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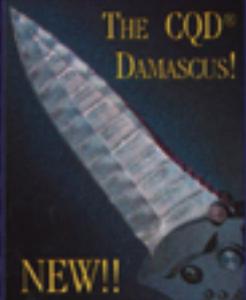
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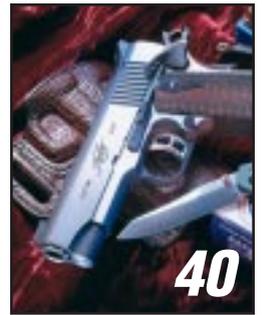
GUNS

MAGAZINE

FEBRUARY 2002 Vol. 48, Number 02-566

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By Massad Ayoob

Photo by Ichiro Nagata



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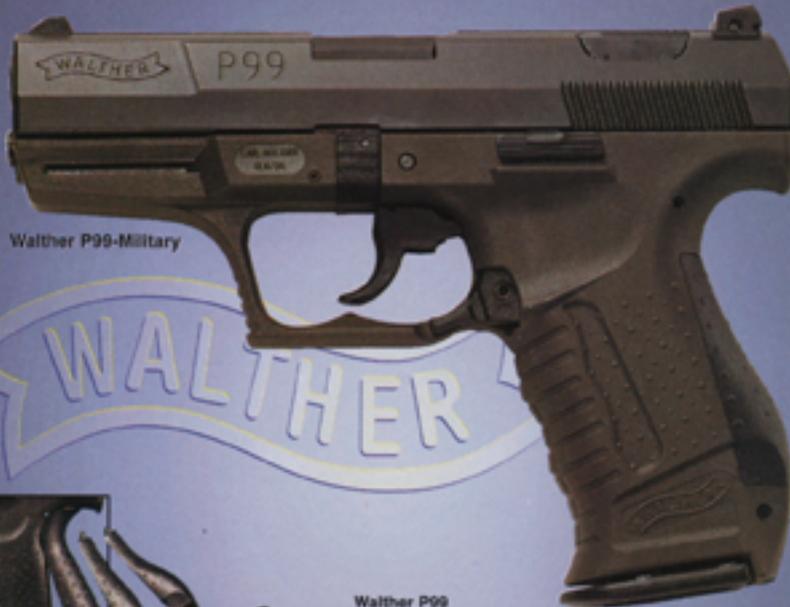
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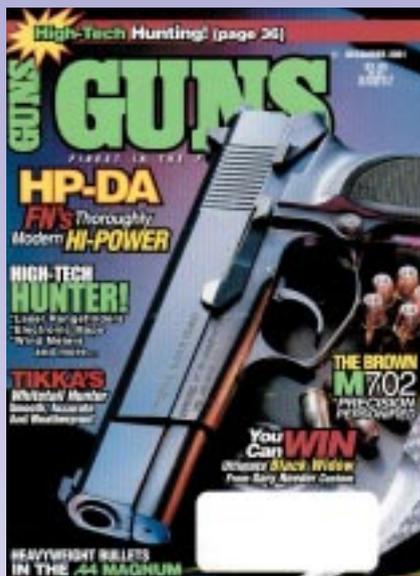
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LETTER OF THE MONTH



GUNS MAGAZINE DECEMBER 2001

Too Much Fun?

OK, that settles it! I want to be Ichiro Nagata. Now I already know that he is respected far and wide for the stunning quality and clarity of his photographs in *GUNS* and *American Handgunner*, but the photo on page 44 of the December issue shows that he is just having way too much fun at it as well! Gee whiz, what a tough job!

All kidding aside, it is nice to know that Mr. Nagata is "one of us" and that he enjoys getting out and shooting an interesting firearm as much as he enjoys shooting film.

Great job guys, you keep it interesting, and I will be certain to keep reading.

Richard Chavez
Simi Valley, Calif.

What's Wrong With The 1911?

In regards to a letter in your December 2001 issue by Vernon Bang, he states, as so many in the past have, that your magazine has too many articles about the venerable 1911. I have always wanted to write these people personally and ask them why they subscribe to such a magazine. Did he not make a decision to subscribe to a magazine that prints articles about guns? And isn't the .45 a gun? Or did he just subscribe to a magazine that he had no idea what the content was?

It should come as no surprise that your magazine might feature a custom 1911 on the

cover, or have an article inside about one. It seems to me that as the editors of your magazine, you can decide cover and content, and that as the consumer, we decide on whether or not we buy what you print. Maybe Bang (great name by the way!) would rather not see any more articles about guns in *GUNS*.

Jeff Namhie
Portland, Ore.

While I must confess to being a dyed-in-the-wool fan of the 1911, I don't dismiss the sentiment in Bang's letter. You will continue to see features about the 1911 in its many variations; however, GUNS will make every effort to include good coverage of other interesting and proven designs. Editor

Not Like The Old Days

I just finished reading the article on the new FN HP-DA. Was this by any chance a pre-production gun? I can't believe the gun in your article was born at the Herstal Factory, and released for sale.

The finish was horrible. The pits, and other marks on the gun, give it the look of a casting, rather than a machined part. Also, what is with the hooked trigger guard? I thought that had gone out of style years ago.

I recently bought one of the last 1000 High-Powers built by FN at the Herstal factory, and the finish on it is like glass, like you would expect on any gun made by FN.

Please tell me that this is not an example of a production gun!

Earl Hawkes
Three Forks, Mont.

Another Country Heard From

With regard to Phillip Howard's problem with his .44 Special load of 13.0 grains of HS7 behind a 240-grain SWC bullet (*Crossfire GUNS*, September 2001). Recoil, noise and muzzle blast are to a great extent subjective, but the primer flattening almost certainly points to cylinder or yoke end-play, which results in increased headspace. When this occurs the primer is unsupported on ignition and is allowed to back out of the case, which is later forced down over the primer. The final result is a totally flattened primer with barely a demarcation line between primer and primer-pocket; in other words, all the signs of horrendously high pressure. Howard should take his S&W Model 29 to a good gunsmith who will fit stainless-steel yoke bearing washers to restore headspace to normal; this will at least correct the primer problem.

On page 31 of the same issue — *Loading*

The .45 S&W — Charles Petty states that a .45 Colt shell holder cannot be used when loading the .45 Smith & Wesson/Schofield. Present .45 Colt rim diameter is .512 inch while most references give the .45 S&W as .520 inch. However, bearing in mind that there always exists minor dimensional variations in shell holders of different makes, and also of factory cases, it is quite likely that most .45 Colt shell holders will accept the .45 S&W rim quite easily. I believe that until now only Starline has made .45 S&W brass, but no doubt the big battalions will soon produce it. If they do, it would make sense to use the same rim diameter as the .45 Colt. I don't see a top-break Schofield extractor star tearing through the .512-inch rim of a .45 S&W case made of modern brass, black-powder fouling or not.

Petty also states that a .45 Colt seater will not place a crimp on the 1.109-inch .45 S&W shell. True, but I was able to correctly seat a 230-grain cast bullet and place a perfect roll crimp on my .45 S&W cases — shortened W-W .45 Colt — with the aid of a .45 ACP seating die. Much cheaper than buying a complete .45 S&W/Schofield three-die set. My handloads worked perfectly in an Uberti Schofield replica and extracted without difficulty.

It is interesting to note that in 1908 Smith & Wesson had plans to offer the New Century Hand Ejector chambered for an improved version of the .45 S&W called the .45 Special. It's rather a pity that they didn't; being more smokeless powder efficient than the .45 Colt, it would have made a superb cartridge.

Keith R. Dyer
Handgun Editor
Magnum Magazine
Durban, South Africa

No Guns Allowed

I was quite disturbed to find the following sign posted at the entrance to the Mt. Sterling, Ky., Wal-Mart store today.

"Attention Shoppers, no firearms, concealed or otherwise, are permitted inside the building."

This is something entirely new at Wal-Mart. In the past they have always been very supportive of the shooting public. I have even presented free firearm safety seminars in the store prior to deer season in past years as I am a certified Hunter Education Instructor Trainer.

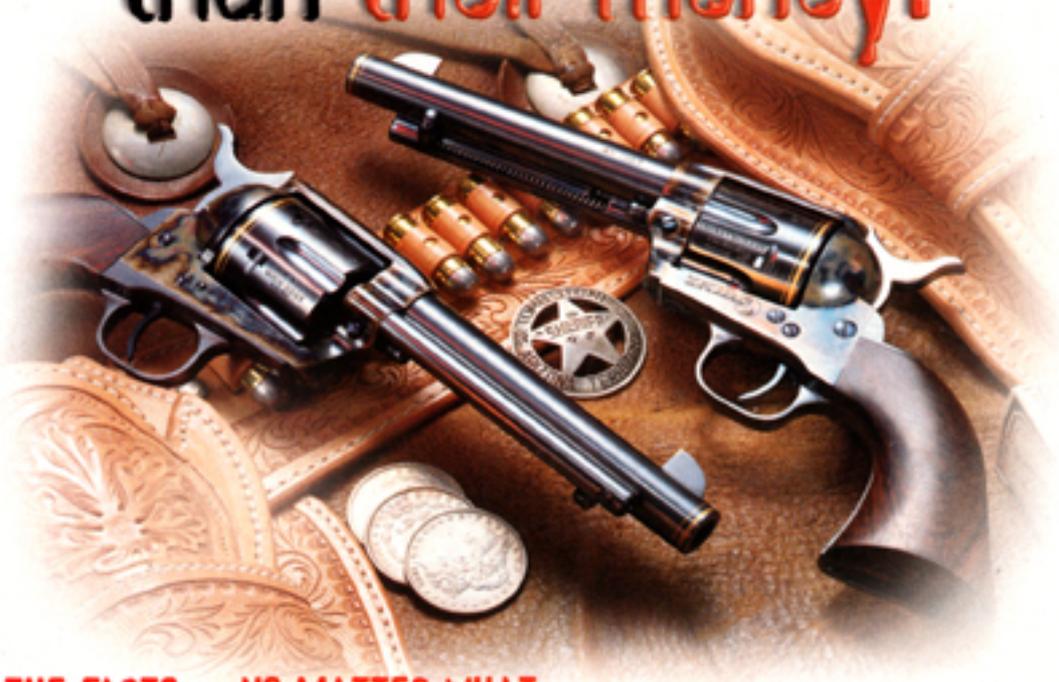
I called the local Wal-Mart manager in reference to this new policy and was informed that this was a nationwide Wal-Mart decision.

I encourage all readers of *GUNS Magazine* to contact the Wal-Mart company and voice your dissatisfaction with its decision and to cease doing business with the company until they rescind this policy.

W. Tandy Chenault
Mt. Sterling, Ky.

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Gun Health Hazards Can Be Dealt With

As the director of what is sometimes called a “shooting school,” I’ve frequently been asked about the advisability of pregnant women shooting. I’ve heard mixed advice on this from the medical community, with one MD essentially saying “no problem,” and another rigidly prohibiting it. I’m not a doctor, but caution and common sense always put me in the latter camp. This stance has been validated by recent research undertaken by Dr. Fabrice Czarniecki. Dr. C. is the consulting physician for the American Society of Law Enforcement Trainers and has also been consulted by the NYPD.

The two big problems are lead exposure and sound trauma, to which a fetus is much more vulnerable than its adult human host.

“Noise is usually considered as detrimental during the pregnancy,” notes Czarniecki. “In most European countries, health regulations forbid pregnant women to work in an environment with a level over 80 dB continuous noise, and rapid impulse noise changes of 40 dB, which is much less than the noise of a firearm.

“The sound levels of firearms are about 125 to 140 dB for rimfire rifles, 140 to 150 dB for rimfire pistols... and 150 to 160 dB for centerfire rifles, pistols and shotguns. Intrauterine measurements showed that the fetus was not significantly protected against loud noises. One study, in human volunteers, found a maximal noise attenuation of 10 dB at 4,000 Hz. In ewes, the noise attenuation was 20 dB at 4,000 Hz, but the noise inside the uterus was actually 2 to 5 dB greater at 250 Hz. As a comparison, foam plugs offer a protection of 12 to 20 dB and are considered as the least effective hearing protection.”

Exposure to this type of noise during pregnancy, the doctor reports, can lead to miscarriage, retardation of fetal growth and reduced birth weight, premature delivery, and hearing loss by the child, including other complications.

Lead toxicity is also an extremely important health factor to be aware of. “Lead is transferred from the mother to the fetus,” Czarniecki states flatly. “Lead is known to be toxic to the fetus, and exposure during pregnancy is associated with the following disorders: decreased birth weight and head circumference, even at very low exposure levels; miscarriage, premature delivery and pre-eclampsia (a severe complication of pregnancy); and behavioral effects in infants and children.”

Finally, the doctor comments, “a combined exposure to noise and lead seems to have an increased toxicity, causing heart

lesions, which are not observed for either of those agents in isolation.” He advises that pregnant mothers not shoot firearms “except in self-defense,” and that those with jobs which require firearms qualification explore use of Beam-Hit, FATS, or similar low-noise technology to achieve that goal until after delivery.

Duty Belts

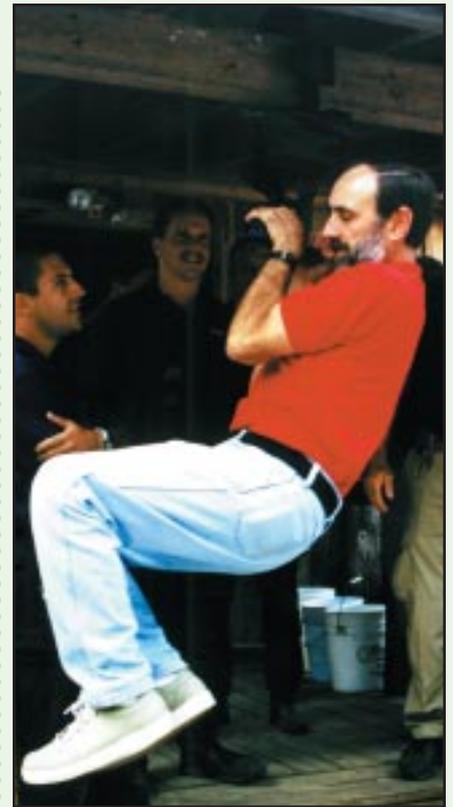
Depending on how much equipment the officer carries, a cop or security guard’s duty belt typically weighs 12 to 18 pounds. This is a major reason why lumbar spine problems are an occupational hazard for these personnel. Lightweight belts, holsters and gear pouches — ranging from nylon to plastic to the synthetic leather Michael’s of Oregon calls Mirage — have gone far toward mitigating this problem. “Duty suspenders” available from Michaels and Magnum Software likewise help relieve this health hazard and are catching on around the country, particularly in the Northwest.

Safariland has now gone a step further with the Levitation system developed by Bill Rogers. The lightweight belt has soft tubes inside at the top and bottom edges. Rogers designed an ingenious clamp system so that holster and equipment pouch clamp to the outside of the belt so securely that adult males can hang from them in midair without pulling them loose. This means that the belt slides of the holster and pouches don’t bear against hips and nerve centers like conventional designs. Velcro-lined and securing to a Velcro under-belt, this new duty belt all but holds the equipment away from the body, which relieves pressure and discomfort. The one I’m testing is almost sinfully comfortable. Look for this technology to find its way to hunters, hikers, construction workers and others. Thanks, Bill.

Holster Pressure

A friend of mine in Pennsylvania had carried an Airweight S&W .38 daily in an ankle holster for most of his adult life. He had to find another holster location recently. His physician told him that the ankle rig was slightly restricting circulation and aggravating an early case of phlebitis.

A cop who had carried his backup in an ankle holster for most of his adult life recently switched his second gun to the side trouser pocket, again on medical advice. He was having increasing problems with arthritis in his left ankle, and his doctor suspected a correlation with the leg holster.



Safariland’s Tom Campbell hangs off a Raptor holster attached to a Levitation belt to show how securely the new system holds the equipment together.

Numerous officers, particularly females, have had hip problems and nerve problems resulting from holsters that dug into their sides at the attachment point. This is why most of the better holster makers put an orthopedic curve in the belt shank of duty scabbards. I suspect that one reason so many concealed carriers find paddle holsters the most comfortable for wear on the hip is that the best ones have a similar orthopedic curve on the side that meets the body, distributing the weight of the gun evenly and comfortably.

Gun-banners have lately resorted to extremely exaggerated statements that paint guns as a health-hazard. We must vigorously fight this misinformation. At the same time, when we have evidence of genuine health hazards, it is nothing less than unethical not to warn our brothers and sisters who own, shoot and carry guns. All the above concerns can be addressed without giving up guns or shooting.

Check out Ayoob’s article, *Today’s Concealment Holster: Better Than Ever*, in this month’s issue for a complete listing of holster vendors.



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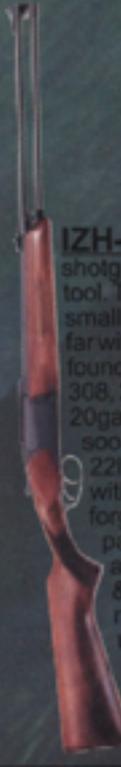
IZH-43 has gained a world reputation for being a quality side by side shotgun at an affordable price. The **43** features: hammer forged hard chrome lined barrels, machined steel receiver and mono block, checkered stock and forend, auto tang safety, and many models come standard with (choke tubes, single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



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Imperial Sizing Die Wax

Like most reloaders, when I first set up my loading equipment I used a lube pad to apply resizing lubricant to my cartridge cases. Originally, I used both Lyman and RCBS resizing lube. They did the job, but the lube pad soon assumed a particularly revolting appearance as it picked up dirt and carbon from the fired cases. Lubing prior to resizing quickly became the most loathsome part of the reloading process.

Some years later, I "discovered" Imperial Sizing Die Wax. Produced by Le Clear Industries, this lube is infinitely neater and easier to use, and I've found that it does a significantly better job as well.

No lube pad is required. Merely tap the tip of your index finger and thumb against the semi-hard lube, and you will have picked up the proper amount of material to lubricate one rifle case. Run your fingertips along the case, and the lube is applied in the proper amount and just where it's needed. No more lube dents in your newly sized cases, as it is easy to keep the neck and shoulder free of excess lubricant. The process may sound

slow, but in actuality, it is much faster than using a lube pad. The stuff lasts forever — I'm still trying to use up my first tin.

Imperial Sizing Die Wax also works far better than anything I have tried when doing heavy case-forming work. I recently formed a large lot of .40-65 cases out of .45-70s, and using the Imperial Wax, the job was a snap.

Like most good things of interest to handloaders, Imperial Sizing Die Wax can be obtained from Sinclair International. Its new catalog consists of 108 pages of great gear for the loading bench. Order a tin of Imperial for \$4.50, and odds are that Sinclair will toss in a catalog for free.

Do yourself a favor. Order a tin of Imperial Sizing Die Wax and toss that grungy old lube pad.



FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

Sinclair International
2330 Wayne Haven St.
Fort Wayne, Ind. 46803
[219] 493-1858
www.sinclairintl.com

A black and white advertisement for Midway USA. On the left, a woman with blonde hair, wearing a dark t-shirt and a baseball cap, smiles while holding a handgun in her right hand. To her right, she is holding several catalogs. The top catalog is titled "Bullet Casting Catalog". Below it is "EVERYTHING shooting & Reloading CATALOG". To the right of these is "Book and Video Catalog". At the bottom right is "GUNSMITHING CATALOG". The Midway USA logo is in the top left corner, with the website "www.midwayusa.com" and phone number "800-243-3220". The text "GOTCHA COVERED!" is written in large, bold letters at the top right. At the bottom right, there is a paragraph of text: "From bullets to bench rests, from Ruark to Hemingway, from alloy to molds, from barrels to triggers, call or visit our web site to get our latest free catalogs. No extra charge for great prices and service." A small box at the bottom center contains the text "Source Code 427".

Lyman/A-Zoom Snap Caps

A set of snap caps is one of the most important accessories that any shooter can have. By far the best use for snap caps is to train yourself to avoid flinching (see Dave Anderson's Rifleman column). If, like myself, you are often alone at the range, a good set of snap caps will allow you to perform a "ball and dummy drill." Load three live rounds and two snap caps into your magazine or cylinder in random order. With the semiauto, you will need to look away as you load the magazine and not pay attention to the order in which the live and dummy rounds are loaded. With a revolver, simply give the cylinder a spin so that you do not know whether to expect a live or a dummy round.

Now, align the sights, focus on the front sight, and apply careful trigger pressure. If the gun fires, then you really don't learn anything. If, however, you get a *click* rather than a *bang*, take notice of what your front sight did at the moment the hammer fell. Did it remain steady on the target? Good job! Odds are, though, that you saw it dip slightly. This is clear evidence that you anticipated the shot. Now relax and try it again. This sort of constant reinforcement is the best way to beat a bad case of flinching.

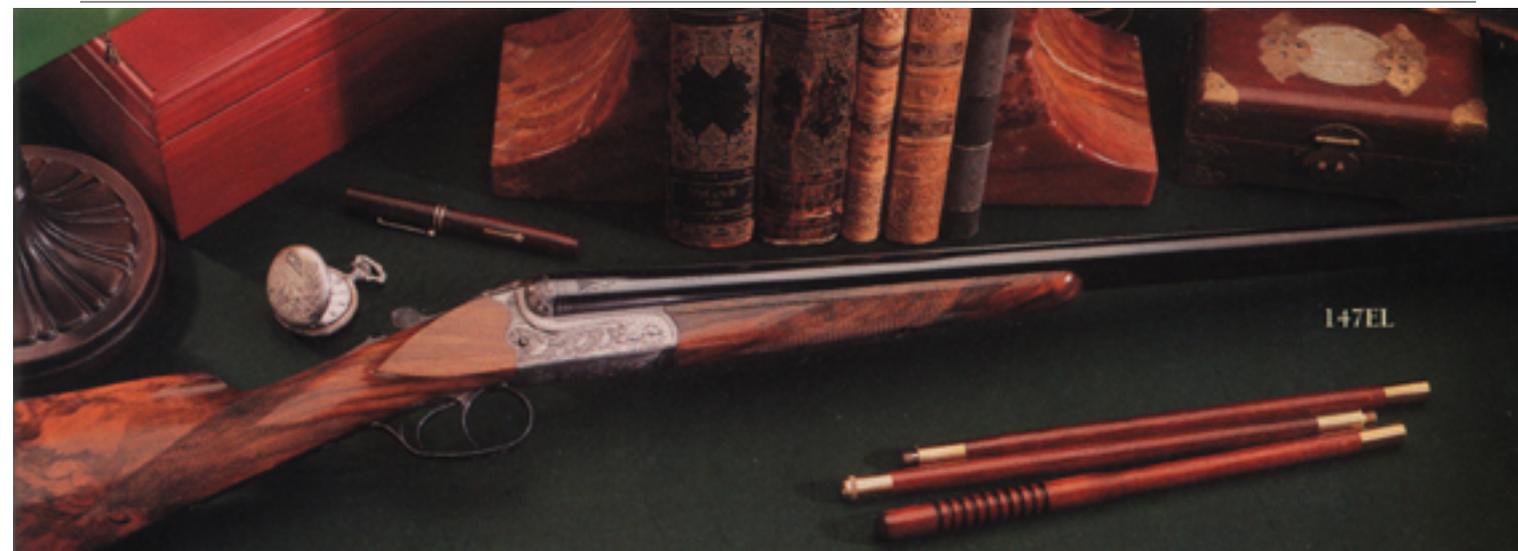
All snap caps are not created alike. A-Zoom's aluminum snap caps are by far the best I've ever used. They are hard anodized to resist wear, and in place of a primer is an extremely tough material that cushions the firing pin and is said to be good for 3,000



impacts. These will cycle through an action much better than the common plastic snap caps, and will last longer as well. Price varies by caliber, but as an example, a set of six .44-40s like those pictured retails for \$18.98.

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Wilson Chamber Brush

Improvise all you like, but some jobs just can't be done well without the correct tool.

Until a couple of years ago, I never owned a proper chamber cleaning brush for the .45 ACP. Why would I? I could just use my bore brush, right? Well, yes, it was quite a bit undersized to do a good job of scrubbing stubborn carbon deposits out of a heavily fouled chamber, but if I wallowed it around and worked at it for long enough, it eventually got the chamber sufficiently clean. Sort of.

Then one of my shooting partners gave me a Wilson chamber-cleaning brush. What a difference! Just insert the properly dimensioned brush into the chamber, give it a couple of quick twists, and you're done.

The bristles are not only properly dimensioned, they are made of tough stainless steel to last for a very long time. The handle is a polymer, resistant to all common cleaning solvents and is nicely knurled for a good grip.

A clean chamber can make a vital difference in the reliability of your favorite .45, so quit fooling around, and get the right tool for the job. The Wilson .45 chamber brush retails for a mere \$9.95.



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THE .25-20 New Adventures in Loading

Long before I wrote about guns, I collected them. Before that, I was a serious competitive pistol shooter. So it's logical that my circle of friends has quite a few folks who share those interests. At a gun show not long ago, one of my buddies who knows of my fondness for the old "dash" cartridges, came up and said, "Come with me Charlie, you need to see this gun." It was a Winchester Model 92 SRC that I had already seen — and dismissed — since it was chambered for the .25-20 WCF.

"The last thing I need is *another* cartridge to load," I said.

But during the course of the day he nagged and kept saying, "Charlie, you *need* that rifle."

I went to visit it a couple of times and, after some serious consideration and negotiation, it tagged along with me on the way home — with a detour by the gun shop for a box of ammo. Then came the necessary ordering of materials: dies, brass and bullets, all of which are readily available.

Unlike most of the other old dash cartridges like the .44-40 or .32-20, the .25-20 was never available in a handgun. It is really nothing more than the .32-20 case necked down — just as the .38-40 is a necked down .44-40. You might call it the first varmint

cartridge — for it was something of a hotrod, pushing an 86-grain bullet at over 1,400 fps. There was also a 60-grain load at over 2,000 fps.

My order was for dies, brass and bullets: the 75-grain Speer softpoint and some bulk Remington 86-grain JSPs that are used in the factory ammo. While waiting for all the loading stuff to get here, I shot a little factory ammo and quickly concluded that this was going to be another really fun gun.

We are often told that these old bottleneck cartridges are hard to load because of the thin case mouths. I guess that's true if you're careless, but the .25-20 is treated like a rifle cartridge in loading, so two die sets are offered. Since we don't have to bell the case mouth, that helps a bunch, although we do need to lightly chamfer and deburr the case mouth.

Loading data is plentiful. And even though the case is small, we'll still be using rifle powders. Older data shows 2400 as being used, but it seemed to me that powders commonly used in the small PPC and BR cases would work. Sure enough, the Speer Manual listed a load using Accurate 2015 BR for their 75-grain bullet, and Hodgdon had one for H-322 with the 86-grain Remington. Both are powders that have

worked well for me.

Sometimes we get lucky with initial load choices. Speer's data showed a starting load 13.5 grains of Accurate 2015 BR for the 75-grain JSP. Hodgdon shows 11.3 grains of H-322 as the starting point with the 86-grain Remington. Just because I like to keep things simple, I began with 11.5. With a few rounds of each charge, it was off to the range.

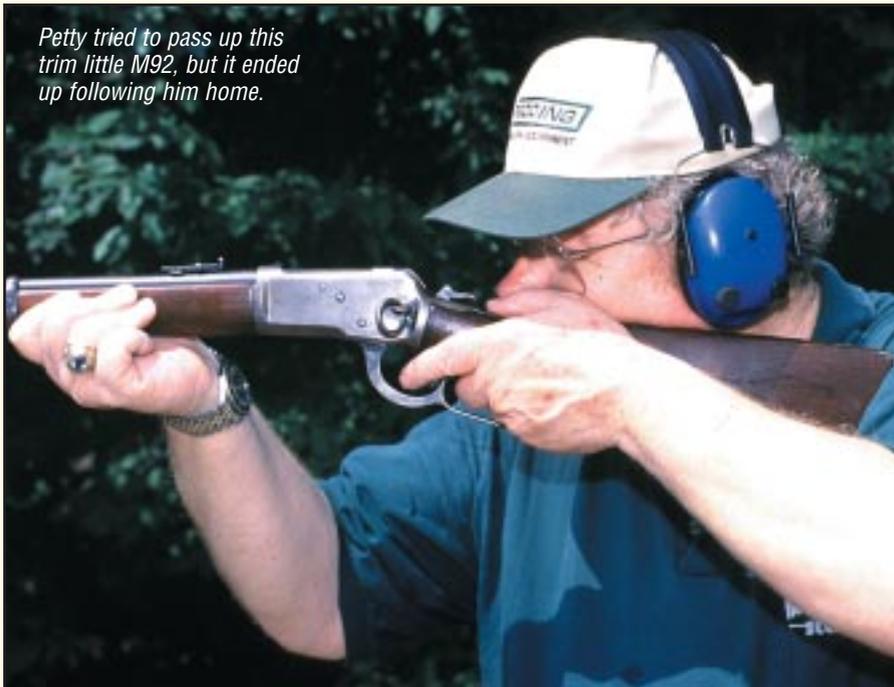
My litmus test for this sort of fun plinking is a 6-inch diameter steel plate that is 70 yards from the firing line. My very first shot with a factory load had resulted in a satisfying *clang*. Now the same thing happened with the H-322 handload — and with the Speer bullet as well. There simply was no need to change the load. Both met my needs without adjustment and have become standard. I never even bothered to chronograph them and probably wouldn't have done so had I not decided to write about this pleasant little cartridge.

The H-322 load delivers 1,450 fps, the Accurate 2015 BR charge gives 1,412 fps from the Winchester's 20-inch barrel. Since those are comfortably close to the published factory speed of 1,460 fps, they did what I almost always want them to do: duplicate a factory load. But the next time I went to the range, I picked up a box of factory ammo by mistake. And after shooting the handloads, it felt kinda puny. The chronograph showed only 1,180 fps for the Remington factory 86-grain JSP. We have to remember that the standard test barrel length for the .25-20 is 24 inches so the saddling carbine's 20-inch barrel accounts for some of the difference, but we also need to keep in mind the simple truth that factory ballistics come from something other than real-world guns. The numbers are nice clues, but don't hang your hat or bet money on them.

And, in this case, while it would have been possible to reduce things to get to the actual speed of the factory ammo, there just isn't any need to change the handloads. They were doing what I wanted anyhow, and since they are the *starting* loads, it's best to shrug and go on.

The beauty of the .25-20 is negligible recoil and outstanding accuracy. References describe it as a small game and varmint cartridge and another speculates that it might just be, "the ideal turkey cartridge." While there is no current production rifle chambered for the .25-20, it isn't hard to find older Winchester, Savage and Marlin rifles. Everything else is readily available. I probably won't take it turkey hunting, but that gong better learn to duck. 

Petty tried to pass up this trim little M92, but it ended up following him home.





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FLINCHING What And Why

Flinching is any involuntary movement that occurs as the gun is being fired. The slightest movement during the time between the trigger releasing and the bullet exiting the barrel can seriously reduce accuracy.

Every shooter flinches some of the time, and some of us flinch all of the time. We flinch because at a subconscious level we are apprehensive about what will happen. A blow, a loud noise or sudden movement near our eyes is enough to cause a reaction. When a gun is fired we get all three, and we are often subconsciously concerned about the results of the shot. It's natural to fear failure. And interestingly, some sports psychologists have found that some people have a subconscious fear of success.

Flinching may also be situational. Shooters who are comfortable shooting at targets on their own might have a tendency to flinch if they have to shoot in front of an audience, in a match, or at a trophy big-game animal that's about to disappear. Others who can shoot a .270- or .30-'06-class rifle with ease might flinch when firing a .416 for the first time. Someone taking up shooting after a long layoff or illness might also tend to flinch at first.

Satisfying The Subconscious

I shoot a lot of new rifles. Intellectually, I know that a rifle from a reputable manufacturer using quality ammunition is perfectly safe, especially since I clean the bore and inspect it before shooting. The subconscious, though, doesn't operate that way. It needs to be shown. Often instead of trying for maximum precision with the first shot, I'll just let a couple of rounds go into the backstop. This both fouls the bore and reassures the subconscious. It doesn't hurt a bit, and you are sure that the gun is safe. Maybe I'm just being superstitious, but I believe in being nice to the subconscious. If you aren't, it will get even one way or another.

The amount of body movement caused by flinches varies from mild to wild. The mildest form is blinking — closing your eyes just as the gun fires. Some very good shots blink all the time, and even world champions blink occasionally. Because blinking doesn't impart movement to the gun, it does not affect accuracy. The problem with blinking is that it makes improvement very difficult. In order to reach the highest



Here is what should happen at the moment of ignition or when the striker clicks upon a dummy cartridge: eyes wide open, no movement of rifle or body.

level of shooting skill, it's necessary to be able to call the shot — to keep the eyes open and see the sight picture as the cartridge fires and the gun lifts in recoil.

At the other end of the scale, a real all-out flinch can be a wondrous thing to behold. Many years ago I was at a range shortly before deer season, with every shooting point occupied. A shooter at the other end of the line stood up to get in some practice offhand. He must have had a misfire or failure to chamber a round because as he pressed the trigger, he shoved the rifle violently down, yanked his face away from the stock, and actually stumbled forward half a step. When he recovered, he looked around furtively to see if anyone had noticed, and I managed to look away in time. Never laugh in such circumstances or feel anything but sympathy, or the flinch gods will get you.

Diagnosing a flinch

The first step in curing a flinch is determining if you have the malady, and if so, how severe it is. To do this, take the most powerful rifle you regularly shoot to the range, along with a camcorder and tripod. For this test it's all right to use a shooting bench. Set the camcorder up a few feet downrange and off to one side with the camera focused on your face as you shoot. If possible, set the camcorder at a fast shutter speed so you can replay it frame by frame. Wear clear shooting glasses so your eyes can be seen. Fire 10 or 12 rounds and concentrate on shooting the best group you can. Group size should be comparable to what you normally expect from the rifle.

Back home, play the video and watch your eyes. Ideally, they should remain open as each shot is fired. A couple of blinks in a 10-shot string is still pretty good. If you blink at every shot, but group size is good, you're probably a good shot but could likely be even better by learning to keep your eyes open and call the shot.

The next test is the classic ball and dummy exercise. If you're on your own and a reloader, you can make up a couple of dummy rounds by leaving the spent primer in a fired case, resizing and seating a bullet without adding a new primer or powder. At the range, mix these with a few live rounds so you don't know at each shot whether the chamber contains a live round or a dummy.

I really don't like this method since I have a horror of one of the dummy rounds getting mixed up with my hunting ammunition. It's better to have a friend hand you the rifle at the firing line with safety on, sometimes with a round chambered and sometimes empty. That way there are no dummy rounds to make up or get mixed up. There's also the added pressure of a witness. Your friend will be actively trying to fool you, and you'll be able to switch roles later and get even.

Shoot from the standing position so the benchrest can't cover for you. You won't learn anything when the gun fires — but you certainly will when the firing-pin clicks on an empty chamber. If the sight picture remains steady as the gun clicks, you don't have a serious problem with flinching. If it moves, check back next month and we'll start working on some remedies.



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By Charles E. Petty

Phil Bloomer putting the Eagle Eyes through their paces.



Ocular lenses of the Eagle Eyes. Note the threaded spacing adjustment system.



There aren't many things more tiring than staring for a couple of hours through a pair of binoculars or a spotting scope. But that is exactly what varmint hunters do. So do special law-enforcement and military units that must keep a distant suspect or target under surveillance. Binoculars are commonly used for this type of work, but their weight limits useful magnification. It's just simply too hard to hold them steady.

Early Experiments

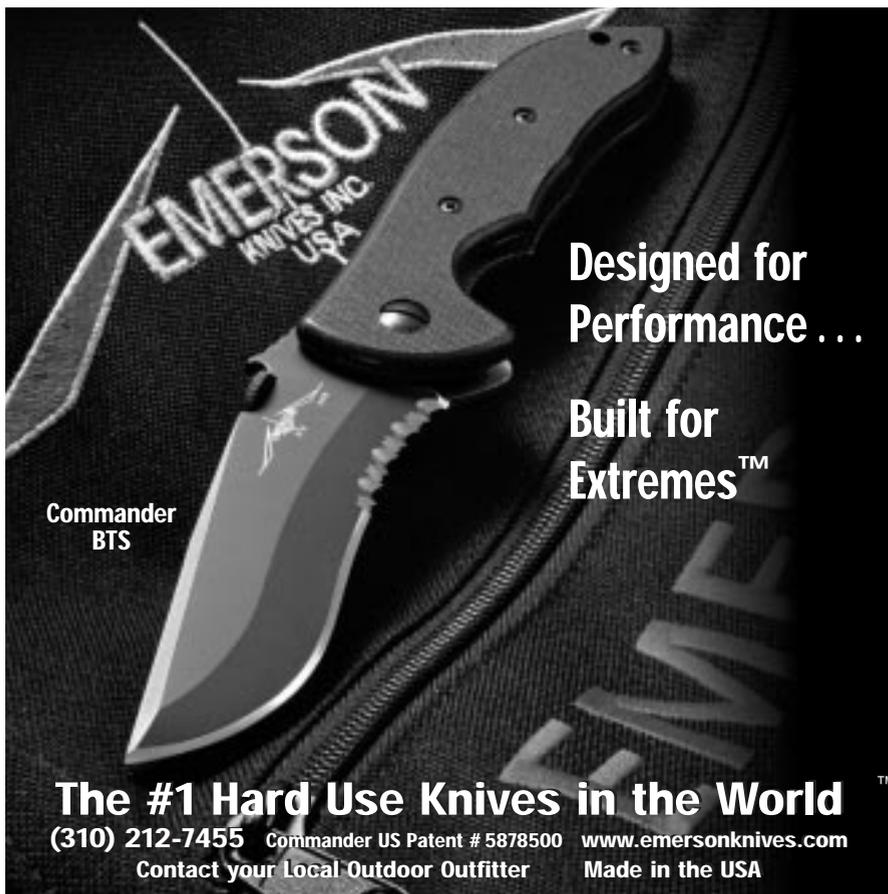
Quite a few years ago, serious varmint hunters began to rig up two spotting scopes to form a pair of more powerful binoculars. There's a lot more to that than just gluing two parts together — but when it was done right, the result was definitely worth the work.

On a recent groundhog hunt in the Virginia mountains, I had a chance to use a set of Eagle Eyes from Grandeur Manufacturing. The company is a high-tech manufacturer of such diverse products as sophisticated industrial control and conveyor systems and custom motorcycles. There is a surprising degree of precision needed to make the Eagle Eyes work right.

I'm sure you've noticed how you have to adjust the spacing between a pair of binoculars so that it appears as if you're looking through a single lens. The same applies to the Eagle Eyes, but it can't be done with a simple hinge. Instead there's a spring-loaded adjustment that slides on a precision-ground rod, which is fitted to a tolerance of .001 inch. Turning a knurled adjustment wheel moves the right side scope for individual adjustment.

Grandeur looked at a number of different spotting scopes for its Eagle Eyes and decided on the Bushnell Spacemaster. One of the critical design elements is that the lenses of both scopes be on the same plane. The prismatic design of the Spacemaster allows a rotation of 180 degrees of one scope without distortion. Another factor was the location of the focusing knob on the scope. The Spacemaster's is accessible from the rear, so even though the knob is on top on one side and the bottom on the other, they are easily focused. The scopes are mounted on a very solid cradle machined from aircraft-quality aluminum.

One of the curses of binoculars and many field spotting scope arrangements is that the glass won't hold still. It is both tiring and annoying to look at a field of view that is in constant motion. The Eagle Eyes come with a sturdy Bogen tripod with both pan and tilt functions. In use, you just keep one hand on each to pan and tilt the scopes as needed. If



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you wish to have them remain fixed in one position, it only takes a twist of the appropriate handle to lock it down.

Eagle Eyes are only sold as a complete unit that includes the scopes, cradle, tripod and carrying cases. A considerable amount of field testing went into the development of these, and one of the things Grandeur learned along the way was that the best glass in the world was nearly useless without a good tripod. The logic is flawless. If customers mount the unit on a poor tripod, they're *still* going to complain about the scope. Because of this, Grandeur adopted a hassle-solving measure. The tripod it chose is heavy-duty, easily adjusted, and comes with its own canvas carrying case. The Eagle Eyes also come with an airline-approved, virtually bulletproof, carrying and storage case. It has a molded insert of granulated polypropylene to hold everything in place.

Field Of View

One of the real assets of the Eagle Eyes was the considerable field of view, which is roughly 160 feet at 1,000 yards. To do this, it uses a special 22X wide angle eyepiece that is made to order. The wide angle increases the field of view by roughly 20 percent over a standard eyepiece of the same magnification. A 60X eyepiece is also available should special circumstances require that much power.

All field tests should be this much fun. Phil Bloomer and I went groundhog hunting in the Virginia mountains. We set up on top of a hill overlooking a recently mown hay field. On one side there was a gentle uphill slope that permitted shots out to about 250 yards. But on the other side, the rangefinder told us that a utility pole was 1,165 yards away. The crow on top of that pole was safe, but through the Eagle Eyes I had a great view as he surveyed the landscape and preened itself.

Dotted around the field of view were several spots of bare dirt that indicated the presence of a groundhog burrow. The wide field of view made it possible to keep several burrows under observation at one time without moving the glass, but it was also easy to do a slow pan and periodically check them all. The only flaw in our afternoon was that somebody forgot to invite the groundhogs. One, unshootable next to a barn, scoffed at us I'm sure. But that's why they call it hunting. And that didn't matter at all. What can be wrong with spending an afternoon looking at great scenery and having a long conversation with a friend? And I wasn't worn out from staring through wobbly glasses either.

Eagle Eyes have a suggested  retail price of \$2,495.

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New Weatherby Firearms For 2001

More new offerings from one of
America's most innovative manufacturers.

By Dave Anderson

Great news for double-gun fans!

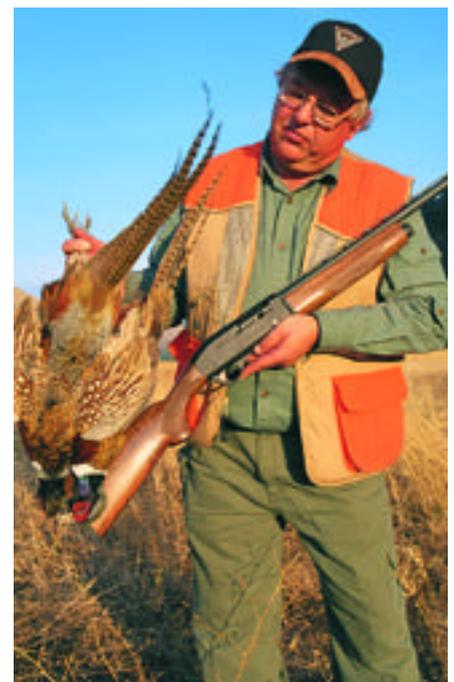
Weatherby is introducing a pair of side-by-side shotguns. Both are built on Anson & Deeley style boxlock actions and feature selective single triggers, automatic ejectors, and the Weatherby Integral Multi-Choke system. Barrel lengths of 26 and 28 inches will be available. Receivers are color case-hardened with tasteful scroll engraving.

The Orion model comes with a half-round pistol grip stock and semi-beavertail forearm in gauges 12, 20, 28 and .410. (The .410 model features fixed chokes of improved cylinder and modified.) The Athena model has a straight grip stock with splinter forearm and is currently offered in 12 and 20 gauges. It also has dummy side-plates. Both are made exclusively for Weatherby by a Spanish gunmaking firm.

The guns are stocked with a good grade of Turkish walnut and the barrel selector is on the tang safety, which incidentally is nonautomatic. Bores are hard-chromed for durability and easy maintenance.

I had the opportunity to hunt with these new doubles for pheasant and partridge at the beautiful Flying B ranch in Idaho. Both models performed very well. They balanced and handled nicely and functioned with complete reliability. The only criticism I had was that opening and closing the actions on these new guns was quite stiff at first. These are handsome, well-made shotguns, and at the suggested retail prices of \$1,099 for the Orion and \$1,549 for the Athena, they are exceptionally good values.

Top-Right: Three of Weatherby's newest rifle offerings (left to right): TRR Magnum Custom, TRR and SBGM. The acronyms may be comical, but the rifles are real performers. **Bottom-Right:** Anderson with Weatherby's new SAS autoloader, and the makings of a fine meal. **Below:** Weatherby Athena grade side-by-side. Imported from Spain, these hand built guns are a tremendous value.



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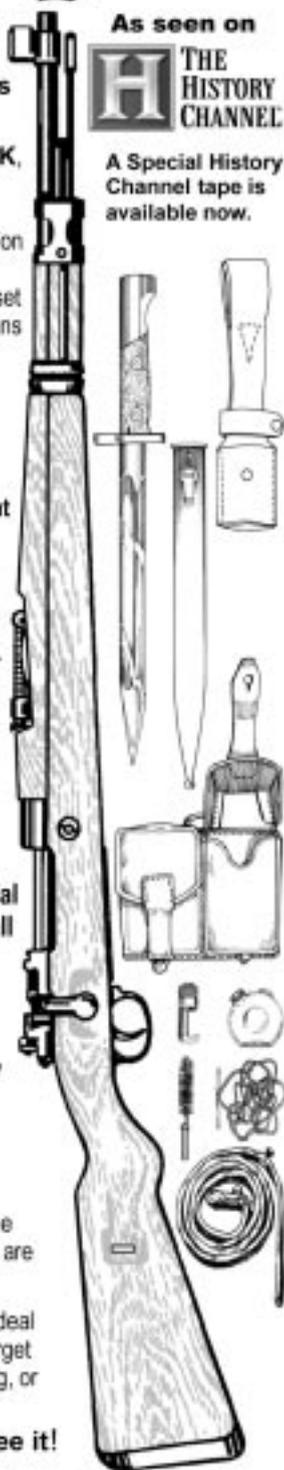
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The standard models are very attractive shotguns, but for the double-gun fan who wants a bit more choice, the Weatherby custom shop plans to offer several options. These include a 16-gauge version on the 20-gauge frame, extra sets of barrels, a coin-finished receiver, higher grades of wood and fitted cases. Custom-fitted stocks and even double triggers for the arch traditionalist will be available as well.

Weatherby SAS

Weatherby also has a new semiautomatic shotgun called the SAS. Previous Weatherby autos were made in Japan; the SAS is made in Italy utilizing a new simple and reliable gas system. Rounds from light 2½-inch loads to heavy 3-inch magnum loads can be used without adjustment. An alloy receiver is used, making the SAS fairly lightweight (7 to 7½ pounds). Barrels have ventilated ribs, hard-chromed bores, interchangeable choke tubes (three provided) and lengthened forcing cones to reduce recoil. In use, the SAS proved to be completely reliable, easy to carry and handle, and had very soft recoil. SAS stocks can be user-adjusted for cast and drop.

One interesting feature is what Weatherby calls a "smart" cartridge lifter. During normal firing, it operates like any semiauto shotgun. However, if you manually pull back the bolt to unload the gun, the lifter remains stationary rather than feeding the next round. It's necessary to press a small latch on the lifter to let it drop down, then manually cycle the bolt again to feed and extract the next round. The advantage is that it allows the shooter to quickly change the load in the chamber if desired.

Suggested retail of the Field SAS is \$799. An even better value is the synthetic SAS with black injection-molded stock and sling swivel studs at \$749. For the wildfowl or turkey hunter, two versions of Mossy Oak camoflaugage are offered. Both list at \$849.

Finally, the SAS Sporting Clays model features a ported barrel with two brass bead sights and a special recoil pad. A 30-inch barrel option is available for this model. All SAS models include a hard plastic take-down carrying case.

New Rifles Too

The new Weatherby Super Big Game Master (SBGM) is a lightweight hunting rifle that incorporates many of the accuracy-enhancing features of the very popular Super VarmintMaster and Super PredatorMaster models. These include a button-rifled, hand-lapped Kreiger Criterion barrel with parabolic target crown, and a high-quality, rigid synthetic composite stock with aluminum bedding block. The adjustable trigger is factory set at a crisp 4 pounds.

Barrel length is 24 inches in .240 Weatherby and the '06 cartridge family (.25-'06, .270, .280, .30-'06 and .338-'06), and 26 inches in magnum calibers from .257 to .300 Weatherby. Weight is 5½ pounds for standard

calibers, 6¼ pounds in magnum calibers. The SBGM is similar in handling and appearance to the earlier Ultra Lightweight model. The main difference in appearance is that the Ultra Lightweight has a bright stainless barrel with black flutes, while the fluted barrel of the SBGM is black-finished stainless steel.

The Ultra Lightweight with its standard Weatherby barrel is to my mind one of the best rifles Weatherby has ever made, and the new SBGM with its match-grade Kreiger barrel should if anything be even better. Suggested retail prices for the SBGM are \$1,459 in standard calibers, \$1,517 in magnum calibers.

So-called "tactical" rifles for law enforcement and military use have been an interesting trend in recent years. They have become popular with shooters who are intrigued with the challenge of extreme accuracy. Weatherby rifles have long been noted for their accuracy, so the appearance of three tactical models from Weatherby is a logical move.

The "Threat Response Rifle" series are all built on the Mark V action and fitted with Kreiger Criterion match barrels. Barreled actions are bedded in a special hand-laminated composite stock in an aluminum bedding block.

The standard TRR model is fitted with a heavy (.850-inch muzzle diameter) 22-inch barrel, chambered in either .223 Rem. or .308 Win. The TRR Magnum is similar but with 26-inch barrel and is chambered in .300 Win., .300, .30-.378, and .338-.378 Weatherby Magnum calibers. (The last two calibers have the Weatherby Accu-Brake recoil-reduction system). Stocks on both these models have the usual Weatherby style Monte Carlo comb with cast-off for right-handed shooters. The beavertail forearm is flat-bottomed and tapered for stability when shooting from a rest.

The TRR Magnum Custom is similar to the TRR Magnum but with a fully-adjustable stock that can be custom fit to the individual shooter. Time only allowed me to fire a couple five-shot groups with each rifle over a jury-rigged rest, but it is clear these are accurate rifles. Actions are smooth and reliable, trigger pulls break cleanly at 4 pounds. With factory ammunition, sub-MOA groups were routine. A lighter trigger and match ammunition or good reloads should reduce group size even further.

Suggested retail prices range from \$1,517 (TRR) and \$1,569 (TRR Magnum) to \$2,499 for the TRR Magnum Custom. The .30-.378 and .338-.378 versions with Accu-Brake list about \$150 higher. The Weatherby name has long been synonymous with quality, and these new shotguns and rifles certainly continue that tradition.



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New From Springfield Armory

By Jim Gardner

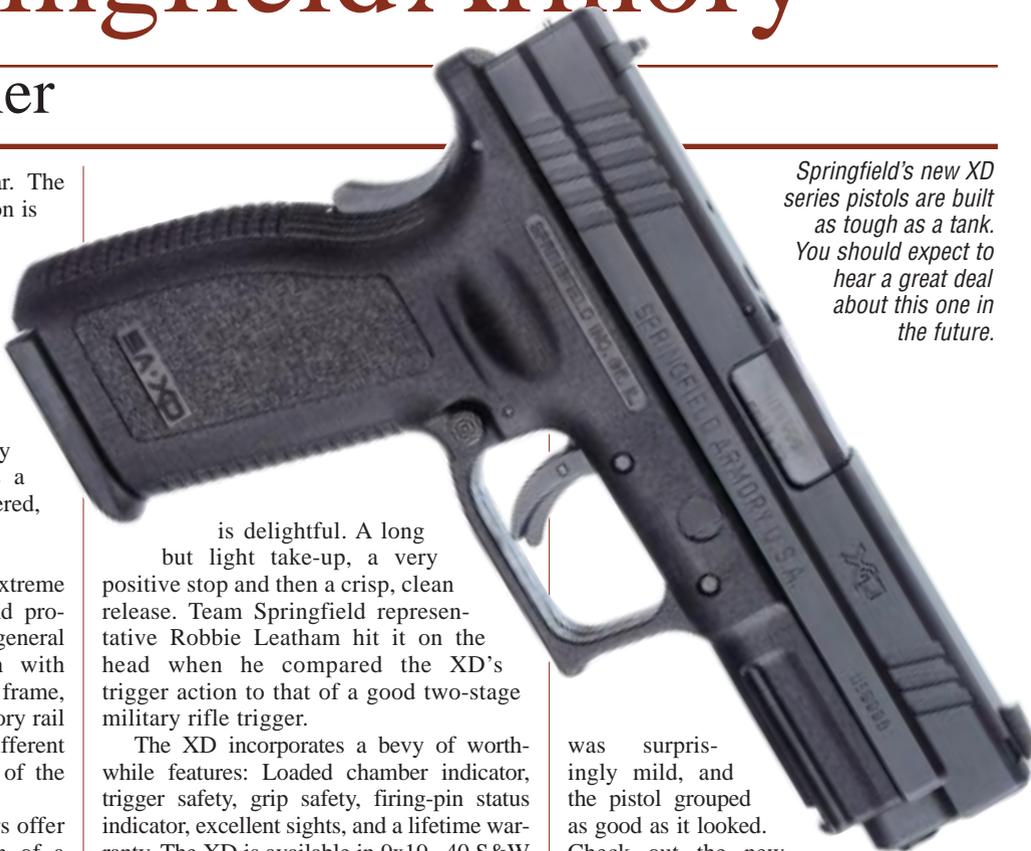
Fall is a splendid time of year. The weather freshens, hunting season is in the wings, and perhaps best of all, our favorite sporting arms makers show off what will be available for the coming new year.

I recently enjoyed the opportunity to see the just announced offerings from Springfield Armory, which has four newly available products: two are variations of its highly regarded 1911 pistol series, one is a reintroduction of a model it once offered, and one is a completely new product.

Let's examine the latter one first.

New from Springfield is the Extreme Duty series of pistols. Designed and produced in Croatia, the XD shares the general theme that has become common with modern service pistols — polymer frame, double-action-only lockwork, accessory rail under the dust cover, etc. What is different about this offering is the character of the trigger action.

Most of the modern DAO triggers offer all of the grace and sophistication of a staple gun — a long scratchy take-up, a heavy, creepy, roll-off release and then they culminate in a nauseating *sproinggg*. Lovely. By contrast, the trigger on the XD



Springfield's new XD series pistols are built as tough as a tank. You should expect to hear a great deal about this one in the future.

is delightful. A long but light take-up, a very positive stop and then a crisp, clean release. Team Springfield representative Robbie Leatham hit it on the head when he compared the XD's trigger action to that of a good two-stage military rifle trigger.

The XD incorporates a bevy of worthwhile features: Loaded chamber indicator, trigger safety, grip safety, firing-pin status indicator, excellent sights, and a lifetime warranty. The XD is available in 9x19, 40 S&W and .357 Sig. If you've been looking for a new full-size semiauto, don't commit until you've had the chance to check out the XD. Yes, it's that good. Suggested retail is \$489.

Speaking of two-stage triggers, Springfield has announced that it will once again offer brand new M1 Garands. The original Springfield Armory Garands have an enviable reputation for quality, and I can attest that the new production will only further that. They were unavailable for a time but are once again in production, both in the original .30-'06 chambering as well as in 7.62x51 (.308 Win.). The latter is particularly nice given the abundance of good quality surplus ammunition in that caliber, inexpensive reloading components and factory match ammunition.

The sample that I inspected showed superb quality walnut stock and hand guards, first-class metal finish and flawless functioning. If you admire M1s, you won't be disappointed with Springfield's new production. Suggested retail has been pegged at \$954.

Springfield's new Micro Compact 1911 should find wide acceptance with citizens of states that authorize concealed carry. At only 5.7 inches OAL, it is quite compact. The alloy frame keeps the weight down to a very comfortable 24 ounces. Furnished with Novak tritium sights, ambi-safety, beavertail, hammer forged tapered cone barrel, slim-line stocks and carry bevel package, it is a dandy! Recoil

was surprisingly mild, and the pistol grouped as good as it looked. Check out the new Micro Compact on page 68. MSRP is \$1,060.

Last but not least is the new TRP Operator. An addition to Springfield's very popular TRP series, the Operator incorporates a heavy, full-profile slide along with a heavy, full length dust cover sporting a Picatinny rail. This pistol is going to be in high demand by SWAT teams and other special units that need to mount white lights, infrared or laser systems onto their entry guns. No more flimsy trigger guard attachments!

The heavier weight of the Operator makes it an extremely shootable 1911. Muzzle flip is reduced significantly and recoil is very moderate. Shot to shot times on a series of fast drills were very short. The TRP series guns incorporate all of the bells and whistles, but Springfield has also chosen to offer the heavy slide and accessory rail of the Operator in its value-priced Mil-Spec series. Retail for the TRP Operator is \$1,407, and for the Mil-Spec version a very reasonable \$756.

Look for a detailed review of the XD series pistols and the new M1 Garand to appear in *GUNS* in the very near future.



Above: The new TRP Operator offers every feature needed by the guys who play for keeps. **Below:** Dennis Reese, Springfield Armory's co-chairman of the board, shows how it's done with the new M1 Garand.



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Don't Overlook Variable Choked Guns

There are a lot of nice used guns sitting on dealers' shelves that feature those old variable chokes — and they're not selling well. Wandering up and down the aisles at Murphy's Gun Store in Tucson, I've noticed that 12-gauge Winchester Model 12s, Browning A-5s and Remington 870s, fitted with the once popular Poly-Chokes, Lyman's Cutts Compensators, Pachmayr's Power-Pacs and Weaver Chokes, just sit there. The same models fitted with fixed choke barrels or barrels with the newer screw-in choke tubes move out at a brisk pace.

Don't make the same mistake. For example, if your eye catches a nice Model 12 outfitted with a Cutts Compensator or Poly-Choke, give it a chance. Cutts Compensators and Pachmayr Power-Pacs not only offer a wide selection of degrees of choke, they also can reduce felt recoil by 30 to 40 percent. To a lesser extent, so will the commonly encountered ventilated Poly-Chokes, Weaver Chokes and Herter copies. Poly-Chokes also offer nine(!) degrees of choke settings — one or the other should produce the pattern you're looking for.

Many shooters find that the variable choke systems actually improve their sight picture. While concentrating on the target as they should, gunners have dis-

covered that the indistinct, bulbous shadow on the end of their muzzle improves barrel alignment.

So give the older variable choke systems their due. They work, and depending upon the model, they can dramatically reduce felt recoil.

Older variable chokes like the Poly-Choke can deliver excellent patterns.



Pachmayr And Kick-Eez Pads Take The Lead

Speaking about recoil, Pachmayr Decelerator and Kick-Eez pads for shotguns have emerged as the most popular aftermarket pads on the market. And the secret is in the materials.

Kick-Eez pads are made from Sorbothane and Pachmayr's from something fairly similar. The basic material in both pads is soft and springy. Available in a size and style for every shotgun sport, both brands really take the sting out of recoil. Combine either pad with Kick-Eez's "Buttstock Pitch Spacer," and

either positive or negative pitch can be adjusted to one's shooting style.

Pachmayr has recently expanded its unique line of "pre-fit" Decelerator pads that permit the shooter to replace the factory pads on Winchester 1300s; Remington 870s, 11-87s and 1100s; Ruger Red Labels; and Mossberg 500s and 835s. More offerings are in the wings.

If you're not into amateur gunsmithing, by all means turn the task of mounting and dressing down an aftermarket shotgun pad over to a professional who has the grinding jigs to do a proper and exacting job. Nothing looks worse or affects the value of a gun more than a poor pad job.

Pachmayr's Decelerator pads, like this Sporting Clays model, have revolutionized pad technology with materials that substantially reduce felt recoil.



LARGE HEAD SAFETIES

There is nothing more frustrating than trying to disengage a small diameter cross-safety while wearing gloves or with cold, numb fingers during the hunt. While manufacturers of pumps and semiautos have gradually increased the size and

ergonomics of trigger guard mounted cross-safeties, there are still a lot of used Remingtons on the market that could use a safety upgrade.

Williams Gun Sight Co., I believe, was the first company to offer large head, easy-to-push cross-safeties, but it has discon-

tinued the unit. An excellent replacement is now being offered by Scattergun Technologies. Called the "Jumbo Head Safety," it's a drop-in replacement for both Remington shotguns and rifles. At \$12 retail, it's a bargain.



Older Remingtons can be made safer and handier with the addition of a large head safety.

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The bolt of the .50-caliber 10ML-II is now devoid of locking lugs, similar in design to Remington's Model 700ML and Ruger's 77/50.



Turning out a single screw with an Allen wrench permits removal of the bolt for access to the breech plug.

Savage arms **MODEL 10ML-II**

Savage's Modern Muzzleloader offers smokeless performance.



By Sam Fadala

A rifle of controversy, the Savage Model 10ML has been completely redesigned — not because of flaws, but to please government mandates and alleviate concern from game departments. The ATF did not know which pigeon-hole the Model 10ML belonged in, and game departments were not certain that the rifle belonged in “primitive” seasons.

Was it really a muzzleloader? The answer, of course, is yes. The rifle is a muzzleloader. Every powder charge and every bullet goes down front end first, not through the breech. But there is an interesting complication. Savage deems this bolt-action muzzleloader — which appears very much like its parent cartridge rifle — safe with smokeless powder. The heart of the original 10ML was retention of the bolt’s locking lugs, which secured a stainless steel module much as if it were a rimless cartridge. The module in turn secured a No. 209 shotgun primer. But Savage was faced with a problem: build a muzzleloader requiring a FFL for shipping as well a suspicious eye cast by game departments, or come up with changes. The decision favored changes.

New Design

Enter the .50-caliber Savage Model 10ML-II with bolt now serving as a striker (no locking lugs). Extensive proof tests by Savage pledged the new rifle smokeless-powder worthy, just like the original. In fact, the rifle functions more fluidly than the original, mainly because no module



Above: View of the open bolt shows the slot which accepts a No. 209 shotgun primer. *Left:* The new Savage Model 10ML-II is a handsome rifle built for rugged hunting conditions.



is required. A No. 209 shotgun primer slides into a recess in the bolt face as slick as glass. Since the bolt is now a striker, a breech plug is required that is screwed into the breech area with fine threads and which is removable for cleaning from the breech. This is good because it allows swabbing the bore free of fouling in no time when using either blackpowder or smokeless, yet it is not quite as handy as the first model that required no breech plug, the module taking its place.

Safety is the byword. Printed on the left-hand side of the barrel are the words, “USE ONLY FACTORY RECOMMENDED LOADINGS AND POWDER.” The right-hand side of the barrel warns, “UNDERSTAND OWNER’S MANUAL AVAILABLE FROM SAVAGE ARMS.” Savage’s Website also provides information: www.savagearms.com. The remainder of the safety story is written in high-grade workmanship.

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This rifle reflects all the best in modern materials. Along with stainless-steel barrel and action, the black composite stock — homely compared to a piece of nice wood — is Herculean strong. Checkering provides a slightly better hand grasp on pistol grip and forend, while the butt-stock is dressed with a recoil pad that may as well be made of granite. It is not a recoil pad, actually, but rather a slip-proof rubber platform that is very unlikely to slide off your shoulder.

Cosmetically, the Savage 10ML-II is a good-looking rifle. The stainless-steel trigger guard, barrel and action sharply contrast with the midnight-black stock. The only appointment that should be done away with is the little Savage Indian imprisoned in the grip cap. It is hardly recognizable and looks like it's made from the foil around a stick of chewing gum. The Savage name and Indian chief logo on the bolt, however, look good. The rifle balances perfectly, carries easily, and recoils straight back, rather than levering up into the cheekbone.

Staying with the outside of this front loader, the black synthetic ramrod is just what it should be — straight and essentially unbreakable. It rests in a stainless-steel thimble screwed to the bottom of the barrel. Another plus on the side of safety is the length of the ramrod, which matches the distance from base of breech to muzzle. In order to verify that the rifle has no charge or projectile in the breech, insert the rod. If it goes all the way home to the bottom of the breech (only the tip showing at the muzzle), then the bore is clear. If the rod protrudes above the muzzle, something is down there. The ramrod has a wasp-waist jag tapped and threaded for accessories. Likewise, the off-end brass tip is also threaded for accessories.

Typical of modern muzzleloaders, the new Savage wears sling swivel eyes for the easy addition of a carrying strap. The rifle is also drilled and tapped for a scope sight. Hooray for the open iron sights, which are sturdy, clean and easy to adjust. The rear sight moves for elevation via a front-mounted screw. A double-headed screw just beneath the leaf, which has a U-notch, handles windage. The front sight rides on a ramp with dovetail for gross windage, which should not be necessary considering the range of adjustment enjoyed by the rear sight. The serrated three-position sliding tang safety shows a red dot in the far forward fire position. The middle stop allows bolt movement for fitting a No. 209 primer or removing one, while preventing trigger function. The most rearward safety location locks the bolt entirely, also blocking the trigger. A cocking indicator shows a red dot when the rifle is in battery. The dot drops out of sight when the trigger is pulled.

How It Works

Functionally, the Model 10ML-II works very much like a Remington Model 700ML or Ruger Model 77/50. Both of these rifles

are based on their famous bolt-action cartridge rifles. The same thing goes for the Savage. Locking lugs on the bolt are removed, turning it into a striker, while the breech is sealed with a breech plug. The usual precautions pertain, such as total removal of grease or oil from the bore, breech plug and vent liner. Anti-seize lubricant applied to vent liner and breech plug threads is vital for easy removal later for cleaning. I have found Kleen Bore TW-25B a good choice. The next step is ensuring an unloaded firearm, which is accomplished with the ramrod as explained earlier. With bolt open and free of a primer, the loading procedure begins. It's time for the powder charge, and here is where the fly lands in the oatmeal. The manual states, "Your Savage Model 10ML-II rifle can be loaded with charges of black powder, Pyrodex or prescribed loads of certain smokeless powders." A maximum charge of 150 grains (volume, not weight) of blackpowder or Pyrodex is maximum, with smokeless loads by weight "on a smokeless powder scale," according to the manual. The Lee powder dipper set is also allowed.

Smokeless Concerns

The use of smokeless powder in the Savage muzzleloader has caused concern. The major worry is that less knowledgeable shooters may be led to use smokeless powder in their traditional muzzleloader, which is safe only with blackpowder or blackpowder substitutes, such as Pyrodex. Considering some of the lawsuits I have worked on as an expert witness, I find it within the realm of possibility that shooters will do just that — drop in a healthy charge of smokeless powder and, if they're lucky, blow up their gun and not themselves.

However, is this concern valid? Am I allowed to load my Model 1894 Winchester rifle with a 55,000 psi powder charge because my Weatherby bolt-action rifle handles that much pressure? Another analogy is a driver pushing his short wheel base, 4WD pickup around a corner at top speed because he saw it done at the Indy 500. Not being designed for that use, the truck will roll over. The Indy car was built to drive fast around corners. Should race cars then be illegal because people may drive their ordinary sedan at a high speed around corners?

Following the powder charge, the Savage accepts any of today's popular muzzleloader bullets. For the biggest game, I still tend toward heavy lead missiles, such as the Hyrda-Con; jacketed pistol-type projectiles in sabots have also proved reliable on big-game. The test rifle came with the latter, and they shot well. Scoped, the rifle is capable of achieving that baseline MOA goal, three to five shots printing inside an inch center-to-center of bullet holes. This is possible with any of the recommended powders, including smokeless. The remainder of the loading/shooting sequence follows the usual

track: ensuring that the bullet is securely retained in the breech with no air gap between it and the powder charge, keeping the rifle on safe until ready to shoot, and removing the ramrod after loading the rifle. The simple installation of a No. 209 shotgun primer in the bolt-face receptacle *after* powder and bullet are seated places the rifle in battery. No mysteries here in spite of the smokeless powder allowance.

Maintenance is likewise the same as other bolt-action muzzleloaders since the 10ML-II now has a removable breech plug. Tools are provided. There is the usual breech plug wrench. With bolt removed — which requires only freeing one screw on the underside of the rifle — the wrench is installed through the receiver where it locks onto the end of the breech plug. A good move is the addition of a handle, which fits through a hole in the end of the breech plug wrench. This feature allows sufficient torque to free the breech plug even after a number of shots have been fired. The wrench handle does not, however, eliminate the need for a good anti-seize lubricant, especially when firing blackpowder or black powder substitutes. The usual precautions pertain: Make certain that the rifle is unloaded before attempting to clean it, and remove the bolt, which guarantees that there can be no live primer in the rifle.

Part of the cleaning process deals with removing the breech-plug vent liner with a 1/8-inch Allen wrench. This step is not necessary after every shooting session. However, the small vent liner should be taken out, dropped into solvent, and cleaned up periodically. Savage recommends this procedure after 100 shots are fired in order to maintain peak ignition performance. As with the breech-plug threads, the threads of the breech-plug vent liner should also receive a light coating of anti-seize lubricant. Excessive lube can cause a misfire. On the other hand, failure to treat threads can lock both liner and plug so fiercely that the rifle must be taken to a gunsmith or sent back to the factory for unthreading. The usual methods of cleaning the bore prevail: I flushed with hot water, following with solvent on a bristle bore brush, then wet patches, ending with dry patches. Long-term storage calls for a touch of metal preservative in the bore, which must be wiped free before the next shooting session.

Smokeless-powder cleanup is accomplished with the same products normally used for modern cartridge guns. This pertains to breech-plug and liner as well as the bore and working parts of the rifle. As with more traditional muzzle loaders, if using black powder, you will need to clean after every shooting session and between strings of shots. Pyrodex will produce less fouling, and you may be able to wait until the day's end to swab out your bore. The size of the powder charge, with black-

continued on page 55

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For more than a decade, Taffin's favorite sixgun hunting rig has been a Freedom Arms scoped 7½-inch revolver carried in a Freedom Arms shoulder holster.



El Paso Saddlery's Tom Threepersons #1920 design is of even better quality than the vintage Lawrence #120 on the right.



The simple, neat "Slim Jim" is a period design that still works well today. This beautiful example is by Will Ghormley.

Favorite Field Holsters

For use in the field, a holster must be chosen with the same care that went into the selection of your handgun.

By John Taffin

Sometimes it pays to shop around, but there are definitely times when “cheap is too expensive.” I don’t know about you, but it would make me very nervous to consider buying bottom-line tires, brakes, parachutes, firearms or, yes, even holsters. My holster makers are as important as my doctors and my gunsmiths. An expensive firearm deserves the best care — care that can only be provided by a well-designed holster made of the best available materials. And one that is crafted by experts who understand what a holster should do and what it must not do.

Quality Counts

If properly cared for, a firearm will last a lifetime... and then some. The same is true of holsters. My Ruger Flat-Top Blackhawk .44 Magnum was purchased new in 1957. To compliment it, I also ordered a George Lawrence #120 Keith holster. The Ruger’s 6½-inch barrel was soon cut to 4¾-inches, and the #120 Keith was altered accordingly. The Ruger currently wears another barrel, a 7½-inch tube. The #120 now carries Colt New Frontiers and various short-barreled Ruger Blackhawks, but it is still in excellent shape albeit with several scratches that show its use. The holster will definitely outlast me. Had I chosen to save a few bucks in 1957 and bought a cheaper holster, it would have fallen apart years



Uncle Mike's full-flap shoulder holster offers maximum protection for this scoped 10-inch Freedom Arms .41 Magnum.



Idaho Leather's #44 shoulder holster carries a Freedom Arms .44 Magnum and 24 rounds of ammunition very comfortably.

ago. One of my grandsons will inherit this one, and I have no doubt that some day he will be able to pass it on to one of his grandchildren.

Holsters are highly subjective items, perhaps even more so than sixguns and semiautomatics. And when it came time for me to choose my first holster, it was relatively simple. There were three big manufacturers back then: George Lawrence, S.D. Myres and H.H. Heiser. All represented the best quality that was possible to obtain at the time; however, my local dealer only handled George Lawrence. Today's shooters have a much more difficult time deciding. All three of the 1950's major purveyors of leather are gone, but there are dozens upon dozens of excellent leather craftsman out there with everything from one-man shops, to mom-and-pop operations, to large companies.

What follows herein is not meant to be an exhaustive treatise of all the great field holsters available. That would take a book. Instead we will look at some of the leather that I have used successfully lo these many years for traveling afield — be it for hunting, hiking, backpacking, camping, or just plain old fashioned woods bumming. All of these can take place not only in the woods, but in sagebrush deserts, rolling foothills, and lofty mountains — in short, anywhere it is prudent to pack a handgun.

Different forays will require different handguns and different holsters, but the essential elements remain the same. The holster must provide comfort, security and, most of the time, easy accessibility. Comfort will depend largely upon each individual. However, most of us can be equally at ease with any of the three basic styles of field holsters: *strongside hip holsters*, *cross-*

draw hip holsters or *shoulder holsters*. Our choice will largely depend upon how we are moving about — be it on foot, by horseback, or in a vehicle. A right-handed person might have difficulty driving with a long-barreled sixgun in a hip holster on the strong side but be fine with either a crossdraw or shoulder holster. A southpaw might be able to handle the shoulder holster or strong side hip holster but have trouble with the cross draw interfering with seating in the vehicle. Switch to the passenger side and just the opposite it true. If you are going to drive some of the time and be the copilot other times, this should be taken into consideration when selecting a holster.

Security Is Vital

All three styles of holsters normally require some sort of retaining device or, at the very least, a tight fitting holster. A pleasant trip in the field can be ruined as you watch a prized sixgun bouncing off the rocks. The subconscious mind seems to protect us from this. I was once climbing in the rocks while carrying my 4-inch Python, complete with a new pair of Herrett's Jordan Trooper stocks in a holster sans safety strap. (Yes... it was dumb, but I was much younger then!) As luck would have it I took a tumble. When I landed, I realized my hand was wrapped around the custom stocks holding the Python in its place. I was banged up and scratched, but the Python came through unscathed. Bodies heal, stocks and sixguns don't.

Perhaps the best retaining device is a simple safety strap — a sturdy piece of leather that goes over the



The #200AW by Milt Sparks was originally designed as a concealment rig; however, it makes an excellent high riding and secure field rig.

hammer and then fastens to the front of the holster with a heavy snap. It is easily unfastened and can be folded behind the belt when its use is not necessary. I also like the hammer thong, especially for single-action sixguns. However, it can be hard to release in cold weather with equally cold fingers. Not using the safety strap can ruin a hunting trip. When in Africa, I shot a Warthog early on and placed my scoped Freedom Arms in its shoulder holster, leaving it unstrapped. When I bent over to look for the bullet that had exited the Warthog, my sixgun slipped out of its holster and the scope hit the only large rock around. Fortunately I had both a backup scope and a second handgun, or my hunt might have ended there.

Let's look at some of the best examples available for these three classes of holsters.

Strongside Holsters

From the time of the Civil War until after World War I, the most common holster in use was what has become generically known as the Mexican loop. In this style of holster, the back flap is an integral part of the holster. It features one, two or three loops that accept the main body of the holster. When made of quality leather that is not overly bulky, the Mexican loop still serves well as a field holster. I carried a 6½-inch Smith & Wesson .44 Magnum in this type of holster for several hunting seasons.

Currently, both Rick Bachman of Old West Reproductions and Big Ed Douglas of San Pedro Saddlery offer traditionally crafted Mexican loop holsters, which hold single-action sixguns tightly without the use of a

safety strap or hammer thong. Not only is this design still usable as a field holster, there are still a whole lot of six-gunners who prefer to do it the old way. And that means leather of a design prior to the turn of the 20th century. G. Wm. Davis recently sent me a miniature rendition of the Mexican loop holster that I use to carry one of the neat little Cimarron .38 Lightnings. As an extra added bonus, I found this same holster works quite well with my custom L'il Ruger Single-Sixes from Andy Horvath. These little six-guns, which have 4-inch barrels and rounded butts, fit perfectly in the Davis leather.

This is as good a place as any to mention belts. A good quality heavy belt is necessary to make your hip holster ride correctly and comfortably. I prefer a 1¼-inch belt; you can also wear suspenders to help distribute the weight. When it comes to cartridge belts, I prefer the folded over money-belt style made of soft leather that conforms to your body shape. For years I felt that the belt had to have a full row of cartridges. I have completely changed my mind on this. When out for a day's shooting, a full cartridge loop belt may be appropriate. However, for hunting I now go with 12 to 15 cartridge loops on the belt or a cartridge slide that holds 6 or 12 rounds. When going with a shoulder holster, I use the same suspenders. I also hope that the weather is at least cool enough to wear a heavy shirt to help pad the straps of the shoulder holster rig.

In 1920, Texas Ranger Lee Trimble and former NW Mounted Policeman Tom Threepersons met around a campfire and decided to design a new holster — one that would work much better than the Mexican loop style when

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Don't neglect the importance of a quality belt to complement your holster. The center belt is a soft money-belt pattern.

The Rifles Of DAKOTA ARMS

**Rifles to dream on
from the high plains**

By Dave Anderson

Sturgis, South Dakota, is best known to the public for its annual motorcycle rally that draws over half a million bikers to the normally quiet little town. To shooters, hunters and collectors of fine firearms, Sturgis is known as the home of Dakota Arms — maker of distinctive, elegant hunting rifles and shotguns of uncompromising quality.

The company was founded by Don and Norma Allen. Don Allen is a former pilot, and since 1972 he has been making custom rifle stocks in his spare time. Allen noticed that pre-'64 Winchester M70 actions — favorites with lovers of fine hunting rifles — were getting more scarce and expensive. He also felt the M70's action could be improved. So with typical American entrepreneurial spirit, he went ahead and built his own.

Dakota Model 76 in .375 H&H being prepared for delivery. Some Dakota customers order their rifles scoped and ready for use.



*Don Allen with the first
Dakota Model 10 single shot.
A beautiful rifle stocked with
a magnificent piece of
walnut.*



The Mechanics Of Safety

Allen and Pete Grisel designed the Dakota 76 action. It is similar in function and appearance to the pre-'64 Model M70 but with more Mauser 98 influence. In discussing these changes, a brief digression is in order. Rifle enthusiasts like to argue about which action is the strongest: In fact, all current commercial actions have a huge margin of strength. Bolt-actions are typically strong enough to handle pressures of 150,000 psi or more.

The brass cartridge case, however, will take pressures in the 80,000 psi range. Since commercial ammunition is usually loaded to maximum pressures of 55,000 to 65,000 psi, there is an ample margin of strength — but the cartridge case will fail long before the action does.

Why not use a stronger material such as steel for the cases? Because brass has an excellent combination of strength, pliability and elasticity. When the gun is fired, the pliability lets the case expand to tightly grip the chamber walls, which seals off the powder gases from coming back into the action. When the bullet exits and pressure drops, the elasticity of the case lets it spring back to near original dimensions, allowing the case to be extracted. Although strong, steel cases wouldn't seal off the chamber as well as brass, wouldn't extract as easily, and would be subject to rust.

When comparing actions, it's not a question of strength. As stated before, steel is much stronger than the brass cartridge case. The question is, in the event of a case failure, how well does the action protect the shooter from the escaping gases? Occasionally we hear accounts of how someone had a rifle "blow up" but miraculously wasn't injured. Actually the rifle didn't blow up (if it did, the shooter likely wouldn't be around to talk about it). What really happened? The case failed and the action controlled and vented the escaping gases away from the shooter, just as its designers intended.

A hundred years ago when technology was less advanced, case failures from poor brass were more of a concern. Today's manufactured cases are of such uniformly high quality that such failures are virtually unheard of. Now

when a case fails, it is almost always a result of shooter error: firing the rifle with the bore obstructed, loading the wrong caliber cartridge, or poor handloads with excessive headspace or the wrong powder.

The Mauser 98 action protects the shooter from failures as well as any, and better than most. It has a "flat" breech in which the cartridge case is enclosed by the steel chamber right up to the extractor groove. If the case does fail, escaping gases going down the firing-pin channel in the bolt are vented through two oblong slots in the bolt, down the left lug raceway in the receiver, and out to the left through the thumb slot (which facilitates magazine loading with stripper clips) in the left receiver wall. Gases going past the slot are deflected away from the shooter's face by a flange on the bolt sleeve.

The pre-'64 Model M70 has several Mauser features but also some differences. Like the 1903 Springfield, it has the breech end of the barrel coned to enhance cartridge feeding, which leaves a small portion of the case unsupported by the steel of the chamber. However, the unsupported section is the area just ahead of the extractor groove where the case is thickest and strongest. Pressures high enough to cause it to fail would likely result in case failure at the primer with other actions.

The pre-'64 action has a small hole in the right side of the receiver to vent escaping gases. The bolt has two holes that vent gases coming down the firing-pin channel into the left receiver raceway. Unlike military Mauser actions, the Model 70 does not have a thumb cut in the left receiver wall (which would allow a large volume of gas to escape) or a flange on the bolt sleeve. The bolt-stop partly blocks the raceway, but in the event of a case failure, gases coming through the left raceway would likely hit the shooter (one of the many reasons to always wear protective glasses when shooting any firearm).

Frank de Haas, in his fine book *Bolt Action Rifles*, phrased it rather delicately: "... several arms experts... said that in case of a cartridge failure... they would rather have been firing some other rifle when this happened than the M70."

Incidentally, the current Model 70 Winchester has a steel lug on the bolt (opposite the extractor), which blocks off the left raceway to deflect gases away from the shooter.



In this day and age, it's refreshing to see that not all parts are produced on CNC equipment. An engine lathe like this is needed to produce some of the Dakota components.



Cutaway sample shows the delightful simplicity of the Model 10 single shot.



Cutaway of the Dakota Model 76 shows flawless metalwork.

I own several pre-'64 M70s and shoot them regularly. I certainly wouldn't do this if I thought it was dangerous. With these or any rifles, I shoot either factory ammunition or carefully prepared handloads — and I treat the cartridge cases with tender loving care. Reloaders who do any of the following are likely to get into trouble with any cartridge: use brass of questionable or unknown origins; don't understand headspace; don't measure, trim, and anneal cases as needed; or try and get just a bit more velocity or one more reload. Designers and manufacturers do their best, but with any action there is the possibility of serious injury if a case fails.

Designed To Be Better

The Dakota 76 receiver is similar to that of the M70. It is a flat-bottomed receiver with a substantial, integral recoil lug. It has the slanted bolt handle of the M70, the same excellent three-position wing safety, and the same fine trigger. Like the M70 and the Mauser 98, it has a large external extractor, controlled round feeding, and mechanical ejection. The Dakota differs from the pre-'64 M70 in that it has the flat breech of the Mauser 98.

"The breeching system we use is very similar to the Mauser," says Allen. "The bolt face is squared off like the Mauser and we've pulled the barrel back further into the receiver... the bolt actually fits into the rear portion of the barrel, forming an inner ring around the bolt."

The Dakota action, like the M70, has a vent hole in the right side of the receiver ring. The bolt stop is a precise, finely fitted part that blocks the left raceway to deflect gases

and brass particles away from the shooter. Other changes include a redesigned firing-pin, beefier safety, and what Dakota calls "reverse round feeding." This means that the first round in the magazine is held by the left feed rail instead of the right. The advantage is that it is easier and faster if the shooter ever has to load a round in a hurry.

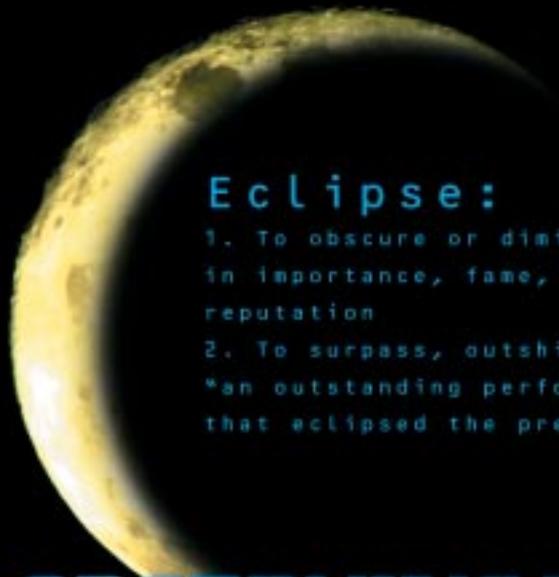
The quality of materials and workmanship is equally important. Actions can be made in various ways, all of which produce good actions if the work is done well. Dakota Arms receivers are machined from high-grade, heat-treated steel. The advantage of this method is that there is no concern about warping, which can happen if the steel is machined and then hardened. Parts can be machined to extremely close tolerances. The disadvantage to this is that it is much more time-consuming and costly to machine steel after it has been heat-treated. As Don Allen says, "We start with a 10-pound block of steel and we end up with a 2-pound receiver and 8 pounds of steel shavings on the floor."

Great pains are taken during manufacture to keep everything straight and concentric; bolts are matched to receivers and receiver threads are cut so that the barrel is properly centered and aligned. Currently there are a number of gunsmiths who cater to accuracy enthusiasts by specializing in "blueprinting" actions. They take standard actions of various makes, square and true them, fit barrels square to the action, and lap the locking lugs to bear evenly. Dakota Arms rifles are made with all these features right from the beginning and have always featured high-grade barrels, which are currently supplied by Lothar Walther.

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Used wisely, the Kimber Custom Eclipse, good defensive ammo, and a slick Benchmade model 940 will give you all the security you can hope for in a troubled world.



Eclipse:

1. To obscure or diminish in importance, fame, or reputation
2. To surpass, outshine:
an outstanding performance that eclipsed the previous record

OBSERVING THE ECLIPSE

KIMBER HAS SET THE 1911 WORLD ON FIRE WITH ITS
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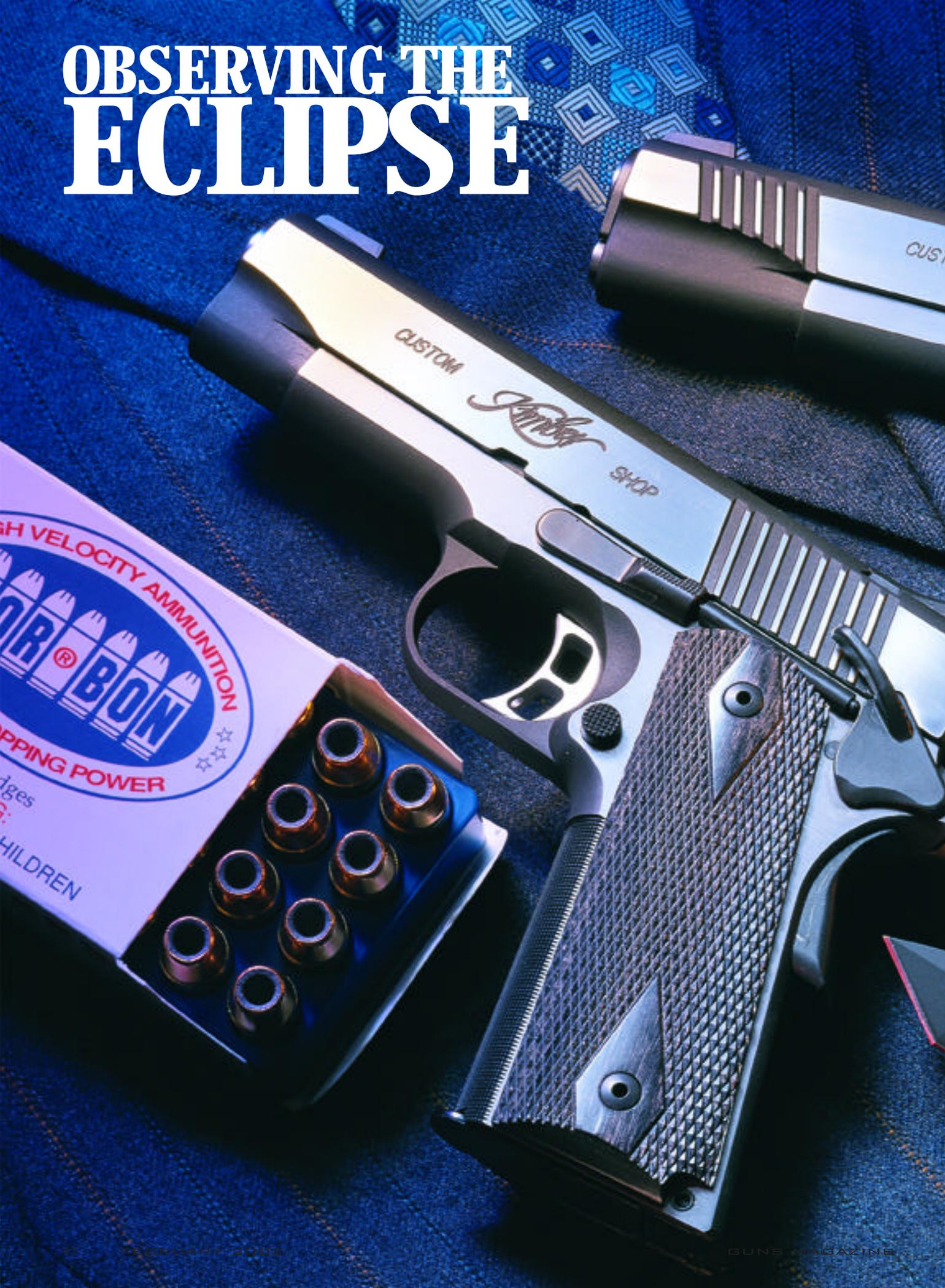
• STORY BY MASSAD AYOOB • PHOTOS BY ICHIRO NAGATA •

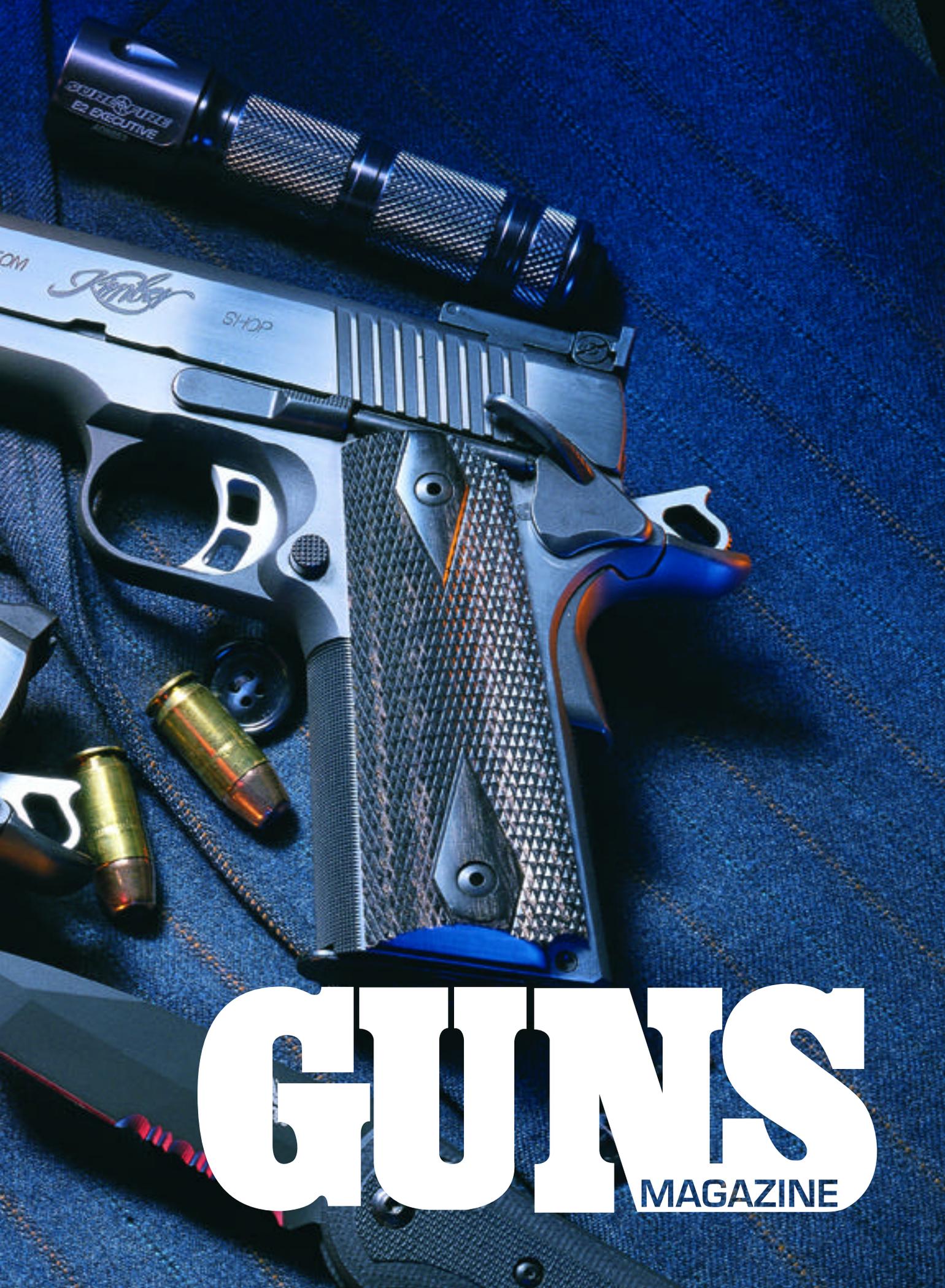
The first thing that strikes you about the Kimber Eclipse is its appearance. There's no way around it. The flats of the pistol are silver in color and brush/polished in texture. The rounded surfaces — the underside, the valleys of the slide grooves, the distinctive lettering — are a charcoal gray that's only a shade or two away from jet black. The result is a light and shadow effect that an artiste might call chiaroscuro. Kimber's laminated double-diamond-checked grips (sold separately for \$55.95) finish the eye candy element with a stunning earth-tone medley of subtle brown and green

shades. The overall result is a pistol that just reaches out and grabs you by the eyeballs.

The kid here ain't no artiste, but he knows a good lookin' gun when he sees one. The concept is traceable to Dennis Medonia and Winslow Potter, assigned to Kimber's Custom Shop operation, and Scott Gibbs from the sales side of the Kimber house. Dwight Van Brunt, the company's head of marketing, was the one who came up with the Eclipse designation. "All that light and shadow just reminded me of an eclipse of the sun," Van Brunt told me.

OBSERVING THE ECLIPSE





GUNS

MAGAZINE

The Pro Eclipse II test pistol shot as follows from 25 yards:

Manufacturer	Type	All 5 Shots	Best 3 Shots
Federal Hydra-Shok	230 gr. JHP	2.10"	1.35"
Winchester USA	185 gr. BEB	2.30"	0.90"
Remington Golden Saber	230 gr. JHP	2.35"	0.75"
Pro-Load Tactical +P	230 gr. JHP	2.45"	1.50"
CCI Blazer	200 gr. JHP	2.50"	1.30"
Black Hills	230 gr. LRN	2.55"	1.20"
Average		2.375"	1.16"

But beauty is as beauty does. The Eclipse is part of the Custom Shop series. Unlike other firms, Kimber doesn't put its custom shop in a separate place. Rather, Van Brunt explains, it exists as a series of hand-picked top craftsmen along the assembly line who are assigned to pay extra attention to the guns that will bear the Custom Shop logo. Each Eclipse's trigger system is individually worked to a crisp, clean 4- to 4.5-pound pull. The ambidextrous thumb safeties are installed for smooth, easy, but totally positive functioning right out of the box.

Two sizes of Eclipse are currently available, each all-stainless steel in construction and with full-length grip frame. The Government size pistol with 5-inch barrel uses a conventional bushing. The Pro series, one of which GUNS received for testing, has a 4-inch "cone" style barrel. This does away with the bushing and allows for a bull barrel configuration up front, which some believe adds just enough weight to help dampen muzzle jump. I personally can't tell the difference, but some swear they can. The spring guide rod that comes with the Pro model requires a tool Kimber supplies with the gun, which resembles a large, glorified paper clip, for take-down. It's an inconvenience, but probably a necessary safety precaution to prevent a careless gun cleaner from being nailed by a 22-pound recoil spring that could otherwise go flying.

Bottom-Left: Bushingless barrel of the Pro-Series Eclipse is simple and robust. **Bottom-Right:** Kimber's non-slag tritium sights make the most of the excellent accuracy potential of the Eclipse.



5-inch and 4-inch versions of the Eclipse. Note the difference in barrel format.

Accuracy

Half a dozen .45 ACP loads — 1/3 practice-type, 2/3 duty-type — were tested at 25 yards from a hand-held bench rest position. Five-shot groups were fired, and two different measurements were taken of each group to the nearest .05 inch. Each group was measured twice, with every measurement being center-to-center, farthest shot to farthest shot. The first measurement was of all five shots. This determines what the gun could do if you were braced and shooting over an auto hood or something similar.

The three-shot measurement was something I started doing several years ago to factor out human error.

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Yes, Virginia, even stainless-steel guns need a little cleaning and maintenance from time to time. The Tetra products do a fine job.



NEW!
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- Reduces friction
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- Reduces wear
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Net Wt. 30 Gr. (1 oz.)

• A Little Less Friction is T



Old West

*If you want the very finest period-correct
holsters and accouterments, Rick
Bachman is the source.*



Reproductions

By Barrett Tillman

The monthly newspaper of the Single Action Shooting Society lists 36 Western leather makers, from Alfonso's of Hollywood to Wolf Ears Equipment. Of those 36 companies, at least 27 produce gunbelts or holsters. But standing tall among the providers of authentic cowboy leather of the frontier era is Old West Reproductions, ramrodded by Rick M. Bachman.

Fascinated From Youth

Born in Kalispell, Mont., in 1949, Bachman was exposed to vintage Winchesters as a youngster by the famous rifle-barrel maker Les Bauska. By age 13, he had a small but representative collection of vintage rifles, sights and other accessories.

A natural byproduct of Bachman's interest in antique guns include other accessories such as belts, holsters and catalogs. These catalogs were especially important because they offered a wide variety of original designs. Even more important were old saddle-shop catalogs that provided insight into those who made the old gear.

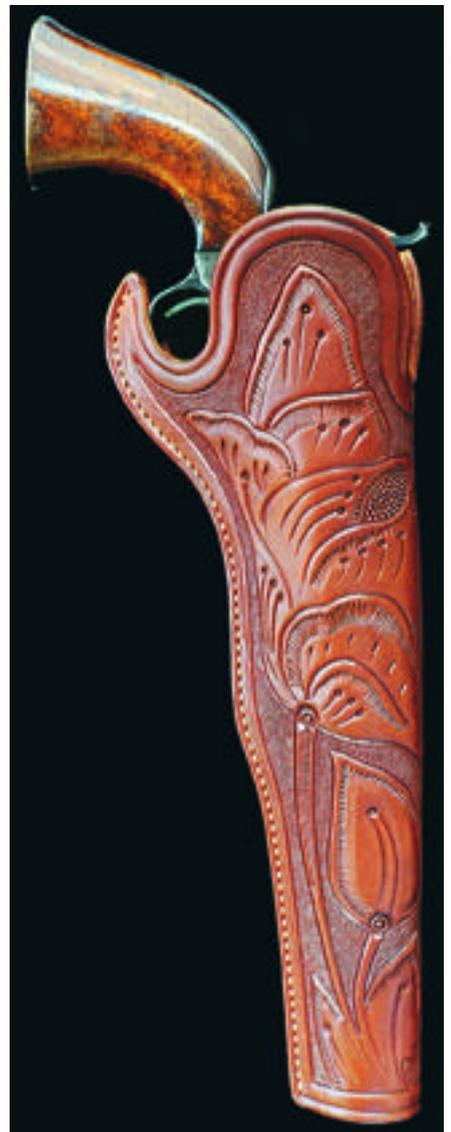
"There is a lot more to offering 'authentic' period leather gear than just saying you do," Bachman says. "You have to study the original pieces and the men who created them."

Bachman's collecting instinct assumed huge proportions, and he now holds some

3,000 items, including dozens of holsters, belts, scabbards and assorted western collectables, some of which can be seen in Richard Rattenbury's fine book, *Packing Iron: Gun Leather of the Frontier West* (Available from GUNS Books, \$45.).

Opposite: Rick Bachman's personal rig. The fully beaded, brain-tanned buckskin pouch is also available through OWR. **Right:** The Slim Jim type holster is characterized by clean simple lines. This example is beautifully hand carved, and is OWR's No. 45A "Prospector."

Below: Those who want something different from the common Mexican Loop design might consider the No. 43 Lawman. The original design was produced by J.S. Collins of Miles City, Montana Territory.





Bachman took the plunge in 1978 and entered the leather business full time. Deciding to concentrate on the era from 1849 to 1900, he established Old West Reproductions Inc.

“At that time, there were two other companies making old-time holsters,” Bachman relates. “But I was the first to introduce authentic reproductions of the original leather gear made by such famous names as E.L. Gallatin, F.A. Meanea and the Moran Brothers. All of these patterns and others, including J.S. Collins, Main & Winchester, etc., come directly from the original pieces in my collection.”

In 1990 he moved his family to the small town of Florence, Mont., which lies in the Bitterroot Valley, south of Missoula. In a

world that seems to move faster every day, Rick Bachman still operates his one-man shop and produces handmade, quality products as if the clock has been turned back to 1875.

On The Silver Screen

Apart from SASS competitors and western re-enactors, Old West Reproductions’ clients include several TV and movie actors and production companies. Although Bachman didn’t make any gear for the *Tombstone* producers, he did have a few items in the film, including a double holster rig worn by Peter Shirako as Texas Jack Vermillion.

“I’ve done work for Andy Cannon when he outfitted *Dances With Wolves* with guns

and leather,” Bachman adds. “I’ve also done quite a bit of work for Hank Williams Jr. and Dwight Yoakam. Over the years there have been several movies and TV productions that have been supplied with my leather. I also made some of the rigs used in the TV series *Young Riders* a few years back.”

Bachman gets his leather from Hermann Oak Leather Co., in St. Louis. “They have been my leather supplier almost from the start,” he says. “Several special things are done to my leather at my request, before it is processed and shipped out. It costs more than average but makes for a much nicer finished product. At the same time, I can offer an outstanding product at a price that is extremely competitive. The authentic look of Bachman’s leather gear has resulted in





Above: Holsters are not the only offering from OWR. Shown here is the No. 73 scabbard for your saddle carbine. **Right:** Another popular model, the No. 48 Gallatin. **Bottom-Left:** Perhaps OWR's most popular offering, the No. 32 Cheyenne shown with the very comfortable No. 24 money belt.

OWR creations appearing on the Hermann Oak Website and Ruger Vaquero ads."

In assessing the state of his market, Bachman sees little specialization, which fortunately means wider variety:

"Cowboy Action Shooting certainly set trends toward angled crossdraw holsters, shotshell belt slides, bandoleers, etc. I do make items such as these because they may be necessary in the sport, but they're not necessarily authentic pieces of Old West equipment. I attribute much of this gear to the movies we've all watched from the 1940s through the 1960s."

A Passion For Authenticity

Conceding that many classic Western films are marvelous entertainment, Bachman explains that, until recently, few of these films made any effort at authenticity of leather:

"As a veteran collector of period guns and equipment, I can say that crossdraw holsters cut to hang at an angle were not offered by saddle shops and never appeared in the early catalogs," he points out. "Holsters of this style didn't start to appear until around the turn of the century, after the cowboy era was coming to an end."

Bachman reckons that he was the first to reproduce a holster he calls the Cheyenne, a design made famous by a Wyoming saddle maker named Frank Meanea:

"I named this holster the Cheyenne and listed it as such on my first catalog almost 24 years ago. Now, everyone seems to offer a version of this holster."

Assessing his current product line, Bachman says, "The No. 43 Lawman and the No. 48 Gallatin are very popular holsters, and my No. 32 Cheyenne is still as popular as ever. The No. 24 money cartridge

belt sells 10 to 1 over any other belt I offer. I make this belt from the same type of leather as the originals. The money belt is not only handsome and authentic to the time period but extremely comfortable."

One authority who agrees with Bachman is western artist and historian Jerry Crandall, a fellow Montanan:

"I've known a lot of holster makers but Rick is absolutely the best," Crandall says. "He's a collector and highly knowledgeable; he's meticulous and a superb craftsman who uses top-quality leather. As far as I'm concerned, Rick at Old West Reproductions is the Cadillac of holster makers."

Crandall, a Cowboy Action Shooter and *Tombstone* extra, prefers the rich russet brown color of OWR and appreciates Rick's ability to carve leather using old traditional patterns."

OWR holsters range from the extreme simplicity of the early Slim Jim design to the later, and more ornate single- and double-loop variations.

The Slim Jim dates from the California Gold Rush (1849) and is adaptable to a variety of Colt revolvers from cap and ball Walkers and Dragoons, to later cartridge models. The design's classic simplicity lends itself to enhancement with elaborate tooling and even fringe.

OWR also makes slipper holsters, which were designed to accept Colt Single Action revolvers with barrel lengths from the 3-inch Storekeeper's model to the 12-inch

Buntline. The versatile open-toe design will accommodate all of these barrel lengths from a single holster:

"The slipper holster is a very unusual design," Bachman says. "Historically speaking, these holsters apparently originated in Mexico sometime in the 1870s. In my years of collecting I have only encountered four of these little holsters, all of which were identical except in color — and the original maker, from my observation, is unknown."

Based on an anonymous design, Rick's shoulder holster is available from \$130 to \$150 depending on the extent of tooling. Bachman's research indicates this particular style to be of the 1885 to 1920 period.

As with all of the holsters offered by Old West Reproductions, these, too, are available for a variety of early single- or double-action revolvers and their replicas.

Other Old West items include a variety of cartridge belts, rifle scabbards, pommel bags, saddle pockets, spur straps and wrist cuffs.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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LOADING REMINGTON'S 7MM ULTRA MAG

Petty tests Hodgdon's loading data for the hot new 7mm Ultra Magnum.

By Charles E. Petty

Ever think about launching a 7mm bullet at 4,000 fps? That isn't doable yet, but we sure can come close. In the new 7mm Remington Ultra Mag., Hodgdon's loading data shows 3,800 fps with a 100-grain Hornady hollowpoint. That's faster than the .22-250 with a bullet that's half the weight!

Any time a new cartridge is introduced, I get letters wanting handloading data. Although I can understand the undeniable rush for data, the fact is that *nobody* outside the factory has guns or brass yet. I guess the interest must be purely academic, or, who knows, maybe some people just collect data.

But there is no denying that as soon as the stuff is available, handloading will begin.

I've found that developing data on a cartridge which is simply a variant of one I'm familiar with isn't too hard. But when it's a brand-new cartridge, patience is required. And when you consider the popularity of lawsuits today, the last thing anybody wants to do is publish a handload that hasn't been tested by a laboratory with the proper testing equipment.

A couple of years ago, Remington introduced the .300 Remington Ultra Magnum. This is one big sucker and is based on a case that resembles the .404 Jeffrey. You should expect to buy your powder in bulk to feed this big boomer. Last year Remington introduced a variant of the .300: the 7mm Remington Ultra Mag. Powder sales will spike up again, but, as is so often the case, one half of the equation lags behind the other. In this case I had the test rifle a couple of months before the ammo was available.

This factory load features the excellent 140-grain Nosler Partition at 3,400 fps.



Then a fax came in from Hodgdon with loading data for the 7mm UM. Hodgdon must have a great relationship with Remington to have developed this data so early on. And it is noteworthy that no other data has appeared over the months that I've worked with this project, although it may well have by the time you read this. My compliments to Hodgdon for making this information available.

No Brass — No Problem

Of course I didn't have any brass, and shooting enough factory ammo to get some is an expensive and possibly painful proposition. So I did what any good boy scout would do — I improvised. The 7mm Remington Ultra Mag. is, after all, a necked down .300 UM, and I had plenty of those cases. And this is one of those circumstances where the only change between the two is bullet diameter. There also wouldn't be an effect on powder capacity because the



(left to right) 7mm-08 Remington, 7mm Remington Magnum, 7mm Remington Ultra Mag.

In true Tom Sawyer fashion, Petty enticed Bob Maddox to help with the test firing.

shoulder remains in the same location. So we were shooting long before we received any factory ammo.

The 7mm Ultra Mag is a *high* pressure cartridge with a maximum of 65,000 psi. This is not something to be trifled with, and I deliberately elected to limit work to Hodgdon powders because of the available pressure-tested data. It was also necessary to limit the bullets used in the test. To its credit, Hodgdon tried just about every known weight from 100-grain up to 175-grain. (The data is available from Hodgdon, or via its Website.)

I chose to follow the factory's lead here and avoid the heavier bullets. At the time of this writing there are two factory loads: one with a 140-grain Nosler Partition bullet and the other with Remington's 140-grain Core-Lokt. Velocity for both is advertised as 3,425 fps, and my chrono showed 3,405 fps. As a point of comparison, this is 100 fps faster than the 7mm STW with the same bullet weight.

Size Matters

The test rifle is a Remington Sendero SF with a 26-inch barrel. The barrel length is important only in that it complicates comparison of factory and handloaded ammunition. Remington's catalog doesn't state the length of its test barrel, but Hodgdon's is 24 inches. Because I overlooked this discrepancy, I wondered at first why I was getting higher velocities... duuh. Achieving higher than published velocities is something that just doesn't happen very often. Depending on the powder and other variables, my 2-inch longer barrel could account for velocity differences of 50 to 100 fps.

Depending on bullet weight, Hodgdon used five different powders in developing its data, which are all in the slow range: (in order of burning rate) H4831, H4350, H1000, H870 and 50BMG. To simplify things a little, I used three: H4831, H1000 and H870.

Hodgdon's *starting* load in this caliber is usually 6 grains below the maximum. So, again to simplify a bit, I loaded three charge weights in 2-grain increments with the heaviest being the maximum. This verifies that everything is progressing in a linear manner. I chose 120- and 140-grain Nosler Ballistic Tips and Speer's 110-grain TNT.

Any time you do these lengthy tests, shooter fatigue is an issue. And with something carrying substantial recoil, abuse is also a factor. This went a lot quicker thanks to Bob Maddox, who shared the shooting/chronographing chores. Since I didn't have access to pressure-tested data from any other source, I chose to work exclusively with Hodgdon powder. As others publish data, I will be able to do more testing — but I won't print loads that can't be traced to some verifiable pressure test data. Even so, Hodgdon has four or five powders that are quite suitable for the super-magnums.

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Ayoob draws Glock from a Safariland 0701 concealable security holster.

By Massad Ayoob

More than 30 states now have “shall issue” concealed-carry permit laws. Only six states remain where no such option exists at law (Kansas, Illinois, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio and Wisconsin). The remainder are “discretionary” states where it’s up to the discretion of the local authorities as to whether a permit is issued or not. Some are strict (New York, for example). Some are extremely strict (New Jersey comes to mind). And at least one is hopeless (Hawaii, where history shows us the privilege is reserved for governor or lieutenant governor, a police chief’s sister-in-law, or the civilian armorer for a police department). Some of the rest aren’t too bad for the most part (Iowa, Indiana).

So what does all of this mean? More law-abiding citizens are now carrying guns than anyone living can remember.

Fashion Factor

Clothing fashion — men’s fashion, anyway — has brought us another fortunate confluence of the stars. It’s almost as if closet pistol-packers have become the arbiters of clothing trends.

Remember the bell-bottoms of the ‘60s and ‘70s? They’re back, as “flares,” and they are ideal for discreetly concealing (and quickly reaching) guns in ankle holsters.

A decade ago, the Fashion Police would have issued me a citation for being the only guy on the street with an untucked tee or polo shirt. I wore them to conceal the full-size handgun in my waistband. Today, roughly half of the adult males you see out and about wear such shirts tails out. Does it help to hide our aging male paunches? I dunno, but it helps to hide our hand-



S&W 442 Airweight with LaserGrips disappears when placed into the specially reinforced pocket of the Blackie Collins Toters.

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guns. The slightly large-sized shirt is also “in” because it’s more comfortable with better air circulation. (Younger males started this trend. Don’t say they never gave us anything.)

Consider Dockers and “relaxed fit jeans.” The skin-tight pants of yesteryear are gone. They have been replaced by billowy trousers that perfectly hide baby-Glock-size guns in side pocket holsters. They also lend themselves to “groin holsters” such as Thunderwear and its assorted imitators. This roomy style better conceals holsters in belly bands and has helped make possible the new generation of Workman holsters; more about those later. Knife designer Blackie Collins has come out with his own jeans, relaxed fit of course and with four pockets especially cut and reinforced for carrying guns. He calls them Toters. They work.

Once the mark of either a yuppie or a gun-wearer, the photographer’s vest has come universally fashionable. Its many pockets provide space for Daytimers, cell phones, pagers, and other accoutrements of modern life... and, of course, they do a great job of hiding full-size defensive handguns in hip holsters. Similarly, the fanny pack no longer signals “gun.” It can’t when everyone is wearing them. Another happy turn of events: Joggers seem to be going to the black nylon variety that once were the province of gun-

toters, even as the pistol-packers started going to bright colored ones and sewing on “Adidas” and “Nikon” labels.

The Holsters Themselves

Quality of both construction and workmanship is, for the most part, going up in the gunleather world. Only a few years ago, if you wanted a truly Rolls-Royce-class holster, you had to look hard, wait long, and pay big. At the moment, three beautifully made and identically styled holsters for the Government Model pistol sit on my desk. One is the Mitch Rosen 5G, one is by relative newcomer Josh Bulman, and one is the top of the line Galco that



Top-right: Quality inside-the-waistband holsters are often the preferred choice of experienced shooters. Rearward flange of leather aids concealability, comfort of this DeSantis IWB, carrying Kahr K9. **Bottom-right:** Michaels of Oregon has been fabulously successful with this \$19.95 Kydex holster, shown here with Pachmayr-gripped Kimber Custom Match. **Below:** Kramer’s pocket holsters have revolutionized the concept. (top) S&W Model 38 Bodyguard Airweight in left handed model; (bottom), Glock G27 in right handed version.





Above: State of the art Kydex (left to right) IWB Blade-tech with Beretta 96D; S&S Enterprises No. 2 scabbard with Glock G29; Ky-Tac speed rig with Ruger P97. **Below:** Concealing under tucked-in shirt on strong hand side, Workman holster by Rosen hides baby Glock with only key strap visible on belt.



comes in a velvet bag like a bottle of fancy whiskey. Only the cognoscenti can tell one from the other without examining the maker's mark. They aren't cheap, but all are worth the price.

Bruce Lee said that his art, *Jeet Kune Do*, was the style of no style. Many feel that the state of holster art today is the gunleather of no leather. We are in the time of synthetic pistol scabbards.

Nylon came first. It's still a sales leader for low-priced plinking and outdoorsman use, where a holster needs to do little more than keep the gun from falling on the ground. Though some very nice police duty rigs have been offered in this format by Bianchi, Strong, Uncle Mike's, Magnum Software, and more, little design work has been spent on the concealment models. Most nylon hideout holsters are floppy things that make it difficult to reinsert the pistol in a tactical situation or during a day of training. Exceptions include the excellent Strongcore series from Strong and the deservedly popular inside-the-waistband rigs from Magnum Software (formerly known as Orca).

"Plastic holsters" have been around since the '70s, but quantum leaps have been made in their technology. Safariland led the way in Kydex, which has become the medium of choice for most of today's plastic holster artists. The company is now getting away from Kydex and into a synthetic it considers more modern with its Raptor series of police security rigs.

Glock's own polymer belt-slide holster proved remarkably efficient in hiding its pistols and helped popularize "plastic" holsters. However, Kydex currently rules the roost in the concealment market. I recently made reference in *Shooting Industry* to "holster wars" for dominance in the lower-priced market. One manufacturer took exception and insisted that no such thing was happening. This was doubtless news to the popular Kydex holster-maker who recently went out of business.

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MODEL 10ML-II

continued from page 31

powder, Pyrodex, and similar powders, makes a big difference in cleaning frequency. Obviously, squib loads in the 50-grain (volume) domain will not foul the bore as quickly as maximum charges of three times that volume. Smokeless-powder cleaning is recommended at 50- to 60-shot intervals.

High Power Performance

Savage lists only three suitable smokeless powders in the owner's manual for its .50-caliber Model 10ML-II. These are IMR-4227, Accurate Arms XMP-5744 and Vihtavouri N110. Hornady 250- and 300-grain XTP sabot bullets are listed at velocities ranging from around 2,100 fps to nearly 2,400 fps. Sabots with smokeless powder must be the magnum type as sold through Magnum Muzzleloading Products (870-741-5019). Other sabots may fail. A typical maximum powder charge with Hornady's 250-grain bullet is 48.0 grains of IMR-4227 for a muzzle velocity of 2,254 fps with 2,821 ft.lb. of energy. A typical maximum powder charge with the 300-grain Hornady bullet is 44.5 grains of Vihtavouri N110 for a muzzle velocity of 2,244 fps and an energy rating of 3,355 ft.lb. At closer ranges, the rifle has 30-06 power, but Savage has not, so far, touted the 10ML-II as "most powerful muzzle-loader," which it is not. For example, October Country offers a muzzleloader capable of pushing a 1,400-grain round ball with 6,000 ft.lb. of muzzle energy.

The strength of the Savage Model 10ML-II is its sound construction and top-flight materials. That it shoots smokeless powder is unique, and it is, of course, the flag waved at the head of the parade for Savage. On general hunts — where the muzzleloader fan shares the field with other outdoorsmen who pack scoped, long-range cartridge rifles — the use of smokeless in the 10ML-II is certainly sporting. Rules for special blackpowder-only "primitive" seasons are another matter. A cursory investigation of game laws shows "black-powder or substitute only" as common. No smokeless powder allowed. Meanwhile, smokeless powder makes after-shooting cleanup easy, and this is where the Savage 10ML-II shines — lots of practice at the range with very little fuss afterward. The marksman who says, "I sure would like to shoot today, but I don't have time for cleanup," has no excuse with the Model 10ML-II.



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Return Of The Single Shots

The single-shot rifle has a romance and appeal that is unique among firearms.

By Holt Bodinson

Only a few decades ago, single-shot centerfires were considered as dead as the Dodo by most hunters. Instead, finer American single-shots such as the Sharps, Winchester, Remington, Stevens and Ballard had gravitated into the collections of connoisseurs. A few Winchester High and Low Walls, Remington-Hepburns, Ballards, Stevens 44½ and Sharps-Borchardts had been rebarreled and converted into varmint rifles. Model 1902 smokeless Remington Rolling Blocks in 7x57 and svelte BSA Martinis from Australia in .310 Cadet were being remaindered off at \$9.95 each. Springfield Trapdoors in .45-70 were abundant and cheap, but most were relegated to casual plinking or the walls of National Guard armories. Savage continued to fill a mar-

ginal market with its Model 219 in .22 Hornet and .30-30. Small custom builders like Hauck, Clerke and, yes, even Colt, with its Colt-Sharps rifle, filled a small niche market. But by 1950, it was clear that the general market in the United States for a centerfire single-shot hunting rifle was nonexistent.

That all changed in 1966 when the impresario of nostalgic firearms marketing, William B. Ruger, launched the Ruger No. 1 single-shot. Modeled somewhat after the Scottish Farquharson, stocked by Leonard Brownell, and priced so that everybody could afford one, the No. 1 became an overnight hit with the U.S. shooting community. Seven years later, Ruger introduced his No.3 with its American style lever, carbine stock and lower price.



Today we have a virtual outpouring of traditional and strikingly modern single-shots in every caliber imaginable, with new models appearing yearly. Our variety of choice is remarkable: Ruger No. 1s; Browning's High and Low Walls; Remington's No. 1 Rolling Block; Thompson/Center's switch barrel Contender and Encore carbines; H&R and New England models; Mossberg's SSi-ONE; Ballards; Blasers; Dakotas; a plethora of domestic and foreign-made Sharps; and even newly manufactured Springfield Trapdoors.

The popularity of the single-shot has grown so much that there's even an *American Single-Shot Rifle Association*. There are a variety of single-shot rifle competitions, which culminate with that grand Schuetzenfest, the annual *Coors Match*.

With all the advantages of repeating rifles, what is it that makes the single-shot rifle so appealing to the sporting public?

Esthetics

There is something racey, clean and uncluttered about most single-shots. They're elegant, streamlined guns, and I suspect that many owners simply like the way they look and handle.

Top-Left: One of the most attractive reproduction single-shots is this Officer's Model trapdoor by H&R. The Italian firm of Pedersoli is currently importing excellent quality trapdoor replicas. **Below:** One of Holt's favorites is this Ruger No. 3 chambered in .30-40 Krag. **Right:** Single-shots are wonderfully compact. Both of these .22-250s sport 26-inch barrels, but the Ruger No. 1 is a full 4 inches shorter overall.



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Nostalgia

No question about it, single-shot rifles stir up images of a romantic past. They're the buffalo gun, the long-range Creedmoor match rifle, and the big-bore Farquharson on safari in some distant land.

Challenge

Many hunters are attracted to the single-shot rifle for the same reasons some hunters take up muzzleloading or archery. It's the challenge of being limited to one shot. It's the thought of taking the time to execute a carefully planned stalk and insuring that the first shot gets the job done. Some feel the single-shot rifle brings out the best in a hunter; or, who knows, maybe only the best hunters choose a single-shot.

Versatility

No rifle is more versatile than a single-shot. Switch barrel rifles like the T/C Contenders and Encores, the H&Rs, and the Mossberg SSI-Ones allow shooters to change calibers for only the cost of a new barrel. And there is an overwhelming selection of calibers from which to choose, particularly for the T/C Contender which is available in anything from the .17 K-Hornet offered by T/C's custom shop to SSK's massive .50/70. Ruger No. 1s and 3s are readily rebarreled to any cartridge they can safely hold and that includes SSK's chambering of the .577 Nitro and .600 JDJ. In fact, rebarreled Ruger No. 1s are the least expensive method of obtaining a rifle chambered for exotic cartridges like Lazzeroni's big .300 Warbird. There are no feeding problems to contend with or issues of action length. One just chambers or rechambers a barrel and alters the extractor. In the memorable words of the late Maj. George Nonte, single-shot actions function like "nailing a board over a rat hole." It is that very simplicity that makes the single-shots so versatile.

Mechanical Variations

The design differences in single-shots are legendary when compared to other action types. Consider the differences among the following single-shot actions: the Springfield Trapdoor, the British Snyder, the Martini, the Remington Rolling Block, the H&R break-open, the T/C Encore, the Heeren, the Ruger No. 1, the Blaser, the numerous Sharps' models, and the Browning High and Low Walls — and that's just touching the tip of the iceberg. One could spend a lifetime collecting mechanical variations alone!

Performance

With their short, compact actions, single-shots can be built with longer barrels to extract maximum velocities out of any

given caliber while still maintaining a overall length less than an equivalent bolt-action. Typical of this are my two .220 Swifts: a Model 70 and a Ruger No. 1. Both sport 26-inch barrels yet the Ruger is 4 inches shorter in overall length than the Winchester. Pound for pound, a single-shot such as the T/C Contender carbine — with a 21-inch barrel in a caliber like the 6.5 JDJ, 7-30 Waters or .30/30, a synthetic stock, compact scope and a total weight of only 5.3 pounds — is a marvel of firearms efficiency and portability.

Available in any caliber to match any game on the face of the earth, the single-shot is a joy to carry afield.

It's best use is quite possibly for varmint hunting. Here, any reasonable hit will at least anchor the prey without the need for an immediate follow-up shot. And typically when hunting small-game like woodchucks, prairie dogs or coyotes, you are in a fixed position with an adequate rest so that shot placement is very controlled. I've owned two Ruger No. 3s in .22 Hornet and .223 Rem. and still treasure a Ruger No.1 in .220 Swift — all three Rugers have been exceptionally accurate. In spite of what one may have read about the difficulty of tuning single-shots, the varmint caliber Rugers will do less than MOA with nothing more than some careful load development.

I've used single-shots a good deal for stand-hunting big-game where I had time to wait for a perfect setup before pressing the trigger. For many years, my favorite rifle has been a Ruger #3 in .30/40 Krag. It's handy, can be loaded much hotter than the old Springfield Krag, and, alas, it's discontinued. Frankly, the No. 3 action with it's short American-type lever is really more functional and cleaner looking than the No.1, and I hope Ruger brings it back.

The most elegant little single shots I've ever hunted with have been the break-open Germanic Kipplaufs: a Blaser in 7mm Rem. Magnum, while pursuing red deer; and a Sauer in 6.5x57R, loaded with RWS 93-grain softpoints that performed like the hammer of Thor on whitetails.

Using a single-shot for big-game is disciplined hunting in the extreme. You will definitely have to pass up shots that are less than ideal. The problem we all face in big-game hunting is the unexpected — when the shot is slightly off, or the animal doesn't react the way you expected. In this situation it's very comforting to have a repeater in your hands with three or four shells in the magazine. I can think of several occasions when I ripped through a full magazine to put game down. That's not to say I haven't seen some fast shooting with single-shots, especially if the experienced hunter is carrying extra shells in a wrist ammo carrier, but that kind of shooting takes a lot of practice. On the other hand, that's the essence of responsible sportsmanship.

And if you never ever take a single-shot hunting, they're still a joy to own and to shoot at the range. My local range master

and I both own Trapdoor Officer's Models in .45-70, which were once produced by H&R. And we have a Trapdoor grudge match from time to time. Nothing is more fun than a leisurely afternoon spent plinking away with those old pumpkin rollers.

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Observation had shown me that the best three hand-held shots from the same gun would roughly equal all five out of a Ransom machine rest with the same gun. Senior Field Editor Cameron Hopkins recently assigned Charles Petty and me to test this hypothesis, with each of us firing four guns, comparing my "best three" hand-held, to Charlie's "all five" from the Ransom Rest. One pistol we both tested was Charlie's Kimber Custom Shop Super Match .45, enhanced by Charlie and equipped with a Kart barrel. We averaged .37-inch difference, which is similar to the difference between one and another test of the same gun and ammo in a machine rest on two different days.

The load with which we differed the most, less than .5 inch, was Federal's famously accurate and effective 230-grain Hydra-Shok. Charlie's five-shot measurements averaged 1.09 inches at 25 yards with the Kimber Super Match .45, while my "best three" measurements averaged 1.57 inches. The difference was .48 inch. It showed two things: The "best three" concept worked for giving a rough idea of the gun's pure mechanical accuracy, and the Federal Hydra-Shok and the Kimber Super Match made one hell of an accurate combination.

With the Kimber Custom Shop Pro Eclipse II, I took some ammo from the same lot of 230-grain Hydra-Shok Charlie and I had used and ran it from the bench at 25 yards. The results: 2.10-inch group for all five shots, and 1.35-inch group for best three.

Now, I'm not gonna play the statistics game with you and say the Kimber Custom Shop Pro Eclipse II concealment pistol is more accurate than the same custom shop's famous Super Match. But I am gonna tell you this: The carry gun shot better for me with the same ammo than the top-flight tournament target pistol.

As you scan the above figures, notice the extraordinary consistency. Half a dozen different loads, delivering five-shot groups less than .5 inch different from one another. In a world where you can't always find your first choice in ammunition, that consistency means a lot.

None of the above rounds caused a single malfunction. More than 500 assorted .45 ACP cartridges were tested in multiple hands. The only "malf" that occurred was a human error. The shooter was firing with a very relaxed hold, his left thumb was extended forward in an IPSC target-shooter's position, and his thumb hit the slide lock lever as the pistol recoiled while firing some hot Pro-Load +P. The slide, not surprisingly, locked open. A touch of the thumb downward on the slide release lever chambered the next round and put the gun back into action. This could not be construed as a failure of the gun or the ammunition. Professionals know that a .45 automatic needs to be held firmly to ensure 100-percent functioning with full power ammunition.

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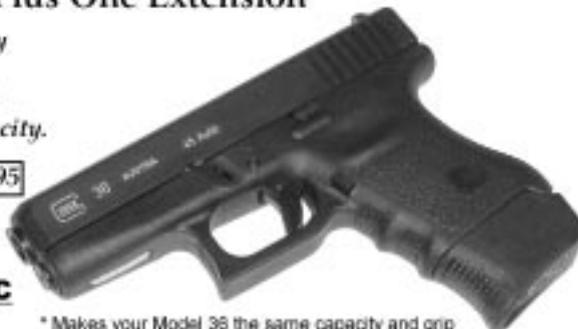
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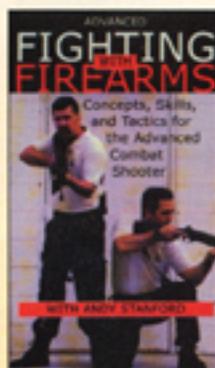
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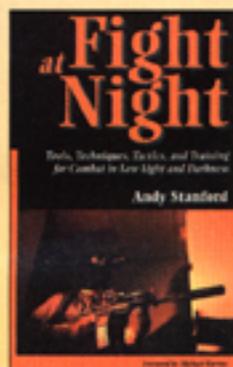
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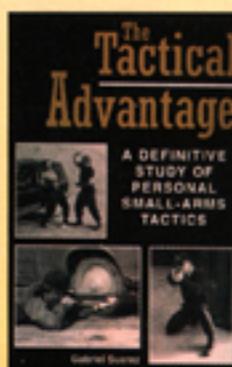
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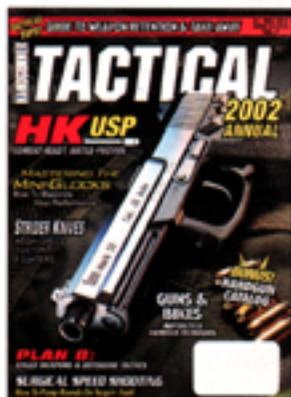
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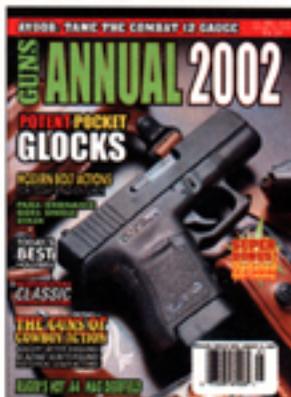


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Reliability

Let's stay on the topic for a minute here. Reliability is the single most important attribute of a defensive firearm. It must work all the time, every time with the ammunition you'll be firing from it at the moment when the difference between life and death hinges on the performance of the gun/ammo combination.

Somewhere between 500 and 600 rounds were fired from the gun in question in the testing for this article. The only malfunction was traceable directly to human error. That equals a 100-percent reliability quotient for the test itself. The gun was still in action when deadline for this article came up.

I had put it out among the students in an Lethal Force Institute class. I am a part-time gunwriter, part-time cop, and part-time expert witness in deadly force cases. What I do full-time is teach use of force, with an emphasis on judicious use of deadly force. This gives me ample opportunity to do the "Tom Sawyer whitewashing the fence thing" and let other folks do my job for me. Many of my students have 1911 .45 autos that they bring to class. When I offer them the opportunity to shoot the one I'm testing at the moment, they usually take me up on it. This lets me get lots of other folks' ammo through the test gun in lots of other folks' hands, which makes my gun testing job a whole lot easier.

One student who used this gun shot it with his own ammo, lead semiwadcutter commercial reloads that were 10 years old. There were feeding problems. The same ammo caused feeding problems in his own gun, a customized ParaOrdnance. We came together to the logical conclusion: ammo at fault, gun not at fault.

I later tried the Eclipse with some lead semiwadcutter .45 ACP loads of my own. It didn't like to feed those, either. In did, however, work perfectly with lead round nose (LRN) Black Hills .45 ACP ammo, which it also put to center pretty damn well. Bottom line: Know thy gun, know thy ammo, know what works together and what doesn't.

The Eclipse fed every jacketed hollow-point defense load/police load I put through it without a hitch. It worked 100 percent with the old wide-mouth 200-grain CCI hollow-point that my friend Dean Grennell dubbed "the flying ashtray." That load is a litmus test of .45 ACP feeding reliability. The Kimber Pro Eclipse II passed the test 100 percent.

Let us put it this way: The biggest compliment that firearms professionals can give to a gun is to trust their life to it. During much of the test, I carried the Eclipse cocked-and-locked behind my right hip as my first line of defense. As the phrase goes in one of my part-time jobs, "further, the affiant sayeth not."

The Feel of the Gun

The interface that the Eclipse presents to its user is excellent. I prefer the flat housing on a full-length 1911, and the Eclipse came so equipped. The semi-long trigger allows the average-or-longer finger of an adult male

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to reach in and contact it with the distal joint, which is the technique this writer has found to work the best. If you prefer the older paradigms of the fingertip or the pad of the farthest index finger joint contacting the trigger, the Eclipse works just fine that way, too.

The ambidextrous safety levers were just the right size: big enough to be fast and positive to release, small enough that they weren't accidentally released in routine carry. The checking on the front and backstraps was just right: rough enough to stay in place in the hand during extreme rapid fire of heavy defensive loads, but not so rough that it chewed up the hand during extended firearms training sessions. Nor was it so rough that it kept the hand from sliding into its preferred grasping position during the draw stroke.

The grip safety is standard issue M-1 high-tech, which fortunately is the current paradigm of the upswept beavertail that guides the drawing hand into the proper position. It flares out at the bottom to guarantee that if you use the old-fashioned high-thumb position, you will still activate the grip safety when you need the gun to work. This is a good thing. With the standard 1911/1911A1 pistol, the high-thumb grasp often moves the web of the hand so far back that the pistol may not fire when you desperately need it to.

Carrying and Shooting the Eclipse

I wore the 4-inch Eclipse in the same kind of holsters I'd have used with my 4-inch Colt Commanders and 5-inch

Government Models. There were no surprises. The pistol was flat, it had no sharp edges, and it was comfortable to wear. If I'd been wearing a tailored suit, I'd have worn something smaller. I wasn't, so I didn't.

Nothing snagged the covering garment to make it ride up. Nothing slowed the draw. I tried an Alessi CQCS designed by veteran narc Dave Spaulding and a Josh Bulman belt scabbard when carrying outside the waistband and used a Ted Blocker LFI Concealment Rig, a Milt Sparks Versa-Max, and a Mitch Rosen Ayoob Rear Guard for inside-the-belt carry.

Shooting the gun? Accuracy testing is one thing. Combat shooting is another. I like to run any gun I'm testing through some sort of a stress-producing competitive environment. The schedule didn't allow an open match, so I shot the Eclipse out of the Sparks IWB (inside-the-waistband) holster when I ran the pace-setter drill for an LFI-I class.

The pace-setter is what we call the instructional staff demonstrating the qualification course of fire for the students. We've found over the years that when you ask people to perform a physical skill set, they do it better if their instructors have shown them immediately before the test what is expected of them. This particular course was a close-combat run done under time, with the whole class watching (in case you didn't have enough stress already), with the maximum 5-point target ring being the center of an International Defensive Pistol Association silhouette. Now, the center zone of an IDPA

target measures 50 square inches according to firearms instructor Dennis Luosey, who crunched the numbers. By contrast, the International Practical Shooting Association target has a center zone for the maximum five points that measures 66 square inches, not counting the head of the silhouette in either case. Most police silhouette qualification targets are vastly larger than either in their volume of maximum-point target zone.

Firing Federal's low-priced generic American Eagle .45 ACP 230-grain hardball, the test Eclipse gave me a 300 out of 300 score. All 60 bullet holes measured a little over 4 inches, center to center of the farthest-spaced bullet holes. The slow-paced firing from the 25-yard bench had shown that the Kimber Eclipse was accurate; the fast-paced firing in the pace-setter run showed that it was user-friendly.

Any self-defense pistol can end up going to the ground in a fight or other strenuous activity. You want one that won't go off when dropped. The II designation in this gun's name denotes the presence of the Schwartz-type firing-pin block, resurrected by famed handgun designer Nehemiah Sirkis, who has been with Kimber for a few years now. It renders the gun "drop-safe," and working off the grip safety instead of the trigger mechanism, it does not in any way interfere with the quality or reliability of the pistol's trigger pull.

Conclusion

Kimber promised dealers that the original Eclipse pistols would be limited to a few thousand each, and production runs were completed in September of 2001. However, the guns were such a hit that Kimber will be doing a subtle refinement of the concept and adding the Eclipse series as a standard item in 2002. Look for the addition of an Ultra Eclipse with short grip frame and 3-inch coned barrel. This will be the first of these smallest Kimbers to be offered with a steel frame instead of the usual aluminum.

The Eclipse lives up to its name in more than just its striking appearance. Even when the pistol was filthy, it ran 100 percent with factory jacketed ammo. We had to get it filthy and then run lead bullet reloads through it to induce malfunctions. The gun combines duty reliability with target pistol accuracy in a concealable handgun whose classic 1911 styling appeals to so many performance-minded handgunners.

By eclipsing most other Commander-style 1911s in accuracy and so very many other guns in styling, the Kimber Pro Eclipse II has lived up to its name. At a suggested retail of \$1,065, it is an excellent value.



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Speer 110-Grain TNT

The first powder I tried is H-4831. H-4831 began life as a surplus powder left over from World War II and Korea. In my early days when every penny was precious, I used it for many loads because it only cost \$1 a pound. It's one of the most versatile powders around, but it is also close to the fastest burning rate you'd want to try in the Ultra Mag.

Loading was done in 2-grain increments, the heaviest being the maximum listed in Hodgdon's data, which shows a max of 93.5 grains with the 110-grain Speer. My rifle showed signs of pressure I didn't like at that level so I reduced it to 93.0 grains, which pushed the Speer at 3,553 fps.

Next was H-1000, and once more my rifle didn't like the maximum Hodgdon data, which show a compressed maximum charge of 104 grains with a velocity of 3,750 fps. My rifle did 3,748 fps with a charge of 102 grains; bolt lift got stiff at anything heavier.



Nosler 120-grain Ballistic Tip

Hodgdon shows H-4350 data for this weight, too, but I chose to use only H-4831 and H-1000. The gun was perfectly happy with its maximum charge of 90.0 grains with the 120 at 3,388 fps. The maximum charge of H-1000 is 99.5 grains, and my rifle liked that load at 3,585 fps, which is right where Hodgdon's data said it would be.

Nosler 140-grain Ballistic Tip

For a bullet in the 140-grain range, Hodgdon's data used the 140-grain Barnes X-bullet, which I didn't have. There was data, however, for a 145-grain Speer Grand Slam, and that was used with due care. Moving up to the 140-grain Nosler brought two new powders into play: H-870 and H-50BMG. I chose not to use H-50BMG simply because it seemed to duplicate charge weights of H-870 but not give quite as much velocity. I'm sure it would shine with bullets heavier than 140-grain should you need to use them.

Cautiously working up with H-870s brought me to a point where I wanted to stop just short of their listed maximum. Bolt lift was heavy and there was a distinct ejector rub on the case head. A charge of 104.0 grains of H-870 with the 140 Nosler gave 3,450 fps, which certainly duplicates the factory velocity. This bullet weight is getting a

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little heavy for H-4831 and velocities with it will not be quite as fast as the slower propellants, but a charge of 87.0 grains pushed the 140-grain Nosler to 3,240 fps.

H-1000 is one propellant with which I don't have a lot of experience, but you can bet I'll learn more about it. A charge of 93.0 grains at 3,267 fps delivered groups that were well under an inch from the standard rifle. The data shows a maximum of 95.0 grains, which gave 3,345 fps but groups were not the equal of the lighter charge.

We are rightly warned to not switch components, and yet you've just seen me do it. My rationale is that the solid construction of the X-bullet almost always results in charges being a bit lighter than they would be with conventional jacketed bullets. The data for the 145-grain Speer Grand Slam were

indeed a little heavier, but since we were using a slightly lighter bullet, those *starting* loads would be safe for a lighter bullet of conventional construction. This is one of those cases where working up a load takes on an even more serious tone, but in this case it was uneventful.

I'm sure that other data will come along in due time, but with all the present interest in short magnum cartridges from both Remington and Winchester, it will be very interesting to see if they can duplicate — or come close — to the performance of the full-size versions.



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Kydex deeply penetrated the holster market because it dramatically undersold the leather equivalents. Fobus International drove the market in a different direction when it introduced a series of holsters with an average price of \$24.74, the basic model only \$19.99. The firm also used a different material.

"Fobus holsters are made from a much more durable polymer than Kydex," says Craig Fisher, president of Fobus USA. "Fobus' proprietary RX-18 polymer will retain its shape under extreme temperatures, unlike Kydex, which loses its shape under warm temperatures."

This company's latest product, still well under \$30, is called the Roto Holster. This design, explains Fisher, "allows the holster to rotate 360 degrees and maintains the weapon in a secure position, allowing the user his choice of draws — for example, cross-draw, SOB (small of back), body-guard/driver (almost horizontal cross-draw) or strong side carry — without having to purchase multiple holsters."

The low-price plastic holster market created by Fobus is now shared by Michaels of Oregon, which advertises its Kydex scabbard with heavy emphasis on the \$19.95 price of its basic model.

Blade-Tech remains the most popular of the Kydex holsters and offers the widest such line I've seen. Quality Kydex are really a hair faster than the leather rigs they have all but replaced in IDPA competition. Another excellent choice is the Ky-Tac, manufactured by IDPA master shooter Dave Elderton. Ky-Tac's latest ultra-thin, inside-the-waistband rig may be the most concealable Kydex belt holster yet, and it's still very fast.

The only complaints I routinely get about "plastic holsters" is that they can tear off the belt during full-power weapon-retention drills with dummy guns; and the scraping sound they emit when the gun is withdrawn can prevent a surreptitious draw. The first problem can be solved with a strongly secured inside-the-waistband design like the snap-on version from Blade-Tech. The latter can be cured with suede lining, one option in the popular line from Hellweg Ltd.

While belt holsters comprise the overwhelming majority of Kydex offerings right now, that could change. It would be interesting to see what kind of pocket holster could be made out of this material. Blade-Tech already has a "deep down in the pants" hideout model for smaller guns, and Fobus introduced an ankle holster at the 2001 SHOT Show.

Design Concepts

Some new to concealed-carry are afraid of being disarmed when in a struggle. Thumb-breaks are widely available and make a lot of sense. A few true security holsters have emerged that are reasonably concealable. In synthetic, there is the Safariland 0701, a high-ride hip holster with some of

the features that have made its Rogers-designed SS-III security holster a million-unit seller to the police and private-guard sectors. In leather, there is the Strong Piece-Keeper: a pancake-style with an ingenious "double-locked" thumb-break safety strap.

One increasingly popular design feature is quick on-and-off capability. Paddle holsters are a good example. They go back to the mid-20th century with a Bucheimer design that used leather loops to snap over the belt. Today's models are more likely to secure with a plastic hook and work with beltless pants. They are also more likely to be orthopedically curved for greater comfort.

Originally developed for detectives who tended to keep guns in their desk drawers and only don them when they had to, this concept finds favor today among armed citizens who, due to their jurisdictions, are limited as to where they can carry. A day of shopping in, say, North Carolina may see you take your gun off and put it back on multiple times as you stop at the post office to pick up your mail, at the courthouse for a copy of a document, and at a cocktail lounge to meet a client.

The paddle is not the only approach to quick-on/quick-off holster capability. The LFI Concealment Rig I designed along with Ted Blocker in the mid-'80s remains one of the Blocker company's most popular lines. This inside-the-waistband holster, available with or without thumb-break safety strap, has a tab of Velcro that secures inside a mated, Velcro-lined dress gunbelt. It has recently been copied by a couple of other makers.

Alessi now offers a design inspired by police weapons expert Dave Spaulding. Reminiscent of an earlier model by the late, great Bruce Nelson, this CQCS (Close Quarter Covert with Snaps) scabbard has leather tabs with snap fasteners that go over the belt to save unbuckling when the gun must go on or come off the person. Derry Gallagher makes an inside-the-waistband holster that secures in a similar fashion but uses Velcro to secure the belt loops instead of metal snaps.

Snap-on belt loops have been with us for decades on IWB holsters like the Summer Special, designed by Bruce Nelson and popularized by the late Milt Sparks. A gun inside-the-waistband needs help to fit comfortably. Years ago, Lou Alessi pioneered a design that was "squared out" to spread the pressure against the body that such a holster could exert. More recently, Elmer MacEvoy (at Leather Arsenal in Idaho) and Gene DeSantis have taken this concept a step further with slightly more ergonomic designs.

Even the simplest gun concealment designs have improved in recent years. Circa 1963, a photo appeared in a gun magazine of John Bianchi with a prototype belly-band holster. He didn't produce it during those years, but a firm in New York called MMGR did. It was a simple 4-inch-wide band of elastic with a holster pocket or two sewn in and designed to be worn between a tucked-

in shirt and underwear. When I started carrying one in the late '60s, perspiration went right through the fabric and rusted my blue Chief Special brown in a single day. Bianchi International finally jumped in with an improved version that doubled as a money belt and had a pocket for a spare magazine or Speed Strip — and even for handcuffs.

Today there are too many belly bands on the market to count. Brauer has one that resembles the old MMGR. Gould & Goodrich, Guardian Leather and Uncle Mike's all offer versions with padding or film to protect the gun against salty sweat.

Before we leave fabric holsters, we must look at the first practical and popular groin holster, Thunderwear. Widely copied, it can carry a compact handgun below the belt in the front of the pants, accessible through the top front of the waistband. Some find it uncomfortable. Others, when they see where the muzzle points, find it disconcerting. But for many, it's a concept that works. We also can't forget Greg Kramer's special undershirt with a holster pocket sewn in to ride under each armpit. Introduced as the Confidant, it has allowed a number of people with tucked-in shirts to keep their small handguns completely hidden in gun-unfriendly work environments.

The pocket holster is another old and simple concept that has been recently updated. In addition to the previously mentioned TOTERS, we have Kramer's defining design with a Kydex square outside the holster's leather body. It breaks up the outline of the gun and makes it look as if you have a wallet in your pocket. However, unlike the original gimmicky "wallet holster," it stays in your pocket while the gun clears.

The latest Pocket Softy design by Mitch Rosen is one of the best pocket rigs ever. It uses a plastic tab at the upper front to catch on pocket fabric. This guarantees the necessary separation of gun and holster at the moment of truth. Bill Rogers' design for Safariland, new this year, is another advance in pocket holsters. It is synthetic on the inside for smooth draw and suede on the outside to catch on fabric pocket lining, ensuring that your holster stays in when you want your gun to come out.

The most meaningful new design may also be the most widely copied. Gun-rights activist Dave Workman showed me a handmade system he had designed to hide a small handgun under a tucked-in dress shirt. I introduced him to Mitch Rosen who produced it. Several companies now have copies of the Workman holster, but I still like the original. The baby Glock is about its upper size limit for real-world functionality.

Synergy

We've never had such a good selection of gun-concealment options. It has been a long time since American men's fashions were so amenable to hiding handguns as they are today. The guns themselves have evolved in a positive way, too.

The current .380 and .32 pistols by Seecamp and Guardian are the size of many popular .25 autos. Titanium and Scandium have made the already compact snubnose .38 Special revolver unimaginably light and have convinced many to carry .357 Magnum and .44 Special revolvers that heretofore were considered too heavy for all-day concealed wear. Once the province of only the most privileged general officers in the U.S. Army, the ultra-compact 1911 .45 auto is now available to the gun-buying public in numerous forms.

The Kahr MK9 and MK40 put full power 9mm and .40 S&W potency levels in packages once reserved for marginally powerful .380s. Colt's short-lived Pocket Nine was exactly the size of a Walther PPK .380, and lighter — but it delivered 2-inch, 25-yard groups with full-duty 9mm ammunition. There is hope of it becoming available again, whether or not it carries the Colt logo next time around.

SIG marketed its P-239 in 9mm, .40 S&W, and .357 SIG as an ideal concealed-carry size

pistol. I won't argue the point. The same was true of the gun the P-239 primarily competes with, S&W's 3913 series, which is currently only available in 9mm. A few years ago I spent several weeks in Florida carrying a 3913 in an LFI Concealment Rig under untucked tees and polos, never once needing an outer garment.

Such is the nature of the good times we live in: the right holsters, the right clothes, the right guns, and, in more and more states, the right laws to allow good people to protect themselves and their loved ones in public.

The situation for concealed-carry is the best it has been in modern times. And having the best concealment holsters available is no small part of the reason why.



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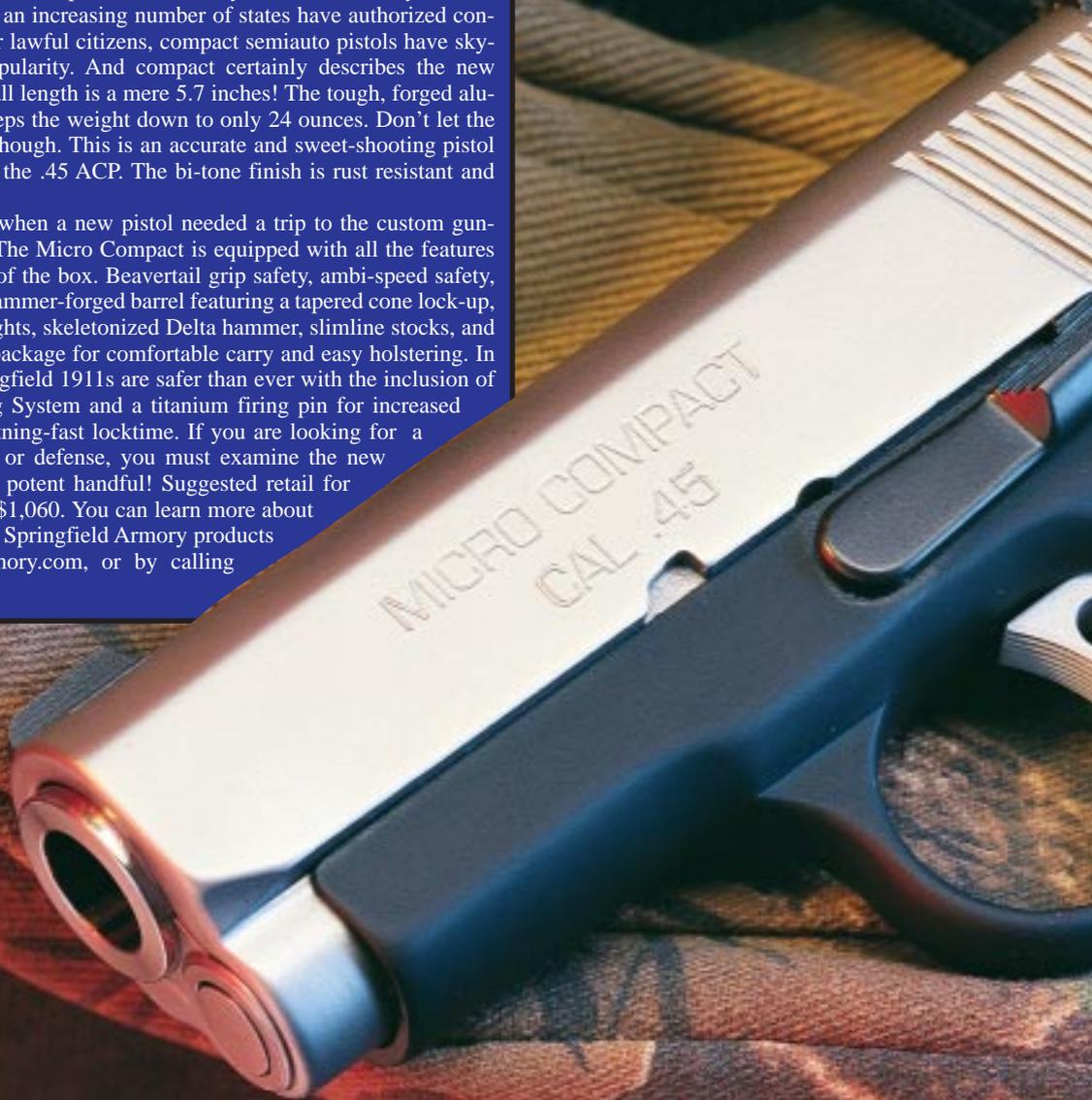
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DAKOTA ARMS

continued from page 39

Made To Order

The Dakota 76 action is made in four lengths and in either right- or left-handed versions at no extra cost. It is possible to purchase actions, barreled actions or complete rifles. The Classic Grade Model 76 is handsomely stocked in a good grade of English walnut, hand checkered and complete with sling swivel studs and recoil pad. It's an attractive, reliable and distinctive rifle. The majority of Dakota rifles are made to order, with additional features selected from a long list of options. These include upgraded wood, fancier checkering patterns, skeleton grip caps and butt-plates, special stock and barrel lengths, sight options such as quarter ribs and banded/hooded front sights. Many customers fly in from around the country or around the world to discuss options and to select a stock blank from the extensive supply on hand.

Touring the Dakota facility is a fascinating experience. The melding of technology and tradition can be disconcerting. At one point you can watch the most modern, computer numeric controlled machine tool at work, which fabricates components to precise tolerances. Step around a corner and it's as though you've stepped back in time back to the world of hand craftsmanship of a century ago. Here, a worker — more accurately, an artist — is unhurriedly hand fitting and assembling components to make an action.

The Hand Fitted Difference

Take the Model 10 single-shot rifle, for example. The receiver, breechblock, lever and linkage components come from the machine tools precise enough that any set of parts can be assembled and the action will function. Except that's not how it's done. Craftsman Ward Dobler assembles each action at his workbench — selecting parts, trying for fit, honing, polishing and fitting. Each action takes an average of 6½ hours to assemble before Dobler is satisfied. But when he's done, the action functions with such precision and smoothness it brings joy to a rifleman's heart.

Fine walnut is an increasingly scarce commodity, and keeping a good supply of blanks on hand is an ongoing job. Recently Dakota was able to purchase a huge Bastogne walnut tree. By careful cutting, Dakota was able to get nearly 5,000 stock blanks, many of them with spectacular grain and color.

There's that melding of old and new again; stock blanks are carefully kiln dried in an environmentally controlled atmosphere. Blanks are cut to profile and allowed to stabilize for several months. They are then shaped to near final dimensions by automated machinery. Walk through

another door and its back in time again. Skilled workers do the final bedding, shaping, sanding and finishing by hand. Some big factories have machinery that cuts quite nice checkering patterns. At Dakota Arms, the checkering is done by another artist, Karen Dufek, with the stock fixed in a checkering cradle, just as great stockmakers from Alvin Linden to Monty Kennedy have done for generations.

Dakota produces only about a thousand firearms annually, fewer than some manufacturers make in a day. There's really no "standard" model — almost every rifle has some special feature. The people at Dakota take a proprietary interest in each one. For example, after a barreled action is assembled, chambered and proof tested, a standard round is fired into the bullet trap. The cartridge case is then marked with the rifle serial number and stored. Let's say I have a Dakota rifle you're interested in purchasing. By checking its records, the factory can immediately determine if a rifle has been altered. Comparing a fired case will indicate if the rifle's chamber has been altered or damaged in any way. This helps protect subsequent buyers and maintains the value of used rifles.

The Model 97

Currently the Classic Grade lists at \$3,595 and getting frisky with the option list can push that up fast. Don Allen recognized that there are many hunters who appreciate fine accuracy and workmanship but don't want to invest that kind of money. The lower-priced Hunter series is built on the Model 97 action. The main difference is in the receiver. The Model 76 flat-bottomed receiver with integral recoil lug is time consuming to machine while maintaining concentricity. The Model 97 receiver is cylindrical, with a separate recoil lug sandwiched between receiver and barrel. Because it can be turned on centers, it is much easier to produce.

It's important to note that the 97 is not an economy or lower-grade version of the 76. Like the 76 it features controlled-round feeding with a Mauser-type extractor and mechanical ejection, the three-position safety and Dakota-style bolt-stop. It is built to the same standards from the same grade of heat-treated steel, with the same quality Lothar Walther barrels. The trigger is an adjustable, self-contained unit and the Hunter is supplied with a synthetic stock with blind (i.e., without floorplate) magazine.

Production time savings and the use of synthetics instead of wood keep the price down, currently \$1,995 in either Long Range Hunter or Lightweight Hunter versions. Stocked in semi-fancy wood with steel floorplate and hand checkering the price is \$2,995.

Air travel with firearms is a pain, especially long guns. The cases are bulky and heavy to transport, they get tossed around,

and their unmistakable shape makes them the target of thieves. Many Dakota customers hunt worldwide and spend a lot of time travelling. Recently Dakota began to offer the Traveler, a takedown version of the wood-stocked Model 76. Instead of using a threaded system that would eventually wear and loosen, Dakota uses a bushing on the rear of the barrel which slips into the receiver. Since the bolt lugs lock into this bushing the fit remains tight and headspace constant no matter how often the barrel is removed.

The Traveler takes down into two short sections that can be easily packed in a compact, discreet carrying case. The rifle lists at \$4,495 in Classic grade; extra barrel/caliber units are \$1,650. Units will interchange on the same receiver assembly provided the cartridges are from the same family. Examples would be .270 Win. and .35 Whelen; 7mm. Rem. Mag. and .458 Win. Mag.; .300 H&H and .375 H&H Mag.; and .300 Dakota and .404 Dakota. Many other combinations are possible as well.

Not Just Turnbolts

Recently Dakota has begun producing other classic hunting firearms. One is a high grade side-by-side double shotgun, in a joint venture with Ferlib of Italy. Offered in two grades, the American Legend and the Premier Grade, the Dakota shotguns are built and stocked to the customer's specifications. Options include select grades of wood, checkering and engraving patterns, choke, barrel length, and extra barrel combinations. Current prices are \$13,950 for the Premier Grade and \$18,000 for the American Legend.

The second arm is the Dakota Double Rifle, introduced at the 2001 Safari Club convention. Serial number DR001 was chambered in .500 Nitro Express. The Double Rifles will be built to order in virtually any standard caliber. Double triggers and selective automatic ejectors are standard. No one has found a way to make a quality double rifle inexpensively, but the Dakota double at \$25,000 is certainly in line with other rifles of comparable quality.

Quality doesn't come cheap, and clearly Dakota Arms rifles and shotguns aren't for everyone. Some customers are wealthy business and professional people with more money than time who want their Dakota rifle built, scoped, sighted in and ready to go. One can certainly feel pity for people who are so busy that they miss half the fun of owning a rifle: sighting in, accuracy testing, and working up the best handloads.

There are also many customers who aren't particularly wealthy but whose tastes have matured. They reach a stage in life where instead of a whole rack of standard rifles they want one or two high-grade rifles. Don Allen knows of customers who trade in three or four seldom-used standard rifles for one custom Dakota.

Saving The Best For Last

Truth to tell, I've been recently spending time in front of the gun safe, studying the back row of rifles that I haven't shot in some years. Like many enthusiasts, I want one of every new rifle and new caliber that comes along. And though it's been hard to keep up in recent years, I keep trying. Right now I'm trying to convince myself that I don't really need them all. The reason is the Dakota Arms Model 10 single shot rifle.

Photographs of the Model 10 show an exceptionally handsome rifle, but nothing compares to actually handling one. The Model 10 for standard calibers weighs just 5½ pounds and is so perfectly balanced it feels like less. Visually, the rifle is one elegant sweep of polished steel and fine walnut, without a single visible pin or screw. There isn't an extra ounce of weight or a fraction of extra material. The Model 10 is a slim, lean classic in its most basic form: lock, stock and barrel. It may be the single most handsome, classic hunting rifle ever produced in America.

If this sounds a bit overwrought, be warned. If you admire and appreciate fine rifles, don't pick up a Model 10 or you may not be able to put it down. I want one desperately and I'm not even a big fan of single shots.

The Model 10 is also available in a magnum version weighing 6½ pounds and in calibers from .338 Win. Mag. to .416 Dakota. Standard barrel length is 23 inches, but as with the other models, a wide range of options are available (barrels, checkering and engraving patterns, upgraded wood, sights). Prices for both versions start at \$3,595 with good quality walnut, checkering, barrel band swivel stud, and recoil pad.

Dakota's line of proprietary cartridges, based on the .404 case, are popular in all the Dakota models. Brass is made by Norma of Sweden, meaning quality is second to none. Dakota provides loaded ammunition for all its calibers with an excellent selection of premium bullets such as Winchester Fail Safe, Swift A-Frame, Barnes and Woodleigh solids.

Dakota Arms is a remarkable company. Its annual production likely doesn't cause executives at Remington, Ruger, or Winchester to lose sleep. However, it has found success in appealing to a niche that has not been well served. Sales are limited not by demand but by the number of rifles they are able to produce. Whether you ever own one of these rifles or not, for those who love fine rifles and fine workmanship, it's good to know that a company like Dakota Arms exists.



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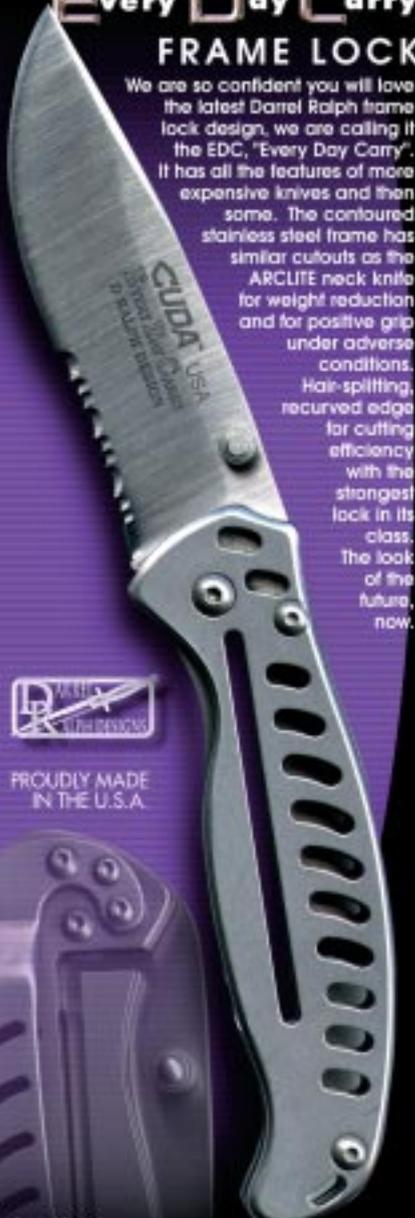
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FIELD HOLSTERS

continued from page 35

riding in the newfangled automobiles. Threepersons removed all excess leather, which included the back flap and the part that encloses the trigger guard; raised the exposed trigger guard riding on a heavy welt at the back of the holster; and folded over enough leather to sew a very tight belt loop on the back of the holster. The sixgun now rode very high on the belt so the holster was slanted with the muzzle to the rear, which allowed the sixgun to be drawn quickly. Trimble was apparently a little more traditional than Threepersons. And although he used the same basic design, his holster maintained an abbreviated back flap and rode about one-inch lower than Threeperson's design while maintaining the same angle.

Threepersons took his design to S.D. Myres in El Paso. Trimble went to A. W. Brill in Austin. Both companies are long gone, but the designs remain. The basic Tom Threepersons has been made by virtually every holster maker, with George Lawrence offering it as the #120 Keith. Today the original designs are available from El Paso Saddlery, and they make dandy field holsters. Available in plain, basket stamped, border stamped and floral carved, the #1920 Threepersons and the #1930 Austin are both fully lined and equipped with a safety strap or hammer thong. They are made for virtually every single-action or double-action sixgun as well as most semiautomatics. They are superb examples of leather crafting, and the artist who does the floral carving is without equal.

Somewhere in-between the old traditional Mexican Loop holster and the Tom Threepersons is the Duke Rig, made famous by John Wayne. The Duke wore his too low for field use, but the El Paso version rides high and comfortable on a money belt.

Bianchi also has its rendition of the Tom Threepersons, the #1L Lawman. Unlike the others, Bianchi's version has an open toe. Crafted of high-quality leather and fully lined with a safety strap, over one million of these holsters have been sold. That should give some idea of what sixgunners think of this field holster. For double-action sixguns, Bianchi's #5B is a high-riding, very secure thumb-snap design for concealment and duty-use that also doubles as an excellent field holster.

Von Ringler's Tom Threepersons design is The Linebaugh, which can be used to carry the big custom sixguns of John Linebaugh as well as such other offerings by Freedom Arms. This is a very sturdy holster: It's lined; it features a safety strap; and the main seam, unlike the Threepersons design, features a curve as it travels downward from the trigger guard to the end of the mainframe and then into the barrel profile. Ringler also offers an excellent Pancake design for the big single-action and double-action sixguns

as well as trim cartridge slides. The Ringler is designed with the handgun hunter in mind. El Paso's excellent version of the Pancake design is the #77, appropriately labeled the Tortilla.

As I have mentioned, many of the peace officer designs also turn out to be excellent field holsters. Both applications require comfort and security when wearing the holster all day long, and then some. Special Agent Hank Sloan of the FBI, with some input from Elmer Keith, designed the #200AW for Milt Sparks. This is basically a Tom Threepersons holster with two changes: The leather comes up to cover the hammer, preventing excess wearing of coat linings, and the safety strap has been replaced by a tension screw at the welt. The result is an excellent field holster.

Crossdraw Holsters

The most prevalent holster in the middle of the 19th century was the Slim Jim. Originally designed to carry such sixguns as the long-barreled 1851 Navy Colt, it also made the transition quite easily to Colt Single Actions, Remington 1875s and Smith & Wesson Model 3s. All of these sixguns had long barrels, and the Slim Jim design was a high-riding crossdraw, actually a butt-forward design that rode high on the hip with the sixgun normally being accessed by the cavalry twist draw. This is also a workable field design, especially for those who want to stay in the 19th century. El Paso Saddlery, Will Ghormley and San Pedro Saddlery all offer working Slim Jim field holsters.

The design of Tom Threepersons #1920 allows it to not only work as a strong-side hip holster for single-action and double-action sixguns and semiautomatics, but also make a very trim crossdraw holster. It is very difficult to carry an 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch Smith & Wesson sixgun on the strong side; however, it becomes very easy by using a crossdraw such as the #1920.

Thad Rybka learned long ago that crossdraw holsters were very suitable for hunting use. Most of his designs are offered in crossdraw persuasion; the favorite among hunters and woodsbummers is the Tomahawk. Originally designed for a Mag-Na-Port Custom Predator .44 Magnum with a 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch barrel, I use Tomahawks for a Ruger as well as a short-barreled Freedom Arms .454. The 2/3 flap holds the sixgun safely and securely while at the same time allowing for easy accessibility.

One of the toughest sixguns to pack without going to a shoulder holster is the 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch Ruger Super Redhawk. This is a big, bulky sixgun. C. Rusty Sherrick has come up with a very trim crossdraw holster that rides on the belt and features a contrasting half flap made of light-weight sharkskin-leather. This excellent holster is notable for what it does not have, namely excess bulk and excess weight.

Shoulder Holsters

I am not a great fan of nylon holsters until we come to the shoulder holster category. Scoped pistols are very hard to carry, but Unce Mike's solves much of the problem. I especially like Michaels of Oregon's shoulder rig — actually more of a bandolier style — for packing 10-inch scoped revolvers and scoped Thompson/Center Contenders. As an extra added bonus, I also use these holsters for safe shipping while flying. The guns are placed in their respective holsters, then wrapped in my hunting clothes, and finally placed in a hard locking case. Packed this way, they have always arrived at my hunting destination in perfect shape with the scoped still zeroed.

When the weather is really crummy or the going is tough, I reach for the nylon shoulder holster offered by Idaho Leather. This is a true shoulder holster in that it rides under the armpit. Unlike other nylon holsters, this one is lined with suede leather. It accepts a 6-inch Freedom Arms sixgun; this is the rig and revolver I used when making my way up a mountain in waist-deep snow to get my mountain lion. Idaho Leather also offers an excellent leather shoulder holster closer to the spring-clip style that still fully covers the revolver. Made of the best leather obtainable, this rig helps distribute the weight by the use of a cartridge holder on the off-side strap. This wide, flat piece of leather holds two vertical rows of 12 cartridge loops each.

We have mentioned how difficult it is to holster an 8½-inch Smith & Wesson. For many years now I have used a shoulder holster from DeSantis that does much to solve the problem. There is no spring clip, and you don't have to try to pull that long barrel up and out of the top of a shoulder holster. Instead, the sixgun is carried straight up and down under the armpit, and the whole portion of the holster body pivots forward to allow the sixgun to be pulled straight out. Excellent design. The same basic idea is now also being offered by Wesson Firearms for its Dan Wesson revolvers.

Ringler Custom Leather offers a most ingenious design; it isn't a strong-side holster, a crossdraw holster, or even a shoulder holster — it's actually all three. Known as the Wyoming Combination, this rig consists of a fully adjustable lightweight belt and a holster pouch. The belt's adjustment level allows it to be worn as a waist belt or a shoulder strap. You can tighten up the belt and wear it around your waist or lengthen it and wear the rig over your shoulder. I've found it most handy for carrying a 5½-inch Super Blackhawk; I use a second one to carry the extremely hard-to-holster Thompson/Center Super 14 Contender.

Finally, we come to my most used hunting holster. Three of my favorite hunting handguns are all scoped 7½-inch Freedom Arms Model 83s in .357 Magnum,

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.44 Magnum and .454 Casull. Which caliber I choose depends on what I'm after. In either case I grab the shoulder holster that Freedom Arms offers for its scoped revolvers. Perhaps it is not correct to call this a shoulder holster because it really rides across the front of your body. Whether walking, standing, sitting or riding, this holster works! I wear it so my belt enters the loop on the back of the holster, which takes much of the weight off the shoulder straps.

This works out very comfortably, and when I don't forget to fasten the safety strap, it is perfectly secure.

When you realize how important the holster is, price becomes secondary. When it comes to sixgunn', a good holster is actually one leg of a three-legged stool; the other two are custom stocks and the sixgun itself. Your selections in all three of these areas will dictate the comfort and effectiveness of your handgun system. Choosing the right

holster allows the sixgun to be readily accessible when needed. Choosing the wrong holster could mean just the opposite. A quality holster will last a lifetime... and then some — and it will also help to build many pleasant memories afield.



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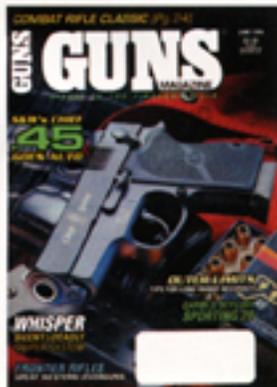
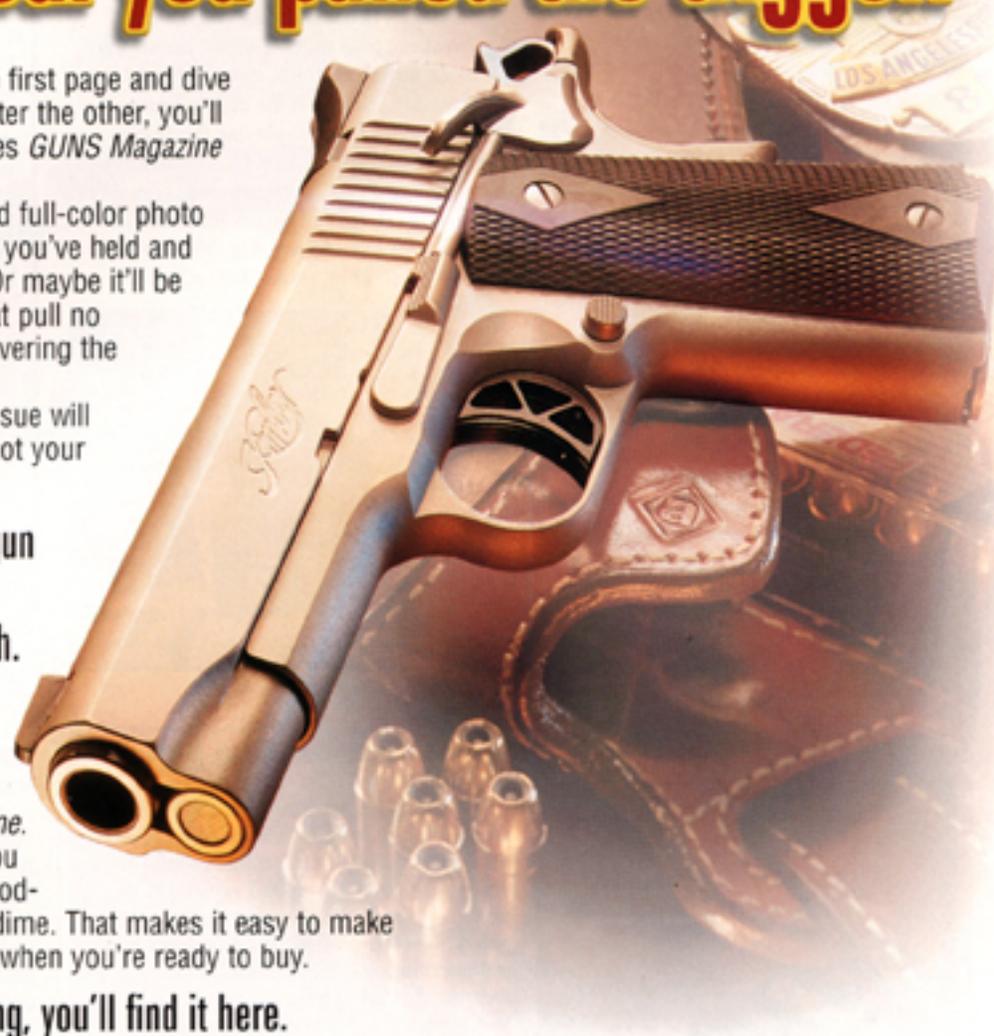
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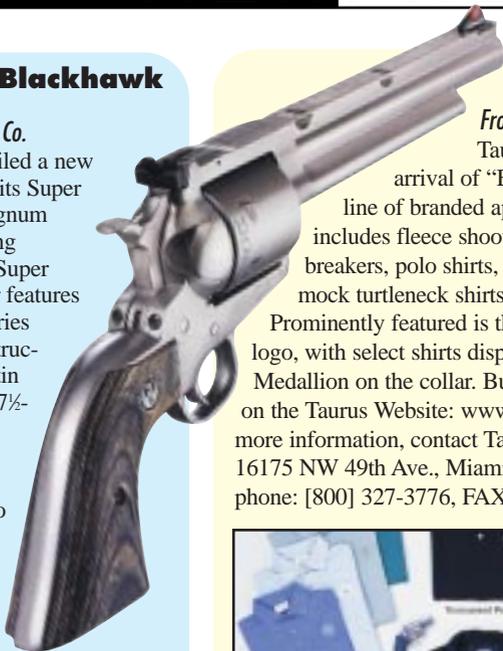
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New Super Blackhawk Hunter

From Sturm, Ruger & Co.

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Bull Gear

From Taurus

Taurus announces the arrival of "Bull Gear," its new line of branded apparel. The line includes fleece shooting vests, wind-breakers, polo shirts, T-shirts, denim shirts, mock turtleneck shirts, range bags and hats. Prominently featured is the classic Taurus logo, with select shirts displaying the Taurus Medallion on the collar. Bull Gear is available on the Taurus Website: www.taurususa.com. For more information, contact Taurus International, 16175 NW 49th Ave., Miami, Fla. 33014, telephone: [800] 327-3776, FAX: [305] 623-7506.



New Juno Lockback

From Buck Knives

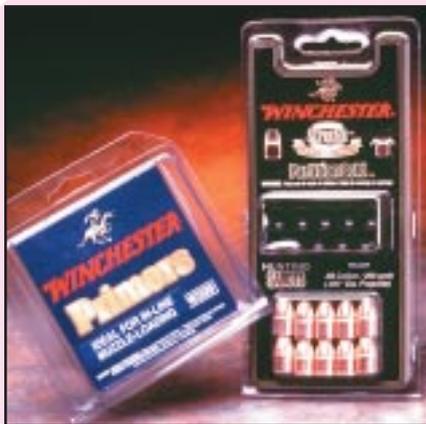
The Juno is a new lightweight, compact lockback knife with a comfortable one-hand opening design. The Juno's gently curving handle is made of glass-filled thermoplastic. It has a 2½-inch hollow-ground, modified drop-point stainless steel blade, partially serrated for added cutting power. The Juno weighs only 2.5 ounces and folds to a handy four inches. Contact Buck Knives, P.O. Box 1267, El Cajon, Calif. 92022, telephone: [800] 326-2855, Website: www.buck-knives.com



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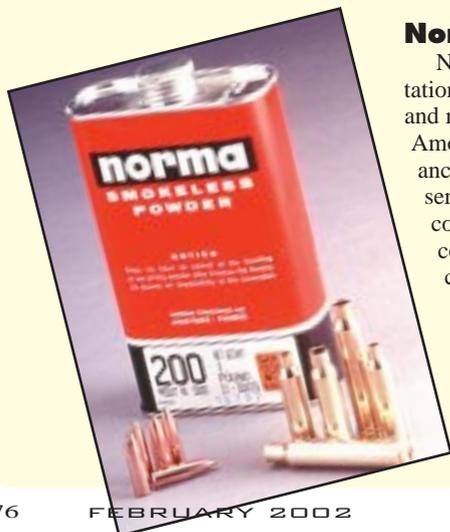
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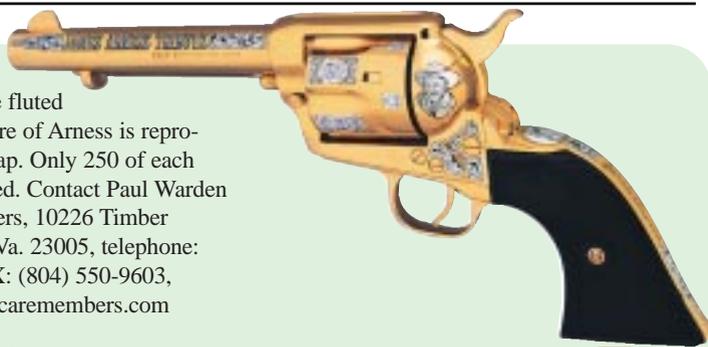


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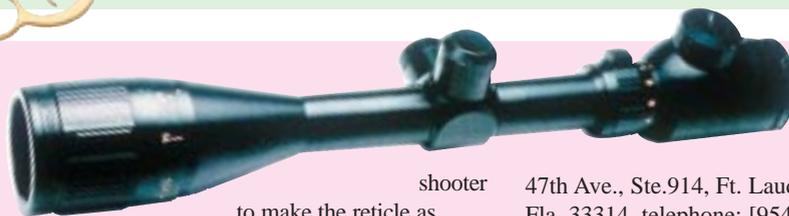
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1700 Sleepy Valley Rd., Hot Springs, Ark. 71901-9017, telephone: [800] 221-4156, FAX: [501] 321-9232, Website: www.smithabrasives.com

TacLite Folder

From Buck Knives

The TacLite tactical folder from Buck Knives features a slim, compact design. The modified spear point carbon steel blade measures 3 1/2 inches long. The one-hand open/close lockblade has a modified locking liner system with patented button-release mechanism for added safety and security. The TacLite measures 4 1/4 inches closed and 8 1/4 inches open and it weighs only 3.44 ounces. Contact Buck Knives, P.O. Box 1267, El Cajon, Calif. 92022, telephone: [800] 326-2825, Website: www.buckknives.com



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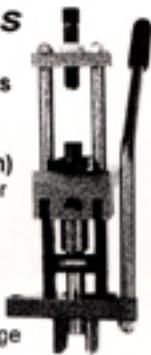
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CAMPFIRE TALES

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a much better choice than a .38 Special. Texas Ranger Captain Manuel Trazazas "Lone Wolf" Gonzuallas carried a pair of ivory stocked, 4-inch .44 Special 1926 Models. Although he was often photographed with a pair of ivory stocked Colt Single Actions, A picture of him I've had since the 1950s shows him packin' his twin Smith .44 Specials, and the painting hanging in the Texas Ranger Museum also show his .44 Specials. The 1926 Model was also such a great sixgun that the basic pattern was used to build the .38/44 Heavy Duty in 1930 that would then become the .357 Magnum in 1935.

Now I have been a fan of a big-bore six-guns since my first center fire, an 1899 manufactured Colt Single Action Army .38-40. Shortly thereafter I discovered Elmer Keith, which of course meant .44 Special. I have had several Fourth Models: the 1950 Targets; even a first year production Triple-Lock; and last year, for my birthday, my wife presented me with a pair of unfired 4-inch Model 24 .44 Specials made in 1983. But I still did not have a 1926 Model. For the past 45 years, I have seen affordable dogs and unaffordable 1926s with four-figure price tags. It did not look like I would ever own an affordable Third Model Hand Ejector in excellent shape or even good shooting condition.

Enter a faithful and like-minded reader. He had been traveling in Oregon, spotted a like new .44 Special, and immediately notified me. I was put in contact with Gunners Central Oregon Traders in Redmond and also happened to be a reader of this magazine. He described the 4-inch Model 1926 .44 Special: blue with fixed sights and Magna stocks — exactly what I had been in search of for 40 years. The price was an extremely reasonable three figures. When it arrived, I was pleasantly surprised to find it in even better condition than described. I would call it 99 percent, and I certainly enjoy dealing with sellers that are 100-percent honest!

Now I know why those old Southwest peace officers had such a high regard for the 1926 Model. I hesitate to use the much over-worked phrase "silky smooth" to describe the double-action operation of this classic .44 Special; however, I don't know of a better fitting description. Once started, the double-action almost seems to operate itself; recoil with pre-War .44 Special type loads is very mild; and best of all, this grand sixgun was made the same year I was! It was certainly meant to be mine. When I shoot it, I feel as if I am holding history in my hand. I keep looking over my shoulder expecting to see The Lone Wolf.



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It was Vince Lombardi who said, “Winning isn’t the most important thing, it is the only thing!” — or words very closely to that effect. We might say the same thing about our readers. A magazine such as this can have the best writers, photographers, art department, editors and publisher — but without readers none of the rest makes any difference. Our readership as a whole is extremely important, and once in a great while a reader reaches out and touches me right where I live. That’s what happened right before Christmas.

I admit to you the readers that I lust. I lust for blue steel and such inscribed words as “COLT FRONTIER SHOOTER,” “SMITH & WESSON” and “.44 RUSSIAN AND S&W SPECIAL.” A particular item of my long-term affection has been a Third Model Hand Ejector Smith & Wesson .44 Special — or as it is more commonly known, the 1926 Model. As you might surmise, this particular model was number three in the succession of .44 Specials from Smith & Wesson.

The .44 Special began in late 1907 with the Model of 1908, the .44 Hand Ejector First Model, the New Century, or, as it is lovingly known among .44 Special devotees, the Triple-Lock. This is one of the few big-bore sixguns ever made that truly deserves the phrase “Swiss watch.” The first of what would eventually be called N-frames, the Triple-Lock gets its name because the cylinder locked in three places: at the rear, at the front of the ejector rod, and with a beautifully machined lock at the front of the frame. This was also the first Smith & Wesson to feature an enclosed ejector rod housing.

These magnificent sixguns sold for \$21, and after producing slightly more than 15,000 New Centuries, Smith & Wesson determined that they were too expensive. In 1915, S&W dropped both the third locking feature and the enclosed ejector rod and introduced the Second Model. This newer sixgun sold for only \$19. So for the grand sum of \$2, we lost what may well have been the finest double-action sixgun ever made! Two Dollars!!!

The Triple-Lock was very popular with peace officers, especially those in the Southwest and along our southern border. The pre-World War II Smith & Wessons are usually referred to as having “long actions,” which were particularly good for shooting double-action style. As new peace officers came along, a demand arose for a return to the Triple-Lock or at least an enclosed ejector rod housing. Smith & Wesson did not feel the demand warranted such a return until Wolf & Klar of Fort Worth Texas placed an order for 3,500 .44 Specials with enclosed ejector rod housings. Only 1,000 of the new 1926 Models were ever shipped to Wolf & Klar. And from 1926 to 1940, as far as the Smith & Wesson catalog was concerned, the Third Model did not exist and could only be special-ordered. In spite of this, nearly 5,000 were made before the start of World War II.

These guns featured a blue or nickel finish; adjustable or fixed sights; barrel lengths of 4, 5 and 6 inches; and while mostly found in .44 Special, a few were also made in .44-40 and .45 Colt. Now realize that from 1926 to 1940, .44 Special ammunition offering was mostly a 246-grain round-nosed lead bullet with a muzzle velocity of 750 fps. Even so, it was looked upon in the early years as

continued on page 81

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The C7.45 LDA comes with custom features including a match-quality 3.5-inch barrel, low-mount rear sight, dovetail front sight, full-length guide rod, beavertail grip safety, flared ejection port and Para's Lifetime Service Policy. The slim Para Companion is the perfect balance between power, concealment and shootability.

Visit your Para Dealer today and compare the Para Companion's natural trigger stroke to that of any other pistol. See for yourself why a Para LDA will make you a better marksman. There has never been a better time to have the advantage of a sweet, smooth trigger.



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