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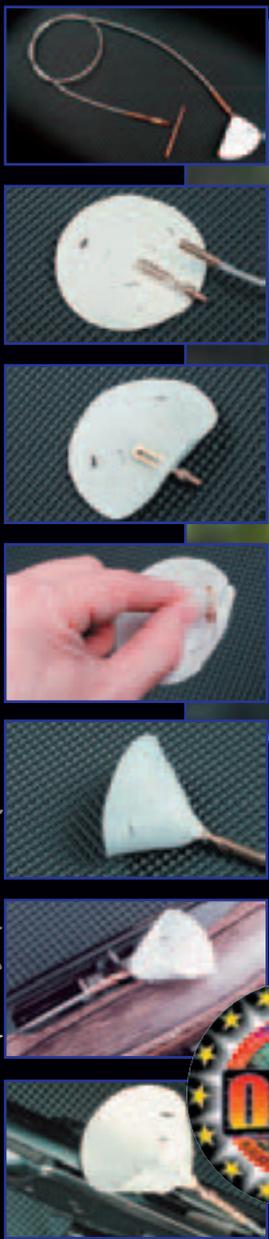


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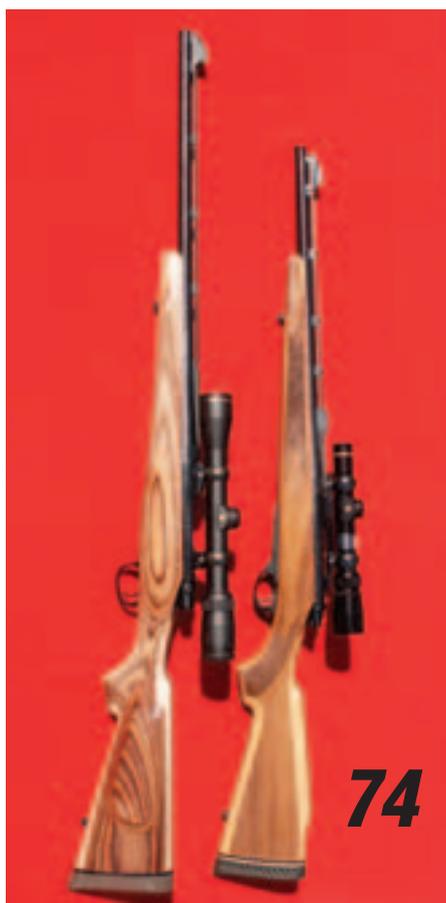


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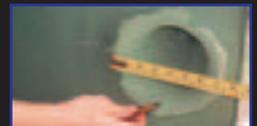
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Of Texas And Rumors

“Texas by God!” was the startled cry of notorious gunman John Wesley Hardin, as he spotted Ranger John Armstrong entering his railway car near Pensacola, Fla. Hardin grabbed for his Colt, but it tangled in his suspenders, giving Armstrong sufficient time to quiet Hardin with a whack on the noggin. Hardin was sentenced to 25 years in Huntsville, but was eventually paroled after 15. He studied law during those years, subsequently hanging his shingle in El Paso. And, yes, I’m going to pass on the obvious barb about going into prison a criminal and emerging an attorney.

I’ve just recently returned from a long trip through Texas, and it’s an awe-inspiring part of our great country with many interesting places to see. After a long spell on the road, I stopped in El Paso to tank up on spicy *guisado de res* hot enough to scorch the table underneath, washed down with an ice-cold bottle of *Negra Modelo*.

In Pecos, I took in the very nice “West of the Pecos” museum situated in the old Oriental hotel. If you make it out there, drop a couple bucks in the kitty, will you? Further up the road, I stopped at an antique shop (always looking for old guns and such) and inadvertently interrupted a session of the local hot stove league. Those fellows wouldn’t let me leave, and we passed an enjoyable couple of hours swapping gun trading and “hell, I was there” stories. Nice folks, those Texas boys.

Heading back from Dallas, I took pains to visit the Texas Ranger Museum in Waco. It’s another must see destination if looking at cases full of Colts and Winchesters does anything for you.

From there it was on to the game-rich Texas hill country and my primary destination, Thunder Ranch, for a week of shooting black powder cartridge rifles. This was my first visit to Thunder Ranch, and I’d be a liar if I said I wasn’t impressed. I’ve been to some very

fine shooting schools, and each has its strong points, but Thunder Ranch is something special.

From the moment you enter the front gate, you’ll find yourself looking at some mighty handsome country just chock full of wildlife. A long-bearded old turkey gobbler greeted me at the gate, and whitetails, axis deer and blackbuck could be seen ghosting through the meadows if you only looked.

The various ranges are all state-of-the-art. There are ranges optimized for handgun, carbine, rifle and shotgun use, as well as the world famous Terminator and Tower indoor/outdoor simulators. Add to that Thunderville — what must be the finest “Hogan’s Alley” in the world not constructed with taxpayer dollars.

Lots of ranges start out nice, but the wear and tear of constant use soon has them looking like third world facilities. In contrast, everything at Thunder Ranch is meticulously maintained. The shot-up props and chipping, sunburned paint so common to other facilities was nowhere to be seen. In addition, the place is spotless. As one frequent Thunder Ranch student was heard to say, “Clint keeps this place like a national park!”

The quality of instruction was simply top drawer. I’ll hope to tell you of this class in detail soon, but suffice it to say the instructors were all tops in their field. They pushed the students to improve their performance, but kept it fun. The entire experience, from staff to facilities to the wonderful fellow students was just first rate.

Which is why it’s so troubling to hear the rumor, “Thunder Ranch is going out of business.” I’ve heard this or some variation several times lately, often as a post on some shooting-oriented computer bulletin board. The truth is rather different.

Thunder Ranch opened its gates in 1993. After 10 years and many thousands of students, Clint and Heidi Smith are ready for the next challenge. A new facility is being readied in Oregon, to be known as The School Of Arms. This next evolution will continue to offer the state-of-the-art training Thunder Ranch has been so famous for, but in a smaller, more intimate setting. I’ve seen photos of the new location, and you can too. Point your browser to www.thunderranchinc.com. Scroll down the main page and click on “The Future” to see the latest.

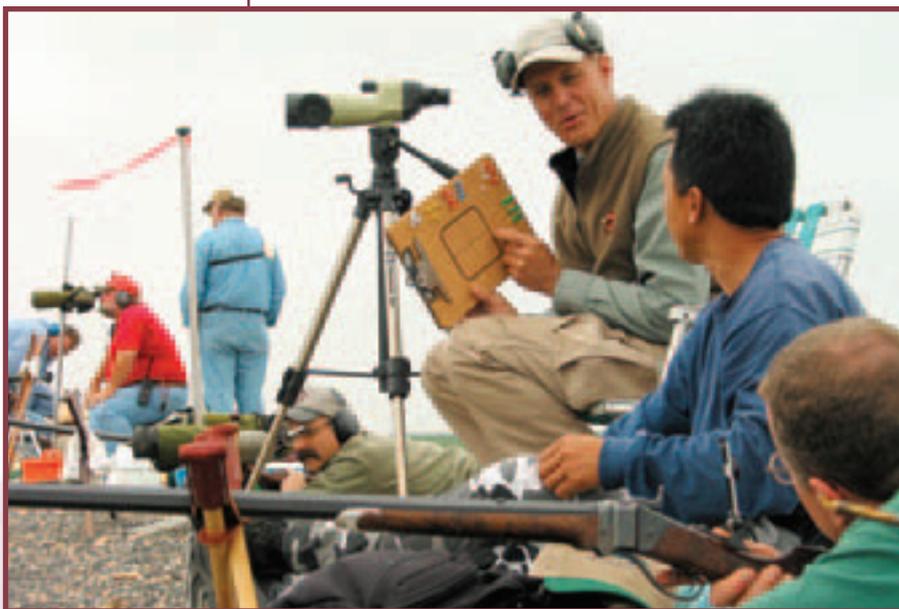
As anxious as I am to see the new facility, it’s important to remember that the opportunity to attend Thunder Ranch is rapidly drawing to a close. The Texas facility is expected to remain in operation for another two years, and classes are filling fast. If you want to learn why many people return to Thunder Ranch year after year; if you want to see a magnificent facility that accommodates everything from 19th century firearms to helicopter gunnery — you need to make your plans now.

Who knows, perhaps we’ll meet there. I’m certainly hoping to visit this top-flight institution again in the near future.



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Clint Smith uses a spotting board to show Garth Kendig where his .45-90 round struck the 700-yard target.



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TRAC3



HANDGUNS BY MASSAD AYOUB

The .45 ACP Approaches Its Centennial

The hundred-year anniversary of the .45 ACP (Automatic Colt Pistol) cartridge approaches. Trivia quiz:

The .45 ACP was conceived in what year? A: 1911. B: 1905. C: 1904.

Many would answer A, but they would have confused the cartridge with the most popular pistol for which it was chambered. The more deeply schooled handgun historian would answer B, the year Colt produced the first semiautomatic pistol designed by John Browning for the "caliber .45 rimless smokeless cartridge."

However, that would be an incorrect answer as well. The right answer is C. Remember, the question was, in what year was the .45 ACP conceived.

of energy. That energy is equaled by the 230-grain bullet at 855 foot-seconds, which later became the "standard" bullet weight for the cartridge.

Note that in the beginning, the .45 ACP superseded a ".41 ACP" that died a-borning. More than 85 years before the introduction of today's stupendously popular .40 S&W cartridge, Colt's had been working on the concept, along with a 9.8mm round.

The latter, also stillborn, had been intended largely for the European market. What made the .40 S&W work was modern bullet design: it was the first semiautomatic pistol cartridge designed from the ground up to work with a hollow point bullet. What made the .45 ACP so famous was that, with its great bullet mass, it got the job done even with a full metal jacket, round nose projectile.

Fast Forward

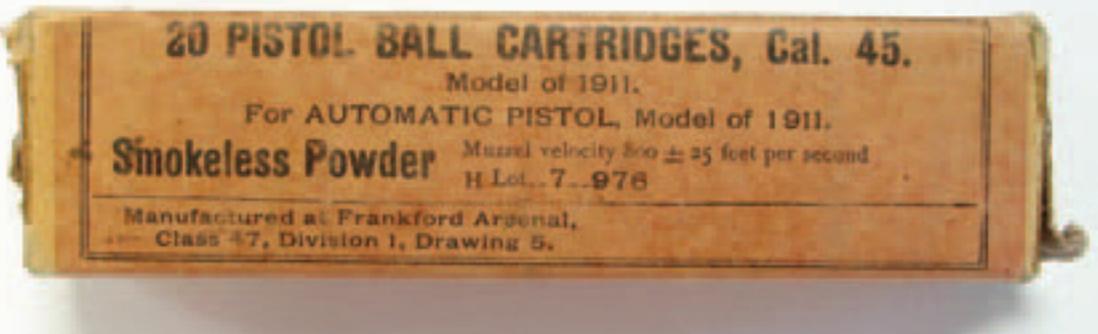
Today, the .45 ACP is better and more versatile than ever. Conventional-style bullet weights range from 117 grains (Aguila) to 230 grains (everybody). Sub-100 grain .45 ACP slugs are available as exotic pre-fragmented projectiles, and I've seen swaged bullets up to 260 grains handloaded for tasks like shooting bowling pins. The original 200-grain weight is hugely popular among reloaders, particularly with the Hensley & Gibbs No. 68 lead semi-wadcutter, and is still loaded by CCI in a famously effective wide-mouth Gold Dot JHP. At a standard velocity of 975 fps it churns up 421 foot-pounds, and is available as an even hotter +P running at 1,050 foot-seconds.

Numerous 185-grain JHP rounds at a +P velocity of 1,140 fps, including one loaded by Olin for U.S. Special Forces, deliver 535 foot-pounds, energy comparable to a full power 10mm Auto.

In the traditional 230-grain weight, we have the most dynamically expanding JHP bullets ever, enhancing the .45 ACP's already legendary stopping power. These include CCI's Gold Dot, Federal's Hydra-shok, PMC's StarFire, Remington's Golden Saber, and Winchester's SXT/Ranger series. Specifically engineered to open at low velocities, these rounds make particularly good sense in today's breed of three-inch barrel concealed carry .45 ACPs.

Recent events have again shown our nation's military the dramatic superiority of .45 hardball over 9mm in the same configuration, a simple fact of physics written in the blood of combat since before World War I. In addition to a resurgence of military interest, the .45 ACP enjoys the greatest popularity ever among both the police establishment and the armed citizenry in this country.

2004 will mark an even hundred years since the conception of this great cartridge. The all-American .45 ACP is more potent, more versatile, and altogether better than ever today.



Twenty-round box of .45 ACP from Frankford Arsenal dates from 1915.

In his superbly detailed book *Colt Automatic Pistols*, Donald B. Bady wrote, "Colt's developed a .45 inch caliber automatic pistol because of the demand for that bullet diameter. When U.S. Government field trials with small quantities of .38 automatic pistols demonstrated that that caliber was insufficient, the importance of preparing a .45 was increased. Work started on this project in 1904, presumably arising from the .41 inch caliber program just concluded. By early 1905, Colt's had successfully fired a .45 bullet from an enlarged version of the Military Model 1902 style pistol. By mid-1905, the Colt .45 automatic pistol was in limited production."

The famous Thompson-LaGarde tests to determine the US military's new handgun had begun in 1904, and the .45 ACP came along in time to not only participate but win. Interestingly, it was not in the form of today's 230-grain hardball round at 820 to 880 feet per second.

Writing in his classic *Cartridges of the World*, authority Frank C. Barnes noted that the .45 ACP load of the Thompson-LaGarde tests was actually a 200-grain bullet at 900 foot-seconds velocity, developing 405 foot-pounds

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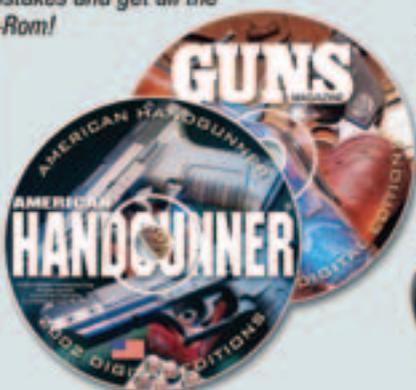
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RIFLEMAN BY DAVE ANDERSON

Leupold's New Rifleman Series

Leupold has introduced a new line of riflescopes called the "Rifleman" series. Currently there are three variable scopes in the series — a 2-7x33, 3-9x40 and 4-12x40.

All are finished in a smooth, attractive, non-reflective matte and are fitted with a wide Duplex™ reticle. Adjustment turrets have no "click" stops; instead, they are infinitely adjustable, with dials marked at 1/2 minute of angle (MOA) intervals. Click stops are important if the turrets are regularly used to adjust for wind or distance. On a hunting scope, which is normally sighted in and left alone, friction-lock adjustments work fine.

In our May, 2003 issue Technical Editor David Fortier had a nice story on a fine scope carrying the prestigious Zeiss name. As part of his testing Fortier froze the scope in a block of ice.

I don't know if "ice blocking" will become part of our standard testing protocol here at *GUNS* Magazine, but it made a memorable photograph. I wanted to see if the new Rifleman scope could handle the ice test just as well and for a quarter the price.

With the turret caps removed, I immersed the 2-7x33 Rifleman in a basin of hot water. The heating expands the inert gas with which the scope is filled, testing the integrity of the various seals.

After a half hour or so in hot water, the Leupold went into a water-filled plastic cookie container and then into the deep freeze for 24 hours. Fortier called his scope/ice block creation a "Zeissicle," but I'm darned if I can think of a clever name for the Leupold version.

After snapping a few photographs, I tossed the scope-in-ice back into warm water to thaw, while I dug a favorite rifle from the gun

safe. This Ruger 77/22 Varmint/Target model in .22 Magnum is a very accurate rifle, and of course uses the strong, reliable Ruger scope rings.

Out of the water at last, toweled off and air dried, the Leupold Rifleman appeared as good as new in every respect. There was no fogging, no leaks, no — well, no anything. The scope looked just as it had when I first peeled off the shrink wrap and opened the factory box.

The Rifleman's turret adjustments proved to be accurate and repeatable. It happened that the aiming points of the top two targets I was using were just over seven inches apart. After firing a three-shot group on the top left target I dialed in 14 graduations of right windage. The next three shots were centered on the top right aiming point, just as they should have been.

To complete the square I then went 14 down and fired three more shots, then 14 back left, and finally 14 back up to the original position. The final three shots were right in the group with the first three and the four groups made a neat, seven-inch square box.

Optics of the Rifleman series appear to be high quality. Compared to my old favorite Vari-X III under good light at the same magnifications, I could see virtually no difference in resolution at the center of the field, with only a slight falloff at the edges. Resolution is important in a scope to permit precise aiming. The image through the scope was crisp, clear and sharp. The optics performed fine under typical low-light conditions (1/2 hour after sunset).

Is it perfect? I guess if it was, Leupold wouldn't bother making other scopes. Lenses on the Rifleman series are fully coated, but evidently with less costly coating processes than the Multicoat 4® on the more expensive models. About the toughest light conditions for a scope are aiming in the direction of the sun at sunrise or sunset. Here the Vari-X III exhibited less lens flare and was a bit easier to aim.

Ring spacing of the 2-7x33 Rifleman is 5.2 inches, adequate for standard actions but too short for some magnum actions such as my CZ .375 H&H without using extension rings. The 3-9 and 4-12 Rifleman scopes allow up to 5.6 inch ring spacing and fit even magnum actions with standard rings.

Made in the U.S. at Leupold's facility in Beaverton, Oregon, carrying Leupold's unsurpassed lifetime guarantee, and retailing at well under \$200, the new Rifleman series are excellent scopes and an outstanding value.



Leupold & Stevens
[503] 526-1400
www.leupold.com



SPECIFICATIONS:

Leupold Rifleman 2-7x33 scope

Actual magnification: 2.5-6.5

Field of view (feet @ 100 yards): 43.2-17.3

Eye relief (inches): 4.2-3.7

Adjustments: . . Friction-lock, 1/2 MOA graduations

Adjustment available (elevation and windage):65 MOA

Weight: 11.1 ounces

Length: 11 inches

Ring spacing: 5.2 inches

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QUARTERMASTER

BY DAVE FORTIER

Superknife

Ever consider what would make an ideal folding knife for taking care of daily cutting chores? Personally I'd like something small enough to tuck neatly away so I'll actually have it when needed. To make it truly useful give it a razor sharp edge for opening boxes and performing all the other mundane tasks that constantly crop up. I'd prefer it good looking, but it'd have to be built from quality materials. Since we're fantasizing let's make it so that it never needs to be sharpened. Better yet, make it cheap so I can actually afford one.

Sound good? Well I recently I ran across just such a blade. Called the Superknife, it's a nicely made and good looking working blade. What sets it apart though is its use of cheap, disposable utility blades. This allows you to use it hard until the blade dulls down. Then, using the blade changing key, you simply flip the dull blade around for a fresh edge. Dull this and swap the entire worn blade for a new one. Quick and simple.

The knife itself is well made from stainless steel with aluminum scales. It features ambidextrous thumbstuds for easy one handed opening and the blade locks firmly in place. With the blade locked open the overall length is 6 inches, closed it shrinks to 3½ inches. For convenient carry a stainless steel pocket clip is mounted facilitating point down carry.

Simple, well made, and good looking, the Superknife scores high on the cool meter. Better yet is its price, only \$24.95! A Mini



model is available for only \$11.99 and a carrying case with a pocket for spare blades fetches only \$9.99. If you need a good utility knife check this one out.



FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Superknife
[480] 348-0544
www.superknives.com

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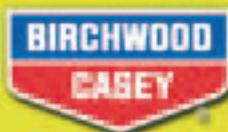
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QUARTERMASTER

BY DAVE FORTIER

Nosler Match Projectiles

There was a time not so very long ago where there was only one name when it came to truly outstanding Match ammo. Today, this is no longer the case and a number of manufacturers turn out truly excellent Match loads. In the past few years I have been particularly impressed with Winchester's Match ammunition. The performance of their .308 168-grain HPBT load being quite consistent and impressive. Of interest here is the fact that Winchester utilizes Match bullets from Nosler, rather than those from the green box.

While for the most part I've always been a 'green box boy' I was impressed by the accuracy of those factory loaded Nosler projectiles. So I decided to take a closer look at Nosler's line of Match bullets available for handloading. Currently they offer five different projectiles in their Custom Competition (formerly J4 Competition) line. These are all hand inspected, hollow point boattail projectiles. They offer three different weights to choose from in .224 diameter. These consist of a 69-grain HPBT with a BC of .359, a 77-grain HPBT with a BC of .340, and an 80-grain HPBT with a BC of .440. For .30 caliber shooters they offer a 155-grain HPBT with a BC of .450 and a 168-grain HPBT with a BC of .462.

While not an extensive line, these five projectiles will cover the needs of many. The projectiles themselves are consistent and well made. Accuracy from a Les Baer Match rifle and a Sako TRG-22



was excellent. While I wish they offered a wider selection, such as a 175-grain and 190-grain .308, what they do offer is made right. Best of all they're competitively priced and available in 250 round bulk boxes.



FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Nosler
[800] 285-3701
www.nosler.com

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QUARTERMASTER

BY DAVE FORTIER

Lyman 1200 DPS

When it comes to reloading I'm all for anything that will make my life easier. Like most, I never seem to have enough time. So a piece of gear that will shorten my stay behind the bench is greatly appreciated. Well, let me preface that by saying it's appreciated *if* the ammunition I turn out is still of suitably high quality. Cursed with the affliction of being an accuracy nut, only the best will do.

Well, Lyman has introduced a piece of gear that is not only making my life easier, but turning out excellent ammunition. Called the 1200 DPS Programmable Digital Powder System, it's an impressive electronic powder dispensing system. A good looking and well made unit, the 1200 DPS is relatively simple to use. Pour your powder into the hopper, enter in your desired charge weight in grains, and press a button. Instantly the unit rumbles to life dispensing powder into the pan.

As it nears the desired charge weight, the powder flow slows to a trickle. When the proper charge has been dispensed (within .1 grain) an audible tone signals its completion. Need another one just like it? Simply hit one button and it dispenses the exact same charge while keeping track of the number of charges dispensed.

In actual use the Lyman 1200 DPS impressed us. We put it to work during load development for a .308 Steyr Tactical rifle. A variety of powders were tried at various weights with different projectile weights. Here the Lyman proved an adept helper, carefully mea-



suring out each charge while keeping track of how many rounds we had loaded. As the unit is programmable, once we settled on a load it was a simple matter to recall and dispense it. Retail price on this puppy is \$333.25 and while not inexpensive, if your time is valuable, it's more than worth every cent. 

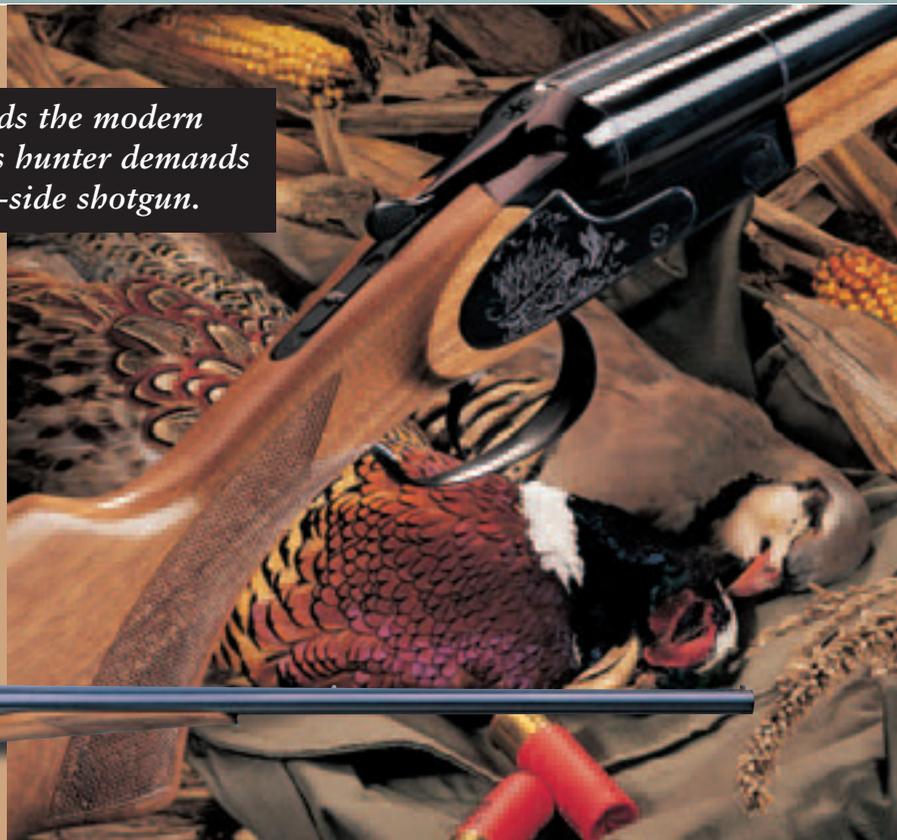
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Stevens Model 411 Upland Sporter



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Holt's special Arizona dove load? Nah, but this promotional round shows the versatility of the plastic hull.

By the mid-1950s, the wound-paper shotgun case had reached the peak of its development. The folded crimp had replaced the roll-crimped shell with over-shot wad. Winchester-Western had introduced a highly efficient, bottle cap shaped, obturating over-powder wad and their Mark-V plastic shot wrapper that reduced shot deformation and improved patterns considerably. Yet, the problem was in the paper.

Whether the paper hull was waxed or lacquered, it still tended to absorb moisture. I can recall shells that could hardly be seated into the chamber of my gun and others, that upon firing, could hardly be extracted, particularly when shooting a pump or semi-auto. The wound-paper tube had to go, and the major manufacturers like Winchester-Western and Remington consequently spent millions of dollars developing plastic substitutes.

There were endless failures during early attempts to form cases using the injection-molded process. Working with the available plastics of the day, companies found that the resulting cases did not have the necessary tensile strength plus they became soft when heated and brittle when cooled. It took a German technique, the Reifenhauer process, to really bring plastic shotshells to the marketplace by the mid-1960s.

What the Reifenhauer process did was to work the plastic in such a way that its tensile and radial strength were increased during the manufacturing process. In the simplest terms, melted polyethylene resin was extruded through a die to produce a heavy walled tube that was then stretched to six times its normal length, resulting in the resin's tensile strength increasing from 4,500 psi to about 18,000 psi.

The thin walled tube was then expanded in diameter through the use of air pressure, thereby increasing its radial strength. In industry terms, the end product was known as bi-axial oriented tubing. Cut in shotshell length segments, the tube and a separate base wad were

then crimped securely into a metal head, producing a straight walled plastic case that was very strong indeed.

The next development was Winchester's compression-formed AA type case that emerged around 1965. The compression formed process began with melted polyethylene resin that was formed into short slugs (called pre-forms) by an injection-molding machine.

The polyethylene slugs were introduced into a case shaped die; the slug was heated almost to its melting point; and then a punch was introduced into the die that forced the plastic to flow outward and upward within the die to form the finished shaped case. As a result of this compression forming in which the resin was forced to flow in two directions, the much desired bi-axial orientation of the molecular structure of the plastic was achieved.

The compression formed case without a separate base wad was so strong that it was experimentally loaded up to pressures of 60,000 to 65,000 psi before it failed.

One of the interesting sidelights to the "AA" compression forming process was that to insure the formed case could readily be removed from the punch, the punch was tapered and rounded on the end. The result was an internally tapered tube and a semi-hemispherical combustion chamber. The tapered walls required the development of a new wad and the semi-hemispherical chamber required the use of slower powders to control pressures. Because it had less internal volume than a straight walled case and could generate higher velocities with less powder, it proved to be an ideal case for target loads.

While this early production of plastic shotshells was going on, Remington invented the one piece, plastic "Power-Piston" wad. It was a revolutionary design that combined the old over-powder wad, filler wads, and plastic shot sleeve into one unit while adding the collapsing ribs that further cushioned the shot charge. It was the right wad at the right time, and it has influenced wad design ever since.

Today, we have plastic cases of every conceivable design — straight walled, taper walled, without a separate base wad, with a separate base wad — and we still have paper cases for specialized target applications and for environmentally friendly field use. For the finest look at the construction of today's shotshells, browse through Lyman's beautiful, colored cross sections contained in their *Shotshell Reloading Handbook*.

There is a certain romance to shotshells.

Attention "Four Tenners"

Hodgdon's "Lil' Gun" is a great powder for the .410, *but check your lot number!* Hodgdon has a recall notice on Lot No. 103080221. Don't use it. Excessive pressures may result. Fertilize your plants with it.

Alliant has just introduced a new powder for the .410 bore. It's called "410." Initial loading data for the 2.5 inch case looks impressive — excellent velocities with moderate pressures. "410" is a clean burning, double based powder designed specifically for skeet and sporting clays target loads. Try some.



MODEL 9410

Winchester Model 9410 Packer, now with choke tubes.



Want a sure pattern for fun? Get a grip on the Model 9410, now even more fun and versatile with Standard Invector™ choke tubes.

The Winchester Model 9410 lever action shotgun, introduced in 2001, has been a tremendous success. Shooters across the country love it. It's simply a very practical gun that adults and youth alike can have fun shooting. And shoot it they do!

The Model 9410 is built on the famous Model 94 receiver; a design well known and trusted around the world for over a century. In 2001, Winchester Rifles and Shotguns took home the awards. The Model 9410 received the prestigious "Firearm of the Year Award" from The Shooting Academy of Excellence, and the Guns & Ammo "Shotgun of the Year" award.

For 2003, four new Model 9410 shotguns are available; three with the most proven and reliable small-gauge choke tube

system ever, the Standard Invector choke system. This incredibly popular little shotgun just got a whole lot more versatile with the addition of interchangeable chokes. Three chokes come with the gun: Full, Modified and Improved Cylinder. A special wrench quickly screws the chokes in and out. Use the tighter chokes, Full or Modified, to tighten and focus shot patterns on small game such as doves, squirrels, cottontails or for trap shooting. Use the Improved Cylinder choke for a more open pattern for skeet and taking medium-sized varmints using rifled sabot slugs.

Even without the Invector system, patterns for the Model 9410 prove to be excellent, producing modified to full choke patterns at 25 yards, depending on the load. The Model 9410 is better, more fun and more versatile.

Select your new Model 9410 from six models, three with Standard Invector System.

The new value-priced Ranger® features a hardwood stock. The quick, sweet-swinging Packer has a 20" barrel, a choice of two stock lengths, a three-quarter magazine that holds five rounds, and a pistol grip. Traditional and Ranger® models have a 24" barrel, full-length magazine with a capacity of 9 or 10 rounds depending on shell types (without magazine adapter), and a straight stock. The Standard Invector choke system is standard on the Packer Compact and optional on the Traditional and the Packer. You'll also appreciate the TRUGLO® front sight matched with a "V" adjustable rear sight, and the new top-tang safety on all models.

For more information about the Winchester Model 9410 family of shotguns, contact us at 1-800-333-3504 for a free catalog, or visit winchesterguns.com.



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HANDLOADER BY CHARLES E. PETTY

Barnes Triple Shock X Bullet

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Barnes Bullets
[800] 574-9200
www.barnesbullets.com

Ever since they came along in the early '80s I have thought the Barnes X-bullet was one of the best game bullets around. But the solid copper construction that helped it work so well in the field pretty well threw the conventional loading book out the window.

In order to get the weight to be comparable with standard lead core bullets, the X-bullet had to be longer. That dramatically increased the area of the bullet in contact with the bore. In other words woe be to one who thought loading data would be the same. Strange as it might sound, the solid construction was a complication too.

A lead core lets the bullet be a little bit flexible when subjected to chamber pressures. Depending upon its construction, a bullet with a lead core is open at one end or the other so things can move a little. The solid copper doesn't do that, which leads to higher pressures as well. When a bullet is forced through a barrel some metal is displaced and needs somewhere to go. It often ends up as fouling in your bore.

Now these are far from fatal flaws, but we had to go through a learning process to get the most from the bullet and it wasn't always possible to duplicate

velocities of standard loads. That really wasn't much of a handicap because the bullet performed so well. One of the tricks that was tried to increase velocities with the copper bullets was to apply various coatings. Barnes has one they call "XLC" that has a blue color. All they say about it is that it's proprietary and is applied by spraying followed by heat curing.

While it is certainly true that many coatings help lower pressure, opinions are mixed. Some learned authorities say they are wonderful while other, equally qualified, sources say nothing good at all. Actually I've seen evi-

dence of both points of view and have come down on the side of the devil we know — un-coated bullets.

Barnes now has the Triple-Shock X-bullet. There are three circular grooves in the body of the bullet that effectively reduce the surface area in contact with the bore. Each groove is about .050 inch wide so the actual reduction is substantial.

While they don't come out and say so, their literature would perhaps, lead one to believe that the rings — after all they call it "Triple-Shock" — have some effect on game performance. They say, "The bullet that delivers a triple impact — one when it first strikes game, another as the bullet begins opening, and a third devastating impact when the specially engineered cavity fully expands to deliver extra shock with maximum transferred energy."

Now a curmudgeon like me might mention that all expanding bullets do pretty much the same thing. I'm not knocking the bullet at all because it does do all those things, but when you look at a recovered, expanded bullet you'll see that the expanded area doesn't even come close to where the three grooves are.

Hype aside, they serve a very helpful purpose by reducing the surface area and providing a place for the metal displaced by firing to go. They are analogous to the grease grooves in cast bullets which, in addition to holding lube, allow the alloy displaced off the driving bands to go somewhere. Reducing the area in contact with the bore both reduces pressure and increases velocity.

Those terms are not normally used that way and it might be more accurate to say that the reduced friction allows the bullet to go faster with the same charge. This is not a new idea. We could compare this to the rotating bands seen on artillery shells that predate World War I, or maybe even the groove that used to be on Nosler Partition Bullets when they were turned on a screw machine.

Sadly, there's no chance to test hunting performance here in the month of May, but accuracy and velocity are a piece of cake. The simplest test would be to use identical charges with a standard bullet to compare with the Barnes. From several manuals I found that comparable loads of Hodgdon Varget were listed for the Barnes as well as several well-known match bullets.

I have a Remington 700P in .308 that has been tuned up a bit so I loaded some ammo and went to the range. Here's what happened:

All the ammo was loaded in Federal cases with CCI large rifle Bench Rest primers. Each bullet was seated to be .030 inch off the lands, which has proven to be a good depth in this rifle.

Examination of the bore after routine cleaning found no significant copper fouling and the bore cleaned easily. So it would seem we've got a good thing here. Both bullets liked the 44.0-grain charge and I'll take half inch groups for a .308 any day of the week. Sometimes good accuracy and hunting performance don't exist in the same bullet.

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| 44.0-gr. Varget | 2,625 | 0.50" | 2,567 | 0.56" |
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Jaw Dropping Performance.

Be A Good Consumer

It is probably inevitable that if you buy enough things as you pass through life, sooner or later you'll get something that doesn't work correctly. It just happens. The next issue then is what to do about it. If you buy a gun or a magazine or a holster or a metal finish and it's not in your opinion correct, I have a suggestion for you — *call the guys who made it.*

We know there isn't anything mechanical that doesn't fail sooner or later, but unless you tell the guy who made the product you surely cannot expect to have them make it right. Try it. Call Robar, Wilson Combat, Les Baer, Ed Brown, Brownells, S&W etc. First see if they will help you to fix your problem, if not, then start your warpath.

The Righteous Warpath?

I was in Alaska teaching a rifle school using my Robar rifle. During a lunch break a fellow cruises by and makes a comment about my rifle to the effect, "I had one of those ba-tards and the finish fell off." So I asked him the story. Well he espouses how he, "hunts all over Alaska; bear, moose, elephants etc., he had a Robar rifle and the finish fell off." Inquisitive soul that I am I asked, "Did you call Robbie and tell him?" His response: "Hell no, they wouldn't do anything about it anyway!"

You will never know unless you ask. I think this guy would have told everyone in Alaska and the lower 48 before he would have called Robbie. You can't expect a cure if no one knows you are sick.

The Modified Gun

I'll give you an example — you bought a Thunder Ranch Special pistol from Les Baer. Your complaint: "It don't work right."

You call Les and you say, "Les, this pistol don't work right."

"What don't it do?" Les replies.

"It don't load right," you explain.

Les asks, "You change anything on the gun?"

"Well not much — I only put in a guide rod and one of them rubber

buffer things and an extended slide release and damn Les, that slide was really tight, so I buffed the rails and stippled the feed ramp a little — other than that I didn't change much."

Hmmm? Consider, did you maybe fix what wasn't broke?

Honesty Pays

You know what, if you shot crappy reloads in the gun and bulged the barrel, why don't you just say so. You might be surprised, they may just help you out. You know we can't expect much from manufacturers as far as repair, replacement or even consideration if from the beginning we aren't exactly on the level with them. Be honest.

I once heard a guy bragging about how he had modified the trigger on his Colt 1911. "This baby has a hair trigger," I think was the quote. Later that day I saw him put a 230-grain FMJ bullet through his leg.

About two days later I talked to him again and he advised how he was, "gonna sue Colt's pants off." He even asked if I would testify as to what happened. "Sure," says I, "as a matter of fact I'll even testify as to how you modified the trigger, drew from the holster with your finger on the 'hair trigger' and took the safety off while the muzzle was pointed at your leg."

The law suit seemed to fizzle out after that.

Be Educated

If you call with a complaint or a problem try to use the correct nomenclature or terminology for the part or problem you are addressing. Something like, "the thingy majig on the whatchama-bob is kinda' bent — you know what I mean?" No, actually they probably don't.

Be Considerate

The person answering the phone probably didn't create your problem. You have a problem, you paid good money, you worked hard for your money, and you woulda' won the world championship if the gun had worked, the finish hadn't fallen off, and the sight wasn't bent.

I'm pretty sure most people in business don't intentionally build or create problems. If they do they are not in business long or then again most consumers catch on pretty quickly.

Try honey first, especially with the nice lady who answers the phone. Guess what — she controls the switchboard, and your access to the person who will eventually solve your problem. Oh yeah, the "stupid broad" on the phone might know the answer to your problem. Damn don't you just hate those women (who really *run* the office) that know about handguns and holsters and zeroing scopes and calibers and velocity and the ballistic curve and the zoot suit finish you want applied to your gun?

There is an old saying that the squeaky wheel gets the oil. You got a squeak? Call the person who made your squeak, use some honey and you'll probably get your oil.



450 REASONS TO OWN THE M1A



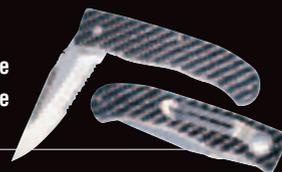
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SPRINGFIELD ARMORY®

The Misadventures Of Pete Haggins

By Glenn Barnes Original Artwork By Sequoia Blankenship

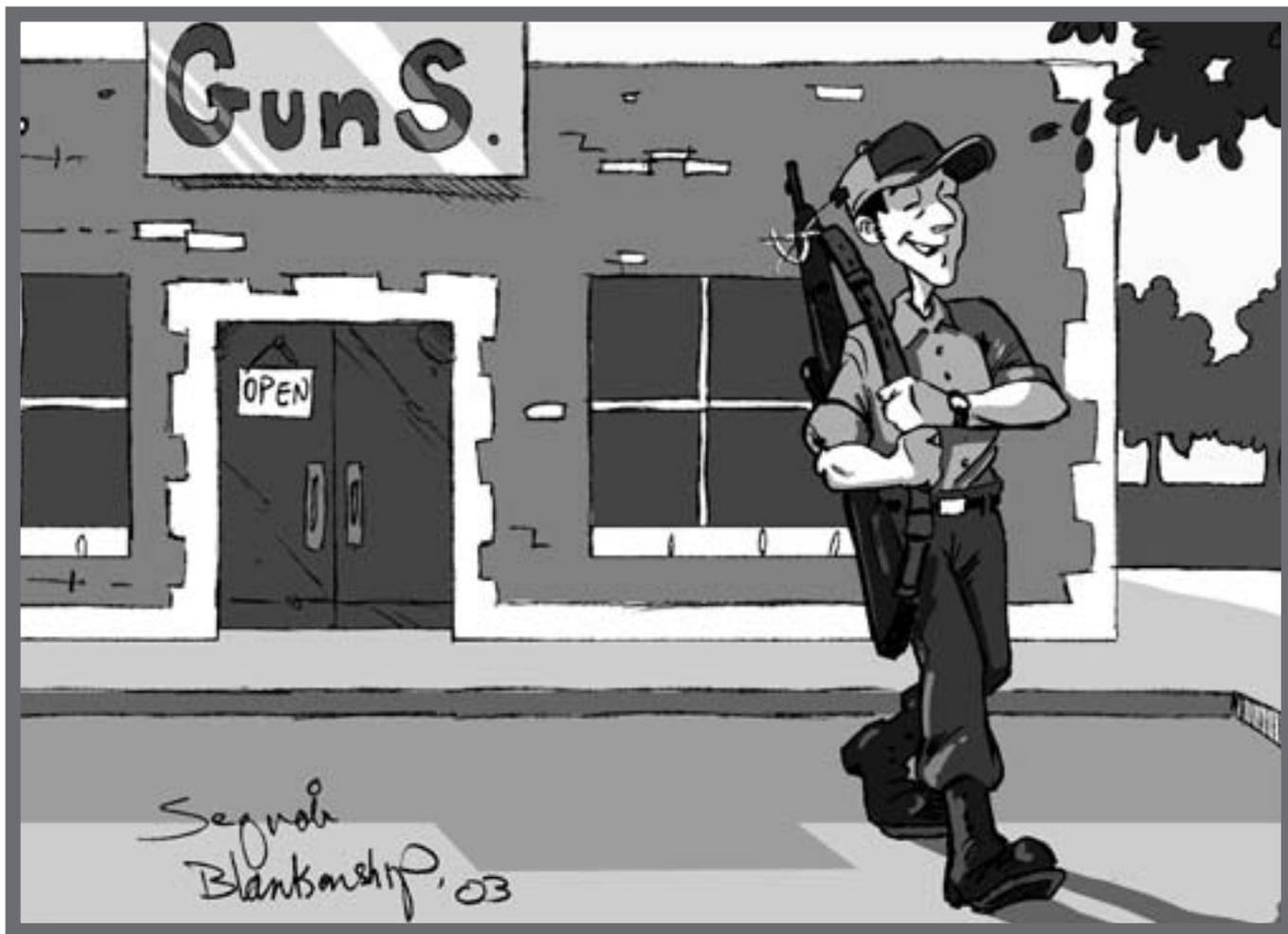
Everyone should be blessed with a friend like my buddy Pete Haggins. Pete's father, Steve Haggins, christened him after a particularly potent concoction of his favorite Kentucky corn squeezin's. Our family farms were located about two miles apart, so it was only natural that we sort of migrated towards each other. Living on a farm, there wasn't much to do except work, and we both hated that so most of our time was spent conjuring up ways to avoid it without getting caught.

Our formative years were mostly spent in the woods hunting squirrels, coons, rabbits and the occasional deer. It was during these early years I noticed something very pecu-

liar about my best buddy. Pete always seemed to have bad luck dogging his heels wherever he went, or whatever he did. It wasn't natural for one person to harbor so many bad luck demons.

Eventually, with luck, and a whole passel of prayers from our families, we finally grew up. We both still live within hollering distance of one another, and still maintain our aversion to work. In fact, most people think we're forest rangers because we spend so much time in the woods just bumming around.

I've pleaded with Pete for a number of years for his permission to relate some of his misadventures and bad luck tales. Some of these stories may sound a little far-fetched





and unbelievable. I was there and shared in most of these misadventures, even so, sometimes it's hard for me to actually believe that it happened.

It Starts With A Rifle

A few years ago, Pete and I decided to order new rifles for the upcoming deer season. We pondered and poured over catalogs until we knew every rifle then available. I decided on a Remington model 700 chambered in .30-'06. Pete wanted something a little more elaborate and chose a custom rifle reamed to 7x57 Mauser.

We placed our orders with the local gun shop and were assured the rifles would arrive within the week. Mine showed up a couple of days later. Pete's rifle was nowhere to be seen. This should have triggered a warning in my brain but went unnoticed. While Pete waited impatiently for his prize to arrive, he sent off an order for custom dies, new components, and a brand new chronograph.

Two months later Pete received a phone call from the

gun shop informing him the rifle had finally arrived. Grabbing his checkbook and keys, he jumped into his truck and headed to the shop.

A few miles from town, Pete noticed the sky was growing dark and ominous looking. Within a few minutes it began raining. The wind picked up and the rain fell harder, obscuring his vision. He failed to see a broken, jagged edged bottle in the road and ran over it, blowing out his left front tire. Pete managed to rein his truck to a stop on the side of the road. He was only about a mile from the gun shop.

The rain was falling in sheets hurled sideways by the wind. Getting out and changing the tire was pointless; he had no spare. Last week he had used it to replace a rotted tire on his trailer. Pete's wife, Paula, was visiting her mother and had taken the cell phone with her. Cursing, Pete stepped out of the truck straight into a hole and twisted his ankle. More curses. He hobbled through the rain to a country store/gas station about 300 yards down the road.

Soaking wet, still cussing and limping, he entered the store to inquire about a new tire. The mechanic on duty

"Ten minutes later Pete was fondling his shiny new rifle. Boy was that thing pretty! Once in a great while bad luck forgets to poop on Pete."

"The buck shifted into overdrive and ran towards the two-lane black-top located several hundred yards from our stands. A few minutes later, Pete heard the sound of screeching tires and a crash."

refused to install one until the rain let up, so Pete pulled up a chair by the wood stove and waited. An hour or so passed, with Pete massaging his ankle, before the storm played itself out. Another hour passed before the mechanic had Pete back on the road. His "new" re-capped tire set him back fifty bucks.

Oh, What A Beauty!

Ten minutes later Pete was fondling his shiny new rifle. Boy was that thing pretty! Once in a great while bad luck forgets to poop on Pete. That 7x57 somehow left the factory wearing exhibition grade wood that was a sight to behold. Wood to metal fit was incredible. The stock actually appeared to have grown around the steel. Pete was happy — boy, was he pleased. He paid for his purchase and drove to my house to clue me in.

Early the next morning Pete and I headed to our makeshift range loaded down with guns and shooting gear. Pete is meticulous and slow by nature, so while he was organizing his stuff, I fired a few groups with my favorite hand-load through the Remington. Average group size ran just over an inch. Sliding the model 700 into the gun case, I sat down and waited on my friend.

After what seemed an eternity, he was ready to shoot. Pete had stayed up well into the wee hours of the morning carefully loading 100 cartridges, each filled with various amounts of powder and topped off with five different bullet selections. He

prides himself as being an amateur ballistician and believe it or not, he's actually quite knowledgeable on the subject.

I watched him settle down and wrap himself around the rifle. Stepping behind him to watch the show, I noticed his chronograph was not where it should be. Before I could say anything about it, Pete touched one off. Two things happened at once — the chronograph exploded into tiny pieces, sending slivers of steel through the air like an exploding grenade and Pete screamed as if he'd been shot.

With the very first round fired through the rifle, that gorgeous stock cracked and split at the wrist, somehow sending a huge splinter of wood straight back into Pete's shoulder. Poor Pete. I hurriedly threw our gear into the truck and rushed him to the hospital. We waited about an hour before a doctor could examine him. The sawbones removed the shard of wood mumbling under his breath all the while about crazy gun guys. I felt so sorry for Pete I didn't have the heart to argue with the doctor.

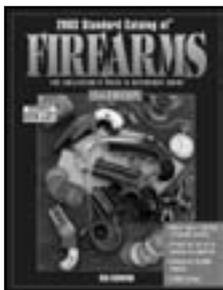
Fresh Start

While waiting for Pete to heal up, we sent his rifle back to the factory for a new stock and ordered another chronograph. Three days before deer season opened his rifle showed up at the door. Instead of replacing his stock with the same grade of fancy wood, the factory had replaced it with a stock that resembled a half-rotted two by four. He was heartbroken.



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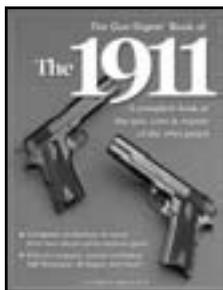


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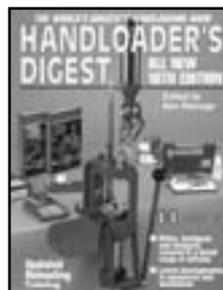
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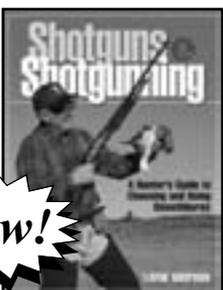
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The next morning found us back at our range. While I made sure the chronograph was lined up correctly, Pete was strapping a "sissy pad" to his still tender shoulder. He gave the go-ahead signal and caressed the trigger sending one down range. To his credit, he did not flinch. Not even a little.

More bad luck — that once pretty rifle would not shoot. None of his groups went less than three inches, and to top it off, the chronograph suggested his powder choices were all low voltage, way too slow. Pete was thoroughly disgusted so we loaded up and drove home.

Opening morning found us perched near the top of some Georgia pines, freezing half to death, overlooking a small field where we had glassed a few good bucks during the summer. An hour passed, then another. No deer. Pete decided he needed a cup of hot coffee to warm him up a bit, so he poured some from his thermos, spilling most of it onto his hand. Cursing, he dropped the thermos, and watched as it fell onto a rock, shattering. No coffee. Still cold.

Moment Of Truth

As if to warm him up, a big buck sauntered into the small field less than 100 yards from Pete's stand. He shouldered his rifle, placed the crosshairs on the buck's shoulder and squeezed the trigger. One thing Pete can do really well is shoot. He claims he's a direct descendant of Davy Crockett and Daniel Boone, and if you saw him shoot, you might believe him.

As if on cue, the big deer took a step forward just as Pete pulled the trigger. Gut shot. The buck shifted into overdrive and ran towards the two-lane blacktop located several hundred yards from our stands. A few minutes later, Pete heard the sound of screeching tires and a crash.

Hearing Pete's shot, I hurried over to help him with the deer. Pete is a good shot, so I knew he wouldn't have missed. He related the story as we tracked the deer. Sure enough, we found the buck. He was wrapped around the bumper of a late model luxury sedan. At least three police cruisers had traffic stopped, and cars were backed up as far as we could see. It turned out the car's owner was the President of the local chapter of PETA.

Pete received a ticket from one of the officers, and settled out of court with the PETA President. He kept the deer but decided against having the head mounted, the rack was in too many places and pieces. Just for the heck of it, he did get the hood ornament from the luxury sedan mounted on a small plaque and it resides on his mantle above the fireplace. In block letters it says this: "1985, ONE SHOT, 7X57, FORD LEECON" Poor guy, they couldn't even spell Lincoln correctly.

Let me tell you about the time me and Pete were returning from a hunting/camping trip and stopped off at a local Cowboy shoot...



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GREAT
GRANDPA'S
DAY OFF

Art by Wright © 1990

Randolph S. Wright

HIS TALENT OPENS A WINDOW TO THE PAST.

BY JIM GARDNER

Initially, you see only the entire scene. Then slowly, as you study all the fine detail, the image comes to life. If only for a moment, you find yourself transported to that particular moment of time...

Ramrod straight, great-grandpa stands on the line with his heavy, engraved Ballard *schuetzen* rifle at the shoulder. He's known in the area as a fine rifleman, but in the company of many other good shots, it will take all his skill and discipline to win. Two hundred yards away, shimmering in the heat mirage stands the King target. A heavy wooden shield, it's beautifully painted with an intricate scene in the old Bavarian tradition. Each marksman will fire one shot, the closest to the center winning a cash prize, the King medal and bragging rights for a year. One shot. No alibis, no excuses. Just stand on your hind feet and shoot like a man.

Great-grandpa holds, waiting for an errant breeze to die. Perspiration oozes from beneath his jaunty straw skimmer,

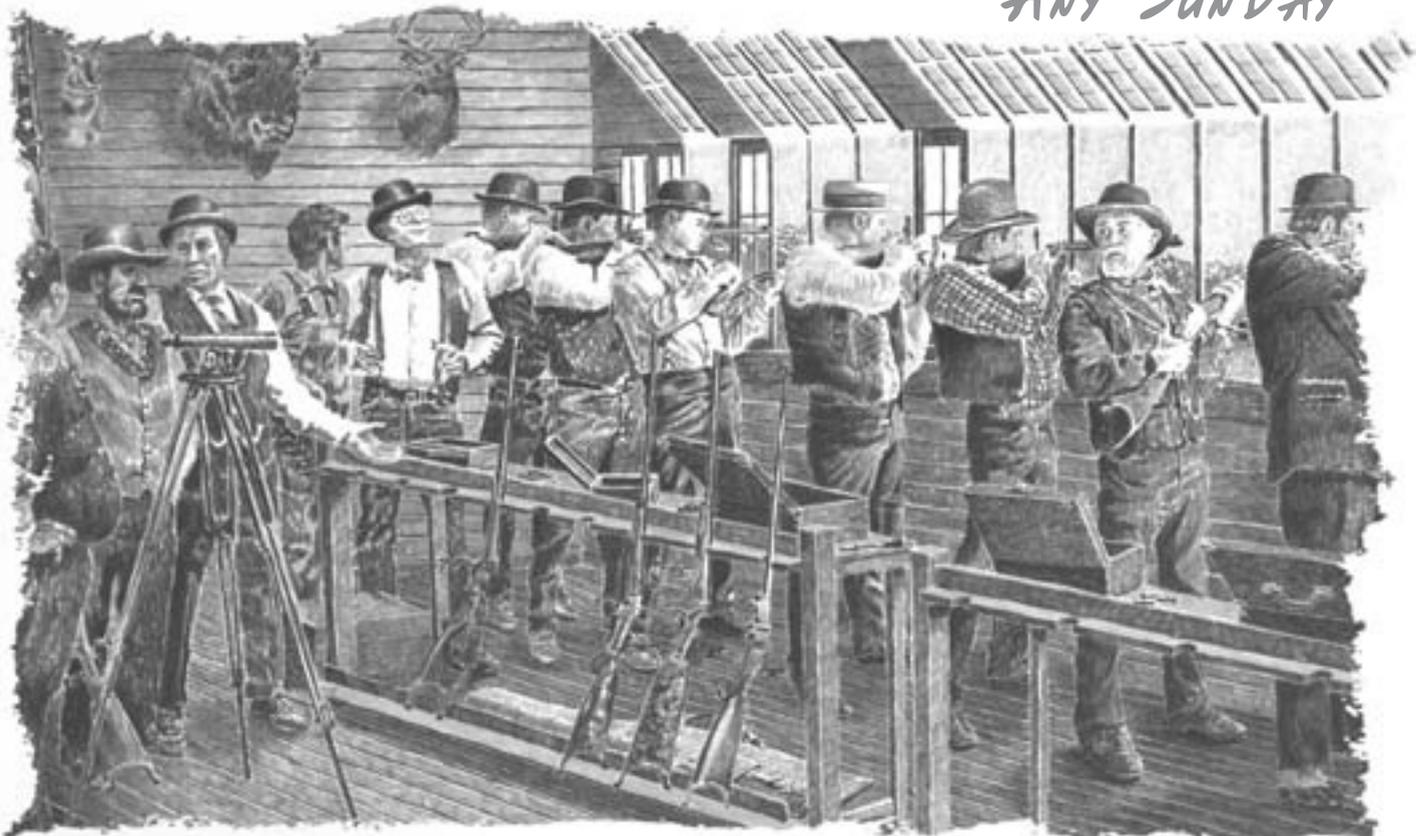
the salt stinging his eyes. The 11-pound rifle is heavy, but to the onlookers, his silhouette appears as unmoving as if cut out of tin. The breeze trails off. A full breath in, then half a breath out as he moves his finger to the set trigger...

Good art will captivate you. But tour the halls of most art museums, and you're unlikely to find much to inspire the imagination of the shooter and outdoorsman. Oh, perhaps a Remington portrait, or if you're really lucky a Russell or a Schoonover, but such as these are few and far between.

A Shooting Artist

In fact the "art crowd" in general holds shooting and the outdoor sports in scant regard. Given the power to do so, many of them would like to see firearms forbidden in this country — for our own good, of course. But there are artists who shoot, and their work carries a special fascination.

ANY SUNDAY





I first encountered Randolph S. Wright in the mid-1980s, when I obtained a copy of *The Paper Patched Bullet*. Written and illustrated by Wright, it was a good instructional guide and set me on the path to developing traditional and accurate ammunition for my old .45-120 Shiloh Sharps. But long after I learned all I needed from the text, I would find myself studying the beautiful cover illustration.

Recently, I was delighted to receive a message from Wright announcing a new work, and wondering if *GUNS Magazine* would care to feature it. After a bit of communication back and forth, Randy agreed to allow us to show you a number of his creations, as well as sharing a little about his background.

“A Great Place To Grow Up”

Wright was born in St. Louis, Mo., but his family relocated to the Phoenix, Ariz., area in the mid-'50s. “Arizona was a great place to grow up,” he relates. “As a boy, we lived on the



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edge of town and my brothers and I had the seeming endless desert as our playground.”

After earning a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in commercial art, Wright took a commission with the U.S. Army through the ROTC program. “I spent two years on active duty, one of them in the Republic of Vietnam, serving with the 1st Cavalry Division.” In subsequent years, he added to his credentials a Master’s degree in business.

His mother claims Randy has been sketching and drawing since the age of two. It’s his far-ranging interests that dictate the subject matter of his work. His portfolio spans the years; from hard bitten cavalry troops of the 1860s, to hide hunters of the 1870s, through the golden age of *schuetzen* shooting in the ’80s and ’90s. Magnificent steam locomotives as well as deadly yet thrillingly beautiful “warbirds” from the desperate days of World War II are particular specialties.

“I’m a history, military, and shooting devotee at heart,” Wright said. “I particularly find it satisfying to research and create accurate artworks portraying military aircraft, frontier American history, steam locomotives, and target shooting and hunting scenes.

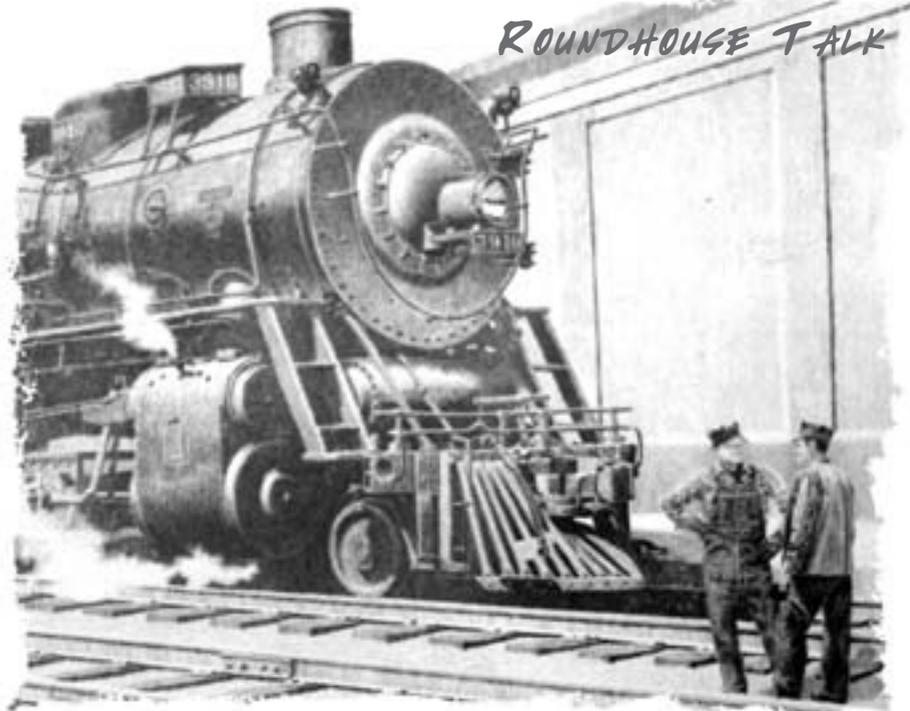
Once A Nation Of Riflemen

Personally, I’ve admired all of Wright’s work, but I’m particularly taken with his images of famous shooters of the *schuetzen* game. His illustration of the noted shooter William Hayes adorns the wall over my

reloading bench. Randy’s latest effort along these lines is *Any Sunday*, showing the interior of a shooting house with its cast of interesting characters.

Sadly, *schuetzen* shooting is not much known today. Swiss and Germanic in origin, anti-German sentiment after World

ROUNDHOUSE TALK



War I as well as urban expansion and the loss of the shooting grounds all but doomed the pastime. In the late nineteenth century however, nearly every mid-sized town would have a *schuetzen* range and an active *verein* or club. Competition

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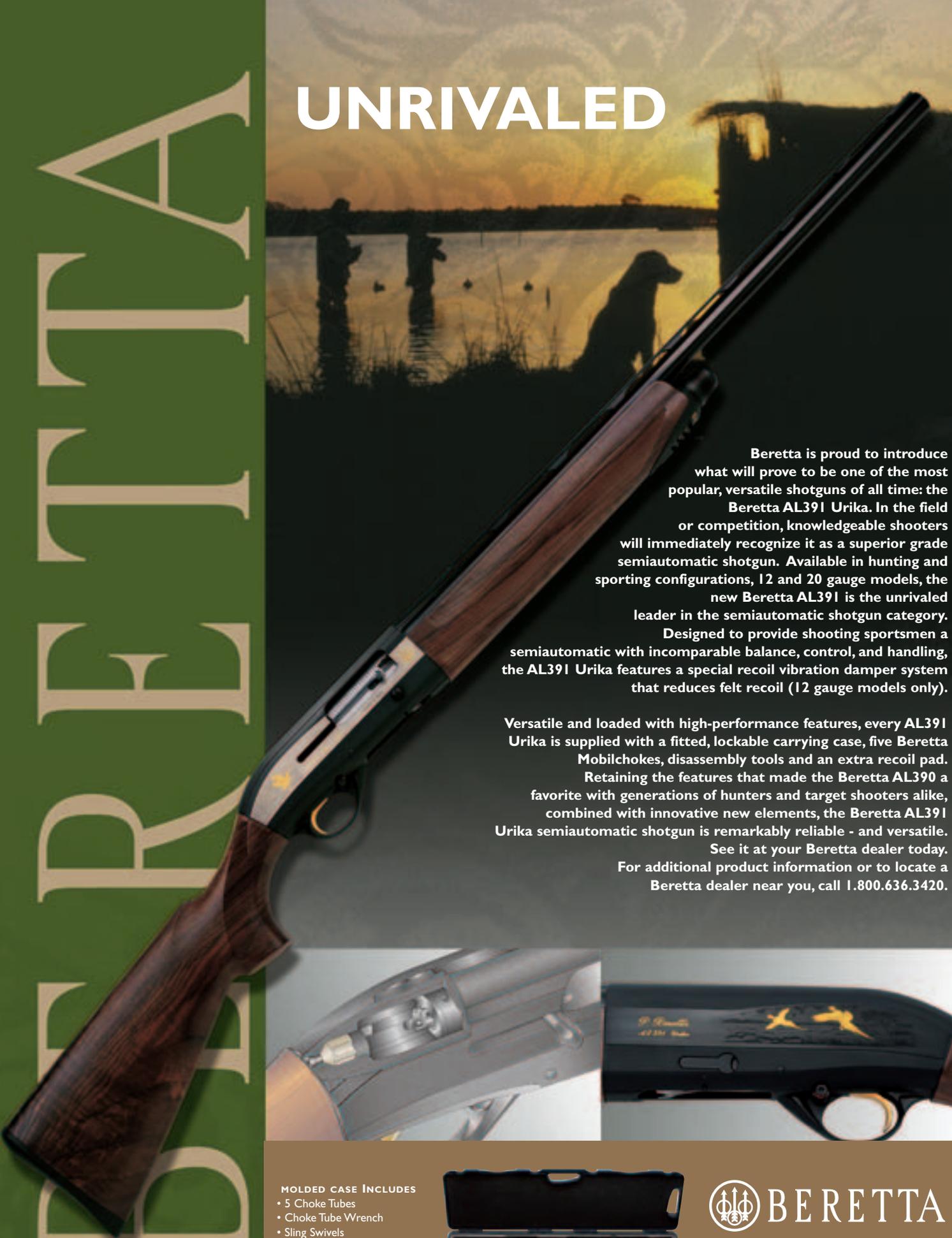
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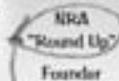
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between neighboring communities was lively and well attended. Some especially hotly contested matches on the east coast were attended by up to 20,000 spectators.

Wright explained why he enjoys schuetzen shooting:

"I settled on Schuetzen shooting as a result of my interest in antique firearms and narrowing my shooting interests to a manageable number. I only have enough discretionary time to pursue one shooting discipline in depth, and I find Schuetzen the most personally satisfying. Schuetzen, for me, presents a well balanced challenge of quality bullet casting, reloading, load development, precision shooting — both offhand and bench rest — plus it offers iron sight and scope events all combined with the beautiful old Schuetzen rifles."

Randy also continues to pursue the grail of accurate black powder and paper-patched bullet loads for his vintage rifles.

If you like what you see here, you may view current selections of Wright's artwork at his Web site: www.home.earthlink.net/~warbirdsart. Ordering details for these very reasonably priced works may be found there. I greatly enjoy the Randolph Wright prints that adorn the walls of my home. After a busy workday and a frustrating commute, I can study them, and for a moment — just a moment — I can be there in that frozen moment in time. 

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(with apologies to John Ford and John Wayne)

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**Co-starring: "DOT" TAFFIN (AS THE TEARFUL BRIDE), ELMER KEITH,
SKEETER SKELTON AND A CAST OF SMITH & WESSONS.**



A quartet of .44 Special 'Smiths anyone would be proud to own. Clockwise from top: 4-inch nickel Model of 1926, 4-inch blue Model of 1926, 4-inch 1950 Target Model and 5-inch nickel Model 1926.

Growing up in the kinder, gentler 1950s was a wonderful experience for many reasons, not the least of which was the excellent, and very wise teachers I had in high school. Several of the men were returning veterans, while the English department was staffed with the proverbial old maid schoolteachers who not only knew their stuff but also had a great understanding of how to motivate kids.

The English department was backed up by another old maid, the librarian, who kept the shelves stocked with books that would be politically incorrect today — hunting books, exploring books, and the three top outdoor magazines of the time, *Field & Stream*, *Sports Afield*, and *Outdoor Life*.

About the same time, an aunt gave me a nearly worn out old typewriter, and this, coupled with my teachers and available resource materials, sent me on my way. Of course, I read everything assigned to me and reported on it, but I was also allowed to do extra credit work by typing reports on virtually every article found in those three magazines each month. My teachers encouraged a love of reading and writing, and I in turn taught them about Jack O'Connor, The Old Man and the Boy, and the Lower Forty Angling, Shooting, and Inside Straight Club.

The Man In The Big Hat

By the time I had become a junior in high school, another magazine arrived on the scene, this very same *GUNS* you are reading now. It wasn't long before I discovered a new writer, Elmer Keith, and my life was changed forever. Sixguns

became my passion. As if it wasn't enough to be stirred by Keith's articles and columns on a regular basis, I soon had a copy of his book, *Sixguns by Keith*.

I read it cover-to-cover and back again. I spent countless hours looking at the pictures of sixguns, especially the .44 Specials. The Colt Single Actions, of course, stirred my heart, soul, and spirit, but there were also double action Smith & Wessons, the Triple-Lock, the 1926 Model, and the 1950 Target, that had the same effect.

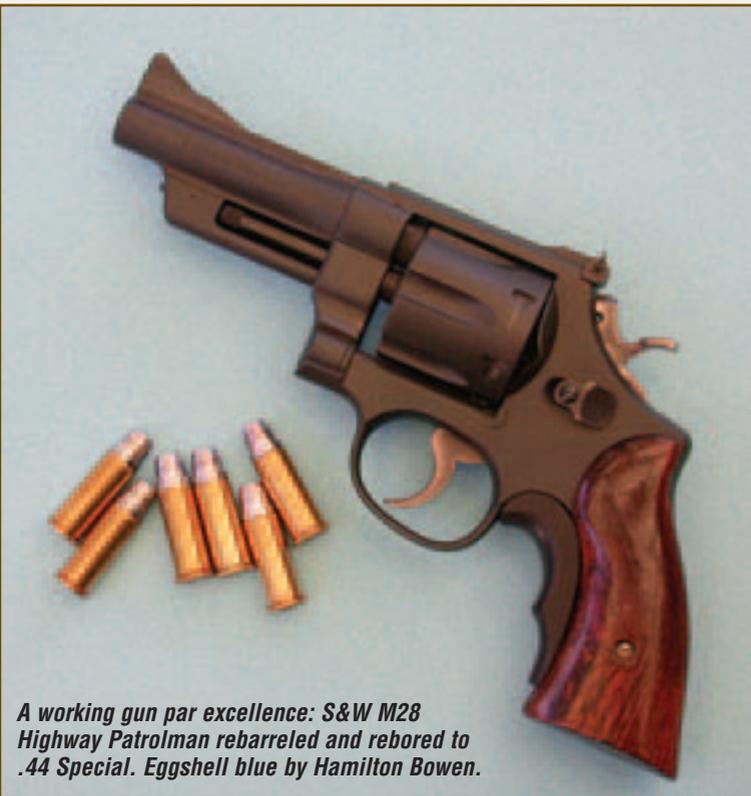
Pictured in the 1955 First Edition of *Sixguns* are Keith's personal 4-inch 1950 Target .44 Special, as well as son Ted's 5-inch 1950 .44 Special. Someday I would have one of each of these. Someday.

Marriage Changes Things

I soon met the girl of my dreams and for our first Christmas in 1959, my 19-year old wife presented me with my first .44 Special, a 6.5-inch barreled Model 1950 Target Model. The second edition of *Sixguns* arrived in 1961, and to the "Wish List" of these two magnificent .44 Specials was added the 4-inch S&W .44 Magnum, the sixgun Elmer Keith considered the perfect peace officer's sidearm.

By now I was in college and also working full-time to support my fast-growing family, so the three .44 Special sixguns were pushed to my "Way Off In The Future Wish List." In fact, it got even worse.

In 1962 I was faced with a terrible dilemma. I could feed my babies, now numbering two and a third on the way, or



A working gun par excellence: S&W M28 Highway Patrolman rebarreled and rebored to .44 Special. Eggshell blue by Hamilton Bowen.

pay tuition, but not both. I was afraid if I dropped out of school I would never get back. We made the rounds of the gun shops with the purpose of (gulp!) selling guns. The 1950 Target, an early 2nd Generation .45 Colt SAA, and my Model '94 Winchester all went. As we left the shop, my wife was in tears and sobbed, "You will never have to do that again." Thankfully I never did, and, for the first time at that moment I knew she really understood.

Everybody Loved Skeeter

By the mid-1960s school was behind me. I had found a 4-inch .44 Magnum, however, both the 4- and 5-inch .44 Specials were virtually nonexistent as far as I was concerned. I had never seen either one so I tried to push them off the "Someday List" and onto the "Impossible To Find List." I was doing okay. I could live without them. I could forget about them. And then, enter Skeeter Skelton.

Like Keith, Skeeter had a wonderful way of capturing readers and bringing them into the story. The problem for me was Skeeter's favorite sixgun was an original 4-inch Model 1950 Target .44 Special. My heartache started all over again.

When the .44 Magnum arrived, Skeeter had sold his first 4-inch 1950 Target .44 Special and took up the short barreled .44 Magnum as his everyday packin' pistol. He soon found for his use the recoil was excessive and the gun too heavy to carry comfortably all day, so he traded it off for another 4-inch barreled .44 Special. And therein is the beauty of the .44 Special.

It's lighter by about one-half pound than comparable .44 Magnum sixguns, and with a handload consisting of a 250-grain Keith bullet over 7.5-grains of Unique, delivers an adequately powerful load of 900 to 950 fps. Skeeter espoused the 6.5-inch S&W .44 Magnum and 7.5-inch Ruger Blackhawk for hunting, but favored the short barreled .44 Special for nearly everything else requiring a big bore sixgun.

A Close Miss

I still could find neither an original 4- nor 5-inch S&W 1950 Target .44 Special. So once again, I decided it just wasn't in the game plan for me. Then I came oh so close. I ran into a fellow who was getting ready to take a bunch of boys on a camping trip. It just so happened he was packing a sixgun for insurance. Not just any sixgun — it was an orig-

These two sixguns were made within one year of each other, a 1950 Target .44 Special and a pre-Model 29 .44 Magnum.





Not quite what they seem to be; the 4-inch 1950 was cut from a 6.5-inch Target Model, while the 5-inch is a customized Military Model.

inal 4-inch S&W 1950 Target .44 Special. I was beside myself! I had finally seen one in person. Up close.

“Would you like to trade that .44 for something else?”

To him it was just a gun, so he was willing to talk trade when he got back from the trip. Well, in this case Murphy was an optimist. The very first morning he returned home,

he started his truck and left it running in the driveway to warm up. When he came outside, the passenger side door was opened, the glove box was pilfered, and the S&W was long gone.

There was nothing left for me to do but take matters into my own hands. I now had another 6.5-inch 1950 Target that

Four fine, 4-inch .44 Specials: 1950 Target with shortened barrel, Model 624 stainless-steel with scrimshawed ivory grips, Model 24 also with carved ivories, and original 1950 Target Model.



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I had cut to 4 inches. A second .44 Special, a Model 1950 Military with fixed sights was fitted with a S&W adjustable rear sight assembly and a 6.5-inch 1950 Target barrel trimmed to 5 inches. It wasn't the same.

They were not original, but at least I had a 4- and 5-inch .44 Special. What I didn't know at the time — none of us did — was how valuable both of these sixguns would be today if I had left them alone. Both had been purchased very reasonably at \$80 new for the Target Model and \$65 for the used Military Model in excellent shape. The latter now sells for around \$1,200 if original. There's a lesson there somewhere. The fact that these two sixguns were not original prevented my ardor from being completely cooled. The search continued.

Silk Purse Or Sow's Ear?

I found a converted Model 28 Highway Patrolman at a gun show for \$200. The previous owner had the cylinder re-chambered to .44 Special and fitted with a 4-inch Model 24 barrel from a 1980's run of .44 Specials by S&W. For some reason the project was never finished, and the satin blued Highway Patrolman turned .44 Special had a bright blue barrel. I was suspicious of this gun, especially due to the low price, but I did know the dealer. He admitted that the previous owner said it wouldn't shoot.

Knowing full well it's a rare gun that will not shoot, I agreed to buy it with the stipulation I could bring it back if it proved to be the exception. With my new .44 Special in hand I left the gun show and found a place to shoot. The previous owner was halfway correct. It would not shoot to point of aim. Apparently he did not understand that the two screws in the rear sight were for adjusting elevation and windage. Several turns here and several turns there and I had that little .44 Special hitting empty shotgun shells at 35 yards.

Now that I knew it would shoot, something had to be done about the finish. It was off to Hamilton Bowen to be bead blasted and re-blued. The result was a real, everyday working sixgun with a tough matte finish and service stocks that I would not sell for four times what I paid for it. Sometimes things just turn out right. Of course, I still had that nagging feeling that this was not an original 4-inch 1950 Target.

The search continued to no avail. Original 1950 Target Model .44 Specials with the short barrel were simply not to be found. My wife tried to soothe my dejected feeling somewhat by presenting me with a pair of original and unfired 4-inch .44 Special Model 24s as offered by S&W in 1983.

Yes they were original, yes they wore 4-inch barrels, and yes they were deeply appreciated; however, they were not original 1950 Target Models. I liked them so well, however, I sent them off to Bob Leskovec to be ivory stocked Keith-style, with a carved longhorn steer — one on the left panel of

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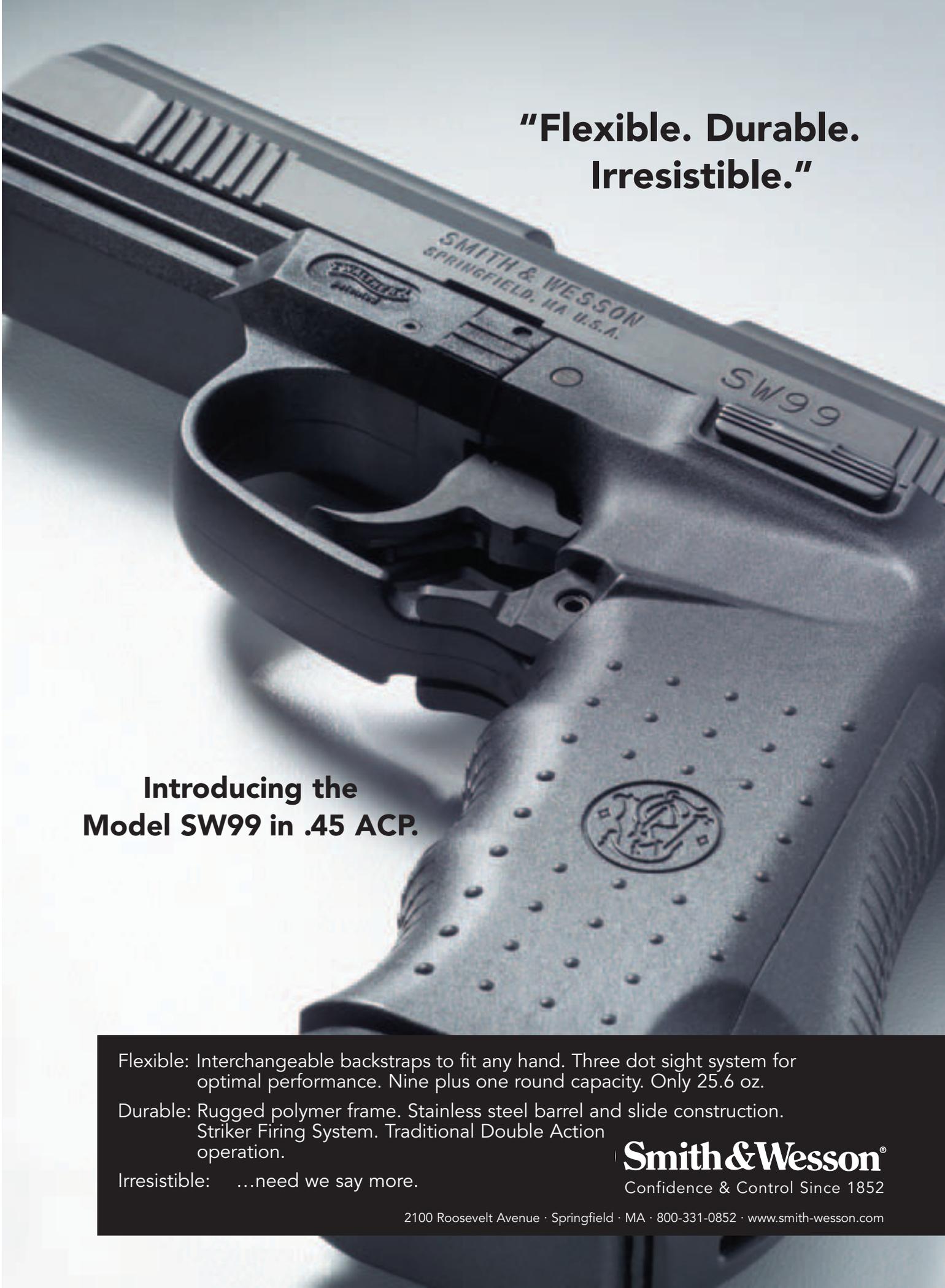
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one sixgun and the right panel of the other sixgun — to completely fill in the natural creases in the hands.

.44 Special Family Tree

Back when it became painfully apparent I would not find a 4-inch 1950 Target, I began to look for another 4-inch S&W .44 Special. The 1950 Target Model was also known as the 4th Model Hand Ejector, and was produced from 1950 to 1957 when it became known as the Model 24. It was removed from production in 1966 with a total of 5,050 being manufactured. It then returned for a special run in 1983 with both 4- and 6.5-inch versions offered for a total of 7,500 of the new big-bore sixguns. The predecessor of the 1950 Target Model was the 3rd Model Hand Ejector, or the 1926 Model. Since there was a 3rd Model and a 4th Model, one might reasonably expect both a 1st and 2nd Model.

The first .44 Special sixgun arrived late in 1907 with the Model of 1908, the .44 Hand Ejector First Model, the New Century, or as it is lovingly known among .44 Special devotees, the Triple-Lock. This beautifully crafted sixgun became the first of what would eventually be called N-frames, and Triple-Lock comes from the fact that the cylinder locked in three places — at the rear, at the front of the ejector rod, and with an exquisitely machined third lock at the front of the frame. This first S&W to feature an enclosed ejector rod housing originally sold for \$21.

After producing slightly more than 15,000 New Centuries, S&W determined they were too expensive, and in 1915 dropped both the third locking feature and the enclosed ejector rod and brought forth the Second Model. This newer sixgun sold for only \$19, so for the grand sum of \$2 we lost what could easily be argued for as the finest double action sixgun ever made.

The big-bore .44 Special Triple-Lock was very popular with peace officers, especially those in the Southwest and along our southern border. The pre-World War II Smith & Wessons are usually referred to as having "long actions," which are particularly good for shooting double action style. By the end of World War I, they were gone and a new group of peace officers and sixgunners came along to demand a return to the Triple-Lock, or at least an enclosed ejector rod housing.

S&W did not feel the demand warranted such a return until Wolf & Klar of Fort Worth, Texas, placed an order for 3,500 .44 Specials with enclosed ejector rod housings. Only 1,000 of the new 1926 Models were ever shipped to Wolf & Klar and from 1926 to 1940 as far as the S&W catalog was concerned, the Third Model did not exist and could only be special ordered. In spite of this, nearly 5,000 were made before the start of World War II.

For 45 years I had looked for an original 4-inch .44 Special S&W. I do not know which was worse, not being able to find 4-inch Target Models, or finding unaffordable Model 1926 guns with four-figure price tags. It did not

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look like I would ever own an affordable Third Model Hand Ejector in excellent shape or even good shooting condition.

“Hey, Search That Guy”

Ten years ago, Roy Huntington, who is now editor of *American Handgunner* Magazine, was on the San Diego Police Department and arranged for the staff writers of *GUNS* and *Handgunner* to tour the department. What should I find in their gun room but a 1926 Model, 4-inch .44 Special, nickel-plated and in excellent condition. Roy had me searched before leaving just in case I yielded to temptation.

Time passed. Years had become decades. Still no original 4-inch Target Model nor Model 1926 was to be had. Then just before Christmas 2000, I got a call from a reader who knew of my admiration for .44 Specials. He had been traveling in Oregon, spotted a like new .44 Special, and immediately notified me. I was put in contact with Gunners Central Oregon Traders in Redmond, and talked with another gentlemen who also happened to be a reader of this magazine.

The Floodgates Open

He described a near-perfect, 4-inch Model 1926 .44 Special, blue, fixed sights with Magna stocks, exactly what I have been seeking for four decades. The price was an extremely reasonable three figures, not four. Arrangements were made for shipping, and the normal inspection privilege that all honest gun dealers offer, and, when it arrived, I was pleasantly surprised to find it even better than described. Of course it had the wonderful old long action, and was exceptionally smooth. Once started, the double action almost seems to operate itself.

Somehow this first original 4-inch .44 Special sixgun was the charm and soon lead to others. The fact that it was made the same year as I was a great omen and may have had something to do with this magical power. Nine months later I looked through my latest copy of the *Old Town Station Dispatch* and found a second 4-inch 1926 Model, this one nickel-plated, for a very attractive price.

Surely it would be gone, but I called anyway hoping against hope. They still had it! After four decades without an original 4-inch .44 Special Hand Ejector, I now had two in less than one year. Other than needing re-crowned to remove a few minor dings at the muzzle, it was ready to go.

Nine months later, which now brings us to June 2002, one of the regulars at www.sixgunner.com posted a 1926 Model for sale, this time a 5-inch nickel-plated .44 Special. The first five shots from that sixgun with .44 Special handloads cut one ragged hole at 50 feet. Good things really do come to those who wait, and the floodgates were seemingly opened. Would there be an original 4-inch 1950 Target pouring through? Then it happened.

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MARLIN'S STAINLESS **.44 MAGNUM**

BY CHARLES E. PETTY

In the eastern half of the country there are plenty of whitetail deer and lots of guys who hunt them. For the life of me I've never been able to understand why super magnum rifles are so popular there. To be sure there can be some long shots but most aren't. Of course there's no way to be really precise about this, but from my own experience I would wager the majority of deer in the east

are taken at ranges of 100 yards or less. That's why the .30-30 lever action rifles from Marlin and Winchester are still standard equipment. You simply do not need a .300 Ultra Mag.

And if the .30-30 is king of the east-coast deer cartridges, can the .44 Magnum be far behind? Outside of handgun hunters who use it extensively, there are several handy lever action rifles chambered for

the big .44. Both Marlin and Winchester have offered them for years.

Stainless Advantage

This time though the new Marlin is made of stainless steel. I have been witness to the stainless revolution — that's really what it is — since way back in 1965 when S&W intro-







duced the Chief's Special Model 60. It was a huge success because the idea of a material that required less attention was obviously appealing. Some folks inferred that "stainless" steel was rustproof. That never was the case, and even today stainless guns are better called rust resistant. They still need care, you just don't have to be so afraid of rain and snow.

It was a long time before S&W saw much competition in the stainless market. One reason was because the older stainless alloys were very difficult to machine. But over time alloys improved and the shops learned how to work with stainless with the same ease as they had with carbon steel. Probably the next big advancement came in barrels as custom gunsmiths began to install stainless steel barrels in varmint and target rifles. The final step in the evolution was when rifle actions were made of stainless.

Now we have a stainless steel lever action Marlin Model 1894 SS, and this just may be the *ideal* woods rifle. The material is the main thing to distinguish this model from other Marlin .44s. It's compact with a 19.5-inch barrel and straight grip stock

with 14-inch length of pull. These dimensions fit most folks and I found the little carbine to handle with ease.

The stock has nice straight grain with checkering in the grip area. There is a rubber butt plate which can't really be called a recoil pad, but doubtless softens things a little. Not that recoil is a major issue with .44 magnum in a 6.5 pound carbine. The forend has equally nice wood with a large area of checkering. It is wide enough to be comfortable without getting in the way. In keeping with the likely use, sling swivel studs are installed. The receiver is drilled and tapped for scope mounts.

Making The Most Of The Magnum

I've heard some debate about the suitability of the .44 Magnum for big game hunting in terms of both power and accuracy. Neither of those arguments hold much water. Since its debut in 1956, the .44 Magnum cartridge has been the darling of handgun hunters and has taken just about every game animal in the world. All the carbine does is make it better with improved velocity and accuracy. The car-

ACCURACY TEST RESULTS

| Load | Velocity | Accuracy |
|---|----------|----------|
| CCI Blazer 200 gr. JHP | 1,778 | 1.35" |
| Federal Classic 220 gr. MC | 1,892 | 1.06" |
| Winchester 240 gr. JHP | 1,838 | 0.93" |
| Winchester Supreme 250 gr. Partition | 1,759 | 0.85" |
| Pro Load 200 gr. .44 Special JHP | 1,187 | 1.41" |

Accuracy results are the average of three five shot groups at 50 yards from benchrest with iron sights. Velocity is the instrumental average of 10 shots as measured with a PACT Chronograph.

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tridge has proven time and again that it is capable of superb accuracy and those who claim that it isn't may be blaming the cartridge for shooter errors of trigger control or flinching.

In full power loadings, the big .44 can be uncomfortable in handguns but those concerns are virtually eliminated in a shoulder fired weapon. The M94 definitely has some recoil and it is proportional to the intensity of the load. Hot 300-grain loadings give you a pretty good thump, but more customary 240-grain factory loads feel very moderate. The carbine makes things better in the accuracy department too, for 1 inch, 50-yard groups are common with the standard iron sights and would doubtless be much smaller with a scope.

During the course of testing the Marlin was fired with .44 Magnum ammunition ranging from 185 to 300 grains in projectile weight. All functioned through the magazine tube without incident. And just because you can shoot magnums doesn't mean you have to. Several cowboy style .44 Special loads were shot for fun and the little Marlin is a formidable plinker with those.

The instruction manual tells us the action will function with ammo from 1.535- to 1.610-inches overall length, but this one worked just fine with some cowboy loads that were a bit shorter. There is the obligatory warning about not using pointed bullets in tubular magazines. In a way, it seems surprising anyone would use them — since we know that pointed things make primers pop — but it will ruin your day if a tube full goes off. I've seen the results and am glad I wasn't there.

The mechanical stuff is pretty standard for Marlin rifles. It weighs 6.5 pounds, and holds 10 rounds in the full length tubular magazine. There is a hammer block safety that has become a standard feature on new lever action designs. Trigger pull is an average 5½ pounds, with just a little creep.

Just Plain Fun

This is one of those guns that tends to grow on you. It is an eminently practical hunting rifle but also a bunch of fun to shoot. The .44 Magnum chambering makes for a very versatile little carbine because you can shoot, and shoot well, everything from cowboy action level .44 Special loads all the way up to the hottest magnum levels with bullets from 185 to over 300 grains. After the work was done I had lots of fun shooting the little Marlin with modest .44 Special loads. Soda cans at 75 yards jumped smartly when hit with a lumbering 240-grain chunk of lead. Did I mention this little carbine is a lot of fun?



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TR SPECIAL

As Good As Its Name

STORY BY David M. Fortier

PHOTOS BY Emily K. Fortier & Ichiro Nagata

Few reviews move along so trouble free and are so positive as this one. Usually something happens — the weather is dreadful, or the performance, while good, is not particularly outstanding. This time though, things were different. What is especially amusing about this is the amount of abuse heaped upon our test sample.

Usually when a brand new model as good looking as this arrives on the scene, every magazine is in a fistfight to be the first with it on the cover. Rather than being rushed to slap an article together, I received the okay to take my time and beat the heck out of it. This model after all is designed for personal protection, and as such it either works flawlessly or shouldn't be trusted. Period.

Going To The Source

If you're wondering, yes it's *that* Thunder Ranch this serious little AR is named after. Indeed, Clint Smith and Les Baer worked together in designing and refining this rifle into what you see today. So when I began researching this article, I felt it only prudent to go straight to Clint Smith. Let me preface this by saying that up to this time I'd never so much as spoken with Clint, and have never been to Thunder Ranch. But his reputation precedes him and I'm lucky to be able to call men like Jan Libourel, Peter G. Kokalis, and Mike Venturino friends. They do know Clint, have been to Thunder Ranch, and gave me a good idea of what he's like.

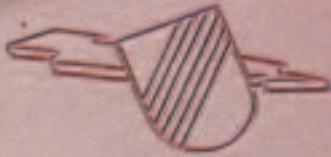
Clint Smith put the spurs to the first prototype TR Special, eventually pronouncing it, "Good to go."

R.H. PHOTO

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MAGAZINE



TR SPECIAL



When I interviewed him though, I was still impressed by how down-to-earth he came across. I like people who are honest, blunt, and shoot from the heart without mincing words. This is Clint Smith. When it comes to firearms he has very strong opinions on weapons suitable for personal protection. He began to formulate these decades ago as a young Marine in Vietnam. He gave his country two tours of duty and was wounded in combat.

After the war he became a police officer and eventually entered into firearms training. By 1986 he had become the Director of Training for H&K. Then he stepped out on his own and opened Thunder Ranch on July 4, 1993. This academy has since gone on to be recognized for both the quality and relevance of its training.

Simple Is Good

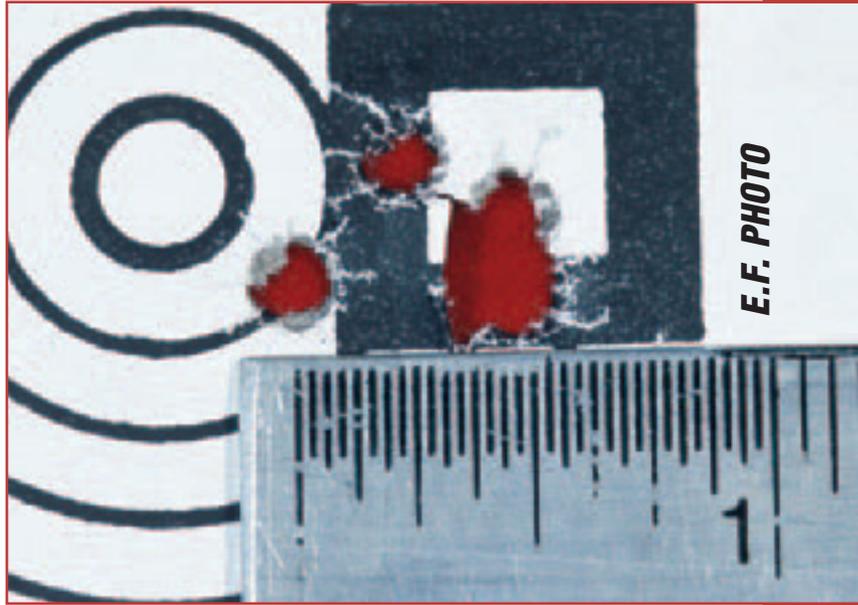
Talk firearms with Clint and you quickly learn he likes to keep things simple. He's not into fads, gadgets, or trying to look cool. Nor does he feel the need to hang widgets all over a tactical rifle. Instead he demands a weapon work flawlessly — every time — all the time. Accuracy must be sufficient for the job at hand. Human engineering must be good enough to allow the operator to get the most out of the weapon. Unlike many, he's not willing to trade reliability for a little more accuracy or comfort.

He also feels anyone who purposely brings a handgun, rather than a long gun, to a fight has chosen poorly. So the Thunder Ranch Special was designed with this in mind. Clint's concept for this rifle was a simple one. He wanted an utterly reliable rifle, small and compact enough to fight within what are normally considered pistol ranges. Such a rifle would be substantially more accurate, easier to hit with, and offer increased terminal performance over any service pistol. So he and Les Baer began the delicate balancing act of sorting fantasy from reality.

Known For Quality

While I don't know Clint Smith, I do know Les Baer. Through hard work, attention to detail, perseverance, and a competitive streak, Les has carved for himself a well respected niche. His M1911s are highly regarded for their accuracy, reliability, and handsome good looks. Roy Huntington, editor of *American Handgunner*, once commented about the sterling accuracy of his personal Baer 1911, relating how he had posted some 3-inch, 50-yard groups from the rollover prone while at Thunder Ranch.

"I thought you were shooting a Les Baer?" I replied.
"I was," he said.



E.F. PHOTO

Above: One half inch at 100 yards is the boast, and Baer's TR Special will do it with good ammo. Below: Performance of this third-generation ZH-5 NVD from American Surplus Company was quite good.

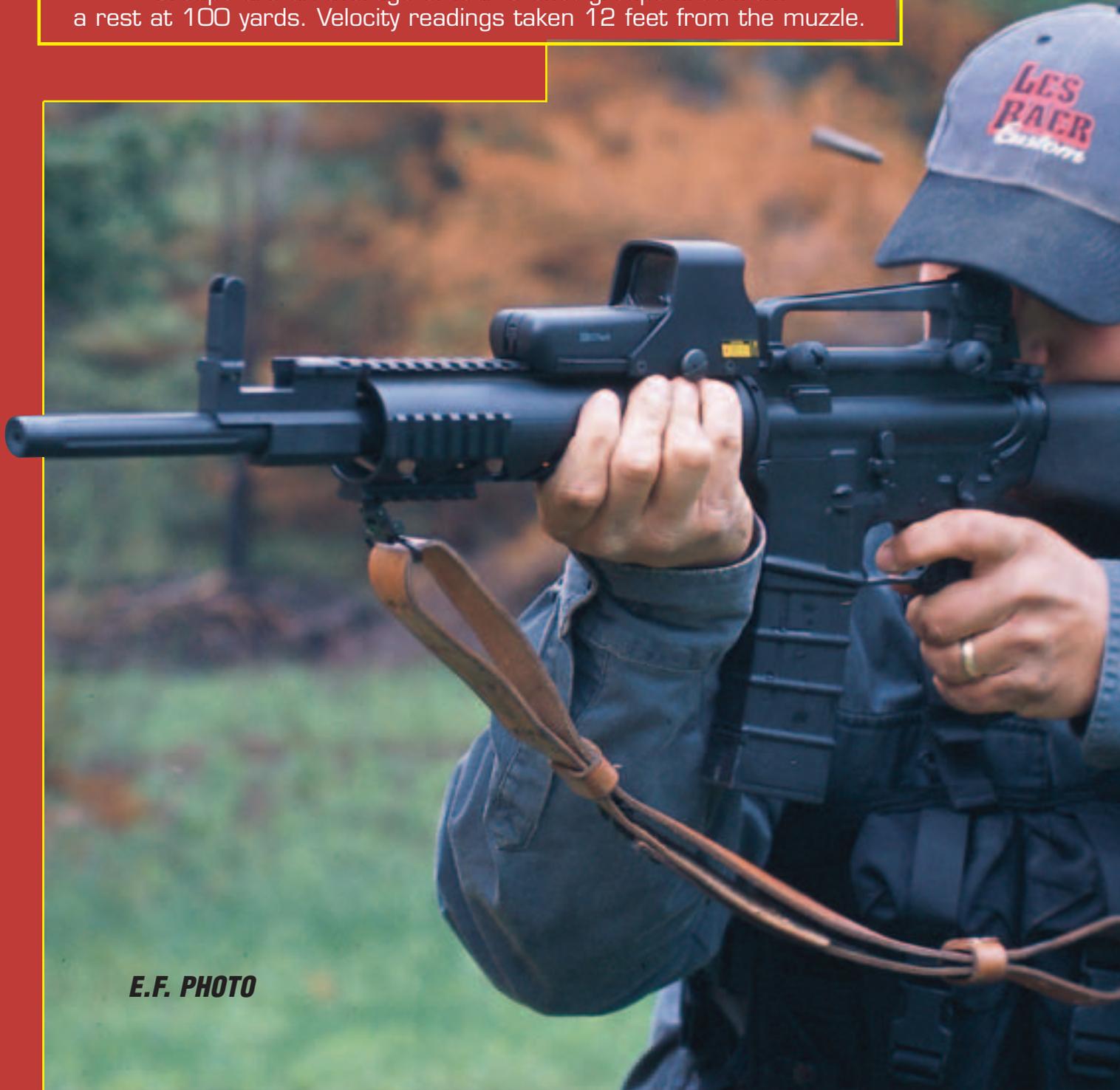


E.F. PHOTO

ACCURACY AND VELOCITY

| Load | Velocity | 100 Yards |
|--|----------|-----------|
| Black Hills 68-grain Match | 2,686 | .65" |
| Black Hills 77-grain Match | 2,568 | .487" |
| Hornady 75-grain TAP | 2,600 | .625" |
| PMP 55-grain FMJ | 2,995 | 1.25" |
| Sellier&Bellot 62-grain SS109 | 2,970 | 1.25" |
| Winchester 50-grain Ballistic Silvertip | 3,132 | .75" |
| Wolf 62-grain FMJ | 2,945 | .875" |

Groups are an average of four 5 shot groups fired from a rest at 100 yards. Velocity readings taken 12 feet from the muzzle.



E.F. PHOTO



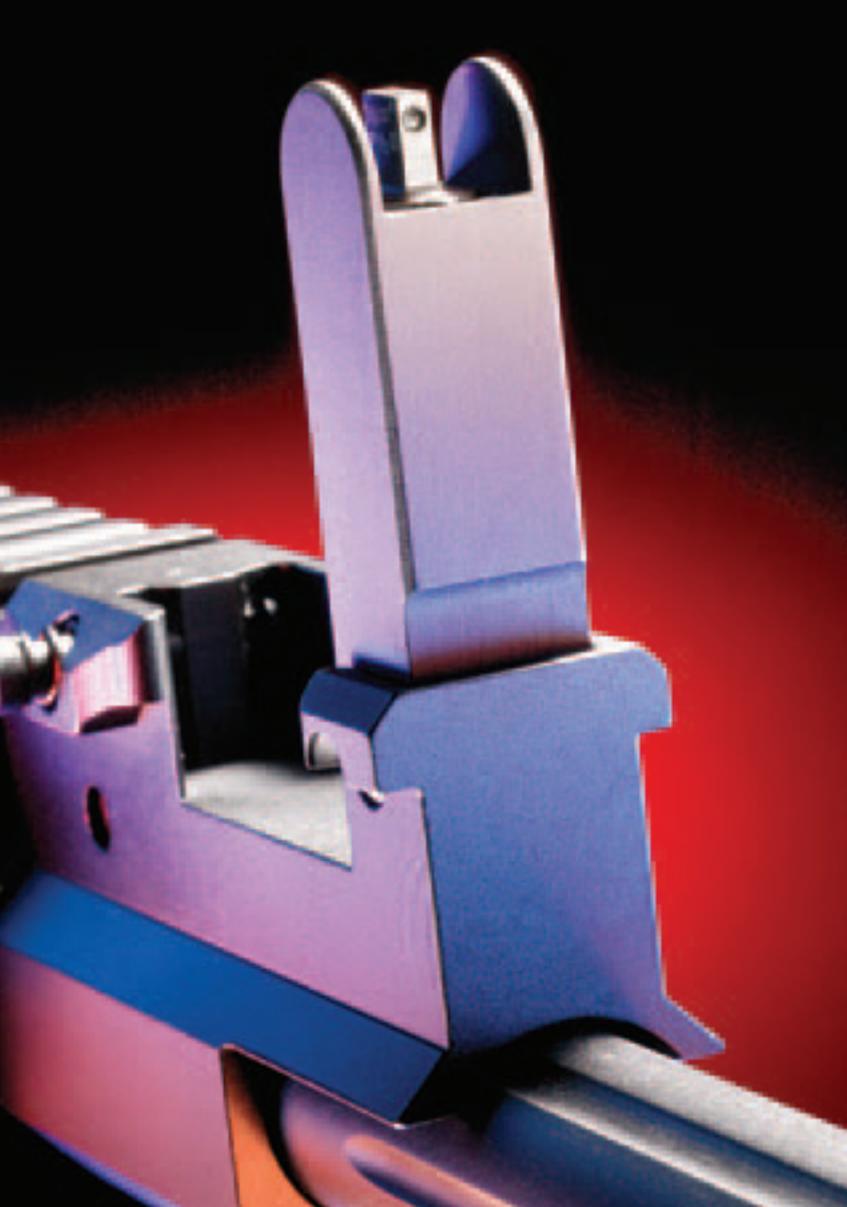
“Well don’t worry,” I retorted, riding him for all it was worth, “You keep practicing and I’m sure your groups will tighten up.”

Baer doesn’t just build a fine M1911 either, his custom AR rifles are also noted for their workmanship and 1/2 MOA accuracy guarantee. I’ve thoroughly flogged one of his High Power Match rifles and it has done nothing but impress me. Real world accuracy? How about a best of .437 inch for 5 shots at 100 yards, fired prone with iron sights and sling. Off the bench with optics it will almost cut that in half. What I like best about Les is that he’s straightforward, to the point, and driven to build the best firearm he can.

When Clint and Les first started brainstorming, Clint wanted the rifle to weigh six pounds even. Les said no problem, only it wouldn’t have a barrel. In this manner, with the two of them going back and forth, the rifle slowly evolved.

Beneath The Skin

The foundation of the Thunder Ranch Rifle is a forged receiver set. The upper and lower receivers are machined from forgings as a matched set, fit by hand before hard anodizing, and then refit again. Into the flattop upper Les slid his patented National Match chrome bolt carrier



assembly with a QMI Gold Titanium firing pin. This carrier is one ounce heavier than stock and is machined to offer improved oil retention. A titanium firing pin combines strength with light weight and is titanium nitride coated.

Into the lower receiver, Les stuffed a Jewell two-stage trigger. This is the same unit he uses on his competition rifles. A versatile and fully adjustable design, it allows the trigger to be tailored to fit the needs of the individual. For furniture a Duck Bill pistolgrip and an A2 buttstock are mounted. Length of pull is 13.5 inches and the stock also features Les' own buttplate that deletes the trapdoor. Looking at the upper and lower receivers you can see that a considerable amount of time is spent on polishing before the units are finished, and it shows.

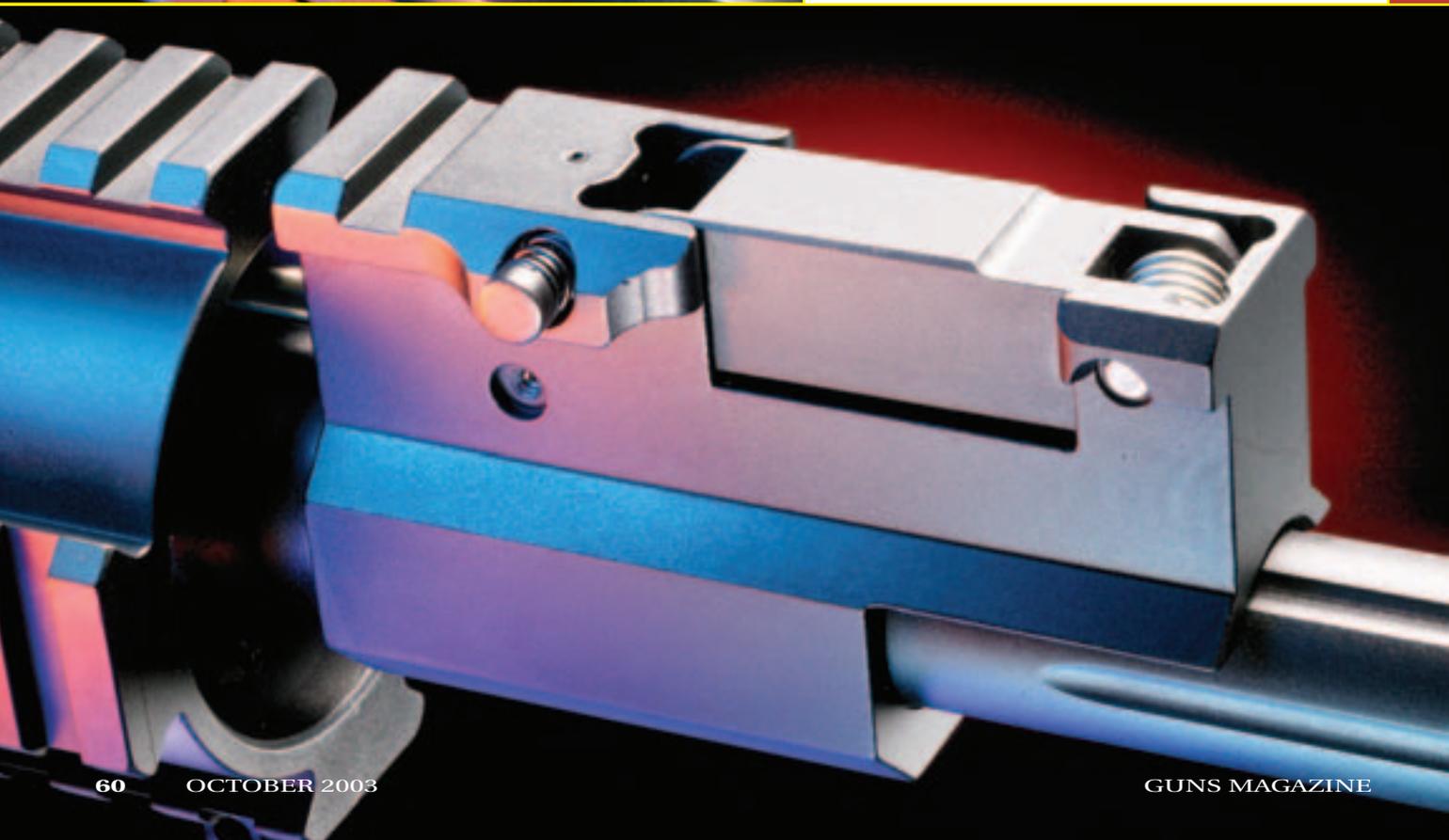
Corked into the front of the receiver is a benchrest-grade 416R stainless steel Match barrel. Manufactured in-house by Les Baer Custom, it's 16 inches long and features cut rifling with a 1:8-inch twist. Diameter at the muzzle is approximately .725 inch. To increase its good looks it sports cosmetic flutes in front of the gas block. Surrounding the Match barrel is a freefloating aluminum handguard.

Fine Tuning The Design

Originally this unit featured full length Mil. Std. M1913 rails at 12, 3, 6, and 9 o'clock. Under Clint's advice though all but the top rail were radically shortened. This allows accessories to be mounted without needlessly cluttering up the forearm. To aid cooling, 14 oval vents are cut into the bottom of the forend. So placed, mirage from an overheated barrel is less likely to interfere with the sight picture.

To the front of the handguard one finds a robust gas block incorporating a folding front sight assembly. The front sight is spring loaded and folds neatly out of the way when not required. Push a button and it pops up ready for use. The sight blade itself is from Trijicon and incorporates a bright tritium insert for low light use. It adjusts for elevation and is protected by robust wings.

The front is mated to a Tippie National Match unit mounted onto a detachable carrying handle. While this sight appears to be a standard A2 unit, upon closer examination



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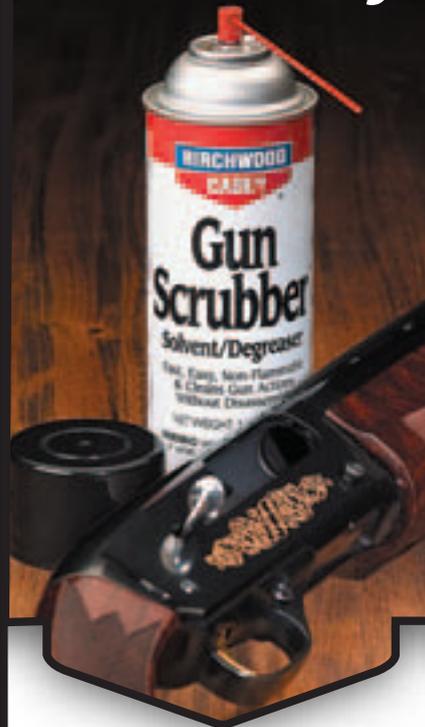
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one notes 1/4 MOA adjustments for both elevation and windage. Plus while the flip sight sports one large (.198 inch) ghost ring aperture, the other is fitted with a smaller screw-in .100 inch aperture. This can be removed and exchanged for apertures of differing size to suit conditions.

The end result is an attractive looking carbine 34.75 inches long, weighing 7.4 pounds. Finish is a durable Bearcoat. This matte black, all-weather protective finish uses tough Teflon-S. What one can't see though is the amount of work and testing that went into the overall design.

For example Les told me the front sight assembly took eight months to evolve into its final state. He also shared how he started with the same crown as he uses on his varmint rifles. During testing though he found that if someone really gouged it (such as by accidentally running into a door hinge), it would negatively affect accuracy. So he redesigned the muzzle crown. Also while this rifle is guaranteed to put 5 rounds into less than 1/2 inch at 100 yards (with appropriate ammunition), it's not a bench gun. No, this is a social rifle, so it received a 4.5-pound trigger rather than something lighter.

Baptism Of Fire

When the design was completed an example was shipped to Clint for testing. He promptly gave it a hot supper by running 700 rounds through it in 25 minutes. In doing so he got it hot enough to begin cooking the Bearcoat off of the gasblock. Yet, the rifle ran flawlessly with all the rounds staying on a half-scale silhouette placed at 200 yards. The next day Clint pounded another 300 rounds through it without incident.

Impressed, he took a rubber mallet to the front sight to see if it would withstand some abuse. It did. Next his wife Heidi ran it through an Urban Rifle course. She wanted some first hand knowledge of how the carbine performed if it was going to wear the Thunder Ranch logo. During an interview Heidi related the rifle impressed her as being, "solid as a rock."

She liked the trigger, felt it was crisp with a good reset, really liked the sights, and was impressed with the fit and finish. Loaded with Federal ball she said it ran with no problems of any kind. She was impressed enough to call Les up and say, "I love my rifle!" thus forever claiming it. It appears Clint will have to get his own. Having successfully passed muster the die was cast, and the Les Baer Thunder Ranch Rifle was born.

Testing In Maine

This all sounds very good, but how would an out-of-the-box example perform? There's only one way to find out. My test rifle arrived with two 10-round magazines, front sight tool, manual, soft case, nylon sling, and information and wrenches for the Match trigger. Also included was a test

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target fired at 100 yards by Les Baer himself with 77-grain Federal Match. This sported two 5-shot groups, the biggest of which measured .25 inch. They would be impressive groups for a heavy-barreled bolt gun, let alone a 7-pound gas gun.

Out of the box the Thunder Ranch Rifle looked good. The Bearcoat finish was evenly applied, the markings were well executed, and the quality of workmanship evident was very high. The muzzle sported a very nicely executed crown and the bore looked excellent. In the hands the weapon balanced well, felt good, and was quick to the shoulder. The freefloating handguard is comfortable and the cooling vents aid in providing a secure grip. The controls all operated smoothly, magazines inserted and ejected easily, and the trigger was light and crisp. Pull weight was approximately 4.5 pounds with zero creep.

The takedown pins are fitted very tightly, and I needed a nylon punch and hammer to pop the hood. Once inside you can see how the upper and lower receivers have been carefully fitted together by hand. While the fit is superb I would prefer a gun you can push the takedown pin out on by hand. However I know not everyone agrees with me on this.

Next, I examined the sights. The front sight is well designed, simple, and rugged. Push a button and it pops up. To fold simply push the sight down, depress the button, and lock the sight into place. With the rear sight sporting 1/4 MOA clicks you're not locked into the military Bullet Drop Compensator as with the A2 sights.

Accuracy In Spades

To check its intrinsic accuracy I tested the Thunder Ranch Rifle from the bench at 100 yards. Four 5-shot groups were recorded with each load firing from a Wichita rest in conjunction with a rear bunny bag. Velocity readings were taken 12 feet from the muzzle with an Oehler 35P chronograph. Ambient temperature was 71.6 degrees F with wind running around 5 mph and switching back and forth from 3 to 9 o'clock.

For this portion of testing I mounted a 6-24x50mm I.O.R. target scope with a fine crosshair reticle. Seven loads were utilized. These consisted of Black Hills 68-grain and 77-grain Match, Hornady 75-grain TAP, PMP 55-grain FMJ, S&B 62-grain SS109, Winchester 50-grain Ballistic Silvertip and Wolf Performance Ammunition 62-grain FMJ. I felt this cross section of match, hunting, and FMJ loads would give a good indication of this rifle's performance.

It quickly became apparent this rifle can shoot. However it was not easy for me to harness its full potential. Round forends do not snuggle into bags well, and the trigger was a little heavy for sub-1/2 MOA work. Yet even so, when teamed with Black Hills 77-grain HPBT "Special Match" the little carbine would easily plunk 5 rounds into .625 inch.

With some effort I cut it down to .487 inch by treating it like a bench gun and

cleaning the barrel every 5 shots. So yes, the little rifle shoots like a house of fire. I did notice though, as to be expected by the twist, that this rifle preferred heavy bullets. This is a good thing in my book.

Next we stripped the target scope off and remounted the carrying handle. We then proceeded to fire 500 rounds of inexpensive steel-cased Wolf through it without incident. This went downrange in a hurry, pounding IPSC silhouettes at 50 yards and in. Here the Thunder Ranch Rifle came into its own doing what it was intended.

Versatile Performer

As we heated the barrel up while littering the range with empty 5.56 cases, we noted it handled well and indexed quickly onto the target. Casually firing kneeling and unsupported prone it was a simple matter to hit a head size target at 200 yards. Next we mounted an EOTech HDS sight on the Mil. Std. M1913 rail on the forearm. This allowed use of either the Holographic sight or the iron sights which co-witnessed. We sent more rounds downrange with this setup, shooting out to 330 yards.

When the light faded we mounted a USNV-14 3rd Generation Night Vision monocular in place of the carrying handle. Manufactured by U.S. Night Vision, the USNV-14 weighs less than 10 ounces and is an extremely impressive NVD. A 1x viewing device, when mounted behind the EOTech (or head mounted) it allowed quick and easy engagement of targets in virtual darkness. The USNV-14 provides a bright, clear, flat image with good depth perception and impressive resolution. It complemented the Thunder Ranch Rifle nicely.

Next we mounted a ZH-5 NVD from American Surplus Company. The ZH-5 is a 3rd Generation, 5x weapon sight sporting Zeiss Hensoldt optics mated to American technology. With this optic mounted the Thunder Ranch Rifle delivered consistent .625-inch, 3-shot groups with PMP ball at 100 yards in darkness. Head shots with this setup were a snap off a Harris bipod at 250 yards.

While a large unit at 4 pounds, the ZH-5 sports a drop down ocular allowing a good cheek weld. Performance was impressive and we appreciated the 5x magnification for shooting past 300 yards. Night fires are a lot of fun and we sent approximately 400 rounds of PMP ball downrange in total darkness. Despite never being cleaned throughout testing, the rifle ran like a champ. The only problem encountered was a single round of Wolf ammunition which required a second strike to fire.

The Bottom Line

Negatives? The pushpins are very tight and require a punch and hammer to knock out. The sling swivels are set up for conventional carry. This works fine if you want to throw an M1907 sling on it. However, if you want to add a tactical

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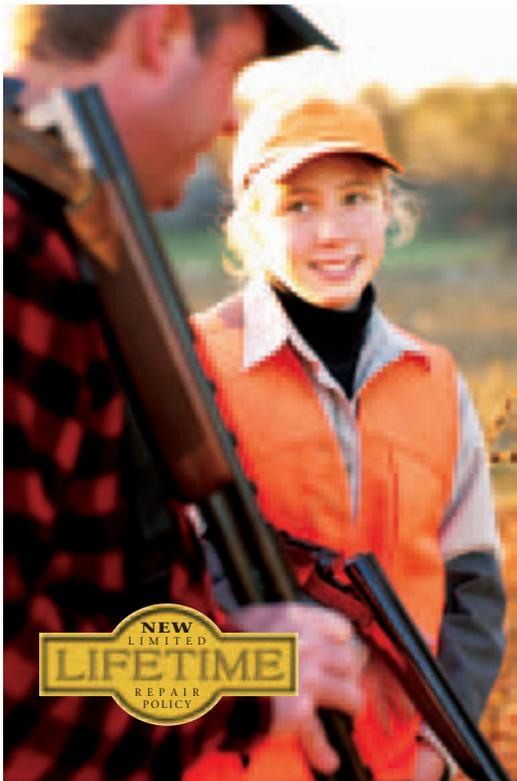
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slings you'll need to rig it up. Muzzle flash varies greatly depending upon ammo. In low light some of it is retina melting, so you'll have to carefully test your social ammunition. Controllability is AR like, inferior to an AK-74's but still pretty darn good. This is an expensive piece with a suggested retail price of \$2,488.

Positives? The TR Rifle was flawlessly reliable and ate whatever I stuffed in it. Accuracy is simply superb, especially for what it is, a seven pound AR carbine. Workmanship is excellent and evokes pride of ownership. This is one rifle you'll show off to your buddies. It's well balanced, quick handling, and compact. Accessories are widely available and easily mounted. It performs superbly with the new generation of heavy bullets.

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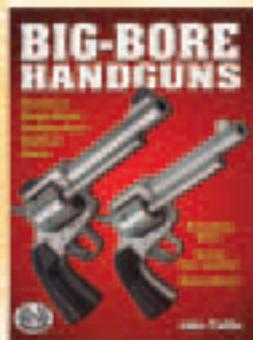
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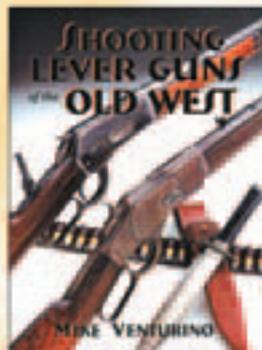


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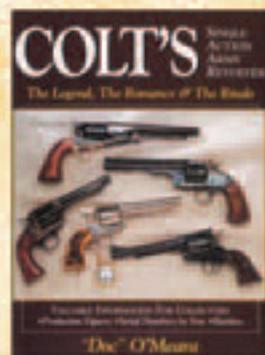


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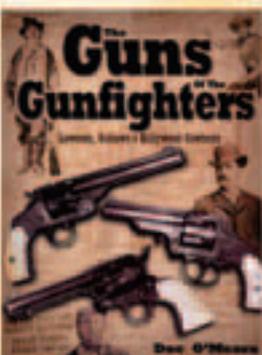


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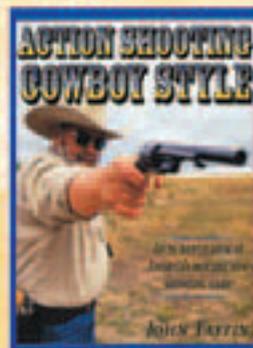


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Rollin' On The River

By Dexter Ewing

Wilsonville, Oregon, based Columbia River Knife & Tool (CRKT) is best known for producing solid, working knives with a heavy bent towards the bang-for-the-buck factor. If you've never owned a CRKT knife before, you're in for a real treat. Nearly the entire line showcases designs by popular custom knifemakers, made with proven materials, yet all the while keeping prices within a range anyone can afford.

In a business where you're only as good as your last design, CRKT has built a solid reputation, one knife at a time. 2003 is certainly no exception for them. In what may be a record-breaking debut for any knife company, CRKT took the wraps off close to 10 new models at the 2003 SHOT show, held in Orlando, Fla. And here is a brief run down of what's new and exciting from Columbia River Knife & Tool.

First Rate Folders

Custom maker Michael Walker designed the BladeLOCK 2 as the follow up to his original CRKT BladeLOCK design. This folder, like its predecessor, features a unique blade locking mechanism that positively locks the blade in the open and closed position. The lock release is integrated into the thumb stud of the blade, permitting the user to easily and



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effectively unlock the blade and rotate it open or closed.

With a little practice, the BladeLOCK 2 can be deployed quickly. The blade is 3 inches in length and is ground from AUS-6M steel. The stylish handle has textured Zytel scales for a secure grip, and a pair of steel lock covers add to the visual appeal. MSRP is set at \$79.99.

Kit Carson's name is highly respected for the bulletproof tactical folders he crafts.

HAMMOND A.B.C.



Carson and CRKT have three collaboration knives on the market that have generated a lot of interest and excitement. This year, two variations have been added to offer even more variety. The M16 Compact is a slender version of the regular M16 tactical folder, best suited for everyday carry. It's lightweight and slim, yet built tank tough like its full size sibling.

Available in either a tanto or spearpoint titanium nitride-coated blade, the M16

Compact comes in two handle color choices of black and British racing green. The knives feature the Carson flipper protrusion that aids in speedy opening and once open, functions as a hand guard. Blade length measures a little over 3 inches, making this a comfortable folder for daily carry. MSRP is \$69.99.

Next up, the Jim Hammond designed Cascade lockback folder. This is a handful of a folder with its ergonomically contoured,



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CARSON M16 COMPACT



ELISHEWITZ ROLLOCK



NEALY PESH KABZ

heavily textured Kraton handle. The AUS-6 stainless steel clip point blade is 3.5 inches long, and overall length is about 8.5 inches. The handle's design incorporates forward and rear guards to retard slipping in either direction. The blade comes in either plain edge or partially serrated and has ambidextrous thumb studs for ease of deployment with either hand.

A steel pocket clip is attached to the handle, but the Cascade also comes with a Cordura belt sheath. The Cascade is a comfortable work knife — just pick one up and wrap your grip around the handle and see what I mean. MSRP of the Cascade is a pittance at \$39.99.

Fixed Blades Too

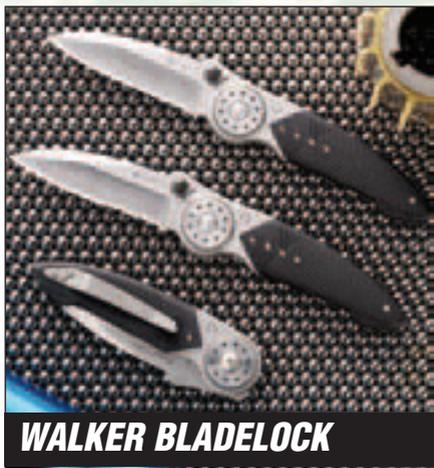
Perhaps you enjoy knives of Japanese flair? Then look no further than the Steve Corkum designed First Strike. This is CRKT's first offering involving a traditional Japanese fixed blade knife, complete with *same* (stingray skin) underlay and hand wrapped handle. It is truly a beautiful production knife!

The 4.5 inch long AUS-6M stainless steel, tanto shaped blade offers a strong blade tip for strength not found in other point shapes. Each First Strike comes with a molded Zytel® belt sheath that keeps the knife secure at your side, yet allows for easy access for withdraw. At \$69.99, the CRKT First Strike is an outstanding value.

Custom maker Ron Lake's influence

HALLIGAN KISS (TOP) AND PECK





WALKER BLADELOCK

is far reaching. His work has influenced many a knifemaker, and his upscale designs please even the most discriminating knife collector. Recognizing this, CRKT contacted Lake to design a stylish folder for mass production. The result is the Lake Signature. With a blade length of 3 1/4 inches, the Lake Signature model is another comfortable knife for everyday carry.

It is of the interframe design for which Ron Lake is so famous, and even includes a custom-inspired pivot screw and hand tied leather fob just like that found on Lake's handmade versions. The CRKT Lake Signature incorporates the custom maker's own safety design, which was engineered in conjunction with fellow knifemaker Michael



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Walker. Dubbed the LAWKS (Lake And Walker Knife Safety), it prevents inadvertent unlocking. As a side note, CRKT incorporates the LAWKS into every one of their liner lock folders.

If you pay attention to the photos of other CRKT folders, you will see the LAWKS release lever above the pivot end of the handle — looking at it from the pocket clip side. But for the Lake Signature model, the LAWKS release is integrated *into* the pocket clip. Pivot the clip down to engage, pull it back up to disengage. With practice, one can put the safety into play after opening the blade. Pretty unique! The machined, 6061 T-6 aluminum handle, anodized a titanium gray color, rounds out this nice upscale looking package. MSRP is set for \$99.99.

The Art Of Minimalism

The Ed Halligan designed KISS and PECK folders are unique in design and construction in that they are fully functional folding knives with only two main parts. These have been really good, consistent sellers for CRKT. This year, they add another dimension to these lines — all black Teflon coating. A new sub-series is born, called the KISS/PECK In The Dark.

The black Teflon coating gives a subdued look while adding an element of dress. Just like their standard counterparts, the KISS and PECK knives have blades of AUS-6 stainless steel and are chisel ground (blade is ground only on one side) so that when the blade is folded against the frame, it "seals" itself to protect the user from contacting the sharp edge.

The KISS and PECK, respectively, have blade lengths of 2.25 and 1.88 inches. These are very nice conversation starters too as they defy what we have come to expect in normal folding knives. The KISS In The Dark has a MSRP of \$39.99, the PECK In The Dark runs \$29.99.

For those who want a different kind of knife, look no farther than the Allen Elishewitz-designed Rollock. It's not quite a folding knife and definitely not a fixed blade. Its blade slides back and drops down into the handle from the open position to offer an easy-to-carry, nicely contoured package. The Rollock's mechanism came from the original Rolox knife manufactured by Benchmark. CRKT's version brings the Rolox design into the new millennium with modern styling, function, and aesthetics — all at a reasonable price.

Something Completely Different

The Rollock's 2¼ inch AUS6M stainless steel, clip point shaped blade is mirror polished. It also features an aggressively textured thumb ramp to aid in extending the blade. To fully deploy the blade, one presses down on the rear of the nestled blade, which tilts the blade upwards a bit and unlocks it

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It must have been fascinating to have worked at Remington during the 1960s.

It was as if someone at the corporate level said, “Let’s throw out the rulebook. Let’s try something new. Let’s look at some modern materials and contemporary designs.” And they did. Innovative, futuristic, even what could be called “radical” firearm designs rolled off the assembly line at a breathtaking pace.

This was the era of the “Nylon” .22s, the XP-100 pistol and the Model 600 and 660 carbines. They even shared some common design motifs. The .22s, XP-100 and the

Model 600 all featured the very striking “shark fin” front sight. The XP-100 and the Model 600 shared the same action plus a plastic ventilated rib.

Well, Remington has gone “retro.” In a move that is like Ford bringing back the petite Thunderbird, Remington has brought back the Model 600 — albeit in a slightly more contemporary form. They’ve even given it a unique designation — the Model 673.

The “6” stands for the original 600 series. The “7” indicates that the new carbine is built on the type “Seven” action; and

the “3” indicates the year of introduction, 2003. Seeing the Model 673’s laminated stock, ventilated rib and shark fin front sight for the first time brought back a flood of memories.

Love At First Sight

It was 1970. I was working for the New York State Conservation Department and doing most of my hunting in the Adirondack mountains. In the Adirondacks, the deer are not plentiful and the hunting pressure is light. Yet, it’s quite possible to take some

Remington Goes RETRO

By Holt Bodinson



"Dogleg" bolt handle of the original M600 was much maligned, but worked well.

Left: Floorplates of new Model 673 (left) and Model 600.

With 22-inch barrel, the new Guide Rifle stands a hand taller than Holt's 1970 heartthrob, the Remington M600.



great, trophy quality bucks plus black bear there. My rifles of choice at the time were a Model 71 Winchester in .348 Win. and a Sako Finnbear in .338 Win. Mag. Then one day I stopped in at Russ Carpenter's shop in the Mid-Hudson and there in the used gun rack was a Model 600 in .350 Rem. Mag. with a price tag of \$150.

If ever there was a controversial rifle, the Model 600 Magnum has to rate close to the top of the list. Gun writers of the day crucified it. "It's ugly." "The dog-leg bolt handle is non-functional." "The bolt release is impossible to reach." "The bottom metal is

plastic.” “Who ever heard of putting a ventilated rib on a rifle?” And the most universal gripe of all, “It kicks too much.” But to me, it was love at first sight. I had to own it. It cost me a sporterized Springfield plus some boot, but I walked out of there with that Model 600, and to this day, it remains one of my very favorite big game rifles.

To understand the appeal of the new Model 673, let me share with you why I like its predecessor, the Model 600 in .350 Rem. Mag.

A Real Woodsman's Gun

It proved to be an ideal woods rifle — light, handy, well-balanced, powerful, and with its beech and walnut laminated stock,

weatherproof and stable. The recoil lug was even epoxy bedded at the factory.

The Model 600's short, slim, free-floated, 18.5-inch barrel was perfect when you had to crawl through dense mats of young hemlock and spruce while tracking a bear in the snow. When it rained or snowed, the little carbine was compact enough to fit under your slicker and to tuck up under your arm. It was very fast to get into action once game was spotted. And the .350 Rem. Mag. cartridge proved time and again to be a magnificent one-shot performer in the field. In fact, last fall I hunted elk with the little Model 600.

Remington initially offered two loadings for their new “short magnum” — a 250-grain Core-Lokt soft point at 2,410 fps and a

200-grain Core-Lokt at 2,775 fps. Those velocities were indeed achievable from the carbine's 18.5-inch barrel. What's more, the accuracy of the Model 600 carbine with its stiff, short action, free floated barrel and epoxy-bedded receiver was remarkable. Even with factory ammunition, the big bore carbine was capable of holding pretty close to a minute-of-angle.

Surprisingly enough, recoil was moderate with both the 200- and 250-grain loadings. So manageable in fact, that my wife bought a Model 660 in .350 Rem. Mag. the following year. If you can handle the 180-grain loading in the .300 Win. Mag., you can certainly manage a .350 Rem. Mag.

I can remember buying only one box of Remington 250-grain factory loads. For

Now who wouldn't be proud of a whitetail like this? Holt's potent little Remington .350 scored on this Adirondack buck in 1971.





deer, antelope, sheep, caribou, black bear and elk, the 200-grain Core-Lokt, either as handloaded or as factory ammunition, leaves nothing to be desired in terms of terminal performance. It puts game animals down with great authority and with a minimum of meat damage. Plus it shoots surprisingly flat.

Sighted 2 inches high at 100 yards, the 200-grain loading is dead-on at 200 and only 9.5 inches low at 300. If I were pursuing moose or grizzlies, however, there's no question that the little carbine would be stoked with 250-grain loads, and having said that, the Model 600 and 660 Magnums proved extremely popular in the Alaskan bush.

Standard Of Comparison

The .350 Rem. Mag. has often been described as being nothing more than a .35 Whelen in a short, compact case. Actually, it's a better cartridge on all counts. It operates at a higher pressure than the Whelen and out performs the former wildcat in terms of velocity and energy, even in a shorter barrel. It's simply a grand, medium-bore hunting cartridge that Remington is smart enough to keep in the line and breathe new life into it in an era of short magnums.

Being a .35-caliber case with an excellent expansion ratio, the .350 Rem. Mag. is versatile. If you are a handloader, it can be fed a diet of .38-caliber pistol bullets for plinking or varminting. It's amenable to a variety of excellent cast bullet designs. And when fall rolls around, you have a wide choice of quality 180-, 200-, 220- and 250-grain jacketed soft points to match the game. Indeed, the 180-grain pointed soft point can be moved along at almost 3,000 fps from the original 18.5 inch barrel.

Which brings us to the new Model 673.

Something Old, Something New

Called the "Guide Rifle," it could serve well in that capacity, and with its 22-inch barrel, it does qualify as a rifle. Cosmetically, it looks a lot like the old Model 600. The ventilated rib is there, but it's now made of steel rather than plastic. The distinctive shark fin front sight of the 1960s has returned and looks as racy as ever. The laminated stock has been retained, although it's a bit beefier and more conventional in shape than the Model 600's.

Alas, the dog-leg bolt handle has been replaced, and the Model Seven's bottom



There it is, that racy "shark fin" front sight, on the new M673 as well as vintage M600 and Nylon 66.

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metal is steel not plastic. And it's chambered for the .300 Rem. SA Ultra Mag as well as the traditional .350 Rem. Mag. Overall weight is up a bit. The Model 600 Magnum scaled out at about 6.5 pounds. The Model 673 is a pound heavier.

By any measure, Remington's "retro" is a well thought-out rifle, and to me, pleasing to look at and handle. It's certainly more affordable than the original Model 600 Magnums that today command a premium collector's price. Of course, one question remained: How would it perform?

When I scoped my original Model 600 Magnum, I chose Conetrol rings and bases. Conetrol's mounting system is uniquely elegant and rugged. The smooth streamlined rings add a touch of esthetic class to any rifle, and I've never had a Conetrol mount shoot loose. So when the Model 673 arrived, I again chose Conetrol.

The scope selected was one I had wanted to try. It was Bushnell's new 1.5-4.5x32mm Elite 3200, with their proprietary Rainguard lens coating and Firefly reticle.

Bushnell's water repellent Rainguard coating technology prevents lens fogging when you're hunting in rain, sleet, or snow. The coating causes moisture to bead up into tiny droplets. The result is amazing. You can continue to acquire a clear image under the wettest of conditions.

The Firefly reticle is the non-battery answer to the illuminated reticle. Designed for those highly productive dawn and twilight hunting periods, the Firefly reticle is charged by covering the objective with your hand and shining a small pen light (supplied) through the eyepiece for a minute or two. The result is a reticle that glows with a warm green hue. It's very distinct without being distracting, and it's utterly practical, requiring no batteries or electrical circuitry.

Ballistic Comparison

Having an original carbine with an 18.5-inch barrel and the new rifle with a 22-inch barrel to shoot side-by-side was an appealing prospect. Plus I had a variety of old Remington and Peters 200- and 250-grain ammunition on hand and a favorite handload to test together with Remington's latest 200-grain Core-Lokt load. The results were intriguing.

First, both .350s averaged about 1.25 inches for three-shot groups at 100 yards with just about everything I fed them. Only my carbine, when stoked with a tailored 200-grain Core-Lokt handload, consistently shot under an inch. The larger bores tend to be accurate and these two .350s were no exception. What was fascinating were the variations in velocity between the two guns and between different lots of ammunition.

Remington's latest 200-grain Core-Lokt ammunition averaged 2,707 fps in the Model 673 and 2,667 fps in the Model 600 for a total variance of only 40 fps between the rifle and the carbine. Another way of expressing it would be that the .350 Rem.

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Mag. looses only 11.5 fps per inch of barrel length between 22 inches and 18.5 inches, which is inconsequential.

This illustrates one of the endearing qualities of the larger bores with their excellent bore expansion ratios. You can shoot a shorter barreled, compact gun without sacrificing performance.

Remington lists the current 200-grain loading at 2,775 fps in their ballistic tables, and frankly, I was disappointed in the low velocities generated by the latest lot.

So next was a 30-year old lot of Remington's 200-grain factory load. It averaged 2,796 fps in the Model 673, and 2,718 fps in the Model 600. That's 89 fps and 51 fps faster than the velocities registered by the new lot of .350 Rem. Mag. ammunition. That was more like it. Save that old ammo!

While Remington has discontinued the 250-grain Core-Lokt load, I had some 30-year old stock on hand. In the new Model 673, the load averaged 2,440 fps, and in the Model 600 carbine, 2,406 fps. The spread between both guns was now only 34 fps. If you're wondering about recoil with a 250-grain bullet, I can only say you wouldn't know whether you were shooting a 200-grain bullet at 2,775 fps or a 250-grain Core-Lokt at 2,400 fps unless you read the flap on the ammunition box.

Finally, I tested my standard hunting handload, which by the way, can be found in the Hodgdon Manual. It consists of a 200-grain Core-Lokt bullet; 59.0-grains of H4895; and a Remington case and primer. This is a maximum load registering 52,100 CUP so approach it carefully. In the new Model 673, it averaged 2,847 fps and in the Model 600 carbine, 2,784 fps.

That's the level of performance I think we should expect from the .350 Rem. Mag. Hopefully Remington will revisit its current loading and bring it up to the velocity they advertise in their catalog.

In summary, the .350 Rem. Mag. is one of our finest big game cartridges, particularly when it's housed in a compact, handy Model 600 or Model 673. There's something about short barrels with ventilated ribs, shark fin front sights, and laminated stocks that gets my blood boiling.

Remington has done us a great service in returning both its original "short magnum" cartridge and the "retro" Model 673 to the forefront of our sport. The 30-year wait was worth it.



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A Hunter's Essential: MODERN CAMP STOVES

By Carolee Anita Boyles

We've all seen the ads. You know, the ones where the camper is sitting with a look of absolute bliss on his face, sipping his freshly-brewed morning coffee. Or finishing his evening meal next to a bubbling stream. And he did it all on an open campfire. Advertising executives come up with these scenes to conjure nostalgia for camping trips where you cooked your meals over an open fire. But nostalgia and reality are two entirely different things.

"The reality of campfire cooking is that it takes an enormous amount of time and patience to do it properly," says Dr. Paul Kolask, an emergency room physician in St. Petersburg Florida, who's also an avid camper and kayaker.

Think about it: the last time you tried to build a campfire from scratch, how long did it take you? You had to gather wood, get some kindling started, then add small sticks and finally put on larger ones. The time it takes build a campfire correctly, without any accelerant that can transfer residues to food, and then wait for it to develop into a deep bed of coals for proper cooking takes about 90 minutes. Do it a few times and you can understand why the western chuck wagon went on ahead of the drovers to begin cooking the midday meal only a couple of hours after breakfast.

And what do you get out of it? A meal that takes three times longer than normal to prepare and always seems to have the taste of ashes in every bite.

For all these reasons, and a few dozen more, we're grateful for the virtues of the portable camp stove. From small single-burner backpack cooking units to multiple fuel source stoves and smokers, they all make our outdoor experiences easier and more fun. After all, an hour after trudging into camp from a day of chasing elk, would you rather still be playing with the fire or eating a hot, hearty meal? Who wants to spend hours getting a fire ready for cooking, when what we really want to be doing is sitting in front of the fire and enjoying it!

We'll look at two main types of camp stoves. The first variety is the large, usually two-burner stove that works so well in camp for our heavy cooking chores. But another worthwhile piece of kit is the small, minimum-bulk stove of the type backpackers usually employ. This latter type makes a good back up to your big stove, but its primary virtue is for hike-in spike camps or as an emergency stove to keep in your daypack when hunting in winter conditions.

Tabletop Stoves

Most campers who use a cook stove aren't hardcore backpackers or climbers. They're hunters, anglers or family campers using tents, motor homes or recreational vehicles. So they have room for a larger tabletop stove, of which there are many on the market. Let's look at just a couple:

Coleman two-burner fuel stove, model No. 414-700

Remember that old green Coleman two-burner stove your parents had when you were a kid? It's still around, albeit in updated form. The biggest surprise is that although today's



COLEMAN DUAL FUEL

version still burns Coleman fuel, it also handles unleaded gas. This means that no matter where you are, you have a fuel source for the stove.

This two-burner stove is typical of what most of us fondly remember from Coleman. The main burner can produce 13,500 BTUs, and the smaller auxiliary burner generates 11,000 BTUs. The fuel reservoir holds slightly less than a half gallon of fuel, and will power the stove for about two hours on high or a little more than eight hours on low. When I timed how long it took to boil a quart of water, the stove lived up to Coleman's claim that it will do so in a little more than three minutes. After my initial disquiet about lighting a match anywhere around unleaded gas, I must admit I developed a liking for the stove's ability to use alternate fuels; it makes it far more versatile than other camp stoves.

The one downside to this stove was that I found it a little difficult to clean, particularly between the burners and the side panels, which is characteristic of the stove historically. Like its predecessors, the two-burner stove folds down to a compact 17x24x8 inches. It's a nice, fuel-friendly camp stove for traditionalists who want a two-burner camp stove.

MSRP: \$108.

Coleman propane grill stove with electronic ignition, model No. 9921-750

Besides updating their traditional two-burner stove, Coleman also has designed another version of it that features a grill in place of the second burner. However, the grill is versatile enough that you can put a pot on it and use it for a second burner if needed.

The Model 9921-750 has the same standup Windblock as the original, which provides for a more even flame in the wind. The burner and the grill have separate control knobs, and each side can produce 10,000 BTUs at the same time.

The overall design of this stove makes it easier to clean than the traditional two-burner stove, and the grease management system really does carry the grease and drippings away from the grill's surface without a lot of scraping and scooping. I found the reservoir easy to remove, and just popped it into the dishwasher when I was done with it.

Coleman makes a screw-on propane tank for the stove, but I had trouble putting my hands on one and ended up using a generic brand that worked fine. I actually like this stove better than the original or the updated version, in part because it's so quick to use, particularly if you're camping with kids who want to eat *now*.

MSRP: \$97.

SmokinTex Smo-Kit

This stove is totally different from anything else I tried. It's versatile and actually fun to use. The Smo-Kit is a 12x12x14-inch camp stove, smoker, and oven all in one. It comes with its own carrying bag with pockets to hold two propane canisters. Each one-pound propane gas cylinder will operate the stove for about five hours, so you have several days' worth of cooking ability in one package.

Depending on how you configure the Smo-Kit you can use it for a camp stove or bake oven, and when you get home you can smoke whatever you caught or killed on your camping trip, or make jerky. I really liked the versatility of this little unit, and plan to keep it handy at home for smoking fish every week or so.

Because the Smo-Kit has a removable top and a hinged front, I found it easy to clean; that hinged front also makes it easy to load food into the cooking chamber. The one problem I did have with the Smo-Kit was that it requires some assembly. That's not a big issue for me, since I'm pretty handy with tools, but if you're mechanically challenged it may take you a while to put it together.

MSRP: 69.95

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Small Stoves

Coleman Exponent Xtreme stove

Coleman's Model No. 9720-725 Xtreme stove is designed for backpackers, hikers, canoeists, kayakers, and anyone else who wants minimal weight and bulk in a stove. This unit is the lightest of Coleman's backpacking stoves, weighing only 11 ounces; it folds down to 7x4x4 inches. It's made of magnesium alloy, which makes it both light and durable.

One terrific feature of this stove is that it has curved cooking grates that help keep small pots level when you're using it on uneven ground. Nothing is more frustrating than having your boiling water for your "ready to eat" meal slide off the burner because you couldn't find a level place on which to cook. The tripod design of the stove also helps keep it stable on irregular surfaces.

The fuel for this stove is Coleman's high-performance Powermax fuel cartridge, which can generate up to 14,000 BTUs on the single burner, so you can boil water in about three minutes. Both the stove and the cartridge can be packed away in the "stuff sack" that comes with the stove.

While the Exponent Xtreme is a neat little stove, there were a lot of things about it I didn't like. One was the difficulty finding fuel for it. Coleman is one of the largest outdoor equipment companies around, so you'd think it would be relatively easy to find a Powermax fuel cell unit, especially since I live in a fairly large metropolitan area.

However, it wasn't easy at all. After striking out locally, I made three telephone calls before finding a cartridge in a neighboring county. Coleman clearly states that only their fuel cartridge may be used, so there isn't anything you can substitute for it.

The second problem could be a safety hazard under certain circumstances. The flexible tube — about seven inches long — between the stove and the connector to the fuel cell was somewhat curled and a bit stiff from being packed in the box. When I connected it to the fuel cell, it tried to return to that curl, and caused the stove to tip to one side.

And although the instructions clearly state that the stove should be used on firm, level ground only, when you're backpacking or hunting in a remote location, you may not find a spot that exactly fits those instructions. A twist in the tubing at the wrong moment on rough ground could send boiling water or even flame from the burner somewhere you really don't want it.

The last thing I noted is that even though the stove comes with a puncture tool — called a Green Key — that's supposed to promote safe recycling and disposal of empty fuel cells, I couldn't find any information available on just how to go about recycling the spent unit.

MSRP: \$74.99.

Mountain Safety Research Pocket Rocket

MSR is a big player in compact stoves, and this may be the ultimate backpacker's camp stove. The Pocket Rocket, from Mountain Safety Research (MSR), really does fit in your pocket. The unit weighs only three ounces and comes in a neat little plastic case.

The Pocket Rocket has a very simple design that includes integrated stainless steel, aluminum and brass components, which provides for very durable construction. It has a wind protection system called the WindClip Windshield that protects the flame in a light wind, and helps make the Pocket Rocket easy to light.

This little stove has serrated pot supports, so that whatever you're cooking doesn't slip off the burner and spill. It's also really easy to assemble when you get to your campsite (or when you stop for a lunch break on the trail). I set the unit up with bare hands and again with gloves on, and found it be to pretty effortless both ways. Lighting the stove was almost as easy; the literature claimed the stove doesn't need to be pressurized or primed, and I found that to be the case. I also found that it lived up to its claim of being able to boil a quart of water or simmer soup in less than three minutes.

The Pocket Rocket mounts to a canister-style fuel cell; if you use MSR's Iso Pro fuel canister, it creates a sturdy base for the little stove. The threaded base makes it easy to attach the Pocket Rocket onto the fuel canister. However, one of the great features of the Pocket Rocket is that any fuel canister with a threaded top for mounting a stove on it will work. That makes fuel more easily accessible; even if you're in a small town in the mountains where there's no MSR dealer, you can probably find fuel that will work with the Pocket Rocket. According to the company's information the fuel of choice is an 80/20 isobutane/propane mixture.

Honestly, I could find very little to dislike about this efficient little camp stove; it's a well-designed package for outdoors men and women who want to get into remote areas but want to be able to at least heat water when they get there.

Okay, there was one thing that caused everyone around me some amusement about this stove, and that was the name. For some reason, everyone I called when looking for a fuel cell for the Pocket Rocket laughed when I told them what I wanted. I got giggles and one, "Are you putting me on?" MSRP: \$39.95

MSR Wind Pro

The third small backpacking stove I looked at was the Wind Pro, also from MSR. The Wind Pro is the newest addition

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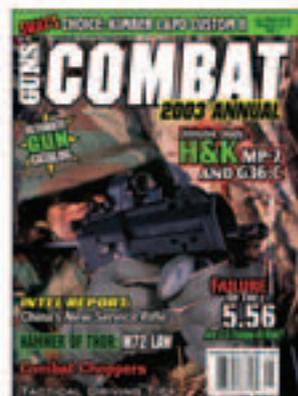
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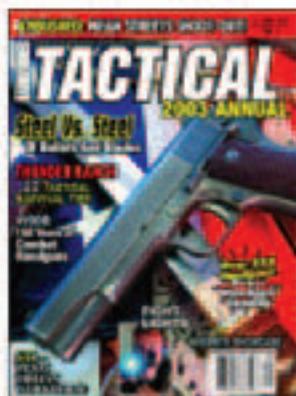
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to their line of remote canister stoves. It comes with a windscreen and a heat reflector that helps redirect heat to the cooking pot, which makes for more efficient cooking. As a backpacking stove, its weight is perfect; it weighs in at less than 7 ounces (the one I had was 6.8 ounces), and the stove lives up to the company's claim that it will fit into a standard 1-liter cook pot; at least, it fit into mine.

The Wind Pro has the same three leg, serrated leg design as the Pocket Rocket, which has the same effect, to keep pots from sliding. There's nothing revolutionary about the ported burner, but it did produce a stable, quiet flame.

When I saw the cable that connects the stove to the fuel canister, my first thought was that Wind Pro would have the same tendency to tip that the Coleman Exponent Xtreme does. However, the cable is a bit longer than the one on the Coleman so it doesn't twist, virtually eliminating the problem of stove turnover. According to MSR literature, the Wind Pro can be used with a bake oven, but I didn't have one to test so I can't verify how well it works.

I did note one problem with packing and carrying the Wind Pro. The stove comes with a lightweight fabric bag that's so light that it doesn't stand up well to carrying the unit. When you pack the stove into the bag and draw the cord tight, it's very easy to rip the bag on the metal legs. This happens frequently enough that one

independent retailer with whom I talked about the stove told me he won't replace a bag when it gets torn.

MSRP: \$69.95

The days of clumsy, hard-to-operate camp stoves are long gone. If you're a hard core climber or backpacker who needs a lightweight, portable camp stove, a recreational camper, or a hunter or angler who just wants a comfortable way to cook a great meal at the end of a day in the outdoors, there are a lot of stoves out there to choose from.

The key to selecting the right stove lies in knowing what you need. Do a little research and fit the right stove to the camping experience you're planning for, and your meals won't taste like the ashes of your campfire. Done right, a meal cooked in the outdoors is the perfect ending to a day afield.



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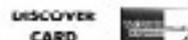
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Web Browsing Pays

Saturday morning I turned on the computer and checked the posts at www.sixguns.com and the sister site, sixgunner.com. "For Sale: 1950 Target, 4-inch." Could it really be? The e-mail address was wrong but I recognized the problem and also knew it was a gentleman, a collector of Colts and Winchesters, whom I had dealt with before. I was the first one through with the correct e-mail address stating I was "very interested" in the gun. That was an understatement to be sure.

By Saturday afternoon I had placed a Priority Mail envelope with a check and a copy of my FFL in a curbside mailbox. It arrived in Pennsylvania 2,500 miles away on Monday morning. The 1950 Target was expressed and arrived here on Tuesday morning. I was in the shower when it arrived and my wonderful FedEx driver came back later.

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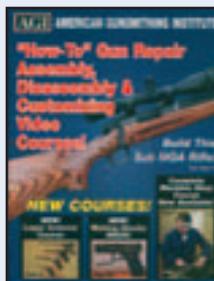


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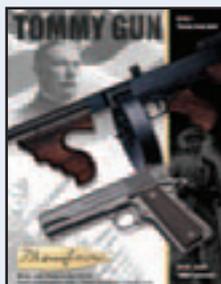
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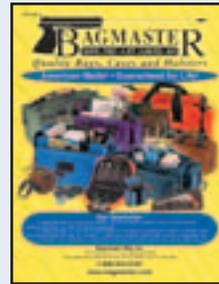
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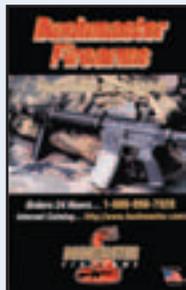


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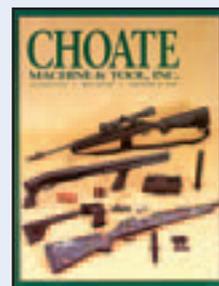
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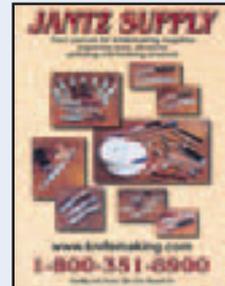


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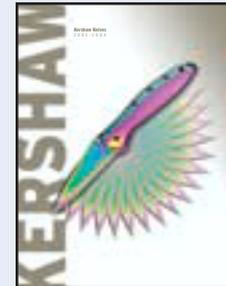
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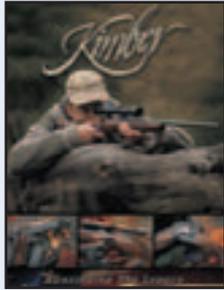
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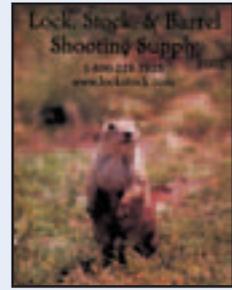
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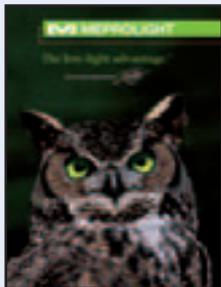
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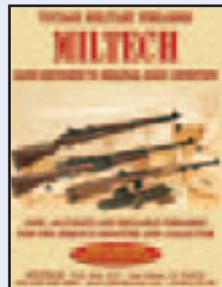
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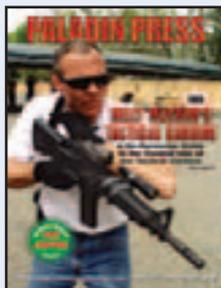


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A Cause For Wonder

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pique the imagination, some so aged they require considerable detective work to figure them out. If you have to explain an interest in cartridge cases, that person won't understand. The rest of us stop, stoop, and pick up an old "shell," relishing in the find.

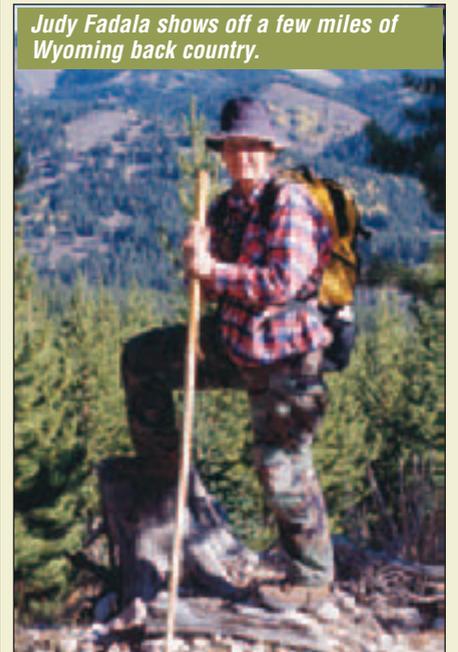
I like to roll a scene on the cinema of my mind based upon the lay of the land. For example, I snatched up a weathered .32-40 Winchester empty on a ledge overlooking a prime piece of whitetail creek bottom habitat. I think a hunter shot at a deer below. I can see it clearly. He lifted his Model '94 Winchester lever-action rifle, aimed, fired and... we don't know the rest of the story.

Perhaps he was successful. Or maybe the buck plunged through the heavy brush, its white flag doing the windshield wiper routine — back and forth, back and forth, as they do in that territory. I brushed the case against my shirt, stuck it in a pocket, and ambled on. I saw a buck that same day, in the same creek bottom, taking it with a vintage Mannlicher 9x56mm carbine. Normally, I save fired cases. This time I shucked the empty out on the ground, kicking it off of the path for someone else to run across, perhaps in a distant future.

Detective Work

Part of the fun is identifying found cartridges. My favorite study guide is *Cartridges of the World*, (COTW) the dedicated work of Frank C. Barnes offered now in a 9th Edition edited by M.L. McPherson. Barnes loved the study of cartridges. He devised a solid identification program with several criteria, along with a table at the back of the book providing specifics for cartridges ranging from the 2.7mm Kolibri to the .50-caliber Browning.

Headstamps make ID easy. But they are not always present, especially with military cartridges or eroded examples residing in the dirt for decades. Barnes' book uses silhou-

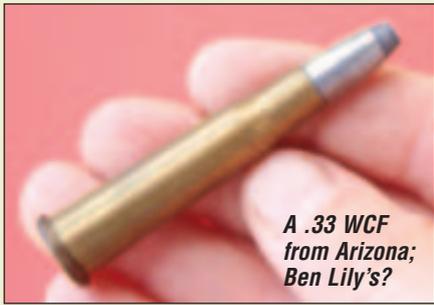


GUNS MAGAZINE



NOVEMBER
2003:

**Maximum
Mini
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**A .33 WCF
from Arizona;
Ben Lily's?**



ettes of cartridges that match up favorably with the real thing. I once ran across a dropped cartridge case on a high mountain trail in western Wyoming. It was an odd duck — rimfire, short, squat, with pointed lead bullet. The micrometer showed caliber .40 or a bit larger.

Placing the round upon the black silhouette pictured on page 423 of COTW showed it to be a .41 Short, noted as a popular rimfire in its day but, "so underpowered as to be worthless for anything but rats," according to Barnes. He was right. The bullet was only 130 grains in weight pushed by 13 grains of blackpowder. I wonder who dropped that fat little derringer round high in the mountains so long ago?

On the plains I located a darkened case, large bore. Age and the ravages of time had not obliterated this headstamp. It was never there. Military? The micrometer went to work. The case was .50-caliber. Straight wall. A game of elimination put the old-timer in its place. Too short for a .50 Bullard. Too long for a .50 Maynard. This was a .50-70 Musket, also known as the .50-70 Government. No magic crystal ball was required to visualize a buffalo hunter of the latter 19th century firing on a shaggy. "It was said to be very effective on buffalo and other heavy game," reported Barnes.

The primer was different, the Benet type, invented by Col. S.V. Benet and adopted by the U.S. Army in 1866. The priming compound was extremely sensitive. It had no anvil and had to be handled carefully. The .50-70 Government saw duty in the Springfield Trapdoor single-shot rifle from 1866 to 1873, the first centerfire in general U.S. military use.

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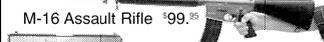
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Echo Of The Past

Perhaps an even more interesting find was a heavily corroded spent case picked up in the mountain peaks of western Wyoming. I was sheep hunting and had just (stupidly) passed up a chance at a decent ram, a 40-yard opportunity. As I crouched back behind my boulder, allowing the ram to quietly disappear rather than spooking him, there it was, resting openly upon a flat rock, a .38-56 Winchester case.

This time the headstamp remained clearly readable: "W.R.A. Co. .38-56 W.C.F.," translating to: Winchester Repeating Arms Company, .38-56 Winchester Center Fire. Incidentally, sometimes Winchester did "Co." sometimes "CO." for company. Winchester's 1916 catalogue listed the .38-56 with a "grooved" 255-grain bullet and 56 grains of black powder. Also offered with smokeless powder, full patch, or jacketed soft point bullet at \$40 per thousand rounds.

Barnes notes the .38-56 on the scene in 1887 for the 1886 Winchester lever-action repeater, also chambered for the Colt pump as well as Winchester single-shot rifle and Marlin's 1895 lever-action. It was factory-available until about 1936. A fellow sheep hunter fired that round on the mountain. That's what I like to believe.

There were worlds of different cartridges in the 19th century. I have found examples of many, including a smashed



.45-60, probably stepped on by deer, horse, cow, elk, moose — who knows? But sometimes a case defies identification.

No Easy Answer

I located four rounds of spent brass in a little heap alongside a nearly extinct trail in the mountains. They were devoid of any markings whatsoever. They must be rimfire, I concluded. Each had a deep dimple dead center, but the mark may not have been made by a firing pin, just as we have Federal Gold Medal .22 Long Rifle ammo with a deep centered indentation. Or perhaps this was a case with inside priming, which the editor of this magazine suggested.

True collectors are professional investigators. Perhaps one of these sleuths is reading this. So what are these cases? They're flattened and caliber is difficult to determine, but seems to be .50 plus, straight wall, .673-inch rim diameter.

Another interesting find was a .38-55 case with a .30-30 headstamp, very old, reading "W.R.A. CO. .30 W.C.F." So the idea of using one case to form into another is hardly new with today's handloaders. I have run across everything from small caliber rimfire to .50 caliber Machine Gun, even a few 20mms on my walks in the wild. The Big .50s are especially easy to locate in Wyoming antelope country, where, I am told, World War II Army Air Corps pilots practiced.

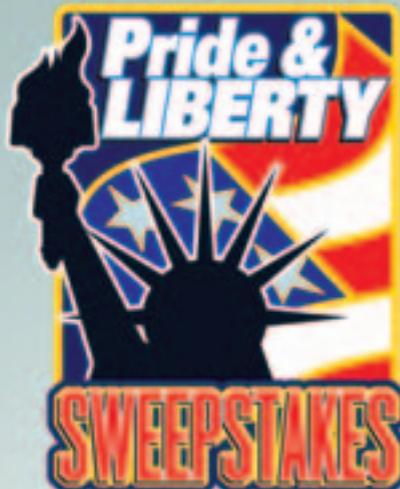
Just about everything is collectible these days, from ugly little dolls to colored glass insulators and medicine bottles. Depending upon the viewpoint of the observer these are either treasures or trash. As a friend put it, "Most artifacts and antiques are the garbage of other people." Perhaps spent cases located upon the countryside are nothing more than refuse left behind in the haste of the hunt or by those who had no further use for them as potential reloads. However, I don't regard them as such. I see them as bits and pieces of American history, each one with a story of its own.

Following The Hawk

One of my treasures is a .33 Winchester cartridge, intact, located on a hunt in Arizona. It reminded me of Ben Lily who left his wife to catch up to a hawk that was terrorizing the chicken coop. He was gone for years, hunting grizzlies and mountain lions in Arizona and New Mexico. As Ben put it, "That hawk just kept flying," and he had to follow. His rifle was a Winchester lever-action Model 1886 chambered for what was then the state-of-the-art .33 Winchester cartridge with its 200-grain jacketed bullet.

Will Rogers said he never met a man he didn't like. I've never found a spent cartridge case that wasn't interesting.





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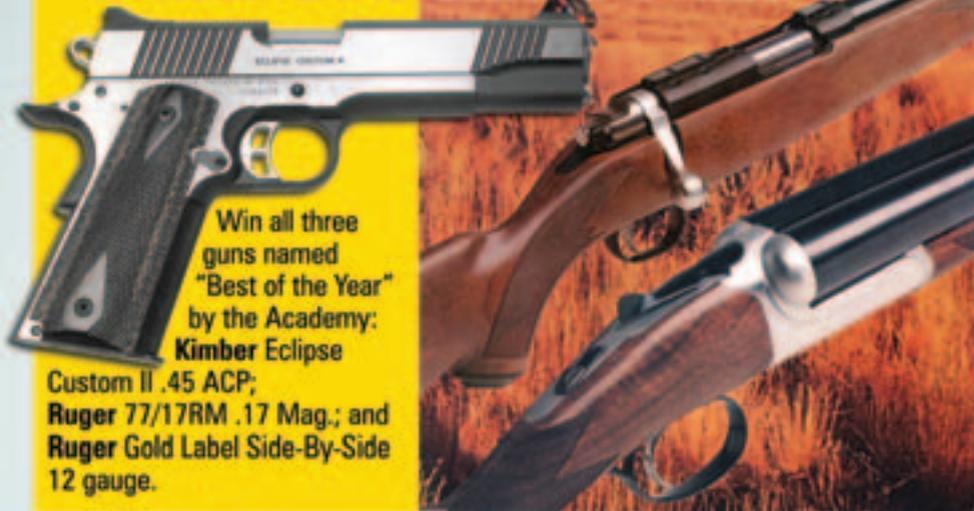


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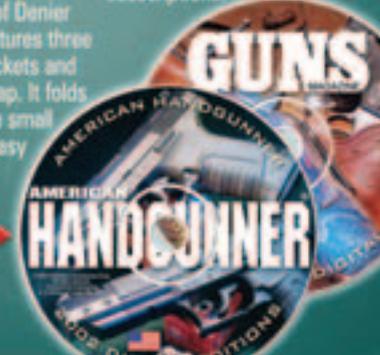


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Wolverine Hunter From Kellam Knives

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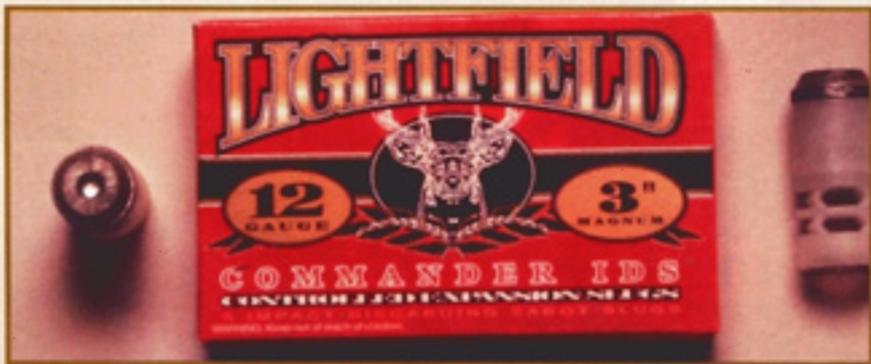
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Three New Custom Knives

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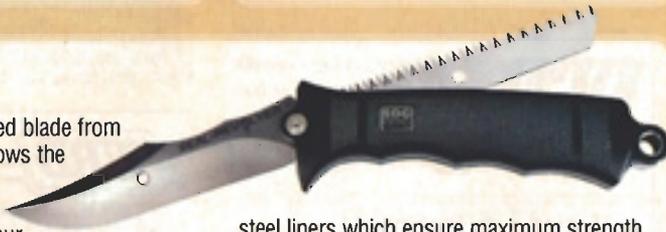
Buck announces the addition of three new custom blades to its family of fine knives. Pictured top to bottom are the Model 196 Mini Alpha Hunter with 2.5-inch drop point blade and elk antler handle, the Model 532 BuckLock folding knife with three-inch drop point blade and Sambar stag handle inlays with limited edition gift box and the Model 932 Custom Medium Skinner with sweeping 4 1/2-inch drop point blade and elk antler handle detailed with a cut-out of an elk profile. Contact Buck Knives, 1900 Weld Blvd., El Cajon, CA 92020, phone: [619] 449-1100, FAX: [619] 562-5774, Website: www.buckknives.com



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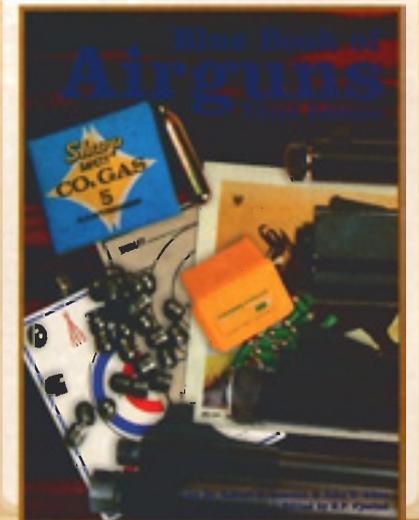
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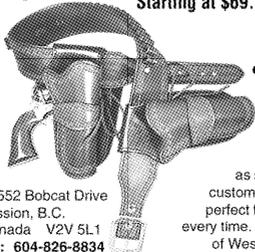
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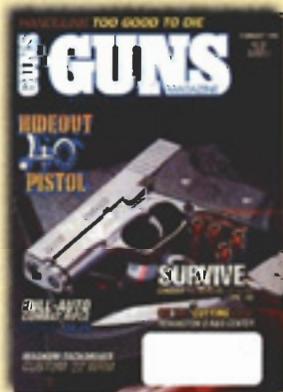
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CAMPEIRE TALES

continued from page 82

the manufacturer is; and for this trickery to occur it would require a totally dishonest seller and a completely uninformed (stupid?) purchaser.

I was first asked to fly back east to give my deposition. Regular readers of this column know I do not normally fly except in cases of dire necessity or an extreme emergency. I did not classify the situation as either. The lawyers were willing to come to me. It was just a matter of being able to get the schedule of the lawyers for both sides to coincide with each other at the same time I was available. This took about six months.

The Adventure Begins

Finally, early this spring, three lawyers arrived in my town and also hired a court stenographer and video photographer to record everything. I expected a totally negative experience, however I was instead quite surprised. At the end of my time as a witness I was definitely weary, however I thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

The deposition took three days. The first day was spent with the defendant's lawyers, with us just getting to know each other and trying to figure out what questions I would be asked by the plaintiff's lawyer. I was also able at this time to share some new things I had learned historically speaking.

The second day found me being "grilled"

all day by the lawyer for the plaintiff. Now I have watched enough television to know what to expect from lawyers. I was wrong. He did not try to trip me up. He did not try to discredit me. He did not attack me in any way. I was surprised in the afternoon when he said, "I have no further questions of this witness." He had been totally respectful, asked straightforward questions and I was surprised to find he knew more about my writings than I did. He had definitely done his homework. When we were not in the lawyer and witness roles, we talked firearms and I was pleased to find he was a knowledgeable shooter.

Now it was "our" turn on the third day. I was so excited about this I could hardly sleep the night before thinking about my presentation and the questions I would be asked by the defendant's lawyer as he cross-examined. My main task would be "show and tell" as several dozen single actions would be used to provide a panorama of single action sixgun history from the 1836 Paterson right up through today's offerings. The defendant's lawyer spent several hours questioning me while having me display various single actions.

One of my biggest problems as a witness was wanting to always add more to my answers. As I was re-examined in the afternoon by the plaintiff's lawyer I could see the wheels going around in the head of the defending lawyer as he took extensive notes. By now I learned that this fellow was good at what he did and he would be asking me

questions to elaborate or explain anything when his chance came again. I basically stayed with "yes" and "no" answers until he had his chance. He did not disappoint me.

That evening the two lawyers for the defendant shared supper with my wife and I, and then the two of them did the dishes. After that we all went to the local indoor shooting range together. One of them was an accomplished shooter; the other had never shot. He can now say he has fired a .22, a .357 Magnum, and a .45 Colt. After the shooting session we all went to a restaurant with some friends gathered up at the range who had also been shooting and we simply had an excellent time visiting over pie.

Before leaving town they asked me to direct them to a western store so they could each buy a proper hat. While I was in the hospital recuperating from a blood clot in my lungs after Easter, the lawyers sent me flowers. That's a pretty human thing to do.

After this experience with the lawyers from both sides I am no longer in the lawyer bashing mode. I found all three of these gentlemen to be most pleasant to be around (especially when we were not in the lawyer/witness mode), thoroughly knowledgeable, excellent at what they do, and most importantly men of extreme integrity. The writers of television scripts need to take a look at *real* lawyers.

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CAMPFIRE TALES

BY JOHN TAFFIN

NO LAWYERS

One of the world's toughest businesses is the restaurant business. It seems that the most successful ones find some kind of a gimmick to survive. Two establishments may serve food of equal quantity, quality and price. One survives and does well; the other goes out of business. The key to survival is which one has the best gimmick or at least the one that is perceived as best by the public. My tastes must run against the norm, as my favorite places are usually the ones that disappear.

One of our local establishments came up with a great advertising ploy in 1985, and I just read in the paper that after 40 years at the same location they are now moving to larger quarters. The gimmick cost them \$10,000 nearly 20 years ago. That was the amount the couple owning the business had to pay in lawyer's fees when they were sued by their neighbor, who happened to be a lawyer.

It seems this couple applied for a permit to put a swimming pool in their backyard. Their lawyer neighbor sued to prevent its being built, claiming it would wind up as a noisy nuisance. The lawyer lost while the couple won in more ways than one. Ever since this episode a sign has gone up on their business proclaiming "No Lawyers." It was just what they needed as a great boost to their business. Their menu features lawyer jokes and they also sell T-shirts with "What do you call a lawyer with an IQ of 70? Your Honor"

Common Perception

They struck gold simply because most of society consider lawyers as bottom feeders somewhere on the ladder beneath used car salesman and alphabet network anchormen. Several hundred years ago it was Shakespeare who said, "First kill all the lawyers." This was repeated in the Tyrone Power and Henry Fonda movie *Jesse James* as the editor, played by Henry Hull, expresses the same sentiment. I will admit to once being a lawyer basher, but this was, in the words of Burt Lancaster as Bob Valdez in *Valdez is Coming*, "Before I Know Better."

Until very recently my only first-hand experience with lawyers had been 20 years ago when I served as a witness in a child custody case. The lawyers on both sides perfectly filled the stereotypical perception we normally have of lawyers. Both men did everything they could to destroy the credibility of everyone concerned and paint them as the worst possible human beings.

The only official in the whole courtroom with any true feeling of right and wrong as well as really caring for the

kids involved was the judge. He did a thoroughly good job of lecturing both parties and both lawyers on the fact we were there to find what was best for the kids. At the time I did not even think of the fact the judge was also a lawyer. I came away from that experience with no respect whatsoever for lawyers.

In the past few years my opinion of lawyers has changed drastically. This first started happening four years ago when I found myself as Chairman of the Board of Elders in my church needing to consult a lawyer over a problem we had. Both myself and the finance chairman met with a lawyer for two long sessions. He told us exactly what we needed to do to correct the situation and also the steps to be taken so it could not happen again. Not only did he help us tremendously, he did not charge one penny for his services. "This," I thought to myself, "is certainly not the typical lawyer."

In The Company Of Attorneys

Last year I was contacted and asked to serve as an expert witness in a case involving one firearms manufacturer suing another company that is actually an importer of parts which are then used to build completed guns as well as importing completed single actions. I was not comfortable with the expert label. Today with our 24/7 "news" coverage we are bombarded with experts of every type and political persuasion every time there is a real or perceived crisis. All that broadcasting time has to be filled with something.

When I was a kid, a dime could buy you a cup of coffee or a dozen experts. Today the price of coffee is much higher. I felt better after I checked The Oxford Dictionary and found expert defined as one having special knowledge or skill in the subject. That I could handle.

"Expert" witnesses are normally paid very well. However, I refused any payment for my services for the simple fact that I have written about both companies and I will probably write about both companies in the future. I have pointed out the positive aspects and negative aspects of both company's product line and I expect to do that in the future as well. By not accepting any payment, I cannot be accused of being biased in favor of one firm's products over the others.

My testimony was offered simply because I think the plaintiff is wrong in his claim that people are buying the defendant's products and somehow being fooled into thinking they are getting the other companies products. Shooters have to be smarter than this. All guns are clearly marked as to the manufacturer and/or importer; when the federal 4473 form is filled out, it must clearly list who

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