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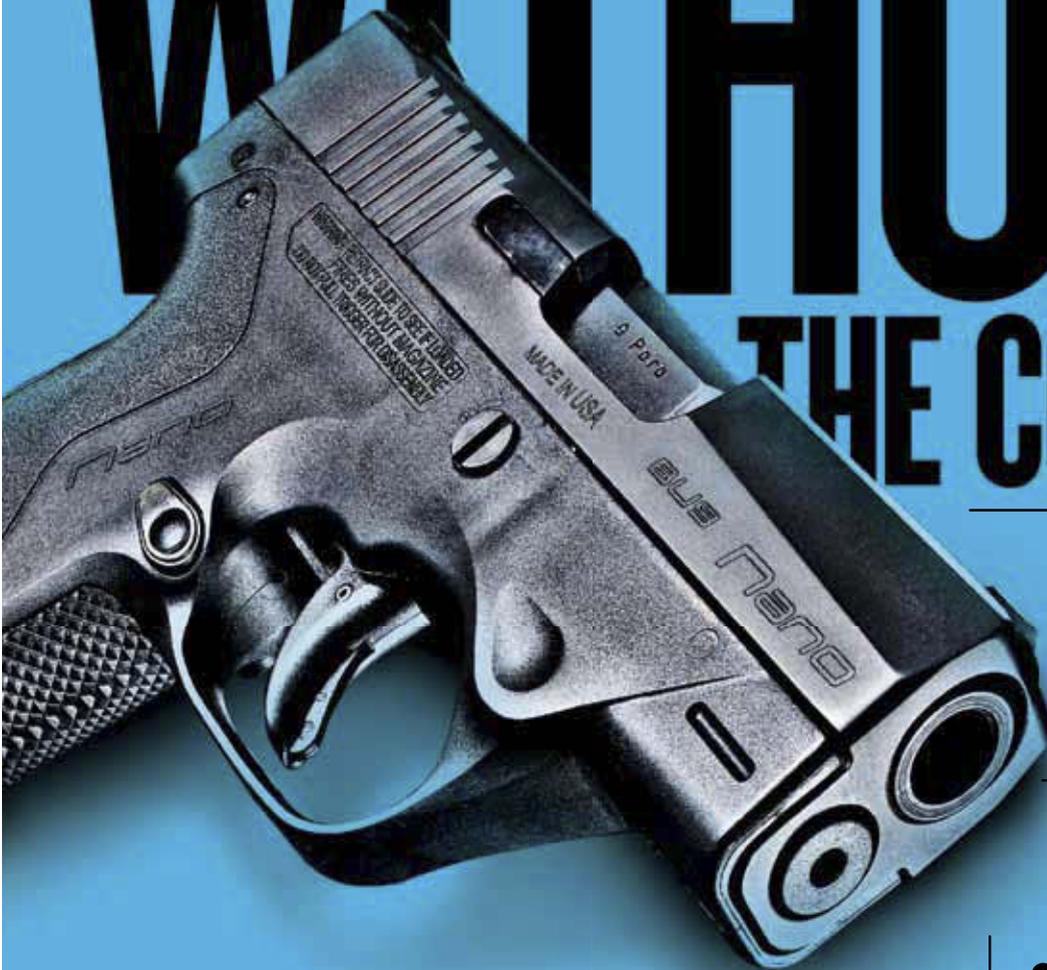
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**92**



**38** SCOTTWERX  
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**26** HK MP5  
.22 LR



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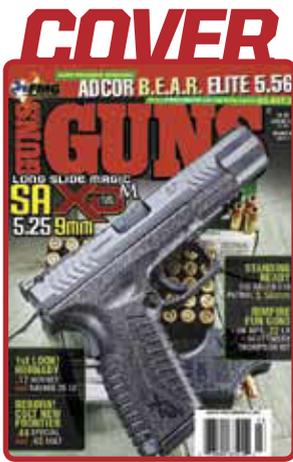
**12** RELOADING THE .40  
SMITH & WESSON

## COLUMNS

- 6** CROSSFIRE  
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
- 8** HANDGUNS  
MASSAD AYOOB
- 12** HANDLOADING  
JOHN BARSNESS
- 16** RANGING SHOTS™  
CLINT SMITH
- 20** UP ON ARs  
GLEN ZEDIKER
- 24** RIFLEMAN  
DAVE ANDERSON
- 26** RIMFIRES  
HOLT BODINSON
- 30** MONTANA MUSINGS  
MIKE "DUKE" VENTURINO
- 72** KNIVES  
PAT COVERT
- 74** VIEWS, NEWS & REVIEWS  
RIGHTS WATCH: DAVID CODREA
- 94** ODD ANGRY SHOT  
JOHN CONNOR
- 98** CAMPFIRE TALES  
JOHN TAFFIN

## DEPARTMENTS

- 34** SURPLUS LOCKER™  
JAPAN'S TYPE 30 RIFLE  
HOLT BODINSON
- 38** OUT OF THE BOX™  
TOMMY FUN GUN  
J.B. WOOD
- 42** QUESTIONS & ANSWERS  
JEFF JOHN
- 85** QUARTERMASTER  
Featuring GUNS All-stars!  
THIS MONTH:  
• JACOB GOTTFREDSON
- 88** GUNS CLASSIFIEDS
- 89** CUSTOM CORNER
- 90** NEW PRODUCTS
- 92** GUN OF THE MONTH
- 96** ADVERTISER INDEX



**SPRINGFIELD  
ARMORY  
XD(M) 5.25**



**48**

## FEATURES

**44 THE BEST OF ALL WORLDS**  
Colt's "new" New Frontiers have the handling and balance of the venerable SAA with fully adjustable sights.

**JOHN TAFFIN**

**48 LONG SLIDE MAGIC**  
Springfield Armory XD(M) 5.25.

**MASSAD AYOOB**

**54 FOUR FAVORITES**  
Bonding with handguns.

**MIKE "DUKE" VENTURINO**

**58 MAKE IT COUNT**  
Shot placement on big game.

**JOHN BARSNESS**

**64 MIGHTY TINY-MITE**  
Hornady's new .17 Hornet.

**MARK HAMPTON**

**68 STANDING READY**  
SIG SAUER's 516 Patrol rifle.

**JACOB GOTTFREDSON**



**44**

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**64**

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# CROSSFIRE

## LETTERS TO GUNS

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### Meeting Duke

While attending the CMP Western Games last October, I got to meet one of my favorite gunwriters, Mike Venturino. I've always respected his knowledge and writing. Now that I've spent some time talking with him, I know he is a "real person" and was as friendly and open with me as if I had known him for years, instead of just an hour. I hope his "Montana Musings" column and other writing appear here for many years. I enjoy your magazine very much and have been a subscriber for quite a few years. By the way, I enjoy Conner also but always read Mike's column first.

*Mike Soock  
via e-mail*

### High Angle Shooting

Kudos for Robbie's photography of the Baer Match Rifle and Jacob G's article on high-angle shootin'. One of the most useful expositions I've seen in a lo-o-o-ong time. I hear good things about Mil Dot Master, but until I decide to get one (here in the Sonoran flat land) JG's article is an excellent reference.

*Barrett Tillman  
via e-mail*

### X vs. Y

Finally! A gun magazine stated what many of us have known for years. I'm referring to "Cartridge X vs. Cartridge Y" by Dave Anderson in the December issue.

After running a gun club for 32 years and doing time behind the gun counter, I get bored listening and reading about senseless debates over which is the best big game cartridge, or which is the best handgun round for self defense.

When everyone is finished nitpicking about caliber, bullet weight, velocity and bullet drop, my contribution is always succinct: "What can you hit with what you've got?"

*Ron Brault  
Twentynine Palms, Calif.*

### SAA Speed

I read with great interest Clint Smith's article "True Grit: The Colt SAA For Self Defense" in the March 2011 issue. As an original Thunder Ranch Regulator, and attendee of Clint's pre 1900's courses, I felt a

#### 1ST ROUND ON TARGET (TRUE CONCEALED CARRY)

GUN (MODEL)	TIME (SECONDS)
1911	2.75
SAA	2.60
Peacemaker SAA	1.31

#### 5 ROUNDS ON TARGET (TRUE CONCEALED CARRY)

GUN (MODEL)	TIME (SECONDS)
1911	4.50
SAA	5.20
Peacemaker SAA	2.89

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Peacemaker SAA	7.65

#### SHOOT UNTIL EMPTY, RELOAD AND SHOOT UNTIL EMPTY

GUN (MODEL)	TIME (SECONDS)
1911	13.40 (15 rounds total)
SAA	34.00 (10 rounds total)
Peacemaker SAA	15.88 (10 rounds total)

Note: Top two times from Clint Smith and Duke Venturino

properly-tuned Colt Peacemaker like the ones we customize here might be able to match or improve on the times achieved by Mike Venturino.

Shooting an early 2nd generation 4-3/4" .45 Colt with a Deluxe Gunslinger Action Job for enhanced shooting speed and reliability, my buddy and I set up the exact same test. I chose a Thad Rybka Holster and Carhartt ranch coat for true "concealed carry," a Milpark target at 5 yards, and Pact timer.

I was able to reduce the Revolver times by approximately 50 percent across the board, and improve on all but one of the 1911 times.

I'd like to thank Clint Smith for all his insight and instruction and Mike "Duke" Venturino for his dedication to the Colt Peacemaker that helped inspire me to shoot my Colts.

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**Advertising:** Scott McGregor, 800.553.7780

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**ONLINE ADVERTISING MANAGER:** Tracy Moore,

TEL: 888.651.7566, FAX 858.605.0205

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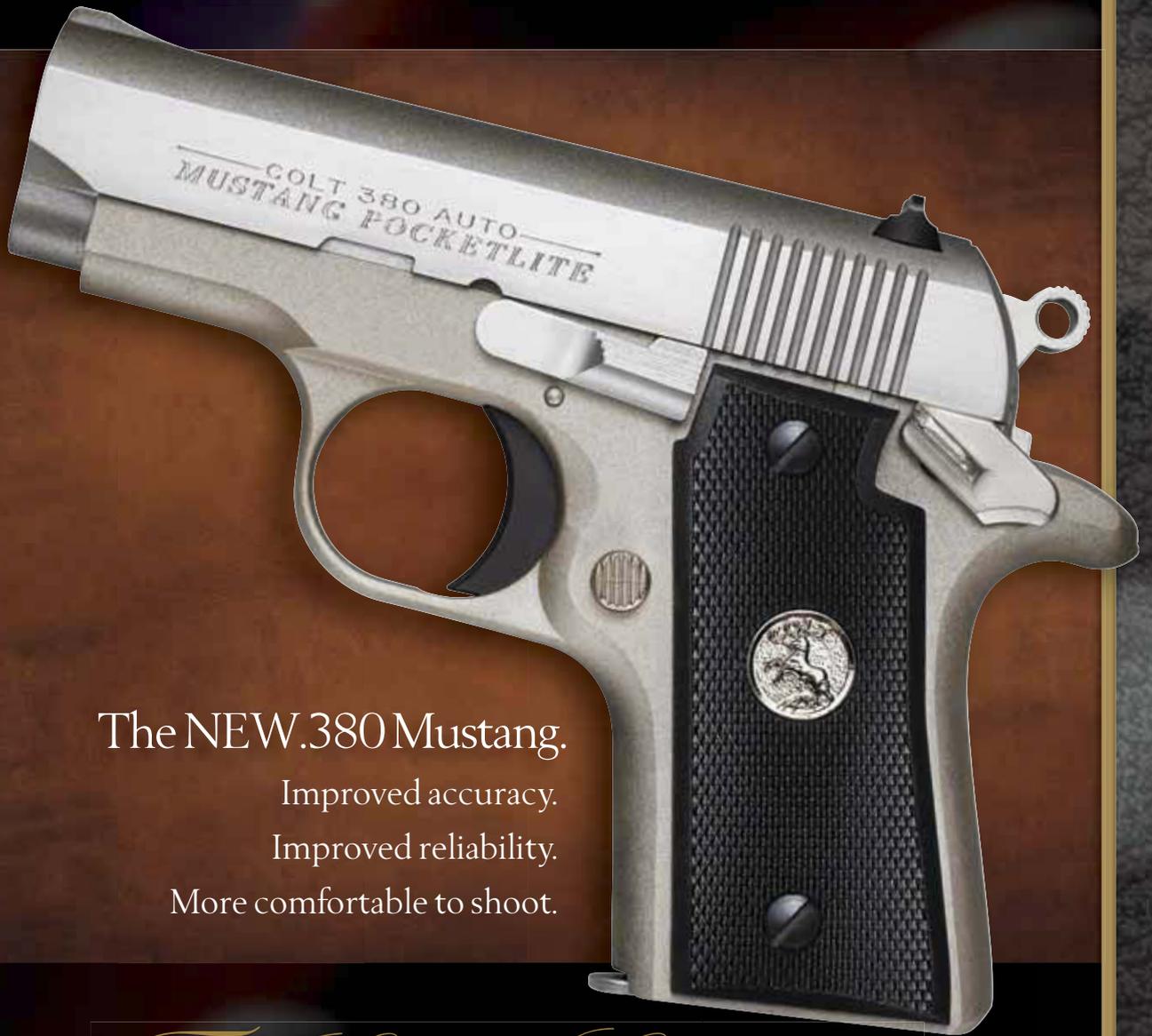
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# HANDGUNS

STORY: Massad Ayoob PHOTOS: Gail Pepin

## THE RATIONALE OF COMBAT HANDGUN COMPETITION

Why do defensive handgun owners shoot “combat matches”? For the same reason professional fighters spar.

In my new book *Combat Shooting* from the Gun Digest folks, I make the point that, “A shooting match is not a gunfight, but a gunfight most definitely is a shooting match.” It follows the person most acclimated to shooting fast and straight under pressure is going to have an advantage, whether the stakes on the table are a trophy or survival.

I was reminded of this at the South Mountain Shootout, a regional championship sponsored by Phoenix Rod & Gun Club in Arizona under the auspices of the International Defensive Pistol Association. A well-trained crew set up and ran eight scenarios replicating potential gunfight situations, and well over 100 shooters drew carry-suitable guns from under concealment garments to see who could indeed shoot “fastest and straightest.” The match was run efficiently and fairly: the “level playing field” in action.

Stage One was a pure skill test: non-dominant hand only, dominant hand only, both hands and in between, a “tactical reload” that let you top off the gun to full capacity without throwing away a few precious

remaining rounds you might need in a few seconds if things got worse. I’ve talked to guys who survived shooting weak-hand who would have been killed otherwise because their strong hand was out of commission, and can’t help but notice that in some 40 years of NYPD gunfights, 38 percent or more have been 1-handed shooting events.

In other stages, targets charged at you the moment you opened a door, and you had less than two seconds to pump six shots into them to effect a “stop.” One stage had two targets simultaneously exposed for less than two seconds for two shots apiece. Another required you to “rescue the hostage from the hostage-taker” by shooting an 8” plate off the shoulder of each of two “hostage” targets from



Jacob Hetherington, 14 (above), was First Master in Stock Service Pistol division as well as High Junior. From 10 yards behind replicated cover, Gail Pepin’s Springfield XD(M) (below) blows away a plate (arrow) representing a hostage-taker’s head.



10 yards. (Tougher than dueling with one shot apiece at each other at the same 19th century standard of 10 paces, with nothing intervening, yes?)

Mobsters who you fear want to kill you, charge into the barbershop while you’re in the chair, draped in a sheet over your coat and your gun. When it happened to Murder, Inc., crime figure Albert Anastasia in 1957, he was killed in place. When it happened at South Mountain Showdown, you had to rip the barber’s bib away, get under your concealing garment, and draw and shoot back, carefully avoiding innocent bystander targets.

The contestants were white and black and all shades in between. Male and female. Young and old. This kind



Arizona sun catches smoke and brass as this shooter hoses a fast-charging target with his 1911.



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**Not caught napping, Mas (above) throws off the barber's sheet and goes for his S&W 686. Arlan Avery (below) shows excellent "weak hand only" control with his Kimber .45 Auto.**



of shooting isn't just for prime-of-life athletes. At least one of the division champions was in his 60s, and the First Master in the most popular gun division, Stock Service Pistol, was also High Junior: Jacob Hetherington, age 14.

Don't tell me you don't have a suitable gun, or that you can't afford competitive hardware. Erick Van Haaster won the Custom Defense Pistol division with an economy-priced Taurus PT1911, beating all the other single-action .45s. The Enhanced Service Pistol division is for single-action 9mm, .38 Super and .40 pistols: the Springfield XDs compete here, and I've seen them win, though this year's victory went to Kurt Arnold with a Predator 1911 9mm.

You prefer a double-action auto, or perhaps, something in a polymer frame/striker fired format? This was by far the most heavily populated category, and Brian Bakke won it with the best score of the match by far, shooting a Smith & Wesson M&P Pro 9mm auto.

For geezers and atavists, there are sixgun divisions too. Enhanced Service Revolver, for moon-clipped wheelguns, was captured by Bob Lee with a Jerry Miculek signature model S&W Model 625 in .45 ACP. I managed to capture the Stock Service Revolver title for wheelguns using speedloaders for the second straight year with a Smith & Wesson Model 686 tuned by Bob Lloyd, and firing Winchester .38 Special ammunition.

### Bottom Line

In that *Combat Shooting* book from Gun Digest, I talk about champion shooters who were also champions in terms of winning gunfights. Men like Jim Cirillo and Bill Allard of the NYPD Stakeout Squad, and Col. Charles Askins, Jr. From SEAL Team 6 to the FBI's Hostage Rescue Unit, professionals train in live-fire scenarios for the day when they'll have to do it for real. IDPA puts something

similar to that at your disposal, at a club near you.

Professionals call it "crisis rehearsal." From weddings to gunfights, important things are rehearsed for a reason: to make sure we get them right for The Real Thing.

It's not about the trophies, it's about that Crisis Rehearsal. Go to a well-run match like South Mountain and resolve to participate. Don't worry about coming in last place, because even if you do end up there, you'll still be well ahead of a few thousand dudes who think they're cool, but didn't have the guts to do what you just did, and test their skills in front of an audience. **GUNS**

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# HANDLOADING

STORY: John Barsness

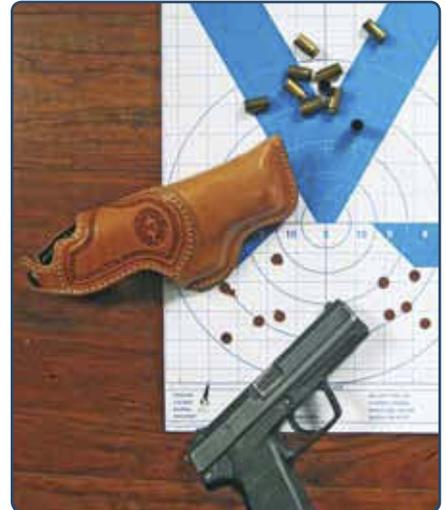
## ENDURING IN THE MIDDLE Reloading the .40 Smith & Wesson

**W**hile the 9mm Parabellum and .45 ACP enjoy enduring popularity, these days the .40 Smith & Wesson certainly ranks just about as high as them among Americans who buy handguns for self-defense. Or at least that's the conclusion many of us come to when informally surveying sporting goods stores and shooting ranges. Not only are there lots of .40s available, both new and used, but when visiting my local range it's rare not to discover just about as many escaped .40 S&W cases as 9mms and .45 ACPs.

The .40 S&W was developed by Winchester and Smith & Wesson specifically as a law-enforcement compromise after the notorious 1986 shoot-out in Miami between eight FBI agents and two bank robbers. While both criminals were killed, so were two agents, and it was obvious the limited firepower of the FBI's .38 Special revolvers was part of the problem.

At first the FBI adopted the 10mm Auto developed by Jeff Cooper, but soon discovered the average agent couldn't handle the recoil of the 10mm, and the larger pistols also presented carry problems. The .40

S&W's case is the 10mm shortened .142", allowing the .40 to function in autoloaders designed around the 9mm Parabellum. The FBI found a 170- to 180-grain bullet at 900 to 1,000 feet per second achieved their desired ballistic performance, with recoil light enough for most agents to shoot accurately. All of this, not so oddly, paralleled the history of the .41 Magnum revolver cartridge, promoted as a more powerful police round by Elmer Keith in the 1960s. Like Cooper, Keith was well known for being relatively recoil-proof. Most police officers simply couldn't handle full-power .41 loads, and didn't much



*John's HK USP definitely prefers cast bullets (right hand group) over jacketed.*

like carrying the S&W Model 58 revolver. The .41 instead turned into a round for hunters who want to be different, and not carry a .44 Magnum.

In 1988, Smith & Wesson introduced the .40 in their new Model 4006 pistol, though Glock actually delivered guns to dealers before S&W. Despite some naysayers, the .40 S&W took off pretty quickly among civilians, and has become one of the standard rounds for law enforcement. A few shooters still dislike the .40, especially those who firmly believe the .45 ACP is still the ultimate cartridge for autoloading pistols, but the .40 continues to increase in popularity, even figuring in action beyond its original design parameters.

When bear enthusiast Timothy Treadwell and his girlfriend were killed and eaten by at least one brown bear in Katmai National Park on the Alaska Peninsula, park rangers armed with .40s and 12-gauge shotguns killed two bears. Most civilians who buy .40s are primarily interested in self-defense against humans, but quite a few in western Montana (where I live) carry .40s rather than large revolvers when in grizzly country, due to the very reason it was designed: They can shoot more accurately with a .40 than with a .44 Magnum, much less a .500 S&W.

Of course, many other woods wanderers adamantly maintain that the .40 ain't any sort of bear round,



*John has tested a lot of .40 S&W loads over the past year in both a SIG SAUER P226 and a Heckler & Koch USP.*

though many of these folks have never even seen a grizzly, much less charged by one. Still, the arguments rage back and forth, especially on the Internet. Personally, I have been charged by a couple of grizzlies, and can't imagine choosing a handgun as my primary bear defense, though I've carried my own .40, a Heckler & Koch USP, a few times in grizzly-free country, on the same Norm Schertenleib shoulder-sling used for my Taurus .44 Magnum, though with another holster Norm made for the HK. The .40 will definitely do for mountain lions, black bears or 2-legged predators if by some remote chance any of the three threatens me while fishing or hiking.

The .40 S&W wasn't meant to be a target round, and the three I've handloaded for haven't matched the average big-bore revolver in accuracy. This is sort of beside the point, as 2" to 3" 5-shot groups at 25 yards are accurate enough to dispatch 200-pound varmints in any close encounter. Most people who buy a .40 are looking for an easily shootable (and packable) handgun with more magazine capacity than a big-bore revolver.

My HK was purchased "pre-owned" a number of years ago and has become even more used since.

### SIG SAUER P226 EXTREME 4.4" BARREL .40 S&W HANDLOADED AMMO PERFORMANCE

BULLET (BRAND, BULLET WEIGHT, TYPE)	POWDER (BRAND)	CHARGE (GRAINS WEIGHT)	VELOCITY (FPS)	GROUP SIZE (INCHES)
NOSLER 150 HP	AA No. 5	8.7	1,115	2.98
NOSLER 150 HP	Longshot	9.0	1,245	2.35
WINCHESTER 165 HP	N350	7.0	1,075	2.59
SIERRA 180 HP	Blue Dot	8.5	973	2.26
SIERRA 180 HP	Longshot	7.5	1,150	2.97
NOSLER 200 HP	Longshot	6.0	961	3.63

Notes: All handloads used Federal cases and CCI 500 primers.

### HK USP 4" BARREL .40 S&W HANDLOADED AMMO PERFORMANCE

BULLET (BRAND, BULLET WEIGHT, TYPE)	POWDER (BRAND)	CHARGE (GRAINS WEIGHT)	VELOCITY (FPS)	GROUP SIZE (INCHES)
NOSLER 150 HP	Power Pistol	8.0	1,196	3.25
NOSLER 150 HP	Longshot	9.0	1,318	2.97
SAECO 155 SWC	True Blue	6.5	997	2.17
SAECO 155 SWC	Blue Dot	10.0	1,103	1.91
WINCHESTER 165 HP	N350	7.0	1,038	3.75
SIERRA 180 HP	Blue Dot	8.5	949	3.86
NOSLER 200 HP	Longshot	6.0	1,062	3.31

Notes: All handloads used Federal cases and CCI 500 primers.

It will put five rounds of cast-bullet practice loads into less than 2" at 25 yards, but I've yet to find a jacketed-bullet load that will consistently shoot better than 3"—and don't really care,

because the gun hasn't yet bobbled with any sort of correctly assembled ammunition.

Of late, some newer powders have been getting a workout, in both the HK

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and the SIG SAUER P226 reviewed in the December 2011 issue. Some are even so "good," in fact, that they easily exceed the FBI's parameters for easy shooting. Probably the overall winner was Hodgdon Longshot, but several other new powders also worked well, perhaps in part because they were at least partially developed with the popular .40 Smith & Wesson in mind.

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# RANGING SHOTS

STORY: Clint Smith PHOTOS: Heidi Smith

## CLICKS AND BOOMS Both can be very loud.

**A**lthough it is construed by many to be boring, I am somewhat intrigued with the general aspects of the safe handling of guns, and since *I do it every day* it is important to me. The versions of particular interest to me are what I call the click-and-boom version of gun handling. Generally speaking, two things in life are very loud in the overall audio spectrum: a gun going click when it supposed to go boom, and a gun going boom when it is supposed to go click.

So I thought I would tell you a few stories about click and booms as I approach the age sometimes referred to as the “golden years.”

### The Girl And The Finger!

I have this girl I've hung out with for at least the last 14 years—my wife Heidi. She is a bright chick and quite an accomplished shooter in her own right. Even more importantly, she can teach a firearms class very well across a broad spectrum of guns. A while ago she and I were teaching an Urban rifle class. Rifles, like other weapons in training, often require movement—you know, to do all the really cool operator stuff. This one “operator” in

*A steel-toed boot versus a 12-gauge shotgun. Yes, that is daylight through the boot. No toes where killed in the staging of this photo.*



the class, unfortunately, was a bunch of pounds overweight and couldn't go to prone or kneeling, “cause my knee's bad.” Yeah, the knee is bad because of the buncha pounds “we” are overweight.

Anyway, Heidi and I do a drill where students do a back-and-forth sort of movement to make or break contact. As a school/training institution, we have done it well and correctly without incident for 28 years. Heidi told this dude for a day and a half to get his finger off his trigger while he is not on the target (I think that's a basic rule?). So you guessed it. While moving back and forth out of breath, overweight and finger on the trigger, he took the safety off and torches one into the ground. By the grace of a higher being, no one is hurt and it was basically a “wet spot in our shorts” drill. Coolly, the girl goes forward and reprimands him firmly—he had it coming.

So a suggestion for anyone who wants to go to a shooting school, shoot in a 3-gun match, be a cool tactical operator and other such folks: Lose some weight, go for a walk, tie your own shoe strings, don't eat stuff bigger than a human head at one sitting—and keep your finger off the trigger until the sights are on the target. And before everyone launches on the editor, eat what you want and be what you want, but try to be what you are, not what you imagine you are. I can climb every hill around where I live, but some I climb slower than others. And I can always remember

what I was in the “good ol' days.” In reality, what I am today is something other than what I remember being when I was younger.

My Mom had a saying as we grew up as kids, “Act your age.” Solid advice from an 84-year-old sage.

### Snappy Cappy

In another rifle school, a father and son showed up. Nice folks, they were shooting hunting-type rifles, and apparently well disciplined to their world—sort of. Well, we worked the first day, and at day's end the students moved their rifles to a setup or safe area line so they could clean barrels, and we could do range clean up and all the admin junk. So all goes well and the boy comes after a bit of rifle cleaning and asked, “Can I put my snap cap in my .270 bolt action?”

And I said, “Why?” He said so he could “...let the striker down, relieving firing-pin spring tension.”

I said, “Yeah, but why don't you just check the chamber, check the mag well, check the chamber, check the mag well, point it in a safe direction, safety off, and gently close the bolt on the empty chamber, while your finger is on the trigger (and the muzzle in a safe direction)? Then the pressure will be off the striker.”

“Cool. You can do that?” he said.

“Yes, and then you are not screwing around with stuff in the chamber—which is a very bad idea,” I said.

He did his Winchester .270 empty chamber thing. Life is grand. He and Dad leave and went to the fiddle table near the classroom. Well, after a bit, I drove by and the Dad came forward long in the face.

“What?” I asked. He said, “I had a FUBAR” (you can find the general meaning in a Google search).

### I Say, “A Wha-a-at?”

He said, and I quote, “I put my snap cap that wasn't in my rifle (he had mixed the snap cap with live rounds in his pockets), pointed it at a bullet trap and pressed the trigger,” thereby getting a resounding *Boom* with his .30-06 into my \$400 550 armor plate. The projectile struck at the very edge of the plate, zapped the edge and the secondary frag sprayed the building

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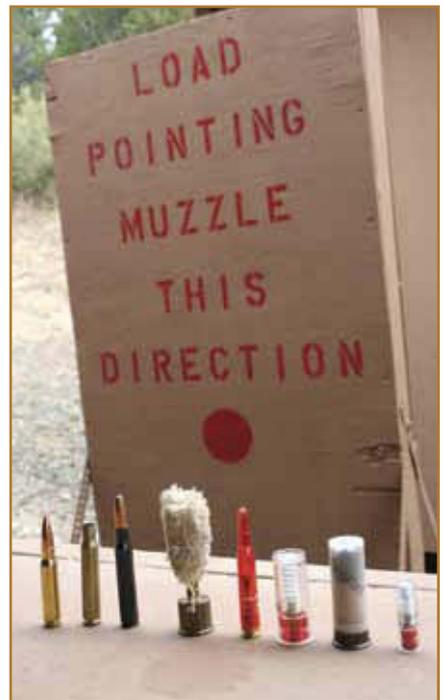
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*This is a broad spectrum of things that go into gun chambers. One goes boom, and the others all go click. The test is to get it in correct order.*

behind the trap.

I didn't really look at the older guy. At this point there was not actually much for me to say, so I leaned forward looked around him at the younger guy and said "That's why I don't use snap caps!"

I do not put *anything* in the chamber and press the trigger. I also don't press the trigger while pointing the muzzle at anything I do *not want to shoot*.

That also sounds like a familiar thought from someplace. So, the trap served its expensive purpose. No one got hurt...

And yeah, I know all the trap, skeet, shotgun fuzzy snap cap, rimfire, blah, blah.

You do it your way, I will continue to advocate "nothing in the chambers and to always point the muzzle thing in a direction you can afford to buy or replace." We'll see who ends up with less holes in stuff.

### Really?

Something in the aforementioned material probably offends someone... it always does. You know what? In retrospect, in my "golden years," all the people who blow off safety rules, and on occasion their own fingers and toes, sort of offend me.

If you read what I wrote, there are two versions of the finger trigger thing and they need to be done correctly, at the right time and place, and they all need to have a muzzle pointed in a safe direction. Odd huh?

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# UPON ARS

STORY: Glen Zediker

## LOAD DEVELOPMENT Crucial to accurate, consistent handloads.

**I usually talk here about guns. But, dang, guns are little to no fun at all without ammunition. I thought for this bit it might help some to talk about the process of developing a handload for your AR-15.**



*Glen does all his load work at the range. A good powder meter is a must to get reliable results from an incremental test. This (above) is from Harrell's Precision. If you encounter any pressure symptoms—any—back the load off a 1/2 grain. If you see any more, back it off another 1/2 grain. Don't come back a 1/10 or two and think you're OK, even if the signs don't return. If visible pressure signs appear, the load isn't just a little over pressure, it's a lot over pressure. This is especially true given the experience of a load that seemed fine and then, on another day, showed pressure signs. Guess what? It was already over pressure, and the question is always how much.*



New bullet, new propellant, new rifle—anything new means testing and development. For myriad reasons, some known and some I'm not so sure about, one load may perform differently in different rifles, and this new jug of propellant or box of primers may not behave the same as the last batch of the “same” thing.

I do all my load work at the range. That's another article by itself, but it lets me not only save a whopping lot of time, but also have the opportunity to test combinations under pretty consistent conditions.

There are a number of good loading manuals. Most are done either by bullet or propellant manufacturers, and there's a lot more data available via magazines. Study enough of it and it becomes plain agreement is unusual. The reason is because of differences in components and equipment, and also testing conditions or circumstances. Published data serves me mostly by establishing an idea of what to anticipate—an important function.

A number of variables apply to a cartridge (propellant, bullet, primer, case), and then an increasingly escalating number of variables introduced through variously combining and fine-tuning all those (bullet seating depth, for example). Reduce variables to a minimum to get accurate feedback from testing. Let's focus on propellant charge.

### Keep It Safe

It's best to do load testing with new brass because it gives a better indication of pressure than a previously fired case will. The primer pocket tells you the most. It's easy to gauge what is ostensibly case head expansion by feeling how the

primers seat into the resized cases. A hand-style priming tool is really necessary to get accurate feedback. If the primer enters the pocket more easily than normal, that's a very good indication that load is running hot.

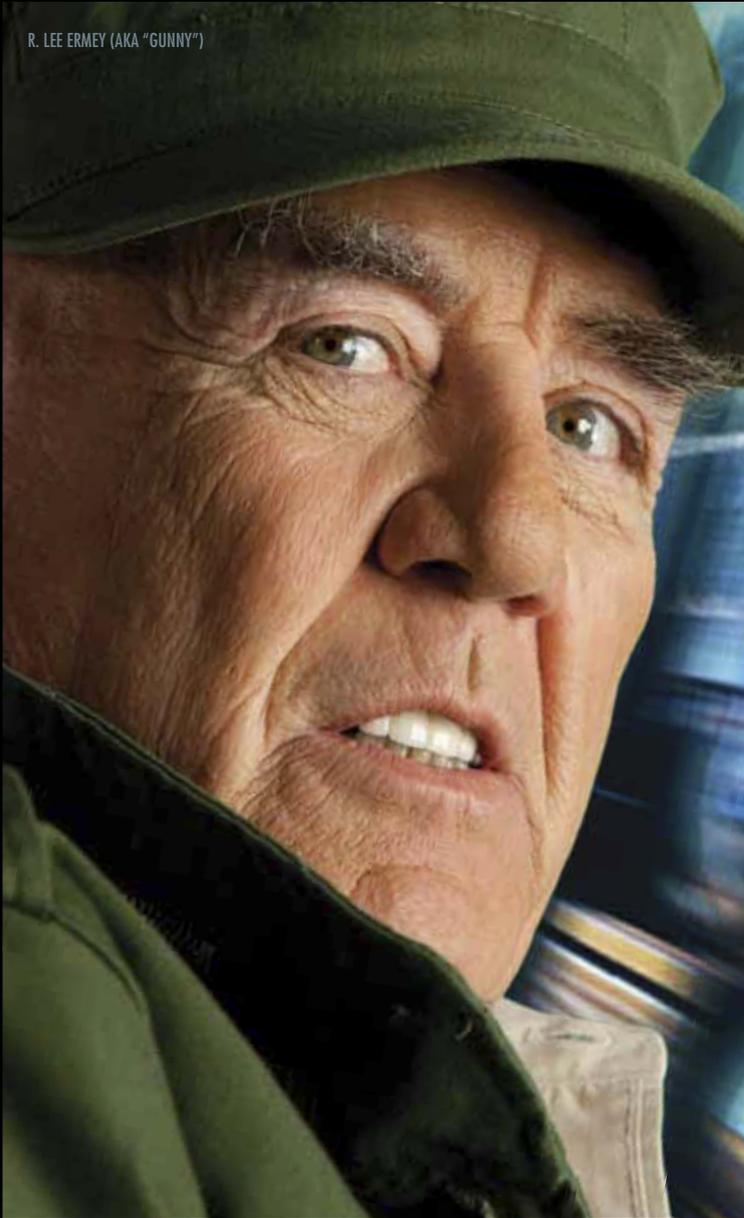
There's only one caveat. Brass has a “memory.” A case may not fully expand with lighter “starting” loads. Cases fire-formed with lighter charges should not be reused with heavier charges. Many disagree, but my experience has been that can result in shorter case life and possibly even case failure. “Lighter” and “heavier” depends on the range of propellant weights tried in the test. For a yardstick, cases first-fired within one full grain of propellant of the maximum load, or we could call it 100 fps, are OK to reuse for upper-velocity reloads.

Judging fired primer condition is a common means to gauge pressure. I habitually look at the spent primer on each case coming out of the rifle chamber during testing. Not all combinations clearly reveal the visible clues we watch for: excessive flattening, cratered surface, or cracks and pierces. That depends, it seems, a lot on the primer brand, and generally, small rifle primers may not show as “much” as large rifle primers, or won't until pressure levels are comparatively higher. I will say if you see anything that looks like an over-pressure symptom show in a primer, you better believe it's telling the truth. In a load that's not over-pressure, there should be a radius on the edge of a fired primer.

The best immediate indication though, is bullet velocity. A chronograph really needs to be part



R. LEE ERMEY (AKA "GUNNY")



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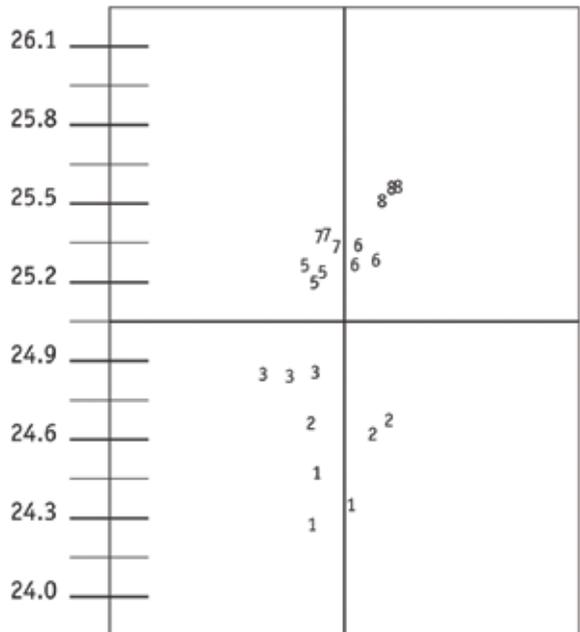
of any handloader's tool set. It's the only way most of us can get numbers that reflect load pressures. If you're seeing more speed than "everyone" else claims to get, you best be backing off. Do not, however, assume the combination you're testing is pressure-safe just because you're not seeing as much speed as you think you should. That's the one that can bite back. Back to lot variations and a slew of other reasons, some combinations may hit a pressure ceiling before they reach the speed goal.

### Target Method

The "Audette Method," named for the late Creighton Audette, can work well to get things started. Many call it "incremental load development." It's easy to find detailed treatments of this process, so I'll just overview it here. The sole variable is the propellant charge. Establish a starting and stopping point for the charge weight, and then take .20- to .30-grain increments upward and put them on a target, the same target.

Creighton did this one round at a time, but let's go ahead and shoot three per step. As the propellant charge increases after each 3-round test, impacts on target should get a little higher and there will be points along the test that show tighter groupings. There ideally will also be a stretch where accuracy and elevation of a few sequential workups are coinciding: all the groups are small and contained in close vertical proximity.

Pressure symptoms define the upper limit, of course, and looking back "down," as it were, on the progress of the incremental build up there will be an area where impact clusters are similar and pressures are workable. Hopefully there will be at least two charge increments represented, more is better. If it's showing this, then



*If it would only always work this way... The numbers on the left represent approximate propellant charge weights and the lines each indicate one click on Glen's meter, value about .15 grains of the propellant used in this test. Going up two clicks at a time for eight tries took Glen from 24.0 grains to about 26.0, which is a good range from a reasonable starting charge to primer problems. Glen didn't add in the velocities since they're inconsequential to this illustration, but will say that "8" was too hot, and he settled on "6." To make more sense out of this illustration, that ended up being 25.5 grains—step 6. Glen also went up using three rounds and skipping ahead by adding more clicks to the meter after viewing low velocities on the first three groups (that's why there's no group numbered 4—Glen went from step 3 to step 5). Intuition sometimes applies. Point is, and should be, here's how the "Audette Method" is supposed to work: impact elevation on the target goes up (these were fired at 300 yards) with charge increases, groups get smaller (hovering around 2" for this test) and stay small, and then elevation begins to stabilize. Then it's a "sweet-spot" load. If this happens for you, ask for no more!*

choosing something from that sector gets a load that's accurate and not "sensitive," meaning that variations in temperatures and so on aren't likely to push it over pressure or mutate its accuracy. That, again, is shown by seeing vertical consistency over more than one incremental work up. Choose an upper, lower, or middle representative from this cluster—upper-middle usually appeals to me.

That method sounds reasonable, and it is. It doesn't always work perfectly, but it's something concrete to follow.

*This article was adapted from Handloading For Competition: Making The Target Bigger, published by Zediker Publishing, www.zediker.com, (662) 473-6107.*



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# PERFORMANCE ENHANCEMENT



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# RIFLEMAN

STORY: Dave Anderson

## GOOD GUNS GONE Britain used to have a thriving trade in gun making, but no more.

**I**t's hard to believe now, but there was once a thriving gunmaking industry in Britain. Of course those wonderful custom firearms from famous names such as Purdey or Holland & Holland are still in production. I'm thinking of companies offering sporting firearms people like me could afford. One such company was Birmingham Small Arms (BSA).

Shortly after WWII ended, BSA shipped a prototype bolt-action sporting rifle to US representative Jack Warwick, who asked for input from rifle enthusiasts. Based on their input, BSA made a number of changes. The first production model was shipped in 1954.

At the time, the .222 Rem cartridge was tremendously popular. It made sense to make the first models on a short action, offered in either .22 Hornet or .222 Rem. Later, medium and long actions were added.

The rifle shown here was made in 1955. The action is short, just 7-1/8" long, but is not particularly small or light. The receiver ring measures 1.350" in diameter, the size falling in between the Mauser small and large ring actions. Apparently the idea was a short action, but with a receiver strong and rigid enough to support a varmint-weight barrel. The receiver is flat-bottomed with a thick integral recoil lug.

The operating design is based on the Mauser 98, with two forward locking lugs, non-rotating claw extractor, staggered 4-round capacity double-column magazine, fixed ejector and controlled-round feeding. The bolt face is slotted for the ejector below the top/left lug, and the locking lugs are solid.

The trigger mechanism is a well-designed and well-made 3-lever system. It lets the designers use a strong

mainspring to shorten lock time, in conjunction with a crisp, clean trigger break. An extension of the sear serves as the bolt stop.

Integral dovetails in the receiver accept Parker-Hale clamp-on scope rings. I tried using CZ rings but they are made for a narrower dovetail. The rotating safety locks the firing pin



**This BSA Hunter .222 Rem was made in 1955. It has features some of the younger generation of shooters consider recent developments, such as integral receiver scope-ring bases, and an excellent 3-lever trigger mechanism. Checkering is 20 lpi with flat-topped diamonds. Hinged floorplate is steel but the triggerguard is alloy. Its finish hasn't held up as well as on the rest of the rifle.**

and bolt when turned to its rearward position.

Fans of Brno/CZ rifles will see a strong resemblance to Brno/CZ rifles of the same era, such as the ZKM-465, though they will spot several differences as well, such as trigger mechanism, bolt stop, magazine and scope-ring dovetail dimensions. It wouldn't surprise me

if BSA were purchasing receivers in the white from Brno. The only proof marks to be found are those of the Birmingham Proof House.

The 24" barrel has six grooves, with a 1:14" right-hand twist. I've read these barrels were cut rifled and hand-lapped. Certainly this barrel appears to be very smooth, as it cleans easily and with little copper fouling. The barrel shank is large in diameter, and its breech end is counterbored to fit the head of the bolt, and slotted for the extractor.

The stock is nicely shaped out of what I think is walnut, without much figure, but straight grained and hard. The checkering is by hand at 20 LPI. Diamonds are flat-topped rather than sharp. Not fancy by custom standards, but it is quite good for a production rifle.

There's a nicely shaped cheekpiece with just a hint of a Monte Carlo drop from cheekpiece to heel, probably at the request of American enthusiasts infected by the California stock virus. I can just imagine the reaction of conservative British stockmakers of the era. They probably said, "Here's your blasted Monte Carlo," while making it as unobtrusive as possible.

Weight of the empty rifle is 6 pounds, 11 ounces. With rings and a Leupold M8 6X scope, the weight is 7-1/2 pounds. The metal polishing and bluing are exceptionally nice, the fit of barreled action to stock is very good and overall it has a high standard of workmanship. The rifle balances and handles beautifully. The feeding, chambering, extraction and ejection are an absolute joy.

With the slow rifling twist, heavy bullets are out, although in .222 I prefer lighter bullets anyway. I shot it with reloads using W-W brass, Hodgdon H-335 powder and Hornady 40-grain V-Max bullets. Groups average 1 MOA,



The BSA Hunter .222 was made on a short receiver, which to Dave appears to have come from Brno/CZ. Operating design is similar to the 98 Mauser with external claw extractor, fixed ejector and controlled-round feeding. Bolt and safety are made for use with a scope.



The cheekpiece is nicely shaped with just a hint of a Monte Carlo drop, no doubt at the suggestion of shooters influenced by the "California" stock design. Dave can just hear old guard British stockmakers of the 1950s saying, "If we must make a Monte Carlo, we'll make it as nearly invisible as possible."



The plastic grip cap and butt plate both bear the "piled rifles" emblem long used by Birmingham Small Arms.

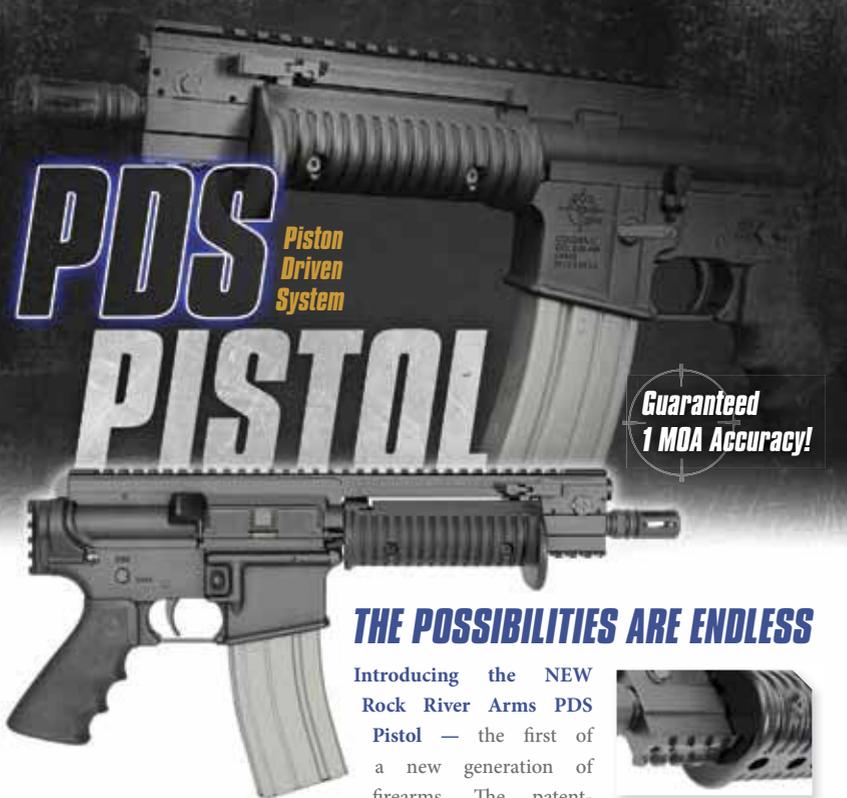
adequate for a walking around coyote and jackrabbit rifle, though nothing to write home about by today's standards.

Glass bedding the receiver and floating the barrel would likely improve accuracy. This rifle is in such nice shape (considering it is over half a century old) I kind of hate to alter it. I'll try some further load development first.

I can find a few faults. Though the hinged floorplate is steel, the triggerguard is some kind of alloy, and is the only part of this rifle showing much wear. Plus it is big and ugly. I'd prefer there was a separate bolt stop/release, rather than having to hold the trigger back to remove the bolt. Schnabel forearms I can take or leave, but mostly leave them.

Relatively few of these rifles were imported to the US. They can be found a bit more often in Commonwealth countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand) but even there are not common and are much prized by shooters and collectors.

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# RIMFIRES

STORY: Holt Bodinson



## HK MP5 .22 LR And a stunning understudy to its centerfire brother it is.



*The MP5 safety is handy and ambidextrous. Note the authentic HK pictograms for "fire" and "safe."*



*The distinctive, side-cocking handle of the MP5 (above) can also be used to lock the bolt open. HK's signature rotary-drum sight (below) is adequate, but optics would really benefit the MP5.*



**N**ext to the AK/AKM, Heckler & Koch's "Maschinenpistole 5" submachine gun is one of the world's most identifiable firearms. For four decades, it has been appearing on the nightly news in the hands of police, anti-terrorist and special operations professionals. And now we can own one too! Well, not exactly, but HK has finally delivered a semi-automatic, rimfire version of their MP5 that is a spitting image of the real deal. When it comes to fun gun rimfires, the MP5 is as good as it gets.

The archetype MP5 owes much of its success to its versatility. It's a modular platform that can be configured in dozens of different ways with changes in calibers, barrel lengths, sighting systems, stock types, selective fire control groups and suppressors. Incorporating sheet metal stampings and polymer parts, the MP5 is easy to build, reliable, lightweight, yet rugged and simple to repair. It's an inspired design, derived largely from the HK G3, and uses the G3's proven delayed blowback, roller-locking, closed bolt system.

### The Original

Historically, HK fielded a .22 Long Rifle conversion kit for the MP5 in

the 1970s. The kit consisted of a .22 LR barrel insert, 20-round rimfire magazines and a complete rimfire bolt group. The system was adjusted for a cyclic rate of 650 rounds per minute, and like most fully automatic rimfire systems, it was susceptible to miss-feeds, stovepipes and excessive fouling. It was not a successful venture, and only several hundred units were manufactured.

After a wait of 40 years, we now have two MP5 rimfire models from which to choose, plus a dozen or so accessories to modify stocks and sighting systems.

The model pictured in this article is HK's MP5 A5, featuring a retractable stock and an ersatz suppressor



# H O R N E T

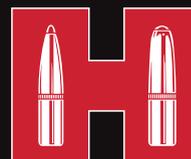
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*With its stock extended or retracted, the HK MP5 A5 is a remarkable rimfire copy of the centerfire model.*



can. The second model currently available is the MP5 SD6, featuring a retractable stock and a fully integrated, ersatz suppressor shroud that encompasses the total barrel. This latter design is based on the real MP5 SD which featured a multi-ported barrel, surrounded by a suppressor shroud, and did not require the use of subsonic ammunition for adequate sound suppression.

### Authentic Clone

Both models are good looking clones of existing centerfire models in the HK line. HK's rimfire MP5s are being built under license by the Carl Walther firm of Germany and imported into the US by Umarex USA of Fort Smith, Ark. The Carl Walther firm is world famous for the quality built into its firearms, and UMAREX USA has an enviable record as an importer and marketer for RWS, Walther, Hammerli, Beretta, Colt, S&W, Ruger, RAM, Tactical Force and Magnum Research brands of replica air and airsoft rifles and handguns. In my experience, the Colt, Walther and UMAREX M4/M16A4 rimfire clones are right at the head of



*The ersatz suppressor can makes the MP5 A5 a head-turner at the range.*

the pack for authenticity and quality.

Examining the MP5 A5 in detail, the retractable buttstock, forearm and trigger housing are formed from a high-impact polymer just like the real deal. The upper receiver of the MP5 A5 consists of two discreetly joined aluminum castings housing the bolt, barrel and operating rod system. The 16" barrel sports an all-metal fake suppressor can. It's threaded and removable with a special wrench included in the Walther tool kit. Since the whole gun is finished in a subdued matte black, it's really hard to tell where the metal ends and polymer begins.

Overall finish and fit of the MP5 A5 is outstanding. The controls are where they should be, and with an unloaded weight of 7 pounds, 3 ounces, it feels like the genuine article.

The rear sight of the MP5 A5 is HK's typical, rotary-aperture, drum design, featuring four different size apertures. Rotating through apertures should adjust elevation. I found minimal point-of-impact differences among them, although the sight is fully adjustable for windage.

Combined with the front post, encircled with its distinct, protective, ghost ring, HK's rotary-aperture sighting system is fast but coarse with a sighting radius of only 13".

### Optional Sights

Ideally, it would be nice to install some good optics. Ah, but to do so, you have to buy a small Picatinny-type accessory rail, called a low-profile

mount, from UMAREX USA that locks down over the lugs on top of the receiver. Unfortunately, you can't run down to your local gun shop and pick one up. Given the almost universal employment of optics these days, the mount should really be included with the gun.

Other accessory sighting systems available for the MP5 include a green laser pointer, red dot scope and conventional compact scope. Speaking of accessories, the line also includes 10- and 25-round magazines, an HK fixed buttstock, a full Picatinny-type forearm and a vertical front forearm grip.

The 2-stage trigger of the MP5 A5 has a long, initial take-up with a light, crisp let-off. As my accuracy trials indicate, it's a thoroughly manageable trigger. The trigger is not interlinked to the magazine, so the gun can be fired without the magazine in place. The 25-round magazine that comes with the MP5 does activate a bolt-hold open catch when the last round has been fired. Every semi-automatic should be so designed!

The receiver is marked for high-speed ammunition, although the owner's manual states the system is adjusted to function with normal velocity, as well as high-speed ammunition. I found this to be true. What struck me as a bit

## HK MP5 A5

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**ACTION TYPE:** Blowback, semi-automatic, **CALIBER:** .22 Long Rifle, **BARREL LENGTH:** 16.1", **OVERALL LENGTH:** 26.8" [collapsed], 33.8" [extended], **WEIGHT:** 7 pounds, 3 ounces unloaded, **FINISH:** Matte black, **SIGHTS:** Rotary aperture, **STOCK:** Polymer, **RETAIL:** \$489

surprising was the owner's manual goes on to give instructions for fieldstripping the MP5 to provide the owner access to a bolt velocity adjustment screw at the rear of the receiver used to fine tune the action.

I found it unnecessary to fool with it, although I did remove the rear pushpin, pull off the stock housing and break the gun open to see what I could see—not much. You're warned not to strip any further, which means you can't remove the bolt from the rear of the receiver to clean the barrel from the breech. It's a

muzzle-cleaning gun, or you could use a pull-through from the breech end.

Accuracy? Excellent. As you can see from the test target, shot with the MP5 hand held over a bench at 25 yards, it's a shooter. The groups ran from 5/8" to 1-3/8" with Remington Golden Bullet HVHP generating the best-looking pattern and group size. It's a terror on tin cans, too. The short sighting radius and coarse sights of the MP5 don't bring out the full accuracy potential of the gun. Optics would.

What did surprise me after running a couple hundred, mixed rounds through the gun was how clean the HK action stayed and how reliable it was from the get-go. Semi-auto rimfires typically accumulate a lot of carbon and unburned power grains in the breech, and often require a bit of break-in before functioning without a hiccup. The MP5 didn't miss a beat, nor did it accumulate crud to the extent I would have expected. The 25-round magazine proved a snap to load and functioned perfectly.

All in all, HK's MP5 A5 rimfire is a head-turning, fun gun of the first order. If your rimfire shooting is becoming a bit bland and boring, grab one of these beautifully constructed HK MP5s. They'll put a smile on your face. I guarantee it.

GUNS

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# MONTANA MUSINGS

STORY: Mike "Duke" Venturino

PHOTOS: Yvonne Venturino

## CMP GAMES

Shooting vintage military rifles is catching on nationwide.

Every year, the CMP (Civilian Marksmanship Program) holds both eastern and western games. These events include shooting with M1 Garands and M1 Carbines, '03 and '03A3 Springfields, vintage military rifles and vintage sniper rifles.

Although age 62 is not the ideal time to take up a new shooting discipline, I'm building a World War II military rifle collection so I thought a trip was in order to the Ben Avery Shooting Facility near Phoenix, Ariz. last

October to see what the CMP games were all about. CMP's games offer a large variety of competitions but a primary one is called "GSM" which is an acronym for Garand, Springfield and (vintage) military rifle. Also on



Duke's Montana friend, Ted Tompkins, is shooting Duke's M1903A3 Springfield after they super glued its rear sight into place.

one afternoon there would be a vintage sniper rifle match, which particularly interested me.

Here's the course of fire for GSM. All shooting is done at 200 yards. The first stage is slow fire from prone with only slings for support. The shooter gets 15 minutes for a maximum of five sighting rounds, but then must fire 10 shots for score on the standard SR target. (That target is 40"x42" with a 13" black 9 and 10 rings.) The next stage is 10 shots rapid fire from prone. (No sighters.) This must be done in 80 seconds. Final stage is 10 shots slow fire, offhand in 10 minutes. The GSM match was held on three days.

The vintage sniper rifle event was different. Shooters participated as 2-man teams with their individual scores combined for a total. Ranges were 300 and 600 yards, and shooters could use sandbags supplied by the CMP or their rifles' slings, but not both. This match allowed a 5-minute sighting period at both distances with unlimited shots. One or both team members could do the sighting. Then the match consisted of 10 rounds for score at 300 and 600 yards. The targets were variations of the SR target: the one used at 300 yards also had the 8 ring in black, and at 600 yards the 7 ring was also black. To add a little pressure, the rules call for the targets to be up for only 20 seconds.

Making the trip with me was good friend Ted Tompkins of Big Arm, Mont. Never previously had I fired a high-power rifle event on paper targets, but get this: Until the day before we left on the trip, Ted had never fired a military rifle at all. (However, he is a Master Class shooter in the BPCR Silhouette and Long Range Target games and holds state champion titles from both Montana and Arizona.) Before leaving we spent about an hour on my range so I could at least show



Duke fires his M1 Garand (above) from prone position as Ted spots for him. This is the 200-yard firing line (below) at the Ben Avery shooting facility in Phoenix, Ariz. as the competitors prepare to fire a stage.



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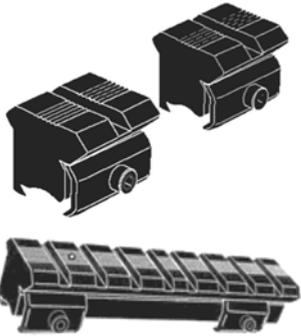
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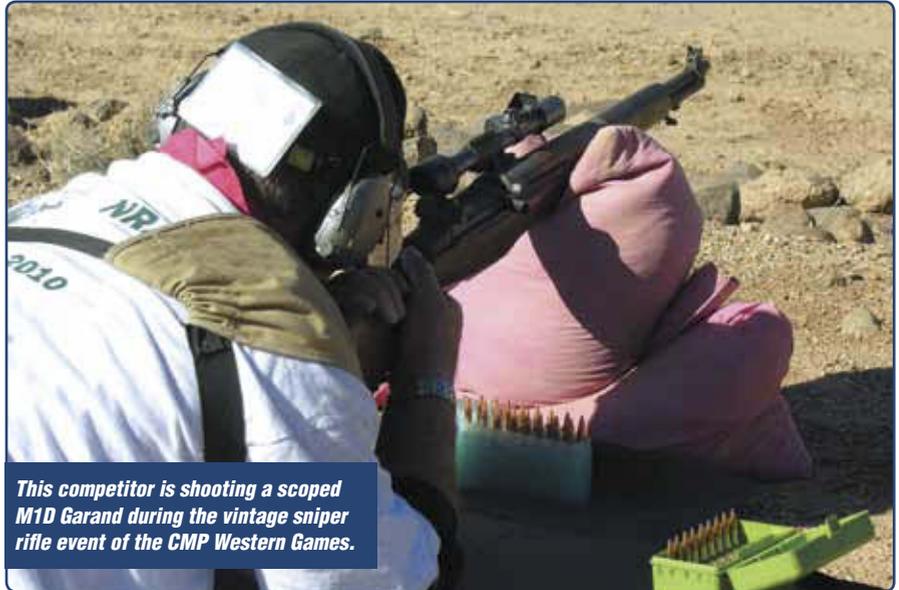
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*This competitor is shooting a scoped  
M1D Garand during the vintage sniper  
rifle event of the CMP Western Games.*

him how to load and fire the various  
rifles with which we planned to shoot  
the GSM match. By the way, it was left  
to the GSM shooters as to which day  
they shot each particular rifle.

So did we cover ourselves with glory  
in Phoenix? No way! In fact I made  
enough newcomer mistakes that it  
got downright funny. For instance, we  
fired my Remington '03A3 Springfield  
first. It was picked over a standard  
'03 because its peep rear sight is more  
compatible to aged eyes than open  
sights. My mistake here was in not  
checking out my rifle thoroughly before  
making the trip. As I fired at the SR  
target, my shots kept impacting low. I  
would move the rear sight up and the  
shots would still make their way back  
towards the bottom of the target.  
Finally I realized the detents holding  
the '03A3's peep sight were so worn,  
that recoil caused the sight to bottom  
out with every shot. If I didn't finish  
dead last among Springfield shooters  
it would amaze me, but I didn't want  
to scan the scoreboard too thoroughly  
after that performance.

Shooting next, how did Ted cope  
with the '03A3's defective sight? He  
has a shooting box containing about  
everything under the sun, including  
a tube of Super Glue. A dose of that  
kept the rear sight right at its 200-yard  
setting, and he did respectably in the  
Springfield shooting. On Monday we  
fired my Winchester-made M1 Garand.  
My shooting wasn't great, but perhaps  
I made it into the middle of the pack  
(certainly not higher than that).

Ted did much better, and got a  
bronze medal for his score of 269 out  
of 300 possible. On Tuesday we shot  
my Winchester Model 1917. This time  
the rifle worked properly, but I caused  
the fubar. After loading my second  
five rounds in the rapid-fire stage I

reacquired my sights and began blazing  
away. The problem was my target  
number was 44 and I put at least two  
bullet holes in target number 45. A third  
bullet disappeared completely, so I had  
three complete misses. (In CMP games  
if someone gets more than 10 bullet  
holes in his target he gets to count the  
highest scoring ones, so at least I didn't  
handicap my neighbor.) Ted again did  
much better and missed getting another  
bronze medal by only two points.

### Sniper Match

On Tuesday afternoon in  
100-degree temperatures we fired the  
sniper rifle match. Using the original  
German K98k 8mm low-turret  
sniper rifle I wrote about last month,  
I managed a 95-5X at 300 yards and  
a 93-1X at 600 yards. After my poor  
scores in the GSM match I felt better  
about my shooting and was even  
more pleased about my old Mauser's  
performance. Ted did a 91 at 300  
yards, but at 600 he short-stroked the  
rifle's bolt, so he snapped on an empty  
chamber. He didn't get a shot off in  
the 20 seconds the target was up. He  
finished with a 70 at 600 yards. Still,  
out of 25 2-man teams, our combined  
score placed us ninth. I truly enjoyed  
the vintage sniper rifle match.

Vintage military rifles are currently  
popular, and various types of  
competitions are springing up around  
the country. The CMP games allow a  
structured format for those who would  
like to shoot paper with them. They're  
worth checking out in your locale. 

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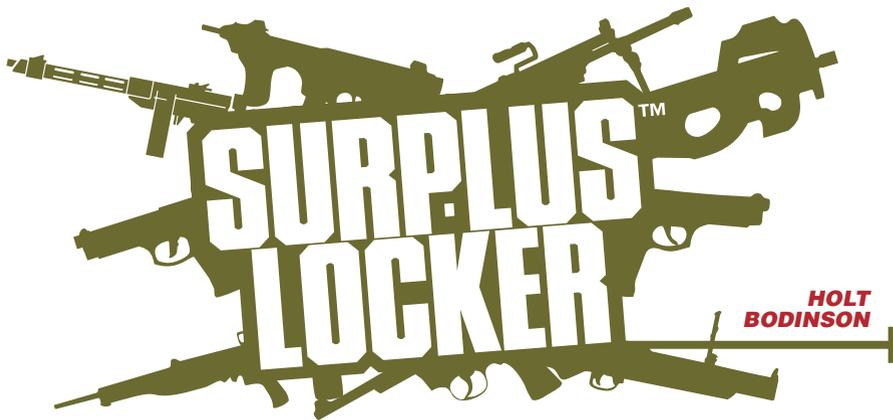


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# 1911



## JAPAN'S TYPE 30 RIFLE

### One of the many 6.5mm smallbores adopted worldwide at the end of the 19th century.

**W**hile we readily associate the name Arisaka with Japan's familiar Type 38 (6.5mm) and Type 99 (7.7mm) rifles and carbines, Artillery Colonel Nariaki Arisaka's rise to prominence in the small arms field is marked earlier with the design of the Type 30 infantry rifle and cavalry carbine of the late 1890s. Commonly referred to as the "hooked safety model," the Type 30 is significant because it ushered in a new small-bore cartridge, the 6.5x50, to replace the older 8mm Japanese round chambered in the outdated, tubular magazine, Portuguese Kropatschek-looking Type 22 rifle and carbine.

The 6.5mm was certainly the hot caliber of the 1890s. Military arms designers were intrigued with smaller caliber bullets exhibiting high sectional densities, high ballistic coefficients and high retained kinetic energies. Sequentially, we have the 6.5x52 Carcano (1891), the 6.5x54R Mannlicher (1892), 6.5x55 Swedish (1894), 6.5x50SR Arisaka (1897), 6.5x54 Mannlicher-Schonauer (1900) and the 6.5x58 Portuguese (1904). Less we forget, the US itself entered the small-bore craze with the

adoption of the ultra-radical, 6mm Lee Navy in 1895.

The Type 30 rifle derives its name from the 30th year of the Meiji reign (1867-1912) under Emperor Mutsuhito, which also corresponds to the year 1897, the year in which the new rifle design was adopted. Subsequently, the Type 38 and Type 44 rifles and carbines also reflect the 38th (1905) and 44th (1911) years of the Meiji era. Nomenclature changed after the end of the Meiji reign. Under the following Emperor, Hirohito,

firearm types were designated after digits in the Japanese calendar year. For example, the well known Type 99 of WWII in 7.7mm was adopted in the Japanese year 2599 (1939) and so forth.

The role and symbolism of the Emperor can't be overstressed in the context of small arms furnished to the Imperial Japanese Army. The familiar 16-petal chrysanthemum, commonly referred to as the "mum," stamped on the front receiver rings of Japanese rifles and carbines is the symbol of the Japanese Emperor. So marked, Japanese arms were considered the Emperor's property and so the soldier understood he was personally entrusted with the arms of his Emperor.

This is why the mum—the Emperor's symbol—on the majority of surrendered Imperial arms is ground off or otherwise defaced to avoid disgracing the Emperor\*, while small arms captured in the heat of battle commonly retain their mums.

Work on the new Type 30 rifle/cartridge combination was undertaken in 1895 at Japan's famous Koishikawa Arsenal in Tokyo, which was also the source of the Siamese Mauser discussed in a previous issue. The Superintendent of the arsenal was none other than Colonel Nariaki Arisaka. While the colonel's name is associated with the Types 30, 38 and 44 designs and the design work was performed under his direction, you can presume there was an official trials commission of fellow officers drawn from the various services who together fostered, tested and approved the new designs developed at the arsenal.

Typical of long guns of the period, the Type 30 infantry rifle is long, measuring 50-1/4" overall. Fitted with a bayonet, it stood taller than the average conscript. It is also beautifully machined, fitted and finished. It was an era when the quality



*The Type 30 rifle is very long at 50-1/4", much taller than most recruits when the long bayonet was affixed. Note the Type 30 sports a rather unique, spherical bolt knob.*



of a nation's arms reflected on the country's reputation among nations. It was a competitive international environment, and the Japanese arms makers were no slackers when it came to producing a high-quality product.

The receiver of the Type 30 is very Mauser-like. The rear bridge is set up to receive 5-round stripper clips. Unlike the Mauser, there is no corresponding thumb notch in the left receiver wall. The receiver wall is solid and thick. It's a strong, rigid design.

Visible on the left side of the rear bridge is the mark of Tokyo's Koishikawa Arsenal. It depicts four, stacked cannon balls as viewed from above. The mark is also stamped over the Imperial chrysanthemum of this particular Type 30 rifle, indicating the rifle was removed from service with the Imperial Japanese Army and was probably sold as military surplus to Russia, Britain or another country during WWI.

The one identifying giveaway on the Type 30 is its bolt with its unique "hook safety." When the hook is in the vertical position, the bolt is de-cocked and safe. Pulling back on the hook and turning it 90-degrees to the left cocks the bolt and makes it ready to fire. It's an awkward and slow safety, but so is the wing safety of a Mauser.

On the other hand, the operation of the round-knob, cock-on-closing bolt is buttery. It's almost as smooth as that of a Krag. Interestingly, the Type 30 bolt features a non-rotating, detachable bolt head, similar to that of the German 1888 Commission rifle. It is removed by turning it 90-degrees and pulling it off.

In the design of the Type 30 stock,

**A-B)** In the vertical position (A), the hook safety de-cocks the bolt. Pulling back the hook and turning it 90-degrees to the left, readies the rifle for firing. C) The stacked cannon ball mark of the Koishikawa Arsenal is found just below the clip slot. D) This mark is over-stamped with the arsenal's mark, indicating the rifle was released from the Imperial Army. Note the high-quality finish of the receiver and twin gas vents. The Oberndorf-type, straddle floorplate of the Type 30 (below) is a touch of elegance.



we begin to see features that will carry over to the later Type 38, 44, 99, 2 and 1 rifles and carbines. Specifically, the butt is composed of two pieces of wood, dovetailed and glued together, in order to minimize waste by permitting the arsenals to use much smaller stock blanks. Another significant feature is the introduction

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- Holt Bodinson  
*Guns Magazine*, Jan, 2012, pp 12-14

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*The Type 30 served as Japan's first line, infantry rifle during the Russo-Japanese War in 1904-05. To minimize stock blank waste, the arsenal developed the two-piece buttstock design, which is showing a little separation now near the buttplate.*

of upper and lower detachable, extended, metal tangs which function to greatly reinforce the delicate wrist section of the stock.

One of the nice design touches on the Type 30 is its handsome, Oberndorf-type straddle floorplate with an inside-the-triggerguard floorplate release.

The Type 30 rifle and cavalry carbines served Japan with great distinction during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05 and were replaced shortly thereafter by the new Type 38. The Type 30 was also made under contract for China and Siam. A slightly improved version of the Type 30, the Type 35 with a sliding dust cover, was designed for the Imperial

## TYPE 30 RIFLE

MAKER: KOISHIKAWA ARSENAL, TOKYO, JAPAN

**ACTION TYPE:** Bolt action, **CALIBER:** 6.5x50 semi-rimmed, **CAPACITY:** 5, **BARREL LENGTH:** 31-1/4", **OVERALL LENGTH:** 50-1/4", **WEIGHT:** 8-1/2 pounds, **FINISH:** Blue, **SIGHTS:** Rear: 400m to 2,000m, front blade, **STOCK:** Hardwood, **PRICE:** \$300+

Navy's Special Naval Landing Forces by none other than Captain Kijiro Nambu.

During the Type 30's lifetime, a flatter shooting spitzer loading replaced the original roundnose load for the 6.5x50. The rear sights of most Type 30s were retrofitted with a new staff calibrated for the spitzer load.

However, the rear sight on the Type 30 pictured here with its missing upper handguard is the older, original sight featuring a "V" notch for the 2,000 meter setting. Unfortunately, the bore of this particular Type 30 is too rough to shoot so I can't comment on the rifle's accuracy potential.

Type 30 rifles, carbines and their associated bayonets are very collectible milsurps. You never know where they'll pop up. Just recently, I saw a nice example at the Frontier Gun Shop in Tucson, Ariz. Keep your eyes out for an old "Hook Safety"!

**GUNS**

\*MILITARY RIFLES OF JAPAN, FRED L. HONEYCUTT, JR. & F. PATT ANTHONY (1996) (5TH ED.) (PP. 12), JULIN BOOKS

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J.B. WOOD

## TOMMY FUN GUN

A ScottWerx Thompson kit neatly transforms the Ruger 10/22.

**F**or the excellent Ruger 10/22 carbine, there have been several “conversion kits” to change its appearance. I had one I obtained many years ago, that made it, cosmetically, into a German MG42. It even had a nice bipod at the front. A lot of fun, but actually a bit cumbersome in handling. Now there is a new kit in this category and it is outstanding in many ways.

Designed by Craig Scott, it transforms a Ruger 10/22 into a Thompson SMG. Two versions are offered: The Chicago for an FBI/Gangster look, and the Squad Leader for a resemblance to the old US



Military gun. The Squad Leader has, of course, a straight horizontal fore-end, while the Chicago has a vertical fore-grip. There are a few other small differences.

Before installing the ScottWerx kit on my 10/22, I had to first get the basic gun out of its MG42 ensemble. The original instructions were lost long ago, so this proved to be an interesting endeavor. When it was finally out, I remembered Ruger once offered a replacement barrel that was a couple of inches shorter than the

An advertisement for Hogue Inc. featuring a collection of handgun grips and a rifle stock. The grips are shown in various colors and textures, including wood grain, black, and red. A hand is shown holding one of the wood-grain grips. The rifle stock is shown at the bottom, with a hand holding it. The text "HOGUE" and "WWW.GETGRIP.COM" is visible in the top left corner. The main text reads "QUALITY YOU CAN WRAP YOUR HANDS" and "OR... YOUR ARMS AROUND". At the bottom, it says "HOGUE INC", "GRIPS - STOCKS - RECOIL PADS - ACCESSORIES and MORE", and "Free Catalog - P.O. Box 1138 Paso Robles, CA 93447 800-438-4747 Getgrip.com".

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**A)** This is the Chicago version of the ScottWerk kit. Another version, called the Squad Leader, looks more like a US WWII Tommy gun. B-C) The kit's rear sight is a non-adjustable aperture (left). The Ruger front sight is surrounded by the muzzle piece designed to look like a faux muzzlebrake. D) The original Ruger magazine release had been earlier replaced with a lever-type from Ranch Products.

**A**



**B**



**C**



**D**

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18.5" original. Do they, still? Yes. I sent for one.

### Easy

It's amazing, how much difference that 2" of barrel length makes in the appearance. So, when you get this kit, you should consider it. The cost of the shorter barrel is around \$60 plus shipping, direct from Ruger. In contrast to my laborious extraction of the gun from the MG42 unit,

application of the ScottWerx kit was easy. The well-written and illustrated instructions were a help.

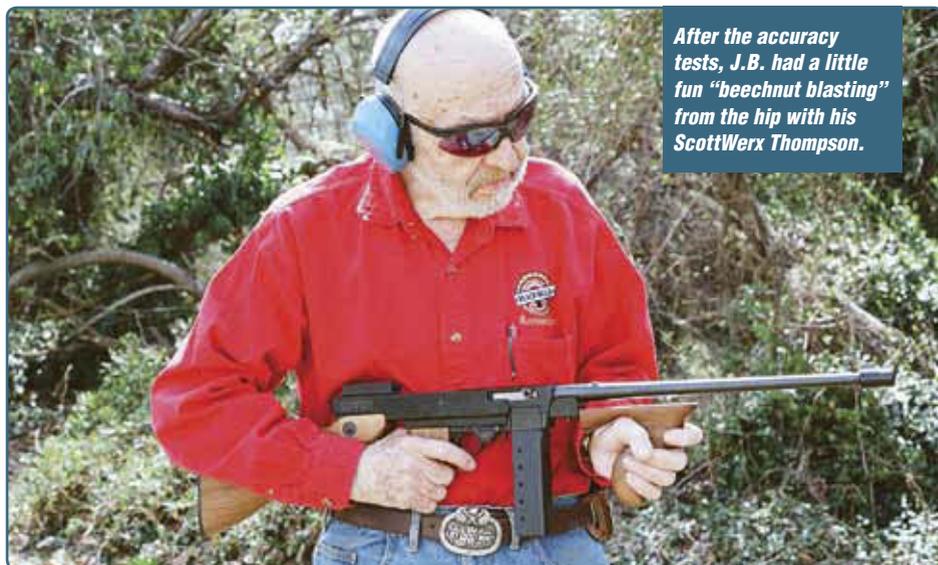
One area that does require some care is installation of the pistol grip. The retaining screw enters the receiver at an angle, so you have to go slowly to avoid any chance of cross threading. If it's the "Chicago" version, this also applies to the fore-grip. Otherwise, all of the other parts just slip into place perfectly.

The original 10/22 magazine is used, with a "dummy" stick-type or drum-type unit affixed to its underside. There are high-capacity magazines with a Ruger top (I believe Ruger makes one, now), and of course these could be used, but their curved shape would detract from the Thompson "look." I will note on this gun I had long ago replaced the original Ruger magazine release with a convenient lever-type from Ranch products.

### Sights

In the sight department, you have the Ruger gold bead, protruding through the cosmetic muzzlebrake. The rear sight is a simple aperture, non-adjustable (hey, this is not a serious target gun!). If you want precision, the ScottWerx kit leaves the top of the Ruger receiver open, so you could easily install a scope or red-dot sight.

Fortunately, in this case, the sights were dead-on. At around 15 yards, the Remington Thunderbolt loads printed in the center of the Champion VisiColor target, with one nice 1.25" group. I will admit, also, to some firing from belt level, no sights, and the gun did well on the small beechnuts scattered on the ground. Well, it's supposed to be a "fun gun," right? No



After the accuracy tests, J.B. had a little fun "beechnut blasting" from the hip with his ScottWerx Thompson.

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*J.B.'s Ruger 10/22 "mule" was already engaged as a .22 LR German MG-42. Now discontinued, it was an early attempt to create a Walter Mitty-like .22 "fun gun."*

malfunctions—it is, after all, a Ruger 10/22.

Considering the beautiful precision of the ScottWerx kit, prices are moderate. Suggested retail for the Squad Leader version is \$299.95, and the Chicago is just a little more at \$319.95. I should point out the magazine extensions are not included, but can be ordered with the kit as an option.

If John Taliaferro Thompson were still around, I feel sure he would approve of this neat look-alike. 

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# Q&A

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Got a burning question to ask the editor? Contact him at:  
 Email: [ed@gunsmagazine.com](mailto:ed@gunsmagazine.com)  
 or postal at: GUNS Q&A,  
 12345 World Trade Dr., San Diego, CA 92128. Due to the volume of mail received, GUNS cannot offer a personal reply.

### Mag Woes

**Q:** Why oh why didn't Ruger simply use one of the more common 7.62x51mm magazines for the Ruger/Gunsite M77? A single 10-round magazine is \$70. There are three perfectly good, standard 7.26 mags now (FN-FAL, M14 and AR-308), so why use an off-brand, uncommon magazine? That fact alone is enough to keep me from buying one; and I have to wonder how many other people feel the same? They even make it left-handed! The folly of it makes me weep, because it is a gorgeous weapon.

Cole B. Combs  
via e-mail

**A:** Ruger chose the magazine for the Gunsite scout for its quality and consistency. While there are many good magazines for the platforms you mention, there exists many lesser quality aftermarket brands and used, surplus mags in conditions from very worn to like new. In the case of the FN/FAL, there would be the confusion of inch and metric pattern mags—and even wider variations in quality, since the rifle has been made all over the world.

Ken Jorgenson of Ruger added, "We found way too many variations in M14 magazines to consider them reliable. Some work and some don't. Unfortunately folks would use all sorts of them, and if they don't work

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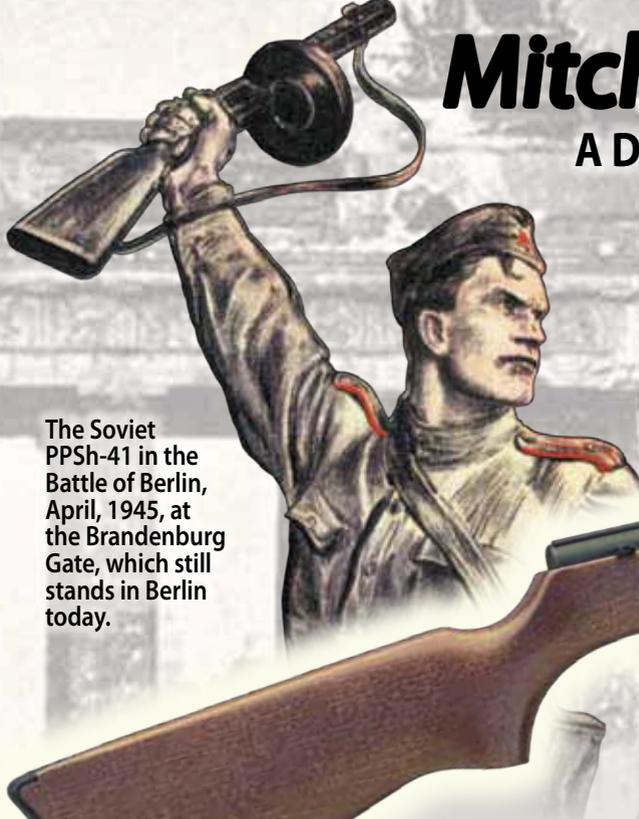
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The Soviet PPSH-41 in the Battle of Berlin, April, 1945, at the Brandenburg Gate, which still stands in Berlin today.



The PPS50/22 has a secure, semi-auto action, a smooth trigger, a high-quality and nicely-fitted stock, making Shooting All Day Long very comfortable and a lot of fun! The PPS50/22 is equipped with studs to accept swivels and a sling.

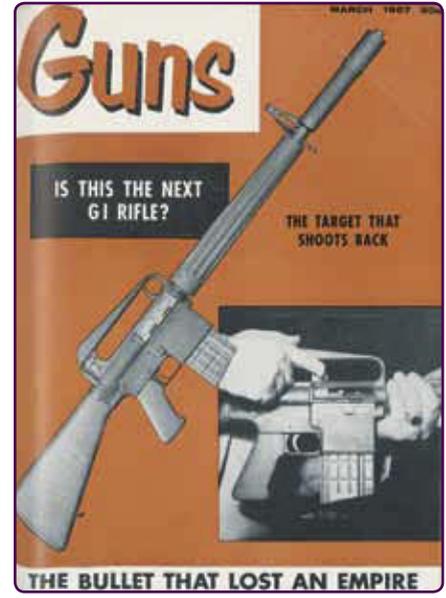
The PPS50/22 looks like the Soviet PPSH-41, especially when equipped with the quick-release Drum Magazine. Made in .22LR caliber, you can Shoot All Day Long, because .22LR ammunition is inexpensive and reliable. With its adjustable rear sight and sharp-blade front sight, it rivals far more expensive rifles in accuracy.

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in their Ruger Gunsite Scout rifle, it would be considered a problem with the Ruger rifle not the magazine. Our goal is to provide a reliable platform, and that takes a reliable magazine. The magazine we chose is not a Ruger exclusive as it is used in many other manufacturer's products."

### Winchester Stock

**Q:** I have a Winchester Model 37 Steelbilt 20 gauge with a 28" barrel. Do you know where I can get a replacement foregrip or stock?

Gerald Duchinski  
via e-mail

**A:** You might try Macon Gunstocks (34535 Lickingteller Ave., Warsaw, MO 65355, 660/438-4699, www.macongunstocks.com).

I bought a Macon stock for an 1873 Winchester and it is of good quality and the turnaround was pretty quick, although mine is unfinished. The firm offers a variety of stocks for modern and antique arms, and can fit and install it for you.

### March 1957 Issue

**Q:** I found a PDF of an old March 1957 GUNS Magazine with the article on the ArmaLite AR-10. Is it possible to find PDFs with the issues

from the '60s and '70s?

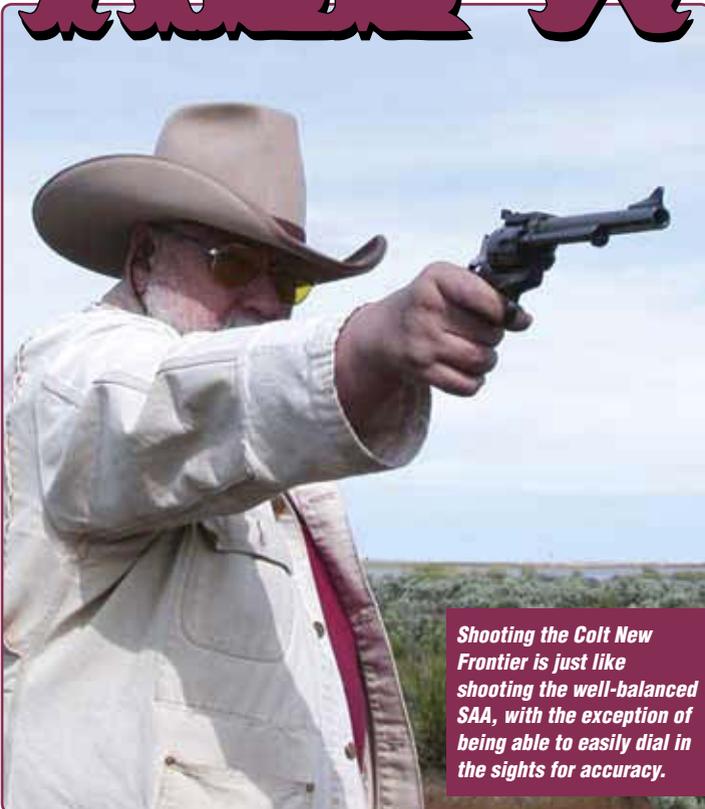
**A:** The older issues are very time intensive to scan, and we do one issue per month of the corresponding calendar month. The past issues from 1955 to the early 1960s are available free at [www.gunsmagazine.com](http://www.gunsmagazine.com). Scroll all the way to the bottom. There is a black field with white links. Click on "Classic GUNS Magazine Editions" and you can download them.

**GUNS**

PHOTO: JOSEPH R. NOVELLOZO

# THE BEST OF

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*Shooting the Colt New Frontier is just like shooting the well-balanced SAA, with the exception of being able to easily dial in the sights for accuracy.*

## John Taffin

In late 1961, Colt introduced its New Frontier model in honor of President John F. Kennedy's ringing declaration, "We stand at the edge of a new frontier..." To further honor the new young president, Colt went to work on a special engraved presentation Model New Frontier to present to JFK, however the dark days of November 1963 occurred before the Colt was finished, and it was never presented.

The original Colt Single Action Army was produced from 1873 to 1940 with the traditional hog-wallow fixed rear sight matched up with a blade front sight. In the 1890s, a very few Target Models, both in the Single Action and Bisley Model configurations, were offered with a flat-topped frame and crudely adjustable sights.

To come up with the New Frontier, Colt started with their standard Single Action Army, which was now in its 2nd Generation phase (production had resumed in 1955). They generously flat-topped the frame, fitted it with a fully adjustable rear sight matched up with a ramp-style front sight, and the New Frontier was born. The finish on these Colts, which I consider the most beautiful single actions ever factory produced, consisted of a case-hardened frame as only

Colt could do it with the balance of the sixgun being Colt's Royal Blue as found on .357 Magnum Pythons of the same era.

The Colt Single Action Army may be the choice of traditionalists, however the New Frontiers maintain the beautiful look, feel and balance of the Colt Single Action Army with the added advantage of adjustable sights. It is a rare fix-sighted sixgun that shoots perfectly to point-of-aim, and even if it does, it may be with only one particular load. If such a sixgun shoots low, it is an easy fix—namely simply filing down the front sight—however, if it shoots high, the front sight has to be made taller, which is not so easy. If the windage is off, the barrel must be turned using a special vise.

Two years ago we spent considerable time checking over 100 traditional single actions of various manufacturers, and spent several days turning barrels to bring point-of-aim to point-of-impact. The adjustable-sighted Colt New Frontier requires nothing more than a proper fitting screwdriver to change point-of-impact. The addition of adjustable sights also turns a Colt Single Action into a viable hunting handgun.

The first run of Colt New Frontiers, known as 2nd Generation sixguns, began at serial number 3000NF and finished in 1974 at serial number 72XX. Four chamberings were offered in this first run of magnificent "modern" Colt Flat-Top Target sixguns: .45 Colt, .44 Special, .357 Magnum and, very rarely, .38 Special. Standard barrel lengths of 4-3/4", 5-1/2" and 7-1/2" were cataloged, but not in every caliber. For example, there were no 4-3/4" .44 Specials.

In 1978, the New Frontier went back into production, joining the 3rd Generation run of Single Action Armies. Serial numbers began at 01001NF, using five digits instead of four. Chamberings were .45 Colt, .357 Magnum, .44 Special and .44-40. Production ended in 1982, however a few were assembled from parts for the next two years. Shortly after this, my friend and fellow writer Wiley Clapp and I questioned the Colt rep at a press conference about the return of the New Frontier and the .44 Special. His answer was we were not going to see either one probably ever again. I'm certainly glad he was wrong on both counts!

The year 2011 marks the 175th Anniversary of Colt Single Actions, going all the way back to the first one, the percussion Paterson of 1836. It is fitting for Colt to resurrect

the New Frontier to help celebrate this anniversary, and all New Frontiers produced this year have a special anniversary marking on the barrel, consisting of "1836 – 175th Anniversary – 2011." Serial numbers began at 20000NF. Colt has announced all three standard barrel lengths, 4-3/4", 5-1/2" and 7-1/2" are to be produced in three chamberings of .357 Magnum, .44 Special and .45 Colt. The first two production runs consist of the .45 Colt with a 7-1/2" barrel and the 5-1/2" .44 Special, both of which I have received as test guns. As this is being written, I have been informed I should have a 4-3/4" version soon.



*Colt's New Frontiers are easily packed in Tom Threepersons-style holsters.*



*Colt's latest 7-1/2" .45 New Frontier (middle) is shown flanked by earlier 3rd (top) and 2nd Generation examples.*

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**ACTION:** Single-action revolver, **CALIBER:** .45 Colt, .44 Special (both tested), .357 Magnum, **CAPACITY:** 6 (carry with hammer down on an empty chamber!), **BARREL LENGTH:** 4-3/4", 5-1/2", 7-1/2", **OVERALL LENGTH:** 13" (7-1/2" barrel), **WEIGHT:** 41 ounces (7-1/2" barrel), **FINISH:** Case-hardened frame, Royal blue, **SIGHTS:** Elliason adjustable rear sight, ramp front, **GRIPS:** Walnut with Colt medallions, **PRICE:** \$1,455

### .45 COLT HANDLOADED AMMO PERFORMANCE

BULLET (BRAND, BULLET WEIGHT, TYPE)	POWDER (BRAND)	CHARGE (GRAINS WEIGHT)	VELOCITY (FPS)	GROUP SIZE (INCHES)
LACMILLER 45-255 (.454")	HP38	7.0	859	1-1/2
LYMAN 454424 KT (.454")	HS-6	10.0	825	1-1/4
LYMAN 454424 KT (.454")	H4227	20.0	997	1-3/8
LYMAN 454309 (.454")	Unique	8.0	946	1-3/4
RCBS 45-255KT (.454")	HS-6	10.0	841	1-1/4
OREGON TRAIL 250 RNFP (.454")	Unique	8.0	917	1-1/8
OREGON TRAIL 250 RNFP (.454")	Red Dot	6.0	818	1-1/8
OREGON TRAIL 250 RNFP (.452")	N-100	6.0	766	1-1/4

Notes: Groups are the product of the best five of six shots at 20 yards. Chronograph is set at 10' from the muzzle. CCI 300 primers used in Starline brass.

### .45 COLT FACTORY AMMO PERFORMANCE

LOAD (BRAND, BULLET WEIGHT, TYPE)	VELOCITY (FPS)	GROUP SIZE (INCHES)
BLACK HILLS 250 RNFP	765	1-1/8
FEDERAL 225 LSWCHP	821	1-1/4
REMINGTON 255 LSWC	817	1-5/8
WINCHESTER 250 LFN	742	1

Notes: Chronograph is set at 10' from the muzzle.

### .44 SPECIAL FACTORY AMMO PERFORMANCE

LOAD (BRAND, BULLET WEIGHT, TYPE)	VELOCITY (FPS)	GROUP SIZE (INCHES)
FEDERAL 200 LSWCHP	886	1-5/8
WINCHESTER 240 LFN	724	1-1/4

Notes: Chronograph is set at 10' from the muzzle.

### .44 SPECIAL HANDLOADED AMMO PERFORMANCE

BULLET (BRAND, BULLET WEIGHT, TYPE)	POWDER (BRAND)	CHARGE (GRAINS WEIGHT)	VELOCITY (FPS)	GROUP SIZE (INCHES)
HORNADY 240 XTP	Unique	7.5	877	7/8
SPEER 240 GOLD DOT	Unique	7.5	880	7/8
SPEER 240 JHP	H4227	17.0	882	1
SPEER 225 SWCHP	H4227	17.0	1,001	1
LYMAN 429421 (.429")	Universal	7.5	966	1-1/4
NEI 260 KT (.429")	Unique	7.5	947	1-1/2
RCBS 44-250 KT HP (.429")	H4227	17.5	986	1/2
OREGON TRAIL 240 LSWC (.430")	Unique	6.0	833	7/8
NEI 260 KT (.430")	Unique	7.5	928	1

Notes: Groups are the product of the best five of six shots at 20 yards. Chronograph is set at 10' from the muzzle. CCI 300 primers used in Starline brass.



*It may be reminiscent of 1930s technology, however the Colt New Frontier .44 Special (above) with hollow cast bullets is still a viable hunting handgun. The latest New Frontiers are factory equipped with Elliason rear sights (below), which allowed John to zero the revolvers easily, and were repeatable.*



I have a long acquaintance with New Frontiers, both 2nd and 3rd Generation versions, including all three barrel lengths and chamberings of .45 Colt, .44 Special, .357 Magnum and .44-40. As nice as they are, they actually pale in comparison to these "new" New Frontiers. This new production pair is unequivocally the most beautifully finished Colt Single Actions I have ever experienced. Not only is the finish a case-hardened frame and the balance a blue you can see your ancestors in—absolutely stunning—but both of these sixguns are also exceptionally well fitted with no sharp edges.

Grip frame to mainframe fit is as it should be, and running a finger over the seams shows a nice smooth transition. Lockup is tight, trigger pull, while not perfect, is certainly more than adequate. Grip panels are nicely fitted to the grip frame and, although made from very plain wood, are shaped to fit my hand perfectly. I'll take proper fitting and shape over fanciness anytime. I definitely intend to purchase both of these New Frontiers so they can have custom grips worthy of the metal finish in their future.

As a bullet caster I have a great advantage, namely being able to custom-tailor bullet diameters to fit each particular sixgun. There is a lot of variation found in the chamber throats of both .45 Colt and .44 Special sixguns. Applying a pin gauge to the .45 New Frontier gave me a uniform reading of .455" for all six chambers. I keep a generous supply of reloads on hand with both .452" and .454" diameter bullets so for the most part I chose the latter. However, I was pleasantly surprised to find the smaller bullets also shot well, as did factory-loaded ammunition.

I was pleasantly surprised to find .44 Special chamber throats at a uniform .429". Reloads were used with both .429" and .430" cast bullets, and results show this is the most accurate Colt Single Action I have ever encountered in 55 years of shooting sixguns. Several loads delivered groups of

less than 1" for five shots at 20 yards. One of my favorites, the RCBS Keith bullet 44-250 over 17.5 grains of H4227, placed five shots in an astounding 1/2". I cannot shoot this well! Full test results are in the accompanying chart.

One of the great attributes of Colt Single Actions chambered in .45 Colt and .44 Special is how user friendly they actually are. Loads in the 800 to 1,000 feet per second range are exceptionally pleasant to shoot, with felt recoil at a minimum. When the trigger is pulled, the hammer begins its long arc to strike the primer. As the sixgun fires, instead of heavy recoil, one experiences a gentle nudge. The original Colt Single Action grip frame has always been user friendly. Things change a little, but not much, as you tailor heavier hunting handloads. Using 250- to 260-grain cast Keith bullets at 1,100 in the .45 Colt, and sneaking up on 1,200 fps in the .44 Special results in more felt recoil, but certainly nothing punishing. Both of these ancient cartridges are more than a century old, however are still viable for hunting in sixguns such as these New Frontiers.

All Colt Single Actions including the New Frontiers have the traditional action with no transfer bar. This means they *must* be carried with only five rounds and the hammer down on an empty chamber. The earlier 3rd Generation New Frontiers did away with the full-length cylinder bushing, going instead to a button in the front end. Two improvements have been made to this latest run, namely the full-length bushing is back, and more importantly, the rear sight has been changed. The original adjustable rear sight was certainly adequate and acceptable, however Colt has now gone to the excellent Elliason rear sight. Adjustments are more precise, and, more importantly to my eyes, the back of the rear sight is totally flat and serrated to block glare. After shooting these two examples, I wouldn't mind equipping all my New Frontiers with Elliasons.

In earlier articles on both Colt 1911s and Single Actions, I have especially tried to point out the fact Colt is definitely doing it right. These latest examples are as close to perfection as I have ever seen in any single actions. They may be test guns, however they are destined to stay with me. It is certainly much easier to mail a check than it is to ship guns back.

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**Massad Ayoob**

**Photos: Joseph R. Novelozo**

**D**esigned—and proven in the arena—by a great world champion, the latest iteration of this popular polymer pistol has captured the attention of competition shooters.

Last spring, I got to sit down with Dave Williams and Chad Dyer at the Springfield Armory facility in Geneseo, Ill. The topic of discussion was the 5.25 variation of the XD(M) pistol, which was about to be announced.

This new model is the brainchild of Rob Leatham, who is the face of Springfield Armory in the action-shooting world. Rob has won more world and national championships, in disciplines such as IPSC, NRA Action Pistol and the Steel Challenge format, than just about anyone else. He shot his way to fame with the 1911, which from the mid-1980s until recently, was Springfield Armory's most popular pistol. However, in recent years the polymer-framed XD series has become the company's best-selling handgun.

Built in Croatia and described by its manufacturer as a

single-action, striker-fired design, the XD was joined a few years ago by the XD(M), which is essentially an update of the XD format for which Williams, the head of the Springfield Custom shop, is generally credited. The slide is re-shaped, with grasping grooves that give many hands more traction. The frame of the XD(M) has interchangeable backstraps, to better fit the pistol to a wide variety of hand sizes.

At XD Armorer School, they tell you emphatically that the XD(M) is sufficiently different internally as to require a separate course. One XD(M) feature is it does not require a pull of the trigger to begin takedown. Some in the firearms world see this as a safety feature. Dave Williams sees it as simply a convenience to the owner. In any case, this is generally perceived as A Good Thing.

### **The 5.25 Factor**

The new gun's sobriquet, 5.25, comes from its barrel length of 5-1/4". This variation is credited by Dave and Chad entirely to Rob Leatham. The original XD(M), which has become so popular in the last few years, has a 4-1/2" barrel, and for most that's just fine. However, world champion shooters like Leatham aren't satisfied with what's fine for "most." They strive for perfection.

It's a given in the handgun marksmanship world that a longer sight radius decreases human error in aiming, translating to better hits. Leatham wanted a longer barrel and slide to extend the dimension between the front and rear sights. Explains Dave Williams, "It's a little more competitive, the longest barrel legally allowed in most competition in action shooting."

In most handguns, a longer barrel of similar configuration to a shorter one naturally makes the gun more muzzle-heavy. It's true on revolvers, it's true on long-slide 1911s, and it's true on XDs. While preparing this article, I took a pair of XD .45s out of my safe to dry-fire. The service model with 4" barrel was distinctly less muzzle heavy than the 5" Tactical model. Leatham, of course, had picked up on this long before I had.

In a game like PPC, where you're shooting at a single target and a good portion of the firing is done from the 50-yard line, a heavy barrel is seen as helpful in holding the sights on the mark. However, PPC is not action shooting. When you're sweeping your gun across an array of reaction targets at the Steel Challenge, or down a table of 8" steel plates at the Bianchi Cup, you want a pistol somewhat lighter and more "lively" at the front end.

Leatham's solution was a cutaway in the top of the slide around the barrel, to lighten the longer slide and keep weight down, while allowing extended sight radius. It's analogous to what Glock did with their longer barrel models, the Tactical/Practical Glock 34 (9mm) and 35 (.40 S&W) with 5.3" barrels, and their long-slide G17L 9mm and G24 .40 with 6" barrels.



*Petite Gail Pepin (above) has the muzzle of the 5.25 back on the next steel plate while the spent casing from her last shot rockets past her head. "I want one!" she said after the test shoot. Scene is Springfield Armory test range in Geneseo, Ill. Also at the Springfield Armory test range (below), Mas experiences the easy shooting qualities of the 5.25 in 9mm. Photos: Massad Ayoob*



# LONG SLID

## SPRINGFIELD ARMORY XD(M) 5.25



# DE MAGIC

# LONG SLID

## SPRINGFIELD ARMORY XD(M) 5.25

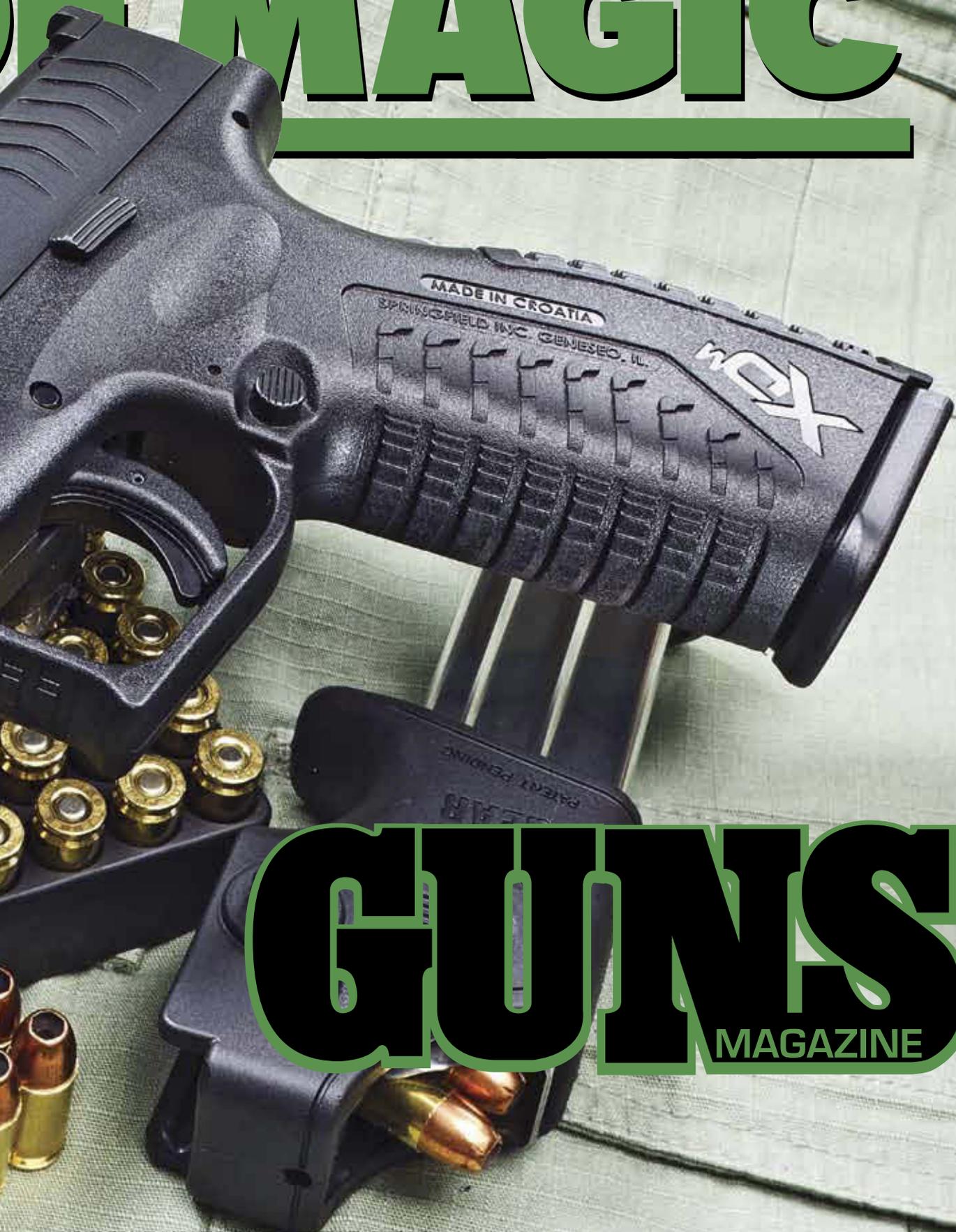
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# OF MAGIC



Is there an advantage to this configuration? Well, Glock certainly seems to think so, and since the Glock pistol is the arch-competitor to the XD and XD(M) in the handgun market, Glock's take on things is obviously germane to the discussion at hand. In Glock's own shooting discipline, GSSF (Glock Sport Shooting Foundation), the Tactical/Practical and the 17L and G24 are required to compete separately from the 4.5" and shorter barrel models. A contestant can only use them in Competition and Unlimited divisions. A police officer shooting in Guardian class, or an ordinary contestant in Amateur Civilian class and even a top shot in Master Stock is forbidden to use a barrel longer than 4.5", because it is seen as an unfair advantage and a less-than-level playing field.

Of course, when a longer barrel is allowed, an advantage is exactly what the shooter wants, hence the XD(M) 5.25.

### Reports From The Front

Let's take a look at how the 5.25 has fared thus far, having been out and about in competition for only a few months at this writing.

**Steel Challenge:** Rob Leatham shot his brainchild, the 5.25, in the 2011 meet. In the last few years, to bring in more shooters from other disciplines, Steel Challenge has established categories for IDPA's five gun divisions, as well as SASS's cowboy revolvers. Leatham won the IDPA Enhanced Service Pistol division championship with it, and placed a strong second in the Production class, Dave Williams reports. For those who came in late, the Steel Challenge is also known as the World Speed Shooting Championships.

**USPSA:** The United States Practical Shooting Association is the American arm of the International Practical Shooting Confederation (IPSC). At this year's National Championship for Production class pistols, Rob came in a strong second place with a 9mm 5.25.

**Bianchi Cup:** Since this prestigious event is traditionally held in May, the 5.25 was not out in time for Leatham to shoot it here for 2011, so he won the Production class championship with a regular XD instead. But he has shot the 5.25 over the course and is expected to use it to defend his Championship title in the 2012 Bianchi Cup.

**IDPA:** There was a rumor going around that the XD(M) 5.25 would not be approved by the International Defensive Pistol Association, something about the cutaway slide. I checked with Robert Ray and found out this is not the case. The XD(M) 5.25 is welcome in that discipline, where it vies in the Enhanced Service Pistol division (ESP). In fact, Robert told me multiple 5.25s were in the field at the September 2011 IDPA World Championships, held at Frank Garcia's superb Universal Shooting Academy range in Frostproof, Fla. Robert further advised that a rising star of the handgun world, 5 Gun Master Caleb Giddings, had used a 5.25 XD(M) in 9mm to win the World Championship in the Press category.

I picked the brains of two accomplished XD(M) shooters I frequently attend matches with. Jon Strayer is an IDPA 5 Gun Master who owns the Pro-Arms Gun Shop in Live Oak,

### XD(M) 5.25

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**ACTION TYPE:** Striker-fired locked breech semi-auto, **CALIBER:** 9mm (tested), .40 S&W, .45 ACP, **CAPACITY:** 19+1 (9mm), **BARREL LENGTH:** 5.25", **OVERALL LENGTH:** 8.3", **WEIGHT:** 29 ounces, **FINISH:** Melonite, **SIGHTS:** Fully adjustable rear, fiber-optic front, **GRIPS:** Integral polymer with interchangeable backstraps, **PRICE:** \$795, \$865 (bi-tone)



*The XD(M) can be disassembled without first dry firing (above), often a complaint about striker-fired systems. The pistol comes with three interchangeable backstraps to help fit the wide body to most hand sizes. The best 25-yard group (below) was 1.75", four of those into 1" on the nose, and the best three into an especially pleasing .65" with inexpensive Rem-UMC 147-grain FMJ. Photo: Massad Ayoob*



Fla. has held multiple state and regional IDPA championship titles, and has won many matches with XD pistols and the original XD(M). He says of his 5.25, "It's a tack-driver out of the box. It's not picky about ammo; the 115 grain, 124 grain and 147 grain all go where you aim them. I really like the balance. I'll be shooting the XD(M) 5.25 at my next major IDPA match."

Gail Pepin is the producer/editor of the Pro-Arms Podcast, and a former state champ and current Florida/Georgia Regional woman's champ in IDPA. She has become a huge fan of the standard XD(M), hers with a Springfield Custom shop trigger job, and used it to win her current woman's champion title at the 2011 National Tactical Conference in Tulsa. Five-foot tall, with small hands, she was particularly appreciative of the 5.25's improved handling qualities. Her comments on the 5.25 were more succinct than Jon's: "I want one. I want one! I want one!"

The 5.25 exhibits a handling difference out of all proportion to its mere 3/4" of extra barrel length and sight radius. The light front end makes it handle with a wand-like effect that let us maintain sight picture while tracking between multiple lateral targets on the Springfield Armory test range in Geneseo, Ill. The fully adjustable rear sight is blended into the rear silhouette of the pistol in an aesthetically pleasing upward taper, and the fiber optic front sight certainly helps fast shooting. It comes fitted in red, but there are spare red and green replacement filaments in the box.

Springfield Armory sent GUNS a T&E 5.25, serial number MG850641. I was happy to discover it was already sighted in. This has been true of every other XD(M) 5.25 I've seen, and it is reassuring evidence of extra attention given to the gun before it leaves Springfield Armory.

This test sample was a little more picky about ammo than



*The 5.25 is just at home in the self-defense arena as it is on the action-shooting field. A rail for lights, lasers and combinations (top, left) is provided. The 5.25 XD(M) is a striker-fired semi-auto, and the tail of the firing pin (top, right) protrudes through the back of the slide when cocked. Note the subtle sculpting of slide where it meets the frame, and the wide grasping grooves at the rear. The long slide (bottom, left) is hollowed out at the top to keep weight down, and improves balance for action shooting games. A low profile, fully adjustable rear sight (bottom, right) is provided, mated with a red fiber-optic front sight. A spare red element comes with the gun, as does a green element. Note the grip safety of the XD(M) system just below the wide beavertail-style tang.*



Strayer's specimen. With Wilson Combat TAC/XP, using the 115-grain all-copper Barnes hollowpoint, the first hand-chambered round went low, causing what would ultimately be a 4" group from a Matrix rest at 25 yards. However, the next four shots went into 2.55", and the best three were 1.85" apart. Another self-defense load, 124-grain +P Winchester PDX hollowpoint, did 3.10" for five shots (all measurements were taken to the nearest .05"), with four of those in 2.4" and the best three in 1.45".

A light, 20-shot 9mm can certainly be a fine personal defense gun with loads like these. However, the 5.25 was really designed as a match gun, and its accuracy came into its own with a match load: the Remington-UMC 147-grain subsonic with full metal jacket. I've seen this load win a lot of matches in the hands of champion shooters like Robert Vogel, Tom Yost and "Super Dave" Harrington, and it lived up to expectations in the test sample. The 5.25 put all five of them into 1.75", four of those into 1" on the nose and the best three into an especially pleasing .65". Given that measuring the best three of five from hand-held on the bench seems to eliminate enough unnoticed human error to give a good prediction of inherent accuracy from a machine rest, I would

say that Rob Leatham's 5.25 is very likely to stay in the 4" diameter tie-breaking center X-ring at next year's Bianchi Cup.

### Bottom Line

Three-quarters of an inch of barrel/slide length and sight radius may seem like a little thing, but in competitive shooting, little things mean a lot. The 5.25 has a lot going for it. My sample came out of the box with a very controllable trigger averaging 6.4-pounds pull weight. This is suitable for home defense or street carry. (The petite Ms. Pepin often carries a stock 4.5" XD(M) concealed in an Aker Flatsider holster. If she can, you can, and the 3/4" longer barrel is unlikely to compromise that.)

Now available in the 9mm we tested, plus .40 S&W and .45 ACP, the XD(M) 5.25 carries a manufacturer's suggested retail of \$865 in bi-tone, \$795 in all black according to Rob Leatham, but is likely to be less out the door at your local gun shop. I think we're going to be seeing a lot of these on the various tournament shooting circuits... and a lot of them in the hands of shooters who simply appreciate a light, superbly-handling pistol.

**GUNS**

**Mike “Duke” Venturino**  
**Photos: Yvonne Venturino**

**B**onding is a current catchword—such as bonding with a new pet, male bonding, etc. How about handgun bonding? I’ve experienced that and it seems to follow no rhyme or reason. Then again, friendships are the same. For example, I don’t remember the name of a single person from my college years, but I’m still tight with people I worked with in Yellowstone National Park during the same time frame.

Here’s a specific example of what I mean about handgun bonding. Back in 2010, I sold my Smith & Wesson “pre-Model 29” .44 Magnum after owning it for 42 years. Why? Because I never bonded with it. It was just a tool: a powerful handgun I carried back in the ’70s and ’80s when riding horses in Montana’s mountains. Since that isn’t a pastime for me anymore, that old .44 just gathered dust. Conversely, I’ve

truly bonded with a couple of other handguns owned only for two or three years, and for which I have not the slightest practical purpose.

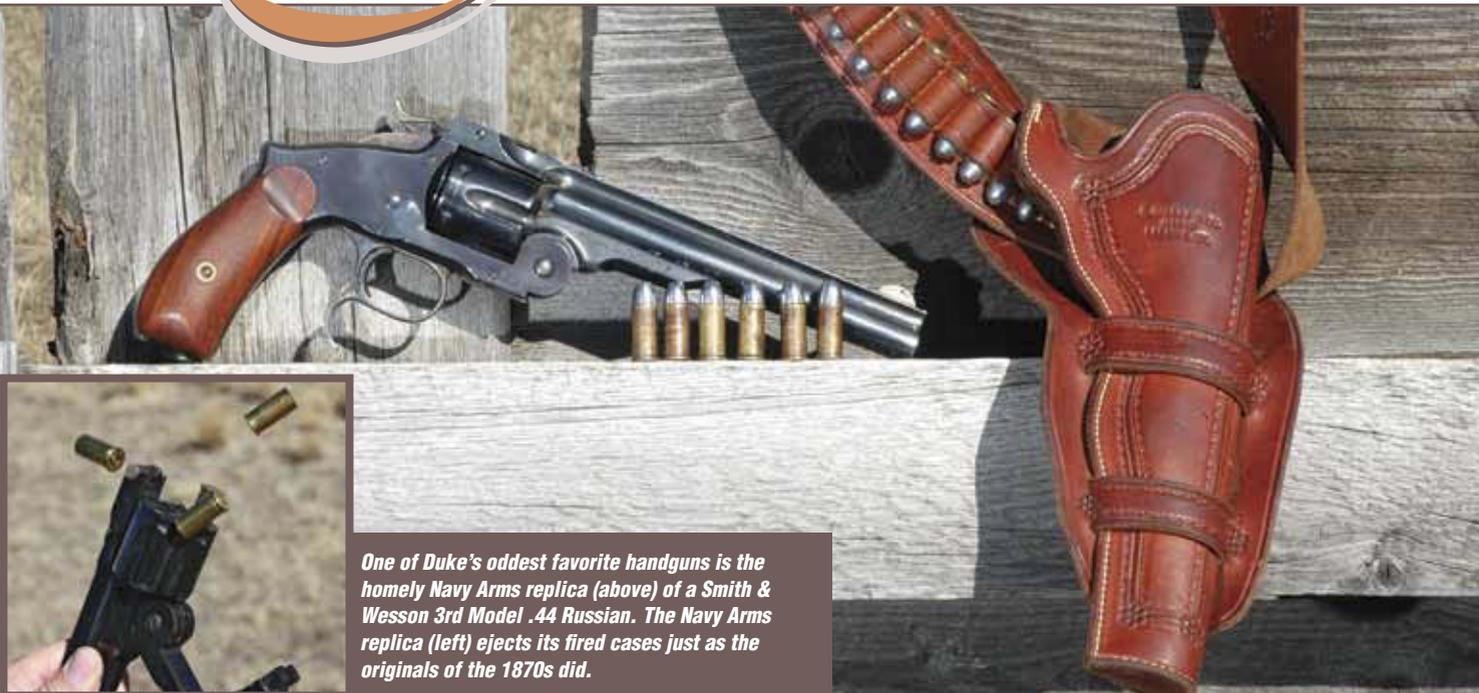
What it is that creates a handgun bond: aesthetics, accuracy, utility, history, and uniqueness? *Aesthetics* must be a factor, although I’ve owned engraved, custom-finished handguns and then sent them down the road with no regrets, and one of the handguns to be detailed further along is plain ugly. *Accuracy* must be a factor, but is not the main reason for bonding. I wouldn’t keep a handgun that sprayed bullets

around the countryside, but I’ve gotten rid of some far more accurate than the one’s I’ll talk about soon. *Utility*? Nope. We’re back to the handgun as a tool thing. I’ve got self- and home-defense handguns I’d never sell, but could care less about them otherwise. *History*? That’s a more important factor with me than with some other people, because the study of history is part and parcel of my life. What about *uniqueness*? That is a factor with only one of these four favorites.

Frankly I can’t pinpoint why some handguns “trip my trigger” and others are just tools, any more than I can tell you why I prefer blondes to redheads. It must be a combination of the above factors come together to make one handgun more special than others. Two of the four discussed here are single actions, and two are autoloaders. Not one of them is a double-action revolver, although I’ve searched out and owned many notable double actions. They never bonded.

The most unique of my special four is a nigh on perfect duplicate of an 1870s .38 Colt Conversion. When metallic handgun cartridges became the norm in the early 1870s, Colt found themselves in possession of tons of parts for their now-discontinued percussion revolvers. The cap-and-ball Model 1860 was turned into a .44 Colt caliber “conversion,” and Models 1851,

# Four Favorites



One of Duke’s oddest favorite handguns is the homely Navy Arms replica (above) of a Smith & Wesson 3rd Model .44 Russian. The Navy Arms replica (left) ejects its fired cases just as the originals of the 1870s did.



A



B



C



D

**A) Duke bought this Luger P08 to fill a niche in his World War II collection never expecting to bond with it. B) These two handguns show the opposite ends of handgun bonding. The S&W pre-Model 29 .44 Magnum at left belonged to Duke for 42 years without bonding. The 1918 vintage Colt 1911 .45 ACP bonded with him almost instantly. C) Duke gave a gunsmith a 2nd Generation Colt Model 1861 .36-caliber cap-and-ball revolver like the one at left, and he returned to Duke the Colt .38 Conversion at right. D) No pistol points as naturally as a P08 Luger.**

1861 and 1862 were made for both .38 centerfire and rimfire cartridges. But Colt left the barrel groove diameters of these “conversions” as they were when made for percussion use. For example, the .38s had barrel groove diameters of about .375”, instead of the .357” we associate with .38 handguns today.

Italian made replicas of Colt Conversions are being imported by

of reloading details. Suffice it to say that I use very soft hollowbase 150-grain bullets of .358” diameter, over both black powder and smokeless powder loads. The gunpowder’s gases will cause the hollowpoints to swell up and fit the oversize barrel. My Colt Conversion .38 is a mild mannered, mid-size revolver both easy to look at and easy to hit with.

Another of my four favorites is

found I could hit pretty good with it. Being made of modern steels it is perfectly fine to shoot smokeless powder .44 Russian loads in, whereas doing so with the antique S&W .44 Russians could be downright dangerous. S&W’s various No. 3 revolver models were interesting and advanced designs for the early 1870s. With the Navy Arms/Uberty 3rd Model .44 Russian I have a

# Bonding with handguns.

several firms, but they have .357” barrels so ordinary .38 bullets can be fired in them from .38 Long Colt or .38 Special brass. That just didn’t suit me, so I turned to custom gunsmith (not still doing such work) to build me a “true” Colt Conversion. We started with one of the fine quality 2nd Generation Colt Model 1861 percussion revolvers. I chose the ’61 over the more popular Model 1851 because its round triggerguard fits my thick trigger finger better than the square back one of the ’51s.

The gunsmith did a wonderful job; building a new cylinder, fitting an ejector rod and housing, putting a firing pin in the hammer and then at my request adding a dovetailed front sight with brass bead on the end of the 7-1/2” barrel. That may make it “illegal” for some forms of cowboy action competition, but I didn’t care. I wanted to be able to sight the new revolver in perfectly.

I won’t go into a lengthy description

indeed an Italian replica, and an odd-looking handgun if there ever was one. That’s not entirely accurate: it is plain ugly. I’m talking of the Navy Arms replica of the Smith & Wesson 3rd Model .44 Russian. When writing my book *Shooting Sixguns Of The Old West*, I bought most variations of the basic No. 3 Smith & Wesson top-break revolver. I came to appreciate their design, especially their simultaneous ejection of fired cases. At the same time, I also came to fear them in a way. They are all very expensive antiques and very fragile ones to boot. I shot them only with black powder loads and only enough to get information for that book. Then they lay dormant in my gun vault’s shelves until sold off.

In the late 1990s, Navy Arms came out with an Uberty-made clone of the 3rd Model .44 Russian, with its mysterious spur on the triggerguard and odd saw-handle grip. I bought one, and despite its almost non-existent sights,

handgun in which I can both appreciate its intricacies, and shoot safely.

Few handguns have as distinctive an appearance as the famed German “Luger.” The name in itself is misleading, for there never has been a “Luger” factory. Georg Luger was its designer, but “Luger” pistols have been made in several factories, including one in England.

However, the classic “Luger” as most of us know it, and as was adopted by the German Army, is the P08 (Pistole 1908) 9mm Parabellum. P08s have 4” barrels, 8-round magazines and checkered wood grips. The rear sight is a mere notch, but the front sight is dovetailed into the barrel so it can be drifted laterally for sighting in. Lugers have a unique toggle design of function, and its sweptback grip frame gives it fine pointing qualities. Many nations’ military forces adopted “Lugers” at one time or another. Switzerland, Bulgaria, Finland, Portugal and Brazil

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are examples. However, "Lugers" and Germany will always be connected in most peoples' minds.

Indeed, my "Luger" was German military issue, made in 1938 by Mauser according to the code S/42 stamped on it. It's in beautiful condition except for a few very tiny areas of pitting—probably caused by its leather holster collecting moisture at some point.

I bought my P08 because it was priced right and I wanted to fill a niche in my growing collection. Never did I think it would bond to me. At first it hit a bit left of point of aim, so the front sight was moved. Also I quickly learned that P08s richly deserve their reputation for being finicky about ammunition. Feed them good FMJ "hardball" ammunition and all is well. Branch off into hollowpoints and they just quit working. I can't pin my affinity on this P08 particularly to its beautiful manufacturing quality, its long history or its unique appearance, but I do feel like it is here at the Venturino household to stay.

### M1911

Another cause for head scratching is my last pick of this favored four. I've owned many 1911 .45 ACPs in the 45 years I've been buying guns. None have ever been "special." Then about 3 years ago when browsing a gunshow, I happened to look down while visiting at an acquaintance's table. There sat an as-issue Colt 1911 made for the US Army in 1918. With it was a well-worn holster with "R.G. Winkler" carved into it, along with the US Army's Signal Corps emblem and "1931." In good light I also discerned "Winkler" scratched into the bottom of its magazine. Again it was priced right, and was bought only to fill a niche in my collection.

It is no different than hundreds of thousands of other 1911s of the same vintage, but it has become special to me. Perhaps it's because I can shoot that .45 ACP better than most handguns of any type that have passed through my hands, or perhaps it's because it exudes history, or perhaps it's because it has never once failed to function perfectly despite an enormous variety of factory loads and handloads put through it. Whatever the reason, I quickly bonded with that old .45. When I steal time to plink with pistols, that one is usually with me.

Those are four of my most favored handguns from the many hundreds tried in 45 years of gun buying. As said above, I have no true purpose for owning them except I just plain like them. It is very doubtful if I will be able to try hundreds more in the future, but only time will tell if there will be more bonding.

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- J2327 D2 Steel (Peened).....29.95
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# MAKE IT

## Shot placement on big game.

**John Barsness**

**T**hroughout the last century, many people have felt compelled to devise mathematical formulas to predict the effectiveness of various calibers, bullet weights and velocities on big game. The simplest formula uses foot-pounds of kinetic energy. Some people suggest a minimum of 2,000 ft-lbs is the minimum required to “cleanly” kill an average 500-pound elk—about the energy retained by a 180-grain spitzer from a .30-06 at 300 yards, or a 180-grain spitzer from a .300 Winchester Magnum at 450 yards.

This sounds plausible, but the truth is that a 180-grain .30-06 bullet will cleanly kill a 500-pound animal at 450 yards, out where its energy level drops below 1,500 ft-lbs. I know this not because of theory but because I've done it myself. Instead of ft-lbs, a bullet's effect depends primarily on exactly where it lands.

Many hunters think any shot landing somewhere in the ribs should be quickly fatal, but the rear edge of a big animal's lungs only contain tiny blood vessels, and have relatively low “air pressure.” Quite a few hunters have killed an elk and found scar tissue from somebody else's bullet in the edges of the lungs.

All of this eventually compelled me to come up with yet another killing power formula, called the 90/9/1 Rule: 90 percent of killing power is bullet placement, 9 percent the bullet and 1 percent the cartridge. This may sound simplistic, and no doubt some hunters will strenuously object—the same guys who constantly bicker over which .300 magnum is the ultimate elk cartridge. Since this essay is a monologue, not an election, they don't get to vote.

### The Right Spot

The most common place to shoot a big-game animal is in the chest, with the basic aim of disabling the cardio-pulmonary system. On an elk, deer or similar hoofed mammal, the most effective placement is with the animal standing broadside. The bullet should land about a third of the way up the body, right in the “crease” at the back of the shoulder. The bullet will then penetrate the top of the heart, where most of the large veins and arteries that transport blood are located, or the same blood vessels just above the heart.

The bullet will also penetrate both lungs, causing them to hemorrhage and collapse.

One of the oddities of the English language is that many hunters call this shot placement “behind the front shoulder,” as if mammals have rear shoulders. The front shoulder regularly shows up in national hunting magazines, and even Ernest Hemingway, usually a very careful writer, mentioned shooting a kudu “a touch behind the fore-shoulder” in his safari book *Green Hills of Africa*.

If the bullet penetrates sufficiently, this top-of-the-heart, double-lung shot is always fatal. How quickly the animal falls over, however, can vary. Even with major blood vessels shredded, it normally takes at least 10 seconds for the drop in blood pressure to deprive the brain of oxygen. A deer or, especially, a pronghorn can run quite a ways in 10 seconds, often acting as if it isn't hit, the reason we're



*This nice mule deer buck was less than 50 yards from a deep, ice-rimmed river. Eileen Clarke didn't want to risk having the buck run a ways after a lung shot, so put a 100-grain bullet from her .257 Roberts into the shoulder and spine, dropping the buck right there.*

# COUNT

obligated to follow the direction it ran for at least 100 yards.

The heart-lung shot also provides the greatest leeway for error. If a little low, it still centers the heart and penetrates the bottom of the lungs. This placement normally takes longer to affect blood pressure however, since the lower part of the heart is mostly muscle, and can keep pumping blood even with a sizeable hole punched through the middle.

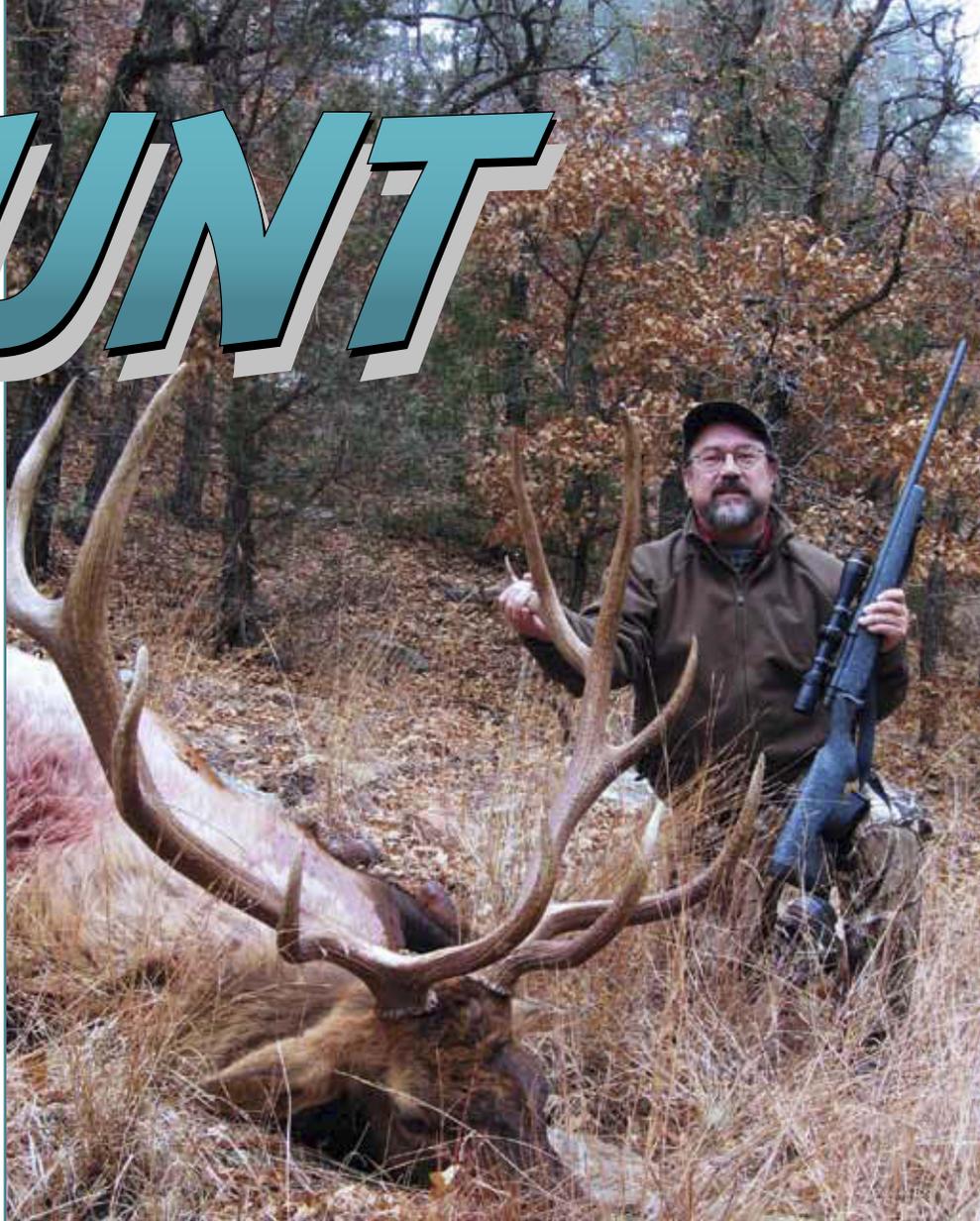
If a few inches high or behind the shoulder, the bullet still penetrates both lungs, often bringing an animal down just as quickly as a top-of-the-heart shot. If a little higher yet, the bullet will cut the vena cava, the big vein right under the spine, often breaking the spine as well.

A deliberate spine shot is most easily placed by aiming three-fourths of the way up the body, directly in line with the front leg. (Yes, quadrupeds have front and rear legs, but not front and rear shoulders.) This placement breaks the shoulder blade and the spine, and a stout enough bullet will also break the far shoulder and often exit. The animal will drop right there.

Unfortunately there isn't as much leeway with a spine-shoulder shot as the heart-lung shot: If the bullet lands a little high it only strikes flesh and skin—or, sometimes, one of the spinal processes, the boney bump rising from each vertebra. This usually drops the animal—but the animal will usually get up and try to run away, because the spinal cord itself isn't severed. I've seen this often enough to quickly aim again at any animal that drops instantly from a chest shot—and if it's a potentially dangerous animal, I shoot again while it's still on the ground.

## Insurance

In Africa this is known as “paying the insurance” and sometimes the people who don't pay it suffer. My latest Cape buffalo, taken in Tanzania in September of 2011, had round



*This New Mexico elk (above) was trotting away in scrub oak at about 100 yards, with only the top half of the body visible, so the shot was placed in the spine. This big eland (below) was taken in Namibia with a .338 Winchester Magnum. The shot placement was exactly correct, right behind the shoulder, but the bullet hole is elongated. The 250-grain Nosler Partition struck a single tiny branch just in front of the eland, and turned sideways in a matter of inches, only penetrating the near lung. Another shot was required.*





**Eileen Clarke took this mature cow bison with a single perfectly-placed chest shot from a .270 Winchester at about 130 yards. According to some theorists, the .270 is supposed to be too light for such large animals, but the bullet, a 130-grain Barnes TSX, completely penetrated both lungs. Shot placement and bullet performance are more important than the cartridge's headstamp!**



**This Texas whitetail was taken with one shot just behind the shoulder with a 200-grain Nosler AccuBond from a .338 Winchester Magnum. The buck dropped when hit, but even with a .338, deer will often run 50 to 75 yards before falling from a lung shot.**



**The surest shot on a facing animal is at the base of the neck. This will normally break the spine, but if not the bullet will go on into the heart or cut one of the big blood vessels in the neck.**

scars on either side of the top of the spine, just behind the shoulders, and the spinal process was missing from the vertebra between the scars. Did the hunter who fired that shot survive?

The spine-shoulder shot is also complicated by the shoulder hump on some big-game animals. On herbivores, this hump is made of tall spinal processes shaped like ribs, surrounded by the long muscles known as the backstrap or tenderloin to most hunters. Putting a bullet through the backstrap above the spine is not only ineffective, but ruins some very fine meals.

The only North American animals with sizeable humps are the bison, mountain goat and musk ox, not exactly the



**A zebra's stripes seem to confuse some hunters, but a shot placed at the top of the "sergeant's stripes"—the three inverted Vs on the shoulder—will take out the big blood vessels at the top of the heart, plus the center of both lungs.**

most commonly hunted game. In Africa, however, many animals have humps of various sizes, and many African professional hunters complain that Americans tend to shoot animals "too bloody high."

I've seen this too-high shot a number of times over there, but I've also seen it in North America, especially on bison. Once in Texas, a guy equipped with a .458 Lott decided to drop a big bull with a spine-shoulder shot. He had never shot an American buffalo before (and perhaps not any kind of buffalo), and put the first bullet from his "elephant gun" through the hump meat. This resulted in several hours of chasing a wounded buffalo through the thorn bush of south Texas.

In contrast, my wife Eileen once shot a full-grown cow bison with a .270 Winchester. The 130-grain Barnes TSX bullet went through both lungs, and the buffalo stumbled a mere 40 yards before falling over. The trick to shooting humped game is to aim a little lower, no more than halfway up the body.

Many shooters firmly believe in neck shots, but the rut-swollen neck of a big buck deer or any mature elk has an

awful lot of meat compared to very little spine, and the precise location of the spine also varies. Just in front of the shoulders, the spine lies a little above the center of the neck in most animals, but near the skull it's near the top of the neck.

Probably the surest broadside neck shot places the bullet in the middle of the neck, just in front of the shoulders. If the bullet misses the spine low, it normally shreds one or more of the carotid arteries. The animal will likely go a little way before dropping, but no farther than with a heart-lung shot, and often drops right there, due to the bullet landing near the spine.

A frontal neck shot is easier, because the spine is located in the center of the neck all the way up. Placing a bullet anywhere from the "dimple," at the base of the neck, to the throat will drop the animal right there.

If the dimple shot lands a little low, the bullet will still penetrate the heart, but the bullet should be a "premium," since it must puncture the cartilage and ribs in the front of the chest, then keep going in a straight line. I've seen

relatively soft "deer" bullets slide off to one side of the breastbone and skid along the ribs, even on 100-pound pronghorns and doe whitetails. On bigger game this can even happen with really tough bullets.

### Brain Shot

Brain shots are even iffier than neck shots. Some claim head shots "either kill clean or miss clean," but that simply isn't so. The brain of any wild animal isn't all that large compared to the rest of the head. I used to hunt a certain Forest Service ridge in southwestern Montana with several good friends for deer and elk every year. One summer, a new guy moved into the canyon below the ridge, and turned out to be a headshot artist. It may have been coincidence, but until he moved away a few years later, we encountered several deer and elk with various parts of their heads shot away. One cow elk had its lower jaw shot off, and was slowly dying of thirst, so no, head-shot animals aren't either missed clean or killed clean.



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*This big bull elk is completely in the open, presenting an angling-away shot. However, the paunch of herbivorous animals is on the left side, just behind the chest cavity, and a big wad of semi-chewed grass can stop an inadequate bullet from reaching the heart and lungs.*



If the animal is angling away, a shot can often be placed right at the rear of the ribs, but any shot that lands behind the ribcage is rather iffy, even with the super-penetrating bullets such as the Barnes TSX or Nosler E-Tip. One problem is the paunch, the big "stomach" of herbivores, located on the left side of the body behind the lungs. In a really big animal such as a moose or Cape buffalo, the paunch can contain over 100 pounds of chewed-up vegetation that can stop fairly large bullets.

Some hunters even use the "Texas heart shot" these days, putting a bullet between the hams of an animal facing directly away, trusting their super-penetrating bullets to reach the heart-lung cavity. Many of today's bullets will certainly perform this trick, even with non-magnum cartridges. My friend Jim Gelhaus killed a huge Alaskan moose with a .30-06 and 180-grain Federal Trophy Bonded factory loads. His first shot went right up the wazoo, and the bullet ended up in the bull's heart.

However, it didn't kill the bull very quickly, as by the time a bullet slows down at the end of its path it doesn't damage much tissue. The moose just kept walking, and Jim kept shooting until another shot hit the bull in the spine. The bullet in the heart was found during field-dressing—with very little damage to the heart.

The other problem with the Texas heart shot is bullets don't always penetrate straightly—and even if they do, it's sometimes difficult to imagine where the heart's located when shooting at an animal's rump. Plus, even with the toughest bullets, a rump shot can shoot up a bunch of good meat. This is why most hunters



avoid shooting unwounded game in the “rear shoulder”—but if an animal is wounded, the rump is often the only target. Far more effective is placing the bullet right at the base of the tail. This breaks the pelvis and the rear of the spine, dropping the animal right there—though it often requires a finishing shot.

Even the broadside heart-lung shot is sometimes difficult to make on certain animals. Some animals have so much hair the chest is semi-obsured. When I hunted musk ox above the Arctic Circle almost 20 years ago, there was enough wind blowing to plaster the long hair against the big bull’s body, revealing the contours of the shoulder, but many musk ox get shot a little too low, because of the 18" of hair hanging below the chest.

Some animals, however, have definite markings that can be used as aiming points. My South African friend, Keith Gradwell, an experienced professional hunter, advises aiming right at the top of the “sergeant’s stripes” on a zebra, the three inverted-V stripes right on the shoulder. Many people seem to get confused when aiming at zebra, perhaps because of the stripes, but I’ve seen several “pajama ponies” dropped neatly with a bullet at the tops of the sergeant’s stripes.

Pronghorn also have a handy aiming point: The white belly hair forms a corner on the tan body hair, halfway up the shoulder. Put a bullet within an inch or so of that white corner, and there’ll soon be backstrap on the grill.

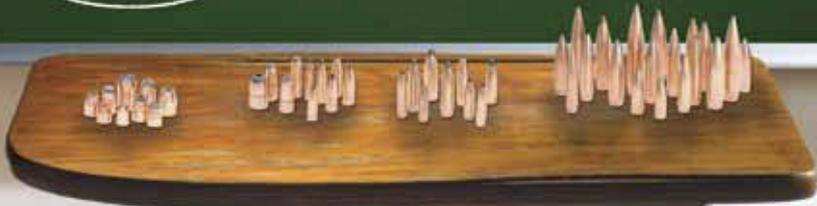
One last shot should also be mentioned. Sometimes there simply isn’t any way to place the bullet correctly for a clean kill, and the smartest and most ethical decision is not to shoot at all.

**GUNS**

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# MIC



*Savage, Leupold and Hornady's new cartridge made for an enjoyable day of shooting.*



*Varmint cartridges, once the province of wildcatters and experimenters, have continuously evolved over the years, and now include factory offerings such as the .17 HMR, .17 Hornet, .204 Ruger, .223 and the venerable .22-250.*



*The Savage Model 25 topped with Leupold 4.5-14X optics and the .17 Hornet proved effective on Wyoming's over-populated prairie dogs.*



*The new .17 Hornet (middle) is flanked by a .17 HMR (left) and .223 (right).*

## Mark Hampton

**W**hen the .17 HMR first hit the market, like so many others, I jumped on the bandwagon. I certainly wasn't alone. The astonishing record sales statistics from this rimfire cartridge was evidence a lot of shooters enjoyed the new offering. I immediately had a Contender pistol format chambered for the .17 HMR and shot everything including squirrels, prairie dogs and other pesky varmints. My wife really enjoys shooting this rimfire too. Accuracy and zero recoil are two positive attributes that make this round so enjoyable.

This cartridge was yet another brainchild from Hornady's Dave Emary. Dave is the senior ballistics guru behind many other successful endeavors from Hornady, including the 6.5 Creedmoor, .204 Ruger, LEVERevolution lineup and Superformance just to name a few. When I first found out Dave had designed another .17 offering, my ears perked up and I wanted to learn more. Could this possibly be another home run from Hornady? Luckily, I even had the opportunity to field-test this new .17 from Hornady on a Wyoming prairie dog shoot. What better way to evaluate a sub-caliber?

## Long History

Granted, .17s of various designs have been around for quite some time. From what I can gather, the sub-caliber actually hit the radar screen way back in the 1920s. Sometime after that, the legendary wildcatter P.O. Ackley came along and started working more with the .17 cartridges. There were several designs, but like many other wildcats, come and go as time drifts. There was the .17 Pee Wee, based on the .30 Carbine case, .17 Mach IV, a necked down .221 Remington Fireball, .17/223, based on the .223 Remington case, .17 Magnum on the .222 Remington Magnum case, and many others including my favorite, the .17 Flintstone Super Eyebunger. Say that three times real fast after a double-scotch! Actually, I've never shot one, but whoever came up with the name had a sense of humor.

Then along came 1971 when Remington introduced the .17 Remington. They even offered rifles, brass, bullets and ammunition. Die-hard varmint shooters took a liking to this round, but not nearly as much as the shooting community did with the .17 HMR. In 2007, Remington necked down their .221 Fireball and introduced the .17 Remington Fireball. This cartridge seemed to appeal to varmint busters more so than the .17 Remington. As you can see, the little .17 has taken many forms to date. So, what makes this new offering from Hornady special? After a few days of actual field-testing the new cartridge, all I can say is Dave Emary and Hornady have struck again.

# TINY-MITE

## Explosive

My first shot with the .17 Hornet through a Savage Model 25 was at somewhere around 100 yards. I was a little apprehensive at first, not knowing exactly what to expect. The target, feeding leisurely near a mound on the rancher's precious grass needed for cattle, was not much larger than a dollar bill. I slowly tugged the trigger as the mild report broke the morning's pristine solitude.

There were two factors I quickly noticed after the shot. One, recoil was virtually non-existent, similar to a puff of wind, or a .22 WMR. Secondly, due to the lack of recoil I was able to observe the impact and I liked what I saw. The 20-grain V-Max connected and the results were explosive. Being able to see your impact is a real benefit in this game. As the morning shooting continued, we kept the majority of our shooting under 300 yards.

# HORNADY'S NEW .17 HORNET

For a while, it seemed like shooting a laser guided RPG. The consummation was rather impressive. I am not going to say we never missed, but the percentage of connections was extremely high. In the wide open spaces of Wyoming, sooner or later the wind becomes a factor. The little 20-grain bullet did drift when long-range shots were undertaken, but that was perfectly normal and to be expected. This new offering from Hornady was both accurate and most enjoyable to shoot. I didn't count how many rounds were shot that first day, but it was enough to make the rancher happy. The new .17 offering is definitely a cartridge you can shoot for extended periods without fatigue.

Our second day of shooting was pretty much a repeat of day one; lots of targets and lots of trigger time with the .17 Hornet. The long day proved to be a relatively intense evaluative process. I love this kind of work! Luckily, the wind did not bother us making the little .17 Hornet efficient with 1-shot connections. It was just an enjoyable shooting exercise in a target rich environment. After two long days of extensive shooting at a multitude of targets from various distances, I was impressed with not only the .17 Hornet but the Savage rifle as well. It was

*Hornady's new .17 Hornet will be a welcome addition to any varmint hunter's battery. Only the prairie dogs will hate to see this arrival.*



## THE SAVAGE RIFLE

The Model 25 LV Savage rifle we were shooting proved its effectiveness on the range as well. Our test gun was fitted with a Leupold 4.5-14X scope, one of my favorite optics for hunting. The laminate wood on the rifle was easy on the eyes and I was careful not to put a scratch on it. Complete with scope, the gun weighed around 9 pounds and was a pleasure to shoot with the AccuTrigger. The trigger on our test gun broke at just less than 3 pounds.

The .17 Hornet will be available in all Savage Model 25s including their new Walking Varminter. I am anxiously waiting for this new model, with synthetic stock and 22" barrel. The Walking Varminter will be ideal for the varmint hunter who is constantly on the move, changing locations frequently, weighing just a tad less than 7 pounds. This will also be a nice vehicle gun, and I plan on carrying it while riding around the farm on the Polaris



*All versions of the Savage Model 25s will be available in the new .17 Hornet cartridge.*

Ranger. I can't wait for this rifle to arrive, as the crows in my corn field are just about to drive me nuts!

If you're looking for a varmint cartridge economically priced, accurate, generates recoil on par with a .22 WMR and allows you to observe bullet impact, the .17 Hornet will fill the bill. This will be a fun cartridge for ladies and young shooters to enjoy shooting for long periods. My wife already has made plans for shooting this cartridge in the Savage rifle for upcoming practice sessions. That is if she can pry it out of my hands!

**GUNS**

### MODEL 25 LV

MAKER: SAVAGE ARMS  
100 SPRINGDALE RD., WESTFIELD, MA 01085  
(413) 568-7001  
WWW.GUNSMAGAZINE.COM/SAVAGE-ARMS

**ACTION TYPE:** Bolt action, **CALIBER:** .17 Hornet, **CAPACITY:** 4, **BARREL LENGTH:** 24", **OVERALL LENGTH:** 43.75", **WEIGHT:** 8.25 pounds, **FINISH:** Blue, **SIGHTS:** None, Weaver-style scope bases supplied, **STOCK:** Wood laminate, **PRICE:** \$687

The new .17 Hornet proved its worth out to 300 yards, but as the range increased, Mark switched to other varmint cartridges loaded by Hornady on this Wyoming trip, including the .204 Ruger shown here.

a winning and effective combination for sure.

The new .17 Hornet is based on the .22 Hornet case, utilizing maximum case capacity from this platform. The steeper shoulder and reduced body taper found on the .17 will reduce bolt thrust and aid extraction. Superformance propellant is responsible for launching the 20-grain V-Max bullet at 3,650 fps. That's good reason for bullet impact to demonstrate explosive results. Hornady is running this cartridge around 50,000 psi. Basically, the .17 Hornet delivers the same trajectory of the popular 55-grain .223 round, with virtually no felt recoil. Now

that's what I really enjoyed about shooting this new cartridge all day long in an over-populated prairie dog town.

Ammunition is reasonably priced, readily available, and reloader friendly—an advantage over the popular .17 HMR. The cartridge has the same overall length as the .22 Hornet, so the existing action of a rifle can be maintained. When sighted-in for 200 yards, the bullet drops almost 6-1/2" at 300 yards and a little over 20" at 400. For me personally, I consider this sub-caliber to be an effective varmint cartridge out to 300. And yes, wind will be a factor, when present, with

the 20-grain bullet. That's not considered a negative, just more of reality. Bottom line, the new .17 Hornet is extremely accurate and very enjoyable to shoot for extended periods.

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PICTURED: M-15 SPR MOD 1 CARBINE

# STANDING RE

## SIG SAUER'S 516 PATROL

Jacob Gottfredson

**A**nyone with even the mildest interest in guns knows the AR genre has caught on like a raging wildfire. That reality was hammered home with last year's trip to the SHOT Show in Las Vegas. Huge! Start a company, order parts, put them together and get in on the fray! Is the SIG SAUER in that category?

First Impressions: It did not take long after opening the case to realize the SIG SAUER 516 Patrol rifle is a quality machine. SIG has taken an American design and coupled it with their brand of design, quality engineering and manufacturing. They have also taken advantage of the situation by fixing some apparent problems in the original design.

I was a bit surprised that SIG's mini red-dot sight was already mounted. A call to the rep who had sent it revealed the red dot was included in the packaged price. At the range, I found they had already sighted the little red dot in.

Being interested in what the rifle could do, I mounted Leupold's new Mark 4, 2.5-8x36mm MR/T M1 with the TMR reticle. I wanted a bit more optical power to test the rifle at longer range than I thought the little red dot would allow. I mounted the scope in Leupold's high rings.

I was amazed at a recent sniper match after examining a piston driven AR with a few hundred rounds fired through it. We took the bolt out and examined the interior. I am used to smudge, powder dust and gunk coating the interior of the gas-driven

rifles. Not so with the piston-driven variety. The interior of these rifles look like they have just been cleaned and oiled! We will get to the "why" of that in a moment.

The SIG 516 Patrol rifle is likewise a piston-operated action. The rear of the gas piston impacts directly against the bolt carrier assembly. Thus, the SIG 516's bolt carrier features an integral strike plate in place of a traditional gas key. The rear of the carrier has raised radial ridges designed to reduce friction between the carrier and the lower receiver extension. Additionally, it provides greater reliability under adverse conditions because if dirt, dust and sand enter, it will not increase friction as with a perfectly concentric carrier.

The bolt and bolt carrier staying clean through a lot of rounds, lubricant not drying out, plus the advantage of being able to regulate the stroke of the piston in dirty, sandy conditions will significantly help in adverse environments.

The adjustable gas valve allows the advanced operating system to reduce carbon fouling, excessive heat and powder gases in the action, ensuring reliability and function. The gas



**A) Breaking the rifle down for cleaning is no different than the typical AR, and it functions exactly the same. Anyone familiar with Stoner's AR will be off and running immediately. The carrier and bolt have both slight and radical differences. B) You can see the slight differences at the rear of the carriers—the SIG (right) having raised radial ridges designed to reduce friction between the carrier and lower receiver extension. Additionally, it provides greater reliability under adverse conditions, because dirt, dust and sand can**



**The SIG 516 Patrol rifle and Leupold's new Mark 4 2.5-8x36mm MR/T M1 set up in Jacob's old benchrest bags to begin testing.**

valve can be opened to increase gas flow when ammunition or adverse environmental conditions require more cycling energy. Gas flow can also be reduced or shut-off for use with suppressors to prevent stoppage or damage to the rifle when in the suppressor mode. These positions are unobtrusively marked to match up with a line on the gas block. The piston driven system also heats up more slowly. Excess gas in the self-cleaning system is vented out and downward in the forward portion of the handguard just to the rear of the rifle's gas block through two vent holes in the piston rod. Thus, the bolt and bolt carrier remain clean, and lubricant does not dry out.

SIG 516 rifles use 5.56mm NATO chrome-lined chambers and bores. The upper receiver features the traditional forward assist and shell deflector. But it doesn't end there. The

# ADY

## RIFLE



enter and not increase friction as with a perfectly concentric carrier. The radical differences are the screwed on gas key of the typical AR, versus SIG's integral, piston-driven strike plate. C-D) Like many modern ARs, the SIG 516 (top) features a flattop, number-indicated Picatinny rail and easily removed, quadrail handguard. Note the ambidextrous magazine release just below the bolt release. At first glance (bottom), you might be fooled by the SIG's typical AR appearance, but it includes many features the typical AR does not.

rifle will accept QD slings in integral, ambidextrous attachment ports and comes with a 2-point rifle sling with QD sling swivels. It features Magpul's MOE pistol grip and collapsible buttstock, and incorporates a free-floating, quadrail fore-end and barrel. The barrel is nitride finished.

Like others, I am beginning to wonder if this little baby will be competing to replace the current US Army's select-fire M4 carbine.

Good or bad, depending on your perspective and use, the trigger pull registers about 7.5 pounds. My benchrest rifle triggers are about 1.5 to 2 ounces; my other competition rifles are around 1 to 2 pounds. To me, most 7.5-pound triggers are like moving sludge. But the fact is, the SIG trigger is not as bad as it sounds, and is quite smooth and predictable. You must remember this rifle's primary use is close-quarter combat.

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SIG has taken the trouble to design and manufacture slightly deeper guards (fences) for the magazine release and included a magazine release on both sides of the weapon. Three-position swing swivel connection ports are also pre-machined into the lower receiver and the handguard on both the left and right sides.

Briefly, features include: Piston-driving bolt carrier, 3-position gas

## 516 PATROL RIFLE

MAKER: SIG SAUER  
18 INDUSTRIAL DR.  
EXETER, NH 03833  
(603) 772-2302

WWW.GUNSMAGAZINE.COM/SIG-SAUER

**ACTION:** Gas piston, rotating bolt, **CALIBER:** 5.56x45mm NATO, .223 Rem. **CAPACITY:** 30, **OVERALL LENGTH:** 39.5", **RECEIVER:** 7075 Forged aluminum upper and lower, **BARREL LENGTH:** 16", (tested, 7", 10", 14.5" and 18" available), **GRIP:** Magpul MOE, **STOCK:** Magpul collapsible, **WEIGHT:** 7.3 pounds, **RETAIL:** \$1,599.99

regulator with receiver height top Picatinny rail, free-floating military-grade chrome-lined barrel, free-floating aluminum quad-rail system with continuous top rail, 7075-T6 Aircraft-grade aluminum upper and lower receiver with hard-coat anodized finish, milled lower receiver with integrated ambidextrous QD sling attachment points, Magpul MOE pistol grip and buttstock, SIG SAUER mini red dot sight, 2-point rifle sling with sling swivels and a 1-piece bolt carrier.

The rifle is chambered for the 5.56 NATO round. I had some of these, and several other weights in .223 Remington. The barrel has a twist of 1:7". This suggests it would handle the heavier loads well, if not the best. That did not happen in my case. I put a lot of time in at the range, shooting several mornings per week over a 3-month period. I shot factory loads from 50 grains to 77 grains, as well 5.56 NATO rounds, all with different bullets and loading. The overall aggregate was 1.434". On occasion, the rifle would



*The rifle is supplied with an STS-081 mini red-dot sight with a 4-MOA dot and mount from SIG SAUER. It is extremely well made from anodized aluminum and finished in matte black. The elevation and windage adjustments, as well as the brightness knob are easy to get to. The dot is parallax free. Screwed into the front of the sight is an anti-reflective honeycomb (removed and shown in front of the sight for this photo). Lenses are anti-reflective and have multilayer hand-pass optical coating. It weighs only 3 ounces.*

## LEUPOLD MARK 4 2.5-8X36MM MR/T MI

Leupold was kind enough ship their new 2.5-8x36mm with the Tactical Milling Reticle (TMR) to test the SIG 516 Patrol Rifle. I used their high tactical rings to secure the scope to SIG's flattop Picatinny rail.

Featuring a 30mm body and fast diopter ocular ring, it also includes tactical elevation and windage knobs. Most scopes under 10X do not include a parallax adjustment knob, nor does this one. The scope has 90-MOA adjustments for both windage and elevation. It comes complete with flip-open lens covers.

Leupold advertises the Mark 4 MR/T riflescopes for "everything from 50 to 700 meters."

The glass is exceptional, part of the price I suspect. There is no fringing. The glass is free of barrel, pincushion and rolling distortion. It is not only clear and bright, but resolution and



*Leupold's Tactical Milling Reticle (TMR) allows for much greater precision vs. the round- or football-shaped Mil-Dots. The longer bars are mils and the short bars are 1/2 mils. The bars at top, bottom and each side are .2 mils and allow for more precise ranging and targeting.*

contrast are excellent as well. It does have very slight curvature of field.

I am a fan of the TMR reticle. The longer bars are full mils with smaller 1/2-mil bars in between them. At the top, bottom and sides, the bars are 1/4 mils, offering more precision when used for ranging. The reticle's bar system allows for more precision, and does not cover targets as much as the round- or football-shaped mill dots. An excellent scope for such a rifle.

GUNS

post a .5" group, then turn around and shoot a 1.8" group with the same ammo. But clearly, the rifle wanted to shoot a 1.4" agg with any bullet or load.

I thought at first the Leupold 2-8X scope might be throwing the occasional shot. I mounted two other scopes proven successful in both benchrest and sniper matches, and which had considerably more power. The results were identical to those shot with Leupold's 2-8X. I shot the groups in the morning at 60' elevation when the winds were low and the temperature around 75 degrees F.

It surprised me I could post almost the same group size with SIG's little STS-081 mini red-dot sight with a 4-MOA dot. All groups were shot at 100 yards.

I cleaned the bore after every shooting session, but I did not clean the interior, the carrier or the bolt. The rifle continued to shoot flawlessly with no malfunctions, and the carrier and bolt remained clean without the lubricant becoming dry or the carrier being full of powder dust. They remained clean and lubed after 500 rounds.

The rifle is an AR, and it acted and shot like an AR. I mounted the sling that comes with the rifle, and after a little adjustment it worked well. Mounted with just the red-dot sight, any shooter would be well served. GUNS

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## MARK 4 2.5-8X36MM MR/T MI

MAKER: LEUPOLD  
1440 N.W. GREENBRIAR PKWY.  
BEAVERTON, OR 97006  
(503) 646-9171

WWW.GUNSMAGAZINE.COM/LEUPOLD

**ACTUAL MAGNIFICATION:** 3X, 8.7X, **LENGTH:** 11.3", **TUBE DIAMETER:** 30mm, **EYE RELIEF:** 3.7 (2.5X), 3" (8X), **WEIGHT:** 16 ounces, **INTERNAL ADJUSTMENTS:** 90-MOA windage & elevation, **RETAIL:** \$949.99

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# KNIVES

STORY: Pat Covert

## CLASSY CAT! Puma's Woods Walker gets the job done with style.

**T**echnology is a funny thing. While we think of modern knives as being state-of-the-art it is interesting to note one of the most popular handle materials today is Micarta, a tough synthetic developed in the early 1900s. However, it pales in comparison to Stag, which dates back 35 million years when the first deer appeared during the late Oligocene Epoch. If you've ever tried to cut or abrade deer antler, you're well aware it is one of the toughest organic materials you'll ever fool with. It is also one of the most attractive handles materials for a knife you'll ever see.

Enter the Waldlaufer, a classy Stag-handled drop point from Puma every bit as tough as it is attractive. The word Waldlaufer translates from German to "Woods Walker," but that descriptive moniker doesn't nearly describe the capabilities of this knife. First and foremost, hunters will appreciate the Waldlaufer for its ability to skin game. The drop point—recognized for its ability to glide under flesh without spearing an animal's innerds—is by far the most popular blade style for skinners, and at 3.4" in length, the Waldlaufer's 440C blade is versatile enough to handle large North American game and smaller fare to boot. Though it may be considered common compared to many of the fancy steels gracing many of today's modern knives, 440C is a time-proven steel and nobody does a better job of



*The Puma Waldlaufer is more than just a walk in the woods. This is a skinner that will go the distance in style!*

getting the most out of this steel than the German manufacturers.

Traditionalists will appreciate this knife for its classic styling. A brass guard graces a clean, no-nonsense handle shape that tapers out at the base, fitting the hand like a glove. But let's face it, the crowning Waldlaufer's touch is its exquisite Stag handles. As hunting knives go, nothing warms the cockles like deer antler, and Puma does it here in spades. Trying to find a stag handled production knife these days is like looking for a needle in a haystack of synthetic gobbledygook. Look no farther! The Puma Waldlaufer retails for \$199 and comes with a handsome, genuine leather sheath.

**GUNS**

### WALDLAUFER

MAKER: PUMA KNIFE COMPANY USA  
13934 W. 108TH ST.  
LENEXA, KS 66215  
(913) 888-5524

WWW.GUNSMAGAZINE.COM/  
PUMA-KNIFE-COMPANY-USA

BLADE MATERIAL: 440C, BLADE LENGTH: 3.4",  
OVERALL LENGTH: 8", WEIGHT: 5.4 ounces,  
HANDLE: Stag, SHEATH: Leather, PRICE: \$199



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# GUNS VNR

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## RIGHTS WATCH

DAVID CODREA

### Wisconsin Carry: 49 Down, 1 To Go

“Wednesday was a normal afternoon at Lou Perrine’s gas station in Kenosha, except that there was something new—a sign on the door, telling customers to leave their weapons at home,” WITI-TV Fox 6 reported.

“I, myself, I have guns. I am going to get my concealed carry, but I just feel it is not necessary,” Owner Anthony Perrine said.

It’s an interesting attitude, but not exactly one to inspire customer loyalty among Perrine’s fellow gun owners. He was responding to reporter questions about Wisconsin’s new law that took effect on November 1 to allow for concealed carrying of firearms in the Badger State—making it the 49th state (the lone holdout is Illinois) with some form of concealed carry provisions for citizens: roughly designated as “may issue,” where permit approval is based on individuals meeting criteria determined by the issuing authority, “shall issue,” where permits are provided to anyone who meets the general requirements and “unrestricted” or “Constitutional carry,” where permits are not required, as currently allowed in Alaska, Vermont, Arizona and Wyoming.

Wisconsin’s new law requires applicants to be residents, 21 years of age or older, that they pass a background check establishing they are not prohibited by law from firearms possession and to provide proof of firearms training. It also provides for recognition of out-of-state permits where comparable background checks have been performed.

Naturally, the qualifiers did not stop horrified hoplophobes from issuing dire warnings. Speaking of a court decision from the year before that Wisconsin’s ban on

concealed carry was unconstitutional, then-Brady Center President Paul Helmke declared “The ruling by a Wisconsin trial court judge that the US Constitution provides a right to carry concealed weapons in public endangers our communities, puts law enforcement at risk, and is just plain wrong... This ruling shows the danger of accepting the gun lobby’s vision of the Second Amendment as mandating its any guns, anywhere, for anybody agenda.”

Kristen Rand of the Violence Policy Center ramped things up a notch, claiming “Concealed carry permit holders don’t prevent mass shootings, they perpetrate them. They don’t support police, they shoot them.”

Really, I didn’t make that up.

Ignoring such lunatic warnings from those who don’t trust themselves, and by extension you, with freedom, Wisconsin residents voted with their actions. The Green Bay *Press-Gazette* reported on the day the law went into effect: “By mid-afternoon, the DOJ had received 145 applications, approved 123 and printed 85 permits... An agency website offering downloadable applications went live at midnight. As of 9 a.m., the site had received 400,000 hits and people had downloaded about 83,000 applications....”

What the citizen disarmament professionals never seem to realize is that we gun owners are “the gun lobby.” Elites just don’t fathom that grassroots trump Astroturf.

Seeing as how his business does not get its funding via grants and from well-heeled contributors, it’s something Anthony Perrine might do well to learn. Besides, it’s not like anyone intent on predation is going to take his stupid “No Guns” placard as anything but a sign of vulnerability.

GUNS

Visit David Codrea’s online journal  
“The War on Guns” at  
[waronguns.com](http://waronguns.com),  
visit [DavidCodrea.com](http://DavidCodrea.com) to read  
his Examiner column.

Due to the importance of this column, GUNS will begin posting “Rights Watch” at [www.gunsmagazine.com](http://www.gunsmagazine.com) on the 1st of the month—long before it appears here.—Editor

## Pirate Mother Ship Captured

A dhow pirate mother ship involved in attacks on merchant shipping in the Indian Ocean has been stopped and boarded by ships from the Royal Navy operating in the Indian Ocean.

This action followed on from the successful rescue of the Italian merchant ship MV Montecristo on Oct. 11, 2011 by the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) vessel Fort Victoria.

It is believed the dhow was hijacked by suspected pirates so they could use it as a base, or mother ship, from which to launch attacks against merchant ships many hundreds of miles from Somalia. Throughout this time, the Pakistani crew of the dhow were held hostage onboard.

On Friday 14 October, some 200 miles (320km) off the coast, HMS Somerset and RFA Fort Victoria closed in on the dhow. HMS Somerset's Commanding Officer, Commander Paul Bristowe, said, "The mother ship was located by Somerset's Merlin helicopter at first light and the boarding teams brought to immediate notice whilst Somerset closed with the dhow."

HMS Somerset is currently assigned to the Combined Maritime



**HMS Somerset's Merlin helicopter fires warning shots across the bow of the pirate dhow. Photo: Leading Airman (Photographer) Dave Jenkins, Crown Copyright/MOD 2011.**

Forces counter-piracy mission, Combined Task Force 151. RFA Fort Victoria is deployed as part of the NATO Ocean Shield counter-piracy task force.

The dhow was soon surrounded by a Royal Navy and Royal Marines boarding team from RFA Fort Victoria, supported by HMS Somerset's

Merlin helicopter.

The suspected pirates capitulated as the boarding team scaled the vessel's side. Captain Rod Yapp Royal Marines, the commander of the boarding team, said, "There was a clear indication that the suspected pirates found on the dhow were well-practised and knew what they were

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doing. Approaching the dhow before boarding was quite tense. Through my weapon sight I could see dark figures moving in the shadows on the bridge. We quickly boarded and secured the dhow, then mustered the 24 occupants on her bow.”

In the run up to being boarded, the suspected pirates were observed by Somerset’s Merlin helicopter ditching equipment and weapons overboard as well as setting one of their skiffs adrift. Despite their desperate attempts to cover their tracks, a large cache of boarding ladders, weapons, a second attack skiff, and equipment from a previously pirated ship were found onboard.

Captain Yapp added, “One of the weapons had recently been fired and was well maintained—as was the RPG [rocket-propelled grenade]. I think if we hadn’t disrupted this group of suspected pirates, it is quite possible they would have attacked another merchant vessel.”

The dhow’s crew were free to go on their way once the evidence gathering had finished. The four suspected pirates, however, have been passed to Italian authorities, on suspicion of their involvement in the attack on the MV Montecristo 3 days earlier.—*Courtesy MoD*

GUNS

Royal Marines boarding teams close in on the dhow (above), suspected of being the “mother ship” involved in the attack on the Italian merchant ship MV Montecristo three days earlier. The dhow itself had been hijacked and its Pakistani crew held captive below. A member of the upper deck gun crew on RFA Fort Victoria (below), with Royal Navy frigate HMS Somerset and the dhow in the background. Photos: Leading Airman (Photographer) Dave Jenkins, Crown Copyright/MOD 2011



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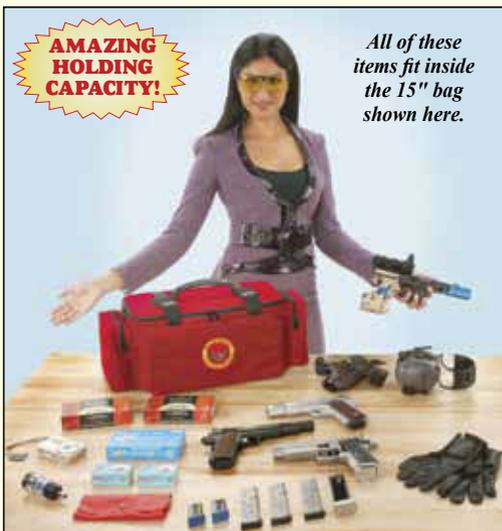
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## Heroin Seizure In Helmand

Over 2,000 pounds (900kg) of heroin and two bomb-makers have been intercepted in Afghanistan with the help of the Royal Navy's Sea King helicopters—known as the “eyes in the sky.”

Ground troops intercepted drug runners trying to smuggle 2,200 pounds (1,000kg) of heroin, after being guided by naval aviators and their Sea Kings bristling with state-of-the-art sensors.

In another incident, the Navy Sea Kings led US Marines of the 2nd Light Armoured Reconnaissance Battalion to apprehend two bomb-makers suspected of producing improvised explosive devices.

The “Baggers,” as the distinctive Sea King Mk7 Airborne Surveillance and Control helicopters from 854 Naval Air Squadron are known, are based at Camp Bastion, Afghanistan, and fly on average one mission a day, using the aircraft's state-of-the-art radar in its large grey “bag,” which gives the Sea Kings their nickname, to track movements thousands of feet below on the ground.

The aircraft, crews, maintainers and engineers ensure that the Baggers,



**An 854 Naval Air Squadron Sea King Mk7 Airborne Surveillance and Control helicopter flies over the Afghan desert. Photo: LA(Photo) Alex Cave, Crown Copyright/MOD 2011**

which have flown more than 1,000 missions over Helmand since they arrived from Royal Naval Air Station Culdrose in Cornwall, England, back in May 2009, are constantly ready to support the international mission.

Commander Pat Douglas,

Commander of the Maritime Sea King Force—849, 854 and 857 Naval Air Squadrons, as well as 771 Naval Air Squadron and HMS Gannet's Search and Rescue Flight—said by working as part of a larger team that includes UK and coalition troops in

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the air and on the ground, his men and women are scoring successes nearly every week, be they drug busts, arrests of insurgents or arms and bomb hauls.

The Baggers' most recent successes include the following:

- Tracking vehicle movements in southern and central Helmand to provide near-real-time information to ground troops and disrupt insurgent supply routes and drug-smuggling activities.
- Helping the US Marine Corps to

seize 2,200 pounds of heroin, prompting US commanders to comment, "Sea King support is invaluable in denying freedom of movement to insurgents and smugglers."

• Tracking a suspicious vehicle and sharing information with other coalition reconnaissance aircraft, which meant US Marines intercepted and captured two experienced insurgent bomb-makers.

Commander Douglas said, "We are strangling the insurgent lines of communication. Almost weekly there's a seizure of heroin, arms and the ingredients for improvised explosive devices which could claim many more lives.

"We fully understand what we're achieving. The Baggers are unique, they are on the spot, they can react quickly, they're working with people they know and they're having an impact."

Commander Douglas also commented on the physical demands the helicopter crews face in Helmand:

"In early October it's 42 degrees C (113 degrees F) by day in Bastion. Inside the helicopters it's 50 degrees C (122 degrees F). By the time the aircrew have walked to their Sea Kings with all their kit on and climbed in, they are soaked in sweat. Then they



*The distinctive shadow of a Sea King Mk7 Airborne Surveillance and Control helicopter passes over the Afghan desert in this stock image. Photo: Crown Copyright/MOD 2009*

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are flying demanding 6- and 7-hour missions. They are exhausted by the time they return.

“The ground crews work exceptionally hard, too, in the same dusty and hot environment. The Sea Kings are airborne 180 hours a month, supported by a very small team, but it is a rare day indeed when all the aircraft are not available to be flown when needed—frankly a Herculean effort from the maintainers.”

Two front-line Bagger Naval Air Squadrons (854 and 857) take it in turns in Afghanistan; 857 Naval Air Squadron have just returned from HMS Ocean where they played a key part in Apache strikes against pro-government forces in Libya by monitoring the air and sea space to make sure the gunships could pounce on their targets in secret.—*Courtesy MoD*

## Team Sinclair Wins

Team Sinclair won the National F-TR Team Championship while Sinclair Team member Jeff Rorer won the F-TR Individual National Championship at the 2011 F-Class National Championship, held at the Winnequah Gun Club in Lodi, Wis. On top of that performance, two team members set new individual national records.

This is the fourth National Team Championship Team Sinclair has won in the past five years. During the individual matches, team member Jeff Rorer won the 2011 F-TR National Championship and set a new aggregate National Record, while Brad Sauve set a new, national record with a score of 150 – 11X in the F-TR division, 600-yard match. Both national records are pending until NRA verification.

Sinclair International was represented by Brad Suave, Jeff Rorer, Derek Rodgers, Paul Phillips and coach Ray Gross. Sinclair General Manager Bill Gravatt also

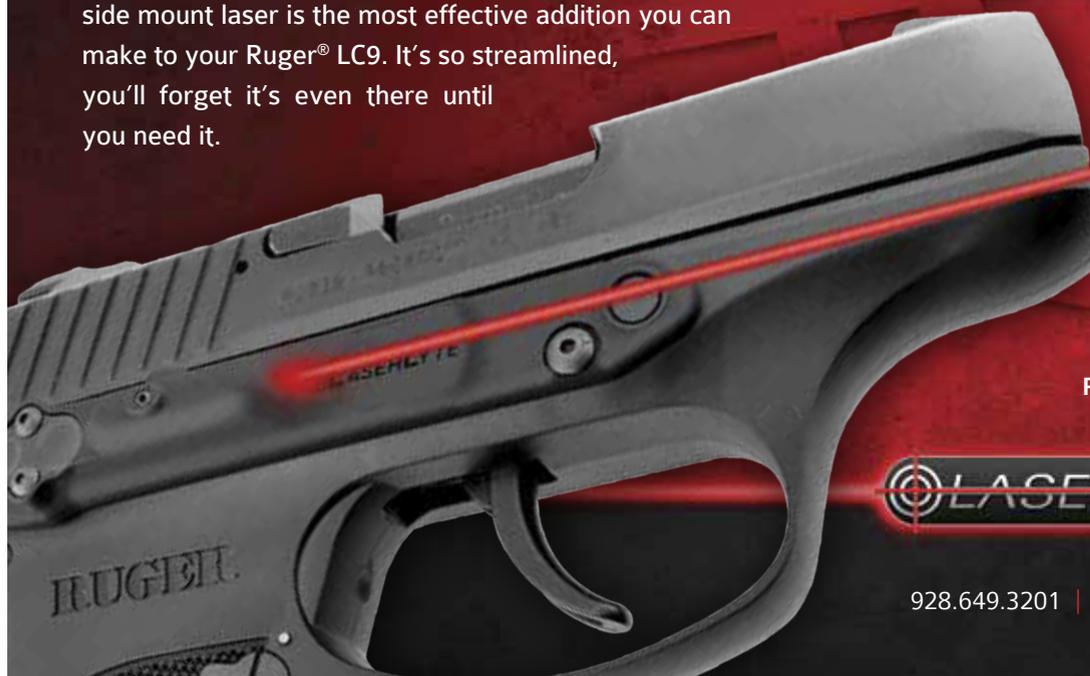


Team Sinclair shooter Jeff Rorer with his trophy for the F-TR Individual National Championship at the 2011 F-Class National Championship.

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competed in the match.

F-TR Division rifles must fire .223 Remington or .308 Winchester cartridges. A bipod and rear sandbag is permitted, but the total weight of the rifle including the bipod can't exceed 18.5 pounds.

"It's great having these talented shooters represent us," said Sinclair

General Manager Bill Gravatt. "I love getting to these events to see what the shooters are using, and what problems they might run into. That gives us a chance to create products to solve those problems," continued Gravatt.

Sinclair International is the world's premier supplier of high-quality reloading tools, components,

ammunition and accessories, plus unique competitive shooting and hunting supplies. A member of the Brownells Group since 2007, Sinclair International stocks more than 15,000 items and supplies handloaders, shooters and hunters worldwide.—  
*Courtesy Sinclair Int.*

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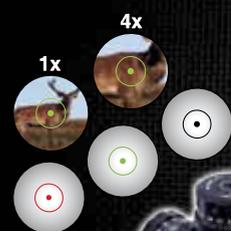
Mississippi Gov. Haley Barbour and officials with Olin Corp., the parent of Winchester, cut the ribbon last October on the new centerfire ammunition manufacturing operations in Oxford, Miss., the Associated Press reports. About 1,000 people are expected to eventually be employed at the plant when it reaches its production capacity over the next five years. The decision to move the plant from East Alton, Ill. to Oxford was announced in November 2010.—  
*Courtesy NSSF*



**Team Sinclair, winners of the National F-TR Team Championship at the 2011 F-Class National Championship, held at the Winnequah Gun Club in Lodi, Wis., included (left to right) Ray Gross, Brad Sauve, Jeff Rorer, Paul Phillips and Derek Rodgers**



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## Heavy Drop

The inhospitable, mountainous terrain surrounding Forward Operating Base Curry in Paktika Province, Afghanistan, makes vehicle maneuver nearly impossible, and units have relied heavily on air assets to receive supplies.

Soldiers from B Company, 9th Engineer Battalion usually recover water, food, fuel and other classes of supplies from the drop zone, but the delivery last Nov. 23 was unlike all others and the first of its kind in the history of Operation Enduring Freedom.

"Today we air dropped a 16' platform carrying an all-terrain forklift. It is one of six platforms ever dropped in theater," said 1st Lt. Chelsea Craig, the 11th Quartermaster Detachment commander. "It is the first forklift dropped in theater and, weighing in excess of 15,000 pounds, it is the heaviest platform ever dropped."

As the C-130 Hercules aircraft flew overhead, the back hatch opened and the crew pushed the platform carrying the historic load from the plane.

Within seconds, three parachutes opened and the platform descended onto the drop zone. Upon landing, the platform made a loud cracking noise as it came in contact with the earth.

"Uh oh. That didn't sound good,"



A crew pushes the forklift platform out of a C-130 aircraft (above) over a drop zone near FOB Curry in Eastern Afghanistan. Weighing 15,000 pounds, ground crews wondered if it would land OK. The terrain surrounding FOB Curry is too rugged for overland supplies. Soldiers from B Company, 9th Engineer Battalion (below), recover a 15,000-pound forklift from the platform it arrived on at a drop zone near FOB Curry in Eastern Afghanistan. It landed with a loud crack, but only the platform was broken. It started right up and was put to work. Photos: Sgt. Andrea Merritt.



said Maj. Michael Laporte, the 172nd Infantry Brigade support operations officer, as he watched from a tower overlooking the drop zone.

Once on the ground, engineer Soldiers ran over and inspected the new piece of equipment. Although the packing material encasing the equipment

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**A platform carrying a forklift descends onto a drop zone Nov. 23, 2011, near Forward Operating Base Curry in Eastern Afghanistan. It was the first forklift ever dropped in theater—and the heaviest platform ever dropped. Photo: Sgt. Andrea Merritt**

broke during landing, the forklift remained intact.

Every shadow of doubt about the operation's success disappeared when the Soldiers were able to start up the forklift and use it to load boxes onto the trucks.

"It went excellent," said Laporte. "When it came out, it didn't look good, but we pulled off the drop and they were able to pick up kicker boxes using the forklift."

"Our daily [combat outpost] sustainment tasks include picking up supplies from the [helicopter landing zone], recovering container delivery system drops and also moving equipment around the COP," said 1st Lt. Timothy Smith, executive officer for B Company, 9th En. Bn.

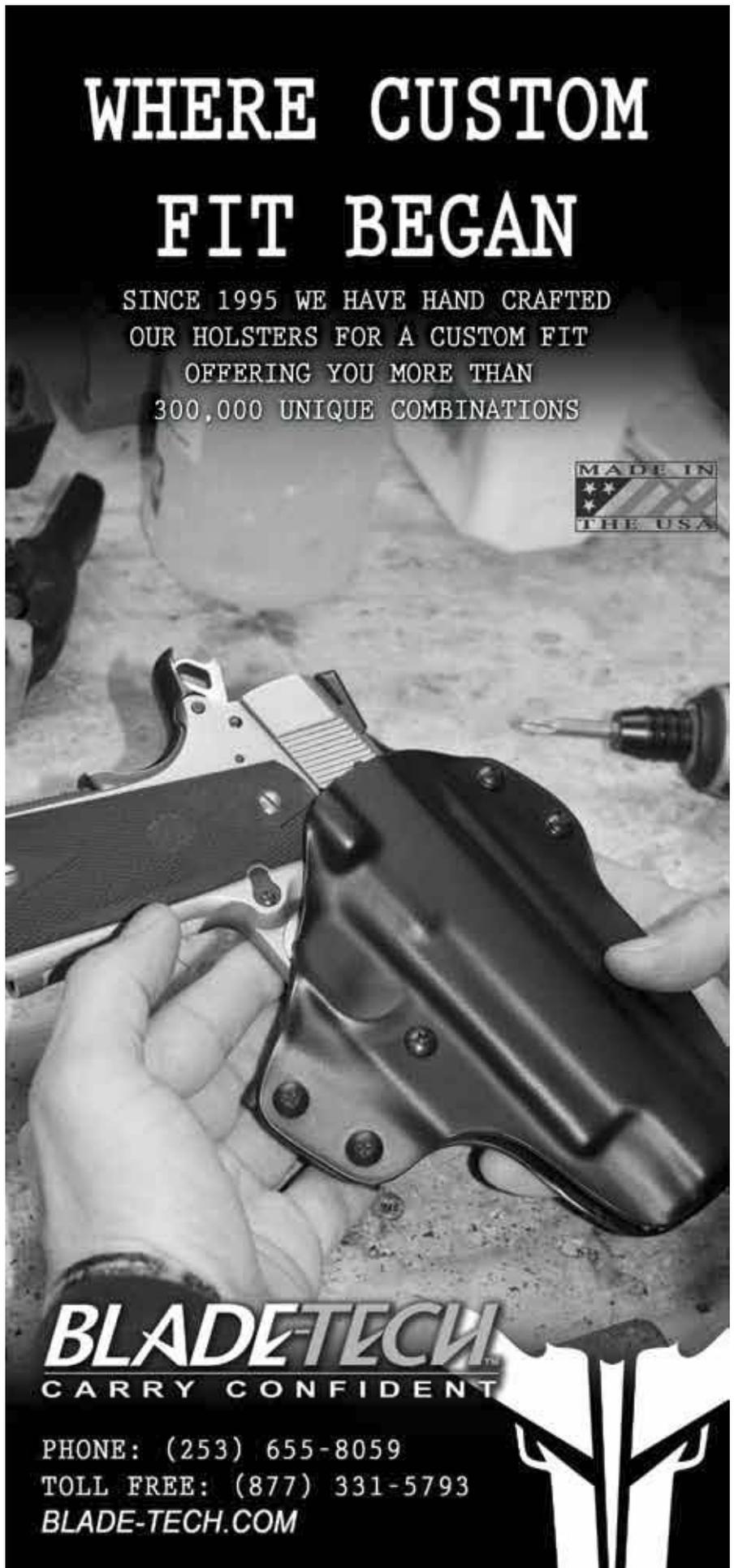
"It will now take the unit half the time to recover bundles that come in, which means they will spend less time on the drop zone and more time out of harm's way," Laporte said.—Sgt. Andrea Merritt, Combined Joint Task Force 1 - Afghanistan

## **Federal Top Gun Shotshells Support Wounded Warriors**

Shooters will soon have another reason to hit the range. Federal Ammunition's Top Gun Target loads now support the Wounded Warriors. Each special box contains a random mix of patriotic red, white and blue hulls great for everything from informal shooting to the highest levels of clay target competitions. A portion of the sales of Top Gun will assist

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An on-box royalty program sends proceeds from every sale of the patriotic Top Gun product directly to support Wounded Warriors. The Wounded Warrior Project honors and aids individuals who suffered service-related injuries on or after the events of Sept. 11, 2001. Family, friends and shooters of all levels can all help to meet the needs of injured troops by purchasing this product—one box at a time. To learn more about the Wounded Warrior Project, visit [www.WoundedWarriorProject.org](http://www.WoundedWarriorProject.org).—*Courtesy ATK*

## USMC Issues Order To HK

Heckler & Koch was awarded a competitive contract to produce the US Marine Corps' new Infantry Automatic Rifle (IAR). The formal "Full Rate Production" announcement by the Marines caps a competition that began more than three years ago.—*Courtesy NSSF*

## Don't Believe It

Despite rumors to the contrary, Cerberus, the private equity firm that owns Freedom Group, a holding company that includes firearms manufacturers Remington, Marlin, Bushmaster and DPMS, is in no way tied to anti-gun activist George Soros.—*Courtesy NSSF*

## August Imports Up 2 Percent

NSSF reports that overall US imports (in units) in six sporting arms and ammunition categories increased 2 percent in August 2011 compared to August 2010. August 2011 imported units in tracked categories totaled 146.2 million, up from 143.3 million reported in August 2010.—*Courtesy NSSF*

## Sportsmen Buy

A look at the buying habits of sportsmen in 2011 compared to the previous year reveals purchases of hunting and fishing equipment have remained steady in the current year, and in fact, even slightly improved.—*Courtesy NSSF*

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### THE ATLAS BIPOD

The designer/owner of this advanced bipod sent it to me nearly a year ago. I have since used it on many occasions, testing it in the extreme. Atlas brings some innovative features to the table for prone shooters. It not only folds flat in either direction, but also at 45 degrees. Depressing a knurled ring allows the bipod to be extended. The Atlas bipod is perfect for prone shooting and sniper competitions. The company provides several means of attachment. The sling swivel attachment is simple and easy. The rifle I mounted it on has a rail under the forearm. The Atlas rail mounting bracket works well and fit my rifle like a glove.

I have noticed an increase in use of the Atlas in competition. With the solid strength and versatility of the bipod, it is easy to understand why.

Construction is from T6061 Alu-



The Atlas Bipod from B&T Industries L.L.C. This photo shows one leg extended and the other collapsed to indicate the extremes of extension (5" to 9"). With an approximate setting in one of the notches and the use of a squeeze bag, the exact elevation is quickly attained.

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*The Atlas under-forearm rail attachment. Rotation of the mount can be tightened using the knob shown.*

minum, hard anodized black, with stainless steel springs and fasteners. UHMW (polyethylene) components are used for smooth tracking. Preload on pan, and cant is then tightened by means of the knurled knob. Both are adjustable 15 degrees +/- of preloaded pan, and 15 degrees +/- of preloaded cant. Leg positions are: stowed back, 90 degrees straight down, 45 degrees forward and stowed forward. All four leg positions are solid, allowing you to load the bipod at the 45- and 90-degree positions. Optional 3" leg extensions to increase height are available, and the standard soft, durable rubber feet are suitable for many surfaces, while optional interchangeable ski- and multi-spiked-style feet can be swapped in the field with the press of a ball plunger with a bullet tip. Optional mounting systems are available for Accuracy International and Sako rifles. Estimated range of elevation on the BT10 is 5" to 9" from the surface up to the rail, and estimated weight is 10.5 ounces for the clamp on style. Best of all, it is made in America.

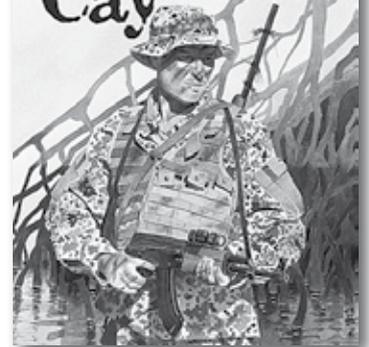
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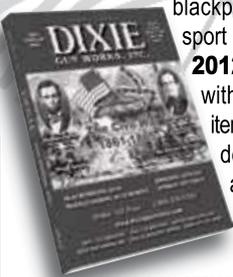
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*Shown from the rear. The L3 Insight WL1-AA is activated using the dial. The lower circle is where the cable to the remote pad attaches. The rear of the unit houses the batteries.*



*The L-3 Insight light as shown mounted on a 6.8 SPC. It can be activated using a dial, or by use of a remote pad (provided) attached to the rifle. The unit is configured for pistols or long guns and with or without laser.*

strobe starts by pushing the back-plate switch up, then pressing it down rapidly twice and holding it down. The light returns to normal when the switch is released.

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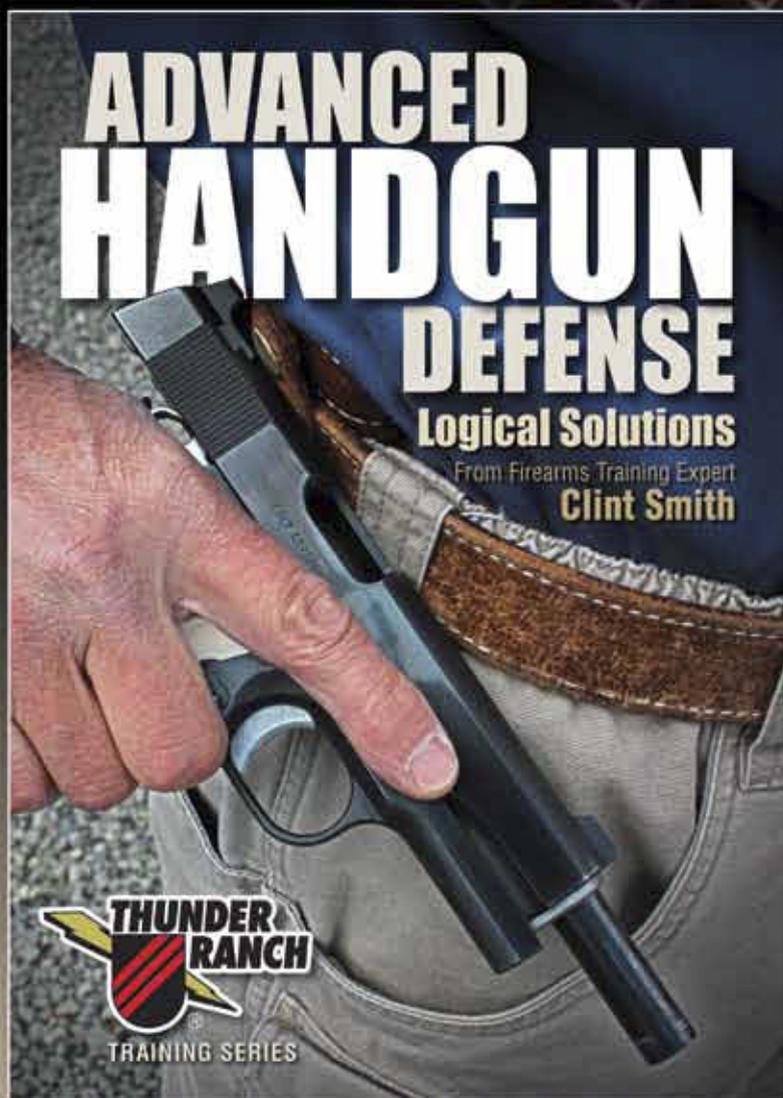
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SAMPLE ONLY

# ODD ANGRY SHOT

STORY: John Connor

## THE PRINCIPLES OF PREP Because bad things happen to good people....

**L**ess than two months ago, over a 13-day period, 1/3 of the nation's population was impacted by natural disasters and emergency conditions. Hurricane Irene forced hundreds of thousands from their homes, and left millions without power or potable water for a few days, to two weeks or more. Wildfires in Texas and California's mountains destroyed over 3,000 homes, 1,939 of them over the Labor Day weekend alone. "Storm fringe" tornadoes tore up towns and rivers hit 500-year flood levels. Then all the lights went out in San Diego. Thirteen days, folks.

The lucky ones had 24 hours to evacuate their homes. Thousands had only minutes, and hundreds had seconds. Some weren't fast enough. Millions had to hunker down in their homes, and most were miserably unprepared, lacking enough water and food for even two days, with no alternate light or heat sources at all. Mercifully, it was warm in the Northeast. When the San Diego grid went down, spreading throughout southern California, Arizona and northern Mexico, it was a balmy 85 in San Diego, but 115 degrees in the Imperial

Valley when the air conditioners rattled and died.

It could have been a lot worse. Irene had fallen from a Category-3 hurricane with 140+ mph winds to a Category-1 before hitting the US coastline, then skipped offshore and fell to Tropical Storm status before smacking Coney Island, N.Y. Had she remained at Category-3 and hugged the coast, "catastrophic" wouldn't have covered it. The monster fires, terrible as they were, could have been far worse with a change of winds. And now as I write this on the night before Halloween, 3 million

people in the Northeast are without power because of an early winter snow-storm. Yeah, I've received a lot of questions about preparation planning.

### Threes & Fives

In the May 2011 issue, I talked about some other peoples' experiences in disaster situations. I would urge you to go to [www.gunsmagazine.com](http://www.gunsmagazine.com) and reread it in our *Digital Editions* for suggestions on products and hardware. This recent wave of questions is more general, essentially asking about the principles of preparation.

The following comments presume you haven't done much prep, you're responsible for a family, and when I refer to "stored" or "storage," I mean stored in a relatively cool, dry place with a fairly stable temperature, away from sunlight. Think basement rather than attic, interior closet rather than against a wall subject to direct sun or deep cold.

You can't prepare specifically for every possible situation, but you can prepare for a wide range of emergencies. Don't run out and buy a year's supply of "survival food," typically sold in large containers and requiring preparation skills and hardware like grain mills, etc.—at least, not before you've prepared for threes and fives!

First, prepare to evacuate your home on three to five minutes notice, presuming extended help is out there somewhere, and you'll be able to return. Second, prep for 3 to 5 days inside your home, without power, communications or other support. Third, prepare for 3 to 5 days outside or in your damaged, weather-compromised home, without support. Now add, "without showing light or making noise after dark."

Concentrate on the basics: Water, food and shelter. You must be hydrated, nourished, warm, dry, rested and protected from infection, pests and predators, both 2- and 4-legged. Hydration is critical. Most Americans routinely run at a chronic low-level state of dehydration simply because they don't drink enough water, wait until they're thirsty to drink, and then gulp liquids rather than sip them. If you're thirsty, you're already dehydrated. Even mild dehydration leads to poor judgment, enervation, headaches,



"Economy, Charity and Survivability"—Good rules!

small-motor muscle failures and worse. Stored canned goods last longer than you think. With those and single or 2-portion, freeze-dried “pouch” foods, first focus on foods which can be eaten without preparation, then those requiring only warming, then “just add hot water” foods. Smaller units are more easily moved, portioned out and shared.

A friend who lives in an all-electric condo in a deep-winter area just bought a 23,000 BTU portable kerosene heater and 5 gallons of fuel for under \$200—a potential lifesaver. Another found a canned-fuel cooking system and supplies for 3 weeks for less than \$300. The deals are out there if you look for them.

Apply the “Airline Oxygen Rule”; the rule that says you put on your own oxygen mask before trying to mask others and children. Make sure *you* are taken care of so you can better care for others. It’s not selfishness; it’s sensible. You’re the one who will burn the most energy, get the least sleep, experience the greatest environmental exposure and run the most risks while protecting your family. Get quality foul-weather gear and high-energy supplements for *yourself!*

Follow the rules of Economy, Charity and Survivability. Examples: A

24-ounce can of long-storage emergency drinking water costs \$4.50, and a \$30 *Blast Match* and *WetFire Tinder* is a good thing. But I recently bought four cases, 24 units each, of 16.9-ounce bottles of water for \$10, and well stored, they’ll last for years. A pack of seven disposable butane lighters cost

(mosquito-free) *sleep* is critical; create it and enforce it. Mylar space blankets multiply the thermal value of even cheap blankets and sleeping bags.

Don’t assume kids will “eat what you give them,” hydrate themselves properly, or stay silent when they ought to. You and your mate can

## “Confidence calms and skills soothe”

me \$4.99, and that’s hundreds of lights. Now consider first, which is best for sharing with others less fortunate (“in extremis,” wise sharing creates allies, not enemies), and the value of spreading smaller, less expensive units out in different, convenient positions.

### In The Aftermath

Post-disaster, infection and insects are serious threats. Use sanitizing gels liberally; clean, antibacterial-treat and bandage even minor cuts, scrapes, stings and bites assiduously. A little mosquito netting and insect repellent goes a long way toward health and comfort. Warm, protected

share a can of green beans and a tin of tuna, but for “modern kids,” provide the yummy, tasty—and expensive—freeze-dried hiker’s meals. The effect on your nerves will pay off—and help validate your sudden “bossiness.”

“Confidence calms and skills soothe”: *Practice* lighting that camp-cooker, erecting that tent and using emergency tools, so when your family sees you confidently, skillfully doing it, they are assured they’ll be all right.

I hope I’ve provided something helpful here. If just one of you deals with disaster better as a result, I’ll be dancin’—badly, but happily! Connor **OUT**

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# GUNS

MAGAZINE

MARCH 2012

## ADVERTISER'S INDEX

The companies listed have featured advertisements in this issue. Look to them first when you are ready to make a purchase.

ADVERTISER	PAGE
Ambush Firearms	75
American Tactical Imports	40
American Watch Co.	11
ArmaLite	67
Benchmade Knife Company	10
Beretta USA	3
Blade-Tech Industries	83
Bond Arms	15
Burger Knives	86
Chapman Mfg.	88
Colt Mfg.	7
Condor Outdoor	41
Crimson Trace Corp.	61
CrossBreed Holsters LLC	56
Daniel Defense	C3
DeSantis Holster	69
Dixie Gun Works	87
El Paso Saddlery Co.	84

ADVERTISER	PAGE	ADVERTISER	PAGE
Elite Sports Express	95	Magpul Industries Corp.	37
European American Armory	15	Majestic Arms LTD.	74
FenixLight Limited	35	Master Piece Arms	56
Fiocchi Ammunition	14	Maxpedition Hard-Use Gear	19
Fort Knox Security	87	Mitchell's Mausers	37, 43
G-96 Products	22	O.F. Mossberg & Sons	71
Gentry Custom	88	MTM Case-Gard	13
Glock Inc.	21	N82 Tactical Inc.	62
GUNS Magazine Subscription	89	Pearce Grip	42
Helvetica Trading USA LLC	39	PrOlix	74
Hodgdon Powder Company	9	Rock River Arms	25
Hogue Inc.	38	S & K ScopeMounts	88
Hornady Manufacturing Inc.	27	Savage Arms	23
Hot Caliber	25	Sierra Bullets	63
ITT Corp	66	SIG SAUER	33
Iver Johnson	18	Silver Stag Knives	69
Jantz Supply	57	SOG Specialty Knives	87
Kimber Manufacturing Inc.	C2, C4	Spartan Blades	63
Kwik-Site Co.	32, 72, 86	Springfield Inc.	31, 73
Lancer Systems	79	Steelcutter Publishing	86
Laser Devices Inc.	28	Sturm, Ruger & Co. Inc.	17
LaserLyte	80	Sun Optics USA	84
LaserMax	76	Tactical Rifles	62
Leapers Inc.	81	TOPS KNIVES	85
Lee Precision Inc.	78	Triple K Mfg.	22
Lewis Machine & Tool	18	US Rare Coin	42
Lyman Products	82	Woodstock International	77
Mag-na-port International Inc.	84	XS Sight Systems	47
Magnum Research Inc.	29	Zerust Products	95

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is adjustable and the front sight is the high Patridge type. The base pin latch was changed to eliminate any chance of the pin jumping forward under recoil, and mating a standard Colt SAA triggerguard with a Bisley backstrap made the grip frame.

### Croft Connection

In the late 1920s, Harold Croft of Pennsylvania had packed a suitcase full of sixguns and took the train all the way across the country to Elmer Keith's small ranch in Durkee, Ore. At the time Croft was having lightweight pocket pistols built on Single Action and Bisley platforms, while Keith was more interested in full-sized single actions for long-range shooting and everyday packing. Gunsmiths Sedgley and Houchins had turned Croft's ideas for perfect sixguns into reality, with the former doing all the framework and the latter working on the sights, stocks and action. The frames were also flat-topped and fitted with adjustable sights. All of the Croft Featherweights weighed between 30 and 32 ounces, and were written about by Keith in the *American Rifleman* in 1928.

One year after the Croft visit, Keith unveiled his idea of the perfect sixgun in the above-mentioned article, "The Last Word." He incorporated many of Croft's ideas including the flat-topped frame, adjustable sights and the modified grip frame. Keith called his new sixgun the No. 5 S.A., as it had been patterned after Croft's numbers M1 to M4. When Croft visited Keith, his sixguns numbers M1 to M4, were .45s, while Keith's No. 5 was a .44 Special. Of the two Croft sixguns that have surfaced lately, both have been converted from .45 Colt to .44 Special. Both sixguns have two dates on them and I am assuming one date is for the original completion to .45 Colt, and the other represents the changeover to .44 Special by Croft.

In the mid-1980s, Bill Grover of Texas Longhorn Arms built his salute to Elmer Keith with his Improved Number Five. Grover's single actions were all mirror images of traditional single actions, that is, the loading gate and ejector rod were on the left side instead of the right side. Bill maintained this was natural for use by a right-handed person.

Grover said Keith chose what was the best cartridge when he built his No. 5 S.A., then namely the .44 Special. In the 1980s, Grover chose what he considered the best cartridge of the time, the .44 Magnum. Texas Longhorn Arms and the Improved Number Five were relatively short-lived, and the factory



Lipsev's special edition Ruger Bisley Model .44 Special shoots!

closed its doors before the turn of the century.

In the early years of the new century, I had talked with the then president of Ruger about bringing out a .44 Special; he didn't say yes, but he didn't say no. When the .357 Blackhawk arrived in 1955, the next step should have been the same sixgun chambered in .44 Special. When the .44 Magnum was introduced in late 1955, all thoughts of a .44 Special were lost, and in early 1956 a larger Blackhawk was introduced in the new .44 Magnum instead.

By 1972, all Rugers, .30 Carbine, .357 Magnum, .41 Magnum, .44 Magnum and .45 Colt were built on the same large-size New Model frame. Fast-forward 50 years. When Ruger came out with the Anniversary Model .357 Flat-Top in 2005, it was not on the old 3-Screw action, which allowed only five rounds to be carried safely, but rather on the New Model transfer bar action, and the safe carrying of a full six rounds. It was, however, the same size as the original Blackhawk of 1955. The original version from 50 years ago never made it to a .44 Special, however this one now seemed to me to be a natural for chambering in .44 Special. Jason Cloessner of Lipsey's also thought so. The .357 Magnum Flat-Top Blackhawk Anniversary Model was chambered in .44 Special and offered by Lipsey's, a major distributor to the firearms trade, in both 4-5/8" and 5-1/2" versions.

Ruger liked the idea so well, finally, that after the run of special Lipsey's Specials, the New Model Flat-Top .44 Special became a standard catalog item. So what would be next for Lipsey's? The blue versions had sold well, so now the next natural step would be a stainless steel .44 Special Flat-Top. I liked mine so well it was fully engraved by Michael Gouse even before I shot it. When I got it back and

actually fired the first rounds, I was not disappointed as it is capable of 1-hole groups. Mine has now not only been engraved, it also wears ivory grips.

Jason thanked me for being the inspiration for resurrecting the .44 Special, and now Lipsey's is offering what is definitely a direct inspiration from Keith's No. 5 S.A. No, it is not called a No. 5, but it is a .44 Special with a Flat-Top frame, adjustable sights, wide hammer and 5-1/2" barrel. Keith's original No. 5 grip frame was made by blending the backstrap of a Bisley and the triggerguard of a Single Action; Lipsey's "No. 5" uses the Ruger Bisley Model grip frame which fits most sixgunner's hands much better than the smallest Keith-style.

I have fired the Texas Longhorn Arms Improved Number Five extensively in both .44 Magnum and .45 Colt, and I find the grip which was made to precisely fit Keith's hand is very unforgiving in my hand. I have to concentrate mightily to maintain the same exact grip each time, or groups will open up. The Bisley Model grip frame from Ruger is much more forgiving and also allows room for my whole hand. I know felt recoil is quite subjective, but at least in my hand it is also just about the best factory single-action grip for reducing felt recoil.

Keith's No. 5 was fully engraved and ivory-stocked. The Lipsey's version is standard blue. However, mine shoots so well, groups of 7/8" and 1" are not uncommon, it is going to be carried farther down the path of the No. 5. That means full engraving, carved ivory grips with a Mexican eagle and refinished with a case-hardened frame and hammer by Turnbull Manufacturing.

GUNS

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# CAMPFIRE TALES

BY JOHN TAFFIN

## THE LEGEND LIVES!

### Lipsev's delivers again.

**F**or a quarter-century beginning in the mid-1950s the Sixgunners Mecca was found in the little town of Salmon, Idaho, where Elmer Keith resided. This ended when he suffered a stroke in 1981, as he would spend the next three years in a Boise, Idaho, nursing home. From the time of his passing until a few years ago, everything was kind of in limbo. Then Cabela's incorporated the Elmer Keith Museum within their Boise store, and now sixgunners come from all over to view the sixguns, rifles and hunting trophies of Elmer Keith.

I was given the rare privilege of placing all the firearms, and so was able to position the No. 5 S.A. in the spot where it could be seen immediately as you enter the museum. It is the centerpiece of the sixgun display. I "visit" the No. 5 at least once a month.

From the late 1920s until 1955, Keith continually promoted the .44 Special as the ideal sixgun cartridge using his designed "Keith" bullet, weighing 250 grains and pushed at a full 1,200 fps using first No. 80 powder and then, when it became available, Hercules No. 2400. Over the years Keith featured his

sixguns in his articles, and as a teenager I purchased a copy of *Sixguns By Keith*, subsequently spending many hours carefully studying the pictures of his many custom sixguns. Other teenagers were interested in the new rock and roll music, movies and fast cars. I soon lost interest in all three but developed a passion for sixguns.

### The Four Colts

Keith was not satisfied with stock factory sixguns and enlisted the help of some of the top gunsmiths and engravers in the country to customize



*Anyone who doesn't recognize Elmer's famous Stetson and No. 5 S.A. needs to go back to Sixgunning 101!*

his sixguns. His four Colt Single Action .44 Specials were a King short-action job with a 7-1/2" barrel, an original one-of-a-kind 7-1/2" Flat-Top Target, a 5-1/2" Flat-Top Target with a folding 3-leaf rear sight designed by Keith and the No. 5 S.A. Colt—an extensively customized 5-1/2" Flat-Top Target Model with a special grip made by combining a Bisley backstrap and Colt SAA triggerguard.

This now famous custom Colt was written up as "The Last Word" in the April 1929 issue of the *American Rifleman*. The title for the article comes from the fact this revolver was designed as the epitome of the single-action sixgun. Every possible improvement was incorporated in "The Last Word" sixgun and Keith tried to interest Colt in making it a factory offered single action, but to no avail.

Keith, along with the ideas of Harold Croft and gunsmiths Neal Houchins, R.F. Sedgley and J.D. O'Meara, worked together to weld up the top strap of a standard Colt Single Action to make a heavy Flat-Top Target design. The old flat mainspring was replaced by a U-type spring, and the hammer was made by welding a Bisley wide spur on a standard hammer. The rear sight

*continued on page 97*



*Three of Elmer Keith's custom Colt Single Actions. The bottom one is the No. 5 S.A. in .44 Special.*

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