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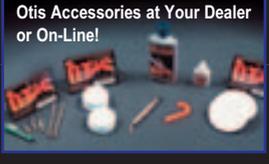
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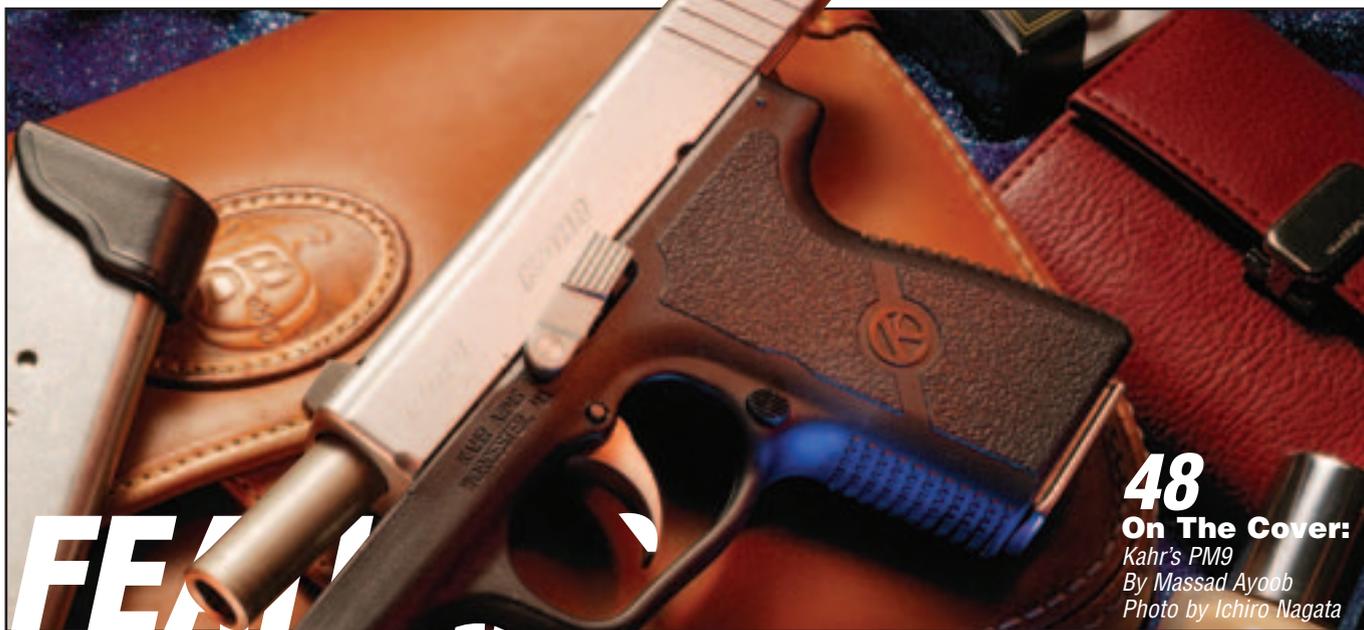
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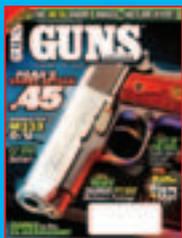


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GUNS MAGAZINE
SEPTEMBER 2003

CROSSFIRE LETTERS TO GUNS

GUNS MAGAZINE™ welcomes letters to the editor for "Crossfire." Send your letters to:
CROSSFIRE, GUNS Magazine, 591 Camino de la Reina, Suite 200, San Diego, CA 92108. Email: ed@gunsmagazine.com

Letter Of The Month

I have been an avid reader of the firearms press for over 25 years. By far the best article in the last quarter century has been John Taffin's "Guns in the Classroom?" in your September issue.

Young people are the future of our sport, our industry, and the 2nd Amendment. All of us 50 (or 60) somethings can talk 'til we're blue in the face about the latest "Super Belchfire" piece of hardware, but if we don't get kids interested in shooting, we are going to go the way of the dinosaurs.

A perfect follow-on to that article would be for Mr. Taffin and Mr. Walters to take the kids to a range. Shooting .22s, the kids would probably have the time of their lives. Let Mr. Taffin know I'd be happy to contribute \$50 to \$100 dollars to an event like that.

Dean Coldiron
Santa Clara, Calif.

Still More Wish Lists

Guns I would like to see made:

- 1) A Ruger Single Six with the regular grip and the bisley grip in .22LR, with an 8-shot cylinder and octagonal barrel. Why waste all that metal on a 6-shot cylinder?
- 2) A .22 caliber conversion kit for the SIG P220 and SIG P226. Are you listening J.A. Ciener?
- 3) A Ruger GP-100 with a 4-inch barrel in .45 Colt.
- 4) S&W to re-introduce the Model 25 revolver in .45 Colt.

Anthony Calabria
Staten Island, NY

It's The '06 For Me!

With the new 'short' mags becoming all the rage, we shooters now must have somewhere in the neighborhood of 10,000 different calibers and case lengths to choose from. First there were double rifle big bore magnums, then long-action belted mags, and now short action, and super short-action mags.

I'm approaching 60 good years of life in the field, variously hunting in Wyo., Northern Minn., Mont., Ariz. and N.M., as my job required moving around quite a bit. I've bashed around the backcountry in pursuit of elk, mule deer, whitetail, black bear and antelope, all with my brace of Sakos in .30-'06.

One of them is an old FN mauser sporter and the other a newer Finnbear. I simply can't imagine taking anything else to the field except these old, primitive, long actions in a hundred year-old caliber. But you know what, in bullet weights of 150- to 180-grains, and a good handload, all these critters have fallen to my trusty old Sakos — usually with the first shot. Having packed them afield for nearly 40 years, I kind of know where they hit.

If you are enamored by these new ultra short magnums, have at it and add to your collection of firepower. I however, am fully satisfied with my two-gun battery for big game even though they do look a little worn around the edges.

Joe Spehar
Springerville, Arizona

Another Vote For A Rossi '86

Here's a couple for the wish list you are compiling at GUNS magazine:

I'd like to see Rossi introduce a Model 1886 in 45-70. Not being a U.S. company, they might not add a totally unnecessary tang safety, and I might be able to actually afford their version. I sure can't afford Winchester's!

While we're at it, how about Uberti introducing a Model 1876 as well? As both of these companies currently manufacture the pistol caliber versions of these same rifles, enlarging the actions to suit rifle caliber rounds shouldn't prove an insurmountable challenge.

Dave Buck
Upper Hutt, New Zealand

Politically Incorrect

I enjoy reading a magazine I find entertaining and educational. GUNS magazine fits both criteria. I have enjoyed it for some time, and the September '03 issue had many great articles, but I will just give you my two cents worth on two of them.

First, I enjoyed John Taffin's "Guns in the Classroom." I am sure you will get many comments concerning this entertaining epitome of political incorrectness. I would have never guessed a private citizen would have been able to take a firearm onto school property without being arrested.

Although the firearms were a valid teaching tool concerning the history of the time

period, I doubt that there are any liberal politicians who would appreciate using them in that role. I remember guns being a common sight in the parking lot of the high school I attended many years ago, and I was probably much safer then than children going to school today.

Second, I enjoyed David Fortier's article concerning the Para-Ordnance Carry Option LDA. I have thought that it is a very nice looking gun, and it has features I am looking for in a concealed carry weapon. Thanks to the article, I will probably look around some more before I decide to buy.

Although the gun worked fine after he sent it back to the factory, I don't want to take the chance of having to go through the hassle.

Thanks for the information and entertainment,

Jeffrey T. Koogler
Springdale, Ark.

It's worth noting that anyone who has worked in the retail firearms trade can relate stories of defective products from every manufacturer. Guns are mass produced items, and the occasional defective example is bound to surface despite careful quality control efforts.

The real measure of a company is how well they react to help a consumer with a truly defective product. The September cover story showed two things worth noting: First that Para made its product right, and secondly, that we shared with you the truth of this test as it happened. Ed.

Bring 'Em Back, Please!

I hope I haven't waited to late to get on the "Wish List." I would like to see:

- 1) USRAC (or whoever holds the patent) come back with the Winchester Model 100 with the original calibers plus the .358 Winchester, particularly the carbine version.
- 2) S&W come back with the Model 631 (.32 H&R) with a 3-inch heavy underlug barrel, adjustable rear sight, "express" front with 1/8-inch gold bead on top of a neat little ramp.
- 3) Savage bring back the Model 24 in its original configuration with a slim, trim composite stock.

Charles Wilkins
Ash Flat, Ark.



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Ol' Moze

Three days ago, at 2:30 in the morning, my account finally came due.

For the first few years, you tend not to think about it much. But as they grow older and become such an integral part of your life, a thought surfaces in the dark recesses of your brain. You know one day you'll pay in tears and heartbreak for the joy you're experiencing now.

Of course it can happen at any time. Maybe it will be a screech of tires and a sickening thud, or worse, the helpless agony of watching your beloved companion lose his fight against disease. But we expect a certain span of joy before the grief. For some this is granted. For some, it is not.

Moze wasn't a pup. He was three days short of nine years and four months when it happened. But of course I expected more years with him.

Something in his voice as he awakened me caused me to pick up a flashlight before letting him out. Instead, there was just enough moonlight to see him as he "watered" his favorite tree.

Then he fell to the ground.

The weather had been hot, and for a half second I thought he was cooling himself in the sand, but no. I ran to him, and sitting in the dust, I stroked and comforted him as he convulsed and the life left him. An ear to his side told me what I couldn't believe, that his great heart beat no longer.

His favorite blanket was spread upon the back porch, and I carried his limp body to it, brushing the leaves from his beautiful, soft coat. I placed my sleeping bag beside him and petted and spoke to him until dawn. How many nights had he watched over me and kept me warm along some trout stream or in a lonely desert camp? Now it was my turn.

It's hard to give thanks at such times, but I thanked God for the years he had given me with Moze. I thanked him that my pup had not suffered unduly, and that — hard as it was to witness — he had not been alone when his end came.

At first light, I began to make a safe resting place for my dear friend in that hard earth. I wrapped his big bear-like head in one of my favorite work shirts, as if to keep my scent in his nostrils. I took a lock of his long silky hair and cut a tuft of mine to press close to his heart before securing him in his blanket and laying him gently to rest.

Maybe that's silly, but you don't think so at such a time. And I'm not embarrassed to admit that as I covered his grave with rocks I stained each one with tears.

Yes, a dog — a good dog — is an account you'll have to settle one day. Now, set this magazine aside and go spend a few extra moments loving your pup. Because friend, the day will come when you would give anything to scratch



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behind those soft ears and look into his eyes once more. Goodbye Moze. It's a lonely world without you.

Point Of Clarification

The cover of our recent August issue carried the words "Cold Canadian Steel," denoting Pat Covert's excellent article on custom bladesmiths Greg Lightfoot and Brian Tighe.

Friend Lynn Thompson of Cold Steel™ knives telephoned recently to remark that the text was mighty close to his trademarked company name. I think Lynn was having fun pulling my chain, but just in case anyone had a question, nope, we weren't talking about *that* Cold Steel.™ Duly noted?

Now You See It, Now You Don't

Recently, I've been in contact with a nice fellow from Florida who does a particularly fine job of camouflaging rifles and other gear with a tough resin coating. Operating as Combat Coat, Inc.; Mark Dougan is an energetic and serious Marine who takes great pride in designing patterns to ideally match his customer's requirements. Law enforcement and military personnel make up the bulk of his customers, but hunters can make good use of his skills as well.

Dougan learned his craft while in the service, pattern painting his unit's rifles. His work was so popular it eventually blossomed into a business. Starting with his existing experience, Mark took several college art classes to expand his knowledge of the subject, and now offers a wide variety of very intricate and carefully thought out patterns to match any environment.

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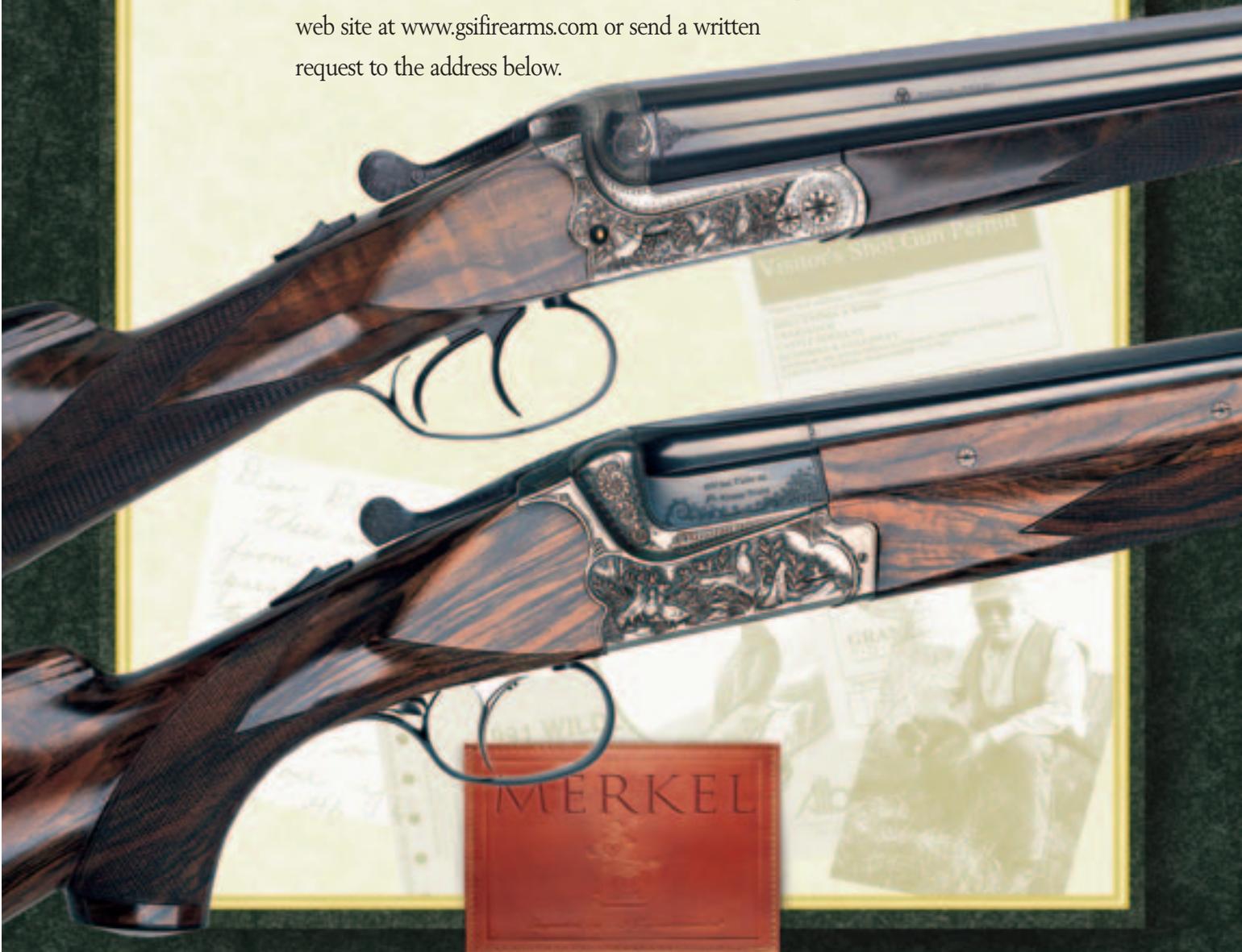


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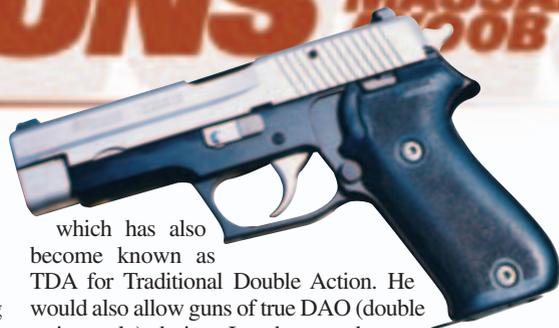


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HANDGUNS BY MASSAD JOB

The Niche Of The Double Action Auto



When police unions dragged their chiefs kicking and screaming into the world of semiautomatic service pistols, it was conventional double action (DA) autos that were purchased at first. The bosses figured that if pointing cocked revolvers at suspects with your pulse pounding was accident prone, pointing a cocked “automatic” couldn’t be better. The long, heavy pull of a double action first shot seemed to be a bulwark against unintentional discharges.

Time went on, and police administrators discovered that after the first shot, the DA pistol cocked itself. If the cop was bumped or startled with his finger still on the trigger, an accidental discharge was still a distinct possibility. Unscrupulous lawyers could also falsely allege, as has happened in multiple cases, that the officer cocked the gun to show off and “recklessly created a hair-trigger situation which he knew or should have known would increase the danger of a shot being fired unintentionally.” Thus was born the double action only auto.

The DA auto is widely thought to be much more difficult to shoot than a single action such as the 1911. IDPA, the International Defensive Pistol Association, certainly thinks so. You can make the top grade of Master in their DA auto category (SSP, or Stock Service Pistol) with a 97 second run on their challenging 90-round classifier course. To make Master with a 1911 .45 (CDP, or Custom Defense Pistol) you need to be down to some 91 seconds, and the mark is about 89 seconds for that rating with something like a Browning Hi-Power single action 9mm in ESP (Enhanced Service Pistol).

Ernest Langdon likes double action autos. He has made IDPA National Champion several times, beating all the single actions with his DA Beretta 92 9mm. He recently switched to another DA, the SIG P220 .45, and shoots it in CDP class against cocked and locked 1911s. In his last four major matches, he has won three times. Langdon keeps threatening to start an organization just for competition with his favorite type of pistol. He would call it DASA, the Double Action Shooting Association.

DA/SA is also a popular acronym for Double Action/Single Action, the classic format of this type of pistol,

which has also become known as TDA for Traditional Double Action. He would also allow guns of true DAO (double action only) design. In other words, you could shoot your DAO or your TDA a.k.a. DA/SA in DASA.

Before I spill my alphabet soup, let’s go into some details.

Defining Double Action

Langdon feels the spirit of “double action” means a pull so long and heavy that it should have to be intentional is required to fire the first shot. It should have to raise a hammer from an at rest position. He figures the rules should prohibit guns that are partially pre-cocked.

No striker fired guns. No guns that don’t have second-strike capability. That would take out the most popular gun in IDPA Stock Service Pistol, the Glock. It would also eliminate the Springfield Armory XD, all the double action only S&W autos, all the Kahr pistols, and all the Para-Ordnance LDA models.

The rules in his hypothetical organization would require that every first shot from the holster be fired double action. This makes sense. It’s true to the real world need for speed, and it’s good for safety. Thumb-cocking the hammer on a double action auto is not a safe habit to get into for a number of reasons.

The fact of it is, the difficulty of managing a double action first shot — and of transitioning from that trigger pull to the shorter, lighter follow-up pulls — has been highly over-rated.

Managing Double Action

A long, heavy movement requires proportionally more power, and power comes not just from strength but from leverage. Therefore, the fit of the gun to the hand is more important with a DA auto, particularly in the element of trigger reach. You want to be able to get the distal joint of your trigger finger onto the trigger. You’ll be able to exert more leverage, as any experienced DA revolver shooter can tell you. Once that first shot has been fired, there is no need to change the finger’s position on the trigger. Leave it in contact at the distal joint.

Spend a day shooting “pairs,” one shot DA with an immediate SA follow-up shot. Spend another day of all double action shooting, decocking between shots. Your trigger finger will quickly become educated. A fast, straight DA first shot and an instantaneous SA follow-up will soon become second nature.

If you’re interested in Ernest’s concept of a Double Action Shooting Association, contact him at Langdon Tactical Technology, Inc., PO Box 10759, Burke, VA 22015, or at www.langdontactical.com

While you’re at it, look into the superb custom work he does on Berettas and SIGs. I have one of each by Langdon, a Beretta 92 9mm and a SIG P220 .45. Both have put five shots into an inch and a quarter at 25 yards, with butter-smooth trigger pulls that make shooting a joy.



Above: This DAO SIG P220 is carried daily by a Chicago copper. **Below:** Grantham, N.H. officer Bob Schwartz in action with his department issue Ruger P90 .45.



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SHOTGUNNER BY HOLT BODINSON

The Universal Shotgun

The mood in my hometown was pretty tense following the attack of 9/11. We live close to the permeable U.S./Mexico border where thousands of illegals cross over without being detected each month. Within a few minutes drive are a Raytheon cruise missile assembly plant, major wings of A-10 Warthogs and electronic surveillance aircraft, and the Army's intelligence center.

The red flag was up.

We were being urged to stock up on canned foods, water, batteries, toilet paper and portable radios. Further terrorist attack scenarios being shared with us included everything from suitcase size nuclear bombs to bio-chemical weapons. No one was talking about guns and ammunition, but I bet every gun owner in the country was thinking about them.

Which brings up the question, what gun or guns would you grab if you had to evacuate your home and community on a moment's notice?

Well, whatever you decide, don't leave your shotgun behind. The shotgun is the most versatile firearm system ever developed. It can serve as a shotgun, an accurate big bore rifle, a handgun, and even as a flare gun. It can put food in the pot, and it can secure the lives of you and your family like no other firearm can. It is the ultimate "street stopper."

Which shotgun to take with you is a more difficult question.

While we love our svelte doubles for target shooting and hunting, they are limited in their firepower, mechanically hard to access and work on, inflexible in design, and almost impossible to find parts for.

Well, how about a semiautomatic? They offer lots of firepower. The design is somewhat flexible. Their mechanisms are accessible for maintenance and cleaning, although they are complex and unique to each maker. They're also expensive.

No, if push comes to shove, my choice is the pump gun. This good old American design is simple, easy to understand, operate, clean and maintain, very reliable, flexible and offers as much firepower as the magazine will hold. It's relatively inexpensive and the variety of after-market accessories available for it is mind boggling.

If yours is a Remington 870, Mossberg 500/590/600, or Winchester 1200/1300, you can just about make any-



thing you want out of it. My concept of the all-purpose pump gun for tough times runs something like this.

Purpose-Built Defense

If I were in the family evacuation mode, driving a car, I would like my pump to be as compact and handy as possible. If necessary, I would like to be able to shoot it one-handed. This means re-stocking it with either a folding butt stock or with pistol grips on the forearm and at the rear of the receiver. That would immediately reduce the gun's overall length by almost a foot and vastly improve its maneuverability within a vehicle.

I would have removed the magazine plug and might have added an 8, 9, or 10 shot magazine extension tube. Loaded with a mix of number 1 or 4 and OO buck, I would feel pretty secure; however, I would have a sidesaddle shotshell carrier on the side of the receiver filled with rifled slugs just in case.

Barrels and chamberings are another matter.

Ideally, I would like my gun to be chambered for the 3 inch/12-gauge shell. The 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ - and 3-inch shells will be the most commonly available after the panic and having the ability to chamber a 3-inch case adds to our gun's flexibility.

The ideal barrel should be short. Let's say between 18 and 22 inches, more like a turkey or slug barrel than a waterfowling tube. It should be fitted with interchangeable choke tubes and that would include a rifled choke tube for shooting sabot slugs. In fact, because it is short and factory fitted with high visibility open sights and choke tubes, the common turkey barrel may be perfection. Well, one might want to carry along a completely separate rifled slug barrel with scope, but I think it would add unnecessary complexity to the kit.

Ammunition? Just a box each of No. 6 for upland game; No. 4 for waterfowl; No. 4 or 00 buck and rifled slugs for personal protection and big game hunting; and 10, 12-gauge flare shells for signaling.

So after all this theorizing, what pump guns fill the bill? A lot. Mossberg, Remington and Winchester all offer models that range from turkey guns to tactical that would be ideal. Mossberg even packs a pistol grip with some of its models.

If you already own a Mossberg, Remington or Winchester and haven't explored the world of after-market accessories, do so. It's an education. Among the leading sources are TacStar, Butler Creek, Choate, and Speedfeed, or you can go directly to Brownell's master catalog.

And let's pray we never have to turn the-



FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Brownells
[800] 741-0015
www.brownells.com

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www.butler-creek.com

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www.riflestock.com

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www.speedfeedinc.com

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Above: Sidesaddle shotshell carrier is a great design. **Below:** A defense-oriented pumpgun featuring accessories from Lyman/TacStar.



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QUARTERMASTER

BY DAVID M. FORTIER

LaserLyte QD Laser System

It doesn't seem so long ago that lasers were only the stuff of Sci-fi movies. Not anymore, today they're well within reach of the working man. One company offering reasonably priced laser sighting systems is LaserLyte. They make a Quick Detachable Laser System that's lightweight, compact, and priced right. Units are offered that mount easily onto a Beretta 92FS, SA-XD, Glock and S&W SW99 pistols sporting integral rail mounts on their dustcovers.

These lasers feature a QD mount CNC machined from Dupont Delrin, a high wear resistance polymer. This mount is rugged, but won't mar the finish on your handgun. The mount locks solidly in place on the weapon's rails via two cross locking pins. These are operated by 2 horizontally opposed spring loaded buttons. To install you simply depress the two buttons and slide the mount onto the rail.

This mount works with LaserLyte's universal laser body in both standard and Super Bright models. The laser features an ambidextrous switch located on the endcap. When the laser is mounted, the switch is positioned directly in front of the triggerguard. This allows easy on/off activation. Power is provided by three small, common watch batteries which give 1½ hours of continuous operation.

The round aiming dot projected by the Super Bright model I tested was very easy to see indoors, outdoors on an overcast day, or in subdued light. Regulating the laser to the firearm is easily accomplished via two adjusting screws. Once zeroed, no problems of any kind were experienced, even firing snappy .40 S&W +Ps. Laserlyte lists the max-



imum range of the Super Bright model as 1,000 yards. Weight of the complete unit is a scant 1.8 ounces. Price? \$119.95 for the standard model and \$149.95 for the Super Bright. If you're looking for a reasonably priced laser sight that's easily mounted/dismounted from your pistol, LaserLyte's QD laser system is one to consider.



FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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Technical specifications
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Length closed 26"
Barrel length 16"

QUARTERMASTER

BY DAVID M. FORTIER

Katz Knives Safari Kit

Headed into the woods for some relaxation, fun and adventure? Trying to bring only what you need to lighten your load? Well, if so Katz Knives has a nifty new tool you'll want to consider. Called the Safari Kit, it features a quick release handle, a hatchet head, and a 4-inch hunting blade.

The heart of the system is a sturdy steel handle with kraton scales. Pull a steel locking lever down and the hunting blade can be rotated 90 degrees and pulled off the handle. It may then be replaced with the axe head to form a hatchet.

Desire more versatility? No problem, Katz also offers an accessory kit. This consists of a 7½-inch fish file blade, a 6-inch boning blade, an 8½-inch wood saw and an 8½-inch bone/meat saw. These accessory blades are easily and securely mounted to the handle via a rugged steel backing plate. The accessory blades, like the Safari Kit, come packed in a high quality leather sheath.

Designed by Keith Derkatz, the Safari Kit is well made and designed. The 4-inch hunting blade and hatchet are both manufactured of XT80 stainless steel while the accessory blades are carbon steel. Out of the box the knives (and hatchet) were sharp enough to shave hair off my arm. In use the different blades were quickly and easily exchanged, even in the field with cold, wet and tired hands. Mounted, they lock rigidly in place.

While I don't usually carry a hatchet afield, I was impressed by how well this one chopped. Plus the wood saw, which cuts on



the draw stroke so as not to bend the thin blade, quickly ate through 4-inch limbs.

Simple, and well made with quality blades, the Safari Kit is a handy tool for anyone needing to travel light. Price? \$269 for the Safari Kit and \$118 for the accessory kit.



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QUARTERMASTER

BY DAVID M. FORTIER

Wolf Adds .308 Winchester

Wolf Performance Ammunition continues to expand their ammunition line with the introduction of .308 Winchester. It was only a few short years ago the Wolf label first appeared on the U.S. market. Produced at Tula Cartridge Works in Russia, the original offerings were largely Com Bloc calibers. However, the quality was good and the prices were even better. This coupled with the amount of ammunition that "black gun" shooters expend, quickly put Wolf on the map.

Since their start Wolf has gone on to introduce not only Western calibers but also entirely new lines of ammunition types. Today, in addition to their steel-cased centerfire line they also offer high quality German made .22 LR Match ammunition, brass-cased 7.62x54R EXTRA Match ammunition and 12- and 20-gauge shotshells.

Wolf's new .308 Winchester load though is a return to their roots. It's a quality load offered at an inexpensive price for people who enjoy high volume shooting. Like the rest of their centerfire rifle and handgun ammunition this steel cased load is manufactured in Russia. It features a 150-grain FMJBT at an advertised velocity of 2,800 fps.

This projectile is seated into a Berdan primed steel cartridge case. To minimize bore wear and ensure this load is welcome at ranges across the country, the projectile sports a copper jacket (rather than steel) and lead core. Priming is non-corrosive. For long storage life the case mouth and primer annulus are coated with a sealant.



With the recent huge influx of FAL, CETME, and G-3 type rifles, good quality .308 ammunition is in high demand. My initial testing of cartridges randomly selected from two different cases of ammunition revealed consistent velocities. Accuracy from a Steyr SBS HB Tactical rifle was surprisingly good averaging 1.125-inch 5 shot groups at 100 yards off the bipod. Best of all, like all Wolf Performance Ammunition this load is priced with the working class shooter in mind.



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“Go Outside And Play!”

Have you driven through any neighborhoods lately? It seems to me there is a shortage of kids playing outside. Remembering back to being a kid I recall one of Mom’s standard responses, “Go outside and play.” Fortunately, my mom was different than a lot of others as she actually got in the tree house with us and shrieked like a banshee in a Tarzan movie.

Playing outdoors was fun as I recall, we played cowboys and Indians (can’t do that anymore). Cops and robbers (can’t do that anymore). And general horseplay in the big fields around the place we lived, to include climbing on railroad tracks and dropping bombs (rocks) from the elevated railroad trestles above the river crossings.

In general many of the kids of today seem to play “safely” indoors with the Playstation® black boxes doing *Vice City™* level six, machine-gunning the police, stealing cars and otherwise hosing down of two or three city blocks with bullets.

Okay, no harm no foul, or is it?

Maybe if we keep our kids (in many cases medically documented to be overweight) indoors and allow the television and the video game console to be the resident “babysitter” we should not be surprised by their lack of interest in the outdoors, sports and firearms.

For most of you reading this, these observations would fall into the category of preaching to the choir. You already do something with your kids, but you also know a lot of people who don’t. There will come a day when these non-participating video kids can vote, unfortunately without having had to take physical education classes in school.

Because (of course), it might make them feel bad to be involved in sporting activities where they may “lose” a game which would crush their ego.

And all of these video demons that killed three million people in their “games” can’t possibly serve in the armed forces or in any capacity that would make them understand and appreciate the freedoms we enjoy — which by the way we know were not free.

So, issue number one: What about the kids? Send them outside to play. Teach them how to read a compass and map, build a fire, run a fire extinguisher, change a tire, load a magazine and maybe shoot a firearm under parental supervision. Now there’s a concept — parental supervision.

Issue number two: Mothers and Moms. In all candor I believe that women (who outnumber the men by the way), will decide the issue of civilian ownership of firearms in this country. The anti-gun million moms (who aren’t a million) appeal to the emotional side of women with their argument of “guns kill our kids.”

And my response is yes, of course they do. Many guns killed American kids in Iraq, Somalia, Vietnam and Tarawa. But at the same time, let’s not forget kids killed by their parents, in bathtubs, by drunk drivers, choking... hell, your kids were even killed while diplomats argued over the shape and seating arrangements of a peace talks table! Really want to get Mothers angry? Find out how many kids were killed playing high-school football over the last 10 years.

Mothers, you understand the language of emotion. Let’s try this one on for size: *Your* kids and grandkids will grow up to be slaves in this country without the ability to use guns to defend themselves in their homes or in their own country.

I am told that things change. I recently found paperwork to show I successfully participated in the high school rifle team for my four-year tenure there. The high school had a range in the basement, where we shot and stored the real rifles and ammunition used in the school-sponsored rifle team program.

We never had any school shootings.

I guess things do change.

Take your family, your wife, husband, kids and grandkids to a National cemetery on Veterans Day. Point out to them that the people buried under these flags are why they can pretty much live where they want, travel freely, go to church, and even own a gun if they choose to.

Then take your same group to the range and teach them to have guns in their homes safely and explain to them that it’s okay for them to defend themselves.

Here’s one thing that never changes. On each Memorial Day there are always more flags flying in the cemetery than there were the year before. I guess some of us are paying more interest on the loan of a “free country” than others.

So send your kids outside to play in our free country. And as a matter of fact, why don’t you go outside play with them.

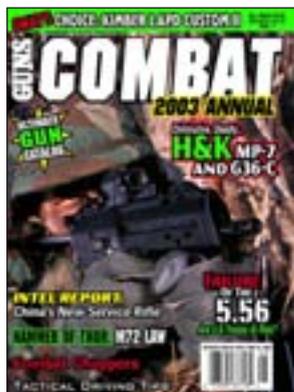


Civil War (above) and Korean veterans sleep side-by-side in a small southwestern cemetery.



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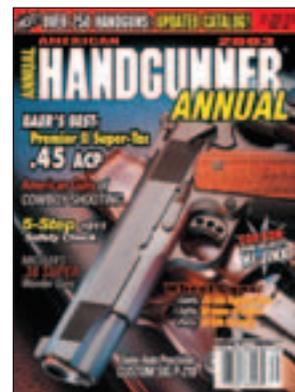
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A QUICK LOOK:
THE AIR FORCE
TALON SS

J.I. GALAN

Pre-charged pneumatic (PCP) rifles are currently enjoying a huge wave of popularity among the general shooting population. Although some PCP enthusiasts may not realize it, modern PCP rifles trace their ancestry back to the tremendously powerful pneumatic rifles developed in Europe and England more than 200 years ago for hunting large game such as deer and wild boar.

In a military context, some of the original European PCP rifles were also employed by Austrian sharpshooters to depopulate the ranks of Napoleon Bonaparte's seemingly unstoppable Grand Army.

Although today's PCP rifles are generally much less powerful than those of centuries gone by, they are still among the most potent of all air rifles produced at this time, easily surpassing the power levels of spring-piston, CO2 and traditional pump-up pneumatic rifles.

Made Right Here

AirForce Airguns is a true American pioneer in the production of modern PCP rifles. Their basic model, dubbed the Talon, was launched a few years ago and became an instant success. Part of that success was due to the fact the Talon offered lots of quality combined with practical design at an affordable price. Prior to the Talon's appearance, most PCP rifle production came from overseas and retail prices were steep enough to keep mama and the kids in groceries for several months.

The latest model from Air Force Airguns is the Talon SS, available in a choice of .177 or .22 caliber. For this report we tested a .22-caliber sample of this decidedly unusual rifle. Interestingly, interchangeable barrels in either caliber may also be had in a choice of either 12- or 18-inch lengths.



Variable power thumbwheel adds greatly to versatility.



Talon's breech open for loading.





*"Carrying handle" mounts iron or optical sights.
Below: The optional manual pump is very nicely made.*



The Talon SS looks unusual and sinister enough to be used in a James Bond film, given its all-black finish and unorthodox styling. In any event, the fact is that the Talon SS employs modern, state-of-the-art aluminum and space-age polymer construction throughout; one major-exception being the finely rifled Lothar Walther premium match-grade steel barrel. The Talon's frame is made of aircraft-grade aluminum alloy with a matte-black anodized finish that not only looks good but is extremely tough as well. Fully assembled, the Talon SS measures just 32.6 inches overall and weighs a rather feathery 5½ pounds.

Power Plant

Since the Talon's power plant — a 490cc removable air tank — doubles as the buttstock, this already compact rifle can be made even smaller for storage or transport by unscrewing the air tank from the receiver. This D.O.T.-certified aluminum air tank can be easily filled to a maximum working pressure of 2,800 psi (195 bar) via either a SCUBA tank or a special hand pump. The manufacturer can supply the required fittings for either method. The latter, incidentally, retails for \$189.95, but is well worth the extra money.

A fully charged Talon air tank can give dozens of shots before a refill is needed, depending upon the power setting chosen. This rifle comes with a fully indexed Vernier-style power adjustment mechanism capable of allowing literally hundreds of different power settings. The thumb-operated adjustment wheel is located on the left side of the barrel shroud, just above the synthetic forend.

One additional, highly practical feature of the Talon SS is its integral dovetailed rail on the top and bottom of the barrel shroud. The top rail accepts the front end of the optional Tru Glo fiber-optic open sight system, while the adjustable rear sight fits the dovetailed top of the rifle's M-16-like carrying handle. Scopes and other special sights can also be mounted on the grooved carrying handle. In turn, the rail at the bottom of the barrel shroud can be employed to mount accessories such as sling swivels or a bipod, adding to the tremendous practicality of this unique air rifle.

The Talon comes with a surprisingly smooth two-stage trigger. The trigger blade can be adjusted for posi-

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tion and overtravel, but no adjustment for trigger pressure is provided. There is an automatic trigger safety located in front of the trigger. Cocking the rifle activates the safety every time. Cocking is accomplished by pushing the oversized bolt knob forward. This also exposes the breech for manually loading a pellet. The bolt must then be pulled back to close the action, leaving the rifle ready to fire the shot.

An Excellent Feature

Like all air rifles in which compressed air stored in the gun is suddenly released with the shot, the Talon can be quite loud upon discharge, especially since this is also a rather potent gun. To solve that problem, the Talon SS incorporates an integrated sound reduction system that really works. In fact, the front section of the aforementioned barrel shroud acts as an air chamber that traps and slows down the high-pressure air blast following the pellet's exit from the bore, greatly reducing the muzzle report that this air rifle would normally generate.

The .22-caliber Talon SS on test was given a varied diet of pellets, producing impressive results. With a freshly filled air tank and set at full power, the rifle on test produced muzzle velocities averaging 841 fps, printing groups measuring approximately 3/4 inch across at 30 yards. Bringing the power adjustment down to the low-power setting, the Talon averaged 407 fps, still printing impressively tight groups at 10 yards. From the preceding, it is quite clear that this is a tremendously versatile air rifle for a wide variety of uses ranging from small-game hunting to backyard plinking.

Besides its impressive performance and rather deadly looks, the Talon gets very high marks in the 'user-friendly' department. In addition to its comfortable pistol grip, the straight-line buttstock/air tank sports a neoprene sleeve and a flat metal buttplate for extra comfort. Suggested retail for the basic gun without sights is \$439.95. Add sights and refill clamp, and the total comes to \$499.95.

Although the Talon's looks are definitely not everyone's cup of tea, its performance leaves little to be desired. Incidentally, the standard Talon — similar to the SS but without the barrel shroud — can also be purchased for the same price as the Talon SS. Besides a clearly written instruction manual, the Talon SS also comes with a videotape that helps illustrate all the operational aspects of this most unusual air rifle.



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FIELD NOTES FIREARMS

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RCBS' Little Dandy

BY GLENN BARNES

Few things in the life of a serious shooter are as rewarding and fulfilling as reloading your own ammunition. Do you remember the first time you fired that inaugural batch of home-brewed ammo through your handgun? If you did your homework correctly, chances are that initial group chewed a ragged hole in the ten ring. Exciting, wasn't it?

As shooters become more experienced in the art of reloading and discover a degree in rocket science isn't needed to successfully build accurate loads, we are constantly on the lookout for ways to make this task easier and less time consuming. Most of us would rather spend more time at the range and less stooped over our loading benches.

With the possible lone exception being myself, reloaders are not generally lazy people. The next time you visit the range, spend a few minutes watching shooters retrieve their spent brass and you will discover a bevy of individuals hard at work. That's one of the reasons I normally play with my six-guns, no brass to pick up.

Good Green Gear

Since 1943 RCBS (in case you are curious, RCBS stands for Rock Chuck Bullet Swage) has been the industry leader in producing reloading equipment that is simple to operate, and manufactured to withstand a lifetime of arduous reloading chores without complaint or failure. Fred Huntington, founder of RCBS, thankfully for us,

built a reputable business by supplying shooters with modern reloading products that made life much easier for savvy shootists, or somnolent shooters like myself, who "roll their own" ammunition.

In spite of ultra-modern progressive reloading presses capable of turning out hundreds of quality handloads an hour, many shooters continue to rely on the various time honored single stage loading presses such as RCBS' Rockchucker, for the majority of their reloading needs. Simple and durable, that's what most shooters demand from their equipment and that's just what you get from this respected firm.

When cranking out a slow box or two of favorite recipes for one of my six-guns on my scarred old Rockchucker, I often find using a bench mounted powder measure an inconvenience due to the lack of space in my war room. RCBS solved this dilemma for many shooters enduring this same problem by offering the handiest powder measure for pistols ever conceived. It is a dandy, and they aptly designated this new product the "Little Dandy" pistol powder measure.

Simple And Efficient

Introduced in 1980, the Little Dandy was quickly accepted by shrewd reloaders across the country. Today, this marvel of powder measures is better than ever. Up to 400 different load combinations are possible for the 49 powders





listed in the charge table, while 28 interchangeable fixed-charged rotors are available to throw your favorite powder combinations.

The powder measure body is constructed from good old American steel and wears attractive bluing that actually rivals the metal finish on many firearms. The hopper is crafted from hard durable plastic and wears the one color that cannot be found in a box of Crayola crayons — RCBS green. Large and small threaded drop tubes are provided to secure a proper fit on cases ranging from .22 to .45 caliber. A threaded 7/8x14 TPI hex lock nut is included should you choose to mount the Little Dandy on an optional powder measure stand. (I suspect most Little Dandy users choose not to)

Each rotor is milled from a single piece of steel to exacting standards. A hole, or cavity, drilled in the rotor determines the powder charge weight and is numbered and stamped on the end of the rotor for easy identification. It's quite obvious these rotors are meticulously crafted and qual-

ity throughout. They even sport a blued finish to match the Little Dandy body. Fashion and appearance conscious reloaders should appreciate this thoughtful little touch.

Check That Chart

So how do we use this handy Little Dandy powder measure? I'm glad you asked. Determine which powder and charge weight you intend to use, then carefully inspect the chart and match the powder charge to the correct rotor. A rotor charge table or chart is provided with each Little Dandy powder measure or you can locate it in the current RCBS catalog. Make sure you use the correct rotor for the intended powder charge.

If you happen to be blind in one eye and can't see out of the other, like myself, you will probably not appreciate glancing over the rotor chart. Due to the enormous amount of information these tables provide, chart size is limited. The numbers are small and can easily run





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together, so double check the chart to insure you haven't mistakenly grabbed an incorrect rotor. A small magnifying glass can be a handy tool to keep around the bench for this purpose.

Once you've selected the proper rotor for your intended powder charge, make sure you double check the charge on an accurate powder scale. For instance, the charge table informs us that rotor number 17 should throw 9.0-grains of Alliant Unique powder. My number 17 only manages to toss out 8.7 grains. Three tenths of a grain isn't much of a difference in some circumstances while in others it could prove dangerous.

It has been my experience that whatever weight a given rotor happens to throw, that is what it *always* throws. Make your own chart and keep it handy for future reference. I've weighed literally thousands of charges thrown with the Little Dandy over the years and have never seen them vary more than one tenth of a grain even with heavy doses of bulky powders.

Little Dandy powder measures are simple to use and operate. The first order of business is to clean any road film (dried grease or oil) that may have accumulated on the rotors; any quality degreaser that air dries quickly works fine. Next, loosen the rotor guide screw and insert your chosen rotor, then tighten the screw in place. Lastly, fill the hopper with powder.

Drum Roll, Please

Assuming your prepped cases are lounging in the loading block ready for action, place the powder measure over the case with the drop tube lightly pressed against the case mouth. Grasp the knurled end of the rotor and give it an even half turn. The powder flows smoothly through the measure and you have an accurately charged cartridge case. Repeat these steps in a uniform manner until all cases are charged. Simple isn't it? Starting with a full hopper and depending on the particular load, I can generally charge around 100 cases or so before I need to fill up again.

I purchased my Little Dandy 12 years ago and use it on a regular basis. Problems have been non-existent, and it looks as good today as it did the day I brought it home. I have produced thousands and thousands of accurate handloads (they were usually only accurate when someone else was shooting them) with the Little Dandy and it has been a great time and space saver for me. Fun, simple to operate, and always reliable, that's my Little Dandy. 

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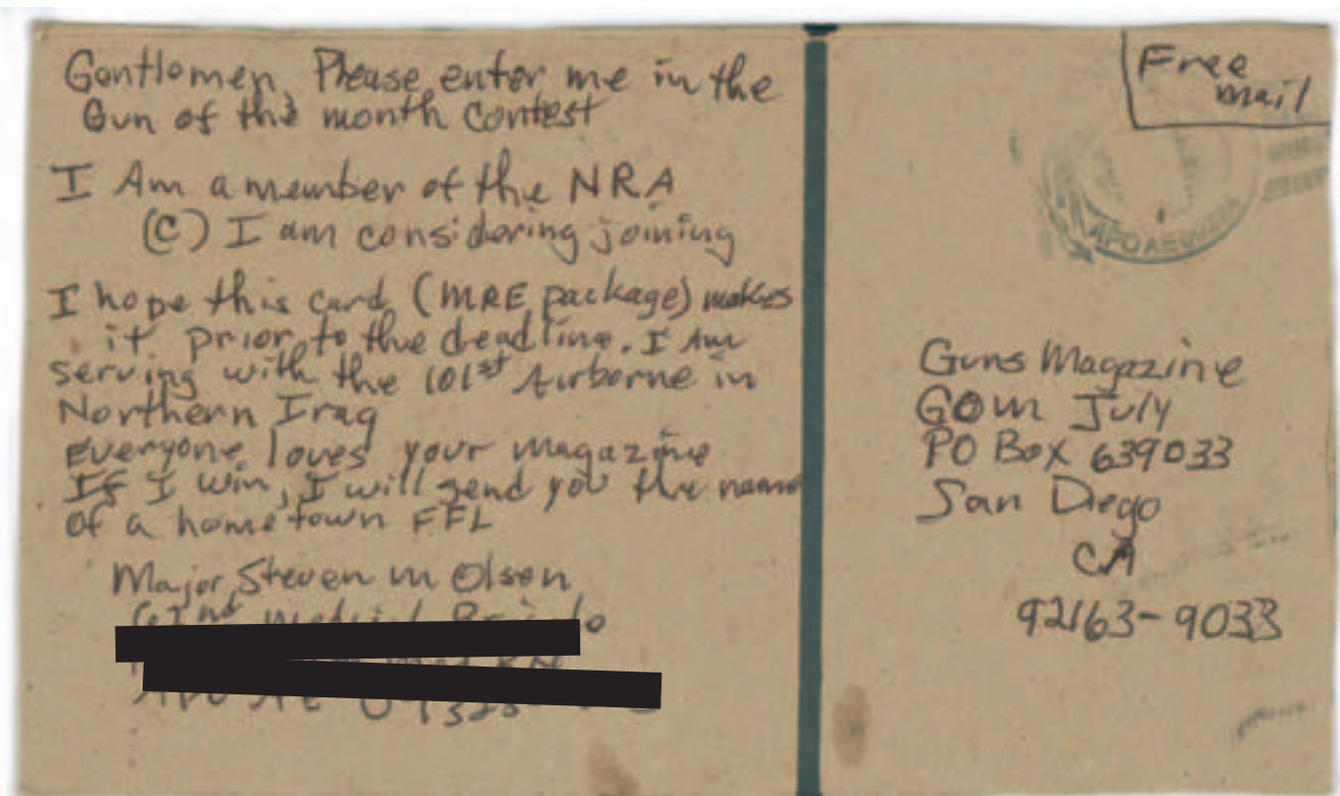
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RIFLEMAN BY DAVE ANDERSON

Good Things Come In Threes

Talley Scope Rings For CZ Rifles

The integral receiver scope bases on the popular CZ rifles is an excellent feature. CZ rings are strong and well made. My only objection to them is they mount the scope higher than necessary.

The fine Talley rings are available to fit CZ receivers. The rear ring has a projection to fit the notch in the receiver bridge to prevent ring movement from recoil. As with all Talley products they are precisely machined and beautifully finished in a smooth, non-reflective matte.

I used the Talley rings to mount a Leupold 3-9x40 Rifleman scope on my CZ Safari Magnum in .375 H&H Magnum. The rings fit both rifle and scope perfectly. The assembly is strong and rigid, with no ring or scope movement from recoil. I like the fixed version, but quick detachable rings are offered as well.

Improved Trigger For Marlin's 17V

Marlin's 17V in .17 Hornady Magnum Rimfire is an outstanding value. A sample I had on consignment gave superb accuracy, often placing five shots in a half-inch group or less at 100 yards. It's only drawback was a "liability trigger," with substantial creep and overtravel, and a weight of pull in excess of six pounds.

A friend who purchased a 17V solved the problem by shipping the rifle to Mike Johnson's Shooting Specialties for a trigger job. It came back with a crisp 2.5 pound break, free of creep and with minimal overtravel.

I called Mike to inquire about the job. He was a little vague on details, likely afraid I'd try it at home and lose a finger. In essence he said it was a matter of changing a couple of angles on a surface grinder, honing engagement surfaces and replacing the trigger return spring.

My pal absolutely dotes on his accurate little Marlin now that it has a first-rate trigger. It's a great buy, even after adding the \$65 cost of a trigger job to the moderate initial purchase price. You can spend a lot more on a .17, but I doubt you can get better accuracy at any price.



Garmin eTrex GPS

Some years ago I tested several GPS units. They were a great innovation, but also bulky, heavy, expensive and in some cases, overly complicated.

In fall of 2002 I bought a Garmin eTrex from Walmart for \$119.95. It is small, light (5.5 ounces), relatively simple to use, reliable, and a year later is still on its first set of batteries. I bought it mainly to keep from losing my pickup, but found a number of other uses as well.

On an elk hunt I used a topographical map with longitude and latitude markings along with the Garmin so we always knew exactly where we could legally hunt. Legal hunting hours in many areas are from a half-hour before sunrise to a half-hour after sunset. The Garmin shows sunrise and sunset times for the position it is located.

On a mule deer hunt with my wife, we shot a nice buck shortly before sunset, with the truck a long ways away across two large, deep valleys. We field dressed the deer and marked the position on the Garmin. Next morning we used the GPS to navigate the truck in from a different direction. Before moving the deer I went back to the place from which I'd fired and used the GPS to check my range estimate.

The eTrex displays ground speed, a feature I found useful for checking speedometer accuracy. On the other hand...

I found myself parked on the shoulder of Interstate 94, looking into a pair of sparkling blue eyes framed by lovely blond hair. Normally a pleasant experience, but in this case the eyes and hair belonged to a highway patrol officer.

"I'm letting you off with a warning, but slow down a little. The speed limit is 75, my radar unit said you were going 83".

"Thank you, officer, but let me check my Garmin GPS. It stores average speed, and it can recall the top speed of a trip — see, 87.6 mph. Better get your radar unit checked."

"Oh, I will", she said, with an unnecessarily happy smile. "Want to guess where the money will come from to repair it?"

The officer flipped open her ticket book. Dang GPS unit. It's too accurate.



Talley rings on CZ .375 H&H.

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HANDLOADER BY CHARLES E. PETTY

Lyman 1200 DPS

It wasn't really very long ago that the first digital powder scale came along. It was a spinoff of a laboratory scale that was simply told to read grains instead of grams. This was an expensive piece of gear, but it changed my reloading forever. Since then I have never again used a beam balance.

The great advantage of digital is that you don't have to wait an eternity — or so it seems now — for the swinging beam to stabilize. Digital scales are not more accurate — both types are accurate to +/- 0.1 grain — but they are more precise simply because all you have to do is read the numbers. There is no estimation or interpolation between graduations. Their great advantage is pure speed.

As is always true with new electronic gadgets the number of manufacturers increased and the price came down until digital loading scales were price competitive, but the next big leap pushed prices up all over again. That was the PACT/RCBS Digital Powder Dispenser that communicated via infrared data port with their electronic scale. The pair required calibration with any new powder every time you changed, but then all you had to do was key in the charge weight you wanted and it would give it to you all day long. It seemed a mite slow, but in comparison with the time it took to throw a partial charge and then trickle it up to the proper weight was about a tossup. I just did something else while the dispenser did its thing.

The new Lyman 1200 Digital Powder System combines scale and dispenser into a single unit that is simple to operate. It does have a couple of idiosyncrasies that need explanation. Digital reloading scales are all based on load cell or strain gauge technology. These devices do a great job but are subject to drift due to changes in temperature.

Lyman's programming provides an automatic 30 minute warm-up period and unless you manually override, it counts down until the time is up. There's a loud "beep" to let you know when the warm-up period is over. Then it's a wise idea to run through the simple

calibration procedure. Calibration is done without the weighing pan in place so when it's finished you put the pan on the scale, press "zero" and you're ready to go. The unit will also beep at you if there is a shift in zero of 0.3 grains or more.

The ability to zero out a weight — it's also called "tare" is another of the electronic scale's great advantages. You obviously tare out the weight of the powder pan, but you could also do it with a cartridge case to make setting up a progressive's powder measure easier. Lyman also has an accessory called the "Powder Pal" that combines the scale pan with a powder funnel. It doesn't come with the DPS 1200 but is a worthwhile couple of extra bucks. It's one of those things that make you wonder why nobody thought of that before.

By far the most common use will be what Lyman calls the "scale and dispense" mode. Just put the proper powder in the reservoir (no black powder or Pyrodex) and key in the desired charge weight. Press "Enter." The DPS 1200 will dispense the desired amount and stop when that weight is reached. It beeps to tell you it's through and the display will show "01" to count the number of charges dispensed. To repeat, just hit "enter" again or to change the charge punch the new one in on the keyboard and hit "enter". When the scale reaches the set weight you get another beep. By now this is becoming a bit annoying.

One of the conveniences offered by the DPS 1200 is the ability to store up to 20 loads in memory. To do so you must enter the cartridge name, powder name and charge weight into permanent memory. Since it is so easy to just key in the charge you want I use that method exclusively.

Perhaps the most challenging part of the DPS 1200 is emptying the powder reservoir. There is a convenient drain chute at the back and all you have to do is hold a funnel under the chute to put most of the powder back in the can. The reservoir tube is removable and when you look in the bottom there a couple of tablespoons of powder left. Lyman's instruction manual says you should not turn it upside down so there is a rather complicated procedure that requires partial disassembly to get that last bit.

However a conversation with a Lyman executive revealed that it is permissible to remove the powder reservoir and gently turn the unit on it's side — 90 degrees is enough — to drain that last tad of powder. Do not shake! They advise to turn the scale off before doing this and then go through the warmup and calibration procedure before using it again.

It is never a good idea to leave powder in a measure over any period of time, but if you know you're going to be using the same powder again the next day I'm sure it would be okay to drain the reservoir but leave the small amount of powder in the bottom. Just be sure to give yourself some way to know what's in there. I use sticky notes.

The Lyman DPS 1200 is really easy to use and considerably faster than previous dispensers. The greatest asset is not having to calibrate the measure for different powders. The biggest drawback is having the thing beep at you all the time.



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Give credit to the unique inertia-assisted rotary bolt system for the speed and efficiency of the Model 1300's lightning cycling. First, it mates into the bolt extension for a quick, strong and reliable lock-up. You immediately feel the assist as the shell is fired and the forearm comes back to eject and chamber another shell. In actual tests, our R&D staff have fired three shots with the Model 1300 in .56 of a second. This system has been the hands-down choice of shotguns because reliability and

speed equal confidence in the field or on the target range —it's here, a premium pump shotgun you won't pay a premium price for.

For 2003, you can select from over 30 models of the Model 1300 Speed Pump, with interchangeable turkey, deer or field barrels to give you the exact gun for specific game. Or, select specialized, ready-to-shoot models such as the Ranger® Deer. This model has a 22" rifled barrel that fires Sabot slugs with proven accuracy. Adjustable TRUGLO® sights provide excellent low-light target acquisition. It's also drilled and tapped for a scope. The Ranger Deer is also available in a compact model.

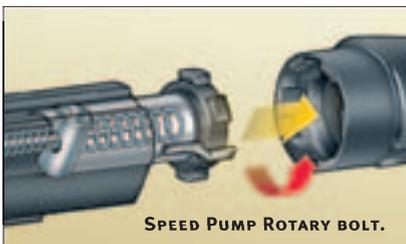
The Sporting/Field model is your best all-around bet for both target and game. A Pachmayr® Decelerator™ recoil pad and five WinChoke® tubes accommodate any situation; plus, the TRUGLO TRU-BEAD™ front sight with interchangeable fiber optic inserts in different colors and a mid bead give you an edge on

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If you don't own a pump shotgun, you might just consider carrying the one with the timeless Winchester heritage. Consider the fast and versatile Model 1300 Speed Pump as your next purchase.

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OPEN HAND TECHNIQUE

Ideally no more than one cartridge would be needed for a big-game hunt. The goal should always be one properly placed shot with an adequate bullet, the objective to kill the game instantly and painlessly. To strive for anything less is disrespectful.

Nonetheless things can go wrong. The animal can move just as the shot is fired or the bullet can deflect on an unnoticed twig. Bullets occasionally fail to perform as expected. We can misjudge range or wind, and we can get excited and just flat-out miss.

Because things can go wrong we have repeating rifles. If we carry a bolt-action rifle we need to develop the skill to work the bolt smoothly and efficiently. Let me be clear, accuracy always takes precedence over speed. The goal is not to lay down a barrage. It's to make the rifle ready to fire

another shot, while simultaneously evaluating the result of the first shot and deciding whether a follow-up shot is necessary.

Find Your Best Method

There are several ways to operate a bolt-action rifle, three of which are outlined here. I don't think there's a "best" way, just methods that suit certain circumstances. Weigh the merits of each, then pick a method and stick to it. For convenience I'll refer to them as the open hand, closed hand, and straight hand methods. In all cases the action is operated with the rifle in shooting position. It's astonishing how many shooters lower their rifles to reload, then raise it again to shoot.



CLOSED HAND TECHNIQUE

RELOADING

BY DAVE ANDERSON



Speed And Strength

Open-hand method: In this method the hand never closes on the bolt handle. The shooting hand releases the pistol grip and is oriented with palm up and towards the shooter. Initial movement of hand lifts bolt for primary extraction of fired case and to compress the mainspring. With the hand cupped over bolt handle, bolt is briskly withdrawn until it strikes the bolt stop, completing extraction and ejection of the spent case.

Orientation of hand is now reversed, palm away from shooter. Bolt knob is located in the palm of hand at base of thumb. Hand moves briskly forward, stripping fresh cartridge from magazine, feeding it into chamber and turning down the bolt to fully locked position.

Advantages: This method, once learned, is very fast. A shooter skilled in this method simply slaps the bolt back and forward again in a blur of speed. The strong muscles of the upper arm and forearm power the reloading cycle. Plenty of strength is available if needed, for example to extract a sticky case or seat a cartridge that is dirty or slightly oversize.

Disadvantages: If there is little clearance between bolt handle and scope, the base of the thumb can strike the rear of the scope on the forward stroke. Because of the arm movement required this method doesn't work as well from the prone position, as most shooters find it necessary to shift from and then re-acquire the shooting position.

If there is little clearance between bolt handle and stock (such as with flat "butterknife" bolt handles) the





STRAIGHT HAND METHOD

bolt handle initially hits the edge rather than the center of the palm and contact is none too secure.

Grab That Bolt

Closed-hand method: The ball of the bolt handle is grasped between thumb and forefinger throughout the reloading cycle. Bolt is operated crisply, retracting the bolt solidly against the bolt stop and briskly forward to feed and chamber a fresh cartridge.

Advantages: This method is also powered by the muscles of the upper arm and forearm, providing a good margin of strength if needed. Even with a 90-degree action and low-mounted scope there is adequate clearance between hand and scope. It works about as well with any type of bolt action; 90-degree or short lift, short action or long, conventional bolt handle or butterknife type.

Disadvantages: As with the open-hand method, when shooting from prone the shooter usually has to shift position slightly while cycling the action. Theoretically it is slower since the hand has to close on and then release the bolt handle. For me at least the difference, as measured with an electronic shot timer, is quite minor, on the order of one or two tenths of a second.

Because the shooter has full control of bolt movement at all times he may be more likely to stop retracting the bolt as the case ejects, beginning forward movement without picking up a fresh cartridge. It must become an ingrained habit to retract the bolt solidly against the bolt stop.

“Reverse Karate Chop”

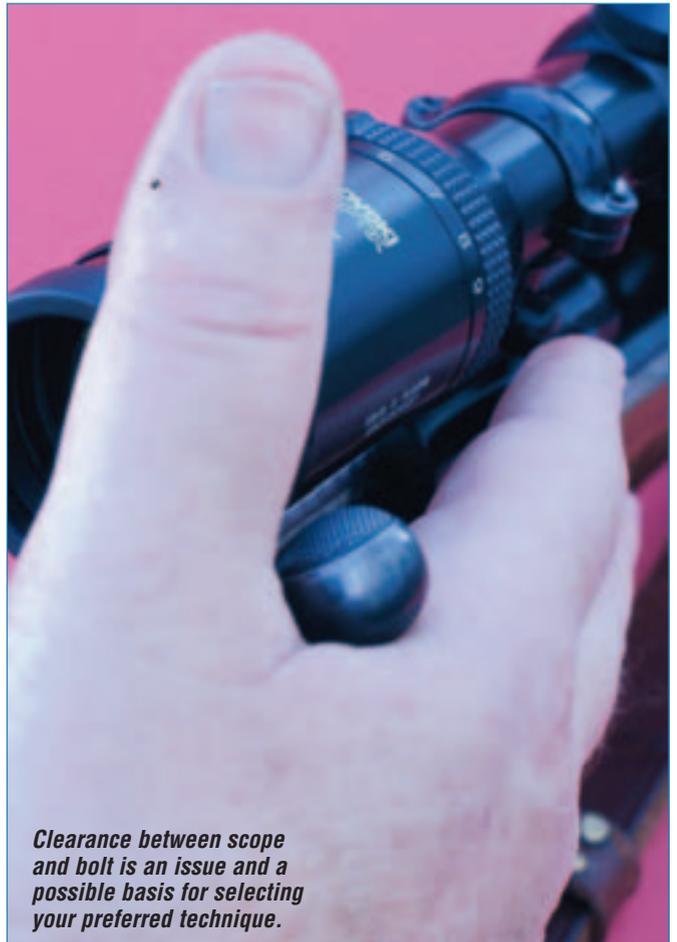
Straight-hand method: The hand is oriented straight, against the stock and beneath the bolt handle. The hand then pivots at the wrist, up and back, retracting the bolt solidly against the bolt stop. The motion has been called a “reverse karate chop,” not a bad description.

The hand then pivots at the wrist forward and down with the bolt handle at the base of the thumb to feed and chamber a cartridge and move the bolt to locked position.

Advantages: This is a quick and efficient method. Little movement is involved; the hand simply straightens, rotates at the wrist up and back, then forward and down. This can

be an advantage in hunting situations should the first shot miss. Game may not be able to locate the source of the shot, but they’re quick to spot movement.

The straight-hand method works very well from the prone position. Little or no arm motion is involved so there’s no need to shift position and sight picture can be maintained. This method is at its best with a short action rifle.



Clearance between scope and bolt is an issue and a possible basis for selecting your preferred technique.



With a long action, such as the Weatherby Mk. V pictured, in order to cycle the bolt crisply I have to move the arm a bit, though much less than with the other two methods. Note the open and closed-hand photos; with the bolt fully retracted the arm has bent so the wrist is in line with the comb of the stock. With the straight-hand method the wrist is about at the bottom of the pistol grip.

Disadvantages: Since the hand moves at the wrist, there isn't a lot of surplus strength available in case extraction gets a bit sticky. I've noticed that shooters preferring this method often use custom short-action rifles with nice smooth chambers and honed actions.

Should a case stick, though, it doesn't take long to bring the strong muscles of the arm into play. Other disadvantages



are similar to those of the open-hand method. Insufficient clearance between scope and bolt handle can result in the thumb hitting the scope. The bolt handle has to extend out from the stock far enough to be engaged by the hand.

Author's Choice

Which method to adopt depends on your needs and circumstances. Because I use a variety of rifles, I prefer the broad-spectrum utility of the closed-hand method. It works with any size action, from a little Anschütz .22 to a big CZ 550 in .375 H&H or .416 Rigby. It provides sufficient clearance even with a 90-degree action and low mounted scope.

The method works even with bolt handles that are oddly placed, as with my 1903 Mannlicher-Schoenauer, or handles that are close to the stock such as the Mannlicher butterknife or the dogleg handle on the Remington 600. For my needs the shift in position required to reload while prone and the hand movement involved are not critical disadvantages.

Practice With A Plan

Speed comes not from convulsive effort but from smoothness and economy of motion. Smoothness comes from repeating an action many times until it becomes a subconscious, reflexive skill. None of us was

“The slowest bolt action I’ve used is my 1903 Mannlicher-Schoenauer in 6.5x54. About all it has going for it is a short bolt throw.”

born with the skill to eat with a fork, yet most of us have learned to do so without stabbing ourselves in the eye.

To acquire skill at reloading, practice it as part of regular dry-fire sessions. Basic rules of dry-fire are to ensure there is no ammunition in the area; check, recheck, and check one more time that the rifle is unloaded; and aim at a backstop that would positively and safely stop a bullet in the event the rifle were to fire.

Acquire a sight picture, press the trigger, and “call” the shot — that is, observe exactly where the sights were when the sear released. Cycle the action, ideally while continuing to observe the target through the scope.

The mindset you want to develop is that the actual firing of the shot is just a step in the shot sequence, not the end. Followthrough, calling and evaluating the shot, cycling the action, and recoil recovery are all part of the process. The shot sequence ends when the shooter is ready to fire another shot if required.

From a mechanical point of view the bolt has to operate in an “L-shape” pattern; up and back, then forward and down. The shooter, though, should have a sense the hand is moving more in a diagonal pattern, simultaneously up and back, then forward and down.

When raising the bolt most of the effort should be upwards but also slightly to the rear, so as the locking lugs clear their recesses the bolt instantly begins moving rearwards. When moving the bolt forward most of the hand strength is forward to strip a fresh cartridge from the magazine and feed it into the chamber. There should also be slight downward pressure so the instant the cartridge is fully chambered the bolt can begin moving to its locked position.

Operate the bolt vigorously. Whatever direction the bolt is moving, keep it going until it is stopped by some mechanical fea-

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ture of the rifle, not by the shooter. For example, many popular actions use spring-loaded plunger ejectors in the bolt face to eject spent cases. Ejection occurs the instant the case clears the receiver ring.

If the shooter stops the rearward bolt stroke when the case ejects, the bolt will not be far enough back to strip a fresh cartridge from the magazine. Work the bolt briskly so it whacks solidly against the bolt stop and can pick up, feed, and chamber a cartridge on the forward stroke.

Elements Of Design

I find rifles easiest to operate when they have the following features:

- * Bolt knob is level with or behind the trigger, so the hand can move in a smooth, natural, back-forth pattern while cycling the bolt.

- * Bolt knob extends far enough out from the rifle to be readily grasped.

- * Bolt lift is shorter than 90 degrees, providing more clearance between bolt handle and scope.

- * Stock has a soft butt pad that keeps the rifle securely at the shoulder during bolt operation.

- * Bolt travel is smooth and non-binding.

- * Bolt throw (the distance the bolt travels back and forth during reloading) is short.

Within fairly broad limits recoil isn't an important factor. Regardless of the level of recoil, reloading commences as soon as the

shot breaks. The process can continue during and after recoil recovery.

Personally I find bolt throw to be more of a factor in reloading speed. A couple of my rifles, a Browning A-Bolt .284 Win. and a Remington 700 Mountain Rifle in .280 Rem. are very similar in weight and dimensions. My standard load for each is a 140-grain bullet at 3,000 fps.

The A-Bolt has a bolt throw of 3.625 inches versus 4.875 inches for the Remington. As measured with an electronic shot timer, I can cycle the A-Bolt action about a half-second faster.

With a short bolt throw the shooter can retain shooting position while reloading. With some long actions the shooter has to move his head back to give the bolt room to operate. The sight picture is momentarily lost and the shooter has to reacquire proper shooting position and pick up the sight picture.

Really long cartridges, the .416 Rigby for example, may require the shooter to both move his head back and push the rifle forward a bit with the support hand. Realistically though, a half-second difference is hardly critical.

The slowest bolt action I've used is my 1903 Mannlicher-Schoenauer in 6.5x54. The bolt handle is well ahead of the trigger, flat against the stock. Bolt lift is a full 90 degrees. About all it has going for it is a short bolt throw.

Just reaching the bolt with the rifle

shouldered isn't easy. Lifting the bolt handle to extract the fired case and compress the mainspring is very difficult. It's actually faster to drop the butt from the shoulder, work the bolt, then raise the rifle to shooting position again — a rare exception to a basic rule.

The Real Goal

It's a mistake to get obsessive over minor differences in speed. Accuracy always takes precedence; make the first shot good and there won't be a need for followup shots. The objective of practice is to make reloading a reflexive, unconscious habit so the rifle is always ready.

Some years ago a friend generously offered to act as a guide, hunting antelope on private land. Using a pre-'64 Winchester Model 70 in .257 Roberts, I shot from a prone "binocular rest" position. The antelope dropped at the shot. I was watching through the scope when my friend said "Don't shoot again, he's down."

I realized that without consciously thinking about it, as soon as the shot broke I had worked the bolt and made ready to fire. I had no intention of shooting again, but if a second shot had been required the rifle was ready. It was a nice affirmation that the hours of practice were worthwhile.



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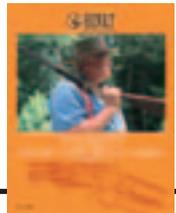
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PERIOD-STYL

Story By Clint Smith

Photos By Heidi Smith



Front (above) and rear mounts are nicely graduated and highly repeatable in adjustment.



Accuracy has always been its own best reward. Accuracy is by definition: “an exactness or correctness free from mistake.” Accuracy, whether achieved with words, rocks, rifles or bombs is always satisfying as well as effective.

In the recent Iraq War the number of precision-guided “smart” bombs was increased a nominal 80 percent over what was used in the earlier Desert Storm conflict. Historically, American aviators paid dearly in the beginning stage of World War II as they elected precision daylight bombing over Fortress Europe to gain the advantage of accuracy over carpet type bombing.

Accuracy or things that are accurate are still appreciated today.

In October 2002, a Confederate Whitworth rifle mounted



THE PRECISION

“Money well spent,” is Clint’s assessment of MVA’s period-style scope.

with a Davidson scope sold for \$72,900 at auction. It appears to be one of only eight of its kind documented as surviving out of a possible 250 rifles used by the Confederacy for sniping in the War of Northern Aggression.

Little Known Fact

Unknown to most is the fact that a scoped rifle was present at the most famous of all American Indian, United States Cavalry fights. First Sergeant John Ryan of M Troop, 7th Cavalry carried a seventeen-pound, telescope-mounted

Sharps Model 1874 Sporting Rifle chambered in caliber .45-70 onto the adjoining Reno Hill battlefield.

The day after the Little Big Horn fight, Company M — facing west-southwest — was still pinned down along with six other Troops by rifle fire from a ridge 600 yards away. Indians firing from the position now known as Sharpshooter’s Ridge placed accurate enough or fire of enough volume that several troopers were killed in rifle fire exchanges.

Captain French, the troop commander, requested that the First Sergeant put suppression fire on the



ridge, which he in fact did and caused the indigenous riflemen to clear the ridge. First Sergeant Ryan's story was vindicated by the finding of Sharps' projectiles on the aforementioned ridge during archeological digs at the battleground in 1985.

Moving the clock forward many of today's modern rifles carry optics of tremendous quality and sometimes size. These optics are very helpful in achieving accuracy and in fact help many a set of old eyes gain the advantage of continuing to shoot simply because the old eyes can see with the help of scopes. We all know that in fact scopes do not actually help us shoot better as far as the application of fundamental marksmanship skills. Scopes do however help us see better and seeing better is good!

A good scope used with good ammunition and a good rifle can help place accurate shots on intended targets. And in truth scopes let old or infirm eyes still participate in the game of accuracy.

Of Black Powder And Big Bullets

Over the last eight years most of my shooting has turned to rifles as much as I can and work will allow. This rifle shooting has also taken a turn toward the past as I shoot more black powder rifles than any other type. This has been a worthwhile progression, as I have gained great personal satisfaction out of taking animals such as bison, elk and oryx with black powder cartridge rifles. All of this work has been done with iron sights.

Recently, while dealing with my favorite

iron sight vendor, they introduced me to the period-style scope they make for black powder rifles. After much hesitation I mounted a Montana Vintage Arms scope on my Shiloh Sharps rifle.

This probably seems like a small deal to most of you, but this was my very first Shiloh rifle and I have owned it for many years. I was guarded about drilling and tapping holes in the barrel of the old bison killer. The worry was for naught.

The Montana Vintage Arms scope is a steel tube 3/4-inch in diameter at the body. Overall length is a nominal 22 1/4 inches. Scope magnification is six power, and the field of view is 10 feet at 100 yards. The ocular and objective lens areas have approximately .950-inch openings. The scope has a Pope style under rib that the scope moves on at firing and is then reset by hand, drawing the scope rearward on the mounts to reset eye relief for each new shot to be fired.

Lest one think this is an awkward arrangement, I would point out that the 1903A1 Springfield rifle mounted with the Unertl scope used by the United States Marines in World War II and beyond was operated the in same way.

Highly Adjustable

The MVA scope can be adjusted for parallax by adjustment of the eyepiece knob and the range focus adjustment knob forward on the tube, which cures out of focus targets and eyepieces. The loosening of two setscrews and the rotation of the reticle level adjustment knob at the back of the scope tube can level the reticle itself.

The scope is mounted in Malcolm style mounts, which are made by Montana Vintage Arms and are patterned after original Malcolm mounts. The current MVA production mounts are upgraded by the fact they are made on modern CNC machines. While operating these adjustments I noticed a slight backlash on the adjustment knob, but referring to the manual of all things, it states there is a slight backlash to compensate for possible binding during operation. This backlash did not have a negative effect on the operation or adjustment of the scope.

The Malcolm style mounts produce adjustments at a nominal one-half minute per mark for windage and elevation. Windage is adjustable from both the front and rear mounts which helps, as a gross adjustment can be made forward that allows the rear to set at zero on the scale. This makes for a clean zeroed start for windage from the rear base. Elevation comes from the rear mount adjustment knob, which is an integral part of the rear base.

The scope comes with screw-on protective covers for both ends of the steel tube to protect the ocular and objective lens when not in use.

A plain reticle or a three-inch dot format is available. The scope I bought and had mounted was a standard reticle and that suits me fine, as I don't personally care for the clutter of dots in my view.



Handsome MVA scope really sets off a Sharps or other period-style rifle.

Putting It To The Test

At the range the rifle with scope attached performed well and the scope did what scopes do best — it greatly added to visual acuity.

The MVA scope was mounted on my 26-inch, heavy-barreled Hartford model Shiloh Sharps rifle in caliber .45-70.

Shooting at a six-inch bull, I started with the rifle at zero windage and elevation. The first three rounds down range printed a group inside two inches located 11 inches below the point of aim. Coming up from mechanical zero with adjustment equal to a nominal 12 inches, the second string of fire was put downrange with all the rounds falling inside the center disc.

A point of interest should be expressed about now. When shooting black powder ammunition, different types of powders produce different velocities. Five rounds loaded with Swiss 1½FG grade powder fired over the chronograph averaged 1,183 fps with extreme spread of 15 fps. Change that load to use 3FG Swiss in an equal amount and you'll see average velocities of 1,216 fps with an extreme spread of 12 fps.

All this means to us is that different black powders shoot differently and thus may need different sight settings or adjustments. This is just as we may need different sight settings when shooting with modern smokeless loads of different projectile weights and velocities — no magic required — only research and familiarization with one's rifle and ammunition.

Knowing the drop of my black powder projectiles at different ranges, the rifle was set up and fired at 200 yards with the corrected adjustments for that range. The first two groups fired with the 1½ FG Swiss load produced clusters of 2½ inches. The Swiss 3FG loading grouped into just less than five inches for five shots.

Anyone needing a period style scope would be well served to consider the MVA scope whether for fun, targets or hunting. It is well constructed and functions as would be required for any of these applications. Mine was money well spent.

This coming summer is filled with scheduled plans of black powder rifle shooting and practice, and this fall I am looking forward to a Red Stag hunt where I plan on using the Shiloh rifle mounted with the Montana Vintage Arms scope.

I hope to hold up my end of the deal because the rifle and scope are surely capable of doing their part.

The MVA scope with mounts as tested currently retails for \$895.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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NATURAL SELECTION

KAHR'S PM9

STORY BY MASSAD AYOUB PHOTOS BY ICHIRO NAGATA

For a century, Americans have enjoyed a love affair with the pocket auto, and this downsized roscoe just may be the highest evolution of the breed.

A neighboring couple has come to me because they know I'm into guns, and the lady of the family has decided to carry. We bring her to the range with a selection of handguns suitable for her intended purpose. She's particularly taken with the new Kahr PM9, a polymer-framed subcompact semiautomatic pistol which holds seven rounds of the hottest 9mm Parabellum ammo you can get, which is frankly a bit beyond the best .38 Special revolver ammo you can get.

"I guess I got into this at the right time," she says. "If this is the newest, it has to be the most advanced, right?"

I open my mouth to answer — and close it just as fast. This may indeed be the best handgun for her needs — but the concept isn't exactly the newest.

A Century of Pocket Autos

Colt introduced their classic Pocket Model in 1903, chambered for the "Calibre .32 Rimless Smokeless." This flat, sleek, pistol had an internal hammer that being out of sight was obviously out of mind because the gun instantly became known as a "hammerless." It was radical, it was streamlined, and above all it was modern! Modern always seems to sell, and it seems to sell even better at times when centuries are turning or shortly thereafter.

Five years later, Colt brought out a more potent version, caliber (excuse me, calibre) .380. Identical in appearance to one another, the Colt Pocket Models would eventually define the shape of the generic "automatic" to the public in everything from movies to cartoons



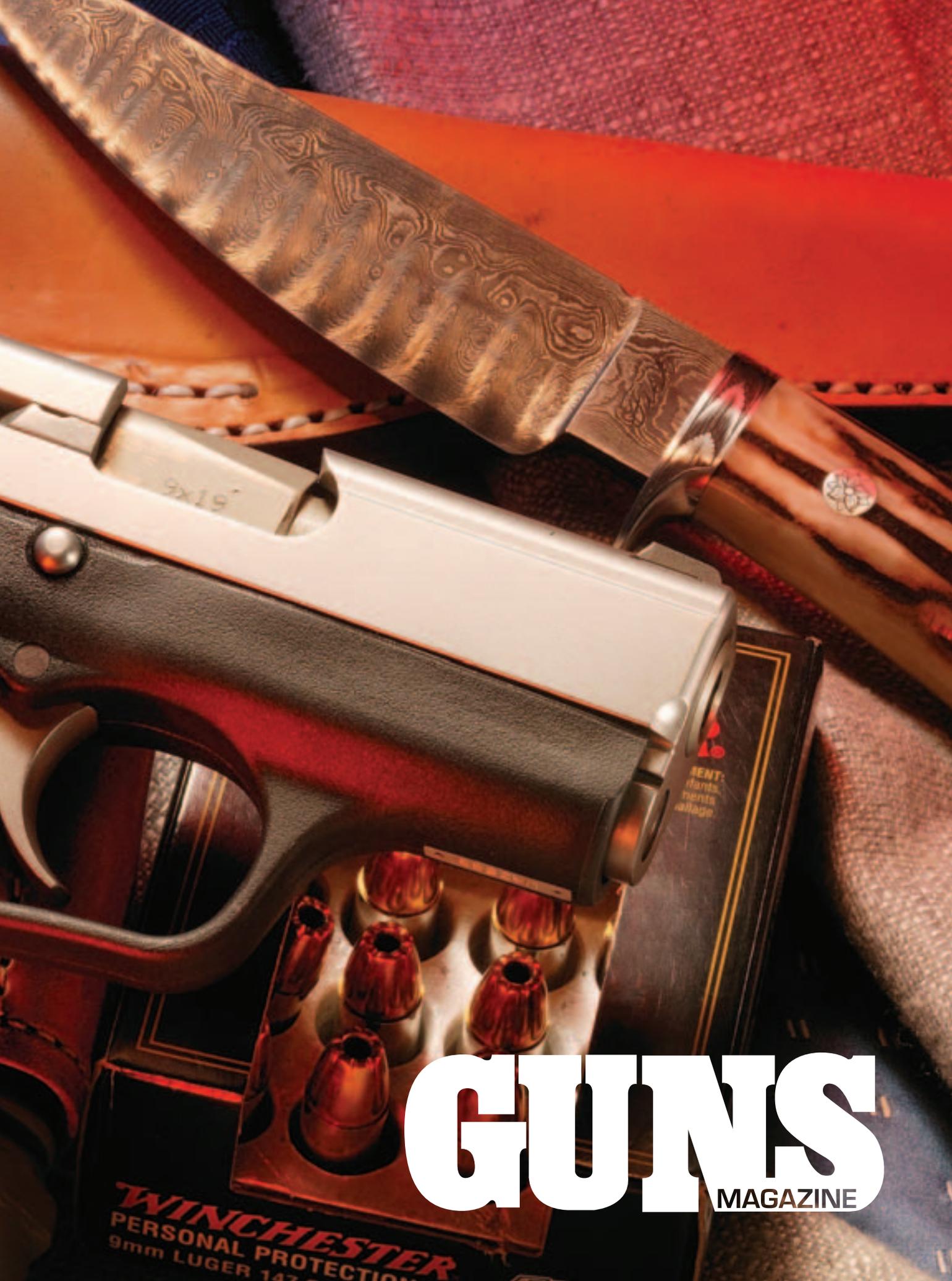


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NATURAL SELECTION
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GUNS

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Bevy of pocket autos from the turn of the century onward: The PM9 is more potent, yet compares size-wise with all but the Beretta .25 and TP-70 .22. Others shown are Colt 1908, Browning 1910 and Walther PP. (J.G. photo)

(remember the early Dick Tracy?). People accustomed to the old paradigms laughed and said, "That new-fangled thing will never catch on! It's just a flash in the pan!"

Famous last words.

There would be other pocket autos, of course. Colt's own Browning-designed .25 became known to the cognoscenti as a "vest pocket pistol" to distinguish it from the .32 and .380 "pocket pistols." In the late 1920s, Carl Walther changed the paradigm again with a double action first shot pocket auto, the PP (*Polizei Pistole*) and its smaller "Detective Special" version, the PPK (*Polizei Pistole Kriminalale*).

In the first half of the 20th Century, CZ pioneered the double action only pocket auto pistol. The postwar years brought a flood of scaled down 1911s in .32 and .380, mostly from Spain, a concept that didn't catch on until Colt brought out their .380



Government Model in 1985. That gun was followed by the smaller Mustang, and the even nicer Pocketlite with aluminum frame that brought weight down to 15 ounces — Airweight revolver territory. If you covered the hammer and grip tang area of a Colt Government .380 with your thumb, it looked remarkably similar to a 1903 Pocket Model.

Seecamp produced a .32 the size of a .25 with a DAO mechanism that appeared to have been inspired by the old CZ, and with Louis Seecamp's own ingenious double captive recoil spring. The Seecamp .32 became so much in demand as a hideout gun that it brought scalper's prices in the marketplace, and still does.

This was not a helluva lot of progress. In 90 years, the best the industry could do was to come full circle to the original 1903 model, albeit with an internal firing pin safety and an external hammer instead of a

concealed one. However, there was still a decade before the Pocket Model turned 100 years old. There was time for a renaissance.

That renaissance would be built on one thing more than anything else: power. The vest-pocket .25s and the pocket size .32s and .380s were certainly convenient to carry, but they weren't manstoppers. Conventional wisdom was that you needed at least 9mm Parabellum in a pistol you might have to bring to a gunfight. And the industry was listening to that advice.

Pocket Auto Renaissance

The great leap forward in pocket auto design came in the mid-1990s. Three companies were the key players: Glock, Kahr Arms, and Kel-Tec. They brought us a new wave of pocket pistols as short and light as many of the old .32s and .380s, but chambered for cartridges powerful enough to stop lethal fights with some degree of reliability.

From Kel-Tec came a small 9mm with a

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MAKE	LOAD	GRP "A"	GRP "B"	BEST 3 SHOTS
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Pro-Load	115-gr. JHP	3½"	2½"	1½"
Remington	115-gr. JHP +P	5"	4¼"	1½"
Samson IMI	115-gr. JHP +P+	4½"	2½"	1½"
Winchester	124-gr. BEB ball	5½"	5½"	1¾"
Winchester	147-gr. JHP subsonic	3¼"	2½"	1½"



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polymer frame so soft you could flex parts of it with your hands, using an external hammer, double action only design with second strike capability. It held 11 rounds using a truncated copy of the S&W Model 59 magazine, and it would work with any series 5900 or 6900 mag as well. Price was dirt cheap, and the gun weighed only 14.5 ounces. After spring problems were sorted out in the first production run, the Kel-Tec worked. Its unusually long and heavy trigger pull turned off some serious shooters, but that was nothing a good pistol-smith couldn't fix up.

Kel-Tec found that this design did not translate well to the .40 S&W, and after a brief run that caliber was discontinued by the company. They were much more successful with their fabulous P32, a .32 ACP the size of most .25 automatics and weighing an incredible 6.6 ounces. Like its big brother, the P32 was really cheap and it really worked, and therefore it was really successful, quickly outselling the bigger gun. Remember, however, that this size pistol is more "vest pocket gun" than "pocket gun."

Glock made a huge sales splash with their "baby Glocks," basically the standard pistols radically chopped at both butt and muzzle. In a gun the overall size of a Colt Detective Special and lighter, albeit more square, the 9mm Glock 26 held a total of 11 rounds. That equaled the in-gun firepower of a six-shot Dick Special and a five-shot S&W J-frame snubby put together.

In caliber .40 S&W (Glock 27) or .357 SIG (Glock 33), the same size pistol held 10 rounds when fully loaded. These little Glocks are remarkably accurate. My personal best is a 1.5-inch five-shot group with a G27 and Winchester 155-grain .40 Silvertip at 25 yards. The baby Glocks were such groundbreakers that their style has essentially been copied by two more series of mini-service pistols, one from Springfield Armory in their Croatian-made XD, and one from S&W in the SW99 line, the Smith/Walther collaboration.

Kahr Arms introduced a neat little all-steel double action-only 9mm auto in the mid-'90s. It instantly captured the fancy of the shooting public. It soon passed the demanding standards to allow NYPD to approve it for off duty carry.

Gun writers universally sang the Kahr's praises. Its double action trigger pull was light and sweet, the gun had excellent accuracy potential, and its efficient size made it easy to carry. There were a few problems. Having tight chambers, they fed only factory ammo and the very best handloads. They were so tightly fitted you about needed a rubber mallet to take them apart. Being all-steel, a Kahr felt as if it was too heavy for the size of the package.

Justin Moon and his team at Kahr Arms listened to the complaints and acted upon them. Soon they had come out with polymer framed versions, which brought the weight down considerably. The latest evolution of the concept is their PM9 pistol.

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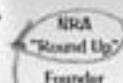
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The PM9

The Kahr PM9 (P for Polymer frame, M for Micro size, 9 for 9mm Parabellum chambering) pretty much describes itself once you translate the code for its model designation. It is just under a pound, still putting it in the weight class of a J-frame S&W Airweight but a bit more than an AirLite made with Titanium or Scandium. The PM9 is only 5.3-inches in overall length. That's smaller than a baby Glock or a Kel-Tec P-11 9mm, shorter than a snub-nose J-frame revolver by about an inch, and shorter than a Walther PPK .380. MSRP runs from \$660 to \$790.

The PM9 comes with two magazines. One fits almost flush with the butt of the short grip frame, holding six rounds to augment the seventh in the chamber. This gives maximum concealment but leaves the little finger of the firing hand "floating." The second mag holds seven rounds, bringing you up to eight shots total and leaving a plastic-covered extension below the butt to allow all fingers of the firing hand to take a useful purchase.

It is flatter than the other 9mm autos mentioned, slimmer than the little revolvers against which it competes. When you actually carry your pocket auto in your trouser pocket, that makes a huge amount of difference. All these striker-fired autos have a rear slide structure that hangs out over the back-strap of the grip, and can snag on the top edge of the pocket opening. They are squarer than the old Colt Pocket Model in this area.

In capacious pockets like those of BDU's or Dockers, you can get a fatter compact auto like a baby Glock to not only conceal, but draw reasonably fast. However, for the penalty in cartridge capacity, the slimmer PM9 will conceal even better and draw even faster. As the trouser pockets get tighter, you reach the point where you would need your tactical folder to cut your mini-Glock loose, but the PM9 can still be drawn, albeit with more difficulty than a "hammerless" or spurless hammer small-frame revolver. It's proportional.

It's A Size Thing

During unseasonably hot days this past spring, wearing shorts and an untucked tee-shirt around town, I found myself carrying a Glock 27 inside my waistband in a Ted Blocker holster, and slipping the Kahr PM9 into a Kramer left side pocket holster for backup. Most of my shorts just aren't cut baggy enough to hide even the smallest Glock effectively in the side pocket.

The flatness of the PM9 also makes it the most comfortable of the currently available breed of tiny 9mm to hide in a belly band holster, or an underarm holster attached to a ballistic vest beneath a tailored uniform shirt. It's this greater concealability from the gun's thinness for which you are paying a three or four round penalty in cartridge capacity when you choose the PM9 over one of the other modern pocket autos in this category.

The PM9 fires like a revolver: point gun,

continued on page 73

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For Cowboy Shooters craving a long-range rifle, our Model 336 Cowboy lever action in classic 38/55 fits the Old West image. It features a 24" tapered octagon barrel with deep-cut Ballard-type rifling, a full-length magazine, and a straight-grip walnut stock.

If you enjoy the excitement of Old West competition, or the versatility of hunting with revolver-caliber ammunition, there's a Marlin Model 1894 lever action just for you. Our 1894 Cowboy Competition, chambered in 38 Special and – new for 2003– 45 Colt, is "factory-tuned" to meet the demands of competitive shooters. The octagon-barreled Model 1894 Cowboy, in 45 Colt, 38 Spl. and 44 Mag., was designed specifically for Cowboy Shooters. Our new Models 1894PG in 44 Mag. and Model 1894FG in 41 Mag. are

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If the SHOT Show had been operating way back in 1873, that year would have gone down as one of the truly memorable shows for the great cartridge/firearm combinations which, 130 years later, are more popular than ever. These three landmarks were the Model 1873 Colt Single Action Army .45 Colt, the 1873 Springfield Trapdoor .45-70, and the 1873 Winchester chambered in .44 Winchester Centerfire.

Today the Colt exists in both real and replica form. The Winchester and Springfield are offered as replicas by several

importers. And the great cartridges of 1873 — the .45 Colt, .45-70 and .44-40 (.44WCF), are some of the most desired for use in Cowboy Action Shooting and Black Powder Cartridge Rifle competition as well as for all-around fun shooting.

Actually, if firearms and cartridge development had never progressed past 1873 we could still get along quite well with the .45 Colt sixgun; the long-range .45-70 single-shot rifle; and the “Gun That Won The West,” Winchester’s .44-40 Model 1873. Thanks to progress we do not

have to make do with just these three. Today we not only have an excellent reproduction of the Winchester ’73 in .44-40, we also have its two predecessors and two followers available giving us several possible levels of .44-40 performance.

The Model 1873 was Winchester’s first centerfire lever action rifle, having been preceded by the 1860 Henry and 1866 Winchester, both of which were chambered for the .44 Rimfire. Today, all three of these are readily available as excellent reproductions and all chambered in the .44-40.

Load With Caution

These are some of the slickest operating leverguns ever offered, however, an important warning is necessary as it is the slickness of the action that also accounts for their relatively weak structure. All three of the original Winchester leverguns as well as their replicas have a toggle link action.

Removing the side plate and looking at this set up will immediately reveal there’s not a lot holding the action shut when the rifle is fired. I would recommend that any-

LEVERGUN LOADS: THE .44-40 WCF

BY JOHN TAFFIN



Reloading the .44 WCF on the frontier would likely involve the use of the versatile Ideal combination tool.





The Winchester 1873's toggle action is a great design, but is not suitable for hot handloads.



Know your actions! The 1892 (right) is considerably stronger than the '73.

one with any thought of trying to somehow hot rod one of these old rifle designs take a good look first at what they are working with mechanically.

The Model 1873 .44-40 was tremendously popular and made well into the 20th century, although it was superseded by the Model 1892 Winchester 20 years after its introduction. The relatively weak toggle link-actioned Model 1873 was chambered in the .44-40, .38-40, and .32-20. By 1878, a shooter could match his Winchester .44-40 with a Colt SAA in the same chambering. This was a very popular combination.

However, the 1892 Winchester with its twin locking lugs at the rear of the receiver was a great stride forward in strength compared to the Model 1873. The 1873 Winchester, whether original or in replica form, remains a rifle for the use of black powder or black powder level loads. This also holds true for replica 1860 Henry and 1866 Yellow Boy leverguns.

Built To Be Stronger

The 1892 Winchester, again whether in original or replica form, is a totally different story. These are very strong leverguns, and

in fact in the 1950s original Winchester were often converted to .357 Magnum and .44 Magnum. To make the change to .44 Magnum it was necessary to start with a '92 chambered in .38-40 or .44-40. Many who used the .44-40 could not understand why anybody would go to the trouble to convert to .44 Magnum as it could already be loaded to "Magnum" levels in its original form.

Today's replica Winchester 1892s, be they from Japan, Italy, or South America, are every bit as strong, probably more so than the originals. In recent years Marlin has also offered their excellent Model 1894 octagon-barreled Cowboy levergun chambered in .44-40. The Marlins came with 24-inch barrels and I ordered two these, one to shoot as is, while the other was cut back to 19.5 inches, to make it easier handling while still being capable of holding 10 rounds in the magazine tube. This latter .44-40 has become my wife's favorite for CAS competition.

Beware The Old Manuals

It's most interesting to look at loads for the .44-40 in reloading manuals from the early 1960s. Using Hercules No. 2400 powder, we find loads of 27.5-grains with a 200-grain jacketed bullet for 2,080 fps; 26.8-grains with a 205-grain cast bullet for 2,050 fps; and 26.0-grains with the 215-grain gas checked bullet for 1,850 fps. *Warning: These are too hot with today's components!*

Alliant's No. 2400 powder of today is faster burning than the Hercules version of four decades ago, primers are also probably hotter, and Starline's .44-40 brass is thicker and heavier than that available to shooters at mid century. For my use I cut these loads to a maximum 24.5-grains of Alliant's No. 2400 with the 200-grain jacketed bullet, and I do not recommend going over 22.5-grains with the 215-grain gas checked bullet. Both of these loads are assembled with Starline's .44-40 brass and CCI's No. 350 Magnum Pistol Primer. *Warning: These loads should be used only in modern Marlin 1894 and Winchester 1892-class actions!*

In the past the .44-40, being a bottlenecked cartridge, and also having a very thin mouth, made it doubly troublesome for reloaders. It was not unusual for me to lose several cases from each box full as they were crushed either by hitting the bottom of the die slightly off center or during bullet seating. In addition to this, each cartridge case had to be lubed by hand. Both of these situations have changed.

The .44-40 is still a bottlenecked cartridge, which precludes the use of carbide sizing dies. However, instead of lubing one case at a time, I now place 100 empty cases in a shallow cardboard box, spray with Midway's Spray-On Case Lube, shake, and spray again and they are ready for sizing. For loading in large quantities I use the RCBS Pro-2000 Progressive press and find no need to wipe the lube off the cases after they are loaded. With the stronger Starline brass I rarely lose a case due to the mouth buckling.

.44 WINCHESTER CENTERFIRE HEAVY LOADS		
Warning: Use only in Marlin 1894 and Winchester 1892-class actions.		
TEST GUN: MARLIN 1894 COWBOY, 24-INCH BARREL.		
BULLET/LOAD	VELOCITY	GROUP
Remington 200-gr. JSP/9.0-gr. Unique	1,241	2 1/2"
Remington 200-gr. JSP/22.5-gr. #2400	1,848	2 1/8"
Remington 200-gr. JSP/23.5-gr. H4227	1,582	1 1/2"
Hornady 200-gr. JHP/20.0-gr. IMR4227	1,374	1 1/4"
Hornady 200-gr. JHP/18.5-gr. #2400	1,316	2 1/2"
Hornady 200-gr. JHP/21.5-gr. #2400	1,727	1 1/2"
Hornady 200-gr. JHP/22.5-gr. #2400	1,807	1 3/4"
Hornady 200-gr. JHP/23.5-gr. #2400	1,928	1 5/8"
Hornady 200-gr. JHP/24.5-gr. #2400	1,971	1 1/4"
Hornady 200-gr. JHP/21.5-gr. H4227	1,423	3/4"
Hornady 200-gr. JHP/22.5-gr. H4227	1,453	1 3/4"
Hornady 200-gr. JHP/23.5-gr. H4227	1,537	3/4"
Hornady 200-gr. JHP/24.5-gr. H4227	1,585	5/8"
Lyman No. 42798/10.0-gr. Unique	1,421	1 1/8"
Lyman 215-gr. FNGC/21.5-gr. #2400	1,785	1"
Lyman 215-gr. FNGC/22.5-gr. #2400	1,891	1 1/2"
Lyman 215-gr. FNGC/22.5-gr. H4227	1,573	1 1/4"
Lyman 215-gr. FNGC/23.5-gr. H4227	1,613	1 1/4"
Lyman 215-gr. FNGC/24.5-gr. H4227	1,735	5/8"
Lyman 215-gr. FNGC/9.0-gr. Unique	1,259	1 7/8"
Lyman 215-gr. FNGC/10.0-gr. Unique	1,384	2"
Oregon Trail 200-gr./10.0-gr. Unique	1,440	1 1/2"
Oregon Trail 225-gr./10.0-gr. Unique	1,399	1 1/4"

*Groups are three shots at 50 yards.
Lyman 215-gr. FNGC is No. 429434.

.44 WINCHESTER CENTERFIRE		
Black Powder And BP-Class Smokeless Loads Suitable for use in all rifles constructed of modern steel.		
TEST GUN: NAVY ARMS MODEL 92 .44-40, 20-INCH BARREL WITH TANG SIGHT.		
BULLET/LOAD	VELOCITY	GROUP
Lyman #42798/36.5-gr. Goex FFFg	1,566	3 7/8"
Lyman #42798/36.5-gr. Pyrodex P	1,322	3"
Lyman 200-gr. Cowboy/35.0-gr. Pyrodex P	1,450	6"
Lyman 200-gr. Cowboy/35.0-gr. Pyrodex Select	1,234	7"
Lyman 200-gr. Cowboy/35.0-gr. Goex FFFg	1,176	8 1/2"
Lyman 200-gr. Cowboy/35.0-gr. Goex FFFg	1,307	7 1/4"
Lyman 200-gr. Cowboy/35.0-gr. Goex CTG	1,145	7 1/8"
Remington 200-gr. JFP/8.0-gr. Unique	1,056	2"
AA LTD 205-gr. RNFP/8.0-gr. Unique	1,193	1 5/8"
Oregon Trail 225-gr. RNFP/8.0-gr. Unique	1,143	5/8"

*Groups are 10 shots at 50 yards.

.44 WINCHESTER CENTERFIRE		
Suitable for use in all rifles constructed of modern steel.		
TEST GUN: 1860 MODEL HENRY 24-INCH BARREL.		
BULLET/LOAD	VELOCITY	GROUP
Oregon Trail 200-gr. RNFP/5.5-gr. N100	1,056	1 1/4"
Oregon Trail 200-gr. RNFP/5.5-gr. Red Dot	1,049	1 1/2"
Oregon Trail 200-gr. RNFP/6.0-gr. TiteGroup	1,151	1 5/8"
Oregon Trail 200-gr. RNFP/7.0-gr. WW231	1,176	1 1/2"
Oregon Trail 200-gr. RNFP/8.0-gr. Unique	1,235	1 7/8"
Oregon Trail 200-gr. RNFP/5.0-gr. Bullseye	1,038	1 1/2"

*Groups are three shots at 50 yards.

.44 WINCHESTER CENTERFIRE HEAVY LOADS		
Warning: Use only in Marlin 1894 and Winchester 1892-class actions.		
TEST GUN: NAVY ARMS MODEL 92, 20-INCH BARREL WITH TANG SIGHT.		
BULLET/LOAD	VELOCITY	GROUP
Hornady 200-gr. JHP/20.0-gr. H4227	1,256	1 1/4"
Remington 200-gr. JFP/22.0-gr. H4227	1,537	1 3/4"
Remington 200-gr. JFP/9.0-gr. Unique	1,197	2"
Speer 200-gr. JFP/10.0-gr. Unique	1,366	2 1/4"
Speer 225-gr. JHP/10.0-gr. Unique	1,309	2"
Oregon Trail 200-gr. RNFP/10.0-gr. Unique	1,390	2"
Oregon Trail 225-gr. RNFP/10.0-gr. Unique	1,360	1"

*Groups are three shots at 50 yards.

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An Easy-Shootin' Load

My most used load for the .44-40 consists of a 200 to 225-grain RNFP bullet over 8.0-grains of Unique. This is a load that is pleasant to shoot in sixgun or levergun, safe in all toggle link actions, and an excellent choice for CAS competition. An added bonus is the fact this load also works great with 180-grain bullets in the .38-40, and 255-grain bullets in the .45 Colt.

Using the RCBS Pro-2000 Progressive press with its stationary powder measure, I can go from any one of these cartridges to any of the others in 10 seconds by simply removing the two restraining pins and replacing the die plate. All three cartridges work just fine with the .44-40 shell plate. With the use of primer strips instead of having to load primer tubes, the RCBS Pro-2000 is seen to be even more efficient.

Watch Those Diameters

There has been a lot of variation in barrel groove diameters of both .44-40 sixguns and leverguns over the past 125 years. It's not unusual to find barrels as tight as .426 inch, and I once had a Colt Bisley Model with an oversized barrel of .432 inch. For the .44 Special or .44 Magnum I normally size cast bullets at .429 to .430 inch diameter, however I do have a few .44 Specials that require bullets sized to .428 inch or they will not enter the chambers.

The commercially cast bullets I normally use for the .44-40 come from Oregon Trail and can be ordered sized to .427-, .429- or .430-inch diameter. My normal rule of thumb is to use the largest bullet that will comfortably enter the revolver cylinder or a rifle chamber.

When it comes to jacketed bullets for the .44-40, Remington offers a 200-grain JSP that measures .426 inch, while most .44 bullets designed for the .44 Magnum measure three to four thousandths larger. I find the smaller Remington bullets will work in the newer rifles chambered for the .44-40, however, the accuracy obtained is slightly less than that resulting from using .44 Magnum bullets.

As an example, 23.5-grains of H4227 under the Remington .44-40 bullet clocks out at 1,582 fps and put three shots in 1½ inches. Switching to Hornady's 200-grain bullet designed for the .44 Magnum and using the same powder charge results in a muzzle velocity of 1,537 fps, or about 50 fps slower, however group size is cut in half. *Warning: Use only in modern Marlin 1894 and Winchester 1892-class actions!*

Not only do the .44 Magnum bullets perform better than the .44-40 bullets, they are also much easier to find on gunshop shelves. However, I don't recommend going over a weight of 200 grains when it comes to using .44 Magnum jacketed bullets in the .44-40. Heavier bullets will either increase the overall cartridge length, which can cause feeding problems in some rifles, or will take up more case capacity thus raising pressures significantly.

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The Compleat Turkey Hunter

BY HOLT BODINSON

The turkey is North America's greatest game bird, and its recovery from a population low of 30,000 in the 1930s to more than 5.6 million today is one of the hunting community's greatest success stories. It is said that if Benjamin Franklin had had his way, the wild turkey, rather than the bald eagle, would be our

symbolic national bird. Still, we honor Old Tom every November on Thanksgiving Day.

Keen of sight, omnivorous in his food habits, the turkey in my mind ranks right up there with the whitetail deer when the conversation turns to the most challenging hunts of a lifetime. To hunt him is to respect him.

You can spend a lifetime pursuing him and still be outfoxed on a regular basis.

Many states, like Arizona, give the turkey almost big game status with limited draws for specific management units, and there are hunt-able populations in every state except Alaska. He is a big bird and he's fast — capable of doing 25 mph on his feet and 55 mph in the air.





He comes in five regional sub-species: the Eastern, ranging throughout the eastern half of the U.S.; Osceola, limited to the Fla. peninsula; Rio Grande — Texas, Okla., Kan., Colo.; Merriman's — along the Rocky Mountains and into the plains of Wyo., Mont. and S.D.; and Gould's — central

Mexico and now just beginning to be established in Ariz. and N.M.

And, yes, like our wild sheep, there is a recognized Grand Slam of turkeys. Turkeys are scored using a formula that takes into account weight, spur length and beard length. The keeper of the record

book is the National Wild Turkey Federation, and you can download score sheets from their web site.

We hunt him in the spring when he's love sick and most vulnerable, and in the fall, when he and she are just out there somewhere. The latest figures indicate that





2.6 million hunters pursue the big bird each year, and to do so, you do need some turkey-specific gear.

Dedicated Guns

The majority of states require the use of a shotgun for turkey hunting, partially because it's traditional and more recently because it's considered safer by our game and fish departments. The trend in shotguns has been toward camouflaged autoloaders and pumps with 24- to 26-inch barrels fitted with very tight "turkey chokes" and possibly a scope or day-glo type sight.

In turkey hunting, the object is to lure the turkey as close as possible, hopefully within 30 yards or less, and place a carefully aimed load of shot into the head and neck area. That is what kills turkeys instantaneously. Body shots, except when the bird is flying or wounded, are to be avoided. Turkeys on the ground are somewhat protected from small size shot by their heavy wing feathers and well muscled breasts.

Turkey hunting is one of those rare occasions when you actually aim a shotgun like a rifle so there is an emphasis on fitting turkey guns with rifle-type open or optical sights. Personally, I favor open sights should I have to take a quick shot at a flying or wounded bird. TRUGLO and HIVIZ both market bright, fiber optic, after-market open sights for barrels with ventilated ribs. They're quick to install for the turkey season, adjustable, and very visible in the dark woods.

You are also going to be doing a lot of walking and hopefully, walking out with a Tom. A sling on your shotgun will prove to be an invaluable accessory.



A Wealth Of Options

Today, every major shotgun manufacturer offers one of more models designed specifically for turkey hunting. In the Winchester line it's their Super X2 Universal Hunter Turkey and several Model 1300 Universal Hunter Turkey guns featuring Mossy Oak Break-Up camouflage patterns, TRUGLO sights, barrels from 22- to 26-inches, extra full turkey choke tubes, and a 3-inch chamber in the Model 1300 and a 3½-inch chamber in the Super X2.

Remington offers the same range of turkey models in their 11-87, 1100, 870 and SP-10 series, and just this year released a neat Model 1100 youth turkey gun in 20 gauge. The list is endless with Browning, Beretta, Benelli,

Ithaca, Mossberg and New England Firearms all fielding specialized turkey models.

Another trend in turkey guns has been toward the 3 inch or 3½ inch twelve gauge or the 3½ inch ten gauge, and with good reason. A turkey's head and neck present a relatively small target at any range, and we want to smother it with as much shot as our gun can throw.

Dedicated Ammunition

If you study the ammunition manufacturers' turkey loads, you will see that they're based around generous charges of No. 4, 5, and 6 shot. The shot is usually copper plated and buffered to enhance the density of the patterns. Typical of your average loads is



Specialized turkey chokes are a boon. **Below:** Remington Hevi-Shot is a real performer. **Right:** H&R's 10-bore single is simple and effective.





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Turkey hunting is infectious, and with more hunters pursuing old Tom each year, our sporting manufacturers have provided us with a wealth of great gear. In shotguns, have a look at the very small sampling above. (left to right) The versatile Charles Daly Maxi-Mag accommodates up to 3½" 12-ga. shells.

From Mossberg, the Model 500 Bantam 20-ga. is just the ticket for your young hunter. Benelli is well known for the reliability of the M1 Field, and this 3" chambered version in Advantage Timber HD continues the tradition. Beretta's gas-operated 391 Urika is soft-shooting even when used with 3" loads. Browning has gone all out with the NWTF version of its popular Gold auto.

And don't stop at the right gun — the Mossy Oak Cut-N-Run vest is a great accessory. Remember too that camo is important all the way down to your boots. The 6" Whitetail from Wolverine is very comfortable as well as hard to see in the woods.



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Winchester's 12 gauge Supreme Turkey line offering 2¼ ounces of shot in the 3½ inch; 2 ounces in the 3 inch; and 1½ ounces in the 2½ inch chamber.

Recently, manufacturers have been pumping turkey load velocities up to 1,300 fps and reducing the shot charges accordingly. When we're trying to throw the densest patterns possible, I think this velocity binge is a mistake. Recommend you stick with the heavier charges of shot at velocities of 1,125 to 1,250 fps. They're proven turkey getters.

One exception to this may be Remington's new Hevi-Shot loadings, since Hevi-Shot tends to produce exceedingly dense patterns with even light shot charges at velocities as high as 1,450 fps. In the 20 gauge, Remington's Hevi-Shot combination of 1 ounce at 1,350 fps in the 2½ inch case and 1½ ounces at 1,300 fps in the 3 inch hull may well prove to be the very best loadings for turkeys in that gauge.

The real key is to buy, pattern, and hunt with specialized turkey loads. You're not going to shoot more than one or two shells per turkey so ammunition cost is meaningless.

Patterning

Since you will be shooting your shotgun like a rifle, patterning your gun and ammunition is absolutely essential for a successful turkey hunt. Patterning at distances from 20 to 40 yards will prove two things. One, does the shotgun shoot to the point of aim? And two, does the choke tube/ammunition combination deliver a tight, killing pattern? Fortunately, there are some great turkey head and neck targets available. My first choice is Birchwood Casey's Shoot-N-C Turkey Patterning Kit.

The Shoot-N-C kit consists of a free-standing cardboard target frame with five self-adhesive turkey head and neck targets. In use, you merely open up the target frame, paste on a target, set it at a measured distance, and fire. It's instant gratification! Every hit appears as a large, visible, yellow dot. It's very easy to see if your pellets have hit the cranium and spinal column of the big bird.

Use a range finder to set up your patterning targets at 20, 30 and 40 yards. I would also recommend you carry a range finder in the field. Once you're in position and awaiting the arrival of Old Tom, shoot some measurements of your field of fire so you know what your limits are.

In summary, do you need a specialized turkey shotgun? No, I took my first turkey with a Fox side by side. Currently I shoot a stock Winchester Super X2 with a 3½ inch chamber and a tight turkey tube. In the last few years, I've prowled the woods with an "uncamouflaged" New England Firearms single shot 10 gauge, a Browning Gold Turkey model and a Remington SP-10. Shoot what you have. Use a turkey choke tube. Mask your gun with camouflage tape if you like. Do shoot turkey ammo and do pattern your scattergun.

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Clothing And Gear

Where camouflage becomes even more essential is your clothing. The well-equipped turkey hunter will be dressed head-to-toe in camouflaged clothing. This includes camouflaged boots, socks, pants, shirt, coat, rain gear, vest, face mask, hat and gloves. Try to match your camo pattern to the terrain you will be hunting.

Two of the most visible parts of the human body are the face and the hands, particularly the hands that hold and move the shotgun into position. An experienced hunter will rest his shotgun over his curled up knees pointed in the likely direction that Tom will appear. This position minimizes hand and body movement during aiming and shooting. In any case, light, cotton, camouflaged gloves are essential, as is a simple, open mesh, face mask.

The heart and soul of the turkey hunter's gear is his vest. A modern turkey vest is both a means of comfortably carrying your calls, decoys, GPS, ammunition, lunch, water, and turkey trophy as well as a padded seat. You're going to be doing a lot of sitting, some of it on wet and uncomfortable ground, so that padded seat is worth its weight in gold. In addition, a good vest is fitted with blaze orange safety streamers that are deployed from pockets on both sides as well as from the back when you move around in the woods.

Don't think the turkey vest is handy only for the turkey season. It's a great outer garment for general hunting. I use mine all the time for varmint hunting.

The ability to hear turkey talk and audibly locate turkeys is important. You'll find many hunters using electronic hearing aids or muffs to augment their hearing even though it may not be impaired. I use a set of Walker's Digital Game Ears and having lost the higher pitches, I am dependent upon them. Try some form of auditory augmentation. You might be amazed at what you've been missing.

By all means carry a GPS. Walking into a pitch black woods to set up on Old Tom is so much easier if your GPS is doing the guiding. When you are scouting an area, a GPS is the perfect tool for mapping and relocating roosting areas and routes. And if you're buddy hunting, add a small 2-way radio to your vest.

And finally, calls. Turkey hunters are inveterate collectors of calls. Like guns, there's a new model every year, and you just have to try it. The easiest calls to work with are the slate models, box calls, and finger activated yelpers plus mouth blown locator calls that mimic an owl, crow, or coyote. The elite calls are the mouth diaphragms. They require a longer learning curve but they are the most versatile and their use minimizes hand movement.

In states that permit them, electronic calls have a place. Frankly, I find the ability to change my call or calling pace on a moment's notice strongly favors hand and mouth calls over pre-programmed electronic models.

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Technique

How do you learn to hunt turkeys and use calls? You're blessed if you can team up with an experienced hunter or a guide. If the National Wild Turkey Federation holds a banquet in your area, by all means go. You're bound to meet some energized turkey hunters who will help you get started. More importantly join and support the Federation. It offers an excellent magazine and has poured millions of dollars into turkey restoration projects. It deserves every hunter's support.

There are also numerous how-to video tapes on the market today. The tapes produced by the major call manufacturers like Primos, Quaker Boy, Penn's Woods, Lohman and others are outstanding.

And there are many good books. Krause publishes the *Turkey Hunter's Digest* that is filled with good and original information and the *Turkey & Turkey Hunting* magazine. Stoeger has just released the first in a three volume series entitled the *Turkey Hunter's Tool Kit: Shooting Savvy* that focuses entirely on guns, ammunition, chokes and sights.

What is probably the best one-stop shopping mall for turkey hunting gear is Cabela's, and they now issue a special turkey hunting catalog.

Turkey hunting is one of the finest sports North America has to offer. Try it. I must warn you though — it's very infectious.



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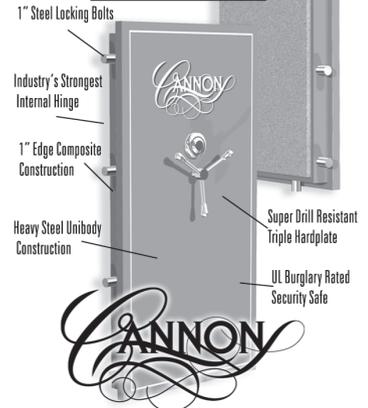
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KAHR'S PM9

continued from page 56

perform long trigger pull, do same again. Reliability is quite high. The only malfunction in many hundreds of rounds of testing was a single failure to go into battery when loading a first round into the chamber. A light pressure on the back of the slide fixed the problem instantly.

The big advantage of these little pocket autos of today is that they are shootable. All have pretty good inherent accuracy. The Kahr's long, light double action trigger is easier than most. It is conducive to a surprise trigger break.

The gun is very controllable. Recoil is mild, even with +P or +P+ ammo. It's at least as easy to shoot as the Glock 26, which is very easy indeed. By comparison, an Airweight revolver of the same heft hurts to shoot with +P ammo, and an 11-ounce Titanium revolver with +P approaches torture when fired intensively in the kind of practice you need to make a last ditch hide-out gun do what it must.

Accuracy? The first time I tested a PM9 for a gun magazine, my best five-shot group measured 2 1/4 inches from 25 yards, with the best three of those shots in an inch and five-sixteenths. The ammo was blue-box, remanufactured 115-grain FMJ from Black Hills. I noticed that, like many autos in general and most Kahrs in particular, the PM9 was prone to "4+1" syndrome. That is, the first hand-cycled round would go to a different point of impact than the rest of the five shots, which had subsequently been automatically cycled into battery.

To allow for that, I fired six-shot groups and took three different measurements. The first was the total of six shots, to give a true picture of what the user could expect when he opened fire. For clarity in the following chart, let's call this group "A." The second (group "B"), was a measurement of shots two through six, a five-shot group in which all rounds had been fed into the chamber the same way. The third measurement was the best three of those last five.

The "best three" measurement practice helps to factor out human error and give a truer picture of the gun's inherent mechanical accuracy when you don't have a machine rest available. Six different loads, encompassing the three most popular bullet weights in the 9x19, were tried. All firing was hand-held from a rest at 25 yards. For the results see chart on page 53.

No, this probably isn't the pistol you would want to take to the national bullseye championships at Camp Perry, but for a pistol that fits nicely in your pocket, it's not bad. For perspective, the Pro-Load would have kept all six rounds including the slightly errant first shot in not just the head but the center head box of an IPSC target. The head box measures 2 inches high by 4 inches wide; the Pro-Load group measured one and one-eighth inch high by three and a quarter inches wide. For a gun this tiny, I'll take that.

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Subjectively Speaking

Like some other things we hide in our pants, pocket guns can be intensely personal. A lot of it depends on the styles of the day and the wearer's tastes. The baggy trousers of the first half of the 20th Century are back in style with Dockers and whatnot. If your tastes run to Armani suits or jeans so tight they appear to be spray-painted on, pocket carry of a 9mm semiautomatic pistol is probably not for you.

In days of yore, Elmer Keith and some other gun writers spoke of guns the size of the Colt Commander .45 auto as pocket pistols. I always wondered where they bought their clothes. They must have had pockets deeper than an insurance company's. Even with today's gun-forgiving men's fashions, I suspect that more PM9s will wind up inside waistbands and in fanny packs than in trouser pockets, and certainly more baby Glocks will.

I strongly recommend you use a proper pocket holster if you go for trouser pocket carry. Safety demands it: leather or Kydex now safely covers the trigger guard area. The modern 9mm-class pocket guns are "drop-safe" and proper to carry with a round in the chamber. You want a pocket holster of the type made by Kramer, Ky-Tac, or Mark Miller. These have a pronounced upper flange at the front, which catches on the pocket edge and helps guarantee that the holster doesn't come out with the pistol.

One place where the pocket auto loses against a revolver of the same size is speed of draw from a pants pocket. The reason is that the thumb seems to have nowhere to go but around the grip frame in firing position, in essence creating a fist. A fist is much harder to pull out of your pocket than a flat hand. With the snub revolver, you put your thumb on the hammer spur area, which streamlines the hand shape and allows a much faster draw.

With a striker-fired subcompact auto, putting your thumb on the back of the slide compromises your two-finger grasp of the short grip frame. With one of the above-mentioned pocket holsters, you put your thumb on the flange and push. This helps break the gun free, keeps the hand in a streamlined configuration, and allows the thumb to close down into firing position as your little auto clears your pocket.

Personal History

Pocket pistols have saved many lives. They've been used by all four generations of my family in this country. Not terribly long after he first came to the U.S., my grandfather bought a Colt 1903, which was the high-tech "Glock" of its time. He wound up having to shoot an armed robber with it. He gave that gun to my dad, who one night used it to frighten off a burglary suspect who was staring in through the bedroom window. That the little .32 had scared the guy was evident not only from the footprints in the snow heading away, but the fecal matter left in the footprints.

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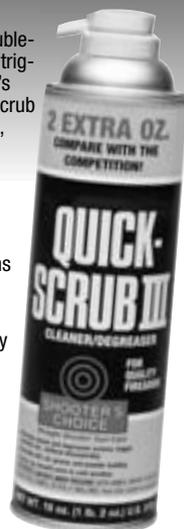
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While I never used that particular .32 for anything serious, the day came when I was with some NYPD officers who responded to an armed robbery in progress by multiple suspects armed with sawed-off shotguns. I was not carrying. The backup gun I was graciously handed by one of the uniformed guys was a Walther PPK loaded with .380 FMJ.

Now, quite apart from that gun being totally against NYPD regs then and now, being issued a .380 is something Jeff Cooper probably has nightmares about. However, going from nothing at all to a .380 makes the little gun feel like the thunderbolt of Zeus. The perps were gone when we got there, but the little gun was comforting.

Later, the time came when my oldest daughter, licensed to carry at 18, had to draw a compact 9mm auto to back off two large male rape suspects. The pistol she used was a Model 3913 S&W, a tad large to call a pocket gun, but it was in the spirit of the concept. My younger daughter has shot her great grandfather's Colt .32 auto and enjoyed the nostalgia, but is more likely to reach for a 9mm when there's trouble. Her generation, after all, has the heritage of a century of experience and development in these things.

The Kahr PM9 is an excellent pocket pistol of the new breed, and for many will prove to be the best possible choice. It may well represent the peak of development of an honorable American tradition.



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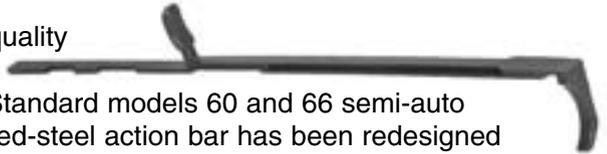
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The particular version pictured here is technically the model "870 SPS-T RS-TG." What that equates to in plain English is a delightfully trim 20 gauge, weighing a scant 6.5 pounds. Barrel length is 20 inches, and it's threaded for the versatile Remchoke™ system, with one Super Full Turkey Choke included.

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Of course the standout adaptation of this 870 is the Mossy Oak New Beak-Up camouflage pattern. The original Mossy Oak Break-Up is a great pattern, but the new version is far more versatile, and Remington is to be congratulated for keeping up with the latest developments.

This Remington 870 is a really attractive and nicely put up shotgun. While designed for chasing gobblers, it's versatile enough for many hunting pursuits. For details on the entire Remington line of arms, ammunition and accessories, see the Website at: www.remington.com, or call [800] 243-9700.





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SEPTEMBER 2003 * SCOPE MOUNTING: Why not do it yourself – it's easy! * **EYES LIKE AN EAGLE:** Five good binoculars for your inspection * **SEASON WITH THE SHORES:** We put the hype aside to see how they perform * **PARAS C7 .45 CD LDA:** A close look at this hand-hitting compact * **CZ 550 Safari Magnum:** Dave finds a lot to like in this fine bolt action * **GUNS IN THE CLASSROOM?** Making the most of a rare opportunity * **REMINGTON'S 332:** Sometimes, it just feels right * **OUT OF THE BOX:** Short, straight and to the point. This Month: CZ 527 Carbine, EMF Great Western II and FNMF's FNP-9.



AUGUST 2003 * SW99 .45 ACP: "Best of the breed" is Charlie's verdict * **LEVERGUN LOADS:** Two of Winchester's least known cartridges the .375 & .356 * **NORTHERN INVASION!** Steek custom steel from two superb Canadian knifemakers * **SPIT-TIN IMAGE:** The CP99 offers realistic looks and loads of cheap fun * **SECOND BEST CO-PILOT:** Out of Alaska comes a take-down powerhouse * **TALKING SOGUN?** Barnes finds a loquacious sample of S&W's M28 * **ITALIAN ALLEY SWEEPER:** FABARM FP6 – utterly reliable and novel in appearance * **IMPROVISED RESTS:** Making the most of what's available * Website Showcase



JULY 2003 * OFFHAND SHOOTING: The most basic and least appreciated skill * **THE GUNS OF EL-FEGO BACA:** Read the incredible story of the "Frisco War" * **FIST FULL OF FURY:** .300 WSM power for the handgun hunter * **GREAT GLASS!** Forster reviews two fine European spotting scopes * **COLT'S LEGENDARY SAA:** The finest sixgun of the frontier still survives * **COWBOY SHOOTING:** The unwashed truth of "cowboys" then and now * **BALLARD'S NO. 5 PACIFIC:** Both yesterday and today, this is "some rifle." * **WEAR OUT A GUN?** They're easy to "kill," but hard to wear out * **OUT OF THE BOX:** Short, straight and to the point.



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Performance Then And Now

The original black powder loading of the .44-40 consisted of a cast bullet for around 1,300 to 1,400 fps from the 1873 Winchester. This was a do-everything load in the hands of many frontiersman. It was the rifle and load they had, so it was used to take deer, elk, black bear, even grizzly bear. To put it into proper perspective this is about the equivalent of today's .41 Magnum from a six-inch revolver.

There are few today who would consider the .41 Magnum as a top choice for elk and large bears. However, the .44-40 was what they had so it had to work. I would not want to try to tally all the deer that fell to the 1873 Winchester in the last quarter of the 19th century and beyond.

Today's brass is solid head rather than the old balloon head style that was used for black powder loads, thus it has less powder capacity. Starline brass is slightly heavier than other brands, which further reduces powder capacity. On the upside, the primers we have and the black powder we have access to are both probably better than that which was available more than 100 years ago.

To duplicate the old black powder loads requires about 35.0-grains of black powder (by volume) or black powder substitutes, also by volume. My best results have been obtained using Lyman's No. 42798, a 200-grain plain-based, flat-nose bullet over 36.5-grains of Pyrodex P for 1,322 fps and three shot groups of three-inches at 50 yards. The accuracy is nothing to get really excited about, however for hunting whitetails it's more than adequate if one confines the shots to 50 yards or less.

A smokeless powder duplicate of the original black powder loads requires 8.0 to 9.0-grains of Unique for 1,200 to 1,400 fps. I would be very careful using anything heavier in the toggle-link replicas. In fact, for my own use in these leverguns, I rarely go over 8.0-grains of Unique. In the accompanying chart I have listed six smokeless powder loads for the toggle action rifles all of which will stay well under two inches for three shots at 50 yards.

Both the Winchester 1892 replicas and Marlin's 1894 Cowboy give us whole new vistas for reloading the .44-40. For a cast bullet load I prefer Lyman's No. 429434, a 215-grain FNGC (flat-nosed gas check). The flat nose is safe in tubular magazines and also delivers maximum shock on game, while the gas check design normally gives better accuracy in rifles at higher velocities than can be obtained with plain based bullets. It depends upon the caliber and each individual rifle, however most plain based bullets start to lose accuracy around 1,400 fps. With the gas check design accuracy holds well beyond 1,900 fps.

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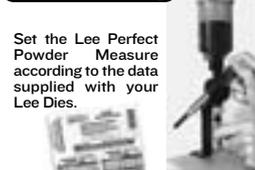
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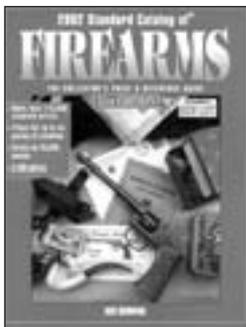
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Additional Favorites

My most used powders for heavy loads with this bullet in the .44-40 levergun are Alliant's No. 2400 and Hodgdon's H4227. Hodgdon's H4227 works extremely well for .44-40 levergun loads, with my top load being 24.5-grains for 1,735 fps and three shot groups at 50 yards of 5/8 inch from Marlin's 1894 Cowboy. For a very slightly more powerful load, 21.5-grains of No. 2400 clocks out at 1,785 fps with three shot groups of one-inch. My most powerful recommended load with this bullet is 22.5-grains of No. 2400 for just under 1,900 fps. Again, all of these loads are recommended *only* for use in replica 1892s and the Marlin 1894 Cowboy.

Switching to jacketed bullets I prefer Hornady's 200-grain JHP, again using No. 2400 and H4227. My top load with No. 2400 is 24.5 grains for just under 2,000 fps and three shot, fifty-yard groups of just over one inch. Using this bullet and H4227 results in exceptional accuracy, and the same charge of 24.5 grains is just under 1,600 fps and three shots at 50 yards of a most satisfying five eighths of an inch. There are an awful lot of out-of-the-box bolt action rifles that can't do this.

All of these mentioned loads using either Lyman's No. 429434GC or Hornady's 200-grain JHP are serious hunting loads. They are certainly adequate for any deer-sized game, however I believe I would stick with the hard cast bullet for anything requiring deep penetration such as feral hogs. We don't always need these heavy loads, in fact for most shooting they are not needed at all. This is where the everyday fun loads come in.

Wrecked Rifles Rescued

If one desires to forego replica leverguns and search out the real thing, the task can become quite exasperating as it is difficult to find good shooters at shooter prices among the Model '73 and Model '92 Winchesters made from 1873 to 1919, and 1892 to 1937 respectively. Collector pieces abound; dogs are easy to find also. Now thanks to Cosby Custom Guns those dogs can be totally rebuilt and re-finished including re-lining the barrel.

Brian Cosby specializes in this service for Colt SAAs (www.cosbycustomguns.com) as well as Winchesters. When Cosby completes his magic, the firearm in question looks better than new. His case colors on receivers are exquisite. He recently rescued an old Winchester Model '73 .44-40 for me including re-welding a botched up action. His work is highly recommended.

Seventy-five years ago the .44-40 was pretty well a dead entity. Thanks to Cowboy Action Shooting and all the interest in the Old West it has fostered, the .44-40 is alive and well. Sometimes, things work out the way they are supposed to.



OUT OF THE BOX

RUGER'S SUPER BLACKHAWK

By Glenn Barnes

Forty-eight ounces of bear killing, hog slaughtering, deer slaying, silhouette shooting and target blasting perfection — Ruger's famous New Model Super Blackhawk .44 Magnum is one tough, versatile six-gun. Introduced to the shooting public in 1973, the New Model was simply an ultra-modern rendition of this firm's reliable and bull-strong predecessor.

Changes incorporated into the New Model include a slightly beefier top strap (my New Model measures .029-inch thicker than my old model) for added strength, and a brand new internal design incorporating an innovative transfer bar system. This creative transfer bar system allowed the shooter to safely carry the revolver with all six chambers loaded. It can also help prevent accidental discharges should you happen to drop the six-gun hammer down onto a hard surface.

Antecedents of the New Model and similar single-action designs should only be carried with five cartridges, leaving the hammer down on an empty chamber for safety's sake. Many savvy *pistoleros* continue this practice even with the New Model. With each new metamorphosis in a proven handgun design, there is inevitably going to be some sense of loss, whether it is simply physical, or perhaps even sentimental or maybe historical.

What did shooters disinherit when Ruger offered us the NM Super Blackhawk? When you slowly thumb cock the hammer on an old model, you here and feel the familiar click clack, click clack, that spells C-O-L-T,

or in this case perhaps B-I-L-L. New Models simply go ker-thunk. The cylinder is recessed on the old three-screw model, which adds a touch of class in my opinion, while the New Model lacks this feature. Not much to yield when you consider what it would cost Ruger, and eventually shooters, to produce these cylinders; and ker-thunk really doesn't sound too bad, it kind of has a solid feel and throaty resonance to it.

How does it fit and feel? Clearly this is subjective topic, but Super Blackhawks have always fit my hand like the proverbial glove, and New Models are no exception. Many experienced shooters complain of the Dragoon-style square back trigger guard rapping their knuckle when a heavy load is touched off, but fortunately I've yet to experience this malady.

Thirty years have passed since the NM Super Blackhawk was introduced, yet its design is superbly modern and its appearance remains somewhat futuristic for a single action six-gun. Beefy, bull strong, and built to withstand practically any abusive shooting and hunting situation imaginable; that's the foundation and manufacturing principle behind this successful revolver.

Durability, strength, and good looks are clearly attractive attributes, but don't account for much if the pistol fails to shoot tight little groups. So how does it perform? I tested a current-production sample with nine factory loads and three of my favorite handloads to determine its potential. Hornady's excellent 240-grain XTP fueled by 21.0-

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Model: N.M. Super Blackhawk
Caliber: .44 Magnum
Finish: Blued or stainless steel
Barrel Length: 4½", 5½" or 7½"
Sights: Serrated ramp front, adjustable rear
Weight: 45 to 52 ounces
MSRP: \$519 to \$639
Contact: www.ruger.com

grains of AA9 or alternately 21.0-grains of Alliant 2400, or 23.0-grains of Winchester 296 using the same bullet, averaged 1¼ to 1½ inches at 25 yards with speeds averaging around 1,350 to 1,380 fps.

Black Hills' 240-grain JHP, along with Corbon's 240-grain JHP, and Garrett's 310-grain Hammerhead loads were the showponies in the factory load tests. They produced very close to published speeds, with Corbon actually exceeding theirs, and exceptional accuracy.

If you're in need of an ultra-modern single action six-gun for hunting or simply bumming around the woods, give Ruger's NM Super Blackhawk a look. No, it's not the newest model to hit the dealer's shelves. By contrast, it has been faithfully serving shooters and outdoorsmen for three decades now. And as always with any Ruger handgun, you get more bang for your buck.



OUT OF THE BOX

GOING STEADY WITH CALDWELL

By Jim Gardner

On any visit to the rifle range, you'll see shooters at the benchrest trying to get ol' Betsy zeroed for the upcoming deer season, or maybe just checking out the latest pet handload.

Often as not, you'll see some sort of improvised rifle rest, ranging from rolled up sleeping bag to cut-off pants leg turned sandbag. Once, I saw a fellow using a 10-pound bag of pinto beans for his impromptu front rest.

On my home range, they thoughtfully supply short lengths of 4x4, wrapped in indoor/outdoor carpet. A stack of these actually works fairly well until recoil disassembles it for you, and your rifle comes crashing down onto the bench.

Most of these improvised rifle rests also share the flaw of placing the rifle far too low, forcing the shooter into a hunched over position that magnifies recoil.

The right way to make use of a bench rest is with a proper adjustable front rest and rear "bunny bag." Wonderful shooting rests can be had from Sinclair, Ransom, Bald Eagle, etc. These are precision instruments, and they're a joy to use, but to be blunt they're mighty pricey for the sort of occasional use the average shooter will put them to.

Solid As A Rock

To fill this gap, Caldwell Shooting Supplies has brought to the market an interesting variety of shooting rests for both rifles and handguns. Their top-of-the-line product for riflemen is "The Rock" front shooting rest. I purchased one of

these last year from Cabelas, and have been very satisfied.

The Rock is made with a sturdy cast iron base. Weight with front bag attached is a bit over six pounds. The legs span about seven inches from the center column, giving a wide, stable footprint. The finely threaded adjusting feet permit you to level the rest and assist in getting the rifle correctly aligned with the target. They're also sharply pointed, to prevent the rest from skidding across the bench under recoil.

I've found The Rock has sufficient vertical adjustment for my needs, but a taller center post is available if required. The standard component allows adjustment from about five inches to as high as seven inches above the bench.

Suggested retail price for The Rock is a modest \$79.99, less than half the tariff for most similar products. Mind you, that's without the front and rear bags, which you'll need. Check the Midway catalog for Caldwell's cordura nylon bags, or you might look at the good leather Protektor bags (www.protektor-model.com) I eventually selected.



Caldwell Shooting Supplies offers another good aid for the rifleman. Called the Steady Rest, this five-pound, plastic shooting rest is convenient and easy to use. With no loose bags or other components, it's a cinch to tote to the firing line using the built in carrying handle. A large rectangular compartment in the base corrals your loose cartridges, screwdrivers, etc.

The front and rear saddles are constructed of a soft, non-marring material. The rear saddle stands at 6¼ inches, and the front saddle is hand wheel adjustable from nine to 12½ inches above the bench. The three feet are well padded, and won't scratch the hood of your pickup when used for back country shooting.

The Steady Rest is just the ticket for all the normal bench rest duties, and given the stability of its one-piece construction, should do double duty as a gun cleaning cradle. Suggested retail is a modest \$49.99.



FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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OUT OF THE BOX

ROCK RIVER ARMS COMMANDER

By Charles E. Petty

For more years than I like to admit, a Commander size .45 has been my primary defensive handgun. It's not unusual for someone to ask why I don't carry a full size gun. Honestly, that is a decision based on what I like instead of some objective reason.

The difference between Commander and full size is 3/4 inch of slide. The frame and all the innards are the same as the larger gun. Some folks gripe about the grip size and prefer one of the sawed off "compact" styles which give up a round or two in magazine capacity and a ton in shooting comfort. The idea of making the frame shorter is to promote "concealability" which I guess it does but there are also costs involved.

Folks with very small hands do well with them, but more average guys like me just can't get comfortable gripping them. Maybe it's just personal prejudice, but I want to have my little finger around the grip not under it.

The point is that I've got a long standing fondness for the Commander size guns and the latest to come live at Charlie's house is an Elite Commando model from Rock River Arms. It's a fully accurized pistol with a 4.2-inch barrel. All of the amenities you'd expect on a match gun are there.

There are forward slide serrations, 30 lpi checkering on the front strap and mainspring housing, beveled magazine well, beavertail grip safety and Novak night sights. Mine has an ambi thumb safety since I shoot with the "proper" hand.

The heart of the job is a Kart match barrel that is flawlessly fitted. It may seem as if I harp on this subject sometimes but it is the



single most important job in building an accurate government model pistol. The bottom barrel lugs have an intimate, and snug, relationship with the slide stop pin and the hood fits the slide just as it should. There is simply nothing to criticize here.

The standard finish is a highly polished blue on the flat surfaces of frame and slide, but the top of the slide receives a light bead blasting for a non-reflective matte finish. Of course you can get stainless steel, "Black T" or hard chrome finishes at additional cost.

Over the years I've had the opportunity to test a couple of Rock River's pistols and they all have one thing in common. When new they are tighter than a tick. You would think (I know I did), that there was no way in hell they would function, but they always do.

From the first shot all have fed and functioned flawlessly and by the time you've run a hundred rounds or so through the gun the action is silky smooth. In other words they get better as you shoot them and finish fitting the parts with normal wear. This is something that is technically hard to do, because if the initial fit is too tight the gun won't run — too loose and it won't shoot. It is a skill the Rock River crew seems to have mastered.

From the very first shot I knew this was going to be fun. The trigger broke at just a tad under four pounds without a trace of creep. Hardball ammo hit right at the point of aim so the sights were true. And perhaps the best news of all is that Rock River's guns are a real bargain. When you look at the cost of many custom guns these days sticker shock isn't limited to cars anymore. With prices starting at \$1,025 you can't find a better gun for the money.



ACCURACY TEST RESULTS

LOAD	VELOCITY	1	2	3	AVG.
Black Hills 230-gr. JHP	828	1.84"	1.50"	1.88"	1.74"
Federal 230-gr. FMJ	821	1.45"	1.33"	1.46"	1.41"
Remington 230-gr. Golden Saber	823	2.09"	2.32"	1.00"	1.80"
Taurus 185-gr. Hex-bullet	949	2.92"	2.20"	2.67"	2.60"
Winchester 185-gr. SWC match	718	0.86"	1.32"	1.32"	1.17"
Average					1.74"

Notes: Accuracy results are 10 shot groups at 25 yards from Ransom Rest. Velocity is the instrumental average of 30 shots measured with a PACT chronograph.



FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Rock River Arms
[309] 792-5780
www.rockriverarms.com

CAYWOOD'S FIRST CLASS FIRELOCKS

BY JIM GARDNER

With a *clack* flint strikes frizzen, *whoosh* the priming charge leaps to life and almost immediately the gun responds with a throaty *boom*, filling the air with pungent white smoke. You may be standing on a concrete firing line, dressed in modern jeans and boots, but just for a moment, you are other people in other places as well.

Maybe you're a French/Canadian *voyageur* in the stern of a freighter canoe loaded to the gunwales with trade goods. Each paddle stroke inches you further upstream towards the Abenaki encampment that should lie perhaps a league ahead. Beside you, wrapped in your *capote* against the dampness, is your *fusil*. You loaded it with patched ball this morning, hoping to catch sight of a moose in the



gray light. Your fusil feeds and defends you — it's your lifeline in this beautiful but treacherous new country.

Or perhaps you're a prosperous Virginia planter. The rich, dark soil has rewarded you with fine tobacco crops and you've indulged yourself by ordering a fowling piece from the local gunmaker. She's light as a feather, sporting a good English lock and barrel mounted to a fine piece of maple. She's your pride and joy, and as you ride toward the marshes, you can almost taste the roast goose Molly will prepare.

And what's wrong with indulging in a little mental time travel? We shoot for fun, don't we? Perhaps that's one reason why shooting a muzzle-loading firearm can be so enjoyable — you operate at a slower pace, and thus there's lots of time for quiet introspection.

A Reputation For Quality

I first heard of Caywood Gunmakers some years ago. I was interested in a flintlock smoothbore typical of the French and Indian War period. Caywood was recommended as producing some of the very best of the type. I ordered a catalog, but never managed to get the funds together. You know how it goes.

Last year, while attending the International Sporting Arms Exhibition in Las Vegas, Nev., I rounded a corner and was delighted to find Caywood's booth. An arsenal of fine muzzle-loading guns in several different styles adorned the walls. I hadn't been in the booth for a minute before a tall gent wearing a broad smile thrust one of these sleek front stuffers in my hands and introduced himself.

Danny Caywood is a likeable fellow. He's a fountain of knowledge on the subject and he's more than willing to share it. Nor is his experience simply "book learning." He has hunted extensively with his period guns, and finds the added challenge of hunting with a firelock adds zest to his hunting like tossing red chili into the stew pot.

I happen to know he recently took an Arkansas elk with one of his flint guns, becoming the first man to do so in perhaps 200 years. This challenging hunt took place in the middle of a downpour, and I asked Danny what the secret was to keeping a flint gun functioning in wet weather. He generously offered to share some pointers, and you'll find them in the attached sidebar.

Caywood's splendid French fusil with: Horn with hand woven strap by Col. John Baker, tow and tow worm, loading block, pouch full of .595" ball, patches, spare flints, horn charger, priming horn, forged turnscrews and vent pick and a wonderful knife by Tim Ridge. Look for a future story on his Swamp Fox Knives.



Close-up of engraved butt of the French fusil.





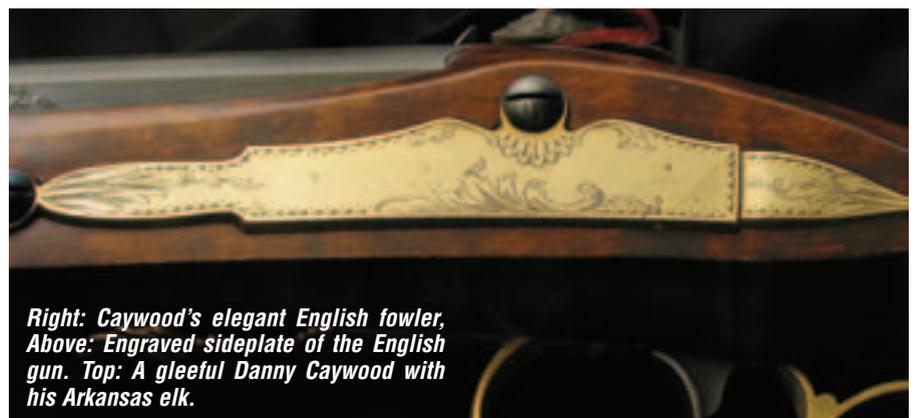
Strange And Pleasant Event

Not long after the Las Vegas show, a heavy package arrived at the office with not one, but two of Caywood's fine handmade guns enclosed. It was rather like Christmas in April. And then, as I unpacked the guns and admired the fine workmanship, the strangest thing occurred.

One by one, several of the young ladies from our offices came over to inquire about these 18th century arms. Some had questions about how they functioned, while others simply remarked on how "pretty" the

guns were. The *GUNS* and *American Handgunner* offices just happen to be staffed with a large number of very attractive and lovely young ladies. Having a variety of guns come through the office isn't at all unusual, but never before has a package had such an effect. I learned two things that day: The first is that I *really* like my job, the second was that I must find a way to get more such packages shipped in.

I can't blame the girls — these two Caywood guns really are handsome. Danny had shipped both an English fowler and a French "Type C" fusil. Both were fitted with



Right: Caywood's elegant English fowler, Above: Engraved sideplate of the English gun. Top: A gleeful Danny Caywood with his Arkansas elk.

BASICS OF FLINTLOCK HUNTING

By Danny Gaywood

The experience of hunting with a flintlock is rivaled by no other weapon. When you cradle a gun built of curly maple, satin finished brass and steel — you are holding not only a formidable firearm, but a piece of history as well. I've hunted game from rabbit to elk with flintlock rifles and smoothbores with great success and satisfaction. Whether calling turkeys on a muggy spring morning or stalking whitetails in a fall rainstorm, I've found there are a few secrets to making the flintlock function as the reliable hunter's gun it was designed to be.

A high-quality flintlock is a pleasure to shoot and a challenge to use in the game fields. Fast, consistent ignition depends on three things; a high quality lock, a good ignition vent (touch-hole) and a sharp flint.

When buying a flintlock, remember that the lock is the most important component on the firearm. A quality lock has proper architecture and spring strength. Parts should be properly hardened for performance and longevity.

A properly coned touch-hole funnels the flash to the main charge insuring quick and consistent ignition. Avoid long tunnel shaped vents; they cause erratic and slow ignition.

When loading for hunting, place a touch-hole pick fully into the touch hole. This will prevent moisture from reaching the small exposed surface area of the main charge and causing a hang-fire. Sharp flints insure that the gun fires at the moment of truth.

Familiarize yourself with the gun at the rifle range to work out accurate loads. Sight the gun in for the ranges at which you will encounter shots in the field. Load the gun with recommended powder charge and top off with patched round ball. Round balls have taken game cleanly for centuries and still do so. Though not a long-range projectile, they are devastating when used at practical distances. If you see your quarry at 125 yards, figure out how to get closer.

When hunting in rainy weather, a small oiled rag placed in the pan offers simple, effective water resistance and keeps your main charge dry, even in a downpour. You can either remove the patch and prime the gun if the rain slacks off, or leave it in place until an animal approaches. Keeping your primer on a thong around your neck enables you to prime in mere seconds. Avoid shots when in doubt and enjoy any animal taken in fair chase with a flintlock. Your buddies will envy your skills.



.62-caliber (20-gauge) smoothbore barrels. The first thing you'll notice is how incredibly light these guns are. Despite their lengthy, 41½-inch barrels, they weigh only about six pounds.

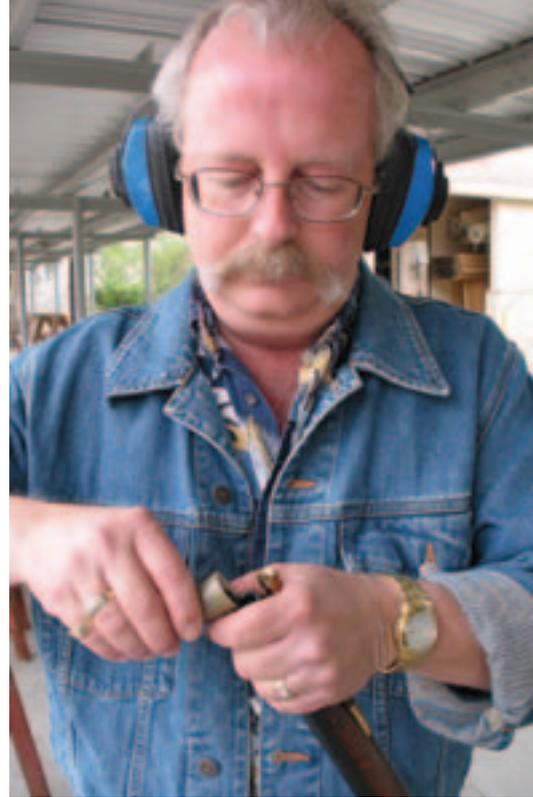
The reason for this is twofold. First, the barrel is made heavy and strong where it needs to be, but light elsewhere (as were best-grade originals). The barrel's breech is octagonal, tapering to a point 13 inches up the tube where it transitions to round with an attractive "wedding ring" design. The barrel's round section is not uniform in diameter, but tapers to a waist about a foot from

the muzzle, after which it flares slightly. This puts a little extra weight at the muzzle, making it more durable and giving a better feel in offhand shooting.

The second reason these guns are so light is because they are built correctly. That's to say they carry no excess wood at all. The entire stock is delicately shaped, with the long forend especially light and slim. I've handed these guns to several shooters, and all have commented on the light weight and very pleasant feel at the shoulder.

Both guns are brass mounted, the buttplates and trigger guards carrying deli-

*Serpent sideplate of the French fusil.
Right: Steve Evatt loads, primes, aims
and fires. They don't call 'em
'flinchlocks' for nothing!*





cate engraving. The English fowler carries quite a bit more engraving and wears a nicely shaped and engraved sideplate opposite the lock. The fowler is also fitted with loop and button for affixing a sling. Both guns are spruced up with sterling thumbpiece inlays on the wrist.

Heart Of The Gun

The locks on the two guns differ greatly. The fusil is fitted with an unusual brass lockplate. Not only does it look quite distinctive, it could have a practical advantage. The area of the pan is prone to rust when these guns are used hard and not afforded much care. A brass lockplate and pan might stain, but it won't rust. I wondered if it might wear much faster than a steel component, but a closer look showed a steel bearing pressed into the tumbler's pivot hole. Pretty darn clever, and a good indicator of the thought and care that goes into these guns.

The lock on the fowler is of a later, more advanced design with a bridled frizzen and fancy "waterproof" pan with drain. The general style is what would be called a round-faced English lock, and it's a perfect choice in keeping with the design and period of this fowling piece. The cock (hammer) of this lock has an especially graceful shape.

The trigger pull was surprisingly light on both guns, although the English fowler exhibited a tendency to creep. Caywood uses locks from Mike Rowe of Quality Locks, Inc. exclusively. Both of these locks are good sparkers. As long as the flint is good and sharp, they deliver a healthy shower of white-hot sparks when the cock falls.

Fit And Finish

The quality of inletting on these guns is excellent. Even complicated shapes like the thumbpiece inlays show no gaps, looking as if the wood grew around them. Pulling the lock showed a combination of machine routing and handwork in the lock recess. From buttplate to forward thimble, the fit is uniformly quite good.

The barrels are nicely blued, and some small parts, like the lock bolts, were brilliantly heat blued for contrast. I noted however, that after cleaning these guns a couple of times, the finish adjacent to the vent was pretty well rubbed off. "We've tried all sorts of traditional finishes and none of them stand up to the heat of the flash, coupled with the acids and salts that are by-products of black powder combustion," Danny Caywood advised when questioned about this. "Even a slow rust brown finish is soon eroded. I guess that's the price of playing with black powder."

The stocks of these guns are very nice, both as to wood figure and finish. The French fusil is stocked in a nice grade of curly maple, the English fowler wears a very attractive stock of quilted maple. Both are neatly finished to a pleasing soft luster. They



Above: Jen Terlecky gives one of the Caywood guns a look. **Below:** Sterling silver thumbpieces adorn the wrists of both guns.

show the results of careful sanding, whiskering off, staining and many coats of finish. I was particularly impressed to find that all internal wood surfaces — barrel inlet, lock recess, etc. — were sealed to resist swelling and warping when hunting in wet weather. It's just another sign of careful attention to quality in details large and small.

Of course all of this exacting handwork comes at a price. Checking the Caywood Website showed this French fusil, once returned, would be available for \$1,485 plus shipping (this reflects an additional \$100 for the optional brass lockplate). Remember that these guns are exempt from federal and most state regulations, and may be shipped directly to your doorstep. Wouldn't that be a pleasant delivery?

The Versatile Smoothbore

Glance at Caywood's list of products, and you might be taken aback at the fact they're essentially all smoothbores. The myth would have us believe that every colonial American had a rifle, but it's simply not so. While the longrifle that evolved from the German Jaeger was uniquely suited to the needs of the American frontiersman, it had its disadvantages — principally that it was far slower to load and lacked the versatility of the smooth-bored gun.

For hunting, a musket, trade gun or fowler might be loaded with small shot for running or flying game, with a heavy charge of buckshot, with a tight-fitting patched round ball for longer ranges (possibly two patched balls for heavy game at close quarters), or with "buck and ball."

Unlike the rifle, it could be loaded in the middle of a fight with a loose fitting, unpatched ball. If the bore were not too badly fouled, such a projectile could be spat from the mouth into the muzzle, and the butt slapped hard against the ground to seat it without the use of the loading rod. An 18th century speed load, you might say. But what of accuracy with the single projectile?

There's a great deal of interest these days in "smooth rifles," trade guns and fowlers. In my muzzleloading heyday in the early '70s, these guns were all but unknown. Today, there's a wealth of information on how to make them shoot well. Some users report accuracy that would be the envy of any good rifled gun, but all seem to agree it takes a good bit of experimentation in powder type, ball diameter and patch thickness to achieve the best results.

I didn't have time to go through that pleasant process, but I was satisfied with the way these guns grouped. Testing the French fusil at 50 yards, five-shot groups ran about five inches. These groups often had three shots clustered much tighter, but invariably I would plant a couple of those big holes wide of the mark.

An inconsistency in my loading technique? Failure to follow through during ignition (they don't call 'em "flinchlocks" for nothing)? Honestly, I don't know, but it

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A-7/03

would be great fun to work further on loads and technique to make the most of these guns. However, I do know of a surefire way of improving the long-range accuracy of a Caywood gun.

Split Personality

Due to the care and uniformity with which the barrels are profiled and the stocks inletted, Caywood is able to offer interchangeable rifled barrels for most of their guns. This makes tremendous sense, and doubles the versatility of the gun for hunting or match use.

The English fowler was so outfitted, and exchanging the .62-caliber smoothbore barrel for the .54-caliber rifle barrel took all of five minutes. First check to ensure the gun is unloaded, loosen the sidenails a turn or two to remove pressure on the lock, remove the sling swivel and then turn out the tang screw. Now, using the supplied push punch, press out the barrel retaining pins and carefully lift out the barrel. With the barrel removed, that beautiful, slim stock is pretty fragile, so treat it carefully before laying the replacement barrel into the inlet and securing it in place.

The rifled barrel carried front and rear sights, the rear consisting of a low-profile base sweated to the barrel with a petite, drift-adjustable blade. The barrel is rifled 1:54-inches, with a very nice internal finish, testified to by smooth loading and easy cleanup. Firing at 100 yards, five-shot groups ran five to seven inches. Again, I suspect a little load development and increased familiarity would cut that figure significantly.

Caywood offers a wide choice of calibers in these guns, ranging from 12 to 28 gauge, and .45 to .58 caliber rifled. Please note that most, but not all of these may be had in the interchangeable barrel system. Smoothbored barrels are furnished with front sights only.

I've been told a good reviewer should always find a small thing or two to criticize when reporting on a product. I'm pretty much out of luck as far as these two splendid guns are concerned. I found them delightful to shoot, and equally enjoyable to see reposing on the living room gun rack. The only real dissatisfaction came from boxing them up to return. They're wonderful guns, and I'd be pleased as punch to have one of them. If you share a taste for history, I suspect you would feel the same.



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From N.E. Custom Gun

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Custom Guns, 438 Willow Brook Rd., Plainfield, NH 03781, phone: [603] 469-3450, FAX: [603] 369-3741, E-mail: bestguns@cyberportal.net, Website: www.newenglandcustomgun.com



Rifleman Scope & Mounts

From Leupold

Leupold's line of Rifleman scopes and rings deliver accuracy, durability and reliability in an affordable package. With a suggested retail price beginning at under \$200 the Rifleman line comes in three popular magnification levels: 2-7x33mm, 3-9x40mm and 4-12x40mm. The matte black non-reflective finish offers maximum concealment. Other features include the new "Wide Duplex" reticle and fully coated lenses which deliver a clear, bright sight picture across the wide field of



view in low light level conditions. Contact Leupold & Stevens, P.O. Box 688, Beaverton, OR 97075-0688, phone: [503] 526-1400, FAX: [503] 526-1475, Website: www.leupold.com

Cigar Box Folders

From Imperial Schrade

Imperial Schrade offers a handsome collection of folding knives in attractive cigar box presentation displays. Inspired by the artistic creations of the Walden Cigar Company in the early 1900s, the colorful boxes hold the following four knives: large traditional trapper pattern, traditional muskrat pattern, three-blade stockman pattern and two-blade peanut pattern. The series is limited to 1,000 serialized pieces. Contact Jeff Ahearn at Imperial Schrade Corp., 7 Schrade Ct., Ellenville, NY 12428, phone: [854] 647-7601, FAX: [845] 210-8671, E-mail: jahearn@schradeknives.com, Website: www.schradeknives.com



New 7mm-08 Handi-Rifles

From New England Firearms

New England Firearms has created both a adult and youth version of the Handi-Rifle in 7mm-08. Both the adult model (SB2-708) and the Youth version (SB2-Y08) feature a

22-inch barrel, factory-mounted scope rail, American walnut-finished stock and a ventilated recoil pad and swivel studs. Other features include a break-open single shot action and a 14¼-inch length of pull on the adult model and a n 11¼-inch on the youth ver-



New Catalog

From MidwayUSA

MidwayUSA has published the first edition of its new *Affordable Shooting & Reloading Master Catalog & Reference Guide*. The new 436-page catalog is packed with items of interest from the casual shooter to the professional gunsmith. Also included are topical editorial contributions and handy reference material from well known gun writers. Contact MidwayUSA, 5875 W. Van Horn Tavern Rd., Columbia, MO 65203, telephone: [573] 445-6363, FAX: [573] 445-3182, Website: www.midwayusa.com

sion. Contact New England Firearms, 60 Industrial Rowe, Gardner, MA 01440, telephone: [978] 632-9393, FAX: [978] 632-2300, Website: www.hr1871.com





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From Mitch Rosen

The Clipper is a new inside-the-pants holster for semi-automatic pistols from Mitch Rosen Extraordinary Gunleather. The Clipper fastens securely inside the waistband with a sturdy spring steel clip for maximum concealment, security and comfort. It accommodates all popular semi-auto pistols and is available in a variety of colors.

Contact Mitch Rosen Extraordinary Gunleather, 300 Bedford St., Manchester, NH 03101, telephone: [603] 647-2971, FAX: [603] 647-2973, Website: www.mitchrosen.com



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From Slide Systems

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From Charles Daly

Charles Daly introduces the new Daly HP single-action 9mm semi-automatic pistol. The Daly HP features a choice of 10-round or pre-ban 13-round double stack magazine, XS rapid target acquisition sight system, extended slide release, improved thumb safety, Uncle Mike's rubber grips and combat hammer. Contact Charles Daly, P.O. Box 6625, Harrisburg, PA 17112, phone: [717] 540-8518, FAX: [717] 540-8567, Website: www.charlesdaly.com



Catalog No. 56

From Brownells

Brownells has published Catalog No. 56, featuring nearly 30,000 quality shooting sports products and accessories. Over 2,000 new items have been added and the expanded index makes referencing the catalog easier than ever. Factory gun parts are available from such key manufacturers as DPMS Panther Arms, Benelli, Colt, Para-Ordnance, Remington, Ruger, Smith & Wesson and Winchester. To order the \$5 Catalog No. 56, contact Brownells, 200 S. Front St., Montezuma, IA 50171-1000, telephone: [641] 623-5401, FAX: [641] 623-3896, Website: www.brownells.com



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SporTrak Topo GPS

From *Magellan*

The new SporTrak Topo handheld GPS receiver uses preloaded interactive topographic maps to ensure a hunter's safe return to and from camp. The pocket-size unit weighs just 6.1 ounces and the armored, waterproof casing enables it to function dependably in even the harshest field conditions. The nine-button keypad gives instant access to nine



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From *Weatherby*

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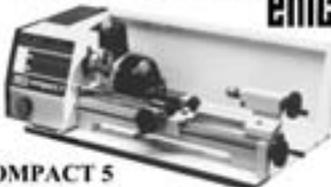
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CAMPFIRE TALES

continued from page 82

several reasons, one of which was now having the perfect revolver to shoot with Elmer Keith's .44 Special loads. By this time I already had a Ruger .44 Magnum but running .44 Special loads through it was not the same as having my own .44 Special.

Four years later, we had three very young kids, I was in college, and there was not enough money to both pay tuition and buy groceries. Three guns, one of which was that .44 Special, had to be sold. As we came out of the gun shop, Dot looked up at me and sobbing said: "You will never have to do that again!" Fortunately, she was right. Not only have we never had to do that again, I have lost track of the number of guns she personally has purchased.

Earlier this year our local shooting club held the first practice Levergun Silhouette Match. This was designed for prospective participants to come out, check out the targets, sight in their leverguns, and be ready to go the following month. We went together so we could sight for each other just as we had done in long-range handgun silhouetting 20 years ago. However something went wrong.

Every time it was my turn to shoot and Dot was supposed to sight for me, I couldn't find her. As I looked around she was off somewhere talking to this guy and that guy. Since we were celebrating our 44th anniversary later that same month there were no thoughts of jealousy, but I could not understand what in the world she was doing.

When we got home I went to cleaning both the rifles and myself while she went shopping. As she returned I was summoned to come help her carry several bags. In they came, I placed them on the counter, and proceeded to go about my business.

"Didn't one of those bags feel a little heavy to you?"

It hadn't, so she pointed me in the right direction. What I found stunned me with both surprise and amazement. While she was talking to all the men that morning she was actually asking them if they knew of a .44 sixgun for sale unlike anything I already had. She actually found one.

As I reached in the bag my hands felt an unfamiliar shape as I pulled out a S&W Double Action Frontier Model. Chambered in .44-40 and manufactured in the early 1880s, this sixgun had an absolutely pristine barrel and cylinder, was mechanically perfect, as were the grips, and the lock-up of the cylinder revealed absolutely minimum play. The nickel plating showed slight flaking and oxidation in a few small areas.

I asked her where she found it but to this day, four months later, I have not asked how much it cost, nor do I ever intend to. She had done her homework and actually found a .44 that I not only did not have, I had also never even experienced. At my age some new experiences, very few, are totally welcome.

One of my very well known fellow gun writers could probably blame his now happy situation on Diamond Dot. Several years ago he came to the house with a 7.5-inch Great Western Frontier Model .45 Colt for sale. I did not have the money. Dot heard us talking, asked how much it was, disappeared into the bedroom, and brought out the cash. My friend, a confirmed bachelor at this time was stunned.

He didn't know such women existed. Within a year he had found a young lady with three kids, we were invited to their wedding, and they now have five more kids of their own. Yep, he can thank Dot for opening his eyes and filling his life.

A classic example of role reversal occurred two weeks ago. My eighth-grade grandson was playing in three basketball games on the same day. After the marathon Dot and I stopped at Boise Gun Company in search of a part needed for a project. Of course, while there we needed to look at what they had to offer in both sixguns and leverguns. I spied a particularly good-looking Winchester, which turned out to be the Cheyenne Carbine Commemorative Model '94 chambered in .44-40. I thought about buying it, however I didn't really "need" it, nor did I want to spend the money.

Dot took a look at it and it was love at first sight, just what she needed to have the best looking outfit at the local Cowboy matches.

"We really don't need it!" says I.

"I'll pay for it!" says she.

What a rare situation! The husband is saying we don't need it and the wife wants to buy it! I sat down in a chair while she bargained to lower the \$550 price tag. The owner looked at the tag, quoted a new price of \$475, which turned out to be what Dot was hoping to pay, and "we" were the new owners of a beautifully looking rifle.

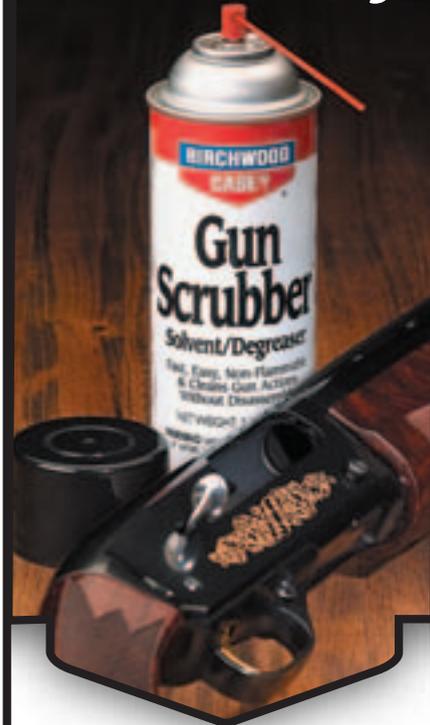
The shop owner may put up a plaque to commemorate this unusual situation, a woman urging the man to buy another gun. As I think about the young girl who stood in the parking lot and cried in the early 1960s because we were spending all of \$68 for a new stove, I realize I may have created a monster, albeit a most pleasant monster.

I just got a call from Dot. She had to drive to Salt Lake to call on a client and she phoned, 150 miles out, not only to tell me everything was fine but also that she was in a pawn shop and wanted to know if there were any guns they had I "needed." Their entire stock of handguns consisted of a Davis Derringer, a S&W Model 65, and an old Three-Screw Ruger .357 Blackhawk. "Bargain with them on the Ruger," I instructed as I gave her a maximum price. She called back to tell me we now own another Ruger.

That's a long way from sneaking an extra gun into the house. I have to stop here as I think it would be a good idea, make that a *very* good idea, to go out and buy her a dozen long-stemmed roses.



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CAMPFIRE TALES

BY JOHN TAFFIN

GUNS-N-ROSES

It's time to come out of the closet. I confess. I'm an addict. I took that first no turning back step in 1956. That was the year I bought my first sixgun and started that total decline into dependency.

In those pre-plastic cards and trust-everyone days, a teenager could open a charge account at Boyle's Gun Shop. The owner kept track of the accounts on simple index cards in a small metal box. No computers. No interest. No carrying charges. No limit. I've had an ongoing gun bill ever since.

Perhaps it would've been possible to have been cured in those early days had it not been for an 18 year-old blonde by the name of the Dorothy — Dot for short. Maybe it was my own fault. Our first date was not to a movie or even a drive-in for hamburgers and a shake. Instead of such normal teenage activities I picked her up in my '53 Merc hardtop and we drove to the gun shop to pick up my custom Arvo Ojala rig.

Forty-five years later, I still have the Ojala rig and its \$49.95 price has now escalated to a value of over \$1,000.



Diamond Dot resplendent in her 19th century finery.



"I hope the tie doesn't ruin my image," said John Taffin. "After all I was tryin' to impress my dream girl!"

More importantly, Dot is still with me, and that \$2 investment for a marriage license less than three months after the first date has proven to be of incalculable worth.

When we met, Diamond Dot, as she is now known (and that name may give you some clue to her own addiction), had never even held a sixgun much less fired one. With such a first date she had every opportunity to run away, however, instead she has become both an enabler and an active and willing participant.

When I was actively selling firearms, I would always run into men who would tell me not to call the house when the gun came in as they did not want their wife to know about it. Two things struck me about this situation. First, how could anyone live this way, and if so why let anyone else know about it? Secondly, I always had to wonder what in the world they talked about before they got married!

Dot knew exactly what she was getting into and not only chose not to fight it but to actually encourage it. That has been both a great blessing on one hand and an inescapable curse on the other. The latter refers to the fact that there is no doubt I will go to my grave still having a sixgun charge account.

Our first Christmas together Dot added fuel to my sixgun fire by presenting me with a 6.5-inch S&W .44 Special 1950 Target. That was a very special sixgun for

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