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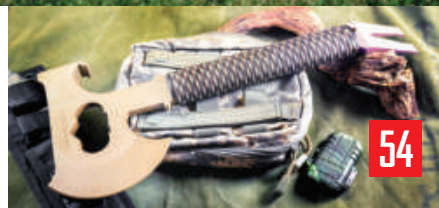
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The Custom Ruger

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COLT COMES HOME

That was a great eulogy by Jeremy Clough ("A Colt Comes Home," Sept 2024 issue). It is articles like that which make GUNS Magazine and its sibling American Handgunner such great magazines in my opinion. Yeah, it's kind of interesting to see the latest iteration of the newest plastic 9 but in the autumn of my years, I much prefer reading thoughtful pieces rather than sales plugs. By the way, Dr. Will Dabbs' articles are superb. I wonder how he

replacement of the ejector star. They also did some sort of repair on the barrel which I did not know needed attention. However, it no longer shoots at the point of aim. I'm thinking they might have changed something inside the forcing cone. Do you think Roy would consider taking a look at it and see if he could repair it?

Adam Price

I can't do the work because I'm not a professional gunsmith, but let me offer some ideas here. First off, very carefully bench rest the gun and shoot some target wadcutters or other mid-range loads, say, at seven yards. See where they hit. Then move the target to 10 yards and repeat. The odds of having to shoot farther are remote.

The vast majority of fixed sight small frame revolvers don't shoot to point of aim. Close, but rarely spot-on. Also differing loads will

change that point of impact. Lighter, higher velocity ammo will generally shoot lower, while slower rounds will strike higher.

Make sure the front sight is vertical. If they changed the shroud and barrel and installed it off-center they need to fix that. It should be obvious if they did. The forcing cone won't affect the point of impact.

When you shoot, make sure you stage the trigger and go slowly so your press doesn't affect the group as much as possible. If it's a windage issue, there's no easy fix. But again, at toe-to-toe distances it hardly matters. What's your carry load? —Roy

GUNS



has managed to cram so much living into his life. I try to read everything he writes even if I am not that interested in the PPSH-14, although I probably should be because many of the Marines I served with had up-close and personal experiences with that particular bullet launcher. Thanks for posting the moving eulogy.

C E Voigtsberger

FIXIN' SIXGUN

I bought a S&W 640-1 sometime in the mid-'90s and has been my EDC ever since. Recently I sent it back to S&W for repair which included

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REAL PISTOL CALIBER CARBINES HAVE LEVERS THE PCC ISN'T A NEW IDEA!

John Taffin

Much attention has been given recently to pistol caliber carbines, especially those chambered in 9mm. So much attention, in fact, some might think it's a new idea. Not quite. Carbines chambered in pistol-length cartridges go back well over 160 years.

IN THE BEGINNING

The very first attempts, some more successful than others, to come up with a repeating firearm involved pistol-length cartridges. The first successful repeater, the Model 1860 Henry, was chambered in the .44 Rimfire, which is definitely a cartridge that proved to be suitable for chambering in sixguns. The Spencer arrived about the same time as the Model 1860 Henry and it also featured a pistol-length cartridge. The Model 1860 Henry was improved to the Model 1866 Winchester and was still chambered in the same .44 Rimfire.

1873 saw the arrival of the first centerfire Winchester with the Model of 1873 chambered in .44 Winchester Centerfire (.44 WCF) or as it is most commonly called today, the .44-40. Meanwhile, the same year Colt issued their Single Action Army in .45 Colt. Prior to this, Colt Cartridge Conversions were available in .44 Colt and many believe the first Single Action Army was actually chambered in .44 Rimfire.

Winchester did not chamber their lever action Model 1873 in .45 Colt for a couple reasons that seem obvious. One problem would be feeding. The .45 Colt is a straight-wall cartridge, while the .44-40, .38-40 and .32-20 are all bottlenecked cartridges — or tapered if you will — making them much easier to feed from the action into the chamber. Another reason, probably the most important, is found by looking at the rims of .45 Colt cartridges. The original

rim was very small without much area for an extractor to grab.

I recall reading of handloaders complaining in the 1940s-50s of rims pulling off when cases were re-sized, giving birth to the myth of weak .45 Colt brass. Even today, the .45 Colt cartridge actually has the same size rim. A major improvement in modern brass is the channel cut around the base of the cartridge case, right in front of the rim, which allows a better grasp by the ejector. Even so, I don't believe any lever-action carbines were chambered in .45 Colt until quite a while after both Marlin and Winchester chambered the .44 Magnum in the mid-to late 1960s.



A Marlin .32 Magnum matches up nicely with a pair of custom Ruger .32 Magnums.

One of the great attributes of the 1860/1866/1873 Winchesters was how smoothly they operated. They are very particular about overall case length, however with the right ammunition it is almost a spiritual experience working the lever of one of these great guns. Today's replicas work exactly the same way. These first leverguns could easily be operated without removing the butt from the shoulder and this is true of most leverguns today. Keep the butt on the shoulder and work the action with authority.

POWER UP

After the 1873 Winchester, the Models 1876 and 1886 arrived

chambered in what we normally think of as rifle cartridges such as the .45-60 and .45-70. Then, in 1892, Winchester went back to their pistol-length roots by modernizing the 1873 Winchester into what is basically a miniaturized Model 1886, yet chambered in the same cartridges as the Model 1873 Winchester. The Model 1892 proved to be one of the slickest handling and strongest lever-action carbines of all time.

Although Real Pistol Caliber Carbines are lever actions, we do see the beginnings of handy carbines with the arrival of the .351 Winchester Self Loading (WSL) in the semi-automatic model of 1907. In 1941 the United States military adopted the .30 M1 Carbine, which was widely used in WWII. Ruger still chambers their Blackhawk revolver in .30 Carbine.

The modern era of PCC lever-action-style began in the early 1950s. Ward Koozer, a gunsmith in Arizona, began converting .32-20 Winchester Model 1892s to .357 Magnum. One of my favorite articles found in this magazine at the time was by Kent Bellah and featured his sixgun/levergun combination consisting of a 3 1/2" Smith & Wesson .357 Magnum and a Koozer-converted Model 1892.

I believe the first factory-produced Magnum pistol caliber lever-action carbines were the Winchester 1894 and the Marlin 336 both chambered in .44 Magnum in the late 1960s. In 1969, the old Marlin 1894 was resurrected and offered in .44 Magnum, and then later in .44-40. This action, being shorter, is better suited to sixgun cartridges than the .30-30-length Model 336 action. Marlin also made a special run of Trapper-style 1894 carbines in .44 Magnum and .45 Colt with a 16 1/4" barrel, full magazine tube holding seven or eight rounds depending upon the nose length of the bullet, a recoil pad on its straight gripped stock,

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.308 Winchester	165 gr.	SST	2645
.30-06 Springfield	165 gr.	SST	2749



Henry's .357 Magnum Big Boy performs exceedingly well.

checkering on forearm and buttstock, and excellent sights.

Winchester would also go on to chamber their Model 1894 in .45 Colt and .357 Magnum offering both in Trapper versions. In the 1970s, Marlin brought forth their Model 1894C chambered in .357 Magnum. This is one of the handiest carbines ever offered and our family has four of them currently in use. Marlin also chambered this little carbine in .32 Magnum, .32-20, and .25-20. Since they did not come up with one in .327 Magnum, I had my local 'smiths convert one of the .32 Magnums to this longer cartridge.

PERFECT TRAPPER

My favorite rifles are lever guns, and my favorite lever guns are the Trapper models, that is those with barrel lengths of 16 1/4". Before government in its infinite wisdom made shorter lengths illegal, factories offered barrel lengths such as 12" and 14" that would certainly be exceptionally handy.

My all around Perfect Rifle is a PCC levergun chambered in .357 Magnum. Properly loaded, it makes a very effective home defense rifle. Especially in such a situation, I appreciate the fact I'm in control of loading the next cartridge into the chamber. There is nothing I am likely to encounter in my area that cannot be handled with a .357 levergun such as this, and if I ever wander into a more challenging environment I can always reach for a Trapper in .44 Magnum or set up for Heavy .45 Colt.

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LESSONS FROM A SHOOTING MATCH COMPETITION IS THE BEST TESTING LAB

Massad Ayoob

It has been a long time since I was a serious competitor on the “pro tour” of handgun matches but I love it and still compete when I can. I think of it as a “pressure laboratory” — I’ve talked to a lot of combat and gunfight survivors who said they felt less pressure in a shootout than they did at the match.

UNDER PRESSURE

At the first Bianchi Cup in 1979, I shot on the same squad as my friend Jim Cirillo, the legendary NYPD Stakeout Squad gunfighter. As we walked between stages, he blurted, “Jesus Christ, I never felt this much pressure in any of my gunfights!” I asked him why and he replied, “There weren’t all these people watching you, and there wasn’t all this time to build up to it!”

Just as there are lessons learned in race car driving that can translate to the street in terms of both more-capable vehicles and more-capable “emergency drivers,” there are things you can learn from the competition arena. These things translate directly to real-world handgun needs, both life-saving situations like those of Cirillo — who said that the best gunfighters on his squad were the ones who shot matches — and to handgun hunters.

Note J.D. Jones, one of the all-time great handgun hunters, was also a



Pins fly as speed and accuracy with 9mm PCC are demonstrated.

champion-level shooter: The same was true of my fellow writers Mike Venturino whom we recently lost all too soon and John Taffin, who is thankfully still with us. Apart from our own motivations to shoot, it’s participatory journalism — we can share with you our own experiences in a “you are there” sort of way and with the info we get from observing and interviewing the winners.

ON THE HARDWARE SIDE

Let me focus on my favorite match, The Pin Shoot, which I’ve competed in 30 times now. Lessons include:

You don’t need a tricked-out gun as much as some think. This wasn’t my best year and my one trip to the prize table in “top 10” out of more than 170 shooters was in “Stock Gun.” This is where you can’t have compensators as in “Pin Gun” or optical sights as in “Space Gun” division. I shot a well-worn, out-of-the-box

Springfield Armory Range Officer with a “street trigger” better than a customized, compensated Springfield with a “match trigger” and the same .45 ACP ammo. Part of it may have been that I had been carrying this gun daily and teaching with it for weeks before, and had a lot more rounds through it than the comp gun. I’d only had time to shoot the competition model enough beforehand to verify sights were point of aim/point of impact.

I wasn’t the only one, though. Patrick Sweeney had a great year, winning both Pin Gun and Stock Gun overall. He, too, shot his best with the stock gun. His winning time with the compensated pistol was 24.90 seconds to blast five heavy bowling pins off a table five times over, but his time with the un-compensated, harder-kicking stock gun was 23.80 seconds.

The lessons there? The gun you are most familiar with may give you your best performance, and sometimes the gun that’s harder to shoot forces you to focus better on the fundamentals.

Another lesson: As the novelist and hunter Robert Ruark famously said, “Use enough gun,” to which I would add, use enough load. This year there was a five-pin event geared for 9mms in which the pins were set farther back on the table. However, lots of 9mm shooters found they still needed more than one shot to get the pins all the way off the rack. The winner of that match was Richard



Bruce Barlow shot his first Pin Shoot with stock GLOCKS and was called to the prize table twice. Expensive hardware not required!



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Hupp, using his preferred 8-shot S&W .357 Magnum revolver. Hmmm ...

And don't forget, carbines generally perform better than pistols. Winning PCC (Pistol Caliber Carbine) time was Brandon Schwenke's 4.0 seconds for 13 pins versus Jess Christensen's winning 9mm pistol time of 6.2 seconds for 12 pins.

SOFTWARE LESSONS

Practice for what you expect to need. I had been shooting cardboard targets in qualifications and demonstrations for students but hadn't shot a bowling pin since "same time last year." It showed in my sub-par performance. Decades ago cops learned one-handed bullseye practice ill-suited them for close-range gunfights and changed training accordingly. Smart hunters know groups fired from the bench don't equal hits on game from standing positions. Same principle. Next year I'll shoot some pins before the match.



Patrick Sweeney, seen here with a Springfield Echelon won at the Pin Shoot, had a lot to do with creating the Stock Minor event.

The rule of gunfighting, "bring friends with guns," holds true. I can't quantify it because team scores don't

reflect individual members' performance at the Pin Shoot, but I'm convinced when you shoot on a team, you try harder to support your comrades than you try for yourself. Every year, I seem to shoot better in teams than in individual matches and the principle seems to hold true in actual combat.

Bring more ammo than you think you'll need. Every year, I see people with too few magazines getting flustered trying to refill them while the pin targets are being reset. It puts them under unnecessary pressure. I try to come to the firing line with enough full mags to invade a small island and it's one less distracting thing to worry about. In the real world, similarly, no gunfight survivor has ever said "Gee, I wish I'd had less ammo when I was under fire."

Give competition a try if you haven't already. It teaches you things as you observe and correlate the performance of others — and yourself. **GUNS**

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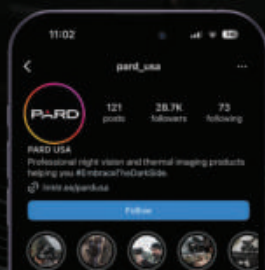
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GUNSITE



DON'T BE A PROBLEM STUDENT YOU NEVER WANT TO BE 'THAT GUY'

Ken P. Campbell
Gunsite CEO

Every profession has “that guy” — the one who always must know the most, have the best experience, did it bigger and better and on and on and on.

It is my pleasure to greet each class on Training Day One (TD1) at Gunsite Academy. I consider it a great opportunity and honor and a highlight of my week. As we discuss the history of Gunsite, the highlights of their class, where the necessary amenities are located and more, I warn them about “that guy.”

BEST OF THE BEST

Gunsite has some of the best instructors in the firearms training world. As our founder, the late Lt. Col. Jeff Cooper said: “They have seen the elephant.” One does not buy their way to being a Gunsite Instructor, they earn it. And it is a tough ticket to punch.

I ask the students on the first morning to keep an open mind when their instructors suggest methods of shooting to them differing from what the student currently uses. Try this stance, try this grip, let's move your trigger finger a bit, have you considered a different firearm? The vast majority are open-minded and eager to listen to try to improve their gun handling, marksmanship and mindset.

However, we occasionally have “that guy or gal.” Gunsite Rangemaster to student: “Let's modify your body position a bit.” Student looks at Rangemaster: “This is the way I've always done it.” Sigh

... “Let's modify your grip a bit.” Student: “This is the way my grandfather/dad/husband told me to do it.” Gunsite Rangemaster — How about you consider a different firearm that might fit your hand better?” “Student — “This is the gun my spouse told me to use and was best” or “This is the one the guy at the gun counter said would work well.”

As an aside — Never try to teach a family member or spouse to drive a stick shift, paddle a canoe or shoot. Further, men should never try to purchase their lady's gun purse, holster or firearm without them present. Find a suitable trainer and let them do it. Trust me on this ...

You saved and saved your money, found the perfect firearm, picked your course, arranged for the vacation from work, purchased the plane ticket or fuel, rented a car, got the hotel, bought meals but now you want to do it “your way.” What is the point? Did you come to learn, or simply visit?

THE BOTTOM LINE

Let me make this simple — Why did you send us all the money? If you are going to do it the way you've always done it, why are you here? You could have stayed home and shot at soda cans out at grandpa's farm. You really wouldn't learn anything but you won't here either, if you don't let yourself.

What may have been cutting edge 15



A shooting class might just puncture several of your long-held beliefs but in the spirit of learning, always try the instructor's suggestions. You can always disregard them if they don't work.

years ago is no longer. Despite what interweb pundits say, *The Modern Technique* developed by Jeff Cooper 50 years ago has and continues to evolve. Techniques and technologies change, and good instructors know this and teach this.

Please heed the tried-and-true advice to “Listen and Do.”

Men — Put on your thick skin for what I am about to tell you. Women are better students than men as they truly “Listen and Do.” Us men folk tend to not ask directions, open the instruction manual or even look on YouTube. We know all there is to know about everything. Ladies listen to our suggestions, do it, and discover it works. Some of the men require a switch to cut off the Juniper tree on the back of their calves.

MORE THAN WORDS

I go to different schools. When I go, I pay my money to learn their way. Many years ago I returned to Bill Rogers School in rural Georgia. Bill shoots Isosceles and I prefer Weaver. However, I tried to listen and do. Billy, the experienced Coach, kept coming up and adjusting my arm. The old Rangemaster (God rest his soul, Ronnie Dodd) yelled at Billy: “Leave him alone. He's hitting.” My response was for him to smack me on the side of the head as I came to learn the Rogers way.

All jesting aside, if you take nothing else from *GUNS* this month, whenever you go to that favorite class, heed their advice and try their methods. You might be surprised and find it works for you. If not, tuck it away in the tactical toolbox inside your brain as you might need it a later time. More simply put: Don't be “That Guy!”

GUNS



You've spent a lot of time and money to attend professional shooting classes. Why wouldn't you listen to the instructors? Photo: B.T. Wheat

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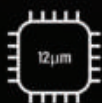
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THREE WISE CHOICES

WHAT EVERY RIFLEMAN NEEDS



Semi-auto .223 rifles are workhorses around a farm or ranch. This older Ruger Mini-14 (bottom) has a 1-10 twist while the current Ranch rifle (top) has a 1-9 twist.

Dave Anderson

Back in 1905, two brothers claimed homesteads on adjacent quarter sections in western Canada. They built houses, raised families, shared labor and assets. Among the shared items were firearms. Each had a .22 rifle. One brother acquired a Winchester 1892 .25-20 WCF, the other, a Remington-Lee sporter in .30-40 Krag. The .25-20 was mainly for protecting the chicken coop from predators such as coyotes, fox, badgers, skunks. I suspect it was also used on hawks and owls, legal at the time, and on the occasional white-tail deer.

The .30-40 was the “big game” rifle, which at the time meant mainly deer plus the occasional moose or elk wandering far from its usual stomping grounds. Game populations were not nearly as high as they were to become later but wild game often made for meat on the table, so a pig or steer could be sold rather than eaten.

TIME MARCHES ON

Fifty+ years later, the brothers were retired and living in Arizona as -40° winters are something you can learn to tolerate but never get used to. A new group of young men had taken over the farms and the jobs. One fellow had two Savage centerfire rifles, a Model 40 in .250 Savage and a Model 99 .300 Savage. Another, who always had to have the newest and latest, had two Winchester

88 rifles, a .243 and a .308. One fellow, a known oddball, had two bolt-action rifles — a Winchester 70 .270 and a Remington 722 in .222 Rem. It goes without saying they each had a .22 rifle.

Seventy years later some things have changed. There are far more rifle models, far more cartridges from which to choose. Frankly I don’t know how youngsters manage. When I was a pre-teen hunting enthusiast in the 1950s it already seemed complicated enough. If you wanted a big game rifle, it would be in .270, .30-06, .300 Savage or .308. A varmint cartridge would be .22 Hornet, .222 Rem., or for the power-mad a .220 Swift. “Dual-purpose” cartridges like the .243 Win. or .244 Rem. were gaining a lot of interest. Surely they had to be superior to the old .250 Savage — they were newer, after all.

Some things have changed, others are much the same. In North America the game we hunt and the pests after our livestock and gardens haven’t changed much. There may be more elk and fewer mule deer, more coyotes and fewer groundhogs, but generally speaking, it is the same type of shooting challenges.

BASIC BUILDING BLOCKS

Believe it or not there are people who want or need to own rifles but want only the essentials, the irreducible minimum. For a rifle enthusiast such as me, this is just nuts. I’m always looking for a reason to add another

rifle. I try to understand those who disagree. I know people who love hunting and love the outdoors but consider rifles just tools. They’d just as soon hunt with a muzzleloader, shotgun, compound bow or crossbow.

They seem puzzled why I need 10 or a dozen rifles just for deer hunting. Rifles are expensive, they explain. They need to be cleaned, stored, scoped, provided with ammunition. Why go to so much trouble just to avoid the minor inconvenience of still hunting and stand hunting with the same rifle?

I remember buying a rifle shortly after getting married. My bride said, “I don’t see why you can’t hunt deer with your duck rifle. I really think you could if you wanted to.”

GOOD ADVICE

So, for those afflicted with a practical nature, my recommendation for a minimum is pretty much the same as half a century or a century ago — a rimfire, a vermin/pest/small game rifle and a big game rifle. To be specific, a .22LR, a .223 Rem. and a .308 Win. There’s nothing particularly magic about the .223 and .308 but they are perfectly adequate and available in a wide range of models and price ranges. Ammunition and reloading components are widely distributed.

Ammunition resupply is a bigger issue than perhaps we old timers realize. Young shooters are neither dumb nor blind. They see empty and picked-over ammo shelves and don’t like the thought of searching around to find ammo. Believe it or not, many have no interest in reloading. Cartridge availability has far more appeal than minor improvements in ballistics.

These practical types can teach us old timers a thing or two. At present and for the foreseeable future, the .223 and .308 cartridges will remain widely distributed and moderate in price — or at least no more expensive than other cartridges. They are sound practical choices for the new shooter. In fact any rifle enthusiast will find it prudent to have something on the rack capable of firing these cartridges. The day may come when we are glad to have any ammunition at all, without being too fussy!

GUNS



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IT'S NOT YOUR GUN! FIVE MISTAKES THAT HANDICAP BIRD HUNTERS

By Tom Keer

I'll never forget the hunting season when I missed so much for so long that I thought about wrapping my shotgun around a tree. A poor workman blames his tools, right? Well, the way I figured it my stock must have had too much drop, the fixed chokes should have been opened and my loads had to have been off.

I eventually realized I needed to focus on my shooting mistakes. You know the kind — cheek not on the stock, too much muzzle rock — and all the rest. My technique contributed to the mess of being above, below, behind, and never quite in front of the bird. Fortunately, the season ended without fanfare. I still have that shotgun and I shoot it quite well.

After some soul-searching, I eventually realized five common shotgunning mistakes handicapped my shooting. The great thing was that they were easily resolved.

POOR FOOTWORK

Brush, vines, and plants that tangle feet make for terrible stances. Most of the time my feet were too close to each other and my lower body didn't support the movement of my upper body. Other

times I had too wide of a stance which caused my back to tighten. It's why I typically shot behind the bird.

The solution was to read the woods and fields and pick an easier-to-navigate path. Yeah, I got brownie points for plowing through the jungle, but each point was lost with a missed bird. Stance is the foundation of a shot and getting a good one creates a smooth, even swing and puts more birds in the bag.

PROPER POSITIONING

Being in the right place at the right time is important for hitting birds. If you're putting on a pheasant drive in a field and you're lagging behind, then you won't get a shot. The solution is to stay in line. Not only will you get a better shot, but your hunting buddies will appreciate you being safe. And get up on birdy dogs, too. Folks drag behind usually because they're out of shape or because they stayed up too late the night before. You'll kill more birds if you shed a few pounds and get up on those dogs.

CHECKED SWING

The concept of standing in thick cover and shooting into the open can get stuck in our heads. Why? We reason more shot will hit our birds.



Haste Makes Waste — “Speed kills” and it's true, unless you're too fast with your gun and have poor form, resulting in a miss. Don't wait all day, either. Find the middle ground for a quick, lethal shot.

Because of their thin skin, we only need a few well-placed BBs to drop a bird. And it's much easier to deliver them if we're standing in a more open area and shooting into the thickness. Sure, some pellets will be deflected, but only a handful need to make contact. Let your dog scour the thick stuff while you look for open areas adjacent to the cover. Birds like edges and those can be found along a clear cut, a skidder trail, hedgerow or two-track. You'll be glad you did.

HASTE MAKES WASTE

Watching a bird fly away can make us speed up our shot. We panic, “he's getting away,” we think so we hurry. But how fast do you really have to be when your load is speeding out beyond your muzzle at a pace faster than 1,200 feet per second?

Rushed shots are loaded with mistakes. We don't take the time to establish a proper stance, acquire the target sharply, mount our shotgun, swing, and follow through. There is also the opposite — if we set up our chokes and loads to be deadly at 40 yards but hit a bird flushed at 20 yards, then we won't have much left for supper. Or, in most cases, our pattern will be so tight that we'll miss.

For the most part we always have more time than we think so the solution is to find the middle ground. Be quick but smooth, be deliberate and not random. Get on the bird as quickly as you can without sacrificing mechanics.

Proper Positioning — Being out of position does more than create a miss; it can make for an unsafe hunt, too.



WRONG CLOTHING

Outerwear frequently causes lousy gun mounts. It's common to layer up on a cold day but if your layers are bunched they'll grab your shotgun butt. Wear so many bulky layers you resemble the Stay Puff Marshmallow Man and your length of pull gets altered. Tight clothing isn't any better because it restricts movement and encumbers a swing. Rough cotton jackets grab shotgun butts, especially if they have rubber recoil pads.

Wingshooting is an athletic sport. Fleece vests provide warmth and comfort while allowing for good shoulder movement. If it's cold or if you need more pockets to hold your shells, GPS or compass, e-collar transmitters and birds, then wear them under a vest or a strap vest. The layered approach works well to dissipate moisture and a base layer to wick away perspiration helps us stay warm and dry while delivering lethal technique.

If your shotgun has a rubber recoil pad, wrap it with electrician's tape.



Attire that contributes to a fluid swing helps hunters kill more birds. Layering is always a good idea, especially when it's cold.

Two or three strips placed where the butt meets your shoulder are enough. Then wrap the edge with one long strip. The pad will slide up your clothing as easily as if it were made from leather. It's tough to get on a bird when your clothes mess up your mount, so leave your work clothing at home and wear hunting-specific

gear. It's designed a certain way for a reason.

Michael Jordan said, "you miss" 100% of the shots you never take." But when we get close to missing 100% of the shots we take, we get frustrated. Improvise, adapt and overcome with a few tweaks. It's how you can make this season one for the books.

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J.C. HIGGINS MODEL 80 A HI-STANDARD BY ANY OTHER NAME IS JUST AS SWEET

Payton Miller

If you're an "oldies but goodies" type of guy, searching out store-brand guns can be a fruitful method for acquiring classic — or even long out of print — specimens from major firearms companies.

Back in an earlier, less-complicated time, store-brand guns were pretty common. Essentially, they were an established model by a maker such as Winchester, Stevens, Marlin or High Standard, marketed by a large chain store such as Sears & Roebuck, Montgomery "Monkey" Ward, J.C. Penny or even more specialized outfits like Western Auto Supply. They were given a new name and model number of course and were often priced below the same or similar item from the original maker. The concept has pretty much gone by the boards today — along with many of the store chains themselves — which is a shame.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

My experience with store-brand guns was inextricably linked to my early experiences with firearms. Examples? My Dad's .270 Model 50 J.C. Higgins from Sears & Roebuck was an imported FN Mauser I'd put up against darn near anything ever. Another? My Depression-era Sears Ranger 20-gauge 520 pump courtesy Stevens, with a design assist from John M. Browning, which was my first serious dove gun. And then there's a buddy of mine who is the proud owner of a Western Auto Supply "Revelation" .30-30 lever gun — a Marlin 336 by any other name! Naturally, a sort of "reverse snobbery" appeal was, and is, a big chunk of the cool factor of store-brand hardware. Truth is, the appeal wouldn't carry far if the guns weren't proven products from seriously excellent manufacturers.

My latest experience with store brands happened to be the pistol side of things, a .22 rimfire side to be exact. It was a slab-sided variant of the High-Standard Dura-Matic and was "store branded" as Sears' J.C. Higgins Model 80. It was produced between 1955 and 1962 and sold for a bit less than other members of the Dura-Matic line in the Hi-Standard catalog.

Throughout its storied 92-year history, Hi-Standard produced .22 autopistols covering every rimfire niche from Olympic competition through military training to "picnic plinking" and



The Model 80 delivered excellent groups with CCI Pistol Match ammo at 50 feet. A bit of sight drifting and/or experimentation with different loads could bring the Point of Aim and Point of Impact closer together.

small game hunting. As far as the J.C. Higgins Model 80 goes, you can reasonably expect to pay around \$400 for one in good shape today. It remains an excellent plinker and hunting tool as we were soon to discover.

MORE VALUE ...

Our particular specimen featured a 6.5" barrel, fixed sights and a brown one-piece synthetic grip with a thumb-rest. With a reasonably forgivable amount of sales hyperbole, the preamble of the original Sears manual reads as follows:

"The J.C. Higgins Model 80 gives you more handgun value for your money than any other autoloading pistol you can buy. From its sleek comfort-contour grip to the muzzle of its gracefully tapered barrel, this is truly a quality handgun that will delight every sportsman, plinker and target shooter."

Turns out those long-ago Sears Roebuck copywriters weren't altogether off the mark. We used CCI Pistol Match ammo to dope out the possibilities of our *pistola* and were pleasantly surprised, thanks in no small part to the broad, easy to acquire sights and reasonably crisp 3-lb. trigger. Actually, considering the brand-heritage of the gun, we really weren't *that* surprised. Nor should we have been. Basically, at 50 feet we got close to big "single hole" groups slightly above and left of our point of aim. Functioning was flawless, although we didn't have any hollow point ammo on hand, which can sometimes be problematic in autos.

ACCURACY DEFINED

Of course, all .22 pistols are "ammo finicky" in terms of accuracy as well as function so you should try as many brands as possible before settling on your One and Only. We just happened to get lucky early on with the CCI Pistol Match 40-grain solids.

Thankfully, John Wightman, the owner of our Model 80 had seen fit to acquire several magazines, all of which performed flawlessly. One of the gripes concerning Hi-Standards has been the fact that mags from one model may, or may not, fit another one. But

our Sears-branded pistol accepted magazines from a Hi-Standard Supermatic Citation — a welcome bonus. We can't speak for other Hi-Standard models, so *caveat emptor* should be the guiding principle for any potential magazine buyers for the J.C. Higgins Model 80.

Here's an interesting sidelight: Sears' J.C. Higgins sporting goods line was named after a long-time employee who retired in 1930. The name apparently caught the imagination of the corporate brain trust as it sounded "outdoorsy." The J.C. Higgins line was eventually replaced by the Ted Williams line in 1960. At the risk of agitating New York Yankee fans, Williams — perennial star of the Boston Red Sox and arguably the greatest hitter of all time — was also an exceptionally skilled hunter and fisherman, thus an ideal candidate for Sears' name-branding.

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The Case For THE TAURUS JUDGE HOME DEFENDER

Frank Jardim

Is there a perfect gun for self-defense in the home? Possibly, but the choice of gun depends on a lot of variables unique to each defender and their home. How much confidence and experience handling and shooting firearms do you have? How good is your eyesight? Are you recoil sensitive? Are you strong enough to rack a slide or hold up a standard handgun, shotgun or rifle? Do you have children in your home? How close are your neighbors? Do you live in an urban or rural area? Is your home a standalone suburban house or city apartment? What are your walls and doors actually made of? Where do your children or roommates sleep? What's the most likely range for you to have a dangerous encounter in your home?

These questions, and many more, should be considered along with the inevitable compromises, when deciding what home-defense firearm is the best choice for you and your circumstances. With that in mind, indulge me in an

experiment in making a case for the Taurus Judge Home Defender.

THE RIGHT FIT

I suspected the Judge Home Defender might be practically employed in the hands of a less-than-ideal home defender. For my test case, I wanted a person capable of operating a firearm safely but with no formal instruction and little, if any, experience handling or shooting firearms. I chose these criteria because I suspect they describe the majority of people who rushed to buy their first gun during the height of social chaos in 2019–20. Additionally, I wanted a test subject whose physical characteristics offered them no advantages in using the gun. I chose a small-statured, middle-aged woman in good health but neither an athlete or unusually strong for

her size and age. In short, a person who could easily be overpowered physically by a larger opponent, but possessing the minimum strength and dexterity to operate a firearm safely.

My test subject was a petite woman, 5' 2", with basic firearm safety knowledge but absolutely minimal shooting experience due to a complete lack of recreational interest in shooting sports. She was shown the basic operation of the gun, fitted with a green targeting laser/tactical light on the fore-end, which also serves as a stop for the supporting hand. A red dot optic was installed on the top rail. For familiarization, she fired one round, double-action, from the hip, at a gallon jug of water 10 feet away, aiming with the targeting laser. She hit it squarely.

Immediately afterward, she loaded the cylinder with five rounds to shoot a course of fire — three life-size silhouette target threats positioned 5, 10 and 15 feet away in a 20-degree arc in front of her. She was instructed to engage the targets as fast as she could, firing double-action with the gun's pistol grip held tight against her body and aiming with the laser. The drill began by firing two shots into the five-foot threat on her right, then two into the 10-foot threat on her left and



Awkward when deployed as a two-handed .45 Colt revolver, Frank believes the Taurus Judge Home Defender comes into its own loaded out with .410 shotgun ammunition.



A DIFFERENT TAKE ON HOME DEFENSE

finally sweeping back to the center to fire her last shot into the 15-foot distant threat. She completed the exercise without a hiccup in 2.51 seconds scoring solid hits on all targets. For comparison, my first try at the drill was 1.61 seconds and I improved little over the next three attempts. However, hitting three targets at three distances in 2.5 seconds is decent for a novice and realistically, this is all many first-time self-defense gun buyers will ever be.

Part of the reason the Judge Home Defender did so well in untrained hands is its fore-end allows the shooter to better support the gun, aim it (especially with the laser in short range hip shooting), control it during recoil and retain it if an assailant tries to wrestle it away. The targeting laser also aided novice shooters

in placing shots quickly and accurately.

In terms of physical strength and dexterity requirements, revolvers as a class require less strength and mechanical finesse than autoloading pistols and long guns. The revolver is also more reliable. In subsequent tests with a pump shotgun, my novice shooter inadvertently induced malfunction through improper manipulation. This highlights what might be the Judge Home Defender's greatest strength — it offers the point-and-pull the trigger simplicity of a double-action revolver with the firepower of a shotgun.

I'd venture that a typical novice would have missed some of the test targets shooting a Judge .45 Colt double-action revolver with a 3" barrel. The Judge Home Defender is better as a little shotgun than as a .45 Colt revolver. With the right ammunition, a shotgun



The Judge Home Defender is an ideal gun for the less experienced or smaller-stature shooters. Those with grip-strength problems appreciate the revolver-based action.

armed home defender can significantly increase the likelihood of hitting the threat through the pattern spread as well as the lethality of each shot through multi pellet hits.

CHOICES

The long cylinder of the Judge series allows the versatility of shooting a wide variety of 2.5" and 3" .410 shells. Loads range from a ½ oz. of #9 birdshot that at 15 feet barely penetrate the backside of a typical residential wall sheathed in two layers of ½" sheetrock, up to devastating four-pellet 000 buckshot loads capable of penetrating the target and the wall behind it.

Testing showed Winchester's .410 PDX1 Defender "Stop The Threat" 2.5" shells fired through the 13" barrel of the Judge Home Defender averaged 1,035 fps velocity. This is 285 fps faster than the 750 fps advertised from the standard length Judge revolver it was developed for. The load consists of three lead discs backed by 12 BB pellets.



While the discs remained clustered at all ranges under 20 feet, the pellets pattern opened up more significantly, improving hit probability. At five feet I measured a pattern of 2.36", at 10 feet it was 6.3" and at 15 and 20 feet, I got 14.5" and 13.6" patterns respectively — illustrating results aren't always predictable.

For comparison, the Winchester's 2.5" SUPER-X, 000 buckshot load of three pellets averaged a velocity of 1,252 fps, a little less than the 1,300 advertised on the box. The big pellets penetrated the aforementioned typical residential wall completely up to 20 feet away. The patterns were rather tight, offering less risk from wayward pellets but still increasing hit probability. At five feet, my pattern measured 0.76" and at 20 it expanded to 3.48".

STAYING SAFE

In circumstances where the primary concern is a missed shot will penetrate the wall and endanger innocent life, the 2.5" Remington STS Target #9 shot load might be considered.



The Judge Home Defender's long cylinder accommodates all .410 ammunition types and many impressive loads are available, allowing you to rain a storm of lead on your target.

With approximately 290 tiny pellets in the half-ounce payload, it throws big, dense patterns that improve hit probability. The problem is, even at the 1,209 fps velocity, the pellets have such little mass penetration into tissue is limited. Ballistic gel tests I've studied

suggest penetration of 3" to 4" was possible with a load chronographed 150 fps slower. This isn't much and heavy clothing or bone would present serious obstacles to the pellets. However, there's a lot of them and they spread out fast improving hit probability overall and the chances that some pellets will find a major blood vessel or a path into the internal organs.

The pattern at five feet measured 3.88", at 10 feet it was 11.1" at 15 feet it grew to 16.37" and at 20" it became a near-doorway-spanning 23"! The gruesome close-range wounds caused by the shredding effect of so many tiny pellets are generally shallow and less likely to be immediately lethal compared to the PDX1 and 000 buckshot loads. However, a #9 birdshot load may be the best option when the concern over injuring someone in another room with an errant shot is your main concern.

GUNS

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The Custom Ruger *Wrangler*



Brent T. Wheat • Photos: Robert Jones/The Imagesmith LLC

Whenever we talk about custom guns, I'm aware of the fact many people would love to own a true bespoke handgun, rifle or shotgun. I'd also like to win the Indianapolis 500, but we have to be realistic — you don't get things simply by wanting. Money is often necessary, along with plenty of hard work and the right opportunity.

I'll never drink from the Indy winner's bottle of milk — aside from the fact I'm lactose-intolerant — but if you *really* want a custom handgun, you're in luck. There is a handgun which is the perfect raw material for your

project and it's within financial reach of nearly anyone who isn't deceased. It punches far above its weight in terms of quality and you might even call it a "best buy." I call it both "fun" and "a diamond in the semi-rough." What we're talking about is one of my favorite handguns at any price, the Ruger Wrangler .22 LR.

PLAYING FAVORITES

If you haven't shot a Wrangler, you're sorely missing the boat. Built to resemble the Single Action Army model 1873, the Wrangler was birthed by Ruger in 2019 to fill the budget end of the handgunning market with an inexpensive yet safe and reliable single-action revolver.

If you ever want to turn someone into a dedicated handgun shooter, slap a Wrangler into their hand. After 10 seconds of instruction on how to operate the thing, they'll soon find themselves transmogrified onto a dusty street at high noon, dropping Dirty Dan the Scoundrel with a hail of well-placed 40-grain bullets. The resulting grins are infectious — and let's hope they never develop a vaccine!

I've used nearly every euphemism I possess for the concept of "cheap" but here is the deal: the Wrangler has an MSRP of \$279 and can easily be found around \$200 at dealers. Yes, that's correct: You can own brand-new, safe and reliable, rootin' tootin' shootin' Old West lookalike *pistola* for two "Benjamins." This is why I say everyone should have a couple sitting in the gun safe for plinking parties, teaching purposes and simply for remembering how much fun a handgun can be.

The Wrangler is certainly a hoot to shoot but there is another side to this splendid pistol you might not have considered: It's the perfect canvas for customization.

Think about it — for two bills you get a brand-new aluminum alloy frame, zinc alloy grip frame and hammer-forged steel barrel and cylinder. The guts of the Wrangler are MIM steel alloy but are otherwise identical to the much more expensive Ruger Single Six. Aside from being a great gun for customization, the Wrangler is likewise a great way to practice your gouging and filing maneuvers *before* doing anything irreversible on your spendy Single Six.

This brings us to our cover guns — a couple of good examples of what you can do to transform the humble Wrangler.

A Blank Slate For Your Wildest Imagination



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The Custom Ruger *Wrangler*

GUNS[®]

MAGAZINE

RUGER WRANGLER GEAR LIST

HOLSTERS: Thad Rybka Field Holster,
Rob Leahy Simply Rugged Holsters Shootist

AMMO: Federal Hunter Match 40-grain, CCI Std Velocity 40-grain

EAR PRO: Safariland Liberator, Axil GS Extreme

PINKY TUSCADERO

The most visually interesting gun is the one I call “Pinky Tuscadero,” a homage to the role played by red-haired actress Roz Kelly in the *Happy Days* 1970s television series. Pinky was Fonzi’s motorcycle daredevil girlfriend and certainly before her time in terms of what a female co-star could be.

The project started out with a stock birds head Wrangler, one of the several models available. The master of ceremonies and chief gunsmith was our own Roy Huntington, tackling the project simply for the challenge and as an excuse to spend more time cuddling his milling machines.

For starters, Roy disassembled the gun and gently polished everything. As you might imagine the Wrangler doesn’t get a lot of handwork at the factory and the action tends to feel a bit like 400-grit sandpaper. That’s not really a criticism — if you consider the amazing price, it’s simply a fact of life.

The frame was cleaned and gently sanded overall to remove casting marks and small imperfections. Roy then used JB Weld as “body filler” to fix some pits while the inner surfaces were also cleaned up a bit.

The action parts were all polished and buffed to eliminate mold marks and ensure smoothness. The sear was gently polished but otherwise unaltered as it could affect safe operation. MIM parts tend to be a bit uneven due to their manufacturing technique so Roy cleaned up the flat sides of the hammer and trigger using fine sandpaper on a flat aluminum sanding block. Other important areas got polished including the ejector rod and body, the cylinder base pin, the cylinder pivot points and breech face. He also polished the trigger face with sandpaper and followed up with a buffing wheel. The forcing cone was then carefully chamfered and lapped.

The hammer spring was given a bit of thinning to lighten it. Roy points out spring coils should never be cut on a revolver as it changes the mechanical parameters and frequently causes misfires. Instead, Roy slipped the springs onto a metal rod and touched it against a belt sander to reduce the outside diameter a tiny amount. It works as none of the guns have so far had a single misfire!



A The action parts of the Wrangler are Metal Injection Molded (MIM) to keep down costs. All these parts were polished far more than the factory could afford, making for buttery-smooth operation. **B** The customized gun were plenty accurate but the traditional shallow groove rear sight can be a challenge to tight groups. There’s not much material to work with so adjustable sights aren’t an option. **C** Premium Grips grip panels were installed, “Black Bart” getting a chaotic patriotic red, white and blue while “Pinky Tuscadero” sports a more refined wood and faux mother of pearl.

The loading gate on the Wrangler tends to be a little cantankerous so Roy stoned everything and ever-so-gently bent the spring to lighten it. He notes if the gate ever gets sloppy, you can bend the spring back a bit. On this gun, Roy left the cylinder round and kept the integral front sight.

The revolver was then sent out B-H Customs Inc. in Joplin, Missouri for the custom pink and purple Cera-kote. Roy did this because he doesn’t trust himself around guns with rattle-cans. Upon its return, he added a spectacular set of Premium Gun Grips and My Dearest Sweetheart

now had her very own pew-pew! I assure you she’s smitten!

BLACK BART

My gun is named “Black Bart” simply because ... well, that’s what I named it. The moniker sounds western and slightly malevolent, like the bad guy in a B-movie. This gun got essentially the same makeover as Pinky, plus Roy added a few more touches. A dovetail front sight was milled into the barrel, the barrel was fluted and flats were added to the forward portion of the cylinder. The flats lend a nice decorative touch but are exceptionally handy



when manipulating the cylinder during loading and unloading. The finishing touch is the wild red, white and blue Premium grips which really stand out on the black Cerakote finish. On this gun, Roy cut the 11-degree chamfer on the muzzle after the coating process as he feels the plain steel is easier to keep clean of burnt powder.

RANGE TIME

After all this work it was time for the proof-of-concept day at the range. For comparison purposes I used a stock Ruger Super Wrangler, the convertible 22LR/22 Mag big brother to the

Wrangler. Actually, this isn't a fair contest because the upgraded Super Wrangler is heavier, has a 5.5" barrel versus the 4.62" and 3.75" of our custom guns and has a real rear sight instead of the frame notch of the standard Wrangler.

On the other hand, I had a secret weapon — Pinky's trigger felt like 15-year-old Bourbon tastes. After testing with my Lyman Digital Trigger Gauge, I was slightly nonplussed to find the trigger broke on average at 1 lb., 15 oz.! This is compared to the stock standard 4 lb., 4oz. The black gun trigger hovered at 4 lb., 1 oz. but the difference in feel versus the stock trigger was stark.

Eventually, after a long afternoon hanging over our new Ransom Rest, burning countless rounds from various brands of .22 LR at the 15-yard line, there was a clear winner — the hand-wrought Wranglers. No surprise there.

The leader of the pack was the diminutive Miss Pinky. Despite her shorter barrel, the light trigger allowed us one group of 0.76" for six shots. If you go with the "best three," the size went down to 0.61". Compare this to the stock Super Wrangler at a still-respectable 1.71". Our Wranglers are certainly custom guns and now have the accuracy to match!



Yes, you can! — we never recommend using a .22 LR for self-defense. But, in a pinch ...

BUT WHY?

Not everyone can avail themselves of the *gratis* services of Roy Huntington. If we had used any of the other half-dozen gunsmiths who would tackle this job, I'm sure we could have spent \$1,000. This leads to the obvious question: Is this really a worthwhile project when you're talking about a \$200 base gun?

I'd say so, in spades. There are certainly countless other options, but if you want a true custom gun you can afford *without* selling a kidney or foregoing little Timmy's braces, give the Ruger Wrangler a look. Likewise, if you are venturing into the world of gunsmithing yourself, the Wrangler provides a forgiving platform to make those painful beginner mistakes — or maybe turn out a masterpiece.

Moreover, if you want to try something really wild, maybe a Purple-and-Lime Green revolver with a custom-etched scene of Hillary Clinton giving a sponge bath to Dennis Rodman, I'd say the Ruger Wrangler would be your best, most logical choice as a blank canvas.

Well, maybe not the etching. But, ultimately, anything goes, so go wild. At worst, you're out the cost of a nice dinner and a show, but more likely, you'll wind up with a cherished custom shooter you can actually enjoy getting dirty! **GUNS**

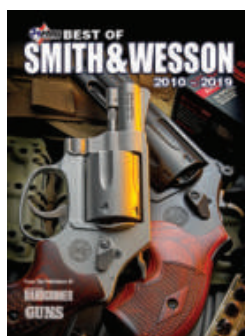


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Clayton Walker

Before we get to the nuts and bolts of the rifle featured in this article, indulge me just for a moment as I tell you a little bit about Jägermeister. Yes, the same liqueur that somehow became the preferred quaff for an unfathomably large number of America's frat boys. It's unfair, however, to dismiss it without understanding its historical context.

PRE-PARTY

In fact, Jägermeister is a textbook German digestif: Made from 56 different herbs and botanicals oak-matured, the brew was intended to be consumed in small quantities after a meal to settle the stomach. Before its marketing pivot into party fuel for rock-n'-rollers, Jägermeister was a very old-world product.

Most are unaware of the poem on the fringes of its label. Translated in such a way as to keep an English rhyme scheme, it reads:

*This is the hunter's badge of glory:
That he protects and tends his quarry,
Hunts with honor, as is due,
And through the beast to God is true.
All of a sudden, Jägermeister's logo of*



European .22 Refinement

a deer with a holy cross behind it starts making a lot more sense. Certainly, it speaks to the ethos of a certain kind of hunter — someone who sees his time in the wilderness as something more valuable than bagging a trophy. Indeed, to hunt in this Germanic tradition is to recognize oneself as a steward of the forest, and to stop and consider that the time we spend outdoors with a rifle in hand is precious indeed.

HIDDEN MEANING

So why do I mention this poem? Quite simply, it's because if you understand its message, you'll absolutely understand the Walther KKJ. Short for

Kleine Kaliber Jäger, which translates in English to "Small-Caliber Hunter." The old world spills into every aspect of this rifle from sights to stock, and it's a wonderful thing to experience.

One of the first things a person notices about a KKJ, especially a shooter familiar with modern .22 rimfire bolt actions, is this gun is far, far nicer than it really needs to be. Stocks were made of walnut (as mine is) or beechwood but all were nicely figured and hand checked. Similarly, the bluing is deep and rich.

Cosmetics aside, Walther built these guns to shoot. A key feature of the KKJ is its match chamber. The bolt takes a little extra force to close, as it's really shoving each round into as tight a fit as possible. Additionally, the safety clicks into place positively, the two-stage trigger is a crisp 2.25 lbs. and in general, nothing about this gun feels loose or imprecise.

Across all dimensions, the goal was to create a hunting rifle par excellence. With a weight of only about 6 lbs., Walther designed the KKJ to be carried and shot comfortably offhand. These design parameters and the inherent beauty of the rifle make the experience of actually packing and using the KKJ as pleasurable as possible out in the field. Again, very old-world.

Perhaps the only real thing I found a little too "European" about the KKJ were its sights. To be sure, the rear sight unit is immaculately constructed and extremely precise. However, I don't know whether I'm getting older, whether the Germans of the 1960s had exceptional eyesight, or whether I just love my aperture sights too much, but the miniature "AK-47" style square notch and Lilliputian front post didn't work for me.

I don't think I'm alone here. Over the years, many have set out to scope the KKJ and found that the rear sight



Walnut stocks on the KKJ were often exceptionally fine-figured.



Though the KKJ deserved better, a Simmons 3x9 “.22 Mag” scope proved surprisingly adequate.

doesn't play nice with a number of tubes and objective lenses. As a result, no small number of KKJs are found on the used market sans sights — and replacing them is pricey. Note its 11mm rail requires specialized rings. My scope rings sat a little higher than I ultimately wanted, but helped the objective lens clear the rear sight blade.

I topped the KKJ with a “good enough” scope I had laying around, a Simmons “.22 Mag” with a 3x9 magnification range. While the adjustments were far from consistent or repeatable, the Simmons did offer relatively clear glass and allowed me to see what this old gem was truly capable of. Certainly something from Zeiss would have been more fitting but the Simmons was what I had on hand and the .22 Mag product line tends to be fairly well regarded for a budget option.

RANGE TIME

Settling in with the KKJ, it was clear the gun wasn't a picky eater. My first lesson: I arrived to a gorgeous day outdoors having previously zeroed the KKJ for the 50-foot maximum distance of my indoor range. I typically shoot my .22 long guns at my local haunt offhand and my previous best was a brag-worthy five rounds of Federal Automatch inside of a half an inch.

Shooting my first group at 50 yards, however, my rounds impacted about 4" high! Once I got dialed in at that distance for my accuracy work, I decided to try my hand at 100 yards and found I was about 3" low. This is a decent amount of up-and-down dispersion

across the KKJ's usable range. As such, it would behoove ethical small game hunters to learn basic range estimation and establish a dope chart for their preferred ammo.

Unsurprisingly, the speedier stuff shot noticeably flatter. While Aguila's “Interceptor” .22 wasn't the accuracy leader of the brands I tested, it is about 400 feet per second faster than most of the standard velocity ammo I shot and as a result, was a little more predictable of where my groups landed on paper.

Additionally, I noticed the gun exhibited a “first round flyer” effect, which was especially pronounced with the slower SK Rifle Match and CCI Green Tag ammo. Thinking about it, I wouldn't be at all surprised if the difference in impact was due to barrel temperature. Unlike the storied kings of rimfire competition like the Winchester 52, Remington 37 and various Anschütz models, the KKJ has a sport-weight barrel.

This, of course, is the double-edged sword of a gun so lithe and handy. Indeed, many of the KKJ devotees on various Walther and rimfire-specific forums are quick to remind prospective owners the KKJ is not a target rifle and was not designed primarily with itty-bitty groups in mind.

EXTRA SPECIAL

But let me tell you, a person can do some spectacular shooting with this thing. Even if we deny it target rifle credentials, my KKJ is a sub-MOA gun through and through. Supposing I threw out that first round, the majority of my 50-yard groups with the SK Rifle Match and Green Tag were under 0.4". My best five-round group, however, wasn't far off! The KKJ performed very well and very consistently with the 38-grain Aguila “Super Extra” putting the best five into 0.459".

Another interesting note here — I've seen a number of rifle makers base their “accuracy guarantees” on a three-round group. If you haven't shot from a rest before, you'd be pretty surprised by how groups tend to open up when you increase your sample size by only two more rounds. The average of the KKJ's “best three” was a paltry 0.287". Make of that what you will.



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Not a picky eater, the KKJ cheerfully ate and spit out all ammo brands into respectable groups.

Keep in mind I shot my KKJ with my own two hands and an improvised rest created from my range bag. A more talented shooter with better glass, better eyesight, better gear, and the patience to give the barrel time to cool between shots would undoubtedly get my KKJ to perform at another echelon.

SATISFACTION GUARANTEED

For what it's worth, I was very happy with what I could coax out of the rifle. In the past, I have owned larger .22s with bull barrels and high-magnification scopes. Those guns eventually got sold and I don't much miss them. They produced tiny groups from the bench, but at more than twice the weight of my KKJ, they produced groups only from the bench. Me? I like picking up and shooting my rifles without fighting fatigue or having to wear a cumbersome shooting jacket.

If you want a KKJ of your own, there's good news. Walther produced the rifles over a 17-year period, making them generally available on auction sites, and street price is about \$1,000. It sounds steep, but consider the precision, craftsmanship — and dare I say soul — present here. One would be hard-pressed to walk into a gun store and buy a long gun of this quality at the same price.

In the end, the KKJ is a great rifle from a bygone time where the goal was to savor the experience of making every shot count — it is handcrafted for the true Jägermeister who finds the sublime in the connection of man, machine and nature. To me, that makes it an unqualified keeper. **GUNS**

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Alan Garbers

The Henry Improved was the first rifle to be called a Winchester, but its story started years before.

FROM SHIRTS TO SHOOTING

Mr. Oliver Winchester was an excellent dress shirt maker and an even better investor. He didn't have much formal schooling, but he made up for it with uncommon business sense.

In the years leading up to the Civil War, the Volcanic Repeating Arms Company developed a unique lever-action rifle. A fresh cartridge was fed from a magazine into the chamber.

Winchester knew in a world of single-shot rifles, a reliable repeating rifle was a golden opportunity. Winchester invested heavily, securing the majority of stock. While the rifle design had promise, the self-contained ammunition lacked performance. When the company ran into financial trouble, Winchester took over and renamed it New Haven Repeating Arms.

The plant foreman, B. Tyler Henry, had been heavily involved in the gun's development, and he continued to make improvements. In 1860, the company received a patent on a radically improved repeating rifle known as the Henry. It was chambered in the .44 Henry, a rimfire cartridge packed

with 28 grains of black powder, propelling a 200-grain bullet at 1,125 fps. The testing reported the Henry rifle could drive the slug through seven 1" thick pine boards. While standard military rifles were single-shot, the Henry could carry an impressive 15 rounds.

The Henry had many promoters and some haters. Southerners called it "The damned Yankee rifle — loaded on Sunday and shot all week." No account was more spectacular than one of a Union sympathizer attacked in his Kentucky home by seven Confederate ruffians. The man pleaded with his attackers to take the bloodshed outside and away from his family. As the men stepped out, the homeowner

The First Winchester Rifle

The Henry Improved, later known as the Model 1866, was the first lever-action made by the Winchester Repeating Arms Company.



snatched up his Henry rifle and started dispatching his attackers. When the smoke cleared, all seven attackers lay dead around him!

Despite repeatedly proving itself in battle, the military refused to give the rifle a serious look and went with the inferior, but more available, Spencer rifle. A Winchester catalog stated while 10,000 Henry rifles were produced during the war, less than 2,000 were part of a military contract. But the firepower of the Henry spread like wildfire and orders came in for over 100,000!

CHANGE OF SCENERY

After the Civil War, and with years of feeling under-compensated for his designs stuck in his craw, Henry filed a lawsuit for ownership of the company. He won but Winchester owned the patents, so Winchester walked away, leaving Henry with nothing.

Winchester immediately did two things — formed the Winchester Repeating Arms Company and hired Nelson King to redesign the Henry to overcome some of its shortcomings.

The Henry's open tubular magazine collected dirt and debris in heavy use and was the first to go. King replaced it with a closed tube magazine. Second, loading the Henry was cumbersome. The follower had to be shoved home so



Family Tree — The evolution of the Winchester rifle is easy to see. From left to right, a replica Henry rifle by Henry Repeating Arms; the Henry Improved or Model 1866; a replica Winchester Model 1873 by Uberti.

the end of the barrel could be turned, exposing the magazine. During loading, the shooter was vulnerable to attack. King changed this, adding a side-loading gate allowing rounds to be loaded at the receiver. Lastly, a wooden forearm was added to shield the user from the heat generated during the heavy firing of black-powder rounds. They called the modified rifle the Henry Improved.

The Henry Improved was a hit, and orders from around the world rushed in. While the U.S. Military wasn't interested, other countries saw the value in repeating rifles. Turkish contracts amounted to 46,000 muskets and 5,000 carbines. The French government ordered 3,000 muskets and 3,000 carbines. Chile and Peru ordered approximately 4,000 rifles. The records in some years are missing or unclear, but in 1877, 12,000 rifles shipped overseas and evidence shows countless Henry Improved rifles went to Mexico to fill state or national arsenals.

While most associate the Winchester rifle with the American West, in reality, a large portion went to troops around the world. A story was told by Rear Admiral Jasper Selwyn, "I saw personally ... the Circassian Cavalry all armed with the Winchester-Henry carbine." His friend, Reouf Pasha, commander-in-chief of the Turkish Army of Ranglia told him of an incident during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877 when a Russo regiment of 600 Cossacks suddenly encircled him and his personal guard of 30 men. Pasha had his men dismount and use their horses as a breastwork. The Winchester-armed Turkish Cavalry laid down a field of fire so fierce the Cossacks fled as many were killed. The Turks were untouched.





WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Here in America, the rifle became known as the “Yellow Boy” because of the brass receiver, but it’s a misnomer. The receiver was made from gunmetal, an alloy of copper and tin — brass is an alloy of copper and zinc. The firepower and superior corrosion-resistant qualities made it popular with frontiersmen and Native Americans alike. Warriors prized the good-looking rifle and often added brass tacks to the stock to compliment the receiver.

There has always been speculation the Sioux and Cheyenne carried many Winchester during the battle of the Little Big Horn. Some are well-documented, including a Henry Improved used by Sitting Bull. Private Charles Windolph of Company H, 7th Cavalry, estimated roughly a quarter of the warriors carried repeating rifles. Archaeological studies did find Henry rimfire cases scattered around the battlefield. The troopers had .45 Colt revolvers and .45-70 Springfield Trapdoor rifles so it is safe to assume the Henry cases were from Indian rifles.

The success of the Henry Improved firmly embedded the association of repeating rifles and Winchester. To many, any repeater was a Winchester, regardless of who made it.

In 1873 Winchester came out with an upgraded repeating rifle, the Model 1873. While it used the same toggle-link system, the frame was steel and the predominate chambering was .44-40 centerfire. The .44-40 packed 12 more grains of powder and the reliability of a centerfire primer system. Until the '73 came out, Winchester didn't attach a model year to the Henry Improved. It was just known as the Henry or Winchester Repeating Rifle. Catalogs show

To increase the reliability of the rimfire rifle, the Henry Improved (left) had two firing pins at 3 and 9 o'clock. A cleaning kit could be kept in the buttstock (right).

it was about 1875 before Winchester started calling the Henry Improved the “Model 1866” to differentiate it from the new Model 1873.

Historians argue cartridge rifles were shunned by some frontiersmen because of the lack of ammunition in vast areas of the American West. Not one to miss an opportunity, Winchester overcame this prejudice by inventing an adapter, which converted the Henry Improved into a muzzle-loader and allowed the use of a percussion cap for ignition.

CHANGES

During the production run, many small changes were made to the frame and collectors considered there to be four distinct models of Henry. The rifle pictured in this story has a serial number of 20343 and was made in 1869, making it a Second Model. At this point, the drop in front of the hammer had been softened to a graceful arc and the frame flared to meet the forearm.

The first thing to note: Our test rifle is still in the original .44 Henry rimfire configuration. To improve the reliability of the rimfire cartridge, the Winchester has two firing pins 180-degrees apart. Later on, many rifles had the bolt and firing pin reconfigured to allow the use of centerfire cartridges.

Since the Henry Improved wasn't a new design, Winchester didn't restart the serial number. In fact, both the Henry and Henry Improved were made concurrently for a period and it's evident from examining frames both could have come from the same casting mold.

While we all like to romanticize the lever-action as a cowboy rifle, this particular rifle most likely didn't see any time on a horse. The sling mount on the forearm cap would have chewed up any leather scabbard and there is no evidence of pommel wear on the forearm. It was common



The folding rear sight was graduated out to a very optimistic 900 yards.



Most factory rifles did not have slings, which makes one wonder where our test rifle (left) served! It also didn't have any apparent saddle wear so it probably didn't spend any time in the Western U.S. Operating the lever caused the elevator (right) to raise and lower, feeding a fresh cartridge into place.

for explorers in dangerous country to ride with the rifle across the saddle and ready for action. Rifles with heavy saddle use often have the wood worn down to the magazine from abrasion by the saddle leather.

The rifle does not have the Winchester name anywhere. However, the work of Henry and King was honored

by the barrel markings: HENRY'S – PATENT – OCT. 16, 1860 and KING'S – PATENT – MARCH 29, 1866. The octagonal 24" barrel wears a sporting leaf rear sight graduated from 100 to 900 yards. With the leaf down, the sight was useful for close and fast shots.

Original examples command a premium when they come on the

market, and original ammunition can run thousands per box but those wanting to experience a small part of the Old West can take heart. Companies like Cimarron Firearms, Taylor's and Company, and even Winchester offer a modern version in standard pistol calibers such as .38 Special and .45 Colt.

It doesn't matter if we call it the Henry Improved, the Model '66, or Yellow Boy, Winchester's first lever-action rifle will always hold a place as an icon of the American West. **GUNS**

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SCAN ME

M231 FIRING P

Will Dabbs, MD

Fascinating American Ballistic Boondoggle

There is a likely apocryphal tale about the way astronauts kept records back in the 1960s during the height of the space race. Conventional ink pens of the day were gravity-driven and subsequently would not write upside down. Accordingly, once in orbit in a zero-G environment, your typical Bic or Montblanc suddenly became just so much worthless dunnage.

American engineers purportedly spent a zillion dollars to develop a pen that used a pressurized ink cartridge. Though spendy, their invention would indeed write in any gravitational state across a broad range of temperatures. The end result was a triumph of American ingenuity and is sold today as the Fisher Space Pen. The Fisher Space Pen has flown on every American manned space flight since Apollo 7 in 1968. That much is verifiable.

Meanwhile on the enslaved half of the planet, the spacefaring Russians faced a

similar quandary. However, according to the legend, instead of spending exorbitant amounts of money to design a zero-gravity space pen using a revolutionary pressurized cartridge, they just opted for a pencil ...

AMERICA'S LONGEST WAR

The Cold War was the gift that kept on giving. I tasted a bit of that while in uniform myself. I have read if we took everything we spent on defense from the end of World War II until the fall of the Iron Curtain, we could raze and rebuild every manmade structure in North America. That's honestly pretty pathetic. However, the Cold War did see some simply extraordinary technological advancements.

The tactical tit-for-tat went on for decades. We built the XB70 strategic

bomber, and the Russians designed the MiG-31 interceptor to counter it. When we canceled the XB70 after a catastrophic in-flight disaster, the Russians sure felt stupid but they are still using those geriatric MiG-31's in the skies above Ukraine today. Another area where the East and West had a serious martial showdown was in Infantry Fighting Vehicles (IFVs).

The M113 armored personnel carrier was a workhorse throughout the war in Vietnam, but it was basically just a big aluminum box with tracks and an engine. The ACAV kits consisted of armored shields fitting up top to accommodate a Ma Deuce 50-caliber machinegun and a pair of M60s. However, this was a makeshift solution at best.

Meanwhile, the Soviets were churning out BMPs. The BMP was a legit



The M231 Firing Port Weapon was a weird footnote to the Cold War. Though we invested ample resources in its development, the end result was a bit of a boondoggle. Photo: Chester County Armory

FIRING PORT WEAPON

IFV with a turreted 73mm gun, a rail-mounted AT3 Sagger antitank guided missile, and firing ports through which Soviet conscript soldiers could exercise their Kalashnikovs. Aside from the fact the BMP was as cramped as a Ringling Brothers clown car and only slightly more survivable in a proper fight, we felt like we were falling behind. The end result was the M2 Bradley IFV.

The Bradley was and is a simply superb piece of kit. Featuring a wicked 25mm Bushmaster chain gun, an external two-shot TOW missile launcher and room for a crew of three along with half a dozen kitted-out grunts, Brads are kicking Russian butt in Ukraine as I type these words. However, the M16A1 rifles issued to American infantrymen did not well-accommodate a firing port in such cramped quarters, particularly if the interface also needed to help minimize such vile stuff as nerve gas and radioactive fallout. The flower of American engineering prowess set about designing a solution. That solution was the M231 Firing Port Weapon.

The competition came down to the standard WWII-vintage .45-caliber M3A1 Grease Gun, a curious German offering based upon the roller-locked

The M231 fires full-auto-only via an open bolt. The entrails are therefore completely different from those of a more conventional M16 or M4.

Photo: Chester County Armory



HK33 assault rifle, and a unique M16 variant designed by Colt. The Grease Gun and HK weapons both fell out of the running for various reasons, leaving the Colt gun ultimately to see production. The end result, while not terribly effective, was mechanically fascinating. The development process took five years and the gun was formally adopted as the M231 in 1979.

DETAILS

The M231 looks like an M16 carbine, but it is not. This thing was redesigned from the ground up to fit into the screw-in gun mounts on the Bradley IFV. It

allowed individual grunts to stay prickly even when buttoned up inside their tracks. There's no telling what we spent on these things but they never saw any serious action. The M231 really was a solution in search of a problem.

For starters, the M231 had no sights, like "at all." It was also full-auto only. The theory was you would fire this thing using tracers and adjust the fall of your shot based upon the limited vantage allowed by the Brad's armored view ports. The mission was to slather the area outside the vehicle with fire. As a result, the M231 cycled at a breathtaking 1,200 rounds per minute.

To keep the gun from melting at such high cyclic rates, the entrails were redesigned to fire from the open bolt. While the basic upper and lower receivers look familiar, the upper has no forward assist and the open-bolt fire control parts are entirely different in the lower. Colt claimed a 65% parts commonality between the M231 and the M16.

A big part of the initial problem was length. The M16A1 has a fixed stock. Any reasonable mounting solution left each rifle protruding back so far into the fighting compartment as to interfere with its counterpart on the opposite side. As such, the M231 employed a unique nested three-spring recoil system inside an abbreviated buffer tube. The gun fed from STANAG 30-round box magazines and utilized a standard charging handle. The manual of arms would be pretty



The bolt carrier group on the M231 represents a radical departure from the conventional M4.

Photo: Chester County Armory.



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The M231 only runs on rock and roll. Photo: Sienna Armory

straightforward for anyone already familiar with the M16.

The M231 was a direct gas impingement rifle with a 15.6" barrel. The bolt was interchangeable with the M16 but the bolt carrier featured a generous sear cut on the bottom. The fire control parts were unique to this weapon.

Prototypes had flip-up sights. Early production versions included a Grease Gun-style sliding wire stock. These were eventually deleted to dissuade troops from trying to use the guns outside the Bradley.

PECULIARITIES

The features are all pretty straightforward, but the weapon had its eccentricities. The M196 tracer round was the only authorized fodder to the gun. Dummy and blank rounds were fine and standard M193 ball ammo could be used in an emergency. However, the M231 field manual specifically says the heavier M855 ball and M856 tracer rounds should not be utilized. As the M231 featured a slow 1:12 barrel twist like the M16A1, these heavier rounds would reliably tumble upon firing.

The manual lists four warnings to be heeded when firing the M231 offhand. Muzzle rise can be excessive, the forward barrel collar will get really hot and the brass catching device should always be used inside the vehicle. There was also a reminder that hearing protection is required.

RUMINATIONS

Eventually, the Army got sick of keeping up with these things. Subsequent armor upgrades on the Bradleys occluded all of the firing ports save those in the back ramp anyway. I worked with mechanized infantry units many times back in the 1990s and never saw an M231 operationally. I have run across a handful of photos of armor guys using M231s as personal defense weapons in the Middle East but the gun has no sights. The M4 is a much better choice for that role.

I have never fired an M231 myself, but I can imagine the experience. At 1,200 rounds per minute, the M231 would empty a 30-round magazine in a second and a half. That's comparable to a 9mm MAC-10. As the gun does not offer a semiauto function, this would get tedious pretty fast.

Surprisingly, there are a few transferable versions of the M231 in circulation. Jonathan at Sienna Armory sold one recently via a legit penny auction for \$47,075 — a bit rich for my blood. Ryan at Chester County Armory has sold several of the weird little guns and scared up some splendid pictures.

The M231 was both cool and strange in comparable measure. It never really did anything particularly well, but it was a novel solution to a thorny problem. The Firing Port Weapon was a curious footnote to the expansive family tree of Gene Stoner's famous black rifle. **GUNS**

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LOW RECOIL .45-70? HAVE YOUR CAKE AND EAT IT TOO!

Alan Garbers

You won't find too many shooters urging their friends to go plinking with their .45-70 rifles. In reality, most shooting becomes a test of testosterone levels! No, thanks!

MATCH IT UP

I shoot the .45-70 Government competitively in three different styles of matches. Each match is timed. The faster I run the gun while keeping the bullets on the steel target, the higher I am in the standings. The notorious, punishing .45-70 recoil is not my friend.

The first match is long distance using a single-shot rifle. My favorite rifle is a Shiloh Sharps with a diet of Lyman 535 bullets on top of a compressed case of Goex black powder. Luckily, the rifle weighs about 12 lbs. and is supported so recoil is not painful. The biggest issue is finding the steel target among the creosote and mesquite brush clutter!

The second match is the Quigley Bucket, which requires a single-shot rifle

shot from the shoulder unsupported. As before, the target is steel. Scoring is not complicated. The spotters must see the bullet splash or the LED target indicator flash. Waiting to hear the ring of the steel only slows a shooter down. I chose a reproduction H&R Trapdoor carbine, much like Custer's Troops used at the Little Big Horn.

The third match requires a lever-action rifle to hit a steel target, as before, the spotters watch for the bullet splatter or LED target indicator flash. A competitor runs the lever gun as fast as they can, often reloading on the clock. My choice for this match style is the Cimarron Firearms 1886, a faithful copy of the original Winchester rifle with the same designation. (See *GUNS* Sept 2023.)

When I first started in the Quigley Bucket and lever-action matches, I used full-power loads with 405-grain lead bullets. Shooting to practice and during the match was brutal on my neck and shoulder. The bruise would last for weeks. I decided to find a less painful way to make the steel ring.

I wanted a low-recoil load to use in the Trapdoor and the lever-action rifle. The Trapdoor has a comparatively weak action but I only needed to make the steel target ring. My first stop was to check the Lyman Cast Bullet manual, which had a specific Springfield listing. While a 405-grain bullet was the standard, Lyman also had data for a 330-grain bullet and a 292-grain bullet.

The pandemic was in full swing and mold options were limited. I finally found a 330-grain Lyman mold (457122) within my budget. After casting a few, I followed the powder charges in the Lyman manual. The recoil was still brutal and practice was not fun.

It took some time but I found a Lyman 292-grain mold (457191). Recoil was less, but I still didn't enjoy a day of range practice!

SEEK & FIND

Searching the forums for an answer, I found fellow shooters loading the cartridge using pistol powder, predominately Unique. Could this be my answer? They claimed 12 grains of Unique powder produced a velocity of 1,200 feet per second, and recoil was non-existent. They had my attention.

The idea had some detractors. Some I spoke with were concerned I would get erratic ignition because there was no guarantee where the powder would be in relation to the primer. Those using the load said they had no issues with inconsistent ignition. Some shooters pointed me to a website that thoroughly investigated the use of pistol powders for rifle loads to great results.

I pored over the website and decided to try the loadings using Unique. I loaded up 50 rounds with 12 grains of Unique and went to the range. I was quickly on target at 150 yards and truly enjoyed shooting the rifles. I was hooked! I used the new loads in the next match and placed! The low-recoil loads had proven themselves, but I wanted more data.

I decided to test the loads as best I could using a chronograph.

I used Unique, Titewad and Bullseye in my testing. I also decided to position the powder against the primer and away from the primer by tilting the up or down rifle just before the shot. I assumed if I had erratic ignition, it would show



For shorter-range completion, Alan chooses the Cimarron Firearms Model 1886 (top) and H&R Trapdoor reproduction. With low-recoil loads, the guns are both accurate and actually fun to shoot!

a high standard deviation value. The standard deviation value measures how much the velocity changes from shot to shot and a low number is better. Erratic velocities cause vertical stringing of shots dropping below or raising above the target.

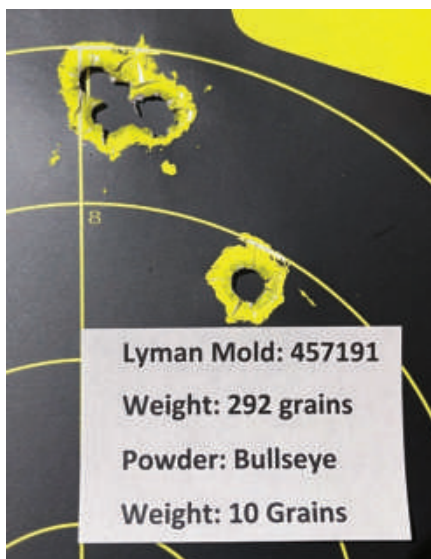
The results amazed me. I was already pleased with Unique's performance, but TiteWad and Bullseye beat it handily.

THE RESULTS

Unique — 12 grains — 292-grain bullet — Average velocity 1,240 fps — SD 9.11. On average, loads shot pointing downwards were 17 fps slower but the SD increased to 25.

TiteWad — 10 grains — 292-grain bullet — Average velocity 1,174 fps — SD 7.12. The loads shot downhill decreased by an average of 59 fps but the SD went down to 4.32!

Bullseye — 10 grains — 292-grain bullet — Average velocity 1206 fps — SD 7.02. The loads shot downhill decreased by an average of 65 fps, but the SD went down to 4.39!



Of the three powders Alan tested, Bullseye performed the best in all situations. Aside from a flyer, the group was impressive.

The testing proved ignition is exceptionally consistent and not impacted to any extent by powder position, which agrees with what others have found over the decades.

Some claim using magnum primers makes the SD worse and some claim it makes it better. In my testing with Unique, magnum primers pushed the average velocity higher by 21 fps, and the SD increased to 15.72, so magnum primers do not help.

With results like this, I decided to try again with the standard 405-grain bullets. The results were equally low recoil and accurate. The only real change was a 100–150 fps drop in velocity. The TiteWad loads dropped the SD down to 4.03!

So, what does this mean for me? I'm switching to Bullseye! During the testing for this article, one range setting included shooting 100 rounds of .45-70 in less than 90 minutes with no bruises or pain. No matter how I look at this, it's winning material!

Do I think these are excellent bison hunting rounds? Absolutely not! But these are perfect for target shooting, plinking, or getting to know a rifle!

GUNS



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In addition to being a very stout axe, Bear Valley Tactical's BV-TAC 8 offers a host of additional functions that take it to a whole 'nother level of performance.

BEAR VALLEY BV-TAC 8 NO ORDINARY TACTICAL AXE

Pat Covert

Modern tactical axes are just as home breaching domestic drug dealers flats as they have rooting out bad guys in Middle Eastern hinterlands. They are both weapons and tools. Bear Valley Tactical, a family-owned company in southern Utah, has made their BV-TAC 8 tactical axe much more useful by adding a host of other functions to its repertoire. A "multi-axe" if you will.

The first thing I immediately noticed about the BV-TAC 8 was this is one beefy axe. Many tactical axes this size are cut from a quarter-inch sheet stock by waterjet or laser cutting. The Bear Valley axe is machined from much thicker stock with the poll (or butt) clocking in at a full $\frac{3}{4}$ " in width — a huge difference. The bearded axe head and throat are $\frac{3}{16}$ " thick. The

BV-TAC 8's overall length is 17.0" of heat-treated S7 Tool Steel and it tips the scale at 3.0 lbs. A tough Cerakote finish keeps the rust bugs away.

The list of features includes the axe blade, a hydrant wrench, spanner wrench, hammer, $\frac{7}{16}$ " wrench, $\frac{5}{16}$ " wrench, gas turnoff, and a beefy pry bar at the base. Additional expansion options include shovel and pick attachments. Our sample had a Coyote Tan Cerakote finish — OD Green, Tactical Gray and Black versions are also available. The handle is made fuller and more comfortable by half-ovate spacers on both sides topped with paracord. A full-edge blade cover is included for safe storage.

WHY YOU'LL LIKE IT

The Bear Valley Tactical BV-TAC 8 manages to give the user a nice group of added functions without forgetting



Not just another flat steel axe, the BV-TAC 8 is dimensionally machined to perform where it counts. Here you can see the rear poll of the axe head swells to $\frac{3}{4}$ " in width — ready to do some serious hammering.

first and foremost it's an axe — and a stout one at that. The best feature of the BV-TAC 8 may just be its ovate grip, which not only offers better purchase than a flat one, but is much easier on the slinging hand during extended use. The Bear Valley BV-TAC 8 is affordably priced at \$199, very reasonable for an axe of this quality with so many functions.

GUNS

RANSOM REST MULTICAL STEADY REST

As a baby gun writer, I always coveted a Ransom Rest. They are considered the gold standard in handgun testing but being economically challenged, I was forced to use a low-budget combination of sandbags, ammo cans, moving blankets and even cardboard boxes.

I've now joined the ranks of serious shooters by virtue of the Ransom Rest MultiCal Steady Rest. This model is the little brother to the mechanical Master Series rest but for most handgunners, the MultiCal Steady Rest will actually serve their purposes better.

I love the fact it doesn't require any fiddly set-up or special adapters, and is less than half the cost of the Master Series. You simply pull the MultiCal Steady Rest out of your range bag, set it on the table and start shooting, easy-peasy. While it might not offer the mechanical repeatability of its sibling, a careful shooter can achieve the utmost accuracy any handgun is capable of delivering.

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RansomRest.com



SWAMPFOX WARHORSE 1-6X FFP LPVO SCOPE

A low-power variable optic (LPVO) on your favorite AR or bolt gun is truly a case of the "best of both worlds." The first focal plane Swampfox Warhorse adds a great middle-of-the-road option for those seeking this versatility on their defensive or hunting gun.

My overall impression of the Warhorse is "stout." If you're looking for an ultralight optic, this isn't it. But, without getting into destructive testing, the Warhorse seems likely to be a long-term survivor. Even if you somehow manage to break it, Swampfox optics are backed by a Limited Lifetime Warranty.

The 34mm main tube houses very clear optics with no distortion or fringing noted at any power setting. The operating controls, including the push/pull locking elevation turret with zero reset and 12-position reticle illumination turret, are robust and positively engage their stops with no slop. This one now resides on my longer-range AR-15 defensive gun.

MSRP: \$639
SwampfoxOptics.com

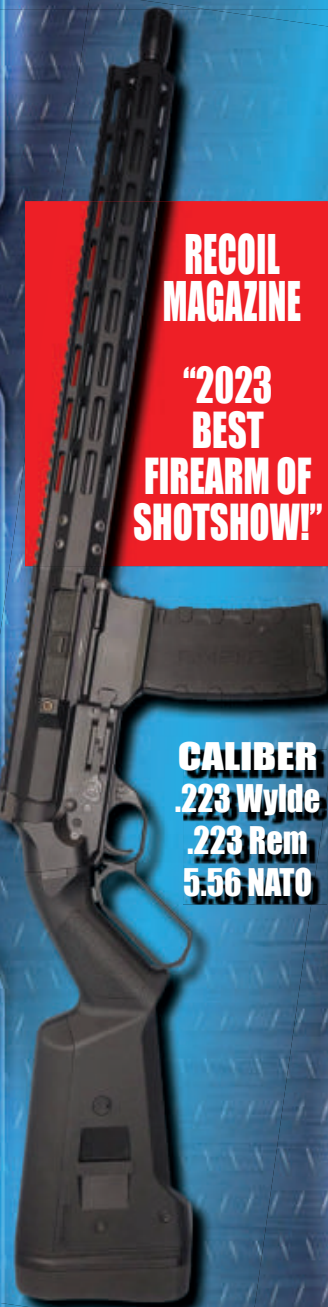
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PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS HOAX PERPETUATING A LIE

Dave Workman

For the past several years, anti-gunners have insisted so-called “gun violence” — a term applying to anything involving gun-related injury or death including homicide, suicide, self-defense or accidents — is a “public health crisis.”

FEDERAL ABSURDITY

It was and remains a preposterous assertion. This past June, Joe Biden’s Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy made it official policy, at least so long as the Biden administration remains in power. As the government’s official position, it will allow Capitol Hill anti-gunners to introduce all kinds of restrictive legislation aimed at ratcheting down Second Amendment rights by using public health as an excuse.

Dr. Murthy wasn’t even subtle about using the pronouncement to push the Biden gun control agenda. He called for:

- Requiring safe and secure firearm storage, including child access prevention laws;
- Implementing universal background checks and expanding purchaser licensing laws;
- Banning assault weapons and large capacity magazines for civilian use;
- Treating firearms like other consumer products, including requiring safety testing or safety features;
- Implementing effective firearm removal policies when individuals are a danger to themselves or others; and
- Creating safer conditions in public places related to firearm use and carry.

According to the Surgeon General’s own website, here’s his job description: “The U.S. Surgeon General is the Nation’s Doctor, providing Americans with the best scientific information available on how to improve their health and reduce the risk of illness and injury. The Surgeon General oversees the U.S. Public Health Service

(USPHS) Commissioned Corps, an elite group of over 6,000 uniformed officers who are public health professionals. The USPHS mission is to protect, promote, and advance the health of our nation.”

It’s a stretch to associate firearms regulation with any of this, and unless Murthy and his 6,000 officers are credentialed as firearms instructors, none of them should be talking about gun safety. Likewise the banning of whole classes of firearms, gun safety mechanisms, background checks or when and where to legally carry.



This has to be stopped before it gets started in the next Congress and the policy must be reversed and erased. The only way to accomplish this is for grassroots activists to flood Congress with telephone calls, letters and emails for the next couple of months.

Gun rights leaders were quick to offer blistering rebuttal, which should guide your comments to Congress now.

RESPONSE

Randy Kozuch, executive director of the National Rifle Association’s Institute for Legislative Action was terse and direct: “This is an extension of the Biden Administration’s war on law-abiding gun owners. America has a crime problem caused by criminals. The reluctance to prosecute and punish criminals

on the part of President Biden and many of his allies is the primary cause of that. That’s a simple fact.”

Alan Gottlieb, chairman of the Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms, issued a scathing statement: “Gun ownership is not a communicable disease, it’s a constitutional right,” and that wasn’t all.

“This is just one more effort by the Biden Administration to demonize guns and the law-abiding citizens who own them,” Gottlieb continued. “The problem with violent crime is not that it is a disease, but a symptom of failed leadership, from the White House on down. From the day he took office, Joe Biden has treated gun owners like social lepers. He considers us second-class citizens who should be ostracized as though we are spreading a plague.”

Gottlieb called Murthy “Joe Biden’s mouthpiece.”

“The real crisis in America is the failed policies of the Biden Administration,” Gottlieb said. “Instead of focusing on locking up felons and disarming criminal gangs, he wants to disarm millions of honest gun owners whose only crime is that we exercise our right to keep and bear arms. Dr. Murthy says firearms should be treated like other regulated consumer products such as cars or pesticides. In that, he fails even high school civics, because cars and pesticides are not specifically protected by the Bill of Rights, but firearms ownership is.”

Readers receiving this issue of *GUNS* prior to the Nov. 5 election should let this guide your votes from the presidency on down. After the election, when winners are clearly identified, make sure they know you are watching and expect this nonsensical policy to be abandoned.

By making gun-related crime a public health issue, the Biden administration — at least for the time being — added one more weapon to use in its unrelenting crusade to crush

the Second Amendment. An official policy like this could result in legislation requiring mental health evaluations for anyone applying for a carry license and if Democrats hold the majority in Congress, it could actually pass. It would be an obvious infringement but proving so would require costly litigation which could drag on indefinitely.

60 DAYS

Following the Nov. 5 election, gun owners will have approximately 60 days to make sure new lawmakers know their concerns before the new Congress and most state legislatures convene. Send them a message, send them a Christmas card; get known by these people.

During the next two months, put together a package of proposed legislation — federal for Congress and state-level for legislators — and submit it. While some may mock this as foolish, it's a way to smoke out the bad guys and identify the good guys. Here are some

suggestions, which can be refined to your local situation:

- Permit-less “constitutional carry.”
- Prohibit creation or expansion of so-called “sensitive areas” and remove any such existing designations.
- Make basic firearms safety courses part of the public school curriculum.
- Repeal any existing waiting periods, and any requirements for purchase permits.
- Repeal bans on original capacity magazines and semi-automatic rifles.

Sure, these may seem an impossibly far reach but such proposals not only serve to identify friends and foes in public office, they also remind lawmakers of your presence. Expect polite rejection but don't be surprised if some lawmakers actually express their

interest. Be willing to meet if invited and also be prepared to entertain different ideas. People who insist “it's my way or the highway” rarely accomplish anything and they don't get invited back a second time.

Keep this in mind: On the first day of the next Congress and the next Legislative session in your state, the campaign for 2026 begins. If we come out of November with pro-gun majorities in Congress and state legislatures, don't make the mistake of other Second Amendment activists by not staying involved. This is not the time to pack up your tent and go home.

Remember the words of Pericles: “Just because you do not take an interest in politics doesn't mean politics won't take an interest in you.” **GUNS**

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CR920XP

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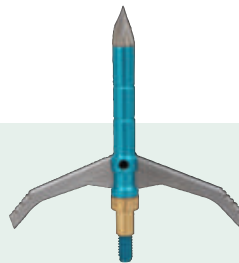
The Shadow Systems *CR920XP* is the most advanced compensated subcompact in the market. It leverages Shadow's tool-less attachment technology and provides the shooter with an unparalleled degree of control at speed. With an OAL of 7.18" and a nitride finish, the CR920XP features a 15+1 flush-fit capacity, Elite slide machining and multi-optic compatibility. MSRP: \$1,046. For more info: (469) 458-6808, ShadowSystemsCorp.com



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Bushmaster presents the *Bravo Zulu 300 Blackout* AR-15 barreled upper receiver. Forged from 7075-T6 aluminum and precision machined to ensure proper fit with Mil-Spec AR15 lowers and aftermarket parts, this 11.5" .300 Blackout has a barrel thread pitch of 5/8 x 24 and comes equipped with the BFI® 10" M-LOK Handguard offering plenty of space for mounting accessories and maintaining a low profile. The Snake Charmer Muzzle Brake helps to reduce muzzle rise and improve overall accuracy, while the Mil-Spec Charging Handle and 8620 Steel SBN Complete BCG (Bolt Carrier Group) provide smooth and reliable operation. MSRP: \$694.95. For more info: (800) 883-6229, Bushmaster.com



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Dead Ringer introduces the *Great White Broadhead*. It adapts to its target just like its namesake shark. The hybrid design cuts on contact for a 1" entrance wound and a devastating 2.5" exit wound. The Great White is designed for optimal performance on both vertical bows and crossbows up to 450 fps. The 100- and 125-grain adjustable broadheads with weighted collars boast field-tip accuracy. MSRP: \$44.99. For more info: (844) 471-4868, DeadringerHunting.com

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VIKTOS

The VIKTOS *Range Trainer Pant* is designed for both tactical training and operational use. Its four-way stretch chassis ensures comfort during activities, while the durable nylon/spandex fabric can withstand harsh conditions. The adjustable waist closure provides a low-profile fit while the hand pockets are notched, allowing vertical knife orientation. The StormStrike DWR finish sheds the elements, and the SunStrike UPF 50+ fabric blocks 98% of the sun's harmful rays. All VIKTOS pants are designed by U.S. veterans for tactical professionals. MSRP: \$95. For more info: (800) 597-7179, Viktos.com



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TELUM TACTICAL

Telum Tactical's *Incinerator Automatic Knife* is built for speed. It has a 3.5" S35V steel, black stone washed coated blade with a hollow grind and a contoured G10 handle. Featuring specifically designed cuts in the blade to make it lighter to enable it to deploy more quickly, the knife can be fully opened with the push of a button. A slide safety lock on the back locks the knife when in the closed position. Measuring 4.5" when closed, the Incinerator is finished with a reversible tip-up pocket clip. MSRP: \$189.99. For more info: (844) 471-4868, TelumTactical.com

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TAGUA GUNLEATHER

The *Sidecar DCH* from Tagua Gunleather offers reliable retention in a high-quality, durable design. A versatile holster ideal for both IWB or OWB carry, the Sidecar DCH features a pair of removable, reinforced steel clips for security and comfort. It's constructed with premium leather to stand up to years of wear while quickly drawing from the open-top design. With a multifit concept available in several sizes in black or brown, the Sidecar DCH can accommodate a wide range of popular handguns. MSRP: \$59.99. For more info: (866) 638-2482, TaguaGunleather.com





MOSSY OAK CAMO PATTERNS MAMMOTH COOLERS

In addition to a variety of solid colorways, several of Mammoth Coolers' best-selling coolers are available in six different *Mossy Oak Camo Patterns*. Hunters, anglers, and camo fans can choose from Break-Up Country, Obsession, Bottomland, Gamekeepers, Elements Agua, and Elements Terra on popular models such as the Cruiser, Ranger, and Pathfinder Series. MSRP: From \$129.99 for the Cruiser. For more info: (816) 295-6321, MammothCooler.com

21" NEX QUICKER DUTY BATON NEXTORCH INDUSTRIES

NEXTORCH Industries announces its 21" *NEX Quicker Duty Baton* has been awarded TR certification for use by German police forces. The baton is offered in two versions: a lightweight "Air" model utilizing an aerospace aluminum alloy for the first two sections with the last segment being steel; and a full steel version for more heavy-duty use. These duty batons offer super-smooth open and close operation with a solid locking mechanism. They have been drop test rated to 6.5 feet and can expand and retract smoothly after 3,000 impacts. MSRP: \$138.99 (steel) and \$118.99 (air model). For more info: NEXTORCH.com



XS LEVER RAIL AND GHOST RING SIGHT XS SIGHTS

XS Sights is pleased to offer the *XS Lever Rail and Ghost Ring Sight* kits for the Rossi R95 lever-action rifle and Lever Scout Mount for the Rossi R92. The XS Ghost Ring sight sets are made of precision-machined steel and allow for the fastest target acquisition possible with iron sights.

Machined from aircraft-grade aluminum, XS Rails are hard coat anodized to provide a lightweight mounting system that is tough enough to withstand a lifetime of use. MSRP: \$192.99 for the R95 Lever Rail and Ghost Ring Kit; Retail Price: \$76.99 for the R92 Lever Scout Mount Kit. For more info: (888) 744-4880, XSSights.com



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Mission First Tactical introduces the newest edition to the Belly Band holster family: the *Belly Band Ultralite*. Its 3D Spacer Mesh Fabric allows all-day carry and special channels promote more efficient airflow. An open-air weave construction provides for air/moisture to pass through, naturally hindering bacterial growth. Maximum breathability keeps the user cool and dry all day. MSRP: \$39.99. For more info: MissionFirstTactical.com



CANVAS DOG DUMMY CUPPED WATERFOWL

Cupped Waterfowl offers the gear waterfowl hunters need to get their dogs season-ready. One of the training tools is the *Canvas Dog Dummy*. The Canvas Dog Dummy holds scent and is ideal for training young dogs. Other products include the EVA Dog Dummy, the Blaze Orange Dog Field Vest, Neoprene Dog Vest, Hunting Dog Blind and Camo Dog Bed. MSRP: \$9.99 for the Canvas Dog Dummy (in photo). For more info: (844) 471-4868, Cupped.com

BE:1 GRINDER SCENTLOK

The *BE:1 Grinder Treestand Pack* from ScentLok is ideal for trucking gear into a treestand, but also travels fluidly through the fields and forests for the on-the-go hunter. The updated BE:1 Grinder sports exterior compression straps for holding and toting climbing sticks and platforms, which are commonly carried by saddle hunters. There is a large side access that allows you to get into the main compartment without opening the top. The BE:1 Grinder Treestand Pack features scent control with its Carbon Alloy lining to adsorb and lock away odors from the gear placed inside. MSRP \$249.99. For more info: ScentLok.com



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Gear up for the cold with the *Pnuma Vintis Jacket*, the ultimate shield against biting winds and chilly temperatures during mid to late-season hunts. Crafted with a cutting-edge blend of whisper-quiet microfleece and our fortified PNUMABLOCK layer, this jacket is engineered to keep you warm, silent and mobile without weighing you down. Featuring 100 grams of Primaloft Silver insulation in the torso and 60 grams in the sleeves, it provides warmth without sacrificing agility. The stretchable inner cuffs with thumbholes ensure a snug fit, while the harness pass-through adds versatility to your gear setup. MSRP: \$229.99. For more info: (800) 983-1956

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**If you are unable to
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WINNERS CHOSEN BY RANDOM DRAWING. Limit one entry per household. To protect the privacy and security of winners, their names will NOT be made public. Contest void where prohibited by law. Winners must undergo a background check and comply with all other federal, state and local laws. Taxes and fees will be the responsibility of the winner. Contest open to U.S. residents only. Employees and agents of Publishers' Development Corp. are not eligible. No purchase necessary. Attention deployed military: Use stateside address! Giveaway guns and accessories may have evidence of being test fired or exhibit minor handling marks. Factory warranties may apply in some cases. The Gun of the Month package is awarded only to the entrant drawn and will not be awarded if the firearm presented is illegal in the jurisdiction of the winner. An alternate, authorized winner will be selected. No substitutions or transfers to a third party are allowed.

Howa[™] **SUPERLITE SHORT BARREL RIFLE PACKAGE**

Howa's *Superlite Short Barrel Rifle* graces the GOM page of this issue of *GUNS Magazine*. Offered in 243 WIN, .308 WIN, 6.5 Creedmoor or 7MM-08 REM, the rifle weighs 4 lbs., 3 oz. It has a 16.25" threaded barrel, a one-piece pic rail, flush detachable mag, large front barrel lug, three-position safety, two-stage match trigger, tool-less firing pin removal, machined receiver and forged bolt, ACCUBLOCK Superior Lug Bed, LIMBSAVER buttpad and more. The Superlite Short Barrel Rifle comes in Gray, Tan, Green, Kryptek Obskura Transitional, Kryptek Altitude and XK7 Kings Camo.

Streamlight's USB-C rechargeable *Wedge XT* lights your path with up to 500 lumens for two hours on high. The 4.25" light features a flat, low-profile design. Made of rugged anodized aluminum with a waterproof charge port, the *Wedge XT* balances durability with performance.

The *FORCE-48* from SPYPOINT provides high-resolution images and 720p videos from the field for game scouting, wildlife tracking and property management. The trail camera's high-resolution 48mp photos allow you to see your targets up close and personal. It offers three capture modes: photo, video and time lapse.

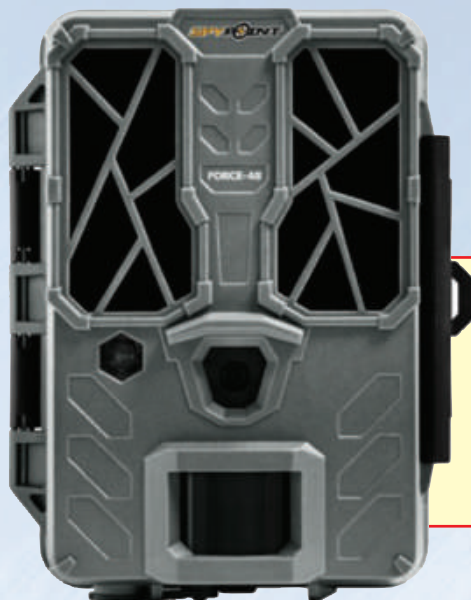
Claim ownership of Howa's Superlite Short Barrel Rifle, Streamlight's rechargeable flashlight and SPYPOINT's trail camera ... when you win! So join the giveaway now! Go to GUNSMagazine.com/giveaways or mail a postcard. -Jazz Jimenez

GUNS





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SUPERLITE SHORT BARREL RIFLE

Manufacturer: Howa
LegacySports.com
(800) 553-4229

Caliber: 243 WIN, .308 WIN, 6.5 Creedmoor or 7MM-08 REM;
Barrel Length: 16.25"; **Weight (rifle only):** 4 lbs. 3 oz.
Value: \$1,039



GOOD MEDICINE WHEN BAD LUCK TURNS AROUND

Jeff “Tank” Hoover

Suspended in midair I thought, “Damn, this isn’t good.” Then again, maybe it is. I was well into a 45-minute pre-dawn hike to my hunting spot in West Virginia, a two-mile obstacle course consisting of blown down trees and numerous creek crossings. After a series of zig-zagging, boulder-dodging maneuvers through river bottom country, I know I’m almost there.

THE DUNK

Just one more creek crossing and I’m home free. I’ll have 40 minutes until first shooting light to cool off, catch my breath, and rest.

Being submerged in cold rushing water in total blackness was exhilarating! I was halfway across the stream and remember stepping on the smooth, slimy, moss-ridden stone, wondering, “Is it slippery?” It was.

Suddenly, I’m horizontal, floating in mid-air, pause, then flop underwater. Recent rains made the usually calm creek fast and deep. With head submerged, I think, “you dumbass!” Temperatures were hovering around the freezing point. It’s going to make for a long, cold, wet, miserable day. Getting up, I pour water out of my rifle barrel, then notice my glasses missing. Great! Luckily, I find them as my Mini-Mag flashlight is shining its beam underwater. Boy, those rubber O-rings really work! Rather than being pissed, I’m now full of hope!

UNEXPECTED CONSEQUENCES

A favored uncle, Jerry, always told my cousins and I that accidents, turmoil, or unexpected happenings before a hunt brings good luck. He told us this for years. Looking back, I’m not sure if he said this to pacify us when things didn’t go as planned, to keep us quiet or if he was genuinely sincere. Either way, I believed it — and still do.

I got up, put my glasses on and shook off like an old hound dog. Slogging my way to the stand, I started my soggy vigil. The sun started making day and I notice my vision wasn’t quite right. “Did I hit my head during my dunk in the creek?” Closing my right eye, things looked clear but when closing my left eye, things blurred. Great. My shooting eye. I stuck my finger up to touch the lens but my finger passed through like magic.

The right lens popped out. So, there I was shivering, right eye closed, looking thru my new monocle. Eating a pack of soggy peanut butter cracker mush, I thought, “Any more mishaps and I’ll be a sure bet to shooting a Boone & Crocket buck!” A smile crossed my chattering teeth as I thought of Uncle Jerry’s belief.

IT WORKS

It doesn’t take long though, and a few hours later a doe crossed my shooting lane up above me, followed by a huge 10-point buck. As he walked, he paused, sniffing the air, playing a perpetual game of hide and seek while pursuing love and happiness.

Next thing I know, my rifle seemed to go off by its own accord. Bringing the boned-out meat, hide and horns back to my Tahoe, I noticed a glint in the creek. A closer look revealed the lens from my glasses. I snatched it from the icy waters, pressing it into the frame. The lens “clicks” back into place, good as new. Talk about good luck.

BETTER LUCKY ...

Hunters are an optimistic, superstitious lot in general. Every season brings dreams of taking a big, gnarly, heavy-horned buck. Everyone thinks, “Where am I going to mount this trophy once it gets back from the taxidermist?” As happens



Tank’s Uncle Jerry on another successful West Virginia hunt before he died.

The glasses Tank wore while taking his pre-dawn creek bath, along with his Maglite and knife.



more times than not, most hunters go home empty handed, or shoot the first legal buck they see.

Superstition and tradition go hand in hand and hunters are full of both. Some eat the same breakfast, wear a special shirt or carry a particular knife to bring them luck. The Dena Indians in Alaska called this magic. The local Shaman made special bags, each one different and private for individual hunters. One man's medicine would not work for another. It was very specific.

For the ones who believe, the medicine is very strong. So are the traditions and superstitions of most hunters. Some hunters are so stuck in their ways the slightest deviation can make them forget about going hunting that day. "What's the use? I'm jinxed."

But maybe having good "medicine" can give you the edge, to keep your attitude positive and keep you out longer. Face it, the longer you stay out, the better the odds will be in your favor.

UNCLE JERRY

My Uncle Jerry died in the very mountains we hunted in West Virginia. It was 1996 and me and my cousins, Brad and Brent, were with him. On the third day of the hunt, Jerry shot

at a buck during a traditional drive of "sh--house ridge" named in honor of the old outhouse there. We pursued the buck, recovered it, but there was no Jerry. Backtracking, we found him on his stand.

Jerry was dead. At only 50 years old, we were in shock. I think he would laugh dying on a ridge so named. He was a great Uncle!

The following year in West Virginia I had a brand-new Chevy Tahoe, and found out from my wife we were pregnant with our daughter. Opening day came, and I took the biggest buck of my life after falling in the creek. I know Uncle Jerry had something to do with it, too. He brought me good medicine.

Over the previous year, I had thought nothing worse could happen when he died on that mountain. In some weird way, his bad misfortune brought me good luck not only on that hunt, but life in general. I felt him telling me all will be fine and go ahead and have a good life, no matter what happens.

You just never know when bad circumstances will bring you good luck! It's something I still believe in. So, if you happen to run into some hard times on the trail of life, don't get discouraged — get ready to capture Lady Luck, she's just around the corner.

GUNS

SWITCH

BLADES ARE ILLEGAL THIS ISN'T!

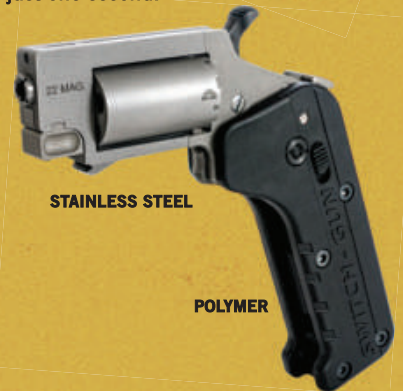
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-Mike B. Harvey
President of Cimarron Firearms Co.

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1877-SIXGUN1

GUNS INSIDER

continued from page 66

naturally and rationally afraid of experiencing a controlled explosion at arm's length, but too much testosterone won't let us admit it. Thus, younger guys in their ever-present quest to look tough, strong and virile, often pick their guns based on what is the most intimidating rather than what works best.

AGE AIN'T FOR KIDS

However, once you get older, things start to happen. One big factor is your testosterone starts to dry up and you eventually become far less concerned about impressing the rest of the world. This varies wildly from guy-to-guy and there are other factors involved, but generally the older you get, the less you worry about what anybody thinks.

Your body also starts to fall apart like a poorly-maintained house. First, the paint peels, then a shutter falls off and finally holes appear in the roof. It's quite a shock the morning you wake up to realize you always feel like a sack full of broken crockery and you've lost another shutter during the night. This also about the time Mr. A — arthritis — starts to visit and no matter how tough you are, deep bone pain makes for poor shooting.

Thus, the natural progression for men is to eventually reach a point where you don't give a tinkers-damn about what anybody thinks, plus it hurts to shoot anything with significant recoil. Therefore, you are forced to face facts and make more circumspect choices about the guns you carry and shoot. Welcome to Aging, population: you.

The trouble is this hard-earned wisdom is wholly wasted on us oldsters. We generally don't engage in too much risky behavior or even stay out past 9 p.m., so the chances of needing to shoot somebody are, honestly, pretty minimal. Meanwhile, the young males, are out carousing and generally living life on the edge, thereby facing greater odds of being in a situation where self-defense is necessary. Yet, you're often carrying a gun you don't shoot well because it secretly hurts whenever you touch off one of the miniature nukes in the chamber.

CHANGE THE PLAN

There's a better way. Guys — if you can't fire your gun without flinching, gritting your teeth or suffering minor incontinence every time you brush the trigger, it's time to reconsider the matter.

There's nothing wrong with carrying a full-house .44 Mag if you can shoot it well but most folks don't. Meanwhile, there is no shame in "stepping down" to a caliber starting with a three, especially if your marksmanship is markedly better. Or maybe carrying a 9mm instead of that 2" airweight stocked with full-house .357 loads. You really don't need the extra 20 fps or ft-lb. simply to outdo your buddy and his favorite gun.

**"GUYS — IF YOU CAN'T
FIRE YOUR GUN WITHOUT
FLINCHING, GRITTING
YOUR TEETH OR SUFFERING
MINOR INCONTINENCE
EVERY TIME YOU
BRUSH THE TRIGGER,
IT'S TIME TO RECONSIDER
THE MATTER."**

Here's the hard truth: Bad guys don't really care about what brand or caliber you're carrying, especially if your marksmanship is — pardon the pun — dead on.

Do what you want, it's your life after all. But before you decide which gun is for you or who is the milksop, consider what most Boomers have already figured out — owning fast motorcycles and even faster bullets simply for the sake of appearances is simply silly. You might be shocked to find it doesn't hurt a thing to downshift and enjoy life AND your shooting more.

Do this, and be home by 9 p.m., and you'll eventually become one of us. Then, trust me, you'll discover the true meaning of "living on the edge!"

GUNS

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WHAT DO FAST MOTORCYCLES AND FASTER BULLETS HAVE IN COMMON?

Brent T. Wheat

Recently I was having lunch with a buddy while on a road trip to look at motorcycles — for him, not me. I'm "happily married" at the moment to my screaming yellow Spyder.

We were sitting at a picnic table outside a restaurant as he tried to talk himself out of buying another bike. He's already got a nice chrome-finished cruiser the size of Los Angeles-class submarine, a couple of "fun" around-town bikes and even has one or two derelicts moldering at the back of his garage. Yet, he's been on a kick to buy a retro European two-wheeler.

NO SALE

At the dealership he was within seconds of pulling the trigger on a new Royal Enfield but the nagging voice of fiscal responsibility unexpectedly appeared. Taking the salesman's business card, we abruptly de-camped to discuss the possible purchase over a tray of food at a nearby drive-in.

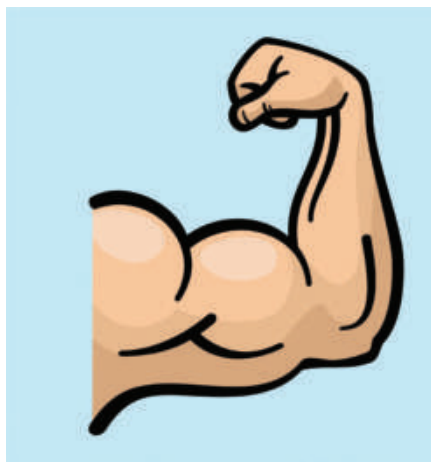
"You know," he said with a mouth full of coney dog, "I'm not even sure why I want a bike like this. Top speed is 67 miles per hour, with a tail wind!"

"First, you've already made your purchase decision, which is why we rode 40 miles," I pointed out. "Second, you've got the cash in hand. Third, you're the last person in the world to worry about how fast you can go. Just buy the damn thing and don't look back!"

It was a pretty shocking moment. We've known each other about 40 years and I normally play the part of the parsimonious, anxiety-ridden reluctant while he always throws caution to the wind and enjoys life to the utmost. I think they slipped something into the draft root beer we were enjoying.

We continued talking about our love for riding motorcycles, me the eager newbie and he the old hand. Our shared outlook is to cruise at a

reasonable velocity and stop whenever a roadside vegetable stand, greasy-spoon diner or sketchy roadside attraction beckons. We decided our many friends who like to run fast and hard are welcome to continue their perilous sprints but we'll keep happily poking along in the rearview mirror.



During our conversation my friend casually mentioned how many guys in our age group are now taking testosterone supplements to enhance their "maleness" and how these tended to be the same guys who had the loudest, flashiest and fastest motorcycles. As we stood up and cleared our food tray, we agreed it was a good thing both of us have (mostly) moved past the abundant testosterone-fueled stupidity of our younger days.

On my ride home, however, I started thinking about a couple of recent podcast episodes where we built the case for carrying snub-nose revolvers. One major takeaway was that for most folks, a smaller/less powerful caliber for self-defense makes sense because you tend to have better accuracy due to lower recoil. As I cruised down the highway thinking, it became apparent the twin topics — dodgy motorcycle riding and CCW caliber selection — were strangely entwined and just might be related to

the testosterone levels of the person in question.

ALL THE YOUNG DUDES

The only downside to the male hormone testosterone is the fact when you have it in abundance as a younger male, it has side effects — aggressiveness, poor judgement and the tendency to suffer any indignity for the smallest chance of female companionship. It also causes us to take unreasonable risks in order to "prove" ourselves to any sweet thing who might be watching as we jump off the 2nd floor balcony into the shallow end of the pool.

Younger guys are physically far, far better than older guys but often come up short in the decision-making department. I would compare most 25-year-old men to a Caterpillar D11 bulldozer being operated by a team of earthworms. I know, I was once a young guy myself.

On the shooting front, it's not uncommon to see young males packing massive blasters with the hottest ammo they can find, rather than something a little more pedestrian. They also love to loudly point out you're a weak Nancy-boy and possible communist sympathizer if you pack anything less bone-jarring.

However, they don't seem to shoot those guns very often and when they do, the target looks more like a shotgun pattern. If you had the temerity to suggest their questionable marksmanship was due to recoil anticipation or flinch, the suggestion would not be well-received. So, you keep your opinion to yourself and continue chopping away at the X ring on a B-8 with your .38 Special loaded with wadcutters.

Let me get down to a simple fact — anybody who *isn't* afraid of the recoil from a hot cartridge/pistol combination is missing a few earthworms in the control room. The problem is we are

continued on page 65



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