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MARCH | 2024

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By George Harris



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NRA™ Official Journal of the National Rifle Association of America

The NRA, the foremost guardian of the traditional American right to “keep and bear arms,” believes every law-abiding citizen is entitled to the ownership and legal use of firearms, and that every reputable gun owner should be an NRA member.

The items and information offered or detailed in this publication are intended for, and directed and offered to, only those at least **18** years of age or older and who are in compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws.

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KEVIN CREIGHTON



The Rise and Fall and Rise of the Metal-Frame, Double-Stack 9 mm Pistol

Polymer-frame, striker-fired pistols have dominated the concealed-carry market for years. Recently, however, metal-frame, single-action, double-stack 9 mm pistols are becoming a popular choice for both law enforcement and armed citizens. However, this new trend has its roots in one of the oldest semi-automatic pistol designs out there, which raises the question, just how new is this “new” trend?

TAMARA KEEL



Springfield Armory Echelon 2,000-Round Test

Creating a pistol that can handle the day-in, day-out strain of constant carry is no easy task. The Echelon is a “clean-sheet” pistol design from Springfield Armory that was meant to be used by police officers and armed citizens alike. So, how does this new pistol hold up to 2,000 rounds of all sorts of 9 mm ammo with no breaks for cleaning, adjustments or maintenance? Find out in this web-exclusive report.

ED HEAD



Should You Have a Backup Gun?

Spend any time talking with gun owners who carry concealed on a regular basis, and you’ll find some of them believe that a backup gun is as necessary as a steady supply of oxygen. You’ll find others who prioritize other gear like a flashlight or a less-lethal option over a backup gun. Which group is right? Well, that all depends on what mission you’re looking to accomplish when you carry a defensive pistol.

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Optimus Arms Acquires Sentry Solutions



RemArms Closing Historic Iliion, NY, Factory

Guns



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Gear

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Some of the photographs in this magazine illustrate specific shooting stances or positions in which it was occasionally necessary to position the camera in front of the muzzle for instructional purposes. At no time was a loaded, functioning firearm used in these photographs; special, deactivated guns or solid plastic gun simulators were employed. In some cases the image was taken using a remotely triggered camera.

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DANA LOESCH

Just Right

Tamara Keel is the coolest writer in *Shooting Illustrated* because she has a sense of humor and doesn't get above herself. In the January issue, I took a glance at the picture illustrating her "Goldilocks" column and thought, "Oh boy, my favorite gun, and my EDC, the Smith & Wesson M&P Shield." On second look, my hopes were dashed. Here in California, the Springfield Armory Hellcat was unavailable to armed citizens until quite recently, after I had bought all the guns I could afford. The Shield (I have two now, one as a backup) drove me crazy for a long time, until I learned to control it (the grips are really short for my hands). Now it is my favorite handgun, more so than my 1911 or wheelgun. I

didn't even begin my firearms saga until age 71. Now range time is twice a week, and so much fun!

Gary M. Ogden
via e-mail

When reading

Tamara Keel's January

column, I was taken back to 1976, when I purchased my first revolver. It was the Smith & Wesson Model 13 in .357 Mag. she mentioned. In my case, because I have very large hands that sometimes don't even fit in size XXL gloves, I replaced the original square-butt grips with an even larger set, so I had enough to hang onto. It wasn't a great concealed-carry gun, but it served me well until the 1990s when I purchased my first semi-automatic. Thankfully, many manufacturers now include interchangeable backstraps for those of us who need the extra girth. I would love to carry any of the smaller, more concealable models she describes, but they are not a great option for people like me.

Ronald P. Andring, Sr.
San Antonio, TX

The Most Important Right

The President's Column in the January issue brought home, once again, the lesson of an unarmed citizenry suffering from an armed invasion. Israel and Ukraine suffered invasions that saw many of their citizens killed or injured. During World War II, England faced the threat of a Nazi invasion and its unarmed subjects cried out for help from America. We donated privately owned firearms to help them.

Despite the lessons throughout history, anti-gunners still do not comprehend the lesson that an unarmed or disarmed citizenry is at terrible risk of death from invasions. Americans must preserve our great Second Amendment.

Norm Villanueva
Peyton, CO

I wanted to thank you for the excellent January column by Charles Cotton about confronting evil in Israel, and the right to be armed. I returned recently from Israel after volunteering there by bringing supplies and making barbecues for soldiers on army bases who have been separated from their families since the beginning of the war. During that time, I met with soldiers and commanders, and I heard many stories of civilians who were armed and survived or died with honor defending their communities, and those who were unarmed and were cruelly murdered after being raped and abused. Most notably, the success of the female fighting units and civilians stood out as a testament to the heroism of those who fought during the initial assault, ending debate on the issue of women serving in combat.

I had many conversations with Israelis about the importance of our Second Amendment and the right to bear arms. We can all be ambassadors for the Second Amendment when we travel abroad. Fortunately, with recent changes in the law and culture, Israelis who live past the "Green Line" have a right to obtain a pistol license, and firearms sales have increased in unprecedented numbers.

With the social unrest in our country, we should never take our rights for granted, nor should we rely upon our government or our fellow citizens for our own protection. The Talmud states in a quote that I have engraved on my rifle, the words "*Ein Somchim Al HaNes*", which means that when you are in danger, you can't solely rely upon God creating a miracle to help you; you must make preparations yourself to meet that threat. The responsibility to provide for the security of our families is our own personal responsibility, and should be paramount to each of us.

Jacob Silver
Woodmere, NY

Knowledge is Power

As most of your readers know, concealed carry and the interstate transportation of guns can be very confusing. In his December 2023 column, "Personal Defense And the Law," Sheriff Jim Wilson was able to provide all the basic information a reader would need on the subject in just one short article that captured the essence of the issue very well. He made sure the reader was well aware that there are serious consequences should one not, as the Sheriff stated, "know and understand the law"—not only in your home state, but also anywhere you might travel with your firearm. It was an excellent article and, like everything Sheriff Wilson writes, a must read.

Dominick J. D'Andrea
via e-mail

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A man, his girlfriend and their two children were getting out of their vehicle outside the Denver Museum of Nature and Science on Dec. 31, 2023, when two armed men charged at them. The suspects reportedly grabbed the man and demanded the silver chain around his neck, but then struck him in the back of the head. The man drew his own firearm and pointed it at the suspects, who fired at him, and he fired back. The alleged assailants fled, firing back at the family as they went, fortunately not striking anyone. Later, a car which matched the description of the one the suspects fled in, dropped off a man at the hospital whose clothing matched the security footage from the museum. The man was reported as "medically unresponsive," but faced several charges, including attempted first-degree murder, should he recover. The other person from the vehicle was not apprehended at the time of the report. (denver7.com, Denver, Colo., 1/2/24)

A 31-year-old concealed-carry-permit holder was outside in Chicago, Ill., on Dec. 9, 2023, when two men in a vehicle pulled up near him and allegedly started shooting for unknown reasons. One of the bullets struck the victim in the chest, but the man drew his own firearm and shot back, striking both assailants and killing one. The victim was hospitalized in fair condition. The investigation was still ongoing. (cbsnews.com, Chicago, Ill., 12/10/23)

An armed robber entered a gas station convenience store Dec. 21, 2023, around 1 a.m. in South Bend, Ind., and demanded money from the clerk at gunpoint. When the man then got into an altercation with the clerk, a customer believed the clerk to be in danger of his life, so he drew his firearm and fatally shot the assailant. The would-be robber managed to flee the store but collapsed nearby. The store's security footage quickly confirmed the armed citizen's account of events and the prosecutor was able to tell reporters the same day that the shooting was justified in defense of someone's life and they would not seek to press charges. (wndu.com, South Bend, Ind., 12/21/23)

On New Year's Day, a masked man allegedly entered a Taco Bell in Akron, Ohio, pulled out a gun and fired at an employee behind the counter. Another employee, a 21-year-old man, drew his own gun and fired back at the assailant, striking him in the chest. The would-be robber then fled with some of the money, only to show up at the hospital a short time later. Another man, who drove him to the hospital and who was apparently involved in the incident in some way, was arrested. The wounded suspect was in stable condition and was expected

to face charges upon release. The police chief said, "To some degree, [he] could've saved or prevented someone from being seriously injured or killed—himself or others." (news5cleveland.com, Cleveland, Ohio, 1/2/24)

A store owner and concealed-carry license holder in Chicago, Ill., arrived at her convenience-store business the morning of Jan. 4, only to discover several robbers inside. The intruders reportedly fired shots at her, so she fired back, causing them all to flee. The store's security video shows the robbers breaking the glass front door and taking money from the registers, and the store owner said it was the second robbery in a week. (abc7chicago.com, Chicago, Ill., 1/4/24)

In Houston, Texas, a woman was leaving an apartment complex the morning of Jan. 6 when two armed people allegedly pulled her back out of her pickup truck and held guns to her head. A friend of hers heard the commotion and came out of his apartment. Seeing the situation, he shot one of the assailants, killing him; the other would-be robber fled. (abc13.com, Houston, Texas, 1/7/24)

A woman in Blair, Wis., called 911 to report that a man had kicked in a door of her home around 1:15 a.m. on Jan. 1. The woman's husband shot the intruder after he entered the house. The suspect was transported to the hospital by ambulance, but his condition was not otherwise reported. Police discovered that the alleged home invader had also broken into another residence where no one was home; the investigation was still ongoing. (wqow.com, Eau Claire, Wis., 1/1/24) 

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Farewell And Thank You

Forty-five years ago, as a very young man, I accepted a position as a legislative assistant with the National Rifle Association of America. I had no idea that I would one day assume the leadership of the NRA, or that my involvement with this Association would span nearly half a century of American politics. But I believed then, as I do now, that there is no greater calling for an American citizen than to fight for the founding principles of this great nation.

From the day I joined the NRA, I always tried to work hard and let my performance speak for itself. I tried to do my best for our members and our Constitutional freedoms.

I can point with pride to the NRA's many achievements over the years I've led this organization—not only winning legislative, regulatory and courtroom battles, but also changing the hearts and minds of tens of millions of Americans when it comes to guns and to crime issues.

But my greatest pride is in the relationship I've shared with you and millions of your fellow patriots across this great nation. One by one, there is little that any of us could have done to prevent the ultimate destruction of the Second Amendment and all it stands for. But standing together, we have not only saved and strengthened this right, but written an extraordinary chapter in our nation's history books that will endure for generations to come.

Today marks my final communication with you in my official NRA role. After forty-five years, it is time for me to step aside and watch you write the next chapter for American freedom. And in saying this final goodbye to you and my other fellow warriors, I want to say to you that my life has truly been blessed.

There are simply no words that can adequately convey my gratitude to you—my brothers and sisters in arms—for your forty-five years of confidence in me and your commitment to carry the fight into the future. I've found my purpose and my strength in standing by your side these many years, in your never-ending commitment to freedom, and in your courage under fire in some of the toughest political battles of the 20th and 21st centuries.

I know I leave the NRA in good hands. I've always said that the NRA isn't a building in Washington, D.C., or anywhere else. It's an idea—and an ideal—that transcends who we are as individuals and stirs us to muster together under freedom's banner.

From America's seacoasts to our wheat fields, from tiny towns to big cities, from men and women in the military and law enforcement, from plinkers to Olympians, from every church and synagogue and mosque, from football stands and deer stands, from the halls of Congress and to the bounds of outer space, you will find NRA members standing tall and proud.

You will find Americans who know in their hearts that they were born into rights that are worth fighting for. Who know that freedom is precious beyond life itself. And who believe today—as I did when I first came to the NRA 45 years ago—that fighting for that freedom is the highest calling for any American.

I know you are up to this essential task. I know that you will carry the banner high. And I know that as I watch you continue the fight in the years to come, my heart will be filled with pride in your achievements.

I bid you farewell, and I thank you for the opportunity you've given me to play a role in defending American liberty. God bless you always, and God bless this great nation.



By Wayne LaPierre
Executive Vice President

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A planed off area on both sides of the stock allows for near perfect seating in a hunting tripod saddle.

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By Charles L. Cotton
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Anti-Gun Politicians Owe Answers

Registered Democrats are buying guns like never before, and they're headed our way. Are you ready?

Before anyone misconstrues my words: No, I'm not suggesting that the legacy media's fever-dream fantasies of "civil war" or widespread "insurrection" in this election year are founded. No, when I say Democrats are buying guns and "heading our way," what I'm saying is that they're agreeing with us. They're coming over to our side of this debate. That's good news.

In case you missed it, last November, an NBC News poll found that the number of Democrats who reported owning firearms jumped significantly over the previous four years.

Between August 2019—when a similar survey was done by NBC News and *The Wall Street Journal*—and the survey last November, the number of registered Democrats who reported living in a home with a firearm increased from 33% to 41%.

What's more, since 33% of registered Democrats also reported owning guns in a 2004 survey, that means the jump from 33% to 41% apparently occurred mostly over the past four years.

It's not hard to understand why.

Over the past several years, Democrat politicians have been pushing policies that make America less safe: Defunding police. Abolishing bail. Redefining felonies as misdemeanors. Flinging open our southern border to anyone who wants to sneak in. Clearing out prisons through reduced sentences and early releases.

For example, California passed a ballot initiative that raised the felony threshold for shoplifting from \$450 of merchandise to \$950. Other states have followed suit. Today, 40 states don't consider shoplifting a felony until at least \$1,000 worth of loot is stolen. Of those, 16 states set the felony threshold at \$1,500. The result? Flash-mob shoplifting sprees and organized retail theft—losses they politely refer to as "shrink," which amounts to a \$100 billion-per-year "tax" on every one of us.

Violent crime has been rising as well. Between 2019 and 2020, homicides increased by almost 30%—the largest single-year increase in six decades—to the highest number of murders since 1995. In 2021, murders increased again by another 4%. The latest statistics available, for 2022, show a decrease in homicides nationwide, but you'd never know that if you lived in Washington, D.C., Baltimore, St. Louis, Detroit, Memphis or other cities where homicides continue to increase.

What's maddening about all this is that even as their policies put more Americans at

ever-greater risk, anti-gun politicians continue pushing gun bans and restrictions that further diminish our ability to protect ourselves.

In January, I wrote about how Israeli and Ukrainian authorities had awakened to the reality that they can't always protect their own people, and that ordinary armed civilians are the first line of defense against those who would harm us, whether they're armed invaders or terrorist butchers.

Here in America, many Democrat voters are evidently waking up to that same truth, as they increasingly seek out the tools to defend themselves and their families through the right to keep and bear arms.

Make no mistake: No particular political party "owns" the Second Amendment. But the fact is, most of the politicians pushing gun bans and prohibitions are Democrats. Most of the leaders fighting to stop them are Republicans.

The National Rifle Association is strictly nonpartisan. We support those who protect our Second Amendment rights, and we oppose those who don't, regardless of political party.

So, it's encouraging to see more self-identified Democrats joining the ranks of gun owners.

Black Americans are embracing the Second Amendment even more. Between 2019 and 2023, gun ownership among black Americans rose from 24% to 41%. Again, this is good news for the freedom and safety of all of us.

Maybe these new gun owners will succeed in persuading their leaders that the fundamental right to protect yourself shouldn't be a partisan issue. And if their leaders abandon them, maybe they'll abandon those leaders.

So, I would urge our new gun-owning allies to demand answers from their leaders: Since when is it a virtue to relinquish the rule of law ... to surrender American cities to the violent ... and to treat honest, peaceable, law-abiding people as second-class citizens by relentlessly attacking their God-given right to protect themselves and their families?

As president of this Association, I call on every one of you to reach out to these new friends of the right to keep and bear arms. Freedom needs all the protectors that we can possibly muster. Reasonable minds can disagree on some issues, but the preservation of innocent lives through the use of self-defense firearms should be a point concerning which all Americans, all parties, all courts and all elected officials agree.

Charles L. Cotton



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By Randy Kozuch
Executive Director,
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Gun Control Targets The Law-Abiding

It's getting harder and harder to take anti-gun politicians seriously. That's not to say the threat these gun controllers pose isn't dire. Their goal, as ever, is civilian disarmament. It's that their rhetoric, actions and preferred policies are increasingly divorced from reality.

Consider Illinois. In January 2023, Gov. J.B. Pritzker (D) enacted a sweeping ban on commonly owned semi-automatic firearms and standard-capacity magazines. Upon signing, Pritzker crowed, "My colleagues in the State Capitol have been battling the powerful forces of the NRA to enshrine the strongest and most effective gun violence legislation that we possibly can."

Such legislation does not include efforts to meaningfully ensure those who actually commit violent crime are prosecuted and punished. The governor has signed legislation to abolish cash bail and backed numerous other criminal-justice "reforms." Pritzker assumed the governorship in January 2019. Chicago Police Department statistics show that crime in that city was up 16% year over year in 2023 and up a shocking 55% from four years earlier. There were 16% more shooting incidents and 23% more murders in the Windy City in 2023 than four years before.

Contending that this legislation is "effective," let alone the "most effective," at anything other than harassing law-abiding gun owners is risible. Illinois' gun ban chiefly targets certain types of semi-automatic rifles and shotguns. Restricting access to rifles and shotguns is not an effective means of confronting violent crime, in part because long guns of any configuration are rarely used in violent crime. FBI expanded homicide data for Illinois in 2022 listed 372 murders as having been committed using a handgun. In contrast, 16 murders were listed as having been committed with rifles and a grand total of three were committed with shotguns. Together, "knives or cutting instruments" and "personal weapons (hands/fists/feet/etc.," accounted for more than three times as many murders as rifles and shotguns combined.

According to the ATF's National Firearms Commerce and Trafficking Assessment (NFCTA), which broke down firearm tracing data from 2017-2021, pistols and revolvers accounted for 87% of "crime gun" traces from Illinois over that period. Further, no caliber used predominantly in rifles appeared in a list of Illinois' 10 "Top Crime Gun Calibers,"—aside from .22, which is also a popular handgun caliber.

The most senseless portion of Illinois' new regime prohibits .50 BMG-caliber rifles of any description. In a finding that should surprise no one, these large and expensive rifles didn't appear in the ATF NFCTA's section on "Crime Guns Recovered and Traced Within the United States and Its Territories." It turns out, Chicago

gangsters aren't partial to carrying around 25-pound guns with 29-inch barrels.

Anti-gun politicians have no excuse not to know their favorite gun-ban scheme doesn't work. The entire country engaged in a fruitless semi-auto firearm and standard-capacity magazine ban from 1994 to 2004. A 1997 DOJ-funded study of that ban acknowledged, "at best, the assault weapons ban can have only a limited effect on total gun murders, because the banned weapons and magazines were never involved in more than a modest fraction of all gun murders." A follow-up study from 2004 reiterated this point, stating, "AWs [assault weapons] and LCMs [large capacity magazines] were used in only a minority of gun crimes prior to the 1994 federal ban." The researchers went on to admit, "the ban's effects on gun violence are likely to be small at best and perhaps too small for reliable measurement."

Part of the Illinois gun ban required existing owners to register their now-prohibited firearms, parts and ammunition by Jan. 1, 2024, merely to retain their lawfully acquired property. Compliance has been sparse. Illinois ABC affiliate WTVO reported on Jan. 4, "According to the Illinois State Police, as of this week, about 29,357 of Illinois' 2.4 million Firearm Owner's Identification card holders (about 1.22%) had registered the banned weapons." On Jan. 8, news outlet The Center Square reported that a representative of Federal Firearms Licensees of Illinois "said other estimates of those who actually own the now-banned guns may bring the compliance rate to somewhere between 4% and 8%." That source went on to add, "no matter how you slice it, the compliance is very low."

Perhaps acknowledging the futility of the registration scheme, the Illinois State Police noted that they are keeping registration open past the deadline, but "the relevant jurisdiction could deem a late endorsement affidavit submittal to be invalid or insufficient."

Extensive noncompliance was foreseeable for anyone operating in the real world. Previous efforts to register firearms in New York and Connecticut were met with similar widespread civil disobedience.

With anti-gun politicians pushing senseless gun restrictions that won't impact criminal conduct, while abandoning their constituents to violent crime, gun owners must adopt a cynical view to make sense of these lawmakers and their motives. Gun owners should ignore the empty rhetoric and recognize these measures for what they truly are—a calculated attack on an opposing political constituency and their fundamental rights.

Randy Kozuch

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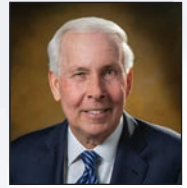


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By Randy Kozuch
Executive Director,
NRA-ILA



This Election Could Determine The Future Of The Second Amendment

In my 30 years with the NRA, I have never seen an election that is more important than the one we face in 2024. I know it may seem like we say this every four years, but that's because it's true. All of our gains could be gone in an instant if gun owners don't turn out at the polls in November. If you value your rights as a gun owner and a citizen of the world's last, best hope for liberty, you cannot afford to be on the sidelines of this year's general election. It is easily the most important of our lifetimes.

The potential Republican and Democrat candidates could not be further apart when it comes to the Second Amendment.

The situation is very similar to the 2016 election when the future direction of the U.S. Supreme Court (and with it the Second Amendment) was effectively on the ballot. President Trump's victory ensured that the federal judiciary, and particularly the Supreme Court, would remain true to the original understanding of the Constitution and Bill of Rights. He indeed built a mighty wall that remains intact to this day: a firewall of Originalist judges and justices in the mold of the late, great Antonin Scalia, author of the landmark 2008 Supreme Court decision, *District of Columbia v. Heller*.

That was the case that ignited the modern Second Amendment renaissance. Yet the promise of *Heller*'s reassertion of the Second Amendment could have been cut short with Justice Scalia's shocking and untimely death in February 2016. Then-candidate Trump understood the gravity of the situation and made the wise and far-reaching decision to prioritize Originalist judicial appointments as a centerpiece of his administration. Originalism is a method of constitutional interpretation that centers on the public understanding of the document at the time of

its adoption and the Bill of Rights' later application to the states (known as "incorporation") following the Civil War.

Originalism preserves our sacred, fundamental rights, the same freedoms so much blood has been shed to protect throughout American history. Proponents of a "living Constitution," by contrast, would empower activists in the government and judiciary simply to read rights out of our founding documents whenever they became inconvenient to the political ambitions of the day. No right was more imperiled by this pernicious ideology than the Second Amendment, which living constitutionalists insisted had outlived its usefulness—and supposedly its binding effect—with the advent of America's modern standing Army and professional police forces. There was, they asserted, no longer an individual right to keep and bear arms.

Heller repudiated that lie in the clearest possible terms. "[T]he enshrinement of constitutional rights necessarily takes certain policy choices off the table," Justice Scalia wrote. These included Washington, D.C.'s illegitimate attempts to ban handguns and the possession of usable firearms within one's home. He continued: "it is not the role of this Court to pronounce the Second Amendment extinct."

Heller was followed in 2010 by *McDonald v. Chicago*, another Supreme Court decision that made clear states and localities are also bound to respect the Second Amendment's protections. Thus, Chicago had no more authority to ban handguns than did the federal enclave of Washington, D.C.

For years after *McDonald*, there was no appetite in a Supreme Court closely divided between originalists and living constitutionalists to revisit the Second Amendment. With Scalia's death, however, there was a decisive opportunity to tip the balance

away from originalism and in the direction of modern legal activism. Then-President Barack Obama's choice for this transformation was none other than Merrick Garland, now leading under Joe Biden the most partisan, politicized U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) in American history.

Your NRA saw through Garland's veneer of judicial professionalism and exposed him for the anti-Second Amendment activist he is. We explained how as a federal appellate judge he voted for a do-over of what was then the most-important pro-Second Amendment decision in American jurisprudence, the same case that would go on to generate the *Heller* decision in the Supreme Court. When a three-judge panel on the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled against D.C.'s gun bans in that case, Garland would have given the District another chance to have that ruling overturned by the entire circuit court. A majority of his circuit colleagues, however, voted to leave the decision undisturbed, and D.C. officials instead had to face the Supreme Court.

Fortunately, the pro-gun Senate of 2016 decided it should be the American people who chose which of the presidential candidates got to pick Scalia's successor, and Garland's nomination never came up for a vote. President Trump prevailed and proved true to his word; during his term, he appointed three originalist Supreme Court justices, as well as scores of like-minded judges to the lower federal courts.

Trump's makeover of the federal judiciary finally brought the potential of *Heller* to fruition with the Supreme Court's 2022 decision in *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen*, which recognized the Second Amendment's right to bear arms in public for self-defense. That decision invalidated New York's discretionary licensing system for public carry, which had required applicants to prove they had a special need to carry before they could be issued a license. Just as importantly, it reasserted *Heller*'s standard of review for Second Amendment cases. The court stated that when conduct is protected by the Second Amendment's plain text, the government can only subject it

to regulation by demonstrating "the regulation is consistent with this Nation's historical tradition of firearm regulation." Simply put, laws that restrict the right to keep and bear arms must have analogues dating to the founding era to survive Second Amendment challenges. This is as strong an assertion of originalism as exists in American law.

Every justice appointed by President Trump voted with the majority in *Bruen*, giving the decision a six-to-three majority. Had Hillary Clinton made those appointments, the decision would have undoubtedly gone the other way, and the Second Amendment would have been rendered a dead letter.

A federal judiciary shaped by President Biden for another four years poses an immediate threat to our right to keep and bear arms.

BIDEN OPENLY CHARACTERIZED THE GUN INDUSTRY AS "THE ENEMY" OF HIS ADMINISTRATION AND THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.

Biden campaigned as a unifier, promising a return to normalcy and bipartisanship after what he characterized as the divisiveness of the Trump administration. Nothing could have been further from the truth. If there is one thing that has characterized the Biden administration, it has been his use of government power and influence to persecute, marginalize and censor his political opposition.

No one has experienced this tendency more than America's gun industry and the law-abiding Americans it serves. Biden openly characterized the gun industry as "the enemy" of his administration and the American people. He and Garland have directed the ATF to take a "zero tolerance" approach to oversight of licensed gun dealers, once the allies and friends of

federal law enforcement in pursuing their joint interest in combatting illegal firearms trafficking and diversion. Now, the slightest clerical mistake can result in dealers losing their longstanding businesses and livelihoods.

Meanwhile, ATF has produced one legally dubious gun-control rulemaking after another. They have assumed the authority to redefine the meaning of "firearm;" to reclassify braced pistols as the legal equivalent of machine guns; and to label hobbyists making occasional gun sales as "dealers" subject to federal licensing and regulation. Decades of settled legal understandings, enforcement policies, and professional goodwill have been reversed.

The White House wastes no opportunity to blame law-abiding gun owners and firearm businesses for the acts of psychopaths and violent criminals for whom the laws are irrelevant, even as Biden's party pursues policies to coddle hardened convicts and to excuse their behavior as the byproduct of injustice.

Biden even established a taxpayer-funded "White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention" staffed with career anti-gun activists. Its early moves have included coaching states on how to crack down on Second Amendment rights, with model gun-control legislation produced by DOJ. The administration also instituted a widespread "pause" on otherwise-legal firearm exports, seemingly just because it could.

And Biden's Democrat party has embraced gun control as never before. One possible Biden alternate, Gov. Gavin Newsom (D-Calif.), has even proposed rewriting the Second Amendment to require gun bans and other wide-ranging controls, rather than restricting them. Nothing could illustrate anti-gun Democrats' approach to the Constitution or to the right to keep and bear arms more clearly than that.

There is still much to be determined about the 2024 election, including the ultimate contenders. But the stakes for freedom could not be higher. Stay tuned here for further information and, above all, stay involved. The consequences of inaction could well be irreversible. 



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16.3oz
(w/No Mount)

WEIGHT

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-300WM

CALIBER

1.64"

DIAMETER

ETM[™]
(Elite Taper Mount)

MOUNT TYPE

6.6"
(w/No Mount)

LENGTH

PHOTO COURTESY GLOCK



In Memoriam: Gaston Glock

Gaston Glock, the Austrian engineer who founded Glock Ges.m.b.H in 1963—the company that ultimately took polymer-frame pistols mainstream for self-defense, law enforcement and military personnel—died on Dec. 27, 2023. He was 94 years old.

When Glock first established his company, it specialized in non-firearm-related injection-molded products, including curtain rods and other small household items. It later landed contracts to make knives, machine-gun links and other gear for the Austrian military.

The company did well for the next two decades, but by the early 1980s Glock had come to understand the strength of modern, nylon-reinforced polymer when employed in a solidly engineered design. Perhaps it was fate, but the Austrian military was looking for a new standard-issue sidearm at about the same time.

Glock and his team designed a semi-automatic, 9 mm-chambered pistol to submit for consideration. That historic, polymer-frame Glock G17 was introduced in 1982. It—the company's first handgun—had a 17-round capacity, no manual safety and inventory of only 36 parts. It quickly gained a reputation for reliability in challenging conditions with minimal maintenance.

Those virtues showed, and the Austrian military adopted it in 1983. The next year it passed NATO durability testing, and shortly after, the Norwegian Army fielded it. The performance didn't escape the notice of

other militaries and law enforcement departments, and orders grew.

The company expanded quickly afterward and opened an office in Smyrna, GA, in 1986. The next year a second factory began operation in Austria. The company's pistols continue to be among the most popular around the globe, both among professionals and civilians.

Shooting Off

"The criminals have the upper hand — they're the ones going out there robbing us, murdering us ... getting away with it. If we can fight with the same firepower, they're going to think about it twice."

—Fernando Mateo, spokesman for United Bodegas of America, told the *New York Post* in December when asked why so many of the organization's members are getting concealed-carry permits.

Lifestyle | Rally 'Round Your Rims



Your ride may be the highest-caliber chariot on the boulevard, but the look is far from complete without at least one touch that indicates an enthusiasm for firearms. Bumper stickers are passé and sometimes invite trouble, but why not ditch those run-of-the-mill, black-plastic valve stem caps that compromise the look of your fancy rims?

Custom-made valve stem covers have been around for years, but most feature a standard OEM plastic cap glued within. HittCraft began offering a finely machined, improved version in 2022. The outside is spent .45 ACP brass, but inside beats the heart of finely machined aluminum, ensuring long-lasting, trouble-free style—both on- and off-road.

They are made in HittCraft's Maryland factory and MSRP for a set of four, in brass or nickel, is \$12.99. Visit hittcraft.com to order.

Quick Shots

On Dec. 18, Colt/CZ Group announced an agreement with CBC Europe to purchase the Czech ammunition manufacturer Sellier & Bellot. The transaction includes \$350 million in cash and the issue of new Colt/CZ common stock that will lead to CBC Europe holding a minority stake in the Colt/CZ Group's shared capital pending approval.

The Indian River County Sheriff's Office of Vero Beach, FL, an agency with more than 370 deputies, has selected the FN America FN 509 MRD-LE 9 mm-chambered, striker-fired pistol as its new duty sidearm.

Blackhawk announced in December that the United Security Group has been awarded a four-year contract from the Federal Police in Belgium to deliver new duty holsters. Law enforcement professionals in the Belgian Federal Police and local police will begin utilizing T-Series L3D holsters to carry their service pistols.

Hodgdon has released its "2024 Hodgdon Annual Manual," the 21st edition, featuring data for more than 6,000 loads.

Schrödinger's Drill

Eliminate the dreaded flinch by adapting a famous thought experiment to your shooting practice.



How can a shooter be flawless and flinch-less in dry practice, yet have a woeful performance in live fire? A short lesson in quantum mechanics from Nobel Prize-winning physicist Erwin Schrödinger may provide some insight. The practice drill, based on the "Schrödinger's Cat" experiment, balances the body and the brain through a two-part exercise where anticipation and flinch are explored and eliminated.

In 1934, Schrödinger penned his most famous thought experiment: the Schrödinger's Cat Paradox. A brutally oversimplified explanation of the experiment: In a room, there is an opaque box, and inside it is a cat. Due to circumstances beyond our control, we do not know if the cat is alive or dead. Because both options are equally possible, the box is in a state of what is known as "quantum superposition." When the observer touches the lid to open it, the probability of the cat being alive or dead is 50/50. Only after the lid is off is the actual state of the cat known.

How does this translate to shooting? If not practiced correctly, dry fire can cultivate a no-consequence, or "dead-cat," mindset. The brain allows the body to relax as there is no recoil or performance judgment on target. Live fire, "live-cat" mindset, comes with physicality, the auditory report and the stress of being graded downrange. Because the shooter knows that the gun is loaded, they fundamentally alter their performance at a subconscious level and discover they missed their mark. To correct this behavior, we need to train with a mindset of quantum superposition—the probability of the gun being both inert

and live is equal—to ensure our technique is not altered based on what they predict to be chambered.

In this drill, the shooter learns to consistently function the gun such that at the trigger break (lifting the lid), there is either a dead cat (snap-cap) or a live cat (live round) in the box (chamber). Three possibilities can occur in range practice: the shooter knows there is a snap-cap in the chamber, they know a live round is in the chamber or they have a Schrödinger's Cat Paradox—they don't get to know until they take the shot. You'll need a semi-automatic handgun, two magazines, 10 snap-caps, 50 rounds of ammo and two B-8 targets placed side-by-side at 10 yards.

Here's the Drill:

Part 1—Dead Cats

Load one magazine with eight snap-caps and two live rounds loaded at random. Live rounds may not be the first, last or one atop the other in the mag. The drill is fired at the left target, one shot per presentation until the magazine is empty. Treat snap-caps as failure-to-fire malfunctions and perform a safe tap-rack to clear and cycle the next round. The goal is to place the two live shots within the black of the B-8 and to witness the sights hover without movement over the B-8 center for the eight snap-cap "shots."

What is happening? The shooter acclimates to the expectation that the gun is predominantly inert and will not move the gun at the trigger break. While mentally relaxed, they become meticulous in their trigger press as they cannot predict when the live round will manifest. This heightened state of awareness increases tactile discrimination and sight focus. Any flinch is visible. This first magazine is an opportunity to study the shooter's consistency or inconsistency with just enough stress. The two live rounds keep the shooter honest and engaged.

Part 2—Live Cats

Load one magazine with eight live rounds and two snap-caps loaded at random. Snap-caps may not be the first, last or consecutive in the mag. The drill is fired at the right target, one shot per presentation, until the magazine is emptied. The goal is to place all eight live shots within the black of the B-8 and to witness the sights hover without movement over the B-8 center for the two snap-cap "shots."

What is happening? The shooter loads the gun with the knowledge that it is filled with predominantly live ammo and recoil is imminent. After shooting the Dead Cats phase, they should be dialed in to be aware of each shot's nuance. If they can treat the gun the same with the knowledge that there is either a snap cap or live round, there should be no gun movement at the trigger break, no flinch and all hits on target.

Repeat four more times. 

Editor's note: No cats were harmed in the creation of this drill.

Turnbolt Tidbits

The following pieces of gear offer enhancements to improve your comfort and precision with bolt-action rifles.

1. Made from reinforced polymer and featuring an integral aluminum bedding block, the **Magpul Hunter 700 Stock** offers Remington 700 owners an economical alternative loaded with practical upgrades, such as adjustments for length-of-pull and comb height, and other enhanced ergonomics that allow the stock to be custom fit to one or more shooters. Since the stock requires no bedding, it permits drop-in installation without the added expense of costly gunsmithing fees. The Hunter 700 is also compatible with the company's versatile Bolt Action Magazine Well 700 (sold separately), which allows the stock to be used with detachable-box magazines and doesn't require inletting.

MSRP: \$269.95; magpul.com

2. In addition to providing enhanced comb height for improved alignment of tactical scopes with larger objective lenses, the **Blackhawk Urban Warfare IVS Performance Ventilating Cheek Pad** helps you gain a positive and consistent cheekweld. Its compressed-spider design cushions recoil and minimizes perceived vibration, so your face takes less of a beating when firing large-caliber rifles. There's even a zippered utility pouch and external cartridge loops for ammunition storage. Available colors include black and coyote tan.

MSRP: \$47.95; blackhawk.com

3. **Timney's Impact Remington 700 Trigger** replaces the factory "bang switch" with an improved variant (at a cost-effective price) without compromising quality. It does so by using parts machined from billet steel that are then hand-assembled, calibrated and tested to deliver a crisp, 3- to 4-pound, non-adjustable, single-stage pull that features the company's Sear Engagement Adjustment Lock Design (SEALd) technology.

MSRP: \$124.99; timneytriggers.com

4. Offered by Brownells, the **Hawkins Precision M5 Detachable Box Magazine Rifle Bottom Metal** is CNC-machined from billet aluminum and crafted for precision shooting. It integrates a barricade stop in front of the magazine well and a drafted magazine port. The unit comes with pillar as well as action screws and is available for Remington 700-based actions in .308 Win. and .300 Win. Mag.

MSRP: \$198; brownells.com

5. **Flatline Ops Halo-X Accu/Level** helps you add an extra degree of precision to your shooting. The system is constructed from 7075-T6 aerospace-grade aluminum and fits scopes with either 30-, 34-, 35- or 36 mm-diameter tubes. Weighing less than an ounce and only 5/16-inch wide, the top features the Vial-Bridge. This built-in, two-position, articulating bubble level enables shooters to correct cant error at a glance. Designed for left- or right-handed shooters, the Halo-X contains high-visibility fluorescent fluid that ensures easy use in varying light conditions.

MSRP: \$134.99; flatlineops.com



It's a Spring Thing

I am looking at buying an FN America Reflex to replace my older concealed-carry gun. Since I will always (except for cleaning and range use) keep a round chambered in the pistol, I was wondering if keeping a double-action-only (internal-hammer) pistol under spring tension (stretched) would be worse for the pistol in the long run than keeping a striker-fired spring under compression?

—Alice
Somewhere in UT



There is a long answer and a short answer to your question.

The short answer, for readers with limited time and patience, is the differences are inconsequential enough for it not to be a consideration when selecting a quality firearm for personal defense or for any legal purpose.

The longer answer takes a look at the possibilities, as opposed to the probabilities, that are derived from the manufacturing processes. Added to that are the lengths and trouble to which manufacturers go in ensuring their products live up to and surpass the expectations of the consumer.

Spring manufacturers as a whole have cracked the code on the longevity of their products with materials and manufacturing methods that extend the spring's service life well past what was once considered a mandatory replacement time. Modern-manufactured springs taking a set to the point of being unserviceable is unheard of these days—with perhaps the exception of springs that escaped quality control and were defective in the first place.

One of the primary causes of spring failure is a breach in the integrity of the surface of the spring. This applies to coil springs, leaf springs, torsion springs or any other type of spring used in a firearm.

Once any part of the spring's surface incurs nicks or dings which interrupts the smooth and continuous nature of that surface, that spot becomes prone to breakage through the flexing of the part as it does its work. When springs break, it is almost always at the point where the surface has been damaged. The damage can be so small that it is actually unnoticeable to the naked eye without the aid of some degree of magnification.

While these small deficiencies can originate at the manufacturer, they usually come from mishandling at installation or by the user performing maintenance by disassembling and reassembling the firearm or parts thereof. The inappropriate use of a pair of pliers or other tools in removing or installing a spring often results in damaging the surface of the spring, which can ultimately lead to a potential breakage in the future.

Looking at possibilities as opposed to probabilities as to whether a spring is compressed or stretched to do its work, each end of the spring needs to be considered as to how it interfaces with the parts being powered by the spring.

A spring that is compressed to store the energy to do its work is ground so it fits evenly in or on a seat to provide consistent force each time it cycles to power the part or parts.

A spring that is stretched to do its work usually has a hook or connecting interface manufactured into each end of the spring wire itself, allowing it to be attached to the moving parts. Forming these ends on a spring requires a little more attention to detail in maintaining surface integrity on the spring wire itself. It is possible that configuring a spring that stretches as opposed to compresses could be more prone to fail because of the way the ends are formed, but the probabilities do not show that to be true.

Every quality firearm manufacturer has a target service life for each product manufactured. While still in the prototype stages, a firearm is tested to the point of failure or until it surpasses the number of cycles required for the expected service life. What this means to the consumer is the likelihood of the gun failing, especially due to spring failure, is very unlikely for the service life of the gun. That assumes routine maintenance is performed and quality ammunition of the type recommended by the manufacturer is used.

Most guns designed for concealed carry will fire many thousands of rounds with recommended maintenance and ammunition. Most often, this number is greater than what the original owner will ever shoot through the gun in their lifetime.

When considering spring durability and longevity in a newly manufactured gun, there is not enough difference in manufacturing design to be concerned.

That said, when buying a previously owned gun of unknown origin, replacing the springs as a preventative measure will provide a little insurance and peace of mind that the gun will work when needed.

Correspondence is welcomed and encouraged

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Expanding MSR Accuracy

Looking for accurate, practical rounds for your semi-automatic rifle? Here's a start.



We ask a lot from our rifles and sometimes even more from our ammunition. We'd all love a factory cartridge that can clip the wings off a deerfly at 1,000 yards; lacks recoil, drop and wind drift; will stop a charging grizzly with a poorly placed shot and only costs 7 cents per round (delivered). But, until that unicorn-cartridge exists, we'll have to settle for less. Fortunately, if reliability, respectable accuracy and a reasonable amount of expansion/deformation/upset top your list, suitable factory loads are available in many modern sporting rifle chamberings.

Since 2009 and as of this writing, I've test-fired slightly fewer than 1,300 MSRs that either belonged to someone else or became theirs soon afterward. While standard-length rifles made up most of that number, approximately 220 SBRs and large-format pistols were included. Whether they were in for repair work, accurizing or were newly manufactured in my shop, each MSR was evaluated for function and accuracy before leaving my hands.

Among the uses indicated by those firearms' owners, hunting and/or home defense ranked high in importance for all but a handful. In addition to match-grade and ball ammo, I included loads with expanding or deforming projectiles whenever possible. Because top-of-the-line, tissue-destroying, ballistic buzz saws tend to be pricey, I instead sought out lower cost, reliable factory loads with historically strong records afield.

Overall, I expended a hair less than 100,000 rounds testing these firearms, which excludes personal shooting or evaluations for this and other publications. Although serious competitors, firearm trainers, professional testers and our nation's most elite warriors shoot far more

than that and in far less time, I've popped enough primers during this phase of my life to have spotted a few trends among factory hunting loads. Still, this is not an exhaustive list of MSR calibers. Many excellent rifle chamberings that fill freezers or defend the innocent each year don't show up here. While I may have worked with several of those, they numbered too few for use in identifying practical loads.

Unless otherwise noted, the following cartridges typically delivered sub-MOA, five-shot groups at 100 yards (or meters) during testing. Keep in mind that these are average results, not absolutes. Every barrel is different, and every so often one bucks the trend. Firing was mostly done from a prone, bag-supported position with occasional bench or bipod use. Barrel lengths were predominantly rifle, with 66 percent of barrels measuring between 16 and 20 inches, while 33 percent were 14.5 inches or less.

.223 Rem./5.56 NATO

This chambering comprises nearly half of the guns I've built or worked on, so I have definite go-to loads for field accuracy. At the lighter end of the spectrum, Federal's 50-grain JHP varmint load groups slightly less than 1 MOA most of the time. Also in the varmint class, 55-grain Hornady and Fiocchi V-Max loads often print between .5 and .75 MOA. Winchester's 55-grain PSP and Federal's 55-grain SP ammo have hovered around 1 MOA in most rifles. Barnes' hard-hitting TSX projectiles really shine in this caliber, with Black Hills' 55- and 62-grain versions shooting closer to .75 MOA most of the time.

6 mm ARC

Hornady's 103-grain ELD-X is the sole hunting bullet among the three 6 mm ARC factory loads available. While it's been the least accurate for me, it was still sub-MOA out of every 6 mm ARC rifle I've built.

6.5 Grendel

Most Grendel ammo is geared for target or match use, but American Eagle's 90-grain JHP regularly shoots sub-.75 MOA and Hornady's 123-grain SST load stays sub-MOA for me.

6.5 Creedmoor

My best expanding-ammo groups in this long ranger typically come from 143- and

147-grain ELD-X projectiles, either loaded by Hornady or Black Hills (143-grain only). However, Hornady's 129-grain Interlock and the 131-grain SP load from Sellier & Bellot yield sub-MOA results and sometimes rival match ammo accuracy.

.300 BLK

There's no shortage of expanding .300 BLK ammo choices. I count on Black Hills' excellent 110-grain TTSX, Hornady's 110-grain V-Max, 120-grain SST and Federal's 123-grain Fusion for steady, sub-MOA accuracy. For subsonic needs, Hornady's 208-grain V-Max and Engle Ballistic Research (EBR)'s 220-grain SP reliably deliver .8 to 1.2 MOA accuracy for me.

.762x39 mm

As the third most common MSR chambering with which I've worked, this stubby Russian round has several factory hunting loads that really stand

out. Hornady's 123-grain SST, Federal's 123-grain Fusion and EBR's 220-grain SP subsonic "Jackhammer" have all shot very well. Topping them all is Federal's 123-grain SP load, which often shoots less than .75 MOA in my testing. While not marketed as a hunting round, the bi-metal "HP" loads offered by Wolf and TulAmmo typically hover between .9 and 1.2 MOA and are used successfully by several of my customers to hunt predators, varmints and whitetail.

.308 Win./7.62 NATO

This trusty .30-caliber holds the number-two spot for frequent appearances in my shop. I've had MOA or better accuracy with Federal and Hornady 150-grain soft-point loads in many MSRs (and several Remington Model 742s) that I've worked on. Hornady's 150-grain SST shoots tighter from most barrels, but also costs more. On the lighter side,

I can always count on Federal's 130-grain JHP ammo to shoot well, often printing five-shot groups smaller than .75 MOA.

9 mm

This cartridge isn't likely to come up in conversations about 100-yard accuracy. However, I've built and worked on a large-enough number of 9 mm PCCs and SBRs to know that it's certainly capable of it. Specific ammunition preferences vary widely from one barrel to another, but I generally see Remington's 124-grain Golden Saber, SIG Sauer's 124-grain V-Crown, Hornady's 124-grain XTP and Federal's 147-grain Hydra-Shok stay well inside of 1.5 MOA.

While the ammunition above has worked well for me, your mileage may vary. I recommend buying a box or two of new ammo types to try before mortgaging the farm to buy a pallet. 🌀

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Resetting My Opinions

When forming opinions on firearms, it's best not to jump the gun.



Guns crafted for specific tasks—like PPC—may have seemingly appealing features that don't necessarily serve well in other applications, such as for self-defense.

This is going to be another in an intermittent series of columns examining the various topics on which I've changed my mind over the last 20 years or so as a result of being hip-deep in the defensive-pistol world.

This particular column is going to be all about triggering people by discussing what I've learned about triggers over that time—and why what I thought I knew about triggers before then was wrong, possibly even counterproductive.

Let's talk about double-action revolver triggers, for instance. Back in the early 1990s, at the first gun store where I worked, I ran across a couple of very nicely tuned PPC-competition revolvers customers traded in.

For the uninitiated, "PPC" stands for—well, stood for—"Police Pistol Combat," a shooting sport originally fostered to encourage marksmanship ability with the double-action revolvers of the era when it was founded (which would be the late 1950s).

When PPC started out, the overwhelming majority of law-enforcement officers in the U.S. were equipped with double-action revolvers; for the most part, medium- and large-frame Smith & Wesson and Colt products.

Because hitting a target with a double-action revolver trigger pull is, for some reason, viewed as a Herculean task right up there with mopping out the Augean Stables with a mop made from the mane of the Nemean Lion, it was decided that inaugurating a game where police officers

would be forced to use the double-action trigger pulls on their revolvers to have any chance at winning was the way to go.

Of course, once you gamify something by adding rules and scoring, gamers are gonna game that thing. Within the space of a single police firearm-instructor's career, the winning revolvers in PPC matches went from regular double-action cop guns to heavy-barreled monstrosities with esoteric sights mounted atop barrel ribs and triggers that were obscenely heavily massaged.

It was the latter kind of revolver that I ran into back in 1994 in our trade-in section, and they enthralled me. At the time I was not, to put it very charitably, the world's best pistol shooter. To be blunt, I was awful in the marksmanship department. The only thing worse than me shooting my Glocks and SIGs and CZs was me trying to shoot a friend's double-action revolver. I was sure that the problem was the trigger on the revolvers, not the tension of the nut actuating the trigger.

In the early 2000s, when I was working in a shop with an outstanding gunsmith who could do a proper PPC-style trigger job, I had several revolvers converted that way. All the bearing surfaces were exquisitely polished, and (here's the important part) factory springs got substituted with lighter replacements.

This had two notable side effects: The first is that the lighter mainspring was unreliable with harder primers—"Federal primers only!" was the frequent admonition. The other is that the reduced spring weights caused the trigger to reset with less authority.

That slower trigger reset isn't that big of a deal for the PPC course of fire, which never requires pushing much speed with the gun. The fastest strings of fire are 12 rounds in 20 seconds, after all. Try shooting any faster than that, though, and your finger will quickly outrun the trigger. There's a reason Jerry Miculek runs a heavier-than-stock rebound spring.

This is why, years after I had all that work done, those revolvers found themselves back on a gunsmith's bench—Denny Reichard at Sand Burr Gun Ranch in Rochester, IN—this time getting factory springs reinstalled to replace the lightweight gamer springs. Now I have reliable ignition, don't need to worry about outrunning the trigger and, thanks to all the polishing work, I still have excellent trigger pulls in those wheelguns.

Another trigger lesson I learned over the years involved taking a learning tool and misusing it as a crutch. When teaching novice shooters of semi-automatic pistols—especially striker-fired ones—how trigger reset works, it's common to tell them to keep the trigger pinned to the rear after the shot and then, only after they've realigned their sights on target, let the trigger out just far enough that they feel the distinct *click* of the reset before firing the next shot. This was a revelation to me and helped me understand the mysteries of trigger reset.

It wasn't until I took a class with Ernest Langdon that I discovered the fly in that particular ointment. As the speed of the shooting picked up, the wheels came completely off in the accuracy department. When splits neared the .5-second mark ("splits" being the time between shots, so two rounds per second) my shots stopped making a nice little ragged hole in the middle of the target and turned into an almost random scattering across the center-ish area of the Q-PT target.

Langdon quickly diagnosed the problem, correctly deducing that I was pinning the trigger after each shot. While that is a technique that works great in slow fire as a demonstration, when the pace gets faster, the shooter's brain needs to process input at a greater rate. What should be happening is that you're using the sights as your "gas pedal." In other words, your sight picture should be controlling the speed of your shooting.

But, when you're pinning the trigger and then letting it out after each shot only when you think you've got that good sight picture, you're adding an extra step to the process. Furthermore, your fingertip provides an alternate input—"Hey, the trigger reset just clicked! We're ready to go now! Send it!"—whether the sights are still acceptably on target or not.

The solution is to let the trigger out and then prep it during recoil, so the whole thing is ready to go once you have that good sight picture, rather than keeping it pinned until you get the sight picture and then hoping you can hold it still all through the reset, because that doesn't work at speed.

That latter tip from Langdon—not pinning the trigger—was probably the single biggest improvement to my handgun-shooting technique ever, for what it's worth. Now, I get the gun ready to go again in recoil so that I can let my sights be my guide and not get distracted by *clicks* in my fingertip.

We live and we learn. Hopefully, we keep on learning, too. I wonder what I'm doing right now that I'll be un-learning in 10 years? 🌀



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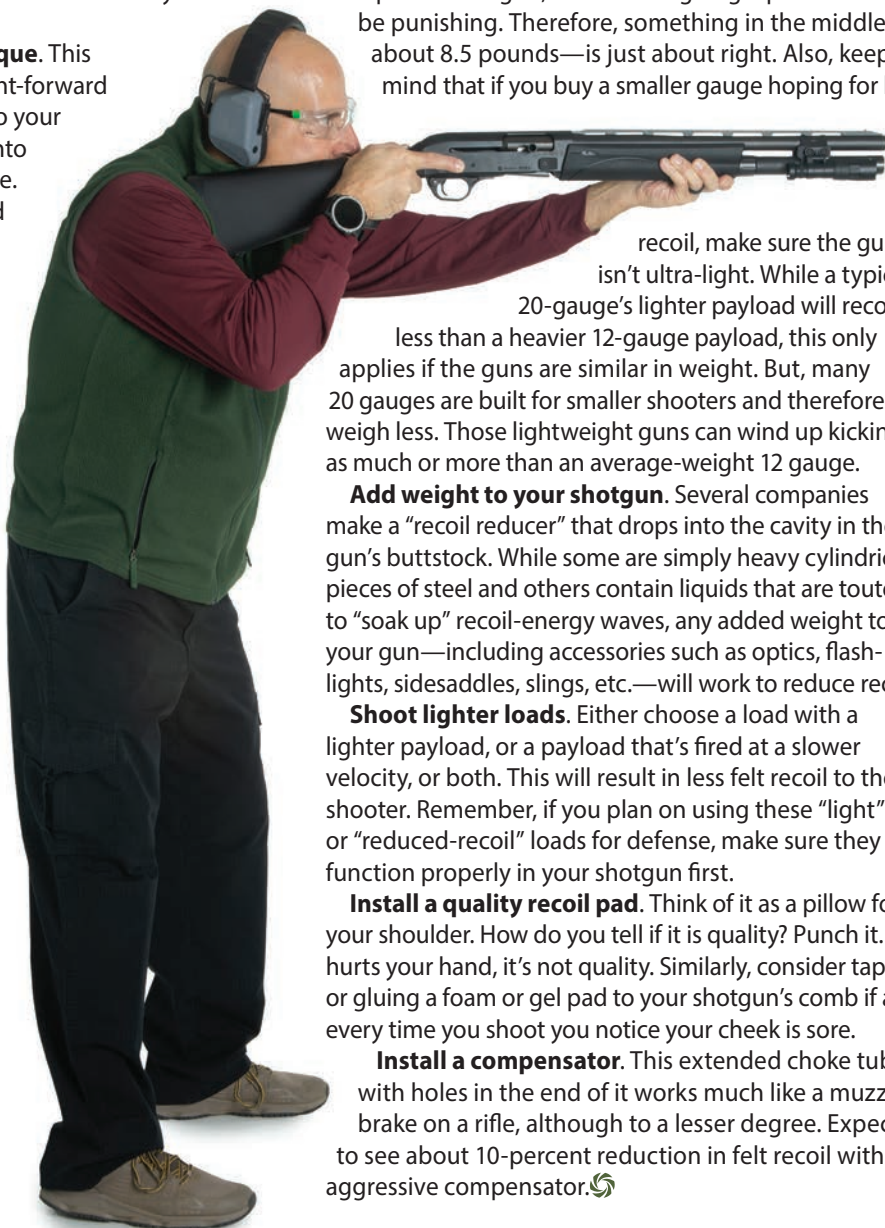
Taming the Beast

Love the scattergun but hate bruised shoulders? Here are some tips to mitigate recoil.

I believe a big reason why more people aren't better shotgun shooters is because these guns kick hard, and therefore are not much fun to practice with. Consider that the average 12-gauge recoils roughly 10 times harder than a typical AR-15—which is no doubt one reason why ARs are so popular. If recoil becomes a detriment to practicing, know that some shotguns inherently transmit recoil less than others and that there are multiple things you can do to tame that mule. Here are some of my favorite recoil-reducing tips:

Learn proper form and technique. This means assuming a balanced, weight-forward stance, gripping the gun firmly into your shoulder and cheek, and leaning into the shotgun aggressively as you fire. It's amazing to see a small-statured expert shooting a shotgun effortlessly when the same gun rocks a huge guy who has bad form.

Make sure your shotgun fits properly. While many people seem to think a longer stock would cause the gun to impart more recoil, the truth is stocks that are too short can cause recoil to feel even worse. Ideal is a shotgun that fits perfectly, so buy one that fits. If your new shotgun came with a shim kit and spacers to adjust drop-at-comb and length-of-pull, as many do nowadays, take the time to fit your new gun to yourself. It will result in less felt recoil. Notably, make sure the comb height is such that while looking naturally down the bore, your cheek is firmly planted on the stock and not floating over it. Four body parts—the shoulder, cheek and both hands—need to be in unwavering contact with the shotgun to fully minimize its felt recoil. If you use an optic, you'll most likely need a high comb to assure a good cheek weld while looking through it.



Shoot a semi-automatic. With everything else being equal in terms of gun weight and the load fired, semi-automatics recoil less than pump-action and break-open guns. Continuing this, gas-operated-action semi-autos recoil less than recoil- or inertia-operated models. This is because some of the gas used to cycle the action cancels a portion of the recoil energy. It's just physics.

Choose a traditional-style buttstock. The English knew what they were doing when they perfected shotgun-stock design ergonomic to the human body. If you wish to get pounded, on the other hand, go with any number of "tactical stocks" that are often straight, rigid and too short. They may look cool, but they hurt.

Buy a heavier gun. Gun weight is the most important element of the recoil equation. The heavier the gun, the less it recoils. Of course, you don't want to lug around a 12-pound shotgun, but one weighing 6 pounds will be punishing. Therefore, something in the middle—about 8.5 pounds—is just about right. Also, keep in mind that if you buy a smaller gauge hoping for less

recoil, make sure the gun isn't ultra-light. While a typical 20-gauge's lighter payload will recoil less than a heavier 12-gauge payload, this only applies if the guns are similar in weight. But, many 20 gauges are built for smaller shooters and therefore weigh less. Those lightweight guns can wind up kicking as much or more than an average-weight 12 gauge.

Add weight to your shotgun. Several companies make a "recoil reducer" that drops into the cavity in the gun's buttstock. While some are simply heavy cylindrical pieces of steel and others contain liquids that are touted to "soak up" recoil-energy waves, any added weight to your gun—including accessories such as optics, flashlights, sidesaddles, slings, etc.—will work to reduce recoil.

Shoot lighter loads. Either choose a load with a lighter payload, or a payload that's fired at a slower velocity, or both. This will result in less felt recoil to the shooter. Remember, if you plan on using these "light" or "reduced-recoil" loads for defense, make sure they function properly in your shotgun first.

Install a quality recoil pad. Think of it as a pillow for your shoulder. How do you tell if it is quality? Punch it. If it hurts your hand, it's not quality. Similarly, consider taping or gluing a foam or gel pad to your shotgun's comb if after every time you shoot you notice your cheek is sore.

Install a compensator. This extended choke tube with holes in the end of it works much like a muzzle brake on a rifle, although to a lesser degree. Expect to see about 10-percent reduction in felt recoil with an aggressive compensator. 🌀

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Don't Be Afraid of the
DARK

The revamped version of Marlin's tactical lever-action rifle is a substantially more potent defensive carbine.



Long before we enjoyed our modern sporting rifles and polymer-frame handguns, there was one gun that reigned supreme: the lever gun. They have been the heart of America since the mid-1800s. The first lever-actions to hit the market were Henrys and Winchesters, and as the cliché goes, the rest is history. The lever gun's impact on American history cannot be understated, and it continues to be a popular firearm today. More than 150 years after the first model rolled out, the mighty lever gun still finds its way into gun safes and hunting lodges around the country. As with all things, though, modern times tend to influence these items and the lever gun has seen the same evolution. Today, the well-known lever gun maker Marlin Firearms brings us the new Marlin 1895 Dark Series in .45-70 Gov't. While it has the classic bones of the lever guns of the past, it is finished as a rifle that can perform in tactical applications.

By Fred Mastison
Photos by Eric Dean

While it has a tactical vibe to it, the Dark is not a modern battle rifle. What it is, in my opinion, is a dual-purpose rifle.

Marlin first introduced the Dark series in 2019. In fact, it appeared on the cover of this very magazine. At the time, the Marlin brand was owned by Remington, but that company's bankruptcy forced the sale of the Marlin marque. From the ashes of the old Remington business, Marlin once again found a home, this time with Ruger. In short order, the Dark series was brought back to life, and the rifles are even better than they were in the first run.

The new Dark comes with a 16.17-inch, cold-hammer-forged barrel. At the end sits the Marlin radial muzzle brake that can be easily removed should you want to run the gun suppressed. As with any modern rifle, shooters will want to mount an optic. Marlin answered that call and included a 23-slot, 11.25-inch rail. Of course, iron sights are still desirable, and the rifle is set up nicely. At the rear of the action, there's a fully adjustable ghost-ring sight and at the muzzle there's a fiber-optic front blade with a tritium enhancement for increased visibility in low light. I found the front sight very easy to acquire and believe it is a solid choice for this rifle.

The buttstock is one of the most eye-catching points on the carbine and is a departure from the classic wooden stock to which we are accustomed (and which the Remington Marlin Dark simply painted black to achieve a more "tactical" look). While it maintains its traditional shape and lines, it is made from nylon-reinforced

polymer. The center of the stock has three cut-out M-Lok slots to allow you to mount pretty much any accessory you would need. Marlin has given this stock design some thought, and included a cheek riser should you choose to shoot with a mounted optic. It attaches easily and allows you good alignment with the glass you choose. Should you choose to run the classic iron sights, then simply skip attaching the riser and you will have excellent alignment with the iron sights. The grip is a textured insert and provides good purchase without being too aggressive, and the buttstock is finished off with an effective rubber recoil pad.

Keeping up with the "tactical" flavor, the gun includes steel studs to accept QD sling swivels. The other eye-catching aspect of the gun is the black 13.6-inch anodized aluminum handguard with M-Lok slots along the bottom and sides. Inside the handguard sits a five-round magazine tube to hold the hefty .45-70 Gov't rounds. As with all other Marlin guns we have seen in the modern age, it comes complete with a cross-bolt safety and the traditional half-cock hammer. The bolt and lever are treated with a nitride finish for wear resistance, and the other major components are enhanced with a Graphite Black Cerakote finish for durability. Once again, Marlin has put serious thought into the gun and made it to be more than just a safe queen—it is designed to be out in the field and used.

MARLIN | Dark



SHOOTING RESULTS

Load	Velocity	Group Size		
		Smallest	Largest	Average
Buffalo Bore 300-grain JHP	1,854	2.00	2.75	2.37
Federal Hammer Down 300-grain Bonded HP	1,820	1.85	2.25	2.05
Hornady LeveRevolution 325-grain FTX	1,950	1.35	1.85	1.60

Velocity measured in fps 15 feet from the muzzle for 10 consecutive shots with a Caldwell Ballistic Precision chronograph. Temperature: 71 degrees Fahrenheit. Accuracy measured in inches for five consecutive, five-shot groups at 100 yards from a sandbag rest.

SPECIFICATIONS

Manufacturer: Marlin; (336) 949-5200, marlinfirearms.com

Action Type: Lever action

Caliber: .45-70 Gov't

Magazine Capacity: 5 rounds

Finish: Graphite Black Cerakote/Nitride

Barrel Length: 16.17 inches

Rifling: 6 grooves; 1:20-inch RH twist

Sights: Ghost ring rear; fiber-optic/tritium front

Trigger Pull Weight: 5 pounds

Stock: Nylon-reinforced polymer

Length: 35.5 inches

Weight: 6 pounds, 13 ounces

Accessories: Cheek riser, manual

MSRP: \$1,379

I was excited to get it on the range and added just two items before we started. First was a Trijicon Credo 1-8x28 mm LPVO optic and a Blue Force Gear Vickers sling. The optic would serve me well when the time came to reach out at distance and the sling was purely for comfort. Ammo wise, I wanted to try three different rounds to test both accuracy as well as function. The flavors for the day were Federal Hammer Down 300-grain HP, Hornady LeveRevolution 325-grain FTX and Buffalo Bore's 300-grain JHP. The .45-70 Gov't round is capable at a variety of ranges, but I believe a 100-yard accuracy test would be best (and also *Shooting Illustrated* protocol). The winner in performance that day was Hornady's 325-grain FTX with a group coming in at 1.35 inches. That is fantastic accuracy for the big, slow .45-70 Gov't round. Now, understand that this was off a sandbag, using magnified optics and a rear bag to minimize human error. While it is not a sniper rifle, it is drastically more accurate than most people would initially think.

The action was smooth and I was able to run rounds at speed. The lever was finished well and had no sharp edges, making it comfortable to run. I used steel targets at ranges varying from 25 to 100 yards for the testing. With the Trijicon optic, it was easy for me to switch back and forth between my near and far targets. For those who may have not had the pleasure of running a big-bore lever gun, I suggest you take the chance to experience it. It is especially enjoyable on steel and at safe distances. The .45-70 Gov't round has around 2,200 ft.-lbs. of energy, which is impressive. On steel, it sounds like a train hitting a wall. It is also why the round is popular in the hunting world, as its effectiveness is undeniable.

While I chose an LPVO optic for this test, I believe that there are two options for glass on the gun. If you are truly looking at it as a personal-defense rifle and nothing more, you might consider a simple, 1X red-dot optic. This will provide you with a good field-of-view and allow you to shoot with both eyes open. If you choose the hunting angle, then magnified optics are a must in my opinion. The rifle and round are capable of taking game ranging from deer and elk all the way up to brown bear inside 150 yards.

For this section of testing, I shot exclusively off-hand. This is the "worst-case



Viewed from above, the lever-action Marlin Dark doesn't look too much different from a traditional semi-automatic carbine, with plentiful Picatinny rail space for optics, and a muzzle brake • Enlarged to aid in ejection of the big spent casings, the cavernous .45-70 Gov't chamber fostered smooth operation • While the hammer has a lengthy spur, it's hardly needed in normal operation of the rifle, and does have a half-cock notch for safety •

Should a sound suppressor or other muzzle device be desired, Marlin's radial muzzle brake can be removed, revealing $\frac{1}{4} \times 24$ tpi threads • A pushbutton safety confirms instantly whether the Marlin is ready to fire or on safe • Should you prefer iron sights over a powered or magnified optic, the pairing of a ghost-ring rear sight with a green tritium-enhanced, fiber-optic front pipe for added low-light visibility offers excellent contrast and fast acquisition.

For those who may have not had the pleasure of running a big-bore lever gun, I suggest you take the chance to experience it. It is especially enjoyable on steel and at safe distances.

scenario” in that I would not have anything on which to stabilize the gun to get every bit of accuracy out of it. In the hunting world, I would use shooting sticks or improvised rests to give me a better base.

What I found was that the gun was still quite accurate. The rubber buttstock made running the beefy .45-70 Gov’t easy and did not beat up my shoulder. Additionally, the Marlin radial muzzle brake performed well. Even though it weighs a mere 6 pounds, I had little muzzle rise with the gun. The only thing I noticed was the heat from the barrel after I got a little sporty and ran a couple of tubes very quickly. The .45-70 Gov’t round is frisky, with loads running out to about 2,000 fps, which will heat up any barrel.

The trigger broke consistently at 5 pounds using my trigger gauge. I did notice a slight grab in the travel of the trigger, but do not feel that it is a major flaw.

While it has a tactical vibe to it, the Dark is not a modern battle rifle. What it is, in my opinion, is a dual-purpose rifle. At 35 inches in overall length and coming in at 6 pounds, the rifle certainly has personal-protection capabilities. The .45-70 Gov’t round is without question a fight stopper. You might be wary of overpenetration, which is a concern with any rifle, but the .45-70 Gov’t round—particularly with a good, expanding bullet like the Hornady FTX—will dump its energy very quickly inside a threat and overpenetration is likely to be minimal, if it exists at all.

While I love my wooden-stocked rifles, the weather and elements can take a toll on them. Let’s face it, nobody sits around the fire talking about their ugly guns. We want our investments to maintain the same good looks they had when we first brought them home. A polymer-style stock and aluminum handguard will not even blink in the backcountry when the weather turns bad or you lean the rifle against a rock. The modern aspects of the gun will allow shooters to use high-performance optics as well as run the gun suppressed. It is truly the modernization of a classic rifle.

“The Marlin Dark Series is the next step for Marlin,” said Ruger president and CEO Chris Killooy. “There is a growing demand for more modern lever rifles, and the previous Dark series rifles introduced Marlin into this space. We took a hard look at them and made several significant improvements.”

Marlin has done a good job and made the old, new again. The growing interest in lever guns is refreshing to a gun nerd like me. A unique angle of this gun is its availability around the country. While the powers that be work to unconstitutionally limit our access to semi-automatic rifles, lever-action guns are mostly left alone. Lever guns have been getting it done for the better part of 200 years now, and they still work today. While traditionalists may unjustly roll their eyes at the “tactical” aspects of the rifle, its performance is undeniable. 🌀



M-Lok attachment points are plentiful on the fore-end, allowing the addition of lights, lasers, vertical or horizontal grips or any other accessory one might want to add to a handy carbine • With a removable cheekpiece, the polymer stock is actually more versatile than a prettier wooden variant • Easy to actuate, the lever is robust and accommodates gloved or just naturally large hands.



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The Secret to the Secret

To become a better shooter, practice one thing at a time by starting with trigger control.

All good firearm instructors know the secret to shooting a handgun and hitting what you shoot at is the mastery of sight alignment, sight picture and trigger control (whether that's achieved via learning to master the trigger pull or your grip). In my book, "Handgun Training for Personal Protection," I offered that secret in the first paragraph of the first chapter. It's too bad it's not as simple as it sounds, but few things ever are. The problem with mastering the secret to shooting is attempting to learn to maintain the proper sight alignment and sight picture, while also trying to learn how to press the trigger properly.

I've been shooting handguns for a half-century, and I've been carrying a handgun most every day for about half that long. I've also attended a bunch of shooting schools and I've taught a lot of others how to shoot a handgun. I've even won my share of shooting competitions. However, I didn't learn the secret to the secret to shooting until I began teaching my kids to shoot.

Sight Alignment

Half of the good-shooting equation is the proper alignment of your sights and their relationship to the target. If both are not correct, nothing you can do other than experience some luck will allow you to get a good hit. But, here's the thing: Establishing the correct sight alignment and sight picture are the easiest parts of shooting. I can describe and demonstrate proper sight alignment and sight picture to you one time, and you will remember it forever.

For proper sight alignment, you position the front sight in the middle of the notch in the rear sight, so the top of the front sight is level with the top of the rear sight. For the proper sight picture, you place the properly aligned sights on the target, so the top-center of the front sight is pointing at the spot on the target you want to hit. It's that simple. Now you know it, and you'll never have to see it demonstrated or learn it again.

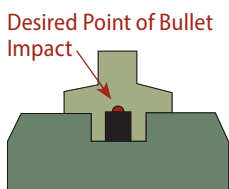
By Richard Mann

OK, I know, there are some sight systems that require slightly different alignment. With XS Sights' Big Dot sights, you put the big-dot front sight in the center of the "V" of the rear sight, and then you place the dot over the spot you want to hit. Still, the concept is similar, and it does not change unless you're trying to shoot at extreme distance.

So, why is it so hard to get hits with a handgun, especially when you're just learning to shoot? It's difficult because, while you're trying to establish proper sight alignment and sight picture, you're also trying to learn to press the trigger without altering either. It's just like the old parlor trick of trying to pat your head with one hand while rubbing your tummy with the other. Learning/doing multiple things at the same time is never easy.



Proper Sight Alignment



Proper Sight Picture

Pressing the Trigger

The first thing you must learn is the hardest, and that's how to press the trigger properly. Unlike with sight alignment—which you only have to be taught one time—for the rest of your life you'll be learning to press a trigger correctly. No matter how good you get at it, there will be times when you do it incorrectly. This is why masters like Jerry Miculek sometimes miss. It's a fact of life; accept it. Your goal is to minimize the percentage of bad trigger presses.

Good shooting is all about keeping the muzzle from moving, which most instructors will teach you to do by mastering the trigger press. Everything else is secondary to trigger control.



Instructors sometimes press a shooter's finger against the trigger to help them feel what a good trigger press feels like.



PHOTOS: SABASTIAN "BAT" MANN

You can get better at pressing a trigger, but you have to practice pressing the trigger to do so. The good news is that you don't have to shoot for this learning to take place. The easiest way to improve your trigger pressing skill is by conducting dry practice. But, this dry practice is likely a bit different from what you have done before.

Some folks call the process of learning to press a trigger "establishing muscle memory." Muscles, of course, do not have a memory, but your brain—the thing that controls your muscles—does. When a specific movement is repeated over time, the brain creates a memory of that movement, eventually allowing it to be performed with minimal conscious thought. Until that happens with your trigger press, you're not going to consistently hit anything with a handgun. This is especially true if you're trying to develop that memory while also attempting to align the sights correctly and achieve a proper sight picture.

I know what you're thinking: If you cannot learn to use the sights and press the trigger at the same time, how are you supposed to learn to shoot? That's a good question.

The Secret to the Secret

The first thing a new shooter wants to do when they get a new handgun is shoot it. That's fine. Do it and get it out of your system. You'll see if it works, and you'll discover what the recoil feels like. Once that's over, take your handgun home, give it a good cleaning and then begin a dry-practice routine where you press the trigger over and over and over, until you can do it—almost subconsciously—without the gun moving.

For sure, follow all the safety rules just like any other time you're conducting dry practice, but there's no use trying to aim—that only complicates the learning process. Remember, you can only effectively learn one thing at a time. You see, if you're pulling the trigger while aiming, you must divide your focus between the sights and the trigger. The more you focus on attempting a good trigger press, the less you can focus on the sights, and vice versa. Trying to do both induces trigger panic and trigger jerking, and now your brain must work to overcome those errors.

Sometimes you'll see instructors put their finger over the shooter's finger while the

shooter aims at the target. Then, the instructor will press the shooter's finger and the trigger. The idea is that the shooter will then experience what a proper trigger press feels like. This works to some extent, but while this is happening the shooter is still concentrating on the sights. Dry practicing the trigger press without moving the handgun—and without any attention being paid to the sights—is a better approach.

Enter the Red Dot

One you can consistently press the trigger without the handgun moving, the next step is to bypass the sights. I've been working with miniature red-dot sights on defensive handguns a lot lately. And while I think they're fabulous at enhancing accuracy, I'm still not convinced they're ideal for personal protection. This is partly because they sometimes fail, and partly because sometimes the sun or artificial light can make them unusable. However, if precision is your goal, they're much better at helping you achieve it than traditional open sights.

This is mostly because they allow you to divert a portion of your concentration to the trigger as opposed to sight alignment. You still have to manage sight picture, but no longer do you need to focus on the target, the front sight and the rear sight. You just put the dot on the target. Before I took my daughters to Gunsite, I taught them how to press a trigger. At Gunsite they used a 9 mm pistol with a miniature red-dot sight and almost immediately were getting good hits. This was partly because aiming with a red dot was easier, but mostly because they already knew how to press a trigger.

Finishing the Process

Once you can shoot your handgun accurately with the red-dot sight, you can either leave it on the handgun or revert to open sights. You're not going to be as accurate with the open sights, and you're not going to be as fast. Initially, you're also going to struggle a bit with maintaining sight alignment and sight picture through the shot process. But this will quickly pass, because since you already know how to pull a trigger, you can apply more concentration to the sights.

When I started seriously teaching my son how to shoot a pistol, he was struggling. I

just happened to have a SIRT laser-training pistol, which has a laser that is constantly on. I told him to just play with the training pistol by trying to press the trigger without allowing the laser to move. He was playing, but he was also learning, and it wasn't long until he was dead steady. We transitioned to a pistol with a red-dot sight, and he was immediately getting hits.

He soon started working with an open-sight centerfire pistol and when he was 16 years old, he took the adult version of the 250 Pistol Course at Gunsite Academy. Even though the class was full of adults, he won the man-on-man shoot-off, despite being just a young teenager. This was all possible because he first learned the secret to the secret—he learned to pull a trigger properly. After that, everything else involved in shooting well came easy.

Like I said, learning proper sight alignment and sight picture is easy part. Learning to press a trigger correctly—without inducing movement to the gun—is the hard part. Learn the hard part (managing the trigger) first, then put the two together. Trying to learn both simultaneously can be extremely frustrating and can also lead to the wasteful expenditure of a lot of ammunition. The good news is that once you learn trigger control, the skill will translate to other firearms as well.🌀

Unlike with sight alignment—which you only have to be taught one time—for the rest of your life you'll be learning to press a trigger correctly.

Once you learn to press the trigger properly, try working with a miniature red-dot sight before using iron sights. This will help you continue to focus on the all-important trigger press.



PHOTOS: RICHARD MANN



By first learning to master the trigger press—making the gun discharge without moving the muzzle relative to the target—new shooters can quickly become proficient, as the author's daughters discovered.

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Natural Enemies?

Contrary to what you may believe, speed is not the enemy of accuracy.

Renowned, multiple-time world-champion competitive shooter Rob Leatham shares his hard-earned wisdom: "Speed is no more inaccurate than slow is accurate." If this is true, then why do some shooting instructors tell you to "slow down and get the hit," when in fact going slow has nothing to do with accuracy? The answer is found in developing your fire-control skills to shave valuable time across your entire shooting platform.

By Steve Tarani



Leatham's adage happens to be true as demonstrated by countless grandmasters across the globe, including him. Clocking the impressively accurate round-placement speeds of a legitimate grandmaster shooter fully supports the veracity of his claim.

Given this premise, how does one then dispel the "slow is more accurate" fallacy? The answer is to shoot more accurately, faster. Easier said than done, right? Although you may have a sound understanding of this concept mentally and perhaps the requisite mechanical skills, pulling it off more than 85 percent of the time requires the on-demand consistency of a master-level shooter.

How can you attain such an elevated level of repeatable performance? Leatham will be the first to say that "what you're trying to do is exceptionally difficult." It's not something everyone can do, because if it was, then everyone would be able to hammer five rounds into a fist-size group in an A-box at the 25-yard line from the holster in less than 4 seconds on their first day at the range.

Rather than approaching this seemingly paradoxical dichotomy in terms of a speed-accuracy relationship, let's examine it from a speed-control relationship.

Look at any professional athlete like a hockey, basketball or Major League Baseball player performing at the highest levels. They always move faster and are more confident than the non-professional, make fewer mistakes and make it look so easy. Since it's their full-time job, they train extensively to move quicker, make fewer mistakes and it doesn't look like they're working as hard at it, because they are not.

Analysis of the performance sub-components of the professional athlete to the fundamentals of speed (going fast), success (repeatability) and confidence (ease of movement) will allow us to apply these same sub-components to further develop our own on-demand shooting performance.

Speed, repeatability and ease-of-movement are quite arguably the most prominent elements of any on-demand performance. However, before delving deeper into each of these particulars, let's take a quick glance from the outside looking in.

Tension

Any shooter seeking to shoot well must be made aware of one of the greatest threats to repeatable on-demand performance—tension.

The insightful words "tension is the enemy of performance" highlight a profound truth—that often, our own strained attempts at perfection undermine our abilities. This maxim transcends the shooting domain, finding application from artistic expression to athletic prowess. It serves as a critical reminder that when pressure mounts and stress tightens its grip, we rarely perform at our peak.

The seasoned musician knows the frustrations of overthinking intricate passages. The harder they try to force the notes from memory, the more the music eludes them. Yet, take a step back, clear the tension from one's mind and

muscle, and suddenly the melodies flow effortlessly once more. The tendency to bear down and "grip too tight" is in fact detrimental, revealing tension as the nemesis of performance.

So, too, does the star quarterback lose his/her innate rhythm and finesse in the closing minutes of a big game, the immense pressure causing them to "choke." But, in calmer practices he/she threads perfect spirals through the air. For them as well, tension proves the enemy of achievement. Only by learning to quiet the strain and stress, to stay fluid and focused in the moment, can he hope to overcome it. Time and again, we hamper the very abilities we long to demonstrate by our own taut anxiety.

As its snares grow tighter, tension stifles the mechanical process, blunts the reflexes and blocks the mental process which could otherwise illuminate our performance and help transform possibility into reality. Yet, if we step back from consciously controlling each action and outcome, relaxing into simply letting go, talent is permitted to manifest.

Much as we may try to compel results through strained exertion, we achieve our potential only when tension's talons retract from our mind and body. Trusting in meticulous preparation, then resting on the assurance of our capabilities allows us to rise to challenges unencumbered. Performing under pressure is a fine art. But, its secret lies in the ability to find space, allow flow and let go of tension's insidious tricks. When we unravel such bonds, we obtain the freedom to turn possibility into mastery.

Speed

Speed is nothing more than efficiency, expressed. Therefore, efficiency is paramount, whether constructing an engine or working on reducing the overall time of your draw stroke. At its core, efficiency represents the ratio between the effective output garnered from a system and the resources invested in it. More specifically, when applied to gun handling and marksmanship, the measure of efficiency is speed.

An efficient machine converts energy into maximum useful work. An efficient thinker arrives at optimal solutions with minimal wasted mental effort. Efficiency thus denotes the crucial balancing of a process' costs against its ultimate returns.

For pioneering engineers, maximizing mechanical efficiency meant minimizing energy loss to friction, heat and other leaks that divert output. More incoming power could instead be channeled directly into rotational force, thrust or torque. This principle enabled engines from steam locomotives to internal-combustion motors to generate unprecedented speeds, power and durability while using less fuel.

Such gains compounded over generations of tinkering and testing. But, the essence remained that efficiency's ideal is generating the highest kinetic return-per-unit of

energy input. Where loss was minimized, productive output was maximized. This ethos made the entire modern world of mechanized speed possible.

Efficiency applied to shooting is no different. Speed is nothing more than the product of no excessive motion or wasted energy.

Whether pistons in an engine or a pistol presentation from concealment, the overarching lesson remains that efficiency enables aspirations to become reality. It is the linchpin that cements potential into achievement. By mastering efficiency's nuances, we can step out of our comfort zone and develop the skills capable of conquering new and attainable goals.

Fast runners, fast car drivers and fast shooters all share one thing in common: efficiency. The least amount of movement creates the least amount of input into the gun. Adding input into the gun causes any number of undesired events which contribute to cascading series of undesired events (inefficiencies), all of which cost valuable time.

Excessive input adds to muzzle movement. The muzzle is perpetually moving as it is; you certainly don't want to introduce even more instability. Any energy contributing to unnecessary movement is considered inefficient as that excessive movement—which already costs you time—must now be corrected, costing you even more time than if you didn't need to make any corrections.

An illustration of efficiency might include an optimal magazine reload. No matter how quickly you want to move, if your magazine well is not in your workspace and you don't have a straight-line movement from your mag pouch to the mag well, then you're wasting space, movement and energy, all of which equate to inefficiency.

Efficiency might be described as presenting your handgun from the holster in such a manner as to come to your workspace employing only kinesthetic or proprioceptor alignment and then switch over to visual processing as you integrate your mechanical processing, including trigger manipulation.

Eventually your visual process in reading the situation, as soon as it presents itself, provides the green light to break the shot.

At the end of the day, speed is nothing more than an alluring shiny object for the amateur shooter to chase. Its only true function is as a measure of how long it took you to accomplish a task.

Success

As a shooter develops further skills in the art and science of shooting, something interesting happens. He/she begins shooting noticeably tighter groups at greater speeds, with fewer mistakes and with less wasted movement, all of which adds up to success—the second sub-component of repeatable on-demand performance.

The fewer your mistakes, the greater your success. Who doesn't want greater success? Ironically, the path to success is paved with lessons learned from making mistakes. If you are not risking mistakes intentionally in your training, then you are not progressing.

We've all heard the phrase "You learn from your mistakes." This adage rings true in all areas of life, but is especially relevant when it comes to training. Mistakes are not only unavoidable, but are also a critical part of the learning process. Making mistakes gives you valuable feedback, pushes you outside your comfort zone to gain new skills and can lead to insights and breakthroughs.

When you make a mistake, you receive direct evidence that you have more to learn in a particular area. Without making mistakes, you miss out on this valuable feedback needed for improvement. Mistakes point you toward weaknesses, gaps in understanding or flawed thinking. They show you directly where you need to focus your study or practice to shore up deficiencies in knowledge, skills or judgment. Rather than viewing mistakes as failures, embrace them as progress markers on the road to shooting mastery.

Staying within your comfort zone hinders your learning, while pushing beyond it accelerates progress. Attempting something new or challenging where you don't feel confident about succeeding increases the chance you'll make a mistake. But at the same time, this expands your abilities. As the old saying goes: "If you never fail, then you're never pushing your limits."

Mistakes test your composure and mental fortitude. They build grit and tenacity as you learn to accept errors without frustration or loss of self-confidence. Bouncing back from



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Multi-time world-champion shooter Rob Leatham is living proof that accuracy and speed need not be mutually exclusive.



NRA Precision Shooting takes accuracy to the nth degree, but speed is only a minor consideration as time constraints are generous.

mistakes gives you practice emotionally coping with challenges as well as unforeseen setbacks.

Mistakes provide us with valuable feedback to target your learning, force you to expand your skills, build grit and resilience, cement comprehension through struggle while also inspiring flexibility and imagination. Rather than avoiding errors, embrace them for the learning opportunities they provide. The path to excellence is wrought with mistakes, missteps and failure. However, with the right mindset aimed at growth, you can leverage the pivotal role mistakes play in unlocking your true potential.

Confidence

Ease of movement, the third and final sub-component of on-demand performance, is confidence. When you are supremely confident about something you are exceptionally comfortable with it.

Stepping outside your comfort zone is pushing past your current skills envelope. Discovering your efficiencies by trial and error, you start to gain greater confidence in your abilities. Confidence is pressing the "I believe" button and ultimately trusting in those abilities. To the degree of self-trust is to the degree of mastery. If you don't believe in yourself or trust in yourself then your mind wavers

and struggles to break itself free from the ubiquitous shadow of doubt.

Ease of movement is an expression of confidence. The greater your familiarity and comfort with a skill, the greater your confidence.

The first step toward elite shooting performance is to eliminate tension from the equation altogether. Next is to know the difference between "going fast" and being efficient (no wasted movement). The measurement of efficiency is speed. How do you get faster and more accurate? Find your efficiency.

Integral to finding efficiency is success. The more you leverage your mistakes in training, the greater your successes (fewer and less egregious errors). Lastly, but certainly not least of the sub-components, confidence is built upon the bedrock of comfort.

At elite performance levels, the greater your efficiency, the less time it takes to accomplish the task at hand (speed); the less frequency and severity of your errors, the greater your accomplishments (success) and the greater your familiarity, the greater your comfort (confidence).

The fruition of such good habits as gaining efficiency, learning from your mistakes and building confidence is what brings all shooters to the stark realization that speed is no more inaccurate than slow is accurate. 🌀



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Precision Shooting Versus Defensive Shooting

By George Harris

The Problem

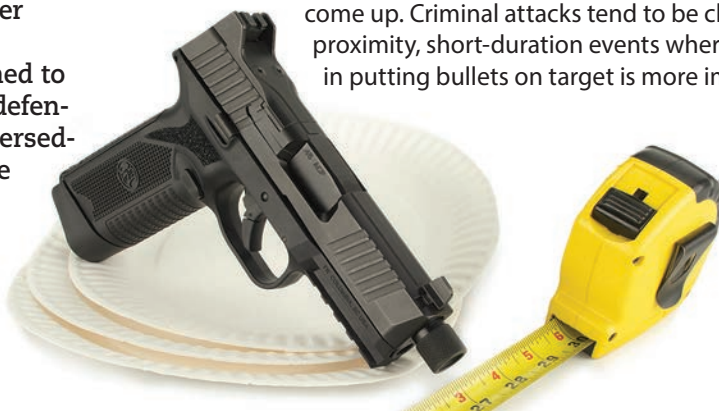
You recently attended a concealed-carry class in which you shot a lot of ammunition—almost 500 rounds—over a two-day period. The thrust of the class was staying on the sights with hard eye focus and a slow, continuous trigger squeeze from a rigid shooting stance. Shooting tiny groups repetitively seemed to be the overall objective. You believed defensive types of shooting, with speed superseding accuracy, would be more applicable to a concealed-carry class. You know that marksmanship is important, but shouldn't precision shooting and defensive shooting be addressed and defined as two different types of shooting with dissimilar outcomes?

The Solution

Marksmanship is defined as skill in shooting. The objective of shooting could be defined as hitting the intended target on demand, when and where the shooter desires.

The application for which one is training really dictates whether the focus would be on absolute precision placement of a bullet on target or in an area that would accomplish the desired result.

In reality, the primary reason responsible citizens carry a concealed firearm is for personal defense. When considering the likely scenarios where one might have to produce and use a firearm in self-defense, some common factors come up. Criminal attacks tend to be close-proximity, short-duration events where speed in putting bullets on target is more important



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than the precise placement of the bullet or bullets on the target (although keeping all rounds on target is vital). Seeing a sharp, crisp sight picture with a slow, steady trigger squeeze will likely bring you to the party a bit late to be effective.

When all things are considered, the target area of an attacker is similar in size to that of an 8-inch paper plate and the anticipated engagement distance is measured in feet rather than yards. In an instance such as this, speed trumps precision, provided the hits are realized in the target.

Also, consider the heightened state of excitement and physiological factors that occur in a defensive confrontation that has escalated to the potential of lethal force. Scientific studies suggest that the eyes will likely be on the object of threat—the criminal's gun, knife or some other weapon—not on the sights. What this leaves us with is utilizing our natural

eye/hand coordination and natural ability to point to get the muzzle of the gun pointed at the target area. Since the hands usually will go where the eyes are looking, with the gun as an extension of the hands, just holding and possibly seeing the outline of the gun hovering within the outline of the target while operating the trigger is likely to put shots where they are needed to stop the hostile action.

Understanding the application and training necessary to maximize the utilization of one's natural abilities will go a long way to achieving success in a dire situation.

Precision shooting may have a place in defensive applications, but it occupies a narrow space when all things are considered.

Furthermore, it is a given that there are exceptions to the circumstances one may face in a defensive confrontation. But, the overwhelming data

indicate that the likelihood of having to make or being able to make multiple precision-type shots to eliminate an imminent threat is extremely rare.

Some additional food for thought might be the realization that it is unlikely either you or the criminal(s) attacking you—yes, there may be multiple—will be stationary, in a shooting stance, during a conflict. If there is sufficient distance to need the sights for precision shots, escape might be a better option rather than risking injury or death.

Run through the potential scenarios in which you may find yourself—given your lifestyle and locale—in your mind and practice avoidance if possible. If avoidance is not an option, have a plan. With the information provided, it should not be hard for you to decide where you should spend your time and money in the pursuit of your shooting endeavors. 

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The General Purpose **Partition**

Nosler's Partition projectile has purpose and poise.



RICHARD MANN

If you're keeping a rifle handy for the end of days or some type of cataclysmic social collapse, you should probably have some ammunition for it that's loaded with Nosler Partitions. This was arguably the first premium rifle projectile, and is generally considered a bullet just for big-game hunting. However, the Partition is much more than that; it has application in the tactical arena and might best be described as a general-purpose rifle bullet. To fully appreciate it and its capabilities, you need to know its story.

In 1946, John Nosler went hunting for moose up North in British Columbia. He found a big bull and at a close range smacked him right behind the shoulder with his .300 H&H. The bull just turned and looked at Nosler. So, he shot the bull again and it ran. As it was running away, Nosler hit it twice more. Ultimately, several more shots were required, and when he and his guide skinned the moose, they found that several of the bullets just barely made it through its mud-caked hide. Nosler's rifle was just too powerful for the thinly jacketed bullets he was shooting.

While Nosler was waiting to come home, he drew out an idea for a new bullet on a napkin. (Why does it always seem great ideas are first forged on napkins?) His concept was for a bullet that was essentially two bullets in one: it would penetrate deeply, while upsetting in a controlled manner. The first Partition was created by drilling a hole in each end of a short section of copper rod, and then filling each cavity—on each side of the wall/partition—with lead. Then the bullet was formed to shape with a die press.

Nosler went back to British Columbia the next year and shot another moose with his new bullet. One shot was all it took. Word got out, and soon lots of hunters wanted his bullets. But, during the Korean War, lead and copper were hard to find; it was 1952 before Nosler could really get serious about them. Since then, the Partition has been refined and perfected and is now made via an extrusion process. Nosler currently offers 36 Partition bullets, in 14 calibers, with weights ranging from 60 to 500 grains. It's considered one of the best big-game bullets and the grandfather of all premium projectiles.

For law enforcement and self-defense applications, the ability for a bullet to defeat intermediate barriers is important. This is true with low-velocity handgun bullets that might need to shoot through several layers of clothing, wallboard or automotive glass. But, it's also important with high-velocity rifle bullets. Police sharpshooters might need to shoot through glass or even a wall to neutralize a threat. These same concerns can sometimes apply to anyone relying on a rifle for personal protection.

While intermediate barriers are tough on low-velocity handgun bullets, they're even harder on rifle projectiles impacting at two to three times the velocity. Auto glass and masonry walls can rip rifle bullets apart. This is where the dual-bullet construction of the Nosler Partition comes into play, and I conducted a test that illustrates its benefits.

I wanted to see how rifle bullets could withstand impact with a concrete block, and how much they would deviate from point-of-aim after passing through the block. I fired the bullets at a 50-yard target to establish point-of-impact. Then, I placed a 6-inch-wide concrete block 4 feet in front of the target. By extending a crosshair out to the edges of the target for reticle reference, I could maintain the same point-of-aim when the block was intervening.

The first bullet was a 168-grain Sierra HPBT Match bullet; a bullet commonly used by law enforcement in .308 Win. designated-marksmen rifles. Though it will penetrate 20 inches or more in 10-percent ordnance gelatin, it failed to remain intact after hitting the block. A large piece of its mangled jacket was found stuck in the cardboard target. The second bullet was a 180-grain bonded bullet from Federal. Those seeking barrier-blind bullets often turn to bonded bullets in handguns and rifles, as they will not come apart when passing through intermediate barriers. The 180-grain bonded bullet reached the target, but on average the point-of-impact shifted 3.75 inches.

The last bullet was a 165-grain Nosler Partition. Due to the gilding metal partition/wall between the bullet's front and rear cores, the results with the Partition were a different story. It shed the front core while passing through the cinder block—like Nosler Partition bullets are supposed to do—but the intact rear core continued on, passing through the target, deviating only 1 inch from the point-of-impact when no cinder block barrier was in place.

The Partition will shed about 30 to 40 percent of its weight during penetration, but this transfer of miniscule lead particles is what makes it so lethal. The Partition will usually upset to about 1.5 times original diameter and penetrate very well. Volume wise, Partition wound cavities are generally larger than those created by other bullets of the same weight when impacting at the same velocity.

Factory ammunition loaded with Nosler Partitions is available for rifle cartridges like the .223 Rem., 22 Nosler, 6.5 Creedmoor and .308 Win. It might not be the newest thing, but the Partition is a bullet that works. I consider it one of the best general-purpose rifle bullets available. 🌀

Gun Toters I Have Known

We run into fellow firearm enthusiasts from time to time, and we can often learn from them.



GETTY IMAGES

I have spent my entire adult life making my living, one way or another, with firearms. And you can bet that, along the way, I have crossed paths with some extremely interesting folks. Here are three that come readily to mind.

Mr. Gibbs was an old-time Texas deputy sheriff. He wore pointed-toe boots, starched-and-pressed khaki pants and a white shirt with his badge pinned above the left pocket. Gibbs was a pretty good talker and could generally convince folks to cooperate. When that didn't work, his right fist took care of things. But, there was a time when neither one was getting the job done.

As a young deputy during the Great Depression, Gibbs performed his law enforcement duties while carrying a Colt Pocket Auto chambered in .380 ACP in his pants pocket. While certainly a nice gun, it was not what one would expect a peace officer to be carrying. The gun was on loan from a relative, and Gibbs carried it because he couldn't afford a duty gun, much less a belt or holster.

Then came the night when all of the local deputies were out looking for a huge hobo who had been breaking into homes and terrorizing the neighborhood. As luck would have it, Mr. Gibbs was all alone when he found the criminal. Words did not work, and soon the fight was on, with Gibbs getting the worst end of it. Down on the ground with the vagrant on top of him, the deputy realized he was about to lose consciousness, so he used the little Colt for what it was

made for. It took every cartridge in the magazine before the desired result was reached. Gibbs spent several days in the hospital, healing up and considering his options.

When I knew Mr. Gibbs, he carried a 4-inch, fixed-sight Smith & Wesson Model 1926 .44 Spl. revolver in pristine condition. He said he was too old to take another beating like that one. And, yes, I tried to buy that .44. I also tried to trade for it. And, no, I didn't get it done.

Down in the Texas Hill Country was a mom-and-pop grocery store/beer joint near where I used to hunt deer. The couple were really nice and the old gentleman was one of those who always wore bib overalls (or overhauls, as we used to call them). A friendly old fellow, I'd never seen him with a gun.

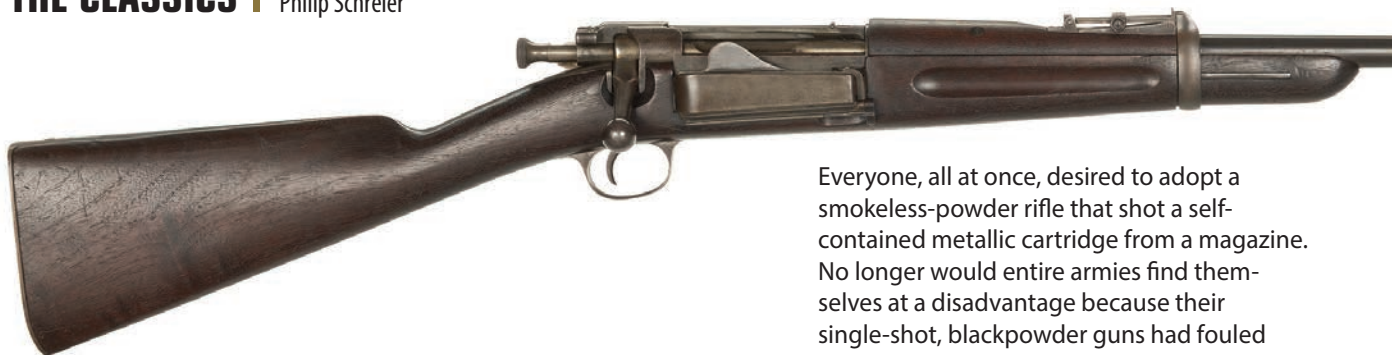
On one of my visits, a local deputy told me about the big armed-robbery attempt at the little store. It seems three city punks thought it would be child's play to get control of the old couple and knock over the store. When the deputies arrived, they found all three robbers standing out in the parking lot with their hands up—in just their underwear in 30-degree weather. The arrest was without incident because those crooks were looking for some relief.

I asked the old gentleman about it and how he had gotten control of those bad boys. He just grinned and reached under the bib of his overalls, pulling out a .45 Colt semi-automatic. You see, before putting on his overalls in the morning, the old fellow would strap a belt and holster around his waist with the holstered gun slightly in front of his right hip bone. The bib overalls made about the perfect concealment garment for a Hill Country businessman.

One of the ranchers in the county where I was sheriff was extremely interesting. This fellow was very intelligent, but he looked and dressed like Gabby Hayes, Roy Rogers' old movie sidekick. Although a lot of the ranchers kept a pistol handy, I had never seen this particular gentleman with one. His family collected vintage Winchester rifles, and his preferred armament was a Model 1894 carbine in .25-35 Win. Far from a vintage piece, this carbine's stock showed scars from mesquite thorns while being carried in a saddle scabbard and there was absolutely no blue on it anywhere. However, I also noticed that the carbine was clean, well-oiled and showed no signs of rust or pitting.

One day, when the crew was rounding up a herd, the rancher and a helper were getting the pens ready to receive the cattle. Hearing a yell, the rancher looked up to see his helper backing up and trying to get away from an obviously rabid fox. The rancher snaked his Winchester off the seat of the truck. The helper fell on his back. The rabid fox jumped to attack the helper. And, the rancher was able to blast the fox before it could bite, ending that threat. That same rancher helped me with several man-hunts over the years, and I was always glad to have him and that Winchester along.

Guns are a lot like raincoats. You don't need one every day but, when you do, they sure are handy. 🌀



U.S. Model Krag-Jørgensen Rifles

What is the shortest-lived bolt-action rifle in the U.S. Armed Forces arsenal?



With a smooth bolt pull and side-loading internal magazine, the Krag-Jørgensen was a quantum leap forward for the American battle rifle. Graduated for targets out to an optimistic 2,000 yards, the rear sight flipped up for long-range sighting endeavors.



There are some historians who would argue that the 20th century was the “American Century.” America certainly stood front and center on the world stage for the 10 decades that saw some of the most innovative advances and tragic wastes in the entire epoch of world history.

As if it would become a harbinger of things to come, the United States decided to prepare to enter the new century with a new military rifle. The 1880s had witnessed the introduction and advancement of smokeless rifle powders, and their obvious advantages sent the arms designers, procurers and manufacturers into a frenzy.

Everyone, all at once, desired to adopt a smokeless-powder rifle that shot a self-contained metallic cartridge from a magazine. No longer would entire armies find themselves at a disadvantage because their single-shot, blackpowder guns had fouled themselves into uselessness.

In 1890, the United States was armed with the single-shot Model 1873 “Trapdoor” Springfield rifle and carbine. An Army Board reviewed 53 various rifles and, in a most shocking move, picked a rifle that had been designed by two foreigners. (Two disappointed rifle board entrants actually filed suit trying to reverse the selection. One of their grounds was that it was “unAmerican.”) The rifle that the Army settled on as its first bolt-action, magazine-fed, smokeless-powder longarm was designed by two Norwegians: Col. Ole Herman Johannes Krag and Erik Jørgensen. Their rifle was a unique magazine-fed design that allowed a user to randomly drop five cartridges into the right-side box magazine and close the door which allowed a spring lever to push the rounds around the bolt and into the chamber.

Most folks will tell you that the first year of production is the worst model to buy. Wait a few years for the “bugs” to get ironed out and all will be well, they are fond of saying. In the case of the Krag, as it is now referred to, the first effort was the best.

I can say, without fear of contradiction, that the Krag-Jørgensen rifle is the finest, smoothest, bolt-action ever manufactured. No one in the 130 years since its introduction has been able to surpass or even match the glass-like smoothness of the Krag bolt.

The Danish Army was the first to adopt the Krag in 1889, and the United States adopted a modified version of the rifle in 1892. The rifle was chambered in the brand-new, rimmed .30-40 Krag cartridge, a close cousin to the .303 British cartridge adopted by the British military in 1891.

The new cartridge fired a .30-caliber bullet with a 40-grain charge of nitrocellulose powder. The bullet was a round-nose, 220-grain FMJ, and when fired from the



Theodore Roosevelt equipped his Rough Riders with Krag-Jørgensen rifles to face Spanish Mausers.



30-inch barrel of the rifles and 22-inch carbines, it achieved a maximum velocity of 2,000 fps. Sights were graduated out to 2,000 yards, beyond the effective range of the round.

Between 1892 and 1901, the Springfield Armory in Massachusetts produced nearly 750,000 Krag rifles and carbines in nine different models. The standard model was introduced in 1892, with updated models in 1896, 1898 and 1899. Each new model represented a new rifle, carbine and some specialty versions.

The most celebrated chapter in the service life of the Krag came during the Spanish-American War of 1898 and the Philippine Insurrection of 1899 to 1902. Even though the war with Spain had started some six years after the adoption of the Krag into military service, the numbers on hand were still limited enough to warrant the use of the venerable "Trapdoor" in

Cuba and the Philippines by most of the volunteer and state troops that were sent into combat.

For the most part, the Spanish were armed with the Mauser Model 1893 in 7 mm Mauser, a smokeless-powder cartridge. COL Theodore Roosevelt of the 1st U.S. Volunteer Cavalry (the Rough Riders) remarked that during the skirmishing on the night previous to the famous charge up San Juan Hill, he felt that the U.S. troops were still at a disadvantage with some of the blackpowder Trapdoors, as the smoke generated clearly gave away the position of the firing party, whereas the Spanish were able to keep their positions concealed due to their use of the smokeless powder.

As the former Assistant Secretary of the Navy in President McKinley's cabinet, Roosevelt, as Executive Officer of the Rough Riders, pulled every string in Washington to secure 1,000 of the Model 1896 Krag carbines for

his unit. (The Model 1898 carbine was not actually issued until the battles in Cuba had ended in August of 1898.) His men were proud to display them in a famous photograph of the unit atop San Juan Hill on July 1, 1898.

The Krag stayed in service until it was replaced by the Springfield Model of 1903, and was still in active inventory in many state and National Guard units up through World War I.

Today's collector has a wide variety of makes and models to choose from depending on how extensive of a collection they wish to build. Even the various Krag bayonets alone are the subject of a profusely illustrated 311-page book by Donald J. Hartman.

If you're looking for a historic rifle or carbine to take to the range and with which to enjoy a day of fun shooting, the Krag, if you can find the ammo, is one of my personal favorites. You can shoot it all day and not feel beaten up by it the next morning. 



Monumental Revolution.

Girsan MC P35 PI LW Match

The latest addition to the MC P35 PI line may be the best yet.

When it comes to the evolution of handguns, it stands to reason that size is a key element in the evolutionary chain, with a service- or duty-size pistol residing at one end of the spectrum. As we move away from the needs of military and law-enforcement personnel, the full-size service pistol, while still beneficial for utilitarian use by civilians, may be a bit excessive for those who wish to carry it concealed for personal protection or self-defense. To satisfy that need, line extensions appear with compact and micro/subcompact

variants—the frames and slides of which are noticeably shorter than their predecessors. This evolutionary path can be seen with Turkish gunmaker Girsan and its superb line of Hi Power-pattern pistols imported by EAA. After releasing its standard Hi Power pistol in 2021, Girsan released a compact model with shortened barrel and slide, dubbed the PI, which I reviewed in the June 2023 issue of this magazine. The pistol performed so well, it hasn't left my side since. And, when a recent conversation with someone at EAA hinted toward yet another tactical variant destined for the PI line, I jumped at the chance to review it.

While it may look like a standard MC P35 PI at first blush with its full-size frame paired with a truncated barrel and slide, as its name might imply, the MC P35 PI LW Match boasts an aluminum-alloy lightweight frame along with several other transformative enhancements. (EAA also offers a variant with an integral accessory rail named the LW Ops.) The difference in frame material shaves 8 ounces from the handgun's weight—making it even



SPECIFICATIONS

Manufacturer: Girsan, Turkey
Importer: EAA; (321) 639-4842, eaacorp.com
Action Type: Locked-breech, semi-automatic
Caliber: 9 mm
Capacity: 15+1 rounds
Frame: Aluminum alloy
Slide: 416 stainless steel

Barrel Length: 3.88 inches
Sights: Optics ready; non-drift-adjustable, plain-black rear; red fiber-optic front
Trigger Pull Weight: 7 pounds, 2 ounces
Length: 6.25 inches
Width: 1.48 inches
Height: 4.99 inches
Weight: 21.4 ounces
Accessories: Bore brush, case, lock, manual
MSRP: \$772

SHOOTING RESULTS

Load	Velocity	Smallest	Group Size Largest	Average
Winchester 115-grain FMJ	1,122	1.58	2.79	2.11
Hornady 124-grain XTP	1,079	1.57	3.08	2.12
Federal 147-grain JHP	928	1.40	3.91	2.49

Velocity measured in fps 5 feet from the muzzle for 10 consecutive shots with an Oehler Model 36 chronograph. Temperature: 72 degrees Fahrenheit. Accuracy measured in inches for five consecutive, five-shot groups at 15 yards from a sandbag rest.

ON TARGET

Iconic pistol now carry friendly

OFF TARGET

Mediocre trigger pull



In addition to conventional sights, the MC P35 PI LW sports an optics cut and can be outfitted with any MRDS with the RMSc footprint • The risk of hammer bite is eliminated by an extended beavertail • Integral to the pistol's optics plate, the low-profile rear-sight assembly provides welcome contrast with the front sight • A red fiber-optic pipe in the front-sight blade promotes rapid alignment • The flat-face trigger provides a touch of aesthetic appeal • An ambidextrous thumb safety is one of the pistol's many practical features • While handsome, some may find the texturing of the pistol's G10 grips too aggressive.

more conducive to concealed carry. There's also a slightly raised nub at the bottom of the frontstrap. I suppose an argument can be made that it helps maintain finger placement when obtaining a firing grip on the pistol. Either way, I found it unobtrusive during testing.

Obvious enhancements can be seen in the pistol's fire controls. Instead of an OEM trigger and traditional spur-style hammer, the LW Match sports a Cylinder & Slide Commander-style rowel hammer. The size of the hammer's ring (or rowel) has been reduced to be the same as on a Colt Commander hammer and has been raised as high as possible, another feature designed to safeguard the shooter's hand from hammer bite. The edges of the hammer are chamfered to minimize slide drag and clothing wear.

The LW Match's trigger has a flat, smooth face, as opposed to the more

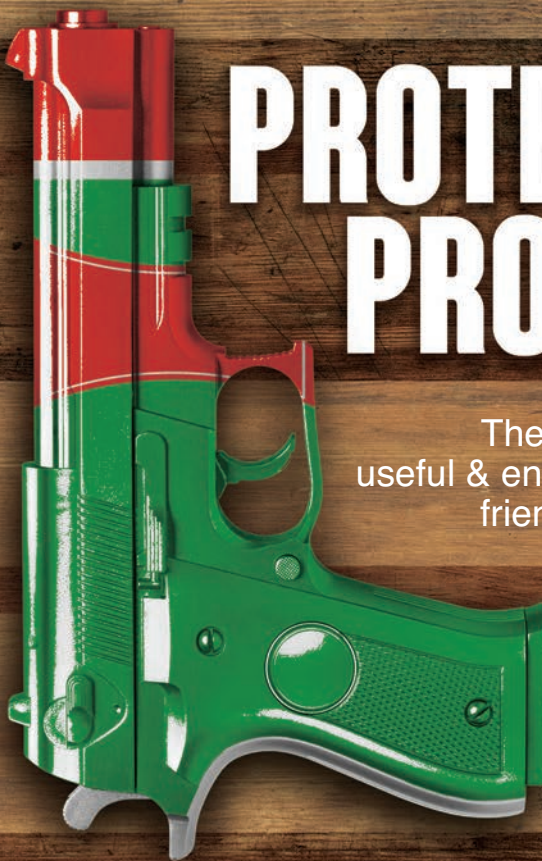
traditional rounded contour. The flat face allegedly provides consistent trigger feel, no matter where your finger contacts it. Whether it's true or merely the current "hotness," it sure does look cool, and while looks aren't everything, they are something.

Like previous PI model pistols, this variant retains its ambidextrous thumb safety. The extra lever not only makes the pistol more conducive to southpaw shooters like me but also, more importantly, it adds the versatility of being able to manipulate the pistol with your support or weak hand, which could be useful should your strong hand become injured in a gunfight. Similarly, the pistol has an extended slide stop, lessening the amount of reach required to actuate.

Speaking of versatility, the slide of MC P35 PI LW contains the standard, low-profile, plain-black rear assembly paired with a dovetail-mounted front blade adorned with a red fiber-optic

pipe. I'm not a fan of fiber-optic sights because of their less-than-rugged design and their knack to shear off when you least expect it. I am, however, quite a fan of this pistol's rear-sight assembly. The absence of white dots fosters a sight picture that is simple and fast to acquire. The assembly is also integral to a cover that conceals its optics-ready cutout. The cover/rear-sight assembly has two notches that help to hold it in place along with a single screw. Beneath, the cutout is compatible with any MRDS with an RMS/RMSc footprint.

On the range, the newest addition to the MC P35 PI line didn't disappoint (though at one point during testing the grip screws needed to be tightened), and no stoppages of any type were experienced. For those looking for a Hi Power-pattern pistol optimized for concealed carry, the EAA MC P35 PI Match is worth a long, hard look. Oh, the price is right, too.



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Riton 3 Tactix EED Red-Dot Sight

Riton enters the enclosed-emitter market.



SPECIFICATIONS

Manufacturer: Riton; (855) 397-4866, ritonoptics.com

Magnification: 1X

Display Window Dimensions: 21.8x15.8 mm

Reticle: 3-MOA dot

Adjustability: 90 MOA total travel in 1-MOA clicks

Eye Relief: Unlimited

Length: 1.73 inches

Width: 1.06 inches

Height: 1.14 inches

Weight: 1.48 ounces

Accessories: Glock MOS- and RMSc-compatible plates, screws, Allen key, CR2032 battery, adjustment tool

MSRP: \$349.99

ON TARGET

Sturdy construction



OFF TARGET

Unknown battery life



Brightness is controlled in an intuitive manner via twin buttons on the left side of the optic • Two plates are included to mount the 3 Tactix EED, and it shares a footprint with the Aimpoint Acro, meaning aftermarket mounting plates are plentiful • Adjustments are easy to make, but require a small slotted screwdriver.

As if we need further evidence of the growing popularity of pistol-mounted red-dot sights in general, and of the enclosed-emitter variety in specific, Riton has entered the market with its 3 Tactix EED sight. The firm has offered open-emitter models for a few years now, starting with the 3 Tactix PRD in the late 20-teens and the MPRD and MPRD2 series earlier in the 2020s. Riton's entire line of pistol-dot sights are RMSc-footprint compatible and maintain the value for which the brand is known.

The newest addition to the 3 Tactix family of red-dot sights is the EED (Enclosed-Emitter Dot), and it continues Riton's line of affordable, reliable optics. Simple to use and robust, the EED offers a 3-MOA dot, simple controls for adjusting brightness and 1-MOA-graduated dials for adjusting windage and elevation. Add a top-mounted battery compartment so that once mounted, there's no need to take the EED off, and the 3 Tactix EED enclosed-emitter red-dot sight can greatly add to your EDC pistol—although with its 1.5-ounce weight, heft won't be one of the things it adds.

When it comes to attaching the 3 Tactix EED to your pistol of choice, Riton has been especially smart. Since the enclosed-emitter design precludes direct-attachment methods owing to the full-tube body, a plate is needed to marry the optic and the pistol's slide. Riton cleverly designed the EED to use the Aimpoint Acro footprint, meaning that aftermarket plates are available from a variety of trusted manufacturers like C&H Precision Weapons, Apex Tactical and others.

When it comes to mounting the 3 Tactix EED to a Glock MOS slide, there are a couple things to note. First, it actually reduces the number of attachment points compared to an open emitter. Glock's MOS system requires that an adaptor plate be screwed to the MOS cut, then the optic attached to the plate. That's four screws to torque down and/or Loctite, and two of those screws can't be marked to check for potential movement (the screws holding the plate to the slide are obviously covered by the optic itself). When adding the EED, it's two screws for the adaptor and then the single cross-mount screw on the optic itself. The second note is that, since the EED is slightly thinner than full-size enclosed emitter sights, it's more streamlined on a compact or full-size pistol slide like that of the Glock G19.

After successfully mounting the EED, zeroing it is a simple procedure. Audible, 1-MOA adjustment clicks for windage and elevation mean some math will be needed if you're zeroing at closer than 100 yards, but getting the optic on target is simple. We followed the same general protocol as that espoused by Scott Jedlinski of Modern Samurai Project, getting a rough zero at 10 yards, checking it at 25 yards, then refining it back at the 10-yard line. Zeroing the EED took less than a full magazine of ammunition in the G19 used to test it.

Once zeroed, the EED was used in a series of drills to check how easily it could be picked up. From 5x5x5 drills to The Test to the Bill Drill, passing scores were easily achieved using the EED, with the 3-MOA dot clearly visible in the 21.8x15.8 mm viewing window. Should you get complacent and forget to change the battery, the housing itself makes for a decent rough sight in an emergency situation, and center-of-mass hits out to 10 yards are achievable using this backup method. No information on battery life is available on the Riton website for the EED, but it uses an inexpensive and plentiful CR2032 battery, so changing it once a year won't set you back a ton. And again, with the top-mounted battery compartment, it's quick and easy to swap old batteries for new.

Range time was uneventful, with no change in zero observed in more than 150 rounds. While this is certainly no exhaustive test of the optic's ability to hold zero, it is generally sufficient to spot any glaring problems with the mount, dot or electronics.

What's the final verdict on the Riton 3 Tactix EED enclosed-emitter red-dot sight? I experienced no problems on the range with the dot for more than approximately 150 rounds between sight-in, drills and accuracy testing. While this isn't a torture test, it's a good start and a decent indicator of solid performance. When it comes to affordable enclosed-emitter optics, the EED is a solid choice. 

Greg Gadson



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LATEST
LEGISLATIVE
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ACTION

Legislative Sessions Have Begun: Stay Informed And Involved

As we go to press with this issue, the legislative session in many states is starting to unfold for 2024. Because of the timing constraints of publishing a print magazine, and the speed at which some legislatures operate, we strongly encourage readers to supplement the information they receive on the pages of NRA publications by subscribing to our alerts that are sent via e-mail. It's the best way we can ensure

you know what is happening as soon as it happens, and what you can do to help defend the Second Amendment.

Just go to nra.org/sign-up, and you can tailor how you receive our alerts to best suit your needs. You can even receive text alerts, if you wish.

In the meantime, here is a brief update on what we anticipate will be on the agenda in some of the states as we go to print.

Constitutional Carry Expansion

Last year, we saw the number of Constitutional Carry states increase to 27, with Florida and Nebraska being the latest states to remove the carry permit requirement for law-abiding citizens to exercise their right to bear arms in public for personal protection. That's a total of 11 states that have taken this critical step to restoring our rights as gun owners since Joe Biden began his occupation of the White House.

This year, we expect at least three states—Louisiana, North Carolina and South Carolina—to make concerted efforts to pass Constitutional Carry. All have passed a form of this permitless carry law through at least one of their legislative chambers over the last several years, with Louisiana putting legislation

on former Gov. Jon Bel Edwards' (D) desk in 2021. Although he vetoed the bill, he is no longer governor, and Louisiana now has a solid supporter of Constitutional Carry at the helm. Gov. Jeff Landry (R) has pledged to not just sign Constitutional Carry, but also has stated he will work to help shepherd legislation through the state house in Baton Rouge.

In South Carolina, the House passed a Constitutional Carry bill, so it is now in the hands of the Senate. This year, North Carolina will have its "short" session. As neither chamber passed a Constitutional Carry bill last year, the shorter session will make passing a bill more difficult this year, but NRA will explore all possibilities to bring this critical law to North Carolina.

NRA-ILA

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NRA-ILA website: nra.org

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There will be other states where NRA will promote other pro-gun reforms, so stay tuned to future updates, and remember to sign up for electronic alerts for the most timely information.

Not All News Is Good News, But You Can Help Defend The 2A

Of course, we can also expect a deluge of anti-gun legislation at the state level, especially in those states that have long histories of antagonism toward law-abiding gun owners and the Second Amendment. The usual states that have long despised the Second Amendment can be expected to throw every conceivable anti-gun bill they have not already enacted into their legislative hoppers. California, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey and New York can be expected to lead the charge, but states like Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico and Washington also have radical, anti-gun politicians as governors or in legislative leadership positions—usually both—who are eager to push assaults on our right to keep and bear arms.

These are certainly not the only states where we will be seeing threats to the Second Amendment, and while threats of federal anti-gun legislation remain, the current makeup of the U.S. Congress makes it likely we will be able to derail new laws designed to deprive American citizens of their rights. The persistent danger of Joe Biden abusing his executive authority to unlawfully target gun owners and the firearm industry using the federal bureaucracy will likely increase as he desperately seeks to bolster the support he needs from his anti-gun base in order to try to win another term.

With all that is at stake this year—either in the form of legislative battles or election battles—it has never been more critical for NRA members and supporters of the Second Amendment to stay informed and to stay, or to get, involved. As stated earlier, go to nra.org/sign-up to make sure you are receiving the most up-to-date information we can offer on what is going on in the fight to defend the Second Amendment.

If you want to take a more active role in defending freedom, go to nra.org/grassroots, where you can find any number of options for getting more involved. This year is shaping up to be a pivotal year in the battle to preserve the Second Amendment for generations to come. We need you to stand and fight alongside the NRA. 🌀

Warren Zeiders is NRA COUNTRY

Photo courtesy Warren Zeiders

Warren Zeiders' distinctive, high-energy country music is powered by a steady supply of youthful grit, honesty and muscle. Hailing from Hershey, Pa., the 24-year-old singer/songwriter delivers outlaw sermons in a gravelly, world-weary voice that belies his youth and imbues the American heartland into his music. A setback in this Frostburg State University student's athletic career turned him to music, just as the pandemic hit. For some, this combination might have been devastating, but Warren applied his win-at-all-costs attitude and the work ethic instilled in him by his parents to morph his challenges into a "viral" movement. He took to social media, playing his guitar and singing songs, resulting in millions of followers and billions of views. He then created his label, Pretty Little Poison, in August 2023. Warren is an unapologetic patriot and supporter of all those serving in the military as well as law enforcement and first responders. It's easy to see why he was the perfect fit for the NRA Country concert at the 2024 Great American Outdoor Show! You can find Warren Zeiders on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and TikTok, as well as at warrenzeiders.com. NRA Country's Lisa Supernauth had a chance to ask Warren a few questions before he hit the road to his next event.

LS: How does it feel to be Nashville's youngest headliner at the ripe old age of 24?

WZ: It's a blessing, and I feel honored that my fans that have been with me and the ones who continue to join along the way are following me on this journey. I don't take this position lightly or for granted.

LS: Tell us about your time at Frostburg State University?

WZ: I spent two years at FSU studying business and marketing, while being a collegiate lacrosse player. Unfortunately, my time there was limited due to my concussions, but FSU was good to me—the training, workouts, 6 a.m. wake-up calls, film room, study halls with the team; all these things helped build and instill discipline in the man I am today.

LS: What is it like to have millions of followers and billions of views?

WZ: There's no secret to success in the world of social media. There's hard work, consistency, strategy, and knowing who you are and what you want to say. I had no plans of pursuing a career in music, the good Lord had other plans for me. As the months went on, my followers turned into fans and wanted original music from me aside from the covers I was posting. Having never written a song, I took a shot at it and before you knew it, my first hit song, "Ride the Lightning," came out.

LS: Do you have a favorite firearm?

WZ: I don't know if I would say I have a favorite firearm, but I definitely have plenty of them. I have a lot of older hunting rifles that my great-grandfather and great-great-grandfather used, passed down to me from my father.

LS: You're playing the NRA Country Concert at the Great American Outdoor Show. How does it feel to be playing back in the "717"?

WZ: I love seeing familiar faces and feel honored to be supported by the hometown crowd. Appreciate all the love the 717 has shown this Pennsylvania boy!

NRA Country is a lifestyle and a bond between the country music community and hard-working Americans everywhere. It's powered by pride, freedom, love of country, respect for the military and the responsibilities of protecting the great American life. For more information, visit nracountry.com, follow on Twitter @NRACountry, and NRA_Country on Instagram.

NRA Online Regional Report

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le.nra.org

Public and private officers interested in becoming law enforcement firearm instructors should attend one of NRA's Law Enforcement Firearms Instructor Development Schools. NRA Police Pistol Combat competition is intended to be used as an extension of an officer's training.



GUN SHOWS

gunshows.nra.org

Dates and locations of gun shows are subject to change. Please contact the show before traveling. Discounted NRA memberships are sold through NRA recruiters. Some shows may offer free admission to people who sign up for new memberships or renewals.

To become an NRA Recruiter, contact NRA Recruiting Programs at recruiter@nrahq.org.



AREA SHOOTS

ssusa.org/coming-events

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Friends of NRA events celebrate American values with fun, fellowship and fundraising for The NRA Foundation. To learn more about events in your area, visit friendsofnra.org, contact your local field representative or send an email to friends@nrahq.org.



TRAINING

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Questions? Email to refuse@nrahq.org or by calling (800) 861-1166.



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The "NRA Regional Report," a service for NRA members, is an up-to-date listing of NRA conducted and/or sponsored events scheduled in your region for the current month. Call to verify event dates and locations before traveling.

NRA DALLAS '24 ANNUAL MEETINGS & EXHIBITS

MAY 16-19, 2024

For hotel accommodations at the NRA Annual Meetings, visit nraam.org.



2024 Forward Look: NRA Leaping Into A Big Year



Photos by NRA



Joining NRA-affiliated state associations supports NRA's mission in your state.

GET INVOLVED TODAY!

GO VISIT

stateassociations.nra.org

This year holds a lot of promise for the National Rifle Association of America. Here are some highlights so far and what is yet to come.

In February, the NRA Great American Outdoor Show, held at the Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex and Expo Center in Harrisburg, Pa., welcomed attendees who cherish our hunting and shooting heritage. During the nine-day show, more than 1,000 exhibitors covering 650,000 square feet presented the latest products and gear, along with outfitters offering the chance to book once-in-a-lifetime hunts and fishing trips in America and abroad. In addition, top outdoors experts conducted more than 200 educational seminars and demonstrations, covering topics such as hunting, fishing, trapping, self-defense tactics and wild-game cooking. Visit greatamericanoutdoorshow.org to learn more.

The 2024 NRA Annual Meetings and Exhibits will be held at the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center in Dallas, Texas, May 17-19, and is expected to attract more than 80,000 NRA members. This year's exhibit hall will feature more than 14 acres of guns and gear, along with a host of special events for NRA members, including dozens of seminars and workshops, celebrity appearances and more. Make plans now to join fellow Second Amendment patriots and their families for a freedom-filled weekend—go to nraam.org for more information.

April will see the return of the NRA World Shooting Championship after a five-year hiatus. Held for the first time at Camp Atterbury, an Indiana National Guard base located about 37 miles south of Indianapolis, the 2024 NRA World Shooting Championship will boast a total prize purse

of \$250,000 thanks to title sponsor Walther Arms and other generous corporate partners. Learn more at wsc.nra.org.

This summer, the NRA National Matches will enter its fourth year at Camp Atterbury. Our flagship competition will commence July 22 with the opening ceremony and the National Precision Pistol Championships and conclude August 19 with the National High Power Long-Range Championships and Palma Matches. Our hardworking NRA Competitive Shooting Division staff consolidated some of the match days to make attendance at the NRA National Matches easier for shooters. Register now at competitions.nra.org.

Always a crowd-pleaser, the NRA National Firearms Museum at our headquarters in Fairfax, Va., is a destination that all NRA members should visit. The museum—with 15 galleries featuring approximately 3,000 firearms—is open seven days a week. Learn more at nramuseum.org.

Additionally, we would like to highlight the many NRA programs that make a difference every year, such as our extensive Education and Training programs, the Eddie Eagle Gun Safety Program, Youth Hunter Education Challenge and the NRA Youth Education Summit.

None of these programs and events would be possible without YOU and your enduring support of NRA. These programs underscore a vital NRA commitment—to keep America safe and free.

Learn more about NRA programs at explore.nra.org.



Photo by John Parker

Apply Today For NRA's Youth Education Summit (Y.E.S.)!

Don't wait a moment—March 1, 2024, is the application deadline for the NRA's Youth Education Summit (Y.E.S.), a weeklong leadership, scholarship and fellowship program for high school students that runs from July 16-21, 2024.

Y.E.S. is a unique program giving students the opportunity to more deeply explore the U.S. government, Bill of Rights and Constitution and encourages them to become responsible citizens who understand how to advocate for their natural rights. The selected 30-40 participants will enjoy visiting the NRA, practicing their debate skills, viewing our founding documents at the National Archives, touring D.C. monuments and memorials, speaking with members of Congress and much more!

Beyond the experience itself, \$40,000 in college scholarships are being offered for eligible students who display strong leadership abilities and a deep understanding of the week's activities. Thanks to Friends of NRA fundraising and grants provided by The NRA Foundation, more than \$700,000 in scholarships have been awarded since the creation of Y.E.S. in 1996.

Past participant Brayden T. from North Carolina stated, "While attending Y.E.S., I interacted with one of the chaperones who was a college student and a member of the Air Force ROTC at the University of Kentucky. My interactions with him, in addition to our visits to the various veteran's memorials, sparked a desire to serve others through military service! Today, I am a senior at

North Carolina State University and a proud member of their Air Force ROTC, with plans to commission into the Air Force next spring!"

Entry into the Y.E.S. program requires submission of a completed application form, a high school transcript, a three-page essay on the Second Amendment, a one-page personal statement and three letters of recommendation. Selected students are the best and brightest among their high school peers—actively engaging in academics, clubs and community service.

Don't miss the March 1 deadline! To find out more about Y.E.S., including frequently asked questions, please visit yes.nra.org. You can also make a lasting contribution by donating to the Y.E.S. Scholarship Fund—visit yes.nra.org/donate for more information. 



Photo by NRA

NRA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Communications intended for any member of the NRA Board of Directors should be addressed to:

(Name of Board member), NRA Office of the Secretary, 11250 Waples Mill Road, Fairfax, VA 22030; or nrabod@nrahq.org; or (703) 267-1021. Please include your name, contact information and NRA membership I.D. number, as only communications from NRA members will be forwarded.



NRA®

2024 DIRECTOR NOMINATIONS

The nominees for election to the NRA Board in 2024 have been selected by the Nominating Committee and by petition of the membership.

The Board consists of 76 Directors. The terms of office of one-third of the 75 Directors expire at each Annual Meeting of Members. One Director will be elected for a one-year term at each Annual Meeting of Members. That Director shall be selected from only those candidates who were not elected by the mail ballot.

The 2024 election will fill the 25 three-year terms that expire in 2027. Voting members will vote for a total of 25 candidates. The 25 candidates receiving the highest number of votes will be elected to three-year terms.

Nominations by the Nominating Committee. The Committee, elected by the Board of Directors, includes six Directors and three Lifetime members who are not Directors. The Committee met and gave consideration to 46 names recommended by the membership.

Each person was given serious, deliberate and careful consideration. Thirty candidates were selected.

Nominations by Petition of the Membership. Four people were nominated by petition. Each petition sponsored by an NRA member or member organization required the signatures of not less than 378 voting members.

A total of 34 candidates, the combined total from the Nominating Committee and petition of the membership, will appear on the ballot. 

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| 1. Scott L. Bach
Newfoundland, New Jersey | 13. Maria Heil
New Freedom, Pennsylvania | 25. Janet D. Nyce
Elliottsburg, Pennsylvania |
| 2. William Bachenberg
Allentown, Pennsylvania | 14. Antonio A. Hernández
San Juan, Puerto Rico | 26. Kim Rhode
Monrovia, California |
| 3. Ronnie Barrett
Murfreesboro, Tennessee | 15. Niger Roy Innis
North Las Vegas, Nevada | 27. Regina Roberts
Valley Center, California |
| 4. Charles R. Beers, III
Glenville, New York | 16. Greer Johnson
Duluth, Georgia | 28. Wayne Anthony Ross
Anchorage, Alaska |
| 5. Donald J. Bradway
Hayden, Idaho | 17. Phillip B. Journey
Wichita, Kansas | 29. Don Saba
Tucson, Arizona |
| 6. Dean Cain
Henderson, Nevada | 18. David A. Keene
Ft. Washington, Maryland | 30. John C. Sigler
Dover, Delaware |
| 7. David G. Coy
Adrian, Michigan | 19. Susannah Warner Kipke
Pasadena, Maryland | 31. Craig Swartz
Adel, Iowa |
| 8. Rick Ector
Detroit, Michigan | 20. Jeffrey A. Knox
Tombstone, Arizona | 32. Jim Tomes
Wadesville, Indiana |
| 9. Edie P. Fleeman
Durham, North Carolina | 21. Rocky Marshall
Boerne, Texas | 33. James L. Wallace
Newburyport, Massachusetts |
| 10. Joel Friedman
Henderson, Nevada | 22. Carolyn D. Meadows
Marietta, Georgia | 34. Robert J. Wos
Sarasota, Florida |
| 11. Dennis Fusaro
Middletown, Virginia | 23. Bill Miller
Beckley, West Virginia | |
| 12. Craig Haggard
Mooresville, Indiana | 24. Owen Buz Mills
Paulden, Arizona | |

The General's Gun

Traditionally an elegant symbol of rank, the General Officer's Pistol has taken various forms.



Recent General Officer's pistols have been gussied-up versions of the U.S. Military's standard-issue sidearm, like the fancy Beretta M9 seen here that belonged to Marine Corps Commandant Gen. P.X. Kelley.

We've had a United States Army since the Revolutionary War, and generals to run that army for just as long. The responsibility asked of a handful of Soldiers who make it to General's rank is massive. It is recognized by salary, insignia, privilege and, as of 1944, the opportunity to be issued a special pistol. The nature of that pistol has not always been ideal as a combat handgun, but has always been a handsome badge of rank. There have been four different variations of the pistol, and we will look at each in turn. The various pistols were shipped with a beautiful belt and holster.

The carry system was essentially the same for all variations, so let's first get into the details of the dressiest rig any General ever buckled on to go to work. Any interested observer can glance at GEN George S. Patton's famous two-gun rig and see where it probably started. Patton, an Olympic pentathlon competitor, was awarded the stars of a Brigadier General in the early years of World War II. He began to carry a Colt Single Action Army .45 and a Smith & Wesson .357 Mag. in matching right- and left-side holsters. The two holsters rode on a leather version of the original canvas belt known as the Garrison belt. The most attractive part of the belt was a two-piece

round buckle, where two interlocking circles formed the front closure. The front face showed a beautifully rendered seal of the United States on the officer's version. Late in the war in Europe, the Army decided to make the special General's pistol a reality.

The first gun cast in the role was a Colt. At the outset of the war, the army acquired quantities of any firearm that might be useful, including several hundred Colt Model Ms, a mid-size .380 ACP. While the standard-issue pistol was the respected 1911 .45 ACP, any General who wanted one could have a lighter, less powerful .380 ACP pistol. The smaller and less powerful cartridge apparently did not concern anyone. The choice also suggests the real rationale in having a General Officer's Pistol. The fancy belt and gun were a badge of office and not really intended for the General to fight with. Some unknown number of Model M .380s were also in the varied armories of the OSS (Office of Strategic Services). From 1944 to 1950, many general officers carried the little Colt as an emblem of their rank.

Since the supply of .380-caliber Model M Colts was finite, the Army began to cast about for a replacement. As it happened, there were several thousand of Model Ms chambered in .32 ACP.

These semi-automatic pistols were pressed into service as General Officer's Pistols, as they were dimensionally interchangeable with the .380s and the supply of .32s actually was slightly greater than that of 380s and lasted until 1972.

The next General Officer's Pistol had a complicated development history, but the gun was a step in the right direction. They were made by civilian gunsmiths in the employ of Rock Island Arsenal. The gun was a version of the legendary Model 1911. Like the service pistol, the handgun was chambered in what many saw (and still see) as the best service cartridge of all time—the .45 ACP. On this version, the gun had a sort of "Commander" style, with a slide .75 inch shorter than the regulation gun. There were a number of other refinements, including a plate embedded for engraving in the checkered walnut grip. Many general officers fondly recall carrying this special .45, which was officially designated the Pistol, General Officer's, M15.

The next chapter in our story happened in 1985 when the Armed Forces of the U.S. adopted the Beretta Model 92 9 mm pistol, called the M9 in military terms. It would become the latest iteration of the General Officer's Pistol. This version was different only in the sense of the serial number. The leather was the same as the earlier versions.

Within the past few years, the Army has again changed its sidearm to another make and model. At present, the General Officer's Pistol is a SIG Sauer, though I have yet to see even a picture of one of the latest models issued to those holding flag rank.

Those who wore the .45 ACP variants somehow got better performance than those who carried those classy-looking aforementioned .32 ACPs—better fightin' iron. 

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