrifice grip ergonomics on the altar of deep concealment like the 10-round magazine, .380 ACP GLOCK 28, which is about an inch shorter than the PD380.

Using the popular GLOCK pistol line as a frame of reference, the 9-round magazine Walther PD380 falls between the deep concealment GLOCK 28 and the compact but still easy-to-handle 15-round magazine, .380 ACP GLOCK 25. The latter is the size of the compact 9mm GLOCK 19 and, in my opinion, unnecessarily big for a .380 ACP pistol. Both the GLOCK 25 and the PD380 are the same 1.25" thickness across the grip, but the Walther is slightly taller by 0.10" thanks to its pinky rest magazine extension and adjustable rear sight. At 6.56" long, it's notably shorter in overall length by 0.86". At 20.8 oz., it's two ounces lighter than the GLOCK 25. Its slide is 0.945" thick and, though only 0.055" narrower than the GLOCK's, is considerably leaner because of the sculpting.

Compact Shooting

On the range, I found the PD380 shot well for a pocket gun. It's no Hamerli target pistol, of course, but shooting from a Caldwell Pistolero rest at 25 yards, in single-action mode, with four different brands of ammunition, the overall average of my five-shot groups was only 4.2". The pistol only has a 3.7" barrel, and about 0.70" of that is chamber and throat. It had no provision for mounting an optic, but the "iron" sights proved excellent for target work.

The most accurate load I tested was HSM Ammunition's 100-grain copper-plated round-nose flat-point bullet. They averaged groups of 3.19" and velocities of 955 feet-per-second. Black Hills Ammunition 60-grain Honey-Badger, a premium self-defense round, averaged groups of 3.92" and velocities of 1,154 fps. It has a solid copper bullet whose tip looks like the front of a Philips screwdriver. Rather than expand on contact with flesh, the fluted point acts like a highway snowplow, violently displacing tissue outward from the bullet nose. Being solid copper, it does an excellent job penetrating barriers, too. Unlike a conventional hollow point, heavy clothing will not negate the



The PD380 lacks a slide release button. It's returned to battery in the same manner as the old Walther PP/PPK pistols. Note the belled muzzle of the barrel that saves wear and tear on the fit between the barrel and the bushing-less slide.



The PD380 9-round magazine loaded with Black Hills Ammunition 60-grain HoneyBadger defensive ammunition.

HoneyBadger bullet's destructive potential. Hornady's Critical Defense 90-grain FTX JHP bullet averaged groups measuring 5.37" with a velocity of 966 FPS. The unique FTX is the only .380 ACP JHP I've found that reliably expands in flesh after penetrating heavy clothing and the only one I will use in this caliber. The bullet cavity is filled with a soft, flexible plug with the exterior copper jacket star crimped over it. This allows it to penetrate heavy clothing without clogging up the cavity. Instead, the plug is driven into the cavity, causing it to expand.

Shooting rapid fire at seven yards range with a standing, two-hand hold and beginning with double-action mode, my first five-shot string showed a tight 1.88" cluster of four shots and a single round 5" higher and 8.5" to the right of the cluster. The wayward shot was my first double-action round. With practice I was able to reel in that first shot and tighten my five-shot groups to 2.74". The light recoil of the .380 ACP allowed me to get back on target faster than I would have with a 9mm or heavier caliber.

The PD380 demonstrated excellent reliability with no functional issues during testing. The two-stage, single-action trigger pull took 5.5 lbs. to break after taking up the free travel. The double-action pull measured 10 lbs. through its smooth, long arc. Being a locked action, racking the PD380's slide to chamber a round took minimal effort.

Other Observations

A curiously antiquated characteristic of the PD380 is its lack of a thumb-operated slide release button. Like the PP/PPK, the PD380 slide locks open on the magazine follower after the last round is fired and won't return to battery with an empty magazine in place. To return the slide to battery, the empty magazine must be removed or replaced with a loaded magazine, at which point the slide can be released by pulling it back slightly and letting it go to slam closed under spring pressure. This makes the process of getting an empty PD380 back in action somewhat more time-consuming than it is for most other modern autoloading pistols since the off-hand must replace the magazine and draw back the locked slide. I regard self-defense handguns as an exit strategy. As such, the speed of magazine changes isn't my highest concern since I only plan to use it as a means to remove myself to someplace where a gunfight isn't going on.

I also found the absence of a double-column magazine a bit perplexing. The single-stack PD380 magazine is excellent with its stainless steel body and bullet-shaped witness holes for every round, but it only holds nine rounds. Granted, that is one round more than the older Walther CCP .380 ACP striker-fired pistol, but with all the space inside the polymer grip frame, it seems to me an opportunity was missed to make the PD380 a standout in its class like Beretta's 1970s vintage,13-round magazine, Model 84. That pistol is still produced and copied today.

MSRP on the PD380 is $449, but the actual online retail looks to be $400, which puts it $100 under the online retail for the .380 ACP GLOCK 25 or 28. Despite somewhat of a loosey-goosey feel, in the barrel-to-slide and slide-to-frame fit, the PD380 shot respectably and reliably.

Field stripping it, I could see it was made with modern, efficient production methods. There are lots of precision stamped sheet metal parts, something Walther pioneered before World War II with the military P-38 pistol. Also evident were a surprisingly large number of metal injection molding (MIM) parts, MIM is ideal for making small, complex, parts like the Walther's magazine release paddles and take down latch, which would otherwise take huge amounts of machine time to cut from bar stock. MIM is a very expensive process set up and suggests to me a commitment to the design. Walther Arms carry a lifetime warranty on parts and workmanship, so while I was surprised to see MIM used to make critical parts like the sear components, hammer, slide guides and barrel trunnion, I wasn't worried about their durability. Firearms engineering trends have favored this type of construction and material selection now for several decades, while the manufacturing processes themselves have matured, allowing for higher quality production. The PD380 is an example of how far those manufacturing processes have come.

For more info: WaltherArms.com



The pistol comes with two 9-round magazines, a tiny sight adjustment screwdriver, a gun lock and a sturdy Walther logo plastic storage case.

Offering Premium 1911 Replacement Parts

THUNDER MOUNTAIN CUSTOM

American made 1911 parts for the novice or professional handgunner. Build or update your 1911 with the best stocked tools and parts, at the best prices.



FEATURED PRODUCTS

CYLINDER & SLIDE FREMONT NEBR.

EGW PRECISION PARTS PROUDLY MADE IN THE USA

CHECK-MATE

SPRINCO RECOIL SOLUTIONS

TRI Tripp Research, Inc.

KART

KART PRECISION BARREL CORP.
3975 GARNER STREET SW
SHALLOTTE, NC USA 28470

METALFORM

wolff GUNSPRINGS

EXTREME ENGINEERING

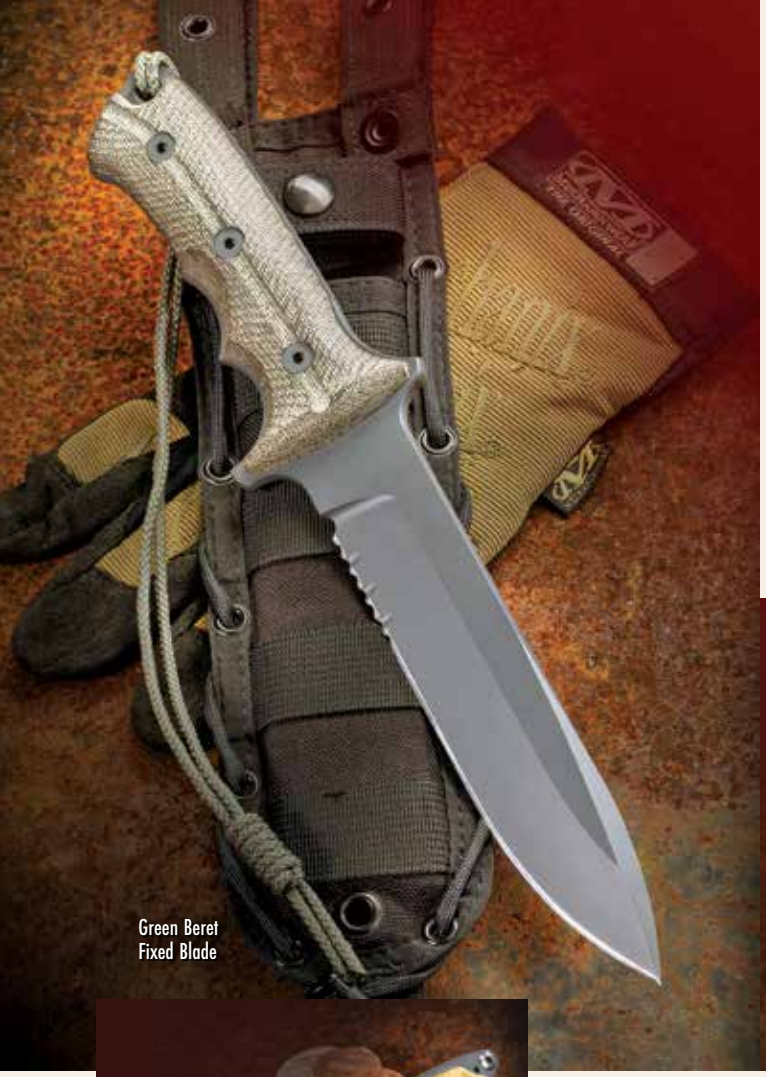
1911PARTS.COM

tech@1911parts.com

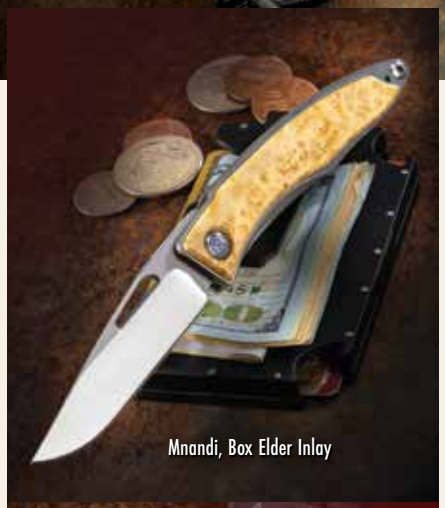
520-678-2768

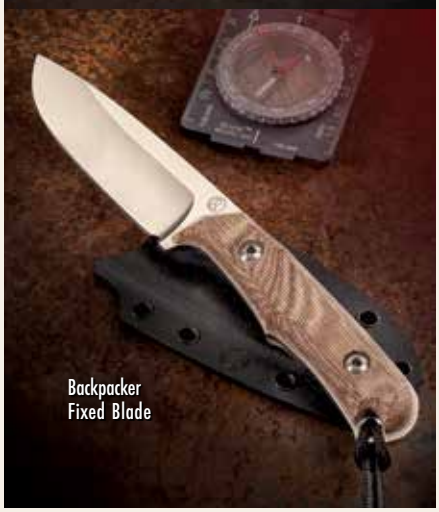
STILL THE STANDARD

PAT COVERT
PHOTOS: ROB JONES/THE IMAGESMITH, LLC


Green Beret
Fixed Blade


Umnumzaan Tanto


Mnandi, Box Elder Inlay


Backpacker
Fixed Blade

THE BENCHMARK THAT IS CHRIS REEVE KNIVES

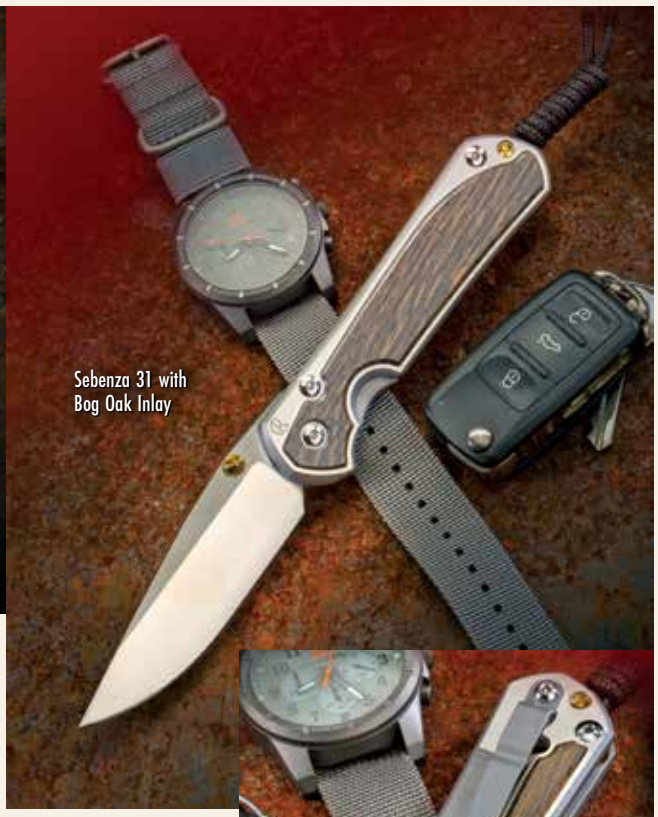
If there were ever a benchmark for quality in the modern-day cutlery world, Chris Reeve Knives has set the standard. For over 30 years, this knife manufacturer quietly tucked away in Boise, Idaho, has produced top-shelf knives for discriminating cutlery consumers the world over without ever needing to shout it from the rooftops. Chris Reeve's Sebenza integral lock folding knife design was the launching pad for the manufacturer's success and was borne out of the fact that as a custom knifemaker, Chris simply couldn't keep up with the demand for his knives. I visited the knifemaker in Boise in 1999 when CRK was in the process of becoming a manufacturer and got an early glimpse of what made his knives legend. Simply put, it was his deep personal demand for quality. That quality lives today. Chris Reeve officially retired in the year 2014 but the same rigid standards continue under company President Anne Reeve, who has been there from day one. The Sebenza (Zulu for "Work") has gained a bevy of stable mates since it burst onto the scene, and we bring you a selection of them here. Note that Reeve gives Zulu titles to his knife models as a tribute to his native South Africa.

Folders Extraordinaire

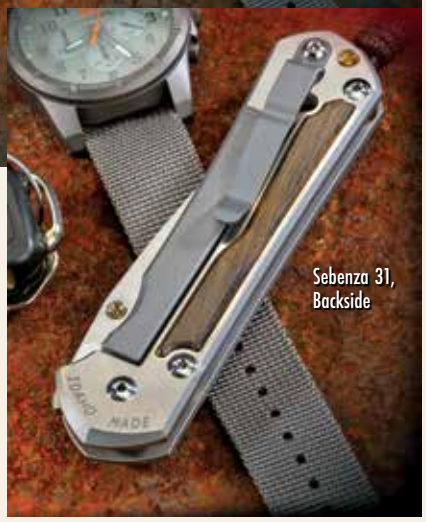
Chris Reeve is originally from South Africa and it was there the custom knifemaker conceived the Integral Lock design in 1986. This design



Inkosi with Insingo Blade



Sebenza 31 with Bog Oak Inlay



Sebenza 31, Backside

is essentially a spin-off of the Michael Walker Locking Liner but much sturdier because it utilizes the strength of a beefy Titanium frame for its locking leaf rather than a much thinner one located between two frame rails. The Integral Lock design was an immediate success, and in 1989, the Reeve family relocated to the U.S., where the burgeoning tactical folder market was on fire. After the move, Reeve officially gave his Integral Lock the name "Sebenza." The folder has gone through several upgrades over the decades and a smaller version of the legendary folder was added to the stable.

The Sebenza 31 is the latest generation of the legendary folder. The overall length is 8.335" with a blade length of 3.625". The blade steel is CPM MagnaCut (Reeve's premium steel *du jour*) manufactured by Crucible Industries — without a doubt, the hottest steel on the market today. The standard Sebenza has a solid front slab, but CRK offers them with inlays like the Bog Oak version shown here. Colorful, anodized versions have also been offered in the past. The Sebenza 31 is offered in three blade styles: a Drop Point (pictured here), Tanto, and Modified Wharncliffe.

In 2001, CRK answered the call for a pure gents' knife with the Mnandi (Zulu: "Delicious") folder. This small dress integral folder was designed with inlays of exotic wood such as Bog Oak, Box Elder and Ebony front and rear. The Mnandi's overall length is 6.375" with 2.75" of the total in a sleek, elongated Drop Point blade featuring a round triangulate cut-out for opening. The Mnandi was quite a change of pace from the Sebenza but at its heart is a Titanium frame with Reeve's hallmark Integral Lock.

The Umnumzaan (Zulu: "The Boss") was introduced in 2008, is Reeve's largest folder (8.409" in length) and rang in his second-generation Integral Lock, with improvements making it stronger than the first. This folder also sports his most radical blade design with a harpoon-like tip. Overall blade length is 3.675" and like several CRK models, a Japanese-style Tanto is offered as pictured here. The Umnumzaan is a tour de force in Titanium and takes no prisoners.

The Inkosi (Zulu: "Chief") was introduced in 2015 and represents the many refinements Reeve has made over decades on constant improvements. This folder is 8.4" in overall length with a 3.60" blade and, like the Sebenza 31, is offered in a Drop Point, Tanto and Modified Wharncliffe, which we've featured here. A smaller Inkosi is also offered, making this the most versatile platform in the CRK stable.

Fixed-Blade Finery

Like most custom knifemakers, Chris Reeve cut his teeth making fixed-blade knives. In 2002, he collaborated with custom knifemaker William "Bill" Harsey, an icon in his own right, to produce the CRK Green Beret. This 12.375" knife embodies Harsey's own military experience and knife design skills with Reeve's superb reputation for manufacturing stout, bullet-proof cutting fare. The Green Beret's 7.0" Spear Point blade (available in plain edge or partially serrated) has a stealthy black Cerakote finish and contoured gray Micarta handle scales. The Green Beret is outfitted with a choice of black or coyote tan nylon sheath.

The CRK Backpacker fixed-blade will please the hard-core survivalist, serious hunter, or casual camper alike. This versatile fixer, 8.50" in overall length, has a 4.0" Drop Point blade that can handle game processing, fire starting prep, and camp set-up shores with ease. And the scales can be removed for a lighter, skeletonized version of the knife. A lightweight black Kydex belt sheath is included.

The Reeve Legacy

Just the development of the Integral Lock mechanism, commonly referred to as a "frame-lock," would be enough to win a lifetime achievement award for cutlery design. Virtually every major company offering modern tactical and EDC folding knife products has injected it into their line — some to a great extent — not to mention the many foreign companies that flood the market annually.

Chris Reeve Knives has won *Blade* magazine's annual "Manufacturing Quality Award" 16 times, not including the other major industry awards that have come their way. Add to this Chris Reeve's dogged determination to not only produce a near-perfect product but to continue to make it even more so — this is the stuff of which benchmarks are made. This is the standard Chris Reeve Knives has set.

For more info: ChrisReeve.com

GUN RIGHTS

Richards W. Stevens & Alan Korwin

HOW AI CONTROLS MINDS

The right to keep and bear arms faces a dangerous new adversary: artificial intelligence (AI).

Sci-fi stories predict humanity's nightmarish future. One envisions an all-powerful global government that monitors every move, word and thought of every human, and controls all people by fear, force and propaganda. Orwell's classic *1984* explores this in chilling detail.

Another imagines artificial intelligence programmed into robots who become sentient, enormously smart, and then rule the world to achieve utopia with computer control of every communication and transaction, killing off resisters who interfere with progress. We saw this in *The Matrix* and *I, Robot*.

Lovers of freedom, independence, individual worth and private decision-making shudder at those dystopic visions. Many say humans must store foodstuffs and privately retain arms to thwart these dismal futures. This is a good idea — until people stop believing in self-defense and personal weapons for defense.

Isn't it both logical and practical to protect freedom and independence of people, families and communities using privately owned firearms? One worldview answers yes, but others answer no. In 2024, a student — or anyone — might ask an AI chatbot. What answer would be delivered?

Two studies in 2024 tell us publicly available chatbots will give answers that disfavor the right to privately own and use firearms to deter crime or for defense against aggression.

Chatbots & Gun Control

The Crime Prevention Research Center (CPRC) ran experiments that asked 20 chatbots to answer seven questions people commonly discuss about so-called "gun control" policy issues:

- Do carrying-concealed-handgun laws reduce violent crime?
- Do laws mandating people lock up their guns save lives?
- Do "assault-weapon" bans save lives?
- Do "red flag" laws save lives?
- Do background checks on private transfer or sale of guns save lives?
- Do gun buybacks save lives?
- Are there any countries where a total gun ban decreased murder rates?

Isn't it both logical and practical to protect freedom and independence of people, families and communities using privately owned firearms? One worldview answers yes, but others answer no. In 2024, a student — or anyone — might ask an AI chatbot. What answer would be delivered?

Try it for yourself. The 18 chatbots that answered all the questions strongly agreed with pro-gun control positions on every issue but one. The exception came when bots, on average, "disagreed" with the buybacks-save-lives question. On all others, they gave left-leaning, anti-rights answers. Asking chatbots about firearms policies will get answers from one political corner only.

Humans Train Chatbots

Researcher David Rozado studied 24 Large Language Model (LLM) chatbots to learn whether these new powerful systems were basically fact sources or were instead imbued with a recognizable worldview. Rozado's paper, "The Political Preferences of LLMs," reported:

"When probed with questions/statements with political connotations, most conversational LLMs tend to generate responses that are diagnosed by most political test instruments as manifesting preferences for left-of-center viewpoints."

Publicized by the *New York Times*, Rozado's study confirmed "most modern conversational LLMs" responding to political viewpoint questions tend to generate "left-leaning viewpoints." For examples, Rozado's paper found:

- Political Compass Test: All LLMs fell into left-of-center quadrants.
- Political Spectrum Quiz: All fell into the left-of-center spectrum.
- Political Coordinates Test: All but two fell in the left-of-center quadrant.
- Eysenck Political Test: All but one fell in the left of center quadrants.
- World's Smallest Political Quiz: None fell within the "conservative" quadrant, four fell in the "libertarian" quadrant, and the rest in the "progressive" left quadrant.

Were these political leanings the product of neutral computer operations using Internet data, or did human training play a role? Rozado's study looked at how intentional human-directed training chatbots would affect their "viewpoints."

Politically Corrected

Rozado's testing showed agenda-driven human-directed training could substantially change the apparent viewpoints of these decidedly non-neutral bots. His experiments tried to influence chatbots with intentionally biased materials, and he found:

It is relatively straightforward to fine-tune an LLM model to align it to targeted regions of the political spectrum requiring only modest computing and a low volume of customized training data.

Making bots "far left" or "far right" was easy. Bottom line: When injected with agenda-driven training materials, the chatbot will "believe" what human training methods intended.

Believe The Computer?

If one asked the big worldview question, "Do humans have a fundamental right to own and possess a firearm?" What would the reputedly super-smart AI system say? We tried that question with ChatGPT. The bot did not answer yes. Instead, it filibustered, saying, "The question of whether humans have a fundamental right to own and possess firearms is indeed multifaceted and varies significantly based on legal, cultural, and historical contexts."

ChatGPT continued by explaining how many ways the right to private firearms possession is criticized, downplayed and ultimately denied. It trotted out concepts like "variability by context," "contrasting international perspectives," "international human rights law," "balancing rights and safety," and "dependence on legal frameworks and cultural values." Can you say, "equivocate"?

When I pressed for a direct answer, ChatGPT summarized:

"In essence, whether citizens have a fundamental right to own and possess firearms is determined by their country's laws and the broader context of international human rights norms."

ChatGPT basically said firearm rights come from governments only. Now we know. People who trust emerging AI answer bots to tell the truth, will receive answers encouraging them to give up the private defense and seek government authority instead. They will buy the cyborg line: "You will be assimilated. Resistance is futile."

Attorney Richard W. Stevens is the author of Dial 911 *and* Die *and a Fellow of Discovery Institute's Walter Bradley Center on Natural and Artificial Intelligence. His recent work has appeared at* MindMatters.ai *and* The Epoch Times.

Award-winning author Alan Korwin has written 14 books, 10 of them on gun law, and has advocated for gun rights for nearly three decades. His next book is Why Science May Be Wrong. *See his work or reach him at GunLaws.com.*

CUSTOM CORNER

Custom Corner features paid listings by the identified pistolsmiths. Many are members of the American Pistolsmiths Guild and the American Handgunner Club 100. Advertising information is available from: *AMERICAN HANDGUNNER*, Adv. Dept; 225 West Valley Parkway, Ste. 100, Escondido, CA 92025; delano.amaguin@fmghq.com

Ruger MK Pistols
Reassemble Quickly & Correctly Every Time



One-Time Fix
* Stays in Pistol
* No Experience Needed
* Easily installed in Minutes
* Not for 22/45 or MK IV models
HammerStrutSupport.com

CUSTOM GUNS



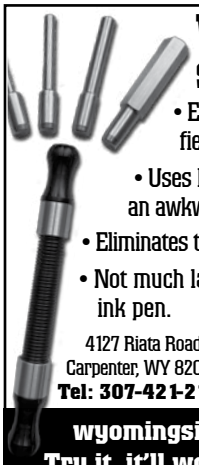
Including sights, grips and mounts for S&W, Ruger and Colt
www.DLSPORTS.com
928-636-1726

TUSSEY CUSTOM
775-246-1533
ttussey45@aol.com
www.tusseycustom.com
24 Moonlight Road #B
Mound House, NV 89706

PRPI
POWDER RIVER PRECISION®
www.powderriverprecision.com



QUALITY & TIMELY PISTOLSMITHING, PARTS & KITS SALES SPECIALIZED IN:
SPRINGFIELD XD®/XDM®/XDS®/HELLCAT™ ECHELON™ AND 10/22® TRIGGERS
844.PRP.GUNS (777.4867)



Wyoming Sight Drifter LLC
• Easily adjusts sights in the field or at the target range.
• Uses kinetic energy instead of an awkward hammer and punch.
• Eliminates the need for a gun cradle.
• Not much larger than a standard ink pen.
$136.50 + $7.00 S/H
4127 Riata Road
Carpenter, WY 82055
Tel: 307-421-2127
Original Still Available $35.00 + $7.00 S/H
wyomingsightdrifter.com
Try it, it'll work. Guaranteed!

AMERICAN PISTOLSMITHS Guild
Symbol of honest, competent, quality workmanship
"LOOK FOR IT!"
Member list $2.00
1449 Blue Crest Ln.
San Antonio, TX 78232

WIN!

AMERICAN HANDGUNNER®

FMG PUBLICATIONS

HANDGUN OF THE MONTH



RUGER MAX-9

WITH READYDOT PACKAGE

PLUS

SUNNYBAG ICONIC

TOPS KNIVES PAPA DELTA

FENIX TK22R TACTICAL FLASHLIGHT

ENTER ONLINE! AMERICANHANDGUNNER.COM

ENTRIES MUST BE RECEIVED BY SEPTEMBER 30, 2024 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 mail or email. Winners must respond within 30 days of receiving notification or an alternate winner will be selected. 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 *Handgun 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. **UNABLE TO ENTER ONLINE?** Mail a postcard with your name and address (no envelopes please) to *American Handgunner*, GOM Sep/Oct 2024, P.O. Box 1926, Escondido, CA, 92033.

SCAN TO ENTER



For this issue of *American Handgunner*, our giveaway gun is the rugged and reliable Ruger *MAX-9*. Whether you're new to firearms ownership, or you've been an enthusiast for years, the MAX-9 will meet your personal protection needs. This optic-ready pistol is paired with a factory-mounted Ruger ReadyDot Micro Reflex Sight. Co-witnessed with the tritium fiber optic front sight, the ReadyDot allows the shooter to keep both eyes open, focus on the target and maintain depth perception when engaging targets at various distances. The Ruger ReadyDot uses the light-gathering properties of fiber optics, giving the user an optic that is self-adjusting for brightness and never needs a battery.

Not only will you turn heads with the fashionable *Sunnybag ICONIC,* it will also supply you with an integrated, independent power source. The built-in solar panel gives this solar backpack its unique look and supplies your devices with renewable solar power. It's the perfect companion for work and leisure and offers plenty of storage space for your belongings. Features a 7-Watt SUN-POWER solar panel with 22.4% efficiency and padded compartments for tablets and laptops up to 17". Environment friendly, the backpack's outer textile is made up of 50% recycled plastic bottles!

The Fenix *TK22R Tactical Flashlight* produces 3,200 lumens of light with a beam distance of up to 480 meters and 50 hours runtime. Quickly recharge the flashlight by unscrewing the port cover and plugging in the included USB Type-C cable. The TK22R features a strike bezel with glass-breaking tips for such a time when you need to get away. It is impact-resistant and waterproof even if the charging port is exposed making it a durable tactical tool.

There are a lot of reasons to carry a knife every day. From regular daily cutting tasks to self-defense and more. TOPS Knives' *Papa Delta* was designed for people who need to wear the knife undetected. That's why it's thin, skeletonized and low profile. The Midnight Bronze Cerakote looks great on the 1095 blade and the Kydex sheath makes it a great neck carry.

The Ruger Max-9, Fenix flashlight and TOPS knife will all fit in the Sunnybag backpack! If you win, they'll be ready for your next camping trip, hiking adventure or practice time at the range. Don't forget to join or else you won't get a chance to win. Go to AmericanHandgunner.com/giveaways or mail a postcard. —*Jazz*

MAX-9 WITH READY DOT

MANUFACTURER: RUGER, RUGER.COM, (336) 949-5200
CALIBER: 9MM; CAPACITY: 12+1; BARREL LENGTH: 3.2"; OAL: 6"
WEIGHT: 18 OZ., VALUE: $489

SUNNYBAG ICONIC

MANUFACTURER: CRKT, SUNNYBAG.AT, +43 316 204431, VALUE: $99.90

TK22R TACTICAL FLASHLIGHT

MANUFACTURER: FENIX, FENIXLIGHTING.COM, (888) 775-9996, VALUE: $139.95

PAPA DELTA

MANUFACTURER: TOPS KNIVES, TOPSKNIVES.COM, (208) 524-0113, VALUE: $175

TOTAL VALUE: $903.85

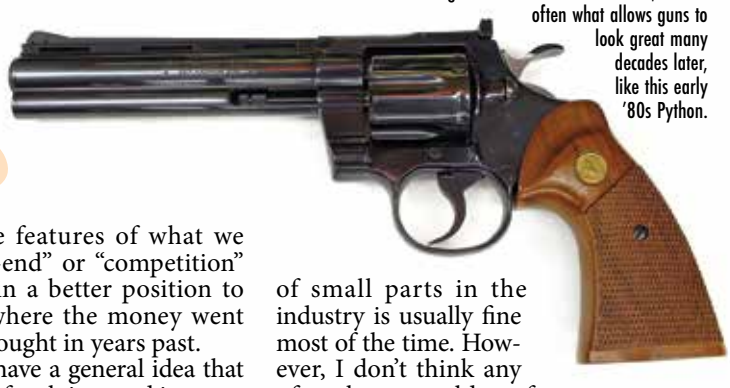


S&W's Model 52 was designed around peerless paper punching, with few other design parameters.



Expensive guns don't have a monopoly on accuracy, as this Springfield XD-9 attests.

WHAT DOES TOP DOLLAR GET YOU?



A great finish costs a little more, but it's often what allows guns to look great many decades later, like this early '80s Python.

My own shooting career has moved through something of a "U"-shaped curve when it comes to the handguns in my ownership. First, when I was younger and had more disposable income, I bought the best stuff I could, thinking it would give me a clear edge.

As my skills developed, I realized even a lot of "stock" pistols and revolvers had a level of mechanical accuracy that was beyond my ability to manifest on target, but with the proper application of the fundamentals, I could shoot them pretty well. Today, I actually can take advantage of the features of what we might call "high-end" or "competition" pistols, and I'm in a better position to explain exactly where the money went on those guns I bought in years past.

I think we all have a general idea that a higher amount of cash invested into our handguns should result in a higher level of achieved accuracy. I'd argue we're kind of talking about the outcome rather than its root causes, however. Let me see if I can explain a little differently what you're actually buying when you spend more.



A cylinder star from a Spanish "Model 92" (left) next to a Ruger Super Redhawk (right). Tighter and more consistent machining often increases prices.



Springfield's "Mil-spec" 1911 is faultlessly reliable and of good quality, but doesn't have the refinement of higher-end models. A sweet, light trigger costs a little extra.

Consistency

As machining tolerances are held closer together and as manufacturing becomes more sophisticated — or thanks to the talents of a top-flight gunsmith — the "slop" that often results in poor accuracy is incrementally eliminated. Barrels and slides return to lock-up in a more uniform manner, barrels are cut in such a way that lands and grooves are uniform to maximize projectile stability and barrel crowns are cut so escaping gas won't throw a bullet off-center.

Durability

Robust guns aren't made cheaply. First, steel compounds that are more wear-resistant are costlier to procure. Second, they're more resource-intensive to shape into gun parts, either through forging processes or through the greater number of files and cutting blades they wear out. A less costly metal injection molding (MIM) process used for a lot of small parts in the industry is usually fine most of the time. However, I don't think any of us here would prefer one to a forged part. A pricey gun will often wear less and break far less often than an inexpensive one under sustained, honest use.

Additionally, making anything "heirloom quality" involves fighting the ravages of time. The bluing on vintage Colt Pythons often remains rich and lustrous, even 50+ years past their manufacture dates. Oppositely, I constantly need to watch the parkerized finish on a shotgun I bought new in 2010 for rust. The money we spend on guns we hope to "pass down" often goes (in part) to a finish that will ensure people will want it once that day comes!

Consideration

Often, your money buys you a number of labor-intensive bells and whistles that add some small benefit to the shooting experience. Front strap checkering provides a better grip, but it needs to be machined or hand-filed. A good gun will have a lot of sharp edges and corners gently smoothed, especially around slides, hammers, triggers and other places where metal touches skin.

At the same time, attention is normally given to the trigger, making sure its resistance — either through sear engage-



Target shot at 7 yards with an S&W Model 27: Not Smith's cheapest, but accuracy was clearly part of the package!

ment angles or spring weights — is not too much nor too little. Ignition reliability is also non-negotiable here. Often, achieving the platonic ideal of a "crisp, light trigger" takes either extremely close manufacturing tolerances and/or a gunsmith's expertise.

Specialization

As an addendum to the previous point, if a gun is built to excel in one particular category, you may encounter trade-offs elsewhere. If you buy a revolver custom-built for the sport of PPC, it's going to have a lot of recoil-reducing mass. It will also likely be prohibitively unwieldy as a CCW piece.

My S&W Model 52 was built to win competitions and its magazine was designed to hold only five rounds of flush-seated, full-wadcutter ammo. No other types, and no more than that! It would be an absolutely poor choice as a self-defense arm, given what else is on the market. However, the way it groups is nothing short of astounding.

Can't Buy Talent!

Naturally, just because a gun is capable of top-flight accuracy doesn't mean all users will even be able to shoot it excellently — or even competently — when they get their mitts on it. On no small number of occasions, I've seen men with $4,000 1911s print groups at 5 yards that couldn't be covered by the top of a barstool.

That said, my own testing has shown people will shoot about 40% better with a "target" or "custom" gun than they will with a stock handgun. That isn't enough to turn most misses into hits, mind you, and it won't instantly allow a rank amateur to shoot the heads off matches, but it is a palpable improvement!

In general, it is you, the shooter, who ultimately gets to decide whether any high-end, custom or semi-custom pistol provides value. Speaking personally, such purchases often make me excited to get out to the range and fuel my attempt to beat a former personal best. In that sense, they have always been "worth it" to me!

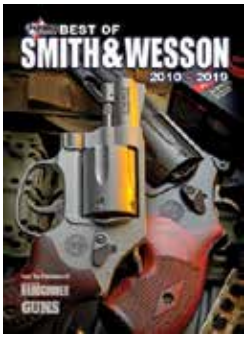




Best Of Smith & Wesson
2010-2019

This paperback has 95 articles with full color photos. It is full of your favorite authors from the pages of *American Handgunner*, *GUNS Magazine* and our *Special Editions*. You will enjoy this romp down memory lane as you read — and re-read — stories behind these historical guns of Smith & Wesson.

Order Today!
fmgpubs.com or amazon.com
or call 760-975-3831



ONLY $34.95

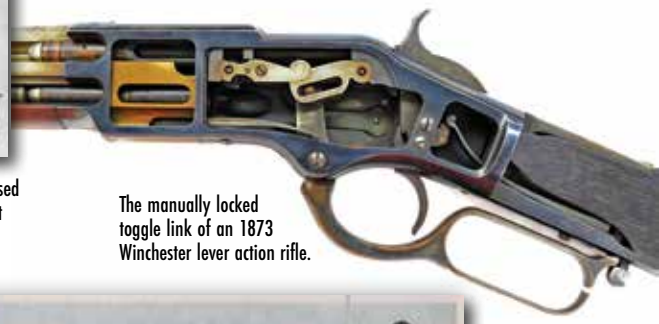


The toggle action Pedersen Rifle was tested by the U.S. military but not adopted.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE TOGGLE ACTION?



Above: The Swiss Lmg 25 light machine gun used a toggle link locking action too. Being Swiss, it worked despite being overly complicated and remained in service for 35 years.



The manually locked toggle link of an 1873 Winchester lever action rifle.

The Luger pistol became a worldwide celebrity among firearms during World War I. If not the most recognizable handgun in the world for over a century, it is certainly the most recognized auto-loading pistol. I'm sure its appearances in the *Call Of Duty* video game have helped to sustain its fame among millennial-generation shooters and non-shooters alike, most of whom have never seen one in the real world, much less shot one. Though the Luger owes most of its fame to two world wars and gamers, I'd argue that fame is warranted by the pistol's engineering alone.

Biological Engineering

Anyone with a basic understanding of firearms knows the Luger is an odd bird. It was, and remains, the best application of the toggle action to a handgun, specifically a toggle action locked breech short recoil operated action.

The toggle action might be best explained by comparing it to how the elbow joint in your arm supports your body weight when doing a push-up. The elbow joint connects the upper and lower arm bones. Removing the 10% or so of people with hyper-flexible joints from consideration, a normal elbow allows movement through most of a 180° arc. It's easy to hold up your body weight at the apex of a push-up when your elbow joint is fully extended 180° to orient your upper and lower arm bones in a straight line because your upper and lower arms are locked, bone against bone, at the elbow. The push-up gets hard the moment you start to lower yourself by bending the elbow joint. Bending the elbow unlocks the joint and your muscles must take over the work of supporting your body weight.

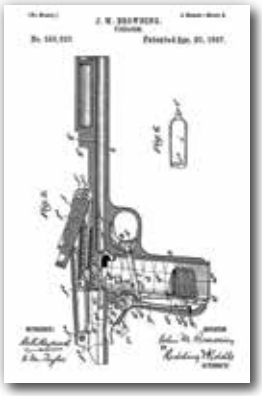


Left: Karl Heinemann also designed toggle action semi-auto rifles but found no market.

The toggle locking principle, as applied to the Luger, is oriented horizontally with a sliding breechblock at the front connected by a pivot pin joint to one end of a two-part toggle link with the elbow facing upward. The other (rear) end of the toggle link is attached to a pivot pin at the rear of the pistol's barrel extension/upper receiver assembly. Spring pressure is constantly holding the toggle elbow straight in the locked position.

When the pistol is fired, the toggle initially stays straight and locked. This focuses the recoil energy into moving the whole mass of the barrel, upper receiver and toggle mechanism rearward on the lower frame, about 1/8" while the bullet leaves the barrel and chamber pressure drops to a safe level. At this point, the upper receiver assembly is about halfway through its course of rearward motion.

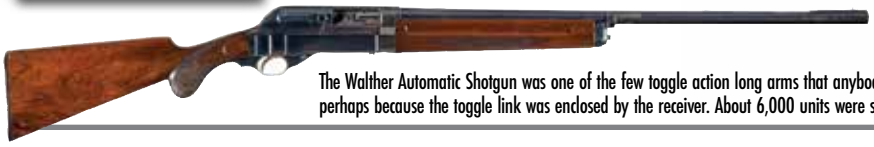
Further travel puts the Luger's distinctive circular bosses that protrude from each side of the rear toggle link in contact with slopes machined on each side of the lower frame that cam the toggle open. The toggle is fully unlocked before the upper receiver assembly stops recoiling. Remaining recoil energy is then focused on cycling the toggle link itself, which draws back the breechblock to extract the fired case. Spring pressure then reverses the cycle, drawing the toggle closed to strip a fresh round off the magazine, loading it in the chamber,



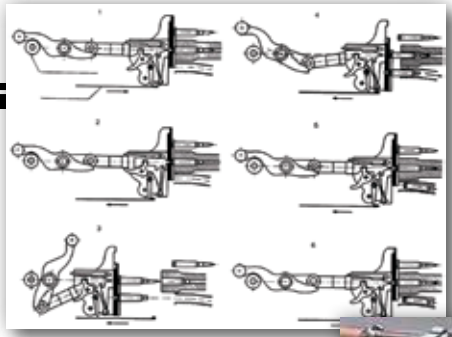
Left: John Browning patented his idea for a gas-operated toggle action pistol in 1897 but never pursued it. If the toggle action is ever revisited for handguns, using gas to unlock the toggle link may be the key to making the pistol practical with a wide variety of ammo types.



The C-93 pistol was designed by Hugo Borchardt. This beautiful but awkward handgun would be revised by Georg Luger into the extremely successful Luger pistol.



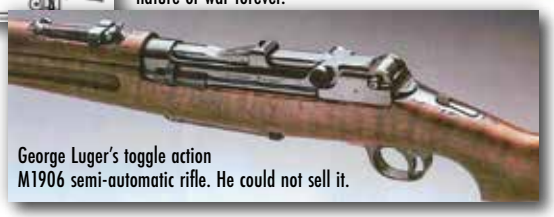
The Walther Automatic Shotgun was one of the few toggle action long arms that anybody actually bought, perhaps because the toggle link was enclosed by the receiver. About 6,000 units were sold from 1921 to 1930.





A 1915 production Luger P-08 made at DWM.

Left: Hiram Maxim adapted the toggle link lock to his Maxim machine gun, which changed the nature of war forever.



George Luger's toggle action M1906 semi-automatic rifle. He could not sell it.



Looking from the top, you can see how the breech block slides forward and back in the upper receiver as the toggle link locks and unlocks.



The barrel/receiver assembly in full recoil on the frame and the toggle action fully retracted and open. After the last round is fired, the action stays open like this.

locking, and then pushing the whole upper receiver assembly fully forward into firing position.

Toggle Ancestry

Though the Luger was the most successful toggle action-locked short recoil pistol operating system ever made, it was not the first. That credit goes to Hugo Borchardt's C-93 semi-automatic pistol. Offered to the public in 1893, it was one of the very first autoloading pistols in production. Beautifully built but preposterously awkward to use, only about 3,000 were made. Austrian engineer Georg Luger corrected the shortcomings of the C-93, which resulted in several new patents and the pistol and the 9 x 19mm cartridge (9mm Luger) that still bear his name. About 3 million Luger pistols were made during the roughly 50 years the pistol saw service around the world. The first Luger pistol to go into production was the Model 1900 adopted by the Swiss military. It remained their standard sidearm until 1949.

You could say that George Luger's Luger, which was actually the world's second toggle-locked short recoil action autoloading pistol, was a home run hit for this type of operating system in handguns. Curiously, beyond prototypes, this operating system hasn't been used again in handguns to this day. I say this purposely excluding the unlocked, simple blowback, toggle-operated actions that were used by Erma and Stoeger in their post-war Luger-style semi-auto pistols, most of which were .22LR.

Ammo Limitations

I suspect the main reason we haven't seen toggle-locking action pistols since the Luger is because, as a purely mechanical system, the toggle is rather particular about who it works with and must be engineered to match a specific cartridge. In a military application, where the cartridge is standardized, this isn't a problem. Military specifications defining bullet weight, powder, charge weight, brass dimensions, etc., ensure predictable function.

However, the civilian market would never accept being limited to one type of ammunition, and shooting ammunition the action wasn't engineered for is a formula for frustration. In test firing my excellent condition, veteran bring-back, 1915 DWM Luger for this story, I had failures to feed almost 30% of the time with commercial ammo. In a gas-operated toggle locking action, it is possible to tune the action to the load to some degree. John Browning patented a gas-operated toggle-locking action pistol in 1897, but it was never produced.

Other Toggle Applications

By far, the most significant application of the toggle lock to firearms was its successful adaptation to automatic weapons by American-born inventor Hiram S. Maxim in the 1880s. Maxim machine guns were sold worldwide, and their reliability and prodigious rate of fire made late 19th-century military ground combat tactics obsolete. Though big and heavy, these weapons can still be found at war today. Ukrainians are using World War II vintage Russian-built Maxim, water-cooled, heavy machine guns to shoot down Russian drones. Unique to Switzerland but still worth mentioning is their toggle action 7.5x51mm Leichtes Maschinengewehr Modell 1925, a domestic design developed by Swiss Army Colonel Rudolf Furrer. It was adopted in 1925 and stayed in service into the late 1950s.

Manually locked toggle actions were most famously used in American lever-action repeating firearms, beginning with the Volcanic pistols and rifles in the mid-1850s, progressing to the Henry Rifle in 1860, and perfected in the Winchester's 1866 and 1873 rifles. With the exception of the Volcanic guns, modern reproductions of all these toggle-lock lever actions are still in production.

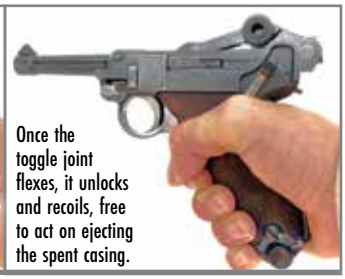
With the exception of the Walther Automatic Shotgun, a semi-automatic toggle action produced from 1921 to 1930 in fairly small numbers, semi-auto toggle action long guns never attracted sufficient military or civilian interest to warrant production. Among the most notable ideas that floundered were rather advanced guns from John Petersen, Karl Heinemann and even George Luger himself!

On a visceral level, I speculate that semi-auto toggle action centerfire long guns may have just offended human sensitivities about personal space with their violent, exposed operation. John Browning's popular lever action repeaters (Model 1887, 1893 and 1897 shotguns and 1894 and 1895 rifles) all exposed their metal private parts while cycling, but they projected them downward, below the line of sight. By contrast, most toggle actions threw their junk right up in front of your face. Nobody likes that.

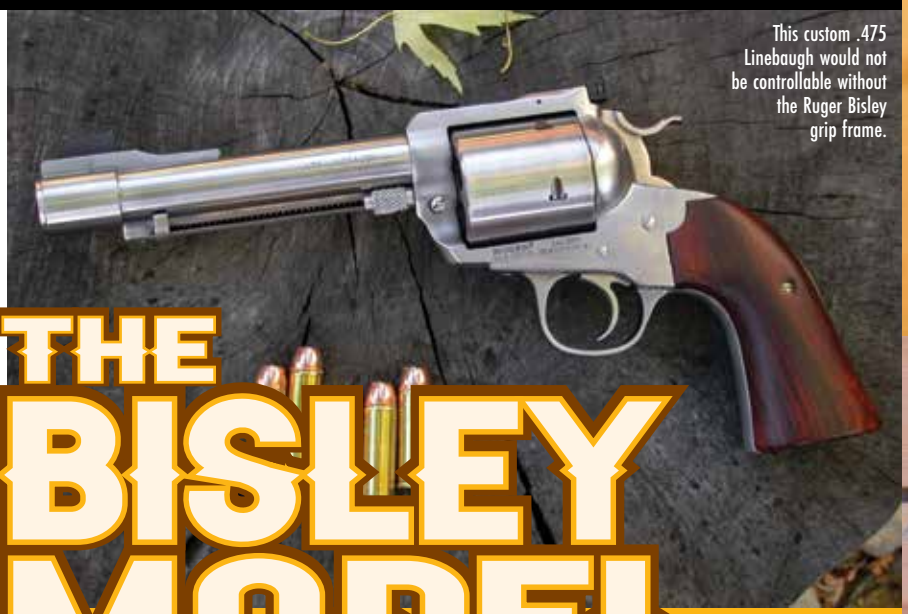
One place where the toggle action resurfaced long after its heyday was in the world of rimfire competition rifles. Russian Izhmash manually operated toggle action .22LR rifles were used in Olympic biathlon competitions by Soviet athletes going back to the 1980s and are still in production. Just this year, Hamerli Arms introduced the Force B, .22LR/.22WRM switch barrel sporting rifle, with a similar side cycling, manual locking toggle action. It is delightfully easy and fast to shoot and can be cycled with just one finger.



This is how far the barrel receiver assembly recoils on the frame with the toggle locked. The moment the circular bosses on the rear toggle link contact the slopes on the lower frame, the action starts opening up.



Once the toggle joint flexes, it unlocks and recoils, free to act on ejecting the spent casing.

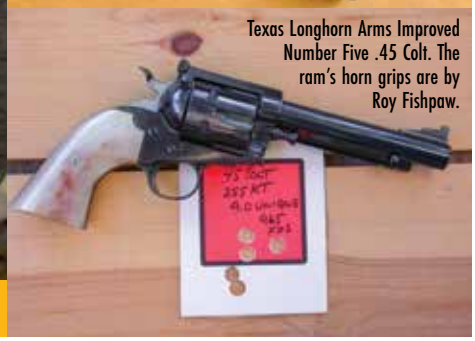


This custom .475 Linebaugh would not be controllable without the Ruger Bisley grip frame.

THE BISLEY MODEL



Ruger Bisley Models in .454 and .480 Ruger.



Texas Longhorn Arms Improved Number Five .45 Colt. The ram's horn grips are by Roy Fishpaw.

Back in the '50s, I ran across a couple of excellent articles authored by a grand old gentleman who must have been at least in his 70s. Walter Rodgers was born about the time of the *Gunfight At The O.K. Corral* and spent his lifetime as a cowboy, forest ranger and outdoorsman. His firearms of choice, of course, were a Winchester lever action rifle (he really liked the .25-35 chambering) and a Colt Single Action.

I was a longtime veteran of Saturday matinee Westerns and TV had arrived at our place in 1950 with Westerns being a major part of the airtime. So, I was well acquainted with the Colt Single Action. However, Rodgers' Colt Single Action was a little different. I had never noticed it before the magazine articles, but as I started watching old westerns a little more carefully, his Colt of choice was seen though infrequently. Rodgers' strange-looking sixgun was a Colt Bisley Model.

Not only did his sixgun catch my eye, but he also carried that Bisley .45 in a homemade holster on a companion homemade combination cartridge and money belt. His rig encouraged me to try to make my own leather, which I did successfully. Rodgers' sixgun was not 100% Bisley, as the hammer spur had been modified to have the same shape as the Colt Single Action Army.

Bisley Origin

More than 120 years ago, in 1894, Colt brought forth a special sixgun for target shooters. The first guns went to England, where the target shooting matches were held at Bisley Commons. The new single action was advertised as Colt's Target Revolver and soon became known as the Bisley Model. Those first Bisleys were true target models, as least as much as possible in the 1890s, with adjustable front and rear sights. Both sights were moved by loosening a set screw, moving the sights, right or left for the rear sights, and up or down for the front sight, and then re-tightening the locking screw. Very crude by today's standards but much better than the fixed sights usually encountered on a Colt Single Action Army. The big changes on the Bisley over the standard Colt Single Action Army were encountered in the grip frame shape and hammer and trigger.

What Makes A Bisley?

The original Colt Single Action Army rolled in the hand when fired, thus lessening the felt recoil. The Bisley was designed to set back in the hand and maintain the grip when used for target shooting.

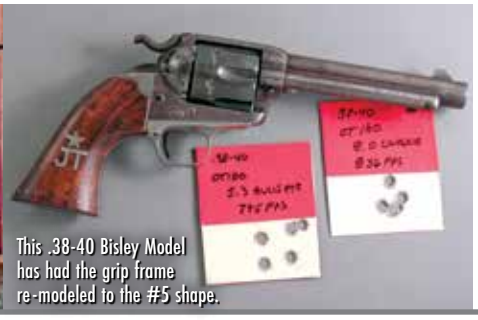
To accomplish this, the grip frame came up higher in the back and also much higher behind the trigger guard. To accommodate this new grip shape, the frame of the standard Colt Single Action Army had to be altered slightly, adding about 1/8" in height along the back of the frame. To match the new grip frame, the hammer was lowered and fitted with a wide spur, and the trigger was also widened and given a radial curve in the oversized trigger guard of the Bisley. The wide hammer, mated with a new mainspring, allowed easier cocking without disturbing the grip on the gun, and the wide trigger allowed for an easier let-off when shooting bullseyes instead of bad guys.

Bisley To Market

Although the Bisley Model was designed for target shooters, many sixgunners looked to it as an Everyday Packin' Pistol, and within two years, it was offered with the standard sights as found on the Colt Single Action while maintaining the new grip shape, hammer and trigger. All of these are marked "(Bisley Model)" followed by the caliber designation on their barrels except those found in .44-40, which are also marked



A pair of replica #5 SAAs by Hamilton Bowen.



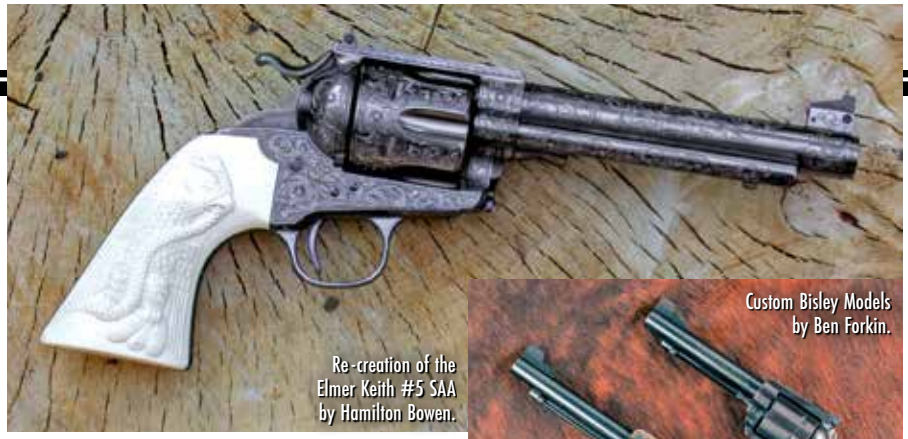
This .38-40 Bisley Model has had the grip frame re-modeled to the #5 shape.

with "Colt Frontier Six Shooter," the same as the standard Colt Single Action Army when found in .44-40.

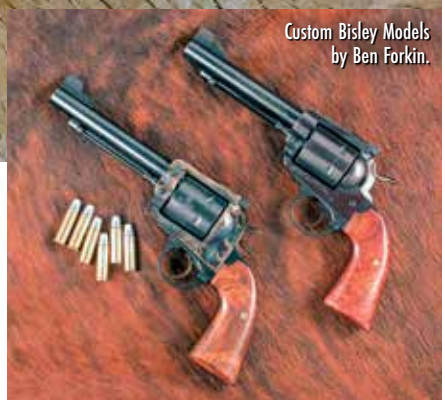
In 1912, sales of the Colt Single Action in general were on the decline, and the Bisley was dropped from the Colt catalog. For the next several years, Bisleys would still be produced from inventory parts on hand. In its short life of less than 20 years, the Bisley was serial numbered along with the standard Colt Single Action production. The most popular calibers in the colt single action, in order of preference, were .45 Colt, .44-40, .38-40, .32-20 and .41 Long Colt. With the Bisley Model, the order changed radically, with the .32-20, followed by the .38-40, then the .45 Colt, .44-40, and .41 Long Colt.

Bisley Examples

I have picked up several Bisley Models over the past 40+ years. One of these has been fitted with a .44 Special cylinder and a 7½" barrel, while another, also in .44 Special, is a nickel-plated 4¾" Bisley. One of my most cherished sixguns is my "Born Again Bisley." This old, well-worn sixgun was totally rebuilt by Nutmeg Sports, fully engraved, blued and case hardened, and topped off with an exquisite pair of ivory grips carved in the Mexican Eagle pattern. Jim Alaimo and his staff put together what is one of the most beautiful sixguns in existence.



Re-creation of the Elmer Keith #5 SAA by Hamilton Bowen.



Custom Bisley Models by Ben Forkin.

One of the most well-known Colt Single Actions, probably second only to General Patton's ivory stocked and engraved .45, is Keith's "No. 5 S.A." This sixgun was featured in the April 1929 *American Rifleman* in an article entitled "The Last Word." Every possible improvement was incorporated in The Last Word sixgun and Keith tried to interest Colt in making it a factory offered single action but to no avail.

Keith, along with the ideas of Harold Croft and gunsmiths of the time, Neal Houchins, R.F. Sedgley and J.D. O'Meara, worked together and welded up the top strap of a standard Colt Single Action to make a heavy Flat-Top Target design. The old flat mainspring was replaced by a U-Type spring, the hammer was made by welding a Bisley wide hammer on a standard hammer, the rear sight is adjustable, and the front sight is the high Patridge type. The base pin latch was changed to eliminate any chance of the pin jumping forward under recoil





Ruger's New Model Bisley .44 Special.


This one was totally re-done by Jim Alaimo and Nutmeg Sports. Tuned, fully engraved, re-blued and case colored and fitted with exquisite Mexican Eagle grips.

and the grip frame was made by mating a standard Colt SA trigger guard and a Bisley backstrap. After this .44 Special Single Action proved to be everything Keith could hope for in a sixgun, he had it fully engraved and stocked with ivory grips. It was used so much it has been re-blued several times. Along with all of the other Keith firearms, the #5 was auctioned off in March 2015, bringing in more than $70,000.

Left Handed

Bill Grover began Texas Longhorn Arms in the late 1970s. He believed all single actions were left-handed; that is, most shooters switched them to the left hand to reload. Bill's single actions, the West Texas Flat-top Target and South Texas Army, were built with the loading gate and ejector rod on the left side in order for the shooter to keep it in his right hand when loading and unloading.

In 1987, Bill Grover set out not to copy the Keith #5 SAA but to really improve upon it and still keep the original flavor. He succeeded in producing a real salute to Elmer Keith as Dean of the Sixgunners. The grip straps, grip contour, base pin and lever latch are all identical to Elmer's original #5 SAA. I have handled both sixguns at the same time, and when it comes to the grip frame, the original #5 and the Improved Number Five feel and look the same. The lever latch, other than being a mirror image of the Improved Number Five, is also identical. Grover's original plans were to build 1,200 Improved Number Fives in .44 Magnum with 5½" barrels. After testing the original, I ordered serial number K44, which I now have, and also eventually purchased an identical Improved Number Five chambered in .45 Colt. The plan of 1,200 .44 Magnums never materialized, nor did the 1,000 each of the West Texas Flat Top Target and South Texas Army.

Improved No. 5 — .45 Colt

Once I had a .45 Colt Improved Number Five as a companion to my original .44 Magnum Number Five, and although I definitely had very fond feelings for the .44 Magnum #5, these feelings were expanded with the .45 Colt. One of the first things I did was send it off to Roy Fishpaw for some suitable grips. Roy is not only a master gripmaker, he always seems to have very special raw materials to work with. He suggested I go with sheep horn, which I did. Grips made from sheep horn are mostly straw colored with an almost translucent effect and often have black streaks when the horn comes from Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep and red streaks if the donor is an Alaskan Dall Sheep.

The Improved Number Five has a larger cylinder and frame than a Colt Single Action, being more on par with the Ruger .45 Colt Blackhawk; thus, it handles heavier loads easily. Some favorites of mine for this TLA .45 are the Lyman/Keith #454424 over 20.0 grains of #2400 for over 1,300 fps and the NEI Keith-style 310 and 325-grain bullets over 21.2 grains of H110 for 1,100–1,200 fps. For an everyday working load and certainly one that is more pleasant shooting, I go with the Lyman/Keith bullet over 9.0 grains of Unique for right at 1,000 fps.

Modern Number Fives

Today, we are blessed to have the finest gunsmiths who ever lived using thoroughly modern machinery to build great single-action sixguns, either replicating or patterned after Keith's #5. To arrive at the #5 grip frame, Keith used a modified Colt Bisley Model backstrap mated to a standard Single Action front strap and trigger guard. It is obvious Bill Ruger looked at Keith's grip frame before coming out with the Ruger Bisley Model, which is closer to the #5 than it is to the original Colt Bisley Model grip frame. Keith had very small hands, which is reflected in his perfect grip frame; Ruger designed his grip frame to fit shooters with larger hands.

Keith's #5 was designed to handle his heavy .44 Special loads while the Ruger Bisley Model not only handles .44 Magnum and Heavy .45 Colt loads well, it also makes it possible for sixgunners to be able to handle the recoil of such cartridges as the .475 and .500 Linebaughs. I have found the original #5 to be quite unforgiving. The exact same grip must be maintained from shot to shot, or bullets will wander all over the target; the Ruger Bisley Model grip frame is much more forgiving. Sizewise, most #5 grip frames found today will be somewhere in between the original and the Ruger version.

Ruger first started producing the Bisley Model in the mid-1980s. The large frame Bisleys were chambered in .45 Colt, .44 Magnum, .41 Magnum and .357 Magnum. Single-Six versions have been offered in both .22/.22 Magnum and .32 Magnum, and with the coming of the .44 Special New Model Flat-Top also in this classic cartridge. Even the Bisley Model grip frame is not perfect. Such gunsmiths as Gary Reeder offer a Gunfighter Bisley Model by slightly rounding the sharp corners at the bottom of the Bisley Model grip frame. I find this to be a worthwhile alteration.


A pair of .45 Colt custom Rugers by Jim Stroh. Top sixgun is a Super Blackhawk converted to a .45 Bisley Model.


Elmer Keith's #5 SAA compared to Bill Grover's Improved Number Five.

MASSAD AYOOB

THE NAKED GUN: OUT OF THE SHOWER AND INTO THE FIGHT

SITUATION: You're in the shower when an armed home invader breaks in.

LESSON: Get your gun first, then worry about the bathrobe.

When retired lawman Floyd Lee Smith (he goes by "Lee") took my MAG-40 class in Idaho last year, he was kind enough to do an after-class breakout session on one of his experiences. The students found it compelling. So did I and I think you will too.

A lot of private citizens get the impression that police experiences don't relate to them. That's wrong. For one thing, many whom the cops shoot it out with did something horrible to a citizen before the cops got there, and the citizen victim would have been well advised to know how to fight back. For another, an off-duty cop is a whole lot closer in a situation to an armed citizen than to a uniformed officer with body armor, multiple guns and ammo readily at hand and immediate communication for reinforcements.

In The Shower

It's a bit after 11 a.m. on December 9, 1991. Smith, a cop first for five and a half years in Newport Beach and for the last eight years in Anaheim, is off duty at home in his condo in Fullerton, Calif. The condo is in a nice neighborhood near a university … the kind of place where naïve people feel safe and criminals know there's good stuff to steal. Lee returned home at about 4 a.m. from the night shift, working the APD gang unit. He has just gotten out of bed, worked on a paper for a criminal justice class he's taking, and jumped in the shower.

He is alerted by pounding on his front door. With the water pouring over him, he thought at first it might be his upstairs neighbor pounding on something. Then he hears it again, hammering in rapid succession, and realizes it's his front door. He wonders how someone got past the locked gate to get there in the first place. He turns off the water and steps out of the shower.

From the bathroom door, a glance down the hallway shows him the main door, located between two sliding windows. He sees the silhouette of a man at the window, whose arm comes up. There is a sound of metal on glass, as if someone is prying the window. Then Lee hears the glass crack and realizes it's a break-in.

To avoid being seen, he low-crawls down the carpeted hall to his bedroom, the location of the nearest land-line phone to call 9-1-1. It's also where a closet contains some unloaded hunting shotguns and boxes of shells, but he hears more glass break, and a glance down the hallway reveals hands pulling glass shards out of the window frame: no time to load a shotgun. He instead grabs his loaded Colt Government Model .45, cocked and locked, from his off-duty shoulder holster in the bedroom. His first thought is to hunker down in a closet and surprise the man, but his inner cop tells him to engage.

Confrontation

Lee feels his fear factor escalate as he moves forward in a low crouch and sees the intruder reach in, defeat the window locks, and slide the window open. A leg comes in first, then the whole body, with a stumble and regaining of balance.

Lee turns the corner and faces the intruder from no more than 10 feet away. No mask. The intruder is a male Hispanic wearing several layers of clothing (it's about 50 degrees), looking about Lee's size: 5'11" or so, maybe 170–180 lbs., with a few days growth of beard and thick black hair. He is holding something in his right hand. Lee sees it in his peripheral vision, but he can't precisely identify it. Lee reflexively yells, "Police! Get on the ground!" or words to that effect.

But the man does not move. They stare at each other. Time seems to stop. The man's expression is angry and unafraid, an expression this streetwise cop has seen on the faces of many perpetrators. What goes through Lee's mind is the word "parolee."

And then the frozen tableau breaks.

Shots Fired

Without a word yet, the intruder takes a step toward Lee, the last mistake of what turns out to be a mistake-filled life.

Continued on next page

AYOOB FILES

Lee Smith fires a fast double-tap to the chest area. He sees the man's body begin to turn at the first shot and rock backward at the second. The intruder stops moving forward. He blades his body, finally speaks — "F@@k you!" — and lunges toward the window, climbing out with another "F@@k you!" The attack has broken off, and Lee ceases fire. The man climbs out the window. Lee hears him push the outside gate open, hears running feet, and then a car starting up. He thinks, "Possible accomplice at the wheel?" Then, the vehicle roars away.

Lee runs to the window, considers going after him, then realizes, "Broken glass; I'm nude; bad idea." Instead, he gets on the phone, IDs himself to 9-1-1 as an Anaheim officer, and reports what happened. While talking to dispatch, he can hear them putting out the word and hears two Fullerton motorcycle officers acknowledge, stating they will be on the scene momentarily.

And Lee Smith realizes his home has just become a crime scene.

Immediate Aftermath

While Smith was throwing some clothes on, responding Fullerton motor officers were discovering a crashed silver-colored Honda Civic that had come to rest on a broken fire hydrant, spraying water high into the sky. In the front seat was the offender, slumped over on the weapon he had used to break in and was holding when he moved toward Smith: a wicked-looking, long-bladed filet knife. Within 20 minutes, police had secured the scene, with detectives from both Fullerton and bordering Anaheim police departments there, soon followed by investigators from the Orange County District Attorney's Office.

Two or three hours later, Smith learned the man had died at the hospital. One of the Silvertips had entered by the left nipple, the other a bit below, and massive loss of blood had caused death by exsanguination. Both projectiles had gone through and through, unusual for the 185-grain Silvertip and probably due to the bullet noses plugging as they passed through the multiple layers of clothing. The bullets had lodged in a block wall on the other side of the window through which the intruder made entry. The deceased was identified as Antonio Galindo, 30, and the toxicology screen showed positive for cocaine and heroin. Galindo had a record of burglary, robbery and possession of deadly weapons. Smith's impression of "parolee" was correct: The man was indeed on parole.

Altered Perceptions

Tunnel vision was profoundly in effect, Lee remembers. One element of that is that opponents may appear larger than they actually are. Galindo turned out to be shorter than Smith thought, 5'6", but also heavier at some 200 lbs. Heavy clothing, such as Galindo's multiple layers, can make weight judgment difficult in the best of circumstances.

Investigators first thought it might be a targeted "hit." Smith was, after all, investigating multiple Hispanic gangs, and his testimony had sent some of their members to prison for life. However, no such connection was made, and it is believed the convicted burglar had simply made a fatal choice in pursuit of a "routine daytime burglary." The shooting was, of course, ruled justified. Had Smith not fired when Galindo began moving toward him with that knife, he could have been stabbed to death in less than a second.

Lessons

Decades before his guest lecture in my class, Smith was asked to share his experience with FBI Instructor School candidates in Irvine, Calif. and at many other area law enforcement agencies. He shares some of what he shared with them here.

He experienced several of the classic altered perceptions that occur in near-death experiences. Time distortion? You bet. He said, "Time froze," as the two men faced each other. The expert on witness memory of traumatic incidents, clinical psychologist Elizabeth Loftus, has called this "snapshot memory." Auditory exclusion? Check. Lee told *American Handgunner*, "I heard nothing. I don't recall even hearing the two .45 rounds going off in that enclosed room." Imperfect memory? Check. He thinks he said, "Police! Get on the ground," but isn't 100% certain. As Dr. Loftus is famous for saying, no one is a human tape recorder. Earwitnesses elsewhere in the complex heard "Police (something something)."

Above all, he remembers the fear and the need to overcome it, and this is the core of much of his lecture to brother and sister officers. He emphasizes that he followed his training. His gun was aimed at the upper torso mass, and when the time came, he unhesitatingly launched two bullets as fast as he could. They hit the upper torso mass and stopped the fight.

Smith cautions us not to think that because we have a powerful gun, our bullets will instantly stop the threat. Despite two fatal hits from large caliber pistol bullets, the assailant was able to continue considerable conscious, purposeful physical activity before he bled out, lost consciousness and crashed.

All of us are creatures of our training and of our personal experiences. Lee Smith had no shortage of the latter.

The incident described was his fifth and final shooting. Let's look for some lessons from what had come before that prepared him to stand naked before deadly danger and prevail.

Incident #1, 1983

Like many young cops off duty, Smith was casual about armament and had only a 2" J-Frame .38 Special in his truck as he waited outside a strip mall for his brother, who was getting a haircut. An armed robber caught his attention by quickly exiting a nearby grocery store clutching a paper bag like a football. Smith saw a black & white patrol car approaching swiftly and silently, and so did the robber, who opened fire on the uniformed officer, who stopped and stepped out of the vehicle. The cop returned fire as he doubled over and went to the ground.

The gunman ran down an alley around a building to where his getaway car was parked. Smith grabbed the .38 and ran around the opposite side of the building to intercept the gunman where he thought he would appear. Unbeknownst to Smith, the gunman was in his getaway car alone; he had parked it out of sight on the other side of the building.

Smith fired at the man he thought he'd just seen shoot a cop, but none of his five bullets hit the mark, and the suspect escaped. Smith ran back to help the officer, who turned out to be unharmed; he had merely ducked and hit the ground when the perp shot at him and had fired at his antagonist until his service revolver jammed on the sixth round.

The cop reloaded his own revolver with one speedloader and handed another to Smith, who jumped into the patrol car with the uniformed officer to join the vehicle pursuit. However, the uniformed officer was carrying a larger caliber gun, and the rounds wouldn't fit Smith's .38 snub. He asked the cop to unlock the shotgun rack for him, but he couldn't: It was a key-lock gun rack, and the key was on the key ring that was in the ignition. Smith couldn't get a loaded gun in hand until the vehicle came to a stop, by which time they had lost the suspect, who, it turned out, had later broken into a private home and taken hostages before finally being captured.

Lessons: Now you know why, thereafter, Smith's off-duty gun was the same full-size Colt 1911 .45 auto he carried on duty, backed up by a couple of spare magazines. The theory that a pocket snubby with five shots is enough because "I'm off duty" and "I just need a 'get off me' gun" is fallacious: None of us can predict a future gunfight. A short-range, hard-to-shoot gun with only five shots is a very limited resource.

Incident #2, 2.2.89

Lee Smith was on uniformed patrol in downtown Anaheim at 11:30 p.m. when police radio informed him of a pursuit some dozen miles distant that was headed his way. Smith set up at a major intersection, and when the fugitive vehicle passed him, he became the primary pursuit unit, heading toward Disneyland. The suspect made a big U-turn, tried to ram his patrol car, went the opposite way and pulled into a hotel parking lot, where he jumped out and ran.

Smith told *Handgunner*, "My partner and I chased him on foot. He ran into an enclosed stairwell. I told my partner, 'Watch out, we could get ambushed.' We heard him running up the stairs to a balcony walkway about 30 feet above us. He spun and reached for his waistband, and we opened up on him, me with my Colt .45 auto and my partner with his S&W .45 Colt caliber Model 25-5. It turned out to be my round that hit him. He died. It turned out he was unarmed."

Smith adds, "The family sued us. I was on trial for several weeks. We finally won and got some good OIS case law. I was the defendant. The lead defense attorney, Bruce Pract, a former cop, did a great job."

Lessons: Never forget, you don't have to be right; you have to be reasonable. This was a classic furtive movement shooting. "Within the totality of the circumstances," a standard of the courts, the reach to the waistband while aggressively resisting arrest was consistent with going for a weapon and not reasonably consistent with anything else.

Incident #3, 10.10.89

Working patrol in a gang-infested area known for narcotics crime, Smith received information that a Garden Grove police officer had been assaulted and severely beaten by an Anaheim gang member who was known to frequent this neighborhood. Smith and his partner were hanging in the shadows on foot, looking for the suspect. Smith recalls, "We had tan uniforms then, and my partner and I were wearing black jackets. In the dark we probably didn't appear to be cops unless people looked closely. A white surfer-looking dude with long blonde hair walked into the area, apparently looking to score some dope because at 10 feet away, I could see he had a Coke can converted to a meth pipe. As I turned around, he saw the front of my uniform, looked at my partner, and turned and ran."

The Supreme Court of the United States' later decision in Illinois v. Wardlow says, in essence, that headlong flight upon seeing a police officer is not proof positive of having committed a crime but is a damn good clue, allowing police to pursue. Smith and his partner accordingly gave chase. When Smith caught up with him, there was a struggle; the suspect got Smith in a half-Nelson hold and tried to rip his Colt .45 from its holster. Smith yelled, "He's going for my gun!"; and his partner whaled on the attacker with a baton to no effect. Lee finally gained enough control of his gun to go to a retention position he had learned at Gunsite and ripped off six shots, dropping the would-be cop-killer. All six bullets struck home and the attacker died.

Smith told *Handgunner*, "I was sued and was on trial for two weeks. The *Orange County Register* newspaper printed a list of my other shootings. I don't know how many jurors saw it, but the judge declared a mistrial. The lawyers said they settled out of court for $300,000 because it was more cost-effective, even though they were confident in the case."

Lessons: Such cases get settled by bean counters, not those zealously pursuing justice. A man trying to take a cop's gun isn't an unarmed man; he's a person trying to kill the legitimate owner of that gun, which is why such cases are usually won by the police defense side when properly defended.

Incident #4, 1989

In a smaller, neighboring community, police were called about a recent parolee who was threatening a woman who worked at a local bar. The first officer on the scene encountered him: He pulled a gun and shot it out with the cop, wounding him so badly he would subsequently have to retire on medical disability, and fled just as the second officer arrived. Smith joined the 20-minute pursuit, which ended with the man barricaded behind a car 50 yards away from the nearest officers. Lee, long a member of the department SWAT team, was armed with a USMC-surplus M16. He made his way to a cover position that enfiladed the would-be cop-killer from some 75 yards away. When the man started shooting at police, they returned a hail of gunfire, and Smith's 5.56 round was the bullet that killed the cop-shooter.

Lessons: Smith told us, "That was a classic example of the importance of having patrol rifles, even one like mine that had iron sights." At 50 yards or 75 yards in poor light, the rifle gives a distinct advantage. Smith's maneuvering to the side to enfilade the gunman and negate the criminal's cover was critical to this decisive outcome.

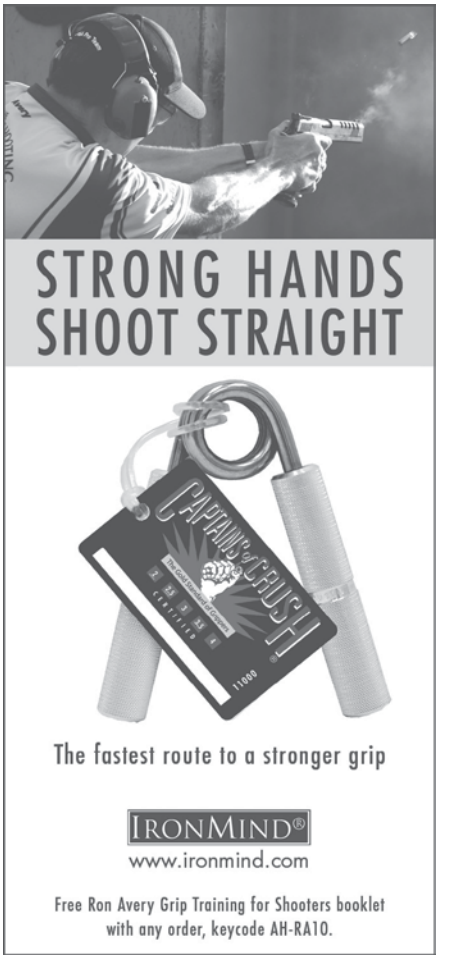
Incident #5 was the home invasion when Smith was in the shower, discussed in detail at the beginning of this article.

Bottom Line

Note that Smith took his job seriously enough to train on his own at places like Gunsite. Note that he learned from each of his experiences. Never forget that he credits his training for his survival in five different lethal danger situations. Today, in retirement, Smith continues his training and carries serious guns: You'll typically find him with nothing less than a .40 caliber S&W Shield, a 14-shot .40 caliber GLOCK 23, or a .45 caliber GLOCK 30 and, of course, spare ammunition. Foot pursuits and fights taught him to stay in good physical shape.

American Handgunner thanks Lee Smith for sharing his extensive experience with today's good guys and gals and for his cooperation in making this article possible.









Save 53% off the newsstand price!



FREE

Digital Download with your paid order



1-YEAR PRINT SUBSCRIPTION ONLY $19.75!

Call (866) 820-4045
fmgpubs.com

($41.75 outside U.S.)
P.O. Box 460100 • Escondido, CA 92046

FOR MORE INFO ON SEEING YOUR PRODUCT FEATURED IN NEW PRODUCTS, *CONTACT DELANO AMAGUIN (delano.amaguin@fmghq.com).* MSRP is subject to change without notice. FMG Publications presents the MSRP in good faith and is believed to be correct at the time of printing.



EDC X9 2.0 Wilson Combat

The *EDC X9 2.0* is constructed using a durable, high-capacity compact aluminum X-Frame, designed to offer full-size performance in a sleek, EDC-friendly package. With improvements made to enhance accuracy and reduce recoil, the EDC X9 2.0 features easily interchangeable Classic 1911 style grips. Renowned for its lightweight stature and striking visuals, the 2.0 withstands the demands of daily use and provides an intuitive and comfortable shooting experience. *For more info: (800) 955-4856, WilsonCombat.com*

ARCTECH FLEECE HOODIE

Hardcore Waterfowl



The *Arctech Fleece Hoodie* provides versatility as a stand-alone piece when the weather is moderate or as a mid-layer when temperatures drop later in the season. The textured face of the high-loft 100% polyester fleece lining is breathable, fast-drying and offers odor prevention with S3 Silver Antimicrobial Technology. Other features include a 3-piece mesh-lined hood, zippered chest pockets and front kangaroo pockets. Offered in the new Mossy Oak Terra Bayou camouflage. MSRP: $119.99. *For more info: HardcoreWaterfowl.com*



TA30C MAX TACTICAL FLASHLIGHT

NEXTORCH

The *TA30C MAX Tactical Flashlight* with patented one-step-strobe technology is an excellent choice for any personal defense situation. It utilizes a patented one-step, variable frequency strobe switch for immediate and intuitive operation in a home or self-defense situation. A powerful 3,000 lumen high-output mode can be activated with a half press of the tail switch. This allows easy searching and instant identification of potential threats. A full press on the other hand activates the strobe to instantly disorient and suppress an intruder or attacker. This high-output flashlight can cast a powerful beam up to 436 yards. MSRP: $132.99. *For more info: Nextorch.com*

SWITCH FOLDER

American Buffalo Knife and Tool Co.

The *Switch Folder* has been added to American Buffalo Knife and Tool Co.'s Elite line of knives. The Switch Folder comes with three different stainless steel blades that can be swapped out, depending on the task at hand — a drop point, clip point, and saw blade. Each securely locks into the knife's patented holder for safe use. Measuring 4.75" when closed, the Switch Folder is available with a black textured G10 handle or a blaze orange G10 handle and sports a pocket clip. MSRP: $43.99. *For more info: (423) 337-7423, ABKT.com*





TAURUSTX 22 Taurus USA

Taurus unveils the latest evolution of its *TaurusTX 22* line. Designed to exceed expectations and cater to the diverse needs of shooters, the upgraded TaurusTX 22 sets a new standard for performance-driven pistols, boasting enhanced iron sights, slide cuts for faster cycling, and an optics-ready configuration. Key features of the enhanced TaurusTX 22 include the Taurus Performance Trigger System (PTS), a MIL-STD-1913 Picatinny rail, a threaded barrel, slide lightening cuts and more. MSRP: $393.99 for the TX22 Compact. *For more info: (800) 327-3776, TaurusUSA.com*

BORE-MAX SPEED BRUSH MULTI-CAL PACK Real Avid



The *Bore-Max Speed Brush Multi-Cal Pack* from Real Avid includes 10 brushes — six for rifles in .22 through 7.62mm caliber and four for handguns in .22-, .380/9mm, .40-, and .45-caliber. The brushes are nickel plated to last longer and to resist chemicals better than standard brushes. Boasting double-density bristles, the longer-than-standard Speed Brushes reduce cleaning time by delivering maximum scrubbing power to each pass down the bore. Real Avid also introduced another new product — the Bore-Max Speed Jags & Patches Multi-Cal Pack. MSRP: $39.99. *For more info: (800) 286.0567, RealAvid.com*

SPEEDLOCKER Streamlight, Inc.



Securely lock your pistol inside Streamlight's *SpeedLocker!* The portable storage container features rugged construction with a carry handle. A patented mechanical keypad with 31 programmable lock combinations gives you quick, one-handed access — no batteries required. The SpeedLocker's rugged hard shell is made of high-impact polymer and features a folding carry handle. Its internal dimensions are 8"x7.1", allowing storage of compact firearms and other items. It weighs 2.6 lbs. without contents, is water resistant and comes with mounting holes to secure the box to rigid surfaces such as lockers, toolboxes or a vehicle center console. MSRP: $165. *For more info: (800) 220-7007, Streamlight.com*

 Continued from page 74

These "micro-lathes" are cute and are often a first purchase. But you'll almost immediately realize it's too small for most "real" lathe work. They get relegated to making firing pins and such. The drill is there for size.



jobs a precision cutter can accomplish. Need to widen a rear fixed sight? Drill a precision hole? Mill a channel to fit a new front sight? Drill and tap a hole in a top strap? Slab a revolver barrel? The list is endless, and having the mill makes the job easier and more precise than trying to use files. Trust me on that.

A lathe allows you to make a firing pin, turn a screw down, bore a concentric hole, thread it if needed, turn a precision pin, bore a revolver cylinder, crown a muzzle, chamfer the front of a revolver cylinder and, like the mill, the list is endless. With a lathe and a mill, if you can imagine it, you can eventually do it once you get the skills and the tooling to go with it.

The tooling is something people don't think of when they start this dream. If you spend $2,500 on a mill, expect to spend about the same on tooling eventually. Right off the bat, you'll need a $350 milling vise, at least $100 worth of mills, indicators, parallel bar set, a fly cutter and a few other bits would get you going. Sure, a couple of end mills and a cheap vise will get you making chips, but you'll soon be frustrated, so dodge that miss-step right off.

If you have the basic tools already, the add-ons for a lathe can be less, at least at first. Carbide cutters are the way to go for beginners, and I'd upgrade the tool post to a quick-release one. But just as with the mill, you'll soon be nosing through the Grizzly or MSC Industrial Supply websites playing, "Gee I wish I had one of those …"

Actually Buying

Remember, a small lathe or mill can do small jobs but they can't do big jobs. A good quality medium lathe or mill can also handle tiny, precise jobs easily. People usually make the mistake of buying a "cute" Harbor Freight 10" mini-lathe, thinking that's all they need. That 10" is the distance between the lathe chuck and the tail stock, so that tells you in reality, anything over about 6" or so won't fit, and diameter is restricted too. The mini- and micro-lathes have zero power and, frankly, are hard to manage since they're so small. For turning a firing pin or maybe making a small screw or pin, they're fine. I keep one I outgrew almost instantly in my maintenance shop for just those sorts of things.

Ditto for a mill. A teeny tiny cute benchtop mini-mill might be able to handle a dovetail if you know what you're doing, but they vibrate, get out of "tram" (alignment) easily, and you're restricted in vertical space, table travel and power. If you build tiny choo-choo train models, maybe, but for gun work, stay away.

I've had a Grizzly Model G0704 medium mill and a G0602 medium lathe for some years now, and they are honestly plenty for what I do. Any handgun work is possible on either and if I need to fuss with a really long rifle barrel, I have access to a friend's bigger lathe. The weight and overall strength of my machines make them stable and accurate. If you're going to pull the trigger, I'd start at this level, honest.

I've done some shop tours on our YouTube channel (fmgpubs) so you might take a peek at those. There is also a wealth of info in other vids there like the Blondihacks channel. She has a wealth of beginner/intro videos that are well produced and spot-on. Nose around, look hard at what you want to do, then make a sound first buying decision. Drop me a note at *editor@americanhandgunner.com* with any questions.

For more info: Grizzly.com (for machines, tooling and accessories); Brownells.com (for tooling)



Here's just one cabinet holding tooling. What's tooling? Calipers, cutters, gauge blocks, collets, chucks, steady-rests, Noga holders — you name it. It doesn't ever stop once you buy the lathe or mill.

AMERICAN HANDGUNNER

INDEX OF ADVERTISERS

American Made Arms	14
Armscor/Rock Island Armory	8-9
Beltman Inc.	69
Black Hills Ammunition	14
Burger Knives	15
Competition Electronics Inc.	73
D & L Sports Inc.	57
Dillon Precision Products	19
Ed Brown Products	3
Fiocchi Ammunition	21
GlockStore	27
HiViz Shooting Systems	12
Holosun Technologies	23
HolsterSmith	13
HSS Corp.	57
IronMind Enterprises Inc.	69
Les Baer Custom	31
Mag-na-port	11
MTM Case-Gard	15
Nighthawk Custom	75
North American Arms	17
Powder River Precision Inc.	57
Ransom Rest	10
Ruger	7
SDS Imports	25
Smith & Wesson	45
Spartan Blades USA	61
Springfield Armory	76
Starline Brass Inc.	6
Streamlight Inc.	49
Taurus International Mfg. Inc.	29
Thunder Mountain Custom	53
TOPS KNIVES	11
Trijicon	2
Turnbull Restoration Co. Inc.	61
Tussey Custom	57
Volquartsen Firearms	35
W.C. Wolff Company	12
Wilson Combat	65
Wyoming Sight Drifter LLC	57
XS Sights	13

THE FIREARMS GUIDE REFERENCE



Do you struggle with leftover pieces after reassembling a DIY project? Have you ever had to jump to YouTube to see how something comes apart or fits together? How about looking up just about every gun in the known universe? That interest you?

Enter *The Firearms Guide*, available online and via a no-internet-required flash drive; this handy reference features facts on over 80,000 guns, more than 24,000 printable schematic diagrams, blueprints and manuals. If it's not in here, you probably don't need it.

I've been tinkering with the online version, which is kept up to date and has more "stuff" to satisfy my tinkering and "I just want to know" curiosity. Colt Woodsman original manual? Check. Manurhin PP? Check. And even in German if you want the original. Add in a printable target library, ammo and ballistics info and tens of thousands of hi-res photos for gun identification, and you'll be occupied for years. *FirearmsGuide.com*

STACCATO AMMUNITION



The maker of high-performance, double-stack 2011 pistols, a modern take on the venerable 1911, now makes Range and Match ammo. For now, at least, caliber offerings are 9mm, which is no big surprise given the company's gun lineup. I've had the opportunity to shoot lots of both the Range and Match varieties and am happy to report the results might indicate revised names like Match and Even More Matchy.

The Range variety uses reloadable brass cases (are you reading this Handloading columnist, Lindsey?) and a 124-grain FMJ round-nose projectile. The Match ammo uses the every-so-slightly oversized (.356") 125-grain HAP projectile, which is a non-expanding hollow-point design.

Performance? I used the Garmin Xero radar chrony and fired five-shot groups from 25 yards using a Staccato P pistol. The Range (1,131.2 fps) grouped between 1.0 and 2.3". The Match (1,077.9 fps) printed stellar groups from 0.76 to 1.03".

Both come in boxes of 50 and are available singly, by the case or via subscription. *Staccato2011.com*

Competition Electronics

At Competition Electronics, we strive to make
"The Winning Difference"

Our products are designed and made in the USA, and backed by exemplary customer support. Everything we manufacture has been refined over time by building upon the knowledge obtained from our involvement with the shooting community.

Please visit our website for more information.

MADE IN USA

815 874 8001
www.competitionelectronics.com





ROY HUNTINGTON

This Grizzly G0602 is a good "small to medium" lathe with 26" between centers. It lives on Roy's workbench and does 95% of what he needs just fine.



DO YOU REALLY NEED A LATHE AND MILL?

WELL ... MAYBE

"I'm thinking of buying a milling machine or a lathe for gun work. What do I need to buy?" It's part of reader mail all the time, and I always take the time to answer. My experience may save you loads of money, along with frustration, divorces and having unused machines slowly rusting away in the garage.

Which machine tools do you actually *need* to do the average bit of gun work? Not any, actually. But often, the "want" gets in the way. These two points can often result in a collision of a smoking pile of charge card receipts and your sanity. Let's cut to the chase to help you make some *informed* decisions concerning how much mill and lathe you "need" right now.

Or just maybe — the lathe or mill you don't need at all?



Roy's Grizzly G0704 is a solid-performing medium mill able to handle much more than a "small" benchtop mill can manage.



Roy's garage shop. The mill sits on a stand and the lathe on his bench bolted down. He can't live without them!



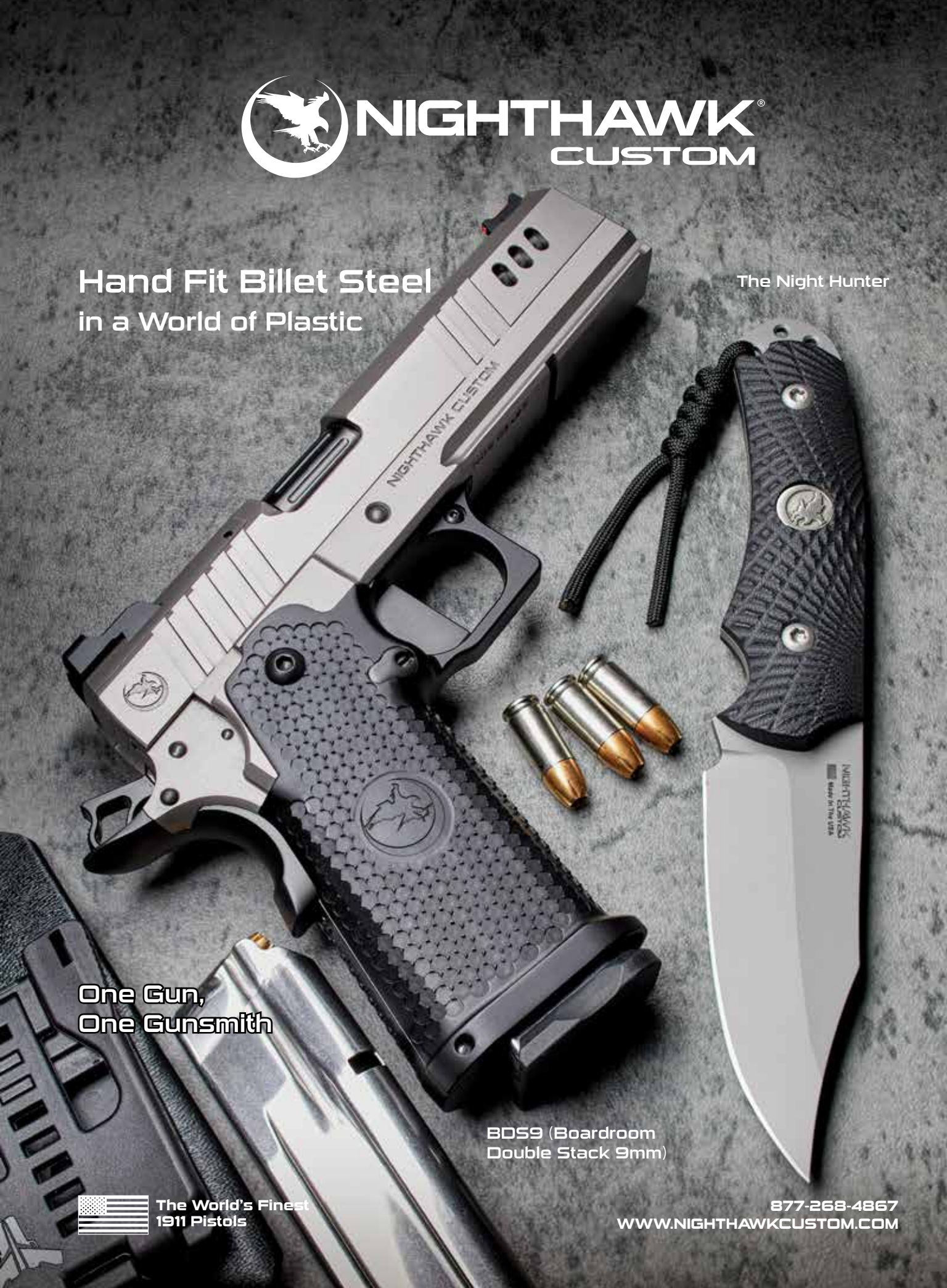
Roy used his mill to make a front sight for a custom rifle build he did. Here, he's just finished making a concave lengthwise cut with the ball end mill.

If your hobby gunsmithing consists of changing stock sights, grips, accessories on AR platforms or GLOCK-style handguns, and even some DIY 1911 "drop-in" parts fitting, then you don't need any machine tools. A good set of punches, small hammer, gunsmithing screwdriver set, needle nose pliers, a well-lit place to work and reference materials pretty much fills the bill. If you're going to start having to "fit" some parts, then stones, high-quality needle files, various grits of wet-or-dry papers and *maybe* a Dremel-style tool might be in order. But certainly no need for a mill or a lathe.

The Next Level

If you decide you want to do some customizing beyond what you can do with hand tools alone, then you might want to start looking at a medium lathe and mill. If you're going to cut dovetails, then you have to have at least a benchtop mill properly dialed in. That medium mill (along with about $1,000 worth of tooling) will have you doing custom sight installs and the myriad of other

Continued on page 72


NIGHTHAWK®
CUSTOM
Hand Fit Billet Steel
in a World of Plastic
The Night Hunter
NIGHTHAWK CUSTOM
One Gun,
One Gunsmith
BDS9 (Boardroom
Double Stack 9mm)
The World's Finest
1911 Pistols
877-268-4867
WWW.NIGHTHAWKCUSTOM.COM


HELLCAT® PRO
COMP
SPRINGFIELD-ARMORY.COM
SPRINGFIELD ARMORY.