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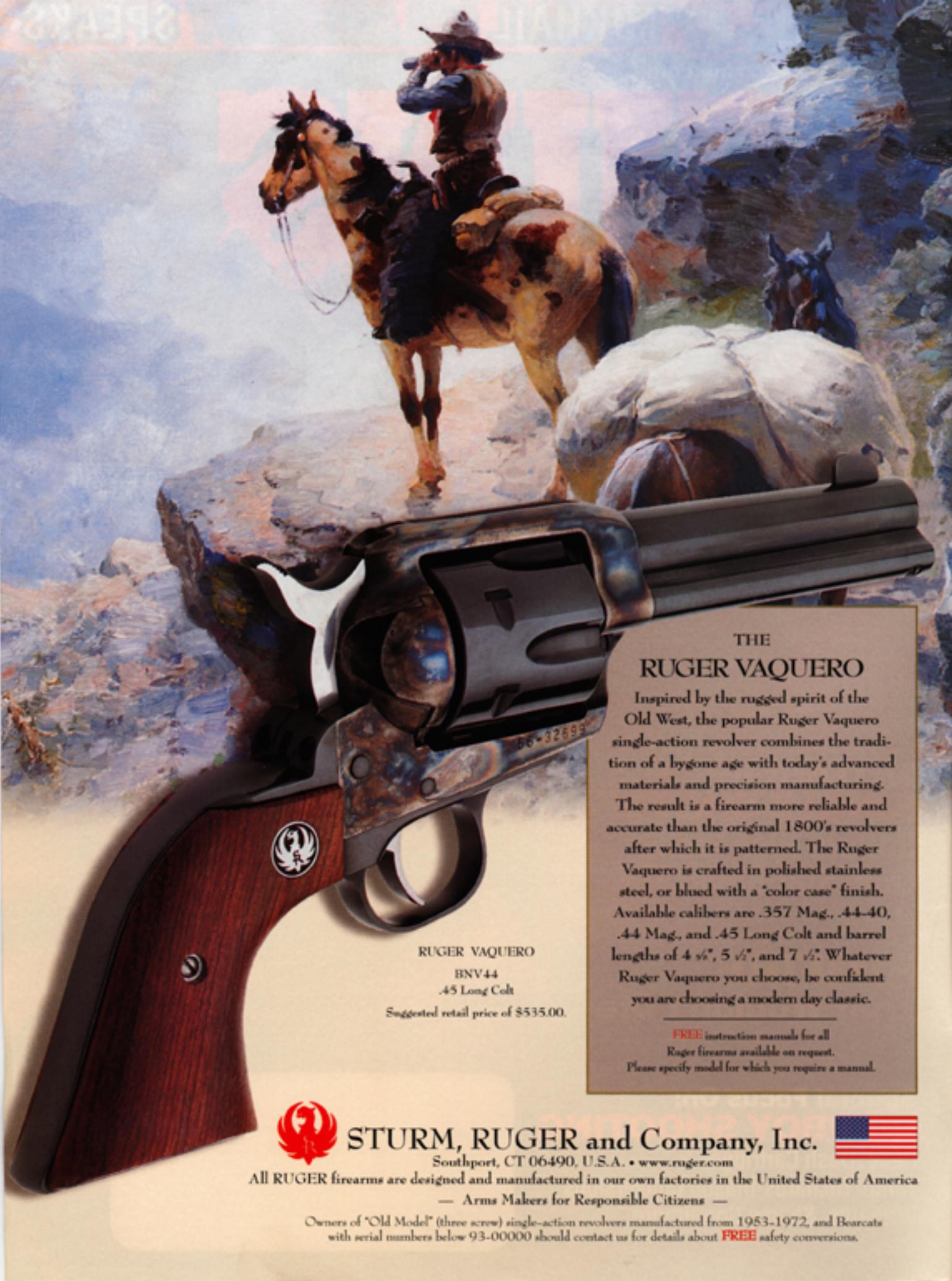
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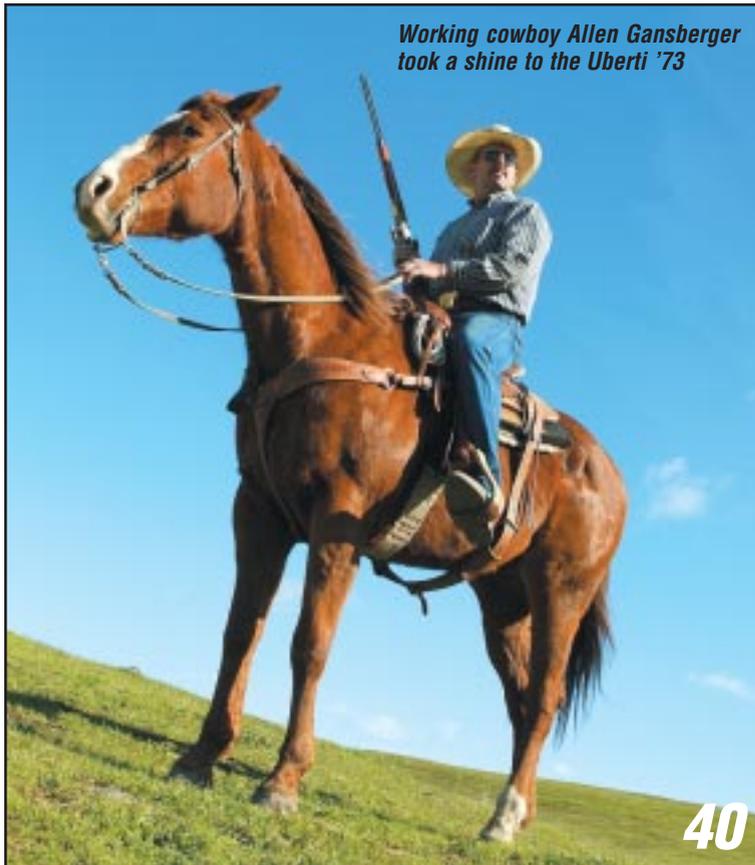
GUNS

MAGAZINE

JULY 2002 Vol. 48, Number 07-571

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Photo by Ichiro Nagata



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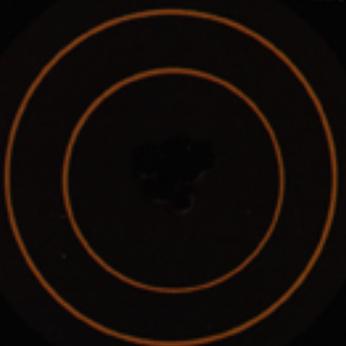
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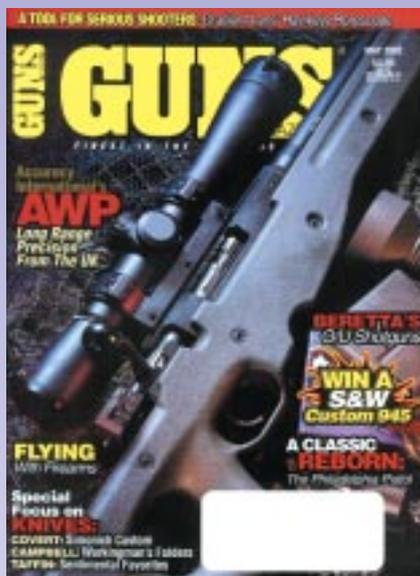


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LETTER OF THE MONTH



GUNS MAGAZINE MAY 2002

Philadelphia Pistols

I really enjoyed the article "Return Of The Philadelphia Pistol" by Bill Ball. The details about the lock design were intriguing, since I had read that just before the Colts took over the better single-shot pistols really improved. Was the purpose of the roller on the frizzen spring to increase lock speed?

I always thought a great article would be to compare the accuracy of a well made pistol like this and a Colt, perhaps an 1848 Dragoon Colt or maybe a '51 Navy. I always had the feeling the flintlock had a much slower lock time than the Colt cap and ball revolver. Even substituting a cap lock for the flint lock on the single shot doesn't seem to make a huge difference, but further testing would be interesting.

Don Johnson
Seattle, Wash.

Cutting Criticism

I have been subscribing to *GUNS* Magazine for many years for one reason only — as the title implies, guns! If I wanted to read about knives, I would subscribe to a knife magazine. Please don't waste my money by writing about knives when I have paid for *GUNS*.

'Nuff said.
Ron Stinson
Via e-mail

Taking Your Work Home

I am a physician and am trained in the use of endoscopy to diagnose and treat my patients. I was thrilled to read about the application of this technology to my other love, shooting. The article was wonderfully written and I appreciated the endoscopic pictures. Thanks for your quality magazine. Keep up the good work!

Dr. Ian Fawks, D.O.
Salisbury, Miss.

Hard To Argue With Success

Regarding Timothy Case' story in the June issue about the pleasure he found in using a vintage Remington Model Eight:

Here's my story. I traded an '03 Springfield "sporter" to my father for his Remington Model 8 just before I graduated from high school in 1960. Dad had purchased (or traded for — I'm not sure which) the gun in 1943 from a man named Arch Simms in Baker, Idaho. This old .35 autoloader had seen some use, but was in great shape. I don't know much of its history before Dad got a hold of it, but he took a deer every year but one from 1943 to 1960. He also took four elk (two Olympic and two Rocky Mountain), a moose, and a black bear. After I swapped for it, I took six mule deer and an elk before moving up to more "modern" guns.

The point is this: your article stirred up a bunch of old sentiments and I believe it's time to take "Old Meat-In-The-Pot" out of retirement and see what she'll do. I'd like to find a 'smith who would do a good job of

tuning her up and maybe refinishing her. Any suggestions would be greatly appreciated.

Thanks for a great article about a great old gun. Dad would have been delighted to read this one.

Tom Taylor
Ontario, Calif.

It's About Time

Yesterday, I finally got around to reading my January issue and to my surprise there was an article which addressed the frustrations I have been feeling about your magazine — the lack of real gun articles! I have seriously contemplated canceling my subscription. It seems that the only weapons you feature in the magazine any more are the assault or assault-like weapons. I really enjoy reloading and in the last couple of issues you have returned to covering that topic. Thank you!

Maybe you could return *GUNS* to the old format and start a new magazine called *Assault Weapon* or something along those lines. Thank you and keep up the good work.

John and Pam Gardiner
Via e-mail

Never An Expert

Thanks for your focus on reloading in the April issue. I've been reloading for 30 years and at first glance I wondered if there would really be anything of interest in these articles. How wrong I was!

I enjoyed Taffin's candid tale of his early handloading experiences, and especially appreciated the articles by Petty and Bodinson. I've always had good success with my rifle loads, but had never bothered to consider neck turning. The 30 percent improvement in group sizes that Petty described has motivated me to give this a try. Also, learning exactly what "match primers" are was really interesting. I had never considered using them in loads for my hunting rifles, but now will.

Some of the younger shooters at my club have occasionally referred to me as an "expert." I suppose that I was rather proud that they might think of me that way, but reading this issue has reminded me that no matter what your level of experience, there is always more to learn.

William Phelps
Cincinnati, Ohio



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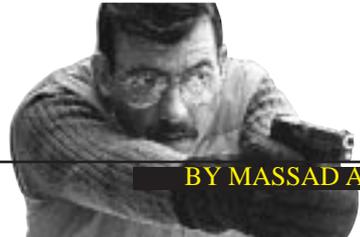
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BY MASSAD AYOUB

Getting Started In COWBOY ACTION

C'mon, admit it. In your heart of hearts, you want to try this cowboy action shooting thing you've heard about. The word from here is: Go for it!

I've gotten to like this game. It's more about friendly folks just having safe fun with guns than it is about winning. You'll need a shotgun, either a double barrel, a Winchester '97 pump gun, or its affordable Chinese clone from Norinco. You'll also need a lever-action, revolver-caliber rifle. Or a carbine.

And, of course, you'll need a couple of six-shooters.

Sixgun Savvy

Most SASS (Single Action Shooting Society) stages require you draw one revolver, fire five shots, holster it, and repeat with a second gun, usually with the rifle and scattergun brought into play somewhere along the line. It's handy, but not essential, to have both revolvers chambered for the same ammo.

But if you've got a Super Blackhawk in .44 Magnum and a regular Blackhawk in .357, it's not gonna be that much hassle to load the first with light .44 Specials and the other with .38 Specials. Or, since vintage cartridges have been reborn thanks to this sport, you can load the Super with ultra soft .44 Russian and the .357 with weak but correct-to-the-period .38 Long Colt. I shoot a lot of both in the Black Hills brand.

The adjustable sights of the Blackhawk series would put those Rugers in Modern class. I like shooting in that category for two reasons. First, my aging eyes pick up Ruger's adjustable sights better than any fixed sights I've seen on factory produced single action revolvers. Second, Ruger has been producing the Blackhawk since around 1955, and there are lots of them on the used gun market. I got my pair, much worn on the outside but mechanically perfect inside, for \$150 a piece.

Traditional/Duelist/Gunfighter

Fixed sights are required for Traditional class, where you are allowed to use a two-hand hold. Ditto for Duelist class, where the six-gun must be fired one-hand only, though you can use the dominant hand for each one in turn.

Fixed sights are also required for the newest class. In Gunfighter, you alternate firing one revolver in your left hand and the other in your right, with both drawn simultaneously.

Colt has two popular offerings. The best deal, I think, is the recently introduced Colt Cowboy, a popularly priced gun with a hammer bar safety. If your pocketbook is up for it, the original third generation Single Action Army is still available from the Custom Shop. There are countless clones of this revolver available at more reasonable prices. The nicest of these I've personally seen, in terms of workmanship, is the Hartford brand.

The single most popular flavor of "Peacemaker" seems to be the Ruger Vaquero. A tad bigger than the Colt sixgun, this Magnum-frame single action is proportionally correct in looks and is the most rugged revolver you'll find on the cowboy firing line.

An advantage of purchasing the Vaquero is that if you later find you don't care for cowboy shooting, once you've got the fixed

sights trued up for your favorite hunting load, you still have a perfectly suitable woodsman's revolver. The price is very affordable, too. You can get these guns in standard or Bisley grip style, and as of 2001, in bird's head configuration as well.

Last year Ruger also brought out the smaller, handier Single Six in .32 Magnum, which is a really sweet shooter with Black Hills' new .32 H&R "cowboy load." I shot a pair of them in the local state championships and was happy with the performance, though shooting .32s makes you feel more like Dale Evans than Roy Rogers.

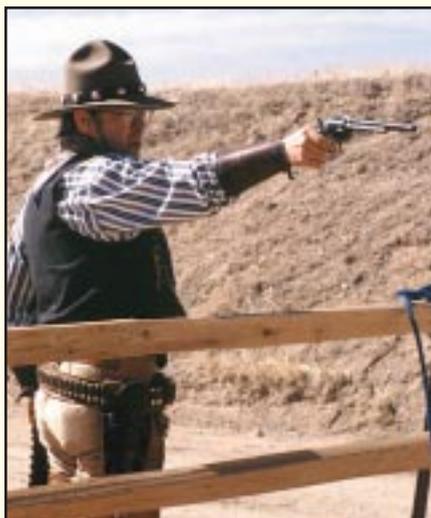
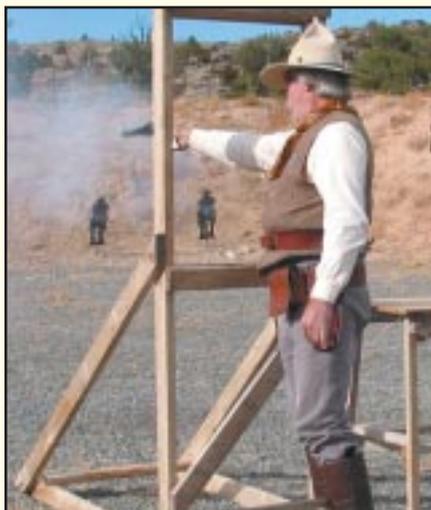
While the Peacemaker and its doppel-gangers rule the current cowboy roost, you still see quite a few of the top-break Schofields. A few gunners pack Smith & Wessons exquisitely reproduced and subtly updated by the Performance Center. Most are more affordable copies by Uberti and Armi San Marcos. They're faster to reload than the SAAs, though that's rarely necessary in a cowboy match. But in my hands at least, they're slower to shoot.

Cowboy Leather

For the price of a concealed carry belt/holster/magazine pouch from a top custom house or a fully-accoutred police duty belt from the law enforcement equipment shop, you can get good, period-correct cowboy leather. In Gunfighter class, you need a southpaw holster on your left-hand side, and a right-hand holster on the right hip. In the other classes, most shooters have one revolver in a strong-side straight draw holster and the other in a high-ride crossdraw. When working that crossdraw rig, be careful to keep the weak-side hip, and therefore the muzzle, angled downrange during both the drawing and the reholstering process.

I use an inexpensive Old World rig for my battered twin Blackhawks when I shoot Modern class. I acquired one of Greg Kramer's superb rigs with mirror image holsters for the Colt Cowboy and the Ruger Vaquero .45s I have for the Gunfighter class. When you select your cowpoke leather, remember that safe drawing and especially re-holstering are more important than a fast draw.

There's a reason this shooting game is growing so fast. It's fun! The hardware doesn't cost that much, and neither does the cowboy garb. (Heck, our friend John Taffin can treat a cowboy match like a "Come As You Are" party.) For information on a match near you, contact the Single Action Shooting Society, 23255 La Palma Avenue, Yorba Linda, Calif., 92887. Or look them up at www.sassnet.com.



Imagine...

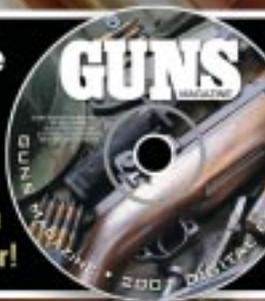
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Benchmade knives are renowned for quality and a superb level of fit and finish. Benchmade's new Model 5 Rescue Hook upholds this reputation, but not due to an intricate assembly of carefully fitted parts. This little rascal is made of nothing but tough 420-HC stainless steel.

"We tried a number of different steels noted for toughness and edge retention," said Travis Noteboom, marketing coordinator at Benchmade. "We found that 420 High Carbon stainless actually performed better, due to its ability to take on a very high level of polish."

The sharpness of their blades has always been a point of pride with Benchmade. Given the seriousness of the uses for which the Model 5 was designed, it was necessary to devote even more time and energy to ensure that each and every Rescue Hook would wear a cutting edge as sharp as is humanly possible to achieve.

The original design intent for this model was as a dedicated tool for first responders. It will slice through a seat belt or cut away clothing with lightning quickness. The shielded cut-

ting surface eliminates the possibility of causing an unintended cut — even when working blind or in tight quarters. Other uses for this handy little tool continue to crop up. Hunters are finding this a great field dressing aid, and parachutists and river rafters have taken to it in droves. A built-in cap lifter makes the Model 5 the answer to those less threatening little emergencies.

In putting mine to the test, it cut through various types of nylon webbing with no perceptible effort. Several cuts through 1/4-inch thick sole leather required a bit more force, but that tough material parted like the Red Sea before Moses. The Rescue Hook will do the job, and unlike your everyday knife, the edge will be sharp when you need it because



you won't be abusing it with mundane chores. The Rescue Hook retails for a very modest \$25.

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QUARTERMASTER

BY JIM GARDNER

Zeiss Scopz Shooting Glasses

Okay, 'fess up. You've been guilty of firing your favorite rifle or handgun without wearing proper shooting glasses, haven't you? I know that I have. I also know that this is about as foolish a stunt as you can think of. Sometimes the reason was pure laziness, but often as not it was because I had removed my uncomfortable shooting glasses.

I won't have that excuse anymore. The new Scopz shooting glasses from Zeiss are the most comfortable I've worn yet. Also, the optical quality is just what you would expect from the most respected name in sporting optics. Clear and completely free of distortion, these glasses are a pleasure to use.

The lenses are properly large — both to provide the utmost in protection to your peepers — and so that with your head down on the comb of the stock you will still be looking through the center of the lenses. To further ensure this, the bridge of the Zeiss Scopz is rather unique.

The large, comfortable nose pads are of silicone elastomer. Squeeze them together

and you will find they can be adjusted to three separate positions, raising or lowering the glasses to set them properly before your eyes while in shooting position.

The temples are of the cable type. They will stay in place and not slip forward irritatingly on a hot day. Carefully padded and with a smooth bulb on the open end, these do not become uncomfortable after an extended period of wear as others do.

The Zeiss Scopz come with a very nice molded nylon belt case, and are available with polarized, yellow, vermilion and clear lenses. These are really nice. Treat yourself to a pair and protect your valuable eyesight.



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Brownells Multi-Vise

Tinkering seems to be a natural progression for many shooters. Of course we should all be industrious about performing proper maintenance at the minimum, but most real shooters of my acquaintance eventually turn to making a host of slight modifications and adjustments to their firearms.

By the time this condition develops into the impassioned search for the right gun-tinkering tools, the place to turn to is Brownells. Brownells has been the standard supply house for both the professional and the amateur gun craftsman for generations.

Only a little experience will show you that one of the first tools needed by the hopeful gun crank is a good bench vise. And when it comes to a vise designed for gun work, the Brownells Multi-Vise is the only game in town.

The most distinguishing characteristic of the Multi-Vise is the separate base section that features a 1.5 inch diameter cylindrical mounting post. The Multi-Vise can be mounted vertically upon this post in the conventional fashion, but the real novelty is that it may be mounted horizontally as well. This

makes it possible to grip and hold long items such as barrels with their muzzles held vertical yet close to the point of support. This is an absolute necessity to properly perform many tasks, such as facing off the muzzles of a double shotgun shortened for cowboy shooting as shown.

The jaws are just as they should be — smooth and wide to distribute the clamping force over a wide area — measuring 3.5 inches wide and a little over 2 inches deep. Designed to withstand a lifetime of use, the lead screw is fabricated of 4140 Chrome Moly, the handle of stainless-steel, and the body and base of the Multi-Vise are cast of best-grade ductile iron. The Multi-Vise



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A Systematic Approach To LOAD DEVELOPMENT

When beginning work with a new cartridge, the handloader must make dozens of decisions. Since so many variables in load development exist, the first thing we must do is decide *what* we want to accomplish. How we approach a load work-up is usually governed by the type of rifle. Therefore, our goals are not the same for a varmint rifle, plinker or hunting rifle.

If the only desire is to push a bullet as fast as possible, simply check the loading manuals, find the highest speed, and work up to that load. But if you demand accuracy too, this approach probably won't work. Since varmint season is upon us, let's pretend we've got a brand new .223 varmint rifle and want an accurate load for prairie dog shooting. Where to start?

Establishing A Benchmark

Well, first we need to establish a baseline and find out how well the rifle shoots with a good factory load, and then try to duplicate and improve upon that. We may be able — with properly pressure-tested data — to get a few more fps. But do not expect dramatic differences.

Comparing velocities of your handloads with what the books say will probably disappoint you. Most of the time we will see considerably slower speeds than those printed in the manual. The culprit is just the difference between your sporting rifle and a factory's special test equipment. Each barrel is a law unto itself, so expect to see differences in velocity from one maker to another, and even between two barrels from the same manufacturer.

I don't even bother to chronograph until I've found a load or two that groups better than the others. And then it's just because I'd get lots of letters if I didn't print the speed. Maximum speed moves me not at all. Oh sure, I know all about the argument for flatter trajectories or better on-target performance. However, uniform, dependable accuracy is far more valuable than a few extra feet per second.

This market offers many brands of brass, bullets, primers and powders from which to choose and the first thing to do is narrow the field a bit. Unless you're a new loader you've probably developed some brand loyalties and that's a good place to start. I think it's important to eliminate as many variables as possible, so make sure you have plenty of the same cases to do the job. Same with primers.

Limiting The Variables

We know that the .223 is frequently used with 50 or 55 grain bullets in the varmint field. By both experience and reputation I know that the Speer 50 grain TNT is accurate and effective. So, at first, we'll reduce bullet variables to one. Speer's manual shows 15 powders for the 50 grain bullet in the .223. They are listed in order of the highest velocity possible. Winchester 748 gave almost 3,400 fps from the test rifle but there are 10 more that give between 3,200 and 3,300 fps. You *could* just start with 748 and probably get good results, but among the other 10 propellants are quite a few known for good accuracy. But before rushing out to buy powder, check the inventory of those you already have. There are quite a few powders used in the .223 that are also popular for a number of other cartridges. Among those in the book are a couple I know to have given good accuracy in other uses. Those are: Hodgdon Varget, Accurate 2015 BR and Vihtavuori N 133. I have all of those so let's construct a table to try them.

Speer's data usually shows a spread of two grains between *starting* and *maximum* loads so we can work up in one grain increments and have just three loads to shoot. So here's my potential table:

POWDER	748	VARGET	2015 BR	N 133
CHARGE	26.5	25.5	22.5	22.0
	27.5	26.5	23.5	23.0
	28.5C	27.5C	24.5	24.0

"C" indicates compressed load

This gives us a total of 60 rounds to test. If you think this is too ambitious, or don't have many powders, begin with what you have. It certainly doesn't need to be the same selections I've chosen, as long as the approach is systematic and reduces variables to a minimum.

From Speer's data we see a couple of items that complicate things just a bit. First, their data was developed in IMI cases. Second was their routine use of magnum primers with any ball type powder. Speer advises they deliberately chose the IMI brass made to military specifications so their data would be safe for shooters using GI brass. The data will work with commercial brass, but you are likely to see slightly lower velocities. Just to keep things simple at first

I'll use the same primers Speer did, although you can bet I will investigate other primers when it comes time to really refine the load.

One thing we *know* will help us is seating the bullets out further. With the .223, I've found a good starting place is with the bullet just slightly off the lands — say .005 inch or so. The Stoney Point gauge makes this adjustment simple and is well worth having, but there are other options. Alternatively, you can make a dummy round with no primer or powder and leave the bullet seated way out. Chambering this dummy in your rifle will seat the bullet to firmly touch the lands. You can measure that length, subtract five thousandths or so, and use that length as a starting point. Further along in the refinement process you can experiment with other seating depths, but this method should get you started.

I load five rounds of each and then shoot groups with them. Since we are also working up to maximum loads, each case should be examined for signs of pressure problems before progressing to the next heavier charge. Make a little chart and record the charge data and group measurements and you'll see pretty quickly if one stands out from the rest.

Is It Shaping Up?

Now it is decision time. The first thing to do is compare your loads with the factory ammo and look for something *at least* as good. If none of them are better it's time to punt and go try other powders and bullets. Chances are you won't have to. If you know your rifle shoots 1 inch groups with factory loads and you have a handload that groups half that size, this might be a great

place to stop. If you're like me, you'll want to see if any more accuracy can be wrung out of the gun. So maybe a half grain change in powder charge — as long as it is not over the maximum — would be appropriate. Then, if you feel the need, you can try different bullets, primers, or any other component. The important thing is to make only one change at a time.

Now I know that one five shot group is not enough data, but it's a start. The next step is to load a larger quantity to see if the results are repeatable. Sometimes they aren't and you might even say a bad word as you go back to the drawing board.

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.44-40 — STARLINE BRASS, CCI LARGE PISTOL PRIMER

200 GR. LRNFP: 5.5 Titegroup
225 GR. LRNFP: 5.2 Titegroup

It has been said that the country is in the grip of a wave of nostalgia. Retro is in. For some — cowboy shooters spring to mind — retro is waaaay in. And nothing is more retro in shooting than the group of former black powder burners I call the *dash* cartridges. Perhaps it really is true that, “everything old is new again.”

Way back when black powder ruled, cartridge nomenclature was actually pretty descriptive. Very often (but not always) the cartridge was named with the caliber and charge of black powder separated by a dash. Since Winchester was often the designer of the cartridge it might have dual citizenship and also be called, for example, the .44 WCF — for Winchester Center Fire.

Cartridges that come most often to mind are the .25-20, .32-20, .38-40 and .44-40. Of these, the .38-40 doesn't quite reflect the truth, for it actually uses a .40 caliber bullet. If the rules were followed it should have been a .40-40. Why it wasn't so named shall remain one of life's little mysteries.

It All Began With A Winchester

For me this nostalgic voyage started innocently enough with one of those deals that was too good to pass up. It came in the form of a Winchester Model 1892 saddle ring carbine chambered for the .32-20 (.32 WCF). That soft shooting little carbine brought an element of fun to my shooting that had been missing for awhile.

Winchester started it all back in 1873 when they needed something to shoot in the new Model 1873 rifle. The Winchester '73 is said to be the gun that — in conjunction with Colt's Single Action Army — “won the West.” That is surely an arguable statement, as an awfully good case can be made for the



Trapdoor Springfield. But the ability to shoot more than once without reloading was a powerful selling point. Another incentive was the ability to use the same cartridge in both a long gun (rifle or carbine) and revolver. Colt wasted no time in chambering their SAA for Winchester's cartridge and when, a year later, Winchester necked the .44-40 down to make the .38-40, Colt followed suit.

Winchester felt the need for a good small game cartridge for the '73 and, in 1882, brought us the .32 WCF (.32-20). Again, Colt wisely made the SAA available in this new chambering. There is some debate over the use of the .32-20. Winchester reportedly deemed it suitable for deer and I've no doubt that a deer could be taken with perfect shot placement. But by today's standards it is woefully under-powered. I've heard it said that the .32-20 was intended for the farm wife as protection from marauding two- and four-legged critters.

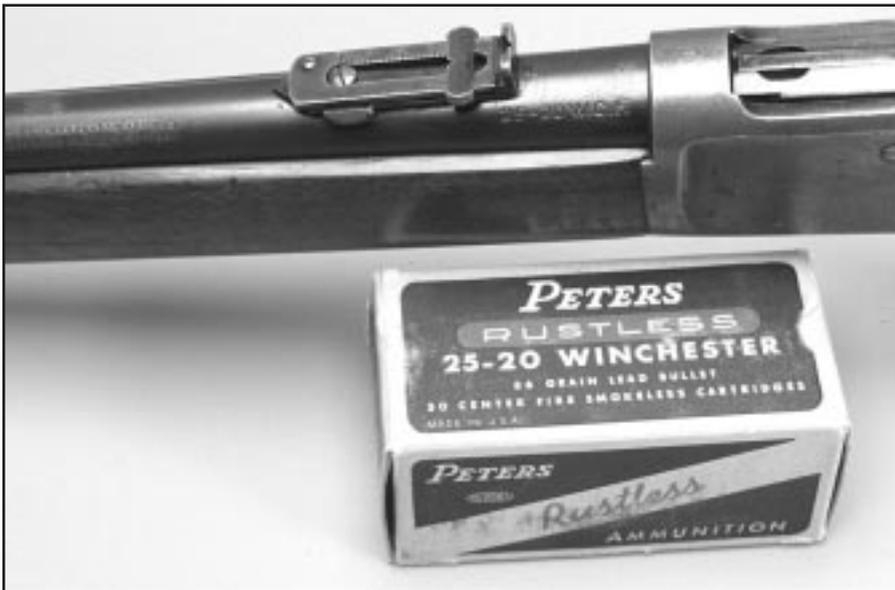
In 1893 the quartet was completed by necking-down the .32-20 to form the .25-20. This time Colt didn't follow and I've often wondered how the diminutive .25 would have

performed as a revolver cartridge. These two smaller calibers still have a following among small game and varmint hunters.

More than a few writers have dubbed the dash series as "obsolete" but all are still produced by one or more ammo companies, and components are easily found as well. And even though most of the current replica firearms favor the .45 Colt, there are a few new guns in most of the dash chamberings.

We Dare You To Shoot Just One

For me that first .32-20 was kinda' like opening Pandora's box because after all of the enjoyment it brought me it was only logical to get a .44-40 which — of course — led to a .38-40. I valiantly resisted the .25-20 but finally fell victim to another 1892 SRC. And the hard thing now is deciding which one to take to the range on any given day. The addition of the dash car-



Below: The dash cartridge line up, (left-right) .25-20, .32-20, .38-40 and .44-40. The .45 Colt is shown for comparison. **Right (top):** Say .44-40 revolver and most will think of the Colt SAA — however many double action guns were also produced, such as this blue-worn New Service Colt. **(middle):** Trim Winchester M-1892 carbines have brought a lot of pleasure into Petty's shooting of late. **(bottom):** Despite the pronouncements of many experts, these cartridges refuse to die. Current loadings from Black Hills and Winchester are shown, along with a vintage box of Peters .25-20.



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tridges brought an element of fun back to my mostly businesslike shooting and I shoot more for sheer enjoyment now than I have in a long time. It's now a rare range trip that doesn't include a little shooting with one of these pleasant cartridges.

All of this has led to some new adventures in handloading, for each new rifle brought with it a set of dies, shell holders, brass, MTM boxes, and all the other paraphernalia we shooters enjoy. And of course lead bullets... lots of lead bullets. Each new cartridge required a load work-up to try to find a single load that worked well in both rifle and revolver.

While many loading projects involve trying to push a bullet as fast as possible, these took another direction. I sought loads no faster than current factory ammunition and in most cases even those were speedier than I required. Cowboy shooters want to minimize recoil and while none of the dash cartridges can be called punishing, they can be slowed down a little without penalty. A second concern for me is accuracy because my primary target is a 6 inch diameter piece of steel located 70 yards downrange.

Fixed Sights And The Handloader

Sometimes handguns present a different set of accuracy challenges. It's pretty rare to find a single action revolver that shoots where the sights say it should. There are methods for adjusting these fixed sights that involve bending and beating, and very often a slight twist of the barrel will get the windage pretty close. But elevation can still be off with either rifle or handgun. There are two things the handloader can do to remedy this. At least in theory, the original sights were regulated with factory ammo of the time, and it may take nothing more than duplicating original bullet weight and velocity to get the gun to shoot where it looks. Handloading gives you the flexibility to make subtle changes in bullet weight or velocity in order to zero the gun, and this can be a much better option than touching a file or hammer to Grandpa's old Colt.

Pervasive Myth

We have been told that the dash cartridges are hard to load. Whoever first penned that statement may very well have either not tried or done it wrongly. It is surely true that these cartridges have thin case mouths — the walls aren't too thick either — but it takes only a little more care in loading to overcome any potential damage to cases by seating or crimping the bullet. One thing that limits case life is the amount the case mouth is expanded (belled) to accept a new bullet. This is one of those things that is best done in moderation. Adjust the expander die to bell the mouth just enough to allow a bullet to start cleanly and case life will be extended considerably.

The other opportunity for trouble is when applying the crimp. It's a bit hard to find a

continued on page 25

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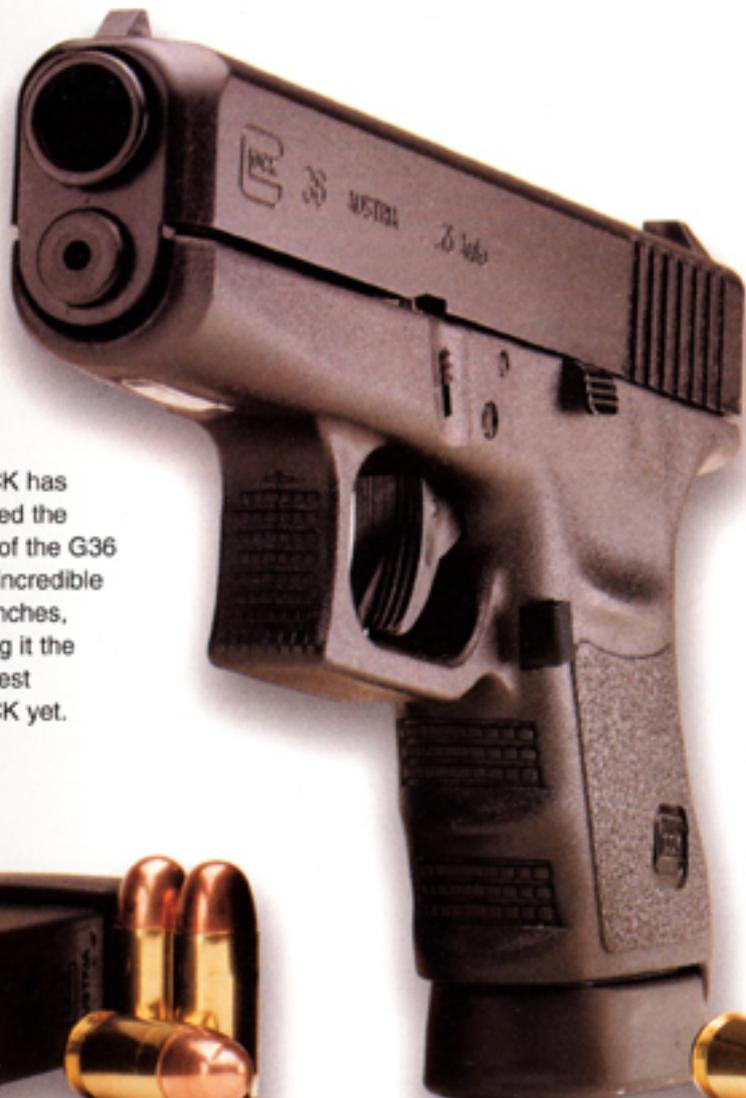
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LOADING THE DASH

continued from page 22

good balance between enough crimp to adequately hold the bullet and putting on too much which will result in split case mouths and shorter case life. Since we're normally using pretty fast burning powders we really don't need an aggressive crimp to promote good ignition. All we really need is enough to prevent recoil inertia from pulling the bullet. Given the light recoil of most of these loads, it really doesn't take much crimp to do that job.

One reason given for *not* loading the dash cartridges is that carbide sizing dies are not available. I know I grew up thinking lubing handgun cases was a real pain but that really isn't true anymore. Laboriously rolling each case on a lube pad was a chore to be avoided but today we can use any of several excellent aerosol case lubes. A squirt or two of RCBS Case Slick or a similar lube on a pile of cases and you're ready to start sizing.

Cast Bullet Champions

With the exception of the .25-20 there is absolutely no need to use jacketed bullets in the dash cartridges. While most factory loads for the .38-40 and .44-40 use JSP bullets, none of these are really driven fast enough to require jackets to prevent leading. Thus for both cost and aesthetic reasons I've stuck to lead. The exception to this is the .25-20 that I load with either Remington 86 grain or Speer 75 grain JSP bullets. Original .25-20 loads used an 86 grain lead bullet and even in this caliber, cast bullets will suffice if you can find them and if your bore is in acceptable condition.

The dash cartridges have surely not been the product of modern research so you'll only find pressure test data in CUP but that doesn't mean that we can't use some of the newer powders. And it is one of those, specifically Hodgdon's Titegroup, that has replaced everything else in my loads for the .32-20, .38-40 and .44-40. It has also won a place in my loads for the .45 Colt and .44 Special.

Note: New handloaders may be interested to know that CUP stands for Copper Units of Pressure. This obsolete system of gauging pressure was performed by measuring the degree to which small cylinders of copper were compressed by a given load. Modern pressure testing is normally accomplished with a piezoelectric transducer and given in the form Pounds per Square Inch — Ed.

The only one of these cartridges I don't load with Titegroup is the .25-20, which requires one of the faster rifle powders. My favorite propellant for loads using the 75 grain JSP is Accurate 2015 BR and for the Remington 86 grain JSP I prefer H-322.

Again with the exception of the .25-20, I use lead bullets exclusively. For the .32-20 you can use either 100 or 115 grain weights. The .38-40 almost always utilizes a 180 grain bullet. And you can have either 200 or 225 grain bullets for the .44-40. Due to

recoil considerations, the 200 grain bullet is much more popular.

All of these loads are at or near the recommended starting loads in the manuals but were developed to provide a good combination of accuracy with light recoil. And, with the exception of the .25-20, since all are intended mostly for recreational shooting, I geared them to give between 700 to 800 fps in the various revolvers and 900 to 1,000 fps from the 20 inch barrels of the carbines.

The .25-20 data is also close to starting loads, but runs 1,300 to 1,400 fps, which is still very mild. In some cases it might be possible to load even lighter, but I found that velocities tended to become erratic and we should keep in mind the possibility of sticking a bullet in the bore if we go down too far.

Selecting A Dash-Shooter

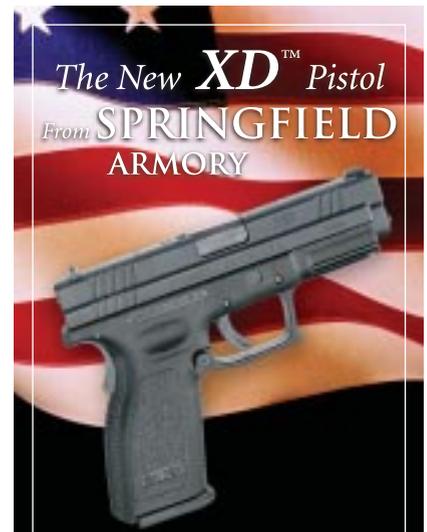
Even though we've been talking about lever guns in the form of saddle ring carbines and rifle-length barrels there are revolvers for all save the .25-20. And you don't have to cough up the green to buy a Colt SAA to shoot these loads either. To be sure there are some single action replicas although you may have to cull through a bunch of .45 Colts to find one in .32, .38 or .44 WCF. But there are other options too.

Both Colt and Smith & Wesson made double action revolvers to shoot these rounds. And in the rifles or carbines there are Winchester and Marlin lever actions to choose from, as well as a smattering of vintage bolt actions and single-shots. And you don't have to pay a ton of money for them either. Market price on these guns usually boils down to the amount of original finish remaining but there are lots of rifles with little finish that are mechanically just fine.

Bores don't have to be spotless either and since many were made before the advent of non-corrosive primers some pits or spots are inevitable. Unless the bore is badly pitted they can still shoot just fine. And even if the bore is ruined it can be relined or rebored.

I'm going through that right now with a Model '92 in .44-40 that has lots of finish on the outside but a damaged chamber that wasn't apparent until I shot it and found that cases came out split. It may not be the bargain I first thought it was, but it is still worth saving.

We've been told that dash cartridges are hard to load for so long that it has become *conventional* wisdom. And as is often true conventional wisdom ain't necessarily so. With just a little care, loading these nostalgic old cartridges is no more difficult than loading anything else. I cannot say that any of them are more accurate or powerful than one of the similar straight wall cases, but since Winchester didn't make a Model 92 in .45 Colt I guess I'll just have to muddle through. Obsolete? Maybe, but give the *dash* cartridges a try and I'm willing to wager you'll enjoy them as much as I have.



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GUNS magazine receives a substantial amount of mail. Some you read in our Crossfire column. Others, due to length or other factors, we are unable to publish. We recently received a letter from a wonderful gentleman we felt should be shared.

Shooters, hunters and firearms owners are frequently vilified by the general press. The image of the firearms community often portrayed is one of reckless, undisciplined Neanderthals who are a destructive force in society.

This is doubly infuriating. For most of us, our introduction to the shooting sports was accompanied by a careful indoctrination in the responsibility that comes with the use of a firearm. We may never be able to alter the distorted view of the shooting sports so many hold, but we can celebrate the truth that the vast majority of shooters and hunters are fine, upright people.

We hope you enjoy this nice remembrance of a young man's introduction to the shooting sports and to lifelong ideals of responsibility, self-reliance and independence.



Richardson and Paul Brooks show off the result of a successful 1999 hunt.



School Days 1946-1947
Phillips High



“No one today would allow a child of 10 to do the things my Dad let me do.”

To: John Taffin, GUNS Magazine

From: Herb Richardson — old coot from the Texas Panhandle

I just finished your article in GUNS on "Handloading On A Budget." I think you did a commendable job of explaining how to get started. We all did things that were dangerous when we started out. I'm past 70 now, and you understand about eyes and shooting handguns. I can't do it well but I do it anyhow. I have fun shooting in competition with a small group at a local range each Monday night. We are all just shooters — some good, some average, some really good who shoot 505 on a 510 course and sometimes go clear to 510. We do like you. We shoot everything we own because they were what we liked and we bought them to shoot.

I'm a 1911 nut. My first handgun was a nickel-plated 1911 with mother-of-pearl grips. My mother won it at a raffle in 1939, and of course I was instantly in love, as you well understand. It became mine on 8-18-41, my 10th birthday. But I didn't get to shoot it much until after World War II when surplus ammo became available. Then I got to shoot it plenty. It still resides in my hands and has been kind of tuned up. New sights and springs and firing pin and a little link-adjusting and slide tightening. Not a match grade gun, but I can get 8 shot 2-inch groups from the bench at 25 yards. However, even this is not what I'm writing about.

My dad was a make-do kind of guy. He wanted me to be able to shoot a lot of .45 pistol. Well, he came up with a .44 Special and a bullet mould. It was an old and well-worn Colt double action. Non-adjustable sights. Well, he didn't know anything about reloading, so he talked to some fellows who did and then did some thinking. He took a piece of boiler plate about 3 inches by 4 inches, 5/8 inch thick, and drilled a couple of holes in it. He reamed one side of it to size the case, the other to squeeze a crimp. He made a powder measure from a cut-off case. I never knew the charge weight, but it was enough to generate some recoil with black powder. He taught me to knock out the primer with a punch, press the case in the sizing hole and knock it out, then prime it with a piece of 2x4 with a dowel in it to press the case down on the boiler plate with a primer. Then scoop in the powder and put down a bullet on top of it and turn it up in the reamed hole and press down to crimp with the 2x4 across the base. He knew old timers used soap for lube in muzzle loaders, so he taught me to roll the bullets in a thick mixture of Ivory soap and water and let them dry. Dad said any fool could cast a bullet and gave me the mould. Well, I got lead from an oil field scrap heap by the gasoline plant.

I got to shoot that old .44 Special all through World War II and when I left home Dad sold it to someone else. I never had more than 50 cases and they got worked no telling how many times. They lasted almost forever.

Of course the old gun got cleaned good every time it was shot. A kid with a real gun was more diligent at cleaning than most folks, so it never got pitted but the bluing was sure rubbed away. We lived in a time when jack rabbits were vermin and the ranchers wanted all of them killed and I sure helped them out a bunch. I wish now we hadn't been so thorough at killing them. Because I love them chicken-fried then smothered in mushroom soup. They get tender enough to fall off the bone.

Those days are gone, but now I and my kids and grandkids still like to shoot. So I load and I do it by the book with all due safety measures in place. We shoot a .357 Uberti Bisley with a 4.75 inch barrel. Feels like an old Colt and it's fun with 158 grain SWCs and 3.3 grains of Bullseye. Not unpleasant even for small kids who really love to shoot if you start them out right. We shoot a .45 Colt Vaquero 3.75 inch from Ruger. Right now we are shooting factory stuff till we get a couple of hundred rounds of brass. The bird's-head grip is almost as easy on my arthritic hands as the Bisley. Anyhow, it's just a family thing.

I am so sorry that kids today don't get to do some shooting as I did. I grew up on the edge of the Canadian River Breaks at Borger, Texas. Canyons and creeks ran to the river down gullies 200 feet deep and were full of quail and cottontails and coyotes and jack rabbits. Kids then didn't know about bird seasons. We got to hunt all year round. The grown-ups would rather have us in the canyons than in town. We didn't know the reasons behind it. We just liked it that way.

No one today would allow a child of 10 to do the things my Dad let me do. He taught me not to use the pistol when other kids were with me and I knew if I did he would hear about it and I would lose my gun. So I became a weekend camper all by myself and it helped me to become competent at many things and confident in my ability to take care of myself. One of those things that lasts a lifetime. Self reliance is good for anybody.

Well, I will close with how much I enjoy your writing on old guns and sixguns.

Thanks,
Herb Richardson

HODGDON'S TRIPLE SEVEN

— The Non-Corrosive (Almost) Muzzleloader Powder

A close look at a new high-performance BP substitute.

BY SAM FADALA

What the muzzleloader world needs now is a non-corrosive propellant that's loaded by volume just like black powder. It should make smoke, giving the game its unique character, but at the same time not cake up the bore like smudge in a chimney. That fuel does not exist. However, Triple Seven is so close to non-corrosive that this new powder requires little additional after-shooting effort than modern cartridges demand. The only solvent necessary to remove Triple Seven fouling is H₂O — plain old tap water, preferably hot to promote drying.

Lives Up To Its Claims

Sometimes manufacturer's claims are overblown. However, I can say after purposely firing multiple consecutive shots without swabbing the bore (under test conditions) that hot water slicked the rifle up to brand new in a few short min-

utes. The effort required to remove Triple Seven fouling was little more than I lavish on my favorite smokeless powder cartridge guns. Hodgdon points out that it's the lack of sulfur that makes cleanup so easy. That's true, in part, but not the entire story. The powder's special formulation also plays a role.

Easy after-shooting maintenance brings more and more shooters into the fascinating world of muzzleloading. However, cleanup is only one criterion of a viable muzzleloader propellant. In the past, I've tried a few promising propellants that provided easy cleaning, but the rest of the story was poor energy yield resulting in low velocity, plus high standard deviations for potentially large groups. Another negative feature was impaired shelf life, the powder changing its pyrotechnic nature even when stored properly. Triple Seven has shown none of these drawbacks. Velocity for Triple Seven FFg, the granulation tested, proved to yield high energy. The new powder also shows good stability.



Again under test conditions only, in the name of discovery, Triple Seven was placed in the freezer for three days then baked in direct sunlight for three more. No changes in velocity or standard deviation resulted from this torture.

Volume Vs. Weight

Named for the 777th formulation, which finally worked as its inventor Dean Barrett intended, Triple Seven is loaded just like black powder — by volume, not by weight. Cartridge fans can use a powder/bullet scale or powder measure if they wish, but they must first establish the correct charge weight by use of a volumetric powder measure.

For example, a .45-70 Navy Arms Remington Rolling Block was tested using 60 grains volume FFg Triple Seven. A 60 grain charge *by weight* would spill over the walls of the case like 12 ounces of water in an 8 ounce glass. Here is the correct procedure for weighing Triple Seven. The example is for a 60 grain volume charge. Set an adjustable volume muzzle loader's powder measure at 60 grains. Pour Triple Seven into the measure to slightly overfull. Tap the barrel of the measure to settle the powder. Rotate the swing-out funnel in place to strike off excess powder kernels. Place this volumetric charge on a powder/bullet scale. This 60 grain charge by volume of Triple Seven FFg was found to weigh 42.0 grains.

Hereafter, 42.0 grains weight Triple Seven FFg can be prepared on a scale or with a powder measure. Special black powder compatible measures from Lyman or Hornady are safe with Triple Seven. Warning: Standard powder measures designed for use with smokeless powder must never be used to meter out black powder or any black powder substitute. Conventional powder measures may conceivably set off the powder in the body of the measure by developing a static charge or through internal friction.

Below (left): Triple Seven is not just for muzzleloaders. Ron Cox prepares to light off a round in the author's custom Navy Arms roller. **(middle):** This Markesbery .54 caliber performed splendidly with Triple Seven FFg granulation. **(right):** Triple Seven will be available in FFg and FFFg granulations.

Helpful Hints with TRIPLE SEVEN

Hodgdon Powder Company offers helpful hints for the shooter using Triple Seven powder. The first is dealing with inaccuracy with the patched round ball. Hodgdon recommends checking patches. This is easy to do. Patches normally end up not far downrange. Torn patches may indicate sharp rifling lands. Blown patches (holes) result from gas blow-by in the rifling grooves. Hodgdon recommends reducing the charge until patches are no longer damaged. This, however, results in an under-load, and is not necessarily ideal.

For example, a 230 grain patched lead round ball in a .54 caliber muzzleloader can achieve close to 2,000 fps with a maximum allowable powder charge. Why reduce that by cutting back a normal and acceptable big game charge? A better way is introducing a couple thin leaves of hornet nesting material on top of the powder charge before seating the patched ball. This step results in a buffer between powder and patch. I have yet to find a burned-out patch when using hornet nesting leaves. Note: this is not mud dauber nesting material, but hornet nest.

Hodgdon has good advice for shooters of sabots. Again, the idea is to search downrange, picking up spent sabots. If they are torn or show signs of damage, switch to magnum type sabots. These are made to withstand the ravages of heavier powder charges.

Bore leading is not much of a problem with muzzleloaders or black powder cartridge guns, but Hodgdon recommends that if leading does appear when using Triple Seven powder, lubing the base of lead projectiles can help. There seems to be an accuracy advantage in placing lube on the base only, rather than the shank of lead bullets.

Hodgdon recommends tapping the side of the barrel to settle a charge of Triple Seven in the breech area of the bore. This is worthwhile advice. While it may or may not promote good ignition, having the full charge settled into the breech is always desirable.



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Compared With Pyrodex

Triple Seven is not a derivative of Hodgdon's popular Pyrodex. It is less dense than black powder, but more dense than Pyrodex RS. With a volumetric powder measure set at 100 grains, GOEX FFG produced 100 grains by weight. The same setting produced 71.0 grains weight for Pyrodex RS and 76.0 grains weight for Triple Seven FFG.

Two rifles were chronographed, a Markesbery .54 caliber Outer-Line muzzle-loader and a .45-70 Navy Arms Remington Rolling Block with 30 inch Badger barrel installed by Morrison Precision of Hereford, Ariz. The .45-70 Government load was built with Star Line brass. Federal's hot 215 primer was selected and produced flawless ignition with Triple Seven. The cast bullet selected is from a custom Hoch mold, a flat nose which averages 417 grains weight. Lube: one part toilet bowl ring, two parts salt free lard, two parts beeswax. A single-over-powder card wad rested on powder charges that were compressed with a custom-made tool. Shooting procedure included the use of a blow tube, with three deep breaths exhaled down bore after each shot.

Not Just For Muzzleloaders

Three different powders were tested in the .45-70. A 60 grain volume charge (42.0 grains by weight) of Triple Seven produced an average muzzle velocity of 1,327 fps with a standard deviation of 8 feet per second. A proven accurate GOEX load of 63.0 grains weight developed 1,155 fps with 24 fps standard deviation. Swiss FFFg at 63.6 grains weight developed 1,363 fps.

Ignition with Triple Seven was perfect in the Markesbery .54 caliber, which was not set up with its special small rifle primer ignition system. A normal nipple with RWS No. 11 percussion caps produced 100 percent ignition without a hint of a hangfire from first to last shot, which included 54 firings.

Further proof of Triple Seven's high-energy yield was demonstrated by comparing Pyrodex RS at 1,675 feet per second with a Hornady 240 grain sabot-bullet and 100 grains volume measure, while Triple Seven FFG gave 1,800 fps with the same charge and bullet. My testing also included the heavyweight Parker Productions 580 grain lead bullet fired from the Markesbery .54 caliber muzzle-loader. A charge of 120 grains volume (not weight) Triple Seven FFG delivered 1,475 fps and over 2,800 foot-pounds muzzle energy. For reference, substituting an equivalent charge of GOEX FFG developed 1,400 fps.

Flintlocks can digest Triple Seven, but Hodgdon recommends delivering five grains volume of FFFFg black powder down bore prior to introducing the main charge of Triple Seven, which must be reduced by five grains to compensate for the black powder priming charge. As always, there is to be no air space between

the powder and the projectile or shot charge in the bore. That condition is called a short-start and has been known to split barrels and cause other mischief. The bullet or shot should be seated firmly upon the powder charge in the breech, but not rammed down with undue force.

Cartridges should be loaded to 100 percent density, meaning no air space between bullet and powder in the case. A single thin wad up to .030 inch (thirty-thousandths) thickness between powder and bullet base is all right in the cartridge. But filler materials with reduced charges are not allowable.

Easy Cleanup

Both the Markesbery .54 caliber muzzle-loader and Navy Arms .45-70 cleaned up like prom-bound high school lads. Continuous shots without swabbing (for test purposes only) included a total of 6,480 grains volume Triple Seven FFG in the Markesbery .54 caliber muzzle-loader. A dab of Orange Stuff, a new lube from Old Western Scrounger, was applied to the base of all conical bullets in shooting the Markesbery. The muzzle-loader was not cleaned, purposely, for several days after shooting. The entire process of returning the rifle to a bright bore took only a few passes with a water-soaked bristle brush plus a few cleaning patches.

The .45-70 rifle's bore brightened with even less effort because it was properly cleaned soon after shooting. Solvents are acceptable and a shooter need not abandon a favorite cleaning method with Triple Seven. Water alone works, but I do recommend the application of a good preservative as a final touch before closeting guns.

The Bottom Line

As this is written, Triple Seven in either FFG or FFFFg granulations lightens the wallet by \$23 a pound. But each pound gives 25 percent more shots than black powder since Triple Seven is about 25 percent less dense. Pelletizing Triple Seven will make it even more appealing, because the Pyrodex Pellet already has a strong following among hunters. When hunting in lodges I make informal surveys of sportsmen to see what rifles, bullets and powders are most popular. The last time I checked, Pyrodex Pellets won the day. Triple Seven pellets may be the ultimate propellant for modern muzzle loading hunters, offering a bit higher velocities while demanding nothing more than a few moments of after-shooting attention to return the firearm to super clean — not only the bore, but locks and actions as well.

There's no way this new propellant can fail in the marketplace. It will not replace Pyrodex or black powder for everyday shooting due to cost, but it will find its way into hunting camps everywhere front stuffers are carried in the hunting field.



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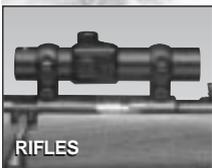
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Two New Single-Shots

By Holt Bodinson

Noteworthy Single-Shots of the 21st Century



He was a gangling teenage boy with a burning desire for a big game rifle of his own. The ad read “7mm Remington Rolling Blocks — Only \$9.95.” Into an envelope addressed to Winfield Arms went a \$10 bill, along with a note requesting they send a “good one.”

Three very long weeks rolled by and then it arrived, packed in a long brown carton, delivered to the front door by the postman.

After unpacking the carton with a degree of haste and trepidation, out slid a mint condition 1902 Remington Rolling Block. Cocking the hammer and thumbing the block back and forth, the boy threw the 7mm to his shoulder, sighted down the long barrel, and realized he was the owner of an honest-to-goodness big game rifle.

A quick bike trip over to Rorer’s hardware store procured a single green box of 7mm Remington/UMC cartridges that were sitting on a shelf behind the main counter. After asking to see them, the boy opened the dusty box and for the first time in his life held a 7x57 cartridge loaded with a long, impressive 175 grain round-nose soft point.

The boy took the cartridges home. And that boy was I.



Sometimes You Can Go Home Again

So when Dave Higginbotham, proprietor of Lone Star Rifle Co., hinted I might enjoy shooting one of his newly manufactured rolling block rifles, there wasn't a moment's hesitation on this old boy's part.

A day or two after my conversation with Higginbotham, I heard from Steve Garbe, owner of the Ballard Rifle Co., who just happened to have available one of his new Winchester High Walls designed as a '30s or '40s varmint rifle chambered in .225 Win. and topped with a classic Lyman 15x Super Targetspot scope.

What could I say?

So now here we are, in the 21st century. And two gifted gunmakers and national match class competitors are crafting 19th century single-shot models that rival in quality, fit, finish and accuracy any American single-shot rifle ever produced.

Lone Star's Rolling Blocks

Dave Higginbotham's career of building what have to be considered the finest rolling blocks ever made began in 1968 with the purchase of a Model 1871 Remington rolling block in .50-70. It was a parts gun he painstakingly rebuilt, and took deer hunting.

Today, his Lone Star Rifle Company offers rolling blocks designed as sporting, target, silhouette, cowboy and buffalo rifles, as well as even more unique models such as a "Custer" replica and a Gove underlever variation. Higginbotham also repairs, restores, and rebarrels original Remington rolling blocks and modern reproductions. His extensive catalog and web page are replete with parts, actions, triggers, sights and other accouterments for rolling blocks. Want a .50-90 or a .44-77? He can chamber for them as well as for smokeless cartridges such as the .30-30 or .30-40.

Designed around the time of the American Civil War, the Remington rolling block was kept in production for almost 70 years with more than one million rifles, pistols and shotguns built on this basic bread-and-butter action by Remington and foreign licensees.



Winchester's .225 cartridge is ideally mated to a fine, strong single-shot like Ballard's High Wall.

Varminting with a classically styled single-shot makes a day in the field even more enjoyable.



Secret Of Its Success

The rolling block is a deceptively simple action with few moving parts and an operation that is almost self-evident. One merely cocks the hammer, rolls back the breechblock, inserts a cartridge in the chamber, closes the breechblock, and pulls the trigger. In function, the hammer not only strikes the firing pin but cams under the breechblock, locking it firmly into place. The relationship of the rotating breech block and the rotating, locking hammer is precise and calls for close dimensional machine tool work and quality steels.

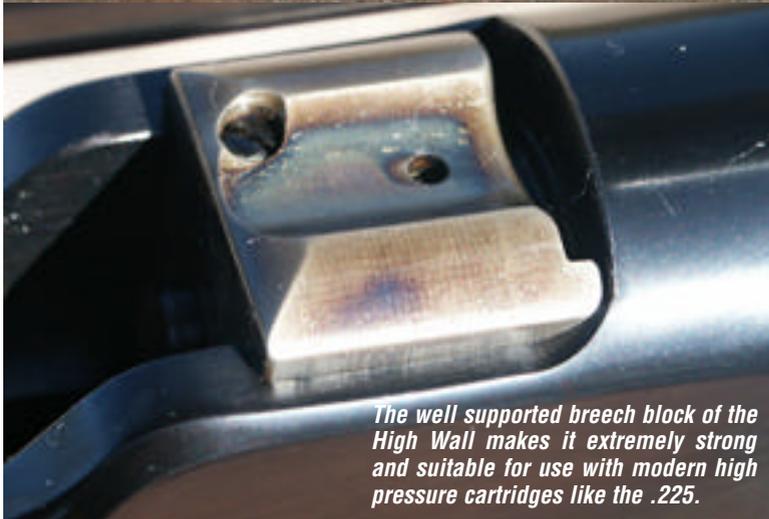
Higginbotham offered two rolling blocks for perusal — a standard “Cowboy” gun in .45-70 to shoot, and a deluxe sporting rifle in .30-40 Krag to examine and ogle.

I’ve owned four original military and sporting rolling blocks. None was as silky smooth in operation as Higginbotham’s, and none had a trigger as light and crisp as the Lone Star’s. Both models sported beautifully color case-hardened receivers and butt plates, and handsome side-panels in the stocks both fore-and-aft of the receiver, just like the original commercial models. One of those custom touches which often goes unnoticed is that all the screws in both guns lined up precisely.

The “Cowboy” rolling block lives up to its name. It is a plain, straightforward working gun with a 28 inch tapered, round barrel, bead front sight, leaf rear sight, and, additionally, was fitted with a Marbles tang sight, adjustable for elevation and windage. Weighing 8.5 pounds, the “Cowboy” felt good in the hands and balanced nicely offhand. The trigger was a joy with a crisp, light pull set at 2 pounds. It’s a very popular model available in .38-55, .45-70, .40-65, .32-40 and .45 Colt.

Boy, Can It Shoot!

While this model is designed for the needs of the cowboy action matches and would probably be shot with black powder loads, I tested it with factory smokeless ammunition. Both Remington’s 405 grain soft point and



The well supported breech block of the High Wall makes it extremely strong and suitable for use with modern high pressure cartridges like the .225.



Winchester's 300 grain hollow point loadings averaged 1.25 to 1.5 inches for three shot groups at 100 yards.

The surprise came when I began getting groups under an inch with Federal's "Classic" .45-70 load featuring Sierra's 300 grain Pro-Hunter hollow point. In fact, the smallest group I shot measured 3/8 inch and was witnessed by Roy Marcot, author of the official history of the Remington Arms Co. and a recognized authority and collector of original Remington rolling blocks.

The .30-40 Krag deluxe custom rifle was spectacular, featuring 100 percent figured walnut stocks with checkered pistol grip and forearm; a color case-hardened forearm tip and shotgun butt plate; a 26 inch octagon barrel tapering from 1 1/8 inch to 1 inch; a Beech combination front sight and both buckhorn and tang rear sights. The overall package was simply a beautiful example of uncompromising custom gunsmithing, and an immediate family heirloom.

Lone Star's standard Cowboy Number 5 Sporting and Silhouette rifles start at \$1,495 while their custom rifles begin at \$1,995. If you're in a hurry, they always have a standard rifle or two for immediate sale.

Ballard's Winchester High Wall

When Steve Garbe acquired residual rights to the Ballard patent, his Ballard Rifle actually reestablished the 19th century company. Today, located in Cody, Wyo., the Ballard Rifle Co. makes a complete line of original sporting and target model Ballards and Winchester High Walls as well as offering original dimensioned parts, actions, triggers, and rebuilding and restoration services for these classic single-shot arms.

In terms of the variety of Ballard and High Wall models available coupled with the competitive and gun-making experience of people in the company such as Garbe and Ron Long, this house is the mother lode of American single-shot rifle making. Check their Website for a list of completed High Wall and Ballard rifles

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Made In America **Arsenal Inc.'s SA M-7**

STORY BY DAVID M. FORTIER

PHOTOS BY EMILY K. FORTIER

Author Fortier respects a good Kalashnikov rifle, and the man behind its design. We learn a little about both in this report.



As the van pounded down the bumpy road, Vladimir and I argued back and forth. My friend Mark was caught in the middle as he translated for us from Russian to English and back again. It was almost comical. Eight of us were packed into a small 4x4 van bumping along in Izhevsk, Russia and we were arguing about M-1 Garands and the SKS. Shooting enthusiasts are the same no matter where you go! Our Russian friend Vladimir seemed to have a very poor opinion of the M-1 Garand. Listening to him for a bit I found out that it's true — you're never more patriotic than when you're abroad.

I started to educate this former MVD sniper on what a "real man's" rifle was. He took it right in stride. Soon we were bantering back and forth in a lively and heated,

although good natured, exchange. Then in the midst of making a point the van bounced to a stop and the door opened. Suddenly reality set in. We were there.

Stepping out of the van Mark Vorobiev, Marc Krebs, and I kinda' looked at each other. Vladimir smiled, and then he and the rest of our group headed up the walk towards the *dacha*, or summer home, of Mikhail Kalashnikov. We had arrived and were now about to meet the grand ol' man himself — Mikhail Kalashnikov, Russian weapons designer and father to the AK-47 assault rifle. In Russia he is a legend, a hero of the people known to every school child. A man who devoted his entire life to his country.

Meeting A Legend

The door opened and he met us on his porch. Dressed in reed-pattern camouflage pants and a light shirt, the Hero of the Soviet Union Mikhail Kalashnikov warmly welcomed us into his home.

Our hosts introduced us and we followed him inside. His summer home sits in the midst of well kept flowers, bushes and plants. The rustic cottage, constructed with pine slats, was the home of a man who loved the outdoors.

We removed our shoes and Kalashnikov invited us into his living room. We settled around him and presented gifts. Kalashnikov is a serious knife collector, so we felt presentation-grade Ka-Bars would be appropriate.

In Russian tradition, Kalashnikov reached into his pocket and removed a coin, which he gave to Mark Vorobiev. Along with the knives, we gave Kalashnikov letters from American firearms enthusiasts. As a lifetime member of the National Rifle Association, this enthused Kalashnikov. He exhorted us to keep the anti-gunners at bay.

Vorobiev emotionally thanked him for designing the rifle that saved his life in Afghanistan, which greatly moved the old man.

"My intentions were to build a rifle to protect and defend my motherland," Kalashnikov said. "A simple and utterly reliable rifle that our young soldiers could trust and depend on."



Arsenal Inc.'s U.S. manufactured SA - M7 is a true mil-spec Kalashnikov in semiauto. Right: The Grand Ol' AK Man himself, Mikhail Kalashnikov. He's seen holding one of his rifles at his summer home during a meeting with the author.





“Today some people accuse me of making a weapon of war,” he added. “A weapon used by terrorists. That was never my intention. I designed my rifle only to defend my country.”

Over the next few hours we had a chance to get to know and dine with the man behind the legend.

A gifted story teller, he made us feel right at home with colorful tales from his past. As we sat talking, I was impressed by his down to earth manner. Originally I’d been unsure of what to expect, but in the end my expectations didn’t matter. He far exceeded them with his friendly, open attitude and fatherly demeanor. While our time together was over too soon, I came away with the impression that he is one

of the few legends who actually lives up to his reputation.

Most who knew Kalashnikov as a young man thought he’d become famous for his writing. However, the German invasion and the Great Patriotic War soon changed all that. A tank commander, he was severely wounded when his vehicle was put out of action during fierce fighting early in the war. As he lay in the hospital he began designing a sub-machinegun. While this first project of his was never adopted, he continued on and in 1946 submitted the prototype of what would become the best known assault rifle of all time, the AK-47.

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The weapon strips easily in seconds for routine maintenance.



Accuracy And Velocity Chart

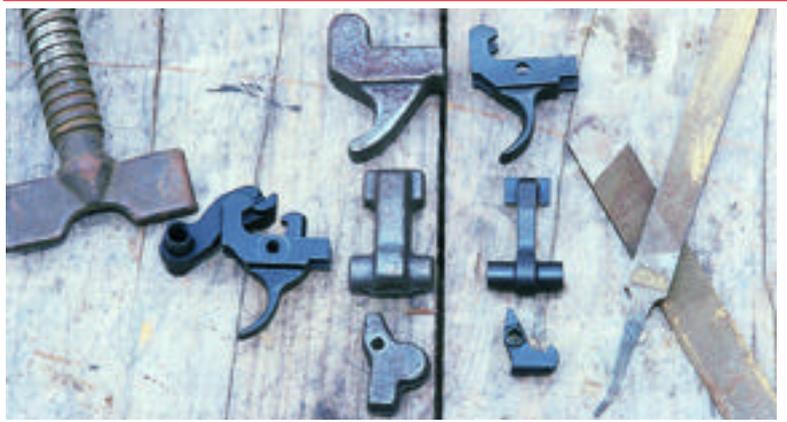
LOAD	VELOCITY	100 YARD GROUP
WOLF 154 GR. SP	2,022 fps	3.0"
WOLF 122 GR. FMJBT	2,249 fps	3 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
NORMA 125 GR.SP	2,287 fps	3 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
PMC 123 GR. SP	2,119 fps	4.0"
BARNAUL 122 GR. SP	2,374 fps	3 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

Groups are an average of four 5 shot groups fired off sandbags at 100 yards. Velocity readings recorded 10 feet from the muzzle at 50 degrees F with an Oehler 35P.

SA M-7 Specifications

OPERATION	Self loading via long stroke gas with rotating bolt
CALIBER	7.62x39 M43
LENGTH	35 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
BARREL	16 $\frac{1}{8}$ ", 1:9.4 Twist rate
WEIGHT	8 $\frac{1}{2}$ lbs
FEED	5, 10, 20, 30, 40 round box; 75 round drum
Sights	
FRONT	Protected Post
REAR	Tangent adjustable from 100-800m
FINISH	Matte black powder coat

The SA M-7 in full recoil. Short, well balanced, with light recoil, this rifle excelled in CQB drills. Camouflage is Russian Reed pattern from Advanced Armament System.



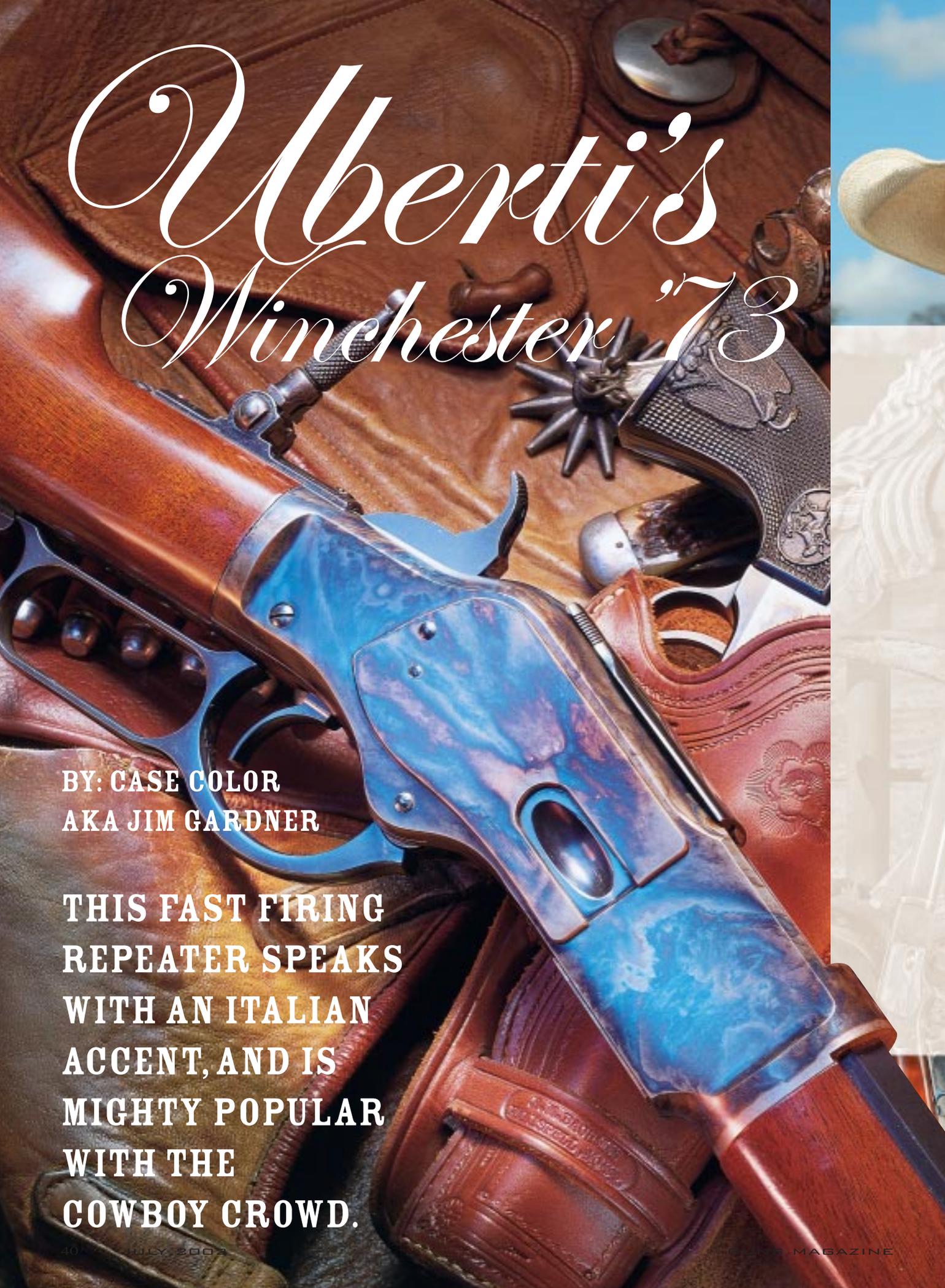
Machining these SA M-7 fire control components from heavy steel forgings is an expensive and time-consuming process that results in the best, most durable product possible.



The SA M-7's muzzlebrake (right) is as effective as the Russian AK-103 brake (left), yet produces less flash.

Left side view of the SA M-7's action with a Bulgarian polymer 30 round magazine from K-VAR.



A collection of cowboy gear including a blue Winchester 73 rifle, a revolver, a spur, and a cowboy hat.

Alberti's Winchester '73

BY: CASE COLOR
AKA JIM GARDNER

THIS FAST FIRING
REPEATER SPEAKS
WITH AN ITALIAN
ACCENT, AND IS
MIGHTY POPULAR
WITH THE
COWBOY CROWD.



“WITHOUT BEING UNKIND TO EITHER THE HENRY OR THE SPENCER, DO YOU SUPPOSE WE CAN AGREE THAT THIS IS THE FINEST GUN IN THE WORLD?”

**— WILL GEER AS WYATT EARP
IN “WINCHESTER ’73”.**

The door creaked as I pulled it open. My boot heels thudding on the dusty floor alerted ol’ Sam dozing behind the counter to my presence. His grin told me without a word that yes, it had finally arrived. It had taken a long spell of careful saving on my part before I could place the order. Now the eternal wait for the long heavy package to arrive from back East was over.

Opening the box, I lifted out the new Winchester. Behind the counter, I could see that ol’ Sam was just as enthralled as I was by the gleaming blued steel and polished walnut. I knew that he had been a sheriff’s deputy in Texas, and I wondered if the sight of the new Winchester sparked any old memories.

Yessir, a Winchester Model of 1873. It was a special ordered “short rifle,” and wore a 20 inch octagonal barrel in place of the normal 24 inches. It used the .44-40 central-fire metallic cartridge, and would carry 11 of ’em in that 20 inch length.

“You need any ca’tridges” Sam asked, knowing full well that I did as he laid two boxes on the counter. Clever merchant that he was, Sam knew that the rifle

and cartridges had cleaned me out, so he didn’t bother to ask what else I might need. After a little careful ciphering on a scrap of paper, Sam put down his pencil before asking: “Cash or credit card?”

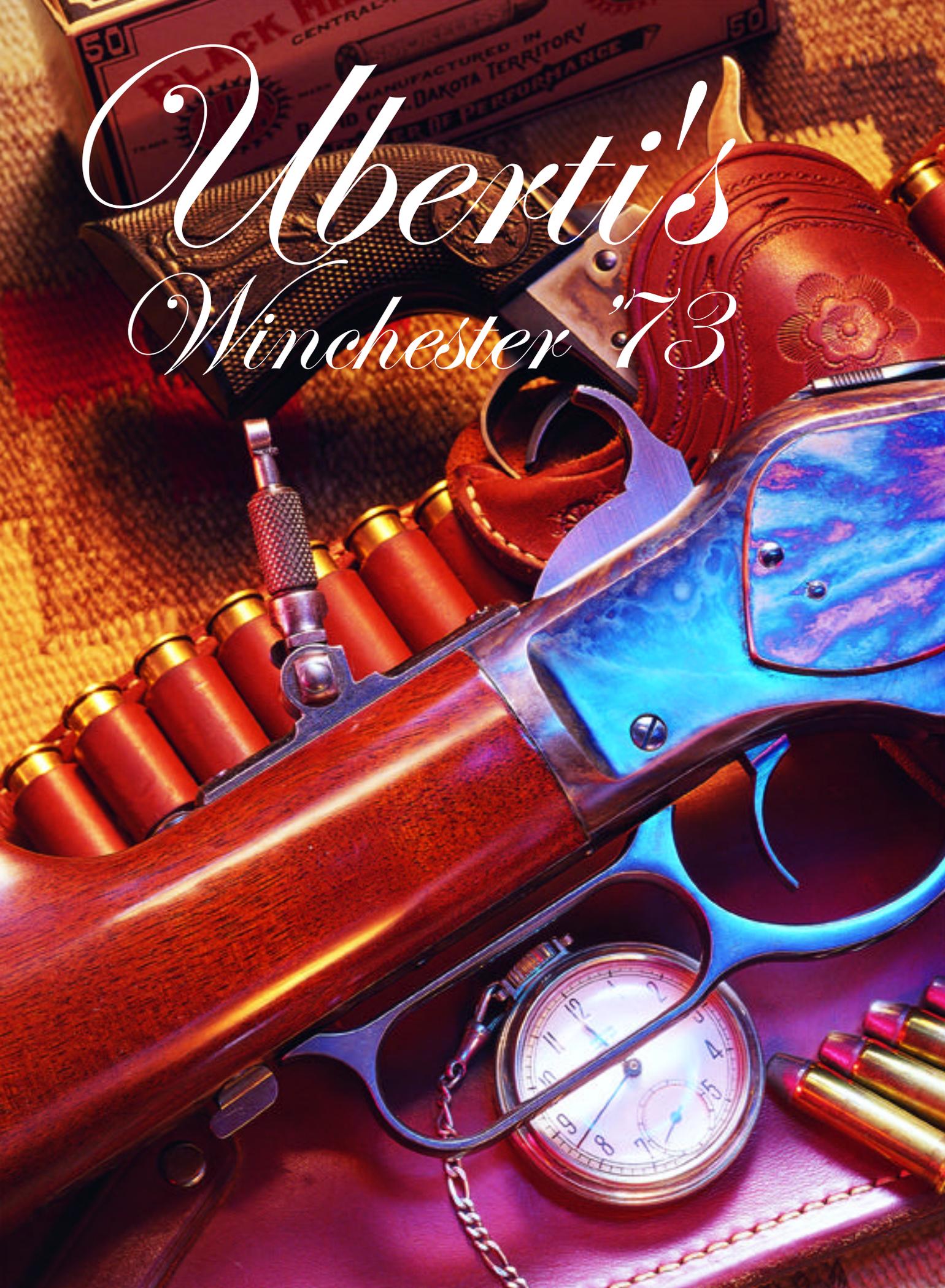
Incredibly, 129 years after the introduction of the classic Winchester ’73, and fully 79 years after Winchester discontinued the model, you can buy a brand new 1873 Winchester rifle. They no longer come from New Haven, Conn., but rather from Gardone, Italy and the factory of Aldo Uberti and Co. They are available in a stunning variety of calibers, finishes and configurations, harkening back to the special order guns that Winchester once supplied. And they are selling like hot cakes, er... biscotti.

A Little History

The ’73 was the third evolution of Oliver Winchester’s world changing repeating rifle. The first of this series was not called a Winchester at all. The Henry took its name from B. Tyler Henry, the capable genius retained by shirt maker Winchester to run his new arms venture. The Henry was an outgrowth of the earlier (and



*Uberti's
Winchester '73*





GUNS

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The Henry was extremely successful, and would have been so even if the events of the 1860s had not swelled production figures to nearly 14,000. But the Henry was not without flaws. Its open magazine tube permitted the accumulation of dirt and debris. The exposed magazine follower could be interfered with by the support hand, causing malfunctions. And with no forend, that barrel was too hot to hold after prolonged fast firing.

The Winchester Model of 1866 — sometimes called the improved Henry — rectified these objections. This was the first Winchester to incorporate the “King’s Patent” loading gate. This made it possible to simplify the construction of the barrel, to use a sealed magazine tube, to add a wood forend, and to greatly lessen the weight of the rifle. The new model was an instant success, but it did retain one weakness from the earlier rifle — the impotent .44 Henry Flat cartridge.

Enter “The Gun That Won The West”

The 1873 was designed to answer this shortcoming. A new iron frame, in contrast to the bronze frames of the '66 and most Henrys, made the rifle seem stronger. In actuality, there may have been little difference, as the '73 used the same somewhat weak toggle link action of the earlier rifles. Lengthening the elevator accommodated a longer cartridge, and a sliding dust cover sealed the top of the action. Cycling the lever automatically opened this cover. The firing pin was changed to strike a centrally located primer. However the biggest change was the new cartridge.

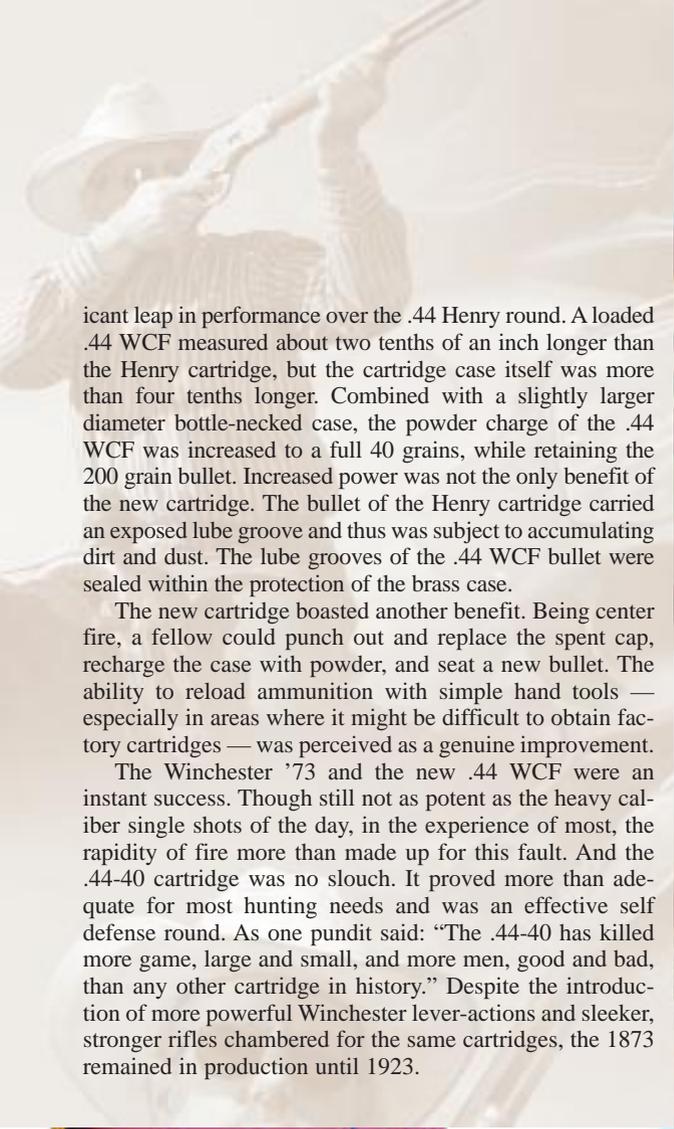
The .44 Winchester Central Fire, or .44-40, was a signif-

completely unsuccessful) Jennings, Hunt and Volcanic repeating firearms. The repeating design had merit. What it lacked was a usable cartridge. Henry provided that by developing the copper cased, rimfire, .44 Henry Flat.

The Henry cartridge carried a 200 grain bullet propelled by a mere 26 grains of black powder. The Henry was no powerhouse, but it made up for that with its capacity to carry 16 rounds and to fire those rounds as fast as the lever could be worked. The advertising hyperbole of the day proclaimed that the Henry fired “Sixty shots per minute,” and further that “A resolute man, armed with one of these rifles, particularly if on horseback, cannot be captured!” This was heady stuff indeed in a day when the average rifle could fire perhaps three shots a minute.



PHOTO BY CASE COLOR



icant leap in performance over the .44 Henry round. A loaded .44 WCF measured about two tenths of an inch longer than the Henry cartridge, but the cartridge case itself was more than four tenths longer. Combined with a slightly larger diameter bottle-necked case, the powder charge of the .44 WCF was increased to a full 40 grains, while retaining the 200 grain bullet. Increased power was not the only benefit of the new cartridge. The bullet of the Henry cartridge carried an exposed lube groove and thus was subject to accumulating dirt and dust. The lube grooves of the .44 WCF bullet were sealed within the protection of the brass case.

The new cartridge boasted another benefit. Being center fire, a fellow could punch out and replace the spent cap, recharge the case with powder, and seat a new bullet. The ability to reload ammunition with simple hand tools — especially in areas where it might be difficult to obtain factory cartridges — was perceived as a genuine improvement.

The Winchester '73 and the new .44 WCF were an instant success. Though still not as potent as the heavy caliber single shots of the day, in the experience of most, the rapidity of fire more than made up for this fault. And the .44-40 cartridge was no slouch. It proved more than adequate for most hunting needs and was an effective self defense round. As one pundit said: "The .44-40 has killed more game, large and small, and more men, good and bad, than any other cartridge in history." Despite the introduction of more powerful Winchester lever-actions and sleeker, stronger rifles chambered for the same cartridges, the 1873 remained in production until 1923.



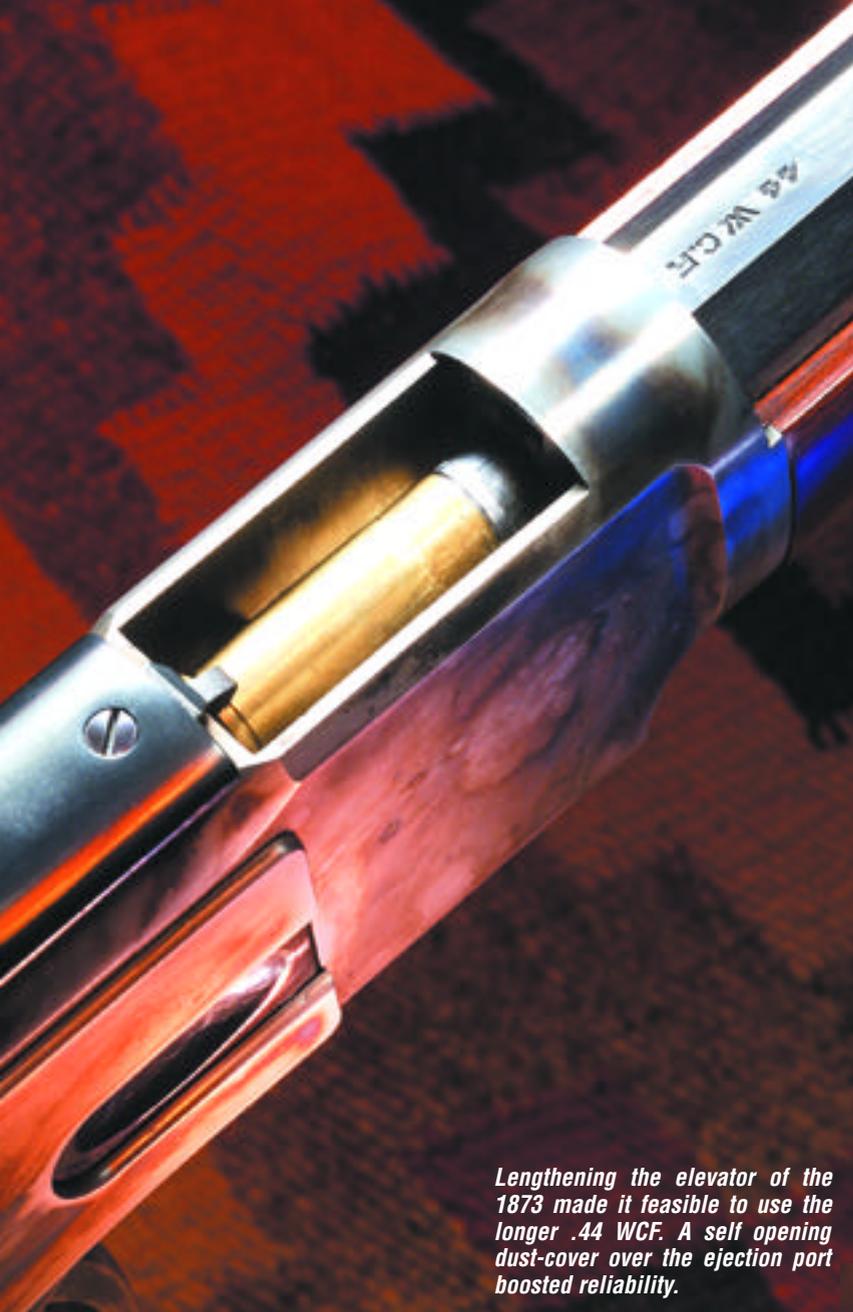
The '73 Rides Again

I do not know who first made the replica 1873 available to the American market, but I would put my money on Navy Arms. The most significant fact to understand though is that the importation of replica leverguns commenced long before the current Cowboy Action Shooting phenomenon. The dusty cover of my 1975 *Guns and Ammo Annual* features an Uberti '73 carbine, and a Navy Arms '66 carbine is reviewed in the pages of my 1969 *Gun Digest*. Certainly though, it is the CAS craze that has motivated the various importers to offer the marvelous variety of chamberings and configurations that are available in 1873 Winchester reproductions today. Let's take a look at what is available from the main importers...

Cimarron

This Fredricksburg, Texas, based firm offers the widest variety of replica '73s. Available are "long range rifles," with 30 inch barrels and either plain or pistol-grip stocks; 24 inch barreled rifles, again either standard or "deluxe" with checkered pistol-grip and forend; the 20 inch octagonal barreled "short rifle"; and the carbine which features a 19 inch round barrel, saddle ring and flatter, carbine-type butt plate.

Not enough variety? Okay, now choose from .45 Colt; .44-40; .44 Special; .38-40; .357 Mag.; or .32-20.



Lengthening the elevator of the 1873 made it feasible to use the longer .44 WCF. A self opening dust-cover over the ejection port boosted reliability.

Some of these calibers are available only in specific models, or as a special order only. Think you are through? Oh no, you still need to pick out a finish. Most of the Cimarron '73s are delivered with a beautiful color case-hardened receiver, but the remaining metal finish can be conventional blue, "charcoal blue" (a fragile but shockingly beautiful pale blue), or Cimarron's "original finish." This latter is an antiqued finish that looks for all the world like a well used 19th century original with tales to tell.

EMF

Early and Modern Firearms' catalog shows '73s in the following configurations: rifles and short rifles in .45 Colt, .357 Mag. and .32-20. Also 19 inch barreled carbines with either blue or color case-hardened receivers. EMF has been a loyal and long-time supporter of CAS — good folks to support.

Navy Arms

It is thanks to Val Forgett and his Navy Arms Co. that you and I have replica arms to enjoy. Forgett

imported the very first replica revolvers in the late '50s and hasn't stopped yet. Even though all of the replica '73s are produced by Uberti, I've met a number of people who feel that the Navy Arms offerings are either a higher quality product or more carefully inspected. I can't vouch for the truth of this, but it is a sentiment I've heard repeated more than once.

Navy offers a wide variety of 1873s, including: a 24 inch barreled rifle with straight stock; a "sporting rifle" with same barrel length but featuring a checkered pistol-grip and forend; the "border rifle," a 20 inch short rifle; the very popular "deluxe border rifle," same as above but with pistol-grip; and an all-blued carbine version. All of the rifles come with a gorgeous case-colored receiver, and all models are available in .357 Mag., .44-40 or .45 Colt.

Taylor's & Company, Inc.

Taylor's offers '73 replicas in the form of 24 inch barreled rifles, calibers .45 Colt; .44-40 and .357 Mag. A sporting rifle carrying a 30 inch barrel and a checkered pistol-grip and forend is available in .45 Colt only. A .45 Colt carbine model is also listed.

Uberti U.S.A.

Ordering your new '73 from Uberti U.S.A. is essentially getting it straight from the manufacturer. The current Uberti catalog also shows some interesting variations I've not spotted from other importers.

The first of these is a 16.5 inch barreled carbine, as close as we can have to the rare 1873 "trapper" or baby carbine model which offered barrels as short as 12 to 14 inches. The next is the 1873 musket. Winchester courted military sales



by offering his repeater in a full stocked version featuring a 30 inch barrel and bayonet mount. This one would draw some interest at your next CAS match! Also offered is the special sporting rifle, wearing a 30 inch tube with checkered pistol-grip and forearm. Add to these the usual carbine, rifle and short rifle versions; calibers including .32-20, .357 Mag., .38-40, .44-40 and .45 Colt; and finish options that include a brilliantly polished-in-the-white finish that looks for all the world like a rare original full nickel plate '73.

Stepping Back

The price of these replicas varies by configuration, but a good average is \$750 to \$950. This is an interesting situation, as for the same pile of greenbacks you *could* choose to purchase an original Winchester 1873. The original will probably have a pitted, shot-out bore, bugged screws, and other unknown problems. Shooting original arms is great fun, but a crisp new Uberti '73 will let you feel what it was like to walk into that hardware store in the late 1870s, slap your double-eagles on the counter, and say, "I'll take that Winchester." I understand that the science-fiction crowd likes to speculate about the feasibility of time travel. Carry one of these replica Winchesters into the woods or to a good CAS match, and you'll feel as if you've stepped back 100 years.

Testimonials

Cowboy shooters may not be responsible for the first importation of replica '73s, but they certainly account for the majority of those imported today. I know why I like the Uberti Winchesters, but I asked a couple of the *hombres* at a local cowboy match why they preferred them.



"It goes with the period I'm interested in," said Cap'n Spike, a retired Naval aviator and all-around good guy. "The '73 is fine looking and functions flawlessly." Spike's 1873 is a 24 inch barreled version, and he is a fine and fast rifle shot.

D.D. LeDu is a fierce competitor and keeps a matching pair of Navy Arms 1873 short rifles in constant use.

"I like the action," LeDu said. "I like the way the gun feels — it's a little heavier gun, but once it's on target it tends to stay there better."

Some have commented that the longer action of the '73 should be slower than that of the later Model 1892, but in D.D.'s hands, slow is not a word you would use to describe the 1873.

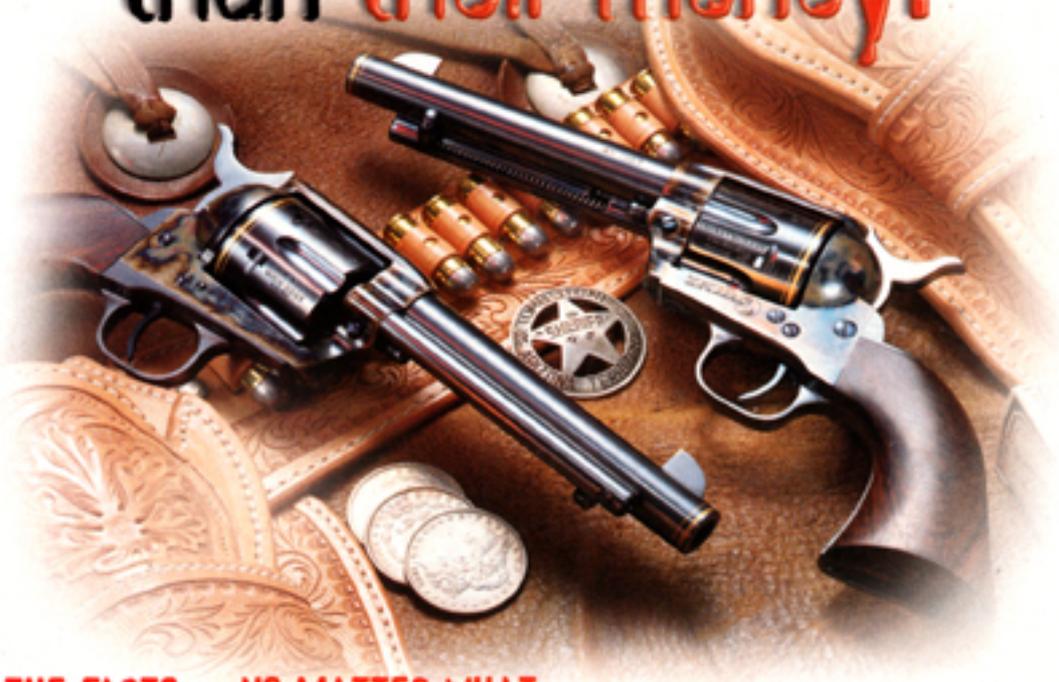
Slicking Your '73

Most of the Uberti 1873s are just dandy as they come out of the box. However with a slight amount of work they can be improved significantly.

Many people pay to have their local 'smith smooth up the action. Yes, this is a worthwhile modification, but you may find that simply shooting a few hundred rounds

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4


CIMARRON'S
RICHARDS-MASON
CARTRIDGE CONVERSIONS


THE PAST COMES ALIVE AGAIN
WITH THESE REPLICAS OF LONG
FORGOTTEN COLT REVOLVERS.

Pure and simple, Samuel Colt was a firearms genius. From the late 1830s to the early 1860s, the finest sixguns of the period bore the name Colt. And Ol' Sam carried the percussion revolver to its highest evolution.

However, Sam Colt's first excursion into firearms manufacturing with the 1836 Patterson resulted in bankruptcy, and 10 years later, when he resumed production of sixguns with the magnificent Walker, he had to hire Eli Whitney to actually make the big .44s. The Walker set Colt on the right path, and by the time of his death in 1862, he saw his finest creation, the 1860 Army Colt, selling by the thousands to equip the troops of the North during the War Between the States.

Photos top to bottom: 1) These Richards-Mason conversions are not only historically interesting, they are fine shootin' sixguns. 2) Cimarron's Richards-Mason cartridge conversions — Model 1851 .38 and Model 1860 .44 Colt — both fitted with ivory micarta grips by Dustin Linebaugh. 3) These three classic sixguns all share the same size grip frame: 1851 Navy .36, Model 1851 Richards-Mason cartridge conversion, and Colt SAA. 4) Notice the difference in the ejector rod assemblies and rear sight location on the Richards conversion (top), and Richards-Mason conversion (bottom)

BY SIXGUNNER AKA JOHN TAFFIN



**CFA .38
MODEL 1851 7½"**
RICHARDS-MASON CARTRIDGE CONVERSION

LOAD/.38 LONG COLT	MV	GROUP*
Black Hills 158	663	1½"
Hornady 148 HBWC/3.2 gr. N-100	693	1¾"
Hornady 148 HBWC/3.0 gr. Unique	672	1¾"
Lyman #358311/3.2 gr. N-100	711	1¾"
Lyman #358311/3.3 gr. TiteGroup	748	2¼"
Lyman #358311/3.2 gr. Red Dot	733	1¾"
Oregon Trail 140 FP/3.2 gr. Red Dot	787	1¾"
Oregon Trail 140 FP/3.3 gr. TiteGroup	786	1½"
Oregon Trail 140 FP/3.2 gr. N-100	745	1¾"
Oregon Trail 158 RNFP/3.2 gr. Red Dot	803	2"
Oregon Trail 158 RNFP/3.3 gr. TiteGroup	770	2½"
LOAD/.38 SPECIAL	MV	GROUP*
Black Hills 158 Cowboy	712	1¾"
UltraMax 125 Cowboy	715	2¼"
UltraMax 158 Cowboy	724	2¼"
Winchester 158 Cowboy	757	1¾"

**CFA .44
COLT MODEL 1860 8"**
RICHARDS-MASON CARTRIDGE CONVERSION

LOAD	MV	GROUP*
Black Hills 200 Cowboy	652	7/8"
Black Hills 230 Cowboy	617	1¾"
Ten-X 200 BPC	651	1¾"
Ten-X 4-in-1 BPC	702	2¼"
Ten-X 200 Cowboy	644	2"
Oregon Trail 225/5.0 gr. N-100	708	2¼"
Oregon Trail 225/5.2 gr. N100	689	1¾"
Oregon Trail 225/4.1 gr. TiteGroup	675	1¾"
Oregon Trail 225/5.3 gr. WW231	676	1¾"
Oregon Trail 225/4.3 gr. Red Dot	713	1¾"
Oregon Trail 200/5.0 gr. N-100	699	2"
Oregon Trail 200/21.5 gr. ClearShot FFFg	678	1½"
Oregon Trail 180/21.5 gr. ClearShot FFFg	658	1"
RCBS 200 Cowboy/25.0 gr. Goex CTG	715	2¼"

**CFA .44
COLT 1860 8"**
RICHARDS CONVERSION

LOAD	MV	GROUP*
Black Hills .44 Colt 230	689	2¼"
Black Hills .44 Colt 200	700	1½"
Black Hills .44 Russian 210	717	1¾"
RCBS #44-200/25.0 gr. Goex FFg	770	1¾"
RCBS #44-200/25.0 gr. Goex FFFg	846	2¼"
RCBS #44-200/25.0 gr. Goex CTRG	719	3¼"
RCBS #44-200/25.0 gr. Pyrodex P	873	3½"
RCBS #44-200/25.0 gr. Pyrodex SLCT	839	1¾"

*FIVE SHOTS AT 50 FEET. ALL BLACK POWDER OR BLACK POWDER SUBSTITUTE LOADS ARE BY VOLUME NOT BY WEIGHT.



Left (top): Some of the excellent powders for reloading the .44 Colt include WW 231, AA N100, Red Dot, and TiteGroup. **(middle):** Natural evolution from 1860 to 1873: 1860 Army (Eagle Ultralvory grips); Richards-Mason cartridge conversion (grips by Dustin Linebaugh); and Colt SAA. **(bottom):** Cimarron's cartridge conversions carry easily in Kirkpatrick Leather's double Prospector rig.



Both Black Hills and Ten-X offer factory loaded .44 Colt ammunition for the Richards-Mason conversion.

An Error In Judgement

Genius though he was, Sam Colt made some grave errors of judgment. He did not believe sixguns that fired fixed ammunition would ever replace cap and ball revolvers. When Horace Smith and Daniel Wesson brought forth their Model No. 1 .22, the first successful cartridge firing revolver, they could only do so by using the Rollin White patent that Colt had turned down.

Sam Colt simply saw no future in producing sixguns that fired fixed ammunition, and his influence lived on long after his death. Smith & Wesson one-upped Colt in 1869 by creating the first successful big bore sixgun that fired fixed ammunition — the Model No. 3 S&W .44 American. But when the United States Government ordered 1,000 Smith & Wesson's, you can bet Colt finally started paying attention.

But Colt had a problem. The Rollin White patent, the very patent that Colt had turned down, was now controlled by Smith and Wesson, and it would not expire for a few years. Until that time passed, Colt could not produce sixguns with bored-through cylinders for use with fixed ammunition.

Colt Catches Up

To circumvent this restriction, Colt developed the Thuer Conversion, which allowed the cylinder of a converted 1860 Army to be loaded from the front with a tapered cartridge. This conversion did not last very long, although some sources say as many as 5,000 were made. Either way, it was soon replaced by a better solution — the Richards conversion.

Charles Richards, an assistant factory superintendent at Colt, was awarded three major patents for breech loading firearms, including the Richards conversion in 1871. Existing cap and ball cylinders were cut off at the back to allow the installation of a con-

pletely different profile. For more in depth information about Colt and Remington conversions, I highly recommend *A Study of Colt Conversions* by R. Bruce McDowell, Krause Publications, 1997. It is an invaluable resource for anyone interested in old Colts.

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Small Sight And Tired Eyes

One drawback to the later Richards-Mason conversion compared to the First Model Richards is the placement of the rear sight. Unlike the Richards' rear sight mounted on the conversion ring, Mason used the simple hammer notch rear sight of the earlier percussion pistols. When Mason redesigned the Richards-Mason conversion to become the 1871-72 Open-Top, he placed the rear sight upon the barrel. When the U.S. Army nudged him into coming up with something better after the Army trials of 1872, the result was the Colt Single Action with a Remington-style top strap and the hog-wallow rear sight incapable of being knocked out of alignment.

Sixgun history would not be complete without the cartridge conversions, as they are the bridge from Colt's percussion revolvers to the Colt Single Action Army — the legendary Peacemaker. For decades western movies featured heroes and villains armed with Colt SAAs, regardless of the time period in which the film was set. Once in a great while, a Smith & Wesson or Remington would show up, but these instances were very rare. Now we regularly see cartridge conversions in recently made movies such as *Crossfire Trail* or *Last Stand at Saber River* as movie makers strive for more authenticity.

Original cartridge conversions were real workin' sixguns, and those remaining from the 1860s and 1870s show evidence of being well used. Those who spent hard earned dollars to convert their cap and ball sixguns did not suddenly discard them when the Colt SAA arrived. Today we live in a throw away society in which money has very little value.

pletely different profile. For more in depth information about Colt and Remington conversions, I highly recommend *A Study of Colt Conversions* by R. Bruce McDowell, Krause Publications, 1997. It is an invaluable resource for anyone interested in old Colts.

The Richards-Mason Conversion

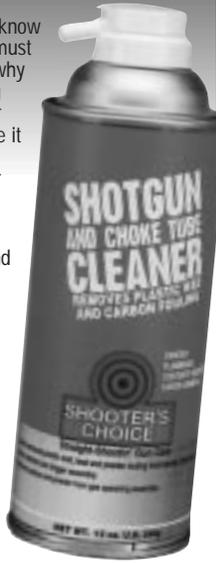
William Mason built on Richards' conversion system with a number of subtle improvements. Mason was superintendent of the armory at Colt from the mid 1860s. He would be responsible for the improvements on the Richards Conversion, the 1871-72 Open-Top, and of course the Colt Single Action Army.

At the time the Richards-Mason conversion was placed into production, much of the old stock of percussion parts had been exhausted. New barrels were produced with a provision for a longer ejector rod housing. They are easily distinguished from the Richards conversions by the web shape under the barrel, as it is boxier with a com-

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It was quite different 140 years ago. Dollars did not come easily and firearms had to last. The conversions performed on cap and ball revolvers gave the owners of these sixguns a great return for the money invested.

Cartridge Conversions Today

Cimarron's Colt cartridge conversions are not only being used by movie makers, they are also very popular with Cowboy Action Shooters, especially with those having a late 1860's persona. However, even if one doesn't take part in this grand sport, the cartridge conversions are sixguns that can deliver a lot of pure sixgunner's pleasure.

Most of us will never have the opportunity to fire an original Thuer, Richards or Richards-Mason Conversion. Today, thanks to Cimarron Firearms, we can shoot two out of three in brand new sixguns. And as they say, "two outta' three ain't bad."

Editor's note: Those good folks at Cimarron aren't satisfied with "two outta' three." They are working on a Thuer conversion for the true historical sixgun aficionado, and they expect these to be available in 12 months or so.

Two years ago, I picked up Richards conversions in both .38 Special/.38 Long Colt and .44 Colt as offered by Cimarron. The Richards-Mason conversion is now available. The .38s come on the Model 1851 platform with the standard grip frame, while the .44s sit on the larger 1860 platform with the longer 1860 grip frame. Original cartridge conversions were for black powder only, but unlike the originals, these Cimarron cartridge conversions work fine with both black powder or black powder equivalent smokeless loads.

Semi-Historic Cartridges

In order to give us a replica Colt cartridge conversion that could be shot and enjoyed, it was necessary to modernize the ammunition. The original Colt fired a .451-inch or .375-inch round ball, depending upon which sixgun was used: the 1860 Army .44 or 1851 Navy .36. Original conversions were chambered for rounds that used a heel type bullet, a bullet with a base smaller in diameter than the rest of the bullet. This resulted in bullets with the same diameter as the outside of the cartridge case, much like today's .22 rimfire rounds. These original conversion cartridges were the .44 Colt and .38 Long Colt.

Modern ammunition uses bullets of uniform diameter smaller than the outside diameter of the brass case itself. The new Cimarron cartridge conversions simplify things for us, with some help from Starline brass and Black Hills Ammunition. The new 1851 Navy cartridge conversions fire standard .38 Special loads, or the shorter .38 Long Colt loads, both available from Black Hills.

The current version of the 1860 Army conversion required a "new" cartridge. This new .44 Colt is simply the .44 Special trimmed back from 1.16 inch to approximately 1.10 inch. In addition, rims are

reduced in diameter. My cases from Starline have a rim diameter of .487 inch.

At The Loading Bench

For loading the .44 Colt, one can use .44 Magnum dies but it may be necessary to grind some material from the bottom of the die, as many of today's .44 dies — designed to handle both .44 Special and .44 Magnum — are too long for crimping the .44 Colt. The easier solution is to order .44 Russian dies from RCBS. Then you're set to load both .44 Colt and .44 Russian. The standard shell holder for the .44 Russian/.44 Special/.44 Magnum works, but the proper shell holder is the RCBS No. 2, the same size as used for the .30-30.

The original loading for the .44 Colt was 28 grains of black powder. In modern solid head brass, I normally use 25 grains by volume measure of Goex FFG, FFFg, Cartridge, or ClearShot; Hodgdon's black powder substitute; and Pyrodex in both the P and Select grades. Smokeless powders normally used for standard sixgun loads: Unique, TiteGroup, Red Dot, and N-100, all work fine with suitable loads in the cartridge conversions.

Not Always Perfect

The Richards conversions I tested a few years ago were the first into the country. Both had problems. The 1851 Navy Richards had a very smooth action. But it would sometimes get out of sync, and the hammer would fail to cock. If the cylinder was rotated slightly it would right itself. The 1860 Army was a simple matter of poor inspection as the walls of one chamber were filled with circular scoring.

The two latest versions I've just inspected — one a .38 Navy and the other a .44 Colt Army Richards-Mason conversion — exhibit excellent fit and finish with no problems whatsoever. Well, no problems except for the fact that pistoleros from that era must have either had very good eyesight. Or they relied entirely on movie style point shooting.

The rear sights on the original Richards conversions were a very small V notch. This is faithfully recreated on the Uberti-manufactured Cimarron conversions, requiring a lot of concentration for me to use these guns by sighting in the traditional way. The Richards-Mason conversions have even smaller rear sights with a V notch in the hammer. They are authentic, and not meant for eyes that spent a lifetime staring at movie and television screens. Or that now spend hundreds of hours every year typing articles while glaring at a computer screen.

Grips And Grip Frames

The original Colt 1851 Navy has the grip frame that eventually became the Colt SAA grip, with little or no change. This is the same grip shape found on Cimarron's 1851 Richards-Mason cartridge conversions. The cartridge conversions based upon the 1860

Army carry the longer and more comfortable grip originally found on that revolver. Original Colt cartridge conversions were available with either grip frame. I do believe the suppliers of Colt SAA replicas miss something by not offering the longer 1860 grip frame, which better fits large hands.

The shape of the grips supplied on these cartridge conversions are near perfect for my hands. However, all of these Cimarron six-guns, whether of the Richards or Richards-Mason type, deserve grips of better materials than those supplied. Whether on Colt SAA replicas, cap and ball, or cartridge conversion models, the grips always seem to shout: "Hey! Look at me. I'm an Italian replica!"

I realize that the way we feel about grips is purely subjective, but I like these cartridge conversions so well that I had to replace the grips, or stocks if you prefer. I sent a pair of .44 Colt Richards conversions off to Eagle for the relatively new UltraIvory stocks. This new synthetic is unlike any other offered, and difficult for one to tell whether or not it's real ivory. They look and feel like ivory, and the panels are cut from larger blocks, and then shaped and fitted, not cast. Both .44 Colt Richards conversions now wear Eagle one-piece UltraIvories.

Stocks By Linebaugh

For the Richards-Mason conversions I took a different path. I have long been a supporter of John Linebaugh's custom big bore sixguns. When I first met John he had a pair of boys with him who were not only safer than most adults when it came to handling sixguns, they could *shoot* those little .22s they packed. Now those boys are all grown up, and Dustin Linebaugh makes excellent sixgun stocks — many of which are on the custom sixguns from Linebaugh Custom Sixguns.

Dustin prefers to fit grips as perfectly as possible to the grip frame, which means polishing the grips and frame together. After such work, the grip frames must be re-blued. The Richards-Mason in .44 Colt already had a steel grip frame as found on the 1860 Army, while the .38 Model 1851 cartridge conversion came with a brass grip frame. Since I wanted to carry these two sixguns as a slightly mismatched pair, the .38 was fitted with a steel back strap and trigger guard before being shipped off to Dustin.

Dustin's work in white micarta is just about perfect. The ivory-colored micarta one-piece grips set off both guns, giving them a completely different look than the "walnut" stocks of the original equipment. I recommend him highly for any grips for any sixgun.

What's A Sixgun Without A Holster?

Pickin' leather for carrying the Cimarron cartridge conversions was easy. A few years ago I had Kirkpatrick Leather build me a double Prospector rig for a pair of 1860 Armies. These fully-lined, Slim Jim-style holsters hang straight on the belt and make it easy to wear them butts to the front or to the rear.

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The matching belt is also lined, with everything basket stamped and a light tan color.

Though made for the 1860 Armies, their square and open bottom leave enough room for the ejector housings of either the Richards or Richards-Mason conversions. This is excellent leather, so much so in fact that I have since added a similar double rig, black floral carved, for a pair of 7½ inch stainless steel Ruger Vaqueros. Just this month I took possession of a third set of Kirkpatrick Prospectors in plain black to carry two 4¾ inch Colt SAAs.

I use these with cartridge slides rather than bullet loops on the belt as it makes them so much more versatile. If I don't want to carry a lot of cartridges I do not have a lot of empty loops. I can go with no cartridges, or six or 12.

A Pleasure To Use

Both Cimarron Colt cartridge conversions were test-fired with smokeless loads and black powder handloads. Even with the crude-by-modern-standards sights and my older eyes, these sixguns turned in some excellent groups with both smokeless and black powder, both factory and hand assembled. So much so that I've already sent the check to Cimarron to purchase these sixguns for my personal and pleasurable use. The accompanying table has the complete results.

When Colt and Smith & Wesson introduced their cartridge firing sixguns in the

early 1870s, thousands of perfectly good cap and ball sixguns were still in service. The conversions performed on these revolvers kept many of them shooting right through the turn of the 20th century. Now, thanks to Uberti and Cimarron, a whole new crop of 21st century shooters can enjoy these important chapters of sixgun history. Sometimes progress actually works.



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Blinking, the closing of the eyes when firing a shot, is one of the most common shooting faults. It's a mild form of flinching, a natural reaction to the noise and commotion that results when a firearm discharges. Previously I've discussed how to detect and remedy blinking. Using a video camera can record if you blink. Intensive dry firing develops a subconscious habit of keeping the eyes open as the sear releases.

But what's the big deal? As long as sights are aligned on target and the trigger breaks cleanly, what does it matter if the eyes are closed at the instant of ignition? As far as hitting the target goes, it doesn't. It's possible to blink every time and still be a good shot. But to be really good, you have to learn to keep the eyes open to see what happens as the shot is fired.

The Path To Improvement

The conscious mind learns intellectually by repetition and reinforcement. That's how we learned multiplication tables and state capitals. Physical skills are learned best and deepest at a subconscious level. The subconscious learns best through a process of action/feedback.

The faster the feedback is received, the more strongly it reinforces the lesson. One of the earliest lessons we've all learned is not to touch a hot object. How did we learn? By touching a hot object and getting burned. The feedback (pain) is virtually instantaneous. Suppose the pain didn't hit until 10 minutes after we touched the hot object. At a conscious, intellectual level we might think, "Hmmm, that finger really hurts. Must have touched something hot, maybe that baking dish from the oven. Have to remember not to do that again."

Because there was such a long delay between action and feedback, at a subconscious level the connection between the two is weak and the learning process slow. We'd likely have to burn ourselves 20 or 30 times before we formed a habit of not touching hot objects.

Time Is Critical

Research by sports experts has shown that the physical memories of an action fade at the rate of 30 percent every eight seconds. Now let's say we're practicing shooting from the sitting position with sling. We are trying to internalize a specific set of physical skills at a subconscious level; forming a comfortable, stable, repeatable shooting

platform; holding the rifle as still as possible; indexing the sight; coordinating trigger release with sight movement; letting the shot break without imparting additional movement; and then following through so the rifle recoils in a consistent manner.

If at every shot we blink our eyes just as the gun fires, there is no visual feedback of what the crosshairs were doing or where they were just as the shot broke.

After firing a string of shots we get up, set the rifle on the bench with action open, maybe wait for the range officer's permission, trudge downrange and examine the target. Now, finally, we have some feedback — the location of the bullet holes on the target. Whether the group is good or bad, several minutes have passed since we carried out the physical actions of firing the shots, and the subconscious memories of just what we did, right or wrong, have faded rapidly. There is some learning, but the effect is weak.



The challenges to marksmanship have not changed. Shooters at this 1947 benchrest match fought blinking and anticipating the shot, just as we do.

Immediate Feedback

Physical skills develop much faster at a subconscious level if feedback is received more quickly, and the sooner the better. The use of steel targets provides very quick, audible feedback. There are, however, disadvantages. Steel targets suitable for centerfire rifles are expensive and often unavailable. Their audible feedback rewards an edge hit as well as a center struck.

But the fastest feedback of all is to call the shot; to watch the sights or crosshairs intently as the shot fires. Once the shooter learns to keep his eyes open and call the shot, the subconscious gets immediate, accurate feedback. If the crosshairs dip sharply just as the shot breaks, the subconscious immediately connects action with

results. *Jerk trigger* equals sight moves. *Press trigger smoothly* equals sight remains still. But if the eyes are closed as the gun discharges that critical feedback is lost.

Another example: maximum precision requires the rifle be held the same for every shot, so that the recoil pattern is consistent. By watching the movement of the sight during recoil we get prompt feedback of consistency in our hold. Ideally the sight should track exactly the same during recoil from shot to shot. If the hold changes, the different movement of the sight tells us so immediately.

Proofing Your Practice

Let's say that through intensive dry fire practice we've ingrained the habit of keeping the eyes open while the rifle discharges. How do we learn to call the shot? Here's an exercise I learned from J. Michael Plaxco, a world-class competitor and coach. To illustrate, we'll assume you shoot from the sitting position at a 200 yard target. Your rifle has been carefully sighted, and will shoot into 2 inches at 200 yards.

For the exercise you'll need two identical targets. One is stapled to the target frame, the other is beside you on the ground, along with a marking pen. Take up the sitting position and fire a shot at the 200 yard target, trying to hit dead center. Watch the crosshairs intently and note their position at the instant the shot breaks. Now take the marking pen and make a bullet-hole sized dot on the target beside you, at the exact position where you recall the crosshairs were as the shot broke. For example, if you recall that the crosshairs were at 9 o'clock, an inch outside the black, that's where you mark the target beside you.

Shoot four more rounds, calling the position of the crosshairs each time and marking it on your target. Now go downrange and compare the marked target to the one you fired at. If you called each shot correctly, the group marked with the pen and the group made by bullets should be similar. They won't likely be identical, that would take both a perfect call and a perfect rifle. But they should be close.

This is a tough drill. Don't be discouraged if results aren't very good at first, but keep at it. The results are worth the effort. If 200 yards is too difficult or too easy, use a different distance. A pitfall to beware of is that at too close range, with a quality scope, one can spot the bullet strike through the scope, making it easy to cheat. Just remember who it is that's being cheated.



Rimfire That Wouldn't Die

New ammunition from CCI sends the vintage .22 WRF back into the game fields.

By C. Rodney James

Winchester introduced its first pump rifle in 1890, designed by none other than John Browning and chambered in the .22 Winchester Rimfire. Though also known as the Remington .22 Special, we can designate the .22 Winchester Rimfire (WRF) the first ever .22 Magnum because of its similar dimension and ability to chamber in other .22 Magnum guns. But most importantly, even after all these years, the WRF refuses to die.

A More Potent, Modern Rimfire

With a 45 grain bullet lubricated and seated in the modern manner with the bearing surface protected, the WRF proved a significant step beyond the .22 long rifle, whose heel crimp left bullets exposed to the elements. The WRF held 7 grains of black powder compared to the long rifle's 5 grains. The WRF's original muzzle velocity was about 1,100 fps, and its flat-pointed bullet was a better stopper than the long rifle's round nose.

With the arrival of high-speed loadings in the 1930s, which clocked at between 1,400 and 1,500 feet per second, the WRF's trajectory proved flatter than that of the .22 long rifle, making the WRF a better killer of tough varmints such as woodchucks, but without the damage "varmint" cartridges



CCI's new .22 WRF ammunition should help rescue many vintage rifles from exile in a dusty closet.



could do to squirrels, rabbits and grouse. The improved lethality made the WRF a reliable tool on the farm for butchering pigs and cattle. Unfortunately, most such rifles hung on a nail in the barn uncleaned from one use to the next

The length advantage of the WRF made it a better shooter than the long rifle in long-cylinder revolvers such as the Colt Pocket Positive and Officer's Match revolvers. During the '20s and '30s, Stevens chambered a number of their heavy barreled 22s for the WRF. A good iron-sighted rifle such as a Stevens, Winchester's 1890 and Model 61, or Remington's 121S, will place its shots into a 2.5 inch circle at 100 yards.

Accuracy Standard

Machine rest groups recounted in C.S. Landis' excellent book *.22 Caliber Rifle Shooting* run 1.56 inches, 1.06 inches and 1.10 inches for three consecutive 10 shot groups with the Winchester hollow-point round at 100 yards. This level of accuracy is quite possible with a target rifle and a good scope. But unlike the .22 Magnum, for which no target or true varmint rifles (as of this writing) have been made, the WRF chambering was available in the Stevens 417, one of their best target rifles which was discontinued in the late 1940s.

Sadly, a number of good guns failed to come back into production after World War II, and the WRF chambering was hard hit. The last offering in this caliber was the Winchester 61 hammerless pump, which dropped the WRF chambering in 1955.

After the guns departed, the ammunition was next. The hollow-point loading went first and then the flat-point was discontinued in 1982. Outraged shooters bombarded Winchester with enough requests that the ammunition company calculated

the cost of answering letters was greater than doing another run of the ammunition. In 1985, with some fanfare and a new antique-style box design, a "limited" run was produced. Dealers snapped it up almost immediately. A few months later, a second run was made and later a third — all of which were bought in short order. Finally, Winchester realized there was a real demand. The cartridge again appears in their general line of ammunition as a regular item.

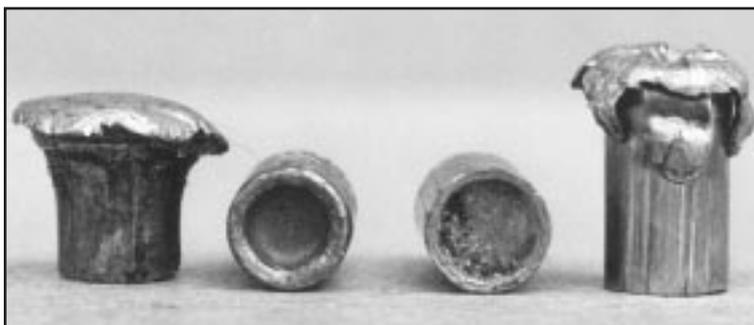
WW 45 GR. FLAT POINT	CCI 45 GR. HP VELOCITIES.
1,439 +	1,408 +
1,387 -	1,274 -
0052 E	0134 E
1,421 M	1,366 M
0023 S	0053 S

VELOCITY TABLE

(+) Highest (E) Extreme spread (-) Lowest
(M) Mean average (S) Standard deviation

All data was recorded with an Oeler 35P Chronograph placed 10 feet from the muzzle.

Right: Fired into water at close range, both plated and jacketed rounds give good expansion. Copper jacket and hollow base of CCI's new .22 WRF loading improve performance in worn, eroded barrels. **Below:** (L to R) .22 WRF early smokeless loading from Winchester; smokeless non-corrosive standard velocity version from the 1930; first Winchester high speed loading; 1931 and later version with plain brass case; current Winchester high velocity flat-point with plated bullet, and CCI jacketed HP. .22 long rifle and .22 Magnum shown for comparison.



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We tested using a relined 1890 Winchester, mechanically sound with a reasonably good bore. Because the post and notch sights were not adequate for long-range shooting we limited our shots to 50 yards, with a couple of groups at 75.

Tough Conditions

In Ohio, breezy fall weather remained throughout most of October. The 22nd of October produced 70 degrees and calm conditions with winds gusting up to 15 mph, but mostly staying in the 4 to 7 mph range. We tried to shoot during the calm intervals. As a benchmark we fired a 5 shot group at 75 yards with a bull barrel Winchester 52 and Winchester Power Point hunting ammunition, which is capable of .55 inch groups at 100 yards in this rifle under dead calm conditions. This day it put five rounds into 1 inch at 75 yards.

Three 5-shot test groups with the 1890 put the Winchester copper-plated ammunition into 1 inch at 50 yards. The copper-jacketed CCI went into .7 inch at this range. At 75 yards the CCI registered 1.5 inch to the Winchester's 1.4 inch. Wind was undoubtedly a factor in these results.

When Switching Ammo...

One important caveat is barrel cleaning. The WRF is the only rimfire round currently available with both jacketed and lead-alloy bullets. Copper has a great affinity for lead. The copper fouling left by the jacketed bullets causes stripping and leading on the part of the lead alloy bullets, even those such as the current Winchester which are copper plated. This copper fouling must be completely removed when switching from jacketed to lead ammunition. There are no problems the other way around.

While I would not urge anyone to rush out and buy a WRF gun, I notice arms in this caliber sell at gun shows for significantly lower prices than their .22 long rifle counterparts. If a fine 1890, Model 61 Winchester, or 417 Stevens turned up, and I liked the idea of owning a classic I could shoot, I don't think I'd turn it down — if the price was right. Ammunition is available, and will continue to be for the foreseeable future. And the current jacketed bullets from CCI may well provide a new shooting life for that WRF gun passed down through the family that's spent the last couple decades hanging in the closet.



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NAVY ARMS' SHARPS NO.2 CREEDMORE

Upon first seeing this Sharps, the author felt an irresistible attraction. Be careful — you may too.

STORY BY DICK WILLIAMS

PHOTOS BY JIM GARDNER



“Admittedly I’m a .45-70 fan, but the Navy Arms No. 2 Creedmore Sharps is probably the most enjoyable rifle I’ve handled in a long time.”

Not all the hardships Ulysses suffered on his voyage home from the Trojan War were caused by the gods. Because of his desire to experience the irresistible call of the Sirens, he had his men tie him to the mast and plug their ears so they would not succumb to the voices and steer the ship into the rocks. The story says Ulysses nearly went mad screaming at his crew to turn the ship. They could not hear his orders any more than they could hear the Sirens, so they continued on course to safety.

As gun lovers and shooters, we frequently experience some level of Ulysses’ frustration at gun shows, usually after we have spent all our money and suddenly see that “irresistible” firearm. Perhaps it was the SHOT Show Sirens that placed the Navy Arms Sharps No. 2 in my path last February.

It’s A Beauty

Navy Arms’ No. 2 Creedmore is a replica of the 19th century Sharps single shot rifle. The rifle is manufactured in Italy by the respected firm of Davide Pedersoli. Though chambered in the common .45-70, as are many of the replicas, this one is a bit different.

The first three things that caught my eye were the beautiful stock, the chrome vanadium steel receiver finished in electroless nickel, and the rather slender (for a Sharps), round barrel. Upon further examination, other interesting features surfaced, but let’s stay with these three for now. The stock and forearm are beautifully grained dark walnut with nicely done checkering on the pistol grip and forearm. A couple of the checkering border lines extended a wee bit beyond the pattern, but you need to look care-

LOAD	AVG. VELOCITY (fps)	GROUP SIZE (inches @ 50 yards)
Federal 300 JHP	1,775	1½"
Remington 300 JHP	1,790	¾"
Remington 405 JSP	1,351	1¼"
Winchester 300 JHP	1,844	1¾"
Winchester 300 Part Gold	1,794	1¾"
Black Hills 405 Cowboy	1,294	1¾"
PMC 405 Cowboy	1,334	1¾"
27.5gr/AA5744/400gr Cast	1,337	1"
29gr/5744/500gr Schmittzer	1,307	1¾"
31gr/5744/500gr Schmittzer	1,366	2½"
27gr/5744/535gr Postell	1,271	¾"
29gr/5744/535gr Postell	1,326	1¾"
39gr/RL7/500gr Schmittzer	**	2¾"
39gr/RL7/535gr Postell	**	1¾"
43gr/4895/500gr Schmittzer	**	2½"
43gr/4895/535gr Postell	**	2¾"
* 60gr/H777/400 Cast	1,348	1½"
* 60gr/H777/535 Postell	1,205	1"
* 1 ea 50gr/50 caliber Pyrodex pellet	1,154	2¼"
* 2 ea 30 gr/50 caliber Pyrodex pellets	**	4"
* 2 ea 30 gr/45 caliber Pyrodex pellets	1,398	1½"

* Black Powder loads (H777 is Hodgdon’s new BP substitute)
** No chronograph readings due to logistic problems



fully to see it.

The stock wears a wide, steel shotgun type butt plate that minimizes felt recoil compared to a deeply dished rifle type butt. Interestingly, close inspection shows that the buttstock is a lamination, consisting of at least four sections. Given the strength of modern adhesives, this construction is actually stronger than a one-piece stock. The joint lines are very faint, and are not readily apparent at first glance.

The forearm is slender (befitting the round barrel) and tapers toward the schnabel tip. Fit of wood to metal everywhere is quite good. And did I mention that the grain pattern was beautiful?

Receiver, loading lever, hammer, lock-plate, and takedown lever all wear the electroless nickel finish, while the breech block and screws are nicely blued. The overall contrast of nickel, blued steel and richly grained walnut is very attractive. The barrel is finished in a matte blue and is 30 inches long, with a diameter that tapers from just under 1.1 inches near the breech to less than .9 inch at the muzzle. It is lighter and looks much smaller than the octagonal barrels common to most Sharps replicas. Combined with the tapered schnabel forearm, the rifle seems far more sleek and trim than other Sharps I've handled. Sitting on the rack, it practically begged me to pick it up and venture forth in search of buffalo.

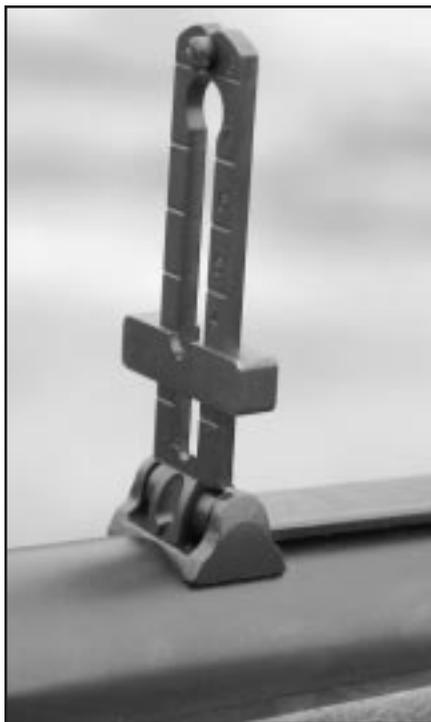
A Wealth Of Sights

The sights on the Navy Arms Sharps No. 2 are excellent, but as delivered, are probably more appropriate for target shooting than hunting or field use. Starting at the muzzle, the front sight consists of a large hood dovetailed into the barrel. A spring steel keeper retains any one of 12 sight inserts provided with the rifle.

The supplied inserts include apertures, posts of various widths, and cross hairs. I used the narrower post insert for all group testing and hunting. While I used it successfully on a pig hunt, the globe front sight tends to block a lot of light and obscure the shooter's view of the target area. This was a bit of a problem with dark animals in the low light conditions of early morning and late evening.

If the gun is to be used primarily for hunting, you might consider removing the globe front sight and replacing it with a conventional post. That said, it's great fun playing with different inserts at the range, and one of the inserts might work perfectly for a hunter with younger eyes than mine.

A traditional looking ladder rear sight is mounted on the barrel. With the ladder down, a U-notch is exposed for close range shooting. Elevating the ladder portion of the sight allows the slider to be set into one of 17 positive click stops. The standing ladder is graduated with eight horizontal lines marked from 1 to 8. I can't correlate the markings on the ladder to specific ranges because I didn't do my shooting with the ladder sight. I chose instead to employ the vernier tang sight, and for me, this is the



The barrel-mounted ladder sight is traditional, but may interfere with use of the tang sight.

jewel of the No. 2's sighting system.

Much Improved Vernier

Pedersoli has acted on input from black powder cartridge rifle shooters to greatly improve its vernier sight. The sight base mounts easily to the top tang of the receiver, but does require a little careful adjustment when initially installed. The sight tension spring, mounted on top of the sight base, must be correctly positioned to ensure that the staff of the sight will stand perpendicular to the shooter's line of sight when raised into shooting position. Given the very small hole in the aperture disk, slightly off the perpendicular means you can't see through the aperture.

Once properly mounted and put into use, the advantages of the aperture sight become readily apparent. Adjustments are easy and repeatable with micrometer marks for both elevation and windage. Simply loosen the aperture disk by unscrewing it, turn an adjustment screw, then re-tighten the aperture disk to lock your setting. The sight provides about 2/4 to 2/2 inches vertical adjustment and about 1/2 inch horizontal adjustment.

As we learned long ago, sight pictures with apertures are crisp, and the eye does all the work of centering things automatically. In bright sunlight, groups were small and life was good, but as mentioned earlier, the aperture size seemed a bit small for me. I'll grudgingly admit it might be perfect for a target shooter with keener eyes, which translates to a younger shooter. In any case, it's an easy job to enlarge the aperture if required. For those contemplating different models of Sharps, Navy Arms will be upgrading their Buffalo and Sporting Sharps model with this

improved model vernier sight.

Navy's No. 2 Creedmore looks very period correct with both barrel-mounted ladder sight and vernier tang. However, you will need to give some thought to your most likely use of the rifle. The presence of the ladder sight complicates the use of the vernier, especially at close ranges.

As an example, when zeroing the rifle with Winchester's 300 grain Partition Gold ammo preparatory to a hog hunt at the Tejon Ranch in Southern California, I found myself shooting 5 inches high at 120 yards when the ladder sight got in the way. Lowering the aperture any further was out of the question.

If the rifle will be used principally on the target range, then removing the ladder sight will be in order. If hunting and casual field shooting are your normal pursuits, you will find it a simple matter to remove the tang sight from its base by merely removing the pivot bolt. This allows a quick re-installation when you desire to use the vernier sight for longer range shooting. I suspect the tang sight will return closely to its original zero, but I can't say that I actually verified that.

Operation And Features

The Sharps is the classic falling block rifle. Lowering the loading lever drops the breech block for loading. At the bottom of the lever's stroke, the extractor pulls the spent cartridge partially from the chamber. On a few occasions the fired case was not extracted sufficiently and a cleaning rod had to be dropped down the barrel to remove the case.

This happened less frequently over time, particularly when the gun was clean, (which was almost never the case) so I have to suspect my slothful maintenance habits as being the culprit. Raising the lever elevates the breech block back into shooting position. Proper shooting practice with the side-hammer Sharps dictates that the hammer be drawn back to half cock prior to opening or closing the breech.

Superb Set Triggers

One of my favorite things on the Sharps is the trigger system. These are the classic double set triggers which allow you to set the front trigger by first pulling the rear trigger. You can then almost *wish* the gun to fire. It isn't necessary to set the front trigger before firing, but the trigger is extremely heavy in the unset mode. I fired exactly one round in this unset mode and that was just to test the weight of pull which seemed to be well over the 12 pound measuring capacity of my Lyman electronic digital trigger pull gauge. Every other round fired, even when hunting, was fired using the set function. Weight of pull in the set mode measured a mere 9 ounces. Perhaps there will come an occasion when I'm feeling rushed enough to just pull that unset 12 pound trigger, but I

doubt it.

Proper Fodder

The Navy Arms Sharps in .45-70 is not a fussy eater, doing quite well with a variety of loads. I confined myself to the milder .45-70 loads in working with the Sharps. Factory jacketed ammo featured 300 to 400 grain bullets with velocities as shown in Table I. The cowboy cast loads from Black Hills and PMC were absolutely delightful to shoot. For the heavy weight cast bullet reloads, I used charges recommended by Lyman, Hodgdon and Accurate Arms in their literature. Velocities were measured on a Pact chronograph with the screens at 10 to 15 feet from the muzzle.

Schedule complications precluded me from getting out to a proper rifle range, and thus group testing was done over sandbags and consisted of three shot groups at 50 yards. Recoil of some of the heavier loads tested was brisk, but nothing shown in the tables was abusive.

When shooting with the tang sight, I had to push my cowboy hat or baseball cap up and back on my head to keep it from being knocked askew by the sight in recoil. This is a non-issue with baseball caps because we have a whole generation struggling to find the proper position for these sartorial accoutrements. But when wearing a cowboy hat



with spectators present, beware! No one trusts a cowboy with a skewed hat.

Fit For The Field

A quick report on the hog's demise is now in order. My guide Cody Plank and I were working the foothills of the Tejon Ranch at daybreak. It was technically daylight, but still pretty dim, when we spotted a large, dark, lone boar a few hundred yards away. He was in the open and started running immediately upon seeing us. He ran laterally right to left in

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side looking at us. On my next look through the sights I saw him, and it seemed like he filled the entire front sight hood. Knowing the Winchester Partition Golds were about 5 inches high, I squeezed his dark body into the upper half of the hood while setting the front trigger. There was no time for anything other than an off-hand shot and the Sharps seemed remarkably steady.

When the front sight hood was half filled with ground and half filled with pig and it looked like the top of the post was behind his shoulder and just into his chest, I touched off the front trigger. A dust cloud appeared immediately behind the boar and he took off running toward his canyon. Both Cody and I thought I had missed based upon the dust and the poor light conditions. After running a couple hundred yards, the pig reached the first scrub oak and lay down under it. Cody, watching the boar through his binoculars, said: "I think you got him."

We walked down to the boar and, except for one twitch that had us both reaching for our holstered .44 mags, he was done. The 300 grain Partition Gold had passed completely through the chest cavity at a slight downward angle taking out much of the lungs. Interestingly, the entry hole was larger than the exit hole indicating the Partition Gold jacket petals had peeled back quickly, aided no doubt by the 1½ inches of gristle plating over the pig's shoulders, and then pushed on through the body. Perfect performance.

Cody gave me one of those funny guide looks and admitted he was pretty impressed with the shot. Someday I may tell Cody the shot was perhaps more luck than skill. Meanwhile, he's very young, and I'm at an age where building a legendary reputation gets more difficult with each passing year. I answered his funny guide look with a professional gun writer nod.

Admittedly I'm a .45-70 fan, but the Navy Arms No. 2 Creedmore Sharps is probably the most enjoyable rifle I've handled in a long time. While there are some modifications I would make depending upon the gun's primary usage, I have yet to make any changes. I continue to shoot the gun with all the original factory options installed and continue to enjoy myself. What more could you ask of a rifle? If you would like one of these excellent rifles, contact your local dealer or Navy Arms at the address below. If you would like an inexpensive weekend or weekday hunt for wild boar within one hour of Los Angeles anytime of the year with your new Sharps, contact Tejon Ranch at the address below.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Navy Arms Company
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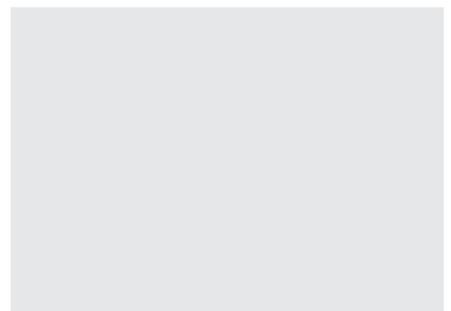
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RUGER'S ELEGANT GAME GUN

With its flair for blending nostalgic designs with modern production methods, Sturm, Ruger & Co. has produced another classic firearm — the Gold Label, 12 gauge, side-by-side, upland game gun.

The new Gold Label is a remarkable achievement. First, because the Gold Label features the aesthetic, handling and dynamic qualities of a handmade English game gun. And second, because Ruger brings this quality side-by-side to the marketplace at a suggested retail price of only \$1,950.

Scheduled to be shipped to dealers in the second half of 2002, we expect to have a test Gold Label gun in our hands soon in order to write a more complete review. But here are my impressions from handling the Gold Label at the 2002 SHOT Show, where it made its debut.

In the traditional sense, an upland game gun as made by the best of the English gun makers, is a 12 gauge side-by-side weighing between 5.5 and 6.25 pounds. It has a straight grip and shallow splinter forearm, is lively and very dynamic in the hands — in short, a blend of functional elegance and economy of form that has evolved from the flintlock doubles of the 18th century up till the present day. The game gun is normally fitted to the specific shooter during the building process, which can still take two or more years to complete. Cost, at a minimum, is \$35,000.

What struck me about the Ruger Gold Label is its weight of 6.25 pounds or less and its weight distribution. How did they do it? Although chambered for the 3 inch shell, the 28 inch hammer forged barrels are exceedingly thin and pleasantly contoured. Fitted with thin-walled interchangeable choke tubes that are steel shot compatible, the barrels maintain slim profiles without the bulbous look at the muzzle that is so prevalent in choke-tubed barrels today.



Ruger's Gold Label SxS is built in the classic tradition of fine upland game guns.

The rounded stainless steel action is so shallow and small, it almost looks like it belongs on a 20 gauge rather than a 12. With its splinter forearm and straight-gripped stock, the Gold label balances 3/8 inch ahead of the hinge pin, which places the weight evenly distributed between the hands. This gun is a natural pointer!

We'll have a lot more to say about this exciting new Ruger as soon as we have an opportunity to test it in the field and on the range.

The Six Foot Barrel

When I first saw this barrel in the Hastings' booth at the Shot Show, I thought it was an advertising stunt for the firm's popular replacement shotgun barrel and choke tube lines. Hastings representative, Aaron Bloom, soon set me straight.

The barrel is actually two 12 gauge barrels — a 32 inch Remington Model 870 barrel and a 36 inch Hastings barrel — that screws into the choke tube threads of the Remington. The Hastings extension barrel is fitted for choke tubes and ported with a number of small round holes running around and along its length.

What's the purpose of this strange looking combination?

The quiet elimination of problem fowl and beasts in urban settings.

By using a load like Winchester's 26 gram Low Recoil/Low Noise round, the report from the Hastings' 6 foot barrel is exceedingly quiet and not one to raise the rancor of nearby residents.

It's a simple, ingenious, low-tech solution to a growing problem — as any goose-hassled golfer will tell you.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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This is a serious 6-foot barrel for problem wildlife control.

Worthy Of The Name

Over the last few months I have been testing an interesting new semiautomatic version of Kalashnikov's rifle, the SA M-7. While semi-auto AKs are nothing new to the American market, the SA M-7 offers a twist. It's American made. Built on a forged steel and CNC machined receiver, the SA M-7 represents an interesting step in the life and manufacture of this venerable rifle series. Produced by Arsenal, Inc. of Las Vegas, Nev., it's the first time that full-scale licensed production of the AK-47 has been undertaken outside the Eastern Block.

In the past, stamped AKM and milled AK-47 receivers have indeed been manufactured in the U.S. So what's the difference, you may be asking. In one word? Quality. Arsenal, Inc. is not some fly by night operation stamping out junk. Instead they are licensed by Arsenal Co. Ltd. of Bulgaria.

Arsenal Co. Ltd.'s history goes back to 1878 when Artillery Arsenal of Rouseau was first founded. This factory was tasked with supplying the newly formed Bulgarian Army. In 1891, the factory was transferred to Sofia and became the Sofia Artillery Arsenal.

Six years after the end of the Great War the factory was once again moved, this time for strategic reasons, to Kazanlak as the State Military Factory. As the years went by the factory grew and expanded to become a vital part of the nation's economy. From 1956-58 the Russians set up and licensed the factory to produce the AK-47 Avtomat. By 1982, 1 million of these rifles had been produced. Today, the company is a vast enterprise that specializes in small arms, artillery systems, ammunition, hard alloy tools, machine building, and much more.

The Right Stuff

The rifles of the U.S. firm Arsenal Inc. are produced with the benefit of the Bulgarian Arsenal Co. Ltd's 43 years of experience. Each rifle starts life as a heavy steel receiver forging. This raw forging then undergoes some 150 machining operations on CNC equipment to become a finished receiver. Each receiver is then heat treated using the same exact system the Bulgarians have long used for their military rifles. The same Rockwell hardness is achieved and each unit is X-rayed to check for imperfections.

To this new receiver is mated a chrome lined, cold hammer-forged barrel produced with technology from Steyr. At the end of the barrel an effective muzzle brake from the SLR-95 is mounted. Inside the receiver, the rifle's fire control parts all start life as forgings, not castings. They are then precisely CNC machined to exact

tolerances. The locking lugs on the bolts are even matched to the locking shoulders of the receiver.

The furniture is a modern black synthetic. The buttstock is 1.25 inches longer than the standard military buttstock. This added length will endear it to most Americans. The forend is based upon the current Russian, rather than Bulgarian, pattern and incorporates a steel heat shield. The pistol grip features a metal insert.

Sights consist of a sliding tangent rear graduated out to 800 meters. A protected post front sight is adjustable for both windage and elevation when zeroing. Finish is a matte black powder coat over parkerizing. Caliber is the tried and true 7.62x39 M43 cartridge that's respected around the world.

Deserving Of A Close Look

Interest perked, I contacted the folks at Arsenal Inc. about receiving one of their rifles for review. They were kind enough not only to send me a rifle, but also a receiver forging and forged fire control parts to examine. The bare receiver forging is impressive, especially to anyone who works metal for a living. Most of it simply ends up as scrap on the floor. I had a nationally known gunsmith examine the fire control parts. His comment on them was simply, "beautiful."

Arsenal Inc. is very vocal of the fact that their rifles are produced exactly in accordance to military specifications. Each part is precisely checked with original Bulgarian gauges throughout the assembly process. They even go so far as to hand file the elevation graduations in the rear sight block. They are very proud of their product and after testing it I can see why. It's a very well made rifle.

Out Of The Box

My test rifle arrived with the standard accessories consisting of a well written manual, cleaning kit, sling, oil bottle and 5 round magazine. It's no secret that I like "black rifles" and I liked this SA M-7 very much. The protective finish was very well done and was complemented nicely by the tough synthetic furniture. The receiver was beautifully machined both inside and out. The bolt assembly operated smoothly and the trigger was excellent. To be honest, the trigger on this rifle was quite a bit better than on your average Remington 700.

In the hands the rifle felt very good. It shoulders quickly, and the slight beavertail in the forend gives a good purchase to hold onto. Magazines insert easily and the mag release was easily manipulated for a rapid reload. My only negative comment is that the safety lever was on the stiff side. However this is pretty much par for the course with this rifle design. After consultation, the company president promised to modify the safety in accordance with American tastes. Such a response speaks highly of Arsenal Inc.

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During testing I evaluated the rifle's accuracy, reliability, controllability, handling characteristics and flash signature. For testing I gathered together a variety of 7.62x39 loads. These included soft point loads from Norma, Barnaul and PMC. We also included a 122 grain FMJBT load from Wolf Performance Ammunition as well as a brand new 154 grain SP load from Wolf. I had a first peek at this new load in September while in Russia. There I was given the opportunity to try it out on the indoor range at Tula Cartridge Works through both an SKS and an AKM. I came away impressed by its accuracy, especially through the SKS. Although one word of advice if you ever find yourself on that particular range — their rangemaster really frowns on full auto fire.

Shoot For Group

Accuracy work was done from the bench at 100 and 300 yards. While the sights on the Kalashnikov are fine for their intended function, they are no great aid when trying to shoot tight groups on paper. However the rifle was relatively easy to shoot thanks to its excellent trigger and lack of recoil. Rounds chambered easily, and ejection was vigorous but very consistent with all the empties going in one spot.

Accuracy was good for a member of the AK family in this caliber. Five shot groups ran in the 2 to 4 inch range at 100 yards. Top accuracy honors went to Wolf Performance Ammunition's new 154 grain SP load which averaged consistent 3 inch groups. Posting some plain IPSC targets at 300 yards, we had at them. This is generally considered about the maximum effective range for a 7.62x39 AK but here the SA M-7 did well with all shots easily kept on target. Groups ran in the 9 to 12 inch range, though I believe optics would have helped to reduce group size.

Full Throttle

With the drudgery of accuracy testing out of the way we put the rifle to work the way it was intended — up close, fast and furious. The rifle excelled in CQB drills.

Lock a 30 round magazine in place, chamber a round, safety on, and standby in the ready position. On the go the safety is swiped off, the rifle comes up, the front sight indexes on target and the shot breaks. Faster than thought, a .30 caliber hole appears on target and with an aggressive stance you continue on the trigger. Brass explodes out of the gun as it barks, but the muzzle stays down. You switch targets and shoot as you move. The gun hammers out .30 caliber 154 grain soft points wherever you point it. Finally the mag runs dry and you transition to your handgun. It's good.

The muzzle brake worked very well and controllability was quite good. I tested it side by side with a Russian AK-103 unit,

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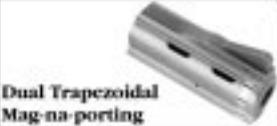
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which is highly regarded, and found recoil and controllability about the same. However, the Bulgarian brake exhibited less flash in low light. The rifle's handling was very good. It shoulders quick, points well, and is fast on target. The synthetic forend is a vast improvement over the old laminated wood units that would occasionally burst into flames when pushed too hard for extended periods.

Torture Testing

Reliability, as expected, was flawless. Kalashnikov's basic design is simplicity turned into art. We tried to make things hard on the rifle during testing, but in all honesty, how do you abuse an AK? Not clean it? Get it wet and dirty? Put sand and mud to it? It laughs at things that would jam an FAL and break an AR. But we tried anyway just to check Arsenal Inc.'s workmanship. Fouled, wet, muddy, and extremely overheated the SA M-7 ran like a champ, voraciously devouring 30 round mag after 30 round mag. All we got for our trouble was wet and muddy.

I came away impressed by Arsenal Inc.'s SA M-7 rifle. It's good looking, well made, accurate, and reliable. The retail price of less than \$700 makes it all the more interesting. There are a number of Kalashnikovs on the market today, some of which are rather shoddily put together. For someone interested in an attractive and well made Kalashnikov, I recommend taking a look at Arsenal Inc.'s SA M-7.



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There are many modern replicas of the famous 1874 side-hammer Sharps, but few as distinctive in feel and appearance as the new Navy Arms No. 2 Creedmore. The Creedmore is not heavy and clumsy as are many reproduction Sharps. The round, tapered 30 inch barrel and slim forend place the point of balance right where it should be in a good off-hand rifle — just at the front of the action.

The double set triggers are a great aid to good shooting, as are the very fine sights furnished with the Creedmore: a long-range vernier tang sight with windage adjustment, a globe front sight with inserts and even a period correct open ladder sight mounted on the barrel. Accuracy is assured by the careful attention given to the manufacture of the barrel itself. These barrels are hand straightened no less than three times during the boring and rifling process.

A truly attractive rifle, the Creedmore wears gorgeous, richly grained walnut furniture with good quality checkering at the wrist and forend. A wide flat shotgun-type butt makes recoil comfortable even with heavy loads. Electroless nickel finish on the receiver not only looks stunning, but resists corrosion when firing black powder cartridges.

The Navy Arms No. 2 Creedmore is perfectly suited to Black Powder Cartridge Rifle competition, long-range Cowboy Action side-matches and hunting, as well as being a fine enjoyable rifle for an afternoon of recreational shooting. Check out the feature article on this beautiful rifle on page 60. Saddle-up and visit your local dealer. If he doesn't have one of these on the shelf you can find more information by calling [201] 863-7100 or at Navy's Website: www.navyarms.com.



CLASSIC ATTIRE: TYLER'S T-GRIP

By Jim Gardner

Spend enough time at the range or the pistol matches and you'll learn to spot these guys. They probably aren't sporting a \$2,500 custom pistol from some currently fashionable pistolsmith. Dark and soft looking, their leather gear shows the effects of long hours of use.

These are the *salty* guys. Real pistol shooters who have patiently honed their skills over the years. Old timers of my acquaintance refer to these guys as "gun-snakes." These are the men you don't want to shoot against for money — or your life.

Odds are they'll sport a revolver. It may be blue-worn and carry a bountiful collection of nicks and scratches, because it hasn't spent much time in the dresser drawer. Look closely, and you're likely to notice their wheelgun wears a grip adapter.

That Hollow Feeling

Double-action revolvers — Colts, Smith & Wessons and others — have a hollow behind their trigger guards. Sure, you can shoot them fine as is. But a far better grip is achieved if you fill that hollow such that the second finger carries a portion of the weight of the gun. This can be done by ordering custom stocks, and certainly many shooters take this approach. But a better option in several respects is the use of a grip adapter.

Pachmayr, Mershon, and for a brief time S&W, all offered grip adapters. While you may still see these on vintage guns, they are no longer commercially available. But the best of the breed, the Tyler T-Grip, thankfully still is.

Melvin Tyler introduced his T-Grip adapter in 1952. Cast from pure No. 1 grade aluminum, it is significantly more durable than

the Pachmayr or Mershon equivalents. It also feels better. Tyler's design not only perfectly fills that hollow behind the trigger guard, a swell on the T-Grip gives a finger groove effect for a more sure and comfortable grip.

Finger groove pistol stocks have been made for ages, but unless made to your specific hand size, they tend to feel extremely uncomfortable. I've seldom found a pair I could tolerate. And yet I do not have that objection with the T-Grip. The gentle swell of Tyler's design seems to accommodate a wide range of hand shapes and sizes.

No Muss, No Fuss

The Tyler T requires no modification to your revolver. If you've selected the correct model, it will closely mate with the contour of your revolver's front strap, retained in place by a pair of thin copper tabs. Simply loosen your stock screw and draw the stocks slightly away from the frame. Slip the tabs between the frame and the stocks and tighten your stock screw. It's just that simple, and takes only a moment.

The Tyler T-Grip is made to fit all S&W frame sizes, as well as the Colt "D", "I" and "J" frames. A special version is still in production to fit the old pre-war Colt Police Positive family with its very narrow frame. Ruger revolvers built with a conventional grip frame are not neglected. You can order a Tyler adapter to fit the excellent Security Six and Speed Six, as well as the Redhawk with conventional frame.

Available in three finishes, you can order a T-grip to match or contrast with the finish of your revolver. The black version is low-profile and looks good on a blued gun. In my experience, the finish holds up well to long use. For your stainless or nickel plated guns, there's a brightly polished aluminum version. For what John Taffin would describe as a "barbecue gun," you can order a snazzy gold anodized version.

A High-Speed Improvement

In slow-fire target work, you may not find much to admire about the T-Grip. Yes, it's extremely comfortable and will help to stabilize your grip, but you're unlikely to notice a night and day difference. The T-Grip really comes into its own when you turn to fast double-action work with a large caliber wheelgun.

You'll find greatly improved control and the revolver will tend to stay in place during a fast string of fire — not bury itself deeper into your grip. On hard kicking guns, the tendency of the trigger guard to deliver a sharp rap to the knuckle of your second finger will be gone. Obviously these things are subjective, but I find a revolver equipped with the T-Grip to be significantly more pleasant to shoot.

Carry Gun Perfect

Certainly these same advantages can be had with a pair of rubber stocks from Pachmayr, Houge, Uncle Mike's, etc. These



Mershon and Pachmayr are gone, but the T-Grip remains.

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are all good and comfortable alternatives, and for a recreational revolver I've used all of the above with satisfaction. But for a carry gun, the Tyler adapter is preferable for a couple of reasons.

First, Tyler adapters add no unnecessary bulk to the revolver. My old shooting pard Marc Halcon is certainly one of the saltiest gunmen I've ever come across. Regardless of whether or not he's wearing a large gun, Halcon is usually in possession of a S&W Model 642. It wears a pair of smooth stocks and — you guessed it — a Tyler T-Grip.

"It fills up that grip frame just where I need it," Halcon explained. "Rather than making the grip larger and hampering concealability."

Halcon's little airweight J-frame .38 is simple and businesslike. The internal hammer and smooth contours allow it to slip easily into a pocket. That's the second advantage the T-Grip holds over rubber grips for a carry gun.

The manufacturers of these rubber stocks have gone to a lot of trouble to produce a product that feels slightly tacky in the hand. Indeed, this makes them feel comfortable and secure as you hold them in a firing grip, and is one reason for their popularity.

That same slight stickiness makes them less than ideal for concealed carry. They tend to grab and tug on clothing, which makes it more likely your concealed revolver will "print" and show a telltale bulge through your coat or vest. It can also make your draw from holster or pocket a little more difficult as fabric tends to cling to the rubber stocks. In fairness, it should be said that this tackiness of rubber stocks diminishes as they age.

The Big Question

So if these Tyler T-Grips are so great, why aren't they better known? Frankly, they have fallen out of fashion. They're a relic from the heyday of the revolver as the peace officer's handgun. It is also true that we shooters are quick to fly to the newest product on the market. And rubber stocks have been the beneficiary of this attention over the last decade or so.

Although I've been an admirer and regular user of these for nearly 30 years, I was a little surprised to learn recently that these adapters were still commercially available. Manufactured by a small, family-run business, you'll hear a genuine human being on the other end of the line when you call [800] 654-8415 to place your order. Ask for Brian or Anna and they will be happy to help you order the correct model. Prices are reasonable at \$18 for the polished finish, \$23 for either the black or gold versions.

So there you have it. The Tyler T-Grip installs easily, feels great, conceals well, and improves your shooting. It's a darn good old fashioned product made right here in America. It's the right enhancement for your classic sixgun, as only a soulless heathen would put rubber stocks on a nice old Colt or a classic Smith .38-44 Heavy Duty. Besides — you'll look salty.



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TWO SINGLE-SHOTS

continued from page 35

available for sale as well as their picture catalog of the various models and variations currently offered.

The Ballard target and Schuetzen rifles, often fitted with Pope's superbly accurate barrels, were considered to be the crème de la crème of target arms during the last quarter of the 19th century. What Garbe shared with us was not one of his splendid Ballards but the most nostalgic of varmint rifles — a Winchester High Wall fitted with a 28 inch full octagonal barrel, a single set trigger, a Lyman 15x Super Targetspot scope, and chambered for the .225 Winchester cartridge. This is exactly the type of rifle that first put varmint hunting on the hunter's map during the 1930s, and it is still the most elegant of all small game rifles.

John Browning's First

The 1885 Winchester High Wall action was designed by John Moses Browning in 1878. Winchester acquired the patent and manufacturing rights in 1883. The event was a win-win for both parties. It established Browning as a gun designer of note and marked the beginning of a business relationship that made millions for Winchester — and still does.

Manufactured from 1885 to 1920, the Model 1885 was offered in a variety of models chambered in every rimfire and centerfire cartridge of the era from the diminutive .22 BB cap to the get your attention .50-100 Express. The High Wall is a strong action with the breechblock being supported almost 100 percent by the high action walls. The action was so well designed that it easily made the transition from black powder to smokeless powder and was factory chambered for modern cartridges such as the .30-4 Krag, .303 British and the potent .405 Winchester. Yet, it is a gracefully slim action that can be the heart of the most elegant of single shots.

Ballard's recreation of the classic single shot varmint rifle may very well be the start of a trend I see coming — a twinge of nostalgia in the varmint hunting ranks. Specialized varmint model bolt actions are now spread across every maker's lineup. In the single-shot lines, pickings are pretty slim if you're talking about an elegant (and single-shots should be elegant) single shot varmint rifle. Then add a set trigger, an octagon or half-octagon barrel, a classic Lyman or Unertl target/varmint scope in external adjustable mounts — now we're talking.

Neglected Cartridge

While many shooters have never shot or even seen a .225 Win., this rimmed varmint cartridge introduced by Winchester in the Model 70 in 1964 ran

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head-on into Remington's commercialization of the .22-250 in 1965 and never received the popularity it should have had. It is a remarkably accurate and well balanced cartridge, and being rimmed, it is a perfect complement to a single-shot rifle. In many ways, the .225 case reminds me of a .219 Zipper Improved, which was one of the most popular rounds chambered in original High Walls converted years ago into classic varmint rifles.

In the Ballard High Wall, Winchester factory ammunition loaded with their 55 grain soft point averaged 3,444 fps and made nice little 1/2 to 5/8 inch five-shot groups at 100 yards. Yes, classic single shot rifles do shoot. And set triggers like Ballard's that touch off at less than a pound can be a tremendous asset in the field as well as on the range. If I hand-loaded the .225 Win., I'm sure the Ballard High Wall could cut those factory ammunition groups down a bit.

Optics As Classic As The Rifle

Ballard's use of a full length tube Lyman target/varmint scope on their High Wall was no mistake. The optics offered by those old scopes are simply brilliant. Old scopes! Until the development of 15x plus internal adjustable target scopes in the 1970s, the long Lymans and Unertls reigned supreme. I still shoot a 1 1/2 inch objective Unertl on a Model 70 Varmint in .243. If you've never used one, the scope tube, under recoil, actually slides forward through the external adjustable mounts and must be pulled back into battery with every shot. Keeping the reticle of the scope properly aligned at right angles is accomplished by a "Pope's rib" — a rectangular rib on the top of the scope tube that rides in a close fitting slot in the front external mount. The ultimate varmint scope of the period was Unertl's 2 inch objective scope. Brilliant? You didn't even need moonlight to see through that scope.

Ballard's recreation of the classic High Wall varmint rifle left nothing to be desired in terms of first rate custom gunsmithing. I understand it's going along with Steve Garbe to chase rock chucks this spring.

Indeed, fine guns are made to be used, and their use in the field is the highest compliment we can bestow on them. Beautiful single shots like Ballard's just add a bit of class to the whole experience.



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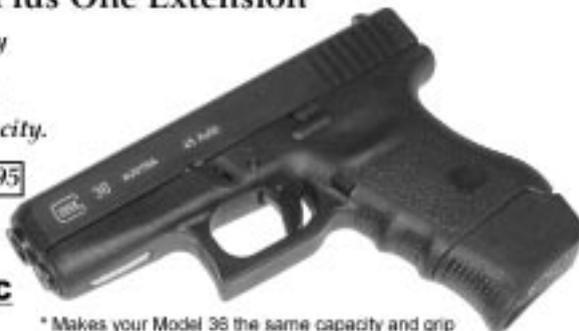
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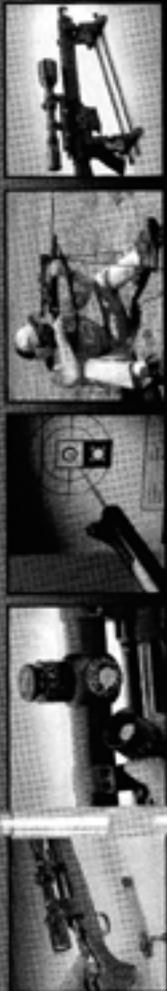
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UBERTI

continued from page 47



(Left To Right) Two rounds of .44 Henry Flat, Winchester factory black powder .44 WCF, and current CAS type handloads. The vintage style cartridge box is from Cheyenne Cartridge Boxes: [816] 413-9196.

will smooth up the action to a noticeable degree. If still too stiff, a small shim washer of leather fitted underneath the mainspring, much as is done with SAA revolvers, will lighten the mainspring and reduce the cocking force as you lever the action.

I demand a crisp, light trigger on my rifles, and both of my '73s have been adjusted down to about 3 pounds. Again, this is a simple job for a good gunsmith.

Check the muzzle of your rifle. Most are fine, but my .44-40 short rifle had a very large and prominent dent in the crown. After shortening the barrel slightly and reworking, groups shrank by nearly half.

The biggest improvement required by every Uberti '73 I have seen is lightening the lever safety spring. On unmodified rifles, the lever will stand out from the lower tang by a full 1/4 inch and will require considerable force to squeeze the lever closed. This is a nuisance in slow fire and a real handicap during a CAS match. The fix is simple if you are handy, or cheap if you need to rely on your gunsmith. Remove the buttstock, and grind the lever safety spring narrower. If it doesn't lighten sufficiently, bend it slightly to reduce tension. The "high-speed" types will tell you to just remove the safety and its spring. This is unwise and unnecessary. Just refit it so that only light pressure is required to close the lever.

Beyond these simple improvements, the only other addition you may wish to make to your rifle is a tang sight. The tang sight offers greater precision by increasing the sight radius, and yet is much faster in quick shooting. It only suffers in very low light. Marbles, Lyman and Uberti have reproduction tang sights available, and you may

have an original lying around in your kit.

When first introduced, the 1873 Winchester was a fine rifle. It was more than potent enough for most hunting needs. It was accurate, reliable, flat and easy to carry. Its magazine full of squat little cartridges were a comfort to the man or woman who spent their time alone and far from help. All of these attributes are as true today as they were in the 1870s, and Aldo Uberti's 1873 is a worthy inheritor of the legacy of this great American firearm.



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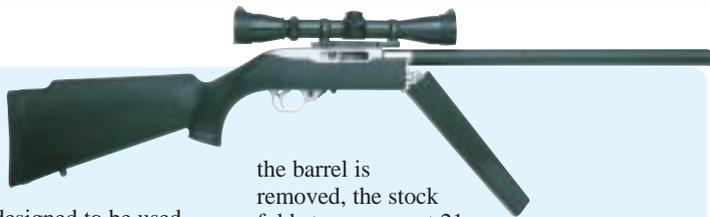
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NEW PRODUCTS

Bull Packer Stock

From Butler Creek

Butler Creek's Bull Packer Stock is designed to be used with the company's range of .920" barrels for the Ruger 10/22 rifle. Utilizing Butler Creek's patent-pending Cam-Lock system, the Bull Packer Stock allows the shooter to quickly detach the barrel from the receiver by simply pulling the forearm down. Once



the barrel is removed, the stock folds to a compact 21 inches. Contact Butler Creek, a division of Michaels of Oregon, P.O. Box 1690, Oregon City, OR 97045, telephone: [503] 655-7964, FAX: [503] 655-7546, e-mail: info@michaels-oregon.com, Website: www.michaels-oregon.com

Model 17V Rifle

From Marlin

Marlin's new Model 17V Varmint rifle is a blued bolt-action repeater chambered for the Hornaday .17 Magnum Rimfire cartridge. The 17V rifle has a heavy 22-inch barrel, seven-shot clip and a walnut-



finished hardwood Monte Carlo stock with sling swivel studs. The receiver is grooved for a tip-off scope mount. One-inch scope rings are included. Contact Marlin, 100 Kenna Dr., North Haven, CT 06473-0905, telephone: [203] 239-5621, FAX: [203] 234-7991, Website: www.marlinfirearms.com

New X-42 Field Knife

From SOG

Just announced is SOG's newest field knife, much to the anticipation of the outdoor sportsman. The X-42 Field Knife combines a tough, BG-42 ball bearing steel blade with aggressive thumb ridges, contoured finger grips and a glass reinforced Zytel handle for one extremely formidable hunting knife. Contact SOG



Specialty Knives, 6521 212th St., SW, Lynwood, WA 98036, telephone: [425] 771-6230, FAX: [425] 771-7689, Website: www.sogknives.com

Double Rifle

From EAA

European American Arms is importing the Model IZH94 Double Rifle for shooters and hunters who appreciate Old World classic design and performance at a reasonable price. Key features include mono



block construction with machined receiver, double triggers, walnut stock and forend, automatic tang safety and hammer forged barrels with extractor. Available in all popular calibers, including .223, 308 and .30-'06. Contact European American Armory, P.O. Box 1299, Sharpes, FL 32959, phone: [321] 639-4842, FAX: [321] 639-7006, e-mail: eaacorp@bv.net, Website: www.eaacorp.com

Western Style Gun Cases

From JD Western Works

JD Western Works offers a complete line of wool "carpet bag" style Indian carrying cases for rifles, shotguns and revolvers. These beautifully hand crafted cases feature a lined wool padding that may be removed



for dry cleaning. Additional customizing, such as canvas pockets, tooled or custom-cut leather and sewing in the owner's initials, are offered. For a free color brochure, contact Jamie Denton at JD Western Works, P.O. Box 71, Sedalia, CO 80135, telephone: [303] 663-9175, FAX: [303] 346-5922.

New Bolt-Action Knife

From Myerco

Meyerco's new Camp USA Bolt Action knife is noted for its rock solid locking strength. Key features include 440 bead blasted 3 inch stainless steel blade, Fibersin handle and stainless steel pocket clip. Choice of honed, serrated or gut hook blades. Gift boxed. Contact Meyerco USA, 4481 Exchange Service Dr., Dallas, TX 75236, telephone: [214] 467-8949, FAX: [241] 467-9241, e-mail: meyerco@bnfusa.com, Website: www.meyerco.com



Tracker Ghillie Suit

From Custom Concealment

The new serape-style Tracker Ghillie suit from Custom Concealment is ideal for hunters who require effective cover and comfortable mobility. The suit is vented for comfort and it virtually eliminates the human body form while the hunter pursues game. Contact Custom Concealment, P.O. Box 455, Zanezville, OH 43207-0455, telephone: [740] 453-3702, FAX: [740] 455-3865, e-mail: cci@ghillie.com, Website: www.ghillie.com



Pocket-Size Cleaning Kit

From Norton & Assoc.

The FieldKit is a pocket-sized cleaning kit for use by hunters and shooters. This handy single-use kit contains cleaning patches, swab, patch puller, bore cleaner and lubricating oil.

Optional brush adapter and black synthetic carry pouch with belt loop also available. Kits are available for all caliber handguns, rifles and shotguns. Contact Norton & Assoc., 2991 Mountain Trace, Roswell, GA 30075, telephone: [800] 792-8668, e-mail: info@fieldkitproducts.com





GunMantis Gun Case From Brooks & Thomas

The GunMantis is an innovative new fully-padded long gun carrying case with a retractable leg system. The legs automatically fold out when the case is set on its end and retract tightly against the case when moved. The GunMantis is manufactured from heavy 18-ounce cotton duck and

features leather handles and a hefty pack cloth lining for maximum protection. Available in 48 and 52 inch lengths. Contact Rick Billingham at Brooks & Thomas, P.O. Box 1209, Monument, CO 80132, telephone: [719] 593-9050, FAX: [719] 593-9051, e-mail: sales@brook-sandthomas.com, Website: www.brook-sandthomas.com

New Benchrest Press From Corbin

The S-Press is Corbin's new precision all-steel reloading press designed specifically for benchrest shooters.

Key features include Torrington needle-bearing linkage for smooth operation, a hardened and ground alloy steel ram traveling within bronze bearings and a strengthened automatic ejection system for swaging bullets and making bullet jackets. Contact Corbin Mfg., P.O. Box 2659, White City, OR 97503. Telephone: [541] 826-2511, FAX: [541] 826-8669, e-mail: dave@corbins.com, Website: www.corbins.com



New Camouflage Rifles From ArmaLite

ArmaLite introduces a new line of sporting rifles in Realtree Hardwoods (pictured) and Advantage Classics camouflage. Realtree Hardwoods is a three dimensional camouflage consisting of 13 natural colors and realistic leaves and limbs with light to dark contrast. The Advantage Classics pattern has detailed leaves and limbs that offer excellent short

range concealment. At a longer distance, it breaks up the human outline. Contact ArmaLite, P.O. Box 299, Geneseo, IL 61254, telephone: [309] 944-6939, FAX: [309] 944-6949, e-mail: info@armalite.com, Website: www.armalite.com

"Retumbo" Rifle Powder From Hodgdon

Hodgdon's new "Retumbo" powder is designed specifically for rifle shooters using high performance cartridges like the .300 Remington Ultra Mag, .30-378 Weatherby, 7mm Remington Ultra Mag, 7mm STW and others with large capacity cases and small bores. Shooters can expect up to 40-100 fps more velocity than traditional magnum powders, depending upon choice of bullets and primers. Contact Hodgdon Powder Co., P.O. Box 2932, Shawnee Mission, KS 66201, telephone: (913) 362-9455, FAX: (913) 362-1307, e-mail: info@hodgdon.com, Website: www.hodgdon.com



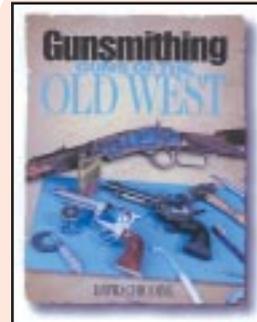
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DeSantis has recreated the ultimate western-style gentleman's holster and dedicated it to legendary Old West gambler Doc Holliday. The holster is crafted from fully lined premium saddle leather, accented by a handsome hand-stamped traditional frontier design. This slim line holster accommodates all single action revolvers with barrel lengths from 3½ inches to 4¾ inches. Available in right and left hand and cross draw designs in tan or black. Contact DeSantis, P.O. Box 2039, New Hyde Park, NY 11040-0701, telephone: [516] 354-8000, FAX: [516] 354-7501, e-mail: contact@desantisholster.com, Website: www.desantisholster.com



Gunsmithing Old West Guns From Krause Publications

"Gunsmithing Guns of the Old West" is a comprehensive 352-page softbound reference book with detailed instructions on repairing and fine-tuning Old West firearms. Authored by noted gunsmith and firearms restorer David Chicoine, the book discusses common gunsmithing tools, general repair work and step-by-step disassembly instructions on more than 40 Old West firearms and their modern replicas. \$27.94, plus \$4 shipping and applicable state sales tax. Contact Krause Publications at [800] 258-0929, FAX: [715] 445-4087, Website: www.krausebooks.com

All-Weather Binoculars

From Swift Instruments

Swift Instruments has three new all-weather roof prism binoculars, designed to perform in adverse conditions in the field. The compact, lightweight Trilyte is offered in two powers (8x25 HCF and 10x25 HCF) and the nitrogen purged and fog proof Audubon (pictured) in 8.5x,44 HCF. All



three are rubber armored and feature twist-up eyecups with click-stop action on the right diopter for precise focusing. Contact Swift Instruments, 952 Dorchester Ave., Boston, MA 02125, telephone: [617] 436-2960, FAX: [617] 436-3232, e-mail: info@swiftoptics.com, Website: www.swiftoptics.com

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From Hornady Mfg.

The Varmint 17 HMR Express is a new rimfire cartridge from Hornady designed for the plinking and small game hunting. The Varmint 17 HMR Express comfortably delivers a flat trajectory at distances up to 200 yards at an eye-popping 2,550 fps. The bullet also retains 45 percent higher velocity at 200 yards than the fastest .22 WMR load currently available on the market. Contact Hornady Mfg., P.O. Box 1848, Grand Island, NE 68802-1848, telephone: [308] 382-1390, FAX: [308] 382-5761, Website: www.hornady.com.



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New "Police" Binoculars

From Steiner

Steiner, one of Germany's finest manufacturers of fine optics, has a new line of law enforcement and tactical binoculars. Marketed by Pioneer Research in the USA, the Police binocu-



lars are available in two powers (7x50 and 10x50) are housed in a black rubber-armored shell and feature large objective lenses and multi-coated optics on all air-to-glass surfaces for a bright clear view in all light level conditions. They are waterproof, fog-proof and shockproof.

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Premium Gun Cleaning Kit

From Hoppe's

Hoppe's new Premium Gun Care Cleaning Kit is range-ready with everything needed for firearms maintenance in the field. Packaged in a roomy soft-sided carrying case, the Premium Kit contains: Hoppe's No.9 aerosol solvent, Hoppe's lubricating oil, three-piece solid brass cleaning rod with three slotted ends and two adaptors, five phosphor bronze cleaning brushes,

phosphor bronze utility brush, silicone cleaning cloth and assorted cleaning patches, bore light, 12 x 36-inch cleaning mat and Hoppe's *Guide to Gun Care* instruction booklet. Contact Hoppe's, a division of Michaels of Oregon, Airport Industrial Mall, Coatesville, PA 19320, telephone: [610] 384-6000, FAX: [610] 857-5980, e-mail: sales@hoppes.com, Website: www.hoppes.com



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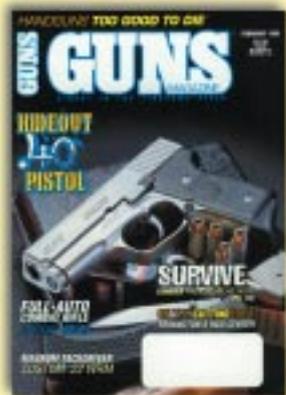
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CAMPFIRE TALES

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or more, however except for their height there's nothing particularly noticeable about them. Both men have shoulders too narrow for their bodies; both men have very sparse covering on top of their heads. They don't look like men of courage if there is such a look.

Jim's wife was confined to bed for three years. She could not move unless he lifted her in and out. He had to do literally everything for her. As a man who was in business for himself, he had nothing to fall back upon, and his business suffered tremendously. He was also not a young man, and those years took their toll. One year after the death of his wife, I attended Jim's funeral. He gave all he had.

Don's situation began 15 years ago. His wife was confined to a wheelchair and he was able to adapt much of their home so she could still function. However, as her condition worsened Don found himself in the same situation as Jim. He has literally spent his life meeting this challenge. Both of these men have exhibited tremendous courage and character. Should anyone asked for the definition of what it really means to be a man I would point to Jim or Don. And one characteristic that both of these men exhibited is the fact that neither one ever complained about the fortune Life has dealt them. They simply did the right thing — quietly, calmly, patiently.

This is not a situation unique to men. In fact, it is probably women who are most likely to find themselves caring for their spouse. Laura is such a lady. This little woman is now in her 80s and though very feminine on the outside she is tough as nails when she has to be. I've never seen a ranch wife who wasn't.

Her husband, Glen, was a third generation rancher, and she spent most of her life cooking for the ranch hands as well as taking care of the endless list of tasks that must be accomplished to keep a ranch going. Winters are also extremely tough on the high prairie plateau of southwestern Idaho, and Laura weathered them with never a complaint. Glen was a very special man in many ways not the least of which is the fact that he saved my oldest daughter's life when she was just a young girl. You don't forget things like that.

A few years back Glen fell and suffered a tremendous blow on the head. He stayed with ranching but he never quite got over that injury, and his health deteriorated rapidly. Two years ago, Laura found herself in the same situation as Jim and Don. Glen lasted for a year and a half with Laura always at his side. On one of my visits to him I took a copy of my second book and autographed it to him. He clutched it to himself as though it was gold. We were friends. This past Thanksgiving, as a group was sharing their blessings, Laura said she was so thankful and so privileged to be able to care for Glen during those 1½ years. And she meant it! What tremendous courage and character.

None of us know what lies ahead, but we do know that we will face changes and challenges. May real courage and character be your hallmark through every situation.



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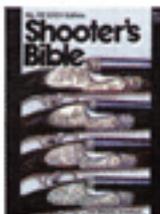


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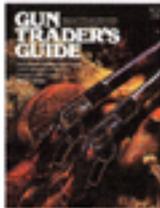
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CHANGES & CHALLENGES: Courage And Character



Life consists of a long series of changes and challenges. Challenges, if not too tough, I can readily handle. But change is difficult and I must admit I fight most of it. Actually change and challenge usually go hand-in-hand. The great changes in firearms over the past 25 years have been a real challenge for me to accept and I am not totally there yet.

On a higher plane, think of some of the life changing situations that happen to all of us in turn. There is that painful day when we realize we are no longer a kid and that we must follow the time-honored instruction: "When I was a child, I spoke as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things." I must admit that this has been a never-ending battle for me. As for most of us, there are still childish things I like to hold on to.

Then there is that even more painful and stressful time when we finally realize we are no longer invincible. As teenagers we know everything, we can handle anything, and as far as we are concerned, we will live forever. Nothing can stop us. And then there comes the day we must admit to mortality. Some of the important people in our life add to this stress. Remember walking out of the office of the doctor, dentist, or eye doctor after first hearing those crushing words, "At your age...?" Challenges all — and all require commensurate changes in our lifestyle.

A not so wise man once said, "You cannot teach an old dog new tricks." He obviously did not know very many old dogs. If we don't learn new tricks we don't survive and *this* old dog has been learning new tricks rapidly lately. As this is being written, it has been six weeks since my wife, Dot, underwent hip replacement surgery. She fought it as long as she could, and even after she made the decision she tried to back out. However, the last two weeks before surgery the pain had become so inescapable there was no way she could opt out. Now she is doing fine though still on a walker. However, that will soon end and she will be better than ever and our life will be back to normal.

I always thought I appreciated her, but I never realized how much until suddenly I had to do all the housework. The cleaning. The cooking. The dishes. The washing. The drying. The folding. The sweeping. And I want to tell you, I do not care what women may say, housework is definitely not all the fun it is cracked up to be, and it never ends!

I work hard at shooting, writing, reloading, taking pictures, and yes I know that many would not consider this work. It definitely is and what shows up as the finished product is really only a small portion of what I do. However, I can work to my own schedule and can take a break whenever I want to. But housework never stops!

In addition to this I've also had to help Dot with virtually everything, especially during those first few weeks. Not only have I had to change and face new challenges, along the way I've also gained considerable new respect for Jim and Don. They have faced tremendous changes and challenges in their lives, and I have suddenly realized how much real courage and genuine character these men not only possess but exhibit every day in a situation that has absolutely no glory attached to it. You see, both of these men have had to do for years what I have faced for only a few weeks.

Both of these are large — not just in the strength of their character, but physically as well. They each stand at 6½ feet

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"SHOW US YOUR BUCKMARK" CONTEST WINNER BOZEMAN, MONTANA

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Why would this English major at Montana State University want to do such crazy work? "I like the challenge and the adrenaline rush," he says. "Being scored puts you at your physical best. The worst situation is when the bull hooks a horn into the end of the barrel, then I'm at his mercy and have to ride out the storm. It's like being inside a washing machine that was pushed down a flight of stairs."

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