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ON THE COVER LUCKY 7

A 686+ .357 Magnum
from S&W's "Pro
Series"

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Massad Ayoob

PHOTOS:

Joseph R. Novelozo

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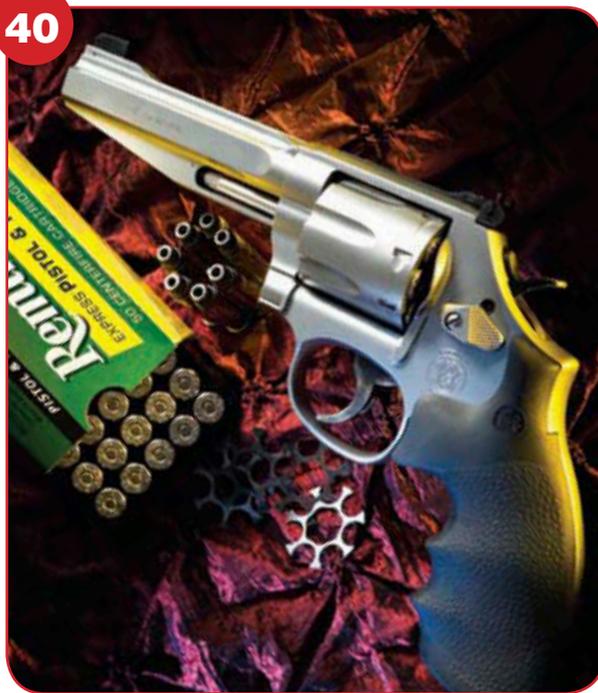
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CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

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FEBRUARY 2010

CROSSFIRE

LETTERS TO GUNS

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Common Sense?

I've read some of the letters in your March online issue. Quite frankly, they puzzle me. How is it a majority of these individuals think they are the only people perusing your publication? Not only that, they believe you should only run the articles, commentary and opinions they want to see.

I had to scratch my head at the comments from the gentleman in SC. How he isn't capable of seeing the correlation of Ms. Maddow's stance that "no-one should be *allowed*" to bring their guns home and the prohibition of bearing arms, indicates he hasn't got a bit of common sense. Ms. Maddow's stance is exactly the same as the "Grabbers," only couched differently. His conclusion that David Codrea's final comment borders on threatening is absurd. Where has Common Sense gone?

Scott Wharem
Nashua, New Hampshire

Crossover

The liberal media always gives slanted news or none at all. It's refreshing to hear some of the positives of the wars. Gear wise there is a large crossover of what the military uses and competitive shooters use. Aimpoint-type optics were widely used at the ranges before widespread military use. The black gun articles are getting repetitive. The guns themselves I enjoy, but every little bolt on gadget seems to warrant a whole article like there is a new rifle in town. How about some more articles on the most successful military rifle of the last 60 years: the AK-47 and its clones?

Mark Runyan
via e-mail

Stories In GUNS

I think *GUNS Magazine* does a superb job covering our shooting sports and our right to own firearms. I am an active shooter, so I am somewhat distressed by letters to the editor that say things like "Stop Military News" or "No More Tactical Guns," etc. My distress is quite simple: your magazine is called *GUNS* for heaven's sake! It is not called

Guns for Fun, Plinkers Delight, or The Warrior's Tools. It is not limited to certain guns—there are magazines for that. You are not limited to certain uses of guns (hunting, self defense, etc.). There are magazines for that. *GUNS* is about guns for every shooter in America, and the world, too.

So, first, no more "no mores" from the readers. If it is about a gun (of any kind whatsoever), a part of a gun, or the use of any type of firearm, the story belongs in here.

I really can't understand how any former military types could misunderstand this but that's a topic for another day.

Greg Jacobs, ISCS USN (Ret)
Nubbins Colt/SASS 7802
Dallas, Texas

The Lebel Saga

I never imagined I'd see, in a mainstream gun magazine, an article on the French Mle 1886/93 "Lebel" rifle. Yet there it was. Great story, great photos!

Author John Sheehan and fellow readers might be interested to know the Lebel saga continues: While on TDY to Aberdeen Proving Ground early in 2004, I had a chance to examine a number of small arms recently recovered in Iraq. As you might have guessed, there were many AK variants. Also lots of SVD sniper rifles; the scopes on some were so messed up the users might have been better served using the backup iron sights. Just as well for our men and women though!

Then there were the oddities: a WWII German Kriegsmoell Kar 98k; a Brno-made Model 98/29 Persian carbine, the kind with the really short barrel; two near-mint Rasheed carbines, stamped "Made in Iraq" in English letters; and finally (you guessed it) a pair of Lebels! The two young NCOs tasked with cataloging the arms had no idea what these half dozen oddities were; needless to say I did my part.

Ed Rudnicki
Dingmans Ferry, Pennsylvania.



FMG PUBLICATIONS



shootingindustry.com

Publisher & Editor: Russ Thurman

Advertising: Anita Carson, 866.972.4545

email: anita@shootingindustry.com



americancopmagazine.com

Editor: Suzi Huntington

Advertising: Denny Fallon, 800.426.4470

email: denny@americancopmagazine.com

Delano Amaguin, 888.732.6461

email: delano@americancopmagazine.com

HANDGUNNER

americanhandgunner.com

Publisher & Editor: Roy Huntington

Advertising: Steve Evatt, 800.533.7988

email: steve@americanhandgunner.com



gunsmagazine.com

Editor: Jeff John

Advertising: Andrew Oram, 866.903.1199

email: andrew@gunsmagazine.com



fmgpublishations.com

Editor: Sammy Reese

Advertising: Scott McGregor, 800.553.7780

email: scott@gunsmagazine.com

ONLINE ADVERTISING MANAGER: Tracy Moore,

TEL: 888.651.7566, FAX 858.605.0205

tracy@fmgpublishations.com

NATIONAL ADVERTISING: 12345 World Trade Dr.,

San Diego, CA 92128, TEL: 866.972.4545, FAX 858.605.0211,

anita@shootingindustry.com

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING: Lori Robbins,

TEL: 800.633.8001, FAX 858.605.0247,

classes@fmgpublishations.com

FMG EAST COAST SALES: Sig Buchmayr, Buchmayr &

Associates, 28 Great Hill Rd., Darien CT 06820,

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PRODUCTION 858.605.0216

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HANDLOADING

• John Barsness •

SPINNING ANEW

The twists of rifling twist.

Spiral rifling was developed in what are now the countries of Austria and Germany in the late 15th and early 16th centuries, but didn't catch on all that fast, primarily because of the difficulty of fitting the projectile to the bore, especially if it was full of black-powder fouling. Still, by the late 1700s rifles were overtaking smoothbores as the firearm of choice in some parts of the world, and over the next century the invention of conical bullets, self-contained metallic cartridges and smokeless powder made rifles truly practical.

One of the results was the invention of the first formula for figuring the correct rifling twist for projectiles. This was done empirically for centuries, primarily because bullets (and cannonballs) were all round, so they didn't require much twist. In 1879, however, a British mathematics professor, Sir Alfred George Greenhill, developed a formula for lead-cored conical bullets some people still use.

In The Beginning

When expressed mathematically the Greenhill formula appears more complex than it is. In practice it's really simple:

- (1) Measure the length of a bullet in inches, then divide by the bullet diameter.
- (2) Divide 150 by the result of (1).
- (3) Multiply the result of (2) times bullet diameter.

This product is the supposedly ideal rifling twist for that bullet, expressed in inches.

As an example, let's figure out the rifling twist for a typical 180-grain 30-caliber spitzer boattail, in this instance the 200-grain Nosler Partition, 1.38" long:

- (1) $1.38 \div .308 = 4.48$
- (2) $150 \div 4.48 = 33.48$
- (3) $33.48 \times .308 = 10.31$

So according to Greenhill, rifling of about 1 turn in 10" is needed to stabilize a 200-grain Nosler Partition. This is remarkably close to the 1:10" twist used in most .30 caliber centerfires, but this doesn't mean the Greenhill formula is perfect, or even all that applicable today.

The big problem is that in 1879 muzzle velocities were much lower than they would soon be, with the advent of smokeless powder, and muzzle velocity also has an effect on bullet stabilization. A modern modification of the Greenhill formula substitutes 180 instead of 150 for bullets started at higher velocities, but the fact is modifying the Greenhill formula is kind of like dressing up a really old pig. Newer formulas are more precise.

My friend Don Miller, a retired engineer and enthusiastic shooter, likes to spend time fiddling with various aspects of ballistics. Among other things, a couple of years ago

Don published an article about my 4-to-1 formula (April 2009 issue), for figuring the potential velocity changes due to case capacity. Don played with the actual physics of the problem, just because he wanted to know why such a simple formula worked, and published the results in *Varmint Hunter* magazine. Don's math is far over my head (I was a biology major, not an engineer), but it was nice to know somebody thought enough of the 4-to-1 rule to find out why it worked.

Don also became intrigued with rifling twist, and eventually published an article with some new formulas in *Precision Shooting*. Don's formulas have become accepted in certain circles; in fact Bryan Litz, an aeronautics engineer and shooter who recently published the fine book *Applied Ballistics For Long Range Shooting*, cites Don's formulas, including those for variations in muzzle velocity and atmospheric pressure.

These formulas are published in *Applied Ballistics*—but more importantly (at least for most of us) they're incorporated into the ballistics



"Over-stabilizing" of bullets isn't as big a problem as it used to be, thanks to better balanced bullets. This SIG 556 DMR shot 50-grain Nosler Ballistic Tips very well, despite a rifling twist that's theoretically too fast.

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program of the CD included with the book. Such stuff is normal in our computerized society; previously the Sierra ballistics program also includes a more sophisticated rifling-twist formula than George Greenhill's.

Why is this stuff important? Don't riflemakers put the "correct" rifling twist in their barrels? Well, yes and no, and muzzle velocity and atmospheric pressure also have effects on bullet stability. Extra velocity doesn't affect stabilization as much as many shooters assume, mostly because it also has effects on the bullet itself (to find out why, read Bryan Litz's book), but the effect is still there. Atmospheric pressure has a definite effect, primarily seen at different altitudes: Less twist is required to stabilize a bullet in the thin air of higher altitudes than at sea level, for instance.

One problem today is many bullets are much longer for their weight. Fifty years ago all spitzers were lead-cored, and very few had boattails. Today not only do a lot of bullets have boattails, but they often contain less lead and sometimes none at all. They may also have either a plastic tip, or a very long ogive that might only be full of air. Plus, even hunting bullets are shot at much longer ranges these days. A twist sufficient to stabilize a bullet out to 300 yards might not get the job done at 600.

In reality, not all riflemakers use sufficient twist. One of the old theories about twist is the best accuracy results from just enough twist. There's some truth to this, but it was "more true" 50 years ago, when many bullets weren't all that well balanced, the reason the 110-grain .30-06 varmint load had a reputation for lousy accuracy from the typical 1:10" twist.

Small Difference, Big Result

Some custom riflemakers still subscribe to this theory. One built me a custom 7x57 some years ago, and asked what bullet I'd be shooting most of the time. I told him the 140-grain Nosler Partition, but thought he asked because we'd already discussed making the throat shorter than in many 7x57s. The rifle shot great with 140 Partitions, and any other bullet in the 140-grain range such as the 139-grain Hornady Interlock.

But when I tried some 140-grain Barnes Xs and 150-grain Swift Sciroccos, both resulted in patterns instead of groups. It turned out the riflemaker has put a barrel with a 1:11.5" twist on the 7x57, rather the standard 7mm twist of around 1:9", on the theory the slower twist would shoot 140s super-accurately. These days, a different custom 7x57 I own shoots very well



This Wyoming pronghorn was taken with an E.R. Shaw 6.5-06 and a 140-grain Berger VLD. The 1:9" twist in the bore is theoretically a little too slow to stabilize such a long bullet at a muzzle velocity of 2,950 fps, but at over 7,000' in elevation there wasn't any problem.

with bullets from 140 to 175 grains, just as a 7x57 should.

The factories sometimes can't agree on rifling twist. Today more manufacturers are putting 1:9" twist barrels on .223 Remingtons, both because of the heavier bullets often used in competition shooting, and because many varmint bullets are getting longer, but some still use the older 1:12" twist. I just tested a new Thompson/Center Icon Precision Hunter and, before the shooting started, measured the twist, using the standard tight patch on a cleaning rod. It turned out to be 1:12", eliminating some of my favorite .223 bullets, such as the 69-grain Hornady BTHP. The Icon did shoot great with 50-grain bullets.

Today's bullets—even hunting bullets—tend to be very well balanced, so extra spin doesn't affect them nearly as much. In fact, I've gotten excellent accuracy from 40-grain Nosler Ballistic Tip bullets in .223 Remingtons with 1:9" twists, and from 85-grain Sierras

in a .260 Remington with a 1:8" twist. In theory neither of these combinations should work, but they do, and the reason is extremely well-balanced bullets.

It does help to know whether the bullet you choose will stabilize in your rifle's barrel, especially at different elevations. Luckily, thanks to computers and new research, it's a lot easier to find out precisely what twist will work with today's longer bullets.

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Bushnell's Upside Down Christmas Tree.

It is curious how few people thought about using mil dot reticles for hunting 20 years ago, although it has amazing utility for such a chore. The first reticle with holdover bars to really hit the industry running seems to be the TDS reticle designed by Col. Tom Smith and used in Swarovski scopes for several years. Introduced only about 12 years ago, the reticle took the shape of a Christmas tree. The distance between bars was used for holdover. Each lower bar was a little longer horizontally than the one above it to account for a 10 mile per hour wind.

Variation after variation followed until almost every manufacture had holdover dots or bars of some sort and with some logical purpose in mind. But then Bushnell did something very curious: They turned the Christmas tree upside down. Why?

Bushnell Elite Riflescope

Bushnell was kind enough to send along one of their 3-9x50mm 3200 Elite riflescopes for this article. I tested it at the range for resolution, contrast, and aberrations. It was outstanding. I had just finished an article on their 8x42 Legend Ultra HD binos with ED lenses, and was as impressed with the glass in this rifle scope as I was with the binos.

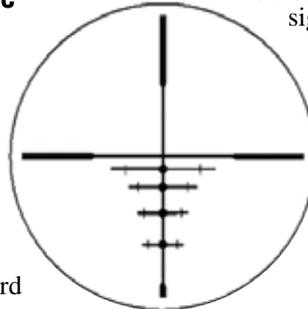
The rifle scope is waterproof and fog

proof and has their Rainguard Coating. The lenses are HD coated, and the reticle is their 600-yard DOA, or Dead On Accurate. Twisting the power ring showed me the reticle is in the second focal plane. That means only on its highest setting, i.e. 9X, do the holdover bars hit the distances given by Bushnell with selected cartridges. That is not quite true. Much more about that in a moment.

This particular model has the European-style quick focus eyepiece. Since it is only a 9X scope on its highest setting, parallax adjustment

has not been provided.

The dials are 1/4" clicks and can be set to zero once you have sighted in. The scope is a 1-piece design, and is labeled "made in Japan." The warranty is excellent. I could not fault anything I saw or tested. The 50mm objective transmits light very well. An excellent hunting scope.



Bushnell's DOA 600 reticle provides holdover bars as well a "Rack Bracket System" to size mule deer and whitetails. While this might appear to restrict its use to certain calibers and just hunting deer, the reticle can be used with any cartridge, for any animal, and for ranging as well if you do some work ahead of time.

DOA Reticle

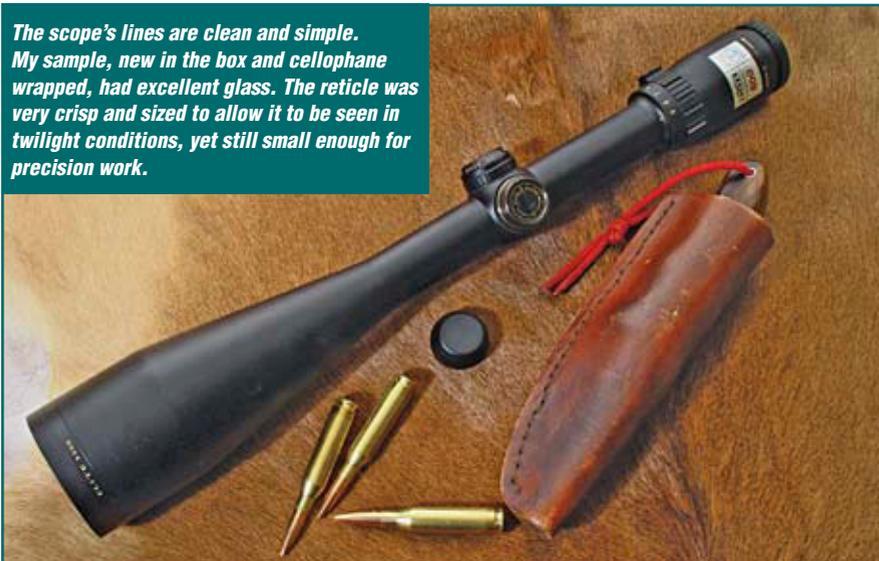
So much for the boilerplate. Let's talk about the upside down Christmas tree holdover bars. While most bar designs are rather simple, they provide the shooter with a tremendous advantage unknown to hunters 20 or so years ago. It is true Premier Reticles and a few other folks have been installing holdover dots

for particular cartridges and ballistic trajectory for several years prior to this, but the rush to more elaborate holdover bars is a relatively new phenomenon.

To satisfy marketing, many reticle designers and manufacturers find it expedient to tell people the holdover bars will hit at particular ranges with several popular cartridges—true to a certain extent, and certainly simpler to say so. The truth, however, is a bit more complicated, and the fact is most people don't want the complication. In the case of Bushnell's 600 DOA in this scope, the main reticle is sighted in at 100 yards, allowing a 200-yard hit for the first holdover bar below the main reticle, 300 yards for the second, then 400, 600, and finally 650 where the vertical stadia wire gets thicker.

The smart hunter understands margin of error, realizing if he's shooting an elk at 300 yards, the second holdover bar will produce a hit in the vital zone. No problem. However, at 500 and 600

The scope's lines are clean and simple. My sample, new in the box and cellophane wrapped, had excellent glass. The reticle was very crisp and sized to allow it to be seen in twilight conditions, yet still small enough for precision work.





The dials (left) are 1/4" per click at 100 yards and can be accessed with the fingers. Once sighted in, the dial can be lifted, turned to zero, and then tightened down again. Caps protect the dials. The ocular adjustment (right) is the European-style fast focus. The glass has Bushnell's RainGuard and HD coatings, powers are clearly marked and the ring turns smoothly. Jacob was impressed by the optics and the low price is just icing on the case.



yards that might not be true. Why? Let us suppose you are hunting deer and see the monster of a lifetime at 650 yards exactly. Great, you put the point of the wider vertical stadia wire on the deer's kill zone and fire. There is no wind, and you have a solid rest. Yet, you miss. Now what?

This is where the complication raises its ugly head. Bushnell doesn't tell you at what elevation and temperature they calculated the holdover bars, and neither does any other manufacturer of similar holdover bars. Suppose their calculations were completed at sea level. Suppose further you were at sea level during the testing of your new scope, and the cartridge you were shooting was on the money for each holdover bar. But when you made that most important shot, you were hunting at 8,000' elevation on a hot

day. The drop in pressure from sea level to 8,000' and the rise in temperature makes the bullet's ballistic path much flatter. The point you used for 650 yards is no longer 650 yards.

The point is, what Bushnell and other manufacturers show for their holdover ranges are simply ballpark estimates. To know exactly what the holdover bars are good for, you need ballistic software to calculate exactly what each holdover bar is good for at each change in density/altitude in any set of environmental conditions. One of them, Exbal, will give you that information. Other ballistic software will as well, but they take a bit more arithmetic with pencil, paper, and a calculator. Exbal has a built in Ballistic Reticle Analysis window. So, we're home free. We know how to make Bushnell's holdover bars, or any other

manufacturer's bars, work perfectly in any set of conditions with any bullet's ballistic path, and in a no wind situation with a great rest, we might make hits at such ranges.

Truly Different

But why the upside down configuration? Here is where Bushnell got an idea for something different. Hunters have a difficult time judging deer in the field, particularly using optics with magnification. After some research, they found a mule deer's ears measure about 24" in width, a whitetail's about 17". The length of each horizontal bar measures 24" at each respective distance. They placed a vertical hashmark on each horizontal bar that measures 17" at each respective distance. Thus, the upside down Christmas Tree pattern.



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ADJUSTMENT RANGE: 50" at 100 yards

CLICK VALUE: 1/4"

LENGTH: 15.7"

WEIGHT: 19 ounces

EYE RELIEF: 3.3"

RETICLE: DOA 600

PRICE: \$429

They call their idea the "Rack Bracket System." I am sure you could find ways to use it for other animals as well.

So, let's take a trip in the field. We see a mature whitetail and range the animal with a range finder, or if practiced enough, do it with the holdover bars. We determine the deer is 300 yards away. We find the deer's ears fit the 17" wide hashmarks on the second or 300-yard bar. Further use of the hashmarks gives us some idea of the width and height of the horns as well.

Not a bad idea. Of course, the deer must face you long enough for you to check his width, and both you and he must be steady enough for the measurement to be taken. Once you decide he is worth the shot, you move the 300-yard dot to his kill zone and let one rip.

Does all this sound a little far fetched? My intuition told me it was. But after using it, thinking about it, and doing some ballistic studies, I decided it was a pretty good idea.

The bars are precise, very crisp, and with a little work on a ballistics program, they can be used for wind holdover as well as for quickly ranging animals when your rangefinder's battery fails or you simply don't have time to use it. I would like to go on with my discoveries about the reticle, but the editor says my real estate has run out.

Let me end by saying this article may appear negative about Bushnell's new reticle. Quite the contrary. However, to make best use of it, a little thought and some time with a ballistic program will enhance its use. As far as the scope and quality of glass is concerned, I give it high marks.

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SHOTSHELL INNOVATIONS

Faster, faster, faster.

Nothing has driven innovations in shotshell technology and shotgun design faster than the advent of steel shot. When the US Fish & Wildlife Service banned lead shot in 1991 for migratory waterfowl hunting, many thought the world had come to an end, but look what's happened since then. We're blessed with new and more lethal pellet designs, a smorgasbord of lead-free pellet alloys, higher velocities in lead and non-lead ammunition as well as screw-in chokes, lengthened forcing cones and back-bored barrels for our shotguns. But nothing prepared me for what the engineers at Remington have cooked up for 2010.

Remington's new steel shotshell is so revolutionary in design, we were actually sworn to secrecy until the end of 2009, thus giving Remington a bit of a marketing lead over their competitors and giving their engineers and corporate attorneys time to refine the product and its patents.

Being 30 percent lighter than lead, steel shot needs velocity to make up for what it lacks in density. As the engineers like to put it, "speed kills." The fastest steel load I'm aware of is Winchester's 3-1/2" 12-gauge shell packing 1-1/4 ounces of shot at 1,625 fps, but the trade-off is its light shot charge. Typically, a 12-gauge 3-1/2" shell is loaded with 1-3/8 to 1-5/8 ounces of steel shot.

Hypersonic Wad

The challenge in shotshell ballistics has been to push up shot charges and

velocities while staying within SAAMI pressure limits. The answer to date has been to reduce the payload. Not any more. Remington has found a way to keep the payload heavy and to push it to an unheard of velocity of 1,700 fps. Meet the "HyperSonic" wad.

The 1-piece HyperSonic wad incorporates a short, hollow tube at its base, called the "Ignition Chamber." As the wad is seated over the powder charge, a small amount of powder is forced inside the tube. When fully seated, the mouth of the tube is then positioned in direct contact with the primer flash hole.

When the primer fires, the small amount of powder in the ignition chamber is the first part of the powder train to be ignited. This small captive charge drives the wad and its payload forward in the barrel milliseconds before



Winchester's buck-and-ball shell places three 00 buck on top of a 1-ounce slug. It should prove devastating at close range.

the full impact of the main charge kicks in. Think of the ignition chamber as a miniature booster rocket that jump starts the payload.

Rocket Booster?

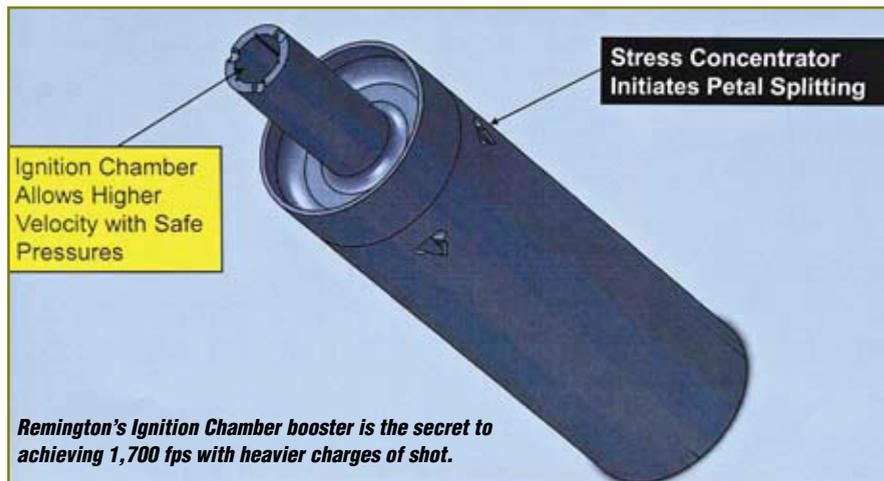
As the wad is boosted out of the shell, the increasing internal volume behind the wad permits the primary powder charge to burn fully without generating excessive pressure. Finally, the wad breaks away from the shot column as the "Stress Concentrator" holes around the base of the wad fracture the sidewalls.

The result is the 1,700 fps HyperSonic shotshell—actually 10 different 3" and 3-1/2" 12-gauge loads will all make their debut in the second quarter of 2010.

There are six 3" loads featuring either 1-1/8 or 1-1/4 ounces of BB, 1-, 2- and 4-size steel shot and three 3-1/2" loads packing 1-3/8 ounces of BB, 2- or 4-size shot. The interesting part of this new lineup is all the loads are adjusted to a muzzle velocity of 1,700 fps.

What are the advantages of 1,700 fps? The delivered pattern energy is approximately 16-percent greater than existing steel loads, shortening your leads by about 11 percent, which works out to approximately 8" at 40 yards. Speed kills.

An interesting sidelight to the presentation by Remington engineers was the HyperSonic technology was so new no shells had been shouldered fired from a regular shotgun. Hmm, the HyperSonic technology and the powder being used may help to moderate





Winchester's "Judge" load for the Taurus .410/.45 Colt revolver mixes three Defense Discs with 12 BBs to help stabilize the load in the rifled barrel.

Newton's third law of motion, but I did run some numbers of what level of recoil is delivered by 1-3/8 ounces of steel shot at a common industry velocity of 1,450 fps and then at 1,700 fps. The weight of the gun factored into my calculation was 7-1/2 pounds. At a velocity of 1,450 fps, the recoil energy generated is 40.4 ft-lbs and at 1,700 fps, 61 ft-lbs. I hope I'm wrong.

Winchester's New Loads

Two new shotshell loads from Winchester should be of interest. Winchester Ammunition has reinvented the classic buck and ball load as a personal defense shell. Called the Supreme Elite PDX1 12, the new reduced recoil load is a 12-gauge 2-3/4" shell packing 3 pellets of 00 plated buckshot over a 1-ounce rifled Power Point slug. That's a hammer load!

The other new shotshell is designed particularly for use in the .410/.45 Colt Taurus Judge. One of the problems associated with firing normal .410 ammunition in the rifled barrel of the Judge is the rifling engages the plastic shot cup, throwing the pattern down and to the right unless the distance is less than 15' or so. Winchester's new Supreme Elite PDX1 .410 2-1/2" shell is loaded with three unique plated "Defense Disc" projectiles and 12 plated BBs. It's really another variation of a buck-and-ball loading and should prove lethal at short distances.

It will be interesting to see what else the ammofsmiths cook up for us in 2010.

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TIMBERWOLF .338 LAPUA RIFLE

Filling the gap between the .300 Win Mag and .50 BMG.

Recently I had the unique opportunity to shoot a Timberwolf bolt-action, magazine-fed rifle built by Prairie Gun Works Defense Technologies Inc. or PGWDTI for short. The rifle platform uses the expressly made—theoretically for the middle ground of long ranges—.338 Lapua Magnum cartridge. The .338 Lapua falls between the .300 Winchester and the .50 BMG calibers used by long-range rifle shooters to access targets most of us can't see with the naked eye.

Although it sounds odd, this “middle” ground of long ranges can create problems for the .300 Winchester where it can be a bit overworked, and the .50 BMG, which is accurate but requires a solid working platform to get its big projectile out to range with repeatability. The Canadian based PGWDTI people build high dollar, high-quality rifles



Bolt, safety lever and 40-minute base (above) are well constructed as is the rest of the rifle. The Canadian Timberwolf rifle is a well-built piece of gear chambered in the far-reaching .338 Lapua Magnum.

and weapons systems across a broad spectrum of calibers and end users to address “access” to this middle ground of ranges.

If you ask the “Maple Leafs,” they are closed mouth; extending courtesy to their end users and enforcing their ideology of “loose lips sink ships,” a concept very unusual in today’s world. This “quiet mode” has earned them well-deserved sales and better yet the respect of customers (including me). I am not going to get into the mystery mode over which Canadian special operations-type units use the PGWDTI .338 Lapua rifle. If such “Secret Squirrel” stuff interests you then dig into and research all the who, what, why and when.

Specifications show there is a McMillan solid-type version, but my copy was the folding stock model. Should you be leery of folding stocks—like I am most of the time—this stock locked open solid as a bank vault door with no play whatsoever.

Hands on, the nominal rifle



The stock of the rifle (above) folds for movement or transport. It is rock solid when opened. The muzzlebrake (below) is well made and effective.

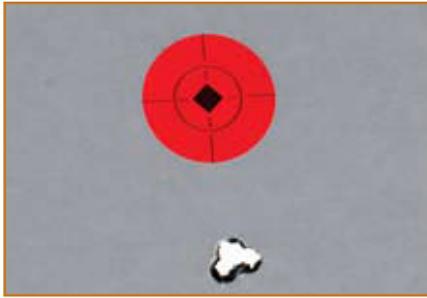


measurements are: 26" on the barrel, 48" overall length. With the stock folded for transport the piece comes in at 38". The rifle with scope and bipod weighs in around 16 pounds. It is big and to some it may seem a bit heavy and I leave it at that.

The Rifle

The rifle is built with a 1-piece bolt bearing two ejectors and a hook or claw extractor. The bolt handle is oversized the way they all seem to be built nowadays, and the bolt itself has three locking lugs—two fore and one aft. As a point of safety, the bolt has a 3-position safety lever placed at 3 o'clock on the bolt body. One last different thing is the bolt is cut with helical fluting the length of the bolt which might scrape debris away from the ejection port and off the bolt while rotating it to load in very hostile environments. It bears thought, I guess, but I would probably try and be more protective of my gear in field





The first benchrested 100-yard group of five rounds of CorBon .338 Lapua ammo fired before the scope was final zeroed.

conditions.

The action is stainless steel with other options available and the action has a 40-minute scope base, adjustable trigger system, and what is described as monoblock bedding with four lugs holding the action to the stock. The barrel has a very effective muzzlebrake that could be considered loud, yet regardless of noise, is very effective in suppressing recoil.

The barrel is sort of odd. It is of course declared as match grade and I would have no reason to think otherwise. The odd factor is the elaborate helical cuts in the barrel, in what would be called flutes, except these cuts wrap around the barrel. I am sure there is a reason

besides “the chicks dig it factor.” In the end, the rifle shoots like yours and my houses are both afire.

Scope

The rifle was set up with a Schmidt & Bender 4-16x50 PMII and it worked perfectly on this big rifle. The S&B scope was made with a mil reticle and used clockwise-turn mil adjustments. The scope was set in Badger rings mounted to the aforementioned bases to add elevation to the scope often needed at longer ranges. Heidi and I own several Schmidt & Bender scopes and they are all mounted on our serious work rifles. We have grown fond of the S&B glass (although it is not cheap, it is very good glass). Our best source is for finding Schmidt & Bender scopes is Alex Roy of Euro Optics. I haven't found anyone who wasn't satisfied in their dealings with Alex and his Euro Optics almost always have scopes in stock.

The Ammunition

Both 250- and 300-grain .338 Lapua ammunition made by CorBon was used in the Timberwolf rifle when it was shot for this review. As always the CorBon ammo performed well inside a minute of angle and, at our elevation of 5,500' plus, the dial ups on the scope were pretty flat.

Should you want or need a rifle that will do the long-range voodoo, you might want to look at this pretty intriguing piece of gear. The people from the great white north made a very utilitarian and functional long gun and even though it is not cheap it is well worth the money. I am not sure everyone will want or need a rifle like this, as it is definitely not a ground squirrel gun. Then again if you need to shoot something big or something far off in the middle of nowhere, or a combination of both, this is probably the rifle to do it with. **GUNS**

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THE “GUN OF THE MONTH CLUB”

Use just one gun always. Oh, really?

You’ve committed the cardinal sin of *not* always using the same handgun? Well, say three “Hail John M. Brownings” and share a confession here. So, I was reading one of my favorite electronic gun forums, Gun Rights Radio Network, and one member chided another for often changing firearms. The term “gun slut” was used. I gasped... and said, “Hey! Hey! Hey! I resemble that remark!”

My old friend John Bianchi is credited with “Bianchi’s Law,” which holds, “Carry the same gun, in the same place, all the time.” It makes a lot of sense. Alas, there are those whose jobs require them to violate it, and I fear I am a serial offender.

Part of my work involves testing guns, which includes finding out how well they “carry” in the concealment mission they’re designed for. They aren’t all the same type. More of my work involves teaching the use of firearms, and not all shooters use the same handgun. The instructor has to stay on top of the “manual of arms” with several popular designs, so long ago I began the practice of changing “teaching guns” on every

training tour. Part of my recreation involves handgun competition, and not all matches allow the same guns, either.

Looking back over the last 10 weeks, I realized I was a certified member of the gun-of-the-month club. Here’s how it worked out.

Month 1: S&W Revolver

Around the beginning of month one, a member of the same electronic gun forum with an evil sense of humor had accused me of being a “Gun Metrosexual” for carrying a designer gun in a designer holster. If only to save my masculinity, I replied I was a Gun Retrosexual, thank you very much, and would prove it by carrying an old-



Spent brass flies as Mas wins IDPA Stock Service Pistol event with Beretta 92, during “Month 2.”

fashioned six-shooter for the next 30 days. Of course, I was also signed up to shoot the IDPA National Championships in Stock Service Revolver division at the end of the month and needed some practice and bonding time with my Refugee from the Police Museum.

The gun I chose was an old police-trade S&W Model 15 .38 Special Combat Masterpiece I’d bought in 1995 for the munificent sum of \$130. In 2008, I had won the Tri-State Regional Championship of IDPA Stock Service Revolver in Memphis. I knew it was accurate, it was worn in smooth, and it was compact enough to carry inside the waistband for a month in the Ayoob Rear Guard holster I’d designed for Mitch Rosen back in the 1990s.

Loading with Remington 158-grain lead semi-wadcutter hollowpoint +P ammo, I wasn’t worried about stopping power. There was spare ammo on my person here and there (not to mention a second revolver), and I felt perfectly confident with it. Shot some qualifications along the way with the students on the teaching side of things and did well—won the Stock Service Revolver division with it at an IDPA match in Jacksonville... and wound up absolutely tanking with it at the



The Glock 30 and Rem-UMC .45 hardball win a GSSF match in Major Sub (compact) division (above). The G30 is the Mas’ favorite Glock pistol. Mas won the Stock Service Revolver division at a local IDPA match with his old S&W Model 15 during (below). The Nationals, however, were a different story.



Nationals in Tulsa, but that was me, not the gun. By the time the next month rolled around though, I was ready for something with a few more bullets.

Month 2: Beretta 92

I had a police match on the menu for the next month, and an IDPA match. The gun I chose for month two was a Beretta 92, tuned for "street" years ago by Ernest Langdon. That particular gun likes Federal ammo, and the 9PBLE load was my choice. That was the old "Illinois State Police" round, a 115-grain hollowpoint at 1,300 feet per second. I've seen autopsies where such rounds resulted in a finding of "cause of death: macerated heart." Macerated is the medical term for "burrito filling." Sixteen of those in your carry gun takes the worry out of being out and about in sometimes dangerous places.

The one trial on the schedule for that month got postponed, so I could dress casual, and hiding a large semiautomatic service pistol in daily concealed carry was no problem at all. A Dillon Leather outside the belt scabbard and a Galco inside the waistband rig did just fine. At an IDPA match with some 86 shooters, the Beretta won the Stock Service Pistol division for me, and I came in second overall, with Five-Gun-Master Jon Strayer nailing me for the overall title



Mas shot this qualification target with his old police trade in S&W Model 15 .38 Special prior to an IDPA Match during the "Month 1" portion of this test.

with his Springfield Armory Custom Shop XD9. At the police match, done in an NRA PPC format, I managed to capture high overall and win a new S&W M&P pistol. The transition from double action revolver to double/single action auto pistol had been no problem at all. It's just a matter of getting habituated to the given platform.

Month 3: Glock

I'm not quite halfway through the third month now. The first weekend included a Glock Shooting Sports Foundation match (it's worth your time to learn more about 'em) and the next

morning, a quasi- IDPA match would be all BUG (Back-Up Gun) allowing barrels no greater than 3.8" in length. I chose a Glock 30 subcompact .45 ACP. With Remington-UMC 230-grain hardball, it won the Major Sub event designed for such guns at Pensacola, Florida, and a 6-hour-plus drive later got me to Jacksonville, Florida, in time to shoot my own G30 in the Custom Defense Pistol division against other .45 automatics, mainly short barrel 1911s. My G30, with New York trigger and a Tarnhelm grip trim, won the division. GSSF doesn't allow grip trims in the stock gun classes, so I used an out of the box G30 with 5.5-pound trigger there.

In a week or so, I'll be visiting one of my kids in one of those states Jeff Cooper warned you about, where they have stupid laws limiting you to 10 rounds per magazine. What a coincidence: that's how many .45 ACPs a G30 packs in its mag. I think I feel a Glock 30 month coming on.

And the bottom line is, whatever gun you've got will probably do what you need done, so long as you've spent time learning how to run said gun. The Smith .38 and the Beretta 9mm and the Glock .45 all did their jobs, and when I shot lousy with one of them, it was me, not the gun—a valuable lesson. All I can say is, "Gun sluts of the world, unite!" **GUNS**



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GUNSMITHING

• Hamilton S. Bowen •

REFINISHING CAST ALUMINUM PARTS

It's tough, but a few shops do it well.

One of the most common problems in gunsmithing and custom gunbuilding enterprises is refinishing aluminum well. It can be done well on a small scale but often takes more time and effort than the occasional job warrants so even professional gunsmiths may find it a good idea to vend out important pieces to finishing experts. Most of the trouble comes from aluminum castings (or rough castings of any stripe) which offer some unique finishing challenges that well-machined parts do not. The ubiquitous Ruger grip frames we handle daily at Bowen Classic Arms have been particularly troublesome and are the basis for the remarks following.

It doesn't seem like it now, but once upon a time, aluminum was a scarce and desirable industrial material. Now it is pervasive in nearly every field of manufacturing. It is light, formable, strong (in suitable applications) and inexpensive. For all of these reasons, the firearms industry produces aluminum receivers, grip frames, barrel shrouds, scope tubes and countless other components. It is not, however, without its limitations. Just like ordinary steel, aluminum "rusts," forming an oxide coat in reaction to the atmosphere. The natural oxide that occurs on aluminum does not continue to develop as rust does on steel but rather stops at a certain depth, leaving a nice, protective coating. Alas, this coating is fragile and wipes away easily. So, like steel, a protective surface treatment is necessary to preserve aluminum parts. This is where it gets tricky.

Aluminum is variously finished with hard-coat anodizing, paint, and a wide variety of exotic coatings. Unfortunately, most of

these finishes are a four-star pain to apply for gunsmiths out here in the trenches. The effort of Bowen Classic Arms Corp. in finding aluminum finishes that are at the same time attractive, cost-effective,

and durable and feasible to do in-house is a lengthy comedy of errors costing much time and treasure. After years of fussing around, we have hit on a couple of vendors offering finishes first-rate in every respect. But, first, the treatments that didn't pass muster.

Re-Anodizing

Typically, hard-coat anodizing produces, thickens and toughens aluminum's surface oxides. It does so by immersing an electrically charged part in a vessel containing sulphuric acid. Yeah! The resulting finish is readily dyed or stained an unlimited variety of colors from black to pink. A first-rate finish, it toughens and protects the surface as well as colors aluminum parts. The disadvantages are, however, considerable.

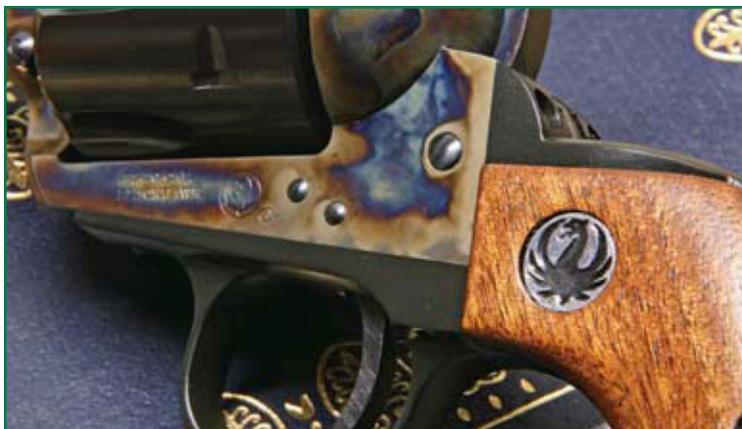
It is not easy to do in a simple shop environment. Outside vendors typically have large minimum batch fees which makes doing the odd part or two very costly. The biggest drawback is the process does not seem to work well except on aluminum parts of the very highest quality. Our primary use is on cast Ruger single-action grip frames which often have voids and inclusions of impurities. The several anodizing samples we have received from vendors over the years exhibited poor finish quality because the pits would bleed out contaminants and impurities wouldn't always color properly.

Painting

Gunsmithing supply houses sell a number of paints and dyes to color aluminum but most are not terribly durable, even the baked paints. Further, unless you are an auto body paint-and-fender expert



Although the Black T coating on the grip frame (above, left) isn't an exact duplicate of the original anodizing, it actually stacks up pretty well against a blued steel part. Nicely finished and properly fitted aluminum parts need not be an eyesore (below).





While local touch-up polishing of anodized aluminum is best (right), sometimes the grip frames are so dinged and damaged, bead blasting is the best way to prepare a part.

with a formal paint booth, achieving attractive results is often problematic. I'm not much for orange-peel coatings or encapsulated dust on firearm parts. In time, most of these products wear thin, leaving white aluminum exposed.

Exotic Industrial Coatings

While these are first-rate products, they are a nuisance to apply. There is no sense in spending an hour of valuable shop time finding your gear, rigging it up, cleaning out the paint gun, etc., when dedicated enterprises enjoying economies of scale can do it for near

nothing. While self-sufficiency is commendable, time is still money. I have also found that while excellent for well-polished steel or machined aluminum, most such coatings are exceedingly thin and do not cover grittier aluminum castings very well unless considerable time is taken in detail polishing. A somewhat thicker finish flowing a bit better (like paint) is desirable.

So, what to do? After a bit of poking around, we have found a couple of first-rate firms applying coatings for aluminum that are durable, corrosion resistant, inexpensive and cover aluminum castings very nicely. W.E. Birdsong & Associates offers its proprietary Black T coating while Predator Custom Shop applies a mil-spec coating call RhinoHide. Both are tenacious and quite closely resemble the original anodizing on Ruger revolver grip frames.

Like many finishing operations, these firms prefer to work with prepared parts, ready to process without additional metalwork so we always handle this part of the job. The late (and much-lamented) Walter Birdsong, Sr., who developed the widely used Black T coating, counseled me many years ago that, whenever possible, do not remove hardcoat anodizing from aluminum parts for finishing. The hard substrate tends to

give support to coatings and minimize the likelihood of failure. Accordingly, when we prepare a grip frame (or anything else) for coating, we do as little as necessary to get out any dings or garfs. A fine file or 180 to 220 grit aluminum oxide sandpaper on a sanding block on the offending spot will suffice to set most imperfections aright. In cases of extreme damage or wear, we'll simply bead blast off the remaining anodizing and start from scratch.

Both Black T and the RhinoHide may not fool a knowledgeable collector but are satisfyingly similar to anodizing in terms of color and texture. While in-house aluminum refinishing is feasible and relatively inexpensive, there are alternatives that may prove both superior and more cost-effective, particularly where castings are concerned. **GUNS**

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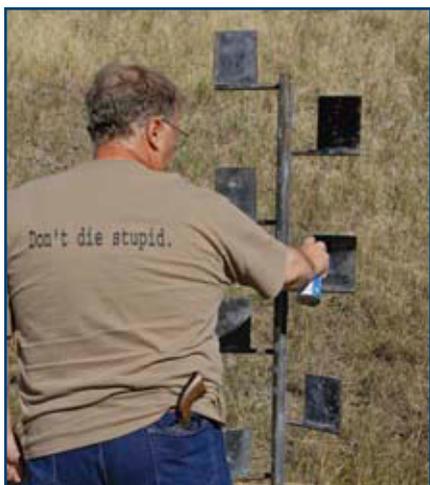
MONTANA MUSINGS

• MIKE "DUKE" VENTURINO • PHOTOS: YVONNE VENTURINO

RINGING STEEL

The fun side of shooting.

Gun'riters are forever being trashed on the Internet for simply being voices for the gun industry. One of the factors that enticed me to sign up with this outfit was assurance I wouldn't have to do that. With that said, this column could be taken as an unashamed "attaboy" for a steel target company, although it's not just about their products.



All Duke's steel targets require (above) is a shot of paint once in a while and they're ready for action again. Because of their convenience Duke has grown very fond of his PT Torso targets (below).



The company is Action Target. They're big; selling targets ranging from simple plates to entire range setups for local, state and federal agencies to use in law enforcement training. They really don't need my few words of help. They do deserve them.

Here's a basic fact of my gun'riting life. When I want education, paper targets are my staple and there are literally hundreds of used ones cluttering up my office right now. Recreation is a different matter. Nowadays I only shoot at steel for that. What threw me completely over the edge and caused me to buy steel for all my berms happened last spring.

Montana's winter had been long and even though I have a heated shooting house, conditions had just been too miserable to shoot much. This is a high wind area where in winter it's not unheard of for winds to hit 100 mph

and not uncommon for them to break 70 mph. The day in question there was nary a breeze so I hot footed it down to my range with an assortment of rifles and stapled up some paper targets for sighting them in. By the time I got back to the shooting house and unloaded my gear the wind had come up to the point that it blew all my paper targets away.

"That's it! That's enough!" I said and the very next morning called Action Targets. I actually got the company's name from Clint Smith, Director of Thunder Ranch. The TR facility uses Action Target's products and I had noticed the impact of many thousands of rounds hadn't hurt them a bit. Now I have their PT Torso targets at my 100-, 200-, and 300-yard berms, plus there are two more on my little pistol and sub-gun range at about 30 and 40 yards.

The PT Torso targets are 5/8" thick armored plates 13" wide and 18" tall with a 6x6" "head." Available stands can be 1-4' tall and the plates are secured to them with two 3/4" bolts. A nice safety feature is the stands hold the plates at a slight forward angle sloping from top to bottom. That means all bullet splatter is directed downwards. To make sure there is plenty of berm surrounding my PT Torsos, the 100-yard one is on a 3' stand, the 200-yard one is on a 2' stand, and the 300-yard one is on a 1' stand. Those for pistols and sub-guns have an entire mountain behind them so they're on 4' stands.

Tough Targets

I laughed when a friend recently asked if he could shoot my 300-yard PT Torso with his .257 Roberts. I said, "Go ahead. It won't hurt it." He asked again, "Are you sure?" I'm sure because I've fired GI "ball" ammo from 5.56mm to .30-06 and 8x57mm Mauser at all of them with no ill effects. They don't dimple or crater the super hard steel. (It's 500 Brinell hardness.) I won't try armor piercing on them or some .50 BMG behemoth. There's no sense in pushing matters.

My steel pistol and submachine gun range doesn't have just the PT Torsos.



Duke practices on his steel targets with almost every firearm he owns, including the Cimarron Arms Model 1973 .44-40 (above). Note the variety of shapes and their height placement. Duke's recreational shooting nowadays is mostly at steel (below) such as shooting this PT-torso with an M1A1 .30 Carbine.



Over the years I've accumulated a couple of dueling trees. Those things are pretty common and to be honest I don't even remember where I got mine. Most likely they were made in someone's garage and I bought them at one gun show or another. Also there's a nifty device with two 6" paddles setting in line with one another 3' apart. Hit the first and the rear one pops up. Hit that rear one and when it goes down the front one pops back up.

Its maker is no longer in business so I won't put a name with it. The way all these targets are set up I can shoot at them at ranges from 15 to 40 yards.

The beauty of having those additional steel targets for pistols and sub-guns is they set at different heights, angles, and ranges. Shooting at them, swinging from steel target to steel target tests your shooting ability much more than firing at the same target over and over

again. Likewise with the 100-, 200- and 300-yard PT Torsos. Instead of just pounding one distance over and over again. I move around, perhaps taking the first shot at 200, then coming back to 100, and going back to 200 or 300 as the whim strikes. This kind of shooting certainly makes you familiar with the trajectory of your load. For instance, I have my '03A3 Springfield .30-06s sighted so a 6 o'clock hold at 100 yards is a little low of center. Then a center hold at 200 yards is pretty much on, and a top of the target hold at 300 yards is again centered. I can generally whack steel as fast as I can run the bolt and reacquire the sights.

Shooting steel for recreation hasn't always been my way. In less affluent times I have fired many thousands of rounds at things like cans, chunks of firewood or most any object I was willing to destroy. That was fun but there was always garbage to pick up afterward.

With these steel targets all they need is a new spray of paint once in a while. And being of solid steel means they have considerable weight. If those targets begin to blow away I'm moving! **GUNS**

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RIFLEMAN

• DAVE ANDERSON •

THE .300 RUGER COMPACT MAGNUM A reloader-friendly cartridge.

In the post-WWII era, hunting rifles for .30-06 class cartridges were heavy and long, with beefy 24" barrels and overall lengths of 44" plus. Standard pre-'64 Winchester 70s weighed a nominal 8 pounds. Wood density varies, with individual rifles weighing from a couple of ounces less than 8 pounds to almost a full 9 pounds.

The issue isn't the carrying weight. The issue is handling. A rifle weighing 9-1/2 pounds and nearly 4' long is a nuisance in any kind of heavy cover, slow and sluggish anywhere. Assuming reasonable balance, a heavy rifle does swing smoothly for running shots, and the weight helps control recoil. But that's about all the good you can say.

The original Featherweights were discontinued long ago, but the style it started became tremendously popular. A rifle with an all-up weight of around 8 pounds, chambered for a fairly powerful cartridge is a mighty useful tool.

The Ruger 77 Mk II Hawkeye Compact Magnum is a rifle you have to use to appreciate. Length of pull is 13" and overall length is 39-3/8" (corresponding measurements for the pre-'64 Featherweight are 13-1/2" and 42-1/2"). Weight with scope and rings for both rifles is right around 8 pounds. Both balance about 5" ahead of the trigger when the magazine is loaded.

With its compact overall length, shortened length of pull and excellent balance the Compact Magnums

are dynamic, fast-handling rifles. Ballistically the .300 RCM is 200 to 250 feet per second faster than factory .30-06 loads, and around 100 to 150 fps faster than full power '06 reloads. With its modest powder charges (only a few grains more than typical '06 loads) recoil is very similar to that of the .30-06. With its excellent stock design and soft recoil pad I found perceived recoil very similar to that of my '06s with hard buttplates.

I'm not about to chuck nearly 40 years of history with my old Featherweights. Like many a rifleman I'm a sentimental soul. But if I was just starting out, wanting a reliable and fast-handling all-around rifle, these Compact Magnums would be hard to resist. I haven't been as impressed with a rifle/cartridge combination in a long time.

Hornady Technology

The original .300 RCM cartridges from Hornady were loaded with their "Light Magnum-Heavy Magnum" technology which mechanically compacts the powder in the case to allow a bigger charge. When I was dumping



Dave's love of the pre-'64 Winchester 70 Featherweights in .30-06 include (from left) one with Leupold 2.5-8X scope and one with a 4X Kollmorgen Bear Cub. A new love, the Ruger 77 Hawkeye Compact models in .300 RCM (middle right) sport a Leupold 3-9X scope and second, the new Redfield 3-9X (far right). Rugers have a shorter length of pull (13" vs. 13-1/2") and shorter overall length (39-3/8" vs. 42-1/2"). All the rifles weigh right around 8 pounds scoped.

factory powder charges to weigh them it took some fairly vigorous case tapping just to get the powder out.

Rumor had it that handloaders wouldn't be able to match factory velocities. Factory ammunition is so good these days there's no real need to reload from a performance aspect, but from a cost aspect there'll always be a need. Plus, like most handloaders I just like to be in control of factors such as component choice and seating depth.

Alliant Powder

Fortunately, I can get the performance I want by handloading. Alliant RL-17 is a double-based kernel type powder. Burning rate is similar to IMR-4350, but Alliant load data shows consistently higher velocities at safe pressures with RL-17.

Alliant says, "Reloder 17 features

.300 RCM HANDLOADED AMMO PERFORMANCE

BULLET (BRAND, BULLET WEIGHT, TYPE)	POWDER (BRAND)	CHARGE (GRAINS WEIGHT)	VELOCITY (FPS)
HORNADY 165 SST	WW 760	59.5	2,756
HORNADY 165 SST	IMR-4350	62.5	2,821
HORNADY 165 SST	RL-17	61.0	2,906
HORNADY 165 SST	RL-17	62.0	2,967
HORNADY 165 SST	RL-17	63.0	3,033
HORNADY 180 SST	RL-17	59.0	2,692
HORNADY 180 SST	RL-17	60.0	2,759
HORNADY 180 SST	RL-17	61.0	2,810

Notes: Hornady .300 RCM cases, Hornady SST bullets, Federal 210 primers, overall cartridge length 2.825", velocities from Ruger 77 Hawkeye with 20" barrel. Normally group size would be noted and some loads delivered 1" to 1.3" groups, but the temperature was 10 degrees F and a stiff wind developed before testing could be completed. Rounds chronographed were first kept in an inside pocket to bring their temperature up.

WOLFF REDUCED POWER TRIGGER SPRING

Around 2006 Ruger introduced the LC6 trigger on its Model 77 Mk II rifles. It's an excellent trigger, simple, very reliable and consistent, with a clean break and minimal trigger movement.

My one objection is weight of pull which on the rifles I've tested generally runs around 4 pounds, and I've seen one or two closer to 5 pounds. Shooters sometimes criticize the Ruger trigger as being nonadjustable, by which they mean there aren't any screws to turn.

Actually adjusting weight of pull on the Ruger trigger is simple and inexpensive. Just go to the Brownells catalog and order a Wolff reduced power trigger-spring for the Model 77. The spring costs \$3.49, I generally order the 3-spring pack for \$7.49. I've used these springs in five Mk II Model 77s and in every case the result was a crisp, quality pull right around 3 pounds.

You may be tempted just to clip a coil or two from the factory spring. Don't do it. The spring has two jobs, to return the

trigger to its forward position and to push up on the sear. It needs to be the length it is. Get the proper length, reduced-power spring. It costs less than one of those macchiato-latte-cappuccino with whipped cream and chocolate sprinkles. **GUNS**



The Ruger LC6 provides a quality trigger pull, reliable and consistent. Replacing the standard trigger/sear spring with a reduced-power Wolff spring (shown installed) reduces weight of pull to around 3 pounds. Springs are available from Brownells, either individually or in packs of three for those owning more than one Ruger 77.



A pair of Ruger 77 Mk II Hawkeye Compact Magnums in .300 RCM create a component sandwich of Alliant RL-17 powder, Hornady ammo, brass, bullets and dies. Optics include a Swift 8x32 binocular and Leupold laser rangefinder. Knife by Spyderco.

an advanced, penetrant-type kernel coating. Alliant believes this is superior to typical surface powder coatings because it provides a more consistent, progressive burn.

"The powder pressures do not spike as sharply as with surface-coated powders but remain more consistent throughout the burning process."

Federal Primers

The reloads I used were with Hornady SST bullets, using Federal 210 primers. Powder charges around 60+ grains are about the level where many reloaders prefer magnum primers, however I found the 210s gave consistent ignition even at fairly cool temperatures (around 15 degrees).

The RL-17 loads were extremely consistent, with single-digit standard

deviations the rule. I shot most loads through two RCM rifles and much to my surprise average velocities between the two were within from 1 to 4 feet per second.

I also chronographed a batch of Hornady factory loads with the 150-grain GMX bullet. Average velocities in Rifle A were 2,973 fps and in Rifle B, 2,974 fps. Rather amazing! **GUNS**

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This is a pistol! A French .69 Mle 1859 with a rifled barrel (above). The lock plate of the M1859 indicates it was made at the French arsenal of Tulle. The elegant US Model 1805 (below) was the first pistol ever built at a federal arsenal. Originally a .54 smoothbore, this one is rifled in .58.



There is so little historical documentation on the performance of small arms in the field and so much misinformation and prejudice afloat in the literature (the Carcano being a sterling example) that you really do have to carry out your own tests. Nothing could be more interesting, enjoyable and yet, at times, more challenging.

Every time I pick up a big-bore military pistol from the past I think of Crocodile Dundee's classic line, "This is a knife!" Well, 54-, 58- or 69-caliber pistols deserve the same level of respect. Just think of the punch those pistols delivered. Our fighting ancestors may not have known anything about muzzle velocity, but they did understand size, mass, and terminal energy. Just look at the size difference between the 45-, 58-, and 69-caliber lead projectiles and consider the wounding capabilities of those big, soft lead balls fired at pistol distances.

I've been curious about the performance of big-bore military handguns for a long time. The first one that came into my possession was an 1859 French cavalry pistol (a conversion first done as the Mle 1822, then rifled during Napoleon III's time) a friend brought back from the Paris flea market. I was 13 at the time and was shooting an 1863 Springfield musket and a 32-caliber squirrel rifle on a regular basis. I had an ample supply of caps and black powder but no bullet mould for the .69" bore of



The French Model 1859 sports both a front and rear sight.

that French pistol. It was either adapt and improvise or simply hang the big gun on the wall.

Don't Do This At Home

Scrounging around for a projectile, I rummaged through my box of marbles and came up with some pretty glass spheres that would just fit the 69-caliber bore with a thick, flannel patch. The

next hurdle was to figure out a way to test fire the piece.

I couldn't tie it down to an empty tire like I routinely did with muzzleloading long guns, so I finally decided to test fire it by hand, with some protection of course. Suiting up for this ordeal, first came someone's reading glasses, next, an old kapok life vest that had been hanging in the barn for decades; then, a leather work glove and topping off the bizarre get-up, my cousin's Naval Academy football helmet. Bracing the pistol on top of a post, I squeezed the trigger. The big .69 went *Kaboom*, and I still had two hands and two eyes. When I ran out of suitable marbles, the gun went on the shelf until just recently.

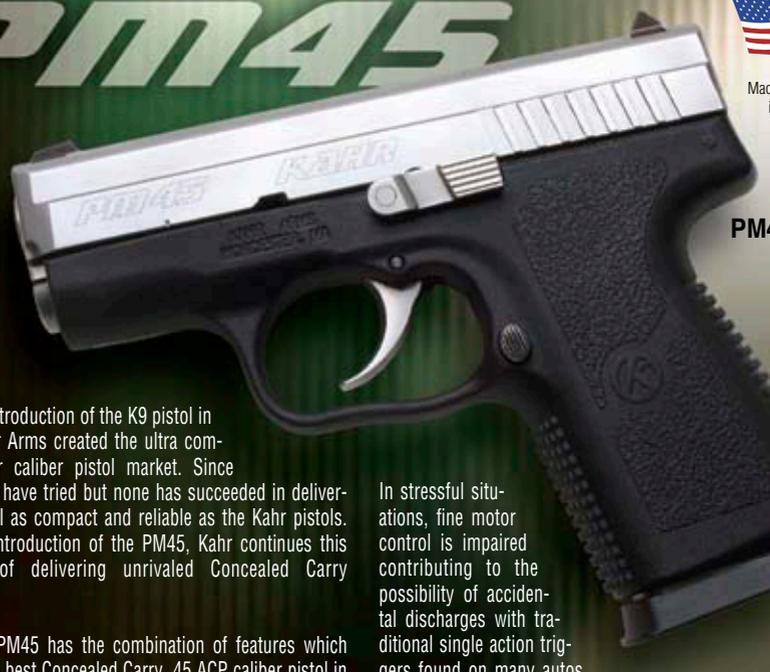
A Better Way

Another early, big-bore pistol to cross my path is what I consider one of the most elegant of the martial handguns, the US Model 1805 flintlock. Made at Harpers Ferry from 1806 to 1808, the Model 1805 was the first pistol ever made at a US government arsenal. It was produced in pairs, or as a brace, with identical serial numbers to be issued to officers. Exactly 2,048 pairs, or 4,096 pistols, were manufactured.

The Model 1805 was a 54-caliber smoothbore. Original Model 1805s are rare and depending upon condition, can



The Pedersoli "Harpers Ferry" marked lock (above) turned out to be an excellent sparker. The heavy brass butts of the 19th century pistols (below) made perfect cudgels.

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SURPLUS LOCKER

fetch many tens of thousands of dollars at auction. An intriguing sidelight to the pistol is that crossed Model 1805s today form the insignia of the US Army Military Police.

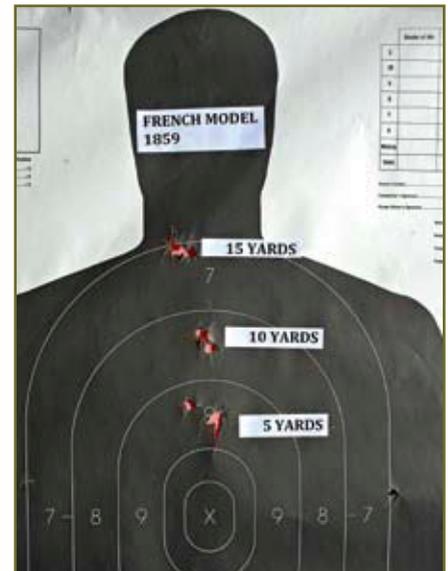
My Model 1805 (marked 1807) is the sensational rendition produced by Davide Pedersoli & Co. Except for sporting a 58-caliber rifled barrel, rather than a 54-caliber smoothbore, the Pedersoli model is a very exacting replica of the original. Selling for about \$525, it is a sound value and a very handsome firearm for shooting or simply displaying.



With only one shot to fire, which size ball would you choose? A .69, .58 or .45?



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FRENCH MLE 1859**MAKER: "MRE IMP ALE DE TULLE"
(IMPERIAL MANUFACTORY OF TULLE)****ACTION TYPE:** Percussion**CALIBER:** .69**BARREL LENGTH:** 7-7/8", rifled**OVERALL LENGTH:** 13-3/4"**WEIGHT:** 2-3/4 pounds**FINISH:** Bright**SIGHTS:** Fixed front and rear**PRICE:** \$750-\$1,250

With two big-bore, 19th Century type pistols in hand, I was curious about their performance and comparative handling qualities.

My load in both pistols was 35 grains of Goex FFFG. Pedersoli recommends 25 to 40 grains in the Model 1805 and 25 to 35 grains in 69-caliber French pistols. The Model 1805 was loaded with a .570" ball and a .011" linen patch lubricated with Track of the Wolf's "Pure Mink Oil" grease. The spark to a pan full of FFFFG was provided by a hand-knapped English flint also from Track of the Wolf. The French Model 1859 was loaded with a .678" ball, a .020" muslin patch and torched off by a CCI musket cap.

In both cases, the ball/patch combination could be "thumb started" without the use of a short starter. For

fighting or hunting, it's a good rule to follow because it makes the reloading process so much easier and faster.

The essential difference between the two handguns was the sighting arrangement. The Model 1805 sports only a tall front sight while the Model 1859 is equipped with both a front and rear sight.

The target for the tests was a human silhouette. My protocol was to shoot two shots, 1-handed, at the close combat distances of 5, 10 and 15 yards. The results astounded me. At all distances, both pistols placed their two balls side-by-side and more often than not, cutting each other. The only change as the distance increased was in elevation. The impact points walked *up* the target as the distance lengthened.

Observations

I ignored the front sight of the Model 1805 Harpers Ferry entirely and simply sighted along the top of the barrel, taking a 6 o'clock, offhand hold on the center ring of the target. The Pedersoli lock proved to be an excellent sparker, although the trigger pull was a bit heavy.

The French Model 1859 was a more natural pointer than the Model 1805, due to the curved radius of its grip. The French lock proved to be crisp and light. It should! Every part and screw in the

US MODEL 1805**MAKER: DAVIDE PEDERSOLI
WWW.DAVIDE-PEDERSOLI.COM
IMPORTER: DIXIE GUN WORKS
P.O. BOX 130, UNION CITY, TN 38281
(800) 238-6785
WWW.DIXIEGUNWORKS.COM****ACTION TYPE:** Flintlock**CALIBER:** .58 rifled
(.54 smoothbore originally)**BARREL LENGTH:** 10"**OVERALL LENGTH:** 16-1/4"**WEIGHT:** 2-1/2 pounds**FINISH:** Bright**SIGHTS:** Fixed**PRICE:** \$525

Accessories

Track of the Wolf

18308 Joplin Street N.W.

Elk River, MN 55330

(763) 633-2500, www.trackofthewolf.com

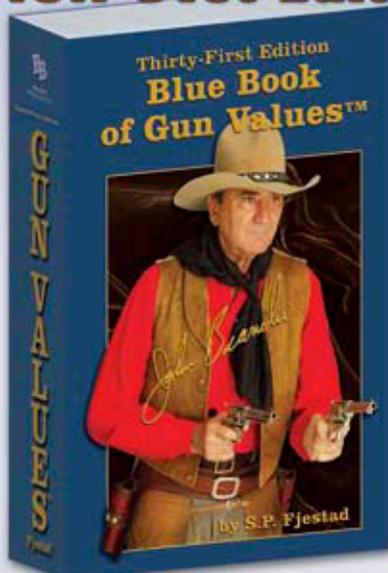
well-tuned lock is numbered to the lock.

Recoil was moderate in both pistols. The recovered, "thumb seated" patches performed perfectly, revealing no cut or burned through areas.

In short, the big bore pistols of our fighting ancestors were highly accurate and formidable weapons indeed and a hoot to shoot.

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OUT of the BOX™

• JOHN TAFFIN •

THE WALTHER PPS

A compact, concealable pistol in potent 9mm.



John fired two full 7-round magazines through the Walther PPS at 10 yards.



Black Hills 147-grain FMJs fired at a combat shooting distance of 7 yards delivered stellar performance.



The 9mm Walther PPS is thinner and slightly shorter than either the Colt Cobra or Smith & Wesson J-frame .38 Specials.

There are several things gunwriters need to be concerned about and guard against. Two of these are being misunderstood and misquoted; both of which we are usually helpless to do anything about. The other two are repeating oneself and routine. Since I spent most of my life as a teacher, I can simply dismiss repeating myself as ongoing review. Routine is the greatest danger as it is easy to fall into an almost mechanical mode of punching out words without feeling and it is always great when the firearm being tested provides something to prevent routine. Such is definitely the case of the Walther 9mm PPS. As soon as I fired it the first time I knew this was not a routine pistol. In fact it is quite exciting to someone who does not excite easily.

I encountered my first Walther as a 6-year-old in 1945 when my stepdad (returning from the service) brought home several souvenirs, one of which was a 9mm Walther P38. It took him awhile to find work, so his Walther was sold. Twelve years later I would actually get to fire a Walther P38 and did not particularly care for it as by then most were saying the 9mm was inadequate and you needed a .45. I bought two surplus .45s, a 1911 Colt and a 1917 S&W and forgot the Walther. In the 1960s I encountered Skeeter Skelton who was a big fan of the Walther PPK

.380 as a pocket gun. I wanted one but never quite got around to it.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s semi-autos became more and more accepted as duty and civilian self-defense firearms, polymer framed pistols became quite prevalent, and the 9mm which had been so easily dismissed over the years began to be offered in some very potent JHP configurations, which are not all that far removed from the .357 Magnum in a short-barreled pistol.

Currently Smith & Wesson is offering the line of Walther pistols including the latest, the PPS. This little 9mm has a black polymer frame with an integral grip, pebble grained on both sides and serrated front and back for a very secure gripping surface. The steel slide has cocking serrations in front of the rear sight, and sights consist of a post front with a white dot mated up with a square notched rear sight with white dots on both sides. These sights are very easy to acquire and provide a very good sight picture.

The only mechanical safety is the lever, which is found in the front of the trigger surface and which must be depressed before the PPS can be fired. There is a red loaded chamber indicator in the back of the slide below the rear sight. The ambidextrous magazine release is unlike anything I have ever seen. Instead of being found on the grip frame behind or below the triggerguard it is instead a lever on both sides of the bottom of the triggerguard and this must be pressed downwards to release the magazine. This presented a slight

PPS

**MAKER: CARL WALTHER
GMBH-SPORTWAFFEN
ARNSBERG, GERMANY
WWW.CARL-WALTHER.DE
IMPORTER: WALTHER
AMERICA (S&W)
2100 ROOSEVELT AVENUE
SPRINGFIELD, MA 01104
(800) 331-0852
WWW.WALTHERAMERICA.COM**

ACTION TYPE: Locked breech, semi-auto

CALIBER: 9mm

CAPACITY: 7+1 and 6+1

BARREL LENGTH: 3.2"

OVERALL LENGTH: 6.3"

WEIGHT: 21.3 ounces

FINISH: Matte black steel slide

SIGHTS: 3-Dot, Rear, windage adjustable

GRIPS: Integral Polymer

PRICE: \$622

problem but only for a short time. I found I could not reach it with my thumb nor with my trigger finger unless I changed my grip, however I soon discovered I could reach it very easily with my middle finger and press it downwards without altering my grip significantly.

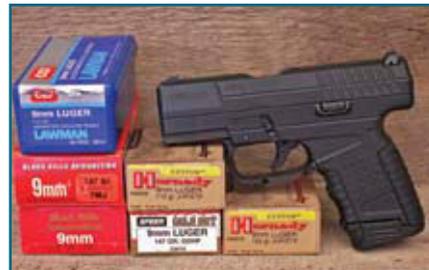
Size And Fit

While not as small as a .380 PPK, the Walther PPS is quite small and light for a 9mm. It weighs in at 21 ounces and with a width of 1" is flatter than either a S&W J-frame or a Colt Detective Special. At the same time it is slightly shorter in overall length than either of these two pocket .38 Specials.

The Walther PPS comes with two non-identical magazines. The medium floorplate magazine holds seven rounds, while the small-plate magazine holds six rounds. The latter is more than 1/2"

shorter than the former and the one I prefer for concealment use even though it holds one less round. The triggerguard looks a little ungainly, however it is much appreciated by my fat trigger finger as it not only makes access to the trigger very easy it also prevents my finger from being pinched when shooting. In addition to the choice of magazines, the Walther PPS also comes with two backstraps—small and large—allowing each shooter to tailor the grip feel individually.

The Walther PPS was test-fired with six variations of factory 9mm ammunition. As usual when I test fire semi-autos, my first chore is to chronograph the various loads. This serves two purposes. First it allows me to then concentrate on shooting groups without being occupied with recording muzzle velocities, and secondly it



The Walther PPS 9mm was test-fired with six different factory rounds.

allows the pistols some break-in time. This Walther really did not need to be broken in and performed flawlessly with all ammunition used both while chronographing and test-firing.

All loads were test-fired at 10 yards and I must say I was amazed at the accuracy of this little pistol! The largest 6-shot groups were 1.1" while the smallest came in at .9" and I must say I never expected these great results. Initial tests showed the point of impact for the Walther PPS in my hands was about 1" left. This is no problem as the rear sight is drift adjustable in the dovetail. Should anyone find elevation to be a problem front sights of differing heights are available. Winter will soon be here; anyone want to guess what backup pistol I'll carry in my jacket pocket?

GUNS

9MM FACTORY AMMO PERFORMANCE

LOAD (BRAND, BULLET WEIGHT, TYPE)	VELOCITY (FPS)	GROUP SIZE (INCHES)
BLACK HILLS 115 FMJ	1,022	.9
BLACK HILLS 147 FMJ SUBSONIC	933	.9
CCI LAWMAN 115 JHP	1,096	1.0
HORNADY 115 XTP JHP	1,096	1.1
HORNADY 124 XTP JHP	1,035	1.1
SPEER 147 GOLD DOT JHP	942	.9

Notes: Group size is the product of 5 shots at 10 yards.

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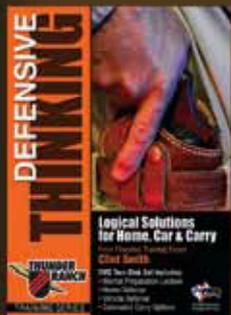
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Q AND A

• JEFF JOHN •

Q: Boys Anti-Tank Rifle

My grandfather recently passed on to me a .55 Boys Anti-Tank rifle. This rifle is very well maintained and in good condition. The cheekrest, however, shows some wear. I'm interested in the Boys' worth and perhaps if you know of any locations I can purchase some accessories for it.

Patrick Graham
via e-mail

A: If you can, find a copy of Disney's limited edition 2-DVD set *Walt Disney On the Front Lines*, one of the shorts is *Stop That Tank!*, a 1942 training film on use and care of the Boys Anti-Tank Rifle in live action and animation. Disney released it a few years ago including other wartime cartoons including the

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Due to the volume of mail received, GUNS cannot offer a personal reply. Please e-mail your question to ed@gunsmagazine.com or snail mail to: GUNS Q&A, 12345 World Trade Drive, San Diego, CA 92128



The Boys Anti-Tank rifle saw limited success early in the war but was quickly obsolete as tanks grew heavier. This one is “camouflaged by bamboo and oats on the island of Crete,” according to the original caption. Photo: www.nzetc.org, reproduced with the permission of the New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage.



The Boys Anti Tank rifle is a 5-shot magazine-fed bolt action repeater. With power similar to the .50 BMG, it was enough to hamper early armor. The odd 55-caliber round is difficult to find and very hard to reload today.



The .55 Boys round (left) has a staked-in bullet and is Berdan primed. More valuable today as collector's items, original ammo often misfires or hangfires, according to Peter Meyer. Meyer reloads original brass with the pocket modified for CCI BMG Primers and an 805-grain lathe-turned solid copper bullet (center). Peter has had some success loading .55 Boys using modified .50 BMG cases, but there are several extra steps involved. Photo: Peter Meyer.

rarely seen *Victory Through Airpower. Stop That Tank!*, (which you might be able to see on youtube.com) shows some of the accessories and tools.

As for value, one showed up on Gunsamerica.com with an asking price of \$9,980. It appeared to be in better condition and cased in its original box. For accessories, you'll have to beat the bushes and gun shows for them. Parts show up on gunbroker.com and gunsamerica.com occasionally.

Although he doesn't export ammo or components, Peter Meyer of Australia, www.somatech-ab.com, makes Boys ammo. The bullet is the difficult part, because it is .55" rather than the more common .50 BMG's .510", and Peter lathe turns the 805-grain bullets from solid copper. Also, the case is of the belted variety and looks somewhat like a giant .300 H&H. Some have converted

their pieces to .50 BMG, but with the price of originals climbing so high, it might be best left alone.

Should you want to load for the Boys, dies and press are in stock at C&H/4D

Dies, (P.O. Box 889, Mt. Vernon, OH 43050, 740/397-7214, www.ch4d.com).

The .55 Boys dies are Group "O" cost \$334.53 and use shellholder 452290. Brass is the tough part, though. **GUNS**

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HARDCORE

The Model 10 BAS-K

By Dave Anderson

The Savage Model 10 BAS-K Police/Tactical is dramatic and impressive-looking with its “assault rifle” look, adjustable stock, separate pistol grip, muzzlebrake and forearm complete with accessory rails. Its purpose, though, is not to deliver firepower but to deliver extreme accuracy, and that it does.

It's funny sometimes how things work out. An objective of the Savage design was economical manufacture. Earlier Mauser receivers had been made on forgings, with many tedious milling operations requiring skilled machine work. The Savage receivers are made from sections of steel tubing. The only milling operations required were for bolt operation, and openings for the loading port, magazine and trigger mechanism.

Round actions like the Savage 110, made of heavy gauge steel, are inherently rigid. They are relatively easy to manufacture so the entire receiver/barrel unit is straight, square and concentric. It adds up to consistency, and consistency leads to accuracy.

The bolt is an assembly of several components. The main body of the bolt is a section of steel tubing. The 110 locking lugs are integral with a piece of steel which is inserted in the front of the bolt body and secured by a heavy cross pin. Due to the tolerances involved there is a bit of play; not much, but enough to be perceptible. I wonder sometimes if this may not be another factor in the Savage's accuracy.

Incidentally what appears to be a second set of lugs behind the locking lugs is actually a baffle, which blocks off the lug raceways in the receiver when the bolt is closed. Its purpose is to reduce the volume of gas rushing back into the receiver in the event of a cartridge case failure.

Savage's method of setting headspace, designed to be a labor and cost saver, also has the potential to improve accuracy. The old way was to screw the barrel tightly into the receiver, cut the chamber with a chambering reamer, then insert a headspace gauge and close the bolt. If the bolt wouldn't close the worker would cut the chamber a little deeper and try again.

With patience and time this cut-and-try process would eventually result in a minimum tolerance chamber. Since time costs money the temptation is to cut the chamber deep enough with the first or second pass; not so far as to cause excess headspace, but enough so accuracy potential is reduced.

With the Savage 110 system the chamber can be cut first, then the barrel can be spun into the receiver with a headspace gauge in place. Once the



With scope and cartridges (above) the rifle weighs some 15 pounds. A pleasure to shoot from a rest, Dave would hate to carry it on a hunting trip! The Savage rifle functioned reliably, bolt operation was smooth and dependable. Dave would like to see a stronger spring on the magazine catch assembly (below), as he bumped it a couple of times while handling the rifle and unintentionally dropped the 10-shot mag.



PHOTO: JOSEPH R. NOVELOZO

THE SAVAGE

Police/Tactical Rifle.

chamber has been snugged up against the headspace gauge, the barrel locking nut is tightened securely, locking barrel and receiver into one rigid unit. It's interesting how methods intended to save labor and make rifles more affordable also worked to enhance accuracy.

The basic 110 action has been improved over the years. Originally the extractor was a small hook inside the bolt face, part of a spring-steel collar surrounding the head of the bolt. While it no doubt worked there must have been some complaints as in 1966 Savage changed to a sliding wedge extractor built into the right/lower locking lug, similar to the one in the post-'64 Winchester 70.

The biggest improvement was the Accu-Trigger. The tab in the face of the new trigger is designed to keep the rifle from firing unless the trigger is deliberately pulled. With this added level of protection against discharge in the event the rifle is dropped or struck a hard blow, Savage can tune the trigger to a lighter, crisper pull than we had become used to in over the last couple of decades.

The Savage police/tactical rifle has several interesting and useful features. I've talked about the action at some length because it remains the heart of the rifle, no matter how many fancy accessories are attached to it. In this case the heart is the simple, strong, rigid and time-proven Savage bolt action.

The "stock" is really more of an aluminum chassis, to which the receiver is bolted. The combination is a solid base for the 26" medium heavy free-floating barrel, chambered for the .308 Win cartridge. The barrel is fluted, I assume mainly because it looks good. The primary benefit of fluting is to reduce weight, but since the basic rifle weighs over 13 pounds it hardly seems weight



saving is a concern.

The stock is adjustable for length of pull over a range from 13-5/8" to 15-5/16". Comb height and position fore-and-aft is also readily adjustable. There's a separate (and very comfortable) AR-style pistol grip. The butt pad is made by Pachmayr.

A sight rail on the receiver provides maximum flexibility in fitting optics. There is no provision for iron sights. The test rifle was fitted with a Burris XTR 6-24x50 scope in Burris rings. This excellent scope has a 30mm main tube,

A 15-pound .308 Win doesn't kick very hard, and the efficient muzzlebrake handles what little muzzle jump there is.

and windage and elevation turrets with 1/4 minute-of-angle adjustments.

The reticle has rows of mil-dots which can be used for both range estimation (if target size is known) and for aiming. Many shooters prefer to find the range and "click" or dial in elevation and windage using adjustment turrets. For this system to work the click adjustments must be accurate and repeatable.



The stock is anything but conventional, but actually was very comfortable to shoot. Stock can be adjusted for length of pull, comb height and position.



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HARDCORE SAVAGE



The Savage rifle, Burris scope, and match ammunition from several manufacturers (above) proved extremely accurate. The weight (around 15 pounds all up) makes it a rifle to be shot from a rest. Dirty patches with all the pretty colors (below) means severe bore fouling occurred at first. As shooting progressed, longer accurate strings were possible with less cleaning in between.



I had a 100-yard target with four aiming diamonds in a square pattern, 9" apart. After zeroing at 100 yards and resetting the turrets to zero, I used the top left diamond as an aiming point, fired one round, then clicked 36 clicks right, then 36 down, 36 back left and 36 back up, firing a shot after each adjustment.

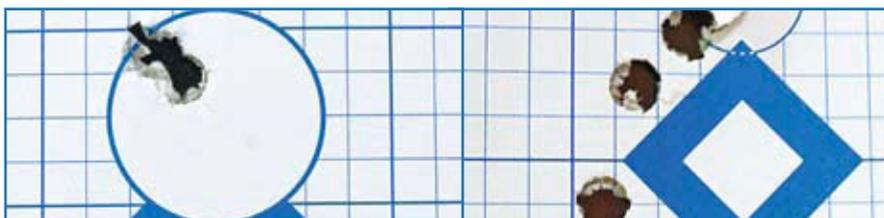
I repeated the pattern three times and ended up with four 3-shot groups in a square, each between 1/2" and 3/4" in size and spaced just over 9" apart. In short, accuracy and repeatability of the Burris adjustments are excellent. Optics appear to be very good; at top power it was easy to quarter a bullet hole with the crosswires.

Trigger pull on the test rifle was outstanding, clean and crisp, breaking at just 28 ounces. Even this original trigger curmudgeon couldn't find much to criticize. It is good even by custom standards, for an out-of-the-box factory rifle it is truly exceptional.

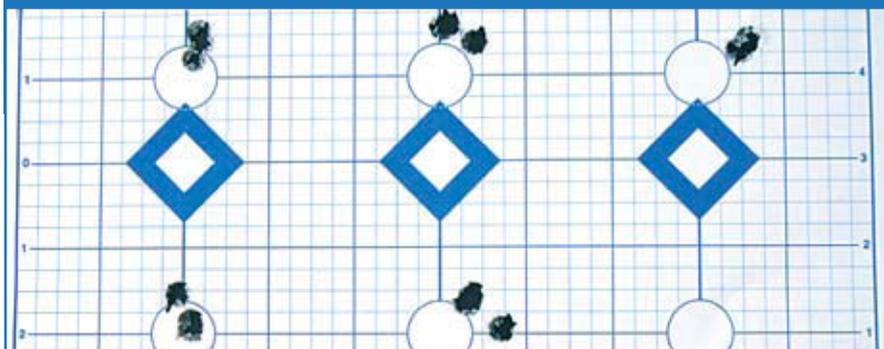
The racy-looking aluminum stock (chassis?) has left and right rails for

attaching accessories such as white or infrared lights or laser aiming devices. I can't see such accessories having much utility on a long range rifle but some shooters may find them useful. If you don't need the rails they aren't in the way and don't compromise gunhandling.

The bottom rail (one of which



Upon first firing, an exceptional group like this (above, left) was made. However, four groups later (above, right), the groups opened up like this due to copper fouling. Eventually, after several "shoot, clean, shoot, clean" sessions, this kind of accuracy (below) was possible. These 3-shot groups were all made with Federal Match ammunition.



incorporates a removable sling swivel stud) would be useful for attaching a bipod, certainly a useful accessory on any long range rifle and especially so on a heavy rifle such as this.

The rifle proved very accurate from the start, with one proviso: it needed regular cleaning to keep copper fouling from reducing accuracy. Savage barrels are button rifled and usually deliver good accuracy from the start. As with most factory barrels they are not hand lapped and honed. Minute machining imperfections lead to copper fouling which in turn reduces accuracy.

The solution? Shoot it. When groups begin opening up, clean the bore thoroughly (I use powder solvent first, then copper solvent) to get the copper out, then shoot it some more. As the rifle is shot, the minor bore imperfections smooth up and the rifle begins delivering top accuracy for more groups between cleanings.

Before shooting I cleaned the bore with Montana Extreme powder solvent and 50 BMG copper solvent. The first five 3-shot groups at 100 yards, using Federal Gold Medal 175-grain match ammunition measured 0.19", 0.38", 0.44", 0.69", 1.07". I had an ideal day for shooting, cool and for once, no wind. I've found shooting 3-shot groups and more of them makes increases in group size due to fouling easier to identify.

After another cleaning the next five groups measured 0.13", 0.26", 0.38", 0.44", and 0.51". As the bore smoothed up the rifle retained accuracy for more shots between cleanings, and cleaning became easier and faster. I expect this trend will continue as the rifle is shot more.

As the numbers show, the accuracy of this rifle is spectacular. It shot equally well with 168-grain match loads from Black Hills Ammunition. Feeding was smooth and reliable from the detachable 10-round magazine.

Two minor criticisms involve the magazine. There is a fair bit of side-to-side play in the magazine well, although the play did not seem to affect feeding. Several times while shooting from the bench my left arm bumped the extended magazine release and inadvertently dumped the magazine. It didn't take much of a bump. A stronger spring on the release lever would be a cheap and easy fix.

This is a heavy rifle for a .308. With scope, rings and cartridges overall weight pushes 15 pounds. With the effective muzzlebrake, recoil and muzzle jump are minimal. With the scope at medium power, I could generally spot bullet strikes when shooting steel targets. Being able to spot and correct is an advantage in some situations. Heavy rifles compensate for minor errors in trigger release. With

10 BAS-K	
MAKER:	Savage Arms
100 SPRINGDALE ROAD	
WESTFIELD, MA 01085	
(413) 568-7001	
WWW.SAVAGEARMS.COM	
ACTION TYPE:	Bolt action
CALIBER:	.308 Winchester
CAPACITY:	10+1
BARREL LENGTH:	26"
OVERALL LENGTH:	Adjustable
LENGTH OF PULL:	13-5/8" to 15-5/16"
CHEEKPIECE:	Adjustable, 1-1/8" height, 3-5/16" fore and aft
TRIGGER PULL:	28 ounces
WEIGHT:	13.4 pounds
FINISH:	Matte black
SIGHTS:	None, Picatinny rail
STOCK:	3D all-aluminum chassis with M4-style buttstock
PRICE:	\$1,852

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MAKER:	Burriss
331 EAST 8TH STREET, GREELY, CO 80631	
(970) 356-1670	
WWW.BURRISOPTICS.COM	
MAGNIFICATION:	6X to 24X
OBJECTIVE	
DIAMETER:	50mm
EYE RELIEF:	3.7" (6X), 3.2" (24X)
INTERNAL	79" elevation, 29"
ADJ. RANGE:	windage at 100 yards
CLICK VALUE:	1/4"
TUBE DIAMETER:	30mm
WEIGHT:	26 ounces
OVERALL LENGTH:	16.5"
RETICLES:	Mil-Dot
PRICE:	\$1,534 (rings: \$46)

its fine trigger and extremely light recoil it is an easy rifle to shoot well.

On the other hand the weight and long overall length with 26" barrel make it rather a ponderous unit to maneuver. Some police departments want short barrels, 18" or even 16", so the rifle is easier to handle in vehicles or other tight confines. This isn't a criticism, just an observation. You don't buy a 4WD pickup and then complain it isn't a subcompact car.

The 10 BAS-K is an interesting and impressive rifle, and it maintains the Savage reputation for accuracy. **GUNS**

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LUCKY 7

Massad Ayoob

Photos: Joseph R. Novelozo

There are three grades of shootability in the shootin' irons available from Smith & Wesson. The standard production grade has set a standard of excellence in the handgun industry worldwide since 1856. At the other end of the scale are the guns from S&W's Performance Center; very much like similarly named sections in the auto industry. The Center turns out special purpose racing iron, some of which gets raced at the national and world championship level, and some of which goes to connoisseurs of those particular machines who can afford to pay for the absolute best.

In this economy more than ever, there are folks who appreciate performance, but just aren't budgeted for top dollar right now. *GUNS Magazine* knows that... and so does Smith & Wesson. That's why, a few years ago, S&W introduced its Pro Series. These are handguns conceptualized and tested in the Performance Center then turned over to the regular Production side of the house, allowing more affordable pricing.

At the time the cover gun was sent to us, it was so new the

company hadn't assigned it a stock number, and it came in a box marked "Model 686" and "4" barrel."

Well, it wasn't. This specimen, serial number CML1430, is stamped "686-6" (the "-6" denoting the presence of the internal locking system). It is actually a Model 686-Plus, meaning an L-frame .357 Magnum with 7-shot cylinder. The barrel is 5" long, and shaped in the manner of the company's popular 686 SSR, another revolver in the Pro Series.

Jim Unger, head of revolver production at S&W, calls this configuration the "wedge barrel." Tony Miele, head of the Performance Center, describes it as the "tapered barrel." I can't argue with either one of them. It is wedge-shaped, and it is tapered. Seen from above, the flat-sided barrel narrows a bit, a little more than 1/2" in front of the frame, and then continues in slim, straight lines to the muzzle. Seen from the side, the ejector rod shield is open on both sides, in the SSR style, and what might be called a "half underlug" sweeps up toward the muzzle, growing narrower along the way. This shape may help to reduce friction drag as the gun is being drawn from the holster. It definitely allows smoother, easier re-holstering, which admittedly is more of a tactical concern than a competition concern, and this sweet 7-shooter seems to have "competition" written all over it.

The SSR is named for the Stock Service Revolver division in IDPA, the International Defensive Pistol Association. Because IDPA limits shooters to 6 rounds in their revolvers, the 686 SSR has the conventional 6-chambered cylinder. Says Tony Miele, "We had experienced very good success with the 686 SSR within the IDPA community. The 5" gun is a natural follow-on for ICORE shooters, who can have longer barrels and who can take advantage of the 7th shot."

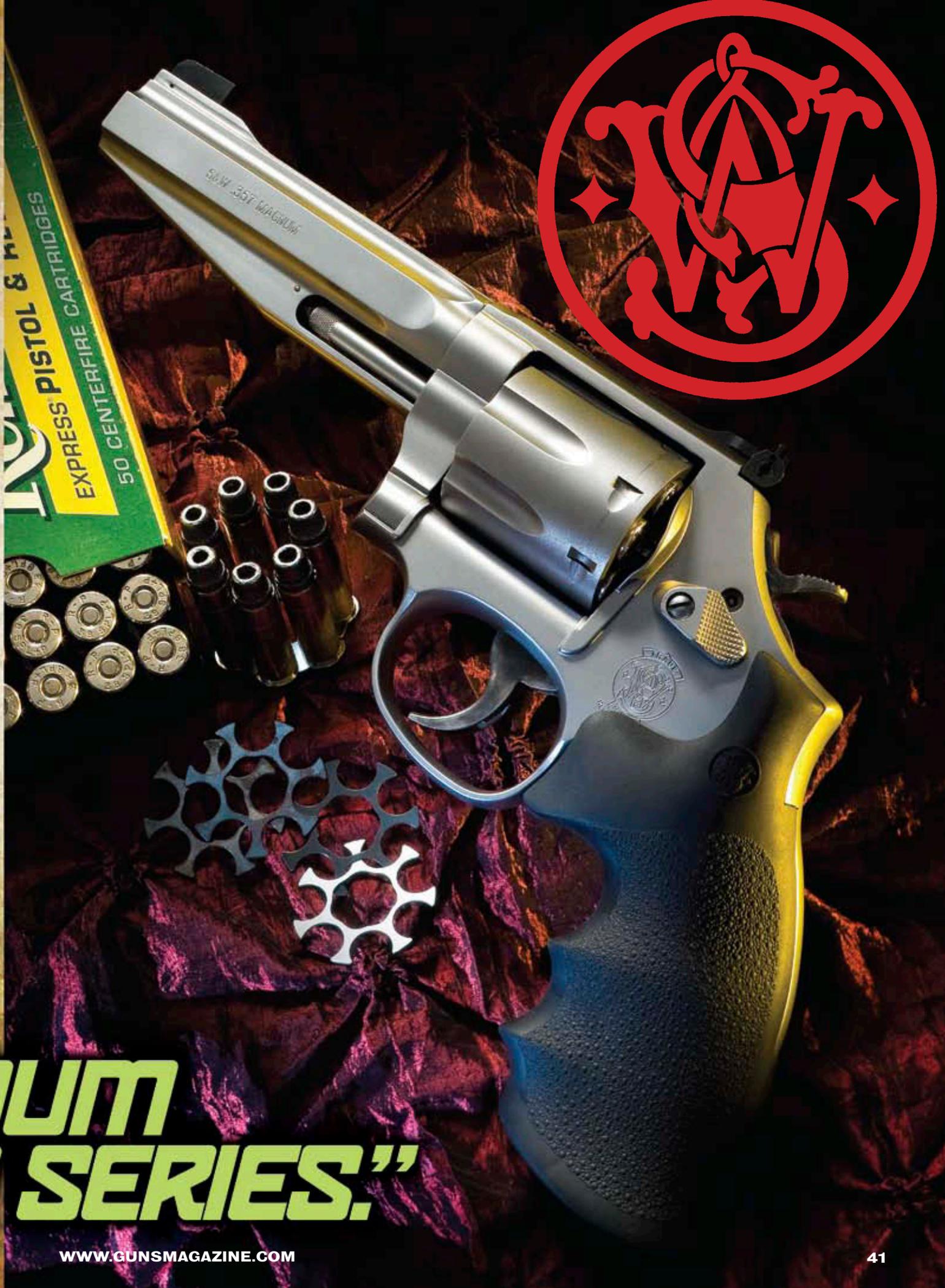
ICORE is the International Congress Of Revolver Enthusiasts. Their formats seem a bit like the Steel Challenge, where a lighter-barreled revolver is an advantage because it swings faster between the multiple targets. Miele knows the ICORE game, and it sounds as if the new gun will be a fine candidate for it.

A couple of other Performance Center touches adorn this Pro Series gun. The cylinder face is cut for full moon clips,



A key feature of this new model is the sculpted 5" barrel, a work of art in its own right. The front sight, a Patridge style, is pinned to the frame and can be changed to suit the individual's requirements.

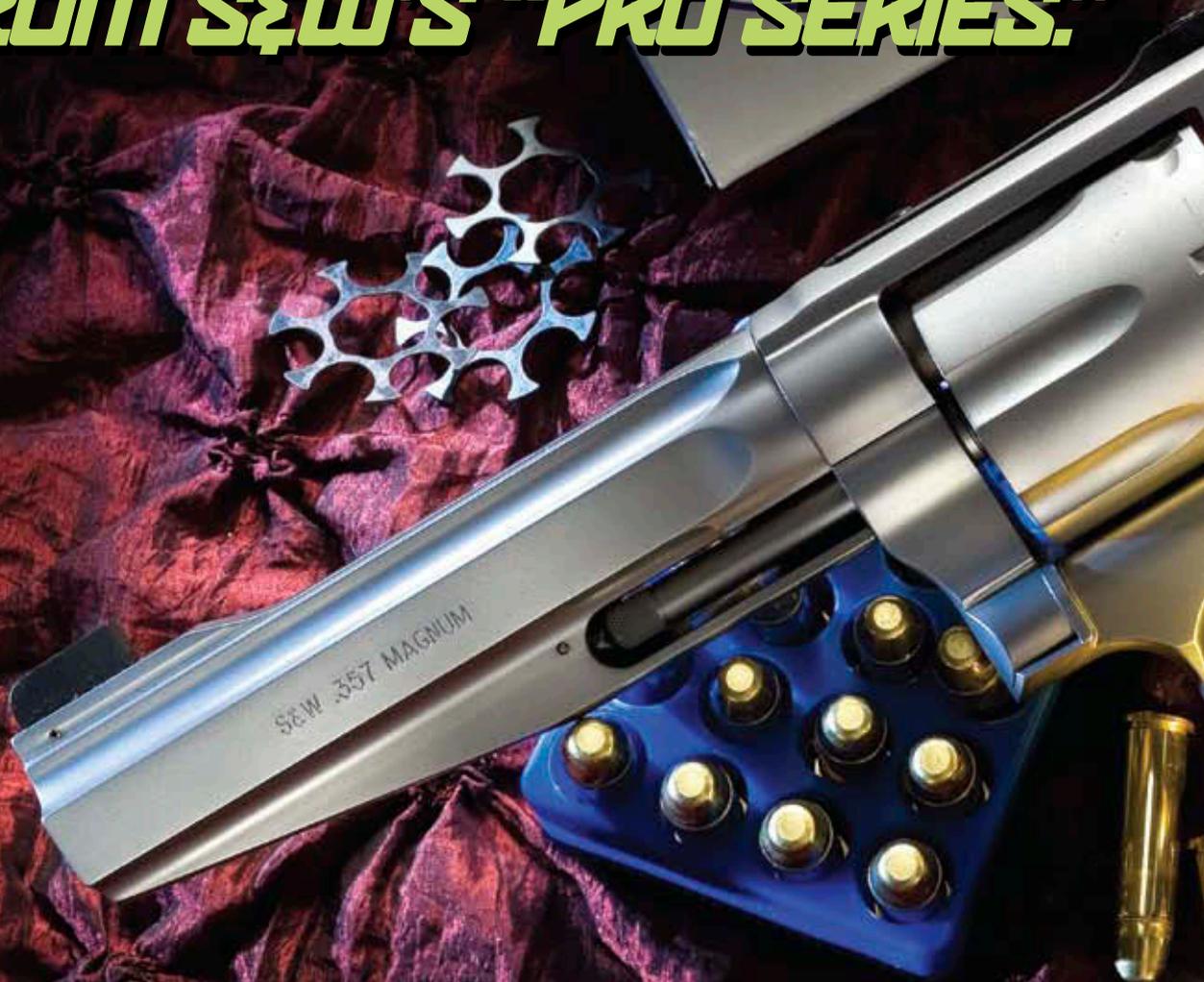
A 686+ .357 MAGN FROM S&W'S "PRO



MAGNUM SERIES."

LUCKY 7

A 686+ .357 MAGNUM
FROM S&W'S "PRO SERIES."



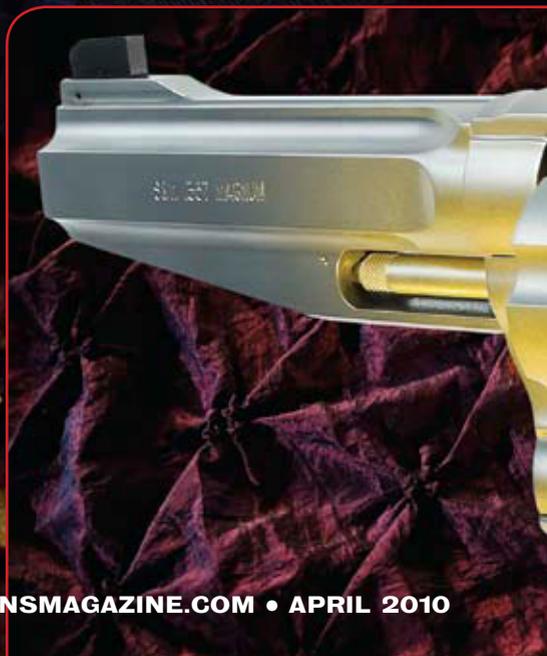


GUNS

MAGAZINE



Mas is happy with the tight 25-yard groups this new Pro Series revolver produces.





Best accuracy was with these SJHP handloads by Chris Christian: 5 shots in .85", the best three tighter than 1/2" center to center, at 25 yards.

A



B



C



D

the fastest possible reloading system for a wheelgun. The chambers also appear to have been chamfered at the factory, to further enhance reloading speed. The action is not hand-honed like a true Performance Center gun, but this one does have the lighter mainspring the Performance Center uses on its custom L-frames.

The .357 is of course one of our most versatile chamberings, which adds to this gun's desirability. I took the 686-6 to the 25-yard bench with an MTM pistol rest and five loads ranging from mouse-fart to Magnum. They're presented in alphabetical order. Each 5-shot group was measured once overall as an indicator of what it and the gun could do from a solid position in experienced but fallible human hands, and once again for the best 3-shot cluster. Experience and testing have taught me this latter mechanism will give a very close prediction of what the same gun/ammo combination is likely to do for all five shots from a machine rest. All measurements were taken to the nearest .05".

American Eagle, Federal's economy line, has a version of the popular 130-grain full metal jacket .38 Special "Air Force bullet," popular because it's cheap, and may be the best of its kind in speed-driven competitions when allowed because it's a roundnose instead of flat at the tip. This allows it to speedload a little quicker. This is normally an accurate load. The week before the test, my girlfriend won a match with it out of her Bill

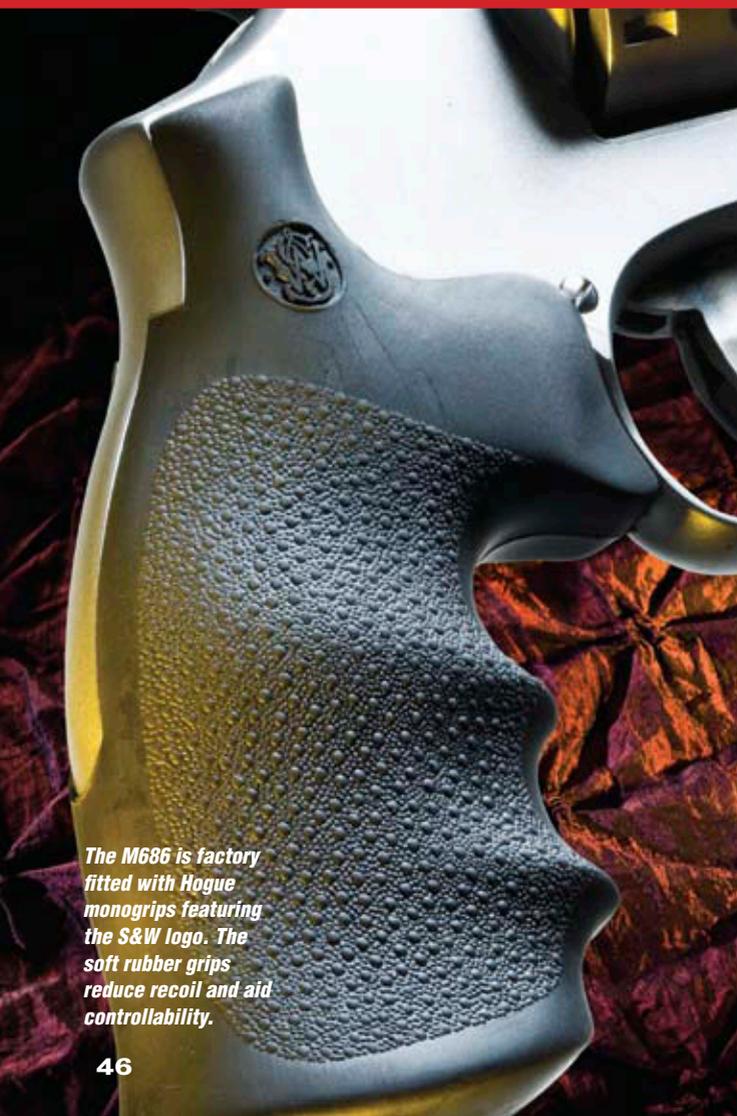
A The Performance Center's new 7-shot M686 .357 Magnum features chamfered chambers for reloading with moon clips. Loose ammunition and conventional speedloaders can still be used. **B** The M686 has a narrow, smooth trigger for shooting double action. **C** The fully adjustable rear sight is neatly set into the topstrap. The firing pin is fitted to the frame and the hammer has a well-shaped, checkered thumbpiece. **D** The Model 686's stainless steel is given a smooth, satin finish. The sights are blued and the hammer and trigger are case hardened.



With all the ability of a .357 Magnum revolver to fire such a wide range of loads, the new S&W was easy to control in two-handed firing.



You don't need the moon clips. For convenience, Mas used loose rounds for first gunload on each run, seen here ejecting.



The M686 is factory fitted with Hogue monogrips featuring the S&W logo. The soft rubber grips reduce recoil and aid controllability.

Pfeil-customized S&W Model 67 4". This new S&W didn't like it at all. Although it was OK at 7 yards, at 25 it patterned more than grouped. I can't imagine why, but guns are like us: they seem to have their own, sometimes picky, preferences.

Black Hills manufactured two of our test loads, both light .38 Specials. Their 148-grain mid-range wadcutter cut five easy-to-see holes measuring 1.65" apart. The best three were under an inch, to wit, .95". The other Black Hills product we used was their cowboy load, which uses a truncated cone shaped 158-grain bullet, all lead like the wadcutter, at a moderate velocity. This actually shot tighter than the wadcutter, with a 1.35" overall group and the best three only .90" apart.

Top Load Is A Handload

A handload was next, put together by outdoor writer and pistol champ Chris Christian. Comprising a semi-jacketed Speer 140-grain hollowpoint in a .38 Special case over 6.1 grains of Hodgdon Longshot and a Federal small pistol primer, it was running fast enough to make IDPA's requisite 125,000 power factor (determined by velocity in feet per second multiplied by bullet weight in grains), this fine example of the handloader's art gave the best accuracy of the test. All five shots were well under an inch, measuring .85" center to center. The best three measured .45": a single .45 caliber hole would have bisected them all! You just can't ask for better accuracy than that from a production revolver.

Moving up the power scale, we used a .357 Magnum round at the end. It was Winchester's street-proven 145-grain Silvertip. This opened up slightly, delivering a 2.45", but the best three were still under an inch: 0.95".

Now, let's look at that for a moment. There was one load out of five the test gun just didn't group with. Setting it aside, the other four were all under 2-1/2" for the 5-shot, hand-held group, and three of those four were under 2", and one well under 1". The "best three" measurements, indicative of inherent mechanical accuracy potential, were all under 1" and one was under 1/2". That, my friends, is accuracy with which you can win most any kind of handgun match.

When an outdoor writer tests a new deer rifle, he hunts deer with it and does his darndest to shoot one. It would seem the best way to test a handgun born for competition, would be to shoot a match with it. I therefore set out looking for one. I had already put together an eclectic black basketweave rig for it: Bianchi dress gunbelt, Safariland synthetic 021 competition holster, and a poor man's moon clip carrier: a Don Hume cartridge slide. I was, b'gawd, ready to shoot.

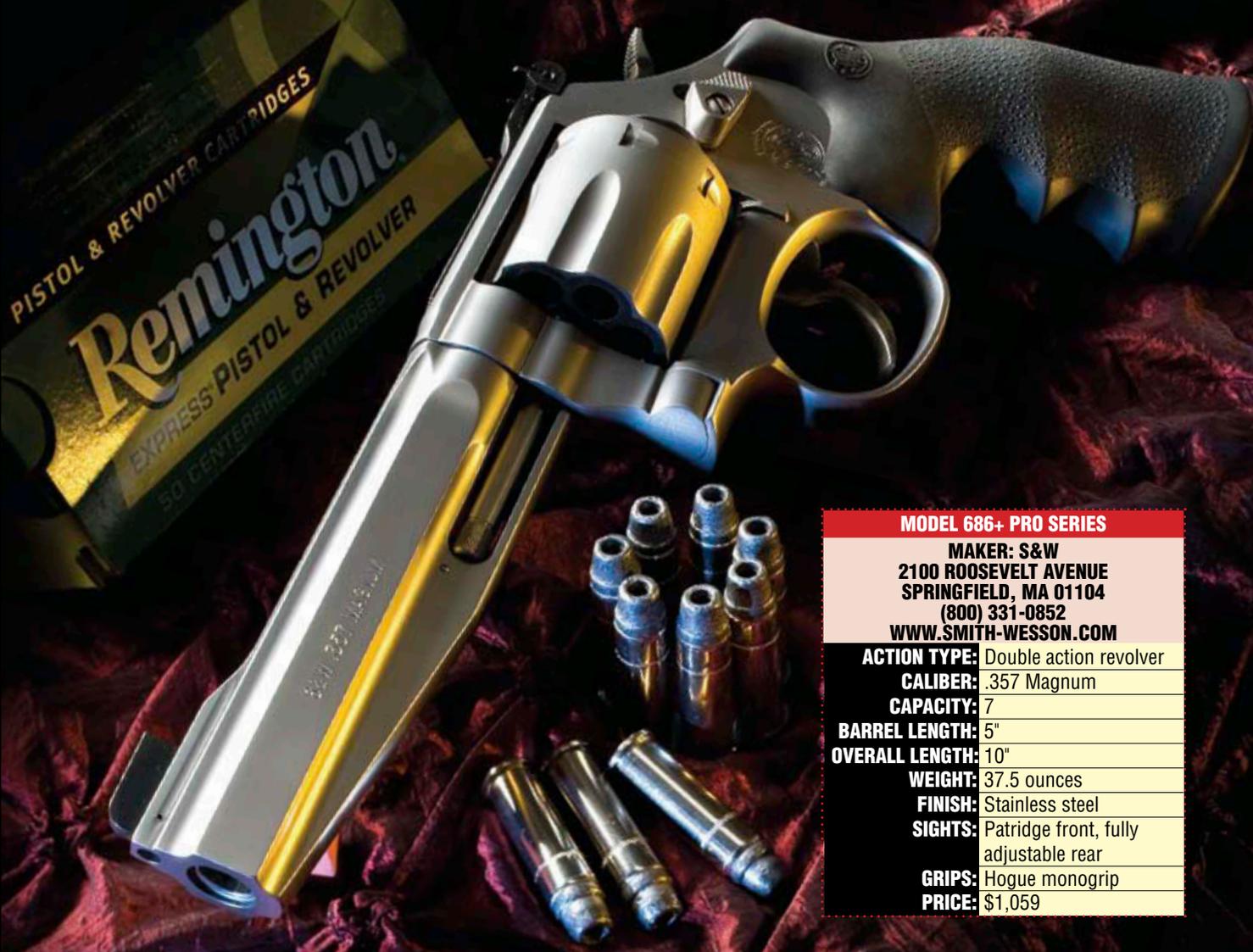
Matchless

Tony Miele had designed this model with ICORE in mind, and I called a club an hour and a half away known to put those on. I discovered they had dropped ICORE a year before. There wasn't another in striking distance. Dang!

Bowling pin shooting is another venue where a 7th shot is a benefit. I checked the calendar. The next one within reasonable driving distance would be after deadline. Double dang!

NRA Action Pistol, as typified by the Bianchi Cup, is fired in 6-shot sequences but the wheelgunner there can certainly benefit from a 7th round in reserve. But there was no NRA Action Pistol match anywhere near me, either. IDPA? The 5" barrel was 1" too long for the rules to allow. PPC? There was only one PPC event on the schedule, and that was a Service Revolver match in Tallahassee, run in accordance with NRA rules, which mandate a 4" maximum barrel length. I had to be there to teach that week anyway.

I was "all gunned up with nowhere to go." So that was that, skunked for any chance to shoot the thing in a match, I took the test gun to my own range and set up a couple of match courses with it, two days before deadline for this article. First, I set up a B-27 NRA police silhouette target. The Service Revolver course is comprised of 48 rounds. Six shots 1-handed in 8

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WWW.SMITH-WESSON.COM

ACTION TYPE: Double action revolver

CALIBER: .357 Magnum

CAPACITY: 7

BARREL LENGTH: 5"

OVERALL LENGTH: 10"

WEIGHT: 37.5 ounces

FINISH: Stainless steel

SIGHTS: Patridge front, fully adjustable rear

GRIPS: Hogue monogrip

PRICE: \$1,059

seconds at 3 yards proved the revolver handled well in a single paw, but I hadn't quite sighted it in perfectly yet and the group was in the upper right of the X-ring.

The second stage is draw, fire six, reload, and fire six more, all in 20 seconds from 7 yards. Two handed and holding at 7 o'clock in the X-ring, the smooth Smith made it easy to "clear" this stage, also. The third stage is the same as the second but at 15 yards, and here I got careless and held the sights too far left, and dropped my first point, a 9-ring hit. The match finishes with a draw and six shots each kneeling, standing left hand barricade, and standing right hand barricade, in 90 seconds including reloads. The gun did well in the left hand for an out of the box double action with the non-dominant hand controlling, the way this match must be shot. I finished with the same point score I'd won the Service Revolver match with a week before in Tallahassee.

For a first time over the course, that spoke well for the test gun. Yes, it had adjustable sights, but I had failed to adjust them correctly. Yes, it had a good action for out of the box, but not as good as the well-worn-in Model 64 I'd shot before, whose sights were dead on. Getting the same score under these circumstances tells me this gun is capable of better scores with familiarization and perfect sighting in, and is clearly capable of perfect scores, even national record scores, in this type of shooting.

With none of the tombstone-shaped Bianchi Cup targets on hand, there was only one NRA Action Pistol event I could duplicate on short notice, the Bianchi Plates. A rack of 8" diameter falling plates, six of 'em, is shot twice each from 10, 15, 20, and 25 yards. Back when I shot the Cup, '79 through '88, the times were six, seven, eight, and nine seconds respectively per string, so that's what I set the timer for.

The 5" 686 came up smoothly out of the Safariland holster, even though it was made for a 6" gun, and allowed me to easily clean two-dozen plates at 10 and 15 yards. On the 20-yard line, I got froggy on the trigger and missed a plate. (I dropped it anyway with the 7th shot, "just because," but it still counted as a miss because NRA rules say you can only take one shot at each plate. In NRA Action Pistol, the big advantage of this gun's 7th chamber is you can fire it to make up for a misfire or a skipped chamber.) At 25 yards I missed another, and finished the course with a 460 out of 480 possible. Well, I don't remember ever getting a perfect score on the plate stage at Bianchi Cup, either.

I wasn't testing me, though, I was testing the gun—and this 7-shot 5" passed with flying colors. For those who prefer a revolver, it should also make a neat home defense gun. Recoil wasn't bad at all with the factory-provided Hogue grips even with .357 Magnum rounds, and one more bullet never hurts. Besides, there are lots of folks who, like the late, great Skeeter Skelton, believe a 5" barrel is just the right compromise length for a heavy-duty service revolver.

There was only one misfire during the almost 300 rounds I managed to put through this revolver in the midst of the Great Post-Obama Ammo Drought, and that was from an ancient box of 158-grain .38 Special. (How long ago did they stop making S&W brand ammo, anyway?) If nothing else, it was the perfect reminder of what that 7th chamber is for. Kinda like the gun itself: "better to have it and not need it, than need it and not have it." I'm glad to see Tony, Jim, and the whole team at Smith & Wesson are still working to give us more options that reflect sound engineering, quality manufacturing and, in this case, creative thinking.

GUNS

TURKEY TA

TIME TO TAKE A GOBBLER.

John Barsness

Turkeys are the only North American gamebird we shoot not only on the ground with a shotgun, but during the spring mating season. This may seem to be a contradiction, but it's the result of both history and hunting ethics.

Archaeological evidence suggests people started hunting and eating turkeys as soon as they "discovered" them thousands of years ago, but modern turkey hunting is a dance between the basic desire to eat turkeys while not taking too much advantage of wild animals. As the Spanish philosopher Jose Ortega y Gasset suggested in his

little book, *Meditations on Hunting*, when hunting becomes something other than simple food-gathering, civilized humans are obliged to limit their use of technology.

This isn't to make hunting "fair," because humans are always smarter and better equipped than their quarry, but to force us to engage the animal's natural

defenses, thereby entering another world. If we use every advantage of our brains and technology, then we are not hunting but merely killing. And mere killing, Ortega y Gasset famously pointed out, is not hunting: "To the contrary, we hunt not to kill. We kill to have hunted."

First Smokepoles

Shooting turkeys with a shotgun began as soon as firearms showed up in North America, but the refinement of calling a gobbler full of spring lust was evidently learned from Indians. It was most highly developed in the Southeast, the last stronghold of wild turkeys during the first half of the 20th century. Many rural Southerners owned only one firearm, usually a shotgun because of its versatility. A shotgun can be loaded with anything from a single slug to fine birdshot to take a wide variety of game.

One of the surest ways to locate one was to listen for gobblers in spring, and then lure a male into range by making sounds like a lonely female turkey. The hunter had to know turkeys, and call skillfully—and thus the tradition of shooting spring gobblers on the ground began.

Americans made the big switch from subsistence hunting (straightforward killing) to recreational hunting (spending time amidst Nature, with a chance at game) after World War II. The new post-war prosperity meant most of us didn't have to eat wild food,



Some modern turkey hunters put scopes on their shotguns (above). When combined with modern loads with heavier-than-lead shot, clean killing beyond 40 yards becomes possible. This is where your called-in gobbler is supposed to end up, in a clearing not too far away (below).



WALK

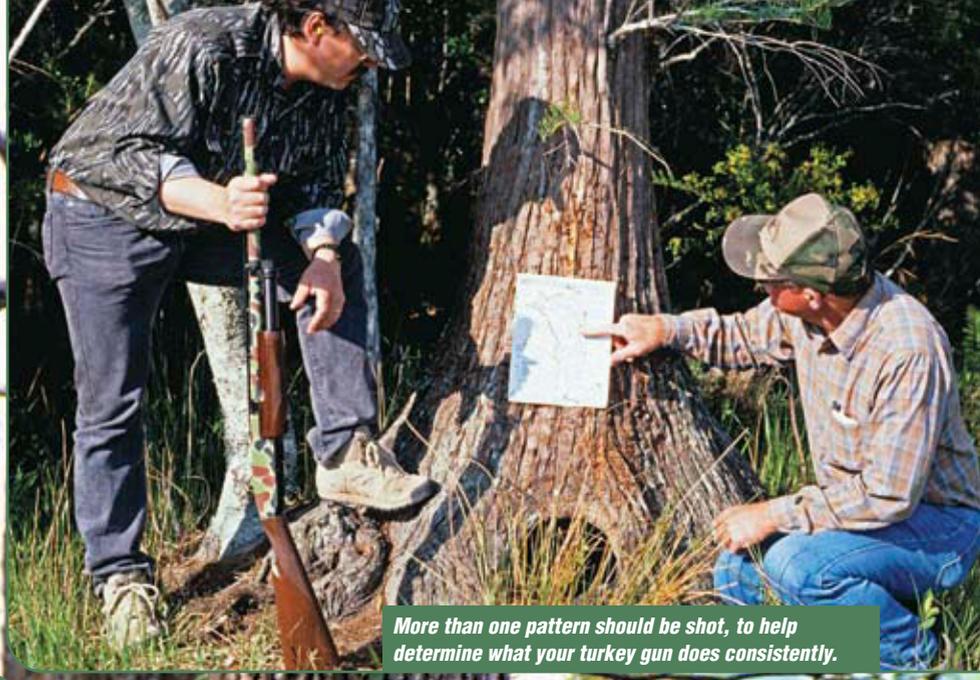
though it was certainly still welcome in most homes. Turkeys started making their comeback at about the same time, thanks to the efforts (and money) of hunters. Those same hunters imposed a technological limit on themselves, at least in most states: wild gobblers could only be hunted with shotguns in spring. This is because it's too easy to use a rifle to shoot a strutting gobbler, bypassing the gobbler's natural instincts of survival. Thus the technique of the backwoods subsistence hunter became the sanctioned ethics of the modern sport hunter.

Civilized Hunters

Of course, civilized hunters are humans. This means while we can make up rules to limit our technological advantages, most of us will also push the technological envelope within those rules. This is the entire reason behind the modern muzzleloading rifle. When muzzleloader seasons were first started in various states, the point was to give hunters who used "primitive weapons" a chance at deer outside the normal rifle season, because people who took old-time caplocks and flintlocks into the field were obviously voluntarily handicapping themselves. In a few places hunters were even limited to flintlocks.

Due to human nature, however, pretty soon we started to improve our muzzleloaders. Today we not only have scoped, stainless-steel, synthetic-stocked muzzleloaders but we can load them with smokeless powder and jacketed bullets. These often come in pre-packaged units that, more and more, are starting to resemble a self-contained cartridge.

Similarly, turkey guns evolved in the same specialized way. While an Appalachian mountain man used his shotgun to hunt turkeys because it was his only hunting gun, today's shooters own shotguns for every purpose. This is only natural, because we long ago discovered target and field shotguns needed to differ from each other, and a slug gun for deer hunting isn't a goose gun. But the specialized turkey gun is the only shotgun we've tried to turn into a rifle.



More than one pattern should be shot, to help determine what your turkey gun does consistently.

The traditional sure-killing range of a shotgun, whether on flying birds or the head of a gobbler, has been about 40 yards, due to the limits of a spreading pattern of small shot. Many turkey-hunting "authorities" still advocate 40 yards as the ethical limit, even if the authority sells extra-full choke tubes or telescopic sights making it possible to kill turkeys further away.

Forty yards is indeed about the longest range for sure turkey killing with a standard full-choke shotgun and a load of No. 5 shot, the most common compromise between penetration and pattern. But shotguns are also imprecise, even when we're shooting at a bird on the ground, and humans are excitable. Normal shotguns don't have precise

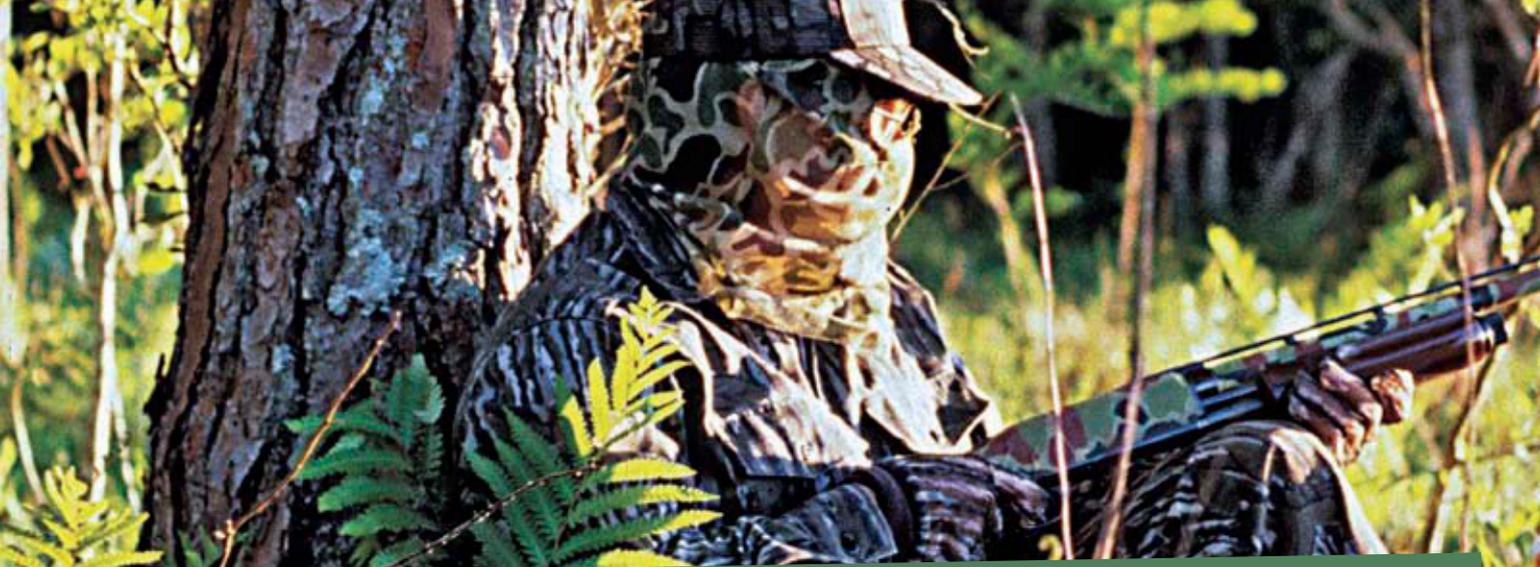
sights, because we depend on the shotgun fitting us so well we can just point it like a finger when shooting at a bird.

Beginning shotgunners tend to lift their head from the stock in an attempt to see the target better, a practice known as "peeking." The urge to peek is even stronger when we're sitting on the ground, hearts thumping, as a big gobbler struts closer, his odd call seeming too loud in the calm of the spring woods. The result is a high miss.

Hunters normally react to a miss by guessing something's wrong with their equipment. The first "fix" is to use more shot and tighter choke. This might seem logical but is often counterproductive. A tighter choke produces a smaller pattern, and with no real sights



This is what's supposed to happen: a big gobbler getting called up right in front of you.



TURKEY 101: YOU AND YOUR **CAMOUFLAGED** SHOTGUN ARE SUPPOSED TO **IMITATE** PART OF A TREE.

on a typical shotgun this makes hitting a gobbler's head at 40 yards even tougher. This is compounded by the extra recoil produced by heavier short charges. (Yes, it's possible to flinch enough to miss a turkey on the ground, especially under 40 yards, where the pattern is smaller.)

When new turkey hunters inquire what new super-tight choke should be purchased for rolling old gobblers, I often suggest the full screw-in choke that came with their new shotgun. It provides a sufficiently tight pattern for killing turkeys at 40 yards, or even a little further, but with enough spread to overcome slight errors in pointing.

The pattern is also more consistent than with many loads in a modern super-

choke. Many turkey hunters don't pattern their shotgun sufficiently to discover its faults. Usually they just set up an empty soda can at what might or might not be 40 yards and shoot one shot. The can is about the size of a gobbler's head and neck and, theoretically, if it ends up with several holes then the shotgun and load are good to go.

With a modern super-choke this isn't necessarily so. One rule of shotgun patterns is the tighter the choke, the more patterns will vary from shot to shot. With a super-tight choke the pattern may not only vary in density but in location from shot to shot. A super-tight foot-wide pattern does a turkey hunter no good if it moves a foot to right or left from

shot to shot. To really take advantage of a super-choke's extra range, we need to shoot a number of shots, with a variety of ammunition, in order to find which ammo shoots not just the tightest but the most consistently. Most turkey hunters don't do this, both because aiming a stationary shotgun makes it seem to kick much harder, and because ammo is expensive. Extensive testing, however, is the only way to make sure a super-choke is actually doing us any good.

Super-choke are also the reason many modern turkey guns have either open sights or an optical sight, whether a red dot or actual scope. As the pattern shrinks, pointing the shotgun as we would at a flying pheasant becomes less



These are the two Alabama gobblers that "flopped so hard the ground shook." Eileen Clarke took them with a 12-gauge Beretta Urika and Federal Premium loads with 1-5/8" ounce of copper-plated No. 5 shot.



likely to work. This means the sights or scope must be sighted in, as if we're sighting in a rifle. Again, this can hurt, the reason so many modern turkey guns are gas-operated autoloaders and pretty heavy. (Some even have thumbhole stocks. I can't imagine anything less comfortable to shoot than a thumb-hole stock on a hard-kicking shotgun, but whatever makes you happy.)

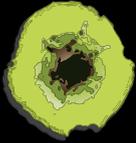
A Light 12?

All of these improvements in modern turkey guns and ammo have changed our attitudes. Apparently turkeys, like many 21st century game animals, have grown much harder to kill than the gobblers our grandfathers hunted. When my wife Eileen and I hunted White Oak Plantation in Alabama a few years ago (partly to collect even more wild turkeys as dinner experiments when Eileen was writing her book *Upland Game Bird Cookery*) she took her light Beretta Urika 12-gauge. We patterned it with several loads before heading south, and found it patterned tightest with Federal 2-3/4" loads with 1-5/8 ounces of copper-plated No. 5 shot and the modified choke tube. This may seem contradictory, but many modern full chokes are so tight (especially in European shotguns) that patterns become erratic.

Down at White Oak, head guide Bo Pitman asked Eileen what she was shooting. When he found out that she not only wasn't using 3" shells (though the Federals held what is essentially a 3" load) and "only" a modified choke, he decided he had to call the turkeys in real close. The two gobblers Eileen killed were both at about 30 yards, and as Bo noted, "flopped so hard the ground shook." He was astonished at the results from Eileen's too-small shotgun, but the reality is putting a dozen shot pellets in the head and neck of even a 20-pound gobbler is all that's needed. Eileen, in fact, has killed more turkeys with what Bo would call a "li'l ol' 20-gauge" than a 12. They all flopped too.

If you're going to shoot an extra-full choke, it's a good idea to use sights (above). This Browning Gold turkey gun comes with sights and is already camoed-up. This Montana hunter (below) used a Winchester autoloader to take a gobbler in the pine/juniper breaks above the Musselshell River.

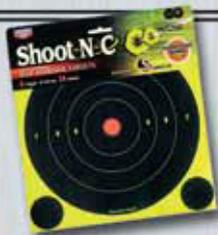




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TURKEY TALK



Osceola turkeys live in the southern half of Florida, often in swamps. This one is being "toted out" on a dike in a swamp south of Orlando.

Another misconception among turkey hunters is it's impossible to hit a running gobbler. Why they think this I don't know. Possibly some famous turkey writers have been lousy wingshots. It's no more difficult to shoot a running gobbler (usually one that's spooked while being called in) than to hit a flying pheasant, and I've done it more than once.

It's also entirely possible to cleanly kill gobblers with body shots, especially with a 10-gauge loaded with No. 2 or larger lead shot, or with smaller gauges and the latest waterfowl loads using extra-dense super-shot that's heavier than lead. I've tested most of the latest waterfowl loads extensively on big Canada geese, and finished off one wounded Canada at 90 yards with a body shot using Remington Wingmaster HD loads with 1-1/8 ounces of No. 4 shot. A Canada goose isn't quite as large as a big gobbler, but takes about as much penetration because of the thick feathers and fat. I wouldn't shoot at an unwounded gobbler that far away, but such loads will take turkeys out beyond the traditional 40 yards.

Action Type

Almost all modern turkey guns are autoloaders or, especially, pumps. Pumps tend to be cheaper, and people who buy a dedicated turkey gun often want to spend less money. I've shot the majority of my turkeys with pump-guns, but in recent years have come to prefer doubles. They tend to be lighter than repeaters (well, with the exception of my 11-pound Ugartechea 10-gauge), and turkey hunting usually involves hiking. A double is also much easier and quieter to unload and reload when crossing fences, and turkey hunting almost always involves fences as well.

One hunt on a pair of Indian

reservations in Nebraska and Montana a few springs ago I even took my 6-1/4 pound Sauer side-by-side. Like a lot of German shotguns, it came equipped with sling swivel studs, and the chokes are typical German: tight and tighter. The load used was 1-3/8 ounce of No. 5 Bismuth shot, because the Nebraska reservation required non-toxic loads, but the Bismuth worked equally well on the Montana bird. Both were taken at right around 40 yards. The Sauer isn't even camouflaged, but is old enough the shine's been knocked off.

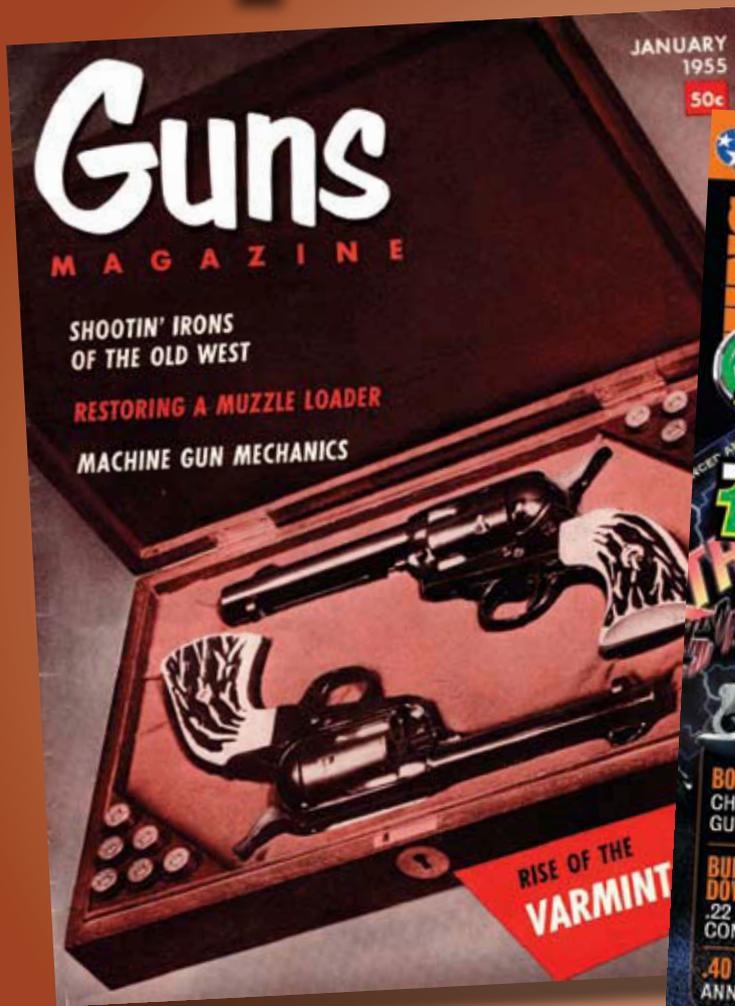
Despite the prejudice toward shotguns in spring seasons, turkeys can be hunted with rifles in fall in many states. When not befuddled by lust, a big gobbler in the fall is often even tougher to hunt with a rifle than he is with a shotgun in spring, and I don't feel the slightest guilt in "Winchester" one, as a Montana rancher I used to know likes to say.

Probably the majority of fall turkeys are shot with whatever deer rifle the hunter's carrying, the reason Eileen and I have shot quite a few with cartridges from the .243 to the .270. The ideal shot placement with a deer load is either from the front, at the base of the neck, or directly from the rear. Either will do the job nearly with a minimum of meat loss, but the ideal turkey cartridge is the .22 Hornet. The old Hornet is perfectly capable of cleanly killing even a big gobbler out to 200 yards, with little meat damage even from a 40-grain varmint bullet. The .22 Magnum rimfire will also do the job, but not nearly as far away; 100 yards is a better maximum.

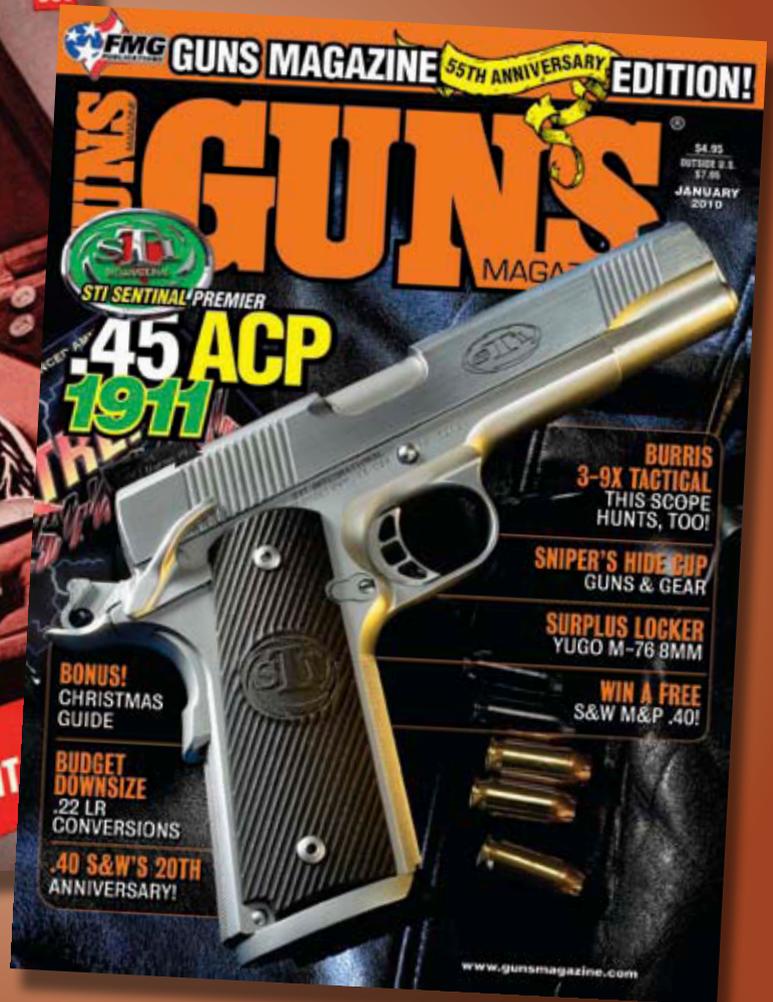
Of course, we can also use reduced loads from bigger centerfires, and in particular a flatnose lead bullet will do a neat job, because just like our ancestors, whether Native Americans or the folks who arrived later, we all like to eat turkey.

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Issue 1 • January 1955



Issue 649 • January 2010

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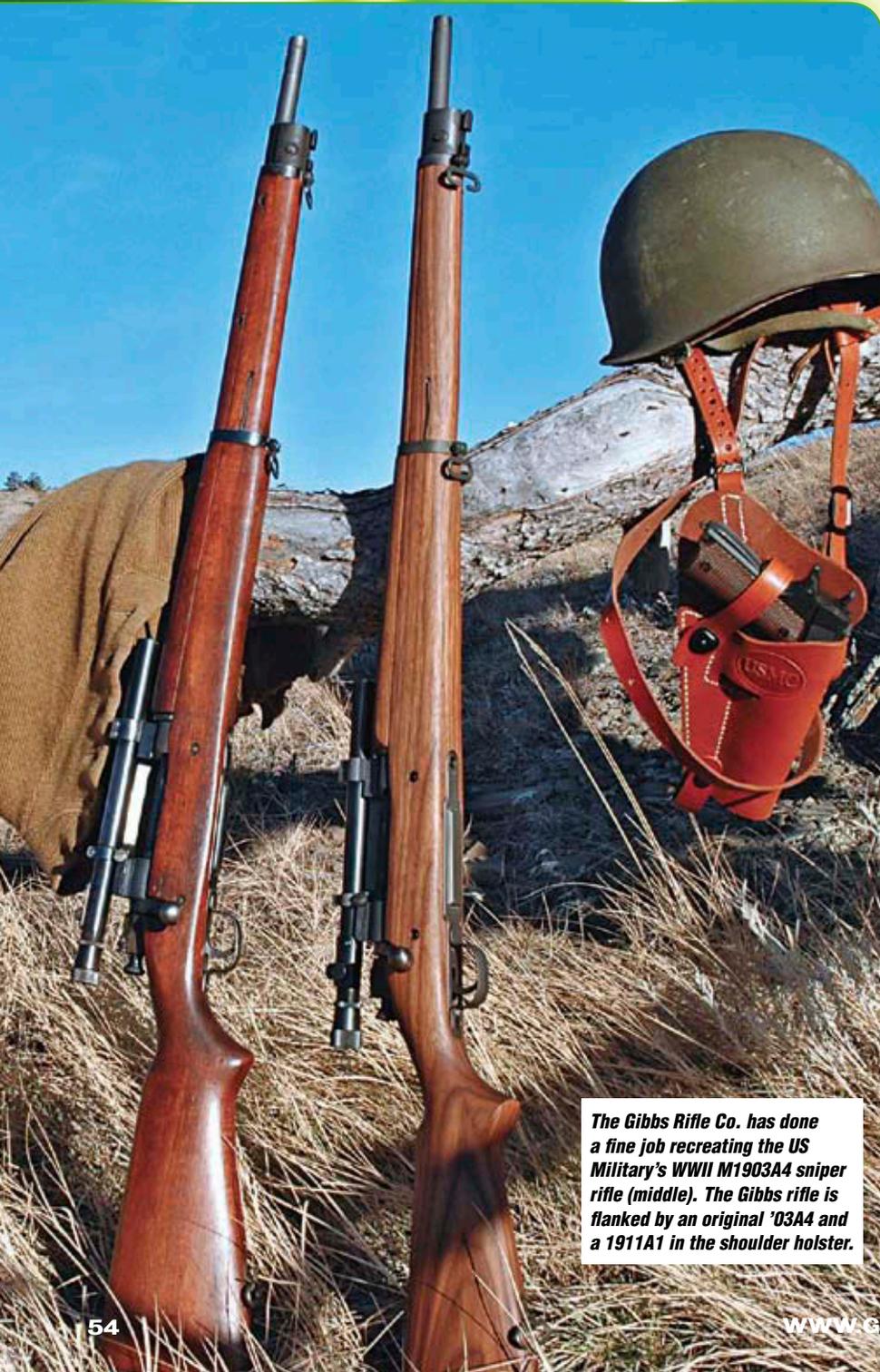
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SNIPER REBORN

GIBBS RIFLE COMPANY RECREATES THE WWII M1903A4 .30-06.



The Gibbs Rifle Co. has done a fine job recreating the US Military's WWII M1903A4 sniper rifle (middle). The Gibbs rifle is flanked by an original '03A4 and a 1911A1 in the shoulder holster.

Mike "Duke" Venturino
Photos: Yvonne Venturino

Any military item of World War II vintage is now considered collectible and is therefore expensive. This is especially true of genuine WWII sniper rifles. I know, for I sold off a portion of my Old West firearms collection to finance just a few. For example, original US Model 1903A4 sniper rifles complete with the proper Weaver 330C 2.5X scopes and Redfield Jr. mounts start about \$3K. So when I heard Gibbs Rifle Company (part of Navy Arms) was offering "new" '03A4s priced at a third of that I was more than interested.

A couple of weeks before this writing the Gibb's replica arrived. And to give my conclusion far before the end of this article I want to say my check paying for it is already on its way back to West Virginia. And my enthusiasm doesn't stem from its looks alone. In only two weeks, I fired several hundred rounds through this "new" '03A4 out to 300 yards. Not only do I consider it a fine shooting rifle, but it certainly is capable of better precision than my original US Model 1903A4.

Perhaps that should not be surprising. The United States, unlike Britain, the Soviet Union, and Germany, did not select rifles of superior accuracy for sniper rifles. Ordinary US Model 1903A3s coming off of Remington's assembly lines were chosen at random. They were given C-stocks (the pistol grip style adopted for all Model 1903s in 1929). According to the US military, fitting a C-stock on a US Model 1903 instantly turned it into a Model 1903A1, although markings on the rifle remained the same.

Other than the stock, US Model 1903A3s chosen to become US Model 1903A4s were changed in a couple of other minor details. Their bolt handles were bent so they would clear the scopes, and the receiver markings remained the same, but were switched from the top of the front receiver ring to its left side. Neither rear peep nor front blade sight were installed. Then the top of the receiver was drilled and tapped for Redfield Junior scope mounts into which were installed Weaver 330C 2.5X telescopes. In the beginning these scopes were simply pulled from sporting goods dealers' shelves. Later ones were purchased directly from Weaver by the government and those had the proper military markings.

Although over 1 million US Model 1903A3 rifles were made by Remington Arms Company and Smith-Corona during WWII, only about 28,000 were set up as US Model 1903A4 sniper rifles, all made by Remington. They were issued to the Army fighting in both the European Theater of Operations and the Pacific Island campaigns. Some also went to the USMC. Although almost no one in either military branch was happy with them, Model 1903A4s stayed in use through the Korean War (1950-1953) and supposedly some were even used in Vietnam in the 1960s, although I've not been able to find concrete documentation of that yet.

One reason often given for the military's unhappiness with the A4 was the scopes and mounts designed for civilian use did not stand up to the rigors of military service very well. Also the fact these rifles weren't chosen for superior accuracy and then were fitted with such a low power scope had a bearing on their acceptance. For example, consider the sniper rifles the more marksmanship oriented Marine Corps built for themselves. They were specially chosen US Model 1903 Springfields fitted with long tubed, external adjustment, Unertl 8X scopes. Here's another fact of comparison with other nations' World War II sniper rifles. The Model 1903A4 was the only one that did not retain its iron sights for use in case the scope was disabled.

Not A Fake

Because its model stamping was rotated to the left side of the rifle's front receiver ring, the US Model 1903A4 is one of the most difficult of all collectible firearms to counterfeit. To insure their new recreations of '03A4s don't end up being posed as originals, Gibbs Rifle Company has not tried to reproduce the upside down marking. Their new rifles are assembled on original Model 1903A3 actions with the model stamping directly atop the chamber.



Because the newly manufactured scopes on the Gibbs Model 1903A4 have mis-marked adjustment knobs Duke simply rotated the scope 90 degrees so they read properly.



Gibbs Rifle Company has even recreated the original inspector's stamping on the new stocks for their Model 1903A4. The FJA stands for inspector Frank J. Atwood.

All barrels put on US military rifles starting with the Model 1903 Springfield and going at least through the M1 Garand are stamped with the month, year and a maker's code. For example, my US Model 1903 Springfield's barrel is stamped SA 11/21 for Springfield Armory November/1921. My original Model 1903A4 carries the markings RA 4/43 for Remington Arms April/1943. To help ensure their rifles are not mistaken for originals, the newly manufactured barrels on Gibbs Rifle Company's Model 1903A4s carry a GR stamp with month and date. The one I received is marked GR 5/09. Also to preclude the replicas of Redfield Jr. mounts being pawed off as originals they are stamped with the company's name.

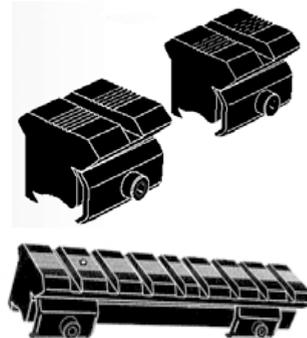
The Gibbs Rifle Co.'s replica 2.5X scopes are being made in China. The one on my rifle has no markings other than an "L" for left or "U" with suitable arrows pointing direction on the adjustment knobs. As described in the reprint of the US War Department's September 1943 Technical Manual Gibbs Rifle Co. supplies with each rifle, the Weaver 330C scopes have standard crosshairs as does the scope on my original '03A4.

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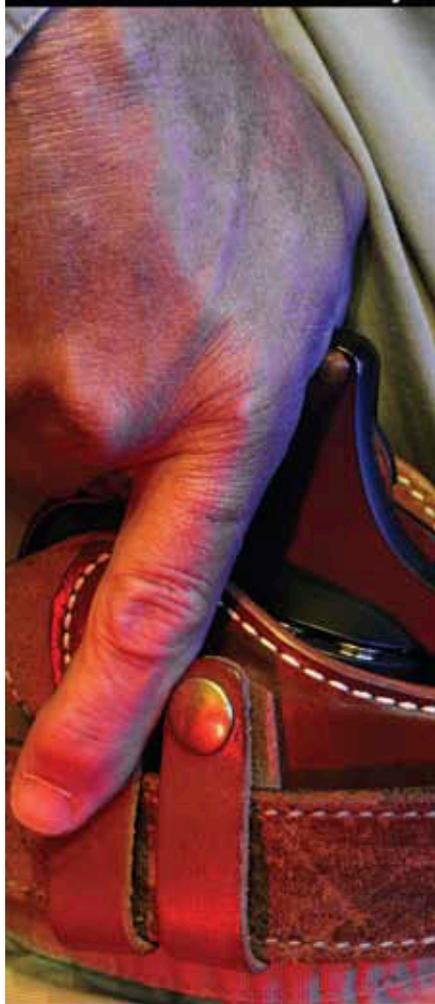
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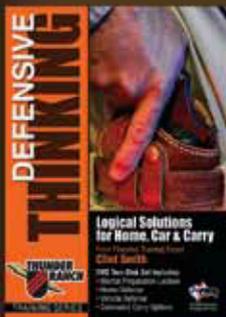
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SNIPER REBORN

.30-06 HANDLOADED AMMO PERFORMANCE

BULLET (BRAND, BULLET WEIGHT, TYPE)	POWDER (BRAND)	CHARGE (GRAINS WEIGHT)	VELOCITY (FPS)	STANDARD DEVIATION (FPS)	GROUP SIZE (INCHES)
150 SIERRA SPITZER	Varget	48.0	2,746	24	2
150 SPEER SPITZER BT	IMR4895	46.5	2,687	41	1.75
155 SIERRA HPBT	Varget	48.0	2,717	15	2.5
155 HORNADY AMAX	Varget	48.0	2,764	28	1.63
155 SIERRA HPBT	IMR4895	46.5	2,648	42	1.63
155 HORNADY AMAX	IMR4895	46.5	2,692	47	2.50
155 NOSLER HPBT	Vihta. N140	46.0	2,649	56	2.50
155 SIERRA HPBT	RL15	48.0	2,759	43	1.38

Notes: All groups are for five rounds fired at 100 yards from a sandbag rest. Chronograph readings taken with a PACT Professional Model with start screen at approximately 6'. All handloads used Remington brass and Remington 9-1/2 Large Rifle primers.

.30-06 FACTORY AMMO PERFORMANCE

LOAD (BRAND, BULLET WEIGHT, TYPE)	VELOCITY (FPS)	STANDARD DEVIATION (FPS)	GROUP SIZE (INCHES)
FEDERAL 150 FMJ	2,815	22	2
HORNADY 168 AMAX	2,646	20	2.13

Notes: All groups are for five rounds fired at 100 yards from a sandbag rest. Chronograph readings taken with PACT Professional Model with start screen at approximately 6'.

However, other '03A4 owners report their rifle's scopes have a thick center post with thin crosswire. The crosshairs in this new scope are fairly thick and subtend about 6" at 100 yards. It has worked perfectly except for one problem, which I will discuss shortly. Its adjustments are fairly precise, each

click changes point of impact 1/4" at 100 yards.

According to the US Technical Manual mentioned above the Model 1903A4 with its 2.5X scope was supposed to be sufficient for accurate shooting to 1,000 yards. I consider that hopelessly optimistic. And evidently so did many WWII infantrymen who were issued such rifles. One friend's father who carried one in Europe in 1944/1945 said he considered 150 to 200 yards as practical combat range.

Here's the minor problem I encountered with the Gibb's scope. Like most of us I tend to shoot a new rifle first and then read the instruction booklet later. I could have saved myself some ammo if I had reversed that. On the back of the Technical Manual reprint that came with my rifle is the following paragraph:

"Please note that on your 1903-A4 rifle, the windage and elevation knob adjustments are marked incorrectly and have been reversed.

To adjust the windage, please use the elevation knob. To adjust the elevation, please adjust the windage."

Naturally because I didn't read this note first, my rifle's point of impact wandered all over the place while I fussed and cussed. Then I read the warning note, but being the bright light I am, instead of trying to remember to adjust one knob when another needed adjusting, I simply rotated the scope 90 degrees. Now the knobs are on the opposite sides of the scope compared to my original rifle's but when I move the elevation knob it moves the elevation and so forth.

Gibb's Model 1903A4s are a mixture of brand new and military surplus parts. Newly made are the barrels, stocks,

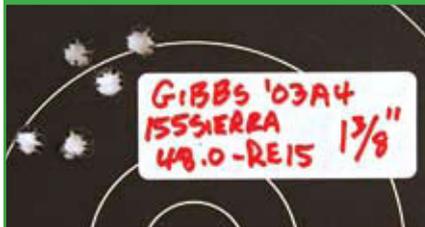


The Gibb's "new" Model 1903A4s are being produced on original US Model 1903A3 actions with the original stampings and serial numbers intact (above). The original US Model 1903A4 rifles (below) have the marking upside down on the left side. This has helped prevent this desirable rifle from being faked.





Like the originals, the standard 5-round stripper clip (above) could not be used with the A4, because the scope was in the way. Rounds had to be fed into the action one at a time. Duke fired 10 groups (below) with factory loads and handloads from the Gibbs Model 1903A4 in one afternoon. This one was best.



scopes, and mounts. Military surplus is the entire action, and stock furniture. Barrels are 24" long with a twist rate of 1:10", and nominal land and groove dimensions of .300" and .308". These barrels are being made by the Pedersoli Company of Italy who are known for their good shooting rifle barrels on replica black powder cartridge rifles. As proper for a replica of the original '03A4s all metal parts are given a Parkerized finish.

The wood on my sample rifle is especially pleasing. It is fancy enough to catch the eye but not so fancy it looks ridiculous on a military rifle. Also as proper for a replica of a military rifle made during a world war, my sample's stock has not been sanded to a shiny smoothness. It is finished in oil. Trigger pull on this rifle is also pleasing. It has the standard 2-stage military type trigger and breaks nicely at 4-1/2 pounds.

Functioning of the rifle has been perfect through the several hundred rounds I've shot so far. Also the clarity of the scope and its adjustments can't be faulted.

During WWII, the US military's standard .30-06 load was designated M2, with a 150-grain FMJ bullet moving at a nominal muzzle velocity of 2,700 fps. (Some sources say 2,740 fps, and others even go up to 2,800 fps but most say 2,700 fps.) I have only one type of .30-06 US military surplus load at this writing. Headstamped LC69, it chronographed from the new rifle at 2,646 fps, but its 5-shot, 100-yard group was very disappointing at almost 4".

For this article, I fired 10, 5-shot groups at 100 yards. Two factory loads were used along with eight handloads loaded with 150- and 155-grain bullets. The factory loads were those fairly new ones being made by Hornady and Federal labeled especially for M1 Garands. Those loads also did very nicely in this bolt-action rifle. Since

US M1903A4

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CAPACITY: 5

BARREL LENGTH: 24"

OVERALL LENGTH: 43.5"

WEIGHT: 9 pounds

FINISH: Parkerized

SIGHTS: Repro Weaver

2.5X Model 330C

STOCK: Walnut, oil finished

LENGTH OF PULL: 13.25"

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SNIPER REBORN



Duke used these bullets in the handloads he fired through the Gibbs Model 1903A4.



Duke fired these two current .30-06 factory loads, both designed to be used in the M1 Garand through the Gibbs Model 1903A4 along with one American military surplus one headstamped LC69 (top).



Duke used these four powders in the handloads he fired through the Gibbs Model 1903A4.

my .30-06 handloads are also likely to end up being fired in M1 Garands they likewise use medium burning powders: namely Hodgdon Varget, Alliant RL15, Vihtavouri N140, and IMR4895. Of the 10 5-shot groups, the smallest group fired with the Gibbs was 1.38" and the largest was 2.5". Averaging all 10 groups gave the figure of 2.03". Note also in the accompanying chart velocities bracketed the desired 2,700 fps by about 50 fps or so in either direction.

That was the work part. The fun part was bouncing bullets off my Action Target PT-torso plates at 100, 200, and 300 yards. With the rifle sighted dead on at 100, I held in the top half of the 18" plates for hits at 200 yards and at the top of the targets at 300 yards.

Having given my conclusion away early in this article there's not much else to say. The bottom line is I bought this rifle and when it comes to guns I don't throw money away foolishly. The people at Gibbs Rifle Company made a good decision to market a new US Model 1903A4 for today's shooters.

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The rings John used in shooting the Stag Arms 6.8 SPC worked fine for him. Shooters with a normal neck may prefer higher scope rings.

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John Taffin

Have you ever been weighed in the balance or survived an Ultimate test? I have. Not once, not twice, but three times. It all started about 20 years ago when I heard an eastern politician spouting off about how assault rifles turned ordinary people into criminals. I just couldn't believe it even if what he was defining as an assault rifle wasn't one at all, but simply a semi-automatic rifle. Assault rifles are fully automatic weapons used by the military, however for the past two-plus decades pandering politicians have managed to convince many that semi-automatic sporting arms are actually assault rifles.

Until I heard that politician I had never owned a semi-auto rifle except a Ruger 10/22. But I had to find out for myself if all the training from grandparents, parents, teachers and pastors would come to naught if I owned an "assault rifle." If he was right my very future was in danger. So I ordered not one, but two Rugers—a Mini-14 in .223 and a Mini-30 7.62x39. By the time they arrived I had second thoughts and didn't want to even open the box. But I slowly did, no noxious fumes came forth, and I then faced the ultimate test.

I drove to a local mini-mart, sat in the front of my Bronco with one of the rifles between the seats and waited to see what kind of feeling would come over me. Nothing! Absolutely nothing happened. I didn't feel any different nor did I have any urge to rob the store. I passed the test. I never again thought about a firearm actually being capable of turning an everyday honest citizen into a criminal.

But just when I was totally relaxed, our Fearless Leader asked if I would be interested in testing an AR. Not just any AR but a Stag Arms chambered in 6.8 SPC Remington. All the old fears came back; this was a serious rifle in a serious chambering. What would it do to me? Fearless Leader, known to most as the editor of this magazine, had never led me down the wrong path. But who can be trusted these days? As I awaited the



Silver State Army 6.8 SPC ammo delivered very good accuracy and consistent velocity. The Stag Arms rifle was utterly reliable throughout the test.

rifle I had a few sleepless nights.

The fact this Stag Arms rifle was listed as the Hunter was the only thing that calmed my fears. It soon arrived with two 5-shot magazines and no sights. A brand-new production Weaver K6, a hunting scope, was installed and I waited, to see if I would have a desire to go buy Camo clothing and find some tall grass to hide in. Neither feeling came over me. This is a hunting rifle pure and simple, and the only urge I had was to get it sighted in before my annual hog, sheep, and goat hunt. I had passed the test for the third time. Never again will I even think about someone's life actually being changed from good to evil because of the presence of an inanimate object.

Stag Arms offers an extensive lineup of reasonably priced semi-auto AR rifles in 5.56 NATO/.223 Remington including left-handed versions. Shooters have been using these rifles for competition, varmint hunting, and plain old plinking for several years and, of course, the .223 AR has been the standard military rifle since the days of Vietnam. With our entrance into Iraq and Afghanistan there were soon complaints from the soldiers in the field the .223 was inadequate and the 6.8 SPC (Special Purpose Cartridge) was advanced as an alternative. Reaching way back in the past, Steve Holland and Cris Murray used a shortened and necked down rimless version of the .30-30—the .30 Remington—as the basic case for the 6.8 SPC.

My previous experience with an AR is about as close to nothing as possible without actually being there. Way back in the distant past I remember firing five rounds through a .223 AR. Every time I shot it sounded like rocks shaking in a tin can. I wondered as I touched off the first shot in the 6.8 Stag Hunter if I would experience the same feeling; not to worry as this is a very solid-feeling rifle.

The gas operated Stag Hunter Model 7 chambered in 6.8 SPC has a 4-groove, 1:11" twist stainless steel barrel just under 21" in length, with an A3 upper unit forged of 7075 T6 aluminum, a straight A2 buttstock, and furnished without sights. Aftermarket magazines of 17- and 30-round capacity are offered. A Picatinny rail is furnished for mounting a scope or red dot sight. The barrel is free-floating and surrounded by a Hogue Free Float Tube which not only protects the hand from heat it is also quite comfortable to use; the pebble grained surface gives a most secure feeling and will be especially appreciated in wet weather.

Weight of the Stag Hunter Model is listed as 10 pounds, but it certainly seems lighter to me. The trigger on the Stag Arms Model 7 is of the 2-stage match variety and the pistol grip is also Hogue.

June 15, 2009

Dear Jeff,

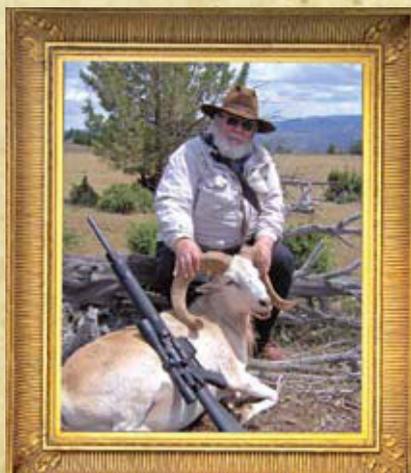
Just back from the annual pig, sheep and goat hunt with my two special friends and hunting buddies, Rick VonDerHeide and Roger Bissell. We have been on a lot of hunts together, however this was the best ever. It actually had nothing to do with the animals we took but the fact we were able to hunt together once more. Roger has been facing some serious physical problems and last fall we made a pact we would hunt at least once more together. No one knows what the future holds for any of us but we are hoping and praying there will be more outings together.

At my age there aren't many new experiences, however this was one of them as it rained, oh my, did it rain! I grew up in the Midwest where we really got rain, but I have never seen anything like what we experienced in Oregon. With the rain came extremely slippery conditions and I am certainly glad we had Rick at the wheel as we went up and down the mountain for three days. With the rain came something else I have never seen before, flash floods. Water, rocks, timber and who knows what else coming down the canyon behind the ranch house was really something to see.

This makes four years in a row we have had a new rifle to test and once again Rick and

Roger were kind enough to help me and we all three successfully tested the Stag Hunter Model 7 chambered in 6.8 SPC. I must say the rifle and Remington ammunition performed superbly. As you know it has not been easy to come up with ammunition this past year and although I eventually had CorBon, Remington, and Silver State Armory ammo for extensive testing of the Stag Hunter the only ammunition I had for hunting in time was the Remington 115-grain CoreLokt. I don't believe anything could have performed any better.

None of us had any experience hunting with an AR-style rifle, so on arrival in camp I checked to make sure the rifle was still sighted in and both friends also fired a couple rounds through it. Wednesday morning found us 4-wheeling up the slippery mountain road. About 10 o'clock we spotted an Ibex just below the rocks and Roger decided to take it. The rangefinder said 146 yards and the goat was on a very steep incline. At the shot the Ibex went down, started rolling down the hill and it was all over.

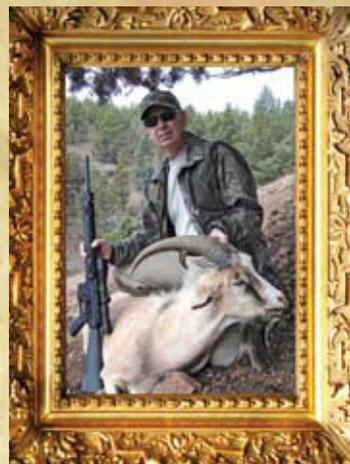


Taffin took his Corsican Ram taken at 82 yards with the Stag Hunter 6.8 SPC. The Remington 115-grain CoreLokt delivered 1,652 ft-lbs of energy from the muzzle.

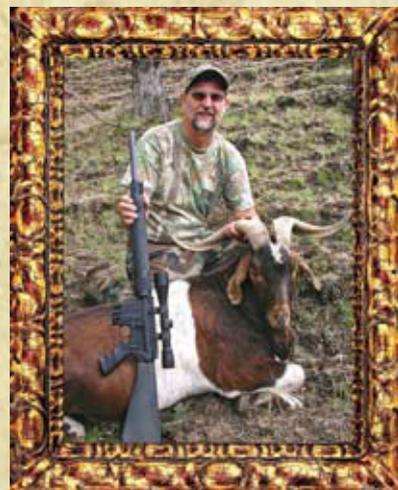
Just before noon I connected on a light-colored Corsican ram at about 80 yards. Same results, the ram went down immediately. The next morning Rick took the Stag Hunter and hiked up into the rocks. He was able to work his way across the top to within 50 yards of an Ibex/Catalina cross. Both animals Roger and I shot revealed massive damage from the Remington Core-Lokt bullet with both bullets penetrating completely. Rick's bullet went into the body, through the heart, out the far side, and then through the top of the leg and out the other side. For deer size game I don't know how I would be able to find any better performance than that provided by the Stag Hunter Model 7 and Remington's 6.8 SPC ammunition.

It poured down rain at least once every day and after the flash floods on Thursday afternoon we decided it was a good idea to be thankful we had all connected and look forward to another time.

Good Shootin' and God Bless,
John

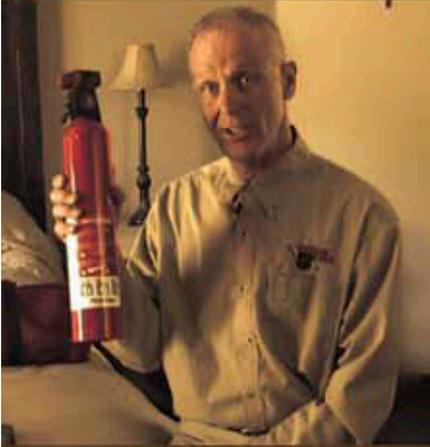


Roger Bissell took this Ibex with one shot at 146 yards with the Stag Hunter.



Rick VonDerHeide went on a stalk and took his Catalina goat at 52 yards. All three were 1-shot kills with Remington's 115-grain CoreLokt ammo.

Clint on Home Defense:

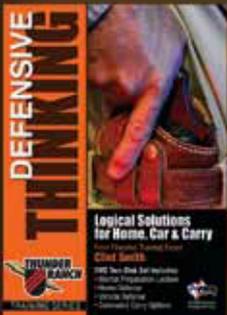


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THE SIXGUNNER GOES ARI!



The Stag Arms Hunter displays excellent accuracy at 100 yards (above). The top target is the first rounds out of the bore-sighted 6.8 SPC. The scope is a Weaver 6X. Standard magazine capacity of the Stag Arms Hunter is five rounds (below). Higher capacity magazines are available if this rifle is to double for defense.



I have spent most of my life shooting leverguns with straight grip stocks, and bolt actions with standard pistol grips. This is my first experience with something such as this rear-slanting, finger-grooved Hogue pistol grip and I must say I really like it, it gives such a secure feeling and snugs the rifle into the shoulder.

Since this is a Hunter Model, no iron sights are provided, but in addition to the Picatinny rail on the receiver there is another abbreviated rail mounted in front of the Hogue Free Float Tube should you desire iron sights. Since it is a Hunter Model, I mounted a hunting scope, however, not just any hunting scope.

6.8MM SPC FACTORY AMMO PERFORMANCE

LOAD (BRAND, BULLET WEIGHT, TYPE)	VELOCITY (FPS)	GROUP SIZE (INCHES)
CORBON 110 DPX	2,672	7/8
REMINGTON 115 EXPRESS	2,518	3/4
REMINGTON 115 CORE-LOKT	2,543	1-3/8
SSA 110 BARNES TSX	2,664	1/2
SSA 110 SIERRA PRO HUNTER	2,604	1-1/4
SSA 115 SIERRA OTM	2,626	1/2
SSA 100 NOSLER BONDED	2,713	5/8
SSA 110 ACCUBOND	2,584	1/2

Notes: Groups the product of best 3 of 4 Shots at 100 yards. Chronograph screens set at 10' from the muzzle. SSA: Silver State Army

When I first started shooting seriously back in the 1950s I'm sure other scopes were available, but I rarely saw anything except a Weaver. A bolt-action rifle with a K4 Weaver scope seemed to be the long-range rifle of choice with most hunters. Perhaps I am proving my ability to be thoroughly modern with an AR-style hunting rifle. However, I also reached way back into the past and chose a Weaver scope. In this case, a newly manufactured K6 Weaver with a standard Dual-X reticle; no ranging dots, no extra crosshairs, just a plain 1950s-style hunting scope.

Mounting the K6 Weaver on the Stag Hunter Picatinny rail even with high rings still provides a very low mount, and matched up with a straight buttstock some shooters may find it difficult to get down on the scope. I basically don't have a neck so I could get a proper sight picture without much difficulty but normal individuals may want to opt for extra tall rings in mounting a scope.

The 6.8 SPC Remington utilizes 100- to 115-grain bullets at 2,500 to 2,700 fps. Bullet diameter is the same .277" as the .270 Winchester which uses a 130-grain bullet at around 3,000+ fps. So call it a down-sized .270 in the class of the .250 Savage. That puts it in pretty good company. Several companies are now offering 6.8 SPC ammunition and at a time when it is practically impossible to get ammunition thanks must go to CorBon, Remington, and Silver State Armory for providing me with test ammo.

Accurate

I am not a rifle shooter by any stretch of the imagination and the Stag Arms being semi-automatic certainly wouldn't be expected to shoot as well as a bolt-action rifle. It did not. What it did was shoot probably *better* than the vast majority of out-of-the-box bolt action sporting rifles. The combination of this rifle and ammunition is just about the most accurate I have ever come across, once again pointing to the fact firearms are better than ever.

Whatever firearm I am testing—bolt action rifle, levergun, semi-automatic rifle, semi-automatic pistol, double action or single-action sixgun—I always allow myself one stress relieving throw-away round. With rifles, I shoot four and count three. Sometimes when everything goes just right and I am shooting like I did 40 years ago, all the rounds are clustered so closely together I can't find a throw-away round.

I was totally and pleasantly surprised by two attributes of the Stag Arms Hunter Model 7, exceptionally mild recoil matched up with exceptional accuracy. Semi-automatic rifles, especially in the hands of an old



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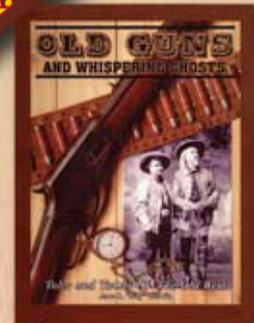


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THE SIXGUNNER GOES ARI

MODEL 7 HUNTER

MAKER: STAG ARMS
515 JOHN DOWNEY DR.
NEW BRITAIN, CT 06051
(860) 229-9994, WWW.STAGARMS.COM

ACTION TYPE: Semi-Auto
CALIBER: 6.8 Remington SPC
CAPACITY: 5
BARREL LENGTH: 20.77"
OVERALL LENGTH: 39"
WEIGHT: 10 pounds
FINISH: Parkerized, stainless steel barrel
SIGHTS: None, Picatinny rail
STOCK: A2 buttstock, Hogue pistol grip and Free Float forearm
PRICE: \$1,055

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PRICE: \$155

sixgunner, simply should not shoot this well. Eight different versions of 6.8 SPC ammunition from three different manufacturers were utilized in testing the Stag Hunter. Complete results are in the accompanying table but notice the average—average mind you not the best—was just barely over 3/4", and three loads from Silver State Armory all went into 1/2". Outstanding!

Anyone looking for a light recoiling, exceptionally accurate deer rifle should be able to find everything desired in the Stag 7 Hunter Model. It certainly has changed my mind about what a hunting rifle is, or can be. Southpaws are not forgotten and a 7L Model is also offered.

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VIEWS NEWS AND REVIEWS

RIGHTS WATCH

• DAVID CODREA •

SENSELESS IN SEATTLE

By the time you read this, it will be yesterday's news. Still, the murder of four police officers in a Pacific Northwest coffee shop by a felon with a history of violence is a lesson in how low some will stoop to put us all at the mercy of killers.

That Maurice Clemmons was even on the streets is the first piece of the puzzle that makes no sense. He had earned himself five felonies in Arkansas (charges were reduced by then-Governor Mike Huckabee, allowing him to be released from his 108-year sentence) and eight in Washington state. He was out on bail at the time of the shootings, facing charges for assaulting a police officer and for child rape.

If that isn't outrageous enough, *The News Tribune* reports "Clemmons told friends and family gathered for Thanksgiving dinner at his aunt's home in the Pacific that he planned to kill 'cops, children at a school' and 'as many people as he could in an intersection.'"

These lovely people not only did not report it or intervene, but *The Los Angeles Times* tells us "Hours after the man suspected of killing four Seattle-area police officers was shot to death... prosecutors said they had evidence that an extensive network of friends and relatives had helped the wounded fugitive evade a massive, two-day manhunt."

So how did *The Times'* editorial-staff weigh in? Typically.

Calling Seattle residents who had expressed concerns for defending themselves "crazy about guns," their editorial went right into a self-righteous, judgmental attack dive.

"It's a typical American response to an all-too-typical American incident of gun violence. It is also a striking example of disconnect between our desire to feel safe and our insistence

on loose gun laws that make us less so. The murdered officers were armed, well trained in the use of their weapons and wearing bulletproof vests. It didn't save them."

Their point appearing to be that guns are not 100-percent effective at defeating sneak attacks. Duh. As if anyone in the pro-rights camp ever suggested otherwise. Still, and left unacknowledged by *The Times*, it was a trained and prepared man with a gun who ended Clemmons' murderous career.

The Times' solution, bearing all that we now know in mind?

"That 'gun-show loophole' should have been closed years ago... Americans could stand to be less gun-crazy and more willing to stop crazy people from getting guns."

Yeah, that would stop a Maurice Clemmons, all right. Still, they give us a surprising concession.

"Time will tell how the suspected shooter in Parkland got his weapon. If he stole it or acquired it from an accomplice, there are few gun laws that could have prevented the tragedy short of a blanket ban on handguns...."

Well guess what? Per *Gun Week* editor and *Seattle Gun Rights Examiner* Dave Workman, "Accused cop killer had a (surprise!) stolen handgun."

Don't hold your breath waiting for *The Times'* editorial staff to stop their blood dancing and point that inconvenient truth out. If things are senseless in Seattle, they're positively loco in Los Angeles.

GUNS

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SAS DOG FOUND AFTER YEAR'S ABSENCE

An Australian Special Forces explosive detection dog has been found alive and well more than a year after she went missing in action in Afghanistan.

Black Labrador "Sabi" was recovered by a US Soldier at an isolated patrol base in Oruzgan Province, after going missing in the same September 2008 battle during which Trooper Mark Donaldson, VC earned his Victoria Cross.

Nine Australian soldiers, including Sabi's handler, were wounded during the fighting.



Sabi the Explosive Detection Dog and her handler David, from the Reconstruction Task Force, take a rest in the shade after a long days' work in Tarin Kowt, Afghanistan. Photo: ADoD

The US soldier who recovered Sabi, who can be identified only by his first name John, was aware Australian Special Forces were missing one of their explosive detection dogs.

He said it was immediately obvious Sabi was no ordinary canine. "I took the dog and gave it some commands it understood," John said. John said he thanked the man who was with Sabi and shook his hand. Sabi was then flown to Tarin Kowt, Afghanistan, to be reunited with one of her Australian Special Forces trainers. "I nudged a tennis ball to her with my foot and she took it straight away," the trainer said. "It's a game we used to play over and over during her training. It's amazing, just incredible, to have her back."

Currently in the United Kingdom after meeting Her Majesty the Queen, Trooper Mark Donaldson, VC said Sabi's return had closed a chapter of their shared history.

"She's the last piece of the puzzle," Trooper Donaldson said. "Having Sabi back gives some closure for the handler and the rest of us who served with her in 2008. It's a fantastic morale booster for the guys."

At the time of her disappearance Sabi



Bath done, belly full and ready for another game of catch, Sabi waits for her trainer to nudge a tennis ball to her. Photo: ADoD

was coming to the end of her second tour of duty in Afghanistan, having previously deployed in 2007.

Sabi will now undergo a period of quarantine before a decision can be made about the timing of her return to Australia. A veterinary assessment of Sabi's exposure to diseases has yet to be completed. It is hoped the tests will prove negative and Sabi can return home.—*Courtesy ADoD*

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Free recoil shooting with the Knox CompStock on the .375 H&H shows very manageable recoil.

BLACKHAWK! KNOX COMPSTOCK

John Taffin

Several years ago, my friend John Wootters, the original Mr. Whitetail, and two of my neighbors, neither of whom are shooters, all suffered detached retinas. I saw what they had to go through, and want no part of it. If I am going to err over this it will be on the side of caution, and this brings me to my brand-new unfired Remington 700 Classic .375 H&H, purchased about the time Wootters suffered his eye problem and it sat unfired since. However I have now been rescued.

BLACKHAWK! now offers the solution with their Knox CompStock. This replacement aftermarket rifle stock starts as a Hogue Soft Rubber Overmolded stock fitted with what

is described as a Horizontal Variable Ratio Cam Recoil System. This unit is contained in the butt of stock which appears to have a slip-on recoil pad. Inside the stock is a large spring and when the rifle fires the pad moves and soaks up at least 50 percent and up to 75 percent of the recoil. For me, this makes the .375 H&H feel like a .30-06. I can shoot it without pain or fear of side effects.

The Knox Compstock is easily installed. Simply remove the old stock, place the barreled action in the Compstock, tighten the stock screws, and it is ready to go. Two versions are offered. The pillar-bed stock is priced at \$249.99 while the full-length bedding block stock sells for \$389.99. They are available for Remington, Ruger, Weatherby, Winchester and most Mauser 98 rifles. Shooting heavy recoiling rifles is pleasant again.

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TAG/SHELLBACK

Clint Smith

My favorite thing from Chris Osman's TAG gear and Mike Wratten's Shellback Tactical is a small chest/shoulder pouch called the GO TIME shooter's rig. In theory it could be a rig for a law enforcement officer/active shooter rig,

but my first thought was of you and I in our civilian "Sam and Suzie homemaker mode."

In case of a potential home conflict, the pouch (which is a nominal 12x10" in size and bears a neck/shoulder strap and an around-the-body strap) would be an easy pick-up-and-go or stay-behind-the-locked-bedroom-door rig. With two mag pouches for rifle and two for pistol (our personal home being a rifle world), Heidi and I stuck a cell phone and a flash light in the smaller pouches. The back opens for the insert of a small ballistic plate for cops, but I simply stuck my pistol in that opening because I could.

The carrier pouches could then be filled with whatever you deem the correct gear. The GO TIME colors might not match all your other stuff but a simple choice of black or green works. Although you could construe the last line as flippant, that is not my intent, as the GO TIME is good gear made by good people to serve a good purpose. Heidi and I hope not to use ours, but it has our stuff ready if we need it.



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Externally, the Knox CompStock just looks like a synthetic stock with a big slip-on recoil pad. The inset shows the internal working parts.

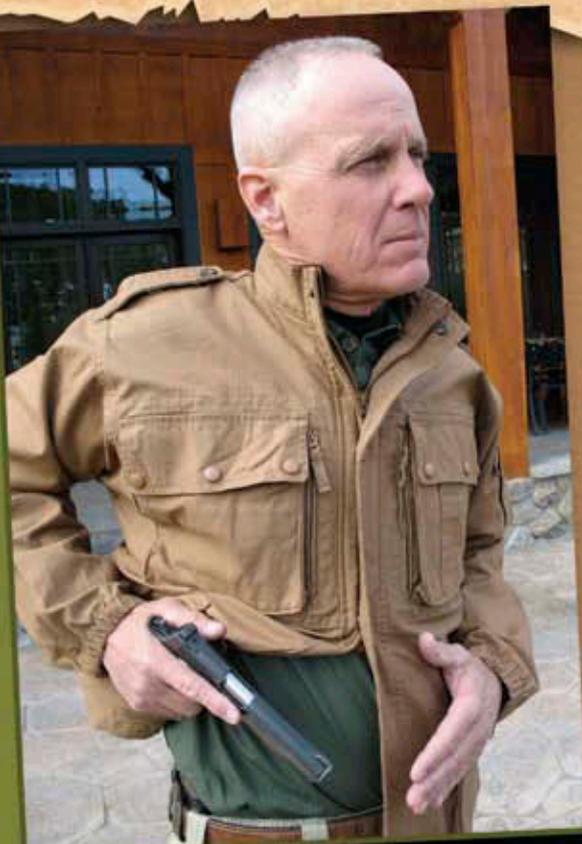
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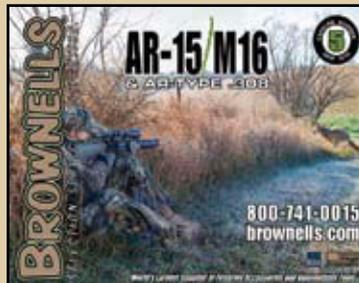
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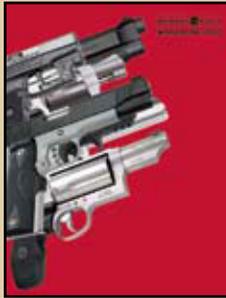


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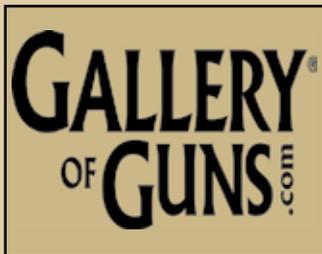
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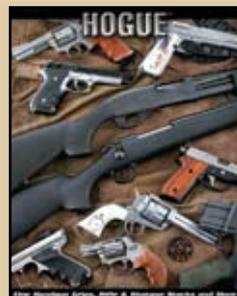


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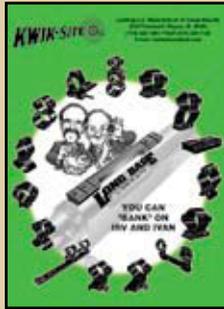
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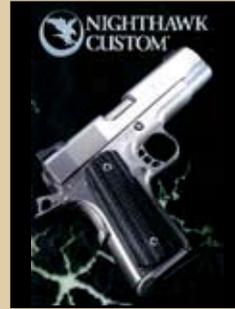


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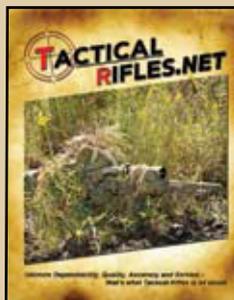


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This contest is open to individuals who are residents of the United States and its territories only. Agents and employees of Publishers Development Corporation and their families are excluded from entering. Contest void where prohibited or restricted by law. Winners must meet all local laws and regulations. Taxes and compliance with firearms regulations will be the responsibility of the winners. Winners will be notified by CERTIFIED MAIL on official letterhead. ATTENTION DEPLOYED MILITARY: USE STATESIDE ADDRESS! No purchase necessary to enter.

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Entries must be received before **MAY 1, 2010**. Limit one entry
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glove box, or attached to the vehicle.
(C) No, I don't have a use for a safe or locked container
but plan on buying one.
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SAMPLE ONLY

ODD ANGRY SHOT

• JOHN CONNOR •

PAUSE AND REMEMBER

The 19th of April, 1775

**By the rude bridge that arched
the flood,
Their flag to April's breeze
unfurled,
Here once the embattled
farmers stood
And fired the shot heard 'round
the world.
(From *Concord Hymn* by Ralph
Waldo Emerson, 1803-1882)**

Emerson wrote *Concord Hymn* in 1836, for the dedication of a monument commemorating the Battle of Lexington and Concord that day. Readers who feel the moving power and sentiment of his words should appreciate the blood connection Emerson felt with that hallowed ground: his grandfather was a Minuteman who fought at both Lexington and Concord that day. The family home, called "The Old Manse," sat beside the bridge Emerson's grandfather stood upon to face the British.

Emerson wrote the Concord Hymn while living in that house, whose walls must have whispered his grandfather's stories of risk and revolution, terror and triumph. Later, Nathaniel Hawthorne lived in the Manse, remarking that he too felt the very roots of American history running through its rafters; the spirits of citizen-soldiers speaking from the stones of the fireplace.

As the title implies, what we know as a poem was written as a solemn song, sung to the tune of an old Genevan Psalter hymn written in 1551. The words were printed on slips of paper and given to those attending the ceremony. It was sung for decades each April 19th at the Obelisk.

In time, that "rude bridge" fell and was swept downstream. As the people and events grew distant and memory faded like the colors of the pine tree "Liberty Flag"

unfurled that momentous morning, the date itself and the deeds done seemed to slip away like mist on the nearby marshes.

*The foe long since in silence slept;
Alike the conqueror silent sleeps;
And Time the ruined bridge has swept
Down the dark stream which seaward
creeps.*

When I arrived in the US, I was disappointed to find there were no significant celebrations on the 19th of April commemorating that *shot heard 'round the world*. It seemed to me a pivotal point in time, certainly for this unborn nation, but also for the world. Maybe that's because my Dad made sure

I saw the events of that day in context.

"The important thing to remember," he often told me, "is that had those first Americans laid down their arms as commanded, the concept of a democratic republic may have been destroyed or at least delayed for what? Hundreds of years? *That,*" he said, "is why that shot was heard 'round the world."

Their known world, he explained, was ruled by the iron fists of kings, czars, emperors and sultans. Of all of them, the English crown, although nearly absolute in its power, was perhaps the least onerous because English people had limited *rights*. But those rights were not extended to the colonists under British rule. A point seemingly lost to

modern history is that for years the "rebels" only requested—then demanded—the same rights as their English cousins across the pond. And with each request and later demands, the King's response was more belligerent and punitive.

Until the French & Indian War, the American colonies existed under what Parliament called "salutary neglect"—essentially non-interference—and non-support. The colonists were widely viewed in Britain as the rubbish of the realm; criminals, religious pariah, escaped indentures and politically radical peasants, and the land, a worthless wilderness where life was dirty, brutish and brief.

*On this green bank, by this soft
stream,
We set to-day a votive stone;
That memory may their deed
redeem,
When, like our sires, our sons
are gone.*

The war changed those views—in a negative way. When the crown reluctantly sent redcoat regiments to help colonial militias fight the French and their native allies, noblemen of the court came with them. They reported to King



"If they mean to have a war, let it begin here."—John Parker, on Lexington Green.

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George III on the rabble's remaking of the wilderness into a land of plenty, one from which great wealth could be taxed and taken.

As soon as the war was won, largely through the courage and sacrifices of the "rabble's" militia, the taxing and taking ramped up with a vengeance. A 10,000-man British army was left in the colonies, ostensibly to "protect" them, but the peasants knew better. It was intimidation, pure and simple; essentially, a goon squad to protect the tax collectors, and the rabble had to pay—handsomely—for the goons. Most of all, *dissent* was viciously suppressed.

The colonists had fought the crown's wars—and were despised by their nobles. Their government seemed cold to their needs but hot for their taxes, which were spent on more "favored" subjects. The crown seemed interested only in their own sophisticated pursuits and expanding ever-greater power.

The crown had once told the colonists to raise and arm their own militia and provide for their own defense. Now those militiamen were to be stripped of their arms and their leaders arrested.

*Spirit, that made those heroes dare,
To die, and leave their children free,
Bid Time and Nature gently spare
The shaft we raise to them and thee.*

Seven hundred British troops marched on Concord to seize, destroy and arrest, but first they had to pass Lexington Green. There in the pre-dawn gray stood 77 Minutemen, captained by farmer and mechanic John Parker. Many were veterans of the recent war. Many could see their own homes or the smoke curling from their chimneys. They were tinsmiths, potters, merchants and wheelwrights. They were *subjects*, about to become *citizens*.

British Major John Pitcairn cried out to them, "Disperse, you rebels! Damn you, throw down your arms and disperse!"

Captain Parker told his men, "Stand your ground. Don't fire unless fired upon, but if they mean to have a war, let it begin here."

Historians tell us only about 3 percent of colonials actively fought as patriots in the Revolution, supported by about 1/3 of the population. One-third sat it out, remaining neutral. Another 1/3 were British loyalists, and in fact, toward the end of the war, more loyalists were fighting for King George than revolutionaries were fighting for their new nation. Against all odds, the 3-percenters prevailed.

Sometimes great deeds are done by the few, the committed. This 19th of April, let us remember those few, those brave, those 3-percenters. Connor *OUT*.



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GUNS

MAGAZINE

APRIL 2010

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After graduation I sent out applications all over the West and the first call came from Elmer Keith country, so I knew it was meant to be. A U-Haul was hooked to the bumper of our '65 Ford Station Wagon, a mattress was placed behind the front seat for the kids to lay and play on, I took a 40-percent pay cut and we made the 2,000+ mile trip to Idaho. When we got here we had literally found heaven on earth! Only one rifle made the trip and that was the original .22 Marlin; all the rest had been traded or sold over the years.

Things have certainly changed since then, but in 1966 there were gun shops literally everywhere and there were also gun departments in all the department stores, drug stores, and even the grocery stores. There was only one traffic light in town on Main Street; today we have thousands of them.

The population of our once small town has exploded and we have at least 100 times the stores we had then but we have only four gun shops left plus Cabela's and Sportsman's Warehouse. I would imagine the same thing is mostly true in the rest of the country.

The Marlin

In 1966 it was also time to order another levergun and Winchester had just announced the .44 Magnum chambered in their Model 1894. When I went to pick it up I was not at all impressed, fortunately the shop also had a Marlin Model 336 in .44 Magnum and I took it instead. The first hunting trip with that rifle was wet and cold and the finish on the stock of that Marlin took a real beating. I spent two weeks rubbing in Tru-Oil and buffing it with 0000 steel wool as each coat dried. The same operation was performed on the Marlin 39 and 40-years later they are still in excellent shape.

I've spent a lot of time over the last 40 years shooting Marlin leverguns of every type and caliber. The old Marlins which had gotten away were replaced by three other antique Marlins chambered in .25-20, .38-40, and .44-40. The .32-20 is also back, however, it is one of the newer Model 1894CLs. I have especially enjoyed the really big bore Marlins. With the arrival of the .45-70 Model 1895 and the .444 Marlin Model 444, I saved up for a long time before I could purchase both of these. As far as I was concerned both of them were built wrong. They were too big and bulky so the barrels were shortened and the excess

wood removed from the forearm. This turned them into very easy handling, powerful up close big critter leverguns.

In the 1950s in one of the early issues of this magazine Kent Bellah had a dream-inspiring piece entitled "The Two-Gun Man Comes Back." A fellow down in Arizona by the name of Ward Koozer was doing a good business converting Model '92 Winchester .44-40s to .44 Magnum and .32-20s to .357 Magnum. Bellah had



Taffin's first two firearms were Marlin's 39A .22 and Ruger's .22 Single-Six. They both still make a wonderful pair.

a Koozer .357 Magnum matched up with a 3-1/2" Smith & Wesson .357. I wonder how many times I read that article and studied the pictures?

I didn't have a Smith & Wesson .357 at the time, however, I did have a Ruger .357 Blackhawk Flattop which would make an excellent mate to a similarly chambered levergun. There was no way I could afford a custom conversion at the time, but several years later Marlin came through with the Model 1894C, an 18-1/2" .357 Magnum. If there has ever been a handier rifle than this one I certainly don't know what it is. If I could have only one centerfire rifle it would be my Marlin .357 Magnum. It is simply a magnificent little carbine.

Marlin was using Micro-Groove barrels at the time and experts were saying you couldn't shoot cast bullets through them. Yes, you can! The key is two fold; a hard-cast, gas-checked bullet is needed. For the two Magnums, I find Ray Thompson's 431244GC and 358156GC work just fine. There are many other excellent leverguns. Marlin brought back the .38-55 in the 1990s, Winchester's excellent Big Bore can be found in .375 Winchester, and their 16-1/2" Trapper Model was offered in .357 Magnum, .44 Magnum, .45 Colt, and of course .30-30. Traditional leverguns will certainly not range alongside a modern bolt-action rifle, but for most hunting at reasonable ranges they will still deliver, and there is nothing better for up close encounters. The heavy-loaded .45-70 has proven itself many times over in Africa and Alaska. I still like 'em!

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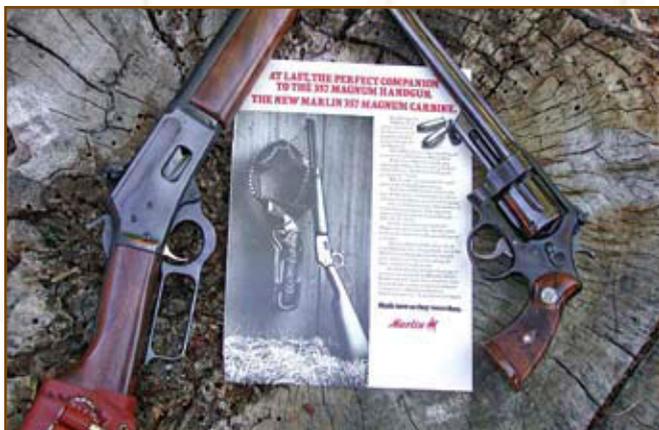
BY JOHN TAFFIN

A HALF CENTURY WITH: Leverguns

June 1956. Workers riot in Budapest, Hungary, Nasser is elected president of Egypt, and Mickey Mantle is on the cover of *Sports Illustrated*. Elvis gets a parking ticket while getting a haircut in Memphis, the new *Steve Allen Show* challenges *Ed Sullivan* for primetime ratings on Sunday evening, *D-Day*, *The Sixth of June* is released to the movie theaters, and I get some bad news. I had just graduated from high school in May and was taking a battery of tests to get a job in one of the manufacturing plants. They said I passed with flying colors, but I was too young to hire having just turned 17 in May. That turned out to be one of the best things that ever happened to me.

Instead of a good paying job I went to work for minimum wage for the Hardware & Supply Company. This 4-story building occupied a city block which provided virtually everything for contractors. I started out as an order boy like the rest of the young kids, however the headman must've recognized some leadership qualities

in me and within three months I was in charge of unloading all freight off trucks and railroad cars with 12 men working under me, the youngest being 34. Being just a kid I had to prove myself to those men so I worked right alongside of them instead of standing there with a clipboard and that hard work really built me up. I could put a 200-pound keg of nails on



Marlin's early advertising of the .357 Magnum caught Taffin's attention immediately and John considers the Marlin Model 1894C .357 Magnum to be the handiest centerfire rifle available. It pairs up nicely with a long-barreled S&W. (The cartridge butt cuff is by The Leather Arsenal (208) 585-6212, www.leatherarsenal.com)

ended I had purchased my very own first firearm. The gun I picked is still one of the best first choices for anyone—a .22, a Marlin Model 39 levergun which in those days was the Mountie version.

Boy was I proud of that rifle; my parents weren't! My stepdad had gone through some terrible fighting in Europe during WWII and did not want any guns around; they both hit the roof. By the second gun, my .22 Ruger Single-Six, they didn't fuss quite so much; and with the third gun, a 4-3/4" Colt SAA .38-40 it was "Hey Johnny show Uncle Chuck your new gun." I call that quite a turnaround. Twenty years later Diamond Dot and I had three teenagers and when my parents went camping with us my mom wanted to make sure I had a gun with me just in case. Even anti-gunners can be won over; well, at least some of them.

Little did I know of all that would occur over the next 10 years. I added other Marlin's, a .25-20, a .32-20, and a .38-40 as well as bolt actions, a Springfield '03A3 and two custom rifles: a .222 Remington and an 8mm Mauser with a full Mannlicher stock. When I got married I knew I needed a better paying job and although it paid three times as much, the tire factory was nowhere near the fun I had unloading freight; but there was a reason for going there which I found the following year.

I felt called to be a teacher which meant going to college. The only way I could do that was also work to support my family. The tire factory turned out to be a Godsend as I could work the night shift and go to school full time during the day. The university was 30 miles away and there were mornings I was so tired I do not remember driving to school and many a night I went to work so exhausted tears were running down my cheeks. My wife was a tremendous support and we made it together. There's a reason we do all these things when we're young!

my shoulder, walk up three flights of stairs, and back down again; I could also pick up 500 pounds. (Boy that was a long time ago!) Yes, I was now a man, but I was still a dumb teenager.

Even better than all of this was the fact I got in with a couple of other order boys who were real shooters and knew where all the gun shops were and when the gun shows were held. Before June

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