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MARCH 2003

GUNS
MAGAZINE

GUNS

FINEST IN THE

S&W 386PD

.357

MAGNUM

**Kimber
84M
Takes On
Alaska**

**Taffin:
Cimarron
"Originals"**

**Threat Response From
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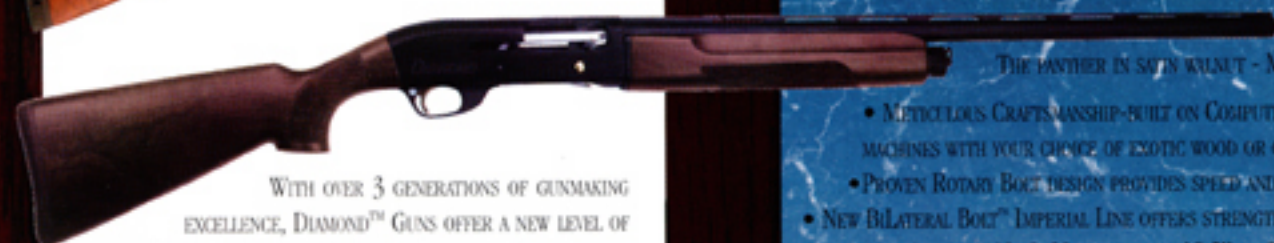
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By Jim Gardner

Photo by Ichiro Nagata

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GUNS

MAGAZINE
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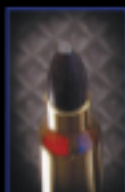


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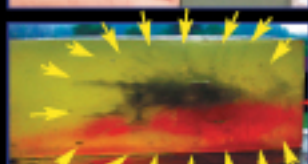


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GUNS MAGAZINE
JANUARY 2003

CROSSFIRE

LETTERS TO GUNS

GUNS MAGAZINE™ welcomes letters to the editor for "Crossfire." Send your letters to:
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Letter Of The Month

I have always found your magazine to be very informative and especially helpful due to the fact that I have been handloading since 1973. As I was examining your January, 2003 issue, reading along in my usual serious manner, I read the article "American Classic" by Glenn Barnes.

When I came to the sentence where he said he had no velocities to report, as he "inadvertently shot his chrony," I nearly choked. I haven't laughed so hard in months.

You see, I've also had my share of "boners" in my day, and it gave me a warm feeling to know I am not alone. I want you to know also that I sincerely appreciate his honesty, as we are *all* humbled from time to time.

P.S. keep up the good work!

Gerard F. Naravas
Whitehall, Pa.

Satisfied Customer

Thanks *GUNS* Magazine for turning me on to El Paso Saddlery Co. I have had two holsters and one knife sheath made by them. They take their time, but the quality is unsurpassed, as is the leather they use.

They also have a most interesting catalog. It gives a history lesson about some of the holsters they make. They have been around since 1889, so I figure they should know history.

Thanks again!

T. Doherty
Apache Junction, Ariz.

Dissenting Opinion

Unfortunately, gun writers occasionally pontificate on a subject they know little about simply because it is related to firearms. Jim Gardner's column (Hurrah! Good News from USRAC) in the January '03 issue is an excellent example of profound ignorance.

He maligns the new safety system design of the present day Winchester lever action rifles. He makes reference to the automatic rebounding hammer and hammer block as well as the manual cross bolt hammer block.

He describes them as "lamentable," "essentially useless," "unsightly blight," etc., etc.

He finds the old safety notch system to be simple and trouble free and concludes, "anyone with the mental acuity to tie his own shoes could figure out how to manage this correctly." Apparently Gardner is ignorant of the large number of accidents that have resulted from this old 1894 design.

No question that it was an efficient and handy killing instrument. Unfortunately, this design was prone to a very large number of accidents. Of course, if everyone did the right thing every time, we would have no accidents including car accidents. Unfortunately people are human and make human mistakes.

I have investigated approx. 1,000 firearms cases involving injury or death. Most involved an accidental discharge. I found that the old design Winchester lever action rifles had a grossly disproportionate number of such accidents. On the other hand, no accidental discharges with the new design Winchester lever action rifles have come to my attention. *Not one.* The new design appears to have dried them up.

Gardner complains that one can easily and accidentally place the cross bolt safety *on*. My thought is that it should have been on to begin with. It is not a problem to learn to remove a manual safety as one is raising a rifle to the shoulder. This is especially so if one has "the mental acuity to tie his own shoes."

Stanton O. Berg
Via e-mail

Thanks Dave!

Please take note of and pass along my compliments to Dave Anderson for his recent article "You Never Had It So Good" (*GUNS* December, '02).

Very well done. I've passed it along to everyone I know and encourage them to read it and think about it. I'm a "fifty something", life long hunter, shooter, and collector, who, in retirement, works part time as a clerk in a firearms store in northern New England.

I constantly hear and at times have thought and said myself the things that Anderson brought out in his article. He did an

exceptional job of putting it all in perspective. Bravo, Dave, and thank you for, at least, putting these size 13s back on the ground.

Herb Lathrop
Via e-mail

Pleasant Memories

I was given my Stevens Favorite at the age of 12, in 1948. I still have this great rifle. Mine is a .32 rimfire.

This was no problem when ammo was still available. In fact the .32 was better at bringing down squirrels than a .22 LR. It would be nice to still be able to enjoy shooting this fine old rifle. Your fine article convinced me to subscribe to *GUNS*.

Thanks for rekindling some great memories.

Herb Dunham
Via e-mail

Ready To Write The Check

Great article on the SV98! But I have one question.

You listed caliber options, type of action, barrel length, weight, etc., and even pictured the rifle's designer in the article. You showed groups at 100 meters of less than 1/2 inch. But you do not tell me the name of the importer or the price.

If you're going to do an exclusive article on such a firearm, please tell us somewhere in the article that although you had access to it for review, that it is not available to American shooters.

James Gibbons
Cottage Grove, Minn.

Reader Gibbons is correct in his assumption that the SV98 is not for sale in this country. Regrettably, our government has decided the SV98 may not be imported. If we failed to make this clear in the article, we apologize. Hopefully, readers will have found David Fortier's review of this interesting rifle enjoyable for its own sake.

Editor



CAVES ARE DARK, BUSINESS IS GOOD.

Special Forces operators are using SureFire WeaponLights in Afghanistan to clear the caves and bunkers that Al Qaeda terrorists use to hide. No other flashlight has the rugged construction, shock-isolated lamps and dazzling bright fighting light. All SureFire WeaponLight systems are NVG compatible with IR filters to give the operator total dominance of the darkness.

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The M900 Vertical Grip along with an M871C tactical light both attach to a Picatinny rail forend like this S.I.R. System from ARMS. A SureFire L12 visible laser in a front sight mount is the best tactical laser for any M16-family weapon.

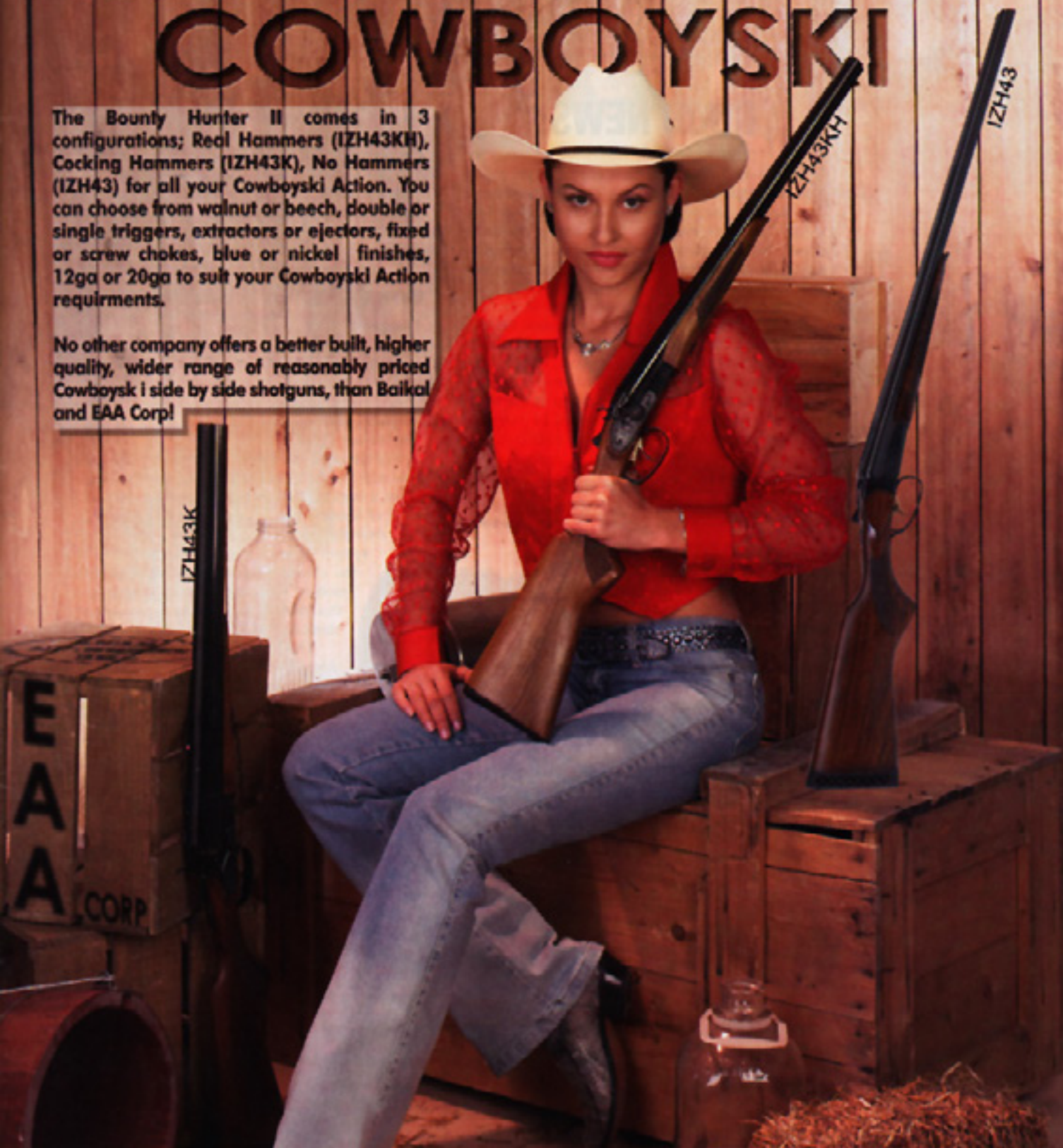


The Millennium Universal System is a modular, upgradeable tactical light system that can be configured for mission-specific requirements. Shown here is a TurboRed version with a Sure Group click-on tailcap switch.

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The new Hornady .17 Magnum Rimfire has swept the shooting world. The ultra-high velocity of this newest magnum translates into flat-shooting fun in the field and on the target range. The .17 HMR takes up where the .22 Magnum leaves off and the field-proven Ruger 77 series is a perfect platform, offering the accuracy and reliability Rugers are famous for.

The aura of the double barrel shotgun is reduced to its essential elements with the Ruger Gold Label Side-By-Side. Virtually an instant classic, this classically styled, distinctly American shotgun kindles visions of pheasant fields and eager pointers. Experts are already calling it "affordable old-world craftsmanship" that you can buy over the counter.

Kimber re-wrote the book on 1911 design. When introduced, Kimber's 1911 pistols rapidly made their name known on the competition circuit and in the self-defense arena. Kimber's manufacturing tolerances account for the performance of their 1911 pistols and the newest — the Eclipse — takes it a step higher with eye-catching features that embrace the technology behind the design.

All in all, this trio would put a final period on anyone's collection.

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HANDLOADER

BY
CHARLES
E. PETTY

Charles E. Petty began his handloading career at the age of 15 with the purchase of a used Lyman Tru-Line Jr. press. Forty-five years after loading that first .38 Special cartridge, Charlie remarks, "It's a lot of fun."

Loading Down

A long time ago, I owned a car that was capable of going a whole bunch faster than any speed limit. I really liked that car and couldn't help using all that power now and then. Sometimes I'd do so and get a real charge out of the speed, but a couple of times I made a new friend.

He drove a car just as fast as mine, but he had a gadget that made a very loud noise and pretty lights that flashed off and on. The lesson I learned was that while it was nice to have the power, using it was not without peril.

Likewise, I've also been present when somebody's gun came unglued because they thought the word *maximum* in the load manual was only a suggestion.

Then came a letter from a reader who was really mad at me because I had not given him a single maximum-class load. He was ticked off because the data in my story was below even the *starting* loads in his manual.

When you look at the various loading manuals, you'll often see a fixed interval between start and maximum charges. It would not be hard to think that the data is derived to find a maximum load and then arbitrarily reduced by some predetermined amount. It might be a percentage of charge weight, or some fixed number of grains, but you'll almost always see such a pattern.

I've said this before, but my shooting is dramatically divided between work and fun. The majority of this fun shooting is done with .44 Special and .45 Colt handguns. The rifle plays a part too, but mostly is limited to .25-20, .32-20, .38-40 and .44-40 rifles or carbines.

Almost all of these are loaded with lead bullets and are generally at or below published starting loads. I've found there is often a point below the start velocities at which they shoot really well, and the reduced recoil simply means that I am going to be able to fire more *good* shots before fatigue sets in.

But just as there are risks when going up in velocity, there are also risks involved in loading down. One of the biggest is known in the industry as "BIB" which means bullet in bore. This is never a good thing, but is the inevitable consequence of going too low. All of the cartridges I've named harken back to black powder days, and have a case capacity far in excess of anything we need or even can use with smokeless powders. And here powder position becomes an important factor.

The key here is powder selection. I have yet to see a powder that does not show some effect related to powder position in the big cases, but some are better than others. To a large degree, cowboy shooting has driven things down toward more modest velocities, and when I began to get serious about shooting some of the oldies I did quite a bit of testing with non-typical powders in the .45 Colt.

One part of this testing was to see if there was a propellant that would work well without leaving so much air space in the case. For that reason I chose powders that were slower and bulkier. The results came as a complete surprise.

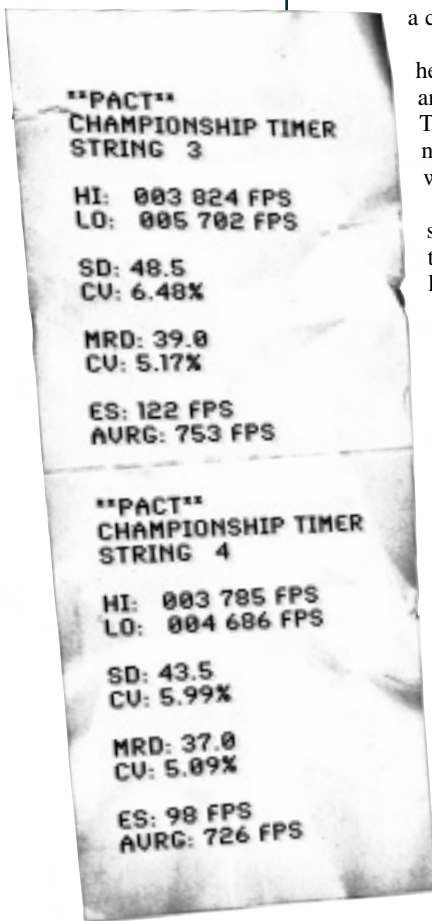
For example a charge of 9.3 grains of N-350 left a little less than 0.25 inch of air space under a 250-grain cast bullet. The powder position test involved simply pointing the revolver straight up and then lowering carefully to shooting position. The reverse was then done.

With the powder back against the primer, the average velocity was a happy 795 fps. But with the powder forward in the case, there was a velocity decrease of 274 fps. This is an example, but similar results were obtained with several other "slow" powders. Even the old standby Unique showed a loss of over 140 fps. for a comparable velocity charge.

For some time now, my standard .45 Colt load has been 5.5 grains of Titegroup with a 250-grain cast bullet. That averages about 750 fps in normal shooting and showed a loss of only 27 fps when fired with the powder settled to the forward end of the case. Even old standbys Bullseye and 231 showed substantial drops.

We should work *down* in velocity with the same care as when we're working up. The best clue to watch for is an overly sooty case. This is an indication that pressure is so low the case is not obturating to completely seal the chamber. It'd hard to predict where this will occur, but it will almost surely be before you stick a bullet in the bore.

So to my critic I'd say that I would much rather tell you all about something original — or at least different — than just perform *me too* exercises that are already available in all the manuals.



5.5 grains Titegroup, 250-grain RNLP cast bullet. First string with powder at the rear of the case, second string with the powder at the front of the case. With this Titegroup load, the difference in average velocity is only 27 fps. With a load of WW 231, I've seen a difference of 163 fps!



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Insight Technology's M3

Like the fashion world, the gun community is subject to fads — features or accessories that become common almost overnight. Some of these disappear as quickly as they arrived, being found lacking in usefulness. For example, in the '60s and early '70s, it was hard to find a revolver without a trigger shoe attached. You seldom see them today. Lack of genuine benefit, combined with a certain safety hazard doomed them.

The hottest fad in autopistols today is a dovetail on the frame's dustcover to mount a "tactical" light. I don't think we'll see this particular fad disappearing anytime soon. One of the most popular lights for this use is Insight Technology's M3 "Tactical Illuminator."

The M3 is a 6-volt light, with both momentary and constant-on switching. It produces a brilliant beam, which may be focussed to throw either a tight spot or a wider flood beam. Once attached, the M3 adds a scant 3.15 ounces to the weight of your handgun.

The M3 slides easily onto the mounting rails of Glock, Springfield Armory, SIG, S&W and other pistols so equipped, and locks firmly into place. Removal is just as easy. Simply press down on the two release tabs and pull the light from the frame. Because all mounting rails are not identical, an adapter may be required. See Insight's Website for details.

While the M3 is intended primarily as a weapon light, I've seen a few savvy operators wear them on a special belt clip. Carried thusly, they may be snicked off the belt clip in a heartbeat for use as



a hand-held light, or instantly attached to a pistol. It's a pretty clever arrangement.

Furnished without batteries, the M3 retails for \$135.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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Technology...Accuracy...Performance

QUARTERMASTER

BY JIM GARDNER

Lyman Classic Rifle Dies

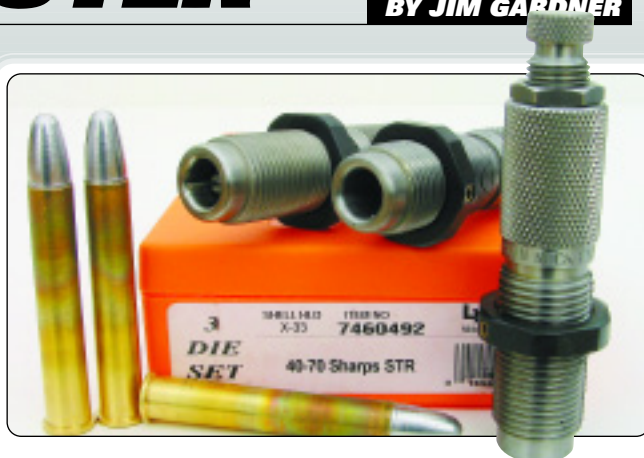
Those who shoot the various 19th century black powder rifle cartridges have a great friend in the Lyman Products Corporation. J.H. Barlow's innovative bullet casting and reloading tools, later sold under the Lyman Ideal label, have been producing good ammunition for well over 100 years.

Lyman's Classic Rifle Die sets are both superior quality and a great bargain. For example, when I recently required a die set for the old .40-70 Sharps Straight cartridge, I priced available products. A set of RCBS .40-70SS dies from my normal supplier (Buffalo Arms) was priced at \$128. By contrast, the Lyman Classic die set is available for a modest \$39. Quite a difference!

So are the Lyman Classic dies a lesser grade product? Don't believe it for a minute! Beautifully machined, the set includes two seating stems for round nose or long range spitzer bullets, and Lyman's unique "M" die.

The "M" die, used to expand the case mouth after resizing, uses a two-diameter expander plug. The minor diameter opens the case to the ideal dimension to provide a proper grip on the bullet, while the short, major diameter section opens just the very mouth of the case to accept the bullet easily, without shaving. It's ideal for cast bullets, and yet works perfectly with jacketed projectiles too.

Case forming is a good test of reloading die quality. I used the Lyman Classic set to form a batch of .405 Winchester cases into .40-70SS brass. This required a heavy reduction of the case all the way down to the rim.



The Lyman dies, mounted in my Corbin S-press, accomplished this task without undue effort, and the resulting cases showed no scratching or rough spots. Proof positive of the dies' excellent interior finish.

Lyman Classic die sets are available in .40-65 WCF, .40-70SS, .45-90, .45-100, .45-110, .45-120 and .50-90. They're a first-class bargain.



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QUARTERMASTER

BY JIM GARDNER

Old West Reproductions

We've pictured the outstanding leatherwork of Rick Bachman in *GUNS* Magazine several times in the past year. Perhaps better known as Old West Reproductions, Bachman makes cowboy leather gear of the first order. But his talents are not limited to leather for Colt SAAs and Winchester lever guns.

Bachman also crafts a limited line of modern carry gear, as well as period type holsters for such "modern" guns as the Colt 1911. I recently received an order from Rick, and enclosed with it was a holster and magazine pouch for the big Colt auto.

The holster, which Bachman lists as his Model 105, is what might be called a "Texas jockstrap" pattern. It's identical to those used by many a Texas Ranger and other border lawmen in the early decades of the 20th century. The Herman Oak leather is just the right weight, and Rick set the snap strap at the correct length to allow "condition one" carry. The color is a beautiful, rich reddish brown.

As with the period holsters it duplicates, the 105 exposes the trigger. *Do not* carry your 1911 in this holster with a chambered round unless you have perfect discipline in regards to keeping your finger straight and clear of the trigger guard until your sights are on the target.

The double magazine pouch is just as nice as the holster. It's glove soft, and features the most elegant arrangement of the twin belt loops I've ever seen. The pouch is constructed from three artfully cut and stitched pieces, and it simply could not be nicer.



Bachman built this pouch to accommodate original style magazines without base pads, but on special order, he can build it to suit your specific magazines.

I've been using Bachman's leather gear for perhaps 15 years, and find it to be truly superior. Call for a catalog (\$5), or check out the Website.



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HANDGUNS BY MASSAD AYOUB

The *Real* Ladies Gun

For too long, women were told that if they wanted to carry a sidearm they needed a “ladies’ gun,” usually a tiny .22 or .25 automatic with so little power it might or might not stop a charging gerbil. Then the trend moved toward the small .38 Special revolver. The snubnose .38 became a classic “ladies’ gun” for modern times.

Smith & Wesson’s first “LadySmith” since the 19th century became a roaring success in the 20th century based on the Chief Special, 2-inch barrel, five-shot, .32-frame revolver. There would be other LadySmiths, including the neat little 3913 LS compact 9mm autopistol.

But Smith & Wesson has sold far more short barreled .38 Specials in conventional Chief Special, hammer shrouded Bodyguard, and “hammerless” Centennial configurations than anything of the other models to which they gave the feminine appellation. When Colt made a “ladies’ model,” they built it on the small D-frame revolver, with a 2-inch barrel, in caliber .38 Special.

Those of us who shoot a lot — competitors, firearms instructors, “serious students of the combat handgun” — can’t help but notice that with the hottest loads, the small .38 has a nasty recoil and is hard to shoot accurately at significant distances. There are those who have said that because of these factors, the snubnose .38 is a bad choice for women.

I beg to disagree. And so do a huge number of that legion of the fairer sex who choose to go armed, and who seem to have taken the snubnose .38 as their collective handgun of choice.

Voting With Their Feet

“Shall issue” concealed carry legislation has swept the country. It is the strongest wave of victory in the gun owners’ civil rights movement. It amazes the opponents of gun owners’ rights how many of the people applying for concealed carry permits are women. And the instructors who train and certify those women for those concealed carry permits are telling us a huge number of those ladies are shooting their qualifications with the guns they intend to carry: short barrel, small frame .38 Special revolvers.

The women of America know what they want. After a lifetime of getting ripped off by men in male oriented things like estimates on automobile repairs, they’ve learned to check things out on their own and not take a man’s word for what women need.

They appreciate that they can shoot pistols like the Browning Hi-Power and the 1911 .45 and the Glock and the S&W 3913 better than most men realize. They also realize that they can carry a short, light revolver a helluva lot more easily within their daily wardrobe and dress code restrictions than they can even a compact alloy-frame .45 automatic.

Tactical Points

Gun dealers tell me the single most popular carry gun they’re selling to women is the lightweight .38 Special, 2-inch revolver with snag-free configuration, such as the S&W Centennial Airweight. Yes, it kicks enough to hurt your hand. Yes, it will be one of the toughest guns for you to “qualify” with on the 15 to 25 yard line of a police-style shooting course.

However, the women who buy them for daily carry have no illusions about being involved in across-the-street shootouts. They’re worried about the mugger who is within arm’s length or maybe even closer when they have to defend their lives.

Women get tired of carrying big guns. The woman with whom I spent 30 years of marriage could count on her annual or biannual gift of what her husband thought was a cool self-defense pistol. She wound up with enough high speed, low drag, often highly customized semiautomatic pistols to outfit a small police department. The HK P7, a Behlert Mini-Custom S&W Model 39, a Trapper custom “bobcatted” Colt .45 auto — the list goes on.

It was always, “That’s nice, dear.” She’d carry it for a week to placate me, and then go back to one of her Colt .38 snubbies, either the engraved Detective Special or the lightweight Agent with hammer shroud and Barami Hip-Grip that fit neatly into the waistband of her beltless slacks.

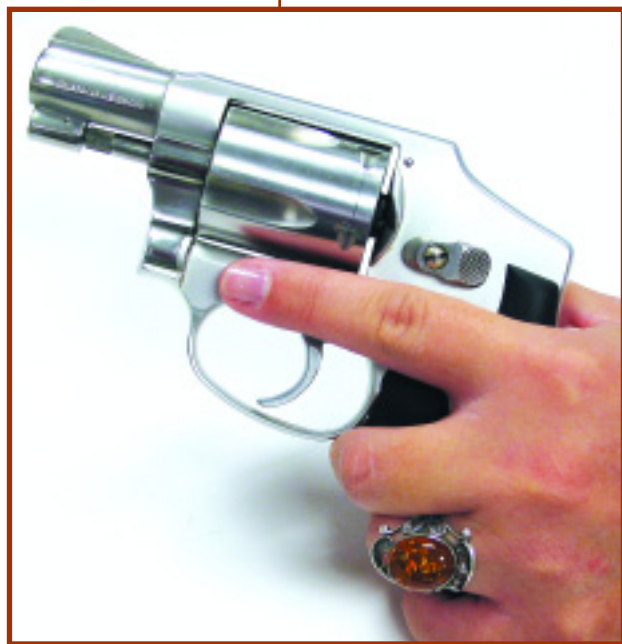
No Surrender

Male criminals tend to be misogynists. The man who would surrender to *him* at gunpoint would die rather than go to prison with it known that he had surrendered to *her*. He is more likely by far to attack and attempt to disarm a woman. More than 20 years of teaching handgun disarming and retention has taught me the hardest gun to take away from its legitimate owner is a 2-inch barreled revolver.

With a shrouded hammer, this is also the only gun a woman can fire through a coat pocket without a hammer or a slide fouling in fabric and stopping her stream of fire.

Ideal for shooting all day at a training school? No. Ideal for concealed carry in real world circumstances? Yes.

The snubnose .38 revolver with snag-free hammer might just be the best choice for the defensive problems an armed woman in this society is most likely to face.



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SHOTGUNNER BY HOLT BODINSON

Wild World Of Chokes — Part Two

Who first invented the choke-bored shotgun barrel?

We will never know for certain, but two men were more responsible than anyone for bringing the design into widespread use by the end of the 19th century. They were Fred Kimball of the United States, and W.W. Greener of England.

Fred Kimball was a professional market hunter, who plied his trade along the Illinois flyway shortly after the Civil War. Searching for the ultimate 80-yard duck gun, Kimball experimented with choke-boring single barrel, muzzleloading shotguns. Around 1870, he reported that his choke-bored barrels could deliver 100 percent patterns into a 30-inch circle at 40 yards — a degree of choke that even Kimball professed might be a bit too tight for waterfowling.

That giant of the English gun trade, W.W. Greener, was also aggressively pursuing choke design at the time. It is reported that Kimball sent Greener one of his barrels for testing purposes. Whether that exchange

galvanized Greener further or merely confirmed his own findings is unclear. That the two men were in communication is intriguing. The rest is history. By the last quarter of the 19th century, choke-boring was well established both here and abroad.

Let's take a look at what we mean by choke.

Choke can be expressed either as the degree of constriction from nominal bore size, or in terms of the efficiency of the pattern at 40 yards.

The chart shows some commonly accepted parameters for the efficiency of various chokes delivering a percentage of the shot charge into a 30-inch circle at 40 yards. These figures are useful for 10,12,16 and 20 gauge guns.

For the 28 gauge, consider these levels of performance good for 30 yards and for the .410, between 25 and 30 yards.

What is fascinating about chokes is the degree a pattern can be changed with even the slightest amount of constriction. In a typical 12-gauge barrel, the difference in constriction between a cylinder or Skeet No. 1 choke delivering a 25 percent pattern and a modified choke throwing a pattern of 55 percent is approximately .020 inch.

Take seven pages of this *GUNS* magazine and squeeze them together. The thickness of those seven pages is approximately equal to the constriction of a modified choke in a 12-gauge barrel. In short, a constriction as slight as seven pages of *GUNS* Magazine can possibly increase pattern efficiency by 100 percent. Double that number of pages and the thickness represents approximately .040 inch, or the constriction of full choke in a 12-gauge bore. Now pattern performance has jumped from 25- to 75-percent!

Full Choke	65 to 75 percent
Improved Modified (3/4 Choke)	55 to 65 percent
Modified (1/2 Choke)	45 to 55 percent
Improved Cylinder, Skeet No. 2, (1/4 Choke)	35 to 45 percent
Cylinder or Skeet No. 1 (No Choke)	25 to 35 percent



Why Does A Choke Work?

Visualize that column of shot flying down a uniform diameter bore. The column has achieved a certain diameter and length. Then the column is squeezed down in the choke constriction. The outer layers of shot are accelerated and compressed inward. The diameter of the shot column is decreased and its length increased, and the compression exerted by the outer layers helps to hold the shot column together once it slams into the atmosphere.

Furthermore, and often less appreciated, is the fact that the constriction of the choke retards the shot wad so that the shot column is less affected by the trailing wad once it leaves the muzzle.

All of this as the result of a very modest constriction of the shotgun's bore over a very short distance. If we lived in a perfect world and could match our choke constriction ideally to the nominal bore size of our shotgun, we *should* achieve the pattern percentages widely assigned to the various chokes.

It doesn't work out that way.

Patterns are greatly affected by such variables as shot size; shot hardness; gauge size; pressures and ammunition in general. But that's a topic of a future discussion.



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And, for gun collectors, the most fitting way to show our "Home State" pride is with a custom-gunsmithed, museum-quality firearm that proclaims, honors and commemorates your place in America through your roots to your Home State! And this custom-gunsmithed **SUPERMagnum** does this in a BIG and POWERFUL way!

Fires Three Calibers

Because of its massive superstructure, this Dan Wesson can handle the super-high-pressure loads of **SUPERMagnum** .44S. But, with no modifications or adjustments, it also fires .44 Magnum and .44 Special. You can load the massive cylinder with any combination of these three cartridges, in any order, and you're good to go.

Custom Gunsmithing

Your family, friends and fellow aficionados won't soon forget this powerhouse, captured in blue steel, 24-Karat Gold, custom etching and American Walnut, with special, custom-gunsmithed features:

- The name of your Home State is boldly etched in deep bas relief and set off with custom-designed scrollwork along the massive 10-inch barrel shroud. Your Home State's familiar nickname is etched in deep bas relief along the heavy full-length underlug. Both are selectively plated with 24-Karat Gold.
- The golden silhouette of your Home State is deeply etched in two places across the custom, unfired (for ultra strength) cylinder, and plated with 24-Karat Gold.

- Your Home State's date of statehood, and the "One of One Hundred" confirmation, are deeply etched and plated with 24-Karat Gold along the frame.
- All the 24-Karat Gold plating is to Jewelers Grade-Heavy thickness, your guarantee of lasting value and beauty.
- The Official Seal of your Home State in beautiful, full-color, fired-enamel cloisonné is hand inlaid into the deluxe-finished American Walnut grip.
- The Dan Jordan Trooper Grip is custom made by the renowned firm of Herrett's, deluxe finished to high gloss, en suite with the revolver.
- All steel surfaces are mirror-polished by trained gun polishers, and custom high-temperature blued to a deep, high-gloss black.
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a small deposit, monthly payment plans are available and major credit cards are accepted.

Your satisfaction is guaranteed or you may return within 30 days for a full refund.

Add to your collection the "One of 100" **SUPERMagnum** Limited Edition that honors your Home State by simply calling Member Relations today or tonight. This BIG, POWERFUL firearm is a symbol of your patriotism, your values, and your presence—immortalized in steel—a BIG and POWERFUL and symbol of your pride in your Home State!

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Satisfaction guaranteed or return within 30 days for a full refund. Yes, please enter my reservation for the Limited Edition Dan Wesson **SUPERMagnum** .44S, "One of 100", which honors my home state indicated below. I will also receive a Certificate of Authenticity attesting to the edition limit, special Registry Number and purity of the 24-Karat Gold plating. Satisfaction guaranteed or return within 30 days.

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The Model 673 is reminiscent of the original Model 600, .350 Rem. Mag.

What's New From "BIG GREEN?"

By Charles E. Petty

Each fall, Remington, AKA "Big Green," invites writers and editors to visit them to learn about the products to be introduced in the coming year. We get to try out the newest releases, but even more importantly, we get to talk to the project managers and ranking executives. The sales pitch is very subdued and highlights the benefit of the new product.

I've been going to these things for quite a few years and always learn something. It's also very helpful to have a chance to talk to the engineers who designed the products. This year the seminar was held at the lovely Bienville Plantation, in White Springs, Fla.

This time, in contrast to the last few years, there were no major new firearms or cartridges, but there were still a number of interesting developments, with ammunition in the forefront.

Premium Bullets

One of last year's announcements that has been greatly expanded is the new line of Premier Core-Lokt Ultra bullets. It's a combination of Remington's older Core-Lokt jacket design with a bonded lead core.

The combination gives both good expansion and weight retention with truly

exceptional accuracy for a game bullet. I saw some groups shot with Ultra Mag cartridges loaded with the Core-Lokt Ultra bullet that would have been bragging size for varmint rifles.

One of the biggest things for shotshells has been the arrival of Hevi-Shot — a proprietary alloy of tungsten, nickel and iron that is 10 percent heavier than lead. It eliminates some of the drawbacks of steel shot for waterfowl hunters. This line has been expanded to include several turkey loads and even an impressive buckshot load with nine pellets of 00 buck cast from the Hevi-Shot metal.

Remington's New Model 332



Bad News For Bucks

Also in shotshell is a round Remington calls "BuckHammer" which is a new approach to shotgun slugs. It is described as an "attached sabot" slug. The slug weighs 1¼ ounces, and fits into a very clever one-piece combination wad and sabot that encloses the base of the slug. The lead itself is radically different from previous designs and has a completely flat meplat that measures .575 inch. After expansion in the target, it looks like a 1-inch flat lead washer.

Accuracy seems to be quite good, and a jug of water just about disappears when hit with this load. Stated velocity is 1,550 fps. It's meant only for use in rifled barrels or with a rifled choke tube.

New Shotguns

Last year Remington brought back the 16 gauge in the venerable Model 870 pump, so there was suspicion they might do it again with the Model 1100 semiauto. And so they did. The 16 has a small, but vocal, following who are sure to love this, and I can personally testify that it does an admirable job in the quail field.

The other shotgun that completely won me over is Remington's new 332. A 12-gauge O/U, the 332 felt really great, and performed splendidly in the quail woods. Remington has been wrestling for several years with O/U shotgun design, and the resulting 332 is a winner. If you gather I'm very enthusiastic about this new shotgun, you're quite correct, and I'll be working on a detailed report soon.

This year Remington joins the .17 HMR club with both a Model 597 rifle chambered for it and new ammo. Remington's cartridge is loaded with a 17-grain V-max bullet at 2,550 fps. I had a chance to shoot a good bit of this, and accuracy on plinking targets out to 100 yards was very satisfactory and the rifle functioned flawlessly. They have also added a .454 Casull load with a 300-grain JHP Core-Lokt Ultra bullet.

The .350 RM Comes Back

Two rifle additions also result in the resurrection of a couple of fine old cartridges to Remington's ammo line. First is the .300 Savage which will be the Classic Rifle for 2003. The other comeback is the .350 Remington Magnum for the new Model 673 Guide Rifle.

You may recall the older Model 600. The new Model 673 looks a lot like it. The rifle is based on the Model 7 short action, and has a 22-inch barrel with the characteristic rib and iron sights. The package weighs only 7½ pounds. The .350 Remington Magnum was once described as the first short action magnum, and the present load will be a 200-grain Core-Lokt at 2,775 fps. The Model 673 will also be available chambered for the .300 Remington Short Action Ultra Mag cartridge.



The R3 recoil pad really impressed Petty.



Core-Lokt Ultra premium game bullets.

Smart As Heck

I confess the item that impressed me the most was just a recoil pad. The word "revolutionary" is badly abused, but this may qualify. If not, "smart as heck" would surely be right. Remington calls it the R3 and it is an exclusive from Sims Vibration Laboratory using material they call NAVCOM (noise and vibration control material).

The R3 designation comes from a unique three step action.

1. Absorbs vibration.
2. Redirects energy.
3. Compresses under recoil.

When you view the pad in cross section, these functions are easily seen. The material is a relatively soft, rubber-like elastomer that dampens vibration. Inside are two "mushrooms" which redirect energy in a 360 degree range. They are isolated from the sides and bottom of the pad, so they come into contact with the solid base of the pad and can then expand radially in all directions.

Most recoil pads just act as cushions and cannot focus energy in any other direction except straight back. The third, compression, element is common to many pads but the internal construction allows it to compress significantly while retaining the customary thickness of around an inch.

Remington's R&D center in Elizabethtown, Ky., spent a significant amount of time verifying the benefits of the R3 pad. Computers, accelerometers, and



New BuckHammer sabot slug.



To see The Cooper Rifle which fired the three shot "test group" shown here, please see page 31.



NEW Match Grade Ammunition

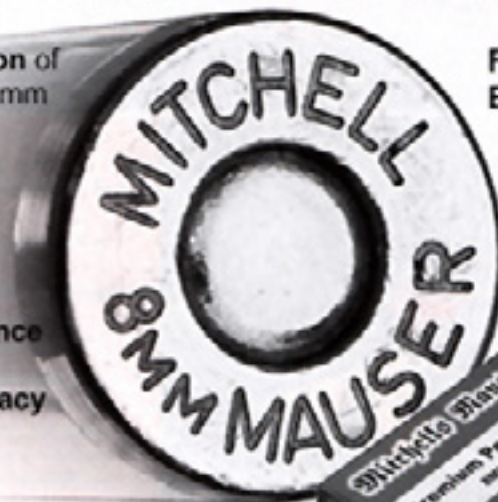
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strain gauges were employed to measure the amount of recoil transmitted to a solid surface representing the shooter's shoulder. We're used to hearing free recoil energy expressed in ft/lbs., but their method allows the measurement of the actual pound force transmitted over time.

If you look at a graph you can see that the recoil force transmitted is reduced, but the time element is also slowed a bit. The net effect is to distribute a reduced force over a longer time period — although it's still measured in milliseconds. Their tests showed a reduction in felt recoil of from 25 to 50 percent depending on the cartridge.

Obviously there's some high tech science here but I saw a much more pragmatic demonstration. Remington had two identical rifles chambered for the 7mm Short Action Ultra Mag cartridge. One had the standard pad and the other the R3 pad. It was a no-brainer. The new pad significantly reduced the thump my shoulder felt.

The actual recoil of the gun is obviously unchanged and muzzle rise was equal with both pads, but my shoulder could really tell the difference when shooting these rifles one after the other. We often hear recoil described as either *sharp* or as a *push*. And that's exactly how I would describe the difference here. Remarkable.

The new pad is going to be standard equipment on some Remington guns in the coming year, and is also available for retrofit on most of their composite stocks. The material cannot be used on wood stocks at this time since it's too soft to be sanded as is required when fitting to a wood stock. It's always hard to predict which new products will fly and which won't, but this new R3 pad is a shoo-in.

Another Winning Year

As I've discussed the new stuff with folks back home and also with other writers, there seems to be a lot of appreciation for the new 673 and return of the .350 Remington Magnum. Several remarked that Remington's addition of a heavy barrel, Sendero pattern rifle chambered for the 7mm SAUM was most welcome.

Hevi-Shot was a huge hit last year, so it's sure to find favor with turkey hunters. Even though it's costly stuff, they don't need many rounds for the season so cost shouldn't be a drawback. Hunters in shotgun-only states will really like the BuckHammer or some of the other slug loads that will be coming along.

Some registered surprise that there were no new additions to the line of short action Ultra Mag cartridges. Actually, I was surprised as well, but I don't think we'll have to wait too long.



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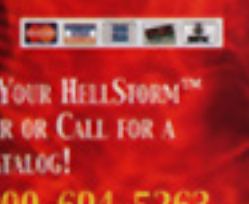
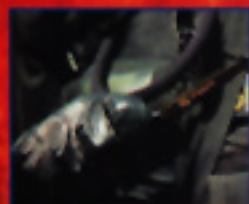
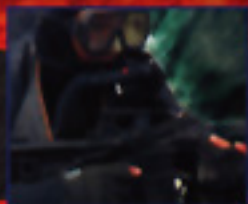
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DER

By Clint Smith



MVA sights are Smith's choice. (Below): Buffalo-stopping bullet shows no expansion but did the job.

The secret is out. Tactical icon Clint Smith has a dark side.

"Black Powder is dirty, smelly, smoky and a mess to clean up." My response to that statement...Yes it is! It's also a part of history, accurate, effective and flat fun to shoot. After 30 years of smokeless powder, black nylon, and tactical ninja stuff, the loading and shooting of black powder cartridge rifles is some of the best shooting fun I've had. In all honesty, it wasn't that way in the beginning.

If my first attempts at loading and shooting my Sharps rifle had been a set of golf clubs I would have thrown the whole thing into the lake. It was so bad my wife Heidi cringed at the thought of going to the range to spot for me. Standard statement for the day was "no call" as rounds sprayed the range berms from top to bottom. The safest thing on the range was the target.

After enough growling and swearing to make a truck stop sound like church social, I found some relief at last.





My friend Mike Venturino, who we fondly refer to as the *Yahmee Salami* of black powder, helped to put me out my misery and bring my wife out from her hiding place under the bed.

Mike patiently taught me the fundamentals of bullet casting and black powder cartridge loading. Mike's teachings brought me such pleasure, I thought I would share them with you. Here is what I learned, practiced, and now do to take myself out of the realm of the being the "World's Biggest Black Powder Dummy."

Selecting Your Rifle

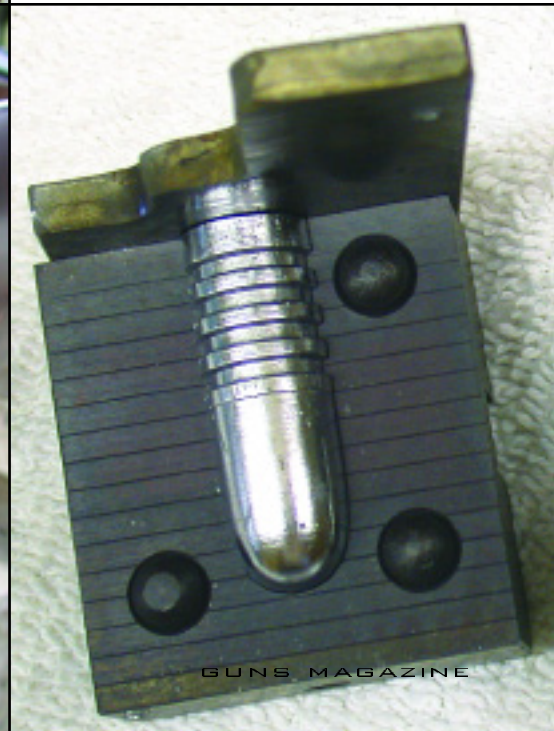
There are many black powder cartridge rifles on the market. I could not afford an original Sharps. Also, I wanted a rifle with a perfect bore — for shooting — not collecting. I choose a modern-made Shiloh Sharps, and in my opinion, this is as close as you can get to the real thing. In the past, Shiloh Sharps had a pretty large backlog or waiting period, up to four years at times. Wonder why?

A couple of points... the wait is currently much shorter, and there is a reason for the waiting list. I've never regretted my selection of the Shiloh and you *do* get what you pay for, waiting list or not.

Caliber

For me, caliber selection was never a question. The .45-70 is historically correct for the black powder cartridge era and the bison hunting period I have an interest in. It's by far the easiest of these period cartridges for which to get cases, dies, bullet molds and all of the other support pieces and parts.

As my knowledge grew and I got braver, I went up the power scale and acquired another Shiloh Sharps, this one chambered for the .50-90. Although in the past it was more difficult to find components for the .50-90, businesses such as Buffalo Arms Co.



now easily solve problems like cartridge case and die acquisition for even the big or exotic calibers.

Buttstock

I selected and would strongly recommend a shotgun butt configuration. Options available are steel crescent, steel military and hard rubber shotgun butt. On a rifle used for hunting, the traditional steel shotgun butt is not susceptible to breakage like a hard rubber buttplate, and the flatter angle of the shotgun butt is more comfortable for long strings of fire encountered while practicing for the big hunt or chasing the wily steel chicken.

Barrel Length

I have two rifles with 26-inch barrels and one with a 30-inch barrel. I've used both barrel lengths successfully for hunting and target work. Purists may be concerned about the historical correctness of the short-barreled rifles. As far as being correct, there are documented orders dating from the hide hunting era for original Sharps rifles of .50 caliber with a 26-inch barrel. The shorter barrel length is very handy in a hunting rifle, although it may be less than ideal for shooting regulation BPCR steel target matches.

Sights

Any way you cut it, the quality of the rifle's sights directly affects the rifle's potential. You can make the best ammunition going and have a good barrel, but you can't hit what you can't see. I recommend the Montana Vintage Arms sights without reservation. In my opinion, they're the only way to go.

MVA sights come in different configurations for different kinds of work. My wife Heidi uses the Scheutzen sight with the shorter staff, which works very well, on her hunting .45-70 Shiloh Sharps.



I have a set of mid-range sights mounted on my 30-inch barreled .45-70 Shiloh, and use it for hunting. It's successes include a laser-ranged, 200 yard, one shot drop-in-their-tracks New Mexico antelope hunt in August of 2001. If you're going to use iron sights, buy MVA the first time and save yourself money and lots of aggravation.

Component Selection

Shooting black powder cartridge rifles means handloading your own ammunition. There's no need to be frightened off by this. It's a simple process. In some ways, far more simple than loading for modern smokeless cartridges, although there is generally a little more work involved.

Most of those who shoot these old-time rifles also cast their own bullets. This gives you the ultimate control over the shape, diameter, weight and hardness of your projectiles. Again, it's a simple process, but there are commercial sources for excellent quality cast bullets if you don't care to dive into this. I can tell you though, there is a spe-

cial satisfaction in dropping a game animal or tagging a distant target with bullets you cast and ammunition you loaded.

I personally learned the hard way, but now without fail I drive a soft lead ball through the bore of every new rifle I come in contact with *before* I ever fire a round through the rifle. Slugging the bore ends countless hours of aggravation trying to get undersized projectiles to work in oversized bores. You *must* acquire or make a projectile that fits the bore of your rifle. I prefer a bullet at least .001 inch over groove diameter.

As in all the rest of this black powder stuff, my approach to loading ammunition is a simple one. I use a single load in each of my calibers. In my .50-90, I use a 665-grain Postell shaped bullet dropped from a custom Steve Brooks mold. These bullets are lubed with SPG and sized to .512 inch.

For my .45-70, I use a 520-grain round nose projectile, also from a Steve Brooks mold. The .45 is similar to a Lyman 457125 mold, and is lubed with SPG and sized at .459. For those of you not familiar with Steve Brooks and his exceptional molds, he has been the Black Powder Cartridge Rifle national champion several times and he knows his stuff.

Bullet Alloy

There can be discussions or even arguments about what mix of lead to use in casting bullets. I use one part tin to 20 parts lead (1:20). It's a fairly soft alloy, but it's hard enough to leave no leading in the bore and has worked well on game. One thing I would not do is to use lead wheel weights and scrap lead.

Some may advocate a 1:30 or even 1:40 alloy for a softer bullet that may expand better. With the large diameter of the projectiles I use, I don't feel bullet expansion is necessary.

With both the .50 and the .45, I have taken bison, elk, antelope, white-tailed deer, axis deer, fallow deer and turkey. In some cases there may be a question of too much projec-



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tile or load, but in all candor I have not had to chase any of these animals after the shot.

Cartridge Cases

Many cartridge case makes are available. In .45-70, I use Winchester brass, and for my .50-90 I use Bell cases, which I order from Buffalo Arms. After firing, I de-prime the cases and clean them in a mixture of water and Simple Green cleanser. After air-drying the cases, they are tumbled and polished for reuse.

Primers

I use Federal 215M primers. Primers can greatly affect the accuracy of black powder cartridges. I have always used Federal primers and they have worked well for me.

Wads

Soft cast bullets are generally loaded with a card wad on top of the powder charge. Some use hand-cut milk carton material or other substitutes as wads. I use a pre-cut, vegetable fiber wad made by John Walters with great success. They come in different thicknesses but my personal selection is a .060-inch wad.

The one strict caution is that the wad *must* touch both the powder and the base of the bullet, in other words, no air space. Failure to observe this precaution can cause scoring or ringing of the chamber, damage to the rifle and or the shooter. *Remember, no air space!*

Powder Choices

I started loading with Goex Cartridge grade powder and it works very well for me, with chronographed extreme spreads of less than 10 fps in ten round strings being common. I have also used Swiss 1½ grade powder and it too is a very consistent powder. Compared to Goex, the Swiss load is a nominal 100 fps faster. Experiments prove the Swiss powder burns a little cleaner, leaving less residue in the barrel. Regardless, I continue to use Goex Cartridge grade powder as my standard load.

You'll notice I've not given specific powder charges. This will vary depending upon the bullet and cases used. Because we cannot tolerate an air space in the cartridge, the proper charge is one that fills the case. Best results are usually obtained with a load that is compressed slightly by the bullet.

Seating Depth

Personally, I cover all the grease grooves of the projectile, but some folks feel they get better results leaving some grooves exposed. My preference is based on the fact that I hunt with these rifles and do not want to pick up debris on the exposed grease grooves, which may in turn foul the chambering of the cartridges. When you have a 2000-pound bison at 80 yards, it is a poor time to have chambering problems... especially if his tail is up!

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Model 21 Varminter in .223 caliber shown - test target at right. Also available in .17 Mach IV, .17 Rem., .19/223, Tactical .20, .221 Fireball, .222 Rem., .222 Rem. Magnum, .223 Rem., .223 Rem. Ackley Improved, .22 PPC and 6mm PPC. Bolt action single shot, three front locking lugs.

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Loading

Loading black powder cartridges is not a speedy process — at least the way I do it. I never load and do other things at the same time. I always set up and load 100 cartridges at one setting. After sizing and priming all cases, I then pour my powder charges through a long drop tube. Hand seating a .060-inch over powder wad comes next.

After all 100 cases are charged and covered with a wad, I use a single stage press to seat the projectile. The newly completed cartridges are wiped to remove any lube residue, and then placed into an MTM cartridge box that is marked with the date, powder charge and projectile weight.

Loading Tools That Work

Calgraf Design has some outstanding products, of which my favorite is their Adjustable Powder Pour device to load consistent charges of black powder in your cases. Made of oak, maple and brass, the device eliminates static electricity concerns, which can cause big booms to occur with black powder outside normal firing modes.

The APP delivers uniform charges time after time through the brass drop tube, which helps "stacking" of the powder inside the cartridge case. Powder charges fall reliably within two tenths of a grain. I have also used a Lyman No. 55 powder measure with the extended drop tube for some loading and it works very well.

Time To Shoot

Armed with perfect cartridges, we're just about ready to head for the range. Before we dirty up that beautiful rifle, let's talk about cleaning.

The new black powder shooter or someone considering taking up the sport is often overly concerned about cleaning. Patches damp with a mixture of water and Simple Green are my choice for cleaning the rifle's bore. I prefer to do this right at the range. After returning home, another quick cleaning followed by an oily patch through the bore is more than enough to adequately clean the rifle. It's really no big deal.

Related to cleaning is the necessity of keeping the black powder fouling in the bore soft. If allowed to accumulate and harden, this can destroy the accuracy of our carefully prepared ammunition. A blow tube is a device used between shots during range work to soften the black powder fouling in the bore and chamber of the rifle.

Constructed from a partial cartridge case and some sort of tubing, the case is inserted in the chamber between shots and the shooter blows a deep lung full of air slowly through the tube. The moisture contained in the breath is enough to keep the fouling soft.

At the range, I shoot my Sharps from the bench at 100 yards to zero the rifle and get the base line sight settings. If your interests are more in line with shooting steel competition, your approach will be different.

continued on page 71

SECRETS OF A PROFESSIONAL SHOOTER



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Battle Sight Showdown

Story By David M. Fortier Photos By Emily K. Fortier

Trijicon's ACOG Takes on Canada's ELCAN

During the Great War, Imperial Germany fielded Scarfshutzen (Sharpshooters) equipped with optically sighted rifles. These early and relatively crude optical gun sights gave German sharpshooters an edge in the trenches. This was due to the fact they gave a magnified and improved sight picture in good light.

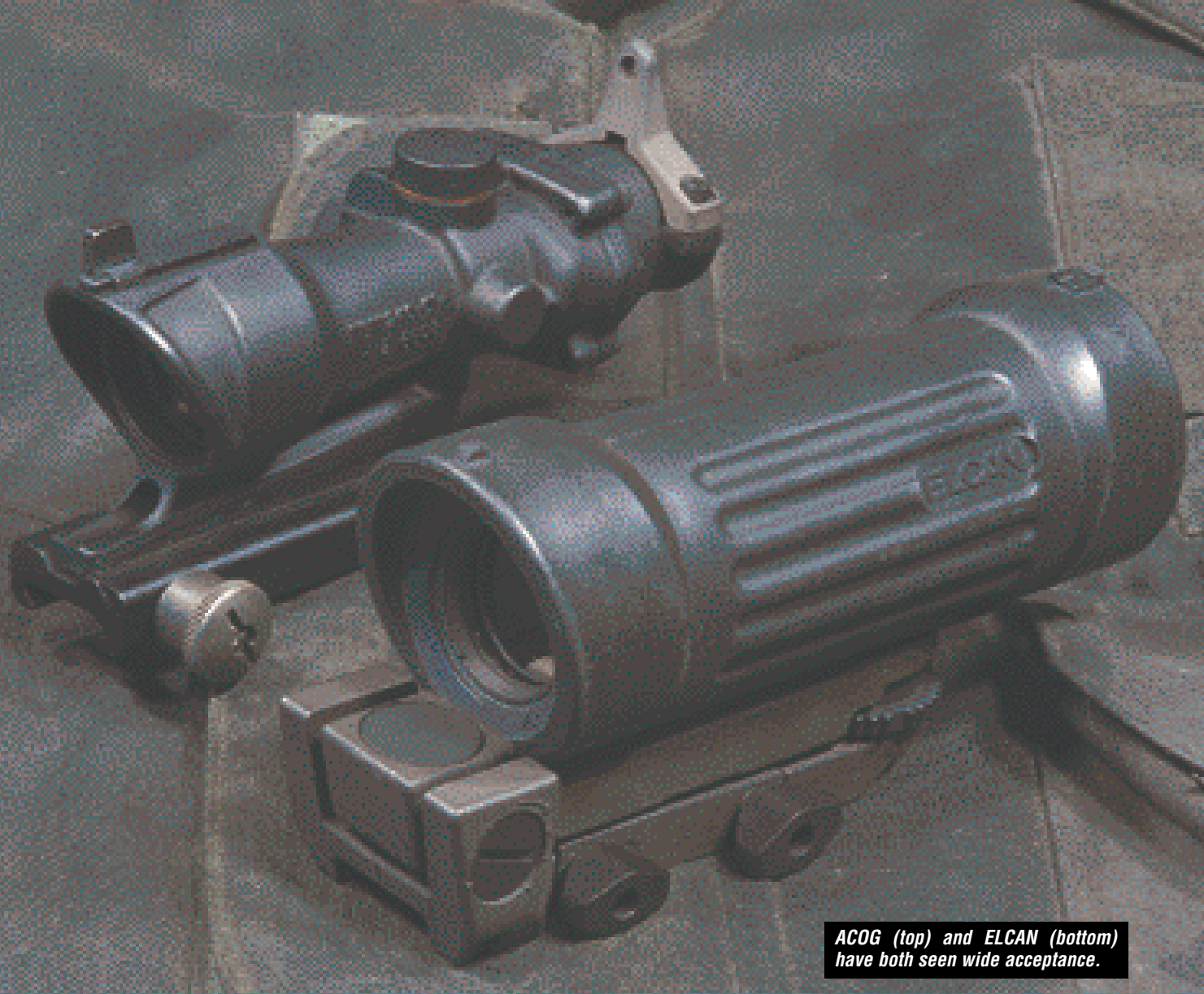
More importantly though, they allowed the engagement of targets in low light where iron sights were useless. Over the years, specialized optical sights have been developed and issued to snipers, and now are starting to

become standard issue on many of the world's combat rifles. Austria, England and Canada are just a few of the countries whose standard issue combat rifle is topped with an optical sight.

With this growing proliferation of optical sights for combat rifles, your correspondent decided to toss two of the better known units into the ring and see which one would come out on top. The sights chosen were Trijicon's TA01 NSN 4x32 ACOG, and Canada's ELCAN. This model ACOG was chosen by the U.S. Special Operations



*As heavy — but also as tough — as a brick,
the ELCAN performed well during testing.*



ACOG (top) and ELCAN (bottom) have both seen wide acceptance.

Command (SOCOM) as standard issue for all Special Forces units. The ELCAN is standard issue on the Canadian C-7 combat rifle. Both these sights are current military issue and are being used in combat in Afghanistan.

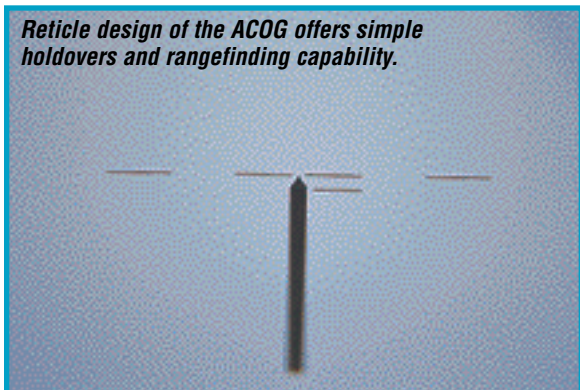
Leitz ELCAN

An extremely robust unit, the ELCAN is manufactured in, of all places, Canada. ELCAN itself is an acronym for Ernst Leitz Canada, its original manufacturer. I contacted ELCAN Optical Technologies master distributor, Armament Technology, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, to obtain a test sample.

Upon hearing of my desire to evaluate an ELCAN optical sight they provided me an example, with the latest GEN-4 mount, which I subsequently purchased.

Examining an ELCAN, the first thing one notices is its size and weight. The outside diameter of the rubber covered tube is some 2.25 inches. From the front of the mount to the rear of the tube is approximately 6.5 inches. Tossing our test unit onto a scale showed it to weigh slightly over 1.5 pounds. Construction is, to put it mildly, over built. This scope was obviously designed with the clumsiest raw recruit and harshest combat conditions in mind.

Reticle design of the ACOG offers simple holdovers and rangefinding capability.



The simple picket reticle of the ELCAN is quick to pick-up and easy to use.



During testing, the ACOG proved to be an excellent performer and had a slight edge engaging targets past 300 yards.

Specifications

	ACOG TA01 NSN	ELCAN
Magnification	4x	3.4x
Field Of View	7 degrees	8 degrees
FOV at 100 yards	36.8 feet	42 feet
Objective lens diameter	32mm	28mm
Exit pupil diameter	8mm	8.5mm
Overall length	5.8 inches	6.5 inches
Weight	9.9 ounces	1.54 pounds
Ballistic compensation	100-600 meters	200-800 meters
Illumination	Tritium	Beta light
Approximate Retail Price	\$1,125	\$783

Physical Dimensions

The unit itself consists of a chemical resistant, rubber covered tube affixed atop an integral mount. The unit features 3.4x magnification and a huge 8 degree FOV. Objective lens diameter is a compact 28mm while the ocular lens is a whopping 38mm. Exit pupil is an impressively large 8.5mm. This is larger than the eye's pupil can dilate to, indicating the potential for impressive low-light ability. The lenses are multi-coated to enhance light transmission as well. Eye relief is just under 3 inches.

The reticle is mounted on an inclined plane to reduce its reflective signature to modern battlefield scanning devices. This increases the rifleman's survivability on the modern battlefield. The reticle itself consists of a floating "picket" or post and 5 horizontal stadia. The uppermost triangular part of the post is illuminated via Beta light and glows green in low light. Aiming is performed with the very tip of the post.

Ranging Capability

To either side of the top of the post are two horizontal stadia. Each stadia is 10 Mils long and spaced 10 Mils apart. There is one additional horizontal stadia to the right of the post slightly lower, but parallel

to, the upper stadia. The space between these two stadia is 76cm at 300m, or roughly the distance between a man's head and his belt buckle at 300m.

The reticle is designed for simple, yet effective fire, at normal combat distances. A rudimentary rangefinding capability is provided via the two parallel stadia. To use, an operator simply brackets a standing figure between the two lines with the bottom of the top stadia touching the top of the figure's head. If the bottom stadia is above the figure's belt he is within 300m. If the stadia touches his belt he is at 300m. If the stadia is below his belt he is further than 300m. If the stadia is at his feet he is 600m away.

Once the range has been determined, the proper elevation can be dialed into the mount, the tip of the post put on target, and the shot fired. In the event of scope failure, or if its lenses are obstructed by mud or snow, there are small rubber emergency sights on top of the tube. These consist of a tiny square notch and a corresponding post.

Zero And Sight Adjustment

The lower part of the unit contains the scope adjustments and base. All zeroing and ballistic adjustments are made via the base. The base itself is robustly constructed from heavy cast aluminum. Windage adjustments are made via a large

screw at the left front of the mount. Turning this screw clockwise moves the point of impact to the right. Adjustments are 1/4 Mil (not 1/4 MOA!) which equates to .91 inch per click at 100 yards. Clicks are solid and very precise.

Elevation adjustments are made via a horizontal thumbwheel at the rear of the mount. This features a bullet drop compensator calibrated from 200 to 800m in 100m increments. The most common model available is calibrated for the NATO 62-grain SS109 5.56x45 load. Another model is available calibrated for the 147-grain NATO 7.62x51 for use on AR-10s or FALs. Rotating the thumb wheel to the right adds elevation.

When zeroing, the unit is rotated all the way to the left, to the 200m position. This is also referred to as the "port" position. The silver colored port is pushed up with a bullet tip or screwdriver to unlock it. The rifle can then be zeroed at 100 yards. With the port unlocked, turning the thumb wheel moves the point of impact 1/4 Mil (.91 inch at 100yards) per coarse click. Once zeroed, simply close the port by pushing it down to its locked position.

The base is designed to mount onto the Picatinny rail on top of any AR-15/M-16 flat top. It features two sturdy thumb-screws on the left side. These allow the unit to be locked solidly in place or easily

removed if so required. All in all, the ELCAN is a tough and well-designed piece of kit.

Trijicon ACOG

At the exact opposite end of the spectrum to the ELCAN is Trijicon's ACOG. Highly respected for their premium optics, Trijicon's wares are selected by many professionals, including our Special Forces. Their TA01 NSN is a lightweight and compact gunsight, featuring a forged 7075-T6 aircraft aluminum alloy housing, hard-anodized to match the receiver of an M-16 rifle. The unit is a very compact 5.8 inches in length and weighs only 9.9 ounces. It is, without a doubt, the sexiest of all optical gunsights.

The unit features 4x magnification and a large 7 degree FOV. Objective lens diameter is 32mm. This generates an impressive exit pupil of 8mm. Again, this is larger than the eye can dilate, and the lenses are multi-coated to enhance performance. Eye relief however is a stubby 1.5 inches. The reticle consists of a "christmas tree" with thick crosshairs that turn fine in the center.

Holdovers and rangefinding are provided on the vertical stadia for engagement out to 600 meters. Each holdover line corresponds to 19 inches in width (average width of a man) at that distance. To facilitate this, the reticle pattern is parallax free along its vertical axis. In addition, the reticle is Tritium illuminated for use in low light.

Determining Range

The ACOG's reticle is designed to be both fast and simple to use. The scope is zeroed at 100 meters using the elevation and windage dials. Adjustments are .33 MOA per click. Once zeroed, the caps are reinstalled and no further adjustments are required. To use, an operator simply determines the correct range by placing the reticle's horizontal lines between the target's shoulders.

Selecting the line that matches the target's width will determine the range. This line then becomes the correct aiming point for that range. Estimate wind and fire. In the event of scope failure, the backup iron sights provide a usable sight picture. These consist of a rugged post front sight featuring a Tritium insert for use in low light, and a large ghost ring rear. The optic can be mounted onto an M-16's carrying handle or the Picatinny rail of a flattop. The ACOG is a rugged, lightweight, and compact optical gunsight.

Putting Them To The Test

To evaluate these optical sights they were run head to head against each other mounted onto a Rock River Arms Elite LE Tactical CAR A4 carbine. The units were used on the range and in the field, shooting targets at both known and unknown distances. Shooting was done under conditions of bright light, low light, and moonlight.

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Top Sixteen Comparison

The scopes were compared in 16 areas. This is how we scored them:

•**Size:** ACOG. Hands down the ACOG is shorter and smaller in diameter.

•**Weight:** ACOG. Hands down the ACOG is substantially lighter.

•**Magnification:** Toss up. The ELCAN's 3.4x is slightly superior for fast work at close range while the ACOG has slightly more magnification for those long shots. But they are so close as to not matter.

•**Objective lens:** ELCAN. The smaller diameter objective lens is less likely to reflect light. However Trijicon does offer a Tenebraex killflash for the ACOG.

•**Field of View:** ELCAN. The huge 8 degree FOV is greatly appreciated especially when engaging movers or when trying to locate targets at close range.

•**Eye Relief:** ELCAN. The ELCAN offers twice the eye relief of the ACOG.

•**Ease to Zero:** ACOG. The ACOG is simple to zero, it's like any other scope. However, if you know the correct procedure, the ELCAN is also quick and easy to dial in.

•**Mount Strength:** Toss up. Both are sufficiently rugged for the job.

•**Back-up Sights:** ACOG. Hands down, the ELCAN's back-up sights are a joke and were designed by some pencil pusher.

•**Zero to 300 yard Performance:** ELCAN. The huge FOV and fat, quick-to-pick-up reticle gave the ELCAN an edge over the typical combat ranges at which it

was designed to be used.

•**301 to 600 yard Performance:** ACOG. The ACOG had a slight advantage at longer range due to its higher magnification and fine crosshairs.

•**Low Light:** ELCAN. The large picket reticle was much easier to pick up in low light.

•**Moon Light:** ELCAN. I found the Beta illuminated triangle easier to rapidly pick up in extremely poor light. However, the Tritium reticle of the ACOG was slightly brighter.

•**Optical Quality:** Toss up. Color rendition, resolution, and clarity of both these scopes is quite good. You may be able to see a difference with a Zeiss test chart but you won't notice it in the field.

•**Range-finding Capability:** Toss up. The ELCAN's is extremely coarse, but easy to see and simple to use, if you have a standing figure. The ACOG's is more precise, if you can see the fine lines and your target is facing properly. In low light conditions, the ACOG is superior, but to be truthful, both are fairly rudimentary.

•**Price:** ELCAN. The ELCAN can be had for quite a bit less than this ACOG model.

During testing I noted a few things. I greatly preferred the small size and light weight of the ACOG over the ELCAN. However, I preferred the ELCAN's larger FOV and bold, easy to see picket reticle. The optics of both of these scopes are quite good, but for their price they should be.

Color rendition of both units was good,

but I noted a slight hint of yellow in the ELCAN's image. I detected no rolling dispersion, barrel, or pin cushion distortion, or astigmatism in either unit. However, I did notice both images were slightly out of focus at their very edges, indicating some curvature of field. This was more noticeable with the ELCAN.

Both units mount and dismount easily, and I had no problems zeroing either optic. The ELCAN's ballistic adjustments are made in its base and this system worked fine. While the Canadian military had problems with some of their mounts, the problem has since been rectified by the introduction of the current GEN-4 mount.

Both optics gave a good, albeit different, sight picture, and I shot 4 to 4.5 inch, five-shot groups at 300 yards using both of them. Neither offers a noticeable advantage over the other as far as light transmitting capability. They both seemed about equal. So it came down to which reticle was easier to use in low light. Here again it was very close and both did the job.

Final Assessment

The end result? After throwing these two into the pit and watching them bloody each other, we came up with no decisive victor. They both have their strong points, and they both have their weaknesses. Both offer advantages over conventional iron sights, especially in low-light conditions and at long range.

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Both units are tough, simple, and reliable. However neither of them are perfect. In the end, it comes down to personal preferences. Pick whichever one you feel will best suit your needs. Then spend time with it on the range and in the field. After testing both units, I feel that either of these scopes would serve me well.



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Thoughts On The S&W 386PD

By Ichiro Nagata

Photographing firearms for *GUNS* and *American Handgunner* Magazines, I see a lot of truly fine guns in the course of a year. These days, the majority of them are semiauto pistols. I like autopistols, and shoot them regularly, but truthfully, I'm a revolver man at heart.

"I really feel this is the best factory revolver I've seen in years."

When this S&W arrived, I knew I would have to shoot it before returning it. Having done so, I can give you my impression of the revolver in four words — I love this gun! It may not be ideal for every use, but I really feel this is the best factory revolver I've seen in years.

I use the qualifier "factory" because much of my revolver shooting is with highly customized guns. One feature that really pleased me was the seven-shot capacity of this 386PD. Many years ago, I ordered and shot extensively with a custom "Baumanized" seven-shot S&W. This was and is a great competition gun, but its large, heavy N-

continued on page 44





MINIMUM MAGNUM

STORY BY JIM GARDNER PHOTOS BY ICHIRO NAGATA

Fall mornings in the desert can be pretty crisp. I left the house early, enjoying the long drive in the darkness, but now, with only a faint glimmer along the horizon, I'm ready for the sunrise. A tiny fire of dead greasewood branches warms my hands and perfumes the air with pungent woodsmoke. The barely noticeable tug on my hip comes from the flyweight S&W I've driven here to shoot.

A fit of nostalgia sends me rummaging through the truck, where I find the scuffed holster that carries my first .357 revolver. I haul it back to the fire to look at and enjoy the feel of this old piece of iron.

A S&W Model 28 "Highway Patrolman," the feel of it brings back countless memories. Thoughts of many other campfires with this old Smith at my side, and memories of a teenage kid pumping 32 cent gas to make the \$120 purchase price.

Unholstering the new S&W 386PD, the contrast is

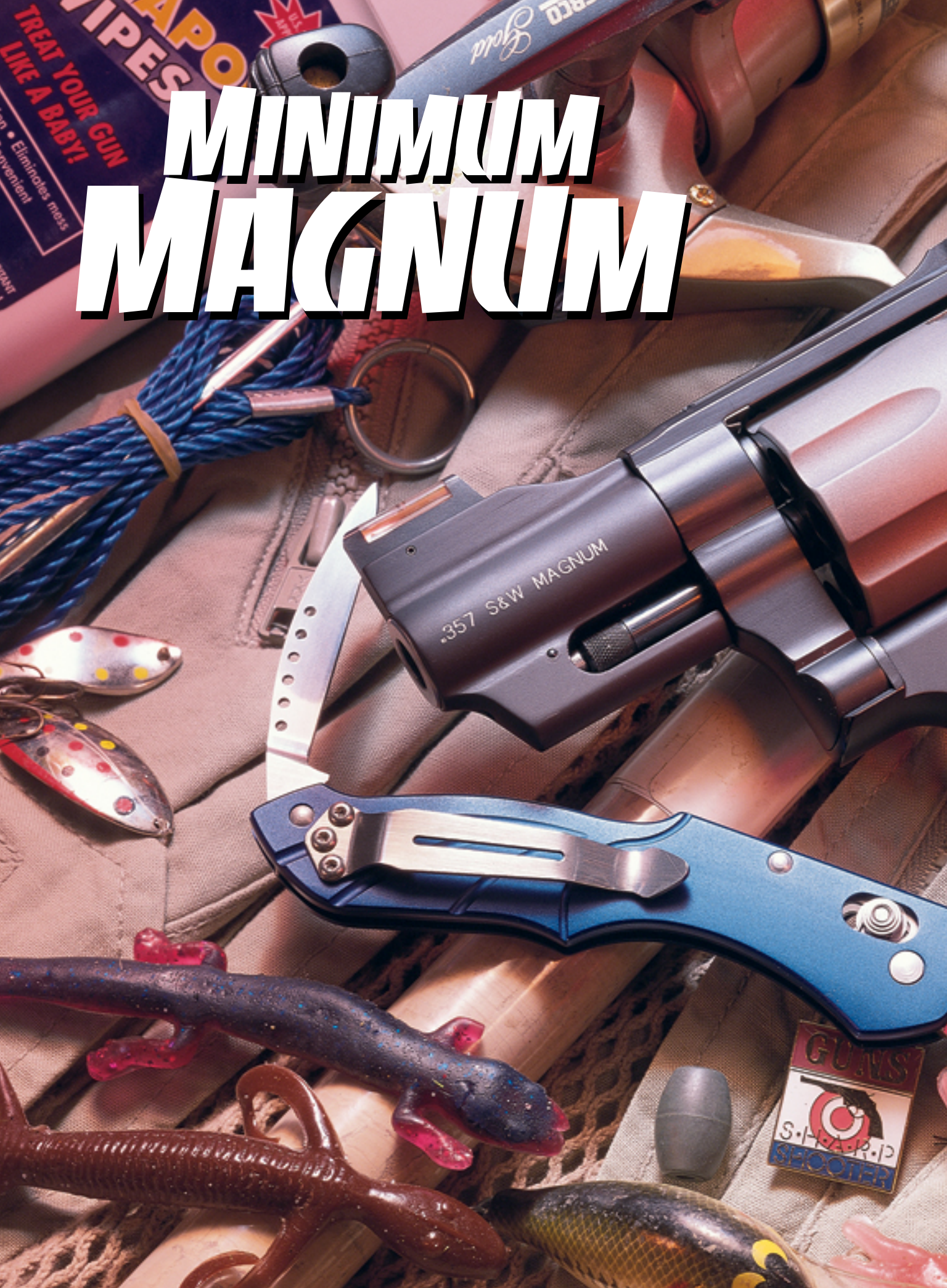
amazing. The beefy, N-framed Model 28 weighs a hefty 42 ounces. At only 17.5 ounces, the 386 is less than half as heavy.

The 386PD is a seven-shot, .357 Magnum revolver built on S&W's L-frame. The finish is subdued and non-reflective, a pleasing mix of muted tones. The rubber stocks are from Houge, and feature an exposed back-strap and very slight finger extension at the bottom of the frame.

The trigger is smooth faced, about 5/16-inch in width. It's well suited to both deliberate single-action shooting and fast double-action work. At 3/8-inches in width, the hammer spur is easier to cock than the old narrow "service" hammer, but it's not unduly large for concealed carry. Like all current S&Ws, the old familiar "hammer nose" is gone, replaced by a frame-mounted firing pin. The 386PD also incorporates S&W's integral key locking device.

***If it were any lighter...
you'd have to tie it down.***

MINIMUM MAGNUM





GUNS

MAGAZINE

ICHI'S THOUGHTS...

frame made it ill-suited for use as a carry gun.

By contrast, this new S&W is so light I easily forget I'm carrying it — until I shoot it that is. The tradeoff for such a wonderfully lightweight revolver is that recoil is very heavy with .357 loads. In my opinion, this revolver is at its best when confined to .38 Special +P loads for defensive use. Despite this, it's a comfort to know this little rocket will digest everything from soft-shooting .38 wadcutters to the hottest .357s if the situation demands it.

There are other reasons to like a seven-shooter besides the additional round. On a seven-shot cylinder, just as on a five-shot J-frame revolver, the cylinder locking notches fall between, rather than over, the chambers. This makes the gun much stronger. I may never blow a chamber, but I can still appreciate the added strength.

As to the small points, I'll let Jim Gardner tell you about those, but suffice to say I liked the shape of the factory grips also. They made the most, comfort-wise, of the K-frame grip, without making the revolver too large for easy concealed carry. Concerns? The double-action trigger pull was far too heavy for my tastes. Perhaps I'm spoiled by my highly tuned competition revolvers, but I think this 386PD needs a little action work.

Sometimes, too many words only confuse. Let me close this with simplicity... I really like this gun!





(Above): Ichiro-san couldn't resist trying the 386PD, and a hostile melon pays the price. (Below): Flyweight S&W grouped well. (J.G. Photo). (Below-left): Integral locking device offers options to parents.

Tool For Parents

While many will have no use for this feature, it's hard to turn your nose up at it. It is completely unobtrusive and can't be accidentally activated. If however, your household includes children too young to be taught the ironclad rules of safe gun handling, the locking system provides one more barrier the wise parent can use to prevent a tragedy. For this reason, it's a good addition.

The S&W 386PD is available with conventional red ramp Patridge sights, or with a HIVIS sighting system. The test revolver features the latter.

The front sight has a rounded "bead" profile, and carries a bright orange fiber-optic insert. A roughly half-inch window cut out of the front sight admits light to be gathered by the insert. This window is filled with clear epoxy. The adjustable rear sight's blade is cut with a shallow "V" notch to mate with the bead front sight.

Out of the box, the trigger breaks at 3.5 pounds in single action. It's crisp and clean, just as we normally see with S&Ws. The double-action trigger pull is heavy. It's heavier than either my static trigger weight set or my spring scale will measure.

There's no excuse for this. Yes, a new revolver must be 100-percent reliable, but S&W knows how to deliver them both reliable and at a reasonable weight of pull. They should challenge themselves to do so.

Instead of fussing around trying to measure the DA pull weight, I popped open the sideplate, trimmed one coil from the rebound spring, and substituted the ground and polished mainspring and strain screw from my old Model 19. The result was a very nice double action pull.

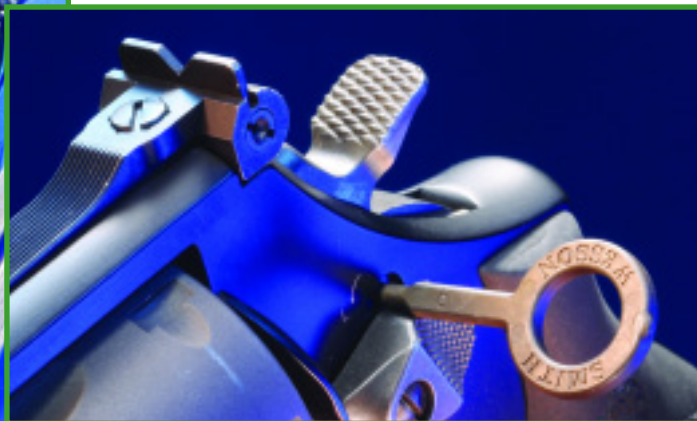


Space Age Revolver

While externally the 386PD looks quite similar to S&W swing-out cylinder revolvers manufactured since 1896, it's truly a space-age product in terms of materials and construction techniques.

The frame, barrel shroud and cylinder yoke are constructed of S&W's Scandium alloy. The introduction of small quantities of Scandium into aluminum alloys produces finer grain structure and yields a significant increase in strength. S&W commenced use of this exotic alloy in late 1999.

The cylinder of the 386PD is fabricated of titanium, while the barrel liner is constructed of stainless steel for maximum wear and corrosion resistance.



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Construction techniques used to produce today's S&Ws are no less novel than the materials. Computer Numeric Controlled machining permits the production of extremely uniform, accurately dimensioned components and minimizes waste of exotic materials. Much of the internal lockwork has been redesigned to make use of the Metal Injection Molding process. The result is highly uniform and durable hammers, triggers, rebound slides, etc., and a significant cost savings.

Affordable Quality

That last statement may bristle some consumers. New S&W revolvers are hardly cheap. Nor should they be. They're beautifully made, accurate, and a product that if used with the least bit of care may easily be passed down to your next generation. But the retail price and features of current S&Ws are the product of an equation that has labor and production costs as its bottom line.

To be frank, I much prefer older S&W revolvers. Features such as five-screw frames, pinned barrels, internal components artfully machined from forgings, the old S&W long action and brilliant bright-blued finish are enough to raise my pulse dangerously. S&W could easily build revolvers with these characteristics today. However, few could afford them. How many \$2,000 Triple-Locks, or 1955 Target Models do you think would be sold? Not many.

In the old pre-war and early post-war economy, skilled handwork was one of the least expensive aspects of production costs. Today, it's one of the highest. S&W faced a choice. Raise retail prices exorbitantly, or find new ways of producing an equivalent quality product at less cost.

Good Guns Made Tougher

The above is true, but it's only one side of the coin. Many of the changes made to S&W revolvers in recent years were not for cost management, but rather were designed to produce a better, more durable product.

Take that frame-mounted firing pin for example. I've replaced a number of the old hammer-mounted firing pins over the years, but I've yet to see the new design fail. Timing and cylinder lockup on the newer guns also seems significantly more durable.

The forward sideplate screw, which locks the crane in place, has been changed in recent years and is superior to the old design. The extractor star — once located by two tiny and fragile pins set into the cylinder — is now shaped in such a way that it is self locating and resists torque better than the old design.

The bottom line is this: As much as we may lust after the older Smiths, the new guns are stronger and more reliable. Period.

Good Shooting Lightweight

The feathery 386PD is a dream to carry, but we know there must be a trade-off for this in the form of recoil. With

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GUNS MAGAZINE

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Astonishing Precision: Weatherby's Threat Response Rifle

By Dave Anderson

The new Weatherby TRR (Threat Response Rifle) has many excellent features, not least is the fact that Weatherby managed to avoid calling it a "tactical" rifle. In recent years "tactical" has become one of the most ubiquitous and misused terms in the shooting world. We have tactical rifles, tactical scopes, tactical knives, and I expect tactical underwear to be announced any day now, if it isn't already here.

Unless Weatherby registers the term "Threat Response Rifle" as a trademark, it would be a much better term than "tactical" to describe this type of rifle. TRR might become, like SUV, an acceptable and recognizable acronym.

In the armed forces such rifles are intended to engage enemy targets at long range. Many police departments have accurate rifles available to use in a defensive role, for situations in which a criminal presents a deadly threat to police or the public, and is too far away to engage with other tools such as chemical spray, shotguns or sidearms. Such circumstances are fortunately quite rare, but when they do occur there really isn't any other good response.

Rifleman's Favorite

This type of rifle has proven surprisingly popular with regular shooters as well. Apocalyptic fantasies aside,

there are few circumstances in which police are justified in using deadly force at long range, and even fewer for private citizens.

I suspect what intrigues many rifleman in this type of rifle is their accuracy and reliability. There was never a rifleman yet who didn't appreciate accuracy. Many shooters acquire such rifles simply because they love the challenge of shooting tiny groups.

Perhaps it is similar to the popularity of SUVs. Probably not one in 100 ever gets driven a mile off pavement, but those ads with SUVs tearing across the desert or clawing their way up a rock-strewn canyon have a powerful appeal. People like to feel they are rugged individualists who can cope with any emergency, even though they know the worst conditions they'll ever face are a few inches of snow until the plows arrive.

Target Rifle In Disguise?

Weatherby is best known for its high grade hunting rifles and shotguns. But if companies like Cadillac and Mercedes can make SUVs, then Weatherby should darn well be able to make TRRs. Even in the fancier Weatherby models, beneath the glitter and gleam, is an extremely capable rifle. Jim Carmichel, whose opinions I greatly respect, wrote:

"If you take a Weatherby Mark V mechanism out of the stock and give it a close inspection, you'll quickly discover that it is only a half step away from meeting the criteria for a really first-class target or benchrest varmint action... it is stiff, highly symmetrical, and locks like a vault." *The Book of the Rifle*, 1985.

The standard TRR, in calibers .223 Rem. and .308 Win., is built around the short Mark V action. In addition to being shorter and lighter, the action differs from the standard Mark V in having six locking lugs (three rows of two) instead of nine (three rows of three).

Otherwise, the features are identical, with a short, 54-degree bolt lift, one-piece forged bolt with fluted bolt body,

The Weatherby's bolt shows a fluted body, 6-lug lockup and a very robust extractor.





Despite miserable shooting conditions, the TRR performed admirably.





Aluminum bedding-block and stable composite stock are two of the secrets of the TRR's performance. (Below-left): Weatherby TRR Magnum Custom model.

forged and machined steel receiver, shrouded bolt sleeve with cocking indicator and an adjustable trigger.

Superior Quality Barrel

The TRR short action is fitted with a heavy, 22-inch barrel in what Weatherby calls its No. 4 contour, with a diameter at the muzzle of .850 inch. These button-rifled barrels are made by Criterion™, a division of Kreiger™. Each barrel is hand lapped to improve smoothness and reduce fouling. Muzzles are finished with a parabolic 11-degree target crown. Barrel and action are finished in a non-reflective matte black.

The stock is a black composite, much more rigid and stable than inexpensive injection-molded stocks. For even more stability, the stock carries a machined aluminum bedding-block in the receiver area. The sample rifle showed excellent fit of barreled action to the stock.

In keeping with benchrest design, the forearm is wide and flat, intended to sit squarely and stable on a sandbag or other rest. The buttstock is distinctively Weatherby, with a high Monte Carlo comb. Stock dimensions are: length of pull, 13½ inches; drop at comb, 3/4 inch; drop at Monte Carlo, 3/8 inch; drop at heel, 1½ inches.

The sample rifle was chambered in .308 Win., with five-shot magazine capacity and barrel twist of 1:12 inches. Weight as it came from the box was 8.5 pounds. The company had considerably fit the rifle with the optional Picatinny-style bases, designed by Dave Talley, and included a set of 30mm Talley rings.

The bases provide additional flexibility in positioning the scope. The machined steel Talley rings (made for Weatherby and carrying the Weatherby logo) are precisely made, extremely strong and reliable.

Good Glass, Good Ammo

A Leupold 8.5-25x50mm Long Range Target scope, a proven veteran, was fitted using the Talley rings. The only other preparation prior to shooting was to run several patches soaked with cleaning solvent through the bore, followed by dry patches to ensure the bore was clean.

One of the advantages of a rifle chambered for the .223 or .308 cartridges is the wonderful match ammunition currently available. All the major ammunition companies take great pride in their match ammunition, and great pains in manufacturing it.

In recent years, the enterprising firm of Black Hills Ammunition, located in Rapid City, S.D., has been producing superb match ammunition in several calibers, including the moly-coated, 168-grain match ammunition I selected to test the Weatherby TRR. As do other manufacturers, Black Hills uses

the proven match bullets made by Sierra and Hornady in its ammunition.

It just happened that on the days I was able to take the TRR to the range, the weather was miserable — cold, with a strong, gusty wind and occasional snow flurries. The combination of a cold trigger finger and unpredictable wind gusts meant some groups were strung out horizontally.

The *worst* five-shot group measured 0.84 inch horizontally by about 0.15 inch vertically. Benchrest shooters refer to such groups as “weather reports.”

The falling snow actually turned out to be beneficial. By observing through the scope the angle of the snow relative to the target, and releasing the shots when the angle was consistent, I was able to shoot nice round groups that measured from 0.5- to 0.6-inches.

On one occasion, the wind died completely and I was able to fire three rounds before it kicked up again. The three shot group measured a mere 0.29 inch. To say this rifle shoots phenomenally well is a gross understatement.

Wealth Of Riches

I was reminded again of what fabulous equipment we have available these days, and how much we take it for granted. We're talking near half-minute accuracy right out of the box — no trigger job, no fussing with action or bedding, no specially prepared handloads. Just take a factory rifle out of the box, bolt a scope in place, open a box of factory ammunition, and start shooting half-minute groups. What amazes me most is that younger rifle shooters aren't amazed by such performance — they've come to expect it.

All shooting was done by loading cartridges in the magazine rather than by feeding them directly into the chamber. Feeding, locking, extraction and ejection proved smooth and completely reliable. The Mark V's bolt handle is well located, just above the trigger finger. The short bolt lift provides plenty of hand clearance even with a big scope, making reloading after each shot very quick and dependable.

Highly Tunable Trigger

Right from the box, the sample rifle had a very good trigger, with virtually imperceptible takeup and a clean break at 4 pounds. Police armorers and marksmen I've talked to prefer lighter pulls, in the 2 to 2.5 pound range, so that if circumstances require they can quickly break the shot.

A friend who is a top shooter and instructor of military and police students described a drill he uses. The shooter has the rifle ready and aimed at a 500-yard target, maintaining his hold until he receives the signal to fire.

At the signal from an electronic shooting timer, the objective is to break the shot in *under* one second. His



better students can accomplish this while hitting a 6-inch square target every time. Such shooting requires a clean, crisp, consistent trigger release. Fortunately, weight of pull of the Weatherby trigger can be adjusted down to around 2 pounds.

Minor Reservations

There are a couple of design features of the Mark V action that I don't care for. I like a trigger to have an overtravel stop to minimize trigger movement after the sear release. In the Mark V design, the bolt stop is activated by pulling the trigger all the way to the rear, so an overtravel stop is impracticable. One could be incorporated, for example by a screw in the rear of the trigger guard, but it would have to be unscrewed to allow bolt removal and then readjusted.

The bolt design uses a ball bearing detent for the firing pin assembly. This has proven reliable in over 40 years of use, but if the bolt is detail stripped for cleaning, care has to be taken not to lose the bearing.

Drop it, and invariably it scoots off to the darkest, most cluttered area of the shop floor. This isn't really a design weakness, but it does mean that the bolt shouldn't be disassembled unless you know exactly what you're doing. Otherwise, it's best to keep the bolt assembled and clean it with some kind of pressurized spray solvent.

One change to the rifle suggested by armorer friends is to replace the slotted guard screws with hex-head screws. Whenever they disassemble a police rifle for routine cleaning and inspection and then reassemble it, they like to use a torque wrench to tighten the guard screws consistently. They find the job easier if hex-head screws are used.

Overall, Weatherby has done an outstanding job with the TRR. It is accurate, reliable, easy to shoot well, fast and dependable in operation. Weatherby also offers two versions of the TRR using the full-size Mark V action.

The TRR Magnum is similar in features and appearance to the standard TRR, but with 26-inch heavy barrel and is offered in .300 Win. Mag., .300 Wby. Mag., .30/378 Wby. Mag. and .338/.378 Wby. Mag. The TRR Magnum Custom is offered in the same calibers and has a stock with adjustable comb and length of pull.



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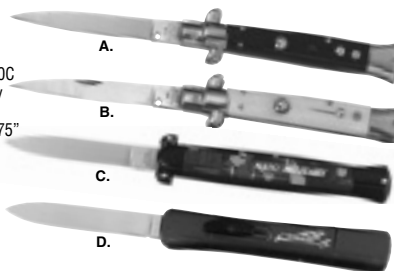
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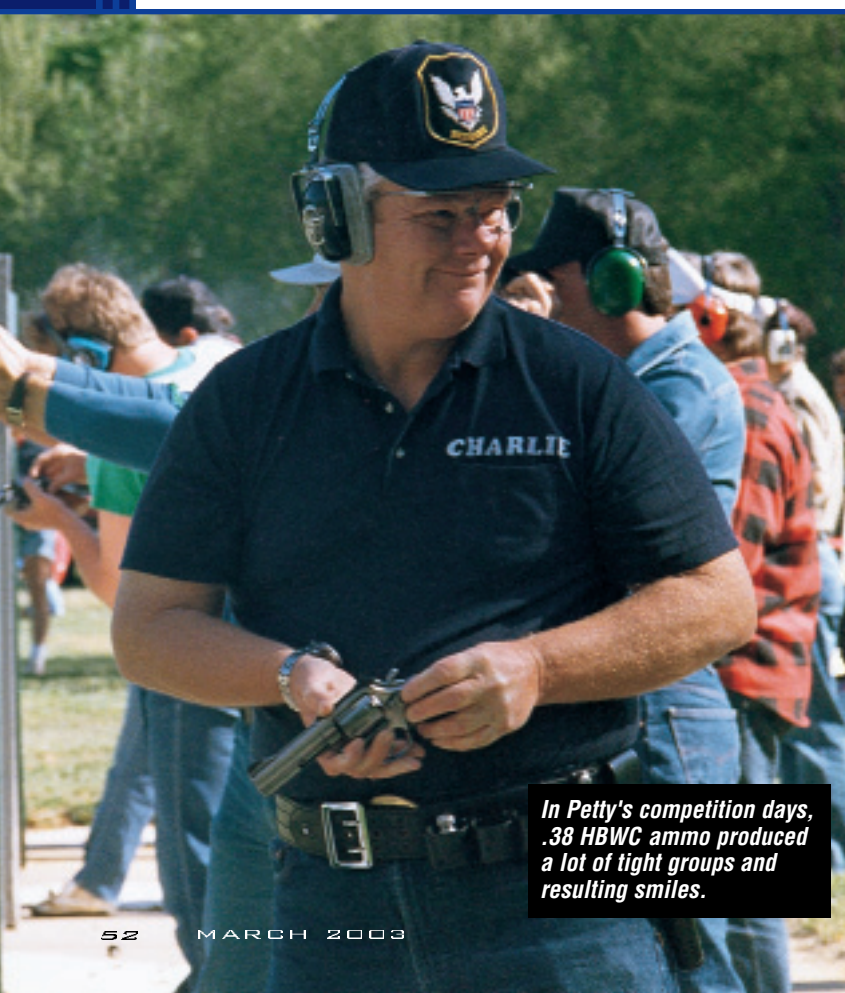
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WONDERFUL WADCUTTERS

BY CHARLES E. PETTY

Soft Shooting, Accurate... Just Don't Try To Figure Out Why



In Petty's competition days, .38 HBWC ammo produced a lot of tight groups and resulting smiles.

If you shoot a .38 Special and want the single most accurate load you can find, there is only one choice of bullet: The 148-grain, lead, hollow-base wadcutter. If you're a handloader, there are several powders that will shoot well, but *that's* the bullet to use. Looking at the humble hollow-base wadcutter, they are as aerodynamic as a brick and don't look like there's a chance of accuracy. But that matters not at all.

Everyone has his own idea of accuracy, but in its purest form, the goal is to put bullet after bullet through the same hole. And there will always be someone who wants to do better... someone like me.

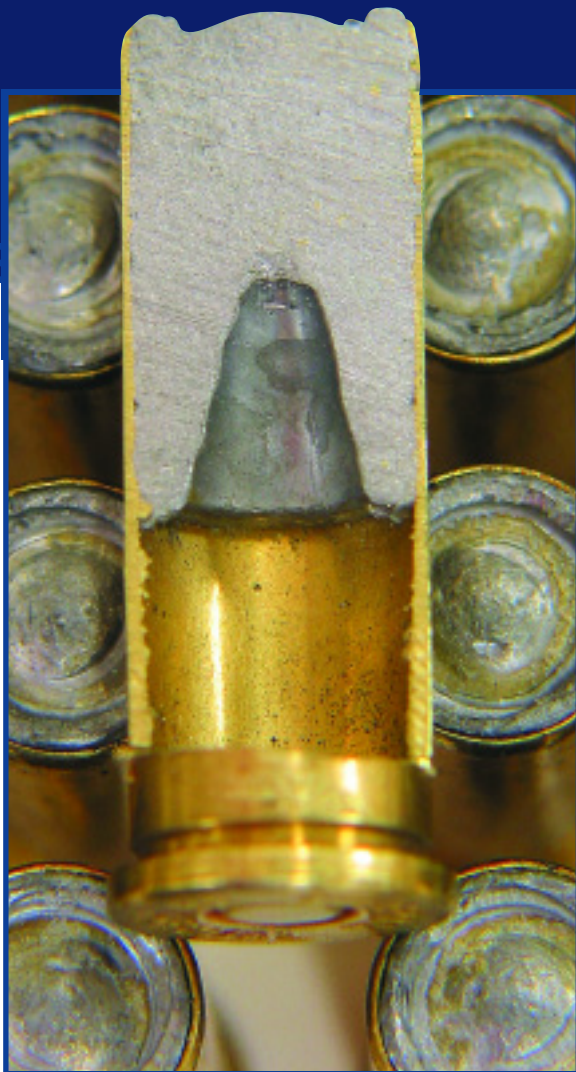
Design Origin

The first thing you notice about a loaded .38 Special wadcutter round, is that it's seated flush with the case mouth. The main objective of the wadcutter design is to cut a nice clean hole in a paper target. This makes scoring ever so much easier. The reason for seating them so much deeper than normal dates back to the black powder origins of the .38 Special.

While the nice crisp holes of the wadcutter were desirable for target shooters, the manufacturers found that better accuracy was achieved with the bullet seated to occupy much of the excess space not needed with smokeless powders.

But there was also a different reason for development of wadcutter style bullets. Not without some logic, it was considered that the wide flat bullet would be an efficient "manstopper." In Johnson and Haven's 1943 book *Ammunition*, the authors report the wadcutter was developed by Himmelwright in 1900 and became commercially available in 1910.

The development resulted in a mid-range target load with a 148-grain wadcutter at 770 fps. This is very much



LOAD	VELOCITY	1	2	3	AVG.
Federal 148 gr. HBWC	702 fps	1.406"	1.130"	1.161"	1.232"
Remington 148 gr. HBWC	729 fps	1.420"	1.166"	1.471"	1.352"
Winchester 148 gr. HBWC	669 fps	1.476"	1.999"	1.530"	1.668"
Remington 158 gr. LRN	770 fps	2.054"	1.697"	1.521"	1.757"
Winchester 158 gr. SWC	785 fps	1.597"	1.828"	1.763"	1.729"
Modified Winchester 116.5 gr.	898 fps	4.081"	5.728"	3.370"	4.393"

intended to expand to seal the bore. And we still see smaller cup-type bases on many modern lead factory bullets.

It is unclear *why* the wadcutter's hollow base was made so much deeper, but it seems to have two beneficial effects. Obviously it provides a good seal and long bearing surface — but it's also thought that the hollow base shifts the center of gravity slightly forward and helps stabilize the bullet.

Not Just For Wheelguns

My first exposure to super-accurate .38s was as a young gunsmith in the Air Force. In the late 1950s, revolvers were going the way of the dinosaur in bullseye pistol competition with the exception of the .38 Special, which was often used in the centerfire portion of the match. But gunsmiths such as the late Jim Clark experimented with conversions of the .38 Super Colt Government Model to shoot the .38 Special wadcutter. This was no small feat.

By this time, the method for accurizing the Government Model .45 was well developed and would form the basis for what we called a Super Conversion... or more commonly just "Super." Everyone knew what you meant. But it was not just a simple matter of cutting a new chamber, and you couldn't call up Brownells and order a barrel.

The .38 Super cartridge is larger in diameter than the .38 Special, so the first efforts involved reaming out the chamber area and making a sleeve that was silver soldered in place. The insert could then be chambered. Another approach was to take an old G.I. barrel and cut the tube off just forward of the locking lugs. The remaining piece was then reamed out and a straight piece of barrel blank turned to fit and soldered in place. This had the additional advantage of allowing the outside diameter of the barrel to be the same as that of a .45 barrel, so normal bushings would work. It also added a little weight.

During my Air Force training, I watched as 1911 pistols were tested in a machine rest and tried to correlate differences in accuracy from one gun to the next with things I could see. Errors in fitting were pretty obvious, but some-

like the load we have today. However, there was also a "full charge" load that used the same bullet at 870 fps and was intended for defensive use.

Over the years, there were many variations of the basic wadcutter design, and you can see all sorts of different configurations of the nose. There were big bumps and little ones, but the basic shape remained cylindrical. The design we know today is little changed from that used in the "Police Match" ammo of the 1930s.

Heel-Bullet Remnant

You may think the hollow base originated with the wadcutter, but actually, it goes all the way back to the earliest revolver cartridges that used a heel seated bullet. The only surviving example of this construction is today's .22 rimfire. Like the lowly .22, these early cartridges used a bullet with a smaller diameter "heel" segment that was seated within the case. The remainder of the bullet was the same diameter as the outside of the cartridge case.

This explains why we call it the ".38" Special, even though everybody knows the bullet measures only .357 inch. But if you measure the outside diameter of a .38 Special case, you'll find it close to .38 inch, which would have been the diameter of the old heeled bullet. The hollow base of old was



times a gun that looked just fine simply wouldn't shoot well. I soon learned the guns would maliciously make you look bad if you feed them ammo they didn't like. .22s are the absolute worst for this, but any gun can do it.

The .38 Special conversions, and later the S&W Model 52, were designed to work *only* with wadcutters seated flush with the case mouth. Of course revolvers were not so restricted. Shooters worried — and still do — whether or not the long jump through the chamber before contacting the rifling had a negative effect on accuracy.

The same question is sometimes raised about shooting wadcutters in a .357 revolver. The skirt of the hollow base wadcutter very effectively seals the chamber, and my experience tells me this long jump matters not at all. I've often observed the same ammunition fired in both pistols and revolvers, and I've seen equal or better accuracy from the six-shooter. The extra .1 inch or so of a .357 Magnum chamber doesn't matter either.

Competition Experience

As a bullseye shooter, the bullets in my 25-yard ammo came from a lovely Hensley and Gibbs mold, but the projectiles I used at the critical 50-yard line came from Speer or Remington. Years ago, you could buy a wooden crate that contained 3,500 of Remington's black beauties. That was a sizeable chunk of cash for this kid, so they were used sparingly. There was no difference in the load, and only the smallest change in the seating die on the Star tool was needed.

When my skills improved to the point I thought it mattered, I changed the game plan a bit. I shot handloads with HBWCs at 25 yards, but my 50-yard stuff came from the factory — whether it was Federal, Remington or Winchester. When I moved on to PPC shooting, the same rules applied.

There was a time when the huge majority of .38 Special ammo consumed was the mid-range wadcutter load. Back then, almost all law enforcement officers carried .38s and training was done with wadcutters. Of course the duty loads were either 158- or 200-grain lead round nose, so that wasn't much of a problem. But when jacketed bullets at higher velocities came into favor, somebody concluded that training should be done with the same ammo used for duty. Sales of wadcutters went down.

Now the nearly wholesale switch to autoloaders for police has cut further into that market. Sources say the drop



Ransom Rest testing is the only way to really proof revolver and ammo. (Below): This vintage 5-screw K-38 is happiest when digesting factory wadcutters.



in .38 wadcutter sales could be as much as 80 to 90 percent. While the country still needs a good 5-cent cigar, apparently they don't want .38 wadcutters. More's the pity.

The Old Standards

Few things are as pleasant as sliding open a box of factory wadcutters, but handloaders can duplicate the accuracy of factory ammo with relative ease. Not too long ago, I did a lengthy test of .38 Special reloads using Speer's 148-grain HBWC. For a long time now, the standard target load with that type of bullet has been either 2.7 grains of Bullseye, or 3.0 grains of WW231.

This got me to thinking that there are a whole bunch of new powders available, so I developed loads with a number of them such that the velocities were all the same as the old standard loads. Careful accuracy testing showed that sometimes the old ways really are best, because none of these new loads quite equaled the oldies. In fact, the WW231 load emerged slightly ahead of everything else.

Testing Plan

Perhaps it's a fatal flaw, but I really like accuracy testing so it wasn't too hard to design a test. I had factory wadcutter ammo from Federal, Remington and Winchester. I chose a vintage K-38 that was made in the early '60s and fired it in the Ransom Rest at 25 yards.

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One secret to measuring revolver accuracy is to eliminate the inevitable variability from one charge hole to another. To accommodate for this, I arbitrarily marked one chamber for exclusion and used only the other five. As a control, I used some Remington 158-grain round nose lead and Winchester 158-grain semi-wadcutters. All groups consisted of 10 shots.

Someone had wondered if a conventional semi-wadcutter would behave better if it were flatter in front, so I painstakingly set up the milling machine and cut off the nose to leave just a slight amount of lead above the crimp. The resulting bullet weighed 116.5 grains... and wouldn't shoot for beans.

Referring to the chart on page 53, accuracy results are 10 shot groups from Ransom Rest at 25 yards Velocity is the instrumental average of 30 shots as measured by a PACT chronograph.

Small Game Too

While almost everyone thinks of the wadcutter as making nice, clean, easy-to-score, holes in targets, there's more. One of the most important factors in on-game performance for any low velocity bullet is the frontal area known as the meplat. Well, the wadcutter's is as big as you can get without going to larger diameter bullets, so for small game or varmints at close range it would be quite effective.

Some even suggest it for personal defense and I'm sure that, properly placed, it would be adequate in that role, but it would be my choice only as a last resort. Years ago, handloaders seated hollow base wadcutters backwards in the belief — which was completely wrong by the way — that the huge hole ensured expansion. Others have tried to hotrod it and discovered more grief than they ever imagined.

The hollow skirt that does so much good at slow speeds turns into a devil at high velocities. As it crosses the barrel cylinder gap at high pressure, the skirt blows out and then must squeeze right down again to fit the forcing cone. The result is sometimes separation of the skirt, which can either result in awful accuracy or — even worse — a major league bore obstruction.

Expert Opinion

The last question to answer is *why* the wadcutters shoot as well as they do. So I sought the wise counsel of Wm. C. Davis, Ballistics Editor of *The American Rifleman* and the most knowledgeable man I know in the science of guns and ammunition. We had a great chat covering many of the topics I've already mentioned. He reminded me that the aerodynamic shape was not an issue at the slow velocities involved, but his final answer to the reasons for the wadcutter's sterling performance was, "I'm not sure."

Personally, that's good enough for me. I'm going to quit trying to figure out the good 'ol wadcutter, and simply continue to enjoy it.





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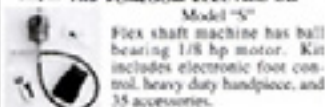


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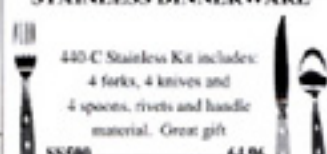
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Gather a group of hunters around a campfire and ask them to list the best caliber for big game hunting and you're likely to get an

earful of argument. Ask the same bunch to name North

America's toughest hunting challenge and you'll find little

disagreement: sheep hunting.

No form of hunting in the world takes you to such remote and rugged country as sheep hunting. From the breathless heights of Mongolia to the moss-slick rocks of the Alaska Range, sheep live in the most inaccessible and dangerous terrain of any big game animal.

If it's not the sheer cliff faces to be climbed with mere fingernail holds, then it's the sharp slivers of shale that slide from under your boots. If it's not the tangled lattice of alders to break through just to reach the mountain, then it's the icy glacial runoff that rushes and crashes with a white water fury.

Hunters often train for several months — jogging, tread milling, lifting weights — just to get into shape to endure a sheep hunt. Stamina is part of it, muscle tone is important, but mostly men must steel their resolve to meet the mountain.

Not For The Soft

Sheep hunting is not just rough on men, it takes a toll on equipment too. "Alaska's rough on gear," observes Master Guide Jim Harrower with characteristic understatement. Harrower is a hard-bitten old salt of an outfitter who has guided professionally in the Last Frontier for over 50 years. He's seen hunters show up with all sorts of gear, and he knows that even the best gear falls apart in sheep country.

And for just this reason — the unparalleled challenge of the mountain — an Alaskan sheep hunt is the ultimate torture test for a rifle. On top of the rocks and shale, Alaska is constantly wet, thanks to the steady rains that are routine during sheep season.



BEFORE



AFTER

I was discussing just how tough Alaska is on guns and gear with my good friend Dwight Van Brunt, who happens to work for Kimber. Dwight posed a question:

"Do you think you could successfully hunt Dall sheep in Alaska's most unforgiving country with a classic American hunting rifle? Not some polycoated stainless marvel of modern synthetics, but a nicely polished blue gun in an elegant Claro walnut stock?"

"Perhaps." I allowed, "I assume you mean one of your Kimbers. But surely the cold, wet and rain, not to mention the various knocks, falls and scrapes are going to play hell with that beautiful little turn-bolt."

"I'm not talking about cosmetically damaging the rifle," Van Brunt retorted. "I'm saying that today's Kimber 84M can take anything Alaska can dish out. No loss of zero, no swollen stocks, no frozen firing pins. My point is a man can successfully hunt a sheep with a *nice* rifle."

"Dwight, I agree your rifle is a beauty, and it's a great choice for whitetails, but you're saying your trim little turn-bolt can withstand Alaska?" I replied.

"A Kimber is Alaska-tough," came the calm reply. "I dare you to take a Kimber to Alaska, and I'll bet you can take a Dall sheep with it."

Alaska-Tough Test

Thanks to the excellent advice of Jack Atcheson Jr., a longtime leader in the professional hunting agency business, Van Brunt's bet was soon in the making. Atcheson recommended Harrower as one of the most experienced and respected sheep outfitters in

Alaska today. Deposits were paid, dates were booked, the wager was on.

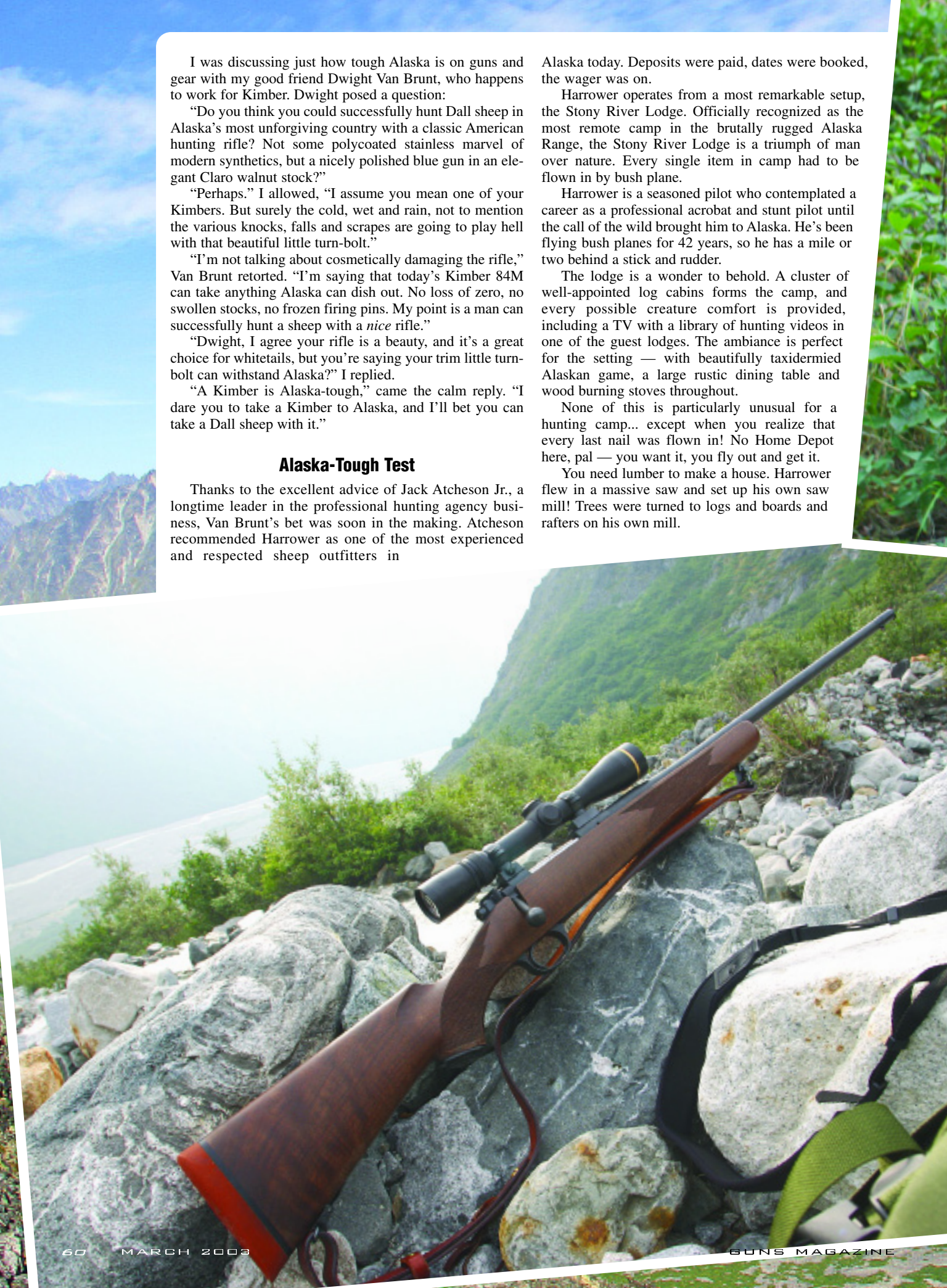
Harrower operates from a most remarkable setup, the Stony River Lodge. Officially recognized as the most remote camp in the brutally rugged Alaska Range, the Stony River Lodge is a triumph of man over nature. Every single item in camp had to be flown in by bush plane.

Harrower is a seasoned pilot who contemplated a career as a professional acrobat and stunt pilot until the call of the wild brought him to Alaska. He's been flying bush planes for 42 years, so he has a mile or two behind a stick and rudder.

The lodge is a wonder to behold. A cluster of well-appointed log cabins forms the camp, and every possible creature comfort is provided, including a TV with a library of hunting videos in one of the guest lodges. The ambiance is perfect for the setting — with beautifully taxidermied Alaskan game, a large rustic dining table and wood burning stoves throughout.

None of this is particularly unusual for a hunting camp... except when you realize that every last nail was flown in! No Home Depot here, pal — you want it, you fly out and get it.

You need lumber to make a house. Harrower flew in a massive saw and set up his own saw mill! Trees were turned to logs and boards and rafters on his own mill.



Glassing for a decent head occupied many hours. (Below): Reflective moment by the campfire offered a rare opportunity to be warm and dry.



dipped over the trees and bounced gently onto the gravelly river bottom. The knuckles weren't Harrower's.

Once on the ground with my guide, an energetic and well-read German named Arno Krumm, we were alone with nothing but the supplies we carried on our backs. It would be too dangerous to cross parts of the Telequana River — a glacial white-water river that's cold enough to numb your hand in 10 seconds — without an inflatable raft, so Harrower left us a blow-up dingy. We also packed our own hip waders for the somewhat less raging portions of the river.

The plan was to hike two miles upriver, leave our packs and return for the dingy. Trudging back to the gear, we would then ford the river in the inflatable canoe, leave it on the other side for our return, and then continue on foot.

We made camp that night just as dusk was fading into darkness, a back-breaking walk across rocks and through alders with packs laden with a week's supplies. We would eat our load away in the coming week, but with luck our packs would be bulging even more with fresh sheep meat.

Stony River Lodge began as a fly tent camp and grew into the diamond in a coal bin that it is today thanks to three things — 30 years of hard work, Jim's love for the true Alaskan wilderness and, of course, one last vital ingredient — aviation fuel.

Wet And Wild

Using Stony River Lodge as a stepping off point, hunters fly by bush plane into Harrower's base camp and then depart for the wilds in Harrower's Piper Super Cub, the Clydesdale of Alaskan aviation. Where you get dropped is dependent on Harrower's ability to set the Super Cub's big, puffy bush tires on something vaguely resembling a make-shift runway.

Harrower happens to be skilled at finding a suitable gravel bar or strip of tundra to lightly set the short-takeoff plane, but there were a couple of white knuckles in that plane when it

The Betting Gun

The Kimber Model 84M is currently available only in a short-action. I chose a .308 Win., shooting handloads featuring a 130 grain Barnes X-Bullet at 3,200 fps. This is a prototype Barnes X-Bullet, featuring a proprietary coating with properties similar to moly — less fouling, greater accuracy, longer barrel life.

The Model 84M is a classic Mauser-based action with true controlled feeding and a massive claw extractor. The safety is a Model 70 style, three-position unit that positively locks both sear and firing pin. The trigger is adjustable, although it doesn't need any tuning. "Kimbers

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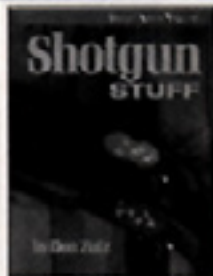
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The first test was trial by water. Arno, my guide, and I were in the bush for seven nights, eight days. The only thing wetter than my socks was the Kimber. It was drenched, almost constantly, if not from the rain, then from the river.

Plan Of Attack

We camped in the river bottom, surrounded by the jagged mountains of the Alaska Range. The plan was to stay low and glass the mountains for sheep. If we spotted a promising head, we would climb and get a closer look. Consequently, we had to cross the river, which was fed by dozens of snowmelt streams, on numerous occasions.

Most of the time the cascading ice water was knee deep, and not too treacherous. Other times it was raging with such force that even Arno would shake his head and mutter, "It's not safe here. We'll have to find another place to cross."

"The water felt like frozen needles stabbing every inch of my body"

Every now and then, there wasn't any safe alternative, only a lesser of two evils. We donned our waders, cut alder poles to act as a third leg and inched our way across. It looked like a piece of cake from the shore, but the water was deceptively strong.

I was half way across a particularly treacherous crossing — the water was surging only a few inches from the top of my waders — when my left foot slipped. I regained my footing, thanks to the pole, but not before the icy water had gushed into my left wader. Stinging with the cold, the wader filled almost instantly.

The shock of the cold water worsened the slip and before I could react, I was swept away by the freezing torrent. My only thought was to keep my feet facing downstream and to try and make it to shore.

The water felt like frozen needles stabbing every inch of my body. My left hand was totally submerged, a death-grip on the Kimber, and I felt the fingers growing numb. I suddenly realized that I had to get out of that freezing water, and quick.

Unexpectedly, the river swept me to a shallow. Like a baserunner sliding into second, as my feet hit a large rock I popped up out of the water, standing precariously to balance the backpack. I still clutched the Kimber, dripping wet in my left hand.

No longer concerned about keeping my waders dry, I forced my way across the river to find Arno running downstream toward me, having shrugged off his heavily laden pack. Other than a small cut on my left hand and a large bruise on my butt, I was uninjured.

Which is more than I can say for the plucky little Kimber. The scope was dented badly, the finish worn away, and the stock looked like it had been dragged through a cactus patch. The bolt knob was scratched and covered with pock marks from the river

rocks; the bolt knob was made of steel, which gives you some idea of what the Claro walnut stock must have looked like.

Undeterred, I poured the water out of my waders and we continued on.

Meets The Challenge

The entire hunt, from the involuntary bath to the moment of truth, high in the mountains, was one continuous barrage of abuse for the Kimber. Once I fell while crossing a precarious rockslide and the rifle clattered onto the granite-strewn ground — dings number 157 through 163.

Forcing our way through the tangled curtain of alders, the rifle was constantly being banged into trees or pulled through the branches — scratches number 87 through 135.

Subject to on and off showers throughout the week, the Kimber must have thought it was on patrol in a monsoon. The barrel rusted badly.

Not knowing that a walking stick was a necessity on some of the more treacherous rocks, I came without one. The Kimber became my staff. I held it by the barrel — chamber empty, of course — and used the stock to steady myself as we crossed rain-slicked, moss-covered boulders. Frequently, the stock banged into the boulders or slipped into crevices, only to be forcibly pulled out.

Like I said, I didn't baby the Kimber.

Moment Of Truth

On the last day of the hunt, after a week of hard hunting, we found the ram we had been searching for. It is now, when the shot must be made, that the bet would be settled. As Yoda said to Luke Skywalker: "Do or not do. There is no try."

Through a combination of Arno's excellent stalk planning and the help of a thick cover of fog, we suddenly came to a precipice, looked down and there was the ram, looking back at us, as startled as we were. He was standing broadside at what I would estimate to be the second-closest shot I have ever made in the field, about 35 yards.

I shouldered the Kimber, snicking off the safety as the dented walnut stock came to my cheek. The shot shattered the mountain stillness and the ram hunched to the heart shot, beginning his death run. I cycled the bolt reflexively, following the sheep with the crosshairs and broke his back, putting him down. The range was perhaps 50 yards, almost straight down.

As Arno pounded my back in congratulation, I looked at the battle-scarred Kimber and wondered if one of those polycoated stainless marvels of modern synthetics could have fared as well. The Kimber man had won his bet.



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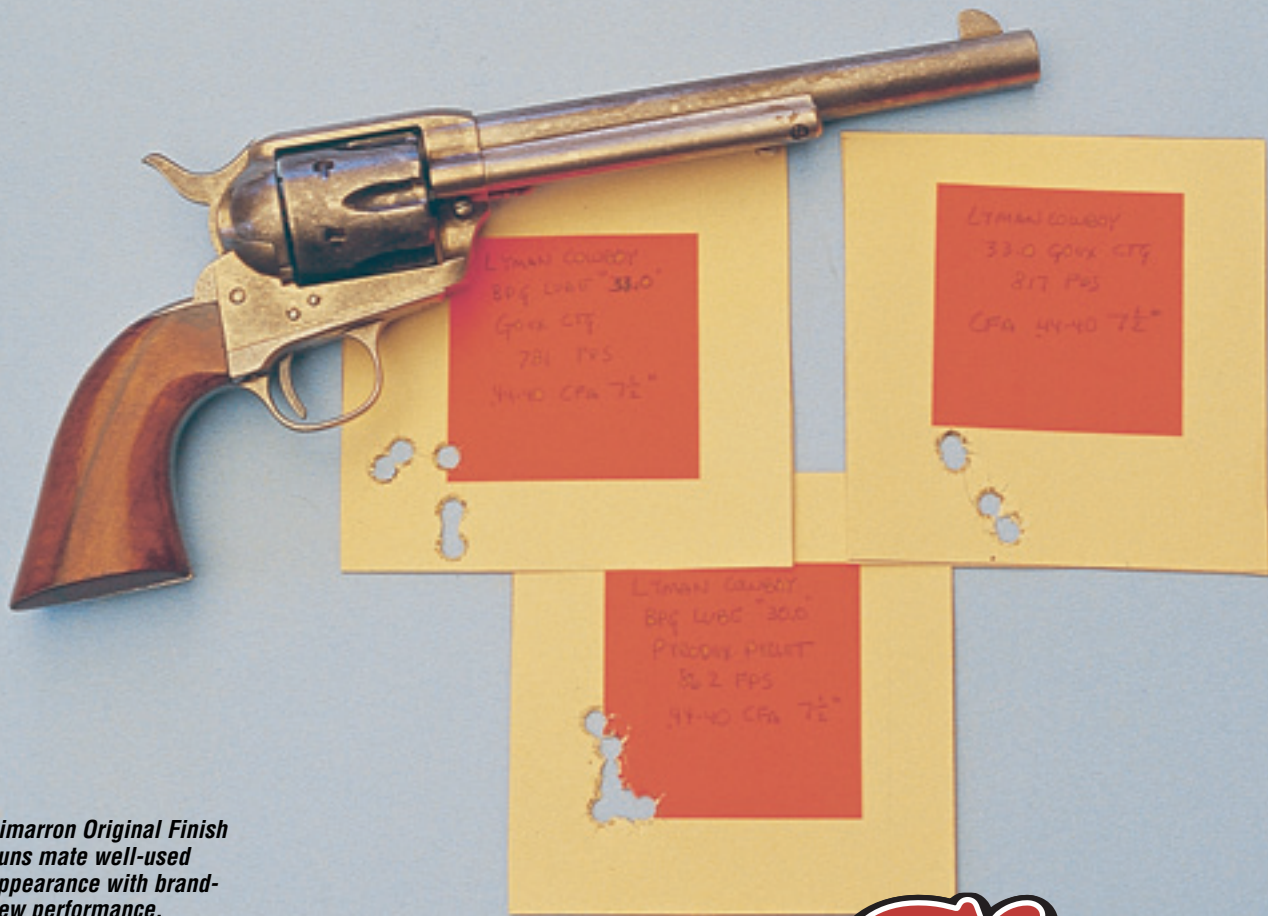
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Cimarron



Replicas are nothing new. In fact, during the 1870s and 1880s, European manufacturers were already replicating the sixguns of both Smith & Wesson and Colt. Spanish copies, poorly executed, appeared very quickly once the Colt SAA arrived. If you should happen to run into such a copy, it is good only for decoration. And then only if your tastes are not too refined.

Several years ago, I answered a classified ad in the local paper and went out to inspect the offered sixgun, a double action Smith & Wesson .44 Frontier. When I pointed out to the sellers that in fact their revolver was marked on the barrel that it was chambered for the Smith & Wesson cartridge, and was in reality a European copy, they became very irate with me. I did notice it was in the paper the following week for half the price.

Replica Explosion

Colt Single Action replicas in our time go back at least to the 1950s, even before Colt resurrected their famous sixgun with the Second-Generation run of revolvers beginning in 1956.

Shortly after this, the replica industry exploded, and today we are offered truly authentic versions of nearly every Colt, Remington, and Smith & Wesson revolver from the second half of the 19th century. As well as replicas of such lesser-knowns as the LeMat, Leach & Rigdon, Spiller & Burr, Rogers & Spencer and even the single- and double-action Starrs.

The early copies of Colt Single Action and Colt percussion revolvers were somewhat lacking in authenticity. Some

of these inaccuracies were quite glaring, such as inappropriately substituting brass grip frames for the correct steel components. The popularity of Cowboy Action Shooting provided a strong motivation to the various importers, and in recent years, both the authenticity and quality of replica sixguns and leverguns has improved tremendously.

One of the key players in bringing this situation about is Mike Harvey of Cimarron Firearms. Compare an early sixgun from Cimarron, or its predecessor Allen Firearms, to one of recent vintage and it's easy to spot the improvement. The actions are much smoother, and the finish looks more like the original, the case coloring is much improved over the early guns, and dimensions and shapes are held very closely to what they were in the 1870s.

The Next Step

With their sixguns and leverguns now authentic in style and finish, Cimarron's next step seemed only natural. Why not offer an antique finish, so that a brand-new replica might look as if it had actually been in use since the 1860s or 1870s? The finish would look 100 plus years old, while the sixgun itself would be brand-new — with a smooth action and pristine barrel and cylinder.

Over the years, I have found several vintage Colts and Winchesters with time worn finish and retaining solid actions, but most bear evidence of insufficient cleaning after use with black powder. All of these barrels are still usable, however, they show some pitting from neglect. This is understandable, as it was not always easy to clean every firearm after it was fired.

ron "Originals"

By John Taffin

Having Our Cake...

Now, thanks to Cimarron, we can have it both ways, as they offer brand-new sixguns and leverguns with, as Cimarron calls it, an Original Finish. I do not quite understand this terminology, as the original "original finish" on SAAs and Model '73 Winchesters was normally deep blue with case hardened colors on the frame. Cimarron's Original Finish instead looks like the results of 100 years of daily use and carry in a holster or saddle scabbard. The result is downright attractive.

Cowboy shooters, especially those purists who prefer not only to look authentic to 19th century — but to look as if they've been around that long — have taken to these antique finished Cimarrons like a thirsty cowhand takes to a saloon at the end of a long drive. But they're not the only shooters who appreciate these new/old guns.

Gone are the days when nearly any good gunshop or gun show would yield a selection of blue worn Colts or

**Return with us
now to those
thrilling days
of yesteryear...**



Winchesters at a price a workingman could afford. The ever-present interest in western Americana has dried up the supplies of these original guns, or driven the prices to the point that only wealthy collectors will have the pleasure of studying them. But the Cimarron Original Finish offerings give anyone the opportunity to own a "Colt" or "Winchester" that looks as if it might have belonged to Cody or Hardin.

Indeed, anyone interested in the period of the great western expansion will enjoy not just owning, but being able to shoot and use these "instant heirlooms." A person with any feeling whatsoever for the romance of our country's history will surely feel his soul and imagination stirred just by picking up Cimarron's Model 1866 Yellow Boy.

Time Machine

When I handle this 24-inch, octagon barreled '66, my mind's eye sees great a great panorama. Herds of shaggy beasts grazing on the Nebraska prairies, rows of tepees along a river bank, warriors on pinto ponies, workers on the transcontinental railroad system, the first snowfall in the high country, a roaring campfire at the end of a long day. The horses are unsaddled, the Winchesters taken from their scabbards for protection through the night. I can almost smell the woodsmoke.

Winchester's 1866 model was a significant improvement over its predecessor, the 1860 Henry. The Henry was a tremendous advance over the single-shot muzzleloading rifles of the time, however it was not without flaws. The loading operation required the rifle be taken out of action, and the external magazine follower of the Henry prevented the use of a forearm.

The '66 was the first Winchester to incorporate the frame-mounted loading gate, and like the originals,

Cimarron's Model 1866 is marked "King's Improvement Patented March 29, 1866." In addition to the King's patent gate and sealed magazine, the Winchester '66 featured a wooden forearm to protect the off hand from a heated barrel. The frame was still brass, and the cartridge was still a rim-fire, both of which would be changed with the introduction of the Model 1873 Winchester.

We have mentioned the authenticity of these replicas, however they are not in the original chambering, as .44 Henry Flat cartridges have not been available for many decades. Instead, Cimarron's 1866 is available in several vintage and modern calibers. My personal rifle is marked "44 W.C.F." signifying .44 Winchester Centerfire, or as it is more commonly known today, .44-40.

Lazy Day Fun

Cimarron's 1866 rifle (it's also available in short rifle and carbine configurations), has a 24-inch octagonal barrel with a fold down ladder sight that is marked out to 800 yards. I normally have no reason to shoot this far with an iron-sighted levergun, and especially not with one chambered in .44-40. But then again, there may come a lazy summer day when I will find myself sitting under a shade tree with the '66, plenty of ammunition, a jug of cool water, and a dry dusty hillside several hundred yards across from me.

For now, the normal rear sight that comes into play when the ladder sight is folded down is more than adequate for my needs. All of the steel on this rifle has been "de-blued," while the brass frame, forend cap, and buttplate are all appropriately stained with age. Forearm and butt stock have been distressed (although not excessively) and the right side of the butt stock has the finish worn away as if several generations of hands had rubbed against it.



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Oregon Trail 200 gr. (.429")/6.0 gr. TiteGroup	878	1⅜"
Oregon Trail 200 gr. (.429")/8.0 gr. Unique	974	1¼"
Cor-Bon 200 gr. Black Powder	795	2⅞"
Black Dawge 200 gr. Black Powder	990	2¼"
Wind River 200 gr. Black Powder	845	2⅞"
Ten-X 200 gr. Black Powder	736	3/4"
Oregon Trail 200 gr./30.0 gr. Goex FFg	829	1¼"
Lyman Cowboy 200 gr./30.0 gr. Pyrodex Pellet	862	1½"
Lyman Cowboy 200 gr./33.0 gr. Goex CTG	784	1"

CIMARRON MODEL 66 YELLOW BOY, .44-40, 24" BARREL

Load	MV	Group**
Black Hills 200 gr. RNFP	1,161	1¼"
MagTech 200 gr. RNFP	920	1"
PMC 225 gr. RNFP	950	1"
UltraMax 200 gr. RNFP	1,103	1⅞"
Winchester 200 gr. JSP	1,114	1¼"
AA Ltd 205 gr. RNFP (.429")/8.0 gr. Unique	1,271	1⅞"
Oregon Trail 200 gr. RNFP (.429")/ 8.0 gr. Unique	1,176	1¼"
Oregon Trail 200 gr. RNFP (.428")/ 7.0 gr. WW231	1,083	1½"

**Groups are ten shots at 25 yards.

The actions of the 1860, 1866 and 1873 Winchesters are like no others. The cartridge feeds easily, coming straight up and then straight into the chamber as the lever is operated. Just working the action alone is an emotional experience.

Keep This In Mind

All that was required to sight in this rifle was to loosen the locking screw on the front sight and drift it slightly to the right. Testing was conducted with factory "cowboy" loads as well as my handloads with muzzle velocities well-under 1,300 fps. These moderate loads will do everything you need done, and hotrod handloads should never be used in this nearly 150-year-old action.

At the fun shooting range of 25 yards, most loads grouped right around 1 inch. Shooting at 25 yards is just about the right distance for busting small rocks, pop cans, and an occasional varmint. If there's any levergun out there above a .22 that is more enjoyable than this one, please don't tell me. I couldn't stand the excitement!

Companion Revolvers

Every good levergun deserves a companion sixgun. In the days of the original 1860 Henry and 1866 Yellow Boy, there were no cartridge firing, big bore sixguns available. However, in the 1870s it was possible to have a Smith & Wesson No. 3 or a Colt SAA in .44 Rimfire. By the time the .44-40 caliber Model 1873 — Winchester's first centerfire repeater — arrived, it was obvious a companion sixgun should soon be available. The first .44-40 Colt arrived in 1878.

Cimarron's companion sixgun for the .44-40 chambered Model 1866 is their Model P. I have an original Colt Frontier Six-Shooter, as the early Colts chambered in .44-40

were called, from 1879. It wears one-piece stocks and a 7½-inch barrel. The "original finish" of this particular Colt was earned with over 100 years of service. The Original Finish of the Cimarron Model P, although brand-new, is a dead ringer for that remaining on the old Six-Shooter.

The Cimarron's finish is not simply an in-the-white sixgun with no bluing. Instead it has age marks, blemishes, and even a small spot or two with a brownish patina look. The one-piece stocks are also appropriately stressed.

The only two things signifying the Cimarron Model P as anything other than an old Colt from the 1880s are the barrel marking of "44 W.C.F.," instead of "Colt Frontier Six-Shooter," and the fact the stocks still have plenty of varnish

The .44-40 Model P mates perfectly with the 1866.



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intact. One other great difference is the condition of the barrel. If only the old original Colt could match the pristine barrel of the Cimarron Model P.

This antiqued .44-40 raise images of its own. Horses tied at the hitching posts all along Main Street, and a crowded saloon on Saturday night packed with cowboys from the neighboring ranches. Above the loud talking, a piano can be heard, and the round tables are packed with those who think they can actually beat the man dressed in black who shuffles the cards oh so effortlessly.

Shooting Characteristics

Without actually counting, I would guess I have tested no less than 100 replica single actions over the past decade. I have yet to find one that could be called a poor shooter, in fact the vast majority of them are well above average. This particular sixgun is about as good as it gets. It shoots to point of aim with most loads as far as windage is concerned, and about an inch low. A few file strokes will take care of the latter, and careful load choice will settle the former.

Loading The Old Ones

My choice of .44-40 brass comes from Starline. In the past, available brass had very thin case mouths that buckled quite easily. Any cartridge case that even touched the bottom of a die slightly off center was lost. However, I have never lost a Starline case in either .38-40 or .44-40. All of my loading for these two cartridges, as well as my standard .45 Colt loads, are handled by the excellent RCBS Model 2000 Progressive press.

All three may be used with the same shell holder. In my loads, the same powder charges are used, so it is a simple matter of less than 10 seconds to change dies. With both the .38-40 and .44-40 being tapered cases, carbide sizing dies are not available. I simply place 100 cases in a shallow cardboard tray, and use a spray-on lube before running them through the progressive cycle. Stories you've heard in the past about the difficulties of loading the .44-40 cartridge are greatly exaggerated.

Both the 1866 Yellow Boy and the Model P are naturals for Cowboy Action Shooting. However, even if I never shot another match I would still want them both, simply for the shooting enjoyment they provide. I've already contacted Cimarron with instructions to put these on my account. They will not be going back. I can't give them any higher recommendation than that.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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MINIMUM MAGNUM

continued from page 46

recoil in mind, first out of the shooting bag is a box of soft-shooting, super accurate Federal .38 wadcutters.

At 25 yards, the wadcutters cluster tightly in single action fire, but with an occasional flier. The target shows they are keyholing just a bit, leaving a slightly oval hole in the paper. Even so, 25-yard, five-shot, off hand groups average around 2 inches.

A good .38 Special practice load — 158-grain RNFP cast bullet over a “+P” equivalent charge of WW 231 — groups well out of the 386PD. Seven-shot, off hand groups average about 2 inches, center-to-center of the widest two shots. There’s no evidence of instability with this load.

Magnum ammo, in the form of Remington’s 110-grain JHP, and a heavy cast bullet handload, was tried next. Recoil with these loads was, well... we’ll get to that. Suffice to say I didn’t fire any record groups with these loads. Two or three rounds would cluster together nicely, and then I would anticipate the shot and throw the next round wildly.

Holster Work

Dropping back to the .38 reload, I worked on fast pairs and triples from the leather. The little gun is less stable than a heavier revolver, but it’s certainly better and faster than a J-frame wheelgun. In DA shooting, it also benefits from the flat mainspring action it shares with K- and N-frame S&Ws. These seem to be uniformly smoother than the coil spring powered J-frame guns.

The holster from Haugen Handgun Leather is a good one. It has one belt loop on the back of the holster, and a second on the trailing edge. This pulls the gun’s butt tightly into your side just as it should. The reinforced top edge makes reholstering easy. It’s a darn nice rig.

The Fine Points

In short order, the ground is littered with spent brass, and I’m ready for a break. Sitting on the tailgate and drinking some water gives time to have another close look at the 386.

S&W has fitted the 386PD with a blast shield of what looks like stainless steel spring stock above the barrel/cylinder gap. It will help limit gas cutting of the Scandium frame. It’s a clever addition.

The 7-shot cylinder is a great feature for a number of reasons. In addition to the extra strength and added capacity, the little gun has a unique feel in double-action shooting. Due to the short cylinder rotation, it actually feels a little like the N-frame M28, M27 and .38/44 S&Ws, the heavy cylinders of which tend to “carry up” after being started into motion.

The 386PD also has S&W’s neat, non-protruding lanyard loop on the lower backstrap. Lanyard loops used to be quite common on pistols and revolvers, and I’m delighted to see them returning.

Questionable Sighting System

Light-gathering fiber optic sights, such as the HIVIS front sight on this 386PD are extremely popular at the moment. They do exactly what they promise, gathering available light and presenting it to the shooter’s eye as a glowing dot. The result is quite a bit more effective than the old Call and McGivern pattern bead front sights once popular on S&W revolvers.

For close, quick, defensive use, they offer some advantage. If there is sufficient ambient light to illuminate it, that brilliant fluorescent orange bead is hard to miss. Superimpose it on your target with some rough correlation to the rear sight and you’re bound to deliver a hit on a close target.

But for finer work, whether that means perforating paper targets or knocking over a cottontail at 20 yards, you’ll find the conventional Patridge sights far more precise. They provide a much better index of elevation. You *can* shoot tight clusters with these HIVIS sights, but you’ll have to work a little harder to do so.

Post Shooting Report

Okay, let’s get right to the heart of the matter — recoil. The wadcutters were of course no problem. The +P equivalent handload was also completely manageable, although a little sharp. Switching to Magnum ammo, my personal fun factor was rapidly exceeded. The Remington 110-grain JHPs — which are about as light recoiling a .357 load as you’ll find — felt a bit nastier than full Keith loads in a 4-inch S&W M29. This latter is about my personal limit of recoil tolerance.

So maybe I’m a wimp. If you run hundreds of rounds at a session through your pet .44 Magnum DA revolver, then you’ll be smiling from here to breakfast while shooting this little beast.

If however, you have a more normal recoil tolerance, you’ll find yourself limiting the amount of .357 ammo you shoot from the 386PD. And this brings us to the \$64,000 question: What is this little beastie good for?

Daily Dress

Obviously, the 386PD is designed primarily as a self-defense carry gun. And *carry* is the operative word. Carrying a suitable defensive handgun can be a real drag, especially in hot and muggy weather. That 38-ounce 1911 you slip on in the morning feels like a boat anchor by the time you return home in the evening.

And while regular practice with your carry gun is vital, you’ll spend eight or 10 hours wearing that roscoe for every round you’ll ever send down range. Knowing this, most experienced pistoleros will gladly trade a little additional recoil for a lighter burden.

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despite reams of print and much talk of Glocks, 1911s, SIGs, etc. — is an air-weight, 5-shot revolver.

And personally, I think that's what we have in S&W's 386PD, a sort of superior air-weight snubby. It's larger and easier to shoot than a Centennial or Bodyguard, comes fitted with easier-to-see sights, and it carries an extra two rounds to boot. Stoke it with .38 Special +P ammo for the best balance of power versus shot-to-shot recovery, and don't waste a moment stressing over the absence of .357 ammo in your chambers.

We all know the .357 Magnum is at its best in a 6-inch or longer barrel. In a 4-inch barrel, it's still pretty effective, but cut that barrel down to 2½ inches, and the result is ear-splitting report, intimidating muzzle flash, and only a modest improvement over .38 Special or .38 Special +P ballistics. Regardless, there is another role for the 386PD in which you may be very glad to have the slight boost in power.

Outdoor Use, Too

This compact S&W will make a great companion gun for the outdoorsman. Hiking, camping, or chasing trout, it's always a pleasure and a comfort to have a good pistol with you. "Be prepared" may be the Scout motto, but it's also just plain common sense. The presence of a S&W revolver once saved my bacon in a lonely campsite, and I'm sure many others could tell a similar tale.

Many carry a handgun in the wild places as bear medicine, and it's here you can make use of the .357 chambers in the 386PD. Ninety-nine percent of the time, if you are fortunate enough to have a close look at a bruin, you're going to feel exhilarated, not threatened.

But you'll feel more comfortable with the easy-riding 386 at your side, loaded with deep penetrating 180-grain .357 loads. If you ever need to use it, you'll certainly not notice the recoil.

The bottom line is that I must echo Ichiro Nagata's sentiments about the S&W 386PD... I really do like this little feather-weight. I think it's the most gun for the least least weight we're ever likely to see.

Now if I could only learn to say so as succinctly as Ichi did.



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BLACKPOWDER

continued from page32

Since my Sharps are used principally for hunting, I get sight settings at 100, 150 and 200 yards. These sight settings reflect the maximum range at which I would engage a hunting target and take into consideration the rainbow trajectory of the projectiles I use.

After the initial zero of the rifle and sights the fun begins! I shoot the rifle in field-like conditions, and practice position shooting as well as supported standing and kneeling using cross sticks. Consistency is of utmost importance and the act of following through after the shot is something to consider because of a slightly longer barrel time compared to smokeless powder firearms.

After Mike's instruction and much experimentation on my own, wife Heidi and I both enjoy going to the range as well as hunting together. While bison hunting together we enjoy the thump and boom of black powder and grin at our successes.

But mostly we grin because we know smokeless powder is a passing fad.



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- (D) *Cowboy Action*
- (E) *Target/Plinking*
- (F) *Collecting*

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Katz Kagemusha Fixed Blade Hunter

Every hunter and shooter appreciates a good blade, and the Katz Kagemusha is a good one. Constructed of tough XT80 stainless steel, the Kagemusha measures 8½ inches overall, with a 3½-inch blade.

The blade features sufficient belly to be a good Skinner, but it's a fine utility knife as well. The serrated blade spine is ideal for laying your finger along it and choking up to do fine work.

Beautiful, stabilized cherrywood scales and a rich russet colored pouch type sheath complete this fine knife. For more information on the entire Katz line, see the Website: www.katzknives.com, or call [480] 786-9334.



Win Prizes Selected "Best of the Year!"

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

Claim Your Prize Today!

Return the Official Sweepstakes Entry Certificate to activate your entry (see certificate in this issue for details).

EXCELLENCE Prize Package

One lucky entrant will win the Accessory, Ammunition, Knife, Optic, High-Tech and Specialty Product of the Year!

To learn more about the Shooting Industry Academy of Excellence visit www.shootingindustry.com.



HANDGUN of the Year Prize



Win All Three Guns:

- Kimber Eclipse Custom II .45 ACP
- * Ruger Super Blackhawk Hunter .44 Mag.
- * Springfield Armory X-Treme Duty 9mm

THREE-GUN GRAND PRIZE



Win all three guns named "Best of the Year" by the Academy:

- Kimber Eclipse Custom II .45 ACP;
- Ruger 77/17RM .17 Mag.; and
- Ruger Gold Label Side-By-Side 12 gauge.

SHOTGUN of the Year Prize



Win All Three Guns:

- Ruger Gold Label Side-By-Side 12 ga.
- * Benelli Super Black Eagle 12 ga.
- * Beretta A391 Xtrema 3.5.

OPTIC of the Year Prize

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RIFLE of the Year Prize



Win All Three Guns:

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- * Marlin Model 1894SS
- * Thompson/Center Omega .50

*2002 Gun of the Year Nominee

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taurususa.com



Taurus celebrates their award by giving away three Titanium revolvers – Model 445 .44 Special, Model 731 .32 H&R, and Model 85 .38 Special!

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NEW PRODUCTS

MARCH 2003

Safari Kit

From Katz Knives

The new versatile Safari Kit™ and Safari Accessory Combo™ from Katz Knives offers the hunter and sportsman a comprehensive cutting system in a compact field-ready package. The completely convertible system allows a sturdy compact axe, 4-inch hunting knife blade, 8.5-inch wood saw, 8.5-inch bone/meat saw, 7.5-inch flexible fish fillet knife and 6-inch boning knife all to be individually

attached to the same rugged Kraton handle. The Safari Kit™ (axe, hunting knife and top grain cowhide sheath) has a suggested retail price of \$265. The Safari Accessory Combo™ (wood saw, bone/meat saw, fillet knife, boning knife, backing plate and sheath) retails for \$114.95. Send \$3 for color catalog to Katz Knives, P.O. Box 730, Chandler, AZ 85224-0730, telephone: [480] 786-9334, FAX: [480] 786-9338, e-mail: katzkn@aol.com, Website: www.katzknives.com



Deluxe 1873 Revolver

From Navy Arms

The new Deluxe 1873 single-action revolver is the handgun component to the "Cowboy Combo" from Navy Arms. Completing the package is the new 1892 short rifle with case-hardened receiver and polished walnut stock. Both are chambered in .32-20. The revolver features walnut grips, a high-bright charcoal blued barrel, cylinder, trigger guard and back strap. Both



the frame and hammer are color case hardened. Contact Navy Arms, 219 Lawn St., Martinsburg, WV 25401, telephone: [304] 262-1651, FAX: [304] 262-1658, e-mail: info@navyarms.com, Website: www.navyarms.com

New Model 1911 Pistol

From Smith & Wesson

Smith & Wesson introduces its new Model SW1911 version of the historic John Browning classic .45 caliber semi-automatic pistol. The SW1911 features stainless steel construction, a five-inch barrel, three-dot sights, a drop safety not connected to the trigger assembly, an extended beavertail and a S&W-style external extractor. Included is a pair of



eight-round magazine clips. Contact Smith & Wesson, 2100 Roosevelt Ave., Springfield, MA 01104-1698, telephone: [413] 781-8300, FAX: [747] 3317, Website: www.smith-wesson.com

Aluminum Grips for 1911s

From Alumagrips

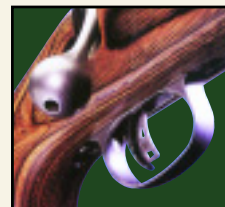
Alumagrips offers a line of new T-6 aircraft-grade aluminum grips for the full-size Colt Model 1911, 1911 Commander, Officers Model and similar .45 pistols from Kimber and Springfield Armory. Custom options include ambidextrous safety cuts and magazine well cuts. Grip color choices include clear, black, and bronze anodized. Custom personalized grips with up to three letters or numbers and nickel and 24k plating are also available. Contact Chris Lynch at Alumagrips, 2851 North 34th Place, Mesa, AZ 85231, telephone: [602] 294-2390, e-mail: sales@alumagrips.com, Website: www.alumagrips.com



New "AccuTrigger"

From Savage Arms

The new AccuTrigger from Savage Arms is infinitely adjustable between 1½ lbs. and six lbs., without danger of accidental discharge and the



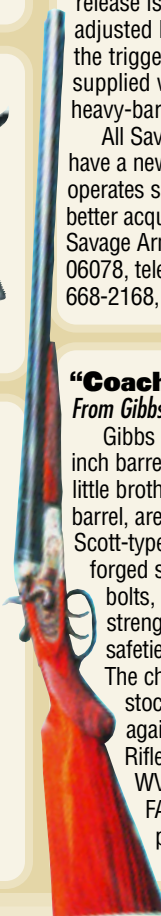
release is crisp with no creep. The trigger is adjusted by removing the stock and rotating the trigger return spring with a special tool supplied with all Savage varmint, LE and heavy-barrel long range rifles.

All Savage rifles built with the AccuTrigger have a new teardrop, three-position safety that operates smoother and quieter, while providing better acquisition of the safety button. Contact Savage Arms, 118 Mountain Rd., Suffield, CT 06078, telephone: [800] 235-1821, FAX: [860] 668-2168, Website: www.savagearms.com

"Coach Rider" Shotgun

From Gibbs Rifle Co.

Gibbs Rifle Company's new 12-gauge, 22-inch barreled Coach Rider side-by-side and its little brother, the Bar Keep with a 20-inch barrel, are classic hammer shotguns with W.C. Scott-type top levers. Each feature modern forged steel receivers with Purdy under bolts, barrel extension locks for added strength, double triggers and sliding safeties on the top tang under the thumb. The checkered, polished walnut pistol grip stocks are oil finished for protection against the elements. Contact Gibbs Rifle Co., 211 Lawn St., Martinsburg, WV 25401, telephone: [304] 262-1651, FAX: [304] 262-1678, e-mail: support@gibbsrifle.com, Website: www.gibbsrifle.com



New Highlander Shotgun

From Franchi

The new Franchi Highlander side-by-side shotgun is specifically designed for upland bird hunters. The Highlander is available in choice of 12, 20 or 28 gauge and features an A-grade polished English walnut stock, scalloped and engraved receiver and a single gold mechanical trigger. The 26-inch barrel is polished blued steel complete with shell extractors and traditional red Silvers-style recoil pad. Comes with a fitted hard case. Contact Benelli USA, 17603 Indian Head Hwy, Accokeek, MD 20607-2501



Blackie Collins Bowie Knife

From MeyerCo USA

Famed designer Blackie Collins has created a new affordable Bowie knife for Meyerco USA. The new Bowie features sturdy 440 stainless construction in choice of 4, 6½ or 9-inch blade lengths. The full tang ensures maximum control and the polished hardwood handle has a sturdy ring attached to the cap. Comes with western frontier-style sheath. Contact Meyerco USA, 4481 Exchange Service Dr., Dallas, TX 75236, telephone: [214] 467-8949, FAX: [214] 467-9241, e-mail: meyerco@bnfusa.com, Website: www.meyercousa.com



Ultra Carry Damascus .45 Pistol

From Uselton Arms

Uselton Arms has added a stunning new titanium/Damascus finish to its high performance Ultra Carry .45 semi-automatic pistol. Other key features include U.S. Tactical sights, gray stain exotic rosewood grips, three-inch barrel and 7+1 cartridge capacity. The overall length is seven inches and the unloaded weight is 27 ounces.

For a free color brochure detailing the complete line of .45 pistols, contact Rick Uselton at Uselton Arms, 842 Conference Dr., Goodlettsville, TN 37072, telephone: [615] 851-4919, FAX: [615] 851-8811, Website: www.useltons.com



Bagmaster Adds New Colors

Bagmaster's popular line of Pro-Shooter Bags, Mini Range Bags, Rectangular Pistol Pouches and related carry bags and acces-



sories are now available in red, brown and purple. Bagmaster's products are also available in black, hunter green and navy and royal blue. Products in the new colors are also covered by Bagmaster's lifetime guarantee against defects in materials or workmanship. Bagmaster will repair or replace any product covered under the lifetime warranty. For a free catalog, contact Bagmaster, 2731 Sutton Ave., St/ Louis, MO 63143, telephone: [314] 781-8002, FAX: [314] 781-3363, Website: www.bagmaster.com

New Long Gun Vault

From GunVault

GunVault introduces the new Long Gun Vault to its line of fine security products. The Long Gun Vault features the "No Eyes" keypad that allows instant access in total darkness. When activated, the keypad triggers an omni-directional spring-loaded door for instant access. The Long Gun Vault is crafted from high tensile strength aluminum alloy with pry-resistant fittings. Other features include a motion detector with user-adjustable sensitivity, an audible alarm activated by the unit's motion detector and a "Security Sleep Mode" that disables the keypad after 24 incorrect entries. Contact GunVault, 2205 W. Lone Cactus Dr., Ste.C-21, Phoenix, AZ 85027, telephone: [623] 445-0309, FAX: [623] 445-0310, e-mail: gunvault@aol.com, Website: www.gunvault.com



New R1 Auto Loading Rifle

From Benelli USA

The new Model R1 is Benelli's first autoloading rifle. The R1 is gas-operated, has interchangeable barrels, a stainless steel upper receiver for secure scope mounting, cryogenically treated free-floating barrel and an aluminum lower receiver in choice of anodized or nickel-plated finish. The buttstock and forend are crafted from select walnut with a radical and distinctive recoil pad and a finger groove configuration. The R1 is initially available in .30-'06 and .300 Win. Mag calibers. Contact Benelli USA, 17603 Indian Head Hwy., Accokeek, MD 20607, telephone: [301] 283-6981, FAX: [301] 283-6988, Website: www.benelliusa.com



New .17 HMR Revolver

From Taurus Inter'al

Taurus International has introduced its new eight-shot, small frame revolver chambered for the popular .17 HMR cartridge. Pictured is the matte stainless steel finish version with five-inch barrel, adjustable sights and hammer-forged frame. The Taurus logo medallion is recessed into the soft rubber pebbled grips. Contact Taurus International, 16175 NW 49th Ave., Miami, FL 33014-1115, telephone: (305) 624-1115, FAX: (305) 623-7506, Website: www.taurususa.com



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RIFLEMAN BY DAVE ANDERSON

Anschutz 1717D HB

Anschutz is one of the great names in firearms. The name is synonymous with the highest quality of craftsmanship. Anschutz rifles have dominated international and Olympic smallbore and air rifle competition for decades.

Anschutz is now chambering rifles for the wildly successful .17 Hornady Magnum Rimfire (HMR) cartridge. Skeptics who insisted the .17 HMR would never catch on better rethink their predictions. Anschutz is not a company that introduces changes based on short-term trends.

In fact, the only other cartridges for which the company offers rifles are the .22 LR, .22 Magnum, .22 Hornet and .222 Rem., proven classics all (the youngest, the .22 Magnum, is over 40 years old). Clearly Anschutz believes there is a big demand for the cartridge and that it is destined to find favor with shooters.

The test rifle on loan is the model 1717D HB. The "D" indicates it has a single-stage trigger, "HB" indicates heavy barrel. The rifle is based on the fabulous model 54 match action. It exemplifies quality and craftsmanship.

The walnut stock is properly inletted, shaped, hand checkered and finished. The steel of the action and barrel is beautifully machined, polished and blued. The bolt operates with silky precision. Anschutz barrels are button rifled, target crowned, and chambered to minimum dimensions. And the trigger pull... talk about joy.

I guess this is a little overwrought, but I'm about worn out with these rough, scratchy, heavy triggers on so many new rifles. Yes, I do understand the liability issues but that doesn't make them any easier to shoot or accept.

Right out of the box, the Anschutz trigger weighed 35 ounces, ice-crisp, virtually motionless, exactly the same every time. Everyone who tries it marvels at the quality. It struck me once again how few shooters have ever used a really good trigger, and what an important factor it is in good shooting.

The Anschutz trigger is fully adjustable over a weight range of 1 to 2 kilograms (approximately 2.2 to 4.4 pounds) and for takeup and overtravel. Adjustments should be made by a

qualified gunsmith, though it's unlikely any will be necessary.

The wing safety on the left rear of the bolt positively locks the firing pin. Pressing it down puts the safety in the "on" position where it is well protected from accidental release. The four-shot detachable magazine proved secure and reliable. Functionally, the Anschutz operated smoothly and reliably in every respect.

Optical Options

The test target provided with the rifle showed a five-shot group measuring .486 inches, fired at 100 meters (approximately 110 yards). Presumably this was fired on a windless indoor range. The 1717D's action is grooved for rimfire-type scope rings, and is also drilled and tapped should the owner wish to use a different style of scope base.

I used Weaver rings in the receiver grooves to fit a 3.5-10x Weaver Grand Slam scope. Shooting outdoors at 100 yards, I couldn't equal the test target, with five-shot groups typically in the .65-inch range. There were a couple of bragging-size groups around the half-inch mark, but also a few that approached 1 inch.

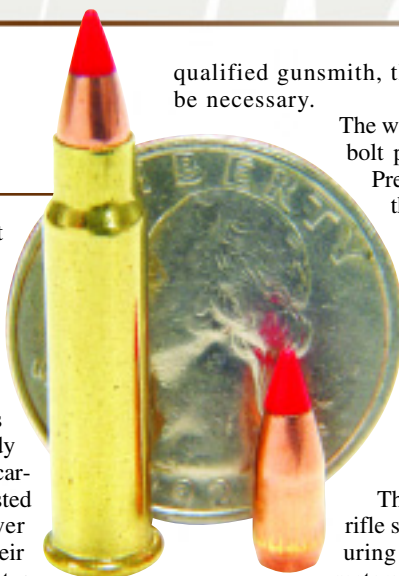
I'm sure the variation is not due to the rifle or ammunition, but to my rather mediocre wind-doping abilities. With (by rimfire standards) its high ballistic coefficient and velocity, the .17 HMR actually resists the wind better than do the .22 LR or .22 Magnum. Nonetheless, even a five mile per hour crosswind moves the bullet a couple of inches.

Minor Improvement

About the only change I'd make to this outstanding rifle would be to add sling swivel studs. The makers evidently felt the rifle would most often be fired from a rest rather than carried long distances. Even so I'd prefer studs, as the front stud can be used to fit a bipod. This is scarcely a problem, as you or your gunsmith can easily add these.

The heavy barrel model certainly does hold steady and shoots well from a rest, though personally I prefer the easier carrying and handling qualities of the lighter barrel. Barrel heating, which can be a problem with centerfire varmint cartridges, is hardly an issue with the .17 HMR. This of course is just personal choice.

There are simply no better rimfire rifles in the world than those from Anschutz. That legendary quality along with the hot .17 HMR cartridge makes a superb combination.



FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

www.anschuetz-sport.com

CAMPFIRE TALES

BY JOHN TAFFIN

MEMORIES

It was morning. Charlie Holden opened his eyes and stared at the ceiling as he had done every day, all day, for the past three years. This had been his life since that terrible day when the unknown pain suddenly struck him. When he awoke, he found himself exactly as he was now, staring at the ceiling. He could not move. He could not talk. He could not communicate with those who served in his room at the Veterans Home, nor with those dear old friends who came to visit him.

They still came regularly to see him, and it must have been just as painful for them as it was for him, not knowing whether he could understand them or not. He understood every word. And perhaps that made it worse — not being able to talk back to them and let them know that inside he was okay.

It would be easy for Charlie to feel sorry for himself. One thing prevented him from doing so, actually two things. First, he was too much of a man to fall into the “Woe is me!” trap, and secondly, perhaps more importantly, were the memories he held dear.

Those memories kept him going every day. Day, after endless day, after endless day. Memories of the good times, the wonderful people, and even the great guns he had enjoyed during most of his life. He ran through those memories every morning and when he reached the end; he started all over again. It gave him strength. It kept him going.

He thought first of Grandpap. John Jeremiah Holden had been his first hero. Grandpap had served under Theodore Roosevelt during the Spanish-American War. He came home wounded, but he brought back with him wonderful stories of TR as well as his cavalry model Colt Single Action Army. It was the first gun Charlie had ever fired.

To an eight-year old boy, it kicked like the proverbial mule, but Charlie loved the black powder smoke and the feel of the well worn, one-piece walnut stocks in his hand. He would never forget his 16th birthday, when Grandpap presented him with the old Colt. The blued finish was long gone, but Grandpap had engraved it with “John Jeremiah and Charlie Holden. Pals Forever.” before presenting it to him.

No, he would never forget *that* birthday, nor would he ever forget Grandpap. Another of the things that kept him going was the hope that when he went Home he would see Grandpap again. He just had to. He never quite got around to telling Grandpap how much he meant to him and how much he loved him while he was alive.

Then Charlie’s thoughts shifted to Theodore Roosevelt Holden, Grandpap’s son and his father. Dad had served in the worst of the fighting of WWI, but

managed to survive and return home to marry his high school sweetheart. Throughout their lives together, they were extremely happy on their 640 acres, and Charlie had to be the luckiest kid in the world. He wondered how kids today survived without having a dad like “TR”, as he was known.

Dad also had a .45, his service revolver, a Colt 1917 Model .45. Charlie didn’t know which .45 he liked the best, and he was glad he never had to choose. On his wedding day, his dad gave him that Colt. This second .45 had also been engraved with, “The Holdens: John, TR, and Charlie.” Charlie got something in both his eyes when he saw that!

On December 8, 1941, Charlie carried on the family tradition and enlisted in the Army. Now the Holden family had a new Colt .45, as Charlie carried a Government Model in the Pacific Theater. Once again, a Holden was in the fiercest of battles but was fortunate to return home unscathed and with his own .45. Three Holdens — all returning from battle with three .45s. And then came Vietnam.

His oldest son had enlisted right out of high school, and when he left for Southeast Asia, Charlie gave him the .45 Government Model. It was now engraved with “John Jeremiah, TR, Charlie, and John II, Holdens All.” Three Holdens had gone to war, three had come home, but the Holden luck had run out. John Jeremiah Holden II never made it home. By some miracle, Charlie got the .45 back.

By this time, Charlie was “Grandpap” himself to a grandson who never had the privilege of growing up with his own father. Charlie did everything he could to take his son’s place, and when he tried to give his grandson all three .45s, he knew he had succeeded:

“Grandpap, I love you and I love these three Colt .45s, but you know the new military museum has just opened south of town, and this part of Holden family history belongs out there where everyone can see them.”

Charlie could not remember when he had ever felt so proud. And now his grandson was in the Special Forces in Afghanistan. Charlie prayed every day that someday his grandson would walk through that door once again and visit his Grandpap.

Charlie didn’t know how much time he had left. It already seemed as if he had spent an eternity in this bed. He wished he could somehow tell people not to feel sorry for him, nor to mourn when he was finally released from this captivity. He hoped the service they would have for him would be a celebration. A celebration of the wonderful life he was privileged to live and all the great memories that he still had.



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