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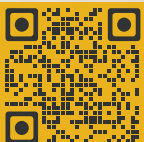
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# 2025

Volume 50 • Number 2 • Issue 292

# MARCH/APRIL



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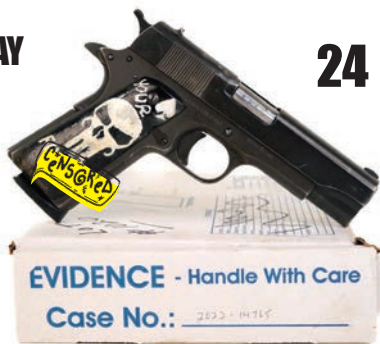
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## HANDLOADING .45 SHOTSHELLS

I would like to get in touch with Lindsey Bertomen (*Handloading*, Sept/Oct 2024). I have reloaded and shot many of them. I also used the cut-down 308 Winchester brass. I used my reloads to actually shoot skeet. Pretty successful at stations 1 and 7. Not so much at 2,3,4,5 and 6.

Mark Ziegler



### Where's The Cred Gone?

I read the review of the S&W Model 43C (*AmericanHandgunner.com*). The author said he prefers to reload .22LR.

Was this guy an idiot, or was it written by AI?

Either way, you lost huge cred.

WTF has happened to AH?

Velle Kolde

Well, first, he didn't say that. He did say, "I have reloaded .22 LR before, but my preference is to keep a good stock of

them." Lindsey is our Handloading columnist, so I'm not the least bit surprised he's ventured into .22LR reloading — he is one very curious and creative guy.

Well, I guess I've lost my cred, too, because I've also reloaded .22LR. Just ask that old steel ashtray I used to melt spent bullets for recasting as .22 projectiles. My shop blowtorch sure did a number on it. And crushing match heads to make a new "priming compound" to stuff into the rim already having one firing pin dent? You can

easily crank out two or three rounds per hour! Reloading rimfire is finicky and most decidedly a pain, but it works. Sometimes. 22LRReloader.com has the kits. It is most definitely a last-ditch option.

And, no, we don't use AI (Artificial Intelligence) for anything we publish. I do hear our sister publication, GUNS Magazine, is created entirely by repurposed

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Atari bots running on a Commodore 64. No one tell Editor Brent I said that; I think he's trying to keep it on the down low. —TM

## Gunnysack

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Jerry Ciccone

Gunnysack is an opinion/recommendation on products we like, use and would recommend to friends. All Gunnysack products have had "hands-on" use. That's why my name (and sometimes others) and the "Editor Picks" banner are included in the section. Usually, a price is mentioned, like the XS Sights in the Nov/Dec issue. There's no price available on the 3D-printed Falco holster in the same issue, as it is a prototype model. We do have a challenge providing pricing on items we cover as MSRP often varies widely and changes frequently from actual street prices. It's a bit of a lose/lose proposition whether we include or leave out prices. —TM

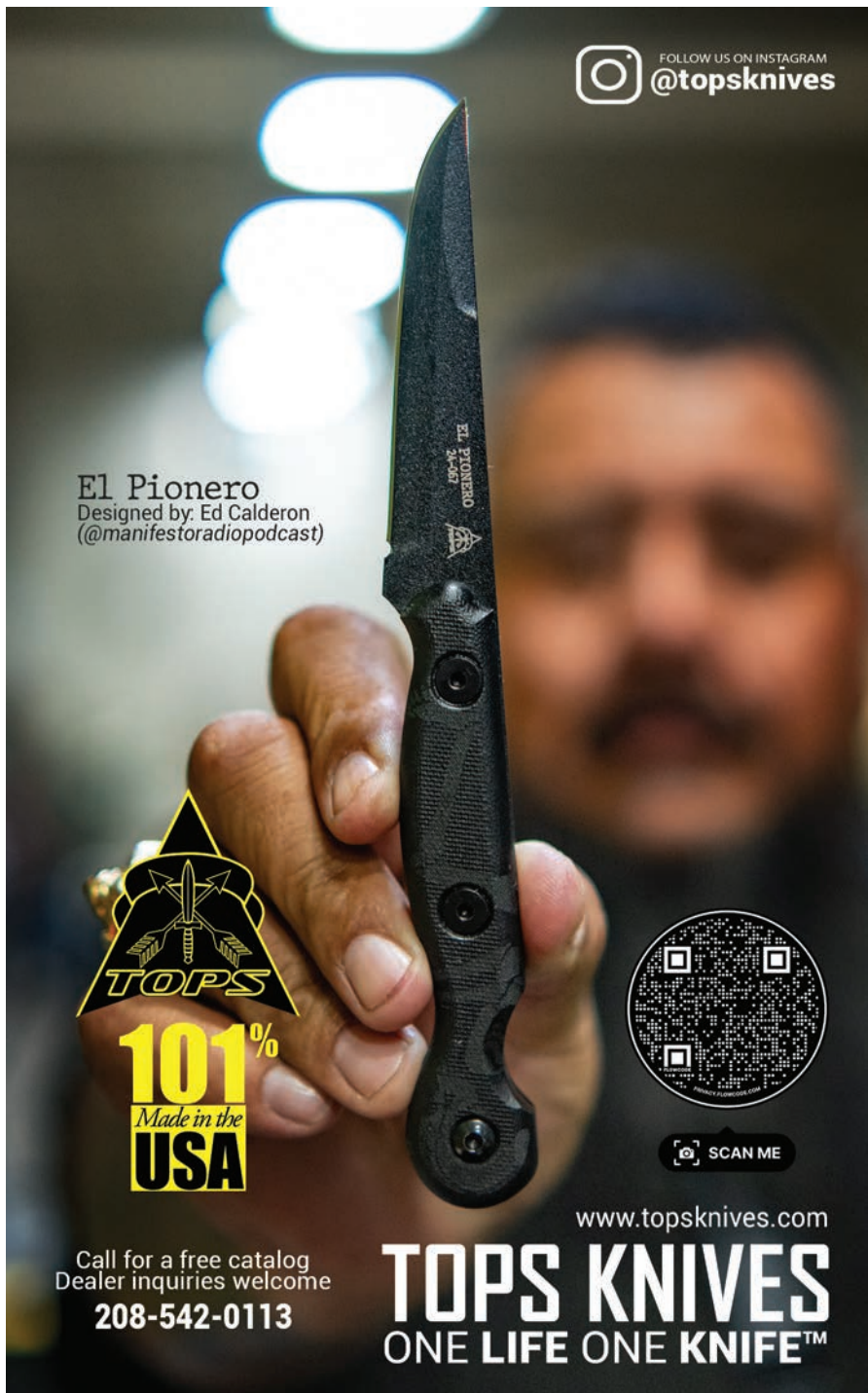
## 869 Demerits?

I am writing to point out an error in Dr. Dabbs' article in the Nov/Dec issue of your excellent magazine. Dr. Dabbs wrote Custer graduated 34th out of 108 in his West Point class. Thirty-four men, not 108 men, graduated in Custer's class — the class of June 1861. In fact, Custer did graduate last in his class. Because of the Civil War, two classes graduated in 1861. The other class was the Class of May, 1861, of which 45 men graduated. It is likely that this could cause some confusion, but the total number of graduates of both classes was 79, not 108. Custer not only did poorly in academics but also in deportment. During his time as a cadet, he was given 869 demerits, a record number. There was some question whether he would be allowed to graduate with his class. Probably the demand for officers caused by the war saved Cadet Custer. My sources for this information are *The West Point Register of Graduates & Former Cadets, 2020*, published by the West Point Association of Graduates, and *West Point: Two Centuries of Honor and Tradition*, edited by Robert Cowley and Thomas Guinzburg. Thank you for this opportunity to correct the record.

Merton E. Munson, Lt. Col., Ret.,  
USMA Class of 1965

## .25 Auto Goes To War

Gentlemen, I enjoyed Doc Dabbs' article on the .25, and wanted to add an anecdote. From 1992 to 96, I was



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## SPEAK OUT

a 71M Chaplain Assistant in Uncle Sam's Army. One of those years was spent in South Korea.

One day, the Chaplain called me into his office. He said, "Don't tell anyone about this." He then pulled a Beretta .25 caliber tip-up barrel out of one of the ammo pouches on his LBE (loaded with ball ammo, of course).

I'm sure he is long retired, and as far as I know, it was never drawn. But it makes an interesting tale.

Nathan Snell

### Kevin v. Haters

Tom, just finished the Nov/Dec *Handgunner* and the first thing I read was haters gonna hate!!! WOW! This guy has no idea what he's talking about. There are thousands of police officers using red dots, including myself. When trained and you learn how to use them, red dots work great. In our last qualification, we did a small competition shooting at 25, 35, 50, 75 and then 100 yards! We had 15 rounds to complete this (I had four rounds left over). Sooo ... I think this gentleman needs to do a little research before running his mouth, just saying. Great magazine, keep up the good work.

Thanks,  
Kevin S.

*Kevin, I have to agree with you. I'm all for "to each his own," so if red dots work for someone, then ... great! As my eyes have gotten older and slower, red dots have made a HUGE difference for me, so I'm a fan, too. Even though I've been shooting irons for decades, I can shoot faster and more precisely, especially at a distance, using red dots. —TM*

### Ow! Slide Bite!

Got a question, I have an older Interarms Walther PPK/S that I am crazy over. It's really accurate and 100% reliable with FMJ, Critical Defense and Federal Punch. I love it as an EDC gun. However, there's one problem: slide bite. I installed a Hogue grip sleeve with a beavertail, and it took care of the slide bite problem. Is there another solution that doesn't take away from the handling of the gun? I know how to grip an old GI 1911 without getting slide bite, but I don't have enough room on the PPK/S. The gun is such a joy to shoot I'm going to start reloading the 380.

The Ultimate Gamer

*Well, you might try adopting a "PPK grip" to see if that helps. Not sure of your normal firing hand thumb posi-*

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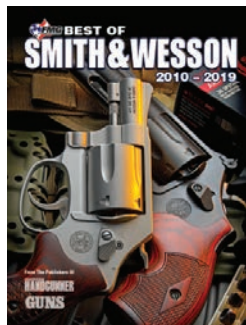
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tion, but if you lower your firing hand thumb to kinda rest on the top ledge of your middle finger, almost curled down like a combat "crush" grip, that might change the soft flesh geometry enough to prevent the bite. It works for a lot of people. —TM

## Bud Ballew

Today, I received my Nov/Dec issue of *Handgunner*, and as I have been doing for the last (almost) 48 years, I read the *Ayoob Files* first. What a surprise ... Mas wrote about Bud Ballew, a deputy in the county I have lived in most of my life. Naturally, I had heard of him but learned a lot more. As soon as I finished the article, I requested the book from my local library that Mas referenced. Pass along my thanks to Mas for all the articles he has written ... I think I have read all of them from the first one he wrote (in 1976 maybe?).

Ron

Just wanted to add a little to Mr. Ayoob's excellent article. Chief JW McCormick of Wichita Falls, TX also served as a Texas Ranger of some note. He was known to have "cleaned up" several Texas towns, most notably San Augustine. I know that Mr. Ayoob will recognize Chief McCormick's

Grandson, Chip McCormick. I knew Chip slightly but enjoyed my time spent with him. My duty weapon was always a 1911, and the first thing I did with a new one was get a couple of McCormick magazines or Wilson Combat mags.

Thanks for the article and the fine magazine.

John Keith

## Automag

I thoroughly enjoyed your article on AMT's Automag III in .30 carbine caliber (*Handgunner*, Nov/Dec 2024), and it brought back memories, especially the problem of galling with early stainless steel autos.

In the late 1980s, I bought an AMT "Hardballer" pistol, the first stainless steel 1911. The instructions recognized the problem and included a simple recipe for a suitable lubricant to prevent galling on early stainless steel pistols. The lube consisted of 1 lb. of white lithium grease well mixed with either two or three oz. of 30-weight motor oil.

I mixed up a pound of the lube and applied it on the mating surfaces of the Hardballer's slide and frame and the contact points between the barrel, frame and bushing. It totally prevented galling and had a special quality, which made it last. When applied, the mixture is paste,

which spreads easily. Once on a surface, it dries out, but retains its lubricating qualities. (Forever so far.)

I subsequently bought an AMT Backup. Several friends in the gun business warned me that it would be unreliable, but I used the AMT formula lube on the mating surfaces of its slide, and it was always totally reliable.

I still have a small container of the original mixture. A little goes a long way, and it remains as effective as when I mixed it up about 35 years ago. It works great on blued steel, too.

I might add a comment on the noise of .30 carbine handguns. I have a Ruger Blackhawk in .30 carbine. Like the Automag III, it produces a huge muzzle flash, 1,700 fps velocities, and, per a small sound meter, the loudest report of any gun I own.

Marshall Williams

What a joy it was to read Clayton Walker's "Blast From The Past" article about the Automag III in the Nov/Dec issue! Every word in every sentence described perfectly the joys of owning and using the AMT Automag III.

As an owner of one of these very interesting and decidedly fun firearms, the only question I have of Clayton is WHERE did he find the "quite a few spare parts for it" he mentioned in his



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## SPEAK OUT

article? Over the 10 years I've owned this little beauty, I haven't even been able to locate an extra magazine! Please point me in the right direction.

Best regards,  
John B.

Clayton Walker's article about the Automag III was fun to read and brought back a "painful memory." He wrote, "It makes a tremendous BOOM, and I guarantee shooters will crane their necks from the surrounding bays to figure out what the hell you're running." I remember going to the outdoor range at Farmington, NM to sight in my new Mini-14 back in the late 1970s, and a guy touched off an Automag next to me that lifted the steel roof shading the benches. He looked at me, and my expression made him grin. Two more of those, and my buddy and I went to the truck until he finished. If you want a range all to yourself, get an Automag.

Charles Beeson

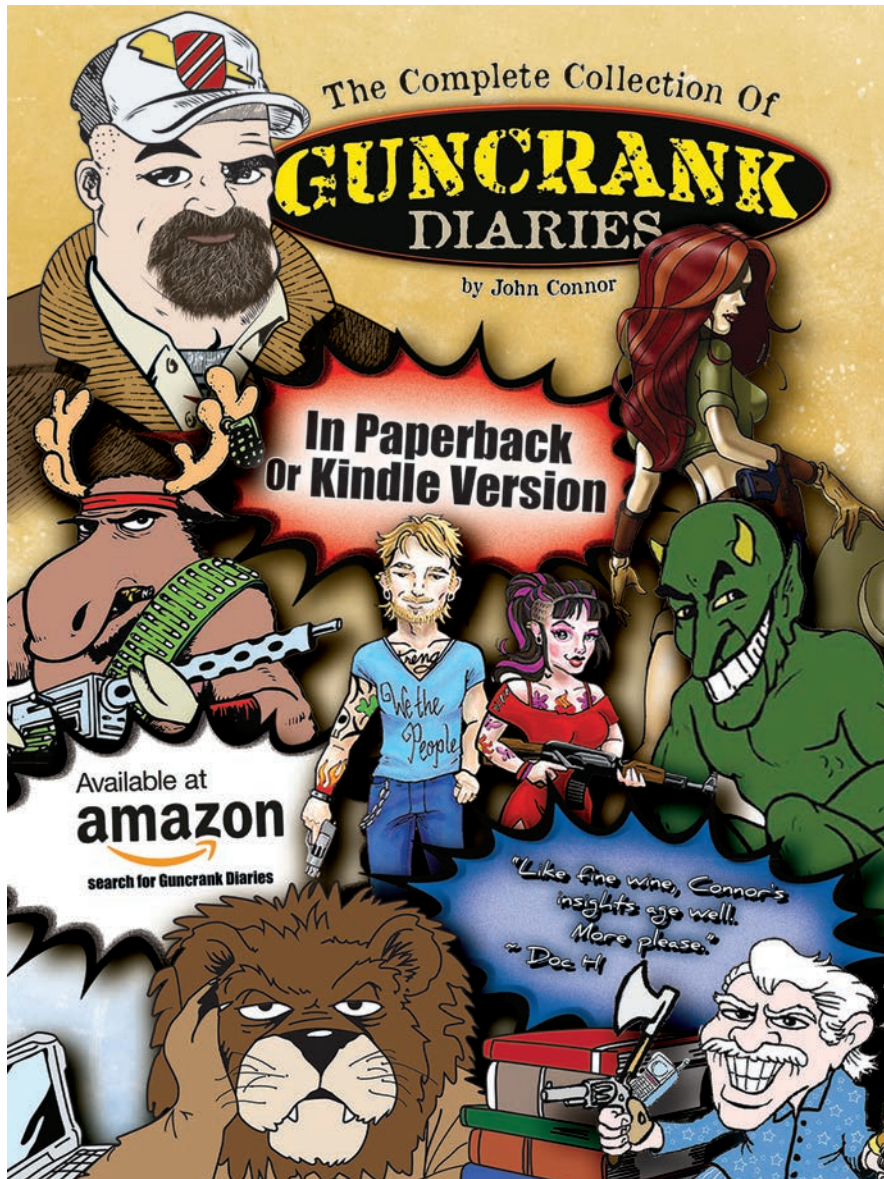
### H&K P7 And ... Ortgies?

The article written by Mr. Dabbs about the H&K P7 brought back memories for me. In January 1981, I had a job interview for the Polk County Florida Sheriff's Office. I was interviewed and hired and, in 1984, accepted as a member of the Agency SWAT. In 1985, we were issued the H&K MP5. In talking with the distributor, he showed us the H&K P7 handgun. Back then, if we qualified with a personal, approved handgun, we were allowed to carry it. I purchased the P7 M13. I carried it on duty and on SWAT. My wife, who was also a Deputy, didn't care for the wide grip of the Model 13, so she bought a P7 M8. She carried the M8 on and off duty. I didn't keep the P7 M13 very long. I didn't care for the wide grip, it didn't seem to be a natural pointing gun and felt unbalanced in my holster and in my hands. It seemed grip heavy when I carried it in an IWB holster. I ended up selling it and bought a new handgun that had recently come out called a GLOCK 17.

Gary Klinger

Great article on the P7, like it was new technology at the time! You neglected to add the little German company called Ortgies developed a similar technology in 1919.

Their pistol at the time was the only striker-fired pistol that could be carried with a loaded round in the



chamber. Their model had the cocking mechanism on the rear of the grip frame. It took the pressure off of the firing pin spring. They called it a safety. When squeezed forward, it would lock in that position, and you could keep firing until you wanted to stop and release it back to the safe mode. Little known company that pioneered a safer firearm.

Paul Berardi

I have become quite a fan of your articles and thoroughly enjoyed the recent item on the H&K P-7/13. However, I opine the H&K P7 is not "unique" in being a squeeze cocker. The German Ortgies auto is also a squeeze cocker, although not recognized as one. The reason is the cocking lever is located on the back of the grip and is called a "grip safety." The appearance of the grip safety/cocking lever is identical to that of the Colt pocket autos, the 1911, and many other pistols. However, those are hammer-fired designs, and their safeties block the movement of the trigger or sear. The Ortgies is striker-fired, and the so-called grip safety has nothing to do with blocking the trigger or sear; instead, when depressed, it fully compresses the mainspring so that when the trigger is

pulled, the gun fires. When in its safe position, it decompresses the main-spring so the gun cannot fire.

The Ortgies differs from the P7 in another way. When the Ortgies grip safety/squeeze cocker is depressed, a small catch above the left grip locks the cocking lever in the firing position from which it must be released by releasing the catch. The P7 squeeze cocker does not lock, but a clever ball detent reduces the effort required to hold the cocked squeeze cocker in place to just 3 lbs.

If you get a chance, study an Ortgies, but do so with a set of instructions, as otherwise you may break or lose something.

As always, I look forward to reading more of your articles.

Marshall

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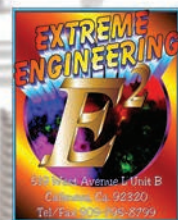
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# QUESTIONS FOR ALL Y'ALL

**R**eading the incoming mail has taught me a few things. All y'all know lotsa stuff about lotsa things. Our vast community of common sense wisdom reminds me of a couple of quips from the not-too-distant past.

Corporate America consultant and overall business guru Tom Peters (one of my favorite reads/listens back in the day when I was a slave to the corporate machine) used to quip about how the average Vermont farmer could effortlessly outmaneuver the Ivy League elites clogging up corporate boardrooms.

And then there was conservative commentator William F. Buckley, Jr. He said something to the effect of, "I would rather be governed by the first 2,000 names in the Boston telephone directory than by the 2,000 faculty members of Harvard University."

That second one gives me a great idea, seeing we're in a timeout between Presidential administrations. The old guy is taking more naps and the new guy doesn't officially take charge until January 20, 2025. How about if we refine Buckley's suggestion just a bit? I propose the following ...

Let's fire Congress — all of them — and replace those bozos with *Handgunner* readers selected at random.

We wouldn't need 535 at a time because that would just lead to far too many 9mm vs. .45 ACP arguments

— we'd never get anything done. I figure a dozen or so would be an efficiently sized workgroup. Thirty-day rotations (forced term limits) would keep things fresh. Oh, and no repeat terms. Get in there, make some tough decisions without re-election pressure, and go back home when the next shift arrives.

There. Fixed it.

I'm kinda serious about this, but the reason I got on this topic is that I thought it would be fun to query the *Handgunner* readership on some things. Put out some burning questions to see what comes back in the mail. I'll agree to report back what the community says in a future *Vantage Point*.

I've always been a vocal critic of our community being too "binary." You know what I mean. Some technique or opinion is either the one and only answer or the stupidest thing ever. I tend to believe with many things, there can be more than one "correct" answer. For example, will (fill in Weaver or Isosceles here, depending on your binary opinion) save your life or get you killed on the street?

Speaking of ...

## Weaver Or Isosceles?

Fess up. How do you shoot? I figure I'm somewhere in between, stealing the best elements of both. I definitely make liberal use of my support hand, both



Most new pistols seem to be red-dot-ready these days. Have you embraced them? Or are you on the Irons Sights Forever team?

with the grip strength and to pull back toward the body, opposing the forward pressure by shooting-side arm. What I don't do is get all wrapped around the axle over exact foot and arm positions. Rather, I've let my body find its naturally desired "fighting stance."

Thoughts? Have you died "on the street" from using the "wrong" technique?

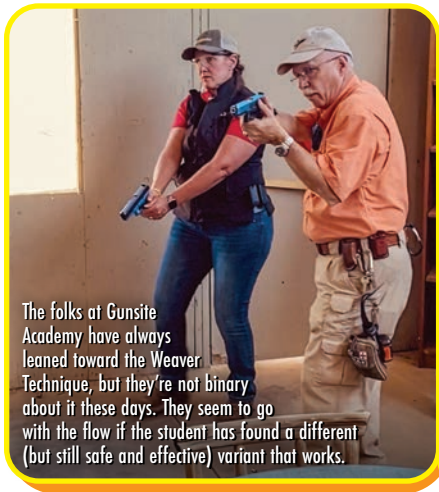
## Where'd Our Thumbs Go?

Can you tell I've been spinning Diana Ross on the turntable this week? Regardless, when shooting a pistol (let's set aside wheelguns for the moment), where do your thumbs go? I've tried three variations over the years: curled down, pointed forward at the target, and, more recently, pointed straight up in the air. Not to influence your responses, but my body and brain keep coming back to straight ahead, even though I tend to interfere with the slide lock lever with some pistols. No worries, my reload habit involves racking the slide anyway, so I don't really care if the slide locks open from a stray thumb after the last round.

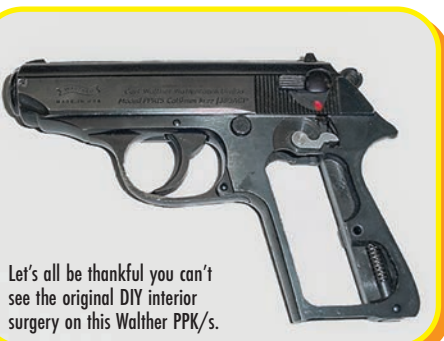
How about you?

## Do You Carry At Home?

If you're reading this magazine, I'm guessing you own one, or probably more, guns. So, they're in the home when you're there. The question *du jour* is, do you carry on your person when puttering around the house? If so, why? If not, why not?



The folks at Gunsite Academy have always leaned toward the Weaver Technique, but they're not binary about it these days. They seem to go with the flow if the student has found a different (but still safe and effective) variant that works.



Let's all be thankful you can't see the original DIY interior surgery on this Walther PPK/s.

Tom has attended classes in which different thumb techniques have been taught as "the ideal way." How about you?



A lot of folks I interact with do, but I won't mention names in the interest of national security.

### Ever DIY-Wrecked?

I won't use any names in the compilation results of our collective wisdom and soul-baring exercise here — except my own. I trashed an old Interarms imported Walther PPK/s many years ago and have written about it here before. The process involved a Dremel. It wouldn't feed much of any defensive hollow-point ammo, so in my infinite lack of wisdom, I figured some feed ramp reshaping was in order. It didn't end well for the gun, for me, or even the Dremel bits. Humanity was dimin-

ished. Thankfully, the folks at Cylinder and Slide were able to raise steel from the dead.

How about you? What's your best DIY the Destructor story?


### Do You Use a Red Dot?

I get a lot of love and hate mail about red dot sights. The love seems to far outweigh the hate, likely because we're all getting older, and those red dots are just so easy to see with aging eyes. But the haters sure are passionate. Some even want to ban red dot users from owning handguns.

Are you a fan of trying new technology, or are you still ticked off about the time they started putting scopes on perfectly good iron-sighted rifles?

### My End Of The Deal

I figure there's validity to this crowd-sourcing approach. After all, the artificial intelligence we're so hot and bothered about now is nothing more than a massive aggregation of knowledge with some analysis and observation layered on top. In this case, we've got real, honest-to-goodness human experience behind the data.

If any of the burning topics above inspire you, drop me a note at Editor@AmericanHandgunner.com and let me know. I'll keep track and report back. If you send anything unduly embarrassing, I'll even stick a fake name on it before publication. Pinky  swear on that.



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Pictured: Integrated Magwell Frame add-on.

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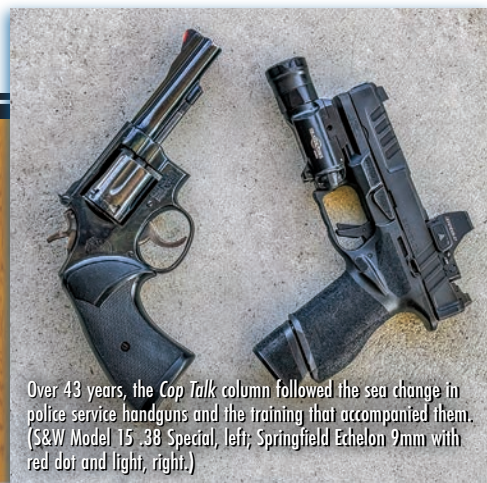
## TIME FOR A CHANGE

**W**e've covered a lot of change in 43 years in this column. It's time for one more. Where the heck is the *Cop Talk* column usually found in this space? That bears some explanation.

I wrote the first *Cop Talk* column in *American Handgunner* for the July-August 1981 issue. Founder and editor Jerry Rakusan told me at the time that a reader survey showed up to 40% of the magazine's readership were police officers. Their world certainly deserved their own corner of this magazine.

Sadly, Jerry Rakusan passed away. Other editors took turns leading *Handgunner*, including career San Diego policeman Roy Huntington, now retired from both SDDP and editorship but still Special Projects Editor. Current editor Tom McHale told me there has been a lot of readership push for something covering armed citizen trends in gear, tactics and techniques, and self-defense law. While we still have tons of law enforcers reading this magazine, they no longer number 40%.

At a 2024 Continuing Legal Education Credit course for the State Bar of Texas, Mas gives attorneys advice on defending deadly force cases.



Over 43 years, the *Cop Talk* column followed the sea change in police service handguns and the training that accompanied them. (S&W Model 15 .38 Special, left; Springfield Echelon 9mm with red dot and light, right.)

Why is that? One reason is that recent trends of anti-police sentiment in the media and in politics have reduced the number of police personnel, period. Another is that our magazine group has long since offered the lawdogs their own magazine, *American Cop*, first in print and now digital: *AmericanCop.com*, expertly edited by Erick Gelhaus. There is no more gun-oriented law enforcement publication in current electronic journalism than *American Cop*.

### What To Expect

The current feedback Tom received from readers was they wanted input that armed citizens, as well as police could benefit from. The fact is America's police and law-abiding citizens are natural allies in the eternal War On Crime, as much as the gun prohibitionists try to drive them apart.

Historically, American citizens have modeled their choice of sporting rifles on what their military used (the bolt action did not begin to dominate the hunting fields until our military adopted the 1903 Springfield, and the autoloading rifle didn't become really popular in the deer woods until M1 Garand-trained vets came back from WWII and Korea).

However, they tended to model on police for their defensive handguns: The 2" .38 revolvers were long the choice of those with carry permits until the universal adoption of the police service pistol presaged the dominance of the autoloader for "civilian" concealed carry and the AR15 patrol rifle supplanted the 12-gauge "riot gun" and is on its way to doing so as a home defense weapon.

The *Cop Talk* column began when the double action service revolver and the slide-action shotgun were the majority armament of American police

and went on to see them replaced with a light-mounted (and increasingly, optics-mounted) high-capacity autoloader in most police duty holsters and an AR in most patrol cars. We watched training progress from square-range rote shooting qualifications to high-tech electronic simulators and actual simulated gunfights with Simunitions.

That's where we've been. Where we're going will emphasize more the techniques of discreet but rapidly accessible concealed carry, the experiences of armed citizens as well as cops in lethal force encounters, and input from those who make and test state-of-the-art guns, holsters and ammunition. We'll be looking at law and case law, and trends in the courts. (Hint: Soros-funded prosecutors don't like armed citizens any better than they like the police.)

### The Background

Nineteen years as chair of the Firearms/Deadly Force Training Committee of the American Society of Law Enforcement Trainers and 20+ years now on the Advisory Board of the International Law Enforcement Educators and Trainers Association have given me access to a great many police sources. Those have the only impartial databases for info on how the given firearm or ammunition performs "on the street." Two years as co-vice chair of the Forensic Evidence Committee of the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, as well as 46 years as an expert witness in gun cases and shooting cases, has afforded me a lot of access and knowledge as to how these things go down in court. Training like Tom Givens' outstanding annual Rangemaster Tactical Conference is one of my regular teaching stops, and while there, I soak up as much as I can from the many Subject Matter Experts, which I'll try to distill in this column to those who couldn't attend.

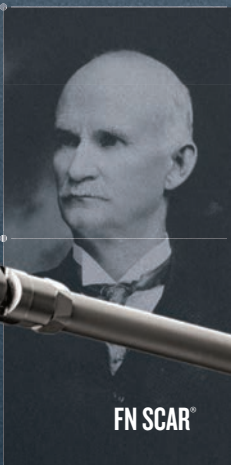
Stay tuned. We're not abandoning cops: Everything we write for the armed citizen will be relevant to the off-duty or plainclothes law enforcement officer caught up in the exact same situation under discussion.



Mas has published several books and training videos on deadly force and concealed carry.



# TO SHAKE THE HAND OF JOHN MOSES BROWNING, HOLD AN FN.



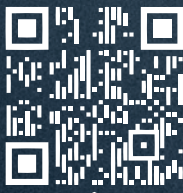
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## HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?

In the early days of practical shooting competition, most shooters used 1911-style semi-autos in .45 ACP, with seven-round (eight-round for the avant-garde) magazines. Standard procedure was to figure out how many magazine changes were needed to complete the course of fire, plus one extra just in case. As courses of fire became more elaborate to increase the round count, sometimes we'd start a stage carrying seven or eight extra magazines.

Some of the skinnier shooters, for example, women with 25" waists, would run out of space. I can remember magazine carriers with three magazines stacked vertically. As competitors switched to smaller caliber cartridges and high-capacity magazines, the problem went away.



Springfield Armory XD with a spare magazine in a synthetic belt pouch. Pocket knife is the Native by Spyderco.



Another nice setup for the gentleman of good taste: HK Compact .40 S&W, one spare magazine, SureFire flashlight and CRKT pocketknife.



Nighthawk Custom .45 in vintage Davis leather, including a single magazine belt pouch. Theoretically, leather can stretch and loosen. In practice, this pouch remains as secure as ever despite years of use.

## RECOMMENDED AMMO DAILY SERVING

What about carrying for self-defense? I tend to the middle of the road. If I feel the circumstances are so hostile I need two or three extra magazines and 50+ rounds total, I'm likely to just stay home. I'm speaking of personal defense here, not of the needs of police personnel.

Statistically, most personal defense situations can be resolved by simply displaying the firearm or with one or two shots fired. Nonetheless, at a minimum, I think a defensive handgun should be accompanied by at least one full reload. With a semiautomatic handgun, that means one spare magazine. I'm most comfortable with a single-stack 1911-style pistol in .45 ACP. With seven-round magazines, one in the chamber and one spare magazine that means 15 rounds are available, or 17 with eight-round magazines.

If I'm wearing a GLOCK 19 with a round chambered and full magazine, I have 16 rounds in the gun. Why bother with a spare magazine? Two reasons: One, after an encounter, even if only two or three shots are fired, it is sound practice to restore the pistol to full capacity when the opportunity arises. Two, although semi-autos are very reliable, malfunctions can occur. Sometimes, the best cure is to dump the magazine, cycle the slide to clear any obstructions and reload with a fresh magazine.

If it makes you feel better, there's no harm in carrying two spare magazines. Personally, I'd rather have just one and make space on the belt or in a pocket for those other two basic items: a compact flashlight and a pocketknife.

## WHAT ABOUT PRACTICE

What about ammo for maintaining skill levels? In normal times, a box of cartridges on hand would be sufficient since we can just buy more as needed. But these are not normal times. In fact these are rather strange times, when ammunition and even components are expensive and often hard to find.

Handgun shooting enthusiasts, who I expect includes most readers of this magazine, will find some way to shoot as much as they want. Sometimes, it is with a rimfire understudy; sometimes, it is by reloading. But many, likely the majority, of those who choose handguns for personal protection are not enthusiasts. For them, maintaining a basic level of shooting skill is just another routine task, like mowing the lawn or maintaining a vehicle.

How much shooting is needed varies from one individual to another. I think a reasonable minimum is five range sessions annually with at least 50 rounds per session. I know, to a handgun enthusiast, this sounds like a pitifully small amount. When I was shooting competitively, I shot about 25,000 rounds annually, while the top shooters shot twice as much or more. Realistically, very few handgun owners are prepared to shoot even a thousand rounds annually. I expect the minimum standard suggested (five sessions of 50 rounds, 250 rounds annually) would be an increase for most handgun owners.

Most of us like saving money. One way to do so is to use inexpensive ammo, or range reloads, for your prac-

tice sessions. I still suggest firing a few rounds of the loads you use for defense. Try a bullseye target at 10 yards and fire two five-shot groups just to check sighting in and functioning. That's only one box of expensive ammunition in a year, and it is money well spent.

How much ammunition to have on hand is a personal choice, depending on your finances and circumstances. For most people, 150 or 200 rounds on hand is ample. I can understand the self-sufficiency aspect of having thousands of rounds. If a huge supply makes you happy, I say, why not? Just be aware there's a good chance someone else will end up with most of it.



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# .38 SPECIAL PENETRATION PART 2

Once, while cross-country skiing in Yellowstone, I was following the ski tracks of the local biologists, who were monitoring bear hibernation activity. I figured the bears were all sleeping, so I was good, at least until huge paw tracks began crisscrossing the ski tracks.

I know little about defending myself against large creatures, but as a reloader, however, I know your best bet is a heavy bullet with a generous meplat. The goal is not expansion but penetration. I set out to design some loads that had accuracy and softer recoil for follow-up shots.

I picked the Lee 452-300-RF six-cavity gas check mold. I use Sage's Outdoor gas checks because I can pop them on before sizing, and they stay on. I sized these bullets at 0.452" and used Carnauba Blue lube from LSStuff.com.

## LOADING DETAILS

I did a little homework, and one point is consistent: Crimp is your friend. For those who don't play with heavy recoil, crimp jump is a real thing. This happens when the rearward thrust from a gun's recoil pulls the bullets out of their crimp.

I settled on a Lee Factory Crimp Die for .454 Casull. This die is unique because it uses a carbide ring to size the cartridge and keep the crimp concentric. You heard correctly: This die re-sizes the case after bullet seating. Usually, .454 chambers have tight tolerances. This die ensures the cartridges will chamber.

My setup for reloading the .454 is the Lee 40th Anniversary Challenger Press, using their new Breech Lock Dies. The Lee Challenger Press has the Lee Lever Prime System, which is an ingenious metal piece that balances in the machined cuts in the ram. For single-stage priming, it is the simplest and fastest method to get consistently seated primers.

## CHARGING

I was looking for moderate pressures and started with Lovex Buffalo Rifle. This generally gives reduced recoil in the .45 caliber straight-walled cartridges in reduced loads. For the .454, loads over 90% capacity with 300-grain bullets are still "light" loads.

In my experience, I can load most straight-walled cartridges to capacity and still run at moderate pressure. For the .45 family of cartridges, this is

almost the rule. Twenty-five grains of Buffalo Rifle pushed the 300-grain gas check bullet at an average of 1,100 fps.

The .454 Casull cartridges need the thicker cup of a rifle primer, and enough of a spark to consistently ignite the load. I used CCI 450 Small Rifle Magnum primers.

## TESTING

I used a 1" piece of exterior plywood and four layers of denim to simulate bones and hide and backed this with ballistic gelatin. After the plywood and denim, the bullet continued into 41" of ballistic gelatin.

After a while, I ran it up to 26 grains, which averaged 1,185 fps. In an S&W 460 460XVR with a 7.5" barrel, it barely raised the barrel off the shooting rest. It felt like a 9mm. Eventually, I moved over to my Ruger Alaskan, with a 2.5" barrel. Even in the lighter gun, follow up shots were possible.

Before you think, "That's not very hot for a .454 Casull," let me point out that this is the purpose of this endeavor. Some of the hottest .44 Magnum loads run 1,400 fps with 225 grains or about 980 foot pounds of energy. The 10mm loads can push 200 grains to 1,100 or so fps., or about 550 FPE. Most of the light loads I tested exceeded 1,000 foot pounds.

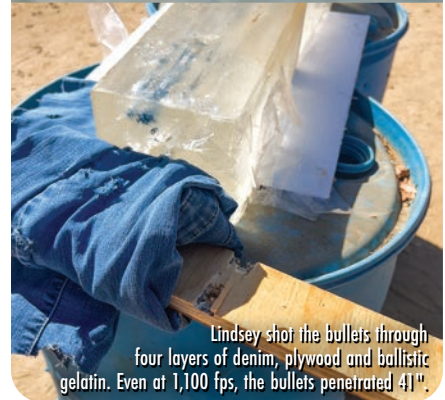
## MORE JUICE

Buffalo Rifle did the trick for soft, low-pressure shooting, but it barely crested 1,200 fps with a full case. I could

The Lee 452-300-RF mold produces a gas check bullet with a wide meplat. Lindsey used Sage's Outdoors gas checks and Carnauba Blue lube from LSStuff.com.



Lindsey believes the Lee Carbide Factory Crimp Die produces the most concentric and consistent crimp. This die has a carbide ring that sizes the case after seating.



Lindsey shot the bullets through four layers of denim, plywood and ballistic gelatin. Even at 1,100 fps, the bullets penetrated 41".

place the 452-300-RF bullets within 4" at 25 yards, regardless of the load. This was good, but I knew I needed something with a little more sauce.

I began using 3N37. I started with 15.0 grains and increased the load incrementally. The groups tightened up at 15.3 grains, which averaged 1,307 fps. This was more like it. *It dramatically splintered the plywood and sped through 48" of gelatin, striking the backstop of our range.* The S&W 460XVR with a 7.5" barrel was printing headshots at 25 yards. At 15.6 grains, I averaged 1,340 fps, with a very low SD. This is 1,196 FPE. The 450XVR effortlessly spat the 300-grain pills out, and I was practically running a clinic on soft-shooting monster killers.

The empty brass extracted as if they were lubricated, and they were less stressed when sizing. I'm pretty sure there are experts out there who know that the more powerful, the better. However, the cartridge I have been loading exceeds the hottest .44 magnum performance by far, which is why the .454 Casull was designed in the first place.





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## TEAM TACTICS WITH INJURED OR DISABLED MEMBERS

Environmental mapping is one of my first steps when traveling outside my home. What does my current environment tell me about my escape routes, dangers I need to avoid and risks I can mitigate to avoid a situation altogether? What is the safest way out of the building or area? Your mapping plan will change according to your ability and the abilities of those with you. Many are less nimble than they used to be, and some of us have injuries that limit movement and speed.

### TOOLS EQUIPMENT

I carry a firearm wherever possible. In non-permissible areas, my secondary tools are a blade, impact weapon, flexible weapons and a medical/stop-the-bleed kit.

You must understand how to use the tools, be comfortable with them, and apply them under pressure, all while assisting the injured or dealing with your injury. Can you present your tools from unconventional positions, off-hand, one-handed, moving with others attached to you? Have you been trained in any executive protection programs? Your family is the most important executive you will ever protect! Consider a class with Steve Tarani (POTUS 45 pre-election detail) or the Gunsite Tactical Concealed Carry course.

### LIMITATIONS

What are my limitations with my injury, my injured partner, or my loved one? Can we move swiftly and, most of all, safely? Suppose I attempt to move faster than my slowest or am injured, and we fall or further our injury. In that case, it will put us into an even worse situation. Can you take an honest evaluation of your limitations? That will provide you with critical information. It allows you to map your environment with the escape routes, cover, concealment and other options available to the condition of your limitations.

What about limitations on carrying weapons? Can I use my dominant hand, or is it out of commission? Do I have to carry off-hand, which usually increases time for presentations, reloads and malfunctions, especially for those who do not train for alternate carry position and off-hand carry? These manipulations become a problem for most of us because they are not performed with the unconscien-

tious skill level of our dominant hand. We must “think” about it, which takes our bandwidth away from problem-solving to the tool, and while you are dealing with your tool, the situation evolves.

So, when developing your training program, include those things you suck at because that might just be the only way you can carry or have your “tool” available.

### MOVEMENT

Movement while injured could be slow and difficult, especially if a cast, crutches, a wheelchair, a walker, or other lower body limitations limit you or your partner. I agree with the phrase “mobility is survivability,” and if I can move, even slowly, that is my “A” option. Limited by an immobile arm is less restrictive in this area; however, it fits the topic of limitation on your tools!

Have you discussed movement with your loved ones and partner where you can give verbal directions and trust they will be where you need them when moving? Or do you need to have one hand on them to ensure they move when I want them to move? Can we utilize our preferred exit, or is it blocked off for the use of a wheelchair, walker, or other items that assist me and my injury/handicap? Proper utilization of mapping your environment will assist you in this area.

### SECURE IN PLACE


If I cannot move or exit the area, sheltering in place is my last option if I am outside my residence because I am in an unfamiliar area accessible by anyone, friendly or threatening. I may not know



who is who. Can I get to an area I can secure with a door and walls, or do I only have tables and the corner of the room? Suppose the person I am with is the one limiting our movement. Can I utilize them to secure a specific “area of responsibility” because they have a firearm or other tool? Or are they limited to doing nothing, and you are responsible for all areas? Moving to an area where our backs are to a safe area (concrete wall, tree, hill, etc.) where I can see any threat coming in my view. Can I use tables or foliage for concealment?

Place yourself in the best ambush position possible. Having the secure area barricaded with furniture, locks, etc., will give you time to act.

### SUMMARY

The main takeaway is to understand that environment and the situation will dictate your response. Proper environmental mapping and training will ensure you have a basic outline to apply to your specific event and adjust according to your situation. Lastly, I want to evaluate myself or those with my limitations honestly so we can plan accordingly. 

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**SOMETIMES  
YOU BUY THE GUN**

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**SOMETIMES  
YOU BUY THE STORY**

I'm addicted to online law enforcement seizure gun auctions. Some folks struggle with prescription opiates, cigarettes, or pornography. For me, it's gun auctions. Decent collectible guns will often command decent collectible gun prices. However, sometimes you find some reasonably priced gems.

## Details

The fact that these sales exist at all is like sand on the eyeball for Chuck Schumer and Nancy Pelosi. Particularly for smaller LE agencies, it is a daily grind to keep the organization running in the black. In my own little town, we have held civic fundraisers to buy body armor for the local fuzz. There is something poetic about the SWAT team charging into harm's way behind a ballistic shield that was purchased by fourth graders. One way for police agencies to turn a little extra coin is by selling confiscated firearms.

The Leftists of the world naturally consider this utter sacrilege. If you view all guns as evil and any firearm taken out of circulation as a net win, then anything that reverses that trend is obviously of the Devil. However, 328 million Americans already own more than 400 million firearms. This is spitting in the ocean.

This particular example began life as a Parkerized Rock Island Armory GI Standard MS in .45 ACP — a full-size frame mated to a stubby slide with a 4.25" barrel. The gun comes with fixed low-profile GI sights. The end result is reliably reliable and looks cool to boot. NIB, this gun sports an MSRP of \$549. However, I didn't buy this pistol for its pedigree. I bid on this piece for the story.

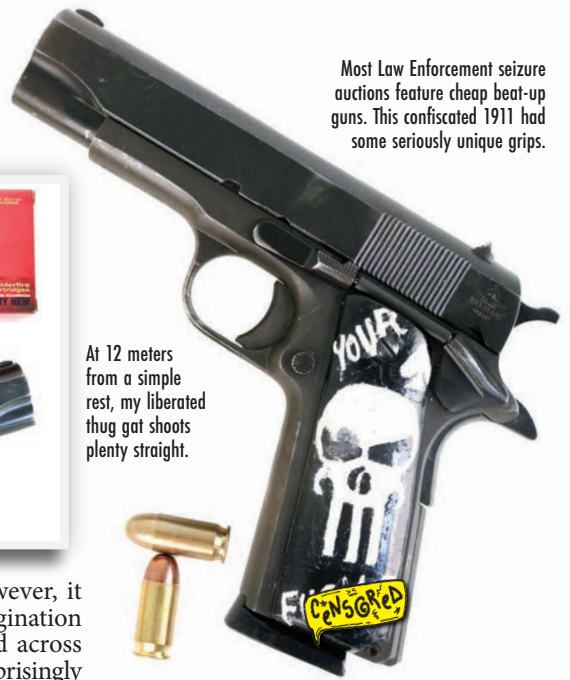
## Specifics

I have seen pistol grips cut from rare exotic woods, bone, antler, mammoth ivory and meteorites. These, however, had none of that. They were clearly crafted by a criminal.

The online photos each had a spot of electrical tape strategically applied to keep



At 12 meters from a simple rest, my liberated thug got shoots plenty straight.



Most Law Enforcement seizure auctions feature cheap beat-up guns. This confiscated 1911 had some seriously unique grips.

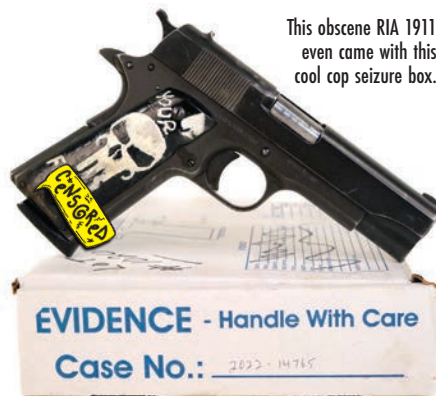
the auction family friendly. However, it did not take a great deal of imagination to tease out the details. Plastered across each side of the weapon was a surprisingly well-executed rendition of the Punisher emblem. However, there was also the sort of word you would never utter in the presence of your grandmother. In fact, say this particular word twice in a PG13 movie, and that film automatically becomes an R.

## Philosophical Musings

I once attended a young man in the emergency department with a fresh gunshot wound. His youthful body was artificially aged with the stigmata of a life lived fast and hard. He had clearly spent some time in prison and had the tats to prove it. Slathered across his right pectoral in that classic jailhouse scrawl was "Born to Loose!"

Beyond the fact that this kid was struggling with a couple of extra holes that God had not put there in the first place, at some point, he had thought it a good idea to have his cellie mark up his chest with a guitar string needle and some blue ink by Bic. In their enthusiasm, they failed to engage spell check. "Born to Lose!" would have been bad enough. "Born to Loose!" was simply Homeric.

Similarly, the anonymous former owner of this obscene 1911 pistol had decided to express himself uniquely in the grips. The Punisher iconography



This obscene RIA 1911 even came with this cool cop seizure box.

was actually quite well-executed. The ace of spades added a spot of flair. The grammatical error, however, just turbocharged the whole thing.


## Grand Scheme

There are 1.9 million people incarcerated in the USA. That's one out of every 173 Americans. By any reasonable metric, that's just sad.

American prisons are not filled with psychopaths. There are a few, to be sure, and they make great fodder for lurid Netflix documentaries. However, rank-and-file convicts are not cannibals or blood-crazed lunatics. They just have poor impulse control.

This customized heater likely looked right awesome, poking jauntily out of those low-slung britches. Then, it likely looked pretty awkward when presented as evidence to a jury. I will forever imagine the details, but it probably earned the poor shmuck another six months at sentencing.

This criminal-owned, cop-seized Rock Island Armory M1911 assumes a prime spot in my own collection. No offense to General Patton, but I tend to eschew profanity myself. My personal arsenal is PG13 at worst, so I sourced a strip of Velcro to obscure the F-bomb. At some point, my mom might wander by.

This pitiful, obscene gun provides a tantalizing window into a darker, uglier world — a world of failing education and a social situation awash in tragedy. However, I like it, I really do, in some ways more than the top-flight expensive stuff that sits to its right and to its left. Sometimes, you buy the gun. Sometimes, you buy the story. 

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## MANAGING LUBRICATION, CRUD & PARTS

**T**here will be oil, but which one? Okay, I'm not a chemist or a petroleum engineer, I'm a gun mechanic. Oil is essential to any mechanism, but the wrong oil can "gum up the works" for sure. I get a lot of calls for servicing a pistol that does not function correctly. Many times, it's oil-related. Too heavy an oil is actually worse than no oil at all. The latest pistol I had in was a European target pistol, a Pardini SP-22. The owner had taken a few years off from competitive shooting and now wanted to get back in the game. The trigger in his pistol would not function. On inspection, I found that all the oil had dried out on the sear pin as well as the hammer pin, preventing free parts movement. I had to soak the internals for *two days* in mineral spirits to free them.

The oil he was using was good for frequent shooting but not good for long-term storage; it was too thick

and dried out. Firearms are complex mechanisms with many interconnected parts. Those parts are usually close tolerance fit and require only a light coating of oil.

The late Jerry Keefer and I used to talk about this a bit. There is so much unburned powder and priming compound during shooting that it actually can foul some internal mechanisms; add too heavy an oil, and you get a gritty mud-like substance in the mechanism. Grease is a no-go for *most* guns.

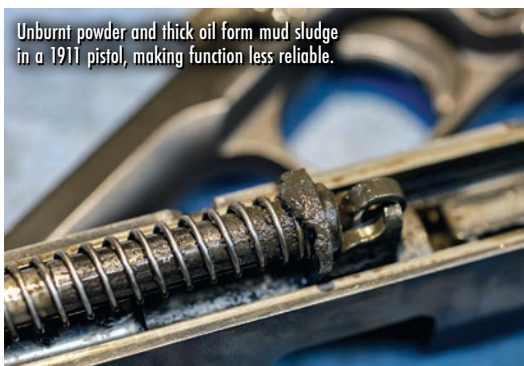
So, what oil is best? I recommend a light oil if you are shooting frequently; you might need to oil more often, but it does not dry out and, during cleaning, makes it easier to flush grit and grime away. After every shooting session, I wipe down my firearms with a slightly heavier oil on the exterior surfaces to prevent rust. For long-term storage, I



A selection of different weight oils from Wilson Combat, which are blended for frequent to heavy use of firearms.

might go even heavier, but knowing that a thorough cleaning is required before shooting. I use a spray-on cosmoline product.

What oils are best? I have all sorts — too many to list. But I like to choose my oil by a simple method; I want my shooting oil to be more like water than honey. That said, I don't think one oil does it all. Wilson Combat has come out with a good kit that offers four oils in a variety of weights or viscosities to cover all aspects of lubrication and protection. Each one comes with recommendations for when and how to use it. This is the right approach in my experience; all four cover most conditions.



Unburnt powder and thick oil form mud sludge in a 1911 pistol, making function less reliable.

## CLEANING THE CRUD

**N**ow that we have a handle on oil, how do I clean the mechanism?

In my shop, I use a parts cleaning tank that holds a gallon of cleaner and has a spray pump; there's a shelf with drain holes that keeps the parts from the bottom of the tank. In my tank, I use mineral spirits. Mineral spirits do a great job removing oil and gunk, and it doesn't dry the parts of all the oil like a "brake cleaner" or acetone. Spirits will not harm bluing or plastic. You do need to remove the grips and optics. Old toothbrushes are great for getting into small areas under the slide and frame. After cleaning, I blow the parts dry with compressed air. If you don't have room for a parts cleaner, you can use a surplus ammo can or a gallon paint can from the big box store to air-tight seal the spirits between uses.

## RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

**R**ecently I had a Pennsylvania Gunsmith School student reach out to me about how to keep track of "The Numbers." By this, he meant all the numbers related to machine work on guns. It is a great question. It's impossible to remember everything, particularly when you might do it once a year.

I have kept a three-ring binder full of articles and instructions from other smiths and manufacturers for parts installation and machining. The things I learn along the way for myself I keep in a "recipe" box. These are index cards with all the details of a custom process: setup, speeds and feeds for the mill or lathe and the numbers for the digital readouts on machines. Most custom smithing is just that: manual machine work, one of a kind. I might install one or two Smith & Wesson revolver sights on a 1911 in a year. I just can't remember all the fine details of that complex install. The small index cards are great since I can have them right next to the work. I can also make additions or corrections to the card.



Hand-written "recipe" cards for custom pistol work detailing the turning speeds and feed rates of machining and listing specific measurements used in the process.

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## ¿PARA QUÉ? ¡PORQUE ES MUY MACHO! [WHY? BECAUSE HE'S VERY MANLY!]



Hi Point pistols, introduced in 1993, hold the title of most successful blowback operated big bore auto-loading pistols.

**O**n the surface, the Hi Point C-9 pistol and the Spanish Astra 400/M1921 pistol don't seem to have much in common other than being single-action autoloaders chambered for a potent 9mm cartridge and using a single stack magazine. The Hi-Point is 9x19mm, has a polymer frame and a cast Zamak (zinc) alloy slide that's painted black. The Astra is all steel, beautifully made, rust blued, and chambered in a comparably powered but long obsolete 9x23mm Largo caliber.

These two pistol families share the distinction of being the most successful big bore, blowback operated autoloaders ever produced. Production numbers for the Hi-Point pistols, made in full size and compact models chambered in 9mm, .40 S&W and .45 ACP, exceed a million. The Astra family is a distant second by comparison, with about 106,000 Model 400 pistols in 9x23mm Largo, 59,000 Model 600/43 pistols in 9 x 19mm and another 11,400 commercial Model 800 Condor pistols in 9 x 19mm made from 1957 through 1968.



The Astra 700 Condor was a post-war refinement of the series sold to the civilian market. It was the last of the tubular receiver Astra models.



In 1924, the Spanish blowback operated JO-LO-AR pistol was introduced. The largest calibers it was offered in were 9mm Largo and .45 ACP.



Why did so many big bore, heavy recoiling, hard to rack, blowback pistols originate in Spain? Unless you want to look like a total creampuff, I wouldn't ask these Spanish Legionnaires.



Over 23,000 H&K VP70 semi-auto pistols were sold.

Aside from the Hi-Point and Astras mentioned above, there are five more large caliber, simple blowback, pistols that also enjoyed some military and commercial success, four introduced in the 1920s and one in 1970.

### Campo Giro

The first two were the Model 1913 and revised Model 1913-16 Campo Giro pistols designed by retired Spanish Army Lieutenant Colonel Don Venancio López de Ceballos y Aguirre, third Count of Campo-Giro, and chambered in the potent 9x23mm Bergman & Bayard cartridge. Adopted by the Spanish Army, the Campo-Giro pistols had three things going

for them that the Spanish liked: They worked, the simple blowback design was easier and less expensive for them to manufacture with their domestic industrial capabilities, and they were designed by a Spaniard. The Campo-Giro pistols emerged at a time when most of Spain's gun industry was tied up making Ruby-style pistols for the French military fighting on the Western Front. Production of the Model 1913 likely didn't exceed 1,400 guns.

Approximately 13,700 of the simplified Model 1913-16 were made after France's World War I needs were met and served Spanish troops until the Astra 400/Model of 1921 replaced it as the standard military sidearm. The Campo-Giro laid the foundation for the

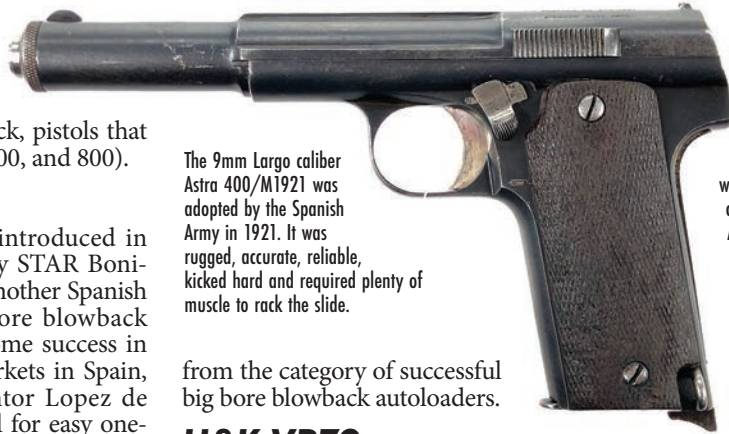
rise of Astra as a major Spanish arms maker and was the technological antecedent of all their tubular slide, blowback, pistols that followed (Astra 300, 400, 600, and 800).

## JO-LO-AR Pistol

The JO-LO-AR pistol introduced in 1924 and manufactured by STAR Bonifacio Echeverria S.A. was another Spanish designed and built big bore blowback autoloader that enjoyed some success in the civilian and police markets in Spain, Peru and Portugal. Inventor Lopez de Arnaiz conceived the pistol for easy one-handed operation and they had distinctive spur triggers and a long cocking lever along the side of the slide. The design was sturdy enough to handle both 9mm Largo and .45 ACP chamberings.

## The French Le Francaise

The French designed and manufactured Le Francaise line of blowback pistols are most noteworthy for their double-action only trigger mechanism, and perhaps also that they only seem to appeal to the French. The Le Francaise Model 1928, introduced in that year and produced until 1938, was chambered in 9mm Browning Long caliber in hopes of selling it to the French military. Due to limitations of design, the pistol lacked the strength to handle the 9x19mm cartridge. The 9mm Browning Long was developed in 1903 for military use in blowback operated Browning patent pistols. Being essentially a comparatively low-powered blowback more than decade behind the times, the Le Francaise 1928 didn't impress the French military. The civilian market didn't seem to have much use for it either. It never attained the level of popularity that .25 and .32 ACP Le Francaise pistols did. An estimated 4,000 were made. Since blowback operation is considered acceptable for any caliber below 9x19mm in power, a good argument can be made to exclude the Le Francaise 1928



The 9mm Largo caliber Astra 400/M1921 was adopted by the Spanish Army in 1921. It was rugged, accurate, reliable, kicked hard and required plenty of muscle to rack the slide.

from the category of successful big bore blowback autoloaders.

## H&K VP70

One might also argue that the 9 x 19mm Heckler and Koch VP70 series of pistols made from 1970 to 1989 should be excluded from the successful big-bore blowback pistol category because it was originally conceived as machine-pistol rather than a handgun. The VP stood for Volks Pistol (people's pistol) and it was a product of Cold War fears of a Soviet invasion of Western Europe. It used a submachine gun-like, double column, dual-feed, magazine of 18-round capacity, and had a butt-stock/holster that gave it three-round burst capability when attached! Sales of the select-fire version were limited to around 3,000 but the semi-auto pistol version proved more popular, I suspect this was more because of its science-fiction appearance than its shooting characteristics. Over 23,000 semi-auto handguns were sold worldwide. Of its many unique design features, the VP70 barrel was rifled with exceptionally deep grooves specifically to reduce chamber pressure and slide velocity by allowing gas to vent past the bullet while it was traveling down the bore. The trade-off for less wear and tear on the gun was a loss of velocity.

## Hi-Point

To circle back to where we started, the real breakthrough for the big bore blowback pistols came in 1993



The 9mm Largo Spanish military Model 1913 Campo Giro was the immediate predecessor of the tubular slide Astra 300/400/600/800 series and the first successful blowback operated big bore autoloader.

when Tom Deeb of Hi-Point Firearms introduced his first pistols. Seeing the rising cost of guns, he

decided to design a reliable handgun for the civilian market that everyone could afford. Like many before him, he chose the blowback action because of its mechanical simplicity. Reliability at a low price point was the key to the success of his pistols.

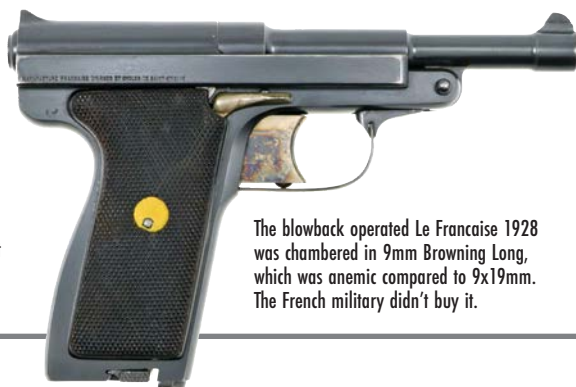
By using heavy zinc alloy and light polymer castings, he was able to drastically cut production costs in a way that wasn't possible in earlier times. Bulky, heavy and ugly, his guns also were inexpensive and reliable. In the civilian market, the Hi-Point pistol's unusually large size and weight were not the deal-breakers they would be for military and law enforcement customers.

Acknowledging that the blowback pistol's mechanical simplicity allows lower manufacturing costs, there is a serious downside to stretching the limits of the operating system with powerful chamberings of 9x19mm and above. Two undesirable characteristics of big bore blowback pistols are that they have heavier slides and a sharper recoil impulse than locked breech action guns do, and they have heavier than average recoil springs and require more, often much more, physical strength to rack the slide.

I think it's significant that Spain was the wellspring of so many successful big bore blowback operated pistols in the early 20th Century. I have to wonder if, on some level deeply embedded in their national self-image, they didn't think at the time that locked-action, recoil-operated pistols, with their easy-to-rack slides were a bit unmanly. Consider that the Spanish Foreign Legion, the aspirational model of toughness for all Spanish soldiers, wears a shirt that doesn't even have a collar button because it's meant to expose the chest. They've been wearing the same uniform since the 1920s. These Spaniards are not the type of men troubled by sharp recoil and stiff springs.



The Astra 600/43 was made under contract for Nazi Germany. Only about 10,000 of these 9x19mm pistols made it to the Germans.



The blowback operated Le Francaise 1928 was chambered in 9mm Browning Long, which was anemic compared to 9x19mm. The French military didn't buy it.

## BLACK HILLS 115-GRAIN EXP JHP

The folks at Black Hills Ammunition have long been known for making serious ammo for serious people. The company supplies match ammo for all the U.S. Service Rifle Teams and plenty of other serious folks like law enforcement and military groups. While we're



not that serious, you'll also see it a lot in this magazine when we test new guns. That's because consistency is prized for helping figure out what a new gun will really do with quality ammo.

I looked back at my records and see an incredible pattern of performance over a wide variety of handguns. A few examples of five-shot, 25-yard groups ...

Walther PDP, 0.98", Springfield Armory XD-S OSP, 1.7" Ed Brown Fueled, 0.94", EAA Girsan MCP35 LW OPS, 1.12", and the list goes on.

Why the consistency? Part of it is the care in production. To this day, every round leaving the factory is hand inspected. *Black-Hills.com*

## REAL AVID SMART FIT VISE BLOCK

I love "third hand" tools. This new one from Real Avid arguably offers both a third and fourth hand to your gun maintenance and cleaning chores.

The Smart Fit Vise Block fits into most any bench vise and is designed to hold steady a wide range of GLOCK and GLOCK-compatible pistols via an adjustable insert for the magazine well. The idea is to hold the gun solid and steady using a non-essential location that won't interfere with most cleaning and basic home gunsmithing tasks.

But that's not all. The device is perhaps even more useful for working on pistol caliber-type AR pistols or rifles. An extra AR9 pivot lock offers fourth-hand functionality by holding the upper receiver open using the rear pin location. That allows you to use both real hands for cleaning and more. MSRP is \$39.99. *RealAvid.com*



## STREAMLIGHT MICROSTREAM

Ever since I started carrying a flashlight in my pocket, I've used it every day without fail. Whether looking for lost items on the rug or under furniture, doing something outside at night, or (fill in infinite uses here), I get my money's worth.

For traditional EDC use, I use a Streamlight Wedge. For always-with-me-no-matter-what use, I have a PocketMate on my keychain. For everything else, there's the Microstream. The new model packs dual power modes. The standard beam is 50 lumens for about 3.5 hours. A doubletap on the tailcap gets you 250 lumens for an hour and a half.

The package is a tad over half the length of the Wedge (3.8") and sports a bi-directional clip so you can stick on a hat to face forward. It'll recharge via USB in about four hours. If you shop, you can find one for \$35 or so. *Streamlight.com*

## OUTERIMPACT M.R.A. RED DOT ADAPTER



Got a pistol not cut for an optic mount? Never fear. The OuterImpact M.R.A. (Modular Red Dot Adapter) is designed to bridge the gap — literally — between a standard dovetail cut on the pistol slide and the base of your optic.

As dovetail cuts vary by manufacturer, you'll need to order a version of the M.R.A. compatible with your gun. The company makes a variety of fits for lots of popular guns from Smith & Wesson, SIG, CZ, IWI, Canik, FN, H&K, Mossberg and more. There are rimfire options for popular plinkers like the Ruger and Buckmark families, too.

Installation is easy. Just remove the existing rear sight, replace it with the M.R.A. dovetail insert and affix the M.R.A. optics plate. Then, you mount the optic as normal. For my SIG P320, the installation added maybe 0.22" to the optic height over the slide. It'll run you about \$60, give or take, depending on the configuration. *OuterImpact.com*



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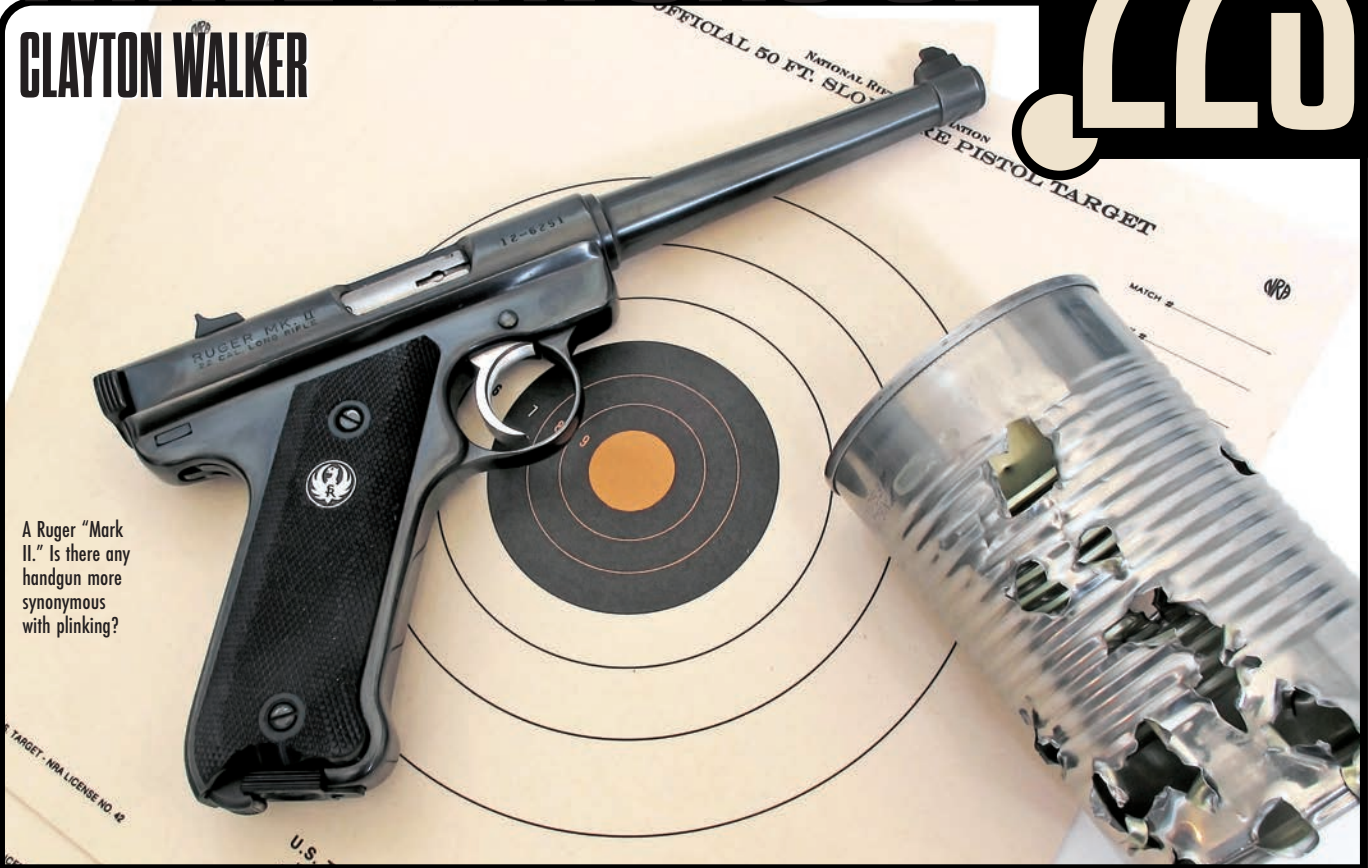
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Actual size: 11" x 17"

# THREE FLAVORS OF .22S

## CLAYTON WALKER



A Ruger "Mark II." Is there any handgun more synonymous with plinking?

## RIMFIRE ISN'T A ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL PROPOSITION!



The Astra Cub in .22 short: Small, silly, and the kind of gun many think of when they hear "twenty-two." But don't write every rimfire off!

If there's one gripe I have with shooting culture in general, it's that a great number of shooters tend to look down their nose at rimfire firearms. Some feel these aren't "real guns," especially when put in the category of 12-gauge shotguns, full-power hunting rifles, or magnum-caliber pistols. Others feel they're junior-status firearms made to be outgrown: that the .22 under the family Christmas tree is just a hop, step and jump to a Remington 700. On no shortage of other occasions, I have been told by shooters they simply find .22s "boring" or that they simply make hitting a target "too easy."

It would be an understatement to say I don't share the same opinion: I own more .22-caliber firearms than anything else, and at least one always accompanies me to any range trip. Though everyone is entitled to their opinion, I take issue with people who tend to put every rimfire gun in the same general bucket of "just a .22." Today, let's look

at three different designs that simply couldn't be more different in terms of form, function and utility.

## The S&W Model 34

For the longest time, S&W advertised their J-Frame rim-fire revolvers as "kit guns." The term didn't mean you put them together yourself, but that they were small and handy enough to be thrown into any "kit" you might think of, like a fishing tackle box or saddle pouch. The idea was that if you needed a gun for an opportune shot on a random varmint, pest or to finish off wounded game, you'd have a tool with you for the job.

These days, most city ordinances take a dim view of taking a potshot at a random bird, snake, or squirrel you might be likely to encounter on your afternoon stroll, so the "Kit Gun" concept has become a little antiquated to anyone not sitting on acres of rural property. You'd be mistaken, however, if you thought such a gun didn't have value even to a city slicker like me.

Simply put, the J-Frame .22 has tremendous worth as an understudy or trainer for the snub-nosed revolver. Despite the advances that have gone into making subcompact firearms smaller, lighter and more reliable than ever before, the snubbie will always find its way into pocket holsters by virtue of its reliability and simplicity.

Most owners will quickly realize that there is absolutely no handgun on the planet Earth that is harder to shoot. The snubbie is often saddled with the title of being a "belly gun" and nothing more, but it's an unfair label: while stiff springs and even stiffer recoil are clear stumbling blocks, the lack of results on target is almost always due to operator error.

One of the primary challenges of mastering the snubbie is making peace with a 12+-lb. pull on a gun weighing only about 20-some oz. fully loaded. It is very easy to push the barrel to and fro, and yanking that trigger straight through will almost always result in a telltale miss.

What the Model 34 offers its users is the ability to really learn the double action trigger of a J-Frame, keeping the sights pointed on target (despite the short radius) and keeping the trigger moving deliberately and evenly until the shot breaks. It also is far easier to build this muscle memory with the stiff, unpleasant recoil of most snubbies decisively tabled. Owners can further practice drawing from retention or concealment and placing rounds on target for mere pennies.

## The S&W Model 41

If there's a vote for perhaps the most unsung design in Smith and Wesson's history, I would nominate



Two Ruger .22 Autos separated by about 75 years of history. Continual refinements to the Standard Auto have resulted in the excellent "Mark IV," which still offers today's shooters outstanding value.

the Model 41. It might surprise some readers that America's largest and best-known revolver manufacturer still catalogs an autoloading handgun that's ready right out of the gate for Bullseye-level competition.

Consider this: If you wanted a gun that was capable of grouping within 2" at 50 yards, had a crisp, repeatable trigger of 3 lbs. on the dot, and was rock-solid reliable with just about any kind of ammo you stuffed into

it, what would you expect to pay? With any centerfire gun, you'd be talking somewhere in the neighborhood of \$3,000+ if you bought something akin to an Ed Brown or Wilson Combat product. You'd also pay about the same price if you sent a quality handgun in for top-flight action and accurizing work.

Meanwhile, street prices on Model 41s are about half of that if bought new or about a third of that price if one sources one of the many used models available. S&W has been making the gun since 1957.



The multiplicity of ammo choices in .22LR speaks to the number of disparate roles for which the rimfire pistol may be employed.



Smith and Wesson's Model 41. You'd have to look far and wide to find a more accurate handgun right out of the box.

The quality of the Model 41 is apparent even before one takes it to the firing line. The design is simply perfect for a gun prioritizing accuracy: The gun uses a clever system that wedges the interchangeable barrels in place with zero mechanical slop, and the sights are integral to the barrel (rather than to the reciprocating slide). Bluing is rich across the gun, magazines are easy to load and feed consistently, and there's a lot of aftermarket grip support.

The net result of all of this is a tool that will do everything it can to punch holes right where shooters want. Whenever I feel like showboating, I turn to the Model 41: The gun will help me shoot the heads off matches, split playing cards in half, and drive golf

balls out to ranges where they're no longer visible to me. If I can see it, I can hit it with this gun.

For myself and others, the Model 41 is often a "secret weapon" when it comes to local or informal matches. For example, my local range rewards the best 50-foot handgun target with a free yearly membership each month. With the Model 41 at my side (and a few boxes of CCI Green Tag), I've set more than a few top scores!

Again, others may find the Model 41 is, at the end of the day, "Still a .22," but I don't know if there's a better off-the-shelf handgun that lets handgunners find the ceiling of their abilities more easily or reliably.

### "Mark" Autoloaders

From the company's first "Standard Auto" all the way up to its newest "Mark IV" design, Ruger has been providing shooters with what may very well be the quintessential "plinking" handgun. It's usually love at first sight with this pistol: Bill Ruger designed the

gun after the Japanese Nambu, but to the layperson's eyes, the rakish lines are often reminiscent of a German Luger.

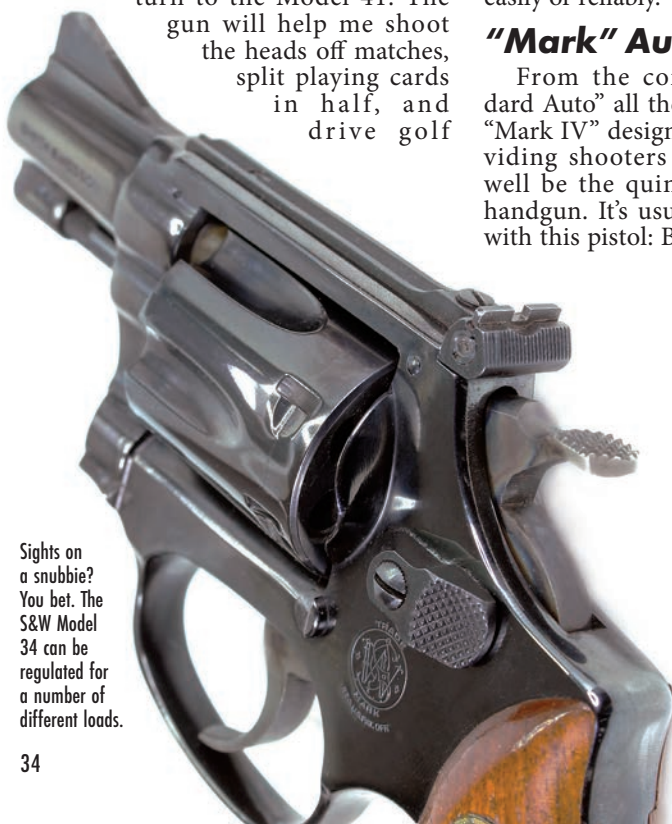
Although I've gushed on the mechanical accuracy of the Model 41, in my estimation the Ruger rimfires don't generally give up too much performance to S&W's design. You'd have to be a pretty good shot to really find that the slightly stiffer trigger or factory barrel was holding you back. Even then, the Ruger boasts a huge degree of customization, allowing it to grow with the needs of the intermediate target shooter through aftermarket triggers, sight units, and even complete upper assemblies courtesy of TacSol, Volquartsen and others.

Still, the box stock Ruger .22 Auto deserves far more credit than its appeal to tinkerers: Perhaps no single handgun has extended a warmer welcome to untold generations of American shooters.

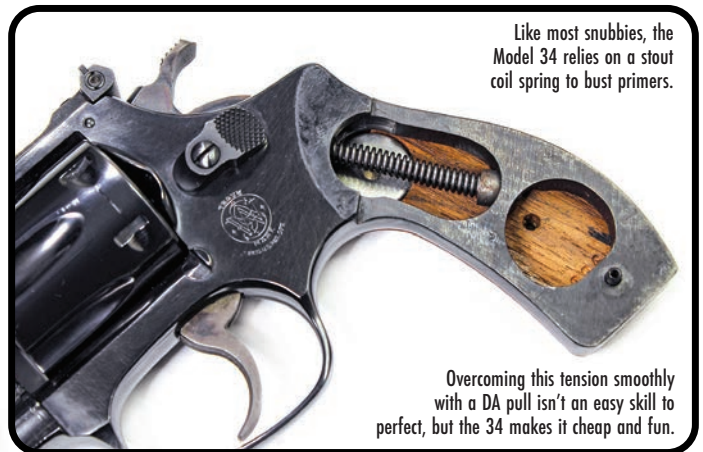
As a general rule, the Ruger "Mark" guns are fun and encouraging to the newcomer. Hardly anyone is spooked or hurt by the recoil of a .22, and as such, mashing and flinching are usually kept to a minimum. The gun seems to whisper, "You can do this!" Shooters who have listened to their trainers' instructions — almost regardless of experience or skill level — are typically rewarded with well-centered groups.

I wish more shooters thought about this more critically: The ability to hit a soda can a few paces away may be one of the very best litmus tests of early ability. When they fail at this reasonable task, or if they find it uncomfortable to persist in the attempt, new shooters are discouraged right out of the gate. If, however, new shooters realize they can put rounds on a reasonably sized target, they're going to come back from the range with a gigantic smile — and will soon want to get back out there.

I'll put this another way: *The single best thing you can do for the Second Amendment is to make another person see its value and develop their own personal relationship with it.* You can talk until you're blue



Sights on a snubbie? You bet. The S&W Model 34 can be regulated for a number of different loads.



Like most snubbies, the Model 34 relies on a stout coil spring to bust primers.

Overcoming this tension smoothly with a DA pull isn't an easy skill to perfect, but the 34 makes it cheap and fun.

in the face about marauding hordes of gang members or the intentions of the founding fathers, but there's too much risk of talking past the layperson. If someone likes shooting, however, I've found it more likely than not that they'll continue making their way down the rabbit hole until they, too, become an advocate of this essential American right.

Naturally, the humble Ruger .22 isn't the only such gun capable of making for a great introductory range trip, but it's certainly one of the most common and one of the absolute best at securing that outcome.

### "Only" A .22?

If we're going purely by the number of rounds sold, I'd reason that the humble .22 long rifle is the most popular cartridge in America. Funny how it never seems to feel that way, though. I frequently encounter shooters — both online and in real life — who too often treat it with disinterest.

Going back to the guns above, I can only conclude that such apathy stems from a lack of imagination. At least for me, the .22LR will always be my go-to caliber when it comes to shooting my best, building muscle memory on the cheap, and showing new shooters the ropes. These jobs are as important as they are different!

The Model 34 has particular value as a training aid, especially for those who wish to master the centerfire snub-nosed revolver.



It's a free country, of course, and people are free to continue to lump all rimfire handguns together as strange novelties or mere toys. However, I'd argue that such a perspective would deprive a person of some truly excellent tools that would be right at home in most gun collections. If you find me at the range, I guarantee I'll have at least one .22 along for the ride.



The diminutive .22LR, next to a .30-06 and a .44 Magnum round. By comparison, many find it slight and unserious ... an opinion I don't share.



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# RUGGER



# RXM 9MM

## STANDARD WHERE IT COUNTS; CUSTOM WHERE YOU LIKE

TOM MCHALE PHOTOS: ROB JONES/THE IMAGESMITH, LLC

**C**oined by networking technology executive Ray Noorda back in the '90s, “coopetition” is one of those made-up words, but I think it’s earned its place in the official Merriam-Webster dictionary. Our world is chock-full of successful examples of coopetition — companies working together while concurrently locked in competitive battle. It’s a bit like the New York Giants and New York Jets sharing MetLife Stadium. In more business-world examples, consider how Apple and Samsung fight over the smartphone market but share product components. Toyota and Tesla collaborated on electric vehicle technology but will cut each other off at the knees to sell an extra battery-powered go-kart or two.

We even have examples of healthy coopetition here in our industry. Throughout the history of gun companies, we’ve seen numerous examples of proprietary cartridge ideas from one gun company becoming adopted industry-wide. Or consider the Ruger 10/22. Through standardization, consumers have a wide variety of customization options from numerous independent manufacturers. Ruger’s embrace of the aftermarket is a complete win for customers and arguably one of the reasons for sales of 10/22 models exceeding 6 million.

Now, the Ruger folks have done it again and embraced the widespread success of the GLOCK platform. In a new collaborative product launch with Magpul, the company brings to market its RXM family of pistols. Magpul is supplying its EHG (Enhanced Handgun Grip) and PMAG 15 GL9 magazines (two per pistol). For those of you trapped in freedom-challenged states, the companies are offering 10-round configurations also. Ruger, of course, builds the shooty stuff.

I love this, primarily because it is just so darn customer-centric. When gun



companies cooperate on basic things like sight-mounting specs or optics-mount standards, it makes life much, much easier for us buyers.

### Appearance & Operation

I do love the look of this compact pistol. The sample shown here includes a dark gray grip frame and a “satin black-like” slide assembly — somewhere in the middle of matte and shiny. It looks fantastic — much more interesting than an all-black pistol. The trigger, magazines and controls are finished in black, too.

As for the subjective ergonomics overview, I like the feel of the RXM much more than that of a GLOCK. I’m certainly not going to complain about one of the most popular handguns in

history; I just prefer the more rounded corners of the RMX grip. While there’s still an underlying rectangle, it doesn’t feel nearly as boxy in my hand.

The pattern on all four sides of the grip (with allowances for smooth corners) is the Magpul TSP pattern. I’d describe it as skateboard tape after soaking in a hot tub listening to Miles Davis records. It’s a mellow version — still “grippy” but far less abrasive on the skin. That applies to both the shooting hand and your midsection should you carry inside the waistband. The slide features front and rear cocking serrations — standard squared grooves with a raked forward orientation.

I found the controls snug but easily operable. For example, the magazine release button, recessed in a nifty cutout,



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# RUGER RXM 9MM



# RUGER RXM 9MM



has plenty of room to travel but is still shielded from unplanned holster pressure drops. I found similar results with the slide stop. If you're of the thumb release vs. racking persuasion, you can do it without contorting your firing hand for leverage.

Takedown is all GLOCK-like with the dual spring-loaded slide lock. First, clear the gun carefully, point at a safe backstop carefully, and release the trigger. Then, just retract the slide a hair, about 1/16th of an inch, being careful not to go so far as to cock the striker, and pull down on the dual slide lock levers. The easy way is to use one hand to apply pressure on the levers while retracting the slide with the other until things release. At this point, the slide assembly moves right off the fiery end, and you can remove the recoil spring and barrel for maintenance. Super easy.

## Modularity

As with a growing number of pistols on the market, the "gun" isn't really the gun, at least not in the traditional sense. The "gun" is a fire control assembly mounted by pins in the polymer grip module, in this case, the Magpul EHG (Enhanced Handgun Grip) frame. That means you'll be able to order different sizes, shapes and colors of grip modules. Just remove the serialized fire control module from your existing gun and drop it into the new module. Add the slide, barrel and recoil spring from the old gun, and you're off to the range. The sky is the limit for grip frame options and future variety only relies on what consumers demand and what the market offers.

Removing the fire control insert is easy. After field stripping, remove the locking block pin, then the side lock lever, and finally, the takedown pin. At

this point, the fire control insert will lift up and forward out of the frame body. If you're just deep cleaning, you're good to go at this point. If you're changing frames, you can then remove the take-down spring and slide lock spring so you can move them over to the replacement frame. We're talking a minute or two of work here requiring nothing more than a 3/32" punch or something of similar size.

## Optics & Sights Features

The RXM is optics-ready out of the gate. It's a direct mount for certain optics footprints. Red dots compatible with the Trijicon RMR, Shield RMSc or DeltaPoint Pro footprints will directly mount to the slide — no adapter plate required. To make this work properly, the slide's optics mount area is pre-drilled with lots of holes for the four dowel pins included with the pistol and for appropriate optics mount screws.

The mounting process couldn't be simpler. I removed the cover plate with two screws using the included Torx tool, added two dowel pins to the correct holes for the RMR HD, rested the sight, and used two Trijicon screws to mount the sight. If you're going with something RMSc or DPP-compatible, you'll use all four included dowel pins. Ruger does not include the optic screws as there are so many variations in length and thread pitch depending on the optic. For example, the RMR HD uses a 6-32 UNC thread pitch, while the DPP uses an M4-40 pitch. And then you might run into variations in length. So, use the screws that usually are included with the optic itself.

Once mounted, I found the RMR HD sat low on the slide, as expected. This is good as the factory standard sights can co-witness with this optic. I'd estimate the top slivers of the front and rear sights occupy about 10% of the RMR HD window — maybe a hair less. You can certainly use the irons, but you're getting a partial view of the sight notch and post.

If you want to use this pistol in the traditional "iron sights" configuration, this sample included an H3 (Tritium) front sight paired with an all-black rear notch sight with horizontal serrations to reduce glare. The iron sights are taller than standard — the front peaks at 0.24", presumably to allow for some co-witnessing. The sights are mounted using the GLOCK-compatible system; the front is screwed through the slide, and the rear is a dovetail mount, adjustable for windage.

## Magazines

The RXM ships with two Magpul PMAG 15-round GL 9 magazines. That's a lot of code letters for polymer, GLOCK-compatible mags.



If you're familiar with original GLOCK magazines, you're going to love the maintenance features of these Magpul offerings. Ever tried to disassemble a GLOCK magazine to clean out accumulated dirt, grit and other assorted junk? Getting that baseplate off is an exercise in pain and frustration. This one is a delight. The magazine spring seat "pin" has a diameter larger than a pencil. That means you can use almost anything to depress it and unlock the baseplate from the magazine body. A pen or pencil works fine, and if you're at the range, you can even use a round-nose cartridge. It's easy. Better yet, when you do this, the floorplate slides right off. No need to scrunch the sides of the magazine body as with many GLOCK-compatible magazines.

The magazines go into the well effortlessly, thanks to the flare built into the Magpul frame. I did notice there's a little play when the magazine is in place. However, it locks in solid and isn't going anywhere. The benefit of having a bit of room is that both empty and full mags drop reliably. Maybe it's my imagination, but a full mag does seem to "grow" a tiny bit from its diet of 15 cartridges. The last two require serious pressure to load. That seems to occupy some of the well space, tightening the interior fit a little more.

## Trigger

The trigger is GLOCK standard, so the interior and exterior parts are familiar. The trigger face is flat and smooth, including the safety leaf insert. I measured the pull weight right around 5¼ lbs. and would describe the feel as GLOCK-familiar. You'll get about a quarter-inch of takeup, followed by another quarter-inch of constant pressure, followed by a surprise break. I wouldn't describe it as "crisp" as there's no real detectable shelf when it's about to break, but I wouldn't call it mushy, either. It's a consistent break and I had no trouble shooting this gun accurately as the trigger was nothing if not consistent. If you don't like it or have different weight and movement preferences, there's a significant aftermarket of triggers and parts that will work with the Ruger RXM because of its GLOCK Gen 3 compatibility.

## Off To The Range

The RXM arrives new, pre-cleaned, properly lubed, and ready to shoot. No cleaning or oiling is required before you check it out. I did mount a Trijicon RMR HD optic before heading off for the first range trip.



I brought four types of 9mm ammo: Black Hills 115-grain JHP, Norma MHP 108-grain defense, Federal Syntech Action Pistol 150-grain and Federal NATO 124-grain. The RXM is rated for +P ammo but not +P+.

The RXM is comfortable to handle and easy to shoot well. Without the magazine in place, my size large hands fit comfortably and I easily fit all fingers on the grip — none were applying pressure to the magazine itself. With its 4" barrel, the pistol measures 7.15" long and weighs 23.2 oz. empty.

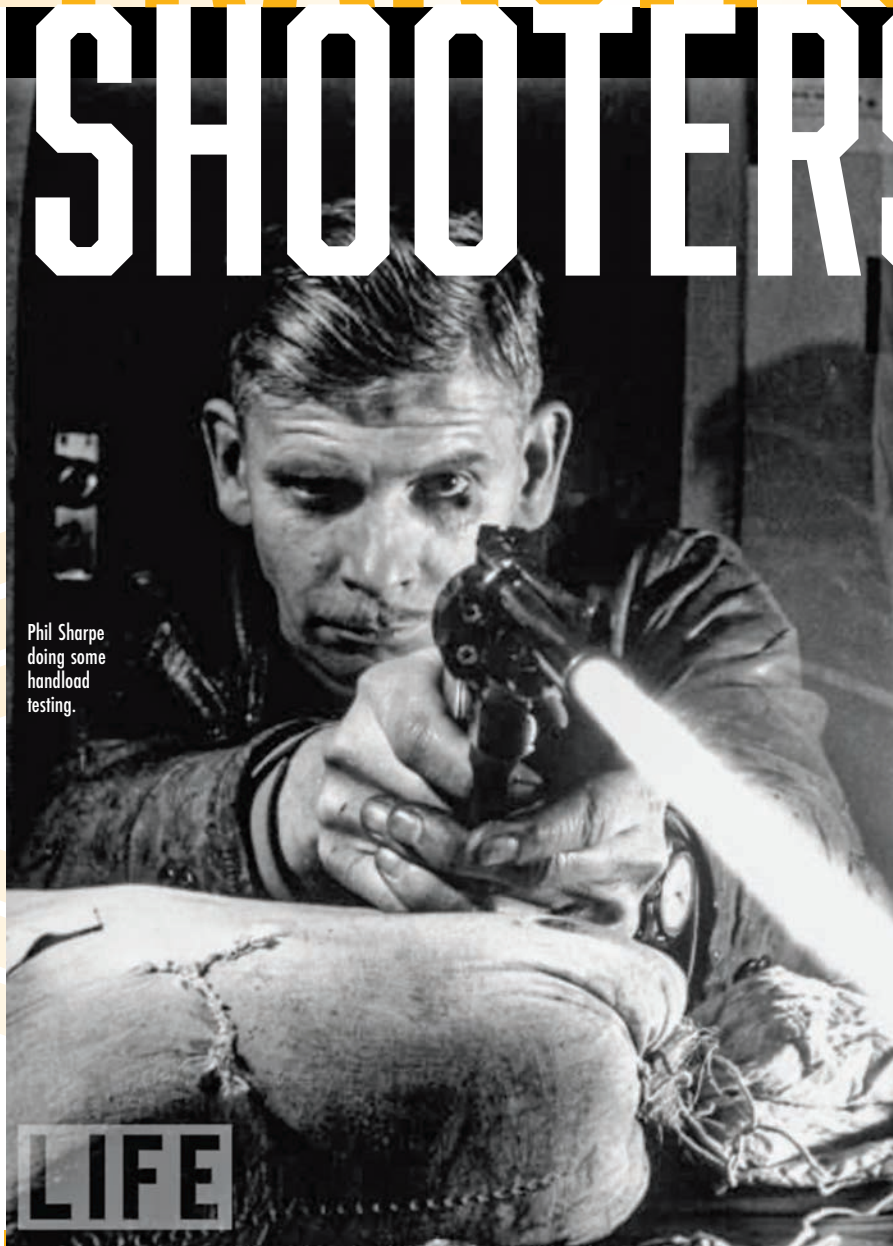
As for accuracy, I used my standard 25-yard target setup and proceeded to shoot five-shot groups using a Ransom Multi-Caliber Rest and a Garmin Xero C1 Pro Doppler radar chronograph. First up was the Black Hills 115-grain EXP JFP load, which produced 2.80" at an average velocity of 1,186.8 fps. Federal NATO 124-grain measured 3.2" at 1,188.2 fps while the same company's 150-grain Action Pistol Syntech load produced 2.6" at 892.2 fps. Last but not least, I clocked Norma's 108-grain MHP defense load at 1,153.3 fps while printing 2.4" for five shots. All in all, great consistency for various bullet weights and jacket types.

## The Final Word

This is good, customer-centric business. Right off the bat, there are hundreds, or maybe thousands, of aftermarket components that will work with this pistol. Sights, trigger components or assemblies, levers, barrels, slides, cosmetic bits and more, thanks to the GLOCK Gen 3 compatibility. And the best part is this pistol is priced to allow some budget space for personalization, carrying an MSRP of just \$499.



# TRANSITIONAL SHOOTERS



Phil Sharpe doing some handload testing.



Elmer with some blue grouse he shot with his early S&W Outdoorsman.

## JEFF "TANK" HOOVER

**W**henever hearing certain numbers and words like 38/44 Heavy Duty or Outdoorsman, my heart skips a beat, and I can't help thinking of Elmer Keith. Just as the longest journeys start with the first step, certain cartridges start with guns. Others start with a bullet mold.

It was Elmer Keith who designed the Lyman/Ideal mold 358429, the heavy, flat-nosed, semi-wadcutter design, complete with three identical driving bands with a square grease groove, which added punch to the anemic .38 Special. The .38 Special was traditionally loaded with a 158-grain soft round-nosed slug puttering along at 800 FPS.

### **Performance Pusher**

Elmer was furious Law Enforcement officers were issued a gun and cartridge combination that performed so poorly. He knew cops were being killed after fatally shooting criminals because the

**LIFE**

# HOW A SHARPE GUY & ELMER LED THE WAY TO THE .357 MAGNUM

Close-up of Tank's Heavy Duty he won on auction from a good friend's estate.



criminals weren't incapacitated immediately after being struck, so Keith wanted a more powerful load for the coppers. The Super Police 200-grain .38 Special loads were developed, performing better than the soft 158-grain bullets due to their heavier weight and blunt round point. But even they were lacking the performance Keith desired.

Elmer thought the .38 Special was one of the finest of small caliber cartridges for reloading purposes. Being wonderfully accurate, the .38 Special shoots as well as any other cartridge. When loaded in heavy .38-44 cases, it can be reloaded with a properly shaped bullet having a flat point or hollow point and driven at high velocity. Loaded this way provides exceptionally good killing and stopping power for the size of the cartridge.

Keith goes on to explain, "Of course, such high velocity, heavy loads are only possible in heavy .45 frame guns." Keith continues by saying, "The standard loading .38 Special is a poor killer, stating it penetrates well, but the pointed slug slips through with little shocking power."

## A Heavy Duty Gun

When S&W introduced the pre-war "Heavy Duty" large N-Frame revolver in April 1930, chambered in .38 Special, Elmer knew the gun had the strength and heft to handle heavy .38 Special loads, rather than factory milquetoast loadings of the time. Keith used heavy loads with his bullet, stating, "They blew up grouse completely and killed porcupines, chucks and jacks with paunch shots. I had written several lengthy letters to Major Wesson describing my results with my extreme loads."

This, I believed from his letters, determined him to bring out a real killing .38 caliber cartridge with properly shaped bullets for game and police use.

These new, more powerful loads went by "Heavy Duty" or 38/44 loads, signifying they were only meant for the large N-Frame guns carrying that name. A year later, in 1931, S&W came out with an adjustable sighted N-Frame, calling it the "Outdoorsman." Now there was a gun with the strength needed for handling heavy loads while having adjustable sights for pinpoint accuracy when shooting at longer distances in the field.

## Elmer's Approval

Keith liked the large-framed revolver, stating the heft made for more comfortable shooting and deemed it great for aerial target work because the recoil did not throw the gun out of line with the target. Keith also liked the fact the large S&W main-spring adjustment screw in the front strap was conveniently placed for turning down trigger pull. Keith

stated, "I have fired Western factory cartridges perfectly with the screw turned out four full turns."

## Sharpe Fella'

During the same time frame, Phil Sharpe and then Major D.B. Wesson were experimenting with heavy .38 Special loads too. While Sharpe and Major Wesson are given most of the credit for the .357 Magnum eventually coming to fruition in 1935, Elmer had planted the seed with his heavy .38 Special loads. Sharpe admitted to modifying Keith's 359429 bullet to come up with his design.

Sharpe's final product had a shorter nose profile, weighing around 150 grains, depending on the alloy, with approximately 40% less bearing surface, allowing for higher velocities with less pressure. Sharpe knew the .357 Magnum was coming out, and his shorter bullet would

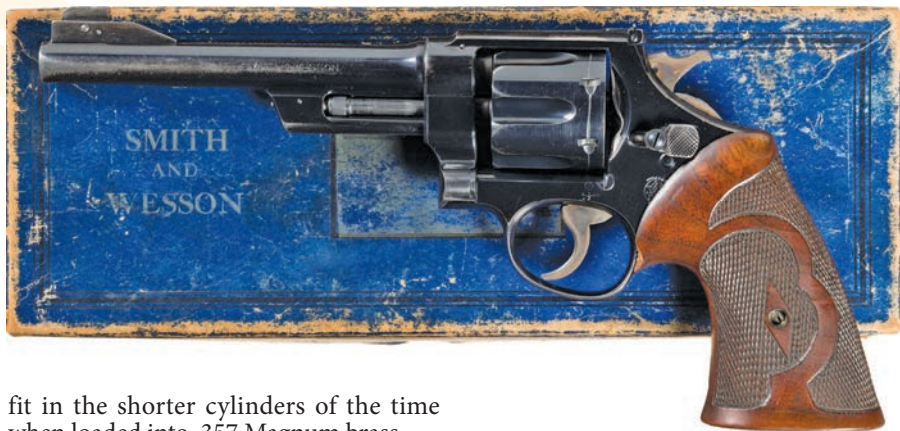


A Heavy Duty and Outdoorsman for comparison. Notice the different front sights and adjustable rear sight. Heavy Keith loads, a Red Nichols holster and a Bill Snow blade round out the kit.



An old can of 2400 powder, HP molds for 358429 and 358156, along with heavy loaded .38 Special loads tell an old but wonderful story.

Elmer's personal Outdoorsman with King front sight. Photo: Rock Island Auctions



fit in the shorter cylinders of the time when loaded into .357 Magnum brass.

Elmer, on the other hand, utilized all the .38 Special cylinder space with his longer 358429 bullet design. When loaded in the longer .357 brass, the nose poked through the cylinder end. To use the 358429 cast bullet in magnum brass, you had to crimp over the front driving band. Personally, I'd go with Elmer's heavier, more aerodynamic bullet loaded in .38 Special Brass than Sharpe's lighter bullet driven faster in magnum brass. But that's just me.

### Purpose Pleaser

The "Heavy Duty" was designed for law enforcement personnel, as the name suggests. The fixed-sighted gun, with a half-moon front sight and hog trough rear, was tough, with one never needing to worry about sights being knocked off center. Besides, most police encounters are close-quarter scenarios. The large front sight was perfect for combat shooting, where the front sight is quickly "picked up" by the shooter.

The S&W Outdoorsman was made for hunters, trappers and anyone else spending time outside needing the pinpoint accuracy provided by the adjustable sights the Outdoorsman provided for longer shooting.

### Pre-War Preference

During the pre-war era, S&W revolvers were essentially custom guns, as the parts were hand-fitted by long-term employees who knew what a double-action revolver was supposed to feel like. Parts were swapped and fitted from large parts bins or tweaked with a file, until they felt "right" when cycling them during assembly by dedicated employees.

Also, pre-war guns had the beautiful high polished deep bluing everyone loved. Later post-war era guns were more of a satin blue. Remember, this was during the Great Depression, and these workers were happy and grateful

to have jobs with so many unemployed people during the day waiting in long soup kitchen lines for food.

### Elmer's Loads

Elmer's heavy .38 Special loads are about as iconic as Elmer himself. When I first started handloading almost 40 years ago, the .38 Special was one of the first handgun cartridges I loaded. It was natural to do so. I had just graduated from the police academy, and we were issued Ruger Service Sixes chambered in .38 Special. Our street load was Winchester +P 158-grain SWC HPs, more commonly known as the FBI load.

I had access to all the .38 Special brass I needed from our range and collected copious amounts of it. The Ruger Service Six is also chambered in .357 Magnum, the only difference being cylinder chambering. If the same gun can handle .357 Magnum loads, they can also handle Elmer's heavy .38 Special loads.

Elmer's load consisted of the Lyman/Ideal mold 358429, weighing 173 grains, loaded over 13.5 grains of Hercules 2400. When Alliant bought Hercules, 2400 was slightly faster, so the load was dropped to 13.0 grains of 2400. This charge was sparked with a standard small pistol primer. Prior to 2400 powder being released, Elmer used Dupont #80 powder for his heavy loads.

From my 4" Ruger Service Six, velocity was just shy of 1,200 FPS with exceptional accuracy. Back then, shooting 2" groups at 25 yards, standing, with this gun was the norm. With my Ruger 6.5" 3-screw Blackhawk velocity was 1,260 FPS and just as accurate. I shot thousands of these handloads. I never missed not having/shooting .357 Magnum loads with Elmer's

hot .38s. When shooting at the range, several people would ask me what I was shooting. I'd grin and simply say oh, just some .38 Specials.

### There Are Others

Another good bullet used was Lyman's 358156 dual crimp groove bullet. The bottom crimp was used for .38 Special loading, and the top crimp groove worked in .357 Magnum brass. Using 13.0 grains of Alliant 2400 provided 1,300+ FPS with excellent accuracy. Softer alloys could be used because of the gas-checked bullet design. This bullet was a favorite of Skeeter Skelton.

### MP Molds

MP Molds makes a dandy 180-grain wide flat nose bullet in either solid or hollow point format. When loaded over 12.5 grains of 2400, velocity in sixguns runs 1,200 FPS and is very accurate. This bullet can easily handle whitetail deer when taking a broadside lung/heart shot.


### Treasure Hunt

I've always lusted over having S&W "Heavy Duty" and Outdoorsman model sixguns. It seems the only thing separating me from my desires was money. Sometimes, if we wait long enough, the brass and bul-



Classic gun, leather, knife and loads warm the heart.

lets align themselves just right, and opportunity and the all-too-rare fat wallet coincide. My good friend Mike "Madbo" Hutyra died a few years ago and I was able to win a "King Custom" transition model "Heavy Duty" from my friend's estate auction. It's a cherished piece, sporting a "cockeyed" hammer with custom work performed on the front sight.

My Outdoorsman is of pre-war vintage, bought from a friend at a very fair price a couple of years ago. The plastic target stocks were replaced with Walnut Roper stocks from NC Ordnance. They resemble the stocks Elmer used on his Outdoorsman test gun, giving the gun that classic vintage look. The stocks provided peace of mind for me for a special gun, which led us down the trail to the .357 Magnum. 

# PRECISION FORGED

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# HOT TOPLESS

WILL DABBS, MD

## BERETTA PISTOLS THROUGH THE AGES



The family lineage is obvious at a glance.

According to Ian Fleming's novels, the Beretta Model 418, chambered in .25 ACP, was actually James Bond's service pistol before he traded up to the Walther PPK.



I'm a mechanical engineer, and I do so love machines. I find the disparate approaches that really smart folks took to accomplish similar goals simply fascinating. In no place is this curious finding put on more glorious display than in the field of firearms.

Most of the world's autoloading service pistols operate off of the time-proven short recoil system pioneered by the legendary John Moses Browning in his eponymous Browning Hi-Power. In the case of the Hi-Power, the chamber end of the

barrel mates with a slot milled into the slide. Recoil forces push the barrel back, the barrel disengages from the slide, and extraction and ejection result.

Compact, reliable, versatile and lightweight, that thing is apparently perfect. Your favorite SIG, GLOCK, HK, Shadow Systems, SCCY and Canik pistols may look different, but they all run off the same basic design. There are, however, a few outliers.

The HK VP70 and Hi-Point C9 are both 9mm pistols that operate via direct blowback. In each case, there is no rigid lockup between the barrel and slide. A powerful recoil spring counteracts the relatively stout mechanical energy pro-

# ITALIANS

The Beretta M1915 pioneered the cutaway slide design that was to characterize a generation of Beretta pistols.  
Photo: Rock Island Auctions



duced by the round as it fires, holding the action shut until pressures drop to a safe level for cycling. However, this is an inelegant solution.

## Origin Story

“9mm Beretta. Fifteen in the mag, one up the pipe. Wide ejection port ... no feed jams.”

That edgy bit of dialogue was uttered by Danny Glover’s Detective Roger Murtaugh as he pawed over his new partner’s Beretta 92F in the timelessly awesome movie *Lethal Weapon*. That movie and that scene sold me a spanking new Beretta 92F back in the heady days of the wondernines. I had vainly hoped that owning the same gun that Mel Gibson and Bruce Willis had wielded on the big screen might somehow make me cool out in the real world. That, predictably, did not work. However, *Lethal Weapon* was my first serious introduction to Beretta handguns.

Standing in marked contrast to all those weapons previously mentioned, the storied Italian firm of Beretta took a slightly different tack. From the very beginning, Beretta pistols have employed



Most 20th-century Beretta autoloading pistols share this curious open-topped slide architecture.

an open-slide architecture that is fairly unique in the world of combat handguns. These guns and the company that makes them are refreshingly original.

Founded in 1526, Beretta is the oldest gun company in the world. In fact, Beretta is one of the oldest companies of any sort. They have supplied weapons for every major European war since 1650.

Beretta’s first military contract was to supply 185 arquebus barrels to the Republic of Venice. For this, they were

paid 296 ducats, whatever that is. The company has been owned by the same family for half a millennium.

## Taking The Top Off

The modern Beretta story began with the Model 1915. Designed by legendary gun designer Tullio Marengoni, the M1915 was chambered in 9mm Glisenti and replaced the previous Model 1910 in Italian military service. A fairly uninspired straight blowback design, the

The Model 1951 was a slim, locked-breech design chambered for the 9mm Para. The top button on the M1951 is a crossbolt safety. The bottom is the magazine release.



The Beretta M9 served as the U.S. military's standard service pistol for decades.



The Beretta locking system uses a pivoting wedge to secure the slide to the barrel.



The Model 1934 in .380ACP (top) was an evolutionary development of the previous 418. Both were straight blowback pistols.

The subsequent Model 418, M1923, M1934 and M1935 were all straight blowback guns in a variety of European calibers, including .25 ACP, .32 ACP, 9x17mm Corto (.380 ACP) and 9mm Glisenti. More than 2 million were produced. The M1934 and M1935, in particular, saw widespread service during WWII. Throughout it all, these guns retained that curious open-topped Marenconi slide design.

### Getting Complicated

In 1949, Beretta launched the M1951. Chambered for either the 9mm Parabellum or 7.65x21mm, the M1951 was called either the Helwan or the Brigadier, depending on whether it was made in Egypt or Italy. However, these cartridges were a bit too spunky for a simple blowback action in such a trim chassis, so Beretta engineers looked to their previous German allies for inspiration.

Most every other autoloading service pistol on the planet employed Browning's short recoil system wherein the barrel locked directly to the slide. However, the Beretta M1951 used the same tilting-wedge, recoil-driven system pioneered in the Walther P38. In this case, a pivoting wedge underneath the barrel locks the barrel and slide together at the moment of firing. Recoil forces then push this assembly back slightly to cam the locking wedge clear and allow the slide to extract and eject the cartridge.

This system is not necessarily better or worse than the Browning design. It is simply different. It also allows the gun to utilize that same curious skeletonized open-top slide architecture of the previous blowback guns.

The M1951 in 9mm Para feeds from a single-stack, 8-round detachable box magazine and features a nice single-action trigger that trips an external hammer. Curiously, the magazine release is a button buried in the left grip. The other checkered button is a push-button crossbolt safety.

The end result is thin, concealable and effective. However, you do have to manually cock the hammer before firing. The subsequent Beretta Model 70-series came in .22 LR, .32 ACP and .380 ACP and was a direct blowback weapon that also utilized a single-action ignition system.

### The State Of The Art

In 1976, Beretta launched its Series 80 pistols, the most common of which was the Cheetah. These guns came in the same three calibers as the 70 series and were also unlocked blowback. However, they debuted a nice single-action/double-action trigger system modeled after that of the P38. Certain of the guns also used a double-stack, single-feed magazine holding either 12 or 13 rounds.

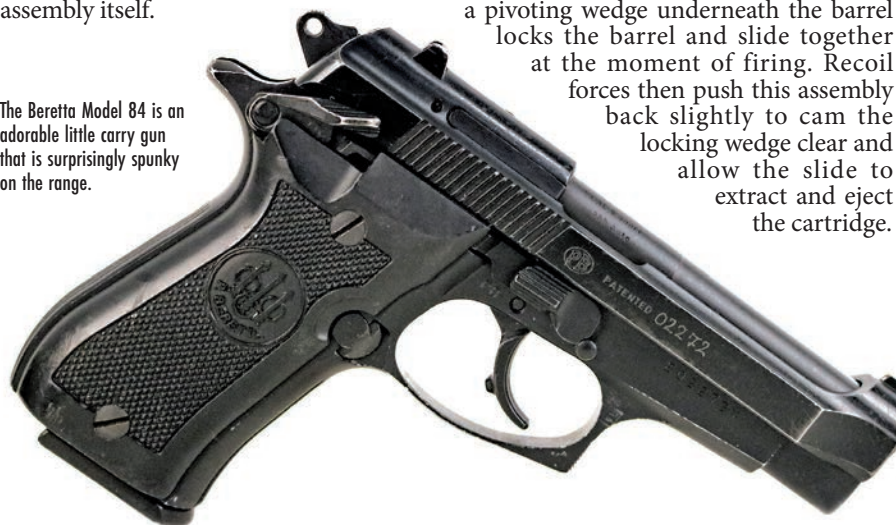


The locking system of the Beretta M9 (top) was copied from that of the German wartime Walther P38.

M1915 pioneered the open-slide architecture that was to define subsequent Beretta pistols for more than a century.

The biggest difference between the M1915 and subsequent Beretta designs was the sighting system. In the M1915, the fixed rear sight rides atop the slide. However, the front sight sprouts from the barrel. The slide is cut to accommodate that. Most later designs mounted both the front and rear sights on the slide assembly itself.

The Beretta Model 84 is an adorable little carry gun that is surprisingly spunky on the range.



Browning's short recoil operating system is simple, elegant and rugged.



The action of the Beretta M9 (bottom) is not necessarily better or worse than that of the Browning Hi-Power; it is simply different.

The Beretta Cheetah is an adorable little carry gun. Mine runs .380 ACP and carries a dozen rounds onboard. However, the unlocked blowback design makes it unexpectedly unpleasant to shoot. Like the Walther PPK and Mauser HSc in the same chambering, these unlocked .380 ACP guns are surprisingly vigorous.

### The Definitive Beretta

In 1976, Beretta also first offered the 9mm Para Model 92. This full-figured handgun incorporated the single-action/double-action trigger, a double-stack, single-feed 15-round

magazine, and their characteristic cropped-top slide design. The safety is a pivoting lever built into the slide that automatically drops the hammer safely over a loaded chamber. A slightly modified version was christened the M9 and served as the U.S. military's standard service pistol from 1985 until 2017. I packed one myself back when I wore the uniform and felt cool doing it. There have been 3.5 million produced in total.

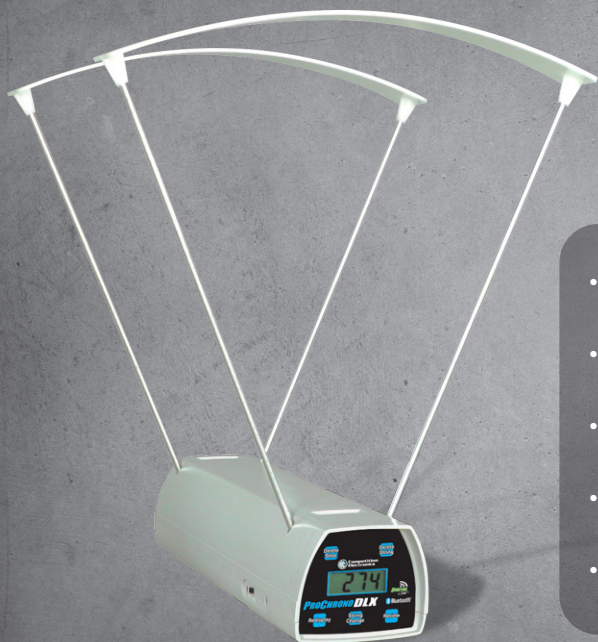
For more than a century now, all these Beretta pistols have sported the same basic open-slide architecture.

No offense to Detective Murtaugh, but after a lifetime of study, I can't really say if that adds much to the guns' reliability or not. If anything, it seems like it might allow more funk to worm its way into the action. Regardless, little will get your blood pumping faster than a little quality time with one of these hot topless Italians.



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The lightweight, dual-cylinder Charter Arms Mag Pug revolver is easy to carry, spirited when shooting .38 Special and 9mm, and a predator-killing brute when loaded with .357 Magnum.

# THE LITTLE GUN THAT COULD

## CHARTER ARMS .357 MAGNUM/9MM MAG PUG REVOLVER



The cylinder release is one of the few parts held in place with a screw. Most are held in place with pins. I noticed screws can work loose during a typical range session, so keeping a small slotted screwdriver handy is a must.

Charter Arms revolvers are built of modern alloys with modern CNC machines, but their solid frame design and extensive use of economical investment castings trace their roots back to the late 19th century Connecticut gun makers like Harrington & Richardson and Iver Johnson.

**T**he old expression goes, “Good things come in small packages.” To my recollection, parents usually say it after detecting a look of disappointment on a child’s face when the Christmas present with their name on it is not nearly large enough for the toy they asked Santa for. This Christmas, if you ask Santa for a versatile revolver suitable for self-defense at home or when carried concealed, useful by shooters of all strengths and statures, ideal for protection from preda-

tors in wilderness areas where all you have is what you walk in with, and also allows for economical range practice to encourage you to master double action shooting, that particular gun is going to come from Charter Arms in a very small, 26.1-oz., package.

### New Mag Pug Combo

Charter Arms first made their reputation with light, compact, value-priced revolvers in 1964 with the introduction of their 16-oz. Undercover .38 Special snubnose. They grew that reputation with

their big bore Bulldog revolvers. Their newest product is the five-shot Mag Pug Combo, which comes with both a .357 Magnum and a 9mm Luger (9 x 19mm) cylinder. They can be easily switched in under a minute by removing a single screw with a small slotted screwdriver.

The guns have ported full underlug barrels to help dampen recoil and are built on Charter’s medium-sized frame, which is comparable in size but somewhat lighter than an S&W J-Frame and has a larger diameter cylinder. Barrels and frames are investment cast stain-



In this photo, you can see the cast stainless steel frame is of the solid type with no removable sideplate.

All the internal parts, except the cylinder crane and hammer, are pinned in place along with the aluminum trigger guard/grip frame.



A 25-yard target showing three five-shot groups fired single action from the bench using Hornady Critical Defense 115-grain FTX JHP.

less steel, while the combination trigger guard/grip frame is cast aluminum to shave off weight. Finish options are utilitarian and include a matte (bead blasted), raw stainless or durable, non-reflective, black passivate treatment that provides corrosion protection and reduces friction, galling and scoring between metal parts. MSRP on the 4.2" barrel model I tested is \$659. The 2.2" barrel model is \$637.

Even with a 4.2" barrel, this is an extremely compact revolver and not intended to handle a steady diet of full-power .357 Magnum loads. I was glad to see that the barrel forcing cone is thicker than that of a J-Frame S&W and very little of it stands proud into the frame window. It is mostly heavily supported. I say "mostly" because the Charter Arms forcing cone has notably less frame metal supporting it at its bottom rear because that small area of the frame is relieved for the cylinder crane. Recalling the problems with forcing cone cracking experienced in some K-Frame S&W revolvers when shooting a lot of .357 Magnum loads, I'm inclined to limit my practice with the full power loads to a minimum to save wear and tear on the gun and my hand.

## Recoil Is Recoil

Despite the barrel porting, recoil is substantial. The oversized walnut Professional Backpacker finger-groove grips gave my medium-sized hand excellent purchase and helped to manage that robust .357 Magnum recoil. I particularly liked the flat-faced area over the front of the grip strap because it reduced the tendency of the grip to shift around during one-handed thumb cocking for single-action shooting and, in general, facilitated a consistent hold. The top edge of each grip panel is also shaved away to provide an anchor point for the underside of the thumb, which likewise assists with a solid hold. However, this thumb

Note how the grip is flat across the front strap. I found this design feature helped stabilize the pistol in my grasp, especially in one-handed single-action and double-action shooting.



rest was causing me pain by my fifth round of .357 Magnum. Maybe I'm just not man enough anymore, but I want to put a rubber grip on it when I'm loaded for trouble. With .38 Special and 9mm, the recoil was at most snappy but always manageable and never a pain in the thumb. I'll save the heavy hitters to deflect imminent animal or human attacks.

## 9mm Shooting

The most valuable feature of these new guns is the extra 9mm Luger cylinder assembly that makes them affordable to shoot. The 9mm and .38 Special loads were also similar enough in their recoil and point of impact characteristics that I'd be inclined to do all my actual shooting practice with the 9mm, which can be had for as little as \$13 per 50-round box. By comparison, a 50-round box of ordinary .38 Special runs from \$25 to \$35 — 48% to 63% more! It takes a lot of practice to shoot a revolver accurately in double-action at ranges greater than the length of a dinner table, and Charter Arms has drastically reduced the cost of developing that skill set.

Charter Arms addressed the fundamental challenge of adapting a rimless cartridge to a revolver in a clever way that employs tiny ball detent-type locks built into the ejector that engage each

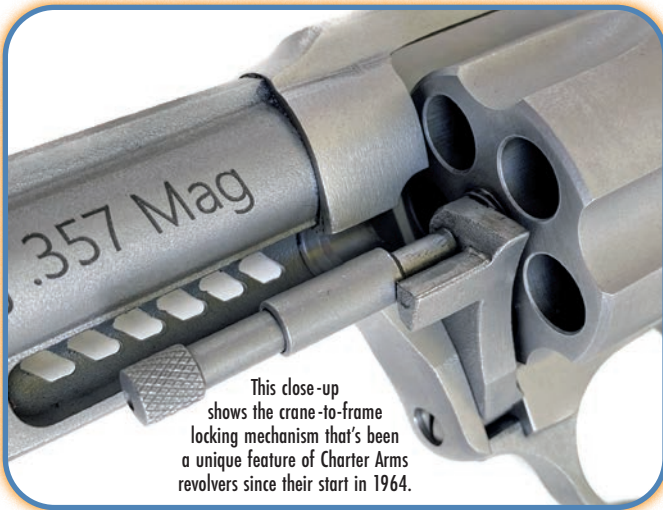


Both 9mm and .357 Magnum/.38 Special cylinder assemblies are included with each Mag Pug combo revolver. The cylinder and ratchet are machined from billets of steel.

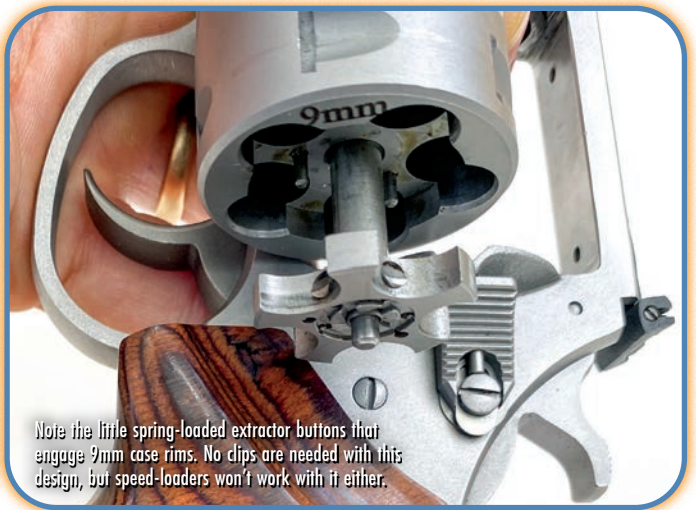
cartridge's extraction groove. Moon clips aren't needed and, in fact, can't be used with this design.

I found it generally worked well when the pistol was held with the muzzle up and the ejector rod struck smartly. If I pushed the ejector rod slowly, as I do when I'm trying to capture my spent cases in the palm of my hand, the case rims have a tendency to detach from their tiny, spring-loaded extractor buttons and end up getting pushed back into the chambers when the ejector is released. At present, the ejector rod is about 1/8" too short to get the mouth of the cases past the outer edge of the chamber, where they can more easily fall clear regardless of position.

Ejection problems are typical of most compact revolvers, so I see this as just a minor twist to that old, annoying theme. If the ejector rod was made just a little



This close-up shows the crane-to-frame locking mechanism that's been a unique feature of Charter Arms revolvers since their start in 1964.



Note the little spring-loaded extractor buttons that engage 9mm case rims. No clips are needed with this design, but speed-loaders won't work with it either.

longer, I expect most of the 9mm cylinder's ejection quirks would disappear. As is, their design is very convenient for range use but not recommended for self-defense since extraction isn't 100% reliable, and a fast tactical reload with a speedloader is essentially impossible. That's a shame since there are so many great 9mm self-defense loads available today. If you are among the surprisingly large number of people who carry a concealed handgun with no extra ammunition, then reload speed is completely irrelevant. In that case, there's no argument to make against using your favorite high-performing 9mm JHP load.

## Shooting

My favorite 9mm load for personal defense is Hornady's Critical Defense 115-grain FTX jacket hollow-point because of its reliable expansion through heavy clothing. Shooting single action from the bench at 25 yards, my average five-shot group with this load measured 3.27" center-to-center, which is quite respectable for a production centerfire handgun. Velocity from the ported barrel averaged 1,113 feet-per-

second (FPS). Winchester "W" Target & Practice 115-grain FMJ averaged groups of 3.67" and 1,131 FPS. I also tried the Winchester load shooting double-action, standing, with a two-hand hold at a range of 7 yards. Those groups averaged 3.28". My test gun shot a lot better than its Spartan aesthetics might suggest. Inside its rather coarsely finished exterior, I discovered a nice trigger with a crisp, 3.5-lb. single-action pull and a thoroughly decent, 12.5-lb. double-action trigger pull.


Moving on to a serious .357 Magnum load for protection from animal threats, I selected the Federal American Eagle 158-grain jacketed soft point. This bullet's flat nose improves its energy transfer into the target without sacrificing penetration. Testing showed it to have plenty of wallop and excellent accuracy. Five-shot groups from the bench averaged 2.7" and 1,268 FPS. Closing to 7 yards and shooting standing, double action, with a two-hand hold, this load averaged 3.16" groups.

## Carrying The Mag Pug

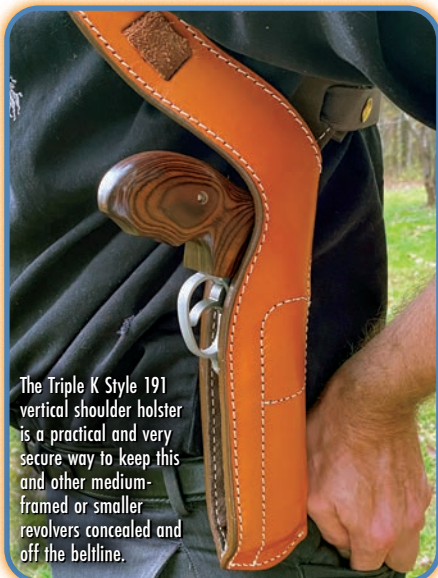
To keep this revolver readily accessible, secure during rigorous physical activity, and off the belt where it might draw unwanted attention on the trail, I use a Triple K holster style 191 vertical shoulder holster for medium frame revolvers. This is a classic leather shoulder holster that keeps a variety of revolvers very secure against accidental loss, whether you're hiking a trail or galloping

on a horse. Tucked under the armpit, a strong spring retainer at the open front of the holster allows for a fairly quick draw when the handgun is yanked out with gusto. Re-holstering is not as easy and usually requires two hands.

Charter Arms considers themselves the "Chevy" of guns and engineered their designs to be economically manufactured in the United States. If you do a little online price comparison, you'll find that their guns often cost at least \$100 less than comparable models from premium brands like S&W, Colt and Kimber. Compared to them, the humble Charter Arms looks a little more primitively made and finished. On the inside and in the places where it counts for accuracy, reliability and safety, Charter Arms keeps their tolerances tight to guarantee reliable mechanical function. The cylinder crane, for example, is unexpectedly thin and distressingly wiggly when opened. However, when closed, it locks into the frame with exceptional rigidity thanks to Charter Arms' unique spring tensioned collar, mounted on the ejector rod, that automatically nests inside a matching cut-out in the frame. I can't recall ever seeing a swing-out cylinder revolver with a more robust lock-up inside the frame window.

As a side note, both the Charter Mag Pug and Triple K holster are proudly made in America. 

For more info: [CharterFirearms.com](http://CharterFirearms.com), [TripleK.com](http://TripleK.com)



The Triple K Style 191 vertical shoulder holster is a practical and very secure way to keep this and other medium-framed or smaller revolvers concealed and off the beltline.



Charter Arms casts their triggerguard/grip frame in aluminum to reduce weight. The large steel pins in the wood grips keep them correctly clocked to each other and the metal grip frame. The snubnose models use a smaller grip that's more readily concealed.



The barrel and front sight are a single stainless steel investment casting. The porting helps control muzzle rise.



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The 2024 *Old West* Special Edition from *GUNS Magazine* will have you yearning to be a gun-slinging cowpoke.

This high-falutin' bonus issue tells the stories of the greatest "barking irons" of the old and wild west.

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- **British Bull Dog** — The Little Big Gun That Truly Won The West!
- **Whiskey With Bernie** — Drinking With The Dead.
- **Unsolved Mystery** — The Lost Soldiers' Gold.
- **British Ammo American Guns** — Substitute Cartridges for the .45.
- **The Civil War Battle Rifle** — The 1863 Springfield.
- **The Lightning Bolt** — AWA's Unique Mare's Leg Pistol.
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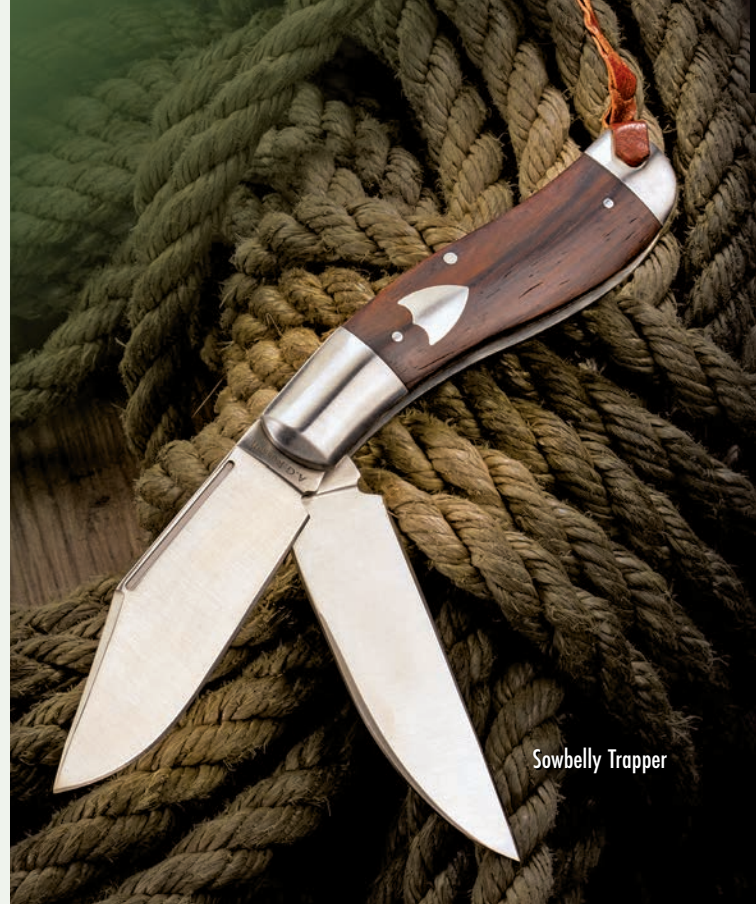
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Sowbelly Trapper

## A.G. RUSSELL STILL OFFERS THE EXQUISITE KNIVES OF YESTERYEAR

# TRADITIONAL VALUES!



Swayback Jack

**F**ive decades ago, if you wanted to keep abreast of the cutlery world, you got your hands on an early A.G. Russell catalog. By 2004, his talented wife, Goldie, was running the company, and the pair built it into the mail-order juggernaut it is today. The cutlery legend passed away in October of 2018, but the A.G. Russell company and catalog are strong as ever under Goldie's watchful eye, still pleasing knife lovers by the masses.

A.G. Russell was a walking encyclopedia on all types of knives, and, growing up in the age of the traditional slip-joint pocketknife, it's not

surprising he was very knowledgeable on the subject. When Goldie took over the company business, he was able to spend much of his time designing new products, and a nice parcel was spent on traditional folders. A.G. wasn't bashful about adding his own touches to the old patterns — and fixed-blades as well. We thought it would be interesting to look back on some of his contemporary takes on these historical subjects, and we bring them to you here.

### An Eye For Patterns

A.G. Russell had an eye for unique pocketknife patterns that he knew traditionalists would like, and often, he

would make slightly larger versions to make them bigger than life. He always overbuilt them to last a lifetime and more. His Sowbelly Trapper is one such knife. Big and bold at 4¼" closed, it's built like a tank with a long stainless-steel Barlow-style top bolster for added strength. This is a slipjoint sporting 3¾" Clip Point and 3½" Wharncliffe blades in 8Cr13MoV stainless steel. The handle scales on the version shown are of dense Cocobolo wood with a shield escutcheon and lanyard hole, with lanyard, in the bottom bolster. The Sowbelly Trapper tips the scales at 5.7 oz., and you can also have it in Brown Rucarta or Yellow Delrin covers. Warning: A beast lurks here.



Gunstock Lockback

The Gunstock pattern — designed with firearms aficionados in mind — is well over a hundred years old and A.G. Russell's addition of a lockback mechanism adds an added level of safety. Once again, A.G.'s Gunstock Lockback leans to the large side — the folder is 4¼" closed and stretches out to 7⅝" in the open position. The 3¾" blade is a full-bellied, recurved 8Cr13MoV stainless steel Clip Point with a swedge grind for improved penetration. The handle has durable Yellow Delrin scales capped off with a lengthened stainless steel top bolster and a bottom bolster fitted with a braided leather lanyard. The blade release is located just above the bottom bolster.

A.G. Russell's Wharncliffe Lockback is a svelte, light carry EDC 3⅜" closed and a mere 3.0 oz. in weight. The satin-finished 8Cr13MoV stainless steel blade is a 3¾" Wharncliffe — known as the workhorse of blade styles. The blade spine has a lengthy swedge grind with an oversized long pull for easy opening. The tapered handle has front and rear 410 stainless steel bolsters, a shield escutcheon, and a blade lock at the lower rear — all satin finished to match the blade. We've pictured the White Bone version here, but you can also get the Wharncliffe Lockback in Deer Stag or Black G10 scales.

The Swayback Jack is an A.G. Russell Gents folder design at its finest. The way the 2⅞" Wharncliffe blade flows off of its gently curved slip-joint handle is pure poetry. Don't let its artistry, however, fool you — it has some tough guy traits built in. The 2⅞" Wharncliffe has a premium Austrian-made Böhler Uddeholm M390 stainless steel blade that will cut like a house afire and a lengthy Barlow-esque bolster on the handle to give it strength. The handle bolsters, as well as the bullet

escutcheon, are Nickel Silver just like the old-time pocket-knives and the dense Desert Ironwood scales are built to last. You can also get the Swayback Jack in Deer Stag, or White bone covers.

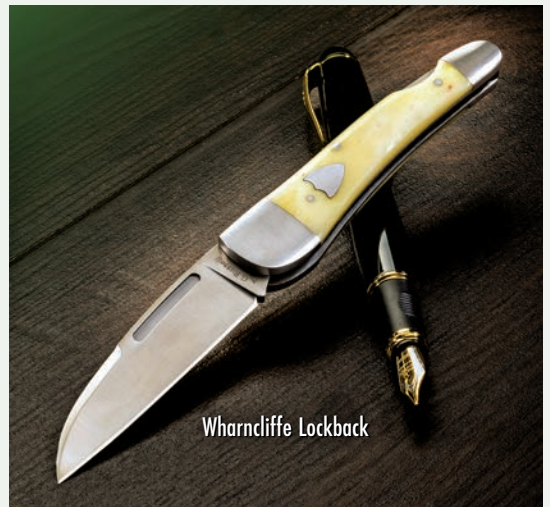
### Fine Tribute Fare

A.G. Russell has offered tribute knives for years and their Premium Scout Knife is a prime example. This is the Scout Knife of old and, for many, their very first knife. The 2⅝" Spear Point main blade is high quality VG-10 stainless steel with "Premium Scout" etched on the front. The gang's all here — many will recognize the can opener, combination screwdriver/cap lifter, and leather punch. The handle is 3¾" overall true to form with Nickel Silver bolsters with brass liners, an acorn shield and the familiar lanyard bail at the base. The Premium Scout comes in two scale options: the premium Deer Stag version shown here and a more affordable Red Jigged Bone adaptation. The Premium Scout Knife is a great way to relive the past or start your child on a new one.

The Gold Field Bowie is typical fare in A.G. Russell's Shopmade line produced in their Rogers, Ark. home base. The Gold Field model is a smaller version of the California Bowie designed by noted bowie maker D.E. "Ed" Henry in the 1960s and produced by the company as well. This smaller version — made to be more comfortably scaled for today's user — is 9¼" overall with a full-tang 5¾" blade of 154CM stainless steel with a stainless guard. Our version has Deer Stag scales, but you can also have it in



Premium Scout Knife



Wharncliffe Lockback

Desert Ironwood or Norway Spruce Cone trappings. The Gold Field Bowie comes delivered with a handsome brown leather sheath.

### Traditional Values

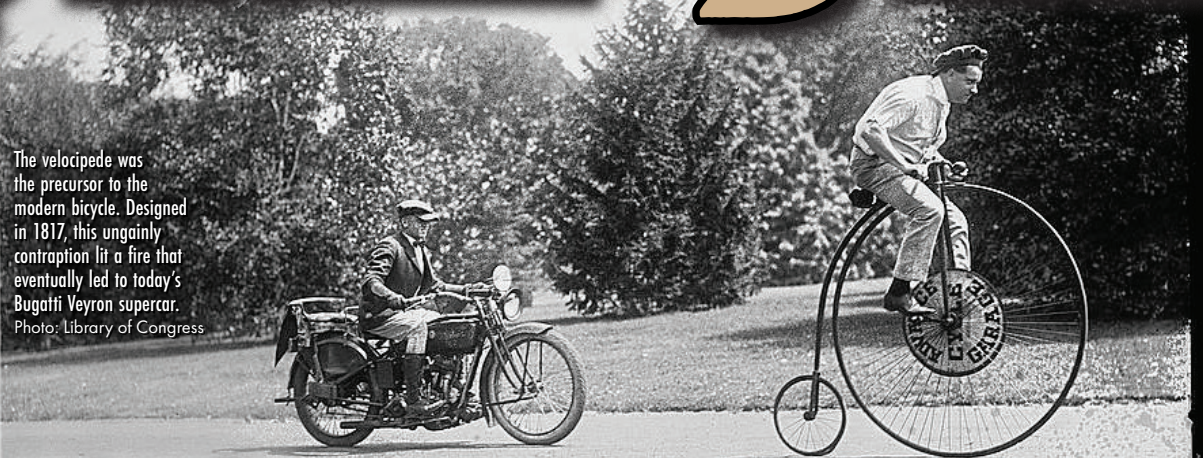
The advent of the first Gulf War brought about the meteoric rise of the modern-day tactical folder and changed the face of the cutlery industry. As a result, many of the famed, decades-old American companies making traditional knives fell by the wayside. There are still many knife users and aficionados among us who appreciate the time-honored folders and fixed blades of yesteryear and even prefer them to modern-day fare as their everyday carry, working blade, outdoor companion, or just to collect and reminisce. For those of you who appreciate traditional knives, A.G. Russell has got you covered!



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

# THE ADORABLE LITTLE BELGIAN VELLO-DOGS

The velocipede was the precursor to the modern bicycle. Designed in 1817, this ungainly contraption lit a fire that eventually led to today's Bugatti Veyron supercar.  
Photo: Library of Congress



WILL DREBS, MD

# THE COUNTER-ROVER REVOLVER



From Will's research, this ancient old revolver doesn't have a name. There are no maker's markings anywhere to be found.



**D**ogs were bred from their lupinus progenitors to be sentinels. Where the previous wolves were natural predators who shed blood as the spirit-led, domesticated versions kept watch over things. They were the automated security systems of the

ancient world. No matter if they were chihuahuas or St. Bernards, such behaviors are hardwired into their DNA. This makes dogs fiercely territorial.

Compared to your typical bear, moose, badger, or skunk, we humans are fairly helpless. Our soft pink skin is susceptible to most any insult, to include excessive grass exposure, while our teeth aren't good for much more than mulching Cheerios. If dropped naked into an enclosure occupied by anything more serious than a peckish porcupine, we are little more than food. However, the great equalizer

rests jauntily atop our shoulders. The human brain is the most effective survival tool in the known universe.

## Bikes & Dogs

Your brain weighs about 3 lbs., and it is mostly fat. However, that remarkable organ is capable of doing some of the most amazing stuff. Back in 1817, the 3 lbs. of exquisitely organized fat that resided in the head of a Frenchman named Karl von Drais conjured up the velocipede. This fore-runner to the modern bicycle focused the mechanical output of the human body more efficiently than might be the case with simple walking. His curious invention was also called the Dandy Horse and the Bonecrusher. Von Drais'



This Velo-dog revolver sports a captive ejector rod that is used to remove empties.



Left: The pivoting trigger folds out of the way for deep concealment.



This Belgian Velo-dog and this vintage Colt .38-caliber revolver were both made at around the same time. The .38 would be a much more effective defensive tool.

velocipede was arguably the precursor to all modern transportation devices. For the first time in human history, man could move expeditiously from one place to another without worrying about oats or a saddle.

The problem was that the hounds of the world were familiar with horses and mules. They didn't have a clue what to do with these big-wheeled contraptions. When in doubt, most dogs' default code is to rip the very heart out of a threat. That meant in the early 19th century, more and more velocipede pilots grew weary of being attacked by angry dogs. In response, a French gunmaker named René Galand, son of esteemed revolver inventor Charles-François Galand, conjured a solution. He called his compact little pistol the Velo-dog.

### Purpose-Built Pistol

Velo-dog is a portmanteau combining the terms velocipede and, well, dog. The intended mission was to dissuade angry canines from biting your legs, unhorsing riders from their velocipedes, or worse. Eventually, the idea caught on, and these compact little counter-dog guns were being produced most everywhere. It turned out you could theoretically use a Velo-dog pistol against stuff other than dogs as well.

The original French Velo-dog fired a unique centerfire 5.5mm cartridge. This odd round pushed a roughly 30-grain bullet with about the same muzzle energy as a .22 Long. Subsequent versions fired other rounds. For the less durable velocipedists, ammunition manufacturers offered Velo-dog rounds charged with cayenne pepper, wax, lead dust, or cork projectiles in lieu of conventional bullets. The obvious mission was not to hunt dogs; it was just to dissuade them from fomenting undue mischief.

### I Know I'm Pathetic ...

I'm a literal slave to regional gun auctions. The gun nerd with poor impulse control is frankly doomed. I have, however, landed some truly superlative firearms in this manner. And then there was this thing ...

I bid about nothing for this adorable little wheelgun because I kind of felt sorry for it. This particular auction was dirty with high-end iron that com-



manded rarefied prices. However, this beat-up little Velo-dog revolver garnered very little attention. I had zero need for a 150-year-old Belgian pocket gun that fired obsolete black powder cartridges unavailable anywhere. I landed it for a song.

The whole gun would readily hide in the front pocket of a pair of Levi's. There are no markings save a pair of proof marks. If ever there was a serial number, it has succumbed to the ravages of time.

This weird little gun is double-action-only with a generous firing pin set into the hammer. I would not think it wise to pocket-carry this gun with a round under the hammer. A vigorous jostling could easily reassign your gender whether you felt dysphoric or not.

The gun loads via a Colt-style loading gate on the right. The trigger folds forward and out of the way for easy storage. There is the niftiest little pivoting ejection rod that stows inside the hollow cylinder pin. When needed you just extend the ejection rod, pivot it right to settle over the appropriate cylinder, and use it to shove out empty cases. The rod is positively retained throughout.

The most prominent marking is a crown-over-R proof on the right side of the frame. Google knows all. This indicates Belgian origin and that it is proofed for black powder loads. After an exhaustive internet search I was unable to locate another gun exactly like it. As patent laws were notoriously difficult to enforce back in the late 19th century and they carried literally no weight across national borders, everybody and their grandmother started making these adorable little pistols. In the lead-up to the 20th century, the Velo-dog represented the state-of-the-art in pocket carry hardware.

### Ruminations

Galand first marketed his adorable little guns as the *Revolver de Poche*. While that sounds a bit like "Revolver de Pooch," poche actually means pocket. The Germans enjoy an insensate affection for consonants, so they called theirs the Radfahrerrevolver.

Galand's company churned out these tiny little wheelguns from 1894 up until 1940, when the Germans purloined France. Clones were produced around the globe in .22, .25, and .32 calibers. A French company called Manufrance sold Velo-dog pistols through the mail back in the 1930s for 45 francs. That was about \$2.70 back then or roughly \$61 today. They offered a layaway program so you could pay in installments if you couldn't come up with the whole sum all at once.

Vintage Velo-dog pistols are tactically worthless today. There is a niche collector's market for them, but I wouldn't shoot mine for love or money. "Accidentally blew his hand off trying to shoot a 150-year-old black powder counter-dog gun" would look pretty stupid on a tombstone. However, there has been one documented case wherein a despondent woman used a .25-caliber Velo-dog to tragically take her own life. To do so, she actually shot herself in the temple ... twice.





# WIN!

## AMERICAN HANDGUNNER

### HANDGUN OF THE MONTH

# RXM 9MM PISTOL PACKAGE



**T**he *RXM 9mm Pistol*, a collaboration between Ruger and Magpul, redefines versatility in the striker-fired polymer pistol market. The RXM offers maximum flexibility and customization via a removable stainless steel Fire Control Insert (FCI) set inside an interchangeable Magpul Enhanced Handgun Grip (EHG). A black nitride-finished slide allows for direct optic mounting of RMR, RMsC and Delta Point Pro (DPP) pattern optics. Co-witness-height steel sights feature a tritium night front sight. With compatibility for off-the-shelf parts and accessories, the RXM combines innovation, comfort and value — crafted to meet the demands of any user.

The *Spartan-George Raider* is a sleek and durable dagger with a full tang design, injection molded handles and modern SK5 steel. The dagger has a double-edged 7" blade with stiletto-sharp tip and diamond-shaped cross section, sharpened on both cutting edges all the way to its oval cross guard.

Nitecore's *EDC25* is an ultra-slim tactical EDC flashlight. With a maximum output of 3,000 lumens, the 5.37" EDC25 has a beam distance of 300 meters. Lightweight and durable, the flashlight is ideal for use in law enforcement and outdoor activities like camping and more.

Ruger's RXM pistol. The Spartan George Raider Dagger from Spartan Blades. Nitecore's EDC25 flashlight. These prizes will increase your personal defense capability. Join now to win! Go to [AmericanHandgunner.com/giveaways](http://AmericanHandgunner.com/giveaways) or mail a postcard. —Jazz Jimenez

#### RXM

MANUFACTURER: RUGER; RUGER.COM  
CALIBER: 9MM; CAPACITY: 10+1 AND 15+1  
BARREL LENGTH: 4" WEIGHT: 23.2 OZ.  
VALUE: \$499

#### SPARTAN-GEORGE RAIDER

MANUFACTURER: SPARTAN BLADES,  
SPARTANBLADESUSA.COM, (910) 757-0035  
VALUE: \$150

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MANUFACTURER: NITECORE; FLASHLIGHT.NITECORE.COM  
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## TOTAL VALUE: \$723.95

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## SCAN TO ENTER



**NITECORE EDC25**

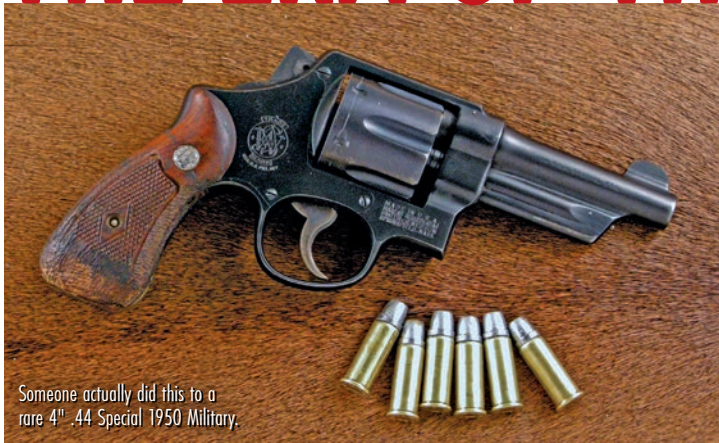


# PLUS

**SPARTAN-GEORGE RAIDER**



## THE ERA OF THE .44 PART 3:



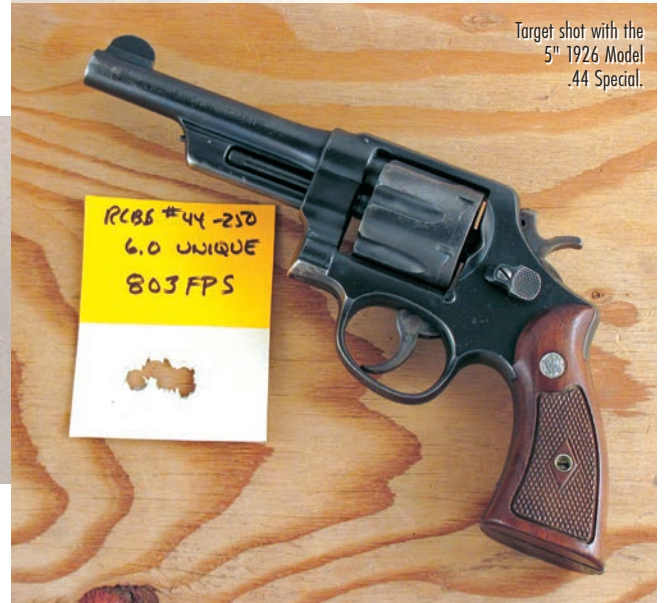
Someone actually did this to a rare 4" .44 Special 1950 Military.



This .44 Special has been butchered, but it still shoots.

# DOUBLE ACTIONS

The Holy Grail of Colt New Service sixguns, the .44 Special Target Model.



Target shot with the 5" 1926 Model .44 Special.

**Y**ou should know it now if you didn't before; I'm a sucker for a good .44! Over the years, I have had the opportunity to shoot a long list of great .44 sixguns. We have looked at a whole passel of single-action sixguns; now, we turn our attention to double actions.

### The Hunt Begins

Although Colt New Services were produced in larger quantities than the SAA, they seem harder to find. Both of my prized long-barreled .44 New Service sixguns were found on the Kull Auc-

tion. I bid about half what I thought they were worth and got both of them in succeeding years. First came a 7½" standard model in .44-40. The old cartridge dates back to the 1873 Winchester, then was shortly thereafter chambered in the Colt SAA where it was second only to the .45 Colt in production. Shooting the .44-40 in the large, heavy New Service is pure pleasure.

That first original New Service came so easily; however, I thought I would never be able to get what I

really wanted — a New Service Target chambered in .44 Special. One year later, there it was in the Kull catalog. I followed my established guidelines and bid about half what I thought it was worth. I had my 7½" .44 Special Target Model Colt. With the Lyman standard round-nosed .44 Russian/Special cast bullet #429251RN sized to 0.431" and loaded over what amounts

From the middle of the 20th century Classic .44 Specials from S&W: 6 1/2" 1950 Target and 5" 1926 Model.



.44 Colt New Service sixguns: .44-40 and .44 Special Target Model.



to a standard load for the original .44 Special, namely 6.0 grains of Unique, the .44 Special Target clocks out at 822 fps with a group of 5/8"; not bad for a sixgun even older than I am!

### S&W Triple Lock & More

While Colt was producing the New Service, S&W, beginning in the closing days of December 1907, had their own big bore sixgun. First came the magnificent Triple-Lock. At the time, Colt locked their cylinder only at the

rear; S&W used three locks, one at the rear, one in the front of the enclosed ejector rod, and a third at the front of the cylinder; take that, Colt! By 1915, the third locking feature was dropped, as well as the enclosed ejector rod housing resulting in the 2nd Model Hand Ejector. Shooters soon began to ask for a return to the Triple-Lock. This never happened. However, in 1926, the 3rd Model Hand Ejector arrived with a return to the enclosed ejector rod.

This 1926 Model was a beautiful, rugged sixgun and, in 1930, was used as the basic platform for the .38/44 Heavy Duty, followed by the .38/44 Outdoorsman, and then in 1935 by the .357 Magnum. This 3rd Model would last until 1950 and the arrival of the 1950 Target.

I had a good friend in Nevada who sold me a 4" 1926 Model and, would you believe, a Target version of the 2nd Model Hand Ejector? Target models of the pre-war S&W

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**TRIED & TRUE SINCE 1968**



Early S&W .44 Magnums with leather by Walt Ostin and George Lawrence.



5" S&W .44 Magnums with leather by El Paso Saddlery.



This S&W Model 624 has been beautifully engraved by Michael Gouse.

accumulated over the past 55 years are simply great shooters; however, there are a few collectibles mixed in. I pulled one of those out of the bottom of the safe and wound up trading for these two 1950 Target Models. My quest was over, or so I thought. Soon after, what should I find in Buckhorn but another pair of 1950 Target Models from the same era and in the same two chamberings. I checked the checkbook, dug around in the safe for some cash and suddenly, I found myself with not only two 1950 Target .44 Specials but a pair of .45s as well. There is simply something about these old classic S&Ws that cannot be approached by any other DA revolver.

### Conversion? No!

I once saw a question online about converting a .44 Special to .45 Colt. I let him know in no uncertain terms this was not an acceptable choice especially when I found out what it was — a rare .44 Military Model of 1950. However, in excellent original condition, this 4" .44 Special would be worth \$2,000 or more. As it was, I bought it for \$500. Someone had decided to make it into a would-be gunfighter's sixgun. The hammer spur was ground off, and both the original stocks and the square butt grip frame were round-buttled. Now, all of these modifications are acceptable when well done, but hopefully not on a rare sixgun.

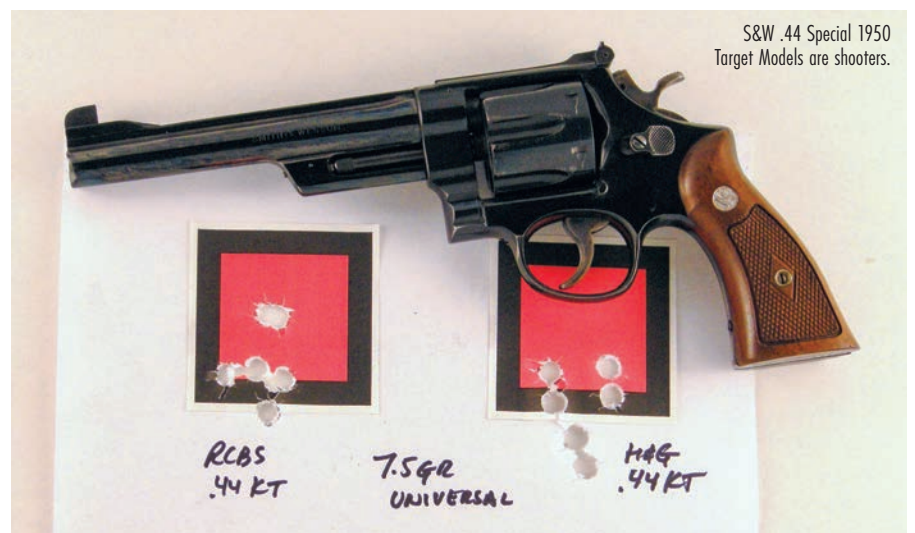
.44 Specials are exceptionally rare. When my late friend Mike Venturino became deeply involved in World War II weapons, he sold off some of his classic sixguns, including a 5" 1926 Model, which I was more than happy to pick up. The longer barrels are easier to shoot, and the 4" versions pack easier; however, the 5" .44 Special makes a great compromise.

### 1950

In 1950, the 1926 Model was dropped and replaced by the .44 Military with fixed sights and the .44 Special Target Model. The former is exceptionally rare. A friend had a 5" .44 Military he was willing to let go, and I traded straight across for a .22 K-Hornet. I had great plans for the latter but just never seemed to get the time to carry them out. For me, the 3rd Model Hand Ejector is more practical, so it was a good trade for both of us.

For several decades, I have been looking for an affordable 1950 Target in .45 ACP/Auto Rim; they are simply

practically nonexistent. Then, I walked into Boise Gun Company and there in the glass case was a pair of early 1950-ish 6½" Target Models, one in .45 and the other in .44 Special. Of course, I wanted both of them, but they were high-dollar. Most of the sixguns I've



S&W .44 Special 1950 Target Models are shooters.

In this case, it looked like somebody used a horseshoe file to perform the work. There were deep gouges in the grips, and the modified grip frame had never been re-blued. I turned to my friend Butch Glenn who found a replacement hammer in his parts box, modified a pair of grips I happened to have, smoothed off the grip frame, and cold-blued it. It now looks presentable and also shoots quite well.

On that same website, on the same day, was another .44; this time, it was a pre-29, five-screw S&W 4" .44 Magnum. These were only made for a very short time and are rarely ever seen. The original .44 Magnum arrived in early 1956, and by 1957 both the fifth screw had been dropped, and it had become the Model 29. The specimen pictured had a little bit of blue wear but was in excellent mechanical shape. I wound up with it, also.


### Rarest Of The Rare

One of the rarest of the .44s is the 5" S&W Model 29, of which only 500 were made in 1958. It was my good pleasure to place Elmer Keith's 5" .44 in a special place in the Elmer Keith Museum and, of course dream of one of my own while holding it. Having my own most likely would never happen. Then I got a call from a reader who had been talking to S&W and found they had a couple of the original 5" barrels still in the shop. He not only grabbed one for himself he told them to put my name on the other one. A Model 29-2 soon went back to Springfield to be re-barreled, and I had my 5" Model 29.

What makes this even stranger is the fact the week before, I had found an 8 3/4" Model 29-2 on another website at a very attractive price, and it was sent off to Jim Stroh to be turned into a custom 5" .44 Magnum.

### The Final Touch

Finally, we come to a .44 Special that is not new to me. In fact, I purchased it from S&W in the mid-1980s. It is one of their special run of stainless steel Model 624s with a 4" barrel. Many years ago, I had it fitted with ivory stocks. The Model 624 was sent up to engraver Michael Gouse for an extremely attractive "C" coverage engraving at a most reasonable price. It has become one of my most cherished .44 Specials.

The Era of the .44 continues. I just traded a black powder Colt SAA for an S&W .44 Special Triple-Lock Target Model. A new chapter  is about to begin.

# 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



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## MURDER OR SELF-DEFENSE?

**SITUATION:** The big man who just threatened to kill your mother appears about to do so. You have a weapon in your hand ...

**LESSON:** You don't have to be right; you have to be reasonable and seen as such in criminal court, civil court and the court of public opinion.

---

It is the evening of Good Friday, but this particular Friday won't be good for any of the three people in this tableau. We have the 6' abusive boyfriend, the petite now-single mom, and her slender, pubescent daughter.

Boyfriend and mom are screaming at each other in the master bedroom. She is shouting to him their relationship is over. He is raving that she'll never leave him. He'll disfigure her. Then, his rage turns homicidal. Disfigure? No, he'll kill her, he yells obscenely, and her mother and her daughter! The daughter, outside the bedroom door, has been listening to all of this. She has armed herself with a knife from the kitchen drawer.

Suddenly, the door opens. The young girl sees her tiny mom coming toward her, followed closely by the boyfriend who towers over her. He has something in his hand — and now he raises that hand!

The girl steps forward.

Even though it is held clumsily with the edge up, the 8" blade of the carving knife pierces the man's upper abdomen. Its sharp point finds the liver, the portal vein between it and the intestines, and the aorta.

The man's eyes widen as he utters his last words: "My God, Cheryl, what have you done?"

He begins to turn away, then topples backward, sprawling with his arms outstretched. Self-defense or murder? Not just the law, but the world will decide.

### Details

The date is April 4, 1958. The place is a mansion on North Bedford Drive in Beverly Hills, Calif. The dead man has gone by many names, but his real one is John Stompanato. The young girl who brought the carving knife from the kitchen to protect her mother is Cheryl Crane, age 14, and her mother is one of the world's most beloved actresses, fresh from an Academy Award nomination, Lana Turner.

It's not just a homicide: Because of who it involves, it's now a "scandal" that occupies headlines throughout the nation and even the world.

The police were not summoned, but instead the family doctor, who was horrified at what he found. Finding no pulse, he injected epinephrine into Stompanato's heart, but to no avail. He turned to Turner and said, "Call Jerry Giesler."

Giesler was Hollywood's "lawyer to the stars." He represented Charlie Chaplin, Errol Flynn, Marilyn Monroe and numerous other Tinseltown celebrities. He also represented famed lawyer Clarence Darrow and, on the other end of the spectrum, mobster Bugsy Siegel.

By the time someone finally called the police — some two hours after the stabbing — Giesler was already at the death scene, along with Fred Otash, the "private investigator to the stars" in Hollywood. The Beverly Hills Police Chief came to the scene himself, of course, and was furious to find the attorney and the private eye there ahead of him. He may also have been somewhat chagrined: A week before, Lana Turner's mother had talked to him about Stompanato beating her daughter, and he had told her Lana had to make a report to the police department. Fearing a scandal, Turner had not done so. Clinton Anderson had the longest tenure as Chief in the department's history — 26 years from 1942 to 1969 — which means he had to know how to navigate political and public opinion waters. He, and for that matter, the prosecutor, knew that in such a high-profile case, they could not be seen as showing favoritism to Hollywood royalty.

*Continued on next page*

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An advertisement for BURGER CANES. At the top, the logo "BURGER CANES" is written in a stylized font with a sword blade forming the letter 'B'. Below the logo, it says "distinguished craftsmanship Est. 1987". The main image shows several sword canes of different designs and materials. One is a dark cane with a silver hand guard, another is a lighter cane with a textured grip. A hand engraving tool is shown in the foreground. Text on the left says "Renowned world-wide for our quality range of sword canes, custom canes, hiking staffs &amp; country canes." Text on the right says "Custom hand engraving options available on titanium handle". Text at the bottom left says "Best grade hand engraving &amp; 24K gold inlay". Text at the bottom right says "Stainless Damascus". At the bottom, it provides contact information: "eMail: info@swordcane.com" and "www.swordcane.com".

## AYOOB FILES

Cheryl Crane did not go home that night. She was kept in custody supposedly as a material witness but also under suspicion of murder. The girl who had acted to save her mother's life was in the mouth of the justice machine.

### The Criminal Justice Side

A Coroner's Jury, somewhat similar to a Grand Jury, was convened. On the advice of attorney Giesler, Cheryl did not testify. The prosecution does not seem to have objected too strenuously to that: She had already given the police a complete statement in which she made it clear the knife was in her hand when it entered Stompanato's body. The star witness was a conservatively dressed, perfectly coiffed, and stunningly beautiful 37-year-old Lana Turner.

By all witness accounts, she was also stunningly articulate. Her critics said she was acting and that it was the best performance of her career. Even if that criticism was on point, it didn't necessarily mean she was falsifying her testimony. Turner was an A-list actor at the top of her profession. A doctor will testify like a doctor, a lawyer will sound like a lawyer on the witness stand, and no one should have been surprised that Lana Turner sounded like an actor.

The Coroner's Jury didn't take long to return a verdict of Justifiable Homicide.

There would be no charges, no trial. But it is said, "You can beat the charge, but you can't beat the ride." Cheryl Crane was declared a ward of the state and remained such for some time, eventually going into the custody of her grandmother. Obviously traumatized, her later teen years would include time as a runaway and also a suicide attempt.

### Civil Court Side

Relatives of John Stompanato sued Lana Turner, demanding three-quarters of a million dollars. In 1962, the case was settled for \$20,000, which, according to one analyst, would be 200 grand or more in today's dollars. For a wealthy Hollywood star, it was a "drop in the bucket," according to one commentator. Most "in the know" considered it a "nuisance settlement" for "chump change."

### Court Of Public Opinion

The Court of Public Opinion convened the day after the incident, fueled vigorously by the press, and remains in session to this day, 66 years later.

Gossip-mongers made much of the fact that the Lana/Johnny relationship wasn't the first rodeo for either of them. Ms. Turner was married eight

times over her years to seven husbands, having once remarried Cheryl's father, Stephen Crane, and had been romantically linked at various times with Ronald Reagan, Robert Stack, George Montgomery, Robert Taylor, Frank Sinatra, Tyrone Power and other famous stars. Her friends called her a hopeless romantic.

The public, for the most part, only knew that Stompanato was a shadowy figure with disreputable associates. People who knew him, including the police, knew more. Stompanato was a WWII vet, a Marine who had fought in the Pacific Theater. There wasn't much else good to say about him. Thirty-two years of age at the time of death, he had already been through three marriages himself with a history of abandoning his wife and child. He had been the bodyguard/chauffeur of Mickey Cohen, the notorious Los Angeles mob boss. Cohen, in turn, had begun his criminal career as a bodyguard for Chicago mobster Joe Barron. The day had come when a trio of rival gangsters opened fire on Barron and Cohen shot back and killed two of them. That shooting had been ruled justifiable in self-defense. Does anyone think a gangster with that life experience would let Stompanato guard his body without a gun?

Stompanato had a reputation as a skillful, well-endowed lover and gigolo who sought out stars and starlets alike, seduced them, leached off the rich ones and took incriminating pictures of them for subsequent extortion. After his death, he was reportedly found to have been in possession of nude photos he had taken of Turner when she was asleep. His history of brutal physical violence against Turner herself is something we'll get to shortly.

The scandal Lana Turner had feared when she hesitated to make formal complaints against Stompanato for brutalizing her flamed up to something far worse after the killing. Though Turner had been certain her film career would die with Stompanato, she remained in demand. Indeed, her most recent movie, which was in theaters at the time of the incident, reportedly enjoyed a 20% uptick in ticket sales after the headlines hit. Ms. Turner stayed busy, on screen, and wealthy until her death from throat cancer in 1995 at the age of 74.

Cheryl Crane had taken control of her life by the time she was 21, working as a popular hostess at her father's restaurant. She went on to a successful career in real estate, and today is retired and living happily with her wife and lifelong significant other, former model Jocelyn LeRoy. But the controversy goes on as you read this. As evidence, I offer the 2024 publication of Casey Sherman's book *A Murder in Hollywood: The Untold Story Of Tinseltown's Most Shocking Crime*.

“Murder?” Really? After an official finding of Justifiable Homicide? Let’s look at some of the fine points of the matter.

## Analysis

What justifies homicide is a situation of immediate, otherwise unavoidable danger of death or great bodily harm to oneself or an innocent party one has the right to protect. It is determined by the simultaneous presence of three criteria, most commonly known as AOJ: Ability, Opportunity and Jeopardy. Ability means the opponent has the power to kill or inflict crippling injury. Opportunity means he is capable of doing so immediately. Jeopardy means the opponent is manifesting an intent, by words and or actions, to kill or cripple someone he had no right to harm.

Ability? While Cheryl Crane saw something in his raised hand that she thought was a weapon, it turned out to be wooden clothes hangers with garments he was carrying away because Turner had just kicked him out, but Crane had no way of knowing that in a brief, tension-fraught moment. Johnny’s threat to cut Lana’s face could certainly be probable cause to believe he had immediate access to an edged weapon.

In addition to weapons, the ability factor can also be constituted by disparity of force: The osten-

sibly unarmed assailant is physically capable of killing or crippling the intended victim. One element of such is size and strength: Stompanato was a muscular six-footer while Turner stood only 5’3” (and Crane, while 5’9”, was slender and much lighter than Stompanato). Check. Male versus female is usually another disparity of force element: Check. The ability factor was absolutely there.

## “The girl who had acted to save her mother’s life was in the mouth of the justice machine.”

Opportunity, the immediacy element? Stompanato was right behind Turner, his arm upraised as if to wield whatever was in his hand as a weapon, and Crane but a single step away. Check.

Jeopardy, the manifest intent element? Crane, listening fearfully outside her mother’s bedroom door, had heard the escalating threats that Stompanato had screamed into Turner’s face. Another check mark.

The yardstick for all of this is what has been called the Doctrine of the Reasonable Man and is better called the Doctrine of the Reasonable and Prudent Person. The judge can be expected to instruct the jury in both criminal and civil cases to ask themselves, “What would a reasonable and prudent person have done in the exact same situation, knowing what the defendant knew at the time?” Let’s analyze that three-pronged test.

Exact same situation: The young daughter is aware this man has brutalized her mother before and has heard him scream threats to cut her face so badly that no man will ever want to look at her again, and then escalate to threats to kill her and her family. Cheryl has become so alarmed she has gone downstairs to take a carving knife from the kitchen in case she needs to protect her mom. As the door opens, she sees the “threatener” behind the mother, whose back is to him, raising a hand that holds something, and she believes if she does not act now, her mother may die in front of her in an instant.

Knowing what the user of force knew: Cheryl Crane had seen her mother’s bruises and black eyes in the past that she knew had been inflicted by Stompanato. On one occasion, he had strangled her mother so viciously she

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was unable to speak her lines for three weeks. Another time, when Turner was filming in London, pictures appeared in the newspaper of her with co-star Sean Connery implying a romantic relationship, and the violently jealous Stompanato had flown to London with a revolver, shown up on the movie set, and waved the gun around with obvious indication of being prepared to use it. Connery, who had been a bouncer in his younger days, had twisted Stompanato's wrist until he dropped the gun and then, by most accounts, knocked him down with a single punch.

It was a matter of record that the illegal gun charge got Johnny deported from England with a couple of Scotland Yard detectives accompanying him to the plane to make sure he left. The revolver he brandished there would have wound up in the custody of London Metropolitan Police, but he was known to own other firearms. According to one report, a box in which he was known to keep a revolver and incriminating extortion materials disappeared after his death, and a couple of .32 automatics were found in his crash pad. After his death, a handgun registered in his name was connected to a separate homicide. (The latter, of course, would not have been known to Cheryl at the time of the fatal incident.)

The reasonable and prudent person element: Within the totality of the circumstances — a perspective the court always demands — it seems that any overview of the situation would give anyone exercising both logic and caution cause to believe death or great bodily harm was imminent to Lana Turner, and for that matter Cheryl Crane, when the knife went into Johnny Stompanato's body.

### Lessons

Lana Turner had, for obvious reasons, kept her relationship with Johnny Stompanato behind closed doors: She knew what it would do to her reputation if she were seen in public with a gangster. He had become furious she wouldn't be seen with him and had not allowed him to accompany her to the recent Academy Awards, where she had been nominated for her performance in the movie *Peyton Place*. She had warned her daughter she would be breaking up with him tonight, and it would get ugly. That was why the teenager was listening at her bedroom door. Lesson: Something we tell all the women we love: Don't get involved or stay involved with vicious, violent people, the lure of the "romantic Bad Boy" notwithstanding.

Lesson: While Stompanato turned out to be unarmed that night, he didn't need weapons to carry out the threats that cost him his life. Lana Turner apparently owned at least one handgun. Sometime before, when Cheryl told her that her then-husband, 6'4" actor Lex Barker had

violently raped her, Lana had put a gun to his head and told him to get the hell out. Barker, who always denied the allegation, left meekly. Lana Turner would have had more "de-escalating power" had she been armed on the night of the killing. (Forewarned is forearmed, right?) She would, if nothing else, have saved her daughter the trauma of having had to kill the abuser. Or, better yet, she could have called lawyer Giesler and pistol-packing PI and Hollywood "fixer" Fred Otash ahead of time and had them emphatically tell the gigolo the relationship is over and prevented the personal confrontation entirely.

Lesson: Call 9-1-1 first! The lawyer and everyone else getting there ahead of the police created the illusion, which persists to this day, that there must have been a cover-up of a murder. One guy even wrote a book whose cornerstone was his claim that Lana Turner once told him, "I killed the SOB, and I'd do it again." It's hard to take that seriously when you look at the totality of the evidence, but the claim haunted Turner to her grave and haunts Crane still.

Lesson: Don't give detailed statements until you've come down from the adrenaline high of a deadly experience and are certain of what really happened. Turner blurted out that she thought her daughter had punched or poked Stompanato, which was somewhat at odds with what Cheryl Crane wrote later: "The door flew open. Mother stood there, her hand on the knob. He was coming at her from behind, his arm raised to strike. I took a step forward and lifted the weapon. He ran on the blade. It went in. In! For three ghastly heartbeats, our bodies fused. He looked straight at me, unblinking. 'My God, Cheryl, what have you done?'"

Small differences in perception like that can create questions that last forever. "He was obviously about to kill my mother" would have sufficed.

As we noted, the Court of Public Opinion is still in session. The best evidence now available is the books and articles on it: *Vanity Fair's* well-researched articles can be found online, and the Sherman book I mentioned is very well researched, its title's misuse of the word "Murder" (which implies malice by the killer) notwithstanding, and the autobiographies of both Cheryl Crane and Lana Turner exist. Amazon will get you those.

In that ongoing Court of Public Opinion, consider yourself one of the jurors. Suppose what is now known was the evidence presented in court. If the case went to trial right now, after 45 years as an expert witness in weapons/homicide cases and extensive training in homicide investigation, if I was one of the jurors instructed that "beyond a reasonable doubt" was the standard of determining guilt, my vote would have to be Not Guilty.



# GUN RIGHTS

Adam Kraut, SAF Executive Director



## A CAREFULLY ORCHESTRATED COURT STRATEGY

To help fight those who wish to trample on our constitutional rights, the Second Amendment Foundation (SAF) legal program abides by strategic and tactical goals in selecting lawsuits. As a national nonprofit, we prioritize new litigation for those issues that affect the largest populations of people or whose burdens on the right are most extreme. We are always looking for individual cases that represent an important legal issue or a novel infringement on someone's rights. We maintain our "Submit-a-Case" form on our website, SAF.org, for that very purpose.

### Who, What, Where ...

Our current programmatic priorities can be most simply described as addressing the "Who, What and Where" of the Second Amendment.

The "Who" is a question that's easy enough to answer. Who can exercise the full collection of rights guaranteed by the Second Amendment? For example, SAF's ongoing legal campaign to vindicate the right to carry for adults aged 18-20 across the country who live in jurisdictions where carry is limited to those 21 and older.

Up next is "What." What types of arms are covered by the Second Amendment? Cases here include "assault weapons" bans, magazine capacity bans, roster cases, etc. Examples include our Gray and Graham cases challenging the assault weapon and magazine capacity bans in Delaware and *Snope v. Brown*, our challenge to the Maryland "assault weapon" ban. As of this writing, all three cases are currently awaiting a decision from the Supreme Court as to whether they will take the cases this term. It's possible, however, that has changed since this article went to print.

Last is "Where," which is best explained as where firearms owners are allowed to legally carry. Examples of these cases include our challenges

to the so-called "sensitive place" carry bans passed in response to the landmark *Bruen* decision, as well as mass transit and post office carry bans. SAF scored a victory recently in *Schoenthal v. Raoul* where we secured a declaratory judgment striking down Illinois' mass transit carry ban as unconstitutional.

### Long Term ... Short Term

While many cases frequently take years to work through the process, the ultimate goal is to get relief as soon as possible for the peaceable gun owners who are affected while also creating good case law that will have a lasting effect for years to come. For this reason, our legal challenges will frequently include requests for emergency preliminary relief, designed to immediately put a halt to the constitutional violation early on in the case.

Of course, the highest court in the land is the United States Supreme Court, and ultimately, they are the final arbiters of the law. There are particular types of cases that the Supreme Court will address, and SAF's litigation program is tailored to meet those needs.

One way to get the Court's attention is to highlight to the justices that a particular circuit court (or perhaps multiple) is failing to faithfully apply the express direction the Supreme Court has laid out in how to properly deal with Second Amendment cases.

Another way is to highlight a disagreement or inconsistency between two or more circuit courts in what's known as a "circuit split." Because our federal system requires that the interpretation of federal law is consistent from one part of the country to another, when circuit courts disagree and come to inconsistent conclusions, it's the Supreme Court's job to step in and settle the dispute.

For as much strategy goes into taking up a case, we must also be strategic as to what cases NOT to bring. First and foremost, resources are finite. It is our responsibility to use the money so generously donated by our sup-

porters to get the maximum benefit for the most people. Second, we must be as mindful of creating bad case law as we are about creating good case law. Bad case law gets applied to new cases going forward, making it even more difficult to win in the courtroom and causing damage to the movement.

To date, SAF has been involved in more than 260 cases and currently has 57 active lawsuits across the country. At the time of this writing, SAF has won 11 cases in the legal arena this year, all with the same goal in mind — to defend, secure and restore the right to keep and bear arms.

### The Long Game

For more than 50 years, the Second Amendment Foundation (SAF) has been fighting to defend, secure and restore our Second Amendment rights.

From the landmark Supreme Court victory in *McDonald v. City of Chicago* to triumphs in state and local courthouses all over the country, the organization has scored countless wins over our 50-year history. SAF's win in *McDonald* is critical in the fight against modern gun control, as it paved the way for legal action against states and municipalities for violations of the Second Amendment.

We are at the forefront of numerous legal battles, challenging unconstitutional firearms regulations like "assault weapon" bans, magazine capacity bans, bans on the purchase, possession, and carry of firearms for adults between the ages of 18- to 20-years-old, "sensitive places" carry restrictions, red flag laws, rights restorations for prohibited persons and many, many more. Through aggressive, strategic litigation, we have successfully challenged restrictive gun laws across the nation, dismantling impediments to the right to keep and bear arms for all Americans.



For more info: [SAF.org](http://SAF.org)



# NEWPRODUCTS

## ECHELON 4.5F 9MM PISTOL WITH MANUAL SAFETY

Springfield Armory

The manual safety of the Echelon 4.5F 9mm Pistol is frame-mounted at the rear of the frame.

It's ambidextrous, easy to engage/disengage and matches the pistol's texture. The patent-pending Central Operating Group is a self-contained and serialized stainless steel chassis that moves between available grip modules in seconds. The Echelon with Manual Safety features U-Dot tritium/luminescent sights and a 4.5" hammer-forged barrel. It comes with one 17- and one 20-round magazine. MSRP: From \$679. For more info: (800) 680-6866, [Springfield-Armory.com](http://Springfield-Armory.com)



## CONQUEST HDX ZEISS

The Conquest HDX family of binoculars is available with three objective lens diameters (32 mm, 42 mm and 56 mm), each with 8X and 10X magnification. The 56 mm model is also available with 15X magnification. The binoculars deliver optical quality and 90% light transmission resulting in vibrantly sharp images, even in low-light conditions. ZEISS FieldFlattener Technology ensures high resolution over the entire field of view. The Conquest HDX has robust mechanical construction and durable, lightweight magnesium housing. The binoculars are waterproof, fog proof and shockproof. MSRP: About \$999. For more info: (800) 233-2343, [ZEISS.com](http://ZEISS.com)



## ECOCARRY 1791 Outdoor Lifestyle Group

1791 Outdoor Lifestyle Group's EcoCarry line of IWB holsters is made from a synthetic leather-like material. A sturdy, spring steel belt clip accommodates belts up to 1.5" wide and keeps the holster and handgun securely in place. A high-tang sweat guard blocks moisture and sweat, and the abrasion-resistant material protects the firearm's finish. The holsters are also optics-ready in several sizes, capable of accommodating most rear-mounted red dot sights. MSRP: \$19.99. For more info: (800) 407-1791, [1791gunleather.com](http://1791gunleather.com)



## WL11 RAIL MOUNTED TACTICAL LIGHT

NEXTORCH Industries



The high-output rechargeable WL11 Rail Mounted Tactical Light features a toggle switch positioned just the right distance from the trigger for comfort. The 650-lumen beam casts the ideal amount of illumination in low-light situations. The WL11 is a powerful weapon light weighing only 2.6 oz. and runs approximately 1.5 hours on a full charge. Compatible with MIL-STD-1913 and GLOCK rails. MSRP: \$107.99. For more info: [Nextorch.com](http://Nextorch.com)

## DXT2 PRO SERIES

XS Sights



XS Sights introduces its DXT2 PRO Series night sights for self-defense, offering increased durability and corrosion resistance. The PRO Series has a green glow dot front sight delivering high contrast in bright light while glowing extremely bright in low light. The DXT2 PRO Series sights have a large tritium front sight with dual-illumination technology and a rear tritium stripe for fast and easy vertical alignment. Currently available for a variety of GLOCK models. MSRP: \$153.99. For more info: (888) 744-4880, [XSSights.com](http://XSSights.com)

## BLODJEGER FLANNEL JACKET

VIKTOS

The Blodjeger Flannel Jacket from VIKTOS features Heritage flannel poly/spandex chassis and interior stretch panels for a dynamic range of motion. FiteLite insulation in the body and sleeves offers warmth and comfort. Reinforced forearm and shoulder overlays hold up well to activity, and Gunvent sidearm access zippers keep a hip-mounted firearm in reach. Zippered chest and hand pockets keep items from falling out, and hidden loop panels secure holsters and crucial EDC items. Hidden chest snaps eliminate the possibility of snagging on bowstrings or rifle stocks. MSRP: \$156. For more info: (800) 597-7179, [VIKTOS.com](http://VIKTOS.com)



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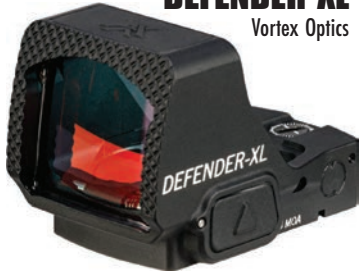


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**DEFENDER-XL**

Vortex Optics



The ultra-wide sight window of the *Defender-XL* from Vortex significantly enhances the field of view, leading to faster speed to target, quicker and more accurate follow-up shots. Other key benefits include 7075 aluminum housing, an ultra-wide aspherical lens, advanced ShockShield polymer insert, Fast-Rack textured front face, 12 brightness settings, auto shutoff, motion activation, DeltaPoint Pro footprint and 5 or 8 MOA red dot options. MSRP: \$599. For more info: (800) 486-7839, [VortexOptics.com](http://VortexOptics.com)



**M81  
DIP  
PATTERN**

MKS Supply

Hi-Point Firearms, marketed by MKS Supply, now offers its *M81 Dip Pattern* for a large selection of the Hi-Point handguns and carbine rifles, including the YC9, JHP Gen 2 45, 995TS Carbine Rifle, 4595TS Carbine Rifle and 1095TS Carbine Rifle. For more info: (877) 425-4867, [MKSsupply.com](http://MKSsupply.com)

**SCOUT 25  
AMMO CABINET**

Steelhead Outdoors

Built for secure ammunition storage, the *Scout 25 Ammo Cabinet* from Steelhead Outdoors has four heavy-duty, all-metal, full-width, adjustable shelves and can be further customized with additional shelves, door organizer panels and exterior accessories. It is constructed with 14-gauge steel and patent-pending vertical beam locking technology. Measures 25" W x 60" H x 15" D and weighs 175 lbs. MSRP: \$1,600. For more info: (612) 326-4244, [Steelheadoutdoors.com](http://Steelheadoutdoors.com)



**CHEST RIG NOMAD**

CrossBreed Holsters

CrossBreed's *Chest Rig Nomad* is a holstering solution for outdoor adventurers with full-size backpacks or daypacks. The Nomad features three adjustable hook-and-loop straps that secure the system between a backpack's shoulder straps. Designed as a universal fit for most packs, it places the handgun high on the torso for comfortable all-day carry and quick access.

The handgun-model-specific rugged Kydex pocket fitted to a leather backer distributes pressure and fully supports the handgun to eliminate uncomfortable "hot spots" and pressure points. MSRP: \$114.95. For more info: (888) 732-5011, [CrossBreed.com](http://CrossBreed.com)



**WHITETAIL NIVOR  
JACKET**

TUO Gear

The *Whitetail Nivor Jacket* is designed for the late-season whitetail hunter. This high-performance parka has microberber fleece with DWR, brushed tricot with DWR, Sherpa fleece with a 2L lamination, Polygiene Freshness and AeroGuard Windproof nano-grid fleece with a 2L lamination. The Nivor Jacket is built with Paralite synthetic insulation, strategically zoned with more in the core and less in the extremities and lower torso to reduce bulk. MSRP: \$299.99. For more info: [TUOGear.com](http://TUOGear.com)



**STILETTO PRO II**

SureFire

SureFire's *Stiletto Pro II* boasts twin Hybrid Beam optics delivering a concentrated 35,000-candela beam, illuminating subjects 375 meters away. The compact light's tactical tail switch instantly activates high output. The integrated USB-C rechargeable lithium polymer battery is environmentally friendly and reduces operational cost and the LED fuel gauge allows easy tracking of battery charge/discharge status. The Melonite-coated, spring steel pocket clip can be positioned for bezel-up or bezel-down carry and the mil-spec hard-anodized aluminum body is corrosion resistant and passes IPX7 water testing to one meter for 30 minutes. MSRP: \$379. For more info: (800) 828-8809, [SureFire.com](http://SureFire.com)



**CARRYKEEPER**

CarryKeeper

It's easy to use: Slip *CarryKeeper* on your belt then hook it to your belt loop. Now you can unbuckle your belt without your holster slipping away. It's practical, durable and reliable. Made of high-strength carbon, CarryKeeper works best on leather and canvas belts. MSRP: \$19.95 for a single pack; \$29.95 for a two-pack. For more info: [CarryKeeper.com](http://CarryKeeper.com), [info@CarryKeeper.com](mailto:info@CarryKeeper.com)



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Cosmetic work still needs doing here but this shows the rough relationship to the original shape. Note how the rear sight is moved well forward. The hammer still needs checkering here.



Lots of hand work with files, stones and wet-or-dry papers after welding was worth the effort. Note the new, flat surface finish.

or real-life design idea, I got my hacksaw and, after some amount of holding the slide up and thinking, "Oh, about there ..." hacked off the back of the slide. The game was afoot then.

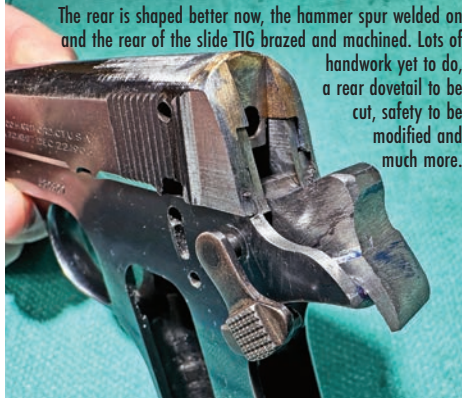
By continuously "holding things up and looking at them," I guessed how much of the rear of the frame to cut off, then attacked it with my mill and files. I had to use TIG braze to fill up voids in the back of the slide, then machined it to look like a 1911. Welding a hunk of steel on the hammer and safety allowed me to reshape things with lots of file work. There were also dozens of hours spent with files and stones to shape things so they all flowed together.

More milling time allowed me to cut the bevels on the bottom of the slide sides and that little scallop at the front of the slide. I crafted proprietary tiny combat sights, then cut very shallow dovetails to mount them. The front barrel lug extended high, so I had to cut a cavity in the underside of the front sight to allow the barrel lug to fit. I used my TIG torch to weld up a zillion pits, dents, dings, gouges, etc., then spent hours dressing them down with files, diamond hones, stones, then paper grits to 400. I still need to do some final cosmetic work, but we're getting close.

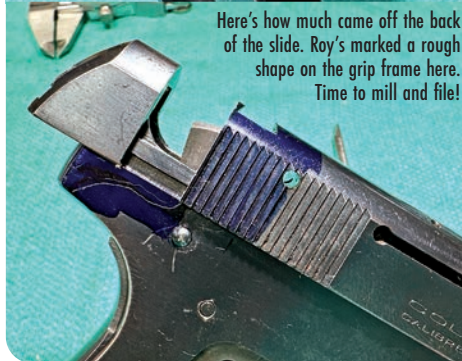
**What'd I learn?**

I had to do a bit of a redesign to the ejector assembly, getting the hammer spur "just right" took two rewelds and plenty of file work. The backstrap shape of the frame took no end of fussing and a few of the internal edges had to be re-cut and re-fit. There were other unexpected surprises, but I managed to work through them. The final finish will likely be that wonderful satin nickel Colt used to put on the Commanders in the 1970s. Remember that?

Much to my surprise, the final assembly proved the gun shot just fine. I had restored the action before I started and found the pistol to be a real shooter with a sharp bore even then. Once fin-



The rear is shaped better now, the hammer spur welded on and the rear of the slide TIG brazed and machined. Lots of handwork yet to do, a rear dovetail to be cut, safety to be modified and much more.



Here's how much came off the back of the slide. Roy's marked a rough shape on the grip frame here. Time to mill and file!

ished, the much better sights made a huge difference, and it was funny, but the 1911 "feel" made it point more naturally for me than a stock 1903.

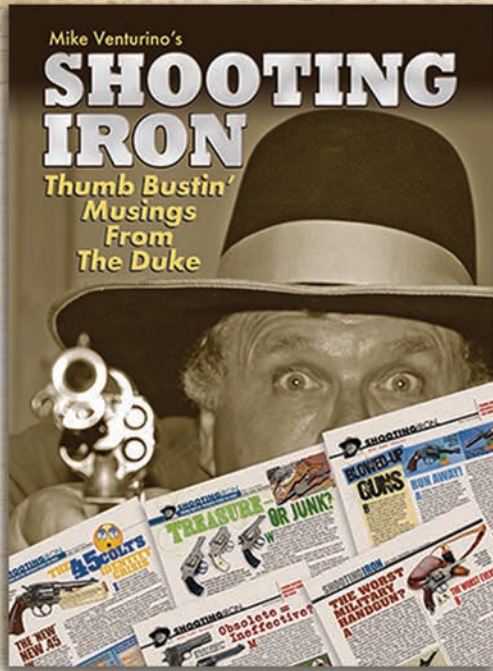
Some might say, "Oh, you could have just bought a Mustang or one of the new Browning .380s," but they aren't the same at all. This has a unique feel and look. I think if Colt had made these instead of, or along with the 1903 after the 1911 was introduced, they'd have sold like hotcakes.

The real win here, at least to me, is I confess to a good deal of satisfaction at pulling this off after years of wondering about it.

And ... it's only one around.  
P.S. I just found a Colt .25 Vest Pocket Auto. Stay tuned for a little brother to the 1903/1911.



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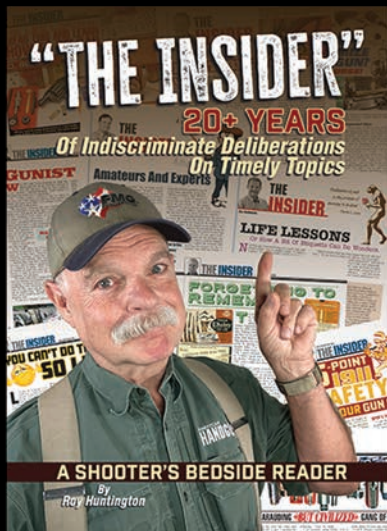
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# A MINI-1911 FROM A COLT 1903? NO... REALLY...



Roy always thought there was a Mini-1911 hiding inside of a Colt 1903. After a month's work, he found out he was right!

I always knew there was a tiny 1911 lurking just inside a 1903. If you looked, you could “almost” see it taunting you. “Oh, I’m here,” it’d say with a wry smile. “You just have to find me.”

So I did.

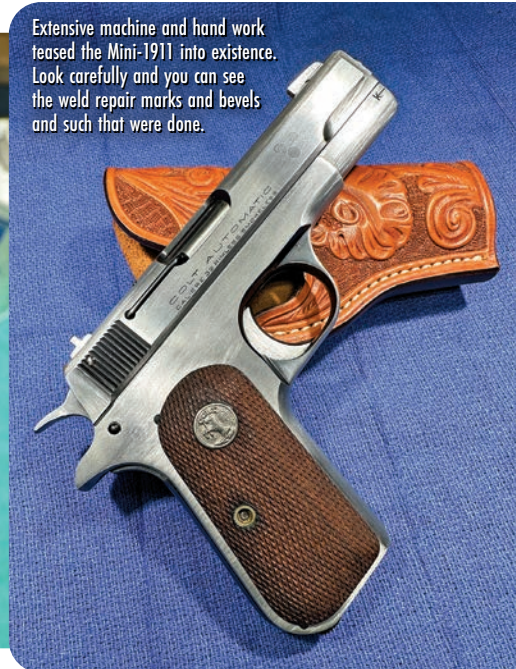
Before all you Colt addicts out there lose your collective minds, please read all of the article. The gun started as a certified beater, something I picked up for \$150 years ago, complete with pits, gashes in the surface metal, dings and plenty of rust damage. So what we did here, friends, was bring an old gun destined to likely die a slow death back to life as, dare I say it — something even more interesting?

## The Old Days

If you know about King’s Gunworks and names like Swenson, Keith, Croft and Fitz, then you’re in the right place. In those days, it was, as I like to call it, “Old School Gunsmithing.” After-market parts didn’t really exist. If you wanted something, you had to invent it, then make it. Small shop gunsmithing from the 1920s through the 1970s basically created the look and function of many factory guns, even today. That extended safety on your 1911? Thank you, Mr. Swenson. Bobbed hammer and slicked-up action on your revolver? Thank goodness for Mr. Fitz. Customized single action? Kudos to Keith. Get the picture?



Some rough shaping prior to TIG work. The cut-off extended into the rear sight dovetail so the sight had to be moved forward.



Extensive machine and hand work teased the Mini-1911 into existence. Look carefully and you can see the weld repair marks and bevels and such that were done.

I like Old School Gunsmithing and it’s most of what I do. If I need a single-shot rifle, I build one using a stock receiver and some imagination. Can’t find an S&W DA revolver with the features I like? I craft one. I recently put an S&W J-Frame adjustable rear sight on a Taylor’s & Co. miniature 1873 .38 Special. In the 1940s, I’m sure gunsmiths put S&W sights on Colt Single Actions, so I’m tipping my hat to them. But that’s the spirit. If you can think it up, you can do it, unencumbered by the fact no “factory” gun exists like the one you want. Please do assemble the

kit guns, learn, figure things out, hone your tool skills — but then take it to the next step.

Which is what we did here.

## The Transformation

The 1903 looks hammerless but it actually has one hiding inside. The rear of the slide is covering it. If you squint your eyes, you can imagine that hammer with a spur welded on sitting there with the back of the slide gone. So, tossing caution to the wind and without a single drawing

*Continued on page 72*

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# AMERICAN HANDGUNNER

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