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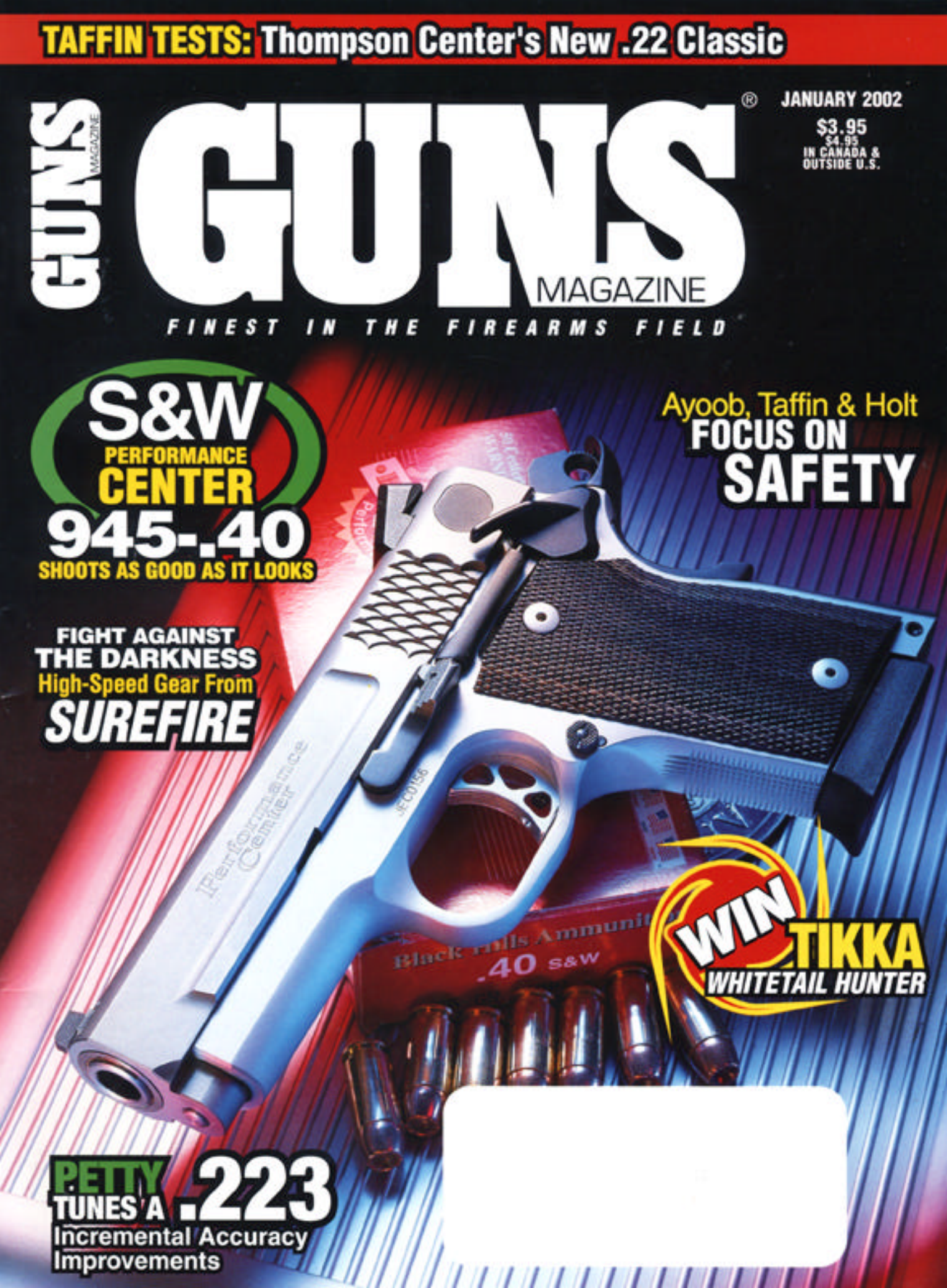

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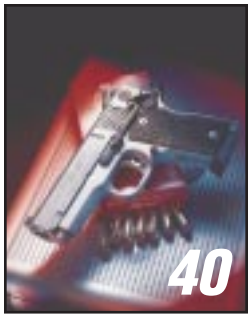

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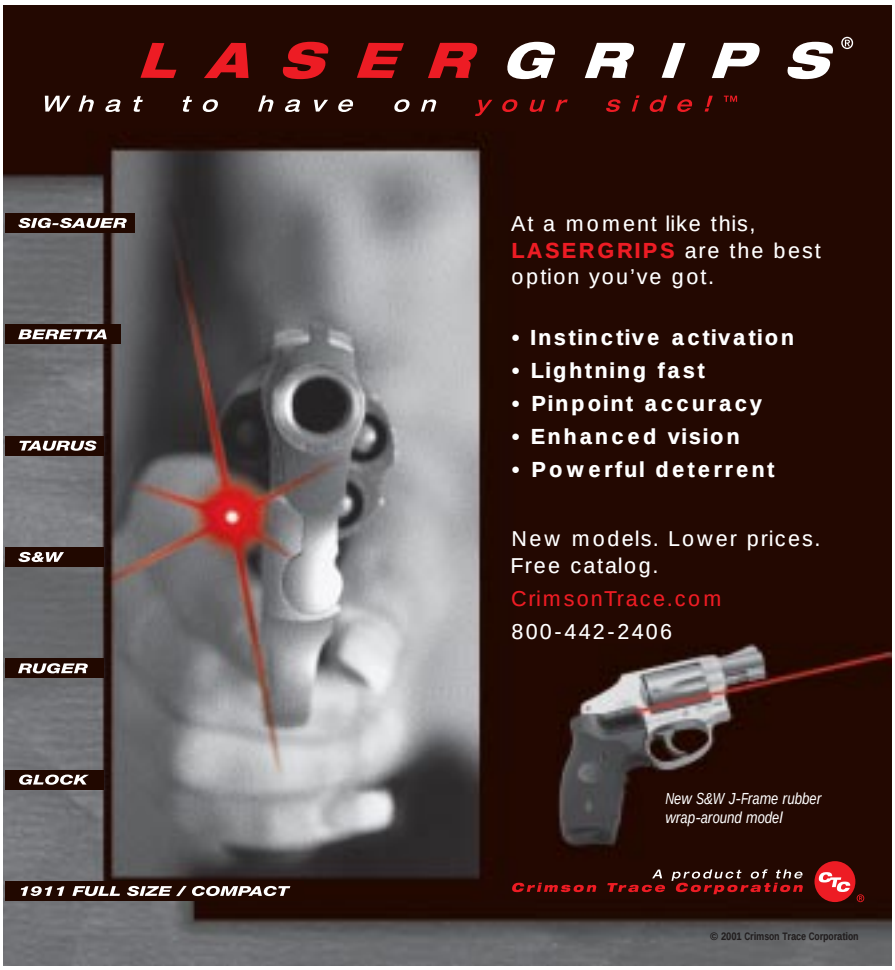

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Now, to mark this national re-birth, to help support relief work, and to show the world the *indomitable* American spirit, The American Historical Foundation is proud to bring a bold, *firing* tribute to those who know and value the *vital* link between firearms and America's security and freedom.

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B235

As this issue goes to print, the events of September 11th are not long past. The staff of *GUNS* Magazine wishes to extend their sympathies to the victims and families whose lives have been forever changed by this tragedy. Our thoughts are with you.

The hate filled men who sought to bring America to her knees by their vile actions have failed. Instead, the world has stood solemn witness to the true character of America and her people. It has seen our firemen and police give no thought to their own safety as they seek to rescue those at risk. It has seen average citizens swarm donation centers to give blood, money, rescue equipment — anything to help. It has seen mosques flooded with flowers and goodwill messages, because America's citizens know that their just rage is directed not toward a religion or a people — but rather against those whose true religion is not Islam, but hatred.

The world has witnessed how America becomes stronger in times of crisis, and we believe that it will remember.

Highest Form Of Bravery

After receiving the November issue, I was struck by the timing and appropriateness of the articles by Steve Tarani and John Taffin. Mr. Tarani's view and dissection of shock goes deep to the heart of survival. In any situation. As we now understand it, the action of the terrorists on all the highjacked aircraft was made possible by just the shock described in the article. The only aspect missed was the failure of most persons to be aware of their surroundings at all times, and ready to act. It is believed that the action of a few persons on the aircraft that crashed in Pennsylvania was an example of the highest form of bravery and valor.

Mr. Taffin's article strikes at the heart of the strength of private gun ownership. Whether hunting big-game or plinking at a local range, you meet a group of people that you have a common interest with. One that can be taken to the levels of friendship and camaraderie that most others envy.

Ernie Hollis
Chester, Va.

Weight-To-Stopping Power Ratio

I really enjoyed "The Forty-Five Auto On The Trail" by Sam Fadala, but his selection of the .45 ACP as a trail gun astonishes me. My 1998 Ruger catalog lists the P90DC as weighing over 33 ounces empty. What is its weight with seven fat .45 cartridges?

Who wants to carry a load like that, when one can have greater penetration and stopping power with either one of the J-frame .357 Magnums or the .357 SIG? The S&W Model 60 with a 3-inch barrel in .357 Mag. weighs only 24 ounces empty. The SIG Model P239 also weighs much less than the Ruger. Wouldn't either make an ideal trail gun? What say you?

C.R. Pounds
Advance, N.C.

The Zen Of Taffin

Just a quick note of thanks for John Taffin's *Campfire Tales* column in the November issue. I read it on the Thursday following the terrorist attacks in NYC and Washington D.C. The column seemed almost providential in its content. The piece helped me to put in perspective the events we find ourselves in. It will find a place of prominence in my reloading room. Thanks to Mr. Taffin and your magazine. Just like the Boy Scouts, you were prepared, even in the face of the unimaginable.

Bruce Schulz
Enid, Okla.

Tactical-Shmactical

The first issue of *GUNS* Magazine that I purchased was because of an article regarding the American Custom Gun Makers Guild, "Gun Of The Year." I have nothing against new technology and developments in the firearms field. Far from it.

But I hope that you will continue to offer us "Over 50" guys articles regarding fine blued steel and walnut, as well as the historical perspective of firearms in this country. Not just black Kevlar, matte stainless and electronic ignition systems.

Perhaps, once in a while, an article and pictures on a custom gun from some up and coming young gunsmith building a rifle or shotgun with Old World Craftsmanship could be slipped into an issue.

I appreciate your new series "Meet The Gunsmith" and hope you never drop the ACGG Firearm Of The Year from your coverage.

Michael Blankenheim
Mequon, Wis.

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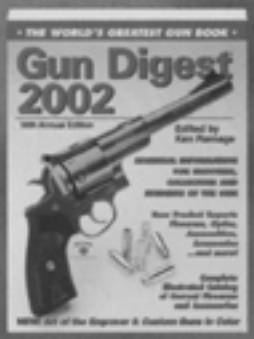

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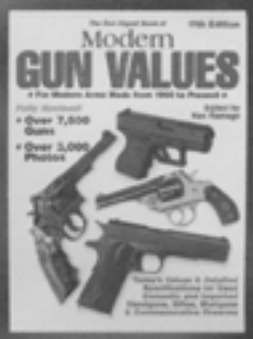

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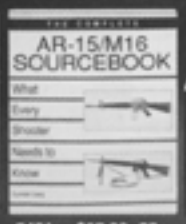

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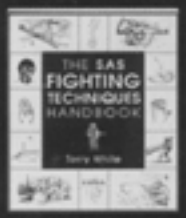

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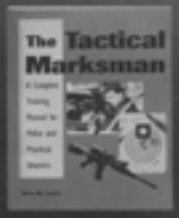

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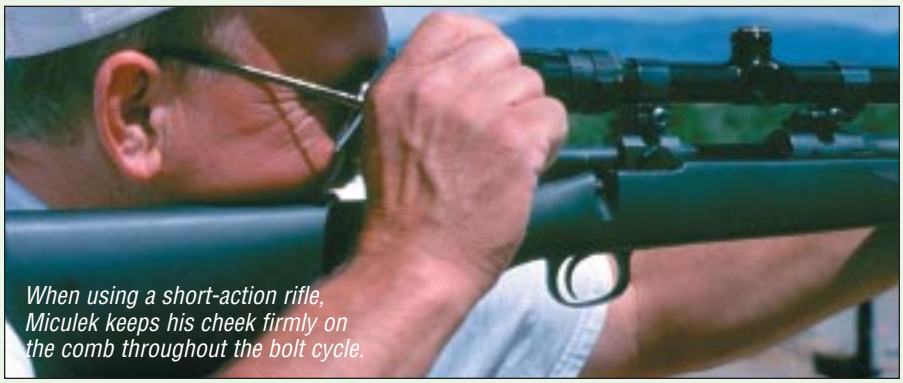
BY DAVE ANDERSON

Jerry Miculek's Rifle Speedshooting Techniques

Jerry Miculek is renowned for his phenomenal prowess with revolvers. He is also an excellent rifle shooter. A testament to this are his many victories in rifle speed events, which require hitting small steel plates at various ranges against the clock, usually from unsupported positions. Miculek recently talked about some of his winning techniques. It should be noted that these are match techniques that may not be appropriate for hunting situations.

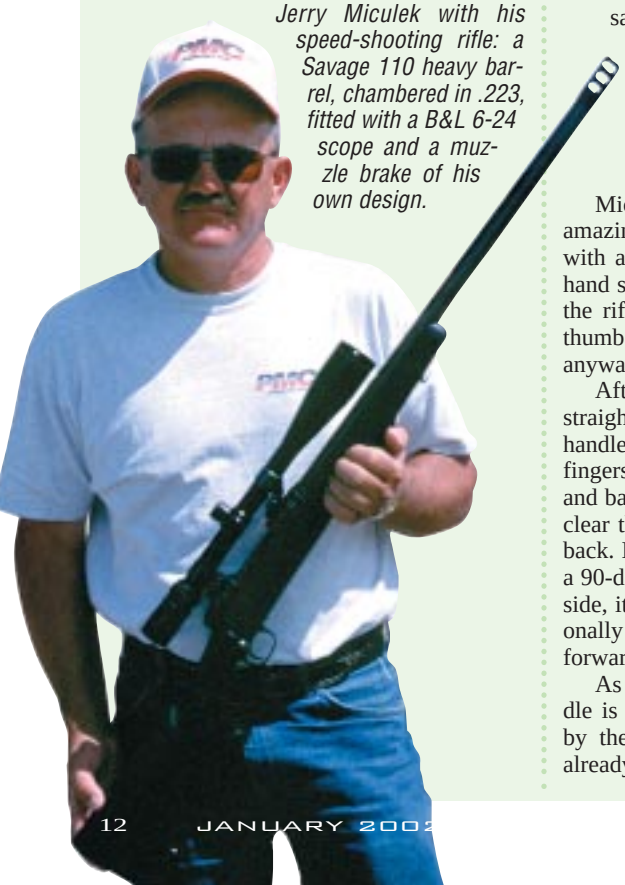
For example, Miculek doesn't have to worry if he's a bit wobbly and misses a shot since the steel targets aren't going to run away and an edge hit is as good as a center one. In the field, a hunter shouldn't shoot from the standing or offhand position unless there is no other option — and then only if the range of movement of the sights is within the vital area.



When using a short-action rifle, Miculek keeps his cheek firmly on the comb throughout the bolt cycle.

Miculek Likes To Use High-Power Scopes For Competition Shooting

"A lot of shooters don't like powerful scopes because they say they wobble too much," Miculek commented. "I want to know how much the gun is moving. I know I can't hold perfectly still, but the high-power scope lets me see the movement pattern of the gun. When I bring the gun up I watch how the reticle is moving — if it is oscillating back and forth across the target or making figure eights."



Jerry Miculek with his speed-shooting rifle: a Savage 110 heavy barrel, chambered in .223, fitted with a B&L 6-24 scope and a muzzle brake of his own design.

From long practice, Miculek's evaluation of the motion of the gun can be done very quickly. He then coordinates the gun movement with the trigger release. As he begins the trigger press, he steers the reticle toward the target. The objective is to have the shot break just as the reticle settles on target.

"Some shooters like to 'stage' the trigger release, pressing only when the sights are on target. I don't use that method; I think it leads to flinching and yanking the trigger. Instead, I release the trigger with one smooth press, continually increasing pressure until the sear releases." Miculek explained. (This is the same method of trigger control recommended by pistol champion Bill Blankenship, as covered in a previous column.)

Operating The Bolt Quickly

Miculek's speed in operating the bolt is amazing. He demonstrated his technique with an unloaded rifle. He keeps his right-hand shooting thumb along the right side of the rifle's grip. "It takes time to cross the thumb across the grip, and there's no need to anyway," he pointed out.

After firing the shot, his hand moves straight up and grasps the ball of the bolt handle between the thumb and the first two fingers. He applies strong pressure both up and back so that the instant the locking lugs clear their recesses, the bolt begins moving back. Mechanically, the bolt has to move in a 90-degree pattern. But observing from the side, it seems that Jerry's hand moves diagonally — up and back simultaneously, then forward and down.

As the bolt is being closed, the bolt handle is pressed into its final locked position by the thumb, while the trigger finger is already moving to the trigger and the other fingers are closing around the grip. Using a short-action rifle, his face never moves from the stock and his eye remains focused on the scope reticle. With a standard-length action, most shooters have to move their head slightly to provide clearance for the bolt.

Miculek is a physically fit, powerful individual; even for his size he has exceptionally strong hands and wrists. Believe me, he does not pussyfoot around when operating the action. He works the bolt hard and fast.

Jerry Miculek's Match Rifle

Miculek's bolt-action match rifle is a standard Savage in .223 Rem. with the regular, factory heavy barrel and factory synthetic stock. He installed a moderately-priced aftermarket trigger tuned to two pounds. With PMC 52-grain match ammunition, it easily shoots group averages of 0.5 inch or better at 100 yards. Savage rifles have always been noted for their accuracy, but this is still remarkable.

Conventional wisdom indicates that to achieve consistent, half-minute accuracy, we have to square and true the action, lap the locking lugs, fit a match barrel, carefully bed the action, and work up accurate handloads. It's exciting to realize the same accuracy is available right off the rack for a lot less money. Jerry also commented on the smooth feeding of cartridges from the magazine and overall reliability of his Savage — critical features in a competition rifle.

The scope is a Bausch & Lomb 6-24X variable mounted in Weaver rings and bases. In competition, he turns the power up as high as conditions permit, often all the way to 24X. Miculek fitted his rifle with a muzzle brake of his own design. The objective is to eliminate muzzle jump entirely so he can observe the bullet strike through the scope and evaluate the shot.

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KNIGHTSTONE COLLECTIONS

BY CAMERON HOPKINS

Brownells' Master Super Set

Screwdrivers are among the more mundane tools. Slotted or Phillips, what else is there to it? Ah, grasshopper, the screwdriver is like the petal of a flower — so simple, yet so complex.

The Brownells' Master Super Set is a gunsmith-quality set of screwdrivers with 44 custom ground bits in nine shank sizes. The hollow-ground bits are made to fit the small and often fragile screws found on firearms.

With Brownells' "magna-tip" drivers, the bits are instantly swapped from one of two included handles — one stubby, one full-size — and are magnetized to assist in picking up small screws.

The entire parade of bits comes neatly packaged in a custom case, perfect for the workbench. The blade widths range from .120 to .360 inch, each 1.5 inches long and marked with its blade width.

There are three types of bits in the Brownells' Master Super Set: 44 slotted heads, three Phillips and 10 Allen heads.

Brownells claims that the Master Super Set of bits "fit 99 percent of all guns screw slots." We doubt that claim is accurate. We have used the Brownells' Super Set for nearly 20 years and we have not yet encountered a 1-percent screw.

The Brownells' Master Super Set retails for $102.46. The Super Set with just the 44 slotted heads — no Allens or Phillips — goes for $93.02. A Starter Set with 22 bits sells for $55.73.

As honest and fair dealing as it is dedicated and innovative, the family-run Brownells business is a true pleasure to deal with. It is strictly a mailorder outfit, but with the highest ethics you will ever run across.

If you have any gun friends or family members for whom you struggle to find a Christmas present, order Brownells' free catalog. Be careful with that Visa... Brownells is habit forming.

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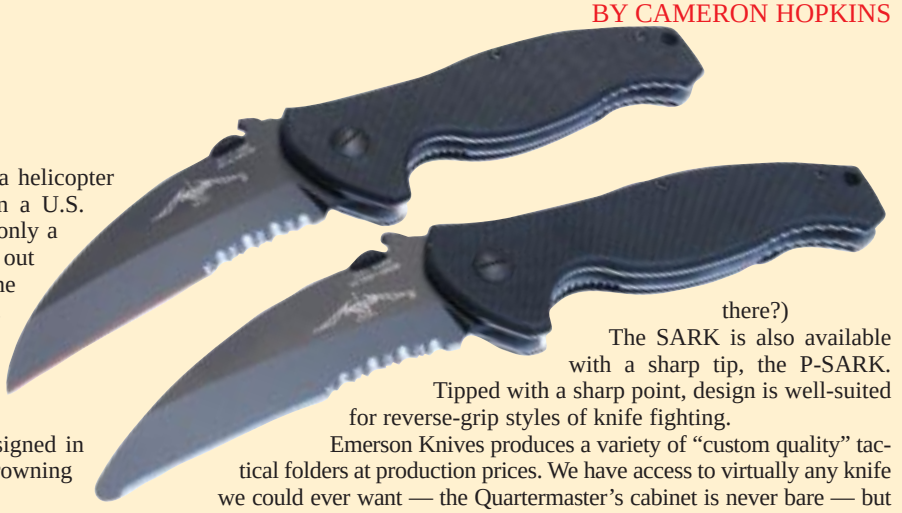
BY CAMERON HOPKINS

SARK Knives By Emerson



Tragedy is a sobering headmaster. When a helicopter swayed and missed its landing mark on a U.S. naval vessel off the coast of California, only a handful of Marines managed to cut themselves out of their restraints and make it to the surface as the chopper sunk swiftly in the warm Pacific waters.

The lesson taught by the headmaster was that a rescue knife to cut harnessing and webbing should be essential gear for Navy rescue personnel. The knife should be razor sharp and tough as an anvil, but at the same time be designed in such a way that a victim doesn't survive his drowning only to bleed out.

The Navy turned to custom knifemaker Ernest Emerson — who was already something of a living legend in Naval Special Warfare circles — and tasked the master bladesmith with the job of designing a rescue knife. The result is the Sea and Air Rescue Knife (SARK).

The blade features a Warncliffe style radius with an intentionally dulled tip. Part of the blade is serrated for greater cutting power. The handle is made of G-10, a tough material favored by tactical knife makers. Emerson landed a Navy contract for his SARK.

Since then, the SARK has been adopted by NASA for use on the space shuttle. It turns out that the little packets of food the astronauts eat need to be opened with a knife. (Do they still drink Tang up there?)

The SARK is also available with a sharp tip, the P-SARK. Tipped with a sharp point, design is well-suited for reverse-grip styles of knife fighting.

Emerson Knives produces a variety of "custom quality" tactical folders at production prices. We have access to virtually any knife we could ever want — the Quartermaster's cabinet is never bare — but for the past forever-and-a-day we have been carrying an Emerson.

The SARK retails for $189.95 in black or green G-10 with 154 CM blade steel, Black T finish, Emerson's patented "wave" opening feature — and a legacy of hard-use that would make a Barbary pirate blush.

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BY CAMERON HOPKINS

Hoppe's Graphite Rods

Hoppe's is a time machine to us, for it conjures wonderful childhood memories of gun cleaning with grandpa. The pungent-sweet scent of Hoppe's No. 9 transports us back to those halcyon days of scrubbing our first gun, a single-shot .410, as grandpa looked on proudly.

Today Hoppe's No. 9 still has that magical smell, although the formulation has changed to appease the tree-huggers and greenies who protested the release of anything stronger than endangered panda flatulence into the globally-warmed, ozone-fading atmosphere.

Another change at Hoppe's is that the bore-cleaner company is no longer just a bore-cleaner company. Hoppe's manufactures all manner of gun-care products and accessories, one of which is before us now — the new Hoppe's graphite cleaning rod.

Graphite is one of those trick materials of the Space Age, like carbonfiber and Kevlar. Graphite is lightweight, flexible and strong, all of which add up to the perfect pedigree for a cleaning rod.

The Hoppe's graphite rods come in two versions, rifle and shotgun. Both are 36-inches long and come with slotted tips for patches. The female-threaded ends are standard size to accommodate other brands of brushes and jags.

We tested the graphite rods and found the rods themselves twirled easily and smoothly inside their ergonomically shaped plastic handles. The rods did not over-flex when pushing thick patches through a tight bore. We particularly liked the graphite surface because it can't scratch or damage the bore like steel rods. Hoppe's graphite rods retail for $16.99.

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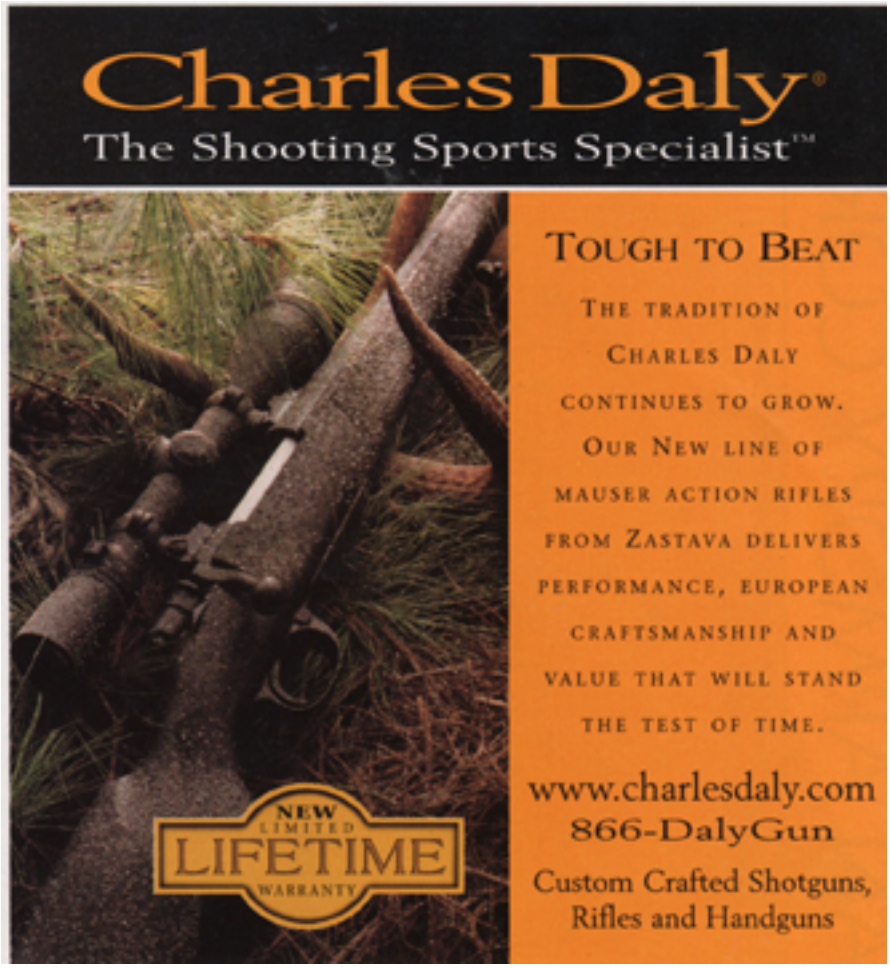


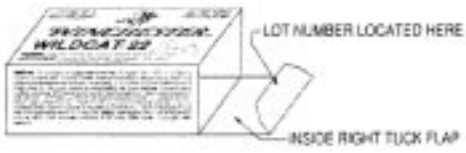
PRODUCT WARNING AND RECALL NOTICE

Olin Corporation, through its Winchester Division, is recalling five (5) lots of its WILDCAT® 22 Long Rifle High Velocity Rimfire ammunition (Symbol Number WW22LR).

Lot Numbers: 3RA42L, 1RH71L, 1RH81L, 2RH81L, and 3RH81L

Through extensive evaluation Winchester has determined the above five (5) lots of WILDCAT® 22 ammunition may contain double powder charges. Double powder charge weight ammunition may cause firearm damage, rendering the firearm inoperable, and subject the shooter to a risk of personal injury when fired.

DO NOT USE WINCHESTER® WILDCAT® 22 LONG RIFLE HIGH VELOCITY RIMFIRE AMMUNITION THAT HAS LOT NUMBERS 3RA42L, 1RH71L, 1RH81L, 2RH81L, OR 3RH81L. The ammunition Lot Number is imprinted (stamped without ink) on the outside of the right tuck flap of the 50-round box, as indicated here:



To determine if your ammunition is subject to this notice, review the Lot Number. If it contains Lot Numbers 3RA42L, 1RH71L, 1RH81L, 2RH81L, or 3RH81L, return the ammunition to Winchester via United Parcel Service (UPS). Securely pack the ammunition into a corrugated cardboard box, write "CARTRIDGES, SMALL ARMS ORM-D" on the outside, and ship to:

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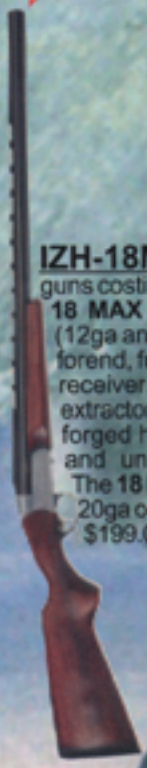
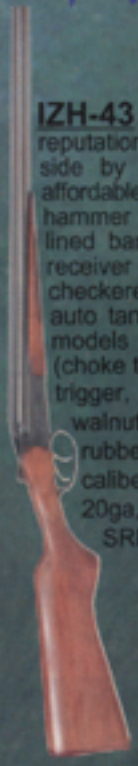


IZH-18MAX looks and feels like guns costing many times more. The **18 MAX** includes: chokes tubes (12ga and 20ga), walnut stock and forend, full vent rib, polished nickel receiver, selectable ejector / extractor, rubber butt pad, hammer forged hard chromed lined barrel and unique decocking system. The **18 MAX** is available in 12ga or 20ga or 410ga with a SRP **under** $199.00.



IZH-43 has gained a world reputation for being a quality side by side shotgun at an affordable price. The **43** features: hammer forged hard chrome lined barrels, machined steel receiver and mono block, checkered stock and forend, auto tang safety , and many models come standard with (choke tubes, single selective trigger, ejectors, checkered walnut stock & forend and rubber butt pad). Available calibers include 12ga, 16ga, 20ga, 28ga, & 410ga with a SRP **under** $439.

MP-133 is the only production pump action shotgun with our patent pending empty chamber bolt lock. With the empty chamber bolt lock there are no missed shots due to an empty chamber and you know when your gun is empty. Standard Features: Dual actions bars, hammer forged hard chromed lined barrel, walnut stock and forend, rubber butt pad, screw extended steel shot choke tubes, full vent rib, empty chamber bolt lock and dual extractors. With the **MP-133** you can mix or match 12ga (31/2", 3" and 2 3/4") shells in one magazine tube and the SRP is **under** $299.

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On the slide's left side, you will find a depiction of the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor along with President Franklin D. Roosevelt's famous line from his speech announcing the attack. To the left, a U.S. Navy ship is rocked by explosions from the attack. In the center, American gunners turn their weapons skyward in a futile attempt to turn the tide of battle, while behind them a sister ship burns. At right, Japanese dive-bombers scream down from the sky, bearing the torpedoes intended for the Navy ships below.

On December 7, 1941, at 7:53 AM, an attack force of Japanese warplanes descends on the island of Oahu, unleashing a firestorm of bullets, bombs and torpedoes on Pearl Harbor. Servicemen and civilians wake to the sound of explosions, as paradise becomes an inferno.

American planes are reduced to flaming wrecks on the runways of nearby Army airfields. The ships of the U.S. Navy's Pacific Fleet, lined up around Ford Island to form "Battleship Row," take a merciless pounding from Japanese torpedo planes and bombers. Caught off guard by the attack, U.S. soldiers, sailors and Marines scramble to turn anti-aircraft guns, machine guns, and even rifles and pistols against the enemy planes. In the course of the battle, more than 2,400 American lives are lost, and with them, the nation's hopes for peace. In the hours that follow, news of the attack strikes the nation with the same impact as those first falling bombs, forever changing the lives of all who heard it.

Though no one could have imagined it only a day before, December 7, 1941 became America's most famous and unforgettable date of the 20th Century. It was, in the words of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, "a date which will live in infamy."

"No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion," vowed the President, "the American people in their righteous might will win absolute victory." Many Americans had hoped to avoid entering World War II, but in the wake of the Pearl Harbor tragedy, the nation united in the common cause of victory, either in uniform or on the home front. By war's end, what Roosevelt termed "the unbounding determination of our people" had transformed America from a nation ill-prepared for war into the mightiest of world powers, an unshakable stronghold of democracy.

Today, Americans recognize the attack on Pearl Harbor as one of the defining moments in American history, a moment that changed the course of history. America was thrust into World War II, and joined the battle against the Axis powers on two fronts. Fighting in Europe and the Pacific, Americans from all walks of life served their country with honor and determination, ultimately securing victory and ensuring freedom for people around the world. To honor those who served and sacrificed during World War II, the Armed Forces Commemorative Society and America Remembers present the Pearl Harbor Tribute .45 Pistol. Today, Pearl Harbor and the *U.S.S. Arizona* Memorial represent America's ultimate tribute to the veterans who answered the call to duty, and this handsomely decorated firearm honors and captures this never to be forgotten chapter in our history.

For this Tribute, we selected the classic military sidearm of the 20th Century, the Government Model Colt .45 pistol. Each Tribute is a working Colt .45 ACP caliber pistol, decorated in a combination of 24-karat gold and nickel by craftsmen commissioned specifically for the Tribute by the Armed Forces Commemorative Society, and the Tribute is available nowhere else.

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The Pearl Harbor Tribute Pistol is individually numbered in a strictly limited edition of only 500 pistols. It will be a family keepsake to be treasured for generations, and a permanent reminder of the sacrifices and triumphs of the generation that turned the tide against tyranny. Reservations will be accepted in the order they are received. We will arrange delivery of your Tribute through a licensed dealer of your choice. If for any reason you are less than satisfied with the Tribute, you may return it in original unfired condition within 30 days for a full refund.

Right side of the slide features a depiction of the U.S.S. Arizona Memorial, America's most moving and inspirational tribute to all those who served and sacrificed. Millions of people from around the world pay their respects at the Memorial, which is erected over the sunken hull of the great battleship, final resting place for many of the 1,177 brave crewmen who lost their lives. To the right is the Arizona as she appeared before the attack, a floating fortress and proud member of the American fleet. To the left, a battleship on patrol, represents the power of the U.S. Pacific Fleet. Flanking this battleship, you will find President's Roosevelt's prophetic vow that "with the unbounding determination of our people we will gain the inevitable victory."

The Armed Forces Commemorative Society® is an affiliate of America Remembers, and is a non-governmental organization dedicated to the remembrance of notable Americans and historic American events, and is not affiliated with the United States Military.

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New Bullets From Speer

A new line of dry lubricated bullets from Speer may have been aimed at the CAS market but provides fine results for all handloaders.

By C. Rodney James

Speer's new Idaho Territory Bullets are designed expressly for the Cowboy Action Shooting market but offer good shooting for any handloader. Like any number of commercial lead-alloy bullets, they save the handloader the time and fuss of casting and lubricating his own bullets. Beyond that, they offer other significant advantages. They are swaged to a uniform shape and weight, which promotes excellent accuracy. Most significant, however, is the proprietary coating on the outside that gives the bullets an attractive blue/black look like those seen in 19th century cartridges. Whatever this coating is, it is very tough; it is applied in layers and is highly resistant to both heat and friction. The coating virtually eliminates leading in all but the roughest barrels. This means a lot more shooting with less cleaning.

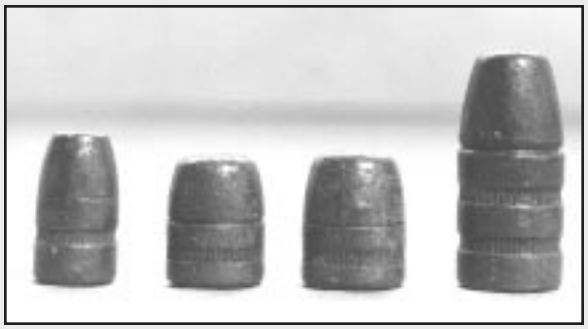
These dry-lubed bullets may be fired as is with smokeless powder. However, the cannelures are deep enough for additional lubrication to be applied for those using black powder or one of the black powder substitutes such as Pyrodex, Clean Shot or Clear Shot. In my experience, the Clean Shot and Clear Shot powders left so little fouling that additional lubrication did not appear necessary. Adding lubricant did keep groups slightly tighter after 50 or more rounds had been fired with Pyrodex, which leaves a heavy though soft deposit of fouling.

Break Out Those Old-Timers

One of the best pieces of news is that Speer's .45-caliber, 405-grain rifle bullet is sized .459 inch for use in 19th-century black-powder rifles such as the Trapdoor Springfield and others that frequently have .459-inch bores as compared to current .457-inch bores. Springfields, Bullards and other rifles from that era, using unpatched lead bullets, often had deep-groove rifling — measuring as much as .464-inch groove diameter. This permitted firing a considerable number of soft tin/lead alloy bullets without cleaning the bore despite the rapid accumulation of black powder fouling in the grooves. This was achieved by using slightly undersized bullets of soft lead alloy, which readily expanded to fill the available groove space.

Many of today's shooters have tried shooting these old rifles using hard alloys — wheel weights and such — and experienced dismal results when the .457-inch and even .459-inch bullets failed to expand properly and obturate the

Right: *A pair of vintage Trapdoor Springfield "Needle Guns" used in the tests.* ***Below:*** *Idaho Territory bullets, from left: .38 cal 158 grain, .44 cal 200 grain, .45 cal 230 grain and .45-70 405 grain.*



TESTING IN .45-70

What follows are results from shooting experiments with the Idaho Territory bullets in a pair of vintage Trapdoor Springfields. Groups indicated were fired at 100 yards in calm conditions and represent the extreme spread of three 5-shot groups.

SPRINGFIELD RIFLE M-1884

40.0 grains Hodgon Varget: 2.5 inches

40.5 grains Accurate 2495BR: 2.5 inches

SPRINGFIELD CARBINE M-1877

In the carbine, none of the black powder substitutes produced particularly good groups. A charge of 55 grains of Clear Shot or Pyrodex Ctg averaged groups between 3.6 and 4.0 inches.

40.0 grains of Hodgdon Varget: 2.8 inches

40.5 grains of Accurate 2495BR: 2.9 inches

These two powders work the best in most .45-70s I have tried. IMR 4320 works tolerably well. All loads were assembled with over-powder wads — either the Ox Yoke Wonder wad (size 44-45) with card or cork wads or corrogated cardboard alone. The three-wad column needed to fill the space between the powder and the bullet base measures .35 to .40 inch uncompressed.

These wads permit use of a slightly harder alloy cast bullet in Springfields without leading. It was not necessary with the Speer bullet but was kept for load consistancy. It is absolutely critical that such wads be a snug fit in the case and loaded snugly against the bullet base — pushing them in a little, then allowing the bullet to drive them into the case as it is seated. A space between such a wad and the bullet may cause a ring in your chamber!

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bore. Even modest amounts of antimony in the mix can prevent cast bullets from expanding. The net result was gas blow-by that melted bullet surfaces, plastering this lead firmly in the deep grooves of these old rifles. The only option (after getting the lead out) was to cast pure tin/lead-alloy bullets of the proper proportions — a fairly expensive and time consuming proposition. Spencer and Pat Wolf's book *Loading Cartridges for the Original .45-'70 Springfield Rifle and Carbine* covers all the details. This book and a host of great black powder cartridge loading supplies can be obtained from Buffalo Arms Co.

Speer's new coating technology features an alloy bullet with 3-percent antimony. They are swaged, thus keeping the alloy soft and consistent — not possible with casting since the antimony tends to float to the top. This alloy bullet is then given a tough skin that resists heat and gas cutting yet takes the rifling well, even in less than perfect bores. The result is a cheaper alloy with good bore-filling qualities that is less likely to lead bores.

Current offerings in the Idaho Territory line are .38-caliber (.358-inch, 158-grain); .44-caliber (.430-inch, 200-grain); .45-caliber (.454-inch, 230-grain); and .45-caliber (.459-inch, 405-grain). Accuracy results are equal to conventional lubricated cast bullets, and because of reduced fouling tend to be better over the long run.

A Compromise Bullet Weight

The one problem with the 405-grain rifle bullet is that it's not a particularly accurate shooter in some rifles: A 3-inch group out of a black-powder rifle or carbine at a hundred yards is about the best you can expect. This was the result in my .45 Springfield Carbine tests; although, the .45 rifle would occasionally do a bit better. That's why in 1881, the government abandoned the 405-grain bullet in favor of the 500-grain "long range" bullet, at least for use in the rifle. Despite this, the 405-grain bullet has been employed by the majority of handloaders for use in the .45-70 in recent years. Lighter recoil and easier availability compared to 500-grain bullets are the most likely reasons.

Good accuracy with the Speer 405 has been achieved with Marlin rifles, which have microgroove barrels. This is interesting as this type of rifling generally yields poor results with cast lead-alloy bullets unless they are gas-checked or very hard. The bullet's flat-point design and relatively soft alloy provides good expansion on game. Because of its place in history as the official U.S. military round from 1873 to 1880, the 405-grain load is the standard for most cowboy action shooting. Initial accuracy is equal to good cast bullets. Lower levels of fouling keep accuracy at a higher level for a longer period of shooting without cleaning.

The old .45-caliber Gould "Express" (330-grain, hollowpoint) is a very accurate shooter and kicks less in .45 rifles and would be a good addition if Speer decides to expand the line. Since shooter response has been good, this is to be hoped for.

According to sources at CCI-Speer, the Idaho Territory bullets will be loaded in the CCI bargain-priced "Blazer" line in .38 special, .44 special and .45 Colt and will be labeled "Trail Blazer." As soon as a few technical details are worked out, the new coating will very likely become standard for the entire lead-bullet line.

Priced per box of 100 for pistol caliber, or per 25 for rifle, the .38-caliber bullets list for $8.95, the .44 and .45 pistol bullets for $12.95, and the 405-grain rifle bullets at $6.95. Bulk packaging is available which makes these great shooting bullets an even better bargain.

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BY HOLT BODINSON

Check Out Those Triggers

Shotgun triggers may be the most neglected triggers in the shooting world. Reams have been written about adjusting rifle and handgun triggers, but the quality and adjustment of shotgun triggers rarely makes the news. Actually, when one considers the dynamics involved to shoot a moving target with a shotgun, the quality of the trigger is critical for optimum performance.

What we're looking for in a good shotgun trigger are exactly those qualities we extol when discussing good rifle and handgun triggers. Above all, the trigger release should be crisp with minimum motion and overtravel. If the trigger is mushy or it grabs, we're not going to be doing our best shooting because our timing will be inconsistent. To use the classic phrase, a shotgun trigger should break quickly and cleanly "like a glass rod."

When it comes to the question of trigger-pull weight, single triggers on better guns are typically set between 3½ to 4 pounds. On a gun fitted with double triggers, the front trigger is normally set at about 3½ pounds. The rear trigger is adjusted slightly heavier due to the improved leverage of the rear trigger.

The finest tool for measuring trigger-pull weight is Lyman's new, state-of-the-art Digital Trigger Pull Gauge. I've worked with all makes of spring-type trigger scales and nothing comes close to its accuracy, flexibility and ease-of-use. This new liquid-crystal display gauge will read from 0 to 12 pounds, can average a string of pull readings, and can be set to measure in pounds or kilograms. It's an essential tool for the savvy gun owner and will answer a lot of lingering questions about triggers. The suggested retail price is $59.95.

Lyman's new Digital Trigger Pull Gauge is the finest tool available for analyzing and trouble-shooting triggers.

Right: *The HIVIZ TomBuster Combo sight set mounts in minutes and generates a bright, clear sight picture under the dimmest of light conditions.*

HIVIZ TomBuster Combo Sight Set

As the spring turkey season approaches, consider adding a set of HIVIZ front and rear sights to your favorite turkey gun. HIVIZ sights have proven so useful in the field that major manufacturers are now mounting them on shotguns, rifles and handguns as standard equipment.

Installing a set of HIVIZ turkey sights has never been easier. And those glowing green, red, yellow or orange florescent points of light in the dim hours of dawn or dusk can make all the difference in the world for a successful hunt.

The HIVIZ TomBuster Combo package consists of a magnetic front sight that snaps over the ventilated rib and rests securely against the front-sight bead. The accompanying adjustable rear sight is screwed to a bracket that is slipped through any one of the rib vents. Mounting the complete sight set takes only a few minutes.

The front sight is supplied with both green and orange light tubes. Most hunters select the green tube because it's brighter and it contrasts well with the two orange light tubes incorporated into the face of the rear sight.

The resulting sight picture consists of a bright-green bead centered vertically and horizontally, with two smaller orange dots projecting from the rear sight. The sight picture is very striking and very bright. The only thing left to do is adjust the rear sight to center the pattern at the average hunting distance.

The TomBuster Combo comes in two models — one for ventilated ribs sized from .165 to .315 inch and another for ribs sized .315 to .385 inch. And if you like HIVIZ hunting sights, HIVIZ also offers a front-sight combination for target shooting under the CompSight label.

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GUNS SHOULD LAST A LIFETIME

A Guide To Their Long-Term Preservation

How you prepare your fireams for storage determines what shape they'll be in when put back into use.

By Holt Bodinson

Protecting and preserving firearms for either short- or long-term storage has never been easier. And the only difference between preservation or deterioration is a few minutes of time and a few cents worth of chemicals. With today's oils, greases, waxes, vapor emitting products and humidity reduction units, the process is a snap. So here are a few ideas on how to properly store your favorite smokepoles.

Clean It Right

First, thoroughly clean the bore and chamber(s) of copper, lead, plastic, carbon — all those contaminants that can either attract moisture, trap moisture, or create some form of electrolytic reaction. For handguns, rifles and shotguns, I like aggressive solvents such as Shooter's Choice, Hoppe's Bench Rest-9, or Butch's Bore Shine.

Once the standard for long-term storage, Cosmoline has been largely replaced by modern corrosion-inhibiting, vapor-emitting products.

Along with these products, I use polymer-coated steel cleaning rods; 100-percent, cotton-flannel patches; and bronze-bristle/brass-core brushes. If a rifle or handgun exhibits considerable metallic fouling, I go right to Sweet's 7.62 Solvent. It is applied with a cotton mop and eliminates copper much more quickly than scrubbing it away with a bore brush. With shotguns, I pay particular attention to chambers, forcing cones and chokes — all places where those rather invisible plastic residues from hulls and wads tend to build up and hasten corrosion.

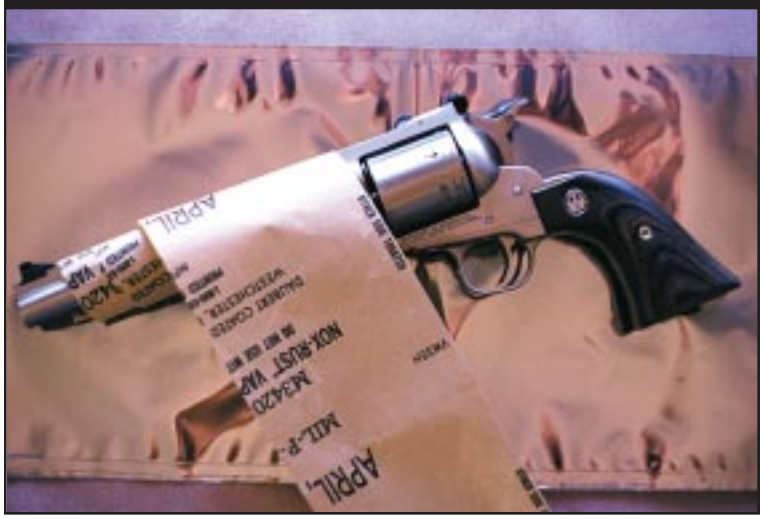
Semiautomatic rifles, handguns, and shotguns, as well as pump shotguns and rifles should be stripped down and thoroughly cleaned on a periodic basis, particularly if they are going into long-term storage. The use of toothbrushes and cotton swabs, along with Birchwood Casey's Gun Scrubber, Shooter's Choice Quickscrub or Tetra Gun's Action Blaster will make quick work of carbon fouling, old lubricant buildup, unburned powder grains, and grass seeds lurking in all those little places.

The second step in gun storage is exterior protection. Metal and wood surfaces *must* be sealed against moisture. I've used oils, greases and dry, film-type products on gun metal; however, over the long haul they are often not compatible with wood stocks, synthetic finishes and glass bedding compounds. As a result, for long-term storage I tend to favor waxes that can be applied to both metal and wood at the same time. One of the best products is Brownells' museum-grade Renaissance Micro-Crystalline Wax and Cleaner. Renaissance wax doesn't build-up but leaves a thin, hard film that accents the richness of both metal and wood. At $21 a can, it's not cheap, but a can seems to last forever.

If you are a shooter and you are not familiar with the Brownells' catalog, then you are in for a treat. Brownells is the standard gunsmith's supply house, and its current catalog number 54 features a whopping 29,000 items.

On the other hand, for routine, short-term maintenance of exterior metal and interior bore surfaces, a light application of these products will do just fine: Brownells' Rust Prevent No. 2, Birchwood Casey's Sheath, Hoppe's MDL, Break-Free CLP, Shooter's Choice Rust Prevent or Butch's Gun Oil. After they are applied to the metal, use a dry patch to remove any residue left on wood or synthetic stocks. If you can, store the gun muzzle down to prevent preservatives from creeping down into the action, or into bedding and stock mortises. And if you live in a humid climate and use a gun safe, by all means install a Brownells silica gel pack or Goldenrod heating element in the cabinet. These two products use different methods to achieve the same result. They remove moisture from the air and go a long way toward preventing mildew and corrosion.

Above: *Shooters have never before enjoyed such a variety of solvents, lubes and preservatives. Experiment to learn which ones best suit your needs.* ***Below:*** *With the use of Gunwrap and Triple Tough storage bags, this Ruger could be safely stored for a century.*



Long-Term Storage Just Got Easier

We don't often think about long-term storage requirements. But there are many reasons, such as a move or temporary overseas assignment, which may require that we do so. Thankfully we no longer have to coat the whole gun with hot Cosmoline or RIG and wrap it in grease-impregnated paper.

Brownells' Triple Tough premium storage bags make long-term storage simple and reliable. They are made from a polyester/aluminum/polyethylene blend and measure 8x20 inches for handguns and 12x60 inches for long guns. They are resistant to all petroleum-based chemicals and are non-biodegradable. Once sealed with a hot iron, they are impervious to moisture and vapor penetration.

To be used in conjunction with its storage bags, Brownells offers two corrosion-inhibiting, vapor emitting products: Gunwrap paper and Rust-Blox tabs. The advantage of these vapor-emitting products over traditional oils and greases is their ability to penetrate and protect even the most inaccessible parts of a firearm; plus, they're totally invisible and leave no residues to be cleaned off after an extended period of storage.

Gunwrap — a brown-colored, vapor-emitting paper — offers 10 to 15 years of protection for steel parts that have been sealed in a Triple Tough storage bag. Gunwrap is available in 12x12-inch sheets for handguns, and 4x36-inch strips for long guns.

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Rust Blox tabs are small squares of vapor-emitting cardboard, effective for at least a year in a sealed environment.

The difference between the two products is their effective life. And while Gunwrap is not recommended for aluminum, silver, brass, copper, nickel plating or old lacquer finishes, Rust Blox is rated as harmless to those materials.

In use, either wrap the firearm with Gunwrap or drop several Rust Blox tabs inside a Triple Tough storage bag, insert the firearm, remove as much air from the bag as possible, and seal the open end of the bag three or four successive times with the edge of a hot iron. It's that simple. And Brownells supplies a clear set of instructions with every order of Triple Tough bags along with adhesive description labels to identify the contents.

To prep the gun for long-term storage, I completely wax the exterior of the firearm with the Renaissance wax and let it dry and harden. If the firearm is stainless steel, it can be sealed up without any further work. If the firearm is blued steel, I still like to run a patch of Break Free, RIG, or Hoppe's Grease down the bore before sealing. Given the anti-corrosion vapor protection offered by Gunwrap or Rust-Blox, it's probably overkill, but that added bit of protection to the bore is comforting.

Finally, to protect the storage bag and to make it easier to handle, I slip it inside the cheapest gun case I can buy. Vendors at gun shows commonly offer a gray-colored soft case at three for $10. They're perfect for such a use.

Ten or even 15 years later, your firearm will emerge from storage in as pristine a condition as the day you sealed it up. Good guns can last a lifetime, and all it takes to preserve and protect them is a simple blend of common sense and modern chemistry.

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BY MASSAD AYOOB

DRY-FIRE SAFETY

In June 2001, a young man of 24 decided to practice quick-draw in his Campton, N.H., home. He drew his Glock and pulled the trigger. The weapon discharged a live round. Its 9mm bullet went through a window, traveled some 44 yards, and killed a middle-aged father who was standing in his driveway across the street. Authorities as of this writing have not announced whether, or what, charges will be filed. Newspaper accounts speculate that alcohol or marijuana might have played a part in this incident.

It was with such things in mind that Jeff Cooper's first rule of firearm safety is, "All guns are always loaded." It was also with such things in mind that NRA director Mike Baker said, "Seemingly obsessive concern with safety is the mark of the firearms professional."

Let's examine some dry-fire safety protocols:

Substance Abuse

Guns and beer are two of my favorite things. I have learned not to mix them. I know of a case in New York where a young cop who had just made the pistol team decided to celebrate by drinking himself silly the night before the tournament. Staggering back to his motel room, he decided to do some dry-fire practice, aiming at the mirror. *Click, click, click.* He then decided to practice with his new Safariland speedloaders to make sure they'd feed OK with .38 wadcutters. Then he decided to work on his trigger-pull some more.

In adjacent motel rooms, brother officers were awakened by a sound they knew well: *Bang!* One of them told me that his first thought was "unintentional discharge." Then they heard, *Bang — Bang — Bang — Bang — Bang!*

Believing a gunfight involving their brother officer was in progress, they grabbed guns and ran to his room. One was armed with the only gun and ammo he had, a PPC competition revolver and .38 wadcutters hastily stuffed in the cylinder; another had a Smith Chief Airweight; and I forget what the third one grabbed. One had pulled on jeans, one was in skivvy shorts, and one responded nude. They kicked in the door to find their brother officer sitting disconsolately in a smoke-filled room, a big target revolver dangling from his hand. In the opposite wall where a mirror once was, six tightly-grouped bullet holes were visible in the plaster above a pile of glass fragments on the floor. One cop screamed, "What happened?" The drunk cop muttered, "I had an AD (accidental discharge)." Another cop blurted, "But you fired six shots!" The impaired officer could only bleat, "I had such a good hold...."

Fortunately the room was at the end of the building and no one was harmed. But the lesson is clear. Celebrate your victory or drown the sorrows of your defeat after all the guns and ammo have been secured.

Dry-Fire Backstop

We tend to think of "backstop" only when we're firing live ammo, but we have to remember that none of us are immune to stupid mistakes. *Whenever you are dry-firing — even when firing a gun you are certain is empty — have it pointed at something that could safely absorb the most powerful bullet that gun could fire.* One day a bullet may emerge from the gun barrel to interrupt your dry-fire session in a most dramatic, and possibly tragic, way.

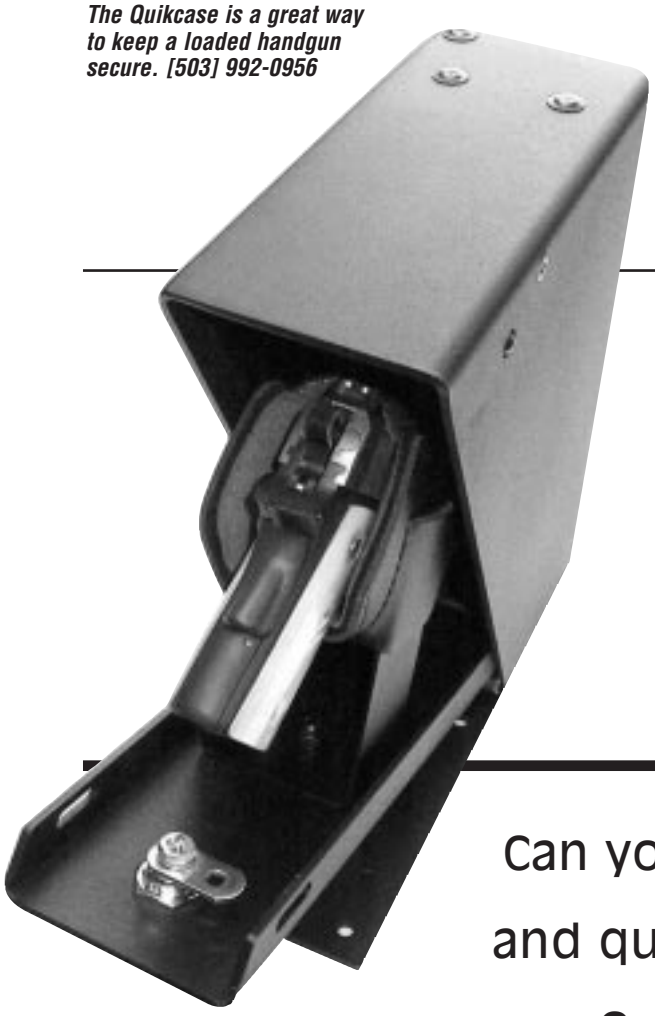
We all have tons of gun books and old magazines, right? Pack some of 'em tightly into cartons, stick a target on the end of the carton, and use that as a backstop. A .45 hardball round that would pierce 26 inches of human muscle tissue simulant will usually stop in as little as six inches of densely packed books. Be conservative: Use double the backstop you think you'll need. Strategically placed bookshelves and boxes of books can make great cover and backstops in home-defense scenarios as well.

Top: *When practicing speed reloading, deactivate the revolver by tying a cloth around the top strap.* ***Bottom:*** *While it may look funny, this field stripped Beretta 92 will permit you to practice speed loading without the slightest chance of an accidental discharge. Weighted dummy magazines, available through Dillon, are an even safer alternative.*

I keep a loaded gun near the bed at night in case armed intruders break into my home. I keep a ballistic vest where I can reach it at night for exactly the same reason. A bullet-proof vest is, by definition, the ideal backstop for dry-fire. If necessary, put the vest behind your TV. (I am Uncle Mas — I know how you live, and you can't fool me. I know that you sometimes read this magazine while on the toilet, and that's OK. But if you dry-fire while watching TV, that's not OK unless there's something behind the TV that'll stop a bullet. The set itself won't.)

Make sure that dry-fire practice is done in a room with no ammunition in it, including any on your person. Never practice dry-fire and speed reloading on the same night. At the moment your goal of sustained fire on automatic pilot is achieved, you *will* fire a shot, and another TV set will die in the name of American marksmanship. When practicing reloads, use dummy ammo. Alas, dummy ammo can "migrate." I've seen cases where live rounds got in with the dummies, and vice versa. If you must practice reloading with live ammo, field-strip the auto pistol and put the barrel/slide assembly in another room; the gun now can't be fired. Tie a rag or handkerchief through the top-strap of your revolver so that the cylinder can't close. You already know you can open and close the cylinder; you're practicing to get those six little guys in those six little holes at once, and a revolver thus disabled allows you to do that safely.

Safety. It's our responsibility. The price of failing that responsibility is painful to even contemplate.



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Loaded... Ready... SAFE!

Can your home-defense gun be loaded and quickly accessible, yet still be safe? Our handgun editor says "Yes!" and offers several proven strategies.

By Massad Ayoob

If you keep a gun in your home or workplace, it's only common sense that it be loaded and quickly accessible. The same common sense, however, also tells us the firearm should be inaccessible to children, incompetent adults and unlawful intruders. Having both at once is a tall order, but that doesn't make it impossible. Let's look at a broad spectrum of armed citizens and police officers in this country who have found that when it comes to this important matter — you can have your cake and eat it too.

In The Home

John is a detective and gunfight winner who works for a large, West Coast law-enforcement agency that serves a very high-crime community. He has investigated a number of violent home invasions, many of which had tragically fatal results. Though most of these were "drug dealer invading and ripping off rival dealer" situations, a disturbing number involved innocent, law-abiding citizens who were helpless once their doors were kicked in.

When John gets dressed for work in the morning, he clips the department-issue Safariland holster containing a Glock 17 loaded with Winchester 9mm hollowpoints onto his belt. When he comes home at night, the gun and holster stay in place.

"In virtually all the home invasions I've investigated, there wouldn't have been time for the victims to run into the next room and grab a loaded gun once the bad guys started kicking the door down, let alone time to get an unloaded firearm from one place and ammo from somewhere else and put it all together," says John.

(Above) Top: *Here's how handcuffs may be used to secure conventional double-action handguns. S&W Model 686 revolver has bracelet locking both hammer and trigger in place. The Ruger P90 .45 auto is similarly secured.* ***Bottom:*** *External appearance fails to reveal that this S&W Model 66 .357 Combat Magnum has been altered to "smart gun" status by installing the MagnaTrigger device.* ***Right:*** *Mossberg's newly-announced Loc-Box is the answer for keeping a shotgun loaded but safe from unauthorized use or theft.*

If friends or neighbors come by to visit in the evening, they are not surprised to see John sitting on the sofa in his shirtsleeves, the Glock at his hip as conspicuous as the ever-present cigar in his hand. Anyone welcome in that household knows John is a cop and that the pistol is a tool of his trade. A postman, UPS delivery person, or other stranger at the door on legitimate business stops worrying about the handgun as soon as they see the badge that John keeps attached to his belt in front of the holster.

3,000 miles away lives *Frank*, a retired big-city detective who spent most of his career in heavy action precincts. He's a veteran of multiple shootouts, including one that occurred off-duty while he was putting out the garbage. His two service weapons, both privately owned, were Smith & Wesson .38 Special revolvers: a four-inch barrel Model 10 six-shooter and a five-shot Model 36 Chief Special, both meticulously maintained. He never leaves the house without the Chief strapped to his ankle or placed in his pocket.

He secures the full-size service revolver using a trick that is taught at his city's police academy. Frank's handcuffs aren't just souvenirs of 25 years of a tough job. One bracelet secures the Model 10 — with the solid half of one bracelet between the rear of the trigger and the back portion of the trigger guard — and the bridged-half locks over the hammer spur. Though the revolver is loaded with 158-grain Federal Nyclad +P hollowpoints, it cannot be fired. The hammer cannot rise, and the trigger cannot come far enough to the rear to allow a discharge. The other bracelet is secured to a firmly mounted horizontal hangar pole in his bedroom closet.

For his entire career, on and off duty, Frank has carried a small keychain with keys to his house, his car and his handcuffs. That hasn't changed. The keys are always on his person. The one for the handcuffs is oversized to allow fast manipulation. Experience has taught him that he can quickly unlock the big Smith & Wesson and have it in hand and ready to go in the rare moment when the smaller five-shot S&W is not instantly accessible. My old friend Phil Engeldrum was among the first to promote this concept to law-abiding armed citizens, referring to the handcuffs in this application as "circular locks."

Jeff is a distinguished octogenarian who killed three more heavily armed enemy personnel with his handgun while honorably serving his country in time of war. In his younger days, he won numerous combat pistol awards and did much to advance the state of combat pistol doctrine. Only semi-retired even now, he is acutely aware that he is slowed down by old injuries from a physically strenuous and high-risk life. He doesn't worry about access to defensive handguns to protect himself and his lovely wife, however. A home defense system he developed decades before keeps the means readily at hand.

When Jeff puts on his pants in the morning, he puts on a customized 1911 .45 auto, cocked-and-locked, on his right hip, with a spare magazine on the opposite side. Even on the bad days when he needs a wheelchair, the .45 is instantly at hand. Not far away is a *lupara*, a short double-barrel shotgun, kept in a broken open condition. On its stock is tied a leather shell loop carrier filled with buckshot and slugs. It's the ideal tool, Jeff feels, to "repel boarders."

Jim is a retired sheriff in Texas and a certified gun expert. In his front trouser pocket a Smith & Wesson Model 640 "hammerless" .38 Special snub will be found, as surely as his wallet will be found in his hip pocket. In addition, there's generally a fancy cocked-and-locked Colt .45 automatic in his waistband, sometimes replaced by a Smith & Wesson .357 Combat Magnum or even a single-action Colt or Ruger sixgun.

A lifetime in a dangerous profession taught Jim to always be armed, even at home. His wife — a police officer back in the days when most cops were allowed only revolvers — doesn't carry all the time, especially at home. However, since their children are grown and gone, Jim and his wife are comfortable

Many cops and civilians have opted to carry their holstered handguns even while at home. Depending upon your personal circumstances, this may be a fine idea — but be prepared for strange glances from the mailman.

keeping a K-frame Smith & Wesson revolver in a drawer or on a high shelf in every room in the house. Each is fully loaded with 158-grain +P all-lead hollowpoints, backed up by an HKS speedloader filled with the same ammo next to each gun. This assures Jim that even when he's away hunting or at a seminar, his wife will be able to reach a gun and effectively defend herself at any moment. When grandchildren come to visit, a household rule is that Jim and his spouse will be notified sufficiently in advance to make a quick sweep of the house and secure the loaded revolvers.

Ricky is a gunsmith and ex-cop. Each morning he slides a factory-tuned Colt Government Model .45 auto into an Ayoob Rear Guard holster by Mitch Rosen. The pistol, like the Federal Classic 185-grain JHP ammo he loads it with, was issued by his police department. He bought the gun when he retired. He and his lovely wife live in a remote backwoods home. And whether the problem is a human predator or one of the bears often seen on the property, he knows that he won't have time to run from the field to the house to access a gun if there's trouble.

Ricky also keeps handy a Smith & Wesson Model 65 .357 Magnum revolver. It has been fitted with a MagnaTrigger, the one "smart gun" concept that not only actually exists but has actually been proven to work. He and his bride each have the special magnetic rings which are worn on the middle finger to activate the gun. When either of them grasps that Military & Police .357, the ring activates the system, allowing the revolver to fire with a normal grasp as quickly as the trigger can be pulled. An unauthorized hand, however, can only pull the trigger far enough to the rear to allow the cylinder to rotate.

I used a MagnaTrigger .357 Combat Magnum as my "nightstand gun" when my children were little. Neither they nor a burglar had the wherewithal to make the revolver discharge, but my wife and I slipped a ring on the middle finger of each hand before going to bed (in case weak-hand-only firing was necessary). Each of us had immediate access to a gun that would only fire at our command. This old Model 66 has been in semi-retirement for some years, but with the recent marriage of our oldest daughter, we know that grandchildren can't be too far in the future. Thus, we expect that the gun we called "Fluffy, the pet revolver" (because it would only "speak" for its owners) may soon come out of retirement.

Points To Note

You have noted that each of the above-named professionals keeps his gun on at all times. This is because each has learned a basic truth: Only by wearing the loaded gun on your person at all times can it be instantly accessible while simultaneously secured from unauthorized hands.

Note also that many of the above have a fallback system of accessible weaponry. And each has ensured that every member of the household with the requisite competency level has a firearm of some sort readily accessible.

In The Workplace

Strangers are seldom allowed to enter your home at will. Your workplace — particularly if it is a place of business open to the public — has people of unknown competence and responsibility going in and out all the time. This can make securing a deadly weapon a much more daunting task.

Jack was a lawyer in the South. The secretaries at the firm thought he was like the star of the old TV show *Father Knows Best* because he never removed his suit coat or blazer in the office. Actually, fastidiousness in the name of men's fashion had little to do with it. The jacket was there to cover his custom Colt .45 automatic in its Milt Sparks inside-the-waistband holster.

As the managing partner of the firm, Jack seldom had to go to court. As a result, he could almost always keep the gun on, so long as it was concealed to keep from alarming clients. There were two occasions when he needed that gun, both times shortly after returning home from work. On one occasion, a vicious dog attacked him and a Glaser Safety Slug to the beast's throat at muzzle contact saved him from crippling injury. In a later incident, he was just leaving his

house when a home invader entered his carport armed with a MAC-10 submachine gun. Jack drew his Government Model and delivered a hail of accurate rapid fire, winning the deadly contest. He is now retired and can always be found with a gun on his person.

Dee is the CEO of a conglomerate in the Northeast. The semi-relaxed dress code in the office does not leave her any good options for carrying a concealed handgun. Her solution is a lock box, the Gun Vault. It uses a fast-access, battery-operated, push-button release with a key-lock backup. It contains an engraved Colt Detective Special .38 with which she is fast and deadly accurate. Because concealment is not a concern, she has fitted the revolver with hand-filling Pachmayr Compac grips, which give her maximum control for fast, accurate combat shooting.

Sandra is a West Coast attorney who survived a tragic multiple murder in which the disgruntled loser of a lawsuit burst into her law office shooting. People were killed before the berserker committed suicide. She remembers the helpless terror she felt as she huddled under a desk, listening to the gunfire and the screams of her colleagues.

Some other survivors of the massacre became crusaders for gun control. Sandra took a logical approach. Ever since the event, there has been a loaded handgun in the top drawer of her desk. The gun itself is sometimes a .357 Magnum S&W revolver, sometimes a 9mm HK auto pistol. She keeps the drawer in an unlocked condition, the key in place with the keychain hanging from it on a Kubotan self defense stick. When she has to leave the room, she has made it an unfailing ritual to lock the drawer of the heavy-duty steel desk and slip the Kubotan keychain into the waistband of her pantsuit. When she goes to court, the courthouse security guards obligingly hold the Kubotan for her in a secure place until she leaves the building. It's a system that works for this violence survivor who has sworn to herself, "never again."

Another survivor of a workplace massacre is *Joel*, a high school principal in Mississippi. He was vice principal of another school on the morning when gunfire broke out in the part of the school called The Commons. A 16-year-old monster had stabbed his mother to death that morning to gain access to her estranged husband's .30-30 hunting rifle, and now the boy was using it to kill and maim his schoolmates.

The school was a "gun-free environment," but under Mississippi law it was legal for Joel to have a gun in his locked car in the parking lot. He sprinted to his pickup truck, unlocked the door, and tore his Colt Officer's ACP from its carrying case. Moments later, he interdicted the young mass murderer and forced him to surrender at gunpoint. Though school policy had not allowed him the means to stop the horror immediately, Joel's courageous action and ability to reach a .45-caliber pistol had prevented more killing. At the time of his capture by this brave armed citizen, the youthful murderer was heading for the nearby middle school with the rifle and another 36 rounds of ammunition to continue the carnage.

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A small safe with push-button code safely holds this loaded S&W Centennial Airweight equipped with LaserGrips, Safariland speedloader and Bianchi Speed Strip.

Fight Against The Darkness SUREFIRE And The Surefire Institute

By Jim Gardner

A new generation of light systems is bringing the concept of "phasers on stun" out of the realm of science fiction.

The sun had set, and full darkness engulfed us as I watched the instructor demonstrate the technique on one of my fellow classmates. When the beam of light fell across his face, the student closed his eyelids and quickly snapped his head away from the brilliant light. I couldn't keep silent any longer. "Oh come on, you're exaggerating that aren't you?" My fellow student vehemently denied it, and the instructor, Barry Dueck, invited me to step forward and try it for myself. I should have paid more attention to that little grin on his face.

From five paces or so, Dueck instructed me to simulate holding my pistol on him. This guy didn't know what he was up against. With empty hands I assumed a good tight Weaver stance directed toward the center of his chest. I *was not* going to flinch like that other student had. I motioned that I was ready. When Dueck triggered the light in my face, I didn't flinch. I didn't turn away. I knew that my imaginary gun was still trained on him. I *owned* this guy!

It was at about this time that Dueck tapped me on the shoulder — just before he whispered "bang."

"I don't believe it" was all I could say. For my benefit, Dueck repeated the drill several times. The results were predictable. Despite my determination to be unaffected by the technique, it rendered me completely unable to mount an effective resistance. And of course that is exactly what the SureFire Institute is all about.

A New Standard

If you are a serious shooter, odds are that you are familiar with the SureFire name. The SureFire team has been producing the very best in compact, powerful, handheld and weapon-mounted lights since 1979. Introduced in time to be deployed by the anti-terrorist units assigned to the 1984 Olympics, the SureFire model 628 was designed to mount on the H&K MP5. It received critical acclaim. Their model 6P, introduced in 1987, set a new standard for handheld lights. Measuring only 1.0 inch in diameter and 4.75 inches in length, the 6P produced a brilliant, well-focused beam that was noticeably more powerful than that of the heavy, four D-cell lights commonly used at the time. Not only did the SureFire 6P produce a more potent beam, it employed a greatly superior switching system. A button on the tailcap could be depressed for momentary illumination, or the tailcap could be rotated for constant light.

The 6P's momentary switch, small physical size and impressive light output made it an instant success and the hands-down best choice for employment with a handgun for night firing, especially when used with the Harries technique.

The compact dimensions of the SureFire 6P were made possible by the use of the Duracell DL123A lithium battery. Originally developed for use in cameras, the DL123A provides 3 volts per cell as opposed to the normal 1.5 volts for alkaline batteries. Additionally, these batteries have a remarkable 10-year shelf life.

As excellent as the original 6P was, the SureFire team did not rest on their laurels, but continued to expand their product line. By the mid-'90s, my personal battery of SureFire lights had grown to include the 3P (an extremely compact 3 volt light) and the 9N. The 9N is a professional-grade rechargeable that uses ni-cad batteries and features a "low beam" for close work as well as an incredibly bright "high beam."

Photo by Ichiro Nagata

SEIKO
Canyon
Gobernadora

Photo by Ichiro Nagata

Frankly, I thought that the 9N was the practical limit of performance in flashlights. Fortunately, the SureFire team does not suffer from such limited vision.

"Good enough" is a phrase that does not appear to exist in the vocabulary of Dr. John Matthews, the founder and president of SureFire. Under his direction, a host of new models have been introduced. These new SureFire lights are not added to the line simply to have something new to offer, but rather each of them brings a new capability or offers a refinement of the existing models.

Along with constantly increasing the performance of the various models, the SureFire engineering team is absolutely driven to maintain their justly deserved reputation for extreme high quality. For example, in simplest terms, you might say that a SureFire flashlight is an aluminum tube with the lamp/reflector assembly threaded onto one end and the tailcap assembly threaded onto the other. It only follows then that the most efficient way to make a SureFire light would be to start with aluminum tube stock. Sorry Charley — that's not good enough. Each SureFire light starts out as a section of solid aluminum bar stock. State-of-the-art multi-axis CNC machining centers then turn, drill, bore, thread and knurl each component to finished shape. In this way, every dimension on the finished part can be held to strict tolerances. Want another example?

One of the key elements in the performance of the various SureFire lights is the lamp assembly. Countless engineering hours have been spent designing lamps that would emit the very high light output desired, and yet be resistant to shock and have a long service life. The lamps are contracted out to a specialty company for production. Production samples of the lamps are put through a strin-

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Below: *(left to right) Lamp from an old fashioned D-cell flashlight compared to the high-output lamp assembly of a SureFire M3.*

Four Favorite Sevens

By Dave Anderson

A detailed look at four of our Shooting Editor's favorite cartridges.

It is really not much of a secret that American hunte and shooters have a bewildering variety of rifle ca tridges to choose from. Indeed, the case can be mac that we may have too many. Nevertheless, we enjoy o selection. It permits us to choose a cartridge that is near ideal for some specific task and allows us to enjoy the plea ure of shooting something different from what the averag rifleman or hunter employs.

Because of these and other reasons, I have found gre success with a variety of 7mm cartridges. Some of them a very common while others have not enjoyed the attentic that their excellent performance deserves. Four of m favorites are the 7mm Mauser, 7mm-08 Remington, .28 Remington and .284 Winchester. All fire 130- to 150-gra bullets with high enough ballistic coefficients and section densities to give good retained energy. All give these bulle sufficiently high velocities so that trajectories are flat ov realistic hunting ranges. They achieve these efficient balli tics with moderate recoil, even in rifles that are light ar portable enough to be carried comfortably.

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Left: *(First pair) Short magazine boxes and chamber throats require heavy bullets to be seated deeply, robbing case capacity. (Second pair) If magazine and chamber permit, loading to a longer OAL can increase performance for handloaders.*

Chart #1

CALIBER: 7MM
MAUSER: SELECTED FACTORY LOADS

MANUFACTURER	BULLET TYPE	BULLET WEIGHT gr.	MUZZLE VELOCITY fps
Federal	Nosler Partition	140	2660
Federal	Sierra Pro-Hunter	140	2660
Federal	Hi-Shok	175	2440
Hornady	SST	139	2700
Hornady	SST Light Magnum	139	2830
Remington	Core-Lokt	140	2660
Winchester	Power-Point	145	2660

Chart #2

.280 REMINGTON: SELECTED FACTORY LOADS

MANUFACTURER	BULLET TYPE	BULLET WEIGHT gr.	MUZZLE VELOCITY fps
Federal High Energy	Trophy Bonded	140	3150
Federal	Trophy Bonded	160	2800
Hornady Light Magnum	BTSP	139	3110
Remington	Nosler Ballistic Tip	140	3000
Remington	Core-Lokt	165	2820
Speer Nitrex	Grand Slam	160	2850
Winchester	Fail Safe	140	3050
Winchester	Ballistic Silvertip	140	3040

Chart #3

7MM-08 REMINGTON: SELECTED FACTORY LOADS

MANUFACTURER	BULLET TYPE	BULLET WEIGHT gr.	MUZZLE VELOCITY fps
Federal	Nosler Partition	140	2800
Federal High Energy	Trophy Bonded	140	2950
Hornady Light Magnum	SST	139	3000
Remington	Hollow Point	120	3000
Remington	Nosler Ballistic Tip	140	2860
Speer Nitrex	Grand Slam	145	2810
Winchester	Fail Safe	140	2760
Winchester	Power Point Plus	140	2875

The Winchester Model 88 chambered in .284 may not have been a marketing success, but it is a potent combination. This very nice whitetail was taken on Anderson's farm.

THE GREATEST RESPONS

BY JOHN TAFFIN

I've often felt that I was fortunate to grow up during a great time for kids, and also in a town that was definitely kid-friendly. Back then, America was a different place. Divorce and broken families were virtually unheard of. In my fourth-grade class I was the only kid whose last name was different than his parents. My own father had been killed before I was a year old and my mother remarried when I was three. My step-dad, who was too old to be drafted, enlisted in the Army and was shipped off to Europe. For much of my young life I could not understand why he would enlist and go off to war when he did not have to serve. He did not own a house or even a car, and he certainly did not have great standing in society. But he had attributes that I had not yet learned the importance of, and key among these was a love of freedom and a sense of duty to country and community.

The America That Was

My parents were great teachers. They were part of the Greatest Generation, living through the Great Depression and World War II. We were always relatively poor, but my folks were proud people and never accepted charity of any kind. I still well remember the stinging rebuke I received from my step-dad when I suggested that with his retirement income he was eligible for food stamps! My parents taught me the meaning of responsibility for my actions — to treat all people with respect, to work hard, to always give more than required, to be dependable and loyal, to love my country and freedom, and to remember that my actions reflected upon them as parents.

Long before Harry Truman proclaimed "The Buck Stops Here!" my parents lived by such a code. They also taught me that the simple things in life were very important, especially when shared with family. For them, popcorn and Kool-aid on Saturday night shared with

There is no shortcut to the vital task of raising children who are safe around firearms.

SIBILITY

family was preferred over champagne and steak with strangers. Neither of my folks ever graduated from high school; my step-dad only made it to the fourth grade. Because of that, my education was tremendously important to them. I had better not come home from school with a note indicating that I was in trouble, or I was *really* in trouble.

When it came to school and any problems that might erupt, teachers and principals seemed to be equipped with the wisdom and common sense to settle the issue. Most of what I was taught by my parents was backed up by public school, church, and even many movies.

Today as a reaction to some random acts of violence, schools have drafted a no exceptions, zero-tolerance policy toward "weapons" of any kind, real or imagined. We have all heard of kids being suspended from school for things such as drawing pictures of weapons or even pointing their finger as if it were a gun. Schools are searching for answers and having a difficult time coming up with them. In my grade-school days after World War II, we all drew pictures depicting soldiers and battles from the war. And *zero* was the number of boys who did not carry a pocket knife.

Those knives were used for many things, not the least of which was playing mumbletypeg at recess and at lunchtime. If you don't know what mumbletypeg is, ask your dad or granddad. I was the proud "Keeper of the Blade" in my fourth-grade class. Any time the teacher needed a package or carton opened, the task fell to my blade. Today such a teacher would be fired. Such is progress! We all had knives, and they were never used in anything but a positive way. Obviously the mere presence of a "weapon" does not cause violence.

A Changing World

Though I did not realize it at the time, it was a sad moment when television arrived. Something drastically changed. Slowly but surely each household acquired one, and the neighborhood

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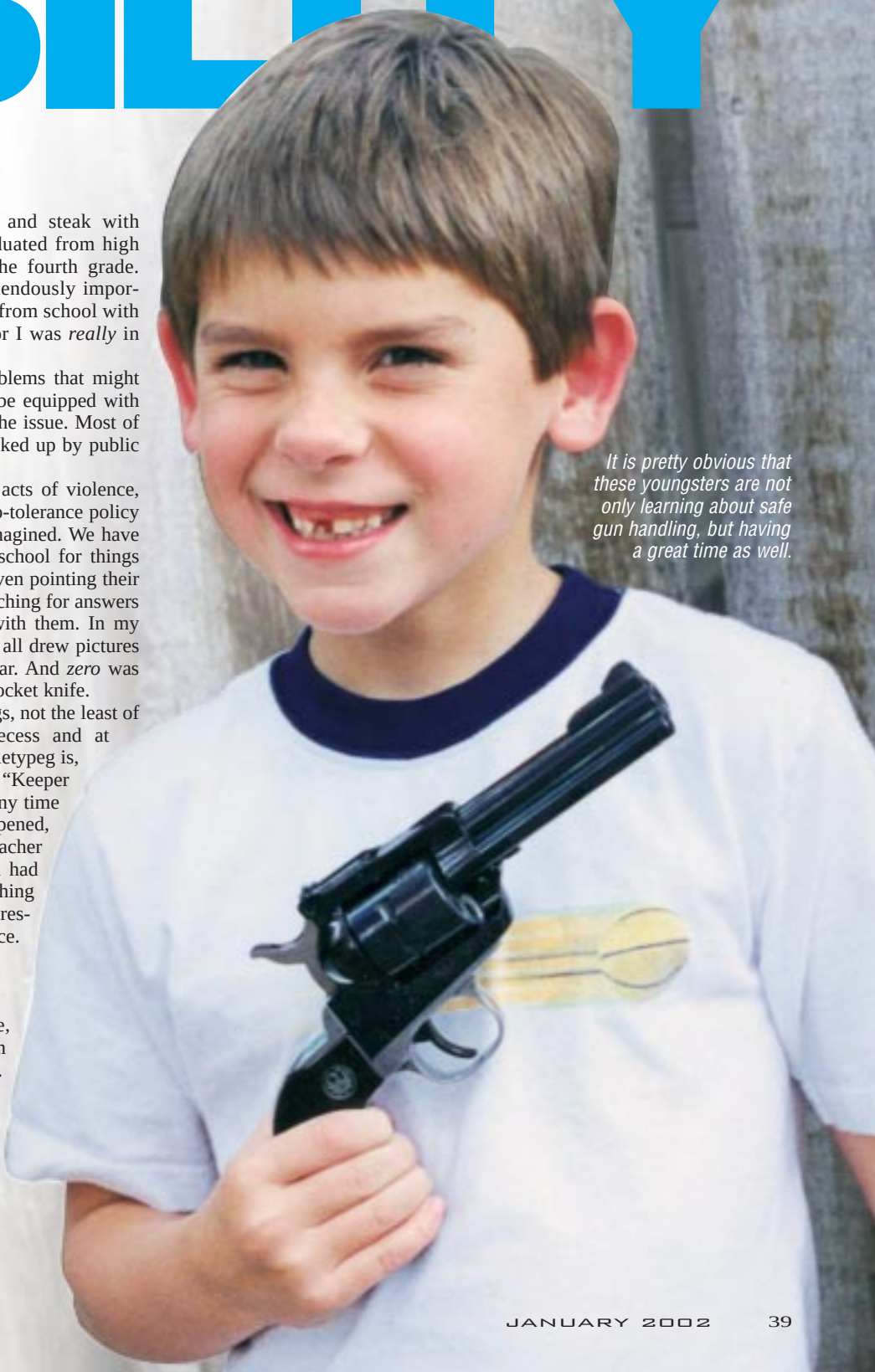


It is pretty obvious that these youngsters are not only learning about safe gun handling, but having a great time as well.

Performance Center
JEC0156
SUNSTRIKE
EI EXECUTIVE

Smith & Wesson Model 945-.40 Compact

Good looking and great shooting, Petty finds that there is a lot to like about this new offering from the S&W Performance Center.

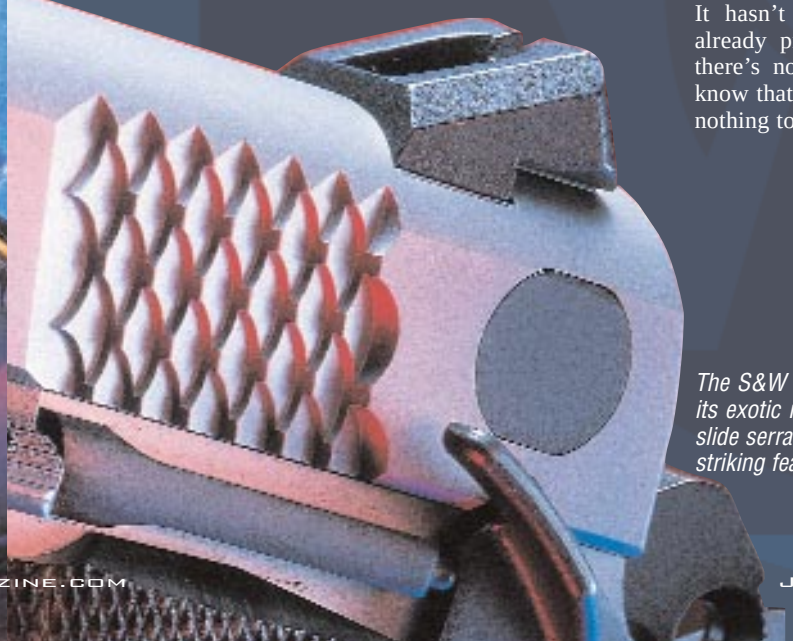
Story by Charles E. Petty *Photos by Ichiro Nagata*

A couple of years ago the Smith & Wesson Performance Center introduced the Model 945. Simply described, it had a top half that was typical S&W, but the frame distinctly resembled the 1911 Government Model. Rumor had it that this was to be Smith & Wesson's entry into the competition for a new FBI pistol, but that was routinely denied.

I had the opportunity to test the 945 and became more than a little enamored with it. The pistol looked great, felt good, and was joyously accurate. So instead of sending it back to S&W as is usually my custom, I sent a check. When I learned that there was going to be a 945 chambered for the .40 S&W cartridge, I made every effort (some might say it was more like sniveled and whined) to obtain an early sample. Either way... the gun is here.

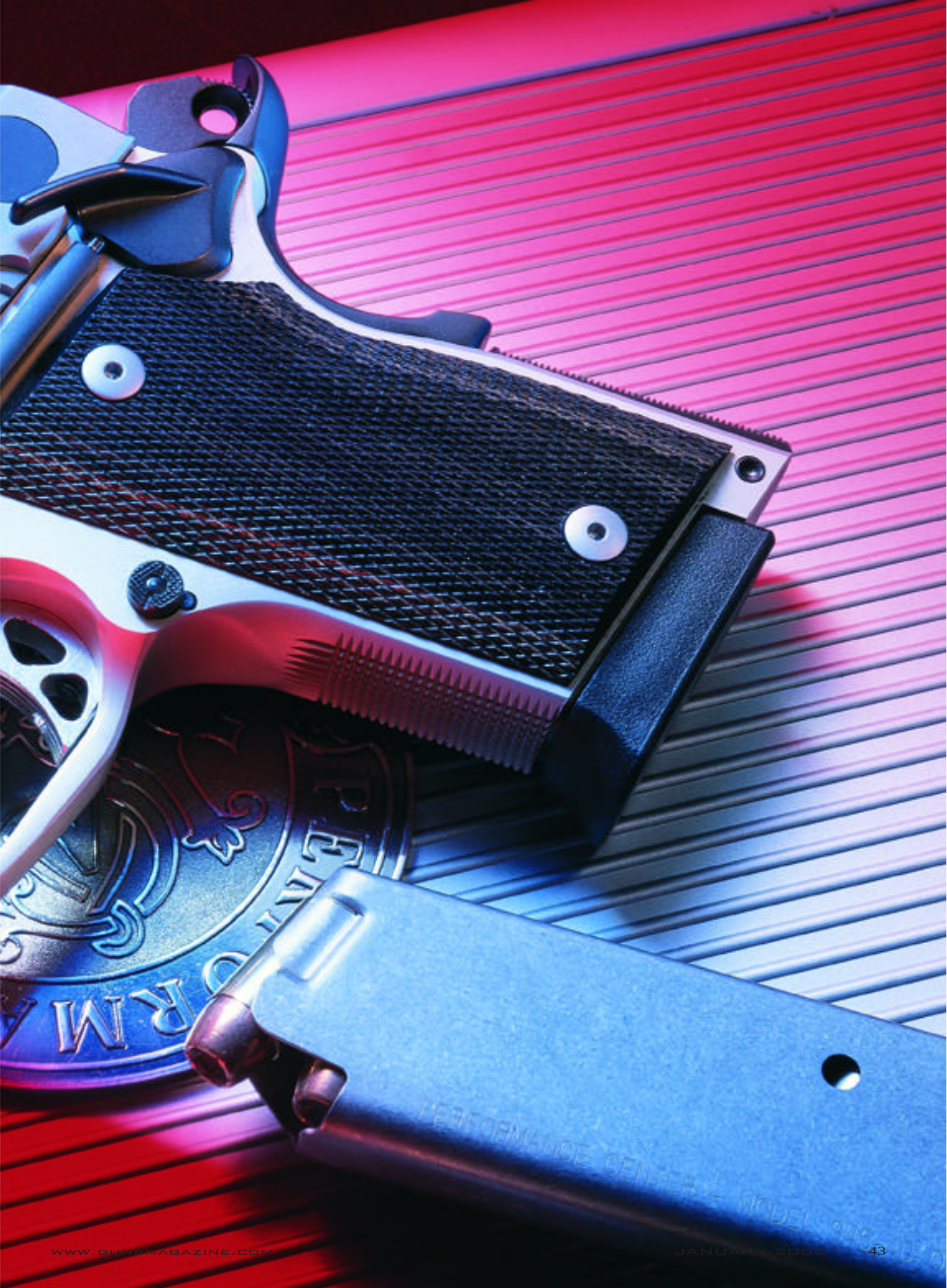
One of the reasons for my begging is that I am a very staunch supporter of the cartridge. In just over 10 years, it has become the number one choice of law enforcement at every level. Why? Because it makes sense. It is small enough to be used in 9mm-sized pistols and has enough oomph to be an effective defense cartridge. I never pass up the chance to say "I told you so" to those who dubbed it the Forty Short and Weak.

Now the power gurus still don't like it, but it's been so thoroughly embraced by the ammo companies that you can have pretty much any load you want, from mild to wild. It hasn't been +P'd yet, but since it's already pretty far up the pressure curve there's not much room. And we already know that it works on the street, so there's nothing to fix anyhow.

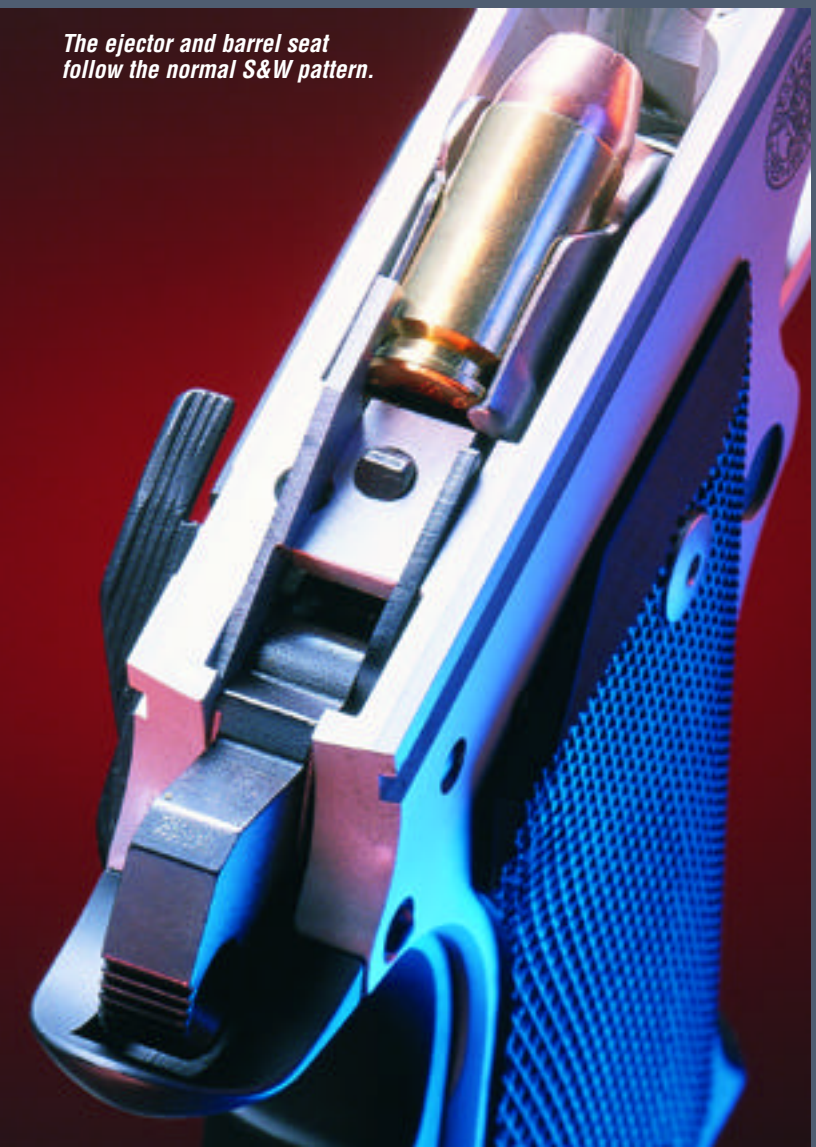


The S&W Performance Center is renown for its exotic machine work; the "Dragon Scale" slide serrations are perhaps the pistol's most striking feature.

Smith & Wesson Model 945-.40 Compact


PERFORMANCE CENTER MODEL

The 1911 influence is obvious in the thumb and grip safeties. Novak three-dot sights are snag proof and work well in dim light.



The ejector and barrel seat follow the normal S&W pattern.

Compact And Capable

But the gun that arrived from S&W was not exactly what I was expecting. The first 945 is a full size .45 with a stainless steel frame. The 945-.40 is a compact — really compact — single-action pistol with an aluminum alloy frame. In fact, if you put it on top of one of the current crop of compact 1911 clones, you'll see that they're very close to the same size. For another perspective, the 945-.40 compares closely in size to the very popular 9mm S&W Model 3913. So while the first 945 is a wonderfully accurate target pistol, the new one is a wonderfully accurate carry gun.

When we discussed the 945, it made sense to talk separately about the top and bottom halves, and the same applies here. The frame looks very much like a government model on the outside, but internally there is also a generous S&W influence. The trigger mechanism is very 1911-ish, with a beavertail and mainspring housing that could probably be interchanged. The firing-pin safety is cleverly keyed to the grip safety just as it was with the original Swartz safety on early Colts or the present-day Kimber Series 2 pistols. When the grip safety is depressed, the firing-pin is unlocked. The ejector is — just as it is on all S&W autopistols — a pivoting lever that sticks up on the left side of the frame. The barrel seat is totally S&W. There is no link between barrel and frame, but the barrel rides within matching cam grooves cut in the frame. This arrangement has been designed to ensure adequate dwell time and prevent the barrel from unlocking before the bullet leaves the barrel. This was alleged to be a fault in early .40 S&W designs, although high speed photography showed that to be untrue.

One very notable aspect of the frame is in the grip area. The mainspring housing is retained by a pin, just as it is on the 1911. But just forward of it, the frame is cut away by a little over 0.2 inch. So even though the magazine holds seven rounds, it doesn't stick out to impair concealability.

In terms of both mechanics and appearance, the slide is typical of Third Generation S&W pistols. There is a blued filler where the normal double-action pistol's safety and decocker would be. Most striking are the "dragon scale" slide serrations that were seen on the first 945. The remainder of the stainless steel slide has a fine matte finish. Sights are Novak with the typical three-dot markings.

The 3.8-inch barrel is supported in the front by a Briley spherical bushing that is common to many Performance Center autos. It is both a blessing and a curse. The design contributes significantly to the pistol's accuracy but also complicates reassembly after field stripping. The brass element within the bushing must be aligned just so to permit reassembly. With the bushing correctly aligned, the barrel drops right in; if it isn't, reassembly is a challenge. Patience, not force, is the only answer. There is a small U-shaped cut on top of the barrel's headspace extension that permits visual inspection for a round in the chamber.

Off To The Range

The whole package is a 28-ounce defensive handgun with impeccable credentials. As is my custom, it was tested in a three-part routine. First is just a short function test that also serves to help break in the gun. This varies but normally involves 50 to 100 rounds of assorted ammo. Afterward the pistol is cleaned and inspected to see if anything is out of whack in the fitting. This will usually be revealed in the form of abnormal wear marks.

The second phase is accuracy testing — preferably in the Ransom Rest. Ammo selection is always a problem here because I obviously can't test a gun with every available load. My policy is to try to test with representative loads from the major manufacturers and to cover the range of bullet weights and velocities that are commonly used.

Clean, crisp lines are evident on the 945-40. Notice also the exotic barrel bushing and trigger over-travel stop.

When it made its debut in 1990, the .40 S&W was loaded with a 180-grain bullet at around 950 fps. This duplicated the FBI's 10mm Auto load that had been shown to be effective based on the FBI's ammunition testing. But the success of the cartridge has encouraged ammunition development to the point that we now have bullets of 135, 155, 165 and 180 grains weight. The 155 came quickly in response to demands from the disciples of velocity. And, of course, we have widely disparate opinions on that subject. When the FBI considered adopting a .40 S&W pistol, they chose a 165-grain bullet loaded to 980 fps. This is the present Federal Hydra-shok load. But proportional pressure and velocity possibilities suggested that the 165 could be loaded to much higher velocities. All the other manufacturers who offer a 165, load it to a published 1,130 to 1,150 fps.

The latest bullet weight is a 135-grain hollowpoint at around 1,200 fps. This prompted a wag I know to comment that we had finally succeeded in inventing the 9mm Luger.

Our purpose here is really not to debate which load should be used in *any* gun but to show you the available options. The velocities shown here are from factory catalogs, which are almost always higher than those we measure with *real* guns as opposed to test barrels. For this test it was sufficient to select one load with each bullet weight and both high- and low-velocity loads with the 165. A few of each of those was used in the preliminary testing to be sure the gun functioned with them before the accuracy work began.

In the early days, the .40 had a reputation for less than sparkling accuracy. But in the Ransom Rest, it was quickly obvious that accuracy was not going to be a problem with the 945-.40. The plan was to fire three, 10-shot groups at 25 yards with each of six representative loads, and that was done uneventfully. While in the rest, the pistol experienced three incidences of a case failing to eject completely and being trapped between the barrel and slide. Try as we might,

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ACCURACY TEST RESULTS

Load	Velocity	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Average
Black Hills 180 gr. JHP	915	1.64"	1.79"	1.63"	1.69"
Federal 165 gr. Hydra-shok	911	1.92"	1.70"	1.96"	1.86"
Pro Load 135 gr. JHP	1138	1.79"	1.55"	1.84"	1.74"
Remington 165 gr. Golden Saber	1034	2.40"	1.48"	2.16"	2.01"
Speer 180 gr. Gold Dot	936	1.41"	1.79"	1.40"	1.53"
Winchester 155 gr. Silvertip	1080	2.34"	2.05"	1.86"	2.07"

Average group size for all shots fired: 1.82 inches

Accuracy results are 10-shot groups from Ransom Rest at 25 yards.
Velocity is the instrumental average of 30 shots as measured by a PACT Professional Chronograph.

THOMPSON/CENTER'S .22 LR CLASSIC

Taffin finds that T/C's new .22 semiauto lives up to its name.

By John Taffin

Clas-sic: (klas'-ik) "of recognized worth, ...of model excellence." We live in an extremely fast-paced world, which seems to be getting even faster on a daily basis. Despite the rapid pace of our lives, one would still expect that it would still take some time for items — especially firearms — to become antiques, collectibles or classics. When I was a kid, a nickel would purchase one pack of bubble gum, which also yielded one baseball trading card. Today those cards from the 1940s are worth a lot of money. (Sure wish I still had them!) Fifty years ago the value was five cents minus the cost of the gum.

My grandsons call me every once in a while to take them to the mall just so they can visit the card shop (there is never any other reason for me to go to that place). Do they buy one pack of gum with one trading card? Not on your life! They can purchase boxes with hundreds of cards, all of which are "instant collectibles." Sure they are! The card shop makes plenty of money and the kids miss out on the great joy of collecting one item at a time. Such is the cost of progress.

When a firearms' manufacturer labels one of its products as a "Classic," the first thought might very well be — what audacity. At least when Smith & Wesson came out with its Classic, Classic DX and Classic Hunter Models, it already had a successful track record of building great .44 Magnum sixguns. Now comes Thompson/Center with its very first .22 semiautomatic rifle. In fact, it's T/C's first repeating rifle, and it's called a Classic. Audacious? Not quite.

A Leader In The Field

Since the 1960's, Thompson/Center has been building great firearms. The T/C Contender single-shot pistol has been chambered in virtually every sixgun and levergun cartridge, as well as many wildcats. And it has become the standard by which all single-shot pistols are judged. Mention muzzleloading rifles and, once again, Thompson/Center will probably be the first name that comes to mind. Their muzzleloaders are affordable, accurate and built along traditional lines. I own three muzzleloading rifles: a Seneca .45, a Pennsylvania Match .50 and a Hawken Renegade .54 — all are marked "THOMPSON/CENTER." Once again, T/C muzzleloaders are the muzzleloaders by which all others are judged. Finally, in recent years Thompson/Center has brought forth a new single-shot pistol strong enough to handle cartridges normally chambered in bolt-action rifles, and T/C's Encore is well on its way to becoming a Classic.

continued on page 66

Below: *50-yard groups fired with the T/C .22 LR Classic.*

LOAD	MV	5 SHOTS/50 YDS	5 SHOTS/25 YDS
CCI Blazer	1205	1 1/8"	3/4"
CCI SGB	1250	1"	1/4"
CCI Stinger	1505	1 5/8"	7/8"
CCI Mini-Mag HP	1281	1 1/8"	5/8"
CCI Mini-Mag+V	1380	1"	3/4"
CCI Std Velocity	997	7/8"	3/4"
CCI Green Tag	1022	1 1/8"	3/8"
Federal Champion	1145	1 3/5"	1/2"
Federal American Eagle	1218	1"	1/2"
Federal Lightning	1181	1 3/4"	5/8"
Federal Gold Medal Match	1125	7/8"	1/4"
Federal Hi-Vel Classic	1245	5/8"	1/2"
Federal Hi-Power HP	1198	1 1/2"	1/4"
Federal Hi-Power	1183	1 7/8"	1/2"
PMC Match Rifle	1002	1 1/8"	1/4"
Remington Target	1116	1"	1/2"
Winchester SX HV	1175	3/4"	1/4"
Winchester Wildcat	1225	1 1/4"	3/8"
Winchester Power Point	1241	1"	5/8"
Winchester HV HP	1276	1 1/4"	3/8"
Wnchstr Super Silhouette	1180	1"	1/4"
SX Pistol Match	1085	1 3/8"	3/8"
SX Std Velocity	1086	1 1/8"	1/2"

ACCURATE PLATING AND WEAPONRY

Custom Beretta M92

This AP&W Beretta is proof positive that the 1911 is not the only service pistol fit for fine custom work.

By R. K. Campbell

In one form or another, the Beretta M92 series has been with us for 25 years now. Its merits have been widely praised in some circles and vigorously denounced in others. But despite howls from traditionalists, the M92 was adopted in the mid-'80s as the U.S. Military M9 service pistol and has also achieved wide acceptance in law-enforcement circles.

Secret Of Its Success

To have become as popular as it has, the Beretta must possess some worthwhile features. And while it differs from conventional semiauto pistols in some respects, it is perhaps these differences that has ensured its success.

The AP&W Beretta looks sharp with its new finish, sights and CTC Lasergrips.

The Beretta features an open-top slide. This may be one of the reasons for the pistol's outstanding reliability. The Beretta uses a short recoil action and an oscillating wedge lockup of the type first used on the Mauser C 96 pistol. This wedge cams up and down to lock and unlock the barrel to the slide. No swinging link, no barrel bushing. The protruding "wings" of this wedge were known to break at high round counts, but a change to more rounded wings was affected early in the Model 92 program. This lockup confounded those striving for increased accuracy. They had to look toward the barrel and slide relation. Early custom efforts at a slide-mounted group tightener added a significant amount of bulk to the pistol. This is no longer necessary.

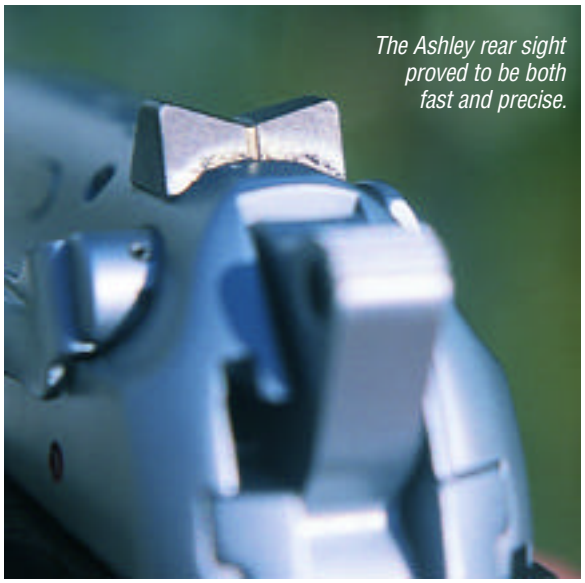
The Beretta fieldstrips readily by a simple camming lock on the right side. In maintenance requirements, it falls between the Colt (which is desirous of lubricant) and the Glock (which scarcely needs lubricant). A little oil on the long bearing surfaces is all the Beretta needs for duty. For long-term range use, the gun should be oiled a little more heavily.

The Beretta boasts a straight-line cartridge feed that promotes reliability. The cartridge skips the feed ramp and is funneled directly into the chamber. Even with lead bullet handloads, which bulge the case an additional .001 to .003 inch, the stock Beretta has proven reliable.

The Beretta's trigger action has been criticized for length. Using an external drawbar, it is seldom as smooth as that of the SIG pistols, but the action tends to improve with use. Trigger reset is not as fast as with the Smith and Wesson autos, but it can be learned.

I am strongly in favor of on-safe carry. Some modern

Good gear for everyday use, the custom Beretta carried in a K.L. Null holster and a Spyderco Ayoob knife.



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Beretta pistols have a decocker only. In this version, the pistol can not be deactivated. The "safety" lever simply decocks the gun and then springs back to its original position. To each his own. I recognize the difficulty of taking a Beretta off safe quickly. However, with a quick motion of the straight thumb similar to that used with the 1911, it can be very fast.

After a few thousand rounds with the Beretta, I found the pistol could be shot fast and well. All fighting pistols are tradeoffs of some type. The Beretta is bulky but very controllable. It has the least muzzle flip of any service 9mm. Once on target, you tend to stay there. In my experience, accuracy is quite satisfactory.

Building A Better Beretta

I came to admire the Beretta for its good qualities but realized that it could be improved. I have enjoyed custom 1911 pistols for years. Why not a custom Beretta?

Bob Cogan of Accurate Plating and Weaponry is a maestro of the 1911, but does not confine his work to that design. He does all types of autos and more than a few revolvers. A Browning Hi-Power from his shop has ridden with me for years and has always proven worthy of my trust. When I instructed that the Beretta must be reliable above all else, he was not offended. Like all truly good pistolsmiths, he asked me what the gun would be primarily used for. I explained that it was destined for use as a service pistol by my son and that it might end up in any corner of the world. The ability to use military magazines and ammunition would be a must.

The gun was in need of refinishing. Although serviceable, its blue finish was a little ragged around the edges. In addition to a new rust-proof finish, we discussed many options, including a radical conversion to a single action trigger used by competitive shooters. While such a conversion was an interesting idea, for my uses, the gun needed to retain the stock controls and method of operation.

When the pistol returned from AP&W, I sensed immediately that I had received more than I bargained for. All factory springs were replaced by premium components from either Trapper gun springs or W.C. Wolff. The chamber had been polished to ensure reliable feed. The trigger action, according to my RCBS trigger scale, was lightened to an incredibly smooth 9.75 pounds double-action. In single-action mode, the trigger broke at a crisp 3.0 pounds. The pistol was refinished with an attractive electroless nickel. A little dull compared to my Browning's chrome, this finish is doubtless more utilitarian.

The Beretta had been accurate enough for general use, exhibiting groups averaging three inches at 25 yards with quality ammunition. I requested that accuracy be improved but only if possible without compromising reliability. Cogan installed a novel barrel tightener. The barrel was turned down and a tightening component placed in the end of the slide. No unnecessary bulk had been added to the pistol, and the sole external trace of the accuracy improvement was the presence of a set-screw, visible on either side of the front sight and a slightly different barrel contour.

At first glance, the newly installed sights may seem to contradict the increased accuracy requirements. The rear sight is an Ashley Express sight, and the front sight had been modified into a large translucent red globe. These sights are excellent for close-range shooting. Those who have survived close encounters of the lethal type realize that they tend to take place at conversational distances. Following the bouncing red ball should be a good way to get high-speed hits. Whether or not this sighting system would work at longer distances would not be known until it was tested.

Beyond Expectations

The proof was in the firing. I expected the tuned gun to be more accurate but to possibly show a distinct preference for one load over the other. I was correct in this prediction. While the overall level of accuracy was improved, the pistol now showed a marked preference for specific loads. I was also concerned that the smoother action and apparently lighter hammer fall might not ensure 100-percent reliable ignition. I should not have worried. For much of my life, self defense has not been a secondary or armchair consideration. In perilous circumstances, I have carried an AP&W Commander .45 and an AP&W Hi-Power with equal confidence. The Cogan tuned Beretta proved to be just as reliable.

For evaluation on the range, I employed my well broken in K.L. Null GSS holster. This holster is constructed of premium shell horsehide and holds the weapon close to the body. The holster is very comfortable and features a tongue extending behind the slide, which protects both gun and shooter. This is among my favorite holsters for serious use.

Test ammunition was varied to say the least. I have a box of leftover ammunition from many range trips, and several hundred 9mm rounds have spilled into it. I use this ammunition in short-range combat drills. The resultant *bam-bam-POW-bam* is disconcerting and requires concentration. This type of mixed loading is also a good test of any handgun's reliability. The newly tuned Beretta was also tested with a supply of high-quality ammunition from Black Hills, Fiocchi, Federal, IMI and Powermax.

The exceptionally smooth double-action of the AP&W Beretta caused me to re-evaluate my normal shooting method for DA semiautos. When addressing a double-action trigger, there are two acceptable techniques. The first is to simply bring

the gun on target and fire. This is the derided crunch-and-fire method. It works at short range.

The second and preferred method is aptly called the Master technique. The Master requires much training and experience. In the Master technique, the trigger press begins as the hands meet in front of the belt, prepping for a Weaver stance. Trigger pressure is gradually increased as the gun rises and comes on target. If your timing is perfect, the trigger breaks and the hammer falls just as the sights align on the target. With this technique, an accomplished shooter can deliver a center-mass strike about as quickly and accurately with a double-action pistol as with a single-action. Requiring much skill to properly execute, this technique was developed to overcome the inadequacies of the DA pistol.

When firing the Beretta, I found that the complicated Master technique was not required. Perhaps a short prep just before the gun came on target helped at longer range, but the Cogan-modified trigger action was the smoothest I have felt on any double action pistol and permitted a smooth, rapid press after aligning the sights on target.

As I eliminated much of the oddball ammunition in my range box, I found the Beretta simply hung on the target. The Ashley Express sights were wonderful for close work. Draw, fire, and you had a hit. Although I fired as quickly as possible, my groups were tightly centered. The combination of the low recoil of the 9mm Luger cartridge and a gun that limits muzzle flip gave excellent results. I fired one-hand shoulder points and even speed rocks at close range. Results were uniformly excellent.

After a session of fast work at close range, I concentrated on verifying the pistol's performance at the 25-yard line. In previous experimentation with the Ashley sights on another pistol, I was able to fire a small group at 75 feet. But if I took the gun down and attempted to fire again, my second group would not converge with the first. In other words, consistent accuracy was lost. Intrinsic accuracy, the ability to make a small group, was there; however, the practical ability to place the bullets where they needed to go was compromised. The Beretta's sights, utilizing the red-bead front presented no such problem. Frankly, I was surprised. Carefully squeezing the trigger in single-action mode, I placed 10 rounds of Black Hills 124-grain +P ammunition into a group of a little less than three inches offhand. Further testing from a barricade position brought 10-round groups down to approximately 2 inches. Accuracy was definitely improved over the stock gun.

While the Ashley rear sight and red globe front combination had worked perfectly, I elected to add to the capability of the Beretta by installing a set of Crimson Trace Lasergrips. Lasers have been

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roundly criticized by a great many experts, and indeed most of the early lasers were not to be trusted. These Lasergrips, however, are a different matter. They are self contained, add virtually no bulk to the gun, and don't interfere with using a normal holster. They retain their zero perfectly and have proven to be totally reliable. There are a host of circumstances where their presence may make the critical difference in being able to quickly place an accurate shot.

Our initial range testing was a success. The pistol proved not only reliable but accurate with an eclectic supply of 9mm Luger ammunition. It outperformed any 9mm I have ever fired, including the estimable Browning Hi-Power. The absolute control inherent in the Beretta made it a joy to fire.

Bob Cogan is known primarily as a handgun refinisher, and a very successful one. The properties of his finishes are well-known and respected. The electroless nickel finish applied to the Beretta never displayed corrosion, chipping or peeling, despite a cavalier attitude toward maintenance and over 500 presentations from tightly boned holsters. From my experience, chrome is less subject to wear, while electroless nickel is more resistant to corrosion. Take your pick based upon your needs. The Beretta seems appropriately finished in a coating superior to any available from the factory.

If someone had told me 10 years ago that I would be carrying a Beretta M92 on a daily basis, I would have chuckled. Nevertheless, the good qualities of the Beretta, both before and after custom work, are not easily dismissed. As a fighting handgun, the Beretta makes the grade. With a few improvements from Accurate Plating and Weaponry, it is a superb choice.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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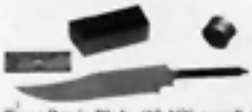

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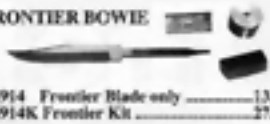

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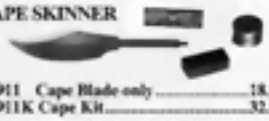

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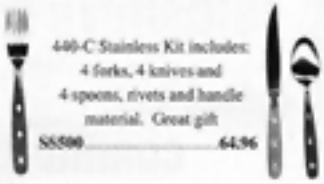

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The Mauser Karabiner 98 KURZ

Restoring a surplus Mauser to prime shooting condition can be satisfying.

BY MICHAEL CUMPSTON

The spate of imported military surplus arms that came on the market after the passing of the McClure-Volkmer Act in the mid '80s may have slowed a bit, but there are still great numbers of these interesting arms available. One of the recently advertised offerings is a number of Yugoslavian Model 48 or K98 pattern Mauser rifles boasted by their importers to be in like-new condition. Never one to resist temptation, I sought the opportunity to acquire one of these late model K98s for my own collection — straight from the former Slavic People's Republic.

Mauser rifles of the late 19th and 20th century retain a strong following among collectors and shooters alike. The rifles in service from 1893 until the middle of the 20th century display a strong commonality of handling features. The German soldier of World War II could swap rifles with a Voertrekker at the end of the 19th Century and find the operating drill of the 1893 Mauser completely familiar. The Boer would be hard put to identify the advances that made the Mauser 98 the final word in turn-bolt rifles for the next hundred years. The operating procedure, the sighting equipment and the overall feel are virtually identical.

Pleasurable hours spent refurbishing and shooting a pair of pre-98 Mausers predisposed me to try out a late vintage model. In the world of surplus arms, phrases such as "like new" and "never issued" have a meaning all their own. And they certainly don't mean that the arm is ready for optimum use right out of the crate.

The Find

A local dealer came up with a K98 imported by Century Arms International in never-issued condition. Aside from very minor blue wear and some light scratches on the stock, it appeared to be a prime example of 20th-century small arm that had seen no active duty. The Yugoslav crest established its origin in the post-war Peoples Republic, but it is of the Karabiner 98 Kurz pattern rather than the later Yugoslavian model 48 style. The receiver, bolt and stock bear matching numbers. The teak stock shows a distinct straight grain and an interesting warm color, which distinguishes it from the more common walnut. This puts it head and shoulders above the laminates that were produced during hardwood shortages in Western Europe. Metal work and wood-to-metal fit appeared to be very good for a military arm.

Problems

The K98 was floating awash in Cosmoline. If memory serves, it had more fresh, gooey Cosmoline, upon wood and metal — inside and out — than any other surplus rifle I've ever encountered.

Fortunately I exercised the opportunity to try the new Tetra cleaning solvent from FTI that, along with separate and judicious applications of heat, aided greatly in restoring the rifle to shooting form.

Several problems emerged at the first range session. My supply of December-1953 marked, 7.92 Yugoslav ball frequently required two hits of the striker to ignite. In contrast, fresh Sellier and Bellot, 197-grain soft-point ignited 100 percent, as did some 1942-manufactured, chlorate-primed, Turkish 154-grain ball. Initial 100-yard groups ranged from 4 to 11 inches leading to the discovery that the barreled action was walking about in the stock, even with both action screws fully tightened. I never did figure out if this came from original poor fitting or the deleterious effects of the decades-long Cosmoline bath. In any case, the rifle was not performing to the expectations raised by the excellent performance of my Model 95 Chilean Mauser or my 96/38 Swedish Naval Rifle.

Making It Shoot

Not content with having a genuine relic of mid-century Euro-Politic hanging on the wall, I relieved the barrel channel and the area around the recoil lug and mounting screws, sanding deep enough to get beneath any remaining Cosmoline. An application of Birchwood Casey bedding gel finished the job. Several range sessions encompassed S&B soft-points; 1953-minted, 199-grain Yugoslav ball ammunition loaded with 40 grains of a square flake powder; and the war-time Turkish ball loaded with cupro-nickel jacketed, 154-grain full patch bullets over flake powder that looked exactly like that in the Yugoslav rounds.

Velocity readings included a minimum of 16 rounds of each load. The Yugoslav ball managed 2,471 fps, with an extreme spread of 135 fps and standard deviation of 38 fps. Groups from the newly bedded K98k ranged from 2.7 to 4 inches, with the most often encountered five-round spread measuring just under 3 inches. The S&B sporting round employed a 197-grain soft-point over 42 grains of stick powder at 2,556 fps, 141 extreme spread and an SD of 41. Groups measured 4, 2.7 and 1.3 inches. The Turkish ball was the most consistent of the lot. Average velocity was 2,977 fps with an extreme spread of only 60 fps and SD of 18 fps. Groups with the war-time ammo averaged 3 to 4 inches. Recoil, as might be expected, is considerably more obstreperous than with my earlier vintage Mausers — more like the 30-’06 these loads closely duplicate.

It is not at all objectionable from the standing or seated positions but makes itself known when shooting prone or from the bench. Casual 100-yard position shooting revealed the 8mm to be about as field accurate as my Swedish short rifle and a bit less so than my excellent 7mm Model 95. From a seated position with my back leaning against a range upright, I put four of five rapid-fire rounds into a 6-inch bull at 100 yards, with a fifth round outside the bull by about 1.5 inches. Such results would guarantee venison on the table were the 154-grain ball loads replaced with a soft-point hunting bullet with the same 3,032 foot pounds of energy.

The various Yugoslav Mausers played a small but important role in enabling the Slavic republic to thumb its nose at the greater Soviet hegemony until the Evil Empire followed the Reich into the dustbin of history. Shooters willing to deal with the vagaries attendant upon a half century of arsenal storage can, with minimal effort, put such a rifle in good shooting trim. So treated, the K98k and its Yugoslav variations serve as interesting artifacts and rugged, practical tools equal to any task suitable to the iron-sighted rifle.

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BY CHARLES E. PETTY

To Trim Or Not To Trim... THAT IS THE QUESTION

Not too long ago, I received a letter from a reader who was concerned about his .45 ACP cases. He knew that he was supposed to trim them. But he couldn't find any that were as long as the trim-to length shown in the loading manual.

"What am I doing wrong," he asked?

The answer, of course, is absolutely nothing. When in the throes of terminal boredom — with positively nothing else to do — I have measured the length of several .45 ACP cases. I cannot recall a single instance of finding one that was too long. That surely doesn't mean that there isn't one out there. But finding one is probably less likely than hitting blackjack in Vegas. It can happen, but not very often.

Let me tell you why. Dimensions of cartridge cases and chambers are established by the Small Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers Institute for every caliber loaded in the United States. SAAMI is a voluntary organization to which most — but not all — of the players who make guns and ammunition belong. Members agree to abide by established industry-wide standards for things such as cartridge and chamber dimensions and the pressures to which ammunition is loaded — important stuff.

To establish a new standard requires consensus among the members. If a concensus cannot be reached, there is no standard. A great example is the pressure for +P+ ammunition. We know it's out there and that some SAAMI members load ammo to such levels. But the point at which something becomes +P+ is an individual decision. It is also of questionable value in any real-world context. But since some law enforcement agencies want it, some of the manufacturers will make it for them. Us ordinary folks are far better served by forgetting that it exists.

But SAAMI specifications for ammo dimensions are well-established and agreed upon. However, we are dealing with two separate components here, cartridge-case length and chamber depth. A maximum-length cartridge must fit into a minimum-length chamber. That makes sense.

But, of course, all manufacturing has some tolerance. So we'll see a range. In SAAMI, the length shown is the maximum allowed with a minus tolerance. So for the .45 ACP, the length is 0.898 inch, with a tolerance of –0.010 inch. The chamber is the other way around. Here we have a specified minimum length of 0.898 inch, with a tolerance of +0.004 inch. It is clear that the twain will rarely meet. Manufacturers control their case process to avoid producing brass close to the maximum length. So if we measure a bunch of new cases, we'll find most of them close to — or sometimes even a little below — the minimum 0.888-inch length allowed.

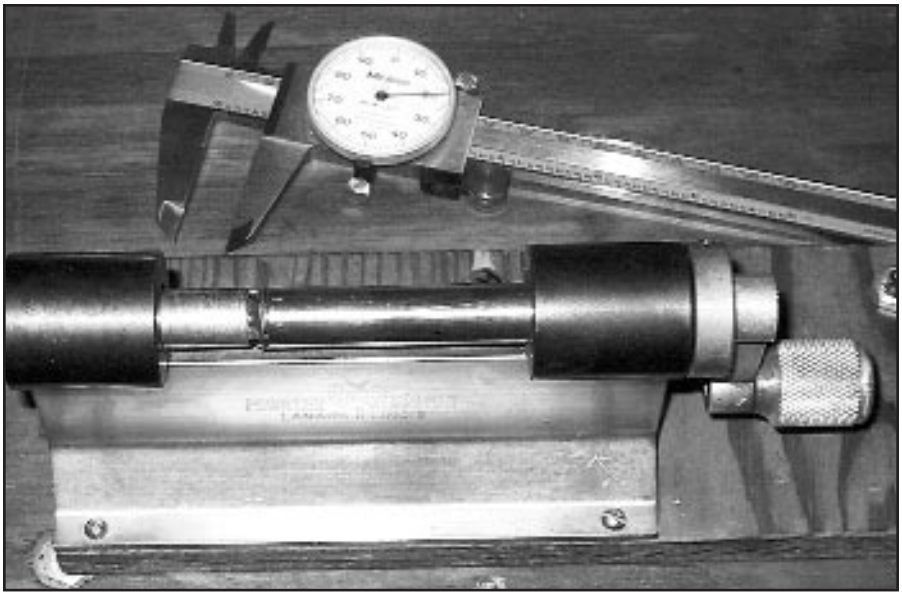
On the other side of the street, the guys who cut chambers don't want to flirt with making them too shallow. So they'll probably target something in the middle of the length tolerance. It's clear that it would be rare indeed for a case to ever touch the chamber shoulder in a .45 ACP, or an automatic pistol in general. Some of you have noticed that I've just committed heresy and contradicted doctrine. Everyone knows that most autopistol cartridges headspace on the case mouth... it says so in the book. And so it might, in a perfect world. But in our real one, it ain't that way very often. Actually, for a case mouth to touch the chamber shoulder would require a combination of worst-case dimensions. In most autopistols, headspace is determined by the fit of the extractor. Doubt me? Go inspect your autopistol and think about it.

We know that brass grows longer with repeated loadings. But if we start with a case that needs to be 0.010-inch longer to even think about touching the shoulder, it is unrealistic to expect this to happen often. Why? Because we either lose the brass, or it wears out before it gets that long. Like so many problems in shooting, this one is far more theoretical than real. Some people need something to worry about. This ain't it.

Well, what about revolvers? In the .44 Magnum, for example, we have a maximum case of 1.285 inches, with a tolerance of –0.020 inch. The chamber dimension is 1.303 inches, with a +0.004-inch tolerance. The case rim is the determinant here.

The amount a case grows in length is based on a combination of factors, including the dimensions of chamber and die. But the intensity of the load is the greatest factor. Cases that are subjected to maximum pressures all the time are affected most. That is especially true with the magnums. But even then it is rare for a case to get to the point where it needs trimming to go into the chamber. Still, there is sometimes a reason to trim the magnum cases. With hot loads, a uniform and firm crimp is essential for good powder combustion. If the case length varies, so will the crimp. Both accuracy and velocity may suffer. So with magnum revolver cases, it pays to keep brass together in the same lot. Then, if the length does change enough to affect the crimp, the cases can all be trimmed to a uniform length and eliminate the need to continuously adjust the crimp die.

Sometimes we do need to trim handgun cases. But more often than not, we don't.



LOADED, READY, SAFE!

continued from page 31

Joel told me later, "There is no doubt in my mind that if I could have reached a gun without having to run to the parking lot, I could have stopped things much sooner."

Phil is a streetwise businessman who used to run a gunsmithing accessory shop open to the public in California. He didn't like the idea of loaded guns lying around behind the counters where an employee's child or some other unauthorized person might reach them. His solution: a bevy of Browning 9mm pistols stored in strategic spots behind the counters. The guns were stowed cocked-and-locked, with a live JHP round in the chamber, but with no magazine in place. The magazine disconnector safety incorporated into the Hi-Power design prevented the chambered round from being fired. Each authorized employee was required to carry a loaded Browning magazine in a pocket or an inconspicuous belt pouch. With a quick, practiced movement, the employees could snatch up a Browning with their dominant hand and snap in a full magazine with the other hand, instantly having a loaded pistol in hand and ready to fire.

My father, a gunfight survivor himself, owned a jewelry store in the Northeast. Dad was a Colt man, and whether he was greeting a customer behind the counter or fixing a watch or ring at his bench, a loaded 4-inch police service revolver was always within reach in a holster nailed to the counter or bench, unseen by customers. In the back room, inaccessible to customers, a cocked-and-locked Colt auto-pistol reposed in a holster nailed to a shelf in a similar fashion, and a Winchester pump gun loaded with 12-gauge Super-X buckshot was readily at hand. Yet another holster was attached to the ceiling of the safe. Here, if forced to open the waist-high vault at gunpoint, store personnel could grab the Colt Cobra .38. When he put the day's receipts and the diamonds from the showcases into the safe at night, Dad would slip that hammer-shrouded snubnose from its holster quickly (one practice repetition per day) and then put it into his pocket for the drive home. The next morning, as he opened the safe, he would return the gun to its resting place.

Points to Note

A "no guns" workplace code can leave those in the workplace vulnerable to assault and mass murder. Guns that are authorized must be stored, like home-defense guns, in a manner that makes them instantly accessible to authorized and competent personnel yet simultaneously inaccessible to those who are not authorized.

Loaded, ready, yet safe? Yes, it can be done, as the true examples above clearly show.

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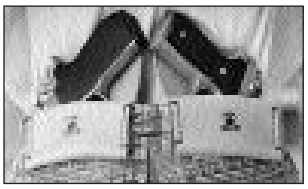

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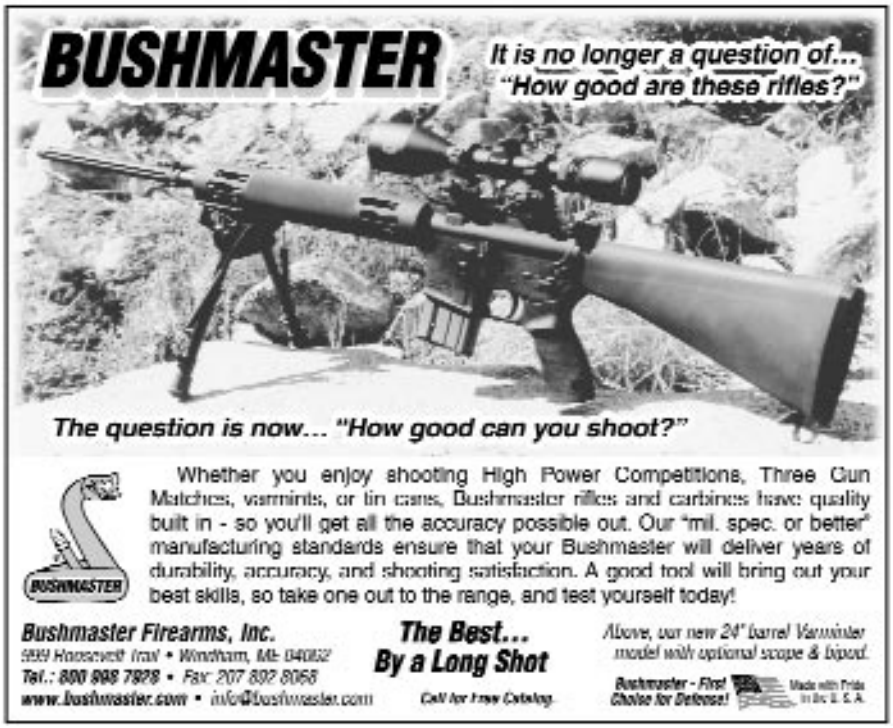

SMITH & WESSON

continued from page 45

this malfunction could not be duplicated when shooting from the hand.

Groups were nicely round, which is always a good thing. There was, however, the occasional first-round flyer, which is not rare but has dreadful consequences when you get to group measuring. I'd estimate that about 25-percent of the time, the first round would deviate from the group by as much as an inch — usually at the 9:00 to 12:00 position. But since we don't get do-overs in shooting, the groups were measured warts and all.

Mixed Magazine — No Problem

The gun was again cleaned and inspected before the final part of the test, which involved some additional function shooting with all of the loads used in the accuracy test and other miscellaneous ammo. Frequently, I'll finish a test with the 10 to 20 rounds of ammo left in a box. These tests are a good way to make use of those partial boxes, and mixing ammo in the magazine is a great test of reliability. Other than the stoppages mentioned in the Ransom Rest, there were no malfunctions. Nearly 500 rounds were fired.

Uniformly Good Accuracy

The accuracy results speak for themselves but deserve some comments. When I do one of these tests, it's very common for the gun to show a distinct fondness for one load or another. This one didn't do that. The smallest average came with the 180-grain Speer Gold Dot, but there really isn't a big difference between smallest and largest. Even the first-round flyers didn't hurt too much, and this tendency to throw the first round almost always improves as the gun wears in.

The manual of arms is exactly the same as for the Government Model, and it shoots just as comfortably too. Even though it is light and compact, it is very pleasant to shoot — even with the hottest ammo. The somewhat short grip doesn't quite fill a large hand, but the finger extension provided on the magazine compensates nicely and there is no discomfort associated with the grip.

A series of fun drills on steel targets proved that this is an eminently *shootable* pistol. While the machine rest accuracy is great, the practical accuracy is just as impressive. Do your part — slow or fast — and the rounds go wherever you put the sights.

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FOUR FAVORITE 7'S

continued from page 36

Any of these cartridges in a light- to medium-weight, bolt-action or single-shot rifle fits the recipe for the classic mountain rifle. Such rifles when chambered in these calibers are perfect for many situations and can make do in a lot of others. They are pleasant to shoot — and the more they are used, the greater the shooter's ability and confidence becomes.

A dynamic I've noticed again and again is that those who start out with centerfire rifles of reasonable recoil often become rifle and shooting enthusiasts. And those who start out shooting a rifle with more recoil than they are comfortable with don't shoot their rifles unless they really have to. They're often fine hunters and adequate shots, but they are less likely to become real rifle enthusiasts.

The Venerable 7x57mm

The senior member of the group is the 7mm Mauser. In European terminology it is known as the 7x57 Mauser, indicating 7mm bore diameter and 57mm case length. Groove diameter is 7.2mm, and it fires 7.2mm (0.284-inch) bullets. Originating in 1892, the 7mm Mauser somehow still seems modern. Americans first became acquainted with it during the Spanish-American war in which it was much feared for the flat trajectory and deep penetration of its bullets.

The original military load for the 7mm Mauser was a 173-grain bullet at about 2,300 fps. Following the first World War, several South American countries contracted with the Western Cartridge Co. for a hotter load, a 139-grain bullet at 2,900 fps. Western offered the same load with a 139-grain, open-point expanding bullet to the sporting market. This load made the 7mm a fairly popular round with American hunters in the '20s and '30s.

Incidentally, some may wonder why we have oddball bullet weights such as 139 and 154 grains. The reason is that these are from European designers who used the metric system. A 9-gram bullet weighs approximately 139 grains; a 10-gram bullet weighs 154 grains.

A minor criticism is that the 7mm Mauser and its relatives don't quite fit the concept of short and long actions, at least as offered by American companies. Most American "short" actions are built around magazine boxes that accept cartridges up to 2.8-inch overall length, such as the .308 Winchester and its offspring. "Long" or "standard" actions usually have magazine boxes around 3.4 inches in length, suited to the .30-'06 family and magnums such as the 7mm. Rem., .300 and .338 Win.

The 7mm Mauser, loaded to an overall length of around 3.0 inches, falls in the middle. It's too long for short actions; if a long action is used, there's a nagging sense that one might as well have it chambered for .270 or .280. Yes, fretting about less than a half inch of surplus action length really is nitpicking, but fussing over details is what we rifle enthusiasts do.

The Ultra Light Arms Model 20 short action is compact and lightweight, but it has a full 3-inch magazine box that makes it suitable for the 7mm Mauser and its offspring. These rifles are more expensive than typical off-the-rack models from major companies — but judged as they should be by custom rifle standards, they are an excellent value.

Factory offerings from the major ammunition manufacturers are a bit sparse, though adequate. Because so many military surplus rifles of uncertain vintage and condition were imported, industry pressure standards for the 7mm Mauser are lower than other commercial rounds. **(See chart #1)**

These velocities were taken in 24-inch barrels. In the more popular 22-inch barrels, the 140-grain factory loads typically produce around or a bit less than 2,600 fps. By today's standards these loads don't seem very exciting — but they are pleasant to shoot, are mild in both report and recoil, provide an adequately flat trajectory at least to 250 yards, and certainly have adequate power for deer and game of similar size.

Reloaders can access the extensive selection of fine 7mm bullets. In strong, modern, high-quality actions such as the Ruger No. 1 and M77, reloading can safely and appreciably improve on factory ballistics. Moderately slow-burning powders seem to produce the best results in this medium-capacity case.

Some Mauser rifles have a rather fast twist of 1:8.75 in order to stabilize heavy 175-grain bullets. This fast twist sometimes gets blamed for indifferent accuracy with lighter 130- to140-grain bullets. It's unlikely the twist is the reason; after all, there isn't that much difference between 1:8.75 and the 1:9.5 twist used by Ruger, or the 1:10 used by other makers. A more likely factor is that the chambers are cut with long throats to suit heavy bullets, meaning lighter bullets have to make a long jump before engaging the rifling. If that's the case (and if the action and magazine box permit) seating lighter bullets out may improve accuracy. The 7mm Mauser has a rather long (.378-inch) case neck, but it isn't necessary to use it all.

For deer and antelope hunting, it's hard to beat a 139- to 145-grain bullet loaded at 2,850 to 2,900 fps. It's not really necessary to use premium controlled expansion bullets for such game; conventional designs from Hornady, Speer, Sierra and Nosler work just fine. Good powder choices include IMR-4350, H-4350, H-414, W-W 760, Reloder 19 and AA 4350.

For heavier game, a heavy premium-grade bullet is recommended such as the 160-grain Nosler Partition or Speer Grand Slam. Or if the shooter prefers to stay with 140-grain bullets in order to be familiar with just one trajectory pattern, Barnes X and Winchester Fail Safe bullets provide both expansion and deep penetration on heavy game.

The .280 Winchester

The .280 first appeared in 1957 in the semiautomatic Remington 740. The .280 was also offered in the bolt-action model 725. Sales were lackluster in both models. Those wanting an accurate, long-range hunting cartridge generally didn't want semiauto rifles. Those who were happy with the .270 stayed with it; those who wanted something different wanted something a lot different. They got it in 1962 with the 7mm Rem Mag., which was bigger, faster, had a belt around the case head, and the magic word "magnum" in its name. For several years the 7mm Mag. took a good bite out of .270 sales and all but wiped out the .280.

The .280 hung on, though. It's been a favorite with some highly knowledgeable riflemen, among them custom gunmaker Lenard Brownell, Fred Huntington of RCBS, and writer Jim Carmichel. Part of its appeal is that it is virtually identical to the .270 but isn't a .270. It lets people have .270 performance and yet feel they aren't just part of the herd, that they are a bit more knowledgeable and discriminating.

Interest in the .280 picked up in the late '70s and into the '80s. For a brief time Remington tried to revive the cartridge by renaming it — first as the 7mm Express and then as the 7mm-'06. The names just caused confusion among buyers and were quickly dropped. At the same time, there was a bit of a backlash against magnum cartridges and heavy rifles; lighter rifles such as the Winchester 70 Featherweight and Remington 700 Mountain Rifle became popular. Many shooters who liked these rifles but were a bit jaded with the .270 decided to try the .280 instead. Interest seemed to peak around the early '90s. Custom gunmakers for a time found far greater interest in the .280 than the .270.

Currently interest in the .280 seems to be fading a bit. After offering the .280 in its Featherweight and a couple of other rifle models for some years, Winchester has dropped the cartridge from the 2001 catalogue. Some .280 factory-ammunition loads have been dropped as well. Remington currently lists five factory loads in .280. The Winchester ammunition catalogue shows two .280 offerings. **(See chart #2)**

Reloaders for the .280 should look to relatively slow-burning powders: Hodgdon H-4831, H-4350 and H-450; IMR-4350 and IMR-4831; Accurate Arms 3100; and Reloder 22. The .280 provides excellent performance with 140- to 150-grain bullets. If the shooter wants to use 160- to 175-grain bullets regularly, the .280 will usually outperform the shorter .284 and 7mm-08 cartridges in which heavy bullets have to be deep-seated and thus sacrifice case capacity.

.284 Winchester — A Radical Departure In Design

The .284 Winchester was introduced in 1963, part of the wave of new cartridges that crested between 1955 and 1965. It is in some ways the most advanced and most interesting one in the bunch. Its case capacity is nearly identical to that of the .30-'06 but with a shorter, larger diameter case. The design is similar that of the "improved" cartridges with minimal body taper, short neck and sharp shoulder. It was really ahead of its time. It would be years later that experimenters would demonstrate that short, fat cartridges of improved design are inherently accurate and efficient.

Actually these were not Winchester's goals in designing the cartridge. The objective was to provide .270 ballistics in a cartridge short enough to function in the Winchester M88 lever-action and M100 semiautomatic rifles. Winchester no doubt considered necking down the .308 case for which the model 88 was already chambered but decided that it couldn't quite get the desired velocity and instead designed a new case with greater capacity. The .284 has a rebated rim (smaller in diameter than the case body) that is the same size as the .308. This feature allowed Winchester to use the same bolts in its rifles as for the .308-based cartridges.

So why did it fail? By 1963 the bolt-action had become the overwhelming choice in sporting rifles, and interest in lever-actions was declining. .270-class ballistics no longer seemed glamorous with the appearance of the 7mm and .300 magnums. Virtues such as inherent accuracy and efficiency either weren't known or weren't considered all that important. There was no special demand for short bolt-actions.

Moreover, the bigger diameter .284 case doesn't always function well in actions designed for .30-'06/.308 diameter cases. In the Remington 700 and Winchester 70 actions, the feed rails that hold cartridges in the magazine are integral with the receiver. As cartridges are pushed forward by the bolt, they reach a release point at which they come free of the rails and are released from the magazine to feed into the chamber. Altering the rails to change the release point for larger diameter cartridges needs to be done with care if the action is to function properly.

Making actions with rails specifically for the .284 would require a substantial initial investment, and for major manufacturers to pay someone to alter existing actions wouldn't be economically efficient. Most of the rifles chambered for the .284 have been designs that use detachable box magazines. That way, a magazine specifically made for the cartridge can be used without having to alter the basic action.

Magazine boxes for the .284 usually limit overall cartridge length to 2.8 inches. To meet that length, even the lighter 120-grain bullets have to be seated with their bases below the case neck, reducing the powder capacity of the case. With long-throated chambers, cartridges can be loaded to an overall length of 3.0 inches with bullets seated out, which increases powder capacity and velocities. Unfortunately that turns most rifles into single shots since the rounds won't fit the magazine. Maybe the best rifles ever made for the .284 are made by Ultra Light Arms. These very light, semi-custom rifles have a full 3-inch magazine. The .284 has been a top-seller in these fine rifles.

Rebated rims are considered less reliable by some shooters who are concerned that the rifle bolt might ride over the rim rather than push it forward. In practice, both .284 rifles I've used extensively — a Winchester M88 and Browning A-Bolt — have proven completely reliable.

Choosing a factory load is simple: There is only one. Winchester loads a 150-grain Power Point at 2,860 fps. Reloaders can take advantage of the huge selection of fine 7mm bullets. Brass is available, though I did take the precaution of laying in a supply some years ago. Good powders choices include W-W 760, H-414, IMR-4350, IMR-4064, AA3100, Reloder 19 and Reloder 22.

The .284 is one of my all-time favorite cartridges and one of the most advanced ever designed. Sad to say, few seem to appreciate its virtues. At present there are no moderately priced rifles available, only the more costly semi-custom or custom. Realistically, the increased margin of performance over the 7mm-08 doesn't justify the extra cost and trouble.

The Practical 7mm-08

The 7mm-08, based on the .308 Win. case, was a popular wildcat for many years before Remington made it a factory round in 1980. It was particularly popular for metallic silhouette due to its light recoil with ballistically efficient bullets.

As a hunting round, it initially didn't generate much excitement. The case looks small compared to the .270/.280 cases, not to mention the 7mm Rem. Mag. It was often used in short-barreled carbines, which reduced velocities from advertised figures taken in 24-inch barrels. Eastern whitetail hunters were the first to appreciate the virtues of light, compact bolt-action carbines and the effective ballistics of the 7mm-08. These carbines have to a considerable extent supplanted the .30-30 lever-action carbines that were a whitetail standard for so many years. Most western hunters, however, tended to ignore the 7mm-08 in favor of old standards such as the .270.

But in the last few years the 7mm-08 has slowly but steadily gained in popularity. Shooters are beginning to appreciate that it is a highly efficient cartridge. It works well with medium-burning powders that don't need extra-long barrels to burn effectively. These smaller powder charges reduce recoil and muzzle blast as well. Taken in 24-inch barrel lengths, velocities of 7mm-08, .270 and .280 bullets of the same weight are surprisingly close.

With 140-grain bullets, Remington lists the 7mm-08 at 2,860 fps. The 140-grain bullet in .270 is shown at 2,925 fps and in .280 at 3,000 fps. The bigger cases really benefit from 24-inch barrels that burn their powder charges effectively; reduce barrel length to 22 or 20 inches and the difference becomes even less.

The 7mm-08 really needs to be used to be fully appreciated. It wasn't until about 1990 that I started to shoot and reload extensively for the cartridge. Chronographing and accuracy testing various loads was an eye-opener. Report and muzzle blast were noticeably less than the .280/.284; recoil was a pitiful little nudge, yet velocities with comparable bullet weights were usually within 150 fps. **(See chart #3)**

Like its parent case the .308, the 7mm-08 is a pleasure to reload, untemperamental and accurate. Medium to medium/slow burning powders seem to give best results. The slowest burning powders I use in 7mm-08 are W-W 760 and H-414. In the IMR series, IMR-4064 and IMR-4320 give good results. Hodgdon Varget often produces outstanding accuracy. Reloder 15 and Accurate Arms 2700 are good choices as well.

An effective, flat-shooting load for game such as antelope is the 130-grain Speer, which can be loaded to around 3,000 fps in a 22-inch barrel, approximating .270 Win. performance in barrels of the same length. The best all-around load is a 140-grain bullet loaded at 2,800 to 2,900 fps (depending on barrel length). Bullets over 150 grains have to be seated deeply to suit the short magazines and shallow barrel throats of most factory 7mm-08s, but they can still be very effective. Premium 160-grain bullets can usually achieve 2,600 fps in 20-inch barrels and break 2,700 fps in 24-inch barrels.

Due to its medium capacity and its use of powders with medium-burning rates, the 7mm-08 maintains velocities quite well, even in barrels as short as 20 inches. It has become a popular cartridge choice in the handy bolt-action carbines that are increasingly popular. However, don't overlook 22- or even 24-inch barrels that do provide an appreciable velocity gain.

Four favorite sevens. Which is the best choice? I can hedge and say I like and use them all; this is perfectly true, but it ducks the issue. I like the 7mm Mauser for its tradition, longevity, and its association with great hunters and explorers of the past. The .284 is a superb cartridge and will always be a favorite, and the .280 provides the best ballistic performance of the lot, albeit by a small margin.

But consider everything — performance, recoil, rifle size and weight, rifle availability, ammunition availability and selection — and the winner, rather to my surprise, is the 7mm-08 Remington. Ten years ago, even five years ago, I wouldn't have said that. But this efficient, effective little cartridge is a good one, and it's going to be around for a long time.

RESPONSIBILITY

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streets were soon deserted as everyone packed into their living rooms to stare at the little box. Visiting, socializing, and knowing one's neighbors had all ended. I didn't know it at the time, but I had witnessed a veritable social revolution. No longer would neighbors know one another, and it felt as if the days of feeling safe and secure were behind us.

In the America of my youth, fathers and grandfathers passed on not only responsible and safe handling of firearms, but responsibility in all areas of life as well. We were still a country with large rural areas where guns were treated as the tools they were. My step-dad had no use for guns after the war, but my uncle had handguns, rifles and shotguns on his farm where I spent considerable time learning to shoot. More importantly, however, I learned the safe and responsible handling of firearms.

We did not have guns at home, but state law allowed the purchase of firearms at the age of 16. I waited until I was one month past my 17th birthday to purchase my first very-own firearm, a Marlin .22 levergun that I still have today. Mom and Dad were not happy and told me so in no uncertain terms. A few weeks later when I bought my first .22 Single-Six, they were still upset but not quite as much. By the time I brought my third gun home, it was "Hey Johnny, show Uncle Chuck your new gun!"

A group of us teen-age boys who worked together handling freight would always go shooting Saturday afternoon after a half-day of work. Every car in our parking lot on Saturday morning had at least one gun and a goodly supply of ammunition in it. At noon we wasted no time heading out to shoot, stopping only for pizza just before leaving town. One particular Saturday a new boy joined us. Several of us had 1911 .45s purchased at anywhere from $7.50 to $15. War surplus they may have been, but they were good shooters all. We were also able to obtain Springfield 03A3s through the NRA for, if memory serves me right, the same $7.50 to $15 price tag. Guns really were easily accessible then! They were delivered to our door by Railway Express.

We were safe and responsible with our firearms and naive enough to believe that everybody knew about proper conduct with firearms. After all, it was the way we were taught. The new kid fired a couple of rounds from the .45, hit a tin can on about the third shot, and was so happy that he instantly turned 180 degrees to tell us so. We instinctively hit the ground as he stood there with a cocked .45 pointed where we had been. We let him know in no uncertain terms what we thought of him.

For the first time in my life I realized that not everyone had received proper training in safety and responsibility while growing up.

Duty And Priviledge

A few short years after this occurrence, I was married. About two years later our first child arrived. I knew I had a tremendous responsibility facing me not only in raising a family, but more importantly in teaching my children the meaning of personal responsibility. I could not expect anyone else to do this for me. Not the schools, not the churches. It was my duty to pass on these vital lessons to my kids. If firearms were to remain an important part of my family's life, then I was also going to have to make a choice. Either totally separate my family from firearms all together, or blend the two. Because I knew of the serious consequences, I decided to teach my family the importance and responsibility of firearms.

Teaching my kids how to shoot was a very small part of their education. Safety was the most important lesson.

My wife came from a family that never owned firearms. She had never even shot a gun before she met me. Our first date found us going to the gun shop to pick up my custom Arvo Ojala fast-draw rig, so she knew early on what she was in for! It was my joy to teach her not only to shoot but the personal responsibility that goes along with owning and using firearms. I don't know if there is any truth to the claim that playing music while the woman is with child has any bearing on the future musical appreciation or talent that child may ultimately possess; however, I took no chances. We often went shooting while she was carrying each of our three children.

By the time each of my kids were able to walk, I had taken them shooting. Not so they could shoot; it would be several years before this would be possible. I wanted them to see very early in life what guns could do. I wanted them to hear the noise. I wanted them to see the damage that a gun would inflict. I wanted them to witness the violent reaction when a concrete block or a metal gallon can full of water was struck by a full house .44 Magnum bullet. They needed to see this. They needed to hold the damaged concrete and metal in their little hands. It served as a great object lesson.

As they grew older, we could start shooting together. Their first guns were .22s of course — a single-shot rifle and a small .22 revolver, which was used as a single shot. It is tough for young kids to learn sight alignment and trigger control, and it helps to give them something that provides almost immediate success. My method was the use of shot shells in a revolver. By loading .38 or

.44 shot shells and using them in a small frame revolver, the kids could easily hit pop cans at close range. This gave them the enthusiasm to keep going and really learn how to shoot. Nothing breeds confidence like big, close-up targets.

Whoever invented the .22 must have been a family man. I can't even begin to count the days we have spent as a family going through inexpensive bricks of .22 shells. And there is no great hurry to graduate to anything larger. That will come naturally. I remember during my early silhouetting days how often well-meaning fathers would have their kids shooting with a big-bore revolver or single-shot. These guns have way too much recoil for young shooters to handle, much less enjoy.

Teaching my kids *how* to shoot was a very small part of their education. Safety was the most important lesson. You've heard the rules. Always point the muzzle in a safe direction. Never point the muzzle at anything you do not intend to shoot. To this I added that there is no such thing as an unloaded gun. Every firearm *must* be treated as if it is loaded. Too often we hear of people unintentionally shooting themselves or others with "unloaded" guns.

My kids also learned early that movies, while they can be highly entertaining, are not real. It is totally irresponsible for anyone to attempt to handle firearms the way actors do in the movies. I went a step further and did not allow toy guns in the house. Firearms are too serious to be mixed up with toys, and it may also be very difficult for a young child to separate the two. When my kids were old enough to handle toy guns, then that meant they were also old enough to hold and shoot the real thing. Rather than pretending with toys, they knew that we could always go shooting together. I did not realize how critical this was until I received a letter from my son on my last birthday telling me how important this had been to him.

Along with firearms training, both the safe handling and the responsibility thereof, I also tried to instill in my kids the same values I received from my parents. Hard work, honesty, personal responsibility in all phases of life; these things have been passed down from generation to generation. Formerly, kids learned personal responsibility from parents, schools, and churches, which formed a veritable three-legged stool that supported society. For eons, every generation has passed on its wisdom, moral teachings, and the importance of individual responsibility to the next generation. It is how we have survived. Now the chain is weak at best, and it is nearly broken. Schools have changed. Slowly but surely, history and patriotism have been replaced by humanities and multiculturalism while personal responsibility has given way to feel good-ism. We have abandoned teaching the important lessons of safety and responsibility.

The Duty Continues

The job of teaching my kids didn't end when they grew up; although, I did have a few years respite. A strange thing happened — my kids started having kids. Now it became my responsibility all over again to teach my grandkids the same lessons I had taught their parents. It would be easy to say that it's up to the kids to teach the grandkids. Such an attitude is totally irresponsible in today's society. Parents need all the help they can get — and who is better qualified than grandparents?

Now that I'm teaching my grandkids, I find that no longer having the responsibility of raising my own immediate family makes the task all that more enjoyable. With my own kids, I had to work around my employment hours. With the grandkids, I can set my own schedule and be available for them at almost any time — not only in the teaching of firearms safety and responsibility but in any other facet of their lives. There is no greater responsibility in life than being a grandparent.

Loaded guns have always been a fact of life in our house. Our three kids learned early what firearms were, and I never tried to hide the guns from them. This certainly cannot work in every family situation. For one thing, there's always the problem of outside kids coming in. Our house was a hangout for teenagers, especially when the kids were in high school. My wife and I made sure that one of us was always at home when the kids had their friends over. We could teach our own kids, but we could not teach other parents' kids — and we would never think of allowing them to have access to any of our firearms.

A while back, my daughter's family lived with us while they were getting settled in Idaho. Now we had three new kids present in the home, but again there was no problem. These kids had also been taught the same lessons that their mother had received. All the grandkids knew, and still know, that we can go shooting virtually at any time. They also know which of my firearms have been allocated to go to them when they are legally old enough to own them. This is true for all of my eight grandkids. They all learned early about guns, what they can do, and how they are handled safely. They all know that there is no such thing as an unloaded gun. All guns are always treated as loaded.

My situation is not your situation. We all have our individual families and we must act accordingly. I would never tell parents that they should keep loaded guns in their home. This is a decision that each individual parent and family must make, and in many areas of the country you are required by law to have your guns stored securely. I will tell you, however, that teaching your children about firearms, especially the safety and personal responsibility aspect, is very important. No, it is more than important: It Is Mandatory! Even if you have decided that your guns will always be locked up, kids still need be educated. I encourage every parent to take advantage of such programs as the NRA's Eddie Eagle educational tool and encourage their child's school to make this part of the curriculum. All kids, whether they plan to hunt or not, should also take part in Hunter Safety Programs. I have even gone into preschool classes and taught the kids about firearms safety. It is never too early to start. Even a little safety education can prevent a future tragedy.

You Can't Buy Safety

Today, firearms manufacturers are approaching the safety and security issue in many ways. Everyone should be concerned about gun safety and especially about keeping guns out of the hands of those who are untrained and/or irresponsible. Even if children are taught the proper handling and safety procedures, each parent and grandparent must still decide whether or not their child is sufficiently responsible.

In an effort to promote safety, we now have many firearms coming with three keys: *one for the internal locking safety,* such as those now found on new revolvers from Smith & Wesson and Taurus, as well as semiautomatics from Kimber, Taurus and Springfield Armory; *one for the locking hard case,* such as those provided by Ruger; *and one for the trigger lock,* which now comes with virtually every American made firearm. After these three are installed, the firearm is then often placed under a fourth lock in a steel cabinet or a locking safe.

Are these guns safe? Are they child proof? No. I am deeply concerned that parents will think all is OK if they employ these safety features and then hide the guns away from little hands and inquisitive minds. All of these are aids to safety, not a substitute for proper education. As parents and grandparents, we are the first line of defense for teaching safety, responsibility and security to our kids. In fact, we are in many cases the only answer. This puts a great responsibility on our shoulders and we must not fail.

One of the hunting shows I enjoy watching ends with the admonition to "Take a kid hunting or fishing." I totally agree, and I would also add shooting. I often see men rushing to the range the day before hunting season to sight in their rifles, and I wonder if they make the time to share their outdoor activities with their kids. Somehow, all of us, no matter what our schedule may be, need to arrange the time to "take a kid hunting, fishing or shooting," and do it often. Our future as a nation depends upon us not shirking this — the greatest of our personal responsibilities.

.22LR CLASSIC

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Whether it's muzzleloading rifles or single-shot pistols, Thompson/Center not only does it right, it also manages to offer its firearms at affordable prices. T/C may be slightly ahead of itself by labeling its first repeating rifle as a "Classic." However, I have no doubt that history will show that the new .22 Classic will live up to its name. The T/C .22 Long Rifle Classic certainly looks the part. And after test firing it with nearly two dozen variations of .22 LR ammunition, I can also say that it shoots like one.

As mentioned, this is a semiautomatic chambered in .22 Long Rifle. No shortcuts here. The receiver and trigger guard are both steel, not alloy; both barrel and receiver are finished in a deep black-blue; and the 22-inch long, match-grade barrel has a target crown at one end and is securely threaded into the receiver at the other end. The stock is deluxe American walnut with a satin finish and is fitted with a pistol grip, sling swivels and a monte carlo cheek piece. It also has adult dimensions that provide a big-game-rifle feel. Although the .22 LR Classic comes with an adjustable rear sight — which is highlighted with a fiberoptic bar and a ramp-style front sight with an easy to see fiberoptic "bead" — this .22 deserves to be scoped to take full advantage of its built-in accuracy. Actually, I think the fiberoptic sights detract from the rifle's classic look. The receiver is drilled and tapped for scope mounting.

Overall length is 39 inches, weight is 5 pounds, and the rifle is also fitted with a thumb safety on the right side of the receiver, which is clearly marked with a red dot for ready-to-fire and a green dot for safe. The detachable box magazine holds five rounds; a 10-round magazine is also available.

While the Simmons scope performed extremely well, one can only imagine what size groups might be obtained with a high-magnification target scope on a quiet day with no wind.

One problem surfaced while test-firing the .22 LR Classic. The bolt would stay open when the magazine was empty and could only be released when I reached inside with a small screwdriver and pressed down on the hold-open lever. To alleviate the problem I took it to Mike the gunsmith at Shapel's; he was immediately impressed with the look and feel of the .22 Classic and was anxious to be able to work on one. The problem turned out to be very minor. The operating spring was not working properly and the solution was simply putting just a little more arc in it. Works fine now.

Putting It To The Test

Twenty-three different loads from five different manufacturers — CCI, Federal, PMC, Remington and Winchester — were fired through the T/C .22 Classic with muzzle velocities running from a low of 997 fps with CCI's Standard Velocity up to 1,505 fps with CCI's Stingers. Tests were first conducted at 50 yards. Accuracy testing can be a problem in my area due to the ever present wind. Nevertheless, several excellent groups were obtained with Federal's Hi-Vel Classic (isn't that appropriate), which turned in the best group with five shots measuring just 5/8 -inch. Several others were very close. *See the total results in the accompanying data chart*.

To escape the wind, I moved indoors to Shooting World's 25-yard indoor range. Firing at this distance without fighting the wind resulted in extremely tight groups with CCI's SGB, Federal's Gold Medal Match and Hi-Power Hollowpoint, PMC's Match Rifle, and Winchester's SX High Velocity and Super Silhouette. All placed their five shots into a very tight 1/4-inch group. This is an excellent shooting rifle that definitely has a match-grade barrel.

Earlier this year, I found a distributor that offered Simmons full size 4X rifle scopes on sale for an unbelievable price, something under $40 each. I bought several at the time, mainly for use on center-fire rifles. One just happened to find its way to this T/C .22 Classic. While the Simmons scope performed extremely well, one can only imagine what size groups might be obtained with a high-magnification target scope on a quiet day with no wind.

Too Good To Let Go

The T/C .22 LR Classic now resides in my rifle rack with other Classic .22s acquired over the past 45 years: two lever-action Marlins, a 39A Mountie and a current Model 39; a Jim Clark Custom heavy-barreled Ruger 10/22; and two bolt-actions, a Remington 541T heavy barrel and a Ruger 77/22. All of these .22s will be passed to the grandsons and hopefully great grandsons someday.

Readers may contact Thompson/Center at P.O. Box 5002, Dept. G, Rochester, N.H. 03866; phone: [603] 332-2333. They are on the Internet at www.tcarms.com.

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INCREMENTAL ACCURACY IMPROVEMENTS

Petty reduced average group sizes of a pet rifle by firelapping, but he was certain that there was further room for improvement.

BY CHARLES E. PETTY

When we buy a modern rifle, we get a level of accuracy that is really quite good considering the demands of mass production. Manufacturers simply can't lavish the attention to a rifle that sells for $500, or even $1,000, that a custom gunsmith can to one costing many times more. It is a variation on the "you get what you pay for" dictum.

And for most rifles, the factory gives us accuracy that is more than adequate. Even though *everyone* wants a sub-MOA deer rifle, the blunt truth is that it's not needed. But if we have to shoot at longer ranges or do something that requires a high level of precision such as varmint or tactical shooting, accuracy becomes a more realistic concern.

Accuracy is also very much a function of your point of view. Your expectations. I recently purchased a new Remington Model 700-P LTR chambered for the .223 Remington cartridge. The rifle was equipped with a new Bausch & Lomb Elite 6x24 variable scope. After a meticulous barrel break-in procedure prescribed by Remington, the rifle was shot with a wide variety of factory ammunition. With most loads it was hard to get groups under an inch. Now *my* expectation is that this gun should shoot better than that.

I happened to be talking to Ed Dillon of NECO products and mentioned how frustrated I had become with this rifle. He talked me into trying their Firelapping procedure. That experiment was discussed in the August 2001 issue of *GUNS*. The stellar success of that experiment made going another step with this rifle almost mandatory.

The Usual Suspects

We all know that simple things like stock bedding and barrel crown can be improved over the factory product with relative ease. Many gunsmiths offer packages of several such enhancements for a fixed price. Most often this includes glass bedding, recrowning, lapping the action so the bolt lugs mate better, and truing the action so that the barrel screws into place square and true to the centerline of the action. Sometimes the barrel and receiver threads are so out of square that the barrel has to be set back and rechambered for everything to line up straight. The cost of this package can range from $200 to $400 depending on a bunch of different variables.

Many gunsmiths with whom I've spoken point to the barrel crown as a feature that often hurts accuracy. The reason is simple. The muzzle is the last point of contact that the bullet has with the barrel as it leaves. The bullet must leave the muzzle in a stable condition or accuracy will be affected. A crown that isn't perfectly square with the centerline of the bore will let gas escape prematurely on one side of the bullet's base and will adversely impact the stability of the bullet.

Correct bedding of the action is also vital. Back in the old days when wood was all we had for stocks, glass bedding did wonders by providing a consistant place for the action to sit. With today's composites, we still want the action to be in full contact with the stock, and the best way to do that is with modern bedding compounds.

So, as the owner of a rifle that wasn't doing what I thought it should, it was only natural to come up with a way to improve its accuracy. To document the effectiveness of these accuracy enhancements, I asked my gunsmith to break down his work into two separate jobs so that we could evaluate the effect of each modification.

Consistency In Ammunition

Of course the end goal is to see if the rifle groups better after all of this work, but in order to have any hope of validity, every variable in our testing must be controlled as closely as possible. Of these variables, ammunition selection is certainly the biggest. And in this case it was doubly important because I wanted to show the continued improvement of the rifle's performance as the gunsmith worked his magic. Unless I used the *exact* same ammunition as I had used for the earlier experiments, then groups shot after bedding, crowning and action truing could not be directly compared to the accuracy improvements that I had seen after Firelapping. Fortunately, I had on hand a good supply of Black Hills factory ammo loaded with the Hornady 50-grain V-max bullet. This load had been used in the Firelapping test and there was an adequate supply of ammo from the same lot to do several more tests.

Immediate Improvement

Off went the rifle to Dave Tooley, of Gastonia, N.C. Tooley first glass-bedded the action and precisely recrowned the barrel. After the rifle returned, I headed back to the range to evaluate the effect of the bedding and crowning. It didn't take long to see that this project was shaping up nicely.

While I could have easily lived with the rifles new level

Below: *The first step in testing is to eliminate the human factor. If a rifle will not group when tested with proper technique, only then it is time to consider other causes.*

Above: *Carefully relieving the stock for the bedding compound.* ***Left:*** *(top) The barrel must run absolutely concentric in the lathe to produce a proper crown. (bottom) Gunsmith Dave Tooley carefully seats the action into the wet epoxy bedding material.*

TEST RESULTS

	1	2	3	4	5	AVG.	% REDUCTION
Before	1.305	1.119	0.973	1.141	1.647	1.237	—
After Firelapping	0.726	0.873	0.658	0.637	0.897	0.758	38.7
After Bedding	0.489	0.528	0.596	0.640	0.731	0.597	21.2
After Truing	0.437	0.633	0.551	0.501	0.719	0.568	4.9

of performance, I was not about to miss the opportunity to see how much more improvement Tooley might be able to extract.

As a final step, Tooley pulled the barrel from the receiver and performed the careful machine work required to true the action, barrel threads and recoil lug. Things weren't too bad here; Tooley reported that the receiver was only .003 inch out of square. The next step was to lap in the bolt. The amount of contact between the bolt's locking surface and those within the receiver is a variable thing. Tooley reports that my rifle had about 20-percent contact between lugs and receiver when he checked it. This sounds like a small amount but is actually close to average. The goal of this part of the work is to be sure that the bullet and cartridge get a start that is truly parallel to the bore. Unless the bolt lugs bear evenly, there is the possibility that uneven setback of the bolt at the moment of firing could have a negative impact on accuracy.

Diminishing Returns

The second phase of the work was unlikely to have as great an improvement as the first. In fact, it gave a good example of the law of diminishing returns. In any effort to improve a product, a point is reached where it takes more and more time or money to produce a smaller and smaller gain. And when we're talking about something as ephemeral as accuracy, it may be difficult even to see these small increments of improvement. Also, any time you unscrew the barrel, it can, as Tooley calls it, "change the rifle's personality." What he means is that subtle changes in headspace can alter how the rifle shoots. In a worst case, groups could conceivably open up after modification.

When we try to objectively evaluate the effect of any change, we need to at least be aware of the implications of statistics. When I read an article in which the author reaches a conclusion based upon a single group, I usually say things we can't print here. Now the guy may be absolutely right, but he hasn't really proved it. What if that group is the one-in-a-million good one — or the bad one for that matter. Either way, the impression he gives us is wrong. So when we set out to test something, we need to be sure we're seeing the result of the changes we made — not just normal variation. For this test we will use the average value of five groups, each with five shots. A statistician can tell us whether I'm right or wrong, but 25 shots is a reasonable number and should accurately establish the performance of our rifle.

This has turned out to be a truly fascinating project as it was easy to see progress at each step along the way. And here I must say that these results are no guarantee that another rifle will necessarily benefit to the same degree. Some observers felt that my rifle was not typical because the improvements were pretty dramatic. They expected improvements — but perhaps not to this degree. So, while we do our best to paint an accurate picture, when we're done the results apply only to this rifle. But the purpose of this test, which I believe was nicely met, was to see what could be accomplished with relatively inexpensive work.

It is gratifying to see that each step showed an improvement, but perhaps the most striking thing is that from start to finish we've managed to cut group size by 54 percent. We took a rifle that really wasn't all that useful and turned it into a gun that is both fun to shoot and satisfyingly accurate. And, for me, there is another challenge to come. Of necessity, all of this shooting has been done with factory ammo, but now those restraints are gone and the vista of handloading opens up. Now I can set about learning what other powders and bullets it might like — working with the seating depth, neck sizing, and doing all the other little things handloaders do to make a more accurate cartridge. All in all I am delighted with the results, and I think that Col. Townsend Whelen had it right when he said "Only accurate rifles are interesting."

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

Tooley Custom Rifles
3317 Candlewick Way
Gastonia, N.C. 28056
[704] 864-7525

LEICA TRINOVID 8X32 BINOCULARS

Leica Trinovid 8x32: Notice the sliding eyepieces — one is extended, the other is collapsed.

By Jim Gardner

I purchased my first pair of binoculars from a drugstore-cum-sporting-goods establishment more years ago than I care to admit. I bought the very best that they had. The price was a whopping $40. I was happy with them and spent countless hours glassing across canyons and flats looking for blacktail deer, black bear and other wildlife. I noticed that my eyes would ache after a long spell behind the lenses, but I just figured that was natural. Then one day, on a shooting trip, one of my amigos did something terrible to me. My glasses being out of reach at the moment, he handed me his best grade German made binoculars — good heavens what a difference! I was spoiled from that moment on and was never satisfied with my drugstore binoculars again.

We have all heard the expression, "I may not know art, but I know what I like." Most of us would have to echo similar comments about evaluating optics. I would like to be able to speak knowingly about *why* a really good rifle scope or pair of binoculars performs so well, but I can't. The important thing is that the difference in performance is obvious once you begin to use them.

I've just had the chance to spend some time with Leica's 8x32 Trinovid binoculars, and the bottom line is that this is one very fine piece of equipment.

Diopter compensation scale is visible through window.

Good Things In Small Packages

These are relatively compact, at 5-inches tall by about 4.5-inches wide. Weight is 23 ounces, which is about right. A flyweight pair of glasses may be a delight to carry as you huff and puff your way up a steep trail, but a heavier pair is infinitely easier to hold steady for an extended session of viewing. The barrels of these 8x32s are rubber armored with nice vertical ribs to hold on to. Not only does this give a very sure feel in the hand, but the rubber armoring helps to protect the binoculars from damage.

As with all really good binoculars that I have used, these are extremely bright. I used them in the failing light of late evening and was surprised at just how much light they transmitted. Looking over the thick weeds of an abandoned orchard, I had no difficulty picking out the little pink ears of a cottontail in the darkening gloom.

Performance in the middle of the day was equally fine. The image is crisp and clear throughout the field of vision. Focusing is fast and easy via a center mounted wheel.

Great Features

Sometimes it is the smaller features that distinguish a good product from a truly fine one. On these Leicas, I found two features that were particularly well engineered. The first is the eye piece. Most binos have roll-down rubber eye cups to accommodate eyeglasses. They work well enough, but rolling them up or down is a clumsy two-handed operation. The Leica 8x32s feature a greatly improved system. The eyepieces easily slide into either an extended or collapsed position. Got your sunglasses on as you grab for your Leicas to get a look at the buck that just crossed the road in front of you? Easy — just slap your palm gently across the eyepieces and they snap into the lower position. If you take your dusty sunglasses off for a better view, simply slide the eyepieces back out. They click into place with a satisfying little "snick."

The other feature that I admired was the centrally located diopter compensation. For most people, one eye will be a little stronger than the other. It is necessary to compensate for this. This compensation is normally adjusted on one of the eyepieces. On the Leica, this adjustment is located on the center focusing wheel, and best of all, it is a locking adjustment with a visible scale. To adjust, snap the cover up to unlock, adjust in the conventional manner, and then press the cover down to lock your setting. The system is easy to use and will end the frustration of finding that your compensation has been accidentally moved from its proper setting.

Leica cameras have been famous for the quality of their lenses for generations. Looking at the Leica Trinovid 8x32s, it is easy to see that this reputation for quality is well deserved. The glasses come with ocular and objective lens covers, a carrying strap, and a particularly nice leather case.

Lifetime Investment

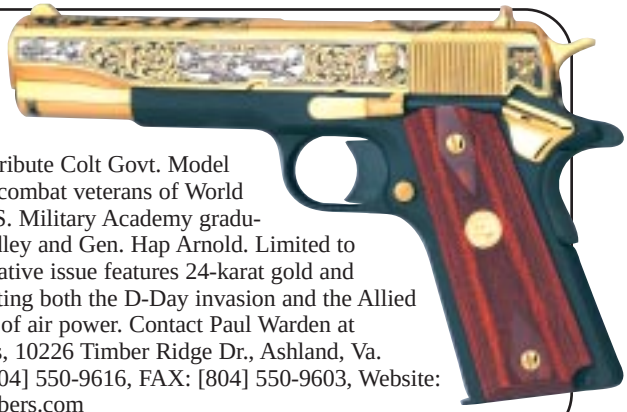
Good binoculars — really good binoculars — don't come cheap. Retail price for the Trinovid 8x32 is $995. When you realize how much their superior performance can add to the enjoyment of your outdoor adventures, and the fact that quality optics are a lifetime investment, then the price seems well justified. Authorized Leica dealers are currently offering a trade-in program. Bring in your old glasses for a discount on a new pair of Leicas. Your old glasses will be donated to an educational organization. If you have been getting by with discount binoculars, make it a point to have a look at a pair of these Leicas. You are going to find yourself just as spoiled as I am.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:
Leica Sport Optics
[800] 222-0118
www.leica-camera.com/sportoptics

Bino Caddy
From Butler Creek

The Bino Caddy secures binoculars with a system of straps that go around the shoulder and cross in the back, allowing the weight of the glasses to spread over the surface of the shoulders instead of the neck. The elastic version holds the binoculars against the chest, allowing them to be raised by stretching the band. The webbed version allows the binoculars to slide up the strap into viewing position. Contact Butler Creek, P.O. Box 1690, Oregon City, Ore. 97045, telephone: [503] 655-7964, FAX: [503] 655-7546, Website: www.uncle-mikes.com

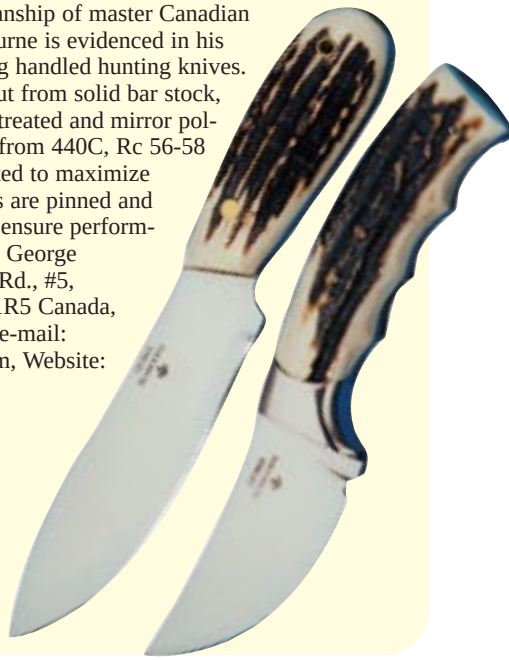
West Point Tribute .45
From America Remembers



The West Point Tribute Colt Govt. Model .45 pistol honors all combat veterans of World War II, including U.S. Military Academy graduates Gen. Omar Bradley and Gen. Hap Arnold. Limited to 500, this commemorative issue features 24-karat gold and nickel artwork depicting both the D-Day invasion and the Allied Forces' strategic use of air power. Contact Paul Warden at America Remembers, 10226 Timber Ridge Dr., Ashland, Va. 23005, telephone: [804] 550-9616, FAX: [804] 550-9603, Website: www.americaremembers.com

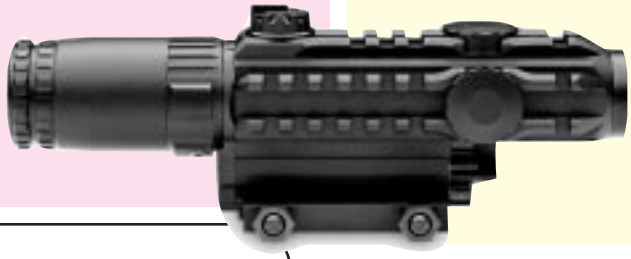
Stag Handled Hunting Knives
From George Tichbourne

The artistry and craftsmanship of master Canadian knife maker George Tichbourne is evidenced in his beautiful line of Sambar stag handled hunting knives. Each knife is individually cut from solid bar stock, hand ground to shape, heat-treated and mirror polished. The blades are made from 440C, Rc 56-58 steel and cryogenically treated to maximize edge sharpness. The handles are pinned and epoxied on the full tangs to ensure performance and reliability. Contact George Tichbourne, 7035 Maxwell Rd., #5, Mississauga, Ontario, L5S 1R5 Canada, telephone: [905] 670-0200, e-mail: sales@tichbourneknives.com, Website: www.tichbourneknives.com



New Mark IV Tactical Scope
From Leupold & Stevens

The new Mark IV Tactical scope is created for close quarter military, law enforcement and commercial use. Designed for M16 and similar rifles, the Mark IV ensures tight shot groups from a distance of 100 yards or less. Important features include true one-time setting, specialized eye relief, 10 illumination settings, two low intensity settings and lightweight, compact design for maximum performance in high activity and stress situations. Contact Leupold & Stevens, 14400 N.W. Greenbrier Pkwy, Beaverton, Ore. 97006, telephone: [503] 646-9171, FAX: [503] 526-1475, Website: www.leupold.com



"The Mule"
From Kawasaki

A camouflaged version of the Kawasaki Mule is now available for hunters and outdoor enthusiasts who want to travel in style and comfort. The bed enclosure, cab body and side covers and seats are all in green forest camouflage pattern. Contact Kawasaki Motors Corp. USA, 9950 Jeronimo Rd., Irvine, Calif. 92618-2084, telephone: [949] 770-0400, FAX: [949] 460-5730, Website: www.buykawasaki.com.

Wrap-Around Lasergrips
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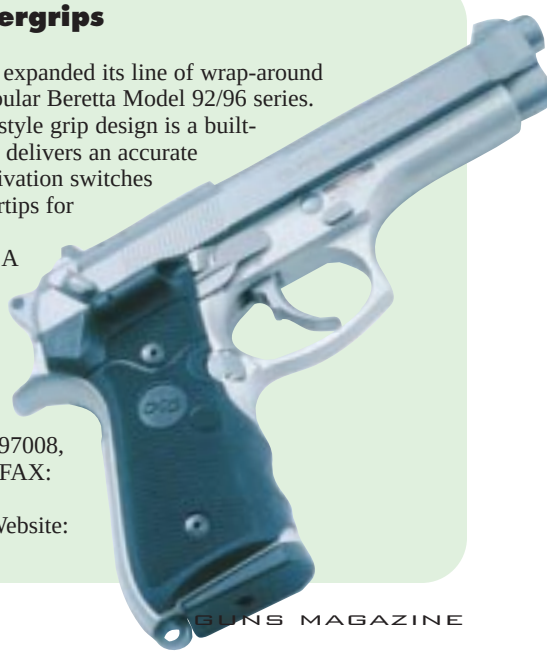
Crimson Trace Corp has expanded its line of wrap-around lasergrips to include the popular Beretta Model 92/96 series. Incorporated in the combat-style grip design is a built-in laser sighting system that delivers an accurate beam to the target. Dual activation switches fit precisely under the fingertips for instant laser activation with either the left or right hand. A master switch ensures quick activation. Fully adjustable for windage and elevation. Fits all standard holsters. Contact Crimson Trace Corp., 8089 S.W. Cirrus Dr., Beaverton, Ore. 97008, telephone: [503] 627-9992, FAX: [503] 627-0166, e-mail: leaha@crimsontrace.com, Website: www.crimsontrace.com



Express Line Holsters

From Mitch Rosen

The Express line of holsters from Mitch Rosen Extraordinary Gunleather features a smooth fit, exceptional design and quality cowhide construction. Pictured is the President Model in Cuban Brown. The seam of this holster is offset to the wearer's body, allowing the body side leather to be curved to the shape of the hip for maximum comfort and concealability. Send $8 for color catalog to: Mitch Rosen Extraordinary Gunleather, 300 Bedford St., Manchester, N.H. 03101-1102, telephone: [603] 647-2971, FAX: [603] 647-2973, Website: www.mitchrosen.com

Mauser Action Rifles

From Charles Daly

K.B.I., Inc. is importing a new line of Charles Daly Mauser action hunting rifles from Zastava Firearms of Yugoslavia. The Field Grade models feature barreled actions in matte blue and matte stainless steel, fitted with Butler Creek synthetic stocks. Superior grade and Mini-Mausers feature polished blued barreled actions and select polished walnut stocks with distinctive Monte Carlo comb cheekpieces. The rifles are chambered in most popular calibers, from .22 Hornet to .458 WinMag. Contact K.B.I., Inc., P.O. Box 6625, Harrisburg, Pa. 17112, telephone: [717] 540-8518, FAX: [717] 540-8567, e-mail: sales@charlesdaly.com, Website: www.charlesdaly.com.

Distinctive Pistol Grips

From Carbon Creations

John Cato of Carbon Creations has designed a series of distinctive carbon fiber and carbon/kevlar blend grips for semiautomatic pistols. These handcrafted grips are individually custom-fitted and hand-finished to enhance both the appearance and the performance of the handgun. Available in a variety of striking carbon fiber weave colors. For a free color brochure, contact Carbon Creations, P.O. Box 1434, Valley Center, Calif. 92082, telephone: [888] 757-4747, FAX: [760] 749-4490, Website: www.carboncreations.com.

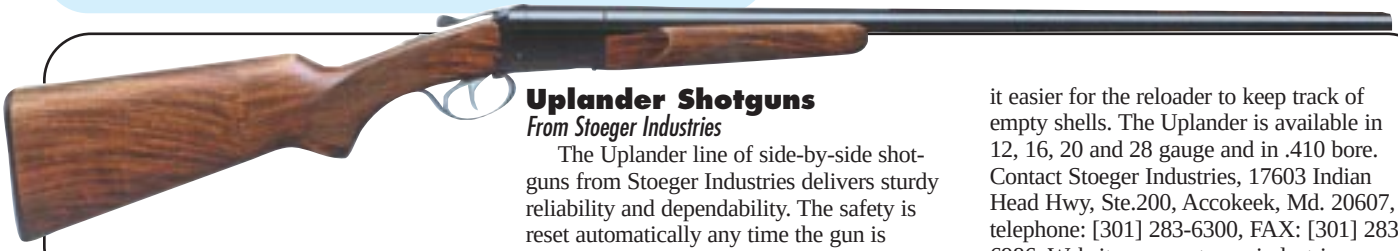
Tactical Bolt Catch

From DPMS

The new Tactical Bolt Catch from Defense Procurement Manufacturing Services (DPMS) features a larger bolt-release pad that is faster and easier to locate and activate. The lower extended pad, which holds the bolt carrier back when the magazine is not installed, improves practice and training techniques. For more information, contact DPMS, 13983 Industry Ave., Becker, Minn. 55308, telephone: [763] 261-5600, FAX: [763] 261-5599, e-mail: dpmsinc@aol.com, Website: www.dpms.com

SensorSafe

The SensorSafe employs a tiny portable transponder to provide instant, keyless access to your handgun. The SensorSafe is constructed from 3mm thick steel, heat resistant to 300 degrees, and equipped with an inner housing that holds the handgun in a suede-lined cradle. The SensorSafe's discreet design does not look like a traditional gun safe, adding to its effectiveness. Contact Jeff Schaff at Kleine Welt Trading Co., P.O. Box 231, Glencoe, Ill. 60022-0231, telephone: [847] 835-9964, FAX: [847] 835-9976, e-mail: corporate@bestgunsafe.com, Website: www.bestgunsafe.com



Uplander Shotguns

From Stoeger Industries

The Uplander line of side-by-side shotguns from Stoeger Industries delivers sturdy reliability and dependability. The safety is reset automatically any time the gun is opened. Reliable mechanical extractors make it easier for the reloader to keep track of empty shells. The Uplander is available in 12, 16, 20 and 28 gauge and in .410 bore. Contact Stoeger Industries, 17603 Indian Head Hwy, Ste.200, Accokeek, Md. 20607, telephone: [301] 283-6300, FAX: [301] 283-6986, Website: www.stoegerindustries.com

Moc-Toe Hunting Boot

From Danner

Danner Shoe Mfg. has introduced the new Moc-Toe Sharptail hunting boot for upland bird and open country deer hunters. The classic design and hand-sewn construction features rich cinnamon, pebbled leather and durable deep green treated canvas uppers, along with a full-length footbed and padded tongue and collar for added comfort. The Vibram Gumlite Stalker outsole is made with shallow lugs and bobs for flatland walking. Contact Danner Shoe Mfg., 18550 Neb. Riverside Pkwy, Portland, OR 97230-4975, telephone: [503] 251-1100, FAX: [503] 251-1119, e-mail: info@danner.com, Website: www.danner.com

Mel Pardue Gentleman's Folder

From Benchmade Knives

Famed knife designer Mel Pardue has created a handsome new compact Gentleman's Folder for Benchmade Knives. The Model 850-01 features a sturdy 154cm stainless steel 2.8-inch blade, a belt/pocket clip and bolsters that run the length of the knife for rugged reliability and dependability. The polished ironwood handle is accented by stabilized ivory insets for an outstanding grip and a striking appearance. When folded, the Model 850-01 measures 3.9 inches and weighs 2.6 ounces. Contact Benchmade Knife Co., 300 Beavercreek Rd., Oregon City, Ore. 97045, telephone: [503] 655-6004, FAX: [503] 655-6223, e-mail: info@benchmade.com, Website: www.benchmade,com

New i-QUIP Multi-Tool

From Imperial Schrade

The new i-QUIP is a multi-tool, combined with an altimeter, barometer, digital compass and clock designed especially for the hunter and outdoor enthusiast in the field. Implements include a saw, cutting blade, scissors, corkscrew, flathead and Phillips head screwdriver, cap lifter and can opener. Also included are a survival whistle, signal mirror and belt clip. Contact Imperial Schrade Corp., 7 Schrade Ct., Ellenville, N.Y. 12428, telephone: [845] 647-7600, FAX: [845] 210-8671, e-mail: info@schradeknives.com, Website: www.schradeknives.com

New Combat Grips

From Nill-Grips USA

Famed German grip makers Karl and Wilfried Nill have opened an office in Bandera, Texas, to accommodate the needs of their customers in the United States. Nill-Grips USA's product line includes more than 600 grips for over 100 models from approximately 30 handgun manufacturers. Nill-Grips are designed to meet the demands of the serious shooter, hunter and law enforcement officer. Pictured are the stippled walnut combat pistol grips, which are anatomically custom-shaped for each specific make and model pistol. For more information on the complete product line, contact Nill-Grips USA, LLC, P.O. Box 1916, Bandera, Texas 78003, telephone: [830] 634-3l3l, FAX: [830] 634-2555, e-mail: info@nill=grips.com, Website: www.nill-grips.com

E-Bolt Camo Muzzleloader

From Traditions Performance

The E-Bolt Model 209 bolt-action muzzleloading rifle from Traditions Performance is now available in an Advantage Timber pattern camouflage synthetic stock. Key features include the powerful 209 Primer Ignition System, quick-release bolt that covers the breech to protect against rain, snow and dirt, adjustable Lite Optic sights, nickel finish performance barrel with one in 28 twist rifling to accommodate saboted bullets and a thumb safety. Contact Traditions Performance Firearms, 1375 Boston Post Rd., Old Saybrook, Conn. 06475, telephone: [860] 388-4656, FAX: [860] 388-4657, e-mail: info@traditionsfirearms.com, Website: www.traditionsfirearms.com

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Survival Books Everyone Needs

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SUREFIRE

continued from page 35

gent series of quality-control tests by SureFire engineers before being authorized for use. After all of this careful design and certification, you might think that the specialty contractor is at liberty to produce all of the lamps that SureFire orders. Wrong. When a critical component, such as a spool of tungsten filament wire, is exhausted, subsequent production must again be quality certified prior to acceptance by SureFire. In short, this is NASA-grade quality control, and it is more than impressive.

Latest And Greatest

The variety of SureFire light systems is now so extensive that it is not feasible to describe them all here. A quick visit to www.surefire.com will permit you to examine the entire scope of their offerings. Permit me though to briefly share with you several of the newest and most interesting models.

The E2 Executive is to my mind perhaps the best of the new SureFire models. While it may not set new standards for brightness, it does something better. It offers the performance of the excellent 6P model but in a package that is roughly one-quarter smaller. The diameter of the main body of the light is .818 inch, and the lens/reflector assembly measures only 1.0 inch. Add to this a very rugged built-in pocket clip, and you have a potent SureFire light that is sufficiently small to carry with you constantly, whether dressed in casual clothing, uniform or business attire. The small size also makes this the preferred model to carry as a back-up to a more powerful SureFire unit. The light output of this little gem is a full 60 lumens, essentially identical to that of the original 6P. By way of contrast the popular and widely distributed "Mini-Maglight" (you know, the pocket-sized light that is sometimes given as a free premium for buying a brick of .22s or a case of motor oil) puts out approximately 6 lumens of light.

SureFire instructor demonstrating a fine point of technique within the simulator.

Lumens, by the way, is the standard measurement of light output used by SureFire. It requires very expensive and exotic equipment to measure the light output in lumens, but the result is a much better evaluation of performance than the use of "peak candle power." SureFire's Chief Engineer, Peter Hauk, offers an easy-to-understand, plain-language explanation of the terms lumen and peak candle power: Imagine pouring a five-pound sack of sugar out onto a flat surface. Peak candle power would equate to a measurement of the highest little peak of our pile of sugar. No matter how badly scattered the pile of sugar, the only measurement taken would be of that one highest point. Lumens, on the other hand, assesses the total quantity of sugar in the pile. It is a significantly better unit of measurement.

The SureFire Millennium is another series that you will want to be familiar with. There are several models in this series, but my preference would be for the M2. A six-volt light, the M2 is still quite compact and features a rugged belt/pocket clip to obviate the need for a special holster or belt pouch. The light output is user variable by selecting one of two furnished lamps: either a 65-lumen lamp with 60 minutes battery run time, or a 120-lumen lamp that will operate for 20 minutes. A light this potent is normally used in short flashes, and even a 20-minute run time is extremely good. The slightly larger, nine-volt model M3 is one of the favorites among SureFire Institute instructors; it features a dazzling 225 lumens. The Millennium series lights feature a shock-proof lamp mounting and water-proof construction, making these the most rugged, damage-proof lights available.

If you have need for the absolute maximum in performance, you should examine the SureFire M6 Magnum. This 18-volt light offers 500 lumens of searing white light for 20 minutes, or you can employ the 250-lumen lamp assembly to extend run time to one hour. Amazing!

All of the current SureFire lights feature additional performance enhancements. Some of these are as simple and easy to miss as anti-roll surfaces to keep your light in position if set on a slanted surface. Others are significant advances over the capabilities of the earlier generation lights, such as the lock-out tailcap assembly. Turn the tailcap out one full turn from the intermittent position, and the light cannot be accidentally activated. Indexing flats on the tailcap and main body of the light make this easy to do, even in darkness. While a lock-out feature may be a mere convenience for most of us — for example to prevent inadvertent activation of the light while stowed in a suitcase — it can be a life or death matter to some users.

High Performance Training To Match

Like any truly good engineer, Dr. Matthews did not confine himself to his own opinions and beliefs as he evolved the design of the SureFire weapons lights and flashlights. He consistently sought out the opinions of those who had used his products in high-threat applications. Law enforcement and military professionals shared their good experiences with the early products, but also pushed for ever more increased brightness and performance. As Dr. Matthews met these demands, reports began filtering back that these powerful lights were increasingly being used as nonlethal compliance devices. Used properly, they could effect compliance from a stubborn suspect, or barring that, they could be used to greatly reduce the capacity of a threatening individual to inflict harm by temporarily impairing his vision.

Through these contacts, the idea was formed that producing the best lighting tools in the world was not sufficient, and that a vehicle for developing and disseminating instruction in their use was equally necessary. This led to the founding of the SureFire Institute in 1998.

The director of the SureFire Institute is Ken Good. He and the cadre of instructors that have been assembled share a vast collective experience that includes military, foreign and domestic law enforcement, Naval Special Warfare, and SWAT backgrounds. They are an impressive team.

At present, instruction is limited to military and law-enforcement agencies, but plans are in work that may soon make instruction for civilians available from satellite facilities.

A wide variety of instruction is available at the Institute, but the most commonly requested class addresses officer survival in low-light conditions. During the lecture phase, the students are brought to a uniform understanding of such topics as the OODA cycle (Observe, Orient, Decide, Act) and other combat mindset concepts, interpreting the body language of offenders, and avoiding target fixation. Topics then move on to understanding the mechanics of human vision and how to employ the potent SureFire light systems to rob an assailant of his capacity to resist. After the lecture and safety phases, the instruction progresses to force-on-force training.

This training is accomplished within the Institute's indoor low-light environment. If you have had the good fortune to test yourself against "The Fun House" at Gunsite or "The Terminator" at Thunder Ranch, then you know how these indoor simulators can raise your blood pressure. Now imagine doing the same thing in com-

plete darkness except for your hand carried light and confronting an unknown number of role players that may prove either compliant or hostile. If in the middle of the Institute's simulator you don't find that your breathing rate has accelerated... I want you on my team.

Armaments for the indoor simulator are marking guns — in both pistol and carbine form — depending upon the training needs of the group. They propel a roughly .60-caliber projectile at approximately 300 fps. They leave a telltale splash on your clothing to show the location of a hit — and yes, they do sting. The Institute forbids the use of any form of armor or padding. After all, if you paid attention throughout the training and employ the concepts that were taught, then you should be able to dominate the situation and avoid these simulated wounds. If not — well, pain is a good teaching tool.

Throughout the day, the students exchange positions as role player and investigating officer. It permits each individual to employ the SureFire lights to disable a threat, as well as to experience the effects of these techniques from the wrong end. By the end of the training session, the participants may emerge somewhat battered and bruised, but they will possess a fight-winning understanding of the realities of low-light conflict.

Unlike some schools, the SureFire Institute has no set, cast-in-concrete "school method." The curriculum is constantly evolving. When approached with a new idea or suggested technique, Good's answer is, "Let's try it and see how it works." Constructive input from experienced students is not stifled, it is encouraged.

It seems clear that just like the Institute's curriculum, the SureFire lighting systems will continue to evolve for the better. SureFire products are not cheap, nor should they be. They are the best, most rugged, and highest performing lights made. They have become the standard for those in the know and for those who put their lives on the line for the public's safety. It is also comforting to know that regardless of your occupation, you can equip yourself with these powerful tools — no permit required.

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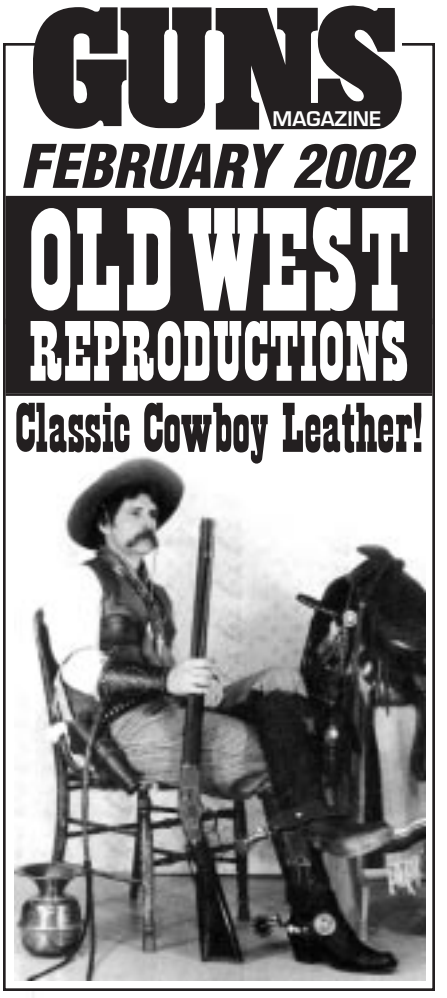

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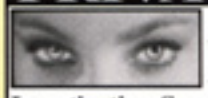
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CAMPFIRE TALES

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Other than the medical advancements over the last 100-plus years, has there been anything else in the way of progress that has really been beneficial — or has it caused more problems than solutions? What if the buffalo still roamed the prairies? What if large herds of elk still grazed together with large bands of antelope? I looked across the country as we traveled, and in my imagination I could still see them. As we passed a ranch with several pinto ponies in the corral, it didn't require much on my part to envision that the Comanches were not gone, the Longhorns were not gone, the drovers, the outlaws, the gunfighters — none of them were gone.

What would the world be like today if all time had stopped in 1876? If life had stayed simpler would we have had two world wars? What would the world be like today if there had not been such major conflagrations? What if Einstein had not advanced his theories? What if the fastest way to travel was still by train? One of the reasons, perhaps the major reason, Cowboy Action Shooting is such a popular sport today is that it stops the passage of time and, for at least one brief instance, locks us into the 19th century.

Yes I know I'm a dreamer, and yes I know those were tough times. But it was a toughness that was easier to understand and handle than the stress of modern living. The more we progress, the less happy we as a society seem to be; the more machines we get, the harder we seem to work; and the more time saving devices we come up with, the less time we seem to have. Consider this, from the beginning of time until the discovery of the steam engine, the world changed very little. The overwhelming majority of what we call progress has occurred in our lifetime and in the lifetimes of our parents and grandparents. What would it be like today if these three generations had been allowed to live their lives the same as all previous generations?

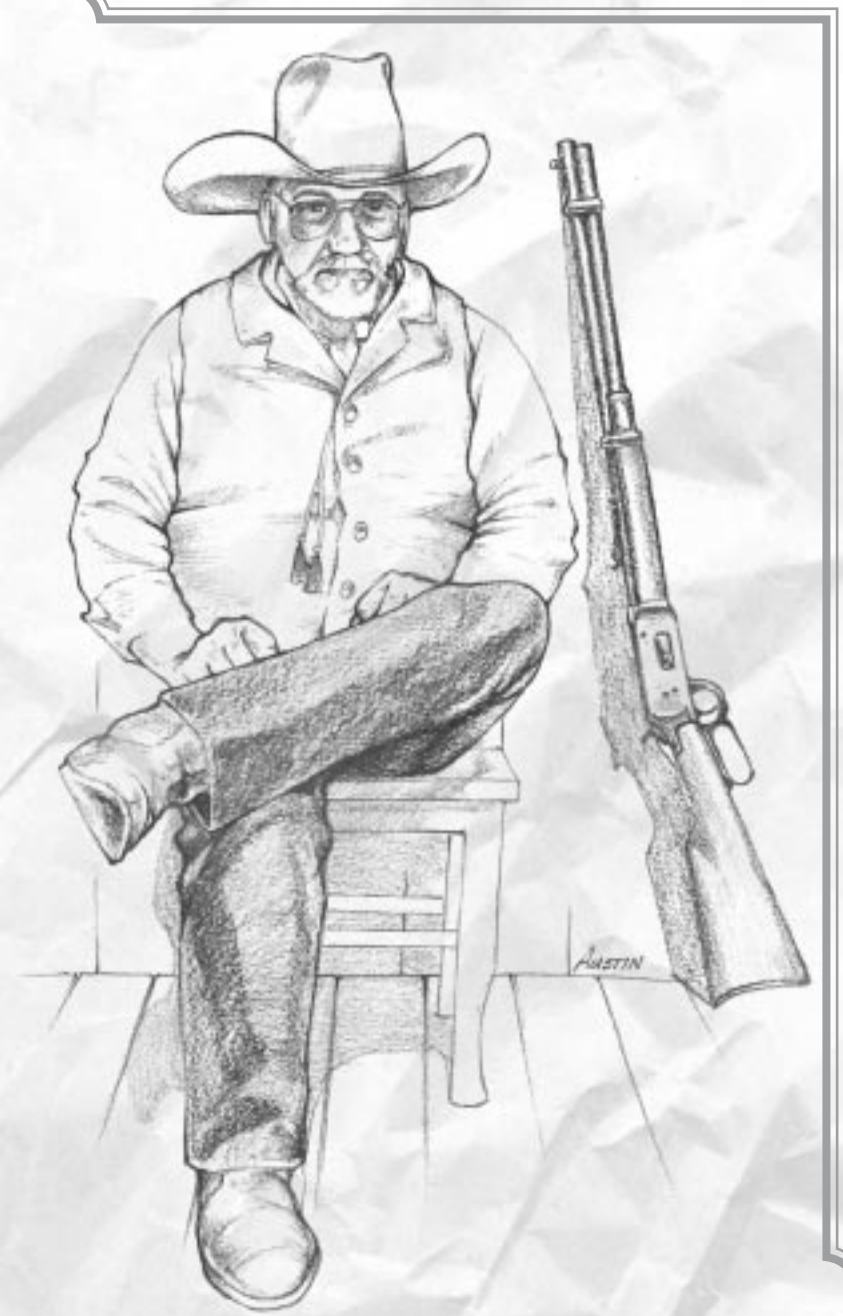
The strangest thing is that I am raising all of these questions while dictating my thoughts into a voice-activated computer! If time had stopped 125 years ago I might be spending this beautiful afternoon sitting on a high, grassy hill with a Sharp's rifle, crossed sticks, a supply of .50-90 black-powder cartridges, looking over a herd of buffalo. How hard would it be to choose between these two activities? But it is all only a dream, and the nice thing about dreams is that we can block out all the harshness of reality and dwell only on what appeals to us and to our imaginations.

The only thing more certain than progress is the passage of time. Progress has varying speeds — high points and low points. time is a steamroller that is chasing all of us while gaining more and more speed. Both of these are man's mortal enemy and both are entirely out of our control. At least it is a most pleasant thought to occasionally ask, What If?

BY JOHN TAFFIN

What If?

Sixteen years ago I invited a dozen men from around the country to bring two sixguns and meet with me for a week of unorganized shooting. We had such a great time that we made it an annual event, which we decided to call The Shootists' Holiday. The original 12 has grown to nearly 100. And there would be a lot more were it not for space limitations. Over the years, we have met in Wyoming, Colorado and New Mexico. This year I traveled to the 16th Annual Shootists' Holiday through southern Idaho, down through Utah, across southwestern Colorado, and into New Mexico. I felt as if I'd traveled more than 1,000 miles by highway, and it also seemed as if I covered more than 100 years of history.



Although we may argue about the age of this country, and whether it was created or evolved, there can be no argument that this is some of the most beautiful country in the world. We have been blessed with everything from deserts and rolling hills to cloud-shrouded mountain peaks. As I traveled over the 12,000-foot high Monarch Pass between Salida and Gunnison, I marveled at the sight. The horizontal- and vertical-layered rock formations are awe inspiring. Anyone who can look at such a sight and does not feel very small and insignificant needs to be humbled. In contrast to these rocky areas, between Grand Junction, Colo., and Price, Utah, one encounters a rugged desolation that has a beauty all its own. I get a lump in my throat just thinking about what the pioneers went through when traveling through such country by wagon, horseback, and on foot.

There's a lot of time for thinking, contemplating, dreaming, and even seeing visions when covering such a great distance, especially when there are two drivers who can switch off every few hours. When returning from New Mexico, we left at 6:00 a.m. and arrived back home in Idaho at 11:15 p.m. the same day. We traveled 1,037 miles, and I could not help but think that we covered a distance in one day which would have taken most of the summer just 150 years ago. Wonderful progress — but at what price?

My favorite western singer, in fact my favorite singer period, is Don Edwards. One of his songs, entitled simply "Coyotes," tells of the old cowboy who had seen Pancho Villa, and curses the automobile with the lament that "the Longhorns are gone, and the drovers are gone. The Comanches are gone, the outlaws are gone, Gerinomo's gone...."

What if progress somehow could have been stopped? As we traveled through the Salt Lake Valley, I caught some of the vision that must have greeted Brigham Young and the Mormon pioneers as they found their destination. Could they have even begun to envision how this beautiful area would be today — choked with people and the automobile cursed by the old cowboy? What if time somehow stood still and everything stayed the same?

In 1876, legislation was introduced in Congress to close the U.S. Patent Office. The reason? Everything that could possibly be invented had already arrived and we needed to go no further! Today — with airplanes, automobiles, television, computers, instant communication, and on, and on, and on — such an idea seems ludicrous. But what if progress had been stopped in 1876? Was the politician who introduced this bill so wrong? After all, by 1876 we had the stagecoach, the transcontinental railroad, the telegraph, the Winchester rifle, the Sharps single-shot rifle and, most definitely, the Colt Single Action Army. The Winchester, the Sharps, the Colt SAA all have the ability to transport many of us back through time. When we pick one up, the modern world seems to disappear and strange things happen to our senses. We can smell bacon and beans sizzling on an open fire next to a chuck wagon. We can hear the low, moanful bawling of Longhorn steers settling down for the night and the barking of coyotes in the hills around us. We can feel a good horse underneath us. We can see stars through skies not obscured by 100 years of pollution. I can taste all of it!

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On The Job.

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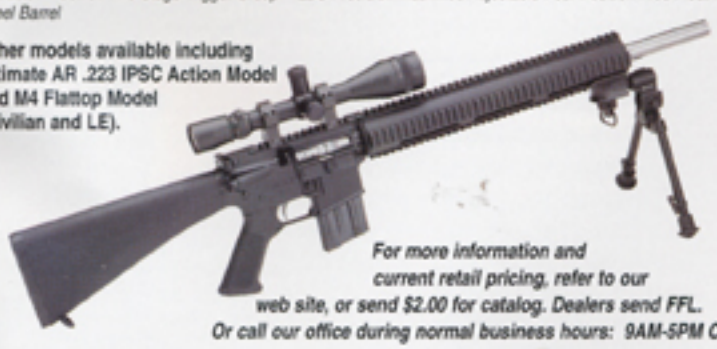

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