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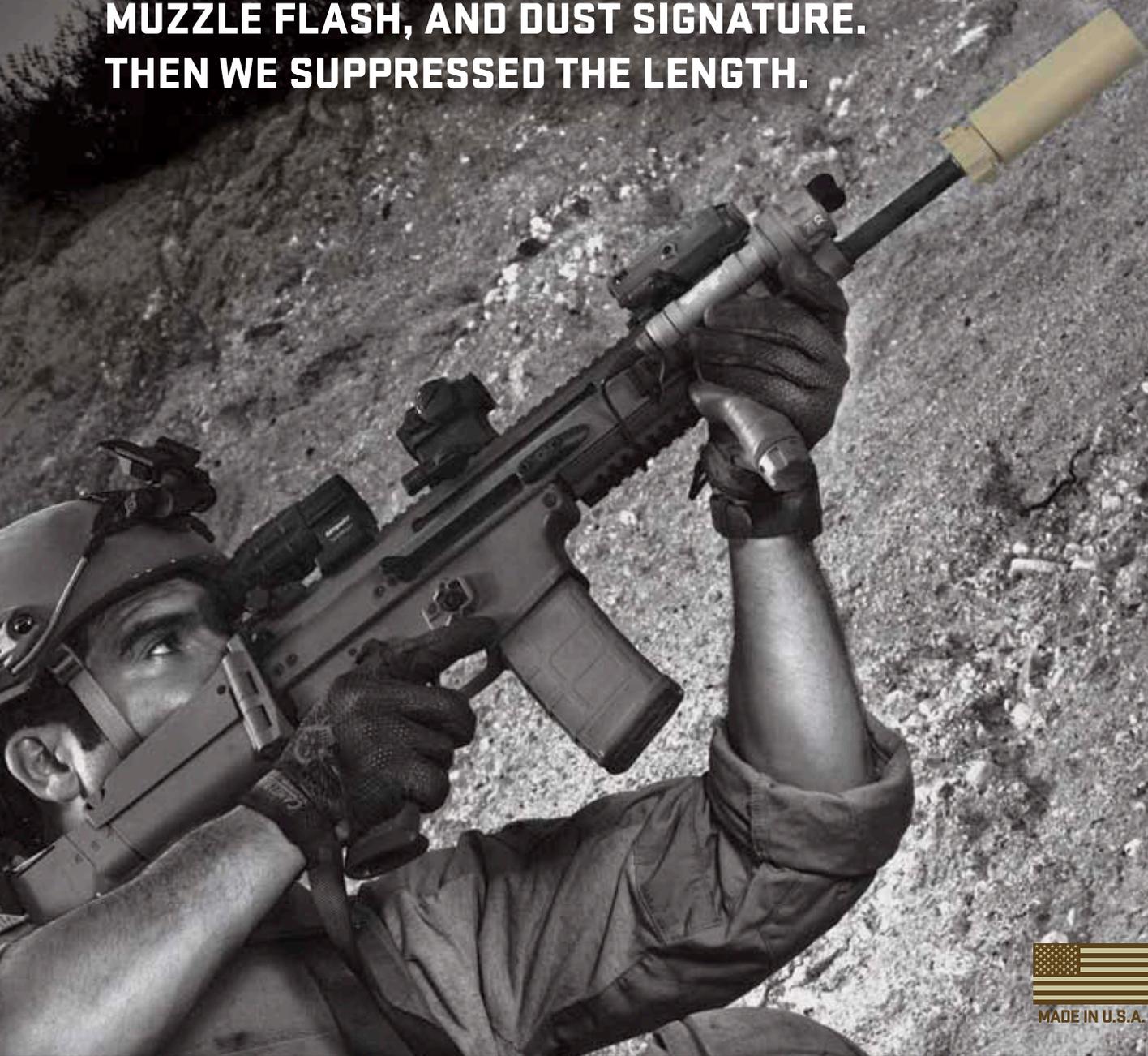
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MAGAZINE

NOVEMBER 2010

Vol. 56, Number 11, 660th Issue



## ON THE COVER

LES BAER

### TACTICAL RIFLE

A superbly accurate precision .308 Win.

### STORY:

Dave Anderson

### PHOTOS:

Joseph R. Novelozo

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GUNS MAGAZINE  
SEPTEMBER 2010

# CROSSFIRE

## LETTERS TO GUNS

**GUNS Magazine**® welcomes letters to the editor. We reserve the right to edit all published letters for clarity and length. Due to the volume of mail, we are unable to individually answer your letters or e-mail. In sending a letter to *GUNS Magazine*, you agree to provide Publisher's Development Corp. such copyright as is required for publishing and redistributing the contents of your letter in any format. Send your letters to *Crossfire*, *GUNS Magazine*, 12345 World Trade Dr., San Diego, CA 92128; [www.gunsmagazine.com](http://www.gunsmagazine.com); e-mail: [ed@gunsmagazine.com](mailto:ed@gunsmagazine.com)

### New Reader

*American Handgunner* and *GUNS* are my two favorite gun magazines. Although I haven't subscribed to any magazine in years I recently sent my subscription in for both of yours. When I choose one to buy from the magazine rack, I always buy the ones that have Mike in them. His articles are always well researched, good reading and interesting. I learn from them. He breaks new ground with articles on homemade shot loads, comparing WWII rifles, actually owning and shooting submachine guns. Any magazine Mike writes for I figure is a quality one.

Robert Jennings  
via e-mail

### Spyderco

I would appreciate the opportunity to say thank you to Spyderco knives for their support to members of the US Armed Forces. Not only do they produce high-quality tools we can use in the discharge of our duties, but they have a monthly drawing for a special edition Native knife for deployed service members. Their devotion and kindness does not go unnoticed. Kudos to their leadership.

Lastly, there are four things I have in my possession at all times here in Iraq: my sunglasses, my M9 Beretta, an MOD automatic knife accessible to my right hand and a Spyderco Delica accessible to my left hand.

We pass around copies of *American Handgunner* and *GUNS* magazine until they're ragged. Keep up the great work. Soper out!

Dana D. Soper, Capt, USAF  
OIC, Viper AMU  
Joint Base Balad, Iraq

### Watta-Boo

I have long been a fan of John Connor. A man who has obviously seen the elephant, it's no wonder he has so many stories to tell but the October column (GARCON! There is

Something in My Coffee) is a classic. What is needed now is a book of John's articles. It should sell like \$15 primers at a gunshow. Great job Connah-mon Watta-Boo.

Sam Juckett  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

### Traveling With Handguns

Nice article by Massad Ayoob, however, he may need to clarify his text and the accompanying photo showing the TSA "mini locks" is just plain wrong. Massad states "TSA approved locks are pathetic, but it's the rules..."

The rules actually prohibit the use of TSA "pass key type" locks on the case containing the firearm. The locks are to be operable/opened only by the passenger checking said baggage. The luggage containing the locked, gun case/box can be any type, hard side or fabric and the traveler should use the deservedly maligned TSA approved locks on this "outer" luggage.

My wife and I use a Pelican 1200 case for our pistols, one in her luggage, one in mine, and so far have had no issues with either the airlines or TSA. We have our names and cell phone numbers affixed to the Pelican cases, to allow the authorities to contact us in case of any "issues."

As an aside, Ayoob notes both New York and Chicago airports are potential problem spots for passengers traveling with handguns. Not surprising since both cities are home to the most anti-gun, anti-self defense mayors in the US. My suggestion (and personal practice) is not to visit either city. Vote with your feet and your dollars!

John Clark  
Sebring, Florida

*I suspect I phrased it badly in the article. What I was trying to say was that you need locks on the "inside case," as required by TSA. Agreed that you don't want them to be locks anyone but you can open.—Mas*



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• CLINT SMITH •

## THE KREBS AK

### A better Kalashnikov.



*The SpeedLoad chute and enhanced selector lever are hallmarks of the Krebs AK and truly solve what is otherwise an AK weakpoint.*



*The Vltor retractable stock was solid gear as we've come to expect of the firm's products.*



*A short forward grip (left) was helpful while firing the Model 74 rifle. Krebs aperture rear sight (right) is a vast improvement over the usual "issue" sight. Note the dual control charging handles visible as well as forward grip and light holding platform.*

**H**aving a bit of intimate history with Mikhail Kalashnikov's AK-47 rifle (like besides more than just owning several versions in the last 40 years), I have watched the AK evolve in the American firearms' industry; especially in the last decade during the so-named War On Terror.

Businesses have grown to include schools of instruction, manipulation, disassembly, and maintenance, as well as general and specialized construction of the rifle system. Some builders, using the term loosely, have turned a good idea into a worse rig and some have truly stepped up and forward with the AK platform.

#### Chinese AKs

I have owed several Chinese AKs over the years and tried both caliber versions of the Norinco rifles in 7.62x39 and 5.56 models. The original caliber guns worked well, but I never had a 5.56/.223 that lasted or worked very long. Problems with the guns cratering were mostly due to trigger and/or interior mechanical problems. Finding the magazines was also difficult and expensive.

The Euro AKs come with the same set of problems the American AR platform has nowadays: With all the aftermarket stuff, much of it made

poorly and cheap or both, the AK, like the AR, is often seen struggling to work. The AK, although it works, has many magazine issues because of the varying makers and each makers' "twist" on the way to build the magazine. Added to this, some recent "plastic" magazines not only did not work, but also wouldn't even fit in the AK mag well. All in all, it seems to work best if you match the rifle to the magazine and minimize the trading of parts.

#### Russian

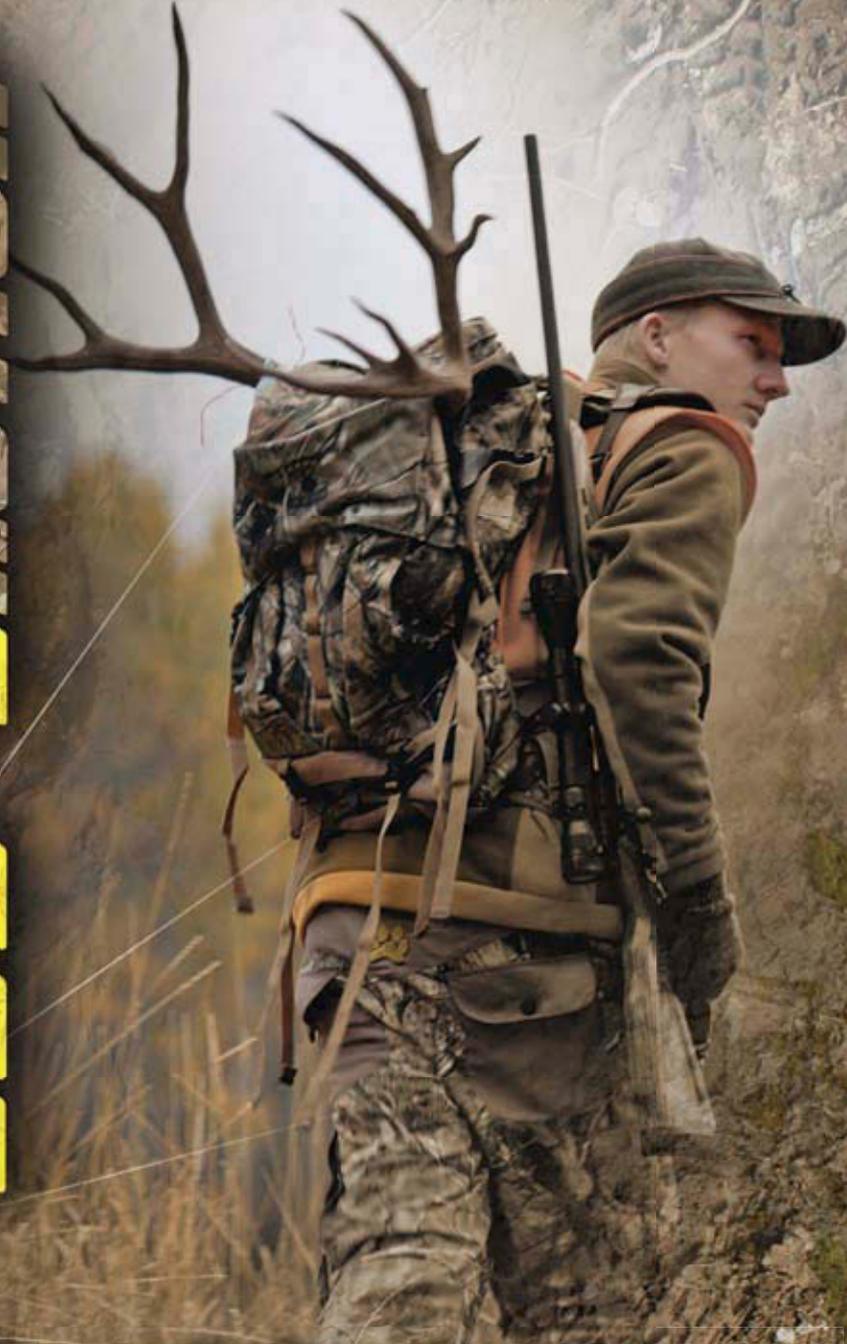
If through no other salient point than proximity to Mother Russia, these should be good guns. But, they can suffer under the same "parts is parts" problem. It appears as though these are otherwise the best of the breed. This is a gross, and probably not perfect, generalization of the rifle, along with the primary overview of where it is made on the planet.

Now we can get to the meat of the AK. We move directly—and "do



*The 7.62x39mm Krebs AK-47 (bottom), is king of the AKs. The AK-74 (middle) is chambered in 5.45x39mm and (top) a standard rifle. Krebs, in Clint's opinion, is the king of the AK platform.*

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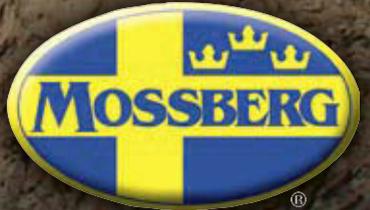
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### RANGING SHOTS



*A true odd duck, this AK was North Korean made and stamped. Clint has been shooting AK-47 rifles for many years—even when it wasn't cool.*

not pass go”—to Marc Krebs and his merry band located in beautiful downtown Wauconda, Ill. The Krebs AK rifles are sweet, tight, rad, hammers... You pick the current vogue word, but the rifles are set up in a form and format where I personally would get “off the boat” anywhere on the planet and not be unarmed or under armed to fight. These rifles will shine in any environment from desert to urban applications. Krebs rifles are what the AK should be, and what the AK should be is done and done correctly by the Krebs folks. The SpeedLoad, the extended and functional enhanced selector lever, the solid rail system both for scope and accessories, all these things make this rifle a solid winner.

I had an enhanced Model 89 in 7.62x39 and the similar version only in a Model 74 in 5.45x39. Both guns worked flawlessly with *no* problems of any kind while shooting. The Model 89 had all the self-described “bells and whistles,” yet each extra served a functional purpose. A shortcoming of the standard AK can be the hook up on magazine contacting the well

during the load/reload and the Krebs SpeedLoad absolutely eliminated the load issue. The enlarged magazine release works as intended and required for a fighting rifle. My tester had the rail forearm and rail mounted over the dust cover that carried good adjustable sights (another standard AK rifle shortfall). The Vltor retractable stock worked well and was solid. I liked the side folder from the Model 74 simply because it made a smaller transport package.

At the range, the 7.62x39 shot groups within an inch from the bench and the 5.45x39 did the same. There was some spread while using the Russian Wolf ammo, and I think the Wolf might contribute to the group sizing somewhat. I shot to 400 with no issues and after that it was mostly consideration for range and drop. With some hold over, and a spotter, I put hits on target to 600 with ease. The 5.45 left magnificent vapor trails, and we walked the rounds onto the 12" wide by 24" tall target with no effort.

### Why the Krebs AK?

From muzzlebrakes to sight tools, Krebs has a full line of products to support their favorite AK rifle. The rifle in Krebs' format is without peer. If I wasn't vested in the M4 format, or if I was starting out brand new to the rifle gig, I would just get all Krebs rifles. The way it is today, I am going to settle for just getting all of the Krebs AKs I can afford to support my rifle applications for personal-defense. After being shot by one, and shooting the rifle for 40 years, I now come to the conclusion that Marc Krebs Custom is truly the gold standard and King of the AK platform.

**GUNS**

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<b>ACTION TYPE:</b>	Semi-Automatic Gas Operation
<b>CALIBER:</b>	7.62x39
<b>CAPACITY:</b>	30
<b>BARREL LENGTH:</b>	16.25"
<b>OVERALL LENGTH:</b>	36"
<b>WEIGHT:</b>	8 pounds
<b>FINISH:</b>	Black Solvent proof
<b>SIGHTS:</b>	Adjustable AR
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	Models: First Edition, Black, Nickel Two Tone



# MONTANA MUSINGS

• MIKE "DUKE" VENTURINO • PHOTOS: YVONNE VENTURINO

## PURPOSE-DRIVEN GUNS

They're kept cleaned, loaded—and handy.



*Yvonne's main purpose-driven handgun is this Glock 23 .40 S&W. She has used it to kill a rabid skunk.*



*Duke's purpose-driven long gun is this facsimile M1A1 .30 Carbine. He often has it with him on his home property. He also carries a Colt SAA .44 loaded with shot loads in his hip pocket during warm months while going about his business.*



*Duke has kept this Remington Model 700 .222 Remington Magnum by his home's door for a quarter century. Its sole purpose is to keep coyotes from making meals of his and Yvonne's dogs and cats.*

**L**ike many readers, most of the guns I own are here simply because I *want* them here. They have no specific purpose other than recreation. Such are my black-powder cartridge rifles used for target shooting, or mine and Yvonne's single actions and leverguns used for cowboy competitions.

That said, among all the guns in my vault are a few truly purpose driven. They are here for specific reasons, and seldom, if ever, used for recreational purposes. Here's what I mean.

For 30 years I've owned a Remington Model 700 .222 Remington Magnum. It was originally bought for recreation in the form of varmint shooting and so was fitted with a Weaver 10X scope. However, brass for that cartridge isn't all that common anymore. In fact, I only have 275 cases. Also, we have lost much of our ground squirrel shooting areas around here due to home building, so the old Rem Mag hasn't been used for recreation in many years.

### Dangerous Pests

Instead, it's been kept out of sight but readily accessible with the magazine loaded, chamber empty. You see, Yvonne and I are animal lovers and keep a variety of dogs and cats (all spayed or neutered) here on our rural Montana property. We take an extremely dim view of coyotes eyeing them as food. It hasn't happened

often, but I have shot a few coyotes right from the front door when they were skulking around.

Another gun that doesn't get fired much, but is kept handy during warm months, is a Colt SAA "Sheriff's Model." That specific version has a 3" barrel and no provision for ejector rod housing. Mine is the dual cylinder .44-40/.44 Special version and it hasn't been fired with bullets for years. Be sure, though, it has been fired. I use it with shot loads to kill rattlesnakes. As with coyotes, Yvonne and I don't go rattlesnake hunting. But, upon encountering one around our house or outbuildings we shoot it. Again the purpose is to protect our animals not to mention ourselves.

Another handgun that has been fired for protection is Yvonne's Glock 23 .40 S&W. One morning a few years back, she was down by our horse corrals just after daylight. A skunk came out of the brush, snapping its teeth and coming right at her. She reached back in the pickup for her ever-present Glock and killed it. Because of its odd behavior I called the county animal control people. They came and collected it for testing. It was positively rabid.

### Fired In Anger?

Our personal self-defense guns have never been fired in anger. Hopefully they never will, but we still have them. Above I mentioned Yvonne's favorite. We also have a pair of Smith & Wesson J-frames with 1-7/8" "snubnose" barrels. I prefer the Model 442: a .38 Special with aluminum alloy frame and internal hammer. That handgun has traveled literally hundreds of thousands of miles with me. On her side of our bed, Yvonne keeps a titanium-frame Model 360.

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Some bright light at Smith & Wesson decided the 360 ought to be a .357 Magnum. Weighing but 12 ounces, recoil is horrendous with full-power .357 loads. It still kicks heftily with .38 Specials, but at least is bearable.

### Home-Defense

Conversely from my S&W Model 442, my Kimber Pro Compact 1911 .40 S&W seldom has been out of the house. It's my home-defense handgun. Perhaps once or twice a year I take it outside and it's fired, cleaned, its magazines checked and then put back in its hiding place.

Both Yvonne and I have attended several of Thunder Ranch's classes and heard when Clint Smith said the purpose for having a handgun is to be able to fight your way to a rifle. I told my wife she could have any home-defense rifle she wanted. Name it, and I would find it. After going through Clint's Urban Rifle course, Yvonne said she wanted a Colt CAR15 .223 Remington. She has it.

I also often have a long gun with me while out on our property, although I freely admit it is commonly used for fun shooting, too. That's a WWII-vintage M1 Carbine barreled action a previous owner fitted into a reproduction "paratrooper" folding



*Duke's only purpose-driven Colt SAA is this Sheriff's Model .44-40/.44 Special he uses on rattlesnakes in warm weather.*

stock. Hence it becomes a M1A1. Lots of shooters consider the .30 Carbine cartridge underpowered. With full metal jacket (FMJ) bullets it gained such a reputation. With jacketed softpoint bullets at about 1,900 fps it's a wicked little cartridge that will handle any chore I need it for.

Luckily, we Americans don't have

to actually have to have a "purpose" to own our firearms, and my life and livelihood have been built around them. For recreational purposes, I have scores of guns from .22 rimfires to a .577 caliber percussion rifle/musket. I never tire of shooting them. But, there are a few rifles and handguns kept here that are purpose driven.

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# HANDLOADING

• JOHN BARSNESS •

## HOW WELL DOES YOUR RIFLE SHOOT?

Good groups depend on many factors.

**A** couple of years ago a young man called me, explaining he had a problem with his custom-barreled .300 Winchester Magnum and needed some handloading help. "I'm only getting 4" groups at 500 yards," he said. It turned out he'd put close to 1,000 rounds through the barrel, searching for even better accuracy.

A few questions brought forth the particulars. He was shooting 5-shot groups, not the 3-shot groups more commonly seen from big-game rifles these days. The barrel was a medium-weight Lilja. In my experience, Dan Lilja makes excellent barrels. The young man also listed the bullets and powders he'd tried.

The longer we spoke, the more I wished we were talking in person, so I could grab his shoulders and shake his head vigorously. The .300 was his elk rifle, and the last time I looked even small elk typically have lungs a lot bigger than 4" across. Plus, he'd probably already shot the best accuracy out of his barrel, searching for a load that put them all in to the same hole at more than a quarter of a mile. Modern rifles and bullets are very accurate, and in my experience sub-MOA 5-shot groups are really good at any range from any rifle portable enough to actually hunt elk, instead of snipe them.

### No Magic?

What the guy wanted was a Magic Load that would suddenly turn his already accurate elk rifle into a 1-hole wonder. I didn't know of such a

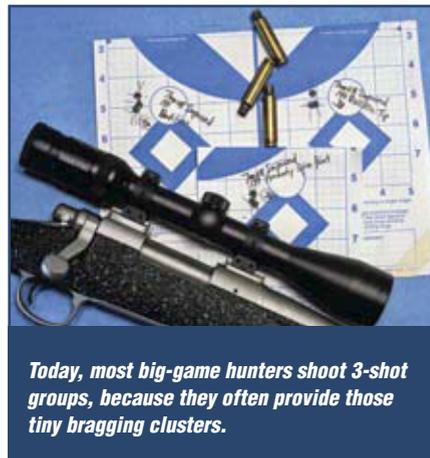
load, so finally I suggested shooting 3-shot groups, because his barrel was probably heating up while shooting five shots, and the heat waves were no doubt interfering with his aim. He may have even believed me, because I never heard from him again.

### Magic of "3"

In reality, I suggested 3-shot groups because three shots stand a much better chance of landing in a psychologically small cluster than five shots. This is the reason so many of today's hunters shoot 3-shot groups at 100 yards: Once in a while they'll shoot a 1-hole group they can cut from the target and show their shooting buddies.

This doesn't mean their factory .280 is a genuine "1/2-MOA" rifle, any more than the high percentage of blonde women in America means a sudden influx of Swedish immigrants. But like blondes, tiny groups make a lot of guys feel better.

I've kept track of 3-shot and 5-shot groups from the same rifles in the last 25 years, and it turns out average group size very much follows the rules of chance. Five divided by three is 1.667, and if 3-shot groups from a rifle average 1", 5-shot groups from



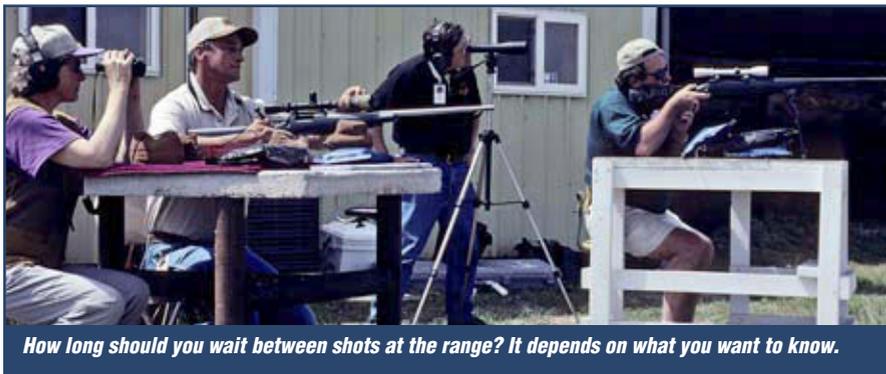
*Today, most big-game hunters shoot 3-shot groups, because they often provide those tiny bragging clusters.*

the same rifle will average around 1.7". (A professional statistician could probably come up with an even more precise ratio, but I had just enough contact with statistics in college to put more faith in range results.) If the young man with the unsatisfactory .300 Winchester Magnum switched to 3-shot groups, odds are his rifle would suddenly become one of those half-MOA wonders, and he wouldn't bug anybody about Magic Loads.

The truth is that neither 3-shot nor 5-shot groups really tell us much about the consistent accuracy of a rifle. Back in ancient times, when a writer named Col. Townsend Whelen frequently contributed to shooting magazines, 10-shot groups were often fired, especially from varmint rifles. The Colonel's goal was a genuine 1", 10-shot group at 100 yards. Even today this indicates a very accurate varmint rifle, especially a factory rifle firing factory ammunition. When I test a new varmint rifle, once the rifle is sighted in I often fire a 10-shot group. If it's around an inch, then the rifle shows the potential to be very accurate.

### Longer Ranges

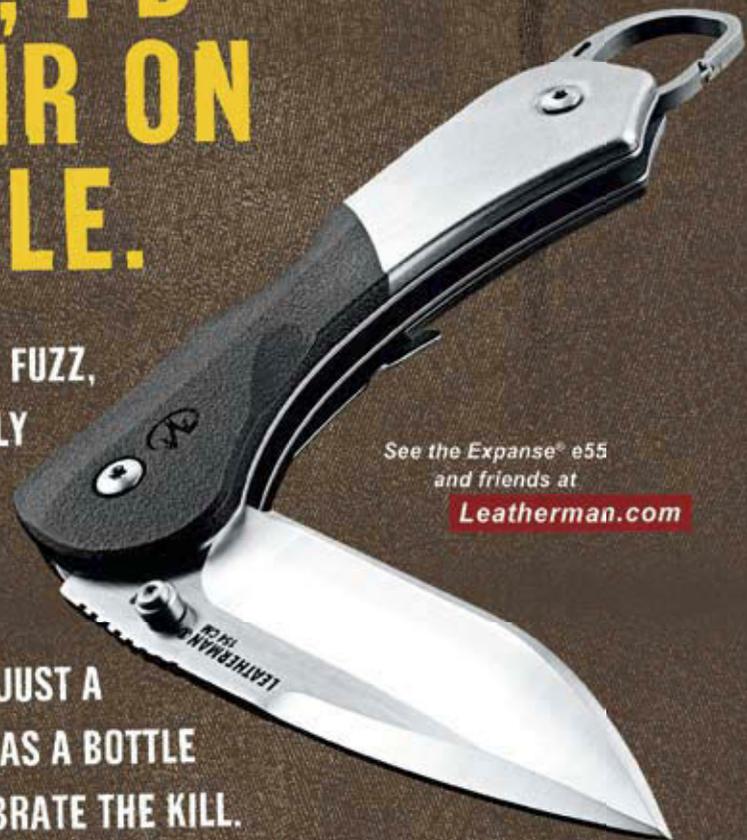
If the rifle is often going to be used at ranges longer than 100 yards (and most are these days), then once an accurate load is found at 100 yards,



*How long should you wait between shots at the range? It depends on what you want to know.*

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MANLIER, I'D  
HAVE HAIR ON  
MY HANDLE.**

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## FACTORY AMMO GROUP SIZE CHANGE AT CLOSE &amp; LONG RANGE

## GUN &amp; CALIBER: REMINGTON 700 .270 WINCHESTER

LOAD (BULLET WEIGHT)	GROUP SIZE (INCHES)
Brand X 130-grain	.78 (3 shots, 100 yards)
Brand X 130-grain	7.24 (5 shots, 400 yards)
INTERARMS MARK X 7MM REMINGTON MAGNUM	
Brand X 150-grain	.87 (3 shots, 100 yards)
Brand X 150-grain	12.88 (5 shots, 400 yards)
GUN & CALIBER: RUGER 77 .30-06 SPRINGFIELD	
Brand X 165-grain	.92 (3 shots, 100 yards)
Brand X 165-grain	4.38 (5 shots, 400 yards)

## GROUP SIZE CHANGE AT CLOSE &amp; LONG RANGE WITH HANDLOADED AMMO

## GUN &amp; CALIBER: E. R. SHAW MARK VII 6.5-06

BULLET (BRAND, BULLET WEIGHT, TYPE)	POWDER (BRAND)	CHARGE (GRAINS WEIGHT)	GROUP SIZE (INCHES)
BERGER 140 HUNTING VLD	H1000	56.0	.68 (5 shots, 100 yards, average of 3 groups)
BERGER 140 HUNTING VLD	H1000	56.0	5.24 (5 shots, 600 yards)

## GROUP SIZE CHANGES AS MORE SHOTS FIRED WITH HANDLOADED AMMO

## GUN &amp; CALIBER: REMINGTON 788 .223 REMINGTON

BULLET (BRAND, BULLET WEIGHT, TYPE)	POWDER (BRAND)	CHARGE (GRAINS WEIGHT)	GROUP SIZE (INCHES)
NOSLER 50 BALLISTIC TIP	TAC	26.0	.36 (3 shots)
NOSLER 50 BALLISTIC TIP	TAC	26.0	.62 (5 shots)
NOSLER 50 BALLISTIC TIP	TAC	26.0	.97 (10 shots)

Notes: All groups in last chart fired at 100 yards.

the rifle should be shot at longer ranges. Sometimes we'll encounter rude surprises, when our sub-MOA rifle suddenly starts scattering shots over two MOA.

In the mid-1990s I was assigned to test a new kind of factory ammo, supposedly more accurate than "normal" factory ammo (whatever that is). I bought a few boxes of this ammo in .270 Winchester, 7mm Remington Magnum and .30-06, because I owned very accurate bolt-action rifles in each of those chamberings. When the three rifles were sighted-in at 100 yards, all produced 3-shot groups less than an inch. Pretty nice!

Then I shot the same rifles and ammo at 400 yards, and only one of the rifles grouped around 4". Another produced groups in the 8" range, and the third rifle scattered its shots over a foot. (Yes, the parallax of all the scopes was tested at 400 yards before shooting.) So accuracy at 100 yards doesn't always mean accuracy at longer ranges.

When firing 10-shot groups, we're increasing the "sample size," a statistical term. The larger the sample size the more valid the result, whether we shoot two, 10-shot groups or four, 5-shot groups. Seven, 3-shot groups would even provide about the same level of statistical certainty as two, 10-shot groups—though the average group size would be smaller, the reason so many shooters like to shoot

3-shot groups. They make bragging easier, especially when we pick out the smallest group.

A custom rifle maker I know tests big-game rifles by shooting an entire 20-round box of factory ammunition at a 100-yard target. If the entire box groups into 2" or so, he figures the rifle is good to go. His customers will be able to develop a handload that groups three shots into less than an inch, especially if they only shoot two or three groups.

The other day I joined an Internet conversation between several hunters, the original question: "How long do you wait between shots at the range?" The vast majority of respondents said they waited anywhere at least two minutes between shots, in order to let the barrels of their elk and deer rifles "settle down."

Now, in a way this makes sense, because the first shot from a cold bore is the one that normally does the job. Personally, however, I want to know if a big-game rifle starts shooting differently as the barrel warms up, because no matter how good a shot anybody is off a benchrest, "repeat as necessary" sometimes crops up in the field. Normally I test my big-game rifles by shooting three or more shots as quickly as possible, and suspect the real reason these guys shot only from cold barrels was to get bragging groups—or at least one bragging group.



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# HANDGUNS

• MASSAD AYOUB •

## A HANDGUN FOR A SOLDIER

This particular 1911 represented more than a rite of passage for one young soldier.

**H**andguns have always been woven into the fabric of American military history. George Washington's flintlock pistols; the cap-and-ball revolvers that made cavalry so effective during the War Between the States; and the pistol or revolver Gen. Pershing wanted in WWI on the hip of every doughboy in the trenches. Personal handguns were also prized in WWII, most famously the ivory-handled Colt Single Action Army .45 and Smith & Wesson .357 Magnum of Gen. George Patton. In Korea, and later in Vietnam, the most cherished possession of many soldiers was a sidearm often sent from home: then-new stainless steel S&W .38s were as much appreciated in the humid delta as among stateside cops.

Today, our armed forces are deeply embroiled in a 2-theater war, and judging by photos from the fronts, Beretta M9 pistols are being very widely issued to supplement the M4 carbine. Constant house-clearing in one theater and cave-searching in the other has led to them being used more heavily than in most other 20th Century conflicts, according to

anecdotal reports.

This is the story of one newly-minted Army officer, and the handgun given to him by the woman who loves him.

### One Special Pistol

Justin Schortmann, 22, graduated from Florida State University, and commissioned a Second Lieutenant in

the US Army through ROTC at FSU, was slated to enter Army Aviation training and thence, no doubt, overseas. At about that time, he married the lovely Anna Gunter, also 22. Some young fiancées might have had to think about a wedding gift for their husband. For Anna, there was no doubt.

The youngest in a "shooting family," she had literally grown up with a gun in her hand, and Justin had been absorbed into the responsible gun world through her. He had already acquired his own handguns and become skilled with them—he was licensed to carry a 9mm Glock, and had bought a Beretta 92FS to practice for the day he would inevitably be issued an identical M9. Anna asked Justin what pistol he would most like to acquire.

His answer came without hesitation: "A 1911 .45 ACP!"

It should not have been a surprise. Though the 9mm Beretta had replaced the 1911 before he was born as General Issue, the iconic .45 was a gun Justin had always associated with the military he had wanted to become a part of since childhood. From its eponymous year, to the year he could expect to be fighting on foreign soil, it had been an icon of the Army for a century. Even after the adoption of the Beretta, the 1911 had remained a standby to this day for two entities within the United States Army: Delta Force, and the pistol teams.

### Not Permitted?

Justin didn't expect his MOS to change to either of those. And he knew the Army no longer permitted personal weapons to be carried in combat zones. He wanted that gun simply as a symbol of the honorable profession he had chosen. For Anna, that was reason enough.

Among Anna's "extended (shooting) family" could be found virtually every brand and configuration of 1911 .45, from economy models to



The Kimber Custom Shop .45 presented to Justin Schortmann by his wife Anna. Details include rosewood Micarta stocks, flared mag well, beavertail grip safety, ambi safety and fixed night sights. On this personalized Kimber Gold Combat Stainless II (inset), the "II" designation indicates internal firing pin safety, rendering the Kimber drop-safe in the most hostile environments. One-off name engraving is one of the few things not available through Custom Shop.



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*Justin Schortmann (above) tests his wife's gift. Spent brass arcs upward as a 230-grain GI ball round flies true. Anna and Justin Schortmann (below), with a pistol rich with meaning.*

\$5,000 custom and “boutique” guns. Justin tried them all, and quietly stated that if he had his choice, it would be a Kimber.

The Kimber Custom Shop was contacted. The chosen model was the deluxe Kimber Combat Gold II. It was ordered in stainless for durability, maintenance and because Justin's home is in humid Florida.

Rugged, fixed-night sights were specified, and an ambidextrous safety. The stocks were rosewood-look Micarta. The trigger-pull weight was NRA spec for the Distinguished Matches, with an exquisitely crisp release, and the pistol turned out to feed everything from light loads to wide-mouth hollowpoint with 100-percent reliability. The gun was turned out from the Custom Shop with surprising swiftness and was perfectly rendered “to spec.”

The final touch was his name tastefully engraved on the slide. This was the one thing the Kimber Custom Shop was not set up to do for orders of less than 25 guns, but Anna was able to get it engraved through a source not generally available to the public.

The result was a pistol Justin shoots into one hole out to 10 yards. It is significant that Anna shoots it even a little bit better... and more significant, her young husband is even more proud of that than her father.

Unless military rules change, Justin won't be taking this pistol with him into combat. It will remain on the



home front, protecting his lovely bride and the babies they hope to have, while he is far away fighting for his country. It is a splendid example of the gunmaker's art, but it is more than that. It is a symbol of a young woman's love for her soldier husband, and of a soldier's dedication to everything that he and his fellow soldiers stand for. Thank you, Kimber Custom Shop, for rendering those timeless values in a beautiful piece of silvery steel. **GUNS**

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# UP ON ARS

• GLEN ZEDIKER •

## AR-15 TRIGGERS

Don't trip here.

**F**irst, there is little that can be done to improve a stock trigger. Any real help comes from the aftermarket. The last stock trigger I measured was a little more than 11 pounds. If trigger break-weight is greater than rifle weight, well, it's a little hard to shoot with.

Competitive position target shooters, like NRA High Power competitors, almost always prefer a 2-stage trigger. That one has free movement to the rear (the first stage), comes to a stop (at the second stage) and then breaks cleanly from that point as pressure is applied. A single-stage has no free movement toward the rear before the break, or isn't

supposed to. Competitive shooters prefer a 2-stage because it's more controllable and predictable. We use the first stage as the start to a shot, and also as a safety valve, of sorts, if we have to back out. Second, it's a way to get a light break-weight (the second stage) while maintaining a higher overall weight (the first and second stage added together).



*The PACT American Gold is one of the newest takes on a 2-stage match trigger. Aftermarket AR-15 triggers are still evolving, and let's hope that continues.*



*Take a look at the hammer; it's radically lighter than standard. Here's a Geissele. What makes it better is what makes it best. It's very well made, adjustable, and way on faster to impact than its competition. Geissele has different "tunes" (which are essentially component sets) available to suit different needs. Geissele pins, by the way, don't need replacement.*



*Unless it's specified in the instructions that come with an aftermarket trigger, pins install from right to left, ungrooved end first (there are exceptions). The reason is how the grooves engage the "J" spring in the hammer. This is a powerful spring the pin has to compress as it's inserted. Use a capture punch to keep the assembly in place while you then push out the punch with the pin.*



*Here's a trigger assembled into a Brownells trigger-fitting jig. This lets you install the trigger on the outside of your receiver so you can see every little nook and cranny, and how the metal-to-metal fits are working. That's a help and a half.*

Getting the finger onto, and then into the trigger, simply makes for a more competent standing position shooter. First stage, plus second stage, equals total trigger-pull weight. That matters much to NRA and CMP Service Rifle shooters who can't use a trigger less than 4-1/2 pounds. The triggers on my Service Rifles are 2-stage, and the second stage is about 8 ounces at, as said, an overall weight of 4-1/2 pounds. The light second stage, therefore, means that trigger is not a handicap compared to an NRA Match Rifle, which has no minimum pull weight requirement. It does, however, require a little getting used to....

The original 2-stage was the MKII as done up by Charlie Milazzo. Its workmanship and quality, not to mention, of course, its 2-stage engineering, was a major milestone in fleshing out the AR-15 as a competition arm. Charlie owns the patent and that's been a legal embroilment for over a decade now. Right. Most 2-stage triggers are Milazzo clones. Others, however, took steps beyond Charlie's original take, or at least took them in different directions.

What's the best 2-stage? Right now, it's the Geissele (say "gih-sell-ee"). It's one of the newer of the bunch and they've looked at their competition longer. In terms of adjustability and design, it be "da bomb dot-com." Jewell makes a good 2-stage. It has a unique and easy adjustment system and spring arrangement (most others use essentially standard form springs) and installs easily. Lock-time is the main difference between these two, in performance.

### Lock-Time

This is defined, so I say, as the time between hammer release by the trigger and firing pin strike on the primer. The quicker the better. Everyone's rifle is moving when it's fired. Even the best prone position will exhibit some discernible movement, and no one's standing position hold keeps the sights still for long. The sooner



*If you install your own trigger, make triple-sure disconnecter function is 100 percent. Test that by releasing the hammer (pull the trigger), hold the trigger back, reset the hammer (keeping the trigger held fully to the rear), and, just as slowly as you can, release the trigger forward. The disconnecter has to "hand off" the hammer to the hammer-sear notch on the trigger. It will jump up as the sear engages. If the hammer falls or feels notchy, the disconnecter has to be tuned. Fixing it is past the scope of this little ditty. Don't ever, ever, let the hammer clank home against the lower! That can and will crack your lower. Back it up with something, if only your thumb. Brownells makes a Delrin block that fits into the mag well. As with all their products, it's a sano option.*



*Another popular means to get a better performing trigger is dropping in one of the "modular" systems. In these, all the angles and adjustments have been made (usually) and the "box" pins in place of the standard trigger. So far, the best of the drop-in, self-contained systems I've tried is the Timney. All the "modular" units can benefit from greater precision in its pins.*



*Not everyone needs or wants a 2-stage and there are outstanding single-stage systems. Single-stage triggers have the advantage of a shorter distance to reset than 2-stage triggers. That means the finger doesn't have to move the trigger as far ahead after pulling through for a shot. They are also (normally) less expensive. Of these, my favorite is the Accuracy Speaks. It's reliable and will suit anyone, after tuning. For easier and more flexible tuning, though, I like the JP Ent. adjustable unit (shown above). It has adjustment screws. Correctly tuned, it's no excuse for a miss on any target.*

the bullet leaves, the closer to call the shot will be, which means bullet exit and perceived sight location will more closely coincide. Standing position shooting, of course, is where effects show most. This is most noticeable on a windy day.

The AR-15 is, by design, way, way slower to ignition than a bolt rifle. The AR-15 has a hammer, for one. Anything with a hammer is slower than any other thing with an inline striker. Lock time on a standard AR-15 is around 16 milliseconds (that's 0.016 seconds). Lock time on an out-of-the box Remington 700 or Winchester Model 70 is about 4. Bill Geissele took this to heart and his trigger installs out of its poly bag at about 8 ms. Wondrous. That is a big deal difference.

Hammer weight matters to this. The trick here is getting one lighter that will hold up. Just grinding metal away may not do it... Hammer spring power has another decided influence. The heavier the spring, the faster the push. The caveat there is the heavier springs place the hammer under more tension, which can influence wear mightily. The combination of a lighter hammer and a stronger spring (unless both have been engineered to work together, as they have in a Geissele or JP Ent. for instances) add up to better performance, but for how long?

### **Pins & Springs**

My experience has been better pins make for noticeably better trigger behavior. The better aftermarket triggers will have their own "matched" pins, which will also be precision-made (size and straightness). I highly recommend KNS-brand pins. They are well made and available in different sizes to suit. This outfit also makes very sano locking pin arrangements that eliminate another foible in AR-15 design. Since standard-form pins are a "press fit," they can rotate. Rotation may not matter if the pins are perfectly straight, and there's evermore reason to replace OEM parts with better parts.

Springs matter. The idea is (usually) to get a lighter trigger return spring and a more powerful hammer spring. That can actually reverse, or at least the trigger spring part, if we're shooting NRA Service Rifle because we want a higher first-stage weight. On a stock-form trigger, aftermarket springs are about the only way to make its action better. On a competition-style trigger, knowing how to specify and manipulate springs can make a big difference in the "tuning" of something like a 2-stage, such as doubling the trigger return springs to

increase first-stage weight.

Installing a trigger isn't at all difficult, but having it install to, one, be what you expect performance-wise, and, two, be what you need safety-wise, ranges from easy to very tedious. Depends, I am convinced, on the precision used in the manufacture of the lower receiver. Engagements and geometries of quality aftermarket triggers are engineered around (and in some cases actually installed into and adjusted for) a perfect blueprint lower. That essentially means the holes are oriented and located exactly as they should be.

### **Shameless Self-Promotion**

*The preceding is a specially adapted excerpt from The Competitive AR15: Builders Guide, a new book by Glen Zediker and Zediker Publishing, (662) 473-6107, [www.Zediker.com](http://www.Zediker.com).* **GUNS**

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# RIMFIRES

• HOLT BODINSON •

## CASCADING IN GREEN

### CCI's new unleaded .22 Long Rifle.

**C**ascade Cartridge, Inc. (CCI) holds a well-deserved reputation in the ammunition world as being the leader when it comes to rimfire ammunition. At last count, CCI offered 34 distinct rimfire loadings ranging from Short hollowpoints and Long Rifle shotshells to .17 HMR spiked with FMJs and .22 Win Mags loaded with a polymer-tipped V-Max.

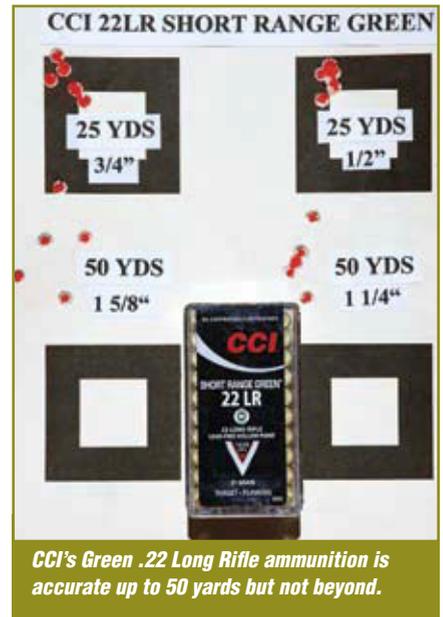
What's especially impressive with the CCI rimfire line is the extent to which it blankets the sports of plinking, competitive target shooting, varmint and small-game hunting as well as reduced noise and other specialty sporting requirements. And let's not leave out the green. CCI's unleaded line now covers the whole rimfire spectrum: the .22 Long Rifle, the .17 HMR and the .22 WMR.

#### Dire Need Or Stratagem?

The leaded-ammunition issue has been completely blown out of proportion. Yes, we all agreed to change from lead to steel for waterfowl and to use non-leaded ammunition in areas where special interest groups are trying to re-establish the endangered, Pleistocene-era Condor, but the anti-lead drumbeat is like a religion. The

worst example is banning lead shot in upland-game covers. It makes no sense and, at best, it's a blatant anti-hunting stratagem.

On the positive side, thank the stars we have a spot-on company like CCI and their "Good Old Boys" in our court who can meet the challenge of keeping our guns cranking in the green zones. This is particularly true for the traditional .22 Short, Long and Long Rifle side of the family. For more than 100 years, manufacturers of .22-caliber rimfire barrels have been able to use a quality of steel that would stand up to 10s, maybe even 100s, of 1,000s of rounds of soft, lubricated, lead bullets. Not jacketed-bullet-quality steel, mind you, but steel perfectly matched to soft-lead projectiles. If "going green" means dropping good old soft lead, what might replace it?



In the 1950s, Remington introduced a non-lead, rimfire bullet composed of soft iron powder in a binder. It weighed 15 grains. Under the Remington brand name, it was called "The Rocket." Under the Peters brand, it was labeled "The Thunderbolt." Think of it as a consumer version of a splatter-proof shooting gallery round. It was ultra-supersonic with an advertised muzzle velocity of 1,710 fps. The only problem that arose with the use of the Rocket/Thunderbolt was it wore out the soft steel, rimfire barrels in which it was fired. Remington/Peters soon withdrew their Rocket/Thunderbolt, non-leaded, brainchild from the marketplace.

I suppose that's why I was intrigued with CCI's solution to the challenge of the lead-free Long Rifle.

CCI's .22 Long Rifle Short Range Green projectile is very distinctive. It's a copper-colored, truncated-cone nose, hollowpoint weighing a mere 21 grains with an advertised velocity of 1,650 fps (1,260 fps in handguns). Upon examination, what is obvious is it is a 2-diameter bullet. According to my calipers, there is a narrow driving





The TNT Green .17 HMR is as accurate as any .17 HMR ammunition Holt has ever tested.

band with a full diameter of .223" just forward of the case mouth and a parallel shank with a diameter of .215" from the edge of the driving band to the beginning of the truncated nose.

Curious, I called the guru of the CCI rimfire line, engineer Brett Olin, in Lewiston, Idaho. Olin said the bullet form was selected to conform to the dimensions of the SAAMI pressure gun chamber. Olin went on to say their green bullet is composed of polymer bonded, powdered copper, which is formed to shape in an injection mould. It is a good-looking little projectile with a smooth, burnished copper appearance. It can't be scratched with a thumbnail so it's harder than lead, and I suspect that's another reason for the relatively narrow driving band incorporated into the design. Olin's final comment was the "short-range" cartridge was designed for informal target shooting at distances ideally not exceeding 50 yards.

### And It Shoots

My test rifle was a very accurate and consistent Remington Model 541-T mounted with a Pride-Fowler, trajectory calibrated, 3-9X Rapid Reticle scope. Five-shot groups at 25 yards ranged from 1/2" to 3/4" and at 50 yards, 1" to 1-3/4". Average velocity over a PACT Professional chronograph at 80 degrees F was 1,656 fps.

To check the cartridge's "short-range" moniker, I moved the target out to 100 yards. I suspected a 21-grain bullet was going to be rather wind sensitive at the longer ranges, and checking the wind on my Midway/Caldwell brand "Wind Wizard" indicated a 1- to 2-mph breeze coming from 6 o'clock. Not a real influencing factor. Anyway, at 100 yards, my groups averaged 5" to 8". Yes, just like CCI says, it's a short-range, 50-yard

cartridge. Suggested retail? About \$6.99 for a box of 50.

CCI's next "green" entry should be on your dealer's shelves now is the "TNT Green .17 HMR." This new round sports a 16-grain jacketed hollowpoint with an advertised velocity of 2,500 fps. The green HP bullet is conventional in appearance. When questioned about its composition, Olin responded the core is made from powdered copper plus a binder compressed into a conventional, gilding metal jacket, making it a rather explosive little pill on game.

Performance? I pulled the .22 WMR barrel on my Ruger 77/22 and replaced it with a Clerke International Arms barrel in .17 HMR. If you have a Magnum 77/22, by all means get a switch barrel for the .17 HMR and possibly even the .17 Mach 2. It only takes a few minutes to switch them out, and in the case of my barrels, the zeroes remain constant and unchanged.

At 50 yards, my 5-shot groups averaged 5/8" at an average velocity of 2,488 fps, and at 100 yards, 7/8". You have to love the .17 HMR. It is so accurate it's spooky. Zeroed for 100 yards, the mid-range trajectory is a flat .3". For those who must shoot lead-free, CCI's TNT Green .17 HMR will prove very effective in the field. Suggested retail is \$14-\$16 for a box of 50.

Green may be nice, but the factual downside is that like most green technology, it's nicely pricey.

Yet, CCI's green rimfires certainly aren't as outrageously and differentially priced as steel shot loads were when they were first introduced. More importantly, we have a dedicated company supplying us with great performing ammunition at the very cutting edge of lead-free technology. The Good Ol' Boys of Lewiston deserve a real hand for keeping our rimfires smoking in the green zone.

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# RIFLEMAN

• DAVE ANDERSON •

## POWER ON A BUDGET

Weatherby ammo now offers a value line.

**B**ack in the early 1960s I read a book from the library of the little village school I attended called *Between the Elephant's Eyes* by Robert Scott, a renowned fighter pilot. It was about an African safari using mainly Weatherby rifles. The glowing terms in which he described the awesome power of the .300 Weatherby might have embarrassed even Roy Weatherby.

Glamorous ads in *Outdoor Life* showed the wonderful glittering Weatherby rifles. The price was \$289 and from my perspective it might as well have been \$289,000,000.

The current standard Weatherby Vanguard rifles are, I believe, the best buy in a hunting rifle today and one

of the best buys ever. Several years ago, Weatherby began offering the Vanguards for two popular Weatherby cartridges, the .257 and .300.

Weatherby cartridges are loaded by Norma of Sweden, often using premium hunting bullets made in the USA and shipped to Sweden for

loading. The ammunition isn't cheap. Being able to afford a quality rifle chambered for a glamorous cartridge is nice, but if you can't afford the ammunition "our situation has not improved" as Professor Jones said to Indy.

Not every situation requires premium bullets. Weatherby now has ammunition for these two cartridges using Norma bullets. At \$39 a box it is still more than what you can find .30-30 and .30-06 ammunition on sale for, but it is more in line with other popular magnum rounds. Brass, powder, primers, and quality control are identical to premium loads, only the bullet is different.

The Norma bullets are a .257 100 grain, and 180 grain in the .300 Wby. The website calls them "spitzer" bullets though the profile is a bit rounded. I'd be more inclined to call them semi-spitzers. I chronographed both loads in four Weatherby rifles, two Vanguards with 24" barrels and two Mark Vs with 26" barrels.

With their slightly rounded profiles, these bullets have a somewhat lower ballistic coefficient than spirepoints of the same weight. As a result, bullet drop is a bit more at longer ranges. The chart shows bullet drop at 400 and 500 yards from a 300-yard zero with the Norma softpoint bullet compared to a spirepoint bullet.

Bullet construction of the SP loads is standard "cup and core" design. Norma has been loading these bullets in other cartridges for a long time, evidently with no complaints from hunters. I haven't shot a single head of game with them; for all I know maybe all they do is tickle the animals being shot and send them giggling on their way. Doubt it, though.

The .257 loads gave 3-shot groups averaging under 1 MOA while the .300s averaged around 1-1/4". In both cases the Vanguards gave the best groups though by a skinny (and statistically insignificant) margin.

Currently, the standard Vanguard with synthetic stock starts at \$439.

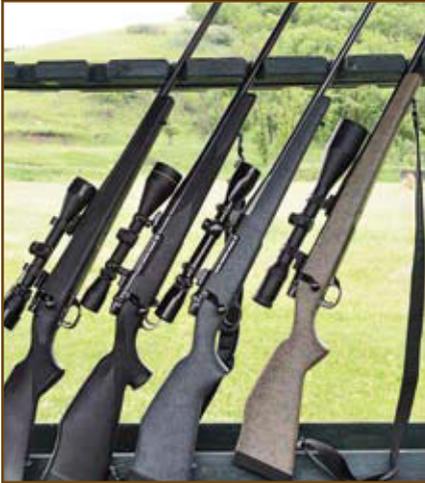


With the use of Norma bullets (and, Dave suspects, cutting margins to the bone) Weatherby ammunition for .257 and .300 is available at prices unmatched in almost 30 years. Dave calls the bullet profile more "semi-spitzer" than "spitzer." Velocities measured up to factory claims and accuracy proved excellent.

GUN, CARTRIDGE (MODEL & CARTRIDGE)	BARREL LENGTH (INCHES)	BULLET (WEIGHT, GRAINS)	ADVERTISED VELOCITY (FPS)	ACTUAL VELOCITY (FPS)
VANGUARD .257 WBY	24"	100	3,500	3,534
MARK V .257 WBY	26"	100	3,500	3,611
VANGUARD .300 WBY	24"	180	3,150	3,043
MARK V .300 WBY	26"	180	3,150	3,144

Notes: CED Millennium Chronograph screens set 10' from the muzzle.

CARTRIDGE	BULLET	BULLET DROP (INCHES)		
		300 YARDS	400 YARDS	500 YARDS
.257 WBY	100 Norma SP	0	-10.1	-28.5
.257 WBY	100 Spirepoint	0	-7.7	-21.0
.300 WBY	180 Norma SP	0	-10.9	-30.0
.300 WBY	180 Spirepoint	0	-9.0	-24.4



*The new Weatherby ammunition was tested for velocity and accuracy in these four Weatherby rifles (from left) Vanguard Synthetic .300 Wby with Bushnell Banner 3-9x40, Mark V .300 Wby with Leupold 4-12x50, Mark V Ultra Lightweight .257 Wby with Pentax 3-9x40, Vanguard Sub MOA .257 Wby with Zeiss 3-12x56.*



*The Weatherby Vanguard standard model with synthetic stock is an exceptional value. It's also offered as a package with scope, bases and rings, sling and hard case. Whether single-loaded or by running cartridges through the magazine the Vanguard functioned smoothly and reliably. Quality of materials and workmanship of the Vanguards is excellent indeed, and has been for some 40 years.*

Certainly the synthetic stock isn't as aesthetically pleasing as the fancy checkered wood of those early '60s Weatherby rifles. On the other hand it is every bit as functional, probably tougher, and certainly unaffected by

moisture. The action and barrel are at least as precisely made, if not better, as is accuracy.

The Vanguard .300 Wby shown here is a package deal with a Bushnell 3-9X scope, bases, rings, sling and

swivels, all packed in a synthetic hard case; the scope factory bore sighted. The test rifle was on paper at 100 yards and needed just a few clicks to get sighted the way I wanted.

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<b>LENGTH OVERALL:</b>	44" (short action), 44-1/2" (long action)
<b>LENGTH OF PULL:</b>	13-5/8"
<b>PRICE:</b>	\$729 (package*)
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<b>EYE RELIEF:</b>	3.3"
<b>ADJUSTMENTS:</b>	1/4 MOA
<b>RETICLE:</b>	Multi X
<b>PRICE:</b>	\$112.95

been improved over the last couple of years. This rifle's trigger had a nice clean break at around 3-3/4 pounds. It is an accurate, reliable package delivering excellent performance, available in both standard and the two Weatherby cartridges, at an amazingly modest price.

I sometimes think people don't understand or appreciate how good we have it today, what choices and quality our money buys. In the early 1960s, a Mark V cost \$289. Sounds cheap, but at that time \$300 a month was a decent wage. Here's another way to look at it: In the early 1960s, a Weatherby .300 Magnum cost 8-1/4 ounces of gold. The Vanguard synthetic costs about 1/3 of an ounce of gold today.

The effects of inflation can be measured in various ways. One is the cost of living, the "basket of goods" price. Another is the income side, the average wage index. Still another is the value of currency as measured against gold. Gold prices reflect both current and anticipated inflation.

In 1954, you could have bought a Winchester 70 Supergrade .375 H&H for around \$200 or \$250, put it away and today it would bring maybe \$7,000. Seven ounces of gold would have bought it in 1954—and still will today.

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## GATLING'S LEGACY

### The US Armament Bulldog .45-70.

**P**atented in 1862, declared obsolete and scrapped by the US military in 1911, rediscovered and transformed in the 1940s as the deadly answer to supersonic aerial gunnery, and now made once again as the Model 1877 Bulldog, the Gatling gun's comeback is unique in the annals of military ordnance. No less remarkable was the gun's inventor, Dr. Richard Jordan Gatling, who believed his machine gun would shorten wars and save the lives of countless soldiers. Now returning to the stage as US Armament Corporation's exacting copy of the Colt Model 1877 Bulldog, the Gatling is cranking out a lot of lead, smoke and fun in the 21st century.

Born in 1818 in North Carolina, the son of a successful southern planter, Richard J. Gatling never stopped applying his mind to mechanical challenges for the next 85 years. By 16, he had invented a screw propeller, only to be informed by the Patent Office that Ericsson had filed his patent just weeks before Gatling's application. By age 26, he had invented and marketed, on an international scale, a wheat

drill that made him a virtual fortune. At age 28, he was afflicted with small pox. Recovering, he spent the next two years taking a medical degree at the Indiana Medical College, but his practice took second place to his inventive turn of mind. His future inventions would include a steam plow, a rotary plow, a cultivator for cotton plants, a lath-making machine, a hemp fiber separator, a distribution system for compressed air and, of course, his legacy, the Gatling gun.

He wrote, "In 1861... I witnessed almost daily the departure of troops to the front and the return of the wounded, sick and dead... It occurred to me if I could invent a machine—a gun—which could by its rapidity of fire, enable one man to do as much battle as a hundred, that it would, to a great extent, supersede the necessity of large armies, and consequently, exposure to battle and disease be greatly diminished." Unfortunately for mankind, it didn't work out that way.

#### The First

Patented in 1862, Gatling's first hand-cranked model looks remarkably like his last. It consisted of six, 58-caliber barrels rotating around a common axis and fed ammunition by a hopper. The ammunition consisted of steel tubes with a percussion nipple in one end that accepted standard 58-caliber paper cartridges. Six individual hammers rotated with the barrels. The hammers were cocked and fired by two incline planes in the breech. After the "cartridge" was fired, it dropped free of the gun as the



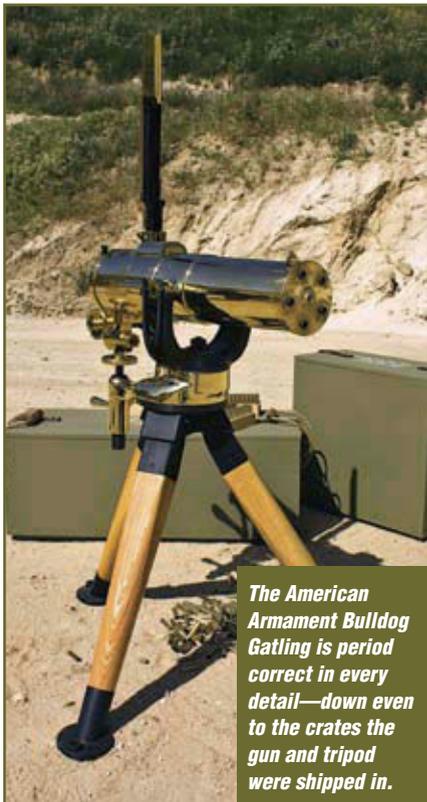
*The front sight (above), neatly dovetailed into its mount, is of brass. Note the burn marks on the front of the barrels. The rear sight (below), offset to the right of the Gatling, is graduated to 1,000 yards.*



barrel rotated further. The cyclic rate of the first model was 200 rounds per minute.

The second model of 1862, used 58-caliber copper-cased rimfire cartridges inserted again into steel chamber tubes, and it was not until the Model of 1865 that Gatling perfected a reciprocating breech bolt that would load, fire, extract and eject self-contained cartridges.

The Gatling was not formally adopted during the Civil War. The Navy requisitioned a few for the Mississippi Squadron, and there were some private sales to wealthy Union commanders. Strangely enough, three Gatling guns bristled from the windows and roof of the *New York Times* office building in July 1863 to defend the paper against anti-draft rioters who were on a rampage in New York City. No one knows how those Gatlings got there, but just the sight of them deterred the rioters from



*The American Armament Bulldog Gatling is period correct in every detail—down even to the crates the gun and tripod were shipped in.*



The address plate bears the original name "Gatling Battery Gun," patent dates and maker of the Bulldog—Colt Patent Firearms.



A safety is present, which the originals never had. It blocks the rotation of the barrels when applied and is unobtrusively mounted beneath the gun.



The US Armament address is nicely put underneath at the back of the gun.

looting the *Times*.

Finally, after extensive formal trials, Gatling was given a contract by the US Army for 50, 1" caliber and 50, .50-70 guns in 1866. The Improved Model of 1866 was manufactured by Colt's Armory. That initial contract by the United States paved the way for the gun's eventual acceptance throughout the world. For the next 40 years, the Gatling appeared in every conflict involving major powers including the Russo-Turkish War, the Zulu War, the American Indian Wars and the Spanish-American War in which Gatlings played a significant role during the assault on San Juan Hill.

The last Gatling was the Model 1903-06, chambered initially for the .30-03 and then rechambered for the .30-06. The Model was made by Colt's Armory and remained in production until 1911.

One of the most interesting and commercially successful models ever fielded by Gatling was the Model 1877

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**Bulldog.** Designed initially for the cavalry, it incorporated several major improvements over earlier models. It was the first regular-production model to have the barrels and breech completely enclosed in a bronze housing, giving it a very distinctive appearance and providing superior

protection from dirt and dust.

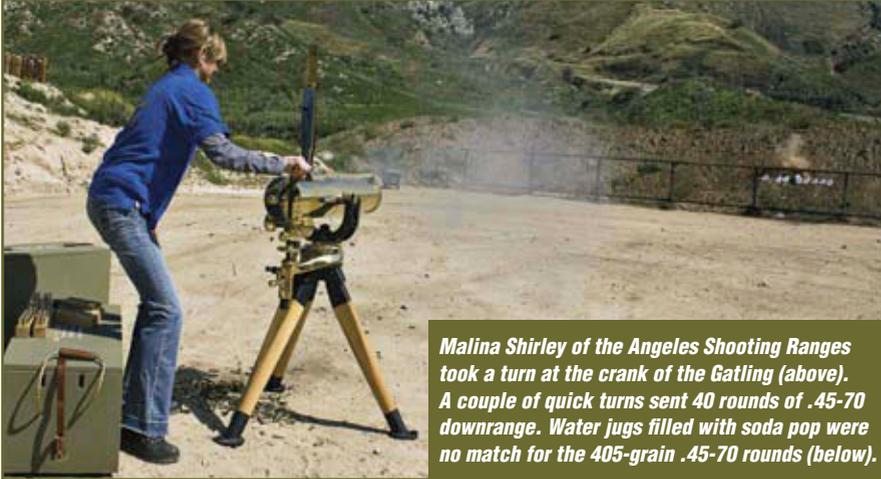
More significantly, the cranking handle was relocated from the side where it worked through a set of gears to the rear of the main shaft, thus creating a direct-drive system. By eliminating the side crank and its gearing, the cyclic rate of the Bulldog

was increased to an unheard of 1,000 rounds a minute. Other improvements included the addition of adjustable sights, an adjustable oscillating device that automatically traversed the gun as the crank was turned, as well as a vertical, gravity feed system and a convenient headspace adjustment knob attached to the end of the main shaft in the center of the crank.

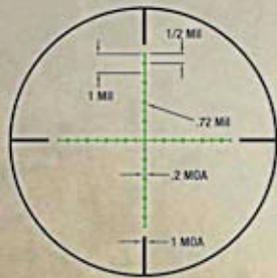
Thanks to the talented men and women of US Armament Corp., located in Ephrata, Penn., the 1877 Bulldog is back. It is a precise copy, made according to Gatling's original specifications. The new Bulldog features five barrels, each 18-1/4" long, chambered in .45-70 Govt.

Cartridges gravity feed from a vertical Bruce feed system holding two stacks of ammunition. As one stack is emptied, the system feeds from the other stack, permitting the empty stack to be immediately recharged. In short, the Bruce feed system facilitates an uninterrupted flow of ammunition to the gun.

US Armaments' Bulldog has a compact overall length of 34" and, without tripod, weighs 135 pounds. The beautifully crafted ash, iron and brass tripod supplied with the gun adds another 135 pounds, bringing the total mounted weight of the Gatling



*Malina Shirley of the Angeles Shooting Ranges took a turn at the crank of the Gatling (above). A couple of quick turns sent 40 rounds of .45-70 downrange. Water jugs filled with soda pop were no match for the 405-grain .45-70 rounds (below).*



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<b>MODEL 1877 BULLDOG</b>	
<b>MAKER: US ARMAMENT CORP.</b> 121 VALLEY VIEW DR. EPHRATA, PA 17522 (717) 721-4570 <b>WWW.USARMAMENTCORP.COM</b>	
<b>ACTION TYPE:</b>	Revolving battery gun
<b>CALIBER:</b>	.45-70 Gov't
<b>CAPACITY:</b>	40
<b>RATE OF FIRE:</b>	1,000 rounds per minute
<b>NUMBER OF BARRELS:</b>	5
<b>BARREL LENGTH:</b>	18-1/4"
<b>OVERALL LENGTH:</b>	34"
<b>WEIGHT:</b>	Gun (135 pounds), Tripod (135 pounds)
<b>FINISH:</b>	Polished brass
<b>SIGHTS:</b>	V-notch rear, Post front
<b>TRIPOD MOUNT:</b>	Ash, iron and brass
<b>PRICE:</b>	\$36,500

to 270 pounds. In fact, the complete Bulldog package includes essential tooling, ammunition feed blocks, three original type transit cases and a technical manual.

Recently, our intrepid editor, Jeff John, joined the Bulldog's owner and Richard Pumerantz, owner of the Ten-X Ammunition Corp., who supplied a copious amount of .45-70 ammunition, for a day at the range. Needless to say, cranking good fun was had by all. The new 1877 Bulldog functioned perfectly, and as our editor exclaimed, "In seconds, with a few quick spins of the crank, you've just sent 16,200 grains of 45-caliber lead downrange. Ouch!"

The Gatling story wouldn't be complete without mentioning its return to service, four decades later.

In 1945, Melvin M. Johnson, inventor of the Johnson M1941 rifle and M1941 and M1944 light machine gun, was contracted by the Small Arms Branch of US Ordnance to research the possibility of creating a high rate-of-fire machine gun by fitting an electric drive to a Gatling gun.

Locating a Model 1886, 10-barreled, Gatling gun in .45-70 with an Accles feed, Johnson added an electric motor-drive cranking system and succeeded in achieving a phenomenal cyclic rate of 5,500 to 5,800 rounds per minute. Based on Johnson's ground-breaking work, General Electric was awarded the development contract that led to the early design of the 20mm Vulcan aircraft cannon and the 7.62 Minigun so familiar to us today.

The Gatling saga is simply remarkable!

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# OUT *of the* BOX™

• JOHN TAFFIN •

## A DREAM REALIZED

### The CZ-USA Model 550FS 6.5x55mm.

*John found the short, handy CZ 550FS also mild in recoil with the proven and effective 6.5x55mm.*



#### MODEL 550 FS

**MAKER:** ČESKÁ ZBROJOVKA  
CZECHOSLOVAKIA  
**IMPORTER:** CZ-USA  
P.O. BOX 171073  
KANSAS CITY, KS 66117  
(800) 955-6615  
[WWW.CZ-USA.COM](http://WWW.CZ-USA.COM)

**ACTION TYPE:** Bolt action

**CALIBER:** 6.5x55mm (tested, many others)

**CAPACITY:** 5

**BARREL LENGTH:** 20.9"

**OVERALL LENGTH:** 41.5"

**WEIGHT:** 7.9 pounds

**FINISH:** Blued

**SIGHTS:** Adjustable rear, bead front

**STOCK:** Walnut

**PRICE:** \$691

#### FULLFIELD II

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GREELEY, CO 80631  
(970) 356-1670  
[WWW.BURRISOPTICS.COM](http://WWW.BURRISOPTICS.COM)

**MAGNIFICATION:** 4.5X to 14X

**OBJECTIVE DIAMETER:** 42mm

**EYE RELIEF:** 3.8" (4.5X),  
3.1" (14X)

**INTERNAL ADJUSTMENTS:** 40" elevation & windage at 100 yards

**RETICLES:** Ballistic plex

**PRICE:** \$615

Looking through the CZ-USA catalog, something took me back a half-century or more. There looking back at me was a full-stocked carbine chambered in 6.5x55. It did not have the butter-knife bolt handle or the double-set triggers of the 6.5x54mm Mannlicher Schoenauer I dreamed of as a kid. However, the more I looked at it the more I realized this was the best chance I had to fulfill my old dream. Manufactured in the Czech Republic by Česká Zbrojovka and imported by CZ-USA it is the CZ Model 550FS chambered in 6.5x55 or 6.5 Swede (named so because it was originally chambered in the Model 96 Swedish Mauser).

The FS in the name stands for full stock, or the Mannlicher-style stock, (which first caught my attention) bolt-action rifle. It holds five rounds with a hinged floorplate for easy removal of unfired cartridges. The thumb safety rides directly behind the bolt handle and is easy to reach and operate. It has three positions, and the middle one locks the trigger but allows the bolt to be operated to unload the chamber.

#### Stock Design

The stock is a well-above-average grade of walnut, fitted with sling swivels and with well carried out checkering around the pistol grip and on the forearm. A generous recoil pad is supplied, which would certainly handle cartridges of much heavier recoil than the 6.5 and, speaking of recoil, the 6.5 is an extremely mild shooting cartridge even though it is so conclusive when used on game. The stock has a slim profile as befits a low-recoiling rifle and it flat out feels

good in the hands and mounts to the shoulder very easily. The one thing I noticed very quickly is the European-style buttstock.

The top of the buttstock does not come straight back but rather curves down. I thought I might have a problem getting used to it but this has not been the case. Sights provided are a typical adjustable rear sight found on most American rifles and the rear sight is seated out far enough on the barrel it does not interfere with scope mounting. The front sight is a bead on a ramp and the only negative I can find with this rifle is with the hood over the front sight. It is definitely not aesthetically pleasing with a very weird (at least to me) shape, however, that was corrected very quickly by its removal.

#### Integral Bases

The Model 550 comes with scope rings and integral bases machined into the receiver. The rear base also has a



*The CZ Model 550 FS is ready for hunting in 6.5x55mm fitted with a Burris Fullfield II 4.5x14X scope. Cut checkering is found on the pistol grip and forearm of the CZ Model 550.*

slot in the side of the receiver, which receives a corresponding projection on the rear scope ring to provide real stability. For a scope I went with the Burris Fullfield II 4.5x14X. This scope provides very clear optics, and I like being able to use the lower powers for hunting, middle powers for shooting groups on paper, and the higher powers allow me to examine those groups by simply turning it up to 14X instead of using a separate spotting

scope. This scope was easily mounted by placing the Model 550 in the new Lyman Revolution Rotating Gun Vise. Padded contact points hold the rifle securely when mounting a scope, while a tray under the rifle holds tools and screws. It certainly takes a lot of the work out of mounting a scope.

I've been shooting rifles and handguns so long I can usually put up with a bad trigger if it is within reason. I prefer 3- to 4-pound trigger

pulls on all of my firearms, however I really appreciate the good triggers showing up on sporting rifles lately. This 6.5x55 is no exception as it comes with a single-set trigger. Used in the normal fashion the trigger pull is right at 4 pounds, however, when the trigger is pushed forward the single-set trigger kicks in at 1-1/2 pounds. You have to remember to set it, but if you forget or there isn't time, the 4-pound trigger works very well.



*The CZ Model 550FS 6.5x55 comes with an adjustable rear sight mounted out far enough on the barrel to accommodate most any scope. A bead front sight is provided. The rifle comes equipped with a very strange looking hood over the front sight, but it can be removed.*

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OUT OF THE BOX

**Accurate**

I don't know how many hundreds upon hundreds of sixguns, semi-automatics, single-shot pistols, leverguns and bolt action rifles I have fired in my lifetime. I do know this CZ Model 550 6.5x55 is the most consistently accurate rifle I have ever experienced. Some of this may be due to handloads assembled with RCBS Competition Reloading Dies. With regular dies, you set the bullet on top of the case mouth and then operate the handle to move both the bullet and case into the seating die.

The RCBS Competition Reloading Dies work differently. They are combined with an extended shell holder. Instead of placing the bullet on the case mouth and then entering the seating die, the empty case is started into the die and the bullet enters a front-loading window on the side of the bullet seating die where it is picked up by a collar, which keeps it perfectly straight as it is seated. This

die also has micrometer bullet depth seating head for near-perfect overall length setting from reloading session to reloading session. From my results, I'd say all this has an awful lot to do with assembling accurate handloads.

All of the handloads tried are rather on the mild side and there certainly is room to go higher in velocity. On the flip side, looking at the accuracy I don't think I want to mess with success. While groups measured are arrived at "mulligan-style" (as in no matter what firearm I am testing I give myself—not the firearm—one throwaway round). For me this removes a lot of stress.



Lyman's new Revolution Rotating Gun Vise aids greatly in scope mounting. Taffin mounted a Burris Fullfield II 4.5 x 55 on CZ Model 550 using CZ rings.

**6.5X55MM FACTORY AMMO PERFORMANCE**

LOAD (BRAND, BULLET WEIGHT, TYPE)	VELOCITY (FPS)	GROUP SIZE (INCHES)
FEDERAL 140 SP	2,475	1

Notes: Chronograph set at 10' from the muzzle.

**6.5 X 55MM HANDLOADED AMMO PERFORMANCE**

BULLET	POWDER	CHARGE	VELOCITY (FPS)	GROUP SIZE (INCHES)
HORNADY 129 SP	Winchester 760	40	2,316	3/4
HORNADY 140 SP	Winchester 760	43	2,536	1-3/8
NOSLER 120 BT	Accurate 2520	36	2,646	3/4
REMINGTON 140 SP	Accurate 2520	36	2,456	3/4
SIERRA 120 SP	Hodgdon H4895	38	2,549	5/8
SIERRA 140 BTSP	Hodgdon H4895	36	2,382	1/2
SPEER 120 SP	Hodgdon H4350	42	2,350	7/8
SPEER 140 SP	Hodgdon H4350	39	2,231	1-1/4

Notes: Group size the product of best 3 of 4 shots at 100 yards. Chronograph screens set at 10' from muzzle. Federal 210 primers used in Winchester brass.



The Model 550FS has a hinged floorplate to quickly unload the magazine of the five rounds of 6.5x55mm.



Taffin feels the RCBS Competition Die Set for the 6.5x55 (above) had a lot to do with the accuracy he was able to attain with the 6.5 CZ Model 550. Results of test firing at 100 yards exhibit the excellent accuracy of the Model 550 (below). Groups shown were made with Sierra and Hornady bullets.



Of my eight handloads, six were well under 1" at 100 yards, including two groups at 5/8" and 1/2", three at 3/4" and one at 7/8". I've never experienced such consistently excellent accuracy especially considering I used four different powders and eight different bullets. Even my "large" groups of 1-1/4" and 1-3/8" are certainly much more than adequate for a hunting rifle. This rifle will definitely go along our annual wild boar, Catalina goat and exotic sheep hunt. My hunting buddies are looking forward to using it.

I waited a long time to get my 6.5 Mannlicher. Although it seems trite to say, the wait was well worth it. **GUNS**

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# OUT *of the* BOX™

• J. B. WOOD •

## TWO SHOOTER

### The latest derringers from Bond Arms.

**W**hen the Bond derringer first appeared around 12 years ago, my comment was this was the ultimate refinement of the old Remington. My opinion is still the same. Not only is it strong enough for some significant modern cartridges, but it also has a unique (and patented) hammer rebound system and a hammer-block safety.

The old Remington, made from 1867 to 1955, was offered only in .41 Rimfire chambering. It has been said those shot with it were more likely to die from subsequent infection than from the wound. As mentioned above, the Bond derringer is available in several effective chamberings, one of the most popular being the .45 Colt/.410 combination. And, it gets even better: the barrel units are offered separately, and are completely interchangeable.

Even my treasured old "Texas Defender" from 1998 will accept the current barrel units. I tried it with one in .327 Federal Magnum, and it worked perfectly. I will note, though, that you probably should check with Bond Arms when considering this application to an older gun, just to be sure.

My original derringer, in .357/.38

Special and .45 Auto, was of obvious high quality, but somewhat drab in appearance. The side flats of the barrels have a brush finish, and the rest of the stainless steel is a matte gray. The two more recent guns I tried can only be described as "beautiful." They are the Snake Slayer, introduced in 2005, and the Ranger (2008).

The barrel lengths offered are 3", 3.5" and 4.25". The Snake Slayer I tried out has the 3.5" unit in .45 Colt/.410, and that length gives it a nice balance. The stainless steel has a satin finish overall, and the rosewood-laminate grips are outstanding. The logo at the top, a striking rattlesnake, is very well done. Also, this is the "extended" grip, with room for all three fingers at the front.

While the old Remington was subject to frequent breakage of the barrel-hinge, no worries here. On the



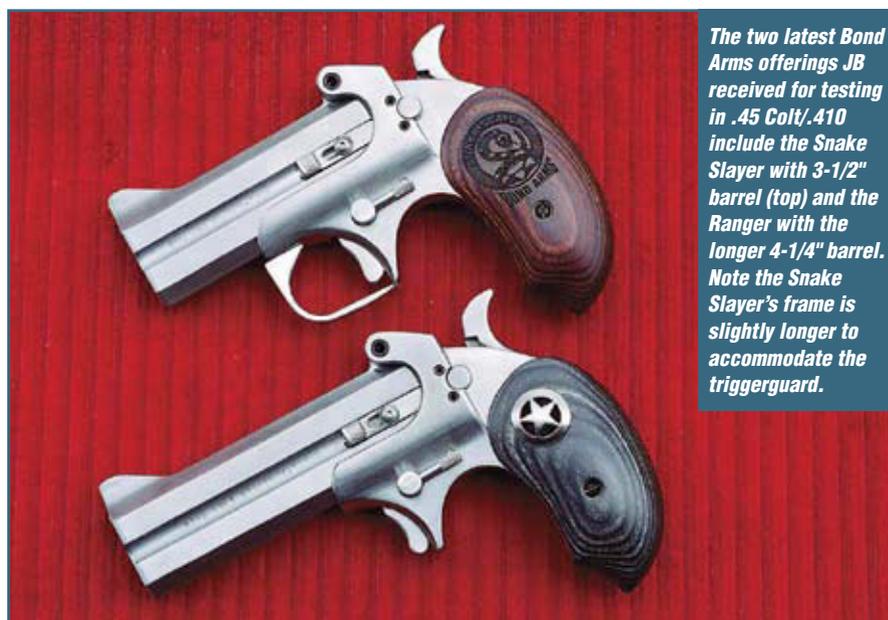
*A manual extractor lifts the spent rounds clear of the chambers.*

Bond, the hinge area is massive and strong. The spring-powered barrel latch was sensibly moved to the left side. The ejector also has a spring, easing the fired ceases partway out on opening. It can be manually pushed a little further. Since you have only two shots, the quick and easy reload is important.

The Snake Slayer comes with the Bond-added triggerguard, and I like this feature. For those who prefer to have the more traditional guard-less look, it is easily taken off, retained by a single screw inside the frame at the front. While they might be seldom used, the sights are very good offering a square picture. Integral and non-adjustable, of course.

As previously noted, the hammer rebounds, engaging the sturdy sear extension on the trigger. If the gun were dropped, impacting the hammer, this alone would probably prevent accidental firing. Even in the unlikely event of sear breakage, the remaining impact energy would likely be insufficient for ignition.

That said, you should always use the excellent manual safety for carrying. This cross-bolt, push-button puts a hefty piece of steel across, inside, to block the hammer. The off-safe direction is toward the right, making it easy to operate with the side of the thumb. Or, if you're a lefty, with the



*The two latest Bond Arms offerings JB received for testing in .45 Colt/.410 include the Snake Slayer with 3-1/2" barrel (top) and the Ranger with the longer 4-1/4" barrel. Note the Snake Slayer's frame is slightly longer to accommodate the triggerguard.*

**O/U DERRINGER**

**MAKER: BOND ARMS, INC.,  
P.O. BOX 1296, GRANBURY, TX 76048, (817) 573-4445, WWW.BONDARMS.COM**

MODEL:	SNAKE SLAYER	RANGER
CALIBER:	.45 Colt/.410	.45 Colt/.410 (many other calibers and interchangeable barrels)
CAPACITY:	2	2
WEIGHT:	22 ounces	23.5 ounces
OVERALL LENGTH:	5.5"	6.25"
HEIGHT:	4.3"	4.3"
BARREL LENGTH:	3.5"	4.25"
RETAIL:	\$469	\$649

trigger finger. The high-spur hammer has good serrations, and cocking is easily done. Compact and handy, the Snake Slayer would be my choice for carrying.

Ah, but that doesn't detract from my admiration of the latest Bond Derringer, the magnificent Ranger. It has, of course, all of the mechanical features of the Snake Slayer, but there are some big differences. The standard barrel is 4.25", giving some welcome extra weight up front. The trigger is the traditional guard-less type, and in this case, there is no provision for attaching a guard.

The extended grips are called "black silver wood" by Bond, and I believe they are a black ash laminate. At the top is a metal insert, a plain deep-out Ranger star, in the style of the old Texas Ranger badge. The barrels of this gun are also in .45 Colt/.410, and I will note the chambering will accept the 3" .410 shell.

The Ranger comes with a nice black nylon zipper case with handles. Inside, there's a well-made leather holster with the same "Ranger star" as the grips. It's removable for use on your belt. The case has the Ranger logo on the outside, and a handy pocket. Inside, there are three Velcro-flap pockets for ammo or extra barrel units. Overall, it's a really nice outfit.

Shooting both of these derringers was interesting. One of the surprises was the accuracy. For quite a while, I have used, for the first few rounds, the Champion VisiShot 100-yard sight-in target. It has an 8" black center, and the hits show up in orange. At social-encounter range (5 to 7 yards), I figure it's the equivalent of the center-of-mass area on a combat silhouette.

At those distances, the Bond derringers kept all hits within that 8" black. This was with a 2-hand hold, using the sights, and holding on the center of the black. Black Hills .45 Colt loads and Federal .410 loads tended to hit a little above center, as did the .357 Magnum. The .38 Special and .327 Federal Magnum were more centered, as you might expect.



*At a social distance of between 5 and 7 yards, the Snake Slayer put two .45 Colt rounds on the 8" target (above). Firing a .410 loaded with three, 000 Buckshot delivered a devastating blow at 5 yards (below).*



One target with the .327 Federal put a round at perfect elevation just 1-3/8" to the right of center, and the other round low left, in the 3-ring, 2-1/2" from center. This was with the Snake Slayer, 2-hand hold, 7 yards. With the Ranger, at 5 yards, a single round of .410 Personal Defense by Federal performed impressively. The four 000 Buck pellets made a single elongated hole, 2" directly above center. At 1,200 fps, imagine the effect.

Now, let's talk about "felt-recoil." Yes, when it's a .45 Colt or a .410 with buckshot, the felt-recoil can be called "substantial." With some loads, change that to "fierce." We always say that during a serious social situation, you won't notice it, and that's probably true. For occasional practice firing, though, it would be best to protect your hand. I use a PAST shooting glove, which has some welcome padding in the thumb-web area.



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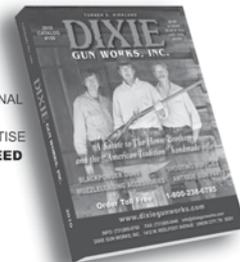
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OUT OF THE BOX



Because recoil can be pretty fierce, JB found a Past Shooting Glove just the ticket for practice with the .45 Colt/.410 Ranger.



The Bond Arms Derringer system offers interchangeable barrels which can be added at any time. Here, the .45/.410 unit is mounted on the frame while above it is the .327 Federal (middle) and .357 Magnum (top).

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A note for the recoil-sensitive: If you have the barrel unit in .327 Federal Magnum, you can back off to the .32 H&R Magnum or the .32 S&W Long. If you can find it, the old .32 S&W will also work, and the felt-recoil will be about the same as a .22 LR. Something to keep in mind for practice.

You can look at the Bond Snake Slayer and Ranger and instantly know here is high-quality arm with precision in manufacturing. And, the prices are not unreasonable. If you are armed with one of these, especially with that .410 buckshot load, I'd hate to be the miscreant who pulls open your car door.

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# QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

• JEFF JOHN •

## MLE 1886/93 Lebel Trench Cover

**Q:** Thank you very much for the February 2010 article “The French MLE 1886 Lebel,” since I own a MLE 1886 M93 originally made in 1890. I would like to mention my rifle has a receiver dust cover attached via the exposed, straight-slotted lug screw. It is stamped sheet metal with a cutout for the bolt handle. There are no markings on the dust cover I can find. Of all the photographs or articles I have seen on this rifle, there has been no indication of a dust cover. I had only known of dust covers being used by the Japanese, so I thought this was significant. Do you have any information on whether this rifle was initially issued with a receiver dust cover?

Randall Hunt  
via e-mail

**A:** The sheet metal “trench cover” was first introduced and issued by the French for the Mle 1886/93 Lebel in mid-to-late 1915. This item was not covered in the original article due to space.

The exact date, as well as the total number of “trench covers” produced, is not known due to the loss of WWI French procurement and manufacturing records during WWII. At the same time, a similar trench cover was produced for the various models of the French Berthier as well.

Once stagnation set in on the Western Front and the combatant armies became mired in the trench systems that stretched from the Swiss border to the English Channel, the existing conditions made it extremely difficult to properly maintain weapons and equipment. One of the salient features of life in the trenches was the seemingly never-ending mud, which quickly found its way into everything, including rifle actions.

Since necessity is the mother of invention, a wide variety of different trench covers were developed in an attempt to prevent rifles from jamming due to mud, dirt or debris.

This particular sheet metal design could be left in place during a firefight since it cycles rearward and then back into battery along with the operation of the bolt. Sheet metal examples were introduced by both the French and Germans.

In addition to the articulating design, there were numerous other trench covers produced out of canvas, leather and other fabrics as well. As is verified in period photos, when nothing else was available, many soldiers simply wrapped rags around the action of their rifle when not in combat. Of course, all these different types of covers had to be removed in order to use the weapon.

—John Sheehan

GUNS

# 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](mailto:ed@gunsmagazine.com) or snail mail to: GUNS Q&A, 12345 World Trade Drive, San Diego, CA 92128

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20 AVS-CMR-R1 10

Milradian Scale Scope Raticle with Green Illumination

Illuminated Centair Dot diam. = 0.28 MIL = 1MOA  
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Range (m)	Reading HW: 10 MIL	Reading SW: 20 MOA	Hold over Values:
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50	15.24	4.23	17.75 9.69 0.90 8.1
100	7.62	2.12	11.37 4.83 0 0
200	3.81	1.06	6.09 2.41 2.00 0.6
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# FOR THE SERVING SOLDIER THE 2010 MILITARY Christmas Gift Guide.

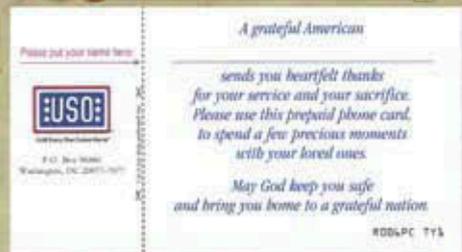
JOHN CONNOR

I've been in both positions—the grunt perched on a rock half the world away from home opening a Christmas package, and the guy on the home front, wrapping the gift and imagining the look on the recipient's face—and I swear, I don't know which one feels better... Too, I don't know which is more soul-satisfying when you're deployed—to get a thoughtful gift from a friend or family member, or receiving a Christmas surprise from a complete stranger; a patriotic American who really cares.

Whether you've got loved ones on your list or you just want to enrich the holidays for one of our troops in the field, we've got some great suggestions for you here. And don't forget to line packages with books, magazines (like *GUNS*, maybe?) unscented lotions, gum, playing cards, eye drops and other goodies, OK?

Just a reminder: The USO—United Service Organizations—has several great programs for our troops overseas, like Operation Phone Home, which delivers prepaid calling cards so our personnel can call their families back home. If you'd like to send one with a thank-you message, or donate to support their entertainment tours, "cyber-cafés" which provide troops with internet/e-mail access, go to [www.uso.org](http://www.uso.org) or call (888) 484-3876.

If you want to do something truly meaningful on the home front, go to [www.operationhomefront.net](http://www.operationhomefront.net), (800) 722-6098. This organization, mostly volunteers, provides much-needed emergency financial and other assistance to our deployed warriors' families when they need it most. You can give money, volunteer time or both. It's a fairly new outfit, but now has chapters across the US, and has filled more than 257,000 needs!



Your name would look nice on the signature line and a hard-pressed Soldier would thank you for being able to talk with home for just a little bit. The USO, best known for their entertainment tours, also provides free phone cards to our troops—with your personal thanks for their service.



## Grayman

Tank-tough and built for battle, Grayman Knives are highly regarded by our troops. The Warrior, top, is a favorite fighting and utility knife. One soldier's life was recently saved by his Suenami, shown in two sizes here, when his vehicle overturned and his crew chief used it cut him free of the wreckage. Up to 15 letters of engraving is free, and orders for military personnel take priority. Grayman Knives, P.O. Box 50, PMB 132, Lake Arrowhead, CA 92352, [www.graymanknives.com](http://www.graymanknives.com).



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Here's a pair of combat cutters any Marine would be proud to own: the folding CQT 303 and the big fixed-blade Marine Heat, both from TOPS Knives. The 303's 3.25" blade is black nickel boride coated 154CM, and the Heat's hefty 6.5" blade is 1095 carbon alloy steel. See them at [www.topsknives.com](http://www.topsknives.com), (208) 542-0113.



## Maxpedition

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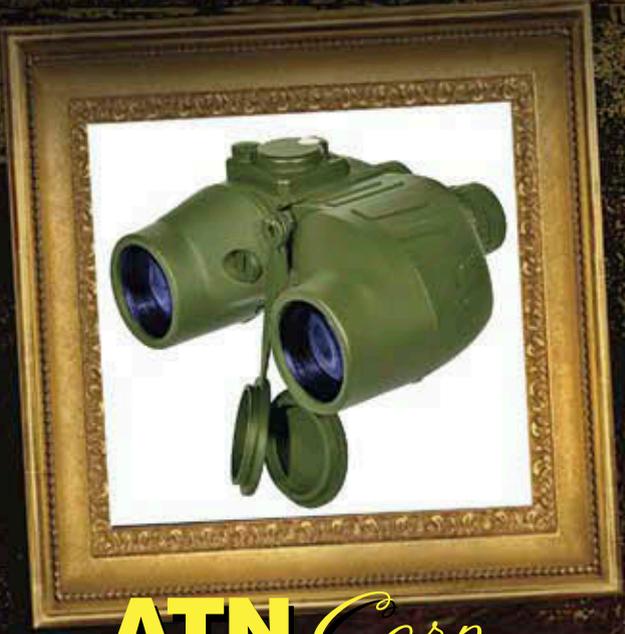
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## Mantis/Novatac

Sometimes power and potency come in compact little packages. Nova Tac's superbly-built 120M Military Ops flashlight packs three light levels up to 120 lumens plus a disorienting strobe mode into a 3-ounce, 3.3" heavy-duty device. The MK-FS Evis I from Mantis Knives was a collaboration between Mantis owner Jared West and Marine Iraq veteran Adam Chavez. Combat taught him many times you need a tough, sharp little claw, and you need it right now! Mantis responded with the AUS-8 steel Evis I and its go-anywhere Infini-Clip sheath. [www.novatac.com](http://www.novatac.com), (760) 431-7370 and [www.mantisknives.com](http://www.mantisknives.com), (714) 701-9136.



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# LES BAER TAG TEAM



*The 24" barrel is made by Les Baer Custom and features 5-groove rifling with a twist of 1:10" chambered in .308 Winchester. The knife is a Grayman Knives, West Nile Warrior, Black Gator Grips, ([www.graymanknives.com](http://www.graymanknives.com)). Les Baer uses a Stiller action. The bolt (above) is one piece with a fluted body. A Wyatt 5-round detachable magazine and Wyatt bottom metal are provided.*



## A SUPERBLY ACCURATE

# AWLORRAHLE

**Dave Anderson**    **Photos: Joseph R. Novelozo**

**T**he 1985 US Practical Handgun Nationals were held north of Phoenix, at what was then called the Black Canyon range, and has since been renamed in honor of Ben Avery. One of the shooters in my squad was a fellow named Les Baer.

I was familiar with the name from mentions in *American Handgunner* and knew he was a well-respected custom pistolmaker. Like most of his peers at the time, Les operated a 1-man shop, building 1911-style pistols for competition on customer-supplied guns. Over the course of the match, I found Les to be a darn good shot and good company as well.

A year or two later, Baer took a position with Springfield Armory as director of the Springfield custom shop. The custom shop provided several well-thought-out custom gun options, as well as building to customer orders. Then, in January 1991, he struck out on his own, establishing Les Baer Custom.

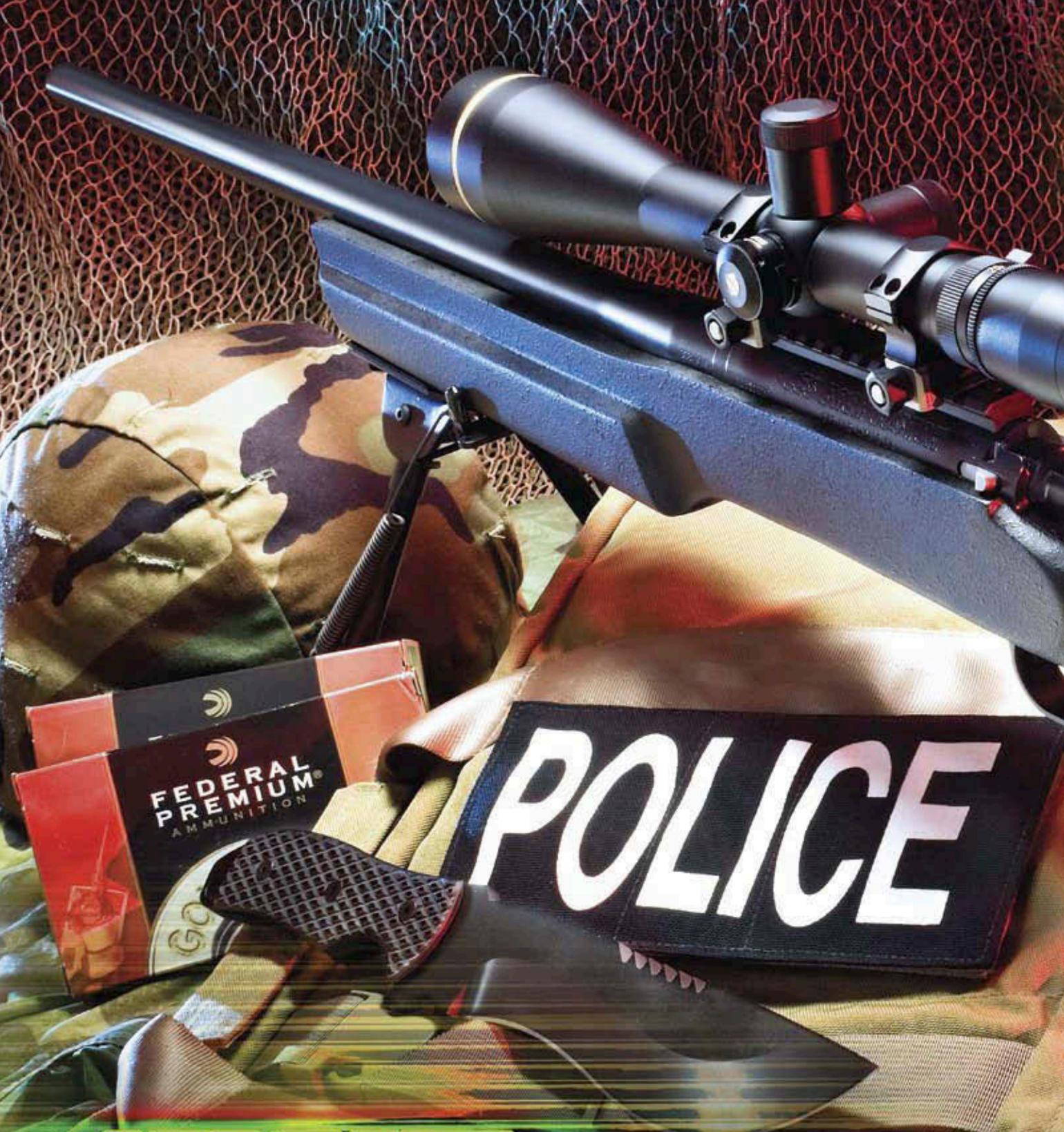
This was an era when manufacturing was going through a revolution summed up by the terms CAD-CAM (computer assisted design-computer assisted manufacturing) and the development of CNC (computer numeric controlled) machine tools. CNC machines were (and are) expensive, though as with most everything involving computers they continually become better, faster and cheaper relative to performance.

Les Baer was one of the first to understand the impact this manufacturing revolution could have on the custom gun business (along with a few other visionaries such as Bill Wilson, Chip McCormick and Ed Brown). CNC machining could shape a pistol frame, for example, to very precise dimensions. Instead of making one frame at a time, with multiple tedious machining setups, the complete job could be done on several frames at once with just one setup.

## Handwork Still The Rule

A misconception about modern manufacturing is that little or no handwork is involved. In fact, the final fitting and detailing on custom quality firearms is done by hand, as it always has been. The difference is the components, which are more

# PRECISION .308 WIN.



# LES BAUER TACTICAL CALL

# GUNS

MAGAZINE



THE



A



B



C

**A)** The Vari-X III scope came mounted from the factory on a Picatinny-style base designed for long-range shooting with 20 MOA elevation built in. A standard base is optional. **B)** A Harris Bi-Pod is standard with the Tactical Rifle. **C)** A Bell & Carlson stock with an aluminum bedding block is standard. The action is glass bedded and the butt is adjustable for length of pull and comb height.

precise to begin with.

I recall a controversy in the '60s and '70s when custom rifle stockmakers began using machines to rough-shape stock blanks. Some purists insisted a true custom stockmaker began with a wood blank and used only hand tools. If a power-driven machine touched the wood even once, why, it was no longer a true custom stock.

Others felt it was a waste of a stockmaker's time to do rough shaping. Better to have machines bring the wood to rough shape, than have the artist attend to inletting, final shaping, finishing and checkering. This particular controversy appears to be settled—with custom stocks more beautifully fitted, finished and detailed than ever.

In terms of high-grade pistols, such as those from Les Baer, it means the gunmaker can use his time to precisely fit slide to frame, without the welding up of frame rails and squeezing of slides we once considered routine.

With his pistol operation solidly established, Les Baer next turned to AR-style rifles, applying the same principles of precision manufacturing components, hand fitted and finished. These rifles proved as successful as the pistols, expanding the Baer reputation for outstanding quality and accuracy.

In 2010 Baer turned his attention

to the more traditional base for super-accurate rifles, the bolt-action. A valid argument is, with such incredibly accurate semi-autos available why do we even need bolt rifles? I'm not sure there is a good counter-argument other than some buyers want accurate bolt-action rifles, and that is reason enough.

### Stellar Stiller Action

The rifle consigned and illustrated here is the Les Baer Tactical Bolt Action rifle in caliber .308 Winchester. Rather than re-invent the wheel, Baer chose the proven, superb Stiller action. The TAC30 is Stiller's short action. There's also the TAC300 long action and TAC338 for the big .338 Lapua cartridge.

Stiller tactical actions are machined of stainless steel with a black-oxide coating. Manufacturing is on CNC machining. Receiver interior and rails are finished to extremely close tolerances using wire EDM (electrical discharge machining) technology.

Bolts are spiral fluted and bolt faces carry an M16-style hook extractor. The right/bottom lug is slotted to fit a rail in the receiver, making for smooth, non-binding bolt operation.

### LBC Barrel

The barrel is by Les Baer Custom, a 24" match-grade with 5-groove rifling, medium heavy with a straight taper. These are single-point cut rifled barrels. LBC sure knows how to make barrels, as their AR experience has amply demonstrated. A thick, heavy, precision-ground recoil lug is sandwiched between barrel and receiver.

Cutting the chamber is a critical operation in a super-accurate rifle (I suppose all operations are critical but this one is especially important). Les Baer worked with Dave Kiff (another fanatic about precision) of Pacific

Tool and Gauge on the chambering reamers. Baer says Kiff designed and made an ideal chambering reamer. The cartridge is precisely chambered with the bullet aligned with the bore so it gets a smooth, consistent launch.

Other precision components include Wyatt floorplate and Wyatt 5-round, single-stack detachable magazine, and a Timney match trigger. The website indicates triggers are factory-tuned to 2-1/2 pounds. The trigger on the test rifle was almost exactly 3 pounds, beautifully crisp and very consistent. On a varmint rifle a 1-1/2-pound trigger is nice, but on a rifle, which may be used by police or military users, under conditions of great stress, this trigger is about perfect.

The stock is by Bell & Carlson, with adjustments to fit individual shooters. This stock uses an aluminum bedding block, but only as a starting point; the receiver is fully glass bedded in the stock. The barrel is free-floated starting from just ahead of the chamber.

### LBC TACTICAL RIFLE

**MAKER:** LES BAER CUSTOM  
1804 IOWA DR., LECLAIRE, IA 52753  
(563) 289-2126, WWW.LESBAER.COM

**STYLE:** Bolt-action repeater

**CALIBERS:** .243, .260, .308  
(Planned: .338 Lapua,  
.338 Norma Mag,  
6.5 -284, .300 Win Mag)

**ACTION:** Stiller

**TRIGGER:** Timney

**MAGAZINE:** Wyatt, 5-round,  
detachable

**BARREL LENGTH:** 24"

**TWIST:** 1:10"

**METAL FINISH:** Dupont S

**STOCK:** Adjustable Bell  
& Carlson

**OVERALL:** 43" (shortest)

**WEIGHT:** 13 pounds

**RETAIL:** \$3,560



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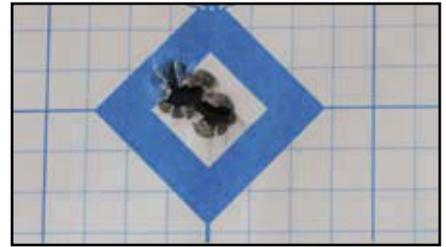
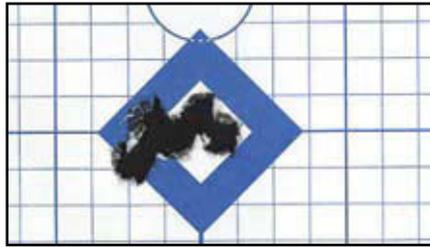
By loosening hex-head screws, the buttplate can be moved to adjust length of pull and rotated to adjust cant. At its shortest position, the length of pull is 13-1/8" measured from center of buttplate to center of trigger. It can be adjusted out a further 1-13/16" for a maximum length of pull of just less than 15".

The straight comb is also adjustable. At its lowest position, drop at comb is 1/2". Range of adjustment is 1-1/4". Overall it is a very fine stock, well made of quality materials. A Harris bipod is standard equipment.

### Sighting

The sight base is a Picatinny-style rail securely attached with a choice of either standard rail or one with 20 MOA vertical elevation. Most police departments, whose shots in urban environments are generally at moderate ranges, will likely prefer the standard rail while long-range shooters will like the 20 MOA rail to take full advantage of scope adjustments.

The test rifle came fitted with a Leupold Vari-X III Long Range scope, 6.5-20x50. Focus adjustment knob is on the left side of the 30mm main tube next to the elevation and windage turrets. I've used this same model on a number of target and



*These are a couple of the larger groups (left) shot with the Les Baer Tactical Rifle, measuring around .75" to .80" from outside edge to outside edge, a bit under the 1/2" mark center to center. Note groups are strung out a bit horizontally, since the shooter (i.e., Dave) misread the wind a couple of times. Vertical dispersion is around .20". This 5-shot group at 100 yards (right) was shot with Federal 168-grain Gold Match ammunition. Center-to-center, the group measures less than .20". Out of around 25 groups fired with three different match loads only one group exceeded the 1/2" mark, it was around 0.6" due to one shot lost by shooter error.*

varmint rifles over the years, always with complete satisfaction. (The Vari-X III has been replaced with the VX-3 so specifications for the latest model are listed).

Obviously, a rifle such as this requires ammunition of comparable quality, I had Federal Gold Match ammunition on hand with both 168-grain and 175-grain bullets, and Black Hills Match with 168-grain bullets. All these loads are with the wonderful Sierra MatchKing bullet.

A target enclosed with the rifle had a 10-shot group fired at 100 yards with Federal 168-grain loads.

At least it said it was 10 shots, though there was no way to count. The entire group measured just 3/8"—not center to center, but outside edge to outside edge. We're talking a 10-shot group under 0.10" inches center to center.

Honestly Les, why do you do these things to me? What am I supposed to do, try and beat that? Well, I can't. I doubt I could do it on a 100-yard indoor range if I had access to one, which I don't. And 5-shot groups are stressful enough. So I shot in the wind (not very hard, maybe 3 to 5 mph with occasional gusts, but it never stopped

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and was never consistent), and I stayed with 5-shot groups at 100 yards.

Still, results weren't too shabby. Ten, 5-shot groups with the Federal 168-grain loads averaged .37" with a worst group right at .5" and best groups of .19". I didn't shoot as many groups with the 175-grain Federal loads or the Black Hills loads, but there was no significant difference in group size. In fact of all the groups I shot, the worst was .6" (the only one over 1/2") and on that group I lost one shot (the other four were .38").

Twisting the Leupold's elevation turret up 58 clicks, I turned to a steel target (an old steel cylinder around 8" or 10" in diameter at 585 yards). It's not really a hard shot as it is more than a minute-of-angle target. I ran through two magazine loads of five rounds each and got 10 consecutive hits, most with the solid "clang" of a hit near the center of the cylinder.

### Function

Bolt recycling and cartridge feeding was smooth and positive. The action is fitted with a Remington 700-style safety, which permits the action to be cycled whether the safety is on or off.

The release for the detachable box magazine is in the triggerguard and functioned reliably. The manual

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provided advises the shooter to insert the magazine until it clicks in place, then pull down to ensure it is locked. It's a good habit, one familiar to many AR rifle shooters.

I found if I worked at it I could induce a problem, by first opening the bolt, then inserting the magazine and pushing it up further than intended. There was about 1/8" vertical play. If I kept upward pressure on the magazine box with the left hand the bolt couldn't be closed.

The obvious solution would be to follow instructions and not push up

on the magazine. Still, I can envision a circumstance in which an officer might have to quickly deploy his rifle over an improvised rest, his backpack for example, and inadvertently have pressure on the magazine, which in turn could make it difficult to cycle the bolt.

I phoned Les Baer and found the problem had already been addressed. Wyatt redesigned the magazine and latch slightly so this situation can't occur. The rifle I had on consignment was a very early one (one of the first 25 or so made) and had been circulating among several writers. Les Baer is very much aware of the responsibility of making rifles for police and military use and will unequivocally ensure any problems encountered will be addressed.

Accuracy is easy enough to measure objectively. There's another factor that is more subjective. It isn't just how accurate this rifle is, it's how easy it is to shoot accurately. Take a bit of time to adjust the stock, dry fire a bit to get used to the trigger, shoot a few tiny groups to get sighted in, and feel the confidence of knowing you can make the shot. It's a great feeling to know that when the rifle recoils the bullet is going to strike right where the crosshairs are on the target.

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# Modern hunting clothes help in many ways.

**John Barsness**

**One problem with hunting is it's done outdoors, not just in North America but all over the world. We must prepare for varying conditions; otherwise we'll end up not just uncomfortable, but maybe even dead.**

The key word in modern hunting clothes is "layering." The easiest way to prepare for weather and temperatures that change across the day and seasons is to buy several layers of clothing, adding or subtracting layers as conditions change. However, this isn't like a shoplifter walking out of a store while wearing several shirts. Instead, the layers in hunting clothes should work together to keep us reasonably comfortable.

For most hunting in North America,

this starts with what's known as a "base layer." Your grandfather called this long underwear, but today's long underwear is fundamentally different than the stuff most hunters wore 50 years ago. Back then, the standard long underwear was made of quilted cotton, exactly the wrong thing to wear next to your skin.

Cotton fiber soaks up moisture almost as readily as a sponge, and the only way the water leaves is by slow evaporation. This is fine if we're

hunting in warm, dry weather while wearing only a single layer of cotton. It's bad, however, if we're hunting in typical North American autumn weather, wearing other clothes on top of our long underwear. In cool-to-cold weather, cotton long underwear soaks up our perspiration and keeps it right next to our skin. This isn't comfortable at any temperature below 50 degrees, and in sub-freezing weather can kill us through hypothermia. Wet cotton also lacks any of the airspace that insulates our body.

Instead of catching and holding moisture, today's base layers are designed to transport ("wick") evaporating sweat away from our skin. Moisture essentially follows the outside of the fibers, rather than soaking into them, evaporating on the outside of our clothing. This both cools us when climbing a hill, and keeps us warm when we stop to glass at the top of the hill. We end up being comfortable in much wider range of temperatures.

Lately I have been wearing Under Armour as a base layer. Under Armour was originally developed for athletes, but the company started offering a line of clothing specifically for hunters a few years ago. It comes in different



*These Colorado elk hunters are all wearing a combination of synthetic and wool clothing.*

*A lot of remote hunting essentially means your clothes are your heating system. These Alaska hunters sleep in small, unheated tents, and live in their synthetic clothes.*



# BOUNT GARR

weights for different conditions. The first fall I wore Under Armour in conditions varying from a mild-weather deer hunt in the Texas Hill Country to a late-season elk hunt in the high Rockies. I was comfortable in a wider range of conditions than with any other base layer I've ever worn.

However, modern base layers have to be combined with outer clothing that also allows wicking and quick evaporation of moisture. A couple of years ago a friend of mine bought some Under Armour exercise underwear for the first time. He lives in Arizona and exercises outdoors all year round, and after a few days of hiking and biking complained that the new stuff "doesn't work." It turned out he was wearing it under the same old cotton running shorts, T-shirts and sweatshirts he'd been wearing for years. These soaked up and held the sweat his high-tech underwear wicked away from his skin.

Most high-tech hunting clothes have been made of synthetic materials since the 1980s, but wool also acts a lot like synthetic wicking fibers, transporting instead of soaking up moisture. Merino wool, especially, has made a comeback in the past decade, even for base layers. Merino doesn't itch like



*Brad Ruddell of Weatherby came up with the idea of removable wool chaps, and they work very well. Apparently, however, not many hunters grasped the concept.*



*This kudu was taken in Botswana on a very warm afternoon, while wearing a cotton shirt and hiking shorts. The hunting shoes are traditional veldschoen made of light kudu leather, with thin rubber soles, both cool and quiet.*

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COVER UP RIGHT

more common, thicker wools, and companies such as Smartwool have been taking some market share from the synthetic companies, and some traditional wool-clothing companies have also been seeing a recent increase in sales.

Wool is also a great outer layer for cool-weather hunting clothing, since it not only allows moisture to evaporate, but is also very quiet when it brushes up against vegetation. It also works as an outer layer for hunting in mild rain or wet snow. (One of the handiest wool items I've ever found is the wool chaps Weatherby sold when they were in the clothing business. These could be worn

over light pants on cold mornings, then easily slipped off when temperatures warm in the middle of the day.)

Rain gear, however, has always been something of a problem for hunters. Traditional, absolutely waterproof clothing keeps rain off our dry bodies, but is noisy in the woods. It also doesn't allow sweat to escape, so if we get hot while hiking, we end up soaked on the inside of our rain gear as well as the outside.

Gore-Tex is supposedly the answer for this. It's a very thin synthetic sheet with tiny micro-pores that sheds raindrops, yet allows evaporating sweat to escape. However, the very thin sheet of actual Gore-Tex must be attached to tougher material in order to survive the outdoors. There are several varieties of tough synthetic cloth that work very well as Gore-Tex laminates, but like traditional raingear they tend to be noisy.

The hunting solution consisted of adding a thin layer of quieter fuzz to the outside of Gore-Tex clothing, but the fuzz itself tends to soak up water. You may be dry on the inside but soaking wet on the outside, and the water adds significant weight to the clothing.

Also, Gore-Tex is water-resistant only if not under pressure. If, for instance, a hunter sits down on wet grass or snow in his Gore-Tex suit, his butt will get wet, because 20 pounds per square inch will press water through the micro-pores. If he crawls on his hands and knees on wet ground—a frequent occurrence when stalking open-country game—his knees will be soaked. As a result, hunters who must deal with serious rain still often use traditional rain gear.

The solution I often use is a Gore-Tex parka from Browning or Cabela's, combined with soft-weave synthetic pants, plus a pair of traditional rain pants made by Columbia. I wore this



The "outer layers" are (from left) Cabela's Gore-Tex Parka, Columbia rain jacket and L.L. Bean wool coat. The boots are Irish Setter Wingshooters, Kenetrek Mountain Extreme 400s and Schnee's Hunter II Pac Boots.



Cool-weather boots are the most useful for all-around North American hunting. These Kenetreks have a rugged lugged sole, and heavy upper leather for ankle support.



Looking over an Alaskan valley—and Kenetrek boots and Columbia rain pants.

combo the last time I hunted caribou in Canada's Northwest Territories, and it worked fine. I kept the thin rain pants folded in my daypack until they were needed.

Some of my companions, however, wore complete Gore-Tex hunting suits all day long. In real rain the exterior fuzz soaked up water, and their rain-soaked pants kept slipping lower on their butts, the bottoms tangling in the caribou moss. By the end of the hunt they all vowed to invest in some traditional rain pants before their next wet-weather hunt.

A daypack is an essential part of the layering system, since you'll need some place to store those extra layers of clothing. The pack should also be fuzzy on the outside, to minimize noise. I stuff thinner clothing, such as rain pants and a fleece vest, inside the pack, but tie my coat or jacket to the outside. This allows the layers to be easily adjusted according to temperature and exercise. Even with a wicking base layer, you don't want to sweat like a racehorse.

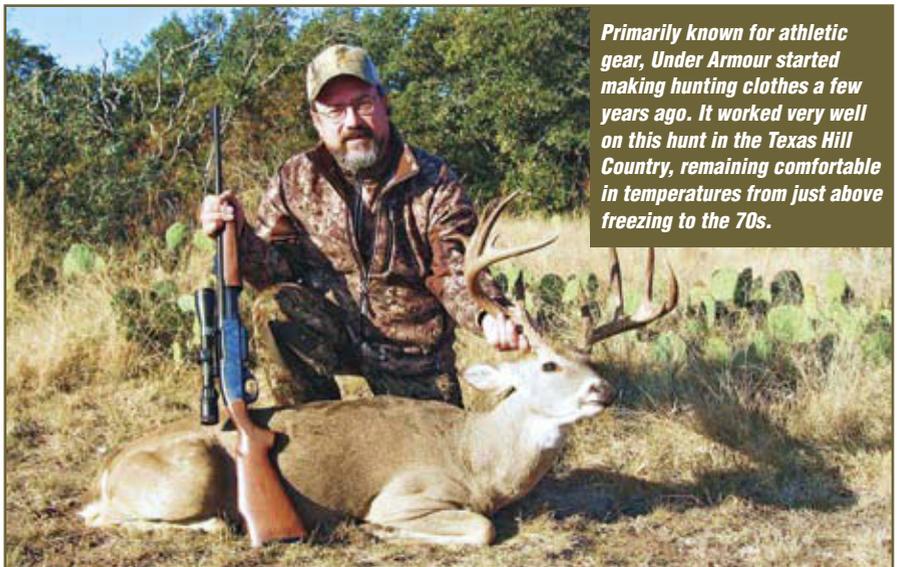
Many of the same principles apply to hunting boots. I'm a boot junkie and own way too many, but could get by with three pairs for hunting everywhere from in 90-degree heat in Africa to sub-zero cold in Montana or Canada: a warm-weather boot, a cool-weather boot, and a pair of rubber-bottomed, insulated pacs.

Cool-weather boots are the most useful all-around boot for North American hunting. They generally have some variation of the lugged Vibram sole for traction, and the sole-rubber may even extend up around the sides of the foot. The boot will be lined with light insulation, usually Thinsulate, and the upper will be really stiff leather to provide ankle support on steep slopes.

The more you hunt, the more it pays to invest in really good cool-weather boots. There are several good brands, among the most popular are the Danner Pronghorns and the Meindl boots sold by Cabela's, but for the past few seasons I've been wearing Kenetrek Mountain Extreme 400s. These retail for more than \$300 a pair, but when I was hunting grizzly and black bears in Alaska for two weeks in the fall of 2009, I was the only hunter in camp who never got wet feet or blisters. One of the other hunters wore a pair of cheap boots, and, after only two days of hunting, ended up with so many blisters on his feet that he had to quit.

Good warm-weather boots are becoming more difficult to find. Light running-style hiking boots often include Gore-Tex laminated

*These elk hunters in the high country of Colorado wear a combination of synthetic fibers and wool.*



*Primarily known for athletic gear, Under Armour started making hunting clothes a few years ago. It worked very well on this hunt in the Texas Hill Country, remaining comfortable in temperatures from just above freezing to the 70s.*



*These two bull elk were taken on the Whittington Center in New Mexico, and the weather varied from the mid-50s and dry to around zero and snowy. Both John Nosler and John Barsness wore layers of mostly synthetic clothes.*

to Cordura. This makes them waterproof and rugged, but who needs waterproofing when hunting in Africa during the dry season, or hiking the plains after pronghorn in September? Also, Cordura isn't worth a darn at turning away cactus spines or acacia thorns, and tends to make feet hot.

### Leather

The best warm-weather boots are made of unlined leather, with a less-aggressive and perhaps even softer sole than a cool-weather boot. Like that other natural fiber, wool, leather allows moisture to evaporate. Unlined leather hunting boots, however, are becoming difficult to find in stores, replaced by boots made of laminated synthetic fibers, partly because synthetic boots are cheaper to produce. If you look a little harder, however, you can find single-layer leather boots made by Red Wing, Irish Setter and W.C. Russell.

Russell boots can even be custom made to fit your feet. My wife Eileen has two pairs of custom-made Russell Bird Shooters, because her feet simply do not match mass-manufactured leather boots. Off-the-shelf boots are mostly designed for men, but many women have feet with a narrower heel and higher arch than the average guy. Some women can wear men's boots, but some women can't.

I know a woman who went mountain goat hunting in a pair of men's hunting boots that didn't fit. She developed horrible blisters, and permanently lost a few toenails. If your wife or girlfriend decides she wants to hunt, make sure her boots fit, because all the high-tech clothing in the world doesn't help if your feet are wounded and miserable. These days several companies do make real hunting boots designed for women, including Kenetrek—the reason Eileen also owns a pair of Mountain Extreme 400s.

The most practical cold- or wet-weather boots are rubber-bottomed pacs. For sitting on stands you'll need heavily insulated boots with a little extra room. The room can be used for thick wool socks or even some chemical



*This eastern Montana whitetail was taken on a below-zero morning in late November, the reason the outer layers are all wool.*

foot-warmers. As with waterproof raingear, real rubber boots are the only thing that will keep your feet dry when walking in wet snow or in rain-soaked countryside all day.

There are several good brands of pac boots, including the original L.L. Beans, but I wear Schnee's. These were designed in Montana by elk hunters and really work. In typical overkill, I have three pairs, one unlined, one with removable Thinsulate liners, and one pair with heavy insulation built right into the boot, as well as Thinsulate liners. The last are really only useful for sitting in stands, because they're too clumsy and heavy for hiking. The leather uppers of all three (as well as the leather on all my other hunting boots) is treated with Montana Pitch-Blend, a combination of mink oil and pine-pitch that outlasts any of the wax-based leather waterproofing I've ever tried. Schnee's recommends Pitch-Blend for their boots.

Good boots, however, aren't worth a darn without good socks. The

first rule here, as with clothing, is *no cotton*. Cotton not only retains foot perspiration but when wet tends to stick to your skin and cause blisters.

Many hunters wear a pair of very thin polypropylene socks under their standard socks. These wick away moisture, and will also slide slightly across your skin, rather than grabbing it and causing blisters. However, I usually wear Thorlo synthetic or synthetic-wool blend hiking socks for all but the coldest hunting, and have yet to develop serious blisters. Eileen, on the other hand, finds that Smartwool Merino-wool socks work better for her.

One of the discoveries made in the development of modern hunting clothing is that certain products work better for certain people, due to differences in body chemistry and the ways we sweat. Just because one kind of base layer or sock works for somebody else doesn't mean it's the best for you, though all of them tend to work better if there's no cotton involved. **GUNS**

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*With 220-grain Hornady roundnose bullets, Duke got 3-shot groups as small as 1.25" at 100 yards with the new Browning/Winchester Model 1895 .30-40 Krag.*

**Mike "Duke" Venturino**  
**Photos: Yvonne Venturino**

**T**wo opinions I hold about Winchester Model 1895s are these: John M. Browning must have been having a bad day or a nightmare when he designed such an awkward looking and handling levergun and somebody at Browning Arms Company got it right about what cartridge their newest ones should handle.

Let's examine my last comment first. In the years since Browning and (US Repeating Arms) have been importing these new '95s, from Miroku in Japan, they have been chambered for .30-06, .30-40 Krag, .270 Winchester and .405 Winchester. Only the second and fourth mentioned rounds were good ideas. The .30-06 was acceptable and the .270 Winchester was downright idiotic.

Here's my reasoning. Except for the 293,816 military musket Model 1895s made in 7.62x54mm Russian caliber and sold to Imperial Russia during World War I, the .30-40 Krag was the most prolific caliber of the model. Three out of every four of the remaining 127,065 Winchester Model 1895s made for United States sales were .30-40 Krag although in those days Winchester stamped them .30 US. The .405 Winchester was also a good modern chambering idea because Teddy Roosevelt made the round famous by



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# THE GUN ARTIST

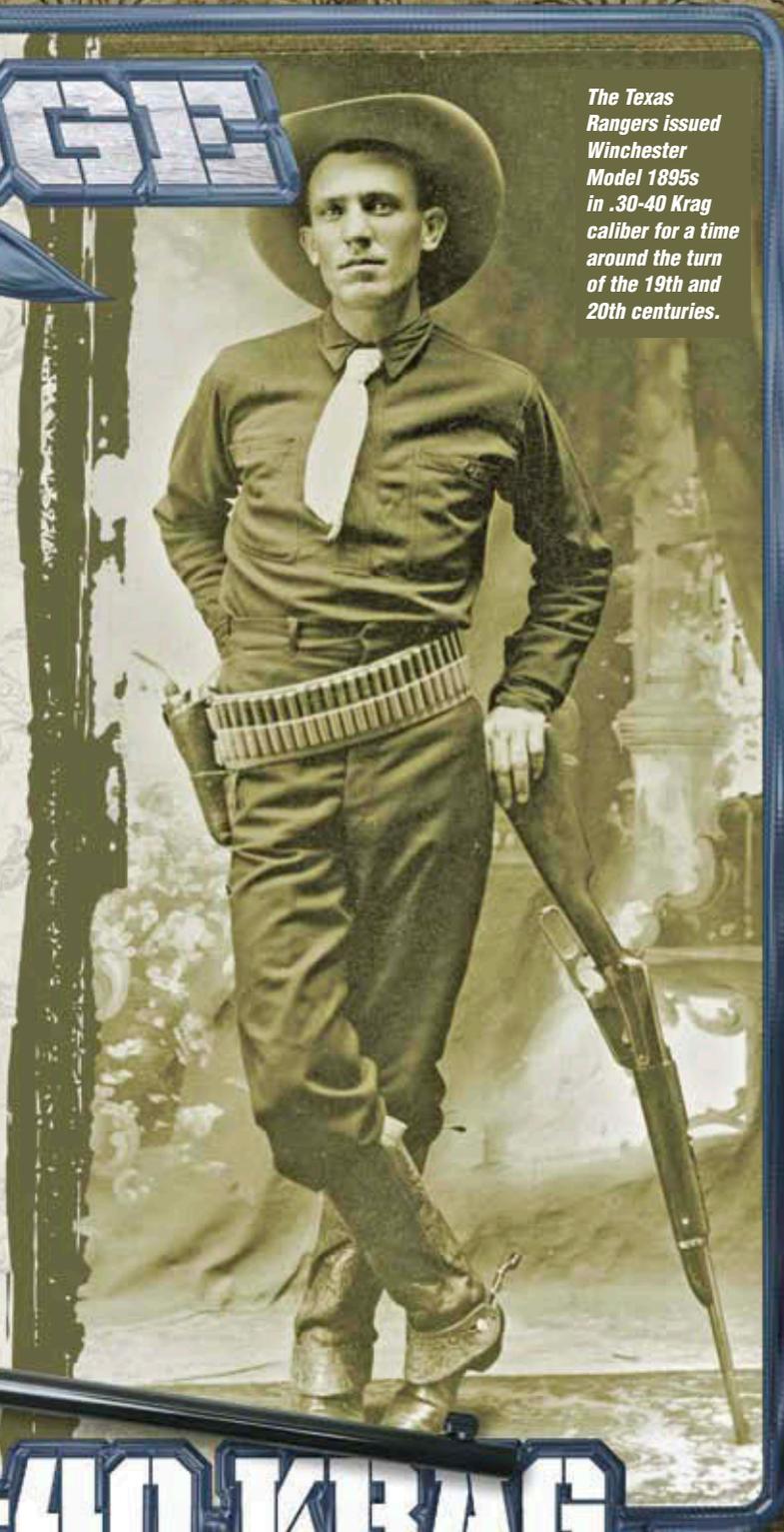
*The Texas Rangers issued Winchester Model 1895s in .30-40 Krag caliber for a time around the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries.*

his African lion hunting with such. That fame insured sales success with the new '95s

In my opinion, the .30-06 is merely “acceptable” as a cartridge for the new '95s. It for sure was a cartridge for original '95s but not an overly successful one. It gave such high pressures that the steels then used in bolt manufacture for the Model 1895s tended to compress if the rifles were fired much. The result was excessive headspace. My objection to it as a modern '95 caliber is not that. It is because it is a high-velocity round capable of flat shooting. A scope may not be necessary for a .30-06 rifle, but its effective range certainly can't be fully realized without one.

## **But .270?**

The choice of .270 Winchester was plainly stupid in my opinion and evidently in the collective opinion of American gun buyers. It was never an original cartridge offered by Winchester in the Model 1895. When you're going to reproduce a firearm whose sales will be generated by nostalgia, what sense does it make to chamber it for a round never identified with it during its first generation? Also, the .270 is even more flat shooting than the .30-06, so rifles for it most definitely benefit from optical sights. The new Model '95's open buckhorn rear sight, coupled with a generously sized silver bead front sight on these new '95s, will allow



# 1895 .30-40 KRAG



Duke feels the long lever throw of the Model 1895 (above) is a bit awkward compared to most other Winchester lever guns. The Model 1895 was Winchester's first departure from their traditional lever-action look. Below (top rifle) is a Model 1894 saddle ring carbine, compared with the Model 1895 saddle ring carbine (bottom).



precise aiming on game out to 100 to 150 yards maximum.

(I know exactly how that .270 decision came to pass. Some non-shooting decision-maker asked what other .30-06-size cartridges would safely fit and function in the '95 action, then looked at the factory ammunition sales figures for such cartridges. The .270 was right after the .30-06 and so got his nod. That's how many American gun manufacturing companies are being run nowadays. And that's also how hundreds of non-selling Model 1895 .270s sat in warehouses until some better thinker decided to rebarrel them to .405 Winchester.)

The Model 1895 was Winchester's first departure from their traditional late 1800s lever-action look. In fact, until the Model 88 appeared around 1960 it was their only departure from that look. That look consisted of a tubular magazine beneath the barrel and loading gate on the right side of the receiver. Instead, the Model 1895 had a single column box magazine that extended under the receiver. It was loaded from the top, and as such it was the first Winchester levergun that

could be safely loaded with spitzer bullets when they finally appeared in the early 1900s.

That single column box magazine gives the '95 its awkward look and some of its ungainly handling characteristics. It's located exactly at the rifle's balance point so the your hand must be on it when carried. A hunting rifle is toted more than shot, so comfortable carrying is a big factor. About the only way I've found of packing a Model 1895 is by its barrel with the receiver resting sideways on my shoulder. Interestingly, in the 1997 made for TV movie *The Roughriders* several of the unit's officers are shown armed with Winchester Model 1895 carbines. Several scenes show them being carried just that way. Be sure, however, that carrying a rifle over your shoulder with muzzle pointed forward isn't a safe way to go unless hunting alone.

Also, here in the cold Montana hunting seasons, carrying a rifle with hand on steel even with heavy gloves can be a trying experience. I've actually juggled them from hand to hand like tossing a hot potato when hunting on a below-zero day. Otherwise, my

hands would go numb from contact with the cold steel.

John M. Browning designed the Model 1895 from the beginning as a smokeless powder rifle. Therefore, some interesting insight into the mindset of the Winchester Repeating Arms Company during the 1890s is revealed by this following fact. Of the three introductory cartridges, only the .30-40 Krag (or .30 US) was a smokeless-powder round. The other two, .38-72 and .40-72, were introduced as black-powder cartridges. As time progressed these other rounds were added as offerings: .303 British (1898), .35 Winchester (1903), .405 Winchester (1904), .30-03 (1905), .30-06 (1908) and, during World War I, the Russians' 7.62x54mmR.

Here's some other trivia about the original Winchester Model 1895s. They were also offered as takedowns but none were made with set triggers. Only rifles chambered for the two black-powder cartridges could be had with octagon or half-octagon/half-round barrels. All others were full-round only. Standard barrel length for .30-40 Krag and .303 British was 28". For the two black-powder rounds, standard length was 26" and for all others it was 24". Buttplates could be the wider "shotgun" style or crescent "rifle" style. Anyone who has ever fired a '95 .405 with the crescent buttplate is not apt to ever forget it. I own a takedown Model 1895 .405 with shotgun buttplate and don't shoot it often because of its hefty recoil.

This is one other little tidbit of '95 lore. Because of its long bolt, a tang-mounted peep sight can't be mounted. Therefore, Lyman Gunsight Company developed the side-mounted peep sight Model 21 or Model 38. They bolted to the left side of the receiver with the sight aperture hanging over the action.

### .30-40 Krag Handloaded Ammo Performance

BULLET (BRAND, BULLET WEIGHT, TYPE)	POWDER (BRAND)	CHARGE (GRAINS WEIGHT)	VELOCITY (FPS)	VARIATION (FPS)
SPEER 180 RN	IMR4350	41.0	2,121	73
HORNADY 220 RN	IMR4350	40.0	1,954	85
HORNADY 220 RN	H4350	40.0	2,009	32
LYMAN CAST 210 RN	AA 5744	20.0	1,645	30

Notes: Chronograph readings taken with a PACT Professional Model chronograph with start screens at approximately 6'.

All handloads used Remington brass with CCI 200 Large Rifle Primers.

The cast bullets were poured of linotype alloy, sized .310", fitted with Lyman gas checks, and lubed with SPG.

### .30-40 Krag Factory Ammo Performance

LOAD (BRAND, BULLET WEIGHT, TYPE)	VELOCITY (FPS)	VARIATION (FPS)
WINCHESTER 180 SP	2,433	22
REMINGTON 180 SP	2,442	59

Notes: Chronograph readings taken with a PACT Professional Model chronograph with start screens at approximately 6'.

One such is on my .405 and it's nice to see these new Winchester Model 1895s come drilled and tapped for mounting a peep sight on the left side of the receiver. And that is another reason why I consider the Model 1895 design a bit unwieldy. Because of that long bolt its lever throw is almost 90 degrees making it a difficult lever gun to operate while still shouldered.

And that brings us to the description of this new '95 Winchester .30-40 Krag. Its barrel length is 24" (I'd like to have seen the traditional 28".) Sights consist of a buckhorn rear adjustable for elevation with a notched slider and a silver bead front on a ramp. Windage can be adjusted by drifting the rear sight in its dovetail but my sample came already printing center. Barrel and receiver are deeply blued with a nice polish. Rifling twist rate is 1:10". Trigger pull is about 6 pounds as taken as an average of five tries. Stock on this new Model 1895 is of rather nice walnut finished in oil and there are sections of "real" checkering on both forearm and buttstock. As with all "new" Winchesters coming out of Japan, this one has a safety mounted on, or rather in, the tang. Pushed forward and a red dot shows indicating the rifle is off safe and ready to fire. Pushed rearwards and it is on safe. Also the hammer of these new '95s is of the rebounding type. Unloaded weight is 8.5 pounds.



**Duke's handloads fired in the new Model 1895 .30-40 Krag included (from left) 180-grain Speer roundnose, 220-grain Hornady roundnose and 210-grain cast roundnose (Lyman 311284). An original US Army military FMJ round is shown for comparison.**



**Duke shot the new Model 1895 .30-40 Krag with these two current factory loads.**

Readers often complain we gunwriters never have anything bad to say about new guns, so here goes. Browning went about 95 percent in having Miroku in Japan produce a nice copy of the Winchester '95 but then they dropped the ball. A minor point is the crudeness of the forearm's schnable tip. Unlike the graceful lines of original Winchesters it is square, even blocky in shape.

The major gaff with this rifle is its buttplate. It is a simple, flat, smooth, sharp-edged, piece of steel about 1/16" thick. It makes the buttstock appear as if someone just sawed it off flat and then stuck a flat piece of steel on it as an afterthought. With the resources of a company as large as Browning certainly they could have done better. Even a 1/2"-thick rubber buttpad such as found on their BLRs, would have been better.

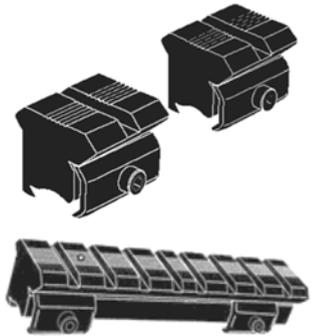
What I can't complain about with this new '95 is its shootability and functioning. That latter factor was perfect and the former one was darn good. Rounds popped right into the magazine from the top. Capacity is five. On hand were both Winchester and Remington factory loads with 180-grain spitzer bullets, and I assembled several handloads using 180-grain and 220-grain roundnose bullets. All fed from magazine to chamber perfectly.

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<b>CAPACITY:</b>	5
<b>BARREL LENGTH:</b>	24"
<b>OVERALL LENGTH:</b>	42.5"
<b>SIGHTS:</b>	Buckhorn rear/silver bead front
<b>STOCK:</b>	Checkedered walnut, oil finished
<b>WEIGHT:</b>	8.5 pounds
<b>PRICE:</b>	\$1,179

To cap things off I also put together some handloads carrying Lyman's 311284 bullet, weighing 210 grains when poured of straight linotype alloy. That bullet was designed early in the 20th century specifically for the .30-40 Krag cartridge and it still is a fine choice for lead bullet shooting. It also functioned perfectly and shot well.

The accompanying chart will show the specifics of the loads fired in regards to velocities and the powders used with the handloads. Three shots were fired per group as befits a rifle solely intended for hunting but at least three groups were fired with each factory load and handload. Groups ran from about 1-1/4" (the best one) to about 3" (more common). That's about the best my aged eyes can do with buckhorn sights. Especially gratifying was the fact the cast bullet handloads grouped around 2" to 2-1/2" and at velocities only about 300 fps slower than the 220-grain bullets. There is no way an open sighted or even peep-sighted .30-40 Krag could be considered a long-range rifle. At best, this one would be good for about 150 yards. Therefore, if I hunt with it, I'd prefer those long 220-grain roundnoses over pointed bullets.

Back when I first moved to Montana, nearly 40 years ago, many ranchers located in elk country still considered the .30-40 Krag as a prime elk cartridge. That was because its 220-grain bullets gave considerable penetration on the big beasts. More than one home I visited had a Winchester '95 .30-40 Krag still hanging over a door. It would be like old times to see one of these new Browning/Winchester '95s hanging over someone's door—if a decent buttplate were put on it.

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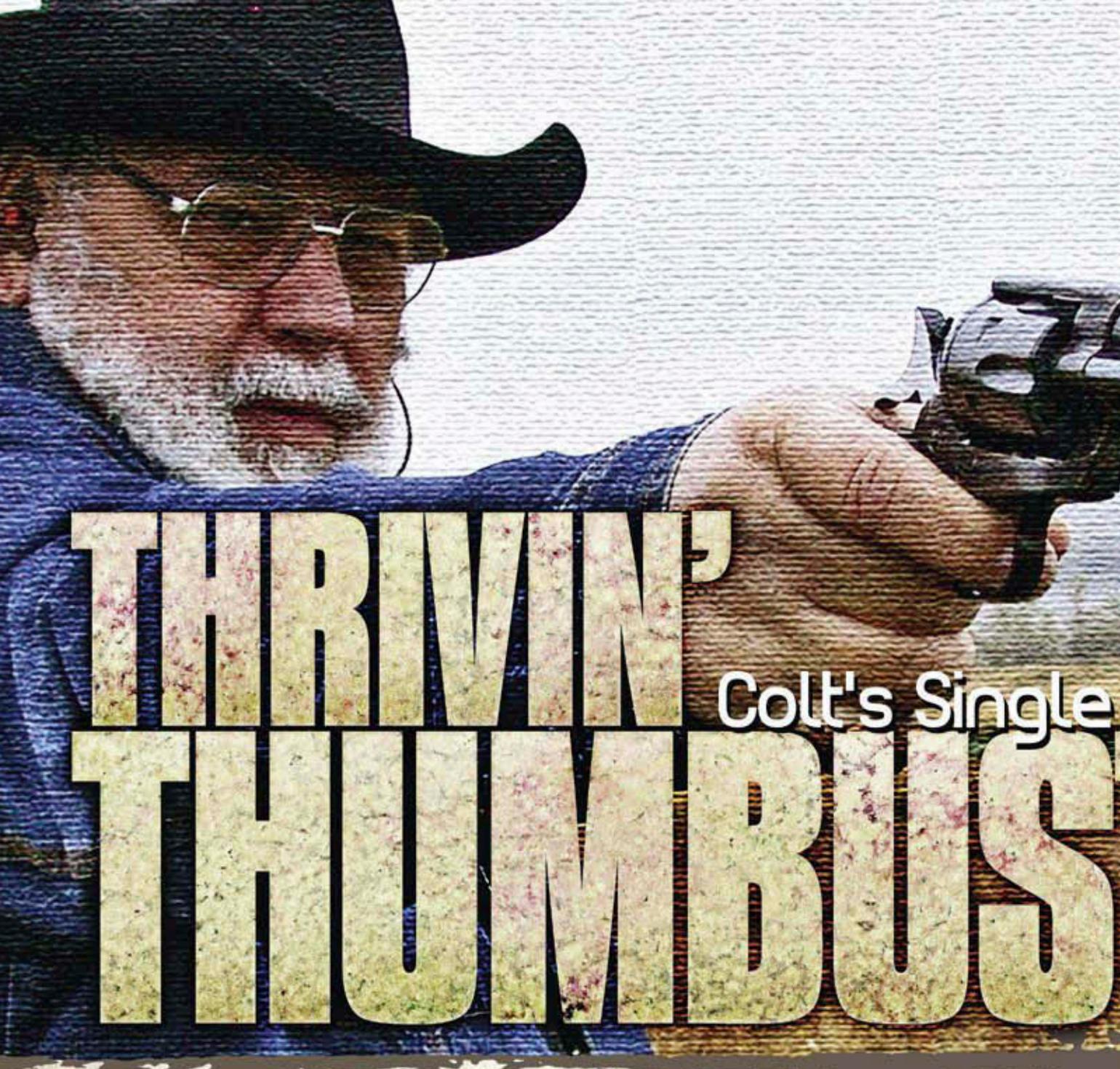
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# THRIVING THUMBUS

Colt's Single

## John Taffin

**William Mason, chief engineer at Colt, came up with one of the grandest sixguns of all time, the 1873 Single Action Army. I've often maintained the SAA is so good Mason must've fallen asleep at the drawing board and some supernatural force drew up the plans in front of him as he slept.**

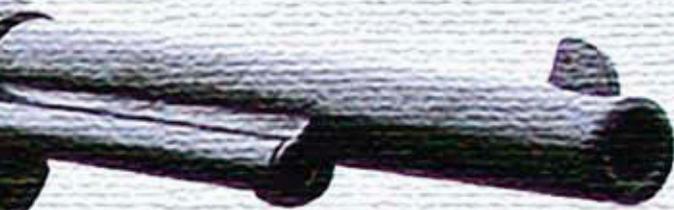
Colt's new sixgun was chambered in a new cartridge—the .45 Colt with a 255-grain bullet over 40 grains of black powder. Barrel length was 7-1/2", it had a top strap and the grip frame was borrowed from the 1851 Navy. This was a very powerful pistol, and when I have duplicated the load with modern components in old-style brass, muzzle velocity is right at 900 fps.

The US Army did not only adopt this new revolver, but it also became a favorite among civilians. Colt would produce more than 350,000 Single Action Army revolvers from

1873 to 1940. Beginning in 1878 it was also chambered in the cartridges used by the Winchester 1873 levergun—first, the .44 Winchester Centerfire, then the .38 WCF, and the .32 WCF. During the course of production of what is now known as the 1st Generation Colts, these four cartridges were the most popular and in the order mentioned. More than 30 other chamberings were also offered.

By 1940 demand for the Colt Peacemaker had dropped and the machinery was worn out, so Colt removed it from production. Thanks to the demand produced by old Westerns on the new medium of television in the early 1950s such a demand rose the first of the 2nd Generation Colts arrived in December 1955. This time production would last a much shorter period ending in 1974 when machinery was once again worn out.

This time the shutdown period was much shorter and the 3rd Generation Colts arrived in 1976. Since then, the Colt Single Action Army has followed a somewhat strange



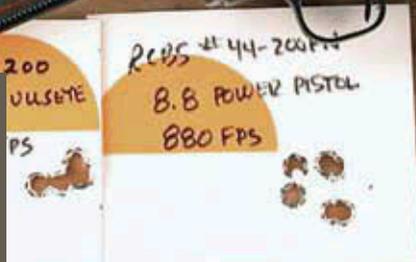
# Action Army. MILITARY

path sometimes offered as a production gun and other times from the custom shop. The bad news is quality has also been spotty, however, the great news is current Colt Single Action Army sixguns are of excellent quality with close attention paid to fit and finish. Colt has added new machinery and adopted the attitude of wanting to produce the finest Single Action possible. I'd say they've succeeded.

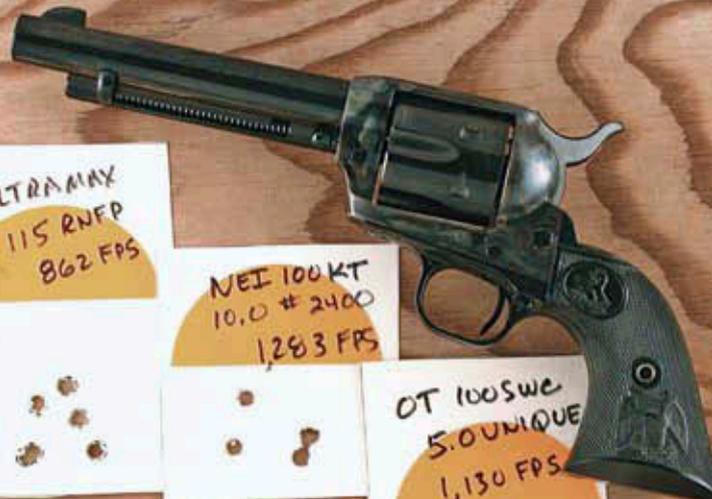
I received three test sample SAAs in the three standard barrel lengths of 4-3/4", 5-1/2", and 7-1/2" in three different chamberings. Colt is currently offering the Single Action Army in .45 Colt, .357 Magnum, .38 Special and the three WCF chamberings. The latter three are now better known as .44-40, .38-40 and .32-20. It is my understanding these latter designations came about in the 1880s when Marlin wanted to chamber their rifles in these cartridges without using the name Winchester on their barrels.

Before we look at each of the three SAAs separately, a few general remarks are appropriate. All three are excellently

*The 4-3/4" Colt SAA .44-40 showed great accuracy as these targets attest.*



*Light recoil makes for accurate, fun and easy shooting with the 5-1/2" Colt SAA .32-20.*



*Great targets were shot with the 7-1/2" Colt SAA .38-40. The old round delivers similar ballistics to the .40 S&W.*



*Black Hills offers factory-loaded ammunition in .32-20, .38-40, and .44-40.*



finished with a beautiful deep blue and the breathtaking case hardened colors Colt has long been known for. Metal to metal fit is excellent with no overhanging edges such as where the triggerguard meets the bottom of the mainframe. The grips are the standard checkered rubber black eagles, and are also fitted exceptionally well with no sharp edges hanging over, and the ears of the top of the backstrap and the curve of the back of the hammer are also fitted very well.

I was especially impressed with the lockup of the cylinder. The bolt is fitted to the notches in the cylinder, the cylinder is fitted to the base pin, and the base pin is fitted to the frame so there is very little side-to-side or front to back movement of the cylinder. All three sixguns are very well timed. An old test to check for timing is to place light thumb pressure on the cylinder producing resistance as the hammer is cocked. If the timing is off the cylinder will not lock completely into battery. All three cylinders passed the test. These guns are put together right!

### The .44-40

Let's look at them individually starting with the shortest barrel length. The 4-3/4", known as the Civilian Model in the 1800s, is in .44-40. Trigger pull on this one was set at 4-1/8 pounds, barrel/cylinder gap is .006", and the cylinder throats are all a uniform .429". There is a lot of variation found in Single Actions, both domestic and replicas chambered in .44-40. I have found some as tight as .426" and my 2nd Generation Peacemaker Centennial Commemorative and early 3rd Generation are set at .427" and .429", respectively. As a bullet caster, I tailor bullets to fit particular sixguns and always keep loads on hand with bullets in both diameters.



*The 21st Century Colt Single Actions include these models (above) representing the most common barrel lengths of 7-1/2" (.38-40), 5-1/2" (.32-20), and 4-3/4" (.44-40). The handiest barrel length for the Colt Single Action is the 4-3/4" (below), here in the very popular .44-40.*



#### .38-40 FACTORY AMMO PERFORMANCE 7-1/2" BARREL

LOAD (BRAND, BULLET WEIGHT, TYPE)	VELOCITY (FPS)	GROUP SIZE (INCHES)
BLACK HILLS 180 RNFP	901	1-1/2

#### .44-40 FACTORY AMMO PERFORMANCE 4-3/4" BARREL

LOAD (BRAND, BULLET WEIGHT, TYPE)	VELOCITY (FPS)	GROUP SIZE (INCHES)
BLACK HILLS 200 RNFP	777	1-3/8
WINCHESTER 200 JFP	657	1

#### .32-20 FACTORY AMMO PERFORMANCE 5-1/2" BARREL

LOAD (BRAND, BULLET WEIGHT, TYPE)	VELOCITY (FPS)	GROUP SIZE (INCHES)
BLACK HILLS 115 FPL	792	1-1/2
ULTRAMAX 115 RNFP	862	1-1/8
WINCHESTER 100 LEAD	838	1-3/8

Shooters, especially those not familiar with the traditional fixed sights found on Single Actions often ask, "Why can't they sight in these guns for me at the factory?" They are asking the impossible, as there are so many variables. We all see and hold differently, point of impact will vary according to the load used, and even the lighting conditions will affect where the bullet strikes the target. Because of the latter, I never try to sight in a sixgun under indoor lighting. I have also noticed if you spend a lot of time shooting during the day, the point of impact will change slightly as the angle of the sun changes. If you're really lucky a Single Action will shoot right to point of aim with the selected load right out of the box. Anyone this lucky should be buying lottery tickets.

Having said all this, the .44-40, in my hands using my eyes and my loads, shoots approximately 1" to the right and 3/4" low at 20 yards. Both of these are an easy fix thanks to my friend Denis Fletcher, a retired engineer, who is now a pretty good machinist. He made a barrel vise for me, which fits the trailer hitch on my Silverado. We have become experts at twisting barrels and it won't take much to bring this one right into line and, once the load is selected, file just enough off the top of the front sight to bring point of aim in perfect alignment with point of impact.

I have pretty much standardized on 200- to 225-grain bullets for the .44-40 using 8.0 grains of either Unique or Universal or 8.5 grains of Power Pistol. In the relatively short-barreled .44-40 these loads are in the 850 to 900 fps category, making them adequately powerful while still very pleasant shooting.

### The .32-20

Next up is the 5-1/2" .32-20. Trigger pull on this one is 4-3/4 pounds, barrel/cylinder gap is .005", while the chamber throats are a uniform .313". This one is dead on for windage and shoots about 1-1/2" low so a few file strokes will bring it right to point of aim.

Two standard loadings for the .32-20 for decades has been 5.0 grains of Unique or 10.0 grains 2400. These loads put the .32-20 into the Magnum class and should not be approached lightly. (They are only for large-framed revolvers and never should be used in either the S&W M&P or the Colt Police Positive.) Both of these loads shot well with 100-grain cast bullets. Recoil in the relatively heavy Colt is extremely mild. This .32-20 would make an excellent varmint pistol, and no can or rock at a reasonable distance would stand a chance.

### The .38-40

Finally we come to the 7-1/2" .38-40. My first Colt, my first centerfire sixgun, was a .38-40 and it has been a favorite cartridge ever since. (OK, so I have many favorite

### .38-40 HANDLOADED AMMO PERFORMANCE 7-1/2" BARREL

BULLET (BRAND, BULLET WEIGHT, TYPE)	POWDER (BRAND)	CHARGE (GRAINS WEIGHT)	VELOCITY (FPS)	GROUP SIZE (INCHES)
OREGON TRAIL 180 RNFP	Universal	8.0	1,038	1-1/8
OREGON TRAIL 180 RNFP	Unique	8.0	1,112	1-1/8
OREGON TRAIL 180 RNFP	5744	15.0	822	1-1/4
OREGON TRAIL 180 RNFP	5744	17.0	937	1-3/8
LYMAN 401043	Unique	9.2	1,062	1

Notes: Groups the product of 5 of 6 Shots at 20 yards. Chronograph screens set at 10' from muzzle. CCI 300 primers used in Starline brass.

### .32-20 HANDLOADED AMMO PERFORMANCE 5-1/2" BARREL

BULLET (BRAND, BULLET WEIGHT, TYPE)	POWDER (BRAND)	CHARGE (GRAINS WEIGHT)	VELOCITY (FPS)	GROUP SIZE (INCHES)
OREGON TRAIL 100SWC	Unique	5.0	1,130	1-1/8
NEI 100KT	2400	10.0	1,283	1-1/8
HORNADY 100 XTP-JHP	2400	10.0	1,246	1-5/8
SPEER 100 JHP	2400	10.0	1,312	1-3/8

Notes: Groups the product of 5 of 6 Shots at 20 yards. Chronograph screens set at 10' from muzzle. CCI 500 primers used in Starline brass.

### .44-40 HANDLOADED AMMO PERFORMANCE 4-3/4" BARREL

BULLET (BRAND, BULLET WEIGHT, TYPE)	POWDER (BRAND)	CHARGE (GRAINS WEIGHT)	VELOCITY (FPS)	GROUP SIZE (INCHES)
OREGON TRAIL 200 RNFP	Bullseye	5.5	738	1-1/8
OREGON TRAIL 200 RNFP	Unique	8.0	878	1-1/2
OREGON TRAIL 225 RNFP	Bullseye	5.5	750	1-1/4
OREGON TRAIL 225 RNFP	Universal	8.0	891	3/4
RCBS 44-200 CM	Power Pistol	8.5	865	1-5/8
RCBS 44-200 FN	Power Pistol	8.5	880	1

Notes: Groups the product of 5 of 6 Shots at 20 yards. Chronograph screens set at 10' from muzzle. CCI 300 primers used in Starline brass.

cartridges.) This SAA has a trigger pull of 4-1/2 pounds, barrel/cylinder gap of .007", and cylinder chamber throats are a uniform .399". This one will definitely need a barrel tweaking as it shoots 2" to the right for me and 3/4" low.

In a properly set up sixgun, the .38-40 is a very accurate cartridge. It got a bad rap in the early days simply

because chamber throats and barrel diameters did not always match up very well. This is no longer the case. My standard load for the .38-40 is 8.0 grains of Universal or Unique under a 180-grain cast bullet. Muzzle velocities are in the 1,000 to 1,100 fps, again, resulting in a powerful but pleasant shooting load. All test results are in the accompanying chart and reveal

# THE BEGINNING

If it hadn't been for Smith & Wesson we may never have seen the Colt Single Action Army. In 1857 Smith & Wesson introduced the first successful cartridge-firing revolver with the 7-shot, tip-up, .22 Model No. 1. Sam Colt dismissed this little pocket pistol as so much foolishness and insisted shooters would never accept fixed cartridges but would always prefer to load their own with powder, ball and cap.

Sam Colt died in 1862, however, the company was firmly entrenched in his backward looking idea. They received a big jolt in 1869 when Smith & Wesson not only introduced the .44 Model No. 3 S&W American, the United States Military ordered several thousand of them. Colt was still mired in the past, so instead of coming up with a new revolver, they converted the 1860 Army to fire the .44 Colt cartridge.

The Army was apparently not completely satisfied with the Smith & Wesson American, so in 1871 announced a trial to select a new sidearm for the military. Colt's 1860 conversions were known as the Richards and then with a slight improvement the Richards-Mason. When it came time for the Army trial Colt was not very original as they simply once again used the basic 1860 platform to come up with the 1871-72 Open Top chambered in .44 Colt. The Army Board did not like the caliber or the frame without a top strap and sent Colt back to the drawing board, resulting in one of the greatest sixguns of all time—the Colt SAA.

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(860) 236-6311, WWW.COLTSMFG.COM

**ACTION TYPE:** Single Action

**CALIBER:** .32-20, .38-40, .44-40 (tested), .45 Colt, .357 Magnum, .38 Special

**CAPACITY:** 6\*

**BARREL LENGTH:** 4-3/4", 5-1/2", 7-1/2"

**OVERALL LENGTH:** 10-1/4", 11", 13"

**WEIGHT:** 39 ounces (varies)

**FINISH:** Blue/Case Hardened Frame, full nickel

**SIGHTS:** Fixed

**GRIPS:** Checkered black eagle

**PRICE:** \$1,290,  
\$1,490 (nickel)

\*For safety, this revolver must be carried with the hammer down on an empty chamber, reducing capacity to five.

what an excellent performer this Colt Single Action really is.

All three of these are test guns on loan, however, all three of them are not going back. I will definitely purchase one of them (there is no way the .38-40 will ever leave my hands), possibly two, and if finances are in line, all three. I can't give them any finer recommendation than that. **GUNS**

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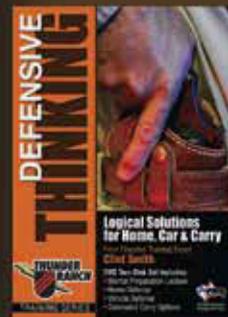
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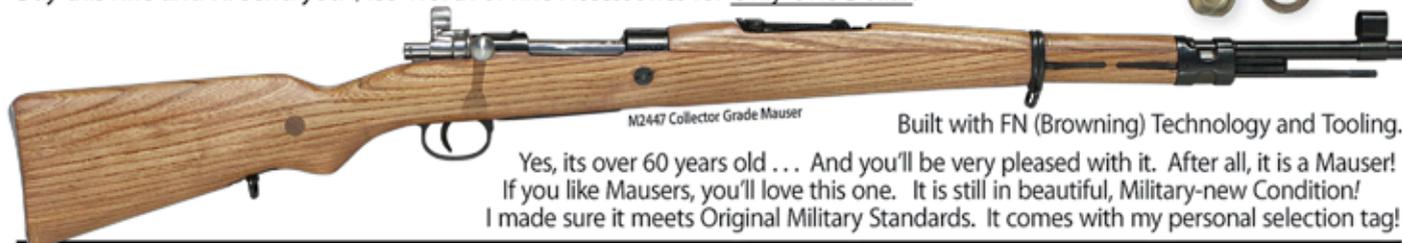
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# VIEWS NEWS AND REVIEWS

## RIGHTS WATCH

• DAVID CODREA •

### UK MASS SHOOTING SHOWS FUTILITY OF "GUN CONTROL."

**"T**welve people have been killed and another 25 wounded after a gunman drove across Cumbria shooting victims in several different locations, before taking his own life," the UK's *Guardian* reported.

"Police said they were investigating 30 separate crime scenes after taxi driver Derrick Bird... embarked upon an apparently random shooting spree..."

Police could do nothing but follow desperate calls for help during a 3-hour manhunt that only ended when the killer took his own life. None of the victims were able to defend themselves, because the government there does not allow subjects to carry firearms for self-defense.

In a synopsis of "Britain's gun laws," *Telegraph UK* admits "British gun laws are among the world's toughest.

"Semi-automatic and pump-action centrefire rifles were banned... Handguns were outlawed in Britain in 1997 and some 160,000 were surrendered to police. Even Britain's Olympic shooters fall under this ban, meaning the pistol-shooting team must train outside the country."

The result? "Cumbria saw gun crime virtually double in 2009..."

Besides, the killer had jumped through all the licensing hoops. *BBC News* tells us "Cumbria Police recovered a shotgun and .22 rifle with telescopic sight and have since confirmed that Bird was licensed to own both weapons."

"The Government will do everything it possibly can to help the local community and those affected," Prime Minister David Cameron pledged to the House of Commons.

Like what? We're told "Cumbria shooting offers no lessons for the future" by media-recognized authorities like Professor Nigel Eastman in his *Telegraph UK* analysis of the shootings.

Thus, "Crucially they are both

unpredictable and unpreventable," he states.

Perhaps. But they're not unstoppable, unless the victims are powerless to do anything but flee, hide or be cut down. There are no "lessons for the future" in that?

To his credit, Prof. Eastman recounts that after past shootings, "proposals were put forward that doctors, psychiatrists, even GPs, should be responsible for 'accrediting' individuals to hold a gun license, based upon assessment of their mental health status. Not only was this medically misplaced, it was a proposal that was highly unlikely to prevent any such future massacre. Gun laws should be debated, but not on the back of an event..."

The government appears sensitive to the fact that more restrictions may not be the way to go. Ceding that the UK has some of the "toughest" firearms laws in the world, PM Cameron cautioned, "We shouldn't make any knee-jerk reaction to think that there is some instant legislative or regulatory answer. You can't legislate to stop a switch flicking in someone's head and for this dreadful sort of action to take place."

Unfortunately for "law-abiding" subjects of the Crown, an observable truth was articulated in a press release by the Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms: "[The] mass shooting in northwest England is more proof that restrictive gun laws do not prevent horrible criminal acts."

And while the Cumbria horror may not result in further bans, neither will it result in rollbacks of existing ones. And people will remain defenseless. **GUNS**

Visit David Codrea's online journal "The War on Guns" at [waronguns.blogspot.com](http://waronguns.blogspot.com) or visit [DavidCodrea.com](http://DavidCodrea.com) to read his *Examiner* column.

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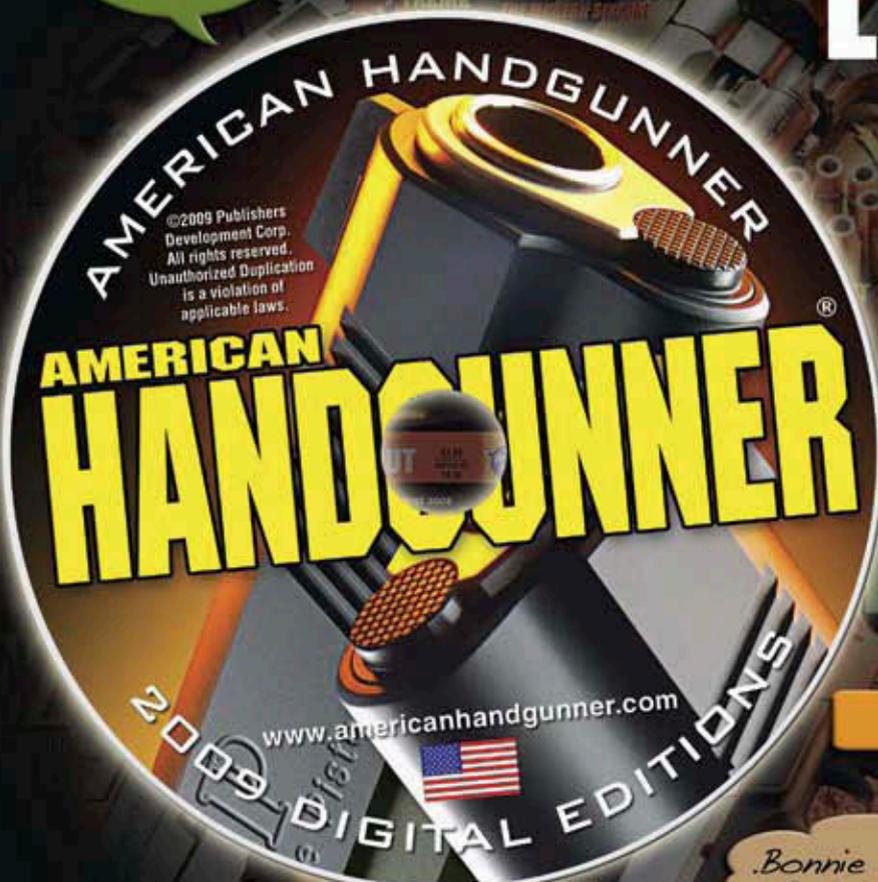
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## MOVING TO THE SOUND OF THE GUNS

In 2007, Warrant Officer John Hermann, platoon commander of 1st Explosive Ordnance

Disposal platoon, 1st EOD Company, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward) was attached to Company B, 1st Marine Special Operations Battalion, out of Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton. Deployed from November 2007 to April 2008, they conducted combat operations throughout Helmand province.

During the deployment, enemy engagements were frequent. "It was about 50/50. It wasn't every single day that we were out, but it did happen," said Hermann. During a recon patrol that also included providing medical care for tribal personnel, the enemy bit off more than they could chew. "It was one of our longer reconnaissance patrols," said Hermann. "We had hit a few of the towns in the western cluster. We did MEDCAP-type things (Medical Civil Assistance

Program). The locals were happy to see us, it was nothing too exciting."

After a day of providing medical care to villagers and getting acquainted with the populace, the convoy found a place in the desert to sleep overnight. The next morning, they approached a town called Dahaneh with the intent of setting up another MEDCAP.

"Generally if there was going to be any kind of contact within a village, it would already be abandoned by women and children, or you would see them egress from the town as you make your way into the village, but that wasn't the case on that day. They were everywhere. They didn't expect us."

According to Hermann, they were in the village less than five minutes when the second vehicle in their convoy was struck with a



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rocket-propelled grenade.

"As soon as it impacted the vehicle (the gunner) yelled contact right," said Hermann. "It was funny because the RPG didn't detonate; it bounced off the truck then landed on the ground. That is when everything else started." More fire came upon the convoy. With women and children still occupying the general vicinity, it was difficult to fire on known targets, according to Hermann.

"People were running to take cover so you had to be very mindful of what you were doing and where your targets were," said Hermann. "Once that happened, we identified where the insurgents appeared to be firing at us from, so we made the decision to dismount and assault through the ambush."



**Warrant Officer John Hermann, 32, from Tucson, Ariz., explosive ordnance disposal officer for 1st Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward), is congratulated by Brig. Gen. Charles L. Hudson, commanding general of 1st MLG (FWD), after being awarded the Silver Star medal in a ceremony at Forward Operating Base Delaram II, Helmand Province, Afghanistan, last July 15. Photo: Sgt. Brandon Owen**

Alongside Sgt. Kurt Zimmerman, the vehicle commander for victor one, Hermann pushed into the village, finding cover behind a building, giving them a better view of the enemy. Between the opposing forces lay an open field. While taking cover from a building, enemy fire still impacting around them, Zimmerman and Hermann made the decision to cross the field and eliminate the enemy threat.

"We took off, Zimmerman was right behind me," said Hermann. "We couldn't have gotten 10 or 15 yards and he was shot in the left leg." Hermann made it to the trench line, jumped in and destroyed the 2-man machine-gun team with his M4 rifle, then made his way back to his teammate to help dress his wound.

"At that point, Zimmerman had crawled back behind the corner

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of a building, struggling to get his tourniquet on," said Hermann. "I applied his tourniquet and dressed his wound."

Shortly after, an additional machinegun opened fire on Zimmerman and Hermann's position. At that point, another fire team appeared with a corpsman, reinforcing their position.

"We passed Zimmerman off to the doc to ensure his wound was taken care of properly," said Hermann. "At that point, we finished clearing through the town." The fire team advanced with Hermann, resulting in the demise of another 11 insurgents. When asked about his reason for returning to aid Zimmerman after crossing an open field under enemy fire once before, the answer was quite simple. "I couldn't leave him," said Hermann. "He would have done the same for me."

Hermann attributes the success of his team surviving that day to two things: training and teamwork. "Honestly, you don't have time to sit and think about what's going on," said Hermann. "You rely on your training. You do what you're taught. It's a team effort. It's never just one guy. People talk about heroics. Heroics happen every single day out here, it doesn't matter what unit you're in."—Sgt. Dorian Gardner, 1st Marine Logistics Group (FWD)

## FLIGHT LIEUTENANT FORTUNE IS VERY FORTUNATE

RAF Chinook pilot Flight Lieutenant Ian Fortune had a lucky escape in Afghanistan recently when an insurgent bullet ricocheted inside his helmet while he was flying his helicopter during a casualty pick up.

Flight Lieutenant Fortune, 28, is part of 1310 Flight, Royal Air Force Odiham, which was detached to Afghanistan in January 2010.

The incident occurred when he and his crew from C Flight, 27 Squadron, were called out on an Immediate Response Team mission to pick up casualties injured during a battle in southern Nad 'Ali.

The Chinook landed and picked up seven injured Afghan and American soldiers but came under heavy and sustained fire during which Flight Lieutenant Fortune was hit in the head as

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a round smashed through the windscreen hitting his helmet and causing facial injuries.



*Flight Lieutenant Ian Fortune shows the damage to his helmet from a Taliban bullet fired on his Chinook during a casualty pick up. Photo: Sgt Leach RAF, Crown Copyright/ MOD 2010*

The round hit the night-vision goggle rail on the front of his helmet, then passed through the helmet skin and out through the top.

Speaking of the incident, Flight

Lieutenant Fortune said, "I heard a small burst of gunfire and my head rocked back. When I opened my eyes I could see pieces of broken helmet visor and splattered blood, which confused me at first.

"It was a strange feeling followed by elation, as I knew I'd been hit and survived. As a crew we are all quite proud of what we achieved."

Despite the aircraft sustaining significant damage as well, all casualties were evacuated back to the hospital at Camp Bastion. Flight Lieutenant Fortune required 12 stitches to his head.—*Courtesy MoD*

## RIBBON CUTTING WITH CZ-USA AND BOY SCOUTS

Mr. Robert Mazzuca, Chief Scout Executive for the Boy Scouts of America was presented with a commemorative CZ-USA Redhead shotgun at the Camp Geiger Shooting Range ribbon cutting last July 16, 2010 by Alice Poluchova, President of CZ-USA, a sponsor of the new range.

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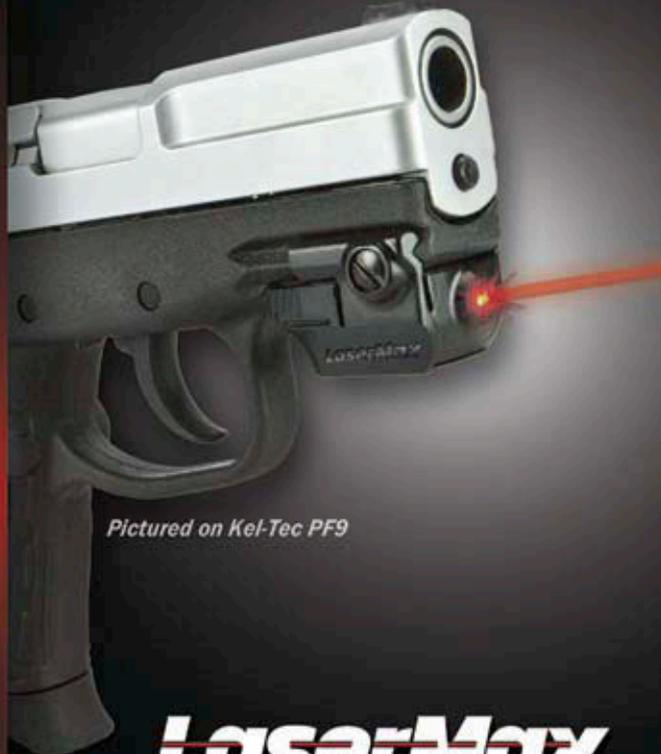
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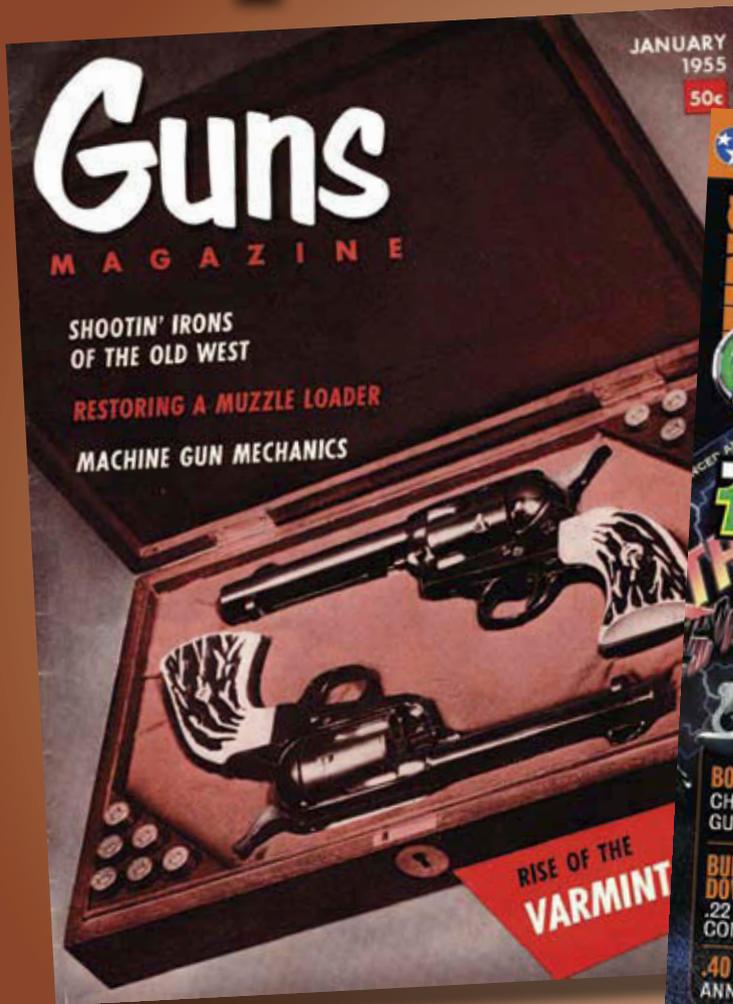
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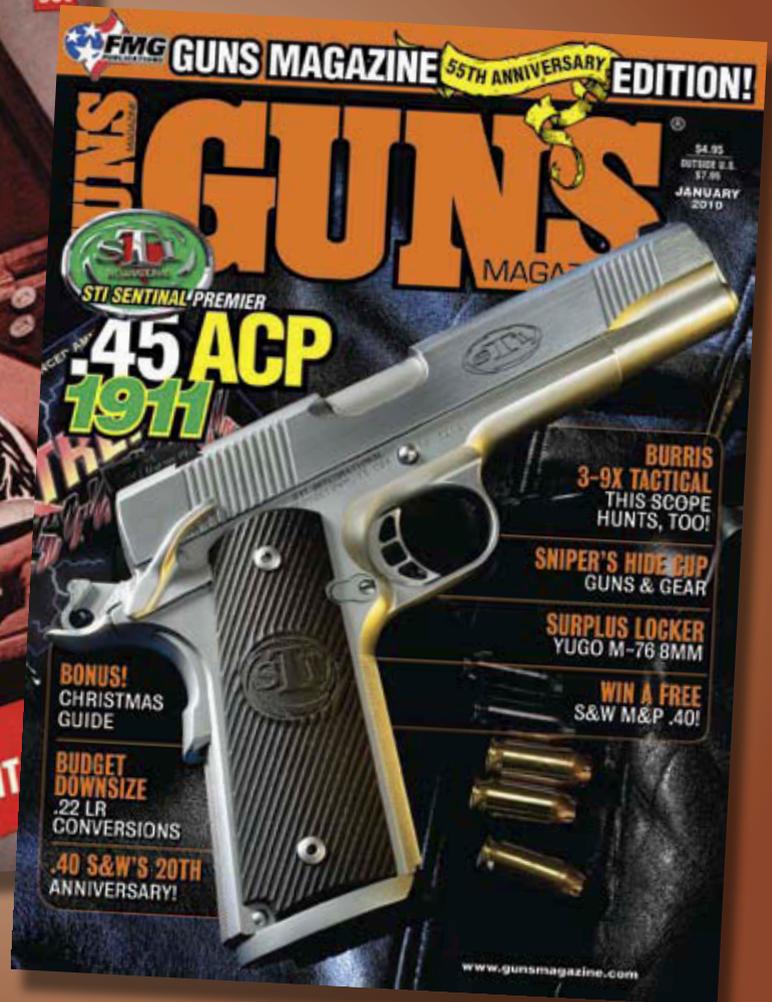
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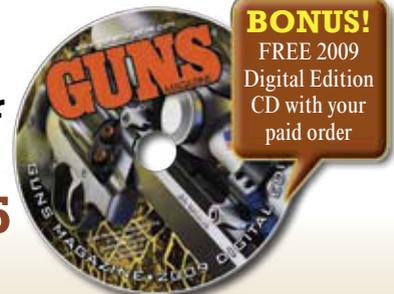
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Camp Geiger Shooting Range is the first public shooting range in the nation to be built and operated by the Boy Scouts of America. The shooting complex offers 40 acres of 5 Stand, sporting clays, archery, rifle, and handgun shooting facilities on the grounds of BSA Camp Geiger in St. Joseph, Mo.. The shooting complex is open to the public during the 10 months of the year it is not filled with scouts attending summer camp.



**CZ-USA President Alice Poluchova (left) presents Chief Scout Executive Robert Mazzuca of the Boy Scouts of America with a CZ-USA shotgun by at the Camp Geiger Shooting Range Ribbon Cutting last July 16, 2010.**

The public shooting complex at Camp Geiger is a pilot program for the Boy Scouts of America. If successful, the model could be followed at the over 400 Boy Scout

camps across the nation. This is not the first time Camp Geiger has been a Scouting innovator. Geiger has pioneered other programs adopted nationwide including Project COPE.



**Chief Scout Executive, Robert Mazzuca with CZ-USA pro-shooter Dave Miller shot a round of 5 Stand at the Camp Geiger Shooting Range Grand Opening.**

The new range will assist in the continuing the efforts of the Boy Scouts to raise the next generation of responsible sportsmen. In addition to the BSA shooting programs, proceeds from shooting activities at the Camp Geiger Shooting Range benefit the Pony Express Council of the Boy Scouts of America and fund programs for more than 2,000 Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts and Venturers each year. For more information:

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## ILLEGAL STING OPERATIONS BANNED

West Virginia Gov. Joe Manchin has signed Senate Bill 1005 into law, making it a crime to knowingly solicit illegal gun sales and to conduct illegal sting operations such as those conducted in 2006 by New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg.—*Courtesy NSSF*

## NEW FIRST SHOTS WEBSITE

A new website for NSSF's successful First Shots program has been launched. The new site serves the needs of range owners interested in utilizing the program as well as new shooters looking to find a First Shots seminar in their area. Take a look at [www.nssf.org/firstshots](http://www.nssf.org/firstshots). —*Courtesy NSSF* 

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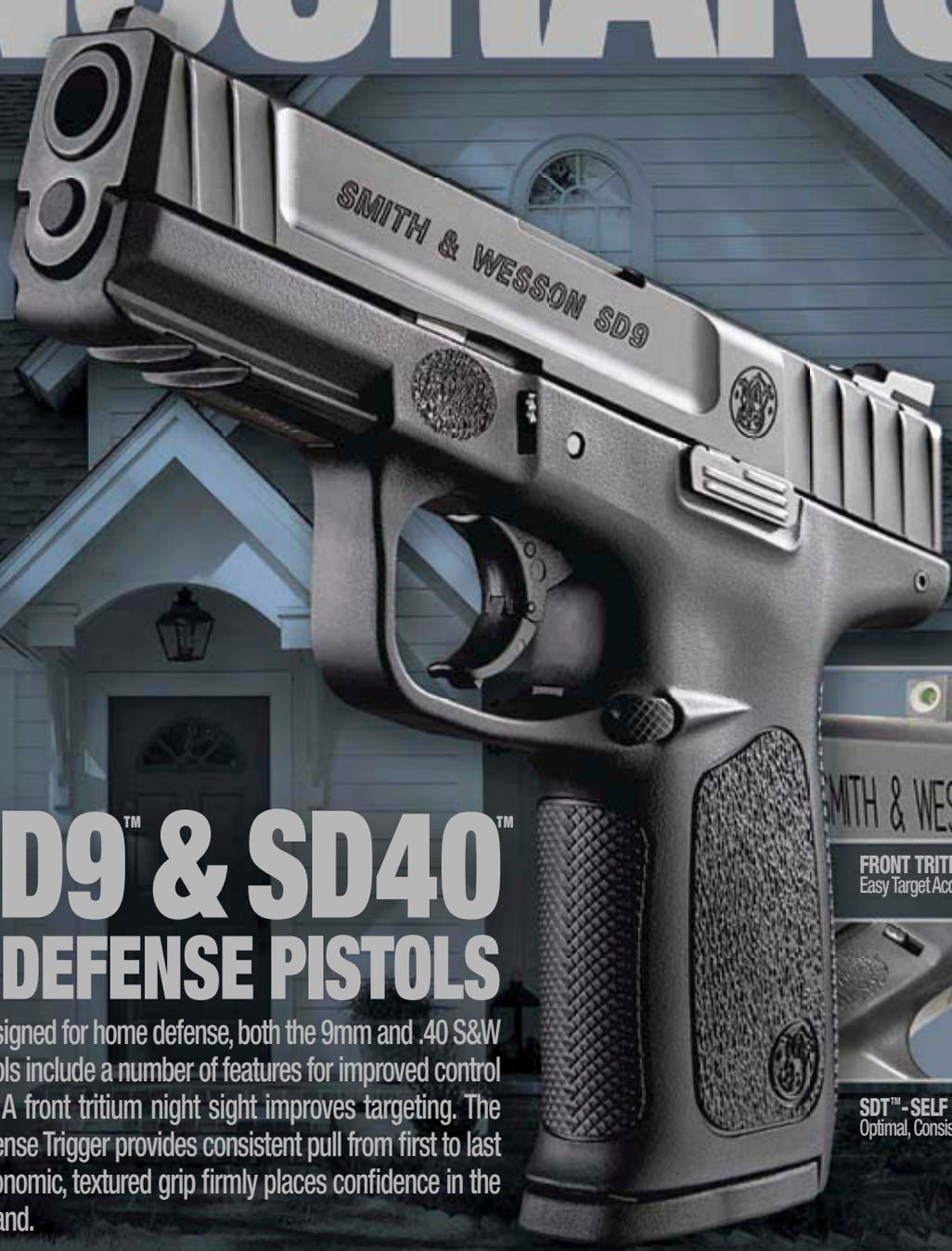


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## MAGPUL PMAGS AND ACS STOCK

**If you've considered building or customizing an AR-15 within the last few years, chances are good you've noticed Magpul Industries. Magpul makes a number of innovative parts for the AR-15, many being a fresh approach to an old idea. Two products that exemplify this spirit of innovation are the Adaptable Carbine/Storage (ACS) stock and the PMAG (short for Polymer MAGazine).**

The Adaptable Carbine/Storage stock is the latest in Magpul's growing line of telescoping carbine stocks. Several things about this stock make it stand out from the crowd. Overall, the stock is extremely streamlined; all the edges are rounded and there are no sharp corners to snag on clothing or equipment. The ACS's release latch is shielded to prevent inadvertent stock collapse, yet is still easily activated, and features Magpul's unique "friction lock." The friction lock sits just forward of the release latch and eliminates the shakiness of the stock on the buffer tube. Another virtue of the ACS stock is the wide comb, which provides an excellent platform for a solid cheekweld. What really sets the ACS apart, though, is the on-board storage.

My favorite feature on the ACS stock, and one nearly unique to stocks of this type, is the compartment found on the right-hand side. The storage compartment opens easily and is surprisingly capacious. This compartment can be used to store a

variety of useful items (a miniature survival kit or a small emergency maintenance kit are ideas that appeal to me). Additionally, there are two tube-shaped compartments below the comb, each holding two AA or three CR123 batteries. This allows the stock to contain everything needed to keep the gun and accessories up and running. The ACS stock is available to fit mil-spec buffer tubes.

Few would have suspected a company would come along and thoroughly update something that already worked as well as the M16/AR-15 magazine. That's exactly what Magpul has done with the PMAG, though. The PMAG is aesthetically pleasing, but offers more than just a sexy new look. First, the polymer body of the magazine is textured to provide a firm grip. The use of polymer also allows the PMAG to be made in a variety of colors; it is currently available in black, foliage green, OD green and Magpul's Flat Dark Earth. Next, the PMAG is exceedingly simple to disassemble—much more



*The standard PMAG (center) and MagLevel are both in Flat Dark Earth. The MagLevel in front is equipped with the supplied "impact cover" in place.*



*The ACS's stock has a rather large storage compartment for spare parts or even a small survival kit. Like PMAGs, the ACS is available in black, Flat Dark Earth, OD green and foliage green.*

so than aluminum GI mags. Finally, and most importantly, the PMAG is utterly reliable. I have used PMAGs a great deal in harsh conditions and they never fail to perform.

In addition to the standard PMAG, the MagLevel is also available. The MagLevel offers all of the features of the standard PMAG, plus a round-count window. The window is a vertical strip of clear polymer molded into the magazine's body, allowing you to quickly check the remaining ammunition—like witness holes in a pistol magazine.

All PMAGs are supplied with an "impact cover" that snaps over the top of the magazine. In addition to protecting the ammunition from dirt and debris, they take the pressure off of the feed lips. PMAGs are compatible with stripper clips, and are available in 20-round versions.

Neither the telescoping stock nor the removable box magazines are new ideas, but Magpul has breathed new life into both with the ACS and the PMAG. Both are rugged, reliable, and look good, too.

**GUNS**



*Justin's ACS-equipped AR-15 feeds from a PMAG 30 MagLevel in Flat Dark Earth. PMAGs are textured and have a flared base to provide a very solid grip during reloads.*

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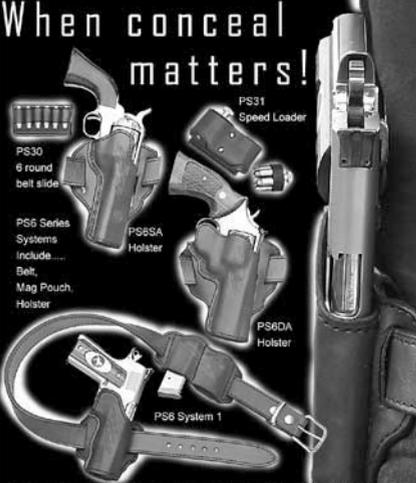


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## EROS FROM CRKT

CRKT and noted knife designer Ken Onion's collaborative production knife, Eros, was named Imported Knife of the Year at the 2010 Blade Show and International Cutlery Fair. It's a featherweight folder with 6AL4V titanium frame-lock build with a 3" blade, weighing in at 1.4 ounces and can be opened instantly with one hand. Retail: \$200. Columbia River Knife & Tool Inc., 18348 SW 126th Place, Tualatin, OR 97062, (503) 685-5015, www.crkt.com.



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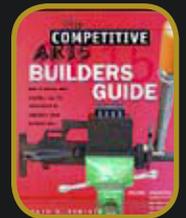
## SIGNATURE T-SHIRT FROM BOND ARMS

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## BUILDERS GUIDE FROM ZEDIKER PUBLISHING

Offering step-by-step instruction that will assist you in producing your own "Ultimate" AR-15, the Builders Guide is 272 pages and has nearly 800 photos. It goes way beyond the basics. Zediker Publishing also offers many new articles and even more new books on its website. Zediker Publishing, (662) 473-6107, www.zediker.com.



## ACCESSORIES FOR MOSSBERG 930/935 FROM TACSTAR

TacStar – a Lyman Brand – has added two new products that increase both the magazine capacity and shell holding capacity for Mossberg's newest autoloading shotguns. Both the new Magazine Extension and new SideSaddle Shellholder offer fast,

easy, no-gunsmithing mounting. Lyman Products Corp., 475 Smith St., Middletown, CT 06457, (860) 632-2020, www.lymanproducts.com.



# PRODUCTS

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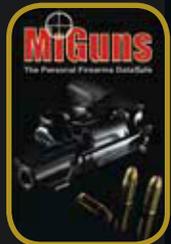
## AR-10 1913 CARBINE FROM ARMALITE

For a limited time, ArmaLite offers the AR-10 1913 Carbine. The AR-10 1913 Carbine comes standard with a National Match 2-stage trigger. It features a 1913 quad rail handguard, forward assist and collapsible stock. Compact yet rugged, this AR-10 is perfect for both tactical and sporting uses. ArmaLite, Inc., P.O. Box 299, Geneseo, IL 61254, [www.armalite.com](http://www.armalite.com).



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Have we got a great set of goodies for just one of you lucky readers! First off is a Bushmaster M4 carbine in 5.56mm NATO. Better still, it is camouflaged in A-TACS, a leap forward in applied camouflage technology that smartly breaks

up the carbine's silhouette. A full-length Picatinny rail is provided for optics and iron back-up sight is an A.R.M.S. 40L low profile flip-up rear. These guns need a quality lube, so G96 Products includes a new synthetic lube to keep your new M4

humming. Sometimes you need a sharp friend, too, and we're including a Spyderco folder and fixed-blade ESEE-3. You can't win if you don't enter, so send those postcards in pronto or take the survey and enter online at [www.gunsmagazine.com](http://www.gunsmagazine.com).



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Limit one entry per household.

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- (A) Local gun store
- (B) Sporting goods store
- (C) Online
- (D) Other

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<b>ACTION TYPE:</b>	Gas operated, semi-auto
<b>CALIBER:</b>	5.56 NATO
<b>CAPACITY:</b>	30
<b>BARREL LENGTH:</b>	16"
<b>OVERALL LENGTH:</b>	33.25" (collapsed), 35.5"
<b>WEIGHT:</b>	6.4 pounds
<b>FINISH:</b>	A-TACS camo finish
<b>SIGHTS:</b>	A.R.M.S. 40L low profile flip up rear, post front
<b>STOCK:</b>	6-position, collapsible
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<b>BLADE MATERIAL:</b>	CPM-S30V
<b>BLADE LENGTH:</b>	4"
<b>OVERALL LENGTH (OPEN):</b>	9-1/2"
<b>WEIGHT:</b>	4.25 ounces
<b>SCALES:</b>	G-10
<b>VALUE:</b>	\$219.95
<b>ESEE-3</b>	
<b>MAKER: ESEE KNIVES</b> <b>P.O. BOX 99, GALLANT, AL 35972</b> <b>(865) 933-8436, WWW.ESEKNIVES.COM</b>	
<b>BLADE MATERIAL:</b>	1095, 57 RC
<b>BLADE LENGTH:</b>	3-7/8"
<b>OVERALL LENGTH:</b>	8-5/16"
<b>WEIGHT:</b>	5.2 ounces
<b>SCALES:</b>	Gray Linen Micarta
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# ODD ANGRY SHOT

• JOHN CONNOR •

## VETERANS DAY, NOV. 11, 2010

### The Living, The Dead, The Famed & The Forgotten.

**A veteran is someone who, at one point, wrote a check to The United States of America, payable in any amount, up to and including his life.—Author unknown**

Some years ago, in a mixed group just before Veterans Day, a guy was goin' on and on about his plans for the holiday. I couldn't help noticing he did not once refer to it as "Veterans Day." I asked him if he knew what the holiday was.

"Sure," he said. "It's a federal holiday." I asked if he knew anything about that holiday. He answered, "Yeah; it's a law; they gotta give you a day off, or pay you extra for working on it." I probed again, asking if he knew it was Veterans Day, and its meaning. His look wasn't really hostile or even disdainful; just a bit annoyed and dismissive, as though I had brought up something inconsequential, except to some kind of military freaks.

"Yeah, there's that," he said, and went to get another drink; just another American looking forward to "a federal holiday."

If you've read my scribbles at all, you know where my heart lies on Veterans Day. I know where many of you stand on Veterans Day, too. The crew at *Ranger UP* was stunned at how many of you ordered those "Freedom Isn't Free" veterans' T-shirts I showed you in the August issue. Some of you who phoned

in your orders took a moment to tell your own stories; when you served, where and how. I wish I could have heard every one.

And you *GUNS* readers who are not vets, I know virtually without exception you are sons of liberty, daughters of independence and the

children of freedom who honor the contributions of our veterans. I want to share a few veterans' stories you may not have heard before.

#### Let Us Remember...

During the Revolutionary War, when 4,000 British-led Hessians besieged the 600 patriot defenders of Fort Mifflin, 25-year old Margaret "Molly" Corbin saw her husband killed at his cannon. She immediately leaped in, loading and firing that cannon until the first enemy grapeshot ripped into her chest and shoulder, then later shot away part of her jaw. Gravely disabled, she became the first woman awarded a disabled veteran's pension. Today, Molly rests in honor in the chapel courtyard at



*The Korean War Memorial in Washington, D.C.: Bronze lives on, but Korea vets will too soon be gone... Thank them while you can.*

West Point.

On Palm Sunday 2005, US Army Sergeant Leigh Ann Hester's squad was trailing a supply convoy near Salman Pak in Iraq when it was ambushed by about 50 terrorists. Leigh Ann deliberately drove into the kill zone to draw fire away from the

civilian truck drivers, then dismounted and moved her squad right into the *fedayeen* trenchline, engaging them with rifle fire and grenades. When the smoke cleared, 27 lay dead and seven more wounded. Leigh Ann became the first woman in US history to receive a Silver Star in close-quarters combat. She's still out there serving her country.

Marine Major Megan McClung— attractive, feminine, sharp as a tack and hard as nails—served as a Public Affairs Officer in Ramadi, Iraq. Unlike the hairsprayed talking heads on TV, she actually got out there *in public*, calmly accepting the attendant risks. A Boston U and Naval Academy graduate; marathon runner and Ironman triathlete, Megan was in the last month of her year-long Iraq deployment when her Humvee was destroyed by a massive IED. She became the highest-ranking servicewoman killed in action in the War on Terror. For Megan, there were no heroics; just exemplary, courageous and dedicated service.

#### Lest We Forget

In 1945, American soldiers liberating an allied POW camp in Japan found a 77-pound starving airman, more dead than alive. They knew his name immediately, but couldn't recognize him at all, though his photo had been splashed over the sports pages in the US for a decade.

In 1936, Lou Zamperini, still in high school, went to Germany as a member of the US Olympic track and field team. He was on his way to becoming the world's fastest distance runner. On a

childish dare, he attempted to steal Adolf Hitler's personal flag from *der fuhrer's* stadium box. SS guards caught Lou and beat him nearly to death. Though he never fully recovered from his injuries, he went on to smash collegiate records in the mile, and nearly set a new world record. When

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World War II broke out, he became a fighter pilot.

Shot down in the Pacific, he drifted on a raft for 47 days before being captured. When his captors learned he had been famous, they made his 2-1/2-year captivity at hard labor even worse than the hell his fellow Americans suffered. Later, Lou returned to Japan, tracked down the guards who had brutalized him—and forgave them. His attitude was, "We won, they lost. Mercy is as important as courage."

In February 1943, the Army transport ship *Dorchester* pitched through the icy North Atlantic bound for Greenland. Just hours from making port, a German U-boat torpedoed her and she began sinking fast. In the smoky chaos on deck, four Army chaplains calmly guided panicked soldiers to lifeboats and handed out life jackets from a crate they had broken open. They were left with four fearful troops without life jackets. Hardly a word passed between them. The *padres* just nodded to each other, stripped off their life preservers and gave them to those soldiers.

Of 905 men aboard the *Dorchester*, more than 600 were killed. All four of those soldiers survived. None of the chaplains lived. They were George Fox, Protestant; Alexander Goode, Jewish; John Washington, Roman Catholic, and Clark Poling, Protestant. Just before sailing on the *Dorchester*, Clark told his family, "Do not pray for my safe return, but that I do my duty."

## The Virtual Wall

Relatively few can visit the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C., or attend the traveling exhibit. If you can, go online to [www.virtualwall.org](http://www.virtualwall.org). There you can search the lists of the fallen by last name, state and city, wall panels by date, by service, and frequently by division, brigade, regiment, ship or other unit. Comrades-in-arms, friends and family members have added photos, personal commentaries, copies of after-action reports and other memorabilia honoring their warriors. It is a deeply moving and ever-growing tribute, which puts warm faces between those cold lines etched in stone. Try searching your own family name, your own state and city...

One request: On Nov. 11, wherever you see a veteran—especially a World War II or Korea vet—thank them for their service, because it may be their last Veterans Day. If you see a Vietnam vet, thank them, because it may be the first time anyone ever has. And I thank you!—Connor *OUT*.

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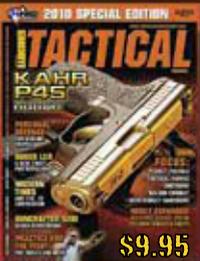
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rifle he had picked up on a battlefield in Germany to which I responded, "Oh yes it did cost you something." That was the only other reference I ever heard from him concerning his military service. And then I read his obituary.

My shooting companion, this friendly little old man, was Retired Air Force Col. Robert W. Flagg. Bob was born in 1920 in Battle Creek, Michigan, and as a child of the Depression, he quickly learned to be self-sufficient and also to repair just about anything. After high school he went on to study engineering at Michigan State University, however, in 1940 after two years of college enlisted in what was then the Army Air Corps.

Turns out my friend was a fighter pilot and squadron commander flying missions in the Battle of the Rhine and also serving in Panama. He was decorated numerous times including the Legion of Merit, a Presidential Unit Citation, and an Air Medal with three oak leaf clusters. For most of the war Bob flew the P-47 Thunderbolt, which was the largest fighter plane of WWII. Weighing in at 9 tons, it was nicknamed named "The Jug." It did not have the maneuverability of smaller planes, however, it was exceptionally rugged and with its 2,000 HP engine could fly higher than other fighters. Armament consisted of eight, .50 BMG machineguns mounted on the wings and it also served as a low-level bomber with bombs tucked under the wings.

### Props To Jets

Bob also flew the P-51 Mustang, the P-39 Air Cobra and the P-40 Curtis Warhawk among propeller driven aircraft and then went on to fly the T-33 Trainer, the F-86 Sabre Jet and the F-100 Lockheed Lightning. I entered the first grade one month after the signing of surrender by the Japanese in August of 1945. Over the next several years my young generation fought WWII all over again every chance we got in the classroom. We knew all of these planes and were continually drawing pictures of dogfights. We probably drove our teachers nuts. Today, we would be expelled for violent acts. I well remember the introduction of the Saber Jet and Lightning while I was still in grade school. My bedroom was filled with models of all these airplanes hanging from the ceiling. Mine was all imagination; Bob's was the real thing.

Bob was more than a fighter pilot; he was also a leader. He served as

commander of the 172nd Fighter Squadron and then the 110th Fighter Group of the Michigan Air National Guard stationed at Kellogg Field in Battle Creek. When he retired he was director of operations of the 20th Air Division, at Air Defense Command in Virginia. He didn't rob the cradle to find his wife, but he did rob a VA hospital where she was his nurse. They were married and then Bob retired in 1973 and moved to my part of the country. I feel very fortunate to have known him.

### Quiet Hero

Bob never told me any stories about his service time. He was more interested in talking about his rifles and my sixguns. Like the vast majority of his Greatest Generation they simply did their job and didn't talk about it. However, another fellow here is also a retired fighter pilot and told me a story about Bob Flagg. He was flying out of Panama in a P-40 Curtis Warhawk. He was over the water when the engine started acting up, and as my friend recounted engine noises always seem louder over water. The engine coughed and sputtered and bucked so badly the cowling even came open.

Bob tried everything he knew to correct the problem but the engine finally died. There was nothing left to do but bail out and ditch the plane over water. He pushed back the canopy, stepped out on the wing and was ready to bail when the engine came back to life. He climbed back in the plane and flew back to the base.

For several years I have worked on boards and committees with another fellow in our club. I knew he was ex-military also but very little else. I recently found out he is also a retired colonel and is unique in that he flew both fighter planes and the B-52. It seems I have been surrounded by heroes for decades and didn't even know it.

We the People will never forget what the Greatest Generation did for our country and for the world. Unfortunately, their sacrifice and what they accomplished has been dishonored for decades. The enemy can be identified and defeated. Despicable politicians with no shame and no honor are much harder to overcome. The Spirit of Bob Flagg and his fighting comrades did not die in 1945. It carried over to those in Korea, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan. Unlike the members of the Greatest Generation, those who followed after have not been allowed to win. America owes all of them a debt, which can never be repaid. **GUNS**



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# CAMPFIRE TALES

BY JOHN TAFFIN

## WE WALK AMONG HEROES

Every day.

**A**n anyone living in a city of any size experiences the same thing nearly every day. A glance at the obituary page shows how often and how quickly we are losing members of the Greatest Generation. Those who fought the Axis powers in WWII are now in their 80s and disappearing rapidly. My stepdad was too old to be drafted, so he enlisted and spent the last 18 months of the war as a POW who was rescued by the Allied troops. My two older cousins, heroes of mine ever since I can remember, both dropped out of high school, lied about their age, enlisted and fought in the Pacific. Of these three, only one cousin remains, and I'm happy to report he is doing exceptionally well.

I remember as a very young child reading about the last Civil War veteran and his passing. Over the years, he has been followed by those from the Spanish-American War and World War I. Now, the unstoppable countdown is happening with the brave men and women of World War II.

Bob Flagg was one of those. He was 89 when he passed, and I had only known him for the past 20 years or so. We were friends, yet I knew so little about him as all our contacts were relegated to two shooting situations. One was meeting at the local gun shows and the other was gathering once a

week, just the two of us, shooting at the local range. We were both members of the host club and had keys to get in on closed days, so one day a week would find us shooting together.

My interest was mostly testing handguns for articles and Bob would always come to my bench to check what new handgun I had. At the same time I would journey to his shooting spot to check out his latest rifle. He managed to sniff out some of the neatest rifles! I never saw him with anything heavier than a .30-06 as he was much more inclined toward the easier shooters. One particular '06 was a 1903 with a refinished military stock, special target sights and a heavy barrel. Bob could make that old Springfield really sing.

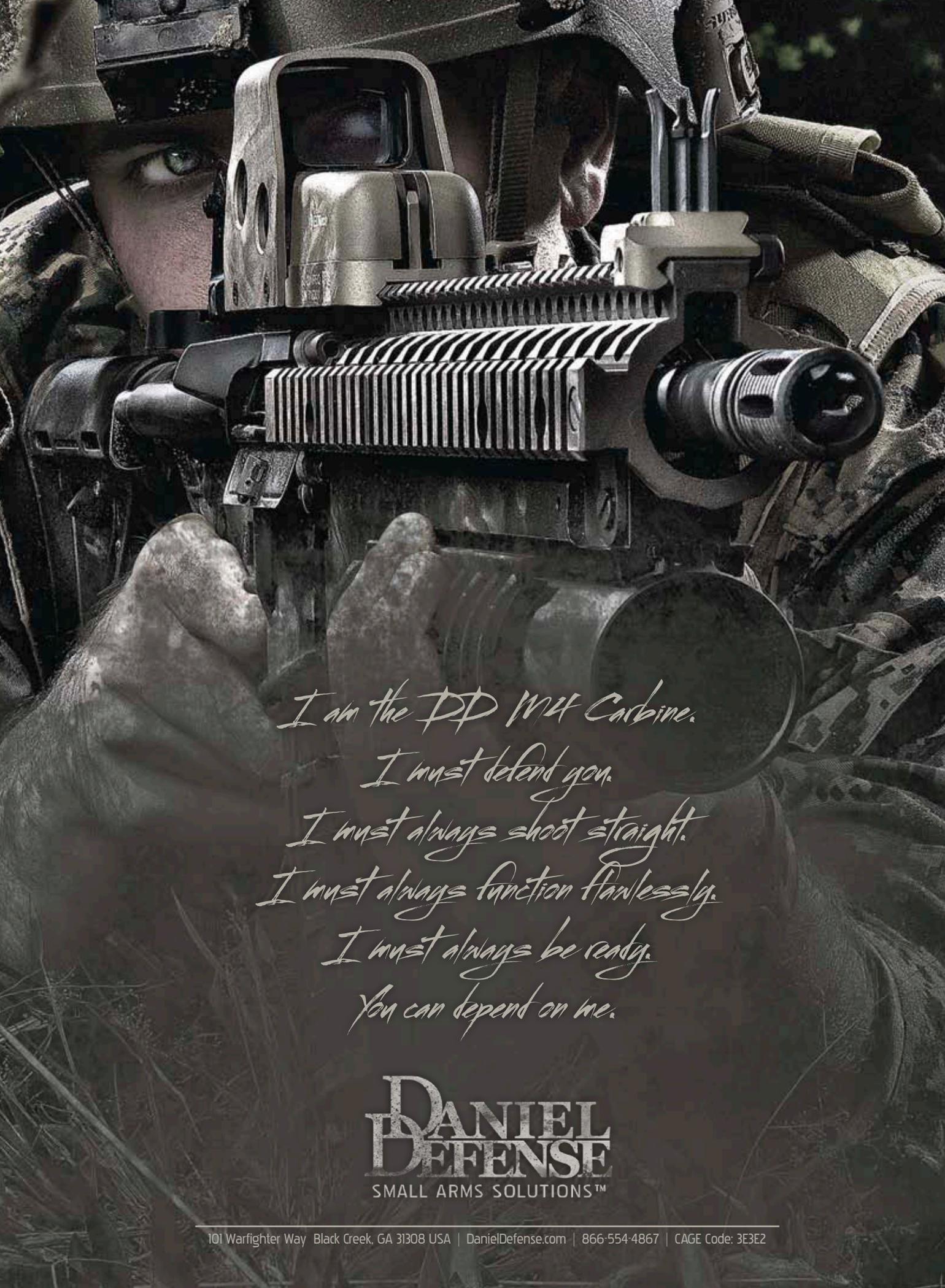
Bob was a small, slight of stature, unassuming, friendly old man. I knew his daughter wrote for the local paper, and I often chided him about her liberal views. When I met his wife I accused him of robbing the cradle. I only later found out they had been married for over 50 years. Obviously she was older than she looked perhaps reflecting how well Bob treated her and took care of her. I knew he was ex-military, but not by much. At one time he mentioned he was already in the Army when Pearl Harbor occurred and that was about all I knew.

Then one day he showed up at the range with a rifle that literally made my heart skip several beats. It was a rifle I had dreamed of and drooled over as a kid from seeing it in the *Shooter's Bible* and thinking it was just about as perfect as a rifle could be. Talk about a beautiful historic rifle! This was it! It was a full-stocked Mannlicher Schoenaur carbine with the butter knife bolt handle and chambered in 6.5x54. "Oh Robert! How much did you have to pay for that beautiful little gem?" I asked. He responded it didn't cost him anything, as he traded it for a



**Robert W. Flagg**  
1920-2009

*continued on page 97*



*I am the DP 12 Carbine.*

*I must defend you.*

*I must always shoot straight.*

*I must always function flawlessly.*

*I must always be ready.*

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