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circa 1817, our National Historic Landmarks Headquarters and Museums (featured on *The History Channel*). Satisfaction is guaranteed or return within 30 days for a full refund.

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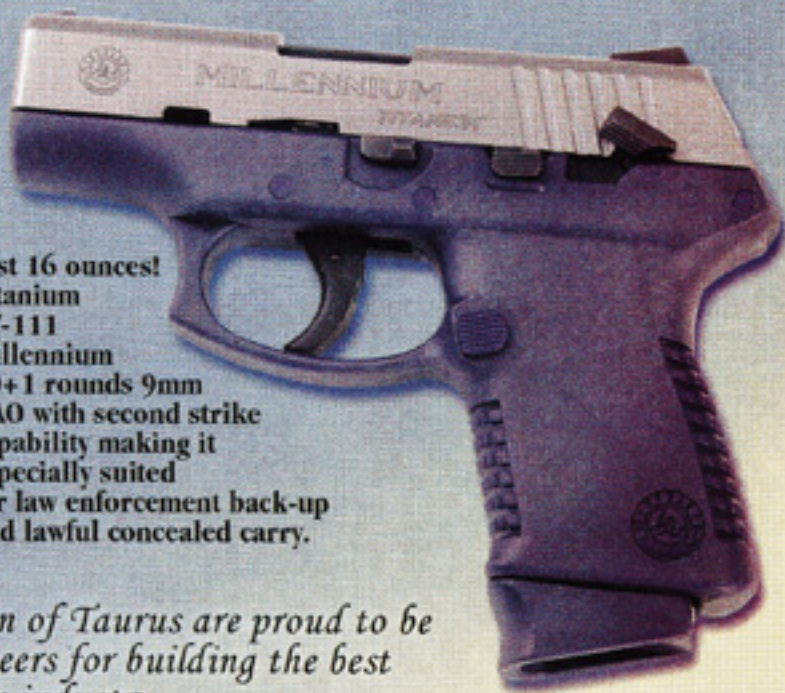
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LIGHTWEIGHT BRAIN

Story and
Photos
By
Charles
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Looking For Healthy Firepower? Smith & Wesson's Mountain Lite Packs A .44 Punch!



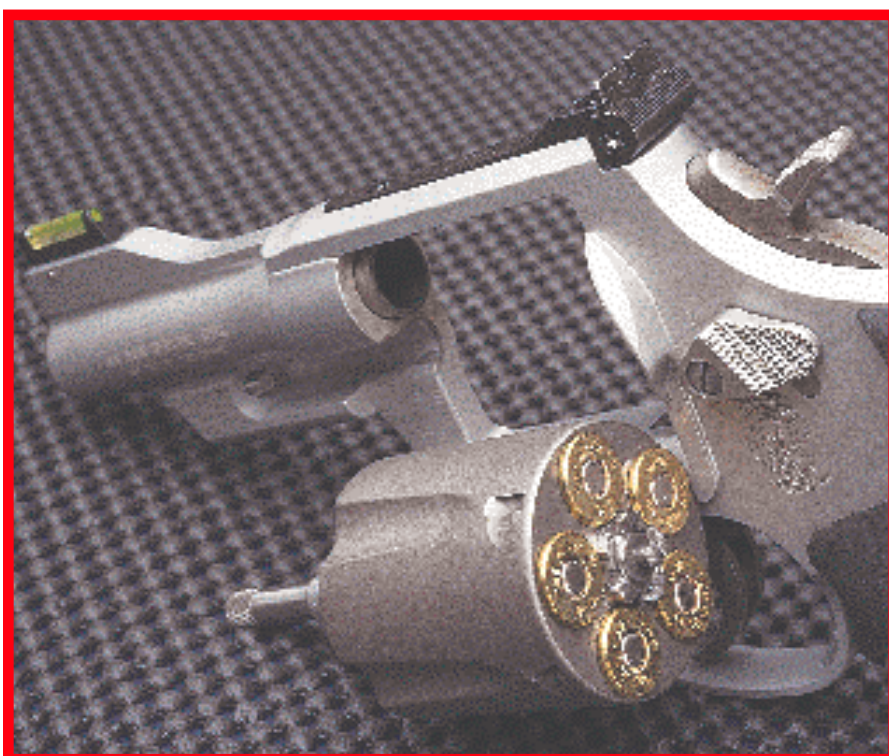
The demand from shooters who prefer lightweight guns—even if it extracts a sometimes brutal price in recoil—has grown steadily since the early '90s. This trend is driven by the growing interest in concealed handguns with the passage of several landmark CCW laws.

Shooters first looked to .38 Special snubnose revolvers but then switched to big bores, culminating with Smith & Wesson's introduction of the Model 296, a hump-back, titanium-cylindrical, hammerless .44 Special. While the concept of a lightweight big bore had a certain appeal, the execution simply wasn't there.

Then the Springfield, Mass., handgun maker introduced the Model 396 AirLite Ti .44 S&W, which solves *all* the 296's problems—save one. There is no way that an 18 oz. revolver can do



The Model 396 AirLite Ti Mountain Lite has an aluminum, titanium cylinder and a HiViz green-dot front sight.



The AirLite's cylinder is made of high-strength titanium.

much about recoil. With hotter loads, it's not much fun to shoot.

What makes the 396 so attractive is the conversion from a too-large *pocket* pistol to a utilitarian big-bore kit gun. Smith added adjustable sights and a HiViz front sight, and deleted the hump-back to give the gun a classic revolver look. S&W's sub-title, "Mountain Lite," expands on the company's already popular series of "Mountain Guns." These light, major-caliber handguns are built for hikers, backpackers and anyone who ventures away from civilization to a place where self-defense may be a consideration. Please do not misunderstand, though— this is not a gun to take bear hunting.

Dressed For Success

The Model 396 AirLite Ti Mountain Lite is a five-shot revolver with a titanium cylinder, a stainless steel 3.2" barrel, and an aluminum frame and barrel shroud. It sports S&W's standard adjustable rear sight and a front sight with a small piece of fluorescent green fiber optic material known as HiViz. It is virtually impossible to ignore the front

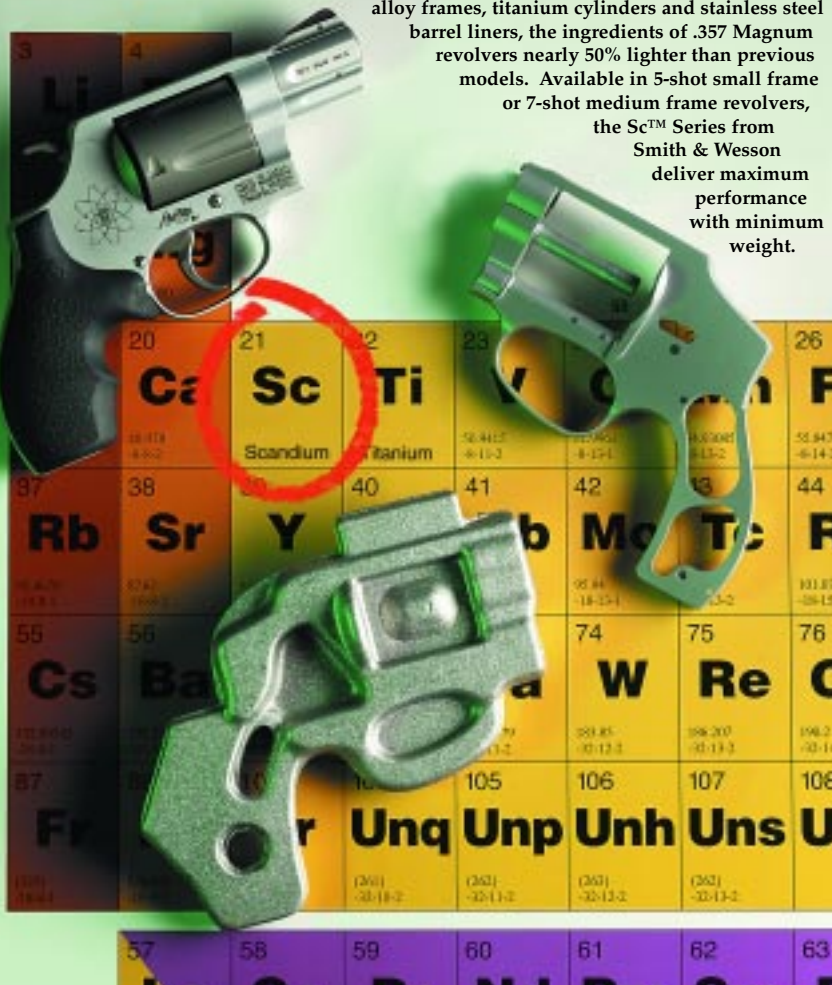


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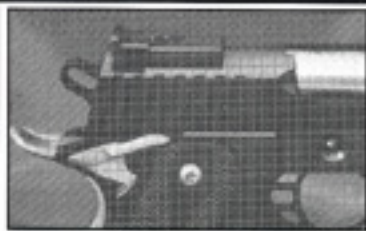
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sight. It jumps up and demands your attention. In bright sunlight, the round front sight almost overpowers the square-notch rear sight and makes it a little difficult to define a precise sight picture. Even though it's a bit unconventional, you get used to the sighting system very quickly.

The light weight imposes some restrictions on all titanium revolvers, and the Model 396 is no exception. Early in the development of super light-weight revolvers it was noted that after a few shots, the front sight wasn't vertical anymore. The solution was clever. In a departure from S&W's standard construction, the barrel is made in two pieces. The stainless steel "barrelette" is covered with an aluminum barrel



The author notes that recoil of the Model 396 Air-Lite Ti Mountain Lite is "not all that uncomfortable."

shroud. There is a small slot cut in the frame which mates with an extension on the barrel shroud.

When the barrelette is tightened with a special wrench that uses the rifling for purchase, the shroud is drawn tight against the frame. The benefit of this design is that torque— of which there is plenty— actually tightens the barrel, if needed. The front sight retains its proper orientation, as well.

The Right Ammo

All the S&W titanium revolvers— except the .32 H&R Magnum version— carry an ammunition warning. In the case of the .38s, you are instructed to use only jacketed bullets. With the .44, a maximum bullet weight of 200 gr. is recommended. Why? Because the little guns become kinetic bullet pullers under recoil. The rapid acceleration to the rear exerts an

equal and opposite force on the bullet. The concern is that additional bullet weight might be even more subject to inertia and could actually jam the cylinder if the bullet moved for-

ward to the end of the charge hole. For that reason, all our test ammo was limited to factory loads with 200 gr. bullets. Well, almost.

We did not use any of the several hot 185 gr. bullets, or any of those touted as being +P (even though no such standard



Top, author found no problem controlling the Model 396. The AirLite has a HiViz green-dot front sight and an adjustable black-blade rear sight.

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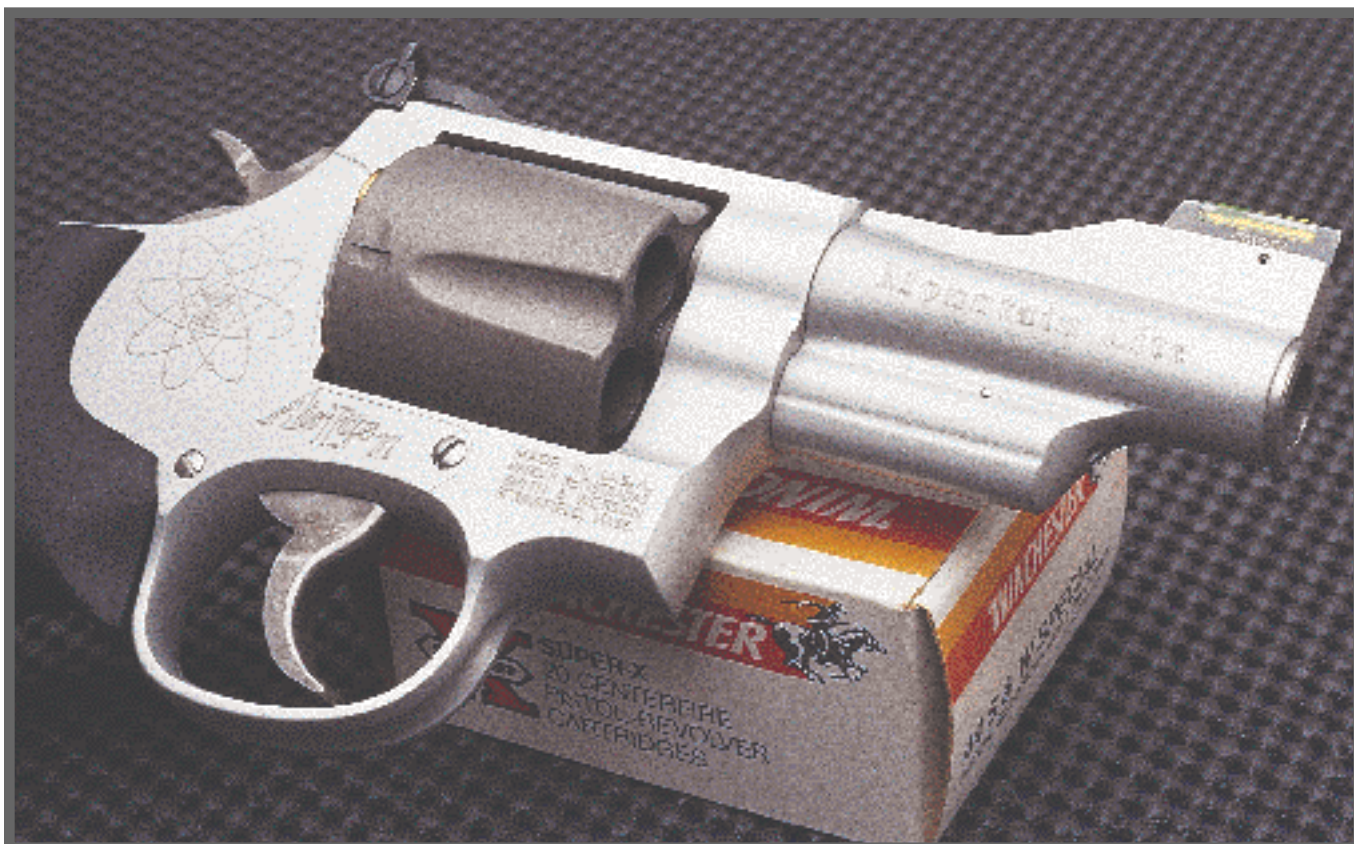
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The Smith Model 396 AirLite Ti Mountain Lite is just that, only 18 oz. for a .44 S&W Special.

ACCURACY TEST RESULTS - S&W MODEL 396 .44 SPECIAL

Load	Wt.	Type	Velocity	1	2	3	Avg.
Blazer	200 gr.	Gold Dot	826 fps	3.11"	3.11"	3.27"	3.16"
Federal	200 gr.	LSWCHP	793 fps	4.43"	3.93"	4.12"	4.16"
Pro Load	200 gr.	JHP	786 fps	3.49"	3.60"	3.30"	3.46"
Remington	200 gr.	LSWC	825 fps	4.92"	5.21"	5.16"	5.10"
Winchester	200 gr.	Silvertip	699 fps	3.15"	3.31"	4.89"	3.78"

Average: 3.93"

Notes: Accuracy measurements are 10-shot groups at 25 yards from Ransom Rest. Velocity is the instrumental average of 30 shots at 10 feet as measured with a PACT Professional Chronograph.

exists for the .44 Special). However, we did fudge— just a little— and use some very mild handloads with 240 gr. lead semi-wadcutter bullets, and we also tried some factory 246 gr. LRN loads.

The procedure was to load the cylinder with five rounds— first the handloads, which were a little below the velocities of the factory 246 gr. LRNs,

and then the factory ammo— and fire a shot. The cylinder was opened, and the remaining four cartridges were inspected. Fire again and again, until four rounds had been fired with no noticeable displacement of the fifth bullet. Load four more, shoot them, then load four more.

After that last cartridge had been subjected to the recoil of a total of 12 rounds

without having its bullet displaced, I concluded that it was reasonable— with due care— to shoot the mild handloads and 246 gr. factory ammo. It should be noted that both the handloads and the factory ammo have a pretty substantial roll crimp.

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handloads— that the little gun became a joy to shoot. Velocities hovered in the 700 to 750 fps range, and while you certainly knew you had shot something, recoil was not at all uncomfortable. I'm sure the rubber grips helped. Please do not take this as an endorsement to shoot anything other than what the factory recommends. It worked with my gun, but there's no guarantee that it will in any others. So if you want to try, be sure to repeat the test procedure I followed. If the 396 is going to be used in any potentially defensive context, use only ammo that conforms to factory instructions.

The 396 is not exactly a *big* gun. Actually, the frame is an "L" size, but it isn't a pocket pistol, so you'll need a holster. Anything made for a 4" model 686



**Test firing is done at 25 yards
using a Ransom Rest.**

or a similar "L" frame should work. I don't know if there's anything currently available specifically for the 3.2" barrel. In any case, make sure the holster can accommodate the front sight, which is a little high and has no ramp for easy sliding into a holster.

The Right Niche

Contrary to conventional wisdom, revolvers really aren't dead, and they still have an important niche to fill. The kit gun is one of them, and for someone who wants something a little more substantial to take along on hikes and other ventures, the 396 seems like a good choice. Remember the old adage: "Bigger bullets are better bullets." They don't have to go very fast; they just have to make big holes.



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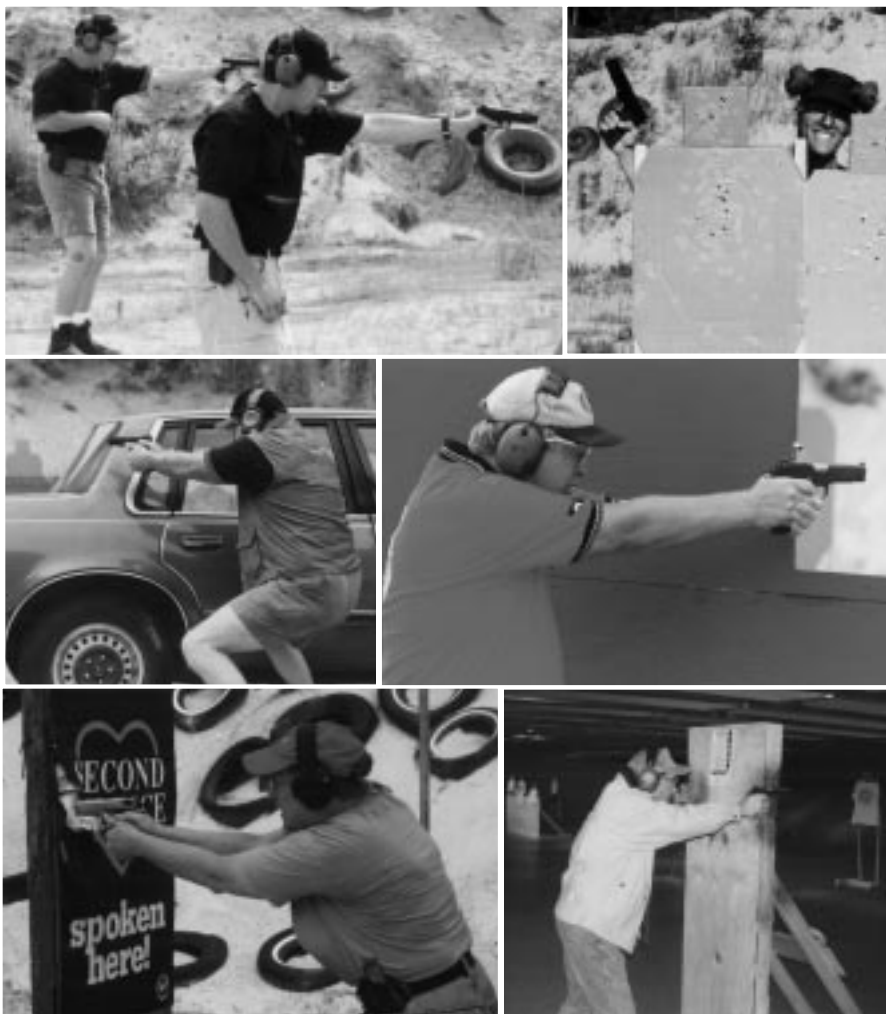


One Of The Discipline's First Four-Gun Masters Shares His Tough-Learned Tips On How To Get Started In The Hottest, Fastest-Growing Combat Handgun Competition Around!



IDPA GET OFF TO A RUNNING START!

By Massad Ayoob



Top left: Weak-hand-only shooting is handled by Dave Sevigny (right) and Bryce Linsky. **Top right:** Perfect score! Jim Carr "cleaned" this third of the tough IDPA Qualifier with a Morris Custom Colt .45. **Center left:** National police champ Bryce Linsky triggers his .38 Super. **Center right:** National SSP champ Tom Yost blazes targets with his S&W PC5906. **Bottom left:** Judy LaFreniere has won national titles with her S&W 9mm. **Bottom right:** Bill Wilson shoots one of his own 1911s.

The International Practical Shooting Confederation (IPSC) has changed a great deal since it was founded. Over the years, it gradually turned into something between a race for the weirdest, most exotic gun, and a contest that was sort of "track and field with a gun in your hand." It has strayed far from the replicated gunfighting intended by its originator, Jeff Cooper.

Some of the founders and early champions of the original discipline, whom Andy Stanford called "the lost tribe of IPSC"—Bill Wilson, John Sayle, Ken Hackathorn and Walt Rauch—decided it was time to "go back to basics." With Wilson at the helm, the International Defensive Pistol Association (IDPA) was born a few years ago.

The credos are simple. No compensators. No optical sights. No holster that couldn't be concealed under a sport coat all day, and ditto for the ammo carriers. Power level for the ammo must be reasonable. It's more or less a "revolver neutral" series of skill-tests, with four main firearm categories to accommodate the guns most commonly used for serious, real-world self-defense. And yes, there's sportsmanship, reinforced by a heavy penalty for "failure to do right."

The Early Years

I got into IPSC early on. A couple of months after the Columbia Conference, at which the organization was founded in 1976, I ran the first IPSC Sectional Championship under the auspices of Jeff Cooper and northeastern U.S. regional coordinator Jim Cirillo. As time went on, I became a member of the "lost tribe of IPSC" Stanford would later describe. The discipline had evolved into a combination

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Top left: Author shot this perfect score with an S&W Model 15 .38. Top right: Author placed second overall at a local IDPA match with a Glock 36. Center left: Justine Ayoob, 15, shoots her way to 1st Novice. Center right: Police chief Rob Haught fires his Beretta. Bottom left: Master Dane Burns shows the awesome speed of one of his .38 Super IDPA guns. Bottom right: National champ Ernest Langdon shoots his trademark box-stock Beretta Elite 9mm.

of athletics and marksmanship, not unlike a biathlon. That was fine. It just wasn't what I personally needed, and I drifted away from the organization. The founding of IDPA was a call back to a warm and comfortable hearth, and I eagerly joined the group.

In 1999, Mike Benedict and I became the first competitors to shoot Master in all four of IDPA's gun categories. It was a quest encouraged by IDPA co-founder Ken Hackathorn. The challenge made me a better, faster handgunner. Shooting in all four of the hardware categories has also given me a pretty good handle on what it takes to be competitive in any of them.

The sport has been good to me. I've been able to win my share of awards, including High Senior at the 1999 Mid-Winter National Championships (my oldest daughter translates this to National Champion Geezer). Thus, I may have learned a couple of things that could save

you some time in reaching your peak if you enter this challenging discipline.

Right Gun Leather

The holster needs to be on your dominant side. It needs to carry the main mass of the handgun behind the ileac crest of the hip. It needs to be concealable under a practical garment like a blazer or a photographer's vest. The same is true of spare magazine carriers. A revolver's speedloaders, in deference to common real-world custom and practice, may be carried in front of the hip, so long as they're concealed under an unfasted jacket.

Safety straps are optional. This isn't purely a quick-draw contest, and I really don't think a strap will slow you down. IDPA was expressly created to be an avenue for practice and training with what you carry for real-world self-defense. If your scabbard has a strap when you wear it on the street, you

should use the same fastened holster in IDPA competition.

Choose Your Weapons

IDPA "covers the waterfront" with the four basic categories of handguns that are most commonly used for self-defense. Each pistol has to fit an "IDPA box" which, basically, is geared around the Colt Government Model. Here's a look at the categories.

SSP: Stock Service Pistol

This is by far the most popular category. These are the firearms that really serious pistol-packers, who are dedicated enough to shoot competition, carry on their own time. The Glock is the most popular, and it has won national championships in the hands of men like the young *wunderkind* David Sevigny. Dave uses the Glock 34, the "Tactical/Practical" model that Glock expressly designed to be the right length to exactly fit "the box" for both IDPA and IPSC's Limited category. The G34 is a 9mm and the choice of serious IDPA shooters. Unlike in IPSC, there is no point bonus for shooting the harder-kicking ".40 and larger" pistols, and the light-kicking 9mm is the overwhelming caliber choice of winners who use Glocks.

This is not to say that the conventional double-action, first-shot, police- or military-style pistol is disadvantaged. No one has won more open championships in IDPA than Ernest Langdon, and he shoots a double-action, first-shot Beretta 92 Elite. Rob Haught has delivered national champion scores with an identical Beretta. Multiple-time national champion Tom Yost favors the S&W PC5906, the accurized and slicked-up Performance Center version of the high-capacity 9mm that the company introduced some 30 years ago. Judy LaFreniere has won national Women's Champion titles with this same gun. Its massive all-steel weight gives excellent recoil control, and the pistol's very short, fast-trigger re-set allows a very slightly higher rate of accurate rapid fire.

There are "sleeper guns" in this category. The Walther P99 and Walther's collaboration gun built by S&W, the SW99, are technically double-action guns. They should, as required by IDPA rules, be decocked before each holstering during actual SSP class competition. Those who do not are cheating and subject to the massive "failure to do right" penalty.

The Steyr M-series, with its short trigger stroke and excellent high-visibility sights, is another sleeper. IDPA rules allow, in the SSP class, the HK P7 squeeze-cocker, a gun long proven on the street as a super-fast pistol in reactive self-defense. I first achieved Master in SSP with a Glock 9mm, after several tries with larger-caliber Glocks. I scored a time in the 95-second range for 90 shots. However, on my first try with an HK



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This shooter has overcome a physical challenge to do well in IDPA with the Glock he carries for real.

P7M8, I shot a 93-second score.

To keep a "level playing field," magazines can be loaded with no more than 10 rounds each. If you think this isn't tactical, I sympathize. After all, cartridge capacity is one reason to use a full-size, 16-shot 9mm instead of a full-size, eight-shot .45. However, we have to bear one thing in mind. While Jeff Cooper developed IPSC to be a test-bed for combat shooting survival doctrine and equipment, Wilson and company developed IDPA to test the skills and gear we already had. We all just need to understand the rules before we step onto a playing field that IDPA tries to keep level.

I achieved Master in SSP with a Glock 17 and CCI Blazer 9mm 147 gr. training ammo. Sights were by Heinie, and the gun had been tuned by GlockWorks. If I were to start over, without a suitable gun already at hand, I'd probably buy a Glock 34 or an HK P7M8.

CDP: Custom Defense Pistol

Cooper's weapon was the cocked-and-locked 1911 .45. This was the original signature handgun of IPSC. It remains the "gun of the cognoscenti," or at least, of the old guard, who are heavily represented in IDPA circles. Calibers .45 and 10mm are encompassed in this category. The overwhelming majority of shooters choose .45 ACP. Don't bring your extended magazines: Eight rounds per "clip" is the max allowed.

The gun of choice and the gun of dominance is, of course, the 1911-style. In the winner's circle, I see about an equal mix of Colts, Kimbers and Springfields. Some are accurized and have BoMar adjustable sights, and some are bone-stock with big, heavy-duty fixed

sights. The targets are rarely beyond 20 paces and usually closer. The center ring that gets maximum point value is a generous 8" in diameter, so you don't exactly need a target pistol.

For reasons I may never figure out, I found CDP to be the toughest category in which to achieve Master. I tried and got "close but no cigar" with all manner of custom 1911s that were worth up to \$5,000, not to mention a Novak Custom single-action S&W .45 auto. The gun I made it with was a Kimber Gold Match borrowed from my friend Mark Morris. It came from the factory with a sweet trigger. Mark had minimally fitted out the gun with an oversize magazine well and skateboard tape on the front of the grip-frame. The gun cost him about a thousand bucks. I later traded it away from him.

If I didn't already have a gun that was suitable for CDP, I'd toss a coin between the Kimber .45 and the "loaded" version of the Springfield Armory 1911A1. You won't go wrong with either one.

SSR: Stock Service Revolver

SSP class is, indisputably, the biggest category in IDPA. Entrants in this class will often outnumber all the rest of the classes combined. CDP, while a distant second, is clearly a dominant second. The last two of the four primary classes fight for third and fourth places in popularity. However, in most of the matches I've attended, the sixgun category is the third most popular, if only by a small margin.

I say "sixgun" advisedly. Your "stock service revolver" may hold seven or eight shots, but you can only load it with six. Trying to juggle the empty chambers into the right position would make it a loser's game, unless, of course, it's the gun you carry.

Because "full moon clips" are allowed, you can use the S&W Model 625 or any other .45 ACP revolver with such equipment. Moon-clip guns are the way to go, because throwing in a "moon" is faster than reloading six cartridges with a speedloader that must be inserted, released and discarded. To my knowledge, almost every national championship of IDPA has been won in revolver class by a .45 ACP S&W that was stoked with moon clips. I say "almost," because Brent Purucker has once or twice won the mid-winter nationals with a K-frame S&W loaded with his .38 Special reloads via Safari-land speedloaders.

Purucker was one of the first to make Master in SSR class. I don't think he has yet tried the auto categories, at least not seriously. Benedict and I were both shooting S&W 625s with full moons when he (5" barrel) and I (4" barrel) made four-gun Master. I haven't seen the official score sheets, but rumor has it that the third guy to make four-gun Master shot the revolver stage with a Colt

Python and conventional speedloaders. My next goal in IDPA is to shoot SSR Master with a standard .38 and the police-style quickloaders.

I said “.38,” because the baseline power factor in SSR category is 158 gr. lead .38 Special ammo at standard velocity. This means that you can down-load your large-bore ammo to an extremely controllable level. I’ve seen SSR matches won by a friend involved in police training who’s also a cowboy action shooter. His gun at the match was the S&W Model 624 double action .44 Special, stoked with the same light-kicking but reasonably hard-hitting ammo he puts through his single actions when he goes from “cop mode” to “cowboy mode.” More power to him; I’ll be surprised if he *doesn’t* win his next gunfight.

Are you thinking about starting IDPA in revolver class because it’ll be easy to win? Don’t kid yourself. At least at the higher levels, this stuff is won by *master* wheelgunners like Purucker who can give men like Jerry Miculek a run for their money in sixgun speed. You only want to shoot SSR if that’s what you actually carry, at least some of the time.

The gun to start with is, as always in IDPA, the one you carry. If you’re going to buy a gun just for SSR, the odds-on choice is the Model S&W Model 625 in .45 ACP. Smith is making a limited-production model in .40 caliber that’s supposed to be geared just to winning this sort of event, but the one that I examined had a hellaciously heavy trigger pull. If you’ve got a slick six-shot .38 or .357 service revolver and speedloaders, go to it.

ESP: Enhanced Service Pistol

This is the .40 (top end) to 9mm (bottom end) single-action auto category.



HK P7M8 is a “sleeper” top choice for SSR class. Here, author wins a local match with one, beating the enhanced and custom guns.

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The Kimber .45 is among the most popular CDP guns. Here, Steve Sager turns in an excellent score with one.

It was developed originally with the Browning Hi-Power 9mm in mind. A certain individual from the FBI Hostage Rescue Team, which used to be armed with the Novak Custom version of that gun, has been kicking butt with that self-same pistol in IDPA since day one. I won't divulge his name, but he's very good, and I would be happy to have him come and rescue me if I'm ever held hostage by terrorists.

My daughter, Justine, chose a Novak Custom Browning 9mm loaded with Triton Competitor when she shot her first IDPA match. The Triton cartridge was designed expressly for the IDPA power factor and used by such national champs as Seigny, Yost and Langdon. Justine's first match happened to be the New England Regional Championships of 2000, where she won in Novice class, having entered against men. Yes, the pistol this category was designed around, the Hi-Power, remains competitive.

That said, most of the national championships in this category have been won with hi-tech 9mm and .38 Super variants of the 1911 design. A whole lot of old single-stack .38 Super IPSC "race guns" have had their scopes and compensators removed and have then been put back into service as IDPA guns.

Bill Wilson and his crew understood that these light-kicking, often hair-triggered single-action autos would be the easiest guns to shoot fast. You see it in their class ratings. You have to shoot faster and straighter with an Enhanced Service Pistol than with anything else to get a "skill promotion" to the next highest class. In the Master category, for instance, you've got the "Big M" if you can break 100 seconds on the demanding 100-round IDPA Qualifier Course with a stock service revolver. Go to Stock Service Pistol, though, and the time is now

about 96½ seconds to earn the same handgun equivalent of "black belt." With the cocked-and-locked .45 custom defense pistol, you need to break into the 91-second range. And, with the enhanced service pistol, you have to shoot a blistering run of about 89 seconds.

The gun I cracked the 89-second mark with to make Master in ESP was a 9mm Colt 1991A1 tuned by Al Greco. This light-kicking, fast-shooting pistol will be ideal for me in a few years when the arthritis *really* takes hold and makes anything else impossible to shoot fast and straight. If you are vying for one of the specialty categories in IDPA that go across the board of all four guns—High Police, High Woman, High Junior and High Senior—it makes sense that if this is the easiest gun to shoot well, it should be the easiest gun to win with.

Well, it is and it isn't. The ESP class itself tends to be won with tricked-out 1911s by makers such as Al Greco and D.R. Middlebrooks. The top-cop overall at most of the big IDPA matches I've been to has been Bryce Linkey. He currently shoots a hi-cap .38 Super and always shoots in ESP class. In the past, he used a 9mm single-action custom tuned by the S&W Performance Center.

Starting from scratch and shooting to win? S&W's Model 952—the Model 52 Master target pistol rendered in 9mm Parabellum—looks awfully promising.

Some Observations

The conventional wisdom isn't wise for everyone. Yes, the Enhanced class seems to offer the most promise if you want to win in a category like High Woman or High Junior. However, I won High Senior at the mid-winter National Championships in 1999, shooting what should have been the slowest gun, a stock-service revolver (an Al Greco-tuned

S&W Model 625).

The following year, Charlie Woolley knocked me down into second place and took the title with his double-action S&W .45 auto. Both of us beat guys with CDP and ESP guns. Go figure. Woolley's wife, Judy, has won the national women's championship with the double-action S&W auto in 9mm, and so has Judith LaFreniere. Joyce Fowler has done the same with a double-action Beretta 9mm. All three of these national champion women were shooting Stock Service Pistols.

The Bottom Line

My best advice is: "Go with what you've got!" You almost certainly have a handgun that you bought for personal defense that is absolutely suitable for IDPA competition. You don't need a \$100-plus quick-draw scabbard. I've seen shooters win awards drawing from inexpensive nylon holsters. I shot my first IDPA national championship with a stock Glock 30 compact .45, loaded with Winchester generic hardball and drawn from a Strong inside-the-waistband fabric holster that cost less than \$30. I did all right.

So will you. Take a shot at it—no pun intended. You can check the outfit's Website at www.idpa.com, or write for information to IDPA, P.O. Box 639, Berryville, AR 72616-0639. This should put you in touch with an IDPA club in reasonable striking distance from where you live. If it doesn't, IDPA can explain to you how to get this kind of shooting started in your area.

Developing Skills

Shooting competitively is one of the best things you can do to develop your survival potential. It conditions you to thinking and reacting with a loaded gun in your hand, and it conditions you to shooting fast and straight when you're under pressure. Jim Cirillo was the most famous name to emerge from the elite unit of urban gunfighters that the New York Police Department called the "Stakeout Squad." In his excellent book, "Guns, Bullets, and Gunfighting," he makes the same point. People conditioned to shoot their defense guns well under stress, in matches, will shoot them well under stress when there's more than trophies on the line, all other things being equal. Cirillo is an enthusiastic IDPA supporter.

Jim and I were both in at the early levels of IPSC, and we both shot PPC before that. We're both avidly competing in IDPA now, and for the same reasons. We want to stay alive. We want to be the best we can be with the guns that we carry to protect ourselves and those for whom we're responsible. We are both convinced that, at this particular point in time, IDPA is the best game in town for honing those skills.

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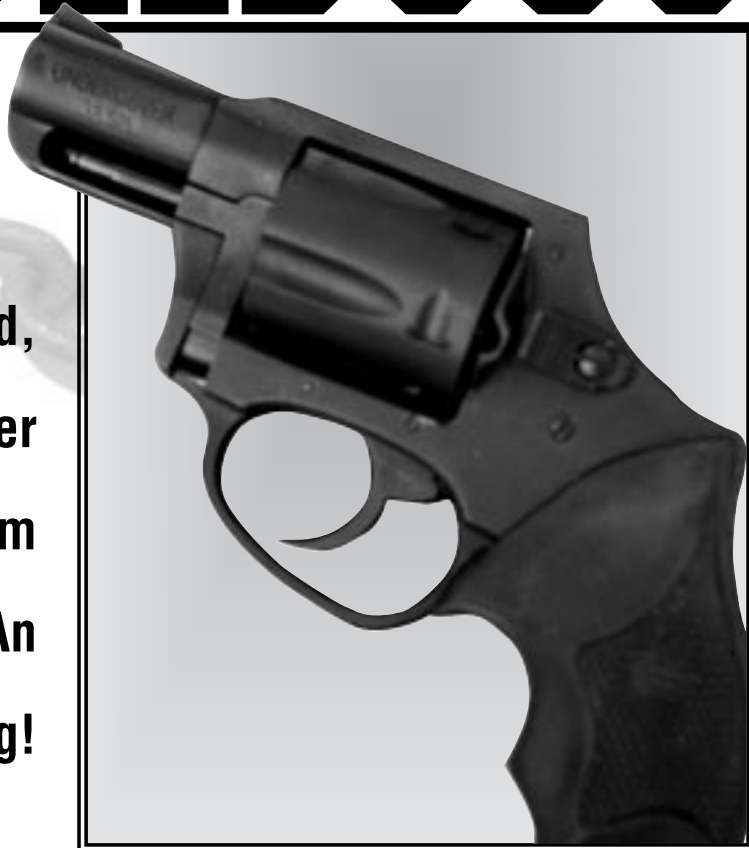
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Two other dogs have also been a most vital part of our family. They're not purebreds like Red and Wolf, and they're not nearly as large as our first dog, K'Lev; in fact, they are quite tiny. However, these little Bulldogs definitely have a bite that is worse than their bark.

The oldest one has been with us for more than 25 years, yet it is still as frisky as ever and has protected the family on more than one occasion. Its younger brother has been my wife's constant com-



The old and the new from Charter Arms/Charter 2000. Top, original stainless-steel Bulldog with a 3" barrel. Bottom, new stainless-steel Bulldog Pug with a 2½" barrel.



panion on many fishing trips, as it does not mind being wet. These Bulldogs are not dogs at all, but rather five-shot .44 Specials from Charter 2000, formerly Charter Arms.

In Times Of Trouble

In all my years of writing, I've rarely

mentioned these two .44 Specials, although this chambering is one of my favorites. When discussing this cartridge with friends, I don't hesitate to bring forth a Colt Single Action Army or a Smith & Wesson chambered in .44 Special. The Great Western Frontier, the TLA South Texas Army, even an old Bisley Colt all

are proudly displayed. Normally, the Bulldogs only come forth in a time of trouble.

Neither the blue nor the stainless-steel version have been shot very much in their lifetimes. They're not the kind of guns I would consider engraving or fitting with exotic custom grips. I don't have floral carved holsters, nor do I have matching belts for them. They have, however, logged many miles and seen many camping trips, and they still serve my family today.

My original blued 3" Bulldog now rests in my desk drawer. This little gun carries what is probably the best-designed wooden wraparound grips that ever came forth from a factory for a small, defensive revolver. Its stainless-steel brother, equipped with compact Pachmayrs, is in the bathroom medicine cabinet. Now, before you laugh at this, I would ask a question. If you maintain a gun for home protection, where is it? Can you get to it easily when trouble starts? What if you are in the shower when a problem arises? No matter where I am in the house, a firearm is easily accessible.

No-Frills Pocket Pistol

Charter Arms began producing a no-frills, economy-priced .38 Special known as the Undercover about 30 years ago. Early on, some detractors said, "It is not a Chiefs Special." Apparently, they didn't understand the gun was never meant to be used in competition; rather, it was a serviceable, dependable and lower-priced .38 pocket pistol. It filled its niche quite well,

Charter Undercover DAO .38 Special with 2" Barrel

Factory Load	Muzzle Velocity	Groups*	
		4 Shots	5 Shots
Black Hills 148 gr. LWC	678 fps	1 3/8"	1 7/8"
Black Hills 158 gr. LSWC	719 fps	7/8"	1 5/8"
Black Hills 158 gr. Cowboy	649 fps	1"	1 1/4"
CCI Blazer 148 gr. LWC	616 fps	7/8"	2"
CCI Blazer 125 gr. JHP +P	794 fps	1 1/8"	1 5/8"
Federal 158 gr. LRN	663 fps	1 1/2"	1 5/8"
Federal 158 gr. LSWC-HP	732 fps	7/8"	1"
Hornady 158 gr. LRN	693 fps	2 1/2"	3 3/8"
Hornady 158 gr. LSWC	692 fps	1 1/8"	1 5/8"
Hornady 158 gr. LSWC-HP	660 fps	1 5/8"	2 3/8"
Remington 110 gr. JHP +P	771 fps	3/4"	1 1/4"
Speer 125 gr. GD JHP +P	843 fps	1 1/8"	2 1/4"
Winchester 158 gr. Cowboy	683 fps	1"	1"

*Groups shot at 30 feet



The new little guns from Charter 2000 are the .38 Special Undercover and .44 Special Bulldog Pug.

giving those whose pocketbooks were not quite up to the price of a Smith & Wesson a viable option. In the early 1970s, at a time when it was nearly impossible to purchase a new .44 Special, Charter Arms increased the size of their Undercover .38 and brought forth the new five-shot Bulldog .44 Special.

The new .44 was an immediate success for two reasons. First, it was chambered in a much-sought-after but hard-to-find caliber, and, for the first time in many years, shooters had a big-bore pocket revolver. It probably got its name from the old English 19th century pocket pistols that were also known as Bulldogs. I also believe it was responsible for a renaissance in the .44 Special. This rebirth of interest was short-lived, but it did give us a new production run of high-quality, six-shot .44 Specials from both Colt and S&W in the 1980s.

Terrible Miscue

Charter Arms has had its ups and downs over the past 30 years. My original .44 Bulldog had a barrel that was torqued too tightly, resulting in an oblong shape at the forcing cone. It was returned to the factory, and a replacement barrel solved the problem. Later, Charter Arms brought forth a target version of the Bulldog with a slim barrel covered by a shroud that simply would not stay in place. This version did not help Charter Arms' reputation.

Charter made one of the worst marketing mistakes I've seen when it named a pair of its revolvers, a .32 Magnum and a .38 Special, "Bonnie and Clyde." The company got clobbered. The terrible miscue of naming firearms after a pair of bank robbers and murderers probably led to the closing of the doors at Charter Arms.

New Company, New Guns

That was then. Now, Charter 2000, not Charter Arms, is producing pocket pistols again. For the past several months, I have been testing two of their guns, a stainless-steel .44 Special Bulldog Pug and a blued .38 Special

Charter Bulldog Pug .44 Special with 2½" Barrel

Factory Load	Muzzle Velocity	Groups*	
		4 Shots	5 Shots
Black Hills 210 gr. Cowboy	535 fps	1⅝"	1⅝"
Black Hills 240 gr. LSWC	660 fps	1¼"	1⅞"
CCI Blazer 200 gr. GD JHP	727 fps	1½"	1⅞"
Cor-Bon 180 JHP	805 fps	1⅝"	1⅝"
Federal 200 gr. LSWC-HP	717 fps	¾"	1⅝"
Hornady 180 gr. JHP	783 fps	1⅝"	1¼"
PMC 240 gr. Cowboy	635 fps	1⅝"	1¼"
Winchester 240 gr. Cowboy	615 fps	1⅝"	1⅝"
Winchester 246 gr. LRN	563 fps	1¼"	1½"
Winchester 200 gr. ST-HP	673 fps	1½"	1¼"
3-D 240 gr. Cowboy	565 fps	7/8"	1⅝"

*Groups shot at 30 feet.



Undercover. Both sixguns are actually five-shooters, like all .38s and .44s offered over the years by Charter Arms.

Charter 2000 revolvers come with a lifetime warranty, have an unbreakable, beryllium-copper firing pin that allows for dry firing without damaging the revolver, a solid steel frame with no

side plate, all-steel construction, eight-groove rifling, and are 100 percent American-made. Both models sell for less than \$300. The Bulldog goes for \$299, while the Undercover is a most reasonable \$255.

The latter is certainly cheap life insurance, and I have been carrying it in the

front pocket of my jeans for the past month. Even fully loaded and with all-steel construction, its weighs only 18 ozs. This makes it quite comfortable and easy to carry.

The .44 Bulldog is as subdued as the Undercover, in a low-shine, matte-finished stainless steel. With five .44 Spe-

Comparison

Bulldog Pug with 2½" Barrel

Original Bulldog with 3" Barrel

Factory Load	4 Shots	5 Shots	4 Shots	5 Shots
Black Hills 210 gr.	1⅜"	1⅝"	¾"	1¼"
Black Hills 240 gr.	1¼"	1⅞"	⅝"	1"
CCI Blazer 200 gr.	1½"	1⅞"	1¾"	2⅞"
Cor-Bon 180 gr. JHP	1⅞"	1⅝"	1½"	1⅞"
Federal 200 gr.	¾"	1⅜"	1"	1⅜"
Hornady 180 gr.	1⅞"	1¾"	1⅝"	1⅞"
PMC 240 gr.	1⅜"	1¾"	1"	1⅞"
Winchester 240 gr.	1⅞"	1⅝"	1½"	1¾"
Winchester 246 gr.	1¼"	1½"	1"	1¼"
Winchester 200 gr. ST	1½"	1¼"	1½"	⅝"
3-D 240 gr. Cowboy	⅞"	1⅞"	1⅞"	2⅞"

(Groups at 30 feet)



The .38 Undercover and .44 Bulldog Pug carry easily and securely in Bianchi leather.

cial rounds in its cylinder, the bigger five-shooter weighs in at 25 ozs. The Bulldog Pug is available in both blue and stainless; the latter is also offered with a bobbed hammer. The smaller .38 Special Charter 2000 revolver is offered in both blue and stainless steel, with a regular hammer or a “stealth” concealable hammer.

All Charter 2000 revolvers are built on new CNC machinery, eliminating much of the hand-fitting that was necessary with Charter Arms models. In previous versions, the cylinder and the extractor were hand-fitted, making them a matched pair. Replacing one part required replacing the other. With the new machinery, all extractors and all cylinders for each model are interchangeable.

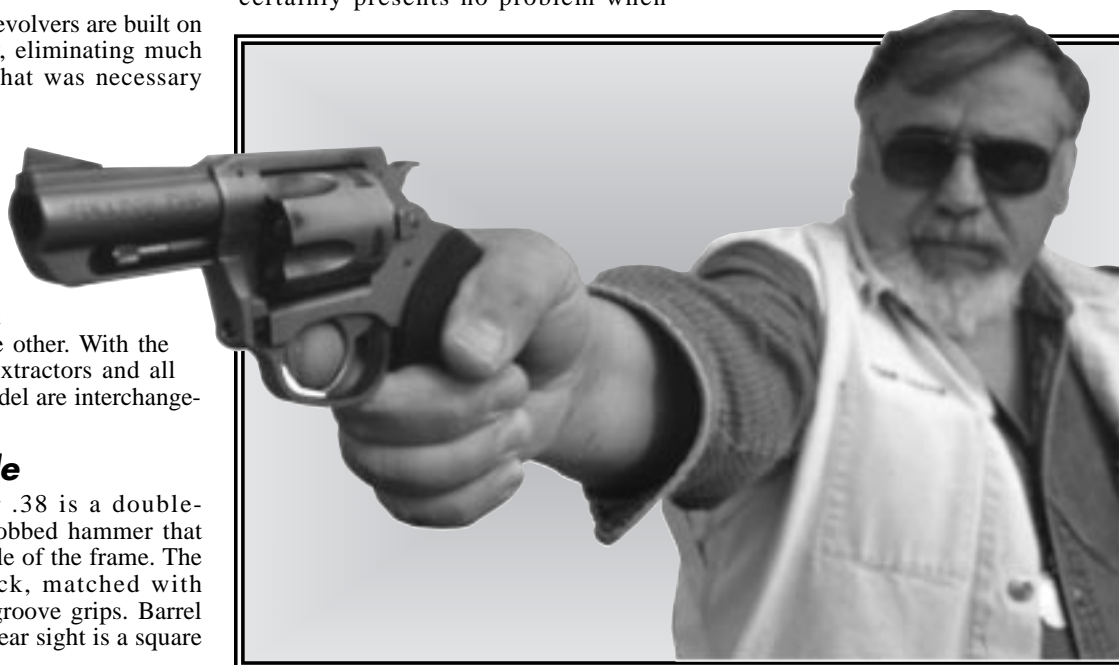
Looking Inside

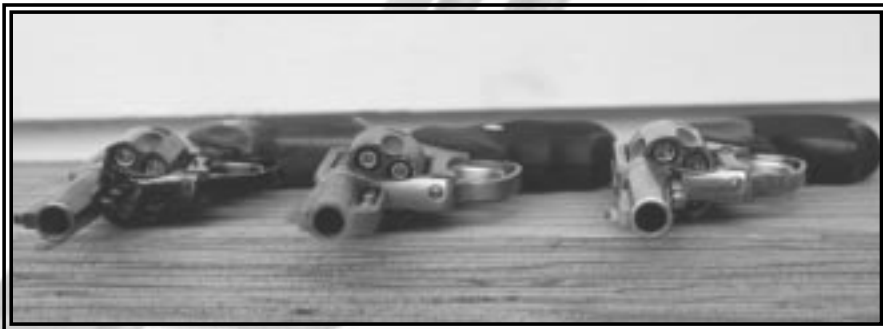
The Undercover .38 is a double-action-only with a bobbed hammer that is flush with the profile of the frame. The finish is matte black, matched with black-rubber, finger-groove grips. Barrel length is 2", and the rear sight is a square

notch cut in the top of the frame, while the front sight is of the no-snag ramp style. The front sight fills the rear sight exactly as it should, with just a thin line of daylight on the side. While the Undercover is far from being a “tuned” revolver, I find the double-action pull to be fairly smooth and easy to live with. It certainly presents no problem when

shooting this little gun in the double-action mode.

I also like the fact that the Undercover, like the larger Bulldog .44 version, has a shrouded ejector rod. Although it never happened, I was always concerned that I might bend the ejector rod on one of my early .44 Bulldogs.





The .44 Special Bulldog Pug has a 2½" barrel and the same excellent sights as the Undercover, and it can be fired in either double-action or single-action mode. As with the Undercover, the action would benefit by a tuning. However, it is quite serviceable "as is." It's also fitted with finger-groove rubber grips, with a Charter Arms medallion inlaid on each grip panel. Both guns were quite comfortable to fire with all loads tested.

On The Range

Both Charter 2000 revolvers were tested with a large variety of factory loads, using a lucky 13 selections for the .38 Special, while 11 different .44s were sent down the barrel of the Bulldog. All loads were shot on an indoor range at a defensive shooting distance of 30 feet. It is doubtful that either one of these little guns would ever have to be pressed into serious service at a greater distance.

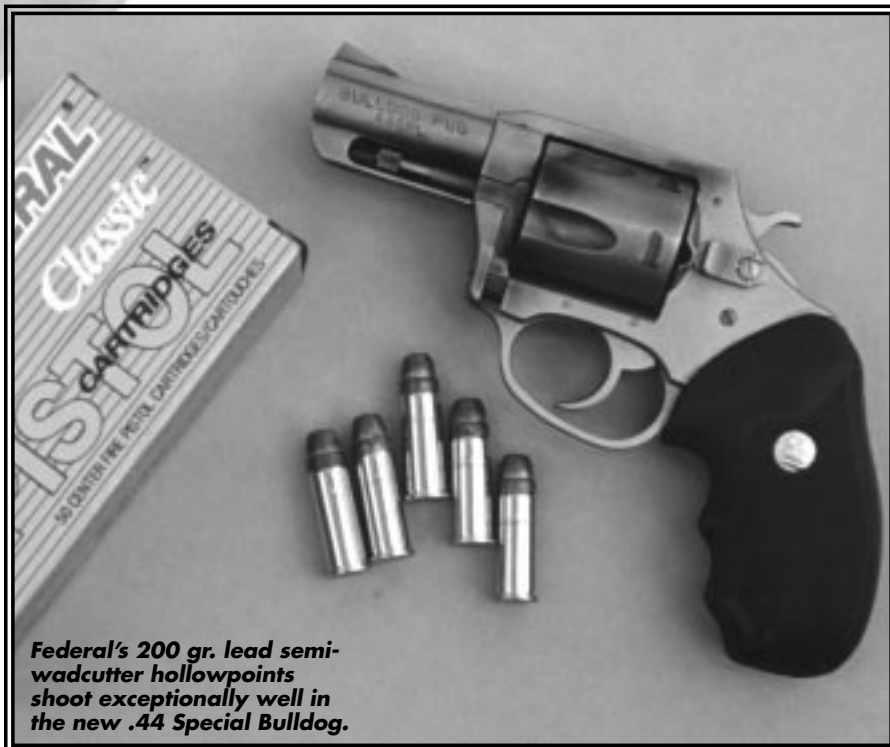
The accompanying chart shows the results for both guns, and I have tracked each gun by measuring both the five-shot group and the best four out of five shots. Both guns shot exceptionally well, with many four-shot groups and some five-shot groups coming in at 1" or less.

I was particularly pleased and surprised by how well the double-action-only .38 Special shot and how well I could shoot it. As an added bonus, it printed right to point-of-aim with most loads. A second chart shows a comparison between the new Bulldog Pug and my old, original stainless-steel Bulldog. They both shoot exceptionally well.

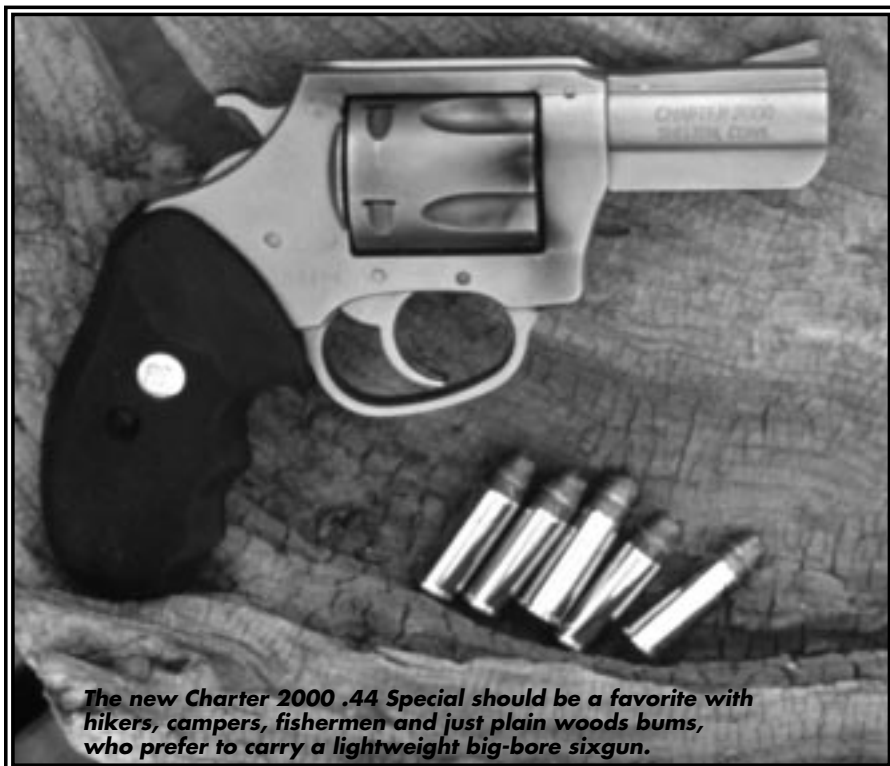
The .44 Bulldog shot slightly low and right. It would benefit from a little filing on the front sight and tweaking of the barrel. Actually, considering the purpose of these guns and the distance from which they are shot, it isn't necessary to change the sights, unless you are using lightweight bullets in the .44 Bulldogs.

Both 180 gr. and 200 gr. .44 Specials shoot about 6" low. However, Winchester's Silvertip hollowpoints were only 1" below point-of-aim, and all five shots from the .44 Special Bulldog are placed in one hole. Who claimed Silvertips would not shoot?

I give both of these guns an excellent rating, as they both deliver more than one would expect by looking at the price tag.



Federal's 200 gr. lead semi-wadcutter hollowpoints shoot exceptionally well in the new .44 Special Bulldog.



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TAURUS TITANIUM MILLENNIUM

***This High-Tech, Award-Winning
Semi-Auto Reflects The New
Taurus And The Shape Of
Things To Come!***

***By Andy Stanford
Photos By Ichiro Nagata***



Though purists may argue that the new millennium began on January 2001, most of us celebrated the beginning of the next 10 centuries at the onset of Y2K. It's therefore appropriate that the 2000 Shooting Industry Academy of Excellence Award for Handgun of the Year went to Taurus International for its PT-111 Titanium Millennium. The recipient of the award is selected by the academy's 400 members, who include top gun-industry executives, gun dealers and gun writers.

The occasion provides an excellent excuse to re-examine the pistol in question, and to take a closer look at Taurus the company.

It's been a long and, at times, bumpy road from the first handguns produced by Taurus Forjas (Taurus Forge) in Brazil to the extensive line of auto pistols and revolvers available in America from Taurus International Manufacturing Inc. In the 60 years since the first revolvers rolled off the line, the company has evolved from an in-extremis wartime armaments factory to a truly world-class gun-making facility, employing over 1,900 people.

Evolution In Action

The whole thing started in 1941, as the Axis powers embarked on their attempt at world conquest. Brazil had no indigenous arms industry at the time; to rectify this situation, the government contracted with Taurus Forjas to manufacture revolvers for the nations' armed forces. Combining features from both Colt and Smith & Wesson designs, these early Taurus wheelguns were not pretty, but provided adequate service in their intended role.

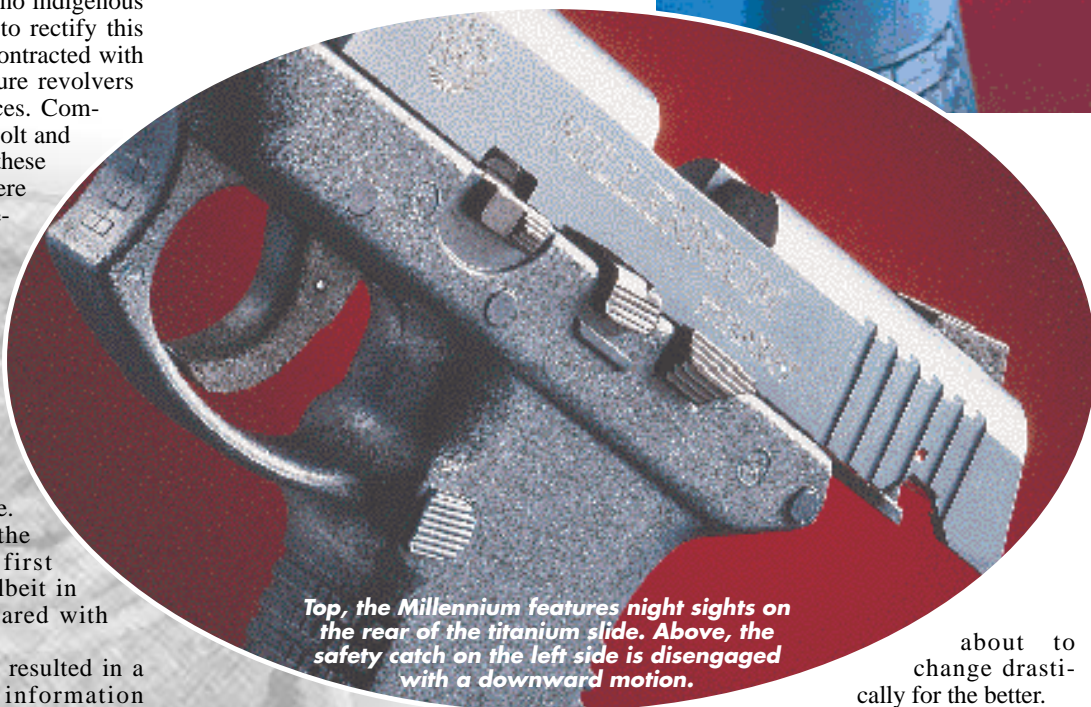
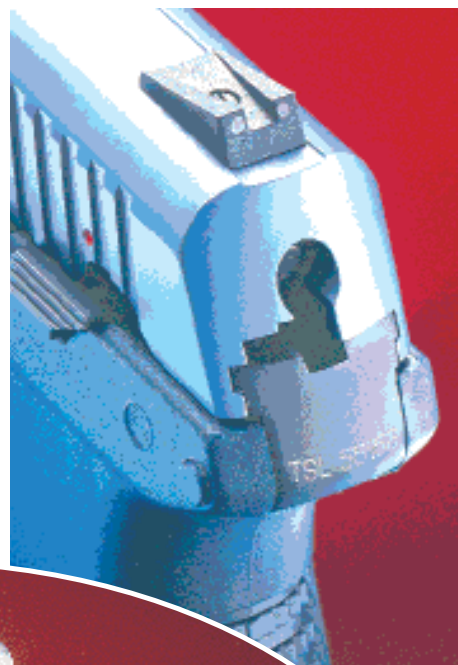
After the war, the company continued to produce firearms, both for domestic sales and export. In the late 1960s, Taurus was acquired by Bangor Punta Co., a conglomerate that also owned Smith & Wesson at the time. It was at this point that the Brazilian guns were first imported into the U.S., albeit in miniscule numbers compared with today's robust imports.

The Bangor Punta deal resulted in a two-way exchange of information

between the American handgun company and the Brazilian one. Interestingly, there was at least as much technology transfer from south to north as vice versa, due in large part to the talented engineering staff below the equator. Also, Smith & Wesson was reluctant to pass on perceived proprietary information, for fear of creating a rival that could offer a similar product at a significantly lower price. As things turned out, this happened anyway.

Executives And Enthusiasts

Taurus sales in this country were relatively lackluster throughout the early-to-mid-1970s, due both to the mediocre quality of the guns produced during the first years of that decade and the lack of a well-organized distribution chain. Both of these factors were



Top, the Millennium features night sights on the rear of the titanium slide. Above, the safety catch on the left side is disengaged with a downward motion.

about to change drastically for the better.

In 1977, the company was purchased by employee Dr. Carlos A.P. Murgel. A savvy businessman, Dr. Murgel quickly harnessed the previously unrealized potential residing in the company's pool of engineers, most of whom were avid shooters. New-and-improved pistols and revolvers soon flowed from the factory, at last bringing Taurus to the attention of mainstream American handgunners.

The 1980s saw the acquisition of tooling that Beretta had brought into Brazil for a major military contract, resulting in the production of the PT-22, P-25 and P-92 semi-autos. Closer to home, U.S.-based Taurus International Manufacturing Inc. (TIMI) was launched in 1982, at last creating the critical infrastructure required to penetrate the American market. Sales skyrocketed.

Since that time, the company has grown by leaps and bounds, both here and abroad. In 1997, star sales rep Bob Morrison was selected as TIMI's chief oper-



**Taurus model PT138SS
.380 Millennium**

ating officer. In stark contrast to some gun company execs, West Point grad Morrison— an enthusiastic shooter, whose diverse resume includes PPC, skeet, sporting clays and benchrest rifle competition— staunchly supports the Second Amendment in both word and deed.

In a representative example of his “walk-the-walk” approach to gun rights, Morrison spent the weekend prior to last year’s presidential election at South Florida’s Markham Park range, imploring shooters to vote. He knew the balloting would be close, and wanted to do everything in his power to elect pro-gun politicians. Morrison didn’t say exactly who to vote for, but pointed to the shooters’ guns and said, “You know which candidates hate these things.” ’Nuff said!

True Confessions

Before examining the Taurus Millennium series of handguns, I must confess to looking down my nose at the Brazilian brand in the past. It has been said that you only get one chance to make a first impression. Unfortunately, my initial exposure to the Taurus line came in the early ’80s, during the period that the gun was first widely distributed in the United States.


At the time, I was the director of a practical pistol club in California. A couple of our more prominent members used the Taurus PT-92, essentially a Beretta 92 with cocked-and-locked capability. These pistols did not hold up well under the heavy use typical of hard-core competition, suffering various and sundry parts breakage in excess of that experienced by the Colt 1911A1s used by most shooters of the day.

I carried these negative images for more than a decade, until my recent visit to the Taurus facility in Miami provided overwhelming evidence that things are far different now. In my defense, let me note that even TIMI honcho Morrison candidly admits the company’s early pistol problems. Morrison owned a gun store in the mid-’70s, and says the Taurus products of that era were, to put it charitably, not up to par.

Alas, some folks cling doggedly to their prior prejudices. A single bad experience equals a hundred good ones in the human psyche. It certainly did in my case. Even subsequent favorable experience with Taurus handguns failed to break through the bias in my brain. In hindsight, the Taurus guns I’ve encountered over the past decade all delivered as promised.


Positive Performances

For starters, a tiny Taurus played a major role in my 15 minutes of fame at the Fourth National Tactical Invitational at Gunsite Ranch. I showed up in Paulden, Ariz., with an Mk IV Series 70 Government .45 and two spare eight-



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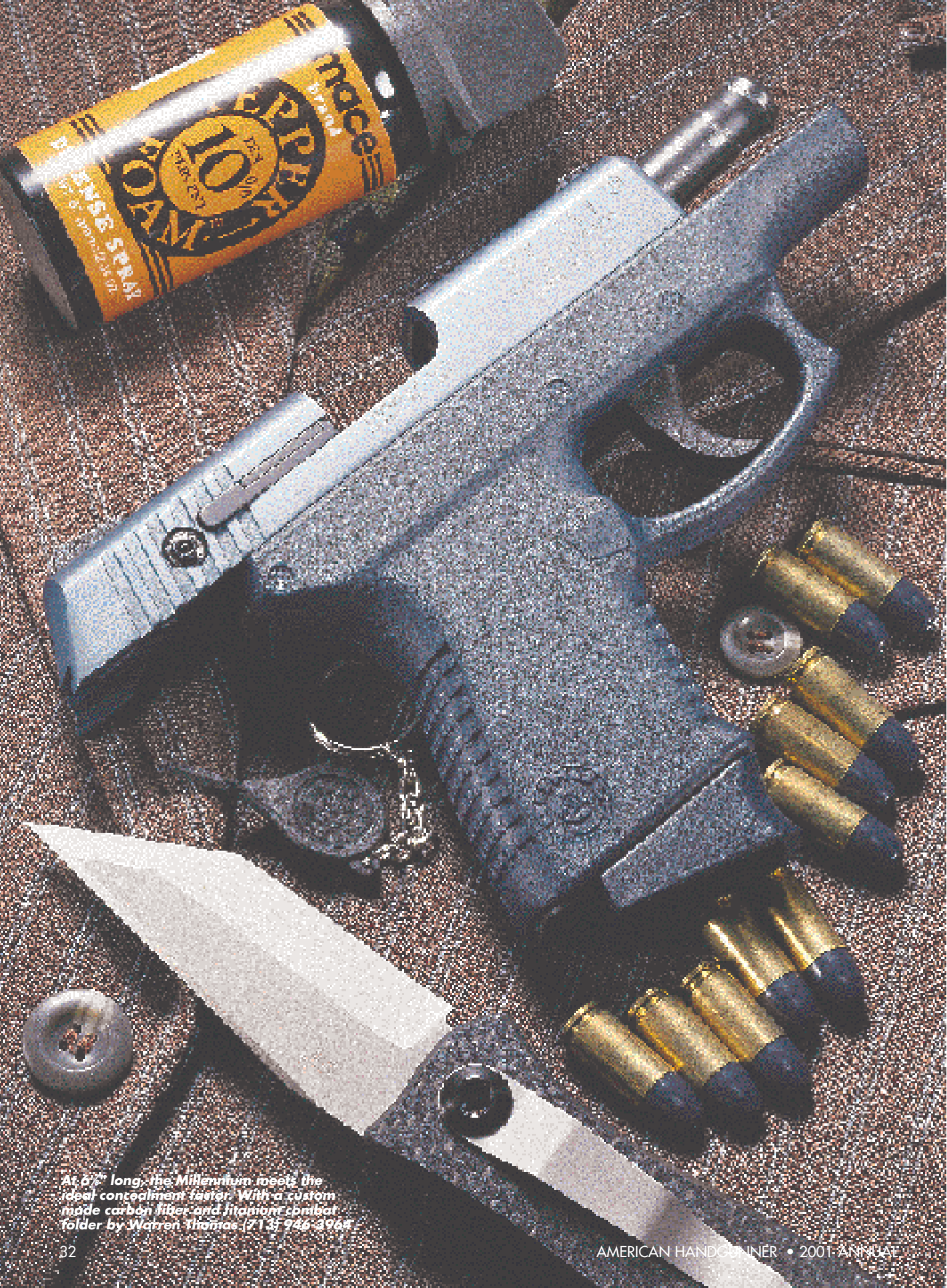
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round mags. The rules allowed one or more backup guns, an item conspicuously absent from my arsenal.

Fortunately, my associate, Doug Miyatake, had supplemented his own 1911A1 with a Taurus M85CH .38 Special, which he lent me for pocket carry during the event. To make a long story short, I ran out of .45 ammo while shooting a house-clearing stage and neutralized two or three targets with the Taurus 2". My first overall victory at that close-fought 1994 NTI clearly would not have occurred without the serendipitous presence of the little, bobbed-hammer, five-shot snubby.

Another Taurus wheelgun—this one a long-barrelled, large-frame .357 Magnum—made an equally lasting impression. During a shooting demo at a martial arts camp in upstate New York, that particular gun printed a 4", eight-round, off-hand group on a target at approximately 60 yards, an unambiguous indication of significant intrinsic accuracy. Since my forte is quick-and-dirty, close-quarters work, not long-range precision handgunnery, firing such a tight cluster was a memorable event.

Back to backups, my former chief of

police, tactical team leader James Yeager, carried a Taurus PT-111 Millennium in a DeSantis ankle rig as a backup gun. At that time, the lone lawman in a wild and wooly region of the Tennessee hills, Yeager took his hardware seriously. The fact that a highly respected operator like Yeager

considered the Millennium fit for duty caught my attention. As fate would have it, I got selected to survey the same sidearm and its many siblings for this article.

Choose Your Weapon

As readers are no doubt aware, the world of defensive handgun cartridges for



The 3/4" barrel is housed in the Millennium's titanium slide.





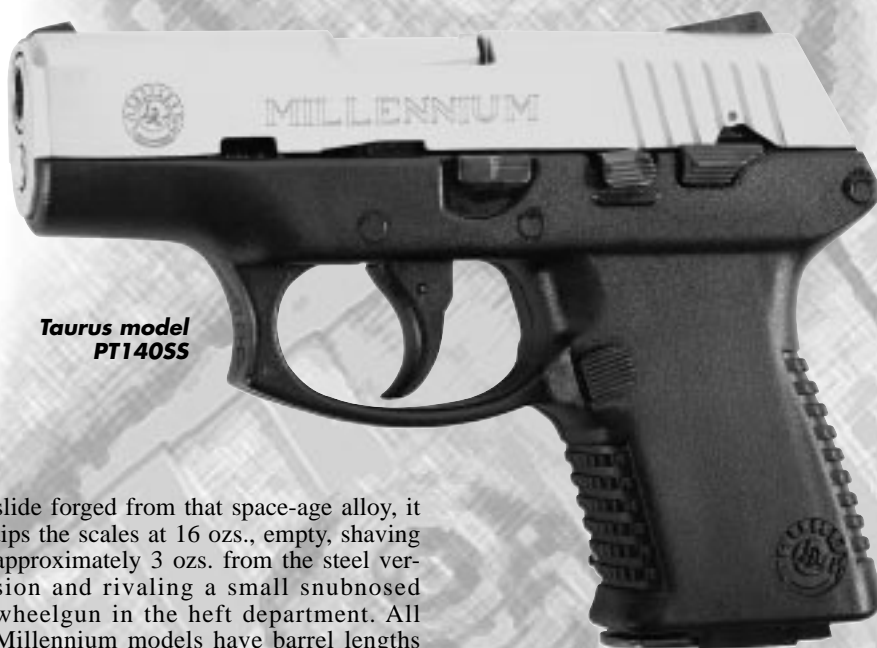
*The Millennium's
polymer frame/tita-
nium slide offers
light weight and
concealability.*

self-loaders has largely stabilized around the 9mm parabellum, .40 S&W and .45 ACP. Each has its vocal proponents, but truth be told, there is not a dime's worth of difference between them in terms of terminal ballistics. Those who have convinced themselves that their pet service caliber sidearm hits like Thor's hammer are setting themselves up for a rude awakening when a determined adversary isn't equally impressed.

No matter. With models available in all three chamberings, the Taurus Millennium series allows you to pay your money and take your choice. Each weapon holds 10 rounds in the mag, plus another up the spout— basically double the on-board ammunition of a similar-sized revolver. The only drawbacks as bore size increases are slightly more weight, slightly more size, and noticeably more recoil. Personally, I'll opt for an easier-to-shoot, cheaper-to-feed 9mm every time, all else being equal.

You also get a choice of finish. I prefer a silvery gun, to maximize the chance that the weapon will be seen when verbally challenging an assailant in low light. Statistics from several sources show that the vast majority of confrontations can be resolved without firing a shot, provided the defender is clearly armed and resolved to use force if necessary. Hence, the stainless models are preferable to the blued ones.

But the sexiest Millennium in the line is clearly the Titanium version. With a



**Taurus model
PT140SS**

slide forged from that space-age alloy, it tips the scales at 16 ozs., empty, shaving approximately 3 ozs. from the steel version and rivaling a small snubnosed wheelgun in the left department. All Millennium models have barrel lengths of 3¼", and overall dimensions are comparable to a Kahr P-9, Glock 26/27 or Kel-Tec P-11.

Maximizing The Machine

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to realize that the Taurus Millennium series represents the shape of things to come, vis-à-vis autopistols in America. Detachable box magazines legally limited to 10 rounds will largely define the dimensions of pistols produced in the future. Light-

weight polymer handgun frames— pioneered by HK and popularized by Glock— and user-friendly double-action-only lockwork are also here to stay.

Economics, ergonomics and concealed carry by common citizens all point to small, lightweight, snag-free, DAO weapons like the Millennium. Provided the pistol in question comfortably fits the hand and functions reliably, there is no





Bob Morrison, Taurus executive vice-president and chief operating officer, holds the 2000 Manufacturer of the Year and Handgun of the Year Awards from the Shooting Industry Academy of Excellence.



Bob Morrison (left) of Taurus, and Wayne Lapiere, NRA executive vice president, launch Taurus' membership sponsorship. During the program, Taurus gave away 6,000 NRA memberships.



Taurus Model 445 .44 Special Titanium



Taurus Model 617 .357 Magnum Titanium



Above and Below: Taurus PT145 .45 ACP Millennium



longer any good reason to exceed the envelope determined by ammunition capacity. For self-defense applications, a handgun should be, well, handy. The Millennium certainly meets all these criteria.

The striker-fired Millennium has an appropriately modern look. Polymer construction facilitates curvy contours that

blend the lower half of the gun into the sleek slide, which in turn mates with the barrel, using a Browning short-recoil lockup. A loaded-chamber indicator, located with the pivoting extractor, protrudes when there is a round up the spout, giving both visual and tactile reference.

Like the Kel-Tec P-11, the Millen-

nium's slide rails are machined into a serially numbered alloy subframe, which in turn is pinned into the polymer grip frame. Molded checkering on the front strap and back strap increases purchase. The steel magazine is made in Italy by Mec-Gar; its molded, polymer base plate supplies a place for the little finger of the firing hand.

A square-notch, Novak-esque, polymer rear sight and square front post present the firer with the popular three-dot sight picture; the factory offers self-luminous tritium inserts as an option at additional cost. Both sights nestle into a machined groove on the top of the slide, maintaining the sleek lines of the rest of the gun.

Trigger action is a long, smooth pull with a lengthy reset and second-strike capability. The frame-mounted thumb safety on the left side allows "uncocked-and-locked" carry, if this is desired. I feel that a manual safety is a positive attribute on even a DAO gun, the benefits of which outweigh the increased mechanical complexity. However, if you choose to carry your handgun "on safe," practice disengaging the lever every time you pre-



Above and below: Manufacturing facilities in Brazil turn out impressive numbers of Taurus firearms for export.



Taurus runs its U.S. operation from its headquarters in Miami, Fla.

**Taurus Model 425 .41
Magnum Titanium**



**Taurus Model
PT111B Millennium**



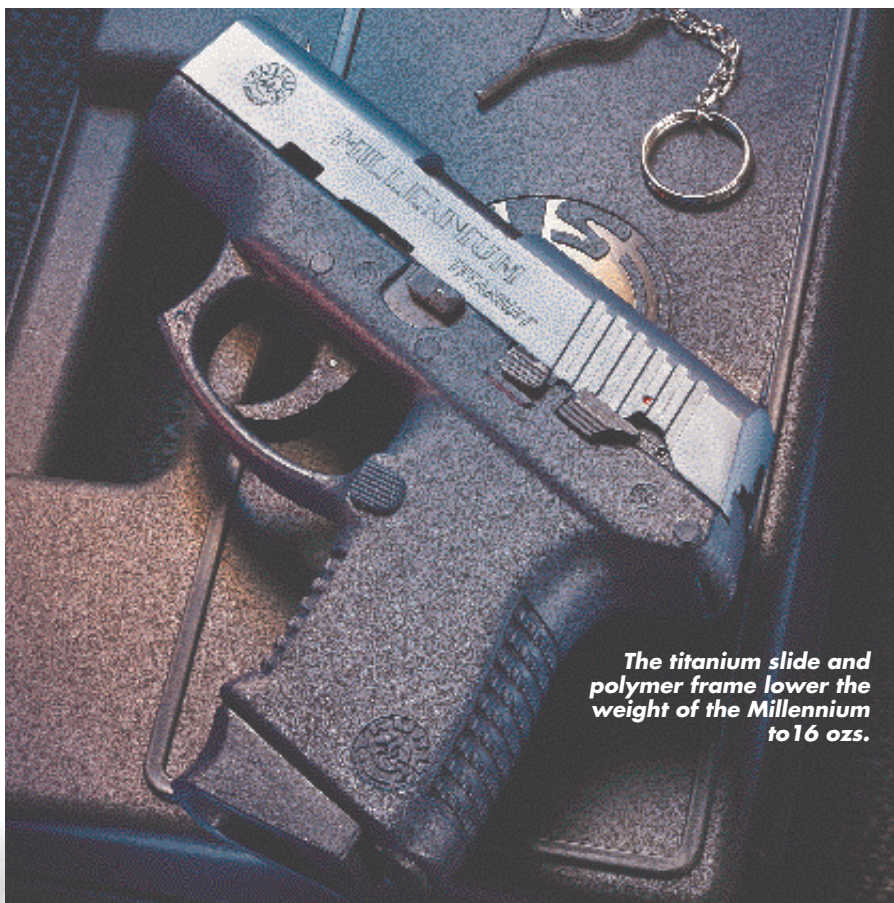
sent the weapon from a holster or tactical ready position.

Above And Beyond

In addition to the thumb safety, the Millennium sports the Taurus Security System, an integral, key-operated firing pin lock now incorporated into every one of the company's firearms. On the pistol in question, the lock takes the form of a small, round pin just aft of the extractor, flush with the right side of the slide when disengaged. When rotated 90 degrees clockwise with the included proprietary key, the lock protrudes slightly beyond the cocking serrations, and prevents the slide and trigger from moving.

This feature represents a pro-active, yet perfectly palatable, answer to the problem of firearm accident reduction, one that compromises neither functionality nor the rights of gun owners. It is safe to employ with a loaded weapon, something that cannot be said for typical trigger locks. I'm fairly adamant about responsible storage of unattended weapons. In tactical terms, if you are in so much danger that you need a loaded, unsecured sidearm, you should be wearing it.

As icing on the cake, the Millennium also comes with the Taurus unlimited life-



The titanium slide and polymer frame lower the weight of the Millennium to 16 ozs.



The Millennium has the Taurus Security System, activated by a key.

time warranty, another thing the gun shares with the rest of the Taurus line. This Dillon-esque guarantee states that if a Taurus firearm breaks, the company will fix it, for the lifetime of the gun. I know for a fact that this shrewd policy has convinced many shooters who were teetering on the brink of buying a Taurus handgun to take the plunge.

In any event, it's unlikely that you'll need to avail yourself of the warranty, given the high quality of current Taurus firearms. Most of the guns now residing in the repair department represent the accumulation of firearms that were sent in without a return address. Nonetheless, it's

nice to know that should *Mr. Murphy* raise his ugly head, the company stands 100 percent behind their products.

My live-fire evaluation of the Millennium consisted of a series of high-speed combat pistol drills, from contact distance out to 15 meters. The gun was plenty accurate, with all misses being chalked up to lapses in trigger control. In reality, virtually any firearm will provide more precision than the user can manifest under stress.

As a full-time firearms instructor and reserve cop, I'm primarily concerned that a self-defense handgun goes "bang" each and every time the trigger is pulled. The sample pistol passed this hurdle with

flying colors, digesting several hundred rounds of Black Hills high-speed hollow-points and blue box ball without a hitch.

The bottom line? The small, flat, light Taurus rides comfortably in a wide variety of holsters— either on the belt, or in a shoulder or ankle rig— and the long trigger stroke facilitates jacket pocket carry. In short, the Millennium model pistol is practically perfect for personal protection in this era of concealed-weapon permits.

Accolades Aplenty

Of course, you don't have to take my word for it. The above account is corroborated by the numerous awards accorded both the Millennium pistol and the company that designed and fabricated it. As mentioned at the beginning, the PT-111 Millennium Titanium won the 2000 Shooting Industry Academy of Excellence Handgun of the Year Award, chosen by top firearm-industry executives, major distributors, gun dealers and outdoor writers in an objective, "one-person, one-vote" selection process.

The academy also recognized Taurus as Manufacturer of the Year for its Total Titanium revolvers. These will-'o-the-wisp wheelguns include the sub-20 oz. Tracker .357 and .41 Magnums— holding seven and five rounds, respectively— plus five- and seven-shot flyweight snubbys, including a recently unveiled concealed-hammer version, dubbed the C.I.A. (Carry It Anywhere).

Another publication voted the Beretta-clone Taurus PT-99 "Gun of the Year" for the year 2000. Taurus improved on the Italian original in several areas. Most importantly, they re-engineered the gun to eliminate the catastrophic slide failures and locking block breakage that plagued early M9 service sidearms. In the area of ergonomics, the Brazilian auto substitutes an ambidextrous, frame-mounted safety-Decker for the dubious double dingus located on the slide of the Beretta.

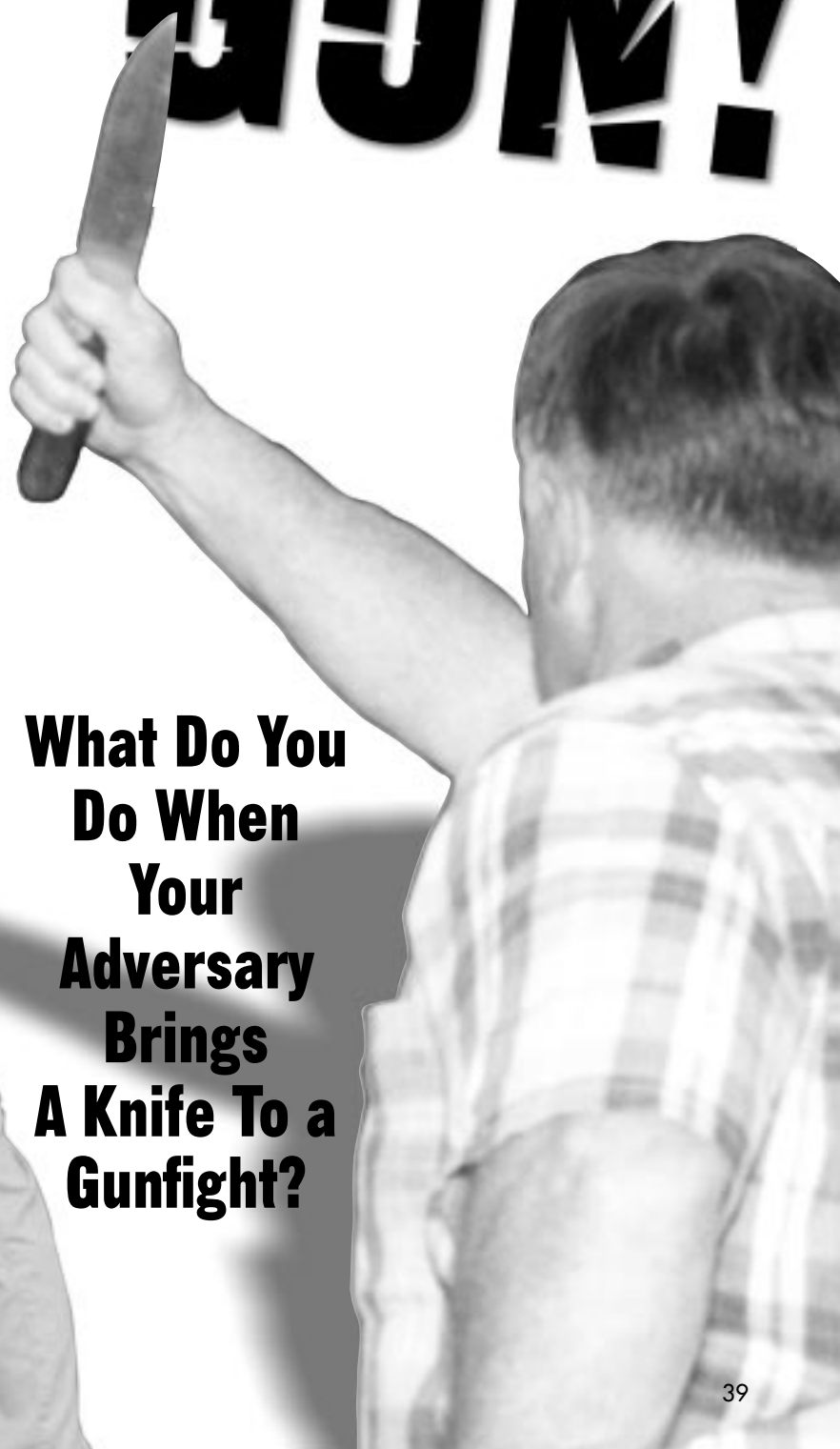
Lastly, I should note that the gun-maker was the first in the industry to meet stringent ISO 9001 manufacturing standards. Under Dr. Murgel's direction, the new-and-improved Taurus has gone the extra mile to attract new customers and keep them happy. Most recently, they gave away free NRA memberships to anyone who bought a Taurus handgun. In all, Taurus gave away 6,000 NRA memberships.

Who knows? Perhaps Taurus even had a direct impact on the 2000 presidential election. Between the new NRA members who went to the polls due to NRA's get-out-the-vote mailings and Markham Park shooters inspired by Bob Morrison's impromptu sermon, there may have been several hundred additional ballots cast for President Bush. I know one thing for sure: Gun owners don't leave hanging chads. American Handgunners understand how to properly punch holes.



KNIFE -VS- GUN!

BY
STEVE
MOSES



**What Do You
Do When
Your
Adversary
Brings
A Knife To a
Gunfight?**

In a dramatic scene in the movie *The Untouchables*, Sean Connery is stalked in his apartment by one of Al Capone's unsavory, knife-wielding henchmen. Connery suddenly confronts the thug with a wicked-looking, sawed-off shotgun and rebukes the lowlife in a most politically incorrect manner for being stupid enough to "bring a knife to a gunfight."

At this point, the audience laughs, relieved that Connery is no longer in danger. The audience is dead wrong.

Gun Vs. Knife Cultures

In terms of modern-day martial arts, most people interested in self-defense have chosen to study the firearm. The vast majority of these people have further concentrated on the use of the handgun, mostly because of its portability, convenience and concealability.

There are good reasons for this choice. Handguns allow us to strike people from a distance, and their effective use is somewhat less dependent upon athletic ability and timing than other forms of physical combat. Furthermore, shooting someone with a firearm is somewhat more impersonal (and easier to do) than slashing or stabbing another human being with an edged weapon. It is no surprise that most people would prefer to defend themselves with a handgun, as opposed to using a knife.

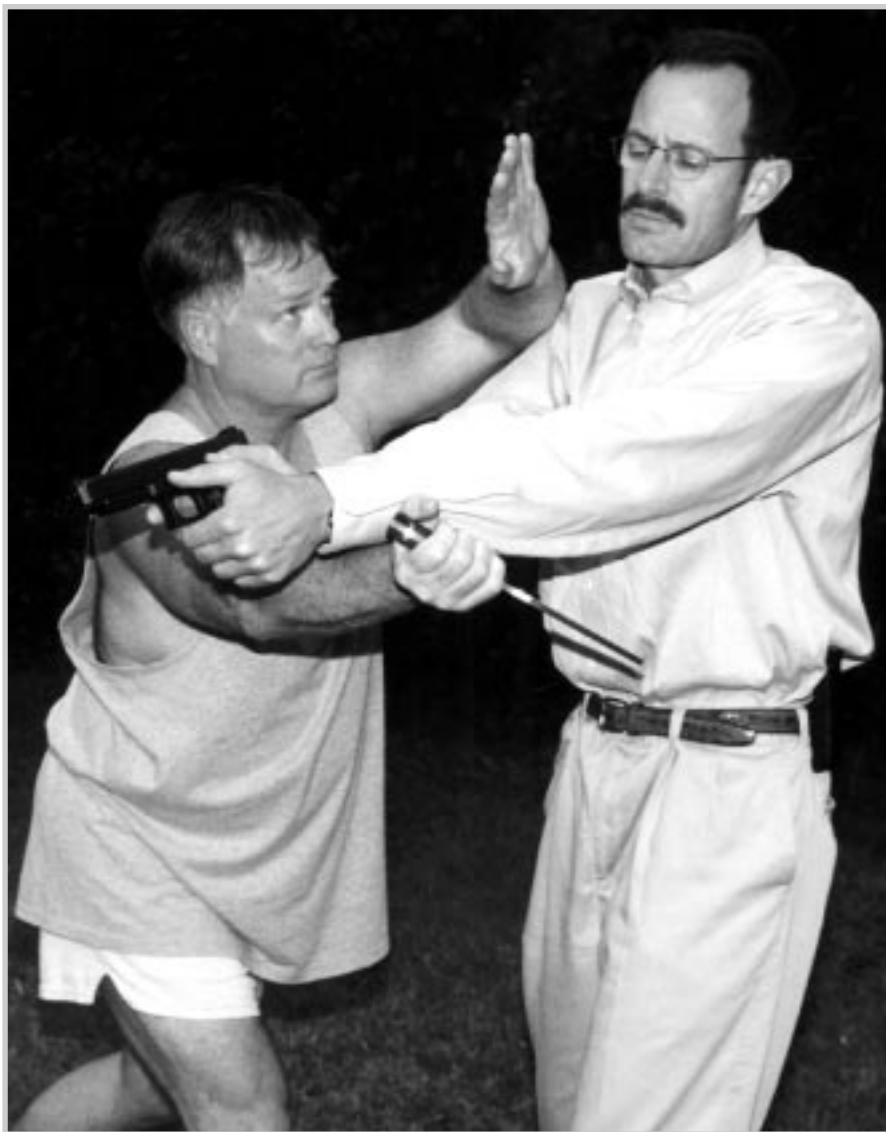
However, knives have been used as defensive and offensive weapons for thousands of years. It's not different today, and knives will still be used to injure and kill people thousands of years from now.

The reasons are simple. Knives do not malfunction. People who are prohibited from acquiring a firearm because of a criminal record often turn to knives. Knives are easily concealed and, in close quarters, a knife is possibly more effective than a handgun.

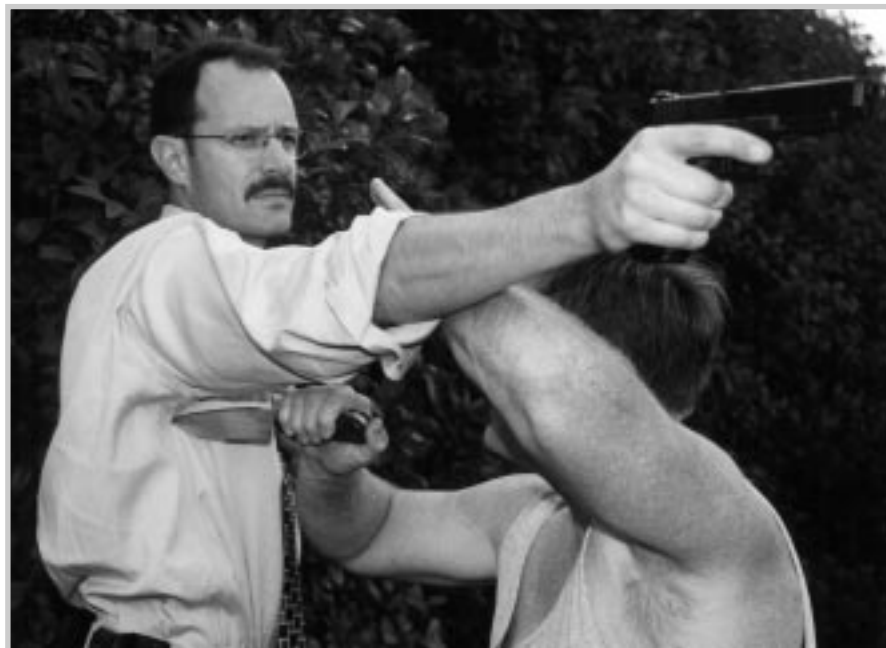
Common sense dictates that today's armed citizen should know as much as he can about what a potential adversary can do with an edged weapon. This adversary may be carrying 5" (or more) of sharpened steel, which will allow him to open your abdomen or put out your eye with a quick, effortless jab. Given this, close-in combat takes on added importance.

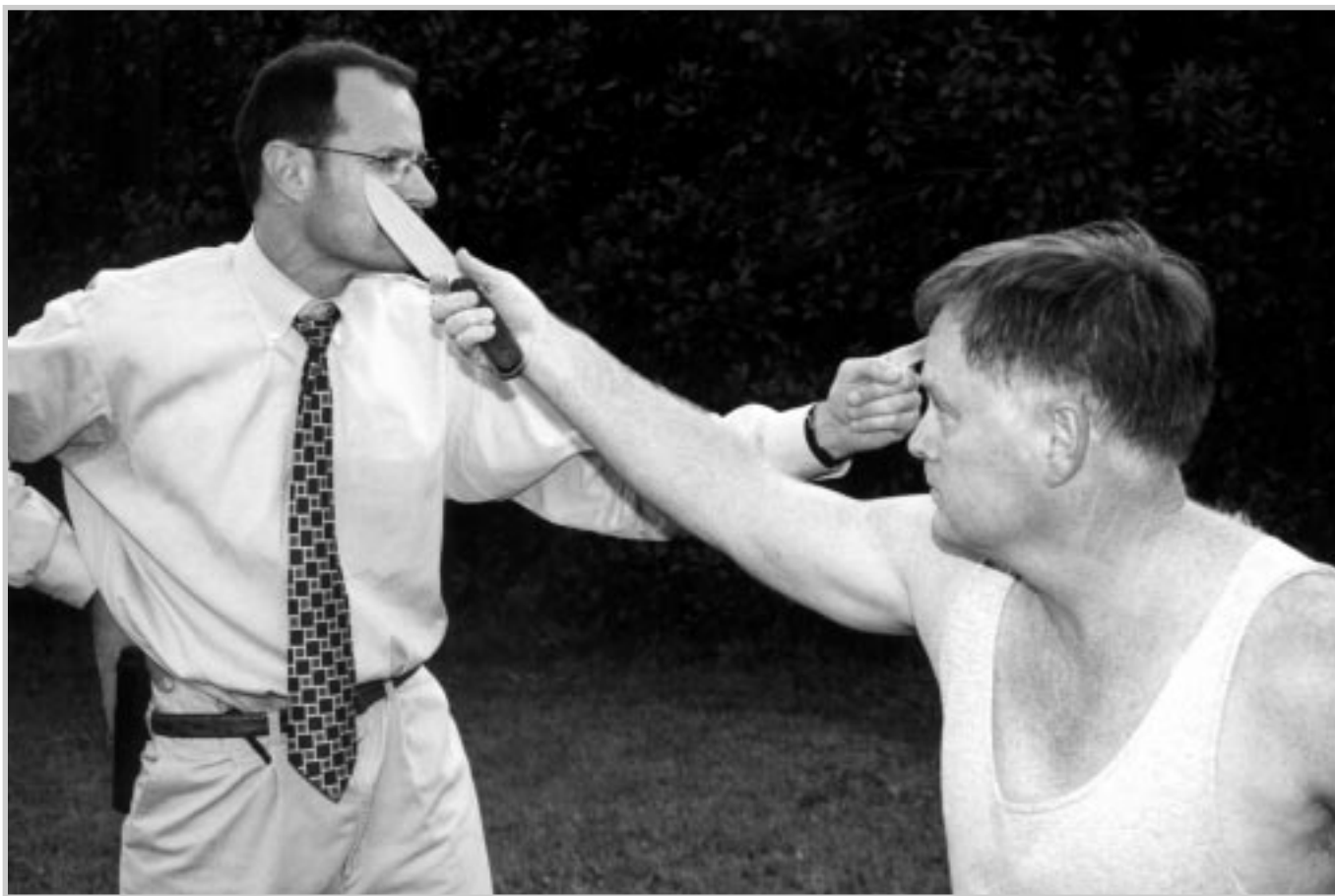
Hot Lead Vs. Cold Steel

As mentioned, in the face of an attack, the handgun is the self-defense weapon used most often. This is unfortunate, because handgun rounds are inherently unreliable stoppers. I don't want to beat this subject to death, but most people shot with handguns who immediately stop fighting do so for psychological reasons (they decide to) as opposed to physiolog-



Above: Charlie Porter, instructor in Filipino knife-fighting techniques, closing the gap by stepping off the line. Below: A short thrust to the armpit can sever the brachial artery, a lethal wound.





Above: Tremendous damage can be inflicted with a flick of the wrist. Charlie Porter demonstrates a snap-cut to the eye. Below: A trained knife fighter often targets his adversary's weapon-bearing arm or hand. This technique is called Defanging the Snake.



ical reasons (their body ceases to function and they have no choice).

Handgun rounds, for the most part, simply crush tissue, creating a small primary wound channel that has the capability of damaging the heart, major blood vessels and solid organs. This can cause sufficient blood loss so that the person passes out from lack of oxygen to the brain. This can take up to 15 seconds. It's no secret that a motivated person armed with a knife can do a lot of damage in that amount of time.

While a direct hit with a bullet on the upper spinal cord or brain stem can cause a fight to end immediately, the chances of accomplishing that on a small, fast-moving, armored target—while under stress—are not very good.

However, your adversary's \$15 pocketknife can slice apart the tendons in your forearm, open up your carotid artery, or pierce your eyeball. A simple jab in the armpit that penetrates less than 2" can sever the brachial artery and cause you to bleed to death in a matter of seconds. A poorly trained knife-fighter can cover 7 yards and grievously slash or stab his adversary in about 1.5 seconds.

Watching a well-trained and motivated knife fighter will give you nightmares.

No Quick Fix

Perhaps, in response, you decide to always have access to a rifle or a shotgun. Try carrying one 24 hours a day. While rifle and shotgun rounds are more superior to handgun rounds, they ain't death rays. There are plenty of horror stories of bad guys who were shot with .223 and .308 rounds, as well as 12 ga. shotguns stoked with buckshot and slugs, and were unimpressed. They did not stop doing what they were doing for some time. Add stress, a moving target and perhaps poor light—all have a negative impact upon accuracy—and the idea of defending against a motivated criminal wielding a knife doesn't sound like a lot of fun.

It gets worse, not better. The law of the land basically provides that legitimate self-defense, or the protection of others, must carry with it clear evidence that the use of lethal force was justified. In most states, it must be reasonably demonstrated that the adversary possessed the intent, ability and opportunity to cause grievous bodily harm or death, and that retreat on your part was not an option (castle doctrine notwithstanding).

To that end, we can't simply shoot someone because we think they *might* represent a threat to us sometime in the *future*. Consequently, we find ourselves in a reactive mode, forced to react based on the actions of a *potential* bad guy. Good firearm trainers will tell you that action always beats reaction. By the time your mind registers that your adversary has initiated an attack, you are about .20 seconds behind, and there is a good

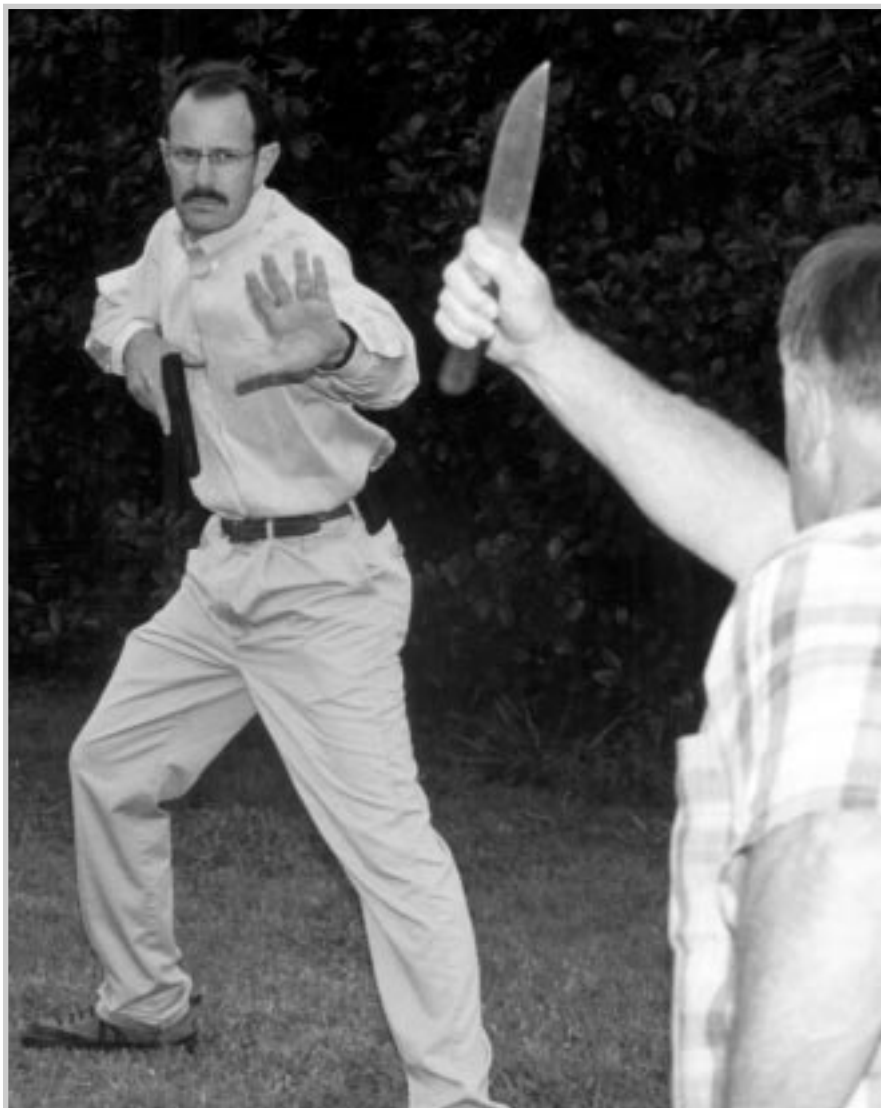


Above: Everything is a target. Painful cuts like this are extremely distracting, if not life-threatening. Knife fighters often follow up by closing the gap.
Below: Fighting often takes place at bad-breath distance.





Above: How close is too close? At short range, the gunman's options diminish. **Below:** Keep your distance. Communicate to your adversary through your words and actions that you are committed to defending yourself. Prepare to move and shoot.



chance you will never catch up.

Value Of Intelligence

What did successful warriors like Gen. Robert E. Lee and Gen. George Patton have in common? Among many other desirable attributes, both placed great emphasis on developing and using data about their adversaries. The more they knew about the enemy and his strengths and weaknesses, the more prepared they were to mount an effective defense or overpowering attack.

Gen. Lee was noted for personally performing reconnaissance during the Civil War, much to the alarm of the soldiers who loved him. Patton spent many hours on the front in his Jeep. Both men knew that there was no substitute for firsthand knowledge about the capabilities of their adversary, and both are considered to be among the best fighting men in American history. There is much to learn from their philosophy. Know your enemy! Learn what good knife fighters are capable of doing and how they do it.

Knife-Fighting Science

To learn how to defend against a knife attack, seek out those who are not only well-trained knife fighters, but also those who are capable of and willing to teach their techniques. There are plenty of "good guys" out there who know how to use a knife. Some that are well respected include Hock Hocheim, Bob Taylor, James Keating and Kelly Worden.

I've had the good fortune to know Charlie Porter, a maker of custom knives and an instructor of Filipino knife-fighting techniques, who teaches out of Denton, Texas. After a few sessions with Porter, I learned that knife fighting is a sophisticated art refined by hundreds of years of ugly, painful combat.

Forget what you may have seen portrayed on television or in the movies. These guys know what they are doing and they know how to defend against people using guns. They do not attack on a straight line unless there is no other way to bridge the gap. They step off-line as soon as possible, while adding insult to injury—often a quick "snap-cut" to the eye or a jab to the extended gun hand. Classes with Porter are surprisingly technical, with emphases on anatomy, angles of attack and psychology.

Serious knife fighters, good and bad, are far from stupid. They're not prone to launch themselves in Kamikaze-like attacks, holding their knives like an ice pick. They, like us, do not want to be injured or killed. They, like us, are looking for ways to accomplish their objective of finishing the fight unscathed.

Don't underestimate your opponent. A good knife fighter uses strategies, tactics and tricks that are best described as "impressively frightening." Their goal is to get in, strike and get out in the shortest amount of time. To a good knife fighter,

everything's a target. It's entirely possible to find yourself cut or stabbed multiple times before you even fully realize you've been attacked!

An alternative to studying under a dedicated knife-fighting instructor is to take a short course covering the defensive folding knife from a more firearms-oriented school. Such courses are taught at the Gunsite Training Academy, Southwest Defensive Shooting Institute, InSights Training Center, Tactical Firearms Training Team and Options for Personal Security. Obviously, these courses can't teach you in two days what you could learn by training for months or years under an experienced instructor. However, even these short courses will make you well prepared, in comparison to the rest of the world.

Fight Smart

If you're ever attacked by a knife-wielding thug, remember that you are fighting, not just shooting. All the things that make a knife fighter so dangerous, such as strategy, tactics and tricks, are also available to you.

Where is the attacker with the knife the weakest? Keep your distance from a potential threat. Maneuver to place an obstacle between you and the threat. This will make a quick, straight-line attack difficult.

Study the art of surgical speed shooting. Learn how to make speed hits on those portions of the attacker that will quickly and effectively render him incapable of continuing to press an attack. You are kidding yourself if you think a torso hit will end an encounter. You must target those portions of your attacker's anatomy that are most vulnerable, such as the heart, the spine or the hip joint.

Your attacker is not going to stand and present a static target, so why should you? Move while you shoot, not backwards, but laterally or in a tight circle. You must continue moving and shooting until your attacker is no longer a threat. Even then, do not allow yourself to be lulled into thinking the danger is over. Remain vigilant. Remember, criminals often travel in packs. Continually scan for others who may not have your best interests in mind.

No place to run? If trapped, consider going to the ground and shooting from there. Under the worst of circumstances, you can use your feet to fend off your attacker while you shoot. Yes, you are probably going to suffer some terrible damage to your feet and legs, and it is, of course, entirely possible to place a round right through the top of your foot. If you have a better idea for when some feral sociopath sporting both bad breath and a bad attitude is right in your face, trying to blind you with a box-cutter, please share it. Sometimes we have to sacrifice pawns to save kings.

Whatever you do, don't stop fighting! People can and have survived horrendous damage. You owe it to yourself and the people who love and depend upon you to survive.

Be Prepared

The key for those who want to increase their ability to protect themselves is to study the enemy. Being prepared is not the same as being paranoid. And who knows, we may all be in a situation someday where all we have available to us is a knife. As Sun Tzu once said, "Luck favors the prepared man."



Move and shoot! At this distance, multiple rounds into the hip joint (not the entire pelvis) may be your best option. Put as much distance between you and your attacker as possible.



The Author

Steve Moses is a founder of and a lead instructor at the Southwest Defensive Shooting Institute L.L.C. in Dallas, Texas. He is certified by the Texas Department of Public Safety as a Concealed Handgun License Instructor. Moses holds a Master rating with the International Defensive Pistol Association and a second-degree black belt in Taekwondo. Moses has completed multiple weapons and tactics courses at some of the most prestigious small arms academies in the United States.

KNIFE EXPERTS

Charles E. Porter
Denton Area Knife Fighters
(940) 382-9558

Andy Stanford
Options for Personal Security
(941) 382-0180
www.ops-defense.com

InSights Training Center
(425) 739-0133
www.insightstraining.com

Southwest Defensive Shooting Institute L.L.C.
(214) 599-0909

Tactical Firearms Training Team
(714) 846-8065
www.tfft.com

Gunsite Training Academy Inc.
(520) 636-4565
www.gunsite.net

Glock G29 10mm Power!

*Practical, Powerful And
Concealable, This Potent
Pocket Pistol Packs
A Lot Of Punch In A
Pint-Size Package!*

By Charles W. Karwan



The Glock 29 10mm is the compact version of the Glock 20 10mm.



Chuck Miller, a former Navy SEAL master chief, can hit a man-sized target at 100 yards almost every time shooting a G29 offhand.

Even though it was unintentional, one of the legacies of the Clinton Administration was beneficial to gun folks. His anti-gun efforts, which banned the manufacture of magazines holding more than 10 rounds for non-government use, also inspired gun manufacturers to come up with small, easily concealable and powerful handguns. The thinking was, if a person is legally limited to just a 10-round magazine capacity, many customers don't want to be burdened with a large pistol designed to hold 15 or more rounds, especially if they could get something smaller and handier that held the legal limit of 10.



Above: For the 10 mm Auto, Federal's new cartridge with a 180 gr. jacketed hollowpoint bullet.

Left and Below: The recoil and muzzle rise of the G29 are quite moderate, even one-handed.

Of all the compact and sub-compact pistols to come out of this trend, one stands out for its high level of power and performance in a small package. That pistol is the Glock 29 in 10mm. There has never been another pistol quite as powerful and efficient for its size. While the similar-sized Glock 30 .45 compact has been a huge hit, too many people seeking a powerful compact pistol have overlooked the G29.

The G29 10mm can deliver 150 to 200 more ft./lbs. of energy per shot than the G30 .45 and holds one more round in equal-length magazines. Consequently, the G29 has gained a strong following among the cognoscente, but it deserves much more attention and recognition than it has received.

More Versatile Pistol

The full-sized Glock 20 10mm has a 15-round magazine and is an incredibly capable pistol. Indeed, when fully loaded with high-performance ammunition, the shooter has more energy on tap than with any other normal-sized handgun. When Glock decided to make a compact 10mm in the G29, it created an even more versatile pistol.

The G29 is a typical Glock through and through, with all the features that have made this line of pistols so successful. These include a tough lightweight polymer frame, an extremely hard, wear- and rust-resistant Tennifer metal finish, a unique DAO trigger mechanism with short trigger reset, three passive safeties, a simple design with few parts, extreme durability and reliability, and a large magazine capacity for its size.

This neat little gun is about the same size as the popular Glock G19 9mm and G23 .40 compacts. It is about the same



length, a slight bit thicker and, surprisingly, a bit shorter in height. The G29 is designed for virtually unlimited use of the hot, full-pressure 10mm loads. There is no question that this little pistol represents a breakthrough in chambering a powerful cartridge in a small, lightweight package.

Plenty Of Wallop

I was very concerned that the 3.78" barrel of the G29, which is .82" shorter than the full-sized G20's barrel, would take too much "oomph" out of the 10mm cartridge. What I found after chronographing several loads was that while there is some velocity and energy loss compared to the same loads fired in a full-sized 10mm, it is not enough to worry about.

The 10mm G29, shooting 180 gr. full-pressure loads, lost only 62 fps and 57 fpe, compared to the larger G20. It still had over 504 fpe of wallop, which is 100 fpe over what the .40 S&W cartridge delivers from a full-sized gun with that weight bullet. Both the 135 gr. Cor-Bon and 175 gr. Winchester Silvertip 10mm

loads delivered substantially more energy, approaching double that of many 9mm Para loads. This is a very powerful pistol, in spite of its short barrel and compact size.

Higher energy, however, does not necessarily provide greater effectiveness, and incapacitation capabilities are beyond the scope of this article. However, with properly performing bullets, the higher the energy of the load, the more damage that can be delivered to the target and the more effective the load in incapacitation. The G29 can deliver as much energy as, or more energy than, any other gun in its size and weight bracket, and unlike the others, it can do it 11 times before reloading.

Control And Concealment

It is evident that Gaston Glock designed the frame of the G29 to have the minimum height possible and still take a 10-round magazine of 10mm ammunition. The resulting grip is so short it allows only two fingers below the trigger guard for a normal-size hand. The best shooting grip puts the little finger of the

"The G29 is also small enough that many people can carry it in a good ankle holster."

The Glock 20 10mm is the author's pick for the best combat handgun, but it is too big for concealed carry, something the G29 handles nicely.

The author prefers to carry his G29 concealed in an inside-the-waistband holster under a jacket or vest.

shooting hand under the floorplate of the magazine. While many people with small hands find the grip of the full-sized Glock 20 10mm uncomfortably large, I have not heard one such complaint about the G29. This is because the maximum girth of its grip is well under that of the larger gun.

If the carry method allows a bit more length to the grip, a Pearce Grip finger extension floorplate can be added to the magazine, allowing a full three-fingered grip on the gun. I highly recommend this approach, because it adds greatly to the controllability of the gun, particularly when fired with one hand.

While the G29 is compact and quite easily concealed, it is a bit too big for pocket carry unless you have exceptionally baggy pants and big pockets. Since I often wear such pants, I have carried it this way, particularly with pants with cargo pockets. The G29 is also small enough that many people can carry it in a

good ankle holster. It is small and light enough to be easily and comfortably concealed in a wide variety of inside-the-waistband, belt-slide, pancake, fanny-pack or other belt holsters and in a wide variety of shoulder holsters. Where concealment is critical, I favor an inside-the-waistband Kydex holster by Blade-Tech. When it is not so critical, as when out in the woods, I like a comfortable paddle holster by the same firm.

Handling The Recoil

Comparing the G29 with the familiar Colt Officer's ACP .45, that company's smallest .45 and typical of the small .45s of other manufacturers, the G29 is .45" shorter in length and .18" shorter in height. The G29 is 6.9 oz. lighter than the steel-frame Officer's ACP. The G29 also holds four more rounds. In all, the Glock G29 is smaller, lighter, holds much more ammunition and is much more powerful.

When you pack this kind of power in such a lightweight, small package, it is only natural to wonder about the gun's recoil and controllability. The G29 offers a truly pleasant surprise in this area. Shooting FBI-type 10mm loads of .45 ACP level ballistics, felt recoil is remarkably low. It is far lower than shooting GI .45 ACP hardball in a full-sized Colt Government model, and muzzle flip is even less.

Turning to the hotter 10mm full-pressure loadings opens up a whole new world. These loads are in the 500+ fpe range from the G29. This is 175 fpe or more than standard GI .45 ACP ammunition fired in a full-sized pistol, and is well into full-sized .357 Magnum energy territory. With such loads, the shooter knows he is shooting something snappy, yet recoil is not at all punishing.

Probably the single best way to compare felt recoil and controllability in combat-type pistols is to measure the split times when firing controlled pairs of shots. The idea is to fire the pair as fast as you can humanly manage and still keep them within 4" or so of each other on a target at 7 yards. I tested five shooters with the G29, using an electronic timer.

The test group included a highly skilled firearms instructor, a shooter just recently out of Army Special Forces, a deputy sheriff who carries a 10mm G20, a civilian shooting enthusiast with only minimal experience, and myself. Using two hands, all of us but one were able to easily achieve split times of .20 seconds or even better with the hot loads. Many shooters can't do that with a typical full-sized 9mm pistol or a .38 Special revolver. This pistol is very controllable.

The G29 works exactly like all other Glock pistols. It has a two-stage trigger pull, with the first stage bringing the firing pin fully to the rear and the second stage releasing it to fly forward.



"The G29 is a small burden in size or weight but an extremely capable and potent gun."

Even though we were shooting loads that delivered .357 Magnum revolver ballistics that you get from a 4" or longer barrel, none of us could have come close to these times with a compact .357 Magnum revolver. The G29 is far more comfortable to shoot and more controllable than even a full-sized .357 service revolver. Indeed, I found the G29, with these hot loads, was much more comfortable to shoot than a Colt Commander firing standard GI .45 ACP ammo. Difficult to believe, but true.

What makes this possible is the telescoping recoil-spring system that was developed for these guns; it keeps the terminal slide velocities down to a reasonable level. In addition, the polymer frame absorbs much of the recoil shock, and the low barrel line minimizes muzzle flip by directing the recoil more to the rear with less upward torque.

Exceptional Accuracy

I have fired several different G29s, and they were all exceptionally accurate, not just for compact handguns but even for full-sized service pistols. At 7 yards, a good shooter can keep all shots from the G29 in one ragged hole offhand. At 25 yards, shooting from a support, five-shot groups under 3" in diameter are the norm with the G29, with some loads doing significantly better. That is more than adequate accuracy to achieve a head shot out to 50 yards. From a supported position, I can keep all rounds on a man-sized silhouette out to 100 yards or more with my G29. That would be excellent performance from any full-sized service pistol.

The G29 is a versatile gun with many applications. It would make a superb backup gun for law enforcement per-

sonnel, particularly those that use a 10mm as their primary weapon. If their primary weapon were a Glock G20 10mm, they'd have the added advantage of both guns using the same high-capacity spare magazines. The longer magazines will stick out the bottom of the G29, but who cares? If things are so bad that you have to reload your backup gun, you need all the rounds you can get!

Naturally, the G29 is a tremendous choice for use as a primary concealed carry weapon for cops and civilians. It will likely get a particularly strong following with narcotics officers. These guys often have to shoot it out with people so high on one type of drug or another that they are relatively impervious to conventional shock. The Glock 29 is capable of getting the job done.

The G29 is also an excellent choice as a weapon for outdoorsmen. Whether you are a hunter, a fisherman, a photographer, or a bird watcher, it is prudent to carry a powerful weapon in the field for use

against potentially dangerous animals like feral dogs, rabid animals, poisonous snakes, and even bears and cougars. There are also two-legged vermin that often frequent the edges of civilization, knowing there's a lack of phones and police in those areas. One of my friends packed a G29 on a recent African safari, and, though he never had to use it, he was comforted by its presence whether he was in town or in the bush. The G29 is a small burden in size or weight but an extremely capable and potent gun.

It is quite common for uniformed police officers to choose the Glock G19 or G23 compact as a duty weapon, because the magazine capacity and performance of these guns makes them competitive with most full-sized service pistols in 9mm and .40. In addition, the pistols' compact size allows them to be easily carried concealed off duty or when working in plain clothes. The same holds true with the Glock 29.

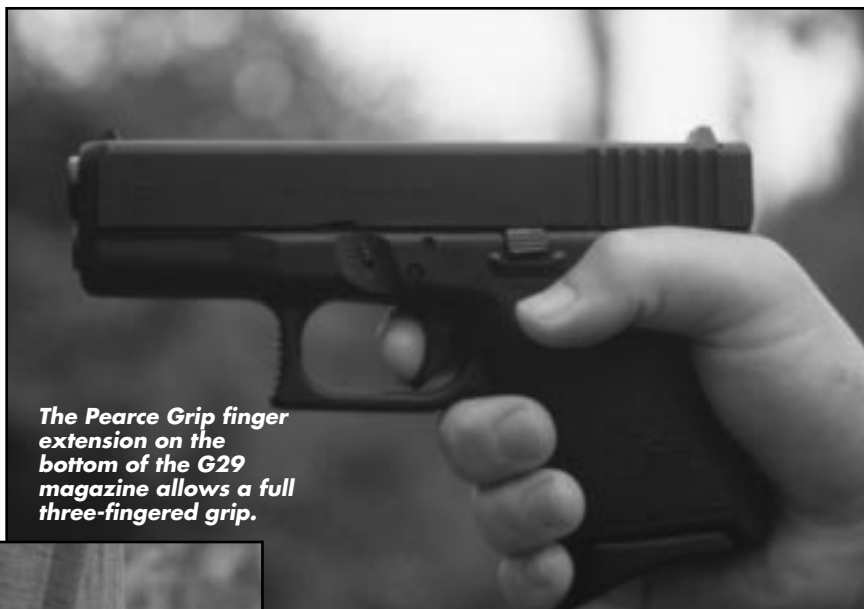
There are thousands of cops carrying



Comparing the compact G29 10mm (top) with the sub-compact G33 .357 SIG, the G29, while somewhat bigger, is still quite a small, handy gun.

Specifications - G29

Caliber:	10mm
Overall length:	6.77"
Height with magazine:	4.45"
Width:	1.27"
Length between sights:	5.95"
Barrel length:	3.78"
Rifling:	hexagonal
Rate of twist:	1: 9.84"
Magazine capacity:	10 rounds
Weight empty w/mag.:	27.09 ozs.
Trigger pull:	5.5 lbs.



The Pearce Grip finger extension on the bottom of the G29 magazine allows a full three-fingered grip.



For non-concealed carry of the G29, the author prefers a paddle-type belt holster.

full-sized 10mm or .45 ACP pistols that hold fewer rounds than the G29. Why not choose a G29 for use as a uniformed duty pistol and also use it for concealed carry? It is an approach that makes a lot of sense.

Future Of 10mm?

Many gun writers have pretty much written the 10mm cartridge off and predict that it will go the way of the dodo. I disagree. Most of the cartridges that fail have one thing in common—they serve no purpose that is not already covered as well or better by another cartridge. This is why the .41 Magnum, the .41 Action Express and the 9mm Federal, among others, are sliding into oblivion.

However, the 10mm cartridge does have a good purpose. It is the most powerful semi-automatic pistol cartridge that will fit in a normal-sized handgun. It allows a normal-sized— or, in this case, compact— semi-automatic handgun to

have magnum-level ballistic performance and high magazine capacities. This and the fact that it is an extremely accurate, efficient and versatile cartridge should keep the 10mm auto cartridge around for some time, even though there are only a few 10mm pistols left on the market.

To increase the versatility of the G29, Federal Arms Corp. offers modestly priced drop-in barrels for the G29 in .40 S&W and .357 SIG. These give complete reliability of feeding and function, with either cartridge using the standard G29 magazine, and they can be installed in less than a minute.

There is no doubt that the introduction of the .40 S&W cartridge hurt the 10mm's popularity, because its smaller size made it adaptable to more gun models, and its lower recoil makes it more palatable to the average shooter. However, the 10mm cartridge has a strong and loyal following among

handgun experts. It is particularly popular in places like Alaska and Montana where there are big, dangerous animals present and where people wear heavy clothing much of the year. In the Pacific Northwest, I know several cops and police departments that prefer the 10mm, usually in a Glock, over all other pistol cartridges, because of its magnum level of performance. Invariably, these are cops who are experienced users of .357 Magnum revolvers and want the same type of performance in a semi-auto pistol.

Most civilians are required to carry their defensive handguns concealed, so the G29 model makes a lot more sense than its full-sized brother. Glock has a terrific pistol on its hands in the G29, and other handgun manufacturers have some tough competition trying to beat it.



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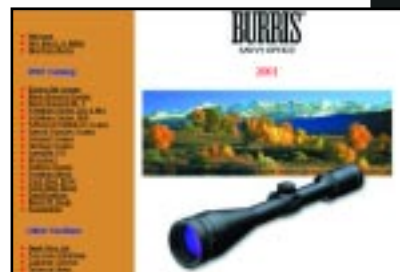
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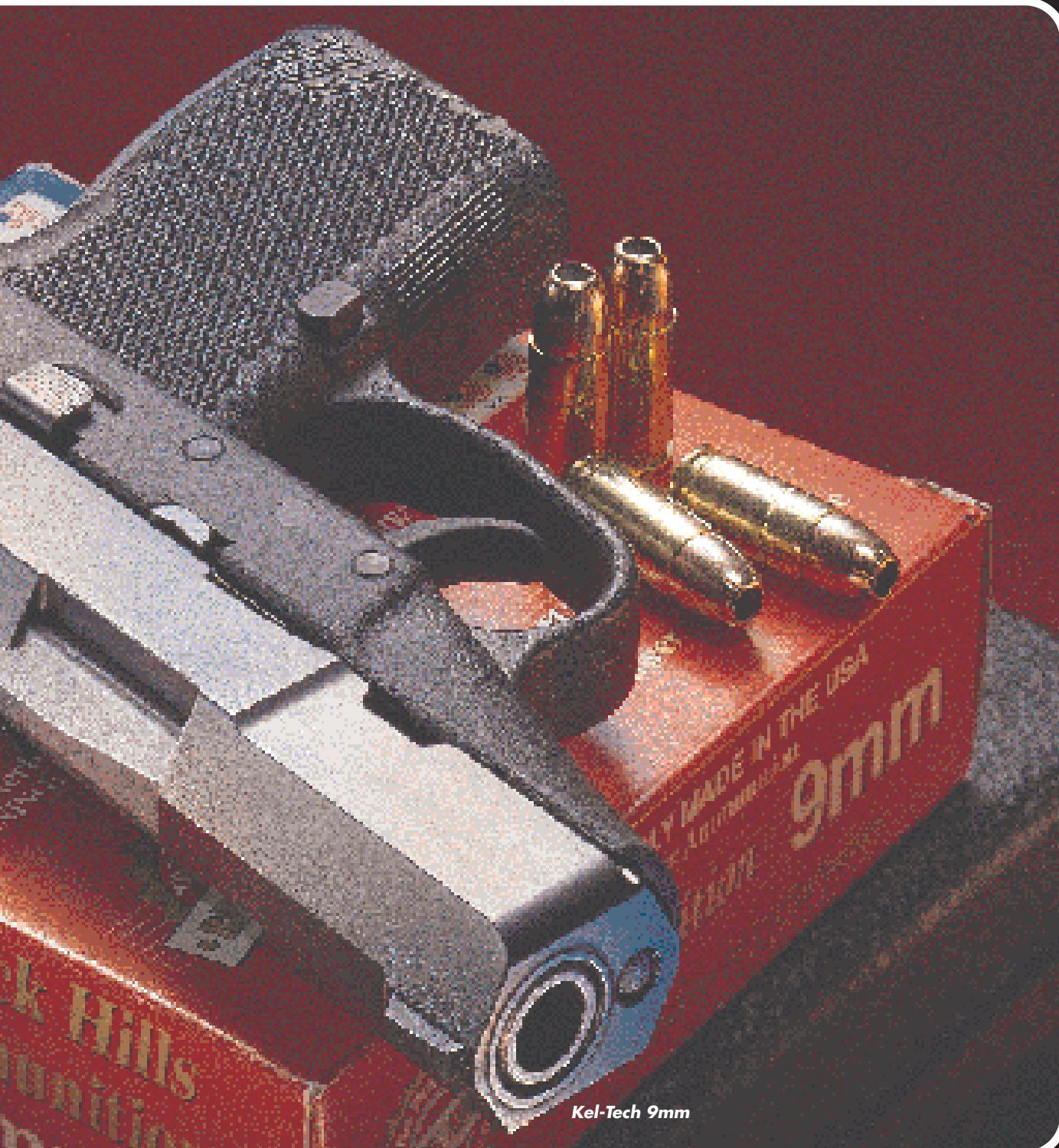
By Massad Ayoob

I grew up in a state that's had "shall issue" carry licensing since the early 1900s. In my family's circle of adult friends, most all of the men were licensed to carry, and a lot of the women. Most carried small guns that weren't terribly powerful.

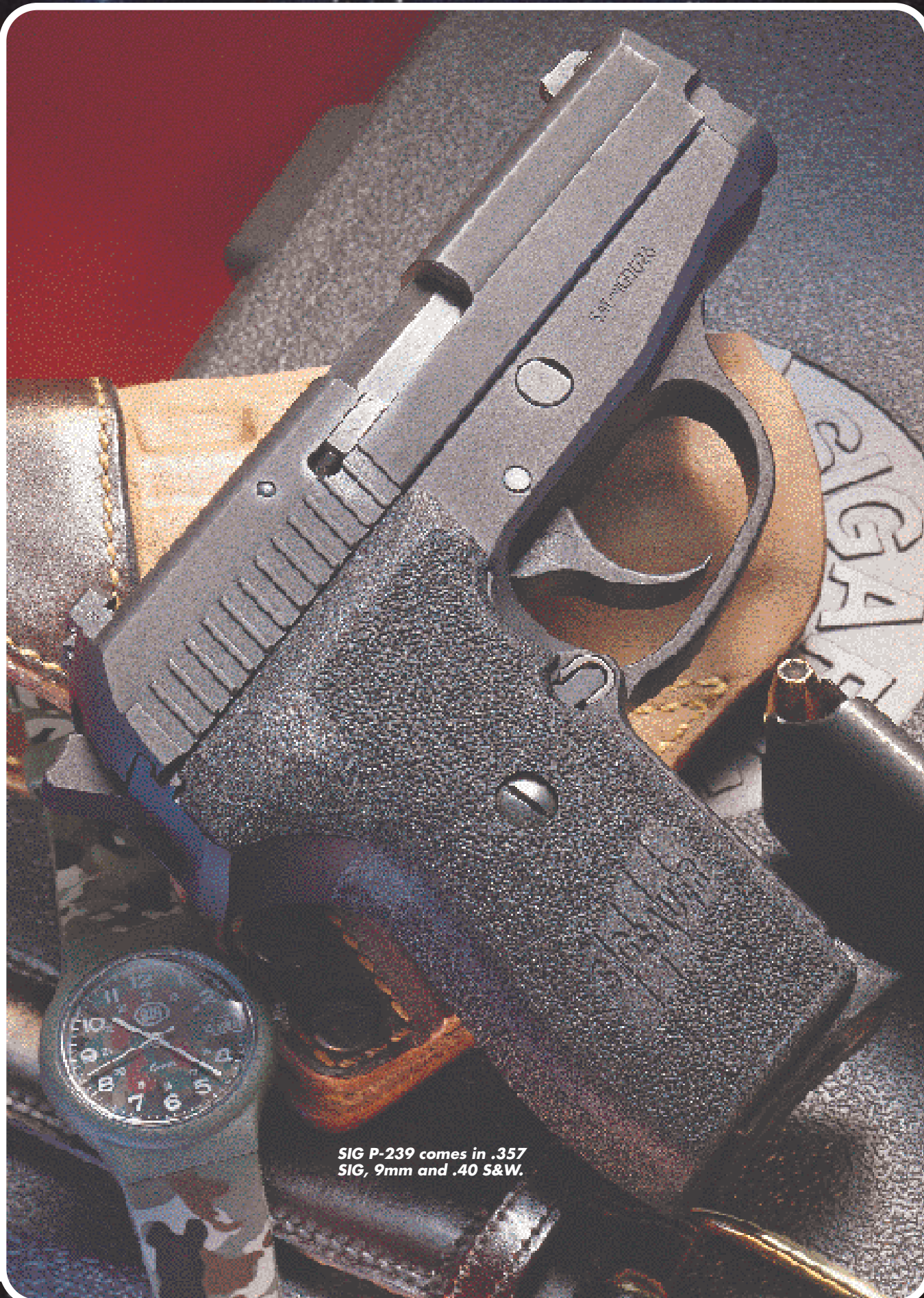


Author shows the Glock G30's controllability in one-handed rapid fire.

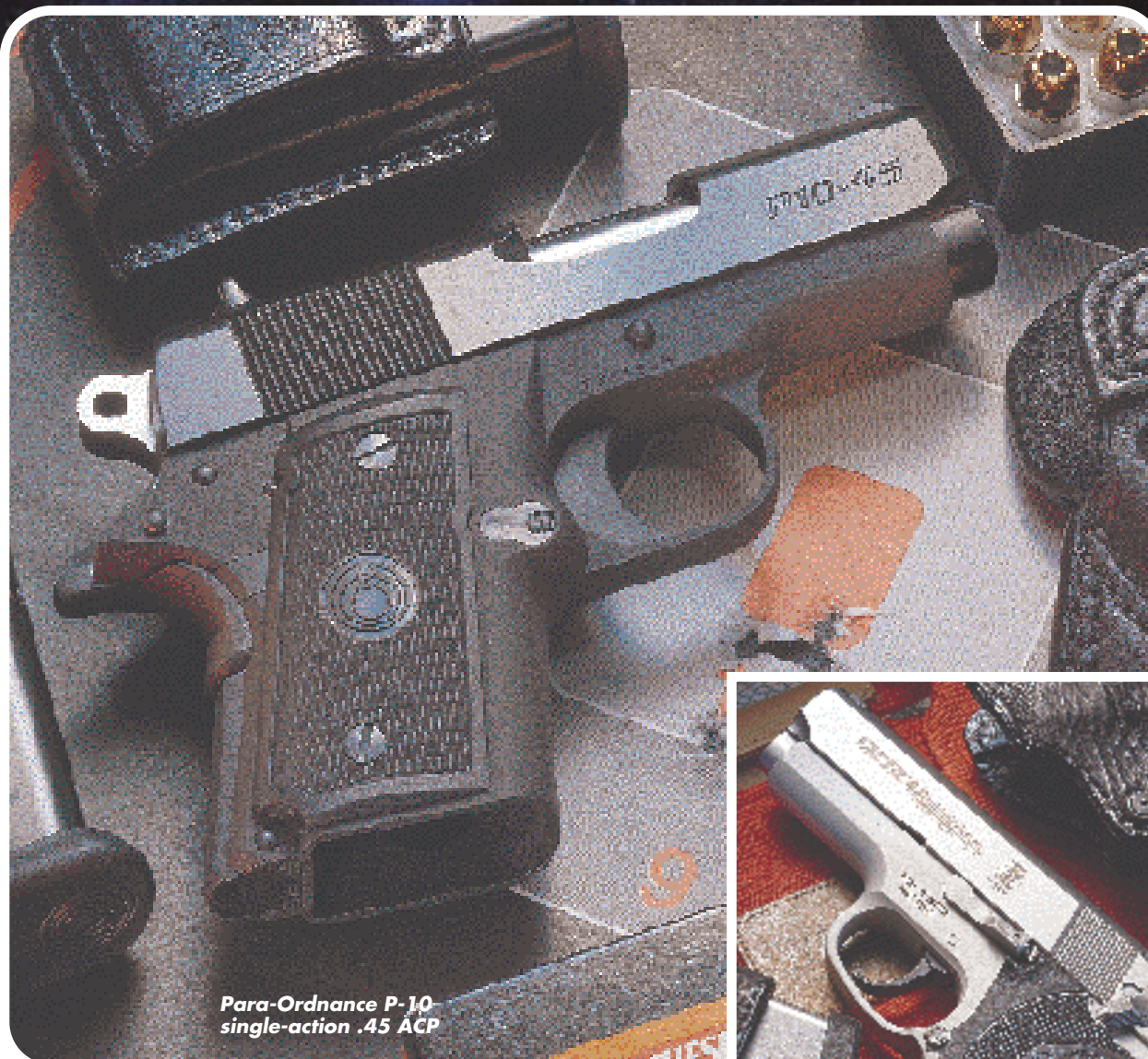
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Para-Ordnance P-10
single-action .45 ACP



Smith & Wesson 3913 TSW
double-action only 9mm

My dad's gun was the Colt Cobra, the lightweight version of the definitive snub-nose .38 Colt's Detective Special. It was the trick gun, until S&W came out with its Airweight Chiefs Special. The Smith shared the Cobra's light aluminum construction and 2" barrel (actually, 1 $\frac{7}{8}$ "), but the Smith carried five rounds of .38 Special instead of the Colt's six.

The Colt was soon available with a bolt-on hammer shroud for snag-free draw from the pocket. S&W followed with their Bodyguard, whose shroud was built in. These were popular, because the pockets of the loose-fitting pants and coats of the 1950s were the carry sites of choice.

In those days, the only .38 Special ammo from the factory was round-nose lead or mild wadcutters. A handful of sharp folks like Skeeter Skelton figured out that .38 RNL punched the same length and diameter hole as a little .380

auto round, and guns like the Walther PPK were flatter and held more ammo. When heavy hitters like Skelton thought trouble was in the offering, they'd strap on a holster for a full-size S&W .357 Magnum, or stuff a 1911 .45 auto into their waistband.

All those guns are with us still, of course. They're still fine defensive tools, especially now that the ammo is better. With us, too, is something else that was commonly carried in the times of our fathers: little .25 automatics. Our parents had to carry them sometimes because nothing else was small enough.

Today's Crop

Dad's aluminum-frame gun was a wonder in its time. If it seems clunky to you today, we have Titanium revolvers

that make the Airweights feel as clunky as Dad's 1950 Olds Rocket 88.

Smith & Wesson began the trend with their Airlight Ti series, which gets down to below 11 ozs. Taurus jumped in with its own titanium guns. Beginning as eight-shot .22s, the field quickly expanded to five-shot .38s and six-shot .32 Magnums on the same small frames. Crank the size up a notch or two, and you're up to .44 Special in S&W.

Taurus has .38, .357 Magnum, .41

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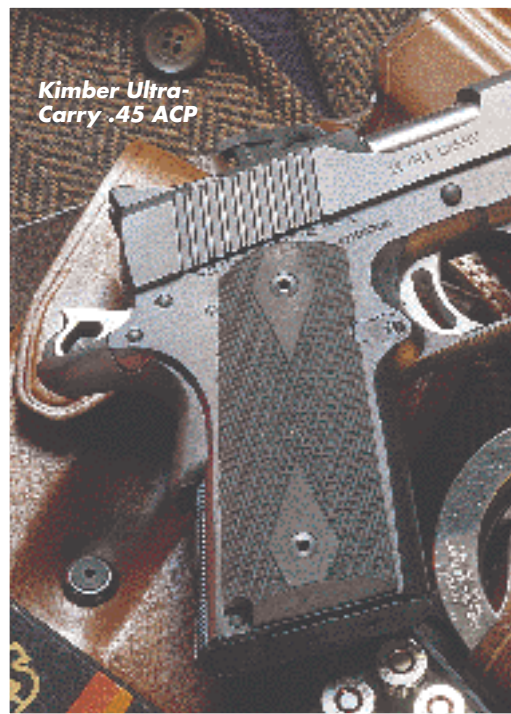
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Face it, when there's an 11 oz. .38 Special that can fire +P ammunition, there's no longer a need to be carrying a feeble .25. Remember, friends don't let friends carry mouse guns.

Lightweight Autos

The time of the titanium autoloaders is upon us, ushered in by Taurus as a variant of their popular model, the Millennium. Weighing 16 ozs., unloaded, in 9mm and offering 10 rounds in the magazine plus one more in the chamber, the little PT-111 titanium Millennium weighs 3.2 oz. less than the steel models. As others in the industry have discovered, Mec-Gar magazines from Italy are the key to making them run 100 percent.

For those who like a tad more heft in a compact, powerful handgun, Taurus offers the PT-145. It's smaller than the Glock 36, weighing 23 oz. and carrying 10+1 rounds of .45 ACP. It has the ergonomic frame-mounted thumb safety of the Millennium series, for those who appreciate that feature.

Polymer pistols are all the rage. I've carried the big ones concealed easily enough under a coat: the USP .45 from HK, the G21 .45 and G20 10mm from Glock, and Ruger's P97 .45 and P95 9mm. When you're going to carry under an un-tucked shirt, you want something

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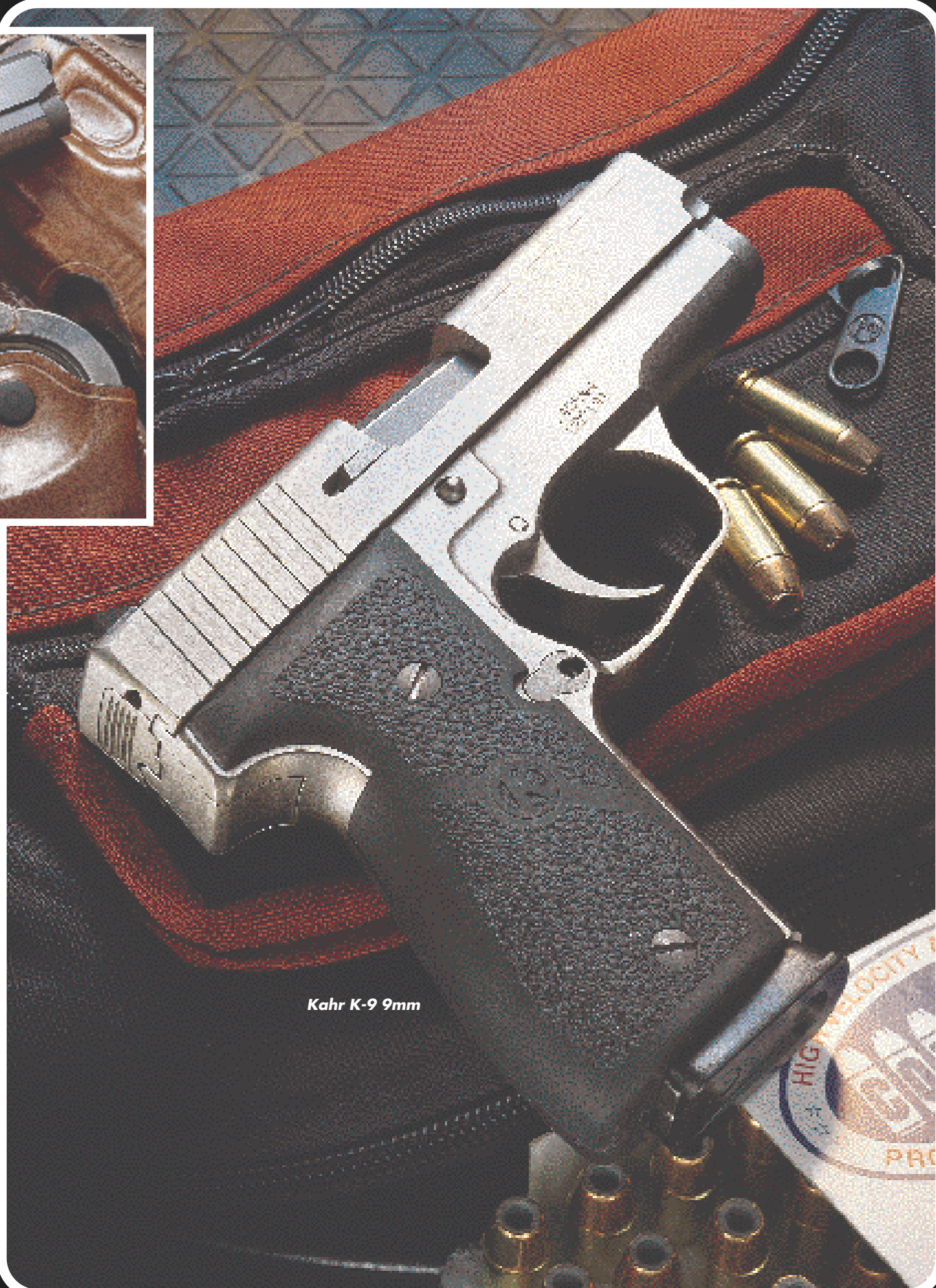
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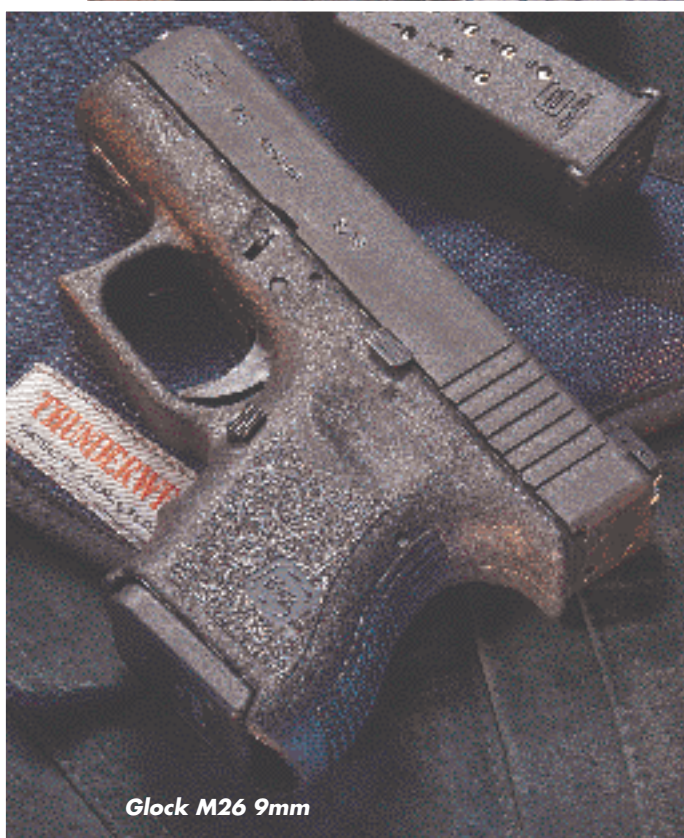
Kahr K-9 9mm





Springfield Armory Compact .45 ACP

"Smaller still are the big-bore baby Glocks, the 10mm G29 and the .45 caliber G30."



Glock M26 9mm

smaller. HK's USP Compact pistols work great, and the .40 and .357 SIG versions are an ideal size for hip carry. Smaller still are the big-bore baby Glocks, the 10mm G29, and the .45 caliber G30. The G30 is my favorite of the entire Glock line. It spits 11 rounds of the big-bore ammo, including +P, yet feels like I'm carrying a compact Glock 19 9mm. The G30 hides under a shirt, and it shoots like a target pistol.

Glock's flattest pistol yet is the long-awaited G36, which carries six-plus-one

rounds of .45 ACP. It has a shorter reach to the trigger, which I really like, and is only 1.13" thick. I found the recoil quite controllable. Accurate? I came in second at an IDPA match with mine in Stock Service Pistol class, shooting against full-size guns.

Glock G36 or G30? Hand size and wardrobe seem to be the deciding factors. I dress casually most of the time, and the Glock 30 is amply concealable for me. However, I put a prosecutor friend into a G36 when he discovered he could carry it

discreetly in his waistband under his tailored suits. This got him up off his knees ballistically, as he had been carrying a .380 until then.

But Glock lets you go even smaller in what may be their single most wildly popular offering among armed citizens, the baby Glock. This series includes the G26 as an 11-round 9mm, and the 10-round G27 and G33 in .40 S&W and .357 SIG, respectively. With a 135 gr. JHP .40 in the former at 1,300 fps, and a 125 gr. JHP at 1,350 fps in the latter,



**Beretta Cougar
.45 ACP**

these guns duplicate the ballistics of snub-nose .357 Magnum revolvers with much less kick. A Glock 27 has become my regular backup gun on police patrol, in a Greg Kramer pocket holster, an Alessi ankle holster, or the neat new boot holster from street cop Sam Brustein.

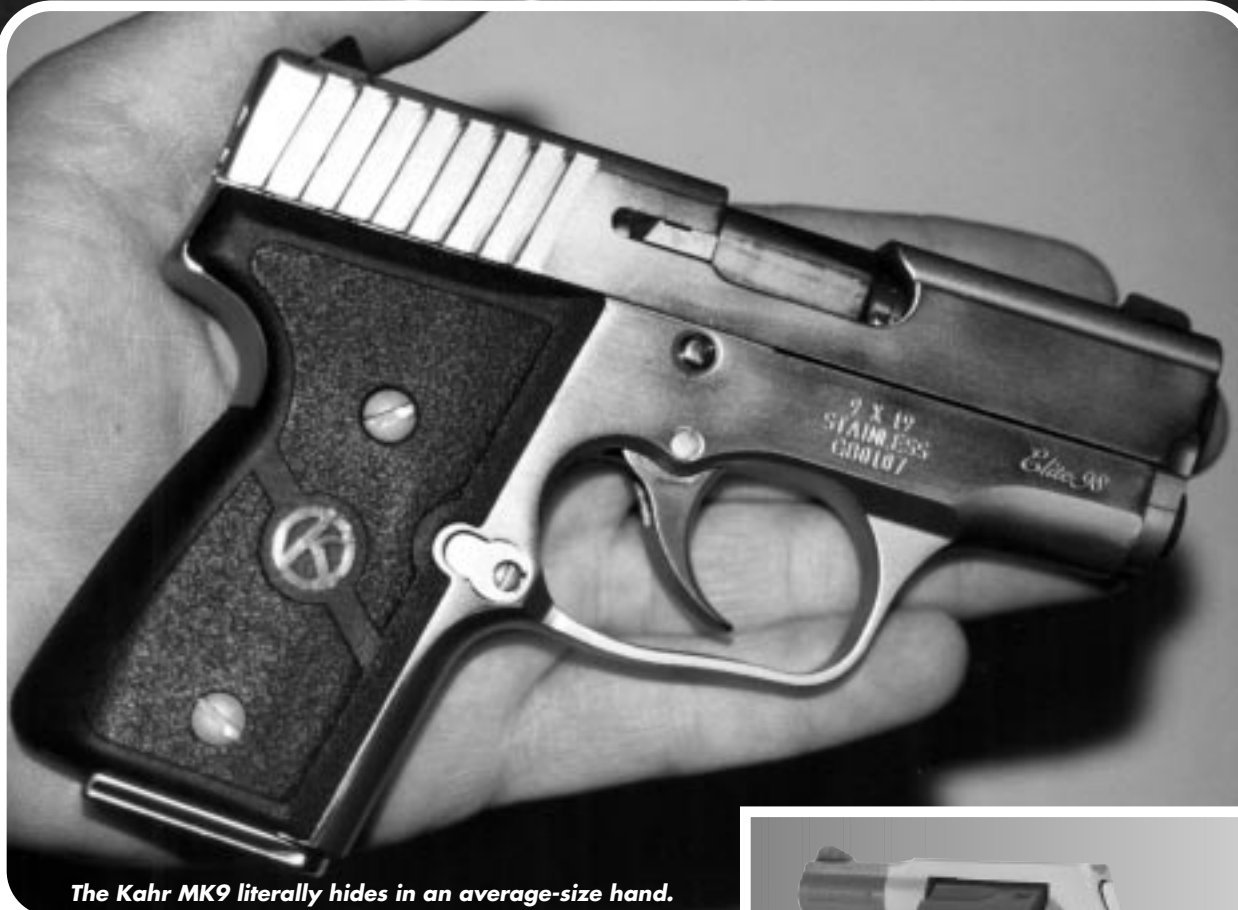
Full-Power Handguns

Kel-Tec has come on strong in the

polymer auto market, largely on the strength of their P-11. This 11-shot 9mm will also accept grandfathered S&W 5900 series 14- and 15-shot magazines. Weighing only 14½ ozs., many have found it an ideal concealed-carry piece. It's affordable, too. I haven't had a chance to work with Kel-Tec's more recent .40 caliber version, but after the first year of production, the 9mms have

been working great. While we're talking about full-power fighting handguns here, I have to mention Kel-Tec's P-32. Weighing an amazing 6.6 ozs., this .32 ACP beats all .25 autos for those who just have to have what Nancy Reagan called "a tiny little gun."

Our latest polymer entry comes from Kahr. Combining the smooth action, remarkable accuracy and reliability of the



The Kahr MK9 literally hides in an average-size hand.

all-steel K and MK series, the new Kahr P9 weighs only about 18 ozs. and fits the hand beautifully. Female hands seem particularly amenable to this sweet auto pistol. Now as light as it is flat, the Kahr will be more desirable than ever to law-abiding pistol-packers.

The real deal in steel is still available in a variety of formats. The original "pocket rocket," Ruger's Detective Special-size five-shot SP-101 in .357 Magnum, is still going strong. So are true J-frame Magnums— .357s on .32 frames— such as the S&W Model 640-1 and Taurus Model 605. For those who still bet their lives on revolver reliability, these wee wheelguns each offer a fistful of firepower.

The 1911 pistol is not only still with us, but more popular than ever, and in sizes that John Browning would barely recognize.

Springfield Armory's fine pistols have won numerous national championships in their full-size models, and the same quality goes into their little concealed-carry versions. These include the Lightweight Compact and the Ultra Compact Lightweight, both weighing 25 ozs. Of particular interest to the recoil-sensitive is Springfield's V-10 variation, with ported barrel to reduce

muzzle jump.

STI is another purveyor to the race-gun trade. This firm offers a slick little sub-compact 1911 in 9mm and .40, called the BLS. The ones that have shown up at my shooting school are all in .40, and all worked fine. They hide like .380s and let you transfer the gun-manipulation skills you learned on the competition range with your bigger 1911s to self-defense.

For Serious Shooters

Kimber is our current sales leader in 1911 autos, and their smallest concealment model is the splendid little UltraCarry. It features a stubby 3" barrel and captive double-recoil springs for reliability and reduced recoil. I know a lot of serious shooters who carry them, and none has yet had a problem with a Kimber UltraCarry.

Another firm whose sole handgun output is the 1911 design is Canada's Para-Ordnance. The P-12, with pre-ban magazines, can be loaded with 12 rounds of .45 ACP. The P-12 and larger Paras are

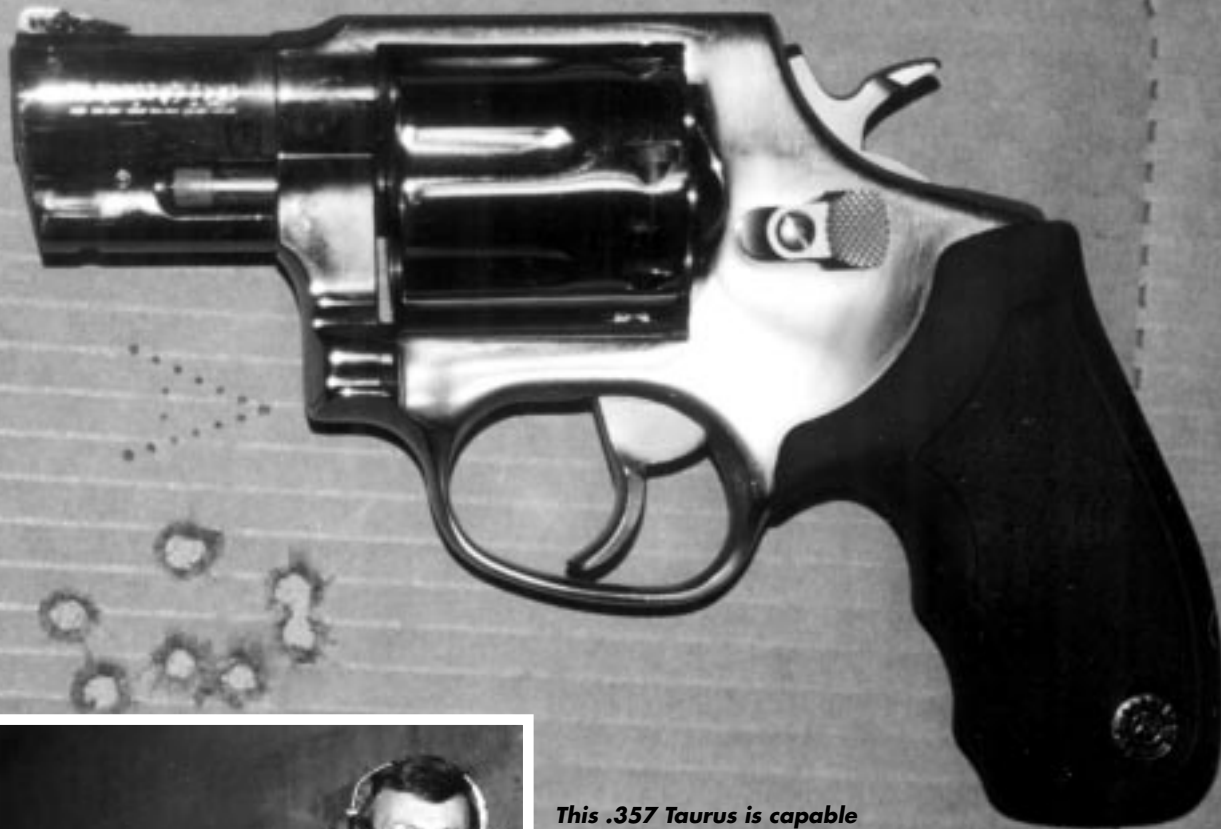


**Taurus Police Model 85 .38
Special Ultra-Lite Titanium**

more accurate than they have any right to be. One thing I like about Para-Ordnance guns is that, like Colts, they come with a passive firing pin lock safety to assure that the pistol is "drop safe." I recently tested the P-12 version of Para's exquisite new LDA double-action series and was delighted with it.

Speaking of double-action autos, these, too, are better than ever for those who need concealed firepower. S&W pioneered this type of gun in this country, and there is no smaller and lighter DA .45 auto than the S&W Chiefs Special. I would buy it in the large-bore caliber.

Of course, you can always ratchet up in size one notch and still have a very



This .357 Taurus is capable of impressive accuracy at combat distances.



Author is gratified with all the center hits he shot with a Glock G30.

concealable S&W auto. None is more street-proven than the charming little nine-shot Model 3913. This sweet slim-nine is utterly reliable and carried by a disproportionately large number of professionals. I like its safety devices from a weapon-retention standpoint. My daughter, licensed to carry, uses one as a concealment weapon. I once carried a 3913 in Florida for five straight weeks without a vest or other cover garment. I concealed this 9mm under un-tucked polo shirts and T-shirts, wearing

one of Ted Blocker's LFI Concealment Rigs inside my waistband.

Ideal Concealment

SIG isn't really into miniature guns, but they offer two outstanding recent entries in the concealment sweepstakes. The P-245 is the long-awaited baby brother of the much-respected P-220. It shares the bigger gun's smooth action,

high reliability and phenomenal accuracy, while carrying only one round less of .45 ACP ammunition.

Still, the standout carry pistol in the SIG line is one that the company has, with some authority, advertised as an ideal concealment size. This is the P-239. Picture the Smith 3913, without a manual safety and a tad more accuracy, and you have the P-239 9mm. What SIG also offers— and S&W doesn't, without adding bulk— is the identical gun in the more potent chamberings of .40 S&W and .357 SIG. If recoil is not a problem for you, definitely go with the latter two calibers. I know a mom who carries a P-239 in .357 SIG, and she's accurate with that little powerhouse.

SIG was ahead of some other European makers in breaking their paradigm of small calibers in small guns, big calibers in medium-size guns. Beretta is only recently catching up, with chopped and channeled versions of their Cougars in .40, .45 and 9mm.


No discussion of double-action concealment autos is complete without mentioning the amazingly successful Kahr. Their MK (micro-Kahr) series is the most popular. These potent little 9mm and .40 pistols are remarkably slim, so small that many .380s are bigger, and they are astoundingly accu-



S&W AirLite Ti J-frame .38 Special

rate for their size. They don't like handloads and can ding spent brass, but they run like tops with most any factory self-defense load. My own favorite is the MK9, loaded with seven rounds of +P Triton or ProLoad 115 gr. ammo, which, at about 1,300 fps, equals or exceeds the factory 110 gr./1300 fps .357 Magnum loading, with vastly less blast and recoil. The butter-smooth double-action-only trigger pull makes converts of almost all who try it.

Bottom Line

Gun expert Mike Izumi coined the term "pocket rocket" to describe the SP-101 when it was first chambered for .357 Magnum. Anti-gun radical and fact-bender Tom Diaz has tried to use the same term to connote something sinister in a compact, powerful handgun that holds enough ammo to win a fight. What such clueless people as Diaz don't understand is that there are a great many people of character in this country who have taken on the legitimate responsibility to carefully protect themselves and their families. For them, this new generation of powerful, light, small, fighting handguns is literally a lifesaver. 



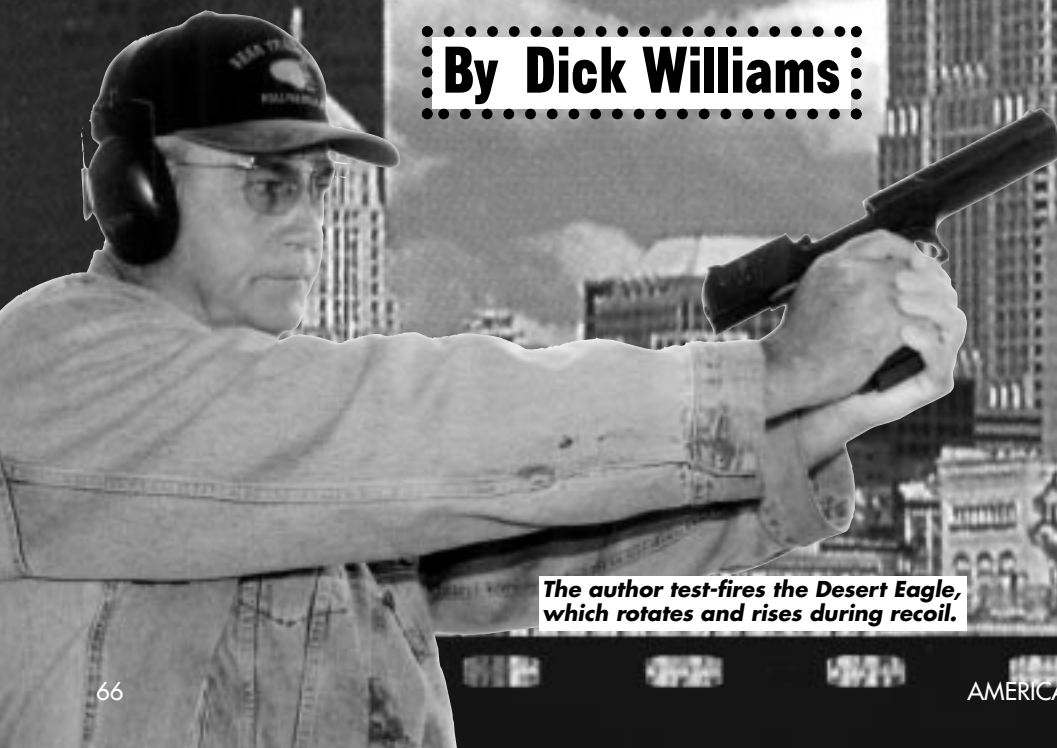
Ayoob sights-in a S&W Model 3913, the most successful and influential of the guns dubbed the "slim-nines."

As Seen In The Movies!
It's The...

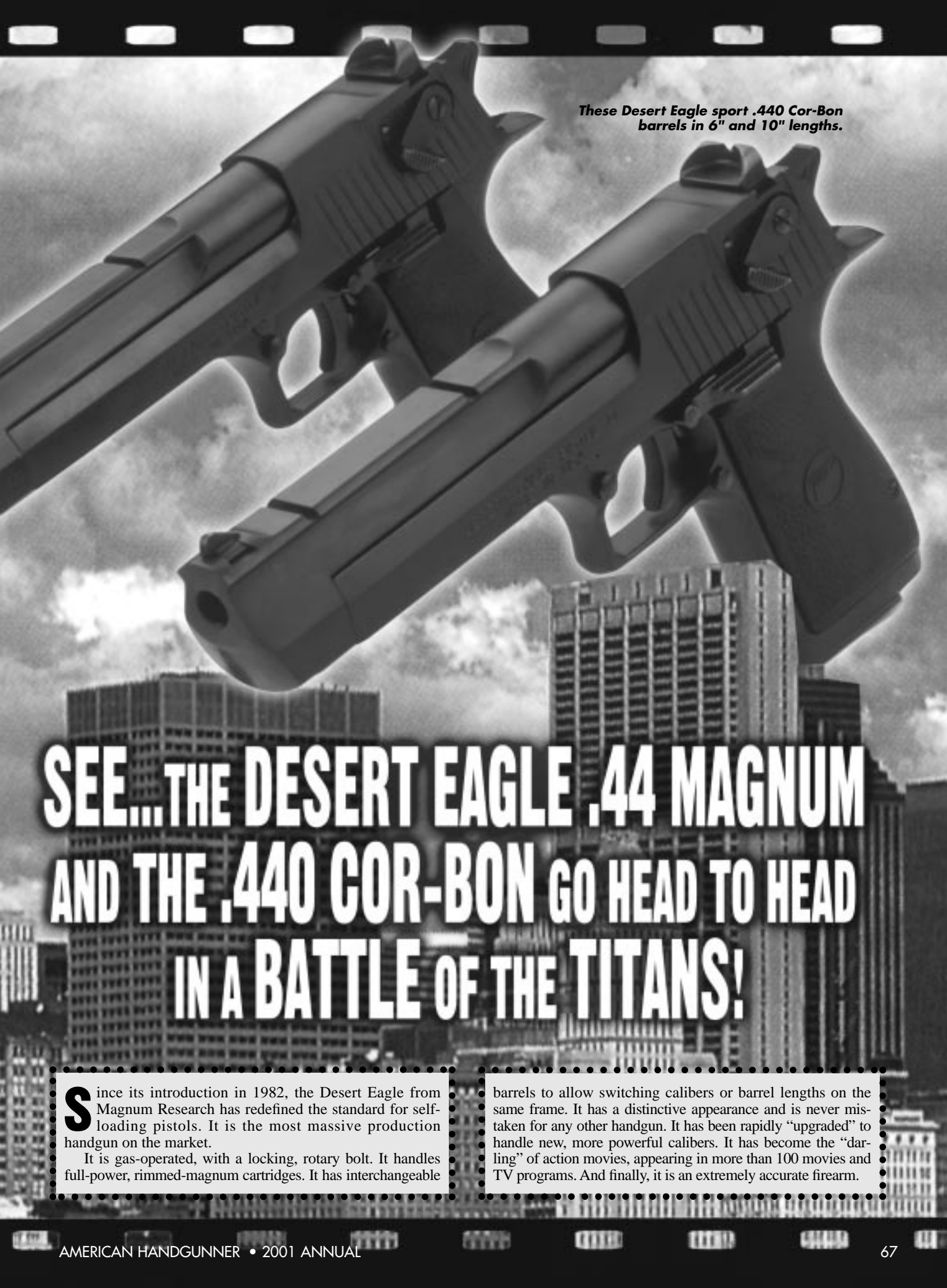
MONSTER MAGNUM

Co-Starring
RIPPIN' RECOIL
and
BLASTIN' TARGETS

By Dick Williams



The author test-fires the Desert Eagle, which rotates and rises during recoil.



These Desert Eagle sport .440 Cor-Bon barrels in 6" and 10" lengths.

SEE...THE DESERT EAGLE .44 MAGNUM AND THE .440 COR-BON GO HEAD TO HEAD IN A BATTLE OF THE TITANS!

Since its introduction in 1982, the Desert Eagle from Magnum Research has redefined the standard for self-loading pistols. It is the most massive production handgun on the market.

It is gas-operated, with a locking, rotary bolt. It handles full-power, rimmed-magnum cartridges. It has interchangeable

barrels to allow switching calibers or barrel lengths on the same frame. It has a distinctive appearance and is never mistaken for any other handgun. It has been rapidly "upgraded" to handle new, more powerful calibers. It has become the "darling" of action movies, appearing in more than 100 movies and TV programs. And finally, it is an extremely accurate firearm.

Switching barrels doesn't get any easier than this. Note the piston protruding from the front of the slide/frame.



The Desert Eagle's massiveness is a function of what it is and what it does. Magnum cartridges like the .357, .41 and .44 require a certain mass in a handgun to handle the higher than normal pressures, i.e. up to 40K psi. Magnum recoil also dictates enough mass to minimize punishment to the shooter.

Being a self loader, the grip must be large to accommodate a magazine that handles the longer magnum rounds. The gas-operation feature requires a channel

for high-pressure gas flow. And to insure the rotary bolt does not unlock prematurely, additional length is required to permit some initial slide movement before unlocking the bolt.

The Desert Eagle is a masterpiece of design that successfully meets all of these requirements and challenges.

.440 Bruiser

The latest "bad boy" offering in the Desert Eagle is the big .440 Cor-Bon, a cartridge that fires standard .429 caliber bullets from a necked down .50 A.E. case. Since the .50 A.E. case has a rebated rim, which is the same diameter as the .44 Magnum, only a barrel change is required when changing from .44 Magnum to .440 Cor-Bon. The same bolt handles both cartridges.

To insure an "apples to apples" comparison in my testing, a new Model XIX Desert Eagle with two 6" barrels, one in .44 Magnum and one in .440 Cor-Bon, was furnished by Magnum Research. The Model XIX is recognizable by the two scope base slots cut into the wide rib

above the barrel. Both barrels had identical ribs and slots allowing a quick interchange of scope, rings and bases from one barrel to another. Even the twist rates of the polygonal rifling were the same for the two calibers, one complete rotation every 18".

The only visible differences between the barrels were some flutes in the .44 Magnum to reduce weight. The .440 barrel had no flutes, thus allowing slightly more weight to counter the effects of its heavier recoil. On Desert Eagle barrels chambered for smaller magnum calibers, the flutes are even larger to further reduce weight, corresponding to the reduced recoil.

Powerful Action

Upon firing the Desert Eagle, the bullet begins moving down the barrel, exposing a hole that allows the expanding propellant gases to enter the gas chamber where it pushes against a small piston attached to the slide. This starts the slide moving rearward—it's during the first part of this movement that the bolt is rotated and unlocked so that it can extract the empty case from the chamber.

Timing and dynamics are critical since chamber pressure must be reduced and the bullet out of the muzzle before the case is extracted. As the slide continues its rearward movement, the empty case is ejected, the hammer is recoiled and the recoil springs compressed. When the recoil springs start to drive the slide forward, the next cartridge is pulled from the magazine and pushed forward into the chamber, and the bolt is rotated so that its lugs are again locked in place and ready for firing.

It is primarily the combined effect of gas operation and heavy weight that makes the Desert Eagle one of the softest-shooting magnum handguns.

Handling The Magnum

Tables I and II show the results of range tests, and while the numbers allow some conclusions to be drawn, there are other factors in firing a Desert Eagle that are not addressed by numbers. Many of the most impressive features of the Desert Eagle are not obvious until you first handle and then fire the big handgun.

It's obviously large, and the trian-



The Lone Eagle and Desert Eagle are outfitted with .440 Cor-Bon barrels.

The same bolt accommodates .44 Magnum and .440 Cor-Bon cartridges, since the rim dimensions are the same.

gular shape is truly unique. But you can't fully appreciate the gun's weight until you lift it. If you don't have large hands, or at least long fingers, the size of the grip can be overwhelming. However, holding the gun in a firing position makes a difference. While small-limbed folks are gasping at the gun's size and weight, they might not notice the user friendliness designed into the rounded edges of the frame and smooth plastic grips.

Even if you cannot wrap your hands fully around the grip and you don't feel like you totally control the gun, you won't be hurt when it goes off. The gun will move, and your grip may even slip, depending on the recoil of the caliber being fired, but there are no sharp edges to cut your hands.

Firing heavy-recoiling handguns over sandbags on a bench while maintaining a reasonable grip is difficult, at least for me. In these tests, the gun moved a fair amount with the .44 Magnum, and rotated several degrees in my hand with the .440 Cor-Bon, but nothing was damaged. I simply had to reposition

myself after every shot, something I expect to do when accuracy testing any handgun.

Accurate Sights

The fixed sights on the Desert Eagle are excellent. The sight picture is crisp and the rear sight has rounded edges in all the right places and sharp edges in all the right places. The sight picture was so good I opted to do the accuracy testing with just the iron sights and no optics.

One of the main reasons for this is simply that the gun is so much easier to shoot offhand with iron sights than with the added weight of optics—plus, I spend a lot of pure play time when I get my hands on a Desert Eagle. Having compli-

mented the Eagle's fixed sights, I must point out that the front-sight blades on both these barrels were much too short, resulting in bullet impact at 25 yards between 5.5" to 8" above point of aim with the .44 Magnum and about 11" high with the .440 Cor-Bon.

Even though Desert Eagles are supposed to be sighted in for 100 meters as stated in the owner's manual, these results at 25 yards were still beyond acceptable limits. Impact was also about 1.5" to 3" right with all loads, but that's a non-problem since both front and rear sights are mounted in a dovetail and can be moved laterally to adjust for windage.

Actually, the front sight's height

This complete Desert Eagle package includes one frame, .44 Magnum and .440 Cor-Bon barrels, and a magazine for each caliber.





The Desert Eagle's rear sight presents an excellent sight picture.

problem is no big deal either, since the dovetail front sight can be replaced with a taller blade. A call to the factory yielded the input that there were some front sight blades from an older inventory that might have been inadvertently installed. The Eagles are once again being manufactured in Israel and the transition may well have caused some logistical problems.

If you buy one of the new Desert

TABLE I – .44 MAGNUM

AMMUNITION	AVERAGE VELOCITY (fps)	FIVE-SHOT GROUP SIZE (inches @ 25 yards)
Cor-Bon 240 gr. JHP	1,408	2½"
Cor-Bon 180 gr. JHP	1,530	<1¼" (4=1¼")
Black Hills 240 gr. JHP	1,190	<1¼"
Federal 240 gr. JHP	1,262	1½" (4=1¼")
PMC 240 gr. JHP	1,298	2¼" (4=1")
PMC Starfire 240 gr.	1,212	1½"
Speer 270 gr. Gold Dot	1,237	1½" (4 <¾")
Winchester 240 gr. JSP	1,331	1½" (4 < 1")
Winchester 240 gr. HSP	1,246	2¼"
Winchester 250 gr. Part. Gold	1,294	1"

Notes: Winchester 210 gr. Silvertip would not cycle action. Cor-Bon's 260 gr. .44 Magnum was not tested because it was too long to fit in the Desert Eagle's magazine.



The Desert Eagle aficionado's dream! The new Mark XIX Component System includes all the components needed to switch from .357 Magnum to .44 Magnum to .440 Cor-Bon and .50 A.E.

TABLE II — .440 CORBON

AMMUNITION	AVERAGE VELOCITY (fps)	FIVE-SHOT GROUP SIZE (inches @ 25 yards)
Cor-Bon 240 gr. JHP	1,645	2" (4 < ¾")
Cor-Bon 260 gr. JHP	1,548	2¼" (4 = 1¼")
Cor-Bon 305 gr. Deep Pen.	1,481	2"

Note: Loading the .440 Cor-Bon rounds into the magazine was made more difficult by the bottleneck shape of the cartridge. A tool that pushes the already loaded rounds deeper into the magazine prior to inserting each new round would prove very helpful.

Eagles and find that your gun shoots high, and you probably won't since the factory has been notified and this was not a problem on earlier guns, call the guys at Magnum Research. Also note from Tables I and II that, although both calibers shot quite high, accuracy was still excellent.

Attack Cases

The one other problem encountered with the new Eagle pertains only to the .440 Cor-Bon. The importance of timing and dynamics has been mentioned, and

in terms of firearm operation, the Desert Eagle performed flawlessly, as long as I kept it reasonably clean. But the ejection process must take into account the shooter, and in the case of the .440, I had a problem.

While the empty .44 Magnum cases behaved in a very civilized manner, ejecting past my right shoulder, the big, necked-down .50 A.E. cases ejected straight back, sometimes flying over my head, sometimes hitting me in the neck or chest, and way too frequently, hitting me

smack in the face (emphasis on SMACK!).

To be honest, I was never cut or physically damaged, but my concentration was seriously impaired. Had it not been for my DeCot shooting glasses, those big, heavy cases could have hurt. Certainly, in a field situation, a follow-up shot could have been seriously compromised, and in the case of a once-in-a-lifetime big-game hunt, results could have been disastrous.

I talked to Magnum Research about this, and their suggestions (should you encounter this situation) are in a logical sequence. First, call them. It is possible that something in your shooting technique could be contributing to the problem. An initial discussion might point the way toward a solution that does not require you to invest in shipping the gun to Magnum Research. Bottom line, they will work with you toward a solution. Word of caution: Don't be offended by phrases like "limp wrist." They really are trying to help.

Pilot Error

There were no failures with the gun in .44 Magnum when the gun was reasonably clean. A couple of times the bolt failed to close all the way, but it was late in a shooting session, after the gun had become dirty to the point of feeling gritty.



These Desert Eagles are equipped with barrels in .357 Magnum, .44 Magnum and .50 A.E.

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 Photography by Jan Seeger

It was actually my third trip to the range, and the gun had not been cleaned between any of the trips. On both occasions, a light forward nudge against the rear of the slide pushed the bolt closed and completed the cycling action.

There were two types of problems when shooting the .440 Cor-Bon, but those could have been "pilot error." One problem was the failure of the slide to stay open after firing the last shot in the magazine. Conversely, the other problem was the slide locking open when there were still rounds in the magazine.

After about 3 or 4 of these occurrences, I noticed that my overlapping thumb grip could have been bumping the slide stop lever when the gun moved in recoil. When I consciously changed my grip, keeping my left thumb low and allowing the gun to ride upwards and away from my left hand, the problem did not reoccur.

The message is clear. Despite being a macho gun writer and having worked with a number of Desert Eagles, it is pos-

sible, just barely possible, that I occasionally do something wrong. Am I sure that in this case, I was the problem? Okay! It's remotely possible.

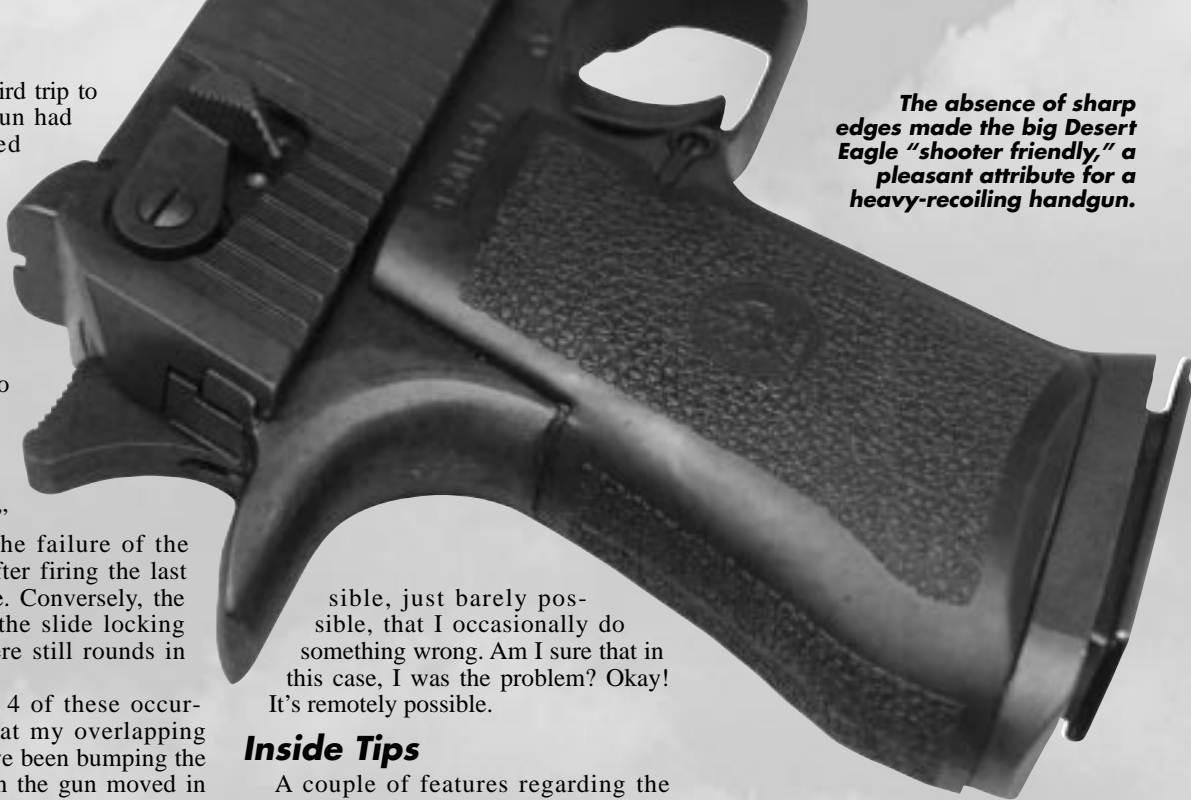
Inside Tips

A couple of features regarding the Desert Eagle are worth mentioning. The gas-operation system, specifically the tiny gas channel that bleeds pressure from the fired cartridge's expanding gases to the gas chamber to operate the slide, dictates that only jacketed bullets be used. Lead bullets, if used, could clog the flow channel, resulting in the action

The absence of sharp edges made the big Desert Eagle "shooter friendly," a pleasant attribute for a heavy-recoiling handgun.

not cycling. If this happens, you'll have a single-shot semi-auto handgun! In addition, when you send the gun back to Magnum Research to repair the problem, I promise they'll charge you for the effort.

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**The Desert Eagle is available
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jacketed bullets using powder charges
recommended in your favorite
reloading manual. A lower-cost alterna-
tive that has worked for me in other
Eagles has been using copper-plated
bullets (mine came from Western
Nevada) with any of the following
powders that generate between 1,200
and 1,300 fps.

Use 24 grs. of Win 296 or H110 and
you'll get 1,210 to 1,240 fps. Try 21 grs.
of 2400, AA #9 or Vitavouri N110, and
you'll see 1,240 to 1,300 fps. It's a lower-
cost solution that will provide accuracy
depending upon your gun's preference
and, as always, your skill as a shooter.

.44 Magnum

I can't walk away without drawing
some conclusions, however tentative.
The Desert Eagle in caliber .44
Magnum is an incredibly fun handgun.
It's easy to see why Hollywood has
become so captivated with it. When you
actually shoot the gun, you have to
believe that some of the folks in Holly-
wood really are shooters as opposed to
special effects guys searching for a new
look in handguns.

What you also learn is that this
handgun is a serious performer, with an
output suitable for the hunting fields.
The gun is heavy, particularly for a .44
Magnum, but hey, you're pretty macho
or you wouldn't have bought it. This is
not a sexist remark, since one of my
daughters loves taking a .44 Magnum
Desert Eagle to the local indoor range,
with all the resulting attention it gets.

It's a handgun suitable for big-
game hunting, which means it will
also work for defending your home,
although it may not be the best choice,
particularly if you live in a condo,
trailer park or area where neighbors
dwell in close proximity to the thin

walls of your residence.

Finally, forgetting the more serious
social aspects of today's living, the .44
Magnum Desert Eagle is one of the most
fun, therapeutically rewarding handguns
available today. For those of us who
seldom venture in harm's way and don't
dwell in the land of Walter Mitty, this
may be the most important aspect of
buying a handgun. It's as gentle as you'll
get in firing a magnum, it's impressive
looking, it generates an attention-getting
fireball and acoustic blast, and it's
capable of hitting the target reliably.

.440 Cor-Bon

The Desert Eagle in .440 Cor-Bon,
while requiring a bit more thought,
cannot be ignored. In comparable bullet
weights, it beats the .44 Magnum by 200
to 300 fps; and, with 305 gr. bullets, it
pushes the 1,500 fps envelope. In addi-
tion, look at its accuracy potential.

With everything I fired staying around
2" for 5 shots and crowding the 1" margin
for the lighter-weight bullets, it strikes me
that with some practice, we're looking at
incredible accuracy from factory loads
generating 15 to 20 percent more energy
than the .44 Magnum. If you disregard
the oddball fifth shot that expanded some
of the groups to 2" as being shooter error,
it's conceivable that the .440 could regu-
larly shoot 1" groups.

If in doubt, or if you're a bit puny like
me, start with a .44 Magnum and add the
.440 Cor-Bon barrel later. Pow-
erful fun, these magnums.



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Ranger

.45 ACP

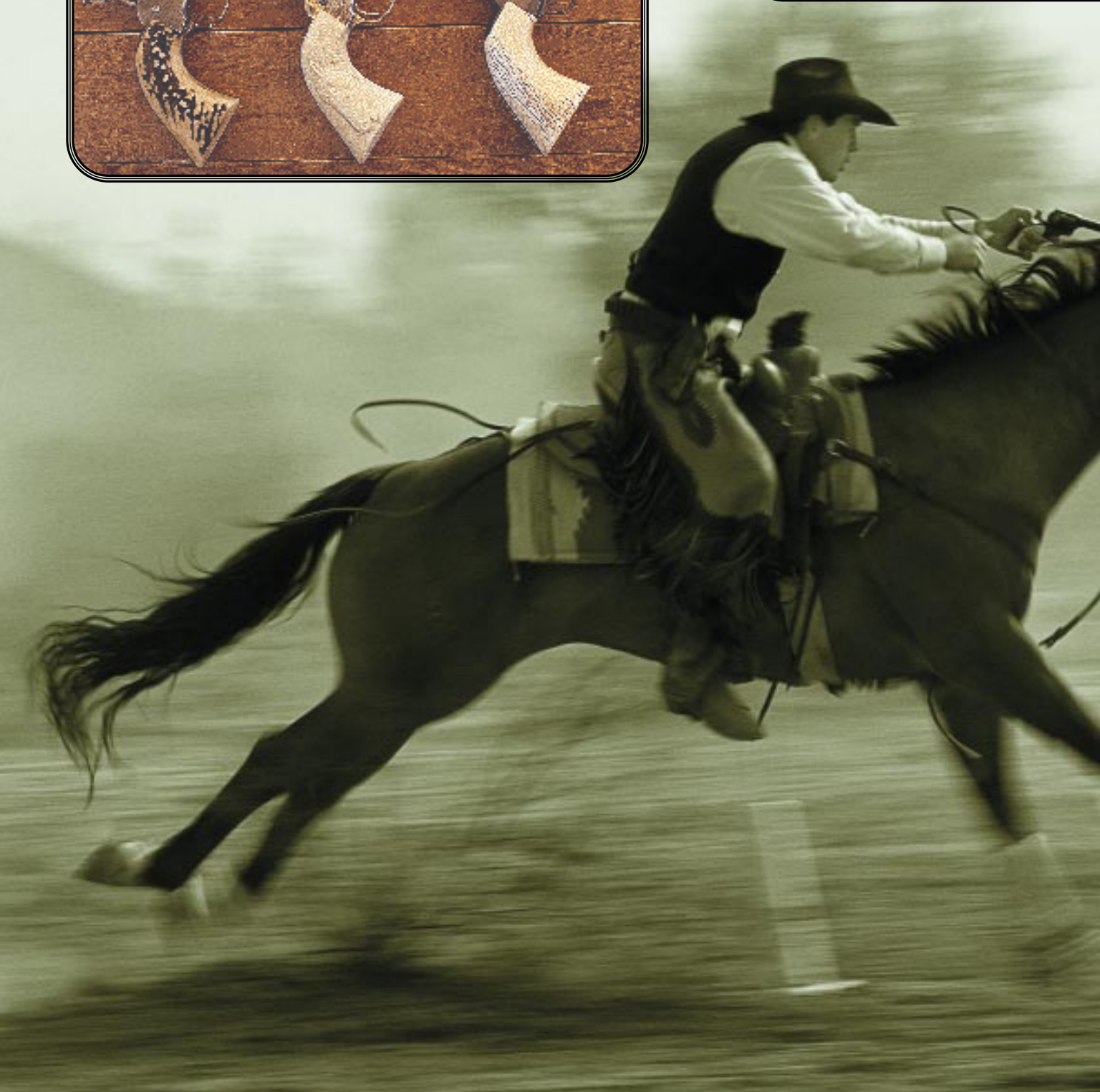
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Three generations of Colt SAAs (left to right): 1st Generation .45 Colt, 2nd Generation .45 Colt, and 3rd Generation .38-40.



By John Taffin

Photos By Nyle Leatham

COLT SINGLE ACTION ARMY

With A Heritage Dating Back To
The Mid-1800s, This Grand Old
Sixgun Still Stirs The Heart,
Soul And Spirit!



IN 1836, A SILK MILL IN PATERSON, N.J., BEGAN PRODUCING A DIFFERENT PRODUCT. IT WAS THE BEGINNING OF A LEGEND. FROM THIS QUAIN'T GENESIS CAME THE FIRST "REVOLVING CYLINDER" FIREARM, A FIVE-SHOT .36 CALIBER INVENTED BY SAMUEL COLT. THE "REVOLVER" WAS KNOWN SIMPLY AS THE PATERSON. THE PATERSON REVOLVER HAD A FOLD-AWAY TRIGGER THAT SPRANG OUT OF THE FRAME AS YOU COCKED THE HAMMER.



While the gun was unique, it was not embraced by those who packed real iron. Young Sam Colt's first effort at a firearms company had failed. That could have been the end of Colt's Patent Firearms Co., except for the war that was brewing along the Texas/Mexico border.

Capt. Samuel Walker, of the Texas Rangers, and Samuel Colt combined their talents and designed the first real fightin' sixgun, the .44 Walker Colt. At 4 lbs., 9 ozs., with a 9" barrel, it was not a gunslinger's weapon by any means, but it certainly was a great advance over the single-shot .54 caliber pistols of the time.

The 1848 Walker quickly evolved into the excellent series of Colt Dragoons.

The Gunfighter

The first real gunfighter's weapon came three years later. It was one of the slickest sixguns ever, a real portable packin' and fightin' pistol, the .36 caliber

1851 Colt Navy. The day of the gunfighter had arrived. For the first time in history, a sixgun was truly portable and easily carried on the hip.

In 1869, another big-bore sixgun, the beautifully made S&W single-action, became available. The Smith was a great improvement over the Colt 1851 .36 and





Classic Colt SAA .45, engraved by Jim Riggs and stocked in ivory by Paul Persinger.



1860 .44, as it was not just another big-bore "cap-n-ball," but a cartridge gun.

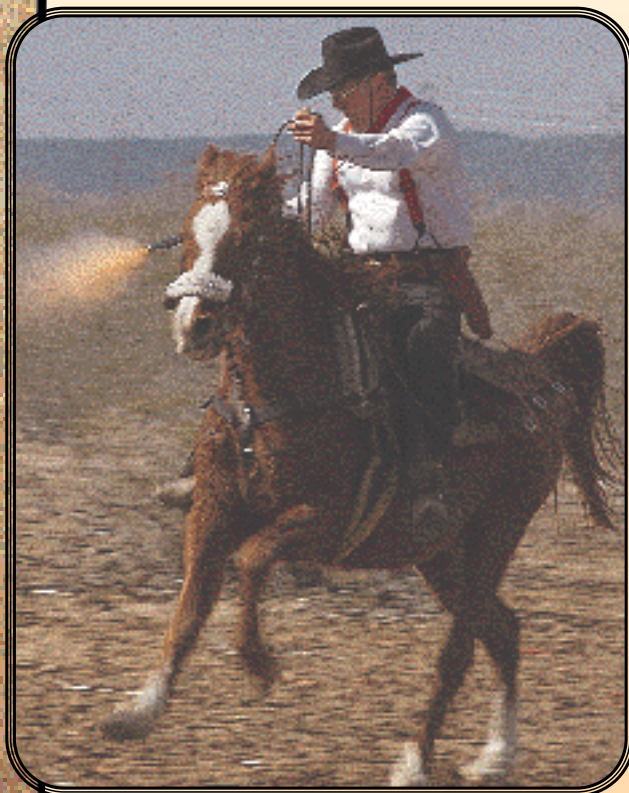
Originally chambered in .44 American, the S&W single-action was soon available in .44 Russian, which later became the .44 Special and then the .44 Magnum. The Russian Duke Alexis, who visited the United States and hunted with



These original 7½" Colt SAAs from the 1880s saw service on the Western frontier.



The three standard barrel lengths of the 1st Generation Colt SAAs were 7½", 5½" and 4¾".



Buffalo Bill Cody, used the .44 S&W American to hunt buffalo from horseback. The duke was responsible for shipping to Europe the .44 Russian and thousands of Smiths in the fine new caliber.

The S&W .44 evolved into the Schofield .45. While S&W was fulfilling the Russian contract for .44 Russian single-actions, Colt was still producing the soon-to-be outdated cap-and-ball six-guns. If Smith had not been involved with the Russian contract and instead had concentrated on the American market, sixgun history might have been quite different.

S&W's .44 Russian single action was one of the finest sixguns of all time, both in accuracy and workmanship. It did, however, have a couple of drawbacks. The design was top-break, with the hinge at the bottom front of the frame and the break at the back of the top strap. It was fragile and, although its simultaneous ejection was fast if a shooter wanted to empty all chambers, it was a hindrance if only a fired cartridge or two needed to be replaced. This was an especially difficult task if attempted while at a full gallop on horseback.

Birth Of The SAA

When the patent for the bored-through cylinder ran out, Colt was ready with their cartridge-style big bore. In 1873, one of the greatest sixguns ever made was introduced, the Colt Single Action Army (SAA). With a basic design dating to the Colt Paterson, it has been copied or modified and offered by Great Western, Ruger, Seville, Abilene and Freedom Arms, as well as by an endless host of foreign importers.

The first Colt SAA was offered in the now equally legendary .45 Colt. Basically designed for the military market, the SAA had a barrel length of 7½" to duplicate the feel of the 1851 Navy and 1860 Army. The Peacemaker was soon offered with a shorter 5½" barrel, called the Artillery Model. The Cavalry Model had a 7½" barrel.

Somewhere along the line, someone came up with the short-barreled 4¾" Civilian Model. Many believe the idea for this model came from Bat Masterson, since he ordered a nickel-plated .45 Colt "with the barrel even with the ejecting rod." However, history tells us that short-barreled Civilian Models were being delivered at least three years before Masterson placed his order.

The Civilian Model's designer may be lost to history, but one of the finest balanced sixguns ever made emerged. The gunfighter's weapon had really arrived.

For the first time, a shootist was just as dangerous with his sixgun in the holster as if it were in his hand. Perhaps even more so. A sixgunner who practices religiously, as I did for a number of years, can draw and fire, hitting a target with



A 7½" .45 Colt (left) and a .44 Special New Frontier for hunting.

unbelievable speed. I was able to get down below 1/4 of a second. Sometimes, when I was at my best, the time was in the neighborhood of 1/10 of a second.

A professional fast-draw expert like Bob Munden can get down to .02 seconds, that is 2/100 of a second! No reaction time is fast enough to counter this. The old "you go for your gun first" myth is just that, a myth. All other things being equal, he who drew second finished second.

SAA Made Famous

The Colt Single Action was carried by gunfighters on both sides of the law: Jesse James, Cole Younger, Wyatt Earp, Doc Holiday— the list is lengthy. Theodore Roosevelt carried a 7½" Colt Single Action .45 as a rancher in the Dakotas. We also know he carried a concealed sixgun while president, and it may have been his old Colt.

In 1916, before heading into Mexico after Pancho Villa, a young Army lieutenant picked up an ivory-gripped Single Action Army .45 in El Paso, Texas. The gun and the lieutenant— General George S. Patton— later became famous during World War II. The gun had two notches on the grip from the Mexican campaign. It now resides in the West Point Museum, along with its companion S&W .357 Mag. and the

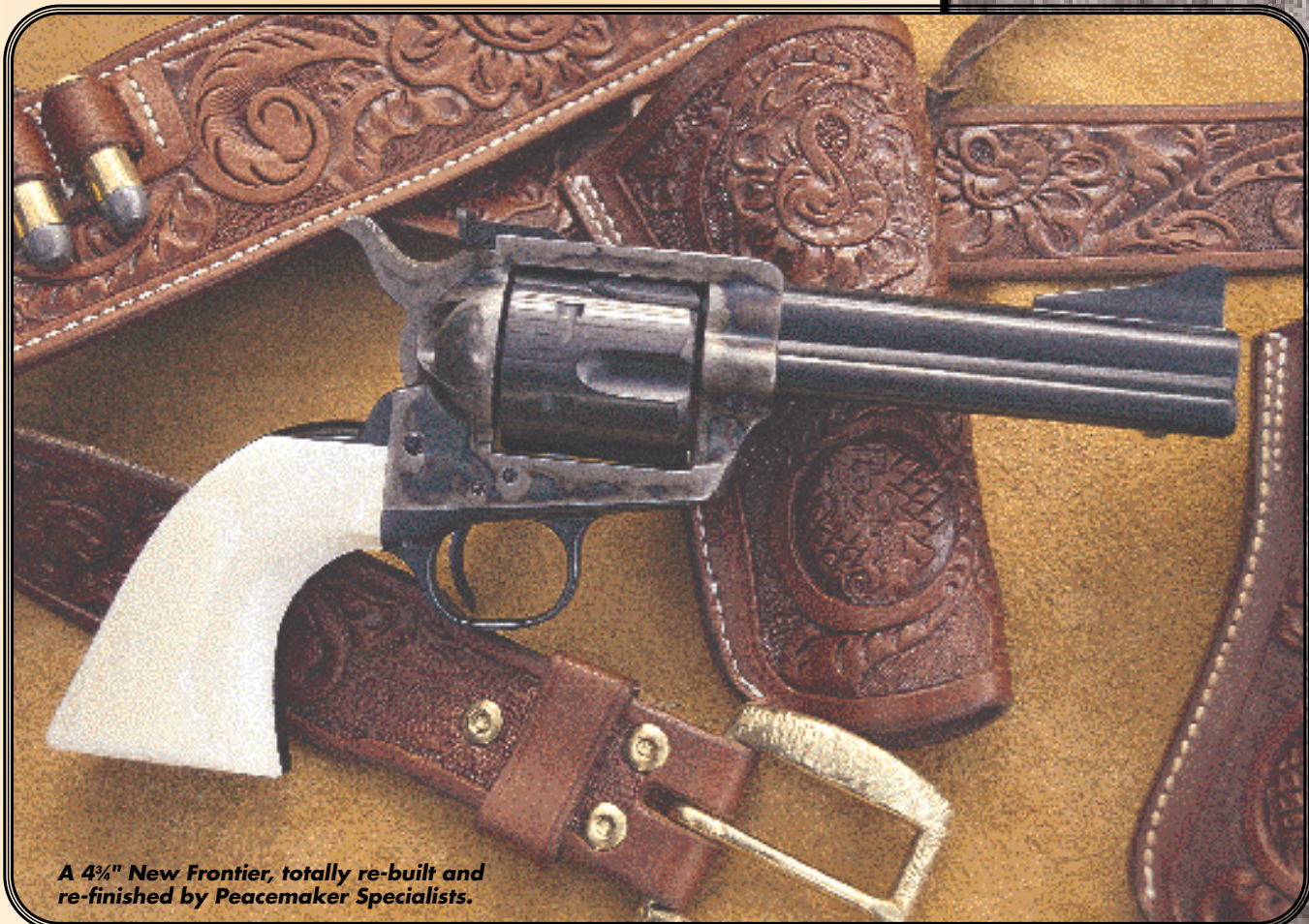
Myres Border Patrol-style belt and holsters.

The career of the infamous team of Bonnie and Clyde was stopped by former Texas Ranger Frank Hamer, whose favorite sixgun was "Old Lucky," a .45 Colt Single Action. Hamer has always been treated unfairly by Hollywood and in actual fact was a real hero, a true "one riot, one Ranger" type of lawman.

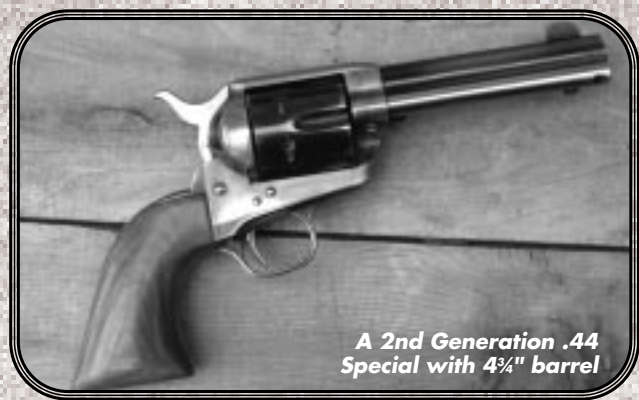
The Fastest Gun

From a proper holster, there is no gun faster for the first shot than the Single Action Army. This has been proven many times by countless shooters and no less personalities than Bill Jordan, Elmer Keith and Skeeter Skelton. However, they all carried double actions for the simple reason: that one shot may not be enough.

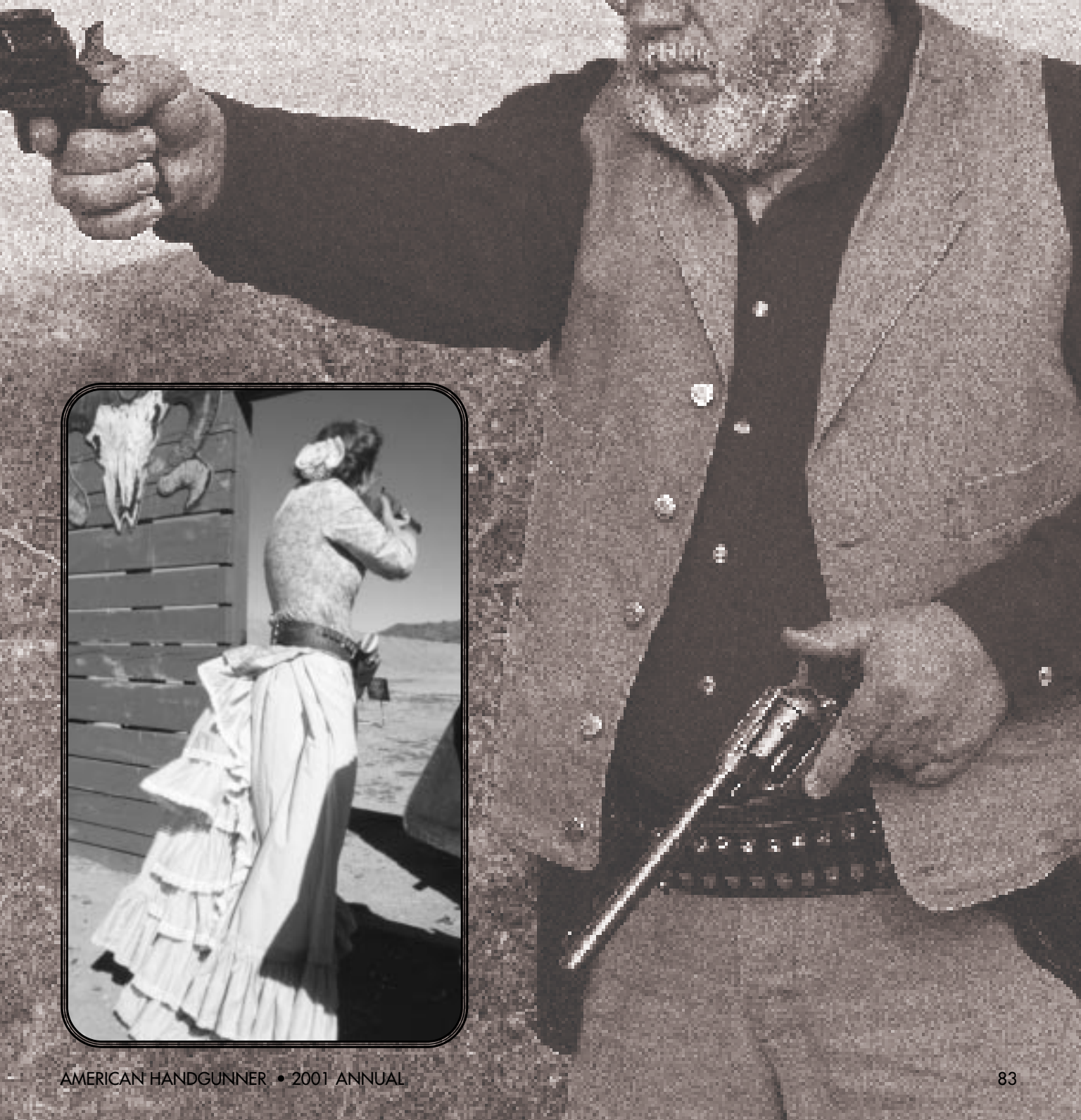
Glenn Ford, in "The Fastest Gun Alive" and subsequent movies, carried his Colt Single Action in a rig quite different from other stars. The holster rode higher, and, in front of it, sewed to the belt, was a thick piece of leather. Ford would cock the hammer in the holster, draw, fire and then swipe the hammer across the piece of



A 4¼" New Frontier, totally re-built and re-finished by Peacemaker Specialists.

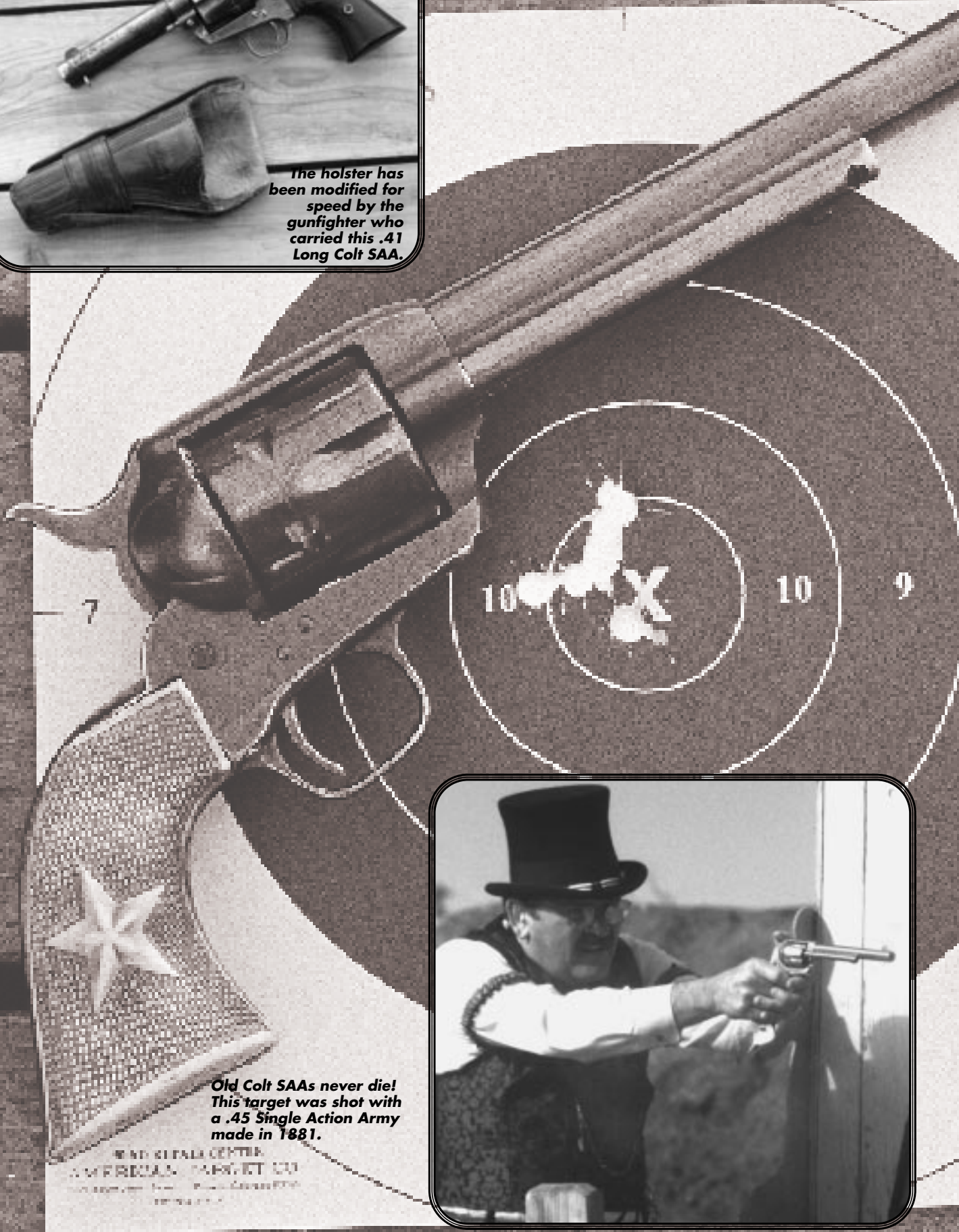


*A 2nd Generation .44
Special with 4 1/4" barrel*





The holster has been modified for speed by the gunfighter who carried this .41 Long Colt SAA.



Old Colt SAAs never die! This target was shot with a .45 Single Action Army made in 1881.

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leather, permitting a quick second shot.

Charles McDonald Heard, a teacher of fast draw, went Ford one better. Heard cocked the gun in the holster for the first shot, caught the hammer with the thumb of his left hand for the second shot, then swept the hammer back with the little finger on his left hand for the third shot. Heard claimed no one was fast enough to count all three shots! Bob Munden outdoes even Heard. He can fire four, five, even six shots in as much time!

Ed McGivern proved that the Colt Single Action could even be fanned very

accurately. He could fire a cylinderful, putting the shots in a space that could be covered with one hand. To master the feat, he used the relatively heavy .38 Special Colt Single Action and .38 wadcutters.

Today's Colt SAA

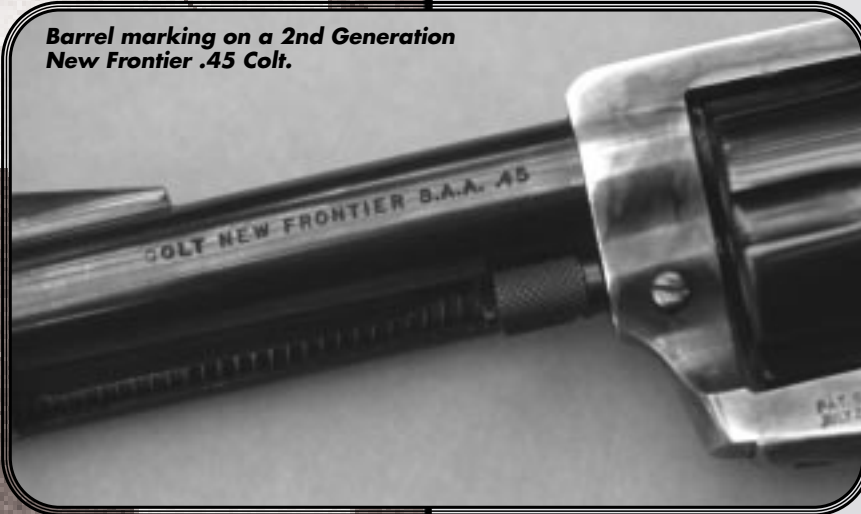
The Single Action Army not only exists today, its popularity is growing in its original form and in the replicas offered by Cimarron and EMF. The reason is the rapidly growing sport of cowboy action shooting, one of the few shooting sports based on real fun.

Ruger, which modernized the Colt Single Action with the Single-Six in 1953 and the Blackhawk in 1955, has found great success in cowboy action shooting with its Vaquero. This gun looks very much like a Colt Single Action.

From 1873 to 1941, more than 350,000 Colt Single Actions in more than 30 calibers were produced. Half of the big sixguns were made in .45 Colt, and half of the rest in .44-40. The next two most popular calibers were .38-40 and .32-20.

After World War II, Colt announced the end of the Single Action. Then, in the mid-1950s, the new medium of television saturated the airwaves with old Western movies and new Western TV shows, and shooters wanted Colt Single Actions again. The Colt was resurrected, and the Second Generation Single Action began. Still the

Barrel marking on a 2nd Generation New Frontier .45 Colt.



This 1st Generation Colt SAA .45 has been totally re-built by Peacemaker Specialists.

Excellent powders for the Colt SAA in .44 or .45 are Alliant's #2400 and Unique and Hodgdon's H4227.



Floral-carved and basket-stamped #1920 Tom Threepersons rigs from El Paso Saddlery.



same gun as the 1873 Peacemaker, the “new” Colt was made of stronger steels and offered in only four calibers: .45 Colt, .38 Special, .357 Mag. and .44 Special.

By the 1970s, Colt’s old machinery for the Single Action was wearing out, and the Colt Single Action was pronounced dead again, only to be revived in a few years with the Third Generation model. Two minor changes occurred. The hand design was changed for easier assembly. Further, the cylinder no longer had a full-length bushing, but rather featured a button bushing at the front end.

With these modifications, plus one

made before World War II— the switch from the original “black powder” screw in front of the frame, which held the cylinder pin, to a spring-loaded catch— you have only three basic changes to the Colt Single Action design in over 121 years.

Yes, hammer profiles have changed, the type of lettering on the barrel has changed, and the location of serial num-

bers has changed, but these are all minor variations that have nothing to do with the actual operation of the Single Action.

The Third Generation Colt Single



Three generations of Colt SAAs (left to right): 1st Generation Bisley, 2nd Generation .44 Special and 3rd Generation .44-40.



Action lasted into the late 1980s when the market was flooded with all types of variations in finish and barrel length. Quite often, these latter guns, before the production was to cease again, were second-rate. Third Generation Colt Single Actions were produced in .45 Colt, .44 Special, .44-40 and .357 Mag.

Genuine Colt Single Action

After being killed three times, who would have thought that the Colt Single Action would be back? I consider today's version the Fourth Generation, but Colt refers to them as a continuation of Third



Recognize these famous Colt SAA rigs re-created by Legends in Leather? Top is Burt Lancaster's holster from Vera Cruz, while the bottom rig was often worn by Buck Jones in many "B" Westerns.



Generation sixguns, so I will go along and also call them Third Generation Single Actions.

The guns are expensive, limited in number and available only from Colt's custom shop. But they are genuine Colt Single Action Armies, and no other single action has that distinction. Available in both blue/case-hardened finish and nickel finish, the newest Colt Single Actions are made in .45 Colt, .44-40 and .38-40.

For the past year, I have at various times been privileged to test four of the newest Colt Single Action Armies. Two of these have been in .45 Colt chambering, a 7½" blued/case-hardened sixgun and a 5½" nickel example. The other two have been nicked sixguns, both in .44-40, one in 4¾" and the other in 5½" length. At the present time, Colt is cataloging both blue and nickel sixguns in all three calibers, but only in barrel lengths of 4¾" and 5½", with the 7½" guns "promised" in the future.

Fine-Tuning The SAA

All Colt Single Action Armies are coming through with very nicely shaped but plain-jane walnut grips with gold-colored Colt medallions. I have replaced those on the 5½" guns with custom grips: one-piece birdseye maple from Blu-Magnum on the .44-40, and stags from Charles Able on the .45 Colt. The short-



Jim Lockwood of Legends in Leather re-created this Roy Rogers rig for a pair of Colt SAAs.

*The 2nd and 3rd
Generation .45
Colt New Frontiers
were available
with 4¾" (rare),
5½", and 7½" (most
common) barrels.*





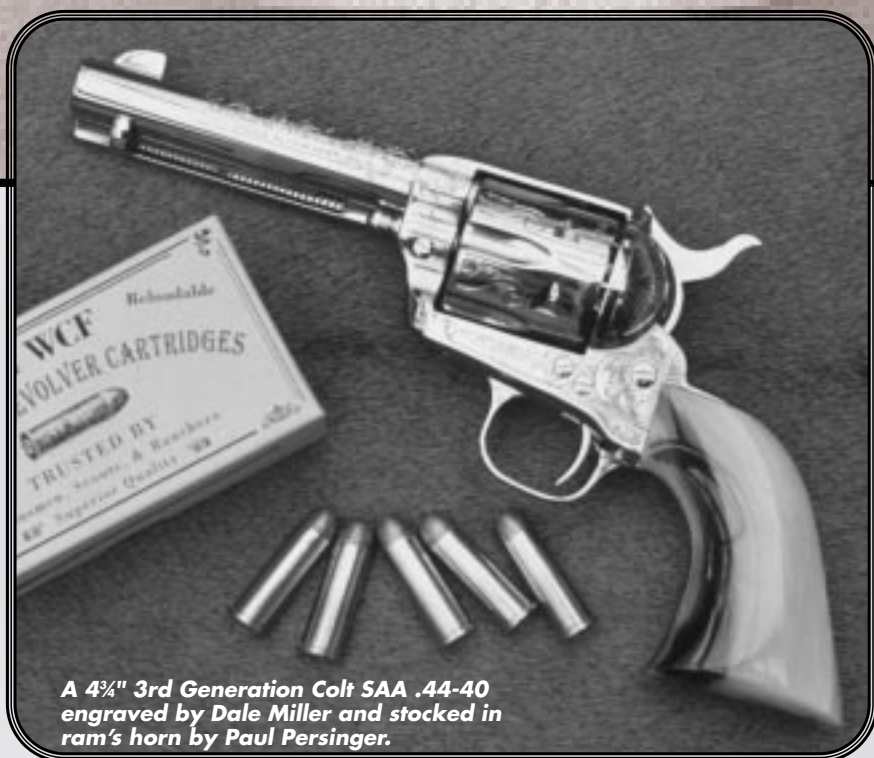
Nickel-plated 3rd Generation .44-40s



barreled .44-40 now wears Third Generation Colt Eagle grips from my parts box.

As they came from the factory, all Colt Single Actions needed an action job and all but the short-barreled .44-40 have been worked over by Fast Draw expert and gunsmith Bob Munden. Munden replaced the mainsprings and bolt springs with those of his own design and then worked all of the action parts with file and stone. The result is an incredibly smooth Single Action Army. The 4 3/4" .44-40 was sent to friend Eddie Janis of Peacemaker Specialists. It now has been action-tuned, the trigger set at 3 lbs. and the barrel tweaked to correct a leaning front sight.

In all my years of shooting Colt Single Actions, I can only recall one gun that shot to point-of-aim with my preferred



A 4 3/4" 3rd Generation Colt SAA .44-40 engraved by Dale Miller and stocked in ram's horn by Paul Persinger.



A 3rd Generation 7½" .45.



Barrel marking on a 3rd Generation Colt .44-40.

load. That was a Third Generation .44 Special with a 5½" barrel. All the rest needed the front sights filed down or built up to be brought to point-of-aim. Reducing the front sight is easy to do, but

increasing the height of the front sights normally requires the aid of a good metal-smith. Windage correction is accomplished by bending the front sight, turning the barrel or filing the rear notch so the

centering of the front sight is changed. Normally, the first option is the easiest.

With a little judicious reloading, one can often move the point of impact. I recently mated six .45 Single Actions with three loads using 255 gr. bullets and, with this very limited experimentation, four of the six were shooting to point-of-aim.

It comes as no great surprise that the four test sixguns needed sight adjustments. Before making any adjustments, however, one must decide the load that will be used and proceed accordingly. All the Ruger Vaqueros and Cimarrons I have tested lately have been right on for windage and simply needed filing of front sight to sight them in perfectly.

Of the four test Colt Single Actions, two shot low and two shot high. The low



An interesting version of the Colt SAA was the ladle-handled Bisley Model.





shooters were the 7½" barreled .45 Colt (2" low with most loads) and the 4¾" .44-40 (1½" low). (These can easily be corrected by filing the front sight.)

The 7½" barreled .45 is now right on the money, thanks to load experimentation rather than filing of the front sight. The proper load turned out to be the Bull-X 255 gr. bullet over 7.0 grs. of WW231 in Winchester brass powered by a CCI #300 primer.

Not so easy to correct are the two 5½" specimens: The .45 Colt shoots 1" high— I can live with that— and the .44-40 shoots 3" to 6" high. The former can probably be corrected by using a lighter and faster bullet; the latter will require extensive load experimentation, or the front sight will need to be built up. One of the easiest ways to do this is to set a bead on top of the existing sight.

Windage turned out to be a minor problem, with the 5½" .44-40 shooting dead on, and the shorter-barreled .44-40 shooting 1" to 3" right. The latter has now been corrected by Peacemaker Specialists.

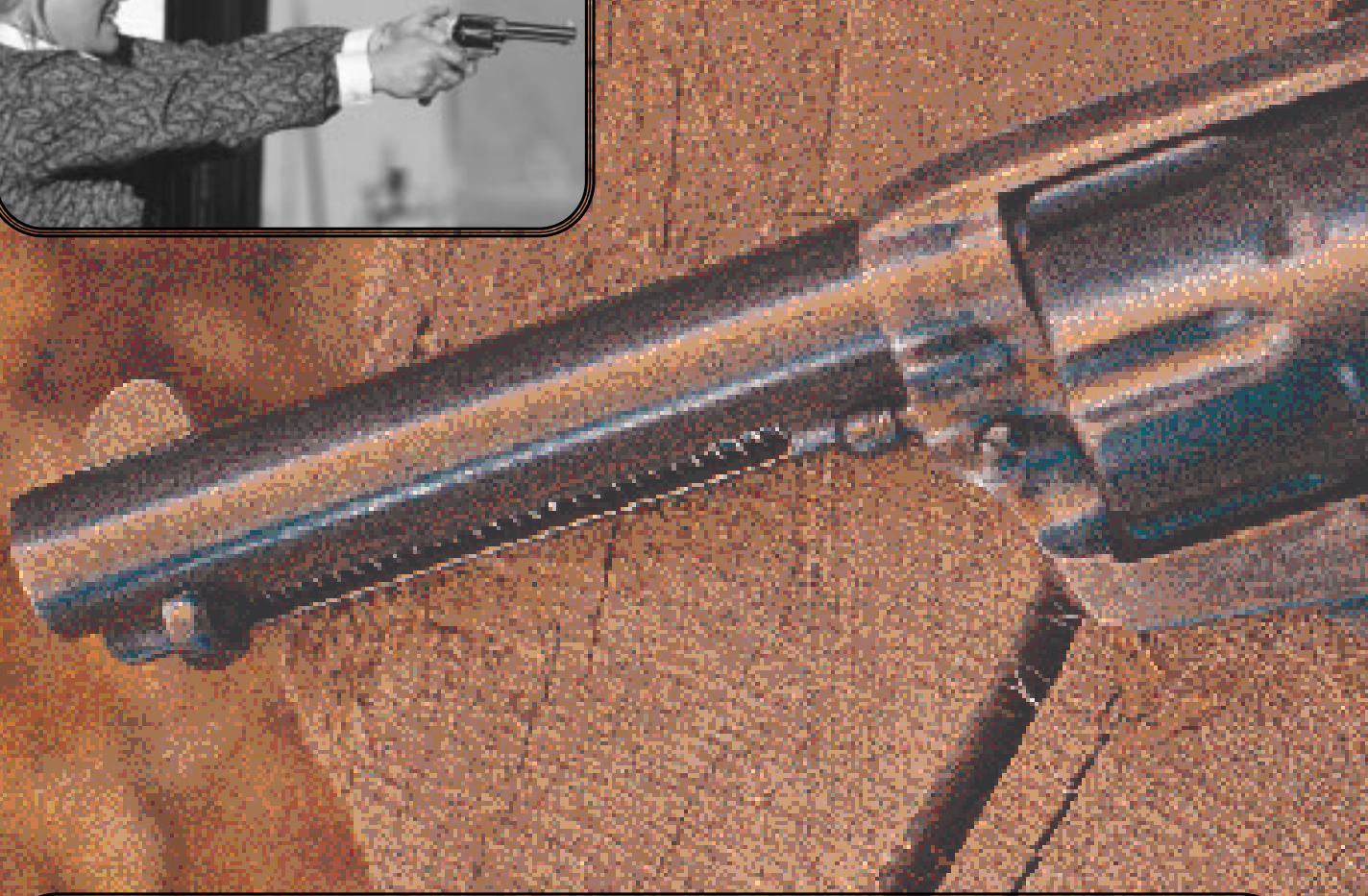
Testing The SAA

These Colt SAAs are not tack-drivers. They have a relatively poor sight picture compared to that offered by modern adjustable sights. Modern sights normally give a clear, broad, black sight picture, even for my half-century old eyes.

Nickel-plated guns with nickel-plated sights are normally more difficult to shoot, also. As they are now, the two .44-40s shoot 2" to 3" groups at 25



Basket-stamped Tom Threepersons #1920 and border-stamped #1930 Austin from El Paso Saddlery.



yards. The .45 Colts are somewhat tighter shooters. Since these are designed as packin' pistols, to be used for close-range encounters where a big-bore sixgun is needed fast, this doesn't present a major problem. Mostly, they will be used for cowboy action shooting, which calls for shooting rela-

tively large targets at relatively close range and at relatively fast speeds.

The only malfunction during testing occurred with the 5½" .45 Colt— and was a common malady with Colt Single Actions. The base pin worked forward under recoil. That's why all custom single actions do not rely on spring-

loaded catches. On a Colt Single Action Army, with factory-style loads, a stronger spring will normally solve the problem. If this doesn't work, the end of the cylinder pin can be tapped and a small Allen screw installed to bear against the bottom of the barrel.

A surprising result of testing was that



A 3rd Generation .38-40 (left) stocked by Eagle Grips and 2nd Generation .45 stocked by Buffalo Brothers, both with 4 3/4" barrels.



By Peacemaker Specialists, this 3rd Generation Colt is marked and re-finished to look like a 1st Generation SAA.

the best-shooting load in the 5 1/2" .45 Colt was the worst in the longer-barreled .45 Colt, and vice versa. The Cavalry Model liked Winchester's 255 gr. lead bullets the best, while the Artillery preferred 255 gr. Blazers. Best loads for the .44-40s were assembled with the Lyman #427098, a standard 200 gr. flat-nosed .44-40 bullet and Unique powder. The

shorter-barreled .44-40 liked 10 grs. of Unique at 1,100 fps, while the other preferred 8 grs. of Unique for 900 fps.

Days Gone By

The Colt Single Action Army is like no other sixgun in its ability to stir heart, soul and spirit. While our minds may tell us other guns are better suited for our purposes, our emotions won't accept this. Those of us who consider ourselves traditionalists know that there are other fine sixguns out there, like Smith & Wesson's K-frames and N-frames, Colt's Anacondas, Ruger's Redhawks and

Blackhawks, and Freedom Arms' Casulls.

For defensive use, we would choose as our first choice a S&W 4" double action .44 or .45, or even a Colt 1911 .45 ACP; for hunting, a Freedom Arms .454 or Ruger .44; for silhouetting, a Freedom Arms .353 or .44 Mag. These are all serious sixguns for serious use.

Then there's the Colt Single Action Army. It's a real beauty. The Colt is for campfires, walks in the woods, cowboy shooting and dreaming of days gone by. We love these other sixguns and use them, but only the Colt can totally stir our emotions. May the grand old Single Action Army continue to be as popular as ever in the 21st century.



A Century Of Development Saw The Best And Worst In Uniform Holsters For The Nation's Police Officers.

COP LEATHER

By Massad Ayoob



Top: High-tech comes to holsters with Michaels of Oregon's Pro4 ID Holster. **Bottom:** John Bianchi, seen here as a Monrovia patrolman in 1965, would revolutionize the design of police holsters. Note his conventional high-ride rig.



This Colonie, N.Y., patrolman carries a 4" K-frame in an S&W Security Plus holster. Note the size of this early breath/alcohol tester in 1980.

The long history of America encompasses the village constabulary and today's professional. While the mission of police officers hasn't changed much, it wasn't until the dawn of the 20th century that it became virtually universal for police in the United States to carry guns. The manner in which the weapons were carried evolved as the nature of the police mission grew and changed.

1900-1920

At the turn of the last century, Western lawmen and East Coast police were sharply divided in dress codes. In the West, officers were partial to the single-action revolver, notably the Colt, and generally preferred larger calibers. The .45 Colt was the most popular caliber. However, the double-action was coming into vogue and with it, smaller calibers. Famed Western lawman Heck Thomas was said to be carrying a double-action Colt .38 when he was murdered.

The Western cop's holster was typically open-topped, often riding on a separate, dedicated gun belt. Often more a pouch than a scabbard, it would hold the gun deep, sometimes with only the grip-frame protruding. Spare ammo generally rode in loops sewn to the gun belt.

In the latter part of the 19th century, Eastern cops carried smaller revolvers than their Western counterparts, in both size and caliber. And while they were likely to wear identical blue uniforms, their guns were less uniform. Some officers carried .32 or .38 break-tops, and some had solid-frame .44 bulldogs. The pockets of trousers or coats were the guns' most typical resting places.

By 1900, the larger cities were pushing for uniformity. The New York Police Department, under Commissioner Teddy Roosevelt, and the Boston Police Department had adopted the .32 caliber Colt New Police revolver. It had a 4" barrel and a swing-out cylinder. Still, the handgun was not always visible. In the



In 1972, this New England patrolman wore an up-to-date Jordan Holster by Don Hume, containing an S&W Model 19 .357 Combat Magnum.



Perhaps the defining police holster of the 20th century was Bill Jordan's design (left), executed here by Tex Shoemaker. Revolver is an S&W Model 10 with Pachmayr grips. Flap holsters (center) reached the height of their popularity in the '20s and '30s, but a few remain in service today. Only the New York Police Department seemed to like this Jay-Pee security holster (right). This one holds a Colt Official Police from a special run commissioned by the department.

East, cops favored uniforms that included a tunic in the summer, while they wore a high-collared "reefer coat," aptly called a "choker," in the winter. These garments usually covered the holstered handgun.

To overcome the difficulty of drawing a firearm from under the cumbersome winter uniform coat, some police officers wore the service revolver in a shoulder holster. While this concept did not stand the test of time with the duty weapon, it would remain a popular option for backup gun carry in cold weather through modern times.

By World War I, the favored guns of Eastern and Western cops converged.

West of the Mississippi, cops traded in their .45s for double-action .38s that they perceived as lighter and faster, while Eastern police turned in their .32s for .38 Specials. The chunky Colt Army Special and the S&W Hand Ejector were popular, as was the smaller-framed Colt Police Positive, all in .38 Special.

Officers began to feel comfortable wearing their guns more visibly in the East. Photos of the period show that plain holsters with simple snap-over safety straps were in vogue, along with military-style flap holsters. Ammo continued to be carried in shell loops, sometimes sewn onto the holster shank or on a separate leather sleeve that slipped onto



A Kentucky state police officer, circa 1975, carry stainless S&W .357 in a S&W Security Plus holster.

the duty belt.

After World War I, a generation of young American men, who were prime candidates for police work, returned from the front accustomed to wearing the 2½" wide Sam Browne uniform belt. It instantly became a staple of the American police image.

1920-1940

Many 20th-century changes in police gun leather were brought about by the patrol car and the motorcycle. Because many officers throughout the nation carried 6" barrel revolvers, they needed a holster that could be slung low from the waist-high Sam Browne belt. The swivel holster became popular. With the arm hanging at rest, a standing man could almost reach his gun without lifting his hand. However, a long-barreled service revolver reached down almost to the knee in such a rig and slapped against the thigh annoyingly when the officer walked.

When seated behind the wheel of a department's patrol car, the gun pointed toward the engine. This meant there wasn't always room to draw the revolver. In addition, the swivel would often wear out, causing the holster to fall off. However, the swivel rig was easier to reach with a heavy winter patrol coat. With a regular holster under a garment like the choker, an officer would draw through a special cut in the side or



Iowa troopers circa mid-1930s, with cross-draw flap holsters, which were common for the period. In this re-enactment, the trooper is wearing an S&W Model 13.



The finger-release holster was designed to keep the trigger finger from prematurely entering the trigger guard. It was popular on the West Coast and, to some degree, in the Midwest. This swivel model by S&W Leather holds a Model 64 .38.

pocket of the coat.

In the 1930s, useful new holster designs appeared on the police equipment market. Berns-Martin offered the first breakfront holster. It was seen as more of a quick-draw holster than a security holster and was not especially popular, particularly in the East. While gun experts of the time, like Charles Askins Jr. and Elmer Keith, thought highly of the breakfront, rank-and-file cops thought it a too-radical design— if they knew about it at all. There were no law enforcement professional journals at that time that could quickly disseminate

information on new equipment designs to police officers nationwide.

Another holster design, which was much more popular in the East than in the West, was the Audley. This was one of the first security holsters. It had a “secret lever” that had to be depressed in order to draw the gun. The lever was a steel-spring tongue inside the holster that protruded into the trigger guard. The device applied pressure against the inside front of the sixgun’s trigger guard, preventing the gun from being drawn. To release the device, the officer placed his index finger into the guard and depressed

the spring. Unfortunately, this required the officer to thrust his finger across the exposed trigger of his holstered gun. The design was quickly identified as something likely to cause accidental discharges in the holster.

If the Audley design was the trick holster on the East Coast, the clamshell holster was the hot setup on the West Coast. Los Angeles Police Department officers were particularly fond of the design. The holster consisted of two halves of leather-covered steel, locked together under spring tension. To open the clamshell, the officer pressed a concealed button inside the holster, much like the Audley design. This released a hook, and the entire outer half of the holster snapped open, freeing the revolver. This made for an extremely fast draw.

Unfortunately, like the Audley holster, the clamshell’s requirement that the officer place a finger in proximity to the trigger greatly increased the chance of accidental discharges. The clamshell had another problem, one the Audley didn’t share. Someone who “knew the secret” could sneak up on the officer, press the button, then scamper away as the officer retrieved his Colt or S&W sixgun from the pavement.

While not perfect, these holster designs were long-lasting. Decades later, the Berns-Martin inspired a new generation of security holsters. As late as 1980, some departments in New Jersey and Rhode Island still used Audleys, and Los Angeles cops clung to the clamshell for decades.

However, as this period closed, other designs were emerging. Tom Threepersons had designed his lean speed scabbard that captivated Western officers, who often wore it with a snap-over safety strap to meet department requirements.



Circa 1970s, this Florida Highway Trooper wears a long-barrel Colt .357 in a cross-draw duty holster. Note the “Santa belt,” a Sam Browne of an unusual 3" width. All equipment was standard issue.

Leaving the back of the cylinder and the entire trigger guard exposed, this design also left the grip-frame fully clear of encumbrance, allowing an extremely fast draw. A holster designed by Charles Askins hung lower from the belt and incorporated a safety strap, but otherwise, it had many elements of the Threepersons design. Bill Jordan, a Border Patrolman like Askins, was working on a more efficient version. This was the thinking that would shape police gun leather for the next 20 years.

1940-1960

Through and after World War II, there was little innovation in holster design on the domestic police front. The postwar years, however, saw significant changes.

Some departments still used flap holsters that had been with them since early in the century. But many adopted Jordan's Border Patrol design. As executed by S.D. Myres, Don Hume Leather and others, this was the first popular police holster to have a steel shank. This kept the holster in a rigid position in relation to the duty belt. Thus, the gun was more likely to be exactly where the officer expected it to be when he reached for it.

Equally important, the Jordan holster ushered in an era of rigid, heavy-duty gun leather. Older holsters were usually thin and soft and wore out quickly. The Jordan rig broke in quickly and stayed in shape almost indefinitely.

The dropped-shank design was another significant feature. It lowered the weapon to a quickly accessible level, even below the edge of a waist-length



Left: The Audley holster was popular on the East Coast. Barely visible in front of the trigger is Audley's trademark metal securing tongue, which many cops discovered was an accident waiting to happen. Right: Circa 1975, the author carried his Colt .45 on patrol in this Roberts Range-master swivel holster by Safariland. Swivels were popular for much of the last century but lost favor in its last few decades.



police jacket. Just as the Sam Browne belt was largely an artifact of the World War I uniform, the drop-shank holster was influenced by World War II.

It was during this period that the World War II "bomber jacket" became enormously popular among returning troops. With its hem riding below the waist, the jacket could cover the butt of a conventional high-ride holster. Jordan-

style holsters, however, lowered the weapon below the hem of the bomber-style garment cops called a "Tuffy jacket." The same was true of the lighter Eisenhower jacket, which many departments adopted.

Flap holsters were fading fast during this time. However, some departments would keep them well beyond this period, including the St. Louis and Detroit departments, along with the Iowa State Patrol. The simple safety strap of the Jordan-style holster made for a faster draw, a less bulky holster, and a more streamlined look that was equally appealing to street cops and police chiefs.

In the '50s, the thumb-break safety strap came on the scene and was an instant success. Its design has been variously attributed to Chic Gaylord, Bucheimer Holsters and others. Gaylord was a premier holster designer of the period, and thumb-break safety straps appeared on many of his designs, including the Highway Patrol model. However, Bucheimer, with their Federal Man model, was probably the first to mass-produce them for the police equipment market.

The thumb-break design allowed for a distinctly faster draw than the Border Patrol holster, which required a separate movement to release the safety strap. Indeed, Bill Jordan himself recommended that the strap on his Border Patrol holster be left undone unless strenuous activity was immediately anticipated. The thumb-break, when engaged, was obviously much more secure than a regular Jordan holster that was left open,



Left: The Berns-Martin breakfront holster was seen as radical when introduced in the '30s. It was appreciated more for its speed than its security. From the author's collection, this one holds a Colt Official Police .38 Special. Right: In the early 1950s, Bucheimer Federal Man introduced the thumb-break duty scabbard, an instant success. This one holds a 1950 production S&W Chiefs Special.





Twenty-five years ago, these Iowa state troopers carried S&W Model 13 .357s in cross-draw flap holsters.



Bianchi's most influential holster was this Model 27, a dramatic and sweeping redesign of the Berns-Martin concept. Key to the function of the Bianchi design was the front-break draw, demonstrated here with an S&W Model 25-5 in .45 Colt caliber.



yet, even with the strap fastened, the thumb-break was only a thin fraction of a second slower to draw from in an emergency. Cops realized this and soon, nationwide, the thumb-break was the most popular choice by far.

1960-1980

The second "radical development" period in American police holster design occurred around 1970. John Bianchi resurrected the Berns-Martin breakfront concept and redesigned it as the Bianchi Model 27. This holster had a snatch-resistant design but still offered good speed. Cops love the holster, and the California Highway Patrol and the Los Angeles Police Department quickly adopted it. Almost every other manufacturer followed with some sort of breakfront, but Bianchi led the pack. Some, including Bianchi, would offer "split-front" holsters that opened only partway down but worked the same way. Among the most popular of these was the Security Plus from Smith & Wesson Leather.

This was the period's most significant innovation, and it literally changed the shape of the American police holster. Meanwhile, in 1970, the California

Highway Patrol lost four officers in a single gun battle. One officer was killed because he was unable to reload swiftly enough with loose .357 rounds from his dump pouches. The California Highway patrol became the first major agency to approve, and then issue, "six-at-once" speedloaders. The rest of the nation soon followed. Thus, not only did the shape of the holster change but also the shape of ammo carriers.

1980-2000

During the last fifth of the 20th century, the police handgun changed. The period of the early '80s through the late '90s would see an almost 100 percent change from the traditional revolver to the semi-automatic police service pistol. While many departments would choose the thumb-break—the Los Angeles Police Department, for example—many more would go to some sort of a security holster.

In the early '80s, Bianchi offered the first holster that cost \$100,000 to design: the Auto-Draw. This was the first high-security holster designed expressly for semi-automatic service pistols.

Ex-FBI agent, master shooter and firearms trainer Bill Rogers designed his

SS-III in the early '80s. A super-security holster that required three separate movements to release the gun, it still allowed a very fast draw for the properly trained officer. The SS-III redefined "snatch-resistant" for the police duty scabbard. Its design worked well for semi-automatic pistols. When Safariland purchased the rights to Rogers' designs, they called their holster the 070. Soon, Safariland introduced other high-security designs, including the SLS (self-locking system) and the 095, a breakfront holster, optimized for auto pistols.

Safariland developed a "rating system" for the security of a holster against a snatch attempt. An ordinary thumb-break was "Level I." If two movements were required before the gun could be drawn, such as the 095 or the later SLS, it was "Level II." If three movements were required, it was a "Level III" holster.

This was also the age of the synthetic holster. "Patent leather," with Corfam becoming state-of-the-art, came into vogue in the '70s, but these were merely ordinary police holsters with a different sheen. Safariland popularized the heavy-duty "plastic holster."



Above: This Rogers-designed Safariland SS-III (070), with a SIG P-226, is used by many of today's cops.

Below: This Uncle Mike's Pro-3, with an S&W 4506, is widely used today.



Above: Current state-of-the-art holsters include this Safariland SLS with Glock 22.



Below: Michaels of Oregon's Pro 4 ID Holster reads the fingerprint of the user before releasing the pistol.

It was nylon that would next change the face of police "leather." Fabric duty belts, holsters and accessories were dramatically lighter than traditional leather. This wasn't just a convenience. Police human-resource managers noted that lighter belts meant fewer back injuries and less lower-back pain. The heavy equipment belt had long been a factor in making back problems an occupational hazard among police.

It was also during this period that the hazards of blood-borne pathogens became a big issue in law enforcement. The blood of a drug addict that splashed all over an officer's uniform, perhaps containing Hepatitis-B or the AIDS virus, was difficult to get out of leather. It, how-

ever, easily washed out of a fabric duty rig. Though all the big makers jumped into the market, Michaels of Oregon seemed to lead the pack. Available equipment included Level III holsters built to match nylon duty rigs.

2001 and Beyond

During the 20th century, holster development often moved "two steps forward, one step back." When the Los Angeles Police Department adopted auto pistols in the late '80s, it also mandated Level I thumb-break holsters, though for a number of years it had mandated security holsters for service revolvers. As the 21st century dawned, the Iowa State Patrol still issued a cross-draw flap holster,

though the holster now contained a .40 caliber S&W auto instead of the .38 Special Colt Official Police the agency had started with in the 1930s.

What of the future? Space-age materials and innovative design will continue to make better duty gear for American cops. It is unlikely, at least in the short term, that "smart gun" technology (which, in theory, allows only authorized users access to a gun) will become popular when applied to police holsters. Much of this technology is politically driven by those who want to control access to firearms, and "holster control" is not the issue that "gun control" is.

Nonetheless, in late 2000, Michaels of Oregon announced its Professional Pro 4 ID Holster, which they proclaimed is "the first holster to release the law enforcement officer's weapon only after reading that same officer's fingerprint."

This spells interesting times ahead, with "light," "durable," "fast" and "secure" the watchwords of future holster development.



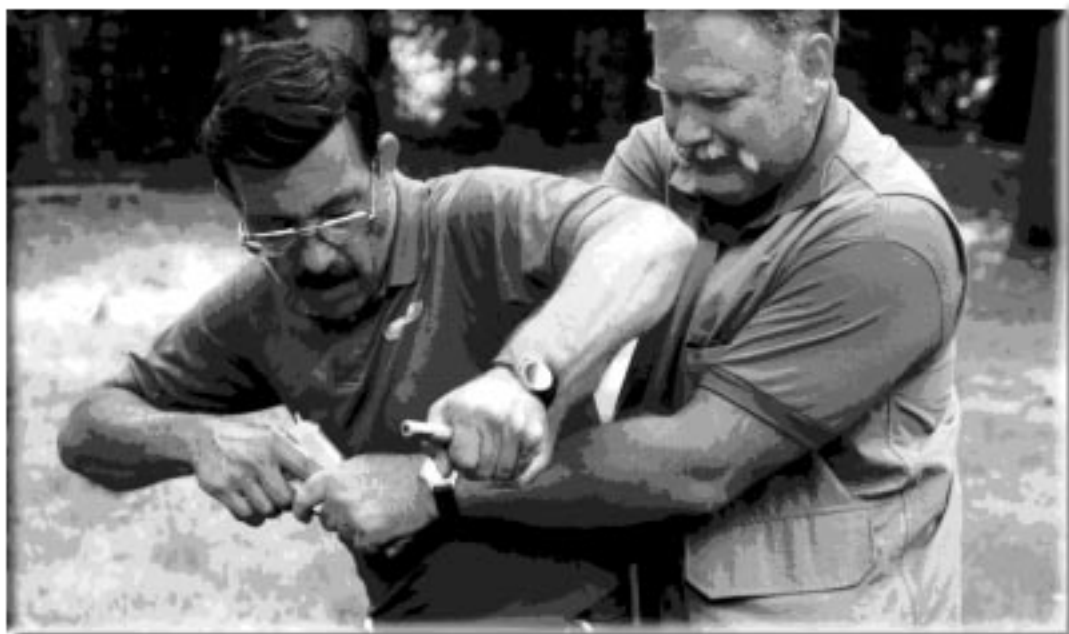
With rare exceptions, by the '90s, flap holsters were strictly a SWAT item, as worn by this Palm Beach (Fla.) County officer describing a raid for the TV show "COPS."

About the author: Massad Ayoob was a sworn officer for more than a quarter of the last century and remains so in this one. He is the director of Lethal Force Institute and chair of the firearms committee of the American Society of Law Enforcement Trainers. For many years, Massad has been the handgun editor of GUNS Magazine and law enforcement editor of American Handgunner. He is a current state champion in police combat shooting, having won the title with his department-issue Ruger .45 auto, drawn from his department-issue Safariland 070 Level III duty holster.

STOP GUN SNATCHES!

THE DEADLY
LESSONS COPS
HAVE LEARNED
THE HARD WAY
CAN SAVE
YOUR LIFE!

By Massad Ayoob



When I was first sworn in as a police officer in the early 1970s, murders of cops in the line of duty were approaching an all-time high. In any given year, one out of five murdered officers was slain with his own or his partner's service revolver after a "gun snatch." In Hartford, Conn., one of America's oldest police departments, every cop killed in the line of duty was slain with a snatched police weapon. At one time, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department determined that roughly half of their deputies shot to death on duty were killed with snatched service revolvers.

Things are better today. It's not that the bad guys aren't trying to wrest firearms from cops. Violent assaults on peace officers remain very high. It's just that the bad guys aren't succeeding nearly as often. Today, police murders overall are down from the number killed in the '70s. An important factor in the decline is that only five to 10 percent of those killed on duty in recent years have lost their lives to their own guns.

Why the turnaround? Essentially, the last quarter century has seen police training and policy address this deadly issue effectively and successfully. Even one cop murdered with his own gun is too many, but cutting the gun-snatch death toll literally in half is a major achievement by American law enforcement. Without giving anything away to the bad guys, there are lessons that can be learned by the law-abiding armed citizen who could find himself (or herself) facing the same deadly danger. After all, those who would ban guns warn that if citizens carry firearms, criminals will disarm them and turn their weapons against them. The better a law-abiding citizen can counter that argument, the safer it will be for him to exercise his civil right to own and carry defensive firearms.

After a series of tragic gun grabs from police over an 18-month period in the mid-'70s, the Kansas City Regional Police Academy tasked senior defensive tactics instructor Jim Lindell with developing a series of counters to disarming attempts. In studying the history of the concept, Lindell would say later, "We had traditionally been told to bite, butt, kick and scratch—



1. Retention skills for holstered guns are critical. Role player Jim Carr is about to try to snatch Rick Devoid's pistol.
2. As he feels a hand grasp his gun, instructor Devoid reflexively traps the offending hand.



3. Stepping through with his holster-side leg and pivoting on the other leg, Devoid peels the hand free.
4. Continuing the movement, Devoid swings the offender's hand up and over to force him back, while his free hand comes up to block a punch or retrieve the snatched gun.

to do anything and everything to stop the disarm— but we hadn't been taught to do anything *effective*."

Lindell completed his systematic counter-disarming program in 1975 and taught the first classes in 1976. In '77, I flew to Kansas City to study Lindell's training system. I was impressed. From the beginning, reports came in from the street of disarming attempts that were successfully countered by the Lindell-trained officers. I was certified as a practitioner in '77, as an instructor in '80 and as a trainer of other instructors in 1990. In that time, I've gotten lots of input from my graduates and their graduates. The bottom line? *The system works!*

At first glance, it seems too complex, with perhaps a dozen different techniques to allow for attacks from all angles— front, back, side, left and right— attacks using both hands and attacks to a holstered or drawn weapon. With practice, however, the techniques become second nature. There have been attempts to simplify Lindell's concepts, but none has worked as well as the original.

There is no central databank on all disarming attempts against police, nor on all officers who saved their lives against such attacks, nor how. However, Lindell retired a few years ago to found the National Law Enforcement Training Center (NLETC) in Kansas City. His staff examined the available data and estimates that his techniques may have saved more than 2,000 officers' lives over the last 23 years.

If you are a police or security officer interested in undergoing NLETC training, there's probably a trained instructor near you. For information, contact NLETC at (800) 445-0857. NLETC-certified handgun retention instructors who train law-abiding private citizens in the system include the staffs of the Firearms Academy of Seattle, (360) 978-6100, and Lethal Force Institute, (800) 624-9049.

Security Holsters

In the early '70s, most officers carried their duty sidearms in simple pouch hol-

sters with outside-snap or thumb-break safety straps. In many parts of the country, the practice of the day was to wear a Jordan Border Patrol holster with the strap fastened around the front of the scabbard, in effect, making the holster an open-top, quick-draw rig. While this was indeed fast for a reactive draw, it did nothing to protect the revolver from a hostile grab attempt.

Today, such holsters have all but disappeared. More than half of the nation's police seem to carry "security holsters" designed expressly to resist unauthorized hands that might grab for the duty weapon. Early pioneers included Bianchi, with their break-front series of revolver holsters, inspired by the Berns-Martin design that began with the B-27 model.

The Safety Speed Holster Co. developed the clamshell holster, which became popular in Southern California. Users operated this holster by inserting their finger through the exposed trigger guard and pressing a hidden button that flipped the holster open like its namesake. You don't see these anymore.

The sales leader for security holsters today is Safariland, the company that popularized a three-level rating system for security. A simple-pouch holster with thumb-break safety strap is "Level I." If the holster needs two movements to draw, say a breaking of the thumb snap combined with a forward thrust, it's "Level II." The highest rating is "Level III," where three movements or strap releases must be accomplished to free the gun.

The undisputed leader of the Level III security holsters is the SS-III, also known as the 070, which was designed by ex-FBI agent Bill Rogers, who later licensed the design to Safariland. I've conducted extensive research and have yet to learn of an officer who was murdered by someone who attempted to snatch a weapon from an SS-III. Tragically, in one case, an officer had swapped his SS-III for a plain thumb-break holster a few days before being killed by his own firearm.

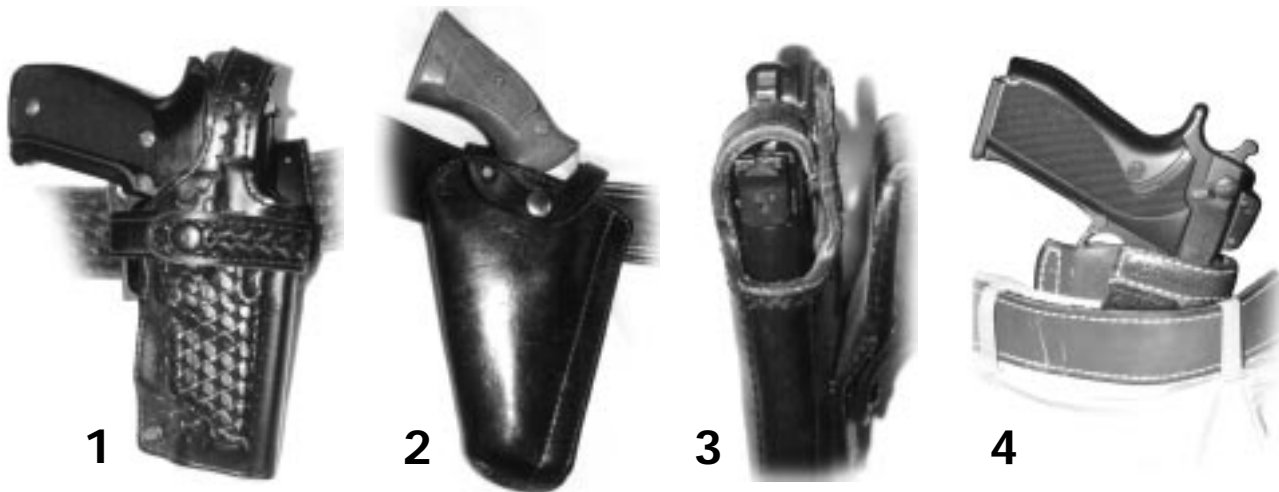
Out West, an officer's Glock was taken from his SS-III only after he was mortally wounded in an ambush during a traffic stop. He was drawing his gun when he was shot, and he probably had the weapon nearly out of the holster before he fell. The officer was already down and dying when the bad guy gained control of the gun.

In Florida, a suspect managed to dislodge an officer's SIG P-226 from an SS-III after a long and violent struggle, but the thug had such poor control of the gun that the officer was able to redirect the muzzle, causing a shot to go wild. The cop recovered the gun and took control of the fight.

The SS-III holsters require more training and practice since they make the draw more complicated. The slowdown



5. Devoid completes the "pin and spin" technique developed by weapon-retention master Jim Lindell. If you finish with this wrist lock, you get an A+; if you finish in control of the gun, you get an A.



1) Safariland 070 "SS-III" is today's state-of-the-art uniform security holster. It's shown with a SIG P-22. 2) For many years, the Bianchi B-27 breakfront was the most popular police security holster. It worked only for revolvers like this S&W Model 66. 3) Author is comfortable with "level one" retention, a single safety strap, if the pistol's safety is engaged. This cocked-and-locked Morris Tactical Colt 1911A1 is held in a Ted Blocker LAPD-style thumb break holster. 4) Security with an open-top holster, like this LFI Concealment Rig, is enhanced if the gun is carried "on safe."



When carried "on safe," these models have saved officers' lives after attackers momentarily gained control of their weapons. Clockwise from top: Beretta 9mm, Colt .45, S&W .40, and HK's unique 9mm squeeze-cocker, the P7.

is minimal, however, compared to how much the holster slows down a homicidal gun grabber. The only price you pay is a fraction of a second. I've seen many tests where even after 30 seconds of trying vigorously, *without resistance*, in testing situations, the "assailant" was unable to dislodge the gun from the security holster.

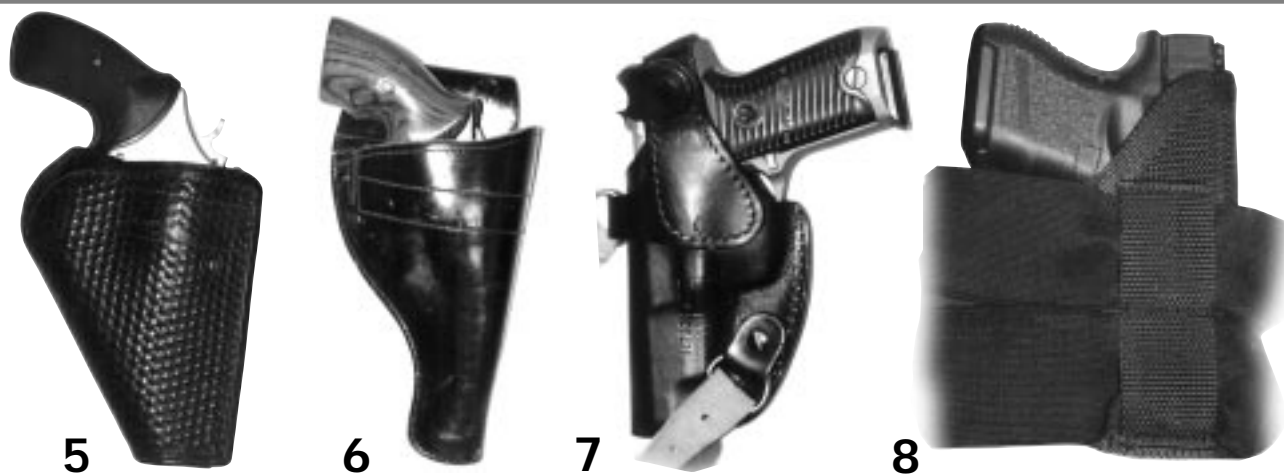
There are now at least three concealable security holsters for plainclothes and off-duty police that merit consideration by armed citizens who have carry permits. Safariland produces the 0701, a streamlined version of the SS-III, with one less strap and featuring the SLS (Self-Locking System). These holsters can be hidden under a sport coat. The Strong Piece-Keeper also comes in concealable versions that can be worn in straight-draw or cross-draw positions. There's also a shoulder-holster version.

It's not known exactly how many lives have been saved by these security rigs. It is certainly in the hundreds. It may be in the thousands.

Body Armor

Richard Davis, an armed citizen who survived a shootout with armed robbers, shot two of his three opponents, but was wounded twice himself. It occurred to him that there must be something better than one's own body with which to stop bullets. He developed the Second Chance vest, the first *soft* body armor that could be worn concealed with comfort.

That was around 1970. Today, the Kevlar Survivor's Club numbers well over 2,500 saved officers, almost 800 of them satisfied customers of the Second Chance brand. Davis also noted that many of the officers saved by his vests were



5) In the '30s, the Berns-Martin holster was favored for speed, but its break-front design also gave it a measure of security. This antique holster holds a modern S&W Model 629 Mountain Gun. 6) For the last half of the 20th century, this Jay-Pee security holster was standard for the revolvers of uniformed NYPD personnel. Crude and cheap (it sold for \$12 in the '70s), it nonetheless prevented many gun snatches and is still in use in New York City. The Ruger Service-six features Craig Spegel grips. 7) The Strong Piece-Keeper is equipped with an inconspicuous strap-locking lever that is natural and quick for the wearer to release. However, it's awkward for anyone else who grabs at this Ruger P90 .45. 8) Glock 27 in Orca vest holster on Second Chance armor exemplifies two proven "safety nets" for surviving disarming attempts.

shot with their own weapons. A majority of them were hit with magnum rounds.

The body armor has definitely been a key component in the reduction of fatal disarmings. It also has reduced the number of lives lost to perpetrators who used their own weapons in murder attempts. Aaron Westrick was a young patrolman when a suspect shot him in the chest with a stolen .357. Westrick shot the man with his own .357. The magnum slug fired by the gunman was stopped by a Second Chance vest. Westrick now works for Second Chance. He estimates that in some 20 percent of the shootings that officers survived because of the Second Chance vest, the gun used had been snatched. It's no wonder that Second Chance is a popular brand.

There are a handful of private citizens whose lives have been saved by body armor. I'm not aware of any of these that occurred during gun snatches, but it could happen, especially to a stalking victim or a retailer in a business that has a high risk of armed robbery.

Proprietary Handguns

Another factor in reduced death from snatched guns was the massive switch a few years ago from revolvers to auto pistols by police departments. This put many guns with manual safeties in the field. Case after case occurred where a suspect grabbed a cop's gun, tried to shoot him with it, but couldn't because he didn't know how to operate the safety catch. A smaller number of officers were saved when, as someone struggled to take away their Smith & Wesson auto, the cop pressed the magazine release button. The suspect then had a non-

shootable gun. The Smith & Wesson has a magazine disconnect safety which prevents the round in the chamber from being fired if the magazine isn't in place.

In 1977, I was given *carte blanche* by the Illinois State Police to study their experience with the S&W Model 39. The pistol had been adopted for the department's 1,700 personnel a decade before. I could not find a cop who was hurt because he had an auto pistol instead of a revolver. I did find 13 who were alive because they had the S&W auto. These officers would probably have died if armed with a revolver when their incidents occurred.

Four of those were "firepower saves"—the extra shots in the gun or the ability to do fast reloads saved the officers during high-volume firefights. The other nine "saves" occurred during gun grabs where either the manual safety or the magazine disconnect saved the day when the attacker gained control of the S&W autoloader.

The "on-safe" policy saved a number of lives in a West Coast police department with some 7,000 officers. The department required newly adopted Beretta 9mm autos to be carried "on safe." At least four officers owe their lives to the policy. No officers were hurt through being too slow to "off-safe" their Berettas when they needed to make a reactive draw.

This "proprietary nature to the user" feature applies well to armed citizens. Police departments buy on bid and they trend toward "Keep It Simple, Stupid" weapons without safety catches, decocking levers, etc. Armed citizens can choose their own guns and, unlike most cops, can carry cocked-and-locked, single-action pistols if

they choose. The necessary application of the thumb safety on a gun like the 1911, Browning Hi-Power or Starfire gives these citizens a weapon-retention advantage from the start. The lives of private citizens have been saved when a suspect tried to shoot them with their own guns and couldn't find the safety catch on their Colt auto or figure out the squeeze cock lever on their HK P7.

Backup Guns

Carrying a concealed second weapon—backup or hideout gun—has saved many officers who were disarmed. In some cases, the second gun was used during a struggle. In other instances, it proved vital after the officer was disarmed and kidnapped.

In Michigan, when a cop knew he was about to lose control of his primary weapon during a struggle, he pulled a Colt .38 snub from an ankle holster and shot and killed his assailant.

In California, a patrolman was pinned on his back by a much stronger assailant who had both hands on the cop's duty weapon and was screaming, "I'll kill you!" Hanging on with his right hand, the officer reached into his left hip pocket and drew his backup, a Chiefs Special Model 36. He emptied it into the attacker.

In Florida, an officer was caught off guard, disarmed at gunpoint and ordered to his knees to await execution with his own gun. The cop knelt and begged, "Let me pray." As the two would-be cop-killers looked at each other and laughed, the officer grabbed a Smith & Wesson Model 60 from his ankle holster and shot both thugs in the face.

There have been an increasing number of armed citizens in the past few years



1. An officer must learn how to perform and counter a disarming attempt. Role-player Dennis Luosey suddenly turns on the author with a drawn gun. Ayoob, left, demonstrates a typical reflexive response.



2. In an instant, each man has grabbed the other's gun and the struggle is on. This scenario occurs often.



3. Ayoob turns clockwise, as if throwing a left hook, and "steps through" with his left leg.



4. Luosey's arms are trapped, but Ayoob still has some range of movement. First he shears away Luosey's S&W .38.
5. Continuing the movement, Ayoob strips his Colt .45 out of the attacker's grasp. Note that, at this point, Luosey has been "destabilized." He can be put on the ground with a hip throw.



9) There aren't many "security holsters" suitable for concealed carry. This is one, the Strong Piece-Keeper, shown in the shoulder-rig version. 10) Safariland's 0702 holster is suitable for concealment wear. It functions similarly to the 070. The snatch-resistant holster carries a customized Glock 23. 11) Michaels of Oregon's lightweight security holster is becoming increasingly popular among police. This one carries a SIG P-220. 12) Holster construction is important. The rear seam of this Border Patrol holster was torn out during a successful gun snatch.

who also owe their lives to backup guns. Sometimes, the second gun was carried by the citizen. In other cases, a store-keeper, who kept guns in multiple locations in the shop, was able to reach one of them when his primary gun was taken.

In the early '70s, only one state police agency issued backup guns to its troopers and required the guns to be carried. Numerous police lives were saved by this policy. Today, at least four state police departments have adopted the practice.

Many officers (and law-abiding armed citizens) carry a tactical knife as a backup weapon instead of a second handgun. Eric Remmen was the first to quantify handgun-retention techniques that used a folding knife in the weak hand to carve the gun grabber's hand and arm away from the weapon. Similar tech-

niques are now taught to police and qualified armed citizens nationwide by Michael de Bethancourt at CQB services, (978) 667-559. I've been through de Bethancourt's course twice and recommend it. One state police agency is using de Bethancourt's system to train troopers with their tactical folders.

Awareness Training

Alertness is emphasized more in police training today than ever before. Officers are taught to read body language and to pick up pre-assault behavior cues such as "target glances." They pay more attention to keeping a distance from suspects and maintaining a "reactionary gap."

Going through handgun-retention training has dispelled a lot of testosterone. You no longer hear, "Ain't no

punk tough enough to get *my* pistol!" The speed of the disarms that occur in training gives a humbling intimation of mortality that makes a person all the more alert to potential hazards. It is an attitude that is equally appropriate for citizens who go about armed.

Final Thoughts

We've seen how a combination of training and technology has dramatically reduced the number of officers murdered with their own weapons. Efforts in this direction must continue.

With more and more law-abiding private citizens licensed to carry loaded, concealed handguns in public, we can look to the police as role models for our safety as well. It's a myth to think that because your gun is concealed, no criminal will ever grab for it. The New York Police Department learned that a majority of successful disarmings of their officers occurred when the cops were off-duty or in plainclothes. The "out of sight, out of mind" theory works both ways. The person whose gun is not exposed is not as constantly vigilant about protecting it as the person who knows the gun is in plain sight. Also, it was only recently that Safariland and Strong Leather made concealable security holsters available.

If you're in a fight and the other man's arms go around your waist, you can expect him to feel your gun and go for it. Your gun may have become exposed. The assailant may be a stalker or disgruntled ex-employee who knows that you carry a gun, and where.

It behooves anyone who carries a gun to learn and practice the lessons of law enforcement's successful efforts against the "gun-snatchers."



For plainclothes police work, the author recommends a minimum of a safety strap. This well-designed thumb-break by Aker holds a sergeant's Glock 23.

A FISTFUL OF SERIOUS SELF-DEFENSE

SMITH & WESSON'S SEMI-AUTO CHIEFS SPECIALS CAPTURE HIGH ABILITY RATINGS FROM TODAY'S MODERN SHOOTER!

**By
John
Taffin**

Smith & Wesson's compact semi-auto Chiefs Specials are a fistful of serious self-defense. Ideal for folks needing a daily concealed-carry firearm, these modern semi-autos have roots dating back more than a century.

Smith & Wesson entered the firearm arena in the 1850s with a pocket pistol that fired the first "fixed" round of ammunition. The cartridge was the .22 rimfire, and the gun the Model 1, a single-action, spur-triggered seven-shooter that had a tip-up

design. The barrel was hinged at the frame's front top and, when unlatched, tipped up to allow the cylinder to be removed.

The Model 1, and subsequent Models 1½ and 2, were popular pocket pistols during the Civil War and the era of settlers moving West. When the Model 3 arrived in 1869, it was a true big-bore .44 sixgun of the break-open design.

In 1871, the Smith Pocket Pistols evolved into the top-break design, combining the small caliber and spur trigger of the origi-

nals with the hinged mechanism of the Model 3. The spur trigger was soon dropped in favor of the typical trigger surrounded by a trigger guard that's found on most sixguns today. The only other thing needed to complete the pocket model was a double-action mechanism. That arrived in 1880.

Dick Tracy's .38

Smith & Wesson would produce five models of the top-break double-action design in both .32 and .38 until well after World War I. Overlapping the production of the old-style pocket model was the advent of the solid-frame double-action pocket pistol in the 1890s.

In the 1880s, Smith & Wesson had advanced the Double Action Safety Hammerless, the "child-proof" sixgun of the time. There was no outside hammer, and the safety consisted of a grip safety that a small child could not depress. This safety consisted of a lever in the back of the grip that pivoted at the base and was depressed naturally by an adult hand when the gun was fired. This same design would later appear in the Centennial series.



Smith & Wesson's CS45 Chiefs Special easily handles Cor-Bon's +P .45 loads.

By 1903, Smith & Wesson had added the now-trademarked locking lug under the barrel. A pivoting pin in the lug fitted into the end of the ejector rod when the cylinder was closed. During this period, the double-action pocket pistols became the stylish-looking little five-shot revolvers that generations of shooters took to heart. That first .38 five-shooter arrived in 1917 on what was referred to as the I-Frame, or .38/.32 frame. To utilize the .38 S&W round in the little I-Frame, it was necessary to reduce the number of rounds from a six-shot .32 to a five-shot .38.

Meanwhile in Hartford, Conn., Colt had shortened the barrel of their Police Positive to 2". This produced Dick Tracy's favorite Detective Special, the first pocket pistol chambered in .38 Special. That was in 1926, yet it took Colt seven more years to realize the Detective Special worked much better in a pocket if the grip frame was rounded fore and aft.

Regardless, Colt dominated the powerful pocket-pistol market with the Detective Special for nearly 25 years. This happened primarily because the I-Frame Smith & Wesson gun was a mite small for chambering in the more powerful .38 Special, which operated at higher chamber pressures than the shorter .38 S&W round.

Chiefs Special Is Born

By the late 1940s, War World I was over, the economy was booming, new guns were in demand, and Smith & Wesson began looking at improving their I-Frame by chambering it in .38 Special. The new revolver that evolved was the ever-so-slightly-larger J-Frame. In the



Author's favorite Model 36 Chiefs Special (L) with the new Chiefs in 9mm (C) and .40 S&W. The Model 36 has Metalife finish, bobbed hammer, custom Herrett stocks and tuned action by Teddy Jacobsen.



Both the S&W CS9 (L) and the CS40 are eight-shooters.

fall of 1950, the International Association of Chiefs of Police met in Colorado Springs, Colo., and peace officers from all over the country were the first to see the new J-Frame .38 Special. When a contest was held to name the new five-shooter, what else came forth but the Chiefs Special?

The first Chiefs Specials were standard with a round butt, a 2" barrel and a choice of blue or nickel finish. They slipped easily into a pocket or purse. As is so often the case with perfection, "improvement" came next. The Chiefs Special (later dubbed the Model 36 when S&W went to model numbers in 1957) was soon offered with the option of a 3" barrel and a more hand-filling square-butted grip frame.

The basic Chiefs Special platform has been used for several very interesting, as well as practical, variations over the years. Two years after the introduction of the basic Chiefs Specials came the Airweight Chiefs Special, complete with aluminum

S&W CS9 - 9mm Chiefs Special

Load gr.	Muzzle Velocity	Group/50 Feet*
Black Hills 115 gr. JHP	1,029 fps	1 3/8"
Black Hills 115 gr. FMJ	999 fps	1 3/4"
Black Hills 124 gr. JHP	962 fps	1 1/4"
Black Hills 147 gr. JHP	884 fps	1 1/2"
CCI Blazer 115 gr. JHP	1,029 fps	1 3/4"
CCI Blazer 124 gr. JSP	1,031 fps	2 1/4"
Cor-Bon 90 gr. +P JHP	1,416 fps	2"
Cor-Bon 115 gr. +P JHP	1,195 fps	1 7/8"
Cor-Bon 125 gr. +P JHP	1,206 fps	1 1/2"
Hornady 115 gr. XTP	1,017 fps	1 1/4"
Hornady 115 gr. RN	1,016 fps	1 7/8"
Hornady 124 gr. XTP	1,048 fps	1 1/2"
Remington 147 gr. JHP	915 fps	2"
Speer Gold Dot 115 gr.	931 fps	1 7/8"
Speer Gold Dot 124 gr.	920 fps	1 5/8"
Winchester 147 gr. JHP	891 fps	1 5/8"

*Six of seven shots at 50 feet.

Smith & Wesson's .45 Models are (L to R): 4506, 4516 and CS45.



cylinder. The cylinder did not fare well with high-speed .38s, so it was replaced by a steel cylinder in 1957. However, with its aluminum alloy frame, the new Model 37 still kept its pocket-pistol rating with a weight of only 12½ ozs.

Hidden Hammers

To allow for easier pocket carry without the worry of snagging the hammer on clothing, two additional models were introduced in two variations

each. The Bodyguard Model 38 and Airweight Model 49 were simply the standard Model 36 with a frame extension on both sides of the hammer. Just the tip of the hammer was exposed to permit cocking the revolver for single-action firing. With the Model 40 and 42 Airweights came the Centennial, which used the grip safety and concealed hammer of the double-action Smith & Wesson Pocket Pistols of the 1880s.

It would be extremely challenging to

determine the number of pockets and purses that have carried Chiefs Specials over the past 50 years. In 1963, I thought enough of my wife to present her with the best possible Mother's Day present I could find for the mother of three children— a Chiefs Special. Today, she still carries the same type of revolver, a 442 Centennial Airweight, in her fanny pack, and she totes a 642 Airweight in her purse.

Stainless Steel Chiefs

Perhaps the most important variation of the Chiefs Special— in fact, one of the revolvers to have the most far-reaching effect on handgun manufacturers— is the Model 60. Fifteen years after the first Chiefs Special was introduced at the gathering of police chiefs, a stainless steel version, the Model 60, was unveiled at a similar gathering. Identical to the Model 36 except for the material used in its manufacture, the Model 60 launched a new era in firearms manufacturing. Many more sixguns are produced in stainless steel than in blued versions by the major manufacturers of today.

The Chiefs Special has continued to evolve over the years. Today's basic model is the 36LS, or Ladysmith. In addition, there are 11 other versions offered in Airweight, Titanium, and even in .357 Magnum chamberings.

In 1950, the revolver was king. The number-one peace officer handgun of choice was a 4" Colt or S&W double-



The CS45 Chiefs Special holds six .45 ACP rounds in its magazine.

action sixgun chambered in .38 Special or .357 Magnum. It was only natural that a companion pocket gun also be a revolver. All this has changed over the past five decades, with most departments long ago going to the semi-automatic as the number-one sidearm. This called for a new batch of Chiefs Specials in semi-automatic. Today, the Smith & Wesson pistols are the CS9, CS40 and CS45.

Semi-Auto Chiefs

All three of the new series of Chiefs Specials are built on a compact frame and in double-action format, with alloy frames and stainless steel slides. The slide-mounted thumb safety is on the left side, and the grips are rubber wrap-arounds from Hogue. The Chiefs also share a common bobbed hammer and a .305" combat trigger, as well as an easy-to-see Novak LoMount rear two-dot sight mated with a white-dot front sight. Barrel length is 3" for the CS9; the CS40 and CS45 barrels are 1/4" longer.

The CS9 and CS40 are eight-shooters

S&W CS40 - .40 S&W Chiefs Special

Load	Muzzle Velocity	Group/50 Feet*
Black Hills 180 gr. JHP	840 fps	2 1/4"
CCI 180 gr. JHP	883 fps	2 3/4"
Cor-Bon 135 gr. +P JHP	1,225 fps	1 3/4"
Federal 180 gr. JHP	905 fps	2"
Hornady 155 gr. XTP	1,115 fps	1 1/4"
Hornady 180 gr. XTP	914 fps	1 5/8"
Hornady 180 gr. JFP	945 fps	2"
Remington 155 gr. JHP	1,003 fps	1 1/2"
Remington 180 gr. JHP	874 fps	2 1/4"
Winchester 155 gr. FMJ	936 fps	2 1/8"
Winchester 165 gr. SXT	980 fps	1 3/4"
Winchester 180 gr. JHP	864 fps	1 1/2"

*Six of seven shots at 50 feet.



S&W CS45 - .45 ACP Chiefs Special

Load	Muzzle Velocity	Group/50 Feet*
Black Hills 185 gr. JHP	882 fps	2½"
Black Hills 200 gr. JHP	874 fps	2¼"
Black Hills 230 gr. JHP	737 fps	2"
CCI Blazer 200 gr. JHP	859 fps	1⅛"
Cor-Bon 165 gr. +P JHP	995 fps	1⅜"
Cor-Bon 185 gr. +P JHP	992 fps	1¼"
Cor-Bon 200 gr. +P	932 fps	1¾"
Hornady 185 gr. JHP	863 fps	1½"
Hornady 200 gr. +P JHP	910 fps	1½"
Hornady 230 gr. +P JHP	815 fps	1½"
Speer Lawman 200 gr. JHP	876 fps	2¼"
Speer 230 gr. Gold Dot JHP	785 fps	2¼"
Winchester 230 gr. JHP	716 fps	1⅞"

*Five of six shots at 50 feet.

with a magazine capacity of seven rounds, while the CS45 carries six rounds in its magazine, making it a seven-shot big bore. All three come equipped with an extra magazine. The original Model 36 Chiefs Special weighs in at 20 ozs. The new Chiefs are rated at 20.8 ozs., 24.2 ozs. and 23.9 ozs. for the CS9, CS40 and CS45, respectively.

Testing The Chiefs

I tested the new Chiefs Specials with a wide variety of factory ammunition of the standard and +P variety. With 16 different loads used in the CS9, 12 in the CS40 and 13 in the CS45, the three test guns performed flawlessly—no malfunctions. At a shooting distance of 50 ft., the CS9 and CS40 shot slightly low, while the CS45 was right on target.

Allowing one throwaway round from each magazine, the CS9 9mm averaged just slightly over 1½" for all 16 loads tested. The most accurate was Black Hills' 124 gr. JHP at 962 fps and Hornady's 115 gr. XTP at 1,017 fps. Both loads of six shots went into 1¼".

Switching to the .40 S&W chambered CS40, the 12 loads tested averaged just under 2". The most accurate loads were Remington's 155 gr. JHP at 1,003 fps and Winchester's 180 gr. JHP at 864 fps.

The CS45, with its 13 different loads, averaged 1¾" for six rounds at 50 ft. For the biggest Chiefs Special, the most accu-





New Chiefs Specials (L to R) ride in Gould & Goodrich leather: CS45 in #801 Yaqui Slide; CS40 in #800 Two Slot; and CS9 in #810 Inside-The-Pants.

rate loads were Cor-Bon's 165 gr. and 185 gr. +P JHP at a little over 990 fps, and CCI's Blazer 200 gr. JHP load at 860 fps.

For me, the pointability of double-action autos isn't as good as with double-action sixguns. While I have a natural pointability with the original Chiefs Special, I have to work to keep up the muzzle of the three new models. This is a personal problem, not an engineering or design problem. It is also the only item of fault I can find with the new line of Chiefs Specials.

When it comes to ammunition, the three CS models are a notable improvement over the 50-year-old Chief. In 1950, the .38 Special was far superior to the 9mm. That has changed. Many of the 9mm loads that are now available surpass the .38 in performance. In addition, the 9mm Chiefs carry eight rounds compared to five in the Model 36. Cor-Bon's 125 gr. +P JHP at 1,200 fps in the CS9 is probably as effective as the same weight .357 Magnum in a short-barreled revolver.

When the .40 S&W or the .45 ACP is compared

to the .38 Special, there's certainly no contest. The big bores win easily. In the .40 S&W, Cor-Bon's 135 gr. +P does over 1,200 fps, while Hornady's 155 XTP is over 1,100 fps. That's a lot of punch in a 1½ lb. defensive handgun. In portable semi-autos, the .45 ACP remains the king of defensive loadings. Both of Cor-Bon's 165 gr. and 185 gr. +P JHP loadings are

right at 1,000 fps from the biggest of the little Chiefs Specials.

Ease Of Carry

The .38 Special Chiefs Special still remains the easiest to carry in a trouser or jacket pocket, while the three CS Models are naturals for carrying in a properly designed holster. For leather, I turned to Gould & Goodrich and their Gold Line series. The company is long known for quality leather, especially for law enforcement and concealed-carry self-defense.

For the CS 9, I went with the #810 Inside-The-Pants holster. When placed inside the pants, this rough-out leather holster, with two snap-on, around-the-belt tabs, stays where it is placed and rides comfortably. This holster also features a screw adjustment at the welt to allow the tension to be adjusted.

The CS40 rides in a #800 Two Slot holster of the pancake style. There is no safety strap, as this holster is simply form-fitted to the contours of the Chiefs Special .40 S&W.

Finally, for the CS45, which in all likelihood will be the most carried of



The original Chiefs Special .38 (L) with the (top to bottom) CS9 9mm, CS40 .40 S&W and CS45 .45ACP.

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The CS9 Chiefs Special (R) is more compact than the Model 3913.



the CS45 protrudes less than 1" below the belt line.

Actually, with the three Chiefs Specials and the selected holsters, it's easy to fit the semi-auto and holster combination to the vest. The CS9, since it rides inside the pants, is worn with a short vest. The CS40, in its Two Slot holster, works fine for me with a vest from the

the new Chiefs, the Gould & Goodrich leather of choice is the #801 Yaqui Slide. Simplicity in itself, this design features a holster that is about as compact as leather can be, with a belt slot and a folded-over strip of leather to hold the barrel and trigger guard. Two adjustable tension screws are provided at the trigger guard. A loop cutout on the back of the holster allows for perfect placement over a belt loop for added security.

It's easy to conceal a sixgun or semi-automatic in cold weather, but concealment becomes more of a logistical problem as the weather warms. The tendency is to go to smaller and smaller firearms as less clothing is worn. A so-called travel or mesh vest is a dead giveaway of a concealed weapon. However, a Western-style vest works. These are often worn by those who take part in cowboy shooting competitions. The combination of the CS45 and the Gould & Goodrich version of the Yaqui Slide can easily be concealed under a vest, as the barrel on

tall rack. The CS45, in its Yaqui Slide, does well with a normal-size vest. Ease of concealment is one advantage that semi-autos have over sixguns. Even as I write this, the CS45 is riding in its Yaqui Slide under my Wahmaker vest.

Working Chiefs

I am no expert when it comes to all the ins and outs of defensive sixguns, but I do have a CCW, carry regularly, and know what works for me. I also know what I like and what I can hit with at reasonable ranges. These three Chiefs all pass my main "ability" tests—likeability, pack-ability and shoot-ability—with no problems.



For more information, contact: Smith & Wesson, 2100 Roosevelt Ave., Dept AH, Springfield, MA 01102; 1-800-331-0852; www.smith-wesson.com. For quality leather for sixguns and semi-autos, Gould & Goodrich is found at 709 E. McNeil St., Dept. AH, Lillington, NC 27546; 1-800-277-0732; www.gouldusa.com.

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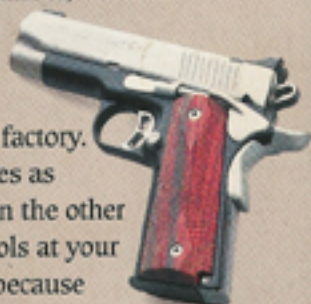
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