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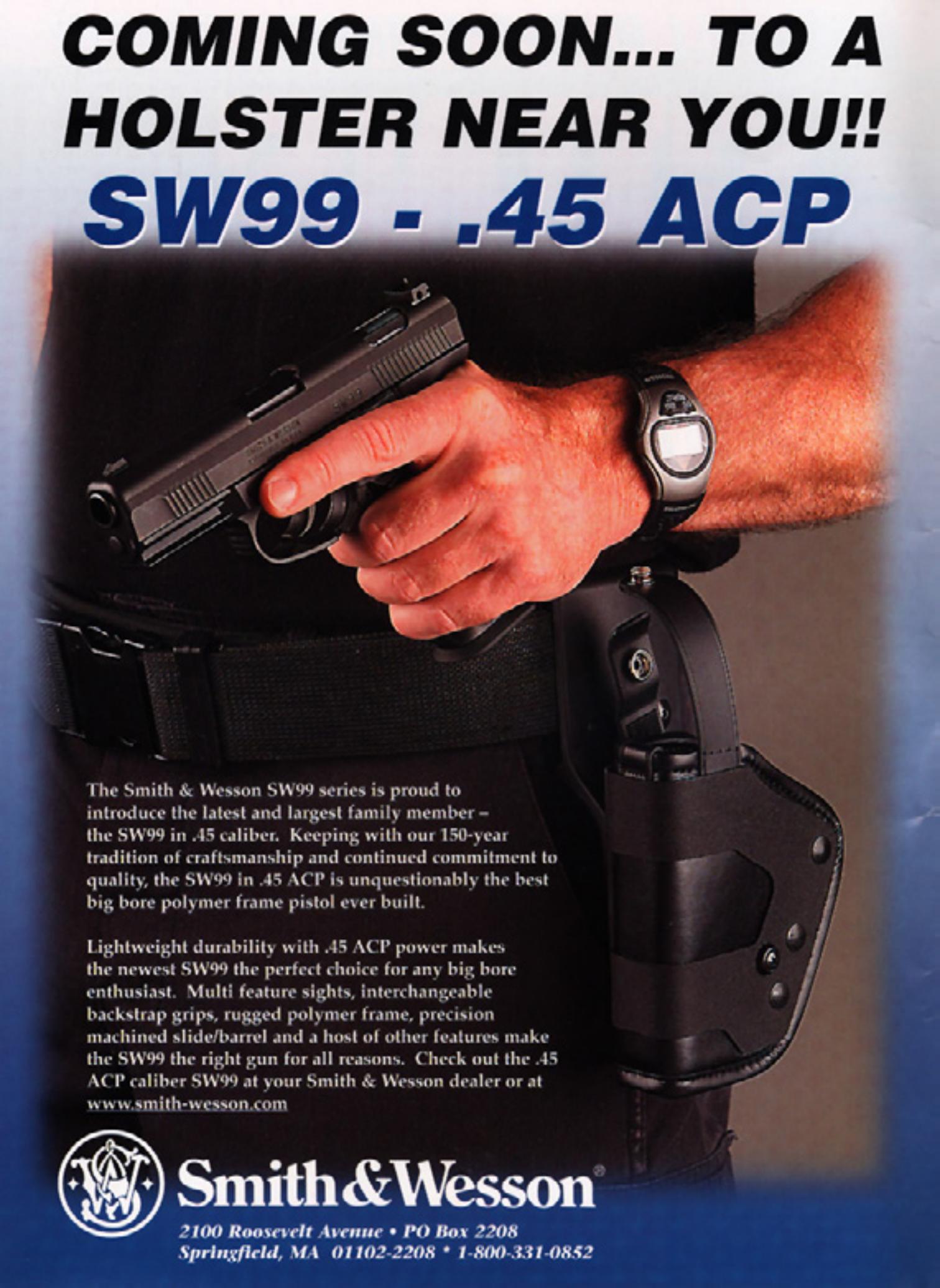
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FOUNDING PUBLISHER

George E. von Rosen (1915-2000)

PUBLISHER

Thomas von Rosen

EDITOR Jim Gardner
ed@gunsmagazine.com

ART DIRECTOR Joseph R. Novelozo

ART ASSISTANT Richard Stahlhut

ADVERTISING PRODUCTION Linda Peterson
production@gunsmagazine.com

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

PHOTOGRAPHY EDITOR Ichiro Nagata

SENIOR FIELD EDITOR Cameron Hopkins

SHOOTING EDITOR Dave Anderson

HANDGUN EDITOR Massad Ayoob

SHOTGUN & HUNTING EDITOR Holt Bodinson

INDUSTRY EDITOR Russ Thurman

HANDLOADING EDITOR Charles E. Petty

TECHNICAL EDITOR David Fortier

FIELD EDITORS Sam Fadala, Roy Huntington

SPECIAL PROJECTS EDITOR Tom Turpin

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Denny Fallon

National Adv. Offices:
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San Diego, Calif. 92108
[619] 297-8520 FAX: [619] 297-5353
email: denny@gunsmagazine.com

East Coast Adv. Reps.: Buchmayr Associates

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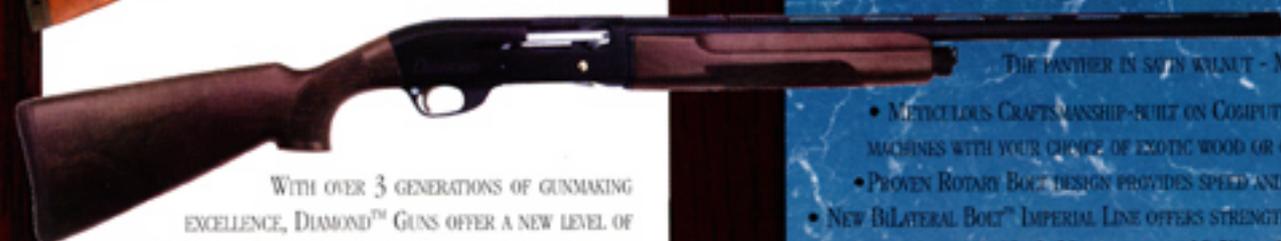
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Coming Attractions

Here's a little inside glimpse into the workings of *GUNS* Magazine: For each month of the year, we have an "editorial theme." These are useful both for pure business purposes — allowing advertisers an advance glimpse into the content of an upcoming issue — and also as a means of ensuring an interesting mix of subjects throughout the year.

May's editorial theme is knives, and if you're a long-time *GUNS* reader, you'll possibly remember the same subject being addressed in the May issue of previous years. Last year's issue prompted a complaint from one reader to the effect that "he didn't buy *GUNS* Magazine to read about knives." Well, fair enough.

But his letter generated many responses from other readers who were not only glad to see this coverage of custom tools, but were interested in seeing more of the same. Some mentioned they carry a good folding knife on a daily basis. Certainly I do, and the same goes for most men, many boys and a surprising number of women.

The world of knives has changed dramatically since I was a pup. You can still go down to the hardware or discount store and pick up a very inexpensive pocketknife. But you may also find, either locally or through an ever-expanding number of specialty knife vendors, custom and high-end production knives of incredible beauty and sophistication. Some of these are very expensive, but good custom knives by highly regarded makers are not only a joy to own and use, they can also have significant investment potential.

Want an example? Benchmade Knives of Oregon City, Ore., recently produced a limited run of 25 Model 49-SPL balisong knives. The "49 Special" as it soon became known, was an instant collector's prize. Originally sold at \$800 retail, within weeks the 49-SPL was trading for prices as high as \$2,500. Now that's a pretty exceptional example, but even working-man's blades can be a good investment.

In the mid-'80s, I bought several Ruana sheath knives. Mind you these were working tools, not something to sit in the safe. A couple of years ago, when I parted with one of them, I was rather amazed to find an anxious buyer at double my original purchase price.

Good knives also have a few virtues firearms lack. A knife is something you can carry with you constantly to use and enjoy in the

workplace and throughout your day. Most of us can't say that about our favorite handgun, let alone a shotgun or rifle.

These days buying a new gun involves a certain amount of red tape, fees paid to faceless bureaucrats and sometimes waiting periods. Frankly, it leaves a bad taste in my mouth to see this become more complicated every year. By contrast, you can buy a fine knife and it's nobody's business but your own.

So, why on earth am I going on about this? Because you'll be seeing increased coverage of knives in these pages in the future. *American Handgunner* Magazine, *GUNS* sister publication, runs regular features on custom knives, and the reader feedback has been extremely positive.

No, we won't cover knives every issue, but rather six times a year or so. And unlike *American Handgunner*, we are not going to limit our coverage to custom knives. We'll also look at collaboration and production knives that the average guy can afford and won't mind using. I'm sure you'll find this coverage interesting (as I do), and a natural offshoot to our normal content. And if not, well, just turn the page!

What You See Is What You Get

I spend a fair amount of time browsing the Internet. It's a remarkably efficient means of answering reader questions, examining the latest offerings from manufacturers, etc. I may use it a lot, but I remain a little awed by the whole thing.

Recently, I was again amazed at something the Web offers to the shooter. Acting on a tip from a friend, I directed my browser to www.cylinder-slide.com. This of course is the Website for Cylinder & Slide, the custom pistolsmithing and parts business owned by Bill Laughridge. At the home page, click on "parts and accessories," and then scroll down to select "grips." When the new screen opens, select either "Cylinder & Slide grips," or "Spegel grips."

After selecting, say, Browning P-35 stocks, you come to a page of available grips. Now here is where it gets interesting. The stocks you see are not representative samples, they are the actual product for sale. Indeed, at any given time, you'll see a few marked "sold." Why does this matter?

Custom stocks are a splendid addition to a favorite pistol. The intricate shading and contours of fine wood can make an average production gun take on a wonderful uniqueness. But there's the rub. I know I've ordered custom stocks that looked great in the catalog, but when they arrived, they had all the rich grain and magnificent color of the 2x4s at the local lumberyard. And some these were not cheap, either.

But there's no need to worry when you can select the actual pair you want, using sharp, close-up photos. Laughridge reports this "Grip Gallery" has been incredibly popular, and his chief difficulty has been keeping up with demand. Give it a look for yourself.



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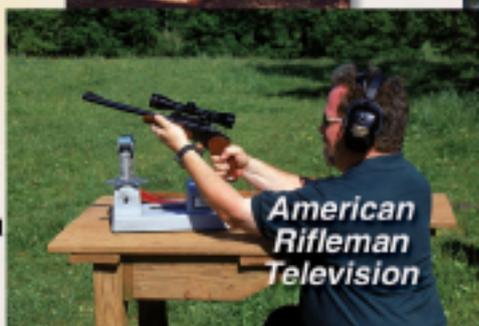
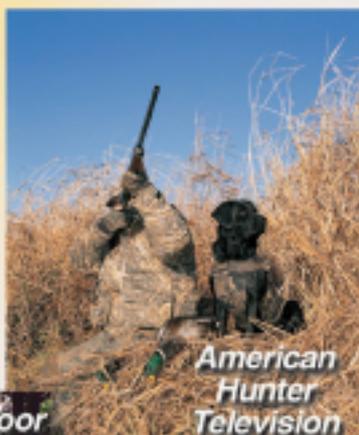
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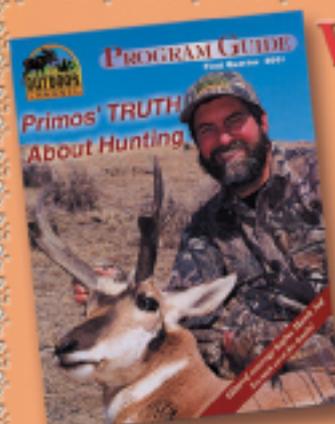
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Remington's 2002 Classic Rifle

This Handloading column will be a bit of a departure. On page 20, I'm going to share with you the interesting experiments I've been pursuing with the .221 Fireball cartridge. But right now, I'd like to tell you about a limited-production Remington 700 chambered for this interesting round.

Each year Remington produces a "Classic" Model 700 in a specific chambering. Over the years they have covered a lot of cartridge ground. For 2002, the cartridge of choice was the .221 Fireball, a cartridge that had dropped from the line of factory ammo some years ago.

Until now it has always been considered a handgun cartridge, as it was developed in 1963 specifically for Remington's XP-100. Depending upon whose reference you use it is either a shortened .222 Remington or .223 Remington.

The little cartridge developed a following, and many found that a light custom rifle chambered in .221 made a low recoil, low noise varmint good

to 200 yards or so and capable of very good accuracy. That's what got me started thinking about it and when I learned that ammo was coming back too it was something to jump at.

As chance would have it, shortly after Remington's announcement I was given the opportunity to test a Cooper rifle and elected to have it chambered for the .221 Fireball. It was one of my wiser choices.

Current Darling

You can see from the accompanying story that I've spent a lot of time with the cartridge. So it was a nice day when the Remington Classic finally arrived. The timing may need a bit of explanation.

The announcement was made at the Remington Writer's Seminar in October, 2001, and it has been a full year before the gun's arrival. That is because Classics are only made to order. Once the announcement is made, Remington distributors are given until March or April to place their orders. Only then will Remington produce rifles to fill all the orders in hand. When they're through that's it. So even though you're reading this in 2003, distributors should have Remington's 2002 Classic in stock.

Modified M700

The Classic is built on Remington's standard Model 700 Short Action. Considering the truly short little .221 cartridge they had an immediate problem to solve — the magazine. The .221 Fireball is .43-inch shorter than the .223 Remington which is typically the shortest case used in that size action. The solution was quite clever. When you open the bolt it looks as if there is a magazine within the magazine, for there is a clever filler that occupies the excess space and a slightly different magazine follower. Feeding from the shortened magazine was just fine.

Otherwise, the Classic looks just like it's supposed to. There's a nicely finished piece of straight grain walnut with cut checkering. The metal is brightly polished blue. The barrel is a 24-inch sporter weight. My only criticism is an atrocious 6.5-pound trigger pull, which thankfully, is fixable. My policy is to test guns as received though, so it is reasonable to expect better accuracy with a lighter trigger.

For this test the Classic was fitted with a Nikon 6.5x20 varmint scope and fired with the only two available factory loads: Remington's new production with a 50-grain V-max bullet, and the Varmint Extreme ammo sold by Cooper. It is loaded with a 42-grain Calhoun custom bullet. And this was also a golden opportunity to verify the handloads developed with the Cooper rifle using Hodgdon Lil'Gun propellant.

My suspicion is that many of the annual Classic rifles are purchased by collectors. After all, for every year since 1981 they have made a different caliber, so it's a natural for them. That probably also means many of them are never fired and that's too bad.

The .221 Fireball, in a rifle, is a peachy varmint cartridge. It has virtually no recoil, modest noise and commendable accuracy for a factory rifle. A trigger job and a little glass bedding would probably work a miraculous transformation to an already dandy rifle. There is little else to gripe about and you can see the accuracy potential with handloads. I'm sure more work will yield even better groups.



ACCURACY TEST RESULTS FACTORY AMMUNITION			
LOAD	VELOCITY	AVERAGE ACCURACY	
Remington 50-gr. V-max	2,995 fps	0.75"	
Cooper 42-gr. Calhoun	2,942 fps	0.63"	
HANDLOADS WITH LIL'GUN. REMINGTON BRASS, CCI BENCHREST PRIMER			
BULLET	CHARGE	VELOCITY	AVERAGE ACCURACY
Hornady 40-gr. V-max	16.0	3,495 fps	0.69"
Nosler 40-gr. Ballistic Tip	16.0	3,550 fps	0.53"
Calhoun 42-gr. Custom	16.0	3,436 fps	0.62"
Hornady 50-gr. V-max	15.0	3,226 fps	0.55"
Nosler 50-gr. Ballistic Tip	15.0	3,213 fps	0.67"
Hornady 52-gr. A-max	15.0	3,170 fps	0.59"

Accuracy results are the average of three 5 shot groups at 100 yards from benchrest. Velocity is the instrumental average of 10 shots as measured with a PACT chronograph.



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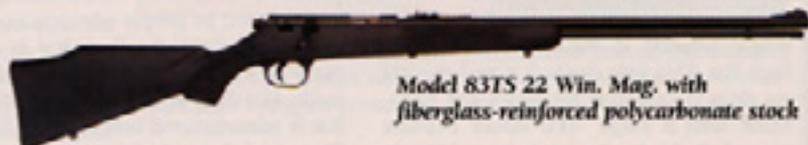
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QUARTERMASTER

BY DAVID M. FORTIER

Spec.-Ops Pack-Rat

Let's face it, as Americans we tend to be pretty gear happy. Yeah, we sure do love our widgets. However even the latest, greatest gadget won't do you any good if you can't put your hands on it when you need it most. While this sounds pretty elementary it can actually be quite a problem. It doesn't take very long in the field (or the office) for everything in a pack's large unorganized compartment to end up in a jumbled mess. So what to do to cure your cluttered mess blues?

Well, Best Made Designs LLC offers a simple solution in their Spec.-Ops brand Pack-Rat. This little dandy is a well thought out drop-in organizer for packs and rucks. Made with a tough 1000 denier Cordura outer shell, this handy unit features 14 separate storage compartments or slots and is lined with nylon pack cloth. What does it do?

In a jiffy, it takes your planner, PDA, calculator, mobile phone, knives, multi-tools, pens, rangecards, etc. and organizes them in a neat, easy to access manner. Zip it up and

everything stays put. Need something? Simply open your pack, access your Pack Rat and there it is.

Cleverly, it also has a reversible feature so that all the pockets are instantly accessible while inside a pack. In addition to the pockets it also features a 12-inch gear leash for keys or lights, a clear business card/ID window, and an external mesh pocket. Plus it can be used as a stand-alone carrier and even has "D" ring attachment points for an optional shoulder strap.

Designed by people who actually spend time in the field, the Pack Rat is a good piece of kit I really like. Extremely well made, like all Spec.-Ops. products, the Pack Rat is manufactured here in the U.S. of A. The price? Only \$34.95.



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QUARTERMASTER

BY DAVID M. FORTIER

C&R Ammo's First Shot

When I was just a kid my step father introduced me to his S&W service revolver. Nothing out of the ordinary, it was a pretty plain, and well worn, 5-inch .38 Special Hand Ejector. As a police officer, he carried that old wheelgun starting in the late 1950s through the late 1970s. For most of his career his issue ammunition was the old 200-grain RNL "Super Police" load. While this round is hardly an impressive manstopper, he had little choice.

While the streets are a lot more dangerous than they were in 1958, we now have a wide selection of truly effective handgun loads to choose from. One of these is C&R Ammo's First Shot line of frangible handgun ammunition designed for self-defense.

Unlike Glaser or Mag-Safe's pre-fragmented projectiles, First Shot is similar in concept to the frangible ammunition used for shooting on steel plates. Designed to be highly effective while reducing the danger from over-penetration or ricochet, the projectile is designed to totally fragment into fine particles upon impact.

Lighter in weight than standard loads, First Shot ammunition also tends to be somewhat faster. As an example their .45 ACP load pushes a 155-grain HP at an impressive 1,300 fps. I've had a chance to test their 9x19, .40 S&W, .357 SIG, and .45 ACP loads and have been extremely impressed by this ammunition's accuracy. In addition, testing in water showed these loads to fragment as per C&R's claims.

Due to its particular characteristics, First Shot ammunition is currently undergoing testing by the security forces of one nuclear



power plant. In addition, C&R also offers a line of conventional JHP loads. If you have need of a self-defense load with these characteristics I suggest contacting C&R Ammo for more information.

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QUARTERMASTER

BY DAVID M. FORTIER

Lahti Tripod Adapter

Simple is good in my book and the Lahti Tripod Adapter is about as simple as it gets. What's it for? Well, when afield there are times when the rifleman will have to take a difficult shot without any support other than his shooting sling. Unable to see his target while prone, and with nothing to brace against, all he can do is hold as steady as he can and have at it. So what's the answer?

Well for some time now military snipers have been using a common camera tripod, properly modified with a yoke, when faced with such situations. Light and handy, such a unit properly utilized can significantly increase one's accuracy.

Now instead of having to make your own yoke, like military snipers do, you can purchase a ready to go unit from the Lahti Company. The unit I received for testing was a rugged "U" shaped device fabricated from steel with closed cell foam padding and a durable black covering. At the base, a piece of steel is welded on that carries the standard 1/4-20 tpi attachment for tripod or monopod. At 8 ounces and approximately 3.5-inches wide at its base and tapering out to 5-inches wide at the top, the unit is light and compact. Built to last through a lifetime of abuse, no aluminum or plastic is used in its construction.

I used the Lahti afield shooting .308 Tactical rifles as well as a .50 BMG target rifle from the sitting and standing positions. In all instances, the Lahti worked extremely well and even shooting the



big .50 BMG off it didn't so much as scratch it. It's a good unit — well worth the \$24.95 (plus \$4.50 S&H) price tag.

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RIFLEMAN BY DAVE ANDERSON

The Shooting Sling

Years ago, I traded for a Remington 700. It was fitted with some oddball brand scope and a lightweight, two-piece shooting sling. The scope promptly broke and the rifle was later traded for something else. The sling remained, and for more than 30 years has been a dependable shooting aid.

What I like about the two-piece sling is the ease of adjustment. Sporting rifles vary in the location of the front sling stud. Rifles on my rack have the front stud located from 12- to 14-inches ahead of the trigger. And the sling adjustment for summer, when the shooter is wearing a short-sleeved shirt, is a bit snug for cold weather hunts when the shooter is wearing a heavy parka.

With my old sling, it's easy and fast to adjust the front claw hook to provide a solid, tight, shooting loop. Then if necessary, the claw hook on the tailpiece can be moved so that overall sling length is correct for carrying the rifle on the shoulder.

To use a shooting sling (assuming a right-handed shooter) the left arm goes through the loop from left to right so the loop is well up on the bicep. The arm then goes around the sling, the left hand between sling and forearm, pressed against the front swivel. If the sling is slack it does no good whatsoever.

Move the claw hook if necessary so the sling is tight.

Target shooters use a keeper to tighten the loop on the upper arm. In the hunting field this takes additional time, more hand movement that might alarm the game, and doesn't add much to stability. I prefer not to worry about the keeper and to keep the loop big so the arm goes through it easily even when a heavy coat is worn.

Recently, to my horror, I found the leather on my old sling was cracking across two of the adjustment holes. I'm wracked with guilt for not taking better care of it, but what's done is done. My old friend has been honorably retired. Its replacement is an Uncle Mike's military sling, one-inch width with basket stamping (catalogue number 2621-2).

The new sling is made of quality oiled leather, a bit heavier than my old sling, and with brass-plated claw hooks. Right now the leather is a bit stiff but I'm sure with regular use and sparing applications of neat's-foot oil it will become more comfortable.

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Above: Dave has found the Ching Sling fast and effective. Left (top-bottom): Tight military sling combined with sitting position offers near benchrest stability.



A More Modern Design

The "Ching Sling", designed by Eric Ching, is an impressive design. Its main virtue is the amazing speed with which a shooting position can be acquired. It consists of two parts, a long carrying strap that attaches at the regular forearm and buttstock positions, and a second short section. The short strap attaches to the rifle a few inches ahead of the trigger and connects to the long section.

Holes spaced on the long section allow a leather stopper to adjust for fit. The big loop is the key to the Ching Sling's speed. There's no need to push the loop up the arm with the other hand. Just shove the arm through the loop, bring it around, and you're ready to go about as fast as you can sit down and release the safety.

Eric Ching has authorized Andrew Langlois Leather and Galco® to make leather versions of his design, and Wilderness Tactical Products to make a nylon version. Make sure your rifle is capable of accepting a third sling stud or base ahead of the receiver. You don't want to drill into the recoil lug recess.

Using a two-piece sling is second nature to me, and I won't likely go to the trouble of modifying all my rifles. However, I will likely adapt a few rifles to accept the Ching Sling. It's an impressive system.





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QUEST FOR PERFECTION

BY CHARLES PETTY

Loading the .221 Remington Fireball.

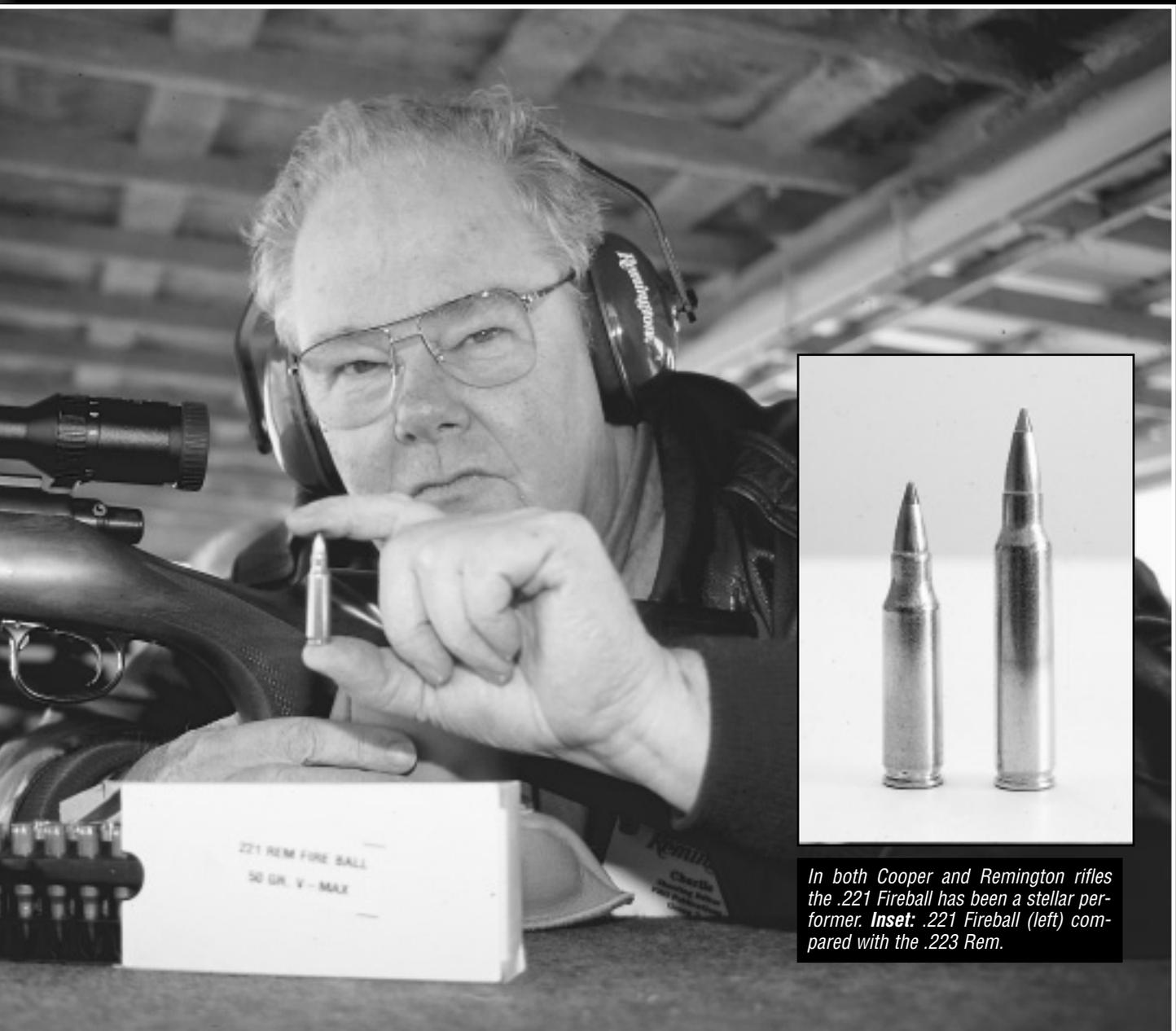
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For some months now, I have been on a noble quest to see just how good it can get with my neat little Cooper rifle. I told you about this little dandy in the April issue and hinted at the accuracy, but with a bare smattering of factory ammo today it is very much the province of the handloader.

The .221 Fireball is a cartridge that almost didn't make it. Originally developed by Remington for use in their XP-100 handgun, it's basically a shrunken .222 Remington. You could also say it is a greatly reduced .223. I've always thought Remington did it that way because they thought the .223 would be too much for the short barrel of the XP-100.

I well recall when gunsmith Bob Day punched one out to .223, and the awesome muzzle flash and noise it generated. Today we think nothing of that sort of thing, but more than 20 years ago it was different.



In both Cooper and Remington rifles the .221 Fireball has been a stellar performer. Inset: .221 Fireball (left) compared with the .223 Rem.

The .221 As A Rifle Cartridge

Remington soon began to chamber the XP-100 for other cartridges but eventually they discontinued the gun altogether. And, a while later, the ammo disappeared from the catalog. Still, the little cartridge had acquired a small cadre of loyal fans who used it in custom rifles or T/C Contenders.

Here's an example from the *Nosler Reloading Guide*, "If you haven't tried the .221 Fireball cartridge in a rifle, you owe it to yourself to do so at your earliest opportunity." Those words are from Gail Root, Nosler's ballistics genius who knows about such things. And their manual contains a great variety of data.

Brass has always been available, and Remington brought back the .221 for their "Classic" rifle of the year 2002, so ammo is available too, but handloading is the only way to really realize the potential of this very efficient little cartridge. From a 24-inch

barrel the Remington factory-loaded 50-grain V-max bullet delivers 2,963 fps and groups that average around .6 inch. Cooper's Varmint Extreme loads with a 42-grain Calhoun custom bullet give 2,967 fps and .52-inch average groups.

For me, any handloading project begins with a look at the loading manuals. Most of the time there are far more recipes than are practical to try, so I generally begin with bullets that represent the common weights for the cartridge and four or five powders. I narrow the field of both powders and bullets based on experience if I have it, and on the clues usually found in the manuals.

In the case of the .221, I started with the 40-grain Nosler Ballistic Tip, 50-grain Speer TNT and 52-grain Hornady A-max. Powders, to start, were: Accurate 1680, Vihtavuori N-130, Norma N-200, Accurate 2015-BR, Alliant Reloder 7, IMR 4198 and, at the last minute based on a hint from Ron Reiber at Hodgdon, their new Lil'Gun.

Loads were put up in in Remington brass with Federal 205M primers, and all bullets were seated to touch the rifling as determined by a Stoney Point gauge.

Promising Beginning

The earliest loading was done with standard dies, but when the accuracy potential looked so good I ordered a set of Redding's Competition bushing neck sizing dies. A .247-inch bushing was found to give adequate neck tension without working the brass too much.

The micrometer adjustment of the sizing die allowed me to size only about half of the neck's length, which seemed to help a little more. Seating is also done with Redding's competition dies and allows adjustment of seating depth in .001-inch increments. Trials with various seating depths led me to conclude that seating to just touch the rifling was, indeed, best for this combination.

The procedure was to go from published

Lil' Gun proved the powder of choice in Petty's testing.

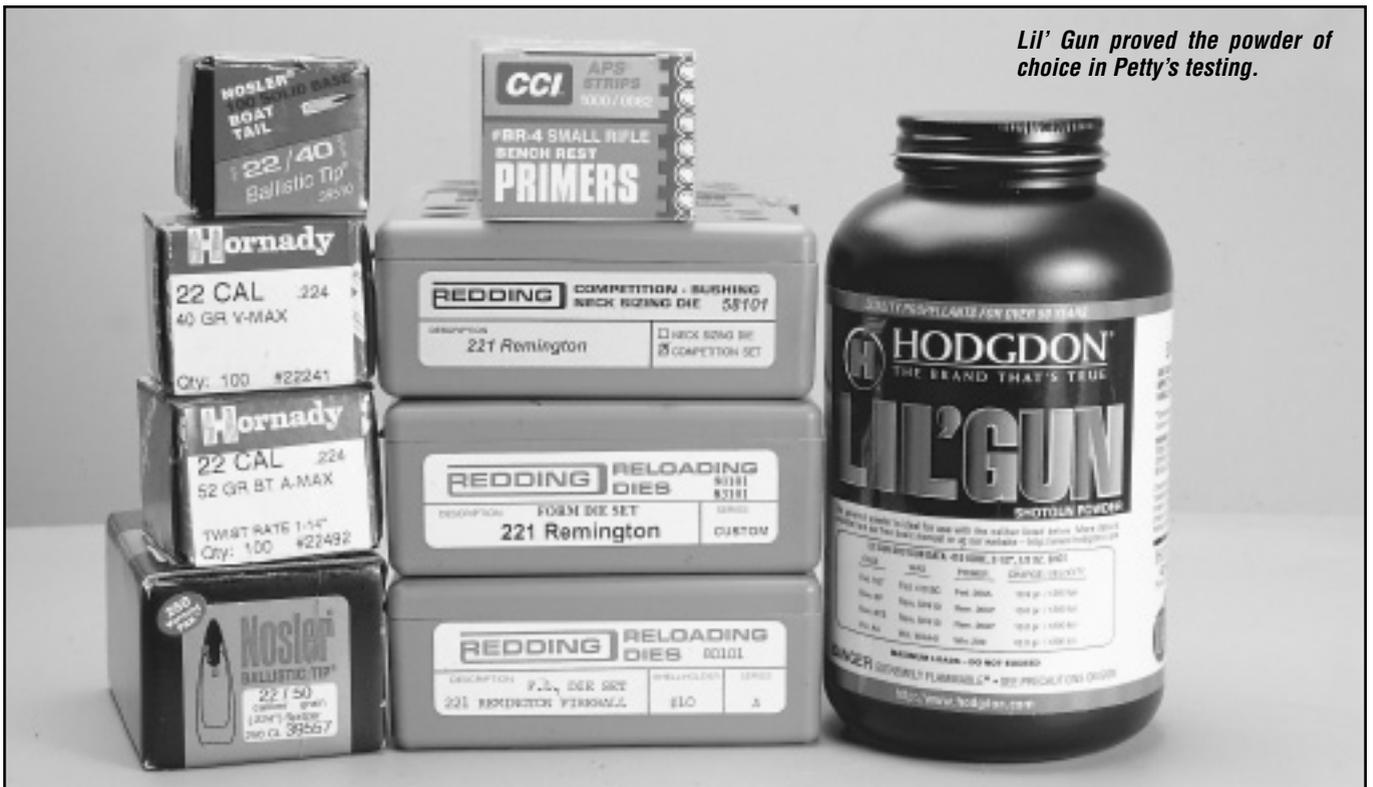


CHART 1

PRIMER COMPARISONS

Primer	Velocity	ES	1	2	3	Avg. Group
CCI	3,620	63	.312	.261	.295	.289
Federal	3,638	58	.343	.240	.348	.310
Remington	3,650	63	.404	.381	.421	.402

starting to maximum loads — usually in one grain increments — and to shoot one five shot group with each. The exception to that was Lil'Gun, for which there was no data at all. Reiber suggested that data for H-110 would be a safe place to start.

In the first round of testing a total of 27 different 5 shot groups averaged .430 inch! To be sure there were some lemons among them, but quite a few cherries too. And so began a bout of obsessive-compulsive behavior that is not all that rare among accuracy nuts — but an uncommon affliction to the average shooter — who should consider himself lucky.

Narrowing It Down

One of the first changes was to substitute the 40-grain Hornady V-max and it shot so well that it became the standard in that weight. Powders were cut down to Accurate 1680, N-130, Reloder 7 and Lil'Gun. Another round of tests led me to concentrate on the 40-grain Hornady with AA-1680 and Lil'Gun, because accuracy results with these components were significantly more consistent.

I have always been happy to take the load that shot best and let the velocity fall where it may, but in this business velocity measurements are mandatory. Most of the loads I tried topped out at speeds similar to the factory ammo, to a high of around 3,150 fps.

You'll find Fireball loading data in the

handgun section of the manuals, so at first glance velocity readings may appear to be out of whack. Check the barrel lengths. SAAMI's standard test barrel is 10.5-inches long, and Nosler's data is shown from a 14-inch barrel so we are automatically going to get about 200 fps more just because of the Cooper's 24-inch barrel.

And It's A Screamer Too?

I had begun with a load of 13.0 grains of Lil'Gun and the 40-grain Hornady and worked up to a maximum of 16.0 grains. I asked my friend Bob Maddox to chronograph them while I was away on a trip, and when he reported the 16.0-grain load had registered 3,598 fps I suggested his chronograph must be broken. It wasn't. And groups were running in the low .3s.

Remember that the factory loads did right at 3,000 fps, and the fastest loads from the manuals were the same. I verified each Lil'Gun increment, carefully felt for hard bolt lift and studied primers with a magnifying glass. If there were any signs of pressure they were invisible to me. And the result wasn't a fluke because on three separate occasions at temperatures from 70 to 90 degrees, velocity averages varied hardly at all and accuracy was consistent too. Reiber's phone rang.

When I told him my results, there was a knowing chuckle and, "I thought so." And the even better news was their pressure test barrel had arrived the week before. I gave

him my loads and received assurance they would shoot them for pressure.

A couple of hours later my phone rang with the news that 16.0-grains of Lil'Gun with the 40-grain Hornady gave a reading happily under the 52,000 psi maximum pressure prescribed by SAAMI. Their barrel didn't give quite as much speed — 3,300 fps — so I'm sure that other barrels will do other things, but am quite comfortable that the load is safe. Hint: start at 14.0 grains anyhow.

I really wish I had thought of this on my own but even so, the use of Lil'Gun in the .221 safely takes it up close to what you'd expect from a .223. And it does it with much less muss and fuss.

Can't Leave It Alone

When you get results as good as these there are two ways to approach things: (1) settle on the load and leave well enough alone or, (2) dive into the benchrest bag of tricks and see if you can do better. Would anyone care to guess which path I chose?

Up to that point everything had been loaded with Federal's 205M primer. My experience has been that "match" or "benchrest" primers usually give slightly better results, so I elected to prepare identical loads using Federal, Remington and CCI premium primers. The load was 16.0-grains of Lil'Gun with the 40-grain Hornady V-max. 15 rounds of each were loaded in cases that had been matched for weight. (See chart 1)

CHART 2

	Velocity	1	2	3	4	5	Avg. Group
Un-turned	3,607	.414	.481	.347	.417	.516	.435
Turned	3,574	.440	.360	.259	.357	.434	.370

Obviously this small sample does not establish statistically demanding precedent, but it did lead me to change to CCI primers for this combination. Next was a gentle neck turn. When you're working with a standard chamber there is no real benefit to an aggressive neck turn so all I did was even things up. This time I loaded 25 rounds using the same recipe from the primer test. (See chart 2)

This little test showed roughly 15 percent reduction in group size with neck turned brass compared with standard. This is a pretty good return for the time spent and the improvement is comparable to what I've observed with several other cartridges.

Law Of Diminishing Returns

Up to this point everything has been done using Remington brass. Benchrest shooters prefer cases made in Finland or Sweden, but neither of those firms make .221 brass. They do, however, make .223, and Redding has dies for the forming job. Folks, this is where we get to the point of *more trouble than it's worth*.

Preparing 25 cases was literally hours and hours of work, and when those were fired there was an insignificant .017 inch reduction in average. Now I know that on a different day, with the planets in different places, I'd almost surely get different results — but with no disrespect to those wonderful folks overseas, in this instance Big Green's brass will do nicely, thank you very much.

So here you have an abbreviated version of a process that took many months and many, many, trips to the range. I could probably have stopped with the discovery of Lil'Gun and a load that happily hovered around half an inch and was hundreds of feet per second faster than anything previously known. But that is what makes accurate rifles and handloading so much fun. You never know till you try.



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Gun Show Treasure

Littlest Shotguns

It wasn't so many years ago when there were a variety of miniature clay target systems on the market. MOSKEETO was one of the most popular brands. Most were designed around smoothbore .22s and the little, long rifle shot cartridge packing 1/15-ounce of No. 12 shot. The miniaturized clay targets were "more fragile than eggs," and they were tossed gently by tiny, scaled-down traps.

As I remember, the Canadian Air Force used the MOSKEETO system successfully to train their WWII Air Cadets in the intricacies of calculating leads and hitting fast moving (and cheap!) flying targets. Indeed, it worked.

A bit later, Crosman marketed a series of CO2 powered shotguns that were widely used indoors and out to train students taking the various state Hunter Safety courses. The "clay" targets were made of plastic and when hit, the dome separated from the outer ring, scoring a point for the shooter.

As a point of interest, many of these models were later custom rebarreled with rifled barrels that performed very well with projectiles up to .40 caliber. 'Tis a pity that Crosman abandoned the air shotgun market.

Of course, the purpose of these miniature shotgun systems was to introduce new shooters into the fundamentals of hitting moving targets without having to confront the problems of recoil, excessive noise, and expensive ranges, ammunition or targets.

The Specimen At Hand

At a recent gun show, I found something that was an improvement on all these earlier miniature systems. There, in one cardboard shipping carton measuring 8x10x20 inches were:

- 1 Mini-Loading Kit for 20-gauge Mini-shotshells
- 20 Mini-Shells
- 1 Mini-Trap
- 25 Mini-Birds

Made by the late Sport Ammo Company of Minneapolis, Minn., the Mini-Kit was a beautifully engineered, produced and packaged system.

Here's how it worked.

The Mini-system was designed to use an existing 20-, 16- or 12-gauge shotgun. The system I bought at the show was for the 20 gauge. In short, you could train a novice shooter on a "real" shotgun using the Mini-system and then gradually transition the shooter, using the same gun, to full powered shotshells. Using the loading kit, the beginning shooter would also be introduced into the fundamentals of reloading.

The little green Mini-Trap looks exactly like a scaled-down, conventional Trius trap. The accompanying plastic Mini-Birds feature a yellow colored dome and a detachable black outer skirt that breaks away from the dome at the moment of impact. The genius of the system lies in the Mini-Shells and the Mini-loading tools.

As seen in the accompanying picture, the loading kit consists of a miniature loading press that resembles those used by benchrest shooters; a shot and powder scoop; a decapping pin; a wad punch; and five Mini-Shells.

The Mini-Shell, regardless of gauge, is a 1½-inch long, fluted alloy casting, with a .410 sized bore, and accepts a No. 209 shotgun primer and conventional .410 bore overpowder and overshot card wads. The shot scoop "scoops" 1/8-ounce of shot, and if flipped over, dips 1.0-grain of Alliant Bullseye powder. The wad punch allows the reloader to cut wads from household materials if commercial .410 card wads are not readily available.

Now for the surprise.

The Mini-Shell was designed to function perfectly and pattern effectively with either a primer alone or with a primer and 1.0-grain of Bullseye. This was a true "no recoil" system. Sound? Well, with a primer alone, the sound is on the level of a .22 long rifle. With 1.0-grain of Bullseye added, it's on par with the report of a .38 Special.

To load a Mini-Shell, one inserts a No. 209 primer in the primer pocket; turns the shell upside down under the loading press and seats the primer with the ram. According to the instructions, overprimer/overpowder wads could be cut from the flattened tubes of old plastic shotshells and overshot wads from milk cartons — which is exactly what I did.

Using the primer alone, two plastic wads are seated over the primer with the press. Then one scoop of No. 9, 10, 11, or 12 shot is added and a "milk carton" overshot wad is seated.

Using No. 12 shot, this load patterned nicely at 30 feet through a modified choke.

If a little more power is desired for either instructional purposes or for backyard varmint control, 1.0-grain of Bullseye is added plus 2 scoops of shot. Loading both No. 9 and No. 12 shot and shooting a modified choke, I was amazed at the density of the resulting patterns at 30 to 40 feet — just right for "Still-Board" contests featuring an "X" on a piece of paper.

In view of our increasingly urbanized society, it's time to revive these miniature shotgun systems of the past.



Photos (top-bottom): Patterns at 30 feet. Top target #9 shot and bottom target #12 shot with 1 grain of Bullseye. Left-hand target #12 shot with primer alone. Thoughtfully engineered, the Mini-Loading kit was an ideal introduction for novices into the fundamentals of reloading.



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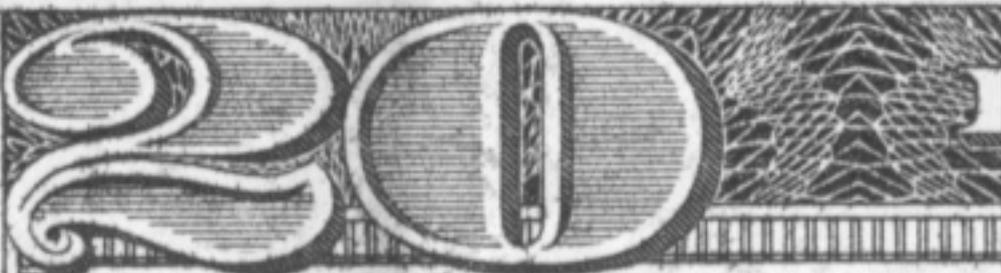
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SURVIVAL TIPS FOR BUYING USED GUNS

PART TWO: REVOLVERS

A quality revolver, be it double or single action, is a splendid work of incredible precision. That buttery smooth action commonly encountered on old Colts and 'Smiths is not there by accident. Factory workers are highly trained to produce this "feel," and their task requires great skill. Unfortunately, due to the very nature of this precise machine, it is subject to wear and tear at a slightly increased pace compared to some other types of firearms.

It seems as if there are more good used revolvers on the market now than ever before. The reason may be that semiauto pis-

tols are currently more "fashionable" than revolvers, and many have traded off fine six-guns towards the hot auto pistol of the moment. The savvy shooter knows that for many uses, a revolver is tops.

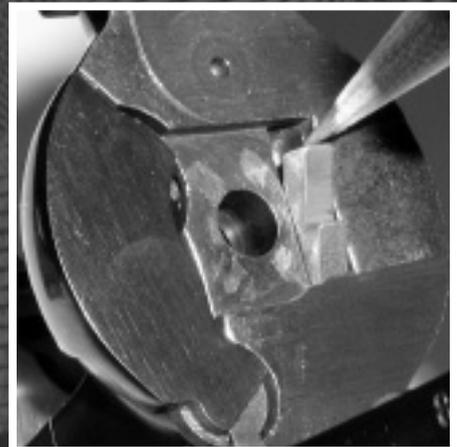
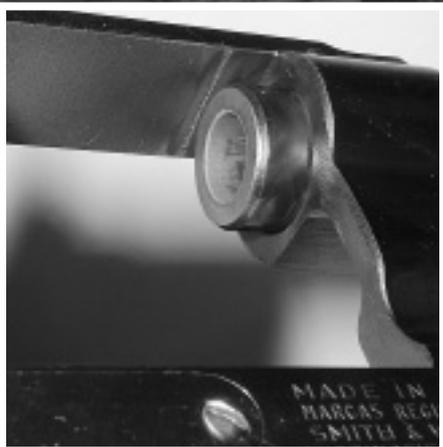
Before you consider purchasing a used six-gun, let's first examine what you might expect to encounter, and discuss what to watch out for. Your ultimate goal in searching for a used revolver is to find one that will provide you with years of trouble free service and satisfaction. Armed with the tips we will discuss, finding a quality used revolver is much simpler than you might imagine.

Glenn Barnes





Below (left-right): Rimfire chamber counterbores are often damaged. Gas cutting above barrel cylinder gap is obvious. Cylinder ratchets deserve careful inspection. Standing breech and exposed hand on Ruger SA revolver. Note how recoil has imprinted the ratchets around the base-pin hole.



Hands-On Examination

Having found a likely prospect at your local emporium, the first step (as always) is to verify the revolver is unloaded. Now, check the overall appearance of the handgun. Does it show signs of obvious abuse, such as dents, dings, or heavy scratches? Screw slots should be examined carefully. Are the adjustable sight screws damaged in any way? What about the side-plate or frame screws? Are they burred and stripped?

If so, the six-gun's previous owner failed to use proper fitting screwdrivers. This may seem like a minor detail, but if he cared so little for the revolver as to neglect this small detail, what else might he have disdained?

Is the finish worn evenly? Most handguns, and especially hunting revolvers, are typically carried in some type of holster. Normal holster wear generally reveals itself in three areas — at the muzzle, the front bottom portion of the frame, and around the cylinder. If the finish is worn in areas other than these, it more than likely denotes the use of an improperly fitting holster. This isn't damaging, but once again, it makes you wonder.

Most double-action revolvers have a sideplate that covers and protects the internal lockwork. Examine it carefully. Has it been removed and re-installed ham-handedly? You can usually tell at a glance if this is the case. The edges of the sideplate are easily peened by careless removal or installation.

Another simple tip if you aren't sure, is

to drag a fingernail over the area. High spots and burrs are readily detected in this manner. There is certainly nothing wrong with removing the sideplate of a six-gun — many shooters do this at least once a year as part of routine cleaning and maintenance. But a beat-up sideplate makes you wonder what hidden damage may exist.

Bore And Crown

To examine the bore, swing the cylinder open, or alternately (on single-action guns), remove the cylinder from the frame. Closely inspect the bore and crown. The bore should be nice and bright and free of any bulges. A dent and ding free crown is crucial to good accuracy. Six-guns are normally cleaned from the muzzle and it takes only one slip with a metal cleaning rod to damage the crown.

If most of your shooting is done at relatively close range, a slightly dinged crown may not adversely affect the size of your groups. If the pre-owned revolver of your choice is to be used for hunting, where longer shots are the norm, even a slightly damaged crown may cause you to miss that buck of a lifetime.

Next, inspect the forcing cone. High-pressure cartridges wreak havoc on them. Typically, a little wear will not impair good accuracy. If it shows more than a little erosion, and you intend to fire mostly full-house loads, you may consider opting for another example. If your goal is low to medium velocity handloads for pleasure shooting and small game hunting, a slightly

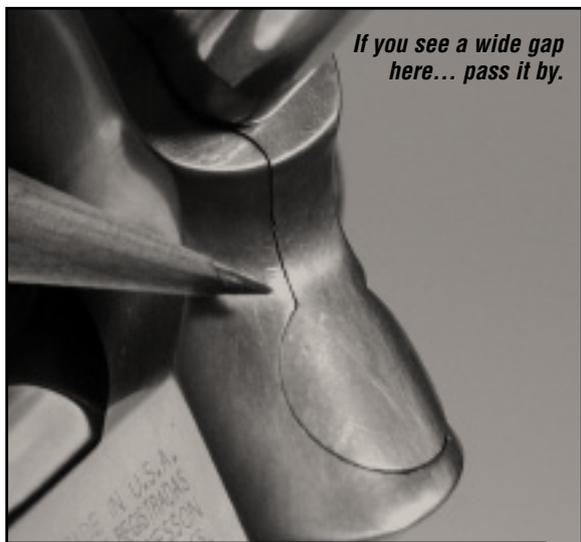
eroded forcing cone should not adversely affect the size of your groups.

Notice the top strap directly above the forcing cone? More than likely you will see a straight line cut into it from hot gasses escaping from the barrel/cylinder gap. This is normal and unavoidable. Fortunately, it only seems to erode a certain amount and then stops. Barrel/cylinder gap is usually set from the factory somewhere around .004 to .006 inch. You can quickly check it with a simple feeler gauge. The larger the gap, the faster the top strap erodes.

Where The Action Is

With the cylinder open, examine the breech-face and recoil shield. The recoil shield is a separate piece of steel surrounding the firing pin and should be firmly set in place. Not all firearms use an independent recoil shield; some are an integral part of the breech-face itself. Whichever the case with the six-gun you are examining, make sure the firing pin hole is free from burrs and dings that could possibly interfere with ignition of primers.

The breech-face on a revolver takes a tremendous beating as it stops the rearward thrust of the fired cartridge. This abuse eventually wears the blue away, often imprinting the headstamp of the cartridge upon it. Stainless steel six-guns are subject to this as well; the breech-face just gets shinier as it wears. It should be smooth and free from burrs and dings just like the recoil shield. Remember if you happen upon one that has a blue-worn breech-face, it has been my expe-



If you see a wide gap here... pass it by.



It takes only a little care to use a correctly fitting screwdriver.



Clean muzzle crown aids accuracy.



Locking bolt cuts in cylinder may sometimes be peened.

rience that it takes a lot of rounds to do this.

With the cylinder still open, let's look at the ejector rod. Most six-guns built today have an enclosed ejector housing, which protects it from damage. Give the cylinder a spin and check for any wobble in the ejector rod. If you detect any, a trip to the gunsmith may be in order.

Using your ever-present pocket magnifying glass, examine the cylinder ratchet shoulders for signs of abuse or wear. The cylinder of a revolver rotates as the hand pushes upward against the ratchet shoulders, eventually causing wear to this area. I have encountered more than a few six-guns that had obtained ratchet shoulder damage while its owner was attempting to clean it. They had removed the cylinder, and it slipped out of oily hands onto a hard floor, damaging this critical area. Single action six-guns are more prone to this accident, as their cylinders are removed from the handgun for normal cleaning operations.

One thing to check that is often overlooked is the extractor pins. These are the two pins located underneath the extractor that holds it in line. It isn't often you encounter a revolver with broken or missing pins, but it does happen. The factory or a good gunsmith can replace missing pins on a S&W, while the entire cylinder must be replaced on a Ruger. Keep this in mind.

Worth A Close Look

Close the cylinder and let's check the timing. If the used revolver is a Ruger or S&W: Lightly place your thumb and middle finger around the cylinder. Slowly cock the hammer back (Single action mode). The bolt should slip into the cylinder notch just before you reach full cock. If it doesn't, it's out of time.

Most Colts, on the other hand, if you were to use this same method of timing check, would probably read as out of time. Colts, if cocked slowly, will usually not allow the bolt to slip into the cylinder notch until the trigger is depressed, only then will it slip into place as it should. If it doesn't, then it's out of time.

Ordinarily, an out of time revolver is due to a worn hand or one that needs adjusting. Either way it is a simple fix for an experienced gun-doctor. A slightly out of time six-gun will only get worse the more you shoot it, but I wouldn't let that keep me from buying the gun if everything else checked out fine.

Next, examine the fit of cylinder locking bolt to cylinder notches. The notches should be sharp and show little to no wear. To check for excessive wear or abuse, simply cock the hammer and manually rotate the cylinder from side to side. A little movement is normal. A lot of slop indicates excessive wear. Pass on this revolver and move on to the next.

A DA revolver's cylinder crane should fit tightly against the frame. No detectable

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gap is ideal. A small gap is common and presents no problem, however, if it is large, more than likely either the frame or crane has been warped.

All Shook Up

Let's check for excessive endshake. When a firing pin drops on a primer igniting the powder charge, the cartridge and cylinder move slightly forward. Pressures cause the cartridge case to expand against the cylinder wall and the backward propulsion forces the cylinder to the rear. This constant battering will eventually cause excessive endshake.

Grasp the cylinder between your thumb and middle finger and try to move the cylinder forward and backwards. A little movement is normal — even new six-guns have a small amount of endshake. Excessive movement more than likely means the revolver has been fired quite a lot and you should look for another or anticipate the cost of having this repaired.

Cock the hammer back and *gently* push forward on it. Nothing should happen. If the hammer falls, a trip to the gunsmith is in order and the repair bill is not likely to be small.

If the used revolver of your choice is wearing rubber grips, ask the salesman to remove them for you. It has been my experience, and sometimes misfortune, that rubber grips attract and hold moisture underneath, promoting rust.

These simple tests for examining a used revolver can be applied to practically any six-gun on the used handgun market. One thing to add... If your pre-owned revolver happens to be a .22 rimfire — excessive dry firing may damage the counterbored chambers. It will eventuallypeen the edge of the chamber making inserting a cartridge almost impossible.

Get Assurances

If everything checked out fine with the pre-owned six-gun of your choice go ahead and buy it. Of course, you won't know how it shoots nor if it has any hidden problems until you take it to the range, so ask the salesman about a return policy. Most reputable gun shops will be happy to repair or replace a problem handgun if it's possible. Some shops have no guarantee, and if you buy it, they consider the problem, and the gun, yours.

Possibly more used revolvers are on the market today than at any other time in six-gun history. Most, if not all, law enforcement agencies and security forces have made the switch from revolvers to semi-autos. This transition has flooded the used handgun market with quality revolvers at bargain prices. Using the careful shopping practices we have discussed, you can be assured of obtaining the best of these buys.

Next month, we'll take a quick look at choosing a used long gun.



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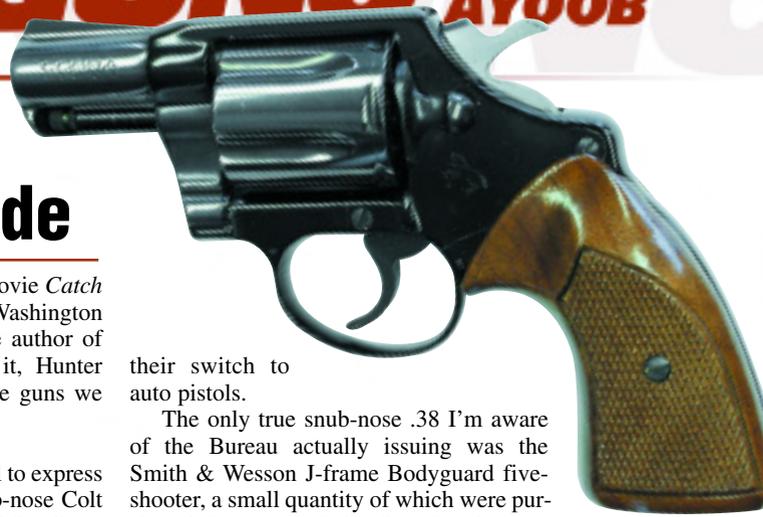


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HANDGUNS BY MASSAD AYOUB



Small Handgun Attitude

The review of the Leonardo DiCaprio movie *Catch Me If You Can* was written for the Washington Post by Stephen Hunter, the gun-wise author of the excellent “Bob the Nailer” novels. In it, Hunter makes an interesting observation on what the guns we choose say about our attitudes.

He writes:

“(Director Steven) Spielberg finds a symbol to express the FBI’s essential harmlessness: It’s the snub-nose Colt Detective Special all the feds keep pulling, and Spielberg keeps noticing in close-up silhouettes: a tiny little gun that seems to reflect the innocence of a world where nobody really shot anybody very often. It’s a gun a man would carry who really did not want to hurt anybody.”

This is not to say that if you carry a more substantial firearm, you do want to hurt someone. Rather, Hunter seems to be commenting on an attitude we’ve all seen with armed citizens and law dogs alike. “I don’t really need a gun, so I’ll just carry this little thing to reassure myself, or to satisfy departmental regulations requiring me to be armed.”

Spielberg’s characters are by no means the first to be so armed on the screen. TV detectives from Jack Webb (in the earliest episodes of *Dragnet*, before he switched to a two-inch S&W Model 10) to the title character of *Barney Miller* carried Detective Specials. So did private eyes ranging from *Mannix* to the entire mainstay cast of *77 Sunset Strip*.

Television’s most famous FBI agent, Efrim Zimbalist, Jr., carried a two and a half inch Colt Diamondback, basically a highly polished Detective Special with adjustable sights.

Famous real-life lawmen who were partial to the Dick Special included master homicide detective Vern Geberth of NYPD; John Dineen, the Chicago copper who became president of the Fraternal Order of Police; and Skeeter Skelton, whose first writing, a treatise on snubbies, was published in this magazine.

For most of its history, the FBI issued service revolvers, not snubbies, starting with four-inch Colt Official Police .38s. These were followed by Military & Police .38s with the same barrel length, a requirement reduced to three inches shortly before the agency adopted the Model 13 .357 Magnum, their last standard issue revolver before

their switch to auto pistols.

The only true snub-nose .38 I’m aware of the Bureau actually issuing was the Smith & Wesson J-frame Bodyguard five-shooter, a small quantity of which were purchased for some of the first female agents hired. While many agents had .38 snubs of their own they wore to work or off duty, most were likely to strap on a .357 Magnum when a tough arrest loomed.

By the mid-1980s, only the S&W brand was approved as a .38 snub, though the Bureau grandfathered Colts owned by older special agents. (*Catch Me If You Can* is set in the ‘60s, when the Detective Special would have been approved but not issued.)

But let’s not nit-pick the particular icon chosen by brother Spielberg, a gun enthusiast himself. What’s worth looking into is the mind-set that Hunter hit on. It’s genuinely there.

The Vestigial Gun

There was a time, not so long ago, when a great many police administrators wore a uniform that consisted of a white shirt and a snub-nose .38. Both accoutrements seemed to make the statement, “I don’t have to get out there and get dirty doing dangerous things anymore.” The .38 snub in this application was a vestigial gun, more a badge of office than a true duty weapon.

This type of gun has all but disappeared as a primary weapon for on-duty law enforcement personnel. The little .38s remain popular for off-duty wear, however, and hugely popular as backup guns.

Surviving the Mind-Set

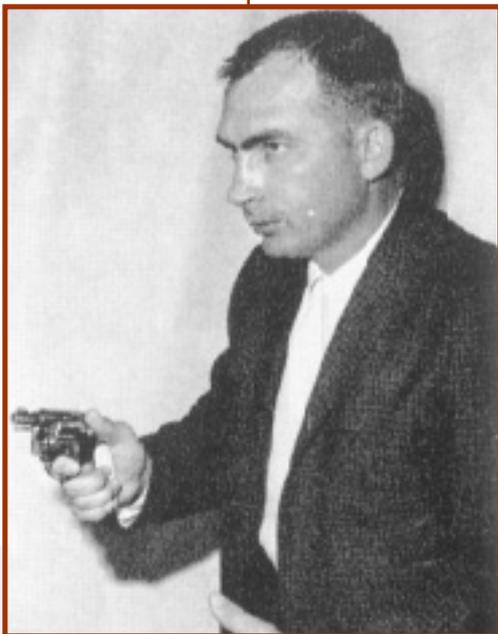
An attitude that says, “I’m not really going to need this gun” is a symptom of potentially lethal complacency. The person who carries a small-frame .38 wants lots of practice with it. These little whippers have a disproportionately nasty kick that demands proper technique, which includes a high-hand hold and a very firm grasp. Hand-fitting stocks are imperative. For pure control, it’s tough to beat Pachmayr Compacs, which seem to enhance both practical accuracy and speed of fire.

When worn in a belt or shoulder holster, a three-inch barrel dramatically improves hit potential. So does an action hone. And practice with speedloaders; five shots (or even six with a Detective Special) is not a lot.

Which is why current new agents of the real world Federal Bureau of Investigation are issued .40 caliber Glock semiautomatics, the fourteen-shot G23 or the sixteen-shot G22.



Above right: *Colt Cobra* was an alloy-framed version of the *Dick Special*. This one dates from the ‘70s. **Below:** The late Skeeter Skelton in a photo from his first magazine article in a 1959 issue of *GUNS Magazine*. The gun? A slicked up Colt snubbie.



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TAKES A LICK AND KEEPS ON

TORTURE TESTING ZEISS' CONQUEST 6.5X20

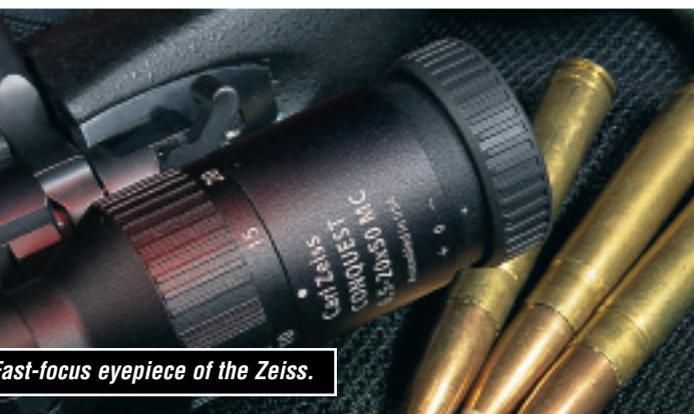


SHOOTING CONQUEST

0



Turrets of the Conquest are nicely compact, and feature 1/4 MOA adjustments. The parallax is easily adjusted from behind the rifle.



Fast-focus eyepiece of the Zeiss.

STORY By David M. Fortier **Photography By Emily K. Fortier**

If you're going to pick a fight with someone, it certainly behooves you to pick an individual to dance with you're sure to beat. Just common sense right? Well common sense isn't always so common, and I'm somewhat miffed to report that I recently had the knuckles put to me by an old and respected gentleman from Germany.

The scoop? Well pull up a chair and relax for a bit, and I'll regale you with a tale of how Carl Zeiss made your old friend look like a silly green horn.

Like most tales of woe, mine starts with correspondence from a lady. In this case it was a call from Shannon Jackson of Carl Zeiss Optical, Inc. Jackson, knowing my penchant for quality European optics, was curious if I'd be interested in playing with one of their new 6.5-20x50mm Conquest rifle scopes.

Now I've been lusting after a Zeiss 8x30 binocular for some time, so I was ever so eager to receive one of their riflescopes in for testing. After all, while Carl Zeiss is justly famous for their superb binoculars they're also well respected for their outstanding riflescopes. So in short order I had a box with the Zeiss logo arrive on my doorstep.

Well-Deserved Reputation

Why this fascination with Zeiss optics? That my friend is an easy question to answer... quality. It's a simple fact that Germany has long been a leader when it comes to producing precision optics. While there are certainly other noteworthy German optical manufacturers, Carl Zeiss has been well respected for some 150 plus years. During this time Zeiss has been a leader in improving the quality and performance of high-grade optical equipment.

Not only can Zeiss be considered the father of modern binoculars, but they've also made great advances in manu-

In order to see how the Conquest withstood heavy recoil Fortier put it to the test. Here he drops the hammer on a 700 grain AP round.



facturing and polishing lenses, designing and applying special anti-reflective coatings, and producing internal mechanisms that adjust precisely and reliably.

In addition, their lens glass, produced at Schott Glaswerke (part of the Zeiss family), is generally considered the finest optical glass in the world. So it's no surprise that since the turn of the century, Zeiss riflescopes have had an enviable reputation for superb resolution and contrast, excellent light transmission and reliable adjustments.

Serious hunters have long sought Zeiss riflescopes for their handsome looks and quality optics. On a more serious note, it was German *Scharfschützen* scanning the trenches through Zeiss riflescopes that introduced the world to modern sniping in 1914. This is another reason why Zeiss optics are so respected, they've been and done.

Sounds good huh? Well, to be blunt, an old name and a European address may impress your friends, but I was more interested in how this new scope performed. With a retail price of only \$799, the 6.5-20x50 Conquest is priced lower than a comparable Leupold 6.5-20x50 LR. Think about that for a bit.

Pulling the Zeiss from its box, the first thing I noticed was the "Assembled in USA" notation on the ocular and the 1-inch tube body. A 1-inch tube? I thought these went out in the '90s! And this is where I made my mistake. Staring at the Zeiss I presumed that with a retail price this low (hey remember, we're talking Zeiss here) corners must have been cut with quality suffering accordingly.

This new Zeiss was probably a Zeiss in name only, I surmised as I plotted against it. Emily is constantly telling me I'm too quick to judge, one of these days perhaps I'll listen to her.

While Zeiss never envisioned us freezing their product in a block of ice for 4 days as part of our review, that's life in the big city. I believe the proper term for this is a 'Zeissicle'.

Built To American Tastes

The new Conquest 6.5-20x50mm was developed with one person in mind, the American long-range shooter. As Americans we're a fussy bunch, with distinct likes and dislikes and strong opinions on how things should be. The Conquest keeps our quirks in mind. For instance, the scope itself is based upon a rugged 1 inch anodized aluminum tube.

While I prefer 30mm tubes, 1-inch remains the American standard and it does provide for a lighter scope. In the center of the tube, the mechanism block sports well designed and compact target turrets. These are readily adjusted and feature coarse, audible clicks, and are clearly marked for easy reading. Adjustments are in 1/4 MOA (1/8 MOA optional) clicks, with a total of 45 MOA available.

Full turret rotations are easily kept track of by Zeiss's simple marking system so you don't accidentally end up one full rotation off. On the left side of the mechanism block is a knob for adjusting parallax from 50 yards to infinity. In addition to being easier to adjust, this feature reduces both size and weight compared to a scope with an adjustable objective.

Magnification runs from 6.5x up to 20x. This provides either a huge FOV (a whopping 170 degrees at 100 yards on 6.5x), or an up close and personal look at a distant target simply by turning the magnification ring. To the rear of the ocular is a European fast-focus eyepiece.

Big And Bright

For superior light transmission, the Conquest sports a large 50mm objective lens. This lens diameter, mated to fully multi-coated lenses using Zeiss' proprietary coatings, provides a bright, sharp image. The etched reticle is located in

Yeah that's \$800 worth of Zeiss glass frozen solid. No we didn't ask permission first. However despite our best efforts the Zeiss never missed a beat.





the second plane and thus does not change size as you power up and down. Five different reticle designs are available with my test scope featuring the venerable duplex. Additionally, the Conquest features a constant eye relief of 3.5 inches. Finished in matte black, it's guaranteed to be water and dust-proof and comes with a lifetime transferable warranty.

"Humbug," said I whilst mounting it via a set of Warne steel rings onto a Les Baer .223 Match rifle. Rule number 1 of fighting: End things before your opponent knows they started, then go enjoy the rest of your day. With this in mind I set about checking the Conquest's tracking. When put to the test, all too many scopes have adjustment, tracking, or repeatability issues. With the Les Baer printing consistent .25- to .35-inch five-shot groups at 100 yards, any shortcomings would soon become evident.

Precise And Repeatable

Settling behind the rifle I had to admit the image quality was quite good. However such things are frivolous if the scope doesn't track reliably. Unfortunately, after "boxing" it and laboriously shooting group after group while adjusting

windage, elevation and magnification, the Conquest came out on top. Putting a ruler to the adjustments showed them to be, well, perfect.

"Sheer luck," I scowled whilst rummaging about for a Zeiss Test Pattern (ZTP) chart. Rule number 2 of fighting: If the sucker punch or shot to the groin fail, keep your head and get technical. With this in mind I posted the ZTP chart at 50 yards and proceeded to examine the Conquest's optical merits.

The ZTP is a specialized chart designed for examining optical instruments, and examine we did. The first thing I noted is the Conquest's image is bright and color transmission seemed dead on perfect. All too often you'll notice a hint of yellow or gray in the image of a scope, but not here. I also noted that the field of view, whatever the magnification, was large. This is a very good thing, in my book the larger the FOV the better.

In addition, the constant eye relief is a wonderful thing, especially on a hard kicking rifle. Usually on a scope in this magnification range, eye relief can shrink up to an inch simply by dialing in more magnification. With the Conquest though, you're not forced to crawl the stock as you zoom in and out.

SPECIFICATIONS: CONQUEST 6.5-20X50 MC	
Magnification	6.5-20x
Objective Lens Diameter	50mm
Overall Length	15.6 inches
Eye Relief	3.5 inches
Weight	21 ounces
Adjustment	1/4 MOA
FOV (feet at 100 yds)	17.6 at 6.5x, 5.8 at 20x
Exit Pupil Diameter (mm)	7.7 at 6.5x, 2.5 at 20x
Maximum Elevation Adjustment	45 inches/100 yards
Parallax Free	50 yards to infinity
Retail Price	\$799



To put the pressure on, we mounted the Conquest on an Ed Brown .50 Peacekeeper. This little gem drives 650-grain .50 caliber projectiles at 2400 fps.

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Peering at the ZTP I noted that resolution (the ability to see fine detail) was excellent from the center of the image out to the edges with only a slight degradation noticed past 16x. Still, I was able to cleanly resolve down to the number 4 block on the chart on 20x. During this portion of testing I detected no curvature of field or spherical aberration.

Contrast was very good and no astigmatism was noted. No barrel distortion and no rolling distortion was present, however, I did note some pin cushion distortion. As the sun went down I checked the Conquest's low light performance. After cranking the magnification down to increase the exit pupil diameter, the Zeiss impressed me with its light transmission capabilities. I was able to detect and successfully engage targets that were invisible to the naked eye. While the Conquest may not be the absolute pinnacle of the Zeiss line, optically, its heritage is quite evident.

"Yes the glass looked good," I grumbled as I removed it from the Les Baer, "but how would it stand up in the *real* world? Rule number 3 of fighting: If getting technical gets you nowhere *fight dirty!*"

The Cold Shoulder Treatment

With this in mind I plopped the Zeiss into a pail of water, and stuck it out on a cold Maine night. By morning the water had frozen solid, encasing the scope in a block of ice. I had me a "Zeissicle." Cool.

With the sun coming out, I stuck the block of ice containing the Zeiss into my freezer. Four days later I peeked inside with a silly grin on my face. Tossing it into the sink I burned the Conquest out of the ice with hot water. Then with no let up, it was placed in the shower and subjected to a prolonged steam bath. Would the seals hold tight or would the Conquest fail and fog internally? When my hot water heater finally asked for a break we had a look. No muss no fuss — I had simply cleaned the Zeiss off.

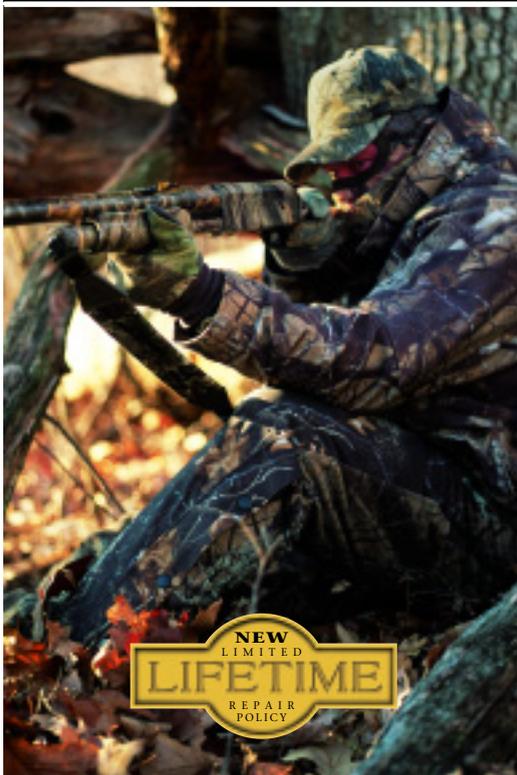
Pulling Out The Big Guns

Scratching my head while examining the Conquest a light bulb suddenly came on. Rule number 4 of fighting: If fighting dirty fails, hit them with whatever you've got left! With this in mind I tightened the Zeiss down onto one of Ed Brown's personal rifles I had on loan. Brown builds truly handsome rifles, and it looked excellent topped with the Zeiss in Warne rings. However this was no ordinary Ed Brown rifle, this was a .50 Peacekeeper.

The spawn of J.D. Jones, the .50 Peacekeeper is a .460 Weatherby Magnum necked up to take .50 BMG projectiles. To put things in perspective think about it this way, imagine a 13-pound rifle hurling 650-grain, .50 cal APIT (Armor Piercing

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Incendiary Tracer) slugs at 2,400 fps. Pounding rounds through this puppy is, well, exhilarating.

Believe me, this rifle will dismember lesser scopes in relatively short order. So one afternoon the Zeiss, Brown's Peacekeeper and I danced our way through my stockpile of 650-grain API, APIT and 700-grain AP rounds. When the smoke cleared and I'd had my fill — the Zeiss was still ready for more. And no Virginia, reticles etched directly onto glass don't break like wire reticles.

I contemplated hitting it with a big rock, but what would that prove? So I meekly said "Uncle" to the Zeiss and gave up the fight. The Conquest may not be the top-of-the-line Zeiss rifle scope, but it none the less remains true to its heritage. The resolution, color rendition, and low light performance are all very good. The turrets are short, a good thing, and the clicks are coarse and distinct. To be blunt, it's a good piece of glass, especially for the cash.

Is it perfect? Heck no, but I've never found anything that was. Personally I don't like scopes with 1-inch tubes. In addition, I'd like more than 45 MOA of total elevation adjustment, especially for those really long shots (although a 20-MOA incline base will suffice). Also, I wish it came with a screw-on sunshade and a reticle with rangefinding capability. That's it for gripes though.

If you're looking for a quality scope in this magnification range for your long-range hunting or varmint rig, the Zeiss Conquest is one to consider. Simply put it's a rugged and reliable riflescope with optics befitting the venerable name of Carl Zeiss.



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IS BERETTA'S LATEST
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IN THE TIME OF BILLENNIUM

STORY BY MASSAD AYOOB

PHOTOS BY ICHIRO NAGATA



Sights are "semi-target," allowing adjustment for POI with ruggedness of a fixed sight.

Beretta has built steel frame pistols before. Beretta has built single action semiautomatic pistols before. Beretta has built fancy guns before, some of them strikingly beautiful. All of these concepts come together in their latest, the Billennium.

The Beretta Model 92 Billennium, says the company's press release, "combines beauty, technology, and function."

I had seen a prototype at the SHOT Show and looked forward to getting one to test. When it arrived, I was not displeased. Though the silhouette and overall dimensions are those of the standard, familiar Beretta 92 that serves our nation as the primary handgun of our armed services, at first glance and heft it doesn't look or feel like a Beretta.

Gone is the slide-mounted decock/safety lever, replaced by a wide, frame-mounted ambidextrous thumb safety. Gone is the forward-riding double action trigger — this new gun's trigger sits further back. Both these changes were made because this gun is single action, intended to be cocked and locked when carried with a round in the chamber.

When you pick it up, it doesn't feel like a Beretta for a couple of reasons. First, there is the matter of weight. With its aluminum alloy frame, the Beretta 92 we've come to know is a big pistol, but a fairly light one. The Billennium is all steel, including the frame, and the result will be called "rock solid" by those who like it and "massive" by those who don't. The pistol weighs 43 ounces unloaded. This is roughly the loaded weight of an all-stainless Smith & Wesson Model 5906, which has the same capacity of the same 9mm Parabellum ammo.

The slide gripping surfaces, front to back, are scalloped into a motif of scales. The same theme continues in the black, scaly-looking grips that don't look as unattractive as they sound.

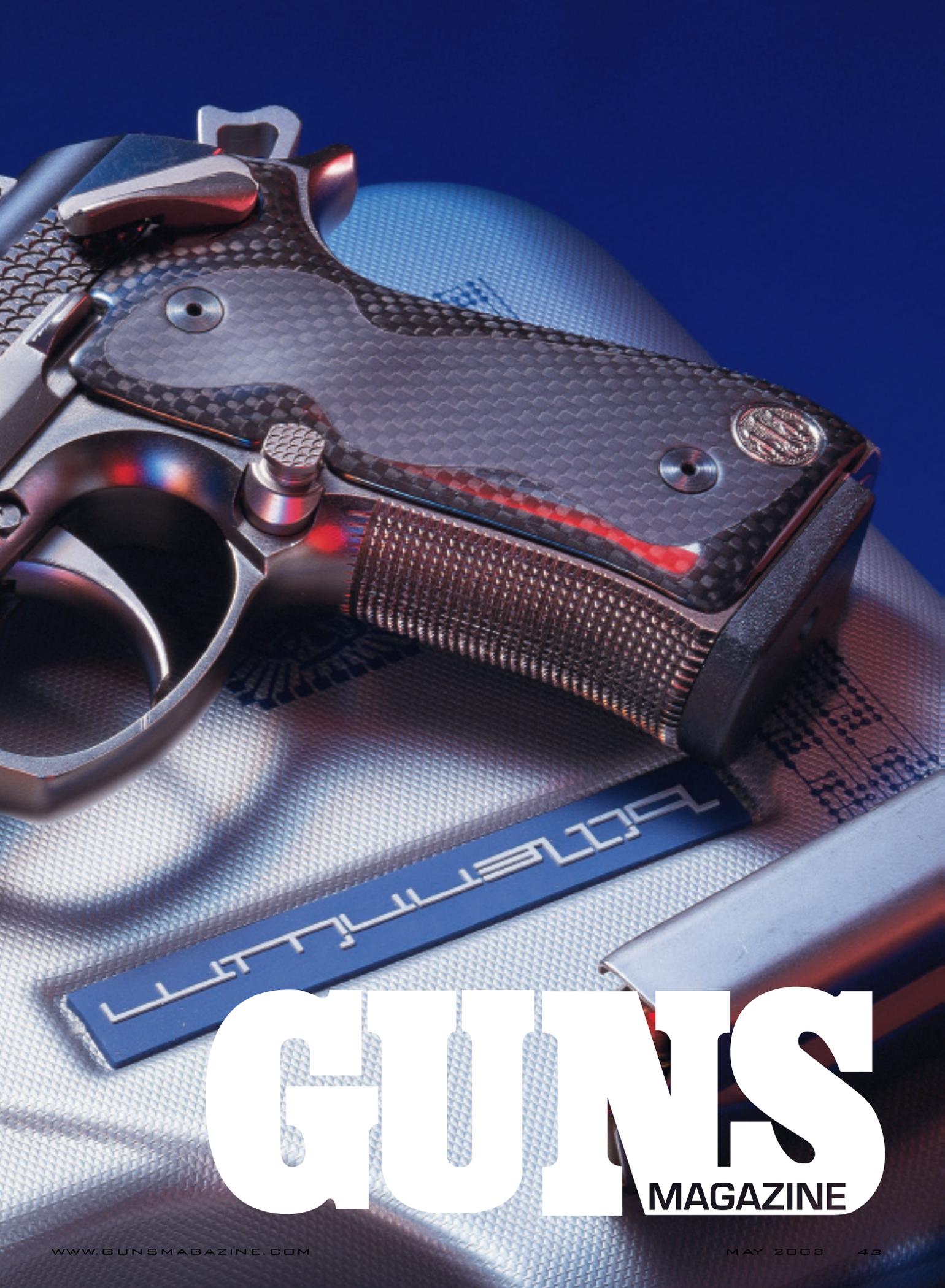
Finally, most of the Berettas we see are plain black guns, finished with the Bruniton the manufacturer has used for so

THE M



IN THE TIME OF THE BILLENNIUM





GUNS

MAGAZINE



Dovetail front sight offers easy interchange if required.



Carbon fiber stocks add to the Billennium's appeal.



Ambi-safeties are wide and comfortable.

many years. This gun is shiny. It gleams. The only word for it is "silver."

Altogether, the Beretta Billennium is a striking handgun. In your grasp or even in your line of vision, it commands attention. Everyone who had occasion to see the test gun wanted to try it.

A Brief History of the Billennium

"We wanted a commemorative for the new millennium that wasn't just collectible, but shootable," says Gabriel DePlano, production manager for Beretta USA. "We wanted a serious shooter motif." Competitive shooters clamored for the frame-mounted safety they were familiar with from their 1911s, and Beretta complied. It wasn't too hard. We geezers can remember when the original Berettas had frame-mounted thumb safeties, a tradition that continues in the Taurus clone of the Beretta.

The steel frame would not only give durability for a lifetime of shooting, but would dampen recoil. The Beretta 92 in 9mm is already a soft-shooting pistol. That dollop of added weight tames it even further. The tiny bit of muzzle flip that remains doesn't last long; a shooter with proper technique finds the front sight instantly back on target.

The sights are what might be called "semi-target." They're not great big target sights that look as if someone jacked up a sight picture diagram from marksmanship school and ran a little pistol underneath it. The sights are proportional to the dimensions of the pistol. Like all current 92s, this one gives a big, blocky sight picture that is very fast to align, and wonder of wonders, the sights were dead on for point of aim/point of impact when the pistol came out of the box. This is always an indication that someone at the factory has done the final inspection with TLC.

The first thing I noticed about the sights was that there were replacements in the box. "The rear sight is micro-adjustable," says Gabriel, "with replacement rear leaf. The front sight is dovetailed in securely, and is replaceable with sights of different heights to allow for elevation." The bottom line: the durability of fixed sights with the

continued on page 56

GUNS MAGAZINE



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Buck Alpha Hunter with guthook



Benchmade Model 192 Bird & Trout



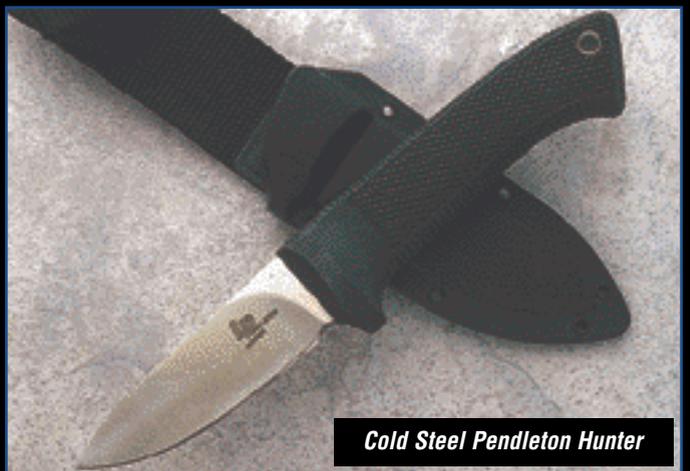
Rinaldi Gambit custom



Benchmade Model 190



Buck Alpha Hunter deluxe



Cold Steel Pendleton Hunter

A good hunting knife is one of the hunter's most important tools. It's just as important, or more so, than the firearm. A good hunting knife should allow the hunter to quickly and easily field dress game, but more importantly, the knife should also serve as a general cutting tool for any task that may arise during the hunt or in camp.

One point that should perhaps be covered is the suitability of a first-rate folding knife for the hunter's uses. A great many excellent folding knives are available that can tackle most anything the hunter is likely to ask of them. Their compactness and convenience is appealing, but for pure handiness and rough and ready durability, the fixed-blade sheath knife is still king and the choice of most seasoned outdoorsmen.

Fortunately today's market offers the hunter a broad choice of fixed blade hunting knives. Nearly every major knife manufacturer turns out hunting knives, and there exists a wealth of custom knife-makers who specialize in handcrafting fixed-blade hunters one at a time. In this article, we have space to look at only a few of the excellent custom and production hunting knives available today. Please bear in mind there are many other well-made knives out there.

An Old Name And A Good One

Buck Knives of El Cajon, Calif., has long manufactured hunting knives. In fact, their far-reaching legacy began with fixed-blade belt knives. Today, that legacy continues with the Alpha Hunter series. The stylish Alpha Hunter is available in two versions. The high-end model features a premium ATS-34 steel blade with a stabilized hardwood handle, and rides in a sewn leather sheath. The less expensive version has a Kraton® rubber handle with a 420HC stainless steel blade. The sheath is of Cordura, with a plastic liner for safety.

SPORTSMAN'S STEEL

STORY BY DEXTER EWING

PHOTOS BY TERRILL HOFFMAN

The Alpha Hunter series has a drop point blade with plenty of belly for most skinning chores. An optional model with a gut hook on the blade spine allows hunters to open up game like pulling a zipper on a coat.

Buck Knives has been the leader in production made fixed-blade hunting knives, and their new Alpha Hunter series demonstrates that the company is still the forerunner in the market. The deluxe wood handled version of the Alpha Hunter retails for \$106, the Kraton version for \$70. Add \$10 to either model for the optional gut hook.

Workingman's Custom

Custom knifemaker John Greco, who hails from rural Greensburg, Ky., is known for his performance blades with affordable price points. His prices rival that of high-end production knives, so for the price of a store bought knife, one can afford a genuine Greco custom.

The knife Greco sent for this article is his Companion Mk III fixed blade, which he states is his best selling model to hunters. And here's why.

The slender drop point blade measures 5-inches in length and is flat ground out of .2-inch thick 8670 carbon steel stock. The Companion's blade is pretty thick for a knife this size, giving it good lateral rigidity and improved balance. The handle is of black micarta and has an integral finger guard for extra user safety. With each knife, Greco includes a pouch-style sewn leather belt sheath.

This is a no-nonsense, sturdy design. Greco puts a mean edge on his knives and this one is no exception. The thick blade stock allows one to tackle big, tough cutting tasks

with aplomb. And the knife has very good balance in the hand. So what do you pay for a custom knife like this? The Companion Mk III runs only \$89.95.

Sleek As A Cat

Katz Knives' new Kagemusha series of fixed and folding knives offer a sleek look in a highly useable package. The Kagemusha fixed blade appears to be a highly utilitarian knife with its upswept blade and slightly curved handle for user comfort.

For the blade, Katz Knives uses their proprietary XT80 stainless steel for a combination of good edge holding qualities and corrosion resistance. A series of deeply cut traction notches are positioned on the blade spine for a secure thumb or finger rest, giving more precise control over cutting chores.

The cherrywood handle scales are very pleasing to the eye. The Kagemusha fixed blade is also available with a textured Kraton® rubber handle for those who prefer the tactile touch of this material. The knife lays in your hand very well, with the curve of the handle conforming nicely to the user's grip.

The Kagemusha's hollow grind and excellent cutting edge geometry make it a great cutting tool, especially for meat. The upswept blade design gives a graceful belly to the cutting edge, ideal for slicing. Evaluating the Kagemusha was a pleasure. Definitely this is a knife that can cut the mustard and then some!

For those looking for a fixed blade with excellent performance characteristics, look for the Katz Knives Kagemusha series. A very well made leather pouch



John Greco Companion custom



Katz Kagemusha



RICHARD STAHLHUT PHOTO

sheath comes with each Kagemusha fixed blade. This blade is well-crafted and a solid performer. The Kagemusha retails at \$168.

Good Things From Oregon

Benchmade Knife Company's new fixed-blade hunters were released last year just in time for deer season. The Model 190 drop-point hunter and Model 192 Bird & Trout share the same make up in terms of materials. Both have flat-ground blades of proven 440C stainless steel, with handles of stabilized hardwood, integral guards and full tang construction for good balance and sturdiness. 440C stainless is widely known for its corrosion resistance and edge holding capabilities.

The Model 190 is the all-around performer, excelling at many tasks such as skinning and slicing, due to its deep-bellied drop point blade shape. The contoured wood handle offers a secure grip.

For smaller game and fish, the Model 192 fits the bill. The thin blade stock, in combination with the full flat grind, makes this knife cut effortlessly. And in a pinch it can be used as a filet knife. Both models feature prominent traction notches for the ultimate in control.

These knives come with a leather pouch sheath and have a retail price of \$100. The Model 190 and 192 join the

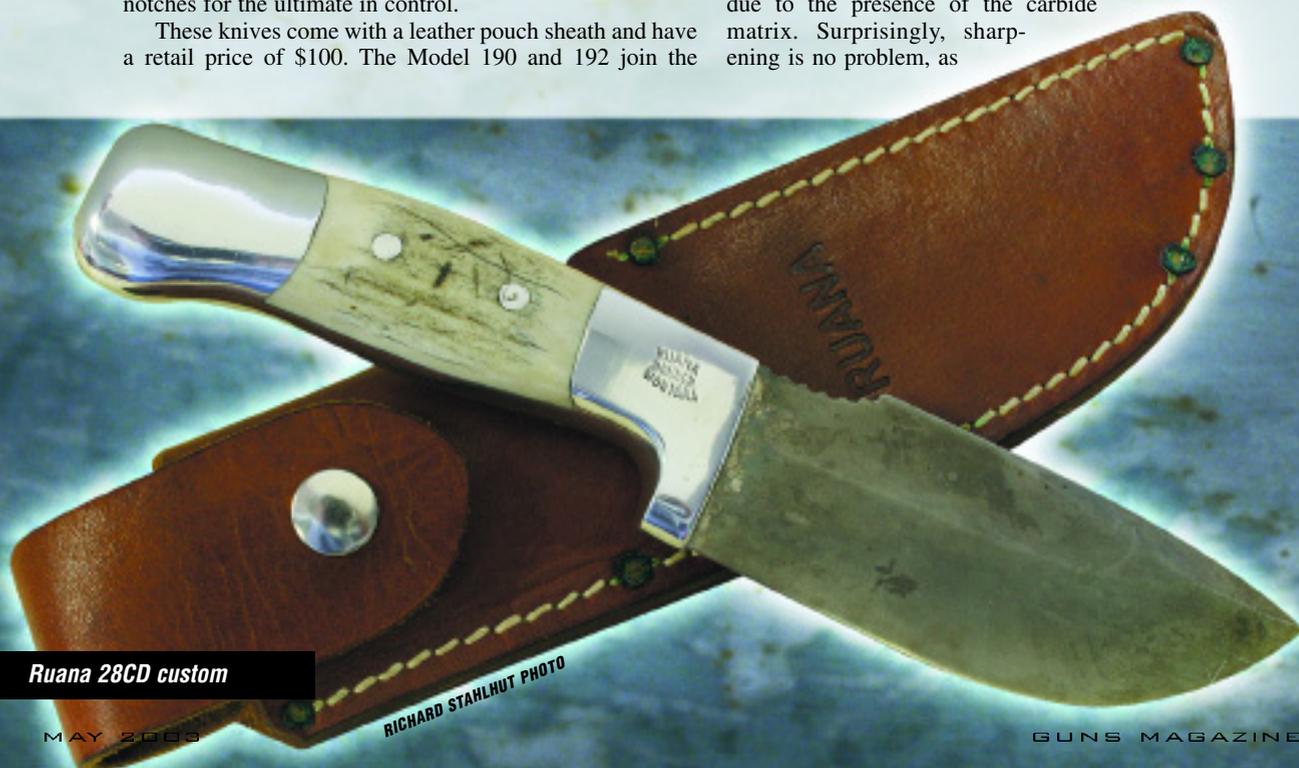
Model 180 Outbounder in forming the core of Benchmade's line of fixed-blade hunting knives for the outdoorsman.

Hard-Core Custom

Trace Rinaldi of Hemet, Calif., is a custom maker known for his high-performance utility and tactical fixed blades. He certainly knows what it takes to build a knife you'll want to use... and use a lot. Among his many designs, the Gambit model is a top seller to hunters. It is a compact, drop-point fixed blade designed for easy carry and adaptable to many uses.

All of Rinaldi's handles are contoured and rounded for the ultimate in user comfort, which has become his calling card. The Gambit is no exception. For this article, Rinaldi fabricated a Gambit with a textured G-10 handle and a high-tech Talonite® blade.

Talonite is a chromium and cobalt alloy, and contains no iron. Therefore, it is not classified as steel. Completely non-magnetic and totally corrosion resistant, Talonite has a matrix of carbides in the alloy that give this material its performance characteristics. The beauty of Talonite is when the cutting edge feels dull to the touch, it will continue to cut due to the presence of the carbide matrix. Surprisingly, sharpening is no problem, as



Ruana 28CD custom

RICHARD STAHLHUT PHOTO

it is a slightly softer material than stainless steel. Total cost for a knife made exactly as you see here — \$250. For a Talonite bladed knife, this is a great price.

The sheath that comes with the Gambit is a molded Concealex thermoplastic unit that is unaffected by the elements. Rinaldi designed the Gambit to be carried as either a neck knife or a belt knife, thus he includes both a necklace and Mini Tek-Lok belt adapter. The Gambit is probably one of the most comfortable small fixed blades you will ever handle. The rounded scales fill your grip while the drop point blade readily tackles any cutting task.

The Gambit is just one example of Trace Rinaldi's fixed blade line up that has garnered him a loyal following among those who demand the finest in custom crafted blades.

A Name Everyone Knows

Randall Made Knives is a big name in fixed blade hunters and skinners. They have a tradition of excellence dating back to the mid-1900s. Their Model 11 Alaskan Skinner has a broad, 4-inch blade that has a generous belly to facilitate the toughest of field dressing chores. The Model 11 was designed in 1952 by renowned Alaskan hunting guide Tommy Thompson.

To complement this hard working blade shape, the Alaskan Skinner carries a 4¼-inch long handle comprised of specially treated stacked leather washers with brass guard, and is topped off with a Duraluminum butt cap. What this amounts to is a serious fixed blade for heavy use. Each Model 11 Alaskan Skinner comes with a high-quality leather sheath.

The 4-inch Model 11 retails for \$235, and there are also 4½ and 5 inch versions available. These run \$245. If you are looking to acquire a Model 11 Alaskan Skinner for your collection, expect to have to wait. At press time, Randall Made Knives has a delivery date of May 2006, and that is subject to change without notice.

Cold Steel

Cold Steel is a name that springs naturally to mind when considering innovative fixed-blade knives. The company has a custom collaboration hunting knife in their line now, which was co-designed with the help of noted custom knifemaker Lloyd Pendleton. Pendleton has been turning out fixed blade hunters, one by one, for about 30 years.

Cold Steel's Pendleton Hunter features a 3½-inch semi-skinner blade made of AUS-8 stainless steel. The handle, including the single guard, is molded from Kraton rubber, and is textured for a secure grip.

The Pendleton Hunter has all the lines of a classic fixed blade. It's simple in design but highly useful when it comes to processing game meat. When your hands are wet or covered in blood, the textured Kraton

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will not feel slick at all. In fact, you will be pleasantly surprised at how secure your grip feels when your hands are wet.

The flat ground blade cuts easily and has enough belly to it to facilitate skinning chores. AUS-8 is a good middle-of-the-road steel and is perfect for hunting knives like this due to its ability to hold an edge and its ease of resharping. Cold Steel includes a molded Secure-Ex sheath that holds the knife securely and safely until needed.

For those who might fancy small fixed blades, Cold Steel also produces the Mini Pendleton Hunter, which has a 3-inch blade. Otherwise, materials are the same as the bigger version. The Pendleton Hunter and Mini Pendleton Hunter retail for \$89.99 and \$49.99 respectively and are available now from your favorite Cold Steel retailer.

Randall Alaskan Skinner



Light And Ready

Spyderco is best known for folding knives, but don't be fooled, they also offer a number of excellent sheath knives. One of the most useful for the outdoorsman is the Fred Perrin model.

At only 3.7 ounces, this knife is shockingly light, and complete with locking synthetic scabbard with Tek-Lok attachment, the package weighs but 6.65 ounces. The 5-inch, VG-10 steel blade follows the Bowie pattern, and is useful for any camp or field chore you can imagine. A deep finger groove and soft Kraton inserts on the handle sides make the knife comfortable and secure, even when wearing gloves.

Light and easy to handle, don't be surprised when you find yourself reaching for the Spyderco Perrin for your camp cooking chores. Priced at \$129.95, The Perrin offers maximum cutting power with minimum weight.

Montana Tough

Last but in no way least is a fine blade from Ruana Knives of Bonner, Mont. Rudy Ruana is said to have made his first knives while a farrier for the U.S. Cavalry. The tradition continues to this day, and traditional is a fine description of Ruana knives.

The blades are hand forged and then ground of high-carbon steel. Yes Virginia, they will discolor with use, as seen in this well-used specimen. However, only the slightest care is

required to keep them rust free, and the trade off is superior cutting performance.

Ruana's aluminum hilts are both striking and unusual. Cast directly onto the blade, they can never become loose. Elk antler panels are dovetailed and pinned into place for comfort and appearance. These are knives designed to stand up to a lifetime of hard use, and include a superior pouch-type sheath with flap.

The model pictured is the 28CD, which currently runs \$225. Ruana offers a host of models, you're sure to find one that appeals to you.

Fixed-blade hunting knives come in all sizes, prices, and choices of handle and blade materials. It's important to bear in mind when selecting your hunting knife that your requirements may not mirror those of your hunting buddy. Evaluate your needs and choose wisely. Odds are your favorite belt knife will become a trusted companion to be used for a lifetime before being passed on to your children. A properly selected, well-made hunting knife will no doubt make your hunting trips more enjoyable, and your life easier.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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www.buckknives.com

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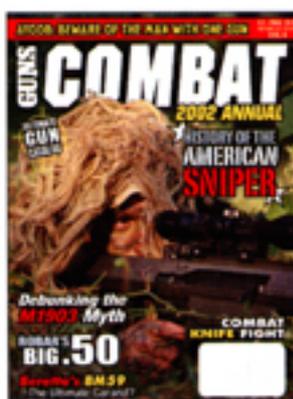
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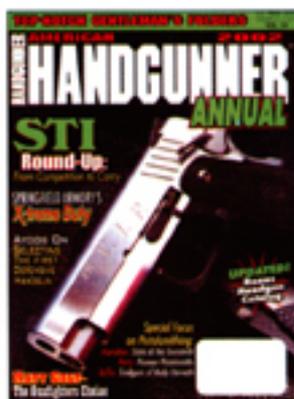


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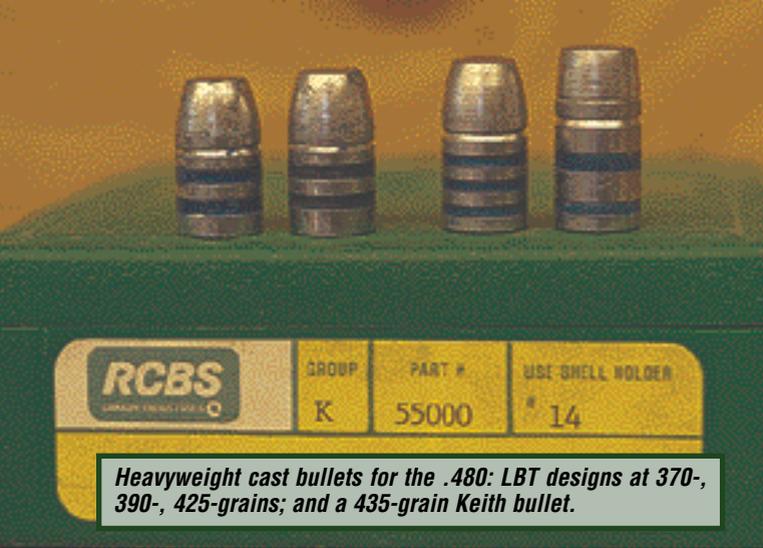
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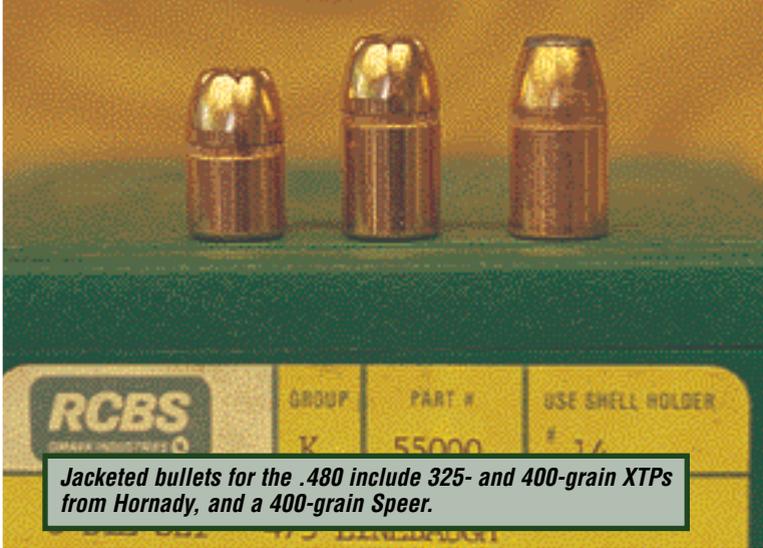
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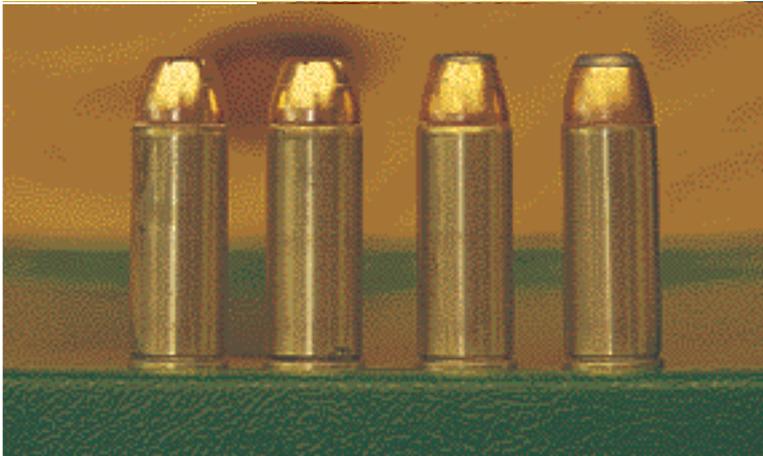
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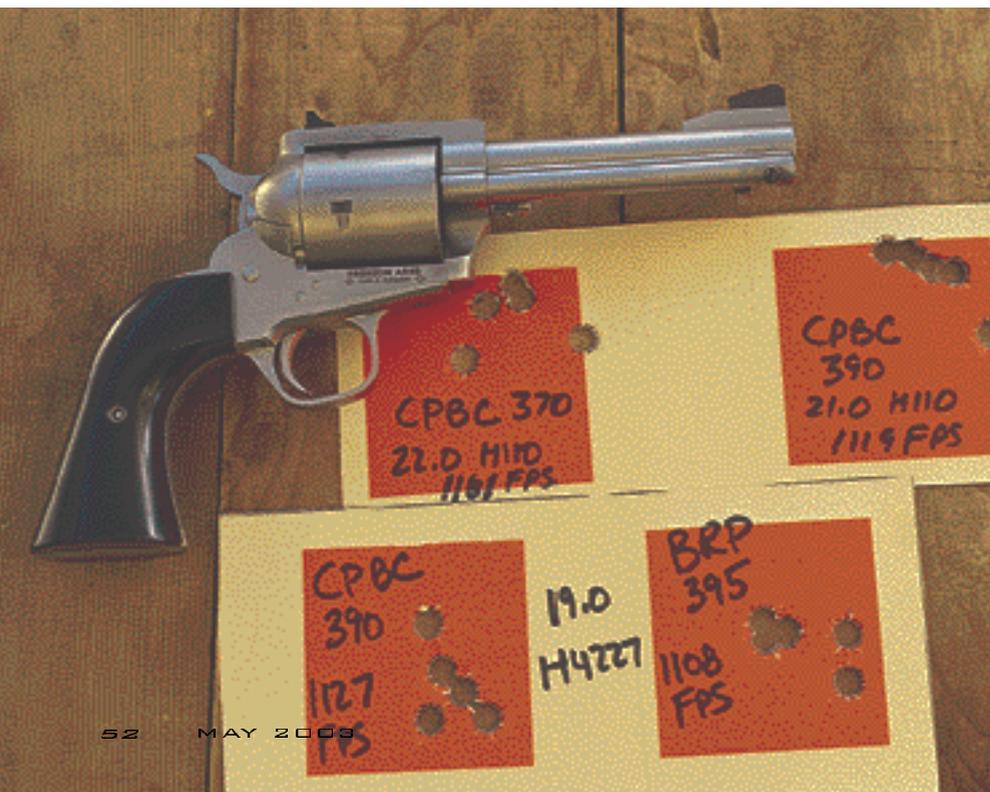
Heavyweight cast bullets for the .480: LBT designs at 370-, 390-, 425-grains; and a 435-grain Keith bullet.



Jacketed bullets for the .480 include 325- and 400-grain XTPs from Hornady, and a 400-grain Speer.



BY JOHN TAFFIN **PERFECT PA**



As this is written the newest sixgun cartridge, the .480 Ruger, is approaching its first birthday anniversary. Chambered in Ruger's stainless steel Super Redhawk, which is available with either a 7½- or 9½-inch barrel, the factory loaded .480 is a relatively easy shooting cartridge when compared to other big-bore sixgun cartridges such as a .454 Casull, and the .475 and .500 Linebaughs.

If we cut through all the hype surrounding the .480 Ruger and look at it objectively, we conclude it's a worthwhile cartridge but certainly not one that stands head and shoulders above either a .45 Colt or .44 Magnum loaded with similar weight bullets. Using a 325-grain XTP JHP, the factory round clocks out at 1,350 fps from a 9½-inch Ruger Super Redhawk. When fired into wet newsprint it expands beautifully and penetrates 17 inches. Which makes it, as currently loaded, a cartridge for those sixgunners after the deer-sized critters.

Freedom Arms Model 83 with .475 Linebaugh and .480 Ruger cylinders offers versatility. **Below:** The .480 Ruger is flanked by the .44 Magnum and the .475 Linebaugh.



CKIN' .480

J.T. investigates a handy-sized .480 sixgun.

Does It Measure Up?

Is the .480 Ruger really on the same level as heavy loaded factory rounds for the .45 Colt and the .44 Magnum? Consider these statistics. Cor-Bon offers three loads for the .44 Magnum with heavy bullets: A 300-grain JSP at 1,300 fps, a 305-grain flat-point Penetrator, also at 1,300 fps and a 320-grain hard cast flat point rated at 1,270 fps.

From Buffalo Bore, we find a 305-grain LBT hard-cast LFN at 1,325 fps and a 300-grain Speer JFP at 1,300 fps. Switching to the .45 Colt shows a 325-grain LBT-LFN and a 300-grain Speer flat point rated at 1,325 fps from Buffalo Bore, while Cor-Bon's JSP is rated at 1,300 fps.

We have no intention of detracting from the .480 Ruger by quoting these velocities (which by the way check out as

being accurately stated when fired in my sixguns), we are simply trying to put everything in its proper perspective. Also remember the .480 Ruger attains its factory velocity in a 9½-inch barrel. When fired in an easier packin' sixgun with a 4¾-inch barrel, the muzzle velocity is just slightly over 1,200 fps. This is still a powerful loading and more than sufficient for hunting deer and black bear.

Until now, the .480 Ruger has been available only in Ruger's Super Redhawk. This is a large, heavy, 58-ounce sixgun. I recommend it highly, especially for those who intend to hunt using a scope-sighted sixgun, as it does come truly scope-ready with Ruger rings at no additional cost. In addition to being chambered in the .480 Ruger, it is also available in both the .44 Magnum and the .454 Casull, allowing the shooter a choice of three cartridges that are excellent

for hunting. The Super Redhawk is probably the strongest double action revolver ever offered to handgunners.

Sixguns Fit To Carry

But what about those sixgunners who want a more compact package? Their idea of a big-bore sixgun is more along the lines of



HANDLOADS FIRED IN FREEDOM ARMS 7/8-INCH .475 LINEBAUGH

HORNADY 325-GRAIN XTP-HP/ HORNADY .480 RUGER BRASS/FEDERAL NO. 155 PRIMER	
Load	MV
22.0 gr. Lil' Gun	1,220
23.0 gr. Lil' Gun	1,251
24.0 gr. Lil' Gun	1,296
23.0 gr. H110	1,178
24.0 gr. H110	1,209
25.0 gr. H110	1,243
23.0 gr. WW296	1,133
24.0 gr. WW296	1,197
25.0 gr. WW296	1,222
18.5 gr. AA#9	1,080
19.5 gr. AA#9	1,125
20.5 gr. AA#9	1,197
21.5 gr. AA#9	1,274
22.5 gr. AA#9	1,301
19.0 gr. VVN110	1,080
20.0 gr. VVN110	1,125
21.0 gr. VVN110	1,225
23.0 gr. H4227	1,035
24.0 gr. H4227	1,083
25.0 gr. H4227	1,161
26.0 gr. H4227	1,246
HAWK 350 JFP/HORNADY .480 RUGER BRASS/ FEDERAL #155 MAG. LP PRIMER	
Load	MV
23.0 gr. Lil' Gun	1,262
24.0 gr. Lil' Gun	1,308

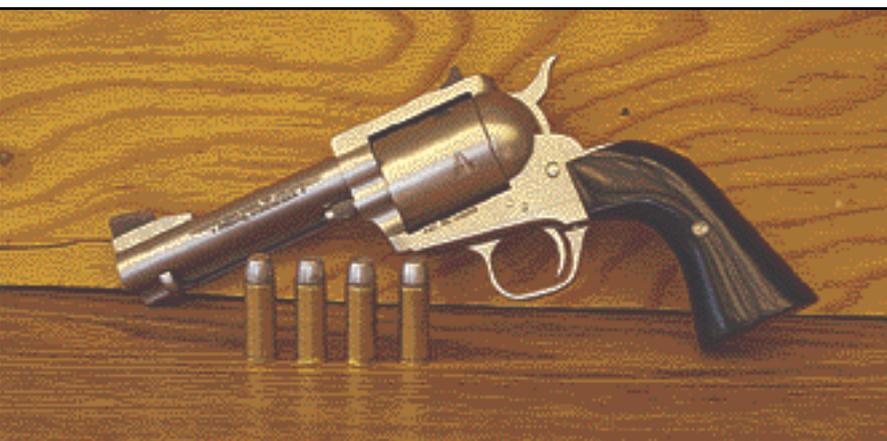
HAWK 400 JFP/HORNADY .480 RUGER BRASS/ FEDERAL #155 MAG. LP PRIMER	
Load	MV
15.0 gr. Lil' Gun	910
16.0 gr. Lil' Gun	971
17.0 gr. Lil' Gun	994
18.0 gr. Lil' Gun	1,103
18.0 gr. H4227	854
19.0 gr. H4227	970
HORNADY 400 XTP-HP/HORNADY .480 RUGER BRASS/ FEDERAL NO. 155 PRIMER	
Load	MV
16.0 gr. H110	820
17.0 gr. H110	875
18.0 gr. H110	939
19.0 gr. H110	975
20.0 gr. H110	1,038
16.0 gr. WW296	820
17.0 gr. WW296	866
18.0 gr. WW296	968
19.0 gr. WW296	1,002
20.0 gr. WW296	1,046
18.0 gr. Lil' Gun	1,101
SPEER 400 JFP/HORNADY .480 RUGER BRASS/ FEDERAL NO. 155 PRIMER	
Load	MV
15.0 gr. Lil' Gun	904
16.0 gr. Lil' Gun	944
17.0 gr. Lil' Gun	983
18.0 gr. Lil' Gun	1,097
18.0 gr. H4227	793
19.0 gr. H4227	894
20.0 gr. H4227	928

CAST BULLET HANDLOADS

Load/Bullet	MV
CPBC 370 gr. LBT/17.0 gr. H4227	794
CPBC 370 gr. LBT/18.0 gr. H4227	892
CPBC 370 gr. LBT/19.0 gr. H4227	971
CPBC 370 gr. LBT/20.0 gr. H4227	999
CPBC 370 gr. LBT/21.0 gr. H4227	1,046
CPBC 370 gr. LBT/22.0 gr. H4227	1,137
CPBC 370 gr. LBT/23.0 gr. H4227	1,182
CPBC 370 gr. LBT/24.0 gr. H4227	1,243
CPBC 370 gr. LBT/17.0 gr. H110	928
CPBC 370 gr. LBT/18.0 gr. H110	971
CPBC 370 gr. LBT/19.0 gr. H110	1,025
CPBC 370 gr. LBT/20.0 gr. H110	1,083
CPBC 370 gr. LBT/21.0 gr. H110	1,173
CPBC 370 gr. LBT/22.0 gr. H110	1,209
CPBC 370 gr. LBT/23.0 gr. H110	1,251
CPBC 370 gr. LBT/24.0 gr. H110	1,289
CPBC 390 gr. LBT/17.0 gr. H4227	799
CPBC 390 gr. LBT/18.0 gr. H4227	900
CPBC 390 gr. LBT/19.0 gr. H4227	989
CPBC 390 gr. LBT/20.0 gr. H4227	1,011
CPBC 390 gr. LBT/17.0 gr. H110	948
CPBC 390 gr. LBT/18.0 gr. H110	1,009
CPBC 390 gr. LBT/19.0 gr. H110	1,070

Load/Bullet	MV
CPBC 390 gr. LBT/20.0 gr. H110	1,112
CPBC 390 gr. LBT/21.0 gr. H110	1,175
BRP 395 gr. FN/17.0 gr. H4227	815
BRP 395 gr. FN/18.0 gr. H4227	920
BRP 395 gr. FN/19.0 gr. H4227	75
BRP 395 gr. FN/20.0 gr. H4227	1,049
BRP 395 gr./17.0 gr. H110	983
BRP 395 gr./18.0 gr. H110	1,008
BRP 395 gr./19.0 gr. H110	1,071
BRP 395 gr./20.0 gr. H110	1,131
BRP 395 gr./21.0 gr. H110	1,201
CPBC 425 gr. LBT/17.0 gr. H110	989
CPBC 425 gr. LBT/18.0 gr. H110	1,058
CPBC 425 gr. LBT/19.0 gr. H110	1,102
CPBC 425 gr./17.0 gr. H4227	906
CPBC 425 gr./18.0 gr. H4227	931
CPBC 425 gr./19.0 gr. H4227	986
BRP 435 gr./18.0 gr. H110	1,084
BRP 435 gr./19.0 gr. H110	1,150
BRP 435 gr./17.0 gr. H4227	900
BRP 435 gr./18.0 gr. H4227	973
BRP 435 gr./19.0 gr. H4227	1,026

*Oehler M35P chronograph, temperature 45 to 55 degrees.



my definition of the perfect packin' pistol. That is, a big-bore sixgun with a barrel not less than 4 1/4 inches nor more than 5 1/2 inches when it comes single action style. This type of sixgun rides easily in a properly designed holster and would never be scoped. It is always readily available for close encounters and will be able to handle anything it is called upon to do.

Caliber is often dependent upon the area in which the sixgunner travels. For some, the .357 Magnum or the .41 Magnum are entirely adequate. For others the .44 Magnum or .45 Colt are better choices, and they may be better served by choosing the .454 Casull, and perhaps even the .475 or .500 Linebaugh. One of these cartridges, carefully chosen, will do any job that is needed from Africa to Alaska and anyplace in between.

Will the .480 be able to join this club? With this in mind, I called Bob Baker at Freedom Arms and we discussed the use of the .480 Ruger in a Freedom Arms Model 83. He agreed to provide a 4 1/4-inch barreled field grade Model 83 in .475 Linebaugh with an extra cylinder chambered in .480 Ruger.

One of my near-perfect packin' pistols is another Freedom Arms Model 83, this one a 4 3/4-inch, premier grade .454 Casull with three extra cylinders in .45 Colt, .45 ACP and .45 WinMag. This has been one of my favorite do-it-all sixguns for well over 10 years now. The new .475/.480 would be in good company.

Ne Plus Ultra

For those who may not be acquainted with Freedom Arms' sixguns, I will say without fear of contradiction these are simply the finest factory produced single actions ever! They are made of the finest and strongest steels available and the cylinders are line-bored. This means they are locked into one frame with one barrel and the pilot holes are drilled into the cylinder to perfectly align with that particular barrel and frame.

Every Freedom Arms revolver is made one at a time. They do not have a basket of frames, another basket of cylinders, and another basket of barrels that are picked at random and then put together. Rather each Freedom Arms sixgun begins with one frame, one barrel, and one cylinder, which are then assembled with as much care and precision as humanly possible. They are very expensive and well worth it!

As we mentioned, the factory loaded .480 Ruger from Hornady is a 325-grain JHP with a muzzle velocity of 1,206 fps from a 4 1/4-inch barreled sixgun, namely our Freedom Arms test gun with the .480 Ruger cylinder in place. It can be duplicated using Hornady's 325-grain XTP JHP with 23.0 grains of Hodgdon's Lil' Gun, 25.0-grains of H110 or 26.0-grains of H4227. Both the H110 and Lil' Gun loads are exceptionally good shooting loads.

**FREEDOM ARMS 4¼-INCH .475 LINEBAUGH
FITTED WITH .480 RUGER CYLINDER**

Load	MV	Four-Shot Group
Hornady Factory 325 gr.	1,206	1¼"
Hornady 325 gr./23.0 gr. Lil' Gun	1,174	1¼"
Hornady 325 gr./25.0 gr. H110	1,241	1¼"
Hornady 325 gr./26.0 H4227	1,223	1¼"
CPBC 370 gr./22.0 gr. Lil' Gun	1,216	1¼"
CPBC 370 gr./22.0 gr. H110	1,161	1¼"
CPBC 370 gr./16.5 gr. H4227	789	1¼"
CPBC 370 gr./23.0 gr. H4227	1,154	1¼"
CPBC 390 gr./19.0 gr. Lil' Gun	1,127	1"
CPBC 390 gr./21.0 gr. H110	1,119	1¼"
CPBC 390 gr./16.5 gr. H4227	789	1¼"
CPBC 390 gr./20.0 gr. H4227	980	1¼"
BRP 395 gr./19.0 gr. Lil' Gun	1,108	1¼"
BRP 395 gr./20.0 gr. H110	1,090	1"
BRP 395 gr./16.5 gr. H4227	837	1¼"
BRP 395 gr./20.0 gr. H4227	1,003	1½"
CPBC 425 gr./18.0 gr. Lil' Gun	1,077	1¼"
CPBC 425 gr./19.0 gr. H110	1,049	1¼"
CPBC 425 gr./16.5 gr. H4227	839	1"
CPBC 425 gr./18.0 gr. H4227	924	1¼"
BRP 435 gr./18.0 gr. Lil' Gun	1,098	1¼"
BRP 435 gr./19.0 gr. H110	1,062	1¼"
BRP 435 gr./16.5 gr. H4227	860	2¼"
BRP 435 gr./18.0 gr. H4227	956	1¼"

Loading In A New Direction

In testing this .480 Ruger Model 83 I was more interested in heavy cast bullet loads, that is, bullets from 370- to 435-grains in weight. The Hornady 325-grain XTP-JHP is excellent when the main concern is expansion, especially in deer-sized animals. We already have this load and know we can duplicate it. I was more concerned about hard cast bullets that offer maximum penetration.

All loads were assembled using Hornady .480 brass and CCI No. 350 large pistol magnum primers. I have not seen any .480 Ruger reloading dies yet. However, RCBS .475 Linebaugh dies work fine once enough metal is removed from the bottom of the crimping die to allow it to crimp the shorter .480 Ruger round. In addition to the RCBS dies, I also used my old standby RCBS Rockchucker reloading press. I would hate to try to count the number of rounds that have been assembled with this single stage press.

I kept my powder selection simple by going with three Hodgdon powders that are favorites for assembling Magnum sixgun loads. These powders are H110, probably the best powder for full house loads in the .475 and .500 Linebaugh. The relatively new Lil' Gun, which is fast becoming a favorite propellant among big-bore sixgunners as it seems to offer more velocity with less pressure and less powder used. And finally, the do-it-all powder for .45 Colt, .44 Special, and .44 Magnum for nearly 40 years now, H4227.

Good Commercial Casters

Bullets came from two sources, BRP and Cast Bullet Performance Company. Both of these companies offer a large selection of quality hard cast bullets for sixgunners. All of CBPC's bullets are of the LBT (Lead Bullet Technology) design while BRP offers both LBT and Keith-style semi-wadcutters.

For these tests I went with CBPC's 370-,

390- and 425-grain LBT bullets, and from BRP, a 395-grain LBT and a 435-grain Keith. I wanted easy shooting loads for all bullets at around 800 fps, as well as top-end loads of 1,100 to 1,200 fps, depending upon bullet weight and several velocity choices in between. I found the .480 Ruger to be an exceptionally accurate cartridge with many loads, as you can see from the accompanying chart, usually delivering groups in the one-inch neighborhood.

Favorite loads include: The CPBC 370-grain LBT over 22.0-grains of Lil' Gun for 1,216 fps and a 1¼-inch group. Either 19.0-grains of Lil' Gun or 21.0-grains of H110 for right at 1,125 fps with CPBC's 390-grain LBT and the same excellent accuracy. Also the CPBC 425-grain LBT for an easy shooting 925 fps with 18.0 grains of H4227, and once again superb accuracy.

Switching to BRP's bullets, the 395-grain LBT over 19.0-grains of Lil' Gun or 20.0-grains of H110 results in 1,100 fps and one inch groups. The 435-grain Keith bullet and 19.0-grains of a H110 runs slightly over 1,050 fps with excellent accuracy. This is more than enough for me with such a heavy bullet in the 46-ounce Freedom Arms Model 83.

Role Of The .480

Does the .480 Ruger fill a need? That is for each individual sixgunner to decide for themselves. I think it does. For me at least, it scratches an itch for one more good big bore sixgun cartridge. We now have two distinct classes of sixgun cartridges with the .44 Magnum, .45 Colt, and the .480 Ruger at one level. And the .454 Casull, and the .475 and .500 Linebaughs at the other. There is room in my sixgunner' for all of them.

During the time I was developing loads for the .480 Ruger in the Super Redhawk, I also fired the same loads in a Freedom Arms 7½-inch Model 83 chambered for the .475 Linebaugh. For your reference I have furnished over 90 loads using six powders, five jacketed bullets, and five cast bullets. This is the most comprehensive data available for the .480 Ruger of which I am aware.



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Freedom Arms
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www.freedomarms.com

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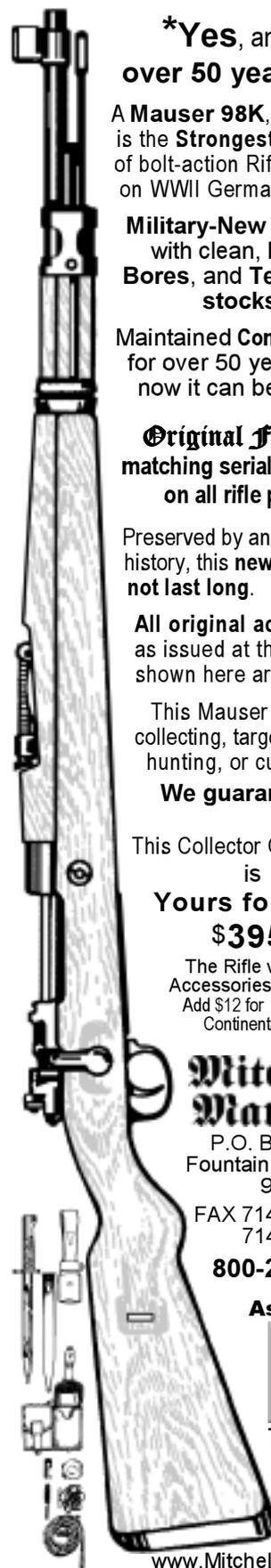
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BILLENNIUM continued from page 44

ability to dial in for perfect point of aim/point of impact that normally comes only with adjustable sights.

Hi Ho, Silver

This gun's finish is new to these pistols, but not new to Beretta, "The 'silver finish' is a nickel alloy. The proprietary alloys that make it more wear resistant were developed jointly by Beretta and one of our outside vendors," says DePlano. "We've used it in the past on some of our over/under shotguns. You'll see it on the Silver Pigeon II. I would call it more of a pewter finish."

It strikes the right chord. The resultant surface has a classy look, one that draws the eye but manages not to look like a "pimp gun." It contrasts nicely with the dark carbon fiber grips, which also bear discussion.

Year Of The Snake

The first time I saw the snake-scale effect replacing the traditional striations for slide grasping surfaces was on a S&W Performance Center Model 945. The next thing we knew, Ed Brown had built it into one of his semi-custom 1911s, the Kobra. The Beretta Billennium has the same treatment.

Some say it looks weird. Some say it looks sharp. Some will just find it different. Looks are subjective. Objectively, all who

tried it found that this feature, which Beretta calls "scalloping," affords a firm grasp of the slide and does what it is intended to do from the purely functional point of view.

The same scaly look carries through to the carbon fiber grips. These put me off at first, not because they looked too reptilian, but because they looked too slippery. Looks can be deceptive, however, as can be first touch. Running my finger over the surface of the grip panel, it seemed all together too slick. In the hand, however, it did not slip within my grasp. If the large frame of a wondernine double-stack pistol isn't too big for you, you'll probably like the feel of the Billennium in your hand.

In a time of ten round magazines, it's good to know this gun will take any other Beretta M9/92F 9mm magazine. There are plenty of them on the legal second-hand market. It will also take the 20 round magazines that have been produced by MecGar for the Model 92, or the similar size extended magazine of the Beretta 93R machine pistol.

Shooting The Billennium

This is an expensive, limited run pistol, made in Italy. If you're going to host an Italian of noble heritage — a count let's say — you're going to put your finest foods on the table to impress him. The Beretta Billennium is indeed a noble descendant of legitimately famous and regaled precursors. Thus, for its first accu-

racy test on the line in seemed only natural to feed it the choicest viands.

In my experience, there are three particularly accurate 9mm Parabellum loads available. One is the Winchester OSM (Olin Super Match), with 147-grain subsonic jacketed projectile. Another is the Federal 9BP Classic 115-grain JHP, so precise that it used to be "choice of champions" for such as Tom Campbell of Smith & Wesson when he shot the Bianchi Cup. A third and more recent super-accurate 9mm load is the 135-grain Hi-Master from Triton. This cartridge is loaded up just enough past a thousand feet per second to make it IDPA legal for 9mm Luger, and its accuracy and controllability is attested to by the number of titles that national IDPA champion Dave Sevigny has won with it.

Each of these primo match rounds was tested through the Billennium from the 25-yard shooting bench. The Beretta clearly liked the Triton best, with all five shots in two and one quarter inches, the best three inside fifteen-sixteenths of an inch. The Match-designed Winchester subsonic was next, with a 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch group, the best three of which clustered into an inch and three-sixteenths. Finally, the 9BP went into three inches even with all five shots, with the best three in an inch and three-eighths.

I try to be a good host, but the Beretta Billennium was also a good guest. An expensive gun shouldn't require expensive ammunition. Gabriel DePlano is right: this pistol is a shooter. Less expensive ammo was now on the menu. We tried one standard

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line hollowpoint (Remington 115 grain), one generic ball round (CCI Lawman 115-grain FMJ), and one "remanufactured" commercial reload (Black Hills 115-grain JHP).

The results were almost as good. The Remington went into 2½ inch (1½ inch for best three), the Lawman into 2¼-inches (1½ inch for best three), and the Black Hills into an even 3 inches (best three into 1½ inch).

What we had here was a very consistent pistol. All five-shot groups, from El Cheapo to Match Grade ammo, were between 2¼- and 3-inches in spread. When fired thus from a bench rest, this basically gives you an idea of the placement an experienced marksman can expect if he braces the pistol on an auto hood or similar surface and keeps his head about him as he fires.

The three-shot measurements tell something else. By factoring out human error as much as possible this side of using a machine rest, this gives you a pretty good picture of the inherent mechanical accuracy the gun is bringing to the table. Here, that was in a range from 1½ to 1¾ inches. This is excellent accuracy, and again, very consistent.

"The Billennium has not been accurized per se," says DePlano. "It was built to deliver the same accuracy and total reliability as the standard Model 92 pistol." Since the standard 92 is famous as one of our most accurate 9mm pistols and one of the most reliable of all semiautomatics, that's a good standard indeed. The Billennium fulfills its mission in this regard.

There were no malfunctions of any kind during the test that were not shooter-induced. This writer found himself firing the gun with the "straight thumbs" position favored by IPSC shooters. In this grasp, right-handed, the forward thumb will ride the slide stop and prevent the slide from locking open when the last shot is fired. I find this to happen with the standard double-action Beretta as well. (This also occurs with a number of other brands. With the SIG, it'll be your right thumb that blocks the slide stop's function if you use this type of hold.)

Shooting Impressions

Recoil is as mild as you would expect with a pistol this heavy firing the 9X19 cartridge. "Kick" is minimal. Imagine yourself shooting your standard Beretta with a .22 conversion unit, and you have imagined yourself firing the Billennium with 9mm ammunition.

The single action trigger is set back from where the standard 92 component would be when decocked into double action mode, but sits forward of where the standard M92's trigger lies in the single action mode. I would have liked the trigger further back, so I could contact it with the distal joint of my index finger. This would give a little more leverage in speed shooting.

The factory specifies approximately a four-pound trigger pull for this single action pistol. My test sample was heavier

than that, more like six pounds if not more. The let-off was clean, but with that much weight, I found it best to shoot the Billennium as if it was a double-action revolver in microcosm. A smooth, straight-back pull led to a clean surprise break. It was a gun I enjoyed shooting.

It seems my heavy trigger is unusual. Other shooters whose impressions I trust tell me their pulls are just what Beretta promises. Said Jeff Williams, "The trigger stroke on the Billennium I shot was exactly like shooting a regular 92 in single action."

And the Exact Purpose Is...

"The Billennium was not built to be a police service pistol," says Todd Green, director of law enforcement sales for Beretta, "though I'm sure some police gun enthusiasts who like the Beretta will buy them." Few cops carry cocked and locked single-action autos today, and those who do usually pack 1911 .45s.

My first thought was that the Billennium would have great potential in the Enhanced Service Pistol category of IDPA, currently dominated by .38 Super, 9mm, and .40 caliber 1911s. After all, the Beretta in the hands of champions like Ernest Langdon has dominated the Stock Service Pistol category.

Alas, it is not to be. Says Green, himself an avid IDPA competitor, "The Billennium is not legal for IDPA competition. It's about two or three ounces over the weight limit for an Enhanced Service Pistol."

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AR-15 Large Pin (.169).....	129-509.....	\$202.99
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Remington 700 HVR.....	706-845.....	\$226.19
Winchester Model 70.....	228-165.....	\$220.39

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It seems these days that if a pistol doesn't qualify for some sort of competition or specific duty application, writers and readers don't want to hear about it. I don't quite understand that.

Since the handgun was developed, there have been those of us who simply appreciated a finely made firearm and enjoyed shooting it for its own sake. The Millennium is such a gun. Yes, its reliability and ease of operation would allow it to perform noble service in home defense and similar applications. But just owning a fine gun and shooting it for fun is enough of a *raison d'être* for the Beretta Millennium.

Work its slide. You'll feel the same glassy smoothness that has made the Beretta the gun to beat in this aspect of quality analysis of service pistols. Shoot the damn thing. Only the SIG and the HK can equal the 9mm accuracy potential of the Beretta in the service pistol arena.

Shoot it some more. Despite its weight, fatigue does not develop. We shooters are an aging breed. More of us than ever have bursitis in the elbow, or carpal tunnel problems in the wrist, or arthritis that can start at the fingers and go all the way up. A pistol you can shoot all day without experiencing discomfort at the time, or later soreness from recoil is not a bad thing.

A Matter of Value

There will be only 2,000 of these guns produced, in commemoration of our civilization having reached the 2,000-year mark for which the Millennium is named. For more of the last half of the last millennium than any other maker, Beretta has been there, producing fine quality firearms. 1,000 of these will be sold in the US, and the other thousand have been allocated to the rest of the world. The first 500 apportioned to the U.S. market are already gone. At this writing, the last 500 have gone into the pipeline to distributors.

Suggested retail price is \$1,357. It's probably worth it. Of course, you can read that figure as "one three-fifty-seven." You can get two "three-fifty-sevens" for the same price, specifically a matched pair of Beretta Cougars chambered for the .357 SIG cartridge. The last time I looked, the list price of the standard model Beretta 92F with plain Brunton finish was \$676. You can buy two of them for the same price as one Millennium, and get five dollars change.

But there is that pride of owning something nice, something special, and something rare. The Millennium is all three. If you simply enjoy owning and shooting fine handguns, you will enjoy owning and shooting the Beretta Millennium, and it will prove worth its price tag.



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GUNS MAGAZINE
MARCH 2003

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Just prior to press time, the untimely death of a computer hard drive caused the loss of all reader letters slated for the May Crossfire column. Sincere apologies are extended to those who took the time to write in.

As it happens, we also had on hand a number of interesting responses to the invitation posed by editor Roy Huntington in the March/April issue of *American Handgunner Magazine*. Roy extended to every reader the opportunity to "tell us what you always wanted." We'll share a few of the interesting replies, but let's not stop there.

Please do share with us what shooting or hunting related product *you* would most like to see made available. Address your replies to ed@gunsmagazine.com. Will your desires run to something entirely new, or would you like to see a reintroduction of a long discontinued firearm? Not only are your fellow readers sure to be interested, odds are the various manufacturers will read your ideas with interest. So, if you've ever felt you had no way of expressing your wishes to the honchos at S&W, Winchester or Ruger for example... now's your chance.

From: Dale Heil, via e-mail

- 1) Adjustable sights on the Ruger Bearcat.
- 2) Taurus stainless steel Tracker in .41 Mag. *without* ports.
- 3) Kahr in .357 SIG.
- 4) 5-inch S&W Model 696 (.44 Spl. L-frame).
- 5) .41 *Special* in S&W L-frame or Colt SAA.
- 6) .32 mag. Ruger SP-101, with 5-inch barrel and adjustable sights.
- 7) Single Action Army with S&W adjustable sights like Elmer Keith used to make up.
- 8) Ruger Old Model with a transfer bar safety (same grips and frame size as was produced 40 years ago). Or instead, a Colt New Frontier clone in .45 colt and .44 Spl. by US Firearms or AWA (a New Frontier would scoop some of the Ruger Blackhawk market).

- 9) Express Sight Systems Big Dot sights as a factory option on Glocks and 1911s.
- 10) Ruger Super Blackhawk Hunter that is actually available for purchase. I have been on the distributor's list for one for over 6 months. I even called Ruger's Sales Dept. and they say that they are "putting out a few every week"... not enough obviously.

Thanks for the opportunity to dream!

From: Mike Schordine, Long Island, N.Y.

A .17 Hornady Rimfire Magnum conversion kit to fit the AR-15.
Love your magazine!

From: Paul Loschiavo, via e-mail

I have one of those neat Ruger Deerfield .44 magnum carbines. It is absolutely great in the field. It would be really neat for plinking and home defense if it had a ten-round magazine as opposed to its current four-round magazine. I suspect that a lot of people might like the gun even more then.

From: Mark Howard, via e-mail

I wish...

- 1) That a manufacturer would market a "home defense package." This would consist of a polymer-framed 9mm or .40 with integral white light, tritium sights and a security stand that could be bolted to a wall. The stand would serve to recharge the light and lock the pistol in place (and lock the trigger & slide) until a combination is punched into the lighted keypad.
- 2) NEF Superlight Handi-Rifle in 7.62 x 39mm.
- 3) S&W Model 12 with 2-inch barrel, bobbed hammer, with a polymer finish.
- 4) Ruger Number 1A, stainless steel, with 20-inch barrel, chambered in .308.

From: Steve Berke, via e-mail

I would like to see:

- 1) Robinson Armament Co. produce a 7.62x39mm version of their M96 Recon Carbine that accepts AK magazines.
- 2) Winchester bring back the Model 70 in .358 Winchester.
- 3) Kahr produce a .45 ACP single stack with 4-inch barrel.
- 4) Beretta produce their new pistol caliber carbine in 10mm.

From: Donald Fleu, Ashland, Ky.

I am primarily interested in self defense handguns. For this reason, I would like to see Kahr create a P45 with a polymer frame and a blackened stainless steel slide. It should come standard with big dot tritium express sights. Kahr's standard grip length and shape fit my hand well and a small, light-weight .45 ACP requires a full-length grip for control.

This single-stack pistol could easily become a benchmark for law enforcement and civilian concealed carry. Its fire control system would overcome all of the liability issues of the single action 1911, while maintaining a sleek and slim package for IWB carry.

If Kahr is not interested in this project, I would like to see Para-Ordnance build a 4-inch barreled, single stack LDA with an aluminum or, better yet, polymer frame. It should be equipped with tritium sights, spurless hammer, and be available in a dark, non-reflective finish.

Finally, for home defense, I would like to see Baikal produce a 20-gauge, side-by-side shotgun with 18-inch barrels and external hammers. I own one of their 12-gauge Bounty Hunters with internal hammers. I believe it is the best inexpensive side-by-side on the market, but an 18-inch barreled model with external hammers in 20 gauge would be handier indoors, safer to maintain loaded and easier for novices to control.



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You Can Win This CUSTOM-ORDER NAA GUARDIAN

All stainless for corrosion resistance and hammer fired for reliability, the North American Arms Guardian is not your grandfather's pocket pistol. Weighing in at 18.8 ounces, the NAA guardian also features safe, simple double-action only operation. The Guardian is available in .32 ACP and .380 ACP as well as the hot new .32 NAA cartridge.

Loaded exclusively by Cor-Bon, the .32 NAA cartridge has been the subject of a great deal of interest. Based on a necked-down .380 ACP case, the .32 NAA launches a 60-grain bullet at just over 1,200 fps. Quite a contrast to the ballistics of the .32 ACP cartridge, which even in the popular

Winchester 60-grain Silvertip loading does not top the 1,000 fps mark.

The Guardian is delivered with two six-round magazines. One with flat base pad for easy concealment, while the second carries an extended finger rest for improved control. The black, pebble-textured synthetic stocks are nicely contoured, but keep bulk to a minimum.

Ken Friel, NAA's general manager, agreed to make an NAA Guardian available to one lucky **GUNS** reader. "But that's not good enough," exclaimed Friel. The winner will be invited to request a special, personalized serial number, as well as a selection of options from NAA's custom shop.

The custom shop is something of which NAA is justly proud, as they offer a wide

variety of extremely popular sighting, machine work and finishing options. Check it out along with the entire line of NAA firearms on the Web at: www.naaminis.com, or call to request a catalog [801] 374-9990.

But wait, there's more...

The lucky winner of the Custom NAA Guardian will also receive a special AL Mar Knives S.E.R.E. 2000 etched with the **GUNS** Magazine logo.

Al Mar's S.E.R.E. 2000 features a 3.6-inch blade of VG-10 stainless. The scales are textured G-10 for slip-proof handling. The large pocket clip is reversible, and is also designed to minimize the profile of the knife in the pocket. For the full line of Al Mar Knives: www.almarknives.com.



TO ENTER CONTEST: Use a postcard (no envelopes, please) and follow sample. Send to GUNS Magazine, GOM DECEMBER, P.O. BOX 639033, San Diego, CA 92163-9033. Entries must be received before JANUARY 1, 2003. Limit one entry per household.

QUESTION OF THE MONTH:

I watch shooting, hunting & related shows on television

- (A) Frequently (C) Rarely
(B) Occasionally (D) Never

Name _____
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CIRCLE ANSWERS TO QUESTION OF THE MONTH:
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To protect the privacy and security of winners, their names will NOT be made public. Contest void where prohibited by law. Winners must undergo a background check and comply with all other federal, state and local laws. Contest open to U.S. residents only. Employees and agents of Publishers' Development Corp. not eligible. No purchase necessary. **Winners will be notified by CERTIFIED MAIL on official letterhead.**



Holt found the Puma .454 to be potent and fast handling.

By Holt Bodinson

short SHOTS

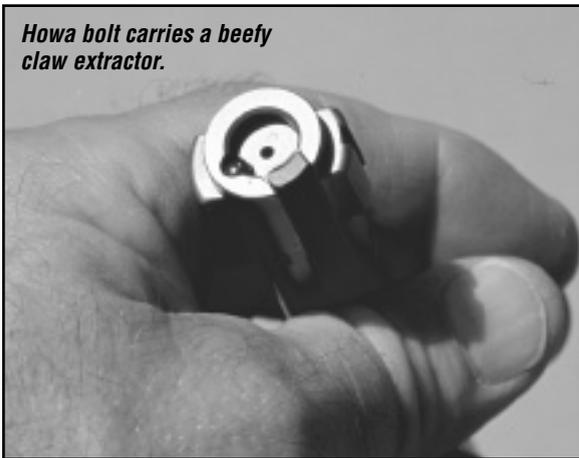
A quick look at three great new guns from **Legacy Sports International**.

The Thumbhole Varminter Supreme fired 100-yard groups as tight as 5/16 inch. Right, Lightweight Silma O/U is a dove hunter's delight.





Howa bolt carries a beefy claw extractor.



Unique method of loading the Puma's magazine.



A Model '92 In .454 Casull!

Rossi's little Puma Model '92 carbine chambered for the .454 Casull was the surprise of the 2002 Shot Show. Many said putting a cartridge rated at 65,000 psi into a lever action design dating back to 1892 couldn't or shouldn't be done. At first, I was a bit skeptical myself.

Having owned and hunted with Winchester '92s in .25-20, .32-20 and .44-40 my whole life, I vividly remember the days when converting original '92s into .357 and .44 magnums was the rage. Many of those conversions did not work out well. The result was a lot of fine, original 1892s shot loose with battered locking lugs and lug seats when stoked with higher pressure cartridges.

Frankly, there's no Winchester design that gets my adrenaline going faster than a Model 1892. Featuring two large, vertical sliding locking lugs that secure the bolt to the frame, Browning's design is inherently strong and slick. The design is essentially a miniaturized Model 1886 Winchester, long renowned for its strength and smoothness.

When the Puma .454 arrived, the first thing I did was to call Glen Ruh at Legacy Sports International to ask him how Rossi had been able to adapt the 1892 design to the hot Casull cartridge. Ruh explained that the metallurgy and heat treatment had been modified to handle the high pressure and that the carbine had been thoroughly torture tested by H.P. White Laboratories using standard factory ammunition.

Looking at the new .454 carbine, there is very little to distinguish it from the standard Puma line of 92 carbines, except for a rubber recoil pad and a magazine tube that can be unscrewed and loaded through a loading port, like a .22 rimfire. It sports a 20-inch barrel secured with two barrel bands, weighs 6.25 pounds, and holds nine cartridges in the magazine tube.

One design feature that is now common to the whole

Puma 92 line is a small safety lever on the top rear of the bolt. The standard sights consist of an adjustable flat-topped rear leaf mated with a square front blade, giving a clean, clear sight picture. The stock is made of stained hardwood. When measured on a Lyman digital trigger gauge, the trigger pull averaged 5.5 pounds. The carbine is also now available in stainless steel.

So, how did it shoot?

The first surprise was how well the carbine moderated the recoil of the .454 Casull round that can be rather taxing in a handgun. The recoil from the carbine won't bother any experienced shooter. If I had to make a comparison when shooting Hornady's hot 300-grain ammunition, my sense would be that it's about on par with firing a 150-grain load from a 7½ pound 7mm Rem. Mag. rifle. I initially tested three factory loadings at 50 yards with the following results for three shot groups:

LOAD	VELOCITY	GROUP
Winchester Super-X 250 gr. JHP	1,583 fps	1½"
Winchester Supreme 260 gr. Partition Gold	2,275 fps	1½"
Hornady 300 gr. XTP-Mag.	2,030 fps	1"

Talk about power packed in a small package!

Focus for a moment on the Hornady loading alone. Both Winchester and Federal offer a 300-grain loading for the .45-70 with a quoted velocity of 1,880 fps. Here we have a pistol cartridge (albeit working at higher pressures) exceeding the velocity of a .45-70 by 8 percent and muzzle energy by 16 percent. By any standard this is remarkable performance from a 20-inch barreled carbine. Wait until Rossi chambers their Model 92 rifle with its 24-

inch barrel in .454. Ballistic performance and accuracy will both improve.

The carbine did have one glaring fault, however, its sights. The current carbine sights are impossible to zero at 100 yards. With the rear sight set in its lowest notch, the carbine still shot 11 inches high at 100 yards with the 260-grain load. With the sight set in its highest notch, the carbine shot 5 inches low with the 250-grain load.

I've urged the company to drill and tap the receiver for a Lyman or Williams receiver peep sight. The Puma rifles, not carbines, are already drilled and tapped for tang sights. Glen Ruh responded that the company is aware of the problem and is working with Hi-Viz to come up with a better sight system. Stay tuned, but in the meantime, if you want a carbine, plan on installing a receiver sight.

Rossi and Legacy have pushed the envelope with their '92 in .454 Casull. The little Puma would make a great woods gun for deer, bear and even elk. And it's just plain fun to shoot!

Howa's Thumbhole Varminter Supreme

Remember the Howa? Imported for many years by Interarms, this extensive line of Japanese made rifles were noted for their well designed actions, accurate barrels, sound workmanship, and reasonable prices. The basic Howa action also proved popular with many gunsmiths because it was very accommodating and, with minor modifications, capable of handling a variety of cartridge types.

Well, the Howas are back. Imported now by Legacy Sports International, the new Model 1500 Howa line is marked by the addition of numerous new models with the options modern shooters demand.



Available are short actions and long actions in stainless steel or chrome-moly. Stock options include walnut finished, laminate, or synthetic in classic or racy-looking thumbhole designs. Rifles are available as heavy varmint models, standard hunting weights or ultralights, either complete rifles or barreled actions.

Also available is a "Custom" series in the





Thumbhole stock rated high for comfort and stability.

new .300 Winchester Short Magnum; and there is even a highly refined line of custom made "Texas Safari" rifles crafted by barrel-maker and master gunsmith, Bill Wiseman.

The latest addition to the Howa line is a Model 1500 Thumbhole Varminter Supreme in .223, .22-250 and .308 Win. Weighing in on my scales at 10.2 pounds unscoped in .223 caliber, the Varminter Supreme is no lightweight, but it's about as racy and spacey a varmint rifle as you are likely to find.

The Varminter Supreme is a deliberate varmint. It's the type of precision rifle you can shoot all day over a prairie dog town or snuggle down solidly in some sandbags and produce those little, bragging groups that warm the heart of any rifleman.

Offered in blue or stainless steel and stocked in either nutmeg or pepper laminate, the Varminter Supreme is designed for long, sustained shooting sessions in the field or at the range.

The 24-inch, hammer forged bull barrel of the Varminter Supreme measures .830 inch at the muzzle which features a precisely machined, recessed target crown. This mass of barrel metal soaks up a lot of heat from the modest .223 round. Moreover, the Boyds' stock incorporates a broad 2-inch beavertail forearm — generously ventilated — that is conducive to maximum air flow around the barrel while offering a firm, stable bedding surface across a sand bag.

Interestingly enough, in an era when every drilled and tapped hole is considered a considerable production expense, the

barrel of the Varminter Supreme is drilled and tapped for target blocks to accommodate those great, old, bright Unertl and Lyman varmint scopes.

One either likes thumbhole stocks or doesn't. In my experience, thumbholes with their straight, rollover combs and almost vertical pistol grips are excellent position and benchrest rifles, providing stability and precise trigger control. In fact, when testing the Varminter Supreme off the bench, I squeezed the trigger, not with my trigger finger alone, but with my whole hand. Try this technique. It's equally useful when shooting handguns as well. Just take a firm grip and squeeze your whole hand. You'll be surprised how nicely that trigger releases.

The .223 was housed in the short Howa action with the magazine box slightly blocked for the petite round. Some of the features I find attractive in the Howa action are the integral recoil lug and recessed bolt face with a Sako-type extractor and plunger ejector. The bolt is exceedingly smooth to operate. It has a guide slot in the right locking lug and it does not drag across the top of the cartridge follower.

A few additional good features are excellent gas handling qualities, snappy lock time and a fully adjustable trigger. I might add that the polishing and finishing of Howa metalwork is well above average.

How did the Varminter Supreme shoot out of the box?

Mounting it with a standard test scope, a Bushnell Elite 4200 6-24x, I shot three stan-

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standard .223 factory loadings and a mild accuracy handload. Here's how the test rounds fared for five shot groups at 100 yards:

LOAD	VELOCITY	GROUP
Federal Classic 55 gr. Hi-Shok JSP	3,160 fps	5/16"
Winchester Super-X 53 gr. JHP	3,254 fps	3/4"
Winchester USA 45 gr. JHP	3,451 fps	3/4"
WW case and primer, 52 gr. Sierra JHP, 26.2 gr. WW-748	3,040 fps	3/8"

Clearly, right out of the box with no tuning or glass bedding, Legacy's Varminter Supreme is the basis for a superb small game rifle.

An Affordable O/U Shotgun

It's not easy to find an O/U with a bit of quality for under a thousand dollars, and that's why I was intrigued with Legacy's new Silma line of Italian-made over/unders. Offered in 12, 20, 28 and .410 gauges, the Silma lines carry suggested retail prices running from a standard grade at \$675 to a super-light, alloy framed model at \$995.

I had the opportunity to hunt the September dove season with a Silma Model 70 EJ Deluxe in 20 gauge. I came away impressed with the handling and performance of this 6½-pound gun. It didn't improve my 1.5 shells per dove average, but it was a pleasure to shoot all morning. During the morning hunts, I traded off guns with several friends. To a man, all liked what they saw and shot and were surprised when I quoted them the suggested retail price.

The entire Silma line features a single, mechanical trigger, matted ventilated rib with a mid-bead, automatic ejectors, automatic safety and either screw-in or fixed chokes depending upon the model and the gauge.

The frames, with the exception of the super-light, are machined from a solid block of steel and are proportioned to the gauge. The 26- or 28-inch barrels pivot on internal trunions, giving the guns a pleasingly shallow frame profile. Fitted with slim schnabel forends, the Silmas naturally point well. The fit and finish of the wood and metal were well done.

The only significant differences between the deluxe and standard models are the quality of the walnut and the amount of tasteful etched engraving that depicts various wildlife scenes.

The 12-gauge models are chambered for the 3½-inch shell with the exception of the super-light that carries a 3-inch chamber. The 20 and .410 gauges sport 3-inch chambers and the 28 gauge, 2¾-inch chambers.

The Silmas are well designed, well made and represent an excellent value in today's pricey O/U shotgun market. In fact, I look forward to toting one of their svelte 28-gauge models this year in pursuit of desert and mountain quail.



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Steyr ProHunter

From Dynamit Nobel

Dynamit Nobel USA is importing the Steyr ProHunter and ProHunter Mountain hunting rifles from Germany. Both models offer all-weather performance thanks to their ergonomically designed synthetic stocks. Options include choice of blued or stainless steel barrels, rear and front sight and high-Capacity Kit, consisting of HC-adaptor, 10-round magazine and assembly screws.

Contact Dynamit Nobel, 81 Ruckman Rd., Closter, NJ 07624, telephone: [201] 767-1995, FAX: [201] 767-1589.



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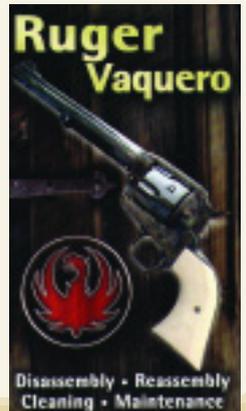
From ACPS

A new 34-minute personal safety video, "Protecting Yourself, Your Family & Your Home," is available from the American Council on Personal Safety. The video is based on crime prevention seminars conducted by the ACPS throughout the country by more than 300 volunteer speakers. For more information on the video, contact Jim McMahon at the ACPS, telephone: [818] 366-8645, e-mail: jimmcmahon290@hotmail.com or visit the Website: www.acps.us

Instructional Video Series

From Competitive Edge Gun Works

Competitive Edge Gun Works has produced a comprehensive series of instructional videos, with renown custom gunsmith Larry Crow. The 11-video series covers the assembly and disassembly of Ruger, Colt and clones, Colt custom and after market parts and Winchester Model 73 & 92, Marlin, as well as, custom lever rifles action work and barrel lining, double barrel design and function and custom shotgun back boring, forcing cone, choke tubes and other custom modifications. Contact Larry Crow, Competitive Edge Gun Works, telephone: [660] 731-5124, e-mail: lscrow@greenhills.net

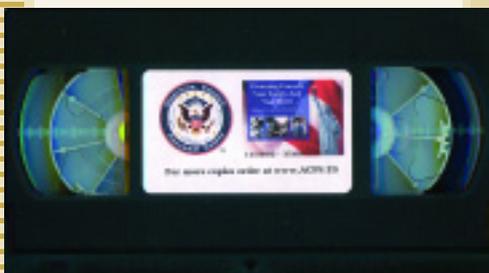
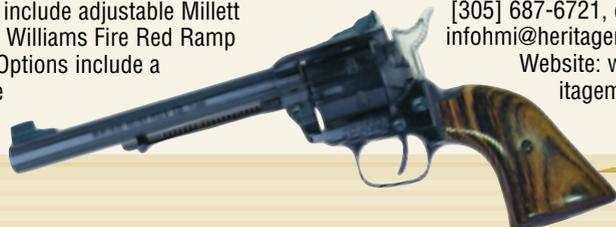


.17 HMR Rough Rider

From Heritage Mfg.

Heritage Mfg. introduces the new Rough Rider six shooter in the hot .17HMR caliber, which delivers increased velocity of between 1,750 to 1,800 fps. Other features include adjustable Millet rear sight with Williams Fire Red Ramp front system. Options include a simulated case

hardened finish on aluminum alloy frame with matching green wood laminate grips or a low gloss non-glare black satin finish. Contact Heritage Mfg., 4600 N.W. 135th St., Opa-Locka, FL 33054, telephone: [305] 685-5966, FAX: [305] 687-6721, e-mail: infohmi@heritagemfg.com, Website: www.heritagemfg.com



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From Addept, Inc.

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New Semi-Auto Holster

From Mitch Rosen

The USD II is a new addition to Mitch Rosen's line of quality gun leather. The USD II, based on the company's popular Slim Line design, is crafted from premium grade cowhide and features interchangeable belt loops (1.25, 1.5 and 1.75 inch sizes). The USD II accommodates most medium and large frame semi-automatic pistols with barrels measuring four inches or less. Color options are black, light brown, dark brown, mahogany and tan. Contact Mitch Rosen Extraordinary Gunleather, 300 Bedford St., Manchester, NH 03101-1102, telephone: [603] 647-2971, FAX: [603] 647-2973, e-mail: holster@mitchrosen.com, Website: www.mitchrosen.com



Field Hunter Camo

From Charles Daly

Charles Daly's line of Field Hunter shotguns is now available in Advantage Timber HD and Realtree Hardwoods HD camouflage in the new 20-gauge models, which feature ventilated ribs, multiple choke tubes and barrel lengths of 24, 26 and 28-inches. The new camo styles are also available in the 22-inch barrel Youth Model Pro Hunter. The Field Hunter line's receivers are machined from solid blocks of aluminum and mated with barrels of chrome-moly steel, making them ideal for steel shot. Contact Casey Clifford at Charles Daly, P.O. Box 6625, Harrisburg, PA 17112, telephone: [866] 325-9486, e-mail: sales@kbi-inc.com, Website: www.charlesdaly.com



New "Scope Scrooz"

From Stoney Pt.

Stoney Point Products' new stainless steel "Scope Scrooz" is designed for temporary scope mounting and fitting of bases and rings. The Scope Scrooz is specially designed to assist in the installation of Stoney Point's new Laser Magic II scope ring and base alignment. Scope Scrooz mates with most Leupold, Redfield and Millet rings with No. 8-40 threads. Contact Stoney Pt. Products, 1822 N. Minnesota St., New Ulm, MN 56073, telephone: [507] 354-3360, e-mail: stoney@newulmtel.net, Website: www.stoneypoint.com



New Camo Binoculars

From Thunderbolt

Thunderbolt Sales introduces its new 10x50 power camouflage binoculars. Key features include ruby red coated lenses, comfortable rubber eye caps, and a soft vinyl zippered carry case with adjustable strap. Value priced at just \$39.95, plus \$5.95 s&h. Contact Stu Collins at Thunderbolt Sales, Box 1222, Andrews, TX 79714, telephone: [915] 523-4389



New Sporting Clays Shotgun

From Benelli USA

The Sport II is a new sporting clays shotgun imported by Benelli USA. Among the important features of the Sport II are a cryogenically-treated barrel to deliver higher velocities, more consistent patterns and a higher concentration of shot to the target, a stepped and checkered rib for faster target acquisition and a gel recoil pad for maximum softening of the kick from heavy target loads. A shim kit is included to customize stock drop. Contact Benelli USA, 176093 Indian Head Hwy, Accokeek, MD 20607, telephone: [301] 283-6981, FAX: [301] 283-6988, Website: www.benelliusa.com



New Fixed Blades

From Mercworx

Mercworx introduces an extensive line of ruggedly handsome and high-tech fixed blade knives, all handcrafted in the USA from 154 CM stainless steel. The three models pictured are the Equatorian extreme heavy duty, the Sniper fighter/field and the Archangel battle blade. Each features a slim line design and perfect balance for maximum performance. The grips are made of black micarta. Contact Nigel Taylor at Mercworx, 235 Main St., Ste. 287, Madison, NJ 07940, telephone: [908] 619-1013, e-mail: info1119@mercworx.com, Website: www.mercworx.com



Tracker 7-shot Revolver

From Taurus Inter'al

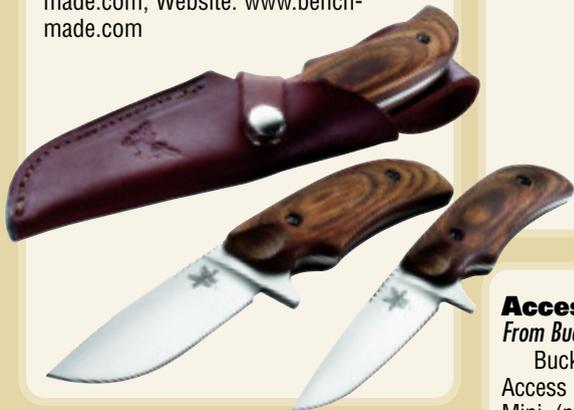
The compact frame .22 Magnum Tracker double action seven-shot revolver features a 6.5-inch matte stainless steel vent ribbed barrel. The Tracker has adjustable front and rear sights, ribbed rubber grips and weighs only 45.2 ounces. Contact Taurus Inter'al, 16175 N.W. 49th Ave., Miami, FL 33014-6314, telephone: [305] 624-1115, FAX: [305] 623-7506, Website: www.taurususa.com



New Fixed Blades

From Benchmade

Benchmade has created a pair of new fixed blade knives for 2003, the Model 190 Drop Point Hunter and the Model 192 Bird & Trout. Both feature 440C stainless steel blades hardened to 58-60 HRC and stabilized hardwood handles to resist cracking, splitting and shrinking due to water exposure. The Drop Point Hunter has a 3.90-inch blade, a notched spine and a deep belly for field dressing and skinning. The Bird & Trout's 3.94-inch blade is thin enough to slice with ease and tapers back for a comfortable grip. Contact Benchmade Knife Co., 300 Beaver Creek Rd., Oregon City, OR 97045, telephone: [503] 655-6004, FAX: [503] 655-6004, e-mail: info@benchmade.com, Website: www.benchmade.com



New Bird's Eye Knives

From Remington

Remington introduces a new line of Bird's Eye fixed blade knives with one-piece laminated maple wood handles and sturdy 420 high carbon stainless steel blades. The four models are the Clip Blade and Drop Point (each with 4-3/4-inch blades), the Drop point with Gut Hook (4.5-inch blade) and the Skinner (3-inch blade). Contact Remington Arms, 870 Remington Dr., Madison, NC 27025-0700, telephone: [800] 243-9700, FAX: [336] 548-7741, e-mail: kemplo@remington.com, Website: www.remington.com



X-Timer Lock Back

From Imperial Schrade

The X-Timer is a new high-performance "quick-lift" one-hand opening lock back knife from Imperial Schrade. Features include a 3.5-inch stainless steel blade with durable non-reflective epoxy finish, gunmetal gray checkered handle and a stainless steel pocket clip and lanyard hole. The knife measures five inches long in the closed position. Contact Tim Faust at Imperial Schrade, 7 Schrade Ct., Ellenville, NY 12428, telephone: [914] 647-7601, FAX: [914] 210-8671, Website: www.schradeknives.com



Access Lock Backs

From Buck Knives

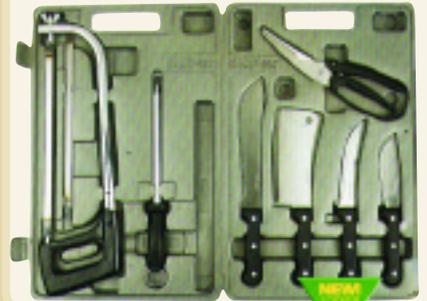
Buck Knives has expanded its family of Access lock backs to include the Model 462 Mini (partially serrated 1 1/8-in. blade), the Model 463 Mid-Size (2 1/4-in. blade) and the Model 465 Maxi (3-in. blade). All feature a modified drop-point blade, Buck's patented locking mechanism and glass-reinforced thermoplastic contoured handle. Contact Buck Knives, P.O. Box 1267, El Cajon, CA 92022, telephone: [800] 326-2925, Website: www.buckknives.com



Game Processing Set

From Meyerco

The Model MBDP2 Game Processing Set from Meyerco provides the hunter with every cutting tool needed for cleaning, skinning and butchering game in the field, along with cutting chores in camp. The nine-piece set comes in a lightweight but durable high impact plastic carry case. Contact Meyerco, 4481 Exchange Services Dr., Dallas, TX 75236, telephone: [214] 467-8949, FAX: [214] 467-9241, Website: www.meyercousa.com



Recon 1 Folder

From Cold Steel

Cold Steel's Recon 1 tactical folders are sleek and lightweight, but have the cutting power of a chain saw. The three models are the Clip Point, Tanto point and the Spear point. Each has a four-inch AUS 8A stainless steel blade with a tough black Teflon finish and Zytel handle. The patented Ultra Lock function ensures safety, reliability and maximum performance. Contact Cold Steel, 3036-A Seaborg Ave., Ventura, CA 93003, telephone: [805] 650-8481, FAX: [805] 642-9727, Website: www.coldsteel.com

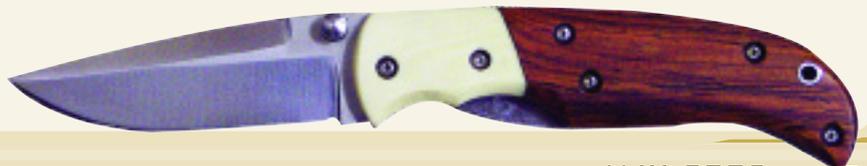


New Jouni Folder

From Kellam Knives

The new Model FJ1 Jouni folder from Kellam Knives, designed by company president Jouni Kellokoski, is the perfect blending of beauty and performance. The one-hand opening function is accented by stunning coco bolo polished hardwood and ivory micarta

handle. This elegant gentleman's folder is crafted from AUS8 stainless steel and has an extra sharp edge. Contact Harriet Kellokoski at Kellam Knives, 902 S. Dixie Hwy, Lantana, FL 33462, telephone: [561] 588-3185, FAX: [561] 588-3186, e-mail: info@kellamknives.com, Website: www.kellamknives.com





1873 Maynard before and after transformation. The talented Ballard team can make your tired old single shot new again.



MEET THE GUNSMEN

Handwork is the secret to best quality work. Here, practiced hands sculpt a cheekpiece.



What, I wonder, is the mysterious force that draws people of a certain nature together in one community or geographic locale? Examples? I'm told that if the theater is your joy, there's no place but Broadway. Movies? Why, Hollywood is the epicenter of course. Oh, and San Francisco... Well, let's not go there.

Cody, Wyo., is such a place. This small community of about 9,000 people is a rifleman and hunter's Mecca. Sitting on the route to the east entrance of Yellowstone Park, it lies in truly beautiful country.

The justly famous Buffalo Bill Historical Center is one of Cody's main attractions. The Center houses soul-stirring collections of western art and a magnificent firearms museum. If you are in the area, you *must* plan a visit, allowing a full day if possible. You'll not regret a moment of the time you spend there.

Other worthy organizations have their offices in Cody. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, which has been such a powerful force in habitat conservation, makes its headquarters in Cody. Likewise the American Custom Gunmaker's Guild, another truly worthy group.

Dave Casey, top-notch gunsmith and producer of extremely fine quality, lathe-turned cartridge cases for modern and obsolete firearms, also hangs his shingle in Cody.

Best In The Country?

But for me, the lodestone of Cody, Wyo., is a modest steel building at 113 W. Yellowstone. It's the home of Ballard Rifle, LLC.

We've profiled several Ballard products in the past year, and you can count on seeing more in the future. The reason

Ballard RIFLE, LLC

Ballard's new-production rifles show impeccable workmanship. Look for a review of this stunning Ballard No. 5 Pacific in a future issue.



Steve Garbe shows a perfectly restored Ballard schuetzen rifle.



for this is Ballard is doing magnificent quality work. Frankly, I think the world of their products. In my opinion, Ballard is the finest gunmaker in the country. Yes, I realize that's a bold statement, and I'll acknowledge there are a handful of shops of nearly equal merit. But that's my opinion, and I'm sticking to it.

It was my good fortune to visit the Ballard facility in 2001, and I was interested to learn that production of new Ballard, Winchester High-Wall and Low-Wall rifles is not the limit of the company's business.

Ballard's president, Steve Garbe, and the rest of the talented crew also make a particular specialty of performing restoration work on 19th century firearms. Of course, fine single shot rifles are their passion and specialty, but I also observed a vintage Marlin repeater waiting its turn at the bench.

When asked why Ballard offers this restoration service, Garbe turned philosophical:

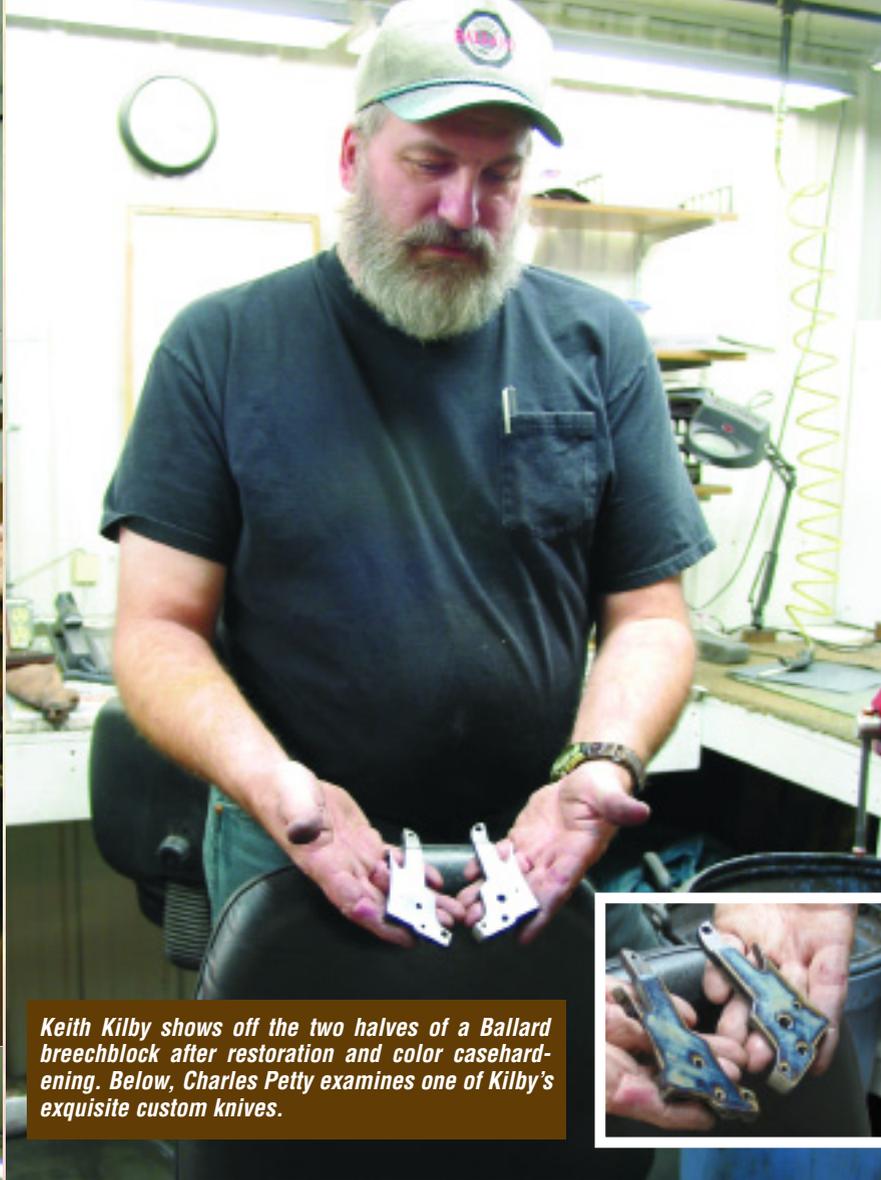
"In a sense, we're not the owners of these good old rifles," said Garbe. "We're just taking care of them for someone else. And when you can put it back the way it originally was before you send it down the line of eventual owners, you've done a good thing."

Garbe also mentioned that a high percentage of those who order restoration services eventually order a new made Ballard or Winchester pattern single shot.

Steve isn't the only member of the Ballard crew who is passionate about preserving these uniquely American rifles.



Fitting a buttplate — one careful chisel stroke at a time.



Keith Kilby shows off the two halves of a Ballard breechblock after restoration and color casehardening. Below, Charles Petty examines one of Kilby's exquisite custom knives.



Keith Kilby, in addition to being one of the country's most respected custom knife makers, is Ballard's specialist in metal finishing:

"One of the most pleasurable things we do here," Kilby says, "is taking a fine old rifle that has been absolutely wrecked, and returning it to original condition. It's immensely satisfying."

Step-By-Step Restoration

Once a restoration project begins, it is likely to involve at least five separate areas of work.

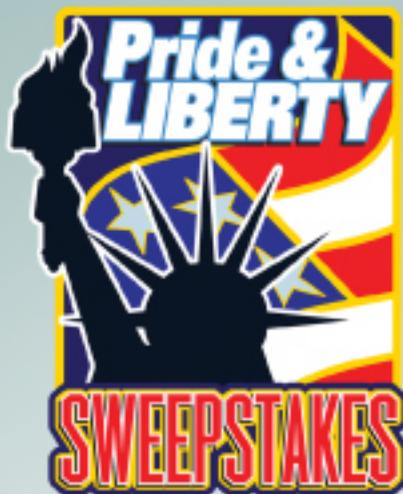
The first step is to verify the arm functions properly, and it's a rare vintage rifle that has not suffered at least some abuse and breakage. Some parts may be repaired, while others must be fabricated from scratch.

A worn extractor for example, may be welded up and recut, restoring it to perfect order. Something like a broken sear or firing pin is better corrected by fabricating a replacement of good modern steel, properly heat-treated.

Many restoration projects arrive with a barrel showing a pitted, unsalvageable bore. How to remedy this depends on the caliber of the rifle and the intended use of the completed project.

.22 rimfire and some low-pressure centerfire barrels may be relined. This has the advantage of leaving the exterior of the original barrel, with all its factory markings, intact. For more powerful cartridges, or where the finished rifle is destined for

continued on page 76



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The prizes featured here were judged best of the year for 2002 by the Shooting Industry Academy of Excellence. The manufacturers are celebrating by giving you a chance to win their award-winning products.

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use in competitive shooting, replacing the original barrel is often the preferred solution.

The Ballard crew has all the necessary tooling and expertise to replace the original barrel with a perfect duplicate, regardless of the original's dimensions or taper. In fact, for a time, Ballard Rifle even manufactured its own barrels on site. These days, Ballard obtains fine quality barrel blanks from Badger, Douglas and others, and turns or mills them to the contour or octagonal profile desired.

With the project rifle now in perfect operating condition, and sporting a new or relined barrel, carefully chambered, correctly head-spaced and nicely crowned, it's a good time to perform any needed stock work.

It may be that the original stock is in pretty straight shape. Checkering, if present, can be recut, small dents raised with steam, and the wood surface carefully leveled by scraping and then sanding prior to refinishing. Often, these old soldiers arrive with cracked or broken stocks, or with missing pieces of wood.

To a point, repairs may be possible with careful workmanship, but often a new stock is the only way to ensure an attractive and reliable finished product. Ballard's wood room is stocked with an assortment of blanks in several grades, from utilitarian to extra-fancy figure.

A duplicating carver is used to rough-out

the cuts for the action tangs, and may be used to rough profile the blank, but from there, it's all hand work. Ballard specializes in duplicating the correct original stock profiles, so whether your rifle requires a simple sporter stock or an elaborate "perch belly" schuetzen stock with high comb, they can provide it.

Finishing Touch

With the furniture up to spec, the time has come to refinish the barrel, action and other metalwork. Here, a wide variety of finishing processes may be used depending upon both the customer's desires and the correct original factory treatment. But before any part is finished, the metal must be properly prepared.

The "secret" to top-drawer metal finishing lies in the careful preparation of the surface beforehand. The work is done not with power buffing wheels, but by hand, with files and abrasive cloth.

Around the Ballard shop, you'll often hear the term "striking." Striking is an old fashioned gunsmith's term for draw filing. The term is rarely heard these days, and even less common are those with the skill to perform it properly. Really good file work is almost a lost art.

But it's the mastery of this archaic gunsmith's technique that allows the Ballard crew to do such fine restoration work. Take a good, but tired and worn 19th century rifle to the average gunshop, ask to have it refin-

ished, and the likely result is a rifle worth far less than before you paid the gunsmith's bill.

Power buffing wheels and modern hot salt bluing can result in a rifle that shines like new but carries ugly, buffed out lettering, dished screw holes and an octagonal barrel full of unsightly dips and waves.

By contrast, Ballard's artisans do the work the old way. Stroke by patient stroke, pitted or marred surfaces are recut, while keeping flats level and radii true. Every stroke of the file requires maximum effort to keep it square to the surface being worked. It's a job that can't be rushed. Fail to clean and chalk your file and you'll soon find yourself adding more scratches and scars than you remove.

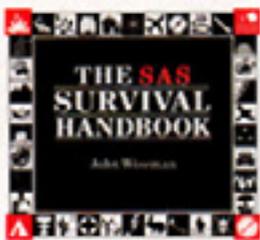
With the file work complete, abrasive papers are used in a series of different grits. At each change to a finer grit, the direction of polishing is changed 90 degrees, the final result being a flawless surface, generally polished to the long axis of the part, and with no scratches from previous, coarser grits remaining. This is a long and tedious process, but it's the only way to remove the effects of decades of abuse and produce a superior metal finish.

In the Ballard shop genuine, old-fashioned pack casehardening is performed as well as "nitre," or heat bluing, period correct browning and hot salt bluing. Due to the careful metal preparation, Ballard's bluing looks richer and far more attractive than the commonly produced finish.

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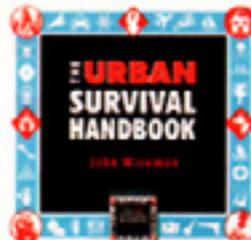
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The last detail to be addressed, if required, is sighting equipment. As you may by now expect, Ballard manufactures in house a complete line of period-correct 19th century sights. Models range from match-grade vernier tang and windgauge front sights, to open, sporting tang, and globe front sights for hunting.

Putting Them To The Test

On my visit to the Ballard shop, in addition to the Marlin repeater, I noticed a solitary Maynard rifle receiver on the workbench. As Maynard rifles are a particular interest of mine, I was soon making arrangements with Steve Garbe and his team to restore an 1873 Maynard No. 1 from my stable. They would have their work cut out for them.

This particular Maynard, despite showing the effects of some careful maintenance over the last 100 years, had its share of problems. Only an occasional faint shadow of the original color-casehardening showed on the receiver, and the barrel's exterior was lightly pitted and devoid of finish. The bore was fairly well washed out, and indeed, when tested, its bullets tumbled, keyholing on the target.

Worse yet, the chamber had been jugged from the erosion of countless black powder .22 shorts, and fired cases could be extracted only with great difficulty. Adding insult to injury, someone had drilled a hole

through the wrist of the stock sometime in the distant past.

I expected to hear some grumbling when this old timer arrived at the Ballard shop, but instead, I received only a courteous acknowledgement of the rifle's arrival, and a couple of questions about what work was desired.

In short order, my Maynard was returned, and oh, what a transformation had taken place!

Old Junker Made New

The receiver had been lightly cleaned prior to finishing. Maynards are notorious for having extremely faint receiver markings, and it takes real skill not to erase them when polishing before finishing. The stampings on my rifle were perfectly preserved, and the receiver, lower tang, buttplate, hammer and lever had been beautifully color-casehardened just as they originally were.

The shot-out barrel had been relined, the liner carefully and tightly fit prior to being glassed into place. The freshly-cut chamber ended all of my extraction problems, and the barrel's muzzle was highly polished and left in the white in the old style.

When tested, this resurrected rimfire shot superbly, and groups were just as tight as I can reasonably expect when my tired eyes are used with open sights.

Even the damaged stock was repaired, and in place of a gaping hole is a tidy repair that

looks for all the world like a small knot in the wood grain. The barrel was finished in a medium luster blue that looks very rich, slightly blue rather than black, and perfectly in synch with the beautifully color-cased receiver.

Maynard rifles have often been dismissed as rather plain looking, and in silhouette, of course, this one is unchanged, but you'll never find a nicer looking example. Ballard had done for me just what they can do for you — turning a marginally sound but uninspiring specimen into a real centerpiece of the collection.

If you have a vintage 19th century rifle in need of some TLC — be it an old family treasure or a new acquisition — don't hand it over to the average gun hack. Call the Ballard shop and arrange for them to restore it properly. I'm willing to bet you too will soon be an admirer of these talented craftsmen.



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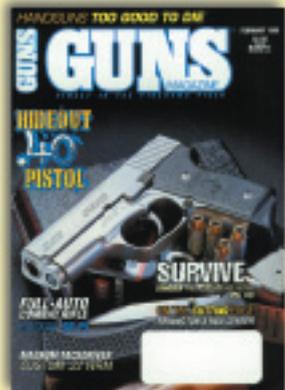
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CAMPFIRE TALES

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too thick for my hand, Grandpa must have had really big hands, but I figured the stock could be easily slimmed.

I asked the young man how much he wanted for the pair of Frontier Six-Shooters and he mentioned a price, which I felt was a little too high especially if I bought both of them. A counter offer was made in a more reasonable, to me, price range and accepted. I had two of Grandpa's sixguns.

Saturday Night Spruce-Up

When I got them home both were totally dismantled and I found a lot of crud in the action of the 1897 .44-40. All the parts were soaked in carburetor cleaner to remove who knows how many years of accumulated dirt, and then everything given a coat of Tetra Gun Grease before reassembling.

All end play was taken out of the cylinder with a couple of Power Custom end shims, the front trigger guard screw was replaced, and when put back together, I found I had a sixgun with a very smooth action.

The second sixgun, from 1902, received the same treatment with the same results. It too was very *smoooooth*.

It was necessary to replace the main-spring on this gun as the one it had was far too heavy for my tastes. I got a surprise when I tried to take this gun apart. The one-piece stocks had been glued on the gun using the normal method of two panels plus a filler in the middle. However, the grip pins were still in use so as I tried to remove the back-strap, the old glue gave up the ghost and the grips came apart. They now reside in the grip section of my parts box and may be used on a future sixgun project. They were replaced with a pair of hard rubber eagles to match the other sixgun.

Tangible History

We often hear the phrase "If only they could talk" and it is certainly apropos here. Who knows what their history is? How old was Grandpa when he acquired them? How were they used? Most importantly why would a young man sell Grandpa's guns? I hope it was for a noble purpose such as going to school, or building a house for his family, but I felt it was more likely that he wanted to buy something frivolous. I hope I'm wrong.

I also hope and pray the day never comes than any of my grandkids find it necessary or even acquire the mindset to sell Grandpa's guns. As I cleaned the guns and put them back together, I somehow felt that Grandpa would rest easy this night even though his grandson was selling all his guns. I think he knew this pair of old Colt .44s had found a new home where they would be cared for, totally appreciated, and given regular feedings and exercise.



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CAMPFIRE TALES

BY JOHN TAFFIN

GRANDPA'S GUNS

Unless I am in my office at the back part of the house, I rarely ever hear either the phone or the doorbell ring anymore. My dogs tell me when someone is at the door, however with the phone, my first clue is usually the recorder coming on, and I then check the caller I.D. to see who is calling before I interrupt the caller's message. This time the little screen attached to the phone said "Shapel's Gun Shop," a call I am always happy to take and one I don't want to miss.

"John, this is Mark at Shapel's. We have some guns up here you may want to look at."

"Mark, I was planning to come over this afternoon anyway for some parts, so I will be right over." Five minutes later I entered the shop.

Relics Of A Man's Life

A young fellow was standing there with history, a chapter on levergun history, laid out before me. On the counter were six vintage Winchesters. My heart and spirit soared at such a display, however, that emotion was about to take a total nose dive. I could not believe my ears when the young fellow informed me he was selling Grandpa's guns.

Grandpa's guns! Sadness enveloped me as I heard those words. Many times, I've been contacted by young fellows who have inherited one of Grandpa's guns and want to know something about it.

My first advice is always: "Don't ever sell that gun! You have a great gun there and most importantly someday this should go to your grandson or granddaughter. It is part of your family history. Don't let it get away." Now, here was this young fellow with six of his grandfather's Winchesters for sale.

In looking at the leverguns it was quite evident, with one exception, that these were real workin' guns. Grandpa was obviously a shooter not a collector. On five of these rifles, most of the finish was gone and the stocks and forearms had the normal marks that come with use. Three of the leverguns were Winchester Model 1892s, the finest, slickest little saddlegun ever conceived by man. Two of them were .25-20s, one a rifle and the other a short-barreled Trapper that probably was not original. I was most interested in the third one, it being a standard 20-inch .44-40.

Two very early Model 1894s were also in the group, one marked .30 WCF and the other in .32 Winchester Special. All five of these fine examples of everyday working tools certainly got my attention.

Something Special

However, the sixth levergun stood out from all the rest as it was in excellent shape with most of the bluing still intact and also near-perfect wood. The real kicker was this was not a '92 or '94 but a very rare Model 1876 in .50-95 chambering. This must have been Grandpa's prized possession. Mark had already looked up the book value on this one and informed the young man that it should go for somewhere between \$5000 and \$7000. The others, of course, would go for working gun prices.

Old Colts Too

Before I began thoroughly examining the barrels of the first five leverguns, I noticed he also had two pistol cases with him. My attention was immediately diverted from the Winchesters when I heard the word "Colt."

Each case contained two 4¼-inch Colt Single Actions from around the turn-of-the-century. There was a pair of .32-20s and another pair each marked "COLT FRONTIER SIX-SHOOTER" which identified them as .44-40s. Now I was really hooked!

All four of these were obviously everyday working six-guns, as the finish was virtually non-existent. However, the lettering was sharp and clear on all the guns and very few of the old screws showed any serious damage to their slots.

Looking at the serial numbers of the .44-40s, I found one to be in the black powder range and the other very early smokeless. Pulling the cylinders, I found the oldest gun did have some pitting in the barrel while the smokeless barrel was in excellent shape. Both cylinders locked up tight with a minimum of end-play and side-to-side movement for sixguns that were over 100 years old.

One had the traditional black eagle grips, while the other had been fitted — probably by Grandpa — with one-piece wooden stocks with a carved maple leaf on the right side. They were way

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