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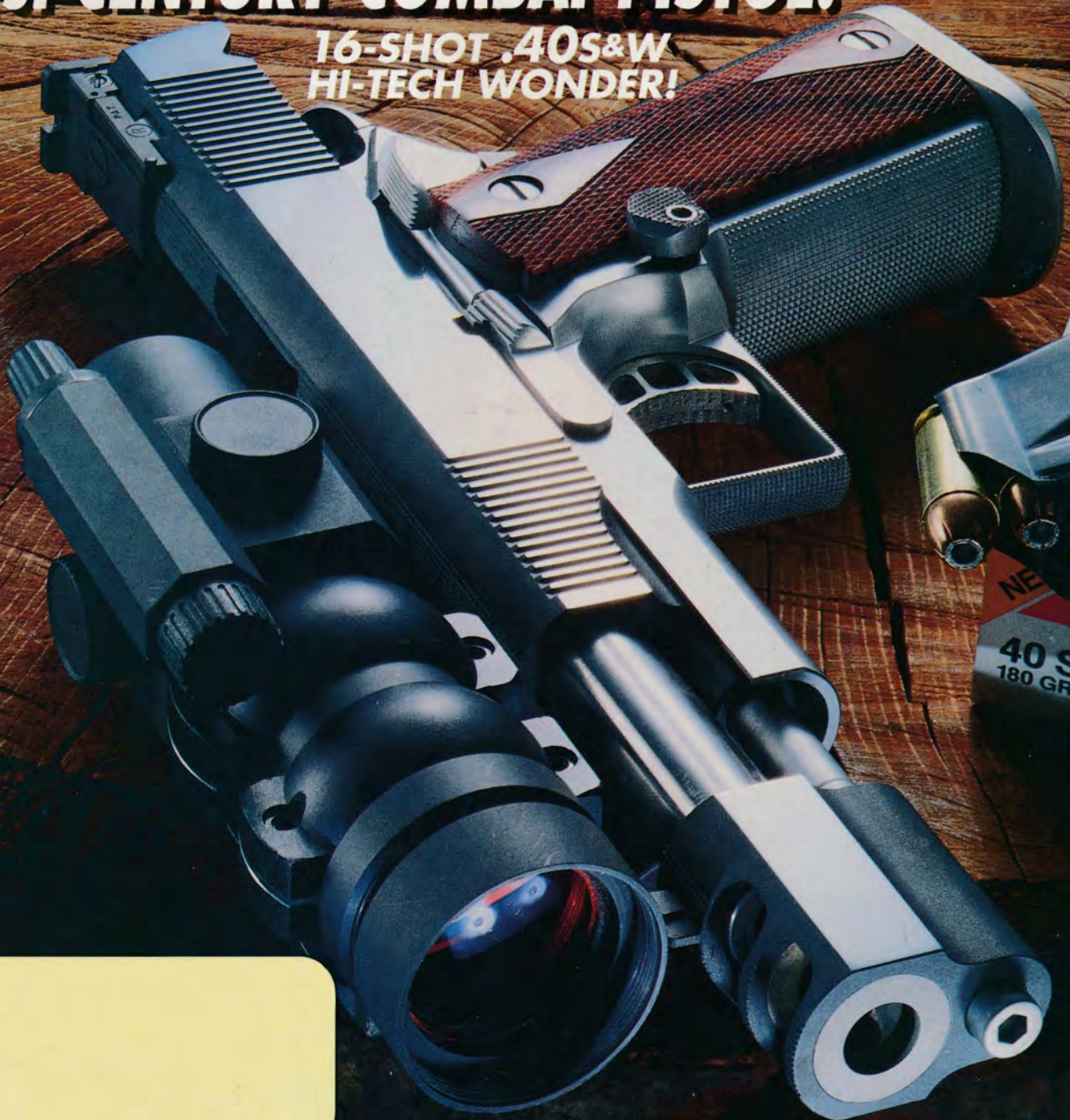
MARCH/APRIL 1991

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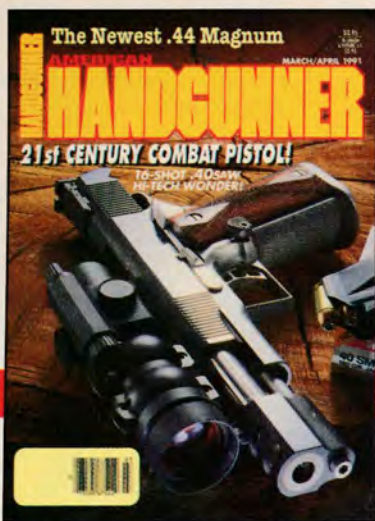
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The turbo-boasted "racegun" from Bill Laughridge bred for speed, a 16-shot .40 S&W with an Aimpoint 5000. Photo by Ichiro Nagata.



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# AMERICAN HANDGUNNER

MARCH/APRIL 1991

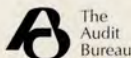
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**WARNING:** firearms are dangerous if used improperly, and may cause serious injury or death. Due to the inherent variables in the reloading of metallic cartridges, verify all published loads with manufacturer's data. Consult a professional gunsmith when modifying any firearm. **Be a safe shooter!**

### .44 Magnum Vasectomy

My buddy sent this article to me and I am passing it for your benefit. One great way for a sex change operation, but the butane lighter is a bit small for cauterizing!

Was going to send this to Handgun Control Inc., but they have no balls.

F.V. Bowles.  
Oakland, Calif.

"A Monterey County jury awarded \$9,660 Thursday to a car salesman whose right testicle was accidentally shot off by a Seaside police officer last fall.

Hardell Brown, 39, sued the city of Seaside after a gun went off in his waistband during a routine frisk on Aug. 25, injuring his scrotum and thigh.

Brown's injury was actually worth \$42,000, the jury decided, but he was 77% at fault for carrying the gun in the first place. The net result: Seaside owes him \$9,660.

According to paperwork in his court file, Brown pulled a .44 Magnum handgun out of his car after he got into a fight with another bar patron at the Oak

Tree Lounge on Aug. 25, 1989.

Brown tucked the gun in his waistband and returned to the bar, according to the papers. A bartender noticed and called the police.

Officer Sean Gillis arrived a few minutes later and spotted Brown in the bar, according to the papers. Brown walked outside. Gillis followed and ordered Brown to drop down to his knees.

Brown lay face down in the street instead, according to the papers. Gillis noticed the butt of a handgun sticking out of the side of Brown's waistband and tried to retrieve it. There was no struggle, but the gun went off. The slug hit Brown in the scrotum and lower abdomen. A butane lighter also exploded, embedding metal fragments in his thigh.

Emergency room physicians at Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula removed Brown's right testicle but managed to repair the minor damage to the rest of his genitalia, according to the papers."

The Californian

For the second time I doubt Massad Ayoob's ability to tell the simple truth. The first was when he suggested he shot the African plains animal running at 200 yards with a 4" Model 29 and then he claimed he was miffed by his shot placement.

The second was when he suggested that he, Jeff Cooper and Mike Dukakis are "married to beautiful, gracious, highly intelligent women." (In the *Speak Out* column, "Pity Kitty" letter from the Nov/Dec 1990 issue.)

After taking a close look at Kitty Dukakis in one of her recent articles where she fesses up to drinking Drano and anything else she thought she could get high on, I suggest that Mrs. Ayoob may very well take offense to her husband's remarks. I refer her to my friend Marvin Mitchleson, attorney at law, Los Angeles, California. Marvin knows just how to handle "assholes" as Ayoob refers to himself in his reply to the "Pity Kitty" letter.

While I am at it, I might as well address your "Kill The Lawyers" letter (*Speak Out*, Nov/Dec 1990). I personally don't care what your readers, staff or editorial personnel have to say about members of my profession. Just keep on teaching people how to carry pistols in "deep concealment" or whatever.

You see, after they have taken your advice about the latest Third Generation

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S&W semi-auto stuck in a Thad Rybka holster and trotted into their local mall only to be apprehended for carrying a concealed weapon, jailed with the scum they claim to deplore and subsequently bailed out, they always seem to call me or my brethren which allows us to ask these modern day gunslingers the three most important questions in the practice of law:

- 1) How much money do you have?
- 2) Where can you get some more?
- 3) Have you got any guns or motorcycles to trade?

Marshall Davis Brown, Jr.  
Lawyer  
Houston, Texas

### Bad Run Of SIGs

In your 1990 *American Handgunner Annual*, Massad Ayoob mentions a "bad run of SIG P-220 .45s" and "older P-226s whose frames cracked in the slide rail area." What I need to know is approximately when these defective SIGs were made and serial numbers of these "bad runs."

C.R. Pete Goddard  
Columbia, SC

*Massad Ayoob replies: The "bad run" of P-220s in question apparently went out circa 1988 and the situation was quickly squared away. You'll know as soon as you shoot one: they won't reliably feed even with hardball. Current P-220 pistols are excellent.*

*I've also not seen cracked frames on any P-266s manufactured after 1987.*

*I don't have any serial numbers on either. However, if you're buying a new SIG, I wouldn't worry about it. If you're buying a used one, just make sure your dealer will stand behind it.*

### Overnight Shotgun

I would like to share with you the outstanding service I received this past September from one of your advertisers, Nu-Line Guns of Harvester, Mo.

While test-firing my Winchester Super-X shotgun on Wednesday prior to shipping my guns to Las Vegas for the SOF 3-Gun Match starting the next week, the shotgun developed incurable (to me) feeding problems. I could see disaster looming on the horizon.

The prospect of having to compete in a world-class match with an unfamiliar, borrowed gun was numbing. One of my friends at the range suggested that I call Nu-Line and see if they could help me out of this serious predicament.

I called Nu-Line and talked to "B.J." and she graciously promised that if I would ship the gun UPS Next Day Air to Nu-Line, she would see that it was fixed immediately and send it to the dealer in Las Vegas with whom I had arranged to ship my guns.

The gun went out to Nu-Line that

Wednesday afternoon and I called Thursday afternoon to find that B.J. had received the gun, repaired the feeding problems and was ready to ship it to my receiving dealer in Las Vegas. The gun was waiting for me in Las Vegas on Monday!

I was amazed at the prompt, special treatment I received from Nu-Line. Nu-Line typifies the spirit and camaraderie I have come to enjoy in competitive shooting, the willingness to help a fellow shooter when a problem arises.

Nu-Line, thanks again!

John C. Appel  
High Point, NC

P.S. I placed 9th overall and probably could not have done it with a borrowed shotgun!

### Left Or Right

I don't know much about Action Pistol, never having attended a match, so the photos of the Bianchi Cup match in the Nov/Dec '90 issue roused my curiosity.

There are these right-handed guys shooting from the left side of a barrier and then we see a lefty shooting from the right side. When I was a boy attending Saturday afternoon westerns, my buddies and I always wondered why the cowboys (right-handed) would shoot from the left side of a tree, thus exposing themselves needlessly.

I mean, even though the pistols look

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### Hunting:

Regular hunting features in *GUNS* will help you decide what's the right gun and load for the game you're after. Hunting big game in Africa? Then the .425 express might be just what you need. But if you want to know more, you have to read *GUNS*.

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## The Sportsman's Year Hunting and Fishing Knife Collection

sort of strange, I presume these matches are supposed to represent some sort of combat situation. Am I missing something?

L. Clifford Soubier  
Charles Town, WV

Cliff, the Bianchi Cup match requires a shooter to shoot from both sides of a barrier in the Barricade Event. All the contestants—right and left handers—shoot from both sides of the barricades, six shots per side, at ranges of 10, 15, 25 and 35 yards for a total of 48 shots in the Barricade Event.

What you couldn't tell in the pictures is that a right-handed shooter frequently switches his gun to his left hand to

shoot from the right side. This technique was developed by '86 Bianchi Cup champion Riley Gilmore as a more effective way to shoot accurately from the barricades.

And you'll be interested to learn, Cliff, that the Bianchi Cup does not seek to simulate a "combat situation" but is instead a match designed to bring together the three disciplines of bullseye, PPC and IPSC shooting. Editor.

### Asinine Controversy

I am getting a little tired of the American Handgunner wasting space on the asinine "Major 9" controversy. The obvious solution is to kick major up to 195 where

it should be anyway. The genuine hairy-chested specimens can make that with no sweat and the wanna-be's are going to bust a gut trying. End of controversy.

Henry McDonald III  
Rockford, Tenn.

At the most recent meeting of the IPSC Assembly, it was voted to begin a new power factor system in 1992 which will solve this annoying 9mm problem permanently. The new system calls for three power factors instead of the current two. There will be minor, medium and major as follows:

Minor: 125 factor; minimum caliber is 9mm or .38.

Medium: 160 factor; minimum caliber is 9mm or .38.

Major: 190 factor; minimum caliber is 10mm or .40. Editor.

### Volquartsen Is Tops!

The Sept/Oct 1989 article on "Radical Rugers" by Tom Volquartsen was a fantastic profile of this custom pistolsmith. After having Tom build a V-2000, a Supreme, a Predator and a PPC gun, I feel qualified to rate his work.

Tom Volquartsen's quality is second to none. His workmanship is the best I've ever seen. Knowing this man personally and shooting his guns is a true pleasure. You can be sure I'll have more guns built by this fine craftsman in the future.

If anyone is considering having a conversion done, it is well worth the time and money for these Volquartsen guns are very accurate and very reliable.

Joel Becker  
Clear Lake, Iowa

### Born To Tinker

The thought came to me slowly that handgunners are born tinkerers and borderline perfectionists. After reading about, dreaming about and saving for a new handgun, the first thing that we do upon acquiring it is to set out and find ways to change it.

First, the factory grips come off and a custom set goes on. Then the sights, well, the sights are never quite what we want so we have a Smith & Wesson rear sight put on a Colt or maybe a Python barrel installed on a Smith & Wesson.

We're never satisfied with triggers and actions. Sears must be honed, springs made lighter or heavier. The factory barrel isn't "just right" so we install custom barrels and compensators. If the trigger happens to have grooves, we remove them. Or we add them if grooves aren't part of the trigger!

Do you suppose that the gunmakers really do understand us and that is why they have yet to produce the "perfect" handgun? They have known all along that the perfect gun would spoil our fun!

Mike Stump  
Fostoria, Ohio

Continued on page 19

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# ALPHA PRECISION

## Custom Colt .45

By Massad Ayoob  
Photos by Ichiro Nagata



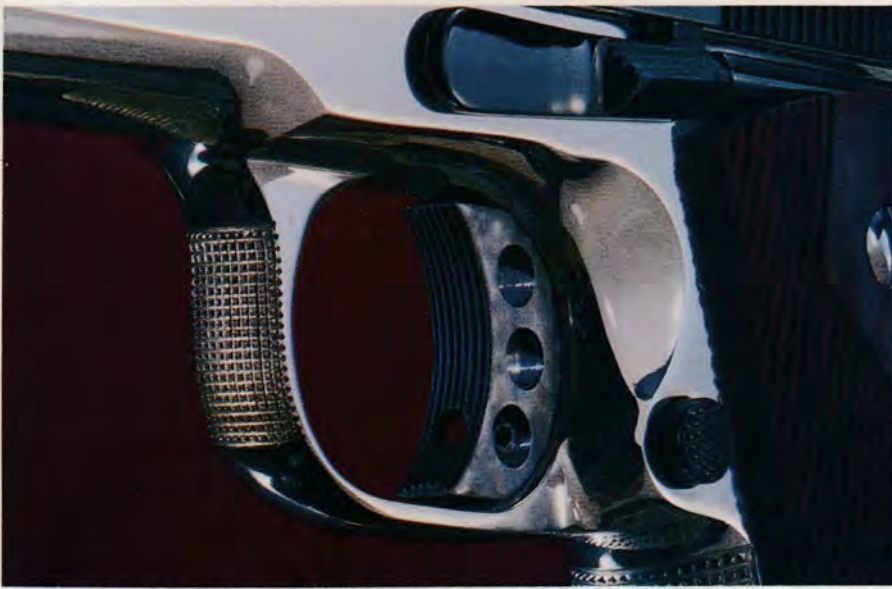
**W**hen handgun experts get together and talk custom pistols, certain top makers' names always crop up. Among them is Jim Stroh, who is Alpha Precision of Good Hope, Georgia.

A full-time pistolsmith since 1981 and member of the American Pistolsmiths Guild, Jim has produced about 300 compensator guns for IPSC, Steel Challenge, and Second Chance type shooting. He has produced another 50 or so full-house showpieces, hand-rebuilt Colt autoloaders whose accuracy matches their beauty, and still finds time to teach gunsmithing classes at Trinidad College.

Stroh's pistols are distinctive. He makes his own magazine funnel and welds it up instead of soldering or swaging it. His recoil spring guide is a solid chunk of heat treated stainless. Alpha Precision's distinctive recoil spring plug features a back end machined like the Colt guide, says Jim, to make 270° contact.

The front sight on an Alpha Precision gun is integral to the compensator. It adds \$50 to the cost to do it that way, but the front sight can't come loose from continued shooting. Jim prefers not to shorten his Colt slides, and on his non-compensated jobs, likes to install a transverse front sight.





**Jim Stroh checks the front of the trigger guard for the "finger-forward" grip. Below, the Bo-Mar combat sight is melted into the slide atop 50 lpi serrations.**

What about triggers? Says Jim, "Our master trigger job removes all play from the trigger, which is set tight in the frame, yet the trigger moves freely. There is a bare minimum of initial takeup, and no follow-through (backlash) after the hammer breaks."

"Due to extra internal polishing, the trigger can be safely reduced to between 3 and 3.5 pounds. Normally, we recommend our standard trigger job for a carry or duty sidearm (4 to 4.5 lbs.). Our master trigger job should be reserved for the sporting gun (IPSC included) because of the emotional state of the shooter when the piece is brought into action."

It is the barrel, I suspect, that has most distinguished Stroh's work from that of his competitors. Our test gun sported a cone design, and was made in one piece from a Douglas blank. It fulfilled the gunsmith's high standards for accuracy.

Using factory Black Hills 230 grain lead match ammo loaded to hardball velocity, this gun consistently delivered .625" three-shot groups, hand-held from a rest. When Stroh tells you that he can build a .45 that will hold an inch and a half at 50 yards, believe him. Our gun proves he's telling the truth.

Finish is another Alpha Precision trademark. Look at the accompanying photos. The only thing more visually satisfying than examining Ichiro Nagata's exquisite rendition of the test pistol is to lovingly examine the gun itself.

It bears Alpha's Master Grade finish, both in the blue on top and the electroless nickel frame. The latter looks as bright as a regular nickel finish, and when Stroh says, "(The Master blue finish) compares to a Colt Python's finish," he is again not exaggerating.

If anything, Stroh's version is even better, and at well under \$100 for a complete gun, I plan to send some of my handguns to Jim just for the Master blue treatment.



**Now that's attention to detail! Note the polished elevation screw in the Bo-Mar sight. Also, check out the custom rib in front of the Bo-Mar.**

malfunctions killed the shooter's chances three out of four times. It took two trips back to the shop before the gun ran without a hitch, and on that day, it won the final match for its shooter.

Out of the box, the hammer followed the slide and when the right lever of the Swenson ambidextrous safety was depressed into fire position for left handed fire, the left side remained engaged and the gun stayed silent. It was promptly

*Continued on page 85*









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## SPEAK OUT

Continued from page 12

### Consumer Advocate

In a recent issue Cameron Hopkins wrote about a publication called *Gun Tests*. It was described as a "consumer advocate publication" for firearms.

The big question is, where do I find this magazine? Any help the *American Handgunner* could provide would be greatly appreciated.

Randy Arnold  
Lander, Wyo.

*Randy, if you want to know the good, bad and ugly about today's handguns and their performance, you already are reading one of only two publications that "tells it like it is." The other one is Gun Tests which is short (24 pages in the December, 1990, issue) on length but long on information. The subscription-only newsletter refuses to accept any advertising, so consequently the entire revenue must come from the readers. A yearly sub is \$72 for 12 issues available from Belvoir Publications, 75 Holly Hill Lane, Greenwich, CT 06836.*

*One of the things I like best about Gun Tests is their "Bottom Line" synopsis of each gun tested in which the anonymous authors—there are no bylines given—summarize their views. An example from the December 1990 issue: "Bottom Line: The Ruger SP-101 has some very good features but, on the whole, is just an average revolver at an above-average price, we feel. Nonetheless, it was user-friendly except for the rough chambers, although those can be smoothed out easily enough. We rank it second place behind the S&W 617."*

### Defensive B.S.

Hooray to Troy Gregory for his letter in the Jan/Feb '91 *American Handgunner* pointing out J.D. Jones' hunting articles as a disgraceful detriment to responsible hunting, and writing.

Boo to J.D. Jones' response to Troy's letter with so much defensive B.S.

I have complained before about Jones' hunting articles and believe you should drop them from the *American Handgunner*.

Handguns are for shooting scumbags on the street—if you don't have something more powerful! Innocent big game animals deserve better consideration. So do *American Handgunner* readers.

Roger Prather  
Las Vegas, Nev.

### Caspian Warranty Covers Boneheads

I purchased a 1911 model frame and two slides from Caspian Arms. Both slides were to be 9mm. Much to my dismay, I

discovered after cutting serrations on the forward end of one of the slides that it was machined for the .45 ACP cartridge.

With not just a little embarrassment for my failure to recognize this problem before machine the slide, I called Caspian and explained my predicament. To my surprise and pleasure, they immediately exchanged the slide for one in 9mm matched to my frame.

They were apologetic over the fact that I was inconvenienced by their oversight and handled the entire matter with good old fashioned courtesy and professionalism. To my knowledge, it is unheard of for a company to exchange a modified product.

I learned two valuable lessons from this incident. First, always check everything before you begin modifications. Second, there really are businesses in this world who care more about their customers than whether or not the check will clear the bank.

Neil Kizer  
Hanover, NH

**AMERICAN HANDGUNNER** welcomes letters to the editor for the *Speak Out* column. Letters should be typewritten, but legible handwriting is acceptable. Letters must be less than 350 words. We reserve the right to edit all published letters for clarity and length. Send your letters to *Speak Out*, *American Handgunner*, 591 Camino de la Reina, Suite 200, San Diego, CA 92675.

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## .357 MAGNUM AND RED DOT SIGHT ARE MARGINAL FOR DEER HUNTING

**A**s I write this one more deer hunt remains in 1990. This is going to be a different kind of hunt for me; you see, I've never hunted from a tree stand before and I'm not really very keen to try it now.

I realize it is an effective way to hunt and probably far more hunters use tree stands than there are still-hunters. "Still-hunting" has somewhat of a strange name to describe those individuals who slowly and quietly make their own way through the woods in search of game. For deer hunters, still-hunting is probably the toughest way to harvest an animal.

### Game Drive

Driving deer is, to me, the most enjoyable way to hunt. In the past I've seldom taken a stand, but as the years add up, stands become more frequent. Driving deer is a method of hunting where some individuals move through the woods and fields in an effort to move deer to other hunters who have taken a vantage position to watch for the deer.

"Driving" deer connotes moving the animals in the manner in which you want them to move. That seldom happens—you can move deer, certainly, but you can seldom force them to go where you want them to go. Does are a lot easier to figure than bucks. Big bucks are simply impossible to figure.

In this type of hunting, seldom do the "drivers" or the "standers" ever get the broadside, standing, picturebook shot. Deer are usually moving at less than top speed but nonetheless moving. Having the knack of knowing when to shoot is important.

Familiarity with the way deer act may indicate whether the animal is going to stop and picking the best place to shoot in his anticipated path can only be gained by experience. Taking the shot at the proper time and place is important. I've passed up my share of shots offered when I felt I could hit the animal—but would not be able to control where I hit the animal.

Even when you think you can hit the animal where you think you want to hit him, this results in enough misplaced shots. A first-shot miss usually means the deer gets away. Following shots at deer running through trees, jumping logs, ditches and whatever after shifting into sixth gear are seldom productive.

I find deer hunting quite enjoyable, in fact much more enjoyable now than I did for years when I cared a lot more if I killed something or not. It gives me the opportunity to try out a lot of different guns, sights, ammunition and meet a lot of great people. In many places hunting is relatively inexpensive and bag limits generous.

### Dot-Sighted .357

This year I've been fooling around with electronic dot sights and .357 Magnum revolvers. The 158 grain Hornady XTP bullet from a Korth revolver did a fine job on a sheep earlier in the year. I switched to a long-barreled S&W with a dot sight on it and Federal 180 grain hollowpoint ammo.

The combination handles well with the Hogue grips and action work on the gun. It's now quite accurate and capable of five to six inch groups at 100 yards off the sandbags.

I was a pretty young kid when I got my first .357. No ear protection in those days and the muzzle blast of the short barreled Ruger combined with the old full power ammo scared the dog feces out of me. It also took a fearful toll on my hearing, but I eventually figured out that this blast was mainly just that, and the cartridge was far overshadowed in power by a heavily loaded .44 Special.

As one of the guys who innovated high-performance revolver ammo, the .357 got a lot of my attention. Which led me to the conclusion that the .357 was underpowered in the field for deer. This year's experience simply reinforced these earlier opinions.

For deer, the .357 is at its best when used from a tree stand with shots limited to close ranges—say 50 to 75 yards maximum—and preferably at undisturbed animals whose adrenaline pumps are not working at 200%.

I have no use for lightweight bullets in the .357 for hunting regardless of how well they may perform on humans at close range. A heavily handloaded 158 to 180 grain bullet is the way to go for hunting.

### .357 Frontal Heart Shot

I don't think there is much question the 180 grain Federal is the best all-around factory deer load for a .357. I did pass on one nice buck at under 35 yards with the 180 Federal simply because I

wasn't carrying enough gun. A .44 with my 320 grain cast bullet would have made him a duster but the .357 simply isn't enough gun for rear-end shots.

When the time to shoot came, it came for a little nine point buck who thought he was being very smart by following 30 yards behind and 10 yards to the side of a younger four pointer. Both were running at a normal pace. The woods were relatively open and I followed the better buck for about 30 yards with the red dot and at the right moment when he turned directly towards me at about 40 yards I shot him straight in the front of the chest.

He immediately shifted from third to sixth gear, a sure sign of a very hard hit deer that runs itself to death. After wasting a couple more in his direction before he fell, I noticed the smaller buck had in confusion circled around between me and where I thought one of my hunting companions was.

Even though we were both wearing blaze orange, I couldn't see him at the moment. Tempting as it was to collect a double, I let him go. Later, I found my buddy also was watching him and didn't shoot for precisely the same reason I didn't—he couldn't see me but he knew I was there somewhere.

### Terminal Performance

The 180 had entered the deer almost exactly in the center of his chest and throat, passing slightly above the heart but severing the great aorta, penetrating the liver and ended up in the stomach.

Somewhere along the line it lost its jacket and achieved some degree of expansion. It now weighs 129 grains.

Performance evaluation: certainly not great, but good. Penetration was fine for the shot taken. Reverse the animal and it isn't good enough. Liver damage was minimal, indicating a very slow-moving projectile at that point. Somewhat higher velocity will shatter the liver on impact.

What can be done to improve on it? Well, maybe a 180 grain of XTP construction with a double cannellure to allow handloading to full length of the cylinder with a couple of hundred feet per second more on it would give a larger wound track without giving up anything in penetration. It just might improve the .357's performance enough to be a worthwhile improvement.

At one point on opening day a nice eight pointer hesitated a few moments 30 yards in front of me. Unfortunately the battery in my sight lost contact and the dot wasn't illuminated. I thought I might be able to center him in the tube and make the shot—it didn't work. After the second shot, a young man on my left took his heart out with a 12 gauge slug.

Dot sight versus a low-power scope? In my opinion a low-powered scope is more useful than the dot in woods hunting 90% of the time.



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## COP TALK

MASSAD AYOOB

### COMPETITION SHOOTING IS BEST TO SIMULATE STRESS OF REAL GUNFIGHT

**W**hy do you see so relatively few cops on the range in competition? The fact is, it's situational depending on which game you're playing. PPC, naturally, is a lawman's game. Pin shooting started that way.

Thus, civilians are only there to give moral support and take pictures (and help run the range!) at matches like the NRA Police Revolver National Championships. At Second Chance, civilians are probably still a minority, albeit a large one.

In IPSC, however, and at the Bianchi Cup, I would venture to guess that the single largest occupational category among the competitors would be law enforcement. Career cops like John Pride, Vance Schmid, Roger Burgess, and Dave

Being a good marksman doesn't guarantee gunfight survival, but being a good marksman *under stress* goes a long way toward that goal.

No, they aren't going to kill you if you lose the match. At the same time, more than one gunfight survivor has told me he experienced more stress at the Bianchi Cup than in a shooting. It's probably the anticipation factor.

Do top shots survive gunfights better?

A friend of mine shot matches whenever he could, including the annual state shoot for cops. A career officer in a small city, he and others closed in on a fast-moving criminal who had shot at police already.

As the suspect raised his weapon, my friend and multiple other officers fired.

One bullet struck the would-be cop-killer, mortally wounding him and putting him down right now.

Guess who it was that launched that 125 grain .357 hollowpoint?

Whether it was confidence born of competence learned in the arena, or competence born of the confidence he'd



Wheeler are among our top shooters in such events.

Sometimes it's because the given officer saw early on in his career that skill with a handgun could be his best life insurance, and that the skill could only be sharpened to a truly fine edge in the heat of the arena. The psychogenic stress of shooting under competitive pressure comes closer, many believe, to duplicating gunfight stress than anything else that can be done in training.

I've done everything from running the laps around the range before firing to being hit with a 50,000 volt stun gun before I drew and cut loose, and I've done the same with some of my students.

But the fact is, the tension or pain or heart-pounding, lung-burning gasps such training engenders don't fully duplicate the fine motor tremors and loss of concentration that winners say come in tournaments—and, survivors say, come in gunfights.

learned shooting under pressure, is irrelevant. His shot went true when it had to. My friend still competes.

### Cirillo Drill

If they ever compile the legendary gunfighters of modern policing, the Wyatt Earps and Bat Mastersons of the 20th Century, Jim Cirillo will be on that list.

He's with the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center's weapons staff at this writing, but he was a member of the NYPD Stakeout Squad when he went through a shootout Jeff Cooper would call a "feat of arms." Indeed, Cooper named an IPSC course after him.

In the original "Cirillo Drill," Jim shot three armed men down, two of them from behind hostages. His supervisor, Joe Volpato, told me in 1972 that Jim dropped the three gunmen in three seconds with three shots from his Smith & Wesson Model 10 .38 Special.

Cirillo told me that, as the armed rob-

bery unfolded in front of him, the tension was so palpable his tongue stuck to the roof of his dry mouth. But, when he raised his revolver, he focused on the front sight so totally that he could see every striation on the blade.

Then, he said, it was as if he was back on the range: roll the trigger, roll the trigger, roll the trigger.

Cirillo at that time was an intense competitor in PPC, the only game in town back then, and was the man to beat on the Eastern Seaboard. He would become the first Sectional Director of the northeastern US when IPSC was formed a few years later.

We finished a spot apart at the first Bianchi Cup in '79, and as we stood in the Top Twenty line discussing the match Jim remarked, "This match has stress. It's like going to a gunfight."

### SWAT Shot

Another cop, whose name can not be used here, was National Police Revolver Champion more than twice in a row. It struck his chief that the top police marksman in the country might best be assigned to SWAT, and the officer, then untested in a gunfight, had no qualms about it.

Though his SWAT team preferred high-capacity semi-automatics, he exercised his prerogative to carry his familiar .38 Special service revolver.

The night came before long when SWAT was staking out a dangerous criminal under circumstances that dictated plainclothes and handguns instead of ninja suits, ARs, and shotguns. When the shooting started, several of the old hands opened up on the fast-dodging gunman with their autos and failed to connect.

Our man "went back to the range" and at a considerable distance shot the gunman several times, all center hits, with his S&W Model 64. The gunfight was over, and the pistol champ with the old fashioned gun got no more teasing at all.

This is not to say that even a national title guarantees performance. Legend has it that one national champ emptied his shotgun at a fleeing Pontiac full of armed robbers at a distance of only a few paces, and not only missed the suspects, but missed the car.

Still, the history of it seems to be that the officer who shoots well in the heat of competition will do the same in a gunfight.

Ross Seyfried, the former national IPSC champion, once worked as a part time cop. He wrote recently that he'd never been in a gunfight, but he'd come close.

Knowing what I know about men like him, I wouldn't want to be the antagonist who pushed him over the edge. Historically, armed criminals have not fared well against men who've already proven themselves in the arena of high-stressed pistol competition.



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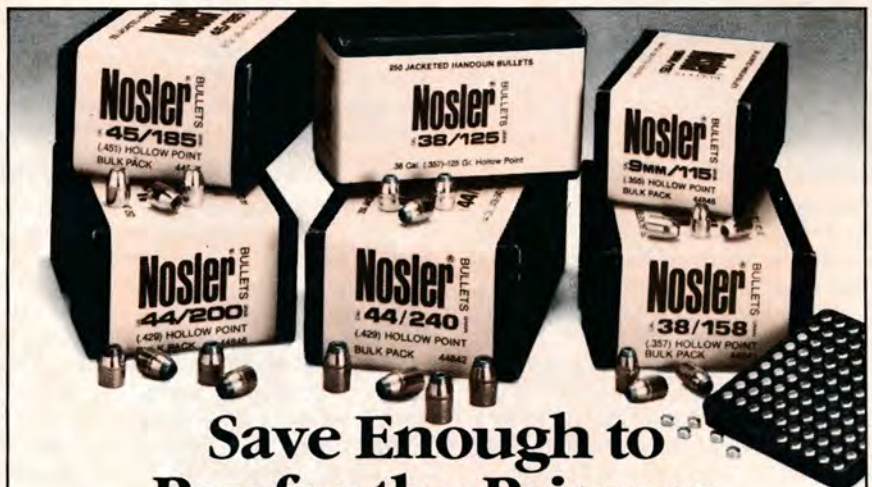
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## NEW IHMSA LEADERS REJECT PRICE CEILING BUT CLING TO SCOPE BAN

**W**hen the price ceiling rule was put into effect with more than 90% of the members voting for it, all progress immediately stopped as far as production silhouette guns are concerned.

Not one single American-made silhouette revolver or single-shot has been brought forth since that rule went into effect. Development of new guns came to a screeching halt.

Freedom Arms had planned to get into silhouetting in a big way. Until 1986, they had pretty much ignored silhouetting as no one in the operation knew much about the game.

But the first Shootists Holiday was

I suggested that one of the first silhouette .44's be sent to David Bradshaw which was done. As luck (or fate) would have it, I wound up shooting beside David in the 1986 Internationals. He used a .44 Magnum; I used a .454 with 260 grain bullets at 1,650 fps.

It was my second time through with the .454 that day. (I'll explain why just a little later.) I shot a 70x80 with the .454, and Bradshaw, who is a better shot than me and also was using the easier shooting .44, did better with, I believe, a 76x80.

The Freedom Arms single-action was certified as a production gun for both of us. This is important as we will also see just a little later.



**Freedom Arms brand-new .22 LR revolver designed for silhouette**

held in Freedom, Wyo., in 1986 and hosted by Freedom Arms. This was nothing more than a bunch of handgun people getting together for a week of shooting and sharing ideas much like an old time mountain man rendezvous.

I had requested ahead of time that they have silhouette targets and a range set up. This they did. It was probably the first time that many of the Freedom Arms people had ever seen a silhouette target.

Up to this time, the only application of the Freedom Arms .454 Casull had really been for big game hunting. As both I and a couple of the other Shootists who were experienced silhouetters started knocking down turkeys and rams with the .454, the wheels started turning.

By the next day we were discussing the use of the Freedom Arms single action revolver in silhouetting and I sat with Jim Morey, who was the sales manager at the time, and we designed a silhouette package which would be not a .454 but a .44 Magnum with the same excellent Bo-Mar sights that were on my personal 10-inch .454 Casull.

And then the curtain fell in the form of the price ceiling rule and the Freedom Arms single-action was ruled out as a production gun.

You may talk all you want to about the protection of the game and trying to prevent an equipment race, but you will never convince anyone at Freedom Arms that this rule was not directly aimed at them.

Thanks to a lot of pressure from members, the new officers of IHMSA put the price rule up for a vote of the membership again during the summer of 1990. Even before the official tally was in, I was contacted by Freedom Arms.

"Do you think the rule will be thrown out?" was the question. I was confident that it would be.

"What do we have to do to get the Freedom Arms revolver allowed for production competition?" And then I realized that both Bradshaw and I had our guns certified in the 1986 Internationals, so the guns were already legal once the price ceiling was gone.

I received a second call from Freedom Arms again before the rule was finally

voted on. This one informed me that they were working on a new silhouette revolver, not a big bore but a .22, and they needed all the particulars as to weight, barrel length, sight radius, etc.

And then a most welcome call came through today. "John, this is Randy Smith at Freedom Arms. A .22 silhouette revolver went out Second Day Air today. You will have it by day after tomorrow."

Without the new vote of the membership against the price ceiling, by a more than two-to-one margin, we would not have the new silhouette revolver.

Congratulations to the leadership and the membership of IHMSA for making progress possible once again.

And special congratulations to Freedom Arms for not wasting any time in getting this first new silhouette revolver in years out on the market.

A full report on the Freedom Arms silhouette revolver will be forthcoming in a future edition of *Siluetas*. Mark up Plus #1 for the leadership of IHMSA. There are others.

Five years ago, The Masters tournament was started under the sponsorship of Smith & Wesson. Numerous other companies were, and are now, involved, but Smith & Wesson was the major backer.

This tournament combines silhouetting, bullseye, and action shooting and has become a major shooting event in a very short time.

The IHMSA Internationals are also a major shooting event and drew over 1,300 entries this year. The Masters had a minimum of 900 entries plus the number of shooters who took part in the long-gun events.

The point is that these are two of the major handgun shooting events in the world.

Two major events and they are both held at the same time! Is that weird or what?

Maybe it is more what than weird.

I have heard two major versions of the story. One blames Smith & Wesson for deliberately setting the date to conflict with the Internationals; the other blames IHMSA for doing the same thing to take participants away from The Masters.

Whether either or both is true no longer matters. What does matter is what will be done in the future.

The Executive Committee of IHMSA has asked the president to contact both the NRA and The Masters with the goal of setting non-conflicting dates. As handgunners, let us all hope that is just the beginning of a new era of cooperation between the three groups and a real end to the bickering and bad feeling that has existed in the past.

Mark that as Plus #2 for the new IHMSA leadership.

I mentioned earlier that I shot beside David Bradshaw with my Freedom Arms .454 revolver when he shot his Freedom Arms .44 in the 1986 Internationals. I also mentioned that it was my second time through with the .454.



The Internationals that year were held in Idaho Falls, Idaho, at the Western Range. Since the make up of this range allows for the possibility of a high shot going over a hill and landing on private property, a system of baffles was set up.

All this consists of is a series of boards nailed across the uprights of the covered firing line so a competitor may not sight high.

A stray shot could still penetrate the boards and sail off to the wrong piece of property, but the theory must have been that shooters would have to keep their barrels horizontal if the boards were in place.

Shooting under this system, I shot Revolver Class with the .454 in 1986 and all went fine with chickens and pigs, but when I got to the turkeys, I found that the baffles blocked the targets from my sight in my shooting position and the same held true with the rams.

My score was correspondingly low. So I shot through the second time using the .454 in Unlimited Class and made sure I had a position that allowed me to see the targets.

The Western Range is beautiful, but it is neither safe nor adequate for silhouetting under the baffle system.

Because of a squabble with the Gates family over the cost and money still owed on the Western Range, IHMSA leadership moved the 1990 Internationals to Texas, set up the 1991 Internationals for the Eastern Range and have already set the 1992

Internationals to be held back in Texas.

Apparently the Western Range idea has been abandoned.

The next question is whether or not we even need permanent ranges for the Internationals, ranges that sit idle all year and are used only for International competition. The idea is to not give anyone an unfair advantage.

The Masters operates just the opposite way. The range in Barry, Ill., is in constant use both by the local club and for

**The price ceiling is gone, a spirit of cooperation exists, and the range situation is receiving serious study.**

other tournaments. They even go so far as to have a warm-up match for The Masters participants.

Which is the right way to go for IHMSA? Should ranges be kept up all year to be used for one week only? Or should ranges be used year-round?

Perhaps this will be the next item up for vote of the membership. Credit the leadership with another Plus for looking

at this situation seriously.

Those are the three major accomplishments in the first year for the new leadership. The price ceiling is gone, a spirit of cooperation exists, and the range situation is receiving serious study. Three major accomplishments.

And that ain't bad, but three out of four could easily have been four out of four for a perfect record.

If you are a regular reader of this column, you know what the fourth one is. Scopes. Scopes for use in long-range, big-bore silhouetting under IHMSA rules.

A large number of competitors are now classed as former competitors simply because the rear sights have become too fuzzy for serious competition.

Everything possible has been tried, but the sights just will not clear up. I myself was a serious and fierce competitor in the 1980's; now I am a casual competitor and will remain so until scopes are allowed in long range silhouetting.

Write to IHMSA headquarters at IHMSA, Inc., P.O. Box 368, Burlington, IA 52601 and let them know your feelings whether they be for or against scopes. At least they will have a feel for the membership's wishes in this important decision.

Membership is up and IHMSA seems to be headed in the right direction. Three out of four really isn't bad and is a great start for the first year of new leadership.



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## **NRA OPPOSES MANDATORY SAFETY TRAINING, FAVORS "AWARENESS"**

**T**here is ongoing pressure from firearms prohibitionists to require states to mandate safety training prior to the purchase of a handgun. One such law is already in effect in Rhode Island. Another was recently passed in California, yet failed to survive the governor's veto.

Mandatory training is championed as a program that will reduce accidental fatalities. This hasn't been the case, however, in Rhode Island, the only state with training as a prerequisite to handgun purchase.

Rhode Island has required a safety licensing procedure since 1979, but hasn't experienced any appreciable drop in handgun accidents since that time.

To make matters worse, the Rhode Island licensing system has become so mired in its own bureaucracy that it has practically ceased to function without volunteer assistance—most noticeably that of instructors certified by the National Rifle Association of America, the same instructors available before training became mandatory.

Had NRA volunteers not rescued the struggling state certification program, it could have become a serious impediment for Rhode Island citizens seeking to purchase a handgun.

"Reasonable controls" rapidly become civil rights nightmares, and mandatory training is no different. Rather than a boon to safety, mandated training becomes a scheme for registration and a tool for outright prohibition.

In Rhode Island, even the lawmakers who supported required training now freely admit it isn't working. The program suffers from inadequate funding, insufficient staff and general malaise.

It's paradoxical that the NRA's hugely successful volunteer training system, long in place in Rhode Island, would step forward to save a bureaucratic licensing fiasco. It's a good example of how voluntary programs serve the public while legislative mandates are a public disservice.

Of course, to a public constantly hammered by misleading statistics generated by firearms prohibitionists and their allies in the press, mandatory training *sounds* good. Yet, the public is seldom informed that gun control advocates want mandatory training as a means of opening new avenues for more restrictions. They may be talking safety, but they are thinking licensing, registration and outright restriction.

If we look at the facts, it's clear that mandatory safety training is unworkable and unnecessary. Volunteer programs offered by the NRA have, over the past four decades, helped reduce accidental firearms fatalities by 62.5%—even as the per capita number of guns owned has doubled (and triple the number of handguns owned).

Due in part to NRA training, accidental firearms deaths now rank 10th in the nation, trailing far behind such causes as automobile accidents, drownings, death by fire, accidental falls, choking on food and accidental ingestion of poisons.

**Mandated training becomes a scheme for registration and a tool for outright prohibition.**

Certainly, one accidental injury or death is one too many. NRA calls for additional firearm safety education.

Specifically, NRA wants a strong firearm education program available in every community in America. The NRA supported legislation in Florida that required firearm safety awareness education in that state's schools.

NRA training is having a profound, positive impact in individual schools and school districts and police precincts and through cooperative efforts with organizations like the American Legion, JayCeers, Scouting and 4-H.

For the youngest of our children, the NRA safety message is an *avoidance* message. It is simple, effective and direct: if you find a gun: *Stop! Don't touch it! Leave the area, and tell an adult!*

Yet, gun control advocates oppose this safety awareness message in our schools. Prohibitionists don't want to educate our young people using programs that are neutral on private gun ownership. They fear that objectivity on the topic of firearms—even the neutral "gun avoidance" message—constitutes a form of philosophical acceptance.

In short, they're afraid that kids who learn about gun safety may make their own decisions about ownership. Someday, they may exercise their right to become responsible owners.

Instead, firearms opponents want programs that teach children to fear guns and mistrust gun owners. The agenda they've outlined for public schools amounts to lit-

tle more than brainwashing. Coming from organizations that appear pious in their announced intentions to save lives, opposition to safety training is, in my opinion, the height of hypocrisy.

### **NRA Instructors**

Right now, the NRA has some 27,000 certified instructors available to train responsible adults in virtually every community in America. In every course offered by NRA to nearly three-quarters of a million Americans annually, safety is paramount.

NRA instructors are carefully screened, required to undergo a minimum of 15 to 20 hours of classroom instruction, and work with experienced instructors under actual training conditions. Our instructors have at their disposal carefully researched and constantly updated manuals, teaching outlines and training aids.

NRA offers training in a number of disciplines, including every type of firearm, personal protection, home safety and youth education. NRA has the advantage of over 100 years of experience. And

NRA makes it all available to the American public at little if any cost.

When the Rhode Island licensing mess began to crumble under the weight of its own inertia, NRA volunteers stepped in, quickly reorganized a program that had become a shambles, and kept the option of acquiring a handgun open to Rhode Island citizens.

I'm sure it makes Rhode Islanders angry to think that these same NRA programs were available at the time of the mandatory law's passage, yet overlooked in the political haste to "regulate" firearms through a "public safety measure."

Voluntary safety programs get the job done. NRA is reducing accidental fatalities every year. And NRA will be able to accomplish much more when we have a strong, positive safety education program in place in all our schools.

On the other hand, mandatory training as a prerequisite to purchase a firearm has been a dismal failure. It has failed to reduce accidents, because it is a registration scheme, part of a program aimed at prohibition, not a public safety measure.

If mandatory training becomes an issue in your state, don't back it and don't buy it. There is nothing to gain and everything to lose—including your right to purchase a gun. Fight instead for safety awareness education.

It's a life-saver.



*Gerard J. Kennedy, Ph.D. is Director of the National Rifle Association's Education and Training Division.*

# HANDLOADS FOR NON-HANDLOADERS

By John Taffin

**H**andgun hunting, more correctly hunting with handguns, has grown tremendously in the past 10 to 15 years. And those taking to the field after big game have often found that the factory ammunition was behind the times and the bullets used were not up to the task.

Larry Kelly, of Mag-Na-Port fame and the world's premiere handgun hunter, discovered this the hard way. The factory 240 grain .44 Magnum loads would not provide adequate penetration, a fact that almost got him killed. That is when he switched to heavyweight cast bullets and handloads in his .44 Magnum.

Two companies are now offering ammunition mainly for the handgun hunter which feature heavyweight cast and jacketed bullets. For the past few months I have been testing the accuracy and velocity of these custom loads as I look forward to hunting season.

The two companies that are offering the loads that handgun hunters have been asking for are Garrett Cartridges, headed up by Robbie Robison and Patriot Manufacturing and Sales, owned and operated by Floyd Hagerty.

Garrett Cartridges (P.O. Box 178, Dept. AH, Chehalis, WA 98532; phone: 206-736-0702) is offering two loads for the .44 Magnum, both consisting of heavyweight cast bullets. One load features a 280 grain flat-nosed bullet and the second load uses SSK's 320 grain flat-point bullet that has been used so successfully in game fields around the world. Both of these loads were tested in a pair of Mag-Na-Port Stalkers with the following excellent results:

Bullet	Firearm	Velocity	25 yds	50 yds
280 TC cast	S&W Silkr	1465 fps	5/8"	2 1/8"
280 TC cast	Rgr Silkr	1503 fps	1 3/8"	2 3/8"
320 TC cast	S&W Silkr	1315 fps	1"	1 1/8"
320 TC cast	Rgr Silkr	1386 fps	1"	1 5/8"

*S&W Silkr denotes Mag-Na-Port Stalker 8 3/8" Smith & Wesson Model 629*  
*Rgr Silkr denotes Mag-Na-Port Stalker 8 3/8" Ruger Super Blackhawk in stainless steel.*

Patriot Manufacturing and Sales (P.O. Box 2041, Dept. AH, Sebring, FL 33871; phone 813-655-1798) offers a full line of heavyweight ammunition from .357 Magnum right up through the .454 Casull utilizing both hard cast bullets from SSK and LBT molds plus heavy jacketed bullets.

In .357 Magnum, Patriot has both 180 grain and 200 grain bullets in both jacket-

ed and cast persuasions. Shooters of the .41 Magnum will find the same situation in both 275 and 300 grain weights.

For the .44 Magnum, Patriot offers jacketed bullets in weights of 265, 275 and 300 grains, and cast bullet shooters will find 275, 300, 320, and 340 grain bullets for their favorite sixgun.

The .45 Colt has been long neglected by ammunition manufacturers. No more. Patriot offers both jacketed and cast bullets for the old Colt in 275, 300, and 325 grain weights. These loads are for the Dan Wesson .45, the Ruger Blackhawk and Bisley .45's, and the T/C Contender in .45 Colt. They are too long to fit the short cylinders of the Colt Single Action and I would use them sparingly in the Smith & Wesson 25-5.

The .454 Casull offerings consist of jacketed bullets in 300, 325, and 350 grain weights and I would hope that they will also offer cast bullets in the .454 in weights of from 300 to 400 grains. The final offering from Patriot is the .45 Win. Mag. in a 250 grain round-nosed soft point bullet.

Caliber	Bullet	Firearm	Velocity	25 yds
.44 Mag	275 JSP	S&W 6"	1288 fps	2"
	300 JSP	S&W 6"	1274 fps	2"
	275 JSP	FA 7 1/2"	1373 fps	1 1/4"
	300 JSP	FA 7 1/2"	1334 fps	1 1/2"
	340 SSK	FA 7 1/2"	1265 fps	1 3/8"
	275 JSP	DW 8"	1297 fps	1 1/8"
.45 Colt	300 JSP	DW 8"	1299 fps	1 1/4"
	265 DE	DE 10"	1371 fps	1 3/8"
	275 JSP	DW 8"	1213 fps	2 3/8"
	275 JSP	BSLY 7 1/2"	1231 fps	1 3/8"
.454 Casull	300 JSP	DW 8"	1105 fps	1 1/4"
	325 JSP	DW 8"	1182 fps	2"
	325 JSP	BSLY 7 1/2"	1245 fps	2"
.357 Mag	300 JSP	FA 10"	1617 fps	1 1/4"
	325 JSP	FA 10"	1562 fps	1 1/8"
	340 JSP	FA 10"	1421 fps	1 1/4"
.41 Mag	180 JSP	BSLY 7 1/2"	1316 fps	1 1/4"
	200 JSP	BSLY 7 1/2"	1159 fps	2 1/8"
.41 Mag	300 JSP	BSLY 7 1/2"	1253 fps	1 1/2"

*DW denotes Dan Wesson*  
*BSLY denotes Ruger Bisley*  
*DE denotes Desert Eagle*  
*FA denotes Freedom Arms*

I have tested numerous Patriot loads in numerous sixguns with the following excellent results:

For those in the market for real hunting ammunition for handguns, look no further. Patriot also offers their heavy jacketed bullets, featuring .032" jackets, for those that load their own.



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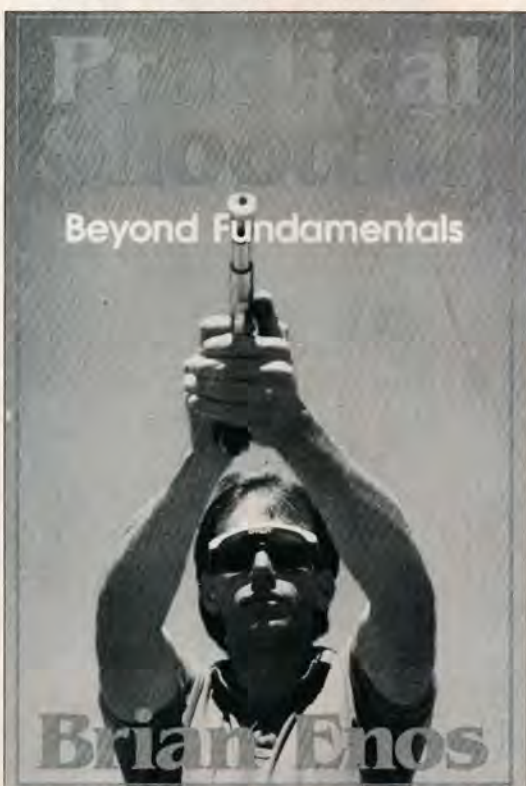
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## BRIAN ENOS REVEALS HIS WINNING TECHNIQUES IN RADICAL NEW BOOK

**A**nyone who follows the IPSC shooting scene is familiar with the name Brian Enos—two-time Bianchi Cup winner, Masters Champion, IPSC Gold Team member, second place twice at both the IPSC Nationals and the Steel Challenge. One of the best, perhaps *the best*, all-around shooters on the pro circuit.

Talk to the other top shooters, that



**"Zen And the Art of Pistol Shooting" could well have been the title of Brian Enos' new book— it's chocked full of good, albeit off-beat, tips and techniques.**

elite group who are capable of winning the big matches, and you will find no other competitor who is more highly respected.

For years Enos has made a study of practical shooting techniques, trying to understand not only what works, but also why.

At the 1990 SHOT Show in Las Vegas I was able to talk shooting with Brian for a while over lunch. I recalled a remark he had made in an interview to the effect that, "The important thing is to realize what you're doing while you are doing it" and I asked him to expand on this remark.

"Shooting is something you do in the present tense, like any physical activity," Brian said, "Yet people seldom really do one thing in the present. Most times the mind is in the past or the future, or both."

"Can you give an example?"

"Okay, say you get up in the morning to go to work. You flip on the radio to catch the news, rub shaving foam on your face and start shaving, and at the same time you're thinking what the traffic will be like or about some problem at work.

"If someone asked you what you were doing you'd say you were shaving, but you're really not. You're shaving and listening to what happened in the world last night and thinking about work.

"So if your goal is to give yourself the best possible shave, you should try and concentrate just on shaving?" I asked.

"No, not at all," Brian replied, "Why would you have to concentrate on something as simple as shaving? A person who's shaved his face a thousand times before isn't going to fail on the thousand and first time. Don't try to do it. Don't concentrate on doing it. Just do it."

But, I wondered, "Then in a match you'd say that all you are doing is just shooting."

"That's right," Brian went on, "And it doesn't matter if it's a match or a practice session. I'm not trying to win, or shoot a certain score, or compete against myself, or evaluate what's happening, or even think about what's happening.

"I'm just in the present, shooting the gun— not the shot I fired a second before, or the one that will be fired a second later, but the one right now, in the present."

In the short time available I asked a number of other questions, wondering if it would be bad manners to whip out a pad of paper and start making notes, and wishing that the rest of us who love this sport could somehow learn from Brian's years of study.

Well, now we can. Recently Enos has published a book called *Practical Shooting: Beyond Fundamentals* that is simply

superb, certainly the best thing ever written on practical pistol competition and one of the best on any type of shooting competition.

Brian doesn't try and teach you how to shoot; he teaches you how to learn. He says that a key to learning is awareness, the ability to observe what is happening, not through a screen of past experience or prejudice, not critically or judgmentally, but simply in a state of open-minded acceptance of reality.

In shooting, the mind receives information from several of the senses—the feel of the gun in recoil, the sound of the bullet striking the target— but none is as important as the sense of vision.

Starting from that base Enos adds sections on the tools of shooting (by which he means not the equipment, but the mechanics of grip, stance, drawing, reloading, etc.); creative shooting; specific challenges; competition; and development.

Don't get the impression that the book is all abstract theory. It is full of practical advice that will benefit shooters at any stage of development.

All the techniques that make up the repertoire of the practical pistol shooter are described in the text and well illustrated in the black and white photographs by Kris Kunkler.

Yet Enos does not say, "These are the techniques I use— do the same and be a good shot." In effect he says, "These are the techniques that are best for me at present, this is how I developed them, and how you can develop the techniques that are best for you."

And this process never ends, for there is no ultimate "right" way to shoot. The best shooters are those who keep an open mind, who continue to learn from every shot fired.

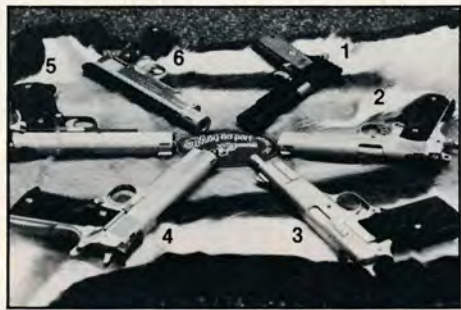
Enos says, "As long as you shoot, your technique will change, but once you have developed the technical skills, the changes come from within...never end your search; never limit yourself to your present knowledge of your technique."

The only criticism I can make is that a certain familiarity with IPSC and action shooting terms and events is assumed. Compared to the overall worth of this book, this is such a picayune complaint that I'm almost embarrassed to mention it.

The appearance of this book is the best thing that's happened to our sport in many a moon; and if your game is silhouette, or bullseye, or sporting clays, or even golf or skiing the principles of how to learn still apply.

If you're already a good shot you'll benefit even more. Currently the price is \$16.95 plus \$3 for shipping and handling. You can put it on your credit card by calling (800) 537-6727 toll free in the U.S. (outside the U.S. call (419) 289-6051) or write to Zediker Publishing at P.O. Box 426, Clifton, CO 81520.





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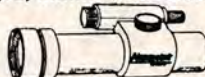
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## CORRECT SPRING TENSION IS VITAL FOR RELIABLE PISTOL FUNCTIONING

In a recent security qualification class, one officer brought a new-in-the-box imported revolver that would not fire double-action, though it ignited every round single-action.

A few days later, when I substituted a slightly heavier hammer spring for the factory part, the little .38 fired any brand of factory or reload ammo we tested on double-action. This was a typical example of compensating for the friction of an individual mechanism by substituting a spring of adequate tension to insure reliable ignition with the slightly shorter DA hammer fall.

In another instance, a lady carried a striker-fired pistol for 20-odd years without ever having tested it for function. When she finally brought it to the range, it refused to fire on repeated attempts.

The malfunction was caused by friction between a slightly oversize and burred striker and the firing pin hole in the slide face. A heavier striker spring solved the ignition problem, but, as is often the case, deburring the parts involved would have been a better and easier solution.

In this particular little pre-war pistol, the firing pin doubles for an ejector when the slide is retracted. The heavier striker spring resulted in violent ejection and a hot case struck another shooter with enough force to break the skin.

Changing spring tension often produces a chain reaction. A heavier recoil spring in an autoloading pistol might require a heavier striker spring, hammer spring and sear spring. Sometimes, it even requires the installation of a heavier extractor spring.

Spring tensions have to be chosen carefully for the specimen being worked on. A too-heavy striker spring could cause some unfortunate results in a striker fired mechanism: A bulged breech face, enlarged firing pin hole or broken firing pin tip are common.

### Firing Pin Tip Loss

One of the saddest sounds I've ever heard is a firing pin tip rattling down the barrel during dry fire. Particularly at risk are Lugers, Nambus and pocket pistols because the only way to relieve spring tension is to snap the action, and this must be done every time you examine the chamber or clean the weapon.

My solution to firing pin tip loss is to put it to work. I don't believe in leaving a

snap cap in the chamber for obvious safety reasons. I drop a piece of  $\frac{5}{16}$ " diameter nylon rod down the bore, elevate the muzzle and snap against the weight of the rod. The nylon drift punches sold by Brownells work beautifully for this purpose. I've lost a lot fewer firing pin tips since adopting this practice.

### Mysterious A.D.

While on the subject of striker-fired pistols, I should relate an incident that happened nearly 40 years ago, but is still vivid in my memory.

I habitually carried a small striker-fired European .32 pistol cocked and locked in the breast pocket of my motorcycle jacket. One evening I came home,

hung my jacket with the pistol still in the pocket in my closet and went to bed. In the early morning hours, the sound of a muffled shot jolted me awake and aroused some of the other tenants in the apartment house.

We did a building search and found nothing. Then I remembered my pistol.

The striker was held in the cocked position by a tiny square section machined integral with the firing pin body. It had succumbed to spring tension and fractured cleanly even with the round body, allowing the pistol to fire one shot.

I still get shudders when I contemplate the result if that had happened as I was tooling down the highway. Needless to say, the next morning I bought a new leather jacket and a Walther PPK to carry in the breast pocket.

That should adequately explain why I will only carry a striker fired pistol with a dry chamber.

### Spring, Sprang, Sprung

Spring replacement, substitution and calibration kits are now available for most of the popular handguns. If you can't find what you need for your particular handgun, chances are that you could use a piece of stock spring from one of the miscellaneous assortments of stock springs available from Brownells; that's

where I found the revolver hammer spring I needed.

Sometimes, you might be able to add tension to a V-shaped leaf spring by flexing the legs outward carefully or remove tension by slightly cramping the legs against a nylon wedge or door stop.

Bending a set in a leaf spring is something that has to be done gently and with adequate support. Whatever you do along these lines, don't scrape or score the spring with metal tools, because the marks could cause the spring to weaken and fracture at that point.

When using a calibration pack with several options, begin with the heaviest spring and work down to the one that accomplishes what you want it to do. This is usually a drill carried out while test firing the weapon.

Often, it is more desirable to stand back and watch somebody else fire the weapon while you watch. I have rigged my Ransom Rest with a long bowden cable so I can fire from a vantage point behind and to the side. You have to consider the effect of possible chain reactions that I mentioned earlier.

In testing some of the new high-intensity loads, you may find that a perfect

One of the saddest sounds I've ever heard is a firing pin tip rattling down the barrel during dry fire.

spring tension balance is reached at the expense of losing skin off your fingertips as you retract a slide with the greater spring tension. Here, more serrations on the slide—perhaps at the front—help somewhat.

When working with revolver hammer springs and rebound slide spring tensions, it is inconvenient to disassemble the revolver on the firing line, so plan on two or three trips to the range.

I have found over the years that only a small group of shooters require a lighter hammer spring, so I substitute a Brownells power rib spring in standard weight. The rebound slide spring has a profound effect on perceived trigger pull weight, so a lighter one may be called for.

If a lighter hammer spring is almost heavy enough, but something between light and standard are called for, the light spring and judicious use of the strain screw counterbore reamer may provide the necessary compromise. This sometimes works better than the heavier spring used with a shortened strain screw.

The most important part of experimenting with spring tensions is to keep notes on the results because this could save you hours of experimentation months or years from now when another similar problem comes across your workbench.





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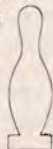
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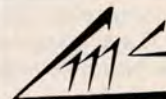
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## IMPROVE YOUR COMBAT SHOOTING WITH VISUALIZATION TECHNIQUES

**H**ow many rounds do you shoot in an average practice session, 400, 500, more? Do you become frustrated after shooting the same course of fire for the tenth time before finally getting it "right"?

We've all been there, so don't get discouraged; maybe the following will help.

Often shooters forget to practice the basics, the fundamentals. They think that all they have to do in order to become

together still in symmetry.

Be aware of the position of your left wrist as you start your grip on the pistol. Visualize the muzzle straight away from your chest with both forearms touching your sides, after the pistol is horizontal or level with the ground, the thumb safety can be taken off and the finger placed in the trigger guard.

From here the pistol is coming up into your peripheral vision, appearing in your



proficient is run through several courses of fire during a session. The top competitors know that in order to maintain their level of expertise they must at regular intervals practice these basics in very great detail.

One of the most important fundamentals of shooting is visualization. In order to be effective you must first be able to visualize every step of each technique.

Consider the technique of drawing your weapon. This would be some of the mental preparation involved in that technique: Key off, or start to move hands, on the first note of the start signal. Both arms will work together in a symmetrical fashion throughout the draw sequence.

That is, if you are right-handed and use a strong-side holster position, as your right hand goes to the strong side, your left hand will go to the opposite side and mimic what the right hand is doing—as if you were going to draw two weapons.

You will need to visualize the manner in which you place your hand on the weapon, whether it's a snatching out or a hooking action. From here to actually drawing the weapon out of the holster and bringing it to the center of your body (keeping your arms as close to your body as possible), both hands will come

line of sight from your eye to the target (your focus will be 100% on the target). Throughout this motion the pistol will be slightly muzzle high.

Continue to raise the pistol until you see the top of the pistol go to point of aim on the target, which is where your line of sight is, though the pistol will be slightly out of focus. At this time, push the pistol straight, point-of-aim on the target; the front sight will start to appear and at the end of the extension will be in focus.

You will be finishing your final squeeze, or grip, on the push out. Begin to take up the slack in the trigger without pre-loading (applying pressure to the weight of the trigger pull).

At the final stage of push-out, the back sight will actually come up to meet the front sight for alignment. At this time you will have 50% focus on the front sight and the other 50% on the target, seeing a ghost picture of the rear sight.

Although this description is somewhat vague, you should begin to get a feel for what visualization entails. Without prepping every detail, no matter how seemingly inconsequential, you will never maintain consistency on something even as common as the draw.

This is how you learn, progress and

maintain in any sport. Sounds simple, which it is, but necessary in order to reach your full potential.

### Home Practice

Many of the basics can be practiced at home. The entire technique must first be broken down into a series of steps. Then spend five minutes (or until each step is fresh in your mind) going through the visualization process already described. Then five to 15 minutes working on the actual technique, going through the physical motions.

The process of visualization (breaking down the steps and becoming proficient in each) is more beneficial than doing 30 to 40 repetitions of live fire at the range which encompasses physical motion as well as actual firing.

By concentrating on only one aspect at a time you've reduced the possibility of mental fatigue caused by trying to concentrate on too many different things all at once.

In order to be as realistic as possible, use dummy rounds in your competition weapon to maintain actual weight, and some type of electronic timing device to gauge your progress and performance by, such as a PACT timer.

Plan your session so that you work on one specific item at a time, and set reasonable goals for yourself. If prior to actual live fire sessions you break down, analyze and become proficient with all of the physical movements involved in all types of draws, magazine changes, shooting positions and movement drills in simulation, you should be able to progress at more than twice the speed of someone who only practices live fire.

### Range Time

Now you should be ready to go to the range. If you have been able to include these elements into your schedule, you should find that whether it's practice or a match, you will become more consistent. Which will result in more productive and educational practice session.

The plateaus and valleys should even out to become a gradual increase of abilities toward your full potential. In addition you should find that you do not mentally tire as quickly, which should enable you to progress even more quickly.

Remember, visualization does not stop in dry fire sessions, but should also be used briefly before each technique is practiced at the range or in a match.

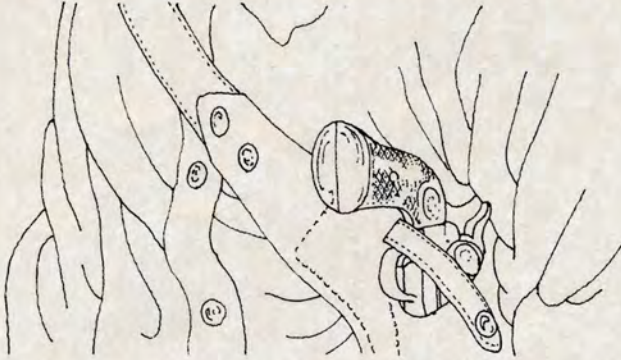


*Current reigning and two-time U.S. National (USPSA/IPSC) Pistol Champion, World Speed Shooting Champion and holder of various other titles, Jerry C. Barnhart is conducting classes at his home range near Berkley, Mich., (arrangements can also be made for your range). Contact him at (313) 546-5154.*

# HANDGUNNING HINTS

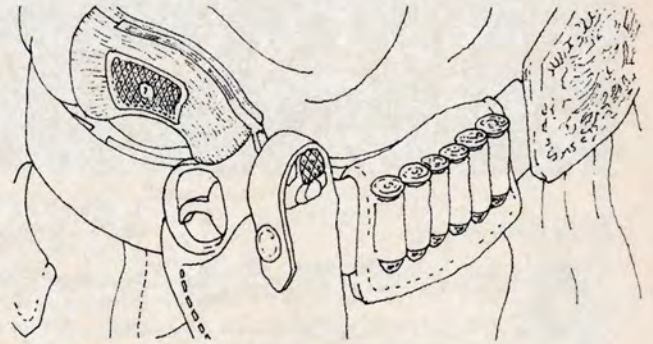
Bennett Viken & Robin Sutton

## ALTERNATIVES for the Gunbelt



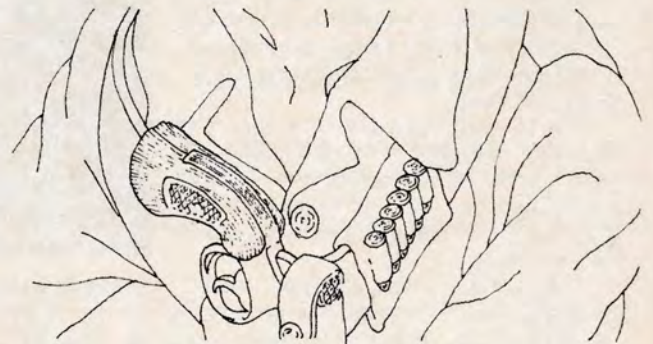
1. A shoulder rig can take some getting used to.

2. That's why most prefer carrying their handguns on their belts.

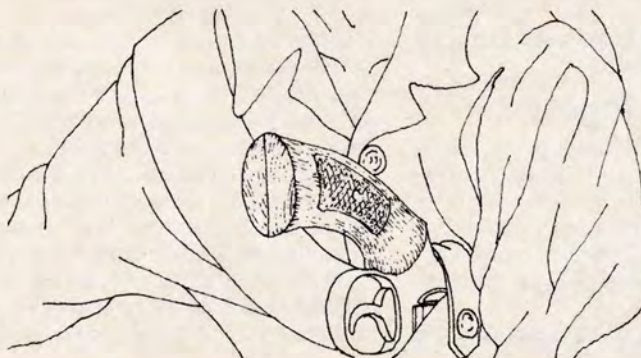


3. But alternative carries of the belt rig for special situations should be considered to keep the gun safe . . .

4. . . clean . . .



5. . . and accessible.



# BULL-X BULLETS



By Peter Tomaras

**A** late April day warms the Illinois prairie. Crop seeds snuggle beneath a comforter of rich, black topsoil. Small guided missiles hurtle towards steel shapes and paper X-rings as shooters gear up for a new match season.

In Farmer City, Ill., handgunners Chuck Bane and Carter Jones have been in high gear all winter— casting lead, not shooting it. By prompt delivery of superb bullets, their Bull-X, Inc. firm has carved out a leading niche in a booming market.

This year, Bull-X will probably sell more cast handgun bullets than anyone else. But when Chuck and Carter purchased Bob Denny's bullet business back in January of 1989, they didn't know if even one of Bob's 3,200 customers would stick with them.

Not to worry. That first year, Bull-X's computer list grew to 6,700 customers who bought 18 million bullets— almost more lead than the new firm could get out. And as the orders multiplied, so did the problems.

"Most troubles were our fault," Carter concedes. "We'd try to cast too hot or too cold. We bought shear pins for the casters by the bucketful." Chuck nods. "Sometimes we'd look at each other and just want to bawl. It was a learning experience, for sure."

Customers helped them learn. One complained that his semi-wadcutters had rounded shoulders. Bull-X immediately replaced his order, and there have been no more complaints about shoulders— or about anything else, for that matter.

But in those trying early months, it's good Bull-X wasn't baking cookies. Imper-

*A selection of cast bullets from Bull-X includes everything from special match-grade wadcutters for competition to heavyweight hunting bullets to general utility slugs. Carter Jones, R, hand-inspects a batch of bullets.*



fect bullets, thank goodness, can go back in the pot. "We did a lot of recycling," Carter says. "At first, only about half the bullets we cast met our quality standard. Today we cast 90-95% good bullets."

## **Bull-X Aims High**

Naturally, Bull-X aims to ship 100% good bullets. Chuck and Carter are committed to maintaining or improving upon the high standard Bob Denny established for commercially cast bullets, and underscore that commitment with an unconditional guarantee.

"We want Bull-X to be a company that

delivers what the customer wants— the first time," Chuck says. "Being the biggest isn't our goal. We want to be the best."

Bull-X wants to be fast, too. Same or next-day shipment is standard for individual orders. Quantity orders sometimes take a bit longer because Bull-X stays too busy to build up much inventory.

By far their best seller is the 200 grain .45 caliber semi-wadcutter (H&G #68). Next comes their 158 gr. .38 cal. semi-wadcutter, then the 125 gr. roundnose 9mm.

Prices for 1,000 bullets range from \$30 to \$41, freight paid to the 48 contiguous states. Individual orders go UPS;

quantity orders—to clubs, police departments, retailers, commercial reloaders, and groups of competitors—usually go by freight. Orders come from all 50 states, and on November 3, 1989, Bull-X went international when Chuck took a phone order from Germany.

## Happy Customers

Prominent names on the Bull-X client list include J. Michael Plaxco, Ray Chapman, Dick Heinie, Rick Byfield, Gib Niswander, and Bob Denny, who also purchases in quantity for commercial reloading.

*Handgunner* editor Cameron Hopkins, testing the Wilson Super Grade .38 Super, found .356" diameter Bull-X bullets in 122, 125 and 155 grains "exceptional." A bunch of shooters fired Bull-X bullets at the Masters International, including the third-place finisher Carter Jones.

While big-name customers are nice, it's Mr. and Ms. Recreational Reloader, ordering 500 to 2,000 bullets at a time, who provide Bull-X's volume. And volume it takes, according to Chuck, to service customers at competitive prices.

"Not all bullet makers shoot," Chuck points out. "Carter and I together have more than 50 years of shooting and reloading experience, so we relate instantly to shooters. We really care, and if you don't care, the quality won't be there."

## Bull-X Shooters

Bane, 43, is both a PPC and NRA Action Pistol master. He was high newcomer at the 1986 Bianchi, and two years later took 8th in the Speed Event and 18th overall with a 1900-137X. A Region 5 IPSC class winner, Chuck is arguably the top pure speed shooter in Central Illinois.

Jones, 54, is a Distinguished Master in conventional pistol and a former National Police Champ. He's also an NRA Action Pistol master, and a four-time Prairie State Games champ. He holds the IHMSA international record of 37x40 in production standing. Finishing 3rd at the '89 Masters affirmed his rank among the nation's elite.

"We often ask ourselves," Carter muses, "if we were making zippers, would we be here at 10 o'clock at night? It's hard work, but we enjoy it because it's shooting-related."

Chuck and Carter stay fit pumping lead, not iron. Incoming alloy shipments—10 to 15 tons, 2,500 lbs. per pallet—must be spread around the floor so they won't crash through into the basement.

Machines make the bullets, but people feed the 8 lb. alloy ingots into the melting pots, then handle the bullets multiple times before they're shipped.

Bull-X uses Taracorp Magnum alloy, and the recipe is no secret: 92% virgin lead, 6% antimony for hardness, and 2% tin for castability. Tin is expensive, but lead and antimony won't pour and mold reliably without it. Some casters use as



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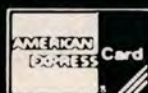
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little as .5% tin, which makes it hard to maintain consistent high quality.

"Hard-cast" is a generic term anyone can use. Bull-X bullets test between 15-17 BHN (Brinell Hardness Number), the same as the Lyman #2, the standard of the industry. Hardness minimizes leading and enables a light bullet like their 125 gr. 9mm to withstand major power factor velocities—for shooters who like to live on the edge.

## Making Bullets

Producing good bullets, of course, involves more than lifting lead and switching on a casting machine. Temperature, humidity, flow rate, and duration of flow are just some of the variables.

In the Bull-X production room, safety is paramount. The toxicity of lead demands proper ventilation engineering.

under pressure and at 145° F, into the lube groove(s) of the sized bullets.

The lubricant Bull-X originally used hardened during shipment in winter and failed to adhere reliably. They soon switched to a different lube which stays in the groove "like a rubber band."

Inspection is continuous throughout the process. After a final hand inspection, bullets are counted by a scale, most frequently set to weigh out 502, boxed, and labeled. Few boxes rest long on shelves before they're packaged to fill orders.

One box of 500 200 gr .45 semi-wadcutters weighs 14.4 lbs., and on a typical day Bull-X ships 70,000+ bullets—over a ton of lead. That explains why most hands are needed for inspecting, boxing, and assembling orders for shipment.

Record 1990 orders for Bull-X missiles have affirmed the surging popularity

Across this broad land hundreds, maybe thousands of shooters will be winning with Bull-X bullets.

Home casters know the importance of eye protection, and Bull-X machine operators also wear ear protection.

Bull-X started with three Bullet Master casting machines from Magma Engineering Co., which average 2,000 bullets per hour apiece. Before long they added a higher-capacity PCM caster from Precision Casting & Equipment, Inc. of Jasper, Ind.

The casters go on by 7 a.m. and, in peak months, spit out bullets as late as midnight. The alloy melts at 500° F, and is ready to cast at 625-650° F. Until molten lead heats up the molds, bullets come out sub-par and get recycled.

Operators dump the still-hot bullets onto inspection tables where bad ones are removed. Too many bad bullets means the caster needs adjustment. Good bullets move to one of three Magna Lube Master lubri-sizers.

Bullets are cast about .002" oversize. A collator arranges them point down and a punch pushes them through the sizer. At the next stage, a die squeezes lubricant,

of the handgun sports. Bane and Jones have moved operations to a facility with concrete floors and twice the space. They've expanded their product line to include brass and powder, and now offer commercial reloading. Best of all, they've got ideas for new types of bullets.

Entrepreneurship has its downside: limited time to shoot. So that one of them is always on the job, Chuck goes to Bianchi, Carter to The Masters, and so on. It will take Chuck longer to become an IPSC master or win the Steel Challenge. Carter may yet win The Masters, but he might have been IHMSA international champ, too.

Look at it this way, master-casters. Across this broad land hundreds, maybe thousands of shooters will be winning with Bull-X bullets. The thrill of victory is just a matter of perspective.



For more information on Bull-X, call Chuck or Carter toll-free at 1-800-248-3845.



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**Situation:** Home invasion! A scumbag bursts in your front door and opens fire with a hidden snubnosed .38.

**Lesson:** You've got to keep him from reaching your family, and there's only one way—you fire your Detonics .45!

We'll just call him Al, for two reasons. First, it's his name. Second, the background and companions of the violent criminal he had to justifiably kill have never been sorted out, and there is no reason to expose Al and his surviving family to retribution.

Perhaps you are relaxing at home, late in the evening, reading this. Al was doing that the night it happened three years ago, only he was stretched out in front of the TV instead. With him was his wife, Rita. Al was a contented man.

Though the couple were in their mid-forties, Rita still had the stunning beauty of her teens, when she and Al had been high school sweethearts and married young. The five children, Al would laugh proudly, had their mother's looks. The kids were all grown now, and Gloria, 25, was living at home with her own daughter. Al was at peace.

There came a knock at the door.

"You better answer it," Rita told Al.

He padded to the door in his stocking feet. The West Coast city where they lived had gone a bit to seed around them, and as the crime rate rose, Al got into the habit of keeping guns where he could reach them. A collector with some 30 handguns, Al read magazines like this one, and books on the subject. In the home entertainment center a few paces from the front door was a loaded Browning Hi-Power 9mm, and on the top of a grandfather clock near the front door was a Detonics .45 automatic.

There was a young black man at the door. "Can I speak with Umberto," he asked Al, "Does Umberto live here?"

Al told the man cordially that he had the wrong place. Their home was in a five-apartment building in the east part of the city, and shared an identical address with another apartment house on the west side. Al told the man how to get there.

As he watched the man leave, he went on alert. There was another man waiting for him in a car in the driveway and Al thought, "The car is heading out. Why did they park so they could make a quick getaway?"

He returned to the living room and plopped back on the couch. "I have a feeling he's coming back," Rita said. Al tried to put her at ease and changed the subject. Ten minutes later, there was another knocking on the door.

Al was sure it was the same man. "My thought was to get to the gun," he would say later, "and then see what this clown wanted." As Al moved toward the grandfather clock, he saw Rita move quickly, a couple of steps ahead of him, and reach the door first.

The compact, shiny pistol slipped easily into Al's hand, its Pachmayr grips firm under his fingers. As he came up behind his wife, the gun hidden from view behind him, he saw that the man was showing her a receipt, insisting that she look at it. Al realized instantly that it was a ruse to get inside.

Al is behind his wife now. With the muzzle safely to the side, he touches the metal of the



Detonics slide to her back, to let her know that he has armed himself. It is his way of saying, "Hey, let me handle this, step away." Al starts to gently push Rita to the side, out of danger.

But she has already started to open the door, and now Al's tunnel vision goes past the receipt in the young man's left hand and to the right hand.

The man has held it behind him until now, and suddenly he whips it out in front of him. It holds a short-barrel .38 revolver.

The man cries, "Get inside the house!"

Still trying to push his wife clear, Al brings the stubby .45 up and over her shoulder.

And the intruder fires the first shot.

Al tunnels in on the attacker, and his response is instantaneous. Right hand only, he begins firing the .45, pointing it instead of aiming it. The alcove explodes into rolling gun thunder.

The .45 slugs hit the offender, driving him backward. But he is firing too, .38 bullets whiz around Al, tearing into the porch, the front door, the wall, even the garage.

The slide locks back on the empty Detonics. The gunman has toppled backward and sprawled on the grass outside the front door. He and Al had been perhaps three feet apart when the shooting started. Now, that distance has doubled.

The man on the ground is convulsing violently, still pulling at the trigger of his revolver. "Momma," Al hears him scream. "Momma! Momma!"

## Keep Shooting!

Armed men have certain reflexes that you see in gunfights. One of them is, when your pistol is empty, grab another.

Al darts back into the house, a matter of only a few steps, and rips the Browning 9mm from its hiding place in the stereo. He lunges back outside, intent on emptying the pistol into this man who has violated the sanctity of his home with gunfire.

As he emerges, he sees another convulsive movement by the man with the gun, and fires the Browning. Al pulls the trigger again.

Nothing. The pistol has jammed.

As Al works to clear the pistol, he comes to his senses. One of the many books he has read about this discipline is called *In the Gravest Extreme*. He realizes that the man is down now, helpless, and to shoot him again could constitute murder. He will not go to prison and leave his family for this piece of scum.

He has expertly returned the Browning to firing battery now. He kicks the gun away from the hand of the downed attacker, who is still twitching.

Almost as soon as the shooting stopped, Al heard the screech of tires as the other man, the one who drove the car, peeled out and fled the scene.

He knows that there is only one antag-

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## Hi-Sweep Beavertail Grip Safety

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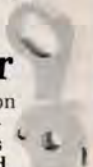
## Beavertail Installation Jig

This is a neat and easy-to-use jig for installing our beavertail grip safety. Heat-treated super-hard so hand filing right up against it is okay.



## Commander Style Slotted Hammer

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Stop screwdriver slips! Replace your ruined screw slots with these Allen Head screws. **Blue #803 and Stainless #804.**



## 1911 Extended Safeties

Made in both **Blue #890 and Stainless Steel #891**, this new part is more oversize than any other. Angled slightly to keep thumb from contacting slide and has double angle to fit thumb perfectly. Requires gunsmith fitting for safe operation.



## 1911 Ambidextrous Safeties

Required for the IPSC weak hand stages as well as left-handed shooters. **Blue #892 and Stainless Steel #893.** Requires gunsmith fitting for safe operation.



## Four-Star Compensator Assembly

Not just four slots, four separate chambers with four baffles to wipe the expansion gas from the bullet and reduce recoil. Complete assembly available in blue or stainless steel with a stainless barrel pre-fitted to a Colt Government model in 45ACP or 10mm. 1911 copies may require fitting.



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## Heavy Duty Guide Rod Assembly

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## Four-Star Full Custom Pistol



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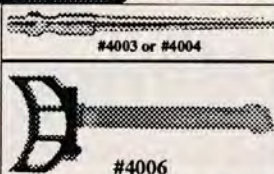
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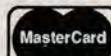
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onist left, and that he is now *hors de combat*.

**Deadly Gunfire**

But what of Rita?

He sees his wife lying near the door. She disappeared when the tunnel vision kicked in at the gunman's first shot. Her glasses lie beside her. Al can't see any blood on her, and prays that she has fainted.

But as he draws closer, he sees a fine mist of red droplets on her fallen glasses. Al has had first aid and CPR training. He feels for a pulse and finds one.

He runs into the house, screaming upstairs for his daughter to call the police. He grabs a wet towel and runs back, cradling his wife's head and trying to wake her up.

He sees a lesion near her hairline that looks like a pimple or a boil. He dabs at it, hoping it is just a graze.

Then, within a minute it seems, the police are there.

**Heartbreaking Aftermath**

The emergency response is swift. Daughter Gloria, hearing the shots upstairs, has already called 911. Neighbors have also heard the shooting and are beginning to respond.

The police officers have no trouble determining who's who. Rita is the unofficial mother of the neighborhood, the kind-hearted woman who is the first to welcome new people who move in, who always has a cup of coffee for a police officer.

The professionals rush to Rita's side. They pry Al away from her gently. He is still calling her name.

"It was then," Al will say later, "that I got a little crazy."

He screams at the downed suspect, "Why did you do it?" He tells the man, who is rapidly losing consciousness, that he is going to die.

Daughter Gloria will have an even more chilling memory of this grievous moment burned into her: she will recall that it is the first time she has seen her father cry.

Al's prediction to the fallen gunman will prove correct. He *will* die of his wounds, but not for another 11 days. He will linger in the hospital, unable to speak or answer questions. Rodney Woods, 21, will die tonight inside his head. The rest of him will take a bit longer.

And the paramedics are shaking their heads. Woods is not the only casualty. The wound on the gentle grandmother's face is not the graze or boil that it looks like. It is the swollen entry point of a penetrating .38 caliber gunshot wound of the brain.

The beautiful woman the neighbors all considered their surrogate mother has been killed almost instantly.

**Gunfight Analysis**

Was "Umberto" a drug dealer Rodney Woods had intended to rip off? Was he someone at the same address on the West

Side that he sought vengeance against? The police were never able to find out. The whole thing may well have been part of the subterfuge for the home invasion Woods paid his life to attempt.

"The police believe they know who the man was that was driving the car," says Al. "I never got a good look at him and could never identify him. With no evidence, they could not make an arrest. The police told me this man was killed in a liquor store holdup attempt several months after Rita was murdered."

We do know that whatever the intruder's intentions, Al's volley of .45 bullets kept Rodney Woods from entering the house. Perhaps he and his colleague intended to kill everyone inside anyway, or perhaps they would have done so without preplanned intent to eliminate the witnesses after Woods' first panicky shot killed Rita.

Al's daughter Gloria, and her own little daughter, may well owe their lives to the fact that Al was able to blow away the killer before he could enter the portal of their home.

Was the shooting of Woods a stopping failure or a stopping success? It's a matter of perspective.

The short barreled Detonics was charged with handloads, a mix of 230 grain ball and 185 grain jacketed hollow-point, all reloaded "light" by Al himself.

"I didn't want to beat the gun to death," he explained, "and I didn't see any point in having a gun I couldn't control."

At a range of three to four feet, every bullet Al fired struck the suspect. Reports say Woods was hit eight times; Al fired one shot from the Browning and seven from the Detonics.

None of the bullets struck the heart nor the central nervous system. However, virtually all were what a combat shooter would call "solid hits." Relates Al, "I never saw the autopsy, but the police who did told me that one bullet went through his jaw and severed his tongue. Another went through his larynx. They had to do a tracheotomy on him. One bullet came close to his heart, and several were in the groin area.

"Yet he lay in the intensive care unit for 11 days before he died. Then, I had to stop and think of stopping power in a .45, at least, in the loads I was using. Any of these .45s could have been fatal but none of them were, at least, not immediately.

"Since the incident I've changed my whole philosophy about personal defense ammo. Right now, my Detonics is loaded with Federal Hydra-Shok 230 grain .45 jacketed hollowpoints."

Having relived it hundreds of times in his mind, Al believes the shootout took no more than three seconds. He pointed the gun rather than aimed it. Some would suggest that taking the extra fraction of a second to more precisely index the weapon would be more likely to bring about a center hit closer to the central

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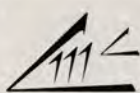
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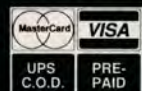


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nervous system that would more likely drop the suspect immediately instead of allowing him to convulsively empty his weapon.

We stress that in any case, no technique would have saved Rita's life by this time; the police conclusively determined that the first shot of the gunfighter, the .38 slug wantonly released by the home invader who was screaming, "Get inside the house," was the one that took her life.

She had already been mortally wounded before Al began his pointing-shooting return of fire at the distance of one yard or less.

We notice that the Browning jammed after the first shot was fired. Al had seen on the range that the gun was finicky about what it would and would not feed. It was loaded with jacketed hollowpoints, 13 in the magazine and one in the chamber.

Browning users have long noted that the P-35 Hi-Power generically functions better downloaded by one, that is, 12 in the magazine plus the one in the chamber. British SAS troops are under specific orders to load their issue Browning magazines with 12 rounds apiece, not 13.

The Browning jam took no price in innocent life. Indeed, it ironically may have saved one. Clearing the jam gave Al time to come to his senses and realize that shooting the man 13 more times could be construed in court as murderous intent. Al made the correct decision at that point to cease fire. He knew he had already neutralized the assailant.

### Tortures Of The Damned

In three years since the death of the woman he loved so deeply, Al has gone over the incident numerous times. He has suffered the tortures of the damned.

"Why her, not me?"

"Could I have kept her from being shot?"

We are all Monday morning quarter-backs here. Al's thought was that if he'd reached the door ahead of Rita, she would not have been shot. That may or may not be true.

If the first shot was going to hit the head of the first person Rodney Woods fired at, then the one armed defender in the household would have gone down without any defensive fire being levied at the threat. It is entirely possible that Rita, and Gloria, and the granddaughter would then have been murdered by a Rodney Woods and his partner who no longer had an armed defender in their way.

Would more potent bullets have worked? We'll never know.

The Hydra-Shok, which was just becoming available and was as yet unproven at the time of Al's shooting, has since amassed a record of one-shot stops high in the 80th percentile according to the ongoing Evan Marshall study of actual gunfights.

On the other hand, the little Detonics is not easy to control; would all of the

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full-power shots have struck Woods as solidly as did the light handloads?

A ballistic junkie would say a "magic bullet" would have dropped Woods, but a homicide investigator would call it a moot point: *once the first return .45 slug hit Woods, he no longer hurt people.* Mortally wounded and going down, Woods' convulsive triggering damaged only the house and garage.

Perhaps the most telling lesson is this one, the one Al seemed to emphasize when he told this story.

"As he was coming up with the gun and yelling, 'Get inside the house,' I pointed my gun at him over Rita's shoulder. It was in my mind that if he sees the barrel of my gun it will be an intimidating force, he will turn and run. Instead, in the little time when he saw my gun, he must have felt it was kill or be killed, because he got off the first shot."

Al has shared his tormenting experience with you and I for one reason: he believes that if someone out there, just one person, learns a lesson that keeps it from happening again, it will be worth it.

When the suspect's gun is coming up on you, all bets are off. Deterrence can no longer be relied upon. It is a "shoot" situation.

I do not believe that it was any form of weakness that kept Al from pulling that trigger in that first moment. Have you ever been in the situation of perhaps killing a human being before the very

eyes of someone you loved, someone who loved you?

Al's wife was most often described after her death by those who knew her as "kind" and "gentle." She was not the person you would want to kill in front of. Al's hesitancy in pulling the trigger was understandable and forgivable.

Most drawn gun situations, police and civilian, do end with deterrence. However, most of them have not gone this far. There is a time to take a suspect at gunpoint and, we learn from this tragic case, there is a time to quickly index the weapon for a center hit and fire. Too, at this close range, thrust the gun forward and put a bullet through the medulla of the man with the gun.

### Lessons To Learn

It was bitterly ironic that such a gentle and generous couple should end their time together in such a moment of mindless savagery. If lessons are not learned, that irony will be even more bitter.

I have no doubt that if he had it to do over again, Al would shove his gun past his wife's shoulder until the muzzle was practically touching Woods' nose, and pull the trigger in the same swift movement.

But we have the luxury of hindsight. When it comes for us, we'll have to do what Al did: trust our training and preparation to carry us through.

The good people don't always win. Al

handled it better by far than most of us could have done under the same circumstances.

The final irony is that the last legacy of the kind woman who was murdered that night was a lesson to us all that sometimes, kindness must be shoved aside and something more terrible must come to the forefront, so the kindness can live to deliver its beneficent effects in perpetuity.

I leave you with these words from Al, the courageous man who was already showing his beloved wife aside to take the bullet himself, in her place, when the murderer fired first; the man so courageous that he bared his soul, for you and your loved ones, for the purpose of this teaching article.

"Maybe if I'd had a mindset to shoot first," he recalls, "my wife today would not be dead. I knew he had a gun in his hand and I knew he presented a threat to me. I was reluctant to take the first shot. Somehow in my mind, I felt he was going to turn around and run."

"That didn't happen."



*The criminal justice system ruled the death of Rodney Woods a justifiable homicide. Al's family continues to put their lives back together amid the scar tissue. Those who would share their thoughts and support with Al may write to him c/o Massad Ayoob, PO Box 122, Concord, NH 03301.*

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# HANDLOADING

FRANK JAMES

## NOSLER, FAMOUS FOR "PARTITION," MAKES GREAT PISTOL BULLETS TOO

Nosler bullets have long had a reputation for accuracy and successful hunters swear by their Partition bullets. But I have to confess my ignorance when it comes to their product line for handgun reloading.

To educate me, Nosler forwarded samples for 13 of the 15 handgun bullets they manufacture. Nosler makes three different .45 caliber handgun projectiles—a 250 gr. JHP, a 230 gr. FMJ, and a 185 gr. JHP.

The 250 gr. hollowpoint is one that was intended for use in the .45 Colt cartridge and, like all the Nosler bullets made for

another story.)

For the semi-auto bullets, the sizes run .400" for 10mm and .355" for 9mm or 9x19.

There is evidence of scalloping of the jacket material around the hollowpoint on all of these bullets, but you have to look for it more carefully on the revolver bullets, and this scalloping of the gilding metal jacket at regular intervals helps the hollowpoint open in a consistent manner.

But it can't be seen on the 240 gr. soft point bullet Nosler builds in .44 caliber, as obviously the intent here is one of penetration and not expansion.

The Noslers for those calibers normally employed in semi-auto bullets are what really attracted my attention, however, because of the distinct and impressive appearance.

The revolver bullets look similar to those from other manufacturers, but that can't be said about the jacketed bullets available in the following calibers and weights—.45 185 gr. JHP, the 10mm 170 gr. JHP, the 9mm 115 gr. JHP, and the 9mm 90 gr. JHP.

Since these bullets are intended for self-loaders there is no exposed lead to the hollowpoint, but the gilding metal jacket of 95% copper and 5% zinc does not fold over as far into the cavity as seen so often with most jacketed hollow point bullets.

No, in this case the jacket material rolls just over the edge and then stops exactly at the beginning of the cavity giving the whole bullet a very precise appearance.

The hollowpoint cavity itself has a bowl-like slope toward the center on all these semi-auto bullets and then a slightly deeper center cavity than that found on other brands of bullets.

I have enjoyed loading all these Nosler bullets, but especially so the 115 gr. JHP bullet in 9x19 Parabellum. The accuracy is excellent and the bullet shape is one I like for reliable feeding in a couple of different pistols.

I asked if the 90 gr. bullet was intended for the .380 Auto and they said it could be used in a .380, but it was really intended for use in the 9x19, so don't expect good expansion at the slower velocity discovered with the .380 Auto guns.

New bullets Nosler is going to introduce in 1991 include a soft point 300 gr. .44 bullet, 150 gr. JHP for the 10mm, and a bullet designed specifically for IPSC shooters and the .38 Super. It will be a 150 gr. and very similar in profile to their

Continued on page 91



revolvers, the hollowpoint has a good portion of exposed lead surrounding the cavity.

Chub Eastman of Nosler Bullets' experience has shown the exposed lead is needed for those lower velocity loads. This 250 gr. .45 bullet has a cannellure at the top of the shank (the shank being the full diameter, parallel sides of a projectile) and a slight bevel to the heel leading to the base of the bullet.

All three of the Nosler .45 bullets are sized .451", as opposed to .452", because the people at Nosler feel there are more variables in handguns, particularly revolvers, and they don't want to encounter pressure problems. They also found the smaller diameter bullets even shoot a little better in most cases.

All of the bullets built for revolver calibers follow the example of the .45 bullet in style and construction, if not exact profile. That goes for the .44 240 gr. JHP, the .44 200 gr. JHP, the .41 210 gr. JHP, the .38 158 gr. JHP and the .38 125 gr. JHP.

It seems, though, that the .45 bullets were the only ones undersized because the .44 bullets were sized .429", the .41 bullets were .410", and the .38 caliber bullets are all sized .357".

(My own experience has led me to wonder if a .409" jacketed bullet wouldn't be better than the full-diameter .410" for the .41 Magnum, but that's

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**Rob Leatham**

- 2nd Place, 1990 USPSA National Championship (Springfield P9)
- 3rd Place, 1990 IPSC World Championship (Springfield P9)
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**Allen Fulford**

- U.S. Civilian Bullseye Champion, 1990 Camp Perry National Matches, his fourth national championship (Springfield 1911-A1)
- Winner, 1990 Masters International Pistol Championship, the first shooter to win the Masters title twice (Springfield 1911-A1)

# "BEST IN THE WORLD"

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1990 IPSC World Championship Pistol

Doug Koenig  
1990 IPSC  
World Champion



**W**

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BY JOHN TAFFIN

# TAFFIN TESTS

I've been a long time fan of the Ruger Single Action sixgun. My first sixgun was an early Ruger Single-Six with the old-style flat loading gate.

Then the big bores beckoned and it

shortly with a .44 Magnum Flat-Top. As old time cowboy, writer, and sixgunner Walter Rodgers said: "Bless Bill Ruger for putting Magnums into single-action workin' guns."

The two Flat-Tops were followed by

first one to hit Montana in '69 or '70.

The Bisleys came along in the 1980's in all the big bore calibers plus the diminutive .22 and .32 Magnum and they too were all welcomed with open arms. My Bisley .41 Magnum will, well, that's another story.

The one Ruger Blackhawk that I have totally ignored has been the .30 Carbine.

## the .30 Carbine

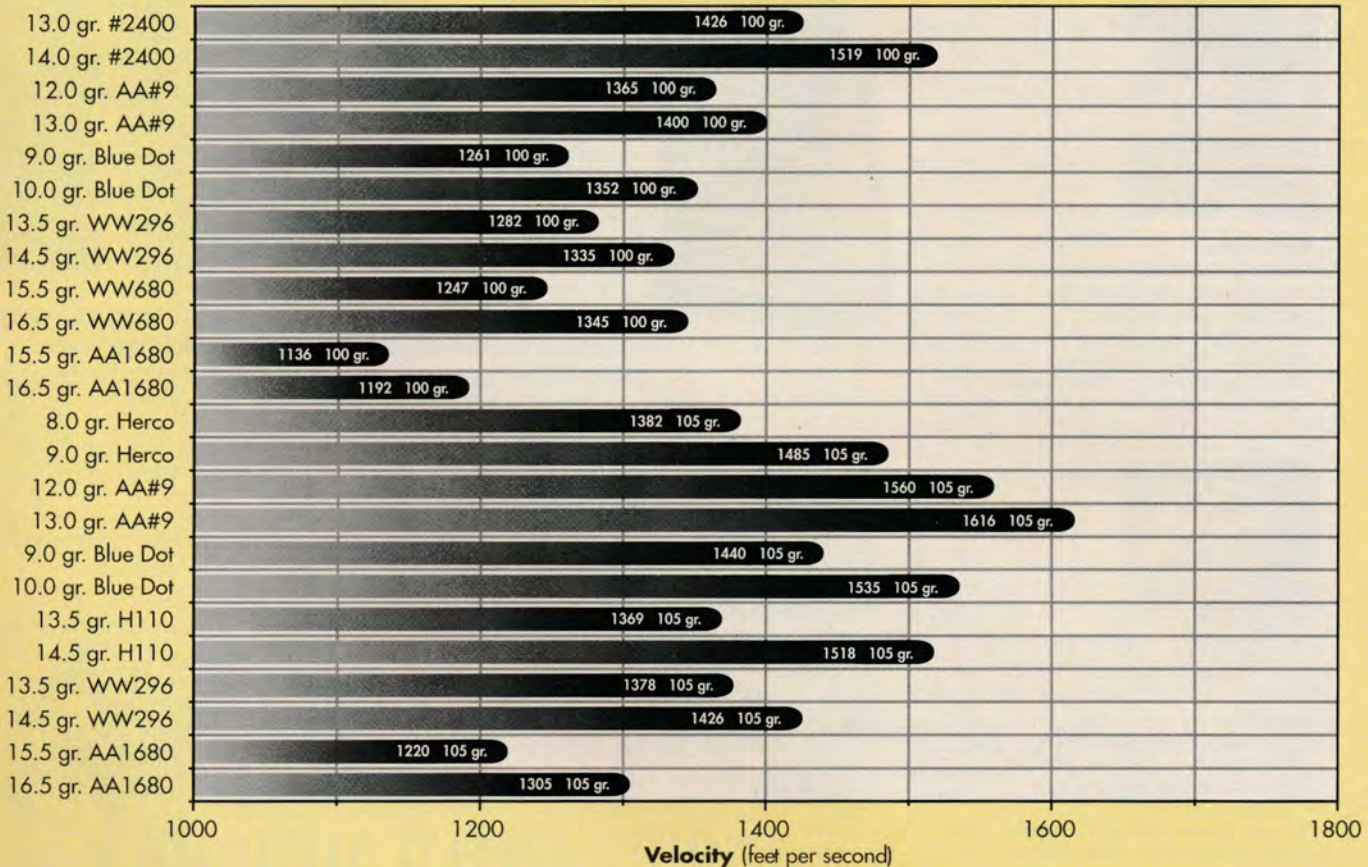
has been a long-time love affair with the Blackhawk since I bought my first .357 Flat-Top in 1957 and followed it up very

an early Ruger Super Blackhawk, and then— wonder of wonders— Ruger chambered for the .45 Colt and I got the

Built on the Ruger Super Blackhawk frame, it struck me as being overly heavy.

Plus, just who were they trying to

### High Performance Favorite Loads For The .30 Carbine



**WARNING:** Neither the author nor **American Handgunner** accept responsibility for results obtained with this reloading information due to the inherent variation in handloading components and individual reloading techniques.



fool? Semi-automatic cartridges don't belong in sixguns, do they? That is why cartridges have rims—so they can be used in sixguns—right?

I was totally happy to go along my way and would have probably completely ignored the .30 Carbine sixgun forever. And then it happened.

My shooting buddy Joe Penner called one quiet evening a few months back and said: "You'll never guess what I just bought!"

Yep, you're right, it was a .30 Carbine Blackhawk.

"I just picked up a three-screw .30 Blackhawk for \$150!"

Of course he had to bring it over and I was surprised to find a gun, even though the bluing was well worn, that locked up tight and showed no signs of abuse. Apparently everyone had passed it up because of the worn bluing and the store lowered the price until it finally sold.

"I figured you would want to try it out so I ordered a set of Lee dies with a taper crimp die plus 500 rounds of Remington brass. It will be here next week."

Then to top it off, he brought it over with a 2X Leupold scope mounted. What more could I ask for? I was ready for another break from the heavy kickers and a heavy sixgun with no recoil and a scope to help me shoot it without straining my eyes was dropped right into my lap.

Going to my storage of bullets suitable for use in the .30 Carbine, I found Speer 100 grain Plinkers and 110 grain hollow-point Varminters left over from previous testing sessions with a custom .30-20 revolver. Joe brought over 500 hard cast bullets that he had moulded from Hensley & Gibb's #250GC blocks. The 105 grain bullets were gas checked, lubed, and sized and I was ready to go to work.

The .30 M-1 Carbine is a product of World War II and was designed to take the place of the .45 sidearm as it would be easier to fire accurately for most G.I.'s.

## **.30 Carbine History**

Sometime in the 1950's, I believe, the short lived Kimball Company produced semi-automatics chambered for the .30 Carbine round. Christy Gun Works offered .30 Carbine replacement barrels and cylinders for the Colt Single Action Army and one former soldier from the Pacific theater wrote in *The American Rifleman* of having a Colt Bisley converted to .30 Carbine by Christy complete with frame mounted firing pin.

But it remained for Ruger to bring out the first successful .30 Carbine handgun. They have since been joined by Thompson/Center with Contender barrels chambered in .30 Carbine, and just recently iAi has gone Kimball one better and introduced a semi-automatic .30 Carbine pistol, the AutoMag III, that really works.

It did not take me long to fall in love with the .30 Carbine Blackhawk.

"Hey, Joe, wanna sell it?"

The combination of light, almost non-existent, recoil with excellent accuracy, makes the .30 Blackhawk a real pleasurable sixgun to say the least.

Since the .30 Carbine is a rimless cartridge, it must headspace on the front of the case mouth in the Ruger's cylinder. This means no crimp on the bullet, which can be a problem in a revolver. In this case, recoil is not enough to cause the bullets in the remaining cases to move forward.

But, a good crimp is usually necessary to get the powder burning properly. The answer to the latter problem is a taper crimp die which puts a long firm pull on the bullet in the loaded brass. It is also necessary for the best accuracy.

Other than the necessity of the fourth die for utilizing the taper crimping operation, the .30 Carbine reloads as easily as the standard straight-walled sixgun cartridges. Lee offers a carbide die set that works well except the shellholder is a somewhat sloppy fit.

The .30 Carbine is sure to be compared to the .32-20. The .32-20 has that all important rim which allows bullets to be crimped for use in sixguns, but the .30 Carbine is much stronger brass.

The necks of .32-20 brass are lost with regularity. Not so with the .30 Carbine brass. It is as tough as the other Magnum sixgun cartridges.

Some have converted .30 Carbine Blackhawks to .32-20 and while it works, it does not work very well. The diameter of .32-20 is big where the .30 Carbine is little and vice-versa. What would really be a proper solution is a .30 Carbine Rimmed.

## **Field Testing**

After loading 400 test rounds for the .30 Blackhawk, I prepared for some pleasant shooting. The 2X Leupold scope was easily sighted in with factory Carbine rounds. Loading the cylinder with the first batch of Speer Plinkers, I watched the first round hit dead center, then cocked the hammer for shot number two.

The hammer dropped on dead silence. Nothing. Bring the suspect cartridge back around in line. Try it again. Nothing. Again. Still would not fire.

I thought this was the portent of things to come with the .30 Carbine in the Blackhawk, but it proved instead to be the one lone exception. No other malfunctions have surfaced with the Blackhawk .30 Carbine. Tainted primer perhaps.

Speer offers the two jacketed bullets that seem to be tailor-made for the .30 Carbine sixgun. One is the 100 grain plinker which is a copper cup with a lead core. No lead touches the barrel and I load these flush with the end of the copper jacket. In the past, these have not been the most accurate .30 caliber bullets when tried in other guns. They work fine

in the .30 Carbine.

Some exceptional loads with the 100 grain Speer Plinker are 13.0 grains of AA#9 for one-inch at 25 yards and a speed over the triple skyscreens of the Oehler Model 35P of a nice round 1,400 fps.

The same accuracy is obtained with 13.5 grains of H4227 for 1,331 fps. All loads use Federal #200 small rifle primers.

Two milder loads that give even better accuracy are 15.5 grains of AA#1680 for 1,136 fps and 7.0 grains of HS7 for 868 fps. The latter load seemed so mild that I tried one shot—that is all it took—without ear protection. Definitely a foolish thing to do.

Even at these sedate lower muzzle velocities, the noise from the .30 Carbine can definitely be classified as earsplitting. Good hearing protection is an absolute must.

Switching over to the 110 grain Speer Varminter resulted in even greater accuracy with the .30 Carbine. Some exceptional loads are 9.0 grains of Herco (1,380 fps), 13.5 grains of H4227 (1,145 fps), and 14.5 grains of H4227 (1,263 fps). These are all in the one-inch or less at 25 yards category and make explosive varmint loads.

The same mild loads used with the 100 grain Plinker, 15.5 grains of AA#1680 and 7.0 grains of HS7, also result in pleasant shooting loads with the 110 grain Speer JHP.

Many sixguns shoot well with jacketed bullets; others do well with cast bullets. Happiness is finding one that does both. The Ruger .30 Carbine does both.

The Hensley & Gibbs #205, 105 grain roundnose bullet gives fast steppin', tack-drivin' results. Some examples are 9.0 grains of Herco (1,485 fps, 1 1/4"), 12.0 grains of AA#9 (1,560 fps, 3/4"), 14.5 grains of WW296 (1,426 fps, 1") 14.5 grains of H4227 (1,563 fps, 5/8"), and 16.5 grains of AA#1680 (1,305 fps, 3/4").

For milder loads, four to five grains of Bullseye, WW231, or WW452AA all give groups under one-inch at muzzle velocities of 850 to 1,150 fps.

The short range silhouette Hunters Pistol and Field Pistol courses were seemingly designed with the Blackhawk .30 Carbine in mind. The same cast bullet loads used for silhouetting can be used for small game shooting and varmints are well handled with either the 100 grain Plinker or 110 grain Varminter.

By no stretch of the imagination, with these loads or any others, should the .30 Carbine be considered a big game gun. It is well below the .357 Magnum, which is marginal at best for anything much larger than small deer. Keep the Carbine as it should be: for varmints, small game, plinking, and short-range silhouetting.

I'm just sorry I took so long to get around to trying one. Thanks,  
Joe, I needed that.

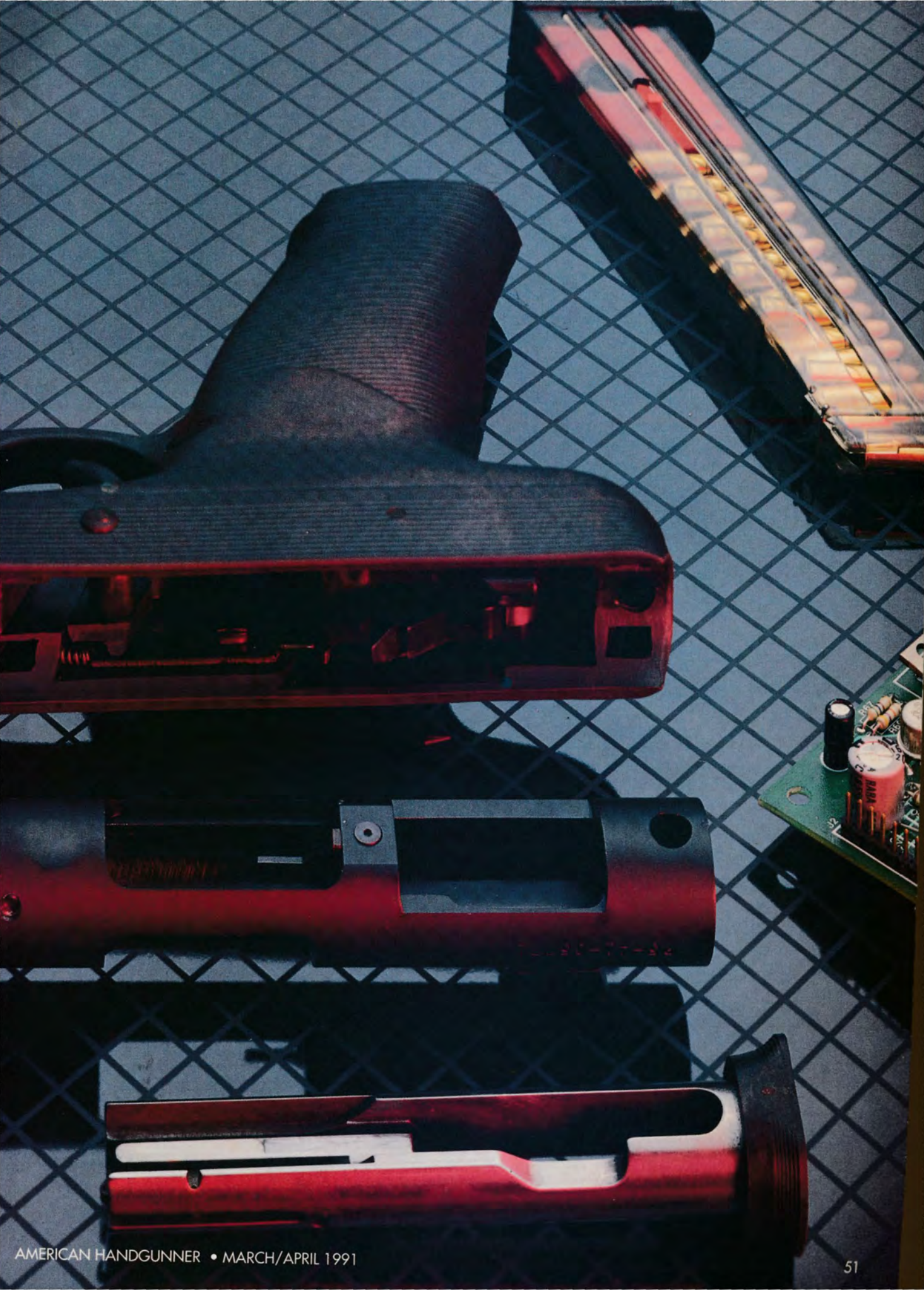




# Extractor

Synthetic technology revolutionizes gun design with this radical new .22 pistol from Ramline.





**W**hen Ram-Line, the plastic aftermarket magazine people, introduced their Syn-Tech .22 pistol at the 1990 SHOT Show in Las Vegas, I was skeptical. I recalled the last time a mag maker had ventured into the land of manufacturing handguns.

Randall had made some mediocre 1911 .45 magazines. I thought it the height of chutzpah when people with a poor track record for a simple sheet metal and spring assembly took it upon themselves to produce a whole gun. While I saw a handful of good, reliable Randall .45 autos, most of the ones I saw in action were roughly made and prone to malfunction. Predictably, the company went under.

The Ram-Line booth at Vegas gave me *deja vu*. While I'd had good luck with the Ram-Line magazines in Ruger .22 rifles, their product for 9mm pistols had been shown on my class ranges to jam again and again. The hideous plastic pistol drew a most jaundiced glance from this scribe.

Some months later, editor Cameron Hopkins assigned me to test a Syn-Tech. Ram-Line's Heather Petrone promptly dispatched one to my local gunshop, Riley's in Hoosett, NH.

I picked it up on a busy day, and was greeted with gales of laughter from the traditional gunny customers.

"Hey, Mas, what are you doing with a plastic Nambu?"

"Naw, that's too ugly to be a Nambu! And too cheap lookin'!"

"Did they pack the rubber tip darts with it, or do you buy those separate?"

"Where do you load that thing, at the kitchen sink?"

## Initial Jams

Wishing I'd picked up the gun in a disguise, I hid myself hence to the nearest range. My worst fears seemed realized when I started with copper-washed Winchester .22 Long Rifle Hi-Speed, and was unable to fire two consecutive shots.

Starting with all 15 rounds in the translucent magazine, I found that each cartridge would stand up at a 45° angle and refuse to enter the chamber, like Marmaduke bracing his paws against the veterinarian's door and refusing to enter.

After clawing five jammed, bolt-bent cartridges out of the magazine, however, the gun started perking. Loaded with 10 or fewer Winchesters, the gun functioned without a bobble.

About a third of the time, it would fail to lock the slide back on the last round, but that is not a true jam. A pricey SIG P-226 9mm will do the same thing when its magazines get dirty.

Remington standard velocity and Fed-



**The Exactor's bolt (above) is made of steel, somewhat reminiscent of the Ruger Mk. I in shape and function. The RamLine magazine's follower (left) protrudes upward and locks the slide back on the last shot. Naturally, the magazine is made of plastic. The sights (below left) are altogether gawky. You can smack them with a mallet for windage adjustment, but there's no provision for elevation. Somehow installing a set of Bo Mar's seems inappropriate!**

cycling mechanism. Of each subsequent, I shot four and threw away the farthest to compensate for hand-holding errors as best I could.

The best three-shot groups were as follows:

**Hansen Standard Velocity:** This super-cheap practice/plinking load grouped about three and a quarter inches. Feeding was 100%.

**Federal Hi-Velocity:** This semi-hollowpoint round, sold as the Power-Flite, is a good performer on squirrel-size game. It grouped two and three-sixteenths inches out of the Syn-Tech.

**Remington Hi-Velocity:** These gilded solids usually feed reliably in any .22 autoloader, and the Syn-Tech was no exception. No malfunctions were noted, and the three-shot group measured one and three-quarters of an inch.

**PMC Sidewinder:** I've seen the quality of PMC ammo improve dramatically over the last few years. The fast-stepping Sidewinder shot the best group in the Syn-Tech, with the best three of four shots measuring an inch and a quarter center to center. There were no malfunctions.

I was happy to be proven wrong. The little Syn-Tech was working reliably with all but one brand of ammo. As it broke in, it started locking its slide back whenever it ran empty.

It was not a gun that anyone would choose to shoot the Precision Event at the Masters. However, neither is any other entry-level low priced .22 plinker.

The Ram-Line is a casual recreation gun. Use the little plastic pistol as it was

eral high velocity both worked fine, even with the magazine loaded all the way up. The gun shot about three inches left, however.

Oddly enough, it sprayed the Remington—which came from a particularly accurate lot—all over the target, but shot fairly true with the semi-hollowpoint Federal small game hunting load.

## Serious Shooting

It was time to head for the serious bench. I drove to the Pioneer Sportsman Club in Dunbarton, stuck some Targ-Dots to an IPSC target a measured 25 yards from the bench, and fired from kneeling across the wooden table.

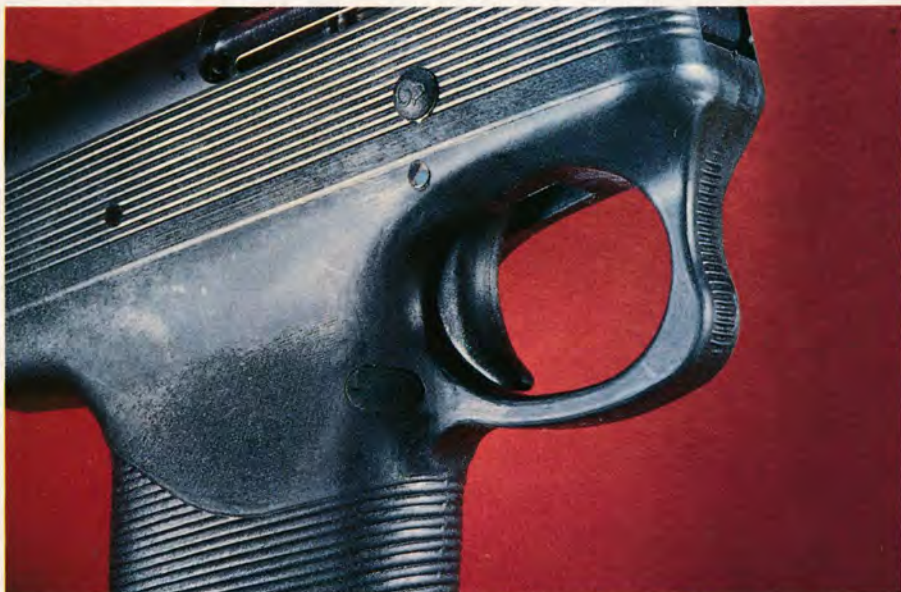
With each brand, I loaded five rounds. The first went into the dirt to cycle the gun into "firing battery," since most auto pistols will put the first hand-chambered shot to a slightly different point of impact than those chambered by the force of a



**There are three controls on the Exactor: the mag release in the traditional Browning location on the grip; the slide release button just above the trigger guard; and the sliding safety, which is easy to operate.**



**You can see the steel barrel sleeve peeking out from the plastic outer shroud.**



**The trigger is single-action in operation but is "stagy" and "creepy" according to author Ayoob.**

intended. At 25 yards, it'll put every bullet in a milk jug. Shooting plastic with plastic. It's destiny.

### **Jamie Can Shoot**

Now, the test target that came with my sample, which was serial number P5-41-04723, appeared to have about 10 bullet holes in it. The center of the group was  $\frac{5}{8}$  of an inch from the center of the aiming point. All but one shot had clustered in one ragged hole that measured, center to center,  $\frac{7}{8}$  of an inch. A lone flyer was another three-quarters of an inch out.

The "Factory Test Fire Target" indicated that the group had been fired through this pistol by a QC inspector named Jamie.

I can only say that Jamie shoots better than anyone I was able to wrap around the strangely-shaped plastic "handle" of the Syn-Tech pistol. Jamie also has better eyes. Our fixed-sight gun averaged more like two or three inches left of center when fired at 25 yards, not the  $\frac{5}{8}$ " seen on the test target.

Heather advised me that each gun is test-fired with five rounds, not 10, at about 20 yards, with the tester shooting offhand leaning against a support. One of those rounds will be a proof load.

Perhaps, when I grow up, I will be able to shoot this gun as well as Jamie.

### **Handling The Syn-Tech**

The test pistol weighs 19½ ounces sans magazine, about the heft of an unloaded S&W Chief Special Model 36. Balance is not bad at all if you're used to muzzle-light handguns. The tubular receiver and the barrel liner and bolt are steel; the rest is plastic, including the barrel shroud.

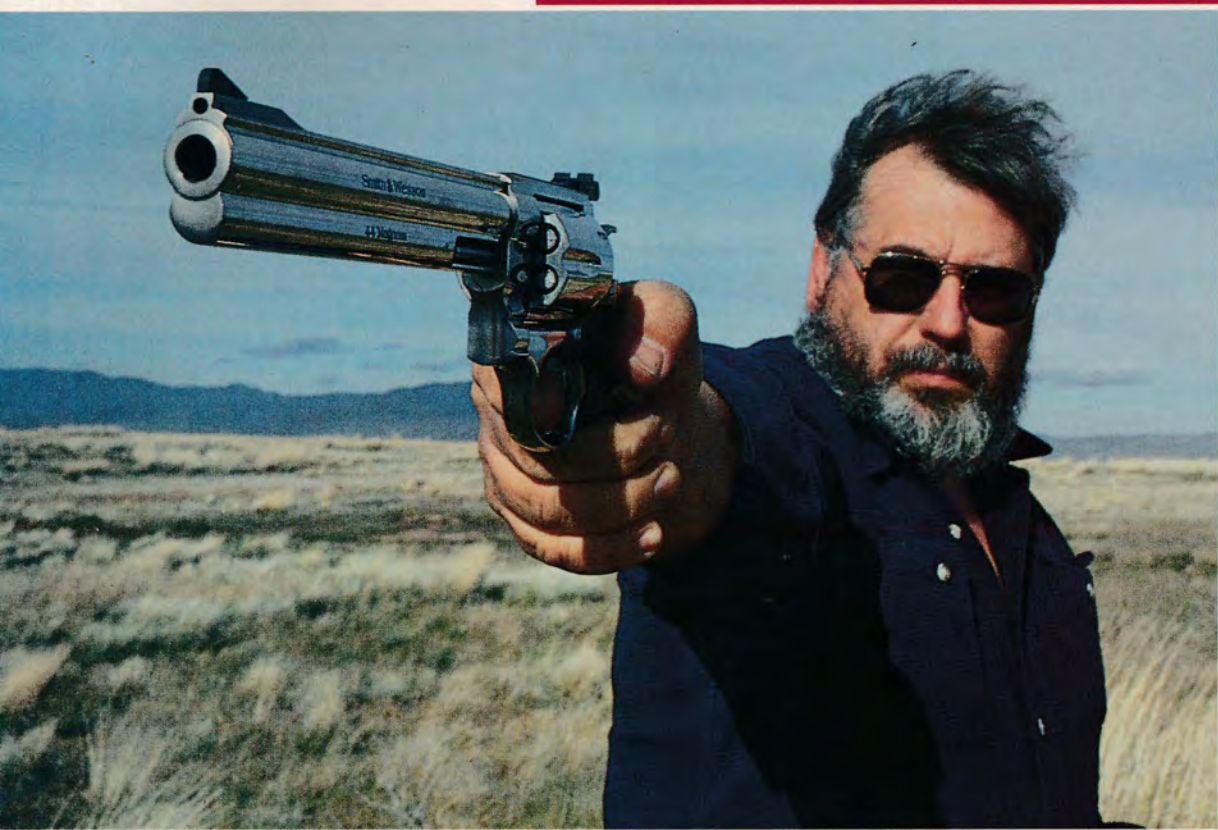
The gun is charged by pulling back the tubular bolt in the manner of the 41-year-old Ruger Standard Models, one of the guns the Syn-Tech will compete against in the plinking pistol market. It requires a fairly firm pull to bring back the uncocked hammer.

This can be dealt with—when easing the bolt forward on an empty chamber, simply lock the gun *On Safe* instead of pulling the trigger to drop the internal firing mechanism to rest. This will make the gun easy to cock and cycle, once the bolt-locking safety is pushed forward and down to the *Off* position.

Besides, dropping the hammer on most .22 autoloaders is in effect dry-firing, and that ain't good for rimfire guns. As the Syn-Tech Owner's Manual puts it, "WARNING! Do Not 'Dry Fire' the hammer on an empty chamber... The chamber may not be empty! Also, 'Dry Firing' causes undue wear on the chamber, hammer, sear, and firing pin."

The safety is easy to operate, at least for right handers. The same Owner's Manual cautions, "Note to Left Handed Shooters: the manual safety is designed

*Continued on page 87*



By John Taffin

For nearly 30 years, the .44 Special was the big bore sixgun. Handloaders brought the anemic factory-loaded .44 Special with a feeble roundnose 246 grain bullet at 750 fps, up to a whomp 'em, stomp 'em 1,100 to 1,200 fps with a flat-nosed semi-wadcutter 250 grain bullet of a design now known as the Keith bullet.

Many shooters were responsible for the final birth of the .44 Magnum which was a direct result of experiments with the .44 Special. Experimenters like Elmer Keith, Gordon Boser, Ray Thompson, and John Zlatich all had numerous .44 Special articles in the only gun magazine of the time period, *The American Rifleman*. Keith got the most press, but the others were also quite instrumental in opening the eyes of shooters to the possibility of a real big bore magnum sixgun.

John Lachuk went the others one step further and made a wildcat ".44 Magnum" case using .30-40 Krag brass and chambered three Colt Single Action .38 Special cylinders to his round which would turn out to be dimensionally a dead ringer for the later-to-arrive .44 Magnum.

His load was 22.5 grains of #2400 under a 235 grain bullet. Lachuk tells of

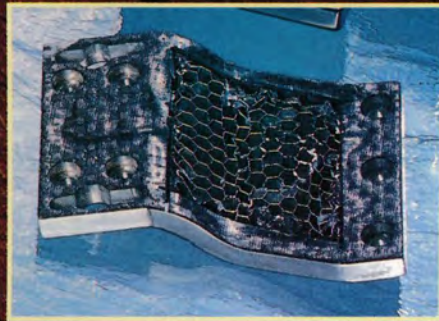
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# MagnaClassic

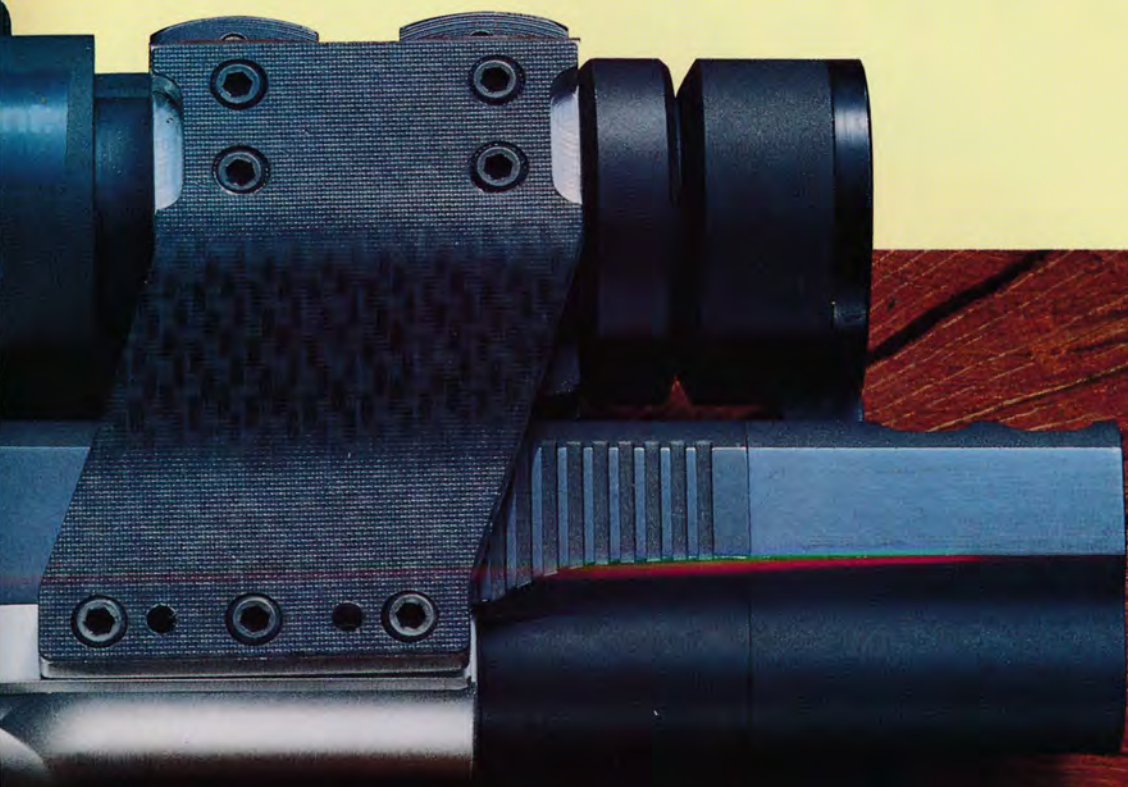
Smith & Wesson's premiere .44 Magnum, limited to only 3,000 guns, brings back the quality of the old Triple Lock.



*A cut-away scrap piece of the scope mount reveals the honeycomb aluminum frame over which a skin of super-light, super-strong carbon fiber is stretched.*







# RACE GUN!



By Cameron Hopkins  
Photos by Ichiro Nagata

**Race** \ 'ras\ n -s [akin to Old English *ræs* rush, running leap]: a running in competition: a contest of speed.

That is a definition from *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, the recognized authority on the language of English.

Now, here is a definition from *Ameri-*

*can Handgunner*, the recognized authority for the language of shooting.

Racegun \ 'ras-'gen\ n -s [akin to Old IPSC *full-house*]: a super-charged combat pistol customized with the latest, most sophisticated technology.

And that is precisely what you see before you, a radically customized .40 S&W Para-Ordnance hi-capacity combat pistol featuring the most advanced new materials and most refined new technology available anywhere at any price.

This is a racegun, a gun that combines the speed of a sprinter with the heart of a

marathoner. It's a gun that can go the distance with 16 uninterrupted shots of the hottest new .40 S&W cartridge. Plus, here's a gun that can blaze furiously ahead with the blinding speed of the lightest and fastest lock mechanism available today with parts made of titanium, carbon fiber and magnesium.

A gun that is bred to win must have a champion's bloodlines. This amazing gun boasts a proud lineage that includes some of the finest pedigrees in pistolsmithing.

**Bill Laughridge**, master gunsmith and consummate craftsman, conceived



**The squared and checkered trigger guard (above) protects the special titanium and magnesium trigger. The double chamber compensator (below) contains two specially contoured "scoops" that dramatically increase its recoil-dampening effectiveness.**

the design of the entire pistol and directed its production. Establishing himself early on as *the* expert on the Browning Hi-Power pistol, the 20-year-veteran of the gunsmithing profession has also been successfully customizing Colt autos and S&W revolvers in his Cylinder & Slide Shop that he has owned and operated for the past 12 years. His work was first featured in *American Handgunner* over a decade ago in an article written by Detroit PD's Evan Marshall in the May/June 1979 issue.

✚ **Chris Hagemann**, the master gunsmith and manager of the Cylinder & Slide Shop who personally executed the incredibly skilled handwork that went into the racegun's creation.

✚ **Robert Pond**, the talented Browning specialist who apprenticed at the Cylinder & Slide Shop and learned the gunsmithing craft entirely from Bill Laughridge.

✚ **George Huening**, the former Indy car chief mechanic turned pistolsmith who contributed his proprietary technology of a carbon fiber scope mount.

✚ **Chip McCormick**, the entrepreneur who brought NASA-levels of sophistication to pistol components, designed the special magnesium and titanium parts for this racegun.

✚ **Irv Stone**, the incomparable master



barrelmaker whose very name is synonymous with accuracy, fabricated a special match-grade stainless steel bull barrel in .40 S&W with minimum-tolerance chamber dimensions to wring the last morsel of precision from this high-tech pistol.

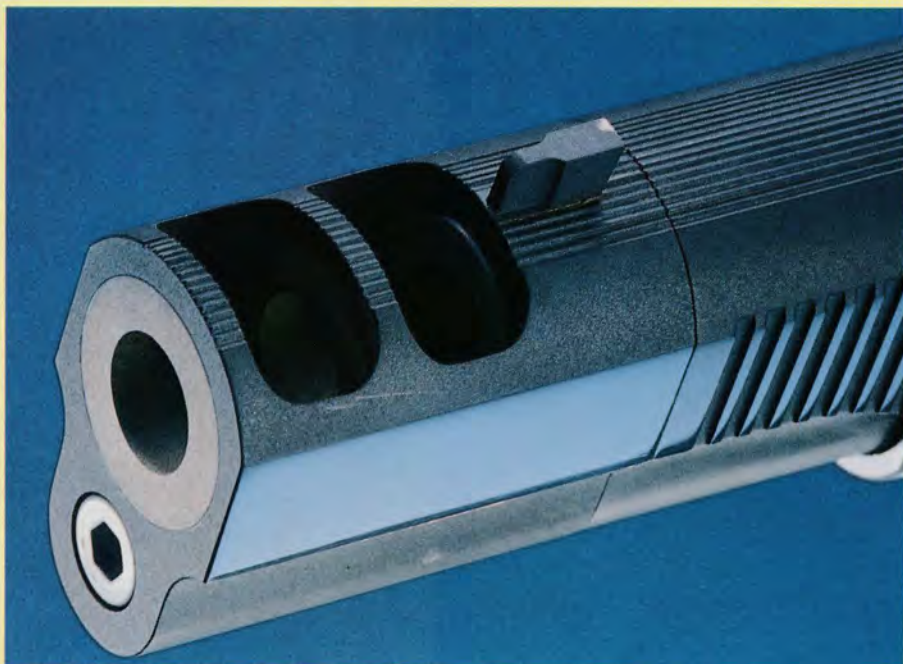
✚ **Kim Hendon**, the savvy mastermind of Aimpoint USA organized a special prototype of the new Swedish-made 5000 series scope with a large field of view in its 30mm tube designed especially for speed shooting.

### **Space-Age Marvel**

This incredible example of the pistolsmith's art reflects the absolute latest in combat handgun technology. The frame is one of the new Para-Ordnance steel units (as opposed to the aluminum alloy version). The Caspian Arms 10mm slide is made slightly over-sized for precise hand-fitting.

Special magnesium and titanium components made with advanced EDM and CNC tooling went into the action: hammer, hammer strut, firing pin and trigger. A carbon fiber skin is stretched over a unique aluminum honeycomb core to

*Continued on page 95*





The 1990 IPSC National Championship was a scandal-plagued, controversy-ridden fiasco. In fact, it wasn't an IPSC match at all. International sanctioning was suspended at the last minute. So what was this thing that determined the new national champion? Well, it was

# THE NATIONALS THAT WASN'T

By Frank W. James  
Photos by Nyle Leatham

In any sport where a machine is an essential element in the performance of that sport, various plateaus are reached by the competitors and their specific machines over the course of history.

Auto racing is the first such endeavor that comes to mind, but the same phenomenon can be seen in parachuting, skateboarding, bicycling or many other sports if you only look. And, obviously, the rules for each of these pastimes dictate what is considered fair and unfair in terms of contest equipment on the playing field, race track, or wherever.

Yet, the drive of the competitor is such that he always embarks on a never-ending search for the smallest fraction of an advantage that can be gained.

How can the basic machine be improved? What are the limits to the present designs? What new directions can be explored?

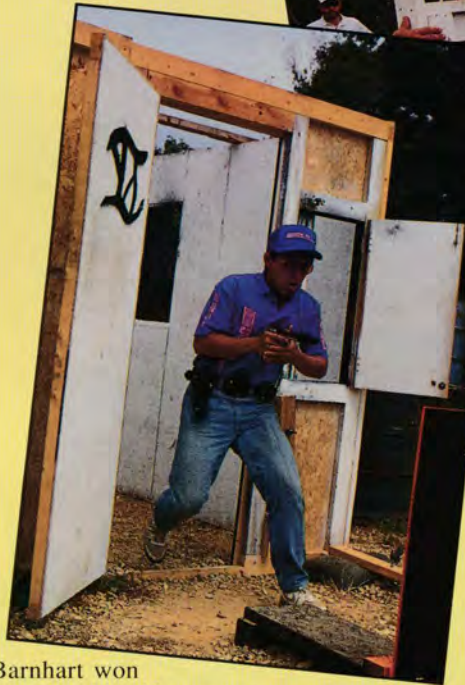
At the 1990 USPSA National Championships we saw such experimentation. Would this be seen in years to come as the beginning of a new plateau of equipment for practical shooting?

The criteria for a new design is very simple—it must win. Not only must it win, it must demonstrate a convincing



*Debbie James, ladies champ, shows textbook form on a mag change caught in hi-speed photography live during the match.*

**Up and over! Michael Voigt (R) leaps over a fence during an assault course. The obstacle served as a holster retention test as well as an athletic challenge. Jethro Dionisio (below) rode his Steel Challenge victory into a very strong 3rd at the Nationals.**



**Peeved at this magazine's valid criticisms of combat shooting matches over the years, the match organizers wrapped us on a roll for a stage simulating an outhouse gunfight.**

advantage in the win. Jerry Barnhart won the National Championship this year at Barry, Ill., and he won it using a gun that was fitted with, of all things, a scope!

Equally as important is the fact that defending champ Rob Leatham finished just 1.5 percentage points behind Jerry using a Springfield Armory P-9 loaded with 16 rounds of a 9mm cartridge loaded to the "major power factor" scoring category.

**B o t h**



men used non-typical firearms in their quest for the National Championship. Each man was a proven champion who decided it was necessary to reach out and search for an advantage in areas previously unexplored. But what happened to the conventional iron-sighted .38 Super 1911 pistols?

Shooters using these pistols started at third place and proceeded to fill out the rest of the field.

This is not to say the remainder of the field of 506 entrants used totally conventional equipment as several competitors tried the Para-Ordnance frame for increased capacity in a .38 Super pistol. Unfortunately, the Para-Ordnance technology still left something to be desired during the Nationals as Master Class shooter John Dixon experienced irregular, but continued, malfunctions with his Para-Ordnance beryllium copper framed gun.

Michael Voight, Brian Enos and J. Michael Plaxco joined Leatham in the march to the newest cartridge on the circuit, the 9x21mm loaded to the major power factor.

### **Controversy Aplenty**

But it would be misleading to have you believe the 1990 Nationals boiled down to nothing more than a technology race. Far from it. This was one of the

most controversial shooting matches I have ever attended in my life and I have been to some many years ago where the competitors dropped their gun belts and proceeded to get with it! Those hotheads would have felt very much at home at this name-calling match.

The general perception is the National Championship of any sport signifies the very best that sport has to offer. It doesn't matter what the challenge is, the National Champion is the best and the tournament used to select him offers everyone great insight into the sport, if not great entertainment.

After all, what is a sport, if not a diversion from the daily grind?

Well, the greatest insight seen at this match was how to wrap a roll of toilet paper.

Maybe it was the combination of the hot weather and the pending election for national president, but whatever it was, perfectly normal people got really weird.

I was not scheduled to cover the Nationals for our editor, but was instead a last minute substitute for Dave Anderson. Dave, *American Handgunner's* commentator on the IPSC scene, had a problem harvesting his wheat in the rain and, as a farmer myself, I could easily sympathize with his plight.

Unfortunately, after what I witnessed I wish I had volunteered to run Dave's combine. And that takes into account the



"Hey Dad, didn't I tell you not to hit that hostage!"

Jerry Barnhart (below) shot superbly.



fact that I'm deathly allergic to wheat chaff!

### 9mm Brouhaha

Upon my arrival at the range I was immediately told the latest joke going through the gallery of onlookers. You want to hear it?

"What's the latest cartridge to be sanctioned by the USPSA?"

"The 9mm JLE," came the reply.

"OK, I'll bite. What's a 9mm JLE?" I asked innocently. I had arrived in the middle of the afternoon on the third day and I wasn't up to speed yet.

"9mm Just Long Enough!"

And my friend went on to say, "However, it has already been amended by the rules committee to the 9mm JLE-FN. Which the is the 9mm Just Long Enough- *For Now!*"

If there was ever a subject that everyone even remotely close to the practical pistol shooting scene was tired of hearing by the end of 1990, it would have to be the 9mm Major Controversy.

The USPSA board of directors ruled during the summer of 1990 that the 9x19 cartridge—the good ole 9mm Parabellum that we all know and love—when loaded to the Major power scoring category with an overall length of less than 1.250" is banned from sanctioned competition.

The push for 9mm Major had come from Europe where they operate under a



different set of standards for their firearms, but the Continentals shoot under the same IPSC

rules that are

used worldwide. Except in the United States, where the USPSA board of directors passes its own rules unilaterally.

It is a difficult arrangement at best to try and coordinate a worldwide set of rules for a shooting sport forced to operate under the unique environments found in each country with the legal, social and economic atmospheres the various shooters must endure. But the end result in this case was that J.P. Denis, the elected president of IPSC, withdrew IPSC sanctioning from the Nationals.

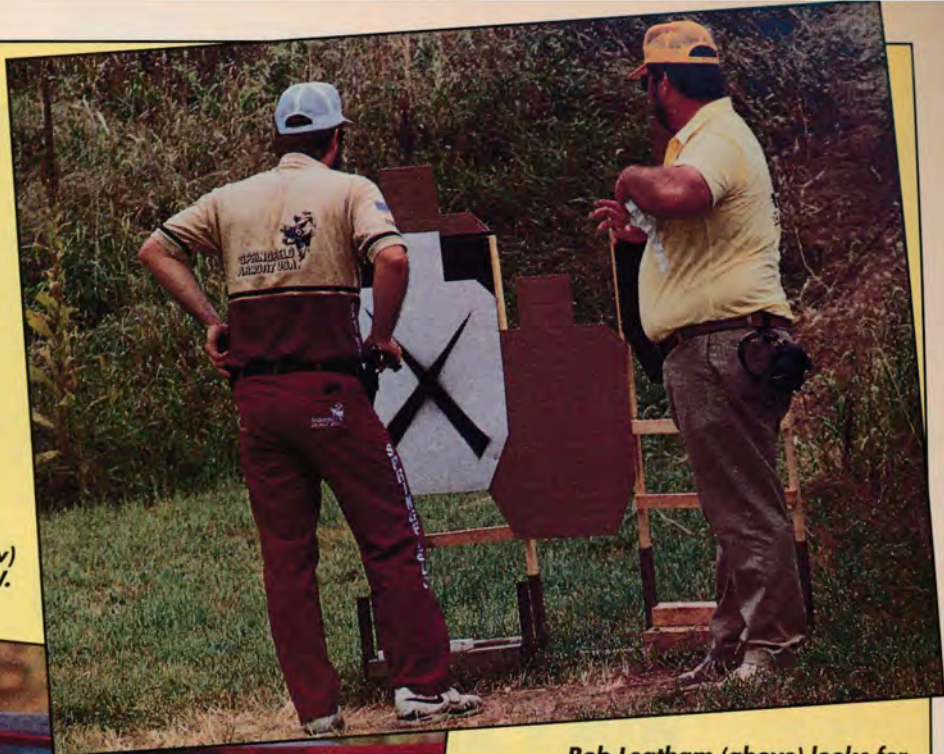
### 9x19 Versus 9x21

In Europe if a gun is proven safe by the proof house and it blows up, then it's the shooter's fault. The gun was certified as mechanically safe once, so if there was a problem after that, the shooter created it.

Here in the United States, the land of opportunity for greedy liability lawyers looking for a fast buck, nothing can be

**Coming through!**  
The thrill of combat shooting is kicking in doors and shooting down bad guys. Simulating a gunfight is the idea—and it's a real kick in the ass!

**Tom Campbell (below)**  
shoots for Team S&W.



**Rob Leatham (above)** looks for a hole somewhere, but the RO says it's a dropped shot.



All of which lead to the most telling comment heard the entire match. A private conversation was ongoing about the future of practical pistol and how some want to attract more money into the sport through the introduction of national TV and big sponsorship deals, but to do so the targets would probably have to be changed. Something like going to plain steel squares or cutting the heads off the paper targets.

To which one competitor replied with fear and trepidation in his voice, "Boy, if you take the heads off the targets in this match, you wouldn't have nothing to shoot at!"

### **Outhouse Stink**

Controversy appeared once again on Friday, the last day of the match, when a ruling to uphold a protest was made Thursday evening in arbitration over target deterioration on Stage Two, Montezuma's Revenge.

This clever little scenario required six shots to be fired after leaving a toilet seat and opening the out-house door. There were two silhouette targets plus the first and the last targets were both steel plates approximating the head portion of the standard IPSC target.

Going into this stage on the next to last day the race for the lead was very close between three shooters: Rob Leatham, who still held the lead, Jerry Barnhart and Todd Jarrett.

proven safe. Not the drinking water, not the air we breath, not Ralph Naderish automobiles and certainly not firearms. The result is a legal mess.

Thus, the 9mm Major, based on the 9x19 case, was banned. Not to worry, everyone started searching for 9x21 brass and immediately the problem was solved with the introduction in America of the 9x21 Major cartridge, also known as the .356 TSW.

How? Well, let's just say two wrongs do make a right.

Since there is no standardized data on the 9x21 from SAAMI, no one in America can argue the round was over-pressure and unsafe for competition. This must have left the Europeans scratching their heads in amazement because over there the 9x19 and the 9x21 are loaded to the same pressure levels, and 9x19 Major is legal.

The two cartridges have the same overall length. The only reason for the existence of the 9x21 in the first place was to pacify the Italian bureaucrats who

won't allow civilian possession of military ammo. Obviously, illogical bureaucrats aren't exclusive to Italy, or even to governments.

None of this was meant to make sense. It was politics in the finest sense of the word. It was an election year. All of which combined together with the heat and the 100° discomfort factor made it easy to understand how warmer climates produce more despots.

### **Heads-Up Head-Shots**

The next controversy to rear its ugly head was mentioned during the open membership meeting on Thursday night and dealt with the number of head shots in the match. One competitor complained there were 24 in number. I didn't count that many from the diagrams represented inside the program, but I will agree there were several and there was an especially troublesome one on Stage 3, The Chameleon, that was 30 yards from the shooter.



*Irv Stone III (left) scoots and shoots! He's the son of barrelmaker extraordinaire Irv Stone Jr. of Bar-Sto fame.*

## GUNS AND GEAR OF THE TOP 16

Shooter	Caliber	Weapon	Gunsmith	Holster
Jerry Barnhart	.38 Super	Colt	Bill Wilson	Safariland
Rob Leatham	9x21 (9 JLE)	Springfield P-9	G. Huening/L. Baer	Safariland
Jethro Dionisio	.38 Super	Colt	First Option	Ernie Hill
Todd Jarrett	.38 Super	Springfield	Blake Gann	Safariland
Doug Koenig	.38 Super	Springfield	Les Baer	Safariland
Arnt M. Myhre	.38 Super	Springfield	Frank Glenn	Safariland
Mark Mazzotta	.38 Super	Colt	Bill Wilson	Safariland
Rick Byfield	.38 Super	Springfield	Les Baer	Safariland
Mike York	.38 Super	Caspian	Gary Kimball	Safariland
Floyd Wine	.38 Super	Springfield	Floyd Wine	Safariland
Mike Martolin	.38 Super	Colt	Mike Martolin	Ernie Hill
Bruce Piatt	.38 Super	Caspian	Frank Behlert	Safariland
Michael Voight	9x21 (9 JLE)	Springfield P-9	Michael Voigt	Safariland
Ted Bonnet	.38 Super	Springfield	Greg Ferris	Ernie Hill
Brian Enos	9x21 (9JLE)	S&W 5906	Paul Liebenberg	Safariland
Charles Putnam	.38 Super	Colt	George Huening	Safariland

(Leatham's lead would have been larger had he not dropped 52 points during the previous stage, the Hardcover Standards, where he had four hardcover hits and two misses. Barnhart gained ground here, either through the advantage of his scoped gun or just plain damn good shooting by only dropping a total of 26 points. Essentially, this is where Rob Leatham let the championship slip away, but more on that in a moment.)

Less than two hours later on Thursday, the Super Squad shot Montezuma's Revenge and neither Robbie nor Jerry made any major mistakes, while maintaining their relative positions, but poor Todd Jarrett had serious problems. He had to perform a magazine change during

the six shot course of fire. Needless to say, he was out of the running after that, but only temporarily.

Now, later in the same day, a shooter who was running along in approximately 464th place noticed that the one of the steel head-shot targets was noticeably shorter than it was supposed to be. He filed a protest, as was his right, and—surprise!— he was correct.

The steel target was slightly shorter. The target had suffered metal fatigue from the constant hammering and it was approximately an inch shorter.

What to do? In order to prevent everyone from having to reshoot the match, that stage was eliminated from the course of fire by the match director.

It was such a shame, too, because so much originality and deep thinking had gone into the course design of that stage, including the wrapping of a roll of toilet paper hanging on the wall with the cover of a recent issue of this magazine.

This offended one of the major sponsors of this sport, Smith & Wesson, because their trademark was featured on that cover and the firm's representative at the match made her objections heard loud and clear.

If I may voice my personal opinion, it didn't offend me as much as it reminded me of a junior high school class and the immature guy in the back of the room who always made the rude, guttural noises and stupid remarks.

But then this incident was fairly typi-



*This shooter (left) can't be accused of getting too excited—he's taking this match lying down!*



# JERRY BARNHART: A CLASS ACT

Interview by Dave Anderson

In the 1990 *American Handgunner Annual* I had an article on several illuminated dot sights: the Action Arms Ultra-Dot, the Adco Pro-V, the Aimpoint 3000, and the Tasco Pro-Point. It was a particularly enjoyable assignment, as all four sights proved to be of high quality.

These dot sights have a wide range of useful features. They place the target and the sight in the same focal plane; they are parallax-free; they have unlimited eye relief; and they are extremely lightweight.

Because they are non-magnifying, they are simple and natural to use. Novice shooters seem to progress faster with this type of sight, for any errors in hold or trigger control are instantly apparent.

Not that their use is limited to novices, by any means. Optical sights have come to dominate virtually every type of handgun competition in which they are allowed. Exceptions to this trend have been the really fast-paced sports such as speed shooting and IPSC. Of the 700 or so shooters at the 1989 Steel Challenge and IPSC U.S. Nationals, only a handful used optical sights. The consensus among competitors in these sports has been iron sights are superior for the fast draw, multiple target arrays, and varying ranges involved.

Recently, though, conventional wisdom got a rude shock when Jerry Barnhart came back from a mid-week deficit to win the 1990 U.S. Nationals, using a dot sight. Following is the gist of a conversation in which I asked Jerry about his views on these sights.

*DA: Congratulations on winning your second Nationals. I'm curious about why the dot sight worked so well for you this year, when the feeling for years has been that they aren't really adapted to IPSC shooting.*

*JB: I don't think they were really given a fair try before. When I started shooting IPSC in 1983 I asked several*

experienced shooters about the dot sights and was always told they were too slow. I think it was a case of everyone thinking that someone else had given the dots a thorough test, when really no one had.

*DA: When did you first start experimenting with optical sights?*

*JB: About 1986 Steve (Nastoff) built me a Bianchi Cup auto using a dot sight on a grip mount. I compared it to an iron sighted gun on some steel plates, keeping records with a PACT timer and printer.*

My target to target times were just as good with the dot, but the hits were better and more consistent. The draw wasn't as fast, since the gun had intentionally been built rather heavy for Bianchi Cup use, but I felt that if we could get the weight down, the draw would be just as fast.

There was a lot of experimenting with comp design going on at that time so this project got pushed to the back burner. The idea stayed in my mind though, and when I changed sponsors recently (to Colt Firearms and Wilson's Gun Shop) it seemed like a good chance to give it a try.

I wanted the sight mounted as low as possible. Ideally, the dot would be no higher than the line of iron sights, but we can't get it quite that low. And I wanted it mounted well back on the gun, so the front element of the sight was behind the point where the gun pivots in recoil.

*DA: Why is it important to have the sight set back on the gun?*

*JB: It's much easier to track the sight during recoil. With iron sights we try to stay focused on the front sight as the gun recoils, and of course the front of the gun is the part that jumps highest. If the front sight is lost as the muzzle jumps up, then the eye has to pick it up and refocus before the next shot can be fired.*

With the dot sight mounted further

*Continued on page 92*

*Jerry Barnhart's red-dot sight on his Wilson custom Colt 1911 is the most radical change in IPSC equipment since Charlie Kelsey first introduced the .38 Super cartridge in the early 80's.*

cal of the thoughtfulness and concern for the shooting community in general that was noticeably absent throughout this national match and is indicative of the small minded, petty mentalities and personal selfishness afflicting some of the board members.

## Yet More Protests

With the outhouse stage flushed from the match, Todd Jarrett had a new lease on life. His position became even better after Leatham missed one of the two required shots at the 30 yard head target on stage three, The Chameleon. After the Super Squad had completed stage three on Friday morning there was only one stage left to determine the national champion and the race at this point was actually too close to call.

All of which made it predictable that yet another controversy would appear before the Super Squad shot the last stage named "The Temple of Boom" and, sure enough, an argument arose over the range commands given to the various competitors at the squad briefings.

The Temple of Boom had a gate that the competitor was required to jump over and then proceed to do their thing. Continuing on, the competitor next moved to a firing port before entering a hallway with four slits in the left wall which were positioned at different heights. Beyond each hallway slit was an individual Pepper popper.

*Continued on page 78*

# MAGNACLASSIC

Continued from page 54

submitting his findings to *The American Rifleman* in 1949 only to have his article rejected twice by the editor and then next editor. He tried to interest Colt in the new cartridge to no avail. Great Western planned to offer Lachuk's creation in their Single Action sixguns but were plagued with financial problems that haunted them until they finally went belly up.

## Birth Of A Magnum

In December of 1955, Smith & Wesson brought out the .44 Magnum. After years of urging by dedicated sixgunners, someone finally listened and the cartridge of the century was born.

Carl Hellstrom of Smith & Wesson was interested in Elmer Keith's pet .44 Special load and discussed the prospect of a new .44 sixgun with him. Hellstrom asked Remington to supply ammunition and they agreed if Smith & Wesson would produce the gun.

Remington produced the first batch of ammunition for the new .44 in 1954. The new .44 cartridge was one-eighth inch longer than the .44 Special, so it would not chamber in .44 Special sixguns. For testing purposes, Smith & Wesson re-chambered four 1950 Target .44 Specials



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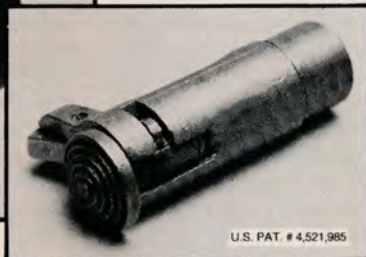
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to the new round in 1954. These were standard .44 Specials except for the rechambering and specially heat-treated cylinders.

Remington received one of the "new" revolvers for testing and it was soon obvious that the 39 ounce weight of the .44 Special 1950 Target Model was much too light for the recoil of the ".44 Special Magnum." Keith had asked for a 250 grain bullet at 1,200 fps and was about to get a 240 grain bullet at 1,500 fps.

To provide the desirable increase in weight, S&W produced a revolver with a barrel that was .15" greater in diameter and a cylinder that was .18" longer. This brought the weight of the six and one-half inch barreled sixgun up to three pounds.

By early 1955, tests were completed and S&W began tooling up to produce what at the time was simply known as The .44 Magnum. The first factory revolver was completed on January 29, 1955, and went to Remington.

The second .44 went to Major Hatcher of *The Rifleman* staff and the third went to Salmon, Idaho, to Elmer Keith. Hatcher, writing in the March 1956 issue, stated: "In shooting the .44 Magnum, we found it advisable to use gloves, as the recoil can only be described as severe. Without gloves, the checkering hurts the hand, and the sharp edges of the cylinder latch are almost certain to shave off bits of skin.

"After firing many heavy handloads in

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To contact Ron, write him at RR 2, Box 756 AB, Dept. AH, Gravois Mills, MO 65037 or telephone (314) 372-5684.





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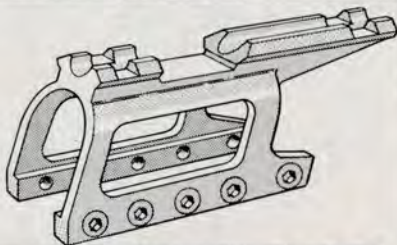


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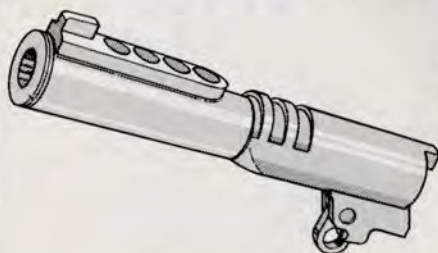
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the .44 Special, we expected a heavy recoil with this ultra-powerful new cartridge. At the first shot the gun rose up a bit, and the first reaction was that it was not as bad as we had expected.

"Just about this time, however, we suddenly experienced a sharp stinging sensation over the entire hand, as though we were hitting a fast baseball with a cracked bat. I fired quite a few shots with this gun, but I must honestly confess it is not an unmixed pleasure."

## Keith On Recoil

Elmer Keith writing in *The Gun Digest* looked upon the .44 Magnum quite differently than Major Hatcher. "The big gun is, I would say, pleasant to shoot, as it does not jar the hand as much as do my heavy .44 Special loads from the much lighter four-inch barreled .44 Special S&W guns.

"It is definitely not a lady's gun but I have known women who would enjoy shooting it. The recoil has not bothered me in the slightest, nor have several old sixgun men complained who have fired it extensively, including Hank Benson and Don Martin.

"The recoil is not as severe as that of a two-inch Airweight Chief's Special with high speed .38 Specials. With .44 Special factory loads it is just as pleasant to shoot as a K-22 and with the .44 Magnum loads, which give the heaviest recoil, it will not bother a seasoned six-gun man at all.

"Recoil with my heaviest loads of 22.0 grains of 2400 and the Keith 250 grain bullet is much less than that of the factory load. The factory load, fired with one hand, flips the barrel up almost vertical."

Who was telling the truth? Both were. They were simply relating what they perceived as the *felt* recoil. As a teenager in high school at the time, I fired one of the first S&W .44 Magnums in my area and felt that if anything, Hatcher had understated the recoil of the .44 Magnum.

Most shooters of the time believed Keith—at least until they fired their first few rounds. After a palm bruising, Hatcher was vindicated and most gunstores had at least one "used" .44 magnum with a box of factory .44 Magnums with six, or at the most, 12 rounds missing.

Keith convinced himself that the .44 Magnum was pleasant to shoot. Most of us cannot do this. And for about 20 years, no one thought much about it. When silhouettes started shooting the .44 magnum extensively, problems arose. Even Keith had reported that he only shot the Smith & Wesson .44 Magnum 600 times in one year; silhouettes began doing this in a couple of weeks, sometimes a couple of days.

I have shot the .44 Magnum as much as 500 rounds in one day and four days in a row when test-firing for an article. Even



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in the four pound sixguns we have today, this is not a wise thing to do.

## Model 29 Weakness

Using the Smith & Wesson .44 Magnum sparingly as most shooters did, no real problems arose. When the .44 sixgun began to receive continual pounding with heavy loads, the timing went out and cylinder began to unlatch and rotate backwards when the guns were fired.

Smith & Wesson refused to officially acknowledge that there was a problem through the 1970's and most of the 1980's. With the coming of new owners and new management, the attitude changed and in addition to producing many different models as some have referred to as the various "Gun Of The Week" models, the powers that be finally began to look seriously at the .44 Magnum. Hatcher had called it right and the recoil was really taking a toll on the .44 Magnum.

There are two solutions to the problem. Increase the weight as Ruger did



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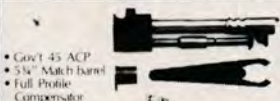
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with their double-action sixgun, the Redhawk, and Dan Wesson did with their .44 Magnum. The extra 33 1/3% weight of the Dan Wesson makes the .44 Magnum recoil feel more like Keith's original assessment.

At the same time, since Dan Wesson and Ruger designed their gun around the cartridge instead of rechambering an existing model that really went back to 1907, they were able to go with larger parts in their mechanism.

Smith & Wesson had a choice: keep the lines and weight of the original or beef it up to a more comfortable four pounds.

The greatest selling feature of the Smith & Wesson .44 Magnum Model 29, at least to this sixgunner, is its beautiful looks and

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feel. It is one of the two or three real classic sixguns ever produced. It would be a shame to lose that look and feel.

### Tight Tolerances

So S&W engineers turned to the second solution. It's the same solution used by custom 'smiths like John Linebaugh and Hamilton Bowen, and the same technique employed by Freedom Arms in their .454 Casull. The whole key is *tolerance* and the more the parts are closely fitted and locked in place when the six-gun fires, the less wear and tear on the mechanism and the longer it will take a gun to shoot loose.

Using ultra-high-speed photos, Smith & Wesson engineers studied the .44 Magnum under recoil and concluded that problems arose as various parts moved under recoil. The frame recoiled backwards and the cylinder pin did not. The result was the cylinder was free to rotate. Heavy recoil was causing the trigger to kick back and the hammer was bouncing and hitting the primer a second time



resulting in two indents on the primer.

The engineers went to work. Longer notches were machined in the cylinder so the cylinder stop could not bounce out under heavy recoil. A bolt block was added that keeps the bolt from transmitting movement to the trigger. All mounting studs for rebound slide, trigger, hammer, etc., were radiused where they attach to the frame as round corners are less likely to "tear" than sharp corners. All receiving holes have also been radiused for the same reason.

To help increase strength, the bearing surface on the cylinder yoke has been increased and the yoke has also received a new heat treatment. All of these improvements are being phased into the .44 Magnum and other caliber revolvers



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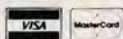


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are also coming through with the noticeably longer bolt slot cut into the cylinder.

### MagnaClassic

The first .44 magnum to have all of these improvements is the new semi-custom sixgun, the MagnaClassic. Three thousand of these are to be made and my test gun has "008" hand inscribed inside the crane. Smith & Wesson has described this gun as "The most beautiful gun you'll probably never shoot" referring to the fact that many will purchase the gun and put it away for a future investment. A gun that won't be shot in many instances but not in my case. I have shot it and shot it hard.

My test gun is what I first thought was a nickel plated Model 29 but as it turns out it's actually a highly polished stainless Model 629. It may well be one of the most beautiful sixguns to ever come out of the factory. The lettering on the side of the barrel is quite attractive and has a classic look. The right side of the heavy seven and one-half inch L-frame barrel is marked in two lines with "629 MagnaClassic" over "1 of 3000." On the left side of the barrel we find "Smith & Wesson" above ".44 Magnum." This is probably the nicest lettering I have ever seen on a factory revolver.

### New Front Sight

Looking at the top of the .44 MagnaClassic, we notice that the rear sight is not squared off at the front of the leaf, but is rounded and dovetailed into the top of the frame. The front sight is a radical departure for Smith & Wesson being of the interchangeable style, easily removed and replaced without tools simply by pushing rearward on the front sight and lifting out.

Patridge sights are now available in four different heights of .187", .208", .227", and .250". The latter is also available with a gold or white dot. The sight package was not available when the MagnaClassic was received for testing and this 629 was fitted with the standard .250" black ramp (Thank you!). This style is now offered with a red ramp.

The directions for changing the front sight blades say: "Using pressure from your right hand index finger, push the sight backwards, toward the hammer and pull upward. *The sight will lift out easily.*"

I pushed and pushed and pushed until it became obvious even to me that the front sight was *not* going to lift out easily. It was necessary to place the blade of my pocketknife under the front of the sight blade as it did come up just a hair as I pushed, and then tap it rearward with a nylon mallet. It was definitely a tight fit.

It was also necessary to start the replacement blade in and then seat it in place with a tap of the nylon mallet. This does not bother me in the least as I know that I will never sight down the barrel and



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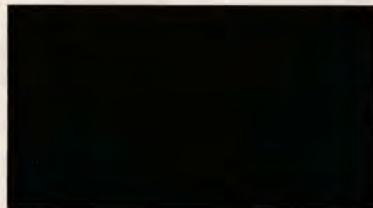
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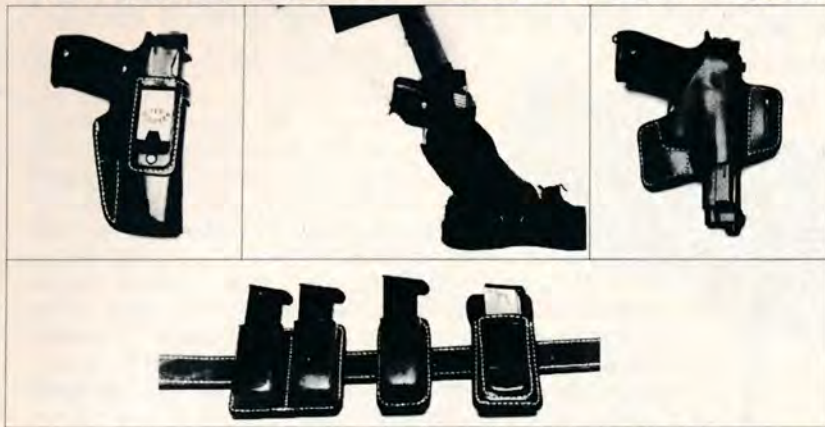


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discover that the front sight is gone.

Interchangeable front sight blades are one of the best features of the .44 MagnaClassic and should be offered on all adjustable sighted sixguns. The MagnaClassic now joins the Dan Wesson and Freedom Arms revolvers which also have interchangeable front sights of different heights and styles.

Smith and Wesson provides a detailed chart showing the trajectory data for different sight heights. This is fine. On paper. The problem is that each of us holds guns differently and sees sights differently and none of this enters into the mathematical equations. It is a matter of finding what works best for each individual.

For example, I normally shoot lower than most other shooters do with the same gun, load and sight setting. The MagnaClassic sight system allows each shooter to choose the best possible front sight combination of height and configuration. Hopefully, even more options will be offered in the future. Presently, my shooting chores with the MagnaClassic are being well-handled by the gold bead front sight.

### More Features

Hammer and trigger on the MagnaClassic are the standard checkered and serrated target style which is loved by many and also destined to be reshaped and made smaller by many others. The grip frame is the now almost-standard roundbutt style and fitted with finger groove grips, the same style as found on the Model 627 .357 Magnum and the Model 610 10mm revolver.

This is the one feature I do not particularly care for on the MagnaClassic. The grip is certainly much more comfortable to use with heavy loads than the former standard target grips, and I went through 300 rounds of full house loads with both standard weight and heavy weight bullets—spelled 300 grain—in one afternoon with no discomfort or experiencing of great felt recoil. The next morning my hand was sore as might be expected after 300 rounds in two hours.

A better solution is the use of custom grips as now provided by BearHug Grips (P.O. Box 25944, Dept AH, Colorado Springs, CO 80936). I have long used BearHug's Skeeter Skelton style grips on double-action revolvers of the standard grip pattern, and also an improved roundbutt grip that Deacon Deason of BearHug made up for me for the roundbutted Smith & Wesson Model 625-2 .45 ACP/AR sixgun.

### Field Testing

Twenty-one different loads, both factory and handloads, were put through the MagnaClassic and the results were nothing short of amazing. This gun really shoots! Using 21 different loads with both jacketed and cast bullets and weight



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ranges from 180 grains to 320 grains and muzzle velocities from 1,022 to 1,689 fps convinced me that this sixgun is much more than "The most beautiful gun you'll probably never shoot."

Anyone who buys a MagnaClassic simply to look at is missing an excellent shootin' sixgun. The average of 21 six-shot groups at 25 yards with all the above mentioned types of loads resulted in an average group of 1.37 inches.

This sub-two-incher is not the best but the average. Drop out the one group that went out to two full inches and the average shrinks to 1.34". And this is not a target pistol but a honest-to-goodness .44 Magnum hunting sixgun.

And speaking of hunting, some favorite hunting loads turned in excellent performances. Garrett Cartridge's load of 320 grain SSK cast bullet at 1,315 fps plopped six shots into one-inch. My handloads consisting of BRP's NEI 295 grain Keith bullet over 21.5 grains of WW296 (1,290 fps) and NEI's #260.429 Keith bullet over 25.0 grains of WW296 (1,473 fps) both went into 1.25", six shots at 25 yards.

Switching to jacketed bullets gave the same results with the .44 MagnaClassic. Hornady's new bullet design, the XTP, is already proving itself in the game fields and the 240 grain bullet loaded over 25.0 grains of WW296 clocked over the Oehler Model 35P at 1,444 fps and gave a very satisfying group of one and three-eighths inches.

Every jacketed bullet tried, in both handloads and factory loads, shot under one and one-half inches except the 180 grain JHP. Federal's load, clocked at 1,689 fps grouped at one and three-quarter inches and Hornady's load came in at 1.530 and two inches respectively.

As I was talking to editor Cameron Hopkins about the quality of the MagnaClassic, he raised an interesting question: "Is it as good as a Triple-Lock or Five-Screw?"

Whoa! Now we are messing with a whole lot of nostalgia and tradition when we start comparing a computer-built sixgun with the Triple-Lock and Five-Screw, sixguns that were built when the standard equipment on the gunsmith's bench was a fitting file.

Is it as good as the Triple-Lock or Five-Screw? Yes, I do believe it really is. Perhaps, even better.

It certainly is stronger and it does not lack for eye appeal in the least. I've long wanted a mint condition .44 Special Triple-Lock, and I may be messing with mom, apple pie, and the Fourth of July here, but I would have to honestly say that if I were given a choice of a gorgeous Triple-Lock and the MagnaClassic, I might hedge a bit, and squirm some, and run my fingers lovingly over the classic .44 Special, but I would eventually select the MagnaClassic.

And not look back.



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## NATIONALS

Continued from page 65

Some of the contestants, including many who came up to me personally, argued that they had been instructed to only engage one Pepper popper per firing position in that hallway. Well, on Friday morning it became apparent to the bystanders who had already completed this course of fire that many of the contestants were avoiding the lowest firing position and proceeding on to the next one where they engaged two Peppers saving a significant amount of time in the process.

Hey, what's the deal here?

The answer is that the course of fire at the Temple of Boom was administered by human beings and it is a known fact that human beings make mistakes. Someone simply failed to remain consistent in their instructions throughout five days of heat and electioneering. Small wonder mistakes were made.

### Do Or Die

In any event, the protests were denied on the basis that the written instructions didn't say to engage only *one* Pepper per firing position.

Around 4 o'clock on Friday afternoon the Super Squad with all the leading contenders, except for Jethro Dionisio, went through their squad briefing. It was now time to do or die.

Jerry Barnhart shot before Rob Leatham, but the last two targets were gravity-driven turning targets and someone had forgotten to properly cock the right hand target. Jerry poured it on during his run, only to earn the right to a re-shoot when the last target failed to expose. His time was 23 seconds and change.

Robbie really had to do it now if he wanted the National Championship, because Jerry had already demonstrated his speed on this stage and he was scheduled for an encore performance.

Robbie had had words before he presented himself to the line with the woman R.O. when she wouldn't let him practice climbing over the gate at the beginning of the course during the walk-through, so who knows how pumped he was when he was told to load and make ready.

As per his fashion he too poured it on in his quest for a record seventh national championship. But it wasn't to be.

He would argue later in a written protest that the door at the end of the hallway froze on him and slowed his entry to the last firing position. This door was triggered by a Pepper popper that had to be successfully engaged before the door would release and allow the shooter entry. Robbie said he hit it twice and when it wouldn't open he looked back through the window to see if he had missed the Pepper and realized to his horror that the target was down. His third try

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opened the door and he completed his run in 24.55 seconds.

Jerry's second run was one where everyone held their breath. It seemed like he took forever to get his hat adjusted properly and to wipe the sweat from his face, but when he started on his run it was all Burner Barnhart at his very best. Time? 22.65 seconds.

### Only Losers Whine

Meanwhile, back under the awning, Robbie was quickly calculating the final scores for both himself and Jerry. He calculated his run at 5.15 and Jerry's came up 5.50. Immediately the defending champion realized he has lost the match, so he filed a protest over the door incident in hopes for a reshoot.

Many would argue later it was poor sportsmanship at its worst, but what everyone—except for Rob Leatham and Jerry Barnhart—failed to remember was that this was the National Championship and there was a hell of a lot more at stake than just a clock.

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Rob Leatham this past year signed the biggest deal in the history of practical shooting with Springfield Armory for a cool million dollars. Did they give him all that money because they liked his sparkling personality? His good looks?

No, they signed him for one reason and one reason alone. Rob Leatham is a proven winner and he damn well knew it.

A lot of the shooters have expressed resentments over his behavior, but think about it. Robbie was only doing what every pro athlete does when large amounts of money hang in the balance.

Professional athletes know they are paid to win, because 20 years from now the only thing people will remember is who won the championship. No one will remember that controversial dropped fly ball in the World Series, they will only remember that the amazing Reds beat the A's.

All the controversies and protests will have been forgotten because the programs and books don't mention the losers. They only tell of the winners.

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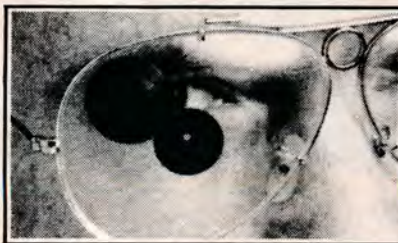


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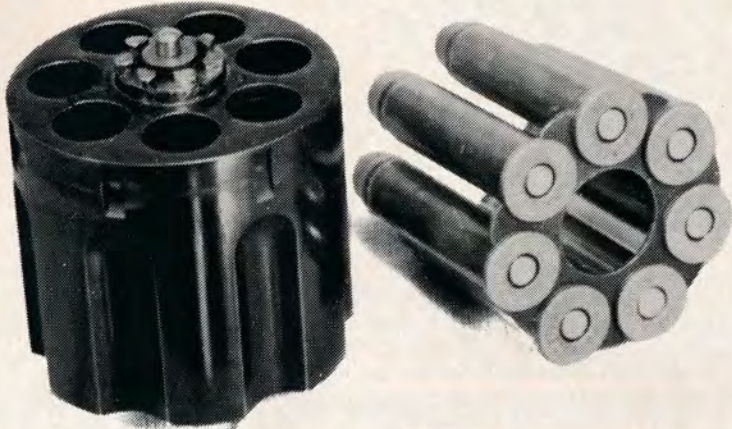
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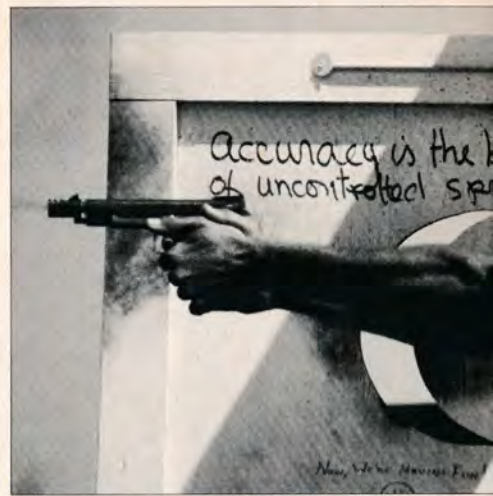
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sports, if you will, and like Vince Lombardi said so prophetically, "Winning isn't everything, it's the only thing!"

I neither condone nor condemn Rob Leatham's protest. I only understand it.

Rob's protest was denied sometime Friday evening and Jerry Barnhart had officially won his second National Championship title.

Later on Saturday I asked Rob what happened to him on the Standards and why did he do so poorly.

"I did something stupid, but I'm not going to tell you because you will put it in the magazine," he said with an impish smile on his face.

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I stood there looking at him with a blank look and finally he said under his breath.

"I changed my sights."

"You *what?*?" I asked in disbelief.

It seems he was able to practice with his P-9 pistol in 9x21 for just three short days before coming to the Nationals, and that practice was limited to a scant 500 rounds. But you were right, Robbie, I did put it in the magazine.

It was his own unfamiliarity with the gun that lead to that fateful decision to change the sights.

When I asked him who built the gun and who should be credited with its creation, it turns out the gun was the product

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of multiple gunsmiths.

He mentioned Les Baer and the Springfield Armory Custom Shop, of course, because he gets paid to shoot their guns. But also Frank Glenn, George Huening, himself and several others who got lost in the translation. With that kind of history his P-9 should be named "The Son Of A Thousand Fathers."

### Revolver "Neutral" Farce

Jerry Miculek brought home the bacon in both the Stock Gun class and Revolver Class by shooting a stock Smith & Wesson 4" Model 625, but he also brought out the fact that "Revolver Neutral" is a complete and absolute joke.

Call it what you will, whether it be "Less Obviously Disadvantaged Revolver" or "1911 Neutral," but these silly course designs do nothing to make revolvers more competitive. This was all too apparent when the best revolver shooter in this country today could manage no better than 146th place out of 506 shooters.

### Hate The Media

By the time you read this the election for the president of USPSA will be over and the new president determined, but the greatest revelation into the problems that plague today's USPSA were brought out by an outside observer who experienced no end of difficulty at this past year's Nationals and he was, oddly enough, a



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TV reporter.

Rick Thurtle is the Sports Director for the CBS affiliate, KHQA-TV, Channel 7 in Quincy, Ill. He was interested in the match on purely a professional basis, but his comments reveal more about the problems affecting the leadership of USPSA

**Local TV doesn't even get the cooperation from our National Championship that they are accustomed to getting at a high school athletic event.**

and the management of the USPSA Nationals than what I can point out.

"First of all, when you are treated as well as you are by Dick Metcalf and the PASA staff at The Masters, everything else pales in comparison. But this sport has such massive public relations problems that you would think they would cater to any positive television coverage they could get.

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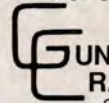


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"But the woman in charge of the statistics won't even call you to inform you at the end of the day of the shooters in the top three positions or even delegate someone to call us. All we wanted was a phone call," the TV journalist lamented.

"It's ridiculous," he exclaimed, "Why do they make the Super Squad shoot at such odd times? Half the fun in being there is to watch these guys perform. Don't they think in terms of the spectators or the media?"

"We don't want them to take us by the hand and spoon feed us. All we want is the same level of cooperation we get from any high school, small college, or professional sport," he said plaintively.

Think about that one, all you guys wanting to get more money into this sport. Think about it.

*Local TV doesn't even get the cooperation from our National Championship people they are accustomed to getting at a high school athletic event.*

What does that say for the management of our sport? If we can't even handle a crew from a local TV station, is it no wonder that we have a bad image?

But Rick Thurtle went on to explain one very good point about our sport for TV.

"The big name shooters are so cooperative. They are wonderful. Jerry Barnhart is pure gold. It is just ironic that the USPSA people are the exact opposite."



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Nevertheless, we regard this incident as important because it reveals a potential danger which we are prepared to eliminate in all P85 pistols now in use. This modification is very simple and does not alter the handling or appearance of this pistol, but it must be installed at the factory.

Accordingly, we urgently request that all owners of P85 pistols contact us immediately to obtain any further information they may desire, and to arrange for return of their P85 pistols to the factory for modification. Please contact us at:

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Or call us for P85 inquiries *only* at: 1-800-424-1886. Please have your pistol serial number available when contacting us.

We will schedule your factory installation of a new safety/decock system free of charge. It will prevent this type of accidental firing even in the rare event of firing pin breakage.

This free safety modification applies *only* to pistols rollmarked "P85" on the slide. Pistols which are rollmarked "MKII" will have these modifications as part of their original manufacture, and are not subject to this modification.

We are also taking this opportunity to remind shooters of the most common and basic firearms safety rule:

### ALWAYS KEEP THE PISTOL POINTED IN A SAFE DIRECTION!

This is particularly important when loading, unloading, or decocking any pistol.

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**ALPHA PRECISION**

continued from page 16

bundled back to Georgia with, I confess, a rather scathing letter.

It was back just as quick, with profuse apologies. Back to the range it went. The three pound trigger had been made slightly heavier and the hammer no longer followed, even when the slide was cruelly dropped on an empty chamber. The Swenson ambidex worked properly this time around.

But new problems developed. Every now and then, the slide would lock itself

When you pay the price for an exotic gun like this that you should bloody well expect it to work perfectly upon delivery.

open with ball, and the disconnecter would fail to release, stalling the gun in the midst of a rapid fire string.

Again, back and forth to Georgia, with fast response. This time, the pistol worked the way Stroh's reputation led us to expect: flawlessly. It had also jammed on a quantity of Federal 185 grain hollowpoint, but the second fix made it 100% with that accurate load.

This is a good point at which to digress briefly into conflicting philosophies of the custom handgun. These pistols are made tight to achieve their precision, and some believe that they need 1,000 rounds through them without counting the malfunctions before they break in and run right. Sort of like those 500 easy miles you put on your new car, so all the parts can wear themselves in and seat just right.

This same school of thought holds that if your pistol has been fine tuned for maximum performance, you have to expect a few trips back to the smith, sort of like having your mechanic in the front seat when you tool around in your newly restored '53 MG TD. This, we are told, is the price of true precision.

The other school insists that when you pay the price for an exotic gun like this—our full-house test pistol carried a price of \$3,200.00 including the base Colt—that you should bloody well expect it to work perfectly upon delivery. Your tester happens to belong to that latter camp.

That said, let's be fair to the test gun.

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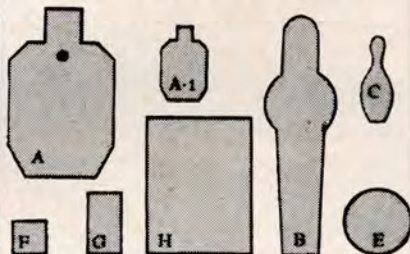
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**Portable Target Stand**

Portable Target Stands of Denver, Colo. has introduced a convenient new portable target holder for practical shooters. Targets are held with cardboard and wood lath, and the stand can be adjusted for different size targets, height and types of terrain. Break the stand down to transport and store it easily. For more information contact PTS at 233 South Marion St., Denver, CO 80210.

**Briley Spherical Bushing**

Designed to maximize accuracy and reliability, this competition-proven design was only available on custom 1911s until now.

The Briley Spherical Bushing aids in maintaining the barrel at the same precise position every shot. The bushing does not allow for any additional interference or drag to slow lock-time. The bushing insert is coated with titanium nitride which has one of the lowest coefficients of friction available today. For details contact Briley at 1085 Gessner, Space E, Houston, TX 77055.

**Port-A-Rest**

Gunsight Powers introduces the Port-A-Rest, a lightweight, compact and rigid shooting rest that weighs only 6 ounces and folds to one inch thick. The barrel support adjusts vertically to aid in sighting in your pistol or rifle, and eliminates the need for sand bags. For more information, contact Gunsight Powers at P.O. Box 165, South Britain, CT 06487, tel. (203) 354-3211.

**Eagle Stag Grips**

Eagle Grips continues to carry genuine handmade grips of shed Sambar stag for that unique but practical western look. The grips are matched for color, grain and pattern, then fitted to original factory frames. Mother of Pearl, Ebony, Rosewood, and Buffalo Horn are also available. For details contact Eagle Grips at 460 Randy Road, Carol Stream IL 40188, Tel. 800-323-6144.

**Four Star Comp**

Ed Brown Products has announced the availability of a new four chamber compensator for 1911 pistols. The Four Star is pre-fitted to a Colt Gov't Model, meaning that unlike many "drop-in" comps, it should fit about 80% of 1911-style pistols without gunsmithing, and the rest with only minor adjustments. The unit is currently available in .45 with other calibers on the way. For more information contact Ed Brown Products at Rt. 2, Box 2922, Dept. AH, Perry, MO 63462.

**Beretta Model 89**

Beretta now has a new target pistol available in the US. The sophisticated single action semi-auto .22LR has a straight blow-back action, eight round magazine, adjustable target sights, ambidextrous safety and contoured walnut grips. The external hammer allows for decocking without dry firing. For more information, see your dealer or contact Beretta at 17601 Beretta Dr., Dept AH, Accokeek MD 20607.

The customer, John Lawrence, who generously made the pistol available to us, had wanted the nickel finish on the frame. Nickel is .0005" thick, compared to .0001" for the more popular hard chrome. When you go with a plating five times thicker than what is usually incorporated, and when the gun has been tightened up to minimum tolerance before plating, the inevitable occurs.

I honestly don't think a Stroh gun ordered in all blue would have suffered the problems we encountered.

It should also be said that while there are a lot of Stroh guns out there, this is the first bad one I've encountered or ever heard of.

The bottom line is that Jim Stroh's work is very pricey, but also very good. Jim is an old bullseye shooter, and he builds in more accuracy than most. And that finish, the Master blue, is to die for.

Despite the aggravation of sending the gun back twice, I finished up very happy with the performance of the gun. I have no doubt the kind John Lawrence is happy with his; now that it's broken in, I expect it'll hit the 100,000 mile mark still purring like a vintage Jaguar XKE.

And I'll be sending some of my own iron down to Jim Stroh at Alpha Precision, Rt. 1, Box 35-1, Good Hope, GA 30641 for that jewel-like Master blue finish. Send \$4.00 for a complete brochure.



## EXACTOR

Continued from page 53

for right thumb operation and cannot be converted to left hand operation."

However, a southpaw can use the safety with the left index finger by shifting the pistol in the hand in a manner similar to that employed by many Colt .45 auto shooters for weak-hand fire.

One reason I suspect we did not get good accuracy was the trigger. Though not unduly heavy, it was creepy and "stagy." In deliberate fire, testers could feel the parts scraping in fits and starts before the sear released. The trigger also had a long forward movement before it reset upon the disconnect's release, which is more of a safety feature than a handicap for the casual shooter.

The sights were not the best. Serrations on the plastic front post were very large and cut too low beneath the top of the sight, which was also radiused on the top.

These design features combined to make the top of the front sight seem lower than it was, since the top edge would seem to disappear under overhead light. This caused the testers to shoot high when outdoors. When the sight was silhouetted on an indoor range with light on the targets but darkness behind the shooter, the sights were dead on for elevation.

This will be easily corrected if Ram-Line chooses to do so.

The rear sight was not wide enough to give good light on either side of the positioned front sight. Opening the former just a sixteenth of an inch would give a much better clearer sight picture.

The rear sight appears "drift-able" in its dovetail. However, an adjustable sight should be an extra-cost option by the time you read this.

The magazine drops cleanly with a Colt-Browning type release button. A side button on the magazine itself allows the follower to be depressed for easy loading, but since the button is recessed, you'll need at least rudimentary fingernails to make it work.

Feel and pointing? That's always subjective. I find it to point dissatisfyingly low, but did not find it uncomfortable to cock the wrist at an angle to bring the sights to the eyes.

The grip starts wide, gets wider, and tapers toward the bottom. Some who handled it said it felt awful. I just found it to feel different. Nothing you can't get used to, though. You may fall in love with it.

### "Toy Gun" Factor

While I was writing this article, a staffer from one of our related businesses walked into the office, saw Syn-Tech beside my typewriter, and commented, "Why are you testing a BB gun?"



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The most common reaction of people who've seen this pistol is to liken it to a toy weapon or a squirt gun. I do not think this is good.

Over the years, a number of armed citizens have captured or driven off criminals at the point of a drawn .22 handgun. They had that success because their .22 looked like a gun. X-number of low-priced .22 plinking pistols do double duty as home defense guns. A defense gun that looks like a toy does not intimidate, and thus fails in one of its two primary roles, the other of which is obvious.

It goes without saying that responsible adults don't leave any kind of firearm where kids or irresponsible adults can access it. Nonetheless, I will be ultra-cautious with the Syn-Tech for fear that someone untrained or irresponsible will mistake it for the toy pistol it so resembles.

## Mechanical Factors

Barrel liner, bolt, and receiver are of steel. The toyish barrel shroud, and the grip and frame, are of glass-filled nylon. Ram-Line's spokesperson refers to it simply as "plastic," apparently recognizing from the start what Glock learned the hard way: you can call it "Fiberglas" or

I am not into being the guinea pig who finds out if radical new designs work or not. Depending on your own outlook, I've just described myself as either a rock-ribbed traditionalist or an old fart mired in the past.

"Polymer" until the day comes that we're all speaking Esperanto, and the public will still call it "plastic."

I doubt that this gun will pass through a metal detector unnoticed any more than will a Glock, and I sincerely hope it doesn't fall victim to the unwarranted hysteria that needlessly blackened the name of the Austrian pistol, which to my knowledge has never been taken through a magnetometer or an X-ray machine undetected in real life.

Counting the barrel and bolt assemblies as one, there are 58 parts in a Syn-Tech. Ram-Line says 22 of them are non-moving. The rifling, which does not seem to be particularly deep but nonetheless gives adequate accuracy for the non-competitive casual shooter, is a right-hand



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### Value Factor

Suggested retail for the 15-shot Ram-Line Syn-Tech .22 pistol is \$199.97. This is how it compares to the other plinking autos in the catalog pages of the 1991 *Shooter's Bible*:

Smith & Wesson Model 422 (fixed sight) 10-shot, \$206.00

Ruger Mark II Standard Model (fixed sight) 10-shot, \$224.75

Browning BuckMark Std. (adjustable sight) 10-shot, \$218.95

We see at least three established Big Name .22 pistols with proven reputations for reliability and accuracy within \$25 of the Syn-Tech's price. This helps define the market. No one is going to buy the Ram-Line gun just because it's six bucks cheaper than a Smith & Wesson.

Will dealers discount the new pistol heavily? We don't know. Though announced in January '90, shipments didn't start 'til July 13 of that year; this article is written only two months later, and market patterns have not yet developed with the new .22.

I was pleased with the reliability of the Ram-Line gun. Durability? Again, we don't know. In a few years, we will.

Ram-Line will sell the Syn-Tech to people who like the feel of it; to people who enjoy wringing out something new in the firearms line; and to plinkers who like to be able to hose 15 rounds down-range without a reload instead of 10.

Our gun would do that with every brand of ammo we tried but Winchester, and it could have been an idiosyncrasy of our test sample, since Heather Petrone tells me Ram-Line uses Winchester ammo heavily in their testing and inspection process.

If I were in the market for a .22 auto in the \$200 price range, I'd probably go with the Ruger simply because I've been shooting the Standard Model .22 since 1959 and love the reliability, durability, and accuracy.

I am not into being the guinea pig who finds out if radical new designs work or not. Depending on your own outlook, I've just described myself as either a rock-ribbed traditionalist or an old fart mired in the past. If you take the former view, you're probably a Ruger/Browning/S&W person; if you take the latter, it's time to drop in on your Ram-Line dealer.

But we don't just buy guns for ourselves. While I am not going to buy a Syn-Tech for myself, I'm definitely going to have one around for awhile. Here's why.

### Kids And Handguns

I have long been a believer in starting children of armed households in firearms safety and marksmanship training at the earliest responsible age. It has worked for my people and it has worked for me.

Now, I would buy myself a Ruger if I wanted a .22 plinking auto. But when I

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was eleven years old, my dad bought one for me. I can't tell you how immensely proud I was to own it.

I also couldn't shoot it worth a damn.

The gun was just too heavy. One-handed was the way you shot a pistol back then, and it's part of the way you shoot one today, and small people don't reach their pinnacle with two and a quarter pound guns. Dad and I finally traded that fine but too-big Ruger in on a Hi-Standard Sentinel that weighed just a bit more than a Syn-Tech, and it was with that .22 that I learned to shoot a handgun competently.

Within a year I had grown into a .45

**The Ram-Line Syn-Tech works a helluva lot better than I thought it would.**

and a Ruger standard-size .22s.

My own children at this writing are 13 and 5. The oldest has her own handguns, .22 to .45, and is not particularly taken with the Syn-Tech. Interestingly, however, the Ram-Line .22 is light enough for the little one to handle with amazing aplomb.

True, she can't pull the bolt back when the hammer is down. Even her big sister has trouble with that; she can't cock the hammer to relieve mainspring tension as she has done, to allow herself to work the slide of a .45 auto, since she was under 10.

However, since it's a bad idea to drop the rimfire firing pin on an empty chamber anyway, my rug rat can insert a magazine, release the locked-back bolt by pulling back on it and letting it snap forward from slidelock position, and pull the trigger with reasonable smoothness, all without awkwardness and without the muzzle straying from a safe direction.

I like that. I've promised Justine a .22 of her own when she turns six. She'd been scheduled for a downsized Chipmunk single shot rifle, like the one her sister began with at that age. However, if she shoots the Syn-Tech with the same aplomb that she handles it executing the plastic rimfire's "manual of arms," she may just start with a 15-shot Ram-Line handgun instead. Time will tell.

The Ram-Line Syn-Tech works a helluva lot better than I thought it would. Ram-Line, forgive me for doubting you.

The Syn-Tech will be a fun plinker and undoubtedly will be the progenitor of more new and different firearms from a firm that started out with magazines and stocks and then progressed to making whole firearms.

I'm glad someone was able to make that progression successfully.



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## HANDLOADING

Continued from page 46

.38 silhouette bullet in that the jacket material will come from the base and curl down over the nose.

This new .358" .38 Super bullet will also only be sold in a 250 bullet bulk pack because they are aware of the volume of ammunition used by IPSC shooters.

### Vic Lites

Another item of interest to IPSC shooters, particularly those like myself still shooting the .45 ACP, would be the "Vic Lite" .45 bullets. They only weigh 152 grs. and the accuracy from these lightweight, almost wafer-like .45 slugs is good. Very good.

Pete Viceroy of Vic International credits his past association with the now defunct Devel Corp. for giving him the initial interest in lightweight .45 caliber bullets.

Six years ago, the development Devel was performing in compensators left them with the idea that what was needed in .45's was the lightest possible bullet to really make a compensator work effectively, but the idea more or less stopped at that point for a couple of years until Pete got together with Larry Brown at Lomax Bullets.

Larry Brown listened to his ideas and complaints about the lightweight bullets in use at that time because of the stability problems they were encountering past 50 or 60 yards. It was later learned this stability problem was inherent because these earlier bullets had a balance point and a center of gravity in two separate locations within the projectile.

It was also at approximately this same time that Viceroy had some friends working for NASA and they were permitted use of the Cray SuperComputer to do some studies on this problem.

The Cray SuperComputer was set up to do gas flow problems and simulate velocities up to Mach 20, so it was no trick at all to work out the problems associated with designing a lightweight .45 bullet and develop one weighing 152 grains in .45 caliber, while having the bullet's balance point and center of mass be virtually the same. Larry Brown then built a cherry.

The weight was saved in the cone of the bullet and if you looked at the bullet head-on you'll see that what they did was narrow the angle from the point of the cone to the area above the driving band. The driving band itself is narrower than a contemporary 200 gr. H&G 68 bullet, but actually wider than a 185 gr. bullet.

The overall length of the bullet is slightly less than the H&G 68, but the nose shape is identical. If your gun now feeds H&G 68's it will have no problem digesting your handloads employing the 152 gr. Vic Lites.



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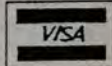
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# BARNHART

Continued from page 65

back on the gun, the amount it moves during recoil is much less. The dot hardly seems to move at all, it just sits there as you track from target to target. The balance and handling are better too, there's no tendency to overswing as with a muzzle-heavy gun.

It was Bill (Wilson) who took the

ideas I had and really made the gun work. There were a few minor problems that came up, such as ejected cases hitting the sight, which Bill corrected by adjusting it to eject straight out to the side. When I got my hands on the first prototype I knew we were on the right track.

**DA:** The sight you used was the Tasco Pro-Point. What were the features of this sight that made you choose it?

**JB:** The Tasco I used was a prototype with a big 12-minute dot [most dot sights use two or three minute dots; DA]

that was easy to pick up at speed and still precise enough for IPSC matches.

I like the big diameter tube of the Tasco [30mm, while other brands use one-inch, or 25.4mm, tubes; DA] because it's brighter and makes it easier to find the dot fast.

**DA:** There still seems to be a feeling among a lot of shooters that the dot sights might be better for more precise, long range shots but they are not as good as iron sights for the up-close, quick 'n dirty stuff.

**JB:** The people who say that are ones who have never given the dots a serious try. I tried all sorts of close-range speed stages, using iron-sighted and a dot-sighted guns alternately. I found that the times were always about the same, but with the dot sight I would shoot more points.

For example, on an El Presidente my times are around four seconds flat with either gun. With iron sights I'll usually be five or six points down. With the dot I'll shoot it clean or maybe a point down.

I don't care what the stage is, I can shoot it just as fast with the dot sight and I'll shoot more points. When the ranges get longer and the shots more difficult, the dot sight becomes even more of an advantage.

**DA:** You wear fairly strong corrective lenses. Does that mean the dot sight helps you more than they would someone with 20/20 vision?

**JB:** Under some circumstances it might. When I'm shooting outdoors in good light, I don't have any trouble focusing on iron sights. But on an indoor range where the light is dim I do find it hard to keep the front sight in sharp focus.

People who are really going to love the dot sights are those whose eyes are starting to lose their close focusing capability. My dad wears trifocals, so to shoot iron sights he has to hunt around to find the part of the lens that will let him focus on the sights. With the dot sights, the dot and the target are in the same focal plane so that problem is eliminated.

**DA:** Have you found other advantages to dot sights?

**JB:** I think a novice shooter will learn faster with a dot than any other type of sight. It shows you your errors. If the hold isn't steady, you see the dot bouncing all over the target. If you whack the trigger you'll see the dot being yanked away from the aiming point.

The dot forces you to improve your hold and trigger control. Shoot with a dot sight for a while and I'll guarantee it will improve your ability with iron sights as well.

**DA:** Some shooters felt that this year's Nationals was very accuracy-weighted, and that in most other IPSC matches the dot sights won't be as much of an advantage.

**JB:** Well, there were some quick 'n dirty speed stages in this match also, and if people will check the scores they'll see

## .41 AE: Going, Going...

The .41 Action Express is the Rodney Dangerfield of the cartridge world. It don't get no respect! First, cases and cases of the Israeli-made ammo languished in the Action Arms warehouses with no guns chambered for it. Two years later, when shooters had pretty well given up on it, Tanfoglio of Italy finally sent a few .41 AE conversion kits through for the Action Arms AT-84, CZ-75 and P-9 pistols. Eventually a few guns actually chambered for the ill-fated round arrived.

Then in 1990 Michael Kassnar launched KBI Inc. with the Jericho 941 as his flagship pistol. The dual caliber 9mm and .41 AE pistol offered much promise, but the curse of the .41 AE struck again.

Writing in the Sept/Oct 1990 issue of *American Handgunner*, we were holding forth on the origins and background of the hot new .40 S&W when we said of the .41 AE's cartridge design, "...rebated rims just don't work in semi-auto pistols!" Michael Kassnar challenged AHG that his Jericho 941 had been branded unfairly because, he claimed, his 941 *did* work even with the rebated rim of the .41 AE.

Well, yes. Our writer Dave Anderson thoroughly tested the Jericho 941 and found that it functioned as advertised. So, to set the record straight, let it be known that the .41 AE can work. We apologize to Mr. Kassnar for any misconceptions.

Cameron Hopkins, Editor-in-Chief



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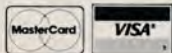
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the dot didn't hurt me in those stages.

I thought this was the toughest Nationals I've ever shot, very technically and mentally demanding. I think it was too demanding, maybe not for the Master and A-class shooters, but it was intimidating for the lower class shooters.

I hope we don't see many more matches like this, if we do a lot of beginning shooter are going to get discouraged and turned off the sport.

I liked it from one aspect, though. I've been stuck with the image of a quick 'n dirty hosemaster type of shooter, so I was glad of the opportunity to show I can hold my own in an accuracy contest as well, and start shaking that image.

**DA:** Do you think the dot sight was the difference in winning this match?

**JB:** No, I don't. I know that sounds contradictory after all the things I've just said about the sights, but in this particular match I didn't shoot all that well, I certainly don't think I did the dot sight justice.

I had a couple of dropped shots, I was 50 points down at midweek, and I was fortunate to pull things together on the last two days while some other shooters had problems of their own.

I think I was putting too much pressure on myself, partly because I didn't want to let the new sponsors down, partly because the dot sight in IPSC was still an unproven concept.

I had tested it, I knew it would work, I was doing what I believed in, but I still would have felt like an idiot if I hadn't shot a decent score. I think I could have shot just as good a score with iron sights, because I wouldn't have felt as much pressure.

But now that we know the dot works, the pressure of trying a new concept is gone, and I think in future matches the superiority of dot sights will become more evident.

**DA:** You certainly seem convinced that the dot is the way to go.

**JB:** I'm convinced enough that unless the rules make me, I'll never shoot iron sights in competition again.

You know, we've had several waves of technological change in this sport, compensators, holsters, calibers, and so on. The next big technological breakthrough will be in sighting equipment. In the next couple of years custom gunmakers and sight manufacturers are going to be making some major innovations in this area.

**DA:** In what areas would you like to see them concentrate their efforts?

**JB:** Both the sights and the mounts should be lighter. The prototype gun Bill put together for me weighs 46 ounces. I can work with that, but for IPSC I'd like to see the weight brought down to 40 ounces or so, empty.

I'd like to see the sights with a larger diameter tube, a brighter field of view, yet much shorter and lighter than at present. I know this is asking a lot, but with modern materials I think it can be done.

Right now I'm talking to several man-

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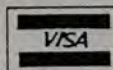
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ufacturers of dot sights, trying to find one that will incorporate some of my ideas into making a better system.

**DA:** Did you see George Huening's prototype mount made of carbon graphite and aluminum? I think it weighs about three-quarters of an ounce!

**JB:** Yes, George has a good idea there. We'll be seeing lots of development in this area. I think Wilson is working on something similar.

**DA:** Do you see the dot sights having practical application for uses other than competition?

**JB:** Absolutely. I think the day will come when they will be commonplace on police duty guns, on home and personal defense guns, on special weapons for emergency response teams.

Right now they have some problems for those purposes, they are too bulky, too heavy, and possibly a bit fragile. But these are technical problems. They can be solved if the demand is there.

**DA:** What about the fact that they are battery powered? I can't see a cop stopping to turn his sights on.

**JB:** There are a couple of solutions to that. One would be to have a switch

I think the day will come when red dot sights will be commonplace on police duty guns, personal defense guns and special weapons for emergency response teams.

incorporated in the grip. Another would be to just turn the sight on and leave it on. They don't draw all that much power, and modern batteries last a long time.

Tasco has a Pro-Point that they left turned on for a full year and it continued to function with the original battery. But that's another area to develop.

**DA:** It looks as though we're in for some interesting innovations in the next couple of years.

**JB:** I'm sure of it. I'm really excited about being on the leading edge of a major breakthrough in sights. You know, we've talked a lot in the past about big capacity guns, but it seems they aren't an advantage if you have good course design.

High capacity guns aren't much of an advantage in practical self-defense. But better sights are a real advantage. Dot sights make anyone a better shooter, but especially the novice and average shooter. We're

going to see developments in IPSC competition that will benefit all handgunners.

*DA: Your achievement in winning the 1990 Nationals certainly has everyone scrambling to catch up. If I can change the subject for a moment, I understand that your shooting classes are keeping you very busy.*

**JB:** Yes, I'm happy with the way the classes are going. I'm starting to use a video machine to tape the students and show them what areas need improvement. It's working even better than I had hoped.



*[Jerry Barnhart's intensive, two-day class requires about a 1,000 rounds and currently costs about \$300. For scheduling information call Jerry at (313) 546-5154.]*

## RACE GUN

continued from page 58

yield a custom scope mount that weighs less than one ounce.

These sophisticated components formed the basis for this very special competition pistol produced by Bill Laughridge (pronounced *lawf-ridge*). But before we get into looking at the details of the gun, it's important to understand the three motivating factors that resulted in this design.

In September of 1990 something happened that will forever change the face of practical pistol competition. This game we call combat shooting has seen tremendous changes over the years—from the street-legal .45s of the Seventies to the exotic .38 Supers of the Eighties—but nothing quite so radical as the *electronic sight* with which Jerry Barnhart won the '90 nationals.

Then, just as the shooting world was reeling from this stunning shocker, only a month later in Australia another equally earthshaking development blew apart the long-cherished notion that God created the Government Model. Doug Koenig won the IPSC world championship with a—forgive me Father, for I have sinned—9mm Italian clone of the CZ-75!

These dramatic events may have shattered the cozy little worlds of insecure people who cling desperately to the status quo, but to a man of vision like Bill Laughridge, it was a challenge and an opportunity. Here was a chance to advance the state of the art of combat pistols; here was a time to build the ultimate new racegun.

And then a third factor came into play that affected Bill's thinking. At a special meeting of the IPSC assembly in Australia, the body that governs the sport of practical shooting worldwide, a resolution was passed to amend the rule governing what constitutes a "major caliber" cartridge. Beginning on Jan. 1, 1993, the minimum caliber for "major" will be .40!

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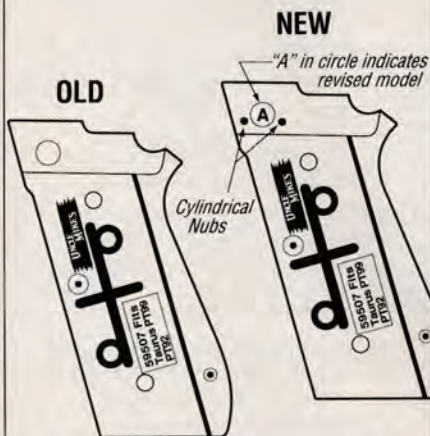
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This is drastic—the .38 Super that Barnhart used to win the nationals and the 9mm that Koenig used to win the worlds will both be permanently relegated to minor caliber.

Add those three factors up and, logically, you would have 1) a hi-capacity pistol 2) in .40 caliber with 3) a large electronic sight. What you would have is a whole that's greater than the sum of its parts—you would have the ultimate combat pistol for the Nineties!

### High-Tech Blueprint

Actually, Bill was already two steps ahead of the game when the events of late 1990 unfolded. At the Steel Challenge in April of 1990, Bill was displaying an alloy-framed Para-Ordnance in .40 S&W. He had already demonstrated that the wide-body frame from Canada could be modified successfully to shoot the new .40 S&W cartridge. Altering the magazine feed lips had proven to be child's play for the talents of this exceptional pistolsmith.

The gun was already working. All that was lacking, really, was the willingness of the market to buy such a gun. Even though Bill knew the gun would be The Hot Set-Up, it took the matches of late '90 to prove him right.

Let's take a detailed look at this study of high-tech sophistication, this remarkable pistol. It began life inauspiciously enough with a pitted, pock-marked Para-Ordnance cast frame. Typical of metal castings, the P-O frame's surface is flawed with tiny holes and blemishes—steel acne, if you will.

"We spent hours and hours hand-polishing that frame to make it look good for the photographer. I want you to make it clear to your readers that the normal frames don't look anywhere near this good," Bill pointed out because he wanted to be totally fair with you *Handgunner* readers.

The surface blemishes of a casting do not affect the part's strength or durability; they are just that, *surface* imperfections. They're ugly, but they don't hurt anything.

It took about 10 hours of hand-polishing to bring the frame's surface up to the high luster that you see here in Ichiro Nagata's stunning color photographs.

"The gun has not been touched with a buffer," the pistolsmith from Nebraska explained, "It's all handwork. That's why the lines are straight and crisp. You make just one goof with the buffing wheel and you've rounded off an edge. You simply can't get that kind of finish except by hand."

Once the frame had been polished to perfection, it was time to fit the Caspian Arms 10mm slide. Caspian Arms manufactures slides and frames, but does not sell whole guns which gives the Vermont manufacturer the ability to maintain over-size specs. These Caspian parts are

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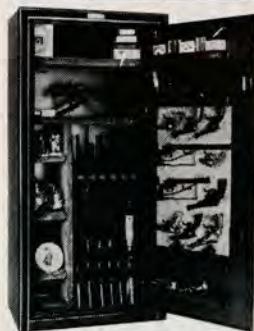


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## Compensator System

Bill first cut the Government-length slide to Commander-length and then meticulously hand-fitted it to the frame with a tedious trail-and-error process that is the only way to get a perfect fit of these two crucial components.

Next came the match-grade Bar Sto barrel, the premier brand of target-grade barrels against which all others are judged. Not only Bill Laughridge but also virtually all recognized gunsmiths attest to the quality of Irv Stone's remarkable stainless steel Bar Sto barrels.

"I won't use anything else," Bill emphatically insists.

However, this is not just any Bar Sto barrel; it is a special-order over-size bull barrel. Rather than merely threading a standard barrel and screwing on a separate tapered steel cone to match up with the slide, Bill takes the much more precise path of machining the over-size Bar Sto barrel to his exacting specifications.

The result is a barrel with a long gradually tapering cone-lockup instead of the short sharply-tapering cones that most gunsmiths add on. Bill says that his system, "saves tremendous battering on the locking lugs and cone." The master gunsmith explained in very technical terms exactly what transpires during the firing sequence of the Browning designed semi-automatic pistol: "It beats the hell out of things."

Bill's barrel design, coupled with his precisely fitted stainless steel two-piece guiderod that supports the compensator during recoil, greatly reduces the natural wear and tear of firing.

To this special Bar Sto barrel is attached Bill's distinctive dual-port, double-chamber compensator. This compensator is a sophisticated design employing two separate expansion chambers. Each of the twin chambers are carefully contoured to maximize the particular gas flow characteristics of the potent .40 S&W cartridge.

In addition, each of the dual chambers is radiused with a "scoop" on the bottom surfaces. These scoops serve to enhance the smooth flow of burning gas to escape through the exhaust ports in the dual chambers. The scoops tend to minimize the turbulence of the gas while at the same time maximizing the upward flow in a sort of Venturi effect.

"The energy is being deflected in an arc" Bill said, "We've worked with a flat wall and a rounded wall, but we've had a lot better results with the scoops."

The wall thickness of the plates between the two chambers have precise dimensions that are customized to the particular cartridge. "The dwell time of the bullet in the port is important," Bill observed, "Even though a lot of gas

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escapes forward, past the bullet, it's still important to vary the wall thickness according to the length of the bullet."

Bill's dual-port, double-scoop compensators employ different wall thickness on the plates separating the chambers, according to caliber. "Quite frankly, we don't see that much of difference in .45 because the pressure is so low. But you can really tell a difference with the .38 Super and the .40 S&W which have a higher volume of high pressure gas to work that comp." Bill told the *Handgunner*.

Lastly, a final bonus to the Laughridge design is that the scalloped shape of the scoops in the twin ports makes for a very clean comp. Lead build-up is absolutely minimal. A bit of residue accumulates in the corners, but it is really nothing compared to some flat-bottomed comps that lead-up badly in less than a 1,000 rounds.

(A digression—the slickest way to clean lead from a comp is with the *Foul Out* electronic bore cleaner from RCBS. I've been using the device for over a year with nothing short of phenomenal results. You plug the barrel at the chamber with a rubber stopper, pour in a special solvent and drop a metal rod down the barrel. Attach the electrodes and switch on the unit. Several hours later, depending on the degree of leading, the barrel and comp are clean as a whistle. The *Foul Out* works great on cooper build-up too.)

The Laughridge-designed compensator system is a full-profile that matches the form of the slide exactly. Like so many handgunners who appreciate an aesthetic sense of proportion in a combat pistol, Bill agrees that a comp which just dangles off the end of the slide looks awkward. The full-profile compensator body, Bill thinks, blends harmoniously with the lines of the slide and, in fact, cannot be distinguished from the slide itself except upon close inspection. The fit is really that good.

## Frame Work

Bill Laughridge is a far cry from a neighborhood "parts changer" in his basement who buys a baggie full of Wilson parts, slaps them on a GI .45 and calls it a custom gun. The 43-year-old master gunsmith used a combination of good old fashioned elbow grease and state-of-the-art modern technology to produce his racegun.

The front strap is "checkered" with precise rows of sharply pointed diamonds cut at 20 lines to the inch. Interestingly, the frame itself is not checkered because the Para-Ordnance frame is too thin at the bottom so that checkering would break right through the metal. Instead, Laughridge cleverly installs a .030" checkered steel plate, so expertly silver soldered to the frame that it is totally invisible.

The trigger guard is wrapped entirely in a fine pattern of handcut checkering. Even with the fine crisp lines running 30 to the inch, the rows of checkered points

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## Major Components

Para-Ordnance steel frame	\$304.00
Caspian Arms 10mm slide shortened to Commander length; front serrations; machined for protected Bo-Mar sight	\$220.50
Huening custom carbon fiber scope mount	\$175.00
.40 S&W dual-chamber compensator with 6" Bar Sto barrel and two-piece guide rod	\$925.00

## Gunsmithing Services

Modify P-O magazines for .40 S&W (4 at \$9.95 each)	\$39.80
Install checkered front strap panel	\$25.00
Square trigger guard	\$100.00
Checker trigger guard top and bottom, 30 lpi	\$60.00
Wrap-around checkering of mainspring housing and frame	\$60.00
Tighten slide to frame fit	\$78.40
Serrate top of slide and compensator, 30 lpi	\$200.00
Checker rear of slide, 40 lpi	\$40.00
Install Bo-Mar sights	\$50.00
Install Brown beavertail	\$87.60
Install Brown ambi safety	\$40.00
Install mag funnel	\$128.00
Install Huening scope mount	\$50.00
Trigger job, 2.5 lbs.	\$77.85
Install McCormick trigger	\$27.50
Remove trigger free-play	\$27.50
Install extended mag release button	\$11.65
Polish and deburr internals	\$63.30
Radius and tension extractor	\$14.00
Master polish frame	\$300.00
Master polish slide and compensator; reblue	\$150.00
Metaloy finish frame and internals	\$97.45
Relieve and recontour frontstrap for high grip	\$150.00

## Ordering Information

Deposits are currently being accepted for the .40 S&W Para-Ordnance "racegun" described here. Call Bill Laughridge for complete details at the Cylinder & Slide Shop (402) 721-4277.

## TOTAL

Parts	\$2,500.41
Labor	\$1,878.05
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>\$4,378.46*</b>

\*excluding N/A items

## Minor Parts

10mm ejector	\$11.50
10mm extractor	\$18.82
Ejector pin	\$1.94
Firing pin stop	\$5.80
Firing pin spring	\$1.94
Hammer pin	\$1.94
Hammer pin strut	\$1.94
Mag catch lock	\$2.74
Mag catch spring	\$1.94
Mainspring cap pin	\$1.94
Mainspring cap	\$1.94
Mainspring housing pin retainer	\$1.94
Mainspring housing pin	\$1.94
Mainspring, National Match	\$1.94
Mainspring housing (flat)	\$34.96
Plunger spring assembly	\$4.18
Sear pin	\$1.94
Extended slide stop	\$29.95
20 lpi checkered frontstrap panel	\$69.95

## Premium Accessories

McCormick titanium hammer	\$76.00
McCormick titanium hammer strut	\$12.95
McCormick titanium firing pin	\$24.95
McCormick titanium/magnesium trigger	N/A
McCormick semi-prepped sear	\$19.95
Gun Craft mag well	\$65.00
P-O magazines (3 at \$44.95 each)	\$134.85
JRL brass magazine bumper pads (4 at \$19.95 each)	\$79.80
Bo-Mar BMCS sight	\$65.00
Brown "high grip" beavertail grip safety	\$29.95
Brown ambi thumb safety	\$54.95
C&S extended mag release button	\$21.95

## Miscellaneous

Wayland custom grips	N/A	Test ammo and range time	\$50.00
Aimpoint 5000 30mm sight	N/A	Return shipping and insurance	\$22.50

still run straight and parallel—a sign of an expert hand. Checking through an 8x loupe, the perfectly pointed diamonds shine clearly and distinctly with not a blunted or flawed tip in their midst. This is perfection in handcut checkering.

The trigger guard itself is tastefully squared for the very functional purpose of providing a more supportive surface for the weak-hand's index finger to wrap around.

The finest of the checkering is found on the rear of slide, exquisitely detailed at the very fine pattern of 40 lines to the inch. Such fine-line checkering, perfectly executed, is indeed the hallmark of a master craftsman's touch.

The flat mainspring housing is blended into the frame with wrap-around checkering, handcut at 20 lines to the inch and executed with the distinctive attention to detail that is characteristic of Bill Laughridge's commitment to excellence.

Again maintaining his distinctive flair for precise tolerances, the frame is sculpted beneath the trigger guard to remove metal and thereby raise the shooting hand's grip. This modification is becoming more and more popular as a sound example of ergonomic engineering designed to increase the hand's leverage over the gun's recoil.

To aid in a fast, reliable mag change, Bill installed an enlarged mag well from Gun Craft of Florida (813-645-3828).

Well, that's an understatement. Enlarged? Try humongous! We're talking the Holland Tunnel here folks!

In fact, let's coin a new term. You've heard of the mag funnel? Meet the mag tunnel!

The Gun Craft unit is tastefully blended into the frame with no unsightly seams or lines to betray its silver soldered derivation. Like everything else on this gun, it's the best it can be.

The frame is finished with the superb hard chrome plating from Metaloy Industries. Using special extra-fine glass beads to bead-blast the frame, Metaloy's Jim Kelley lavished the gun with his most handsome Star Burst finish.

All internal parts were also finished in super-hard, super-durable Metaloy plating for long lasting wear and superior protection.

And to achieve a striking two-tone effect, Bill applied a rich, deep blue to the Caspian Arms slide.

## Premium Components

Bearing in mind that Bill does not expect any customers for the high-capacity .40 S&W racegun to ask how much it costs (if you have to ask, you can't afford it!), no expense was spared on the parts. As Bill put it, "We all know there are a zillion parts out there, but we used the premium of the premium."

This selection of the *creme de la creme* components was greatly facilitated by the availability of a new generation of super-sophisticated parts that is just now sweeping the combat pistol business.

Spurred by innovations found in auto racing and space exploration, the absolute latest materials and techniques are now revolutionizing the status quo. One man is largely responsible for taking combat pistols on this quantum leap forward in technology.

Chip McCormick founded his CMC company a scant five years ago with little more than a rusty '64 Ford pickup, a used patent for a magazine follower that he picked up for a song and an unshakable belief that there was a ready market for space-age pistol components.

At a time when it was really gee-whiz to have a Commander hammer on a Government Model, Chip introduced an ultra-precise, uniquely profiled hammer made on a wire EDM machine that sold for nearly three times as much as a "custom" hammer.

Unsatisfied with merely the best steel hammer, Chip turned to titanium. And not just a titanium hammer, but a titanium firing pin and hammer strut. If a great reduction in lock-time results from the 45% lighter titanium hammer, reasoned the ambitious entrepreneur, then surely the other three parts of the action would also

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benefit from the reduced weight. Lock time would be speeded up even more.

Now all three parts are made in titanium making for a tremendously improved lock-time. Chip's advertising claims that installation of his titanium components, which weigh 45% less than the standard steel parts, will result in a 50% reduction in lock-time.

We were suspicious. We asked an independent engineer with experience at Boeing Aircraft to verify these claims. Based on calculations, the engineer determined that CMC's advertising claims are false—there is not a 50% reduction in lock time but a 66% reduction!

"Yeah," Chip confessed, "We're conservative in our claims. We researched it with two engineers and their estimates were higher, but we figured fifty percent would be safe."

Is this just some theoretical improvement, some abstract advantage? No, categorically and emphatically no. With the full set-up of titanium components, Bill Laughridge says that the lock-time is dramatically faster. "Man, you can see the difference!" Bill exclaimed, "Just dry-fire the gun and then snap one without the titanium parts and you can actually see the difference, it's that obvious!"

McCormick, himself a champion shooter who knows the needs of a combat pistol from first-hand experience, demonstrated the ability of his in-house engineering and manufacturing capabilities by making a custom one-of-a-kind magnesium and titanium trigger for the Para-Ordnance.

A standard P-O trigger weighs 110 grams, but Chip's titanium bow, magnesium pad trigger weighs a scant 67 grams. The McCormick trigger for the P-O was strictly an experimental unit and is not for sale—unless, of course, sufficient demand is there to warrant production.

(To participate in the free-market economy and stimulate the demand for this product—or other high-tech CMC products—call Chip McCormick at (512) 280-3320.)

## Best-Grade Features

In addition to the McCormick trigger and hammer components, Bill also selected other top-quality parts. For the two safeties—grip and thumb—Bill chose the new stainless steel units from Ed Brown Products. The Brown ambi thumb safety is unique in that the levers are wider than the standard Swenson unit and are also ergonomically contoured to match the human thumb. Rounded instead of angled, the Brown thumb safety is indeed a more comfortable fit.

The Brown beavertail features a cut-out in the rear tang into which the hammer sinks when in the cocked position. This allows the beavertail to be raised higher, thus elevating the shooting grip higher on the pistol. Better for recoil control, the higher grip is made possible by the Brown beavertail which is called,



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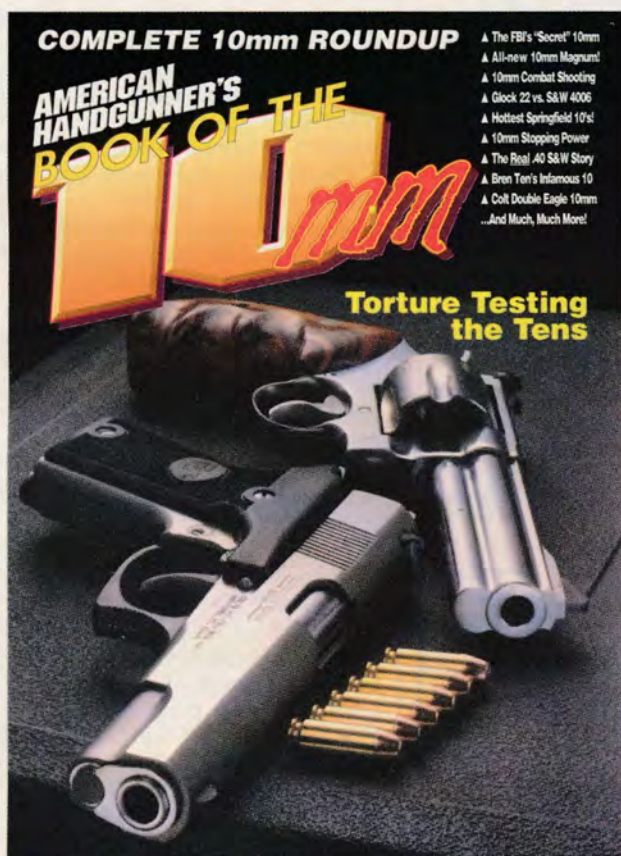
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appropriately enough, the "Hi-Grip."  
Additionally, Bill selected the unsurpassed Bo-Mar BMCS (Bo-Mar Combat Sight) for inclusion on the Caspian Arms slide.  
The Caspian Arms slide came with cocking serrations on the front. Because of the Huening scope mount, the right side serrations are covered up, but they are useful when using the iron sights.  
One of Bill's C&S extended and enlarged mag release buttons is attached. This is particularly necessary on the P-O frame which is awkward to reach around and punch the mag button.

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One of the tricks of the trade that George picked up while captaining Patrick Racing to victory with the Marlboro car in the 1989 Indianapolis 500 was the use of aluminum honeycomb and carbon fiber parts. An inner hull of honey-combed aluminum serves as the chassis, if you will, of a part that will be finished by stretching over it a thin but very strong layer of carbon fiber skin.  
The result is a scope mount that fits low over the gun, actually flush with the front sight, and weighs less than an ounce! The mount attaches to the gun via a special dustcover fixture that is silver soldered to the frame.

It is strong, durable, light. The remarkable Huening mount is just exactly what you would expect—the best.  
But how does it work? Is it as easy to shoot an Aimpoint for IPSC as Jerry Barnhart says it is?

Frankly, I don't know yet. The Laugh-rider racegun is the only IPSC pistol I've ever shot with an Aimpoint and my limited testing, even including dry-firing time, was woefully inadequate to draw any meaningful conclusions. I think you need at least six weeks of working diligently with an Aimpointed IPSC pistol before you would be in a position to offer a valid opinion. I only had a couple of weeks with the racegun before the dreaded deadline drew relentlessly upon me.  
However, in those few weeks I was able to tell that the Aimpoint takes some getting used to. Don't think you can just switch right over from years of iron sights; it ain't that easy! I hasten to add that I was working with a standard two-minute dot Aimpoint 5000 with the wide 30mm field of view—not the "big dot"

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10-minute version which is unavailable at the time of this writing. Barnhart used a 12-minute Tasco.

I must say that the uncluttered field of view in the new 5000 series Aimpoint is a dramatic improvement over the one-inch tubed 2000 series. The 30mm tube of the new 5000 has the same outside diameter as the 30mm Tasco Pro-Point, but the I.D. on the new Aimpoint—which is the measurement that really counts—is significantly bigger.

## Gun Handling

The Laughridge racegun weighs 44 ozs. without the Huening mount and Aimpoint, 53 ozs. with the optic installed. That's really not too bad for a high-capacity gun that gives you 16 shots of major caliber ammunition. But here's the rub—the Para-Ordnance magazine, with brass base pad and 15 rounds of .40 S&W, weighs 13 ozs.

The pleasing heft of the solid pistol felt good. Recoil was minimal, but that was expected thanks to Bill's ingenious dual-chamber compensator with the twin scoops and the efficient .40 S&W handloads I was using (7.5 grs. of WW Super Field under a 150 gr. Sierra JHP for 1,227 fps for a power factor of 184).

The accuracy was utterly phenomenal. This gun is quite simply the most accurate IPSC pistol I've ever tested—period. Consistent sub-one-inch groups were standard at 25 yards. The best of five consecutive five-shot groups measured  $\frac{3}{8}$ " and the worst was  $\frac{3}{4}$ " with a flyer! One-holers all the way!

However, it should be noted that these groups were obtained with the Aimpoint 5000 in place. Shooting accurately is much easier with any optical sight, but the superior Aimpoint 5000 with its sharp, clear sight picture in a true 30mm tube is a real delight for wringing the last drop of precision from a pistol. I know that I could not have extracted such accuracy from the Bo-Mar iron sights and my near-sighted eyes.

Bill supplied a set of specially thinned-down grips, not the gorgeous Coco Bolo panels from Dave Wayland shown in the color photos. Bill's lackluster black plastic grips are sharply stippled to give a solid purchase and, more importantly, they're wafer-thin to reduce the girth of the fat frame as much as possible.

I don't have large hands, and I was very surprised to find that the Para-Ordnance frame, which looks so "blocky," was amazingly comfortable to shoot. I thought the gun would feel awkward and it would balance badly, but it didn't. Live and learn.

Another thing I learned about shooting the P-O gun is that the magazines are prone to jamming if dropped when loaded. I accidentally hit the super-big C&S mag release button a couple of times when I snagged a bad draw out of the holster, and dumping a 15 shot



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mag on the ground was not good. The follower tweaked inside of the magazine tube and it required a complete disassembly of the floorplate to get things straightened out.

If you ever have to do an *El Presidente* or other drill where you have to fire only a few shots and then reload, be sure and start with a partially loaded magazine. Avoid dropping a fully loaded .40 S&W Para-Ordnance mag unless you have your tool kit!

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Topping out at nearly \$5,000, Bill Laughridge's racegun is not for the casual plinker. It is for the man who appreciates the very finest in combat weaponry, the man who prides himself on owning nothing but the very best.

The last words on the Laughridge racegun belong to Bill himself:

"It has really been fun building a no-holds-barred, to-hell-with-the-expense super gun. It's not often we get to do it. Does the soul good to pull the stops out once in awhile.

"I guess that's what I really thought I would be doing all of the time once I had 'made it' in the business. Then I got older and wiser and found out that reality dictates that you rarely have a customer with an unlimited budget.

"I suppose that the aspiring pistolsmith looks at this work as a glamorous occupation. We soon find out that it too is a job like any other. The real difference is that I really love what I do."



*Readers interested in contacting Bill Laughridge can reach him at the Cylinder & Slide Shop, P.O. Box 937, Fremont, NE 68025. The telephone is answered during Central Time Zone business hours at (402) 721-4277.*


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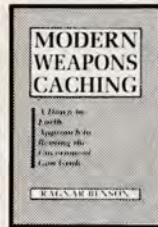


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## INSIDER

Continued from page 110

gun while keeping the weight down," Chip told the *Insider*.

Taking a slightly different tack is Bill Wilson of **Wilson's Gun Shop** who will be introducing a high-capacity steel frame that will be about  $\frac{5}{8}$ " longer than a standard Gov't Model, but not as wide as the **Para-Ordnance** frame. The bottom of the grip frame will incorporate an integral mag funnel.

Bill told me that he's still deciding how many rounds the Wilson/Rogers double-stack magazines will put in his new frame. The Arkansas pistolsmith said, "Thirteen seems to be the magic number. Any more than that and the grip gets too fat. We're hoping to keep our grip real close to the same size as a standard Government Model."

I was unable to confirm details of the Bianchi buyout of the **Ernie Hill Speed Leather** company from Ms. Donna Bianchi, president of **Bianchi International**.

However, I was able to ferret out from Ernie Hill that he's on the verge of inking a deal. "The contract is drawn up and the lawyers are looking it over," Ernie told me.

Look for Team Bianchi to debut in 1991 wearing a new Ernie Hill holster designed by two-time Steel Challenge winner Chip McCormick. Also, watch for Bianchi to put the screws on **Team Smith & Wesson** to switch from the **Safariland** Final Option holster to a Hill holster. The reason—S&W-brand holsters are made under an exclusive contract by Bianchi!

He may have lost the election, but he kept his sense of humor. Challenger Marc Halcon, who now refers to himself as "The Pat Paulsen Of IPSC," was waxed by incumbent Dave Stanford in the race for president of the **US Practical Shooting Association (USPSA)**. The vote tally was lopsided roughly 1,200 to 3,300.

Did you hear about the cops in Quincy, Ill., home of The Masters? They just adopted **Glock** pistols much to the dismay of S&W which has pumped literally millions of tourist dollars into the local economy. Glock has contributed zip to The Masters, zilch to the community. I guess that's how Quincy says thanks.

But on the other hand, police in Cobb County, Ga., home of **Glock**, have just adopted—you guessed it—S&W pistols. They opted for the new .40 S&W in the Model 4006.

Speaking of .40 S&W, this new cartridge will be appearing in green and red boxes in 1991. **Remington and Federal** are loading the round as is **CCI** in *Blazer*.

Chuck Bane at **Bull-X** will soon have the first IPSC bullet for the .40 S&W, a 145 gr. truncated cone lead number that should really shine at around 1,250 fps for a comfortable "major" loading.

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## R-WORD WALLOPS GUN INDUSTRY— LAYOFFS, BUYOUTS, SALES SLUMPS

**G**un companies have fallen on tough times with stagnant inventories stacking up from a general sales slump. Layoffs and shutdowns are sweeping through Gun Valley, leaving literally thousands of workers jobless during the Holiday Season.

Handing pink slips to over 500 workers in three factories, **Remington** is smarting from a general lack of sales.

The jolly green giant was stung when over 37,000 guns were returned as unsold by mass merchandiser K-Mart. The rain-storm in "Remington Country" erupted over its antiquated dating program that allowed K-Mart to take delivery of box-cars full of guns and then not have to pay for them until months later. When the guns didn't sell, Remington had to eat them.

The thunderclouds of gloom also hovered over Springfield, Mass., where **Smith & Wesson** laid off some 150 workers—one insider says it's more like 500—and extended the normal factory closing for the Christmas holidays from one week to two. "It's not just in firearms, the entire sporting goods industry is suffering. People are reluctant to let go of disposable income," rationalized a Smith PR flak.

The trouble extends to neighboring Hartford, Conn., where **Colt** resorted to dumping their guns in a special One-Day-Only Sale to distributors. Ten percent off everything in the store! One distributor was selling a 5" blue Gov't Model for \$390 instead of the usual \$430.

Meanwhile, **Marlin** has cut back to a 30 hour work week. **US Repeating Arms**, makers of **Winchester** rifles and

shotguns, completely ceased operations and laid off nearly all its workforce of 500. **Charter Arms** failed to recruit the necessary capital it needed to stay in business and its doors remain closed.

However, the gun business is flourishing in Europe where gun companies are changing hands like a game of musical chairs. Swedish ammo maker **Norma** has been acquired by German ammo maker **Dynamit Nobel**. This company was founded by the inventor of dynamite, Alfred Nobel of Nobel Peace Prize fame.

In a deal that was signed and sealed just recently, **British Aerospace** (BAe, the parent company of Britain's Royal Ordnance), not **GIAT** (as some publications have reported), has acquired the German gunmaker **Heckler & Koch**. Our insider sources indicate that the sale was necessitated in part because HK ran into a financial squeeze when peace broke out between the two Germans.

Apparently HK sunk a ton of money into the development of the caseless ammo G-11 rifle, betting they could count on a sizeable sale to the West German army. Well, there ain't no more East Germany.

In another story, we have confirmation that **FN (Fabrique Nationale)** has bought out **US Repeating Arms**, makers of the **Winchester** trademarked rifles and shotguns.

USRAC had shut its doors and had laid off 500 workers in early November, 1990, because they were broke and couldn't meet payroll. This precipitated the financial rescue by FN, which already owned 44% of USRAC.

In 1981, the **Olin Corp.** sold USRAC to 11 investors, including FN, for \$24 million.

In 1986, the firm filed for the court's protection from its creditors under Chapter 11 of the federal bankruptcy laws. In 1989, USRAC emerged from bankruptcy when a new group of investors, still including FN, took control.

Then, just after the news of the USRAC acquisition was reported by FN, the Belgian gunmaker was itself swallowed by a bigger fish. FN was

sold by its owner, **Société de Generales**, to **GIAT (Groupement Industriel des Armements Terrestres)**, a French multinational conglomerate.

This is an interesting development. One huge European corporation now owns a significant share of the world's small arms manufacturers. You see, FN owns **Browning** lock, stock and barrel. FN also owns some 20% of **Beretta** which in turn owns a portion of **Perazzi**, purveyors of mega-expensive trap guns. Add all this up and you find that **GIAT** controls a tidy bundle of gun companies.

The following comes from correspondent **Jim Schneider** who writes for *Shooting Industry* magazine:

**Snake Shoots Man**

"Perhaps the most bizarre gun-related story of 1990 came from the island of Cyprus where an otherwise harmless tree snake shot and killed a hunter as he tried to dislodge it from the butt of his single-shot shotgun.

"The snake coiled around the trigger and trigger guard. While resisting the attempt to remove it, the snake fired the gun, hitting the hunter in the chest."

From our *Terminally Stupid Idea Department* comes the new .45 phone from **Shooters World Productions**. Yes folks, it's a telephone shaped like a 1911 pistol. Hold the muzzle up to your ear



and talk into the grip.

The best thing about this zany .45 phone is the unlimited potential for practical jokes. Sneak over to a buddy's house and put a real pistol next to his .45 phone. Then wait til 4 a.m. and call him up! Listen for the fun when he fumbles in the dark for his phone and... *ka-blewie!*

Two high-capacity 1911-style frames will be introduced in 1991 by two different firms best known for their prominence in the field of IPSC hardware.

Chip McCormick of **CMC** is introducing a "super-high-tolerance, blue-printed" titanium frame that will be milled from a solid billet of titanium alloy and will cost between \$800 and \$1,000. Chip's frame will feature an integral scope mount bracket on the frame itself. Because of the titanium construction, Chip says he will be able to offer a high-capacity (18 shots of .38 Super, 16 of .40 S&W) racegun weighing only 41 ozs.

"My object is to get a sight on a race

*Continued on page 106*

### The Euro-Gun

**Smith & Wesson** is wholly owned by the British.

**Colt** is partially financed by Austrian and British banks.

**Winchester** is wholly owned by Frenchmen.

**Weatherby** rifles are made in Japan.

**Browning** is wholly owned by Belgians.

**Springfield Armory** pistols are forged in Brazil.

**Mossberg** pump shotguns are made in Mexico.

**Beretta** of Italy manufactures the official US military pistol.

**Fabrique Nationale** of Belgium manufactures the official US military rifle.

**Savage** subcontracts some of its guns in Spain.

**Glock** of Austria claims to have 40% of the market of US police departments that have switched from revolver to auto.

**SIG** of Switzerland's P-226 pistol is the weapon of choice of Special Forces like the Navy SEALs.



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