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# GUNS

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**DECEMBER 2003**

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# GUNS

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**GUNS MAGAZINE**  
OCTOBER 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](mailto:ed@gunsmagazine.com)

## Letter Of The Month

Editor,

I'm a 25-year reader and 10-year subscriber to *GUNS* and *American Handgunner* magazines, and I am a big fan of John Taffin (keep up the great work).

The reason I'm writing is to let you know about the very helpful service I received from *GUNS* magazine. I'm in the U.S. Air Force and was deployed for four months recently and found out the Post Office does not forward magazines. I did not receive five issues and called to see if you could possibly help.

And with no interrogation or disbelief she said she would get all five issues right out. So, thank you for the superior treatment and a truly great magazine and for *Campfire Tales*.

Stephen Belles, TSgt USAF  
Via e-mail

## Taking Action

I think I have a way for gun owners to "wake up" the politicians. I have been a regular contributor to the Republican Party and pro-gun candidates for many years. For the last few weeks, however, whenever a solicitation comes in the mail, I send it back with no contribution and a statement to the effect, "I will make no further contributions until I am assured that (applicable person or organization) supports the expiration of the 1994 Assault Weapons ban, and will work against new Gun Control measures."

I think if all gun owners start doing this, it won't be long before the politicians see we mean business. Make sure you affix a stamp to any postage-paid envelopes — it wouldn't be right to make the receiver pay for your message.

Bob Yerzak  
Via e-mail

## Credit Where It's Due

I would like to pass on the experience I had with J.Dewey Company. I received a defective 17C36 one piece rod from

Brownells and called J. Dewey Company and explained the problem. A gentleman said to keep it for use on .22s and he would send me a new .17 Dewey rod. Two days later I received the new .17-caliber rod. Now that's really a company that stands behind their product.

Frank Funkhouser  
Brookston, Ind.

## Note Of Appreciation

I just received your October, 2003 issue (at my law office).

Thank you John Taffin. Most Lawyers that I know are gentlemen, many enjoying shooting, hunting etc. Thanks for realizing that *real* lawyers are not what you see on television.

Also, I think Clint Smith's article was excellent. My daddy, a hunter for nearly 80 years, often told me that, "You catch more flies with honey than vinegar."

Robert N. Ray  
San Antonio, Texas

## A One Gun Man

I've found some of *GUNS* reader's wish lists most interesting, but as for me, my favorite guns are all "Elmer's." Most people call it the .44 Magnum, but I call it the ".44 Keith." If they don't understand, they don't matter.

Gary Paulson  
Charleston, S.C.

## Shared Experiences

Dear Mr. Taffin-

Your articles in the August and September issues of *GUNS* particularly struck a chord with me.

I have also been lucky enough to have met Charles Askins, Jr., Walter Walsh and Bill Jordan. It was a privilege and a pleasure.

Like you, I am also a retired teacher who took guns to school. Most of my teaching career was spent in Intermediate Schools in the Bronx, NYC where I taught history, mainly. My percussion muzzleloading rifle

went with me (with my Principal's permission) for years, whenever I was teaching about the Civil War. Each year, I'd mention it and there would be no problem. Finally, one year, I was told it wouldn't be a good idea. Someone had gotten nervous.

Too bad, it certainly reached students who had little interest in the more usual classes.

Eugene Souberman  
Yonkers, N.Y.

## Kudos To Springfield

I have a Springfield Armory stainless 1911 .45ACP that had been "repaired" by an incompetent gunsmith.

I contacted the Springfield customer service department, which corrected my problem in very short order. Other firearm companies should model their customer service policy after Springfield Armory.

Thanks, Springfield!

John R. Terrell  
Stanford, Ky.

## Blue Wonder Is A Wonder

First, I need to apologize for not taking full advantage of your magazine. I usually only read it to try for the Gun Of The Month and for John Taffin's *Campfire Tales*.

Recently, I decided to make a day of cleaning my guns, and was heart broken to see the mess inside the bore of an old Lee Enfield SMLE I'd acquired from a friend. Nitro solvent wasn't even coming close to making it operable again.

I recalled the April issue of *GUNS* contained something about a new cleaner, and opening my copy I found the Quartermaster column describing Blue Wonder gun cleaner. Let me say, what a product! It didn't make the Enfield perfect, but now I can at least feel comfortable firing it.

Thanks *GUNS* magazine. Now not a single page will turn without every word being read.

Michael Nickerson  
Baltimore, Md.

*continued on page 88*



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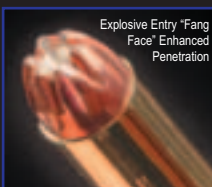
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injure a sleeping family member. An officer can shoot a rabid dog on a playground with less worry that the bullet will penetrate, ricochet and injure or kill a bystander.

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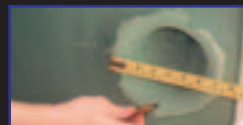
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## Conduct Counts

**I**n the small community where I reside, there lives a talented artisan who crafts quite realistic cutout plywood signs. His work is popular. You'll see it at the local dairy, at the car wash in the neighboring town, etc. I don't know who this fellow is, but recently he got me good.

I'll admit it; I drive too fast. It's a bad habit I've been guilty of all my life. There's one main road into the little valley where I reside, and it's a steeply pleasant series of straights and sweeping turns — just the sort where you like to press on that pedal a little and feel the wind rush by. And so I did recently, peaking at the crest and then backing off the throttle as I coasted towards the edge of town. Then I saw him.

A state trooper — motorcycle-mounted and parked in just the right place for a commanding view of the road. His eyes were locked on my car. I thought about braking, but it was too late. I was 10 or 12 miles over the speed limit, and knew I would soon be paying the price. As I rolled closer to his position, I was pretty sure I saw him smile.

And then I *really* saw him. Or rather I saw he was a plywood cutout. My relief was tempered somewhat

by embarrassment. If I didn't want the local law to see me speeding, then why not just drive the speed limit? Why not do the right thing and not have to worry about it? Good question.

Recently, I was speaking with Eric, a young fellow I know. He's a shooter and related how he had just fired his new Springfield X-treme Duty pistol for the first time the previous weekend. "It was great," he confided with a smile. "We took an old microwave out there and shot it full of holes." Man, what an accurate pistol!"

"Did you bring the microwave back with you?" I asked. There was an awkward pause.

"Well, uh, no... but it's okay, there's trash all over that place."

"And that's exactly why," I explained, "most of the open shooting areas in this county have been closed down. If we go out there and trash the place, we can hardly complain when we find ourselves locked out next time."

He's a good kid, and after discussing the subject for a while, he came to an understanding that his actions as a shooter are likely to effect not only his own future liberty to pursue the sport but that of others as well.

It has been said that character is doing the right thing, even when no one is looking. We're all human. We all fail here and there. But shooters and hunters are under intense scrutiny, so let's try to do the right thing. Let's try to behave in a way that brings credit, not condemnation to ourselves.

And as for myself, I'm going to learn to tread a little more lightly on that accelerator pedal.

### Indispensible Reference

We receive lots of mail here at the office, but few packages are as eagerly received as the new Brownells catalog. The newest No. 56 edition just arrived, and the contents include a whopping 438 pages of tools, supplies and factory replacement parts. I can't imagine a shooting enthusiast who wouldn't benefit from keeping a copy on hand.

Every shooter should have a modest assortment of correct tools to maintain his firearms. Depending on your level of skill and interest, this might mean no more than a good set of screwdrivers, and the Brownells Magna-Tip® has become the standard for most professional and amateur guncranks.

If you're a little more ambitious, I'd suggest adding a pair of parallel-jaw pliers, a good set of needle files (be certain to order a few Brownells needle file handles), the Brownells nylon/brass hammer and a set of pin punches. These tools will run you just about \$100, yet will handle an amazing amount of common gun work and repair.

You'd be hard pressed to find a gun shop without a Brownells catalog, as it's a real problem solver. The same is no less true for the average shooter. To order your own copy, call: [800] 741-0015, or check out [www.brownells.com](http://www.brownells.com).





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# SHOTGUNNER BY HOLT BODINSON

## Seen At The 2003 SHOT Show

**T**he shotgunning world is full of surprises, that is, if the 2003 Shot Show held in balmy Orlando was any example. As always there were new models of all varieties, mostly minor variations of a theme, but what is always interesting are the new accessories and items that supposedly assist in bringing out the best in us. Here are a few examples.

### Limbsaver Recoil Pad

You could have blown me over with a feather if you had told me there was a new recoil pad being marketed that represented a significant technological breakthrough. Well, there is. I first experienced the end result when testing Remington 700s in the new .300 Rem. Short Magnum. Remington had just begun installing LimbSaver pads on their short magnums. The difference in felt recoil between a standard Remington rubber pad and the LimbSaver pad was simply remarkable. Walking around at the SHOT Show, I found that Ithaca as well as Remington were now mounting the LimbSaver pads on their shotguns.

According to its maker, the design of the pad is based on three principles. First, the pads are made from NAVCOM (Noise and Vibration Control Material) that absorbs vibration. Second, internal "decay time modification" units redirect the recoil energy outward rather than straight back into the shooter's shoulder. Third, internal air chambers allow the pad to compress under recoil similar to a car's shock absorber.

The pads are offered as pre-fit units for a number of Benelli, Browning, H&R, Ithaca, Marlin, Mossberg, Remington, Ruger, Savage, T/C, Weatherby and Winchester models; grind-to-fit units for any model; and a new slip-on boot. There's even a pad system now for handguns. Until the world comes up with something better, LimbSaver is the best recoil reducing pad system we have.

### Littleton Shotmaker Gets A Facelift

How about a shot tower all of your own? Think about the economics of converting 45 pounds of cast-off wheel weights per hour into nice, round hard shot. Sound far out? It's a reality.

Burgess Bullets has purchased the old Littleton Shotmaker line, updated and improved the design, and have now brought two models back to the marketplace. The basic Model 65 measures only 12x12x6 inches. It simply dribbles

molten lead through a series of calibrated holes into a container of coolant, and voila, there's your own, homemade shot. Tumble the shot in a bit of graphite, and it's ready for the loading tool.

The Littleton produces shot sizes No. 6 through No. 9, and even those hard-to-find sizes like No. 7 and No. 8.5. Spice up your handloading. Produce your own home-grown shot.

### Beretta's "X-Tra Wood"

Entering Beretta's classy exhibit, I was immediately struck with the beauty of the outrageous pieces of figured walnut gracing their Onyx Pro Series of O/U shotguns. Picking up a gun, reality set in. That outstanding piece of walnut was ersatz figured wood.

I smell a trend beginning here. Take a plain stick of wood and simply overlay it with a richly figured grain pattern. Well, why not? Shotguns look best when dressed out in exhibition grade walnut, particularly when you don't have to pay for it and not be concerned about a bit of field abuse.

Beretta, of course, came up with a method of protecting the value of their real walnut as well as preventing some future buyer into believing the wood was indeed real. On the bottom of the pistol grip is a deep stamp reading "WOOD X-TRA."

Available this year on the Onyx Pro and the AL391, "X-Tra Wood" is a beautiful and tough finish that Beretta will refinish for a nominal fee if it becomes damaged.

### .410 Lever Guns Aplenty

Following on the success of their original Model 9410, Winchester is introducing five new models of the 9410 ranging from the Traditional with its 24-inch barrel and full length magazine to a Packer with a 20-inch barrel and two thirds-length magazine. There is even a Compact Packer with a cut down 12.5-inch buttstock for small framed shooters.

More importantly, Winchester has added a complete "Invector" choke tube system to the gun and a top-tang safety. The front sight is a brilliant TRUGLO fiber optic model, but I still can't get Winchester to provide the 9410 with a folding rear sight. If you buy one of these neat fun guns, do change the rear sight to a folding model that gives you the option of accurate rifled slug shooting or just plain shotgunning.

Marlin is joining the .410 party with the reintroduction of their own lever action shotgun that appeared originally in the 1920s. Based on their 1895 action, Marlin's new Model 410 features a 22-inch, cylinder bored barrel, a two thirds-length magazine that holds four 2 .5-inch shells, a folding rear sight and a snap-on fiber optic front sight that fits over the fixed brass bead.



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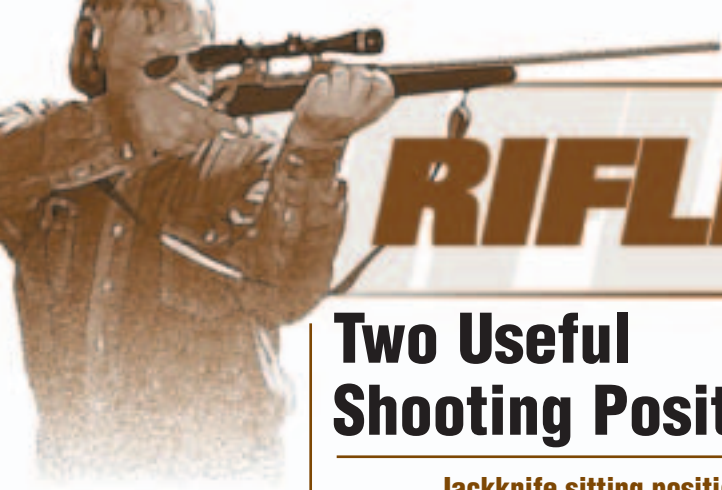
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HS-02





# RIFLEMAN BY DAVE ANDERSON

## Two Useful Shooting Positions

### Jackknife sitting position

The "jackknife" is a useful variation of the sitting position, though rarely seen either in pictures or in practice. One of the few times I've seen it illustrated is in Elmer Keith's classic book *Keith's Rifles for Large Game*.



Barrie Gwillim shows off his favorite "jackknife" sitting position. It's stable and offers a high sight line to clear obstructions.

Keith especially liked the jackknife position when shooting from uneven terrain which made the standard sitting position impracticable. He called it "...one of the steadiest of all sitting positions... (I have) used it in killing much game."

A shooter who regularly uses the jackknife is my friend Barrie Gwillim. Barrie is a fine competitive shooter and an excellent practical field shot. He uses the jackknife exclusively when sitting, regardless of the terrain. He can shoot about as accurately from this position as from prone.

The jackknife is steady, reasonably quick to assume, and gets the muzzle above grass and other obstacles. Disadvantages? Since the rifle recoils freely it is not a position to use with a rifle of heavy recoil. It doesn't work too well if the game is moving. And it's a position for shooters with flexible joints and flat bellies.

### Kneeling Position

The kneeling position is a required stage in some shooting competitions. As a field shooting position many authorities hold it in scant regard.

Captain E.C. Crossman, early 20th century gun columnist, wrote a book called *Military and Sporting Rifle Shooting*. Of the kneeling position he commented, "A position nearly without merit, but more steady than offhand... permits seeing over higher obstacles than sitting, a bit more quickly assumed. Inferior in nearly every respect to sitting..."

In the early '60s when I began reading shooting

*continued on page 87*





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For those hunters who want the same formidable 45/70 performance as the Model 1895G, but prefer a traditional-length rifle, Marlin offers the classic Model 1895. It features a 22" barrel with deep-cut Ballard-type rifling, 4-shot tubular magazine, and an American black walnut pistol-grip stock.

For Cowboy Shooters who want top performance on those tough long-range lever action events, our Model 1895 Cowboy is a must. It's also an ideal big game rifle for hunters who appreciate the nostalgia of 19<sup>th</sup> Century firearms. This authentically Old Western-styled 45/70 features a 26" tapered octagon barrel with deep-cut Ballard-type rifling, a 9-shot tubular magazine, and a straight-grip walnut stock.

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# QUARTERMASTER

BY DAVID M. FORTIER

## Carl Zeiss Tripler

A spotting scope is a great tool to have, and nicely complements a binocular and riflescope. However, the truth of the matter is it's probably also the first optic to be left behind when weight becomes an issue. For such situations where you absolutely, positively have to travel light, Carl Zeiss offers their Tripler.

Weighing a mere 1.9 ounces and only 2.6 inches in length, this small 3x monocular rides unnoticed in a pocket until needed. Then it tucks easily onto the ocular of a Zeiss binocular tripling its magnification and allowing it to perform double duty as a spotting scope. The unit itself exhibits Zeiss' famous workmanship and is nicely made with a matte black finish. The objective is 12mm and it has a 4mm exit pupil. It sports a rubber eyecup, lanyard, and comes in a leather pouch. It's adjustable for focus and can be used alone as a 3x monocular. A collar at its front fits snugly into the eyecup of a Zeiss binocular, holding it securely in place.

I spent several months using the Carl Zeiss Tripler in conjunction with a 10x40 Victory II T\* P\* and a larger 12x56 T\* P\* binocular. In doing so I found this small optical instrument to be a handy tool when used within its limitations. It's not a replacement for a full size spotting scope, let me say that up front. However, it does add a great amount of versatility to a binocular, bumping the 10x40 up to a 30x40 and the 12x56 up to a 36x56. Used off a rest (or Zeiss' tripod mount) in good lighting the binocular/Tripler combo worked



splendidly providing a sharp, clear image. As the light fades though so does performance, which is to be expected. At less than two ounces this is a great tool to have and nicely complements a Carl Zeiss binocular. MSRP \$349.99.



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# QUARTERMASTER

BY JIM GARDNER

## Merit Adjustable Iris Disk

**T**he shooting world is full of new products, but many of the very best are hardly new. Some 69 years ago, avid shooter and toolmaker Ralph Albertson formed the Merit Gunsight Company. His goal was to produce a variable-aperture sighting iris to help shooters achieve better sight definition and higher scores.

Merit changed hands in 1987, but remains a family business in the best American tradition. Also unchanged is the quality of these wonderful shooting aids so many generations have praised.

Merit's best-known product is the Optical Attachment, a variable aperture which mounts to your shooting glasses via a small suction cup. This arrangement permits you to align the device perfectly with your sight line without modifying your shooting glasses.

In use, simply dial the iris to open or tighten the aperture until the front sight and target are both in focus. The unit functions smoothly, with positive clicks to retain your setting, and quite frankly, it's the next best thing to having 17 year-old eyes again.

Another Merit product and one I've recently used is the No. Four Hunting Aperture. This is just the ticket to replace the fixed aperture in your tang or receiver sight. It adjusts from .022 to .156 inch, not only aiding good front sight definition, but adjusting to prevailing light conditions.

On the range in the bright sun, tighten it up and you'll see your groups shrink. When hunting in the morning or evening, run it out to the largest diameter to admit the greatest amount of



light and to speed sighting.

Several threaded shank lengths are available to fit various Lyman, Williams, Redfield and other tang and receiver sights. This is a beautifully made device of considerable complexity, and a real aid to good shooting, especially for those of us who have reached middle age. The price is a surprisingly modest \$48.



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# QUARTERMASTER

BY BROWN RYLE

## RIMZ Moon Clips

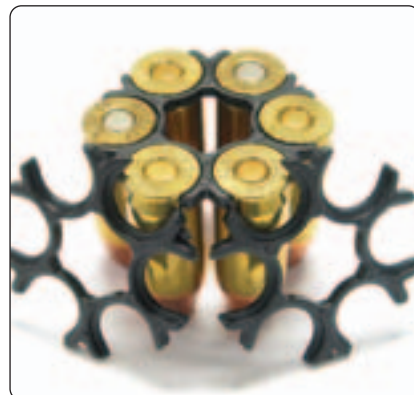
**S**cott Beckham of Beckham Product Design, has created advanced plastic component designs for the medical, commercial and aerospace industries. His credits include the pilot control grips for the F-18 Fighter and B-1 bomber, disposable medical devices, blood oxygenators, artificial kidneys and advanced prosthetics.

Scott grew tired of chasing his 1911 .45 ACP brass, moved to a S&W 625 and then discovered the difficulties associated with half-moon and full-moon clips. It didn't take long to get tired of the extra work and equipment associated with loading and unloading the metal full-moon clips. One evening at his local indoor range, Scott said, "I should make moon clips out of polymer." A fellow shooter replied, "You can't do that, it can't be done!" Beckham took the statement as a challenge and the project began.

Initially, the polymer full moon clip went through several design and material changes as range testing provided feedback. Eventually, an injection-molded unit, the "RIMZ" as it is now called, was produced using dimensions developed from a machined master prototype and an advanced engineering polymer (selected for its inertness and repeated impact resistance). Where some of the earlier attempts had only lasted a few rounds, the final product would fire 300 plus rounds per RIMZ and you can load and unload them with just your fingertips! Honest, no tools required.

The RIMZ for the S&W 625 .45 auto are available now. Future plans call for the production of RIMZ for use with the S&W 610 10mm, S&W 686+ .357 and the S&W 627, eight-shot .357.

RIMZ may be purchased directly from Beckham Product Design. The price is a modest \$5 for six RIMZ.



*Editor's Note: Just to be very clear, these were designed for the current production S&W M625. They will not work without modification on the older M25, 1917, etc. As mentioned however, other versions of the RIMZ are in the planning stage.*



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# Home Defense Rule No. 3: Identify Your Target

Using a bright light to identify and momentarily blind things that go bump in the night is always a good idea. Who knows, you might even get a chance to ask Santa about upgrading your present—after all, you need another tie like, well, another tie. But another SureFire high-performance flashlight you could use. Especially one like the E2e Executive Elite, the smallest light SureFire has ever made that qualifies for tactical use (60 lumens or brighter). At just over four inches long and weighing about three ounces, this mighty mite sets a new standard for real power in an ultra concealable package. With a Military Specification Type III hard-anodized finish, the E2e can take some serious abuse. So this Christmas when you hear a bump in the night, go downstairs and tell Santa what you really want, a new SureFire.

## E2e Executive Elite

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- MilSpec finish (much harder than competing brands)
- Powered by two high-output lithium batteries (10-year shelf life)





## What Zero For Your Fighting Rifle?

**O**ne of the many myths and legends that abound promulgates the thought that many rifle fights take place at long range. Conceptually this sounds good and we all like it because it satisfies our ego to shoot and hit targets at long range. In reality many rifle fights may fall well within ranges normally considered to be handgun distances.

Whatever the range, marksmanship is always a helpful problem solver and hitting the target is the intent. However hitting the target may be harder than you think. Thinking logically, if every center fire round ever fired in anger had hit its intended target there would be no air breathing entities left on the planet. Lots of angry rounds have been fired and lots of targets have been missed.

As one example, the 8th United States Army Air Force in World War II fired a nominal 76.9 million rounds of .50 caliber and .7 million rounds of .30 caliber machine gun ammunition downing 6,090 enemy aircraft which equates to about 12,700 rounds fired per enemy aircraft. Although rifles are not machineguns mounted in aircraft you get the point.

### The Instruction

To help us hit the target with each rifle class I teach, the first range exercise is to check on or confirm the zero of the rifle being used. The vast majority of the rifles used here are of military origin so the issue of mechanical off set or the difference between the height of the sight and the center axis of the bore comes into play. If we were dealing with a scoped rifle this offset would be called parallax.

But to set the record straight, the true issue is not whether optical sights or iron sights are used. In fact simply dealing with the offset is the issue. Many times at extended ranges the offset is not an issue as the pro-

### ZEROS AND DOWNRANGE EFFECT

Range:	25	50	75	100
25	0	2½"H	4½"H	5½"H
50	1"L	0	1½"H	2"H
75	1½"L	1/4"L	0	1½"H
100	2½"L	1"L	1/2"L	0

jectile trajectory arc generally passes from below the line of sight through the line of sight and then re-crosses at an extended range.

This projectile cross and re-crossing is determined by range, velocity, wind and other elements that affect the projectile. Two other important factors to be aware of are POA vs. POI. Point Of Aim is where the sights are located on the target when the hammer falls. Point Of Impact is the point on the target where the projectile strikes. Remember point of aim and point of impact are not and may not be the same based on zero and range to target among other things.

### The Zero

The zero or cold zero as called by some, is where the first projectile strikes on the target from a cold clean barrel. Cold zeros may print different than a string of five rapid shots but it's not always necessarily so and may vary from rifle to rifle.

Many students here at school are either law enforcement officers or rifle-armed civilians who want to assure a surgical placement of projectiles on target. So in that vein the zero or the quality or type of zero they have effects their ability to deliver that surgical hit on target. Many law enforcement officers working in cities or built up areas seem to elect a POA/POI zero at 25 yards. The next most popular range seems to be 100 yards for the denizens of the city. Rural residents often go with a military type battle zero.

The actual zero may not be as important as the ability to know if your rifle is zeroed and where your zero places projectiles on targets at different ranges.

Using an AR15 type rifle with a nominal 2½-inch sight to muzzle offset, we established the impact point above or below the POA with varying initial zeros. The chart tells the tale, and may help you to better choose which zero is appropriate for the environment you work in.

Remember the offset in application — just because the sight is clear does not mean the muzzle is clear of obstructions in front of the barrel. Clear sights do not mean a clear path for your projectile.

Also of interest is the fact that inside 15 yards no matter what zero you have, the offset will prevail and the shooter will have to hold the POA off to have the POI strike where they wish.

Since in fact hitting the target is the desired result, it would then make sense to zero our rifle and to know where the projectiles will strike on the target. By knowing what a zero is, having one and knowing how to use it we will go a long way towards solving any marksmanship problems we may encounter.



*Failing to take sight height over bore into account can result in embarrassment or something much worse.*







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# HANDGUNS BY MASSAD AYOUB

## Straight From The Shoulder (Holster)

**S**houlder holsters aren't always as concealable as lay people think. Bat Masterson's older brother Ed and one Jack Wagner could have told this to the world, had they survived the latter's "shoulder holster indiscretion." On the night of April 8, 1878 in Dodge City, Kansas, city marshal Ed Masterson spotted a shoulder rig under the coat of Kansas City cowboy Jack Wagner in the Lady Gay Saloon.

CCW being illegal under town ordinance at the time (as it is today throughout Kansas), Ed relieved Jack of his six-shooter. Since Jack wasn't belligerent about it, Ed gave the gun to the cowboy's trail boss, Alf Walker, to put away until the crew left town.



**Classic Bianchi shoulder holsters show the three popular "rides." From left, X15 with Kimber .45 (vertical); Tuxedo with S&W Model 457 (horizontal); and Scorpio with Ruger .357.**

Later that night, an ungrateful Wagner and Walker ambushed Masterson on the wooden porch of the saloon. The boss had given the revolver back to the boozed-up cowboy, who shot Masterson with it in the abdomen at muzzle contact, setting the marshal's coat on fire with still-burning black powder and inflicting a massive wound.

Fast, reactive gun handling seemed to run in the family for the Masterson brothers: Ed reflexively drew and gunned down both men, then walked some 200 yards to a friendlier saloon before collapsing. The marshal died less than an hour later. His killer succumbed to Ed's return gut-shot the following night, and some say that the trail boss also died from one of the three wounds Masterson inflicted upon him. Three men were dead because one bozo didn't know how to conceal a handgun in a shoulder holster.

### Wear With Care

Because it adds width to the torso, it takes a big coat to hide a big handgun carried in a shoulder holster. If you prefer the horizontal style, you'll need a deep chest to hide anything greater in length than a baby Glock. Adjust the shoulder harness properly. Clint Eastwood as *Dirty Harry* wore his so low as to have impaired both concealment of, and access to, his .44 Mag. in real life.

A shoulder holster's straps are easily spotted through the arm-hole of the popular photographer's vest. The concealing garment needs sleeves. Anything less than a solid, substantial fabric will "print" the straps under the clothing across your back. This is why real-life detectives who prefer shoulder holsters are so partial to tweed sport coats and leather jackets. *Dirty Harry* had that much right, at least.

### A Matter of Balance

I wouldn't wear a shoulder rig if I had a sore neck or upper back injury, because of the pressure of the straps. On the other hand, such a rig can be literally orthopedic if you have lumbar back problems and still have to go armed, because it takes the weight off the belt and the hips. However, in that situation the weight should be balanced. Rick Gallagher created the concept of the "Shoulder System"™ back when he called his outfit "Jackass Leather."

Today, as Galco, his company offers multiple shoulder rigs with holster on one side and magazine pouch, handcuff pouch, and whatnot on the other side for balance. I found that a 26.5-ounce Colt Commander plus the weight of its eight .45 ACP rounds under my left arm was exactly countered by the weight of two spare, loaded seven-round mags, handcuffs, and an all-steel Spyderco Police knife slung beneath the opposite armpit.

If you don't mind looking like *Dirty Harry*'s younger, stranger brother, the solution may simply be to carry a shoulder holster under each arm. Use two guns of similar weight. Going back to the Kansas cow-towns where this column started, history tells us that Wild Bill Hickok's predecessor as town marshal of Abilene, Bear River Tom Smith, wore a pair of sixguns in matching shoulder scabbards in 1870. Fast forward a century or so, and you have the great Charles "Skeeter" Skelton with twin shoulder holsters custom made for braces of full-size Colt .45 autos, and for S&W and Ruger four-inch .357 Magnum revolvers.

You can get these today from Galco, Mitch Rosen, and other makers on special order. The concept is at its very best with a pair of small guns like my Glock 27s, when carried in the true horizontal position (barrel dead parallel to the floor, butt down) and tucked high into the armpits. Modern holster pioneer Chic Gaylord was right when he wrote in 1960 that this was the fastest angle/location combination for a shoulder holster.

Some see the shoulder holster as devil-may-care, some as a flashy accouterment for amateurs, and some as a genuine matter of convenience and need. It has a place. Like anything else, you just have to use it properly and with common sense.





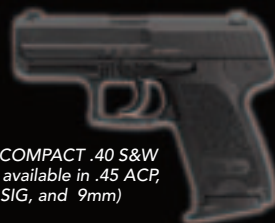


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## Bullet Casting

**W**hen I was a serious bullseye pistol shooter I spent countless hours over a hot lead pot casting the bullets I needed in both .38 and .45 calibers. I scrounged wheelweights from tire shops, melted them in a plumbers pot, poured them into one pound ingots and then cast bullets — four at a time — in a pair of Hensley and Gibbs molds. Then each one had to be inspected and pushed through a Star lubricator/sizer before they could finally be turned into cartridges.

Even when a bunch of shooters got together, as we often did, in joint casting sessions it took a lot of time. My custom was to go on a spree of casting during cool weather and, working before an open window in the garage, try to fill several .50 caliber ammo cans with bullets.

Warmer weather was better for the size/lube job — the bullet lube would flow better then. Still, there was a whole lot of work involved in providing enough bullets for about 1,000 rounds of practice ammo a month. By the standards of practical shooters these days I didn't shoot much but there were many hours of labor involved.

Then I ran across a small shop that sold nice looking cast bullets. They had two guys with 12-cavity molds turning out prodigious numbers of bullets. They had also rigged up a gadget to partially automate the size and lube process. I'm not sure, but

I believe the price (in 1960's dollars) was \$15 per thousand. That was a lot of money back then, but the economics were obvious. I could work a few extra hours at my real job to pay for them and it was a whole lot less time that it would take me to cast, size and lube the same number of bullets.

The commercial bullet casting business has changed a lot since then. Magma Engineering sells golly-gee-whiz machines that automate the whole deal and make it possible for an enterprising guy to carve out a nice niche business. While there are

some national distributors, the costs of freight can be high. It seems as if a system of regional companies has evolved to meet the needs of economically minded shooters. All you have to do is look at local gun shops or shows.

Please do not think that I am knocking bullet casting, absolutely not. It's a matter of volume. There are lots of old guns or cartridges that can only be used with lead bullets and there are even specialty matches that require them. My logic addresses only the high volume shooter.

### The .223 WSSM

Last year about this time we learned of a new cartridge to be known as the .223 Super Short Magnum. It is based on the very successful Winchester Short Magnum case and we're finally getting rifles and ammo. I've been working with a Cooper rifle chambered for the .223 WSSM for just a couple of weeks now and things are looking very good. It will out do the venerable .220 Swift by 100 to 200 fps in a short fat case that looks, proportionally, like the family of PPC cartridges that are superbly efficient and accurate.

For a change there is some loading data before there are many guns out there. The new *Hornady Handbook of Cartridge Reloading* has quite a bit of initial data, which is based on reformed WSM brass. This means there could be some differences in case volume between those cases and the current factory production so we need to be sure to start at the lightest load shown and work up from there.

Hodgdon has just released a comprehensive list of over 50 loads using their powders with bullets from 40 grains all the way up to the popular 77-grain match bullet from Sierra. I've just begun loading it and have gotten some spectacular groups. We will have a comprehensive feature on loading the .223 WSSM in a coming issue.

### Did I Gore Your Ox Today?

I was honestly taken aback by the reaction of some readers to the column where we saw the blown up rifle. Some questioned my analysis of the event and one suggested that we check the IQ of the shooter. Obviously the writer has never made a mistake.

Human frailty ensures that we will do stupid things. It is inevitable. Sometimes people are hurt and our shooter was lucky in that regard, although he still pays dearly since he has to buy a new gun. The critic needs to remember the law of payback, which says what goes around, comes around. Sometimes the penalties are colossal but they always come — sooner or later.

And I'll let you in on a little secret. Every time I see a wreck like that I think, "There but for the grace of God go I," because I can see how easy it was for our shooter to do that.



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# RELOA



# LOADING...

BY HOLT BODINSON

**H**aving always enjoyed the luxury of having a well stocked 4x8 foot reloading table located in the basement or more recently in a spare bedroom, I was seriously challenged recently when preparing our house for sale. The spare bedroom, a.k.a. "the shop," was converted back into a true bedroom, and I and my reloading gear were politely banished to the garage.

The new reloading quarters worked fine for a couple of months, then our sweltering Arizona summer arrived with a vengeance. With night temperatures running in the 80s and day temperatures in the triple digits, the garage turned out to be a 104-degree steam bath.

There had to be a better solution. And there was.

Using tools that are readily available to us today, I was able to downsize my reloading area to a small corner of our home office. In a workspace measuring exactly 3x4 feet, I now have two presses, a powder measure, trimmers, priming tool, table space for powder, primers and loading blocks, and even space for a chair.

If you ever have to downsize, or have to accommodate to temporary living conditions, or if you don't have space for a traditional reloading bench, here are a few ideas for reloading in small quarters gleaned from my experience.

Since it was summer and I was focused on varmint and fall hunting rifles, the first challenge was to find a way to mount my full size RCBS Rock Chucker and Bonanza Co-Ax presses. About this time, someone will make the observation that I could have transitioned to hand presses and solved the problem forthwith.

Indeed I could have. Lee Precision offers a hand press. Lyman is once again manufacturing their 310 tool. In fact, I own the Cadillac of hand presses, Huntington's "Compac" press, but I really wanted to be able to work with my bench presses. They're faster, more powerful and easier to use, and all my dies were already adjusted for them.

## A Starting Point

The answer was found in Midway's reloading catalog in the form of the Frankford Arsenal Portable Reloading Bench, produced under the Battenfeld label.

This unique, modern looking bench has been listed in the Midway catalog for years so it must be popular.

The bench has two main parts — a central pedestal consisting of a 1¼-inch chrome plated metal column attached to a 17-inch circular, black plastic base and a 9-inch square, hard plastic top. In addition, the bench comes with two accessory bins that clip onto the sides of the top. The bins are so handy to hold sized and unsized cases, deburring tools, hand trimmers and primer pocket uniformers that I would suggest one order two more. The top will accommodate all four bins.

Since the top simply lifts on and off the pedestal column, one could also order more than one top for additional tooling. Another possibility would be to bolt a Thompson Tool Mount base plate to the top, and merely snap on and off a variety of presses. As supplied, the top comes with a drilling template that indicates the precise location of the mounting holes for the most popular Lee, RCBS, Lyman, Dillon, Hornady, Forster and Redding presses plus a list of required mounting hardware for each press.

The template was simple to use. Taping it to the plastic top, I spotted in the holes with a center drill chucked in hand drill and then drilled them to size. The hole locations established by the template were dead on. The presses fit the top perfectly. A trip to the hardware store to pick up the specified mounting bolts, nuts and washers completed the job.

Having formerly worked on a solid wooden reloading bench that weighs in excess of 150 pounds, I was truly a bit skeptical about the stability of this lightweight,

*Lyman Powder Pal in use on the 1200 DPS.*



mostly plastic bench when resizing large cases. I shouldn't have been. It's perfectly stable for routine work; however, when full length resizing magnum size cases and large straight walled cases like the 45-70, I found that by placing one hand on the press body while working the handle you can absolutely eliminate any undesirable movement.

Additional endearing qualities of the Frankford Arsenal Portable Bench are that it breaks down in seconds for compact storage, can be hand carried from one location to

# IN SMALL QUARTERS





another, and can be shoved into the closet when company arrives. Given its modern styling and black and chrome finish, it's actually a good-looking piece of furniture.

### Powder Problem Solved

Having solved the press problem, the next issue I had to address was the location of and type of powder measure I was going to use. Normally, I work with bench mounted B&M, RCBS and Redding measures when reloading rifle cartridges. I could have used one side of the new bench top for a measure, but I had already decided I wanted two working presses in place. I could also have purchased another bench top and used that for mounting two or more measures, or I could have used a turret head or progressive press that incorporates a powder measure. I chose the alternative of installing Lyman's incredible, new, programmable 1200 Digital Powder System on top of an adjacent filing cabinet.

Lyman's 1200 DPS system is state-of-the-art. In one integrated unit, it combines a fast powder dispenser and a scale. Frankly, I was glad I had waited before buying into an automated electronic measure. Like computers and digital cameras, electronic dispensing/scale technology just gets more sophisticated and cheaper with every passing year.

The qualities I came to appreciate in the 1200 DPS is its dispensing speed, its programmable memory that stores 20 different loads and its consistent 1/10th of a grain

*continued on page 28*



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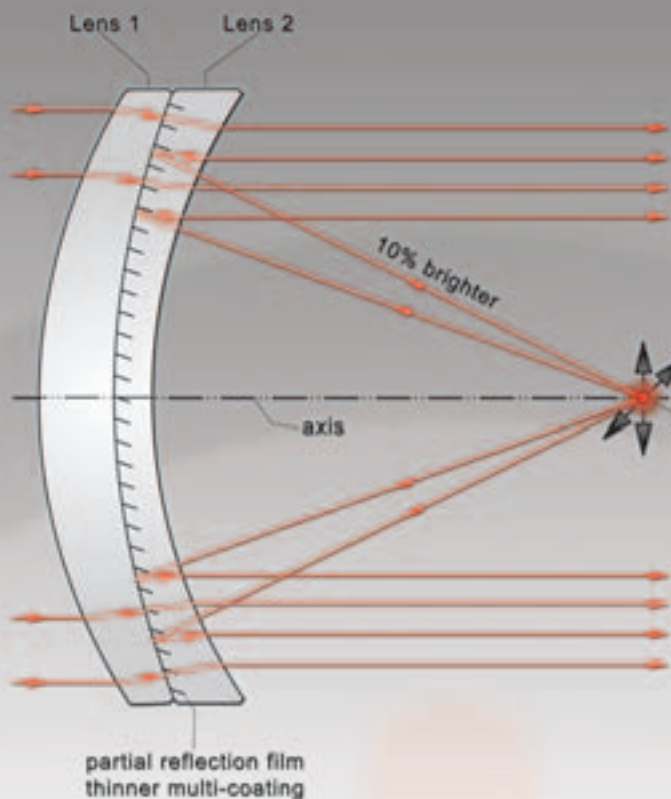
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## RELOADING

continued from page 26

accuracy. As with all high tech tools, there's a bit of a learning curve involved. Lyman's manual proved to be a good tutor, and if you haven't seen it, Lyman's 48th Edition Reloading Handbook is the finest they've ever released.

I did learn a thing or two about dispensing speeds. I began by throwing a charge of 39.0-grains of IMR 3031 for my standard low pressure .45-70/405-grain jacketed load. Hitting "enter," the 1200 DPS dispensed the load in 24 seconds. To drastically reduce dispensing time, you can place a charge a bit lighter than desired in the pan, hit "enter" and let the system bring the charge up to 39.0 grains. That's what I did.

I poured some 3031 into a glass. Then, referring to Lee's slide rule that is packaged with every set of LEE dipping measures, I selected an appropriate dipper (in this case, the 2.8cc unit = 36.7 grains), placed the dipped charge of 3031 into the pan, hit "enter" and within eight seconds, the 1200 DPS produced an exact 39.0-grain charge.

That's fast enough for me since I have traditionally weighed every rifle charge to a tenth of a grain, and it takes me longer to manually dribble a charge than it takes the Lyman 1200. Stored in the 1200's memory, this 39.0-grain charge plus 19 others can be recalled immediately; however, I do measure each new charge on a separate powder scale as a positive check against the automatic system's memory.

This would be a slow process for most handgun and shotshell reloading, but for those cartridges I will be using a progressive or turret-mounted powder measure anyway. I've already ordered another top for that eventuality.

Another Lyman innovation this year is their "Powder Pal Funnel Pan." This little plastic gem combines a powder funnel with a powder pan. It can be used with any electronic measure because its weight can be zeroed out when calibrating the measure. In short, you no longer need a powder funnel. You simply dump the charge directly from the pan's spout. It's one of those "why didn't I think of it" tools. I highly recommend it.

### Easy Trim And Prime

To trim cases I adopted the Lee hand system that uses a simple cutter head attached to a spindle that passes through the flash hole and indexes the trimmed case length. Lee has even speeded this process up with the introduction of their Zip Trim tool featuring a universal three-jaw chuck.

Priming is carried out using the RCBS Prime Guard hand priming tool. Lee offers a similar unit under the name, Auto Prime. It is my experience that I can prime cases faster and with more control using an automatic feed, hand priming tool than by any other method. If you've never used one, try one.

I like the RCBS model because it physically separates the seating operation from

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the primer supply, thereby eliminating the chance of a tray detonation. If you reload, these are indispensable tools.

While we're addressing the priming process, I deprime as a separate step using a Lee Universal Decapping die chucked in the press I'm not loading on. I follow this protocol because it gives me an early warning of a loose primer pocket, permitting me to reject brass before I discover the same problem sometime later in the reloading process while seating a new primer.

Primer pockets are cut uniform and cleaned using a handheld reamer by Sinclair. I also use Sinclair's universal flash hole deburring tool on new brass.

I tried positioning my RCBS Trim Mate Case Prep Center to the left of the Lyman 1200 on top of the filing cabinet, but it crowded the workspace a bit too much, so I'm holding it in storage until I can again return to my real reloading bench.

While I'm on the subject of the filing cabinet, it is a standard letter size, two drawer model. Measuring 29 inches high, it places its 15x27-inch top exactly at an ideal working level. In addition, I use its spacious drawers to store my cases, bullets, loading dies, powder, and miscellaneous tooling and supplies. The filing cabinet really turned out to be an ideal asset for general reloading in tight quarters.

In short, compressing my reloading room into a 3x4 foot floor space was much easier than I had anticipated. Seeking out the right tools like Midway's Portable Reloading Bench and Lyman's 1200 DPS system was actually a pleasant challenge, and the continuing challenge is to come up with additional ideas for space saving techniques. The point is we really don't need much space to have a complete reloading set up. It was a revelation to me, but it's true.



#### FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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# NO TWO WAYS ABOUT IT

By Zachary Foster



3

2



**G**un guys are schizophrenic. At least that's my explanation for the things we do. For example, when I ordered my fancy custom .45 automatic, I wanted a "de-horning" job to eliminate all the sharp edges, but I also ordered sharp checkering. Go figure.

It's the same for hunting. I like to hunt with my grandpa's old Winchester .30-30, but I'm not crazy enough to shiver through a cold night in camp under a wool blanket like he did. No sir, I want the fluffiest dang miracle-fiber sleeping bag I can find, and a foot thick air mattress too. After all, a fella' has to set his priorities.

One modern convenience I've really taken a shine to is a two-way radio. For a couple years, I tried a portable CB handy talkie. That thing was big as a toaster, but it did let me call camp to see if they were burning breakfast yet. Of course half the time, I could hear some foul-mouthed jasper 2,000 miles away better than I could hear old Doc Black back in camp. After a season or two, I figured I'd just as well carry a couple bricks in my pack. They'd weigh the same and be about as useful.

## Small But Useful

When they first hit the market, I tried a pair of FRS radios. Now this was more like it! They weren't much bigger than a



box of .30-30s (they're even smaller now) and were more reliable than the CB at short distances. Now we had the perfect tool for important communications like, "How's supper coming?" or "Dang it, I haven't seen anything all morning, how 'bout you?"

Nowadays, we have a whole bunch of options in these handy little radios, but before you buy, you've got to understand what's available.

That "FRS" by the way, stands for Family Radio Service. Radio transmission in the U.S. is regulated by the

**1: Midland's G11 FRS/GMRS radios have performed perfectly for the author. [www.midlandradio.com](http://www.midlandradio.com) 2: Kenwood Freetalk is an earlier FRS unit with good features including a folding antenna. [www.kenwood.net](http://www.kenwood.net) 3: Garmin RINO GPS with FRS/GMRS radio may be the most versatile 7.6 ounces you can drop into your pocket. [www.garmin.com](http://www.garmin.com) 4: Motorola Talkabout T7200 just may be the performance leader with features from GMRS repeater channels to interchangeable faceplates. [www.motorola.com](http://www.motorola.com) 5: External antenna offers a real performance boost in some applications.**



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Federal Communication Commission. FCC regulations dictate that FRS radios will be limited to 1/2 watt of power and will not use an external antenna. The downside of this low power output is that you'll not be using your FRS radio to yack it up with Uncle Fred two counties away. The good news is you won't be hearing radio traffic from outside the approximate working range of these radios, which is two to five miles (more on range later).

The other radio system you should know about is GMRS, or General Mobile Radio Service. Unlike the FRS system, Uncle Sam requires a license for the use of GMRS radios (\$75 for 5 years). Power output varies by model, but is typically one to five watts. GMRS radios may use an external antenna, and depending upon power output and other factors, may communicate over distances as great as 25 miles (using repeater towers).

***“Short-range communication may be fun, but it can also be a real lifesaver in the event of an emergency.”***

### Real World Range

Realistically however, most GMRS radios can be counted upon for a range of five miles or so, especially with the one or two watt power output common to many of the more affordable GMRS and FRS/GMRS combination radios. And frankly, that's all we usually have need for. The main factor effecting the real world range of both these radio systems is the local topography.

These are line-of-sight radios. If you're on one side of the mountain and camp is on the other, you're probably out of luck. But if you can see your target — in flat country or especially over water — communication is very reliable.

My friend Jim lives only about four miles distant. His home sits just over the ridge that forms the valley I live in, giving

*continued on page 79*



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If the old adage, "bigger is better," is true, how far can it go? The answer may be near. I think the late great Elmer Keith originated the art of handgun hunting. At least my first exposure to what a handgun was capable of at extended ranges was reading Elmer's accounts in gun magazines back in the 1950s.

Elmer had much to do with planting the seed that would make a life-long handgun enthusiast out of me, and I've owned and tested hundreds of handguns from .22s to the big ones. These have included the .454s, .475s, .480s, .50 AEs, .45-70s and even a custom stretch-frame single action in .450 Marlin (the .45-70s all equipped with muzzle brakes, as was the .450 Marlin). And while I rank some of these as charter members of the "wrist rocket" fraternity, they were all out-rocketed by the subject at hand.

This is the .500 S&W Magnum cartridge using a case originally developed for the project by Jamison International, Inc., of Sturgis, S.D., and loaded by COR-BON/Dakota Ammunition to produce over 2,300 foot pounds of energy.

Shortly after I first heard the rumor about the then new .500 S&W Magnum cartridge a year ago, my friend, custom pistol-smith Gary Reeder told me he was building a revolver chambered for it. This was not a double action swing-out cylinder model such as S&W was going to introduce, but a single action revolver using Gary's own mid-length stainless steel stretch frame.

Patterned after the Ruger Super Blackhawk frame, the 5-shot cylinder of Reeder's mid-length frame is 2.2-inches long in order to accommodate cartridges such as the .454 Casull and longer. Gary builds custom big-bore revolvers on this and standard length frames using 5-shot cylinders made from 17-4PH aircraft grade stainless steel. The prototype .500 S&W Magnum caliber gun he was working on would be constructed using a Ruger Bisley grip frame.

Reeder and I share the opinion that the Ruger Bisley grip frame is about the best design available for controlling heavy recoil, and I own three custom Ruger Bisleys. Far superior to the original Colt Bisley grip in my opinion, the Ruger Bisley design distributes recoil over a wider area while putting the hand as high as possible on the gun. In the case of the .500 S&W Magnum cartridge, it would need every advantage it could get.

Gary shipped me the new pistol (Prototype No. Three) before the SHOT Show, but had no quantity of ammunition to shoot in it. In fact, after getting the chamber dimensions, Reeder had a reamer custom made to specifications and did his testing using a handful of .500 S&W Magnum brass he reloaded over and over. At the time, Gary didn't have a single round of factory .500 S&W Magnum ammunition. Getting that would be my job.

At the SHOT Show I told Peter Pi, President of COR-BON Bullet Company, about the gun and that I was in need of .500 S&W Magnum ammunition with which to test it. Peter was

# GARY REEDER'S ULTIMATE

## A GUN TOO FAR, AT LEAST FOR SOME.





# .500

By Gary Paul Johnston





**.500 S&W loads tested included (left to right) a 275-grain Barnes X-Bullet at 1,665 fps, a 400-grain JSP at 1,675 fps and a 440-grain hard cast flat point at 1,625 fps.**

100-percent behind my project, but said there would be a delay, as every round of .500 S&W Magnum the company was loading was going directly to S&W for testing. COR-BON has partnered with S&W on this project, and is the exclusive producer of the .500 S&W Magnum ammunition. When I returned home, I photographed the gun and sat back to wait for the ammunition.

### The Ultimate .500

Called the Gary Reeder Ultimate .500, the gun was indeed a sight to behold. Equipped with a Match grade, .50-caliber barrel 8.5-inches in length, this big wheelgun uses the Ruger Maximum length ejector, and a heavy duty cylinder pin that locks into the underside of the barrel. Made without flutes, the big cylinder is engraved on one side with an African bull elephant, and on the opposite side a North American bull elk. A tasteful touch of floral engraving adorned both sides of the frame with “.500 S&W Magnum” engraved on the frame’s left side. The middle left side of the barrel reads “Gary Reeder Ultimate .500”.

Perfectly fitted to the Ruger Bisley grip frame is a set of what at first I was certain were buffalo horn grips, but are in fact black micarta. These are nicely rounded on the bottom corners as is the butt. Oh, yes, and these grips were smooth. All grip frame screws were hardened Allen head, and the gun used Gary Reeder’s “Set-Back” Bisley style trigger that remains to the rear like the original Colt. The gun’s finish was a fine beaded matte stainless steel.

#### SPECIFICATIONS

### GARY REEDER ULTIMATE .500

<b>Caliber:</b>	.500 S&W Magnum
<b>Muzzle Velocity:</b>	1,650 fps
<b>Barrel Length:</b>	8¼" (tested)
<b>Overall Length:</b>	14¼"
<b>Weight:</b>	50 ounces
<b>Capacity:</b>	5 rounds
<b>Safety:</b>	Ruger transfer bar
<b>Sights:</b>	Gold bead front with Ruger fully adjustable rear
<b>Grips:</b>	Black Micarta (tested)
<b>Finish:</b>	Matte stainless steel
<b>Price as tested:</b>	<b>\$2,395</b>

While I continued to wait for the ammunition, I spoke with a couple of friends who had traveled to Smith & Wesson to preview the new .500 S&W Magnum revolver. One of them had declined not to shoot the big revolver at all, and the other, Roy Huntington, Editor of *American Handgunner*, had that unmistakable tone in his voice when he talked about firing it. A retired police officer, Roy is also a very accomplished pistol shooter, so when I heard that tone, I read between the lines.

### Katz Safari Kit

When I mentioned the Ultimate .500 to Keith Derkatz, of Katz Knives, he shipped me his brand new Safari Kit in case I had the opportunity to hunt with the gun. A compact, lightweight game dressing kit, the Safari is totally modular and of the highest quality. Just two leather belt sheaths accommodate the basic knife plus five accessory blades and saws along with an axe and an adapter plate, all using the same handle. Made of XT-80 stainless steel, the kit will last a lifetime.

When the COR-BON .500 S&W Magnum ammunition arrived, it came in three bullet styles. These were the Barnes-X 275-grain hollowpoint at 1,665 fps and 1,688 foot pounds, the 400-grain JSP at 1,675 fps and 2,500 foot pounds, and a 440-grain Flat Point Lead (FPL) Hard Cast Performance bullet at 1,625 fps and 2,580 foot pounds. This last bullet was made especially for the cartridge by Cast Performance Bullets, Inc., of Riverton, Wyo. Bullets weighing 400 grains and 440 grains at over 1,600 fps are







*Katz Safari Kit impressed Johnston as being a lot of capability in a compact package. Below: The Reeder .500 Ultimate is finely finished and handsome too, with etched scrolls and game scenes.*







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above .45-70 performance from a rifle, and I couldn't help but observe the Reeder Ultimate .500 has no muzzle brake... Hmm.

### Baptism Of Fire

Knowing I was in for a big whack, I started with the "light" COR-BON load, the 275-grain Barnes X bullet. After five rounds, I never again fired the gun without some kind of a glove. Although recoil with the big wheelgun wasn't horrible with the 275-grain loads, it not only rotated upward to vertical, but also came back with the trigger guard slamming into the top of my middle finger. The trigger was set at two pounds, and while that didn't bother me, two problems became obvious. No muzzle brake and smooth grips.

As I was about to leave for a prairie dog hunt in Kansas, I packed up the Ultimate .500 with plenty of ammo, and headed across the border to Bird City northeast of Goodland. When we stopped at a prairie dog town on the first day, I took out the .500. Although the other shooters all admired it, none of them wanted to shoot it, so I put on a pair of leather gloves and fired five shots using a two hand hold at one of the little pests about 90 yards distant.

Although he sat on his mound the entire time, I didn't hit him, and five shots were enough for me, so I put the gun away, my finger hurting once again.

The next time I fired the Ultimate .500 was during our club's annual shooting fair, and to my surprise, I had at least a dozen guys who wanted to try it out. For all but three of these men, one shot was enough. However, the experience wasn't as horrific as it could have been, as I had found somewhat of a solution for the problem of those smooth black micarta grips, and that was to wear rubber surgical type gloves.

While the thin rubber gloves did prevent the gun from rotating in the hand, it now took the hand, wrist, and arm with it. Here the 275-grain loads were relatively manageable, but every time I fired one of the 400-grainers I thought the gun's muzzle was going to hit me in the forehead, and the 440-grain loads were measurably worse. What's more, after every five rounds or so, the grip frame screws had to be re-tightened.

### Where's Elmer When You Need Him?

After volunteering to shoot the gun to get photographs of it in recoil, our club president, Mike Knight, fired five rounds of 440-grain .500 S&W Magnum. An avid competitive shooter, hunter and big game outfitter, Mike is no stranger to big guns, and he never winced during the ordeal, but when he removed the glove to inspect his middle finger it was already turning purple.

Most of those who fired the Gary Reeder Ultimate .500 that day hit what they aimed at out to about 50 yards. These targets consisted mostly of small rocks in the dirt

*continued on page 86*

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# A SECOND LOOK

***The potent .30-378 Weatherby Magnum offers potential for the hunter who can use it.***

**By Tom Turpin**

I've never been all that keen on the "super" .30-caliber magnum rifles. The reader should take that bias into consideration when reading this piece. In my long career, I have owned but three big .30s and I have two of the three in my battery as I write these lines.

I'll admit that most any of the .30-caliber magnum chamberings have a lot going for them, particularly for a one-gun hunter. In fact, if there was such a thing as an all-around caliber, which there isn't, a really good case could be made for a .30-caliber magnum in that role. In my situation though, with several rifles to choose from, I've never felt the real need for one.

Depending on what species I'm hunting, I will normally grab first for a .270 Winchester. If I feel undergunned with that choice, I jump up to a 7mm Magnum. If I still feel too

lightly armed, then I'll opt for a .338 Winchester and on up. The big 7mm and the big .30 are just too close together in performance for me to need both.

## **For The One Gun Hunter**

Having said all that, if I didn't have the luxury of several rifles to choose from and had to depend on but one, it would probably be chambered for a big .30. A hunting pal of mine for the past 42 years or so hunts with but one rifle and has for most of the years I've known him. It's a custom Mauser chambered for the .308 Norma Magnum cartridge. With it, he's taken a sizeable barnfull of game.

My oldest hunting partner, a man I've known for almost all my life, also uses but one rifle. When I first started



hunting with him, back in the 1950s, he used a custom Mauser .30-'06. Sometime in the '70s, he switched to a Sako chambered for the .300 Winchester Magnum. He is now 70 years young and still uses only the Sako.

### Starting A Trend

As far as I know, Holland & Holland started the super .30 merry-go-round with the introduction of their new .300, which they called Holland's Super .30, in 1925. At the time it was introduced it was a real whizbang, however it's very anemic by today's standards. Over a period of several years after the introduction of the H&H version, numerous big .30 wildcats came and went, mostly based on the Holland case.

The next major step in the evolution of the .30-caliber magnum took place with Roy Weatherby and his development of the .300 Weatherby. I'm not exactly sure when he finished the development but I think it was in 1944. My very first big .30 was one of Weatherby's creations, which I bought in the Stuttgart, Germany, Rod and Gun Club in 1964. It was one of the German-made Mark V rifles.

The .300 Weatherby certainly made its mark in the game fields of the world. Three well-known hunters that I can think of used almost nothing else. C.J. McElroy, the founder of Safari Club International, the late Elgin Gates and the late Herb Klein, all used a .300 Weatherby for the bulk of their hunting. All of these men could afford whatever they wanted in the way of rifles to hunt with, but chose only one each.

I suspect it was largely due to Weatherby's success with his class of high velocity cartridges that influenced Winchester to come out with its own series of magnum cartridges. Quite naturally, it included a .300 Winchester Magnum, initiated in 1963. Likewise, Norma launched its .308 Norma Magnum in 1960 and Remington settled on the 7mm Remington Magnum in 1962.

Even more recently we have seen the introductions of the .300 Dakota, a big .30 based on the .404 Jeffrey case, the

*Author's test rifles for the .30-378 Weatherby Magnum included this HS Precision Professional Hunter and a custom E.R. Shaw barreled Ruger No. 1.*







.300 Ultra Mag from Remington which I understand is based on the 8mm Remington Magnum case, and the Lazzeroni family of cartridges — including a super .30 or two.

Although the ultra high velocity .30s are not necessarily noted for their gilt-edged accuracy, my Dakota 97, chambered for the .300 Dakota, is one of the most accurate rifles I've ever tested. With it, I have fired three-shot groups measuring .25 MOA, and it regularly delivers .5 MOA groups.

### Still More Power

Apparently not satisfied with the velocities he was obtaining, Weatherby developed an even larger capacity case. He based it upon the old .416 Rigby case, but with a belt added. He dropped his .375 Weatherby magnum (based on a blown out .375 H&H case) and replaced it with the .378 Weatherby magnum using the new larger case. This new case provided the grist for several new wildcat cartridges.

I'm not sure who first came up with the idea of necking the .378 Weatherby case to .338 caliber but the first I heard of it was in the writings of Elmer Keith. He and R.W. Thompson worked out the .338-378 KT (for Keith-Thompson). Champlin & Haskins (the predecessor to Champlin Arms) built the first rifles for the caliber. Whether Keith or someone else necked the case down further and came up with the .30-378, I can't say. As a wildcat though, the smaller variety didn't seem to be quite as popular as its larger cousin.

Both cartridges remained as wildcats for many years. It has only been in the past five or so years that these cartridges have been commercially loaded by Weatherby. I had, perhaps 20 years ago, dabbled with a wildcat .30-378. However, with the powders then available, I couldn't get it to perform substantially better than its smaller cousins and this with considerably more powder required and recoil generated. It just didn't seem to be a very efficient cartridge. However, with the .30-378 now legitimized by Weatherby, and with new powders on the market, I decided to experiment with the cartridge once again.

### A Specialist's Tool

My feelings about the big .30s haven't changed. I'm reminded of something Jack O'Connor wrote in the preface to the revised edition (1964) of *The Rifle Book*. He wrote, "When *The Rifle Book* was first published, the drift toward high-intensity cartridges was noticeable, and as this new edition goes to press, high velocity is definitely in the saddle. Indeed, high-intensity loads

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Gunnur Split Rings 

Each	Pair
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**CONETROL "CUSTUM" RINGS**



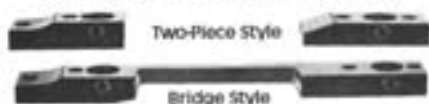
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**CONETROL "GUNNUR" BASES**

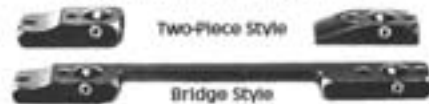


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have become so popular that a good many hunters who would be better served by slower loads and heavier bullets have taken to the magnums. The American shooter has probably never been more over-gunned since the days of The Big Fifty."

That, I believe, is a very sage observation. I fear that as more and more years pass by since O'Connor's death in 1978, the volumes of his wit and wisdom will be forever lost on our new generations of hunters and shooters. That would be a pity.

Anyway, now that the decision was made to try the cartridge again, the next step was to obtain a rifle. I went that one step better, I ordered two! On a visit to H-S Precision to tour their facility, I was most impressed with their production. I wanted to try one of their rifles and so requested the loan of one chambered for the .30-378.

H-S Precision was formed in Prescott, Ariz., in May 1978 when Tom Houghton purchased the Atkinson Gun Co. and combined it with H-S Engineering. In 1990, after concentrating mostly on synthetic stock and barrel production, H-S Precision moved to a new facility in Rapid City, S.D., where they are today. They developed the Pro-Series 2000 rifle starting in 1997 and introduced it at the 1998 SHOT show.

In addition, I wanted to try one of E.R. Shaw's rifle barrels in a larger caliber. I had used them with great success in .22 rimfire, but never in a hunting caliber. E.R. Shaw, Inc., was formed in 1975 as a new division of Small Arms Mfg., a company whose origins go back to 1916 as a defense contractor. Between wars, they produced gun barrels for the sporting arms industry, but reverted back to military production when called upon to do so.

Small Arms Manufacturing continues to supply barrels of every description to firearms manufacturers around the world. The E.R. Shaw Division has become the largest supplier of premium-quality barrels to individuals and professional gunsmiths in America.

I'm a big fan of single-shot rifles so I purchased a Ruger No. 1 barreled action and had it sent to Shaw to remove the factory barrel and install one of their barrels chambered for the .30-378. I also ordered a factory No. 1 stock directly from Ruger.

While waiting for the H-S precision rifle and the E.R. Shaw-barreled precision, I had plenty of time to think over the project. The added velocity (hopefully) resulting from touching off some 100 plus grains of slow burning powder, should give a flatter trajectory and result in a longer effective range. To take advantage of that added range, the rifles would have to be mated with scopes that are up to the task of capitalizing on the long range potential.

### Sights And Ammo

I decided to try one of Swarovski's new 4-16x50 Professional Hunter Model scopes on the Ruger, and a Simmons 4-12x42 Whitetail Expedition Model on the H-S

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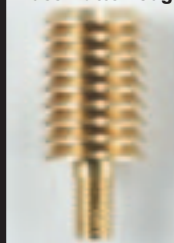


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Precision. The Swarovski scope has a 30mm tube and I didn't have any Ruger 30mm rings on hand. I called Conetrol and ordered a set of their mounts for a Ruger No. 1 with 30mm rings. H-S Precision sent their rifle with a set of Leupold mounts with 1-inch rings already attached.

Finally I called Weatherby and ordered a small quantity of factory ammo. They furnished .30-378 cartridges loaded with 165-grain Nosler Ballistic Tip bullets. I also called Larry Barnett at Superior Ammunition in Sturgis, S.D., and ordered a sample of his excellent ammunition. He sent me one box loaded with 180-grain Trophy Bonded bullets and a second box loaded with 180-grain Ballistic Tips. These would provide plenty of fodder for initial shooting and provide brass for hand-loading. I added a set of dies from RCBS and a .30-378 shell holder to my kit to complete the preparations.

The Ruger arrived first from E. R. Shaw and they did a beautiful job on the barrel. I had requested an exceptionally long barrel to take advantage of the cartridge and the finished barrel is 28 inches long, or 30 inches counting the muzzle brake. It's a medium heavyweight and features helical fluting, that is, the flutes spiral around the barrel rather than running parallel with it. It is very attractive and also provides a functional advantage or two.

I mounted the Swarovski scope and took the rifle to the shop of David Miller and Curt Crum. I asked Crum to fit the barreled action to the factory stock. While it wasn't a huge task, I didn't feel qualified to try it myself. This job may not have been much of a challenge for him, but Crum did a splendid job on it.

A few weeks after the arrival of the Ruger, the H-S Precision arrived. The model provided was the Professional Hunter Pro Series 2000, fitted with a 1:10-inch twist, 26-inch fluted barrel. They also installed a recoil reducer in the synthetic stock. H-S makes nearly every single part for their rifles in their plant to include their own barrels. They cut-rifle all their barrels rather than button rifling or hammer forging them.


### And The Verdict Is

Initial test results were very satisfying, but I have much more to do at the loading bench before I'll be completely contented. I have, however, learned several things from my limited experience to date. First, with the new powders now available, the .30-378 does indeed provide an advantage over the lesser .30-caliber magnums.

It's no great feat to increase the velocity of the .30-378 Weatherby over that of the .300 Weatherby by a couple hundred feet per second. I've not yet experimented with RL-25 which I believe will be an excellent powder for the cartridge. Also, I have been told that Norma has developed a powder called MRP II specifically for the .30-378 but I've been unable to confirm that.

*continued on page 76*

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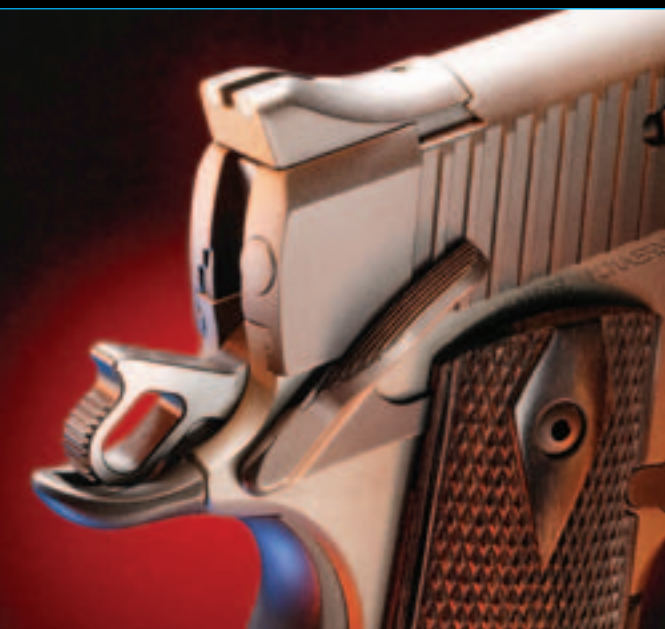
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# WEIGHT WATCHER

STORY BY JIM GARDNER PHOTOS BY ICHIRO NAGATA

Kimber's Tactical Custom II embodies everything we love in a good 1911, while shaving ounces from our CCW burden.

Let's not mince words here. This is a truly superior 1911 pistol. It has every feature you really need in a serious fightin' gun, and a few you may not really need, but which most of us seem to want. It's beautifully fitted, feels great in the hand, and shoots better than it looks, which is to say mighty fine indeed.

What it is, of course, is the new Kimber Tactical Custom II. Most of you are well aware that Kimber has gone from being the new kid on the 1911 block to becoming a standout source of superb quality 1911s in almost unlimited variety.

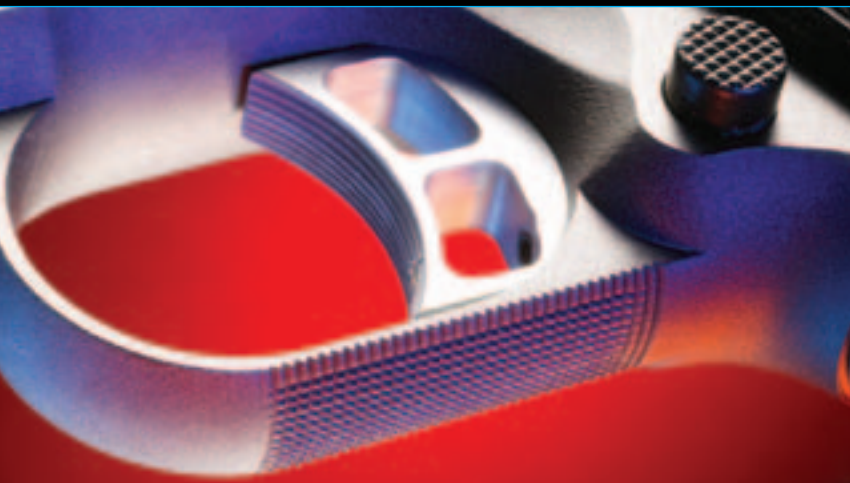
I've long admired the Kimber guns, and have looked at several specimens lovingly. But nice as they were, I

resisted temptation. With a safe full of fine 1911s accumulated over the past 30 years, it was difficult to justify adding to a pretty full stable. The Tactical Custom II however, is a horse of a different color.

## Shoots Great, Less Filling

What makes it different is the fact it's a full-sized Government model with an aluminum alloy frame. Alloy-framed 1911s aren't exactly new. We first saw them in the form of the Colt Commander model introduced in 1950.

The Commander, with its 3/4-inch shorter barrel and slide, was a great carry gun and a fine alternative to the all-





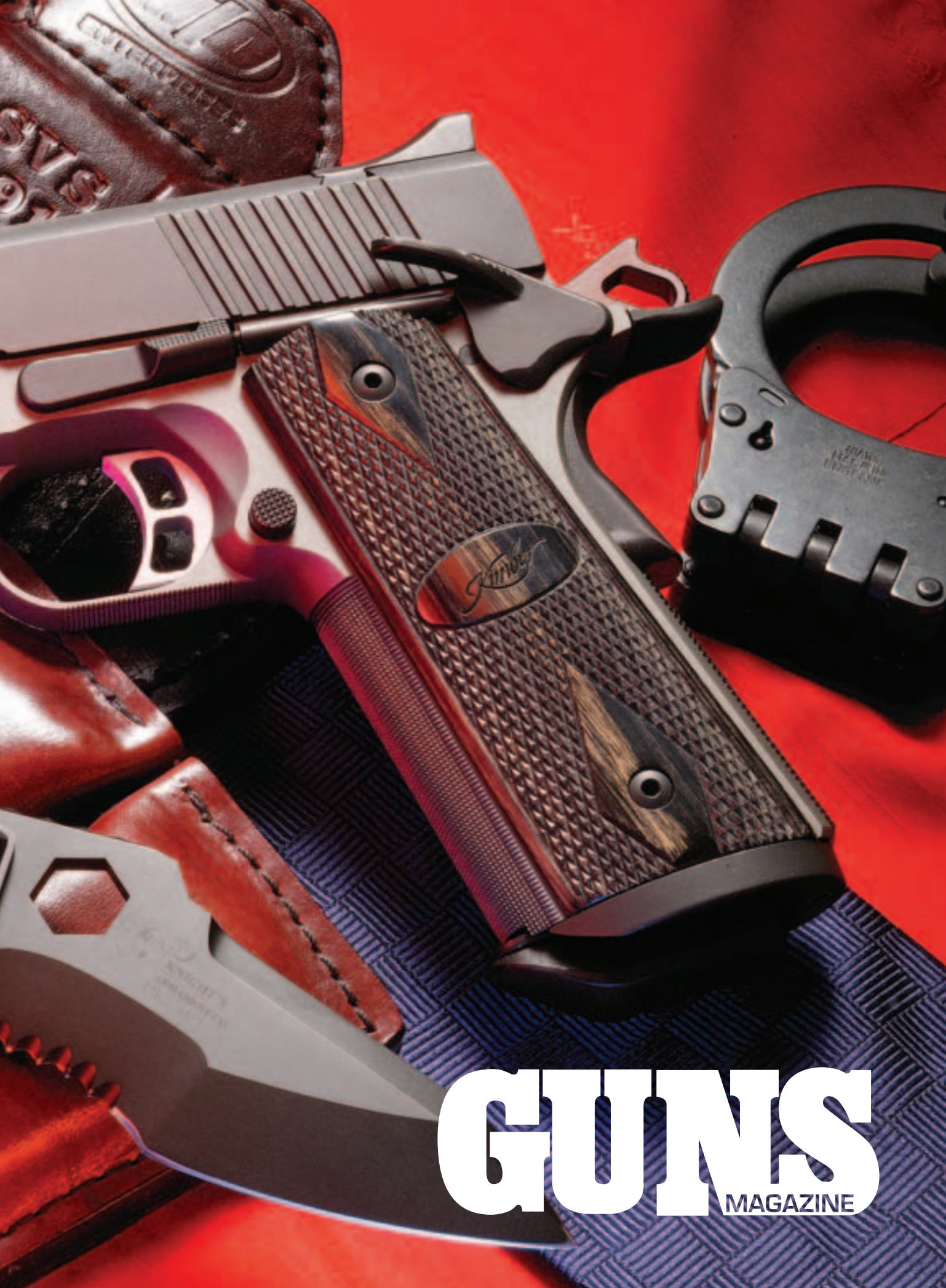




# WEIGHT WATCHER







# GUNS

MAGAZINE







Twenty-five yard, offhand groups were very good. Below: Joe Novelo found a lot to like in the TC II, and this 100-yard group hints at the pistol's capabilities.

J.G. PHOTO



steel, full sized Government model, finding great favor with 1911 stalwarts. However, after all the buzz wore off, a few observant fellows noted that the Commander was still far too large to be a pocket auto. And if it had to be holster carried, bobbing three quarters of an inch from the barrel didn't really aid concealability, but did slightly degrade the controllability of the gun, especially with the hotter, high-performance ammunition that began to reach the marketplace in the late '60s.

By the mid-1970s, it had become popular to assemble 1911s from GI surplus components and newly produced frames. Aluminum alloy frames were available for a time, but quality was spotty. A decade or so later, Caspian offered alloy frames of very high quality, but of course an alloy-framed Government model remained a do-it-yourself proposition.

If memory serves, the first alloy-framed GMs you could walk up to the counter and buy were from Para-Ordnance and later from Springfield Armory. I bought the first lightweight, five-inch Springfield I could find and when it proved trustworthy, dolled it up with a little light custom work. It was and is a darn good carry gun, and proved to me the merits of a full-sized, aluminum-framed .45 ACP.

Now, in the Tactical Custom II, we have a really fine lightweight Government model with every possible feature we could want right out of the box.

### CCW Champ

We both know these things are subjective, and your mileage may vary, but I honestly feel an alloy-framed, full-size 1911 is a crackerjack of a concealed carry pistol.

J.G. PHOTO





No, I'm not speaking of carrying it under your Armani suit in the boardroom, nor of hiding it under your scrubs in the surgery. I know guys who fit both descriptions, and for such uses, they select smaller guns.

But if you have the luxury of dressing in normal casual attire, a lightweight Government model is, as Jeff Cooper once said, "where the curves cross" in relation to power versus controllability in an easy-to-carry package.

No, there's no free lunch, and we understand that recoil with heavy loads will be slightly greater than that experienced with an all-steel pistol. The difference however is extremely minor, nothing to ruffle the feathers of even a beginning shooter. The upside of course, is easing your burden when carrying this on a daily basis.

The numbers hint at the truth. The TC II weighs 31 ounces. An equivalent steel-framed Kimber weighs 38 ounces. The difference is roughly 18.5 percent, and while on the surface seven ounces may not seem like much, I can tell you I find this pistol noticeably more comfortable to carry than a common all-steel 1911.

### Loads Of Good Things

So, if a full-sized, light-weight 1911 is a good thing, the next question must be, "Is the Kimber Tactical Custom II a good example of the breed, and why?" Having

come out of the gate stating my admiration for this pistol, I can't hedge my bets now, but let me tell you why.

The TC II has a number of really nice features. For starters, the finish is a nice two-tone effect of light and dark matte gray. It's highly attractive, and more pleasing than the "tactical black" so common these days.

The front strap and underside of the trigger guard are deliciously checkered at 32 lpi. Yes, it's a functional aid to a secure grip, but truth be told, I've yet to meet a real 1911 man who wasn't at least slightly queer for checkering. It's just so, well... nifty. The flat mainspring housing is also checkered, but a bit more coarsely at 20 lpi.

The sights are good, really good. They're big and easy to see, with green Meprolight tritium inserts in the usual three-dot pattern. The front sight is dovetailed into the slide. Not only will this not shoot loose as staked-in sights are want to do, but it makes for easy replacement if required. The rear sight blade is finely serrated to fight glare, and is properly snag free.

Other good features include the handsome diamond checkered stocks, which nicely compliment the pistol's finish. The extended ambidextrous thumb safety will be appreciated by lefties, and operates exactly as it should, with a crisp "snap" whether going on or off safe. It's pleasing to see such obvious care in fitting.

Another example of careful fitting was found in the operation of the grip safety, which is correctly "clearanced," meaning it's fitted such that it clears the trigger bow at about the half way point of its movement. Thus the grip safety still performs its job, but you needn't take a Vulcan death grip on the gun to make it fire.

Speaking of fitting, the TC II scores well on the quick and dirty test for proper fitting of barrel to slide and slide stop. Cycle the slide, then press your thumb down on the exposed barrel hood. The TC II exhibits no lost motion whatsoever, a good harbinger of what indeed proved to be a fine shooting pistol.

One of the nicest aspects of the Tactical Custom II proved to be the trigger. We know that a good, crisp trigger of acceptable pull weight is the single biggest aid to shooting a pistol well. This is especially so for the novice shooter. An experienced hand can fight his way through a heavy, gritty trigger and still shoot reasonably well, but saddle a new shooter with a miserable trigger and you're asking for flinching, misses and destroyed confidence.

Kimber's catalog promises a trigger which, "breaks between four and five pounds with minimal creep and overtravel," and that's just what we found. Straight from the box, trigger weight was four pounds, with the slightest hint of creep, which disap-

*continued on page 82*







**KIMBER TEAM MATCH II**  
TOSHI YOSHIFUJI PHOTO

## DOING THE RIGHT THING

### **GUNS Staff**

Shooting is an active and vibrant sport, but it's no secret that in recent years fewer young people have been drawn to the sport than in years past. Many of us have said, "Something should be done about this," but too often that's where our involvement ends. By contrast, Kimber has chosen to step forward and partner with the USA Shooting organization.

Not familiar with them? USA Shooting is the governing body for the Olympic shooting sports in the U.S. Its goal is the promotion of Olympic shooting and the support of America's shooting athletes in the form of training and preparation. Introducing young people to shooting and the promotion of all safe shooting sports are concurrent goals of the organization.

In preparation for the 2004 Olympics, members of the USA Shooting Rapid Fire and Sport Pistol teams are competing in action pistol events around the country. Kimber was approached to build the competition pistols for the team, and saw the opportunity to provide the very same enhanced model to the shooting public while supporting USA Shooting's Olympic competitors.



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“One of the strongest contributions we can make to ensure the future of the shooting sports in the United States is making sure our team brings home Olympic Gold,” remarked Dwight Van Brunt, Kimber’s vice president of marketing and sales. In support of this goal, Kimber recently presented \$100,000 to USA Shooting raised from sales of the Team Match II™.

Kimber’s Team Match II is a specialized version of the highly regarded Kimber Gold Match pistol. The Team Match II is a target-grade stainless Government model featuring the new Tactical extractor, checkered

*continued on page 80*



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# CROSSOVER CUTTERS!

By Pat Covert

## GERBER YARI



One of the most interesting trends occurring in the cutlery industry today is the return of the fixed blade knife to prominence. The straight knife had been largely overlooked since the mid-1990s, when the tactical folder market turned into a tidal wave and left everything else in its wake. Somewhat ironically, the resurgence of fixed blade knives can be credited in large part to the tactical folder, which helped develop a fresh customer base for all types of knives over the past several years.

A decade ago the term “tactical knife” was almost unheard in all but close cutlery circles. Today it is on everyone’s lips. The term has also created confusion. Many more Americans are involved in sporting activities that require a knife than are actively engaged in pure defense or survival. So why would anyone other than the most serious user need a tactical knife, or “fighter” as they are so often called? Wouldn’t most users need a more sporting blade, what is generally referred to as a “hunter?” The truth of the matter is, there are strong commonalities among these two types of knives.

Much of the terminology of modern day sheath knives goes back to the Bowie knife of the mid-to-late 1800s. This oversized handful of a cutting instrument became a popular choice as a close defense weapon when the cap-and-ball pistol virtually negated the effectiveness of the long sword. The Bowie popularized such terms as “spear point,” “clip point,” and “trailing point” which continue to be the most commonly used blade styles today. The Bowie, however, wasn’t considered a pure hunter or fighter — but both.

While the difference between a hunting and fighting knife makes for interesting fireside conversation, the bottom line is that the effectiveness of a knife in any situation is more often determined by the skill of the user, and his or her ability to pick the right knife for their needs. Even the Japanese tanto-style blade — which is synonymous with combat — can be a very useful utilitarian tool in the right configuration.





**SOG SEAL PUP**

All of which brings us to the subject of this article. There are scads of fixed blade knives on the market today, and many that will serve you well as both a useful sporting tool or a weapon for defending yourself. These “crossover cutters” are available in a wide range of styles and prices, but they all share the ability to perform a wide variety of functions.

### Gerber Yari

Perhaps the perfect example of a “crossover cutter” is the Gerber Yari. The Yari is a sturdy, full tang fixed blade with an overall length of 9.6 inches — an ideal size for both tactical and utilitarian chores. At just under 5½ ounces, the Yari has just enough heft to be useful for heavy-duty work such as cutting rope and whipping out tent pegs, yet is light enough it doesn’t become an encumbrance when carried.

The Yari’s blade is a graceful clip point design, 4.8 inches in length. This was a popular blade style on early Bowie knives and it works well today. In fact, the Yari’s blade has the looks of a scaled down Bowie. The mild clip on the backside of the blade has a false-grind for improved “stickability;” the front has a deep grind for excellent slice.

The blade steel is 154CM stainless with a black oxide coating that adds extra protection and reduces glare. Black canvas Micarta, a favorite of custom knifemakers, is used on the handle scales, which find their way onto a simply styled handle, comfortably curved to fit the palm and sporting a finger groove for the index finger. The base of the handle has a lanyard hole along with a pointed, skull-cracker base for enhanced combat effectiveness.

The Yari can be had with a plain or partially serrated blade and comes with a Concealex sheath. Kudos go out to Gerber’s in-house design staff for another clean, no-nonsense design. If you’re looking for a highly capable fixed blade with a minimum of hassle, this is your knife. Suggested retail for the Yari is \$139.95.

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**Becker Knife and Tool  
makes big knives for big chores.**

**S**ometimes only a big knife will do. Other times, only a *really big knife* will do. Becker Knife & Tool makes both types. BK&T, now a division of Camillus Cutlery Company, was founded in 1986 by Ethan Becker, an avid outdoorsman with a host of other talents including developing mountaineering gear and writing about gourmet cooking (he is the co-author of the landmark cookbook *Joy of Cooking*).

Becker — who also teaches weapon craft, law enforcement mountaineering and survival skills — is one of those guys who would rather make a better tool himself than settle for something less efficient. Indeed, his first “big knife” design was a combination of his two favorite whacking tools: the famed Ghurka Khukri and the legendary World War II Bolo of Filipino origin.

The result is a 14.5-inch thresher called the Machax. From there Ethan went crazy, building everything from a real deal workhorse cane cutter, dubbed the Patrol Machete, to an odd-looking-but-terribly-effective implement called the TACTOOL, a highly versatile human powered smashing,

bashing, prying, hammering and cutting machine.

And yes, BK&T does make regular hunting knives. They just happen to be large. Their smallest knife, the Companion, is over ten and a half inches long and tilts the scales at 14.6 ounces. There are larger versions as well, but don't look for a selection of colors unless you like black or green. That's the choice of handle colors.

For blades, BK&T makes them all out of 0170-6C tool steel which the company literature describes as “a non-brittle, aggressive-cutting steel that is (sic) easy to sharpen and holds an edge.” All handles are made of GV6H, a tough glass-filled nylon manufactured in Switzerland.

Sheaths are made of Kydex with nylon webbing for straps.

Truth is, just about all of us need a large knife at one time or another, and it doesn't take long to realize that you pay for what you get when you buy one of those three dollar tin foil machetes at the surplus store. When you're ready to step up to the plate, chances are Becker Knife & Tool will have what you're looking for. In a variety of sizes. All large.



### C.R.K.T. Polkowski/Kasper Companion

When it comes to moneys worth propositions, Columbia River Knife & Tool never disappoints. The Polkowski/Kasper Companion is no exception. Designed by two of the most respected names in tactical edged weaponry, custom knifemaker Al Polkowski and combat expert Bob Kasper, the Companion has a lot to like for a suggested retail of only \$49.95 — and that includes *two* sheaths!

At just over 8.5 inches in length, the Companion is an easy to carry, easy to conceal bit of goods. The full-tang 3.5-inch AUS 6M stainless steel blade is of drop point design, but the drop is hardly noticeable, with most of the curve being relegated to the cutting side of the knife. This clever styling allows a lot of slice for a small amount of blade length.

For crossover-ability consider this: the drop point is the most popular blade style on hunting knives today. Next, take a closer look at the Companion's deep, full edged blade. Good for skinning, eh? And that healthy finger choil offers superior finger protection, just what you need for dressing game.

The Companion's four-inch handle is designed for a sure grip during combat, but that's an excellent trait to have in any knife. C.R.K.T. chose injection molded Zytel — an inexpensive yet durable plastic — for handle grips and these are firmly secured to the tang with six Torx fasteners. The knife comes with two sheaths: a multi-purpose, multi-positionable belt sheath and an equally handy neck sheath complete with chain.

For camping use, the Polkowski/Kasper Companion is not going win at hacking and slashing with several of the larger knives featured here, but if you're a hunter who has amenities that don't require such use, this may be the perfect “companion.” And considering you can buy two or three C.R.K.T. Polkowski/Kasper Companions for the same price as some of those big boys, you can sprinkle a few around the cabin or pickup and never have to wonder, “Where'n the hell did I put that knife?”

### Timberline Zambezi

If there is a mega-purpose knife in the group of cutters reviewed here, the Timberline Zambezi garners that distinction. Best described as a “hybrid,” this knife has more gonzo features than you can shake a knife at. Designed by tactical knifemaker *cum laude* Greg Lightfoot, this knife is Timberline's most ambitious fixed blade to date. At 11.75 inches long, the Zambezi is a large knife that can handle every type of camp chore short of cleaning grit out from under the nails.

The Zambezi is a nimble knife despite its size, due in most part to an innovative handle design. Nearly half of the Zambezi's length is in the gripping portion. A large finger choil protrudes from the upper part of the handle. When gripped with the index finger above the choil, the Zambezi becomes an agile cutter with a feisty 6-inch, 440C stainless-steel black powder coated blade. When gripped with all fingers below the finger choil, more weight shifts to the blade, and the knife becomes a whacking and hacking machine that can fell small trees if called upon. Ingenious in design, it's like getting two





**SPYDERCO LUM TANTO**

knives in one.

The Zambezi's blade has features of both the Japanese tanto and a trailing point hunter. The blade grind (available either plain or partially serrated) is that of a tanto, but the backside has a mild upsweep rooted in the Persian trailing point tradition. A long swedge grind on the backside reduces weight and improves penetrability. The handle features ribbed Kraton inserts removable, along with the scales, for cleaning via two beefy Torx fasteners.

To boot, the Zambezi comes with one of the most versatile sheaths ever designed. Made of Kydex, the sheath features a clever button lock that tucks into the finger choil — and there are more ways to wear this sheath than Imelda Marcos has shoes. It can be strapped to the belt and leg for standard carry, wrapped around the calf for diving, or stripped down to just the basics and fastened to your Jeep's roll bar for handy access.

The Timberline Zambezi retails for a suggested \$150. Considering the size of this knife, the quality of construction, and its incredible multi-faceted personality — that's a bargain.

### **Benchmade Nimravus**

Benchmade is most noted for producing high quality, top-shelf tactical folders —

and you have to figure if they can make a good one of those that doing up a real good fixed blade is a no-brainer. Indeed, the Benchmade Nimravus series is extremely well done. The Nimravus features styling by custom knifemaker Alan Elishewitz, a well-known guru in the tactical folder camp. Elishewitz's Nimravus design is very indicative of the knifemaker's cutting edge *zeitgeist*, and these knives are

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unquestionably the most stylish of the collective reviewed here.

Benchmade offers these knives in two sizes: the standard Nimravus (Model 140) with an overall length of 9.45 inches, and the smaller Nimravus Cub (Model 145) at 7.82-inches in total length. All models are of full-tang construction and feature a wicked spear point style blade with plain or partially serrated versions available. Two blade steels are available, a bead-blasted 154CM stainless for those who prefer a silvered finish, and a M2 high-speed tool steel (non-stainless) with stealth-like black BT2 Teflon finish.

On the business end of the blade you'll find a deep hollow grind with plenty of cutting edge; on the backside a sweet boot grind that enhances "puncturability." The spear point blade style is a time-proven winner that functions well for both fighting and field use. Very similar to a dagger, the spear point dates back to the earliest days of knifedom, and eventually found its way onto the Rio Grande style Bowie of the 1800s. The large Nimravus sports a 4.5-inch blade, the smaller Cub checks in at 3.65 inches.

The hi-tech synthetic G-10 handle (machined, not molded) on the Nimravus is a work of art, and it functions nicely as well. A finger groove and thumb rest are sculpted into the upper grips (yep, ambidextrous) and a bulge in the center fits the palm comfortably. The pommel features a skull-cracker base with a lanyard hole. Sheaths are form-fitted Kydex with a thumb activated toggle-lock for releasing the knife from secure carry.

Want to wow your friends around the campfire? The Nimravus black BT2 models are available with matching RealTree® Hardwoods® handles and sheaths. Regardless, these knives are on the forefront of modern fixed-blade design and are true crossover cutters. Standard Nimravus models start at \$155 suggested retail, Cubs at \$140.

## Spyderco Lum Tanto

With so many of the popular Japanese tanto-style knives on the market today we'd be remiss not to include one here. The problem with choosing a good working tanto for the field, however, can be tricky. A full size tanto with a 12-inch blade is going to be much too large for the average sportsman. Opposingly, a wimpy one is not going to get much hard work done. Spyderco seems to have hit it just right with their Bob Lum Tanto model.

Custom knifemaker Bob Lum is credited by many for bringing the Asian influence to American soil. Of all the knives reviewed herein, the Lum Tanto has the finest fit and finish of all, rivaling many customs on the market today. For sure, the nicely tapered tang and exquisite *Hamaguri* or "Appleseed" blade grind — which adds strength to the blade — would give many custom knifemakers fits.

Equally as important, this knife has the right length and heft to do serious business around the camp. Close to 8.5 inches in overall length, the Lum Tanto falls into the medium size category. That can be deceptive, however, when you consider the AUS-8 stainless blade steel is three-sixteenths of an inch thick. Unlike many tantos that sport a chisel grind on one edge only, the Lum Tanto is ground on both sides in the true Japanese tradition. The 3.8-inch blade has plenty of slicing surface, which will perform most camp chores short of full-tilt hacking.

The durable black linen Micarta handle design is a more modern approach than the blade, designed by Lum to bring the knife up to present day standards. The guard area is upswept at the rear to form a comfortable thumb rest. The slightly bulged handle is sculpted with a graceful radius around the sides, and a ovate machined groove in the lower part provides enhanced grip by providing a resting-place for the two lower fingers.

You won't find serrations available on this knife as on other Lum models, but Spyderco does provide a very slick, formed and stitched leather sheath that is looped for belt carry. With a suggested retail of \$199.95, the Spyderco Bob Lum Tanto is not for everybody, but for those who prefer Asian styling and demand superior quality, this is one knife that will certainly please.

## SOG SEAL Pup

SOG Specialty Knives has developed a loyal following over the years, primarily because their focus has been geared almost singularly to serious tactical and survival types who demand a reliable, well-made knife. The SOG SEAL Pup is a smaller version of the company's successful SEAL 2000 tactical knife that was designed in conjunction with the Navy SEALs — hence the name. We feature the smaller SEAL Pup here because it is a newer SOG release, and its size better fits the needs of the casual user more prone to field use.

At nine inches overall, the SEAL Pup isn't as small as the name might imply. Over half that length — 4.75 inches to be

*continued on page 77*

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# BIGGEST BIG-BORE BOOMER BY JOHN TAFFIN

*Two fine .50-caliber single shots. Above: Custom T/C Encore from SSK in the wildcat .50 Alaskan. Below: Gary Reeder's "Big 5 Classic" built on a Ruger No. 1.*



Mark Mehl wrings out the David Clay .50-110. No, we weren't shooting at airplanes, the recoil was a mite stiff.



**B**efore the advent of smokeless powder, bigger was always better. Going back to muzzleloading days, .50 was looked upon as minimum for big game hunting. In fact, most fish and game departments today set .50 as the smallest caliber for hunting such game as elk with a black powder muzzleloading rifle. After the Civil War, as the ordnance board approved a standard breech-loading rifle, the half-inch bore was the choice again. The first Trapdoor Springfields were not chambered in .45-70 but instead were Model 1866 .50-70s.

In 1873, the U.S. Military "downsized" to .45 caliber with the first .45-70 Springfield Trapdoor. By the 1890s, shooters were really thinking small bore as such cartridges as the 7x57 and .30-40 Krag arrived. The .45-70 was replaced by the .30-40, which had a very short life before the 1903 Springfield .30-'06 was adopted. The .30-'06 would serve through two World Wars and several "police actions" before the 1903 Springfield and the M1 Garand were replaced by the 7.62x51mm M14. Approximately 100 years after the use of .50 caliber by the U.S. forces we had retreated all the way down to a .22-caliber service rifle.

In the hunting fields, the arrival of the .30-30 in 1895 followed by civilian versions of the .30-'06 obsoleted the larger calibers for most shooters. The days of the big-bore black powder cartridges were pretty much over long before World War I. With the arrival of the Weatherby cartridges and rifles after World War II, the fate of the big bores was just about a foregone conclusion.

Two things prevented them from dying altogether. One was African hunting and the other was a stubborn handful of people who refused to accept the hypervelocity, relatively small caliber cartridges as being the best for hunting.

Today we see the road marked "cartridge selection" diverging into two separate and distinct pathways. On the one hand we have

the development of a whole new list of short magnums while at the same time there is renewed interest in the larger calibers, especially the .50 caliber.

Custom rifleshooters are waiting with custom barrels in stock and chamber reamers in hand to provide really big-bore rifles to satisfy this new interest. Three of these custom chamberings are the .500 Jeffery, the .50-110 and the wildcat .50 Alaskan.

### Pondoro's .500 Jeffery

In his book *African Rifles & Cartridges* (1948), John "Pondoro" Taylor said of the .500 Jeffery:

"This is the most powerful sporting magazine rifle that has ever been placed on the market. It's a glorious weapon, and very easy and pleasant to handle and shoot... I preferred it to the .505, but it's not easy to say why; I think the answer is to be found in the fatter forearm with which Jeffery fitted his weapons and which gave me a much better and more comfortable grip. These were, I think the most perfectly balanced magazine rifles I ever used... as with the .505, I was most pleasantly surprised at the lightness of the recoil... I found it a most accurate cartridge and killed several elephant, rhino and buffalo with it, but cannot find any record of the number shot; all I can remember is, that no beast got away from me when I was using any one of these three .500's — I killed all I shot. It's an immensely powerful weapon."

Taylor gives the specifications of the .500 Jeffery as "Powder 95 (?) grains Smokeless; Bullet 535-grain Metal-covered; Pressure 16 tons; M.V. 2,400; M.E. 6,800."

The load tested in the custom .500 Jeffery was a 525-grain hard cast bullet at slightly over 2,200 fps, so these were a little bit behind the specifications given by Taylor. They were not at all unpleasant to shoot. Our test rifle came from Gary Reeder Custom







*David Clay converted Marlin makes a dandy .50 Alaskan. Below: The .50 Alaskan is so popular Buffalo Bore now offers four different loads. Below right: Excellent RCBS dies were used for loading the .50 Alaskan and .50-110.*

Guns and as this is written, Gary is planning to take it to Africa.

Reeder built his .500 Jeffery somewhat differently than that described by John Taylor. A bolt action rifle would be necessarily somewhat large and bulky. Instead Reeder chose the Ruger No. 1 single shot, which has been a favorite with hunters and shooters since Ruger first introduced it. Because of its single-shot action it is an excellent basis for a custom rifle of any caliber from .22 up to .500. Some may even choose to go larger.

Reeder's Ruger No. 1 .500 Jeffery features a 20-inch stainless-steel barrel, 4-pound trigger pull, polished feed ramp and block, and laminated stock. To help reduce felt recoil, Reeder has addressed both ends

of the rifle with a muzzle brake and a thick Decelerator recoil pad. Sights are the very quick and easy to acquire for hunting purposes ghost ring rear mated up with a sloping ramp style front sight on a barrel band.

On the right side of the action we find engraved: "GARY REEDER BIG 5 CLASSIC" along with an engraving of a lion and a rhino. On the left side is found the same lettering with a picture of a leopard. Altogether a most attractive big bore rifle.

Taylor's rifle would certainly have been heavier than Reeder's Big 5 Classic, however as Taylor, I found this .500 Jeffery not all that unpleasant to shoot. All my shooting was done offhand, however, I

don't believe I would want to spend the day at the shooting bench with the .500 Jeffery. Offhand it is easily manageable; from the bench I would expect a much different story.

### J.T. Finds An Apprentice

By the time I finished testing and shooting Reeder's Big 5 Classic, winter had arrived and I looked forward to spring and the testing of two more custom .50 calibers. As so often happens, Bobbie Burns became a prophet once again as I experienced, "the best laid plans of mice and men" just as great shooting weather arrived.

I awoke one morning with a not to be ignored pain in my left leg. In checking it out, a blood clot was found with a second one in my lung, as the doctor said, "Large enough to block the pulmonary artery." That meant treatment and nothing heavy being shot off my shoulder for at least six months. This is definitely not what one wants to hear in the midst of testing .50 caliber rifles.

All was not lost however, as the fellow from AAA who had been called the morning of my trip to the hospital to jumpstart a dead battery recognized me and offered to help me shoot some time. I hear this offer several times a month and have heard it over two decades. However, until now, I've always done everything myself. Three days later I knew this was not to be and I contacted Mark Mehl, the pleasant young fellow from AAA, who said he loved big bore rifles. That was before he knew what the meaning of big was.

Now Mark is a big kid, going 6 feet, 4 inches and weighing nearly 300 pounds. I had to force him to wear a shoulder pad during our first session, however, he was very glad I did by the time we had gone through 40 rounds. I cannot tell you from personal experience what the recoil is like in the case of these next two 50s. Mark certainly can.



## The Mammoth .50-110

The original .50-110 arrived in 1887 long after the buffalo had been decimated. During the course of its life it was chambered in both the Winchester 1885 single shot and the lever-action Model 1886. It is a very con-

fusing cartridge as it was offered under several different names all using the same 2.4-inch cartridge length. The .50-100 Winchester, the .50-105 Winchester, the .50-110 Winchester and the .50-110 Winchester High Velocity all used the same case.

Mike Venturino in his book *Shooting*

*Lever Guns of the Old West*, gives us some excellent insight into the history and character of the .50-110. He relates it is the only cartridge chambered in the Model 1886 that was not based on the .45-70 type case head, and the .348 Winchester which arrived in the modernized 1886, the Model 71, was simply arrived at by necking down the .50-110.

The second number after the dash in early cartridge nomenclature normally gave the number of grains of black powder in its original loading. The .50-100-450 used 100 grains of black powder under a 450-grain bullet for just under 1,400 fps, while the .50-110-300 was the high velocity or "express load" using a 300-grain bullet at over 1,500 fps.

Our .50-110 test rifle came from gunsmith David Clay. Starting with a modern Browning 1886, Clay installed a properly chambered 20-inch octagonal barrel, full magazine tube, ghost ring sights, and a Decelerator recoil pad. This is a necessarily heavy rifle, which is a liability while carrying but a great asset while shooting. The trigger pull is 3½ pounds and as they say, crisp and breaks cleanly. This is certainly a rifle that could be used to take *any* large animal with confidence. A beautiful rifle and one that I may have to have built for myself sometime in the future.

### TESTFIRE: THE .50 ALASKAN

	SSK Encore	SSK 1886	Clay Marlin
LOAD	MV	MV	MV
Buffalo Bore 525-gr. WFN	1,839	1,848	1,795
Buffalo Bore 500-gr. JFN	1,863	1,845	1,805
Buffalo Bore 450-gr. LFN	2,021	2,039	2,018
Buffalo Bore 450-gr. JFN	2,012	1,990	1,972
CPBC 410-gr. PB/62.0-gr. H322	1,847	1,886	1,831
CPBC 435-gr. GC/62.0-gr. H322	1,897	1,892	1,920
CPBC 525-gr. GC/56.0-gr. H322	1,710	1,740	1,684
440-gr. Woodleigh JSP/57.0-gr. H4198	1,877	n/a	n/a
570-gr. Woodleigh JSP/54.0-gr. H4198	1,677	n/a	n/a

### TESTFIRE: THE .50-110

	DAVID CLAY 1886
LOAD	MV
CPBC 410-gr. PB/40.0-gr. XMR5744	1,505
CPBC 435-gr. GC/40.0-gr. XMR5744	1,511
CPBC 525-gr. GC/37.0-gr. XMR5744	1,337
CPBC 525-gr. GC/79.0-gr. H4895	2,052
TESTFIRE: THE .500 JEFFERY	
	GARY REEDER RUGER #1
LOAD	MV
CPBC 525-gr. LBT/95.0-gr. IMR3031	2,221

## SSK'S .50 ALASKAN





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In testing the .50-110, I used hard cast bullets from Cast Performance Bullet Co. for several reasons. First they have bullets for virtually every big bore rifle and handgun and secondly, and sometimes even more importantly, if something is ordered it is on the way — not delivered several weeks or even months later. A great product with great delivery is hard to beat. Starline is now offering .50-110 brass at a lower price than some of what has been available. They also have an excellent product with speedy delivery.

All of the loads listed for the .50-110 were assembled with CPBC gas checked bullets. To duplicate the old black powder loadings using smokeless powder it's hard to beat Accurate Arms XMP 5744. This powder was designed to be used in the old large-capacity cartridges originally loaded with black powder. *Note: it is not a black powder substitute! It does not fill the case as does Pyrodex or Triple 7.*

I recently heard of fellow who blew a Sharps replica using a full case of 5744. Apparently he read this was a good powder to use in place of black powder and interpreted it to be a direct substitute for black powder. *Follow the loading manuals when using 5744 or any smokeless powder!*

For full power loads, 79.0-grains of H4895 will send a 525-grain hard cast bullet out of the muzzle of a 20-inch barrel at well over 2,000 fps. Compare that to the .45-70, which at best is around 1,500 to 1,600 fps

with the same weight bullet. If you have shot the .45-70 with such loads you can imagine how this one feels!

## Enduring Wildcat, The .50 Alaskan

In 1935, Winchester introduced a modernized version of the model 1886 levergun. This was the Model 71 chambered in .348 Winchester. The .348 was basically arrived at by trimming .50-110 brass to 2.1 inches, then necking it down to accept a .348-inch bullet. Soon after the Model 71 arrived, custom gunsmiths began to go the other way as "improved" versions of the .348 began to appear.

One of these was the .450 Alaskan, which nips at the heels of the .458 Winchester and does it in a light, easy handling, and definitely heavy recoiling levergun. The next obvious step was to go to .50 caliber. The .50 Alaskan is thus basically the 2.4-inch .50-110 trimmed to 2.1 inches. With a .50 cartridge that is three tenths of an inch shorter, it's possible to chamber the .50 Alaskan successfully in a Marlin 336. The result is a very light, easy packing levergun. Recoil? Don't ask!

The .50 Alaskan has become so popular that we had not one, but three different versions by custom rifleshooters. The first one, also by David Clay, is built on a Marlin. Clay cut the factory barrel to 18.5 inches, re-chambered and re-bored it to .50

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Alaskan. A short magazine tube has been fitted, the factory forearm slimmed down, ghost ring sights installed, the trigger pull set at a clean breaking 3 pounds, a Decelerator recoil pad fitted and as with the Clay .50-110, the entire rifle has been finished in a beautiful deep blue.

This is a very light, carry-all-day rifle, and as with most carbines it comes up to the shoulder very quickly with the ghost ring sights allowing the acquisition of the intended target right now. It would be hard to find a more practical rifle for large dangerous game at close ranges. Whether going after big hogs or bear in heavy brush, this rifle would be very comforting. I need one of these!

Our last two test rifles, both in .50 Alaskan, came from SSK Industries. J.D. Jones is most widely known for hand cannons, that is, very large bore handguns. He turns out some of the most powerful and beautifully handling single-shot pistols in existence. However, J.D.'s interests are not that narrow.

He also likes very small and pleasant shooting cartridges, everything from the .22 Long Rifle through a long list of sub-sonic Whisper chamberings, and not only is he a premier gunsmith when it comes to exotic and wildcat chamberings of the T/C Contenders and Encores, he also builds beautiful rifles.

The first .50 Alaskan from SSK is built on the modernized Browning/Winchester

Model 1886. The barrel length is 22 inches with a full magazine tube, the factory rear sight is mated up with a bead front sight on a ramp base, the trigger pull is set at 6 pounds. There is no recoil pad. Mark Mehl was certainly happy to have a shoulder pad while shooting the heaviest loads in this .50 Alaskan. The entire rifle is finished in a highly polished, deep blue. Not as easy to pack as a Marlin .50 Alaskan, it is however more appreciated with the shooting of long strings of ammunition.

Finally we come to the last test rifle in this .50 caliber quintet. All five of these are serious rifles for serious purposes, however this last example could also be classified as a fun gun, and the only one Mark Mehl really enjoyed shooting. This SSK Encore single-shot rifle features an 18.5 inch barrel which makes it very compact. The fun of the shooting comes from the fact that it has an SSK Muzzle Brake, a synthetic stock, and a T/C recoil pad all of which help in taming felt recoil. Add to this a 1.5-4X Ultra Dot scope on an SSK base for easy target acquisition.

The black scope, stock, and barrel are all contrasted with a stainless steel action resulting in a very attractive, easy carrying, relatively easy shooting rifle. Since it is a break-open single-shot rifle, overall cartridge length is not critical, nor are cartridges fed through a tubular magazine, so spire pointed bullets can be uti-

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#### Technical specifications

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Trigger pull	5 lbs

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# TOO MUCH

Of A

# GOOD THING?

Many shooters seek more power and less weight, but is S&W's Model 329PD approaching the limit?

**BY CHARLES E. PETTY**





**W**hen you see a Smith & Wesson revolver with the numbers 29 in the nomenclature it can only be one thing. It shoots the cartridge Eastwood made famous. While the .44 Magnum can no longer claim to be the world's most powerful handgun, it remains the standard against which other magnums and wannabes are measured.

S&W has been making .44 Magnum handguns continuously since 1956 and for most of that time nothing changed very much until the Model 629 stainless steel version came along — eventually to replace blue or nickel as a finish choice. There have been some mechanical changes that are common to all S&W revolvers. Each time they make an engineering change a “dash number” is stamped right behind the model number. We’re up to -6 right now.

There was also a major redesign of the Model 29's cylinder locking system a few

years ago to prevent it from opening or spinning out of sequence under recoil. Loads were getting hotter and bullets heavier, and the recoil kinda' shook things up in there. Those issues are resolved. The last change was the inclusion of a little key lock just above the cylinder release, which allows the action to be locked completely.

### Consumer Imperative

There are two contests going on at the urging of shooter/consumers. Power and weight are valued or cursed depending on the individual's indoctrination. Some believe you can't have too much power while others want to shave every microgram they can from the weight of their blaster. S&W has offered alloy frames for a long time, but they have radically reduced weight lately.







### ACCURACY TEST RESULTS

Load	Velocity	1	2	3	Avg.
<b>Remington 180-gr. SJHP</b>	1,390	3.61"	2.91"	2.61"	3.04"
<b>Winchester 210-gr. Silvertip</b>	1,148	2.63"	1.98"	2.53"	2.38"
<b>Black Hills 240-gr. JHP</b>	1,087	1.93"	2.11"	1.45"	1.83"
<b>Winchester 250-gr. Partition Gold</b>	1,192	1.82"	1.21"	1.77"	1.60"
<b>Black Hills 300-gr. JHP</b>	1,008	2.15"	1.94"	1.84"	1.98"

**Average Of All Loads: 2.17"**

Notes: accuracy results are six shot groups at 25 yards from Ransom Rest. Velocity is instrumental at 15 feet as measured with a PACT chronograph.

They began with Titanium and came up with a 12-ounce "J" frame revolver — the Model 342 (plus some others) that were approved for use with +P .38 Special ammo. This was a pretty big deal because S&W had always advised against that with aluminum alloy frame guns. But they cranked it up another notch when they added Scandium to the alloy mix and now we've got a 12-ounce gun — the Model 340 — that can handle .357 Magnum ammo.

These were no small accomplishments and required a new way of making the barrel so it would not wander off the vertical under recoil. The solution was a separate stainless steel "barrelette" that is covered, and held on, by an aluminum shroud. The shroud was aligned with the frame with a key/slot arrangement that made it impossible for the shroud to rotate and the torque helped keep everything snugged up.

This really is a big deal engineering wise, and many of us thought that they'd gone as far as they could go in weight reduction. And of course you know we were wrong. I guess it was inevitable for S&W to apply the new construction with Scandium/Titanium to the big bore and bring us the 26-ounce Model 329PD. The PD designation is applied to guns that have a black anodized finish as opposed to natural aluminum.



*A little inquiry revealed the cause of the mysterious carbon dot which formed over each chamber.*



## Light Weight And Power?

So here we are: there is a sizeable segment of the handgun market that believes in carrying the lightest thing possible. Of course there's a downside to that because as you reduce weight you automatically increase recoil. With the .44 Magnum that change is exponential.

My personal view is that weight really isn't the all-consuming issue that some folks make of it, but will also acknowledge that there is a place for a gun like this. It is something you carry with the fervent hope you don't have to shoot it. To me the .44 Magnum is far more gun than you need for personal or home defense, but it could be great for hikers or hunters who are already encumbered with heavy gear and want something "just in case."

Writers seem to talk a lot about handguns for encounters with dangerous game, especially bears, and a lot of them want *power* or *more power*. Okay, that's one approach, but it overlooks the myth of the one shot stop. When we speak of handguns and shooting living objects, be they people or bears, there is much to be said for rapid followup shots.

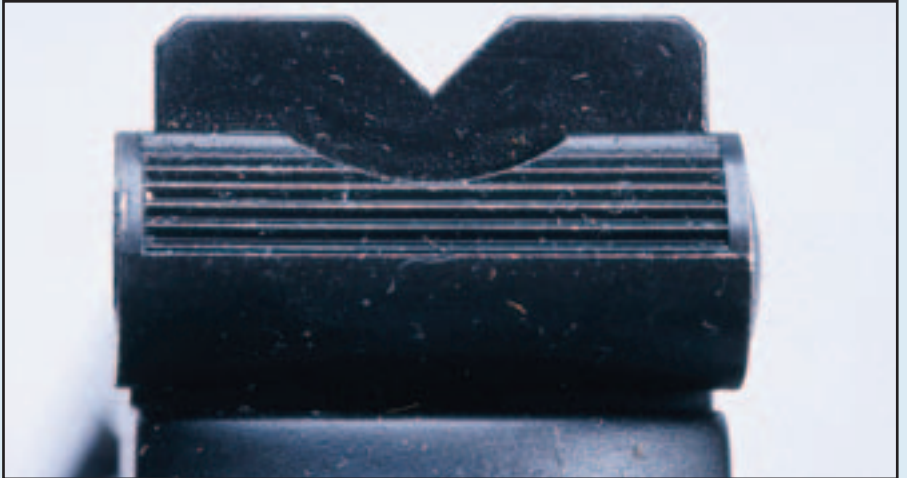
It's rarely wise to wait and see if the first shot was enough. Far better to get some more on the way and one would need to train long and hard to master any .44 Magnum well enough for that. It can be done to be sure, but it wouldn't be a good idea to simply count on the power of the .44 to overcome deficits of marksmanship.

## Defining Moment

The first time I shot the Model 329 was not a joyous experience. It was with full charge 240-grain Magnum ammunition and the gun wore wood grips that left the metal backstrap exposed. Simply put, it hurt. The gun that came later from S&W is furnished with two sets of grips — S&W insists on calling them "stocks." One is a finger groove style of lovely wood from Kim Ahrends. The other is a rubber Hogue Monogrip, which helps with recoil but still leaves the backstrap exposed.

My first act was to purchase a set of Pachmayr Decelerator grips that cover the backstrap and then dig out the Uncle Mike's

*Top to bottom: Petty liked the bold fiber optic front sight and this "V" shaped rear blade, but didn't care much for the factory stocks. Pachmayr Decelerator stocks with covered backstrap were Petty's choice. The new S&W system consists of a small diameter barrel (shown with barrel wrench in place) which locks the barrel shroud rigidly in place.*





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glove. Those accommodations were highly beneficial and strongly recommended if you are going to shoot the 329PD very much.

As with their other ultra-lightweight revolvers, S&W cautions that the heavy recoil could result in a bullet being pulled forward in the cartridge and in the worst case binding the cylinder. Their common sense advice is to load the cylinder and shoot four or five rounds. Inspect the unfired cartridges and if the bullet is exactly where it was before all is well.

I don't really think of myself as particularly recoil shy but that first experience is still indelibly inscribed in my long term memory. So when I began to work with the 329PD I shot a lot of .44 Special cowboy loads and worked up through hotter .44 Specials and then some magnum handloads at the starting load end of the scale. From there it was 180-, 210-, 240-, 250- and 300-grain bullet weights in factory ammo.

Everything in .44 Special was easily manageable and the cowboy loads were plain fun. There was a substantial recoil increase with magnum handloads and even more with factory ammo. The lighter bullet loads seemed most obnoxious, maybe because of greater muzzle blast, but as I shot the various loads shown in the table the Black Hills 300-grain JHP was almost pleasant.

This, obviously, is contrary to expectations. When I ran them through the chronograph the answer was obvious. Instead of the 1,200 or so fps listed in most factory specifications, it was doing only a little over 1,000 fps from the 4-inch barrel of the 329PD.

A word about factory ballistics data: It is almost impossible to compare apples with apples when we chronograph a real gun for comparison with published velocities. For example with the .44 Magnum we can find factory data generated from 5-, 6½- and 7½-inch barrels. The standard test barrels are vented to simulate the effect of the barrel/cylinder gap, and since we don't have very many real world guns with those barrel lengths we need to be careful in our judgements.

### The Mysterious Dot

Speaking of barrel/cylinder gaps you'll see that the 329PD has a steel blast shield directly above the gap to protect the top strap of the frame. We know that gas escapes there, but when you think about loads that generate pressures of 36,000 psi (40,000 CUP) the jet effect should be obvious, but it also produced a sign I had never seen before. After the gun had been shot awhile you could clearly see a round mark about .1 inch in diameter located dead center on top of each charge hole, about 1/4 inch back from the front of the cylinder.

A moment of head-scratching led to the discovery that the mark was directly underneath the screw that holds the rear sight on. The screw doesn't quite fit flush with the top strap and a friend at S&W explained that it serves to focus the blast on that one spot. It

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does no harm — and doesn't indicate that anything is wrong. It's just gonna be there. Which brings us to cleaning.

S&W warns against the use of any abrasive cleaning method on the titanium cylinder. That is especially true of the face of the cylinder as this could damage a special protective surface and lead to premature wear. S&W recommends that only conventional gun cleaning solvents be used. A bronze brush may be used, but no steel wool or stainless steel brushes. I've tried several solvents like Hoppes No. 9 or Shooters Choice, and while they remove carbon fouling they do not remove the little round spot or the darkening on the face of the cylinder. It's a fact of life for this gun and the price you pay for lightweight magnums. Live with it.

### Sights To Be Seen

S&W has done some cool stuff mechanically to make this gun and they added a nice touch in the form of the sights. The front sight is from Hi Viz with a florescent red insert. This takes the old red ramp S&W sight to new heights. It positively demands your attention. The rear sight is S&W's normal adjustable but with a leaf having a shallow "V" shape commonly called an express sight.

The combination works — and fast. I didn't have any trouble with some precision shooting either once I figured out a sight alignment that worked for me. You really have two choices here, and either one will work. You can bury the red front sight in the rear "V" much as we'd do with a normal Patridge sight, or you can have a red half-moon above the rear notch. This seems a bit faster but you can adjust the rear to accommodate either view.

The Model 329 was tested for accuracy in the Ransom Rest with no trouble. It had been speculated that recoil would be too much for the rest but that wasn't at all true. As you can see from the table, best accuracy was obtained with the heavier bullets. When inspecting the velocity figures, remember again we're dealing with a 4-inch barrel, not a laboratory test barrel of 6½ or 7½ inches.

I would be less than honest if I didn't tell you I was intimidated by this gun at first. And why not? Recoil and muzzle blast are ferocious. But once we learn that it only hurts a little and get properly geared up with grips and gloves, I found myself getting along with it quite nicely. Everyone will have to decide his own wants and needs but if those include a gun that is easily carried but has the wallop of the .44 Magnum. This is it. MSRP of the 329PD is \$900



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## A SECOND LOOK

continued from page 47

As far as accuracy goes, both the Ruger and the H-S Precision rifles are very accurate. Both shoot less than 1 MOA in my testing so far. The H-S seems a bit more accurate than the Ruger and I would expect that. I have, by no means, finished my experiments with this cartridge. However, it's quite clear that for extended range shooting, the .30-378 has the capacity to perform if the shooter is up to the task.

Frankly, extended range shooting is probably the only area where the caliber offers much of an advantage over other, milder chamberings. Further, shooting at game at long-range is best left to experts and the average hunter should not even attempt it.

There are hunters, David Miller immediately comes to mind, that are probably more deadly at 500 yards and beyond than the average hunter is at 200 yards. He tailors his loads, his rifle, his scope and most importantly, his shooting practice, all with long-range hunting in mind. His preparation each season is more thorough and extensive than the average hunter devotes to shooting in probably 10 seasons.

The following comments are applicable to all the big .30s and not just the .30-378 Weatherby. At normal hunting ranges, the big .30s won't do much better than a .30-'06. Perhaps this statement will ruffle some feathers, but I believe it to be true. In fact, in the hands of typical hunters, the .30-'06 is perhaps a better choice. Few shooters can handle the recoil generated by most of the big .30s.

For those hunters that are exceptionally well seasoned, and are expert and equipped for shooting at long ranges, then the .30-378 Weatherby has a lot going for it. For the hunter interested in wringing out every bit of velocity and accuracy a big can .30 offer — and who is willing to dedicate the time and effort required to make use of this long range capability in the game fields — the .30-378 Weatherby chambering is a real performer.



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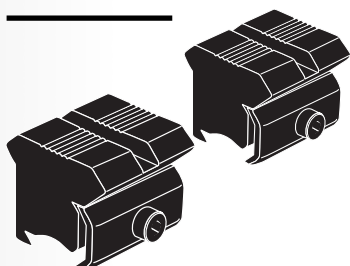
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## CROSSOVER CUTTERS

continued from page 62

exact — is devoted to the pup's unusual double-clipped blade configuration. Unlike the other knives reviewed herein, partial serrations are mandatory, no doubt an element of the parameters set for the original SEAL 2000 requiring the knife to have excellent rope and cord cutting capability. Blade steel is AUS 6 stainless, powder coated in a light, non-reflective graphite finish for even more resistance to rust and corrosion. A lengthy swedge grind on the backside of the blade lightens the load and increases the penetration capability of the knife.

The SEAL Pup has a Zytel handle with checkering molded in to enhance purchase. An extended front guard offers excellent finger protection and shallow finger grooves further the comfort and effectiveness of the grip. A hole in the pommel accommodates a lanyard.

Overall, the SOG SEAL Pup is a very well made knife, and its pedigree comes by way of some of the world's most serious users. This is an excellent knife for field use, one that will stand up to years of routine abuse and the presence of destructive elements like salt water. The SEAL Pup comes very reasonably priced at a suggested retail of \$74.95, which includes a multi-purpose Kydex sheath. If you're looking for a lot of knife at an affordable price, check out this SOG offering.



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## NO TWO WAYS

continued from page 34

us near line of sight. We've experimented with both FRS and GMRS radios. The FRS rigs work surprisingly well, but we sometimes pick up traffic from other people. This class of radio is extremely popular, and there are many, many users of this equipment.

### Good Features

In fact most FRS and GMRS radios feature a variety of channel "codes" to aid in receiving the communication you want while blocking the signals you don't want to hear. With GMRS equipment, there seems to be a little less traffic, and Jim and I can palaver with no interference. Of course we could just use the telephone, but what fun would that be?

Speaking of features, you can now buy a combination FRS/GMRS radio and GPS combination. How's that for versatility? Garmin's Rino 110 and 120 models can guide you to your stand in complete darkness and help you find your way back too. It's a mighty handy tool.

Another point to consider is the power source for your units. Standard "AAA" or "AA" batteries are the most common. Battery life can be fairly short, especially in the higher output GMRS models. Many versions can be had with rechargeable battery packs as an option, but will you be able to recharge in camp?

Another aspect to these radios that's hard to complain about is the price. Current models are far less expensive yet offer more features than was the norm only a couple of years ago. By the way, both Cabela's and Midway USA are a great source for these radios at fair pricing.

As you'll recall, GMRS radios may be used with an external antenna, and experimenting with the Midland unit designed for our G-11 radios, Jim and I have experienced a very notable increase in performance. These small, magnet mount antennas are especially good for vehicle-to-vehicle communication.

When caravanning up to our usual trout fishing camp, I can ask Jim if he's going to buy me breakfast at the cafe up ahead, and he can remind me that he bought last time. And the time before.

You know, sometimes these handy little gizmos work just a bit too well.



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## **DOING THE RIGHT THING**

*continued from page 56*

frontstrap and mainspring housing, long match trigger, beavertail and ambi-thumb safeties, as well as Kimber's excellent adjustable sight and special red, white and blue USA Shooting Team logo stocks. Suggested retail is \$1,284. With the sale of each Team Match II pistol, Kimber donates \$100 to USA Shooting.

"This program has been very well received at all levels, from the dealers to the consumers," said Van Brunt. "The pistol is a winner on the merits of its features as well as on the merit of this program supporting our Olympic competitors." "Everyone at Kimber," Van Brunt added, "really got behind this effort."

Leaha Wirth, director of marketing and resource development for USA Shooting, was asked about the impact of Kimber's

partnership. "Kimber's support has been vital to our efforts," replied Wirth. "As an example, the numbers of Sport Pistol shooters had been on the decline, but Kimber's support has enabled us to generate new interest in this discipline."

Wirth was also quick to point out the broader support of the shooting sports beyond Olympic efforts, especially youth outreach programs. "We're reaching up to one half million kids per year through 4-H and other programs."

### **"Precision In A Hurry"**

The idea of Olympic shooters practicing outside their normal discipline is a novel one. It might be compared to a NASCAR driver climbing into an NHRA dragster for off-season practice. While on the surface the two may seem related, the skills required to win in these vastly different disciplines are radically different.

These Olympic hopefuls having recently scored well in the prestigious NRA Bianchi Cup and the fiercely competitive Steel Challenge match, we asked Wirth about the results of this experiment so far.

"These events may be very different from their normal disciplines, but are proving invaluable at sharpening their competitive skills," she related. "Unlike the structured world of Rapid Fire, Sport Pistol and Air

*continued on page 84*



**Melissa McConnell**  
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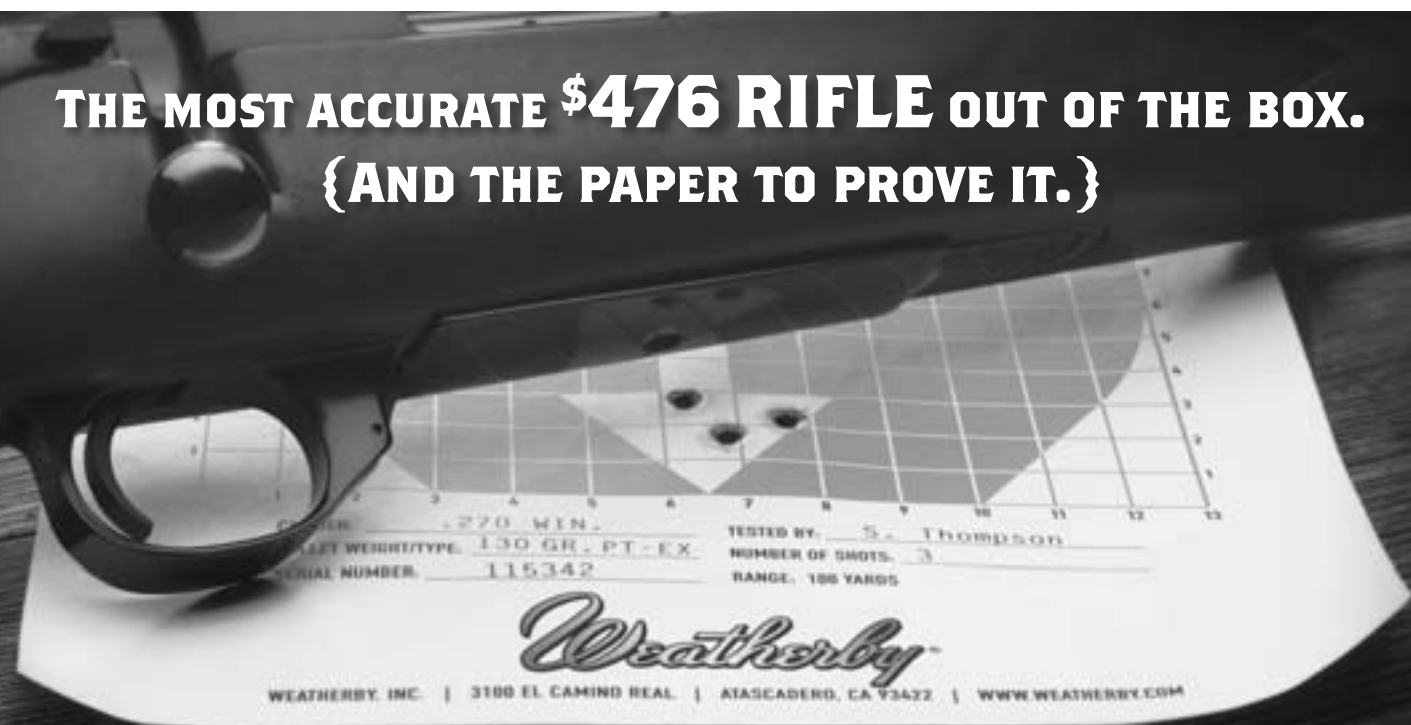
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Team Kimber ready for action at the Steel Challenge. Courtesy USA Shooting



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\*Based on a 3-shot group at 100 yards from a cold barrel and premium factory ammunition. \*\*Based on Vanguard Synthetic model. Prices subject to change without notice.



peared almost immediately. A good trigger is one of the most important features you're paying for in an upscale 1911, and the TC II delivers.

## Emperor's New Clothes

The Kimber TC II is an excellent example of getting exactly what we've asked for. What do I mean? For perhaps 20 years now, the cult of the custom 1911 has gradually stipulated an ever-increasing laundry list of must have accessories or modifications. This begs an obvious question: If the basic 1911 pistol design is really so superior; if it has remained the top choice of those in the know for so many years, why does it need all these "improvements?"

There are two possible answers here. The first is that the basic 1911 is not a genuinely superior pistol design. Of course you can find a fair number of people who will gladly try to convince you of this, but the plain facts argue otherwise. The alternate answer is that we really *don't* need all this gingerbread which is currently so fashionable to hang upon our 1911 pistols. What then are these dubious accessories?

On the Kimber TC II, I'd vote for removing the magazine funnel. Proper technique and practice are the righteous path to fast, smooth reloads, not a hog wallow that

adds bulk to the gun. By contrast, chamfering the edges of the frame in the magazine well is a good idea, and thankfully, this has been done on the TC II.

The extended recoil spring guide rod is an abortion, and serves no purpose other than to complicate disassembly and eliminate one method of cycling the gun if you are deprived the use of your off hand. It has also led to the appearance of grasping grooves at the front of the slide, which would be unneeded in the absence of this gimmick. Less than twenty bucks will buy you a GI equivalent recoil spring guide and plug to return to the original design. It's money well spent.

Of course you can dispense with these observations as the grumbling of an old curmudgeon. Most guys will look at this Kimber and say, "Wow, it has a guide rod, magazine funnel and *everything!*"

## Another Answered Request

The TC II's biggest departure from the 1911 norm is the new external "Tactical Extractor™." In good examples, the extractor of a traditional 1911 is pretty trouble free, however it is a "self spring." The extractor must be tensioned (bent) to just the right degree for reliable function. If your extractor is a little soft, it can get out of adjustment and need occasional tuning. This flaw and a few others caused some to campaign for a reliable external extractor like

those of late-production Browning Hi-Powers and most other autopistols.

Is it better than John Browning's original design? Well, it does have certain advantages. As it's powered by a resilient coil spring, extractor tension (which is a major factor in reliable feeding as well as extraction and ejection) should be stable and uniform. Mounted externally, it also serves as a loaded chamber indicator, a feature many shooters regard highly.

"Customers are demanding this feature," commented Ryan Busse, Kimber's National Sales Manager when asked about the new design. "We have people calling every day asking us to add the Tactical extractor to our other models. They're demanding it both for the reliability the new design offers over the internal extractor, and for the added benefit of the loaded chamber indicator."

Frankly, the new design looks like a winner *if* it functions reliably, and that leads us into how this particular sample shoots.

## Big Smiles And Brass On The Deck

To get a fresh perspective, I asked Joe Novelo, *GUNS* art director and a beginning shooter to take the first swing with the Kimber. This was Joe's first experience with a 1911 pistol, and he observed of the TC II, "Very comfortable. I liked the easy trigger and the easy-to-see sights. The more I fired this gun the tighter the groups got. This is a *really* nice pistol!"

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For this first range session, the Kimber was fed a mixed diet of Winchester 230-grain ball, Triton Hi-Vel 200-grain +P and Winchester 185-grain Silvertip. There were a couple of failures to feed within the first 100 rounds, but after this break-in, it fed flawlessly.

That evening, I stripped and cleaned the Kimber before firing up my ancient Dillon 450 to crank out a fresh batch of my favorite .45 ACP load — a 200-grain, hard cast SWC over 5.9-grains of WW 231, sparked by any standard large pistol primer. This load will run 925 to 950 fps in most 5-inch barrels, shoots better than I can hold, and knocks over small game with authority.

With this load, 25-yard offhand groups fired from the Weaver clustered into a range of 1.71 to 2.55 inches. Point of impact was spot-on for elevation, and roughly 2.5 inches right. In every group, two or three shots cutting one hole told me the pistol wanted to shoot better, and would have done so from a machine rest. But unless you habitually carry a Ransom Rest in your travels, it's how a pistol performs in the hand that should be the measure of its merit, and this is determined by more than mechanical accuracy.

The most accurate pistol in the world, unless it also boasts good ergonomics, a fine trigger and good sights, won't group well and is unlikely to fulfill its purpose. The Tactical Custom II scores well in all these aspects which make for superior intrinsic accuracy, and thus we see groups that are the best I can expect from middle-aged eyes and trigger control that is often far from perfect.

As further proof, I took the Kimber to the rifle range the same week. While waiting for a rifle barrel to cool, I plopped down into roll over prone and ever so carefully fired five rounds at a 100-yard target. The result looked like a shotgun pattern. Certain the gun would shoot better than that, I sent five more slow, careful rounds down range. Result? Another mile-wide group.

Frustrated, I picked a rock on the berm and tossed off five quick rounds — they clustered into a football-sized pattern. That was more like it. With one clean target down range, I held up half the front sight and fired five more as fast as the sights settled and a compressed trigger break could be made. At just under 8 inches, the resulting group may not be much to brag on but it's proof the Kimber will shoot well in better hands.

Furnished with two seven round magazines, cable lock and bushing wrench in a hard plastic case, MSRP of the Kimber TC II is \$1,058. Given its good features, excellent fit and finish and fine accuracy, it's a steal. Whether your need is for a trustworthy CCW companion for the big city; or a lightweight, hard-hitting trail gun for the backwoods, you won't go wrong with this one.



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## DOING THE RIGHT THING

*continued from page 80*

Pistol competition, these action pistol events tend to be quite noisy and busy. Dealing with these distractions has improved their concentration skills dramatically."

Melissa McConnell, a member of USA Shooting's "Team Kimber" confirmed Leah Wirth's assessment. "It's different (action pistol), but it's the same too," McConnell replied. "My Air Pistol and Sport Pistol shooting is all about precision, but you might say these other events require precision in a hurry."

McConnell was full of praise both for Kimber's support and for her Team Match II pistol. "I actually own three Kimbers," McConnell admitted, "they're awesome and they've never failed me."

McConnell has been shooting for only four years. Her initial interest was in self-

TOSHI YOSHIFUJI PHOTO



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defense shooting, "to protect my babies." She's active in IDPA competition, but shooting is not a leisurely activity for her. "I train four to six hours a day," she related. "Most of the people I compete against have been shooting for 10 or 12 years. While God has blessed me with an ability, I need to work hard to make the most of it."

Melissa has taken classes from many advanced shooting schools, and tries to, "take at least two classes every year," which



is not always easy for a busy mother of two. Her enjoyment of and eager participation in the active, "tactical" type shooting has earned her a nickname from her fellow teammates. McConnell broke into self-conscious laughter when asked about this, "They call me 'Captain Bad-Ass,'" she admitted, "because my assertive shooting style shows how seriously I take my training and that I always Shoot to Live."

Her perseverance and go get 'em attitude probably had a role in this nickname as well. Melissa said of the infamously demanding Bianchi Cup, "I don't just want to compete in it, I want to keep training and win it one day!"

A great many companies and people in the shooting world choose to do good when the opportunity presents itself. These good deeds are seldom as well known as they should be. Here we have the story of a company that said "we want to help," and with the active support of shooters across the country is introducing young people to shooting as well as furthering the efforts of our best and brightest competitive shooters.



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## ULTIMATE .500

continued from page 41

impact bank. The big gun hit for me too, including shooting one round of each bullet weight at an old "pepper popper" at about 20 yards to see what the bullets would do to 3/8-inch cold rolled steel plate.

Here the 275-grain Barnes X bullet flattened out leaving only a slight dimple. However, the 400-grain JSP left a 3/16-inch deep crater, and the 440-grain cast lead flat-point left a crater more than 1/4 inch deep and a large bulge on the rear of the popper. By this time, my middle finger was bright red. We all agreed that the gun kills in front and wounds to the rear, and put it away.

Groups? When I recovered, I got up my nerve to shoot the Ultimate .500 for accuracy, this time with a heavy rubber glove with the index finger portion cut off for my trigger finger. At 25 yards, all three loads produced 5-shot groups of from 2½- to 4-inches hand-held from the bench, but since the groups opened up as the bullet weight increased, I've no doubt that I'm partially to blame. I'm also sure the gun would do better from a machine rest.

The Gary Reeder Ultimate .500 would also do better with a muzzle brake and a set of rubber grips, but no one yet makes such grips for the Ruger Bisley frame, and I don't know why. This is just what these big guns need for a lot of shooting.

As this is written, it's rumored that Hornady will load the .500 S&W Magnum cartridge, and that Starline will make brass for it. Other ammunition companies are sure to follow.

Reeder's Ultimate .500 is a true masterpiece, as are all Gary's custom guns. And some day I'd like to test another Ultimate .500 with a muzzle brake — strap it on my belt with my Katz Safari Kit — and go shoot something really big.



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articles, Jack O'Connor and Elmer Keith were my guys. I liked them both, though I'm still trying to reconcile their advice to this

day. My elk rifle, for example, is a custom over-under, chambered .270 Win. over .338/.378 KT. Elk guides consider me a bit weird, though not as weird as when I used to carry two rifles.



In a way their disagreements actually enhanced my learning process. I figured anything they did agree on was probably sound. On the kneeling position, they said almost the same thing.

O'Connor, in *The Complete Book of Shooting*, wrote "it [kneeling] does not have much to recommend it to the hunter... I cannot remember a single head of game I have shot from the kneeling position in many years."

Elmer Keith said much the same in *Keith's Rifles for Large Game*: "I have very seldom used the kneeling position in the game fields."

Due to the Keith-O'Connor influence I've never used the kneeling position much. Maybe it's a matter of not giving the stance a fair try. Even those who don't use kneeling much agree it has some advantages.

It is steadier than offhand. It can be used in sagebrush or other obstacles too high for prone or sitting. It beats sitting on mud, snow, or cactus. Most importantly, it is very fast. A shooter can kneel while bringing up the rifle and get a shot off almost as quickly as from offhand.

A tight shooting sling improves steadiness. With the Ching Sling, discussed in this column recently, the shooter can slip into the loop with hardly any lost time. With a military-type sling, if there is time to loop up there is probably time to sit down as well.



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## CROSSFIRE

continued from page 6

### Still More Wish Lists

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- 2) S&W to buy the rights to manufacture the great Automag pistol.
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- 5) Finally from Remington: a left and right hand version of the Model 700 LSS walk about varmint rifle in .17 Rem., .223 Rem. and .22-250 Rem. with 24-inch barrels.

Gary Belkins  
Princeton, Minn.

### Clint Tells True

I just finished reading Clint Smith's recent column on "The Good Consumer."

I recently purchased a Charles Daly ECS 1911 .45 pistol. I had been looking for a compact pistol for awhile, and after looking over many different models and brands settled on the Charles Daly. I have owned other Daly pistols and have been happy with them. One of the reasons is because you get a lot of bang for your buck with their products. Another reason is because they advertise a "lifetime guarantee" on their firearms.

After purchasing the pistol I found that it had a couple of minor problems that needed some fine tuning.

I emailed Charles Daly explaining the problems and promptly received a reply from Rick Kohl. He said that he would take care of the problems and was sending me a Fed-Ex box in which to ship the pistol. About a week went by and still no box, so I called and talked to Mr. Kohl. He apologized for the delay and said that the box would be at my door the following Monday. The box arrived and I shipped the pistol that day.

On Friday my door bell was rung by the Fed-Ex man with my pistol in hand. Not only was the weapon repaired, but it was done in less than five days!

This just goes to show that Clint Smith was quite correct. When it comes to fixing problems, start with the manufacturer. And when it comes to problems with a Charles Daly product, expect super fast, friendly service.

David Bata  
Via e-mail

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# OUT OF THE BOX

## MAGNUM LITE GRAPHITE RIFLE

By Dick Williams

To say that the Winchester short magnums have become popular is like saying King Kong was taller than average. Everyone is jumping on the bandwagon. One manufacturer chambering rifles for these new calibers is Magnum Research. Their approach is to take a Remington 700 short action and a carbon wrapped, MagnumLite™ barrel and bed both in a Hogue rubber composite stock. Being a 7mm fan, I had no trouble picking a preferred caliber for this review.

The gun arrived wearing a Leupold Vari-X III, 3.5-10 variable riflescope — excellent optics for a long-range hunting rifle. The graphite wrapped barrel measures about 1.2 inches in diameter just in front of the scope's objective lens and tapers to about .85 inch at the muzzle. Magnum Research calls this

their "sport tapered" barrel and says the graphite reduces barrel weight and dissipates heat. There are stainless steel caps at both ends of the barrel.

The barrel may be ordered with the muzzle threaded for a compensator if desired. The rubber stock is generously proportioned with the forearm being quite wide in order to accommodate the large diameter barrel. That wide forearm makes the rifle very steady from the bench or from a good field rest. Although the rifle's total weight sans scope is 7 pounds, stock size and barrel diameter make it look heavier. A black nylon sling with removable swivels competed the package.

Trigger pull is a crisp, repeatable 4 pounds, light enough for varmint shooting, but heavy enough for hunting big game in

### TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

**Manufacturer:** Magnum Research  
**Model:** Magnum Lite  
**Caliber:** 7mm WSM  
**Weight:** 7 pounds  
**Barrel Length:** 24"  
**Twist Rate:** 1:9 inch  
**Capacity:** 2+1  
**Stock:** Hogue rubber composite  
**MSRP:** \$2,067

the colder fall weather. The accompanying manual states the trigger may be adjusted within a range of two to seven pounds.

It's wonderful when a manufacturer's performance claim turns out to be 100-percent accurate. Prior to shipping the rifle, Jim Skildum, president of Magnum Research told me it would shoot half-inch groups at 100 yards with Winchester Supreme 140-grain Ballistic Silvertip.

Our first three shot group using this ammo (which clocked at 3,234 fps) measured three eighths of an inch, and this was shooting off a semi-wobbly telephone cable spool at 100 yards. (Hmm, does that make Jim's claim 125-percent accurate or 75-percent accurate?)

Continuing, Winchester's 150-grain Power Point (3,146 fps), and 160-grain Fail Safe (3,021 fps), both produced one inch groups. To be totally honest, one group with the 150-grain Power Points had two shots touching with the third shot (a called table wobble) opening the group to 2 inches. Even with the wobble, this rifle will put roasts in the refrigerator.

While the 7mm WSM is not an elephant gun, it does generate some recoil, but this is nicely absorbed by the Hogue stock and recoil pad. All our shooting with the 7mm WSM was done with shooters wearing T shirts, and there was no whining about felt recoil. It was also pleasing to note that all ammunition, including the 160-grain Fail Safe, broke the 3,000 fps mark. There's nothing magic about 3,000 fps, but I've always had the feeling that the primary bullet weights in a magnum should move that fast, else why would you buy a magnum?

In conclusion, I think Magnum Research's custom rifle shop has built a great hunting rifle. It's not cheap, but with minute of angle accuracy from magnum loads, their 7mm WSM will let you hunt everything from ground squirrels to elk. And how many seven pound hunting rifles will do that?





# OUT OF THE BOX

## LES BAER AR-15

By Charles E. Petty

It wasn't long ago that common knowledge told us that semiautomatic rifles were not capable of anything more than mediocre accuracy. You would have been laughed out of town if you said an AR-15 could shoot. My how things have changed.

In a way we're watching history repeat itself. I'm sure many of you remember when it was said that you couldn't hit a barn with a GI 1911 .45. Over the years gunsmiths learned how to make the 1911 shoot incred-

ibly well and many of today's factory pistols will meet all but the most stringent accuracy demands. Not too many AR-15s can live up to that sort of standard, but Les Baer's can.

This is a very different creature. You can tell right away that this rifle is only remotely related to the military lookalikes. First you'll notice a heavy stainless steel barrel that floats freely within a heavy round aluminum handguard. That's only the first clue. Every one of Baer's ARs is literally hand built

beginning with upper and lower receiver units that must be carefully hand fitted to even get them to go together. The bolt and barrel extension are mated so everything locks up vault-tight. When the bolt slams shut you won't hear any rattles.

The gun I'm using is Baer's Super Varmint model with an 18-inch stainless steel barrel with 0.97-inch OD and 1:8-inch twist. The rate of rifling twist in the AR is really an important consideration. While the standard 1:12-inch rate works just fine for bullets up to 55 grains, if you want to shoot anything heavier a faster twist is required. A little experimenting on my part led me to pick the 1:8-inch and it has done well with bullets up to 75 grains.

Of course they have even heavier styles now, especially for competitive shooting and the 1:7-inch twist is recommended if you want to shoot the new 80-grain projectiles. Baer guarantees 1/2 MOA accuracy and gets it, although match ammo is needed.

One of the things I like to do is shoot a wide variety of factory loads to see if something really shines. This rifle seemed to like Black Hills ammo a little better and generally favored lighter bullets although Hornady's 75-grain match load shot with the best. As is always the case with accuracy tests like this you find new questions to answer which, of course, requires another trip to the range. Pity.

For this test the rifle was fitted with a Springfield Armory Tactical 6-20x30mm scope in Baer's massive rings. The whole package weighed 11.5 pounds. Surely the weight helps the shooter — not the carrier — and the standard Jewell trigger which arrived at 3.5 pounds didn't hurt either. Over the course of several hundred rounds there were no stoppages of any kind. In addition to Baer's magazine I used an assortment of GI magazines without difficulty.

This gun doesn't look much like the plain, black guns we're used to. In fact it doesn't have much in common with those except for the basic operating system. Those guns were designed to deliver bullets at a high rate of speed into general areas often known as "free fire zones."

By contrast, Baer's rifles are designed to deliver them one at a time to precisely the same spot. Sure you can shoot Baer's just as fast as any other AR-15 but I like to slow down and savor the precision. MSRP \$1,989 to \$3,075.



FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

**Les Baer Custom**  
[309] 658-2716  
www.lesbaer.com



### ACCURACY TEST RESULTS

Load	Velocity	1	2	3	Avg.
Black Hills 50-gr. V-max	3,236	0.425"	0.379"	0.470"	0.425"
Black Hills 52-gr match	3,107	0.511"	0.668"	0.278"	0.486"
Black Hills 68-gr. Match	2,826	0.654"	0.869"	0.628"	0.717"
Black Hills 75-gr. Match	2,804	0.606"	0.874"	0.721"	0.734"
Federal GM 52-gr. Sierra	3,145	0.458"	0.624"	0.567"	0.550"
Federal GM 69-gr. Sierra	2,668	0.456"	0.453"	0.604"	0.504"
Federal GM 77-gr. Sierra	2,679	0.860"	0.447"	0.578"	0.628"
Hornady 75-gr. Match	2,698	0.458"	0.539"	0.427"	0.475"
Winchester Ranger 69-gr.	2,895	0.949"	0.819"	0.840"	0.869"

Average 0.599"



# OUT OF THE BOX

## STAMPEDE – BERETTA'S NEW SIX-GUN

By Sam Fadala

A fair assessment of a product includes a negative side to balance the teeter-totter of opinion. And so I pondered over the less favorable aspects of the new Beretta Stampede single-action revolver until tiny beads of sweat formed on my brow. But I could not come up with a single black mark.

Pretty? No. Rainbows are pretty. The new Beretta is sunset beautiful. More importantly, appearance translates from vision to handling. The revolver settles into the palm the way 16th century swordsmen admired — like holding a bird, not too tight to strangle, nor too loose to fly away.

Of course it's a replica. The Stampede bears the fingerprints of Sam Colt from grip to muzzle. Available in calibers .357 Magnum and .44-40, my test copy arrived in .45 Colt. It was a pleasure to shoot with

Winchester, Federal, and Remington factory ammunition. My groups averaged 1.25 to 1.50-inches center-to-center at 25 yards. The revolver will do better in the hands of a more gifted handgunner.

The new six-shooter comes with a separate safety manual, compliments of lawyers salivating on the sidelines waiting for a mishap to sue over. So the rules are enumerated, such as *Usate munizioni appropriate* — or in English: Use Proper Ammunition. The trigger broke (with a hint of creep) at 3 pounds, 1 ounce testing with the Lyman Electronic Trigger Pull Gauge. Cowboy Action fans will find this about right, as I did.

All metalwork on my test gun was stainless steel — somewhat flashy for my taste, but now and then a fellow has to think young, like having the white letters show on

### TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Model:	Stampede
Manufacturer:	Beretta USA
Barrel Length:	7½ inches
Capacity:	6 rounds
Caliber:	.45 Colt
Overall Length:	13 inches
Weight Unloaded:	2.45 pounds
Construction:	Stainless steel
MSRP:	\$498

the outside of your new pickup truck tires, which I just did. Sights are barleycorn front with top strap notch rear. Remarkable what can be accomplished with such simple aiming devices when ordinary shooting is the name of the game. Adjustable target sights would champion tighter groups, but with the sacrifice of dimming the 19th century flair of this Colt copy.

Precision manufacturing provided flawless mechanical performance, including cylinder removal with a touch on the base pin latch that let go of the base pin like a flicking snake tongue. Of course there is a transfer bar. If this is the result of producing a “lawyer’s dream” I say Bravo Beretta! There is no reason for any sidearm built in the latter 20th into the 21st century “going off” when dropped, even if it’s replica.

*Editor’s note: We all appreciate firearms designed with safety in mind, however informed, careful gun handling is essential regardless of the firearm used.*

Of course we’re told that desperadoes and lawmen of the Wild West loaded only five rounds in their six-guns because they were such careful and caring lads. I suspect that when life and limb were in the balance a six-shooter held a full compliment of ammo. Beretta says, “Repeat step five (inserting a cartridge into the cylinder chamber) until all chambers are loaded.” I loaded five rounds only because I wanted five-shot groups, which is a norm. But six are allowed.

The Stampede comes in barrel lengths including 4¾ inches, 5½ inches, and 7½ inches. Mine was the latter and it balanced like the scales of justice. This is a nice revolver that will attract anyone interested in a large bore single-action replica six-gun.



### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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# NEW PRODUCTS

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## New Taurus Knives From Benchmade

Taurus and Benchmade have partnered to produce a new line of folding knives. The Taurus Tracker Manual and the Taurus Full Auto will each be limited to a production run of 1,000. The Tracker features a 3.25-inch black steel Tanto-style blade with 40 percent serration and a companion two-inch silver slip-jointed utility blade. The Full Auto has a 3.5-inch

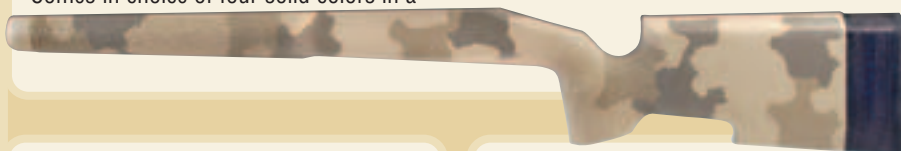
black spear-pointed steel blade with 40 percent serration, a buffered full automatic action and a safety lock to prevent accidental blade release. Contact Taurus International, 16175 NW 49th Ave., Miami, FL 33014, phone: [305] 624-1115, FAX: [305] 623-7606, Website: [www.taurususa.com](http://www.taurususa.com)



## New A-5 Stock From McMillan

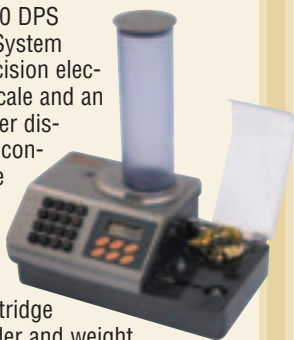
McMillan Fiberglass Stocks introduces the new A-5 stock for tactical rifles. Key features include a wider forend for a more stable prone and off-hand position with a vertical pistol grip, an ergonomically designed comb for a more comfortable cheek fit and a redesigned butt hook. Comes in choice of four solid colors in a

textured painted finish and in molded camouflage and matte finishes. Contact McMillan Fiberglass Stocks, 1638 W. Knudsen Dr., Ste.101, Phoenix, AZ 85027, phone: [623] 582-9635, Website: [www.mcmfamily.com](http://www.mcmfamily.com)



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## Safari Binoculars From Steiner

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## 42mm Series Binoculars From Minox

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### Assisted Technology Knives From SOG Specialty

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### New .45 ACP From CZ America

Adco Sales and CZ America announce the arrival of their new Model TT .45 ACP semi-automatic pistol. The convertible nature of the design will allow for the TT to be converted to 9mm Luger and .40 S&W calibers. Key specifications include an overall length of 7.63 inches, height of 5.86 inches and a barrel length of 3.77 inches. The weight is just over 28 ounces and it has a 10-round capacity magazine. Other features include an automatic firing pin safety and manual safety lever. Contact Adco Sales, 4 Draper St., Woburn, MA 01801, phone: [781] 935-1799, FAX: [781] 935-1799, Website: [www.czamerica.com](http://www.czamerica.com)



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.44-40. I had broken my rule of never being in a hurry. I spotted the gun, hastily made my decision, and then paid the price.

The bargain sixgun proved to have an Italian cylinder and grip frame. The action parts all needed replacement. By the time I got through having Peacemaker Specialists rebuild, refinish and replace parts I had basically discarded everything except the main-frame and the barrel. I did wind up with a first-class sixgun, although it cost me as much as if I had purchased a brand-new Colt. At first, I thought the dealer had been at fault. After observing him over the past couple years I now believe he simply took that gun in on trade and probably did not even know what he had.

At the other end of the spectrum, I once found a S&W Highway Patrolman that had been converted to .44 Special by re-chambering the cylinder and fitting a four-inch Model 24 barrel. The price was ridiculously low and definitely looked too good to be true. When I questioned the dealer he related the guy he acquired it from said it wouldn't shoot. Other than the fact the barrel was bright blue and the balance of the gun the typical Highway Patrolman satin blue finish, I could see nothing wrong with it and certainly nothing that would cause it not to shoot. I purchased it with the idea of returning it if indeed it did not shoot.

I left the show, headed for the foothills, and proceeded to routinely hit spent shotgun shells at 35 yards, but only after I adjusted the sights. Apparently the former owner did not know what the two screws in the rear sight were there for. I never took it back but instead had the whole sixgun refinished so everything matched. It is one of my best everyday working revolvers.

Passing up an especially good-looking sixgun until one has seen everything guarantees that gun will be gone when you return. Pre-Model 19 Combat Magnum Smiths are very difficult to find. Now here was one in the second aisle and at a good price. I thought to myself I would just look around a while before making my decision. By the time I got to the next aisle, and decided to go back, it was already too late. Someone else had not made the same mistake I did.

I should have learned by that episode, however it took one more before I was cured. This time I passed up an extremely rare second-generation Colt New Frontier .44 Special. This time I had a reasonably good reason for passing up the bargain. I had no money. This revolver belonged to someone I knew, who later said I should have told him and I could have taken it and paid him later. Everything turned out fine with this episode as he found another one later and this time I did not hesitate.

There are great bargains to be found at gun shows if one shops carefully and pays close attention. Most tables have their firearms neatly arranged so they can be easily seen. This was not the case on the table I found before me. There were several

dozen sixguns, however instead of being placed in any kind of order, they were just piled on the table, some on top of others. I spotted the grip frame of a Flat-Top Ruger sticking out of the pile.

As I looked among the other guns, the barrel just kept going, stretching almost across the entire pile. It was not a standard 4½-inch Blackhawk, it was not even a 6½-inch Blackhawk. What I had before me was an extremely rare 10-inch .357 Magnum Ruger Blackhawk.

The price was unbelievably low and there was no hesitation, nor bargaining on my part this time. It turned out to be an extremely rare one of 50 with 8-groove

rifling. The finish was worn to the point of it not being a true collector's item so I did not hesitate to have Qualite Pistol & Revolver re-blue it and replace the front sight blade. It has proven to be an excellent shooting .357 Magnum and an example of Rugers we'll never see again.

Gun shows can provide education, a feast for the eyes, bargains, and even occasionally being taken. Contrary to what some politicians would have us believe, they are not the place where criminals buy their guns. May gun shows always be with us.



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## GUN SHOWS: GETTIN' BURNT AND FINDIN' BARGAINS

**F**irst day of school: September 1945. First job: Unloading freight from trailers and boxcars. First kiss: A gentleman never tells. First love: 6th Grade, Nancy Cacioppo, and she never knew I existed. First trip to town all alone: 1948 to see *The Three Godfathers*. First car: 1949 Ford Club Coupe, a V-8 that would literally fly. First firearm: Marlin .22 Mountie levergun.

First Real Date: Dot, I married her! First big game hunting trip: Idaho, Bear River, large Muley buck. First child: Sheryl, my joyous first born. First grandchild: Elyse, just graduated from high school and so artistically talented. These are all special times and events most of us remember. Somewhere in this list goes the first trip to a gun show.

Mine came in the mid-1950s at the Ohio Gun Collectors Meeting held at the Swiss Club in Canton Ohio. This was back when even local gun shows were really gun shows. No flea market items, no junk labeled as antiques, no one trying to sell beef jerky or clean your glasses, no old toys, no jewelry, no cheap swords and knives labeled, "Your Choice \$15," nothing at all except firearms.

Only a decade away from World War II, and less than a century removed from the end of the Civil War, resulted in everything from cap and ball revolvers through first-generation Colt SAAs and pre-war S&W double action sixguns, as well as many tables filled with military rifles and pistols. Today, local gun shows are forced by economics to include all of the above-mentioned items that were nonexistent items at gun shows of my youth.

After nearly a half-century of attending gun shows I've finally learned a few things. Some came quite painfully, others joyfully. Every gun show is slightly different, however these attributes remain.

It's a fact guns never look as good at home as they do at the show. Maybe it's the lighting, or the excitement of finding a long searched for revolver. Perhaps a lower than normal price tag results in one allowing his guard to be let down. Then maybe again it's the razzle-dazzle that some dealers, (fortunately it's only a very few), try to perform to cover up any deficiencies.

I have a thing for nickel-plated, pinned and recessed S&W sixguns. The last two I bought were reasonably priced and looked awfully good on the table. Why did I not notice the scratches until I got home? Even so they were still bargains.

Never, never, ever attend a gun show in a hurry. Not having enough time results in two things. Either great bar-

gains or great firearms or both will be missed or overlooked, and that hastily purchased bargain may prove to be not such a good buy after all. Both have happened to me more than once.

Most dealers are totally honest, but not all. I was somewhat surprised to find a copy of *GUNS* magazine opened to my article on John Linebaugh's Super Sixguns. The reason for the display was the revolver that was placed on top of the article. When I questioned the dealer about it he informed me that that was the very revolver used in the article. As I handled the big .500 I said, "That's interesting. I wrote that article and not only is this not the gun I used, it's not even a Linebaugh product!" He had been caught, and stammered something to the effect that he was just watching the table for somebody else.

"Oh, what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive."

At a later gun show I found a Great Western .44 Special. The dealer could not remove the cylinder pin so I could see down the barrel, however the price was so low I told him I would take it, however I did want him to pull the pin first so I could see exactly what I was getting. When I finally went back to pick it up it was gone and his partner said he told him that I didn't want it. I knew only one other person in the place that would have it, I found him, and eventually wound up with it.

Fortunately I had a new barrel and cylinder to replace the original parts completely eaten up by black powder blanks. The entire story of this episode and the subsequent rebuild will be found in a future Sixgunner column in *American Handgunner*.

The price marked is not always the selling price as most dealers are willing to bargain. One young fellow had a like new three-screw Ruger Blackhawk .41 Magnum for sale. I offered \$50 less than the asking price, and he countered with he would have to call his dad first. I gave him a quarter to go use the pay phone, and while he made the call, I watched his table. He came back with "dad says okay," so subtracting the quarter I still saved \$49.75.

One regular fellow specializing in Flat-Top Rugers is awfully hard to deal with. His prices are his prices. He simply would not budge on the tag price for a .357 Magnum. "Okay! I will take this gun but how about coming down one dollar so I can feel like I got a bargain?" He smiled and cut the price a buck. One year later found me purchasing another Flat-Top Ruger from his table while someone else was watching it for him. When he returned, he tracked me down and gave me back, you guessed it, one dollar.

If a gun looks too good to be true it usually is. A few years back I related in *American Handgunner* my experience in purchasing a third-generation 7½-inch Colt SAA



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