

THE AMERICAN

MAY/JUNE 1978 \$2.00

HANDGUNNER

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE OUTSTANDING AMERICAN HANDGUNNER AWARDS FOUNDATION

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THE AMERICAN HANDGUNNER

MAY/JUNE, 1978
VOL. 3 No. 3-11

George E. von Rosen
Publisher



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WEST COAST ADV. REPS: Media Sales Associates, 12121 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 207, Los Angeles, 90025 (213) 826-8341
EAST COAST ADV. REPS: Buchmayr Associates, 19 Birch Rd., Darien, Conn. 06820 (203) 655-1639

THE AMERICAN HANDGUNNER is published bi-monthly by Publishers' Development Corp., 8150 N. Central Park Avenue, Skokie, Illinois 60076. Second class postage paid at Skokie, Ill. 60076 and at additional entry offices. SUBSCRIPTIONS: One year (6 issues) \$9.95. Single monthly copies \$2.00. CHANGE OF ADDRESSES: Four weeks' notice required on all changes. Send old address as well as new. CONTRIBUTORS submitting manuscripts, photographs or drawings do so at their own risk. Material cannot be returned unless accompanied by sufficient postage. PAYMENT will be made at rates current at time of publication and will cover reproduction in any or all AMERICAN HANDGUNNER Magazine editions. ADVERTISING RATES furnished on request. Reproduction or use of any portion of this magazine in any manner, without written permission, is prohibited. All rights reserved. Title to this publication passes to subscriber only on delivery to his address.

OUTSTANDING AMERICAN HANDGUNNER AWARDS

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NEWSLETTER

As promised, things are picking up. Several newsworthy items should be brought to the attention of those who have not yet signed up as members.

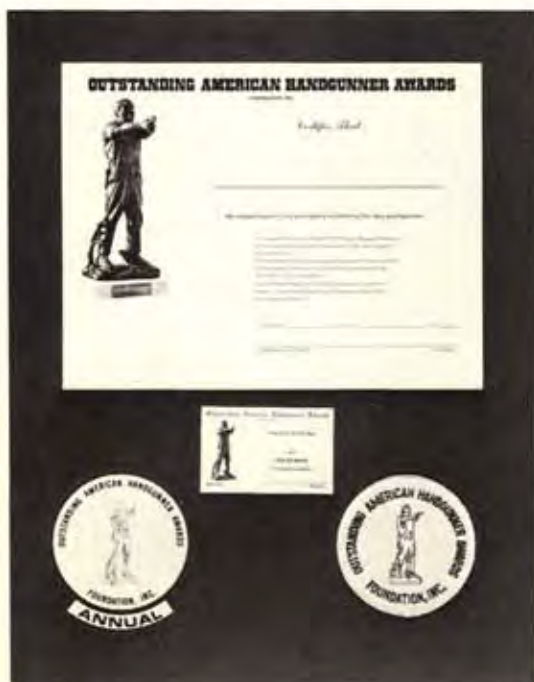
First, we have now completed work on our membership package (illustrated below) which includes: a 10" x 14" membership certificate; a wallet size membership card; a decal for car or home and a 3 1/2" multi-colored shoulder patch for your shooting jacket. All of this is in addition to the one year's subscription to The American Handgunner magazine. Quite a package for only \$15.00.

There are several other special programs in the planning stage, programs that will be available only to members of the OAHA. The first of these will be the offering of limited edition handguns. While several handguns are being considered, we would welcome suggestions from readers. What kind of special edition handgun would you like to see?

Also in the planning stage is a program whereby Foundation members will be able to bid on unique handgun items from the collections of well known enthusiasts. Specially built handguns actually used by past recipients of the Outstanding American Handgunner Awards are be-

ing considered. How would you like an opportunity to own such items as Elmer Keith's personal Single Action or George Nonte's custom Skorpion auto? While these particular guns may not be offered, those that will be are sure to have equal significance. Keep reading, and just as soon as any of these projects are finalized, you'll read about it here.

Membership in the OAHA Foundation has been increasing rapidly since its introduction in this magazine, and the support has been appreciated. With these new programs, I'd like to see the membership double, even triple in the next several months. If you are a member, or are just joining the organization, you can help this drive by telling your handgunning friends all about the present benefits and the plans for the future. If every member signs up just one more member, that's the answer to our goal of doubling membership. Why not give it a try—speak up at the next club meeting or handgun match, and we'll make the OAHA "Twice as Great in '78."



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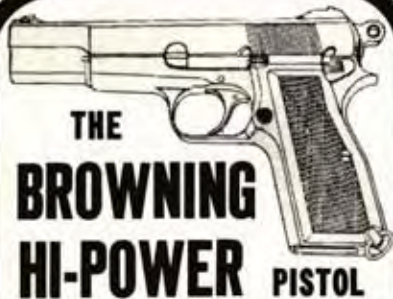
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HANDGUN INDUSTRY INSIDER

NEWS FROM MANUFACTURERS

By MASSAD F. AYOUB

IT'S that time of year again. The NSGA show is coming up, and all the 1978 goodies that have become closely guarded secrets are approaching the great unveiling in Houston. Industry sources are more close-lipped than ever. I *hate* this time of year.

Gotta dig for scraps . . . lessee . . . did I already tell you Colt was planning on a six inch Diamondback? OK, then, never mind, you knew already. What else . . .

There's always the bad news, of course. Security Industries, according to the insiders, is dead. We knew that the plant closed up a few months ago, right after this column came out announcing that company's planned move to Alabama, but we were keeping our fingers crossed, even though that padlock and the poster on the door signed by the sheriff looked kind of ominous.

Joe Lee, president of Security Industries, has been unavailable for comment. His fine little stainless-steel "J-frame" .38 and .357 snub nose guns were never famous for great workmanship. But Lord, they were slick. Trouble was, some production runs would come through sparkling and perking, and others would have a high number of guns that were out of time.

What went wrong? Probably a lot of things, but one we can point to is cheap labor. Joe never was able to get a good skilled craftsman team together, and people paid minimal wage or less produce equivalent quality goods. Joe had hoped to go someplace where labor was both cheap and good, and apparently couldn't hold out long enough to make the transition.

The death of a fine or potentially fine handgun is sad news, and we go into it only because there may be a few lessons to those who follow. We hear through the grapevine that an established firm had offered to buy Joe out, not only keeping him for life as a high-salaried management

employee, but offering permanent jobs to his two capable sons. The price offered was said to have been excellent in addition to the sinecure jobs and perks. Joe turned it down, probably out of pride; a company you build from nothing is precious to you, and you don't let somebody else adopt it, even if they do promise to take better care of it and still give you visitation rights.

Will the Security revolver be reborn? Some of us had hoped so, but it looks increasingly doubtful. The auction of the manufacturing layout should be over by the time you read this, and the several industry people I've talked to are convinced that the Security production line will be sold piecemeal to this firm that needs a Bridgeport lathe or two, and that one that could use a milling machine.

Ironically, a cabal of well-financed gun buffs that wanted to try and buy Joe back out of receivership and re-establish the plant in northern New England, with him still at the helm, wasn't able to get through to him because he secluded himself when the financial roof caved in. For consumers the word is, it would be a good idea to hold onto any Security Industries revolver you have, because it will eventually be a collector's item. A good one is an outstanding "user's" gun as well. This writer has three, and carries his Security Police Pocket Magnum, a Chief-Special-size .357 in stainless, more often than his model 60 or his Detective Special.

On to better news. A new Massachusetts-based firm, Yankee Hill Machine Co. 20 Ladd Ave., Northhampton, MA, 01060 is coming out with a new line of gun cleaning gear under the Kleen-Bore trademark. They're also planning on getting into the firearms industry full blast (forgive me, puns are an occupational hazard for gun writers.) Muzzle-loaders will be their entree. They've already, according to arms-industry whispers, been awarded a contract for three hundred special charcoal-burners that will be used to

refurbish an historic Canadian fort.

Nothing definite yet, but word is that Charter Arms is thinking of upgrading a couple of its revolvers. One will be their 6" .357, which would sport a vent-rib and precision adjustable sight if company management takes the plunge. The other change would be a "factory custom" Bulldog .44 with superslick action, maybe a heavy barrel or a standard one with a vent rib, and classy adjustable sights. A hard-chrome finish like the one on the outstanding "Backpacker" special edition of the Bulldog, might also be part of the as yet un-named deluxe .44. Larry Kelly the Mag-Na-Port honcho whose special-edition revolvers have always been so popular, got exceptional rave reviews with his slicked up, ported, and plated Bulldog, and a factory gun with the features we described above should be a terrific seller. After all, since there is no competition in a small .44 Special, price won't be much of an object.

The big news in ammo for the past year or two has been the Treasury Load, the high performance .38 Special cartridge Winchester-Western has produced for certain U.S. government agencies. Not available for public consumption, it probably will never be; it is what is known by insiders as a "Q Load," a round made up solely for a single buyer who is going to use a lot of it. We should note that Treasury people don't use mild .38 wadcutters for practice, and train their people tirelessly with hot duty ammo. Until it went out of business, Treasury (and Secret Service, and most of the government cops except FBI) used only Super Vel for practice or duty.

The Treasury loads we've seen are made up on Government-headstamped cases, and are in effect well-designed 110-grain .38 special semi-jacketed hollow-points, loaded to quasi-.357 magnum velocities. What incidents have occurred with Federal agents using this ammo are not available to reporters, but word from the Feds we know is that the stuff performs like dynamite. Remember the individual who vaulted the fence and charged the White House some months ago? He was dropped like a stone by a single .38 Treasury Load through the right chest.

Speaking of the Treasury Load, "conventional" law enforcement agencies are eager to try it. California Highway Patrol has adopted it as their standard load. That famous and trend-setting law enforcement agency had allowed its men to carry 6" .38s and .357s of their choice for years; we scooped the rest of the industry in this column several months ago when we reported that the agency was buying its men a new gun designed expressly for them; the Smith & Wesson Model 68, a 6" adjustable-sight .38 Special in stainless steel.

We have more news on that choice of guns. First, the California road patrolmen are getting their choice of that long-barrelled gun, or the familiar 4" version, the

Not everyone's crazy about the good ol' boys' obsession with bullet performance.



Some would rather not think about handgun bullets that can more than double their diameter on impact. Or handgun primers that make sure those bullets get the perfect send-off.

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Then there's pistol primers. They're a prime concern for the boys at CCI. So there's plenty of fussing to make sure their primer mixes match up just right with the powders handloaders use.

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One other thing. These are the exact same bullets you'll find in CCI-Speer's factory-loaded Lawman Ammo. Manufactured to exactly the same strict law enforcement and military standards.

So no wonder they tend to be popular with handloaders. Even though not everyone's crazy about them.



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Cal.	Dia.	Weight	Point Type
9mm	.355	88 gr.	Hollow Point
9mm	.355	100 gr.	Hollow Point
9mm	.355	125 gr.	Soft Point
38	.357	110 gr.	Hollow Point
38	.357	125 gr.	Hollow Point
38	.357	125 gr.	Soft Point
38	.357	140 gr.	Hollow Point
38	.357	146 gr.	Hollow Point
38	.357	158 gr.	Hollow Point
38	.357	158 gr.	Soft Point
38	.357	160 gr.	Soft Point
41	.410	200 gr.	Hollow Point
41	.410	220 gr.	Soft Point
44	.429	200 gr.	Magnum Hollow Point
44	.429	225 gr.	Hollow Point
44	.429	240 gr.	Soft Point
44	.429	240 gr.	Magnum Hollow Point
44	.429	240 gr.	Magnum Soft Point
45	.451	200 gr.	Hollow Point
45	.451	225 gr.	Magnum Hollow Point
45	.451	260 gr.	Magnum Hollow Point
LEAD BULLETS			
9mm	.356	125 gr.	Round Nose
38	.358	148 gr.	Bevel Base Wadcutter
38	.358	148 gr.	Hollowbase Wadcutter
38	.358	158 gr.	Semi-Wadcutter
38	.358	158 gr.	Round Nose
44	.430	240 gr.	Semi-Wadcutter
45	.452	200 gr.	Semi-Wadcutter
45	.452	230 gr.	Round Nose
45	.452	250 gr.	Semi-Wadcutter

Sporting Equipment Division



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Model 67 stainless Combat Masterpiece. Our sources say that slightly over half of these lawmen (who have always carried long barrel guns in the past) have opted for the shorter, more-comfortable-to-carry Model 67. They're also being issued the Griffis Second Six plastic speedloader, though we understand several are exercising their option to carry instead the new Safariland loader. The Bianchi Model 27 holster (as seen on syndicated reruns of "The Rookies") is standard with this department, though many of the officers favor the similar Hoyt holster.

According to one insider, who has never been affiliated with the California Highway Patrol but has always been close to them, the switch to a .38-only gun was partially prompted by the infamous 1970 slaying of four CHP patrolmen in a single gunfight. Their inability to reload fast was determined to have been one factor in their deaths, which is why they were authorized to carry speedloaders a year later and issued them last year. Another factor, some say, was that three of the downed "troopers" were carrying .357s loaded with hot 158-gr. Magnum ammo and couldn't control the recoil enough to fire accurately and take down their attackers, who killed them with .45 autos. CHP's feeling seems to be that a low-kick load like the fast but light Treasury round will give adequate stopping power with

controllable handling characteristics.

We mentioned special loads before. Ammo companies will take such orders from large-volume buyers, if (A) the buyer makes clear his specs and (B) promises that the ammo maker won't be held liable if the hot load they ask for is too much for their guns. Don't expect those companies to make those hot loads available over the counter to somebody who might have a junk .38 Special. This is why you'll never see W-W's Treasury load in your sporting goods store. It's also why you'll probably never be able to buy the special 9 mm. Parabellum cartridge being produced by Federal for Illinois State Police. It's built around a 95-grain semi-jacketed Sierra softpoint pill that expands to 60 caliber in "flesh equivalent" when it hits the 13P-required 1400 f.p.s. It supposedly feeds as slick as hardball through S&W autos. Trouble is, the loaded round is short enough to jam in a Luger or some other guns, and the pressure might get a little spooky with a poorly made foreign gun produced of soft steel. They might have simply settled on Remington's 115-gr. jacketed hollowpoint in 9 mm., which police agencies across the country are beginning to agree on as the ultimate cartridge in this caliber, but that state is cool toward hollow nose bullets after the ACLU-inspired "dum-dum" controversy ... at least, that's the word we get from the pres-

ent and immediate past superintendent of Illinois State Police. Illinois Governor Jim Thompson, the big Republican star of the 1976 elections at state level and heavily touted as the GOP presidential candidate for 1980 told me personally that he would go with giving the troopers hollowpoints if their ordnance department says that's what they need for safety on the job. Thompson, a strong pro-gun politician, is a man to watch for that upcoming Big Race.

Next issue, all the cats will be out of the bag from the National Sporting Goods Dealers Association show. To tell you the truth, the national wholesalers' show comes sooner, and the subsequent NRA show hosts more gun people, but for some reason, the makers love those retailers, and keep a lot of stuff secret just for them. Of course, since the people who ultimately sell your product are the real barometer of whether you'll be eating next year if you make stuff that's sold retail, I guess we can all see why they feel that way.

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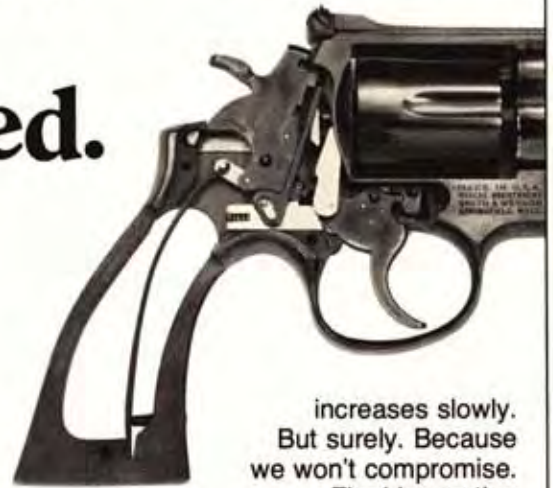
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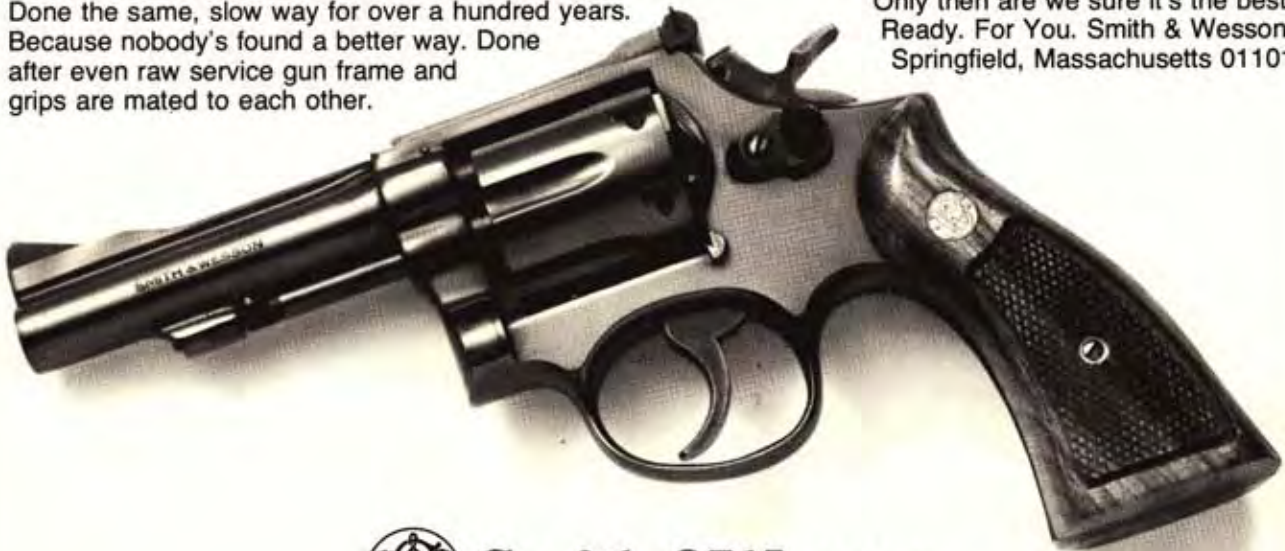
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THE PISTOLSMITH

By GEORGE C. NONTE

RECENTLY, we've received a pair of releases from Smith & Wesson setting forth their offer to apply modifications to M59 9mm autos and M29 .44 Magnum revolvers. First of all it should be pointed out that these modifications are not necessarily indicative that S&W considers guns in the field to be defective in any way. Actually, they are the results of an ongoing product-improvement program that has been in existence for countless years at Smith & Wesson, just as similar programs exist with other manufacturers. Further, these modifications are not repairs or alterations to the basic guns, but the installation of current-production parts on the M59 and reprofiling of the forcing cone on the M29. This simply updates existing guns to current production-gun status.

M-59's delivered to Smith & Wesson service facilities to take advantage of this offer will be fitted with a modified slide stop, new extractor and extractor spring, and a new magazine follower. As in most other autos, the M59 slide stop is forced upward to engage the slide by the follower after the last shot has been fired; an inward protrusion on the stop is contacted by the follower and forced upward. As long as conventional ball ammunition and commercial loads are used, the original slide stop gives no trouble. However,

some of the more recent high-performance loads have a "fatter" bullet profile or have the bearing surface extended substantially forward of the case mouth. Under some conditions, such bullets can make minor contact with the inward protrusion as they are elevated by the follower—with the result that on rare occasions the stop will be raised sufficiently to engage the slide while cartridges still remain in the magazine; an "early slide stop function." Current-production slide stops have this inward protrusion reduced slightly in length so that those fat bullets can't contact it, but positive normal slide-stop function is retained.

The original M59 magazine follower has not produced any particular problems in functioning; however, in a great many magazines it can move far enough down within the body to permit a 15th cartridge to be forced under the feed lips. The design capacity of the magazine is 14 rounds, and when a 15th round is added, and even though it appears to enter without too much difficulty, the magazine spring is over-compressed, and the tightness of that 15th cartridge itself may cause a feeding problem. Shooters experienced with magazine-fed automatic weapons are well aware of the hazards of crowding in the last possible cartridge. It often produces feeding problems, and

most military manuals on such weapons caution against the practice, even to the extent of recommending if not directing that the magazine never be filled to maximum capacity. To eliminate occasional problems encountered when that 15th round is crowded into the magazine, S&W has changed the M59 follower so that *only* 14 rounds may be inserted, and that when the magazine is so charged, the spring cannot be over-compressed. With the new follower, it is not possible to insert that 15th round.

The new M59 extractor (and it should fit and function equally well in the M39-2) has been modified from the original to reduce the possibility of it snagging on an oversize case rim or malfunctioning because of other non-standard case-head dimensions. In addition, the extractor spring has been changed toward the same end.

I might point out that the slide stop and extractor problems eliminated by the new parts have been encountered in some M39's as well, and the modifications made to those parts by Smith & Wesson have been routinely performed by pistolsmiths tuning those guns for maximum reliability and have also been described in some of my own writings in recent years.

Let me think that the S&W has been inattentive, let me assure you that the extractor and slide-stop changes were made necessary by the appearance of new 9mm Parabellum loads. It appears that the characteristics of the M59 were not given sufficient considerations during their development; and, to the greater incidence these days of over-size case rims and irregular extractor groove profiles and dimensions.

The M29 modification consists of reprofiling and refinishing the forcing cone—as is presently done in production guns—producing improved transition of the bullet from the chamber throat into the barrel. This reduces what is commonly called "side spitting." With the new forcing cone, there is a markedly reduced tendency for propellant, lubricant, and bullet particles to be thrown out through the barrel-cylinder gap.

All these modifications are worthwhile, and gunowners wishing to take advantage of them should contact the nearest S&W service facility to do so. There are only a few of these facilities across the country so it will normally be necessary to ship a gun to the nearest location for modification. This is provided for in federal law, and you may safely ship a handgun to a licensed gunsmith/dealer/manufacturer for repair or modification; however, the gun may not be shipped through the U.S. mails, so UPS or another common carrier must be used. According to the releases we have at hand, there is no charge for the M59 modifications, and there is an \$8.00 service charge for the M29 job. If your gun is essential to your daily work, I think it would be wise to contact the service fa-



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cility and determine how long it might be before you can expect the gun to be returned.

Frankly, we're quite pleased to see S&W display this increased concern for shooters and professional gun-handlers. I must admit that in the past there have been times when I have wondered if some manufacturers really gave a damn about what happened to a gun after it was sold. It may well be that these two modification programs herald a new era in S&W customer relations. If so, I certainly extend my hearty congratulations.

Over the years I have received more than a few reports of Colt Government Model pistol malfunctions resulting from the gun being dropped or struck sharply. The results range from a noticeably indented primer to inadvertent firing. The most recent reports involve two guns in the same police department which fired when dropped on pavement, even though being carried in "condition two" with a round chambered and the hammer fully down. I might add that I have on more than one occasion duplicated this malfunction, and that it is not entirely unknown among knowledgeable pistol buffs—reference to it has been made in shooting literature long, long ago.

Actually, the "inertia type" firing pin, long acknowledged as a very effective safety device in and of itself, is the culprit. This pin is spring-retracted and is normally held to the rear by its spring, its head solidly against the firing pin stop or, if the hammer is fully down, against the hammer face. The nose of the pin is thus contained within the slide and protrudes to strike the primer only when the head of the pin is struck a sharp blow by the hammer, giving it sufficient inertia or momentum to overcome the force of its retracting spring. This is great except that it is possible for the pin to acquire forward momentum in other ways, and if it acquires enough, it will set off the primer.

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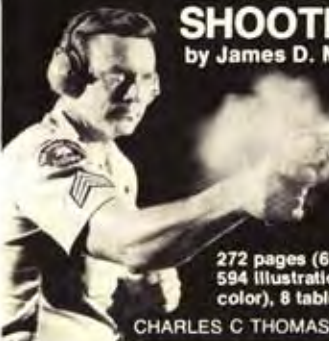
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happening is increased if the firing-pin spring happens to be a bit weak—and in our experience this is often the case. What happens is that the gun comes to an abrupt halt while the firing pin tends to continue forward of its own momentum and—if the impact is hard enough—overcome its spring and strike the primer; this may only mark the primer lightly, or it may fire it. The other way is actually just opposite in that the gun is dropped and strikes a hard surface on its hammer spur and/or grip-safety tang; if the hammer is fully down and the impact is sharp enough, the firing pin can rebound off the hammer face, perhaps with sufficient force to overcome its spring and strike the primer. The probability of the firing pin acquiring enough energy in this fashion to actually fire a primer is slight; but one such incident was reported to me about a decade ago.

It isn't common knowledge, even among .45 Auto buffs, but forty-odd years ago Colt began equipping the G.M. series with a firing-pin safety just to prevent such occurrences. Unfortunately, this was just before WWII, and when wartime production of the big .45 began, the safety was deleted. It was not reinstated after the war, most likely for economic reasons. This automatic safety functioned in such a manner that the firing pin was mechanically locked to the rear (in its retracted position) at all times except when the trigger was deliberately held to the rear. Obviously, the presence of this safety would prevent the malfunctions just described.

At present, there isn't any practical and economic way to fit a firing pin safety to the G.M. pistol—though I know of at least one custom pistolsmith who is developing just such a device for after-market installation. The first step you *can* take toward prevention is to make certain that the firing-pin is not weak; if in doubt, replace it with a new one from Colt (not one from a surplus-parts dealer which may be well-used). A more effective step in this direction is to obtain from Wolff Spring Co. (Box 232, Ardmore, Pa. 19003) an "Extra-Power" firing pin spring and install it in the gun. This spring is stiffer than the factory supplied-item and substantially decreases the probability that dropping the gun will cause the primer to be struck by the firing pin. You'll immediately be able to tell the difference between this spring and the stock item, and it costs but little. The Wolff spring is made stiffer, but not so stiff as to cause ignition problems, *providing* that the mainspring is full strength; if the latter has taken a set from use, or is kinked, or has been shortened in an effort to reduce the trigger pull and cocking effort, then the hammer blow may not be heavy enough to overcome the Wolff firing pin spring and produce consistent ignition. Again, if there exists any doubt at all, I suggest replacing the mainspring with a

new one, also from Wolff. Wolff is also the major source for all manner of handgun replacement springs, both modified and standard. I've used them for many years with complete satisfaction.

While no such item is currently available, a lighter-weight firing pin would also help, but too much reduction in weight would cause ignition problems unless

compensated for by a more powerful mainspring producing heavier hammer blow.

Quite frankly, I would like very much to see Colt do a little imaginative work in this area—a few minor modifications to the ignition system of the G.M. would make a fine gun even better in regard to safety.



By GEORGE BREDSTEN

HANDGUN CARTRIDGES FOR BIG GAME—PART III

THE .38 Special handgun/cartridge combination can be very accurate and, with proper loads, powerful enough to take Category I: A big game. Although acceptable loads can be fired through the medium frame revolvers, the better .38 Special loads should be fired through large frame revolvers; e.g., the Colt Single Action Army or the S&W 38/44 Outdoorsman. However, these revolvers are not only scarce, they are also heavier and/or bulkier than some of the .357 Magnum revolvers currently available. One could load maximum performance .38 Special ammunition that would be safe **ONLY** in the T/C Contender or .357 Magnum revolvers, but the practice cannot generally be recommended. Thus, for most big game handgun hunting purposes, the .38 Special can be considered as having been superseded by the .357 Magnum.

Whenever the .357 Magnum is mentioned, either favorably or unfavorably, there often follows some of the strangest demonstrations of rationalization likely to be witnessed this side of a mental institution. Many non-handgunners and even some handgunners of limited experience continue to believe the .357 Magnum to be a hand held piece of ordnance having the power of a howitzer! Even well known handgunners are sometimes given to making odd utterances. For example, one author recently wrote that he considers the .357 Magnum to be suitable for use on animals to but not exceeding the size of peccary. Thus far each of us would re-

spect—if not agree with—the man's opinion. However, in another publication, the same author describes a jaguar hunt where he carries and intends to use a Colt .38 Super.

Now an adult jaguar would have to be suffering from extreme malnutrition or some other debilitating affliction not to exceed the size of an adult peccary (Collared or White-lipped species), and while the .38 Super is a fine handgun cartridge—neither as appreciated nor as popular as it perhaps should be—it is ballistically inferior to the .357 Magnum. If it is not odd that individual bias can somehow enhance the capability of a favorite cartridge to the degree that the cartridge can perform beyond its potential, 'tis certainly convenient!

Although many different .357 Magnum loads have been and are being used to take big game, handgun hunters reporting big game kills to ABGHA indicate a decided preference for bullets (cast and/or jacketed) of from 140 to 175 grains. The favored jacketed bullets include the Speer 140 gr. HP, the Sierra 150 gr. JHC, the Remington 158 gr. SJHP (B22938), and the W-W 158 gr. JHP (B3574HP). The more popular cast bullets include the Hensley & Gibbs (H&G) numbers 43 and 51; the Lyman numbers 358156, 358429, 358439 and 358477. A few handgun hunters reported using the Remington 125 gr. SJHP (B22866), the Sierra 125 gr. JHC or the Speer 125 gr. JHP, and listed performance as satisfactory only if broadside shots were made directly into

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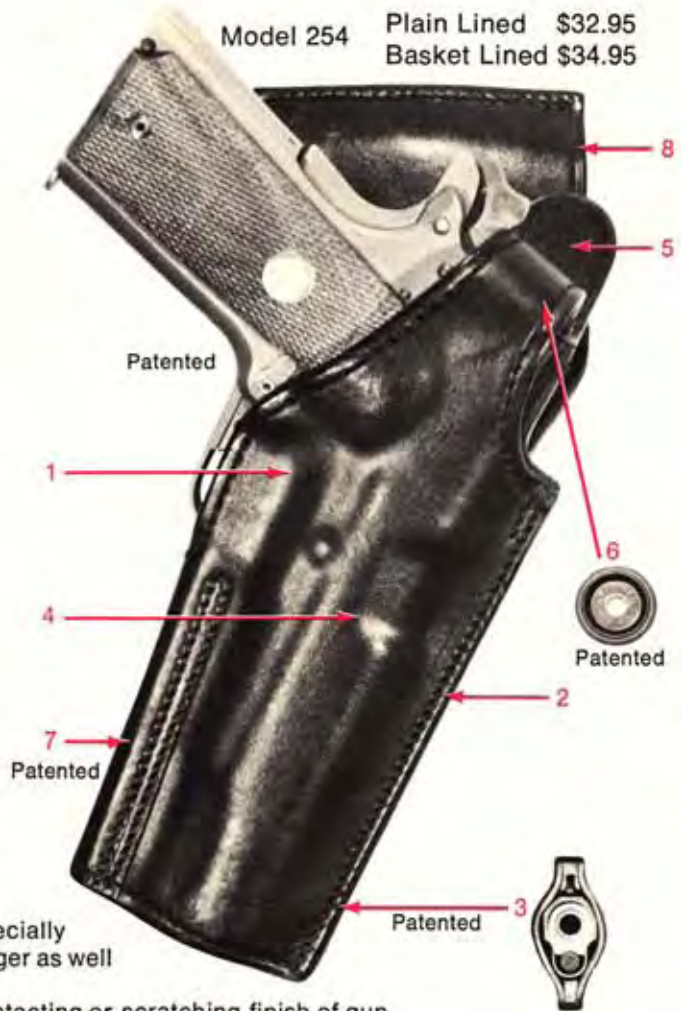
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the thorax (lung cage). When other types of shots were tried, these bullets gave erratic performance.

Based on reported performances as well as personal experience, there is little question that the H&G number 43 and the Lyman number 358429 are the bullets which produce the best all around results. These bullets almost always give complete penetration regardless of the angle for the shot, and as a result game generally travels less distance than when similarly hit by other types of bullets that do not normally give complete penetration.

Interestingly enough, when only broad-side thorax shots are considered, the cast Lyman-Keith 358439 SWC HP gave the best reported bullet performance on big game. This bullet generally penetrates somewhat deeper and also causes greater tissue destruction than that of jacketed hollow point bullets of similar weight. Mention is made that there are two versions of this bullet. One has the hollow extending down to the crimp groove, whereas the other has the hollow extending down to the lubrication groove. It is the latter version which has proven to be the more effective on big game.

Despite rumor and gossip to the contrary, Hercules 2400 is and continues to be the most popular powder for full power .357 Magnum loads. Most handgun hunters report using from 14.0 to 15.5 grains with either cast or jacketed bullets. A check on two of the more popular reported loads gives the following: Using the Sierra 150 gr. JHC over 15.5 grs. of 2400 in R-P .357 Magnum cases and the CCI 550 primers gave an average instrumental velocity of 1288 fps from a six inch Ruger Security-Six revolver. The other load uses the Lyman-Keith 358439 SWC HP over 15.0 grs. of 2400 in W-W .357 Magnum cases and the CCI 550 primers to give an average instrumental velocity of 1376 fps from a four inch S&W Model 19 revolver. Both of the above loads give under four inch groups at 50 yards, and under 10 inches at 100 yards—factory iron sights and field shooting positions.

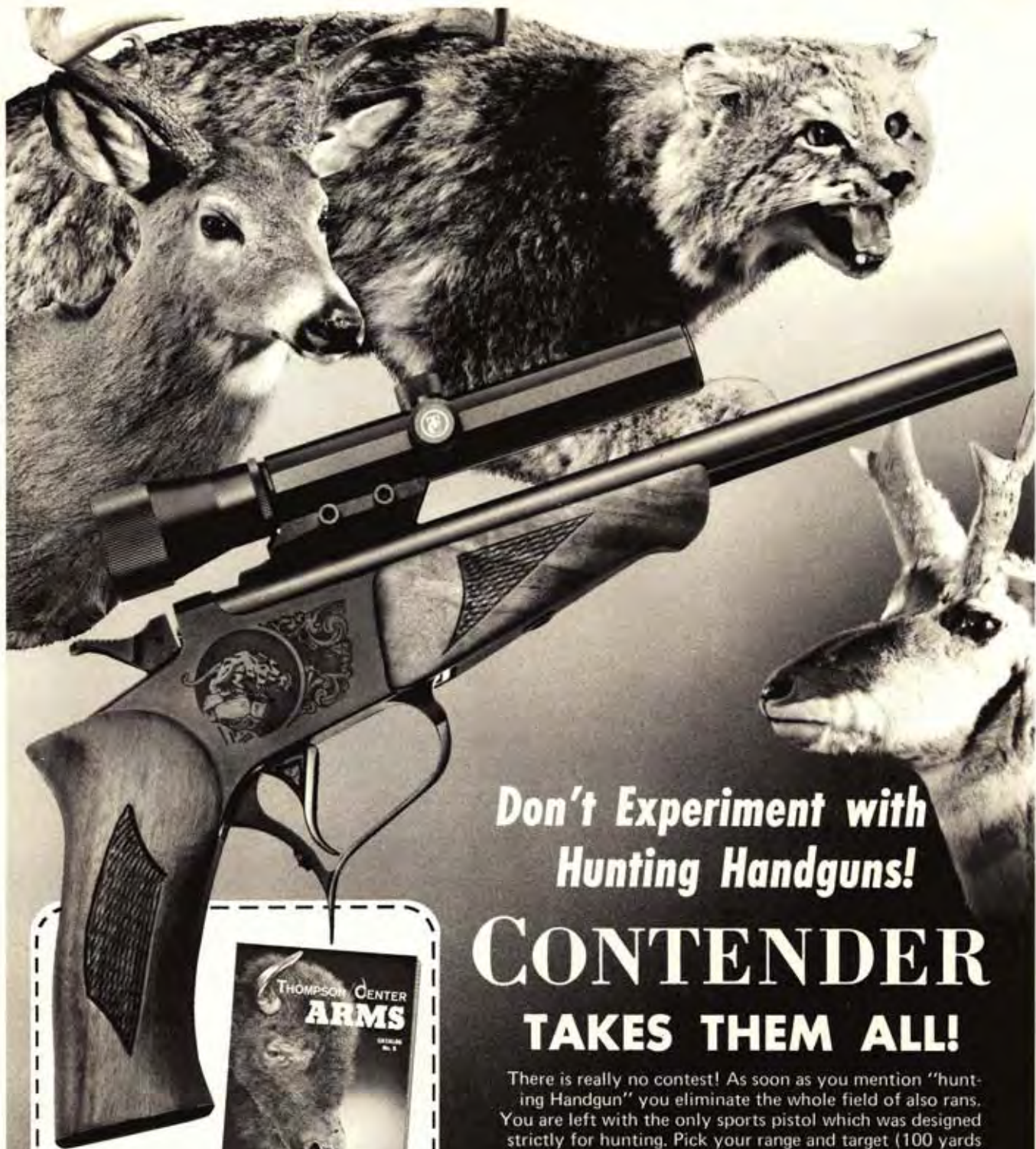
At this point it is appropriate to mention the fact that not all .357 Magnum revolvers can use the H&G number 43 or the Lyman numbers 358429 and 358439 bullets. When loaded in .357 Magnum cases so as to be crimped in the crimping groove, the overall length is too long to permit cylinder rotation; e.g., the Colt Python or the S&W Model 27. If the

handgunner decides he will use one or more of these very fine cast bullet designs in his, for example, Colt Trooper MK III, he has three options. First, he may use .357 Magnum cases and seat the bullet so as to be crimped just over the front driving band. While this will result in a loaded cartridge having an acceptable overall length; pressure will be higher and the sharp corners will be rounded so as to reduce the terminal efficiency of the bullet. Second, he may trim cases that amount which will permit the bullet to be seated and then crimped in the crimping groove, yet still not exceed cylinder length. Since loads that are a safe maximum using regular .357 Magnum cases are or can be in the shortened cases, if not dangerous, at least unnecessarily abusive to the handgun; it would be prudent to make an appropriate reduction in the powder charge used. Third, he may seat and crimp these bullets in .38 Special cases using powder charges that are safe to shoot only in .357 Magnum revolvers. This also requires careful load development and one needs to remember that the .38 Special case was NOT designed to be used with loads that develop the working pressure of the .357 Magnum. Furthermore, a very dangerous situation exists if someone would inadvertently attempt to use such loads in a .38 Special revolver.

For the handgunner who wants to use more effective cartridges, any of the following with the proper ammunition can be used. If only commercial ammunition is to be used, two of the better choices are the .41 Magnum and the .45 ACP. Both give excellent accuracy and have ample power for this type of big game. When handloaded ammunition is to be used, the .44-40, .44 Special and .45 Colt are all first rate choices. Some may wonder why the .44-40 is included, because until fairly recent it was a moribund cartridge. However, there now appears to be an increasing interest in this cartridge among handgun hunters, and the "Dakota" Single Action is one revolver currently available in .44-40 chambering. Other cartridges such as the .357 Herrett, the .357 Auto Mag, the .44 Auto Mag, the .44 Magnum and the .45 Berserker are also quite suitable for such game. Yet when one considers the comparative accuracy, power and performance of various cartridges together with the size and weight of different handguns, it would be difficult to select a significantly better choice than the .44 Special. (Continued on page 16)

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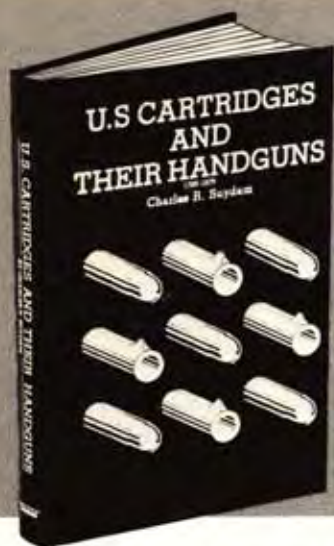
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If Colt does in fact reintroduce their very fine Single Action Army and/or their New Frontier in this caliber, if Ruger would chamber their Blackhawk Model for it, or if S&W could be convinced of the need to reintroduce their Model 24—many a handgun hunter would then have the opportunity to obtain and use what some very experienced handgun hunters still consider to be the best handgun cartridge for big game hunting.

Whatever the choice, it should be such that adequate performance can be achieved under or during less than ideal hunting conditions. It is suggested that the conscientious and responsible handgun hunter select a cartridge of from about 40 to 45 caliber which can be used in a handgun that is both practical to carry and shoot. It is true that what may be practical to carry and shoot for one person may be a ludicrous choice for another, but when the weight and size of any handgun begin to approximate that of a carbine, one begins to question the logic of such a choice.



Book Review:

ALASKAN HUNTER, by Roy F. Chandler. Bacon and Freeman Publishers, Box 411, Deer Lake, Pennsylvania 17961 1977. \$16.00

As the title suggests, this is a book about hunting in the 'great land.' For the most part, the writing techniques are informal yet the author conveys his thoughts very well. Many amusing and interesting anecdotes about himself, a friend or a hunting associate are used to illustrate and emphasize important points. Most species of Alaskan big game are given adequate discussion, and there are chapters devoted to such topics as scopes/binoculars; knives; camping; wild game meals; and a brief but excellent chapter on hunting philosophy.

Although Mr. Chandler is primarily a rifleman hunter, there is material within the book that pertains to handguns and handgun hunting. However, one tends to become somewhat skeptical about the depth of the author's handgun hunting knowledge as well as his ability of realistically relate an accomplishment. In this respect Mr. Chandler demonstrates a rather sophomoric attitude, even though he has undoubtedly taken some big game with the handgun. Two examples of this apparent attitude are manifested on pages 37 and 71 respectively:

"I was surprised, for example, that my .44 Magnum pistol, which uses a Keith type 240 grain lead bullet cast pretty hard with tin and antimony, out penetrated my .300 Weatherby at 50 and 75 yards."

"I shot and killed a running caribou with one shot through the spine from my Ruger .44 Magnum at 165 paces.

I did not and still do not consider this a great feat. I personally know a number of pistol shooters here at Ft. Greely that could do the same with ease."

Any experienced handgun hunter, who has *actually* used a full power Keith load in any of the larger sixgun calibers to take big game, already knows what Mr. Chandler "recently and surprisingly" discovered; i.e., bullet penetration in big game is significantly greater for the sixgun than for most rifle bullets.

Now I have witnessed some mighty fine handgun shooting by some truly expert field shooters, and have even been fortunate to make a few good shots myself, but I know of no handgunner who can hit running game in the spine at around 150 yards with one shot! As a matter of fact, I know of no responsible rifleman who will make such a claim. Such shooting can only be nonchalantly accomplished as a matter of routine over the sights of a typewriter!

To this reviewer's mind, one of Mr. Chandler's most noteworthy comments is his emphasis on using a cartridge having adequate power for the species being hunted. This represents a welcomed change from the usual drivel of so many writers who bleat words to the effect that all a person need do is use a firearm that can be shot accurately. Because one can shoot a .30-06 accurately does not mean that the cartridge is a suitable choice for large big game under all conditions. Mr. Chandler sums it up succinctly by saying: "Learn to use the right kind of rifle or stay home!"

All in all, **ALASKAN HUNTER** is a book that can be recommended and it is a book any hunter will find generally both informative and interesting.—Geo Bredsten

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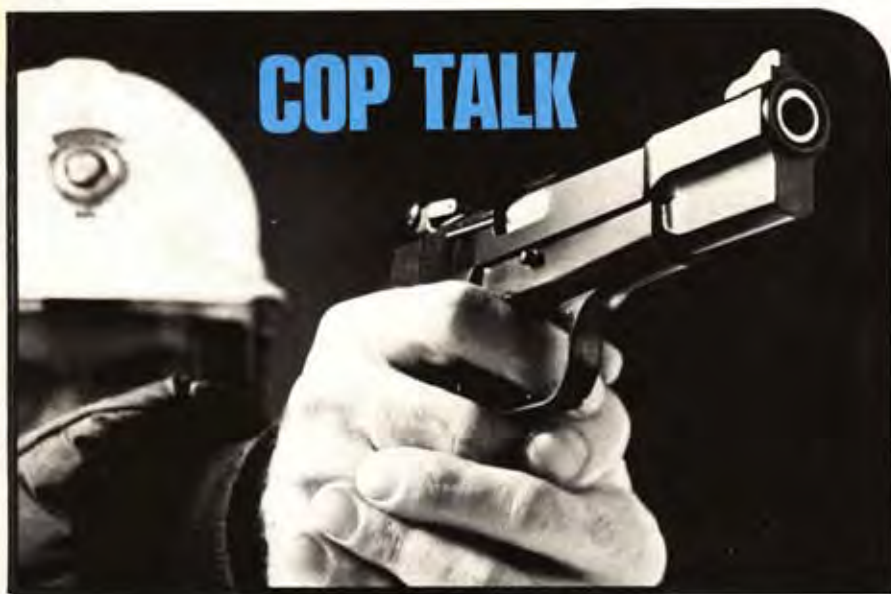
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COMBAT STANCES FOR POLICE

FOR decades, American police and defense-minded civilians have been taught that in a close-quarters firefight, it was best to shoot "from the hip," and the only real debate was the "FBI Crouch" versus the Bill Jordan school of "don't move anything but your gun-hand."

Lately, however, serious thinkers have come to accept the idea of using both

hands and eye-level aim even at ranges of seven yards and less. This approach makes *mucho* sense.

As a policeman and a combat weapons instructor, I have had the opportunity to interview and tape record a large number of cops and troopers who have survived shootouts. Most of them were trained to shoot from the hip, crouching or other-



Turret stance is favored for accuracy by PPC shooters. Shown is John DeChellis, National Champion in 1974.

wise, at close-range; training tells, and most of them did the same under pressure. The result was that, time and again, they would utter the phrase: "I can't understand how I missed him that close."

Most of them were relatively good shots. Many of them were interviewed by me only after they had recuperated from gun and knife wounds. Typical was the metro patrolman who wore an honestly earned Expert badge and missed three shots from the hip at his assailant, at a range of three and a half feet! His assailant, however, had raised his gun, taken a quick aim, and shot the officer an inch to the side of his heart. I play the tape recording of that officer's remembrances to my police classes, and they never fail to shudder when he tells of the aftermath of this close encounter.

Clearly, hip-shooting doesn't work terribly well in real life. It's great on the firing range, when the target is a paper silhouette that obligingly stands still for you, and when you have time to get your feet planted and your body indexed to the target while the rangemaster is droning his commands. *But it doesn't work on the street because, without your feet planted just so and without sights, there is no way to index your aim at your opponent!* If you must turn off-center to fire, the gun now swings at the end of a pendulum that is your arm, a pendulum loose on three joints (shoulder, elbow, wrist), and the muzzle will probably go by him before you fire.

Jeff Cooper and his free-style combat shooting disciplines proved as early as the 1950's that the difference in speed between a one-hand hipshot and a two-hand roughly aimed one, could be measured in milliseconds. Yet the hit percentage is enormously increased.

Though hip shooting at seven years and less is still taught to most of our police, forward-thinking instructors generally realize that it is obsolete. Even the Smith & Wesson Academy with its advanced but FBI-influenced methods, now permits students to bring the gun up to chest level at close range, where the gun can be visually indexed in the periphery of the shooter's vision.

The real choice in a combat stance is no longer one hand versus two; it is the Weaver stance versus what Col. Cooper calls the "Fairbairn Isosceles" position, which I prefer to recognize as the "McGee Turret" stance.

Contrary to common belief among handgunners, the Weaver stance is not merely a two handed hold. Properly executed, one stands with the feet about 18 inches apart, with the foot on the non-gunhand-side slightly forward. The elbow of the supporting hand is sharply bent to create a springy recoil-absorber effect. The gunhand pushes the pistol forward into the support hand, which pushed back against it, both with about forty pounds pressure. The elbow of the gun arm is

bent in the "pure" Weaver stance, though Cooper's highest-achieving student, former World Champion Ray Chapman, prefers to lock the elbow of his shooting arm.

While not quite as precise in slow-fire accuracy as the locked-wrists-and-elbows of the PPC competition shooter, the Weaver stance does permit more accurate rapid fire with a full-power gun, due to that shock absorber effect of the bent elbows, and the forward-and-backward pressure exerted on the grip.

The McGee Turret position pays no great attention to foot position, on the theory that when you go for your gun in the face of imminent danger, you don't have time to do a quick dance-step and get into position. The elbows are locked, with the arms straight out, at eye level or slightly below. The entire torso locks rigidly, in effect becoming a gun turret that pivots at the hips. While Fairbairn may have been the first to put this method into a manual, the man who popularized it in the United States was Lt. Frank McGee, head of the NYCPD Firearms Section. Frank had analyzed thousands of gun-fights, and come to the same conclusion that I and others arrived at later: hipshooting didn't work, and the best chance for a quick, instant hit was a swiftly-taken two hand hold at eye level.

An advantage of the turret position is that it works quite well even when urgency or darkness prevent you from seeing your sights. With the arms locked in front of you in an isosceles triangle, and your upper body muscles rigidly tense, your head turns where your eyes look, and the gun automatically follows. If there really is such a thing as "instinct shooting," the McGee stance achieves it most effectively.

It is also easier to learn and train with. The Weaver stance, though highly effective for a committed shooter who practices heavily, won't be quite natural for someone who only qualifies a couple of times a year. The exact alignment of the bent arms is something that the individual will have to fumble for. But thrusting the arms all the way out in front and locking them is quick, easy, natural.

While the top free-style shooters favor the Weaver stance, most of the ace PPC shooters use the locked-elbow turret position, even though no part of their course requires them to face an off-center target. There are, however, some notable exceptions. Record setting police combat shooters like Jim Cirillo and Frankie May both bend their elbows slightly when shooting, though their arm contours are parallel to each other, not asymmetrical as in the Weaver stance.

It is significant that the free-style shooters, who are going mainly for time, use Weaver's brainchild, while the PPC shooters, who are holding unhurriedly on the X-ring, by and large favor the isosceles hold. The first is better for fast shooting of hard kicking guns, and the second is more steady and precise. What puts me in favor

of the latter for police and civilian self defense training is that it is more natural and easy to learn, and probably more effective in darkness.

Either is vastly superior to shooting from the hip in either the FBI or the Jordan style. It worked for Bill because he was and is a superb and highly practiced shot, who by dint of his experience and his superb reflexes and coordination learned to make a bullet go where he wanted it to without really indexing his body, his feet, or his gunsights. Few of us can learn to "think a bullet home" in the same manner.

The FBI crouch, modified to both hands, eye-level or point-shoulder shooting, still has its good points. Many people find that the crouch somehow lets them get the gun up and "on" quicker, myself included, and many find that it balances them better. Standing straight up with a .45 or a Magnum at the end of your arms, it is entirely possible to be pushed slightly off-balance by the recoil, especially if you're standing on an uneven surface. Real-life shootouts oft unfold in ice-covered alleyways and sidewalks, and on tenement staircases, and a rookie who has never shot anyplace but a paved firing range may learn the hard way that balance is more important than anyone told him.

Weaver Stance or McGee Turret? The choice is yours, but predicate that decision on what's most natural for you. Try them both, extensively, on surprise targets at different angles, and not just planting your feet and facing down range. Each has its good points and bad. And either will probably save your life more effectively than a "shot from the hip" when the chips hit the table quick and a fast hit is your only hope of survival.

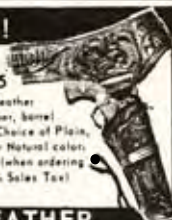


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HANDGUN Handloading

A LOOK AT FULL-LENGTH SIZING

By DAN COTTERMAN

IT should be noted by all who reload handgun cartridges—especially the magnum types—that resizing dies are machined internally so as to introduce a small amount of taper in the body of the resized case. The result is a case dimension that is slightly larger near the head or web area than at the mouth. The taper is intentional, not accidental, because if the die were machined so as to reduce the case to a maximum amount for its full length it would tend to rest on the bottom of the chamber and bulge irregularly when fired. Also worth noting is the fact that, in the event just cited, the bullet would not be positioned in correct alignment with the forcing cone in the chamber with the result that more bullet upset would occur to detract from accuracy.

Another unfavorable feature of resizing straight-sided cases to the same overall diameter lies in the web area's resistance to diameter reduction. If, considering the foregoing, a case were to be resized without taper, a bulge would appear at the junction of the wall and the web.

If you have a resizing die that does not produce a slight taper in magnum revolver hulls it is a good idea to resize no more than a distance that is equal to the

depth to which you intend to seat the bullet. An exception will be found in reloading for a revolver cylinder whose chambers vary in diameter. In this instance full-length resizing to minimum chamber dimensions will be necessary.

Though not a particularly strong concern with straight (though not parallel) walled cases, the matter of concentricity of the reloaded cartridge becomes important when we consider so-called bottlenecked types. These are, almost without exception, handloaded for an ever increasing number of single-shot handguns... which is well represented in the Thompson/Center Contender series as well as Remington's XP-100 and numerous custom creations.

Bottle-necked or shouldered ammo spills over into handloading for autoloaders and revolvers, too. However, concentricity is of more critical importance with some of the longer rounds used in the single shots where the likes of the .222 Remington, .25-35 Winchester, .30-30 Winchester and others may be custom loaded for long-range performance.

Unfortunately, a number of handloaders have the wrong idea—or no idea at all—about the concentricity of loaded car-

tridges and how it should be checked. We are indebted to Fred Huntington of Omark-RCBS for information regarding concentricity and experiments. The methods of manufacture used by RCBS and other makers of quality reloading dies is such as to render eccentricity in the neck of full-length resizing dies extremely unlikely; however, RCBS undertook testing of both factory and handloaded ammo in order to determine relative degrees of eccentricity. The results are fascinating and revealing.

The ammunition was placed on a precision surface plate in a V-block. Then, using a dial indicator sensitive to 1/10,000th of an inch, an average bullet misalignment of 2 1/2/10,000 (.0025-inch) was discovered to exist in a sample of forty rounds in two different calibers. To balance the test, a set of full-length resizing dies was taken from stock, a cast being made for a preliminary concentricity check. The results indicated less eccentricity than was found in the samples of factory ammunition. However, when the same dies were used to handload a test sample of empty cases, the same .0025-inch average eccentricity was noted.

The fact that ammunition may show some tiny eccentricity of bullet alignment may be attributed to such factors as brass "memory" or spring-back and possibly to a lack of concentricity in case neck wall thickness. The handloading tool manufacturer accepts the responsibility for making full-length resizing dies as accurately as machining techniques will allow and generally meets the responsibility admirably. The manufacturer cannot, however, take the blame for a lack of uniformity in cartridge cases.

Other significant anomalies may present difficulties. A loaded round will lie at the bottom of the chamber and, when fired, will expand upward. Since its center axis was not in line with the axis of the chamber, it will take on a shape that is not

(Continued on page 64)

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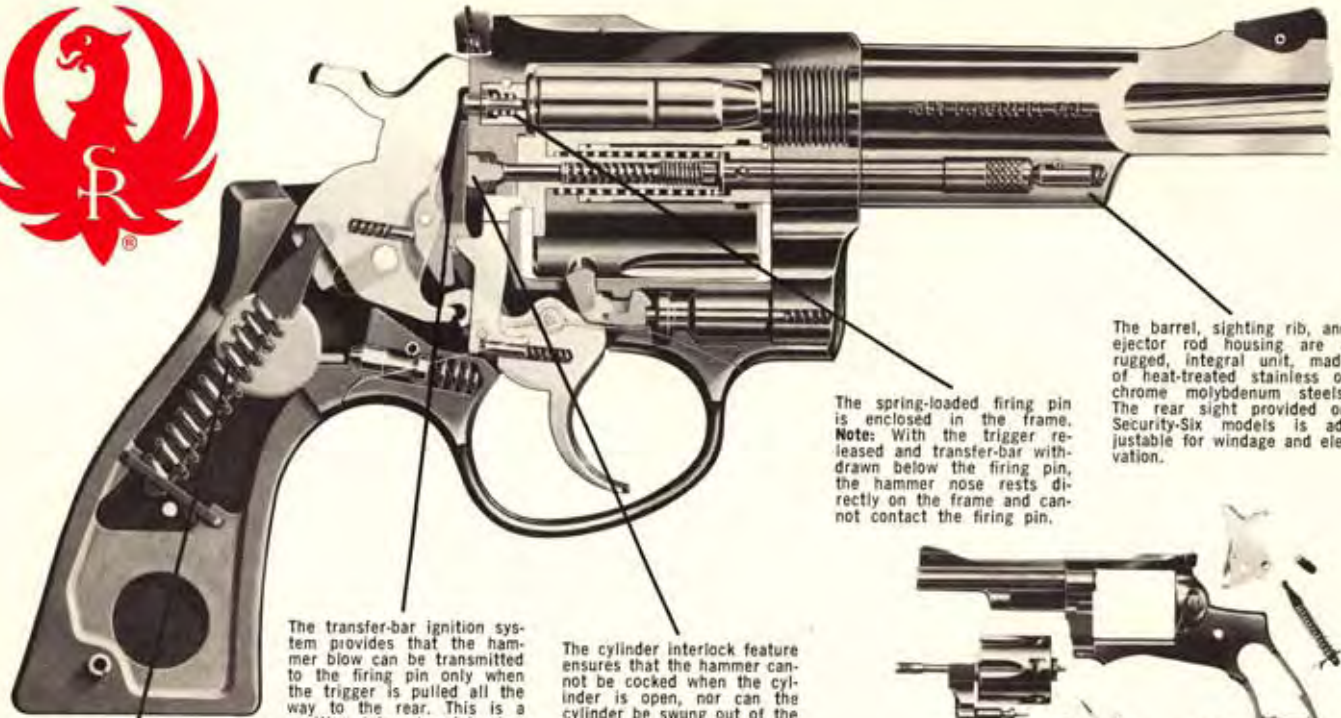
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INTRODUCTION TO Handgun Silhouette Shooting

By **ELGIN T. GATES**, Executive Director, International Handgun Metallic Silhouette Association.

HANDGUN silhouette shooting has enjoyed a brief but swift-moving history compared to any other shooting sport.

The first organized match of any consequence was held on September 20-21, 1975 in Tucson, Arizona. Pioneered by Lee Jurras, founder of the Outstanding American Handgunner Awards Foundation and Club de Auto Mag Internationale, the event was titled: The First National Handgun Metallic Silhouette Championship.

On hand for the match were well known pistol shooters and writers such as Jeff

Cooper, Dean Grennell, Hal Swiggett, J. D. Jones and others. Match Directors were Dale Miller, Dutch Snow and Jurras. The rules were rather simple: Calibers allowed were .357 or larger, ammo of contestant's choice, factory or handloads. Any barrel length, metallic sight combinations and safe trigger pull were allowed. No scopes, artificial rests or supports were permitted. Shooting was free style; off-hand, sitting, kneeling or prone.

The basic match was forty shots, ten each at the four banks of silhouette targets in five shot strings. Each contestant fired one shot at each target in the bank, then

repeated the course of fire for a total of forty shots. A total of fifty-three shooters competed in this match. The seeds were planted, although they would take a full year to properly germinate.

Three significant tournaments were held in 1976. John Adams, one of the competitors at Tucson, formed the Western Handgun Metallic Silhouette Association with Ray Chapman and held what was called the Western Regional championships in San Fernando, Calif. Ron Ricci, of Medford, Massachusetts, held the first Eastern Regional championships at Camp Curtis Guild in Reading, Mass. over the Labor Day weekend with ninety-two registered shooters.

Less than a month later, on October 1-2-3, the 1976 National Championships





Angeles range in San Fernando has tricky, cross-canyon terrain. The turkey and ram targets are visible in this panoramic photograph.

of information on the subject, clubs here and there would simply reach up in the air and bring down whatever kind of local rules or regulations they could in order to sponsor a match. After a couple years of wildcat matches, a shooter wishing to compete in, say, five different matches around the country would have to have five different guns to shoot by five different sets of rules.

Thus, the major decision was the creation of two categories, a stock production class open to all handgunners and an unlimited category to encourage the development of long range handgunning to its ultimate degree, the only two limitations being a 15-inch sight radius and a maximum weight of 4½ pounds. No scope sights to be allowed in either category.

Three more months would pass before the germinated seeds would fully sprout and then burst forth in full bloom.

The first match sanctioned by IHMSA was held on January 8-9, 1977 at the Angeles range in San Fernando, California, and suddenly it was a madhouse race. The Executive Director's office was being swamped with membership applications and requests for match dates from all directions including Alaska, Canada, Aus-

(Continued on page 68)

were held in El Paso, Texas. The title of the tournament on the program read: 1976 National Hunting Handgun Silhouette Championships. It was hosted by the Fort Bliss Rod & Gun club and spark-plugged by the late Tom Beall, one of the 1975 Tucson competitors. Fifty-seven competed in the matches.

Basic rules of the 1976 championships were similar to the Tucson match with a few important exceptions. Any pistol of any caliber was allowed, the only restriction being a sight radius not to exceed 15 inches and an overall weight not to exceed 4½ pounds.

Led by John Adams, who proposed the idea, a group of interested shooters held a meeting during the El Paso match for the purpose of forming a nationwide association. Representatives were on hand from all areas where handgun silhouette shooting was active from Canada to Mexico. Well known pistoleros such as George Nonte, Hal Swiggert, Lee Jurras and others were on hand.

With Ray Chapman as moderator, the first order of business was to select a name. I made the motion which was unanimously approved: International Handgun Metallic Silhouette Association, thus IHMSA.

John Adams was elected Executive Director for the 1976-1977 year and a seven member council was appointed to serve as an advisory committee.

Left: In windstorms, targets are nailed to wooden stands; bullet splashes are then scored as hits.

Right: Competitor fires at 200 meter rams during 1976 National Championships in El Paso, Texas.

All the previous matches were hashed over and every idea that anyone had was aired and discussed. The primary desire of all hands was to create a standard set of rules so any shooter could attend a match anywhere in the country, knowing he could use his same equipment and shoot by the same rules.

It was obvious to everyone at the meeting that the major problem developing without a set of standard rules was that in view of the rapid progress and interest in handgun silhouette shooting, plus a lack



"Hammering" The OMC

A Preference for an Outside Hammer Sparked this Interesting Gunsmithing Job

By J. B. WOOD

OVER the past two years, the OMC Back-Up has gained wide acceptance as a second or off-duty pistol for the policeman, and as a first-line gun for others who can legally carry a concealed firearm. Produced by Harry Sanford of Auto-Mag fame, this little stainless steel .380 is made by Ordnance Manufacturing Corporation, a subsidiary of TDE Marketing Corporation (11658 McBean Drive, El Monte, CA 91732). Its performance and features have been well-covered, in GUNS and in other magazines. When I first examined one of these pistols, I was impressed by the clean design, and such good features as the separate breech block, recessed safety lever and trigger bar, and other fine points.

A few months ago a friend who owns an OMC Back-Up commented that while he was well-satisfied with the gun, he wished

it had an external hammer. The manual safety of the OMC blocks the sear, and it also has a grip-type safety, so carrying it "cocked-and-locked" is not all that dangerous. My friend, however, apparently had been too long under my influence, and carrying with hammer cocked over a live round made him nervous. So, with the OMC, he just carried it with a full magazine and empty chamber. If a serious social situation arose, he would have to cycle the slide before the first shot. Since the Back-Up has a pivoting internal hammer, I suggested that it might be possible to convert it to an external hammer. If so, the hammer could be gently let down on a chambered round, and would need only to be thumb-cocked for the first shot. My friend handed me the OMC and said "Try it!"

Making an entire new hammer might

have been the best way to go, but I thought it could be done by just making an extension piece, using the original hammer. So, I drilled and tapped the top of the hammer to take a headless 6-48 screw, and mated this to a small block of stainless steel with a vertical measurement that brought its top edge level with the outer top of the slide.

Next, I cut a slot the width of the hammer and extension in the top of the slide, down the back, and continued the cut into the back of the frame. The separate breech block has several adequate bearing surfaces for strength, but just to be extra-safe I left a small top bridge at the rear of the breech block, and cut the extension piece to clear this. The slide cut neatly removed the rear sight notch, but the deep rounded groove ahead of the sight can still serve as a "combat sight," and anyway, who's going to use this pistol for serious target work?

The flat top of the hammer extension was deeply cross-grooved to match the top of the breech block, and the edges were left sharp to give a good thumb-grip. The



The OMC pistol with slide removed shows the new hammer extension in semi-safety mode.



Close-up of the new hammer extension being positioned on the headless screw section which was installed in the top of the hammer.

Back-Up



next step was to reshape the top rear portion of the slide to allow thumb contact through the entire arc of the hammer. Rather than just rounding it off, I decided to keep it in line with the symmetry of the original design, and cut it flat on top, with a wide bevel at the rear.

The OMC has a full-reach firing pin. That is, when the hammer is down, the tip of the firing pin protrudes through the breech face. My original intention was to convert it to an inertia system, so the hammer could be fully lowered on a live round. Since the extension added mass to the hammer, it should deliver a heavier blow, and the firing pin could be shortened to an inertia type, right? Wrong. Fortunately, I made the new shorter firing pin from scratch, and saved the original. As it turned out, I needed it.

Here's what went wrong: The original firing pin in the OMC is very small, and very light. To function properly, an inertial firing pin must have a certain amount of weight in itself, and the close proximity of other parts in the Back-Up would not allow a larger, heavier firing pin to be

No, it's not a rare variation, just an OMC Back-Up 380 with an outside hammer, shown here with the hammer at full cock.



Comparison of the customized OMC with external hammer and unaltered original.



Spur of the new hammer extension comes perilously close to the shooter's hand at full recoil and those with fleshy hands may have some problems.



Clearance below hammer in frame allows hammer "whip" during recoil.

used. Secondly, the hammer extension, while adding some weight, also slowed the fall of the hammer. The result of these combined factors was a series of misfires. As they say, back to the old drawing board, and my compliments to the OMC engineers for a finely-balanced full-reach system.

Since the cocking spur of my hammer extension was well-shrouded against being accidentally struck from the rear, I finally settled on cutting a semi-safety step on the lower front of the hammer, to hold it at

rest a small distance away from the head of the firing pin. This was not a true safety step, as trigger pressure would still drop the hammer. The movement, however, was only about a sixteenth of an inch, and in repeated tests would not even dent a primer. With this semi-safety step, the original full-length firing pin could be used, and there were no more misfires.

At this point in the proceedings, my friend asked if there were some simple way to cancel the grip safety. I drilled a small hole in the bottom of the grip frame,

Customized OMC below barely shows the added hammer extension which is partially hidden by the slide.

just to the rear of the magazine release, and installed a screw to extend into a hole in the bottom of the grip safety piece, locking it in the depressed position. If anyone wanted it to function again, simply removing the screw would restore its operation.

Finally, we took our new creation out to the range, where it ran flawlessly through two boxes of .380's. It was noted that while we had no difficulty, the spur of the hammer extension during recoil came perilously close to the shooter's hand, and someone with more flesh in that area might possibly be nipped by it. Even so, I think it worked out well. The manual safety function is unchanged, and having one "up the spout," as the British say, makes the first shot available by just flicking back the hammer. In regard to the cost, any competent gunsmith should be able to do this alteration for around fifty dollars.

I think it's important to point out that this entire job falls into the experimental category, and I don't feel that a hundred rounds would come anywhere close to being a definitive test. Could the screw-mounted hammer piece break off? Could a sharp blow on the spur break the sear or sear step, allowing accidental firing? Unlikely, but anything is possible. So, if you decide to try this conversion, keep in mind that neither the writer nor GUNS Magazine can be held responsible if something lets go. It was an interesting endeavor, and my friend was pleased with it, but at the present time it's still being tested.



Small screw on altered gun (right) cancels operation of grip safety.

“...and I Thumbed Off The Safety of My Smith & Wesson Revolver”

By MASSAD F. AYOOB

WHO among us hasn't read that phrase somewhere in a novel? Something like an Evan Hunter-Ed McBain 87th precinct thriller, real taut, reader-grabbing police procedural stuff, and suddenly the whole effect goes down the drain when you come to the part where "Carella thumbed off the safety on his Smith & Wesson .38 revolver."

Well, that will never bother me again. That's because, as I sit here pecking this out with one finger, my other hand is toying with the thumb safety on a Smith & Wesson Military & Police Model 10 .38 Special revolver.

I'm enjoying it immensely. Just think: to my knowledge, at this moment, I am the first gun writer who has thumbed off

the safety on a revolver. You know, that little square latch behind the cylinder on a Smith & Wesson; the one where if you press the safety too hard, the cylinder falls out.

I am talking about the R-F revolver safety conversion, invented and produced by Frank Murabito of R-F Sporting Goods, 64-14 Myrtle Avenue, Glendale, New York 11227. It is a simple conversion of the Smith & Wesson revolver's lockwork, actuated via the thumb latch. Frank explains the concept thus:

"For some time, I had been aware of the existing dangers of revolvers not having any safety device. As an inventor, sporting goods store owner, and gunsmith by hobby, I would hear many stories of guns being discharged accidentally or by an enraged person turning the gun on its



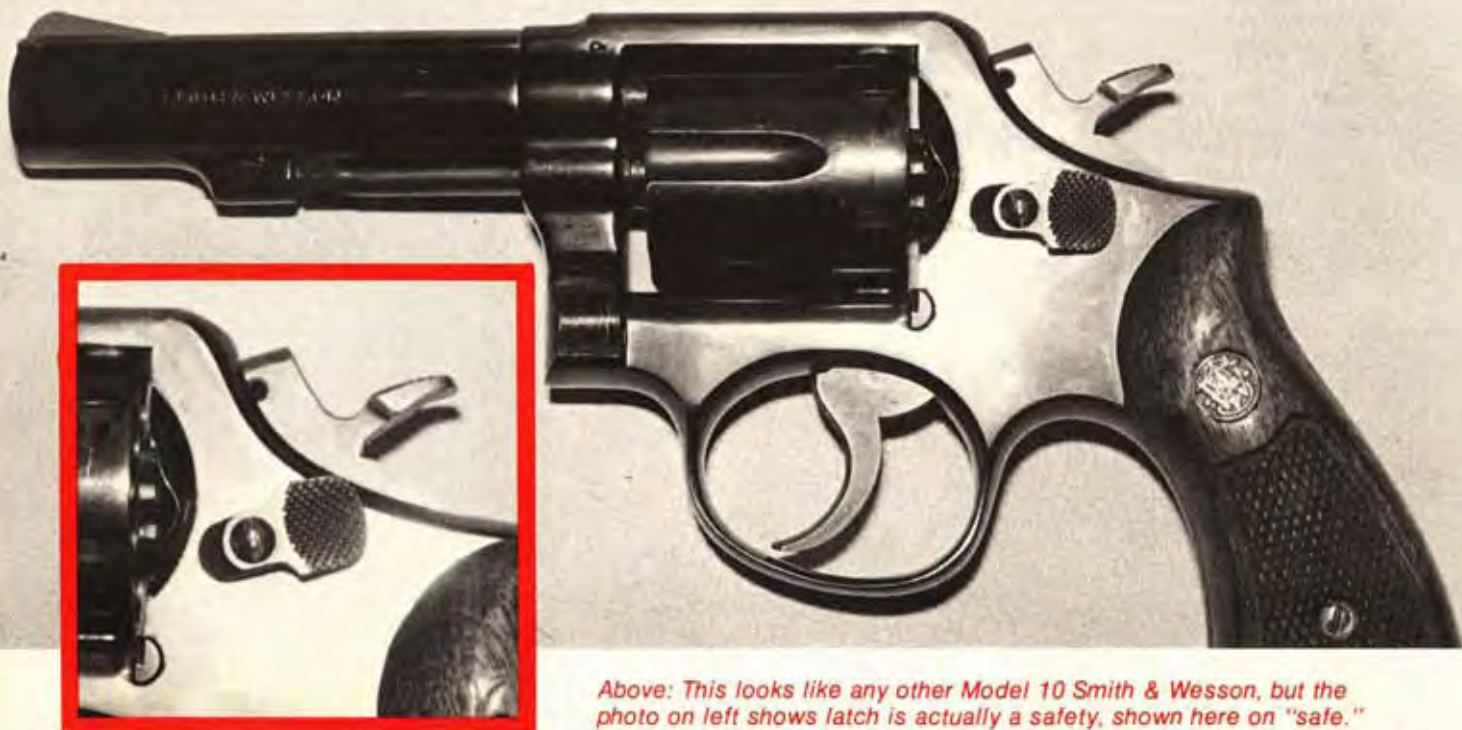
Cylinder latch can still be used to open cylinder, but author had found it possible to move it up to "safe" position accidentally.

owner. I thought this type of situation could be avoided by developing a positive safety.

"Many ideas crossed my mind, but had to be abandoned because they were too complicated, too expensive, or interfered with the basic shape of the grip."

One day, doing some action work on a Smith & Wesson, the proverbial Edison lightbulb appeared over Frank Murabito's determined head. "I found that, as I pulled the thumbpiece (cylinder latch) back, if I stopped in the middle position

(Continued on page 51)



Above: This looks like any other Model 10 Smith & Wesson, but the photo on left shows latch is actually a safety, shown here on "safe."



Base for the new grips was made from scrap 1/4-inch hardwood plywood and rough sanded.



Wood glue is applied to panel and slightly oversize piece of hide is pressed in place.

Hide-Covered

*The Beauty of These Grips is Only Skin Deep
But Their Functional Quality is Unique.*

By V. R. GAERTNER

HANDGUN grips are usually fashioned from wood or plastic. Personally I've always preferred wood, because the subtle flow of fine wood grain is more attractive than the finest plastic, to my mind. I've been making my own grips for years, and well-dried woods can be shaped and finished precisely with ordinary tools, as plastics cannot. Unfortunately, wood has its drawbacks, too.

I've made grips from French and American walnut, rosewood, and tigerwood. As I recall, years ago I paid only a dollar or two for my first pistol grip blank of French walnut with a fine grain figure. If you've priced blanks lately, you know that \$10 is a reasonable price for just fair walnut or rosewood, and a really fine blank may run to a double sawbuck and more. A slip of the router or drill at the wrong time, and the blank and all of your time and work go into the waste bin.

Great as fancy wood grips are in appearance and utility, if properly inletted, shaped and finished, wood may warp or become dented and scratched, especially when carried in a holster. On heavy-recoiling handguns, thin grips often crack and split. So when I heard about the *leather-covered stocks* used on rifles by Tikka of

Finland, I began thinking.

Leather is tough enough for coats, saddles, holsters and boots. It can be very attractive, and its surface should provide a secure hand hold. Besides its obvious advantages, the cost of leather is not much of a factor. An old jacket, suitcase, or ladies' handbag might be recycled at no expense. The grip forms themselves would not require as much care in the making and sanding, since they will be covered. Even cheap plywood should be usable, and stronger than solid wood across the grain.

Having decided to try the idea, my questions were: can leather or hide be attached permanently to plywood, and can it be made to cover smoothly the complex contours of handgun grips without expensive forming machinery? The solutions turned out to be easier than I expected.

Leather is as diverse as the animals from which it comes. Years ago, I was given an unusual reptile skin, that of a Jana Ring lizard from South America, used for shoes before its hunting was banned. The skin had not been tanned, but it was scraped thin and supple. Thinking that water would make the skin more

workable, I soaked a small cutting. This was a disaster; the hide shrank and became rubbery, rather than flexible. On drying, it thickened and stiffened.

The original skin proved to be ideal for my purposes, however, having a spotted dark pattern on the back fading almost to white on the underbelly (the edges of the opened skin) with finely spotted dark streaks suggesting finger memory grooves on handgun grips. Semi-auto grip panels seemed to be the simplest type to demon-



Glue is applied to the top edge and bevel to hold down the loose flap.



Lizard skin is smoothed over the tacky glue coating on the outer face of the panel. Hard finger pressure is used to obtain a smooth, tight surface.

varnishing.

Once I was satisfied with the panel shapes, I checked to be certain that the $\frac{1}{16}$ -inch thickness of hide would not overlap the frame edges or interfere with safety operation. Next I cut two pieces of lizard skin, slightly larger than the grips. The darker gray section with cream-colored rosettes seemed best suited to the .45.

Gluing was simpler than I had anticipated. I applied a uniform coating of Elmer's Professional Carpenter's Glue, a resin emulsion in water which penetrates into wood and leather pores and dries to a tough film resistant to both moisture and oil. It also strengthens and hardens wood in the process.

The curved surface of one grip was coated, as well as the bevels uncoated. This film of glue was allowed to soak into

Handgun Grips

strate the idea.

I chose a Colt's Gold Cup .45 (old model), because I like plain grips on this sight-ribbed target gun. Not wanting to sacrifice the original checkered wood grips, I made new ones from scrap pieces of $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch hardwood plywood. Since they would be covered, the grip forms had to meet only two requirements: correct size and shape, and "glueability," i.e., they must accept the glue being used. For reasons which will become clear, I planned to

use a white wood glue, ruling out plastic grips.

The grips were roughed out with a band saw on the pattern of the factory grips. The screw holes were drilled, then recessed on both sides with square-cutting wood drills which were a bit oversized. The holding surfaces were rounded and bevelled at the top and bottom with a medium-grit sanding drum in a drill press and left rough to accept the glue, rather than being fine-sanded by hand for

the wood for a few minutes and become tacky, but not to dry. Where the glue became dull in porous spots, a second light coat was applied to give a uniformly shiny, tacky coating.

Then the hide was pressed over the glue, smoothing it down firmly out towards the edges and around behind the grips on each side. I continued to smooth the hide against the wood and hold it with hard finger pressure for 10-15 minutes, when the covering was tight and firm.



Excess hide is trimmed off of panel back. This is done before glue hardens and excess glue is removed.



Finished grips on .45 auto are unique and handsome. The rough surface also provides a non-slip handhold.



Right hand Auto-Mag grip was made from fir plywood and fitted to the gun before covering with the hide.



Auto-Mag grips require cuts in the panels and are thus weakened. The wood was hardened with epoxy glue.



Hide over the screw holes is cut in a star pattern, glue is applied and then pressed into hole with a dowel.

Strong finger holding is the best method I found for applying the hide. With a razor blade, I nicked the excess hide at the corners before proceeding to glue the top and bottom flaps. Again glue was applied to the wood, allowed to become tacky, then the hide pressed down smoothly and held until tight, making sure there were no loose areas or creases.

The dry hide seemed to absorb the moisture from the glue and a bond resulted quickly, while the hide shrank slightly and tightened to give a smooth surface. Before the glue had hardened completely, I used a razor blade to trim the excess hide flush with the back surface of the grip, removing the bead of glue at the same time. If this was done quickly, the job was easy. The hard glue required a steel cutter in a Dremel tool.

Having trimmed all the edges flush, I tried the grips on the gun. It might be asked why I did simply fold the hide around the edges and glue it there. The answer is that the grips would be held out of contact with the metal frame and the tightened screws might split the wood or loosen. Furthermore, creasing of the hide underneath would make for a loose fit. Grips need positive, uniform wood/metal contact.

Finally I added a line of glue to the cut edge of the hide to harden it. The edge was smoothed against the grip and again trimmed flush if necessary. A solid wear-resistant, finished grip resulted. The same steps were used on the other grip.

The grip screw holes required finishing. The four holes were opened through the hide from the back with a sharp drill, then a little glue was placed under the loose

hide around the hole recess, and it was pressed down into the recess with a tapered dowel the diameter of the screw heads.

The lizard hide has a pebbled surface with a scaly appearance. The grain is somewhat like fish scales and gives a solid shooting hold without further treatment. However, I felt that it should be sealed against moisture, dirt and oil. A single coat of the two-part epoxy marine varnish I use on my wood grips (Valspar Poly-Aqua) was applied. Most of it soaked into the hide, hardening it without objectionable slickness. It also seemed to deepen and sharpen the natural pattern attractively.

The resulting grips are, in my opinion, the most unusual, beautiful, and functional I have ever seen on a handgun. They are also the finest I have ever used. I can fire a clip of hardball without having the .45 shift a fraction of an inch in my hand. My palm is not irritated as it would be by checkering. The .45 result was so encouraging that I decided to pose the toughest challenge any grip material can face—the Auto Mag semi-auto.

I have both the .44 and .357 barrel assemblies for the Auto Mag, and both recoil more powerfully than any other semi-auto. That's natural enough, since either caliber produces up to 30% more muzzle energy than a full-house .44 Magnum revolver. The .44 AMP muzzle has been Mag-Na-Ported to cut down recoil and parts breakage, but there is still plenty of kick left. This means that a secure hold is vital but any roughness punishes the shooter's hand.

The second problem with AMP grips is



The hide grips give the Auto-Mag an even more striking appearance than usual, and they have worked out well in all of author's shooting tests.



In covering the Dan Wesson, leather is first glued to thumbrest line and around to the flat section on back to avoid any wrinkles.



The finished Dan Wesson grip with its suede covering. This provides a soft feeling—but very solid—gripping surface. Shown here the suede is left natural, but it may be sealed.

that the panels must be undercut to allow free movement of the safety/slide release and holdopen on the left side and for the trigger bar on the right. At the same time, they must be thin, because the grip frame is massive and only a large hand can encircle it firmly, even with the thinnest grips.

Auto Mag buffs use strong, fine-laminate plywood with contrasting cross-plyies on the rounded contours. This is somewhat gaudy to my taste, though it solves the breakage problem which I have experienced with solid walnut grips. A lizard hide grip set would test the toughness of the skin and determine whether its surface could provide secure holding on this powerfully recoiling semi-auto.

For the grip forms, I glued together an old split left walnut grip, then stripped off the marine epoxy varnish with a non-waxy paint remover (Zip-Strip) and sanded the surface with a medium-grit paper to roughen it. The back of the grip had been coated with epoxy compound, but I tapered-sanded to give $1/16$ -inch clearance at the edges.

The right grip was made especially to be covered with the hide. I used ordinary fir plywood, $3/4$ -inch thick, made the relief cuts on the good side (the back of the grip) and drilled and recessed the grip screw holes. I coated the back, including the relief cuts, with a thick film of the wood glue and let it dry thoroughly, to harden and strengthen the soft plywood.

Next, I cut two sections of the lizard hide patterned to conform to the shape and flow of the grips. These pieces were mirror images, the dark-spotted back of the hide lightening to narrow fingers on a nearly white background. Most commercial hides and leathers are not so striking, but the effect in this case was unusually at-

tractive, complementing the all-stainless steel AMP design.

The details of glueing and trimming were almost identical to those given for the .45, but it was not necessary to cut the hide at the corners because the edges were tapered, not square as on the .45. However, the excess hide was cut in several spots to relieve the pull of one area on another during glueing. A smooth, tight covering was obtained easily. After trimming and glue-hardening the edges of the hide, the three shallow screw holes were drilled through from the back and the hide glued down into the recesses with dowel pressure. The fourth screw hole was deeper because it was located on the upper surface of a shallow thumbrest. Therefore no drilling was done, but star-shaped cuts were made to form little flaps of hide, which were then glued to the side of the recess.

Finally, the Auto Mag grips were epoxy-varnished to protect them. The finished grips were fully as fine as I could have asked, both in appearance and utility. They provide a comfortable, solid hold and a striking appearance. I have fired over two boxes of full-power handloads from the .44 AMP with no discomfort and noted no tendency of the gun to twist or shift in the hand.

Other semi-autos should offer no problems, using the same methods. Reptile skins are my favorite type, and I plan to try a rattlesnake skin on single-action revolvers. Other hides and leathers can be used, but they should be thin and supple and easily stretched if they are to be applied to deeply curved grips.

Semi-autos are not difficult to cover with hides, but revolvers offer tougher problems. To try this, I chose the roughest

example I could find: the one-piece Dan Wesson M15 grip. For this trial I picked a brown-dyed suede, purchased at a Tandy Leather shop for 40 cents. Tandy can supply exotic hides such as alligator and ostrich; these are actually imitations on cowhide, but they should be usable.

I had shaped the Dan Wesson grip from the blank (walnut) supplied with the DW Pistol Pac. I overdid the sanding, leaving a sharp edge of the receiver tang sticking out to irritate my hand's web. Later I successfully made a better walnut grip, so the old one was expendable. I stripped off the epoxy finish and sanded the surface to roughen it for the glue. I also tapered and relieved the edges so that the covering would make a flush fit.

Applying the carpenter's glue as usual, I coated only the flatter portion of the left side, around the back and up to the line of the thumbrest on the right (I am left-handed). When the glue was uniformly shiny and tacky, the leather was pressed on with smoothing finger pressure, pushing the leather forward firmly on both sides.

When the glue had dried enough to make a good bond, I cut off the excess leather on the thumbrest side (the right) so that it reached just past the vertical centerline in front. This flap was then glued in place. Before the glue was completely dry, I cut a straight, square line down the center of the grip front from trigger guard to butt, then stripped off the excess leather and scraped off the still-soft glue. Surprisingly, the leather easily formed to the curved grip to give a smooth, wrinkle-free fit. Probably the moisture of the glue again helps here.

The trick then was to fit the loose flap
(Continued on page 58)

The Little Match That Could... Eastern Silhouette Regional

By MASSAD F. AYOOB

WHEN metallic silhouette handgun shooting began in 1975, most everybody figured it to be a Westerner's game. It was there, after all, that metallic silhouette rifle matches had always been most popular.

Accordingly, when a metallic silhouette handgun match was announced in Massachusetts, a thickly populated state with some of the most ardent concentrations of anti-gun sentiment anywhere, a lot of gun people didn't take it too seriously.

That first match was held on Labor Day, 1976. I missed it because it was in conflict with Doc Burgess's NSL money shoot in Laramie, but when I got back East, the whole handgunning fraternity was still buzzing about the success of the Eastern Silhouette Regionals.

I made the '77 event, also a Labor Day affair, and found out how much water had gone under the dam since that first shoot.

Fact is, in terms of popularity and good will, the water under that dam amounted to a flood.

The tournaments are sponsored by the Massachusetts Magnum Chapter of the American Big Game Handgunners' Association, which is headed by George Bredsten, American Handgunner's hunting editor. George's group doesn't coordinate matches, however; the Mass. Magnum Chapter's events are conducted under the auspices of the International Handgun Metallic Silhouette Association.

Ron Ricci of the MMC, an avid handgun hunter and Auto-Mag aficionado, learned of Lee Jurras' ground breaking handgun silhouette shoots in the Southwest, and the proverbial light bulb flicked on above his head.

This was during that black period for Bay State pistoleros when Question Five was on the ballot, the referendum to ban



private ownership of handguns in Massachusetts. Question Five was doomed to fall in the polling booths with a crash that would jar the nation's whole anti-gun network, but Ricci and the other Massachusetts shooters didn't know that yet, and they were hustling for all they were worth to fight Question Five by spreading the word that handgun ownership was a wholesome thing.

In Ricci's eyes, a handgun metallic silhouette match was made to order as a vehicle by which the public could see the sporting value of pistols and revolvers. With ranges out to 200 yards, there was an exciting challenge, and the spectacle of the steel targets going down in a puff of dust with a distinct "clang" had the kind of audiovisual pizzazz of which spectator appeal was made.

Now, Ron Ricci had never run a shooting match, or even helped to run one, in his life. Neither had anyone else in the Mass. Magnum Chapter. They played it by ear.

The first step was getting IHMSA approval, which was quickly forthcoming, along with some good advice and complete sets of rules and target specs. Ron gave the dimensions to a friend who owed him a couple of favors, and MMC's first set of silhouettes was soon completed. Two complete sets would be used in that first match.

A range was vital. They needed someplace with plenty of distance (hard to come by in a densely populated state), plus lots of parking and spectator area. They chose Camp Curtis Guild in Wakefield, Mass., a fine military range complex that also hosts FBI training, State and Regional hi-power rifle championships, and other major shoots. The range was secured for a small honorarium fee, but there was only one weekend open on Camp Curtis' busy schedule; Labor Day. Figuring what the heck, they grabbed it.

Ron had wisely contacted a number of veteran tournament sponsors for advice, and several, including this writer, had warned him that a holiday date might cut into his attendance, since most shooters find it easier to get away from a "regular" weekend, the holidays usually being reserved for family outings. Our predictions of doom were to turn out wrong—many shooters simply brought their families with them to enjoy Camp Curtis' spacious, wooded, picnic-ground atmosphere.

Meanwhile, the MMC-ers blitzed the media—local, regional, and national.

By the time Labor Day rolled around, scarcely a handgun shooter in the Northeast hadn't heard of the event. Some ninety-one turned out on the weekend.

Ron Ricci (left) and Bob Zwirz present first place trophy to Skip Talbot, open class winner.



Coached by his dad, Dale Small won big at the Eastern Regionals.



Skip Talbot, National Champ, with his 7mm wildcat custom XP-100.



John Towle has dominated most of the Eastern shoots. His gun is an XP-100 firing a .358 W.

Many more came just to watch. They found, as their Southwestern counterparts already had, that metallic silhouette handgun competition is an eminently "watchable" sport. Several stayed the entire weekend, mingling with other handgunners from all over the region and checking out the displays of the handgun manufacturers who had donated prizes to help put the project over.

A bullseye Master, Skip Clark of New Hampshire, took that first event with 17 hits out of 40 with the same customized .45 Colt auto and match hardball ammo he uses in bullseye leg matches. His prizes were an Auto-Mag and a Ruger .357. Several other handguns were given out.

By spring of '77, Question Five was past history, but metallic silhouette handgunning in the Northeast was a story that had just begun. Ron put on three more matches at Camp Curtis while waiting for the Northeastern Championships on Labor Day. The word had had time to spread among the beltgunning fraternity, and each match drew bigger crowds: 139 on Memorial Day weekend, 187 on July 4, and 238 in August.

The August match topped the all time record for attendance at *any* handgun metallic silhouette shoot anywhere, and at this writing, the Massachusetts turnout record still stands. "If I'd known we were close to a record, I could have squeezed enough in on the Fourth of July to break it then," Ron sighs. Almost all the previous shoots had drawn turnaway crowds. Ron came back with more target sets and

shooting positions for each successive event, but the contestants kept increasing in the same proportion.

Turnout was down slightly for the Labor Day match; 180 signed up. "The magnitude of an Eastern Regional Championship scared off a few of the new shooters," Ron noted, "but they'll be back."

The '77 Eastern Championships were a great take-in even if you weren't shooting yourself. Skip Talbot of Fallon, Nev. took the open with a 37 out of 40 downed with one of his own custom silhouette guns on an XP-100 action. Skip was thus far the only shooter in the short history of the sport to sledge down all 40, and he came close to duplicating the feat on the Massachusetts range. He was later to clean a straight 60 at the Nationals. Elgin Gates, the famed big-game hunter who all but gave up that sport to devote himself to IHMSA shooting, was also in the thirties

(which, at this stage of the sport, is like being in the bullseye 2600 club). John Towle of Conway, N.H., generally considered the top gun in the Northeastern area, was shooting below par due to a severe hand injury incurred just days before the tournament. John is also a silhouette gun builder, and his pieces and Skip's, among others, will be highlighted in a future Handgunner article.

Dale Small, a 17-year old Bay Stater, swept both Production Class and the Hi Resident title by KOing 27 metal critters with his stock Ruger Super Blackhawk .44. Dale, who had fired maybe 200 shots in prior silhouette matches, had never shot competition of any kind before that '76 Labor Day event. In this respect, he was like a majority of the metallic silhouette pistoleros. According to Ron, a good 60% just aren't into any other type

(Continued on page 56)



Each shooter is allowed to have an observer to spot misses. This one shows good technique, getting down level with shooter's line of sight.

SSK Magnum Pak

Here's the recipe for a limited edition (only 300) that will make T/C Contender fans reach for their wallets and develop a rash while waiting for their guns to be delivered.

Take one Thompson/Center Contender frame, add three magnum barrels, a Maxi-Mount and a Leupold M8-2X scope as your basic ingredients. Then, put all of these components into the hands of master craftsmen and you'll have one of the sweetest single shot combo packs to come along the pike.

The SSK Magnum Pak is the brainchild of J. D. Jones, President of SSK Industries, Dept. AH, Rt. 1, Della Drive, Bloomingdale, Ohio 43910. If you're interested in obtaining one of these sure-to-be collector's items, all you have to do is send J.D. a \$200 deposit, which will be immediately acknowledged, and your serial number will be assigned. Out of state sales only through FFL holders. Serial numbers will be SSK 001 through 300. As soon as your Magnum Pak is ready for shipment, you'll be notified to remit the balance of the \$700 total price. That's right, \$700—a lot of money, but not when you consider what you'll get. Here's a run-down on the entire package:

Open up the solid, lockable Hawk, Int. case and you'll find the

T/C Contender all dressed up with the new rust resistant Metalife finish. Each of the three 10" bull barrels has its own fore-end, and there is a .41, a .44 and a .357 Magnum barrel in the set. Each of these barrels is Mag-Na-Ported and cut to accept the Maxi-Mount which is readily interchanged from barrel to barrel or with iron sights. Though the barrels are finished with matte Metalife, the rear sights are blued. The receivers are finished in Metalife SS, giving the appearance of polished stainless steel. Furnished with the set is a Maxi-Mount and Leupold M-8-2X scope. The stocks furnished are the Herretts "Controller" pattern that work wonders in taming the magnum calibers.

Those are the things you can see when you open your Magnum Pak. The added bonus comes when you settle down to shooting. The smoothness of the action, which has been vaporhoned and adjusted, has to be experienced to be believed, and accuracy of guns already made up and tested exceeded the expectations of J. D. Jones and others who were present.

By the time you read this, many of the 300 guns will already be sold, and if you want the feeling of owning something special, you had better act now.



Two Top Pistolsmiths:

**RON
POWER**

**ARMAND
SWENSON**

HANDGUN
PROFILE





Above: This .45 Commander shows the aesthetic appeal of the work done by Armand Swenson. The group, fired off-hand, is testament of his accuracy.



Left: Ron Power made this special PPC gun for Jim Collins. This gun was a S&W award for a 1976 Police Match. In case you wonder about the slab side, Collins likes it, Power does not, as related in the article.

On the following pages you'll find two interesting articles about two most interesting people—Ron Power and Armand Swenson.

The first is a technical treatise on how a custom revolver is made—by the man who produces winning guns year after year—Ron Power.

Following that is some background on another world renowned pistolsmith—Armand Swenson of California.

Both of these men have given us innovations in design and craftsmanship that have inspired pistolsmiths throughout the world. American Handgunners have voted these specialists tops in their field, and that is why we dedicate this special feature section to them—Editor

Power photos by John Hanusin; Swenson photos by Walter Rickell.

Thoughts On Combat S&W's

By **RON POWER** as told by Massad F. Ayoob

It seems that every day brings word across a gun editor's desk of yet another gunsmith or hobbyist who is now specializing in custom Smith & Wesson revolvers. Many of them do good work.

We sent our handgun editor Massad F. Ayoob to study in the shop of the master, the man against whose guns every other custom S&W is judged. Ron Power of Independence, Missouri is the acknowledged leader in the field of custom, slick-actioned, tightly-refitted, heavy-barrelled Smith & Wesson revolvers. Ayoob spent several days with Power, study-

ing his techniques, from selection of the basic revolver specimen to the finishing touches of what may be the finest custom wheelguns now available. If testimonial is needed, be advised that almost all of the champions at the '76 Combat Nationals used Power Custom S&Ws, including Jim Collins.

Power Custom guns run the gamut from PPC competition revolvers; to heavy caliber metallic silhouette revolvers; to hunting revolvers with accuracy, range, and recoil control that exceed anything else available; to serious gunfighting tools.

In this series, Power outlines the basics of selecting a prime specimen of the Combat Magnum (or any other Smith & Wesson revolver), and then basically refining that instrument for the maximum possible fit, accuracy, and smoothness.

POWER ON TESTING CYLINDER ALIGNMENT

The first thing to do in making sure that each of the chambers line up properly with the barrel is to plug-strike. The plug-strike device is a rod that's .349" or .350" in diameter. Hold the gun with the muzzle up, pull and hold the trigger, then drop the plug-strike down the barrel and see if it goes into the chamber without snagging.

This makes sure the gun meets factory specs, and a lot of custom gunmakers are satisfied with that, but my customers expect more accuracy from my guns than from anybody else's, so I have to go somewhat further.

I use a punch to number each chamber, "1" through "6." Then I'll take six 158-grain round nose lead .38 Special factory loads, and lightly scratch-mark the side of



Power, left, explains method of cylinder alignment to Mas Ayoob.

each bullet. These are also numbered "1" through "6", and inserted in the corresponding chambers. I'll fire all six into a water tank, which permits me to recover the bullets without any out-of-the-gun deformation. Each cartridge had been placed with the scratched number at 12 o'clock, so that this part of the bullet hits the top edge of the forcing cone with each shot.

From this, I can tell which chambers, if any, are off just about to a thousandth of the inch. Which part of the bullet is deformed tells me a lot, too. For instance, if the bullet shows rub marks at 6 or 7 o'clock, that probably means the frame is sprung a little and gaping open at the crane juncture.

POWER ON CORRECTING CYLINDER END SHAKE

End shake is the back and forth movement of the cylinder inside the frame. End shake has to be minimized or you aren't going to get consistent ignition shot to shot, and in really bad cases, you'll have misfires.

My approach to curing end shake isn't really a new idea, it's just an updated one. I knew guys ten years ago that would put a piece of shim stock inside the cylinder between the end of the yoke and the front of the cylinder to set the end shake back. I made a die to stamp my washers out of round feeler gauge stock, two thousandths and four thousandths of an inch thick. I'll put a .004" piece in to start when I'm working on a Smith with end-shake, and reassemble the cylinder until the ejector rod is good and tight, sometimes using a torque wrench that lets me know just how much pressure I'm using so I can get maximum tightness without stripping the threads or breaking the rod.

I use a yoke alignment tool, a spud that I'll drop in through the frame and see if it goes right into the opening in the frame that's created when you hold back on the cylinder latch, when I reassemble it with the yoke but without the cylinder. I want it to be rubbing on the left side a little bit, which shows me that when the action is in motion and the cylinder is turning, there will be a little tension helping to hold the yoke closed in proper alignment.

From there it's a matter of reassembling and trying the gun out, again and again; sometimes I'll have to add another .002" washer. The thing to remember is, once you get it adjusted right, don't disassemble the cylinder group, or those washers may not get back in right, especially after they've been seated with a few hundred rounds of test firing.

End-shake, if it isn't taken care of properly, can lead you to ruin your own gun. End shake can let the cylinder move forward to where the front of the cylinder is rubbing on the rear of the barrel, and a lot of people who really don't understand the mechanism will try to cure it by filing down the back end of the barrel, and that just ruins the revolver. If you've done this to your own gun, about all you can do to fix it is take the barrel out, set it back one complete turn, and start all over.

POWER ON CHAMFERING CHAMBERS

Chamfering the edges of the chamber mouths is a good idea for any serious shooting because it allows you to reload more smoothly and quickly, especially with speedloaders. I use a 40° angle, that I put on with a special reamer that has a stop on it, but a careful man who knows what he's doing can perform this with a Dremel Moto-Tool. You can't go any deeper and stay safe and functional, because if a guy is going to put a heavy handload through there, you want to make sure that the brass case is supported by solid steel all the way around. The safest measurement on a Model 10 is a chamfer 40 thousandths deep and sixty thousandths wide.

POWER ON S&W MAINSPRINGS

I don't like to alter the mainspring con-



In the Ransom Rest is a PPC gun built on M-19 frame; left is a Douglas barreled .45 ACP on M-25; right is PPC gun on M-13.

figuration. What I will do is polish it, not shave it down or anything, but polish it to remove the toolmarks. This prevents the spring fracturing at some future time due to heavy-use fatigue, since if it were going to break, the toolmarks would be a starting point for the fracture. But you have to be sure not to polish to the extent of thinning the spring or of changing the dimensions to any significant degree.

POWER ON SELECTING A CUSTOM BARREL

I stay with the Douglas Premium barrel, for the quality and consistency. Now, Douglas won't furnish these barrels

threaded; that's something the pistolsmith has to do for himself. One mistake that a lot of beginners make is to put the barrel on backwards. The bore is cut from one end, and you have to go with the grain of the metal; which end of the blank you thread to the gun makes a very real difference. Douglas Premium barrels are marked with an "XX" and that is always on the rear end of the barrel. There's also a slightly larger diameter step on the rear end.

You've got to get that end in place, so that the bullet is travelling in the same direction in which the bore was "ironed out." Going "against the grain," you'll no-



Two strategically placed empty cartridge cases can sharply reduce stress on cylinder components during disassembly, as Power explains in text.

tice a tendency to foul the bore quickly, especially with heavy loads.

One-inch diameter is about right. Some of the smiths are using $\frac{7}{8}$ " or $\frac{15}{16}$ " barrels, and one is using an inch and a sixteenth, but the top shooters tell me the one-inch diameter is just about right for handling characteristics in a six-inch barrel on a Combat Magnum or other "K" frame Smith & Wesson.

A lot of PPC shooters like a one-in-ten inch twist in their wadcutter guns, but beyond fifty yards, they're losing something. I think one-in-fourteen is just as good for a wadcutter within fifty yards; it's better *beyond* fifty, and it gives more optimum stabilization of 158-grain ball .38 ammo, and of hotter loads.

The Combat Magnum comes with S&W's standard .38/.357 twist of one turn in $18\frac{3}{4}$ ", and there's really nothing wrong with that. One-in-fourteen is about as low as you can go with a round-nose bullet; a one-in-ten would "overstabilize" the projectile. A person using faster bullets should have a slower twist.

In terms of pure accuracy potential, I don't see that much difference between one-in-ten, or -twelve, or -fourteen, or -eighteen, when you're shooting wadcutter ammo. The advantage of the Douglas Premium barrel is the quality and consistency, and the added weight, more than the choice of twists.

To give you a frame of reference, a good S&W barrel will hold wadcutter bullets in $2\frac{1}{2}$ " at fifty yards from a machine rest. I've seen some that would group in five to eight inches. With a Douglas Premium barrel, I wouldn't let it out of my shop if it didn't stay in one and three-eighths inches. Of course, this assumes that the rest of the gun is properly in tune.

POWER ON COMBAT MAGNUM ACCURACY WITH .38 LOADS

The ideal gun to build a full-house con-

version on is the Model 13, the .357 Military and Police; my next choice would be either the Model 10 .38 or the Combat Magnum. The fixed-sight frames for the heavy barrel "K" frame guns allow you to put a BoMar rib on with more pleasing lines, and I like the thicker, more rigid topstrap, though it's not really necessary. The good thing about the Combat Magnum cylinder is that, being counterbored, it's easier to bevel and adapt for quick reloading. Of course, the fact that it's certified safe with Magnum loads makes you feel a little more comfortable about shooting reloads in case somebody made a mistake at the loading bench and gave you a super-hot one.

All things considered, the Combat Magnum is an ideal basis for a full-house PPC conversion; the only shortcoming is that when you remove the rear sight to make room for the BoMar rib, you'll leave a little open notch showing. I hear a lot of people talk about how the longer jump through the chamber in a .357 cylinder will hurt accuracy with .38 wadcutter ammo, but in all my benchrest testing with all makes and models of guns, I've never noticed a difference. That's an interesting concept, but I don't think it carries over into reality. A lot of championships have been won with worked-over Model 19's.

POWER ON MODIFYING THE HAMMER NOSE

For ultimate consistency in ignition, you want the firing pin to hit in exactly the same place on the primer every time, especially if you've gone to the trouble to get the cylinder lining up just so. The best way to ensure this is to spring-load the hammer, the way the factory does now on the Model 66.

On a regular 19, you can remove the hammer nose, cut a groove in back of it, and install a very small, weak spring in

there, cut to the same dimensions as the S&W factory does on "N" frame hammer noses. Use the smallest spring you can find that will fit.

I put a spring-loaded hammer nose in all of my custom guns. The regular design allows the firing pin to sometimes ding the frame at 12 o'clock. You can grind out the top of the frame at that point with the small attachment on a Dremel tool, or with a Carbaloy cutter. The trouble with grinding it out is that it's awfully easy to go too far and wind up with an elongated firing pin hole. You want to grind out the frame where the hammer goes through; about ten-thousandths on the top and on both sides of the hammer, so that no part of the hammer can possibly rub on the frame when it drops.

POWER ON DISASSEMBLING THE COMBAT MAGNUM CYLINDER

On any Smith & Wesson, if you've got a good, tight, well-aligned cylinder, you should leave it alone. You shouldn't take it down any further than removing the cylinder/yoke assembly as a whole for cleaning.

If you do disassemble the cylinder, make sure you're unscrewing the ejector rod in the right direction. See if there's an uncheckered $\frac{1}{8}$ " band of metal between the length of the rod and the part that's knurled; if it's there, it was manufactured since around '58, and has a left-hand thread; otherwise it's a right-hand thread and you have to unscrew it counter-clockwise.

When you take apart a Smith & Wesson cylinder assembly, you'll notice that the extractor is supported in the cylinder by a groove down the middle of it, and two small retainer pins. A little secret a lot of gunsmiths use is to put two empty shell casings in the cylinder, by each of those pins; that helps keep the extractor in line, and prevents stress being placed on those two pins that could damage them if the cylinder was empty.

NOTE: This part has dealt with modifications that require a definite degree of gunsmithing skill. They are not for the uninitiated; the guy who's a shooter rather than a gunsmith will find them of technical interest, and can use them as a guide in instructing a pistolsmith as to the modifications he desires.

In the first part of this article Ron touched briefly on some points regarding the selection of the heavy barrel. In this part, the master gunmaker goes into the subtle details of fitting the barrel to the frame.

POWER ON SEQUENCE

I prefer to complete the barrel installation before I go on to slicking up the action. So much of accurizing the revolver depends on the cylinder's relation to the final barrel, that adjusting it for the four

or six inch factory tube that you're going to take off anyway can be a meaningless waste of time. I'll just remove the cylinder assembly, take the barrel pin out, and unscrew the original barrel. You should, however, have headspace and cylinder alignment taken care of beforehand.

When you're putting a barrel on or taking it off, whether it's a Smith or a Douglas, you should always use a special wrench. I made mine myself, and I have one each for "K" and "N" frames. They fit exactly the contour of the front of the frame. You're putting a lot of stress on that frame when you clamp the barrel in a vise and start unscrewing it, and if you don't have a wrench that perfectly fits and protects the frame, there's good chance that you'll spread the frame, or spring it.

You should also have special barrel blocks in the vise, wooden blocks cut to fit the shape of the barrel: one for the Douglas, and one for the factory barrel. Don't use any more muscle than you have to. Once the factory barrel "breaks" loose, it usually unscrews easily.



Headspace and basic "convertability" of the gun should be accomplished before barrel work is done; cylinder tightening will take place later.



A .38 round, with number etched on side of bullet, is inserted in chamber stamped with same number. One check for cylinder alignment.

Starting with the Douglas Premium barrel, if the gun is going to have a six-inch barrel, I'll cut the blank to a little over 6 $\frac{3}{8}$ ". You should always figure on the barrel being bad right at the point where they start to cut the rifling, so plan on cutting a half to three quarters of an inch of barrel off each end and throwing those pieces away. The reason is that you have to allow for the time it took the rifling machine to get straightened out and start cutting perfectly true.

POWER ON CUTTING THREADS

Before you start cutting, measure the length of the barrel extension, while the barrel is still out of the frame. I take this measurement from the front of the frame to the front of the cylinder with a depth mike. This usually runs about .800" or a little more, though some guns go as much as .809" (for .38 Special). Figure .006" for the barrel cylinder gap. Some people like a tighter gap, like .003" or .004", but I think that's a little too snug in case you have to go 250 rounds in a match without cleaning. Lead will accumulate, and your cylinder may start to hang up. I can accept .005 or .007, but anything approaching .008 or more is going to cause a lot of spitting. .006 is the ideal to go for.

Get the diameter of the shank for each individual frame. Most K frames run around .547 average. Some may be as large as .550, or as small as .540. In order to get a perfect fit on threads, the shank diameter should be same diameter as that of the barrel hole in the frame.

So, when you're measuring the barrel extension, figure on that .006" gap and treat it as .007" because you're going to have a little "crush" there as you tighten it up later. You'll gain a thousandth of an inch as you torque in the barrel.

Measure the length of the threads from the shoulder of the barrel. The thread length will be about .615" on the shank. The diameter of barrel extension protruding through frame is .512". This is a little bigger than factory, and gives more strength in the forcing cone. I cut my threads on a lathe, one at a time, 36 "B" threads to an inch, and I'll clean them out and finish fitting them with a small three-corner file.

Since the front end of the S&W frame is not 100% supported, it's a good idea to cut a little relief on the shoulder of the barrel where it will meet the frame. The relief should be even, and between .002" and .003".

The barrel also needs to be throated at the forcing cone area. I use a special throating reamer that I run about $\frac{3}{16}$ " deep, with plenty of oil on it and running the lathe at slow speed for a nice smooth cut. Then I put a 30° chamfer on the back edge for the forcing cone. I'll then polish out the barrel, usually with a Dremel tool and soft abrasive rubber tip. This gives you a slick, mirror-like finish that's less likely to lead up on you.

During the fitting, put the barrel into the frame just snug. You don't want it to be more than hand-tight. With the frame out of the barrel, you can observe that at one point, the frame surrounding the bar-

rel area is only .025" or .030" thick, between threads. If you've got a barrel that's going to be too tight, and you screw it right on in there, you'll spread the frame out and make a little bulge at that point (under the barrel) and when you put your cylinder yoke back in, it's going to bind there.

Be sure that everything in that area is super clean, no metal filings or grit or anything, before you start gently screwing the barrel in. I usually put some heavy grease on the barrel extension before I put it in.

Some people don't think it makes much difference with revolvers, but I kind of go along with the old rifle-shooting theory that the closer to 100% bearing surface you have between the threads of receiver and barrel, the more inherent accuracy the finished gun is going to possess. It makes the receiver more rigid. It's a small thing, but a really fine custom, precision gun is dependent on a lot of these little things.

As I mentioned earlier, make sure you're not putting the barrel on backwards, as a lot of PPC gun builders have done. On a Douglas Premium barrel blank, there's always an "XX" on the end that should go into the frame. There should also be larger-diameter step on that end.

POWER ON CREATING THE FRONT LUG

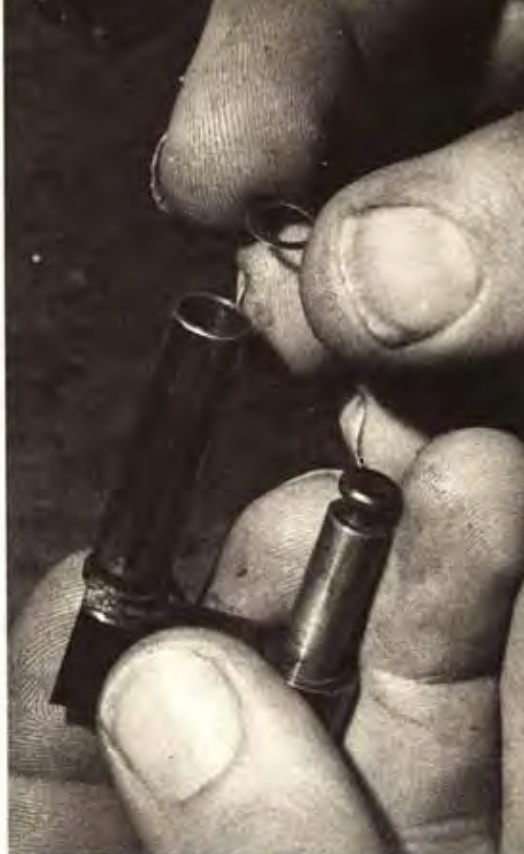
Some really fine scores have been shot with Douglas barrel guns that didn't have a front lug installed, but I still have to believe that the underlug is necessary for proper lockup and maximum accuracy. The cylinder is turning counterclockwise, and the pressure of the hand is forcing it leftward, pushing the yoke away from the

frame and endangering lockup and alignment. You can see it for yourself by putting a little oil between the yoke and the frame once you've got the barrel out, and dry firing the gun. As the cylinder turns, you'll observe the oil seeping out from the juncture of the yoke and the frame. This is because the yoke is moving slightly under pressure with no front lockup to keep it in the proper position.

You'll have to install the lug yourself. I don't know of any source of Douglas barrels with the lug already fitted. Those of us who build them all the time find it takes about an hour, even when you've got the procedure down pat and you're using the best equipment. This is one reason some PPC makers have built their guns without the lugs: it's a very meticulous and time consuming job. A lot of people building just one gun for themselves might want to seriously consider having an expert do it for them. It'll probably be quite expensive, and they should be sure to have a really proficient PPC-gun builder doing the work, because it's very easy to make a mistake with it if you haven't done it before. (I don't take these assignments myself, and now build only complete conversions.) I screwed up more than once before I got the hang of fitting the front lug.

After I centerpunch the underside of the barrel to mark the centerline of the extractor rod, I put the yoke back in the gun while the barrel is still on. Then I'll take a scribe and mark the outside edges of the frame on the left and right sides. This will show me how much of a bevel to make on the back of the barrel so it will come perfectly flush with the frame.

Make the extractor rod groove with a $\frac{3}{16}$ " end mill. Length of the slot is 2.420"; depth into the barrel should be .190".



Power, using a series of carefully fitted .002" and .004" washers, alleviates excess cylinder end play.

Mill the full length of the groove in one cut; then go back to the front of the groove and measure back toward the frame an inch (to allow for the underlug) and mill that same .190 depth out to the left surface of the barrel to create clearance for the extractor rod.

Now you remove the barrel, and cut and crown it to the proper length. For a PPC gun, since the rules forbid anything longer than 6", I'll cut the barrel to about .010" short of that length. That's because some officials will measure the barrel from the muzzle to the face of the cylinder, and I want to allow for that .006" barrel-cylinder gap. I use the same tool I use for crowning the barrel, to shorten it to the right length. I counterbore the barrel, cut the bevel on the outside of the barrel, and then I lap the muzzle approximately six turns each way, with lapping compound on a round brass knob. You can also use emery paper over a round surface. Once you've got the muzzle lapped absolutely true, you're ready to cut that $\frac{3}{16}$ " slot.



In text, Power explains use of his special tool to determine cylinder line-up characteristics on a M-19.

I use about a 45° bevel on the outside edge of the barrels, and a 90° counter-bore. I leave the muzzle exactly square across, and of course the lapping of the muzzle will knock off any machine errors there. I leave it flat across, like a bench rest rifle muzzle, because I think that makes for maximum accuracy. Some people dish out the crown to 11° to allow for uniformity in the escaping gases, but my tests haven't shown this to improve accuracy in the revolver. The counter-boring, I believe, is for strictly the protection of the muzzle.

To make the lug, I use 3/16" key stock, and put the hole for the lug bolt exactly in the center.

Once you've got your barrel finished and your dimensions all right, you can install the barrel on the frame. Be *really* sure that the threads are super-clean, because even the smallest bit of metal filing, if it gets caught in there with those fine threads, will ball up and not only ruin your threads but bulge the frame in the barrel area.

I put my barrels on with a torque wrench. Torque in to approximately 50 foot-pounds. We then mark the exact center of the barrel and use that as our guideline for milling out the 3/16" slot for the extractor rod and underlug. You then want to file the bottom part of the barrel extension at the same angle the top of the yoke is milled; a look at a factory barrel will give you a guide to the proper angle. For this, I use a 6" file with the teeth on the edge rounded off and that side of the file polished, so I won't leave any "tracks" on the frame. About four good strokes will do it; it's awfully easy to take too much off.

The end of the key stock is rounded and matched to the radius of the milled slot in the barrel. Then I cut it to exactly one inch long. The crosspin hole in the lug bolt should be cut with a size 50 drill bit, and you can use .073" wire for the crosspin itself.

Now, you silver-solder the lug on. I've had excellent luck with Welco #5 silver solder, which is also good for stainless steels. I flux the metal and apply the solder to it. With Welco #5, be especially careful not to have your flame directly on the flux area. Once the solder has been indirectly melted, set your underlug absolutely level in the solder, clamp it on, and go all the way down the bottom of the groove and all the way back up. Blow the excess solder off with an air hose, which will save you from having to clean it later with emery paper and file, *but be extreme-*

ly careful of flying hot particles: wear safety glasses! One good thing about this type of solder is that the bluing solution will attack it, removing the excess solder and then bluing evenly over where it was. The result is an underlug with perfect fit and no soldering marks around it, which will look like it was machined out of the same piece of metal as the barrel.

The crosspin is a tapering pin made out of size .073 wire, driven in left to right and dressed off flush. The bolt is made out of stainless steel, and will be installed later.

Now, as you prepare to put the barrel on the frame for the last time, make sure the barrel is polished and that you've dressed off all the tool marks on the inside of the frame. You don't want any burrs there, or any of the raised metal that is sometimes left there after the serial and model numbers have been stamped, especially the last number near the edge of the frame.

Screw the barrel in carefully, and torque it up to where the 3/16" ejector rod slot is lined up exactly with the corresponding part of the frame.

Now, the underlug bolt itself is 3/16" stainless steel. I like to keep the point identical in size and shape to that on a factory S&W bolt, though I do prefer the wider 3/16" bolt body, and the bigger crosspin.

When fitting to the extractor rod, I like to allow about .020" clearance between the end of the extractor rod and the back of the lug housing. You want it to fit so that the edge of the bolt is camming on the *outside* edge of the bevel at the head

of the extractor rod. Too long a bevel on the end of the rod will make closing the cylinder difficult. Try to duplicate the factory bevelling, and polish the surfaces smooth with emery paper. The bolt should be long enough to use the factory bolt spring, which will save you a lot of work.

When you're fitting that front lug bolt, be careful not to leave it really sharp at the end where it contacts the extractor rod, because if you do it can mushroom with wear and tear and eventually freeze the gun up. Just put a slight bevel on that sharp corner, and you can save yourself a lot of problems in the future.

The bolt will have to be fitted by hand, rather than to textbook dimensions. The true test of proper fit is that you should be able to close and lock the cylinder by placing your thumb at the *rear* of the cylinder; if the lug and bolt have been fitted right, the ejector rod will cam the bolt properly and then lock into place.

You are now ready to tighten the cylinder, true up the ejector rod, and install the BoMar sight rib. These steps will be looked at in detail in future installments of this series.



NOTE TO THE READER: This series is by no means a do-it-yourself number. The techniques mentioned and illustrated here are subtleties designed to be put into use only by the skilled and experienced pistolsmith. Those who aren't into their own "heavy" gunsmithing should, however, find the insight into the master's techniques edifying and enjoyable in itself. I know I did.—Massad F. Ayoub

Barrel under lug is shown here in various stages of completion. At left is completed gun with the lug and its locking bolt installed.



Armand Swenson, Master Of The Colt 45 Auto

Profile of a Craftsman, Innovator, Perfectionist and a .45 Customizer of Reknown

By WALTER L. RICKELL

WHEN the words "Custom Combat .45 Auto" are mentioned anywhere in this world, there is one name that comes to mind, Armand Swenson. In the past 10 years he has written the book on the subject and, although his work has been copied by others, many feel that he has yet to be equalled. I have seen work that you might say is as good as the Swede's, but it was still not a Swenson. When you commission Armand to do a job, you not only deliver your Colt Government Model or Commander to him for safe keeping (maybe up to two years) but you are entering into an experience. For, Swenson is an American Tradition—it's that simple.

The two questions most asked Swenson are: "Have you always worked on the .45 auto?" and "Are you from Sweden?" To answer the last question first, "No." He is a native Californian (a rare breed these days) born in Oakland in 1916, into a family of artisans. By the time he was a young man in the 1930's he was a professional boxer on the Northwestern Circuit. Always having an interest in the sea he took up yacht design and building as a trade which was utilized during World War II in special projects.

After the war, Armand turned to another love, riflsmithing, full time. This was in Seattle, where he operated a custom rifle shop, building fine hunting and benchrest rifles. Armand held quite a few Northwest benchrest records. Some of the finest custom rifle work and stock making are in his past when, at the same time, he was also designing and building seacraft. One of the most famous which he had a major part in creating was the Hydroplane, Miss Bardal II.

In the late 50's, Jefferies Yacht Company brought Armand to Southern California as their chief designer and during that time he built some of the most sea worthy vessels turned out by that com-

pany. As he worked at yacht building, he treated rifles and pistols as his hobby, which slowly worked into the business that he now operates.

A turning point in his career came about at the urging of a friend in the early 60's. Armand shortened a Government Model $\frac{1}{8}$ inch more than the Colt Commander model and the "Bob Cat" was born. From there came the other Swenson trademarks such as the squared-off trigger guard, S&W 'K' model sight installation, checkered front and backstraps, matted



A Colt Gold Cup featuring just about every Swenson modification.

top of the slide, ambidextrous thumb safety, and last but not least that famous Swenson Accuracy. But to answer the first question, Armand did not start serious work full time on the .45 auto until the middle 60's when he just, flat out, became snowed under with orders for custom work.

When Swenson first came back to California he located his shop in Gardena and this is where all the developments that are now commonplace in the combat pistol field were designed and perfected. Designing major alterations of the old warhorse Model 1911 was not a simple task but took considerable machining and welding skills, plus an absolute understanding and mastery of aesthetics. This latter trait is very important, for we have seen fine ideas and developments masterfully put together that bordered on genius, but lacked the aesthetics to make it look appealing and saleable. This, Armand has, as evidenced by his past experience in altering military actions, bending and altering bolts, checkering bolt handles, altering military triggers to crisp, short travel and, last but not least, that eye and skill of the stockmaker—not merely finishing a turned piece of wood but carving it from a solid plank that he sometimes selected from a standing tree.

This mastering of the techniques of the gunsmith's trade qualified Armand well to tackle the conquest of the .45 auto. The impact of Swenson was so profound that his work became known as "Swensonizing."

Even though most of his work is on the .45 auto and Armand calls the place Swenson's .45 Shop, he does do work on other guns, such as the Browning Hi-Power and some revolvers, mostly for Hard White Chrome plating.

Let's take a closer look at some of the Swenson trademarks. Probably the most noticeable is the Hard White Chrome finish. This was not an original idea by any means, but he was the first gunsmith that I know of to apply this well known finish to firearms. It has been used for years in the automotive and aircraft industries to cut friction in pistons, cylinders and in other areas where a long wearing, friction free



SANTA FE

White Owl
NEW YORKER

KING EDWARD



A standard accuracy set up by Swenson. The Government Model is given full house treatment and fitted with a .22 conversion unit and a .38/44 barrel and bushing for multi-purpose use.

surface was needed. The secret of the technique is not the chrome itself but the preparation of the surface, which must be flawless. The surface is hydro-honed with diamond dust to prepare it for the matte finish. When the chrome is applied it is only $\frac{2}{100}$ ths to $\frac{3}{100}$ ths of $\frac{1}{1000}$ th of an inch thick. Certain allowances are made to allow for clearances in close fitting areas. The plating is sent to a custom plating house which Armand has used for over a decade. The next most popular finish is the standard old blue job which is all done in the shop. Nearly 90% of the pistols going through the shop are ordered with the Hard White Chrome finish.

The squared-off trigger guard was pioneered by Armand Swenson, applying the knowledge gained in altering bolts and triggers on military rifle actions. The technique involves heating the trigger guard to the correct temperature, then forging it to the desired shape and contour. This all had to be done without disturbing the character of the frame, for heating it too much, or cooling it incorrectly, could cause the temper to be lost or, even worse, warp the frame.

Steps in installing the S&W "K" model rear sight. The commercial slide (right) is milled (center) and completed job is shown at left.

After this is done the surfaces are finished out and checkered to match the front strap of the frame. This feature is applied only to the steel frame models. The squared-off trigger guard has done much to popularize the two-hand hold with the big auto.

Perhaps the most famous Swenson invention seen today, since it is sold separately and assembled on the many stan-

dard as well as custom automatics, is the ambidextrous thumb safety. For years Swenson built these by hand. He began by extending the standard thumb safety for ease of operation. Later, he redesigned the long safety for the right side of the frame. It utilized the same shaft that extended from the thumb safety through the frame to hold the grip safety in place on the frame. The early models featured a square pin at the end of the shaft on the right side of the frame that mated with a blind square hole on the left safety lever. The lever was held in place on the shaft by the right hand grip panel which had to be altered to allow the lever to work freely under it.

Lately, Armand has gone to a stainless steel investment casting which features the connecting grip safety pin being assembled by a tongue and groove system. There are several other ways to connect them, and the above mentioned and every other system have been patented by Swenson. The unit is sold to the public and requires some handfitting to insure that the safety properly engages the sear.

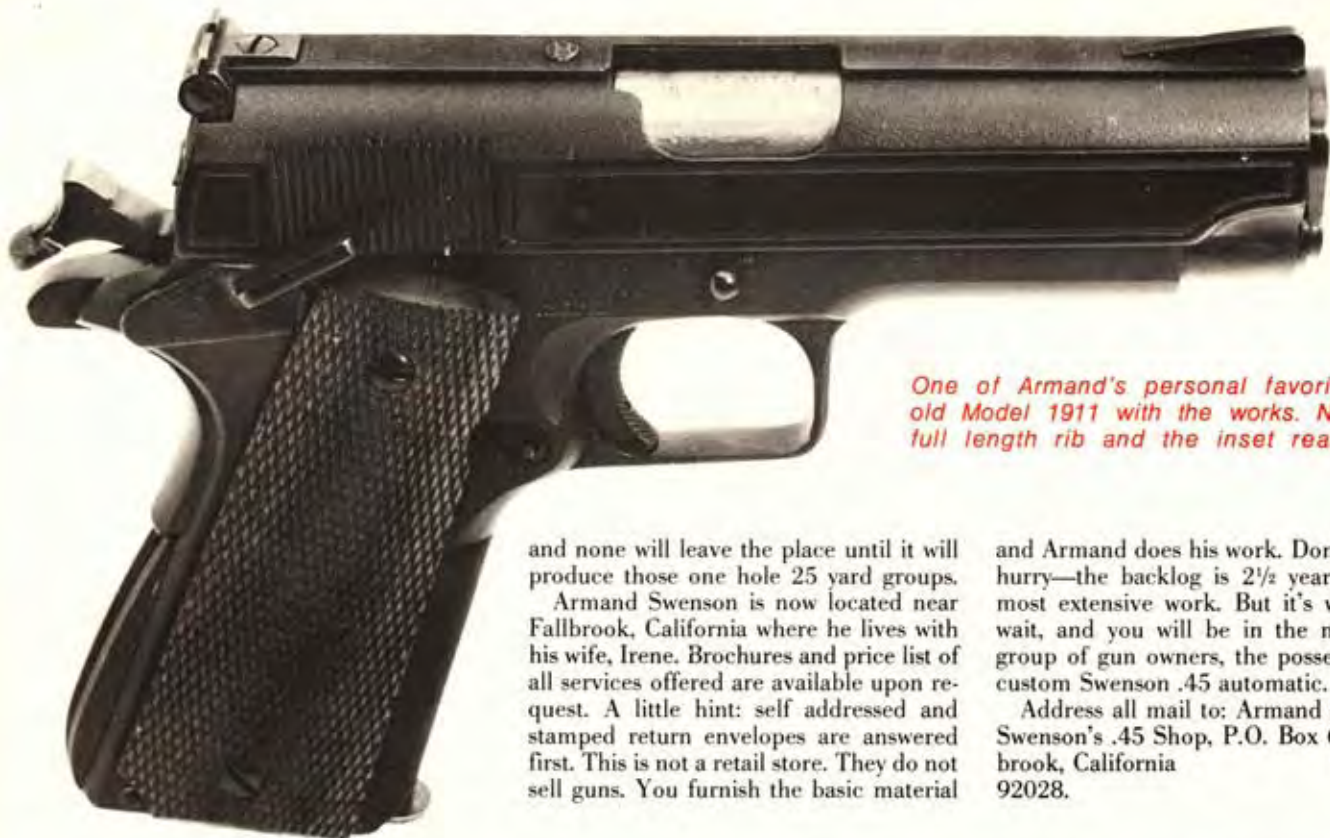
Armand also sells the regular extended thumb safety which is a single unit that replaces the regular Colt or G. I. version—this goes for \$25.00, while the dual purpose model is around \$38.50 in kit form. All are investment cast from highest quality stainless steel.

One of Armand's pioneer features was the installation of the "K" model S & W rear sight on the .45 slide. The technique has changed little, with shear pins now being added for strength. The sight must be set correctly in the slide for proper front sight application.

Along with the sight installation is the custom stippling or matting on the slide. This not only offers a non-glare surface but looks damned good, in my opinion.

Aside from the outer cosmetic features which are readily noticeable, all Swenson





One of Armand's personal favorites; an old Model 1911 with the works. Note the full length rib and the inset rear sight.

and none will leave the place until it will produce those one hole 25 yard groups.

Armand Swenson is now located near Fallbrook, California where he lives with his wife, Irene. Brochures and price list of all services offered are available upon request. A little hint: self addressed and stamped return envelopes are answered first. This is not a retail store. They do not sell guns. You furnish the basic material

and Armand does his work. Don't be in a hurry—the backlog is 2½ years for the most extensive work. But it's worth the wait, and you will be in the most elite group of gun owners, the possessor of a custom Swenson .45 automatic.

Address all mail to: Armand Swenson, Swenson's .45 Shop, P.O. Box 606, Fallbrook, California 92028.



.45's are given his famous accuracy treatment. This includes finely fitting all parts properly to take up the slack and looseness, guaranteeing precise return into battery each time a round is fired.

Along with the standard work done on the Government Model and the Commander, Armand also pioneered the shortened versions of the pistol. The first steel frame shortened pistols were called "Bob Cat." Not too many are made today at the Swenson shop since the introduction of the steel frame Commander, but some customers still want a shortened slide to fit the standard G.I. To accomplish this, the slide can not be cut in half and welded together. This is not safe and Armand will not use this procedure, or any that is not safe, in his shop. One problem that comes with this shortening is that the barrel sets up at a sharper angle, thus changing the point of impact of the bullet. Another is the lightened slide which has less weight for it to function properly. All this has to be rebalanced and timed to shoot properly and safely.

I have seen many of these shortened versions of the .45 and those who own a Swenson job claim that his are the only ones that function properly and accurately. Accuracy is of the utmost importance in the Swenson shop; he tests each pistol personally with match and combat loads

Although Swenson and pretty much standardized the work he does on a .45, this group shows variations that gives each gun a unique touch.



Tools of The Heyday of "FAST-DRAW"

**Western Style Fast Draw is Still Alive
and the Equipment is Most Unique**

By **GEORGE E. VIRGINES**

ONE of the natural true American handgunner sports has to be Fast Draw. This sport is, more or less, a traditionalist event, in as much as it originates from the concept of two gunfighters facing one another as in the days of the old West. Historically speaking this rarely ever happens. It was the Western movies and later the TV Westerns of the early 1950's and 60's that really fostered this idea.

Much has been written on the history and personalities of fast draw but very little information on the specialized guns and holsters that have developed from the sport. But to understand the custom guns and holsters that are now being used, you first must be acquainted with the techniques and phases of fast draw. To comprehend the need for specialization in equipment here are a few excerpts from the fast draw rules and regulations;

"Only single action revolvers with .38 or larger caliber may be used. The minimum length of the barrel must be 4 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches. The trigger and guard may be cut down, but not through, the trigger shoe may not extend beyond the trigger guard on the side of use, viewed from the rear of the trigger guard only, and cylinder slots may be deepened but not cut through. The hammer shall hold on full and half cock when the gun is reasonably jarred. Factory stock hammers are legal. Custom built hammers cannot exceed these specifications; extend no more than half inch above the frame; half inch out of the right or left of the frame. All parts must be on or in the gun and working. Sights are optional.

The holsters must cover 75% of the cylinder and all of the top of the minimum length barrel when the gun is positioned for drawing. The holster must be western type and worn on a belt around the waist or hips. It must not slant more than 45 degrees from a shooting stance.

Ammunition requirements are for blanks with powder only, no foreign material allowed. The shell casing must be of factory length and make. Nothing bigger than .45 Colt casings will be allowed. For wax events, factory made shotgun or pistol primers only, no powder. No buckshot behind the wax or the wax bullet cut so it will break up, etc."

As in all gun sports, the gun is the first important item, secondary is the neces-

Gil Guerra demonstrates the Up-Twist draw. Gil is a top shooter and the chairman of the W.F.D.A.





An early Ruger .357 Magnum that has been completely customized. Note the fanning hammer, aluminum barrel bored to .45, shaved trigger guard.

sary ammo, perhaps loading equipment, etc. But in fast draw, the holster runs a close second to the gun.

The gun must be a frontier style single action type revolver. Back in the early days of fast draw the Colt Single Action was the most popular; naturally so because of its tradition and historical background. When the Colt Company decided to once again manufacture the old Colt Single Action in 1955 the only barrel lengths available were 5½ inch and 7½ inch and some of the fast draw boys started out with the 5½ inch barrel. Because of fast draw and its sudden surge of popularity, Colt came out once more with the popular 4¾" barrel and this was widely acceptable at the time. But just about the same time one of the first authentic copies of Colt's famed single action was introduced by the Great Western Company of California. In addition to all of the various Colt barrel lengths, they also produced a special custom single action just for fast draw. It had the same traditional design of the Colt, finished in blued and case hardened with a brass trigger guard and backstrap, and imitation stag grips; all together fine looking handgun. The action was custom honed for fast draw and extra deep indexing cuts in the cylinder assured proper lock no matter how fast the gun was cocked.

It was my privilege to test one of these guns in several contests and exhibitions and it truly was a fine operating revolver. The price was appealing at the time, it sold for only \$89.95 over Colt's Single Action which was then \$125.

During the early days of fast draw, one dealer, Glauser's Guns of Toledo, Ohio, offered several package deals for the aspiring fast draw enthusiast. One such deal, priced at \$193.50, offered a Great Western .45 single action, a Ojala fast draw holster & rig, 200 .45 caliber empty brass cases, 100 primers, one Ideal 310

Loading Tool, one cleaning kit and free wax and targets. Super and Super Deluxe sets were also available.

Between the re-issued Colt and the new Great Western a completely new single action type revolver appeared on the market, this was the Ruger Single Action .357 Magnum. It became one of the most popular single actions available. There were no leaf springs, it had all coil springs throughout, and the price was right at only \$87.50. The shooters of fast draw were quick to realize the potential of this brand new single action Ruger and soon began to converting and altering it for their purpose.

Before going into detail on the extent that the Ruger was customized, it is necessary to mention the two techniques employed in drawing a gun from the holster, fast draw style and how as the technique progressed and speed accelerated the need for a specialized, custom revolver became apparent.

The original and basic method was simply called thumbing. This was accomplished by first extending the hand about five or six inches forward of the initial point of contact with the gun—which in this case will be the hammer. The hand is brought back sharply and the hammer is cocked by striking it back with outstretched thumb before the last three fingers even touch the grip to make the draw.

In this technique all that was necessary to put the gun in fast draw shape was to have the action timed and smooth, lightened the hammer spring by filing it thinner, and perhaps deepening the cylinder notches to assure the cylinder would lock and line up every time with the barrel. There is perhaps no other gun sport that is as hard on a gun than fast draw.

The second method is fanning, now called "Up-Twist Fanning"—now the most popular and accepted technique in

fast draw competition. This is considered the fastest way to clear leather as witnessed by the fantastic scores accomplished by the top shooters in fast draw. When bare fractions of hundreds of a second can make the difference between winning or losing, one can understand the importance of doing everything possible, legally and within the rules, to gain that extra edge.

Up twist fanning has replaced the thumbing style, however it also takes a great deal more practice. In this draw the gun is drawn with the right hand, and the trigger is depressed as it's drawn. The left hand is extended across the front of the body about waist high, with the hand open, palm upward, just forward of the holster. As the gun is drawn the drawing hand turns inward in order to twist the gun sideways and level. At the same time the edge of the left palm strikes the hammer to cock the gun. Contrary to the old fashioned practice of fanning a single action till the chamber is empty, only one shot is fired at a time in fast draw.

With the advent of fanning, the guns and holsters began to take on a new look.

The most popular handgun now being used in fast draw is the old model Ruger single action .357, re-built of course. Second choice is the Colt Single Action .45 with 4¾ inch barrel. There are still a few Great Westerns, Dakotas, Hawes guns being used.

(Continued on page 56)



Star Model holster and rig made by Alfonse. Holster is lined with sheet telfon. Note the deflector.



Custom Shop PROFILE

Where our readers and writers tell us
of a custom gunsmith you should know.

SHERMAN'S CUSTOM GUNS

By JOHN OSGOOD

WALT SHERMAN'S skills at pistol-smithing became evident to us at the Florida Police Combat League Match, August 20, 1977. Using a Python converted by himself, Walt tied for the second stage with Jim O'Neill of Clearwater, who used a Smith Model 14 customized by—you guessed it—Walt Sherman. Walt won the third stage and then proceeded to lose the aggregate by 2 X's!

Walt's specialty is building custom combat revolvers. He began pistolsmithing in the Marine Corps as an armorer, and is currently armorer for the Florida Highway Patrol. He has also been to Colt and Smith & Wesson factory schools.

A typical Sherman custom pistol begins with a Smith & Wesson Model 10 or a Colt Python. He adds a Douglas barrel to the customer's desired length, Bo-Mar rib, adds a trigger stop and smoothes the trigger, does a complete action job, and re-

blues the entire gun. For the Smith this will cost \$165, the Colt \$180. Either in stainless version will add \$20. Walt doesn't mill the barrel on his guns as he, and most other shooters, like the extra weight. If you want the barrel milled, though, add another \$15.

What does this buy? X-ring accuracy guaranteed, plus one year of functioning. "I'll even stretch that one year a bit," said Walt, as we looked over the Python he had used in the match. The action was incredibly smooth and had a pull of about 4½ pounds. His backlog is currently running six weeks. A tribute to his skills as a smith and shooter is the fact he is the 1977 Florida State Combat Pistol Champion, and rated second in the Governor's Twenty.

Sherman's Custom Guns, Dept. J.O.,
9621 Rose Road, Tallahassee, Florida 32301.



by making a slot in the frame, I could lock the hammer and cylinder without touching the mechanism. I also replaced a screw on the bolt with a special one made for the purpose. I machined the thumbpiece to fit the slot and, by putting a spring washer between the thumbpiece and the nut I could have the thumbpiece swivel freely. The work was simple, the safety was positive and most inexpensive."

To date, Frank has converted over 12,000 revolvers. He does Smith & Wessons of any frame size for \$18, Colts for \$25, and will knock off three bucks on either if the customer is a police officer.

The gun he sent me to test was a well-worn S&W Model 10 with 4" heavy barrel. It is in fact the duty gun of a New York City police officer, and the first R-F converted revolver to be carried on duty by a cop.

The safety is engaged by pressing the thumbpiece inward and upward, so the rear end is angled toward the hammer. This effectively locks trigger and hammer in the uncocked position. It leaves the top edge of the cylinder latch protruding slightly above the edge of the frame at hammer level; one releases the safety into "fire" mode by brushing it down into the normal thumbpiece position.

It somewhat resembled the special thumb-safety Model 10s made by Smith & Wesson for elements of French law enforcement on special order. These guns are now much-sought-after collectors items, and little known in this country. Jan Stevenson, who examined them in their native habitat, didn't think much of them, and people at S&W have confided that there are problems in the gun going safe when it shouldn't. They weren't any more specific than that, but I think I know how what they were talking about could relate to the Murabito conversion. We'll explain later.

The real point in a Murabito conversion, obviously, is to thwart gun-grab attempts. A secondary consideration is "child-proofing" a gun kept in the home. There are two questions you have to ask with this conversion, and the second and most important is "Will it make my gun shoot-proof in unauthorized hands?" The answer to first question, ("Does it work as it should mechanically?"), is an unqualified yes, as far as I can determine. But that second question is more involved.

It comes down, in the end, to who it is who grabs your gun out of your holster. The instinct is to simply pull the trigger, and the chances are greatly in your favor that the turkey who snatches your R-F converted service revolver probably isn't

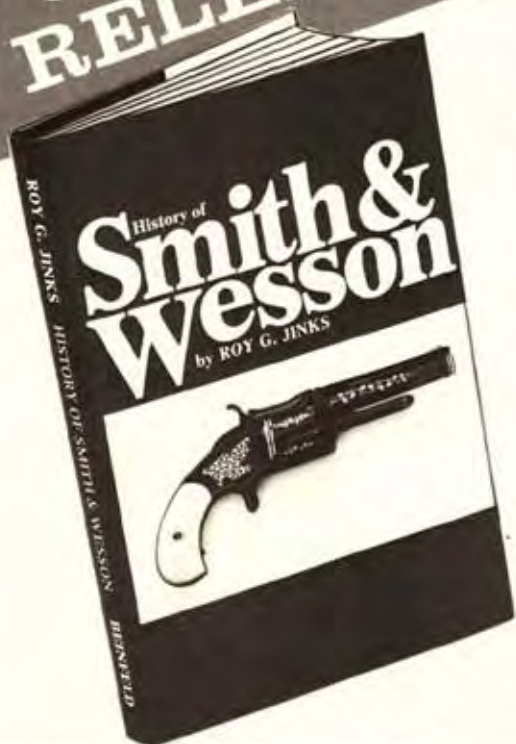
going to be able to figure out how to make it shoot before you have (a) clubbed him unconscious, or (b) blown him away (or restored him to a sense of orderly reason) with your backup gun.

The problem is, the safety is not in a secret place. I have met a lot of novices who took one look at the cylinder latch on the first Smith & Wesson that ever sat in their hand, and pronounced knowingly, "That's the safety, right?" If you're out cold or something, and that guy has the time to stand around and figure out how to get the gun to work, that cylinder latch is going to be the first thing he'll monkey with until the gun does work. I will be the first to admit that this is nitpicking; if the gun didn't have the R-F safety, he could simply shoot you *without* monkeying around.

Likewise, a kid messing with a gun he wasn't supposed to have found will very quickly realize that the big thing behind the cylinder on the left side probably has something to do with making the gun work. He was bright enough to find the supposedly secured gun in the first place, wasn't he?

But enough of my kvetching. A drunk or punk who tears your gun out of the holster in the frenzied darkness of an alley-fight is unlikely to get that safety off before you can deal with him. Out of the conversions done to date, Murabito has

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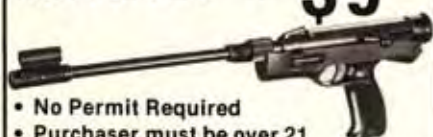
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many testimonial letters, most or all of which revolve around kids getting their hands on policemen's revolvers and not being able to make them go off. No homicidally-inclined gun-grabbers have yet tried and been thwarted, but I personally feel it's only a matter of time.

The first speculation that hits the reader's mind is, "Doesn't this defeat one advantage of the revolver, the instant, instinctive first shot? How much is this going to slow up the policeman's or armed citizen's gun handling in a split-second crisis situation?"

There may be a slow-up, if the owner of the gun has not been trained and drilled in quick-draw-and-fire with it. Many departments have trouble enough training every recruit and line officer to get his unmodified service revolver out and firing with any kind of speed; these are usually poorly trained departments, and adding the step of familiarizing the troops with a safety is likely to slow down the response still more.

I took to the R-F safety immediately, but I'm a .45 auto devotee, and have spent many years learning to instinctively thumb-down the safety of the pistol I draw. If you are familiar with cocked-and-locked automatics, the R-F will be perfectly natural for you. People who shoot only once or twice a year or less will fumble with it. Ironically, it is this type of person who is likely to have accidental discharges with their unfamiliar sidearms *anyway*; their supervisors will think, "Aha, I'll fit all their guns with R-F safeties so it can't happen," and these undertrained people will be even less able to draw and fire quickly and surely; admittedly, they'll also be less likely to accidentally fire their weapons. It is significant that a large percentage of R-F's sales to date seem to be in the notoriously under-trained security guard sector.

Three other problems can occur in actual firing of a gun modified with the R-F safety. One is that the safety is quite likely to be accidentally engaged as the cylinder is opened for reloading. Most officers are trained to open the cylinder as they switch the gun from left hand to right, so the left can handle ejection and hold the weapon while the more dextrous right hand grabs the fresh ammo. This means that in many hands, including mine, the pressure that opens the S&W cylinder latch will be pushing *up* as well as forward, and may lock the safety. The reloaded gun will not fire until it is released. (This is unlikely to occur in an R-F converted *Colt*, since many people will be pulling more back and *down* on the thumbpiece).

Can the safety be knocked upward into "safe" position as the gun recoils during firing? I've been told that it did occur with the French Model 10s with the factory-installed thumb safeties. It is theoretically possible, since at the moment the hammer falls, and while the trigger is still

back, the safety *can* engage if the thumbpiece is bumped into the angled "up" position. This *could* happen if you have a big thumb, or place it wrong. It is, however, most unlikely, and if you were to have this problem, it would certainly show up in practice, provided that you trained with full power ammo.

Finally, you have to be sure the safety thumbpiece is tilted *fully* forward and up into the no-fire position. The nature of the R-F conversion on the Smith & Wesson mechanism is such that you can push the safety forward and up *lightly*, and feel a definite movement and stop. The gun, however, is still in "fire" mode.

In this "false safe" position, the upper edge of the thumbpiece protrudes slightly over the top left of the frame; it should be *markedly* up and over, and the only way you can test for sure is to try to start the hammer back with your thumb and see whether or not it stops. *Don't* test the safety with your trigger finger, since you'll unconsciously be expecting the rigid resistance of a locked action, and are likely to put too much pressure on the trigger if the safety *isn't* locked. You don't need me to tell you what will happen then.

Well, here I've bitched about three or four different things that could go wrong with the R-F safety. Now let me tell you what's *right* with it. The release is every bit as natural and foolproof as that on a .45 auto or Browning 9 mm or any automatic of that genre. It is quickly learned by anyone willing to practice with it, just as is the cocked and locked carry with a single-action automatic.

And it is likely to save lives, and indeed, has already.

What we have here is a mechanical safety that works as it was designed to, that is easy and natural for a *trained* man to release with no loss whatever in response time to a life-threatening situation. It briefly prevents a person unfamiliar with it from firing the weapon. If you're talking about a kid left alone with it in your bedroom, or a brawler left alone with it as he stands over your unconscious form trying to figure out how to shoot you, why then, you've only prolonged the inevitable. But if somebody grabs it out of your holster and tries to kill you with it, it is quite likely to buy you the time you need to rectify the situation and write Frank Murabito a very nice letter.

I'm glad Frank came up with this, and for the ridiculously low price of \$15. I say that because I've been deeply trained and practiced in drawing and firing a safety-locked handgun. I would have serious doubts about ordering the modification on every gun in the department, unless every pistol-packer there was thoroughly trained with it. I've observed several departments that issue double-action automatics, and have noted that while close to half the officers in each organization car-

(Continued on page 66)

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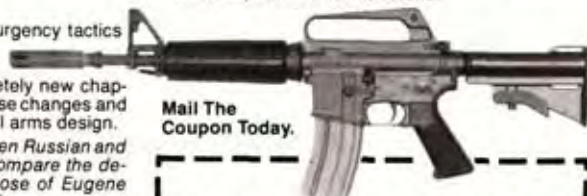
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TEST REPORT:

*An Over-The-Counter
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Bianchi "Pistolero"

By MIKE BARACH

For those handgunners that are caught up in competitive combat shooting, the Bianchi leather firm is now offering their new Pistolero combat rig. The outfit has been designed for optimum performance and comes equipped with a 2½" suede-lined belt, newly designed holster with leg strap, and a quick-draw magazine holder. The holster is made to accommodate large frame Colt or Browning autos.

The test rig sent to me is typical of Bianchi's quality and workmanship. All tooling and stitching is very well done.

The "Pistolero" is available in either tan or black, with a plain finish being standard in both. The outfit is attractive in both colors, however I'm rather partial to tan. Unfortunately, the basket-weave design isn't available on the rig. It doesn't make the outfit perform any better, but would enhance its looks in my opinion.

The rig's fully contoured belt is 2½" wide with suede lining on the inside to prevent slippage on the hips while drawing. For good looks, it's given a fancy stitch design through the middle and for added strength it is outline-stitched around the edges. The right side of the belt is indexed for holster placement and once secured in position with the two retaining-screws, is motionless.



Author found the Pistolero rig comfortable while practicing on his self-constructed combat course.



Entire rig presents a rugged, neat appearance. Overall quality of leather, stitching and workmanship was tops.

The newly designed holster boasts a metal reinforced sight channel, Auto-Flex gun retainer, full leather face and lining, and last but not least a leg strap. The holster is well designed, being very rigid for both strength and protection as well as offering a snag-free draw. It is angled slightly for increased speed in clearing the gun from the top of the holster. Bianchi's reinforced molded sight channel (metal lined) is, no doubt, a very good feature for combat shooting as the front sight is better protected and it also uses the channel as a guide way as the gun slides in and out of the holster.

The Auto-Flex gun retainer is a new idea that utilizes molded surgical rubber made much like the conventional safety strap. The Auto-Flex is, however, a little shorter and because it is made of rubber, stretches, applying tension that securely holds the gun in the holster. The Auto-Flex retainer slips over the auto's cocked hammer serving as a safety. In order to convince myself of the safety of the gun while cocked with the Auto-Flex in position (over the hammer) I pushed in on the Colt's grip-safety and forced the trigger back with a small screwdriver. The hammer was held back by the retainer and didn't so much as start to move. There's



The Grip Clip magazine pouch holds two spare clips securely, yet they can be withdrawn with little effort.



Auto-Flex strap is made of surgical rubber. It holds pistol in place and blocks hammer from firing pin.

no doubt in my mind of the safety the Auto-Flex offers. It likewise holds the gun very securely in the holster, even if one were to go as far as to perform backward-somersaults. (There is usually some form of rigorous movement required at matches to insure the safety of the holster being used.) I've been accustomed to the leather safety straps on my other hunting and combat holsters, but the Auto-Flex is stronger due to the tension applied and in my opinion safer than the leather type, but I must admit that I had some difficulty using it. Naturally, it's newness had a great

deal to do with the awkwardness I experienced, but the tension does make a difference in replacing it over the hammer. It requires more force to stretch it over the hammer and this is where I ran into some difficulty with it. I believe that once a person has become thoroughly familiar with this stretch-type retainer no major handling problems would arise. I'm certain that the inconvenience of becoming accustomed to it through practicing would be outweighed by its ability to positively hold the gun in the holster as well as affording protection against accidental firing.

As far as leg-straps go, there's little to be said of them other than that I personally prefer to have one on any type of quick-draw rig, as it's a good feature. Having the holster remain next to the leg while drawing helps speed and I don't know of a better way than the use of the leg-strap.

The last accessory of the "Pistolero" outfit is almost as important as the holster. Bianchi's "Clip-Grip," as it is called, enables the user to very quickly remove a fresh magazine and ram it home with little thought or effort. The "Clip-Grip" incorporates an adjustable tension screw to hold the magazines as loosely or tightly as one desires. The magazines are separated approximately 3/4" by a round bushing made of rubber. The "Clip-Grip" is not stationary and may be positioned anywhere on the belt.

I've been using the Pistolero Combat rig for a good while now and other than the difficulty I had getting used to the Auto-Flex gun retainer, I'm very happy with the outfit's looks, styling, and over-all performance. The rig fits me well, and thus is comfortable while running through the course. My Gold Cup slides in and out of the holster with some resistance but it's nothing to be greatly concerned about, as the holster is still a bit tight from being rather new.

All in all, the "Pistolero" is a lot of rig for the money. It's available at your local dealer or direct from Bianchi, retailing at \$89.95.



The Pistolero combat rig comes complete with holster, leg strap, belt and Grip Clip magazine holder. Author's Gold Cup is shown.

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of competition, and never have been; they dig this stuff, though, because of its novelty, practicality, and challenge. Of the rest, it's mostly bullseye shooters, with surprisingly few transplanted combat pistol buffs. That surprised me. I'd have figured that combat shooters, being more accustomed to practical and varying courses of fire, would eat this stuff up, but at least up here, it doesn't seem to be the case.

With each competitor, the word goes rippling out to another club, another clique, another circle of friends who share a love for handgunning. Looks like Ron and his group have created something big.

What was their secret? How did people who'd never run a shoot before bring off a coup that set attendance records in the toughest place in the country to find people with pro-gun feelings?

I've talked with some of the principal people involved, and I'd have to say it was pure hard work, dedication, and *believing* in the handgun sports. Ron and countless volunteers, and their wives, spent untold days working to make silhouette shooting a success here, and the answer to their success lies somewhere in the unrecorded log of those tedious hours.

The sporting press in the Northeast, and the gun press nationally helped, too. Less can be said for the conventional media in the Bay State, most of which is notoriously anti-gun, but at least one TV station ran a long and favorable spot on the event on a sportscast.

Advice for others who want to start from scratch and, so to speak, shoot for a super-successful match? "Round up all the volunteers you can," advises Ron.

"Get plenty of target sets. Reach out to the media with news releases and pictures. We do most of our own, though area sportswriters and nationally-known gun writers like J. D. Jones and Bob Zwirz have helped us out enormously. Try to hone your target-setting operation real sharp; our target-resetters are the only ones who get paid for working, and its almost nothing, but they do a super job and we couldn't run a smooth match without them."

If you're in the Northeast, you ought to check out the next Mass. Magnum Chapter tournament. The '78 schedule is not ready, but you can find out by writing the Mass. Magnum Chapter at P.O. Box 53, Medford, Mass. 02155.

And that ain't the only place in the area you can get your feet wet in this new sport. Since Ron's first shoot, many clubs have sprouted in the Northeast, all running silhouette shoots and most to IHMSA rules, though some have developed their own courses. That strikes me as a healthy state of affairs even though a few IHMSA people feel the newcomers should be following a more doctrinaire line.

This magazine and its sister publications will be running more articles on silhouette shooting and how to choose the right guns and loads. We'll also be watching the phenomenon Ricci and his group started in the Northeast.

And the next time some people come up and tell us they're going to put on a super shootin' match, even though they've never run a tournament before, I think we're all gonna take a little more serious!



TOOLS OF THE FAST DRAW GUNSLINGERS

(Continued from page 49)

A typical Ruger conversion is as follows; the cylinder is bored to .45 Colt caliber; the cylinder is long fluted to reduce the weight; deeper notches are cut in the cylinder and the lead-ins are lengthened. An aluminum barrel replaces the old barrel and it is fitted with a chrome plated rifled steel sleeve. The hammer is a typical raised fanning style, straight up, rather than the conventional curved type.

The sights are removed and the top strap, which is normally flat, is filed round. The trigger guard is ground down on the right side to make it narrow and thinner. Internally, the main coil hammer spring is shortened by clipping off six coils. A block in the grip housing functions as a stop for the main spring plunger, it takes the backlash out of the hammer. A hardened block is installed in the frame beside the locking bolt, this prevents battering of the bolt slot in the frame. Usually, the hand and trigger springs are shortened and all surfaces honed for smoothness. The finishing

touch is a chrome plating as this simplifies cleaning, especially when using black powder.

To give an idea of the customizing available and the cost, John Phillips of Phoenix, Arizona, who specializes in fast draw gunsmithing, offers the following. The prices mentioned are subject to change;

New stainless steel cylinders, any caliber	\$50
Bore cylinder to .45 caliber	\$10
Deepen locking notch leads in cylinder	\$ 8
Make rifled aluminum barrel	\$20
Build fanning hammer (on your hammer)	\$20
Tune action	\$20
Six stainless steel cases, for shotgun primers or .22 blanks	\$15
Cut down and reshape top strap (Ruger)	\$20

A number of the "twisters" are using custom grips that are oversize with bell-bottom and a distinct palm swell on the

right side. Several pairs noted were made from crown stag using the natural crown for the bell-bottom.

Another innovation used by various fast draw shooters has been to take a .22 caliber Ruger Single Six or Colt Frontier Scout and install a .38 caliber barrel and then bore the front end of the cylinder to .38 approximately half way, which leaves the back end of the cylinder still a .22. It is then loaded cap & ball style with .38 Red Jets in the face of the cylinder; .22 Winchester blanks are used for power. This same method has been used to create the following combinations 22/38, 22/9MM, 22/45, & .357/45.

Holsters were gradually modified to keep pace with the changing techniques of fast draw. Without a doubt, Arvo Ojala, whose name is noteworthy in fast draw history, made the first steel lined holsters which made fast draw truly fast. His holster rigs were made for the traditionalists; Andy Anderson, another California holster maker improved and modified the Ojala type. He was one of the originators of the "walk & draw" type holster which was worn higher on the hip. Still another noted Californian holstermaker for fast draw is Alfonso Pineda who has kept up with the constant changes of fast draw. His most popular holster now is the Alfonso #2 or "Improved No. 2" or, what he calls the "Black Cat." It is worn higher around


the waist and the holster sets out almost on a fender away from the body giving the fanner more clearance to draw.

A few of the shooters who are handy with leather have created their own holsters. One such "Top Gun," Bob Arganbright of St. Louis, Missouri, who is a highly competitive shooter, has made some fine "JayHawker" fast draw holsters which are in demand by many of the fast draw fans.

Common to all sports are the gadget accessories that "needed," some are good, and others so so. One of the early items offered was a metal deflector that attached to the bottom of the holster. It flared out from the holster and the prime purpose was to deflect the wax bullet or blank away from the leg if the gun is fired in the holster, which does happen. This is a good safety item and still being used.

The cylinders seem to be the main objective for gadgets. One such unique item was called "Pistol-lite Cylinder" for single action handguns. This was a plastic full size cylinder that contains batteries and a bulb and when used registered on a target—with the same accuracy and swiftness as a bullet—a 1" dot at 15 feet. It was supposedly great for practice but it never became popular. Still another gadget was a metal adapter plate that fit over the back of the cylinder and allowed the use of .22 blanks in a large caliber cylinder. It was

effective and only cost \$2.89.

There is no doubt that fast draw advanced rapidly as a highly competitive sport and the guns, holsters, and equipment used are as sophisticated as in any other shooting sport. 

NOTE: Grateful thanks to two fine sportsmen, Gil Guerra, Sr. and Bob Arganbright for their cooperation and assistance with this article. Anyone interested in Fast Draw and/or the equipment may contact either Gil Guerra, Sr., 1192 E. 13th St., Upland, Calif. 91786 or Bob Arganbright, 4704 Upshaw St., Northwoods, Mo. 63121.

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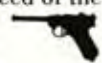
from the left side to meet the edge from the right side exactly in a hairline. A bit less than the amount of leather which seems to be needed will do the job, because the leather stretches during glueing. Then the flap was glued as usual. The line is visible on my grip, but not objectionable. It cannot be felt during firing.

The grip was finished by glueing the edges where the grip fits over the frame and trimming the covering flush. The leather was glued and folded over the wood into the inletting under the tang to avoid a cut edge at this wear point. Finally the square butt was covered by three flaps of leather formed by clipping out wedges of excess hide extending down from each side. The butt is not as neat as I would like, but it is functional.

The suede is fairly attractive and gives an exceptionally secure hold on its soft-

feeling surface. I have not decided whether to seal it or leave it as is. Two-piece revolver grips should be easier to cover with leather, because each half can be covered independently and trimmed flush all around the edge. I use the Dan Wesson mainly for double-action shooting, and I recently fired 20 consecutive shots of full-power handloads (.357 Magnum), all of them in the black and only 3 were 9s! That is as good as I've ever done at 25-yard rapid fire, so I obviously consider the grips a success.

In summary, handgun grips covered with animal hides or leathers combine a novel, striking appearance with exceptionally durable and slip-free holding surfaces at low total cost. In addition, the handgunner who makes his own grips will appreciate the simplicity and speed of the work, compared to the fine sanding and finishing of wood.



HANDGUNNER LEATHER

CARRYING BELOW THE BELT

By **JERRY AHERN**

IT seems that almost since the first handheld firearm was invented, people have been trying to conceal it. The conventional places on the body to conceal a handgun are numerous, and some of the unconventional places are—forgive the rhyme—downright humorous. One spot for concealing handguns and edged weapons which seems to fall somewhere between the conventional and the esoteric is the leg.

The most common methods of carrying handguns—or knives, for that matter—attached to the leg are ankle holsters, boot holsters and leg holsters. For the really sneaky-minded, small guns and rather large knives can be well-concealed under a bandage on the leg, but a fast draw is a bit of a problem and re-holstering the gun or knife can be impossible.

Sticking then to the more convenient leg carrying methods, the most commonly

used is probably the ankle holster. These are secured in a variety of ways, usually involving elastic, buckles, boot laces or Velcro, the latter by far being the most convenient and durable. Before reviewing currently offered ankle holsters, it would be well to look at some of the more obvious advantages and disadvantages they present. Ankle holsters, although rarely, can be dangerous. A downstate Illinois police officer was off-duty and patronizing a local alcoholic refreshment stand. While seated on a bar stool, laughing, talking and drinking—not necessarily in that order—he slipped. Falling off the barstool the poor guardian against crime broke his ankle—on his ankle holster.

Some of the more realistic disadvantages to ankle holsters are the obvious size limitations, which many users and some left-field manufacturers often ignore. A dealer told me he once had a request for

an ankle holster for a four-inch S&W Model 19, another friend had a customer who wanted one for a Combat Commander. Even if the potential wearer is built like the proverbial brick house, any cylinder gun larger than a Colt Detective Special, and on rare occasions a 2 1/2" Roundbutt 19, should not be carried in an ankle rig. Even the short tubed Combat Magnum and the Dick are a trifle large. My own common sense tells me nothing larger than a Chiefs Special.

The reasons for this are legion. To begin with, once the gun is holstered, it presumably will be worn. A lopsided ankle weight running close to or over two pounds gets damned uncomfortable. Try running or even walking a long distance and the problem is more dramatic.

Another factor relating to size of the gun is the size of the butt. Even a roundbutt J-frame Smith makes quite a bulge under a trouser leg. The bigger the handle, the worse it looks.

In the automatics, nothing larger than a PPK/S or PP sized gun should be worn. .25 autos like the Bauer or Sterling or the OMC Backup .380 make even better choices. One thing rarely considered by ankle rig purchasers is that ankle holsters, like shoulder holsters, demand a certain type of clothing to work properly. With a shoulder rig, a sportcoat, windbreaker, loose-fitting shirt or sweater must always be worn and this even in the hottest seasons. With an ankle rig, straightleg trousers of current design invite detection. It is obvious why ankle holsters weren't much in vogue during the 1950s in an era of highwater, straight-pegged, tight-fitting trousers.

To be used properly, ankle rigs must be worn with flared, slightly longer cut trousers. The bigger the flare, the better. If you tend towards very conservative clothes, an ankle rig is a poor bet most likely.

Ankle rigs also demand a certain care of movement. If you are in the habit of crossing your legs a lot, make sure to cross the unarmed leg unless you want to advertise a gun.

To wear an ankle holster properly, several things must be kept in mind. If you are right handed, the rig should be affixed to the left leg, the gun always to the inside of the leg. The ankle holster should always be attached at the slenderest part of the ankle, this to keep it from riding down and to minimize bulge. It should be attached snugly, but not tightly, rather like one ties a pair of boots for the field. No ankle holster should be considered unless

the actual holster features a thumb snap or some other safety device to hold the gun in the leather. Otherwise, during the first moment of strenuous physical activity, the gun will go flying. Also to be considered is the method of attachment. If the holster is to be laced on each time it is used, I'd say forget it. Unless you want to change laces every few wearings to guard against one breaking. Also, such arrangements take a good deal of time to put on and take off and any concealment rig should be quickly removable in case the gun needs to be ditched. For an undercover cop making a drug buy, an empty

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holster can be just as damning as a gun that's not supposed to be there.

The handiest method of attaching an ankle rig is through the use of Velcro, the male hook-female pile arrangement used initially in braces and used so successfully by Safariland as belt fasteners and with some holsters and assorted gear. Though other ankle rigs are available and Safariland, mentioned above is to my knowledge scheduled to come out with one as well, the four makers whose rigs were inspected and tested are Bianchi Leather Products (100 Calle Cortez, Temecula, Calif. 92390), Jackass Leather (920 Waukegan Rd., Glenview, Ill. 60025), Universal Leather Products (Drawer 35747, Tulsa, OK. 74115) and Old West Leather (2244-2 Main St., Chula-Vista, Calif. 92011).

The Bianchi rig is constructed of a slick finished, durable smooth cowhide, flexible and sturdy in appearance and utility. The holster and ankle strap are lock-stitched together. The ankle strap is padded with a sheeps-wool material, apparently a high grade synthetic. It cushions the holster well and provides no irritation to skin. Ankle holsters tend to get a bit warm on the leg, especially in summer months, but by their very nature this can't much be helped. The holster portion of the rig features a thumbsnap retainer. Best of all, the thumbsnap is metal reinforced—a feature vital to consistent heavy duty reliability. The holster is partially molded and available for most sensible ankle holster guns. The strap is secured to the leg by means of two Velcro strips, thus providing easy adjustment and a quick on/off feature.

Old West's ankle holster is nearly identical to the Bianchi model. Made in Mexico of American materials, the Old West line offers quality in finish and construction which is not to be ignored. I own several Old West belts and an Old West field holster, all of which I am enormously

happy with in terms of appearance and serviceability.


The Jackass ankle rig is a true two part system. It consists of an elastic bandage which is secured to the lower calf with Velcro retainers and Velcro pile strips running vertically spaced along the entire outer surface of the bandage. The wet-molded thumbsnap holster is attached to a tape of Velcro hooks. One takes the holster, positions it where desired on the leg, then wraps the Velcro hook tape around the elastic bandage, thus attaching to the Velcro pile strips. The system works reliably and offers a great deal of flexibility in positioning. Also, additional tape strip equipped holsters can be purchased for different guns and used with the same bandage.

The Universal Leather holster is perhaps the most uniquely constructed ankle rig of the lot. The ankle bandage features a fleece lining and has perforations in the leather to allow for skin ventilation. The holster attaches to the bandage by means of one-way paratroop style snaps. The same holster can be attached to a shoulder holster harness or used as a belt holster. The holster itself features a thumbsnap and both the holster and bandage are constructed of soft, durable, attractive black bull llama leather. It is not cowhide, but actually bull llama hide. It has an attractive grain and texture, great flexibility and the black dye is waterproof. It also has a lifetime guarantee to the original purchaser under normal conditions.

For leg carry, the second most popular method when a holster is used involves sewing or otherwise securing a holster inside a boot top. Knives like the superlative Gerber MK1 survival knife work well this way and so can small, flat handguns. A general rule of thumb is the higher and tighter the boot, the thinner the ordnance. A cylinder gun can carry well in a Wellington style boot, a flat midframe or small frame auto in something with an eighteen-

inch rise. For small guns, standard inside-the-pants holsters with spring steel clips, such as those from Bucheimer-Clark, Safariland, Bianchi and others work acceptably. The Bianchi Defender series, saddle leather holsters meant to be worn outside the pants but featuring a spring steel belt clip, would make superlative boot holsters. But, with this latter type of leather envelope, a right-handed person should order a left-handed holster so the gun will ride properly, butt rearward.

But, ankle holsters and boot-top carry aside, one other method of leg carry is offered, this, to my knowledge, only by Bianchi at this time. It is the Bianchi #11 Leg Holster. This is an ingenious device, recommended to be worn with high top boots but suitable for use without boots with the right sized gun and flared trousers. The leg holster is made of a supple leather, two pieces sewn together, the top piece made with a slit. The gun is inserted into the slit and the tension of the holster itself molds the leather over the gun making a safety strap unnecessary. Coupled with this, the gun rides deep in the leather.

The #11 Leg Holster is designed to be worn on the off-gunhand leg, the uppermost of the two thick surgical elastic straps encircling the leg above the calf muscle, the lower strap just below it, the gun riding against the calf muscle and shin bone. The straps are secured by means of multiple sets of paired snaps to allow for adjustment. The rig is comfortable, easy to put on and take off and conceals my J-frame revolver well. With something like a Bauer .25, the gun should be virtually invisible when worn properly. In fairness, it takes slightly longer to raise your trouser leg to get the gun than to snatch it from an ankle rig. However, no leg carry—except perhaps the boot-top arrangement—should be used for anything other than  a back-up gun.

A COMPLETE GUIDE TO UN-LOADING

By GORDON R. STARK

IF confession is good for the soul, the condition of my soul should be enhanced immensely before this piece is concluded. No one enjoys admitting mistakes, but by so doing, we can often help others avoid making them, especially when their lives are concerned. Thus, my confessing a colossal boner might well be in order in this day of increasing activity in handloading.

Having reloaded pistol cartridges for 13

years, I had a rather solid feeling of contentment. My mistakes were few and generally of a minor nature; i.e., failing to bell sufficiently, seating a bullet too deeply or spilling a mite of powder on my humble bench. Nothing of a serious consequence had transpired whatever. Then, one fine day, I blew it and blew it big.

By way of background, I'd like to emphasize the two cardinal tenets that should be followed at all times when working up

your own loads:

1. Never begin with maximum loads regardless of how often tested by other shooters.
2. Never assemble more than 5 or 6 rounds of an untried load.

Let's explore the logic of the above. First of all, what is maximum to one gun may not be maximum to another. Heed this admonition carefully as it is a two-way street. Thousands of modern pistols are

currently manufactured for older calibers and these late production models are often capable of handling rounds vastly superior to those offered in original factory form. *Because* these are older calibers, the implication is inherent that many of thousands of tired or ancient pistols are still in the hands of shooters and as such, must never be used with anything but the relatively mild loads factory produced or carefully duplicated by the handloading fraternity. Excellent examples are the .38 Specials and .44 Specials but there are others.

No sensible publisher of a loading manual is ever going to be guilty of listing flaming hot loadings in his volume unless they are accompanied by bold print disclaimers cautioning against use in all but the most modern, heavy duty weapons. By contrast, pistol editors and contributors with the highest credentials frequently write of loads that in *their* guns have given near-magnum readings. Usually, these articles carry suitable warnings but sometimes they don't and that's where we become alarmed. Thus, when a favorite author waxes enthusiastically about a hoary load for an old, venerable caliber, you should instantly take this to mean maximum in *his* gun. The other side of the coin (or street) is that of a load known to be safe in virtually any gun chambered for the round when in fact a more modern version *is* capable of hotter loads.

Okay, let's suppose you're completely agreed that for any old pistol you'd be willing to work up to maximum or, better still, avoid even approaching such loads altogether but, since *your* piece is thoroughly modern in every respect, you can skip the reduced loads and go directly to the maximum, right? **WRONG!**

Given a modern pistol, you might start out at a higher level but *do not* push maximum loads through your piece for openers. Failing to heed this advice, at least make an attempt to grasp the second tenet regarding the number of untried loads you'll prepare at one time. Please, for your sake, the sake of friends/fellow shooters and the gun itself, do not try more than 5 or 6 rounds of a new concoction. Results could be expensive at the least and disastrous at the worst.

By limiting yourself to 5 or 6 rounds, you may rapidly discover the load is unsatisfactory or downright dangerous. Then, with really very little inconvenience, you can back off considerably and gradually work up to that point which grants a rewarding amount of power and accuracy sans danger to yourself or others. Would that I had followed these truly sensible and uncomplicated rules!

Since I have no cause to blame anyone but myself, I will not reveal the publication, its most distinguished author/authority or the specific load which led me to great alacrity in cranking out an unholy loading for a very popular caliber. Suffice it to say I was dazzled with *his* results and

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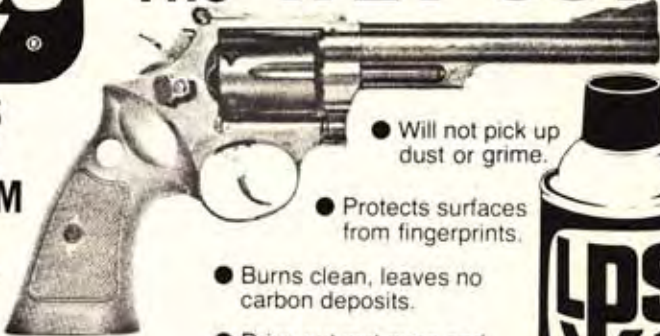


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Having brewed 300 rounds, (you read it right, 300) I found myself itching to show the world what an awesome creation I had produced by taking a vintage caliber and gaining near magnum results. Oh, was I ever in for a surprise.

When I literally closed my eyes and grit my teeth to cut loose the first round, the gun went off and so did I. The heavy frame revolver slammed into my palm so hard I honestly thought it was going right on through my hand. "Some load," I muttered to myself while bravely bracing for the second shot. Some load, indeed. By the time the cylinder was void of live rounds, I was totally shattered.

Upon opening the cylinder, I was horrified to find that my ejector rod, even when tapped rather hard, wouldn't budge those empties. The cases were, for all practical purposes, cemented to the cylinder walls and had to be hammered out. Ah, did that stop me? Did I get the big picture? Hell no. Stupido here decided that since the gun wasn't in pieces, the loads were just super hot and shouldn't be used too often.

Not to be deterred, I fought my way through the balance of two boxes of these homemade honeys, each time, pounding out brass with a sense of vengeance. I was bullheadedly determined they would not be wasted, come hell or high water. After all, who wants to throw away \$40.00 worth of ammo? On the other hand, who wants to throw away the remains of an impossible to find revolver or watch a hand come off at the wrist? Finally, the light was beginning to dawn.

Dimly, yes. Slowly, yes. But, it *was* beginning. Under no circumstances would I fire the remaining 200 rounds. I could, however, salvage the components. How? By merely disassembling them. A quality bullet puller could be had for less than \$15.00 and would more than pay for itself after "de-activating" about 75 rounds. And so, the decision was made; your tightwad scribe dug into his equally tight pocket and staunchly parted with the necessary bucks thereby making "Operation Salvage" possible.

Now, a minor psychological block has to be overcome when a disassembly process is involved. Specifically, we like to

think of ourselves as "creators," not "destroyers." Fair enough, but this block can easily be dispelled when you realize you're not destroying anything. Actually, unless you loaded with one or more components of an absurd nature, you're not destroying a single thing. However, in order to retain your sanity, these simple steps should be followed:

SET UP

You will need separate boxes for extracted bullets and empty cases. You will also need a can for the powder recovered; preferably, the one it came in. Finally, a piece of medium thick cardboard to be used as a funnel.

Unless your loading bench is extremely rigid, avoid using it altogether. When pounding your bullet puller, you require a surface area that's firm but padded. A concrete floor is fine but be sure to use an old "T" shirt or wiping rag as a cushion to prevent the mallet from hitting solid cement.

Having laid out your containers and funnel, you're ready to begin.

STEP 1

If you're right handed, hold the collet with your left hand and gently, very gently, feed the cartridge into it with the right hand. If your manual dexterity favors the left hand, merely switch mitts for the entire exercise.

Since the collet is by far the weakest link in the bullet puller, it is extremely important that in feeding the cartridge to it, every reasonable attempt is made to keep this feeble piece intact. Of the entire unloading process, the most exasperating encounter is having the collet fall apart with its delicate pieces flying in all directions. By feeding the cartridge in a smooth, even manner, you can eliminate, or at least reduce, collet collapse.

STEP 2

Once seated in the collet, you can place the cartridge into the aperture atop the mallet. This, of course, presumes you've already removed the cap. Check your collet to ensure a good seal around the cartridge rim and then replace the cap by turning it to a snug position.

STEP 3


Grasp the mallet and strike it smartly against your cushioned concrete. This is repeated until the distinct sensation of bullet and powder tearing loose can both be heard and felt. The number of blows will vary but three to five usually suffice. With good fortune, a mere two can do the job.

STEP 4

You may now remove the cap and slowly tilt the mallet onto your homemade funnel. Ease bullet and powder from the mallet to prevent same from winding up on

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your floor. Remember, the idea is to salvage everything you can.

STEP 5

To remove the empty case from the collet, place index and middle fingers of the left hand under the collet and draw the case with an even pull of the right hand.

STEP 6

Blow residue, if any, from the case and deposit the brass in the box reserved for it. Rescue the dethroned bullet from your cardboard funnel and free it of all powder. If it's a hollow point, chances are excellent that several kernels of powder are in the hollowed section so merely tap to free it. The bullet can now be placed in its appropriate box.

STEP 7

After four or five unloadings, you'll find your folded cardboard funnel rather full of powder. In an unhurried fashion, pour slowly into the can and resume the mallet operations. You'll be pleasantly surprised to find you've recovered all but a few pennies worth of powder when your task is completed.



CONCLUSION

As this is written, I have had but the one mishap requiring use of the bullet pulling process. The work is tedious, tiring and at times discouraging. To unload 200 rounds took me a total of four hours which were rather evenly divided to avoid wear and tear on nerves and body. As expected, expertise took hold after the first 50 rounds were processed. After all, this is an assembly line operation even if done in reverse!

All 200 cases came through surgery in beautiful condition while the bullets were just slightly marred; certainly not enough to warrant discarding. As a matter of fact, only close inspection would detect any ill effects at all. As for the powder, I would say my total loss could not possibly have exceeded a dime's worth. How does that grab you for a first time salvage operation?

To summarize, never use hot loads unless you have prudently worked them up to safe levels. Never prepare more than half a dozen untried loads. This is for your safety, the well-being of your pistol and avoidance of needless re-work. However, if you pull the goof of the year as I did, don't come unglued. All is not lost. Spend a few dollars to get a bullet puller and take time to do the job right. You'll be thankful you did.



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Dear Odell:

I did not say I'd never had one of them embarrassin accidental shots. I have and my tail was in a crack just like yur describin. But you'll manage to come out all right, too, after you go before the town council next week and explain how you shot the TV in the police department squad room last Tuesday.

You say the chiefs too busy bein mad right now, and you could reason with him if he'd speak to you. Who woulda ever thought somebody'd be dumb enough to put that throw-down gun in the evidence locker with a round in the chamber? And you get it out to clear it before givin it to the judge, tho a .25 cal. bullet through the 19 inch Quasar ain't exactly clearing procedure.

Something like that happened to Jesse Clinton, you remember he was the police champion a few years back at Jackson. Takes a big man to tell about himself, him bein a national champ and all, the way Jesse told me he'd shot a .38 round through the basement ceiling. But there it was, he said, stickin up through the wood floor in the bedroom upstairs. Jesse's wife, May, she's a real good humored Mississippi lady, called down the steps, just real calm and told him, "Jesse, if you're trying to kill me, just come on up and do it, don't sit down there and shoot through the floor."

If you get a chance before they fire you, or tar and feather you, tell those folks what Frank McNally up at that NYPD says 'bout them accidental discharges. "Nat," he told me, "if you handle guns every day, make your living round firearms, sooner or later you're going to let one go accidentally. Just be sure that muzzle's in a safe direction and while you may be embarrassed, you or somebody else won't be dead. Anybody tells you they never shot one they didn't mean to, either doesn't handle many guns—or he's a liar."

If that's good enough for New York City, with 90 firearms instructors, Green Pond PD should figger out someway to overlook their one instructor blowing up the TV.

Nat

HANDLOADING

(Continued from page 20)

concentric. Prove the foregoing statement to yourself by taking a gun whose fired cases show a slight amount of bulge. Use once-fired cases that have no previous signs of bulging, then mark the case head to indicate the point at which the bulge is occurring with relation to the chamber. Place the round in the chamber so that

the mark on the head is at the bottom. Fire several rounds in the manner just prescribed. You will find that in most instances the bulge will occur at the opposite side of the case. To complete the test, fire another short string of marked rounds. This time, however, chamber each round with the mark at the top of the chamber. Fire the gun in a fully inverted position. Again, the bulge should occur on the side opposite the mark. If bulging is severe accuracy and case life will be af-

fect. It's time to trade or rechamber.

If you've a desire to check bullet concentricity, use a surface plate, V-block and dial indicator, as described. Don't be led into believing that you can learn anything conclusive by visually observing cartridges as they are rolled across table tops, plates of glass (which are *not* level unless precision ground) or other supposedly "flat" surfaces.

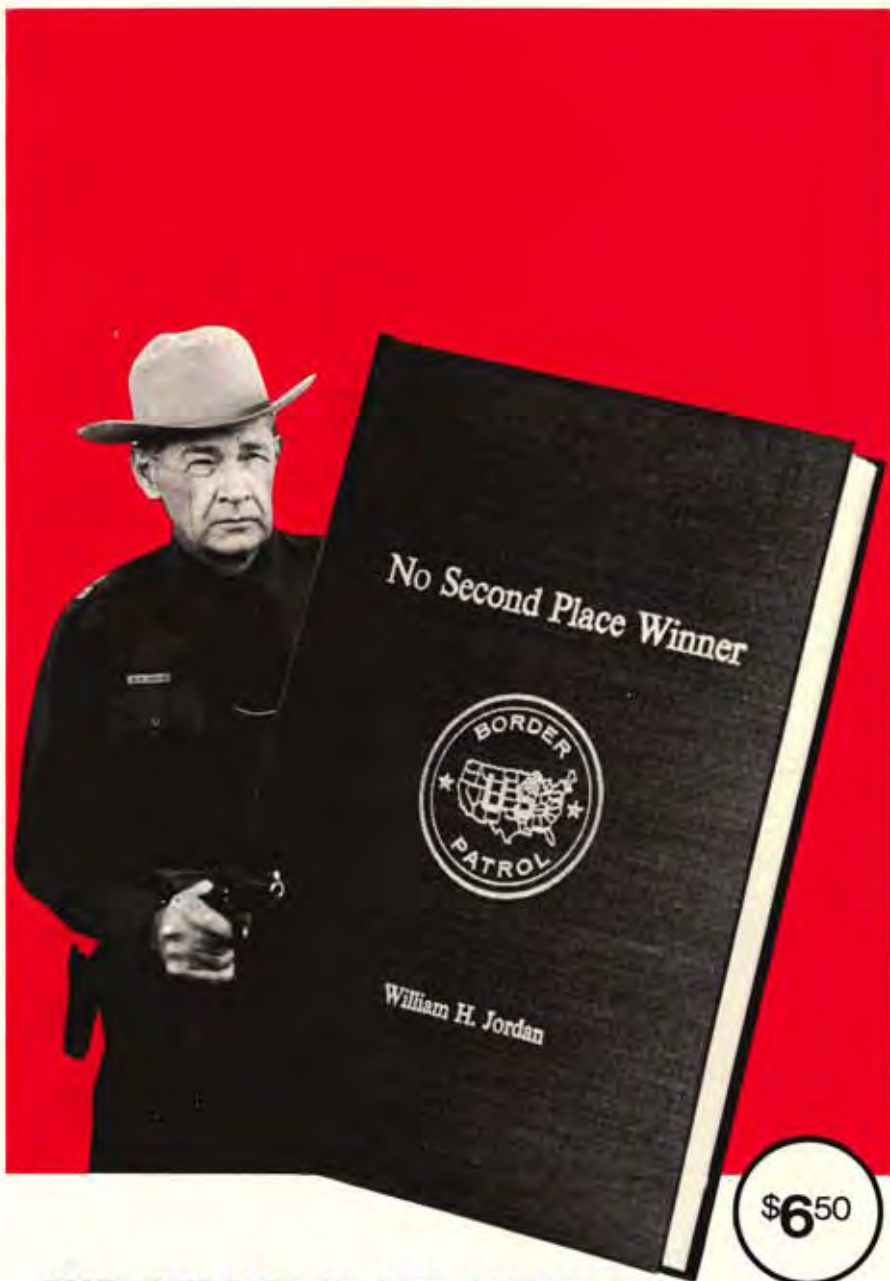
The .0025-inch eccentricity indicated in the tests is relatively insignificant. If, however, bullet offset within the hand-loaded round is appreciably greater, performance will quite definitely be affected. It is also true that such factors as bullet spin balance—as determined by a combination of bullet weight-to-length ratio, velocity and twist rate—and barrel quality will have an appreciable effect on performance.

The handloader should be aware that, of all the components in the nomenclature of items necessary to produce custom ammo, the loading dies are the most precisely made. They are rarely at fault in any problem of inaccurate shooting.

We have dealt thus far with full-length resizing dies. It is, nonetheless, a good idea to mention the fact that, through no lack of precision in manufacturing, a neck-sizing die is capable of turning out a round with an eccentrically seated bullet. The difficulty, more often than not, arises from a slight misalignment between the shell holder and the die body. This can be caused by grit or a particle of powder in the groove of the shell holder. Misalignment can also be caused when, in the case of a tilted press, the case is able to tip slightly in the shell holder.

If you neck-size your cases it is preferable to use a press that can be so adjusted (or is designed) so as to stand vertically. The RCBS Rock Chucker and RCBS Jr., as well as a number of "H" type presses, are suited to vertical bullet seating. Vertical positioning will minimize case tipping during neck sizing. It should, however, be realized that no amount of correct alignment will compensate for the problems attendant to the handloading of irregularly drawn or misshapen cases.

The handloader who is looking for gilt-edged accuracy from a handgun might take something from the book of the benchrest enthusiast. These scrupulous individuals will start with perhaps 200 cases, firing them in small lots while allowing a cooling interval between shot strings. Each time a shot goes out of the main group, that particular case is discarded. Then, with a minimum of 50 tested cases, the search for the ultimate combination of components and weights begins. It should be apparent that a quest for the ultimate in precision handloads casts a responsibility on the experimenter to exercise the same care in assembling his ammunition as was used in the manufacture of his dies and loading components.



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REVOLVER SAFETY

(Continued from page 52)

ried their guns on safe when on duty, few if any ran their qualification runs starting with the guns in the locked mode. If you go to something like the R-F, you have to have training.

If I'm straddling the issue, it's because there are two sides, and I can identify with both of them. In closing, let me tell you this: I am a police officer, and normally carry a cocked-and-locked .45 automatic both on duty and off. I am thinking of going back to the revolver for a number of

reasons which are not germane to this article.

If I do, that gun won't hang on my Sam Browne belt until it comes back from Frank Murabito with an R-F safety.

I'll carry that revolver in a supposedly snatch-proof holster—a Bianchi Model 27 or Judge, a Bucheimer-Clark breakfront, or a Smith & Wesson Security Plus—but I'll still want a police duty gun that will be secure on the night when somebody stronger and meaner than me tears it out of my hand in a confrontation. Contingencies like that are one reason I carry a thumb-safety-locked automatic in the first place, and if I go to the wheelgun, it will

be comforting to have that same added *soupcou* of safety that will take the other guy off-guard for a vital moment or three.

Anyone who cares enough about the guns they own and carry to be reading this magazine in the first place, can appreciate that. To them, I recommend the R-F revolver safety conversion. I recommend it with the safety locked when up, off when down; Frank can make it the other way, but it's unnatural. Incidentally, he's selling franchises for the process all over the country, and can probably give you the name of someone in your area who can do it as competently as he can, and quicker.



By **KARL BOSSELMANN**

THIS brief article is meant to be complementary to that entitled "What This Country Needs" by Claud Hamilton, which appeared in the Nov/Dec issue of "The AMERICAN HANDGUNNER" Magazine. Mr. Hamilton covered well our problem void in defense handgun calibers, and it is the solution of this problem I wish to further discuss, and offer a similar but differing answer.

FACT: In *automatic pistols* for defense, the Colt .45 auto is the best we've got, but the pistol itself tends to be on the large side for concealment, and the cartridge falls a bit short on penetration. The 9mm and 38 Super cartridges both have tremendous penetration, but lack stopping power.

FACT: In *snubby revolvers*, the .38 Special and .357 Mag. lack stopping power also, and the .44 Special moves a bit slow besides promoting complaints of recoil in the

small guns. There lies no compromising caliber between .357" and .429".

This void, which exists in each type handgun in the same approximate caliber range, makes absolutely no sense, and should be corrected, not in a few years, but now!

Hamilton's basic choice of caliber is excellent, and is what has been needed for many years, but in other areas, I must take exception to what he has stated. A hollow point bullet is not the answer. It has been proven time and again that the most predictable and reliable bullet type is the jacketed soft point with much lead exposed. As for the handgun, a Smith & Wesson Model 59 is certainly not the arm for this project in my estimation.

Another item mentioned was a double-action feature for the automatic pistol. I'm continually surprised at the number of individuals who feel this is necessary. In realistic situations, this feature is just not needed, and creates problems just by be-

ing present. It solves nothing. I believe it was Jeff Cooper who stated magnificently what should be an epitaph for this contrivance, and I'll try to quote as exactly as memory will permit: "It (the double-action feature) is a solution to a problem that does not exist." God, that's beautiful!

What follows is not directed to drawing room discussions, parlor game playing, arm chair gunfighters, nor paperback book agents. I'm trying to put it where practicality lies. We are in the worst social conditions this nation has ever seen, and they are going to get much worse, so let's not waste time discussing funny little gadgets and oddball frills that complicate objectives. Let's decide on highest quality tools, and have them produced.

Concerning the automatic pistol, the 1911 Colt-Browning is the finest yet devised for a thoroughly reliable self-functioning pistol, and has proven itself the world over, time after time, for its genius. There is no excuse for law enforcement personnel to be denied this excellent side-arm, save for the reasons of stupid and/or otherwise incompetent management. If the civilian populace objects to seeing the hammer of the weapon cocked, then use a holster with a half flap so the horrible little nasty is covered. But we're not really talking about a full-sized handgun, we're trying to fill a gap for a powerful pocket size auto.

The Colt Lightweight Commander has proven to be the most reliable of all the undersized .45 automatics (the future will tell concerning the new Detonics, Thomas, etc.). With an added benefit of lesser weight due to the alloy frame, there is a great potential here for development. What I propose is reducing exactly in proportion, this pistol, by *at least 20%* in overall size for this new .400 caliber cartridge. It would result in a no-nonsense pistol of time-tried design, that would be compact, light, and powerful.

But wait! Bosselmann has not finished yet!

We also desperately need a revolver in the 'snubby' category, of the same cartridge Mr. Hamilton describes in his article for the automatic pistol. Many individuals are not mechanically minded, or have the opportunity nor desire to become extremely proficient with a handgun. Women, especially, tend to fragment in a life-and-death situation when the needed firearm ceases to function. Into these hands, an autoloader should not be placed. Therefore, what I propose, is another tried and true design, this one proving its worth in the last century.

For this second project, I have in mind a stainless, five-shot, double-action, *break-top* revolver, that is as close in size to the Smith & Wesson Model 36 as is possible to get. With present technology and metals, an excellently made revolver of this fine type can be produced. This proposed arm is highly feasible, and is desperately needed.

Now, dear readers, you have been shown the cake, and what follows is the icing; but the fork you'll have to reach for yourself. The above two pistols have been contemplated for some time, and last week I contacted a well-known domestic arms manufacturer for proposed production. The interest shown was great! Now here is where you come in. Re-read the brief descriptions stated above, and write me, stating explicitly how these appeal to you. Tell me what you do and do not like. The final developments of the above two handguns rests in your powers of persuasion. If hundreds, preferably thousands, of letters are *not* received, this project stops here. Send correspondence to:

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INTRODUCTION TO SILHOUETTE SHOOTING

(Continued from page 23)

tralia and the rest of the states. IHMSA was on the move!

Members came pouring in at an average of over 100 per month and not a week went by without another club or organization joining with IHMSA to participate in this dramatic new handgun game.

In one short year, just under 100 IHMSA matches have been sanctioned including state, regional and International championships. The membership roster is now over 1,400 with no sign of a letup. Total individual entries were in excess of 6000. It is an achievement of which IHMSA and its officers and directors are justly proud.

The decision to create a stock production gun category proved to be right. Fully 85% of the competition is within this category. Likewise, the decision to create an Unlimited class also was correct. More progress in long range handgunning as regards loads, techniques and equipment have been made in 1977 than since the handgun was invented.

New rules were voted in at the Executive meetings held in conjunction with IHMSA's International Championships on October 22-23-24 at the Angeles range in San Fernando. Most important was the approval of a modified production category which opens IHMSA competition to the entire spectrum of handgunning. The game is now open to all comers from the Saturday afternoon plinker with his over-the-counter pistol to the highly modified and exotic unlimited guns with which feats of long range handgunning have been performed that hardly would have seemed possible a year ago.

NRA, heretofore involved only in high power rifle silhouette, has joined forces with IHMSA in working out compatible rules for handgun competition, and will sanction their own handgun silhouette matches in 1978. NRA will recognize two major divisions of handgun competition in the sport, the same long range big bore type that IHMSA specializes in, and a short range pistol category using smaller targets at shorter ranges.

For instant information on IHMSA, two stamps will bring you a copy of "The Silhouette," IHMSA's bi-monthly publication which will give you everything you ever wanted to know about handgun metallic silhouette shooting. The Silhouette, Box 1609, Idaho Falls, Idaho 83401.

For information about ranges holding IHMSA matches, contact the following match directors in your area.



HANDGUN METALLIC SILHOUETTE ASSOCIATION Ranges & Match Directors

ARIZONA

Phoenix, Black Canyon Range
Tom Fradenburg
4525 W. Sunnyside
Glendale, AZ 85304

CALIFORNIA

Fresno
Bert Stringfellow
7223 East Muscat
Fresno, Cal. 93725

Ojai
Bill Kramer
612 Redwood St.
Ojai, California 93030

Oroville
Jim LaPorte
2555 Oak Knoll Way
Oroville, CA 95965

San Fernando (Los Angeles)
John Adams
Box 1358
Manhattan Beach, CA 90266

COLORADO

Aurora (Watkins, CO)
Ron Newberg
1650 Paris No. 201
Aurora, CO 80010

CONNECTICUT

Stanford
Fred Schonborn or
Enzo Del Brocco
Connecticut HMSA
Stanford, CT 06902

INDIANA

Bloomington
William C. Herring
R.R. #7 — Box 627
Martinsville, IN 46151

KANSAS

Great Bend
Ron Radke
Box 166
Great Bend, KS 67530

Hutchinson
Roger Enns
Central Kansas Gun Club
Box 584
Hutchinson, KS 67501

LOUISIANA

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Diane Zufle
232 Lafayette St.
Gretna, LA 70053

MAINE

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Capital City R & P Club
17 Forest Ave.
Augusta, Maine 04330

Hampden

Robert Lermond
MRA Box 255
Bangor, Maine 04401

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New Bedford
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234 Wood St.
New Bedford, Mass. 02745

Randolph
Tom McCarthy
Ames R & P Club
20 Gold Street
Randolph, Mass. 02368

Reading
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Carson City, NV 89701

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Richmond, Ohio 43944

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Oklahoma Shooters Supply
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Norman, OK 73069

PENNSYLVANIA**Jackson Center**

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Jackson Center, PA 16133

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Bob Hess
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Fletcher Kelton
P.O. Box 26321
El Paso, Texas 79926

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Jesse Bailey, Jr., Pres.
3720 N. Texas Ave.
Odessa, Texas 79762

Mansfield

Mike Stimson
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Midlothian, TX 76065

UTAH**Salt Lake City**

Stan Nash, Pres.
Utah Handgunners Assoc.
1002 Elm Avenue
Salt Lake City, UT 84106

VERMONT**Bristol**

Edd Cook
65 Milton Meadows
Milton, VT 05468

CANADA**Ft. Saskatchewan**

Terry House
P.O. Box 3038
Ft. Saskatchewan
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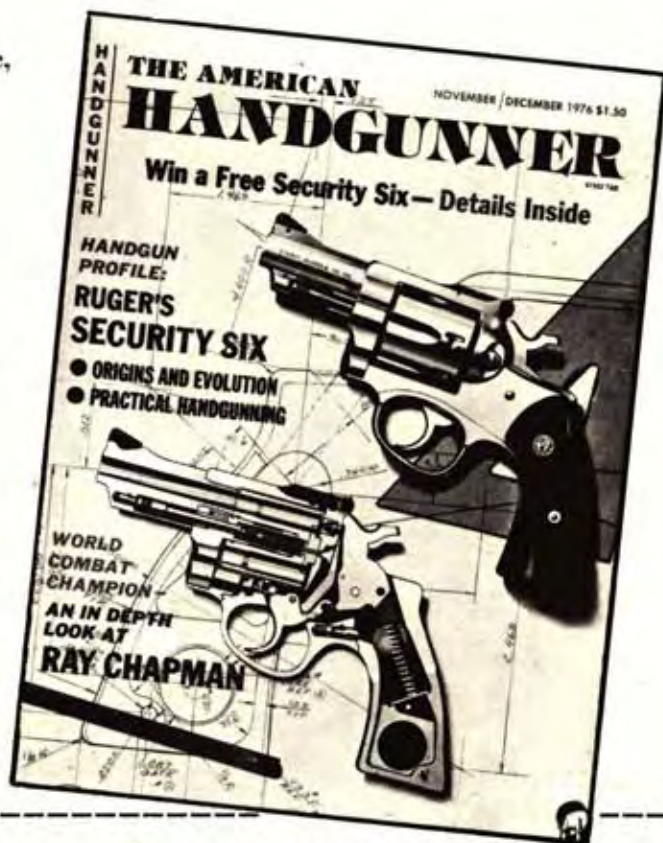
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