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# AMERICAN HANDGUNNER®

JULY/AUGUST 2001 Vol. 25, Number 152

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**MAY/JUNE 2001**

### Hitting The Funny Bane

I've enjoyed *American Handgunner* for years, but usually don't read certain articles, such as this last issue's "SHOT Show 2001." I prefer the nuts and bolts articles on things I'm interested in, but I began reading "SHOT Show 2001" because I had read all the articles of interest to me and there wasn't anything else within arm's reach of the Throne Of Continuing Education.

Please tell me this is the first time Michael Bane has written for *American Handgunner*! If it isn't, I've been denying myself a lot of laughs. Bane's writing is great. Please have him cover other events, and I really don't care what—he'll make it funny.

Tom Sailors  
Calif.

### Doing The Makarov

Many thanks to Ken Hackathorn ("Tactical Advantage," May/June 2001)

for proclaiming the Pistolet Makarov the best low-priced handgun for self-defense. Maybe now I will get a little respect at the range. No more jibes about being the big Libertarian with the little Commie pistol.

In gratitude, I offer the following tips to any potential Makarovniks among the readers of *American Handgunner*. The best inexpensive improvement to the PM is the replacement of the standard grip: Pearce and Makwrap are the two most popular upgrades. The nicest "one-stop-shop" for such grips (and every other imaginable PM accessory) is [www.Makarov.com](http://www.Makarov.com). Tell them Ken sent you.

Matt McCally  
Burien, Wash.

### The Mighty Makarov

I enjoyed your Makarov article ("Tactical Advantage," May/June '01). It confirms what I have long believed. When the subject of pocket guns comes up, the single-stack 9x18 Makarov receives far

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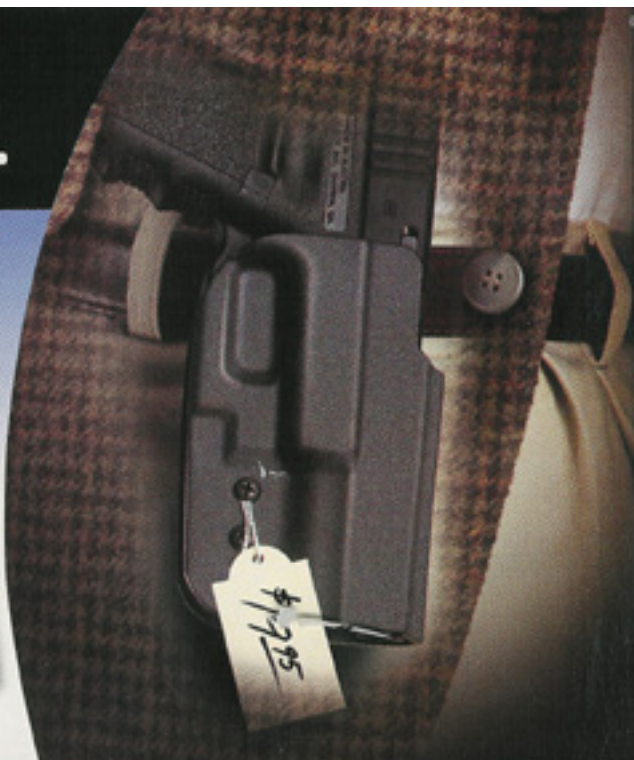
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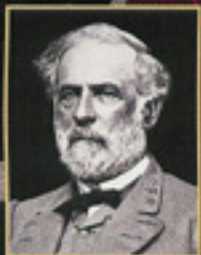




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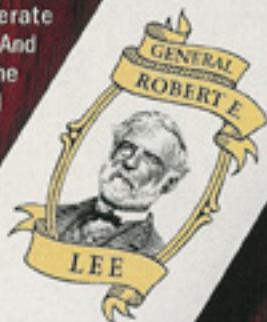
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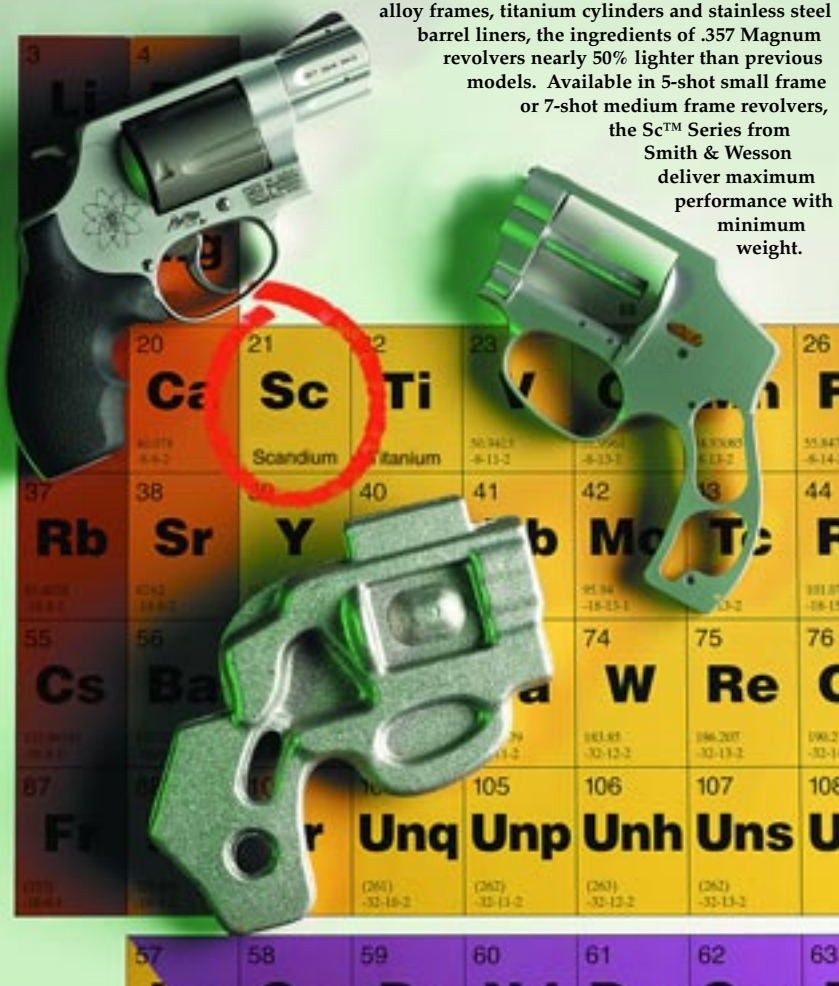
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## SPEAKOUT

less attention than it deserves.

At one time, I owned four of them, two of East German manufacture, one Russian and one Chinese. Here is my two cents worth:

I have frequently fired a Makarov in a 10-month, 1,080-round, 25-yard bullseye league. I didn't win any prizes, but my score was not the lowest, either.

The little gun is quite accurate and I do not know of a single case of a failure to feed, fire or eject—this with both heavy and light loads, both jacketed and home cast bullets. During our early experimentation, before loading data was available and before we had a properly fitting seating punch, we produced and fired loads with weak charges and bullets that obviously did not point to the same compass point as the case. The Makarovs could not have cared less.

Of those I have seen, the ones from China are the poorest finished inside and out. The East German ones are the best and have the best triggers, but Chinese and East German makes both functioned perfectly. All the ones I've seen had a chrome-lined barrel, which is a nice touch. Caution: Some bargain ammo from Eastern Europe has Berdan corrosive primers.

Karl at [www.makarov.com](http://www.makarov.com) has parts and accessories; he provided me with a slide with Novak sights for one of mine, and these are a great improvement. The holster I use is for a Walther PPK, slightly cut out for the hammer drop safety. Four different weights of recoil springs are available from Wolffe if you want to experiment to see if you can drop the cases in something under 30 feet.

William Kinter  
Hellertown, Pa.

## Fingerprint Willies

I've been a hacker for 20 years and a handgunner for somewhat less. The thought of a holster that reads fingerprints ("Handgun Leather," May/June '01) gives me the willies.

Living in the People's Republic of California, I do not have concealed-carry rights. But I have experience with gizmos that read your fingerprint to grant access. For example, I own a fingerprint device from Digital Persona which is supposed to allow access to my PC. Not that I have anything to hide; I bought it as a neat toy.

Which is all it is good for. On the first day I had it, I discovered three obvious ways around it. Okay, that's not so hard to do in a Windows environment. But when I contacted the makers, they shrugged. Evidently, if I wanted real security, I'd need to pay a lot more. I hope that holster is not running Windows as its OS!

I have noticed that an inordinate amount of pressure is required at times to allow the device to "see" the fingerprint

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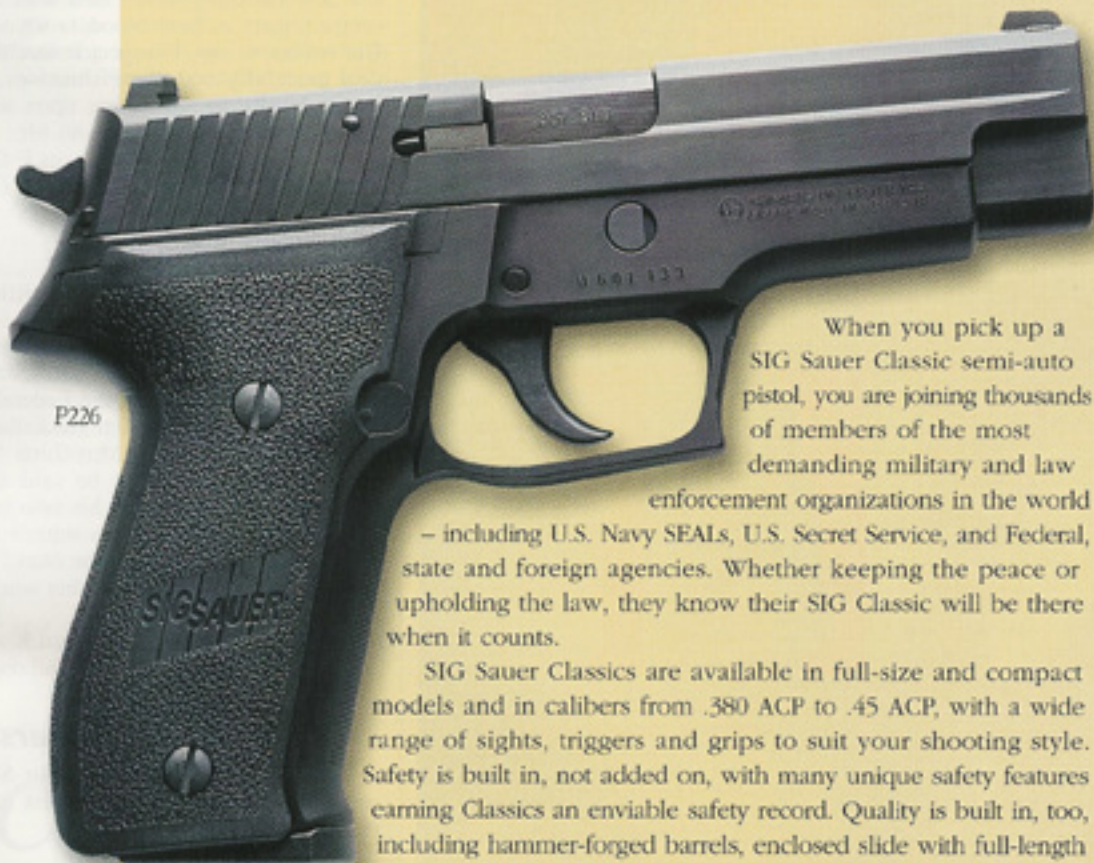
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## SPEAKOUT

well enough to recognize it. I frequently need to press one finger down on the sensor window with another finger.

More worrisome is the "schmutz" problem. If the window gets dirty or smudged by the buildup of normal oils from fingers, the recognition begins to take longer, or fails altogether. Oh, and don't use Windex to clean that window. You must use sticky tape to lift successive layers of schmutz from the window.

I have not conducted experiments to see how the thing would deal with scars on the fingers, or fresh blood, or whatever. But suffice to say, I suspect it would not deal gracefully with these situations, and would hardly be something upon which an officer would want to risk his life.

James F. Glass  
Chatsworth, Calif.

## Ken Said It All

I have been contemplating writing a book on combat shooting techniques for some time. I thought I would base this on 26 years as an Air Force Para-Rescuer as well as my time with the Federal Air Marshals. Then I read Ken Hackathorn's "Tactical Advantage" (May/June '01). Everything that needs to be said about shooting comes down to his two statements: "Place the bullets where they belong and everything will be okay," and "Remember, it's not the gun that wins the fight, it's the user."

Paul Koester  
[paul.koester@mail.dss.mil](mailto:paul.koester@mail.dss.mil)

## Doing The Numbers

Here's my response to your S&W article and the subsequent letters to the editor (May/June '01):

**4**

Number of Rugers I owned before Bill Ruger's magazine capacity limit letter.

**1**

Number of Rugers I own now.

**12**

Number of Colts I owned before Colt's decision to stop producing most of their pistol line.

**2**

Number of Colts I own now.

**7**

Number of Smith & Wessons I owned before they signed the agreement.

**1**

Number of Smiths I own now.

Fortunately, I've been able to replace them with fine arms from Walther, HK, Taurus and SIG.

John Bales  
Marietta, Ga.

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Smaller than the Tomcat, the Beretta Model 21 Bobcat is available in either .22LR (7+1 capacity) or .25ACP (8+1 capacity). Weighing only 11.5 ounces, this sleek double-action pistol has the design features that make every Beretta dependable and reliable, every time.



21 Bobcat Inox



950 Jetfire

The Beretta Model 950 Jetfire single-action pistol is the smallest, and lightest (9.9 ounces), in the Beretta line. Like the Tomcat and Bobcat, the Jetfire features a comfortable, contoured grip, which protects the hand from being pinched by the slide while providing a firm grip, improving control. The Jetfire accommodates 8+1 rounds of .25ACP ammunition.

The same dedication to advanced design, uncompromising quality and strict quality control that make the 92F, Cougar and Cheetah such international standouts is also found in Beretta's small caliber 3032 Tomcat, 21 Bobcat, and 950 Jetfire. These pocket-size pistols epitomize simplicity, safety and practical use.

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### The Hidden Chip

I have seen no adequate discussion of the horrible potential of authorized user technology (AUT), otherwise known as "smart guns." For some time, veterinarians have been implanting ID chips in animals. My parents' dog has one under the skin above his shoulders. The ID number can be read by merely touching the dog's skin with a hand-held scanner and pressing a button.

Here is one scenario. The anti-gunners get a licensing law and an implant law. To own a handgun, a person must get a license and have an ID chip implanted in his shooting hand.

When the handgun is gripped, the mechanism looks for an ID number in the user's hand, compares that number to the one stored in its memory, and, if a match is obtained, verifies that the license expiration date has not been reached. Only then will the mechanism allow the gun to fire. All the government has to do to effectively disarm the gun owner is let his license expire.

The license law will take some time, the implant law probably more. The development of a mechanism small

enough and sufficiently resistant to shock and tampering will, I expect, be slow, but the government's imperative to work on AUT is open-ended.

Perhaps this scenario will not be fulfilled. But since the anti-gunners think that "authorized" means "by government," it would be foolish to expect a benign outcome.

Randolph P. Flowe  
Andrews, Texas

### Elegant Eagles

It's a pleasure to see justice done to Eagle Grips (March/April '01) with a four-page spread. I've tried dozens of grips from various makers over the years on my many Smith & Wesson revolvers, only to replace them all with Eagle's Classic and Secret Service styles. There's no better concealment grip than the latter, and the Classic stocks are unequaled for affordability, comfort and recoil management. The Classics are only about a third of the cost of similar styles from custom manufacturers, making them the cheapest and most effective way to tame magnum loads. As a bonus, they're subtly beautiful, as well.

John Roemer  
Parbeton, Md.



### Centenarian CCW Holder

Here's a photo of my dad, age 100, one of the older holders of a CCW permit from Snyder County, Pa. He's still quite active, walks a mile day and bowls in a Monday night league. The gun is a Smith & Wesson kit gun 22/32.

Wesley E. Romberger II  
Payson, Ariz.

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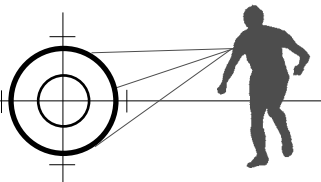
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## THE UNINTERESTING POLICE SIDEARM



Conventional doctrine is that the police duty sidearm is a close-range weapon carried for reactive emergencies only, and that its potential accuracy is not particularly relevant. Like all conventional wisdom, this only holds true in conventional situations.

Bad guys know how to take cover and create distance, just like we do. Remember the military-style tactics employed by suspects Platt and Matix in the notorious FBI Massacre in Dade

County, April 11, 1986? Remember the distance, body armor and occasional cover employed by the perpetrators of the North Hollywood bank robbery? Bad guys aren't all tactical morons.

Distance, obscured line of sight and small targets were in play in both cases. At such moments, the ability to deliver precision accuracy with the only weapon available—the one in your holster when you arrive on the scene—becomes a critical component of police officer survival.

## THE AUTO SWITCH

Fifteen years ago, the revolver still held sway in American policing. Accuracy was one of its strong suits. The Colt Python would typically shoot under 1" at 25 yards. You could expect 1.5" from a Ruger or Smith service revolver using match-grade mid-range .38 wadcutters. The groups would open up some if you shot all-lead +P rounds, but you'd be back to match accuracy if you loaded with 125 gr. JHPs, whether at +P .38 or .357 Magnum velocities.

Police departments nationwide were already getting away from the old FBI course with its 50-yard qualification, and down to "quals" that stretched no farther than half that distance. The switch to autos accelerated that process.

Back in the '70s, I studied the first good-sized police department in Massachusetts to switch to the auto. When Wrentham PD adopted the first-generation S&W Model 59 9mm, they immediately cut the 50-yard line out of their program. The reason, they told me, was that the Model 59 wasn't sufficiently accurate at that distance. Even at 25 yards, theirs would only stay in 4" on a good day.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, much later, would become the first state to make 15 yards the maximum handgun qualification distance required of its local police.



**SIG P-226**

This is not to say that modern police autoloaders are that bad. Some will indeed give 1" groups at 25 yards. These include the best HK P7s and USPs, SIG P-220s and Glock .45s, all presuming the most compatible ammunition. I have a Beretta 92FS that will do 1.5" every time from 25 yards with Pro-Load Tactical JHPs.

Ruger's old P85 earned its bad rep for poor accuracy, but today's P90 and P97 .45s from the same maker are literally match-accurate. My department has P90s, and they average 2" at 25 yards with Black Hills 230 gr. duty loads. When I was shepherd for more than 20 S&W .45 autos, they all reliably delivered 2.5" with CCI JHPs. This is acceptable accuracy in a duty gun.

## DUMBING-DOWN POLICE STANDARDS



Semiautos took over police handgunning at a time when forces were already at work to dumb-down the standard of shooting excellence delivered to rank and file officers. Marksmanship skill badges were seen as elitist and were coming off the uniforms, and departments were going to a pass/fail scoring system where even evidence, let alone recognition, of superior skill was thrown in File 13.

All this was done in the name of civil liability and affirmative action hiring, usually by officials who had little courtroom experience in dealing with either. It was during this period that the KISS principle became a byword in police weapons training.

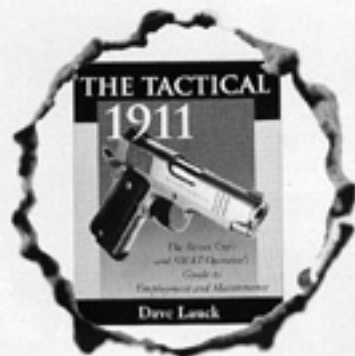
The turning away from accuracy and long-range hit potential had at least some good justification. Cops were being killed at very close distances, not long ones. It was absolutely necessary to focus more on quick and dirty CQB techniques. Alas, instead of keeping long-range tactical training and adding CQB, administrators left instructors strapped for time, and something had to give.

The longrange-shooting was usually discarded to allow more close-in time. The ideal, of course, would have been to find time to add for critical close quarters work, and keep time for the long-range skills. Any study of police gunfights would show that while longer-range encounters were fewer in number, cops trained to hit at long distances usually won such encounters. You don't give up what you're winning to shore up what you're losing; you keep the one and fix the other.



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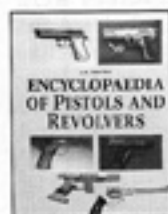
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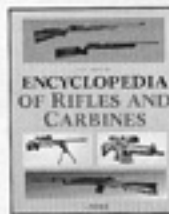
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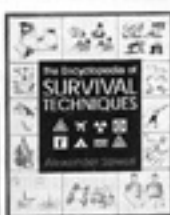
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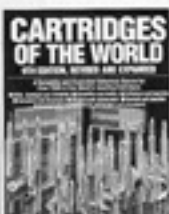
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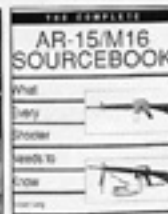
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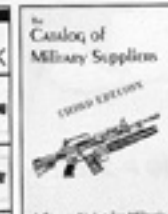
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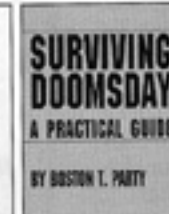
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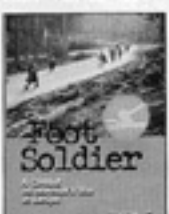
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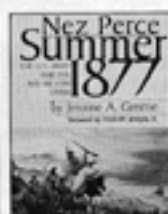
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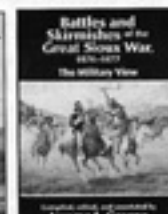
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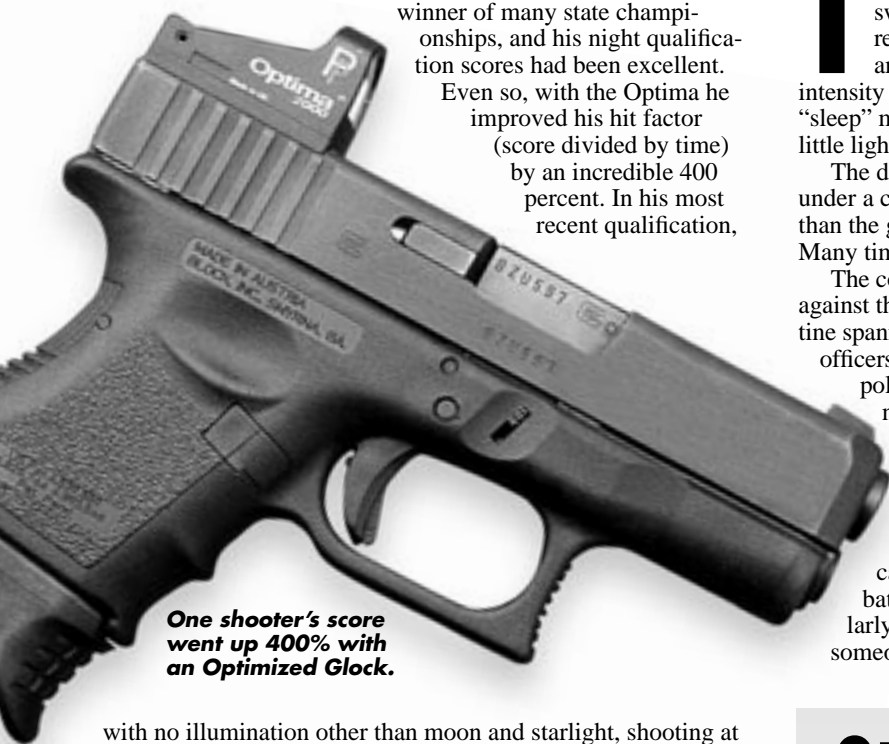
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## Optimizing The Glock

**D**etective-Lieutenant Steve Kukowski of the Minot, N.D. Police Dept. recently obtained authorization from his department to evaluate the Tasco Optima 2000 red-dot sight for duty use. We had a gunsmith fit an Optima to his Glock 26, then pitted it against another G26 fitted with factory night sights. As reported in this column in the Sept/Oct '00 issue, at close range there was no difference in speed or accuracy. At 15 yards, there was no appreciable difference in speed, but the Optima was more accurate. From 25 yards and out, the Optima was both faster and more accurate, the margin of superiority increasing exponentially as the range grew.

It was in low-light shooting that the Optima proved decisively superior. Kukowski is an excellent shooter, a PPC Grand Master and winner of many state championships, and his night qualification scores had been excellent.

Even so, with the Optima he improved his hit factor (score divided by time) by an incredible 400 percent. In his most recent qualification,



**One shooter's score went up 400% with an Optimized Glock.**

with no illumination other than moon and starlight, shooting at ranges from three to 25 yards, all of his 48 shots could have been covered by one hand.

Since the initial testing, Kukowski has carried an Optimized Glock concealed on duty every day for 15 months. He has fired 1,400 rounds, all with department-issue Black Hills 147 gr. subsonic ammunition. After 15 months, the Optima is still operating on the original battery with no deterioration in dot brightness.

Since initial sighting-in, the Optima has had to be adjusted once. On that occasion, Kukowski loaned the pistol to several friends who had never before tried a dot sight. When they returned it, the undercover cop checked it on the range before going back on duty and found the point-of-impact had shifted about 2" left at 25 yards, thanks to one of the buddies who had apparently fiddled with the adjustment screws. Besides re-zeroing, the sight looks and functions as well as it did when brand new.

## THE ALWAYS "ON" SIGHT



**T**he Optima sight is always "on." In fact, there is no on-off switch. The battery life seems surprising, but it should be recognized that the dot intensity varies with the level of ambient light. In bright light, the dot reaches maximum intensity and draws the most power. In darkness, it goes into "sleep" mode, drawing virtually no power. Worn concealed, very little light reaches the sight, so little power is required.

The dot's response to light is amazingly fast. Drawn from under a coat, the dot reaches optimum intensity much quicker than the gun can be brought to eye level. Really. We tried it. Many times.

The concealing coat or sweater also provides some protection against the inevitable bumps a carry gun gets during a daily routine spanning 15 months. Duty guns worn openly by uniformed officers are more vulnerable. If you're ever in the offices of a police station, you'll likely notice that the doorframes are nicked and chipped at "gun level," where the gun and other belt-gear, such as flashlights, keys and cuffs, have banged into the doorframes.

Longterm experience with the Optima has been totally positive. For maximum battery life, it's suggested the gun be worn concealed, and the sight be capped with the provided cover when not in use. Change batteries at least once a year, check point-of-impact regularly as you should with any sighting system. Especially if someone else has been using it.

## ON BASE PERCENTAGE

**T**he current Tasco catalog shows bases for several Glock models, but not the G26. We used a base for the G19. It was fitted by a retired military armorer who took the job as a favor, and subsequently advised us that the mod was a simple task. If you encounter problems fitting a base, have the work done by a gunsmith; it should not be an expensive or lengthy task.

For guns for which Tasco doesn't supply bases, get in touch with Evolution Gun Works. They can custom-make an Optima base for most popular pistols. The address is EGW, Dept. AH, 4050 Skyron Dr., Doylestown, PA 18901; phone: (215) 348-9892; fax: (215) 348-1056; e-mail: egw@pil.net.



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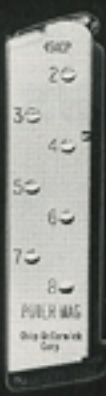


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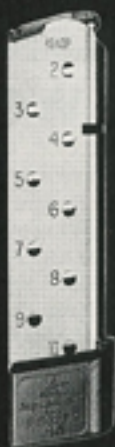
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## WHEN THE BULLET MEETS THE BONE

**T**he debate over the best bullets for handgun hunting with a revolver continues to rage—hardcast lead or jacketed. Cast bullets seem to get a lot of press, but are they really as effective as jacketed on game that the majority of handgunners hunt? That means deer, pigs and black bear.

Deer are by far our most popular big game. Deer are relatively fragile animals. Pigs are a bit larger and more solidly put together. The great majority of black bear taken are well under 200 pounds. All of these animals are easily penetrated, with the whitetail being the easiest to ventilate. Any suitable hunting bullet from any properly loaded revolver of .357 Magnum or greater power level certainly has enough penetration to kill a deer, assuming a properly placed shot.

Unless the central nervous system is instantly destroyed, an animal dies only when its brain runs out of oxygen. A deer struck with a double lung shot may run quite a distance before that happens—or he may not go far at all. Many factors are involved here, such as exactly what the bullet struck.

Did the bullet penetrate both lungs and exit without striking a major blood vessel in the lung tissue? Was it a fringe hit or center hit? Did it strike any of the major arteries or veins between the lungs or miss them completely? Was the animal unaware of danger when it was hit, or was it pumped on adrena-

**320 gr. hardcast lead .44 bullets with three recovered from Cape buffalo. These are made to penetrate, not expand.**



line? Did the bullet hit a rib going in, producing numerous tissue-destroying fragments? Or did the bullet slip between two ribs with no fragmentation? Did the bullet itself shed fragments, greatly increasing tissue damage and bleeding?

Animal reaction to a hit is fairly unpredictable. Sometimes there is almost zero reaction to the hit itself. Reaction to a hit which strikes major bones—not ribs—is usually unmistakable. A standing animal hit in the midsection or farther back will usually kick at its side while arching its back and beginning a run.

## THE EIGHT GREAT TRUTHS ABOUT TERMINAL BALLISTICS



- If the shot is poorly placed, an animal is likely to be lost.
- An exit wound usually bleeds much more than an entrance wound.
- The differences in bullet diameter and velocities of .44 to .50 caliber revolvers is minimal, normally unrecognizable in either animal reaction or wound examination.
- Jacketed expanding bullets create more tissue damage resulting in faster death and greater chance of animal recovery than non-expanding bullets, which just drill a small hole.
- Roundnose cast or FMJ jacketed bullets, both of which are designed for sheer penetration, are not very effective in ordinary deer hunting; they kill, but you seldom recover the animal.
- Increasing the velocity of a cast bullet by using it in a single-shot, like a T/C chambered in .44 Magnum or .444 Marlin, does little to increase its lethality. The opposite is true with a jacketed expanding bullet; lethality is greatly increased.
- Iron sights result in poor shot placement compared to a dot or scope sight.
- Normally you get much better results with a jacketed expanding bullet, but shot placement is critical with anything. A knife in the heart is more effective than 10,000 ft/lbs in the ass.



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## Tuning Up The Little Guns

A steady stream of requests comes into most gunshops to do action jobs on little semi-automatic pocket pistols such as the Beretta Tomcat, Walther PPK, Colt Pony and even various deringers. With the new concealed carry laws, citizens are finding out just how uncomfortable, inconvenient and what a general pain in the lower back it is to carry a big, heavy gun full of ammo all day.

Many times when I see a police officer stand up after sitting for a long period in a patrol car, I feel his pain. If the powers-that-be hang any more equipment off policemen's belts, some day the officers will fall down and not be able to get up, just like the knights in King Arthur's court with all their armor.

Women with CCWs are big buyers of little pocket guns. They're lightweight and fit in their handbags, but the inherent problems with these pop guns become overwhelming for them. The double-action trigger pull is so heavy, the gals cannot pull it for the first shot. If the pistol is DA-only, women simply cannot use it and should not depend on it for protection.

I have taken some ladies to the range and watched them struggle to keep the pistol level while pulling the 15 to 20 lb. trigger. They just cannot do it.

The problem women, and many men, face trying to use these little semi-autos is actually two-fold. First, their hands and fingers are not large enough and long enough to get a proper grip. Second, they are not strong enough to pull the trigger without disturbing their sight alignment, making any sort of accuracy impossible.

After the first shot, they have to shift their grip back to a normal hold for a single-action second shot; by that time the pip squeak .25, .32 or .380 bullet, these guns typically shoot has bounced off the bad guy's noggin and he is all over them.

The other side of the problem is with men whose hands are so big they cannot get more than one or two fingers on the grip.

## A REAL GUN

How do the factories overcome the problem of a small, light hammer and no leverage? They install a hammer spring that is so heavy it overcomes both problems by driving the hammer into the firing pin with such force that the ignition of the primer is assured. The downside of this design is a trigger pull so stiff that there is no way a person with a weak hand can fire a shot and stay on any target—much less on a human target coming at you at a dead run with nasty thoughts.

What is the solution to this annoying little problem? Not much, other than to get a real gun. If you install a lighter hammer spring, the pistol will be unreliable and a danger to you. Most gunsmiths will not even work on these toy guns with the exception of honing the action for smoother pull, so that is pretty much out of the question.

By the time the gunsmith takes one of these guns apart and tries to figure out what to do with it, he has lost money, and when he loses money, he also loses desire.

If you just really *have* to have a little pocket pistol, stay away from the DA-only ones and stick with a traditional double-action—at least the second shot

*The Walther PPK has a trigger designed by Dr. No. Even Q can't fix it.*

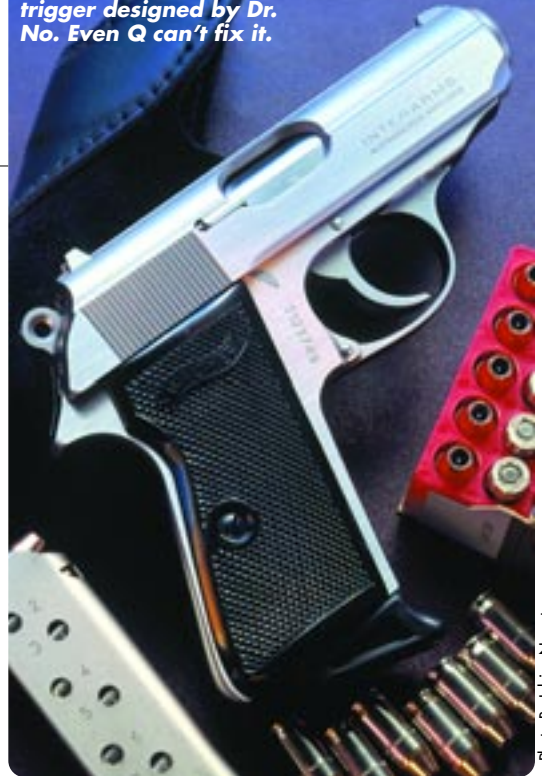
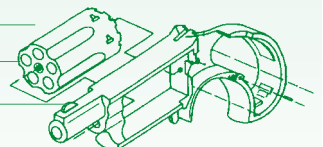


Photo By Ichiro Nagata

will give a much lighter pull. Better yet, get yourself a small J-frame Smith & Wesson or snubnose Taurus. They are fine handguns, the actions can be made smooth and light for both men and women, and they have very light carry-weight. Loaded with .38 Special +P hollowpoints, they pack a bodacious wallop.

I always recommend revolvers for men and women who do not practice with handguns at least once a month and are not completely familiar with a semi-auto's safety and operation.

## IT'S ALL A MATTER OF GEOMETRY



To compensate for the big gun weight problem, citizen shooters have been buying smaller and smaller handguns like the little Walther PPK. The problem with the heavy actions in these pop guns is rooted in the tight engineering that is a must when the guns are in the design stage. The hammer pivot point is very close to the point where the hammer strikes the firing pin, so there is no leverage.

The second problem inherent in these toy guns is the weight of the hammer. The hammer does not have enough mass to generate the force to drive it into the firing pin hard enough to bust a cap. The latter problem is made worse in hammerless pistols or pistols without a hammer spur that adds weight. If you ask your gunsmith to bob the hammer spur, you are going to exacerbate the existing problem.



## THE KYDEX KRAZE

**W**ebster's has this to say about Kydex: "A thermo-formed plastic, being a mixture of PVC and acrylic. Commonly used in the interiors of vehicle and jet fighter cockpits. Resistant to all but the most extreme temperatures, highly durable, resistant to oils and solvents. Clean-up with soap and water."

This miracle material makes holsters and knife sheaths to such a degree you'd have sworn it was invented for the sole purpose of keeping IDPA competitors smiling. Anyone with a common household oven, some bucks to buy a sheet of Kydex and some fumbling around can produce things that look remarkably like holsters, but that's where the similarity ends. Rather abruptly, I might add.

This same perceived ease-of-use has brought about a cottage industry of Kydex holster makers. Caveat emptor, as it were, my friends.



*Pierside's 1911 holster comes with a Barney bullet.*

**J**ust as the cowboy shooting craze has spawned a host of garage "leathersmiths" turning out embarrassing awful "authentic" cowboy leather, such is the terror of the weekend Kydex warrior.

Which brings us, finally, to the subject at hand. Pierside Tactical Kydex is, in actuality, Steve Serrano. He is the owner, designer and person who does what his business partner-wife tells him to do. Steve's employed as an honest-to-God, real-life, full-time cop and has been for more years than I can count, unless I take my shoes off, too. His mix of firsthand experience, an open mind as to what works and what doesn't—a form-follows-function

## Say Brother, Can You Spare Some Rounds?

**W**ith the explosion in small-frame, concealable revolvers along the lines of Smith & Wesson's titanium J-frames and Taurus's snubby, it seems thousands of these are finding their collective ways into coat pockets and ankle holsters. All of which is a good thing, except that usually, almost always, virtually every time, that's all that goes into the pocket. One little gun and five shots. Period.

This roughly translates to: Have gun... good. No spare ammo... bad.

I've never thought of Bianchi Speed Strips as a "speed loader" but merely as a convenient way to carry six rounds in one place. You can, indeed, load from one, but you've got to be careful and know what you're doing.

A little belt pouch, like this one from Rybka, is a nice complement to the strip and a nifty way to tote one. Plus, it looks classy as hell, and that's important, too.

You can find Bianchi Speed Strips in your local gunshop. Good luck finding Thad Rybka.

*Thad can be found with a GPS set for 134 Havilah Hills St., Odenville, AL 35120. Military comsats are attempting to tap his phone number, but we don't know it yet.*



*Bianchi Speed Strip inside a Rybka carrier.*

## A FORM-FOLLOWS-FUNCTION GUY

kinda guy—and his uncompromising drive toward quality in design, manufacture and material means he's no weekend Kydex warrior.

I was told about Steve by one of his customers and since, in my book, a customer's recommendation is the highest kind, I tracked down Pierside Tactical. My phone call revealed

Steve to be as serious as a federal attorney about his gear.

As a matter of fact, his follow-up letter to me on the topic deserves a quote. He made it clear I was to evaluate his products honestly and if I decided they weren't up to snuff that "...we respectfully request that you still call us with your opinions so that we may learn and improve." There you go.

I asked to look at a paddle rig, which is a style I'm particularly fond of wearing. What I got was an innovative paddle/belt loop combination I had never seen before. Perhaps I've been living a sheltered life, but this elegantly simple solution was immediately appealing.

The holster and mag pouch can be worn as either a classic paddle rig or, if you choose, as a standard belt loop, but without the need to unlace your belt each time you don it. I noticed a spacer in the belt loop to keep it from flopping when worn on the belt—nice touch. All the hardware is first-class, with no aluminum rivets. The Kydex itself is beefy and thick, not the skinny, thin stuff that weekend warriors use. The holster shows hand finishing, edge burnishing and careful detail-molding.

Once again I have to remind you I don't let junk into this column. One of *Handgunner's* tender, prideful thoughts is that we always bring you the truth. I would wear Steve's gear on the streets today and be confident. And that's a *Handgunner* truth if ever there was one.



*Pierside Tactical Kydex, PMB 721, 7071 Warner, #F, Huntington Beach, CA 92647; phone: (714) 895-3737; website: [www.piersidedist.com](http://www.piersidedist.com)*



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## RAMSHOT POWDER

**R**amshot is a new brand of powder. The moniker is a brandname for a huge powder distributor, Western Powder. They are well-known in the industry but until now, off the hand-loader's radar screen. They're the folks the ammunition manufacturers call when they need a few tons of powder from one of the major producers.

The Ramshot line consists of nine powders that span a broad spectrum of applications in handguns, rifles and shotguns. All are made to Western's specifications: seven by a Belgian company and two by Primex Technologies (formerly Winchester powders of Florida). All are double-base ball-type propellants. "Ball powder" is a registered trademark of Primex Technologies, so we have to be careful how we talk about it.

I've been working with Ramshot powders awhile now and chanced upon some data for the .45 Colt on their web-site ([www.ramshot.com](http://www.ramshot.com)) that used a propellant they call True Blue. I printed it out and started to experiment. I've been looking for something that would give me some choices outside the standards- Bullseye and Unique- and True Blue was interesting. My reason wasn't dissatisfaction: just the curious nature of an inveterate handloader.

## The Never-Never Land Of No Data

**W**ith the information in hand from loading .45 Colt 250 gr. bullets with True Blue, the next step was a small journey to the never-never land of no 200 gr. bullet data. But this time, since we're using a bullet that is 20 percent lighter, it was a pretty safe trip.

Charges of 8.5, 9.0 and 9.5 grs. gave respective velocities of 687, 719 and 758 fps. The goal was not to see how light we could load these, but rather to get something that felt good. These charges should not be reduced to avoid even the least possibility of sticking a bullet in the bore.

Ramshot powders offer the handloader something new to try and my experience here- and with a few other cartridges- tells me that it merits further investigation.

For more information contact: Western Powders, P.O. 158 Yellowstone Hill, Dept. AH, Miles City, MT 59301; phone: (800) 497-1007; [www.ramshot.com](http://www.ramshot.com)



## RAMSHOT TRUE BLUE IN .45 COLT



| Bullet                     | Charge   | Velocity |
|----------------------------|----------|----------|
| Oregon Trail 250 gr. LRNFP | 8.0 grs. | 730 fps  |
| Oregon Trail 250 gr. LRNFP | 8.5 grs. | 750 fps  |
| Oregon Trail 250 gr. LRNFP | 9.0 grs. | 794 fps  |
| Bull-X 200 gr. LRNFP       | 8.5 grs. | 687 fps  |
| Bull-X 200 gr. LRNFP       | 9.0 grs. | 719 fps  |
| Bull-X 200 gr. LRNFP       | 9.5 grs. | 758 fps  |

## SINGING THE TRUE BLUES

**T** rue Blue is considerably slower than Unique and is more in the burning rate range of Vihtavouri N-350 or Hodgdon Longshot. Charges in the .45 Colt are accordingly a little heavier than with the faster types. It would still be possible to double charge a case with True Blue so customary diligence is mandatory. True Blue is a very fine ball-type powder with a bulk density of 935 grams per liter.

The project began with a review of previous results from factory loads to establish a desirable velocity. The 250 gr. lead round nose is a virtual standard for the .45 Colt. Cowboy loads from Black Hills and Winchester gave 740 and 716 fps respectively from the 5" barrel of a S&W 1950 Target revolver used as a test piece.

Since cowboy shooters want as little recoil as possible, I also included a 200 gr. LRNFP in the test. There aren't any factory cowboy loads in that weight with the exception of a Blazer with a 200 gr. JHP. Ramshot doesn't give data for 200 gr. bullets

anyhow, but logic suggests that a charge that is near maximum for the 250 would probably be a good starting point with the 200. The velocity goal of 700 to 750 fps remained the same.

The first loads were crafted in Starline brass with CCI primers. The 250 gr. bullet was Oregon Trail's LRNFP that is a virtual duplicate of the lead bullets used in factory loads. Ramshot's data suggests a starting load of 8.8 grs. but that seemed a little stout so we began by loading charges of 8.0, 8.5 and 9.0 grs. of True Blue.

Velocities were right in the middle of the ballpark on the first go-round at 730, 750 and 794 fps. Ramshot shows a maximum load of 9.4 grs. with that combination, but there really didn't seem to be a reason to go there.

Both the 8.0 and 8.5 gr. loads were accurate and comfortable to shoot. A charge of 8.5 grs. felt a bit heavier than factory loads with the same weight bullet. It shot exceptionally well. So did the 8.0 gr. load and, at 730 fps from the Smith's 5" barrel, it was a near duplicate of the factory cowboy loads.



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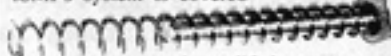
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# The AYOOB FILES

## SONGS OF THE DEAD: THE COP AND THE KILLA RAPPER

**Situation:** A wanna-be rap star tries to act out his cop-killing fantasies.

**Lesson:** Be able to recognize danger signals, and explain why you fired.

It's no fun at all sitting here this winter day in the Midwest in 1993 in a police department office going through blood-stained evidence with my latex-gloved hands. My host, Crashton Burns, is a veteran state police detective who is on his tiptoes for professional courtesy, but he can't seem to keep his lower-ranked assistant, E. Gough, from making snotty remarks about cops from smaller departments not knowing crap— and all expert witnesses being whores. I am there as an expert witness, and I serve in a small department.

A man is dead, a career cop stands accused of murdering him, and I've been hired by the cop's lawyer to prove otherwise, which is why I'm almost elbow-deep in bloodstained evidence. It's a politically charged case, which is why I have a videographer taping my review of the evidence.

A few minutes before, I have asked Burns why, as chief investigator of this officer-involved shooting, he didn't even try to find out where the bullet encysted in the dead man's body and found at autopsy had come from, and he has shrugged and told me, "He's the victim. I'm not investigating him."

I don't respond. I stay as mute on that as the small-town police department badge clipped to my belt, next to the S&W automatic in its LFI Concealment Rig under my suit-coat. I just keep going through the evidence until I find something. "Zoom in on this," I tell the cameraman.

Ah, yes. One of the bullets they couldn't find. The shooting had gone down at a scene where two men were moving one's possessions out of a disputed apartment, and things had turned ugly. The deceased and his partner had attacked two cops. The dead man went for one cop's gun while beating him savagely, and wound up being shot until he desisted, by which time he was dying. Life is hard for the violent, and doubly hard for the violent and stupid.

In this case, it is harder still for the cop who shot to survive, because he stands falsely accused of murder. They say he shot the "victim" as he lay helpless on the ground, just standing over him and pumping bullets into him, but there are missing projectiles and no bullets have ended up where the prosecution's theory says they would have to be.

I open a paper-bagged piece of evidence, a duffel bag that was part of the luggage on the porch above the spot where the shooting went down. The professional, big-department career detectives have not examined it— just bagged it as they found it and put it in the Evidence Room. I open the bag now.

I describe to the camera the tear in the duffel as the camera zooms in on it. I carefully undo the zipper. I point out to the camera the jacket and then the deformed lead core of the Winchester 147 gr. subsonic hollowpoint bullet that has gone through the "victim" and into the bag, on an angle that shows the officer was telling the truth and the prosecutors were wrong.

Burns blurts that we have to stop right now and I agree on tape, suggesting that we go to the nearest hospital and X-ray the bag and then dissect its contents on videotape.

*Continued on page 74*

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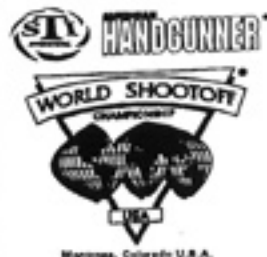
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## The POWER OF SHOOTING

**G**ood shooting is the result of aligning the gun with the target and applying correct trigger control. Sounds simple, but a trip to any local range will show that this is anything but a no-brainer. You will see some folks who shoot superbly, and others who just enjoy putting rounds downrange without much regard to hitting. When you apply the blasting-for-fun logic to self-defense or tactical skills, just putting rounds downrange is not very acceptable.

Our goal is to place our rounds where they will be most effective. This means that accuracy is our goal. Oh sure, there are those who argue that speed is critical, but the cold, hard truth is that if your rounds do not strike an effective blow, no matter how fast you shoot, the outcome could be real grim.

In my time I have known many excellent pistol shooters and I consider myself lucky to have many of these guys as my friends. Without a doubt, the best shooter I have ever seen is Rob Leatham, "The Champ" as I like to call him.

Rob is probably the best pistol shot who has ever lived. His accomplishments are too many to repeat here; he is as good as it gets. I don't think that even Rob knows how hard it is to do what he does with a handgun. I tell people that Rob is a cyborg, not really human.

The key is that Leatham is a natural—he just does it without having to think about what it takes to fire an accurate shot fast. Unlike many other top champion shooters, Rob doesn't have to plan, rehearse or prep for a shooting drill like other mortals. Rob can be joking and talking with a group of friends, be called to the line, told what to do, and do it better than most people even dream is possible.

Why does he do so well? Basically, it's just a matter of fundamentals—sight alignment and trigger control. That and the uncanny ability to "let in happen," not think about it, just shoot.

## THE THREE TARGET TEST

**M**any readers have heard of Jim Cirrillo, the former NYPD Stake-Out Squad member with more gunfight experience than Wild Bill Hickock, Bat Masterson and Wyatt Earp combined. Few would question Cirrillo's skill as an ace gunfighter. What both Rob Leatham and Cirrillo have in common is a great ability to master the basics of marksmanship.

Cirrillo was an accomplished PPC shooter in his day, and he stresses the ability to align the sights and control the trigger under stress. At the recent S&W Winter IDPA Nationals, Cirrillo joked about winning an award for the most procedural penalties, for he totaled up quite a number. "In all my gunfights I didn't have to worry about penalties, just winning. Sight alignment and trigger control were the keys to my success," says Cirrillo.

I have a simple test I run when checking new trainees or operators. I place three NRA five-yard bullseye centers up at 10 yards. I ask the student to fire six rounds at the first target slow fire, about 2.5 minutes normally). Next I ask them to fire six rounds at the second bullseye in 10 seconds, and finally six rounds at the third in five seconds.

Each string starts with the handgun in hand, at the ready. This is done with both hands on the gun in whatever grip or stance the student prefers. If the student cannot shoot a good slow fire group on the first target, with plenty of time for using good sight alignment and precise trigger control—guess what? The second



10 yards slow fire



10 yards timed fire



10 yards rapid fire. All groups with Larry Vickers-tuned 1911 in 9mm with 147 gr. ammo.

and third targets are pretty sad.

My key point is that if you cannot fire an accurate group at 10 yards taking your time, you will be in big trouble if you ever expect to do anything well using marksmanship as a goal. Simply put, you had better learn the basics before you plan on being anything serious with a handgun.

## Focus On Fundamentals

**Y**eah, I know: Some guy always tells me how gunfights take place at close range and point shooting is all you need. I believe in point shooting and teach it—at a proper time. If you cannot place all your shots in the black of a 25 yard NRA bullseye at 10 yards taking your time, then you will never master the sidearm.

You can be an "expert-rated" gunshop commando, but you

better learn to deliver basic marksmanship skills if you plan to be even good at the range. There are no secrets to being good. Try your skills on this basic drill and see where you stand. If you can shoot a nice group that can be covered with the bottom of a Coke can, then you can move on to bigger and better skills, but if you fail at this basic test, practice until you can deliver.



**Strategic Solutions is a new column that deals with mental aspects of combat. The author is a former operator with Naval Special Warfare. After leaving the SEALs, he co-founded Combative Concepts, a training organization. He is currently the director of the Sure-Fire Institute. He can be reached by e-mail at [ken@surefire.com](mailto:ken@surefire.com)**

## SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

**F**ew sane human beings desire to be dominated by outside events, forces and unknowns. By choosing to arm yourself, you've obviously faced this reality and are determined to direct and control the environmental variables during a confrontation.

The extent to which you can adapt to and direct the course of a conflict within an ever-changing volume of space is what I term your "sphere of influence." Perceiving, understanding and influencing this space is critical if you wish to neutralize a wide variety of attacks. True tacticians are ever mindful of critical indicators, perceiving things that others cannot see.

How do you successfully manage all the dynamic factors contained in your space and ultimately expand your sphere of influence? Grab a more potent weapon, right?

Wrong. Over-reliance and over-emphasis on specific hardware or some predefined technique have spelled the end for many. Successful confrontation management begins and ends not with selection, but deep within the confines of the mind, the inner man.



## Three Mental Keys To Winning A Confrontation

**Perception:** Recognizing and prioritizing key indicators within your sphere.

**Situational Awareness:** The ability to collect, collate and store data in a fluid, dynamic and stressful environment, and to retrieve that data as needed to accurately predict future events in a compressed time frame.

**Being In The Moment:** Totally tuned to the present, disassociating yourself from any thoughts of mistake found in the past, free from any fears of the future. This state of mind is the fertile ground for powerful and unique solutions.

It really doesn't matter that you can consistently present your weapon from a position of carry and fire multiple well-aimed shots from your wonder gun into the A-zone in 1.25 seconds. If you never *perceive* the attack, you won't respond. To paraphrase the great philosopher Forrest Gump, "Dead is as dead does."

At peak function, anything in the environment that can become a weapon is an extension of your will. Your opponent may have carried your weapon to the fight for you! I have frequently disarmed opponents who never saw me coming during force-on-force training. Why didn't they see me coming? A variety of reasons that all boil down to one of three failures: not perceiving a dynamic situation clearly, not having situational awareness or not being in the moment.

On the defensive side of the coin, a perceptive, listening mind frequently allows you to position yourself completely out of harm's way before many attacks can fully develop. Typically, attacks develop noticeably over time. Tuned awareness correctly positions you mentally and physically, effectively eliminating many speed advantages opponents are counting on.

If you must engage, do everything possible to make the opponent be concerned about what *you* are going to do, not the reverse. I call this "continuity of pressure."



## BODY LANGUAGE IN A FIGHT



**Y**our body language is a conduit that transmits information to your opponent. Your posture and movements have a tremendous effect positively or negatively in terms of the final outcome.

Put pressure on your threat by adopting a relatively calm, positively determined posture that displays that you are efficiently adapting and that you plan to prevail, period. If your posture ends up collapsing toward a fetal position, it only invites further encroachment.

Now is the time to expand your sphere of influence; do not collapse it. You are not just surviving here. You are absolutely committed to dominate, and your resolve will be revealed in all your movements.

Further expand your sphere of influence by the confident manner in which you present your weapon. Under duress, a weapon should be deployed as effortlessly as you reach for your keys, with no conscious thought in terms of function and employ-

ment. This is not the time to review basic function and presentation procedures.

Your powerful subconscious mind must be free to operate as designed. It should not be cluttered with the static of the conscious mind.

How can you effectively meld your weapon and your mind into a seamless whole? Be committed to effective weapons training. Couple this with an ongoing effort to enhance your perception skills by constantly striving to evaluate the reality around you.

Several notable studies have shown that the "walking dead," those walking in a non-erect, scanning posture, are the preferred victims of society's predators.

Manufacturer, caliber, magazine capacity and accuracy should be subservient to the directed mind, not the other way around. If you don't constantly train, don't expect results. You see, the only free lunch is the one your friends enjoy after your funeral.

*Jerry Barnhart is one of the fastest hosers— they call him The Burner— but he learned to slow down and shoot As before he started winning.*



Photo By Dave Anderson

*Mo brass, mo bettah.*



Photo By Nyle Leatherman

## THE RAT-A-TAT SCHOOL OF HOSING

**M**ost of the great practical shooting champions start out as warp-speed hosers right out of Rat-A-Tat school. They learn accuracy later. But make no mistake, they do learn it. Champions can make the tough shots when they have to. What are the building blocks that make up accurate shooting?

The gun (and its ammunition) must be accurate enough for the shot required. Handguns vary in inherent accuracy. Centerfire revolvers, on average, are a bit more accurate than autopistols of comparable quality. Some makes and models are more accurate than others, and individual examples of the same make and model can vary. My expectations for general purpose handguns (ie, models not specifically made for target shooting) are 25-yard groups of 2" to 3" for revolvers, 2" to 4" for autos. The accuracy expectation assumes good quality ammunition, which is almost a given these days.

The gun must be zeroed for the shots required. Most current service autopistols come with fixed sights in which the rear and, more and more frequently, the front sights are mounted in dovetail slots. Adjusting for windage requires moving the sight with an adjustment tool— Brownells sells several excellent types, from an elaborate gunsmith's fixture to a hammer and non-marring drift punch set. Elevation adjustments require filing down the front sight to raise the point-of-impact, or replacing the front sight with a higher one to lower the point-of-impact.

Most practical shooters zero for 25 yards. The trajectories of service cartridges like the .45 ACP, .40 S&W and .38 Special are such that the bullet drop out to 50 yards is negligible. Head shots at seven or 10 are still minute-of-eyeball, even with a 25-yard zero.

The sight picture must be acceptable for the shot required. Note that we don't say the sight picture has to be perfect, merely acceptable. For a mansize target at 5 yards, that means a crude outline of the slide superimposed over the target's sternum. At 10 yards, it's a glimpse of the front sight over the back of the slide. At 50 yards, it's time to count the striations on the front sight, a classic bullseye-crip sight picture, front sight squarely in the rear sight notch, flush with the tip of the blade. The only way to train your subconscious to what an "acceptable sight picture" looks like is by shooting. Lots of shooting.

The trigger must be released without imparting movement to the gun. Trigger control is the essence of marksmanship. It's hardly an exaggeration to say trigger control is marksmanship.

If a gun is zeroed and capable of adequate accuracy, if it is held consistently from shot to shot, if the sight picture is acceptable, if the trigger is released without causing the gun to move, the bullet will hit the target. There's no place else it can go.



# Taffin TESTS

By John Taffin

Need ammo for your .500 Linebaugh?  
Buffalo Bore has it.



## HOT NEW LOADS FOR BIG BORE SIXGUNS



For the past four years, the new Dan Wesson sixgun has been produced in a new factory with new machinery— and it shows. New owner Bob Serva has invested considerable dollars in order to build the finest possible sixgun using the basic Dan Wesson platform. The SuperMags and the mid-frame gun are back. New chamberings, such as the .414 SuperMag and the .460 Rowland, have joined the ranks of big bore hunting cartridges.

Dan Wesson offers three loadings for the .414 SuperMag— 240 gr., 265 gr. and 300 gr.— all developed by D.J. Bushman, who tested the loads in the field on some pretty impressive Oklahoma whitetail. Out of an 8" .414 SuperMag, the 240 gr. Magna-Shock clocks out at 1,411 fps over our Oehler Model 35 sky screens. We fired five shots into 3/4" at 25 yards, 1 1/4" at 50 yards, and 2 3/4" at 100 yards.

Switching to the 265 gr. Magna-Shock yields numbers of 1,409 fps and 25-, 50- and 100-yard groups of 3/4", 1 1/4" and 2 3/4". Finally, the heaviest load for the .414 SuperMag, a 300 gr. Magna-Shock, produced 1,310 fps, duplicates the other two


loadings for groups at 25 yards, and opens up slightly to 1 1/4" at 50 yards and 3 3/4" at 100 yards. Excellent sixgun; excellent ammo.

### Buffalo Bore

Buffalo Bore continues to expand its line of serious hunting ammunition and now has added both .454 Casull and .500 Linebaugh loadings. The .454 offerings consist of a 325 gr. hardcast LBT bullet at 1,700 fps and a 360 gr. hardcast LBT bullet at 1,535 fps— both muzzle velocities were taken from a 10" Freedom Arms Model 83. These loads are designed for maximum penetration in really big critters.

Buffalo Bore is the only supplier of factory loads for the .500 Linebaugh, and they do it right, covering all the bases, beginning with a "mild" load of a 435 gr. hardcast LBT at 990 fps. This load will certainly work fine for whitetail, black bear and other medium-size game, offering penetration that is out of proportion to its mild muzzle velocity.

These 435 gr. light loads are also most pleasant-shooting.

The other Buffalo Bore .500 Linebaugh loads, clocked from a 5 1/2" barreled custom Ruger Bisley by John Linebaugh, are a 400 gr. JHP at 1,415 fps; the same 435 gr. LBT, but this time at 1,345 fps; and a 440 gr. LBT at 1,300 fps. These loads are not for recoil pantywaists, but they get the job done on big game. 

For Dan Wesson sixguns or .414 SuperMag ammunition, readers can contact Dan Wesson at 119 Kemper Lane, Dept. AH, Norwich, NY 13815; phone: (607) 336-1174. Buffalo Bore operates from P.O. Box 78, Dept. AH, Carmen ID 83462; phone: (208) 756-8085.



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# Holstermaker Profile: G. Wm. DAVIS



**Gordon Davis Returns To His Roots As  
A Craftsman Of Cowboy Leather.**

By Barrett Tillman  
Photos By Lenny Laird



**P**ractical, tactical, concealed and cowboy: if it holds a gun, master leathersmith Gordon Davis has made it. Best known for his IPSC and western holsters, Davis is justifiably proud of his versatility. He's made everything from mag pouches to saddles, but after 30 years in the business he insists that he's still learning.

Starting in the Los Angeles area at age 11, some 45 years ago, Davis began playing with leather as a serious hobby. Eventually he went to work for Bianchi where he taught the basics to another interested youngster named Bruce Nelson.

Other stints with Monrovia And Blazer Holster Company expanded Gordon's experience, but he was still eager to learn. "I realized pretty early that I wanted to learn the leather business," he says, "But I also realized that I needed to learn the business end of leather, too."

Toward that end, Davis spent a lot of time with the late Alfonso Pineda—literally a busman's holiday. As if that weren't enough, the eager youngster got another job with Santa Anita Raceway, repairing tack and equipment for thoroughbred horses. "That's where I really learned leatherwork," he recalls, expanding into Western and English saddles as well as bridles and assorted gear.

The variety of equipment and techniques reinforced his already solid background. By 1977 Davis was an established leatherworker, already interested in the burgeoning sport of practical pistol competition. He attended the first U.S. IPSC Nationals in Golden, Colo., with an assortment of Andy Anderson type rigs.

"I left with pockets full of cash and

checks," he grins, "And after that I was on my way."

G. Wm. Davis Leather became a staple of the early IPSC era, and his California Challenger was a landmark design. A low-cut, front stitched rig with forward muzzle rake, it was just the thing for the new comp guns that were coming on the scene.

But Davis also saw the benefit of expanding his market. He bid on police duty leather, eventually providing belts, holsters, and accessories to a variety of departments and agencies in the western states. "For some reason, most of the ski resorts in Colorado and Utah seemed to select my gear for their patrolmen," Davis reflected.

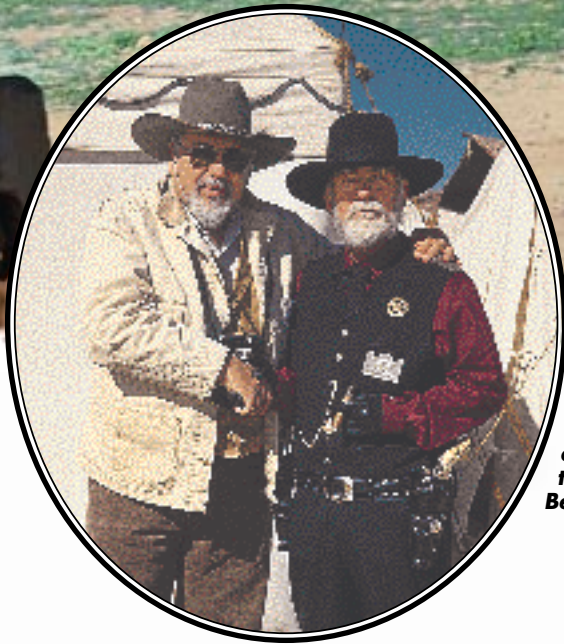
*Continued on page 72*



**Adjustable tension  
Yaqui slide for a Glock  
(above) and other examples of Davis' work.**



**Join The Fun As We Take You Through One Of The  
Better Cowboy Matches, Winter Range 2001.**



*Taffin gives  
a big howdy  
to Judge Roy  
Bean, founder  
of SASS.*

# COWBOY

# SHOOTING!

**T**he classic 1969 Western, *The Wild Bunch* featured a fight scene that was one of the most violent ever filmed, at least up to that time in movie history.

**Story & Photos By John Taffin**

Today, the Wild Bunch lives on in the spirit of every SASS (Single Action Shooting Society) cowboy shooting event. SASS was founded by a group of Western shooting enthusiasts in Southern California who took the name The Wild Bunch to commemorate the movie.

Cowboy shooting matches are held regularly in every state and many foreign countries. In addition to all of these matches, regional championships are held regularly. One such event is Ruger's Winter Range. Held each year in February at the Ben Avery Shooting Range north of



Phoenix, Winter Range is particularly attractive to those shooters looking for some decent weather when winter is at its worst in most parts of the country.

Arizona was exceptionally gracious this year, with daytime temperatures in the mid-60s. Winter Range is billed as the national championship leading up to the world championship at End of Trail in April.

Sponsored by Ruger, sanctioned by SASS, and hosted by the Arizona Territorial Company of Rough Riders, this

Shooting, Encampment, and Frontier Exhibition gathers over 500 participants wearing pre-1900s costumes and shooting single-action sixguns, leverguns and shotguns of the type used on the frontier.

The Arizona Territorial Company is a not-for-profit group. All proceeds from the shoot went to the Paradise Valley Rotary Club for Boys and Girls Clubs in the Phoenix area, a most worthwhile cause.

Three types of firearms may be used, but the single-action sixgun is king. Most shooting events held around the country,

whether skeet or IPSC, consist of competition, meeting old friends and, quite often, sampling the wares of vendors. In most venues, however, the socializing and ware-sampling are nowhere near as important as the shooting. This all changes at a SASS event. Unlike any other form of competitive shooting, a cowboy match is not just a shooting event, it is a *happening*.

There is much less emphasis on serious shooting, much less stress involved and a whole lot more fun to be



**Dressing the part is vital in enjoying the cowboy spirit.**



**Lots of vendors attended Winter Range 2001.**



**Range safety has always been a priority at cowboy matches, as the close proximity of this RO shows.**



### **Fancy rigs for fancy guns!**

sored event, chewing the fat is just as important as shooting.

A major match such as Winter Range is also a grand shopping spree, with over four rows of tents and over 100 "suttlers" showing their wares. Firearms, leather, grips, ammunition, bullets, boots, hats, clothes and even gunsmithing. In one of my columns last year, I mentioned Swede Dahlberg who caught my attention at The Great Northern Shoot with his polymer "ivory" stocked rifle. Swede, now offers these stocks from his suttlers tent for those who would like to go in the same direction.

Other suttlers were on hand this year to show their wares and provide a chance to visit and talk sixguns including American Western Arms, Cimmaron Firearms, EMF, Marlin, Ruger, Navy Arms, Power Custom and Gary Reeder Custom Guns. Leather artisans such as John Bianchi's Frontier Gunleather, El Paso Saddlery, Kirkpatrick Leather and F.A. Meanea were also on hand.

### **Dressed To Kill**

We may add a fourth leg to the stool—a spectacle. Every SASS match is a veri-

table feast for the eyes. Costuming is a major part of any cowboy shooting match, both by the shooters and by those who come simply to enjoy the atmosphere. I had a great time girl-watching 1880s-style, as many women were dressed to the hilt in beautiful gowns and riding attire.

One also has the opportunity to see many famous historical characters. I ran into Wild Bill Hickock, Buffalo Bill, Theodore Roosevelt, a troop of Buffalo soldiers and four men in black that could only have been Doc Holliday, Wyatt, Morgan and Virgil Earp, straight out of the movie *Tombstone*. And as at any SASS event, there was the omnipresent and affable Judge Roy Bean.

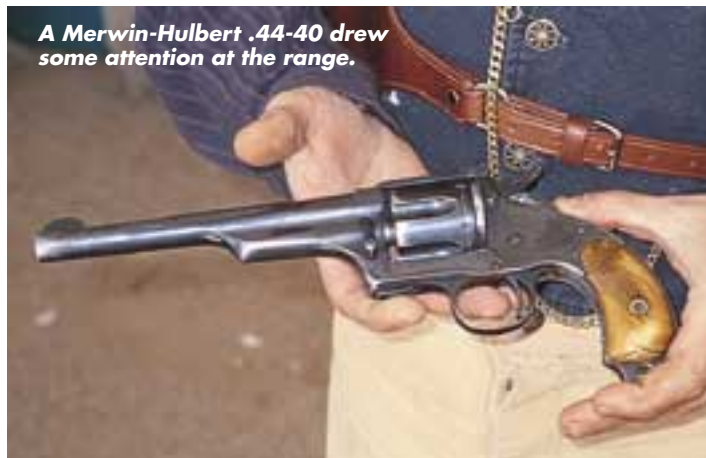
In addition to frontier girl-watching and searching out historical characters, Winter Range is also a great place for the student of sixguns and sixgun leather. One not only sees the usual and very popular Ruger Vaqueros and replicas, but also a closer look will uncover original First Generation Colts; Smith & Wesson Frontier Models of both the single- and double-action persuasion; the occasional

had. SASS matches are, in fact, based on a three-legged stool of shooting, socializing and shopping. A few years ago, I would not have given the latter too much importance, but I have to admit I have changed my mind. These are both extremely important aspects of cowboy shooting and give it its unique flavor among the shooting sports.

At one time, I felt the socializing aspect of cowboy shooting should be played down. No more. For many, perhaps most, attendees to a SASS spon-



**Gunsmiths and engravers were on hand at Winter Range.**



**A Merwin-Hulbert .44-40 drew some attention at the range.**



**Colorful props add to the appeal of a cowboy match.**

Merwin-Hulbert; and a veritable smorgasbord of sixgun leather.

Events include the Mounted Stages, with contestants shooting at balloons while riding at top speed on some very beautiful horses. Handling a sixgun and a horse at the same time is no easy feat. This stage furnishes the ammunition for two .45 Colt sixguns, .45 caliber blanks with enough blast to pop balloons but not send bullets around haphazardly. There is also a costume contest. How anyone can judge this contest when there are so many great contenders is beyond me!

To make it through the 10 stages that comprised Winter Range, competitors fired 244 rounds consisting of 100 from two sixguns, 99 from one levergun, and 45 from a shotgun. If you have made it through all the stages successfully with your sixguns, taken down the 99 levergun targets, blasted 45 targets with your

shotgun, shot quickly and accurately and not had any misses, and also had no penalties, known as "procedurals," you may just find yourself high up in the standings in one of the classes.

Targets are large, up close and hard to miss, but blunders do happen in the heat of battle, and each missed target means a five second penalty. It is also quite easy to shoot targets out of sequence, resulting in a 10-second procedural penalty. Add up your total shooting time for all 10 stages, plus any penalties, and the match is scored.

There are many ways to shoot cowboy matches: Traditional, with fixed-sighted sixguns; Blackpowder, with the same sixguns with cartridges loaded with blackpowder; Duelist, using any sixgun but shooting one-handed; Gunfighter, with two sixguns, one in each hand, shooting in sequence; and Modern, using sixguns such as Ruger's

Blackhawk with adjustable sights. There are also classes that are defined by age and gender. When all the shooting had stopped and all the smoke had cleared, the following winners emerged:

|                        |       |                            |
|------------------------|-------|----------------------------|
| Cartridge Black Powder | ..... | <i>Sparks</i>              |
| Duelist                | ..... | <i>Durango Kid</i>         |
| Frontiersman           | ..... | <i>Blackjack McGinnis</i>  |
| Gunfighter             | ..... | <i>Mr. Shane Starrett</i>  |
| Modern                 | ..... | <i>Dirty Dave Rudabugh</i> |
| Traditional            | ..... | <i>Kanada Kid</i>          |
| Ladies Duelist         | ..... | <i>Dixie Bell</i>          |
| Ladies Modern          | ..... | <i>Running Bare</i>        |
| Ladies Traditional     | ..... | <i>Pearl Hart</i>          |
| Ladies Senior          | ..... | <i>Ramblin' Rose</i>       |
| Junior                 | ..... | <i>Little Bud The Kid</i>  |
| Senior                 | ..... | <i>Jim Bowie</i>           |
| Top Gun Shootoff       | ..... | <i>English Andy</i>        |

As we have said, leverguns and shotguns are also used, but the single-action sixgun is the most important of the three in the competition, as results are normally determined by the speed and accuracy exhibited with the sixgun. Speed really counts, as targets are usually large and up close. So strap on those sixguns and come join the fun of cowboy shooting.



Readers interested in joining SASS should contact the hombres at posse headquarters, 23255 La Palma Ave., Yorba Linda, CA 92887; phone: (310) 548-8400; website: [www.sassnet.com](http://www.sassnet.com)



**Smith & Wesson Model No. 3 Russian was one of the more exotic guns at Winter Range.**

# COWBOY WEAPONS SCHOOL

## THUNDER RANCH TEACHES A PRE-1900 WEAPONS CLASS FOR COWBOY SHOOTERS.

By Dick Williams



**C**owboy shooting is still growing. A large part of its appeal is that it's as much of a social event as it is a shooting match. However, an ongoing concern among participants is the natural tendency of people to be less safety-conscious at social events than they are at shooting matches. Enter Clint Smith, director of Thunder Ranch.

Clint is a history buff, teacher and fancier of 130-year-old weapons. He is acutely aware that cowboy guns, although replicas of 19th century shooting irons, are still lethal weapons, not toys. As a result, he now offers a five-day, pre-1900 weapons class at Thunder Ranch.

Clint teaches serious self-defense classes at Thunder Ranch employing handguns, rifles and shotguns. It was not much of a stretch to adapt elements of those classes into training focused on sixguns and leverguns. As in all Thunder Ranch shooting enterprises, safety is paramount.

The defensive aspects of the class are as realistic as possible. In some homes, cowboy guns are the only guns present and they may, God forbid, have to be used for self-defense. Thus, the purpose of the pre-1900 class is to train cowboy shooters in the defensive use of these types of weapons.

Although the class focuses on reality rather than gamesmanship, graduates see a big jump in their competence and scores in subsequent cowboy matches.

Clint spent three years preparing for this class. For six months of that time, his daily carry gun was a single-action revolver. Absent the capability for lightning fast magazine reloads, one becomes much more tactically thoughtful, he pointed out.


The course is designed to apply current techniques and range technologies to weapons systems that were developed before 1900. The first half of the five-day course involves handguns, beginning with basic handgun shooting and



mechanics and progresses through drills in which students and targets move. The last half of the course brings rifles and shotguns to bear with tactical drills utilizing all three weapons.

In addition to runs through Thunderville, the Tower and the Terminator, there is simulator work in the Stagecoach. There are some practical applications of the Stagecoach drill that can prove surprising. Sorry, no freebies— you'll have to attend to find out.

Equipment, as you would expect, consists of 19th century single-action revolvers and replicas, a pre-1900 rifle or replica chambered in a pistol caliber and an old shotgun. Duds should be representative of the period with the capability to handle Texas weather.

There is only one pre-1900 class offered each year at Thunder Ranch and it's currently scheduled for October. Plan to bring about 1,200 rounds for pistol and rifle with another 300  for your shotgun.

*For more information on the pre-1900 class or any of Thunder Ranch's courses, drop Clint a line at HCR 1, Box 52, Mountain Home, TX 78058; phone: (830) 640-3138; website: [www.thunderranchinc.com](http://www.thunderranchinc.com)*



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**BY SHANE GERICKE**

**T**he owner of my local pack 'n' ship became visibly upset when she realized what the word "Glock" in the mailing instructions meant.

"Is this a gun?" she asked.

"Well, yes," I answered, since I'd have to tell her anyway for insurance purposes. "Is that a problem?"

"Yes! We can't ship it."

Well, that was a head-scratcher. I know UPS charges a king's ransom to ship a handgun via its mandatory Super Duper Brown Kryptonite Next Day Air, but they usually don't reject any sort of freight outright, as there's money to be made. I explained all that patiently.

"UPS says no guns," she said, having none of it. "We can't take them. We're not allowed."

But the Brown Kryptonite Next Day...

"By any class of shipment. And our association emphasized to all of us just last week..."

"Take no guns," I sighed, getting the drift. So I drove to a rival pack 'n' ship down the street, figuring if Mom says no, ask Dad.

"Can't do UPS," the clerk said. Before I could launch the Brown Kryptonite, he added, "FedEx'll take it, though, no problem."

"OK," I said, relieved *someone* wanted my money. "How much?"

He weighed the itchy-bitsy package—a Glock sans ammo is hardly anything—checked the address, then a chart, then blew out a little air like he was surprised, too. "Forty-four."

I about swallowed my tongue. "Dollars?"

"Yep. Plus four dollars for insurance. Gotta send it Rapid Air." The FedEx version of Brown Kryptonite and, naturally, one of the most expensive options available. I sighed, pulled out the Visa, and hit the phones as soon as I got home.

## **Tele-Hassling UPS**

"UPS, how may I help you?"

I explained what I'd just been through, and the voice on the line said: "They're correct, sir, you cannot send guns from a UPS Authorized Shipping Outlet." In



**John Roe, owner of J.R. Shooting Sports in the Chicago suburb of Naperville, inspects a Colt .38 Super that arrived in the day's UPS and FedEx shipments.**

other words, none of the friendly, local pack 'n' ships in the strip malls and grocery stores just two minutes from my house. "You can only send it from the nearest UPS Shipping Center."

"Which is where?" I asked.

He consulted his computer and told me. It's an hour round-trip. And I don't reside in the boondocks where there are no services; I live in one of the biggest, most business-oriented suburbs of Chicago. "That's ridiculous," I said.

"That's the rule, sir. But you could, if you like, take the package to a gun dealer and have him send it for you. Have any of those around?"

"Sure," I said. "But why should I? What makes him any more qualified to send a parcel than me?"

"He's licensed, and you're not."

"Licensed?" I said, dumbfounded. "What on earth does *his* having an ATF license have to do with *my* shipping a package?"

He put me on hold a few seconds, then came back. "It's the law, sir. All guns have to be sent from a Shipping Center, or handled by a gun dealer. No exceptions. That's the law."



**Above, a Mail Boxes Etc. pack 'n' ship outlet. The three major shipping companies—and their wildly divergent gunhandling policies—are available.**



**Above, UPS driver Lisa Hendrickson unloads and delivers a day's worth of guns and hunting equipment to J.R. Shooting Sports of Naperville, Ill.**



**Left, UPS adorns its Super Duper Brown Kryptonite Next Day Air handgun shipments with plenty of air-service and warning labels.**

And thus was my introduction to The Great American Gun-Shipping Wars.

The more I thought about these various conversations, the more confused I became. What exactly *is* the law on shipping firearms versus what's merely corporate policy? Who has the most restrictive policies? The least? Why are UPS' rules so different from FedEx's, which are in turn so dissimilar to the Postal Service's? Could I simply mail my pistol and bypass the private carriers entirely? Why such a big difference in what the pack 'n' ships will accept?

To find out, I talked to representatives of the nation's three biggest shippers: United Parcel Service, Federal Express and the U.S. Postal Service. I waded through their websites. I talked to the government, firearms dealers and gunsmiths, and read page after page of the rules and regulations that govern firearms shipping in the United States.

And here's what I found:

Firearms shipping *laws*, in and of themselves, are surprisingly straightforward. According to Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, the bureau of the Treasury Department that regulates the nation's firearms trade, they boil down to this:

1) You can't mail handguns. You must send them via a private carrier, such as UPS or FedEx.

2) You can send long guns—rifles and shotguns—via the Postal Service or a private shipper.

3) You are required to tell the shipper that there's a gun in the package.

4) Neither you nor the shippers can label or mark the package in any way or fashion as containing a gun.

5) You can send and receive gun parts with no restrictions. As long as the parts don't add up to a complete gun (or a receiver, which in the eyes of the law *is* a

*Continued on page 83*

# VICKERS



# GUN!

**THE ONLY ACTIVE-DUTY SPECIAL  
FORCES OPERATOR EVER TO BE  
ADMITTED TO THE AMERICAN  
PISTOLSMITHS GUILD, LARRY  
VICKERS HAS QUICKLY BECOME  
THE MOST SOUGHT-AFTER  
PISTOLSMITH IN THE 1911 TRADE.**



**BY CAMERON HOPKINS  
PHOTOS BY ICHIRO NAGATA**

**M**ilitaristic overtones are good marketing in today's firearms industry. Smith & Wesson sells a model called the CQB, a military acronym for "close quarters battle." Heckler & Koch relies strongly on a military appeal to market its products— "In a world of compromise, some men don't." A currently running SIG advertisement features a Navy SEAL emerging from the water with a P-226.

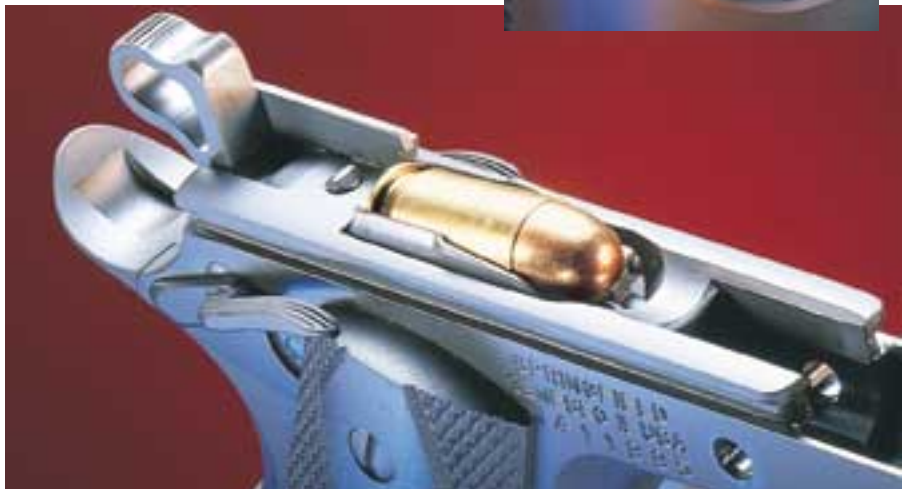
This is all good stuff, the selling of sizzle. Marketers are keenly aware that consumers are driven by their perceptions and associations with a product, even more so than the actual attributes of the item. Buy *this* and you'll be as tough as a Marine!

Amidst this barrage of SWAT-this and SEAL-that sits a man remote from the commercialization of America's military. He remains aloof from the latest "Spec-Ops Covert CQC Entry Gun," disdaining such marketing hype. Even though he is an active-duty Army Special Forces operator, he eschews the opportunity to boast about his shoulder tabs, much less cashier them by selling his custom guns to Walter Wannabe. He is a purist. He builds custom 1911s for a clientele he describes as, "Real guys who use real gear."

Make no mistake, Larry Vickers is a real guy. He is also a highly skilled pistolsmith who specializes in the 1911, but he has remained so low-key that most people have never heard of him. He is miles off the "big name gunsmith" radar screen, and doesn't particularly care. Vickers is not adverse to the spotlight, but he does not seek publicity. Part of the reason for his low profile is the fact that he only builds about 15 custom pistols a year, including small jobs and full-house

guns. With such a modest output, Vickers doesn't need to advertise. Another reason for his shyness is his job.

Vickers is circumspect about the precise nature of his employment. Vickers is a career Special Forces-qualified operator





**The serrations on the rear of the slide are handcut at 50 lpi, with the extractor head perfectly matched. The Novak sights are individually regulated with tritium inserts.**

with extensive combat experience. He is very highly regarded in the spec ops community as both a seasoned operator and a shooter. He is stationed in North Carolina, at Ft. Bragg.

Vickers' service record is not the reason we're here—his superlative pistolsmithing prowess is. A member of the prestigious American Pistolsmiths Guild, Vickers specializes in John Browning's 1911. He customized a Springfield Armory MilSpec 1911A1 for this report.

The gun is a classic five-inch, chambered in .45 ACP and featuring the same modifications that Vickers incorporates on his personal working guns and those he builds for other operators in his unit.

The soul of a duty pistol is reliability. Ergonomics, accuracy, features, finish, they all amount to nothing if a gun isn't 100 percent reliable. "In my line of work, a jam can get you killed. That's why I build every gun like it was my own," Vickers said. "That's not just BS. I liter-

ally build every full-house gun like it was my personal gun."

Reliability guides everything Vickers does to a 1911. Take slide-to-frame fit, for instance. Match guns are built tight, but a duty gun cannot be made too tight or it will jam if dirt or sand enters the mechanism. "To quote Bill Wilson, we don't fit 'em tight, we fit 'em right," Vickers said.

His method of fitting the slide and frame is straight out of the Old School. Most of Vickers' techniques are that way—time-tested, old fashioned, slow, tedious, handfit methods. "I don't squeeze my slides [in a vice] like some guys do. The problem is squeezed slides are no longer really parallel. I peen my slide-and-frame fits the old-fashioned way," Vickers explained.

He laps the slide to the frame until he gets contact on the full length of the rails. Instead of the slide bearing on just a few points on the frame rails, it bears all the way. He continues lapping the slide onto the frame until it reciprocates freely on its own weight.

"The reality is that slide-to-frame fit is not all that important. It can have an effect on the recoil; the gun can have a different feel in your hand," Vickers observed. "The real way to go is with over-size frames and slides; I'm not going to argue that peening is better than over-size slide-to-frame rails."

Vickers said the slide fit really doesn't have that much to do with accuracy, but shooters have come away with the impression that slide-to-frame fit is important, mainly because it's something that can easily be checked by a nimrod. "It's something the average guy can check, so he thinks it's important, but it's really not," Vickers stated.

## The Miller Method

Barrel fit is another matter. Barrel fit matters a lot. For that reason, Vickers is very particular about barrels and how he

# AN ARMY OF ONE

**L**arry Vickers is an army of one, a solo artist who adheres to the classic tradition of the gunsmithing profession by crafting his guns himself, without assistants or assemblers, each by hand, each as if it were the only gun he would ever make.

Pistolsmithing was not Vickers' calling in life. The son of a World War II veteran, Vickers knew from an early age what he wanted to be when he grew up—a soldier. "Like a lot of guys from that era, I was fascinated by the military. When my dad gave me that first .22, a single-

shot bolt-action rifle, that launched me. I never knew I would end up in the firearms business like this, but I was always very interested in guns," Vickers said.

Prior to graduating from high school, Vickers joined the army on a delayed entry program. When he graduated in 1981, he immediately signed up for the Special Forces Qualification Course, but before he could be admitted to the army's most rigorous training program, he first had to graduate from Airborne School. He entered the school along with 12 classmates who

*Continued on page 96*



*Grips of Madagascan ebony by  
Kim Ahrends (515) 532-3449.*

*"Mantrack" knife by Strider  
Knives (760) 471-8275.*

*Tactical thigh holster by  
Safariland (909) 923-7300.*



0 CAL  
CALIBER .45  
**MATCH**  
LOT WCC98H040  
OLIN CORPORATION



SPECIAL FORCES  
AIRBORNE



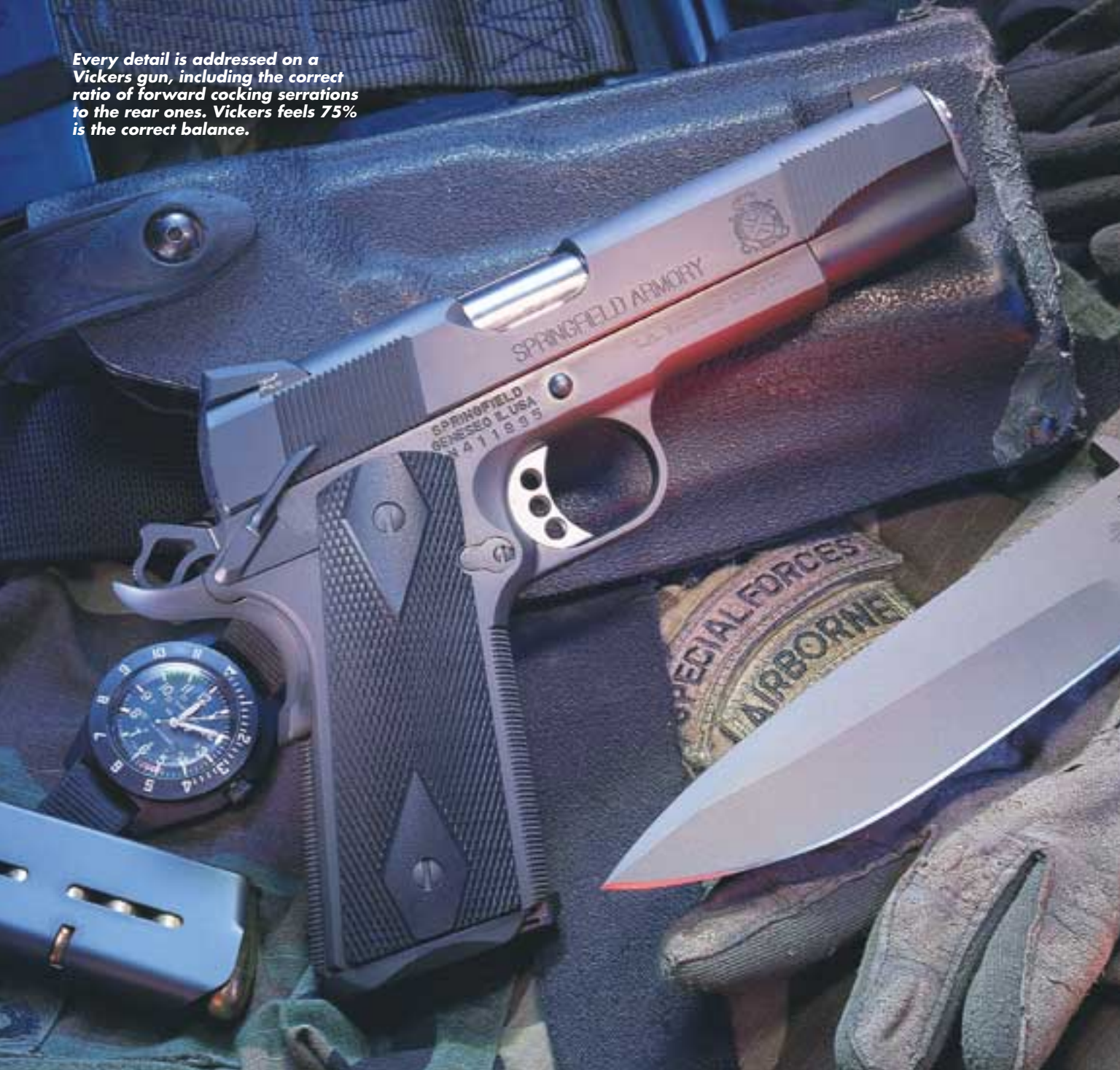
**VICKERS GUN!**



# AMERICAN HANDGUNNER



*Every detail is addressed on a Vickers gun, including the correct ratio of forward cocking serrations to the rear ones. Vickers feels 75% is the correct balance.*



fits them. He prefers Bar-Sto stainless steel match barrels, and he fits them by what he calls the “John Miller hard-fit method.” Miller was an armorer for the Army Marksmanship Unit who taught Vickers how to fit a barrel— the old fashioned way— slow, deliberate, no jigs or fixtures, just skillful handwork.

“I have yet to see a barrel fit technique that is better than the so-called ‘hard fit’ by John Miller. It’s the good, old-fashioned AMU barrel fit. It’s done one at a time and it’s done in a method that’s not very fast. It’s a slow, tedious method, but it’s been proven to give a long-lasting, durable fit,” Vickers said.

There are several benefits of the Miller barrel fitting method. First, there is no

break-in required; the gun runs perfectly right from the get-go. Second, the barrel and slide stay together longer. There is no deterioration in the barrel-to-slide fit, so the gun’s accuracy remains consistent throughout the life of the gun. “It’s not uncommon to have a gun still shoot so well that you won’t even realize the bore is worn out until you chrono it. Then it’s like, ‘I need a new barrel,’” Vickers explained.

Not too many people have ever shot-out a 1911 barrel to the point where the velocity changes enough to indicate a new barrel is needed. Not a .45 ACP barrel and a steady diet of hardball. IPSC competitors can shoot-out a barrel with high-pressure .38 Super competition loads— light bullets at extremely high

velocity— but abrading away the rifling with 230 gr. FMJ rounds trundling along at 850 fps, takes some serious shooting. Larry Vickers has done some serious shooting in his 18-year Army career, both as an operator and as a firearms instructor in his unit.

“Other than some guy proof-firing guns at a factory, I’ve probably seen more rounds of hardball fired than any human being on the planet,” Vickers stated flatly. “I’m not exaggerating.”

Vickers sent the Bar-Sto in our test pistol for cryogenic treatment, even though he acknowledged that a cryo’d pistol barrel probably doesn’t make any difference. “It might make cleaning a bit easier, that’s it. I did it because I



*Handcut checkering is fast becoming a lost art with the proliferation of CNC machinecut checkering, but Vickers still breaks out a jar of elbow grease and a file on his full-house guns.*



*Vickers blends an S&A mag funnel into a beveled mag well.*

wanted to make a totally full-house gun," Vickers said.

His experience has shown him that barrel fitting must be done right. "If you don't fit a Bar-Sto right, it'll shear the lugs eventually. There has to be exact, even contact on the frame," Vickers said. "Another thing about a Bar-Sto— I've never seen one show any corrosion. They are rust-proof."

Accuracy from the Vickers "hard-fit" Bar-Sto was tested by Charles E. Petty, our resident Ransom Rest expert. Those who have never used a Ransom Rest don't appreciate just how much skill and experience goes into operating this precision device to obtain correct and consistent results. It is not by any means a no-brainer.

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AMERICAN HANDGUNNER'S

# 10 MOST SOUGHT-AFTER CUSTOM 1911s

**C**ollectors of everything from uncirculated coins to Parker shotguns agree that there are three criteria in determining the worth of a collector's item— rarity, authenticity and quality. Using these three indicators of collectability, *American Handgunner* ranked the top 10 makers of custom 1911s based on the desirability of their work.

Scarcity is a vital consideration in anything collectible. A David Miller custom rifle is worth more than a gun from the Remington Custom Shop. Bearing in mind that rarity is essential for a gunsmith's work to be "most sought-after," this list omits some prominent pistolsmiths, not because of their quality but because their guns are comparatively commonplace.

Authenticity is usually not a factor in custom guns. We have rarely heard of fake custom 1911s, although fake Colt Single Action Armes are another story.

Quality is obviously a vital component of collectability; people don't collect junk, unless they're junk collectors, which is something else entirely. The quality of the workmanship of the "most sought-after" pistolsmiths is of the highest caliber.

We know someone who owns guns from four of the pistolsmiths on our list— and he is a pistolsmith himself! We would venture to guess that there is not a single person in the United States who owns one 1911 from every pistolsmith on our list. Well there you go— a goal. Let us know if you attain it, we'll want to be adopted.

- |                    |                           |
|--------------------|---------------------------|
| 1) Larry Vickers   | 6) Charles Kelsey (Devel) |
| 2) Paul Liebenberg | 7) Jim Hoag               |
| 3) Richard Heinie  | 8) Jim Garthwaite         |
| 4) Steve Nastoff   | 9) John Yanek             |
| 5) Armand Swenson  | 10) Mark Krebs            |



BY AH STAFF



# RUGER'S SUPER BLACKHAWK: SIXGUN BARGAIN NUMBER 1

Perhaps the best hunting sixgun ever from Ruger is the Hunter Model.



Left, stainless steel Super Blackhawks include the 10½" and the Hunter Model.

Right, custom Ruger .44 Magnum Super Blackhawks: standard SBH cut to 4½", with Old Army grip frame, porting and plating by Mag-Na-Port; David Clements 5½" .44 with Bisley grip frame; Jim Stroh five-shooter with Bisley parts.



Left, John prefers the feel of the earlier Flat-Top .44 (t) and equips his favorite Super Blackhawk (b) with a standard hammer, trigger, grip frame and grips.



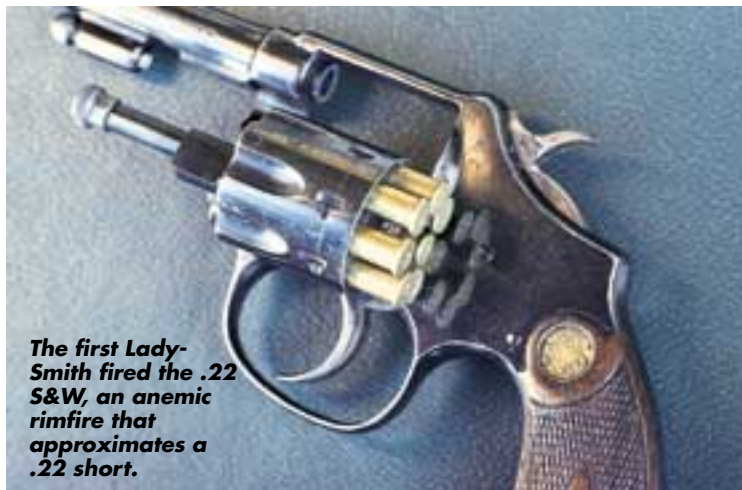
In 1953, Bill Ruger went against all conventional wisdom and resurrected the single-action sixgun. Colt had stopped manufacturing their Single Action Army in 1941 when they switched to wartime production. They were all too happy to do so as the machinery to make the SAA was pretty worn out and the demand for the old Colt had been dropping steadily since World War I with the discovery of Colt's other great handgun, the 1911 Government Model.

Ruger was coming off the successful introduction of their semi-automatic .22 in 1949, a basic .22 that sold for about half as much as the competition and, in many cases, shot better. It was time for a new handgun and the result was the Ruger .22 Single-Six. The grip frame of the new sixgun was identical to the Colt SAA while the frame was scaled down for the .22. The little sixgun was an immediate success.

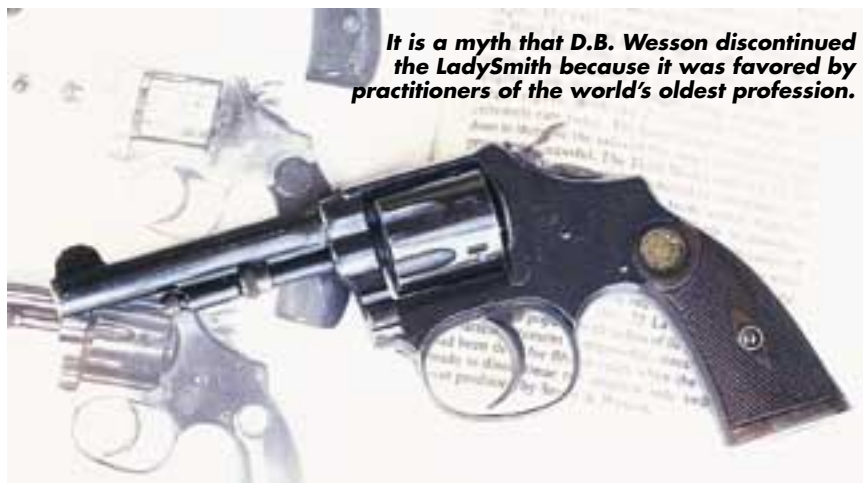
Ruger did not sit on his laurels for long, but continued to upgrade his sixgun. In 1955, the Single-Six was made into a full-sized single-action—the frame was flat-topped and fitted with an adjustable rear sight from Micro mated with a ramp front sight, and the chambering was the best available at the time, the .357 Magnum. The Ruger Blackhawk was hailed as the best outdoorsman's sixgun going.

Meanwhile, over at Smith & Wesson, clandestine plans were taking shape. A secret venture with Remington was in the works to produce an entirely new

*Continued on page 70*



**The first Lady-Smith fired the .22 S&W, an anemic rimfire that approximates a .22 short.**



**It is a myth that D.B. Wesson discontinued the LadySmith because it was favored by practitioners of the world's oldest profession.**



## S&W Model M Hand Ejector:

# *The First LadySmith*

By Mike Cumpston

**E**arly in the last decade, Smith & Wesson tore a page from history and introduced a series of handguns devoted to the defensive needs of the modern woman. The line included variations of the J- and K-frame revolvers as well as a single-stack member of the Model 39 auto family. Designated "LadySmith," these guns harkened back to the days of the independent woman emergent at the dawn of the 20th century.

The first revolver bearing the cognomen LadySmith was the Model M Hand Ejector of 1902, a .22 rimfire version of the series that encompassed the then-new Military & Police .38 Special and later the .44 Triple Lock and its progeny. The M-frame revolver was scaled to fire a .22 rimfire cartridge known as the .22 Smith & Wesson (or Smith & Wesson Long) and was directed toward adventurous women of the time who sortied abroad unchaperoned on their bicycles. With one of these in her handbag, the devotee of the velocipede was well-equipped to deal with such tramps, vagabonds and dogs that might hinder her progress.

With the LadySmith tucked away in her handbag, the independent woman of the early 1900s had at her disposal seven

rounds of a cartridge that was generally accepted as suitable for personal protection in those halcyon days of yore. The revolver also came to be popularly known as the "Bicycle Pistol." The overall package was 6" long, weighed less than 10 ozs. when equipped with a 3.5" barrel, and was sufficiently small to allow concealment in a wide variety of circumstances.

The small size gave rise to a legend that haunts the Model M until this day. It is widely believed that Daniel Baird Wesson withdrew the LadySmith from production

when he learned that its primary users were dance hall performers and prostitutes. The same legend is attached to one or more of the products of John Browning and is thoroughly debunked by Roy Jinks in his *History of Smith & Wesson*. He dismisses the story as an old wives' tale, pointing out that D.B. Wesson stepped on a rainbow some 15 years prior to the demise of the LadySmith.

The revolver suffered from low sales as well as production problems associ-

*Continued on page 69*

**The much-hyped style of Japanese knife harkens to the Samurai Era, but modern renditions often mistake the shape and the purpose of this classic warrior's tool.**

# The Truth About Tantos

**T**he use of the knife in close-quarters combat is as old as time. Throughout the world, there have been countless types and styles of knives used by different cultures over the millennia. Out of all of these blades only a few stand out, perceived as superior to the rest. The Japanese tanto is such a blade. From the intricate forging and folding process, to the sophisticated differential heat treating, to the extensive polishing that both reveals the beauty of the steel and gives it its deadly edge, the tanto is a true work of art. And not just a thing of beauty, but an extremely effective close-quarters fighting blade.

Due to the beauty and function of the Japanese *tanto*, the genre has received a great deal of attention from the American market in recent years. It is an interesting fascination with the legendary swords of the Samurai. The beauty of Japanese blades and their legendary cutting ability has fostered much imitation. The interpretation of the Japanese tanto design by American makers, however, has been for the most part historically inaccurate. The use of the name "tanto" or "tanto design" has been used more as a marketing ploy than an accurate description of the knife.

## Types Of Tantos

The *tanto* has been forged in many different blade shapes over the last 700 to 800 years. In this article, we will highlight some of the more common shapes and mounting styles used by the Samurai.

There are three commonly used mounting styles: The *tanto* with a guard called a *tsuba*; the *aikuchi* style with no

guard; and the *hamadashi* style with a small guard. Blade lengths of the *tanto* ran from about 5" to 12". Blades that were around 13" to 14" were designated as *ko-wakizashi*, or "small short sword."

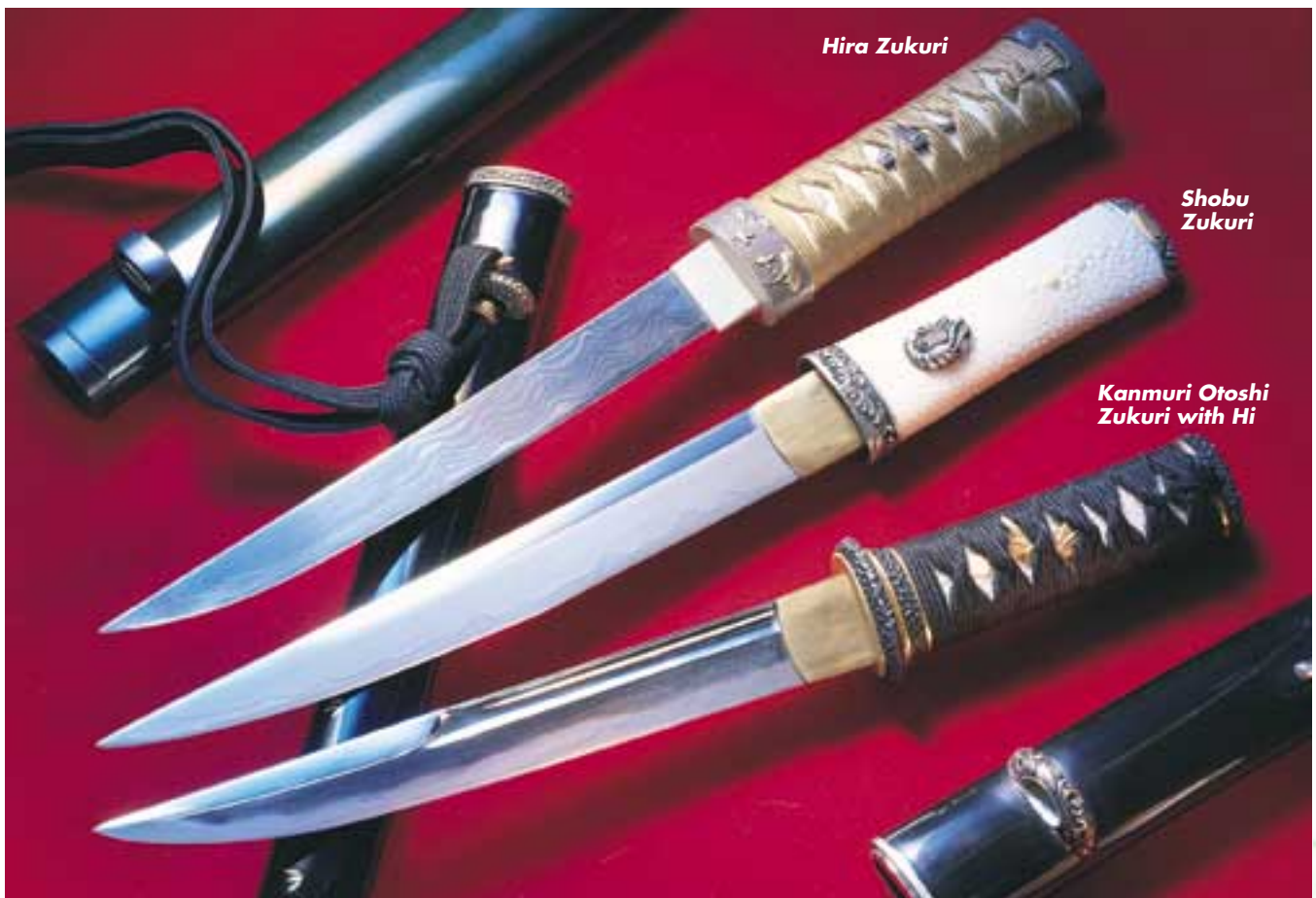
*Aikuchi* and *hamadashi* styles of the *tanto* were very popular. They were easily carried and rapidly deployed without the potential hindrance of a *tsuba*. Since the *tanto* was not used in a fencing type of manner the guard was, for the most part, unnecessary.

Blade styles for the Japanese *tanto* took several common shapes and numerous shapes that were not commonly used. *Hira-zukuri* was the most common shape. The blade was almost flat ground from the *mune* (spine) to the *ha* (edge). This shape enabled the blade to have greater slashing capability. The *hira-zukuri tanto* was designed for armor piercing. The blade was both narrow and very thick for strength when penetrating.

Tanto points were designed to penetrate feudal armor. They came in various styles, but none looked like so-called "tantos" of today.



**By James Williams  
Photos By Ichiro Nagata**



*Hira Zukuri*

*Shobu Zukuri*

*Kanmuri Otoshi Zukuri with Hi*

*Shobu-zukuri* (with ridgeline but no *yokote*) was the next most common style of blade. The photos that accompany this article show both of these styles of blade.

## In Combat

On the battlefield, the *tanto* was used to penetrate feudal-era armor when warriors were up close and grappling. The distinctive shape with the long, narrow blade and very thick spine that tapered to the *kissaki* (point) was punched under or through the armor. There are numerous examples in Samurai art depicting warriors engaged in this type of struggle.

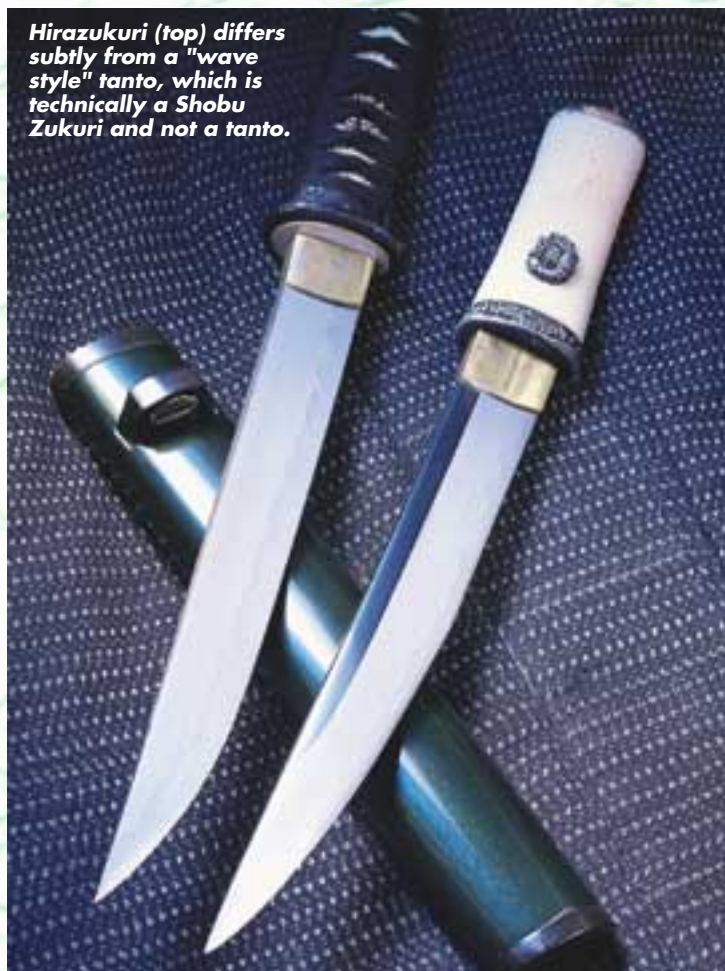
This type of combat was frequent enough that Samurai spent part of their training specifically devoted to grappling in armor.

The *katana* and *tachi*, or sword and long sword, were not designed to penetrate armor. The *kissaki* (point) of Japanese swords are cutting points. Much of the cutting in combat or dueling was done with the first few inches of the blade.

Modern makers who attempt to design *Yoroi toishi*, armor piercing points, are historically inaccurate at best. In fact, the only examples of the abrupt 45° angle prevalent on many modern designs is on blades of the early Nara period in the 8th century before the distinctive Japanese sword had evolved.

*Tanto* almost never had defined points like *katana* or *tachi*. The distinctive point

*Continued on page 68*



*Hirazukuri (top) differs subtly from a "wave style" tanto, which is technically a Shobu Zukuri and not a tanto.*

# pocket pal



**small is as small does. the north  
american arms mini-revolver may  
be the neatest little gun you'll  
never need.**

**By Mike Cumpston**

**a**s the smallest handgun chambering for a commercially available round, the North American Arms mini-revolver is, to paraphrase Robert Heinlein, its own excuse for being. Over the past quarter century, the mini-revolver has gained a considerable cadre of adherents. The result has been a solid customer base for the North American Arms company and an explosion of variations on the design originated by Dick Casull. The permutations range from the purely artistic to the practical and encompass every possible increment in the progression.

The smallest of the NAA revolvers is chambered for the .22 Short. The largest chambers the .22 WMR and is often found with oversized grips and the longest of available barrels. There are multiplicities of design variations, accessories and holsters, including a nifty belt-buckle cache.

My own choice for a shooting impression was the .22 LR model with a 1½" barrel and standard bird's head grips. At 4" length over all and only 2.4" tall, it is suitably small. The grips and spur trigger are redolent of the 19th century, while the overall appearance suggests substantially better quality and ruggedness than many examples dating from that period.

I selected the CCI Mini-Mag hollow-point and the CCI Stinger as my test loads. From the stubby barrel, the Stingers produced energy figures identical to a recently tested .31 caliber Colt 1849 replica and the early 20th century Velo Dog cartridge.

A digression: The name Velo Dog comes from "velocipede," meaning

bicycle, and “dog,” meaning dog, and the upshot was that you used a centerfire cartridge launching a 45 gr. bullet at 750 fps to shoot dogs that chased you while you were riding your bicycle. The dog would either curl up and die or betake himself off into the middle distance, either outcome being an acceptable outcome for the velodipedalist. In actual use, the Velo Dog was a popular European self-defense round chambered in very small revolvers.

*The modern user should take note that it is currently more acceptable to shoot*

*the bicyclist five times than to apply even one round to an animal, however obstreperous the conduct of the canine interloper might be. Editor*

Velocity of the CCI Stinger averaged out at 898 fps, providing 55 ft/lbs of muzzle gee-whiz. Standard deviation was 23.4 fps, corresponding with an extreme spread over 10 rounds of 66 fps.

The Mini-Mags turned up 796 fps, an energy reading of 51 ft/lbs and an SD of 18, with an extreme spread of 59 fps. The Mini-Mags easily penetrated a convenient 1x6 and proceeded on into the

ground. It would not do to be standing in front of either load.

Once the point-of-impact was established, I found it rather easy to place shots in the center of the face portion of a Texas police target at either five or 10 feet. With my revolver, the ideal sight picture occurred when the base of the front sight was aligned atop the tip of the hammer as seen at full-cock and the target covered by the sight picture.


At the onset, I was shooting one-handed and about two of every five rounds were key holing, a circumstance that is both irritating and not conducive to penetration. It soon became apparent that consistent accuracy required a two-hand hold. When I switched to bimanual manipulation and, incidentally, began using my weak-hand thumb to cock the hammer, my speed and accuracy increased and the tendency to land key-holed shots on target disappeared. Go figure.

The two-handed shooting method is favored by local law enforcement officers and State Troopers, many of whom carry the NAA as a backup.

Head shots are quite practical out to 10 feet and well-centered torso hits can be had out to 12 or 15 yards. The revolver's performance is totally reliable with the hammer nose (firing pin) firmly indenting the cartridge rim and providing consistent ignition. The fired cases are visibly indistinguishable from those ejected from the finest of target revolvers and there is no sign of spattered lead proceeding from the cylinder gap.

Loading, unloading and ejection of spent cartridges are accomplished with the cylinder removed, a straightforward process when the instructions are followed. Safe handling requires engagement of the half-cock notch during loading and unloading. The design allows safe carry with all five chambers loaded.

As with most traditional single-actions, the NAA mini-revolver would be a hand grenade waiting to happen with the hammer down on a loaded round. The NAA has deep notches in between the chambers and when the hammer nose is lowered into these, it cannot come into contact with the cartridge rim.

Users of these revolvers report uniformly excellent service from North American Arms. The only recurring mechanical problem uncovered in my informal canvass of enthusiasts was mainspring breakage. When this occurred, the respondents report a quick turnaround from the Provo, Utah, company. A lifetime service warranty remains in place, unless the owner takes the revolver apart. 

*For more information, interested readers can contact the manufacturer at North American Arms, 2150 South 950 East, Provo, UT 84606; phone: (801) 374-9990.*



*The cylinder must be removed and empties punched out by hand to reload the little beast.*

**length: 4.0"**

**barrel: 1.16"**

**height: 2.390"**

**width at grips: .828"**

**weight: 4.5 ozs.**





*Colt 1917*

*S&W 1950 Target*

*S&W 1955 Target*

**Almost Since The Moment The .45 Automatic Colt Pistol Cartridge Was Invented, There Have Been Revolvers Chambered For The Old Warhorse.**

# THE .45 ACP REVOLVERS

**By Charles E. Petty**

**T**he year was 1916 and trouble was brewing in Europe. Somebody recognized that there would be a need for more handguns chambered for the new .45 ACP cartridge. Colt, Springfield Armory— the original one in Massachusetts— and Remington-UMC would not be able to produce enough semiautomatics. Even though the 1911 was standard issue, there weren't enough to meet wartime needs.

Working with Springfield Armory, Smith & Wesson began development of a revolver to fire the ACP cartridge. They were already making .455 revolvers for Great Britain and it was not a particularly difficult job to adapt their Second Model .44 Hand Ejector to .45 ACP.

The problem was the ammunition. Loading rimless cartridges into a revolver cylinder presented some difficulties. While it was certainly possible to cut a chamber that would make the ammo headspace properly, there was no way to eject them.



**.45 Auto Rim brass obviates the need for moon clips.**

It took forever to pick the empties out by hand. Joseph Wesson solved the problem with the half-moon clip we all know and hate. At the time, it was a great idea.

Colt got the same job. With the ammo issue resolved, it was easy for Colt to make their New Service in .45 ACP. When the United States declared war on April 2, 1917, both revolvers were given the designation of Model 1917.

It is interesting to speculate a bit here. Colt was turning out 1911 pistols at a huge rate and it is reasonable to ask how

they could also make large numbers of revolvers. During the World War I period, Colt produced over 500,000 1911 pistols and 151,700 Model 1917 revolvers.

The way guns were manufactured at the time provides the answer. It was customary to group machines and dedicate them to specific jobs. Even though the same milling machine might be capable of making a pistol or revolver frame, the tooling and time it took to change from one to another made it more economical to have machines dedicated to one product line or the other. So while Colt was churning out pistols, somewhere else in the cavernous Hartford plant were lots of machines that could be used to make revolvers.

During the war, the standard package size for .45 ACP ammunition was 20 rounds and the majority of wartime ammo was packaged that way, but as a convenience they also made some 24 round packages that had the ammo already loaded into clips. These are rarely seen these days, and equally rare is a 20 round package with seven half-moon clips stuffed down inside the box.

The 24 round package wasn't just to make things come out even. The standard web ammo pouch for those armed with 1917 revolvers had three pouches that held two clips each. Thus, the pouch held 18 rounds which left six to load the gun.

When the war was over, both Smith and Colt continued to offer the .45

revolvers: Colt's within the New Service line as an available caliber and S&W continued the 1917 with a commercial finish.

In 1937 S&W received an order from the government of Brazil for 25,000 1917 revolvers with the Brazilian crest on the side plate. In the last few years some of these have been imported back into this country.

World War II put a stop to commercial production and after the war the large frame revolver disappeared from Colt's catalog. S&W, working largely with parts already in inventory, continued sales of the 1917 until 1949.

People really didn't like those half-moon clips and in the early 1920s Remington designed a new cartridge, the .45 Auto Rim. It had a big, thick rim to fit into the fairly large gap between breech and cylinder required to accommodate the clips. It eliminated the curse of shredded fingers that often accompanied use of the clips.

## Post-War Growth

The shooting sports got a big boost in the years following World War II and bullseye matches drew large numbers of competitors. S&W had been asked to provide a target quality revolver. They did so with the 1950 Target. They had made just a few 1917s with target sights, but developed a new large frame gun that took advantage of all the postwar improvements of a short action and better adjustable sights. It was a companion piece to a similar .44 Special revolver that wasn't used in competition, but gained prominence in the hands of Elmer Keith.

In his authoritative book, *History of Smith & Wesson*, Roy Jinks reports that the factory received some complaints from bullseye shooters who wanted a heavier barrel to aid in recoil control. S&W's answer was the 1955 Target.

It's pretty easy to tell the two apart. The barrel is obviously quite a bit heavier. The diameter was increased from 0.63" to 0.79" and the rib made correspondingly heavier. The net result was an increase of about 4 ozs. in weight. Handling the two guns, you notice a much more muzzle heavy feel with the 1955 Model.

The rise of the semiauto in bullseye

competition wasn't the end of the big revolvers. S&W has had one or more versions in their catalog ever since. Some law enforcement officers who wanted the .45 ACP cartridge but weren't allowed to carry automatics happily packed Model 25s. Plinking and informal target shooting offer great excuses to have a .45 revolver or two and you'll see them all the time in bowling pin matches.

When Smith began using model numbers in 1957, the .45 revolver came to be known as a Model 25. To confuse things even further, S&W began the practice of dash-numbers. Early on they had made a few 1950 and 1955 target pistols in .45 Colt and with the Model 25 they did so again in 1977 using -3 to indicate the chambering. These guns were made using the same length cylinder as the .45 ACP, but this was quickly changed to a longer cylinder to accept the semi-wadcutter bullets popular for the cartridge. The new designation was 25-5.

With the arrival of stainless steel, the S&W .45 became the Model 625. And, once again, you could get revolvers chambered for both .45 ACP and .45 Colt under that model number. Current production for the .45 ACP is a 625-6 and Mountain Guns in both calibers are

planned. At this time, no blue steel guns are chambered in .45 caliber.

People still hate those half-moon clips, but the advent of full-moon clips that hold six rounds has had a profound effect. If you've ever watched someone who is really skilled reload a revolver with full moon clips, it is far faster than anything you've ever seen with a pistol.

But the easiest way to shoot any of the .45 ACP revolvers is simply to use .45 Auto Rim. There's only one problem with that. Remington discontinued the ammo over 20 years ago. Surprisingly, brass is still readily available and Georgia Arms now offers a factory load using the famous Speer 200 gr. "flying ashtray."

Handloaders have it made for the Auto Rim can use just about any .45 caliber bullet you want. It's not a candidate for serious hotrodding, but it is surely possible to duplicate any sane .45 ACP factory load in AR brass.

Some have pronounced the revolver dead, stating that it is on the slippery slope to dodoland, that the modern automatic has made it obsolete. Nothing could be further from the truth. S&W reports that revolver sales are strong, routinely exceeding those of pistols.



**Colt made a New Service in .45 ACP, dubbed the Model 1917 for the year the U.S. declared war on Germany.**



**The aluminium rod is a tool from SSK to pry those stinker .45 ACP cases from moon clips.**



**Period accessories for Colt and S&W 1917s can be found at gun shows, in Shotgun News or snooping in old shops.**

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**J**ack Weigand

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as autopistols. The current president of the prestigious American Pistolsmiths Guild, Weigand was a former director of both the Springfield Armory Custom Shop and the Taurus Custom Shop. Jack is also a designer of clever, sophisticated scope mounts for handguns.

The custom Ruger Single-Six from Weigand Custom features just such a set of scope mounts. The mount is based on a no-gunsmithing Weigand aluminum base mated with three Weigand light weight rings. With a silver finished Leupold 2x in the Weigand rings, the resulting setup looks just a miniature version of the famous MagNaPort Stalker conversion of a Ruger Super Blackhawk.

Included with the Weigand custom Single-Six (but not shown in the photo) is a set of three interchangeable front sight blades and a Bowen Classic Arms adjustable rear sight.

The custom work on this refined Ruger was performed by Guild member Eric Keisler, who works in Weigand's shop. Keisler has obviously learned well from the master, for the workmanship on this unusual custom handgun is in keeping with the sort of excellence we have come to expect from Weigand's small shop.

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- Weigand three lightweight scope ring set
- Bowen Classic Arms adjustable rear sight
- Eagle buffalo horn grips
- Leupold 2x EER Silver scope
- Glass bead satin finish

The finished revolver, as shown here but including the iron sight package, retails for \$1,286 complete or \$887 on a customer's gun. For more information on the full line of services and scope mounts available from Jack Weigand, contact him at:

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## TANTOS

Continued from page 61

of the *katana*, as defined by the *yokote*, is almost non-existent on *tanto*. The point on the *katana* comes under enormous stress when cutting and the change in angles helps to support it.

This is not necessary on a small knife whose primary function is slashing and stabbing.

The *tanto* was carried in the *obi* (wide cloth belt) with the edge up and the *tsuka* (handle) slightly to the right. This allowed for rapid deployment of the weapon in time of need. *Tanto* were frequently worn in place of the *wakizashi* (short sword), especially indoors.

While most *tanto* had some slashing capability, stabbing was the most effective method to bring down an opponent. There are several methods of gripping the *tanto* when both slashing and stabbing.

### The *tanto* served the Samurai in close-quarters battle.

Unlike the fighting styles of other cultures, *tanto* were commonly used with the edge out and the blade laying along the forearm, point towards the elbow, in a reverse grip. This method facilitates the deflecting of longer blades when the Samurai faced an opponent whose weapon had greater reach.

Samurai women were also taught how to use the *tanto*. With it they were expected to defend their honor or, if violated, to take their own life.

Samurai men used the *tanto* to commit *seppuku* (ritual suicide) when honor or circumstances dictated this course of action. The revenge of their lord by the 47 Ronin is one such historical instance in Japanese history where, even though their act was admired, the sentence of *seppuku* was handed down.

The *nagasa* (length of blade) for *seppuku* was about 11". After cutting (*kiri*) across his belly (*hara*) from left to right, the blade was turned in the cut and a slight upward cut was made. At this point, if the Samurai had the strength and courage, he bent forward at the waist and the *kaishakunin* (his second) would take his head with a sword.

The *tanto* served the Samurai well throughout centuries of close-quarters battle. When properly carried and used, it is no less efficient in the modern lethal force engagement environment.




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The 1871-1872 Open Top was the forerunner of the famous 1873 Colt 'Model P'. Open Top revolvers were produced at the same time as the percussion conversion models of Richard's and Richard's-Manson. Open Top's were manufactured as a new product and did not employ parts used in the conversion models.



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## LADYSMITH

Continued from page 59

ated with the multiplicity of small and delicate parts. There was also some degree of concern that many customers were shooting the .22 LR cartridge in the revolver instead of the Smith & Wesson round that closely resembled a .22 Long.

From the onset, the small size of the .22 Hand Ejector made it a pain to produce. The First Model had a free-standing ejector with no front locking lug under the barrel. The familiar cylinder latch on the left side of the revolver frame accomplished the opening of the cylinder.

The tiny cylinder latch assembly gave the assemblers fits and, in 1906, it was eliminated in favor of a locking bolt in a lug under the barrel. Pulling forward on a knob in front of the locking lug unlocked the cylinder for loading.

In 1910, after a total production of 13,875 units, the Third Model Perfected came into being. Barrel length options included 2.5", 3" and 6", and the round-butt with plastic grips gave way to a squarebutt with checkered walnut panels. This model remained in production until 1921 and serial number 26154.

We examined number 22570, a late-production Third Variation in the possession of Leo Bradshaw Jr. The revolver has isolated specks of surface rust but was mechanically like new. Fit and finish are excellent, and the double-action pull is smooth while remaining heavy enough to reliably detonate modern rimfire primers.

Respecting the age and considerable value of this example, we confined our shooting to a cylinder of CCI Long Mini-Caps discharged into Leo's bullet trap. A longer shooting session would probably prove unremarkable, as the firearm is clearly intended as a close-range weapon, with reliable function being its most important feature.

In its time, the LadySmith was in direct competition with the compact Safety Hammerless revolvers as well as a multitude of other small handguns, generally of lesser quality. All of the gun manufacturers were scurrying to address the personal-defense market. The LadySmith was also a contemporary of the .32-frame Bekeart Target revolver, popular among rimfire sports shooters.

In the final analysis, the M-Frame fell victim to both the vagaries of the marketplace and the production difficulties attendant upon small and fragile parts. The Model M was the first .22 caliber revolver produced by Smith & Wesson since 1882, and it opened the door for the fine .22s of the early 20th century. As a variation of the Hand Ejector series uniquely targeted toward women, it affirmed the role of the handgun as a civilian tool at the dawn of the century.



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## SIXGUNNER

Continued from page 58

cartridge chambered in an upgraded Smith & Wesson .44 Special 1950 Target revolver. Even before the new Smith arrived, Ruger got wind of the project. He made off with a sack of fired brass and some ammunition and went to work.

The .357 Blackhawk was rechambered to the new .44 Magnum. Elmer Keith told them the frame was too small, and he was found correct when one of the three prototypes blew while proof testing. Back to the drawing board. The frame was lengthened and enlarged, and the result was the Ruger .44 Magnum Blackhawk. With a 6½" barrel, the Ruger Blackhawk hit the shelves before the Smith & Wesson .44 in many parts of the country.

I purchased a 5½" Single-Six in 1956, a .357 Blackhawk with a 4½" barrel and a 6½" .44 Blackhawk in 1957. I did not have to agonize over which barrel length to pick as these were the only ones offered.

**Those first Ruger Super Blackhawks were beautifully blued and packed in a wooden box with a retail price of \$120.**

The .22 and .357 became instant favorites, but the .44 Magnum— in those days before I learned how to handle one— was punishing with full-house loads. I was not the only one who felt this way as complaints began to arrive at Ruger's doors about the recoil of the .44 Blackhawk. Again Ruger listened. The answer seemed to be two-fold: a larger grip frame and more weight.

As noted, the original grip frame featured on the Single-Six and Blackhawks was the same size and shape as the Peace-maker. Colt's grip frame was originally found on the mildly recoiling 1851 Navy and carried over to the Single Action Army. The first loading of the .45 with a 255 gr. bullet over 40 grs. of blackpowder for a muzzle velocity between 800 and 900 fps was looked upon as "too much recoil" for horse soldiers so you can imagine what the recoil generated by the .44 Magnum felt like in the Blackhawk with the same grip frame.

Ruger looked way back in history to the 1840s, resurrected the Colt Dragoon grip frame, made it of steel instead of the lightweight alloy used in Blackhawk grip frames, and lengthened the barrel to 7½". The new sixgun also lost the fat-top profile with the addition of protective ears around the rear sight.

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The standard .44 Blackhawk stayed in production alongside the Super Blackhawk until 1963 when it was dropped. The .357 Blackhawk, in its original form, also disappeared at the same time as the grip frame was changed slightly and protective ears were added to the top strap.

To collectors, the original Blackhawks are now known as flat-tops. The 1963 version became the "Old Model" in 1973 with the advent of the "New Model" featuring a transfer bar safety.

## I have never cared for the Ruger Super Blackhawk grip. It nails me with heavy loads.

Those first Ruger Super Blackhawks were beautifully blued and packed in a wooden box with a retail price of \$120. When the box could no longer be shipped, the price dropped to \$116 at a time when the Smith & Wesson .44 Magnum sold for \$140.

In 1973, the Ruger Super Blackhawk became the New Model Super Blackhawk with a transfer bar safety. For the first time it was safe to carry a single-action sixgun fully loaded without having to let the hammer down on an empty chamber, as had been the standard practice since 1873.

With the coming of silhouetting in its full popularity in the 1980s, Ruger listened again and added a 10½" barreled Super Blackhawk to the production line. Since that time we have seen the advent of a stainless version with 4¾", 5½", 7½" and 10½" barrels. Two of the best Super Blackhawks offered for hunters have been the Hunter Model with a 7½" heavy barrel and cut with scallops for accepting Ruger scope rings, and the Bisley Model.

I have never cared for the Ruger Super Blackhawk grip. It nails me with heavy loads. I realize that I am in the minority with this opinion. The advent of the Bisley grip frame was a godsend for me. Ruger looked at the Colt Bisley grip frame and Keith's #5SA, which combined the Bisley backstrap and a Colt trigger guard, for a most comfortable grip frame for shooting heavy loads.

Ruger adapted this idea to the Super Blackhawk and came up with what for me is the best grip shape ever for handling heavy loads.

The Ruger Super Blackhawk has now been in production for over 40 years. It has proven to be nearly indestructible and will handle the heaviest .44 Magnum loads with ease. I expect it to be around for a long time to come.



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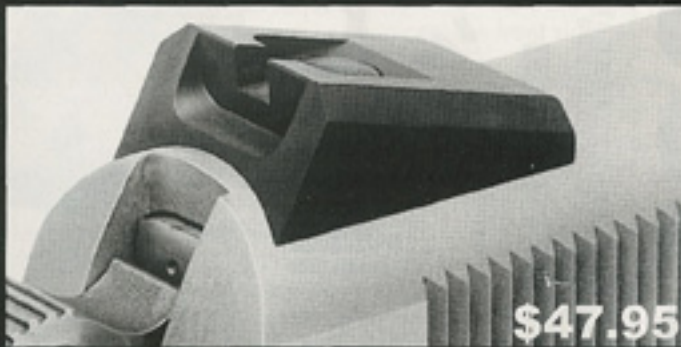
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## HOLSTERMAKER

*Continued from page 42*

Addressing entry-level leatherworkers, Gordon says, "There's quite a few talented guys out there who produce beautiful work. But the most common error they make is to overextend themselves. They say, 'How can I be in debt when I have all these orders?' If they don't charge enough for their work, and if they don't keep the quality high enough, they go under."

With increasing acceptance of ballistic nylon and plastic holsters, the law enforcement market has declined for traditional leathersmiths. Davis saw the trend in the late '80s and that, combined with the L.A. rat race, convinced him it was time for a change.

With his children grown, he moved to the Pacific Northwest in 1997, returning to saddle making with the Hamley company in Pendleton, Ore. When the company went out of business, Gordon fell back on his own resources by concentrating on concealed carry and cowboy leather in his new shop in Arizona.

## Gone Cowboy

Old West gun leather was no novelty to Davis. As "Diamond Jim," one of the three original founders of the Single Action Shooting Society (SASS), he was in on the ground floor of the cowboy shooting genre.

Consequently, more and more of his work in the 1990s drew upon his knowledge of genuine Old West leather.

Describing himself as "a leather history nut," Davis eagerly sought information on authentic cowboy belts and holsters of the 1870-1900 era. His shelves are crammed with reference material, permitting him to reproduce almost any gunleather item of the post-Civil War period.

One of Davis' cowboy staples is the authentic and functional "Slim Jim" design for toting long-barreled revolvers. Various regions tended to produce their own leather, varying from one to two-loop holsters, strong side or crossdraw. A knowledgeable observer can tell you whether a cowboy's gear originated in the Southwest or in Montana Territory, and Davis is capable of recreating most of the identifiable types.

Davis also enjoys occasional forays into the B-western category, with elaborately stitched or studded holsters made to the customer's specifications. Perhaps the most impressive product is the Ranger Belt with matching holsters: a 4" wide belt with two rows of cartridge loops as well as room for rifle rounds.

Davis offers other cowboy accessories including six-round "shotgun slides" for packing scattergun fodder. Rifle scabbards, slings, and cartridge or shell pouches also are part of his stock in trade.

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is his shoulder holster. The holster itself is of conventional origin, but Davis' method of securing the holster to the belt, and his flexible strap arrangement, ensures that the pistol stays put.

"After a lot of trial and error, I found that a shoulder holster works better if the gun's grip lays against the chest. That way it's always in the same place, and doesn't move around," Davis comments. It also makes the gun more concealable, with a lower signature beneath a jacket or blazer.

Davis' original shoulder holsters were for Colt Commanders and Officer's Models, but Government Models and large frame revolvers also are adaptable to the design. Having worn one of these rigs for days at a time, this writer can attest to the features. The pistol stays put, and the grip is always in the same place regardless of arm or torso movement.

For cowboy shooters, Davis offers a skeletonized shoulder rig based on the traditional John Wesley Hardin design. The spring steel that Davis selects for the retention flip over the cylinder is the "secret" of the holster, affording repeatability and reliability over a prolonged period.

## Off Duty And IDPA

Conceding the growing dominance of nylon or plastic belts and holsters for duty rigs and IPSC competition, Davis finds widespread acceptance of innovative leather designs for off-duty or civilian carry as well as the practically oriented IDPA movement.

"I think that Jeff Cooper's idea of using competition to find what works on the street still has merit," Davis says. "I'm hearing from customers who want specific designs for their own purpose—holsters that aren't widely produced anywhere else—and I think I can fill that niche."

One of the notable features of contemporary Davis holsters is the lack of an impression for the pistol's ejection port. Davis observed long ago that some guns shaved leather from the inside during the draw, resulting in shorter holster life and, worst of all, the prospect for untimely malfunctions. Therefore, he filled in the simulated ejection ports on his molds and has never had a complaint.

He says, "The fact that I'm a serious shooter definitely helps with my products. Some holster makers aren't really serious about shooting, so they don't pay as much attention to details that can affect that kind of thing."

That comment speaks volumes, as Davis' leather features constant attention to detail. Whether you're packing a Colt Peacemaker or a Glock 19, Davis probably has something to carry your gun.

For additional information, contact Gordon Davis at Box 1209, Chino Valley, AZ 86323; phone: (520) 636-4111.



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## AYOOB FILES

Continued from page 32

Burns is still very professional, just awfully concerned now. And his mouthy assistant has shut his trap, firmly.

I am hoping the bag will turn up a kilo of cocaine and maybe a Glock, since it's way too light to be holding an Uzi. I'll be disappointed in that, but not in the rest. It will turn out to contain some marijuana, and a notebook with lyrics of the dead man's rap songs, which will be irrefutably tied to him by handwriting analysis. With lines like, "My hand go to tha pistol grip. Cock the muthafucka. Let you ass rip."

This is good enough. I smell justice coming.

### The Participants

As regular readers of "The Ayoob Files" know, everything I tell you is what actually happened in real-life gunfights and struggles. The details are all fully documentable. Unlike some imitators, I don't make this stuff up. I tell you the names, the dates, what the survivors told me was going through their minds, and whether or not the bullets expanded.

Every now and then, I have a case come up where I have to change some names, for logical reasons. This is such a case. The involved officer has since left The Job, doesn't want to be reminded of his nightmare, and tells me it's only permissible to talk about the case if his name isn't mentioned. I have to respect that. When you've finished this article, I think you'll understand why.

If I won't name the slayer, I can't name the slain. There's enough grief of loved ones in every involved family to go around in this matter. Let's call the officer who pulled the trigger Fred Friendly. Let's call his partner Didm I. Best.

The man who was killed in the death battle that he himself initiated wanted to be a "gangsta rapper" like Snoop Doggy Dogg. Very well, give him what he wanted. He is Rabidd Doggy Dogg, and name his brother and partner in crime, Badd Doggy Dogg.

### The Incident

Officers Friendly and Best were dispatched to a low-income apartment building to supervise the removal of property by Rabidd Doggy Dogg from an apartment owned by his paramour. She had kicked him out because she was tired of him abusing her and, she told the police dispatcher, she needed cops there so he wouldn't harm her while he was removing his stuff.

Friendly and Best duly supervised as Rabidd and his brother, Badd, carried Rabidd's things from the apartment. Each time the brothers came back up the stairs, their verbal threats to the woman who had pronounced eviction became

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more ominous and deadly.

When Rabidd snarled to the woman that he would slash her throat, the two cops of this medium-sized city looked at each other and decided that enough was enough. It was obviously going to escalate to something physical. Besides, Friendly warned Best, he had noted gang tattoos on Rabidd that indicated a potential for extreme violence.

They followed the brothers downstairs on their next-to-last trip, and stood in the doorway, blocking access. When Rabidd and Badd returned, Friendly explained that since things seemed to be heating up toward violence, it would be best for the two of them to depart now and let things cool. They could come back another time for the last couple of armloads of belongings still in the apartment. Those which still littered the front porch, the officers explained, they were welcome to take.

Rabidd didn't like that. He began screaming at the cops. They were adamant but polite: Sorry, you can't go back in tonight. It wasn't pushiness, it was a favor; they had already seen and heard enough to arrest Rabidd for criminal threatening and simple assault, which they made clear they didn't want to do.

Rabidd swung, punching Officer Friendly in the face. Friendly reflexively struck back, with a hand holding a flashlight. Rabidd grabbed him, pulled him off the porch, and brought him down the stairs and to the ground in a fight, the flashlight gone in the darkness. His brother jumped the other officer.

Rabidd was big and strong. Officer Friendly was average size, and down on his back. His assailant's fists pounded his head like iron hammers. Nothing like this had happened to the cop before, but as he saw white flashes in front of his eyes, he remembered trauma victims to whom he had ministered. They told him of seeing those white flashes just before they became unconscious.

He felt a violent tug at his right hip, and he reached down to secure his weapon, and his hand closed on his antagonist's hand, which was already there, trying to pull his gun out. It was a Smith & Wesson Model 5906, which the department required all officers to carry "off safe" in case they might be too stupid to remember to flick the catch. The officer was acutely aware that anyone who gained control of the gun could just pull the trigger and make it go off—16 times.

Officer Friendly knew where it was going now. Take the gun. Kill the cop, and the other cop, and then kill the African-American woman the attacker had vilified and threatened to murder. Officer Friendly fought desperately for the pistol.

It came out of the holster, in the cop's hand, and knowing he was about to pass out, he fired.

No reaction. The man was still trying to take his gun. He fired again. And again. And again. He wasn't sure how many

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shots he had fired when the terrible, hurtful weight on top of him slid away, and no one was trying to kill him anymore.

He scrambled to his feet, gasping for breath. A few steps away, his partner, also overpowered by a stronger man who showed no reaction to being sprayed in the face from a tear gas dispenser, was suddenly also free and standing. The man who had been beating him had stopped only when he heard the gunfire, throwing himself to his feet and raising his hands in surrender.

Numb and dazed, Officer Friendly looked down at the still form of the man who had almost killed him. Reflexively, from his training, he pointed his gun away, toward the ground, and decocked it.

The death battle was over. The nightmare had just begun. The man who had tried to kill him would soon be pronounced dead at the receiving hospital. Before long, Officer Friendly would be criminally charged with murder in the second degree.

### The Accusation

The shooting had gone down in a lower-income neighborhood. In moments, the scene was surrounded by African-Americans screaming that the pigs had murdered one of their brothers— for nothing. A relatively low-level civil disturbance accompanied the investigation of the death scene.

It was a cross-racial shooting: Caucasian police officer pulls trigger, African-American dies. Speaking as an expert witness who has stood up for multiple African-American good guys who have killed Caucasian bad guys, I have to state frankly that I can't see anything but a big-time flashing of The Race Card that would account for the involved officer being charged with murder under these circumstances. But that is exactly what happened.

It quickly became apparent to the investigators that the deceased was a member of a gang, specifically The Black Gangster Disciples. The autopsy showed a bullet encysted in his body from a previous shooting. There was no significant effort on the part of the larger, encompassing state police agency, that was assigned to investigate, to look into the background of the deceased. I personally checked out the background of "Officer Friendly," because I don't put my reputation on the line for racists. He was clean. I took the case.

Officer Friendly hired Ned Wehr to represent him in court. Wehr is a fine lawyer. He and I had been through two officer-involved shooting trials together before this, one criminal and one civil, and had won both. We were comfortable working together. He hired me for this one as "expert-in-chief," giving me the rare privilege to pick the expert witnesses as well as do what I normally do in these matters, which is advising on defense strategy and handling my own

side of the expert function.

The prosecutors said that the bullet holes in the dead man's Malcolm X T-shirt, examined after being cut from the body by paramedics, indicated shots from back-to-front instead of front-to-back, hence the murder charge. They had overlooked the fact that part of the gangsta culture is doing things backwards, the way part of Satanist culture is putting crucifixes upside-down and reciting the Lord's Prayer backwards.

The cheap shirt the dead man wore literally had no defined front or back, being cut almost like a tube-top; with the logo you would expect to be on the front worn backwards, the shots exactly lined up with front-to-back shots.

The prosecution intimated that shooting this man five times was *prima facie* evidence of malice. They also said that he must have stood over his "victim" as he lay helpless, and shot him again and again, gratuitously, with no more than the first one or two shots being at all justifiable or excusable.

There were some problems with that hypothesis. Officer Friendly was one of the many victims of the "147 gr. subsonic fad" that enraptured American law enforcement from the late 1990s through, in some few departments, the present. Endorsed by the FBI and a famous forensic scientist who spent more time with gelatin than human bodies, the fad involved Winchester 147 gr. subsonic JHPs being hyped as incredible manstoppers. The department issued this trendy ammo to Officer Friendly.

All five bullets fired in this case went through the suspect. Some expanded, judging by the exit wounds. The bullet I recovered also expanded. It was contained in a piece of luggage that death scene photos proved was located behind the deceased, on a porch above where he and the cop were struggling. Some of the bullets did not expand.

Extensive checking with metal detectors found no bullets in the ground under the body, where at least some would have to be if the prosecutor's theory was to hold water. The angle of the bullet I discovered was exactly consistent with the cop being down on the ground, firing upward, exactly as he testified.

It was Officer Friendly's wife who first noticed the luggage that was on the porch in the evidence pictures, but has not been initially analyzed. She spotted it, told him and he told me. I found the exculpatory evidence, thanks to her.

It is always a good idea to take clothing from the shooter as evidence. Another thing I found that the assigned investigators had missed was that Rabidd had pulled so violently on Officer Friendly's Safariland holster that his uniform pants—confiscated as evidence, thank God, the night of the shooting—had a 2" tear by the inside stud of the holster as the attacker's tremendous force ripped

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it forward along the heavy-duty Sam Browne belt.

It was vital for Officer Friendly to be able to show in court that he recognized his attacker's gang tattoos as symbols of someone who came from a subculture that thought it was good to kill cops. "Understand your enemy," warned Sun Tzu.

Why would this man attempt to murder a cop? One answer lay in the rap music in his own handwriting that I discovered later. The song was called "If You Gankin." Gankin, in gang terminology, is "dissing," or disrespecting, the gang or one of its members. Rabidd probably saw Officer Friendly's eyes go to his gang tattoos shortly before Rabidd was ordered not to re-enter the household. If he decided that the officer had banned him for being a gang member, it would fit a lyric he had written in one of his own songs: "...and you will be killed, mutha-fucka, if you gankin'..."

## The Trial

The four experts I brought in trampled the prosecution's bogus case into the dust. Ed Nowicki explained why the prosecution's suggestion that the cop was negligent for not spraying him with something instead of shooting him was nonsense. Col. Hugh Mills, a master of handgun retention training, explained why retention would have been all but impossible for this officer and that shooting the attacker off of him was the only option left. Mark Dunston, an expert on gang signs, explained why Officer Friendly was right to presume deadly danger when he saw his assailant's gang tattoos, since such gangs are noted for training each other to disarm cops and kill them with their own weapons. Dave Grossi, who had trained Officer Friendly at a seminar, explained why he had run out of viable options at the time he fired his Model 5906.

There was all that. And there was the evidence. In the end, the jury found Fred Friendly not guilty.

## Epilogue

Officer Friendly was returned to duty, but had been so traumatized by his department throwing him to the wolves that he felt he could no longer effectively function in law enforcement. When I last spoke to him, he was working toward his bachelor's degree in business.

His partner, to the best of my knowledge, has stayed on The Job. Crashton Burns was due to retire when I dealt with him, and I hope that went well. I knew, and learned from, many good people on his usually excellent police department, and those I talked to spoke well of him. I hope he can get over this one case that must haunt him. I never much gave a damn what happened to his clueless subordinate. He didn't strike me as being worth the trust that had been put upon him.



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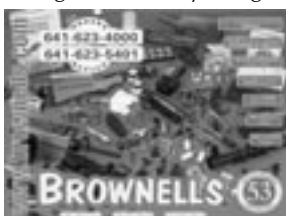
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# GUNNY SACK

By Charles E. Petty

## BUSHNELL YARDAGE PRO SCOUT

One of the great things about modern electronics is that they keep getting better and cheaper. Not long ago, a laser rangefinder was huge and cost thousands of dollars. They were so heavy they were nearly impractical if pack-weight was an issue. They were as large as a pair of high-power binoculars. Today, some will fit in a shirt pocket and cost but a few hundred dollars.

Bushnell has been a leader in this field and their latest, the Yardage Pro Scout, is both small and accurate. Rangefinders have been regularly featured in this column and I use them routinely when varmint hunting. I certainly don't claim that this confers any expertise on me, for it doesn't, but it does give me the chance to look through quite a few.

The Bushnell Scout is a palm-size unit that combines a 7x monocular with the rangefinder. Like all rangefinders, the Scout depends on a computer chip that does a simple math calculation using the formula  $D=R/T$  which, coincidentally, is



exactly what a chronograph does.

The rangefinder measures the time it takes the laser to be reflected back to the instrument. Since we know light travels at 186,000 miles per second, if we can time the tiniest nano second, we got it.

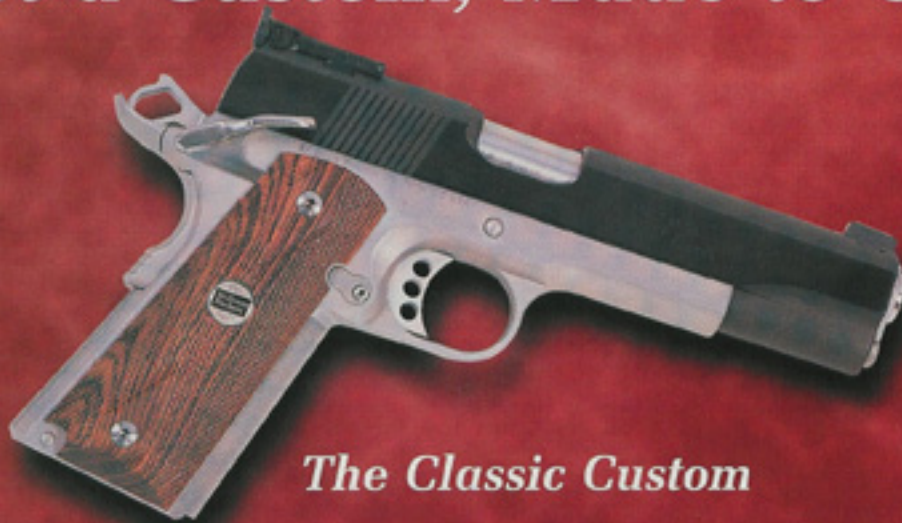
My testing was done by comparing the Scout with several other units and looking at targets at known distances. Up to 400 yards—the longest known range available—it gave accurate results and did so on dark targets, such as a telephone pole, that were not too reflective and had defeated some other, larger units.

Bushnell states their maximum effective range as 700 yards on reflective targets. Don't doubt it at all. And the 6.7 oz. weight makes it imminently packable.



For more information, contact Bushnell Sports Optics, 9200 Cody, Dept. AH, Overland Park, KS 66214; phone: (913) 752-3400; website: [www.bushnell.com](http://www.bushnell.com)

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# GUNNY SACK

By Charles E. Petty

## SMITH & WESSON FL7 FLASHLIGHT

**A**lmost all of the big companies in our field of interest are involved in some kind of licensing program that finds their name and logo being used on non-traditional products supplied by other makers. Sometimes they offer things like coffee, barbecue sauce or even toasters, but most licensed products are more directly related to shooting, such as shooting shirts and caps, knives or gun cleaners.

One such item is the FL7 rechargeable flashlight. It's one of those super-bright lights we've come to know and love, but in a configuration that is just a bit different. The aluminum body is 1.2" in diameter, but there are six flats cut that, when combined with the rough anodized finish, give a non-slip surface. The diameter is small enough for a comfortable grip but not large enough to be unwieldy. It is 7¼" long.

The light is powered by a rechargeable nickel metal hydride battery with a quick recharge (2.7 hour) design. The charger (included) can be used with either household current or from an automobile battery via a cigarette lighter adapter. The charger also serves as a mount which can affixed to a wall or dashboard with two screws. The light's switch is mounted on the head, is rubber covered, and provides both intermittent and continuous operation.



For more information, contact Smith & Wesson, 2100 Roosevelt Ave. Dept. AH, Springfield, MA 01102; phone: (800) 331-0852; website: [www.smith-wesson.com](http://www.smith-wesson.com)



## Winchester. Short. Magnum.



What more do you need in a rifle? The Winchester Model 70 Featherweight (pictured) in the hot new 300 WSM caliber has all three. It's a Winchester. That means it has the quality and features you've grown to trust. Like its massive claw extractor and controlled round feed and its three position safety that lets you open the action in the safe, middle position. The new 300 WSM is a short action caliber. That means your rifle is compact and light. Perfect for those hardcore hunts when you have to cover a lot of ground.

# GUNNY SACK

By Charles E. Petty

## NIKON TUNDRA 10X50 BINOCULARS

**N**ikon equipment is not new to me. Their cameras and lenses have served me very well and produce most of the photographs you see in my stories. Now I'm learning to love their rifle scopes, spotting scopes and binoculars.

The latest of those is a pair of binoculars that are simply stunning. They're a 10x50 center focus model known as "Tundra" and they are as bright and sharp as can be. They are rubber-coated and waterproof.

Outside an optical laboratory, it is very hard to measure the parameters most people use to judge fine optical equipment like this. I rely on simpler things—my carefully calibrated Mk. I, Mod I eyeballs. Seriously, if you've spent much time staring through scopes and binoculars, you get a *feel* for those things. These are as sharp and bright as a pair of really expensive European glasses.

It only took a few simple tests for me to be sold. One of the favorites measures of resolution is just to look at a brick wall and see how well the fine detail shows up. Another is to look



at .22 bullet holes at different ranges. Some spotting scopes have trouble seeing a .22 hole at 100 yards on a dreary day. Not these.



For more information, contact Nikon USA, 1300 Walt Whitman Rd., Dept AH, Melville, NY 11747; phone: (631) 547-4200; website: [www.nikonusa.com](http://www.nikonusa.com)



# DEL 70

Compare the **300 WSM** (left) and **300 Win. Mag.** (right) cartridges. The 300 WSM (left) gives better magnum ballistics in a short action cartridge. Also available in composite and kinetic models version of the Model 70. (Photo for comparison only — not to scale.)



It also has magnum power. In fact, the 300 WSM's ballistics are almost identical to those of the mighty 300 Win. Mag. This rifle is the hottest thing you will see at your favorite gun store this year. But if you can't wait, call for a free catalog at 1-800-945-6427 or learn more right now at: [winchester-guns.com](http://winchester-guns.com). Winchester is a registered trademark licensed from Olin Corporation.

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# GUNNY SACK

By Charles E. Petty

## RCBS DIGITAL MICROMETER

**S**hooters, and especially handloaders, are forever needing to make precise measurements. But as we get older, it gets harder and harder to read those tiny graduations on calipers and micrometers. Happily, the electronics revolution and LCD displays have come to the rescue. They've actually been around awhile, but many have been pretty pricey and perhaps prohibitively so for the average handloader.

RCBS was one of the first to offer dial calipers with their name on them and now they've added to that line with electronic LCD calipers and micrometers. Obviously, RCBS doesn't make these things in lovely Oroville; they're imported. These are from China.

I've heard many screams and gripes about "cheap" stuff from China, and it is true that these calipers are very affordable, but my tests fail to show any loss of accuracy when compared with top-of-the-line American or Japanese tools of the same type.

A friend at RCBS reports that they tested samples from a number of vendors and made their selection based upon accuracy and ease of operation. After using these for a while now,



I'd say they made a good choice.

The calipers have a 6" range, can be used in either English or metric units and are capable of measurement to the nearest thousandth (.001"). The micrometer has a 1" range and measures as little as 50 millionths (.00005").

One of the major difficulties in operating a mike is applying the same amount of pressure each time. These have a nice feature where the entire barrel slips when a preset tension is reached. This is handy and really does lead to nicely repeatable results.



For more information, contact RCBS Operations, 605 Oro Dam Blvd., Dept. AH, Oroville, CA 95965; phone: (800) 533-5000; website: [www.rcbs.com](http://www.rcbs.com)



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Whether you'll own only one "carry" gun or dozens, this one belongs in your collection. Utilizing a grip frame almost a full half inch shorter and 2 oz. lighter than the old "Officers Model" without giving up any capacity (6+1) is a trick that only STI has mastered. The slide is 3.9" for concealability.

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## SHIPPING

Continued from page 49

complete gun), you can send and receive a barrel, a firing pin, grips or other components in any manner your preferences and pocketbook dictate.

6) You can send a gun to any resident of your own state, whether or not that person is a federal licensee (gun dealer, manufacturer, collector, gunsmith or importer). Outside your state, you can send the gun only to a licensee. The in-state/out-of-state distinction is made, an ATF spokesman says, because: "The Treasury Department's authority in these matters is derived from the interstate commerce clause of the U.S. Constitution." If a gun doesn't move across a state line, it's not interstate commerce.

7) Military and law-enforcement personnel acting in their official capacities have a slightly different set of laws to follow.

And that's it. Like I said, simple and straightforward.

**Not being governmental, they're free to add rules and regulations on top of the laws.**

The confusion arises when the laws are translated into the actual shipping policies that apply when you hand your gun to the smiling clerk at the counter.

### Going Postal

The Postal Service is an agency of the federal government, so its policies follow the laws practically word for word. The private shippers are a different matter. Not being governmental, they're free to add rules and regulations on top of the laws to cover such things as corporate liability, safety and security.

Which is how, to cite the most recent and familiar example, UPS was able to ban ground shipping of handguns back in October 1999.

"As a responsible corporate citizen," the press release said, "UPS wants to ensure that handguns are transported as safely as possible by restricting handguns to designated handling channels... We routinely review our policies and procedures and attempt to balance the interests of our customers, our company and the public with every business decision we make."

That meant Next Day Air, a big change for gun owners long accustomed to Big Brown's familiar—and much less

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expensive—ground system. But it solved a huge UPS headache: handguns disappearing from its trucks and transfer stations as the weapons made their way from one part of the country to the next.

"We used to lose guns all the time when UPS shipped them ground," one gun dealer said of those pre-air days. "Since they switched, our shipments arrive every time. Yes, it's more expensive for the customers, but their guns are getting there now."

**The policy change also added to the general confusion, because UPS imposed the new regulations with little notice.**

Unfortunately, the policy change also added to the general confusion, because UPS imposed the new regulations with little notice and virtually no explanation to its millions of gun-owning customers.

"The shippers add layers to the process," one ATF agent dryly noted. "And it's certainly not going to get any clearer in the future."

But we have to live with it.

### A Field Guide To Shipping

To make "living with it" a little easier, here's a field guide to the crucial "dos and don'ts" of shipping a firearm in the United States (sending a gun overseas is generally prohibited). Feel free to pull it out the next time that smiling clerk insists you absolutely, positively can't ship off that Kimber for night sights, or that Glock for a trigger job, or that Winchester to your granddaughter just because you love her:

**Postal Service:** Handguns cannot be mailed; they must be delivered by a private shipper. You can send a long gun to any resident of your own state, but only to a federal licensee out of state. USPS recommends, but does not require, sending guns by registered mail, its most secure option. Packages cannot contain any markings that would identify the contents as a gun.

**UPS:** Handguns and long guns are accepted for shipment, but only for repair, replacement or customization, i.e. warranty service or gunsmithing. Handguns must be sent via Next Day Air. Long guns can still be sent via ground service. Either sender or recipient must be federally licensed; no private party to private party. All guns must be sent from a UPS Customer Counter. The Authorized Shipping Outlets found in strip malls, supermarkets and shopping centers nationwide (the pack 'n' ships) are prohibited from accepting guns because UPS interprets



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the federal gun laws as requiring an actual UPS employee to accept the package, and the Authorized Outlets are independently owned and operated. No guns are accepted in unstaffed drop boxes. You cannot mark or label your package as containing firearms. UPS stamps all packages "Adult Signature Required," mandating that an adult sign for the shipment.

**FedEx:** Handguns and long guns are accepted for shipment. All must be shipped Priority Air Overnight. FedEx has always handled guns via air because it began as an air-freight company and only added ground service two years ago, when it purchased a ground shipper. Either sender or recipient must be federally licensed; no private party to private party. Guns are accepted at any staffed office or station that handles FedEx shipments, including the independently owned and operated pack 'n' ships. Guns are not accepted in unstaffed drop boxes. Guns must not be capable of firing; you must remove the firing pin, disconnect the barrel or otherwise render the weapon inoperable. You cannot mark or label your package as containing firearms, and names readily identified with guns—Glock, Winchester, Smith & Wesson, what have you—must be abbreviated or otherwise disguised, i.e. "G.I." for "Glock Inc." FedEx requires an adult to sign for the shipment.

## You cannot mark or label your package as containing firearms.

**Gun Dealers:** You can legally bring your handgun or long gun to any licensed dealer and ask him to ship it for you. Whether the dealer will agree, though, is another matter. Some will; some won't. A random call-around in the Chicago area showed an even split among those who wouldn't handle private shipments at all, those who handle them only for customers and those who handle them for anyone.

Typical is the policy of one large dealer in the Chicago suburbs. "Sure, we can handle it, no problem," said Connie Roe, who, with husband John, owns J.R. Shooting Sports of Naperville, Ill. "We started offering the service for our customers, but we'll do it for anyone."

J.R. charges the actual cost of air shipping and insurance via FedEx or UPS, plus \$20 to \$25 (depending on packaging and padding requirements) for staff time, storage, customer notification of the weapon's arrival and the ATF-required paperwork.

You are now fully armed with the rules of the gun shipping game. It's all perfectly simple... right?





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## VICKERS GUN!

Continued from page 57

Petty's accuracy testing consisted of three 10-shot groups with each lot of ammunition at 25 yards with six kinds of fodder: Federal match hardball, Federal match wadcutter, Remington and Speer hollowpoints, Winchester "Winclean" ball and— how could we not?— GI hardball. That's a total of 180 rounds. The average group size was 1.82".

The best group of slightly over an inch (1.17") came with the wadcutters. However, the best average came with the ammo that Vickers says most closely resembles what SF operators really shoot— match-grade hardball. With Federal's 230 gr. ball, the Vickers gun shot 1.52" for a 30-round average.

We hasten to add that Petty's testing includes every round fired. Some have asserted that the first round that is "hand cycled" into a semiautomatic pistol should be "discounted" from a group's measurement because a gun does not lock up the same as with a round that's self-loaded "automatically." Discounting the first hand-chambered round is totally unrealistic because the first round fired in a gunfight is the one that has been hand-chambered. Our testing included every round.

We noted that the Vickers gun would have had a noticeably better accuracy average except for the "worst" ammo (for this gun) in the test: Remington Golden Saber turned in a disappointing 2.30" average. Nonetheless, we included all the ammunition tested and are more than pleased with the overall 1.82" group.

We also tested the Vickers gun with

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rested, hand-held firing at 25 yards with Federal match hardball and Winchester's "Ranger" brand of hardball. Groups ran between 1.0" and 1.5" for five shots when we did our part behind the trigger. The fact that we "out-shot" a Ransom Rest means nothing except that a Ransom Rest is a more reliable indicator of accuracy. When we throw a flyer, well, we tend to shoot another group and "ignore" what must have been our own fault.

We did not shoot any handloads for accuracy, although we did dump between 500 and 600 rounds of our IPSC load (6.0 grs. of WW 231 under a 200 gr. H&G #68) to test the Vickers gun's reliability. Loaded to an OAL of 1.250", our IPSC handloads are very reliable, and they proved 100 percent in the Vickers gun. Including the accuracy testing and some GI hardball, we blew over 1,000 rounds through the pistol without a malfunction of any kind.

We used Wilson magazines in all the testing. Vickers recommends Wilson magazines for his custom guns and uses only Wilsons in his work.

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When the gun was finished and delivered, the sights were dead-nuts-on with the bullets landing right on top of the glowing green front dot at 25 yards. Regulating the sights to the customer's ammo and eye is one example of the sort of detailing and craftsmanship that sets a Vickers gun apart.

"I don't do it the easy way, I do it the right way. Nobody would argue that that's not the right way— you zero the sights, then you take them off and tritium them. It's *the way* to do it," Vickers stated.

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world, his pistolsmithing peers are keenly aware of his talents. Ken Hackathorn, a longtime friend of Vickers' and one of the two most influential individuals Vickers's credits with his development as a pistolsmith, had this to say: "You call Bill Wilson or Richard Heinie and ask them where to get the finest custom .45 built to customer specifications, and they'll say, 'Give Larry Vickers a call.'"

Richard Heinie is widely regarded for his consummate craftsmanship. He is a recipient of the Pistolsmith Of The Year award from the American Pistolsmiths Guild and perhaps the brightest light in the Guild for advocating an uncompromising standard of quality. When Heinie evaluates another pistolsmith, it pays to listen. "Larry is good," Heinie says. "As far as his knowledge on the gun and building a working pistol for the real thing, he knows how to do it." Heinie even bought a Vickers gun—a checkbook endorsement, the most sincere kind.

Given the strong recommendations of his peers, it's refreshing to see that Vickers is quick to credit several of them for serving as inspirations in his development as a pistolsmith. Steve Nastoff was an early mentor whom Vickers met when he was temporarily in the reserves, in the early '80s. "I called Steve Nastoff because he lived in the town where my reserve unit was stationed. I went by to visit him and that was my first introduc-

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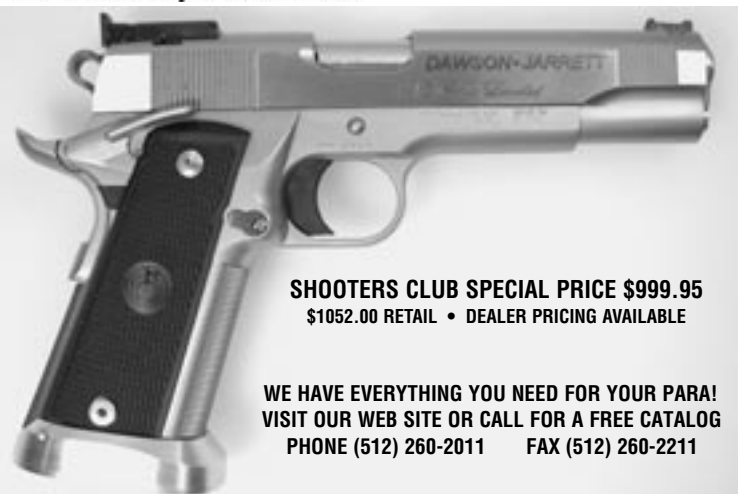


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tion to real high-end custom .45s," Vickers recalled, saying the meeting was an eye-opener for the young serviceman.

"I saw a Heinie gun in *American Handgunner* and I was real impressed with the real clean lines of the gun and just how tastefully executed the guns were. Then I saw Steve's guns and they had a little bit more of a Pachmayr influence to them, but after handling those guns in the flesh, especially Steve's gun, it was like: Wow! Steve was making the finest guns of his career, the best guns that money could buy," Vickers said.

"I once had a Nastoff two-tone five-inch on a pre-Series 70. It was the nicest five-inch I'd ever seen up to that time," Vickers remembered. He credits Nastoff and Heinie, in that order, as being the two most prominent influences on his style. He learned fit and finish, the importance of cosmetics and a sense of aesthetics for custom 1911s from these two masters.

As for the mechanics of working on John Browning's timeless design, Vickers learned from Nastoff's teacher, John Miller of Army Marksmanship Unit fame. It was this legendary military armorer who taught Nastoff, Mike Plaxco, Wayne Novak and Vickers how to fit barrels. "I'm in good company with that crowd," Vickers quipped. "John Miller is the single most knowledgeable man alive on the planet when it comes to small arms. His knowledge is phenomenal—slide-to-frame fit, barrel fit, everything. He thoroughly understands the gun. But he's like every other military armorer out there—his guns are pretty crude on the outside, but on the inside, his guns are perfect."

Additionally, Vickers praises Hackathorn, a *Handgunner* columnist, for coaching him on the more practical applications of the Government Model. "Ken taught me the history behind the gun, how to troubleshoot a 1911, things to look out for, all the stuff to watch for that Ken has seen in all the untold thousands of rounds that he's shot, and seen shot. He's helped me immeasurably."

A willingness to credit others is vintage Vickers. The man is the furthest thing from a prima donna you can imagine. He is talented, but more than that he works hard and puts in the time it takes to build a good gun. Says Vickers on his work ethic: "The best approach is usually the slowest approach. It takes awhile to fit a barrel or fit a slide. It's not the way to make a lot of money. It's a labor of love. I try to build every gun as if I was going to keep it. I always do the Miller hard-fit on every gun. It's like anything else—you get out of it what you put into it."

### The Model T Approach

You can order a full-house Vickers gun anyway you want it, but Vickers' signature guns are black milspec Parkerized. He offers two-tone finishes, but not on one of his signature guns. Vickers does not build exotic compensated raceguns or

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whittled-away Steel Challenge guns. He does not build Bianchi Barricade shrouds or Mover scope mounts. He builds serious 1911s for serious individuals. What that means is this:

**Base gun:** A single-stack, five-inch, .45 ACP, preferably a Springfield Armory MilSpec. Series 70 Colts, Caspians and Kimbers are acceptable.

**Barrel:** Preferably Bar-Sto. "Bar-Sto's shoot a wide variety of ammo better than anybody else's barrel out there. There may be barrels that shoot lead better or a barrel that shoots jacketed better, but nothing shoots *everything* better than a Bar-Sto," Vickers said.

**Safeties:** Tactically shaped ambi thumb safeties from Wilson or Brown; "hump back" beavertail from the same two manufacturers. Our test gun utilized Wilson Combat for both.

**Trigger:** Videcki adjustable combat trigger, poundage tuned for a crisp 4 lbs.

**Springs:** Wolffe 18.5 lb. recoil, 19 lb. main and heavy-duty firing pin.

**Mag funnel:** Heinie or S&A steel mag funnel blended by hand to a beveled mag well.

**Hammer:** Wilson or McCormick EDM hammers and sears.

**Sights:** Heinie or Novak front and rear with custom regulated tritium inserts. Bo-Mar or Wilson adjustables on request.

**Mag release:** Brown tactical.

**Finish:** Milspec black parkerizing from Texas Armament Co. (915-646-5827).

**Recoil Guide Rod:** None, and don't ask for one. "For a life and death gun, I do not recommend full-length recoil spring guides. They really don't add anything and they *can* prevent you from charging the weapon or clearing the weapon. When John Moses Browning designed the gun, you could press the muzzle on a table or against the wall to retract the slide far enough to chamber a round. You can't do that on a gun with a recoil spring guide rod," Vickers explained.

## Handcut Checkering

The degree of handwork in a Vickers gun is astonishing. The man polishes the heads of the sear pin and hammer pin! He takes emery paper and handpolishes the tooling marks out of the firing pin stop! He bevels the *bottom* of the slide rails! You could shave in his handblended mag funnel, if it were hardchromed.

The front strap is checkered at 20 lpi, by hand. "At this point in the game, I'll put my handcut metal checkering up against anybody's. I do it completely, 100 percent by hand. I lay it out by hand, I checker it by hand, I finish it by hand. A lot of people start the vertical lines on a machine and finish it out by hand, but my metal checkering is entirely done by hand," Vickers said. The lines were indeed precisely cut, perfectly aligned, not too sharp, not too dull.




Vickers only offers handcut checkering on his full-house guns because he cannot


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afford to damage his elbow by the time-consuming and tendonitis-causing procedure on anything but his top-end guns.

On all except his best-quality gun, Vickers offers machinecut checkering from Pete Single, a skilled machinist. "Pete Single does the finest machinecut checkering in the industry, bar none," Vickers proclaimed. "He does my machinecut checkering. That guy's stuff is, without question, the best. I could do my own, but the best I could hope to do is to be as good as Pete."

Once again, Vickers is quick to give credit where credit is due. Most other pistolsmiths dare not even admit they send some work out to vendors, let alone give them credit.

"I don't hide anything. There are no secrets. I will show anybody anything, as long as they're a serious 1911 student. I got that from Ken Hackathorn," Vickers said. "One time a famous pistolsmith from my home state refused to tell me how to do a trigger job. This guy always wanted to act like half the stuff he was doing was secret. That's bullshit. I just don't believe in that. In terms of gunsmithing the 1911, there's no secrets in this business. There's been stuff done for decades before any of the current crop of pistolsmiths ever put a file to metal."

"In the special forces community where I work, you are *expected* to pass on experience and knowledge to your subordinates. You have a sacred duty to pass on to others—that's just the way the military works," Vickers said. "I'll show anybody anything—within reason."

The rear of the slide is hand-serrated at 50 lpi with the head of the extractor also serrated to match. This is not easy. If you look at most other custom 1911s, the rear of the slide is serrated, but not the extractor head. The reason is that it is very tricky to get the lines to match since the extractor has a tendency to rotate slightly in its channel. Vickers' treatment is as clean as it comes.

## Carry Bevel Job

The carry bevel package is subtle, radiused by hand using emery sticks. The sharp edges are gently broken, not belt-sanded into oblivion. The result is a clean-line Government Model that doesn't cut your hand—the whole idea behind dehorning.

"I do it by hand with a file then go over it with an emery stick. I don't put it on a buffing wheel. Hell, I don't even own a buffing wheel," Vickers said.

There is more to the dehorning than meets the eye. "The front and rear of the slide are no-brainers, but not many people take the trouble to bevel the bottom edges of the slide," Vickers pointed out. Indeed, the outside edge of the slide was gracefully radiused.

Vickers' fit of the S&A mag funnel is similarly tasteful. The frame comes beveled by the factory, but Vickers files the



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funnel to match. The cast-in checkering is recut by hand. Lastly, Vickers applies a nice bevel on the sides of the S&A. "I got that idea from Paul Liebenberg," Vickers quickly acknowledged. "If you want to do it right, you make sure it's functional—then you give it a touch of class."

All tooling marks are removed by hand polishing. When we say all tooling marks, we mean *all* tooling marks. He polishes the mainspring housing pin! He polishes the grips screws! He even polishes the breech face!

Vickers does not own a surface grinder; almost all his work is done by hand with files and emery paper. "When people find out the amount of work I put into these guns, it adds to the desirability of the guns. There's a lot of time in the guns. I never do anything because it's the easiest, I do it because it's right," Vickers said.

As noted previously, Vickers only builds about 15 guns a year, including both full-house and less expensive carry packages. *That* is an indication of the amount of time he devotes to each gun. "I build every gun as if I were going to take it to work. That's just the way I am," Vickers confided.

## Browning's Mistakes

At the risk of invoking a bolt of lightning, Vickers feels there are two design flaws in the 1911 that need correcting by a manufacturer; the defects are beyond the ability of a pistolsmith to fix.

The problems are the extractor and the plunger tube. The extractor should be an external style, Vickers asserts, like on a SIG. The plunger tube should be replaceable, Vickers says, but it should be retained in a better way than with that "two-legs-and-peening nonsense."

"The way the plunger tube is held on the gun is basically archaic. The plunger tube was made to be held on by the grips, but with the many different sorts of grips on the market now, you can't count on that. There are only two little legs that hold it on there. If the plunger tube comes loose, it can pop over your safety and keep you from taking the safety off. That can get you killed," Vickers soberly stated.

He also doesn't particularly like the way the ejector is press-fit into the frame. Vickers stakes both the ejector and the barrel link to assure they don't wiggle loose.

The extractor, though, is a sore spot for the veteran operator. "The extractor is the key to the gun. The more you know about a 1911, the more you realize that the extractor determines *everything* in that gun. The extractor is more of a functioning issue and the plunger tube is more of a safety issue," Vickers said.

"The spring steel that John Browning originally spec'd for the extractor was some pretty darn good spring steel, but they have tried all sorts of steel in the intervening years and there're a lot of weak extractors out there."

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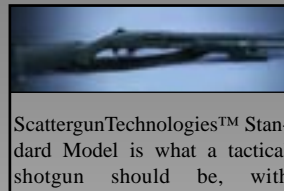
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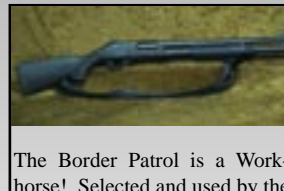
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"I can't count the number of 1911s, especially Colts, I've seen with minimal or no extractor tension out-of-the-box. They *need* to be tuned. A gun that needs that sort of work out-of-the-box is unacceptable. That's like buying a car and needing a tuneup before you can drive it. It's just not acceptable. That design needs to be changed.

"Name the last HK USP or S&W 4506 or SIG 220— those are the other .45s that compete with the 1911— that wouldn't function reliably out-of-the-box because it didn't have sufficient extractor tension. You can't. They all work perfectly, except the 1911," Vickers fumed.

"A good external extractor needs to be designed into the gun and a different plunger tube needs to be designed. That's something that needs to be addressed by the manufacturer," Vickers said.

### The Real Deal

Larry Vickers is the real deal, and his guns are the real deal too. He is not the least bit hesitant to call a spade a spade. He will be the first to admit that a Vickers gun is not for everyone. "Most of the people who get custom .45s out there, the detailing doesn't matter. But for my clientele, they're not the kind of guys who are going to be happy with a gussied-up Kimber. If they take the time to search me out, they expect a level of detail like you get on a David Miller custom rifle,"

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Vickers said matter of factly. "I'm not interested in building 200 guns a year. I want to build maybe 20 guns a year."

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Vickers could charge \$10,000 and he would have no shortage of customers.

Ken Hackathorn said it best: "Vickers pays attention to details that a lot of other people don't even know exist."



Larry Vickers can be reached at P.O. Box 25551, Fayetteville, NC 28314; phone: (910) 867-4047.

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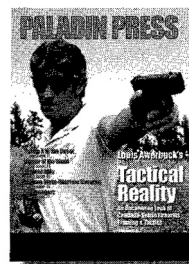
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# ARMY OF ONE

Continued from page 52

also aspired to SF; only two of them, Vickers and one other, made it through.

Now wearing a green beret, the badge of honor of Army Special Forces, Vickers was a Light Weapons Specialist. Of the Light Weapons class, Vickers said, "That course was kind of underwhelming. You learned how to disassemble all sorts of arms, but you didn't learn how to fix them if they broke. It was all book knowledge," Vickers recalled, his esteem for knowledge-through-experience coming through.

After serving four years, he quit the army and enrolled in a community college, earned a degree as a mechanical engineer and continued soldiering as an SF reservist. After graduating, the call of the wild returned and Vickers decided he would rather break things and blow them up than build them. He went active, rejoining the Special Forces.

This time, however, his assignment was outside our purview. Vickers will only say this about the job for which he was reactivated, a job he still currently holds: "I chose to pursue other avenues in the Special Forces community."

With boyish good looks and a ready smile, Vickers does not come across as a dagger-in-the-teeth killer. Yet he has operational experience in Panama and Desert Storm "and some other places I can't talk about."

Vickers is a shooter. He taught marksmanship in his unit as a firearms instructor and he competes regularly in IDPA. He competed in two USPSA Limited Nationals, '93 and '94, finishing 10th and ninth respectively. More recently, he won the "custom defensive pistol" division at the 2001 IDPA Mid-Winter Nationals at Smith & Wesson. We asked Vickers how relevant match shooting is to the real world:

"Putting a guy under the gun—making him shoot against the clock, with people watching, having to perform under pressure—that's a good thing. The only negative is you can pick up a lot of incredibly bad habits. IDPA is a lot better than IPSC in this regard, although IDPA has its problems too," Vickers said.

Referring to IPSC, Vickers said the two worst habits the sport ingrains are reloading away from cover and shooting totally unrealistic guns. "The triggers are way too light and everyone uses a compensator. The guns are the exact opposite of what you'd really want," Vickers said.

"A real guy showing up with a real gun in real gear doesn't stand a chance against the guys with the fancy guns. They either go home or they start falling into that USPSA swamp—they get sucked down, doing stuff that would get them killed.

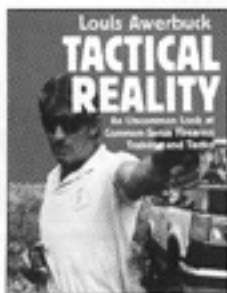
"IDPA is much better. They force you to use cover and do it from concealment. But they have their drawbacks. There's no requirement on trigger pulls—you can use a pound and a half trigger and that's not realistic. Also, they use wimp ammo, 165 power factor in .45 ACP."

Vickers worships at the altar of accuracy. "I've always been an accuracy man. I understood sight alignment and trigger control from day one. Whenever I pressed the trigger, I expected something to happen," Vickers said, emphasizing the two fundamentals of marksmanship.

Vickers is due to retire in slightly over two years. "Twenty years and 20 seconds," he jokes, referring to how long he will have spent in the army. We expect he'll find no shortage of offers within the firearms industry for his experience, knowledge and skill. In the meantime, he remains the only full-time, active Special Forces operator building custom 1911s—real guns for real guys. Larry Vickers is an army of one.



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**By AH Staff**

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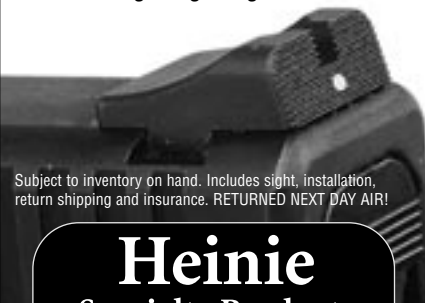
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The driver, totally baffled, could only reply, "What?" When the driver just sat and stared, Dennis got impatient, reached in, grabbed a big canvas sack and ran away.



The victim still couldn't figure out why anybody would rob him of the contents of his bags, but figured he ought to call the police anyway. The cops arrived just about the time that two blocks away, Dennis was discovering that his "take" consisted of

*Continued on page 101*



## IT WAS PROBABLY ONE OF THOSE "COP-KILLER" TONGUES

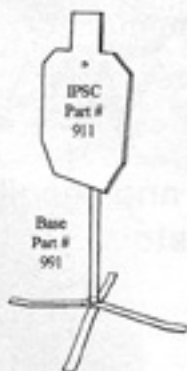
**P**olice in Pinellas Park, Fla., are still trying to figure out if the suspect was using a "deadly weapon" or a "friendly weapon," but they've officially logged the crime as an armed robbery, anyway. Officers said they were called to the scene at an adults-only sort of shop where the cashier reported he was robbed by a guy who threatened him with an oversized, garishly colored, battery-operated vibrating tongue.

Apparently lacking the customary "large black pistol," the suspect pretended to make small talk at the counter, then suddenly reached out, grabbed the vibrating tongue, threw the switch to on, and "waved the tongue menacingly," forcing the cashier to empty the till.

The cops didn't say exactly what the victim was threatened with— a power-licking, or maybe a severe tongue-lashing— but it was enough to scare him, we guess. Maybe it was one of them high capacity assault tongues.

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large numbers of towels and mopheads. About one-half a shake later, several officers were pointing pistols at Sullivan, and instructing him to drop the shotgun.

According to police, Sullivan initially leaned toward shooting it out, but his tricky little inside-the-shirt carrying arrangement resulted in his shotgun getting caught in his sleeve, so poor Dennis couldn't raise his piece to the horizontal, nor could he drop it. At that point, all he could do is beg the cops for a little patience and understanding.

Now for the best part: Why did Sullivan hold up the cleaning supplies guy? Well, the van was the same size and color as the local bank cash pickup service truck. Yeah, the lettering was different, but who reads? Not Dennis.

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## ADD IT UP

42

Handguns in the most recent Steel Challenge that were entered in IDPA classes, out of a total of 164 guns in the match, or 25 percent of the total

44

Colt employees laid off in the latest cutback, in March, bringing the workforce down to under 200

431

SW99 pistols issued to New Jersey state troopers before the agency rejected the newly adopted guns for chronic malfunctions that S&W asserts are due to bad ammo

\$2,100,000

Value of the New Jersey state police contract, for 2,600 guns, that is jeopardized by the SW99's rejection

32

States with "shall issue" CCW laws now that Michigan has passed CCW legislation

54,000

Observations of crimes that forms the data for John Lott's remarkable book "More Guns, Less Crime" (\$10.80 from [www.bn.com](http://www.bn.com))

400,000

Gun locks recalled by the National Shooting Sports Foundation after a much-ballyhooed "giveaway"

Continued from page 106

## A New NRA



Shifting through the rubble of Al Gore's political collapse, it becomes increasingly apparent that the NRA delivered the most telling salvos in the last election. Postelection data reveals that 48 percent of all presidential voters in 2000 came from gun-owning households, up dramatically from 37 percent in the 1996 presidential election. Gun owners are finally showing their strength in national elections and a revitalized NRA is credited with turning them out.

Five key "toss up" states—Tennessee, Arkansas, West Virginia, Missouri and New Hampshire—went for Bush because of the gun issue, according to political analysts. Former President Clinton publicly groused that the NRA cost Gore the election.

Vice President Dick Cheney, in an address to the American Conservative Union, said, "The president and I would not be where we are today if not for the support of friends across America." He said those words while flanked on the podium by NRA Executive Vice President Wayne LaPierre, NRA President Charlton Heston and three NRA board members.

The NRA has grown in power and influence in the past few years, primarily since it ejected ultra-zealot Neal Knox from the board. Purging Knox and his extremist cronies allowed the NRA to soften its combative political stance. The organization remained just as staunchly opposed to gun control, but without Knox spouting various acerbic remarks, the NRA was able to step back from such inflammatory statements as calling the ATF "jack bootied thugs." Such statements had alienated many middle-of-the-roaders, including President Bush's father.

The turning point came three years ago when Charlton Heston stepped forward to lead the NRA away from the sinkhole of vitriol into which Knox would have mired the organization. As a result of appearing more reasonable under Heston's leadership, the NRA's ranks swelled from 2.5 million members to over 4 million in under two years.

Heston campaigned tirelessly for President Bush during the most tightly fought election in U.S. history. Targeting three key swing-states, the NRA consistently drew crowds of over 8,000 cheering supporters to hear Heston speak. Sometimes the Heston rally out-drew a Gore rally when the two appeared simultaneously.

Frustrated that the NRA was "misleading" the public, the Gore campaign called LaPierre and pleaded with him to tell Heston that Gore does not want to

take away people's guns.

Heston did exactly as instructed, telling the crowd that Gore had called to remind everyone he is not against guns. The crowd roared with laughter.

The 2000 presidential election was also significant for the NRA because it marked the first national election in which the NRA finally dispensed with any pretense of neutrality between the Democrats and the Republicans. Previously, the NRA had backed candidates from either party who had a strong pro-gun record. This time the NRA opened its coffers primarily to the Republican Party.

NRA spent \$25 million during the fall campaign, including \$17 million through ILA, and \$1.5 million directly to the Republican Party. Such largesse was not missed by Republican organizers who now regard the NRA as the single most powerful vote-getter for the party.

In years past, the Christian Coalition was considered the strongest get-out-the-vote machine, but in 2000 voters from the Christian-right amounted to a paltry 14 percent of Republican votes, according to NRA board member Grover Norquist. In previous elections, the Christian-right produced 20 percent of all Republican votes in 1994, then 17 percent in 1996, dropping to 14 percent in 2000. Compare that to 48 percent of all presidential votes coming from gun-owning households.

"The NRA is the most powerful grassroots organization in America nowadays," proclaims Rep. Bob Barr (R-Ga.).

Now a bona fide kingmaker, the NRA finds itself in the peculiar position of a powerful knight with no dragon to slay. With a strong pro-gun Attorney-General in office and a President indebted to the organization for his razor-thin victory, the NRA has no easy target. This is bad news for NRA. It is essential for the NRA's relentless fund raising machine to have an enemy. The organization generated over \$200 million in contributions in 2000, mostly through fear-mongering.

Undeterred, LaPierre has mounted his war steed and entered the fray against the only anti-gun entity left with any wind in its sails—the United Nations. Decrying a global effort at disarmament and conjuring visions of a New World Order, the NRA is tipping its lance for a long struggle against blue-helmeted foreigners coming to take away *your* guns. The NRA has found a new villain. Which it will need if it is to keep its money drive alive in a Bush Administration.

## Chinese Target Stands

From the land of 2 billion people comes a new innovation in target stands—self-lubricating and self-propelled, the new Chinese Army Recruit Stand can easily reposition itself from the 10 to the 25 yard line. No more trudging back and forth to check group size, just call your target to you!

Want a moving target? It's easy with the self-activating Recruit Stand. They come standard with walk, jog and run modes. They can even bob and weave better than an IPSC mover!

The only drawback to the new Chinese target holder is an annoying tendency to malfunction catastrophically if an errant bullet impacts any part of the stand. Aim carefully now, they leak hydraulic fluid very quickly!

*A tip of the editor's cap to reader Vince Pinto, IPSC Regional Director of Hong Kong, for sending us this remarkable photo.*



## Glancing through

Shotguns News, we noticed there is a glut of military surplus ammo on the market right now at positively incredible prices. For example, J&G Sales (520-445-9650) has 9mm ball from Sellier & Bellot for \$110 per 1,000 and Russian non-corrosive 9mm for \$95 per 1,000. Tennessee Guns (865-577-1939) has South African .223 in 300-round battlebacks for \$40 each. The best bargain is 765 rounds of World War II .45 ACP ball for \$90 in a sealed tin from Clearview (800-225-5790). Thanks to the McClure-Volkmer Act, you don't need a special license to mailorder ammo.



## THE WORLD'S NEW CRIME CAPITAL

Countries that disarms their citizens quickly learn that "disarmed populace" translates to criminals as "helpless victims found here." Australia and the United Kingdom have the highest violent crime rates in the world, according to a recent survey conducted by Leiden University in Holland.

The International Crime Victims Survey revealed that Australia leads the world in violent crime with more than 30 percent of its population victimized by criminals. England was second with 26 percent of its citizens violated. Wales was included in the English figure.

Contact crime—crimes in which the perpetrator makes physical contact with the victim—was highest in England and Wales with 3.6 percent of the population having been "contacted." In America, where 32 out of 50 states allow their citizens to carry a concealed weapon for protection, only 1.9 percent of the population has been "contacted;" in Japan the number is 0.4 percent.

America did not even make the "top 10" list of the survey, which corresponds with other research showing that crime has steadily fallen in the U.S. in the past 10 years. Depending on which data one chooses, violent crime in the U.S. has declined between four and 11 percent in the past three years.

Burglary rates in England and Wales were also among the highest recorded at 2.8 percent. Australia (3.9 percent) and Denmark (3.1 percent) had higher rates of "burglary with entry" than England. In the U.S., the rate was 2.6 percent, according to 1995 figures.

England's *Daily Telegraph* newspaper reported, "After Aus-

tralia and England and Wales, the highest prevalence of crime was in Holland (25 percent), Sweden (25 percent) and Canada (24 percent). The United States, despite its high murder rate, was among the middle ranking countries with a 21 percent victimization rate."

Indeed, British newspapers have been running lurid headlines about England's staggering crime rates: "Panic Over Gun Crime," "Police Move To Tackle Huge Rise In Gun Crime," and "Handgun Crime Soars" have all appeared in recent newspapers in England.

Newcastle, in the north of England, may actually be the most dangerous place in the industrialized world. Britain's Home Office, more or less equivalent to our Justice Department, reports that "incidents of violence against the person" which includes aggravated assault, rape and murder, are the highest in Newcastle with a rate of 236.5 per 1,000 residents. We have to admit that we find the numbers rather startling, but that's what the study said.

Home burglaries and auto thefts occur 50 percent more frequently in Britain than in the U.S. Even more sobering, there are nearly 75 percent more rapes in Britain than there are in the U.S., even though Britain only has about 25 percent of our population.

But what about Britain's handgun ban? Surely that would have reduced gun violence? Not so. Just from March 1999 to March 2000, there was a 33 percent rise in handgun crime in Britain—one-third! Clearly it was only law-abiding citizens who turned in their handguns and not the gang-bangers known over there as "Yardies."

Take away guns, and watch crime increase. Empower citizens with CCW permits and crime decreases. What part of this picture don't they see in England and Australia?



# Industry Insider

by Cameron Hopkins

## HK DEBUTS NEW DA-ONLY PISTOL

**G**erman gunmaker Heckler & Koch displayed a totally new pistol called the P2000 at the recent IWA arms show in Europe. The gun is a DA-only with a twist. Instead of a conventional DA-only in which a relatively long, stiff pull is necessary for every shot, the P2000 has a “semi-cocked” mode in which the DA pull is considerably lighter even though it moves through the full pull-stroke.

Even though the P2000 is hammer-fired, the hammer is partially cocked when the slide is dropped on a loaded round or the gun cycles during firing. With the hammer partially cocked, similar to a Glock, the pull weight is greatly reduced. We didn’t have our handy-dandy Brownells trigger pull gauge in our suit pocket, but we estimated the pull dropped from 12 lbs. to 6 or 8 lbs. The pull in the lighter mode— what HK calls “Combat Defence Mode” mode— was surprisingly smooth and easy, much better than run-of-the-mill DA-onlys we’ve tried.

If the user wants a really light and smooth DA pull, fine, leave the P2000 alone. However, if the user would prefer a stiffer first shot— or rather, the user’s department’s lawyer— then there is a small button on the rear of the slide to decock the striker. In the decocked mode, the trigger pull is back up to 12-ish lbs.

Other than the little button on the back of the slide, there



are no safeties or decocking levers on the P2000. It is a high-cap (13+1) 9mm intended for the European police market and will not be available in America for quite some time, according to an HK spokesman in Germany.

## A Different Sort Of Trade Show

**K**ids, don’t try this in America. During Europe’s biggest arms trade exhibition, firearms companies routinely offer hospitality to guests in their booths with snacks and refreshment centers featuring open bars. Beverages include coffee, soft drinks, wine and beer. We’re not going to speculate on what might happen at the SHOT Show if open bars were found in every gun maker’s booth, but we don’t think the concept would translate from German.

There are other differences between the U.S.-based SHOT Show and the German-based IWA show.

At the 2001 SHOT Show, there was a taxidermy exhibit of three deer, two bucks and a doe, engaged in a sexual act that is biologically impossible; at IWA, there was a taxidermy exhibit of a wild boar by itself, doing nothing but standing there, looking like a wild boar.

At the SHOT Show, there were buxom ladies in skimpy outfits enticing men to enter their booth; at IWA, there were buxom ladies in skimpy outfits... in the red light district, miles from the show.

At the SHOT Show, celebrities are paid to sign autographs, trying to coax more business into their employer’s booth; at IWA, the only celebrity-signing was done in a checkbook, someone famous ordering a custom gun from a Suhl gunsmith.

At the SHOT Show, there is an incessant background noise of innumerable duck calls, turkey gobbles, doe grunts, elk bugles and goose quacks; at IWA there is an occasional outburst of an oom-pah band, usually on Saturday night at the traditional beer-and-wurst hosted dinner.

At the SHOT Show, there is a cut-to-the-chase impatience to do business, write an order right now; at IWA, you can nonchalantly enter a booth, sit down,



relax, sip an espresso or a mineral water— yes even a glass of white wine or mug of lager— glance through the company’s catalog... and eventually introduce yourself to one of the company’s representatives. You may never place an order, and you are never expected to.

The shooting sports in Europe are much more genteel than in America, and the traditions of the hunt are much more respected. Put it this way— there are no camo toilet paper vendors at IWA. But the telltale sign that we were in a different sort of show was the fact that even though we walked every aisle, we never ran across a single booth that started with the word “Bubba’s.”

*Continued on page 104*

# On The Job.

Law enforcement officers. Firearms trainers. Elite military units. Professional competitors. For all of them, their firearms are among their most valued possessions. Their performance - and in some cases their survival - could depend on the sidearm they have strapped to their hip.

*That's why so many firearms professionals who choose their own equipment choose 1911 custom pistols from Les Baer Custom.*

Professionals like Mike Dalton understand the importance of choosing the best. Mike is a police officer... an FBI certified rangemaster... a Combat Master since 1978... a championship competitive shooter... co-founder of the World Speed Shooting Championship... and he operates the International Shooter Institute. Mike depends on Les Baer Custom 1911s.

Clint Smith is the Director of the world famous Thunder Ranch. Teaching people how to survive in a sometimes-unfriendly world is his business. Clint Smith chose Les Baer Custom to build a signature 1911 pistol bearing the Thunder Ranch logo, and he uses one of those same guns for everyday use at Thunder Ranch.



What attracts such savvy professionals to Les Baer Custom? First, it's the fact that Les Baer 1911s are built from Les's own precision frames and slides that are heat treated for toughness, precision machined to exacting tolerances, and hand assembled for a perfect fit. And, it's the fact that Les Baer builds 1911s with a well earned reputation for uncompromising quality and unerring accuracy. *They're working guns - built for the professionals who work with guns.*

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CDP™ (Custom Defense Package) pistols are built in the Kimber Custom Shop. They include features found only on custom-made defense pistols like carry bevel treatment, checkered front strap and Meprolight™ Tritium night sights. The full size Custom CDP and the Ultra CDP with three-inch barrel are pictured. All four CDP models are chambered in .45 ACP.

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