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AMERICAN HANDGUNNER® (ISSN 0145-4250) is published bi-monthly by Publishers' Development Corp., 591 Camino de la Reina, #200, San Diego, CA 92108. Periodical postage paid at San Diego, CA 92108, and at additional mailing offices. Subscriptions: One year (six issues) \$16.95. Single copies \$4.95 (in Canada \$6.25). Change of address: four weeks notice required on all changes. Send old address as well as new. Contributors submitting manuscripts, photographs or drawings do so at their own risk. Material cannot be returned unless accompanied by sufficient postage. Payment is for all world rights for the material. The act of mailing a manuscript constitutes the author's certification of originality of material. Opinions expressed are those of the bylined authors and do not necessarily represent those of the magazine or its advertisers. Advertising rates furnished on request. Reproduction or use of any portion of this magazine in any manner, without written permission, is prohibited. Entire contents Copyright© 2002 Publishers' Development Corp. All rights reserved. Title to this publication passes to subscriber only on delivery to his address. SUBSCRIPTION PROBLEMS: For immediate action, write Subscription Dept., 591 Camino de la Reina, #200, San Diego, CA 92108.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to AMERICAN HANDGUNNER®, 591 Camino de la Reina, #200, San Diego, CA 92108.

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GEORGE E. von ROSEN (1915-2000)

PUBLISHER

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PRODUCTION	(619) 297-8520 production@americanhandgunner.com
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EAST COAST ADVERTISING:

SIG BUCHMAYR
Buchmayr Associates, 137 Rowayton Ave., Ste. 410,
Rowayton, CT 06853 (203) 855-8834

PRINTING SERVICES: QUEBECOR WORLD

FILM PRODUCTION: WEB-TECH, INC.

GENERAL COUNSEL: STEELE N. GILLASPEY

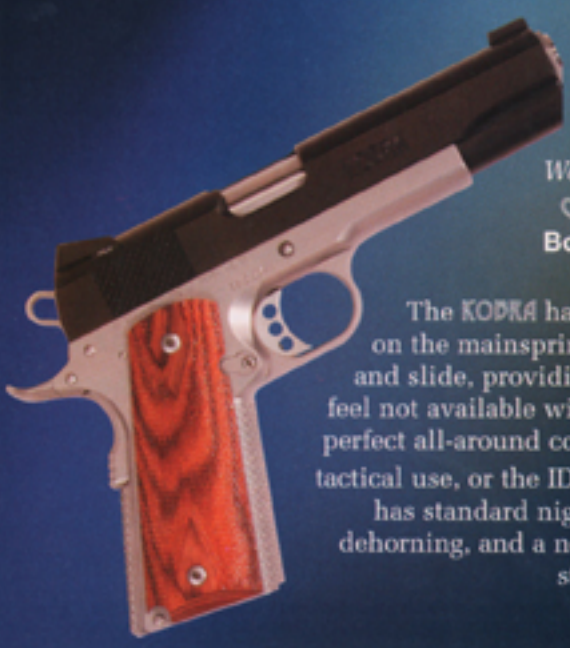


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MAY/JUNE 2002

Invade? We Don't Think So

After reading the letters in the May/June issue concerning the reasons the Japanese didn't invade the West Coast in the early part of WWII, I have a few comments. Without casting doubt on the original report, it's irrelevant whether any Japanese officer gave the reason cited (i.e. the unorganized militia), because Japan was never in a position to launch such an extremely ambitious operation.

The Imperial Army was largely tied down on the Asian mainland, and most of the rest was already committed to adding the oil-rich Dutch Indies, Singapore and the Philippines to the Greater SE Asia Coprosperity Sphere — whether the locals wanted it or not.

Japan lacked both the manpower and

sealift to make an effective landing in Hawaii, let alone on the US mainland. Period.

Barrett Tillman
via e-mail

Barrett is a long-time Handgunner contributor and well-known military author. Editor

Take It ... Please

In the May/June issue, Massad Ayoob provided a credible explanation to the Japanese decision not to invade the mainland (California) during WWII.

Given the California attitude toward the 2nd Amendment and gun ownership in general, my question is: Is it too late to give California to the Japanese?

Keith Halliday
Fountain Hills, Ariz.

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SPEAKOUT

VPC = Morons

In your May/June edition of "Industry Insider" I read of the Violence Policy Center's accusation of a "disgusting display of bigotry" in regards to the "Turban Chase," .50 BMG rifle advertised by Tromix. The VPC has, once again, proven to be complete morons.

The "Turban Chaser", upon closer inspection, would have revealed itself to be a joke, had the VPC taken the time to look at the picture of the garden hose attachment-turned assault weapon. Unfortunately, Tony Rumore of Tromix Lead Delivery Systems (www.tromix.com) has since shut down his main operation. He now only makes AR-15 upper receivers in a monster caliber known as .458 SOCOM, in conjunction with Teppo Jutsu — and that's no joke.

What we see here is the same kind of hysteria that followed the marketing of "Homeboy Nyte-Sytes" to inner-city youths by Birdman Weapon Systems (www.birdman.org). The side-mounted Glock sights, as it turned out, were only available in Adobe Photoshop.

Marc Seltzer
via e-mail

Snyder Hits Home

Ouch! Cuts like a knife, it does, that article (March/April *Handgunner*) about 9/11 as a day of infamy, and how the newer restrictions on liberty — however well-intentioned — will always result in preventing good people from acting in situations when you or I might want them to act.

Jeff Snyder's article was painful to read at times, yet extremely concise and powerful. Required reading for those who missed it.

Ted Ball
via e-mail

Machine-Man

I have read articles by Massad Ayoob and Charlie Petty for many years, and rank them among the best of your writers. Consequently, I was somewhat startled by the format of "Massad Ayoob vs. the Machine" in the May/June *Handgunner*.

Ayoob says he cannot shoot as well as a Ransom rest, yet the way the data is presented it looks as if he somehow outshot the Ransom rest. The purpose of the test was to determine whether his theory of measuring the best three out of five shots to approximate a machine rest was valid. This seems to have been reasonably verified. Why the big, false, build-up? The stories were interesting and informative on their own factual merit. *American Handgunner* is not a tabloid newspaper. Please!

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SPEAKOUT

Geezer's Unite

The story in the May/June issue by John Taffin, "The Legend of Big Red", was annoying. I felt it not proper to refer to Bill Ruger as the "Old Man" no less than 13 times. What could have been a pleasant, informative story wasn't.

Hey Johnnie Boy, did you call Bill "Old Man" to his face? Probably not. Just like most people probably don't call you "Johnnie Boy" to your face. It isn't respectful, especially if it happens 13 times in a couple of pages.

Johnnie Boy, Johnnie Boy, Johnnie Boy, Johnnie Boy, Johnnie Boy, Johnnie Boy, Johnnie Boy, Johnnie Boy, Johnnie Boy, Johnnie Boy, Johnnie Boy, Johnnie Boy, Johnnie Boy, Johnnie Boy. Annoying, isn't it?

Bruce Cox
via snail mail

Well Bruce, we confess — the editor is 12/13ths guilty. John only used "Old Man" once, but since it's considered a term of affection when referring to Mr. Ruger, we sprinkled a few more around. Bill is commonly referred to as the "Old Man" in the industry and we're sure he doesn't mind it at all. He's well-respected and well-loved by all of us. Ever heard of "Old Man Browning?" Editor

GoldPearlescentSissyGun?

I've been reading *Handgunner* since its inception. It's always been a first-rate publication, with good coverage divided between cutting-edge competition gear, big bore hunting guns and dead serious, save-your-life defensive pistols.

Therefore, you can understand my confusion when I first saw the cover of the May/June issue. What is a pearl-handled, gold accented, sissified excuse for a real pistol doing on the cover of my *American Handgunner*? And posed with a police patch? Surely this must be the cover of *Combat Handguns*, not *American Handgunner*! Sheesh!

Bill Macinerny
Ocala, Fla.

Bill, don't always judge a book by its cover. Famous Texas Ranger Lone Wolf Gonzales had "sissified", gussied-up 1911s, and I'd be disinclined to use the "S" word when referring to him. Editor

AMERICAN HANDGUNNER™ welcomes letters to the editor for the *Speak Out* column. Letters should be typewritten, but legible handwriting is acceptable. Letters must be less than 350 words. We reserve the right to edit all published letters for clarity and length. Due to the volume of mail, we are unable to individually answer either written correspondence or e-mail. Send your letters to *Speak Out*, *American Handgunner*, 591 Camino de la Reina, Suite 200, San Diego, CA 92108; www.americanhandgunner.com

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Fire and Iceland II: Don't Save The Seals

Aren't those cute seals on television and in the circus just so adorable? Think again. In the wild, seals are destructive and not such little critters. Usually called harbor seals, they are smart and easily trained to perform simple tasks. They grow to weigh around 200 pounds and scarf down fish and many crustaceans. So in short, we save the seals so the seals can wreak havoc in their own favorite manners depending upon where they live. Ever been to San Francisco?

Traveling along the coast of Iceland, one is constantly impressed by the beauty of the seashore and the small colorful villages that inhabit most safe harbors. I spotted numerous whale-hunting boats eagerly waiting for the day to put to sea again in pursuit of the world's largest creatures; which, incidentally, may not be very far in the future.

On the far north coast of Iceland you too could become a pioneer, as did my friends Palli and Frieda. All you have to do is build a road and a diesel-powered sawmill. Since Iceland has no trees, collect enough driftwood to turn into lumber in order to build the frame of a two-story house. Mix your own concrete, do your own plumbing, and wire your own electricity. Oh yeah, farm the omnipresent sheep and work the short growing seasons too. And kill seals.

125 GR. NOSLER = \$120

That's right — kill seals. There are too many harbor seals, and migratory seals can grow up to 800 pounds; an all around impressive animal in size, appetite and trouble. First and foremost, the seal is the host for ringworm. Voracious eaters, seals eat a terrific amount of fish. Ringworm packs the seals' feces. Fish eat the feces and contract ringworm. Ringwormed fish become a major problem for commercial processing. Since a great amount of Iceland's economy rests on the fishing industry, seals are a huge problem.

Accordingly, the government of Iceland has placed a \$120 (US dollar) bounty on them. While showing me photos of some of his kills, my host Siggie explained that last year he shot slightly over 400 of the big guys with a .300 Weatherby custom rifle outfitted with a throat he designed to shoot 125 grain Nosler Bal Tips at about 4,000 fps.

When he hunts, he watches their nostrils through his 20x scope to be sure they have inhaled, so they will float, and then he fires. If the kill is not instant, the seal dives and that is that. If he exhales and is instantly killed, he sinks. Tow the seal ashore, collect \$120. Remove the lower jawbone and bury the carcass.

Siggie explained only harbor seals were present, and they can be curious, wary, or both. At low tide they sun themselves on rocks and by the time we got there, only one seal lying on a rock was within shooting distance from shore. Scores more crowded a large rock formation out about 300 yards. A 200 yard stalk through a ditch put us about 165 yards from the lone seal and in perfect position on the shore — 10" above the water with a perfect rest to boot.

EYEBALL TO EYEBALL

The seal appeared to float on water and at first, it appeared an eyeball shot was necessary to affect an instant kill. He turned his head and the shot became a spine-at-the-base-of-the-skull or nothing shot. Trigger squeezed, hammer falls, pin hits the primer, igniting 52 grains of 4350. With a roar, the .309 JDJ sent the 165 gr. Sirrocco on its way and the seal simply rolled off the rock to float. Siggie was ecstatic — the first seal he knew to be taken in Iceland with a handgun. Dozens of other seals fell off the rocks at the sound of the shot and some of the curious came to investigate.

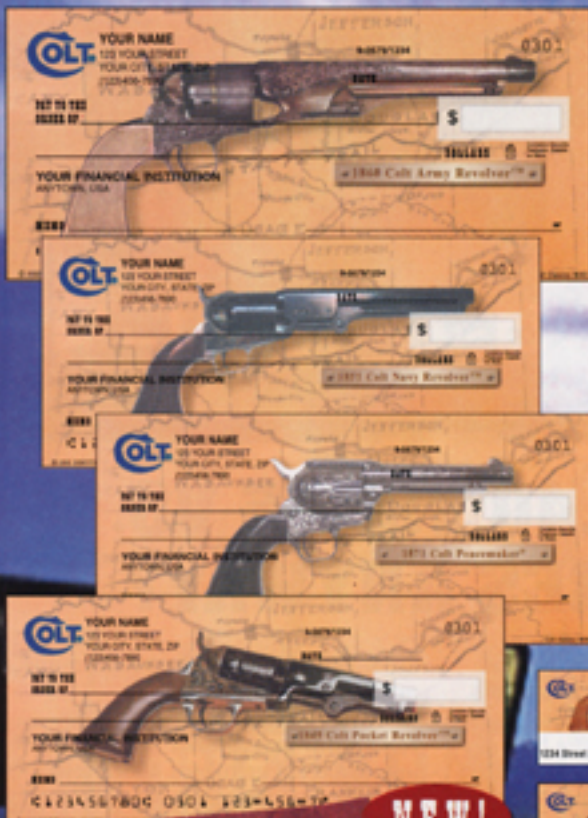
Siggie excitedly pointed-out a head more than twice the size of the others and told me to take her if I could. Out about 175 yards, she bobbed in the waves. There seemed a split second's hesitation of the head at the crest of each wave. When the same type of shot as the first presented itself, the .309 and 165 grainer did their job again. While Siggie and Palli fetched the boat and then recovered the seals, I, of course, guarded the women. The seal was a female, weighed about 400 pounds and measured about 7 feet long. Siggie smiled.

We went back to the house and turned on the television. It was September 11.



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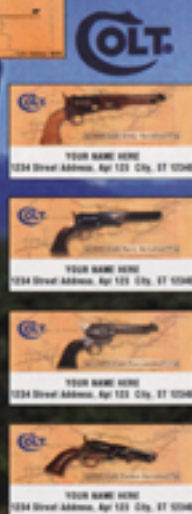
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Much Ado About NOTHING

Despite the huge shift in America to the .40 S&W cartridge, I'm not at all sure it's all that big a deal. If you prefer the .40 S&W, great.

But I believe you're not the least bit under-gunned if you choose the 9mm — as long as you stuff it with good ammo. I'm not saying the .40 caliber cartridge is bad. I just think it's not necessarily that much better than some of the best 9mm defense rounds now on the market.

Quite often, the choice of gun and caliber is the result of the old trend of "keeping up with the Joneses." If the state police or patrol go to brand X pistol in caliber Y, then many local police agencies will want to follow what the big guys are doing. But it's not always wise to play follow-the-leader.

When the .40 S&W cartridge was introduced in the mid 1980s, I wasn't all that impressed with it. At the time, the auto pistol market was pretty well divided between the 9mm and .45 ACP. In fact, the gun rags of the era constantly ran articles comparing the virtues of "9mm versus .45." If nothing else, the .40 S&W ended those nauseous repeats of the same drivel.

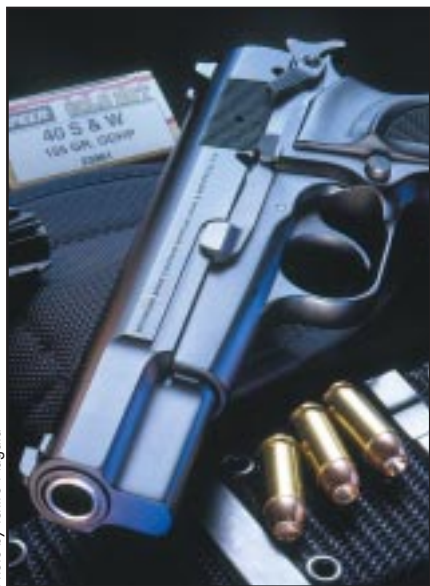
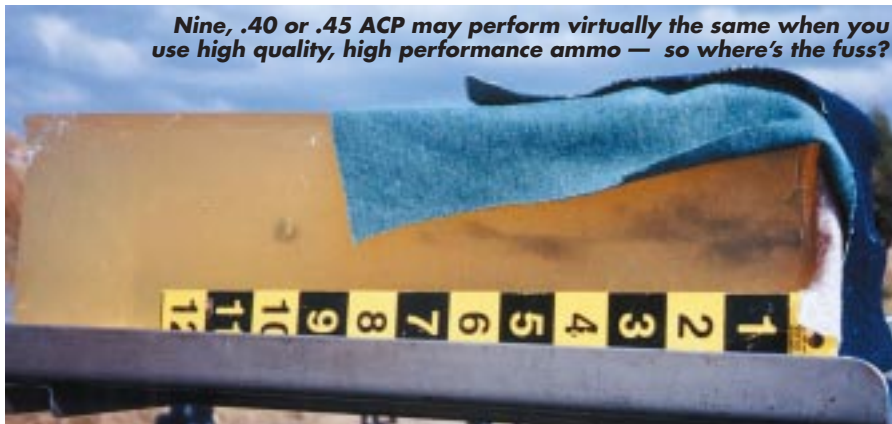


Photo by Ichiro Nagata

Nine, .40 or .45 ACP may perform virtually the same when you use high quality, high performance ammo — so where's the fuss?



9MM VS. .40 VS. .45 VS. WHO CARES ANYWAY?

We've learned quite a bit over the years about the .40 and the 9mm.

If you are a police officer, keeping in mind that the odds are high you'll be involved in a shooting around, near, or through a vehicle, rounds like the 147 gr. JHP Hydra Shok may have merit. Remember that one of the key issues for the FBI selection of the 147 Hydra Shok was the fact most FBI shootouts statistically involved automobiles. Light, fast 115 and 124 gr. JHP rounds often fail to penetrate auto bodies and safety glass.

When the .40 S&W round was first marketed, it was typically a 180 gr. JHP with a muzzle velocity of 950 fps. After a few years of use on the street, not all the results from shootings and gunfights had proven the .40 to be a great improvement. When the ballistic testers went to work on this problem, one of the first things noted was if the .40 S&W bullet was reduced in weight to the 135 to 165 gr. range, a higher velocity could

be used. This resulted in far better results in actual shootouts.

Today, most savvy .40 S&W users select either the super hot 135 grain loadings or the 155 gr. rounds. When velocities reach the 9mm range, the .40 S&W round performs much better. But at a price. The .40 is a high pressure cartridge and occasionally this pressure can create some spectacular results. If you have a good nine, use it and avoid potential problems.

But, there's more. With good 9mm ammo, depending upon your needs, try the 115 to 135 gr. range. Whether it be the Corbon 115 JHP I use, or Federal, Remington, Winchester, Pro Load, Black Hills or Gold Dot, you're probably as well armed with your 9mm as you would be with a .40 S&W.

As a matter of fact, there is quite a bit of evidence around showing a superior 9mm round will often perform as well as, or better than, many popular .45 ACP cartridges. Imagine that.

And The Winner Is?

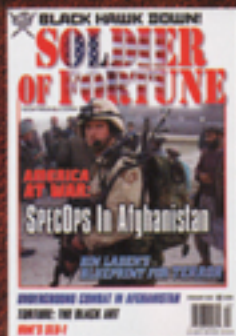
Even with the technical data touting the edge the .40 S&W round initially offered, the simple fact was the .40 seemed to offer the power and ballistic edge of the larger diameter, heavier bulletted .45 ACP. In truth it really did neither. Some argue that 11 or 12 rounds of .40 is better than nine rounds of .45. But is it?

After over a decade of use, however, the good and bad of the .40 S&W is pretty well known. Does it work? Yes. Is it as effective or equal to the .45 ACP? No. Is your 9mm obsolete? Hardly.

Pick your self defense sidearm based upon what works best for you, not what someone else tells you is popular. Stay Safe.



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Let The OTHER Guy Make The Mistakes

Experience, it's said, is the collected aggregate of our mistakes. Otto von Bismarck took it one step further. "Wisdom," he said, "was garnered without pain from the mistakes of others."

Earlier this year I attended the annual conference of the American Society for Law Enforcement Training (ASLET) in Anchorage, Alaska. One of the presenters was an old friend and former student, Sergeant Jim Morgan, of the San Bernardino County (CA) Sheriff's Department. Jim's topic was seamless integration of training in different levels of force. Within that framework, the question arose: "What do you do with an officer who can't successfully qualify with his handgun?"

Jim explained that in his department, even the highest-ranking officer will have to turn in his pistol before he leaves the Center if he cannot qualify. The Sheriff will not allow a deputy on the street with a loaded gun the deputy has just proven he can't shoot straight.

What's the harm? Jim shared the case of an officer who was allowed to continue to carry after repeated failure to qualify. He interrupted a robbery in progress and drew his weapon. In the following shootout, the lawman fired ten rounds, none of which connected. He failed to keep the offenders from shooting him. They pumped so many slugs into him that, though he fortunately survived, he was so crippled by his wounds he had to leave the job.

POTENTIALLY PROBLEMATIC PREDICAMENTS

At a national-class shooting tournament recently one of the 140 or so contestants accidentally discharged his pistol. The shot went safely downrange, so he wasn't disqualified, but the unintentional shot is a learning point.

It was a darkness stage and he was using a small, powerful flashlight in the popular Rogers Technique. This requires you to hold the light like a cigar between the index and middle fingers of the support hand. You then pull its butt-mounted activating button back into the drumstick of the thumb to activate the light, as the lower two fingers of the support hand wrap around the firing hand. It's a useful and proven technique and one I use and teach myself.

The discharge occurred after he had drawn his gun and pointed it downrange and as he was attempting to mate flashlight hand with firing hand. The edge of the butt of the flashlight hit the trigger, driving it back sufficiently to trip the sear.

Another incident that just came to my attention was more tragic. An officer was taking a suspect at gunpoint. The suspect surrendered and the officer attempted to turn off the laser sight on his pistol when the weapon dis-



Start the Rogers flashlight technique like this, with the fingers "hinged" to form a "V", then close them together laterally.

charged unintentionally. The shot proved fatal to the surrendered suspect.

Take time and care when activating some other piece of equipment along with your weapon. Don't bring the flashlight in from the front end of the pistol when doing a Rogers technique, but let the two bottom fingers of the support hand touch with the hands apart and parallel. This will shape the hands like a "V". Now slowly close the hands together and the flashlight will come against the handgun parallel, without its butt having a chance to contact the trigger.

If you have a laser sight with manual activation, it's okay to holster with the light on when you're in a hurry. One unit, the Crimson Trace LaserGrip, is activated by a pressure switch upon grasping and does not require a manual turn-off. Finally, if you have a manual safety on your pistol, leave it engaged at least while initially mating light hand to gun hand.

When Slim Is Better Than Fat



A number of the Anchorage cops at ASLET had customized Glocks in their duty holsters. APD issues the .45 caliber Glock 21, offers the smaller-gripped .40 caliber Glock 22 for those with smaller hands and will pay Robar to do a frame-slimming job on either at the individual officer's request. The result is cops whose guns fit their hands. This, along with APD's splendid firearms training that emphasizes the use of the front sight, has given the department an enviable hit ratio of some 93 percent in actual gunfights.

Some departments have gone with large-handled issue sidearms that short-fingered officers, usually petite females, could not qualify with. When they lost their jobs over this, they

filed disparate impact lawsuits. They have almost universally prevailed. FBI learned this the hard way with the court's verdict in Christine Hansen, et. al. v. FBI. They paid through the nose when the court ordered the fired agents either rehired at full back pay or equivalently compensated and also ordered the Bureau to "revise and update its obsolete and sexist firearms training."

Today's FBI agents are known to carry such slim-gripped pistols as the S&W Model 3913 or the SIG P225. Our new editor, Roy Huntington, carried a P225 by choice for much of his career on the San Diego PD and never felt hampered by being armed with an ergonomic nine-shot 9mm. It's now his wife's duty pistol for the same reasons.

If we follow Bismarck's dictum, we learn from the mistakes of others and spare much pain to ourselves and to those who count on us. If we don't, then we will follow the path charted by another oft-quoted great, Santayana: "Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it."



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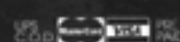
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Pullin' The Trigger ON PRIMERS

I suspect many of you use progressive loaders and know that filling primer feeder tubes is a chore. At the SHOT Show I saw the coolest thing, guaranteed to reduce that problem to a faded memory. It's called the Vibra-prime.

At first glance it looks very much like one of those hand operated primer seating tools with a tray to hold the primers. Ah, but not so. The pistol grip contains a battery and vibrating motor that shakes the primers and drops them, one by one, into a transfer tube. The tube can then be used to dispense the primers into the feed tube on the press. Operation appeared to be effortless. A package of primers is dumped into the tray and shaken to orient the primers properly. This is exactly the same as the primer flippers we all know.

Then, with a tilt of the wrist, and a pull of the trigger the



primers obediently march to one corner and drop into the transfer tube. I didn't time it but it couldn't have taken more than 30 seconds to do the job. This was just a first look at the show but this is something many of us really can use. The retail price is \$59.95 and it's available from Midway USA; (800) 243-4570).



REDDING SIX-PACK PROBLEM SOLVER

If you're like me you've got dozens of shell holders scattered around your loading bench and I always have to pick up every dog-gone one before I find the right one. Funny, how it's always the last one.

Redding has come up with a nifty kit that contains six shell holders that will accommodate about 75 percent of the most commonly loaded cartridges. They've also made the first improvement in design in, well, forever, by simply putting a slight angle on each side so the case centers itself as you put it in the holder. Redding calls it "E-Z Feed" and it's a nice improvement. You can reach Redding at (607) 753-3331.

HARDBALL VS. SOFTBALL

When we think of bullseye pistol competition we usually think of powder-puff wadcutter loads. But, there is also a requirement for service ammunition, better known as "hardball," and the way the two loads perform is considerably different. While we expect to see good guns shoot 2" or less at 50 yards with good wadcutter ammo, that sort of accuracy is rare with ball.

The original military specifications for the 230 gr. FMJ "ball" bullet is 820 +/-25 fps measured at a distance of 25.5 feet from the muzzle (*Hatcher's Notebook*, p351). As a matter of curiosity I chronographed a number of modern hardball loads using my Rock River 5" pistol.

Load	Velocity
CCI Lawman	799
Federal Match	891
GI: TZZ 81	876
Proload	818
Remington	860
Winchester	830

Several of those loads had been accuracy tested in the past and showed an average of 2.5" to 3" for 10 shot groups at 50 yards. There didn't seem to be any correlation between velocity and accu-

racy, but I think there's an incentive to stay at the lower half of the velocity just for recoil considerations.

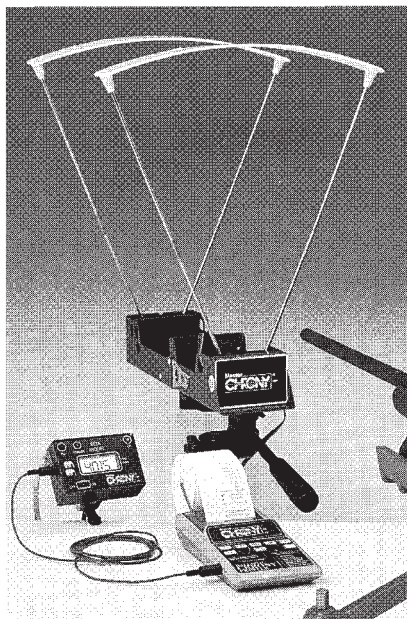
For some time now I've been working to find handloads that duplicate or improve on .45 match hardball ammo. That has turned out to be more of a challenge than I expected and I'm a long way from finished with the project. A couple of interesting things have emerged, however.

Two powders that can best be called non-traditional are producing excellent preliminary results. For what seems like eons, we've used Bullseye or 231, but I've found that Alliant Power Pistol and Vihtavuori N 350 have lots of promise. These are quite a bit slower than 231 or Bullseye so charges are larger. This gives a higher loading density, which is generally conducive to good accuracy.

My intention is to develop loads toward the lower end of the velocity spread to help with recoil. Using published data I loaded a series of three or four charges increasing by .2 gr. increments to hopefully bracket the target velocity of about 825 fps. Charges of 7.1 gr. of N-350 and 6.6 gr. of Power Pistol gave 820-830 fps. Early accuracy tests using the Speer 230 gr. TMJ Match bullet with Federal brass and primers, have yielded groups under 2.5". There is much more work to be done, but these somewhat slower powders are doing well.



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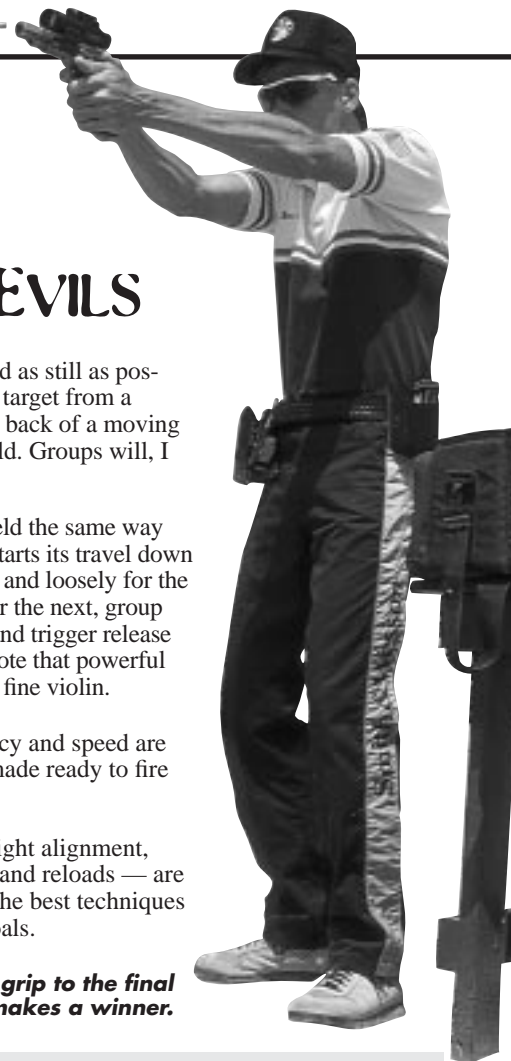
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Different Ain't Necessarily Wrong

In Rudyard Kipling's poem "In the Neolithic Age," a line reads "There are nine and sixty ways of constructing tribal lays, and every single one of them is right!" Or more prosaically, there's more than one way to skin a cat. Actually, I've never tried to skin a cat — maybe there is only one way.

It's odd, but it seems the longer I study the fascinating field of shooting, the less positive and dogmatic I become. There was a time in the early 1980s when I believed with utter, total conviction that the Weaver stance was the one and only correct way to shoot a handgun. Currently I think the Modern Isosceles is the best technique, but I'm much more open-minded than I once was. If there's a better way, I'm prepared to listen. What the heck, I could be wrong. In fact there are just three fundamentals of shooting about which I'm absolutely certain. Okay, maybe fairly certain. I've listed them before and probably will again.

THE THREE NO-EVILS

1. To achieve accuracy, the gun must be held as still as possible. Fire a five-shot group on a 50-yard target from a sandbag rest, then fire another group from the back of a moving pickup truck being driven across a plowed field. Groups will, I guarantee, get larger.
2. To achieve accuracy, the gun must be held the same way every time. Recoil begins as the bullet starts its travel down the bore. If the gun is held tightly for one shot and loosely for the next, in one hand for one shot and the other for the next, group size will increase even if the sight alignment and trigger release were perfect every time. Elmer Keith once wrote that powerful handguns are as sensitive to grip pressure as a fine violin.
3. For practical shooting, in which accuracy and speed are equivalent elements, the gun must be made ready to fire with the least possible delay.

All the aspects of shooting: grip, stance, sight alignment, trigger control, recoil management, the draw and reloads — are all focused on meeting these fundamentals. The best techniques are those that best meet these fundamental goals.

Consistency, from the grip to the final let-off, is what makes a winner.

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The late Bill Jordan was one of the most adept handgunners who ever lived. One of his stunts was to balance a flashbulb on the back of his shooting hand, held above his holstered revolver. He would draw the gun and the bulb would drop into the empty holster.

Part of his ability came from almost supernatural eye/hand coordination. Jordan recorded his methods in a slim book called *No Second Place Winner*, published in 1965.

About the draw, Jordan wrote, "The hand must not pause from the moment it starts moving until the instant the gun is fired. The only means by which this can be accomplished is that the hand move in a circular motion, 'scooping' up the revolver enroute."

Champion practical shooters from whom I took seminars in the 1980s didn't talk about a circular motion. They taught the hand should move straight to the gun then straight to the target, on the principle the shortest distance between two



Jordan's steely-eyed gun-fighter visage was the real thing. In his opinion, second place was "first loser."

points is a straight line. That's the method I've used and taught. But in the spirit of focusing on results rather than techniques I'm prepared to keep an open mind.

Draw sequences in Jordan's book show the arc of movement he discussed was actually very small, hardly visible to an observer. The key point, I believe, is to keep the hand moving once the draw commences and Jordan's image of the hand moving in a circle helps reinforce that point. As skill develops and the draw becomes more of a conditioned reflex, the arc of the circle naturally becomes smaller and the path of the drawing hand appears, to the observer, to be more of a straight line.



No Second Place Winner, by Bill Jordan, is available from The Police Bookshelf, P.O. Box 122, Concord, NH 03302-0122; phone: (603)224-6814 or (800)624-9049; e-mail: ayoob@attglobal.net; www.ayoob.com. Price is \$14.95. For *Practical Shooting: Beyond Fundamentals*, order from Brian Enos, P.O. Box 3168, Tempe, AZ 85280; phone: (877)219-5598; e-mail: briane@brianenos.com; www.brianenos.com. Price is \$17.95.

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COMFY, CONVENIENT AND CARELESS

We've had an awful lot of fun in this column over the years but this one is semi-serious. A friend of mine had a close encounter of a distinctly uncomfortable kind not long ago and was kind enough to bring it to my attention. I might add he had wide eyes while he told me.

Right off the bat, let's all be men — and ladies — enough, to admit we carry small guns now and again. Let's take it a step further and admit we've been known to drop those pocket pistols into our pockets, often (usually?) without any kind of holster. I freely admit doing it and everyone I know has done it.

It's just plain convenient to duck down to the corner store with that Model 60 or Seecamp or Kel-Tec .32 tucked away neatly in your pocket. It's fast, easy, convenient, reliable and safe. And, besides, everyone does it. Don't they?

Not any more, they don't. Or at least they shouldn't.

OPERATOR ERROR

He quickly picked-up the fallen knife, got back into his car and drove away, pulling over around the corner to collect his wits — and throw-up. He said, "I kept waiting for the blood but when I looked through the hole, I was untouched, not even a powder burn on my leg. It dawned on me I had just taken a step with my right leg and it was angled behind me when the gun went off." He was a lucky fellow. A very, very, very, lucky fellow.

He told me the "What could have happened" haunts him to this day. It plays like a continuous video loop in his mind, but less often, as time passes. He told me he hoped it never went entirely away.

So what did happen? As near as we can figure, when he patted his pocket, he missed the knife (with a small light attached) that had been hiding in the bottom of his baggy pocket. During his meanderings, the knife had made it through the trigger guard. When he put his hand into his pocket to stabilize the

But Honest, I Didn't Do It



went automatically into his right front pocket to keep the Kel-Tec from bouncing around. As his hand closed loosely on the gun, there was a surprising sound and suddenly his leg felt breezy. "That's funny," he thought. "That sorta' sounded like a shot."

Looking down, he saw his small Swiss army knife on the ground and the muzzle of the Kel-Tec poking out from a newly-introduced hole in the front of his pants. Powder burns added a touch of blackened edges to the jagged denim. He admitted freely he didn't immediately comprehend what had happened. He hadn't touched the trigger guard of the .32 and, as the dawning of the fact the gun had actually fired in his pocket swarmed over him, he quickly looked around.

There were no bodies on the ground, no broken windows and indeed, nobody was paying him the slightest attention. Perhaps they thought it was a backfire. But that didn't make it any better.



gun, it pushed the gun down slightly, the knife caught the trigger and presto, thanks to the five or six pound pull of the Kel-Tec, there was something that sounded just like a gun shot — because it was.

We were able to duplicate the event during the photo shoot at my house, where he was kind enough to let me photograph the pants, the gun and associated goodies. No live fire was involved, but the gun "fired" as often as not, as our hands pushed it slightly down.

All of which means one thing. If you carry your small, pocket pistol in your pocket, take advantage of one of the zillion pocket holsters on the market today. If it were me, I'd use one that covered the trigger guard and make doubly sure the pocket was empty, except for the handgun. It ain't pretty, but it needed to be talked about.



My friend had taken to carrying his Kel-Tec P32 in his right pocket for almost the two years he's had the pistol. At only around six ounces, he hardly knew it was there and the .32 was arguably enough to keep him out of hot water. The caliber, or even the gun involved, is not the point. The point was he carried it loose in his pocket. No change, no keys, no "nothin'," as he put it. Except this one time.

Racing to leave the house, he slipped on his baggy "old guy" jeans and, patting the pocket to make sure it was empty, dropped in the .32. Off to the store and then a quick stop to get some gas. As he walked toward the door at the gas station to pay, his hand

This will be my last Handgun Leather column. I've taken over the reigns at American Handgunner as editor. Cameron Hopkins, the past editor for over 17 years, has moved on, but will be taking over the leather column. All success to Cameron in his new endeavors.

It seems I've got some boots to fill.

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You've Gotta Have Somebody To Rob

Seems like "having a victim" is one of those crucial elements of a successful robbery, and one guy in San Diego knows what it feels like to be all dressed up with nobody to rob. In Rancho Bernardo, an upscale community in San Diego, a dude in standard bad-guy stickup costume blew through the doors of a Ralph's supermarket, waved a shotgun in the air, and loudly announced a holdup. Just as he was following up with orders for everybody to "freeze," however, the crowd jumped an' bolted like a herd of gazelles and stampeded down the aisles and out the doors. Every last one of them, customers and employees too.

Witnesses watching from a safe distance said the former center of attention wandered around for a couple of minutes, probably going, "Hello? Hello, anybody?" and then tried to open the electronic cash registers. No luck there, either. After another long look and a longer sigh, he shuffled dejectedly out the door, got in his car and drove sadly away. Momma said there'd be days like that.

DIFFERENT RULES IN HAWAII, MAINLAND BOY

This stickup man had to be from the mainland, because he stupidly violated the Hawaiian Rules of Robbery. A lot of the basics are the same as anywhere else, but when you pull a heist in the islands, you've got to remember a few things like, "You're on an ISLAND, idiot!" This kinda limits your getaway options, among other things. No matter which of the islands you're on, there just ain't that many roads and highways. Besides, within ten minutes, everybody on that island with a TV or radio is probably gonna have a full description of your sorry self.

The Hawaiian Rule is, do your job, then jump in a hole and stay there for a long, long time. Dummy didn't do it. Our Dauntless Doofus started his day with a holdup of the First Hawaiian Bank branch in Kihei, on Maui, stuffing

the loot into a Foodland grocery store bag. Then he zipped over to — where else? — Foodland, where he stuck them up. As the radio waves started crackling, he made a last foolish stop at the other First Hawaiian branch in Kahalui, where he made a pistol-point withdrawal. A few minutes later, he found himself on the highway, surrounded by motorists pounding their horns, signaling "There's the robber, guys!"

Pelted with a pouring rain and slowed to a crawl by alert locals boxing him in, he was finally brought to a complete halt by a citizen crime-fighter piloting a six-ton pineapple truck. Doofus bailed out and tried to hoof it, but found himself unable to shake the posse before the cops arrived. My favorite part? The bluesuit making the tag was Officer Kimo Kaha'ahana ohana anhana. Try fitting that one on a shirt-front name tag.

NEXT TIME JUST SHOOT US WITH NICE, CLEAN BULLETS

This disgruntled postal-worker rage stuff is not only getting completely out of control, it's become downright weird. One recently-terminated post office employee in Grand Rapids, Michigan, came back to the office and instead of whipping out an AK-47, he brought a big bucket full of — get this — a mixture of worms and porcupine feces, which he started slingin' all over his ex-compadres and bosses. Worms and porcupine feces? We think it's a setup for an insanity plea. And we gotta ask — just where do you get a sizeable supply of porcupine poop?



They Didn't Give Him A Free Tank Of Gas, Though

It was a fast, breezy, professional stickup, as a masked marauder blew into a 7-Eleven store in St. Peters, Missouri, waved his pistol, unloaded the cash register, and scooted on out the door. The employees were so stunned with the robbery they hadn't even had time to call the police before the crook came back in, this time sorta hanging his head. He shuffled up to the counter, dumped the loot in front of the clerks, and asked if they might just forget the whole thing. His getaway car wouldn't start. Then he asked if the guys could give him a jump-start, please? And they did.

The clerks left the store, went out into the parking lot with a set of jumper cables and helped our hapless crime-king fire up his ride. Parting as pals, they even waved bye-bye as their visitor tootled off into the distance. Then they finally called the cops. "We have a very friendly town out here," said Police Officer David Kuppler. No kidding, Dave? Maybe you don't want certain people to learn just how friendly you are.

Continued on page 74



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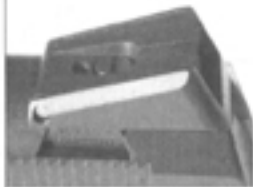


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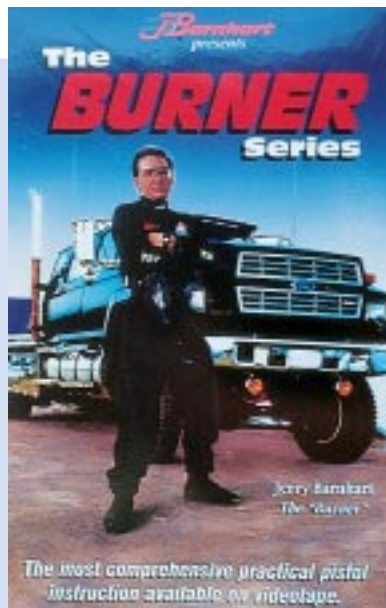
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The Burner himself, glaring at you from the video sleeve assures you of a rollicking good time in this "how-to" series.

An Even Dozen

Jerry Barnhart has been one of the top competitive action shooters for a long time, winning his first national championship in 1987. For more than a decade now, Barnhart has been one of the "Big Three" (along with Todd Jarrett and Rob Leatham), who have dominated the USPSA national championships in both Limited and Open divisions. It was Leatham who gave Barnhart his "Burner" nickname, recognizing both his blazing speed and his intense will to win.

A few years ago Barnhart produced a set of 10 training videos called "The Burner Series." The videos cover every aspect of practical shooting, from the basics of safety and gunhandling to

advanced techniques. Equipment and ammunition, drills, fitness and mental management are also discussed. The videos are \$29.95 each or \$229.95 for the 10-volume set. For anyone seriously interested in becoming a top shooter, these videos highlight the skills that took Barnhart years of work and study to develop.

For those who are too shy to invest that much money, Barnhart also offers "General Overview" (which includes information on shooting optically-sighted handguns) and "Limited Class Overview" tapes, comprised of short segments from the full series. Both cost \$39.95, have a running time of about 90 minutes, and are packed with solid information.

Slippery When Wet

I cringe at the thought of two bare metal surfaces rubbing together, especially under load. At the same time I don't care for oil stains on my clothes, or getting oil specks on my shooting glasses during a practice session. Kleen-Bore is a company that makes a full line of quality gun maintenance products, from solvents to cleaning rods to brushes that solve those sticky problems. The company strongly supports the shooting sports and contributes to the Heritage Fund to support gun rights.

TW25-B is a proprietary gun lube that Kleen-Bore refers to simply as a "high tech lubricant." The card says a little goes a long way, and this is certainly true. Lubing a 1911 took just a drop or two on each slide rail, on the front of the barrel, and in the locking lug area. Cycling the gun a few times spread the lube around, and then wiping the exterior down with a soft cloth left the gun clean and dry. A .75 ounce grease tube retails at \$6.95. TW25-B is also offered in a syringe.

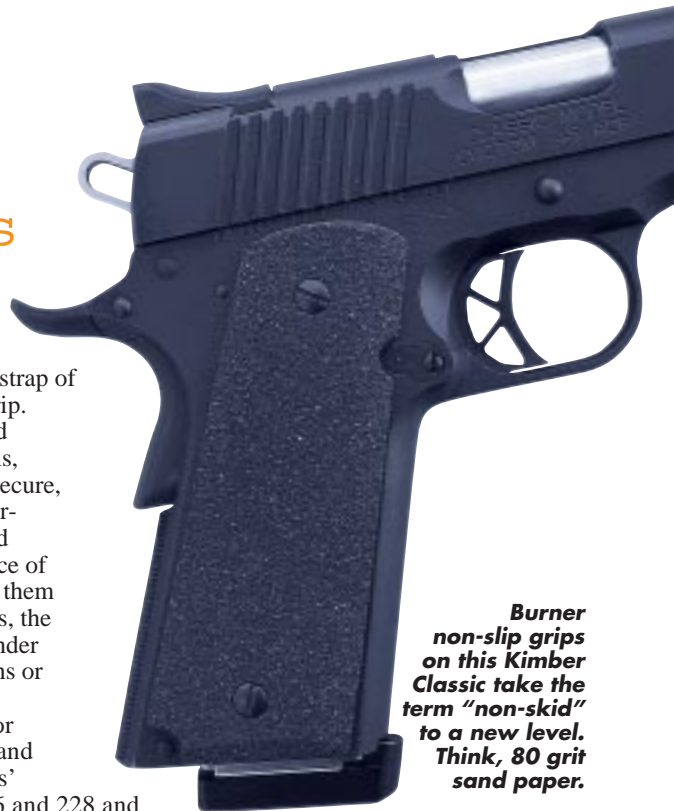
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SkaTE Rats 'r Us

Many practical shooters stick skateboard tape on the frontstrap of their autopistols for a secure grip. Burner Grips are made of wood (except for those for SIG pistols, which are plastic) and sport a secure, non-slip finish similar in appearance and function to skateboard tape. While I like the appearance of checkered wood grips and find them adequate under most conditions, the Burner Grips would be ideal under palm-sweating match conditions or while shooting in the rain.

Burner Grips are offered for 1911 pistols in both standard and thick versions, for the Officers' ACP, Para-Ordnance, SIG 226 and 228 and Beretta pistols. Current prices are \$39.95 for the 1911 and Officers' grips, \$55 for Para-Ordnance pistols, and \$50 for Beretta and SIG models.

For more information contact Jerry Barnhart at P.O. Box 426, Oxford, MI 48371; phone: (248) 628-6557; e-mail: burner@ic.net; <http://ic.net/~burner>



Burner non-slip grips on this Kimber Classic take the term "non-skid" to a new level. Think, 80 grit sand paper.



Stringing Together A Win

Making a semiautomatic pistol shoot accurately is one of the principle jobs the custom pistolsmith performs. Not all shooters want to shoot 2" groups at 50 yards, but most want the cotton pickin' thing to shoot within a 3" circle at 25 yards with quality ammunition.

The ammunition you shoot is of monumental importance and probably comprises more than 50 percent of the accuracy out of any handgun. While there may be other factors, for now the pistol itself is our focus.

The object or end result of an accuracy job on any semiautomatic is to get all the parts to work together without any perceptible movement between them. If you have vertical movement between the slide and frame, you get vertical stringing on the target. If you have vertical movement between the top of the barrel's locking recesses and the locking lugs on the bottom, you see vertical stringing again.

With horizontal slide-to-frame movement you get horizontal stringing. But, horizontal stringing is usually not as apparent as vertical since the movement has a much smaller latitude.

If you're a bullseye shooter and you're shooting at the 50 yard line — the distance that separates the winners from the losers — vertical and horizontal stringing can determine the difference between winning or losing a big match.

If you're a combat shooter and you rarely shoot beyond 25 yards, it can mean the difference between a shot inside or outside a scoring line. Just because you're shooting for speed at large targets doesn't mean you shouldn't shoot a handgun that has been accurized to its full potential.

You need ultimate accuracy as much as the precision shooter if you want to make that wonderful walk to the announcer's podium to pick up your prize.

A properly fitted match bushing is one of the ingredients of a match gun.



Even smaller pistols, like this customized Springfield Armory Champion, can be turned into a top-notch shooter by using standard accuracy modifications.

THE HANDS OF A MASTER

Regardless of what pistol you use, the work required to make it shoot tight groups is the same. In a 1911, the slide must be a tight fit to the frame and the barrel must lock-up tightly at the rear of the hood and where the slide stop contacts the barrel's bottom locking lug. Both bottom lug sides must contact equally and the link should not make any contact with the slide stop until it is ready to pull the barrel out of battery.

On a match gun, the link serves no purpose except to unlock the barrel after the round is fired. It should be able to pull the barrel out of battery even when the pistol is held upside down.

The match barrel bushing must be supported on its outside diameter to the point where it has to be removed with a bushing wrench. If there is any play or you can remove the barrel bushing easily with your fingers, it is not tight enough and your groups could suffer.

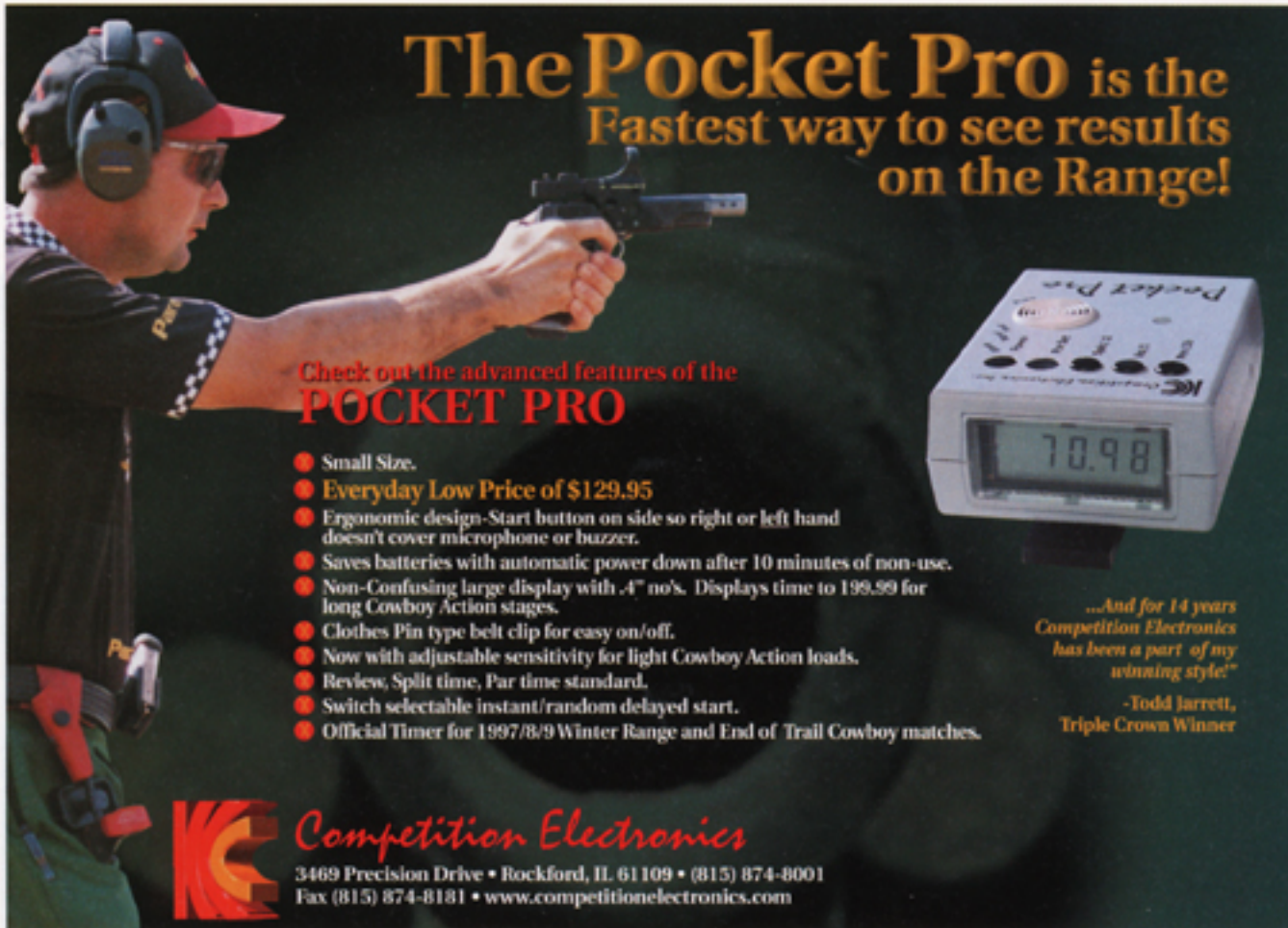
The barrel bushing fit must also be as close as possible, but not so close that it binds or bends the barrel when it's in battery. The clearance should be around .003" to .004" with a slight bevel at the bottom of the front of the bushing that allows the barrel to cam up in the rear without springing back.

In the hands of a Master class shooter, a gun can be made capable of shooting 2" groups or less at 50 yards. No foolin'.



Critical points of accuracy for any semi-auto are two points on the bottom lugs, two points on the top locking recess and three points at the bushing.

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DISCRETION IS STILL THE BETTER PART OF VALOR

Previous columns dealing with cornering have covered mind-set, distancing, timing, the rhythms, as well as illusive horizontal and vertical displacements. This time we take a look at actually breaking the threshold of the corner to dominate the new space.

Everything you have done prior to this moment — observation, anticipation, analyzing space, a varied and random distance routine — can be considered jabbing. Jabs in boxing set up the right hand for the knockout. With a jab you are setting the tone for your most powerful strike. You are light on your feet and ready to hit and move, and move again.

However, you would still be wise to give your opponent the maximum amount of respect. When I conduct training, I always ask my students, “How good is your opponent?” The correct answer? He’s as good or better than you. You are, at the least, fighting your mirror image. The classic military blunder is to underestimate your adversary. You must understand he could put you down in a heartbeat if you give him — or her — the opportunity.

We see much chest pounding, huffing and puffing about this or that concerning gun fighting. Usually, those who engage in such talk have either never been in a gunfight or may simply not understand the true dynamics involved.

RESPECT ‘EM AND THEN FINISH ‘EM

When you turn that corner, what do you see? You see a man with a gun, trying to do exactly what you are doing. How good is he? We already know. You are engaging your mirror image so ask yourself another simple question: “Would you bet your life on a flip of a coin?” What are the possibilities here?

1. I fire and neutralize the threat — I own him and the space.
2. I fire and force my threat to move and retreat — I own the new space.
3. We both fire and we both neutralize each other — neither combatants are a factor now.
4. We both fire and we both move and retreat — neither combatants own the space.
5. He fires and neutralizes me — he owns me and the space now.
6. He fires and forces me to move and retreat — he owns the new space.

Note, that only 2 of the possibilities are optimal for you. The rest are not optimal — or are deadly.

Yet, the fact remains there are times you must corner. Armed professionals and citizens face this dilemma every day of the week.



No Head – No Threat

If you see it, it gets hits, right now. Fire your rounds and vacate the space. I typically fire a triple volley and change position. Whether the threat immediately goes down or not, re-observe from a different angle and distance. If you missed your opportunity, don’t stay and slug it out. Bullets don’t care if you can bench-press 350 pounds or that you’re as fierce as a lion. Besides, most likely, the material between you and your threat doesn’t do a good job of stopping bullets. Don’t admire your handiwork. Get out. There is a saying: “Unless the head is separated from the body by more than four feet, that person is still a potential threat.”

If a gunfight does erupt on the corner, you must be committed to win, but savvy enough to have some patience to win. It happens fast, but there is timing involved. It is the Jujitsu of gun fighting. Let your opponent over-commit. Let him take the same line too many times. Let him be overly aggressive and too fast in action.

But, when the time is right and the window of opportunity opens, you must be there with all your mental tools and the correct physical movements to overwhelm the opponent. Once you have the opponent against the ropes, you must maintain constant, unrelenting pressure until that opponent is fully defeated.

Manipulating all available elements in proper combination and sequence allows you to consistently defeat opponents when the requirement for cornering arises.



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GUNRIGHTS

JEFF SNYDER

OH, NO...



PASSENGERS WITH GUNS?

The March/April 2002 column ("The real day of infamy?"), prompted an unusual amount of criticism and I thought I'd address some of it. My last article covered the events of 9/11 and suggested the airplanes would not likely have been hijacked and used as missiles had passengers been permitted to bear arms while flying.

The point was made as part of a more general argument that "Liberty is not just the condition for bad people to act, it is also the necessary condition for good people to act," and therefore, "Restricting liberty in hopes of rendering bad people harmless comes at the price of incapacitating good people and rendering them helpless." The unstated implication of my argument was that people should have the liberty of carrying arms — yes, even on airplanes.

This provoked some passionate reaction. If people could carry on airplanes, the terrorists would also be armed. This would lead either to gun battles on board or to terrorists being armed while no one else was. How would that state of affairs guarantee

safety? Better that a few trained sky marshals or pilots have arms and the rest of us be disarmed.

One reader wrote: "I grant you it is unfortunate that trained, armed, disguised officers were not on the planes on the morning of 9/11. Had they been, the results would have been, of course, much different. But I don't see how arming everybody makes us all safer. Somalia, where nearly every male is armed, is not a terribly safe place."

Another wrote: "Your premise is that if airplanes were not gun-free zones, armed passengers aboard the planes... would have been able to overpower the terrorists and prevent the event. But if the passengers could be armed, then so could the terrorists. In practical terms, who would decide which passengers could go aboard armed and which could not? The task would be unmanageable."

For many months now, this column has been used to examine the relationship between liberty and safety. If I've not been clear enough on this point, I will now try to be especially blunt: Liberty does not guarantee safety. If safety is

Continued on page 66

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Penetration Testing Big Bore Handguns

We Pit A .500 Nitro Express Against Some Of The Biggest, Baddest Magnums And The Results May Surprise You. A Handgun Isn't All That Far Behind An Elephant Rifle.

John Taffin

This is a test. Rank the following in order from that offering the deepest to the shallowest penetration: .500 Nitro Express, .458 Win. Mag., .45-70, .500 Linebaugh and .45 Colt. If you're like most shooters, you would probably say they are already in the right order — and you would be wrong. The true ranking is neither a guess nor an opinion, but rather fact gained under controlled conditions. I have just returned from the first annual Big Bore Sixgun Seminar





"Who says the .500 Linebaugh doesn't kick?"

hosted in Cody, Wyo., by custom gun-maker John Linebaugh.

Most — make that all — seminars I have attended in the past have been presented by firearms manufacturers with the express purpose of showcasing their products. This seminar was quite different. Over 100 of us gathered to discuss big bore sixguns, how they work, why they work and, most importantly, why they are so effective on big game. No one was selling anything except truth.

We spent the first morning discussing big bore sixguns with Linebaugh and then the afternoon was spent doing actual penetration tests with the biggest sixguns and rifles available.

For any cartridge to be effective — whether it's fired from a sixgun or rifle — the "Four Ps" must be in place. Those are Placement, Power, Performance and Penetration. We define these terms as follows.

Placement: where the bullet strikes the intended target.

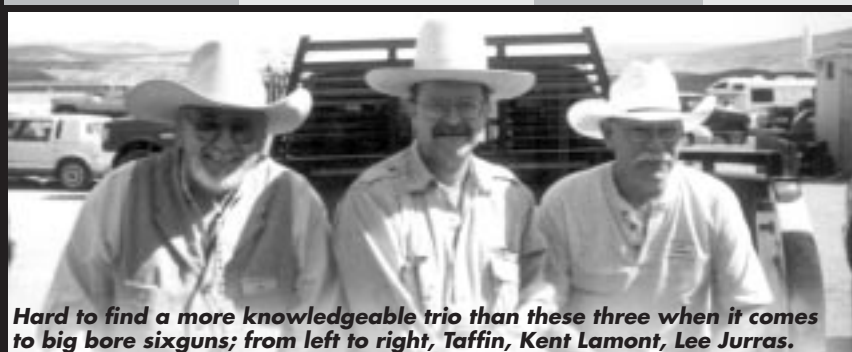
Power: the muzzle energy or TKO value.

Performance: whether the bullet expands, holds together, or comes apart.

Penetration: how deeply the bullet travels in the target medium, especially in a large animal.

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Cartridge	Bullet	Velocity	Penetration
.45-70	530 gr. hardcast lead	1,550 fps	55"
.500 Linebaugh	495 gr. hardcast lead	1,270 fps	52"
.500 Nitro Express	570 gr. FMJ solid	2,000 fps	48"
.458 Win. Mag.	500 gr. FMJ solid	2,260 fps	47"
.475 Linebaugh	420 gr. LBT SWC lead	1,335 fps	47"
.454 Casull	360 gr. bonded core	1,500 fps	45"
.45 Colt	350 gr. hardcast lead	1,400 fps	43"
.500 Linebaugh	480 gr. Keith	1,200 fps	41"
.475 Linebaugh	420 gr. LBT SWC lead	1,050 fps	40"
.500 Linebaugh	435 gr. LBT SWC lead	1,270 fps	38"
.45 Colt	300 gr. LBT SWC lead	1,180 fps	38"
.45 Colt	310 gr. Keith SWC lead	1,250 fps	36"
.500 Linebaugh	435 gr. LBT SWC lead	1,000 fps	34"
.44 Magnum	250 gr. Keith SWC lead	1,200 fps	27"
.480 Ruger	325 gr. XTP	1,350 fps	17"



Hard to find a more knowledgeable trio than these three when it comes to big bore sixguns; from left to right, Taffin, Kent Lamont, Lee Jurras.

The AYOOB FILES

FURTIVE MOVEMENT SHOOTING: THE ROBERT BAUTHUES CASE

Situation: The man peering into your window is fully masked and dressed like a ninja. You confront him and he spins toward you with his hand rising as if to shoot.

Lesson: You do the right thing, yet still get indicted. The key to your survival — an attorney with a sense of justice and an understanding of the dynamics of deadly force.

January 10, 1995

Nighttime, shortly after nine in Anchorage, Alaska. The brief span of winter daylight has fled. In the pitch dark the temperature drops to 15 degrees below zero.

A dark-clad figure stealthily enters the outside storm door of a modest mobile home parked on the city's edge. The neighborhood has become increasingly dangerous. This particular home was already burglarized once; the damage done to the door so extensive it needed new locks.

The figure stands inside the room known in the northlands as an Arctic entry, a buffer zone between the frigid outdoors and a house, similar to a farm's mud-room. He sees boots and heavy outer garments, and up the stairs, a laundry room and the front door of the house. If he reads the sign hanging in the house that reads "Burglars Beware," he takes no notice.

With a full ski mask hiding his face, he quietly climbs the stairs. Outside the front door, he sees the lights switched on and the occupants inside, including the object of his intentions. Nervous, he waits silently, trying to calm himself before doing what he has come here to do.

The Guy's Got a Gun — I'm Dead

The trailer is the home of Cloudia Logan, her boyfriend Robert Bauthues and Cloudia's attractive teenage granddaughter Michelle. Bob Bauthues (pronounced "Buh-thooz") is in his early seventies. Serving his country in war left him almost completely deaf. His career as a truck driver behind him, he lives unpretentiously, a proud law-abiding citizen. Yet, the neighborhood's rampant crime concerns him and Cloudia. Anchorage Daily News columnist Mike Doogan noted in 1993 the neighborhood "... had a crime story on the front page of the Metro section three out of every four days."

Anchorage's Police Department is one of the country's best, but it doesn't have enough cops. Roughly 260 officers serve a thousand times that many citizens within sprawling city limits that stretch more than 90 miles from border to border. Response time cannot always be as quick as the officers would like. Bob bought a couple of dogs for security and, since the burglary, made sure his handgun rested, accessible, in his bedroom drawer.

He and Cloudia sit in the small living room, reading and watching television. Young Michelle rushes in. While coming out of the bathroom, she tells her grandmother, urgently, that a masked man dressed in black stood at the inner door peering through the window.

Bob reacts. Even with hearing aids he is too deaf to communicate with police dispatchers over the phone. He tells Cloudia to call 911, and then makes his way to the bedroom and opens a drawer. His gun is a Ruger Blackhawk old model single action, clean, with

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COLLECTING WESTERN ART AS A SIXGUNNER

Ever since I can remember, I wanted to be an artist. I was always very envious of my older cousin who had a tremendous talent for pencil sketching and even today turns out beautiful artifacts carved in wood. I took art classes in high school, but by the time I got ready for college, I had a family, and a full-time job. If I expected to get through college in four years, I could not afford the double-time that art classes demanded, so I chose the less-time-consuming path of mathematics.

Over the years, I've taken several art classes, but have never quite achieved the level of quality that I hoped for. That's the bad news, however, the great news is that my oldest granddaughter, who is a junior in high school, has tremendous artistic talent and ability, and is already a much better artist than I could ever have hoped to be.

To paraphrase an old saying, "Those that can, do. Those that can't, collect." I have neither the ability to produce great art nor Western art in particular, but I cer-

tainly can collect Western art.

I always enjoy going to the Buffalo Bill Historical Center and visiting the various sections. The six-guns on display garner a high interest, but I also enjoy the wing filled with Western art from all the great artists of the past. This past summer I spent several hours just looking at one large painting called "Custer's Last Stand" and marveling at the artist's ability.

Much as I would like to collect famous paintings and bronzes dedicated to Western art, this is well beyond my economic means. So I decided a long time ago my collection of Western art would be sixgunner-style, and that would mainly mean grips and leather that were



true works of art. Every chance I get, and every dollar I can afford and justify, goes for beautiful creations.

Normally, when you think of artwork, your mind probably goes to Paris or Rome, New York or San Francisco. However, my Western art comes from the sixgunner's mecca — El Paso.

Continued on page 87



HAIL OF LEAD

With A Shotgun Under-Barrel And A Nine-Shot Cylinder, The LeMat Revolver Was The Most Devastating Cavalry Pistol Of The Civil War Period. Now A Faithful Copy Is Available From Navy Arms.

Mike Cumpston
Photos: Ichiro Nagata

By 1856, the caplock revolver had become a primary tool and symbol of the “Age of the Western Empire.” This was the year that Jean Alexander LeMat obtained a patent for an open-frame single-action revolver of martial caliber. Even more than the products of Sam Colt, the LeMat project became a bellwether in the fledgling global economy. LeMat was a French-born Louisiana physician with European connections. His business partner, Gen. P.G.T. Beauregard, was a United States naval officer.



The European influence is evident in the LeMat design. It resembles many of the English revolvers more closely than the Colts and Remingtons. The grip-to-frame angle, the side-mounted loading lever and the shape of the hammer are nearly identical to the features found on the Webley Long Spur revolvers of the mid-1850s.

Major departures from existing American and European holster arms include calibration, capacity and the presence of a unique, auxiliary, smooth-bore under-barrel capable of carrying an 18-ga. ball or a charge of shot.

The early LeMats came in bore sizes of .35 and .41. Some references record that the bore sizes were later changed to the nominal .36- and .44-caliber standard on this side of the Atlantic. Contemporary revolvers possessed five or six chambers in the cylinder; the LeMat accommodated nine.

LeMat and Beauregard arranged for production of the initial revolvers in Philadelphia. With the coming of secession, their global connections were to stand them in good stead. They moved the production base to France and later to the Birmingham steel district of England. The major variations included a Naval Model and a Cavalry Model with a total production



estimated at around 2,000 units. Most of the pistols were destined for the Confederate States and were used by a number of high-profile officers.

It is not surprising that such a tool has become the subject of modern replicas. In the early 1980s, Navy Arms Co. commissioned variations of the Army and Navy Models from the Italian firm of Pietta. A copy of the Cavalry Model — favored by Confederate Gen. J.E.B. Stuart — found its way to the gunroom of Leo Bradshaw in Waco, Texas.

Leo is a sufficiently weighty arms collector and dealer that R.L. Wilson sends him early copies of all his books. They bear such inscriptions as “To the Inimitable Leo Bradshaw (signed) Larry” and constitute a major portion of my personal reference library. Over the years, Leo has owned a couple of original LeMats and is more than passingly familiar with the design.

Leo pronounced the Navy Arms Model to be a virtual clone of the originals and fulsomely praised the overall workmanship of the Italian copy. As Leo observed, fit and finish are excellent.

The major portion of the revolver is

richly polished and blued, while the hammer and trigger are finished in cool-toned color-case hardening.

Pre-Cartridge Arms

Once experienced, the somewhat laborious practice of shooting the pre-cartridge arms creates a recurring itch that must occasionally be scratched. The LeMat proved to be an interesting departure from the familiar Colt designs.

Selected components included a supply of .451" swaged balls from Speer, CCI #10 caps and a flask of Pyrodex FFFG substitute. Navy Arms recommends a charge of 25 grs. volumetric equivalent. Five of these loads gave an average reading of 835 fps. The flask came equipped with a 30 gr. volume spout, and this raised the average velocity to 906 fps with an extreme spread of 60 fps.

The LeMat showed a strong tendency to reliably discharge all nine chambers with no significant hang-ups. Spent caps fell from the cones without binding the cylinder or dropping down into the hammer notch. This is quite an improvement over my usual ham-handed handling of the Colt blackpowder clones.

The 45-degree grip angle and the 3-lbs. 7-oz. weight made the revolver hang steadily in a one-handed duelist stance. The sights — a truncated triangular front and hammer notch rear — hung steady on target in spite of the heavy trigger pull.

I fired the first target group at 15 yards, establishing that the group was centered about 9" above point-of-aim. The off-hand spread came in at just under 4". Several subsequent sessions at 25 yards kept all rounds within a 6" group about a foot over the aiming point. Recoil from the muzzle-heavy revolver was predictably mild.

The hammer spring is massive compared to more conventional caplocks. Bob Archer of Navy Arms told me this is essential for reliable ignition of the under-barrel. The trigger return spring is also quite a bit heavier than the dual-purpose unit found on the Colts and Remingtons. According to Archer, it is also less prone to breakage.

Shotgun Barrel

The Navy Arms literature relates the smooth-bore barrel is designed to fire a patched .63-caliber ball over no more than 25 grs. of FFFG. I tried the Pyrodex



equivalent charge with six rounds of 00 buck, the result being an anemic pop with the balls clattering weakly into the target board.

I cautiously raised the powder charge to 60 grs. equivalent and standardized my shot loading at 310 grs. of 00 buck. This approaches a 7/8-oz. load and provides for six 00 buck, 30 lead pellets of BB shot, 60 #2s and 300 #8s. I also loaded seven .31 balls, which weigh a bit more.

To fire the center nipple of the shot barrel, it is necessary to flip down the nose of the hammer. This can be accomplished by crossing the shooting hand thumb behind the hammer and shoving down on a stud on the moveable hammer nose. I learned that any amount of contact between the web of my hand and the hammer would slow the hammer fall enough to produce a misfire.

With a lower grip, 100-percent reliability is the norm. It is necessary to firmly ram home the powder charge and over-shot wadding. I used scraps of paper towels. Loaded loosely, the lower barrel produces hang fires reminiscent of flintlock ignition.

Continued on page 88



You Can Win A Custom **BERETTA** *Elite II Competition / Carry Gun*

Marines are valuable national resources and should always be put to best use. Put this particular former Marine at a custom-pistol workbench and you end up with something, for lack of a better word — Marine-like (tough, reliable and obedient).

Ernest Langdon joined the Marine Corps 12 years ago and he's been working on Beretta 92 Series Pistols for almost as long. As an instructor at the Marine Corps High Risk Personnel Program, Langdon has fired more than 2 million rounds through his Berettas. For three years he was employed by Beretta USA as a key figure on the design team for both the Elite and Elite II pistols. He's also won six national titles with — you guessed it — a Beretta.

In March 2001 Langdon began Langdon Tactical Technology, (LLT), where he has worked full time since August 2001.

Our American Handgunner Custom Gun Give-away is Langdon's Level III package on the Beretta Elite II. Featuring a speed-bump trigger, a Bar Sto match barrel, Heinie Straight Eight Slant Pro night sights and includes the following features:

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- Stainless steel hex head grip screws
- G Model, with decocker only

Total value? Over \$1,500! Langdon can perform modifications to your own pistol or supply a complete package. Langdon's experience as a Marine and top-class competitor combines with his savvy pistolsmithing to create a package any competitor or shooter would be proud to own.

Langdon Tactical Technology, Inc

P.O. Box 10759, Burke, Va. 22009

(703) 978-1262

www.langdontactical.com

From Langdon Tactical Technology, Inc.

TO ENTER CONTEST: Use a postcard (no envelopes, please) and follow the sample shown. Send to AMERICAN HANDGUNNER, Dept. H7, P.O. 880409, San Diego, CA 92168-0409. Entries must be received before August 1, 2002.

Limit 1 entry per household. This contest is open to individuals who are residents of the United States and its territories only. Agents and employees of Publishers Development Corporation and their families are excluded from entering. Contest void where prohibited or restricted by law. Winners must meet all local laws and regulations. Taxes and compliance with firearms regulations will be the responsibility of the winners. Winners will be notified by CERTIFIED MAIL on official letterhead. No purchase necessary to enter.

HOM JULY/AUGUST 2002:

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Address _____ City, State, Zip _____

If I win, please ship my gun through:

Dealer _____

Address _____ City, State, Zip _____

Phone () _____ - _____ Store hours ____ am ____ pm



**AO SIGHT
SYSTEMS**

BIG DOTS

**SOMETIMES OLD
IDEAS ARE STILL
THE BEST IDEAS**

Roy Huntington

The drop of sweat hangs above your right eye, precariously dancing just at the upper limits of your peripheral vision. The humid night has hung, like a limp towel, following you on patrol, alley to alley, call to call.

The bloody and bruised focus of your attention, standing, shaking in front of you, displays a cartoon-like case of wild, bug-eyed fear. You talk to him quietly, calmly, almost gently and tell him to put the knife down — slowly. Please. All the while you are aware of your front sight; the big dot glowing on the end of your pistol, sitting precisely in the center-chest of Bugeye.

Ever been there? It's one of life's exciting moments and can make a real believer out of you when it comes to high-visibility handgun sights. Duty gun, hunting handgun or home protection

autopistol — all need a bold, reliable sighting system. That's where AO Sight Systems enters the fray.

Since their inception, this Fort Worth company has done things in the usual big Texan way. When they introduced their line of Big Dot Express sights for handguns, there was a shift in the force and old school sight designers, trainers and end-users sat up and gave a collective "Duh, why didn't we think of that" sigh.

The history is simple — and complex. Those express sights on fine English double rifles were there for a reason. Dusty, wind-blown African plains may not be a dark alley on Logan Avenue, but the point is the same. Big, mean, bad things like Cape Buffalo, were going to try to eat you if you didn't beat them to

the draw. On Logan Avenue, it might be someone named Gordo. Who may also be big and mean. And bad.

Taking a "fine bead" at 2,000 pounds of thundering blood and muscle just didn't cut it 150 years ago and it doesn't cut it today. Express sights, with their shallow "V" rear sight and gold, ivory or silver front were quick to acquire, tough as elephant hide and gave the fellow on the other end of that .600 Nitro some peace of mind. Bam, Bam. Problem solved.

AO Sight Systems thought it might just work for handguns too, and they were right. The initial offering of the shallow "V" rear and standard "Dot" front didn't have radioactively-inspired inserts, but nonetheless, got the shooting public's attention. This idea works and since there is often a great deal of elegance in simplicity, the AO Express Sights must be pretty elegant.

This dumbing-down of the move toward fancy sighting "systems" is a good one and, like legions of people who've been there know — simple is best, and the side with the simplest guns and uniforms usually wins the war. And that, after all, is the goal.

The natural progression from the Standard Dot Express sights was a move to a bigger front dot and the introduction of a tritium insert into it. Now we're talking some serious front-sight action, and cops and self-defense types took



The difference is obvious. The simple construction of the AO Express rear sight, coupled with the tritium "bar" insert, makes a bold, easy to acquire set-up.

Set the Big Dot on top of the rear bar and nestle it snugly in the shallow "V" — you're there. It all happens much faster than it takes to explain.

hold of the idea with both shooting hands. Most self-defense shootings occur in the dark so we need to, ah, 'er, see our sights in the dark

But does it really work? We've got living proof in the form of a lady cop. My own wife, Suzi, a 16-year veteran of the San Diego Police Department and multiple Thunder Ranch attendee, anticipated department qualification shoots like an 8-year-old anticipates the dentist. She knew the rules, understood the principles, had the best teachers in the world, but still screwed up at times. What gave?

A move to my old duty SIG-Sauer P-225 gave her a gun that fit her hand better than her old P228. It was still not enough. That's when the AO Big Dot hit the market and I soon had a set on her gun.

"Geeze," she exclaimed. "I can really see that front sight." I had forgotten the glasses-wearing Suzi was having a hell of a time seeing her front sight and that, coupled with her fear of failing, was causing her targets to resemble shotgun quails at 25 yards.


After some quick dry-firing on the home front, Suzi promptly qualified on the first try the next day (on a particularly tough course for her, with 25 yard accuracy skill tests). Her confidence level rose like the dynamo she is and to this day she has consistently qualified on the first go-around, every time.

Perhaps the best recommendation she could give was her telling me that she wished she'd had the Big Dot sights on her SIG years ago, when she was involved in an on-duty shooting. There you go.

The latest from AO in the Big Dot

arena is the 24/7™ Big Dot Pro Express. This design incorporates a vertical "bar" tritium insert in the rear express "V" sight. All you have to do is align the front big dot over the rear bar (think like the letter "i") and you're good to go. They are big, bold and simply put, beautiful to behold if you need 'em in a hurry.

We could bore you with charts and graphs about how fast our times were on-target and how accurate we could shoot during drills. But we won't. Instead, take our word — the Big Dot concept works. It's fast, tough and easy to learn. AO Sight Systems even offers them with adjustable rear sights now.

As far as precision goes, it was very easy to keep shots in a 6" circle at 25 yards with the Big Dot, without trying particularly hard. Fast, accurate and tough.  Sounds like Suzi.

For more information contact AO Sight Systems, 2401 Ludelle, Ft. Worth, TX 76105, (888) 744-4880; www.ashleyoutdoors.com

That big, bad dot stands out. Here, the factory SIG front sight is booted out of the dovetail by the AO Big Dot. Note the tritium insert.



The *Liebenberg* **LEGACY**

Cameron Hopkins • Photos: Ichiro Nagata



After Feeding The Muse In South Africa, At Pachmayr's And As The Driving Force Behind The S&W Performance Center, Liebenberg Is Back Doing What He Knows Best ... No-Limits Custom 1911 Work.

Liebenberg's career began in South Africa, where he customized 1911s for a thriving IPSC market. South Africa dominated IPSC in the late '70s and early '80s. Jimmy von Sorgenfrei won the world championship and Edith Almeda dominated the ladies' category at the Bianchi Cup and any IPSC match she entered. Local shooters flocked to Liebenberg for custom gun work.

After resigning as manager of Pachmayr Gun Works' custom shop in 1986, after shuttering his Pistol Dynamics, and as the founding director of Smith & Wesson's Performance Center, Liebenberg once abandoned the 1911 to pioneer concepts of custom pistolsmithing. But now he's back.

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shooters flocked to Liebenberg for custom gun work.

He was a willing teacher, mentoring the young Claudio Salassa, who would later follow Liebenberg to America and establish the Briley Pistol Division. Salassa himself pioneered numerous innovations in 1911 technology, and the mutual support of the old friends continues to this day.

Perhaps no deeper pool of pistolsmithing talent ever coexisted in one gunshop than it did at Roy Swayden's Hoppes-scented confines in Johannesburg, where Liebenberg and Salassa worked together. At least not until Liebenberg's next assignment.

His life as a pistolsmith in South Africa being a challenge because of embargoes on guns and gun parts, Liebenberg had no choice but to wield a TIG welder with a steady hand. Liebenberg and Salassa learned to improvise and became masters of welding their own parts. Welding a beavertail from nothing more than a stock grip tang was the norm.

Coming To America

Liebenberg read the writing on apartheid's walls and left for America's purple mountains and spacious skies — an immigrant. He was immediately hired by another 'smith of

immigrant stock, Frank Pachmayr. In Pachmayr's Los Angeles shop, Liebenberg reached the pinnacle of his prowess, absorbing what the kindly German imparted while blending in the improvisational skills he'd perfected in his homeland.

If the pairing of Liebenberg and Salassa was the "dream team" of pistolsmiths, imagine the thrill of walking into a shop and finding Liebenberg and Pachmayr at the same bench. Liebenberg worked as director of Pachmayr's gunsmithing department, leading the Pachmayr Custom Shop to new heights by making Pachmayr's Combat Special precisely the way the Old Man wanted it done.

Shortly before Liebenberg embarked on a curious ammunition project that would alter the course of the entire handgun industry, he was there to congratulate his friend when Pachmayr was awarded the Outstanding American Handgunner trophy in 1985.

Origin Of The .40 S&W

Few people outside Smith & Wesson's walls know the true story of the .40 S&W's origin. The genesis was a pistol Liebenberg built for a trimmed-down 10mm case firing a 180 gr. projectile 1,000 fps. And here is the real story.

Liebenberg was a world-class IPSC

shooter, a former member of South Africa's elite Springbok IPSC team. He shot world and national championships and the Bianchi Cup and always finished top 16, if not top five. He and another perennial top finisher, Tom Campbell of Smith & Wesson, became friends. Liebenberg told Campbell about the Centimeter, and from there the concept of the cartridge moved on to 2100 Roosevelt Avenue's decision makers.

For Liebenberg, the Centimeter opened Springfield's historic doors and he was recruited to build a new custom pistolsmithing division called the Performance Center. Meanwhile, with minor modifications, Winchester's engineers matched the specifications of the cartridge, bringing forth in a joint venture with Smith & Wesson — the .40 S&W.

During an interim after new owners closed Pachmayr's Custom Shop, Liebenberg built guns under contract for Pachmayr in his own shop called Pistol Dynamics. As well as building Combat Specials, he customized 1911 pistols for IPSC and introduced a breathtakingly accurate conversion called the Modular Pistol, for the Bianchi Cup.

The Impossible Pistol

Liebenberg mothballed Pistol Dynamics and moved his family east to Massachusetts in order to open S&W's

Performance Center. Without devolving into a list of accomplishments Liebenberg brought to the Performance Center, one story must be told — the origin of the Shorty Forty.

The big handgun manufacturing company, then the largest in the world, held staff meetings. Monotonous and dry, they required Liebenberg's presence, for he was director of the Performance Center. Preferring to be at his bench, he chaffed at the bureaucracy. But realizing that staff meetings lubricate the corporate machine, he sat through them.

One day he proposed a compact version of the Model 4006, a 6906-sized .40 S&W. And the senior engineer dismissed it with an arrogant wave of his manicured hand.

"Impossible," he sniffed. "The peak pressure is far too high and the slide velocity is off the scale. It will never work."

Seething at the haughty manner with which this technocrat dismissed him, Liebenberg set to work. Calling on the totality of his experience as a pistolsmith, Liebenberg modified a frame into a compact configuration, machined a new slide, fitted the two and went to the test range. Satisfied with the result, he went to the next staff meeting cradling his creation.

"There's the impossible," Liebenberg said, and slapped the first Shorty Forty on the polished wood table in front of the engineer. He and other engineers huddled



The mag funnel locks into the frame with an intimacy not seen before. This design is a collaboration between Salassa and Liebenberg and is sure to be mimicked by other pistolsmiths.

over the gun like nuns inspecting a novice, but they could find no flaw. Liebenberg changed the geometry of the 4006 to accommodate the pressures of the .40 S&W, allowing the cartridge to not just function with a short barrel and slide, but making it purr. The Shorty Forty became the single best-selling pistol ever produced by the Performance Center, and the basis for the currently produced Model 4013.

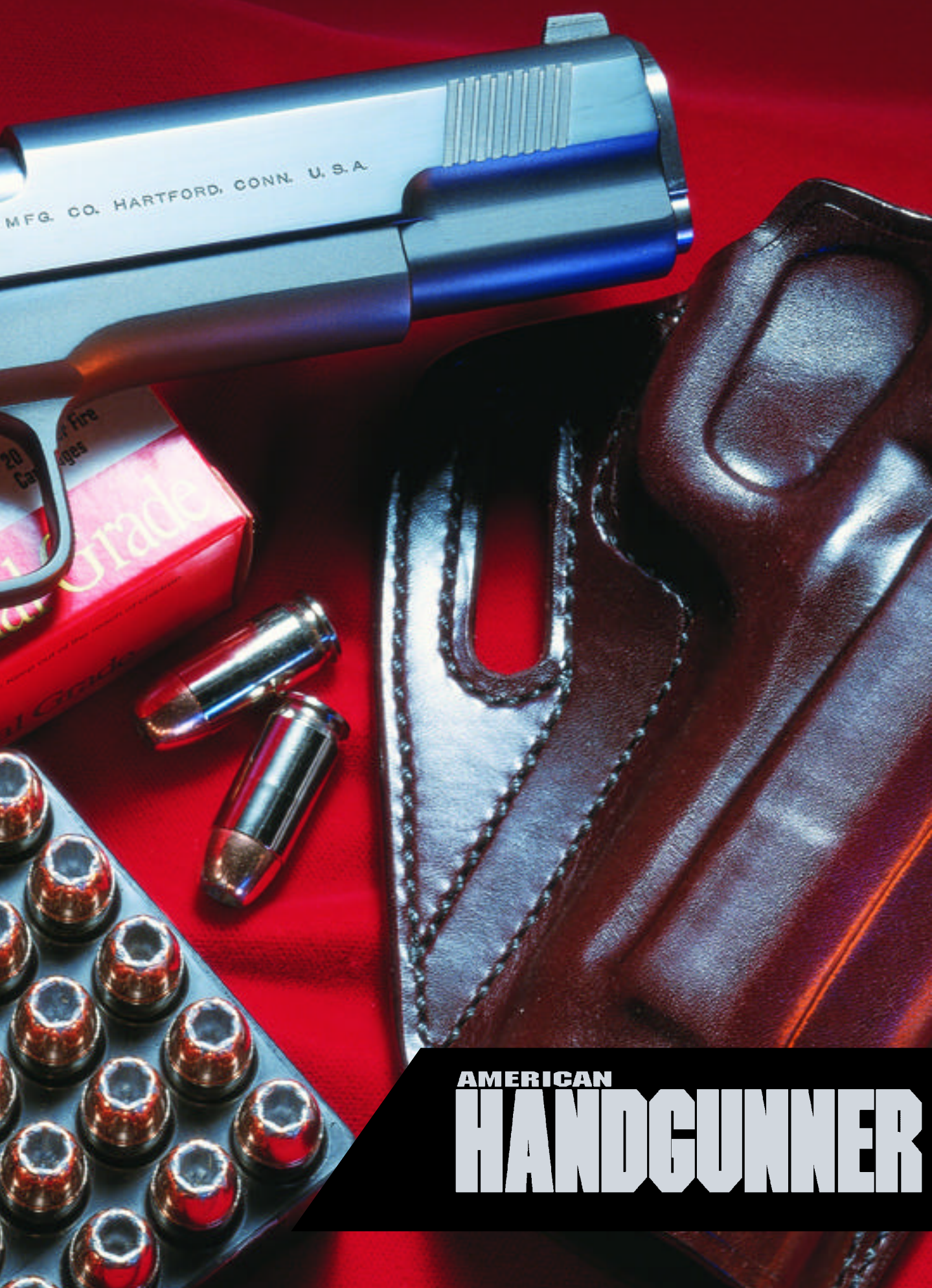
Time passed, new owners came and went, Smith & Wesson evolved. The Performance Center developed into a lucrative business, catering to a coterie of specialized distributors who bought everything Liebenberg and his colleagues created in a series of Limited Edition releases.

Promoted Upstairs

Upper management decided Liebenberg was too valuable to allocate to mere gunsmithing. With the Performance Center off and profitably running, Liebenberg was named Director of International Product Development, assigned to create







AMERICAN
HANDGUNNER



Liebenberg will be offering premier parts in the near future. His master craftsmanship extends to even the tiniest spring.

models for Smith's overseas customers. But then came the bad times. Smith & Wesson's British owners sold-out to threats of a massive HUD lawsuit, signing an agreement that capitulated to Bill Clinton's anti-gun agenda. The NRA launched a vicious attack on the historic American gunmaker, calling for a consumer boycott. Sales plummeted. Layoffs were inevitable.

Liebenberg survived the first two cuts. When the third string of pink slips set sail, his was among them. In a perverse sense, we should be grateful Liebenberg was fired. Because once again we have the single most talented pistolsmith working on the gun that truly deserves his attention, the glorious 1911 Colt.

Liebenberg resurrected Pistol Dynamics, the short-lived custom pistolsmithing business he once ran. Now located in Florida, he no sooner received the pink slip than he made the move south. Pistol Dynamics offers custom pistols built individually by Liebenberg himself, and a line of what Liebenberg calls "performance pistols" built on a custom-production basis.

A Welcoming Colt

To welcome the prodigal pistolsmith back to the bench where he belongs,

we sent the seasoned master a "commercial" Colt to be customized as a Liebenberg Signature Model. Commercial Colts were made from 1913 until the introduction of the Series 70 and were, essentially, rejected Government Models thrown aside to be repolished and refitted for sale to the commercial trade.

Commercial Colts come with a "C" in the serial number, known to collectors as either C-suffix or C-prefix guns. The Colt we sent Liebenberg was a C-suffix made in 1963 and a perfect example of a classic commercial Colt — a horribly out-of-spec reject.

Without Liebenberg's South African experience of cobbling together the worst of guns into superlative custom pistols and fabricating his own parts with a TIG welder, this vintage Colt probably would have become a doorstep for some gun safe. It was hardly a collector-grade piece, and was capable of being revitalized with only the most extensive work.

But from the sow's ear came a silken Colt, beautifully restored and rebuilt into the very pinnacle of a Pistol Dynamics offering — a signed and numbered Liebenberg Signature Model. Like the Pachmayr Combat Specials he built in Los Angeles, all Liebenberg Signature Models come with their own serialized

numbers registered with Pistol Dynamics. This is LSM number nine.

The old Colt is embellished with a number of Liebenberg's trademark modifications features. First, regard the beavertail. Unusual, is it not? Pistol Dynamics offers a line of Liebenberg-designed custom parts and accessories for the 1911 pistol, called Pistol Dynamics Performance Products. A new style of beavertail called the "pocketed beavertail," this beavertail is a handmade version of what will become a Pistol Dynamics Performance Product.

Look closely at the mag funnel. Can you see the microscopic line where the funnel is slotted into the frame? Not just welded on or dangling by the grip screw escutcheon, the new mag funnel is so exquisitely fit that, once again, the old master has redefined the genre. In fact, the frame-locked is a collaboration design between Salassa and Liebenberg. Look for other pistolsmiths to mimic this innovative fit.

Look through these pages for a picture that shows the mag release button. See anything peculiar? The hole on the left side of the frame has been counter-bored to allow the button to sink just a little bit further, insuring a positive release of the magazine. Look at the button itself. Can

you tell that it's been cut on a slight angle and then handchecked at 50 lpi? This is to prevent the thumb from slipping off during a fast mag change.

But now for the ultimate new improvement of the 1911 from Liebenberg, his new front sight. It looks as though it's been machined into the slide longitudinally, and not dovetailed for left-to-right movement as other pistolsmiths now consider de rigueur. How could Liebenberg ignore such a structure, leaving his front sight "fixed" and unable to be drifted sideways to make windage changes?

Instead, Liebenberg chose to make the front sight interchangeable with a clever new barrel bushing design that locks the front sight into its recess. The front sight is an elevation adjustment tool, not a windage tool. The rear sight should be moved to adjust for lateral shot dispersion; the front sight should be changed to alter the vertical point-of-impact.

Liebenberg's front sight is interchangeable by the customer.

"I can supply a new front sight over the phone," Liebenberg said. "The customer can call and tell me he needs to raise or lower his point-of-impact by such-and-such and I will make the necessary calculations, make him a new front sight and send it to him. He only needs to remove the barrel bushing, remove the front sight and replace it with a new one. A tritium dot, a fiber optic, a new height, anything can be supplied."

The rear sight is a Bo-Mar combat sight, sunken into the slide or, as Liebenberg terms it, "pocket machined." Needless to say, the Bo-Mar adjustable unit remains the finest, most rugged sight for the Government Model pistol. As it was before, when Liebenberg was machining them into Pachmayr Combat Specials.

Signature Touches

A handmade Liebenberg Signature Model is loaded with features. The frontstrap checkering is cut by hand, 20 lpi; beautiful hand-formed diamonds, row after flawless row. The mainspring housing is also handchecked at 20 lpi. The squared trigger guard, handchecked at 30 lpi, is a favorite of the expatriate South African.

"I made a replacement part (because the original was unserviceable) and welded it in place," Liebenberg said. "I did a mild square-and-checker to enhance the lines of the gun. The Colt

Continued on page 95





**KNIFEMAKER GRANT
HAWK'S TACTICALS
REDEFINE THE TERM
FUNCTIONAL-BEAUTY**

G HAWKISH

Pat Covert
Photos: Ichiro Nagata



*The Grant Hawk line-up
includes (top to bottom) the
D.O.G. folder, the R.A.T.
fixed blade and the K-ATs.*

How do you dress up a D.O.G.? Carbon fiber scales for starters and a smooth bead blast finish will do the trick.



HANKERING

You'll find two kinds of people in Idaho City. Tourists, and people with good reason to be there. Only about 300 or so are residents drawn to this rural outpost for maybe no other reason than the fact it's just a great place to escape the outside world.

Idaho City was the capitol of Idaho during the gold rush days. Not long after gold was discovered there in 1862, the town population swelled to near 7,000; 30 percent of whom were Chinese laborers who busted rock and moved scabble for boom-town mining companies. At one point, Idaho City boasted 200 business, 36 of which were saloons.

Highway 21 leaves Boise and twists up toward Idaho City into the rolling sage hills surrounding the Snake River's basin. Several miles out of town the asphalt narrows, the curves tighten and the terra firma turns rockier. The highway meanders leisurely toward the state's former capitol tucked deep in the foothills of the Sawtooth Mountains. Huge mounds of river rock stand with great hubris along the creek banks, remnants of the exhaustive sluice and placer mining operations that once took place on the town's perimeter.

Grant Hawk was born in Boise, Idaho in 1941. An inventor at heart, Hawk designed a pickup camper and then manufactured his creation for several years in both Idaho and California. That was

Continued on page 68

The K-AT is shown here in both blade configurations, a spear point (top) and dagger grind (bottom). The sheath strips down for neck carry.



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"AS CLOSE TO PERFECTION AS IT GETS"

THE NEW SIXGUNS OF

DAN WESSON ARMS



John Taffin



Comparing the old and the new. Top, Dan Wesson .32 Magnum circa 2001 compared to a blued Dan Wesson .32 Magnum from the mid-1980s; bottom, .32 20, 2001 and .32-20 from the early 1990s.

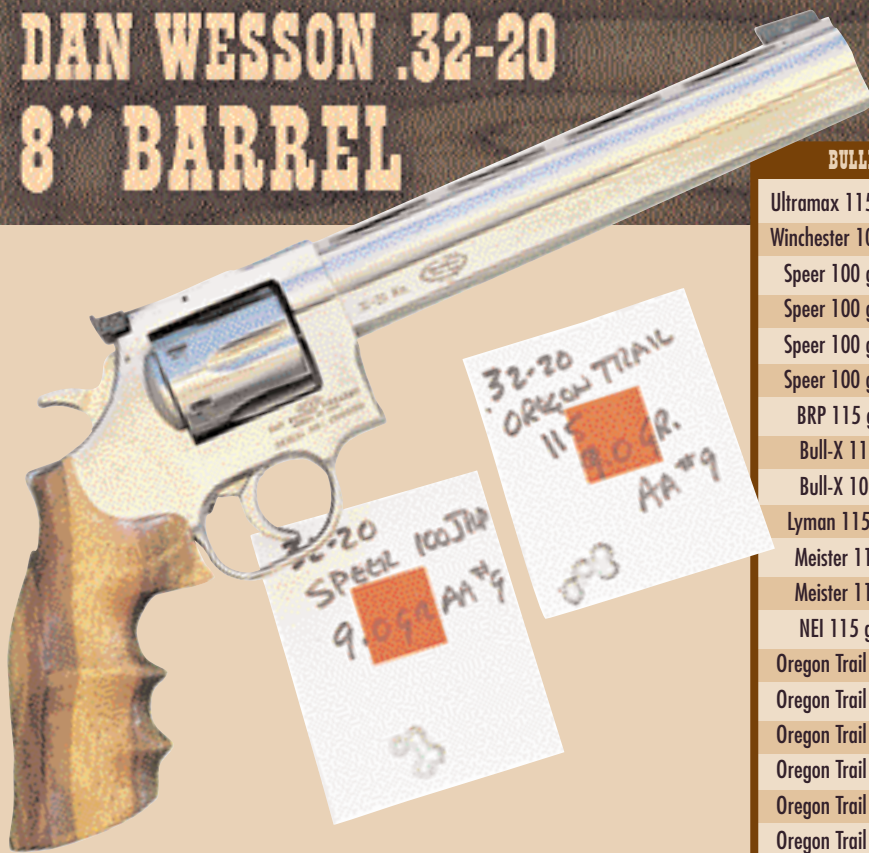
**Resurrected and Rejuvenated,
The Old Wesson Firearms Are
Back With Their Signature
Interchangeable Barrels And
Tack-Driving Accuracy.**

For big bore sixgunners, the late 1970s were the dark ages. Clint Eastwood, Dirty Harry and "Make my day!" had created such a demand for double-action .44 Magnums that Smith & Wesson was working around the clock and still unable to keep up with the demand. The fervor even spilled over to single-action .44 Magnums, so much so that we soon found Ruger Super Blackhawks in short supply. This situation would continue until both Ruger and Dan Wesson both brought out large-frame, double-action .44 Magnums.

For Ruger, the answer was the Redhawk, arriving in a robust 7.5" stainless steel version. From Dan Wesson, the engineers went to work to enlarge their .357 Magnum frame, giving us a superbly accurate, beautifully bright blued Model 44.

Earlier, silhouetters had used Dan Wesson's 8" and 10" .357

DAN WESSON .32-20 8" BARREL



BULLET	CHARGE	VELOCITY	25 YARDS
Ultramax 115 gr. RNFP	factory	751 fps	1.25"
Winchester 100 gr. Lead	factory	845 fps	1.25"
Speer 100 gr. JHP	10.0 grs. #2400	1,394 fps	2.125"
Speer 100 gr. JHP	5.0 grs. Unique	1,043 fps	1.375"
Speer 100 gr. JHP	9.0 grs. AA#9	1,181 fps	.625"
Speer 100 gr. JHP	10.0 grs. H4227	1,054 fps	2.125"
BRP 115 gr.GC	10.0 grs. H110	1,103 fps	.75"
Bull-X 115 gr.	4.3 Unique	911 fps	1.125"
Bull-X 100 gr.	5.0 grs. Unique	1,103 fps	1.75"
Lyman 115 gr.GC	10.0 grs. #2400	1,102 fps	1.25"
Meister 115 gr.	4.0 grs. Unique	979 fps	1.25"
Meister 115 gr.	3.5 grs. Titegroup	965 fps	.75"
NEI 115 gr.GC	10.0 grs. #2400	1,007 fps	1.625"
Oregon Trail 115 gr.	10.0 grs. H4227	1,139 fps	1.25"
Oregon Trail 115 gr.	10.0 grs. #2400	1,265 fps	.625"
Oregon Trail 115 gr.	9.0 grs. AA#9	1,251 fps	.625"
Oregon Trail 115 gr.	3.5 grs. Red Dot	974 fps	1.125"
Oregon Trail 115 gr.	4.0 grs. WW231	891 fps	1.25"
Oregon Trail 115 gr.	5.0 grs. Unique	1,091 fps	1.125"
Oregon Trail 115 gr.	3.5 grs. Titegroup	923 fps	1.125"
Oregon Trail 115 gr.	3.5 grs. N100 gr.	918 fps	1"

Magnum "heavy barrel" revolvers with great success. Once in a while some .357 Magnum shooters would lose a target, so it was an easy switch to the heavier, and more powerful, 8" barreled .44 Magnum.

Sixgunners very early found that even with factory grips, the .44 Magnum from Dan Wesson was about as comfortable for

shooting full-house .44 Magnums as it can possibly be for a packable .44 sixgun.

The key to the accuracy of the Dan Wesson Model 44 was the same as that of the smaller framed .357 Magnum. Dan Wesson revolvers employed a barrel and shroud that were both removable from the frame with a simple wrench so that

shooters could set the cylinder gap that they desired. A locking nut at the muzzle end of the barrel securely tensioned both barrel and shroud to the frame. This had been a notable feature of Dan Wesson .357 Magnums since they had arrived in the early 1970s.

Dan Wesson sixguns, no matter what the chambering, all had a well-deserved reputation for accuracy. The small-frame guns would be made in .32 Magnum, .32-20, .22 Long Rifle, .22 Magnum, as well as the original .357 Magnum. Once the .44 Magnum was established, it would also be offered in .41 Magnum and .45 Colt, and then the frame and cylinder were both lengthened to give us the SuperMags.

Company Origins

The company bearing his name was founded in 1968 by Dan Wesson, the grandson of the original Daniel Baird Wesson of Smith & Wesson. Young Dan also happened to be a longtime employee of Smith & Wesson. He went out on his own with what he felt was a better idea.

Originally, he planned to offer sixguns with interchangeable barrels and cylinders; however, he settled on simply offering shooters a choice of easily changed barrel lengths and configurations, standard weight or heavy underlugged.

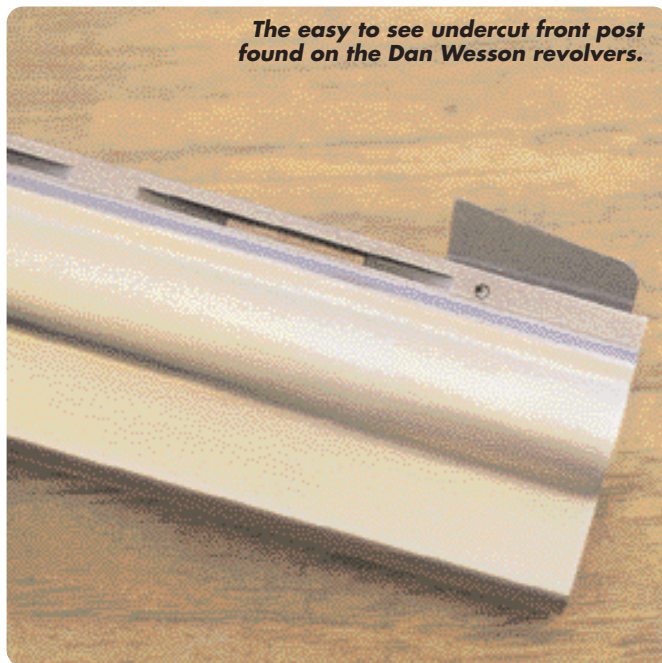
Barrel changing consists of loosening the barrel nut at the end of the muzzle,

Both the .32-20 and the .32 Magnum Dan Wesson come equipped from the factory with rubber finger grooved grips.





Caliber markings found on the Dan Wesson .32-20 revolver.



The easy to see undercut front post found on the Dan Wesson revolvers.

removing the shroud, and unscrewing the barrel. A new barrel and shroud are replaced on the Wesson frame in reverse order. A feeler gauge, thoughtfully provided by the manufacturer, is used to set the cylinder gap, the nut is replaced and snugged up, and the Dan Wesson revolver is ready to go in a very few minutes with a new barrel length or style.

The company had many ups and downs. After Dan's untimely death, the company stayed in the Wesson family for a while, then it went to other inter-

ests, came back to the family, and finally closed its doors.

The New Wesson

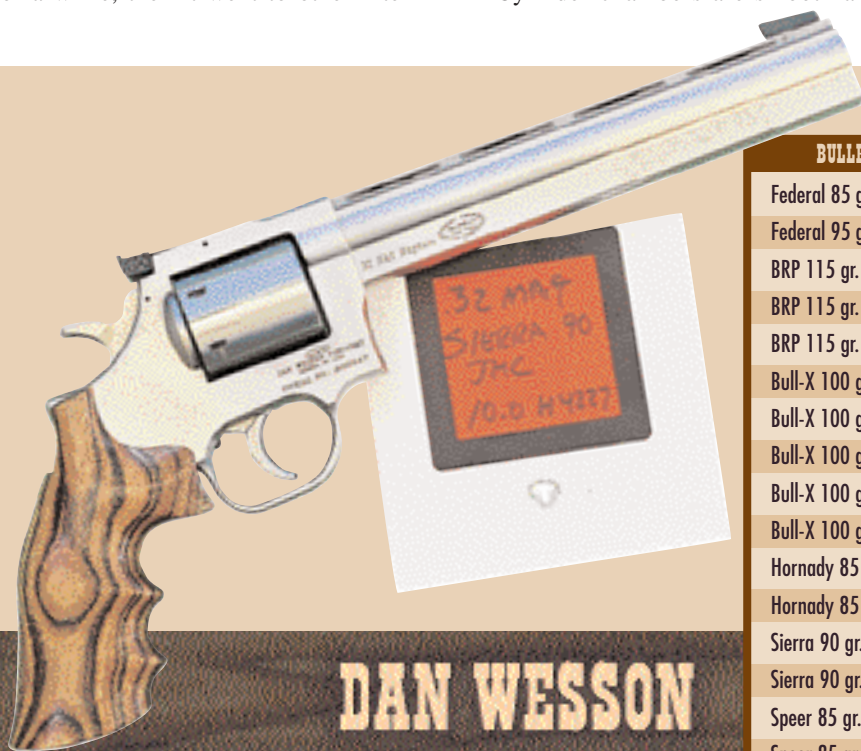
In 1996, the company was purchased by Bob Serva who has invested in new, modern machinery and is now once again turning out Dan Wesson sixguns. By using new and up-to-date, state-of-the-art machinery, Serva is able to turn out the best sixguns to ever bear the Wesson Firearms name.

Cylinder chambers are smooth and

the front of the cylinder and the back of the barrel are parallel to each other. Both of these items had long been problems with Dan Wesson revolvers.

In the early days of long-range silhouetting, I and many others soon found the most accurate sixgun for this then relatively new game was the Dan Wesson .357 Magnum, with many of us opting for the 8" Heavy Vent Rib version and then switching to the 10" when it became available. That extra 2" of

Continued on page 78



**DAN WESSON
.32 MAGNUM x 8"**

BULLET	CHARGE	VELOCITY	25 YARDS
Federal 85 gr. JHP	factory	1,126 fps	1.5"
Federal 95 gr. LSWC	factory	1,021 fps	.75"
BRP 115 gr. GC	4.5 grs. Unique	1,193 fps	1.25"
BRP 115 gr. GC	9.0 grs. #2400	1,394 fps	1"
BRP 115 gr. GC	10.0 grs. H4227	1,217 fps	.875"
Bull-X 100 gr.	4.2 grs. Unique	1,219 fps	.75"
Bull-X 100 gr.	3.3 grs. Bullseye	1,054 fps	1.625"
Bull-X 100 gr.	2.6 grs. Titegroup	976 fps	1.375"
Bull-X 100 gr.	2.6 grs. Red Dot	870 fps	1.125"
Bull-X 100 gr.	3.7 grs. Clays	1,189 fps	1"
Hornady 85 gr. JHP	9.0 grs. #2400	1,390 fps	.875"
Hornady 85 gr. JHP	10.0 grs. H4227	1,115 fps	1.125"
Sierra 90 gr. JHP	9.0 grs. #2400	1,298 fps	1.125"
Sierra 90 gr. JHP	10.0 grs. H4227	1,097 fps	.5"
Speer 85 gr. JHP	9.0 grs. #2400	1,382 fps	1.375"
Speer 85 gr. JHP	10.0 grs. H4227	1,197 fps	1.125"
Speer 100 gr. JHP	9.0 grs. #2400	1,364 fps	1.125"
Speer 100 gr. JHP	10.0 grs. H4227	1,163 fps	1.125"

The American Pistolsmiths Guild has once again united their collective talents to produce a masterpiece of cooperation in craftsmanship. Based upon a Springfield Armory Champion .45 ACP, the basic gun was then extensively modified, honed and generally blessed by the administrations of some of the top artisans of the Guild.

But first, Dave Williams of Springfield Armory's Custom Shop (309-944-5631) hand-selected a frame and slide and then invested time and energy in making sure they fit perfectly. Tight, slick and positive, the slide runs like it's on glass.

Ed Brown, of Ed Brown Products (573-565-3261) fitted his own bobtail mainspring housing, making the Springfield comfortable to carry and user-friendly in the extreme.

Bill Laughridge of the Cylinder & Slide Shop (402-721-4277) honed the internal parts to deliver a 4.5 pound carry trigger. After installing an ambidextrous safety he silver soldered the plunger tube and bushings to keep things neat and tidy. Quality is in the details.

D & L Sports' own Dave Lauck (307-686-4008) coaxed a low mount MMC front and rear sight combination into the slide, letting anyone who sees it know that the package isn't just for good looks. It will perform should the need arise.

To keep things on track down-range, Neil Keller of Kustom Ballistics (219-724-2879) fitted a match Kart barrel with integral ramp. There's no arguing about that set-up. Turning his attention to the trigger guard, Neil undercut the grip and then milled meticulously detailed "fish scales" into the front of the grip. Unique, attractive and functional - not to mention classy.

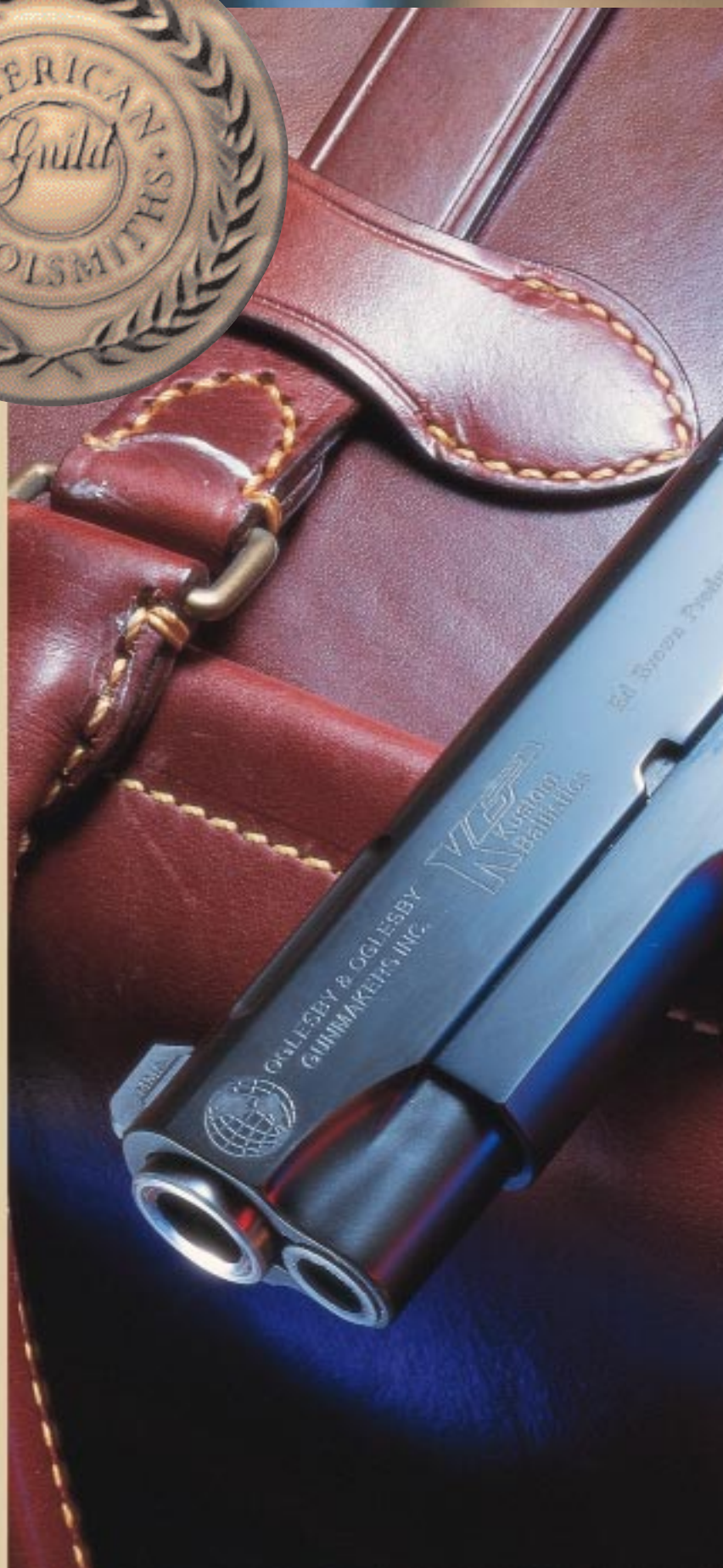
Custom gunmaker Bill Oglesby of Oglesby & Oglesby Gunmakers (217-487-7100) milled a series of flutes into the top of the slide. Their singular appearance is sure to draw comment and adds a certain individualism to an already rare combination of ideas.

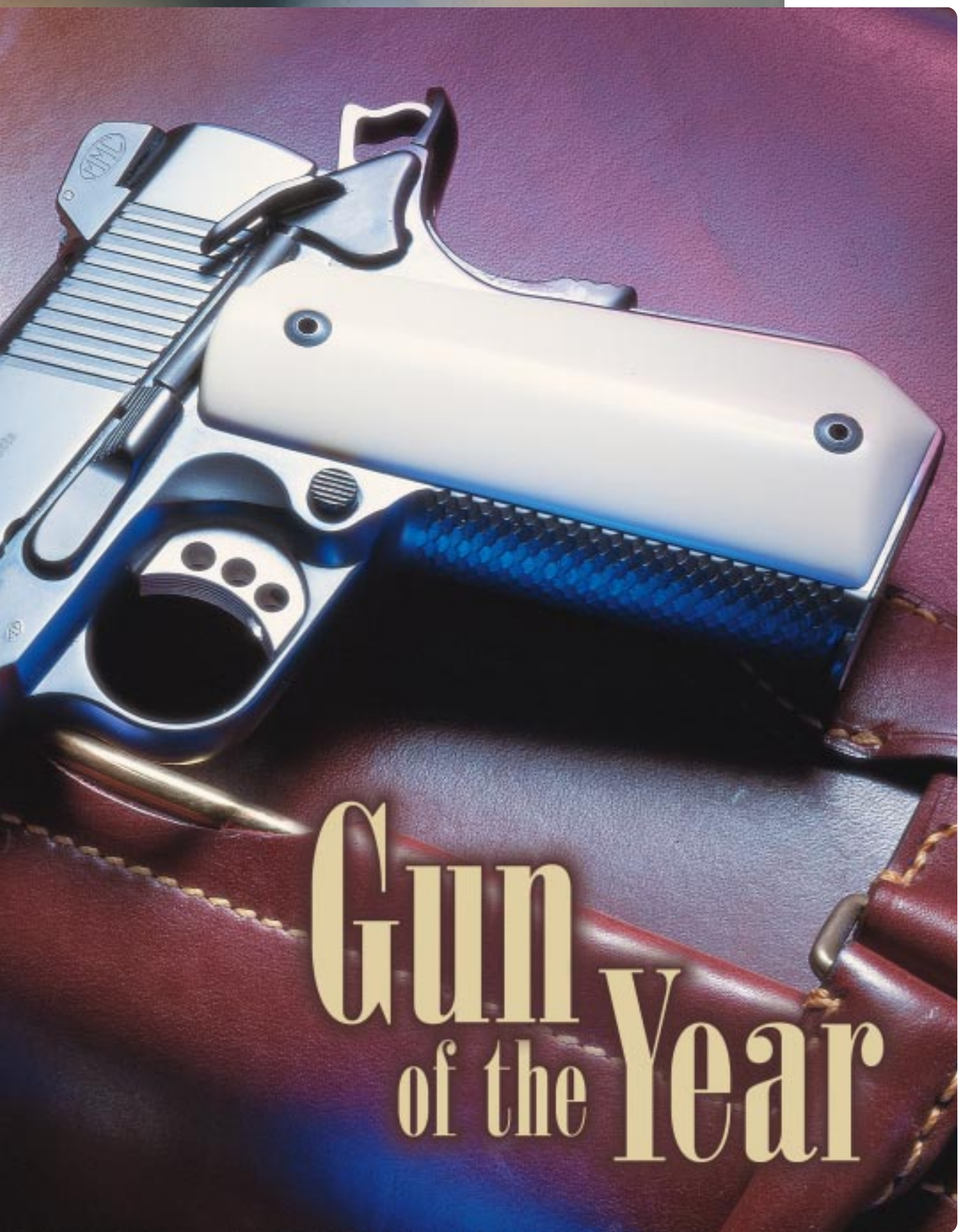
Before leaving the Cylinder & Slide Shop, Chris Haggeman performed a final mirror polish on all parts. "Performed" is, perhaps, the right word, since the result is a command performance indeed.

The American Pistolsmiths Guild 2002 Pistol is an exquisite example of some of the finest craftsmanship available in the world. Each maker touched the original Springfield in the manner he was most gifted and the sum of the parts has become a benchmark of the custom pistolsmith's art.

The drawing for the 2002 American Pistolsmiths Guild pistol will be held July 31, 2002 in Comer, Georgia. All raffle tickets may be purchased for \$20 and will be limited to 950 total. Tickets can be purchased by sending \$20 to:

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Gun of the Year

GUN RIGHTS

Continued from page 36

what you want, you will continually forgo more and more liberty. If you think it's possible to establish and permanently hold onto some "reasonable" balance between the two, you are sorely mistaken.

Safety, when construed as the prevention of evil, is achieved by imposing prior restraints on people's conduct. Basically, by stopping them before they have done anything harmful, while still innocent of wrongdoing, if you will. Good and bad alike are equally restrained — in order to control the bad.

This sort of safety is inconsistent with, and requires the destruction of liberty. In this sense, safety and liberty cannot both be pursued and cannot be "balanced." The maxim that no man can serve two masters applies. A choice must be made.

People find it very difficult to make a permanent choice in favor of liberty. Instead, they want to decide on a case-by-case basis. They desperately want safety and think people should be reasonable in giving up some liberty in order to have safety. It does not seem to them that it is a lot to ask; the restrictions often seem so minor. But often what's really at stake are conflicting ways of deciding what's right and what's wrong.

It is for this reason that the clashes over restrictions are often so heated, despite the seemingly small or relatively unobtrusive nature of the particular restraint or demand (like being asked to remove your shoes for airline security checks).

There are at least two ways of trying to decide what a proper course of conduct is. By far, the most common is to consider what result one wants and then to choose the means that seems, from experience, most calculated to secure that result. That choice is "good," meaning essentially, productive of the desired result. Courses of action that are actually counterproductive to the desired result are "bad." In general, this manner of deciding upon the goodness or badness or what action to take is known as having and exercising "prudence." Its ultimate goal is what Aristotle argued was man's greatest good — happiness.

This sort of safety is inconsistent with, and requires the destruction of liberty.

If safety in air travel is our goal, we might ask what the best course of action is to guarantee that result. As one of my readers surmised, that would be if all the bad guys were disarmed or could be assured of having only meager weapons like box cutters; while a handful of armed and trained certified good guys had guns with which to oppose them. Thus, safety seems assured and no one (on the airplane) has liberty or freedom to act except the agents of the state. A pretty good illustration of what the pursuit of safety inevitably leads to.

For example, if anyone can carry

guns in public, that means that criminals will have them too. The criminals will respond to the threat of armed victims by banding together to attack in gangs or with even more powerful weapons in order to intimidate or kill their potentially armed victims. Thus, we are better off if everyone is disarmed, except for the police.

Same argument, but the hull of the aircraft is now the public streets. Indeed, gun control proponents sometimes do make this "arms race" argument. (See the Gun Rights column, "CCW Reform Movement Spreads Despite Bogus Anti-CCW 'Study'," Oct./Nov.1995 *Handgunner*).

So bans on public carry are just another "reasonable" restriction. If safety is the goal, one has no principled basis for opposing this argument. One can only argue that the armed gang/overwhelming force scenario is not what really happens. Despite that feared result, it's not the actual result, based on what experience shows. If (or when) experience shows the contrary, one will have to concede the "reasonableness" of the restriction, just like I am being asked to concede the reasonableness of the airline travel restriction by my critics.

There is another method, however, of deciding upon the proper course of conduct and we will take that up, along with the question of whether liberty is consistent with safety, in our next column.



Jeff Snyder is the author of *Nation of Cowards — Essays on the Ethics of Gun Control*, available at amazon.com; www.nationofcowards.net, email: jsnyder@ekks.com



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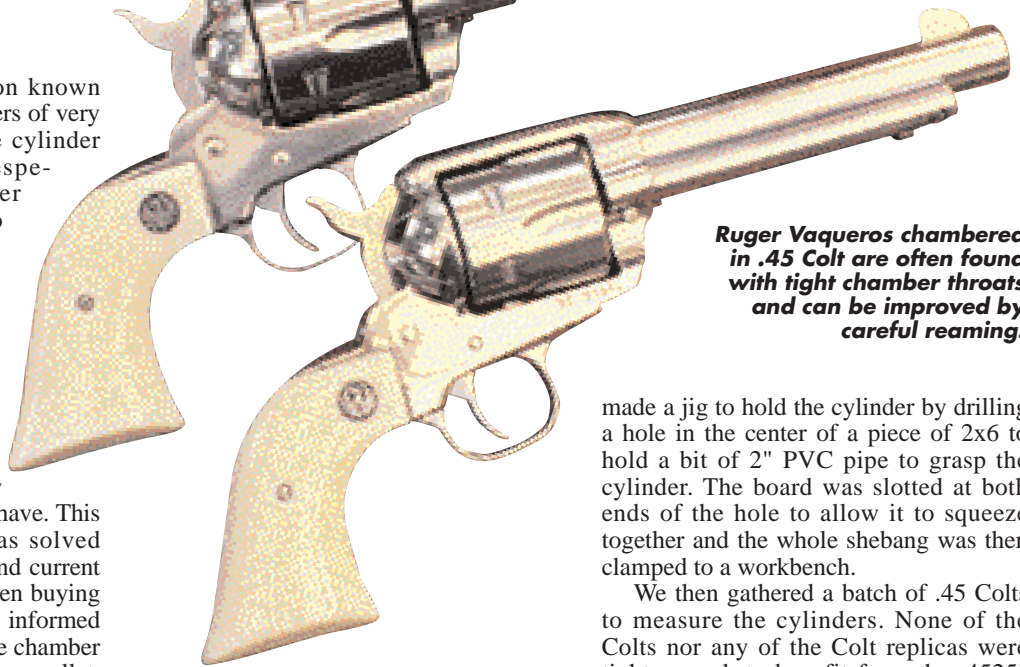
HOW TO CUT CHAMBER THROATS FOR BETTER ACCURACY.



For some odd reason known only to manufacturers of very fine revolvers, the cylinder chambers, and especially the chamber mouths, are cut so that accuracy is hindered rather than enhanced. At one time, Smith & Wesson sixguns chambered in .45 Colt were way oversize often measuring as much as .456". Ideally, the chamber throats should be no larger than .001" or .002" over the barrel groove diameter, when normally .452" or .453" is all you should have. This oversize cylinder problem was solved long ago by Smith & Wesson and current revolvers are fine. However, when buying a used Model 25 you should be informed of the situation and check out the chamber measurements before opening your wallet.

Current Ruger .45 sixguns go to the opposite extreme. Quite often the throats are too tight, measuring as small as .449". This is not a major problem as it is much easier, and certainly less expensive, to remove a few thousandths from the chamber throats than to replace the cylinder.

I do not pretend to be a gunsmith, and normally call on a qualified revolver-smith when I need something like this done. However, I recently had the chance to share in the use of a .45



Ruger Vaqueros chambered in .45 Colt are often found with tight chamber throats and can be improved by careful reaming.

cylinder reamer that was making the rounds all over the country with shooters who share ideas at www.sixgunner.com and www.sixguns.com.

In addition to being able to use the reamer for nothing more than the cost of postage to the next user, I also had the services of my friend Denis Fletcher who is not only an engineer by trade but also a pretty good amateur machinist. If any trouble arose, I knew he would be there to handle it.

Even before the reamer arrived, Denis

made a jig to hold the cylinder by drilling a hole in the center of a piece of 2x6 to hold a bit of 2" PVC pipe to grasp the cylinder. The board was slotted at both ends of the hole to allow it to squeeze together and the whole shebang was then clamped to a workbench.

We then gathered a batch of .45 Colts to measure the cylinders. None of the Colts nor any of the Colt replicas were tight enough to benefit from the .4525" reamer. However, we gathered up 15 local Rugers chambered in .45 Colt, all of which had cylinder dimensions that would benefit by reaming.

A word of caution is in order. I am a firm disciple of the "Don't fix what ain't broke" school. If your .45 already shoots great, don't even bother to measure it, and definitely don't touch it with a reamer! However, if the accuracy is mediocre, this is a possible fix.

Throat reamers for the .45 Colt are
Continued on page 82

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HANKERING

Continued from page 59

before the gas shortages of the '70s rendered business too tough. Around the same time, the price of gold rose and Hawk took up gold prospecting, living in tents and mining shacks from the southwest to Alaska. By the early '80s, he'd invented and patented several mining-related devices and returned to his native stomping grounds, setting up shop in Idaho City. The plunge of the price of gold in the early '90s sunk Hawk's business, so he turned his attention to a newly discovered fascination: knifemaking.

Hawk is what some would call a "tall glass of water" — a thin, lofty presence punctuated by fading, reddish blond hair that flows from under a cowboy hat. Wise and weathered, he looks like Willie Nelson pulled through the eye of a needle. He is a polished, articulate, deep thinking individual capable of taking logic to extremes that most would never dream. When asked a question about his knives, Hawk answers with a pragmatic certitude obtained only by grilling himself of the same inquiry a million times over.

To get to Hawk's shop, take a left on the scrabble road just past the general store that demarcates Idaho City on the highway. The buildings that remain from the town's Wild West days are consolidated in a two-block square, with outliers sprinkled here and there. A picturesque town made up of historical buildings, clapboard sidewalks and intriguing people you'd want to spend days getting to know. Anyone who lives and works in Idaho City must have some damn interesting stories to tell.

Two or three blocks after you turn in, just past an absurd looking antique store at block's end, the road doglegs 90 degrees left while tracing the outskirts of town. The road veers to the right and snakes around into a huge parking lot lined with trailers. At the end of the lot sits a huge and weathered barn with a World War II-era Burma Ford "ATV" parked out front.

Inside the barn, Hawk strung together a veritable hodgepodge of tools and heavy equipment for making his knives. In his words: "A bunch of old machines that have been revamped, remade and propped back up again." It is from these machines that Hawk — with his 20-year-old son Gavin at his side — turns out some of the most sophisticated, innovative knives you'll ever see.

Uncustomary Customs

To understand Hawk's knives, you have to understand two things. First, he is driven by logic. Second, unexposed to outside influences and with plenty of time on

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his hands to think, his mind has no limits. As a consequence, Hawk's knives are different, but make perfectly good sense.

Hawk struck gold on his first attempt at making a tactical folder. His D.O.G. model is a hot seller because it's unique in design and extremely well built. D.O.G. is an acronym for "Deadbolt Over Grabstep," a description for the knife's unique blade locking system. His aim was to design a dependable locking system that functions properly with debris in and around the lock mechanism.

Two design features accomplished this. First, due to the deadbolt being ramped into lockup over a longer length of travel, it's possible to attain a locked blade before the blade rests completely against the stop pin. For example, even if dirt holds the blade away from the stop pin, the lock functions properly. Second, the spring and push rod assembly that propels the deadbolt into lockup is sealed by an O-ring housed in a piston-like chamber that prevents contamination.

Unexposed to
outside influences and
with plenty of time on
his hands to think, his
mind has no limits.

The D.O.G. folder sports a unique handle as well. Foregoing common design themes, Hawk designed the D.O.G.'s handle with more the look of a handgun, right down to the pistol grip-style diamond checkering found on the scales. The frame, 4 $\frac{5}{8}$ " in length, is machined aluminum — light in weight to make up for the beefy steel blade and heavy duty pivot assembly.

Hawk's knives are overbuilt to withstand extreme conditions. The D.O.G.'s ATS-34 stainless steel blade locks into place with vault-like surety, only released by pulling down the two slide releases located on the backside of the handle. Operation is ambidextrous via a slot on the backside of the knife's 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ " modified clip point blade. Cocked and locked, the D.O.G. has the rigid, inflexible feel of a fixed blade knife.

Even the pocket clip received special attention on. He purposely designed the pocket clip to be short so it wouldn't interfere with hand-to-hand contact. The pocket clip is reversible, spring loaded and adjustable for tension. Located next to the clip is a hole for affixing a lanyard to the base of the knife.

All of this makes for an formidable package, a fact not overlooked by cutlery manufacturer Columbia River Knife & Tool (CRKT). This fast-rising knife manufacturer is known for successful

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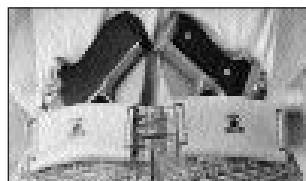
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collaborations with custom knifemakers, and a production model of Hawk's D.O.G. is in the works and poised for delivery in 2002. The fact that Hawk's very first folder design was chosen for production by a top flight manufacturer is unheard of in the business.

Fertile Ground

Over the years, true innovations in fixed blade knives have been few and far between, a fact lost on Grant Hawk. Like any knife project, he looks at any new design as fertile ground for cultivating new ideas. In true Hawk fashion, his fixed blade knives have some very interesting features.

At 6" overall, the knifemaker's K-AT (Knife-All Terrain) model serves double duty as a light duty neck or belt carry. The K-ATs come with either a 2½" spear point or dagger blade. This is a full tang knife made of 1/8" thick, top-shelf BG-42 stainless steel treated to a stout Rockwell hardness of 60-61.

Hawk's knives
are overbuilt to with-
stand extreme condi-
tions.

What makes the K-AT truly unique is a lanyard built into the handle. While most tactical knives have a lanyard hole built into the butt, most users rarely use this feature as the loose cord has a tendency to get snagged — in spite of the fact a lanyard can mean the difference between losing a knife or hanging on to it during a hazardous situation. Hawk remedied this dilemma by incorporating a cutout in the center of the choil and grooved the handle scales, allowing the lanyard to be threaded through the cutout and anchored to a domed pin attached to the butt. The lanyard is held snug by the elasticity of the cord and by an adjustable slide consisting of interlocking O-rings. Undoubtedly a practical and forward-thinking feature — it works like a charm.

The K-AT's sheath also features several innovative touches. Hawk uses a durable material called Uniroyal Adiprene Urethane to cast his sheaths. This special elastomer is available in various properties of hardness and toughness and is resistant to abrasion. Hawk experimented with the material extensively to get just the right consistency.

Unlike hard plastics such as Kydex, urethane is soft, making the sheath more comfortable when worn around the neck. Perhaps more importantly, there is no snapping noise when the knife is drawn from the sheath — a key consideration for both hunting and self defense situations.

The main part of the sheath discon-

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nects from the belt loop portion by removing the pull pin and sliding the sheath partly up and out of the looped section. Once done, a length of cord or chain threaded through the hinge tube makes a neck sheath. Hawk designed the K-AT's blade for symmetry, so there is no right or wrong way to sheath the knife. The sheath also has a small disc of silicon carbide built into the belt loop attachment that can sharpen the knife in remote situations.

He looks at any new design as fertile ground for cultivating new ideas.

The R.A.T. is the big gun in Hawk's arsenal — 9" of fighting pleasure in thick, quarter-inch BG-42 steel. The R.A.T. (Rapid Access Thong) has a deep hollow-ground drop point blade with a mild saber grind on the back for improved stickability. True to Hawk's style, it comes with its share of innovations.

With a handle similar in shape to the D.O.G. and the innovative built-in lanyard found on the K-AT, the R.A.T. uses a different method for affixing the lanyard. It's held taut by a spring-loaded hook in a recessed channel of the handle. Like his other knife designs, an ample finger groove enhances the grip.

Those knurled wheels on the back of the choil also serve to improve purchase. The way Hawk sees it, these wheels provide a much wider surface for thumb contact, making it much less likely for the thumb to slip during hard gripping and reducing soreness that results from over-extended use. A cast urethane sheath — with the knife-maker's usual surprises — is in development for the R.A.T. and should be available by year's end.

Get A Hawk

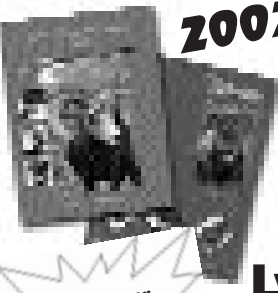
Grant Hawk's knives can be had with a variety of options including exotic wood, urethane, Micarta or carbon fiber handles. His fixed-blade knives start at a very reasonable \$220 and rise depending on choices. The D.O.G. folder starts at \$450, which may seem a bit high at first, until you handle the knife and admire its features and construction.

In a nutshell, Hawk's knives are innovative, unique and built to withstand the toughest of tests — the real world.



For more information, contact Grant Hawk Knives, P.O. Box 401, Idaho City, ID 83631; e-mail: grant@g-hawkknives.com; www.g-hawkknives.com

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BIG BORE TESTS

Continued from page 39

Certainly a solid bullet, whether hardcast or jacketed, can be expected to penetrate much deeper than a jacketed hollowpoint or soft nose. That is a given. The wise hunter decides, according to his intended quarry, whether he needs ultimate expansion, deepest possible penetration or a combination of both.

As a shooter of big bore sixguns for well over four decades, and also one who knows how effective sixguns can be on big game, I must say I was surprised at how effective various sixgun cartridges proved to be during the penetration tests. For the shooting and experimentation, the standard bundles of newspaper soaked in livestock watering tanks were used. No guess. No golly. No opinion.

**The true ranking is
neither a guess nor
an opinion, but
rather fact gained
under controlled
conditions.**

Going back to the five cartridges mentioned at the beginning the results were most interesting. Randy Garrett's .45-70 Hammerhead 530 gr. hardcast at 1,550 fps went 55" into wet newspaper. A 495 gr. hardcast .500 Linebaugh fired from a 5.5" sixgun with a muzzle velocity of 1,270 fps was right behind it at 52".

The .500 Nitro Express with a solid weighing 570 grs. came in third at 48", followed by the .458 Win. Mag. with a 500 gr. solid traveling at a muzzle velocity of 2,260 fps and 47" of penetration. Finally, the .45 Colt with a 350 gr. hardcast bullet at 1,400 fps gave 43" of penetration, or only 5" less than the .500 Nitro and 4" less than the .458.

Of course, the .45 Colt load tested is only for use in the Freedom Arms .454 or custom five-shot .45 Colt revolvers.

Other Cartridges

The .44 Magnum was not really given a thorough testing as the only load on hand was a 250 gr. Keith bullet at 1,200 fps which went 27" into the wet newsprint. At next year's seminar, hopefully we will have a larger variation of .44 Magnum loads to test, especially with 300 gr. bullets at muzzle velocities from 1,200 to 1,400 fps.

We also had only one load for the new .480 Ruger, Hornady's factory offering of a 325 gr. XTP at 1,350 fps. This round is not designed for deepest penetration but did expand well and travel 17" into the newsprint.

How did the truly big bore sixguns compare, the Big Berthas, the .45 Colt, .454 Casull, .475 and .500 Linebaughs? For the .45 Colt, in addition to the already mentioned load, a 310 gr. Keith at 1,250 fps — one of my favorite loads and safe for use in Ruger's Blackhawk or Bisley — penetrated 36", while the 300 gr. LBT traveling at 1,180 fps penetrated 2" deeper.

The .44 Magnum with a 250 gr. bullet at 1,200 fps ... will certainly handle any deer that walks.

Using Cor-Bon's 360 gr. bonded core at 1,500 fps in the .454 yielded 45" of penetration. Moving up to the .475 Linebaugh, a 420 gr. LBT at 1,335 fps did 47" while the same bullet at an easy-shooting 1,050 fps still penetrated to 40".

We have already mentioned the second-place finishing .500 Linebaugh load. Others from this category of the biggest of the big bores included a 480 gr. Keith-style bullet at 1,200 fps and 41"; a 435 gr. LBT at 1,270 fps, 38"; and a 435 gr. LBT at only 1,000 fps still went 34" into the test medium.

This tells me that for most of us, and the game we pursue, either a .475 or .500 Linebaugh traveling at a relatively sedate 1,000 fps will do anything and everything we could ever hope for.

Actually, we can draw the further conclusion that the .44 Magnum with a 250 gr. bullet at 1,200 fps or a 300 gr. .45 Colt at 1,250 fps will certainly handle any deer that walks — but then we already knew that!

Now we know with actual experimentation why it is big bore sixguns perform so well on large or dangerous animals including Cape buffalo, elephant, lion and the big bears of Alaska.



If you would like to take part in the next Big Bore Seminar you may contact John Linebaugh for details at P.O. Box 455, Dept. AH, Cody WY 82414; phone: (307) 645-3332.



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10-RING

Continued from page 28

Instant Relief, But Only Temporary Salvation

James Wilson was going to have a great holiday. The 47-year-old planned to spend a bright, crisp day putting up Christmas lights and decorations on his Vancouver, Wash., home. And everything was going great until he started looking for those dang lights.

Wilson couldn't find them. Then he felt just a little headache coming on. Nothing was really that bad. Even after he finally located the correct boxes, he found that when his wife took the lights down after the previous holidays, she had just balled them up and stuffed them away.

It was just a headache, growing into just a bad, bad headache. Ah, well. You forgive and forget. Wilson began the task of untangling the knots and unrolling the long cords, laying them out in neat rows in the driveway. Finally, he went to hook them up to power and throw the switch. Which is when his daughter pulled into the driveway.

When James came out and saw all those smashed lights, the vicious pounding in his head went off like a mad gnome with a jackhammer. But he knew — or thought he knew — what would help. And it wasn't aspirin.

Wilson told his wife not to panic if she heard shots, and then sent his daughter to warn the neighbors to ignore loud noises. James then picked up his trusty .45 auto, went out in the back yard, and took out his frustration on the lawn.

Bang! Bang!

Take that, yard! Bad, bad yard!

Bang!

Emptying a magazine into the ground took the edge right off, and Wilson started feeling much better. Then five deputies rolled up, jumped out and handcuffed him — for unlawfully discharging a firearm. Because there is no exception for the therapeutic application of firing a handgun in public. And so Wilson went to the GrayBar Hotel.

Our advice to him: next time, Wilson, take two aspirin, apply a cold cloth on the forehead and take a rest in a dark room.

Or at least try popping a Prozac.

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Romance And Robbery Just Don't Mix Well

An old con once said that loving and larceny are best kept separate. But apparently Mark Wharton, age 31, either never heard this expression, or chose to ignore it.

Mark had just pulled a robbery in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne in England and was making his getaway when he spotted a young lovely waiting for a bus. He paused to chat her up briefly, then wrote his name and phone number on her hand, and suggested she give him a call. Semi-charmed, she went home and transferred the skin-notes to a slip of paper.

Later, Mark pulled another robbery, this time waving a knife and relieving some luckless dude of his rucksack and jewelry. But it seems "luckless" that day was a contagious ailment, because Mark's stickup got caught on a public-surveillance video camera.

When it played on the tele a few hours later, Bus Stop Betty took one look, rethought her dating plans, and gave Scotland Yard a jingle. Now Mark is in for a long, long string of dateless nights.

Unless, of course, he winds up with a romantic cellmate. Which might not be such a bad situation. 

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Mike Dalton

Koenig Makes It Three In A Row

Surrounded by citrus groves and vegetable farms, the 2001 Steel Challenge blasted its way through the canyons near Lake Piru, Calif., August 16 through 19. A short distance from the range, Lake Piru, a family fishing spot, may have echoed with just a bit of gunfire. Although some people were there to enjoy the lake, another group gathered to watch and compete in the fastest shooting sport in the world. They probably had more fun, too.

This year's prize package was impressive — over 120 sponsors pooled over \$220,000 in cash and prizes, including more than 60 guns, \$20,000 in cash and top-notch merchandise. Major sponsors included, just to name a few: Tasco, Vihtavuori-Lapua, Blade-Tech, Winchester Ammunition, Bar-Sto Precision, Smith and Wesson, Pro-Load Ammunition, Leupold, Para-Ordnance, Briley, Glock, Brownells, Heckler & Koch, Safariland,



Doug Koenig accepting his third Steel Challenge Cup.

Pro-Ears, SigArms, Browning, Nowlin Manufacturing, Bianchi International, Oregon Trail Bullet Company and Smith & Wesson Performance Center.

Who's Fast and Furious?

The air was filled with — dare we say — anticipation? When the brass stopped flying, who would be the next World Speed Shooting Champion? Hold us down, keep

us back, tell us now ... we need to know.

The first day of the tourney revealed the Marvel Products Rimfire event, designed to provide entry-level competition for newer participants and for the junior competitors. The entry fee is nominal and no holster is required, since the competitors start with their gun in their hand. Eliminating having to draw eliminates much of the intimidation factor and



Tasco's "Team vs. Team" provided a great display of speed and accuracy for the crowd of spectators.

makes it appealing to beginners — and that's what any sport needs.

Smith & Wesson offered 12 guns, six of which were won by raffle, providing every entry-level shooter a chance to win. This was the second year for this event and it was a real hit. Angus Hobdell took top honors in the optic division shooting a 1911 Marvel Product's .22 conversion kit. Todd Jarrett took first place among the .22 iron sight shooters.

The second day marked the beginning of the centerfire categories and movieland personality Paul Walker, star of *"The Fast and the Furious,"* fired the opening shots to kick off the match. He knocked down the 4" poppers in about four seconds and the large crowd enjoyed watching a movie star who could actually shoot without

using a double to handle the "dirty" work.

This year added another new twist by allowing restricted double entrees. The USPSA Limited category benefited from this and produced the largest showing of Limited shooters. When the fighting had stopped, old-timer Rob Leatham edged out Todd Jarrett for the Limited title.

Hey, Steel?

Another thing new for 2001 was the title of Steel Master. The Steel Master award went for the aggregate total score of the Rimfire, Limited and Open categories. The first shooter to win this title was Jerry Miculek of Louisiana. Do we have to call him "Steel Master Miculek" now, or just "Hey, Steel?"

On day three, Open class guns were

being pushed to their limits and beyond by the world's greatest field of speed shooters: Todd Jarrett, Rob Leatham, Doug Koenig, Tetsu Sakai, Michael Voigt, Jerry Miculek, Angus Hobdell, Everett Brunelle, JJ Racaza and 13-year-old K.C. Eusebio. There must not have been another match anywhere 'cause it seems everyone was at the Challenge.

As TNN's "American Shooter" cameras rolled, speed shooting history was made by Doug Koenig who managed to hold off this onslaught of heavy-hitters by hundredths of a second and claim his third straight Steel Challenge. His formula for winning has been consistent, fast shooting on every stage, with strong performances in the two

Continued on page 98



Joe Metz of Southern California separated his shoulder a few days before the match but shot weak-handed to complete the course and ended up winning a Smith & Wesson revolver.



The best of the best cowboy shooters: Danny Moore, Cal Eilrich, Ken Kupsch and Joe Alesia, the 2001 Champion.

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DAN WESSON

Continued from page 63

barrel and the added sight radius was a desired bonus for the 150 meter turkeys and 200 meter rams.

The Dan Wesson revolvers were in a class by themselves when it came to long-range accuracy in the early days of silhouetting. They would rule first in .357 Magnum, then .44 Magnum, and finally in the first SuperMag, the .357. They would not be challenged until the advent of the silhouette sixguns from Freedom Arms.

Accuracy Factors

There are many factors involved in accuracy, some intrinsic to the revolver and others that are simply subjective, those that differ from shooter to shooter. We already mentioned the barrel lock-up of the Wesson revolvers as being a major reason for their accuracy. To this, we also add the cylinder lock-up as it is locked at the rear, like both Colt and Smith & Wesson revolvers. Smith also locks its at the front of the ejector rod; Colt does not. Dan Wesson also locked up at the crane.

The first Smith & Wesson N-frame sixgun, the First Model Hand Ejector, or Triple-Lock of 1908, was the only Smith & Wesson revolver that featured a lock at the crane until the advent of the Performance Center revolvers.

It seems to be a given that with rifles, shorter, heavier, stiffer barrels are more intrinsically accurate than long, lightweight barrels. Does this carry over to sixguns? I would assume so. The heavy barrels on the Wessons install in my mind the thought that, "This gun was made to shoot."

Sights are always a major factor for most shooters when it comes to accuracy. Dan Wesson listened to shooters and provided easy-to-see, black front and rear sights, with the former being an undercut post available in several heights and widths.

A final ingredient in being able to get the most accuracy from any revolver, for me at least, is the grip. Dan Wesson had a radical idea when he came to the grip frame — there isn't any! Instead, Wesson revolvers have a grip stud that accepts one-piece grips that are bolted on from the bottom.

This accomplished two things. First, Wesson was able to provide the most usable factory grips on a double-action revolver, for my particular hand and grip. Second, the stud also allowed the fitting of custom grips tailor-made to fit anyone, from those having from the smallest to the largest hands.

For my use with Dan Wesson revolvers, I have found two separate and distinct solutions. For most of my large-framed, big-bore Dan Wesson revolvers, I go with Herrett's rendition of its well-

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known Jordan Trooper grip. These are smooth with no finger grooves and make excellent field stocks.

However, for the medium-framed six-guns, I prefer Hogue's finger grooved stocks made of exotic woods. The .357-framed Dan Wessons with either 8" or 10" heavy underlugged barrels are extremely muzzle heavy for me, and I find the finger grooves of the Hogue stocks really help me, providing control and a feeling of security while gripping and shooting these little sixguns.

Big-Bore Confessions

I have extensively fired virtually every big-bore sixgun available. Thousands upon thousands, even tens of thousands, of .44 Magnum, heavy .45 Colt, .454 Casull, .475 Linebaugh, and .500 Linebaugh have been personally experienced and most of it has been quite enjoyable. However, there are times that the small bores are appropriate and certainly all that is needed.

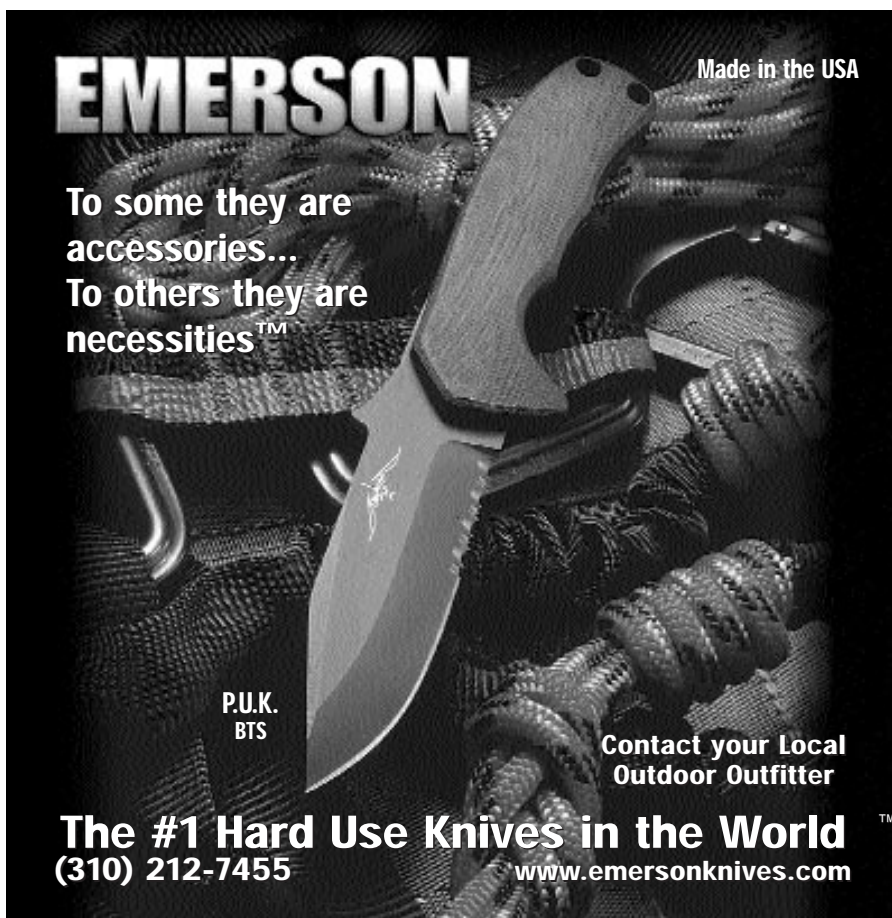
Dan Wesson
had a radical
idea when he came to
the grip frame — there
isn't any!

There's nothing quite so relaxing as spending time with friends and family shooting .22s. But even rimfires, while very accurate and most pleasant to shoot and certainly adequate for small varmints, do not always provide as much power as is needed. To increase the range and power of sixguns without a resulting major increase in recoil leads us to one choice, namely the .32s.

Dan Wesson was forward-thinking enough to offer the .32 Magnum in a premium quality revolver, perfect for the stand-on-your-own-two-hind-legs version of silhouetting Field Pistol. In this game, targets are much smaller than those used in long-range silhouetting with all shooting done from a standing position with the farthest target set at 100 yards. And they do look very small, especially when sighting down the barrel of a sixgun.

The .32 Magnum Dan Wesson was an early favorite for this game and was soon joined by its older brother, the .32-20, or as it is also called, the .32 Winchester Centerfire, or .32 WCF for short.

The .32-20 goes back to the 1870s and 1880s when it was first chambered in the Winchester Model 1873 lever-action rifle and then being offered in the Colt Single Action Army. By the turn of the century it was also found in the Winchester Model 1892 and the Smith & Wesson Military & Police revolver. It has always been an



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easy-shooting round for varmints and even larger game in a pinch.

It is most interesting, at least I find it so, that the first centerfire sixgun that Elmer Keith used in the very early part of the 20th century was a 7½" Colt SAA in .32-20. And when an equally young Charles A. Skelton, later to be known as Skeeter, mustered out of the service in 1946, he stopped in Chicago on the way home to Texas and bought a 7½" Colt SAA in .32-20.

**The accuracy
of both sixguns leaves
nothing to be desired.**

The .32 Magnum, officially known as the .32 H&R Magnum, was first chambered in a Harrington & Richardson revolver, hence the "H&R" designation. The H&R company puts out a line of inexpensive revolvers. These are not particularly strong revolvers, and the .32 Magnum was loaded by the factory to reflect this. Reloaders using stronger revolvers such as the Dan Wesson can really make the .32 Magnum stand up and sing.

My two new test sixguns from Dan Wesson are virtually identical except for their chamberings and one feature that makes it easy to distinguish one from the other at a glance. Both are stainless steel with 8" heavy vent rib barrels. The one marked ".32-20 Win." has a fluted cylinder, while its mate, identified as ".32 H&R Magnum," has a smooth non-fluted cylinder. Both came equipped with Hogue's MonoGrips of rubber with finger grooves; however, I soon replaced these with similar grips from Hogue but crafted from more eye-pleasing exotic woods.

These are heavy sixguns, weighing in at 3 ounces over 3 pounds. Trigger pulls, single-action of course, are also a "double three" at 3 pounds, 3 ounces. Both sixguns were fired with a large assortment of ammunition, including both cast bullet and jacketed bullet loads.

There is very little available in factory chamberings for either the .32-20 or the .32 Magnum. Two factory loads were used in both Dan Wesson sixguns as well as 21 handloads in the .32-20, and 19 handloads were shot from the .32 Magnum. Heavier loads listed are not necessarily recommended for any other .32-20 or .32 Magnum revolvers. The accuracy of both sixguns leaves nothing to be desired. Complete muzzle velocity and accuracy data can be found in the accompanying charts.

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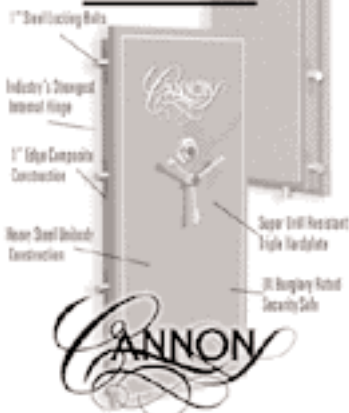
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Magnum. The New Generation large-frame Wessons are available in .41 Magnum, .44 Magnum, .45 Colt, .460 Rowland and the new .360 Dan Wesson.

The SuperMags are also back in .357, .414 and .445 SuperMag. And this is only the beginning. A special Standard Silhouette Model with regular sight and a Super Ram Silhouette with BoMar rear sight and hooded front sight, Pistol Packs and Hunter Packs with extra barrels and accessories, all in a locking presentation case reminiscent of European rifle cases, and a complete line of front and rear sight options as well as scope mount bases are also available in the revolver line.

I found it to be near-perfect for the game and a superbly accurate sixgun.

However, the new Dan Wesson doesn't stop there. New to the family are the Coyote Target and Coyote Classic bolt-action rifles chambered in .22 Long Rifle or .22 Win. Mag. as well as an extensive line of 1911s. At least 10 models of the Pointman .45s are offered with numerous custom features, including one 10-round high-capacity model, at factory model prices.

Way back in the mid-'80s, Elgin Gates of IHMSA sent me an early Dan Wesson Pistol Pack in the then-new chambering of .32 Magnum for use in the also relatively new Field Pistol competition. I found it to be near-perfect for the game and a superbly accurate sixgun.

A few years later a similar sixgun, this time in .32-20, was added and it proved to be an excellent shooter. Its only drawback was the fact that the barrel, at 6", was shorter than desired for my normal use. I had planned to correct this and had ordered an 8" vent rib heavy barrel for the .32-20; however, the Wesson family closed the doors before I was able to obtain it. Now I have what was desired in a totally new sixgun. My original .32 Magnum and .32-20 Dan Wessons were and are excellent sixguns. The new Dan Wessons from the new Dan Wesson Firearms are even better.

Readers can contact Dan Wesson Firearms at NYI Corporation, 119 Kemper Lane, Dept. AH, Norwich NY 13815; phone: (607) 336-1174; www.danwesson-firearms.com. For custom grips for the Dan Wesson revolver, or practically any other handgun, Hogue Grips can be found at P.O. Box 1138, Dept. AH, Paso Robles CA 93447; phone: (800) 438-4747; www.hogueinc.com

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TAFFIN TESTS

Continued from page 67

available from Brownells for \$65. They are just one of thousands upon thousands of useful items for shooters found in the Brownells catalog. Every shooter should have a copy.

The cutting edges of the reamer are fragile and must be protected. Dropping it, hitting against something hard, misuse of any type will surely ruin it. It comes in a plastic protective covering, which should always be used for storage.

**If your .45 already
shoots great, don't
touch
it with a reamer!**

In addition to the homemade jig for holding the cylinder, two other items are necessary. One is a small T-handle for turning it and the other is plenty of cutting fluid. Cutting fluid is especially formulated for cutting steel and will improve the surface quality of the cut and extend the sharpened life of the reamer.

The key to a high-quality throating operation on a revolver cylinder is simple — go slowly. Let the end of the reamer find its own center on the taper between the chamber and the throat of the cylinder. Then carefully begin turning the reamer while visually centering the reamer's flutes at the back of the chamber. Don't force it.

Apply gentle pressure as the handle is turned, allowing the reamer to do the work. The reamer is turned only in the forward cutting position. Going the other direction can ruin the cutting edges as well as scratching the cylinder.

The reamer is removed by continuing to turn it in the same direction and gently pulling upwards on the handle. It is then cleaned of all metal shavings as each chamber is throated. This allows the use of a clean cut for each chamber with no metal shavings to scratch the surface. Once the cylinder is finished, all traces of cutting fluid and any metal chips must be removed. Something called a Flex-Hone, also available from Brownells, can be used to apply a mirror finish to each chamber.

We experienced an average improvement in accuracy of approximately 50 percent without making any other changes in either the sixguns or the loads. This certainly made the entire project worthwhile. If several shooters in the same area all are shooting .45s with the same tight cylinder chamber throats, it is economically feasible to go in together, purchase a reamer and do-it-yourselfers.



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GUNNY SACK

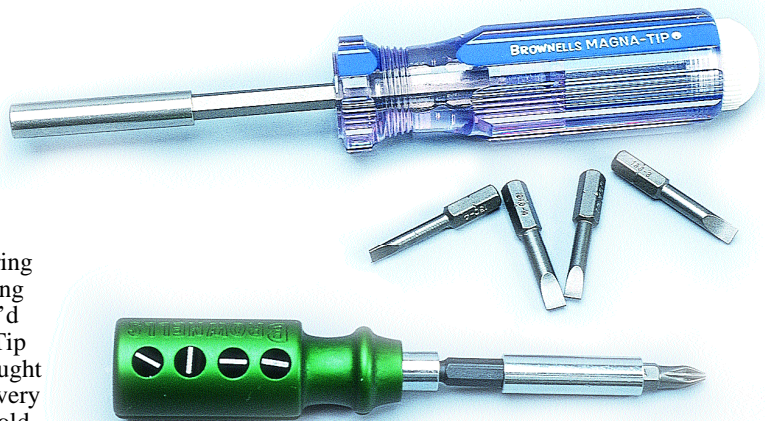
By Charles E. Petty


BROWNELLS SCREWDRIVERS

There's no greater sin in gunsmithing than bugging a screw. Well, there might be, but screw-bugging is still at the top of the heap. I don't know how I'd get along without the sets of Brownells Magna-Tip screwdrivers I use all the time. Now, Brownells has brought us some kits designed with specific guns in mind and a very handy gadget called the "Designated Driver" that will hold four — count 'em, four — Magna-Tip bits.

The popularity of cowboy shooting means lots of people are working on Colt and Ruger single-action revolvers. Both of which have the easiest screws in creation to mess up. Brownells has assembled a kit that contains the very specific drivers needed for those pesky screws. For the Ruger set there are four bits and the Colt set has five. The Magna-Tip handle for them is hollowed out so the bits can be stored inside so there's no risk of getting them mixed up with other stuff. The only fault I find is once you take them out of the package you have to count bits or study screws to separate the Colt from the Ruger. I'll probably take a vibrating marker and fix that.

The other tool is called the Designated Driver — but it's not



the kind who drives you home. This is a green aluminum screwdriver handle with four holes to accommodate the Magna-Tip drivers of your choice. It comes with five bits and an extension that can also be used with the handle for added leverage, but you can customize it for your special needs. It will take the place of several loose screwdrivers in the range bag. But not the loose screws in your shootin' buddy's head. 

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a student of shooting, you know that the real difference in skill shows up when you compare time-to-hit. You also know that the only way to improve your hit time is by diligent practice. The problem is that without a timer you have no way of knowing if you are moving toward your goal of hitting more quickly or sliding back. Of course any timer will give you your shot time, but you are really looking for more than that. You want a timer that teaches you what you need to know about your shooting in a simple and straightforward manner allowing you to focus on your shooting instead of jacking around with your timer.

Both the Club Timer 2 and the MKIV Championship Timer are carefully designed with this mission in mind. Both will tell you everything you need to know about shot strings at a glance with no button pushing at all. If you do want to review your individual shot times, each will play all the shot info at once (Shot number, split time, total time) so you don't have to page back and forth in some sort of R programming drill. The MKIV goes several steps beyond the Club Timer 2 allowing you to program and simulate advanced courses of fire, includes a full feature chronograph, ballistic computer and lead calculator.



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MKIV Timer



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The iris shutter is contained in a disc that is just .6" in diameter and weighs about .2 ounce. Within the disc is the aperture that is adjustable from .022" to .156". Normally, statistics like this are boring but when you think of the tiny size, the degree of precision in manufacturing should be obvious. Don't take one of these apart to see how it works. Do I speak from experience? Uh, no, I mean, maybe, 'er, ah, never mind.

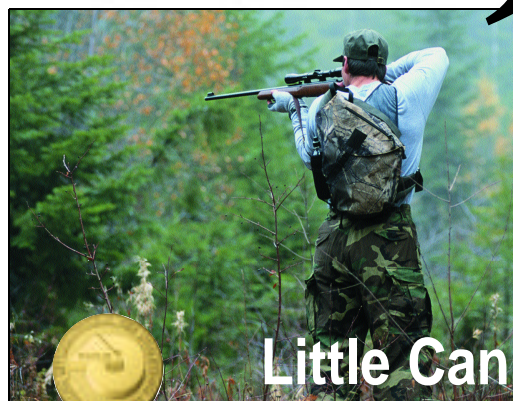
Quite a few years ago when my eyes first began to change I avoided prescription shooting glasses by using the Merit disc. Today I have special prescription lenses that I use only for shooting but tried the Merit anyway. I stuck the Merit attachment to my regular glasses and noticed the front sight was a bit



fuzzy, but as I stopped down the iris it was neat to see the sight grow as sharp as it is with the special lenses. Depending on your visual acuity, there is a good chance the disc will let you see both the sights and the target in sharp focus. 

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GUNNY SACK

By Charles E. Petty

FIREPOWER FP-10

Of all the things we shooters buy, cleaners and lubricants are the most confusing. There are so many and some make questionable claims. None of us have the facilities to really test this stuff so I have devised a simple plan. I clean a gun real good, lubricate it with the product under test and go shooting. You can tell a lot just by how things feel at first and then note whether or not it gets stiffer with accumulated crud. You can readily see and feel whether or not the lubricant remains on the metal surfaces.

This time the product tested was Firepower FP-10 cleaner, lubricant and preservative. FP-10 is a relatively thin liquid with a yellow color and pleasant odor. Beyond the label statement that reads "contains petroleum aliphatic hydrocarbons," (you probably can't use this stuff as a dessert topping) there is no information about the composition. The packaging is exceptionally convenient.



My favorite test pistol is a well-accurized Kimber .45 that is utterly reliable. The pistol was cleaned with liberal applications of Crud Cutter until there were no traces of old lube remaining. Then I applied a couple of drops of FP-10 to each slide rail. The slide movement was slick and not noticeably different than before. Then re-assembly was completed and a couple of drops applied to the area of the barrel bushing and on top of the barrel through the ejection port. That is really all that is necessary for the majority of autopistols.

After all this the pistol continued to work just fine and has done so now for several hundred rounds. Everything still feels slick so this must be pretty good stuff.



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GUNNY SACK

By Charles E. Petty

CASPIAN TARGET GRIPS


There was once a time when the first thing you did when you got a new Government Model was get rid of those tacky plastic grips and put on wood panels — often target style. These days most pistols come standard with nice wood grips, but there are still some people who need or want a different feel.

Caspian Arms now offers “Target Grips” that give a nice hand-filling feel but do not have the exaggerated thumb rest we often associate with target grips. These are made of nicely figured walnut and the bottom portion is checkered with a simple pattern. There’s a small thumb rest on each side that lets the thumb ride in a natural position.

The grips wrap around the front of the frame and have a finger groove pattern. Finger grooves are something people either love or hate and but I must say they almost always feel better than they look. They help to provide a good firm grip and prevent the pistol from twisting under recoil.

Caspian’s grips are nicely made and fit the frame very well. I tried them on several different pistols and the seam at the front where the finger groove sides meet is handsomely done. The



inside surfaces are well sanded and each panel is marked with a number used to keep them as a pair. There are clearance cuts on both sides so there is no interference with the safety — either standard or ambi. Since the grips cover the mainspring housing pin there are small clearance holes on the inside so a pin that isn’t flush won’t put undue stress on the wood. 

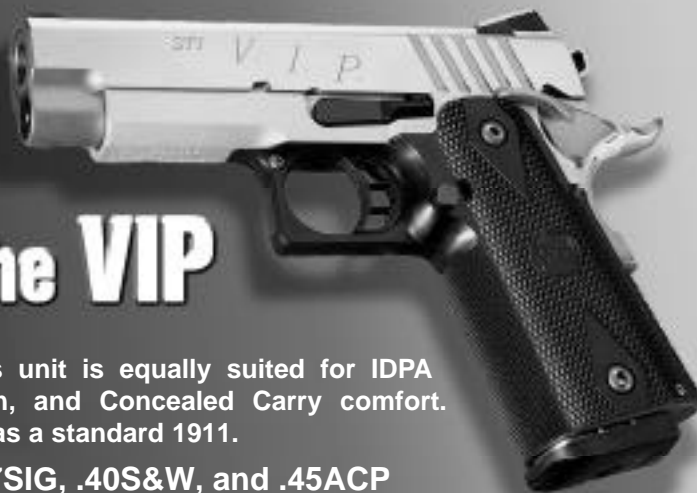
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SIXGUNNER

Continued from page 41

El Paso? Texas? A bastion of Western art? Absolutely! Remember, we are talking Western art, sixgunner-style.

The two artists I am referring to are from the Western artist's colony of El Paso; they both turn out exquisite sixgunner-style artworks in the form of carved ivory grips and floral carved leather. The two artists are Paul Persinger and Adan Saez.

If you are a regular reader; you know I have spoken of Persinger in the past, especially in conjunction with beautiful single-action stocks of ram's horn. However, I doubt many readers have heard of Saez, who is a true artist working in leather.


Saez is the number one leather carver at El Paso Saddlery and, until very recently, was their only leather carver. I'm happy to report he has now been joined by a young man, Manny Aguirre. Aguirre started as an apprentice and is now a fully fledged carver of beautiful Western art in leather.

Trackin' 'Em Down

The past three SASS (Single Action Shooting Society) regional cowboy shoots I have attended have all found me searching out the El Paso Saddlery tent on sutler's row. Each of those trips have found me coming away with both a right-hand and left-hand fully floral carved set of holsters for Colt SAAs.

First, came a pair of 1897 Sweetwaters for 7.5" Colts, then two 4.75" versions of the Cheyenne holster as made by F.A. Meanea in the 1880s. Finally, I just returned from Range War at Tin Star Ranch, where I not only found a matched pair of 1930 Austins in extra fancy floral carving, but I was also pleased to note these were the first items in my collection of working Western art created by Manny Aguirre.

Whether you choose standard or floral carving, a dyed background, or even with "extra fancy" floral carving, El Paso Saddlery can provide you with all manner of leather. They are true works of Western art that are offered at highly affordable prices.

I've got the bug, and I can't help myself when it comes to fancy leather. This, of course, is the mark of a true collector of anything — even  Western art, sixgunner-style.

Readers can reach El Paso Saddlery at 2025 E. Yandell, Dept AH, El Paso TX 79903; phone: (915) 544-2233; www.epsaddlery.com. Paul Persinger's shop is at 10441 Mackinaw, Dept AH, El Paso TX 79924; phone: (915) 821-7541. In either case, realize this type of Western art cannot be rushed, so expect to wait a reasonable amount of time.

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HAIL OF LEAD

Continued from page 45

Properly packed, the shot barrel produces a thunderous roar and devastating effect on close-range targets.

The shot barrel shoots well under the sights at any given range, and it is necessary to aim about a foot over the target at appropriate ranges. From 10 feet, all seven .31 balls would land within a 7" circle. At 21 feet, the spread was still tight at 9", and all of the projectiles would have impacted in the chest of a human silhouette. At 30 feet, the balls were still contained on the upper half of a 21"x26" rectangle, and it appeared that one of the balls might narrowly miss a human-sized target.

A charge of #8 shot from 30 feet produced an extremely dense central pattern that would completely saturate any species of small game. Back at 7 yards, I landed enough #2s on a rabbit target to render a real cottontail inedible.

On occasion, and particularly under the recoil of the shot barrel, the loading lever will disengage its slot in the barrel. This lever is hollow to house the shot barrel ramrod, which generally lands on the ground. I correct the problem by running a long grass stem into the rammer tube. This produces enough tension to keep the ramrod from wiggling around and cancels the tendency to come loose from the barrel groove under recoil.

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The LeMat concept survived the War of Secession and made the transition to a cartridge-firing arm later in the century. These pinfires were largely a French phenomenon, and the arms are said to have been popular with the guards on Devils Island.

James A. Mitchner, in *Colorado*, mentioned a grave marker indicating that the interred had been killed with a Beauregard Le Mat: "... and of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." Seasoned readers may remember the Johnny Ringo Western series of the 1950s, in which the hero was equipped with a centerfire LeMat with a .410 bore-shot barrel. The screenwriters thought a .410 sounded more powerful than an 18 ga. As Mitchner might have said, "... and of such is the Kingdom of Hollywood."



Readers can inquire further about the Navy Arms LeMat by contacting the firm at 869 Bergen Blvd., Ridgefield NJ. 07657; www.navyarms.com

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Continued from page 54

The figure turns and bolts toward the stairs. Bob Bauthues shouts either “Halt” or “Stop,” with the big Ruger’s 6.5-inch barrel pointed at the lower part of the intruder’s body. If Bob shoots, he wants to stop, not kill.

The figure spins toward him suddenly and Bob Bauthues sees two things in rapid succession. One is a faceless mask staring at him impassively, without emotion, without care. The other is the man's right hand, flashing upward towards Bob in the classic movement of draw and fire.

In that split instant, Robert Bauthues thinks: “The guy’s got a gun. I’m dead!” He pulls the trigger and the blast and the orange flash of the .357 Magnum fill the small entryway. The figure jackknifes and Bauthues sees that the man holds no weapon while he clutches himself between the legs with both hands. The threat of danger to himself and his loved ones is over, but Bauthues’ troubles have just begun.

Anchorage Police arrive quickly. The intruder sat in a chair, crying and holding himself. He is a juvenile who lived nearby, aged 14. He stood at the entryway working up his courage before knocking on the door and then asking to talk with the pretty, older Michelle. He is unarmed. He does not say why he spun toward Bauthues, his hand flashing upward like the quick draw of a pistol. He wore the full-face ski mask, he said, because he was snowboarding in the sub-zero cold.

The boy went to the hospital, where trauma surgeons had both good and bad news. The youth would live. But those three fast-moving .36 caliber lead balls had centered on the boy's genitals and done considerable damage. One testicle was destroyed. Two projectiles tore through the penis, causing severe damage. It was uncertain, the doctors said, whether normal function would resume. Time would tell.

Anchorage's District Attorney works for Alaska's Department of Law. The district attorney takes orders from the attorney general, the attorney general takes orders from the governor, and the governor at the time was not what anyone would call pro-gun. In this shooting, the powers-that-be apparently saw only a paranoid old man who inflicted the most horrible injury imaginable on a mere boy who had done him no

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harm. The case was immediately submitted to the grand jury.

The grand jury did not hear from Bob Bauthues. Working solely with what the prosecutor gave them, they indicted Bauthues for Assault in the First Degree. Under Alaska law, a conviction for this serious felony carries a minimum mandatory penalty of eight years incarceration. If he was not acquitted, it was safe to assume Bauthues would die in prison.

Bauthues found his way to attorney Wayne Anthony Ross. A member of the National Rifle Association's board of directors since 1980, Ross is a prominent pro-gun figure throughout Alaska. He provided a sympathetic ear. He knew he would never be paid a fee commensurate with the work the case required.

"When I was young, my father told me to be kind to old guys because with God's help, I might be one someday," Ross explains now. "Basically, it was pro bono, as the bill will never be paid. But it was a battle that had to be fought."

Some say it's more than coincidence that Wayne Anthony Ross's initials spell WAR.

Double Victims

Wayne called me and filled me in. I could see it was a tragedy for the boy and his family, but that didn't make Bob Bauthues a felon. Whereas something in American values seems to say, "If there is a victim, there must be a villain," this, I felt, was a matter of two victims.

The shooting of the juvenile was a classic example of what is called a furtive movement shooting. At law, the furtive movement — a movement consistent with reaching for a weapon, but not reasonably consistent with anything else under the circumstances — creates the reasonable belief that an opponent is armed.

A furtive movement does not justify deadly force; it must be taken in context with the prevailing circumstances. In this case, the appearance of a masked man entering the house and peering through the door without announcing himself had created what most people would consider a reasonable and prudent belief that he was someone dangerous to the occupants, dangerous enough to warrant those occupants arming themselves with a handgun.

Bauthues hadn't shot him for wearing a mask, nor for peering through the window, nor for fleeing despite his lawful command to stop or halt. It was only after a person doing a perfect imitation of a masked criminal spun on him and did another perfect imitation, to wit someone going for a gun, that the householder fired the fateful shot.

After reviewing the complete discovery file, I agreed with Ross that Bauthues was blameless under the circumstances. If the boy had donned a moose suit and moose antlers during moose season, and gone sniffing around the moose hunters' camp, it would not have

been negligent for moose hunters to shoot him. It was simply a human tragedy, a predictable mistake, caused by a young person with limited life experience who did not think about what he was doing.

I figured if Wayne could do the case for free, so could I. I waived the customary expert witness fee and the attorney Ross paid for a plane ticket out of his own pocket and flew me to Anchorage. There I was deposed by the assistant district attorney now assigned to prosecute the case, Audrey Renschen.

A deposition is a pre-trial dialogue in which the witness is under oath. Having sat through my share of depositions, I can tell you this was not the usual kind. It is not uncommon for attorneys to be nasty SOBs and attempt to intimidate an adverse witness during the deposition stage. More commonly, the attorney taking the deposition will be civil, but will make it clear he's only interested in hearing things he can use to help his own case or damage the other side's.

Ms. Renschen's approach was refreshingly different. She seemed genuinely interested in learning the dynamics of furtive movement shootings and action/reaction principles. She figured out why the boy sustained three wounds in the same region of the body from a revolver. The Remington triple-projectile round is uncommon, not widely known even among gun experts, and Renschen didn't need me to tell her only a single shot had been fired.

A Fractional Second

Why didn't it occur to the defendant that if his dogs hadn't barked it must mean that the person at the door wasn't dangerous? The boy had not been to the house before, nor was he known to the dogs. The first time I visited the scene the dogs didn't know me and didn't bark at me either. They may have been lovable pets, but they were useless watchdogs.

Why couldn't Bauthues have waited to be sure the juvenile had a gun? Once the young man's movement mimicked drawing a gun and pointing it at Bauthues, no waiting time existed. The draw to the shot takes only a small fraction of a second. I explained if you wait to see the gun, particularly in imperfect light, you'll probably see what comes out of it.

Why couldn't the defendant wait until the intruder entered the house? The intruder had entered the house. The arctic entryway was not an outbuilding. It was directly attached to the house. Where the juvenile stood when Bauthues engaged him, only a thin door separated him from the inner core of the home where the elderly woman and the young granddaughter stood with no protection of their own. Such a door was smashed during the last burglary, of which the defendant remained acutely aware.

Wayne Anthony Ross is famous for the skill and passion of his courtroom

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advocacy and also for the meticulous research he puts into his cases. As the trial approached, he covered every base. I was scheduled to testify along with Dr. Lawrence Trostle, an Alaska psychologist who spent time with the defendant and explained the effect of his fear of residing in a high-crime area as a senior citizen.

On the morning of the trial, prosecutor Audrey Renschen offered Ross a deal. She would accept a plea for Assault in the Fourth Degree, a misdemeanor offense, which would require no time served and only a short period of unsupervised probation.

The defense took the deal.

"I simply couldn't take the chance on an old man, in poor health, going to jail," Ross said. "But it was hard to do, because I really, really wanted to try this case." Ross also represented Bauthues, and prevailed, in the civil lawsuit that followed the disposal of the criminal case.

Lessons

When you've done nothing wrong, seek the lawyer best suited for your type of case. In all of Alaska, Wayne Ross is the attorney I would call if involved in a shooting. He did a splendid job. Though I believe he would have won, I understand why he didn't put an old man through the ordeal of a trial.

Should you find yourself in Bauthues position, if at all possible, take a barricade position inside the house, call the police and wait. Many juries see the householder who moves forward and accosts the intruder as going on the offensive, looking for trouble. While you and I may disagree with that sentiment, we cannot ignore that it's out there in the jury pool.

Don't assume that every prosecutor is heartless, soulless and out to get you. I thought assistant District Attorney Renschen showed professionalism, understanding and compassion in her plea-bargain offer.

If you rely on dogs as part of your home security plan, make sure they are properly trained and that their training stays honed. Jeff Cooper said having a gun doesn't make you a gunfighter any more than owning a violin makes you a violinist. In the same vein, having fur and teeth and canine DNA doesn't necessarily make your dog a reliable watchdog.

We need to remind our youngsters to think about what they're doing, how their actions may seem to others, and teach them common sense. Had the youth simply removed the ski mask, he would have been recognized by Michelle, the first to see him. She knew him from school. If he had done this and simply knocked, Bauthues would have met him with a smile instead of a .357 Magnum revolver.

Epilogue

The juvenile lost one testicle and sustained damage to another, as well as

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serious penile injuries. However, the medical community did its work well. The last reports accessed by the defense indicated he would retain sexual function and be able to father children.

The City of Anchorage has authorized expanding its police department to 355 sworn officers. Multiple APD officers have been killed in the line of duty since the mid 1990's.

Bob Bauthues, on Social Security, still lives in Alaska. Notes his attorney, "Bob sends me a check for \$30 every two months. He is a proud man who always made his own way. It was an honor to be of assistance to him."

Audrey Renschen now serves with the United States Attorney's Office in Anchorage. Her reputation as a tough but fair Federal prosecutor is well earned. Wayne Anthony Ross has served more than a score of years as an NRA director and has also done a term as first vice president of that organization. He remains a staunch, persuasive and effective advocate of gun owners' civil rights. Ross is, at this writing, running as a Republican candidate for Governor of the State of Alaska.



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LIEBENBERG

Continued from page 57

1911 is a very angular gun and I like squared trigger guards, not to hang onto necessarily, but more for the aesthetic blend with the rest of the line," Liebenberg explained.

Aesthetics reach a pinnacle of perfection on a Liebenberg custom gun — just ask Marc Krebs, C.T. Brian, Larry Vickers or any of the talented generation of younger pistolsmiths who candidly admit that they learned about aesthetics from admiring Liebenberg's work in the pages of *American Handgunner*.

Consider the forward cocking serrations. Liebenberg duplicated the National Match style of serrations that came on the slide of this commercial Colt.

"Even though I'm starting to hate front-mounted pinch checks," he said. "I decided to add them because I loved the old square serrations on the rear of this slide. We matched the cutters and the angle to make sure they worked aesthetically."

Consider the finished work. The flats are flat, the edges are defined, the blends of different surfaces are seamless. The polishing is itself a work of art.

"I spent a considerable amount of time getting the lines of the frame and upper trigger guard straight," Liebenberg explains. "I did not polish this gun on a wheel. The entire gun was draw-filed and hand-polished with various cork-backed manual tools."

Consider the little things. The top of the slide is "decked and lined" at 50 lpi. The classic three-hole aluminum trigger is polished smooth and bright. The Ed Brown ambi safeties are radiused and blended. The rear of the slide is hand-checkered at 50 lpi. The checkering on the head of the extractor matches perfectly with the microscopic checkering lines of the slide, a not insignificant feat.

Consider the hammer. It is a modified Commander hammer, with a beveled hole and handcut checkering, just like the old masters used to make. After so many iterations of hammer holes from so many pistolsmiths, isn't it refreshing to see a classic Commander hammer in all its simplicity? Once again, the good Mr. Liebenberg shows us what taste and elegance on a 1911 is all about.

Inside

As masterful as Liebenberg's cosmetic work may be, it is inside the 1911 where his true talents lie. No one, and I do mean no one, has a better understanding of the mechanical function of semiautomatic pistols in general, and the 1911 in particular, than Paul S. Liebenberg. Goodnight nurse, the man can custom-tune the timing of the gun and reconfigure the essential geometry of the locking system.

An example: as Liebenberg test fired

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the pistol, he noticed a slight discoloration on a spent case, soot blackened more than usual, indicating the timing was slightly off. He diagnosed and corrected the "problem" so the gun was perfectly timed to function with moderate loads.

Liebenberg's command of the 1911's physics is reflected in his unique design for a barrel link, known as the "Wide Link." Liebenberg's system utilizes a custom slide stop pin and hole.

"The slide stop hole was reamed and then an oversized and ground slide stop pin and Wide Link were fitted with optimized geometry that will do a good job of barrel stability, both in and out of battery. The timing was set for a moderate power factor," the master pistolsmith noted.

"There's the impossible," Liebenberg said, and slapped the first Shorty Forty on the polished wood table in front of the engineer.

The Wide Link was fitted to a Bar-Sto stainless barrel from the busy little shop in Twentynine Palms, Calif. Irv Stone III carries forth the tradition of accuracy and quality started by his legendary father, Irv Stone Jr. All of the country's top pistol-smiths, from Vickers to Liebenberg, Heinie to Nastoff, name as their first choice in barrels the acronym for Barbara Stone: Bar-Sto.

The Bar-Sto was fit perfectly by measuring the hood cutout in the slide and matching it so the barrel hood keyed perfectly with the slide. Mated to the barrel was a bushing custom made by Pistol Dynamics. It is a conventional bushing — not one of the spherical bushings that Liebenberg and Salassa perfected — but it incorporates an extension that retains the front sight, as we noted previously.

The fit is finger-tight, wrench-loose. In other words, I could tighten the bushing with my fingers, but I needed a wrench to loosen it. With some shooting-in, the bushing will become finger-loose as well.

The recoil spring tunnel was ball-cut for precise concentricity. The disconnector notch was polished as smooth as Egyptian anthracite. All tooling marks were polished out. The inside of the slide was literally shining.

Interestingly, Liebenberg did not touch the slide-to-frame fit. It was perfect as it came from the dog-eared Colt box. He did, however, have to re-cut the sear and hammer surfaces to compensate for slightly off-spec hole locations in the frame. Elliptical, off-set and downright crooked sear and disconnector holes were not uncommon on commercial Colts.

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The trigger breaks at a crystalline 3 pounds, like snapping an icicle. The trigger take-up is just right, not too mushy and not too short. Over-travel is nonexistent. The ejector is a long Commander style, with the nose radiused.

As I reassembled the old Colt, I marveled at how the inside of a Liebenberg gun is better finished than the outside of many guns. The man is truly a master.

The Finest Hour

Now entering his fifth decade on this insignificant pebble, Paul Liebenberg is building the finest guns of his long and distinguished career. He remains a visionary and a consummate craftsman, but his repertoire of capabilities has only now come to its apex in his midlife.

Liebenberg is at the noon of his talent. The skills he learned in his youth — welding and fabricating parts from scratch — have been enhanced with the experience he gained working with Frank Pachmayr. His ability to manage a custom shop on a large scale production basis came at the Smith & Wesson Performance Center. And his years as a designer of specialized products for Smith's foreign customers have put the final hone on his razor.

The synergy is here, now. Pistol Dynamics is offering custom built 1911s, Browning Hi-Powers and other models for the collector, enthusiast, competitor, police officer and specialized military needs. Liebenberg himself is building handmade 1911s for discriminating customers, serialized and signed with distinctive white-filled engraving. Real engraving too, not just some acid-etched moniker.

And of course there is one more thing, a morsel I saved for the end. Pistol Dynamics will offer an exact duplicate of the legendary Pachmayr Combat Special, built to the very same specifications that Liebenberg followed when he worked for Frank Pachmayr. The gun, built on a yet-to-be-named premium brand of 1911, will be called the Liebenberg Combat Special.

Pistol Dynamics Performance Handguns will be available by the latter half of 2002 as soon as Liebenberg is able to get his new Florida-based facility up to speed. Orders for handmade Liebenberg Signature Models are currently being accepted.

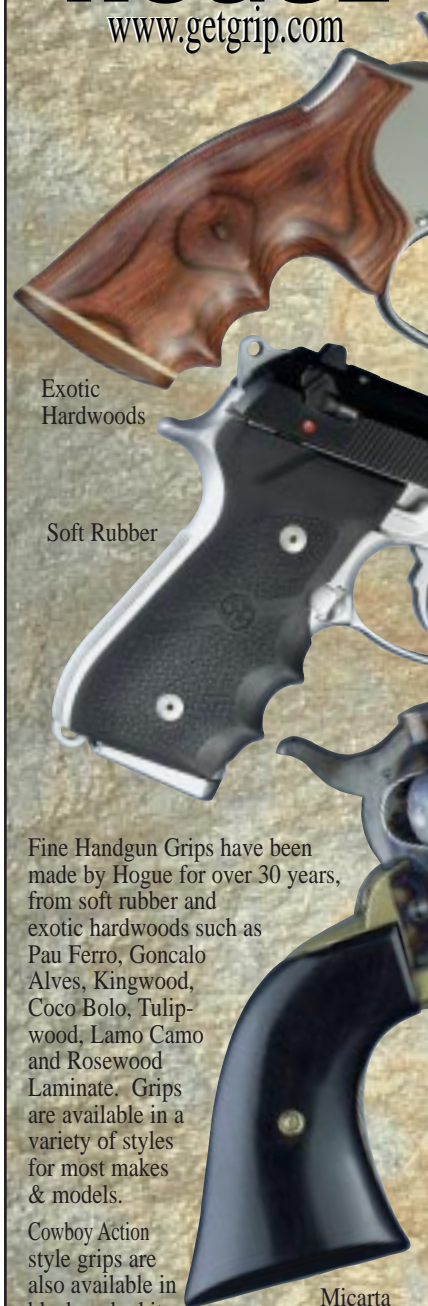
On a sabbatical for the past 11 years from his workbench and checkering file, Paul Liebenberg is back. Pistol Dynamics will be the next quantum leap forward in the custom pistolsmithing business, just as Bill Wilson's operation was in the 1980s. For those who lamented missing the chance to own an original Liebenberg, you just got a reprieve.



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STEEL CHALLENGE

Continued from page 77

toughest stages — Winchester's "Outer Limits" and Leupold's "Five To Go."

Koenig has now won three, count 'em, three Steel Challenge victory cups with not just shooting ability, but by capitalizing on his competitor's collective Achilles' heels. Koenig is more than a great shot. He's also a great strategist. Maybe this is one time when old age and treachery doesn't overcome youth and beauty. Okay, maybe just youth.

Who's 'Da Man?


So now begs the question: Who is the greatest Steel Challenge shooter of all time? Only three competitors have three wins: Jerry Barnhardt, Jethro Denisio and Doug Koenig. Doug is the only one with three consecutive wins, so we can easily argue he is the all-time world speed-shooting champion. But that might be a bit premature when you consider that Jethro Dionisio of the Philippines has three in '90, '92 and '93. Hmmmm ...

While not totally dominating the tournament, three wins with only one year skipped is certainly impressive. But the Jet's wins were at a time when the movement on Winchester's "Outer Limits" was eliminated. So one could make a point the match wasn't in the original or current format during that time period. If one wanted to make a point.

Jerry Barnhart's wins are particularly interesting and impressive when you consider he has pulled in three overall victories over an extended period of time. Winning his first in 1987, his second in 1991 and finally his third in 1998, his consistency over the longest period of time and in all formats makes a strong statement on his behalf. This gets harder and harder, eh?

We now have three shooters who each have three wins. The real proof will be who can make it four World Speed Shooting titles. Doug will certainly be back in 2002 to defend his title. Jerry Barnhart will likely return too. He would have been here in 2001 but last minute business obligations prevented his bid for the title. Sources have rumored that Jethro Dionisio is going to come back and shoot ever since the match's rebirth in 1997, but we haven't seen him yet.

Crystal ball, anyone?

The 2002 Steel Challenge will be a great event but the possibility of three, three-time champions, battling for "The all time greatest Steel Challenge shooter" is something we can look forward to seeing. Sorta' like one of those World Wrestling Federation television specials where exploding fireworks, halter-topped vixens and crazed wrestlers share the same stage? Okay, maybe not.  But it'll be fun anyway.

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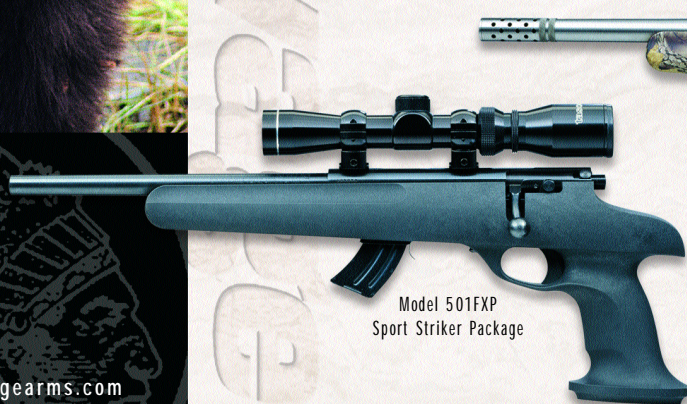
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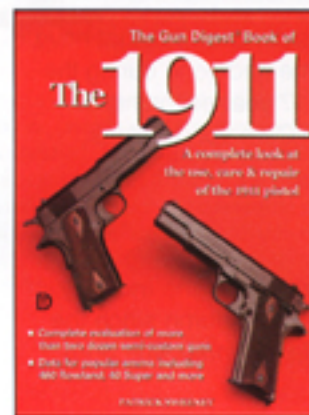
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17 YEARS

9

Presidents of Colt that have come and gone during the 17 year editorship of Cameron Hopkins

3

Authors of the Industry Insider column since the *Handgunner* was born

5th

Place in the 1992 IPSC North American Championship, Stock Class, by Cameron Hopkins, the highest finish in a major IPSC match by any editor



108

Custom guns in the past 17 years given away by *American Handgunner* in the Custom Gun Giveaway feature

1

Wildcat cartridges developed by Cameron Hopkins during his tenure as editor



The license plate refers to the wildcat .425 Express that Hopkins developed.

Continued from page 106

Towelettes Are Available In The Lobby

Resigning as the editor-in-chief of *American Handgunner* after guiding the magazine for 17 out of its 26 years was, to put it mildly, not easy. In a strange, almost surreal sense, part of me is in *American Handgunner* and part of *American Handgunner* is in me. Our lives intertwined.

This is to be expected. *American Handgunner* is a magazine with a strong focus, and any magazine with a strong focus is, at its core, an extension of the will of its editor. Ask Helen Gurley Brown.

I have been the editor for 65 percent of *American Handgunner's* existence, 17 out of 26 years. Not to be melodramatic, but it was an emotional wrestling

pressure and performance demands of what was in reality two full-time jobs. Something had to give.

I made the most difficult decision of my adult life — much harder than deciding to propose to my wife, because that was a no-brainer. This was a tough choice.

As much as I love *American Handgunner* — serving its readers, managing its writers, running its staff and, yes, even helping its advertisers — I elected to strap myself onto the Titan V rocket that is SureFire.

Within six months I was promoted to vice president of sales and marketing at SureFire as the first stage of the booster broke away and we hit the stratosphere.



Here is the former editor-in-chief at the 2002 SCI Convention presenting a SureFire E2e flashlight to President George Bush Sr. Going into sales might not be the worst sin a journalist can commit, but it's close.

match to decide to give it up.

When I left *American Handgunner* and passed the torch to my good friend and hand-chosen successor, Roy Huntington, I felt like a father leading his daughter down the aisle. I was relinquishing something I had had a substantial role in creating.

I didn't go quietly. After being offered a fascinating job as the director of communications for SureFire, a manufacturer of high-end tactical flashlights, I wavered. I went to work for SureFire but remained on as the editor in a capacity that was termed, in labor lingo, a "temporary exempt employee."

Eight months later I realized the heart was willing by the body was weak. I couldn't keep up with the incredible time

Outer space comes next.

And so this is my last column as the Industry Insider. I will remain a contributor for the magazine as a Field Editor, taking over the Handgun Leather column. It will be the third column I've written in these pages.

To you, the readers of *American Handgunner*, thank you. Thank you for making the magazine the best. Because it was you, not me, who provided the real energy that allowed Tom and George von Rosen to support such a preposterous publishing philosophy of tell-it-like-it-is. As long as you believe in the integrity of *American Handgunner*, the magazine will remain the best. Thank you for your time, and your money.

WHY QUIT?

What would inspire someone to quit, to walk away, to move on from the world's best job? Why would someone give up as the editor-in-chief of arguably the most influential magazine in the field of firearms?

Here is the short version.

I was 28-years-old when I was hired as the assistant editor of *American Handgunner*, moving from Texas to the picturesque city of San Diego. White sandy beaches, acres of tanned bodies — goin' to California! It seemed like a much better prospect than staying in the plains of west Texas as a staff reporter for the local paper, *The Lubbock Avalanche-Journal*.

Write obituaries and cover school board meetings or interview Bill Ruger? That was not one of my more difficult career decisions.

When I moved to San Diego in 1984, the IPSC shooting was excellent. I quickly joined the local club, Linea de Fuego, and enrolled as a member of the Lemon Grove Rod & Gun Club. The president of both the gun club and the IPSC club was Marc Halcon, who sponsored me into the clubs and, in spite of knowing me all these years, is still a close friend.

The weekends found me either at Linea de Fuego matches shooting with the local IPSC hotdogs, old friends Sam Dog Kenoyer, Tommy Ozbirn and Jimmy Gardner. Once a month I drove north, through Los Angeles and past Santa Monica, up to Valencia to shoot in the monthly club matches of the Southwest Pistol League — the Southwest Pistol League, the same one founded by Jeff Cooper, the genesis of IPSC.

Being the editor of *American Handgunner* opened a lot of doors. I became good friends with the "Walking Machine Rest," the amazing Mickey Fowler. His partner Mike Dalton gave me private lessons and helped me tune up for the Steel Challenge. Being the editor of *American Handgunner*, I quickly discovered, was way cool.

Being the editor of *American Handgunner* means Gaston Glock will take your call. I interviewed Bill Ruger and Ed Weatherby. And the past nine presidents of Colt. And the past five presidents of Smith & Wesson. And the past two presidents of Remington.

I flew out to the remote Arizona desert in Mike Dillon's helicopter to shoot machineguns — belt-fed, tripod mounted, machineguns. With free ammo. Belt-fed Browning .30s, free ammo and — I wouldn't make this up — sticks of dynamite for targets. And I was getting paid for this!

Being the editor of *American Handgunner* means you can call Rob Leatham for a tip on how to improve your mag changes. Or buzz Bill Wilson to see about going to Africa on safari together. And then actually go on safari with Bill and Mickey, two of the greatest handgunners of this generation.

Speaking of the Dark Continent, I went on a safari to Namibia and South Africa and Massad Ayoob with his 11-year-old daughter Cathy.

I. Went. On. Safari. With Massad-Friggin-Ayoob! Here I am becoming fast friends and hunting in Africa with the man who wrote the book that had largely influenced my mindset as a shooter, *In The Gravest Extreme*.

We bonded on the hunt, Mas and I, and we have been great friends ever since those epic days on the red sands of the Kalahari as Mas wore his Will Robbins pants held up by his Mitch Rosen belt holding a Ted Blocker holster with Safariland speedloaders for his Andy Cannon custom Smith & Wesson L-frame, clipped with his Spyderco knife, beneath his Second Chance body armor.

Being the editor of *American Handgunner* means Ayoob will invite you to his daughter's wedding. Yes, that same 11-year-old daughter who went on safari with us is now grown up. Cat is now married to a graduate of the United States Military Academy. My how time flies.

Four years after I was hired, in 1988, I was named editor-in-

chief of all three of the gun magazines published by the Firearms Marketing Group. George von Rosen, a true visionary, owned the publishing company. George was a firm, but fair man.

I can say nice things about George without being accused of sycophancy because the man who founded Publishers' Development Corp. in 1938 and went on to publish the first newsstand gun magazine recently died at 85. George was a good guy, despite a stern exterior.

The new publisher of *American Handgunner* is his son, Tom. Tom von Rosen had been the *de facto* boss at the magazines for a number of years before George died. Thankfully, Tom understood the importance of editorial integrity. It was Tom — and many times Tom alone — who stood up to preserve the editorial department's philosophy of "tell it like it is" when angry advertisers called for blood. Tom remained steadfast when furious company presidents demanded "that f--king prick editor" be fired.

That f--king prick editor wishes to go on the record as publicly thanking Tom for his support over the years.

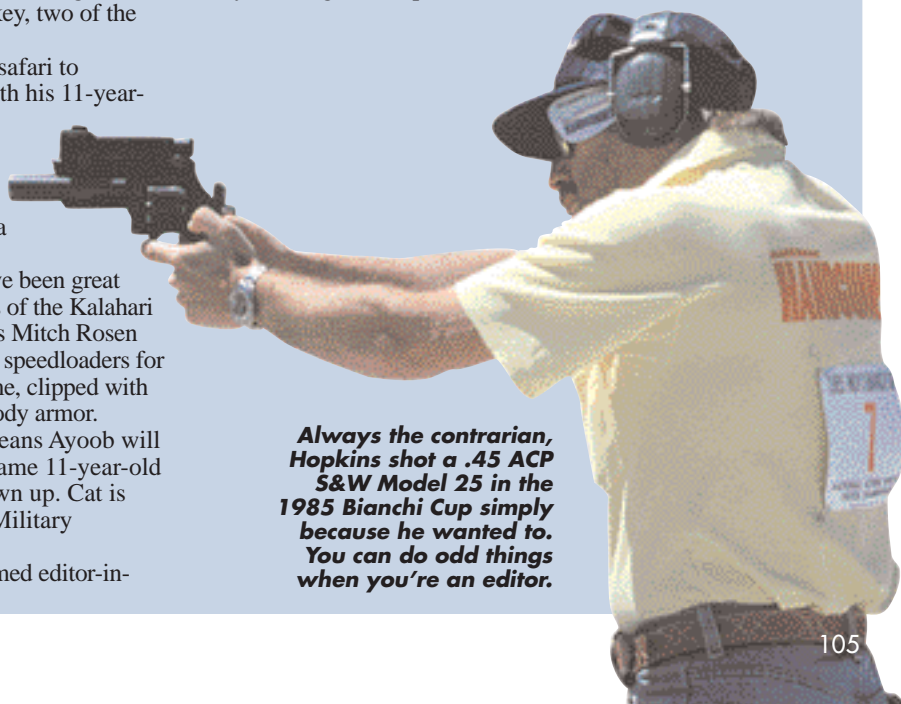
Being the editor-in-chief of *American Handgunner* means getting invited to cuddle in the lap of luxury on fully-paid hunting junkets hosted by munificent manufacturers who wished to impress an important and influential journalist. Shoot doves in Argentina. Hunt chamois in the Austrian Alps. Elk in Wyoming, whitetail in Alberta, deer in Texas. And no, I never wrote a single article just to flatter a host.

I shot sporting clays with Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf and prairie dogs with honchos from Winchester. I went to 18 SHOT Shows, three IWAs, six IPSC nationals and almost every NRA show, including the one where I lost an election to the board of directors. Being the editor-in-chief of *American Handgunner* means Col. Bob Brown and your old machinegun shooting pal, Mike Dillon, will call and ask you — cajole you — to run for the board of directors of the National Rifle Association.

You feign indifference, then eagerly accept their endorsements. You are now a candidate for the NRA board. You lose, of course, despite a personal endorsement from Mike in *The Blue Press* and Bob in *Soldier Of Fortune*, because you run on a populist reform platform to rid the board of blood suckers. You find that you don't win too many friends on the influential Nominating Committee, which promptly black-balls you as a trouble maker.

Which, of course, you are. Because you are the editor-in-chief of *American Handgunner* and that's what you do — point out the turds in the punch bowl. You made a name for yourself as editing the only gun magazine with the "balls to tell it like it is."

So why would someone quit the world's best job as the editor-in-chief of *American Handgunner*? Because Roy Huntington has pictures of me naked.



**Always the contrarian,
Hopkins shot a .45 ACP
S&W Model 25 in the
1985 Bianchi Cup simply
because he wanted to.
You can do odd things
when you're an editor.**

Industry Insider

by Cameron Hopkins

17 YEARS OF PURE FUN

According to an old tradition in publishing, every time a magazine editor resigns, he must subject his long-suffering readers to a wistful journey down memory lane. Reminiscing about his long and eventful tenure, the lame duck editor must hold forth on the Most Significant Moments of his editorship under the mistaken assumption that someone might care.

Editors, you see, are often delusional.

The traditional swansong is typically a heart-rending soliloquy that focuses on the Great Accomplishments of the magazine during the soon-to-be-departed's editorship. While this monolog might serve as a sort of soul-mollifying catharsis for the late editor, it tends to bore the readers silly.

That understood, I will now attempt to depart the scene with as much taste and decorum as possible, without boring you out of your collective gourd. If this sinks into an ooze of self-aggrandizing pap, please turn to any article in this issue written by Massad Ayoob because he is much better than me at writing self-aggrandizing pap.

I can tell you this much about editing *American Handgunner* for 17 years — it was fun. Unmitigated, unrestrained, uncontaminated fun. Imagine getting paid to take pictures of pistols, read articles about revolvers, write headlines about single-shots, talk on the phone about guns, actually collect a pay check to go the range.

The joy of six ... guns.

Not just fun, but exhilaration. Imagine the zip of adrenalin that courses through you as you assign an article — with very specific instructions on just exactly how you want it — to none other than Jeff Cooper. Picture yourself, a jazbo so



No better job exists than shooting free ammo from a Thompson after a ride to the range in Mike Dillon's private helicopter.

green you're still growing, assigning a story to a living legend, the old back-shooter himself, Col. Charles Askins.

Fathom what it must be like to call Bill — that's Mr. Ruger, Sir, to you — to ask a question about some new model that's rumored to be coming. And he takes your call. And he chats for awhile. And he thanks you for calling.

Imagine Mike Dillon calling you and asking you to run for the NRA board of directors because he thinks you have the sort of grit it would take to turn around a fractionalized and disheveled board.

Fantasize what it must be like to have Bill Jordan call you and read you the riot act because of something unflattering about him that you allowed that charlatan Askins to print. Oh yes, you have quickly realized that even though you didn't write it, you printed it. You learn to take the flak, along with the praise.

But despite hobnobbing with the legends of handgunning, the greatest pleasure of all comes not from the Important People you meet, but from the unimportant people you help. The reader in Cincinnati who got ripped off by a pistolsmith, and you helped him get a refund by throwing the might of 5,000 gallons of ink behind his cause.

The young freelancer who showed talent but had never been published, and you gave him a chance and now he's a regular columnist.

The fledgling company with a promising pistol but no advertising budget, but you splashed them on a cover and gave them the push-start they needed. And now they're making 2,000 guns a year.

It was fun, yes, but it was much more than that. It was the pride of knowing you served the readers first and the advertisers second. It was the satisfaction of knowing that you started some very fine writers on the path. It was the privilege of writing about some of the best pistolsmiths in the world who would never have received a drop of ink from the other advertising-driven magazines.

It was, in the final tally, nothing more than a tremendous sense of accomplishment in knowing that you carried a magazine to the next level.

Continued on page 104



More hair, less stomach — our editor in 1984 when he first came to work.

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makes a true professional.*

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No designer threads for Mike Dalton, either. But, as a professional firearms trainer, competitor and law enforcement officer, he selects his personal firearm as carefully as a Madison Avenue businessman chooses his tie. His choice? A Les Baer Custom 1911 pistol.

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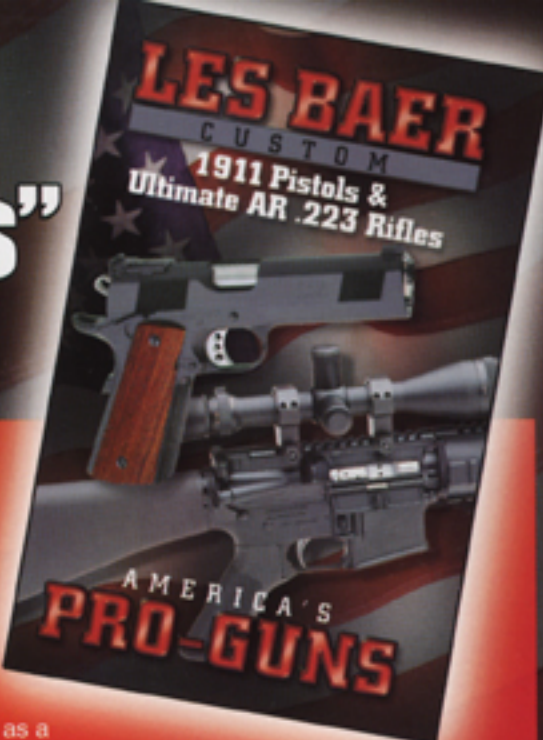
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