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FRAME. **P. 50**



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TARR
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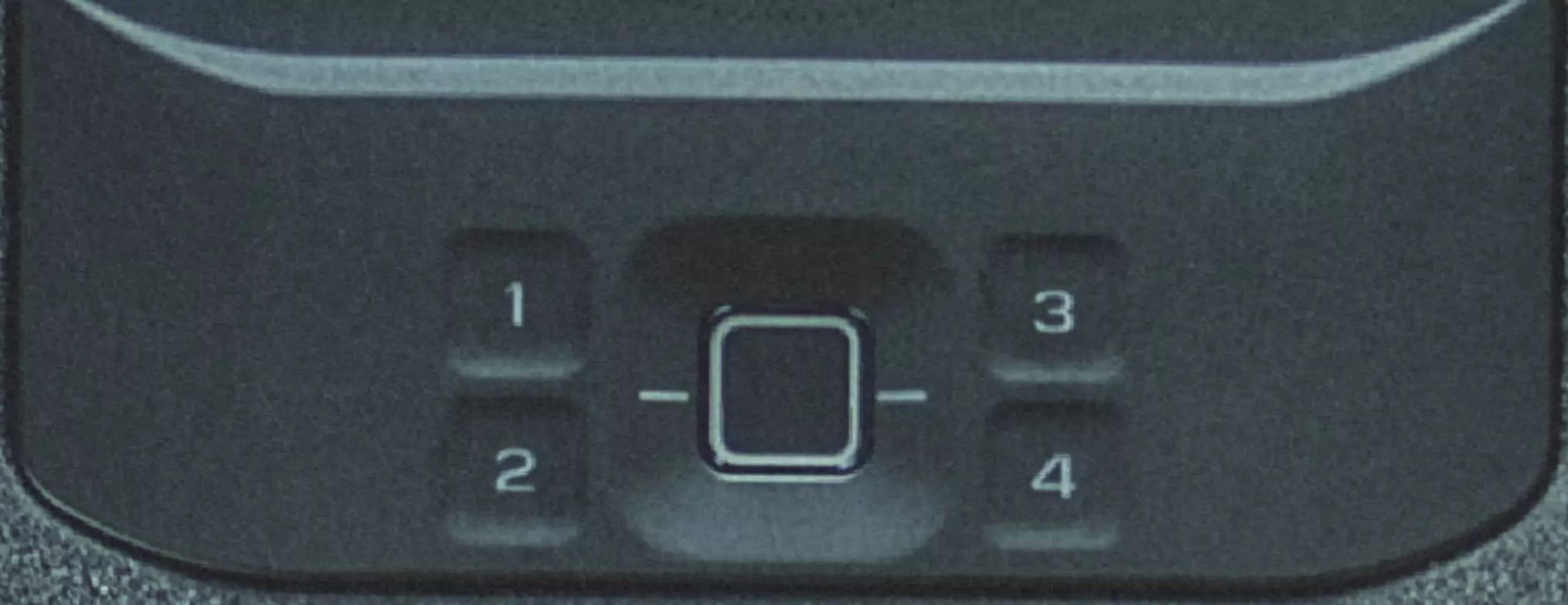
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COVER PHOTOS: MICHAEL ANSCHUETZ AND MARK FINGAR; ABOVE PHOTO: MARK FINGAR

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CHURCHILL'S GHOST

I know October is the month of Halloween, but the picture of the top-hatted gentlemen on page 108 appeared as ghoulish humor. Two right hands and no left? If that wasn't an intentional photo alteration, where did it come from? It was definitely creepy!

Mark Stone

Springfield, Missouri

The picture you are referring in Dave Emary's feature, "That Was Then" (October 2023), was of British Prime Minister Winston Churchill taken during an impromptu "Carbine Match" on March 24, 1944. The appearance of two right hands and no left was simply an illusion. Churchill's left and right hands are correct, but visually confused by the lines of the soldier's jacket in the background. Participating in the contest were Gen. Dwight Eisenhower and Gen. Omar Bradley. The event took place in England during an inspection of the 2nd Armored and 9th Infantry Divisions at the U.S. Tidworth training base in Wiltshire, England. The dignitaries were quickly guided away before targets could be compared. Several U.S. Army photos from this event are available from the Imperial War Museum collection (iwm.org.uk).

— E. Poole

9MM VS. .45

I enjoyed James Tarr's article "Pistol Caliber Wars" (December 2023), which revisited the "9mm versus .45 ACP" debate. I guess the FBI never heard of the Super .38? Keep up the great articles.

James Kenyon

Hemet, California

M1 GARAND LOADS

I have heard that it is not recommended to use newly manufactured .30-'06 rounds in older M1 Garands. Would Guns & Ammo offer any advice regarding this information?

David Gene McQuillen
Email

There are two sets of opinions on this subject. The first suggests you can shoot whatever .30-'06 load you want in an M1 Garand. The second, which is what I subscribe to is this: You should not use newer high-charge

weight performance loads. The higher the charge weight and slower the powder, the higher the gas-port pressure and impulse. This statement is based on testing with an overpressure test barrel with a transducer at the M1 Garand's gas port location near the muzzle. Original .30-'06 loads for the Garand were designed around nominally 48 to 50 grains of powder. Modern high-performance loads use anywhere from 55 to 60 grains of powder. These loads put considerably higher forces on the operating rod. From my standpoint, as expensive as M1 Garands are getting, I want to be as careful with what I feed them as possible. Federal, Hornady and Winchester offer at least one load developed specifically for the M1 Garand. Also, the Hornady Reloading Manual offers Garand-specific load data that conforms to original ammunition port pressure specifications.

— D. Emary

TAKE MY MONEY!

I have been a reader of Guns & Ammo for 51 years, and I always look forward to the honest, straightforward reviews of new products coming to market. Even though it has been 20 years since I purchased my last firearm, all that is about to change now that I've read Brad Fitzpatrick's article, "Rimfire Royalty" (December 2023). I have always wanted a Colt Diamondback in .22 LR, but I could never find one. After reading Fitzpatrick's review of the Colt King

FEBRUARY '60

Author Jeff Cooper penned "The Fabulous .45 Auto, Part I of II." On the cover is a matched set of engraved and gold inlaid Colt 1911 Government models with consecutive serial numbers manufactured in 1957. Marked "I" and "II" on the trigger-guards, these were tastefully enhanced by Pachmayr Gun Works. The grips were crafted from ivory, which were inlaid with rosewood and ebony. Unfortunately, these pistols appear nowhere else throughout the magazine.



Cobra Target, all I can say is, "I want one!" I believe that this will be a worthy alternative. I haven't been this excited about a new firearm purchase since the .300 WSM was announced! Keep up the great reporting.

Bernard Bandy
Indio, California

NULA MODEL 24

I think Craig Boddington missed an easy one with his keyboard in writing "To Hunt Another Day," featured in the January 2024 edition. If he had a "NULA Model 20" in ".280 Remington," he certainly should have bought it; it was one of a kind! The NULA Model 20 was a short-action rifle like the one he was testing in .308 Winchester; the

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NULA Model 24 was the one for the .280-length cartridges. The Model number is the weight of the action. The longer cartridges need a longer action that weighs more; 4 ounces in this instance. Good shooting!
Ted Stephens
 Santa Rosa, California

NO MORE CREEDMOOR

I love the magazine — most of the time. Yet, as soon as I read the top of the front cover of the January issue, I cringed. I'm tired of seeing "Creedmoor." It makes me sick when I see another rifle tested in 6mm or 6.5 CM. Now Horizon Firearms and Hornady team up to add ".22 Creedmoor" to the list? Okay, I get it that Hornady commercializes



rounds that allow heavy-for-caliber bullets to be loaded without the projectile being set deep into the powder space, but this isn't a new idea. Wildcat creators have been doing this for decades! Perhaps, the difference is that Hornady has the money to get SAAMI certifications. I shoot such heavy bullets out of a 6.5x284 Norma

— which was built prior to SAAMI — and my 7mm-300 Winchester Magnum. I seat the 142-grain Sierra Match King and the Hornady 190-grain 7mm A-Tip way out and use faster twist barrels. They are ridiculously accurate. Please, give us an issue with no mention to anything "Creedmoor."

Ted Schaffer
 Email

SOUND OFF!

I'm 55 years old and a gun nut who loves to shoot. I have hunted and taken more deer than the plague! I grew up reading "Petersen's Hunting" and any other gun book I could get my hands on. My "DRT" cartridge, as Craig Boddington described in "Dead Right There," is the .35 Whelen. I shoot the

factory Hornady Superformance load with a 200-grain projectile. I've measured it from a Remington 7600 at a consistent 2,900 feet-per-second (fps). It hits like a freight train, and I love it. In northern Minnesota's deep woods and swamp country — especially where there is no snow for tracking, I want a DRT cartridge. This combo delivers! Another favorite of mine is the .405 Winchester. Years ago, I got lucky and stumbled on a new Winchester Model 1895 in .405 Winchester. I immediately bought it, as well as some Hornady ammunition. I recorded that load at an impressive 2,400 fps. It works flawlessly, but ouch, that one kicks!

Gerald Yourczek II
 Email

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GEN ALPHA

FOUR YEARS. That's the age I was when Dad began helping me shoot a Remington Nylon 66. The stock didn't fit my shoulder, but we made it work. I remember wishing he would take me more often. Though he passed away in 2017, I can still hear his voice when I'm at the range.

My kids started young, too, shooting a single-shot Savage Rascal, and then the Nylon 66. My son, Connor, is of Generation Alpha (2010 to 2024), and I feel as though I am running out of time to influence his passions. He now prefers auto-loaders and rimfire revolvers, and especially likes cocking the hammer of a single-action such as the Ruger Wrangler or Mom's old .22 Colt Peace-maker. Using a two-handed grip, he feels control of the outcome; each *ting* signals his own achievement. Those guns reinforced sight alignment, patience, respect, and trigger discipline.

For a family range day, I brought a single-shot, as well as a Ruger 10/22 with iron sights, and a Marlin Model 60 with a 4X rimfire scope. I tend to go with an objective in mind, and on this visit I wanted to teach the differences in actions and sighting techniques, culminating in the scoped autoloader. Of course, after a few strings of fire, the kids gravitated to shooting only the scoped rifles.

I've been the editor of Guns & Ammo for more than 10 years, and I shoot a lot for work. Unfortunately, I realize that I don't take my kids to the range as often as I should. The time I should be spending with them has been replaced by other obligations; after-school activities, friends, and their hand-held devices. The kids still enjoy shooting, but they don't ask to go as often as they used to. Life has moved on and I'm noticing the effects of social influences beyond my home.

I recently brought Connor to assist me with the eval-

uation of a pistol, and quietly packed the Nylon 66, a revolver, and a box of .22 target loads. Knowing he would ask to shoot a handgun, I selected the Smith & Wesson Model 17 to take his handgun experience to the next level. Though a bit heavy for his age, the Model 17 offers a six-round capacity and introduced him to manipulating a double-action (DA) trigger while steadying its adjustable sights. He produced excellent results, managing to over-

come the 10-pound DA trigger. When he exhausted his finger strength, he continued in single-action mode.

A friend arrived with a Browning Buck Mark Sporter rifle equipped with an adjustable scope. At the bench, Connor used it to score 20-for-20 at 100 yards. The

smile never left his face, and he didn't want to stop. My time teaching fundamental marksmanship skills was over, though.

Once he learned how to work the magnification ring, he kept it on the highest power and went to work. "This is so much easier, Dad!"

I watched him effortlessly shoot through several 10-shot magazines as I thought about the future of his generation. It seems to me that Generation Alpha struggles with a need for constant stimulation and immediate gratification.

I opine that a lot of these changes could be traced to the prevalence of devices, information at hand, and societal attitudes towards affirmation, competition, entitlements, and work. Of course, my kid prefers shooting repeaters with red dots and optics, but at least he still craves spending time with me — for now. There's still time. Let's encourage our youth to never abandon the fundamentals or independent analysis. It is on us to ensure they are prepared to carry our traditions and protect our rights.



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RELIC REMINGTON REVOLVER

Q: My brother, a long-time Guns & Ammo subscriber, recommended that I contact you about a revolver I recently purchased at an estate sale. A Google photo search showed it to possibly be an early 1860s model Colt revolver. I would much appreciate you looking at the attached photos to determine what you feel is its true identity. The gun has considerable surface rust, pitting, and is missing several parts. It is about 15 inches in length and weighs 41 ounces. The only visible marking that I can find is on the left side of the grip. Imprinted is the number “7400” or “7600”; it’s hard to discern if it is a “4” or “6”.

S. P.
Napa, California

A: You have acquired the remnants of a Remington New Model Army revolver. The New Model is considered by many experts to be the apex of American single-action percussion revolvers, though there are also those who are stalwart champions of the Colt Model 1860. About 122,000 New Models were manufactured between 1863 and 1875. Considerable num-

bers were used by Union forces during the Civil War. Caliber was .44. There was also a New Model Navy in .36 caliber that was not manufactured in as large numbers as the Army. Your piece is, unfortunately, in relic condition — i.e., missing parts, broken parts, heavily rusted. It has little collector value. I’d opine it’s worth around \$100 to \$150, strictly as a curiosity.

FRENCH CHASSEPOT RIFLE

Q: For years I’ve had a French rifle sitting in the closet. I inherited it from my father who said it was used in the First World War. It seems to be about .45 caliber. It is a bolt action and 51 inches long. On the receiver are the markings “MANUFACTURE Chatelleraut MLE 1866”. On the barrel is the serial number 31XXX and “1874”. It has no finish.

What is this? Is ammunition available? What is it worth?
F. G.
Tulsa, Oklahoma

A: You have a French Model 1866 “Chassepot” infantry rifle, named after its designer Antoine Alphonse Chassepot. This bolt-action single-shot fired a clever 11mm (.43) self-contained cartridge. At the time of its introduction, it was considered to be one of the pre-eminent military rifles in

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A supremely elegant Holland & Holland Royal self-opener 12-gauge shotgun realized an impressive \$43,000 at a November 2023 Sportsman’s Legacy sale. Made in 1966, the gun has 28-inch barrels with a game rib, 2¾-inch chambers, ejectors, detachable locks, gold-line cocking indicators, automatic safety and a rolled triggerguard. Barrels wear satin rust blue, an ideal contrast to the action’s coin. The select walnut stock has double-bordered checkering, including the butt, and drop points. The action is dressed in the traditional leaf-and-vine to full coverage, the pattern continuing over the guard, top lever and a bit of the rib. “SAFE” appears in gold and the initial plate on the toe line bears initials “RJB”. Finish on the barrels is approximately 99 percent, and action finish is approximately 97 percent with minute traces of tarnish. The package includes the original leather takedown case with housing snaps, oiler and a two-piece rod. For more information about this and future sales, visit Sportsman’s Legacy at sportsmanslegacy.com.



the world. It was used in the Franco-Prussian War where it outclassed the German Dreyse rifle, even though the French came out second best in the conflict. Interestingly, it effectively used a rubber gasket on its bolt to prevent gas leakage. The “Châtellerault” on your gun’s receiver refers to the armory where it was made. Chassepots were also constructed at Saint-Étienne, Tulle and Mutzig. As the rifle appeared during a transition period wherein the metallic cartridge was becoming preeminent, its official service life was somewhat short. It was replaced by the Fusil Gras Model 1874. Fortunately, it was possible to convert Chassepots to handle the Gras’ metallic cartridge, so many are seen in that configuration today. Assuming

your rifle is unaltered and in good condition, it is worth in the \$1,000 to \$1,250 range. The “1874” on the barrel refers to the year the gun was made. They were normally in the white, so the fact that your Chassepot has no finish is correct.

HEIRLOOM COLT WOODSMAN

Q: This Colt Woodsman has been in my family for four generations. After my father’s passing, I inherited it. Can you give me any info on it? S/N 157XXX
J. B.
Grapevine, Texas

A: Colt .22 pistols made from 1915 to 1927 were known as the Colt Automatic Target Pistol, or “Pre-Woodsman.” Yours is a First Series Woodsman Automatic Target Model



manufactured circa 1943. This line of repeaters was manufactured from 1927 to 1947. The Second Series includes those made from late ‘47 to 1955, while the Third Series continued until 1977. More than 690,000 were made. The 1st Model is a good, collectible piece. The condition of your gun, which appears to be about 60 percent, places its worth in the \$200 to \$250 range.

PARKER 12-GAUGE DOUBLE

Q: I have a Parker 20-gauge. It has been in my family for four generations. I think it was made somewhere around 1903. I know my granddad sent it back to be restocked. This little gun has shot lots of birds through the years, and we still shoot it. Any information would be appreciated. Thanks!
J. B.
Email

A: As I am not stellar at Parker evaluations, I forwarded this one to Dwight Van Brunt of Sportsman’s Legacy (sportsmanslegacy.com). From the photos, he opined it’s a decent Parker made around 1920, and it would retail for about \$4,500. Parker Brothers was in business from 1866 to 1934. In 1934, Remington assumed production, which

ceased in 1942. About a quarter million Parker Brothers shotguns were made. Today, some of the higher grade guns can bring hefty prices.

FAUX PARKER 12-GAUGE DOUBLE

Q: I’m writing for my uncle in Pennsylvania who is approaching 90 years old. He inherited this double from his great uncle, also a Pennsylvanian who was 99 when he died. I’ve included numerous photos that I’m hoping can help identify the piece and provide information for an approximate value. My uncle has decided to sell the 12-gauge double.
B. C.
Email

A: Your uncle has a Belgian-made, “hardware store,” exposed hammer, double-barrel shotgun dating from 1890 to 1900. It was stamped with the name “Parker” to take advantage of the cache of high-grade, considerably more expensive, elegant, and highly regarded products manufactured by Parker Brothers in Meriden, Connecticut. As the condition of your uncle’s gun is somewhat lacking, assuming it is functional, I would not value it at more than \$100 to \$150. I would not shoot it without having

HOLLYWOOD HARDWARE

REMINGTON-KEENE, “JOE KIDD” (1972)
The Remington-Keene bolt-action, tubular magazine, .45-70 repeater — which was also offered in .40 and .43 calibers — was made from 1880 to 1883. It was normally seen in military-style carbine and rifle configurations, though some few sporters were also offered. This particular example, gussied up with different-style scopes, was used to effect in the 1972 Clint Eastwood film “Joe Kidd,” where it was carried by actor James Wainwright as “Olin Mingo” (below), as well as in the Sean Connery movie “Shalako” (1968), and Sam Elliot’s “The Quick and the Dead” (1987). It’s an eminently cinematic piece whose amalgam of an exposed-hammer bolt-action, coupled and Winchester-style tubular half-magazine, gives it a great period look and makes it an eye-catching treat for the knowing Western-movie fan. (Courtesy of the National Firearms Museum, Fairfax, Virginia; on loan by Hollywood Guns and Props.)



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SMITH & WESSON SINGLE ACTION (SECOND MODEL), .38 S&W, 30%: \$375



a gunsmith give it a good going-over and proclaiming that it safe.

**SINGLE-ACTION
S&W TOP-BREAK**

Q: I came across an old Smith & Wesson .38-caliber revolver. The serial number is 438XXX. It appears that the revolver is more than 100 years old. I’m hoping you can research and provide additional info on this pistol, including value.

G. A.
Raleigh, North Carolina

A: From what I can discern of your photos, it appears you found a Smith & Wesson Single Action Second Model. Caliber is .38 S&W. Some 108,255 of these revolvers were made from 1877 to 1891. Barrel lengths range from 3¼ inches to 10 inches, the latter being rare. The piece in the pictures looks like it has a common 4-inch barrel, and it has little or no finish remaining. Assuming it works OK, according to the “Forty-Fourth Edition Blue Book of Gun Values (bluebookofgunvalues.com), this little

revolver is worth between \$250 and \$375.

**UNIVERSAL
M1 CARBINE**

Q: I’ve sent pictures of my M1 Carbine made in Florida. It looks and operates like an M1 produced during World War II, but this one was made in 1962. What do you think?

D. B.
Email

A: Universal Firearms of Hialeah, Florida, which began life in the late 1950s, started making copies of the U.S. M1 Carbine around 1962. It continued selling them until 1983 when the firm was acquired by Iver Johnson. Initially, the carbines were close copies of the original military arms, but as production progressed, external and internal changes were made to the wares. Depending upon when a Universal Carbine was listed, it would be composed of part new-made and part ex-GI components. The quality was good. Eventually more than 480,000 were manufactured across several generations. Your

M1000 Military Carbine, serial number 71XXX, was from the first batch. As you opined, it was built in the early 1960s. As it appears to be in at least 85 to 90 percent condition, according to the “Forty-Fourth Edition Blue Book of Gun Values,” it is worth \$350 to \$400.

**VALUE OF A CLARK
CUSTOM .45**

Q: In December of 1968, I purchased a Clark Deluxe Custom Colt .45 with an extended front sight, serial #322XXX-C, through Gil Hebard Guns. I have all the documentation, including the 50-yard machine-rest targets of five shots within a 2½-inch group. The gun was used for Bullseye competition for a couple of years before being put in the safe. It still needs the included tool to remove the barrel bushing, and it has the original crisp 4-pound trigger. I would appreciate it if you could tell me what this gun is worth.

T. R.
Largo, Florida

A: That’s a very nice .45 auto. Firearms offered by Clark Custom Guns (clarkcustomguns.com) are well-respected and maintain their value. Clark, which is still in business,

was founded in 1950. I checked with a couple of dealers who specialize in these and the consensus is your 1968-vintage Colt 1911 in .45 ACP was spiffed up. It is worth in the \$2,500 to \$2,750 range. From your photos, it appears you have kept the gun in pristine condition despite having used it for competition work.

**MODEL 94
WINCHESTER LORE**

Q: Could you give me the value of my 1906-manufactured Winchester 1894 Saddle Ring lever action? It is chambered in .25-35 Winchester.

N. N.
Email

A: From the photos, the condition of your gun looks decent but is not spectacular. It is a standard 20-inch, round-barrel 94 Carbine, so there is nothing exotic about it. While the metal seems to be a bit mottled, at least it doesn’t appear to have been fooled with. The caliber is not common, so that adds value. The stock looks suspicious and may have been redone. If original, I’d value the piece at \$2,500 to \$3,000. If the wood’s been refinished, its worth is reduced by at least \$1,000. **GA**



COLT 1911 CLARK DELUXE CUSTOM BULLSEYE, .45 ACP, 90%: \$2,750



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Why some cartridges didn't survive the future.



JAMES TARR



DEAD FOR DEFENSE

THROUGH THE YEARS, a number of cartridges meant for personal defense have come — and gone. None of them were inherently bad, but the varied reasons why they ultimately failed — or at least failed to thrive — is what I find fascinating. This subject comes to mind because the 2022 G&A Ammo of the Year winner, the .30 Super Carry (SC), is still struggling to find an audience. In no particular order:

.357 SIG The .357 SIG is an interesting cartridge introduced in 1994 and originally chambered for the P229 and offered in .357 SIG/.40 S&W caliber-convertible kits. It was popular for a while, and even famously adopted by the U.S. Secret Service, and adopted by some law enforcement agencies such as Virginia's Richmond Police Department. The .357 SIG cartridge is basically a .40 S&W necked down to 9mm. Performance is equivalent to a 9mm +P+. With the .357 SIG, mid- and some heavyweight 9mm bullets would scream downrange very fast; 125 grainers would clock more than 1,300 feet per second (fps), while 147s would go beyond 1,200 fps. The bottleneck design seemed to feed reliably from most pistols, too.

The downsides to the .357 SIG? Excessive muzzleblast and recoil. It's darn near a .357 Magnum, but chambered in pistols smaller and lighter than most .357 Mag. revolvers! The cartridge was always more expensive than either 9mm or 40 S&W. So, users got the same reduced

magazine capacity as a .40 S&W — compared to the 9mm — and between the cost and felt recoil, the .357 SIG remained more popular with law enforcement than private citizens. Improvements to 9mm bullets within the past 10 years — combined with the fact that most federal agencies switched to using 9mm pistols — killed the .357 SIG.

Performance-wise, the .357 SIG seemed to be the perfect cartridge for a submachine gun. In fact, SIG Sauer was originally going to chamber its MPX in it, as well as .40 S&W, but that's likely never going to happen now unless it experiences the same weird resurgence as the 10mm has.

.327 Federal Magnum The rimmed .327 Federal cartridge was introduced in 2008 in the Ruger LCR. It did two things: It provided six-shot capacity in cylinders only big enough for five .38s, and it offered magnum performance. Federal's 100-grain bullets would do 1,400 fps; 115s, 1,300 fps.

The revolver market has seen steady sales, but the American consumer hasn't taken to the .327 Federal en masse, likely due to the fact that the number of companies offering guns in this caliber has dropped to a fraction of what was a decade ago. As it turned out, yes, that extra shot in the cylinder is nice, but .327 Federal Magnum ammunition was never anywhere close to being as inexpensive as the ubiquitous .38 Special. Second, those people willing to put up with the blast of a magnum in a

compact revolver were not willing to switch from the .357 Mag. to the .327 Mag. Plus, Americans generally think bigger is better. “It’s only a .32,” was often said. Which brings us to ...

.32 ACP Perhaps you weren’t expecting this one. When it comes to being used for personal defense, this cartridge — which was once popular in America and around the world — is dead. You’d be hard pressed to find new .32 ACP guns or ammo, and there is a relationship there.

Also known as the “7.65 Browning,” this cartridge was designed by John Browning and introduced in 1899. It sent bullets between 60 and 75 grains at velocities between 900 and 1,100 fps. Almost all .32 ACP ammo was loaded with FMJ bullets. While penetration could be decent, stopping power proved marginal.

Guns chambering .32 ACP were interesting back Grand- and Great-Grandpa’s day because they were usually small. A Colt Model 1903 Pocket Hammerless could be concealed in a pocket, and the .32 ACP hit harder than a .22.

The .380 ACP — another Browning invention — was always more popular in the U.S. than the .32, and .380 autos just kept getting smaller and lighter. The Ruger LCP, for example, is smaller and lighter than most of the prominent .32s, including those by Beretta, CZ, FN, and Walther. Why buy a .32 when a .380 pistol is basically the same size? Thus, the .32 ACP died.

.45 GAP In 2003, Glock wanted to fit a .45-caliber cartridge into its shorter 9mm/.40 S&W-frame pistols. So, Glock went to CCI, Speer and Winchester. The result was the .45 Glock Auto Pistol (GAP) cartridge. It uses standard .45 ACP bullets, provides .45 ACP performance, and has roughly a similar overall length as the 9mm and .40 S&W.

Wide, heavy bullets were still sought after for defensive pistols at that time, when the .40 S&W was still popular. However, the .45 GAP provided .45 ACP recoil, so sticking that energy in a gun small and light enough for a 9mm did not produce an enjoyable experience.

I was a huge fan of the .45 ACP, but I had no interest in the .45 GAP. If you were big enough to handle the recoil of the GAP, you were big enough to handle a pistol chambered in .45 ACP. Plus, the short GAP was still fat. If a shooter were to move away from the .45 ACP, they often purchased one in .40 S&W for increased capacity.

.40 S&W. Of all the defensive cartridges now seemingly dead, the .40 S&W had the longest reign. It was intro-



This lineup of cartridges were all introduced for modern times: .45 GAP (2003), .357 SIG (1994), .40 S&W (1990), and .30 SC (2022).

duced in 1990 on the heels of the 10mm Auto, and it ran strong for 25 years. Then, it just died. (Perhaps it’s in a hospital on life support.) There many pistols still sold for this cartridge, including police trade-ins. However, almost no gun manufacturer is making new models in .40 S&W. All the law enforcement agencies have dumped the .40. Police trade-in Glock 22s, Smith & Wessons M&P40s, and various SIG Sauer

models are sold at bargain basement prices. (Tip: All those guns mean it’s still easy to find .40 S&W ammo.)

Why the change? The .40 S&W grew from the FBI’s quest to develop a cartridge that would pass its ammunition testing protocol in the wake of several shootouts in the 1980s. The .40 was developed as a short 10mm producing less recoil. The most common loads featured 165- and 180-grain bullets at 1,000 to 1,100 fps. Recoil was somewhere between “snappy” and “abusive,” especially in small guns meant for concealed carry. In the past 30 years, bullet technology improved to the point that today’s best 9mm loads have passed the FBI Ammunition Testing Protocol, providing significantly less recoil than the .40 S&W and more magazine capacity. Bullet technology killed the .40 S&W. The market was already moving away from it before the FBI announced it was abandoning it and adopting the 9mm in 2015. The trickle became a flood.

.30 SC Back to the .30 Super Carry (SC). Is it next to die? The .30 SC provides near-9mm-level terminal performance, but with a narrower cartridge for more magazine capacity. And we get just that. The .30 SC struggles have little to do with the cartridge’s performance. Rather, the rollout was half-botched, in my opinion.

The selling point of the .30 SC was not its performance, but Federal spent too much time defending and focusing on that aspect. Rather the fact that it provides increased magazine capacity was lost on the two guns it was introduced in. Federal should have paired it with a full-size Smith & Wesson M&P, SIG Sauer P320, or Glock 17 with flush-fit 20-round mags. The 13-shot .30 SC Shield Plus sells better than full-size M&Ps, but 20-plus-round mags for the full-size models would have gotten more appreciation. You have to sell the sizzle, not the steak. Yet, here we are. Almost 2 years later, it still hasn’t happened. News of Hi-Point chambering its carbines for .30 SC is the biggest boost in interest the cartridge received in 2023.

Is the .30 Super Carry dead for defense? It’s a little too soon to tell, but if something doesn’t change it sure looks like that’s where it’s headed. **G&A**



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THE CARRY RIG

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Utilizing a two-piece shell and a pair of sliders to retain the pistol, the N8 Tactical MultiFlex holster provides a custom fit for a range of firearms. Available in two sizes, Compact and Full, the holster is compatible with optics and can be user-configured for inside-the-waistband (IWB) or outside-the-waistband (OWB) carry. **\$55**



N8 TACTICAL MULTIFLEX

I'LL TELL YOU FLAT OUT that I am not a fan of "universal fit" holsters for daily carry of a defensive handgun. My experience with the soft, amorphous, oversized, and sometimes stretchy belt pouches is that they neither retain the firearm securely nor fully protect the trigger. The availability and affordability of leather, polymer or hybrid model-specific holsters — such as those from N8 Tactical and its parent, Crossbreed Holsters — means that I never have to recommend a "universal" or "multi-fit" option.

The N8 Tactical MultiFlex holster is different. Yes, it's compatible with a long list of firearm makes and models, and the same holster can be used interchangeably with different guns. Rather than a static multi-fit design, it's a dynamic custom-fit solution that can be tailored by the user to accommodate a variety of pistol platforms. Further, the fit can be refined for ride height on a belt, cant, and retention. Using available and forthcoming accessories, the

MultiFlex may also be configured for inside-the-waistband (IWB) or outside-the-waistband (OWB) carry by attaching belt clips or loops, respectively. An OWB paddle is an option, too, which is installed with 1½-inch footprints.

The MultiFlex is offered in two sizes: Full and Compact. The holster accommodates more than 275 pistol models. To explain how N8 Tactical and Crossbreed Holsters accomplished this, allow me to review my experience carrying the MultiFlex.

60-DAY CARRY

For this evaluation, Guns & Ammo received the MultiFlex Compact. To get a feel for the holster and how it works, I unloaded my primary carry pistol, a Shadow Systems CR920P, and began to follow the sizing instructions.

The MultiFlex has seven visible Chicago-style screws that connect the holster's two molded polypropylene shells.

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The retention sliders found near the triggerguard expand as the screws are tightened, eventually reaching and maintaining contact with the gun to better hold it in place.

Make sure to tighten the screws to fit while wearing the holster, as additional pressure from a belt could change how tightly the pistol is retained.



There are three in the front (slide side) and four in the back (frame side). Step one was to tighten the three front screws, achieving a snug fit over the slide. Step two was to tighten the four rear screws, effectively pancaking the gun between the shells. When adjusting the friction-fit retention, or tuning the amount of force required to draw the pistol, do so by loosening or tightening the rear set of screws, particularly the one below the triggerguard.



Crossbreed Holsters' Confidant Mag Carrier 2.0 is one-size fits most. It was a great pairing with the MultiFlex holster. **\$35**

With the screws snug, the gun is essentially retained. However, users will note a small degree of rock and wiggle, and this is where things get interesting. The holster includes a pair of so-called "retention sliders" located next to the bottom of the triggerguard and the dustcover. These are basically polymer bumpers affixed to screws. As you tighten the sliders, the bumpers contact the firearm and apply pressure to lock the gun in place. It is the adjustment of the seven screws and the two bumpers that enable the MultiFlex to achieve, essentially, a custom fit on a variety of guns. To test this feature, I loosened all the screws and sliders, swapped in a SIG Sauer P365-AXG Legion, and then re-tightened it according to the instructions. It was a different gun, but the same result: A perfect fit. There was no wiggle, just custom and secure retention. Holstering the P365 yielded a confidence-inspiring, audible *click*.

Lessons learned: First, be sure to have a long-necked Phillips-head screwdriver for the retention sliders. They are located between the shells, so a little reach is needed to access them. Next, be prepared to make adjustments after trying the holster on. I found that firearm retention increased due to belt pressure flexing the holster. The solution was to loosen the rear screws until the drawstroke was clean. Off-body retention was not noticeably affected. Finally, the holster came preset with 12 degrees of forward cant, well suited

for FBI-style 4- to 5-o'clock carry. I prefer to carry at 3 o'clock with less cant, so I moved the front belt clip down to the second of its three holes and retightened. For a full straight drop, I would choose the top hole for the front clip.

While I was impressed with the holster's mechanical function, I do have concerns about the durability of the retention sliders. During my two test fittings, a small tension indicator snapped off. To be clear, the indica-

tor was a wholly unnecessary adornment, and its loss does not pose functional or aesthetic issues. It does beg the question, "How many resizes can the holster endure? Will N8 Tactical offer replacement parts so users can affordably refit the MultiFlex?" Whatever the answer, I think there is room to continue improving the durability of this product, especially with the retention assemblies.

Once fitment was complete, I was ready to carry. Initially, I was worried that the holster would be as comfortable as a stack of LEGOs against my hip, but I was pleasantly surprised. "Comfortable" isn't the best word, but "unobtrusive" seems right. I didn't notice the holster while I was wearing it, and didn't need to readjust it as I sat, stood, drove or walked. That's a win. The MultiFlex also performed well in G&A's draw-and-fire test. Having a clean draw is critical for a fast time. Being able to customize the draw was probably the holster's greatest strength. I didn't achieve my fastest shots with this rig, but I credit that to the sub-freezing temps at my range and the need to defeat both a vest and a jacket during this evaluation. With the conditions considered, I thought the MultiFlex was pretty darn quick. I would rate it highly among strongside IWB holsters.

While conducting my review, I simultaneously tested the Confidant Mag Carrier 2.0 (\$35) from Crossbreed Holsters. It seemed appropriate considering the Confidant is also a



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N8 TACTICAL MULTIFLEX COMPACT	
MATERIALS	Polypropylene (shell); steel (hardware); rubber (bushings)
CARRY TYPE	Inside the waistband (IWB) (tested) or outside the waistband (OWB)
RETENTION TYPE	Level 1 (friction fit)
ADJUSTABILITY	Firearm fit, retention, cant, ride height
MSRP	\$55
HANDGUN FIT	Compact and smaller semiautomatics (SIG Sauer P365-AXG Legion tested)
ACCESSORY RAIL ACCOMMODATIONS	No
POSITIONS TO CARRY	3 to 5 o'clock (right hand)
AVERAGE TIME TO ATTACH	20 seconds
COMFORT RATING	4.5/5
CONCEALMENT CLOTHING	Untucked shirt, vest, or light jacket
AVERAGE DRAW-TO-FIRE TIME	1.53 seconds
MANUFACTURER	N8 Tactical, 888-732-5011, n8.crossbreedholsters.com

Draw-to-fire time is the average of five clean draws producing an A-zone hit on a stationary target positioned at 21 feet.

versatile one-size-fits-most solution. The two-piece shell is connected by strong rubber bands that flex to accommodate most single- and double-stack pistol magazines. It's durable and discreet, and I liked the integral no-fuss 1½-inch belt clip.

Overall, the MultiFlex impressed me with its secure fit, adaptability, and ease of wear. It performed very well for me. I can confidently recommend it, as well as the Confidant mag pouch. These are suitable for daily concealed carry. I also liked that I can have a holster for use

with new and unusual pistols that may not have strong aftermarket support.

This review focused on the MultiFlex as an IWB concealment holster. However, given the range of options and likelihood of future evolutions and accessories, I wouldn't be surprised

to see future generations of the holster back in "Carry Rig" down the road.  — J. Kurtenbach



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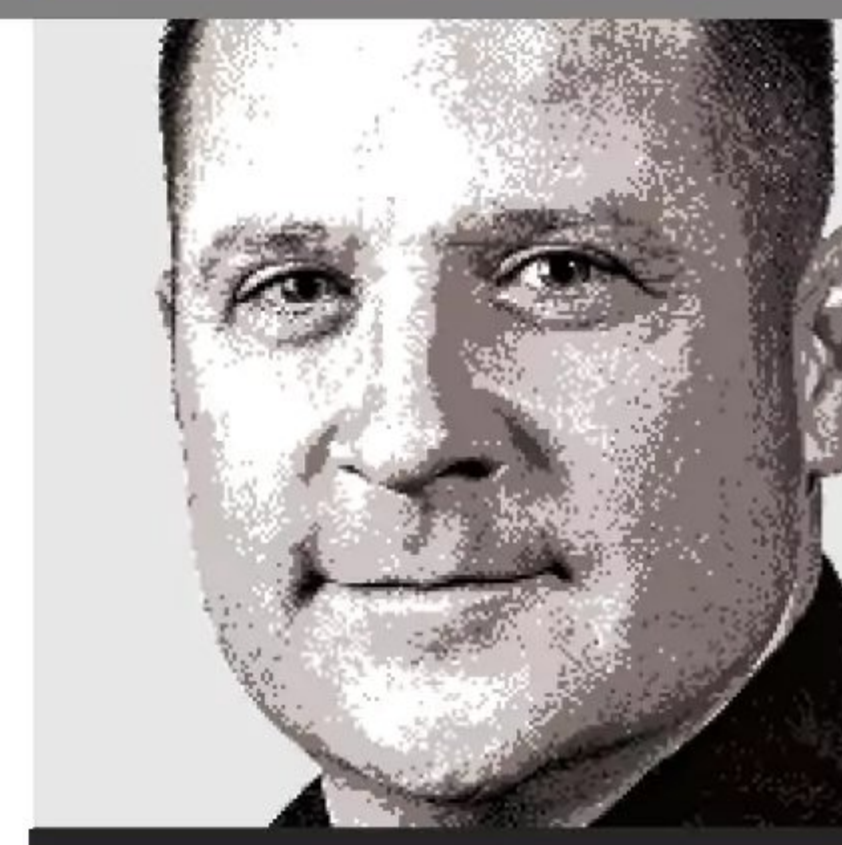


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Nightstick TCM Series



RICHARD NANCE



The Nightstick TCM-5B and TCM-10 are pistol-mounted lights designed for subcompact and compact handgun rails, respectively. Constructed of 6160-T6 aluminum, these lights are powerful, lightweight and compact. Activation switches are intuitive to use, each powered by a CR123 battery. The TCM Series offers 650 lumens of output for 2 hours. The TCM-5B and TCM-10 feature the patented Pulse Width Modulation (PWM) technology, which extends battery life and regulates output so performance remains consistent. Available in black and FDE. **\$140**

FROM THE SHADOWS

SINCE BAD GUYS tend to avoid the spotlight, there's a good chance it'll be dark should you ever need to defend yourself with a firearm. Well-designed pistol-mounted lights such as the Nightstick TCM-5B and TCM-10 enable you to clearly identify an immediate threat with little modification to your grip. This is the main advantage when employing a firearm-mounted light versus a handheld flashlight. There are techniques you can learn to effectively use a handheld light with a firearm, but you must also learn how to shoot with a compromised grip on the gun. A pistol-mounted light offers an additional option when faced with a critical situation, but it must be convenient to carry and intuitive to use.

As a right-handed shooter, I just slide my left thumb down a half inch or so from the frame of the pistol to switch on the TCM-5B or TCM-10. This allows my trigger finger to remain indexed along the frame of the pistol or on the trigger, as appropriate, while I apply 360-degrees of inward pressure around the grip for optimal recoil control. Whenever the situation allows, avoid using a firearm-mounted light as a search tool. It is a last-step verification check to know a threat is truly a threat, and a tool to enhance shot placement while potentially disorientating a



Pistol lights present an ergonomic option for illuminating a potential threat, allowing you to keep a firm two-hand grip around the gun.

person intent on harming you.

The TCM-5B and TCM-10 include a user-programmable strobe and safe mode. A strobing light can be disorienting to an adversary by disrupting his balance, depth perception and peripheral vision. To set up strobe mode, press down on both switches rapidly five times. After the fifth press, the light will flash on and off twice, signifying the change. Reversing the sequence reverts to disabled mode.

Safe mode is an administrative function that can prevent the light from being unintentionally activated. You may decide to switch the light to safe mode to avoid draining the battery during storage, for instance. These lights are delivered with these modes disabled. To enable safe mode, press and hold both switches for 3 seconds. The light will flash once, indicating that safe mode is activated. Reversing the



Switches can be activated with the trigger finger or support thumb, and are programmable for constant or momentary presses.



Adapter plates are included with both TCM-5B and TCM-10. These widen the range of handguns each can be mounted on.



The TCM-10 (left) and TCM-5B (right) both mimic the shape of other popular duty lights, which increase the compatibility with many light-bearing holsters.



sequence reverts to disabled mode.

The TCM-5B and TCM-10 allow one to precisely control the duration of light, as well. Press down on either switch to illuminate the target area. Press the switch for less than half a second and release to activate the constant-on mode. Press for more than a half-second for the momentary-on mode, meaning the light shuts off when pressure on the switch is released. To turn on strobe mode — once it's programmed — press either switch twice in rapid succession, holding it down on the second press.

Each light uses a TIR lens with an internal reflector, providing a clear, white light. The beam culminates in a hot spot and halo, which I found was ideal for room clearing and close-quarter pistol shots during training.

The TCM-5B ships with two additional adapter plates, while the TCM-10 includes five extra. These allow the units to fit a variety of handguns and make them frequently compatible with light-bearing holsters designed for a handgun with a competing Streamlight TLR-7A/Sub-style light attached. Clearly, holster compatibility shaped the design of these Nightstick lights.

Output is impressive. Each model produces 650 lumens

(4612 candela) with a beam distance of 446 feet (136 meters). While several light manufacturers refer to the ANSI FL1 Standard in their marketing, not all are as accurate as Nightstick's. Pulse Width Modulation (PWM) is Nightstick's patented technology that controls the load an LED puts on the battery to meet the product's lumen output requirements. It also ensures the longest possible runtime. PWM causes the light to pulse on and off thousands of times per second, which is visually imperceptible yet dramatically improves battery life. Unlike many lights where output is most intense during activation — where lumens are measured — light intensity usually dissipates. The output of the Nightstick TCM-5B and TCM-10 is modulated to remain consistent throughout the life of the battery. This means the output specified is the actual output.

The TCM-5B and TCM-10 are drop-rated for 2 meters and IP-X7 waterproof-rated. ("IP-X7" means that

these lights will withstand submersion in 1 meter of water for 30 minutes.) Notably, the TCM-10 was the National Association of Tactical Officers (NTOA) "Member Tested and Recommended" winner in 2023. Visit nightstick.com for more information. **G&A**



TCM-5B



TCM-10

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Silencer Central Buck 30 by Banish

TOM BECKSTRAND

IT'S TIME TO OWN A SUPPRESSOR

ANY FIREARMS-RELATED TREND that survives for several years occurs for good reason. An example would be the trend toward heavy-for-caliber bullets. These rose in popularity because rifleshotters had tools such as ballistic calculators and rangefinders that made shooting targets at longer ranges possible. It's only natural that these same shooters would seek out the most aerodynamic bullets to optimize success in hitting distant targets.

Another trend that's been building for the past 20 years is the rise of suppressor (or "silencer") ownership. This is the only firearms-related example, of which I'm aware, that is undeniably healthier for the shooting community. For years I've been a proponent of suppressor use because it's the best and most convenient way to protect a person's hearing. The challenge has been addressing our community's lack of familiarity with suppressors.

When I was a youth, nobody I knew had even seen a suppressor. They were something only seen used in movies, frequently associated with assassinations. I wasn't planning on getting into that business, so I didn't see a need for owning a suppressor. Fast forward a few years and I was in the military fighting a war. Uncle Sam saw fit to loan me a suppressor or two during my time in. This is when I decided I needed suppressors in my life. Many of those I served alongside came to the same conclusion.

Suppressor use certainly has tactical benefits on the battlefield, but the two biggest attractions are the ability to shoot without needing to wear hearing protection and the elimination of muzzleblast. Shooting, even in a war, is a social event; ongoing communication with those around you is beneficial. Whether this communication involves issuing instructions in a timely manner or just chatting away with a friend, it's nice not needing to yell.

The second significant benefit, which sees little discussion, is the removal of a rifle's muzzleblast. Recoil on a rifle comes in two forms: The first is the blow to the shoulder. There is not much we can do about that. The second is the blow to the head that comes from the pressure wave generated by the muzzleblast. This is like a light jab to the brain that occurs every time the rifle fires; it is

the main reason why shooters learn to flinch. No one enjoys having a small explosion occur a couple of feet from their face. One way to illustrate this theory is to watch how much someone flinches when shooting a braked versus non-braked rifle. Flinching, in this example, is defined as closing

the eye just prior to firing. The muzzlebrake reduces the recoil on the shoulder, but significantly increases the muzzleblast. New shooters will frequently flinch more with a muzzlebrake than without. It's pretty easy to film this with a cell phone in slow motion and then review the footage at your leisure.

The last 20 years have seen a meteoric rise in suppressor use. However, there is still a sizeable portion of the shooting community that doesn't own or use suppressors. The barriers to entry have historically been high. The first and most egregious barrier is imposed by the U.S. government; it comes in the bureaucrat's preferred form of warfare: Paperwork. After paying for a suppressor, this used to mean getting fingerprints taken at the Sheriff's office and then sending them and another form off to the feds for review. Anywhere from several months to a year-ish later, the government allowed you to take possession of your property.

Then along came Silencer Central. CEO Brandon Maddox built the company around the idea of making suppressor ownership as painless as possible. Silencer Central can do most of the work for you and talk you through what you need to do on your own. The best part is that everything the individual needs to do can be done from the comfort of home. The "paperwork" can all be done online — including payment — and then, once the federal government approves the sale, your suppressor ships to your front door. It has never been — and will likely never be — easier than that.

In keeping with the "easy suppressor ownership" theme, Silencer Central recently released a new suppressor: Buck 30 by Banish. The effort was a joint project between Silencer Central and the folks at Buck Commander (buckcommander.com), including Willie Robertson, Luke Bryan, Jason Aldean, Adam Laroche, Ryan Langerhans, Tombo Martin, and others. They are helping to educate the public on the advantages of suppressor use. The idea was to create the ultimate





The steel baffles of the Buck 30 are precision-welded together and exist as part of the suppressor. There is no external tube.



The Buck 30 features an industry-standard hub, but there are several thread-mount options including 3/8x24 and 1/2x28, to M16x1RH.

A .30-caliber suppressor is ideal for most first-time owners. The Buck 30 can suppress any round from .17 HMR to .300 Win. Mag. If you're unsure, contact Silencer Central to determine the appropriate thread-mount solution for your application.

the baffles. It's quieter because the baffles can be made slightly larger and there is more internal volume.

Silencer Central's choice of using stainless steel instead of titanium was wise because stainless steel is easier to weld correctly than titanium. Titanium is lighter, but it is also more expensive. Additionally, the complicated process used to weld titanium properly would have driven up the cost of the Buck 30. I'm thankful they chose a tubeless design made from stainless steel because it's the best way for almost anyone to acquire an affordable, quiet, light, and strong suppressor.

introductory suppressor for anyone hunting deer, hence the price, but along the way, they developed a great "first suppressor" for anybody shooting a rifle. The materials and manner of construction reflect its simplicity, durability, and sound economics. The Buck 30 is exactly what I'd recommend for someone thinking about suppressor ownership.

The Buck 30 is a tubeless design constructed of precipitation-hardened stainless steel. This suppressor is made by stacking the stainless-steel baffles on top of each other and then welding them together. Suppressors used to be made by stacking the baffles, welding them together, and then sliding the stack inside a tube before welding them together. Welding technology has improved. Testing has shown that welding the baffles together without an external tube is every bit as durable — but lighter and quieter. It's lighter because there is no longer an external tube surrounding

SILENCER CENTRAL BUCK 30 BY BANISH	
CALIBER	.30
ATTACHMENT	Direct thread, 3/8x24
MOUNT	1.375x24 (hub)
OVERALL LENGTH	6.9 in.
WEIGHT	13.8 oz.
DIAMETER	1.54 in.
MATERIALS	Stainless steel
FINISH	Cerakote, black
MSRP	\$699
MANUFACTURER	Silencer Central, 866-891-4494, silencercentral.com

The Buck 30 also uses the 1.375x24 thread pitch at the suppressor's base, which allows for the use of removable direct-thread adaptors to screw onto most muzzles. Should you possess a rifle without a threaded muzzle, Silencer Central can send you a padded case so you can have their full-time gunsmiths thread it and return it to you. Since Silencer Central is a licensed firearms manufacturer, you can send the rifle from home and receive it the same way.

Suppressor ownership is becoming more mainstream every day, and I'm glad because it benefits the shooter the most. Rifles become more enjoyable to shoot, it's easier to talk to your family and friends when shooting, and it's now more convenient and less expensive than ever. If you still haven't taken the plunge into suppressor ownership, Silencer Central's Buck 30 is the easiest way to dip your toe in. Come on in, the water is fine.

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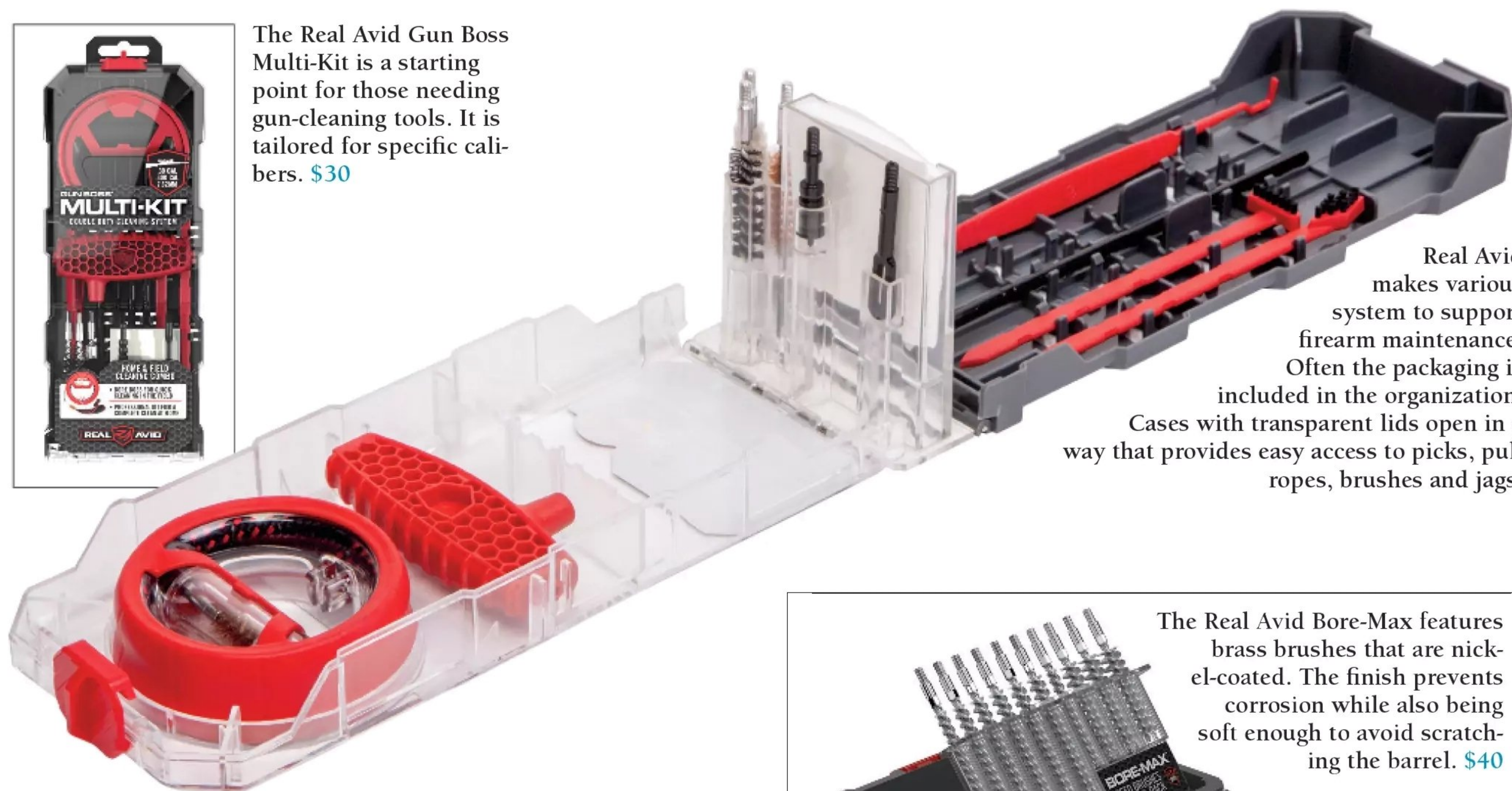
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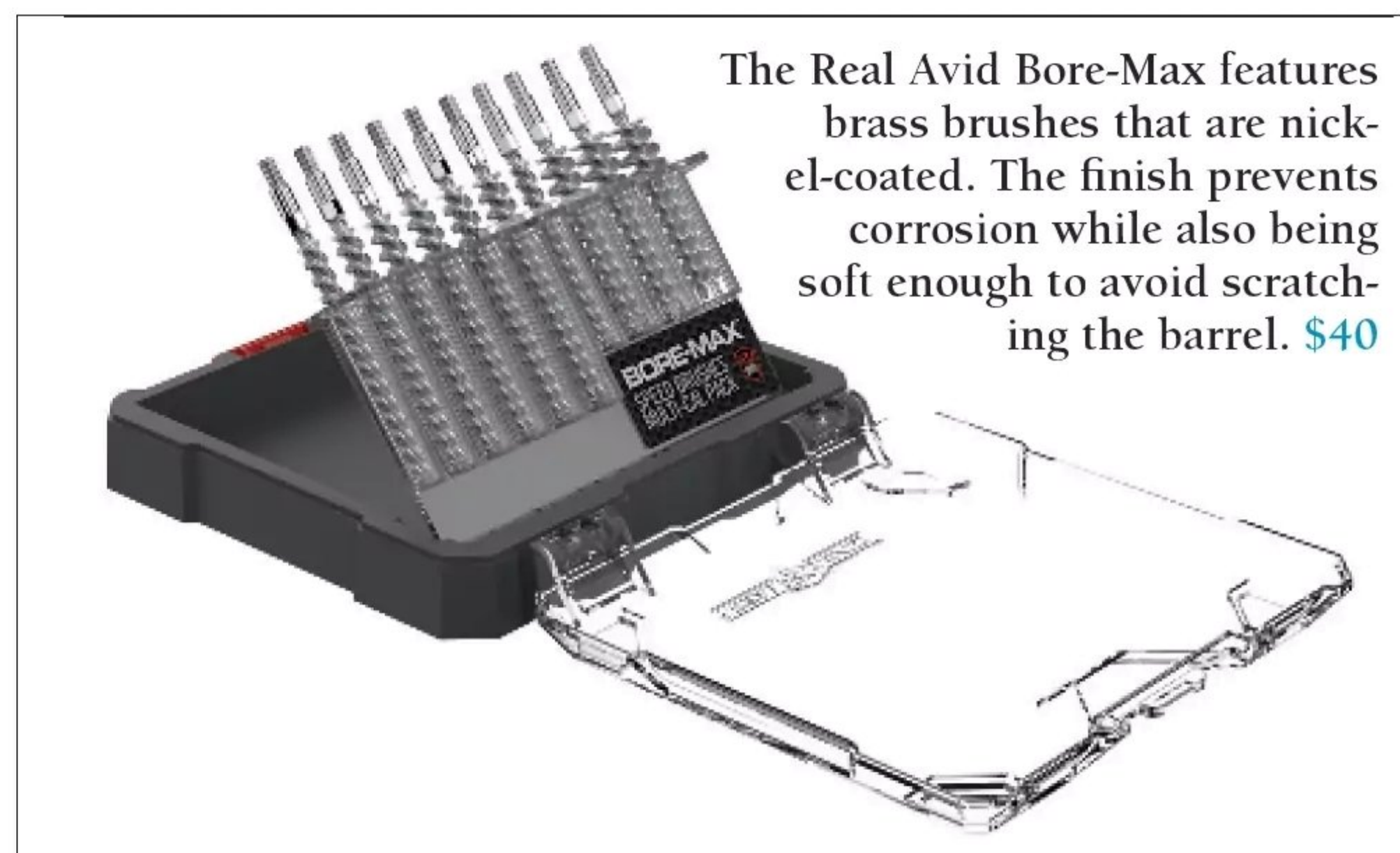
Real Avid adds clever tools to its gun-cleaning systems.



The Real Avid Gun Boss Multi-Kit is a starting point for those needing gun-cleaning tools. It is tailored for specific calibers. \$30



Real Avid makes various system to support firearm maintenance. Often the packaging is included in the organization. Cases with transparent lids open in a way that provides easy access to picks, pull ropes, brushes and jags.



The Real Avid Bore-Max features brass brushes that are nickel-coated. The finish prevents corrosion while also being soft enough to avoid scratching the barrel. \$40

EASY GOING

REAL AVID has been doing a great job innovating products that gun owners find practical. The packaging is often useful, and the gun maintenance tools are well-made, ergonomic and thoughtfully designed by real shooters and gun owners. Among the newest offerings are the Real Avid Accu-Grip Steel Picks (\$40), Bore-Max Speed Brushes (\$40), and Bore-Max Speed Jags and Patches (\$50).

This introduction was the excuse I needed to clean a few neglected guns. I evaluated these products on a 1911, a .44 Magnum revolver, an AR-15 as well as a friend's well-used single-stack 9mm carry pistol. (The latter had enough carbon buildup that you could probably get away with calling it a "coal mine.")

The Accu-Grip Steel Picks were the first tools to see use for this evaluation. They proved excellent for scraping out heavy fouling. Each pick has two head shapes. With five picks to choose from, I never found a spot in these guns that I couldn't reach.



Both the speed jags and speed brushes attach to the coated steel rod and T-handle found in the Real Avid Gun Boss Multi-Kit. The rod is segmented in a few spots that



With 10 heads to choose from, the Accu-Grip Steel Picks can get into any nook and cranny while cleaning. \$40

allows it to wiggle around while brushing or swiping the barrel bore.

While the Gun Boss Multi-Kit has all of the basic tools for cleaning included, the enhanced heads provide better detailing, and they are made from stronger materials. Real Avid opted to nickel-plate both the brushes and the jags to prevent corrosion. Still, I found them soft enough that I didn't have to worry that I was scoring the bore.

The Speed Brush and Speed Jag kits come with most common bore sizes, and the packaging also works as an organized carrying case. When opened, the case props the heads up at a 45-degree angle, and the sizes are clearly labeled above each head. It was easy to simply pop open the cases and set them aside while cleaning. A snap-in-place tray holds the Accu-Grip steel picks, too. These clever, small



The tools in the Gun Boss kit do a good job at basic maintenance and cleaning. The kit includes a pick, brushes, and jags.

conveniences add up. Real Avid has made it easy to quickly and efficiently find every tool you need to keep your guns clean and functioning. **G&A**
— A. Acitelli

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BORN READY

INTRODUCING **ROST MARTIN** AND THE RM1C 9MM PISTOL.

BY ERIC R. POOLE | PHOTOS BY MICHAEL ANSCHUETZ



MORE THAN 500 SPENT CASES littered the range, a mix of brass from Federal, Hornady, Magtech, and others. Accuracy and reliability were flawless with the Rost Martin RM1C, despite its compact size.

"I don't think I hardly missed," the last police officer on the firing line said. "Even through the double- and triple-tap drills. I usually miss the second or third shots in rapid-fire strings with most compact autos, but not this one. It's cool that there is an American-made pistol that shoots this well for less than \$500.

I'd have to put more rounds through it before carrying it on duty, but I would have no issue depending on it while off-duty or as a backup," he concluded.

I can offer no greater validation than that officer's comments. This review is the exclusive first look at the company Rost Martin and its premier offering, the RM1C 9mm striker-fired pistol. The pistol stands to rival the popular Glock 19 Gen5 MOS (\$600, us.glock.com) SIG Sauer P365 XL (\$600, sigsauer.com) and Springfield Armory Hellcat Pro (\$679, springfield-armory.com). All of those are proven, optic ready and capable of carrying at least 15 rounds of 9mm. The Rost Martin RM1C debuts at \$459.

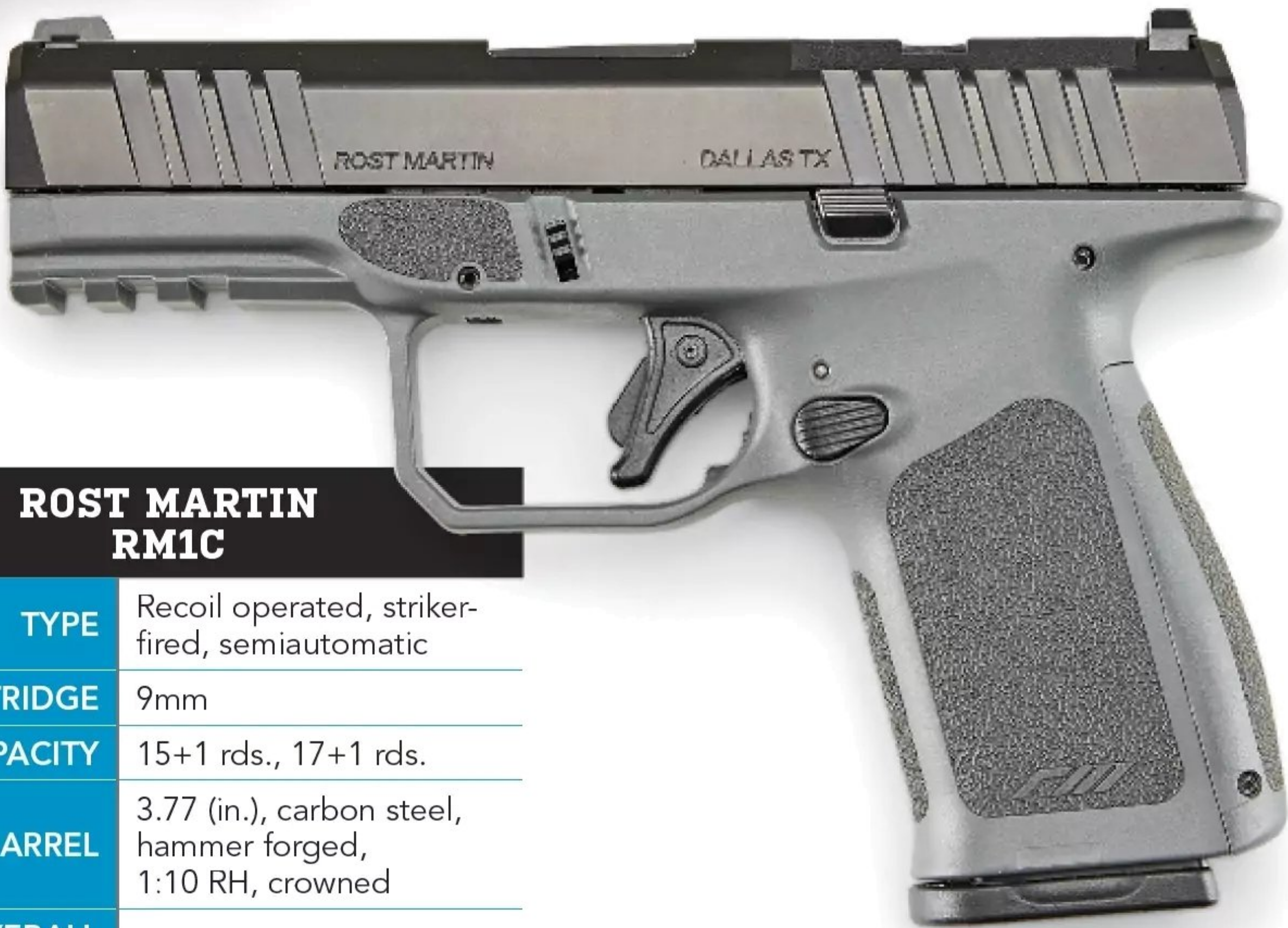
THE TOOMERS

How can a new brand come to market and expect to successfully square off against popular rivals? Chris and Stefany Toomer are behind the Rost Martin endeavor. Chris served 5 years as an infantry officer in the U.S. Marine Corps, deploying with 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marines. He then went to business school. Stefany is the daughter of Dennis Reese, CEO of Springfield Armory. She grew up living the gun culture that started with her late grandfather, Robert Reese, a businessman, competition shooter, and veteran.

Rost Martin is not connected — or supported — by Springfield Armory, which will be difficult for some to believe. Chris and Stefany are two entrepreneurial spirits who share American pride. The Toomers want to preserve and expand U.S. manufacturing of firearms in the face of the anti-gun agenda. That isn't to deny that they haven't gleaned an understanding of the manufacturing business from their experiences.

"Rost Martin represents the next generation of freedom," said Chris. "It's about making sure the Second Amendment is preserved for our children and our children's children," Stefany added.

The name is a marriage of family names. "Rost" is the middle name of Stefany's grandfather while "Martin" is the maiden name of Chris' great-grandmother, a woman remembered for her tenacity. Rost Martin honors the path



paved by each of their families in the firearm space.

THE RM1C

Looking at the firearm landscape, it was obvious to Chris and Stefany that Rost Martin’s first pistol needed to be for the concealed carry market. Despite the segment being crowded, the numbers of firearms sold each month indicate that people are still looking for a pistol they can comfortably use, but not just another “boring striker-fired polymer pistol,” Stefany said. “Let’s look at the best aspects and make a name associated with a competitive price. It has to look, feel and offer unmatched reliability.”

With an engineer and a lean operation, Rost Martin set out to make an all-American-made pistol in Dallas, Texas, redesigning various aspects of the compact-pistol platform. Their professional experiences quickly helped to overcome the usual hurdles encountered by typical off-the-ground manufacturing companies, which is how Rost Martin has a production-ready product to offer in less than 3 years.

“Once we knew how to source the tools and components we were designing, we looked at how the gun is marked. We trademarked the RM1C name and logos,” Stefany said. “Creating the RM1C at the sub-\$500 price point was a mixture of finding partners who could supply us at an affordable level.”

Even while the RM1C was being developed, engineering continued for 2½ years to get the final product where it needed to be. Though the profile and takedown crossbar may give it somewhat of an appearance like one of the many recent Glock clones, the RM1C possesses several

ROST MARTIN RM1C	
TYPE	Recoil operated, striker-fired, semiautomatic
CARTRIDGE	9mm
CAPACITY	15+1 rds., 17+1 rds.
BARREL	3.77 (in.), carbon steel, hammer forged, 1:10 RH, crowned
OVERALL LENGTH	7.96 in.
WIDTH	1.23 in.
HEIGHT	4.92 in.
WEIGHT	1 lb., 5.1 oz.
FINISH	Nitride (steel)
GRIP	Polymer, textured; black, Stone gray, or FDE tan
SIGHTS	Steel; white dot (front); U-notch, black (rear)
TRIGGER	4 lbs., 15.2 oz. (tested);
SAFETY	Striker block, internal; trigger lever
MSRP	\$459
MANUFACTURER	Rost Martin, 844-761-2022, rostmartin.com

unique features. It does utilize a double-action striker, but it has a unique striker capture that prevents it from moving forward no matter how a dropped pistol hits a concrete floor or how hard a hammer smashes the rear of the slide.

FEATURES & BENEFITS

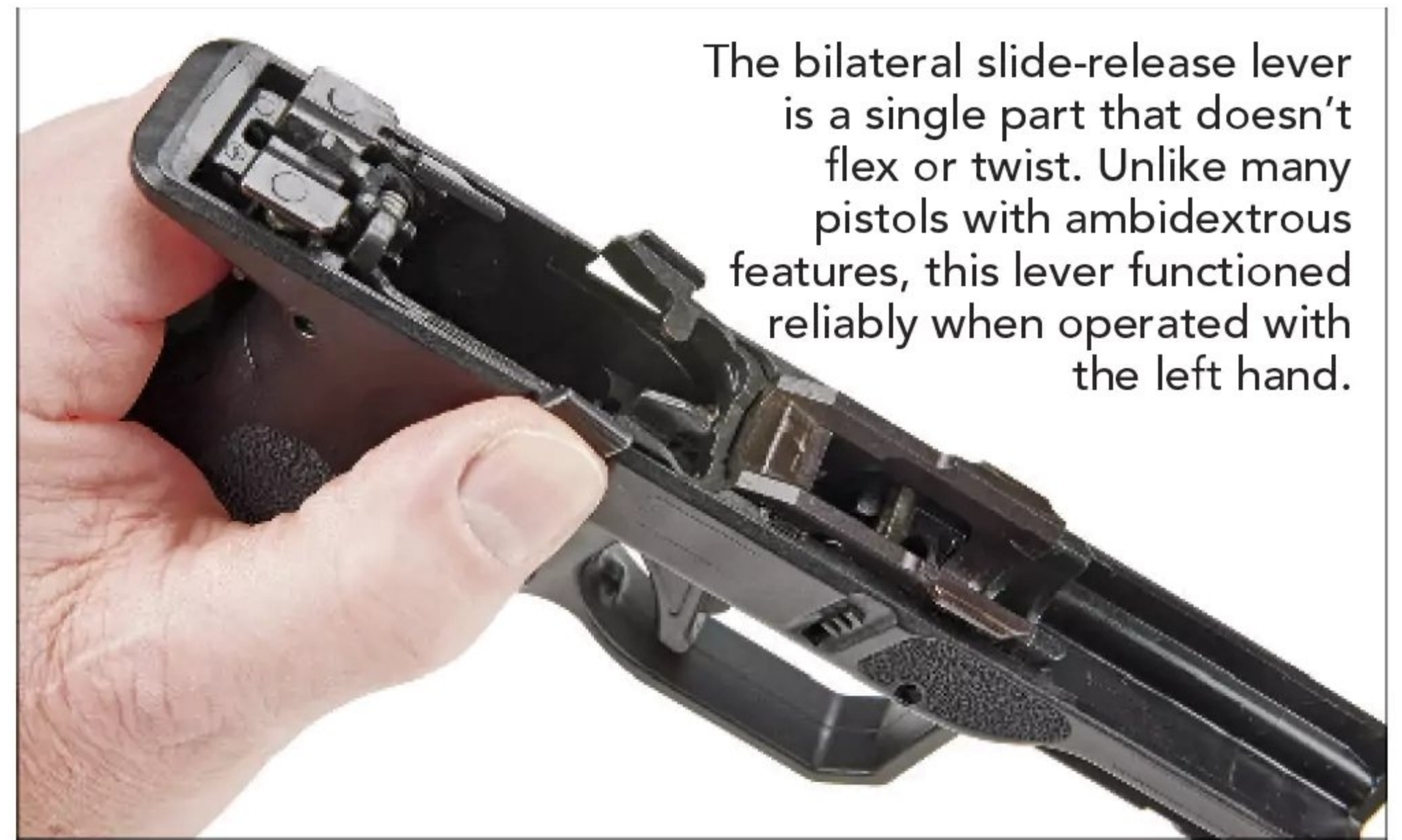
The trigger required longer development than most parts. It has the safety lever in the middle of the flat trigger face, but pressing it requires just less than 5 pounds on average — consistently. No one will describe the trigger

of the RM1C as being “too light,” but they won’t call it “too heavy” either. There is a little creep before the wall, but it fires predictably and has an excellent reset.

The flat-face trigger has a subtle hook at the bottom for a consistent feel and index. Its metallurgy is made of carbon steel, complete with a nitride finish. This is a cost-effective method to prevent corrosion and rust. Another cost saver I noted was the decision to use roll pins, which are easily sourced and replaced. Field-stripping the RM1C, however, will be familiar to those who are used to disassembling a polymer-frame, striker-fired pistol — with one exception. Unlike a Glock-pattern action, the RM1C can be disassembled without having to press the trigger. For many gun owners, this is an important attribute that makes the gun easier and safer to maintain. The slide on the RM1C doesn’t have to be held back as the takedown crossbar is depressed, and it doesn’t have to slide forward over the dust cover.



The trigger averaged 5 pounds. It has a wide and flat face, and safety lever. An overtravel stop is molded as part of the frame.



The bilateral slide-release lever is a single part that doesn't flex or twist. Unlike many pistols with ambidextrous features, this lever functioned reliably when operated with the left hand.



The dustcover features a three-slot accessory rail for mounting lights or lasers.



The follower was molded in a highly visible yellow with a proprietary hue for branding.



The front sight is a white dot in a dovetailed post. The rear is serrated and features a black U-notch. The slide is optic ready.



Once the slide assembly is unlocked, it moves less than a quarter inch before it separates from the frame rails, even with a magazine inserted. The magazine does not prevent slide removal, and the pistol goes back together just as easily.

The serialized chassis is located within the frame, though the action components could be removed and replaced by an armorer. Finding the serial number was a bit of a challenge, at first. Once found underneath the frame within the triggerguard, seeing it required a magnifying glass and light cast from an angle. The font used for the serial number is small and hard to read, which might have to be addressed if the RM1C were to be adopted by a law enforcement agency that conducts regular inventories.

The polymer grip module is molded in one of three colors: Black, Flat Dark Earth (FDE), and Stone gray. A nod to style, the magazine follower is molded in a yellow accent color that's unique to Rost Martin. Created to set Rost Martin apart, I was told that it would appear in the brand's marketing and certain packaging elements, too. Functionally, the bright yellow follower is easily visible through the ejection port when an empty magazine locks the slide to the rear. Allow me to expand on that last



The RM1C includes one 15-round magazine and a longer 17-round magazine. The extended basepad adds grip length, supporting the RGT texture and interchangeable backstrap.



detail. During Guns & Ammo's (ongoing) testfire, the slide never failed to lock back (or stay back) when the magazine was empty. If you've fired other striker-fired polymer pistols, you know how aggravating it can be when you aim, press the trigger and hear *click*, not knowing if the pistol is empty or if you've experienced a hang-fire. Too many shooters tolerate a slide that slips into battery with an empty magazine.

Additional attention given to the frame is with the M1913-spec Picatinny rail at the dustcover. This rail was optimized for use with popular duty lights such as the Streamlight TLR series and SureFire X300. One reason was to ensure easy reach, activating the light using the thumb or support hand. The second reason was to ensure compatibility with most holsters designed for similar-profile Glock-pattern pistols. Until the holster market catches up, RM1C users will likely be able to turn to using existing Glock holsters to carry this model. ANR Design, Black-point Tactical, Crossbreed Holsters, DeSantis, and We The People already offer dedicated holster products.

"Consumers want the option to mount a red dot," Chris said. "Stef was instrumental in advocating that our team give the customer more features and benefits with the RM1C."



The Rost Martin RM1C has a similar profile as a G19, but can be fieldstripped without the need to press the trigger. The slide contains a unique striker catch and pivoting extractor lever. The barrel, recoil spring and guiderod are conventional. The steel magazines are proprietary.



Note the metal red-dot adapter plate. Customers receive a Trijicon RMR adapter plate at purchase, but other plates will be available at a discount using a rebate and proof of purchase through the Rost Martin website. Notably, the pistol even included the correct Torx screws. This seemingly small detail is refreshing to those of us who have tired of dealing with plastic adapter plates or having to find screws with the right length and thread pitch. Thank you, Rost Martin. The slide-cut depth and optic fitment were secure and complimentary to the standard iron-sight configuration.

Also noteworthy is that the slide features front and rear slide serrations, and a serrated topstrap prevents glare between the sights while adding a touch of style. The metal sights are excellent. There's a dot up front and a U-notch rear that's lightly serrated. I could see the RM1C getting a night sight in the near future, but there won't be multiple models advertising different upgrades and various

price points. Certain features will be optional, such as a threaded barrel and extended magazines, but that will have more to do with meeting state compliance regulations. Nonetheless, the RM1C is a well-equipped package.

Not to miss is the not-too-aggressive texture, which is present on the front and backstraps. Rost Martin has termed the touchpoints its signature "Responsive Grip Texture," or "RGT."

RGT is a proprietary laser-stippled texturing designed to react, or "grip back," depending on the amount of grip pressure that you apply. I found it to be a wonderful balance of comfort and control. The grip contour feels similar to a micro-compact with a longer grip for extended capacity, which is very comfortable to handle. I would suggest that it feels like the grip of the SIG Sauer P365 XL or Springfield Armory Hellcat Pro, larger than the S&W Shield Plus and smaller than a Glock 19 Gen5. The grip also features a funneled magazine well that readily



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The steel magazines feature a pair of alignment ribs, and witness holes marked to 15 rounds on the spine. The extended basepad increases capacity to 17 rounds. One of each mag are included.

accepts the supplied 15- or 17-plus magazines, which have the American flag proudly engraved on the basepad.

Not only does the RM1C come with two steel magazines, but it also ships with two additional backstraps, secured by a rollpin. Allow me to suggest that you only use a proper roll-pin punch to change backstraps when searching for that perfect feel. Changing backstraps wasn't the easiest procedure for me, but hopefully you'll only need to do it once.

AT THE RANGE

A thousand rounds were initially fired through the RM1C with only one hiccup attributed to a defective cartridge, which caused a failure to fire. For those who do most of their shooting at paper and steel using cheap 115-grain full-metal-jackets (FMJ), this pistol seemed optimized for range loads. In fact, with two witnesses — and an active police officer — I fired the most accurate five-shot group I'll likely ever fire from 25 yards on a benchrest during testing. Using Magtech 115-grain FMJ, I produced a five-shot hole that measured .94 inch! That isn't to say, "This is what you can expect," but subsequent shooting demonstrated that the RM1C is capable of sub-2-inch groups in the hands of an experienced shooter with quality range ammunition, and sub-3-inch groups using heavier duty loads. For an unknown reason, two loads that Guns & Ammo's samples did not shoot as well came from Winchester, both featuring projectiles with Hex-Vent.

To explore the extent of the pistol's reliability, I fired several hundred rounds from a mixed bag of left-over test



Serrated and textured touchpoints are at the front of the trigger-guard and just in front of the takedown lever. Textured pads on the frame are on both sides, serving as a place to rest your finger while off the trigger or to index your grip with a support thumb.



PERFORMANCE

LOAD	VEL. (FPS)	ES	SD	BEST GROUP (IN.)	AVG. GROUP (IN.)
Magtech 115-gr. FMJ	1,133	138	55	.94	2.16
Hornady Critical Defense 115-gr. FTX	1,112	44	17	1.58	2.16
Federal Hydra-Shok Deep 135-gr. JHP	1,074	39	18.9	1.6	2.01
Winchester Ranger Bonded 147-gr. JHP	1,029	88	34.3	1.85	2.73
NOVX 65-gr. Polymer	1,567	99	41.8	1.98	2.47
Winchester Ready USA +P 124-gr. THP	1,239	17	6.2	2.8	2.96

Notes: Accuracy is the average of five, five-shot groups at 25 yards from a benchrest. Velocity is the average of five shots recorded by Labradar placed adjacent to the muzzle.

ammunition. Grain-weights spanned 115 to 147 grains. Then, I fired 200 additional rounds of NOVX 65-grain polymer projectiles, which traveled at near rifle velocities. Some pistols do not cycle these light-weight loads reliably, especially when an optic is mounted to the slide,

but the RM1C produced zero malfunctions.

PARTING SHOT

The Rost Martin RM1C is more accurate, reliable, and affordable than it should be for a company's first-ever offering. The fact that it is U.S.-made by a company in Dallas makes me feel as though buying one is supporting the American job market. The RM1C is a fresh take on the striker-fired 9mm with a comprehensive list of features. The low-bore axis and grip design help it shoot reasonably flat, while the hammer-forged barrel provides excellent accuracy, even for a broad range of ammunition. The RM1C is advertised as being backed by a lifetime warranty, and considering the Toomers' heritage, that should extend to the next generation of freedom lovers.

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GAME ON

WALTHER'S PDP MATCH STEEL
FRAME IS HERE.

BY JAMES TARR | PHOTOS BY MARK FINGAR





IF YOU’VE BEEN paying attention, you knew it was going to happen. Walther produced a number of different variants of the PPQ after it was introduced in 2011. The last two were the Q5 Match (2018) and Q4 Steel Frame (2020). Then, Walther reworked the PPQ into the PDP (2021), which became Guns & Ammo’s Handgun of the Year for 2021. So, it isn’t a surprise to me that a new steel-frame was created for the PDP. Reviewed here is the Walther PDP Match Steel Frame, new for 2024, but Walther is also offering a near-identical version with a polymer frame.

This initial PDP Steel Frame model is a 5-inch “longslide.” It was meant for competition. You can expect to see other steel-framed PDP models more suitable for concealed carry soon. “PDP,” after all, stands for “Performance Duty Pistol.” The photos in the owner’s manual are of a smaller steel-framed PDP, so the cat’s out of the bag.

The PDP is Walther’s current flagship pistol. It has supplanted the Walther PPQ. Both are based on polymer-frame, striker-fired designs. While the PPQ had a great run, only the Q-series remains. Remember when the first PPQ had a paddle lever-style magazine release? Well, the folks at Walther realized that if they wanted to sell pistols in America, they needed to have an American-style button magazine release, which resulted in the PPQ M2. The continued advancing that mentality by developing its Performance Duty Texture, incorporating Glock-pattern sights, and standardizing an optics-ready slide. The PDP Match



WALTHER PDP MATCH STEEL FRAME	
TYPE	Striker fired, recoil operated, semiautomatic
CARTRIDGE	9mm
CAPACITY	18+1 rds., 20+1 rds.
BARREL	5 in.
OVERALL LENGTH	8.4 in.
WIDTH	1.4 in.
HEIGHT	5.9 in.
WEIGHT	2 lbs., 6.7 oz.
FINISH	Tenifer, matte black (steel)
GRIP	Polymer panels; Performance Duty Texture
SIGHTS	3-dot, polymer, adj. (rear) (Glock pattern); optic rdy.
TRIGGER	Walther Dynamic Performance Trigger; 5 lbs. (tested)
SAFETY	Striker block, trigger lever
MSRP	\$1,899
ACCESSORIES	One 18-rd. mag., two 20-round mags.; one optic mounting plate; mag. loader; lockable case
MANUFACTURER	Walther Arms, 479-242-8500, waltherarms.com

is a longer variation of the duty-size PDP, squarely aimed at the competition segment. The Steel Frame version sports a few bonus features not found on the polymer-framed model.

The standard, full-size PDP is fed by flush 17-round magazines. The polymer-frame version of the PDP Match includes one 18-round magazine, which also has an aluminum basepad that supports proper seating with the aluminum magwell in place. The PDP Match Steel Frame model comes with one 18-rounder and two 20-round magazines.

When shooting a pistol in competition, size and weight are your friends. However, this is the opposite of what most people look for in a carry gun. The PDP Match Steel Frame is 8.4 inches long, 5.9 inches tall and feeds from either an 18- or 20-round magazine. It’s also 1.4 inches wide at the bilateral slide release. The standard polymer-frame 5-inch PDP, with an empty mag inserted weighs just 26.9 ounces; the PDP Match Steel Frame, with magazine and the aluminum magazine well installed, weighs 42.7 ounces. That’s a difference of nearly a pound!

PUTTING THE PPQ BEHIND US

First, let me get this out of the way: We can’t talk about the Walther PDP without mentioning that it evolved from the



Once an optional accessory to the outgoing PPQ models, the PDP Match Steel Frame features Walther's Dynamic Performance Trigger. It's an aluminum, flat-face trigger with safety lever.



The trigger return spring is similar to the part found in other PDP models, which ensures reliability. Despite the external appearance, the PDP shares several parts with the outgoing PPQ.



The 5-inch steel barrel of the PDP Match Steel Frame is not ported or threaded. Sights are a cost-savings polymer design based on the Glock pattern, meaning they're easy to upgrade.



Slide cuts within the front SuperTerrain Serrations are machined to maintain the same slide weight as other PDP models. This keeps slide velocity and the recoil spring assembly the same.

PPQ. The PPQ was a great pistol. It proved reliable and, at the time of its introduction, it offered the best trigger pull of any striker-fired, polymer-framed handgun. The PPQ never had a reputation for being problematic, so Walther took the "If it ain't broke, don't fix it" approach when designing the PDP. Externally, the PDP hardly resembles the PPQ. Internally, the PDP is nearly identical though. Many parts even interchange. The PDP retained the PPQ barrel and striker assembly, as well as the same checkered steel magazine release as the Steel Frame Q-series. The PDP Compact uses the same standard PPQ magazine, too, and full-size PDPs use the same PPQ-pattern magazines, only longer.

The PDP incorporates the Performance Duty Trigger (PDT), which uses trigger components that have the same external dimensions as those in the PPQ. However, the takeup has been shortened and the wall has been made more robust for a crisper-feeling break. In the PDP Match Steel Frame, there is an upgraded version of the PDT, called the "DPT," or "Dynamic

Performance Trigger." (Yes, I know, that's a ridiculous number of acronyms). The DPT has a trigger pull between 4½ and 5 pounds, reduced travel, a shorter reset, a hand-tuned sear engagement, and a crisper break. The trigger is aluminum, featuring a straight, flat face and a safety lever in the center. The trigger pull of Guns & Ammo's sample measured 5 pounds, but it was so short and crisp that it felt even lighter. In truth, the trigger pull of the PDP Match is the closest in character and quality to a 1911 than anything out of a striker-fired gun.

Just like the PPQ, the PDP has a single-action trigger system; the striker is cocked for every shot. Walther tends not to advertise it as the term "single action" since it tends to scare away police administrators.

The PDP Match Steel Frame has a 5-inch barrel. It is visible through cuts in the forward section of the slide, but the barrel is not ported. The lightening cuts in the slide reduce its weight, and less reciprocating weight equals



The three-dot polymer sight arrangement is mediocre, and it doesn't co-witness with optics. The rear sight is adjustable, though.





All PDP models are optic ready and come with a cover plate (above, top). A free mounting plate can be requested for a specific optic online at waltherarms.com/optic-plate-request.



Looking underneath the PDP Match Steel Frame reveals a five-slot Picatinny rail for attaching lights. The triggerguard is squared, which is compatible with popular accessory backplates.



The slide-lock/release lever is long, low-profile, and easy to use. In front of it is the takedown lever, rotated up for disassembly.



less felt recoil and muzzle rise. That is exactly what you want in a competition pistol. There's another reason for it, as well: Walther designed the PDP to be modular. This longslide version uses the same captured recoil spring system as the shorter models. With the weight removed, the longer slide has the same weight as a PDP Compact, so this worked out.

With the PDP, Walther moved to Glock-pattern sights, so aftermarket options are plentiful. The standard front sight is a short post with a small white dot. The rear sight is fully adjustable with white dots on either side of the notch. Both front and rear sights are polymer, and somewhat low in profile.

Here we arrive at the only complaint I have with the PDP Steel Frame. I'll address it and move on: The factory sights work. They are definitely better than nothing, and



The machined checkering on the frontstrap is excellent and includes serrations that continue to the magazine funnel and triggerguard undercut. Grip panels feature Walther's PDT texture.

may be all you want or need if you intend to run an optic. However, they are not what I think anyone should expect on a pistol intended for competition — especially at this price. Any serious competitor using the PDP Steel Frame at USPSA matches — and not using an optic — would have to replace these sights. At a minimum, the sights on this pistol should be made of steel, and the front sight should be highly

visible, sporting a fiber-optic insert or something similar.

The biggest visual change between the PPQ and the PDP are Walther's aggressive SuperTerrain slide serrations. They are deep. At the front, they curve up and over the top of the slide. This is exactly what you want on a competition gun or a gun meant for duty or self-defense. Personally, I really like the way they look on every PDP model.



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The slide of the PDP is red-dot ready. The rear sight is not attached to the optic plate, so you won't lose the rear sight if you attach an optic. This means that mounting tall sights later, for use with a red dot, is an option on the Walther PDP Steel Frame.

One mounting plate (of your choice) is provided with each pistol. They are mounting plates, though, not adapter plates. The plate is attached to the slide with screws, and an optic is attached to the plate.

As for the steel frame of the PDP, it adds a considerable weight. The extra weight reduces felt recoil, sure, but the recoil impulse is a bit sharper and shorter as well. Polymer flexes under recoil, but steel doesn't. (At least, not enough in a pistol that you'll be able to detect it.)

At the front of the frame is a long, five-slot Picatinny rail for mounting lights or other accessories. The pistol has a long slide stop lever on each side, and each one works properly as a slide release. The magazine release is a big checkered steel button, which is also reversible.

Though they appear similar, the contours of the steel frame are slightly altered from the polymer frame. The undercut beneath the triggerguard comes up a bit higher. This pistol has a small beavertail at the back, which adds a little style. The magazine well opening in the frame is beveled, too. The over-size aluminum magazine well is held in place by a roll pin, and is easily removed. The sides of the magazine well are relieved so you can grab a sticky mag by the basepad and pull it out if the need arises. The grip on this pistol is long enough that my fingers don't touch the magazine well in the front, and the heel of my hand just barely touches it in the back.

Unlike with the polymer frame, the grips are a separate piece. The

PERFORMANCE

LOAD	VEL. (FPS)	ES	SD	BEST GROUP (IN.)	AVG. GROUP (IN.)
Federal HST 124-gr. JHP	1,144	25	10	2.5	3
Federal GM Action Pistol 147-gr. FMJ	943	27	12	2.6	3.2
Black Hills 115-gr. FMJ	1,134	30	17	2.7	3.1
SIG Sauer Elite 115-gr. FMJ	1,107	34	14	3.3	4.1

Notes: Accuracy is the averages of four, five-shot groups at 25 yards from a sandbag rest. Velocity is the average of 10 shots measured with an Oehler Model 35P placed 12 feet in front of the muzzle.

one-piece wraparound polymer grip features the Performance Duty Texture (PDT) used on the polymer PDP frame. Because it is a wrap-around grip, the PDP Steel Frame doesn't have the replaceable backstraps of the polymer-framed PDP. The frontstrap of this gun sports aggressive 20 lines-per-inch (lpi) checkering, as does the front of the triggerguard. It feels as good in the hand as it looks.

As Walther is going after law enforcement sales with the PDP, Walther designed it to disassemble without having to pull the trigger. That is now a requirement with a surprising number of police departments to prevent negligent discharges. After rotating the takedown lever up, you can pull the trigger to release the slide — or you can lock the slide

back and, using a handcuff key (or similar-size punch), pop the steel slide cover off and pull the striker assembly out of the rear. The slide will then come all the way off the front of the frame.

AT THE RANGE

As I mentioned, while it's got some updated bodywork, inside this pistol are the ultra-reliable action parts of the PPQ. Between the PPQ and PDP, I've got years of trigger time. They are boringly reliable, and this pistol was no different. With an extra pound of weight added to the frame, felt recoil was significantly reduced. The 5-inch barrel will extract every foot-per-second out of your ammunition.

At my local club, I used the PDP Match to knock down plate racks, pepper poppers, and work through speed drills on USPSA targets. I took the opportunity to test Federal's new Gold Medal Action Pistol ammunition, as well. It was very soft-shooting, although not quite as soft as a dedicated 125-Power Factor (PF) handload would be.

A lot of high-intensity competition experience behind various handgun platforms has shown me that heavier guns recoil less (obviously), but they also tend to remain steadier as you are pulling the trigger. Being a little rough or sloppy on the trigger with a light polymer gun can pull your sights off the target. That's much less of an issue with a gun having the weight of the PDP Match Steel Frame.

While it was intended as a competition piece, the 20-round magazines, and ability to mount a pistol light, make it a viable home-defense handgun, too. To me, the PDP Match SF has almost a Sci-Fi appearance, and I like that. It is unusual enough that I wouldn't be surprised to see Hollywood using it onscreen. But performance is more than skin deep, as it always has been with Walther.



Magazine basepads protrude from the aluminum magazine well. The magwell is notched for more purchase when grabbing the pad.



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THROUGH THE LOOKING-GLASS

THE **NIGHTFORCE NX8 2.5-20X50MM** IS A RIFLESCOPE FOR ANY SEASON — AND ALL REASONS.

BY CRAIG BODDINGTON | STUDIO PHOTOS BY MARK FINGAR

THE SUN was just creeping over the horizon. We weren't hunting; that would come later. On this first morning, Professional Hunter (PH) Fred Burchell spotted kudu cows coming over the skyline two ridges away. The rut was on, so we quickly set up the spotting scope. Sure enough, a mature bull followed, but with only one horn.

Game managers hate broken-horn animals because they can kill rivals in mating battles. We waited until they started to feed in the dense bush, then began a stalk.

Huffing and puffing, we got over the top, and worked our way down through cover. The kudus were still there, pieces of gray hide through dense bush at 380 yards. Burchell put up the sticks and I held on the backline. The bull was broadside, only the head visible, with the cow in front. There was no shot, but if the cow cleared and he stepped forward there might be. We breathed and waited.

The cow stepped forward. Seconds later, the one-horned bull followed and stopped in a clear spot. One more breath, safety forward, crosshairs steady, and I started the trigger press. The bull dropped in its tracks.

WORKING BACKWARDS

In 40 years of gunwriting, I've tested hundreds of rifles and scopes, but I've never done it like this. My scope and rifle were strangers, mated 16 hours earlier. The scope was a Nightforce NX8 2.5-20x50mm F1. The rifle was Burchell's Remington M700 Sendero in 7mm Remington Magnum. I had the scope and a scheduled hunt with the Burchell family's Frontier Safaris in South Africa's Eastern Cape.

Normal order: Mount the scope on an accurate rifle, spend time on the range, then go hunting. On this trip, I also had non-hunting business elsewhere in Africa, and the permits were too complex. Burchell is a friend, likewise his dad and brothers. I've hunted with them all; they're smart gun guys, and I know

their place, big country with varied habitat. Shots are from short to long, game ranging from small antelope to eland. The rifle needed to be accurate and versatile.

I asked for a suitable rifle I could use with a rail mount, then attached the NX8 to a Nightforce tactical mount with medium rings, and stowed it in my locked duffel.

The 7mm Rem. Mag. might not have been my choice, but it's a versatile cartridge with ammo readily available. The rifle, fitted with a South African suppressor, was nearly new. The beauty of the rail system is its simplicity and universality. I landed in Port Elizabeth at midday, and we drove an hour to Frontier's main lodge and settled. Then, I popped the scope onto the rifle and was on the range by late afternoon.

Bore-sighted, I was on paper at short range immediately. I only made a few adjustments, then shot some gongs. Everything looked good, and the light was going, so we called it a day and shot that kudu the next morning.

Flukes can be good as well as bad, and success can mask problems. The kudu went straight down, but my hit was left of where I'd held. On the way back to camp, I missed an impala at about the same distance; it's a much smaller target and Burchell called it off to the left. This time, I knew it wasn't the hold.

Frontier has an awesome range across a deep valley. Steel plates ascend the opposite ridge to 900 yards. After lunch, we headed back to it. Sure enough, the rifle was shooting left. I zeroed at 200, and then verified the 300-yard hold. I did the math and verified turret adjustments to 600 yards, which was far enough for me. My guess is we'd been hasty the night before while trying to beat sundown. For the rest of the safari there were zero misses for shots from 150 to beyond 500 yards.

THE NX8

Today, we are blessed with great optics. Nightforce is one of the brands with a following found among military,



The left turret contains the battery for the illuminated reticle. The left turret is also used for adjusting parallax.



All Nightforce controls feature a signature knurling, including the ocular focus ring. Ahead of it is the adjustable magnification dial.

precision, and tactical shooters — as well as long-range hunters. The NX8 family of scopes offers an amazing 8X-zoom capability.

For decades, 3X-zoom was the norm and seemingly technology’s limit. Then came 4X, 5X, then six, and now eight times zoom. The latter offers a low setting for fast, close shots, plus high magnification for enough “extreme range.” Launched in 2017, the initial NX8 family group was small; there are just six scopes, two each in 1-8x24mm, 2.5-20x50mm, and 4-32x50mm. “F1” designates the reticle in first focal plane (FFP). Both 1-8x24 scopes are F1, one with a capped elevation turret, the other not. The 2.5-20x50mm and 4-32x50mm scopes are offered in both F1 (FFP) and second focal plane (SFP) versions. All use 30mm tubes, and all have illuminated reticles.

Nightforce is a premium brand and thus their products are not “budget” options. That’s okay. Folks who want the best glass reckon optics “cost nothing and weigh nothing” — because of what they enable. The good news: The NX8 line is still a Nightforce, with a price that’s considerably lower than its tactical and competition models.

The Nightforce scope I’ve been using is the 2.5-20x50mm F1 with MOA reticle. Finish is matte black, but Flat Dark Earth (FDE) is also available. With a 12-inch length and weighing 28.3 ounces, it isn’t small. However, it is trim for this level of capability, enabled by the 50mm objective. Yet,

NIGHTFORCE NX8 2.5-20X50MM F1	
POWER	2.5-20X
OBJECTIVE	50mm
TUBE DIAMETER	30mm
ELEVATION ADJUSTMENT	.25 MOA
WINDAGE	.25 MOA
RETICLE	MOAR-CF2 (tested)
LENGTH	12 in.
WEIGHT	1 lb., 12.3 oz.
EYE RELIEF	3.5 in.
MSRP	\$1,950
MANUFACTURER	Nightforce, 208-476-9814, nightforceoptics.com

it’s smaller than the 56mm objectives often seen on other scopes.

I mounted this scope on several rifles. With medium rings, neither eye relief nor clearance were issues. It was just a matter of popping it into place and tightening the nuts. Optics are edge-to-edge clear across the magnification range, too. In Africa, I would need to take several shots in fading light, but brightness was never an issue for the NX8.

The NX8 is an exceptionally complete modern riflescope; if there’s anything else a serious shooter might need, I can’t think of it. The left turret

houses the CR2032 battery for the illuminated reticle, and turning it controls brightness. Its dial also has a parallax adjustment ring. Left and right (windage) turrets have heavily knurled caps, a Nightforce signature. The elevation turret does not have a cap on this model; at first glance this mystified me. *It must have a solid zero stop, right?*

I ended up giving in and reading the directions. Nightforce supplies a handy three-way tool with all the Allen wrenches you’ll need. After zeroing, use the tool to remove the adjustment cap. Loosen four screws on the upper clutch plate beneath, rotate it clockwise until it stops. Tighten the screws, replace the cap with zero lined up at the rear of the turret, and tighten its two Allen screws. Now we’ve got a zero stop.

Clicks are .25 MOA or .1 MRAD. Zeroing, shooting groups, and both on the range and in the field, the adjust-



Nightforce supplies a convenient multi-tool featuring all Allen bits needed. Use the tool to install the extended power lever, or, as Nightforce has labeled it, the "Power Throw Lever," or PTL.



To set the zero stop, remove the elevation cap, loosen the four screws on the upper clutch plate, rotate it clockwise until it stops, then retighten the screws and install the cap.



The cap securing the elevation turret cap uses two stainless-steel set screws to guard the zero-stop.

ments proved consistent and repeatable, enabling me to move the bullet strike around at will. Internally, the scope offers 110 MOA of elevation adjustment (80 MOA for windage). At the base of the rear turret are markings, showing if you're past one full revolution.

The magnification ring is knurled and easy to grasp, but it can seem stiff. Also supplied separately is an extended magnification lever, in Nightforce parlance, "Power Throw Lever" (PTL). I didn't install it at first, but soon did. As shipped, the power adjustment ring is tapped (on this scope, at the 8X setting) for the PTL. Use the Nightforce tool to remove the guard screw, then screw in the PTL. My initial resistance was born from thinking that this would just be another projection on the scope, but I was wrong. The PTL made changing magnification faster and easier. Also, it provides a quick visual for the current setting.



With the zero stop set, the elevation turret only turns counter-clockwise. The horizontal marks at the base of the turret indicate how many revolutions it has been rotated.

Nightforce is no stranger. I used one back in the mid-1990s when the brand appeared from Australia, even before Lightforce became Nightforce. The NX8 is a state-of-the-art riflescope. Not every shooter needs its capability. For those who do, they make one heck of a scope.

FIRST OR SECOND FOCAL PLANE?

Nightforce offers the choice of a first (FFP) and second focal plane (SFP). This has nothing to do with the brand or the "NX8" moniker. It's a useful discussion because purchasers must choose. Mechanically, FFP places the reticle in front of the erector system, which changes magnification. SFP places it behind. The choice doesn't matter to optical clarity or field of view; it matters in use. With FFP, the reticle visually shrinks and expands as magnification changes.

With SFP, the reticle stays the same size.

Many competition and long-range shooters insist FFP is the way to go. In one sense, it is. If the reticle has windage or elevation hashmarks, they are valid at all magnification settings in an FFP scope. In SFP, they are valid at only one magnification setting, usually the maximum. For hunters, this is not good. Because of the narrower field of view,

mirage, or too much magnification up close, we often don't use maximum.

So, FFP must be the way to go, right? No, not for me! I hunt a variety of game under differing conditions; my shots vary widely in range. With FFP, at lower magnification, the reticle is so small that it's hard to see. At high magnification, the reticle is so large that it can obscure too much of the target, especially if it contains multiple hashmarks or a grid system.

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The cap covering the windage turret is threaded. Cap removed, zeroing is accomplished by loosening the screw found on the dial and aligning "0" to the mark.



The 50mm objective lens provides a clear image. The sunshade threads found within the objective bell are protected by a knurled, removeable ring.



Eye relief averaged 3½ inches during testing. Note the throw lever installed on the power ring. This allowed the author quick magnification adjustments in the field.

This was the first time I've hunted with an FFP scope in years. I suspect my eyes were better the last time I did. I loved the NX8, but I fought the FFP feature — especially on close shots at low power where the reticle became a postage stamp. It was relearning an old lesson: If your shots vary from close to far, SFP is the way to go. True, you can't use the reticle for range and windage compensation at multiple power levels, at least not without complex math. Note: If you dial elevation and/or windage, then focal plane is meaningless; turret values do not change.

WHICH RETICLE?

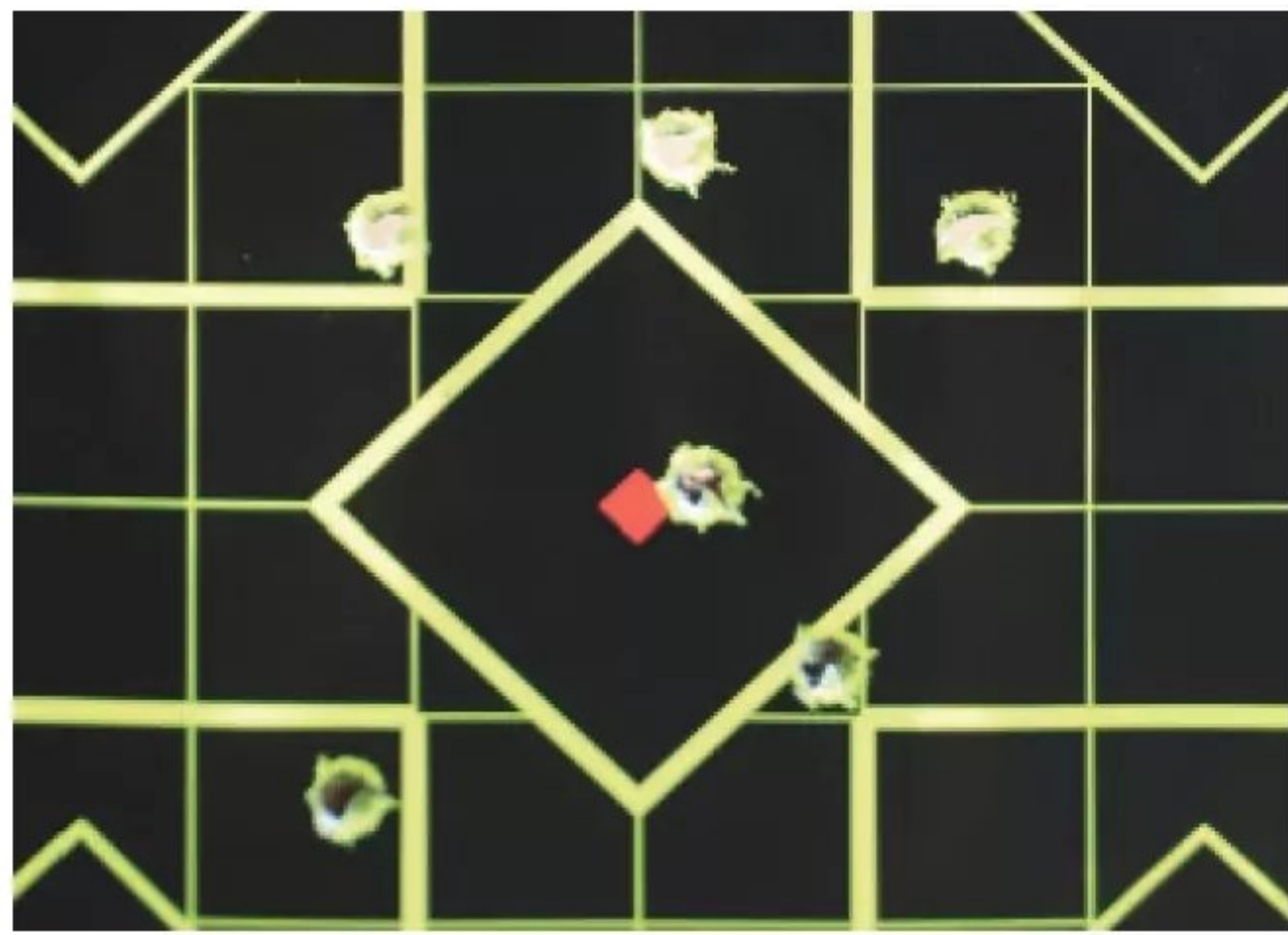
Nightforce offers reticle choices, some simple, some complex. The MOA reticle on Guns & Ammo's test scope had major crosshairs with hashmarks for windage and elevation. I called it a "Christmas tree"; below is a windage and elevation grid. I suppose all might

be useful to long-range shooters and snipers, though. With a dial-up turret, and values verified, nothing mattered to this old hunter beyond the horizontal and vertical crosswires.

At the intersection of the crosshairs was a tiny dot. It's visible to shooters half my age, but was invisible to me. Whether shooting groups or shooting at game, I had to ignore the real aiming point and concentrate on holding in the center, between where the solid crosshairs ended. I prefer a visible, central aiming point, even if it



Impalas are overpopulated in parts of South Africa's Eastern Cape. Management targets the removal of older males with poor horns such as seen on these rams.



The adjustments were consistent and repeatable. With an accurate rifle, the strike can be moved around the target at will. This target was fired using the NX8 on a rifle in 7mm PRC; 1 and 2 MOA adjustments were tested between shots.

subtends some of the target. Our eyes work around that but cannot focus on a dot smaller than visual acuity allows.

The illuminated reticle greatly mitigates this. To Nightforce's undying credit, the illumination system lights up the vertical and horizontal wires, as well as the small dot. Whether in bright or low light, the glowing crosswires draw the eye to the center, greatly speeding target acquisition. It's awesome on dark targets, whether a black bullseye or shadowed animal. However, the illumination control is one more thing to manipulate while a nervous animal contemplates fleeing. There won't always be time to employ it. For hunting, choose a reticle with a visible aiming point.

LOTS OF SHOOTING

I probably wouldn't have chosen a 7mm Rem. Mag., or the ammo on hand, but when you shoot a camp gun, you shoot what's available.

Burchell had Sierra's 150-grain Tipped GameKing load. With zebra and large antelopes possible, I'd have preferred a heavier and tougher bullet. Beggars can't be choosers. With careful shot placement, we made them work and had no problems. We culled several overpopulated impalas, sometimes me on the gun, sometimes Burchell, and other times 13-year-old Etienne Stevens who was on school holiday with his Uncle Fred. It didn't matter who was on the trigger. Nightforce made it easy.

When I got home, I had some quality range time. I put the Nightforce on a lovely SAKO M20 in .300 Winchester



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Magnum. This rifle has an interrupted integral rail. It took seconds to install the scope; zeroing it took only three shots. Tight groups are a credit to the rifle, but a good scope always helps. Right now, I have it on a Mossberg Patriot in 7mm PRC. The pair is a great match. With the Nightforce NX8, I can move its bullets anywhere I want.

LAST LIGHT, LAST CHANCE

As the days passed in Africa, I was still hoping for a good kudu. Frontier Safaris has plenty, but big kudus aren't easy to find. We glassed many ridges and passed on a lot of immature bulls. It was clear down to the end, with us checking one last spot just as the sun set.

Young Etienne saw them first, cows coming up out of a canyon. Burchell put up the sticks. Sure enough, a good, mature kudu bull trailed. Running, stopping, gaining distance. They slowed on the following ridge, but were now past 400. On sticks, I dialed the scope's tur-



A heavy-horned greater kudu was taken at long range in fading light at the end of the author's 2023 South African safari. The Nightforce NX8 in 2.5-20x50 was used on an M700 in 7mm.

we got to him. We spread out over the crest and started down. Running tracks were on the ground; maybe it was him. I found the first blood, but not because I was the best tracker. Then, we found good blood. Burchell saw him first. He was down maybe 80 yards over the top. He was old with wonderfully heavy horns. It was maybe my best Eastern Cape kudu. We always need a good shot with an accurate rifle but, in that light at that range, I needed a great scope like the NX8. 

rets. I had him, but going dead away. It was not the shot with this bullet and cartridge in the chamber. They went on into some bush on the far skyline, hesitated, then came out one at a time.
The bull stepped out, clear and quartering away. Darn it, I can make that shot — but I did. Only then I remembered what I'd hit him with and I started to worry.
Etienne stayed by the sticks to signal us. It was almost dark by the time





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FOR GO-FAST GURUS.



FOR SPEED

BY JOE KURTENBACH | PHOTOS BY MARK FINGAR





The most distinctive feature on the 2023 Spec Series M&P Metal 2.0 is the Faxon compensator and the Cerakote O.D. finish. Enhancements are both aesthetic and functional.



IN 2023, Guns & Ammo awarded Smith & Wesson the title “Innovator of the Year” for recent introductions including the Folding Pistol Carbine (FPC) as well as the versatile Response Pistol-Caliber Carbine (PCC). The company also launched the easy-to-use Equalizer 9mm pistol, along with myriad new chamberings and configurations across its pistol, revolver, and rifle lines. Among those, G&A’s staff was most impressed with Smith & Wesson’s Tempo barrel system, which facilitated the development of both the M&P 5.7 and M&P 22 Magnum pistols. Taken as a whole, it’s clear the company is dedicated to pushing ballistic boundaries and delivering interesting products to its customers.

So, if Smith & Wesson is a center for firearm development and innovation, consider the 2023 Spec Series offerings the company’s “Skunkworks” projects. A lab within a lab, Spec Series design ideas come not just from the R&D team, but from the sales force, team shooters, professional users, and customer requests. Under the Spec Series flag, standard model firearms are modified and tuned to better fit a specific purpose. The gun is packaged with some chachkies, including knives and challenge coins, along with more practical accessories such as custom-cut hard cases and extra magazines. A limited number are produced and put into circulation, adding to the line’s mystique.

The 2022 Spec Series was an enhanced M&P Compact pistol, featuring suppressor-height sights, a threaded barrel and the CORE optics mounting system. It wore a distinct gray Cerakote finish and was easy to configure for carry, range use or home defense, accepting both slide-mounted red dots as well as suppressors or muzzle devices. It was a neat package for about \$800.

SMITH & WESSON 2023 SPEC SERIES M&P METAL M2.0	
TYPE	Recoil operated, semiautomatic
CARTRIDGE	9mm
CAPACITY	17+1 rds., 23+1 rds.
BARREL	4.8 in., 1:10-in. twist; threaded, Faxon compensator (included)
OVERALL LENGTH	8.5 in.
WIDTH	1.3 in.
HEIGHT	5.5 in. (17-rd. mag., no optic)
WEIGHT	30 oz.
MATERIALS	Stainless steel (slide, barrel), T6 aluminum (frame), 6061 aluminum (compensator)
FINISH	Cerakote, OD Green (slide, frame); Armornite, black (barrel)
SIGHTS	Tall, three-dot white/tritium; CORE optic-mounting system
TRIGGER	4 lbs., 12 oz. (tested)
MSRP	\$999
MANUFACTURER	Smith & Wesson, 800-331-0852, smith-wesson.com

For 2023, the Spec Series team expanded the coalition to include the go-fast folks from Smith & Wesson’s Performance Center. Traditionally, the Performance Center has offered tuned firearms with a higher degree of fit and finish, as well as additional feature sets. Best known for competition-oriented upgrades for handguns and rifles, the Performance Center is also home to upgraded sight packages for defensive and hunting handguns, longer and shorter barrel options for pursuit-specific platforms, and modifications such as barrel porting, muzzlebrakes and slide-lightening cuts. The Performance Center’s influence is obvious in the 2023 Spec Series M&P9 Metal M2.0. Let’s break it down.

THE SPEC’S SPECS
Smith & Wesson’s Military & Police (M&P) products date back to 1899 when the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy placed orders for the company’s .38-caliber Model 10 revolver. Since then, the M&P brand has become synonymous with ruggedly reliable, duty-ready firearms. In 2005, the first polymer-frame, striker-fired M&P pistols were introduced and, in 2017, the lineup received the comprehensive “M2.0” overhaul with notable improvements to the trigger, grip texture, and the accuracy of the barrels.

Evolution continued and, through time, the pistol’s articulated triggers were replaced by flat-faced units with central safety levers. Other aspects were tweaked and modified, but in my opinion the two most notable



The Faxon compensator diverts gases up like a booster to push the muzzle down during recoil. Lightening cuts in the slide offset the added weight of the comp to ensure reliability.



Four magazines come with the 2023 Spec Series, two 17-rounders and two extended 23-round mags.

advancements were the inclusion of the Competition Optics Ready Equipment (CORE) optic-mounting system as standard equipment (for most models) and the development of the heavier and more rigid T6-aluminum frame. Compared to the 27-ounce polymer-frame M2.0 Full Size model (i.e., empty mag and no optics), the “Metal” pistol weighs about 30 ounces. Although it’s a modest increase, the aluminum frame’s added heft and reduced flexibility to better absorb recoil, resulting in a flatter- and faster-shooting platform.

A brief aside regarding Smith & Wesson’s CORE mounting system:

The company has taken some flak for its polymer mounting plates, as well as with its optic-ready pistols. What naysayers don’t understand is that the plates are just spacers and seals, not mounting surfaces. The CORE mounting screws pass through the optic body and the mounting plate to affix directly to the slide. In my experience, Smith & Wesson’s solution is superior to typical plate-style multi-optic mounting systems, which often mount a plate to the slide first and then attach the optic to the plate.

The base platform for the 2023 Spec Series pistol is the full-size M2.0 Metal, and its most prominent new feature is the muzzle-mounted compensator. Designed by Faxon Firearms (faxonfirearms.com) in collaboration with the Performance Center, the comp screws onto the gun’s 4.8-inch, 1/2-28 threaded barrel and is secured in place by a locking screw. The compensator features one large top-side port as well as two small, angled side ports. When a round is fired, pressurized gases propel the bullet down and out of the barrel, and escape the same way. Rather than simply letting the gas go, the compensator diverts it through the ports, primarily upward. Like a booster, the gas vented upward drives the front of the gun down, countering the muzzle rise from the rapid rearward movement of the slide



Controls include an M&P flat-faced trigger, a reversible magazine release, bilateral slide stop/release lever and a left-side takedown lever.

during recoil. The net result is that the bore axis remains flatter as the action cycles, making it easier and faster to reacquire sights and make follow-on shots.

So, why doesn’t every handgun utilize a compensator? There are a lot of moving parts in a tilt-barrel pistol, and reliable cycling is all about balancing the weights and interactions of those components with the relatively diminutive power produced by a centerfire handgun cartridge. Any changes — such as an ounce of metal added to the muzzle — can throw that balance off and negatively impact reliability. That’s why compensators

and slide lightening cuts often go hand-in-hand, as they do with the 2023 Spec Series gun. Yes, they look cool, but the practical reason for cutting ports and windows into a pistol’s slide was to reduce weight and increase slide velocity during recoil. When accessories such as optics and comps are added, the operating system remains in tolerance.

For the 2023 Spec Series, the lightening cuts take the form of bilateral windows beneath the front sight and a longer rounded rectangle cutout is on top of the slide, behind the front sight. Too, the front and rear cocking serrations are cut to a different pattern than the typical M&P fare. The forward serrations are full height, for one, and, rather than the scalloped design we’re used to, the Spec Series uses straight, forward-angled ridges. Rounding out the slide’s features, it is optic-ready, as mentioned, and the sights are tall for co-witnessing with red dots. Whereas three-white-dot metal sights are the standard M&P offering, the Spec Series has upgraded night sights with green tritium lamps surrounded by white outlines.

Moving to the frame, being a full-size gun, the grip accepts standard 17-round 9mm M&P magazines. Two come with the pistol, along with two extended 23-round mags. The dustcover sports a three-slot Picatinny rail for

The 2023 Spec Series features a hard case cut to hold the gun, four magazines, a thread protector, palmswell inserts, the karambit knife and challenge coin.

stuck a price tag of \$999 for the whole kit and caboodle. Inexpensive? No, but I think Smith & Wesson is offering a real value.

ON THE RANGE

In preparation for testing, I opted to mount Trijicon's Ruggedized Closed Reflex (RCR) red-dot sight (\$849, trijicon.com).

The process was simple since the RCR shares the same footprint as the RMR, which is easily accommodated by the CORE system; it includes mounting screws. Despite the slightly taller deck height of the RCR compared to the RMR, the gun's tall iron sights still provided a usable lower-third co-witness, should the optic go down. (It didn't, by the way.)

I'm familiar with the M&P series of pistols, so the grip felt natural in my hand. I appreciate the extra heft of the metal frame gun, and almost anyone can quickly become comfortable with the M&P's 18-degree grip angle. Between the weight and the aggressive texture of the front- and backstrap inserts, the pistol felt well-anchored in my grasp.

Normally, I conduct my accuracy testing first and then move on to practical shooting exercises. I had to reverse my plan for the Spec Series because it just begged to be shot fast. It's a gun that looks like it's built to run, and I wanted to see how it performed at speed. Shooting several runs of the classic Bill Drill (i.e., six shots to the "A" zone at 7 yards), the Spec Series proved to be a sprinter. A good Bill Drill for me is usually between 2½ and 3 seconds. I hit a 2.53 cold with the Spec Series and got down to 2.23 on subsequent runs. Similar results followed with plate racks, Failure Drills, etcetera. The gun shoots fast.

Its weight, ergonomics and compensator definitely played a big part in keeping the slide flat between shots and minimizing the effects of recoil. I also can't discount

the aid of the Trijicon RCR; it has a big window for an enclosed optic and I was easily able to track the dot during multi-shot strings. I was also impressed by the trigger, which was consistently 4 pounds, 12 ounces. It was at least a few ounces lighter than most stock striker-fired pistols. There is a little bit of the usual grit, but it's a clean and predictable trigger.

Having proved the Spec Series is ready to race, it was time to put it on the bags to evaluate its precision. For testing, I chose a range of bullet weights and ammunition types,

mounting
lights or lasers.

Controls are
unchanged from stock M&Ps,
including a flat-faced trigger,

reversible magazine release, bilateral slide releases, and a left-side takedown lever. Interestingly, the M&P Metal utilizes two polymer inserts in the frontstrap and backstrap to provide texture and purchase. The rear unit is the same interchangeable palmswell insert as used in all M2.0 M&Ps, and a total of four are included with the gun to fit a range of hand sizes: Small, Medium, Medium/Large, and Large.

Besides the compensator, the gun's most noticeable attribute is its color: Green. Distinct Cerakote finishes are one of the ways the Spec Series guns stand out. The previous model featured a hip Bull Shark Gray finish, and now the 2023 model wears classic Olive Drab (OD).

Besides the gun, grip inserts and magazines, the Spec Series package includes a thread protector, should users prefer to remove the compensator; the CORE system of plates and screws; a karambit-style knife with 2¼-inch blade and kydex sheath; a commemorative challenge coin engraved with a likeness of the pistol on the front and the 2023 Spec Series logo on the reverse; and, finally, a large polymer carry case with custom-cut foam to hold and display everything.

Overall, it's a neat package, but here's where it gets desirable: The MSRP is \$899. The going-price for a Faxon compensator is \$85. Slide lightening cuts and a set of tall night sights would conservatively cost about \$100, each. So, not counting the gun's finish, the extra magazines, the knife or the coin, I'd value the Spec Series pistol around \$1,200; I wouldn't have been surprised by an MSRP approaching \$1,300. Instead, Smith & Wesson



Three-dot night sights are tall enough to provide some co-witness capability with most red-dot optics.



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including Hornady Critical Defense 135-grain FTX; Remington UMC 124-grain FMJ; Lehigh Defense 90-grain Xtreme Defense (XD) — a machined, solid copper bullet — and a custom competition/training load from Wilson Combat. It quickly became apparent that the Spec Series had a strong preference for full-power, standard-weight loads. The Wilson competition ammo is intentionally loaded to lighten

recoil, but given the added weight of the Faxon comp and Trijicon sight, there wasn't enough power to reliably cycle the Spec Series' action. The lightweight Lehigh load struggled, too, but I was able to limp through G&A's protocol testing with a handful of failure-to-feed stoppages. On the other hand, the Hornady and Remington loads produced no issues. It's very common for tuned and compensated pistols to exhibit ammunition preferences, so I would simply advise using loads with standard bullet weights and standard or +P velocities in the 2023 Spec Series M&P Metal.

Overall, accuracy was excellent and on par with modern, optically sighted striker-fired pistols. The average of all 15 five-shot groups fired was 1.99 inches. A decade ago, that level of accuracy would have been reserved for custom-built handguns. Today, we expect production pistols to shoot better than 3-inch groups, especially with a red-dot sight mounted. Still, it was

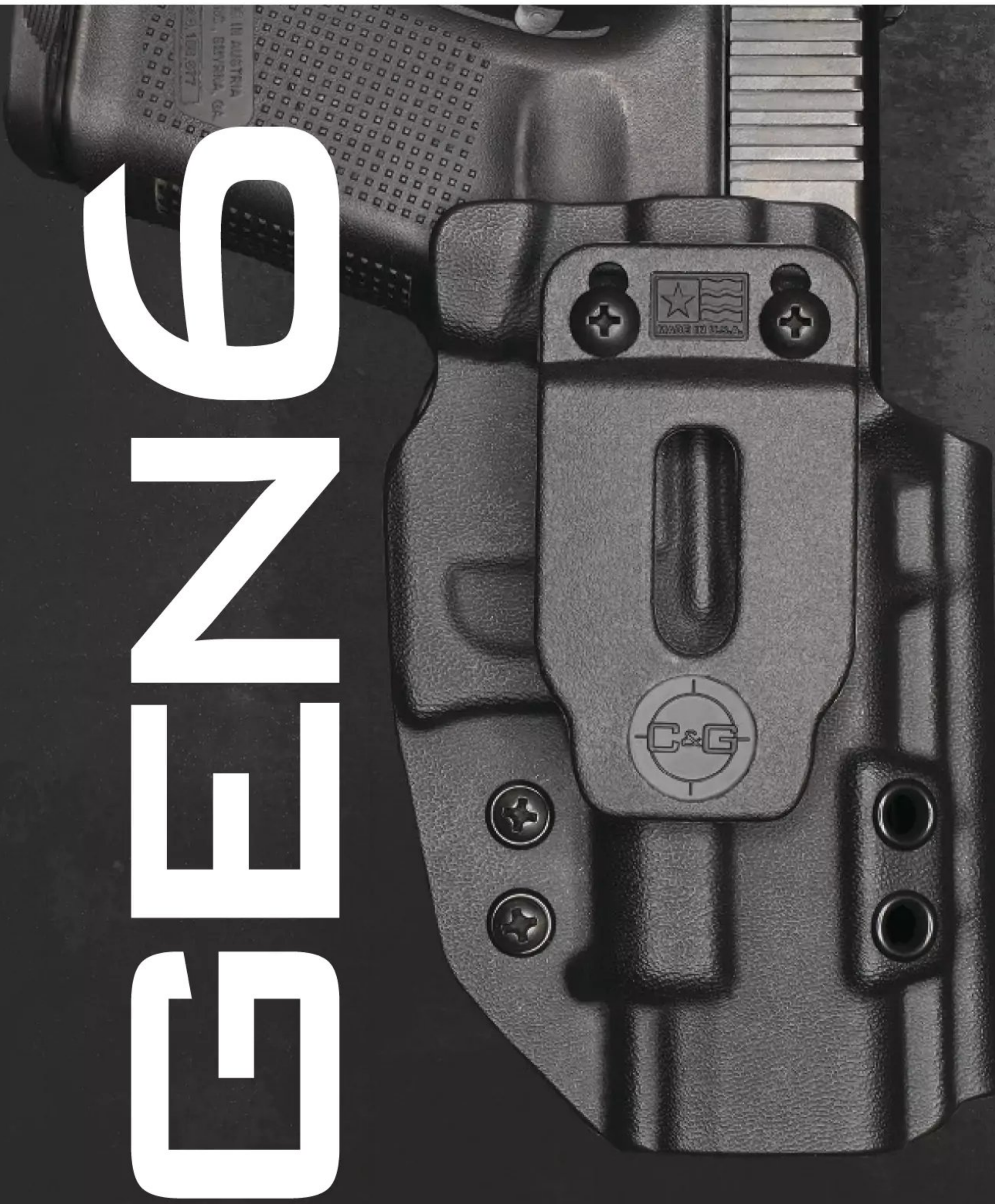
a strong showing from the Spec Series and confirmation that, when you let shooters design a gun, the results are going to be impressive. **G&A**

PERFORMANCE

LOAD	VEL (FPS)	ES	SD	BEST GROUP (IN.)	AVG. GROUP (IN.)
Hornady Critical Defense 115-gr. FTX	1,170	24	7	1.1	1.62
Lehigh Xtreme Defense 90-gr. Mono.	1,137	57	20	1.54	2.07
Remington UMC 124-gr. FMJ	1,078	36	13	1.93	2.27

Notes: Velocity is the average of 10 shots measured by a Labradar chronograph offset 6 inches from the muzzle. Accuracy is the average of five, five-shot groups fired at 25 yards from bag rests using a Trijicon RCR sight.

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BY GARRY JAMES | PHOTOGRAPHY BY PHILIP SCHREIER





FitzGerald worked at Colt for several years beginning in 1918. He developed the "Fitz Special" around 1925, which was based on a Colt Police Positive.



An original Fitz Special in .38 Special, altered from a Colt Detective Special made around 1932 to '33. It features the typical bobbed hammer and cutaway triggerguard seen on Colts modified by J. Henry FitzGerald.

TODAY, the ease of finding a fine off-the-rack defensive revolver

or auto subtly belies the tortuous history of personal-protection arms through the past few centuries. In the 14th century, despite innovations, formative, awkward handgonnes' general inefficiency relegated them almost to the novelty category. The heavy lifting by gunpowder arms, even in warfare, was principally provided by various types of cumbersome cannons at the time.

When true pistols first made an appearance around 1500 A.D., though intended primarily as combat arms, the complicated wheellock mechanisms, by the nature of the size and number of components involved, initially made employing guns anything but easy to carry on the person.

True, wheellocks were a large step forward from the

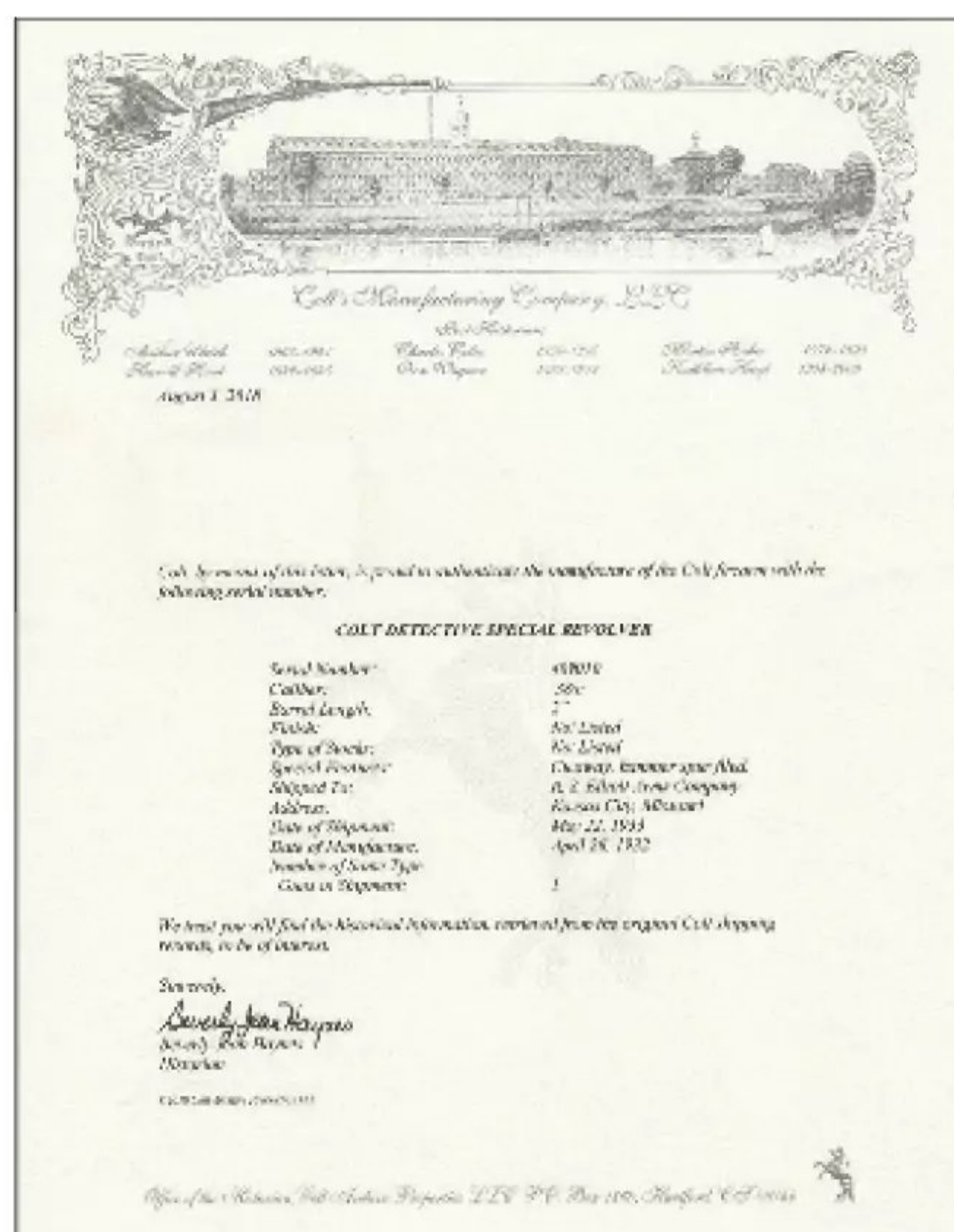
primitive handgonnes and matchlocks that preceded them, but the expense and intricate works relegated them to cavalry use, and as jewelry of the nobility. Refinements in lockwork permitted an improved degree of portability, but they were hardly what one would

regard as "easy to carry" today.

The emergence of the flintlock system in the early 1600s at last fulfilled the promise of smaller, lighter firearms that could be comfortably and effectively borne on the person. Accordingly, many large-caliber, short-barreled handguns of that disposition emerged from gunmakers' workshops during the flintlock's heyday. There were drawbacks though. Firepower could be increased to a degree by the addition of added barrels, but at the cost of mobility. Too, the device's sparking ignition arrangement, even in the finest firearms, was not as dependable in a life-or-death situation as a combatant might wish, and the vertical cock-and-steel components of the lock were anything but discrete. They could be miniaturized

and be more comfortably carried, but then power usually suffered.

When the percussion system became manifest in the early 19th century, reliability and convenience were improved — but only marginally at first. While awkward



A copy of the Colt factory letter attesting to the authenticity of the "Fitz Special" .38 Smith & Wesson featured in this article.

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Steel Dual Magazine Clip Holder for AR15 Rifles

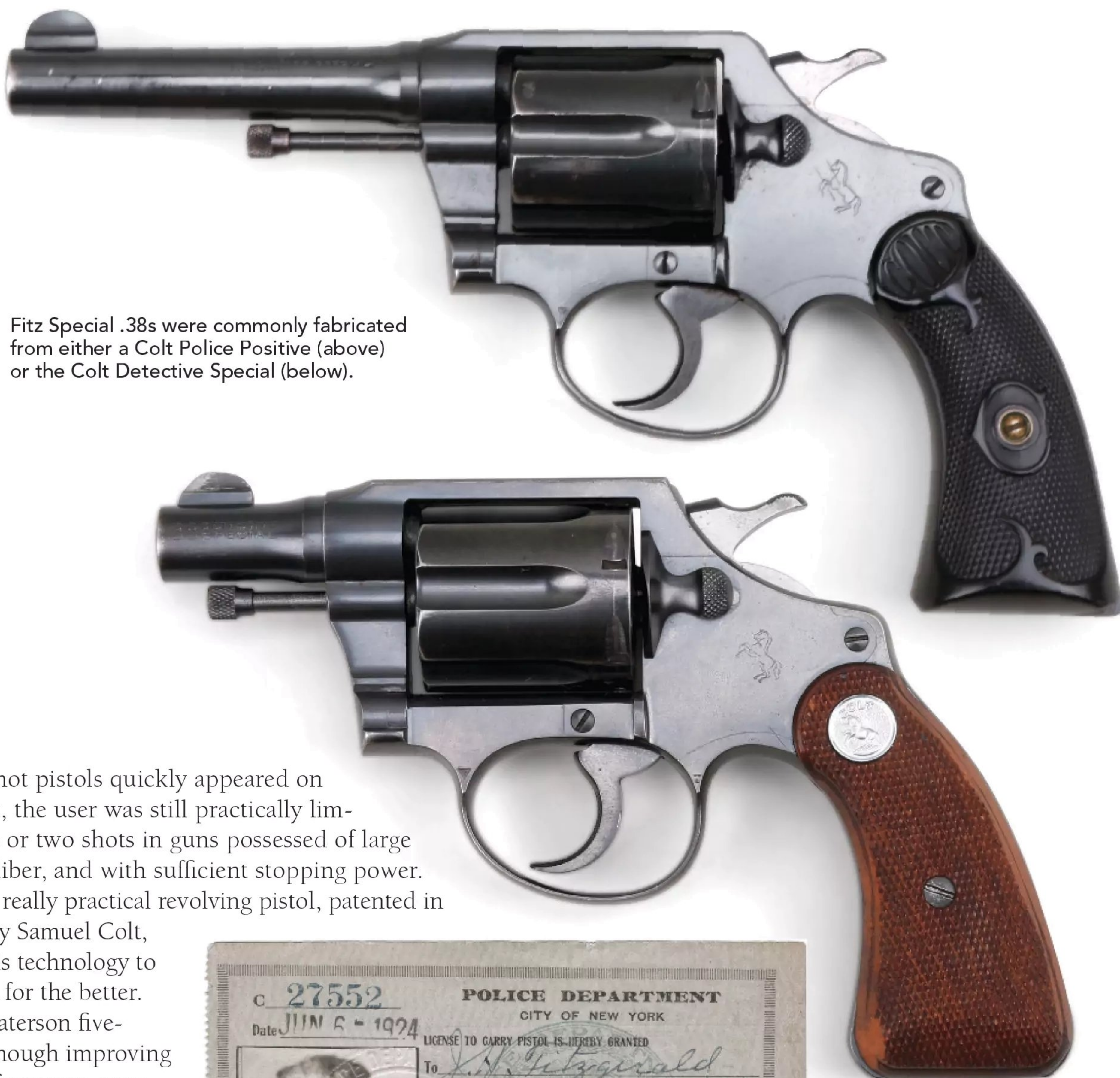
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D. 300 blackout, 8", gas hole, threaded muz. \$95. #AR483
E. 5.56, 14.5", gas hole, threaded muz. \$95. #AR484
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Fitz Special .38s were commonly fabricated from either a Colt Police Positive (above) or the Colt Detective Special (below).

multiple-shot pistols quickly appeared on the market, the user was still practically limited to one or two shots in guns possessed of large enough caliber, and with sufficient stopping power.

The first really practical revolving pistol, patented in 1835/36 by Samuel Colt, allowed this technology to take a turn for the better. His early Paterson five-shooters, though improving carry and firepower, were far from perfect due to the general delicate constitution and hidden pop-out trigger arrangement. Add to this the so-so ballistics afforded by the .28 to .36 calibers, in which various styles were offered, they were greeted with a lukewarm public reception.

Colt attempted to correct these faults by designing the more robust, larger-caliber Walker and Dragoon revolvers, but as they were far from easy to carry on the person, his fortunes continued to wane. As chance would have it, the stars aligned. In 1849, Colt introduced his .31-caliber Pocket Model, a happenstance that fortuitously coincided with the discovery of gold in California the year before. Hardy Argonauts headed for the West Coast were well-heeled enough to afford them; they now had access to a handy, trustworthy self-protection gun. Though its



John Henry FitzGerald as depicted on his New York concealed-carry license, issued on June 6, 1924.

stopping power was iffy, the Pocket sold in enough numbers to finally put Colt in the black, and, at the same time, solidified the concept of small, totable repeaters.

As the self-contained cartridge gained pre-eminence versus percussion, so did the types, shapes and styles of revolvers made to take advantage of this more user-friendly development. Calibers were universally increased, as was stopping power. Initially, the single-action held sway, but by the third quarter of the 1800s, the double-action overtook its lead and became the mechanism of choice for self-protection arms. Carry guns of varying sizes, barrel lengths and chamberings abounded. The introduction of more powerful smokeless powder added positively to the mélange. By the early part of the 20th century, fine,

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As FitzGerald had a penchant for larger calibers, variants of Fitz Specials were also altered from New Service revolvers in .45 Colt.



COURTESY PHILIP SCHREIER

portable, defense revolvers and auto pistols, by the likes of Colt, Smith & Wesson, and Webley, abounded. Design and function had apparently reached perfection. Could they possibly be made any better?

Despite worthy British and Continental examples of self-cocking pistols, Colt, long the exemplar of the best in single action, struggled with double action (DA). The firm's first foray into the field, the Model 1877 "Lightning" and the larger Model 1878 "Frontier," while handsome, well-made products, contained hidden flaws. Though possessed of glitchy mechanisms, the two revolvers fared reasonably well in the marketplace, continuing in production for a number of years. Their success, as well as that of the repeaters of rival companies, encouraged Colt to move ahead and offer other similar wares.

Its next DA, the swing-out cylinder Model 1889 Navy, was followed by the similar New Model Army & Navy (AN). The AN was a handsome piece featuring a swing-out cylinder and, despite its tepid .38 Colt chambering, authorities decided to adopt it as the United States' principal service hand-



Though the hammers have been bobbed, if one is dexterous, they can be cocked and fired in single-action mode. One must exercise considerable care when manually lowering the hammer, however.



To accommodate a shorter barrel, it is not uncommon for the ejector-rod head to be removed on Fitz Special New Services.



One ejects spent cases from a Fitz in the normal manner employed with a swing-out cylinder revolver.

gun. Harboring inherent flaws, the AN quickly underwent a number of upgrades of varying severity, resulting in no less than six versions between 1892 and 1903. Finally, production of the revolver was terminated in 1907; the flawed revolver was ultimately jettisoned by the U.S. military in favor of the infinitely superior Colt Model 1911 pistol.

Colt finally hit double-action platinum with the 1898

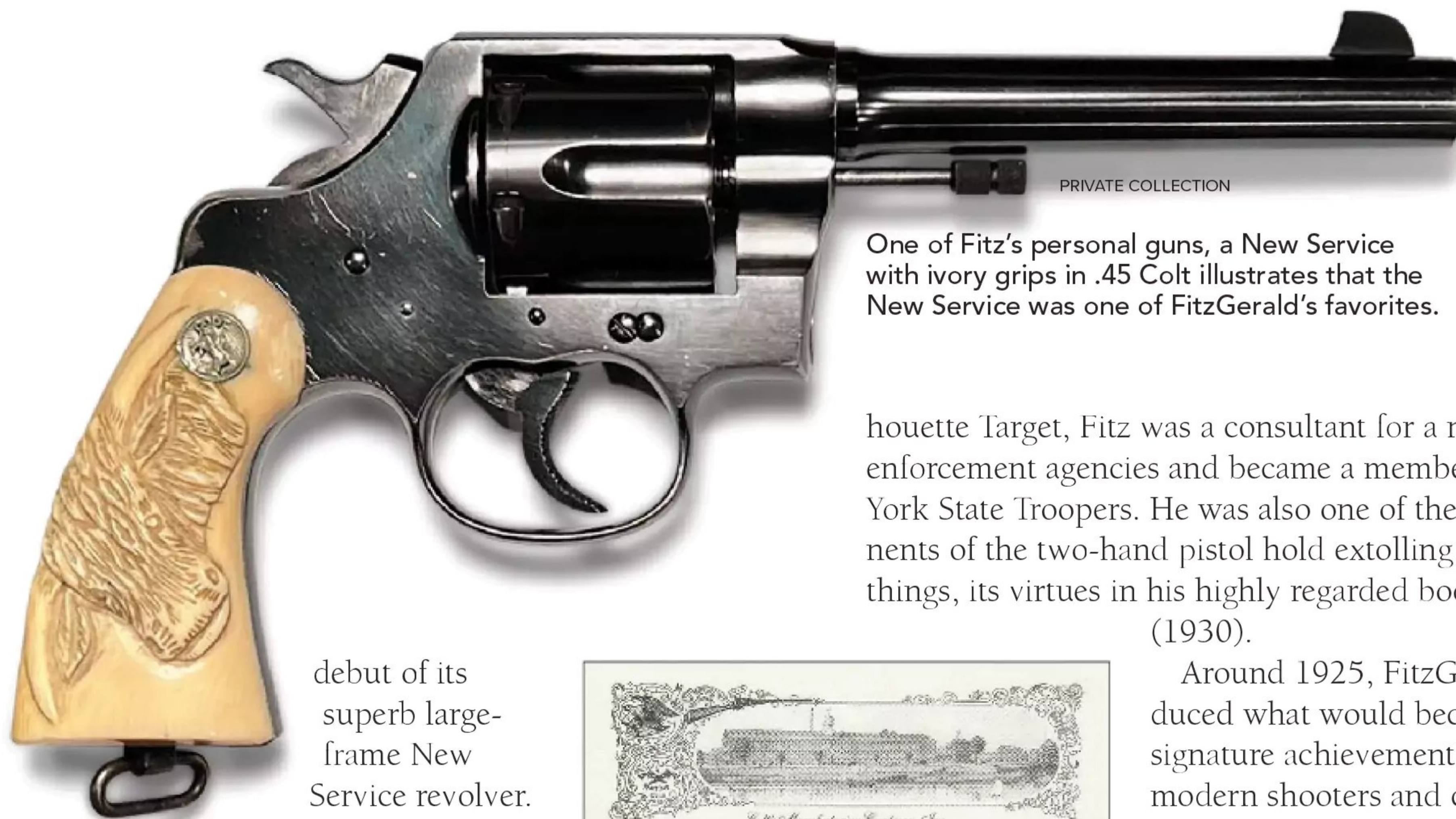
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One of Fitz's personal guns, a New Service with ivory grips in .45 Colt illustrates that the New Service was one of FitzGerald's favorites.

debut of its superb large-frame New Service revolver.

This excellent, swing-out cylinder six-shooter would be manufactured until 1944 in a score of calibers, from .38 Colt to .476 Eley. It would see military and police service with the United States, Canada, Great Britain — and others — in two World Wars, as well as between and beyond.

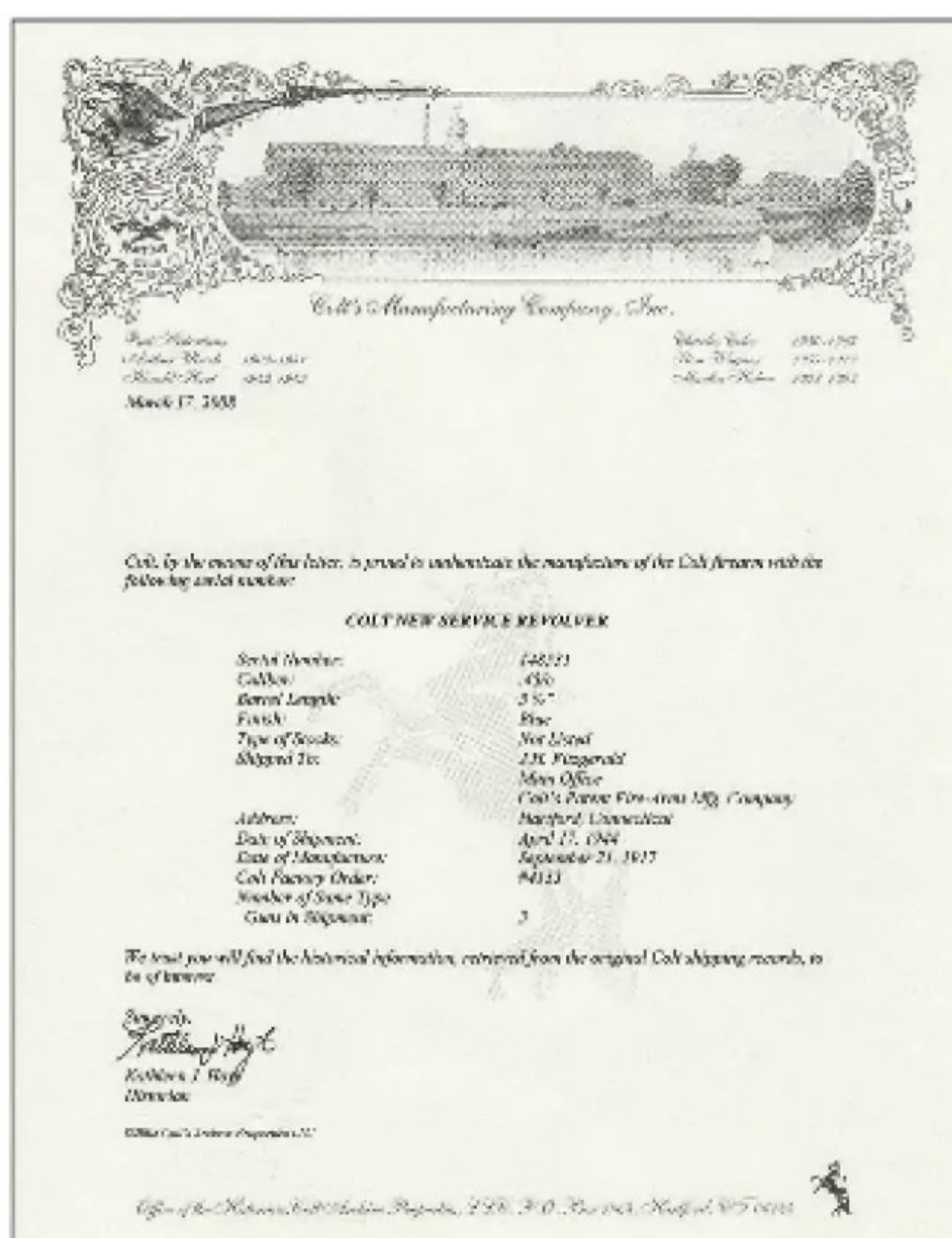
Colt was now in its DA stride. By 1930, it had added to its lineup an impressive selection of DA swing-out revolvers of service caliber. Noteworthy among them were the Army Special, Official Police, Police Positive and Officers Model. These became the go-to sidearms of police and civilians, and would have long life spans. While reliable and offered in effective chamberings, one man felt they could be improved for combat purposes.

COLT'S ADVOCATE

John Henry FitzGerald was born in Manchester, New Hampshire, around 1870. In his youth, he developed an all-abiding interest in firearms, and as he grew older he became highly adept as a competition and exhibition shooter, as well as an expert in the general composition, form and management of handguns.

A huge fan of the Colt revolver, especially the aforementioned New Service, "Fitz," as he came to be known, was described by one associate as "... the fastest man on the draw I ever saw." His acumen soon garnered the attention of the Colt Patent Fire Arms Manufacturing Company, which hired him as a salesman and spokesman for the firm. His talents also extended to the shop floor where he was adept at improving designs and contriving new ones.

As well as devising the now well-known Colt Police Sil-



A Colt factory letter affirms Fitz's ownership of the New Service seen on this page. Interestingly, though made in 1917, it was shipped in 1944, the year of his death.

houette Target, Fitz was a consultant for a number of law enforcement agencies and became a member of the New York State Troopers. He was also one of the earliest proponents of the two-hand pistol hold extolling, among other things, its virtues in his highly regarded book, "Shooting" (1930).

Around 1925, FitzGerald introduced what would become his signature achievement, at least among modern shooters and collectors: The "Fitz Special." An avid proponent of the 2-inch barrel for ease of draw and concealment, he reconfigured a .38 Special Colt Police Positive revolver by bobbing its barrel to that length, and further improved its handling by reconfiguring the grip, bobbing its hammer and cutting away the front of the triggerguard to provide quicker trigger access. At the time, none of these features were particularly unusual, however, FitzGerald was the first to assemble them in one, abbreviated, handy package.

Soon this novel revolver began drawing the attention of law enforcement officials and discerning shooters. With a few tweaks, it actually led

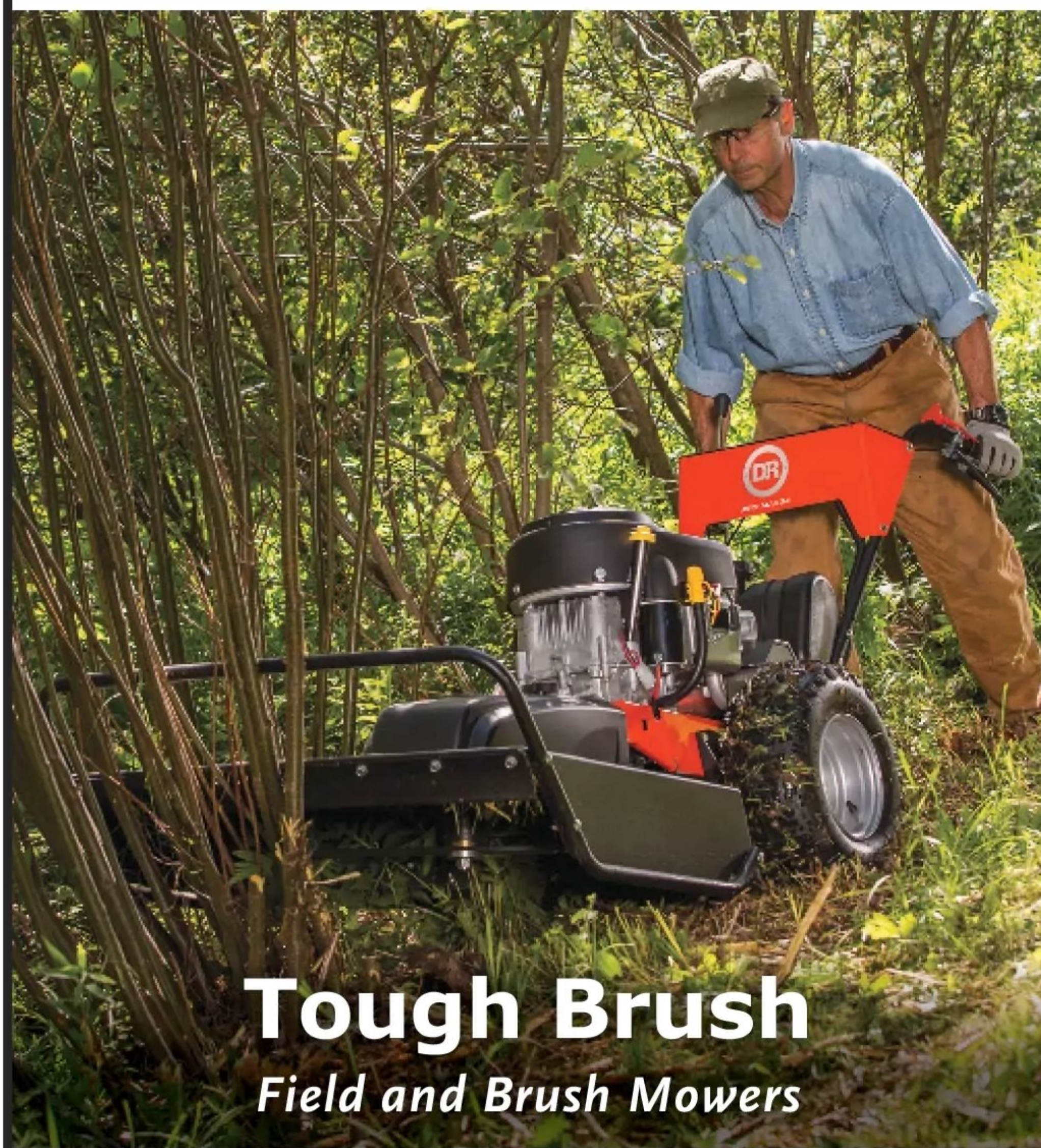
directly to the development and production by Colt of the famed Detective Special.

Fitz Special revolvers, always custom items, were made by Colt using primarily New Service, Police Positive and Detective Special models as basic platforms. It is said, "Fitz was always armed with a brace of his altered .45 New Service revolvers concealed within pockets in the front of his trousers."

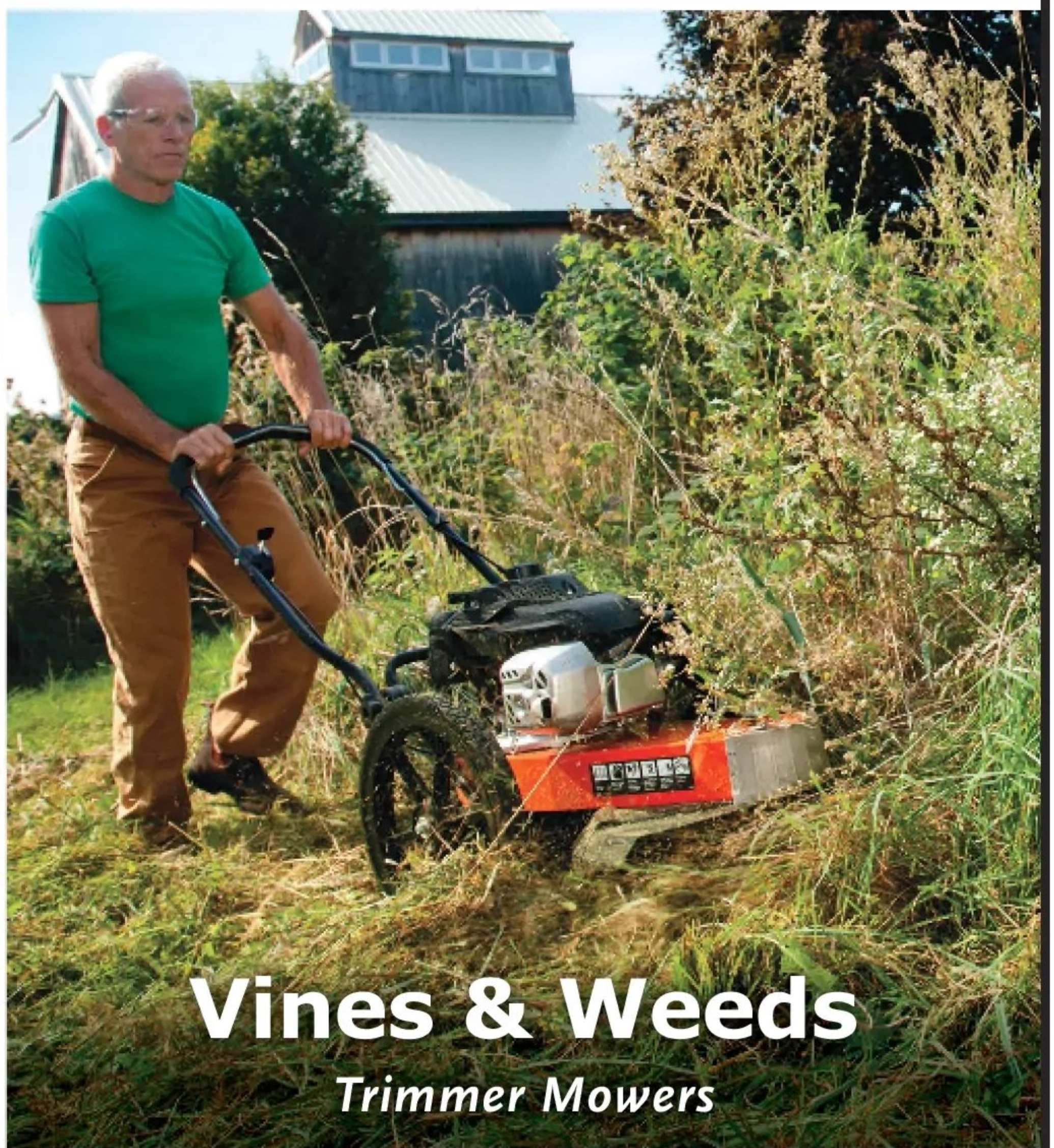
During the heyday of the Fitz Special, versions of the gun were carried by the eminent and notorious, including such figures as aviator Charles Lindberg, actor William Powell, combat expert Col. Rex Applegate, and desperado Clyde Barrow. Currently, a Fitz Special is the favored sidearm of NYPD Police Commissioner "Frank Reagan" as portrayed by Tom Selleck in the popular television series "Blue Bloods."

It is not known how many Fitz Special revolvers were produced prior to FitzGerald's death in 1944. Estimates range from 50 or 60 to around 200, but records are

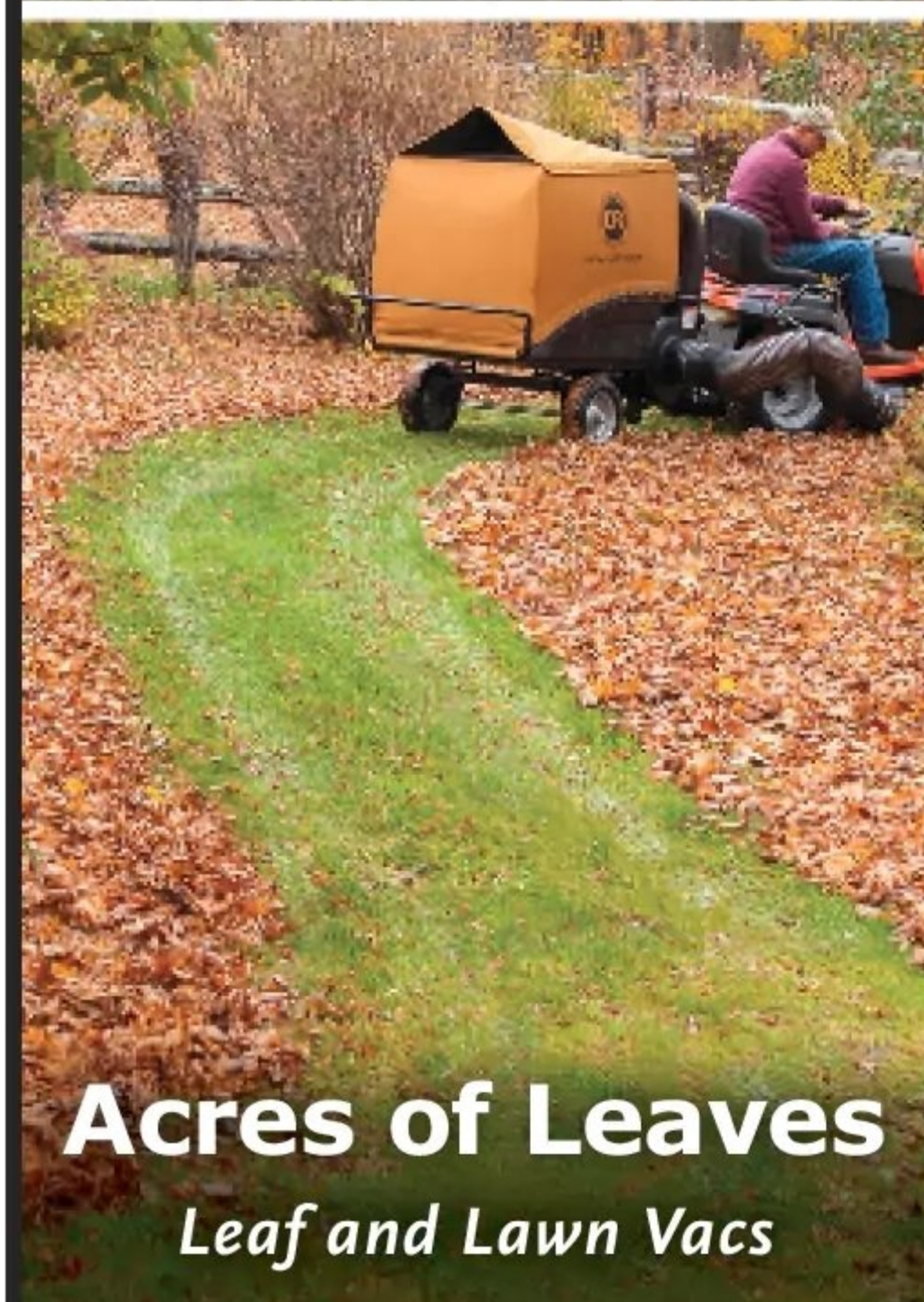
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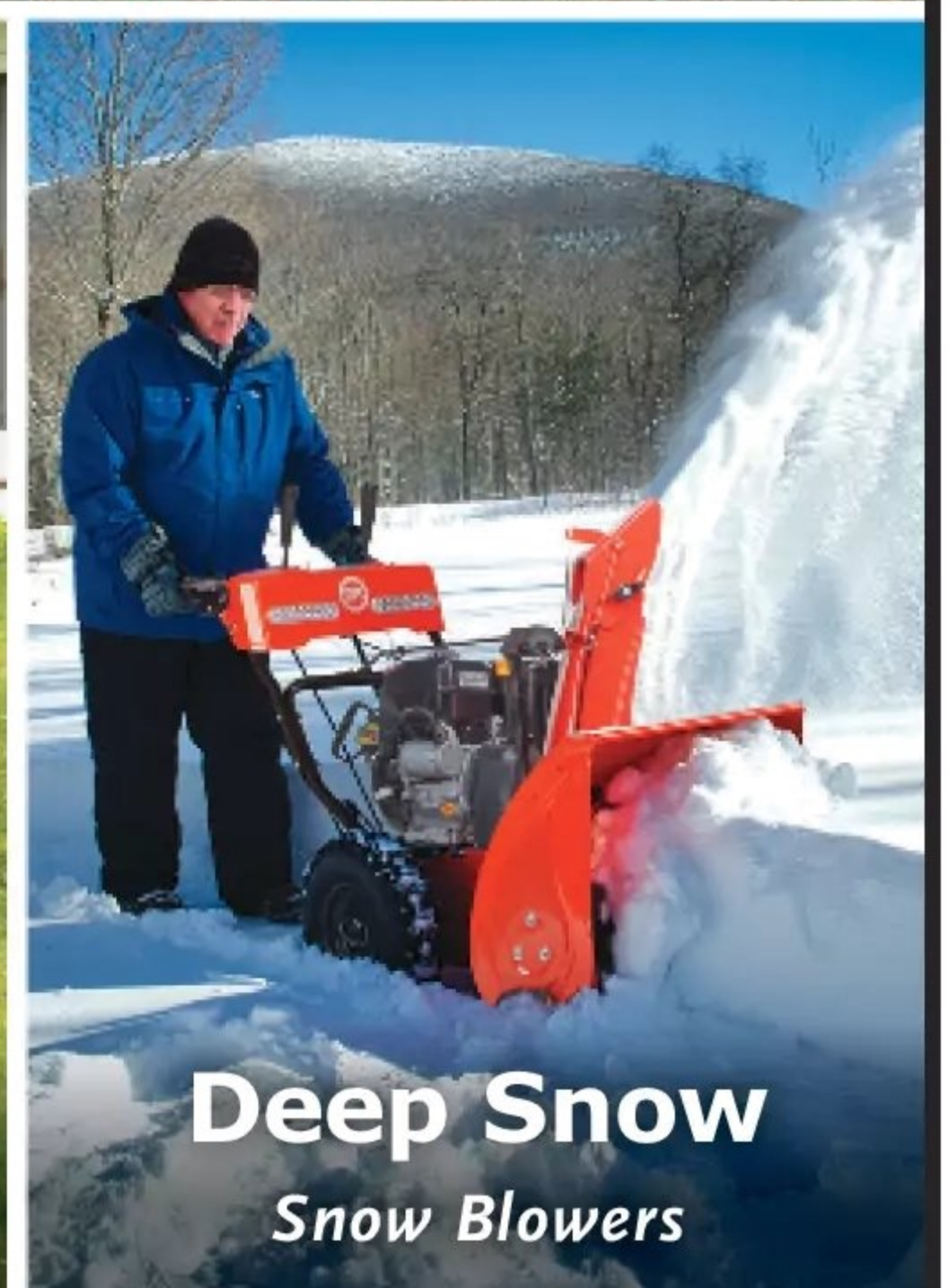
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With the exception of ease of thumb-cocking its bobbed hammer, the author found the shooting characteristics of the Fitz Special almost identical to those of a regular Colt Detective Special.

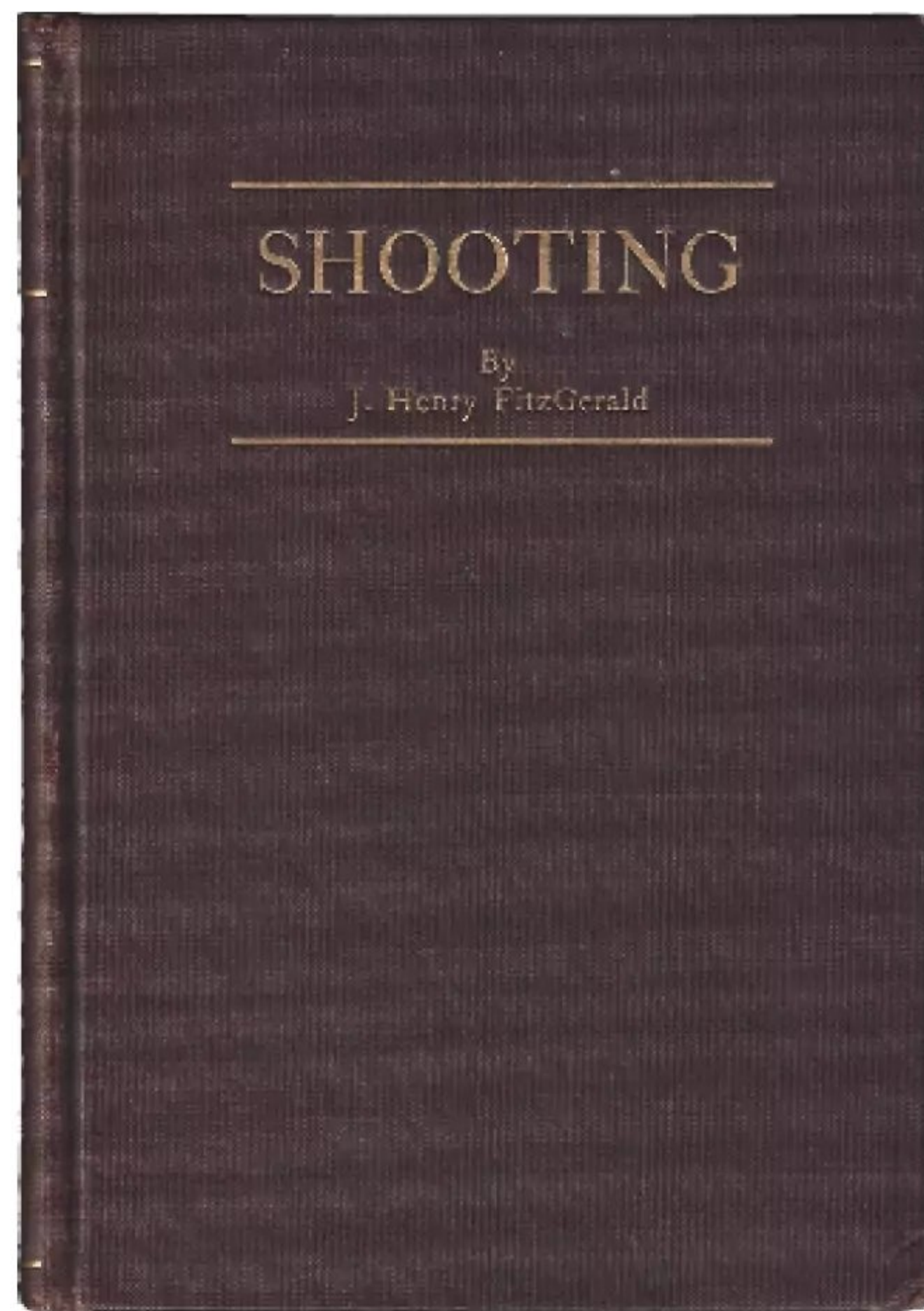


The best 3-inch group was shot offhand at 7 yards using 158-grain Remington-Peters round-nose lead cartridges in a Fitz Special made from a Colt Detective Special. Performance was similar to that of an unaltered 1935 Colt Detective Special used for control during testing.

sketchy. Today, an authenticated Fitz Special can easily bring in the lower five figures. If offered one, the buyer should definitely beware because copies of this unique revolver were even made during the inventor's lifetime — and are still being fabricated.

SHOOTING THE "FITZ"

For this article, we were fortunate to have an original Fitz Special based on a Detective Special, which, according to its factory letter, was produced on April 26, 1932, and was shipped on



In 1930, FitzGerald wrote "Shooting," a book covering shooting competition and combat shooting techniques. It also highlighted his modified "Fitz" Colt combat revolvers.

May 22, 1933. It is blue with standard checkered Detective Special-style grips.

The owner of this valuable piece graciously allowed us to fire it, though, because of the gun's worth, I was loathe to give it my usual rigorous going-over, deciding to be

content with firing offhand three cylinders-full of vintage Remington-Peters 158-grain cartridges. My chosen range was a combat distance of 7 yards.

The DA triggerpull measured a smooth 11½ pounds with single-action coming in at 3½ pounds. All groups were made in double-action. As an aside, we did try manually cocking the hammer; I found that in order to access its spur-less top, it was necessary to slightly pull the trigger to retract the hammer and provide enough of a purchase point. This is certainly not the safest, most efficient arrangement, but I doubt Fitz really intended his Special to be deliberately fired all that much.

The open triggerguard did allow for easy trigger ingress. Though my actual handling of the revolver was attenuated, it led me to wonder if this trigger and triggerguard configuration would be quite as prone to accidental discharge as some shooters have charged. More experience would be necessary for a definitive judgment.

After running through a few rounds, it felt like old home week. The gun had virtually identical handling characteristics as those of a 1935 “Dick Special” I have in my collection. It was pleasant and easy to control with groups running from 3 inches to 4¼ inches, slightly high and to the right. Like most Colts of this period, it is a class act. I’m sure Fitz would not have been surprised, nor would he have expected anything less. 



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Fitz, ever the entrepreneur, for a time marketed a gun solvent from his Connecticut home, in addition to other firearm ventures.



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Long-distance shooting is easier to jump into.

HAVE YOU TRIED IT YET?

LONG-RANGE SHOOTING

can be a tricky subject to teach people. Ballistic Editor

Dave Emary has done some substantial work explaining the math that goes into making sure a bullet arrives at the right location, and the barriers of entry into the sport have gradually shrunk. New gear, tutorials, ammunition, and rifles can be acquired with less expense; no custom guns, loads, or on-the-fly math are needed.

In August 2023, Leupold invited me out for a full factory tour at its Portland headquarters and a long-range shooting class at its private range near Madres, Oregon. You can expect to read more about the factory tour at gunsandammo.com. In this column, I'll focus on my time at the range. There, Hornady and Seekins Precision joined us to demonstrate a few of its extreme-range offerings. With targets placed from 100 to 1,600 yards, attendees received more than a fair amount of long-range practice. Seekins' representatives brought along their HIT Pro rifles chambered in 6.5 Creedmoor,



The 6mm ARC cartridge is incredibly effective at long range, even in a gas gun such as the AR-15. Scan the QR code to learn why the U.S. military wants this round.

and equipped with Leupold Mark 5HD 5-25x56mm scopes. We also tested some ARs chambered in 6mm ARC.

The 6.5 Creedmoor is an excellent cartridge to get into the sport. It has been getting progressively more affordable to shoot 6.5 CM with its 80-cents-per-round price rivaling the .30-'06 Springfield. A tougher round to find is the 6mm ARC, but I understand why U.S. Special Forces wanted it. Repeatedly hitting steel at 700 yards with an AR is a new experience for me.

The Hornady 4DOF app was used extensively used during training, which is free to download. It gave consistent windage and elevation guidelines based on the ballistic and environmental data fed into it. Additionally, any factory-loaded Hornady ammo used with the app can draw on doppler-radar testing, which Hornady performed on its cartridges.



ANTONIO ACITELLI

What stood out to me, both in the classroom and on the range, was the pride that Leupold's engineers

took in their optics. Each strike on steel signified that their designs could enable performance at the farthest ranges, penetrating the limits of what's possible with commercial products.

Field Editor Joseph von Benedikt created an introductory guide to long-range shooting that covers the basics. Read it at gunsandammo.com. 

TOP COMMENTS

In response to "Best Sellers" ("Connect," January 2024):

"I generally prefer good old used rifles such as the Savage 99 in .250-3000, which I picked up in a pawn shop a few months ago. The young pawn owner had taken in a bundle, probably due to a death in some family. He put a \$225 price tag on this 1946-manufactured gem because he'd never heard of such a weird caliber.

If I were to buy a new shooter to occupy my already too-full safe, I would opt for the 7mm PRC because everything about it makes sense to me. I don't have any love for synthetic stocks, but I'd bite the bullet and grit my teeth this time. I'd want it light weight because I'm getting older, and my Utah Mountains are getting steeper. I'd want a good recoil pad and would prefer at least a 22-inch barrel. I would want it to have a recognized-maker's name, one that my pals know by heart. A name I grew up with ...

... Of course, it would need to be guaranteed to shoot less than an inch. It seems like a \$400 Walmart-special combo, .270 with a cheap scope can do that nowadays. So I'd expect my new \$800 to \$1,200 7 PRC made by a good company to do the same, or probably better, though it would be wearing a decent scope. That old .250 Sav will put three rounds in 2 1/4 inches at 200."

— A. J. R.



A GUIDE TO LONG RANGE SHOOTING

Field Editor Joseph von Benedikt describes vital skills needed to make extreme shots.



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KEITH WOOD

Guns are back in the news.

CASE NOTES

IN NOVEMBER 2023, a U.S. District Court judge blocked enforcement of ATF Rule 2021R-08F, better known as the “pistol brace ban.” In a previous ruling, the court blocked enforcement of the rule, but only to the plaintiffs in that specific case. The injunction granted by the court in *Britto v. BATFE* applies nationwide. The Justice Department is likely to appeal the ruling, sending the case to the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals. This confusing back-and-forth brace saga has played-out through the past 10 years, and it has cost taxpayers more than “\$1 billion dollars,” according to court documents.

In December 2023, the U.S. Supreme Court declined to block the implementation of the Protect Illinois Communities Act, a sweeping law that was signed into law by Gov. J. B. Pritzker in 2022. This law bans or severely restricts many semiautomatic firearms, detachable magazines, and even “attachments” such as muzzle devices, pistol grips, folding stocks, and more. Items listed in the ban had to be registered by January 1, 2024. The registration period opened on October 1, 2023. Compliance has been extremely low. Fewer than 2,500 Illinoisans disclosed ownership of banned items during the first 30 days, less than .1 percent of expected.

The ATF is cracking down on so-called “Glock switches.” These small devices, often imported from China or made using 3-D printers, effectively convert semiautomatic handguns to automatic fire. Installing one of these devices on a firearm could result in up to 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine — so, don’t do it. The ATF reportedly seized 570 percent more conversion devices from 2017 to 2021 than it did in the preceding 5 years. More recent anecdotal data suggests that number has risen substantially since ‘21.

In October 2023, U.S. Special Operations veteran and firearm authority Larry Vickers — who has publicly bat-

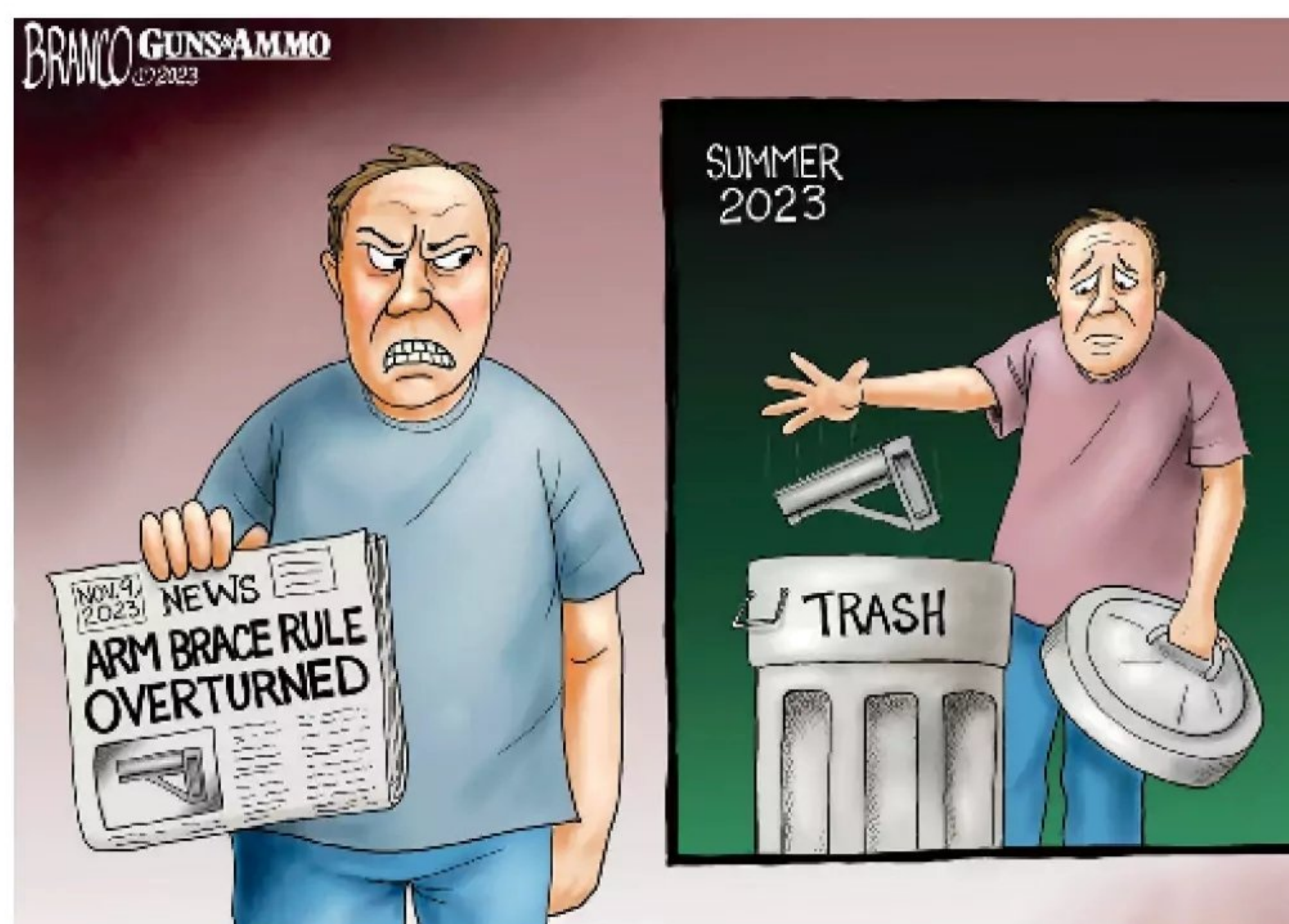
ting cancer — pled guilty to federal charges related to a conspiracy to import and obtain restricted firearms. Vickers and four other individuals were charged by a grand jury for activities that took place between 2018 and 2021. According to a statement issued by the U.S. Attorney’s Office, the men were importing rare and exotic firearms under

the “law letter” provision of the National Firearms Act (NFA). Vickers faces up to 5 years imprisonment under the firearm-related charges, and up to 20 years for a business association with Kalashnikov Concern, a Russian firearm company currently under sanctions by the U.S. In a Facebook post, Vickers said that he would “own my own actions and understand the consequences.”

The ongoing wars in Ukraine and Israel are burning up lots of ammo. So far, the domestic supply of small arms ammunition has not been significantly disrupted. A rumor that the Lake City Army Ammunition Plant had cancelled commercial contracts to meet international military demand was just that — a rumor. Where shortages have occurred, they have been the result of increased demand from panic buying, not actual supply problems.

According to new polling, gun-buying has become an increasingly bipartisan activity. The percentage of registered Democrats with a firearm in the home rose from 33 percent to 41 percent, from August 2019 to November 2023. The 60 million guns sold during the COVID-19 pandemic fed those numbers, no doubt. The NSSF reported that there were 5 million new gun owners in 2020.

Since we are on the subject of new firearm owners, now might be a good time to take one to the range. As experienced shooters, it is incumbent upon us to set good examples of safety and skill for these individuals. Don’t be afraid to invite your Gen Z neighbors to the range. Their votes count as much as yours. 





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