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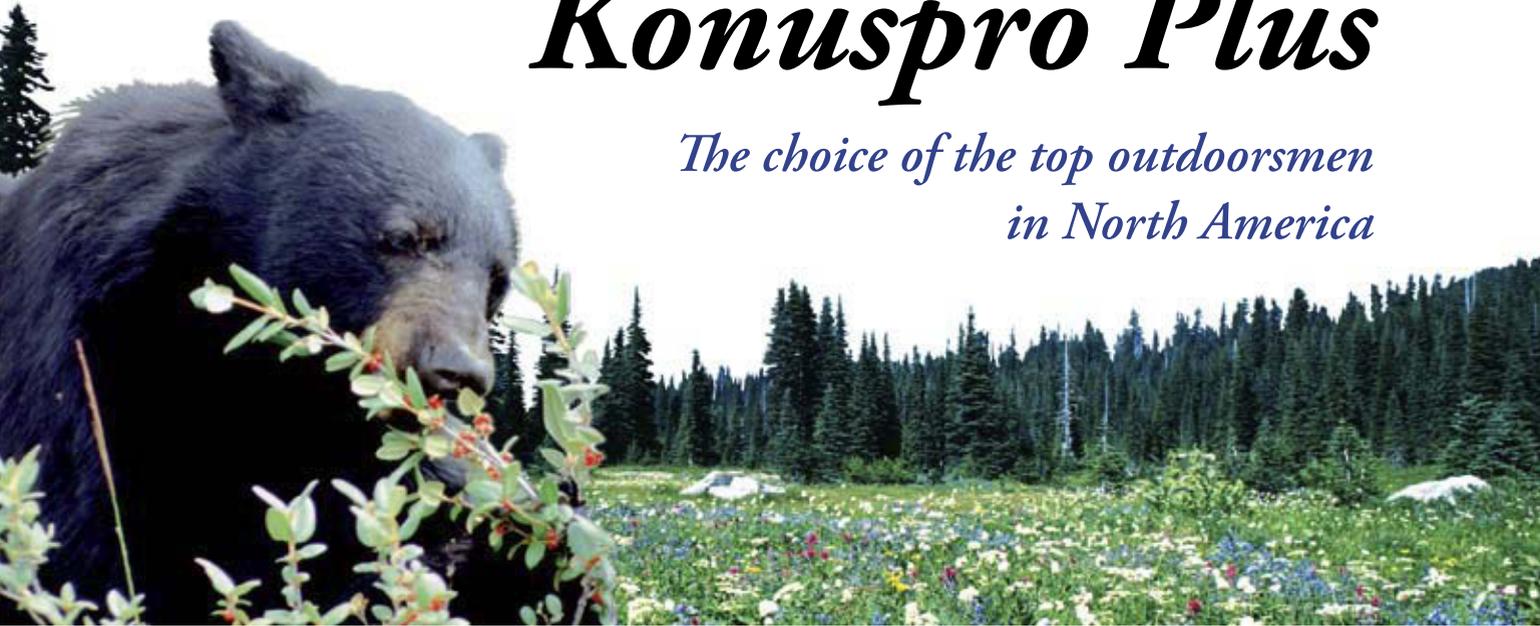
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SEPTEMBER 2010

Vol. 56, Number 9, 657th Issue



ON THE COVER SOLID DEFENSE DUO

Nighthawk Custom
12-gauge Tactical
shotgun and T3 .45
ACP 1911 pistol.

STORY:

Dave Anderson

PHOTOS:

Joseph R. Novelozo

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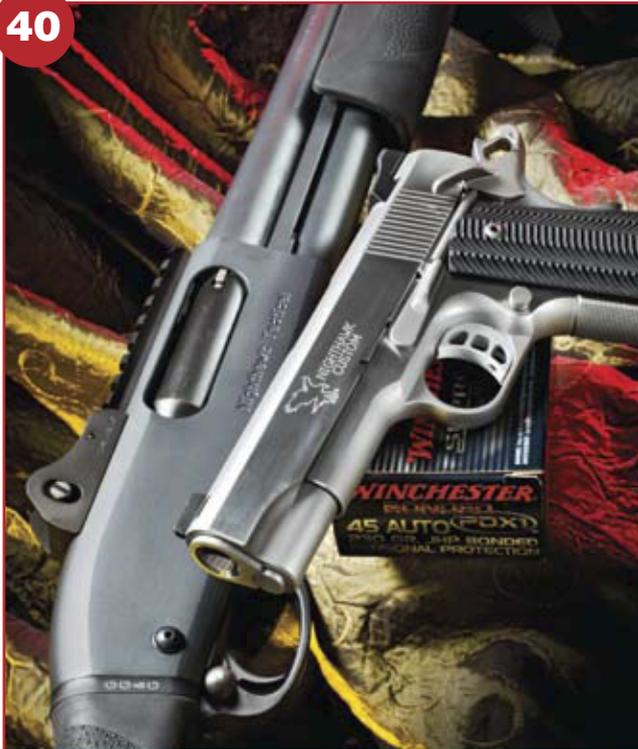
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GUNS MAGAZINE
JULY 2010

CROSSFIRE

LETTERS TO GUNS

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No Explanation Necessary

Concerning "reasonable" restrictions to any of our rights, the burden of proof of necessity lies with those who would abridge or eliminate a right.

For example, a recent change in federal regulations restores a right that should never have been taken from us, the right to carry a gun in national parks. An unhappy liberal who called a local radio talk show demanded an explanation why anyone needed to carry a gun in a national park. We do not owe him an explanation. He owes us one. He needs to prove the necessity of denying us this right.

Let someone try to prove we have no right to defend ourselves, and let them prove that disarming us will not deprive us of this most fundamental right. What have we become that we must hire lawyers to beg a Supreme Court to grant us the right to defend ourselves? Do we need to produce evidence that we have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness?

Fred Cardin
Appleton, Wisconsin

From Across The Pond

As you know it's tough for us shooters in the UK but we keep ourselves going with what we're "allowed." Having been reading GUNS in excess of 40 years now. Most of the contributors will have handed in their dinner pails; indeed your longest serving writer must be old Mas who must have been composing articles since the '70s in the Jerry Rakusan days. John Taffin must have started in the middle '80s. He's a little bit younger than I am, but boy does he take me down Memory Lane a time or two. The old bugger can still shoot a bit, though it's amusing to see that he's arrived at the 9mm late in the day. Great stuff!

J. Ellison
Plymouth, UK

Good to hear from you, sir, and glad the spirit of the longbowmen of Agincourt is still alive in Old Blighty. By the way, I think Brother Taffin may

have a bit more tenure than me. (God, am I old...)—Best, Mas

Mr. Ellison: Thanks for the kind words about our efforts. I'll keep going down The Lane as long as the Memory holds on!—Good shootin' and God Bless, John

Deep Cover Magnum

After so many gun magazine articles about how to carry at least three or more concealed guns Holt Bodinson has introduced reality to concealed carry. Bad stuff happens in one second or less. The gun you have (even a .22 Mag) is the best gun to have when you need it. For concealed carry, I prefer one of my HKs or my Kahr 9mm from a ballistics standpoint, yet I carry a Ruger .380 LCP.

Jim Underwood
via e-mail

I must respectfully disagree with Mr. Bodinson's article about the NAA .22 Mag mini-revolver and laser sight, and his conclusion the combination is a "serious self-defense gun." I am among the group of "average men and women" of whom he speaks. I carry occasionally, violating one of Mas' rules, because I want to, virtually never because I feel I have to. Yes, I know the arguments. If I felt I really needed to carry, I would make the sacrifices.

A year or so ago, I had this same discussion with myself. I love the little NAA PUG, but chose a Secamp .32 in a DeSantis Nemesis pocket holster because it is more effective and shootable than the PUG and it will ride out of sight and out of mind in any normal pocket. It is also smaller, more ergonomic and aesthetically pleasing than the KelTec or LCP, in my opinion, although a strong argument can be made for these pistols.

While I do appreciate the elements of personal preference and confidence in his choice, I think there are better choices for any actual encounters, as opposed to just the satisfaction that packing anything provides.

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Smith & Wesson fans, you're going to like the M&P15-22. Most of us were caught off guard a few years ago when S&W stepped forward with their very own AR-15, the M&P15. It was the right product at the right time. Demand for ARs was insatiable, prices were at scalper levels, and the supply pipeline for factory-finished ARs had dried to a trickle.

Smith & Wesson not only stepped up to the plate in a timely fashion, but their product immediately earned them high marks for the fit, finish and accuracy built into the M&P15 line. If you're looking for a high-quality, traditional AR, it's hard to beat the quality and price of the Smith & Wessons.

And then the .223 ammunition supply dried up, seemingly overnight. Whispers were it was conspiratorial, something like the earlier primer shortage. The fact was the United States was involved in two wars, and the ammunition plants were running 24/7 just to meet the needs of the troops. Ammunition and components are in short supply anytime a war is being waged.

There was no better time for AR makers to develop a rimfire clone and understudy for the centerfire ARs

resting in the rack. With the brilliance of American industry, we now have dedicated rimfire ARs from Smith & Wesson, Colt and Ruger.

Each maker has taken a different tack to bring an AR rimfire on line.

Colt licensed Carl Walther in Germany to build all-metal versions of the AR. Ruger took the guts of their 10/22 and surrounded it with an AR wrapper. Smith & Wesson went to the drawing board and designed a rimfire AR that makes maximum use of synthetics to capture the overall design and essential operating features of their M&P15 centerfire rifles.

The Smith & Wesson rimfire line currently consists of four models. The basic differences among them are the degree to which they are compliant with existing, ridiculous, state-by-state regulations/restrictions. For



Most of the USA can get the M&P15-22 with a 25-round detachable magazine. A 10-round mag is available for states with "restrictions."



The dual aperture, adjustable rear sight can easily be removed and replaced with optics.

example, the S&W model that can be sold in Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maryland, New Jersey and New York can't have a 6-position, collapsing stock or a 25-round magazine. No, the stock has to be fixed and the magazine reduced to 10 rounds. The California "compliant" model can have a 6-position stock but only a 10-round



Accurate and dependable, S&W's M&P15-22 is a great rimfire understudy to the full-size .223 AR-15. "M&P" is a standard designation in S&W lines, standing for "Military & Police."

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Smith & Wesson's M&P15-22 exhibits excellent lines and attention to detail. The stock is fully extended. The quad rail Picatinny fore-end has enough space for sights, lasers and lights.

magazine. For the rest of the country, there are two models, both have a 6-position collapsing buttstocks and 25-round magazines but one sports an A1-style compensator on the end of the muzzle and the other, not.

When comparing the M&P15-22 design to the centerfire line, its overall design comes closest to the centerfire model M&P15T, with its extended, Picatinny, quad-rail fore-end.

Examining the M&P15-22 more closely, the upper and lower receivers are formed from a high-strength polymer, reinforced where necessary with steel inserts. Sounds like the composition of an M&P pistol lower doesn't it? And it is. The blowback bolt

rides on steel rails inside the polymer receiver, and a match-grade barrel is threaded and screwed into a steel breech unit housed in the forward end of the upper. The texture and tone of the polymer provides the whole gun with a matte black appearance. It's a pleasing finish and appropriate to the line.

Comparing the controls on the rimfire to the centerfire model, they're in the right place. The M&P15-22 does sport a fully-functioning charger handle, a two-position safety under your thumb on the left side, a bolt hold-open latch and release on the left side and a recessed-magazine release on the right.

The 6-position collapsing stock rides on a mil-spec polymer tube. Collapsed, the overall length of the M&P15-22 is 30.5" and fully extended, 33.75". What's particularly nice about a telescoping buttstock is it permits shooters of all ages and physical size to adjust the rifle to their physique. Also, when the stock is fully collapsed, the M&P15-22 is easy to store and easy to handle in close quarters. The stock functioned perfectly in all six positions, but there was just enough up and down and side play in the unit to be noticeable. The tolerances between the tube and the stock need to be tweaked a bit at the factory, and while the buttstock



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Photo courtesy of Trooper Ron Wolf, New York State Police SORT Sniper, Savage Model 10 .308



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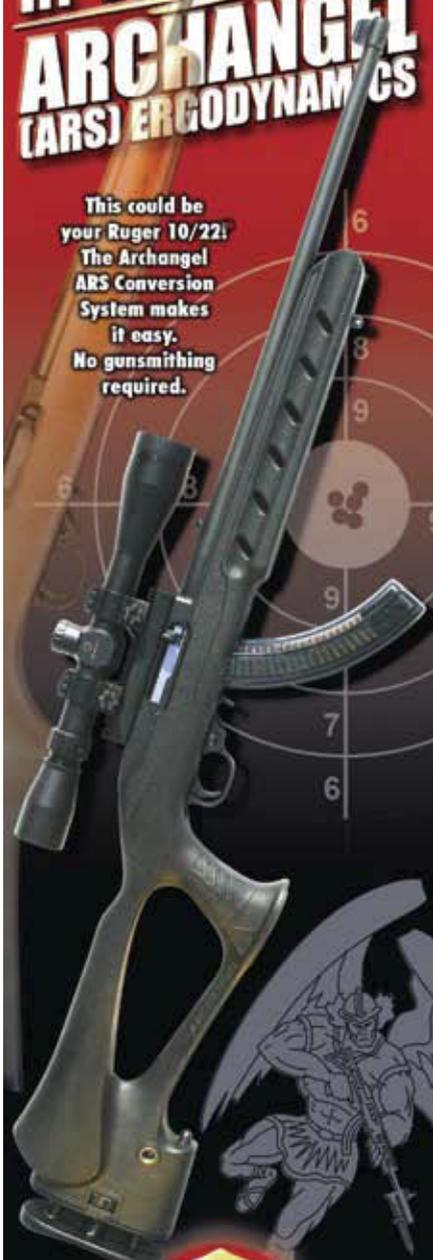
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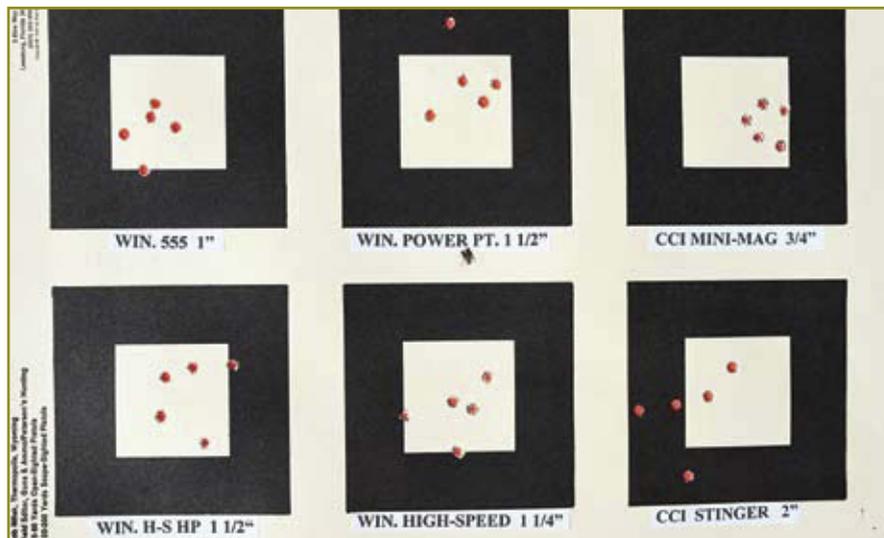
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RIMFIRES



incorporates a rear-sling swivel, there is no complementary forward-sling swivel.

The Picatinny, quad-rail fore-end is 10" long and mates nicely with the Picatinny rib forming the flattop of the receiver. The 4-sided Picatinny fore-end is cool looking, and just begs to be tricked out with scopes, red dots, lasers, flashlights and anything else you can hang on a Picatinny.

Accuracy

How did the M&P15-22 shoot? Averaging 7 pounds on a Lyman Electronic gauge, the single-stage trigger is a little on the hefty side but breaks cleanly. Functioning during the 5-shot, 35-yard tests was flawless with a variety of high-speed, standard and target velocity ammunition.

I fired and averaged 12 different loads. In the high-speed arena, CCI Mini-Mag HP was the clear leader with groups hovering around 3/4" but PMC's Sidewinder was not far behind at 7/8". The more I shoot CCI's Mini-Mag HP in a variety of rimfires, the

The M&P15-22 performed well across the velocity and ammunition cost spectrum.



Made in Springfield, Mass., the M&P15-22 features the right controls in the right places for its role as "AR understudy."



Collapsed, the 6-position buttstock is easy to store and handy in close quarters. Locked into one of six positions, the buttstock can fit shooters of all ages and physiques.

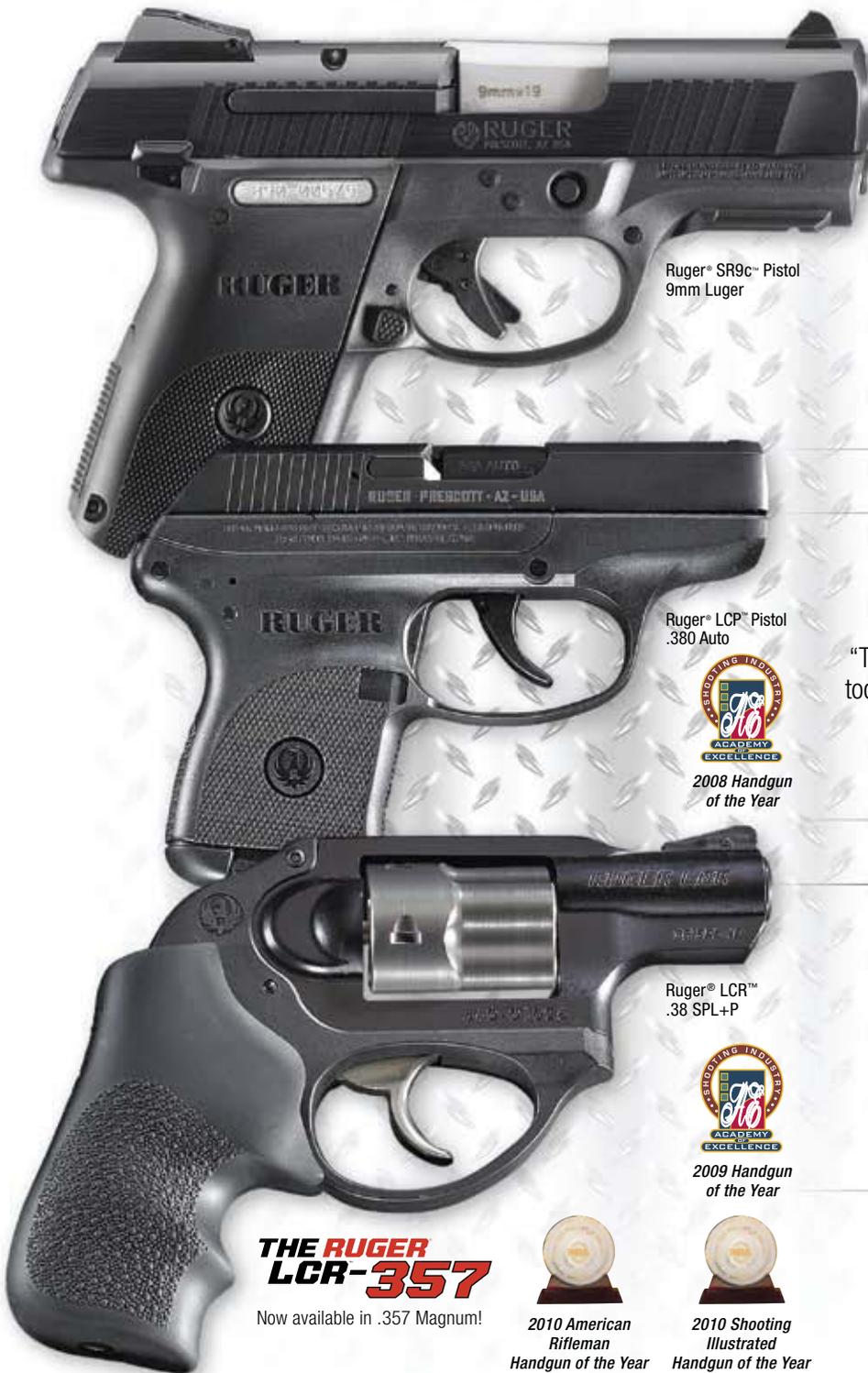
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more impressed I am. In the bulk-pack league, Winchester's "555" HP did best at 1-1/8". In target loads, both Wolf's Extra Match and RWS Target averaged 3/4". Frankly, it's nice to own a rimfire that performs equally well across the velocity and price spectrum.

The M&P15-22 is a real fun gun and an excellent understudy to a real M4/M16, assisting the shooter to develop and hone their muscle memory so handling and shooting any of the AR models becomes subliminal and automatic.



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MONTANA MUSINGS

• MIKE "DUKE" VENTURINO • PHOTOS: YVONNE VENTURINO

THE TRUTH ABOUT GUN FOLK

What we do for each other counts.

An event I recently participated in proved the truth about "gun folk." By "gun folk," I mean we for whom shooting, hunting and studying firearms is an important part of our lives. We're not "gun nuts" or some other pejorative term, as the leftist excuse for news media in this country commonly uses.

We're "gun folk" brought together by a common interest, and I can't think of another group more honest, decent and willing to help one another. There are bad apples among gun owners. That's for sure. The bullet holes in road signs and private property attest to that, as do accidents occasionally caused by some numbskull's stupidity. They're not my "gun folk."

Here's what happened at the recent event. In this column over the past few years I've detailed how my friends Wally and Nicole Wines, living here in the upper Yellowstone River Valley, have raised their children, Morgan and Connor, in a hunting and shooting environment. Recently both a family member and a long-time friend of the Wines' have become afflicted with cancer. In an effort to help defray some of their considerable expenses Nicole Wines decided a benefit in the form of a "turkey shoot" would

fit the sort of people living in the Yellowstone Valley.

Now Nicole Wines had never organized such an event as a turkey shoot before, and to the best of my knowledge, had never participated in one either. Be that as it may, people who know her also recognize that nothing intimidates her and she dives into any endeavor with boundless energy. Seeing that a considerable number of people would likely attend such a gathering, Nicole also used the opportunity to put on an auction.

How she managed it I will never know, but the *donated* items she gathered included fishing trips, pack trips, horse and hunting accouterments, a pair of mules and even a free African plains game hunt. (The buyer has to pay his own air fare.) Somebody donated free food for everyone attending. (They could put a donation in a jar if it pleased them.)



Nicole Wines' brother, Rory Grenier, and his daughters, Sidney (left) and Lexi (middle), spent the entire day loading magazines for Duke. Note the trap shooting group in the background.

And there were even some musicians willing to strum their instruments for entertainment during the day.

When Nicole called me about this project she had already gotten permission from a local rancher to use a pasture with high hills behind it for the shooting. So she asked me if I would help lay out some shooting points for the various types of guns to be included, and perhaps help devise some parameters for equipment rules. When we looked over the proposed shooting site, Nicole had already done most of the thinking. She had in mind places for archery, clay pigeon, handgun events and rifle shooting at both 100 and 200 yards. Looking over the lay of the ground I also volunteered to bring some of my World War II vintage submachine guns.

Contests

Here's what we came up with for contests. Someone donated the use of an automatic clay pigeon thrower so trap shooters vied for frozen turkeys by who hit the most clay pigeons. Handgunners and rifle shooter groups were divided into eight people on a first-come, first-serve basis. (Eight bullet holes in a target were about



Will Freland picked the German MP40 to shoot as Grandpa Dave Gruhler stands nearby.



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MONTANA MUSINGS



After the turkey shoot, a benefit auction was held and Nicole Wines (above), who put the whole thing together, wore the "auctioneer hat," too. Local talent showed up (below) with their instruments to provide entertainment.



maximum. Otherwise they became too crowded to score easily.) The closest shot to center won a frozen turkey.

Also, we decided to further divide the handgun competition to two basic categories: .22 rimfire and above .22 and all with iron sights only at 25 yards. For rifles, the competitors were divided into three basic groups: .22 rimfire, and centerfires at .243 caliber and below or above .243. The reason for the centerfire division was that at .243 and below, the rifles likely carried high-magnification varmint scopes whereas above .243 the rifles likely had lower-power, big-game hunting scopes.

For my sub-guns, we didn't make a contest. The idea was that people might like to experience the thrill of shooting a real MP40, PPsh41, M3 "grease gun" or best known of all: the legendary "Tommy Gun." The target was an armored steel plate at 50 yards. I didn't know if people would actually pay \$20 to fire 20 rounds from a sub-gun since that's at most a couple of seconds worth of thrill. But, we hoped they would because the money was going for a good cause.

Brother would they! Shooting started at 10 a.m. that day and I didn't get a chance to sit down until late in the afternoon when the auctions began. Nicole's brother, Rory Grenier, and his two daughters, Sidney and Lexi, stayed busy just loading sub-gun magazines. To keep things safe, I first gave each shooter a moment's instruction and then hovered just a few inches to their left. Yvonne was on their right, close but a little behind. This way no shooter could turn in an unsafe direction. We were prepared, but I am happy to say no one even came close to doing something unsafe the entire day. Also, I made a rule no one younger than 18 could shoot unless accompanied by a parent.

I expected a lot of interest from kids and that was the case. What I didn't expect was how many grown women wanted to try shooting a sub-

gun. About the youngest shooter we had was 10 years old, and I know the oldest fellow was 75. One and all—and I'm not exaggerating in the least—as I took the gun from their hands, their faces carried huge smiles.

Being focused on what I was doing I couldn't tell much about the other events except all shooting points had continuing crowds. One event you couldn't ignore was "Shooting the Tannerite." Tannerite is a substance that when mixed and hit with a bullet makes a huge boom! and a cloud of smoke. Nicole got a bunch of old stuffed animals from a second-hand store and stowed the Tannerite in them. People paid \$5 and could shoot until they hit the stuffed critter. You certainly knew when they did!

Now here's the kicker. Here's what makes me proud to be included amongst "gun folks." Despite this being a rural area, hundreds of people showed up and between the shooting and auctions more than \$35,000 was raised in a single day!

And that's the truth about "gun folks."

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HANDLOADING

• JOHN BARSNESS •

ALL-TIME FAVORITES

Handloading the .38 Special and .357 Magnum.

More shooters handload the .38 Special and .357 Magnum than any other handgun cartridges, despite the .38 being 108 years old. Even the “young” .357 celebrates three-quarters of a century this year. They’re lumped together, of course, because they’re also the oldest pair of popular “short and long” centerfire revolver rounds. One of the reasons the .357 is so popular is everything from mild to thumper loads can be easily purchased or made.

Yet, the two rounds also allow for a certain degree of specialization. A light, short-barreled .38 is still very popular for concealed carry, despite the recent boom in small autoloaders. A small revolver is simpler and easier to use (and maintain) than any auto, and the .38 Special is also more powerful than the .380, the largest practical round for a small auto. At the other end of the spectrum, a heavier .357 is very accurate at any practical iron-sighted handgun range, and powerful enough for serious self-defense, whether in cities or the wilderness, as well as deer hunting.

Very Versatile

Their versatility has increased in recent decades with better jacketed bullets, ranging from lightweights that can be driven very fast to deep-penetrating heavyweights like the 180-grain Nosler Partition. Yet, both are also very accurate with inexpensive lead bullets, whether commercial or home-cast, ranging from light wadcutters to hard heavyweights—and unlike autoloaders, revolvers easily handle a wide variety of power levels and bullet styles.

My first .38 Special was a 4" S&W Model 10, a former police revolver purchased used when some department made the switch to high-capacity autos. Like many PD revolvers, it had been carried a lot but shot relatively little, so was in excellent mechanical shape. The trigger was a joy to pull, whether single action or double, and it also proved to be very accurate. I intended it to be my all-around carry revolver, in town and the woods, but even with warm loads I discovered (of course) it wasn't a .357,

and eventually traded it in for a brand new S&W Model 66.

That 66 is still my main .38/.357, and has worked very well, especially with Crimson Trace Laser Grips. Of course, it wasn't enough, and my wife Eileen and I have since owned a bunch

of .38s and .357s, from her S&W Airweight .38 to a 10" Thompson/Center Contender barrel in .357.

However, the T/C barrel went too much against the notion of the .357 as a “handy” sidearm, so I sent it down the road. Also, it was purchased primarily for hunting with heavier bullets, but with anything from 158 grains up, it didn't show all that much gain in velocity over my 4" barreled S&W 66. (This may seem strange, but heavier bullets and slower powders tend to show the least velocity loss in any barrel, whether a handgun or a rifle.)



A medium-sized .357 like John's S&W Model 66 is perhaps the most versatile handgun. Here it's being used on Montana ground squirrels.

.38 SPECIAL HANDLOADED AMMO PERFORMANCE

GUN (MODEL)	BULLET (BRAND, BULLET WEIGHT, TYPE)	POWDER (BRAND)	CHARGE (GRAINS WEIGHT)	VELOCITY (FPS)	GROUP SIZE (INCHES)
ROSSI M84	110 Speer Gold Dot	Unique	5.4	989	2.56
S&W 66	110 Speer Gold Dot	Unique	6.3	1,143	1.39
S&W 66	125 Speer Gold Dot	AA No. 5	7.0	976	1.91
S&W 10	148 Speer HBWC	Red Dot	3.0	756	1.54
S&W 66	158 Lyman 358156	Unique	5.0	982	1.91

.357 MAGNUM HANDLOADED AMMO PERFORMANCE

GUN (MODEL)	BULLET (BRAND, BULLET WEIGHT, TYPE)	POWDER (BRAND)	CHARGE (GRAINS WEIGHT)	VELOCITY (FPS)	GROUP SIZE (INCHES)
S&W	125 Speer Gold Dot	2400	16.5	1,150	1.44
T/C	125 Speer Gold Dot	2400	16.5	1,591	1.31
S&W	158 Lyman 358156	Win. AP	8.0	1,117	2.34
T/C	158 Lyman 358156	Win. AP	8.0	1,252	2.56
S&W	180 Nosler Partition	H110	13.5	1,128	1.89
T/C	180 Nosler Partition	H110	13.5	1,258	1.82

Note the comparison of .357 Magnum loads from 4" S&W 66 and 10" T/C Contender barrel.

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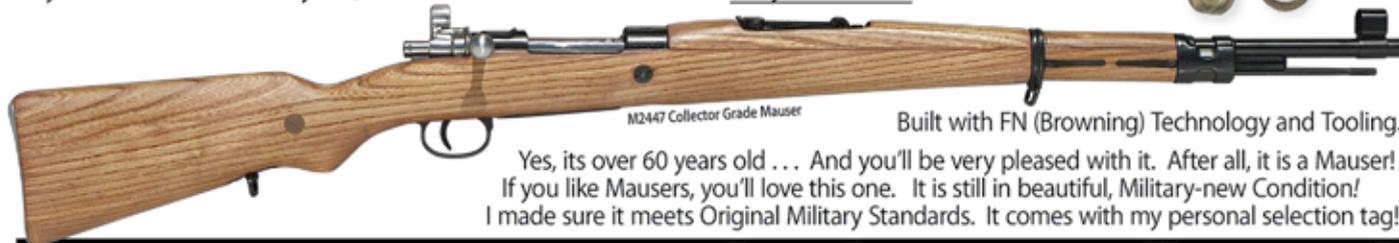


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One of our .38 revolvers was acquired as a "gift" from my anti-gun mother-in-law, Cecilia. A few years after Eileen's father passed away, Cece remarried, and her new husband, nicknamed Doc, kept at least two loaded guns in their Florida home for self-defense, a fact Cece chose to ignore. Seventeen years later Doc also passed away, and when Eileen and I were down visiting Cece the next winter, she suddenly appeared in the room holding a little silver revolver by the very end of the barrel, as if carrying a dead rat.

"John, I found this in one of Doc's drawers. Can you dispose of it?"

I nodded. "Is it loaded?"

She laughed condescendingly. "Of course not!"

I gently took the revolver from her, and of course, every chamber held a 158-grain factory load. It's a Rossi Model 84 with a 3" barrel, and it's pretty darn accurate!

One of the .38 loads proven most consistent in just about any .38 or .357 combines the Speer hollowbase wadcutter and 3.0 grains of either Red Dot or Bullseye. With Red Dot, this was the most accurate load in my old Model 10 and has since worked well in every revolver since, even in .357s where the bullet jump is a little long.

Another classic .38 load is a cast



The .38 Special and .357 Magnum essentially cover the middle ground of handgun cartridges, so are chambered in a wide variety of revolvers from small to large.

158-grain semiwadcutter and 4.0 to 5.0 grains of Unique. The lighter powder charge is better for smaller .38s, while the 5-grain load should be reserved for .357s or .38s rated for +P ammo. In many revolvers, this load tends to shoot to the same point of aim as heavier .357 loads, handy for practice.

Unique is still among the best

powders for high velocity with lighter bullets in the .38 Special, and the latest cleaner-burning version of Unique works even better, in my experience. A charge of 5.8 grains with the 110-grain Speer Gold Dot will get push 1,000 fps even in the Rossi, and a +P load of 6.3 grains gets 1,100 to 1,200 fps in the longer barrels of heavier-duty .38s.

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HANDLOADING

I must confess not many newer powders have worked their way into my .38/.357 loading, partly because the classic powders have worked so well. The major exception is Accurate Arms No. 5, providing a good combination of accuracy and velocity with mid-weight cast and jacketed bullets in several .38 Specials.

Classic Powders

Despite newer powders, H110/W296 (the same powder in different canisters) and Alliant 2400 are still about as good as it gets with the .357 and heavier bullets. Of course, part of the reason for the long career of 2400 is that, like other older powders, it's been improved over the years.

The classic 158-grain jacketed bullet in the .357 was once touted as the all-around load, but this was mostly because lighter bullets tended to penetrate insufficiently back in the days when jackets and core often separated on impact. These days more shooters are choosing lighter bullets for urban defense, and heavier bullets for medium-sized, big-game animals such as deer, mountain lions or black bears.

For inexpensive practice, however, it's hard to beat a good 158-grain semi-wadcutter cast bullet, such as the Lyman 358156. Such bullets almost always shoot very well, whether at mild .38 Special velocities or pushed hard in .357s. In fact, in my 66 this bullet and 12.0 grains of 2400 is more accurate than any jacketed bullet, and works not just for punching paper but for small game and varmints.

Shooting cast bullets from soft to moderate hardness also results in much longer barrel life, due to less gas blow-by than with jacketed bullets in the cylinder/forcing cone gap. One of my friends is still shooting the .357 Ruger Blackhawk he bought back in high school almost 40 years ago. It shoots great, mostly because only one box of jacketed bullets has gone down the barrel since then. Or at least that's what he claims! **GUNS**

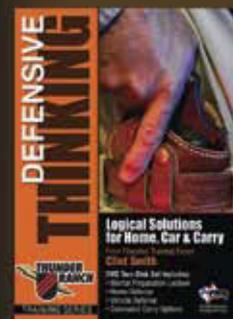
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HANDGUNS

• MASSAD AYOUB •

FLYING WITH HANDGUNS

It isn't a big problem, but there are some trickbags to avoid.

At reader request (Yes, the editor listens to those!) we need to talk about flying with firearms. Unless you're a Federal law enforcement agent or another LEO who has (a) taken the Flying Armed Course and (b) gone through the hoops currently required to be armed aboard the aircraft, we're talking about unloaded guns in checked baggage.

The TSA website (www.tsa.gov) is your friend. Don't just read it, download it and have a printed hardcopy with you at the ticket counter. Do the same with the specific airline's rules on the matter: they're accessible on the 'net. If a counter person says something like, "Sir, the 'Firearms' tag goes on the outside of the suitcase," you want to be able to politely say, "I had heard that too, until your airline and TSA gave me these." It tends to be a very decisive argument-ender. You want to know Federal Air Regulation 108.11 better than anyone behind the counter.

What you don't want to do or say is anything that can be interpreted as "Nyah, nyah: I know your job better than you do." Airline ticket counter personnel are among the very few people in America who take more crap from the public than cops, and antagonizing people who have the power to send your luggage to Patagonia is not a good way to win the argument in the long term.

Your handguns should be unloaded and in a hard-shell case that fits within the suitcase. If you check just the gun case, it can require that red or orange firearms sticker affixed to the outside. Its purpose is to reassure baggage handlers that, when they pick up what is obviously a gun case, the firearm therein has been confirmed unloaded. However, the label is also what we call a "Steal Me" tag, since in most domestic airports

luggage ends up in a common pickup area where anyone can snag it and walk away. You definitely want the pistol case to go inside a suitcase.

The "inner case" needs to be lockable. TSA approved locks are pathetic, but "it's the rules." Some counter folks won't bother making you lock it, but some will, and won't let 'em fly without 'em. The keys for those TSA locks are tiny: I put them in my wallet, so they won't get pulled out of a pocket and drop to the terminal floor unnoticed when I reach for change at the newsstand or go through security.

I know folks who've flown with approved gun cases inside soft outer luggage, but a strict reading of the regs tells me what they want are hardshell suitcases enclosing the pistol case inside, and the outer case has to lock too. I would avoid fancy Zero-Halliburton type hardshell luggage: it's wonderful stuff, but dirtbags associate it with expensive contents, and it may be more likely to grow legs if a bad guy spots it on the carousel before you do. The lower-key Delsey brand is an excellent choice.

My collection of plain but sturdy hardshell Samsonite suitcases have served me well.

TSA limits ammunition to 11 pounds per passenger (not per suitcase). Weigh before you go: a strict airport will, if you don't. The ammo must be in factory packaging or equivalent and have a place in the box for each cartridge, not loose



Mas has good luck transporting his ammo in factory packaging, in compliance with FAA and TSA regs. Rubber bands keep the boxes from opening and spilling inside suitcase, yet allow TSA agents to inspect them easily.



Vanguard Guardforce hardshell gun case with twin TSA-approved locks will house this Gen 4 Glock 17 on its flight in the baggage hold.



Some factory gun boxes are set up for TSA locks, like this XD Gear container factory provided with this Springfield Armory XD(M).

"bulk pack." Some interpret the regs to allow ammo to be in magazines or speedloaders. I've found some airlines forbid that, and to be on the safe side, I put each round in its space in a factory box. I put heavy duty rubber bands around them endwise to keep them from spilling during handling: TSA folks sometimes want to inspect the ammo cartridge by cartridge in my experience, so tape is less satisfactory for this purpose. If I'm going to a match, a shooting class or someplace else requiring ammo in quantity, I'll ship it ahead (UPS, with the box(es) marked ORM-D as required), or arrange to purchase it on-site. Plan carefully: you'll have the same issues to deal with flying back with leftover ammunition.

Remember, some airlines want you to have the ammo in a separate suitcase



Hardshell, locking suitcases like these are recommended to contain the hardshell, separately locked pistol cases inside.

from the gun. I've found some airlines have tighter restrictions than TSA and FAA, and allow only as little as 7 pounds of ammo. All good reasons to check the specific airline's regs well before you depart for the airport.

Suggestions

Plan with care. New York airport police have been known to arrest people checking in handguns that weren't registered there if the traveler didn't fall under that state's narrow

allowed parameters. The website www.handgunlaw.us is your friend. At Chicago's O'Hare, you may have to go to a special counter to check a firearm. Always use inside counters: curbside check doesn't work for firearms.

Bring a good book and get there an hour sooner than you would if you weren't flying with handguns. When you tell the counterperson, "I have a suitcase to check through to (wherever), and wish to declare it, it contains an unloaded firearm," expect

to be asked to "show clear." Do so discreetly: I use the suitcase lid and my body to shield the gun from view of nervous passengers in line, and am always careful to keep the muzzle in a safe direction.

Don't fly with a gun you can't afford to lose. In 35 years as a frequent flyer, I've had my luggage delayed for periods from hours to weeks. Only once was the luggage actually stolen. Investigators determined it was an "inside job" at Delta LaGuardia Baggage. Within a few years, both stolen guns, a Colt .45 1911 and a Smith .38 snub, were both recovered in crack raids in New York City. Wherever I'm going where I'll need a gun, I try to make arrangements to have a loaner available on the ground if my luggage doesn't get there when I do. Plan carefully. Good luck. If you choose to drive instead of fly, you'll get no argument from me. **GUNS**

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RIFLEMAN

• DAVE ANDERSON •

AMEGA MINI-14 SCOPE MOUNT This mount improves accuracy, too.

The Mini-14 was an immediate hit when Ruger announced it in the mid 1970s. It was strong, reliable, well made, durable and cost a lot less than other .223 semi-autos of the era.

The early Minis had their faults. There was no provision for mounting optical sights. Many of them, to put it charitably, were not very accurate. The rifle shown here is an early 180-series, made in 1976 (marked "Made in the 200th year of American Liberty").

Using the iron sights about the best 100-yard groups I get with this rifle are around 6". And that's on a good day, with good ammunition. With some ammunition brands it's doing well to get 8" groups.

The problem is not quality control but the combination of a light barrel and an operating rod system. As expanding powder gases pass the gas block and start the operating rod in motion it gives the barrel a tweak, before the bullet has exited. The result is inconsistent barrel vibration and reduced accuracy. One reason AR-15 design rifles are famous for accuracy is the direct gas impingement operating system makes it easy to float the barrel.

Current Mini 14s using a stiffer, more rigid barrel and provide considerably better accuracy than early models. Still, owners of older models, if they were dissatisfied with

the accuracy, had no choice but to rebarrel or trade in for a new model.

Enter the Mini Scout Mount from Amega Mounts. Initially I was interested mainly in being able to fit optical sights, lights and lasers. Doug Green, owner of Amega Mounts, advised they had consistently found better accuracy after fitting the mount on Mini 14s. The mount, he said, stiffens the barrel considerably, making it more rigid and less affected by the action of the operating rod.

Before installing the mount I fired several 100-yard groups with the stock rifle, using Black Hills ammunition loaded with 50-grain Hornady V-Max bullets. This ammunition has provided exceptional accuracy in every rifle in which I've tried it. Groups were in the 6" to 8" range I've come to expect from this rifle.

Installing the Amega mount was simple and straightforward. The process is clearly described in the instructions provided with the mount, so I won't repeat them here. To sum up, fieldstrip the rifle; remove the wooden handguard; remove the four screws holding the upper and lower gas block components; then install the Amega mount on top of the barrel, securing

it to the lower gas block using the original screws.

A steel band goes around the bottom of the barrel a few inches back from the gas block and attaches to the Amega mount. When all the screws are tightened the Amega mount acts as a truss support to increase barrel rigidity. The top of the mount is a Picatinny-style rail mount, integral with the mount.

A couple of points I like: one is the obvious quality of the Amega mount. It is very well made and finished, and it fits the rifle perfectly with no fuss or bother. Construction material is aluminum alloy, in this case with a black anodized finish. It has the look and feel of a quality component.

Another positive, the Amega mount requires no permanent alteration to the rifle. Some collectors will pay a premium for a "200th year" model, and I didn't want to affect its excellent condition. Reinstalling the upper gas block and handguard to restore the rifle to original condition would take just minutes.

Better Accuracy

At the range I shot it again with the iron sights (the mount is grooved to not impede the iron sight picture). Groups shrank to about half the initial size, to around 4". I then installed a Leupold Scout Scope using Zeiss-



The Mini Scout Mount from Amega replaces the original wooden upper handguard. The scope is a Leupold Scout Scope in Warne rings. A white light/laser aiming device from Insight Systems is attached as well. It's a useful accessory for law enforcement or home-defense, but leave it at home while hunting.

marked rings made by Warne. With the scope groups were in the 2" range (incidentally all were 5-shot groups).

Frankly, this is an amazing transformation. This rifle had been sitting unused for decades because it lacked the accuracy for either competition shooting or hunting. I suppose it was accurate enough for home-defense but I have lots of home-defense guns (and they all have rails for lights and lasers). Plus my 60-year-old eyes don't do so well with iron sights anymore.

With the Amega mount accuracy is dramatically improved, and I can fit a scope or red-dot sight to take advantage of the increased accuracy.

The slanted sides of the Amega mount are drilled and tapped along both sides, to provide flexibility in adding attachment points for lights or laser aiming devices. These attachment points fit Weaver-style rings and most accessories, which fit popular handgun accessory rails.

Accessories

I tried several lights and light/laser combinations from Insight Systems, Streamlight, and SureFire, all of which fit well. Many police officers use issued or privately-owned Mini 14s as duty weapons. For such use, and for



The Leupold Scout scope mounted on the Amega rail ahead of the receiver is very fast when shooting with both eyes. It doesn't interfere with empty case ejection and it makes the rifle easy to carry with a hand grasping the receiver. The Amega mount dramatically improved the accuracy of this older, collectible Mini-14, and the installation can be reversed with no harm to the collector's value of the piece.



Holes drilled and tapped on both left and right sides of the Amega point provide flexibility in adding accessory attachment points. Here an accessory rail is attached with two screws on the left side. It will accept most popular light and lasers as well as Weaver-style rings.

home- and personal-defense, lights and lasers are very useful accessories.

Be aware some states don't allow laser-aiming devices for hunting, and even a white light on a rifle in the field may require a lot of explaining. If using your Mini for hunting, and even for casual plinking away from the range, I'd suggest leaving the light/laser at home.

Amega Mounts are available for virtually all Mini 14s from the originals to current production (including the folding stock GB models). For those with stainless rifles, the Amega mount is available in a clear anodized finish as well as the black anodized model shown.

Mounts are also available for M1 Garands, M-14s (and clones such as the Springfield Armory M1A), M1 Carbines, Ruger 10/22s and Remington 870 shotguns. None require any permanent alteration to the basic firearm. I really like this product. For \$139.95 it turned a back-of-the-gunsafe rifle into one I expect to see a lot of use.

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• GLEN ZEDIKER •

UNDERSTANDING CHAMBERS

Let's clear our throats.

The chamber specifications in any barrel should, one, be known. Two, if there are options, the more you know the better able you'll be to get what serves you best.

I'm going to start this off assuming no one knows anything about chambers. A rifle chamber is a hole cut in the breech-end of a barrel so a round of ammunition will fit into it. It's a lathe operation. A chamber "reamer" is the tool that cuts this hole and is shaped the same as a cartridge case with at least a little part of a bullet stuck down into it. The reamer is going to cut out the case body and shoulder silhouette, the case neck, and then extend into the bore to form a bullet profile silhouette. It's here, the bullet profile area, where the main tooling differences exist. There are a number of .223 Remington reamers considered and available as "standard" (along with 5.56x45mm NATO). The two most commonly used in factory-done guns are at opposite ends of this little universe—one is the shortest, and one is the longest.

Let's look closer. What I called the "bullet profile area" is technically called a "leade." We can also call it the barrel "throat." Inside the chamber, the distance between the end of the case neck and the first point cut into

the rifled portion of the barrel that coincides with barrel land (rifling) diameter is the preeminent variable determined by the reamer. Land diameter will be the smallest dimension inside a bore. If the first point of full land diameter (usually .219" in a .224" bore) is farther from the end of the case neck (farther ahead into the bore), then the chamber has a longer leade or throat.

The bullet won't contact the lands until, of course, it reaches the point on the bullet that coincides with land diameter. I call this the first point of "major diameter" on a bullet. The affect of this conical space ahead of the case neck is simple: the more space the less pressure, and the more space the farther the bullet must "jump" until the bullet contacts the lands.

Chambering specifications, which means the reamer used (and somewhat how it was used), are therefore compromises. Many similar things are.

SAAMI (Small Arms and Ammunition Manufacturer's Institute) set its standards for .223 Remington based on bolt-action rifles chambered for this round. These bolt rifles were configured for varminting. There, of course, was originally a military chamber, and round, in use since the .223 Remington commercial round was renamed from the 5.56x45mm (NATO-spec) cartridge. The SAAMI chamber has a good deal shorter leade or throat than a military NATO-spec chamber.

This was a bad idea (SAAMI's bad idea), and it's become an even worse idea because it's rarely been adequately explained to folks like you and me who load or purchase ammunition for AR-15s. See, off-the-shelf AR-15s may have "either" chamber. Even worse, some barrels are not marked and some are improperly marked. Compounding matters (but not necessarily making them worse)



Rounds loaded to respect magazine box dimensions are going to jump to engage the lands. The question is how much, and in Glen's experience it doesn't really matter. The shape of the bullet matters, and anything with a more "rounded" ogive endures jump better.

is competitive use of AR-15s resulted in even more chambering options and reamers with unique throating dimensions. These came about after 80-grain bullets became available, and then became immediately popular. The SAAMI was too short for these and the NATO was too long.

Competitive NRA High-Power shooters talk about chamber "lengths" based on an overall cartridge length that will have a Sierra 80-grain MatchKing bullet just touching the lands when the round is chambered. Not all of us shoot that bullet, and we don't all set them to touch the lands. However, this has become a "standard" and gives us a way to differentiate chambers with different throats. For instance, the "Wylde Chamber" (named for AR-15 pioneer Bill Wylde) is 2.445". This is a very popular chamber for competition use. A SAAMI-minimum chamber is normally about 2.395", and a NATO chamber is normally about 2.550". Those are huge differences.

Back to the start, and the compromises. If we're shooting different bullets in the same rifle, and these bullets are a good deal different in overall lengths and profiles, there's no way to get things how we'd like them to work best with each bullet.



A Hornady LNL tool will show you the first point on any bullet contacting the lands. Use that information to understand your chamber. This tool comes in handy for checking new barrels of uncertain chambering specs. Enough experience and enough notes will show you right off if you've got a long or short throat, and how long or how short.

SAAMI .223 REMINGTON VS. 5.56X45MM NATO

Pay attention! Chances are an AR-15 bought off the rack, or a barrel bought pre-chambered, will have either a SAAMI or a NATO chamber. SAAMI commercial .223 Remington specs call for a considerably shorter leade than NATO specs. A shorter leade raises pressures. Compounding this, NATO-spec ammunition is nearly always loaded to higher pressures than commercial .223. Shooting 5.56mm mil-spec ammo in a SAAMI "minimum" .223 Remington chamber can increase chamber pressure 15,000 psi, or more. Not all AR-15 barrels are correctly marked, and some aren't marked at all. Know by asking the manufacturer, or just shoot ".223 Remington" ammunition and don't worry. Know also before selecting loading data. If loads were worked up in rifle with a NATO chamber (Colt HBAR, for instance), they will be over-pressure if used in a SAAMI chamber.



NATO-spec ammo will always have a "cross-in-circle" on the headstamp. Note also the crimped-in primer. The crimp will need to be removed before the case can be reprimed.

GUNS

Shortening the leade to minimize jump with short bullets that have to make magazine box length constraints does no favors to the longer, heavier bullets since it requires setting them too far back into the case. That is generally considered a bad thing. Getting the longer, heavier bullets some room to stretch, and the case some room to breathe, means shorter bullets are facing a jump of relatively

epic proportions to get started into the bore. That is generally considered a bad thing.

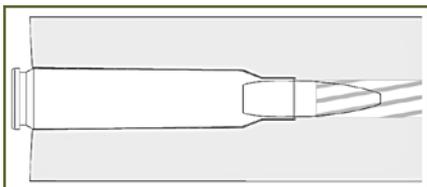
Which generally bad thing is worse? Leade specification doesn't matter all that much to accuracy, but it can to round performance—not the same thing. The .223 Remington has a short case neck, a small body and a, well, it's not the ideal round for long-range performance. Making it work its best means giving as much room as reasonably possible for the long bullets. This, again, is done to prevent seating them so far back into the case. We need all the case powder capacity we can get. I'm a fan of longer rather than shorter in leade specs. Others disagree. There's no answer we can't argue beyond an average man's concept of "a day."

A longer throat doesn't seem to matter to the performance of shorter bullets. That's not to say it couldn't matter, but for it to positively influence groups using, say, a 77-grain Sierra MatchKing, the throat would have to be well shorter than what anyone uses in a High Power chamber. My experience has been that once jump exceeds a few thousandths of an inch I'm not sure it matters. Jumping .015" isn't going to help much more than jumping .035". Reality is that we're shooting targets for score, and we, therefore, must judge the supposed good or bad effects from chambering compromises by score. It's common and easy to clean a 300-yard High-Power Rifle target, with a high X-count, in a "long" chamber shooting "short" bullets, like the Sierra 77 grain. That target has a 7" 10-ring.

GUNS



These are Sierra 80-grain MatchKings (above) seated to engage the lands for a NATO chamber (left) and a SAAMI minimum .223 Remington chamber (right). Whoa. Big difference (more than .150"). Here's the leade or throat in a chamber (below). This is the distance, essentially, from the cartridge case mouth to the first point inside the bore where the bullet will contact the lands or rifling. Different chambering reamers make for different specifications.



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DO OVER

If you shoot a rifle enough, it will need to be rebuilt.

I am a bit odd as I use my guns, have them rebuilt and use them until they need to be rebuilt again. It isn't because the original build is bad, but if you shoot 'em hard and daily they do in fact wear out.

Being a rifle guy at heart I have been fortunate to be able to run my rifles hard the last few years because I have the ranges to press the precision rifles I shoot to the limit. I just had two rebuilt because I don't need nor want a new rifle, I just wanted the ones I have brought back up to speed.

The two rifles were Remington 700s as base guns years ago with one being pretty much a Remington 700 LTR with a cool greenish skull-covered stock paint job.

The second rifle is the original Flame gun built by Robbie Barrkman's shop. That thing has been "rode hard"

over the years with Robbie putting at least two other barrels on it over the last decade.

Do What?

The "do what" was easy, since I just needed the rifles rebuilt, re-barreled and brought up to speed. It was time to add a few mechanical upgrades and just clean up and repair or replace stocks. I made the list of what I wanted and why and then sent it where it needed to go, so we're off to Kansas and Master OB-1.

I sent the rifles to George Gardner at GA Precision to have them done over. George—to his Mom, OB-1 to many of his clients—is a pretty quiet monster rifle builder in a world with its share of technical and tactical blowhards. Simply put, George's GAP rifles work and his rifle work is exceptional.

The Flame Turns Tan

The Flame is an old rifle and it has been shot a lot over the last decade plus. It has always been solid, but the stock was starting to get shaky at the bedding, the rifling was worn and it was tired. I had George spin a new 24" Bartlein barrel into the action and finish off the end of the barrel with a FTE muzzlebrake. We added the great upgrade of the Badger detachable magazine system and triggerguard.

The Badger metal completely solves one of the most significant flaws of the Remington 700 in general and specifically in the case of the Flame rifle, it takes out the factory-issued and always poorly-functioning internal magazine. On top, OB-1 added a 20 Minute Of Angle base for long-range shooting to which was set a pair of Badger 34mm rings holding a Schmidt & Bender 4-16x50 PMII acquired with the aid of Mark Cromwell from Schmidt & Bender USA. I have a short rail and regular detachable sling swivel forward to attach a Harris bipod.

In the clean it up department, I had a large bolt knob replaced with a more



The rebuilt rifles (above) came home with the the original Flame now becoming the Tan rifle (left), and the redone Skull rifle (right) in a new Manners thumbhole stock. The rebuilt Flame (below, left) now lives as the Tan rifle with new Badger detachable magazines topped with the hot Schmidt & Bender 4-16x50 PMII. Other parts of the rebuild on the old Skull rifle included new Badger bottom metal and the new Schmidt & Bender scope (below, right).





The Robar flame rifle and the original skull before it got skulled up. They've since had so many rounds through them, a complete rebuild was necessary.

efficient one and a new recoil pad set at 13" on the LOP. When it was all done, GAP refinished the whole thing in a flat tan color that works well here where we live in Oregon. Project one done!

The Skull Gets Holy

The rebuild on the second gun had some significant changes just like the Tan rifle. The rifle, a 700 LTR, had the barrel spun off and replaced with a new Bartlein measuring 22". It was set into action with an AAC adaptor for a suppressor. The action was checked and a new Badger metal triggerguard and detachable magazine system was put into the stock.

The biggest change was the placement of the rifle into a Manners MCS/GAT thumbhole stock, which is a collaboration of GAP and Manners. I have never had a thumbhole before and admit at first introduction it was different. After some use over a few weeks, I really warmed up to it and the only change to the manipulation program was using the trigger finger to run the safety instead of the right thumb.

Green

Painted green, the rifle was topped off by a Schmidt & Bender 4-16x50 PMII scope mounted in Badger rings.



Looking closely at the stock you can see where the Skull name comes from.

I shot both rifles out to 700 yards when they came home with the same load of 43.3 grains of IMR 4064 powder loaded in Black Hills cases topped off with the Sierra 168-grain MatchKing bullets all put together on a Redding T7 press. I know some people are into group info and both these rifles with this load shot at and under one minute of angle from a benchrest position.

Both rebuilds were a complete success thanks to OB-1 and the crew. Because they work so well, I am going out the door now to flip out the Harris bipod legs to work on wearing these guns out, so I can rebuild them again.

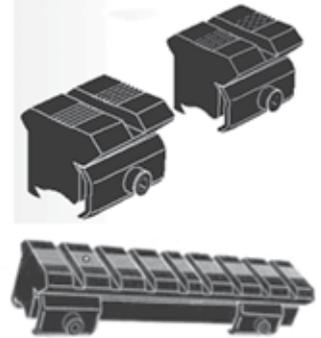


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The latest catalog from Century International Arms (CIA) lists 27 models of the AK/AKM/RPK and Czech VZ designs, including under-folders, side-folders, collapsibles, bullpups, high-and-low-capacity models, wood, synthetic and metal stocks, calibers 7.62x39 and 5.45x39 and, for the first time, a 100 percent made-in-the-USA AK of CIA's design. Called the "Centurion 39 Sporter Rifle," it's proving to be an exceptionally fine AK variant. With the addition of CIA's MTL-225 fore-end weapon light, it's as slick a tactical package as you will find.

While the story of Mikhail Timofeyevich Kalashnikov designing the basic AK-47 mechanism after recuperating from wounds suffered on the Eastern Front has been told many times, it's becoming more intriguing with the appearance of Frank Iannamico's new book, *AK-47: The Grim Reaper*. In it, Iannamico speculates that just possibly the German arms designer, Hugo Schmeisser, who was the technical director of the Haenel arms factory where Germany's ingenious assault rifle, the Sturmgewehr, was being mass produced, and just might have had a

hand in the final AK-47 design.

In April, 1945, US troops occupied Suhl, Germany, the location of the Haenel plant. Both US and British intelligence interviewed Schmeisser and other weapon engineers and then simply left Schmeisser, his professional colleagues and the complete Haenel Sturmgewehr factory behind to be mopped up by the Soviets.

Occupying Suhl in June, 1945, the Russians seized not only Hugo Schmeisser and his fellow engineers but also all the production drawings and tooling necessary for the manufacture of the Sturmgewehr and shipped them

back to the Motherland.

Schmeisser and associates were immediately relocated to the arms center of Izhevsk, where, just by chance, Kalashnikov was working on the AK-47 design. Schmeisser worked for six years at Izhevsk, a top-security "closed" city, before being liberated to Communist East Germany in 1952. Secretly questioned by US intelligence, Schmeisser apparently never divulged any information about his captive-designer years in Izhevsk before dying in 1953.

Secret Weapon

Another intriguing side story is that although the AK-47 was first issued to Soviet troops in 1949, Western intelligence did not learn of its existence until the Soviet crackdown on Hungary in 1956. Apparently, the mere existence of the AK-47 was so secret troops were trained to carry their AKs in canvas cases until they deployed them. The troops were also admonished to police up every single piece of fired brass lest it fall into the



A 100-percent blend of American-made parts adds up to a good looking, accurate AK variant.

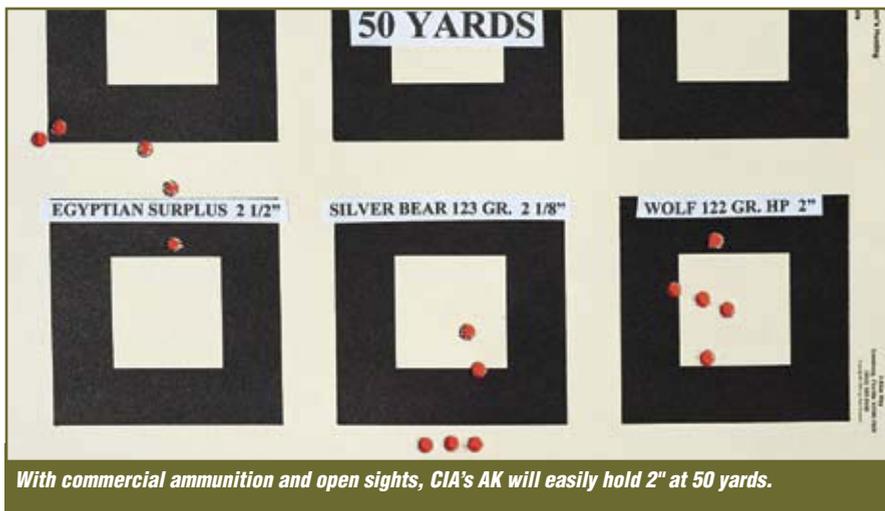
hands of foreign intelligence.

Century's Centurion 39 Sporter Rifle took two years of engineering time and hundreds of thousands of dollars in tooling to bring to fruition. The Centurion is based on the early AK milled receiver (circa 1951-59). Century had three choices for the production of their receiver: a milled receiver, a cast receiver or a stamped AKM-type receiver. A fully milled design was selected because it simply radiates quality and durability.

Milled Steel

The Centurion receiver begins life as an 11-pound block of 4140 ordnance-quality steel. After it's cut and shaped into a rigid AK receiver, the end product weighs a mere 1-1/2 pounds. On my Sunbeam scale, the total Centurion with an unloaded magazine weighs in at a handy 8 pounds, 2 ounces.

There's a new feel to Century's AK as well. The fixed buttstock is 1" longer than standard military models, and it's a significant improvement. The standard fixed AK stock has always felt a bit unnatural to me. Mounting it, you feel like you're scrunched up in a firing position. Frankly, it's much easier to compensate for a long stock, if needed, than one too short.



With commercial ammunition and open sights, CIA's AK will easily hold 2" at 50 yards.

Century got it right with their new stock. It mounts easily, positions your face more naturally along the comb line and places your hand in a better position for positive trigger control.

Century's proprietary upper and lower handguards are a revelation. Formed from a high-strength polymer, they provide four Picatinny rails—top, bottom, right and left—for mounting sights, lights and lasers. The lower handguard is a particularly nice design for comfort. Just behind the right and left rails is a generous,

checkered panel for grasping the fore-end. One of the typical problems with side mounted Picatinny rails is if they're left uncovered, they bite the hand holding them. Not so with the new Century design.

Light Up

With the growing popularity of vertical fore-end grips on tactical weapons, it was a natural to mount Century's Picatinny rail compatible, MTL-225, high output, 225 lumen LED, tactical fore-end grip on the



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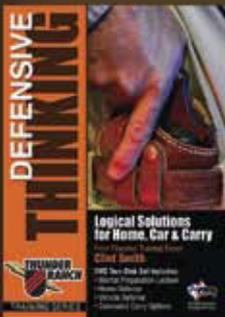
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Centurion. The MTL-225 is a tough, mil-spec accessory grip/light offering both momentary-on and constant-on control of a very powerful LED that slices right through the night like an airport beacon. Turned on, the MTL-225 will clearly light up the landscape at a distance without killing your night vision.

Momentary-on is triggered by two pressure pads placed on either side of the grip while the constant on is controlled by the main switch. Two 123A lithium batteries supply power. Mounted, the MTL-225 looks like it was made for the Centurion, and even when switched off, it provides the level of offhand stability vertical grips are famous for.

Someone finally came up with a fully adjustable rear sight for the AK. Century's Centurion rear sight is graduated and adjustable for windage as well as elevation. The traditional screw-in, front post is still there and is still adjustable up and down to refine elevation for zeroing purposes, plus the Centurion sports a high visibility, fluorescent red tip.

It's hard to find a better AK trigger group than TAPCO's G2 model that slips right into a standard AK and eases the trigger pull down to 3 or 4 pounds. Century agrees. The Centurion is not only fitted with the G2 trigger group, but also comes supplied with two of TAPCO's improved 30-round, polymer magazines.

What you don't see until you disassemble the Centurion is its stainless steel piston and a bolt revealing some interesting lightening cuts.

Genuine surplus 7.62x39 is harder and harder to find. Although Federal, Fiocchi, Hornady, Remington and Winchester currently catalogue the round, by far the most common



Century's handguards offer four Picatinny rails and a comfortable panel for the forward hand.



Five-round magazines facilitate shooting off a rest and are typically hunting compliant. Two 30-round TAPCO magazines come with the rifle.

brands I see at dealers are the Russian Wolf 122-grain HP and Silver Bear 123-grain FMJ.

Accuracy

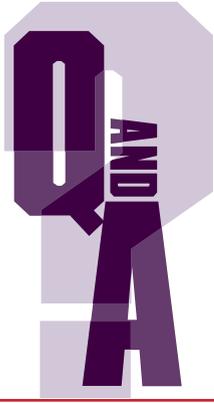
At 50 yards over open sights, the Centurion averaged 5-shot groups of 2" with the two Russian brands and 3" with 1994 Egyptian milsurp ammunition. At 100 yards, I could hold 3" with four out of five shots with the Russian brands, but always experienced one devilish flyer opening up the groups to 3-1/2" to 4". Scoped or fitted with a red-dot sight, the Centurion would squeeze those groups down a bit. Functioning was perfect with all brands.

Century's Centurion is a quality AK. It's greatly improved stocking, excellent trigger, windage adjustable rear sight and inherent accuracy set it apart in a very competitive field. That it's 100 percent made in the USA is the icing on the cake.

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CALIBER:	7.62x39
CAPACITY:	30
BARREL LENGTH:	16.5"
OVERALL LENGTH:	37.25"
WEIGHT:	8.2 pounds
	w/unloaded magazine
FINISH:	Parkerized black
SIGHTS:	Rear adjustable for windage and elevation. Front post, elevation.
STOCK:	Polymer
PRICE:	\$819.87

FURTHER READING
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 BY FRANK IANNAMICO
 HARDCOVER, 868 PAGES, ©2008
 PUBLISHER: NORTH CAPE,
 ISBN-10: 0982391803
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• JEFF JOHN •

Q: Lee Factory Crimp

Am I missing something here? Did Jeff really mean to recommend the Lee Factory Crimp die for use with the .45 ACP round? I've run loaded rounds that wouldn't chamber through a full-length sizing, or even taper crimp die, but wouldn't the factory crimp die only constrict the very mouth of the case endangering headspacing ability and doing nothing for the lower bulge?

Rob Crosby
Maine

A: The Lee Factory Crimp die for straight wall pistol and revolver cases has a carbide ring at the base and a taper crimp at the top, thus, it sizes the case again—if it needs it—as it crimps. Other Factory Crimp dies, such as the ones for the .30-30 or .44-40, put a ring crimp around the case to help keep bullets from telescoping back into the case. In rounds like the .30-06, the Factory Crimp Die can crimp bullets that don't have cannelures when you need the bullet to stay in place.

More On .223 Chambers

Q: I am so confused. Jeff says "don't shoot 5.56 in a .223" and I believe him. He gives convincing reasons. Then, Justin Carroll in his Quartermaster segment on Ruger mags for the Mini-14 tells how he shot a variety of .223 Remington and 5.56 ammunition in his Mini-14 circa 1985. My Mini-14 says ".223 Remington" caliber. I've kind of always mixed and matched and have seen no ill effects. What is "best practice"?

R. F. Williams
via e-mail

A: The Ruger Mini-14 has always been chambered to accept 5.56 NATO—with one exception. The recent Mini-14 Target Model with the harmonic barrel dampener is

chambered for .223 Remington only and NATO-spec ammo should not be fired.

One telltale sign your gun isn't chambered correctly (and sadly, some AR makers have put .223 Remington chambered barrels on receivers marked "5.56mm") is there will be some gas leakage around the primer pockets and the primer pockets might be enlarged, ruining the case for reloading.

More On 7.62mm NATO

Q: You mentioned in the June Q&A 5.56mm NATO barrels have a longer throat than .223 Remington barrels, but you did not say as to whether or not this was the case with 7.62mm NATO barrels vs. those barrels chambered in .308 Winchester. Also, you said modern bolt-action rifles would handle either 30-caliber cartridge safely, but you did not say as to whether or not military surplus bolt-action rifles chambered in 7.62mm NATO, such as Enfield and Mauser rifles, could safely handle the apparently higher pressure .308 Winchester commercial cartridge.

Paul Young
Detroit, Michigan

A: Not all military rifles are made the same. Some are at the limit of their strength when converted, such as Spanish 1893 Mausers converted to 7.62mm NATO and rear-locking lugs rifles such as the Enfield. In this case it's not the throat of the chamber, but the fact the maximum average chamber pressure is much higher in commercial .308 Winchester than in 7.62mm NATO ammunition.

Many K98 Mausers were converted to 7.62mm NATO, and these would have the inherent strength to handle .308 Winchester. Personally, were I buying a K98—either a military conversion or a sporterized rifle—I would stay away from rifles made in the last part of the war. In fact, I make it a rule never to shoot any gun made by the losing side in the last year or so of a war. Never assume anything, and have the headspace checked by a competent gunsmith before firing. **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 or snail mail to: GUNS Q&A, 12345 World Trade Drive, San Diego, CA 92128

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LEVERGUN

Perfection

THE MARLIN 1895 SBL .45-70.

Richard Mann

In 1988 Marlin introduced the Guide Gun; a modified Model 1895 packed with features custom rifle builders had been using to trick out big-bore leverguns for several years. The Guide Gun sold well but savvy riflemen wanted a bit more, complaining about the blued steel, barrel porting, standard sights and short magazine tube. In 2001 Marlin started offering the Guide Gun in stainless steel and finally eliminated the porting. Marlin's new 1895 SBL fixes everything else and might just be the ultimate .45-70 levergun.

The 1895 SBL is similar to the 1895GS, which is the stainless version of the latest Guide Gun with several important modifications. The straight stock has been replaced with a more ergonomic, gray laminated pistol grip stock, the standard sights have been ditched in favor of the excellent XS Sight Systems' Lever Rail, ghost ring and front sight and the magazine tube has been extended to the end of the

barrel. Finally, Marlin opted for a sexy, big-loop lever.

In essence, the 1895 SBL is a perfect example of 10 years of firearm evolution, taking the original Guide Gun and incorporating every modification that enhances the appealing characteristics of a short, fast handling and powerful, big-bore levergun. I can't think of anything I would change.



Even though it looks like four holes, this 100-yard target represents one of the sub-1", 5-shot groups Richard fired with Remington's 300-grain load. This is superb accuracy from a lever-action rifle.

Marlin's new 1895 SBL is the culmination of 10 years of Guide Gun evolution, incorporating all the features desirable in a fast-handling, big-bore levergun. The full-length magazine tube extends almost to the end of the 18.5" barrel. The magazine holds six rounds of .45-70 and adds some weight at the muzzle.



Obviously, the stainless steel offers corrosion resistance and the laminated stock wards off the warping affect water or high humidity can have on wood. Both are a wise choice for a utilitarian, working-type rifle and as good as blued steel and walnut look together, they can't compete with stainless steel and laminated hardwood for surviving the elements.

I'll admit, I like the looks of the straight-grip stock better and that's what I chose for my custom, miniature version of the Guide Gun in .327 Federal. However, the straight-grip stock is not as comfortable for me or for most of the shooters I've queried, especially if you like to carry your levergun in one hand, by the grip. The big-loop lever makes this more comfortable allowing your hand to be at ease, carrying the rifle at your side, while glassing the dark timber with the other.

Fast Enough?

Most competitive cowboy-action shooters like my friend Jerry Dove are not fond of the big-loop lever. Jerry says this wastes motion and can slow down your shot string. But such fractions of fractions of a second matter a lot more on your final match score than on your hunt. Either way, I like the big loop. It's kind of John Wayne-ish and reminds of the Mare's



Richard shot this Alberta black bear with Marlin's new 1895 SBL using the open, Ghost Ring sights, factory standard on the rifle. This rifle is well suited to hunting in thick or mixed cover where the shots can be close and need to be fast.

Leg (the customized Winchester 1892 Steve McQueen's character Josh Randall carried in the television series, *Wanted: Dead or Alive*).

I also like the looks of the full-length magazine tube but, like dad always told me, "Looks ain't everything, son." Of course, dad was talking about girls, but his advice applies to guns too. That said, there's no use hunting with an ugly gun if you have an option. I

listened to dad about women and married a good-looking lady who is skilled in the kitchen. Marlin is on board with this line of thinking too. The SBL's full-length tube holds six rounds—two more than a Guide Gun—and adds some weight up front, helping the rifle's balance, providing good looks and functionality.

All this is good stuff but in my opinion the most important feature

of the 1895 SBL is the XS Sight System Lever Rail pre-installed on the rifle. The Lever Rail is an 11" section of Picatinny rail attached with the scope base mounting screws and the dovetail used to mount a rear sight. The rail is relieved to accept an XS Ghost Ring sight also comes pre-installed. The Lever Rail offers a multitude of sighting options. The rifle also comes with an XS, white striped, post front sight designed to work with the Ghost Ring and if you use quick-detach mounts you can swap between whatever optic you choose and the open sights in seconds.

The most common riflescope used on the Lever Rail is a scout scope. A friend and I used an 1895 so equipped in Africa two years ago to take several animals. The PH liked this setup so well we ended up leaving the rifle with him. You can also mount a traditional scope by removing the XS Ghost Ring, which is attached with one screw or by using mounts high enough to position the scope just above the rear sight.

Another option, and the one I used when testing the SBL, is to mount an extended eye relief riflescope so the ocular bell is positioned just in front of the Ghost Ring. This will likely stretch the limits of the riflescope's eye-relief but it was not an issue for what I intended to use the rifle for.

THERMACELL

Granted, this has nothing to do with guns but everything to do with Alberta bear hunting where mosquitoes are as thick as weasels in Washington. My friend Shannon Salyer handles the public relations



This lightweight and portable ThermaCell unit is a must when hunting in mosquito-infested country. It will keep a 15' area clear of bloodsuckers and does not emit any game-spooking odors.

for ThermaCell and suggested I take one with me. I'm sold, these butane powered scent dispensers work, and I can't imagine hunting in a mosquito-infested area without one. Since you can't carry them on an airplane, the outfitter even had butane refills in camp. This should give you an idea how well they ward off bloodsuckers. They may not work on vampires but mosquitoes want no part of them. A ThermaCell unit and a refill kit sell for about \$36.

GUNS

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LEUPOLD QWR RINGS

To get the most versatility out of the XS Sight Systems' Lever Rail you need a dependable set of quick-release rings. And, the rings must allow you to remove and re-install the scope without loss of zero. Leupold's QRW rings are designed for a Weaver-style base, but they work just fine on a Picatinny rail.

The trick is to position the front ring so the recoil lug is as far forward in the slot as possible. Then, position the rear ring so its recoil lug is as far rearward as possible. This gives you maximum protection against the mounts shifting during recoil and allows you to remove or install the scope in about 10 seconds.

Leupold's QRW rings are horizontally split and the top of the ring covers more than half the circumference of the scope. It is attached to the bottom ring with four Torx screws. By splitting the ring at 4 and 8 o'clock as opposed to 3 and 9, the rings sort of pinch the scope tube making it almost impossible for it to shift no matter how hard your rifle kicks.

GUNS



To maximizing the sighting opportunities the 1895 SBL offers, a reliable set of quick-detachable scope rings like these from Leupold are a must.

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LEVERGUN PERFECTION

Swarovski loaned me one of their exceptional 1-6X, Z6 extended eye-relief riflescopes for an Alberta bear hunt with the SBL. I wanted optics for use during the last part of the day when light was fading. Using Leupold QRW rings I mounted the Swarovski just in front of the Ghost Ring. Since I would be hunting over bait where average shot distances are about 20

yards, having to stretch a bit for the correct eye relief was not an issue. My plan, though a bit European, was to keep the Swarovski in my pack until hunting light dwindled.

The shock I got was while sighting in the Swarovski. I intended to shoot three shots and make a correction. When I looked through the spotting scope, unbelievably all three shots

were touching. So, I fired two more shots and the resulting 5-shot group measured .91"! I made the zero correction and the next 5-shot group measured exactly the same size as the first. Two, 5-shot groups, measuring less than 1", with factory ammo, from a stock factory rifle is more than I expect from any levergun.

These groups were fired at 100 yards



A) Three loads were tested in the Marlin 1895 SBL; two from Remington and one from Federal. Average 100-yard accuracy for 5-shot groups with all loads tested was 1.45". **B)** The big-loop lever provides a distinctive look to the .45-70 Marlin and is a common custom modification to lever-action rifles. It also makes the rifle easier to operate with gloved hands. **C)** The XS Sight Systems Lever Rail is one of the defining features of the Marlin 1895 SBL. It offers endless sighting options. The Ghost Ring rear is easily removed for mounting a conventional scope. **D)** The all-steel front sight on the Marlin 1895 SBL is from XS Sights and mates perfectly with the ghost ring rear sight, standard with the rifle. This sight combination offers fast acquisition and all the precision you need for hunting.



.45-70 FACTORY AMMO PERFORMANCE

LOAD (BRAND, BULLET WEIGHT, TYPE)	VELOCITY (FPS)	GROUP SIZE (INCHES)
REMINGTON 300 SJHP	1,550	.91
FEDERAL 300 FUSION	1,844	1.45
REMINGTON 405 SP	1,120	2.01

Notes: Average of all groups: 1.45". Accuracy is the result of two, 5-shot groups at 100 yards over a sandbag rest. Velocity is the average of five shots fired over a Shooting Chrony chronograph at 15'.

with Remington's 300-grain Semi-Jacketed Hollowpoint. Remington's other .45-70 load, the 405-grain Softpoint averaged 2.01" for two, 5-shot groups, which is nothing to complain about. After the hunt I received a couple boxes of Federal's new .45-70 Fusion load. Two, 5-shot groups averaged less than 1.5".

As it turned out, the bruiser of a black bear I shot with the Marlin SBL came into my stand in the afternoon while there was still plenty of light. He reared up on his hind legs, grabbed the dead beaver bait hanging from the bait pole, ripped it loose and took off running. Focusing on the white-striped front sight, I swung through the bear as he ran and pulled the crisp 2.75-pound trigger. The SBL roared, I cycled the lever with my gloved hand (Did I mention it was rather cool in Alberta?) and was back on target before the bear had traveled 20 yards. The rifle roared again and the 7' 3" bear dropped.

I climbed down from the stand with four rounds still in the rifle and approached the bear with the buttstock to my shoulder, just in case. He was stone dead and hadn't needed the second shot. It's a good thing—that bullet missed the bear and perforated a 6" birch tree. The broadside running boar took the first shot behind the shoulder and the bullet exited just a bit lower on the opposite side.

It was a nice bear, but I can't brag about that. All I did was sit in a stand for several hours reading the book *The River of Doubt* about Teddy Roosevelt's journey down an unexplored South American river. The guide told me, "If a bear shows up, taller than the oil drum, shoot him." When I saw this bruiser there was no doubt he was getting a 300-grain surprise. And he did, delivered with a rifle very well suited to this type hunting. In fact, as well as this rifle shoots, I wouldn't hesitate taking a poke at a deer, bear or even an elk, well on the other side of 100 yards, especially with the hotter Federal Fusion load.

Marlin deserves credit for keeping an ear open to hunters and for keeping an eye on how custom builders are modifying Marlin 1895s and other lever-action rifles. With the 1895 SBL they have incorporated the most desirable custom levergun features into one rifle. As much as I like a lot of the rifles I test, I purchase very few, even with the writer discount. This is because firearm journalist's pay and three kids generally leave a lot of month left at the end of the money.

I've been putting back a few bucks

1895 SBL	
MAKER: MARLIN FIREARMS	
P.O. BOX 1871, MADISON, NC 27025	
(203) 239-5621	
WWW.MARLINFIREARMS.COM	
ACTION TYPE:	Lever action
CALIBER:	.45-70 Government
CAPACITY:	6
BARREL LENGTH:	18.5", 1:20" twist
OVERALL LENGTH:	37"
WEIGHT:	7 pounds
FINISH:	Stainless steel
SIGHTS:	XS Ghost Ring, XS Lever Rail
STOCK:	Gray laminated hardwood
PRICE:	\$978.45
Z61 1-6X 24 EE L	
MAKER: SWAROVSKI	
2 SLATER RD., CRANSTON, RI 02920	
(800) 426-3089	
WWW.SWAROVSKIOPTIK.COM	
MAGNIFICATION:	1X to 6X
OBJECTIVE	
DIAMETER:	24mm
EYE RELIEF:	4.72"
INTERNAL	75.6" elevation
ADJ. RANGE:	& windage
CLICK VALUE:	.36"
TUBE DIAMETER:	30mm
WEIGHT:	15.9 ounces
OVERALL LENGTH:	12.4"
RETICLES:	4-1, CD-1
PRICE:	\$2,732.22

when I can and hope to write Marlin a check for the SBL. That is if the dishwasher doesn't break again or the old, almost paid for, Durango doesn't blow a motor first. **GUNS**

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SOI II

DEFENSIVE DUO





NIGHTHAWK CUSTOM 12-GAUGE TACTICAL SHOTGUN AND T3 .45 ACP 1911 PISTOL.

Dave Anderson Photos: Joseph R. Novelozo

Nighthawk Custom began making custom 1911-style pistols in 2003, and in a remarkably short time established itself as one of the premier names in this highly competitive field. Success in that endeavor led to expansion into manufacture and distribution of custom rifles, shotguns, gun leather and knives.

Nighthawk shotguns are built on Remington 870 Magnum actions. No mistake there, the 870 is only the most popular and successful pump shotgun ever made. I remember being at a seminar at the SHOT Show, 1993 I think, at which Remington presented 870 serial number 6,000,000 to renowned clay target champion, Rudy Etchen.

Etchen spoke of his old 870, one of the first dozen made in 1950. My recollection is he figured he had around four million rounds through it with only minor part replacements.

Incidentally, on the *GUNS Magazine* website there's a Web Blast feature on the 10 millionth 870.

Starting with this solid, reliable, durable base, Nighthawk Custom first details the action, hand-honing components for smooth operation. The standard, small safety button is replaced with a Vang "Big Dome" safety for sure operation under stress or with gloved hands.

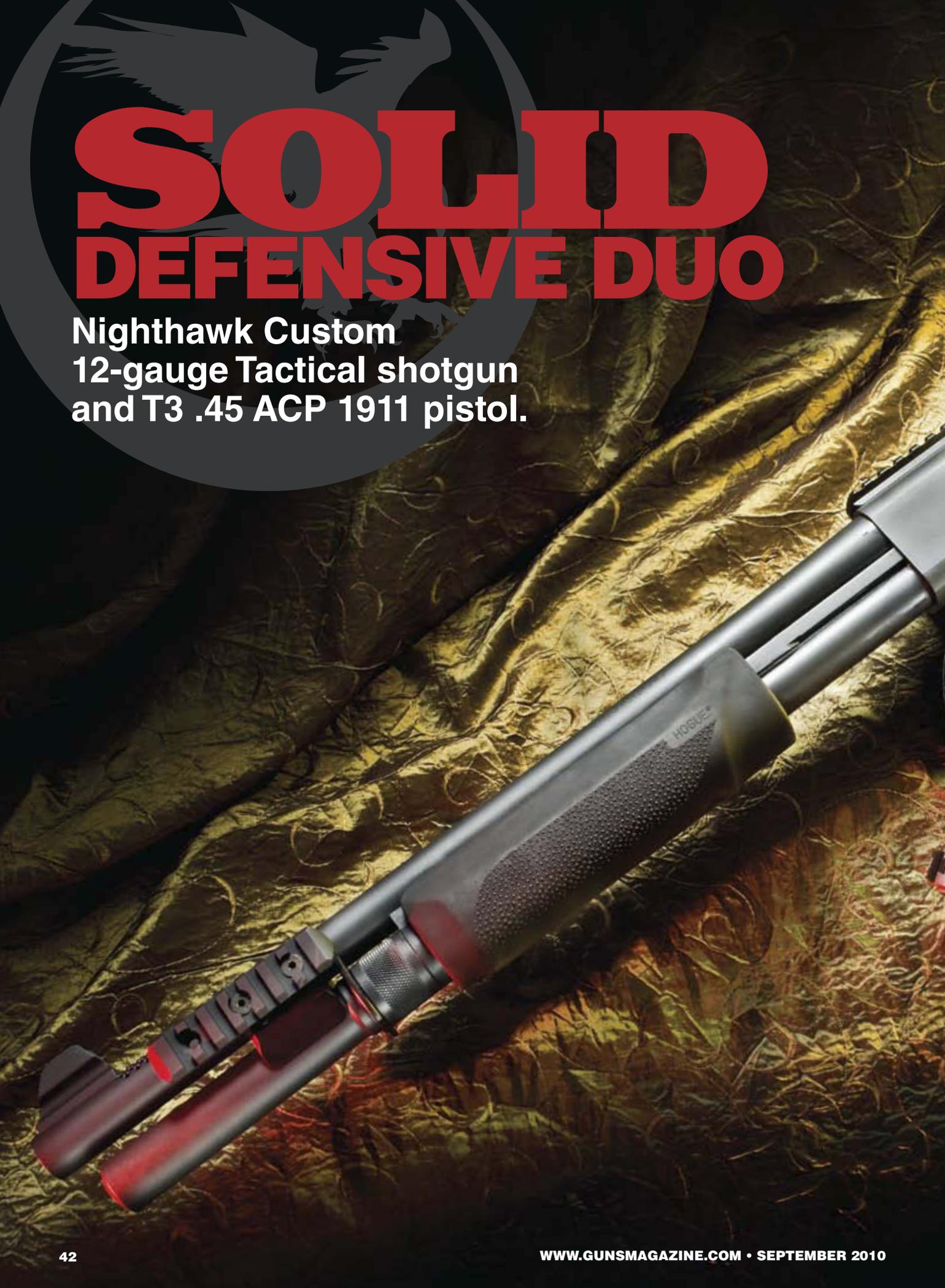
Standard barrel length on these Nighthawk Custom shotguns is 18", and law enforcement agencies can order shorter barrels for special

purposes. Metal surfaces—receiver, barrel, magazine tube—are given a proprietary polymer finish called Perma Kote. This tough rust resistant finish is available in several colors.

The rear sight is an LPA adjustable design consisting of a "ghost ring" peep protected from jars and impact by wings of heavy steel, which are rock solid and dependable. The front sight on the test gun, also protected by steel wings, is a red fiber optic style (a tritium night sight insert is optional). The combination of a large peep-sight opening and the fiber optic front sight is both fast and accurate.

Sighting Options

The shotgun as tested also had the optional receiver-mounted rail to accept red-dot sights, a feature I like more and more as the years mount up. I can still shoot pretty well with



SOLID **DEFENSIVE DUO**

**Nighthawk Custom
12-gauge Tactical shotgun
and T3 .45 ACP 1911 pistol.**



GUNS

MAGAZINE



peep sights, but I can shoot faster and straighter with a red dot.

Stock and forearm are by Hogue. The test gun had a 14" length of pull, while a 12" length of pull can also be specified. The stock has a nice thick, soft recoil pad; a feature I came to appreciate when shooting heavy slug and buckshot loads. Another option is an adjustable length stock, similar in appearance and function to AR collapsible stocks (though not interchangeable with the AR design).

A) The Heinie rear sight is snag free and has a tritium night sight insert. **B)** The top of the slide is nicely serrated to help reduce glare and the ramped post front sight also has a tritium night sight insert. **C)** The barrel bushing is well fitted and the barrel nicely crowned. A conventional recoil spring system is provided. **D)** The slide stop is neatly recessed into the frame, preventing it from being unseated accidentally and ensuring it won't foul Crimson Trace Lasergrips, if they are added. **E)** The T3 has a generous beavertail grip safety, which raises the hand high, a flat mainspring housing with serrations rather than checkering, a subtle mag well flare and grips of G-10.

A shotshell carrier, made from a hard-anodized aluminum billet, is attached to the left side of the receiver with heavy screws. Nighthawk gives you a choice of either a 4- or 6-round

version. In both cases the carrier is neatly shaped so as not to obscure the serial number.

In my view a shotgun has two great advantages as a defensive weapon, whether for the homeowner or for the law enforcement officer. One is stopping power. Certainly nothing is infallible, but a shotgun at close range is a fearsome weapon.

The other advantage is versatility. At home or camping in our travel trailer I generally have an 870 available, stored with chamber empty and hammer down. The extension magazine is loaded with three light trap loads. The receiver sidesaddle holds slugs, while a web cuff on the buttstock holds five rounds of buckshot.

My thinking is, for an intruder at close range the trap loads are perfectly adequate, yet reduce the risk somewhat of pellets going through walls and endangering others. If there's a bear in camp (which has happened twice, though I'm happy to say no shots were fired) I can select either a slug or buckshot round, stuff it in the magazine and rack the action.

The Nighthawk custom shotgun functioned perfectly and was a pleasure to shoot. The "Big Dome" safety is an excellent feature, secure but easily accessible. The action is exceptionally smooth and fast. The shotgun on consignment had the optional Vang Comp System with the forcing cone lengthened and the barrel back-bored, and ported.

The T3 .45 ACP 1911 pistol is a perfect fit with the Galco Royal Deluxe Horsehide 1911 holster.



The combination of the Vang system and the soft recoil pad makes recoil quite tolerable, even when shooting slugs from the bench. More importantly from my point of view, muzzle rise is quite modest for a locked-breech shotgun.

Some of the shooting was done in rather brisk weather, so I was wearing a medium-weight jacket. A couple of times when quickly raising the gun from port arms to shooting position, the recoil pad dragged a bit due to the 14" length of pull. Better technique on my part (keeping the gun held forward while raising it, then bringing it straight back to the shoulder) obviated the problem.

Still, the optional 12" length of pull might be worth exploring. Law enforcement officers, for example, generally wear protective vests on duty and might find the shorter stock fits better. Personally I stand 6' in my shoes, wear a 34" sleeve and don't wear body armor. For my own use I'd take the 14" pull. For a police department where officers of different sizes and builds might use the shotgun, the optional collapsible stock makes a lot of sense.

Given its intended use as a defensive arm, I didn't pattern the shotgun at 40 yards. Using Federal 00 Buck would keep all, or almost all, of the pellets on an IPSC target at 25 yards. Accuracy with rifled slugs startled me. Using Federal slugs, I got 3-shot groups in the 4" range at 100 yards, using the iron sights. Trigger pull averaged 5-1/4 pounds for 10 trials, with a bit of creep—not target rifle quality but adequate for its intended purpose.

The 1911 T3

The Nighthawk T3 is intended for concealed carry and is one of Nighthawk's most popular models. The T3 uses a shorter grip frame than

standard models, along with a 4-1/4" barrel and corresponding slide length. The most recent variation is the T3 Stainless.

This is the fourth Nighthawk pistol I've had the opportunity to shoot extensively and every one has been a gem. The total number of rounds through these four pistols is probably around 3,000 rounds. This isn't a great amount—some of my competition 1911s have had 50,000+ rounds through them. Nonetheless, it is worth reporting I have never once had a malfunction with a Nighthawk pistol.

As with all Nighthawk models, the T3 is built on a forged and machined frame and slide. Modern CNC machine tools are capable of astonishing precision, giving some people the impression machines do it all. Not so, there is still a great deal of handwork in detailing, removing sharp edges, chamfering the edges of pinholes, fitting and smoothing parts.

Fit, finish and function of the T3 are simply amazing. Operating controls (trigger, slide stop, magazine release, manual and grip safeties) function with a crisp precision that makes the T3 a pleasure to handle.

The trigger breaks at 3-3/4 pounds. More important than weight is trigger quality and here it is outstanding: no creep, no "steps," minimal overtravel and a consistent, clean break.

I fired between 300 to 400 rounds through the T3, including ball, lead semiwadecutter, and standard and +P jacketed hollowpoints from Black Hills, Federal and Winchester. No malfunctions of any kind occurred.

Five-shot groups at 25 yards averaged around 1.5", with a best group of .8" and worst of just less than 3". The best group, incidentally, was with Black Hills 230-grain FMJ ball. The 230-grain +P JHPs are a

The 870 loads from the bottom. It's OK to have the shells facing "rim down" in competition, but not from a fighting standpoint. Recoil forces work on dislodging the shells and if the rims are down they might come out.



The red fiber optic front sight is extremely fast to pick up in daylight. The Vang Comp porting really helps tame muzzle jump.



The LPA sight features a generous protected open peep. The forward rail is unobtrusive if left unused for mounting an optic.

snappy load, but the T3 with its steel frame is heavy enough to make recoil comfortable.

Once I had enough rounds fired to be confident of reliability, I wore the T3 as my CCW for a couple of weeks. The steel frame, which handles recoil so well, also makes it heavier to carry than alloy-framed pistols, though a good holster and belt make the weight tolerable. I mostly used my old and well-worn Sparks Summer Special, but also used a sharkskin belt holster from Nighthawk. With its compact

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size, the T3 was easy to conceal under a light-covering garment.

The T3 has a bunch of details I like. The mainspring housing is serrated rather than checkered, providing a secure grip without wearing holes in the material of my closet full of Savile Row suits (yeah, right). The muzzle has a neatly recessed crown, protected from dings and dents.

Two, 7-shot magazines are provided, but the slightly longer 8-shot Nighthawk magazines function perfectly and can be used as your spares. A compact but very effective magazine chute is neatly fitted and blended into the mag well for consistent reloads.

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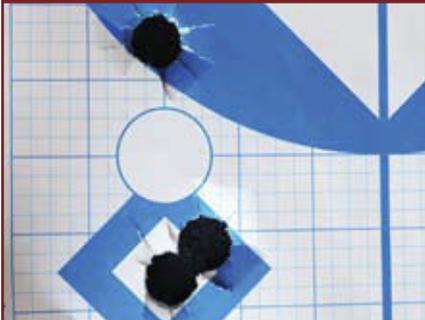
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The best 5-shot, 25-yard group with the Nighthawk Custom T3, hand held over a sandbag rest was .8" with Black Hills .45 ACP 230-grain +P ammo. Groups in the 1.5" to 2" range were typical with other brands.



A typical 3-shot, 50-yard group with the Nighthawk shotgun fired with Federal 12-gauge slugs using the iron sights (front fiber optic sight, rear ghost ring LPA sight).



Rifled slug ammunition from Federal delivered groups like this at 100 yards from the Nighthawk Custom 870 shotgun with a smoothbore 12-gauge barrel.

grips look good and provide a secure grip. While we don't buy a defensive pistol for its looks, I must say this is a very handsome pistol. The stainless steel is hand polished to a pleasing sheen, a very nice job indeed.

Like the lever-action rifle, the pump shotgun and 1911 autopistol are uniquely American. If I were carried back in time to the year 1911 and wanted three guns for personal-defense, I would feel very well armed with a 1911 .45 auto, a Winchester 1897 shotgun, and a Winchester 94 or Savage 99 .30-30 rifle.

And today? You can still make mine a 1911-style .45 and a 12-gauge pump shotgun, and I'd be very happy indeed with the Nighthawk T3 pistol and 870 Tactical shotgun. The rifle would probably be an AR style, another uniquely American design (although with my pre-'64 Winchester 94 .30-30 with Lyman receiver sight I wouldn't complain).



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Mike "Duke" Venturino
Photos: Yvonne Venturino

John Barsness once wrote that I have made a career out of writing about black powder cartridge rifles. He was on the right track but still a bit off base. The truth is, I have made *most* of my career about shooting and reloading for antique, obsolete or just plain old guns. I certainly have not limited myself to black-powder cartridges or rifles. I began hunting with antique and obsolete rifles and calibers in 1982 and started competing with all types of "old guns" in 1984. Anyway, evidently many of you readers feel the same about "old guns" because they keep paying me for writing about them.

Shooting antique, obsolete or just plain old guns is fairly easy nowadays. Indeed it is far easier to do so in 2010 than it was when I started. Here's the heart of the matter. Primers and propellants are more or less universal, with, of course that proviso the correct types and amounts must be mated to specific cartridges and purposes. What are not universal are brass and bullets. With them, the right dimensions are a must.

Thirty years ago the brass and bullets situation was primitive. Most obsolete cases had to be formed from current commercial ones. For example .45-70 cases could be used to make .40-

65, .38-56, .33 Winchester and even the .40-50 Sharps Bottleneck (SBN). As for bullets, we had to haunt gun shows for discontinued Ideal or Lyman bullet moulds and cast our own.

Besides .45-70, about the only thing we had going for us in regards to brass was a company named BELL (Brass Extrusion Laboratory Limited) that made "basic" brass. Those were 3.25" cases in .40, .45 and .50 calibers. Those long, basic cases could be cut, formed and/or reamed into a plethora of old cartridge cases. For instance, a knowledgeable reloader could make a .45 Basic case into .45-110 Sharps, .45-100 Sharps, .45-90 Sharps



Duke began his hunting career using antique and obsolete rifles and calibers in 1982 with this bull elk. Rifle was a Shiloh Model 1874 Sharps .50-90.

or Winchester, .40-90 SBN, .40-82 Winchester, .40-70 SBN and many others. Those named just happen to be the ones I have personally made from .45 Basic brass.

Here's another example of the lengths to which we old-gun shooters used to go. In 1989, I decided the .40-70 Sharps Straight would be ideal for BPCR Silhouette competition. The problem was no one produced .40-70SS brass. A little research showed cases could be formed by cutting .405 Winchesters from 2.58" to 2.50". Bertram Brass Ltd. of Australia did make ready-to-load .405 cases then, so I carefully adjusted the file trim die of my .40-70 SBN forming set and then hacksawed and filed smooth more than 600 of those things! No wonder my hands have arthritis now!

Now, let's take a look at the current brass situation. Starline makes ready-to-load .50-90s and .50-70s. Their 2.40", .45-90 cases can be sized in a full-length sizing die to make .40-82s or cut and formed to make .40-70 SBN. Bertram now makes properly



Duke was pleased to be able to fire a genuine German MP44, but was also surprised to find Hornady is making factory new 7.92mm Kurz ammunition for it.

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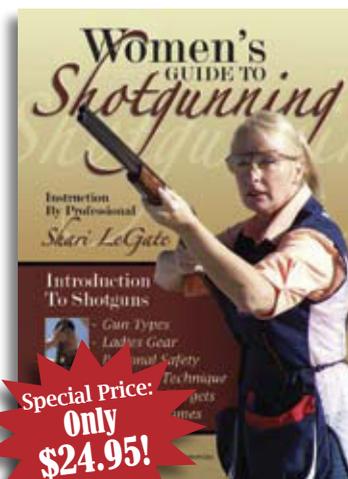
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These are Duke's most recent "old pistol" projects. At left is Japanese Type 14 8mm Nambu with the proper RCBS dies. At right is French Model 1935A 7.65mm Long for which Duke uses .32 ACP dies properly adjusted for the longer French cartridge.

headstamped and ready-for-loading .40-70SS brass. A few years back, Bruce Bertram even brought me 300 of those to the SHOT Show with my name for headstamp.

Just last week I bought, off an Internet firearms auction site, a French Model 1935A 7.65mm pistol. The hang-up? The case is an extra long version of the .32 Auto (.78" compared to .68"). No problem! Bertram makes them, so I actually had the proper brass in hand before the pistol arrived.

Two companies approach the "old & obsolete" brass problem in their own ways. Huntington Die Specialties has special runs of oddball brass produced by various manufacturers. It is headstamped per caliber and ready for loading. Here's an example. In my quest to assemble a shooting collection of WWII firearms, I recently purchased a Japanese Type 14 Nambu 8mm. When I called HDS they said they had just gotten in 100,000 rounds of that odd little bottlenecked case. Starline made it exclusively for them with HDS for headstamp. HDS was also my source for the above mentioned Bertram 7.65mm Long cases.

The other outfit supplying obsolete brass is Buffalo Arms Company. Although they stock many properly headstamped and ready-to-load cases, for some of the more oddball calibers they reform cases. For instance, in the case (pun there!) of .40-70SS they stretch .30-40 Krag brass. For 8mm Nambu they reform .40 S&W cases.

A major American manufacturer who jumped in to help us old-gun shooters is Hornady. They now have oddball cases ranging from .455 Webley in handguns to .405 Winchester for rifles. I'll soon take possession of an old Steyr Model 95 in 8x56mm Hungarian caliber and an Italian Model 1891 Carcano 6.5mm, from a deceased relative's estate.

For Graf & Sons, Hornady now makes factory loads for both rifles; and I have them on hand. Assuming the two rifles are safe to fire, I'll first try them with the Hornady/Graf ammunition and then begin reloading for them with the empty brass. In April 2009 I was invited to an informal machine gun shoot in Nebraska. Not only was I extremely pleased to get to fire a genuine German MP44, but was also extremely



Duke has formed many hundreds of cases from 3-1/4" .45 Basic brass including (from left) the .45 Basic case, .45-110 Sharps, .45-100 Sharps, .45-90 Sharps or Winchester, .40-90 SBN, .40-82 WCF and .40-70 SBN.



The .45-70 can be used to make brass for many different cartridges merely by resizing them including (from left) the parent .45-70, .40-65, .38-56 and .33 Winchester.

surprised to see Hornady is producing factory ammo for its odd little 7.92mm Kurz caliber.

Once a shooter has the proper cases the next crucial step is to get the proper size and weight of bullet. Again, this is not nearly as hard to do, as it was 25 or 30 years ago. Let's look at my 8mm Nambu again. When buying that pistol I had not the slightest idea of exactly what size bullet it might take. As it turned out .320" or .321" is right for jacketed bullets and cast ones up to .323" are fine. Bullet weight needs to be between 100 and 110 grains. When calling HDS I also asked about bullets. They have plated 100-grain roundnoses of .320" diameter, so I bought a couple hundred.

Then I turned to one of the great, unrecognized sources of bullet moulds for us "old-gun guys"—the RCBS list of special order bullet moulds. Sure enough they list an 8mm-110NAMBU

mould. It duplicates the shape of the Japanese military bullet perfectly, weighing in at 106 grains when cast of linotype. They function 100 percent through my Type 14.

One of the first handguns I bought in building my WWII collection was a British Mk VI .455 Webley. From Buffalo Arms I bought a few hundred brand new .455 Webley cases of Hornady manufacture but felt at a loss for a proper 265-grain bullet. That was until looking at the RCBS special order mould list. They have the conical 265-grain, hollowbase, Webley bullet design.

When buying my first Winchester 1886 .40-82, it was distressing to find its barrel slugged a huge .409". That meant lead alloy bullets of .410" in diameter were needed for it to shoot accurately. Even the RCBS special order mould lists didn't catalog a .410" bullet weighing somewhere between



Redding, RCBS and Lyman collectively can supply reloading dies for virtually any metallic cartridge.

260 and 280 grains. So I had my friend and custom bullet mould maker Steve Brooks make one. Since it was going to be custom anyway, I had Brooks cut it to take gas checks. At 280 grains it is a superb .40-82 bullet for my old '86.

When we have brass and bullets, the next necessary item for assembling ammunition for old and obsolete calibers is a set of reloading dies. If a cartridge is reloadable then RCBS makes reloading dies. Redding also has a tremendous list of dies available for us old-gun fanciers. I have .455 Webley dies from Redding, 8mm Nambu dies from RCBS, .30 Mauser from Redding, .44-77 from RCBS and so forth.

As might be expected, some of the die sets for more obscure calibers can be expensive. That is why it was great news a few years back when Lyman Products Corporation, announced that they were going to make die sets for many old rifle calibers "standard issue." You can buy their .50-90 Sharps or .45-110 Sharps dies for about the same price as a set of .30-06 dies. Additionally, a couple of years back when I ordered a set of Lyman .38 Super dies, I found them also labeled for .38 S&W. Since I'm shooting that little .38 in a British Enfield No. 2 revolver from 1936 I was doubly pleased.

Also a knowledgeable handloader will recognize there is much versatility in reloading dies. For example, in straight-sided cases a set of dies meant for a shorter case can reload a longer case of the same caliber. That is; a set of .45-70 dies (.45-70 = 2.1" case) can easily be adjusted upwards to reload .45-90s (2.4" case) or .45-100 (2.6" case). I don't need to buy dies especially for that new French 7.65mm Long because my .32 Auto dies will handle the chore when properly adjusted.

Data

Now here's one bump in the road that shooters of antique, obsolete or just plain old guns *must be aware*. Reloading information can be sketchy. Many of those old calibers have not been included in reloading manuals for decades or may never have been there at all. Furthermore—and this



Duke put this old British Mk VI .455 Webley revolver back into action with the aid of Redding dies, an RCBS bullet mould and Hornady brass.



Duke ordered a set of Lyman reloading dies for this US Firearms Model 1911 .38 Super and was pleased to find them also suitable for his Enfield No. 2 .38/200 revolver.



This original Winchester Model 1876 .45-60 was blown in two by a smokeless powder reload. If it was made in the black-powder era, stay with black powder.

is an important furthermore, a great many of those old guns were made in the black powder era when steels were weaker and firearms designs did not have to be strong because no one had heard of smokeless powders. *You have to be careful when reloading for old guns.*

My rule of thumb is if the gun was built in the black-powder era, then it should only be fired with black powder. I have a friend who didn't agree with me about that and loaded a \$4,000 Winchester Model 1876 .45-60 with smokeless powder. Something went amiss and his rifle blew clean in two.

Even if the firearm is a modern copy of an antique, such as the new Model 1876 replicas coming from Italy, the adventurous or the stupid should not reload them. Being of modern manufacture and from modern steels, smokeless loads can be put together for them but again, tested reloading data should be used. That can be obtained from sources like the current *Lyman 49th Edition Reloading Handbook*.

When there is absolutely no reloading information to be had, you can still proceed if possessed of a modicum of common sense. I'll use my 8mm Nambu for an example again. I knew its small case would require a fast-burning powder, so I decided to use Hodgdon's Titegroup. Using my much vaunted common sense I looked in the above mentioned Lyman manual at two cartridges that bracket the 8mm Nambu.

Those were the .30 Mauser on the smaller side and 9mm Luger on the large side. With bullet weights of 85 to 90 grains both of those cartridges have a recommended starting load of 4.0 grains of Titegroup. Therefore, I determined 3.0 grains of Titegroup should be safe with my 100- to 106-grain 8mm Nambu bullets. It was safe but not enough to function the autoloader. I carefully worked up to 3.5 grains, which gave 100-percent

functioning and there I stopped.

Nowadays when encountering a firearm chambered for an obsolete caliber, the fact factory ammunition is no longer made doesn't enter into the equation. If it's a good gun, I'll buy it. That's because I know all the materials exist, so I can reload for it. It's as easy as doing a little research and then ordering the right components and equipment.

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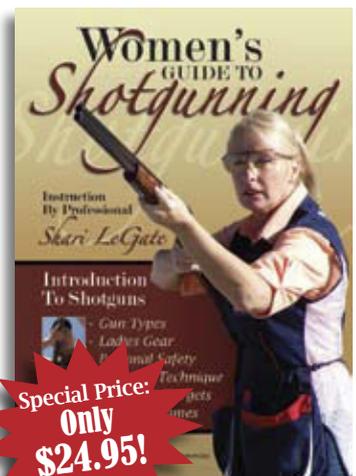
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ELK RIFLES

John Barsness

The large deer known in North America as “elk” has somehow gotten the reputation for being as difficult to topple as a brick bank. The odd thing about this notion is it seems to be most common among hunters who live where there aren’t any elk. When they finally make their dreamed-of trip Out West to slay a wapiti, they often bring a new rifle chambered for a big magnum, leaving their deer rifle back home, because it’s a wimpy, non-magnum such as the .30-06 Springfield.

If you read some gun magazines, or hang around a sporting goods store in, say, Wheeling, West Virginia, you might come to the conclusion every elk hunter in the Rockies carries a .338 Winchester Magnum. You would be wrong. I was born, raised and live in Montana, one of the top-three elk states in the country, and I have hunted elk for around 40 years here. In that time I’ve encountered three hunters carrying .338s. One of them was me, partly to see if the .338 really was the ultra-thumper many hunters believe it to be. Eventually I used the .338 not just in Montana, but also all across northern North America and in Africa, taking game up to Alaskan moose and African eland weighing most of a ton.

In the process, I discovered all a .338 shoots is bullets, contrary to the notions of some of its proponents. Also, in the worldwide scheme of things the .338 is not a really big cartridge, and while it does a pretty good job on big game, the bullets still

have to be put in the right place.

This is not as easy to do as it sounds for the average whitetail hunter. One of my friends here in Montana is a professional outfitter who guides in the Bob Marshall Wilderness. When I first got to know Bill we naturally started talking hunting rifles. Turns out he carries a .375 H&H. I raised my eyebrows upon hearing this, and asked him if was because of the possibility of running into a disgruntled grizzly bear.

“Nope,” Bill said. “It’s to finish off the bull elk my dudes gut-shoot with their brand-new .338s.”

Don’t get me wrong. The .338 is a fine elk cartridge—if you can shoot one accurately. If you can’t, however, it’s a lot worse than a .270 you can shoot. Yeah, yeah, you’ve heard it before, the old cliché that correct bullet placement is the biggest factor in “killing power.” But just because something is a cliché doesn’t mean it’s not true. When somebody says, “birds of a feather flock together”

many of us wander off to look for real conversation, but a pheasant hardly ever flies with a flock of mallards.

The other odd thing about the .338 is that when it appeared, a little more than a half-century ago, one justification for its existence was already disappearing. The .338 became a factory cartridge largely because of a gun writer named Elmer Keith, a cowboy and hunting outfitter from Idaho who liked big cartridges. Keith’s main point was that a long, heavy bullet of moderate velocity worked best when shooting large, big-game animals like elk. Over the years he’d hunted and guided for a lot of elk. He eventually developed several .33-caliber wildcats. He found a 250- to 300-grain .33 bullet not only penetrated well, but also worked pretty well at long range as well, retaining more oomph than smaller bullets, yet shooting flatter and drifting less in the wind than .35” or .375” bullets.

Many people who started traveling to hunt in the economic boom years after World War II were influenced by Elmer Keith, including some of the new crop of gun writers. Keith’s opinion made sense, and came from an experienced hunter. Why not believe him when he wrote nothing less than a 250-grain 33-caliber bullet was truly adequate for elk?

There were two problems with the 33-caliber thesis, however. We’ve already mentioned recoil; the other

The .30-06 has always been a good elk cartridge, whether chambered in a classic rifle like the pre-WWII Model 70 Winchester or a New Ultra Light Arms Model 24.



problem was bullets. The reason Elmer Keith “knew” a 250-grain, .33” bullet was necessary for elk was the mediocre bullets of the first half of the 20th century. These hadn’t changed much since the first experimenters with smokeless powder discovered a lead bullet needed a jacket of harder metal to survive the trip through the barrel.

This thin jacket, however, didn’t affect how much the bullet expanded when it hit an elk. Such bullets often opened up more like a cream pie than a mushroom, especially if they hit heavy bones. The only way to guarantee enough penetration was to make the bullet bigger—and not push it so fast it over-expanded. This was exactly why a long, heavy 33-caliber bullet worked relatively well.

Slow And Steady

I have an original copy of Elmer Keith’s book *Rifles For Large Game*, published in 1946. On page 30 is a photograph of a bunch of bullets recovered from big game. By today’s standards these are some of the ugliest bullets imaginable, with only one exhibiting the ideal “mushroom” shape we’ve come to expect of so-called premium bullets. Many show evidence of major fragmentation and are bent into strange shapes. These are exactly the reason Elmer Keith preferred big bullets for elk: In those days nobody really knew what might happen when a bullet hit a game animal, but a larger, slower bullet stood a better chance of penetrating the animal’s vital organs.



At least 95 percent of the elk taken each year aren’t big bulls. Eileen Clarke took this spike with a New Ultra Light Arms .270 Winchester and a 140-grain Barnes Triple-Shock X-Bullet.

Two years after *Rifles For Large Game* was published, an Oregon hunter named John Nosler started selling a bullet that solved the problem. This means the Nosler Partition had been on the market for a decade before the .338 Winchester appeared in 1958—the same year Elmer Keith made his first African safari, taking as his “light” rifle a .333 loaded with really terrible 300-grain softpoints. These bullets sometimes didn’t even penetrate small gazelles weighing less than 100 pounds. (Keith’s writings about this safari, not so oddly, also had a major hand in the myth African antelope are as tough as a brick bank.)

The troubles he had with his .333, however, could have been avoided if Keith had used a .30-06 loaded

with 180-grain Nosler Partitions. It wasn’t as though Elmer Keith didn’t know about Nosler Partitions. John Nosler was smart enough to get to know most of the gun writers of the 1950s and provide them with bullets. Keith, however, apparently didn’t get the concept. He used Partitions, but only the heaviest 250-grain weight in 33-caliber rifles. Even then he claimed the 250-grain Nosler would be a lot better if it weighed 300 grains.

The Nosler Partition was eventually followed by dozens of other premium hunting bullets, all providing plenty of penetration on game like elk. While some elk hunters still insist on using the .338, the fact is a premium bullet from about any 30-caliber cartridge penetrates plenty deeply even in big elk. I started using Nosler Partitions on elk

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ELK RIFLES



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back in the 1970s, when I was doing most of my elk hunting in the thickly timbered mountains in northwestern Montana near the Idaho Panhandle. The shots were never further than 100 yards, but the bullet might have to penetrate a lot of elk, and possibly some shoulder bones. This was exactly the sort of elk hunting that brought Elmer Keith to his conclusions, but I found a 200-grain Partition from a .30-06 very much up to the job.

The 30-caliber, 200-grain Nosler Partition is still a fine elk bullet, and even better these days than it was back then. It was a roundnose (Nosler called it a "semi-spitzer") until the 1980s. This didn't matter in thick timber but does in really open country, the reason Nosler eventually changed the shape of the bullet to a spitzer.

A few years ago I made my longest shot on an elk—375 yards—when using a .300 Weatherby with a spitzer 200-grain Partition factory load on a hunt in Colorado. The spitzer works just as well a ways out there as it does close up—

but so do a bunch of other bullets, the reason I've never had any trouble killing elk with 30-caliber cartridges from the .30-06 up. My three biggest bulls, in fact, have been taken with the .30-06, .300 WSM and .300 Winchester Magnum, and none of them went more than 35 yards before falling.

The .308 Winchester also works well with today's bullets, as do a bunch of other cartridges, including the .270 Winchester. My wife Eileen has taken all her elk (and her lone bull moose)

with the .270 and never had a problem. This is because she always used bullets that penetrated sufficiently, usually a 150-grain Nosler Partition.

My old friend Craig Boddington killed a big bull at more than 400 yards in New Mexico a few years ago, doing the job with a single 150-grain Partition from a .270 Winchester. Craig carried the .270 on that hunt precisely because he had always been something of a "Keithian" in his elk-rifle recommendations. However, as some people pointed out, he had never hunted elk with a .270, so how did he know it wasn't adequate for big bulls?



A mature bull elk is a big animal, but not bulletproof.

Craig shot the bull just behind the shoulder—and it went down quicker than any bull he'd ever shot before. This isn't to say that a cartridge like the .270 works better than a .300 Magnum, but good bullet placement is still... ah, heck, I can't say it twice in the same story.

So far we have mostly discussed big bull elk, because that's what almost everybody wants. While more than 200,000 elk are taken in North America

each year, only a small percentage are mature bulls with six or more tines on their antlers. The reality is 95 percent of the elk reduced to round steaks are spike or "raghorn" bulls, or don't even have antlers at all. This is perfectly fine with most of the hunters who actually live in elk country, because (according to another true cliché), "You can't eat antlers."

When I started hunting elk in the 1970s, many hunters still hoped they'd tag a 6-point bull each season, but

today many hunters with an elk tag don't stand any chance of taking a 6-point bull. The two mountain ranges on either side of the Montana valley where I live are perfect examples.

In the mountains on the east side of the valley the only elk that can legally be taken on a general elk tag during the entire rifle season are "brow-tined" bulls, meaning they're at least 2 years old. This means brow-tined bulls get pretty well hammered, especially in those years with enough snow and cold to make hunting easier. As a result, finding a big 6-point bull is about as difficult as finding a trophy whitetail on public land in Pennsylvania.

Just A Photo Op

In the mountains on the west side of the valley only spike bulls are legal on a general tag. Consequently, if spikes survive their first hunting season, they're likely to grow pretty big, and each year a lottery is held for about 100 permits for taking the older bulls. There are quite a few 6-points on that side of the valley, so at least 2,000 people apply for these permits. As a result, most of us are hunting spikes, and any big bull encountered will be a photo op only.

Of course, in both mountain ranges a bunch of extra cow permits



Most bull elk are "raghorns" like this Wyoming pair, and don't require nearly as much bullet as a truly big bull.

are awarded, and antlerless elk may even be legal on a general tag in some areas. This means one hunter can sometimes take two elk, and some do, often two cows. But cow elk don't grow antlers, so the fact remains most of the time an elk hunter has as much chance of taking a big bull in either mountain range as Barack Obama has of becoming an honorary member of the NRA.

And that's the way it is over most of the Rocky Mountain west these

days. If we're hunting for meat (a noble enterprise) even a .30-06 is far more than required to cleanly take a cow or young bull. Most people use what would be considered a perfect deer cartridge in Wheeling, West Virginia. A buddy of mine, for instance, used his .243 Winchester to take two cow elk out of a herd a couple of years ago, with one shot each. This would drive Elmer Keith nuts, but that's the way elk hunting is in the 21st century.

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MAXI MICE

RUGER'S .327 FEDERAL MAGNUMS.



John discovered the Ruger .327 GP100 delivered fine accuracy with all seven chambers at a field distance of 20 yards.



Bullets for the .327 Federal Magnum include (from left to right) the Hornady 85-grain JHP and 100-grain JHP, Sierra 90-grain JHC, Speer 100-grain JHP and 115-grain Gold Dot.



The Ruger .327 Blackhawk delivered exceptional accuracy from all eight chambers at 20 yards.

By John Taffin

Our latest Magnum sixgun cartridge is another example of not really realizing what is possible. The .327 Federal Magnum was introduced in the pocket-sized Ruger SP101 and promoted as a self-defense combination. It may well be a good choice for this application, however, it is much more. It didn't take long for reloaders and experimenters to look to custom gunmakers to come up with a longer barreled sixgun designed for field use and varmint hunting.

Custom sixgunsmiths such as Alan Harton and Hamilton Bowen began doing conversions on Ruger single actions and Smith & Wesson double actions, which opened up a whole new window for the .327 Magnum. Since the 1870s, the .32-20 has been a favorite low-recoiling cartridge chambered in such early firearms as the Winchester Models 1873 and 1892, as well as the Colt Single Action. By the turn of the 20th century the West had mostly been tamed and the .32-20 was more popular than the more powerful .44-40 and .45 Colt. It made a whole lot of sense as a practical farm and ranch rifle for taking care of varmints and vermin.

Modernized

In the 1980s we came very close to modernizing the .32-20. The .32 H&R Magnum took us to the brink but then drew back significantly. The .32 Magnum was first offered in Harrington & Richardson revolvers, which were not the strongest, and basically promoted as a low-cost, low-recoil self-defense cartridge. When Ruger chambered their much stronger Single-Six in .32 Magnum, we soon learned how much more the diminutive .32 was capable of by careful reloading.

The .32-20 and the .32 H&R Magnum are both excellent cartridges, but the .327 Federal Magnum has basically replaced them. Federal announced the new cartridge in a press release in November 2007.

At the time Federal said: "Federal Premium has partnered with Ruger to introduce a new personal defense revolver cartridge designed to deliver .357 Magnum ballistics out of a .32-caliber diameter platform. The .327 Federal Magnum is designed for use in lightweight, small-frame revolvers like the proven Ruger SP101 platform."

Now I am not about to sell any of my .32-20 and .32 Magnum leverguns or sixguns, however, when looking at a new purchase I would pass both of them up for the .327 Magnum. When the .327 was first introduced it was extremely difficult to find ammunition or components, thanks mainly to the election of November 2008 and the resulting mass purchasing of firearms and ammunition. However, this original tidal wave has now somewhat subsided and ammunition and components, as well as firearms, are much easier to come by. Federal offers three loadings for the .327 Magnum, an 85-grain Hydra-Shok JHP rated at a muzzle velocity of 1,330 feet per second (The original .32 Magnum with the 85-grain bullet was right at 1,000 fps), American Eagle 100-grain SP, 1,300 fps and Speer 115-grain Gold Dot HP at 1,300 fps.

The roots of the .327 run very deep going way back to the time before the



Ruger introduced the .327 Federal Magnum in the 6-shot SP101. The adjustable-sighted 7-shot GP100 in .327 increases the cartridge's field utility as a small-game gun. (Exotic leather Sourdough Pancake by Simply Rugged, P.O. Box 10700, Prescott, AZ 86304, 928/227-0432, www.simplyrugged.com.)

Civil War. With the arrival of more modern solid frame double-action revolvers in the 1890s the .32 S&W was lengthened to become the .32 Smith & Wesson Long. This excellent little cartridge was mostly found in small-frame revolvers, however it reached its apex in the medium-sized K-32 Masterpiece resulting in

a superb target shooting cartridge/revolver combination. The final step in the .32 saga, at least thus far, is the lengthening of the .32 Magnum to produce a true Maxi-Mouse Magnum, the .327 Federal Magnum.

Reloading the .327 is as easy as any straight-walled cartridge can be. I use RCBS .32 Magnum carbide dies and

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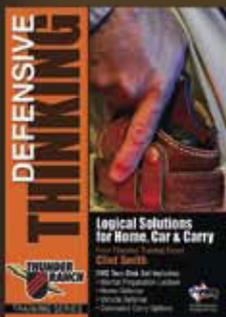


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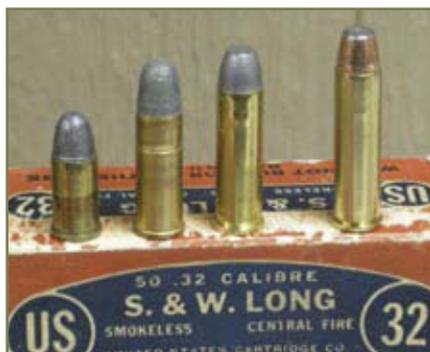
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GUN:	Blackhawk	GP100
ACTION TYPE:	Single-action revolver	Double-action revolver
CALIBER:	.327 Federal Magnum	.327 Federal Magnum
CAPACITY:	8	7
BARREL LENGTH:	5-1/2"	4"
OVERALL LENGTH:	11-3/8"	9-1/2"
WEIGHT:	48 ounces	40 ounces
FINISH:	Stainless steel	Stainless steel
SIGHTS:	Adjustable	Adjustable
GRIPS:	Rosewood	Hogue OverMolded rubber
PRICE:	\$681	\$701

Federal brass. The powders normally used with sixgun cartridges work fine with the .327 with my preference for heavy loads leaning to AA No. 9, 2400, and H110. As far as .32 bullets, any of those previously designed for the .32 Magnum work just fine with my choices being for Hornady's 85- and 100-grain JHPs, Sierra's 90-grain JHC and Speer's 100-grain JHP. Recently, Speer introduced a 115-grain Gold Dot Hollowpoint specifically for the .327 Federal. This excellent bullet is not only offered by Federal loaded in factory ammunition, but is also available to reloaders.

As mentioned, Ruger was the first to offer a revolver chambered in .327,



The .327 Federal is descended from the .32 S&W, .32 S&W Long and the .32 H&R Magnum. The new .327 offers much better ballistics than any of its predecessors.



John found some of his favorite powders such as Alliant 2400, Hodgdon H110 and Accurate Arms No. 9 plus bullets from Hornady, Sierra and Speer are excellent choices for reloading the .327 Maxi-Mouse Magnum.

.327 FEDERAL FACTORY AMMO PERFORMANCE BLACKHAWK 5-1/2"		
LOAD (BRAND, BULLET WEIGHT, TYPE)	VELOCITY (FPS)	GROUP SIZE (INCHES)
AMERICAN EAGLE 100 JHP	1,536	1-3/4

.327 FEDERAL FACTORY AMMO PERFORMANCE GP100 4"		
LOAD (BRAND, BULLET WEIGHT, TYPE)	VELOCITY (FPS)	GROUP SIZE (INCHES)
AMERICAN EAGLE 100 JHP	1,469	2

that sixgun being the SP101 pocket pistol. This year Ruger has branched out to offer the .327 in sixguns, which are larger framed than the SP101. The 4" GP100, one of the most rugged .357 Magnum sixguns ever offered, is now chambered in .327 with a 7-shot cylinder and Hogue oversized fingergroove rubber grips. These grips are great for reducing felt recoil and for hard outdoor usage, however for my use, which definitely no longer includes hard outdoor scenarios, I have installed a pair of the original factory-style GP100 rubber grips. These are much smaller without fingergrooves and I think it's much easier carrying in a hip holster. For anyone looking for a heavy-duty, double-action .327 for any type of outdoor use it would be most difficult to find anything better suited than this Ruger GP100.

Ruger's third offering in .327 Federal Magnum is an 8-shot, 5-1/2" stainless steel Blackhawk fitted with very bright rosewood stocks. Everything we have said about the ruggedness of the double-action GP100 holds and even more so for the single-action Ruger. Blackhawks have been around since 1955 and have been a top choice for hunting and any outdoor use since that time.

The New Model .327 is virtually indestructible. As with the GP100, sights are fully adjustable, black and give an easily seen square sight picture. If there is a drawback to either one of these sixguns from Ruger it is the fact they are heavy sixguns and some

**.327 FEDERAL HANDLOADED AMMO PERFORMANCE
BLACKHAWK 5-1/2"**

BULLET (BRAND, BULLET WEIGHT, TYPE)	POWDER (BRAND)	CHARGE (GRAINS WEIGHT)	VELOCITY (FPS)	GROUP SIZE (INCHES)
HORNADY 85 XTP HP	2400	11.0	1,458	2-1/4
HORNADY 85 XTP HP	H110	12.5	1,424	1-3/8
SIERRA 90 JHC	2400	11.0	1,445	1-3/4
SIERRA 90 JHC	H110	12.5	1,352	1-3/4
HORNADY 100 XTP HP	2400	11.0	1,452	1
HORNADY 100 XTP HP	H110	12.5	1,400	1-3/4
SPEER 100 JHP	2400	11.0	1,391	1-1/8
SPEER 100 JHP	H110	12.5	1,354	1-1/2
SPEER 100 JHP	AA No. 9	12.5	1,552	1-3/4
SPEER 115 GDHP	2400	10.0	1,350	2
SPEER 115 GDHP	H110	12.0	1,335	1-1/4
SPEER 115 GDHP	AA No. 9	12.0*	1,525	1-1/8
HARD CAST 115 GC FN	AA No. 9	11.5	1,394	1-3/8
HARD CAST 115 GC KT	AA No. 9	11.5	1,569	1-7/8

Notes: Groups the product of seven shots at 20 yards. Chronograph screens set at 10' from the muzzle. CCI 550 primers used in Federal brass. *WARM!

.327 FEDERAL HANDLOADED AMMO PERFORMANCE GP100 4"

BULLET (BRAND, BULLET WEIGHT, TYPE)	POWDER (BRAND)	CHARGE (GRAINS WEIGHT)	VELOCITY (FPS)	GROUP SIZE (INCHES)
HORNADY 85 XTP HP	2400	11.0	1,368	1-3/4
HORNADY 85 XTP HP	H110	12.5	1,298	1-5/8
SIERRA 90 JHC	2400	11.0	1,305	1-5/8
SIERRA 90 JHC	H110	12.5	1,229	1-1/8
HORNADY 100 XTP HP	2400	11.0	1,390	1-3/4
HORNADY 100 XTP HP	H110	12.5	1,307	1-3/8
SPEER 100 JHP	2400	11.0	1,359	1-3/8
SPEER 100 JHP	H110	12.5	1,257	1-1/4
SPEER 100 JHP	AA No. 9	12.5	1,489	1-1/2
SPEER 115 GDHP	2400	10.0	1,305	1-7/8
SPEER 115 GDHP	H110	12.0	1,294	1-1/2
SPEER 115 GDHP	AA No. 9	12.0*	1,450	1-3/8
HARD CAST 115 GC FN	AA No. 9	11.5	1,383	2
HARD CAST 115 GC KT	AA No. 9	11.5	1,498	1-1/2

Notes: Groups the product of six shots at 20 yards. Chronograph screens set at 10' from the muzzle. CCI 550 primers used in Federal brass. *WARM!

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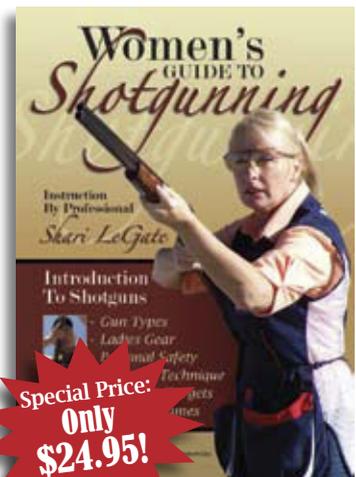
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may not want to carry this much weight when hiking or just exploring the sagebrush, foothills, forest or mountains. I do not find the weight objectionable and even though the .327 is not what you would call a heavy recoiling cartridge, it is exceptionally comfortable when shooting through one of these new Ruger sixguns. Presently the Blackhawk .327 is offered with a 5-1/2" and I hope Ruger sees fit to soon offer a 7-1/2" version.

It is always interesting to watch the whiners on the wire, that is complainers on the Internet about any new product offered. When the .327 arrived there was the little group who had not tried

it, however, condemned it as being too small or too whatever. It really doesn't make a whole lot of difference what the complaint is, as long as they have something to whine about.

The same thing happened when Ruger announced the Blackhawk in .327. Complaints, long before anyone saw one, handled one and definitely had not shot one came forth from this same group. They are definitely wrong and totally misinformed. The .327 Federal Magnum is one of the best ideas to come along in sixgun chamberings in several decades. It is everything the old .32-20 was, the .32 Magnum is and so much more. I like it!

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THE RESURRECTION

SMITH & WESSON'S MODEL 58 .41 MAGNUM.

CLINT SMITH

As part of the continuing program of resurrecting older and unpopular models of Smith & Wesson revolvers, the Model 58 .41 Magnum has been brought back into production. Addressing and hopefully appeasing what is often considered a somewhat cultist group of shooters, the .41 Magnum, in fact, might have been singled out by a sharp group of individuals who saw and continue to see the advantages of this mid-size caliber handgun.

Introduced in the mid '60s, the .41 Magnum was considered by some to be the optimum self-defense cartridge and load for American law enforcement use. Historically, it can be traced to a wildcat cartridge called the .400 Eimer, which was on the drawing boards as early as the 1920s. In its initial introduction, the Smith & Wesson .41 Magnum was brought on the market in 1963-64 in the form of the named cartridge mated to the Smith & Wesson Model 57. The Model 57 was an adjustable sighted, 6-shot, large N-frame revolver. Shortly afterward,

the factory folks at Smith & Wesson introduced a beefed up Model 10 fixed-sight version numbered the Model 58 that might be one of the best examples of a true fighting handgun—if there is such a thing.

Often with dismal results, the .38 special was for many years a pretty universal cartridge for the law enforcement community. Its failures are well noted and early attempts, such as the 200-grain .38-44 Super Police load, still did not bring the .38 to acceptable standards of stopping power. The .357 Magnum was the upgraded version of the .38, but it still lacked cross-sectional density, which is always helpful in a fighting handgun cartridge.

The .44 Magnum was, in fact, too much gun for general police use and the closest it came to solving the problem was the Remington 240-grain mid-range load. The .41 Magnum gave better cross-section density than the .38 Special and the bullet weight at 210 grains could be an attention getter to the misbehaving.

Two factory loadings were available. The barnburner was the 210-grain jacketed softpoint, which ran the gates at a smoking 1,500 feet per second declared and a probably true 1,400 fps. The second load was a 210-grain



The lineage of the .41 Magnum includes (from top to bottom) the Model 57 with blue finish, Model 57 nickel finish and the original Model 58 with Speigel grips.

lead semiwadcutter cruising across the chronograph at a nominal 1,150 fps declared, but was in reality probably closer to 900 fps in the factory loading. It was plenty of load with plenty of projectile for the average shooter, and probably on the verge of too much.

I think one of the key ingredients to the failure of the .41 Magnum to achieve general acceptance in the law enforcement communities was the unclear boundary between the two loads and knowing the difference between the two. Probably if the truth was known, had the .41 Magnum been loaded to a nominal 850 to 900 fps with a 210-grain lead wadcutter from the get go I believe it would have been force to be reckoned with.

At 10 yards free hand, no rest, I shot CorBon DPX 180-grain hollowpoints for the test and the Model 58 placed them (with me attached) inside a nominal 1.5". Moving at 1,300 fps, the 180-grain DPX projects a true 676 foot-pounds of energy downrange. CorBon is one of the few who actually load what they say they are loading on the box. The rounds were stout and impacted steel had a distinct sound not often heard when 9mm or .40 S&W calibers are used on plates.

As mentioned before, this revolver is part of the program to bring back into the market older revolvers and this Model 58 falls into that category. The



Clint shot the test target (above) at 10 yards with the current production Model 58 using .41 Magnum ammunition made by CorBon. The current production Model 58 (below) has the 4th sideplate screw like earlier models. This is part of the program in producing newly made older-style revolvers. The grips are handsomely made and fit well.



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MODEL 58

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ACTION:	Double-action revolver
CALIBER:	.41 Magnum
CAPACITY:	6
BARREL LENGTH:	4"
WEIGHT:	41 ounces
FINISH:	Blue or nickel plated
SIGHTS:	Fixed
GRIPS:	Checkered wood
PRICE:	\$1,090

new Model 58 has a 4" barrel and fixed sights like its predecessor. The gun I had has the old-style cylinder latch and square butt, which is, of course, correct and true to the gun's lineage.

The stocks are nicely done wood with silver Smith & Wesson medallions inlaid. This grip style and these stock panels are a good candidate for a Tyler T-grip filler for anyone who actually wants to carry and shoot the gun. With the filler or larger stocks the gun is a bit of a knuckle buster with full-power loads, which was the whole point of the exercise.

Total original production was a nominal 20,200 made during the years of 1964-1977.

The gun may be an example of a dud or, in reality, it may have been a gun and caliber ahead of its time. Either way, people who want one or wanted one to shoot, now have the chance thanks to the new Smith & Wesson Model 58 .41 Magnum being brought back online.

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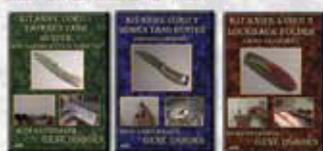


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6 1/4" overall, blade 3 3/4", 1/8" thick.
SS167 Blade Only.....**11.95**
SS167K Renaissance Kit.....**14.95**

Cobra

7 3/8" overall, blade 3 3/4", 1/8" thick.
SS166 Blade Only.....**12.95**
SS166K Cobra Kit.....**14.95**

Sportsman

7 3/8" overall, blade 3 1/2", 1/8" thick.
SS164 Blade Only.....**12.95**
SS164K Sportsman Kit.....**14.95**

Ringtail

7" overall, blade 2 5/8", 3/32" thick.
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Sterling Silver beads used to accent lanyards and many other craft projects. Approx 3/8" dia. with 5/32" - 3/16" center holes. Each marked with the 925 sterling stamp.

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SS635 Bison Skinner Kit.....**12.95**

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SS642 Wyoming Hunter Kit.....**12.95**

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SS912K Alaskan Fillet Kit.....**15.95**

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RIGHTS WATCH

• DAVID CODREA •

MONOPOLY CAN BE A DEADLY GAME

The question of whether armed citizens should be entitled to challenge the government with force is at the heart of the current debate over the Second Amendment in the Supreme Court case of *District of Columbia vs. Heller*,” Coalition to Stop Gun Violence Executive Director Josh Horwitz writes in a recent *Huffington Post* opinion piece.

CSGV, of course, is the kinder, gentler name giving PR cover for what was once called “The National Coalition to Ban Handguns.”

“The concept of a ‘monopoly on force’ might sound foreign or even frightening to Americans that take great pride in our revolutionary beginnings,” Horwitz continues, “but it is the fundamental organizing principle of any political entity, including the United States.”

To back up this assertion, he cites, “German political economist and sociologist Max Weber.”

What he doesn’t cite is Weber’s support for approving Article 48 into the Weimar constitution, establishing “emergency powers” to bypass Reichstag consent, and allowing Adolf Hitler’s rise to unchallenged power. Not to mention the attainment of a “monopoly of force,” although Weber preferred the term “violence.”

But Horwitz has anticipated abuse by a dictatorship.

“This doesn’t mean that Saddam Hussein’s regime, or other totalitarian states, should be accepted,” he writes. “These regimes lack legitimacy, which is the key to Weber’s definition of the monopoly on force.

“If we value our democracy,” he concludes, “we should hope the Supreme Court agrees and explicitly quashes the DC Circuit’s assertion that there is an insurrectionary purpose to the Second Amendment.”

If I may: The word “democracy” appears nowhere in our Constitution, and the votes of many have no claim on the rights of those they

outnumber—otherwise, we’re reduced to a tyranny of the majority. But if we’re going to play Horwitz’ deadly game of monopoly, we should remind ourselves that, per the *BBC*, Saddam received 100 percent of the vote in a 2002 referendum on his rule.

No fair? He cheated? Hey, that’s what happens when there’s a monopoly of violence.

As for the guy Horwitz’s ideological mentor helped give “legitimacy” to, he didn’t bother with such pretenses. The lack of a German majority consensus for his party was no impediment for someone controlling that monopoly we’re told is such a boon to civil order.

The Founders made the whole purpose of having a government clear: “[T]o form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity....”

And they were all keenly aware of this earlier caveat: “That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it....”

“Any.” These were guys who chose their words carefully.

They knew any government that ruled disarmed subjects would be able to condemn those labeled as trouble to the state “directly to jail.” Or worse. And they weren’t about to subject themselves or their Posterity to that kind of monopoly.

Visit David Codrea’s online journal
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\$372 MILLION IN AMMO ORDERS

Alliant Techsystems (ATK) has received orders totaling \$372 million to produce 5.56mm, 7.62mm and .50 BMG ammunition for the US Army Contracting Command in Rock Island, Ill. This is the first significant order in the second year of a 4-year contract, with additional orders expected during this fiscal year. ATK operates the Lake City Army Ammunition Plant (LCAAP) in Independence, Missouri, where the rounds will be produced.—*Courtesy NSSF*

AAA IN AFGHANISTAN, USMC STYLE

Driving over Afghanistan’s rocky terrain can take a toll on tactical vehicles. Roads are littered with improvised Explosive Devices and a tactical vehicle unlucky enough to roll over one is most likely too damaged to continue driving. Even the soft, talcum-like sand can cause vehicles to get stuck while driving. But what happens when those vehicles can’t be driven out of the desert?

Wrecker teams are in charge of going out and recovering these vehicles. “As a wrecker operator, I recover downed vehicles or get them unstuck,” said Sgt. Israel Chavez, wrecker operator for Combat Logistics Battalion 5, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward). “Depending on the situation and what is needed of us, we go out and support the mission, whether it’s a [combat logistics patrol] or a [Quick Reaction Force] mission.”

It is extremely important for the Marine Corps to have wrecker operators. Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles, the Corps’ most widely used forward deployed tactical vehicle, cost upwards of \$1 million each.

Chavez has been a wrecker

operator since October and arrived in Afghanistan a few weeks ago. During his first month here he has made more than 20 recoveries, 13 of which were during his last QRF mission that lasted more than 72 hours.



Marines with Combat Logistics Battalion 5, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward), uses a wrecker to pull a stuck vehicle out of the sandy desert in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, during a recovery mission last April. Soft sand can cause vehicles to get stuck while driving through the desert. Wrecker teams help save a great amount of money and resources for the Marine Corps by retrieving damaged or broken-down vehicles and transporting them back to base for repair. Photo: Lance Cpl. Khoa Pelczar, 1st Marine Logistics Group (FWD)

According to Chavez, on the days they aren't going out on missions, they work on their wrecker trucks, ensuring everything is operating properly.

"During a mission, these [wrecker] vehicles go through a lot of beatings. We have to keep them maintained so they can be in good shape and keep running," said Chavez. "That way, they don't break down often, as we only have a few of these vehicles to operate."

"Every day is a new adventure," said Chavez. "There's always something new that happens every time we go out. That's one of the best parts about being a wrecker operator." —*Lance Cpl. Khoa Pelczar, 1st Marine Logistics Group (FWD)*

NEW YORK LAW HELPS

Gov. David Paterson's signature on a bill passed by New York's Legislature enacted into law a measure to allow manufacturers to possess firearm suppressors prior to securing contracts. The passage follows more than a year of lobbying by federal and state politicians, and its enactment will allow Remington's Ilion, N.Y., plant to be able to compete for federal Department of Defense contracts, said US Rep. Michael Arcuri.—*Courtesy NSSF*



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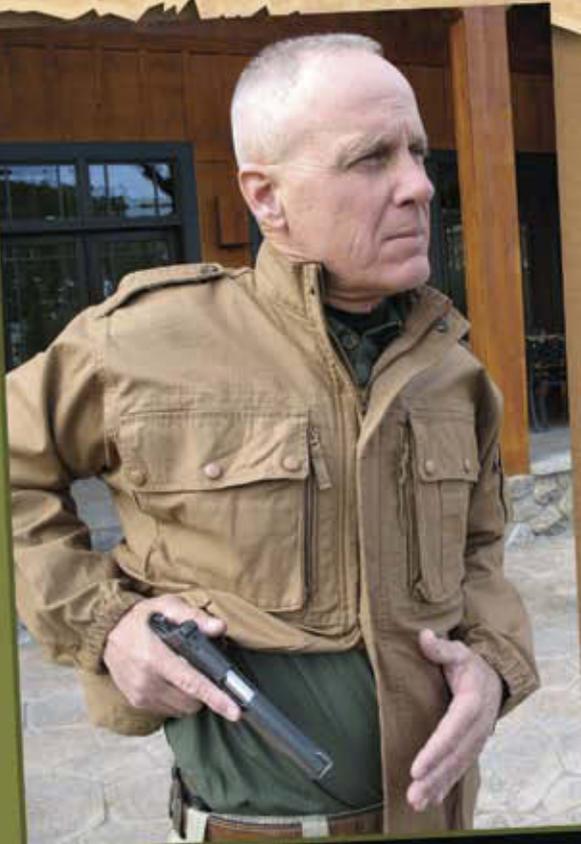
"Clintism" No. 7:

"Carrying a gun is not supposed to be comfortable, it's supposed to be comforting."

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QUARTERMASTER

SAFETY & SECURITY Got guns? Now keep 'em!

• JOHN CONNOR •

Nobody knows—not the ATF, the firearms industry, or even Stinky Stan at Sam's Shootin' Irons on Three Mile Road—how many guns were bought, sold, bartered and gifted during the Great Firearms Frenzy following the November '08 elections. Stan estimates the number as “in the bazillions,” which might be a little high, but still, if they were piled up, there would be smaller mountains in the Absaroka Range—and *you folks* got most of 'em!

Now you better keep 'em safe, because The Feral Gummint ain't the only threat to your continued possession. Herewith, some suggestions on how to stow, go and secure those precious popguns, including a few you might not already know about. They're in no sensible order, because I don't do “sensible order.” OK?

Safe Direction's High Security Case is a soft-sided, double-duty pistol-packer. It looks like an over-built

“bank bag”; stronger, made with slash-resistant Cordura Plus, and it includes the accidental discharge-defeating Ballistic Containment System built into one side. Whenever clearing your pistol, just place the HSC on a solid surface, rest the muzzle lightly on the Safe Direction emblem and proceed.

A security-grade zipper and 7-pin tumbler lock keeps unauthorized people out, and a hefty brass grommet, secured with handcuffs or an optional

cable and lock, keep it anchored down. I particularly like the fact it's semi-flexible, easily packed—and *quiet*.

If you want a compact rigid-case, single-handgun transporter, try GunVault's MicroVaults. These little gunsafes look like mini-laptops, and offer either fingerprint recognition or touch-code access.

Life Jacket gunlocks provide excellent security, speedy lockup and access, and they can be either completely portable or bolted to almost any surface. With very little bulk, the design encloses the actions of your firearms in either steel or steel-reinforced polycarbonate depending on model, and there are variants for handguns, pump and semi-auto shotguns, and ARs. They're California DOJ and TSA approved, and a terrific bargain for the bucks.

For permanent, quick-release locked mounting of shotguns on a wall or inside a closet, also check out Mossberg's Loc-Box, which fits other makers' scatterguns too.

The handgun-sized LockSAF Biometric PBS-001 can be used in many places, but due to its recessed, spring-loaded flip-up top, it's ideal for mounting inside a stout drawer. Twenty-two pounds of 9-gauge steel gives it great strength and fast

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fingerprint recognition—up to 10 fingerprints can be programmed—gives it speed. At about 14" wide by 10.5" deep and 4.5" high, it will take a big handgun plus peripherals and keep 'em safe but handy.

The Titan Gun Vault is one of the most feature-rich and versatile handgun safes available. Designed to hold a single handgun, it's only 2.5" deep, which might make you ask how you're gonna squeeze your meathook in there to grab your gun? You don't have to! As you open the lid, a built-in universal holster, mounted on a pivot, swings

your holstered piece right up into grasping position.

The unit comes with two different mounting brackets, but the TGV case itself quickly releases from a strong mating with the bracket to move on to as many places as you have mounts for: under desktops, on shelves, under beds or on frames, under car seats or between them.

The time-tested Simplex battery-less all mechanical pushbutton lock offers more than 2,200 user-set



GunVault's MicroVaults are sized right for concealment.

combinations, and it has passed all Cal-DOJ entry, drop and cutting tests. This is a terrific design, and I wouldn't be without one.

The Big Toy Boxes

For safe storage of what the evening news would call an "arsenal"—a decent collection of long guns and handguns—you have tons of choices tempered by a few considerations: First, it has to be virtually attack-proof, and lots of makers provide that and more. Generally, any safe with Browning's BuckMark on the door will be highest quality with lots of



The High Security Case by Safe Direction.

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options. The 5-spoke vault handle on Winchester Safe's Supreme Series drives up to 20 massive 2" steel bolts out of all four sides of the door into the body, and the door swings open a full 180 degrees—a convenient feature.

Since it's actually more likely your safe may be tested by fire rather than burglars, make sure you check fire ratings closely. The Winchester Supreme, for example, delivers a minimum of two hours at 1,400 degrees Fahrenheit thanks to several layers of sandwiched fireboard and heat-expandable Palusol door seals.

Weight is another factor, which, sadly, some folks haven't considered closely enough. On several occasions, casual estimation of a floor's weight-bearing capacity has resulted in costly and embarrassing complications. An acquaintance of mine turned his safe from a "roller" into a permanently-mounted vault by loading up the bottom with so much ammo the wheels punched through his floor. Another time, I saw a hefty safe lying on its side in a basement—and a huge hole through not one, but *two* floors above it. Calculate *conservatively*, folks!

Finally, I recommend you think about installation of dehumidifiers, alarms and other accessories before buying a BigBox—and add in those dimensions.

I'm away from home base a lot, and I don't want batteries to fail on dehumidifiers while I'm gone. A couple of years ago, Cannon Safe became the first maker to offer a double electrical outlet inside their vaults, and by now others probably have too. That way, you can power interior lighting



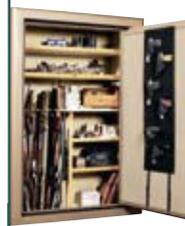
The LockSAF PBS-001 is ideal for mounting inside a drawer.



The Life Jacket is a tough, versatile clamshell-style gunlock.



The Titan Gun Vault can make itself at home almost anywhere.



Cannon Safe offers many storage layout options, plus interior electrical outlets for lighting and dehumidifiers.

plus Cannon's excellent GunSaver Dehumidifier without reliance on batteries. Cannon also provides a free lifetime repair or replacement policy covering burglary, fire or natural flood emergency—a *great* benefit!

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Here's Console Vault's Red Herring—an ingenious design!

is strong, and access is quick—but it involves a little secret they only share with their customers. Oh, you're gonna love it—and so will your guns!

Or, you could forget all this hardware, pile your guns in the middle of the living room—and hire *me* to stand guard! Connor *OUT*

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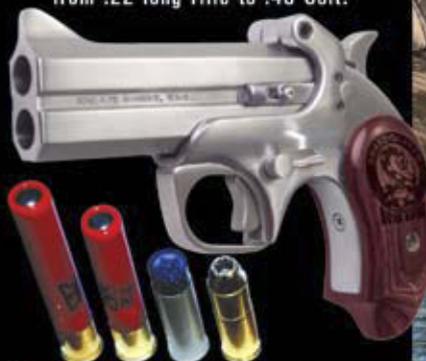
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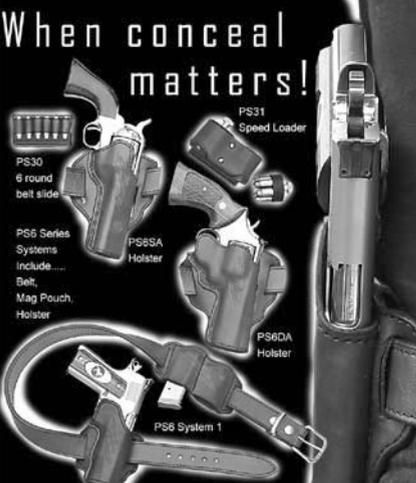
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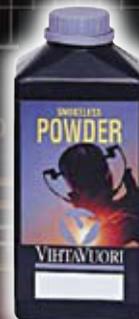
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HARD LESSONS

At the University of Hard Knocks.

The kid was about 7, I think. A rawboned skinny boy with a big scab on his nose and sparkling blue eyes. He gawked at my legs while I stacked groceries on the checkout counter, then finally looked up and caught my eye.

“You sure got ugly legs,” he observed, wrinkling his nose. “What happened?” I thought for a moment—a long moment, and almost got lost in my head. Oh, a lot, I thought, a lot has happened... But that’s not what I told him.

Summer had come to the high country, and despite the fact the appearance of my legs tends to upset some folks of tender sensitivities—an array of shrapnel wounds make them sorta “decorative”—I happily donned old bush shorts again. I mean, long pants are just, you know, too long. Besides, when you’re balancing precariously on a cane, shorts are much easier to pull on.

Anyway, the kid’s statement surprised me. Many people stare sidelong, like they’re trying not to be seen looking at a bad accident, but very few will ever ask what happened. It might be the kinda thing they really don’t wanta know. Little boys don’t have that reticence.

But how can you—and why would you—tell a child about things that made you scream in pain; wonder can I lose this much blood and live?; and haunt you every cold, wet morning, stinging like fire ants?

I told him, “I just moved the wrong way a few times, too slow or too fast; just did the wrong thing.” He took that in, rolled it over like a sour lemon drop on his tongue and said simply, “I done that too. See?” He pointed to the scab on his beak. “Mom says I learned a

lesson. Did you?”

Yeah; I’ve learned a few lessons.

As a Marine, I learned our national “house” needs tough, vicious guard dogs on duty 24/7 out in the inky dark, even out past the far fenceline; couldn’t exist without ‘em—but most of the “residents and guests” don’t want to see them lying on the lawn in the sunshine, nor pay the vet bills when they’re ripped and bleeding, nor even be aware of them.

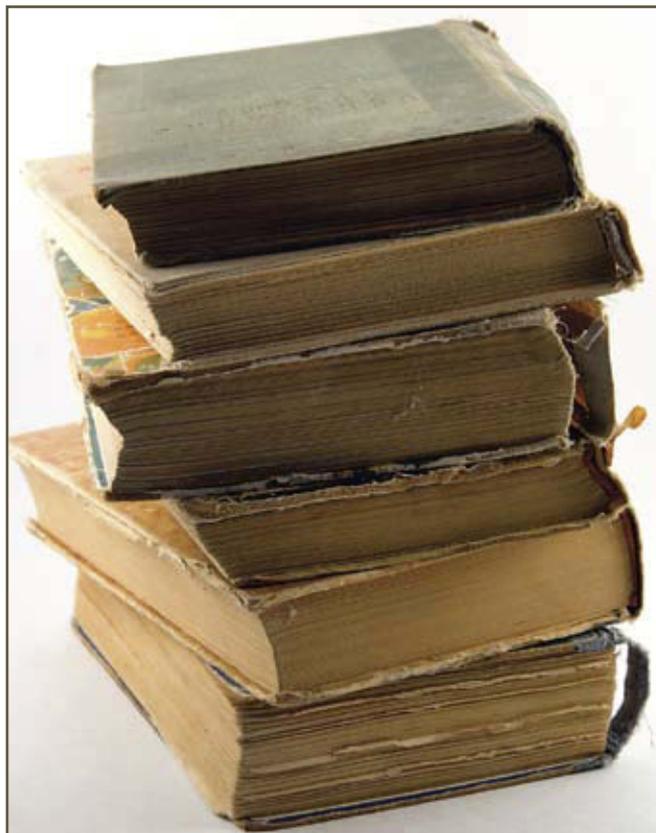
I learned a lot of dogs fight because they’re fighting dogs, not necessarily

because they’ve got a bone in the yard or ever expect to get one for themselves. Others fight because all their brothers are fighting dogs, and there is honor in the pack, and in your heart, if nowhere else. Hard lessons, but the dogs are hard too.

As a cop, I learned we don’t have a Criminal Justice System, we have a Legal Industry. It pays some people handsomely and destroys others, innocent or guilty, and not many care much about who is which. There are prosecutors who aren’t interested in evidence which might absolve a defendant, defenders who fight tooth and nail to exclude damning evidence of guilt, and the courtroom charade is all about who scores the win, not at all about “justice.” Look up the word “eristic” and you’ll know the real name of the game played in court. Testify in enough trials and you’ll learn there are only two kinds of justice left: street and poetic.

I learned every big agency needs shooters; guys who can stand and deliver, willingly and well. The brass knows who they are, quickly calls on ‘em when all else fails, and even more quickly throws them to the jackals whenever it’s politically expedient.

As a contract soldier, I learned most “mercenaries” aren’t very mercenary at all, instead, driven by ideals their birth-nations espouse, but will not support without a hefty, unbalanced quid pro quo. I’ve known “mercenaries” who never lost a fight, but were conquered by every grinning hungry child; every thin, dashiki-wrapped momma with a thirsty mtoto; every bent old man whose only possessions were his cloak, cap, walking stick and his dignity—the people whose only support from their own governments



Sometimes, by the time you learn the lessons, you’re as frayed and dog-eared as the lesson books.

are cold rations of misery and poverty.

And I learned why governments call contract soldiers “mercenaries” and hate them. Simple: because a “mercenary” can have and exercise a conscience; refuse immoral, unethical orders—and will not go quietly to a wall where a man waits smiling with a blindfold and a cigarette. If you want to shoot him, you’d better be able to outshoot him.

I learned sometimes when you “come home,” in many, many ways, it’s not there anymore.

Hard Knock U

As a “representative of US and Western interests,” I learned nations don’t have “friends,” they have “interests,” and for many of their individual leaders, those are “self-interests.” I learned “diplomacy” is usually the act of buying time; time for one side to marshal its forces for the aggression they have long planned and absolutely will carry out—when they’re good and ready; that peace is not a product of lavish state dinners or signatures flourished on treaties. That’s usually the conduct of business; the business of personally enriching those wielding the gold-nibbed pens, knowing that eventually, there’s gonna be a horrific fight, but they won’t have to fight it—just “somebody else’s children”—and meantime, their own pockets are richly lined.

I learned peace usually exists only when others are convinced you can hurt them a lot worse than they could hurt you—and you’re willing to do it.

I learned too often, another word for diplomacy is cowardice.

As a “travelled American,” I’ve learned free peoples can lose their rights and freedoms one tiny slice at a time, and like the death of a 1,000 paper cuts, they may hardly feel it happening. But once freedom is lost, it can never be regained in the same manner; not with elections, petitions and wishful thinking. It can only be regained tumultuously, and at great and grave cost, often paying again the ransoms paid by their grandfathers.

I learned some kids die fighting only because their fathers wouldn’t.

Out in the parking lot, the kid broke free of a hushed conversation with his dad and came over. He wagged a finger toward my legs and asked, “Is that from scrap-null, mister? My dad says maybe so.” I nodded.

“Yeah; shrapnel, kid.”

“Does it hurt real bad, like—still?”

“Some things hurt worse, son,” I told him. “And they hurt a lot longer.” Connor *OUT*

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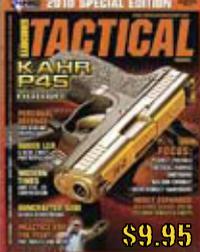
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The basement of the building held all the plumbing supplies. One day the old man at the counter was all excited. Knowing I was into guns he had something to show me; a new rifle, a Winchester Model 94 .30-30. He said somewhat sadly, "I'll never be able to go hunting, but I can polish this rifle in the evenings and dream." I never forgot that attitude, and I'll bet he polished the bluing off the metal and finish off the stock as he dreamed. It would've been unforgivable to rain on his parade.

Wildcats

Just recently, another rain-on-the-parade article appeared by one who labeled wildcat cartridges as useless reasoning since we had plenty of production cartridges, more than enough to fill in any void. The truth be known, we had everything we needed by 1873. We could certainly get by with a Colt Single Action .45, a .44-40 levergun and a single-shot .45-70. If these weren't enough, by 1895 we had the .30-30, and just 10 years later the .30-06, and then five years later the 1911. What else could we possibly need?

The head says nothing but the heart says dream on! Just think of all the wildcat cartridges put forth by such experimenters as J.D. Jones and Gary Reeder. Both men have built very successful businesses by designing wildcat cartridges and chambering them in Thompson/Center single-shot pistols. They have given us dozens of cartridges all of which require starting with some already available cartridge case and changing it. There is something vastly rewarding about making your own ammunition from scratch and then using it successfully in the hunting field. Another dream fulfilled!

We have also seen many new rifle cartridges, especially of the "short, fat" design. Are they really needed? Probably not, but do they fulfill someone's dream? If firearms purchases were based only on need most companies would now be out of business. How many people own just one handgun or one rifle? Very few I would guess. Every time a new chambering is announced, someone, somewhere dreams.

Dreamers

There are three fellows I know, all even older than me who are dreamers. I see them almost every week at our local range; they are shooting and dreaming. Bob was already in the military when Pearl Harbor occurred

and spent World War II fighting in Europe. Today, he has the ability to sniff out some of the neatest rifles around and it's always a pleasure to see his latest acquisition. He enjoys them as he sights them in and if I could crawl into his head, I'm sure I would find him dreaming about what he would like to do with his latest rifle. Instead he just shoots it and enjoys it.

Chuck is a former fighter pilot and also has some very beautiful rifles. He doesn't hunt anymore; he just enjoys coming to the range, shooting those rifles, and I'm sure dreaming about the past and what he would really like to be able to do in the future. He is a happy man! Fritz is a retired doctor and cast bullet fancier. He also has some great rifles chambered in everything from .22 Hornet through the .45-70. I've often seen him shoot 1" groups with that .45-70 using cast bullet not at 100 yards but rather 200 yards. We often talk about how difficult it is to get a .22 Hornet shooting right; he often shares new information and we dream on. He doesn't hunt, he doesn't compete, he just looks for that one right load. Every trip to the range could be the fulfillment of a dream.

We could still be using the cartridges of the 19th century and also all driving around in Model As and we could survive. But it is the American Dream which makes this country great (or did) not American survival. Wildcat cartridges fall into the American Dream as does my long quest of looking for the PPP, or Perfect Packin' Pistol. I never want to find it. The pure pleasure is in the quest not the finding. The same is true of wildcats with shooters looking for that one perfect round. I hope they never find it but simply keeping enjoying the quest.

I still have dreams. There's the .375 H&H I purchased years ago. I rarely ever shoot it, and I'll never see Africa again nor make it to Alaska; but I can dream. I just reloaded 100 reduced level rounds; I can dream without getting belted about. Then there is the Sharps .45-110. I've taken two bison both with sixguns, so I doubt the Sharps will ever be put to use for anything but shooting a few full house black powder loads once in a while. It's still conjures up dreams and I can easily see myself on a buffalo stand 140 years ago. Today, especially, real-life is not always that exciting. One of the reasons Cowboy-Action Shooting has been so successful is the fact it provides an escape from today and fulfills dreams of yesterday. Everyone can't have a job like mine but everyone can dream. Let the parades parade and the rains stop.

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CAMPFIRE TALES

BY JOHN TAFFIN

STOP THE RAIN!

Several centuries ago William Shakespeare examined the Ages of Man with the result being we wind up right back where we started. I've always been a dreamer and now find myself in many ways back where I started. In my early years I dreamed of all the things I wanted to do, then spent several decades doing just a few of them, and now I find myself dreaming again. Dreaming of things past and things I wish I could do again. At my age most of them will continue to be dreams, which will never be fulfilled. However, I have few regrets and have been blessed with many of my youthful dreams coming true.

This past summer I went with my friends Rick and Roger to hunt at Clover Creek Ranch. I grew up in the Midwest where it rained often in the summer—I mean really rained with thunder and lightning and downpours. I've now spent most of my life in southwestern Idaho where we rarely get rain in the summer and thunderstorms are so few and far between no matter what time of the night they happen, I like to go out on the back deck and listen to the rain on the steel roof.

While we were at Clover Creek it rained, I mean really rained. It rained so much the mountain roads were almost impassable and the ground became so saturated I experienced a memorable new happening. I saw my first-ever flash flood. The last afternoon we were there it literally poured down just after we got back to camp. It wasn't long before a flood came down through the canyon behind the ranch house carrying everything in its path, taking out the fence, and totally closing the country road with rocks and debris of every kind. It was magnificent to see such force!

There's another type of rain I have

been experiencing all my life. It is not wet, it does not come from the heavens, but rather springs from man. Maybe my memory is just faulty, however, it seems to me as I was growing up it was pretty much live and let live. Now there is a whole group of politicians, especially, who are convinced they



Dream on!

know much better than we on how our lives should be directed. We seem to be in a constant battle trying to maintain the freedom to live our own lives, and with each passing generation the battle becomes more difficult. There is another group of people whose main object in life seems to be to rain on other people's parades, to shatter their dreams, to destroy their pleasures.

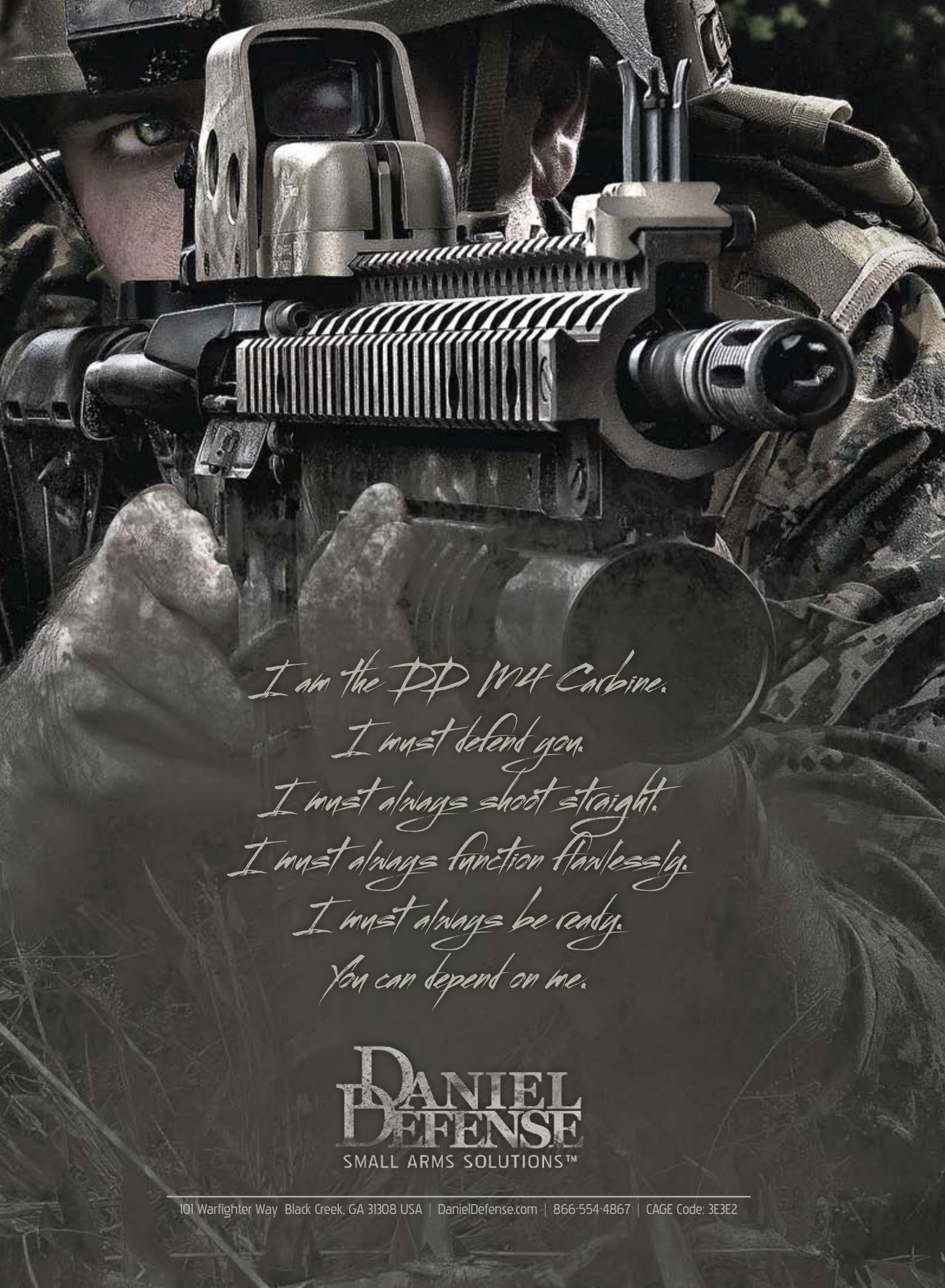
As shooters we have more than enough outside enemies. We don't need people on the inside raining on each other's parades. Many years ago, even before I became a writer myself, I was incensed at an article that's object was to destroy a "friend's" dream. I put quotation marks around friend, as I didn't think friends did such things. The whole article was built around ridiculing a man who had purchased a .458 Winchester Model 70.

No Joy?

The writer took joy in pointing out the purchaser had no hope of ever going to Africa—he was just a dreamer. Just a dreamer? Aren't we all dreamers? The man who doesn't dream is probably too dull to spend any time with. The dreamer probably realized he would never see Africa, maybe never even shoot that .458. But every time he picked it up he was there! Perhaps after a rough day he could come home and relax as he beheld his .458 and was transported in his mind to an African safari. Even if he never got to Africa he could dream. He could spend evenings handling the rifle sighting on an imaginary elephant. It was probably the cheapest medicine anyone could ever buy, and I'll bet he had a lot less stress in his life than the one who rained on him.

In 1956, I was fresh out of high school, living on a lot of dreams and working for a very large construction supply company. It had three floors, plus a basement and covered a city block. It was a great place to work, as I met so many wonderful folks (all these many years later I can still name more than 50 guys from there). I was 17 and in charge of incoming freight by truck and rail. I loved the job, as it built me up so much physically and also taught me the meaning of responsibility.

continued on page 81



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