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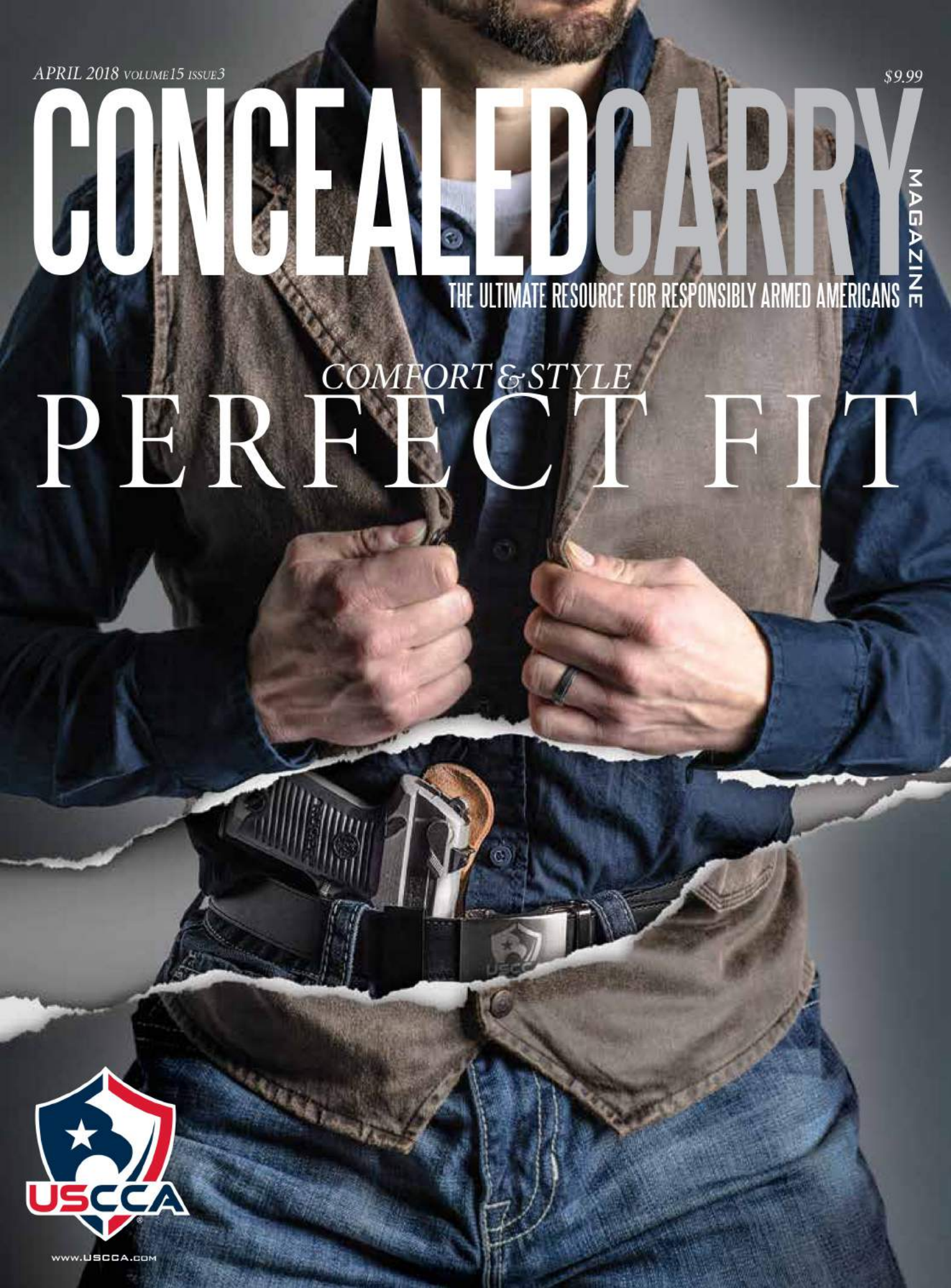
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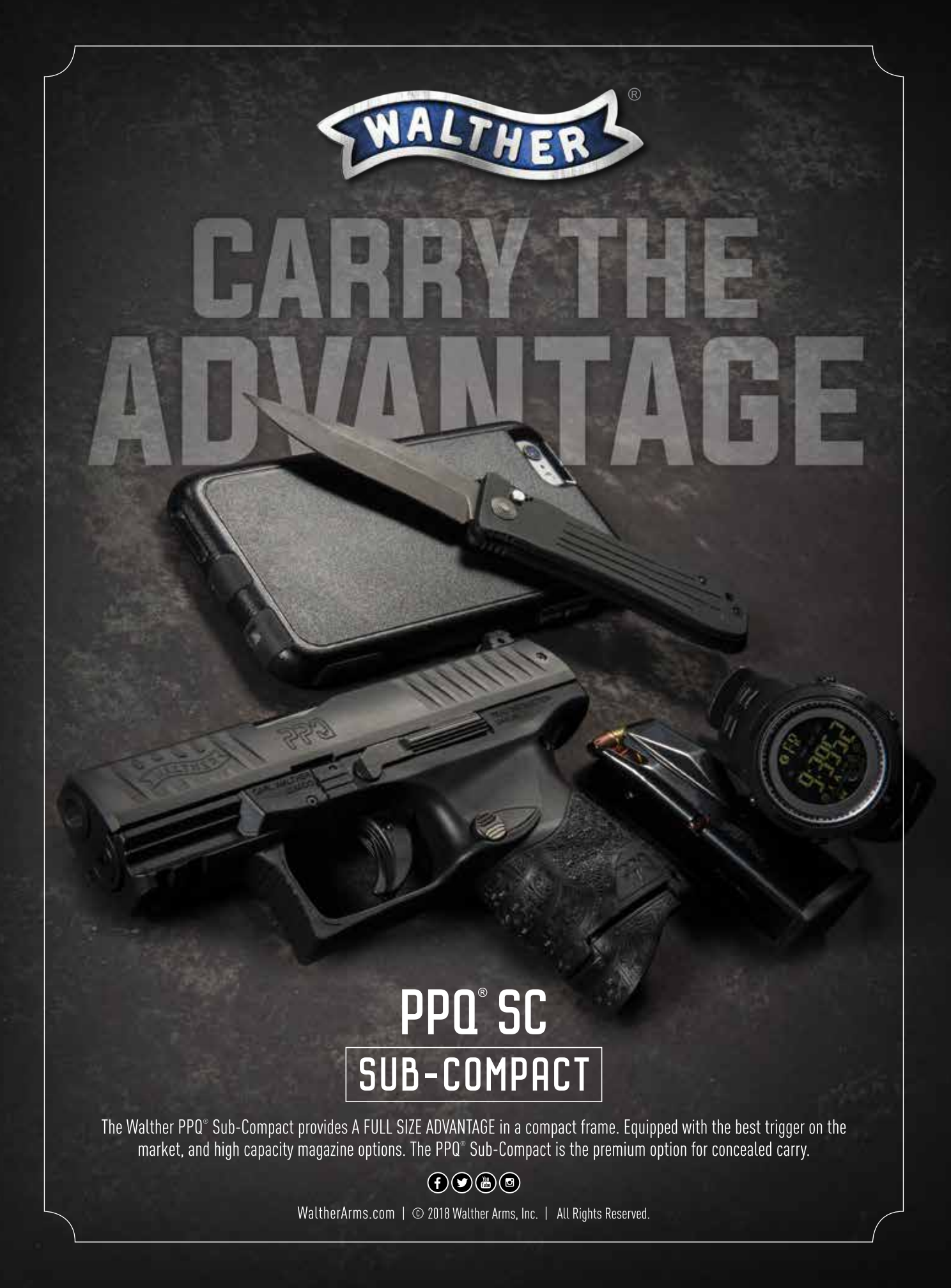
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CONCEALED CARRY MAGAZINE

COVER WINS ASME READERS' CHOICE AWARD

IN EARLY JANUARY of this year, I reached out to readers of the USCCA's *Concealed Carry Report* email newsletter for a little help.

You see, *Concealed Carry Magazine* was in the running for a pretty prestigious award from the American Society of Magazine Editors (ASME). Two of our best issues — May/June 2017 ("Comfort & Style") and August/September 2017 ("Concealed Carry Lifestyle") — were up against such big names as *National Geographic, Newsweek, TIME, Glamour, ESPN, The Atlantic* and *GQ* in ASME's "Best Cover Contest 2018."

Now, besides the obvious honor of sharing the stage with such well-known and respected publications, *Concealed Carry Magazine* being showcased at all was a pretty big deal. In places like Los Angeles and Chicago and New York, where many of these publications originate and where the voting for these types of contests usually takes place, guns aren't exactly looked upon with favor.

Of course, we expected some opposition to our covers (because, well, GUNS) and to our magazine (because, well, GUNS). In fact, take a look at one of the comments a woman named Christine posted on ASME's Facebook page:

You include Concealed Carry Magazine *for gun nuts and violence fetishists? Are you serious, ASME?*

As it turned out, ASME *was* serious about *CCM*, as were more than 3,000 of our supporters who responded in kind:

- *One of my favorite magazine covers EVER.* — Denny
- *Nice use of black and white with just enough color to make it interesting. Best cover design of the bunch.* — Tom
- *The colors and shadows are striking. I mostly appreciate the man's face — looking forward with calm confidence. This symbolizes the concealed carry lifestyle to me.* — John
- *Great cover. The photo 'bleeds' all the way to the top and bottom and the content of the photo tells a story. Great shot, great layout, great magazine.* — John

Comment after comment rolled in, expressing respect, admiration and support for not only our amazing covers but also for the content within *Concealed Carry Magazine* — and the USCCA:

- *Absolutely love the magazine, the USCCA and the amazing content inside each issue.* — Charles
- *I read* Concealed Carry Magazine *from cover to cover not once but several times as I wait for the next issue. Then I share with friends and family.* — Roman
- *Really appreciate the thought-provoking articles that encourage me to contemplate my responsibility to exercise my 2nd Amendment rights judiciously.* — Janos
- *This is the only magazine I read cover to cover every time I receive it. It's also the only magazine that I keep for future reference and to share.* — Lillie
- Concealed Carry Magazine *is always full of great information for all levels of skill and involvement. The cover art is always top notch too! What is most important is that USCCA is there for its members in times of need.* — Jack

As I read through these comments, I was absolutely overcome with gratitude; it became apparent rather quickly that *CCM* is an absolute staple in the lives of countless armed citizens.

The results of ASME's contest were announced in early February, and I'm honored to report that our "Comfort & Style" issue (pictured above) placed in the top five of more than 200 entries (*Entertainment Weekly, Billboard, Living Bird and National Geographic* rounded out the publications whose covers received the most votes). Even more exciting? We ending up WINNING our category (Best Service and Lifestyle). The way I see it, this is just further proof that *Concealed Carry Magazine* really is the ultimate resource for responsibly armed Americans all across the country.

I couldn't be more proud.

On behalf of the entire *Concealed Carry Magazine* team, thank you for your support. I promise we will always strive to surpass your expectations in providing you with important information to help you keep your loved ones safe.

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EDITOR'S SHOT *by* Kevin Michalowski



FASHION & FUNCTION

YOU CAN HAVE BOTH

FOR MOST MEN, fashion gives way to function when it comes to carrying a concealed weapon. We adjust our shirts. We buy jeans one size larger. We wear cargo pants or other cover garments, thinking only about what keeps our gun covered and not what keeps us looking good.

It doesn't have to be that way. Anyone who has seen a TV detective knows that a sport coat makes a great cover garment (and looks good too). While such coats were always made for fashion first and concealment second, now you can get a good-looking suit coat that is designed specifically for concealed carry. Cacharme Systems, LLC makes a suit coat with the proprietary integral holster system shown above that hangs nicely, balances the weight of a firearm and allows for completely concealed yet rapid access to that firearm.

Cacharme, roughly translated, means "concealed weapon" in French, and that is exactly what this system does: allows the wearer to discreetly carry a gun — and be well dressed.

This reminds me of a term used by USCCA-Certified Instructor Will Parker, owner of Freddie Merc's Glock Werks in Kalispell, Montana. Parker says he is not "fully dressed" unless he is carrying his EDC gear. I like that term. It is clear and direct, without broadcasting the fact that he is armed.

If you are heading out for the evening and your partner asks, "Are you ready to go?," your simple response would be, "Yes, I am fully dressed." This makes it clear that you are carrying a concealed weapon and are ready, willing and able to assist in any defensive situation that might arise. It is what I call one of those "'nuff said" situations. Things are clear, concise and easy to understand.

This returns us to the debate about form versus function when it comes to concealed carry. Each of us has a personal decision to make when we head out the door. The goal is the same: We need to be prepared to defend ourselves in the face of any threat. We also need to be discreet in how we carry our defensive tools as we face the world. The goal is to keep our weapons concealed and secure but ready for quick use. Everything else is secondary. Yet, we really do care about those secondary elements. Some people give more weight to them than do others, and that is fine so long as the primary concerns are met.

This edition of *Concealed Carry Magazine* focuses on comfort and style, components of the bigger concealed carry picture. You need tools. You need training. You need mindset. When all of those are in place, you then have the chance to think about your comfort and style. It might be the last thing on the list, but it is still on the list, because anything that keeps you from carrying a gun every day could be the thing that gets you killed when an attacker chooses you.

Stay safe. Train hard. And now you can look good and be comfortable doing it.



CONCEALED WITH ATTITUDE.

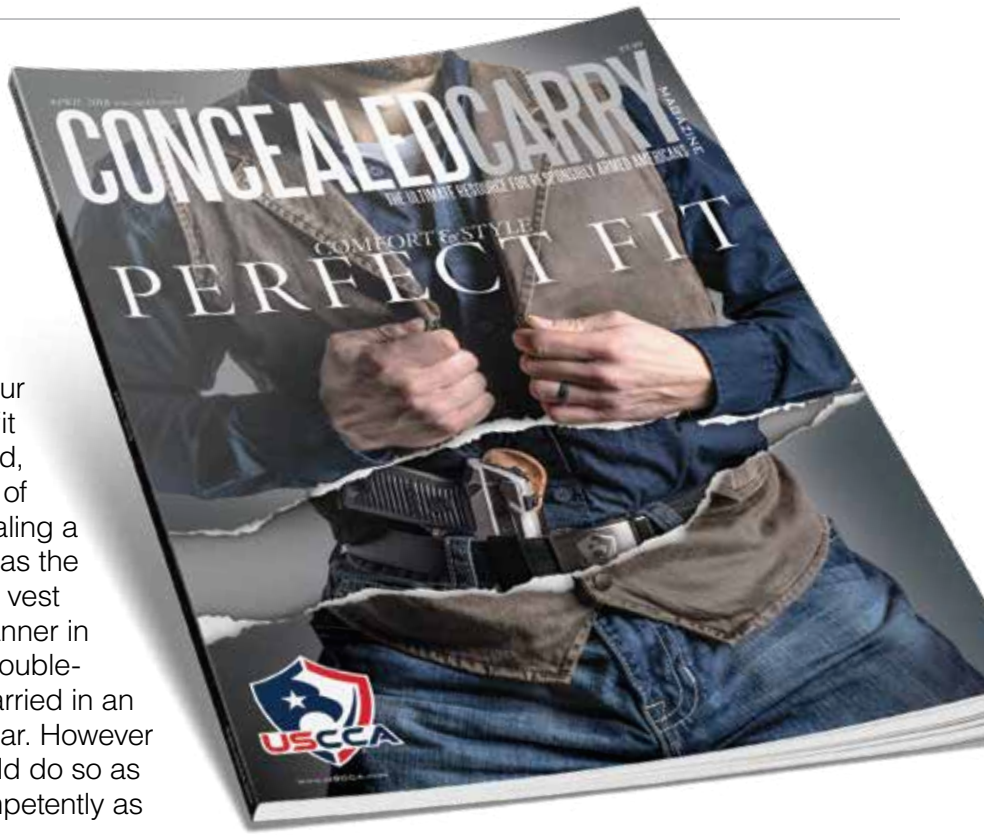


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▪LIKE THE CLOTHES we wear, our firearms are often well-broken-in, fit perfectly to our personal styles and, in very real ways, are expressions of our personalities. As such, concealing a sidearm can take forms as varied as the individual doing so. In this case, a vest to keep out the chill is an ideal manner in which to conceal even the large double-stack Ruger P89, pictured here carried in an appendix holster from Cover 6 Gear. However and whatever you carry, you should do so as comfortably, consistently and competently as possible.

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With Kevin Michalowski

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WEAPON-MOUNTED LIGHTS

BLAZING AWAY

QUESTION: Thanks for an excellent magazine and organization. The October 2017 issue raised some questions for me in regard to gun-mounted lights and, to a lesser degree, lasers.

They have been implicated in several negligent shootings, some by law enforcement officers. It seems like it might be useful to have an article about the pros and cons of these lights.

For the record, I have a Streamlight TLR-2 light/laser combo on my Glock 22. It works fine, but between the dangers I've heard of accidental discharges using them and the greatly reduced options for holsters (doubly so since I'm left-handed), I'm not sure I would recommend one or get another for another gun. It would be great to hear more about these from other people.

Sincerely,

Chester, via email



■ Like so many other aspects of defensive handgunning equipment, weapon-mounted lights are *a* solution to a problem, not *the* solution to a problem.

ANSWER: *Chester,*

You bring up some very important questions.

First and foremost, I understand why a good number of shooters would be hesitant to attach a flashlight to the underside of a pistol. By definition, it would seem that anything at which you're pointing the flashlight would also be receiving the muzzle of the gun … right?

Well, maybe.

Weapon-mounted lights gained popularity in law enforcement circles because of the almost limitless number of situations in which an LEO might have to hold a suspect at gunpoint in the dark. As private citizens, we're not in the "hold him at gunpoint and take him into custody" business; we're in the threat-stopping business and, even then, only when there's absolutely, positively no other option.

The trick to using a weapon-mounted light in a non-law-enforcement context is that all modern models are bright enough that you don't have to break one of the cardinal rules of firearms safety: Never point a firearm at something you do not intend to shoot. If the light on your pistol is the only light you have, you can still move and occasionally "splash" an area with light, just as you might with a hand-held unit. Since you will be moving with the muzzle of your pistol oriented down toward the floor (if you employ most modern techniques), the light will cover what is in front of you and plenty of what's ahead. If you're employing one of the "international" or "bodyguard" methods, in which the pistol is held muzzle to the sky and above head-level of the tallest friendly in the area, then a weapon-mounted light isn't going to work for you as your only source of illumination.

I have weapon-mounted lights attached to several of my home-defense pistols for one reason and one reason only: When it comes to my emergency lifesaving supplies, I prefer built-in redundancy. I suppose I look at it this way: Would I rather have less ways of seeing what I might have to shoot or more?

If I wake up to a door smashing and no one's yelling, "POLICE," I will be grabbing a .45 automatic with an attached Streamlight TLR-1S and a hand-held flashlight in preparation for whatever I might be about to face. Since I'll be wearing a set of trunks and a T-shirt under such a circumstance, there isn't going to be any room aboard for any additional gear, and, as such, a backup flashlight is pretty much out of the question … unless I can attach it to my pistol.

I carried three or four flashlights while on duty as a deputy sheriff, because getting caught without a way to shine bright light on a bad situation was not an option. Violent encounters often involve rapid movement, extreme physicality and conditioned reactions, any one of which can cause an individual to lose his grip on a flashlight. I prefer to keep weapon-mounted lights on my home-defense guns and treat them as backups, though I still train on them several times a year. As for concealed carry, some elect to do the same as I as far as bringing them along for the ride as emergency options, but as you said, the holster (and customer) market is less than enthusiastic about inside-the-waistbanding pistols with lights on them.

Overall, a handgun with an attached light or laser is no different than a pistol without an attached light or laser: It's your responsibility, as the individual running it, to shoot only people who and things that absolutely, positively have to be shot. Though there is the concern of pointing the muzzle of the pistol at whatever you want to shine a flashlight at, a great deal of that can be overcome with training as described above and with a secondary (or, in this case, actually a primary) flashlight.

Thanks for writing and stay safe,

Ed Combs
Associate Editor

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OUT WITH THE OLD

I found the "Ask the USCCA" article on magazine longevity ("Breaking Point," Page 12, November/December 2017) very helpful, but it makes me ask how long the ammo is good for. Does it weaken or deteriorate to a point where it will not fire reliably?

John, via email

John,

Barring the ammunition getting wet, I generally recommend that carriers rotate out EDC ammunition at least once a year. The ammunition will last for much, much longer than that when properly stored — to the tune of decades — but I advise folks to shoot their carry ammo at least annually for two reasons. First, if the pistol is loaded and then unloaded regularly, the rims on the cartridges will begin to wear down, making failure more likely — even when you rotate which round gets jacked into and out of the chamber each time. Second, almost no defensive cartridge is as light-recoiling as a training load. In order to stay atop your game, it is imperative that you train at least occasionally with your actual carry load. If all you ever shoot at the range is the 115-grain 9mm you buy by the thousand, the increased recoil and muzzle flip produced by your Federal HSTs (or whatever) might end up throwing you off your game during an emergency, specifically in the area of follow-up shots.

Stay safe,
Ed Combs
Associate Editor

'SAFE ZONE'

The wife of a long-time coworker and friend has never been a fan of any form of citizen carry. During a recent visit to her sister's home in Iowa, they all went to a Bass Pro Shops and, while in the store, Iowa's open carry policy was frequently observed by all. Upon finishing their visit at the store, my friend's wife said, "Wow, I've never felt so safe." What also needs to be said is that people — especially politicians — who use the horrendously wrong phrase "gun-free safe zone" are 180 degrees off. I find a little comfort in seeing that minds actually can change without browbeating or argument.

Raymond, via email

SHOCKING!

Mr. Combs,

I read your article on cruiser shotguns in the November/December 2017 issue ("Short & Sweet, Down & Dirty," Page 92). I just recently purchased the Mossberg 590 Shockwave and find the recoil to be very manageable when shot from the waist and, after a few tries, I was able to aim very successfully. It is really an awesome weapon and a lot of fun to shoot.

Keep the great info coming.

Clarence, via email

Clarence,

As the Aussies say, "goodonya." Your experience mirrors Executive Editor Kevin Michalowski's and mine in that we've all had a fine old time accurately firing cruisers from the hip for some time now. I've noticed over the years that experienced shooters can often pick up the technique very quickly, but newer shooters who do not yet have years of shooting-related hand/eye coordination to inform their decisions usually pull their shots as I described. As for its status as an awesome weapon, I would have to agree. It's tough to find anything else that's as small as the Shockwave and that still delivers comparable force into an attacker.

Stay safe,
Ed Combs
Associate Editor

GLOCK SOLID

Ed,

As a member of the USCCA, I look forward to the articles presented every month in the magazine. I just finished reading your "Hard Lessons" in the January edition ("Legally Armed Citizen," Page 34) and felt the need to share.

Two years ago, I attended a four-day course on defensive handgun at a training facility outside of Las Vegas, and I brought my shiny new 1911 for the class. The objective was to be able to accurately fire two rounds into center mass from concealment in two to three seconds. Needless to say, many years of bad habits practically broke me, and had I not been paired up with a retired Navy SEAL, they would have. The .45 in the hot desert temps blistered my hand to the point of hardly controlling it by Day 3, but this shooting partner picked up every mistake I made, calmly corrected me and, by the end, everything worked out.

On the evening of the day before testing, we went to get some dinner and he asked me why the .45. I said that I really liked the slim profile for carry and the trigger. His response was ominous. During his tours, the teams he'd been on were issued 1911s, for which he had no love. His simple explanation was his belief in Murphy's Law: "If something can go wrong, it will at the worst possible time." His handgun was a Glock. In fact, out of the 20 people training, only three had something other than a Glock.

Thanks for the great article. Keep them coming. I'm now the owner of a G19 for EDC and am looking forward to more training.

Frank, via email

ID, PLEASE

I am a USCCA Instructor in Massachusetts, and I always read issues cover to cover. I really appreciate the tips included by Attorney Jamison, and I'd never heard of the holding a license overhead following an incident. My next USCCA class will absolutely get this one. Thanks again for all the great work!

Brian, via email

Brian,

That is, indeed, a good one. Not only is it a signal that a lot of law enforcement officers will recognize, it is an extremely unusual and attention-getting act, one that can snap a cop out of his usual thought process while approaching what he knows might be a dangerous individual. Bad guys run or, rarely, try to bait an LEO in for an attack. Like waving a light stick over your head, holding your permit or driver's license over your head with both hands sends the signal that you're of no threat and that you want to be identified by authorities.

Stay safe,
Ed Combs
Associate Editor

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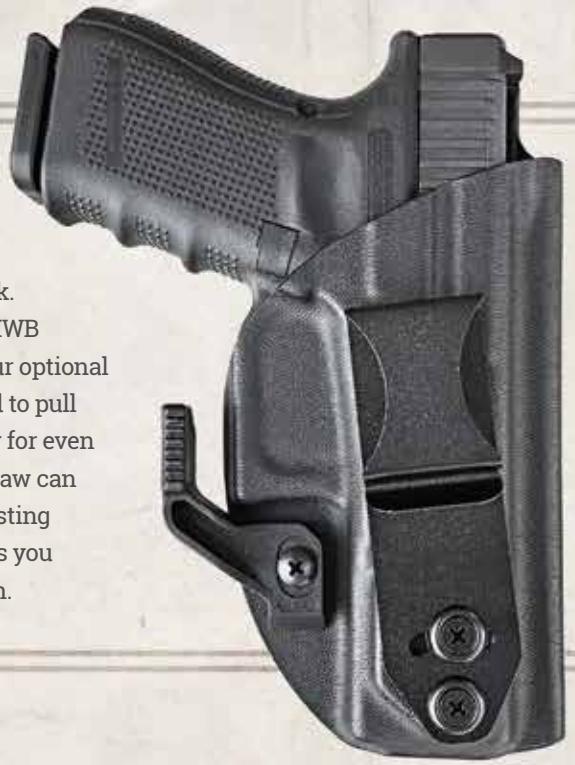
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CASE

WINKLER SKINNER

THE WORDS

"comfort" and "style" can seem almost out of place when discussing a knife, but as soon as that knife needn't fold nor ride in a pocket, suddenly more avenues to both open up. For comfort, it's hard to beat a fixed blade, especially one that's as easy to choke up on as this Winkler Skinner from Case. For style, the sky's the limit, though for the individual who believes the understated always outlasts the bombastic, the fiber-reinforced leather sheath in which the Skinner rides is utilitarian and timeless and the knife itself is a rugged eye-catcher. Designed by Daniel Winkler and retired Special Forces soldier and Navy SEAL Kevin Holland, it fits the bill for tactical and outdoor needs. A true field knife in the tradition of Case offerings from the past, it and others in the "American Heroes" knife series are available at **wrcase.com**.

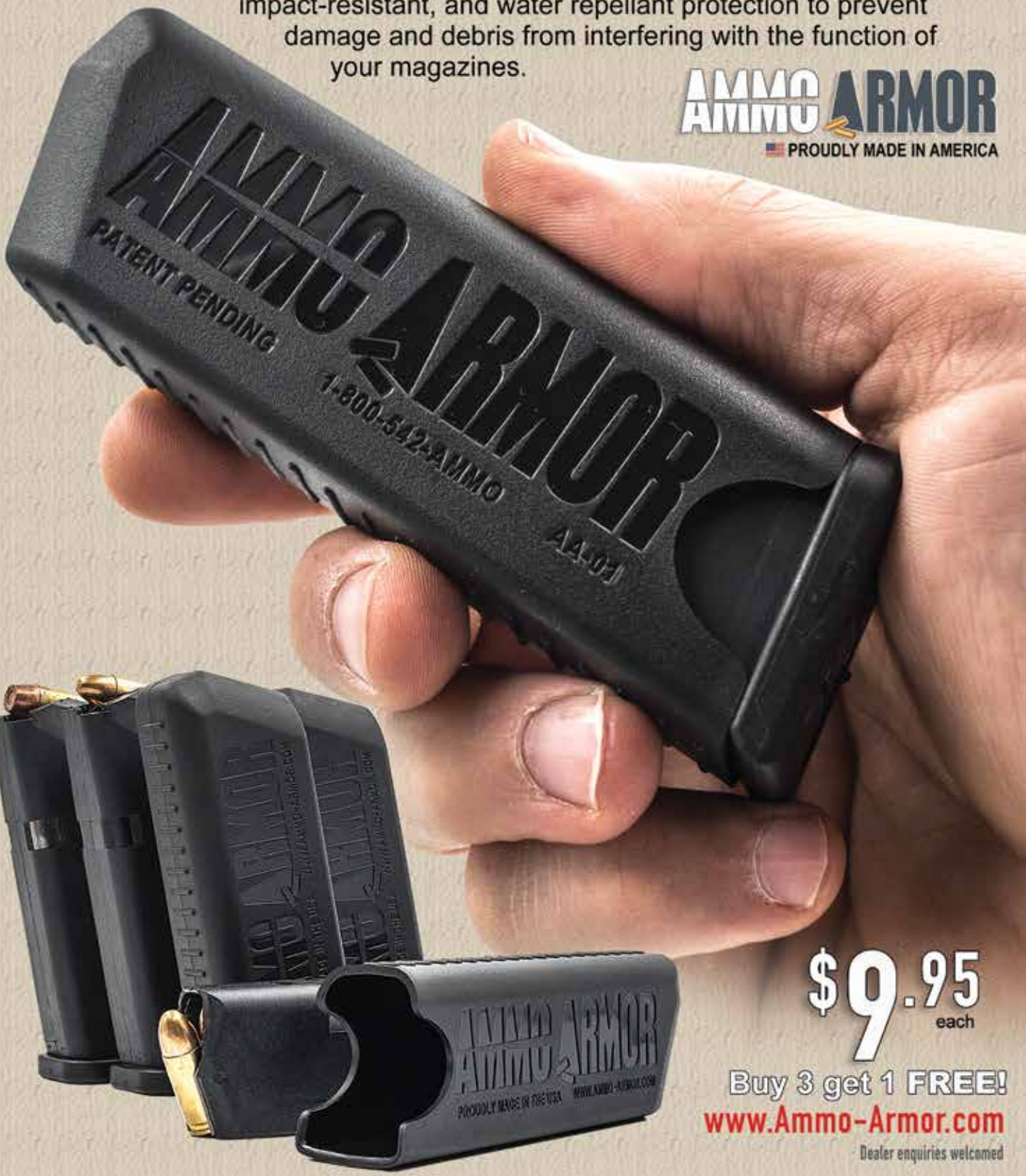
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PILLOW FIGHT

INDIANA HOMEOWNER FOILS HOME-INVADING DUO

A Calumet Township man and his fiancée were watching TV one evening when they noticed their outside front light going off, then their doorknob being jiggled. Suddenly, their Chihuahua dog began barking fiercely, followed by sounds of their back door being kicked in. When a man, clad in black, wearing a ski mask and carrying a shotgun entered the living room, the homeowner took up a .380 pistol he kept under a sofa pillow and opened fire on the intruder and a second burglar, driving them out of the house. Police are continuing their investigation of the crime.

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ELDERLY OHIO COUPLE PREVAILS AGAINST WELL-ARMED HOME INVADER

An elderly Highland County couple was rising for the day when a young man armed with a rifle and a pistol invaded their home. Fortunately, the husband and wife were armed with pistols and ordered the intruder to leave. When he ignored those orders, both homeowners fired on the intruder, killing him and ending the incident.

WKRC-TV Channel 2, Cincinnati, Ohio

NORTH CAROLINA HOMEOWNER FIGHTS OFF ARMED ATTACKERS

A Cameron man was home alone late one morning when an intruder armed with a rifle kicked in his front door. Taking up a pistol, the homeowner fired on the attacker, who fled the house but fired back with his rifle from the yard, grazing the resident's leg. The attacker then fled with an accomplice.

WNCN-TV Channel 17, Raleigh, North Carolina

MISSOURI PIZZA MAN SHOOTS ARMED ROBBER

A pizza deliveryman was delivering an order late one night when he was accosted by two would-be robbers, one of whom pistol-whipped him. When the deliveryman tried to retreat to his vehicle, one of the robbers fired on him. The victim then drew his own gun and shot at the robbers, hitting one and driving both off. The wounded robber, a 17-year-old male, was found by police nearby, dead from his injuries. Police said the defensive shooting was justified.

St. Louis Post-Dispatch, *Missouri*

GEORGIA PASTOR STOPS HOME INVADER

A Cherokee County minister was at home with his wife and three children early one morning when he heard noises of a break-in from his basement. Fearing for his family's safety, he took up a pistol and fired on the intruder, hitting him and putting him to flight. Responding police found the 19-year-old burglar in the yard of the victim's home with a gunshot wound to the head. The burglar will recover from his injuries, and police say the homeowner acted in self-defense and will not be charged.

WXIA-TV Channel 11, Atlanta, Georgia

LOUISIANA WOMAN STOPS BURGLARY

An Eros woman was awakened in her home by a loud noise. Taking a rifle with her to investigate, she found a stranger in her living room. She held the burglar at gunpoint for responding police, but he bolted from the home and escaped before police arrived. The man was later caught by police and, after resisting arrest, was taken into custody.

The News Star, *Monroe, Louisiana*

FLORIDA UBER DRIVER DEFENDS AGAINST ATTACKER

A Sarasota Uber driver asked a belligerent passenger to leave the car. The customer finally did so but immediately returned and escalated his aggressive behavior. Drawing his legally carried pistol, the driver warned the attacker away, but the man punched the driver and threatened to kill him. Fearing for his life, the driver shot the attacker in the leg, ending the attack. Investigating police determined the shooting was in self-defense and returned the victim's pistol after their investigation.

WFTS-TV Channel 29, Tampa, Florida

MICHIGAN MAN APPREHENDS DOMESTIC ASSAULTER

Seeing a strange van with fogged windows on his property, an Ortonville man took a pistol and checked inside the vehicle. He found a young man hidden under a blanket on the floor, whom he ordered out at gunpoint. When the resident called police, a SWAT team responded, ending a 24-hour manhunt. The man in the van was wanted for shooting his estranged wife and her friend, both of whom suffered head wounds.

WXYZ-TV Channel 7, Detroit, Michigan

KENTUCKY HOMEOWNER FOILS CAR BURGLARY

Seeing a suspicious shadow outside his window near his truck, a Louisville homeowner armed himself with a pistol and went to investigate. He found a young man trying to break into his vehicle. He ordered the man to the ground and held him at gunpoint while calling the authorities. Police arrested the offender and found drugs and drug paraphernalia in his possession.

WDRB-TV Channel 49, Louisville, Kentucky

NEW YORK REPAIRMAN FIGHTS OFF ARMED ROBBER

A Rochester repairman working outside a customer's home was accosted at gunpoint in a robbery attempt. The repairman drew his own weapon and fired on the robber, wounding him and forcing him to flee. The robber was arrested at a local hospital when he sought medical attention. Police filed no charges against the victim.

SpectrumLocalNews.com

TEXAS GAS STATION OWNER DEFENDS AGAINST TWO ARMED ROBBERS

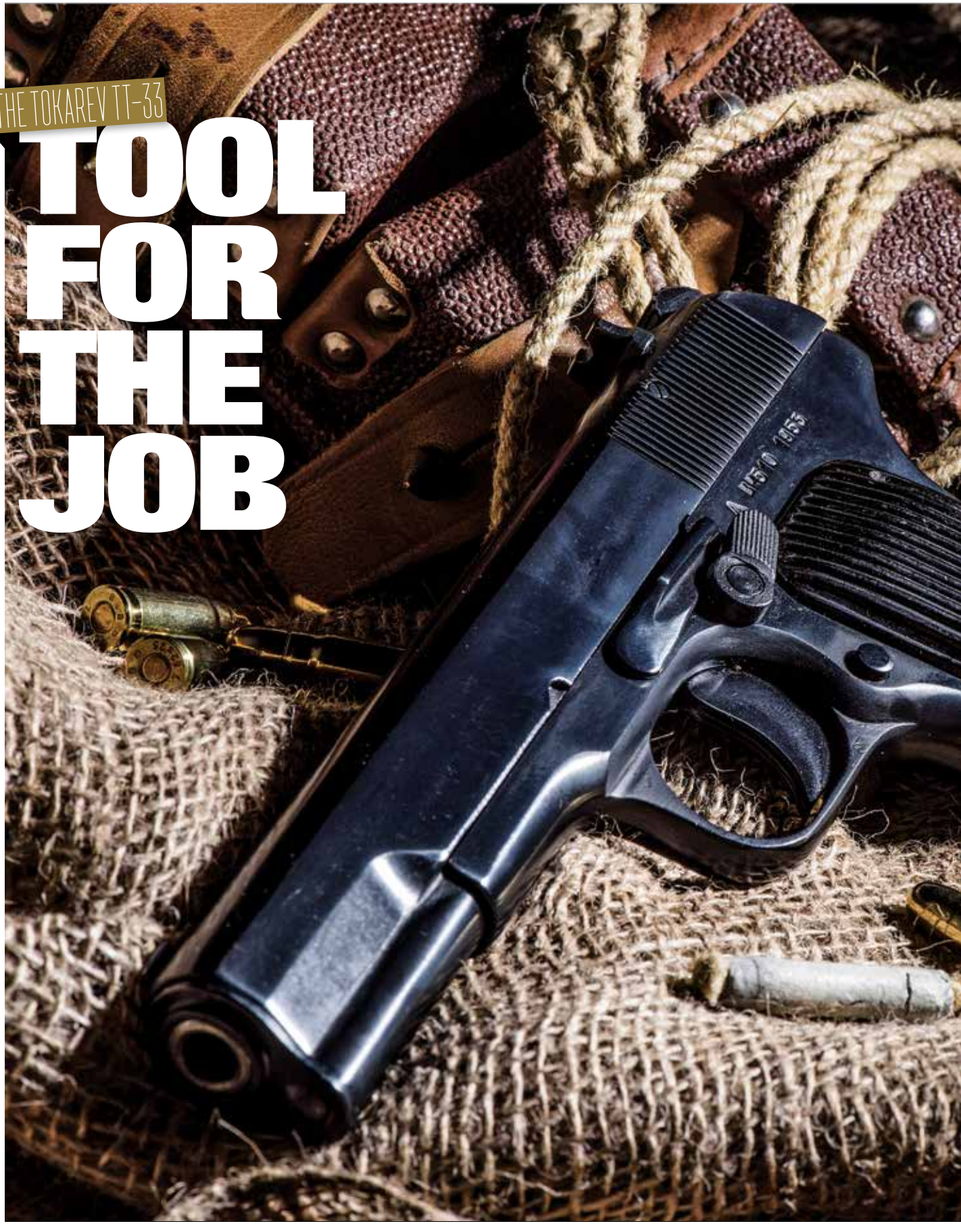
A Houston gas station owner was assaulted by two armed men who entered his store and demanded money. The owner drew his own pistol and fired on the two robbers. In the gun battle that ensued, the station owner was shot eight times in the left arm and still managed to mortally wound one robber while putting both to flight. While awaiting treatment in the hospital, the wounded store owner was asked if the robbers got anything. A relative replied in the negative but said the assailants did "take some bullets with them."

KTRK-TV Channel 13, Houston, Texas


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THE TOKAREV TT-33

TOOL FOR THE JOB





WHEN IT COMES TO a discussion of carry guns, the pistols that come up in conversation in a gun shop are a diverse lot. Darrel, John, Clay and I have seen plenty but have by no means seen them all. Not quite yet, at least.

A steady seller in well-stocked gun shops is the Tokarev TT-33 7.62x25mm. At first glance, you would think the Tokarev is purchased primarily by someone who likes to collect historical military sidearms, and there's certainly some truth to that. By extension though, owning the gun means it might someday be pressed into service, and the Tokarev has many good points to recommend it on that count.

There are few handguns I trust. These include the Colt 1911, CZ 75 and SIG P220 variants, but an older gentleman took me to task for not including his favorite carry gun: He wore a Tokarev TT-33 pistol in a competent but inexpensive holster under a well-worn leather jacket with various Vietnam Vet patches. A spare magazine rode in his back pocket, stabilized by his wallet, and the pistol was chamber-loaded and carried with the hammer in the half-cock position. He told me that it wasn't only expensive modern handguns that were reliable, and it wasn't just old Colts that always functioned.

The Tokarev came up again in conversation with one of the most experienced gunsmiths I know. I was writing a book on gunsmithing and wished to include a number of the high and low points in parts repair of various Browning variants. I asked if he had ever had a Tokarev on the bench for repair, and he replied, "They seem never to break or tie up. I have never had one in the shop." This is quite a reputation for a 1930s design that was intended for mass production with minimal machine work.

Tokarev fans might not be as vocal as others, but if you dig even a little, you'll find that they are legion. Some carry the handgun because they are on a tight budget and the TT-33 is affordable, while others appreciate its flat profile and reliability. Just as many enjoy both.

I prefer service-grade handguns for self-protection, such as the Colt 1911 and the CZ P-01. The Tokarev is certainly service-grade; its service history is practically unmatched — save, perhaps, by the Browning Hi Power. The TT-33 was designed for ease of production and economy; today, the pistol is affordable, as good examples may be had for less than $300 (with more cosmetically worn specimens sometimes found for less than $200).

HISTORY

The TT-33 might be the most rugged service pistol ever fielded. The history of the Tokarev shows innovation and intelligent design not often credited to the pistol.

The Armistice ended the "War to End All Wars" but not did not end unrest. Germany came close to civil war amid clashes between armed camps of socialists and communists. While Germany was broken and France was little better off, Russia was devastated. Labor unrest and unemployment continued after the Bolshevik Revolution. Artillery and tractors were given top priority and, despite the oppression of communism, there were expressions of creative energy here and there.

An engineer named Fedor Tokarev designed a new service pistol to a specific set of government criteria, including simplicity and economy of manufacture. The cartridge was specified as a 7.62x25mm number identical dimensionally to the 7.62 Mauser, as the M96 had seen much use in Russia — particularly the short-barrel or "Bolo" (Bolshevik) version — and great stores of ammunition were already on hand. Ammo aside, the Mauser pistol was expensive to manufacture; it cost more than two Colt 1911s in 1930s money.

Manufacturing costs of the sidearm notwithstanding, the cartridge was appreciated for its penetration and effect on a target. If any handgun cartridge shot as flat as a stretched wire, this was it; ballistics for the 7.62 Tokarev were an 86-grain jacketed bullet at 1,400 feet per second.

The Tokarev pistol went through a number of improvements and was standardized as the TT-33. The design has no unnecessary parts or decoration; rather, the focus is on spatial concepts. It is thin, measuring .83 inches across the slide, and relatively light — 32 ounces — for an all-steel handgun. The TT is slide-heavy and the grip seems smallish, especially for gloved use, but it fits most hands well, as the back strap is even higher than it appears.

Mechanically, it is based on John Browning's proven concepts, such as a swinging link for unlocking, barrel lugs, a barrel bushing and a single-action trigger with a straight-to-the-rear press. The pistol feeds from an eight-round box magazine and its hammer group is easily removed for cleaning by simply lifting the action from the frame. There is no slide-lock safety and no grip safety. A keeper, which is pressed to the rear during disassembly, maintains a grip on the slide lock to ensure it isn't lost while firing. The magazine release is a Browning-type push button and the sights are standard examples of military units, usually well-regulated for loads such as Century International Arms' Red Army cartridges.

There are a few important differences between the Tokarev and other single-action pistols. The Tokarev is purpose-designed for half-cock carry and has a positive half-cock designed into the action that, when engaged, locks the slide in place. While some choose to keep the pistol's chamber empty and rely on racking the slide in case of emergency, this pretty much rules out a fast one-handed draw. Better to deploy a revolver if you do not trust chamber-loaded carry. It takes some getting used to after avoiding half-cock carry with the 1911 for so many years, but this system works well in practice: A large hammer spur is present for easy cocking, even on a pants leg or a belt.

WHY CARRY THE TOKAREV?

First, the pistol is thin and easily carried. MDJ Custom Holsters (mdjcustomholsters.com) offers a kydex unit for the TT-33 that I find useful as an IWB, tuckable or appendix-draw holster. The Tokarev is flat and rides closely against the body, offering a good, fast draw angle. As for the aforementioned half-cock business, remember to never cock the hammer while the pistol is in the holster.

Most TT-33 triggers break at 5 to 7 pounds after a very controllable straight-to-the-rear press. Recoil is light and, as such, the TT-33 is controllable in rapid-fire, aided by its grip shape, weight and the generally light recoil of the cartridge. For a revelation, compare the TT to any modern pistol on a combat course in which you must make fast hits on multiple targets; you will find it is a very effective combat gun.

As for accuracy, any Tokarev will put the entire magazine into one ragged hole at 7 yards. Absolute accuracy is only fair: Most pistols will group five rounds of the Red Army brand into 4 inches at 25 yards — sometimes less, sometimes a little more.

The cartridge itself in ball configuration is a hot number that might seem over-penetrative for personal or home defense, though most authorities who have seen the cartridge in action agree that it is a good stopper if it hits bone. Most loads available today break about 1,350 to 1,400 feet per second. The loading that makes this particular 7.62x25mm pistol viable for personal defense is the Wolf Performance Ammunition JHP at 1,380 feet per second or Privi Partizan's identical load. Such a cartridge is ultimately reliable in the pictured Romanian TT-33: The JHP penetrates 13 inches in water, and the bullet fragments into several shards around a small recovered mushroom. This makes an excellent home-defense load.

MODIFIED PISTOLS

Certain changes to the pistol have been superfluous at best, including odd cross-bolt or trigger-locking safeties. My Romanian pistol features a trigger-locking safety that I sometimes use during tactical movement. These devices earn import points and must simply be lived with. Some Tokarev pistols on the American market boast large grips and sometimes even a 9mm Luger chambering, though I prefer the high velocity of the original TT-33 arrangement.

The simplicity of the Tokarev is evident to a trained observer. This may be an inexpensive firearm, but it isn't cheaply made, and the excellence of engineering is there for the practiced student. However, some Tokarev pistols are better finished than others (though most are functional). The Romanian and Polish guns seem best and the Chinese the roughest.

The Tokarev TT-33 is neither a finely fitted nor finely finished handgun but rather a pistol that always works and offers good shooting qualities. If you're in the market for an affordable defensive piece or a nifty range toy, you owe it a look.

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In the **November/December 2017** issue of *Concealed Carry Magazine*, we published a column detailing the "15 to the 3rd Drill" as presented by Burnett Live Fire Drill Cards ("Drill of the Month," Page 30). We failed to mention that the drill was created by Dave Spaulding of Handgun Combatives. We deeply regret this oversight and will work diligently to ensure all future drills receive proper attribution. Stay safe. Train hard.
Kevin Michalowski
Executive Editor

THE 26662 DRILL

CIRCLE AROUND



SINCE LAST YEAR, we've been bringing you our "Drill of the Month" column in conjunction with Burnett's Live Fire Drill Cards. We're very pleased with the response we've received, and Drill D-007 — the 26662 Drill created by Todd Louis Green — is what we've got for this issue.

One of the most important aspects of any training regimen is to ensure that you're not incidentally conditioning yourself to do the same thing over and over again. The most common error here is training yourself to stand still and slowly fire small groups, as that's how you typically shoot the most impressive score on the firing line. That kind of accidental, incidental "training" is very destructive to defensive shooting. Not only do you need to be training to move while you're shooting, you need to be training to assess and reassess as you shoot rather than to concentrate on one specific point on a stationary object and just dump rounds into it.

For this drill, you will need seven rounds and a range at which you can fire from 5 yards. Print out Target T-003 at livefiredrillcards.com/downloads or fashion a target that has one 6-inch circle on one half and a pair of 2-inch circles on the other. At your signal to begin, draw and fire one round into the top 2-inch circle, then three rounds into the 6-inch circle, then one round into the bottom 2-inch circle. There is a par time of three seconds to complete the drill, but if you're not to the point where you feel comfortable running this one for speed, then by all means do not. What you're after is improvement, so start slowly and build your speed from there.

Follow Live Fire Drill Cards on Facebook or Instagram @livefiredrillcards. To use the complete selection of drills and targets in the Handgun Training Log system, visit **livefiredrillcards.com**. Be sure to visit with Live Fire Drill Cards at Booth 129 at the 2018 USCCA Concealed Carry Expo in Lousville, Kentucky, from April 13 to 15.

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NATIONAL CONCEALED CARRY: WHAT ARE THE CHANCES?

What are the chances? What are the chances that the U.S. Congress will bring itself in line with the 2nd Amendment? *A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.*

Controversial legislation at the national, state and local levels tends to pass or fail along party-line votes and, since the U.S. has only two effective political parties, that split is Republican versus Democrat. Regardless of statute or moral law, regardless of the national interest or public good, one party is "for" … which means the other party must be "against."

Thus, 2nd Amendment advocates, the Republican Party in general and organizations like the U.S. Concealed Carry Association, the NRA, the Second Amendment Foundation, Jews for the Preservation of Firearms Ownership and Gun Owners of America have argued forcefully for national concealed carry reciprocity, which, in short, would help ensure that our right to carry is respected and protected under a single blanket law across the U.S.

The Democratic Party, on the other hand, has lined up almost 100 percent against national reciprocity.

According to *The New York Times*, "To win over Democrats, House Republicans paired the measure [HR 38], which would require all states to recognize any other state's concealed carry permit, with a more modest bipartisan fix [HR 4477, the Fix NICS Act] meant to incentivize better reporting of legal and mental health records to the national background check system."

Just two years ago, under the Obama Administration and with a second Clinton Administration seemingly looming, a national law to halt the political irregularities that exist across America's 50 states seemed impossible. But late last year, the House of Representatives passed the Concealed Carry Reciprocity Act of 2017 and the Fix NICS Act of 2017 on a 231-198 vote. Oddly, the acts had some bipartisan support, which means a few Democrats voted for them.

The Reciprocity Act says that Americans who can legally carry a concealed firearm in one state will be able to do so in every state. The act eliminates America's confusing socio-political mishmash of state and local laws. A law-abiding citizen would no longer have to fear that political hacks could entrap him or her with a nebulous or highly restrictive local ordinance against self-defense. It would ensure that no aggressive state trooper could stop you on the interstate for a broken taillight and end up seizing your firearms and vehicle and tossing you in jail.

The second act — Fix NICS — seeks to improve the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS), which is designed to deny criminals access to guns. It includes incentives for agencies, such as the U.S. Air Force, to comply with the letter and the spirit of the NICS system.

House Speaker Paul Ryan, Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy and Majority Whip Steve Scalise bulldogged the act through the House. Atop that, 24 state attorneys general support the act.

The usual suspects, such as Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D, NY), figuratively (and possibly almost literally) wet their pants in opposition: "The answer to our national problem of gun violence is not that we need more people carrying concealed firearms on our streets."

Fox News voiced this caution before we begin planning a party to celebrate passage of HR 38 and HR 4477: "Senate legislation still faces an uncertain future, with top Democrats and other gun-control advocates rallying in opposition."

Rep. Richard Hudson (R, NC), the bill's sponsor, said, "For the millions of law-abiding citizens who lawfully carry concealed to protect themselves, for conservatives who want to strengthen our 2nd Amendment rights and for the overwhelming majority of Americans who support concealed carry reciprocity, Christmas came early."

> **"CONTROVERSIAL LEGISLATION AT THE NATIONAL, STATE AND LOCAL LEVELS TENDS TO PASS OR FAIL ALONG PARTY-LINE VOTES AND, SINCE THE U.S. HAS ONLY TWO EFFECTIVE POLITICAL PARTIES, THAT SPLIT IS REPUBLICAN VERSUS DEMOCRAT."**

We need to thank Rep. Hudson, cross our fingers, contact our elected senators … and see what happens in this new year.

USConcealedCarry.com, NRAILA.org, Townhall.com, TheHill.com

FLORIDA: ANTI-GUN REPUBLICANS … REALLY?

The state of Florida and its Republican Party have been national leaders in protecting the 2nd Amendment and self-defense rights of American citizens, especially when it comes to licensed concealed carry. Thus, it is surprising that pro-gun bills in the Florida legislature would be defeated … by

anti-gun Republicans.

Senator Kelli Stargel (R, Lakeland) brought SB 274, "Concealed Weapons and Firearms in Multiuse Facilities," to committee. The bill would have allowed churches and religious institutions to protect themselves and their congregations with armed private security or concealed firearms license holders. The current law, as written, says that firearms are illegal on church property if the property is ever used for daycare or any type of schooling.

The bill was effectively killed by Senators Rene Garcia (R, Hialeah) and Anitere Flores (R, Miami), both of whom have claimed, spuriously, to be supporters of the 2nd Amendment. Of course, every Democrat voted against it and thus it died on a 6-4 vote.

In the case of SB 134, offered by Senator Greg Steube (R, Sarasota), individuals with permits to carry concealed could "check" firearms at the security entrances of courthouses and retrieve them upon departing. It went a step further, defining "courthouse," and thus preventing liberal judges from creating local gun-free zones. Senator Bobby Powell (D, West Palm Beach) asked for an amendment to prohibit the carrying of firearms into tax collectors' offices. One political deal, of course, led to another and, on another 6-4 vote, the bill died in committee. Republican Senators Garcia and Flores — our same sheep in wolves' clothing — voted "Nay."

Senator Steube tried again with SB 148. This bill was an effort to stop the abuse of licensed, law-abiding citizens who carry for self-defense. Currently, if a license holder's gun is "temporarily and openly displayed to the ordinary sight of another person," it is a criminal offense. Senator Steube wanted to change that. No momentary or innocent act by one of Florida's nearly two million license holders should be a crime, he argued.

"Every time [permitted citizens] leave their homes carrying a firearm," Steube said, "they run the risk of that firearm becoming exposed to the sight of another person and then being treated like a criminal. It's time to stop that. It's time to stop criminalizing the exercise of a constitutional right."

SB 148, which seems to be an exercise in common sense, was doomed when Republican Senator Anitere Flores again joined the Democrats to tie the bill 5-5 in committee.

It is worth noting that Republican Senators Debbie Mayfield, Lizbeth Benacquisto, Rob Bradley and Greg Steube voted in favor of SB 148.

Editor's Note: *Days before this issue went to press, Florida Governor Rick Scott signed the The Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act, which features some positive steps for school safety and some alarming measures against Florida gun rights. Sapp will weigh in on his takeaways in the next issue.*

HandgunLaw.us, Ballotpedia.org

INDIANA: 'RADICALLY DETERMINED'?

A municipality obviously has deeper pockets than the average citizen. Thus, it can generally lose a case in court — even knowing in advance that it is wrong and will almost certainly lose — and continue its appeals practically forever. The average citizen, unless he or she has the backing of some broader group, cannot, because soon the house and car will be mortgaged and a private attorney will be asking for cash, urging the citizen to drop the case (after the attorney gets paid), and wondering when it will all end.

In September 2011, Benjamin Magenheimer bought a ticket to the Mesker Park Zoo and Botanic Garden in Evansville, Indiana. He was carrying a handgun. Despite state law stating that, as long as someone is not creating a disturbance, he or she can carry a firearm into any public place, zoo security accosted him and tossed him out. Magenheimer sued, seeking damages and attorney fees, because Indiana state law bars local municipalities from passing and/or enforcing restrictive firearms regulations.

Initially, Evansville attorneys described Magenheimer simply as a showoff, a poseur, a man radically determined to pursue his right to carry a firearm, as well as "highly agitated" and a "time bomb," as detailed in previous police reports. Court records reveal a litigious Magenheimer, who reportedly began "posting things around the Internet" immediately after the zoo incident, such as, "What is the going rate for being kicked out of a city park while OCing [open carrying]?"

The Mesker Park Zoo incident was not Magenheimer's first run-in with the city regarding gun-related issues. In May 2016, police officers ejected him from St. Mary's Medical Center. Magenheimer was legally carrying while visiting his child in the Natal Intensive Care Unit. Later, he was stopped by Evansville police for carrying an AK-pattern rifle on his back while riding around town on a bicycle.

Magenheimer was not arrested in any incident because police say he was not breaking any laws … but they have nevertheless continued to harass him and the city has continued stonewalling his lawsuit. City attorneys have said that a "review of a zoo employee's call to 911 indicates that zoo employees were well within their rights" to have Magenheimer removed for carrying a gun.

Empirically and *a priori*, the issue has been settled by a higher authority — state statute — but the city, having repeatedly lost in court, has appealed once again, citing legal technicalities. It has refused to come to terms with Magenheimer, who is represented by the law offices of Guy A. Relford, or with the letter and spirit of the law. The Indiana Supreme Court has twice refused to hear the city of Evansville's appeal.

CourierPress.com, NRAILA.com, TheIndianaLawyer.com, INGunOwners.com, NewsTalk1280.com

{1} ESS MARATHON GUNPACK

MSRP: $59.95

Designed for active outdoor endeavors, this belt system is a handy and comfortable way to carry water, emergency supplies, phones, cameras and firearms. Visit *elitesurvival.com* for color and sizing options.

{2} OTIS I-MOD CLEANING KIT

MSRP: $60

This American-made cleaning kit was originally designed for the U.S. Military and includes everything you need to clean your 9mm pistol. It's compact, effective, built to last and available at *otistec.com*.

{3} HOGUE HANDALL GRIP SLEEVE

MSRP: $10.95

This beavertail grip sleeve from Hogue is a fine addition to your LCP II. It reduces felt recoil by spreading energy across a wider, softer surface, and the rubber construction makes for a surer grip with wet hands. Pick one up at your local retailer or through *hogueinc.com*.



{4} COMBAT OPTICS TOOL

MSRP: $20

Patriot Products AZ, LLC recently released this pocket-sized combination tool that will keep you on target and your loose change in your pockets where it belongs. Zero your ACOG or other combat optic at *patriotproductsaz.wixsite.com/combatoptictool*.

{5} EXTRACARRY BATON CARRIER

MSRP: $55

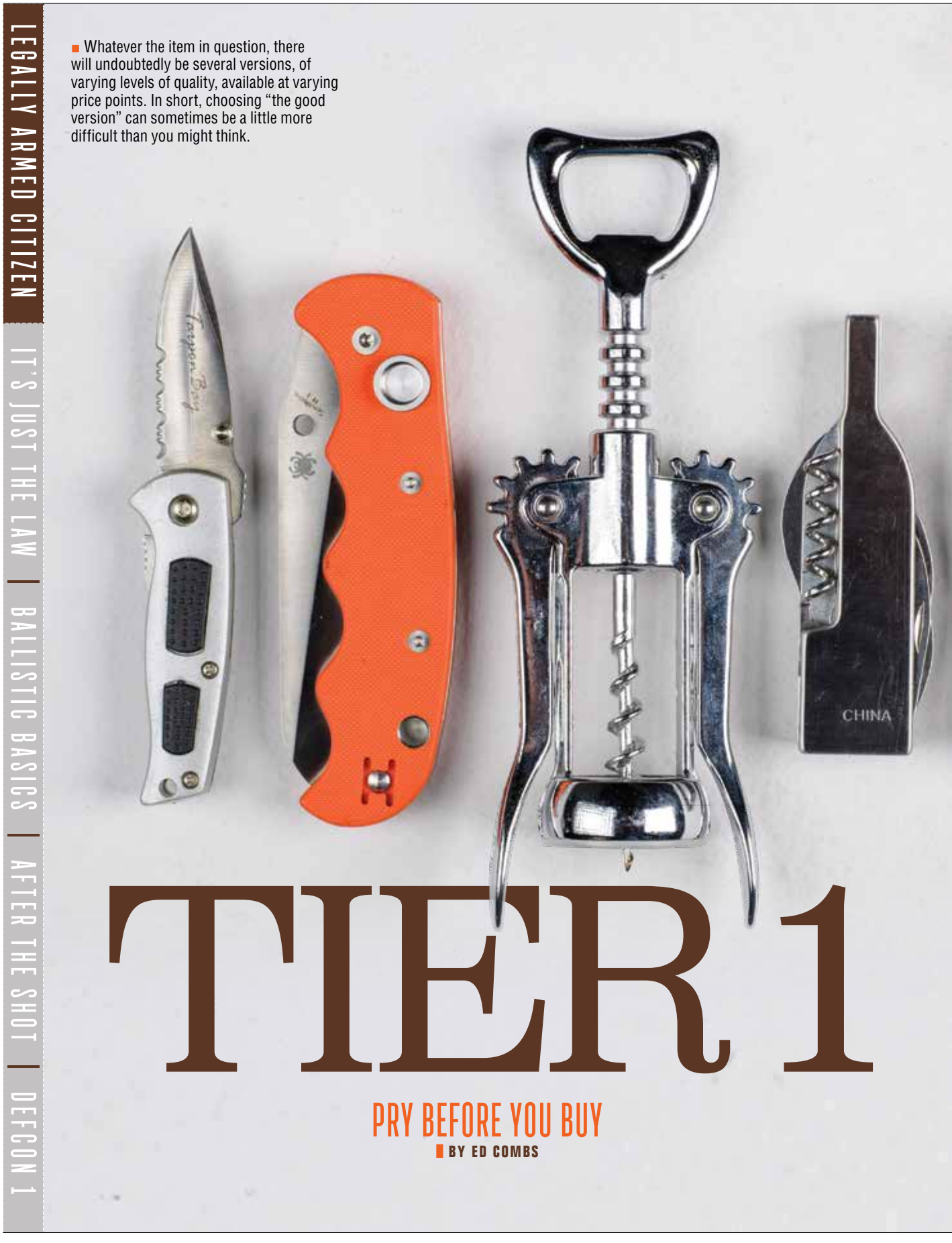
The stainless clip on this carrier conceals small batons in a pants pocket and, from handshake distance, looks like a simple pocketknife. It and other units designed for magazine carry are available at *extracarry.com*.

{6} BARNES TAC-XPD

MSRP: $18.87/20

These 80-grain hollow-points are solid copper and feature a deep cavity, which yields penetration on par with ball ammo while still expanding to deliver energy into a threat. They are available in .380, 9mm +P, .357 Magnum, .40 S&W and .45 ACP at *barnesbullets.com*.





■ Whatever the item in question, there will undoubtedly be several versions, of varying levels of quality, available at varying price points. In short, choosing "the good version" can sometimes be a little more difficult than you might think.

TIER 1

PRY BEFORE YOU BUY

BY ED COMBS



Some of my favorite media outlets release Christmas buying guides. You've probably seen them. They include items and phrases like:

• On a $230 wool hooded sweatshirt: "I may never spend this much on a hoodie, but I'd love it if you did."

• On a $169 axe: "The handle is hickory and the head is hand-forged and ground; you can get it as sharp as a razor."

I don't think anyone reading this would be opposed to receiving such gifts, even if only to flip them on eBay for something a tad more practical. You won't lose any friends handing out $169 axes and sweatshirts that cost more than I spent on my first vehicle. Moreover, some folks simply demand nothing but the best, and they'll pay more for their gear than almost anyone else on the planet. Their buying process is pretty simple: Find the most expensive version of whatever it is they're after and buy it.

But what about everything and everyone else?

Look, were I a hunting guide running a fly-in Alaskan operation, I would probably own the kinds of items listed above. In fact, I almost certainly would.

But I'm not, so I don't. My wool layers are usually European military surplus, and my axes are either light felling numbers made by Fiskars or heavier splitting units sourced rusty from garage sales at a dollar apiece and rehabbed back into service. As I do not use axes or wool clothing professionally, I don't spend professional-grade money on them.

The hard part is, if you carry your sidearm every day (as you should), you kind of do use your EDC professionally. Not in an "I get paid to carry a gun" kind of way, but in an "I use this equipment daily, and therefore I want to be as comfortable as possible while doing so" kind of way.

OPERATOR-ENDORSED

I don't think anyone misunderstands what it means when a manufacturer proudly states that United States Army Special Forces, British SAS or any other elite group of fighting men prefers its product. It's a lot like when an auto parts manufacturer advertises that its brand is the "official brand" of NASCAR: They're saying that among professionals — among men operating at the highest levels and who can basically use whatever they wish — this product beat everything else.

When that's the case, my hat is always off to whomever managed to manufacture such a product, but there's another side to that.

When you buy tires for your F-250, are you getting the same tires that a Formula One or stock car driver gets by the truckload for time trials?

Well … no.

The tires his team installs on that car are racing tires, and tire companies have spent tens, if not hundreds, of millions of dollars on racing-tire development over the last century. Racing tires aren't even designed to last through a race; granted, they're hard miles those tires are absorbing, but you and I are looking for something in the 80,000-mile range. In a lot of ways, the $1,500 you spent on new tires went to support the racing development division, which wins races, which sells tires.

That isn't to say that if you buy a product that is "preferred by U.S. Special Forces" you're never going to get exactly what they do. You might, in fact, be getting the same magazine or flashlight or knife or whatever it is that you heard our elite warriors choose over all others.

> **“WERE WHAT I JUST LAID OUT UNTRUE, KNIVES THAT SELL FOR MORE THAN $100 WOULDN’T EXIST.”**

But I want you to be certain. Remember our tire analogy?

You love Formula One. I love Formula One. I love the technique and the material science behind it. If a company can manufacture tires that can stand up to that kind of punishment, then they’re the manufacturer for me.

But the tires that I buy aren’t Formula One tires. First of all, Formula One tires are almost bald. Even were I able to buy them off the rack at the local tire shop, and even were they to somehow manage to install them, it would be extremely inadvisable for me to drive on them.

What that tire company is actually selling is the unspoken promise that they manufacture everything to the same exacting specs to which they manufacture those Formula One tires, and I don’t suppose it will stun anyone that that’s not always the case.

Knife companies were some early adopters of this technique. Many of you could probably rattle off two or three knifemakers whose wares are “preferred by United States Special Forces” and could even send me a link or two to back that up. It’s true: Members of elite U.S. Military and intelligence organizations do tend to use a lot of the same stuff from the same manufacturers. That said, when a knife made by a manufacturer that is “preferred by the Navy SEALs” turns up at your local big-box store for $19.99, you might want to dig a little deeper.

PICK A NUMBER BETWEEN 1 AND 4

Many manufacturers have different tiers of products in the same way that you have different tiers of clothing. You have Tier 1 clothing, which is the kind of stuff you wear to weddings, funerals, opera performances, promotion ceremonies and other actual formal occasions. You have Tier 2 clothing, which is the stuff you wear in a professional capacity that has to fit the occasion of your employment and cannot be outside of your profession’s tolerances for wear or staining. You likely have Tier 3 clothing, which is what you wear in your time off. And you almost certainly have Tier 4 clothing, which is usually demoted Tier 3 clothing that you throw on for painting, yardwork or other such dirty duty.

Just to pick on knifemakers again, there are often similar delineations within their product lines.

Tier 1 knives are almost always made in the U.S., Japan or in a western European country. These are the knives that you see going for more than $300, and they’re the kind of knives that you’ll pass on to another generation if you can manage not to lose them. This is closing in on custom territory, and they cost more than a lot of us spend on suits. More than $500 is not uncommon, and some go for more than a grand.

Tier 2 knives are made in the aforementioned countries or Taiwan, though they will still be of very high quality. This will be some of your CRKTs, some Kershaws, some Spydercos, et cetera. These knives almost always cost more than $100 but are rarely more than $200.

Tier 3 knives are usually made in Taiwan or China. Quality begins to slide: You regularly see loose locks, shoddy steel quality, hesitant hinge systems and generally non-perfect appearances. Almost everything sold in a big-box store will be of Tier 3 quality, with some exceptions, such as full-sized Leatherman multi-tools and some offerings from Buck. You’re buying a knife like this because you consider it a consumable; you will likely break or lose this knife before you even have to sharpen it, which is why you’re buying it at Walmart.

Tier 4 knives are made in China, India or Pakistan (and sometimes in countries even farther down the quality-control ladder). They will usually have a very vague brand or model name and, with practice, you will literally be able to smell one out. Avoid these knives, as they’re about as dangerous to you as they are to what you’re trying to cut.

REALITY IS AS REALITY DOES

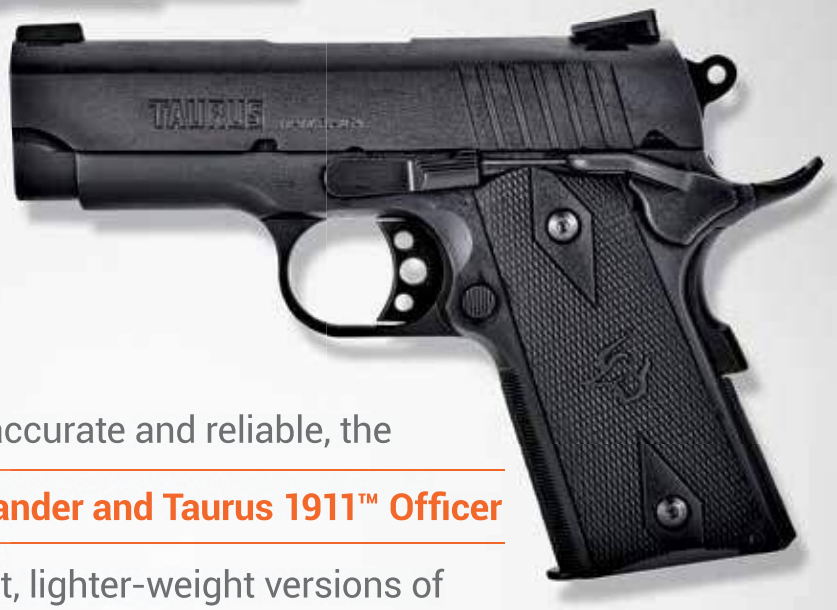
I’m certain at least some of you are frothing at the mouth right now, cursing me as a liar and a cheat and a Free-Silver Democrat. If you are, I regret to report that you’re patently incorrect. Were what I just laid out untrue, knives that sell for more than $100 wouldn’t exist. Companies like Emerson and TOPS and others manufacture knives that cost far more than $100, and they’re not just safe queens either. They’re hard-working tools, and if you believe that your quality of life is improved by purchasing high-quality specimens of everything with which you interact on a daily basis, then they’re excellent investments. (They’re also preferred by U.S. Army Special Forces … go figure.)

So, as usual, I’m not here to tell anyone how to spend his or her money. If you believe part of the fun of knife ownership is that once or twice a year, when your knife breaks, you get to go knife shopping again, that sounds like a plan that works for you. If you buy nothing but the finest in concealed carry compression wear and discard each garment after four trips through the laundry, then it sounds like you’re living a lifelong dream. That said, the next time you’re trying to decide which version of a specific component of your EDC you should buy — be it shoes, belt, pants, shirt or gun — consider which tier you’re looking to occupy and go from there.

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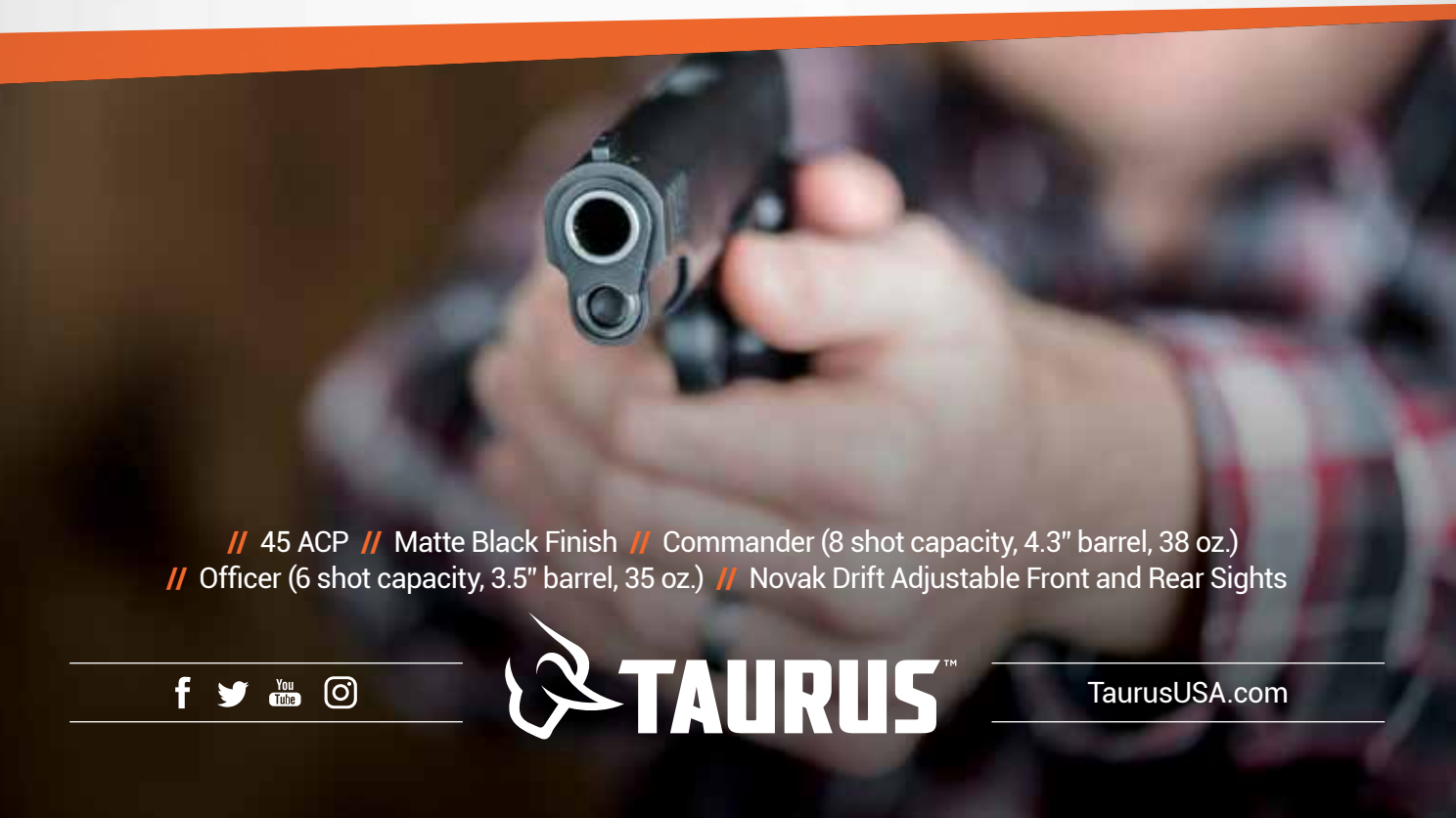
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Over and over, it is said that a gun is not supposed to be comfortable; it is supposed to be comforting. Though firearms do a bang-up job of that, there are other essential comforts.

1. INSURANCE

Traditional insurance covers only mistakes or negligence, and, as such, self-defense, which is a deliberate action, is not covered by traditional insurance. Self-defense insurance might be underwritten by an insurance company. A number of these policies are marketed by denigrating competing policies, while others stand on their own merit.

One individual emphatically claimed that the USCCA does not cover self-defense unless a gun is used; this is not true, but the individual adamantly believed it to be so regardless. Some policies do not provide bail money. Some require that a lawyer be selected from their list. Some policies do not pay until the defendant is found not guilty, which can be many months and tens of thousands of dollars too late, which can result in felony charges being pled down to misdemeanors not involving jail time. Worse yet, it's uncertain whether such policies pay off in the event of a plea bargain. As in any other contract, it is essential to read the fine print.

2. TRAINING

Training is a form of insurance in that it ensures the citizen has some idea of how to safely handle a firearm, act in self-defense and manage the legal aftermath. Concealed carry qualification courses do not make one a gunfighter, and a few hours of training certainly doesn't match a criminal's lifetime of imagining ways to damage people.[1]

Fortunately, most criminals are terrible shots. They do not expect resistance and, when they encounter it, they surrender or run. (They aren't gunfighters either. They're bullies.)



8 COMFORTS

EVERY CONCEALED CARRIER SHOULD HAVE

BY K.L. JAMISON

3. A CARD

A little card in the wallet provides some comfort if it contains the right information. A variety of parties distribute cards for reference in the aftermath of an incident, and such cards typically provide an outline of statements to make. One of the statements is the decision to remain silent and almost always closes with some version of, "I WANT A LAWYER."[2]

The card must bear a contact number for legal assistance. USCCA cards carry a 24-hour contact number, which will put the member in contact with a local lawyer. If the member already has an attorney who allows 24-hour contact, that's an even better situation (though far from universal). The card must also contain phone numbers of family members or contacts.

An Independence, Missouri, man frightened off an attacker by exposing his gun. The attacker drew his cellphone and made an imaginative report of a man with a gun, and his victim was arrested. The victim had the absolute right to make phone calls but did not know anyone's phone number. For years, he'd called friends and family by pushing a single button on his cellphone. Police always seize cellphones, as they frequently contain evidence,[3] and his family's cellphone numbers were not listed in the battered phonebook in the holding cell. There were lawyers in the worn-out old Yellow Pages, but calling a "rent-a-friend" brought him no closer to someone who could post bond.[4] (He could not remember their addresses either.) Fortunately, his absence was noticed and he was found through the usual inquiries.

4. A WILL

People resist writing wills for a variety of reasons, but death is certain and unpredictable. Dying without a will throws the distribution of the estate onto principles laid down by the state legislature; this alone should cause any responsible individual to run screaming to the nearest estates and trust lawyer. Persons who should know better advertise "write-your-will-

at-home" kits. The dearly departed cannot correct the slightest mistake in such a document, and the estate will then be thrown into probate court, where lawyers and executors must be paid from the estate. If one truly wishes to abuse one's heirs, this is the way to do it.

A trust is even better for distributing an estate. A variation called a "Revocable Gun Trust" has become popular. A Revocable Gun Trust can be changed during the life of the granter and can allow use of firearms by other persons. They became popular to facilitate families using National Firearms Act weapons, such as machine guns and suppressors, and they've expanded in recent years to include "ordinary" guns as well. The theory is that if a new law bans the possession of Winchester Model 12 pump-action shotguns (as happened in Australia), the trust proves that Grandfather's shotgun was owned before the ban. Such bans often — but not always — allow current owners to continue owning banned guns or magazines. This is still unconstitutional. By prohibiting the sale or inheritance of a gun, such laws reduce the property value.[5] The 5th Amendment to the Bill of Rights prohibits such a taking, though this does not seem to bother the usual suspects.

Many persons have cobbled together "gun trusts" from samples on the internet. The officer who reviews these trusts for the ATF finds that they could be valid trusts, but the ultimate disposition of the property is probably not what the granter intended. Many trusts list the same woman in central Kansas as the ultimate owner of guns from trusts established by total strangers. She was listed as the ultimate beneficiary in the sample on the internet, and blind copying will make her a very happy woman.

Properly executed, a gun trust provides a flexible means to allow others to borrow guns and a list of ultimate beneficiaries — a list that can be easily changed. Properly done, no agency of the government will have a list of the guns, though the key phrase is "properly done." People have bungled wills and trusts for thousands of years. Lawyers have learned from these mistakes; the internet has not.

5. A LAWYER

Like a stiff dose of penicillin, a lawyer is a good asset to have under certain circumstances. In this best of all possible worlds, a lawyer serves as an asset that can prevent the need for penicillin. Many lawyers give consultations on local law, and they might also create a file so that when the proverbial 2-in-the-morning call comes, they at least have a place to start. A file containing the information to support a low bail and contact numbers to raise bail is the minimum.

Speaking of which, a lawyer should be available at 2 a.m., as bad things happen after dark. A hunter does not find a trophy animal without a local guide, and a defendant will not find justice in the courts without native assistance.

6. A CELLPHONE

Almost everyone has a cellphone these days and, while not inherently litigious, they are certainly comforting. There might never be a need to quick-draw a gun, but quick-drawing a cellphone is essential.[6] In nearly every case, the first person to call 911 is listed as the victim. The other party, by default, is the criminal.

Most cellphones have cameras, which allow the collection of evidence, such as what the aggressor looked like before the attack and the position of weapons after. Taking pictures during a gunfight is problematic, but at least the tool exists. (Someday we will all have our own drones. The government will insist.)

7. A SAFE

A safe even sounds comforting. In the course of getting stamps, getting a drink, attending parent-teacher conferences or entering a government building, the armed citizen will have to disarm. In most such cases, the gun must be left in the car. There has been a flurry of newspaper articles about guns being stolen from vehicles by criminals who then do criminal things — a problem that could be abated by reducing the number of no-guns-allowed areas. Instead, the gist of the articles places blame on gun owners and is likely to inspire restrictive legislation. The use of safes for unattended guns might keep gun owners safe from "safety legislation," which, like all gun-control measures, has evil intent.

8. AVAILABLE HELP

Traumatic events frequently leave survivors and even victors suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.[7] There are various levels of PTSD and various treatments. A common element of treatments is the comfort of family (though, unfortunately, some families are not comforting). Fortunately, the "family" can be a church group, veterans group or an understanding group with similar experiences, which can be especially helpful. After a long year of suffering abuse by politicians, the media and media darlings, it is comforting to attend a convention of gun owners. Fortunately, such a convention is provided by a nearby organization.

Kevin L. Jamison is an attorney in the Kansas City, Missouri, area, concentrating in the area of weapons and self-defense.

Please send questions to Kevin L. Jamison, 2614 NE 56th Ter, Gladstone, MO 64119-2311 or KLJamisonLaw@earthlink.net. Individual answers are not usually possible but might be addressed in future columns.

This information is for legal information purposes and does not constitute legal advice. For specific questions, you should consult a qualified attorney.

ENDNOTES

(1) *Refer to Rottenberg, Dan,* When Violence is the Answer, *Westholme Publishing, Yardley, PA, 2008.* **(2)** *These exact four words must be used. Any other phrase might not be considered a definite request.* **(3)** *They must have a warrant to examine the contents of the cellphone.* **(4)** *USCCA provides immediate money toward bail bonds. Not all such insurance policies do so.* **(5)** *And would make my funeral an unhappy occasion.* **(6)** *It should be part of practical shooting events.* **(7)** *Every one of my clients who has killed in self-defense has suffered from PTSD, especially the guy who denied that it had any effect on him.*

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BY TAMARA KEEL

CARRY IN COMFORT

If there's anything that keeps people from carrying their handguns with them as they go about their daily business, it's … well, probably laws or company policies. But the next most common reason would be issues of comfort. I've known many people who get their concealed carry permits with the best intentions of becoming armed citizens, only to become occasional toters or, worse, stop carrying altogether because the discomfort of packing heat causes them to leave their guns at home.

There are a number of simple pointers that might not be immediately apparent to the new handgun carrier that can dramatically mitigate any discomfort caused by carrying a gun. Done right, a concealed carry piece can be so comfortable that you stop noticing its presence and, indeed, might have to pat your holster to make sure it's there before you leave the house.

THE FLOP

One of the first things to do is to "rightsize" your gun based on how you carry it. I say "rightsize" rather than "downsize," because smaller is not necessarily more comfortable. Carried on the beltline, a barrel that's too short tends to put too large a percentage of the gun's mass above the belt.

If you're carrying outside the waistband, too much weight above the belt can cause the butt of the weapon to sag outward. This is uncomfortable and can also make the gun in question impossible to conceal. Carried inside the waistband, too much of the gun above the beltline can cause the entire rig to flop out of the waistband under strenuous movement and hang there inverted, holster and all. One of the dimensional constants is that when carrying the gun inside the waistband, a thinner handgun is more comfortable.



■ It might take a few tries to really nail down which carry system is best for you. Regardless of how long it takes, if you're actually going to carry every day, you need to find the right type and style. Make sure your carry rig is dusty from constantly being in contact with you and your clothing, not from being left at home.

WEIGHTY ISSUES

The second thing to consider is that weight matters, and balance does too. An orthopedist will tell you that walking around all the time with an unbalanced load of a couple pounds strapped to one hip is the ticket to gait issues and back problems down the road.

One solution is to lighten the load. Looming back issues are part of the reason I switched from a full-sized, all-steel 1911 to a polymer gun, although I could have switched to an alloy-framed 1911 or a Commander-sized gun as well.

Another remedy is to balance the load with a spare magazine carrier on the other side. That's the natural place to carry an EDC flashlight as well, although I counsel against those double flashlight/spare magazine belt carriers. I've seen more than one person try to stuff Surefires into their pistols' magazine wells mid-string.

GEAR CHECK

The right belt will make carrying a lot more comfortable if you carry at the waistline. What the right belt looks like will vary some depending on your carry gun and its location on the belt, but the wrong belt always looks narrow and is usually braided. Carrying at or behind the hip, you're going to want a fairly rigid belt that's intended to carry a pistol. This will keep it from rolling over and causing the gun to flop and bounce as you move about. If you carry IWB in the appendix position, however, a more flexible belt will allow the holster to shift naturally when you sit and stand.

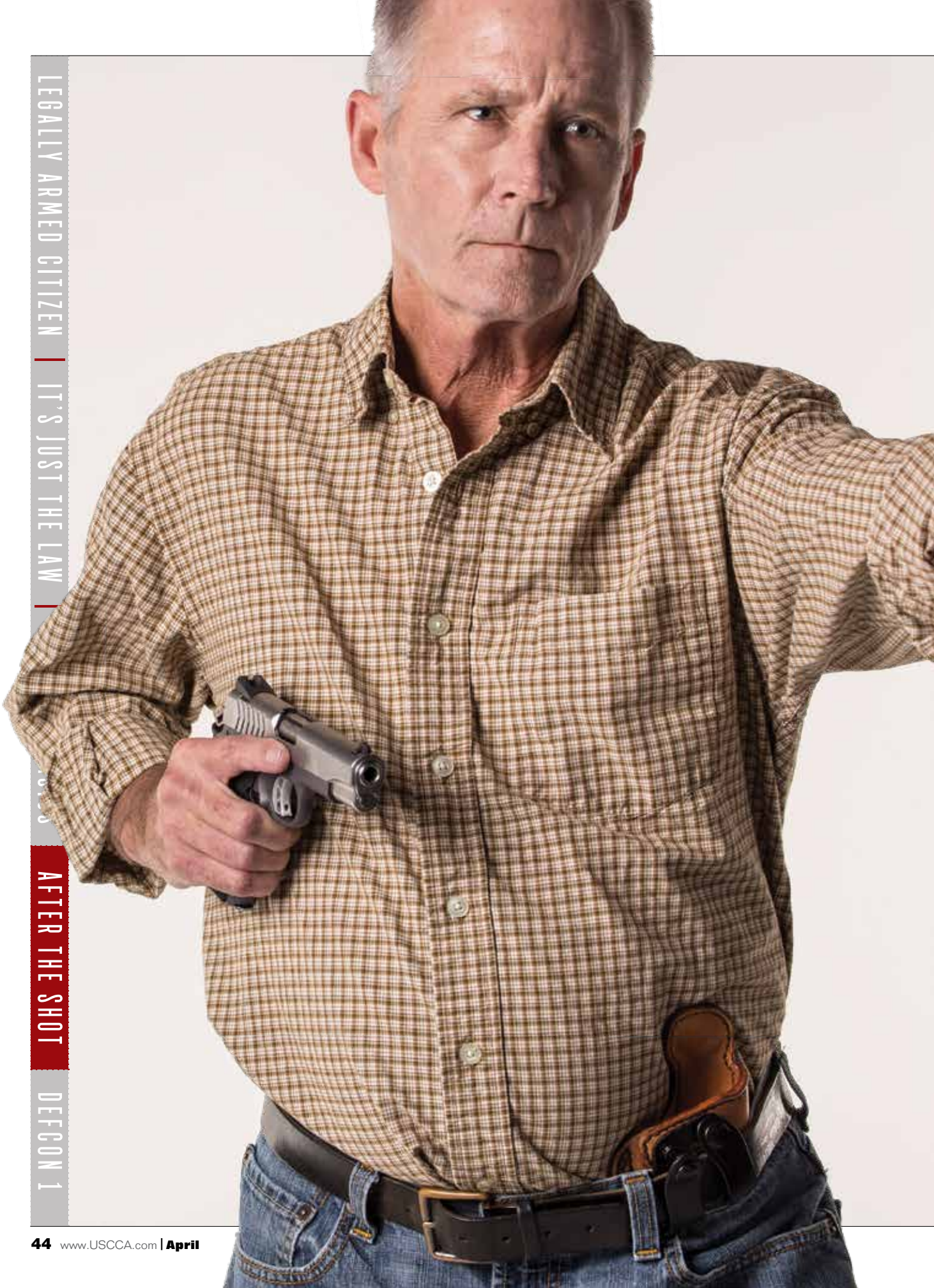
The right holster matters a lot too. In a pocket holster, it should fit the dimensions of the pocket well enough that it doesn't have room to move around much in there. This can also be accomplished with a holster that has a tacky exterior that grips the pocket lining. On a belt holster, the belt loops should be sized to the belt to prevent it from sliding and shifting around. This is also an aid to a safer, more fumble-free draw, since if the holster is free to shift up on the draw before abruptly stopping, there's a tendency to "double-pump" the draw — and that's how fingers end up in trigger guards.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

I personally avoid holsters that promise to do too much. If a holster boasts that it can be worn inside the waistband, outside the waistband, on the belt, clipped to the pants, mounted to a drop-thigh rig and converted to a shoulder holster, odds are good that it won't be as comfortable and efficient at any one of those locations as a holster specifically designed for one place.

One final tip on comfort: With a belt holster, unless there's some mechanical action locking the gun in place, like that on Safariland's GLS, avoid any one that is advertised to fit multiple different makes and models of guns. One-size-fits-all holsters generally fit no particular size very well.

Keep these helpful hints in mind and you'll be carrying in comfort for years to come.





CONSIDER THIS

ALWAYS AVOID SHOOTING IN SELF-DEFENSE (IF POSSIBLE)

BY ALAN KORWIN

In my last column, I promised to continue with reasons you should not shoot someone if there is any way to avoid it. Dealing with the results after a shot is easier if you skip the shot in the first place. Keep in mind that if there is any way to avoid it and you don't (and if the prosecutor is any good at all), that will come out. Your justification will collapse, and you'll be found guilty. That's the best reason of all to avoid taking the shot.

I'll only say this once: Don't take this stern advice on holding fire without a sense of balance. If you gotta shoot, shoot. Straight and true. Keep shooting as needed. You know the drill. What's next is intended to scare you from doing that unless you truly, absolutely, positively must. Proceed.

YOU MIGHT BE FOUND 'NOT GUILTY'!

That definitely sounds like a good thing, but you know in your gut what it implies: The exact opposite is also true. You might not be found innocent of the charges. Even though you might believe you acted righteously and had to shoot to defend yourself from certain death, the judge or jury might not see it that way. It might not look like you acted properly. Your lawyer might turn out to be awful or just not quite good enough. The judge might be a left-leaning, liberal, anti-gun type (they do exist, you know), and your fate is in that person's hands.

Your life is on the line after you shoot, and that's a great reason to hold your fire if you can. Be somewhere else, not where you have to shoot to survive. Sure, it's not always possible, but you'll sure wish you were afterward.

EMBARRASSMENT AFTER GUNFIRE

In some circles, this is hard to understand. Being the survivor of a gunfight seems like it would be all glory — people buying you drinks, singing your praises and hanging on your words, eager to hear all about it. While that might be true somewhere, I haven't seen it.

More often, in my experience at least, survivors are hesitant to drag up an old tired tale again, repeating a painful episode, rehashing doubts and recounting the lawyer malfeasance, lack of justice, endless hours agonizing over the results and the sleepless hours wondering what the final turnout would be. And let's not forget living with the memory of the dead person.

When you tell your tale, you get to wonder how the folks at the dinner table are all taking it in, knowing some are soaking it up but others are quietly repulsed and desperately hoping to change the topic. They'll all go home with a different impression of you, and that impression will never go away. Who they knew you as before and how they used to relate to you will not come back. They'll treat you differently, if only slightly, and you'll feel that. You're now *that guy*, and you'll probably wish you hadn't had to tell that story.

DEALING WITH THE 'NEWS' MEDIA

As you read this, you're a consumer of the media. Speaking from the inside, I can tell you without a doubt that dealing with media mano a mano is an experience you will never forget. Even the good people in journalism — who you will likely never meet if it's about a self-defense shooting — can't get it right enough to satisfy you as an outsider. It almost has to look wrong; it's just the nature of the beast.

They weren't there; you were. It's going to look so different. You will swear they are all lying, bottom-feeding maggots, even the rare few who aren't — who you won't get to meet. I can't begin to give you a sense of that in these short blurbs. They distort, mislead, use words that make you look bad, slant and spin. Many aren't above outright lying. Don't find out first-hand by shooting anyone if it can be avoided. Go to GunLaws.com, click the blue "News Media Accuracy" button and prepare to toss your cookies. At least you'll have a sense of what's going on when you watch or read the so-called "news" later that day.



DEALING WITH YOUR FAMILY

Your immediate family might be supportive and rally around you if you're ever forced to shoot someone to survive. At least some families are. Don't make them do that; avoid the shooting somehow. Don't have them come down to jail, which they have never done and will find nightmarish. Spare them the experience — the heartbreak, the doubts, the fears — of seeing you behind bars. Sure, it's better to be alive, but it's better to not be part of that scene at all.

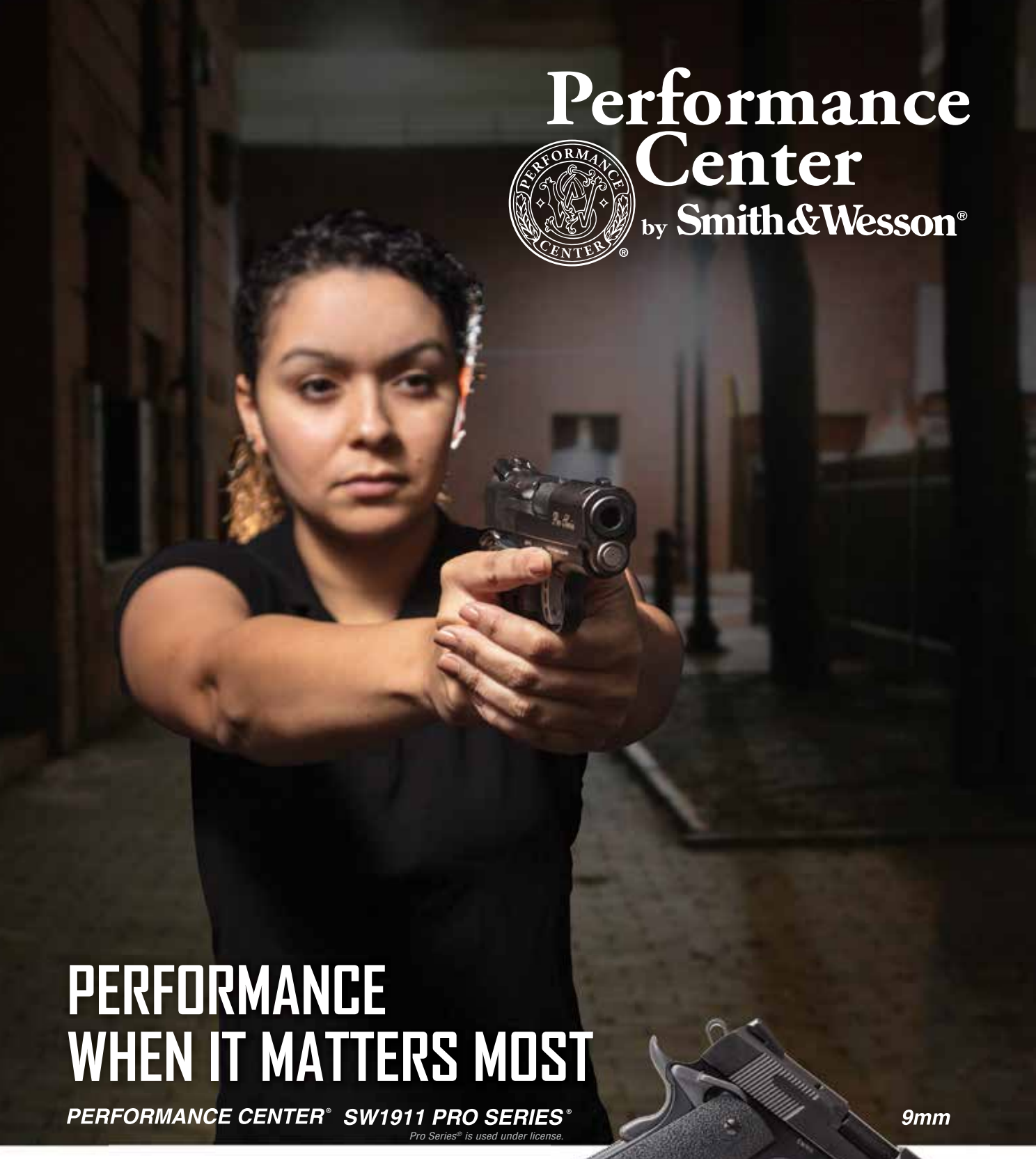
Reverberations through your extended family are beyond intense. Phone calls light up faster than imaginations, and by the time Aunt Bertha gets the call, it's a game of "Telephone." She might hear you gunned down an entire gang in north Philly and are currently in intensive care. You will forever wonder why you're not invited to weddings to which you figure you should have gotten an invite. Hey, you wouldn't invite cousin Harry if you heard he was in the Mob. Do what you can to avoid it all.

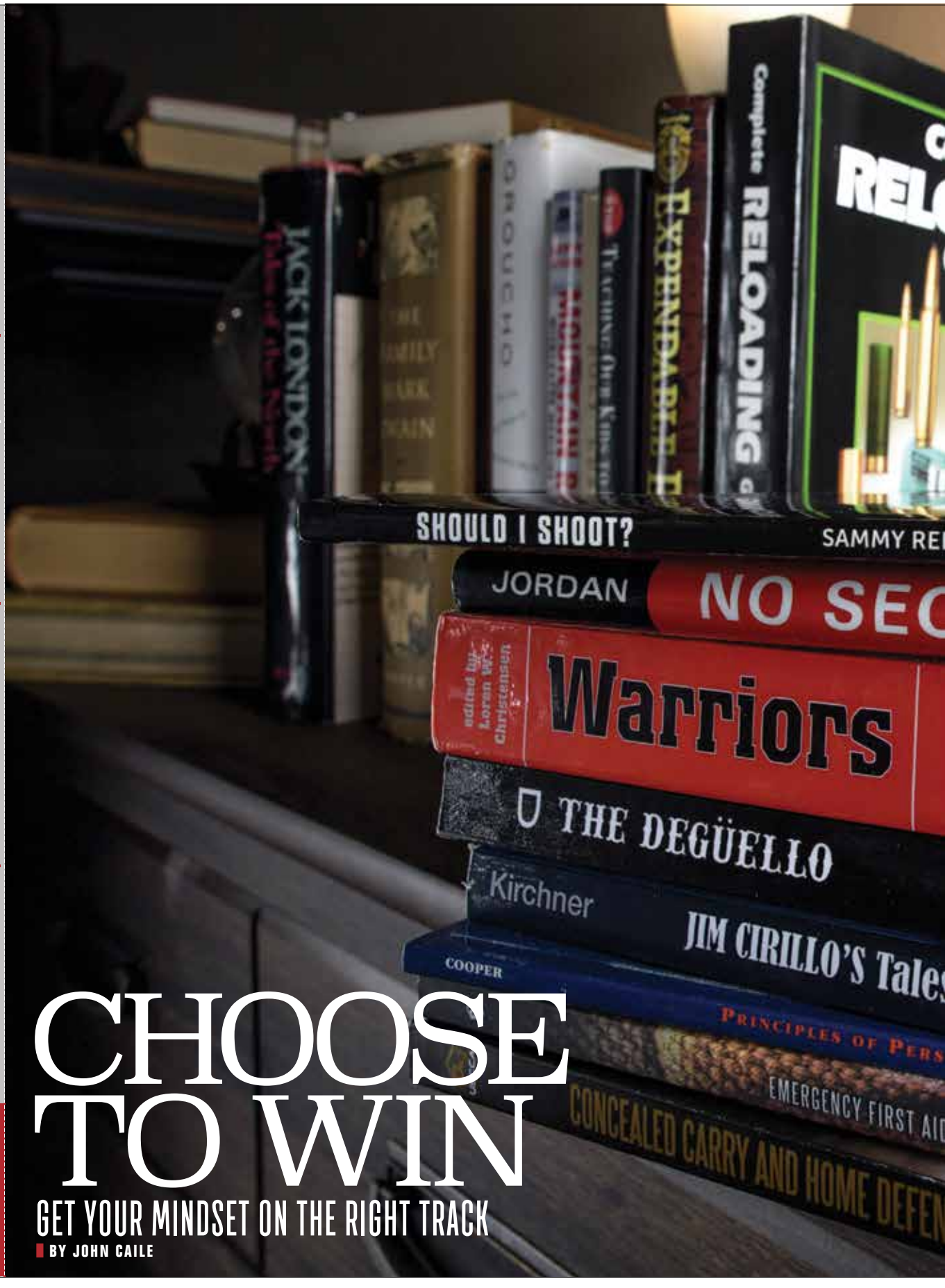
'A RELUCTANT PARTICIPANT'

You're supposed to be reluctant to ever use the gun you carry. With a little luck, this column has scared you with regard to what might happen if you take any of the actions for which your training helped you prepare.

Just in case it didn't, let me leave you with two thoughts. First, I've got another sack of reasons why you should avoid the shot rather than deal with the aftermath. And, second, can you imagine shooting an individual where race could be twisted into "an issue" and the local (let alone national) activists decide to get on your case?

Now there's something to dodge at all costs.

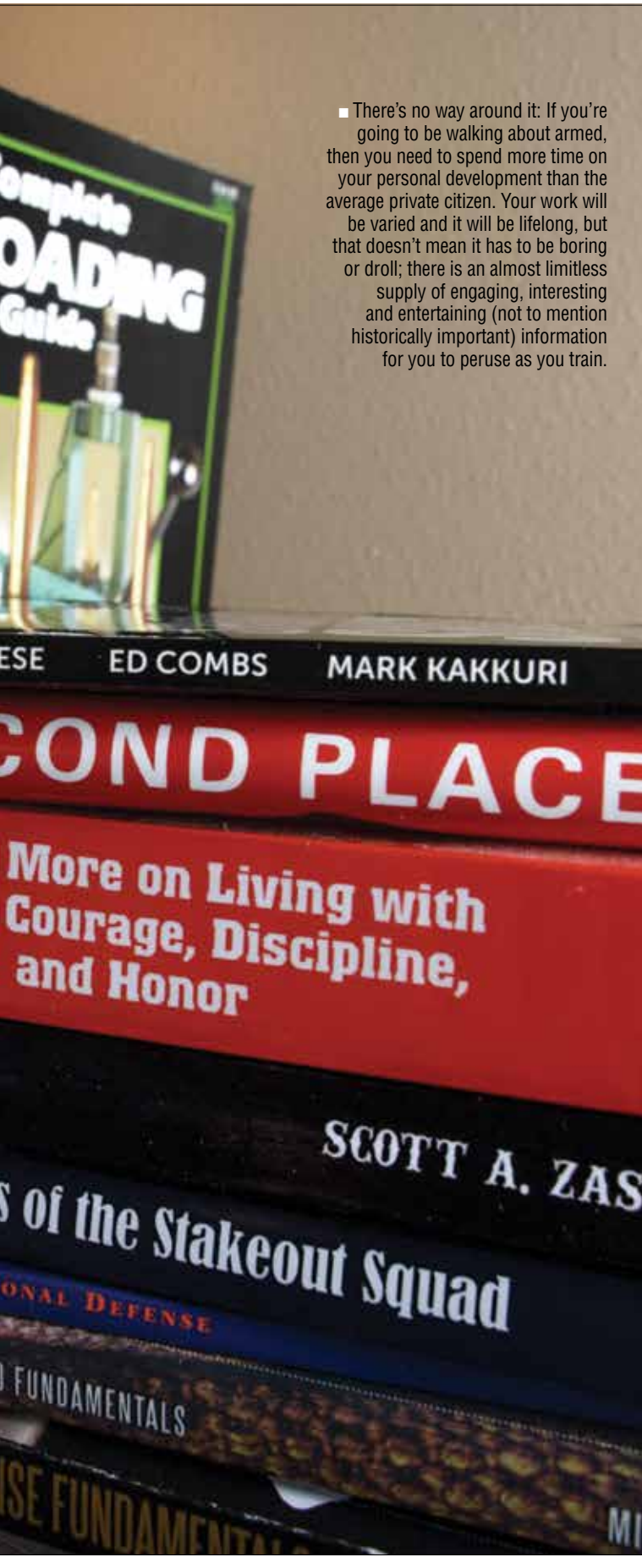

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CHOOSE TO WIN

GET YOUR MINDSET ON THE RIGHT TRACK

BY JOHN CAILE



■ There's no way around it: If you're going to be walking about armed, then you need to spend more time on your personal development than the average private citizen. Your work will be varied and it will be lifelong, but that doesn't mean it has to be boring or droll; there is an almost limitless supply of engaging, interesting and entertaining (not to mention historically important) information for you to peruse as you train.

Carrying a gun is just one aspect of self-defense. Even if you are an outstanding shooter, unless you integrate a comprehensive defensive mindset into every part of your day-to-day life, you risk not only death or injury but legal and financial ruin as well.

I have a friend who is one of the most generally successful people I know. From an Air Force pilot and accomplished musician to a wildly successful businessman and entrepreneur, he epitomizes the term "winner." I once asked him what he thought was the single most important quality in achieving success. His reply was immediate and succinct: "Attitude is everything. You have to have the right mindset."

His comment arguably also applies to those of us who routinely carry firearms for self-defense. Developing and maintaining the proper defensive mindset is vital. But what is a "proper" defensive mindset? Details vary depending on whom you ask, but there are some fundamentals upon which most of us in the defensive training community agree.

AWARENESS

As part of the USCCA family, as a member, subscriber or just an occasional reader of *CCM*, you probably know how strongly we stress the importance of things like awareness and conflict avoidance. The reason is simple: It is far better (and certainly less expensive) to avoid a potentially hazardous situation in the first place than to have to deal with the physical and legal consequences of a violent confrontation.

Awareness doesn't just happen; it takes practice. Look at the people you see walking, sitting in restaurants or standing in elevators, noses buried in their smartphones. A 700-pound grizzly bear could waddle right up next to them and they wouldn't notice.

We trust that none of you conduct yourselves in such a fashion. If you carry a gun, you probably tend to pay attention to your surroundings more than most people. You might not realize it, but this is the result of you developing a healthy defensive mindset.

However, not everyone has the same attitude as you. I'm sure you've run into such people, perhaps even in your own family. When they find out you carry, they often ask if you are being "paranoid" or argue that your safety concerns are at least somewhat exaggerated. But you and I are not paranoid. On the contrary, we recognize that bad things can — and do — happen anywhere, and we've chosen to be as prepared as we can be.

Obviously, being alert can help us see danger coming and thus avoid it. A good analogy is the driver who doesn't merely focus on the car directly in front of him but keeps a sharp eye on the traffic up ahead, watching for that sudden stream of brake lights. Meanwhile, the idiot who is preoccupied with his smartphone or other distractions winds up rear-ending the car in front of him, which, in a case just this past week in my neck of the woods, was a police squad car.

AVOIDING CONFLICT

Awareness is absolutely essential, but it is only the beginning. All of us who carry also have an obligation to do everything in our power to avoid becoming entangled in conflicts that might lead to violence. And, in today's world, that covers a lot of ground.

These days, there are certainly a lot of angry people around, the most obvious example being those suffering from "road rage." It seems we have almost daily reports of some sort of traffic incident that leads to gunfire. But, seriously, who has so little control over his emotions that he becomes hostile over someone else's driving? Unfortunately, the answer is "too many."

I was once with a younger co-worker who seemed unable to quell his anger at others when behind the wheel. He spewed a running diatribe for our entire drive, commenting on just about every other driver within proximity. He was yelling things like, "Move it moron!" (as if the alleged moron in question could hear him) and, "Look at that guy!" He also, of course, blared his horn constantly.

I finally had about enough and, since we were ahead of schedule, I suggested we stop for a cup of coffee. Without going into the details of our lengthy conversation, I did get him to finally admit that he "maybe had too short a fuse" and should "probably lighten up a bit."

Whether he seriously modified his behavior going forward is anyone's guess; he took another job a few weeks later. But the point is that attitude matters and, if the above story sounds uncomfortably familiar, you might want to think about making some changes in your behavior, because combining a "short fuse" with driving (let alone carrying a gun) is a prescription for disaster.

Conflict avoidance starts with something as simple as being polite and respectful to everyone you meet, which is a good rule to live by anyway. But active conflict avoidance means that we constantly monitor our impending choices before we do something we might regret.

A friend of mine who is a lawyer and a firearms instructor has a question he advises all of his students to ask themselves before they do anything even potentially problematic: "Is this really a good idea?" He said that if most of his clients had asked themselves that question in the first place, they might not have to be sitting in his office, hearing him scream at them, "What in the hell were you thinking?"

YOUR WORDS MATTER

Obviously, we need to watch what we say in public, but we also need to be aware of what we are posting online or in social media. Check out some of the statements made in the "comments" sections of some internet stories involving guns, especially if they are reacting to a recent court decision involving guns or gun owners. Many are simply silly, but a few are genuinely disturbing.

As a side note, it is wise for all of us to remember that, should any one of these folks find himself or herself in court one day, copies of his or her online comments will likely be read to the jury. Think about that before you bang out some inflammatory internet message. And I shouldn't have to warn you about watching what you say in tweets and Facebook posts.

But, hey, none of these people sound like *you*, right? We certainly hope not. But are you sure? Self-criticism, if it's honest, is usually uncomfortable and can even be painful. But occasionally taking a good hard look at yourself in the mirror is an important way to gauge your internal mindset and see if it needs an "adjustment."

Another good way to check yourself is to ask those closest to you — family or close friends — for their honest opinions. If their descriptions differ substantially from your own, you might want to give the matter some serious consideration.

LEGALLY SPEAKING

An effective defensive mindset must include preparing for the possibility of defending yourself in court. You do have an attorney's phone number programmed into your phone, don't you? I am still amazed at the number of people who carry regularly but do not have a lawyer. This is like skydiving without a reserve parachute. If you do not have an attorney, get one. Or check into the USCCA's Self-Defense SHIELD. Better yet, do both if you haven't already.

Keep in mind, though, that having the best defense attorney on the planet will be of no use if you conscientiously followed every self-defense tenet in the book (or at least believe you did) but then babbled to police without your attorney present. This is one of the most frustrating realities that lawyers who handle self-defense cases face: knowing they could have helped had their clients just kept their mouths shut and let them do their job.

If you intend to carry a gun, you should already have undergone some serious education on the complex legal ramifications of self-defense, especially all of the common-law principles governing the use of deadly force. This should include the rules concerning dealing with police in the immediate aftermath of an incident. Memorize them and then follow them religiously.

TRAINING IS CRUCIAL

While not the primary focus of this article, I would be remiss if I did not strongly suggest that a true defensive mindset should include a commitment to regular firearms training. And "I don't have time" doesn't cut it. Like losing weight or getting in shape, no matter how busy you are, it is up to you to make the time in your schedule.

And remember that defensive firearms training is not limited to going to the gun range, which, ideally, you should do at least monthly. It also refers to dry-fire exercises and practice in drawing from concealment, both of which cost nothing and can be done at home almost daily. The more you train, the more intuitive your reactions will become. Why do you think Navy SEALS and other military operators train so constantly and exhaustively?

In every field, developing the right mindset is what separates winners from everyone else. We sincerely hope you choose to be a winner.





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YOU WEAR A WHAT?

THE 'PRI-CI' GUN BELT

BY ED COMBS

You know, history can be funny. Certain pieces of technology — the wooden spoon, for example — hit the scene with a bang but then remain pretty much unchanged for a few thousand years. Others, like the gun belt, never seem to stop evolving.

Gun belts developed side-by-side with the metallic cartridge and, by 1880, any saddlemaker could stitch you a good rig. Before then, many frontiersmen simply stuck flintlock, percussion and even cartridge handguns in their belts or sashes or hung them from saddles. A gun belt could carry your sidearm or sidearms and as many rounds as you could afford (or at least as many loops as the leathersmith could sew on), and if you had to surrender your guns to a sheriff's office or justice of the peace upon entering a town or saloon, you could easily do so.

But alas, to many it is a relic of a bygone era. By the advent of semi-automatic pistols at the turn of the last century, you didn't necessarily need to carry your ammo individually lined up around your waist. If you were still looking to carry ammunition in quantity, any saddlemaker could fix you up with basically the same old gun belt but designed to hold magazines for your 1911 or Luger. At seven or eight rounds apiece, it was just as easy to use pouches you threaded onto the belt that went through the loops — also a rather new technological advancement — on your trousers. By the 1940s, most of the lawmen who'd worn the old-style gun belts switched over to drop pouches and eventually speedloaders for their revolvers, as did most private citizens who weren't buying gun belts for sport shooting.

Which begs the question: Do dedicated gun rigs have a place in the modern world or, more specifically, in the pages of *Concealed Carry Magazine*? I would say that they do, though not necessarily in the context you might be picturing.





■ No one piece of equipment will be right for every last gun owner, but for some, a dedicated gun rig might be just what they've been looking for.



■ The "Dog Handler" from Wilderness Tactical (thewilderness.com) is specifically tailored to dog-walking and is designed for easy, discreet mounting of holsters and pouches. Developed for law enforcement use, it is also an excellent option for the canine lover who's looking for a simple carry system.

> "THIS IS WHY SO MANY PEOPLE PRETEND TO HITCH UP THEIR PANTS WHEN THEY'RE PANTOMIMING THE MOVEMENTS OF COPS. AFTER A WHILE, YOUR DUTY GEAR CAN START TO DE-PANTS YOU."

CARRYING CONCEALED OR JUST CARRYING?

One of the more complex realities about carrying in general is that private citizens carry guns under all kinds of circumstances. Plenty of the "pri-cis" who read this magazine don't actually carry concealed very often, and when they do, it is purely incidental. They carry outside the waistband, usually in pancake or other types of simple belt-slide holsters. If they're wearing jackets or untucked shirts, then the holsters are concealed. If they're not, well … they aren't.

Moreover, there exists a multitude of clip-on and paddle holsters specifically tailored to easy removal from belts. There are enough reasons to want to be able to quickly and easily "go cold" that no one could fault a fellow responsible bearer of arms for wanting to be able to ground his gun without having to get halfway undressed.

And this is where a dedicated rig can come into play.

HARD AT WORK

The style of gun belt most familiar to most Americans is the Old West style, at least until they realize that the *most* familiar to most Americans is the style worn by this nation's law enforcement officers. Sometimes humble black nylon and sometimes borderline-extravagant basketweave leather, the "duty belt" carries a heck of a lot more than a gun and ammunition but remains, at its root, a gun belt. Many competition shooters wear similar rigs during matches, and such a belt is usually attached to a trouser belt with "keepers," little leather or nylon straps that pass under the trouser belt and over the outer gun belt and snap tightly to hold the two belts together. (This is why so many people pretend to hitch up their pants when they're pantomiming the movements of cops. After a while, your duty gear can start to de-pants you.)

That aside, they're unassailably handy, and, under certain circumstances, they're the best option for keeping your gear organized and readily available. If you're headed to work at the office, then a tuckable IWB or pocket unit is likely the best course of action. If you're spending the next week at your family's 460 acres of secluded woods to clear brush and ride the fences, then an easily donned, easily removed gun rig might be just the ticket.

Before we go any further though, we need to have a very important discussion.

Unless you are an on-duty law enforcement officer, you absolutely, positively must not carry handcuffs or any other type of restraints. Some LEOs

might look askance at a private citizen who's wearing duty gear in the first place, so you will need to be prepared to explain every last piece of gear you're carrying. To a cop on the beat, an armed (or even unarmed) pri-ci carrying handcuffs reeks of "definite serial rapist and possible serial murderer," so see to it that you don't smell that way. You are a law-abiding citizen and a responsibly armed American, and, as such, you are only carrying emergency lifesaving tools atop your flashlight, multi-tool, first-aid gear and cellphone.

Come to think of it, a baton doesn't look so hot either. In fact, if you're setting up a rig like this, acquire carriers for necessary items that couldn't even be confused as law-enforcement-related, like your fence pliers, utility knife, marking paint or hammer. You are not on patrol; you are wearing a tool belt while doing chores on private property, so it would be to your advantage were your gear to reflect as much. Equally importantly, rigs like we're discussing here are for use on private property only. If you have to run to the store, ground the belt and transfer any firearms to concealed modes of carry.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

If you do intend to wear a modern work/gun belt on your property, you'll need to lay the foundation of a quality belt to which you will affix the gun belt. The only main guideline here is that the buckle area should lay as flat as possible. I wore a Wilderness Original Instructor Belt as the foundation for my duty gear with the sheriff's office for years, and I found it to be perfect in several ways.

First, it is available in a very wide model, which allows less vertical movement in the belt loops and is therefore more conducive to keeping your gear where you want it. Second, the buckle area is very slim — no thicker than the buckle itself — since there's hardly any material overlap, which cannot be said for most other styles of belt. You're going to have a great deal of material up there in front, as the buckle of your gear belt will (likely, unless you rig it in reverse) be right up there on the buckle of your trouser belt. With many modern concealed-carry-oriented belts, the buckle area is already well over an inch thick when buckled; this is not what you're after when wearing a duty-style rig. Get a strong, wide, slim-line foundation belt and you should be golden.

ECON 101

For a basic, utilitarian rig, it's hard to beat the modern law enforcement setup. Holsters are affordable and readily available for all but the most obscure of full-sized sidearms, and acquiring carriers for ammunition, flashlights, comm devices, medical gear and everything else you'll want to have with you will also be friendly on the wallet. In fact, you can regularly find used units on eBay, Craigslist and other such websites at extremely reasonable prices. If what you're after is something to wear as you get on and off of the ATV while cutting trails for bowhunting season, an all-used, all-nylon rig might be the wisest course of action.

Though modern nylon duty gear is extremely low-maintenance and very



> **COST AND LACK OF ADAPTABILITY ASIDE, THE MAJOR DRAWBACK OF THE TRADITIONAL RIG IS RELOADING.**

reasonably priced, if you're looking to get fancier, you can go with the black or brown basketweave leather models many law enforcement agencies employ. Either way, you're going to be spending less than if you go through a custom holstermaker or tack shop for a more elaborate setup.

Which reminds me … if you can grow a mustache (or an even bigger mustache, if you already have one) within the next few seconds, that might be a good idea.

DRAW!

More traditional, Old-West-style rigs are gorgeous and certainly bring with them a certain warm nostalgia, but they fall short for the kind of open carry we're discussing here. They can be difficult to modify, and that makes it harder to carry the gear you're trying to keep immediately at hand (which is, after all, the point of the exercise). As perfect as old-style gunleather is for cowboy action shooting, pro-gun rallies and just plain "I want to do this, so I'm doing it" applications, when it comes to keeping standard and emergency tools on hand, they're decidedly lackluster when compared to their modern equivalents.

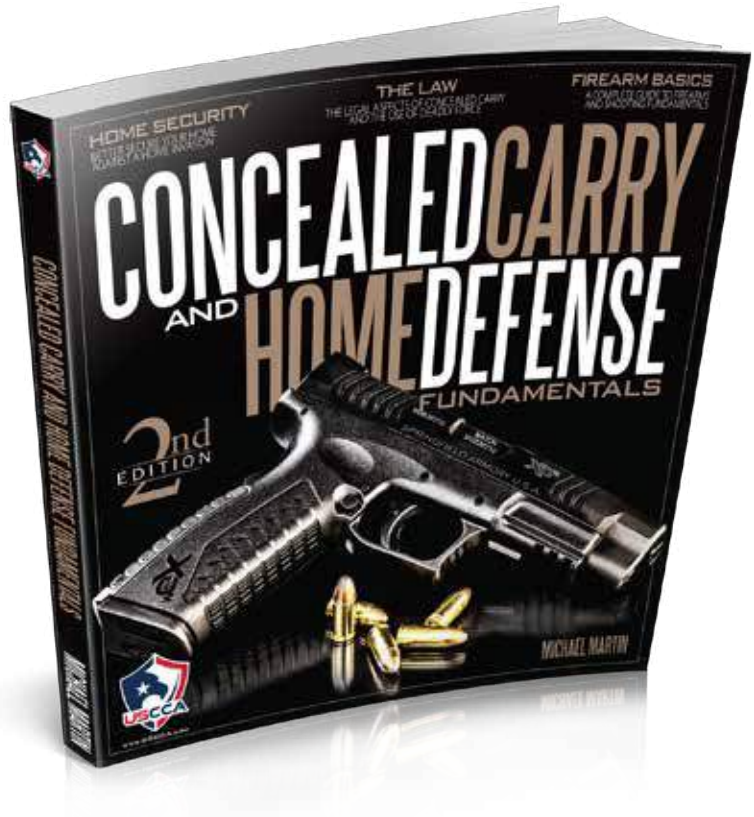
Moreover, the primary barrier to entry for a lot of folks is the cost of most traditionally styled rigs, and, to be honest, like every other style of holster, it's not really worth buying a bargain-basement model. Some excellent American companies, such as Hunter, manufacture and sell ready-to-go units that will hold your sidearm and ammunition, but carrying much else can be a serious challenge.

JUGGLING ACT

Cost and lack of adaptability aside, the major drawback of the traditional rig is reloading. If I'm carrying a revolver on my right hip, that means that, when I need to reload, I'm going to have to transfer a double-action to my left hand as I hit the cylinder release with my right thumb, pass my left middle and ring fingers through the frame around the cylinder and ram the plunger with



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my left thumb, or open the loading gate of a single-action and handle running the ejector rod and turning the cylinder however I've trained to do so. Easy, right?

What can complicate this is the fact that if the dominant-hand side of the belt is carrying your holster, the ammunition will likely be on the off-hand side — the off-hand side where your off-hand is going to be occupied holding your sidearm for a reload. If you're opting to carry a modern swing-out-cylinder revolver with a traditional-styled gun belt, you're going to have to mitigate this. Trying to juggle gun and ammunition back and forth between your hands is not an option, and reaching across to the far hip to retrieve cartridges isn't even possible for some carriers with a few more miles on their shoulders. If you're serious about employing an old-style rig, you're going to need to devise a system for reloads that works and then train on it or buy a setup that keeps ammunition easily accessible by your right hand, such as behind you.

KEEP IT UP

Your old-school gunleather's sagging can be mitigated by rigging other pieces of equipment onto the left side of the belt, such as your knife, comm gear, medical supplies, additional pouched ammo or whatever else you've decided you want to carry. Depending on how elaborate you want this whole operation to get, you could also use a Sam Browne-style shoulder strap. This is the wide leather or nylon strap that connects on the heavier side of the belt and goes over the opposite shoulder — picture a Royal Canadian Mounted Police officer's uniform. While this is a halfway effective setup, it should be noted that the risk of getting the strap caught on passing trees or other obstructions will always be a concern. (This is why some former users sarcastically refer to them as "suicide straps.") I'm not a fan, but I'll never tell you how to spend your discretionary dollars.

It should be noted that this is the point at which some no-longer-concealed carriers throw it all down and just get modern duty rigs or even sets of 1980s military "LBE" or "load-bearing equipment," classic GI pistol belts with padded suspenders. That, however, is a topic for another time (and may look even odder on a man who's repairing an irrigation pump).

MAKE YOUR PLAY

The most crucial factor in carrying your gun is carrying it how you are most comfortable and how you are most likely to actually leave the house with it every day. We're not talking about deep concealment, pocket concealment or even moderate concealment here. We're talking about private property open carry and how to do so in a way that works best for you. If you've been searching for the best way to carry a full-sized sidearm and other important gear as you work your land or hike your trails, a dedicated rig might be just what you're after.



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FULL POCKETS

ADVICE FOR POCKET CARRIERS

BY KEVIN CREIGHTON

Over the last few years, the number and style of guns suitable for pocket carry have blossomed. At one time, we had just a few selections of small semi-automatics in underpowered calibers and a few snub-nosed revolvers in .38 Special, but today you can find small, effective semi-autos from a variety of well-known manufacturers, as well as compact revolvers in calibers ranging from .22 Long Rifle to .357 Magnum.

I've been blessed to have worked at a variety of office jobs that tolerated guns in the workplace but still had business-casual dress codes. I found that pocket carry was the way to go in such environments, and I've carried a gun in my pocket — day in, day out — for more than 10 years now. I've learned a few things while doing so.



■ Modern pocket holsters, such as the SwapRig CargoPack2 pictured here, are unobtrusive, purpose-built and easy to use.

CARRY THE MOST EFFECTIVE GUN YOU CAN

There are plenty of people out there who ridicule the idea of carrying .380 ACP or .38 Special pocket guns, condemning them as "weak" or "underpowered." While they certainly can be described as such in comparison to full-sized service pistols, I can have one with me pretty much everywhere it is legal to do so, and the draw speed on my "weak and underpowered" .380 pocket gun is blazing-fast compared to the draw speed of a 9mm left in my car 100 yards away in the parking lot.

Is a pocket gun an optimal solution for countering the threat of lethal force? No. Is it a better solution than a bad attitude and harsh language? Almost certainly.

We are living in a golden age of pocket guns. From the Kel-Tec P-3AT to the Ruger LCR, from the SIG P238 to the Taurus TCP (and let us not forget the Smith & Wesson Bodyguard line), there are wide varieties of features and calibers from which to choose at prices that will fit just about any budget. Also, keep in mind that with an add-on or built-in laser, the days of relying on the small (or non-existent) sights on a pocket pistol are over. In the right lighting conditions, a laser on your small gun can extend the effective range out to 25 yards and beyond (not to mention make closer, more precise shots much easier to perform).



HOLSTERS ARE NOT OPTIONAL

I've gotten in the habit of dropping a Ruger LCPII into a Sticky Holsters pocket unit whenever I want to pocket carry. The holster is not optional for me for all the same reasons that it's not optional when I carry a pistol on my belt: A holster on my belt keeps the gun oriented correctly, it helps cover up the fact that I'm carrying a gun and it keeps random bits of flotsam and jetsam from working their way into the trigger and making the gun go bang when I really, really don't want it to. Every single one of those reasons is also true with pocket carry, so get a good holster and use it every time.

Pockets are made to carry stuff, and the temptation might be to load up the pocket that contains your gun with your keys, wallet and whatever else you're leaving the house carrying. Resist that temptation, because other objects like pens and keys can work their way into the tightest of holsters and into the trigger guard of your gun, leading to a very dangerous situation for yourself and others. I've found that there's enough room inside one front pocket of an average pair of slacks for my keys and wallet, leaving the other pocket free to carry just my defensive firearm.

POCKET CARRY IS FAST ON THE DRAW

There are few acts more casual or natural than putting one of our hands in a convenient pocket. We do it every day, and no one bats an eye when we do. This becomes a tremendous advantage when things start to feel dicey and when it becomes apparent that lethal force might have to come into play. Starting with your hand on your gun, inside your pocket, effectively halves your draw time, and one-second draws (or quicker) are not out of the question with pocket carry.

Before we go any further, let's pause for a moment to acknowledge the reality that pocket carry probably isn't for most women, because the fact of the matter is, the majority of women's clothing doesn't really have functional pockets. That's the bad news. The good news is that women's workplace fashions are much more tolerant of untucked tops than are men's workplace fashions, so while pocket carry might not work, there are all kinds of waistband holsters that can work under untucked shirts in business environments, giving women carry options not open to guys like me.

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DOWNSIDES OF POCKET GUNS

Newton's Second Law of Motion says that force equals mass times acceleration. What that means with regard to a pocket gun is that it's going to recoil more in your hands than a full-sized gun shooting the same ammunition. Also, because it's smaller, a pocket gun is harder to hold onto than a larger gun, making recoil effects even more noticeable.

In addition to this, a pocket gun typically holds only a limited amount of full-power ammunition, as with a .38 Special revolver or a .45 derringer, or an adequate amount of nominal-power ammunition, as with a pocket .380. This makes shot placement even more important than it normally is. To make matters worse, a pocket gun typically has poor or non-existent sights, making accurate fire challenging.

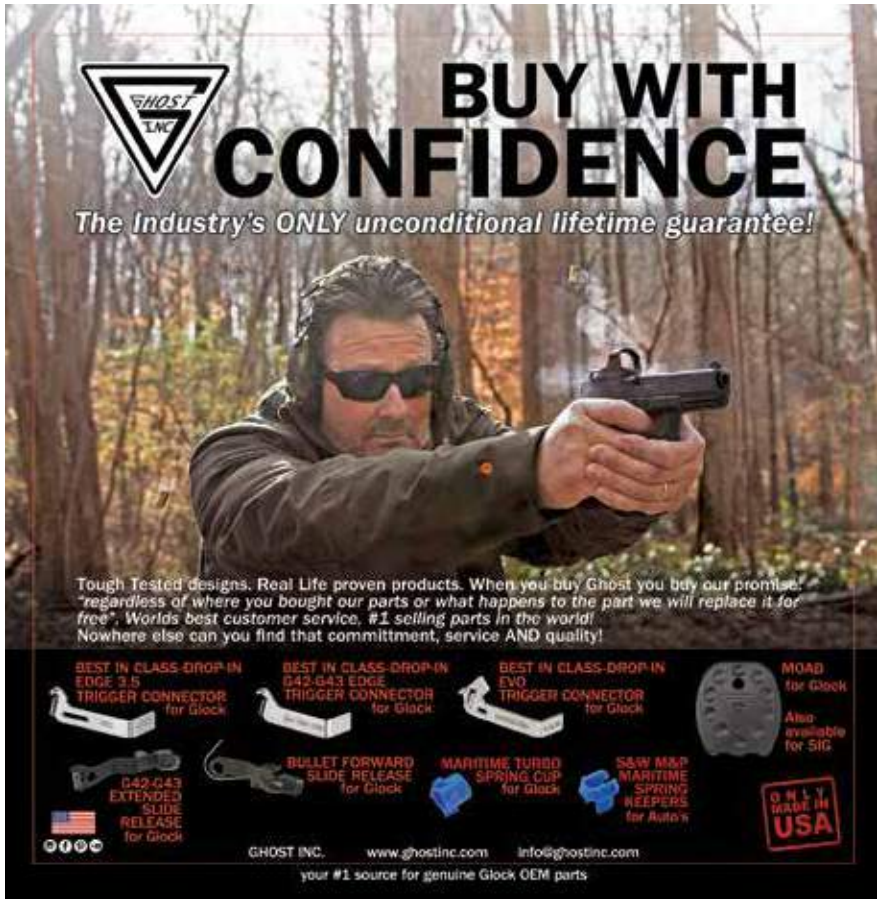
However, because a pocket gun is so small, light and convenient, there are very few reasons not to carry one wherever possible. Yes, it is not as powerful as a full-sized service pistol, but the old cliché is still more correct than it isn't: "A .380 in your pocket beats a .45 in the truck." Carry what you can and make sure you know the limits of what you carry (as well as its capabilities) when it comes to protecting yourself and others.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Achieving competence with your pocket gun is an uphill struggle, and drills that are easy to execute with larger guns can be far more challenging with a 2-inch barrel. There are, however, some drills that can improve your skills with a smaller pistol. One of the most common drills in general firearms training is especially useful for the pocket gun owner: the "3x5 Card Drill." Tape a 3x5 index card to a target that's 3 yards away and shoot six rounds into it for maximum accuracy. The goal here is to have all six shots touching. If you can do that three times in a row, move the target back a yard and try again. You'll soon find out what your maximum range is for precisely placed shots.

The "Mozambique Drill" (or "Failure to Stop Drill") helps you become accustomed to the idea that you might need to quickly switch from center-mass shots to a central nervous system shot to stop







an attacker. This takes on new emphasis when you consider that .380 ACP or .38 Special cartridges sent from a pocket gun have less of a chance of penetrating into a vital area than the same rounds sent through a longer barrel.

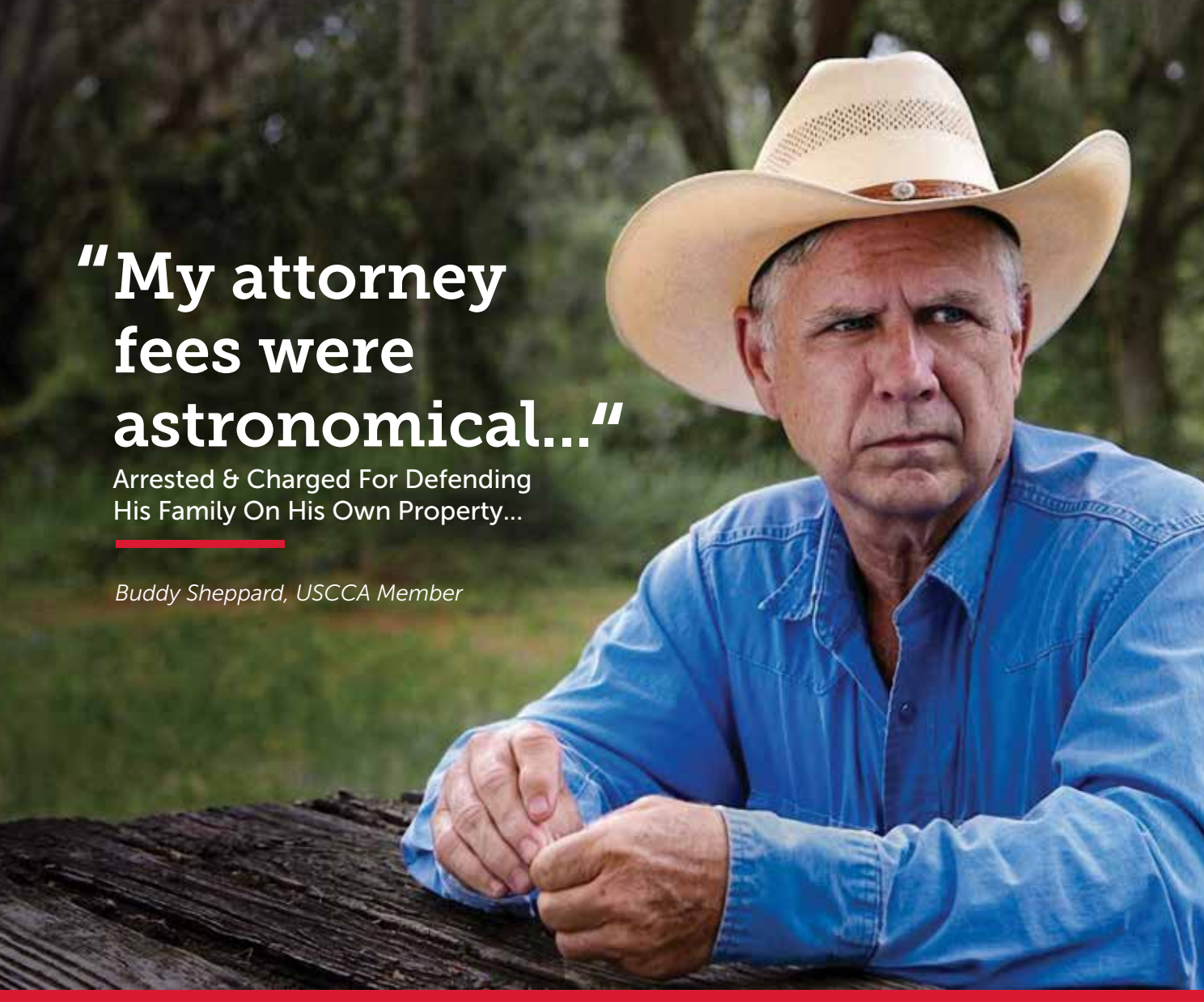
Another effective skill-builder for the user of a smaller gun is the "Bill Drill," which involves putting a large volume of fire on target as quickly as possible. The "Bill Drill" consists of six shots fired as rapidly as possible into the center of a standard combat target without sacrificing accuracy. It is normally shot at 7 yards, but you might find you'll need to stand a bit closer than that if you shoot it with a pocket gun.

CARRY MORE THAN YOUR GUN

Ever walk out of the office after a long day's work and have to cross a darkened parking lot? Me too, which is why I carry a small flashlight on me pretty much everywhere I go. I also carry a small pocket knife, because I've found there's always some task that requires a sharp edge, like opening up a package or removing a nylon tie from a cluster of computer cables. I also like to carry a less-lethal option with me, like a small can of OC spray, to help in situations where something short of lethal force is required to bring things to a happy conclusion. In addition to this, because my pocket gun of choice is currently a six-shot Ruger LCPII, carrying a spare magazine makes a whole lot of sense to me too.

THE CHOICES WE FACE

Is a pocket pistol the optimal choice for the general stopping of deadly threats? Well … no, not really. Given a choice, I'd much prefer to carry a larger, more powerful gun on a regular basis, but that choice is sometimes made for me by others. As such, I carry as effective a gun as I can wherever and whenever I can, and I train with that gun regularly enough to understand what I can and can't do with it under stress. It's not the best option I have for defending my life, but it's better than hoping for the best to happen while waiting for someone else to save the day.



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OPENING STATEMENT

FOLDING KNIFE DEPLOYMENT

BY MICHAEL JANICH



Carrying a folding knife as a defensive weapon is a calculated compromise. In addition to the fact that no mechanical locking mechanism will ever be as strong and reliable as a fixed-blade knife, a folder also requires two actions to actually get it into the fight: It must be drawn from the pocket (or other carry position) and then the blade must be opened. You must also be able to perform those actions in response to — and under the pressure of — an imminent lethal-force threat. That's a tall task.

Before we examine the mechanics of defensive folding knife deployment, let's clearly define the context. If you choose to draw a knife with the intent of using it as a weapon, you must be in fear for your life or in fear of suffering grievous bodily injury — the same requirements as drawing a firearm or any other lethal weapon. Since the knife is a contact-distance weapon, you should only be drawing it to defend against an appropriate close-range threat. Typically, this means your attacker is also armed with a contact-distance weapon (e.g. a stick, brick, bottle, pipe or possibly an edged weapon) and has the ability and opportunity to attack you.

In that context, your priorities when drawing your knife should not only be to get your weapon out and ready for action as quickly and reliably as possible, but also to protect yourself and the mechanics of your draw during the process.

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■ The "Guarded Draw" is one of the most important techniques in defensive knife use, and it's something you need to practice.

CLIP CARRY OPTIONS

Most modern folding knives that are suitable for defensive use have a clip that allows them to be attached to the top of a pocket for quick, easy access. Pioneered by Spyderco founder Sal Glesser back in 1981, this simple feature revolutionized knife carry. Although it is largely taken for granted these days, the details of clip style, mounting and carry position actually have a huge effect on the ability to draw a knife effectively.

Like drawing a handgun, the goal of drawing a folding knife should be to achieve a solid "master grip" on the weapon while it is still in the pocket. When you draw the knife, you should then be able to open the blade one-handed — without having to significantly change your grip on the knife. After the knife is open, you should then be able to transition smoothly to a fighting grip, again with minimal adjustment.

Based on this logic, I prefer carrying a folding knife tip-up, which means that the clip is attached to the butt-end of the handle and the point of the closed knife faces upward when clipped in the pocket. By positioning the closed knife all the way to the back of the pocket (adjacent to the outer seam of your pants), the knife is always in a consistent, predictable location, and the rest of the pocket is easily accessible. In this position, the back of the closed blade also contacts the back of the pocket, making it impossible for the blade to accidentally open in your pocket.

This is in contrast to the other basic option: tip-down carry. Logically, this option positions the closed knife so the blade's point faces downward and the back of the blade faces the cavity of the pocket … and your genitals.

DRAWING MECHANICS

From the preferred tip-up carry position, start your draw by inserting your thumb into your pocket and digging down to place the entire length of your thumb along the inside surface of the handle. Hook your index finger under the tip of the pocket clip and, with your remaining fingers, apply pressure through the pocket toward the outside surface of the handle. Raise the elbow of that arm to lift the knife straight up out of your pocket while keeping your wrist straight. As it clears your pocket, your fingers should naturally wrap around the handle so the fingertips of your middle, ring and little fingers wrap around the clip to hold the handle securely. From this position, index your thumb on the blade's hole, thumb stud or disk and drive it forward to open the blade fully. With the blade open, adjust the knife in your hand to achieve a solid fighting grip.

This same drawstroke also supports other blade-opening methods, including high-speed inertial openings and "flipper" variants.

THE GUARDED DRAW

While the mechanics of the basic draw will get your knife out and open, in the defensive context we described earlier, they're not enough. You also need to protect yourself and your weapon hand during the process. To do that, I recommend what I call the "Guarded Draw."

As you initiate the draw process, raise your non-weapon (support) arm, elbow pre-bent, and anchor your palm to your forehead just above your eyebrow. If you have a cover garment, this motion occurs at the same time your weapon hand sweeps or lifts that garment to expose the top of the pocket. By indexing your palm solidly against your forehead, that arm creates a strong, triangular structure that offers excellent protection for your head and neck. At extreme close range, the action of raising your arm to the guard position also creates a powerful vertical elbow strike. If an attacker tries to foul your draw process, a quick pivot of your upper body allows you to deflect his arm(s) with your elbow while simultaneously pulling your weapon side away from him.

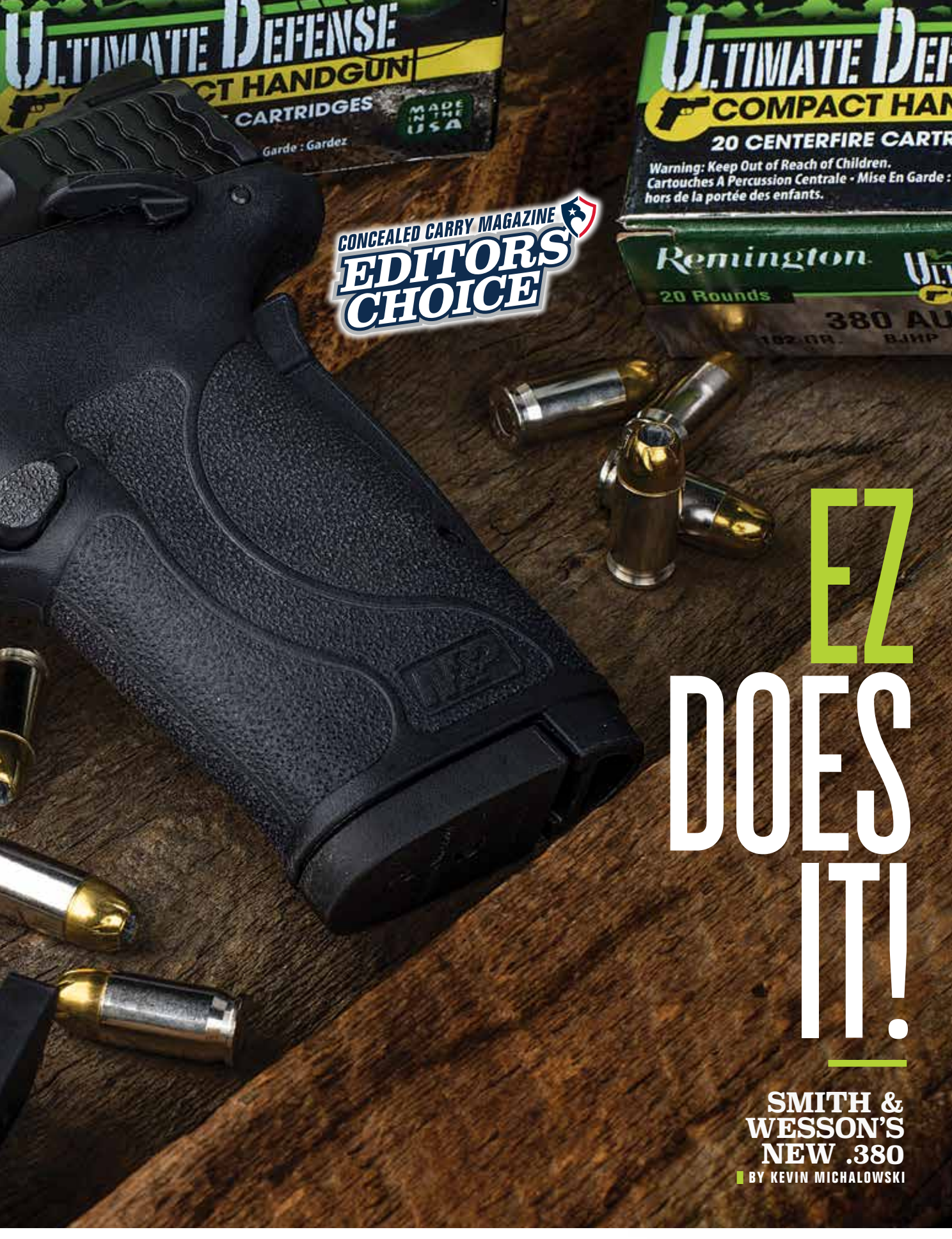
Although the Guarded Draw is specifically recommended for folding-knife deployment, it is actually an excellent platform for all weapon draws, including handguns. The strong guard structure of the support arm keeps the elbow from being pushed downward, providing safe clearance for shots from a weapon-retention position. As with the knife draw, a quick rotation of the torso will also counter most weapon grabs or attempts at fouling your draw. Best of all, with very little practice, the Guarded Draw can springboard off the instinctive flinch of the natural human "startle response" to create a more functional trained alternative.

Learn to get your knife out, but keep your guard up as you do.





■ Specifically designed with ease of use in mind, the Smith & Wesson M&P380 Shield EZ brings accessible self-defense to those who otherwise might not be able to defend themselves.



EZ DOES IT!

SMITH & WESSON'S NEW .380

BY KEVIN MICHALOWSKI



SPECIFICATIONS

CALIBER: .380 ACP
CAPACITY: 8+1
BARREL LENGTH: 3.675 INCHES
OVERALL LENGTH: 6.7 INCHES
FRONT SIGHT: WHITE DOT
REAR SIGHT: ADJUSTABLE WHITE DOT
TRIGGER PULL: APPROXIMATELY 5 POUNDS
ACTION: INTERNAL HAMMER-FIRED
GRIP: POLYMER
WEIGHT: 18.5 OUNCES
BARREL MATERIAL: STAINLESS STEEL WITH ARMORNITE FINISH
SLIDE MATERIAL: STAINLESS STEEL WITH ARMORNITE FINISH
FRAME MATERIAL: POLYMER

What do they say about the internet? Never read the comments. A few days before I sat down to write this story, Smith & Wesson released the new M&P380 Shield EZ and the trolls were banging on the bridges complaining.

They were complaining for no reason, and I just hadn't had the chance to tell anyone that. You see, a couple months ago, Smith & Wesson invited me to a secret location, made me sign a non-disclosure agreement and then handed me one of these little beauties. That's right, I called it a beauty — a little beauty.

The 380 Shield EZ is about 86 percent the size of a standard M&P pistol, which ensures that it falls right in that comfortable category where it's easy to carry but still feels good in your hand. A lot of "small" guns are just too small to hold and shoot comfortably. That's not the case with this pistol. It weighs in at just 18.5 ounces unloaded, and the complement of eight rounds of .380 ACP in the magazine and one more in the chamber doesn't add much weight at all.

So what is all the fuss about? Some of the first people to comment on the gun called it ugly because of the large and easy-to-use grip safety on the back strap. It's not ugly. It is different, but it's a great feature that operates smoothly and positively; as I shot the gun, it caused no trouble at all. The grip safety actually provides that little extra bit of security if you choose the version without the frame-mounted thumb safety. Some people apparently just need things to complain about. This grip safety should not be one of those things.

THE FEATURES

Billed as a pistol that is "easy to use," the 380 Shield EZ includes

■ The grip safety on the 380 EZ is reminiscent of several other classic American guns, such as the 1911 and the old Smith & Wesson "Lemon Squeezer" Safety Hammerless.

> SOME PEOPLE APPARENTLY JUST NEED THINGS TO COMPLAIN ABOUT. THIS GRIP SAFETY SHOULD NOT BE ONE OF THOSE THINGS.

several features that truly make it so. Let's start at the top. A very light recoil spring makes the M&P380 Shield EZ incredibly smooth and easy to charge. Running the slide is made even easier by what S&W calls "enhanced" serrations on the slide. If you look closely, you will see that the serrations get deeper toward the back. This gives a bit of a concave element to the slide right where you will normally grip it. The pistol's magazines also have thumb buttons on their followers to allow shooters to easily compress the springs while loading. For a guy who regularly suffers with filling a 15-round magazine, loading eight rounds of .380 was a breeze.

Field-stripping is also very quick and painless. Lock the slide to the rear. Remove the magazine. Make sure the chamber is clear. Flip the disassembly lever on the side of the frame to the down position and pull the slide off the front of the frame. Remove the recoil spring and barrel and you have successfully field-stripped the pistol. Reassemble in reverse order. Done.

Other things I like about this little pistol include the tactile loaded-chamber indicator right on the top, making it very easy to check to see if a round is chambered. The optional ambidextrous thumb safety is a cool addition for people who love thumb safeties. It is in the right place in that it didn't cause any problems, even with my big hands. It works the right way, simply and positively engaging in either position. Down, of course, means the pistol is ready to fire. And, because it is ambidextrous, lefties won't have any trouble. The magazine release is reversible too for those who demand a truly left-handed gun.

The 380 Shield EZ comes equipped with a big, beautiful, easy-to-see white dot on the front sight and two big white dots on the windage-adjustable rear sight. S&W even include the rear-sight-adjustment tool so you don't have to dig in your toolbox if you want to move the sight. Also included in the box are two magazines.

ON THE RANGE

Shooting the 380 Shield EZ was ... how can I put this without overstating it? Just short of magical. I *loved* shooting this pistol. The 5-pound trigger certainly does not get in the way of good shooting.

It's a .380, but unlike most .380 pistols, there is plenty to hold onto. As you can imagine, felt recoil was negligible. The 3.675-inch barrel, combined with the overall length of 6.7 inches and, of course, the .380-sized recoil, made the gun imminently controllable and accurate even during rapid-fire.

The sights, as I mentioned before, have big, bright dots and a really wide rear-sight channel. During some IDPA-style shooting, I found the gun to be very fast on target, even with my aging eyes. At combat distances, it was very easy to pick up the pace of shooting if the groups were getting too small.

The S&W website touts the fact that the M&P380 EZ offers "an 18-degree" grip angle. If that's important to you, you will love the fact. To me, grip angle doesn't make all that much difference. What is important is how the gun feels in my hands, and this one feels good. It is thin yet comfortable, with what I call Goldilocks texturing — not too aggressive, not too smooth. The back strap is made



■ Thumb buttons on the magazine followers allow the shooter to exert manual pressure on the springs while loading, which can be game-changing for individuals with little or compromised hand strength.

up largely of the grip safety, which is pinned in place at the bottom and moves easily with no pinch points. Shooters should have no concerns about disengaging that mechanism when holding the pistol in a proper shooting grip.

As a bonus, there is a small-but-effective beavertail at the top that protects your hand from slide bite while also not catching on anything during a draw from concealment.

Speaking of that proper shooting grip, I found this little pistol amazingly comfortable to shoot with one hand or two. All the controls are perfectly placed. I was originally concerned that I might knock the thumb safety up into the safe position when I acquired a two-handed grip, but that proved unfounded. Using a high-thumbs grip, the firing-hand thumb stays nicely up above the safety lever, while the support hand fills in the gap on the left side of the grip (for a right-handed shooter) without limiting access to disengage the safety. You might have to move your support hand a bit to re-engage the safety when you are done shooting, but by then, you are done shooting, so the support hand is not all that important anymore.





A QUESTION OF CALIBER

Some people might question S&W's choice to release this pistol in .380 ACP, a caliber regularly disparaged by those who have never been shot with a .380. The only real downside I see in the caliber selection is that .380 ACP ammo is a bit more expensive than 9mm ammo. I can basically shrug that off.

This pistol is designed to be easy to operate. The key elements to that include the reduced weight of the recoil spring and lighter recoil of the .380. If the question is "stopping power," or some other amorphous and subjective term, consider this: We all have choices to make. If this gun allows a person who would otherwise not carry a gun to have nine rounds of .380 at the ready, then this is the right gun in the right caliber for that person, who likely represents a growing segment of the market.

Pistols of this caliber have stopped many fights. I stand by my claim that no criminal scoffs at the caliber of your gun while you are shooting at him. Modern ammunition makes the .380 an acceptable — if imperfect — defensive round. But, then again, every pistol caliber carries some imperfections.

THE VERDICT

The Smith & Wesson M&P380 Shield EZ is a winner. It is a well-built gun and does everything it is designed to do. It is a pleasure to shoot. It has proven accurate and reliable and it lives up to the marketing claims that it is easy to operate. With an MSRP of only $399, you'll even have money left over for a good holster and some ammo.

SOURCES

Smith & Wesson: smith-wesson.com



Brad was forced to defend himself with pepper spray during a road rage attack. But when the police arrived, HE was the one charged with assault! Just like Brad, your USCCA Membership will cover you 100% up-front for the use of ANY legal weapon of self-defense. Arm yourself with a USCCA Membership for complete peace of mind. Because, after all, ***doing the right thing shouldn't cost you everything...***

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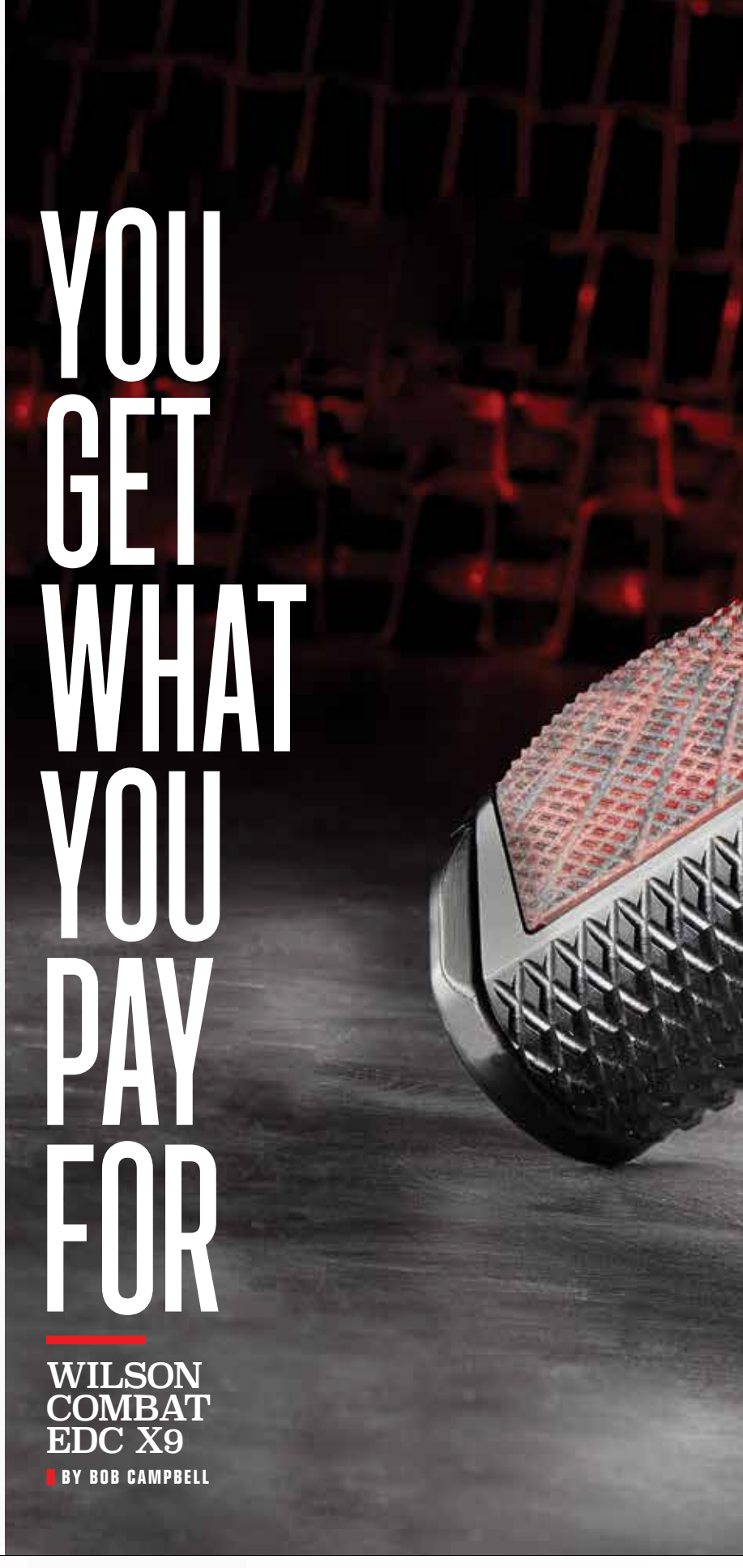
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YOU GET WHAT YOU PAY FOR

WILSON COMBAT EDC X9

BY BOB CAMPBELL



Some of the skilled shooters with whom I shot the Wilson Combat EDC X9 remarked that the pistol isn't a true 1911 any more than a Ballista Molina or Star PD is a 1911, but I disagree. The EDC (Every Day Carry) X9 maintains the best features of the 1911 and incorporates improvements that make for a superior 21st-century handgun. The improvements are not incremental; they are sweeping.

The X9 was completely reliable in firing some 1,000 cartridges and is more accurate than any handgun in its weight class of which I am aware. Perhaps most importantly, it's very fast into action and on target. This isn't a pistol that should sit in the safe or be spared the rigors of practice and constant carry. This is a handgun that thrives with use.

PLANET X

The steel slide is well-finished and the contours are nicely polished. Cocking serrations are cut into the fore and conventional aft positions, offering a finely machined gripping surface for racking and clearing malfunctions. The ramped, fluted barrel is tightly and smartly fitted, terminating in a recessed crown. The hammer is a skeletonized type, which aids in fast lock time and snag-free carry.

The EDC X9 is fitted with Wilson Combat's newest personal defense/battle sight, which offers rapid acquisition of the target but also precision shooting. The front sight is a fiber-optic unit and comes with a spare rod. A gun rug and spare magazine are also included. Wilson Combat pistols do not employ firing pin blocks or drop safeties but rather rely on lightweight firing pins and heavy-duty firing pin springs. If such a pistol is dropped, the firing pin is held steady by the high-power firing pin spring, preventing a discharge.

The external extractor is not likely to need tuning or replacement and the trigger is a true lightweight. Such a trigger is better suited to a trigger action of 4 pounds or less; momentum should not jar the trigger and cause a discharge if the pistol is dropped. Trigger compression is a clean, sharp 3.5 pounds, with no creep or backlash, so there's no worry about drop-safety.Speaking of which,



■ Certainly not the 1911 of the Ragtime Era, the EDC X9 is as modern as a smartphone and ready to help you accomplish almost as much.



■ With a pair of back straps and removable grip scales, the EDC X9 is sure to be a handy head-turner for years to come.

there's no grip safety. The deletion of the grip safety might be debatable, but the final fit and finish of the grip are excellent. A grip safety doesn't work as well with a high-capacity handgun anyway, and redesigning a grip safety to block the trigger of a higher-capacity handgun is, in many ways, not a profitable exercise.

The X9 is built on the new "X-frame," the fit and feel of which is amazing and which offers excellent abrasion and adhesion on firing. The slide-lock safety snaps in place with a solid click; it isn't a "gas-pedal-type" but is sensibly larger than a standard GI-type. Speed is excellent, as the slide-lock safety falls under the firing-hand thumb readily on the draw. Most importantly, it isn't going to work itself loose in a tightly fitted holster.

The X9 ships with two 15-round magazines and its weight is just over 29 ounces. Fully loaded with 124-grain ammo, the piece tips the scales at 35 ounces.



FIRING TESTS

The EDC X9 is nothing short of a joy to carry and fire. It comes on target quickly, and trigger compression is simply lovely — no other way to describe it. While a custom pistolsmith might offer a lighter trigger — and this one will probably work in a little lighter with more use — the X9's trigger is wonderfully smooth and consistent, with no deviation from shot to shot.

The sights are ideal for rapid target acquisition. Though they are crafted in a design once called the "old man's sights," as they allow eyes with some years on them to quickly focus at combat ranges, the system also allows accurate fire at extended distances. The EDC X9 is great fun to play with at 50 yards and even out to 100. After a shooter has picked up the correct holdover, it isn't difficult to get hits at the 100-yard line. But this is a pistol for combat shooting.

'SHOOTER READY'

There are no surprises in running this gun. To acquire a sight picture, you place the front sight on the target between the two edges of the rear notch, press the trigger and send the hit. The 9mm cartridge is powerful enough for serious self-defense, but recoil is light enough that you can proceed to follow-up shots with an undisturbed sight picture. As the pistol recoils, allow the trigger to reset. As soon as you regain control of the sights, fire again.

Using this method, the holes from my double-taps were touching each other in maximum speed drills at 5 and 7 yards.

I've fired about two dozen different loads through this pistol — from the dirtiest steel-cased junk to the finest Federal Match ammunition — without a single malfunction. The X9 digested everything through 400-plus rounds without being cleaned. Though a tight handgun, it is not a finicky beast. The grip treatment is ideal for fast combat shooting with sweaty or cold hands; this handgun simply isn't going to work loose. I haven't experienced hammer bite from a quality 1911 in many years, and it certainly doesn't exist with this pistol.

Wilson Combat magazines are renowned for durability and reliability, and the seven- and eight-round .45 units, as

well as the 10-round .38 Super mags, are first-class and well-respected. The new "high-capacity" 9mm magazines are a case of "so far so good," but all indications point toward them being well-made of quality material and powered by good, strong springs. The magazines are tapered at their tops and, with the magazine wells' generous chutes, this makes for speed reloading that is very, very fast.

Despite the pistol's low weight, recoil is modest and combat accuracy excellent. The pistol shoots like a finely tuned steel-framed Browning Hi Power 9mm — save somewhat better. A pistol that is comparable in accuracy is the SIG P210, though the X9 is a far better combat pistol.

The EDC X9 ships with a guarantee of 1.5-inch groups at 25 yards (when assessed with quality ammunition) and it has bested that average with a number of loads. For a carry load, I prefer a balance of expansion and penetration, which often leads me to the Black Hills Ammunition 115-grain JHP +P. (For service use, I would hedge my bets toward penetration and choose the Black Hills Ammunition 124-grain +P.) When you reach this level of power and pressure, quality control on the part of the gunmaker is very important, and such care results in match-grade accuracy. One test, fired from an OH Products Bullshooter Pistol Rest, showed the 124-grain +P with a five-shot, 1.1-inch group at 24 yards. The average was slightly larger.

The pistol should run with all loads. A good friend favors 147-grain service loads and counts the Federal 147-grain HST as his duty go-to. I tested an overlooked combination — the 147-grain +P Federal HST — and velocity was a solid 1,050 feet per second. If you favor a heavy 9mm with first-class accuracy and excellent wound potential, the +P HST will suit your needs well.

SWEET SUCCESS

After blowing through 1,000 cartridges, the ArmorTuff coating appears as new. The trigger is even smoother and the pistol is more accurate, as the assembled shooters grooved into the piece. The price for this performance is just under $3,000. You might find that price tag a tad high; might something else do the same job for less? There are larger target-grade pistols that are about as accurate and there are less expensive guns that are as reliable, but there is nothing that offers the combination of ergonomics, accuracy, reliability and features found in this handgun.

That said, if you have to ask yourself whether you'd carry such an expensive handgun, that probably means you shouldn't. Whether its destiny is as a "safe queen" or a stalwart everyday carry sidearm, the EDC X9 pairs well with an experienced shooter and just might be the finest 9mm combat handgun on the planet.

SOURCES

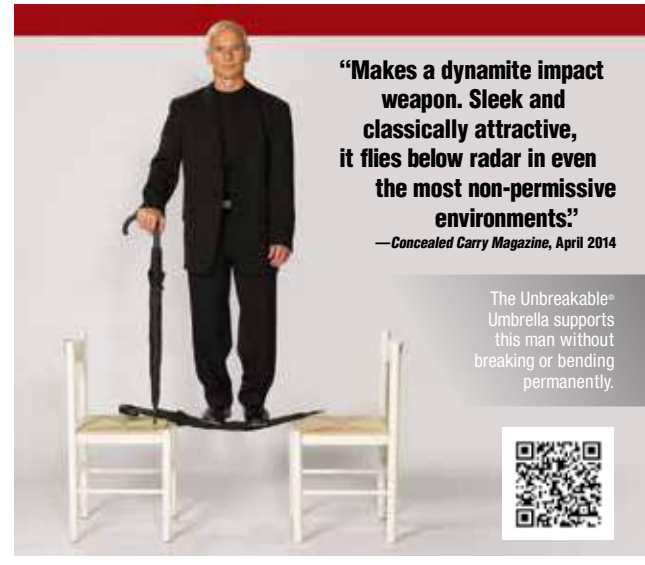
Wilson Combat: WilsonCombat.com
Black Hills Ammunition: Black-Hills.com
OH Products: BullshooterSightingIn.com

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DIVISION SIGN

SHOULD YOU DO BUSINESS WITH A NO-GUNS-ALLOWED COMPANY?

BY STEVE ALBRECHT



■ It can be easy to say, "If they don't want my guns, they don't want my money," but that's not always possible.

We get it, America. We know not to bring our guns into any major-league sporting events at stadiums, ballparks and arenas. We know not to bring them inside county and federal courthouses, mental health hospitals, jails and prisons, and most government facilities.

For every sign you see in a mall, shop, store or restaurant in your town that says, "Guns Welcome. Please Keep All Weapons Holstered Unless Need Arises. In Such A Case, Judicious Marksmanship Is Appreciated," there seem to be 100 that say "No Guns Allowed." For some odd and inexplicable reason, many anti-gun people are under the always-proved-wrong assumption that no-guns signs will somehow repel armed evildoers, mass murderers, terrorists and other maniacs bent on homicide-suicide. No attacker has ever been stopped by anything printed on paper.

It's not that I don't get it. Business owners and their employees watch the news. They see mass murders at malls and churches, the constant war on terrorism overseas, accidental shootings by kids, gang shootouts, police shootings and police being killed in shootings, and they have legitimate fears about being around customers or other people who enter their facilities who might not be trained or mature enough to safely carry guns. Those are valid concerns. But we can also flip those same fears they have of those violent events and say, "All true. But there might be a person in your retail store, restaurant or shop who is legally, safely and carefully carrying a gun, and he or she just might stop one of those tragedies we've all seen on TV."

The issue is complex. For any business posting a no-guns-allowed sign, who can you even speak to — inside or outside the business — to get some clarification? Talking to a nervous or gun-unfriendly assistant manager in the doorway of his store is probably not going to go very well. Chatting in the parking lot or at the cash register will either not be possible or, even worse, create a scene at which the police will soon arrive. Is our only hope to suffer in silence?

Well, here's a sad and parallel issue: We've seen many recent cases of armed cops in full uniform who don't get served in certain fast-food joints or sit-down restaurants; it's usually a way for some incredibly immature employee to make his or her "social justice" statement. What chance does a legally armed citizen have trying to discuss the validity of concealed carry with the same kind of food-service technician?

THE DAUGHTER TEST

One obvious solution is that concealed has to mean concealed. After you start carrying a concealed firearm, you start to notice whether other people nearby are doing likewise. If they're carrying correctly, you either won't know or you won't be able to tell without careful scrutiny. In other words, if you bring a concealed firearm into a no-guns business and you do so the right way, no one working in or visiting that business will ever know. That means no holsters that print, no guns that aren't fully concealed by the right types of clothing, no visible magazine pouches, nothing.

When my kid — a young woman who is not a fan of guns — is home from college, I'll ask her to take the "Daughter Test," in which I ask, "Can you see if I'm wearing a gun or not?" before we go out to eat or to the movies. The trick is — and she knows this — sometimes I'm wearing a gun and sometimes I'm not. (Spotting my gun bag on the front seat of my car doesn't count.) I change the location on my body, so, if I'm careful (and I'd like to think I am), she never spots my gun when it's on me.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

Here's one example of the no-guns-allowed policy taken to the extreme: How do you do business with your bank when they install "man traps" or double doors with metal detectors in their lobby? After inside the man-trap foyer, you get screened. If the green light goes on, you can go in, but if the red light goes on, you cannot.

My local branch did this and I left without going inside, not wanting to set off the alarm. What's the protocol, besides just leaving? Should you try to get the manager to come over so you can explain you're legally carrying? Would that even help? What could you show the manager? Your permit? Driver's license? A picture on your phone of you shooting well at the range?

Since I'm retired law enforcement, I didn't want to identify myself and cause a scene, so I left and found a different branch (in a better neighborhood, frankly) without all the extra security. I get why more and more banks are installing these double-door man traps to stymie robbers, especially with so many stickup artists out here in sunny California. But what are we

> "SOME SIGNS HAVE REAL LEGAL WEIGHT AND OTHERS DON'T, AND IT'S ULTIMATELY GOING TO BE YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO KNOW YOUR SPECIFIC SITUATION WITHIN ANY GIVEN JURISDICTION."

non-crooks to do? Change banks? Complain to the 800-number printed on the door? Gripe about it on Facebook? It can be hard to even find a direct phone line to your local branch, and using social media only further separates us from the anti-gunners who don't think we should have guns in the first place (let alone carry them anywhere).

Last year, I took a great trip to Williams, Arizona, to ride the Grand Canyon Railway into the national park. The train trip was peaceful and relaxing, the views into the park were awesome and it was a fun experience — save for one thing: The train station in Williams has a no-guns-allowed sign. This is ironic on two levels: **1.** Arizona is a no-permit-necessary concealed carry state. **2.** The station is about 300 feet from a small arena where there is a Wild West "shootout" show between the town marshal and three train robbers. After we watched the marshal "kill" the bad guys, he holstered his weapon and sauntered off, spurs jingling. But no-can-do when it comes to bringing your concealed firearm into the adjacent train station or aboard the train.

In 1993, at the Family Fitness Center health club in El Cajon, California, an angry and disturbed gym member, James Buquet, 19, went inside and murdered four people with a shotgun before killing himself. I belonged to that club back then and was glad to have missed his rampage by a few days. I always bring my gun to my gym in a fanny pack when I work out, and I do so for two reasons: **1.** I don't like leaving any gun in my car. **2.** A gym is as much of a public place as any other mass-attack target. There will be dozens or even hundreds of complete strangers inside during busy peak hours. Gym memberships are sold to anyone with a checking account or a credit card, with no screening as to who the person is or what he or she has done. The guy

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next to you on the treadmill could be an accountant or a registered sex offender. The woman on the machine near you could have an ex-boyfriend who wants to murder her. The man standing in the locker room could be stalking one of the female trainers or front-desk staff.

KNOW THE LAWS

If you have the absolute legal right to be armed in your state, can a store or a restaurant set a no-guns-inside policy for that piece of private property? Yes. If it's a private business, it can set all kinds of policies. Public governmental agencies — public sites like parks, nature preserves and beaches, or certain lands that are zoned for specific usages — can allow or not allow guns by law, code, statute or ordinance. A private business can set almost any policy about access or providing service it wants, as long as it doesn't discriminate against customers based on race, gender or other protected classifications.

Private employers can control a lot more than you might think. I know a private-security company owner who says to his employees, "Because of the obvious healthcare costs associated with tobacco use, we do not hire anyone who smokes or chews tobacco, nor do we allow any of our employees to use any tobacco products at work or even on their own time. We will test our employees randomly for nicotine and, if they test positive, we will fire them." Is this legal? Yes. They are a private business and can set this policy as a condition of hiring and continued employment. "If you don't like it," goes the owner's reasoning, "you don't have to work here."

THE CHOICE IS YOURS

Policy is not always a law; it's about choice. We can make a choice whether to patronize a business that allows us to bring our properly concealed guns through its doors. Just like the other sign we see a lot in many public-contact businesses, "We Reserve the Right to Refuse Service to Anyone," well, that choice goes both ways. Don't want me inside with a gun? Perhaps your competitor across the street will welcome my money.

Some gun people I talk with feel strongly about this cause and believe that a targeted social media campaign, connected to a business boycott of some sort, might be the answer to this issue. This country was founded on protests and organized ones often bring results, but we face a few problems with the boycott approach.

First, gun policy is a polarizing issue in this country, and most anti-gun people really don't care to hear our complaints. Boycotting a specific business over their no-guns policy seems likely to create a new backlash we don't need.

But what about sending a polite, non-combative email to the business owner, manager, franchisee or the director of customer service at the company's corporate headquarters? At least it starts a dialogue without being confrontational.

Here's one possible approach:

"Dear Business Operator: As much as my family and I like your food, products, services and the friendly







David jumped into action and saved his children and innocent bystanders from two armed robbers. But when the smoke cleared, David's gun was confiscated and he was taken to the police station for questioning. Just like David, your USCCA Membership will arm you with an experienced criminal defense attorney AND the funds to replace your confiscated gun. After all, ***doing the right thing shouldn't cost you everything...***

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treatment from your staff, my desire to protect myself with a legally carried concealed firearm is more powerful than the signs outside your door telling me guns aren't allowed inside.

"I have no desire to make a scene, get involved in a fight that is not my concern or otherwise draw attention to myself as carrying a firearm. I'm not here to act like a cop, be a hero or frighten anyone. My role is to take care of my family and myself by being a professional witness to any conflicts, threats or crimes that might take place inside your business. My first order would be to get me or a loved one into a position of safety and call the police. If that's not possible and my life is at risk, I will defend myself with skill, accuracy and judgment, based on my years of training and experience safely handling firearms.

"In these days of mass murder in public places, we already know there are not enough police officers to keep us safe or even respond to an armed threat in a timely fashion. I will continue to carry my concealed firearm for a day I hope never comes. Until you change your policy, however, I will not be doing business with your company and I'll tell my family, friends and colleagues to avoid your firm as well. As I'm sure you know from social media review sites like Yelp, bad word of mouth can hurt a business.

"I'm not making a threat or asking you to make an exception for me; I'm asking you to reconsider your policy for all of my fellow valid concealed carry permit holders. We are large in number, with strong feelings about this issue, and we make choices with our wallets based on how we are treated. I'm ready to discuss this when you are."

KNOW YOUR SITUATION

Is a no-guns-allowed sign a suggestion, part of a policy, an ordinance, a municipal code violation or a penal code violation? Some signs have real legal weight and others don't, and it's ultimately going to be your responsibility to know your specific situation within any given jurisdiction.

If, however, we all agree that it's better to have a gun and not need it than to need a gun and not have it, our choices for dealing with businesses with no-guns signs are as follows:

- Follow the law.
- Politely ask the business operators for their support.
- Start a social media discussion with like-minded friends, Facebook followers and colleagues.
- Make your buying decisions based on who supports your concealed carry lifestyle.
- Enter the business with your firearm well-concealed and don't sweat the signage.

Never forget though: Just as they reserve the right to refuse service to anyone, so do you.





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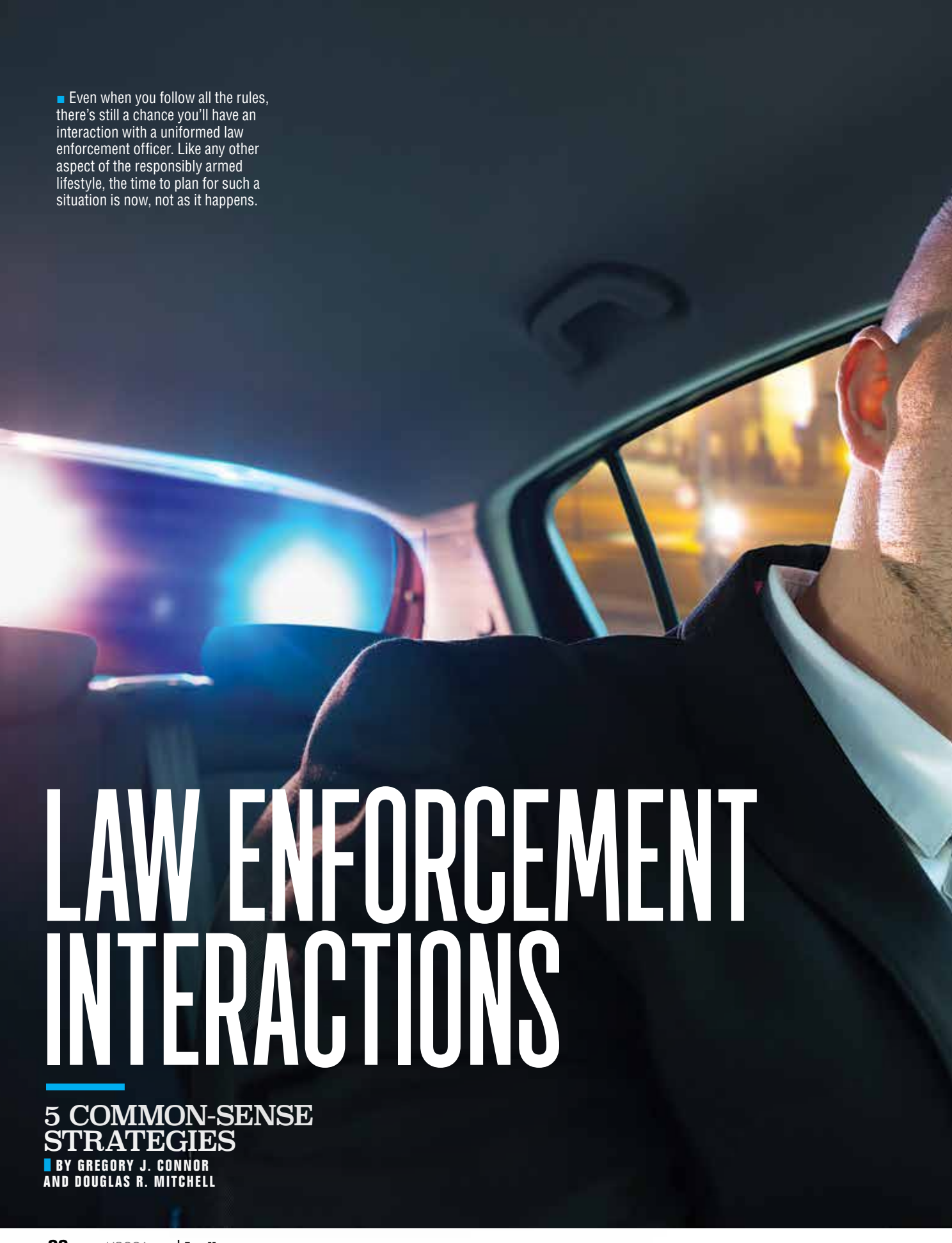


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■ Even when you follow all the rules, there's still a chance you'll have an interaction with a uniformed law enforcement officer. Like any other aspect of the responsibly armed lifestyle, the time to plan for such a situation is now, not as it happens.

LAW ENFORCEMENT INTERACTIONS

5 COMMON-SENSE STRATEGIES

BY GREGORY J. CONNOR AND DOUGLAS R. MITCHELL



Common sense was never as common as we thought it was, and the world has changed. These tactics will seem obvious to some, but whether they're old hat or news to you, they're presented here to ensure that you give real thought to your actions, which can prevent predicaments and save lives.

1. UNDERSTAND IT IS NOT A MATTER OF 'IF' BUT RATHER A MATTER OF 'WHEN.'

You might be following all of the laws of which you are aware, but if your taillight burns out or a vehicle matching yours was recently used in an armed robbery, you will likely be stopped. You won't know the reason or the rationale for the stop, but it is what it is. You also know that you are a model citizen and would not have anything to do with some crime for which your car is a reasonable match, but the police don't know that and cannot assume it.

2. UNDERSTAND THAT, UNDER A LONG LINE OF SUPREME COURT CASES AND TYPICAL STATE STATUTES, THE OFFICERS ARE IN CHARGE.

You must comply with the officers' directions in any non-consensual contact, including a minor traffic violation stop. Per *Michigan v. Summers*, 452 U.S. 692, 702-703 (1981), "The risk of harm to both the police and the occupants is minimized if the officers routinely exercise unquestioned command of the situation." This includes the location of the stop, whether you are to remain in or exit your vehicle and a host of other factors. If you don't like how the event plays out, your only choice is to, as they say, "comply now and complain later." Mid-contact is not the time for a constitutional debate.



3. TELL THE OFFICERS THAT YOU ARE LAWFULLY ARMED.

Use words of that nature, and do not, under any circumstances, say something like, "I have a gun." Officers might already know you hold a permit through proper dispatch protocols in certain jurisdictions, but this is not the case everywhere. When officers want to verify the legality of your carry, follow their directions to the smallest detail. Do not present your firearm to them. Do provide information about holster retention devices and the like without moving toward the holster. Pursuant to *Terry v. Ohio*, 392 U.S. 1 (1968), they can disarm you during a "Terry" encounter, which includes stops for minor traffic violations.

■ Nothing raises a law enforcement officer's alarm quite as quickly as the word "gun." Avoid saying that you "have a gun" and instead let the officer know that you are "lawfully armed."

4. INNOCENT INTENTIONS ARE THE PREDICATES FOR PERIL.

Don't carry your identification anywhere near your gun or in a way in which reaching for it could resemble a drawing motion. Keep your hands where the officers can see them at all times — on the wheel at the classic "10 and 2" is a good option. Do not move to retrieve any paperwork until the officers are present and tell you to do so. If the vehicle stop occurs at night, light up the vehicle with the interior lighting as much as you can and explicitly follow every order issued by the officers.

5. SAFETY MUST BECOME THE STANDARD.

Insist on communicating the correct message within your own community when it comes to interactions between the police and lawfully armed citizens. Any tragedy is far better prevented than mourned, and if it's predictable, it's preventable.



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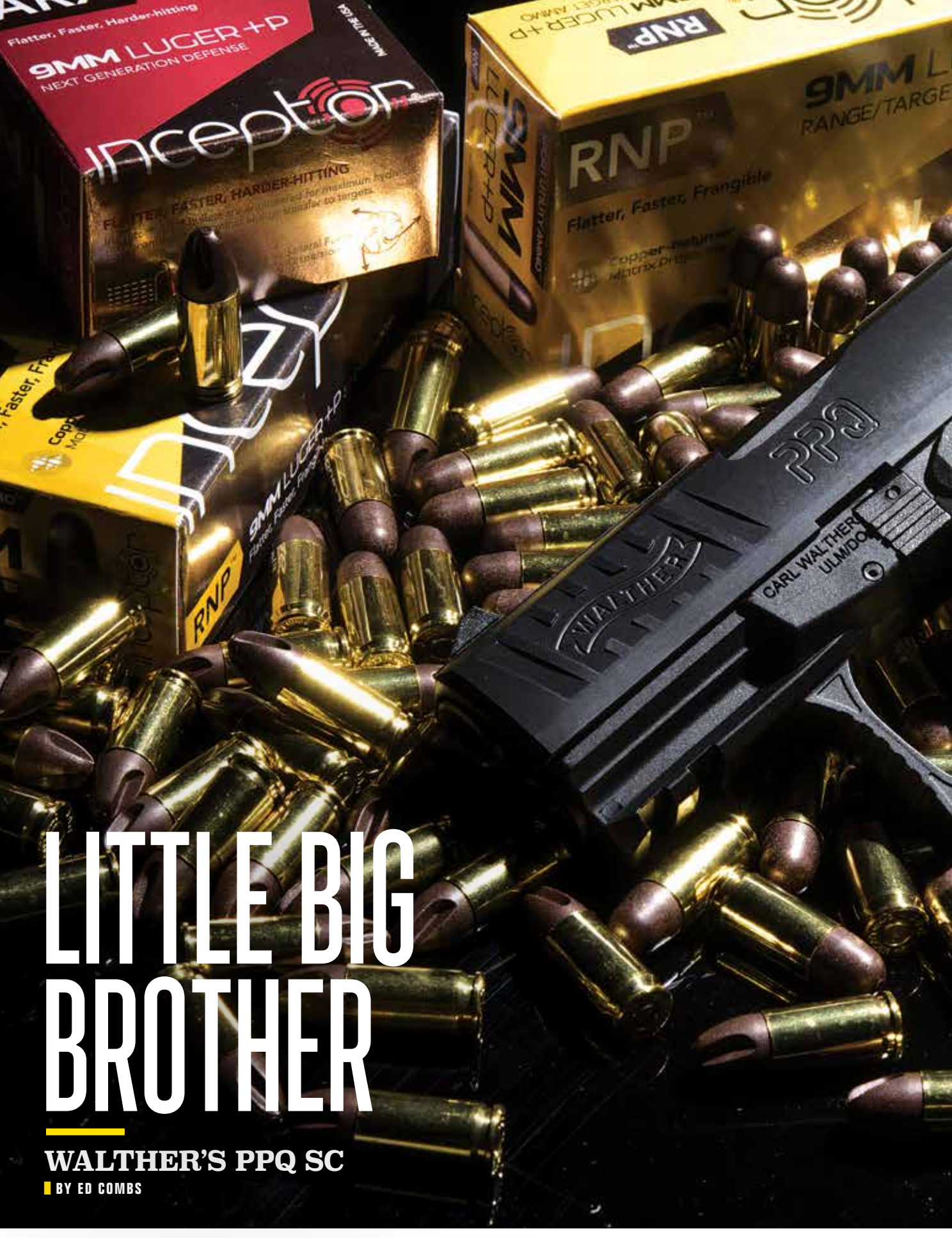
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LITTLE BIG BROTHER

WALTHER'S PPQ SC

BY ED COMBS



■ The PPQ SC and a new line of ammunition from Inceptor made for a hot time in a Utah ghost town.



■ The SC was nimble and reliable, both on the range and in non-traditional (yet more pressing) circumstances.

> **“WALTHER CRASHED INTO THE POLYMER PISTOL WORLD SEVERAL YEARS AGO AND DID MORE THAN STARTLE ITS BIGGEST-NAME COMPETITOR.”**

I recall when the Leatherman Multi-Tool hit the mass market. It was certainly an interesting piece of gear, but what was even more interesting was the speed with which the Swiss Champ on my belt was pretty much rendered obsolete.

I'd never seen anything get hammered that fast; even the electric typewriter was afforded the mercy of the word processor serving as a warning step between total dominance and total annihilation.

The Swiss Army Knife was not afforded such a luxury. When the Leatherman made its way out of tiny 2-by-2-inch advertisements in the back of sportsman's magazines and into catalogs and brick-and-mortar stores, it was game over.

The Leatherman Multi-Tool is the only invention I've ever seen take out another design as quickly and effectively as the polymer-framed pistol took out the revolver in American law enforcement. One day an entity was on top of the world as the global standard for a specific task, and the next it was under total assault by a device no one could have seen coming. Within months, it wasn't necessarily all over, but the writing was etched into the wall with an acetylene torch. Smith & Wesson and Colt would need decades to recover from the damage “plastic guns” inflicted on their bottom lines, and the Swiss Army Knife became more of a nostalgic affectation than a go-to problem-solving device.

Walther crashed into the polymer pistol world several years ago and did more than startle its biggest-name competitor; it forced many in the industry to admit that it had released a pistol that a lot of people found superior to said big-name manufacturer in everything but longevity in the marketplace. The PPQ's trigger was better, the magazines were thinner, the ergonomics were superior and the general experience of shooting one was far more positive for the average woman or man than other ... ahem ... available models of perhaps wider renown in military and law enforcement circles.

All right, as difficult as it is to discuss the Walther PPQ series of pistols without mentioning Glock, I'll do what I can. The original PPQ was heralded as a “Glock Killer,” and though Walther hasn't yet achieved Glock's level of dominance in military and law enforcement, it's made some enormous waves in the market and demanded the respect of casual and competitive shooters nationwide.

There was just one thing missing, though: The PPQ is a “full-sized compact,” meaning about the size of a Glock 19. Those who were looking for a smaller double-stack gun were left with relatively limited options.

Until now.

THE GUN

The feel in hand of the PPQ SC is as you might expect: Picture a PPQ with the grip cut down to just more than 2.5 inch-

es. For someone with sasquatch hands like me, this means that you're going to be firing from what will amount to a one-point-five-finger grip: middle finger wrapped around the grip frame under the trigger guard, half of the ring finger where the mag well meets the magazine baseplate, thumb locked down around the left-side top of the grip and index finger occupied either up on the slide or down on the trigger. The sights are of the usual plastic three-dot Walther factory variety, and the magazines are available with pinky-rest baseplates that actually shake out to be more along the lines of ring-finger-rest baseplates for those with larger paws.

Like all others in the PPQ line, one of the finest features of this pistol is the trigger. It's got a .4-inch travel, which makes for a very consistent and predictable shot, and the reset is 1/10 of an inch, which does wonders for the kind of extremely fast shooting that self-defense often requires. While a Glock trigger — which, don't get me wrong, I adore — clicks, the trigger on the PPQ almost seems more like a very light, crisp snap.

As is becoming more common in the polymer-pistol market, the PPQ SC ships with a pair of interchangeable back straps, sized medium and large, which can solve a great deal of the issues suffered by shooters with larger or smaller hands. Similarly, the PPQ SC's magazine release can be easily swapped from the left to the right side of the frame. As on the original and Gen 2 PPQs, the slide lock/slide release is long and, for lack of a better term, gentle; for shooters who elect to use the lever as a release rather than simply a stop, this makes for a far more pleasant experience.

A pair of magazines ships with the pistol: a flush-fit 10-rounder, and a 15-rounder with a slip-on grip extension, bringing the overall grip profile back up to about the size of the regular PPQ. Though I will caution you to train with your pistol like you'll carry it, a longer grip and a heftier payload in the mag well is an awfully nice touch for open carry, home defense and situations that allow you to conceal a firearm with a larger profile. That 15-rounder also makes an outstanding extra EDC mag, especially in an IWB carrier.

Clinger Holsters supplied the gun-leather from which we were drawing these pistols, and I would definitely encourage you to peruse their selection if you're in the market for a new IWB or OWB rig. The seams were tight, the holsters held the pistols snugly and I don't recall any of the other nine gun writers with whom I put this pistol through its paces experiencing any issues serious enough for me to hear about.

SPECIFICATIONS

WALTHER PPQ SC

CALIBER: 9MM
BARREL LENGTH: 3.5 INCHES
OVERALL LENGTH: 5.4 INCHES
HEIGHT: 4.4 INCHES
WIDTH: 1.3 INCHES
WEIGHT: 21.2 OUNCES
TRIGGER PULL: 5.6 POUNDS
MSRP: $649



■ The PPQ SC ships with a pair of magazines: a flush-fit 10-rounder and an extended 15-rounder. Shown here actual size, the difference they can make is substantial.

THE AMMO

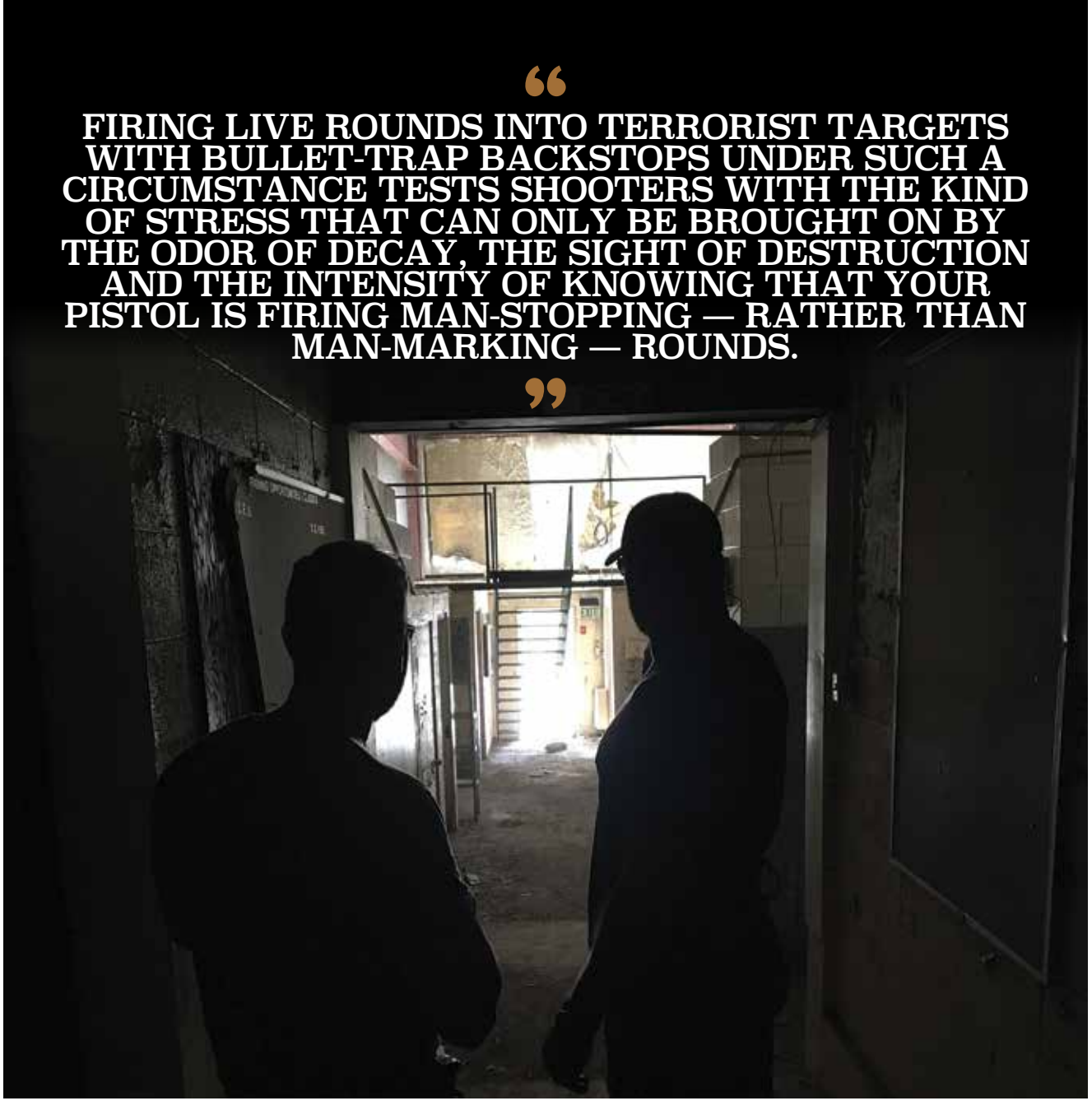
A new pistol calls for new ammunition, and that was handled courtesy of Inceptor, which provided a staggering quantity of 9mm +P Preferred Defense as well as their new "Sport Utility" cartridges.

The Preferred Defense sends a 65-grain copper-polymer projectile at a blistering 1,545 feet per second, delivering 345 foot-pounds of energy at the muzzle. The projectile nose, which immediately reminds most shooters of a curved Phillips-head screwdriver bit, performs extremely well in ballistic gel-block testing, driving deep into the blocks and creating large temporary wound channels designed to mimic the hydraulic displacement of rounds like the .357 Magnum.

The "Sport-Utility" RNP (round-nose projectile) rounds are also copper-polymer and are designed for target use. While any number of ammo manufacturers can claim that their target rounds are "designed for target use," the main benefit of these units (apart from the fact that they had a tendency to go exactly where I and the rest of the gun writers in attendance asked them to) is that they can be fired at steel plate targets from short distances without endangering the shooter or bystanders.

Both varieties are lead-free bullets atop reloadable brass cases, and if you're interested in giving them a shot, they're available in what's called the "Inceptor Combo Pack" — two boxes

> FIRING LIVE ROUNDS INTO TERRORIST TARGETS WITH BULLET-TRAP BACKSTOPS UNDER SUCH A CIRCUMSTANCE TESTS SHOOTERS WITH THE KIND OF STRESS THAT CAN ONLY BE BROUGHT ON BY THE ODOR OF DECAY, THE SIGHT OF DESTRUCTION AND THE INTENSITY OF KNOWING THAT YOUR PISTOL IS FIRING MAN-STOPPING — RATHER THAN MAN-MARKING — ROUNDS.



(100 rounds) of the RNP and a 20-round box of the Preferred Defense Inceptors bundled together and ready for the range.

As controversial a topic as these new entrants to the ammo wars are, I found both varieties to be 100 percent reliable in the PPQ SCs and Q4 TACs we were testing. I am unaware of any malfunctions — gun- or ammo-related — during the several days of shooting, which is admirable by anyone's measure. The projectiles and powder left the bores on the pistols almost clean; there was no copper fouling, no errant unburned powder or any of the other detritus left behind by lesser cartridges. This extended through the frame and mag well, and though it was clear that something had been happening in there, I wouldn't call the guns dirty by any stretch of the imagination, even after hours of dedicated shooting.

THE TRIP

Walther and Inceptor invited the aforementioned other gun writers and I out to the small town of Hiawatha, Utah, to test these guns and ammunition. Hiawatha is actually beyond a small town ... it's a real-deal ghost town, a relic of the coal-mining boom in The Beehive State that lasted from the turn of the last century off and on into the 1970s.

A pair of representatives from Deliberate Dynamics, a tactical instruction firm, met us at the parts of Hiawatha that hadn't dried up and blown away. Our instructors, who I will refrain from naming out of concern for their continued overseas employment, taught a fine set of instructional sessions over the next few days. As they had no idea who might be showing up to write about these new pistols, they began with basic pistol instruction: operation, firing and remediation, and safely drawing from the holster. (Just for the record, the USCCA, *Guns & Ammo, Recoil, Shooting Illustrated* and the other firms represented don't send newbies to media events, but, as an instructor, I can't blame these two men for





■ The PPQ SC proved itself in the daylight and in the darkness, both in an abandoned mine office complex (left and above) and in an abandoned residence (below, shown in daylight).

wanting to know for sure.)

After they were confident in their students' skill levels, we moved on to firing past, under and around vehicles, tactical movement alone and in teams, building-clearing and even a few nighttime sessions: one live-fire on the range, to acclimate the uninitiated to tactical flashlight use while shooting one-handed, and one cold in a dilapidated building that only appeared marginally safe to enter (though I'm no building inspector). Like the long-abandoned mine office complex we'd cleared earlier in the day, it was the kind of experience that would be difficult to replicate elsewhere. It's tough to mock up the bizarrely narrow staircases, seemingly random and sometimes missing windows and doors, oppressive darkness and knowledge that a fall down (or through) the flight of stairs you saw the last time you popped your light could actually kill you.

Though I joke about the desolation and deterioration of Hiawatha, I want to stress that as a training resource, it is without equal. It's one thing to go through someone's shoot house that was purpose-built two or three years ago out of OSB and furniture sourced from the local curbs and thrift stores. It's another to go through an office complex connected to a maze of locker rooms designed and built 50 years ago that's been allowed to fall into an eerie, silt-covered state of disrepair. Firing live rounds into terrorist targets with bullet-trap backstops under such a circumstance tests shooters with the kind of stress that can only be brought on by the odor of decay, the sight of destruction and the intensity of knowing that your pistol is firing man-stopping — rather than man-marking — rounds.

CLEAR COMFORT

The battery of assessments through which I put the PPQ SC and Inceptor ammunition left me with no reason not to carry either. The pistol is quick on target, ultimately reliable, of extremely high quality and comfortable to carry and fire. The ammunition burns clean as oak and paired well with all of the pistols in attendance, never, to my knowledge, turning in a failure to feed, fire or eject. Especially considering how these items are offered for sale — an easily concealed subcompact with multiple back strap options and magazines, and a perfect trial-sized option for truly 21st-century ammo — it's hard to find fault with anything I saw.

The assessment portion of the trip wound down with a dueling tree tournament and some informal plinking between the writers and instructors. It was pleasant; the field notes were all complete and what we were left with as the sun began to fall was the general fellowship present whenever a dozen or so newfound friends are kicking back with a little leisure shooting. We were all relaxed; everything had gone well. If everything doesn't go well after the rounds are in the guns on a trip like that, it can make for some awkward phone calls after the magazines hit mailboxes.

No, we were relaxed. We were going to be able to write about the PPQ SC and the Preferred Defense as confidently as we would be able to carry them.

SOURCES

Walther Arms: WaltherArms.com
Clinger Holsters: ClingerHolsters.com
Inceptor Ammo: InceptorAmmo.com
Deliberate Dynamics: DeliberateDynamics.com



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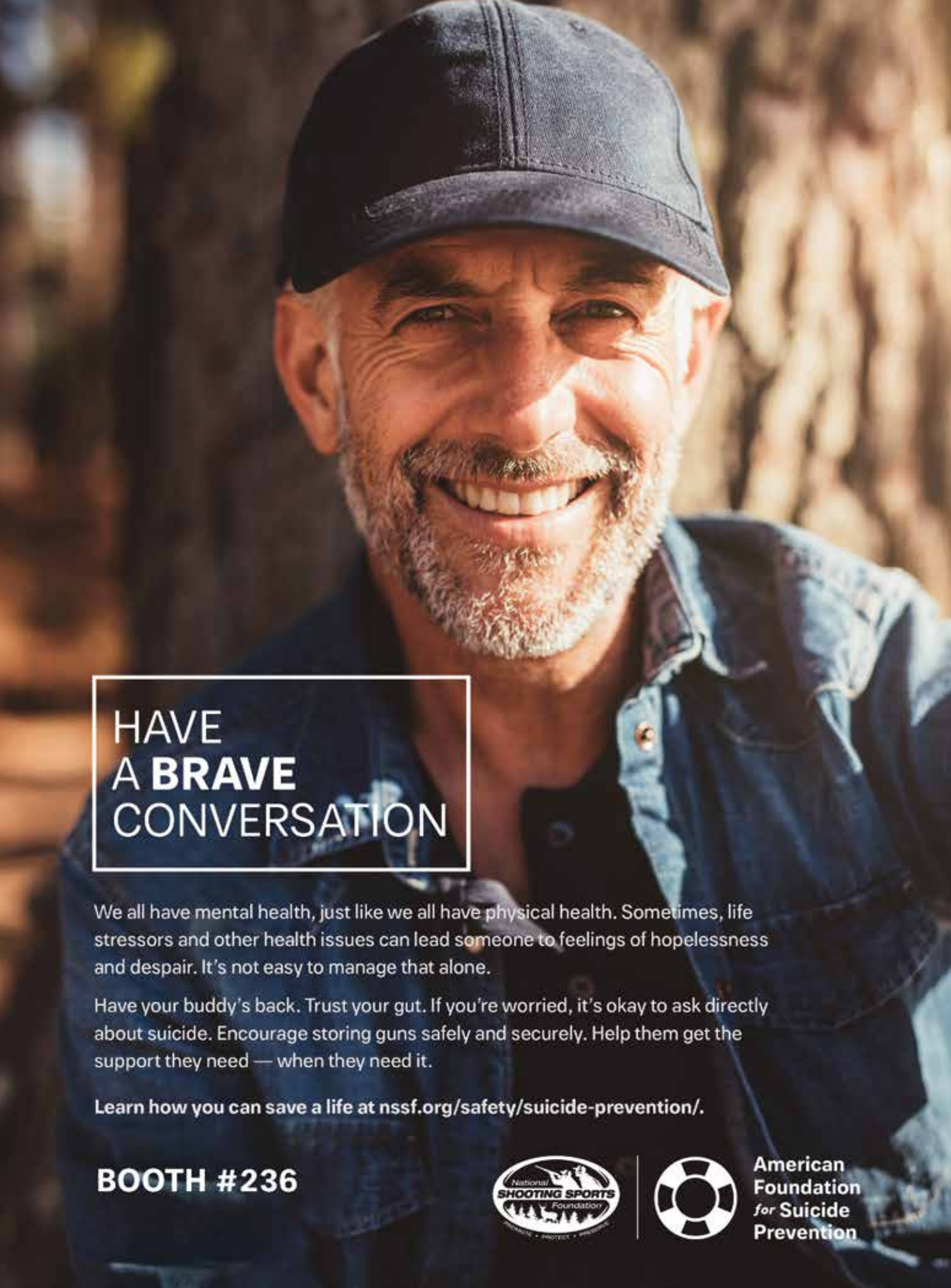
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■ The Ruger LCR is available in half a dozen different chamberings, which raises an interesting question: Of the most common, which is tops in attack-stopping performance?



A RUGER SHOWDOWN

LCR EXAMINATION

BY SCOTT W. WAGNER

As a writer, it is always a great privilege to respond to a reader's question — especially when it's one that many other readers have likely wondered about as well.

Reader Kirk C. asked our editors the following question: "What would be the differences in velocity, accuracy and speed of shooting between Ruger LCRs chambered in .38 Special, 9mm and .357 Magnum?"

That's an excellent question, and one that required plenty of hands-on shooting in order to come up with an objective answer.

THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD

Valid experimentation has several components to it. First, the results must be repeatable by any individual using the same methods and standards. Anyone remember the "discovery" of cold fusion by two "nuclear scientists" in 1989? That announcement set the world on fire. The discovery of cold fusion would eventually mean nuclear reactors that could supply unlimited cheap energy the world over without radioactive waste. However, when other scientists tried to replicate the experiments conducted by the two scientists (Fleischmann and Pons), they found they could not achieve the results that were reported. Basically, the research was fraudulent.

Second, experiments should compare similar components — apples-to-apples, if you will — whenever possible.

Third, an experiment should produce some surprising or unexpected results — otherwise, why bother conducting an experiment in the first place? So, let's see if my methodology covered all the bases.

In order to answer the reader's question, we obviously had to use LCR pistols — three of them. I could have used only a .357 LCR (which can fire both the .38 Special and .357 Magnum loads) for the tests, but I didn't, because there exist some differences in weight and balance between the .38 Special and .357 Magnum models. The .38 Special LCR weighs only 13.5 ounces, while the .357 Magnum version weighs 17.1, so testing the .38s out of the heavier .357 Magnum would not be an accurate comparison. Our reader wanted to know the difference between the revolvers in terms of how they feel when fired.

Atop that, the experiment would not have been a fair comparison had different brands of ammo using different bullet designs been used. For the test-firing, I used SIG Sauer V-Crown defensive JHP ammo in nearly identical bullet weights: 125 grains in .38 Special +P, 124 grains in 9mm and 125 grains in .357 Magnum. Apples to apples!

I made sure I did the velocity testing over my chronograph on the same day, within the span of an hour. Different temperatures and humidity can give slightly different velocity measurements. For the ballistic impact testing, I used, as always, 25-pound blocks of moist modeling clay purchased from Hobby Lobby.



The use of modeling clay as a ballistic test medium makes it easy for anyone to repeat the results I observed. Plus, modeling clay has several advantages over ballistic gelatin.

First, modeling clay is cheap at about $23 for a 25-pound block. Ballistic gelatin is much more expensive. (A block of reusable PERMAGEL from Midway USA sells for $229.99.) Second, clay is convenient to work with: Simply remove it from the box and unwrap the plastic. After you shoot it and do your measurements, throw it away (or maybe sculpt something). Third, the visible results are much more impressive in terms of the cavity that is made. Remember to only compare your shooting results clay-to-clay and not to ballistic gelatin and that neither substance is the same as actual human tissue.

Finally, standard gelatin-based ballistic gel needs to be kept at 55 degrees until it's shot, and I don't know of any human body that needs to be shot when its temperature has dropped to 55 degrees. Ballistic gelatin and modeling clay are also homogenous throughout, unlike the human body. All test shots at the clay blocks were fired 15 feet from the muzzle.

THE .38 SPECIAL

I started my test-firing with the .38 Special +P LCR, already knowing from previous tests with the SIG Sauer loads and years of work with the .38 Special cartridge that this version would do two things. First, it would be the lowest-powered of the three versions of the LCR. Second, it would be the most controllable and pleasant to shoot. According to SIG's published ballistics, its .38 Special load produces 900 feet per second

> "THE PERFORMANCE OF THE 9MM LCR WAS THE ONE THAT PRODUCED SOME SURPRISING AND UNEXPECTED RESULTS."

> AS PREDICTED, THE .38 SPECIAL LCR WAS THE MOST CONTROLLABLE OF THE THREE VERSIONS TESTED.

muzzle velocity and 258 foot-pounds of muzzle energy — likely from a 4-inch barrel. My chronograph results from the 1.87-inch barrel of the LCR averaged 833 feet per second and 193 foot-pounds, a reasonable reduction from the published ballistics. Yet, that is still an adequate level of kinetic energy for use as a defensive handgun.

As predicted, the .38 Special LCR was the most controllable of the three versions tested. Blast was low compared to the other models, as was recoil. I was able to fire the tightest groups with the .38, the best of which measured five shots in 1.5 inches at 21 feet.

The clay block turned out the same as it had in a previous test of SIG Sauer .38 ammo — remember that part about repeatable results? The 125-grain .38 Special bullet penetrated the 10-inch-long block of clay, fragmenting some as it passed. Clay is courser than gelatin and tears up the jacketing material around the bullet core. The widest portion of the cavity that was created measured 3.25 inches and narrowed to an inch beyond 6 inches of depth. This certainly represents significant trauma upon entry for a bullet in this weight and velocity range.

THE 9MM

The performance of the 9mm LCR was the one that produced some surprising results, as the performance was more than I expected. What I expected was performance that mimicked that of the .38 Special, but what I found instead was performance that more closely mimicked that of the .357 Magnum.

First a word about the LCR 9 and its operational differences from that of the LCR in .38 Special or .357 Magnum: The 9mm cartridge case was designed for easy operation in a semi-automatic firearm and, as such, is a "rimless" design. It will not engage a revolver's ejector star, thus making normal case retention and ejection difficult (if not impossible). On the other hand, the .38 Special and .357 Magnum are rimmed cartridges, designed to engage the extractor star of a revolver cylinder so that the cartridge cases stay in place



and eject as desired.

Like a number of other revolver manufacturers have in the past, Ruger overcomes the rimless cartridge issue by the use of steel moon clips, which were originally developed for use in WWI-era Model 1917 revolvers made by Colt and Smith & Wesson. Full or half-moon clips work by locking into the rimless cartridge case, holding, in this case, five cartridges. When inserted as a unit, this allows the extractor star to engage the moon clip and eject the cartridge cases and clip as a unit. Reloading a 9mm or .45 ACP revolver with a moon clip is faster than using a traditional speedloader, since nothing needs to be discarded when reloading, which has to happen when using a speedloader. In short, moon clip reloads are extremely fast with practice. The LCR 9 shipped with three moon clips, but if you buy any revolver that operates this way, it's worthwhile to order more to keep on hand.

The Ruger LCR 9 produced velocities within 30 feet per second of the .357 Magnum loads, which was, quite frankly, startling. The 124-grain SIG Sauer V-Crown 9mm is factory rated at 1,165 feet per second and 374 foot-pounds at the muzzle. Even out of the 1.87-inch barrel, the average velocity was 1,102 feet per second with 334 foot-pounds at the muzzle. That's cooking!

Of course, when you step muzzle energy up by 141 foot-pounds at the receiving end, you also step it up at the shooting end. Recoil and blast were noticeably sharper with the 9mm than with the .38 LCR — not uncontrollable, but sharper — and my best two-handed, 21-foot group measured 2 inches in diameter.

Although prevailing wisdom, including mine before this test, was that the .38 and the 9mm are generally equivalent rounds when firing equivalent bullet weights, they aren't. The 9mm cartridge fired from a snub revolver is much more of a powerhouse than previously thought.

The shot into the modeling clay graphically showed the step up in power. While the 9mm slug did not exit the 10-inch block, it made a 4.5-inch-diameter maximum cavity, narrowing down to 2 inches, which clearly surpassed the performance of the .38 Special load.

THE .357 MAGNUM

The .357 Magnum LCR is a different beast altogether. The model I got for testing was actually the LCRx — "x" indicating an exposed hammer spur — which can be thumb-cocked for single-action fire. I was actually happy to have the exposed spur, and if I were purchasing an LCR in .357 Magnum, it would be the "x" model.

I remember when the first compact snub-nosed .357 Magnum revolvers hit the market, among them the Ruger SP101. The gun writers, at the time, described the pain involved in shooting them, and the Ruger and Smith & Wesson versions were heavyweight, all-steel revolvers, with the SP101 weighing in at 26 ounces, nine more than the LCRx. With these thoughts still bouncing around in my head some 25 years later, I approached the test of the .357 LCR with a bit of trepidation.

The SIG 125-grain V-Crown load is factory rated at 1,450 feet per second with 583 foot-pounds at the muzzle (again, likely from a 4-inch barrel). A good .357 load, like the V-Crown, is truly one of the major "man-stopper" loads out there chambered in conventional handguns. Naturally, with a muzzle velocity factory-rated at 283 more feet per second than the 124-grain 9mm load, I expected the same difference when fired from the LCRx — since the barrels were the same length. In another nod to proper experimentation procedures, my conjecture was wrong and, again, I was surprised.

Muzzle velocity of the 125-grain V-Crown .357 Magnum averaged only 1,163 feet per second, which churned up 375 foot-pounds — a gain of only 61 feet per second and 41 foot-pounds over the 124-grain 9mm.

The recoil and especially the muzzle blast of the .357 Magnum V-Crowns were much more significant than with the 9mm variant, even with such a small velocity difference between the two rounds (but not as bad as the aforementioned previous generation of gun writers had described). It was controllable, but the .357 LCRx loaded with .357 Magnum cartridges is not the gun I'd want to take through our department's 50-round qualification course of fire. I could do it, but I sure wouldn't enjoy it, nor would I score as well as I would with the 9mm or .38 Special models. My best five-shot group with the .357 at 21 feet measured 3 inches in diameter, and between-shot recovery was slower.

Interestingly, the modeling clay shot with the .357 LCRx did indicate more kinetic energy striking it than the clay shot with the 9mm. To ensure a direct center-shot with the .357, I took advantage of the single-action cocking feature. The .357 round hit the block and created an entrance hole almost 2 inches in diameter, likely due to the broader flat face of the .357 bullet over the more pointed

> "THE LCR .38 SPECIAL +P REVOLVER IS A GREAT CHOICE FOR THOSE WHO ARE SENSITIVE TO RECOIL AND WHO WANT TO CONSISTENTLY SHOOT THE TIGHTEST GROUPS POSSIBLE."

shape of the 9mm. Chunks of clay splatter blew back on me, and I later found a 2-inch piece in the back of the SUV I'd left open during firing. The .357 created a 5-inch-diameter maximum cavity, which narrowed to 2 inches before the projectile exited the block. While sectioning the block, I noticed numerous bullet fragments.

FINAL CONCLUSIONS

So, here's what I found for our esteemed reader: The LCR .38 Special +P revolver is a great choice for those who are sensitive to recoil and who want to consistently shoot the tightest groups possible. Because recoil is lower, faster follow-up shots are a certainty when compared to the other options.

The .357 Magnum LCRx offers the most versatility but also the most recoil. It can fire .38 Special rounds and most .357 Magnum loads, but don't run 158- or 180-grain hunting loads designed for heavy handguns or carbines through it. The recoil makes shot-to-shot recovery time the slowest of the three options, and extensive practice time with .357 Magnum ammo is unlikely. Still, an LCRx loaded with .357 Magnum cartridges would make a fine all-day-carry trail gun in dangerous animal territory and could be downgraded to .38s for standard day-to-day self-defense situations. If I could only own one handgun, it would be a .357 Magnum revolver, but the .357 Magnum LCRx is not my prime choice of Ruger LCR for self-defense. Based on this battery of tests, my prime choice is — another surprise — the LCR in 9mm.

The 9mm LCR was the best specimen in terms of accuracy, power, controllability and between-shot recovery. SIG now offers 115-grain V-Crown 9mm, which should reduce recoil a bit more over the 124-grain load. Further, the LCR 9 offers a speedloading advantage with its moon clip system. It could, in an emergency, still be fired without moon clips, but unloading and reloading without moon clips would be very slow. Even better, cheap 9mm FMJ practice ammo is available at prices normally not encountered for .38 Special ammo. All told, it's a great defensive handgun choice.

Thanks to our reader for asking a great question. I learned something new.

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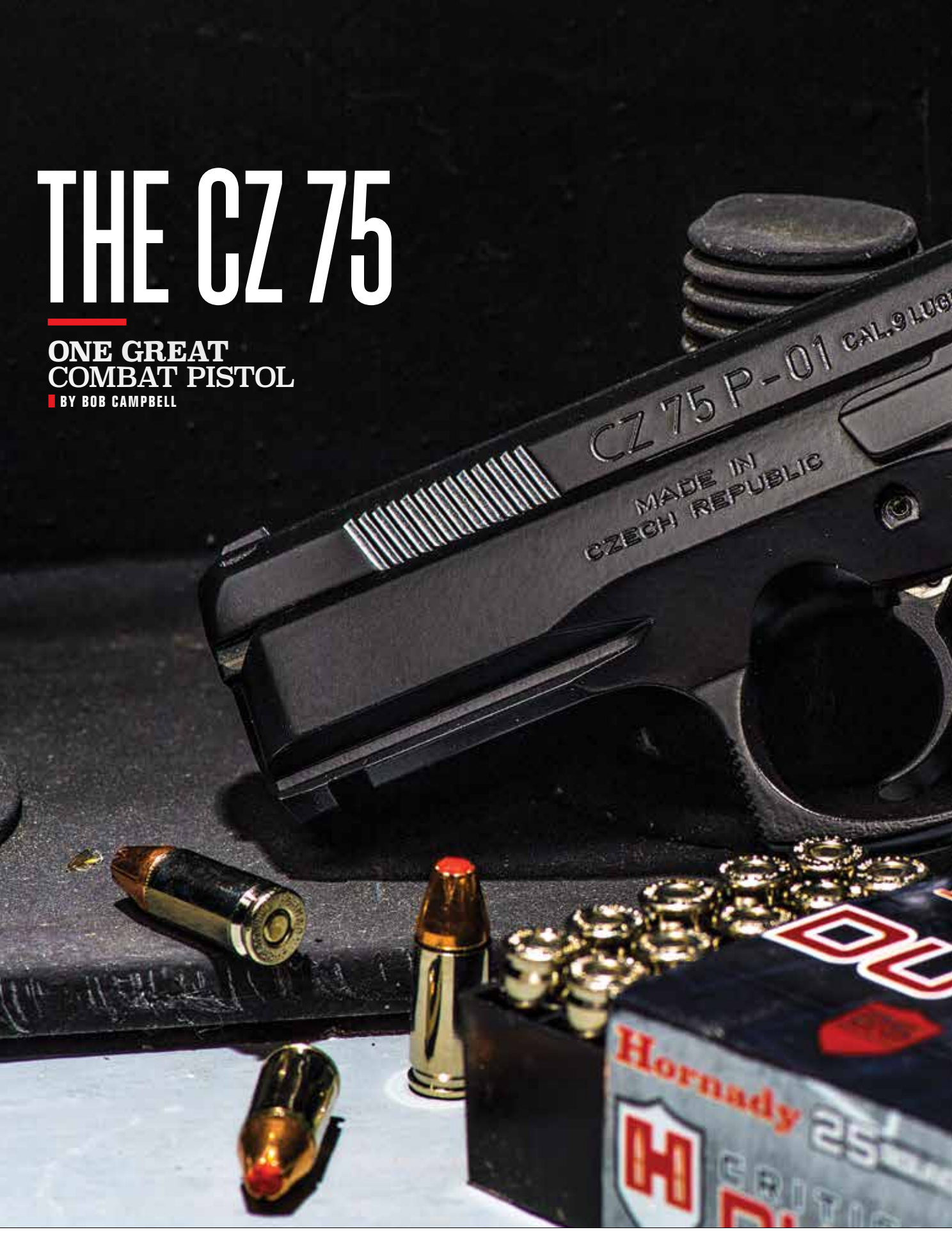




THE CZ 75

ONE GREAT COMBAT PISTOL

BY BOB CAMPBELL





■ It can be difficult to explain to some shooters that the CZ 75 pistol is the most famous, most-copied gun of which they've never heard.



> AN ATTACKER AT 100 YARDS WOULD BE WELL ADVISED TO TAKE COVER IF HIS INTENDED VICTIM'S GOT A 75 AND A BRACED FIRING POSITION.

Conventional wisdom states that collecting, hunting and target shooting are good reasons for owning a handgun. I agree, but the primary purpose of a handgun is personal defense. By extension, the defense of soldiers in combat and civilians in times of unrest is also important. The CZ 75 pistol — and its variants — is among the most reliable, efficient and capable of all personal-defense handguns, yet it remains affordable. I suspect this modest price is confused with modest value, but this isn't the case. The CZ 75 is among the most valuable personal-defense pistols in the world, more so than many that cost considerably more and offer less performance.

HISTORY LESSON

The CZ 75 was designed in the 1970s in the Czech Republic. It was intended as a military pistol and was used by not only Czech military and police units but certain Soviet units as well. The handgun was not readily available in the West until the fall of the Berlin Wall and, as such, the first CZ 75-type handguns seen in America were copies. These handguns varied in quality from poor to good, but none equaled the performance of the original.

At a time when the 7.62x25mm Tokarev was a front-line pistol in the Soviet Bloc and the Makarov 9x18mm was a military standard, the CZ 75 was chambered for the 9mm Luger cartridge. The pistol was designed primarily by Josef and Frantisek Koucky and, by a quirk of the Soviet system, was not exported — nor was it protected by foreign patents. When the Berlin Wall (and along with it the Soviet Union) fell, the new government in Czechoslovakia was quick to let industry search for hard cash.

The West found a handgun that was different from the rugged but mostly uninteresting Soviet fare. Some did not understand the innovative engineering of the CZ 75 and labeled it a double-action, Hi-Power-type pistol, when, in fact, it is far more similar to the French Petter pistols and the Swiss-German SIG P210. The CZ features a double-column magazine, true, but the 15-round CZ 75 magazine was no more Browning-like than the Beretta 92 or SIG P226 9mm that came a little later. The CZ 75 featured a double-action trigger with an internal drawbar, which is mechanically superior to the external drawbar of the Walther P38 and the Beretta 92.

SPEC SHEET

The CZ 75's slide runs inside of the frame. This arrangement gives good contact between the long bearing surfaces and promotes accuracy but also results in a lower bore axis than other double-action pistols. As a result, the CZ 75 has less muzzle rise than most, and recoil is straight to the rear. Cocking serrations are adequate, but some shooters find the low-riding CZ's slide more difficult to rack. The original CZ was all steel, while the Beretta 92 and SIG P226 feature aluminum frames. Like most modern pistols, the CZ uses the Browning locked-breech design and unlocks via angled camming surfaces.

The 75's a double-action first shot. After the trigger both cocks and drops the hammer, the slide recoils and cocks the hammer for subsequent single-action fire. The double-action trigger is long and smooth, and it is recommended that models with decockers be carried chamber-loaded and decocked. However, since the pistol uses an action termed "selective double-action," the pistol in its original form may be carried cocked and chambered, with the hammer to the rear and the safety on. The manual safety may not be engaged when the hammer is in the down position, though some clones differ.

On a traditional model without a decocker, if the shooter wants to avoid walking around with a cocked gun, he must press the trigger — slowly — while deliberately lowering the hammer. (Like the 1911, if a CZ is not fitted with a decocker and is fitted with a frame safety, that means it is to be carried cocked, loaded and on safe.)

The CZ 75 is a pistol long on the tactical rather than the technical. I am certain the intent of the manual safety is to allow the pistol to be placed on safe after the first and subsequent shots have been fired and that the pistol can be made safe in this fashion for tactical movement. The double-action trigger press of the CZ 75 is smooth; my original CZ 75 is perhaps the smoothest double-action trigger I have used. The single-action trigger typically breaks at 4.5 pounds, with the modest backlash common to the type.

The CZ 75 sights are prime examples of combat sights: They're dovetailed in the rear and nicely pinned in place in the front. The extractor is rugged and seems never to need replacement. The ejection port is generous and the mag-

azine release positive in operation. The S-curved grip fits most hands well but is not adjustable in the back strap as many modern polymer-framed pistols are.

The CZ 75B was introduced as a result of market pressure. After SIG introduced the positive firing pin block in the SIG P220, competing designs had to integrate the same drop safety. The "B" was changed in detail, with the hammer now a rowel type. The original painted-on finish was rugged but less than attractive, so matte- and bright-blue finishes replaced the original. Magazines were also changed (despite the fact that the original takes a specific CZ 75 box). Even after the changes, the CZ 75B is a true combat gun with proven reliability and excellent field ability.

ON THE RANGE

I think it's fair to say that modern-production 75-pattern pistols are tighter and more accurate than the originals. That said, the pistol evaluated here is an original with lacquer finish and smaller sights than the newest handguns, and I often carry it in a Wright Leather Works IWB and feel well-protected. It's fast from leather, with the proper tilt in the holster, and it's fast on target and easily controlled.

My usual practice load is a Magnus hard-cast lead bullet over Hodgdon Titegroup powder. The CZ 75 is accurate with lead bullets, which allows economical practice. The smooth double-action trigger is useful to 10 yards or so and allows center hits on-demand for anyone who trains. In single-action mode, the pistol is controllable and offers good hit potential well past 25 yards; an attacker at 100 yards would be well advised to take cover if his intended victim's got a 75 and a braced firing position.

With a service load, such as the Black Hills Ammunition 124-grain +P, the pistol will group five shots into less than 3 inches at 25 yards. Some years ago, using this load and with my back braced against the wall at the Police Club, I fired a 4-inch, 50-yard group with a nickel CZ 75B, so don't let anyone tell you it's an inaccurate platform. The CZ 75 handles +P and NATO standard loads without fail. In short, this is among the most capable 9mm handguns in the world.

VARIANTS

The CZ 85 is a more modern version with an ambidextrous safety. Modern CZ 75s are available with frame rails for combat lights and can ship with night sights as well.

Compact versions of the CZ 75 pistol are also available. CZ's P-01 was developed as a lighter alternative to the full-sized pistol for police work, and it features a frame-mounted decocking button, which makes it among the most desirable of all CZ pistols. It's built on a monolithic frame that houses a light rail and, in competent hands, it is as accurate as the full-sized 75 and as controllable on the combat range. It will also take full-sized CZ 75B magazines.

Another handgun I appreciate very much but carry little is the CZ 2075 RAMI. This pistol sports a redesigned slide that is easier to rack than earlier compacts and is short, light and easily carried. Recoil isn't a factor with a 9mm CZ, but you'll need to stay on top of the sight picture and sight alignment with such a short sight radius. The pistol is tractable and, with attention to detail, quite accurate. I carry the Black Hills Ammunition 115-grain EXP in this pistol and, at 25 yards, it will group five shots into 3.5 inches if I do my part. The pistol is fast from leather and, though I'd never kid you that this pistol is as fast on target or as combat-capable as the larger CZ handguns, when compared to the snub-nosed .38 or most subcompact 9mm pistols, the RAMI is leagues ahead.

It took the CZ 75 less than 30 years to become a classic. The pistol is reliable above all else, fits most hands well and gives the trained shooter an advantage. That is all we may ask.

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THE ESSENTIALS OF HANDLING A HANDGUN

START AT THE BEGINNING

■ AS AN INSTRUCTOR, establishing some common ground with your students through effective communication is of paramount importance in conducting effective training. It may sound overly basic, but almost all problems experienced in firearms instruction can be traced back to a failure to do so.

SAFETY

The objective is to ensure that a student, prior to touching or handling a gun, understands the terms we use and what specifically is being addressed. Nomenclature — the names of the parts or areas of a firearm — is essential to the safe handling and operation of a gun.

The muzzle should be addressed first, because that's where the bullet exits the gun. Therefore, it should be emphasized that muzzle direction must be given constant attention. This attention will lead to the safe handling of the firearm, as well as the highly sought-after goal of hitting the target.

The trigger follows closely behind the muzzle, because it is the mechanism that causes the bullet to exit the muzzle. The gun won't fire without a pulling of the trigger, meaning fingers and other objects should be kept clear of the trigger until the student consciously intends to fire the gun.

The second part of the equation of handling a firearm (following, of course, safety) is hitting the target. All this re-



quires is moving the trigger to the point of discharge without moving the muzzle off of the target. Just these two things will allow the student to enjoy safety and success in a relatively short period of time, but there are other important considerations regarding the handling of a pistol or revolver of which that student must be aware.

OPERATING THE GUN

We teach that the gun should be verified clear and empty — visually and physically — when the student is first introduced to a firearm. Here, the student needs to know how to remove the source of ammunition and open the action for inspection or, in the case of a revolver, open the action first and then remove the ammunition.

Releasing the magazine or opening the cylinder rarely poses a problem for the student, but locking the slide open on a semi-automatic pistol can be challenging. Unquestionably, it is a necessary skill a student must master in order to safely unload the gun and verify it clear and empty. There are multiple techniques to accomplish this feat — both right-handed and left-handed — which the properly prepared instructor should know and be able to demonstrate.

Should the student not have the physical skills to unload and perform a visual and physical safety check of the firearm with which he or she is working, it is likely time to switch to a gun he or she can operate properly. Never forget that safety is not negotiable when handling firearms.

It is essential that the student be able to manipulate the buttons and operating levers on a handgun — magazine releases, manual safeties and decocking levers — in the manner in which they are intended to be used. A case in point that we see more than we would like is a student with a single-action pistol equipped with a thumb safety so stiff or small that it requires two hands to disengage and re-engage. This won't work for a person intending to use the gun for defensive purposes. Successful one-handed operation of a handgun in manipulation and shooting should be an early goal of a student, particularly if his or her aspirations extend beyond recreational shooting.

LOADING AND UNLOADING

The ability to properly and effectively load magazines is essential to handling a semi-automatic pistol. While techniques to partially load a magazine are relatively simple, loading a magazine to full capacity can be a challenging task. Fortunately, there are loading devices on the market that aid a shooter in doing so. Nevertheless, a student should strive to fully load magazines on demand, just in case he or she doesn't have access to an aid. An expanded-capacity handgun doesn't fulfill its role without a full complement of ammunition.

For a student who is unable to lock the slide open easily or at all, manipulate the operating levers or load magazines, the revolver might be the best option. A revolver is simple to operate and as safe to handle as any firearm. The only real downside is a cartridge capacity somewhat lower than most pistols.

Putting the gun into operation — loading the gun so it's ready to fire — is another essential handling feature that a shooter must understand and accomplish with little difficulty. The sequence of verifying the gun's status prior to loading, executing the loading procedure and topping off the magazine is essential to maximizing the carrying potential of the semi-automatic pistol; the added benefit of "topping off" reinforces the knowledge that there's a round in the chamber.

Unloading mimics the actions of performing a visual and physical check by removing the magazine first, then locking the slide to the rear to inspect the chamber, magazine well and breech face for ammunition. Since the gun was loaded, the shooter should watch for the round that was in the chamber to be extracted and ejected from the pistol.

STARTING POINT

The bare essentials of handling a firearm start with safety, putting the gun into operation, taking it out of operation and verifying it as safe. These essentials are necessary prior to learning to perform field-strip maintenance, reloads, immediate-action drills and working from a holster as the student becomes more proficient with his or her firearms and equipment.

As an instructor, take these perspectives and add your own flavor as the situation and class dictate. With the above as a guide, you and your students should find safety and success.

INTRODUCING LT. DAN MARCOU

Carry Concealed Magazine is excited to introduce our newest writer, Lt. Dan Marcou. A retired police officer, Marcou spent more than 33 years in full-time law enforcement. He continues to train officers on firearms and defensive tactics, having accumulated more than four decades of experience as a trainer. Marcou has written four highly acclaimed law enforcement novels and one non-fiction book — *The Calling: The Making of a Veteran Cop, SWAT Blue Knights in Black Armor, Nobody's Heroes, Destiny of Heroes* and *Law Dogs: Great Cops in American History.* "Lt. Dan" is also a featured columnist for PoliceOne.com.

In "Hands On," Marcou will share one hand-to-hand self-defense skill in each issue. He hopes that *Concealed Carry Magazine* readers will learn these skills and practice them in case they ever find bodily harm — or even death — at their doorsteps while law enforcement is miles away.



THE POWER PIVOT

MAKE YOUR ATTACKER MISS

IN MANY CASES where an innocent person's life is taken by a murderer, the victim did one of two things: He or she panicked — freezing and actually doing nothing at all — or fought back ineffectively. Since those of you reading this have no intention of doing either, I would like to share a tool with you that, when properly applied in a sudden assault, can help you survive. This tool can be used to defend against a bully who would do you harm or a thug who would do you in.

If you're facing a push, punch, kick, club, stab or even gunshot, the best way to avoid each of these assaults is to not be at the point of impact when the impacting force arrives. The military and law enforcement term for this is "getting off the X." We'll call it the "Power Pivot."

SURVIVING AN ASSAULT

As a lifelong defensive tactics trainer, if I was told I could only teach a student one thing to help him or her survive a sudden assault without knowing what the assault was going to be, that one thing would be the Power Pivot. I call it the Power Pivot because it can be used defensively to avoid a variety of violent assaults, but, as training continues, this movement can be incorporated into many other takedowns, throws and empty-hand or controlling techniques. It can also be utilized for shooting, allowing an intended victim to move away from a threat and, if necessary, address it.

The Pivot is best understood if you visualize a *Three Stooges* movie. Remember when the Stooges would attempt to break down a door by lining up in a three-person stack and rushing it? As they reached the door, inevitably, someone would choose that very moment to open it. The Stooges would pass through the door and their momentum would carry them through the room and out the window on the opposite side. To perform the Pivot, you are not the person opening the door. You are the door.

PERFORMING THE PIVOT

The Power Pivot starts with a good stance. Instead of



■ After recognizing that you are, in fact, under attack, the next step is crucial and can stage the rest of the fight in your favor. If you can spot an attack coming before it's reached you, reacting in the proper fashion can leave you in a position of tactical advantage and ready to respond appropriately.

"left" and "right," I will utilize the terms "strong" side, which is whichever side your gun hand is on, and "reaction" side, which is your non-gun-hand side.

Stand with your reaction-side foot forward, pointed toward the assaultive person. Your strong-side foot should be at about a 45-degree angle, shoulder-width apart from your reaction-side foot and set back from it. Don't align your feet in a straight line as if you were tightrope walking. Instead, offset them. Your knees should be slightly flexed, not locked, and your weight should be distributed about 50-50 between each foot. As you begin the movement, do so on the balls of your feet.

After you begin moving, your reaction hand should rise up in a guard position to block. Your strong foot should move along a 180-degree arch, like that door swinging open toward the rear and continuing toward and behind your reaction foot. Make sure to maintain that shoulder-width gap. The reaction foot is the pivot point until you are well out of the line of assault. Then it slides back, creating another solid, balanced defensive posture, leaving you ready to counter the assault.

At the same time this evasive movement is taking place, you should be, in the case of a deadly assault, drawing your weapon. After your weapon is out, you can address the threat appropriately in a reasonable manner, depending on the threat presented at that moment.

The Power Pivot is a sudden, unexpected movement that serves to surprise an attacker, get you off the line of assault and give you an opportunity to counter the threat and defeat it. Sometimes the difference between life and death can be movement that will make your attacker miss … because you won't.



Shown with a Samsung Galaxy J3 for scale, either of these med kit components can be carried without much fuss.

CONCEALING YOUR MED KIT

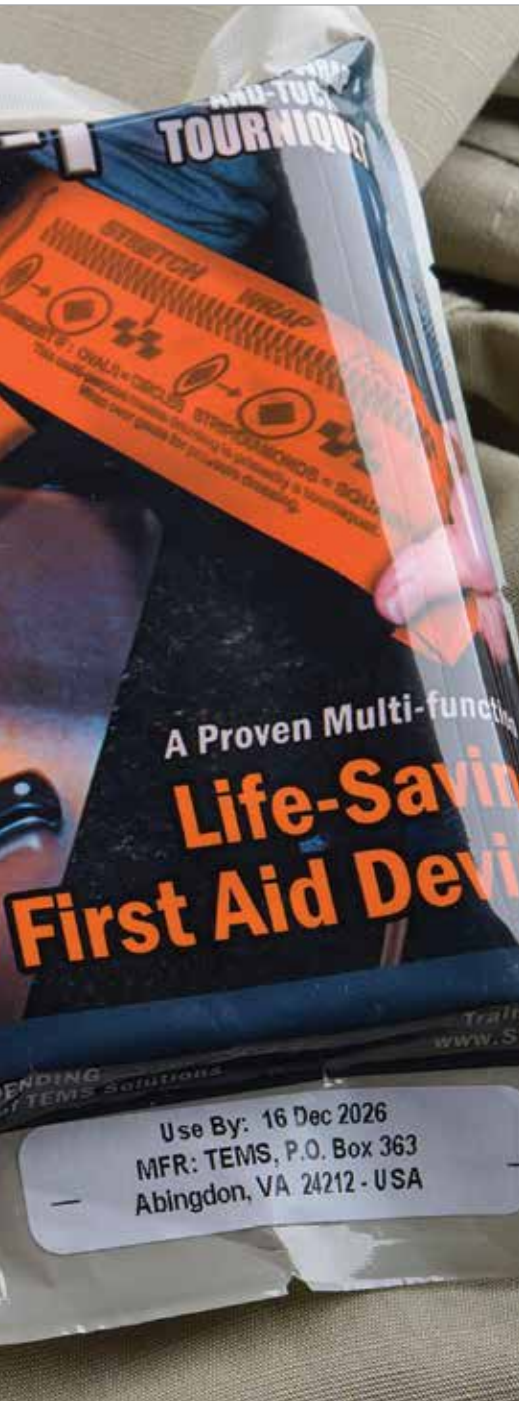
FASHIONABLE FIRST-AID

WITH THE INCREASE of social media, our society has become more self-absorbed and fashion-conscious than it already was. Everyone likes to show off their new clothing, hairstyles and overpriced boutique accessories.

Sadly, I've seen this trend migrate to gun owners, sportsman's circles and concealed carry folks as well. People show off their latest purchases or EDC items, usually consisting of a handgun, extra magazine, folding knife, smartphone and wallet. All essential items to have "just in case."

However, I hardly ever see any type of medical kit in those photos. Is it possible to carry all your EDC items plus a med kit and keep it all fashionably concealed?

I think the key is not necessarily to change how you dress. I'm not suggesting you go out and buy a whole new wardrobe, but think about what clothing you normally wear on any given day. If you carry concealed every day, ask yourself the following questions:



> “FIRST, YOU DON’T NEED A FULL-BLOWN MED KIT; JUST THE ESSENTIAL ITEMS TO TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY.”

- Am I comfortable?
- Does my handgun or self-protection device “print” or reveal itself through my cover garments?
- Is it easily accessible to me from all positions in which I often find myself?
- Can I go about my normal activities without restrictions?

Let’s think a little more in-depth about your personal safety. Let’s say you defended yourself against a deadly attack and fended off the attacker(s), but now you find yourself injured and bleeding from the encounter. You must continue to survive! Because you are an educated USCCA member who reads the “Lifeline” article each issue, you remembered to carry some type of Individual First-Aid Kit with you. You are able to stop the bleeding until police and emergency medical services arrive.

I know what you’re thinking: “It’s already challenging enough to carry concealed and now you’re asking me to carry an emergency medical kit too?”

First, you don’t need a full-blown med kit; just the essential items to take care of yourself in case of an emergency. These items need to be small enough to be easily carried without special requirements (and so you don’t look like you’re an EMT). Remember, you’re just an ordinary civilian going about your business like everyone else. The difference is you’re prepared.

So you might be thinking about what medical items you should carry that will not be too bulky. The following four items are the primary medical equipment I carry with me daily:

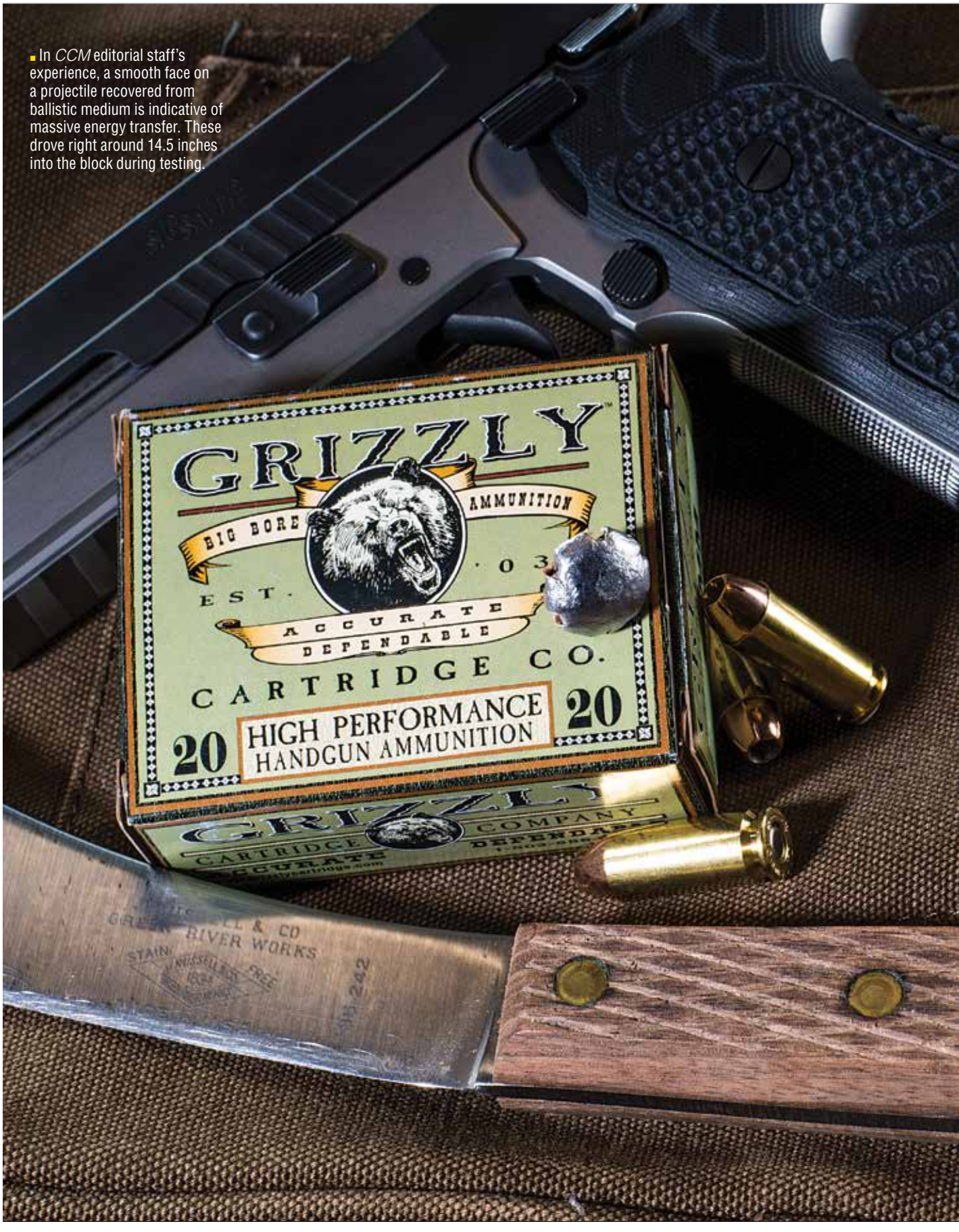
- SWAT-T Tourniquet
- S-Rolled Gauze
- Celox Packet (2 gram)
- Rolled Pair Nitrile Gloves (Large)

Those items should be viewed as a starting point, and you can always add or subtract as your needs require. It took me several goes at it, mostly through trial and error, to find what worked really well and what was simply too bulky to carry. My main goal was to go about my day without looking out of place or fidgeting with my gear.

I picked these specific items because they can serve multiple purposes. The SWAT-T can be used as a tourniquet, to splint extremities to the body, to hold bandages or even act as a chest seal if needed. The gloves are not the most important item in the kit. However, if I am unable to treat myself and a stranger can help me, he or she might be more willing to help me if he or she can wear gloves to have some level of protection against blood-borne pathogens. Remember, that person would likely have no idea who I am.

I package my items in a small mylar-style bag that is waterproof and airtight. All packed up, the kit is about the size of a normal wallet. Depending on what I’m wearing, I normally carry the kit in my left back pocket or left cargo pocket. I find that it is much easier to conceal during the fall and winter months in the Midwest because I’m able to layer my clothing and I usually wear some type of jacket.

Some companies are recognizing the popularity of the concealed carry market and are tailoring medical products to meet those needs. One product I’m particularly excited about is the current generation of ankle pouch carrier, one of which I have on order for evaluation. I’ll share my opinions with you here if it passes the test.



In *CCM* editorial staff's experience, a smooth face on a projectile recovered from ballistic medium is indicative of massive energy transfer. These drove right around 14.5 inches into the block during testing.



WATCH CLEAR IMPACT AT
https://youtu.be/L1YsUhd0nFM

GRIZZLY 10MM

HIT HARD, LOOK GOOD

SPECIFICATIONS

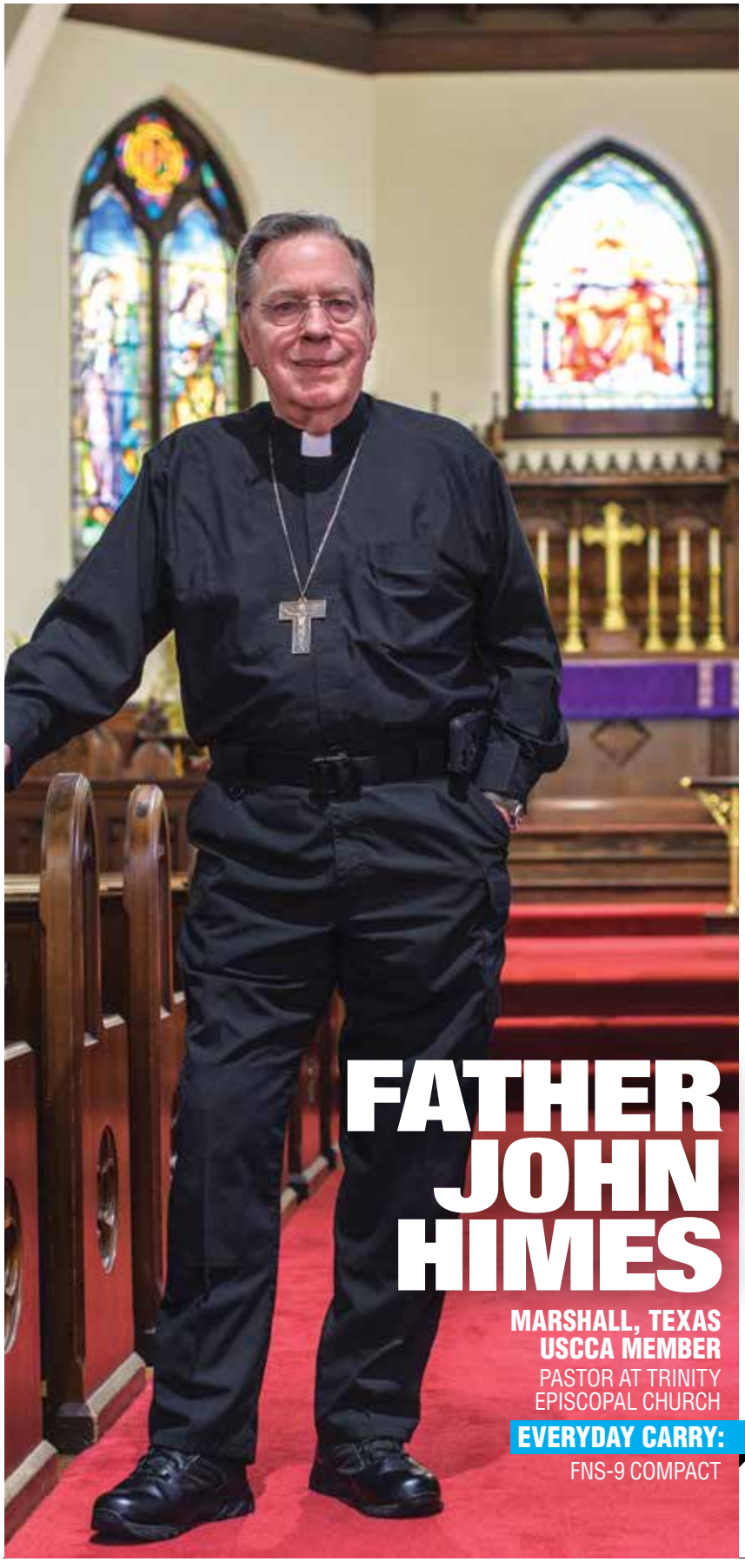
VELOCITY: 1,300 FEET PER SECOND
MUZZLE ENERGY: 694 FOOT-POUNDS
PENETRATION: 14.5 INCHES
MSRP: $24.99/20

■INITIALLY DESIGNED by Col. Jeff Cooper as a hard-hitting hammer of a fight-stopper, the 10mm Auto (or ".40 Super," as he initially called it) was all about a practical middle ground: It sought to offer flatter shooting and better range than the .45 ACP while delivering better knockdown than the 9mm Luger. The result was a cartridge that could best most standard .357 Magnum loads and that also offered the higher capacity and greater ease of shooting and reloading offered by a pistol.

Though no longer a common law enforcement round, it's still a popular choice for hunters and those who operate in areas that contain dangerous wildlife. It strikes a fine balance between, say, the .38 Special and the .44 Magnum. In a platform like this SIG P220 Elite, it's easier to carry than a long-barreled .44, it hits harder than any .38 Special on the market and the resultant combo is more than enough for stopping bad men and even an adequate tool against bad bears.

These rounds from the Grizzly Cartridge Company are more in the former camp. The jacketed hollow-points paired extremely accurately with the 220, and though you'd want to carry heavier jacketed soft-points or even hard-cast bullets in brown-bear country, this duo makes for a stylish and smooth-shooting solution to just about any other outdoor carry quandary.

You can learn more about the entire line of Grizzly ammunition at **grizzlycartridge.com**.



FATHER JOHN HIMES

MARSHALL, TEXAS
USCCA MEMBER
PASTOR AT TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH

EVERYDAY CARRY:
FNS-9 COMPACT

WITH 22 YEARS in the Army and seven years as a police officer, Father John Himes has been around firearms for most of his life.

"There's hardly been a time I've been without a gun," he said.

Himes now serves as the pastor for Trinity Episcopal Church in Marshall, Texas. He carries a concealed handgun daily and sees scriptural connections to an individual's right to self-defense.

"One of the instructions Jesus gave the disciples as they went out after the last supper was, 'Take a sword,' not to be offensive but to be defensive," Himes explained.

A couple years ago, Himes ran across a news story about a man who was sued after successfully defending himself with a handgun in his own home. The concealed carrier was cleared of any crimes, but a lawsuit filed by his attacker still threatened his livelihood.

"I checked to see if my homeowners insurance or liability insurance covered the use of a handgun for defense in the home, and it didn't," Himes said.

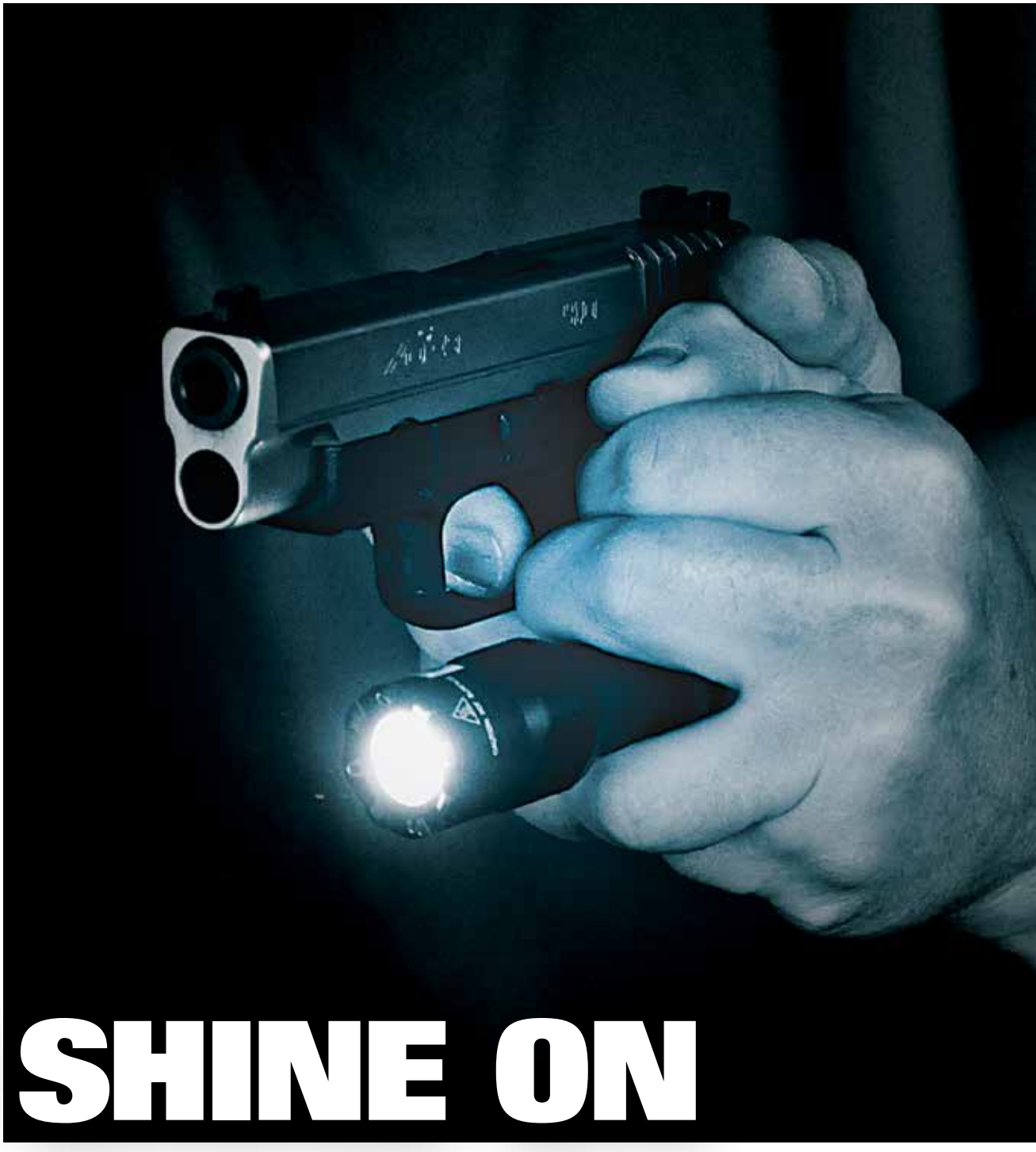
He started searching online for solutions to this dilemma and came across a few options, including the USCCA.

"As I examined them, I thought that [the USCCA] was the best one to go with," Himes said. "It offered the best protection in terms of legal protection, but, also, I liked the fact that [the USCCA] did training programs as well to give people the opportunity to become proficient in self-defense training."

Himes soon became a member. He says the "peace of mind" of knowing that the USCCA will be there to protect him if he's ever involved in a self-defense shooting is more than worth the price of membership, but the magazine and training advice are nice perks too.

In February 2017, Himes benefited from his USCCA membership in yet another way: He won an AR-15 in a USCCA "Gun-a-Day" giveaway.

"Up until then, I had no rifles or carbines, just handguns, but I wanted an AR platform because that's what I trained on in the service," Himes said. "I'm very comfortable handling that. I feel very comfortable shooting it."



SHINE ON

▪A PISTOL AND A FLASHLIGHT are about as handy a set of tools as a homeowner can possess in times of crisis, and one of the fundamental skillsets necessary for proper and effective self-defense in the home is how to use a gun and a light together. It's a balancing act between the need to illuminate your surroundings, the need to protect yourself from unnecessary exposure and the need to properly identify and, if necessary, engage a deadly threat. In the May/June issue of *Concealed Carry Magazine,* law enforcement tactical instructor and two-time *Top Shot* runner-up Chris Cerino will detail the most common methods and styles of working with a pistol and a tactical light, from the FBI Technique to the Harries Technique and everything in between.



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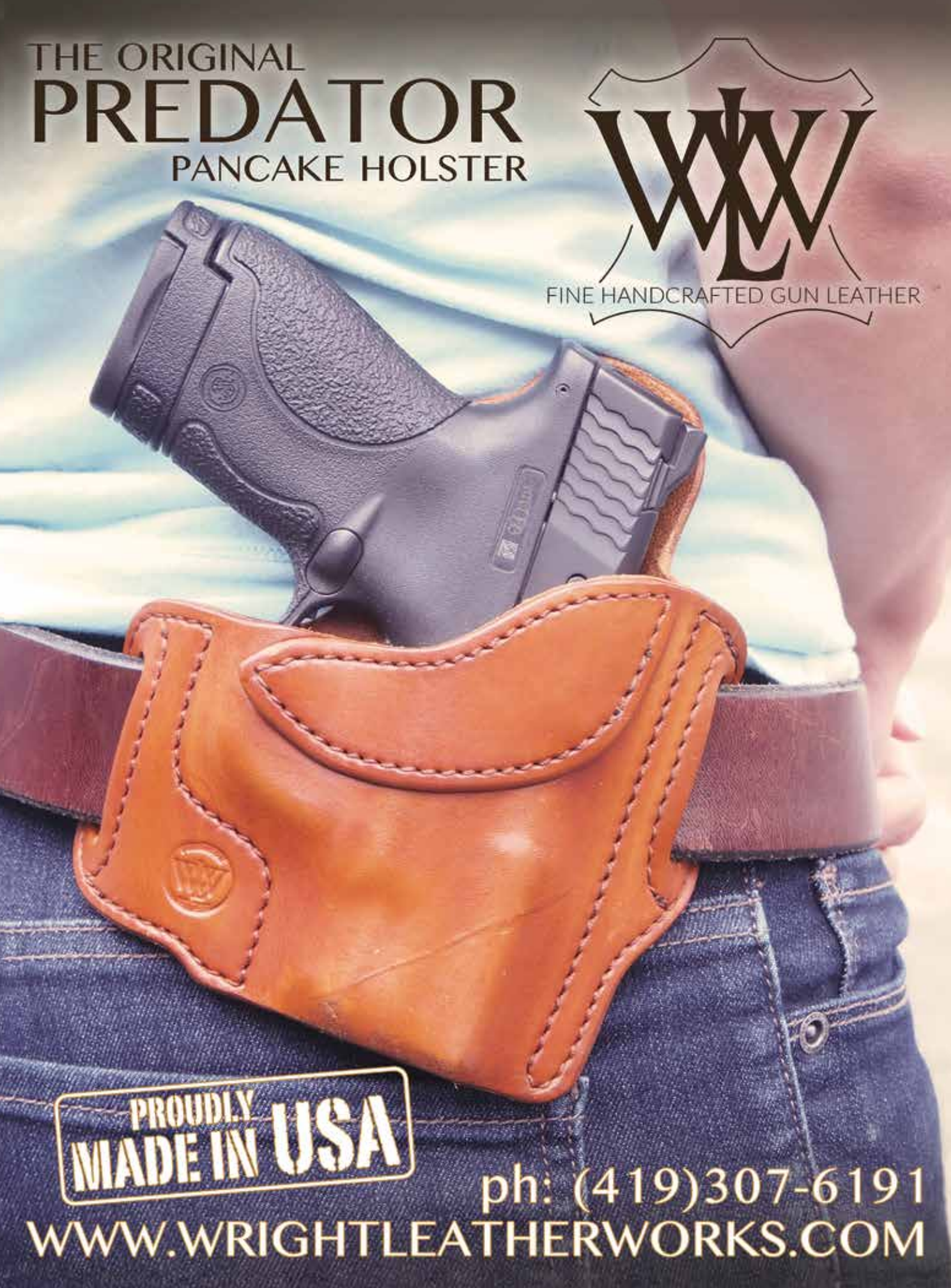




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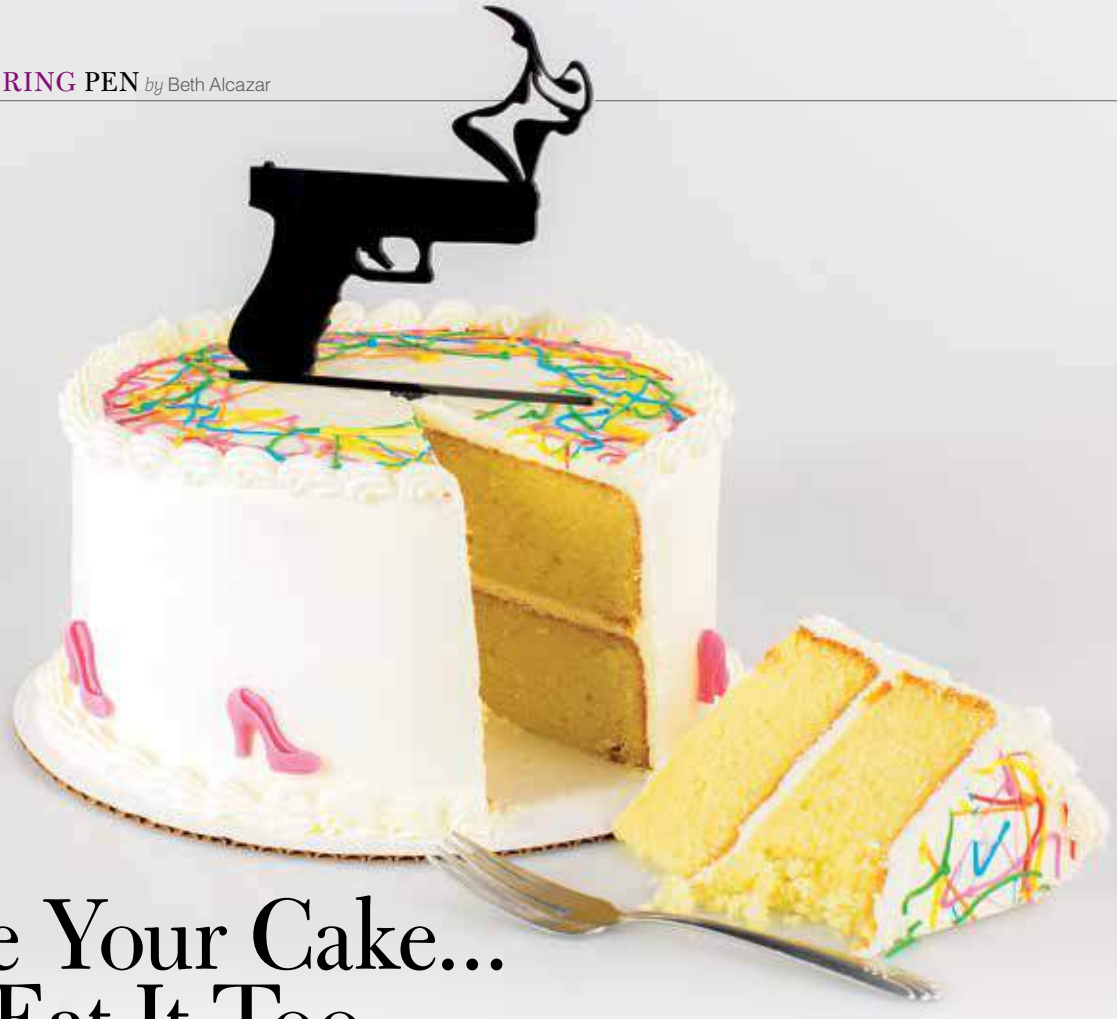
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Have Your Cake... and Eat It Too

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, but I really like the theme of this issue. I think "comfort" and "style" are two words that most definitely ring true with most women I know.

When it comes to everyday life, we strive to have those two important things included within and throughout just about every decision we make. Which couch should we buy for the family room? We don't want to select the ugly, oversized beanbag version just because we sink in like it's a big fluffy cloud. On the other hand, we don't want the beautifully elegant velvet sofa solely because of its hand-carved frame and silver, nail-head trim.

> "And there's got to be a happy medium somewhere — a magical land where comfort and style mutually exist — where you can have your cake and eat it too."

And what about choosing a new pair of shoes? Those fuzzy moccasins offer hours of soft, luxurious comfort, but the black leather Manolo Blahnik pumps offer years of classic, enviable style.

Let's not forget selecting that perfect on-body, concealed carry firearm. Bland and basic will do the job perfectly, but bold and beautiful is also very appealing. So which firearms offer the best of both worlds?

Undoubtedly, the struggle is real. We know that it's typically most practical and rewarding when we can have at least a little of both. And there's got to be a happy medium somewhere — a magical land where comfort and style mutually exist — where you can have your cake and eat it too. Well, there might not be a magical land, and it might not always be possible to achieve comfort and style to perfection, but I believe that many folks have found a very satisfying balance with their firearms choices, their holster selections and the accessories and apparel they choose to wear to manage, maintain and enjoy the concealed carry lifestyle. But that balance takes focus and dedication. It also involves compromise and careful consideration, as well as the willingness to accept, challenge and change, all of which should be paramount to the responsibly armed.

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Illustrated by: Caitlin Aussprung

HIGHLIGHTED in the "Girl Gear" section of our "Comfort & Style" issue is the beautiful and stylish Lion + Lamb: a two-piece, stretch-knit tank and wrap from Incognito Wear IX. The top is not a holster but rather a lovingly and cleverly designed concealment top that you can wear with just about any cross-draw appendix configuration. The inner "Lion" tank features ambidextrous openings at the sides for easier firearms access, and the stretchy "Lamb" outer wrap features ¾ Dolman sleeves and draped pleats "in all the right places," providing camouflage for your holster and firearm and allowing you to simply reach down and through the front of the top to safely and discreetly draw. Super comfortable and available in salmon, black or charcoal gray, it's a perfect top, even if you don't want to conceal a weapon.

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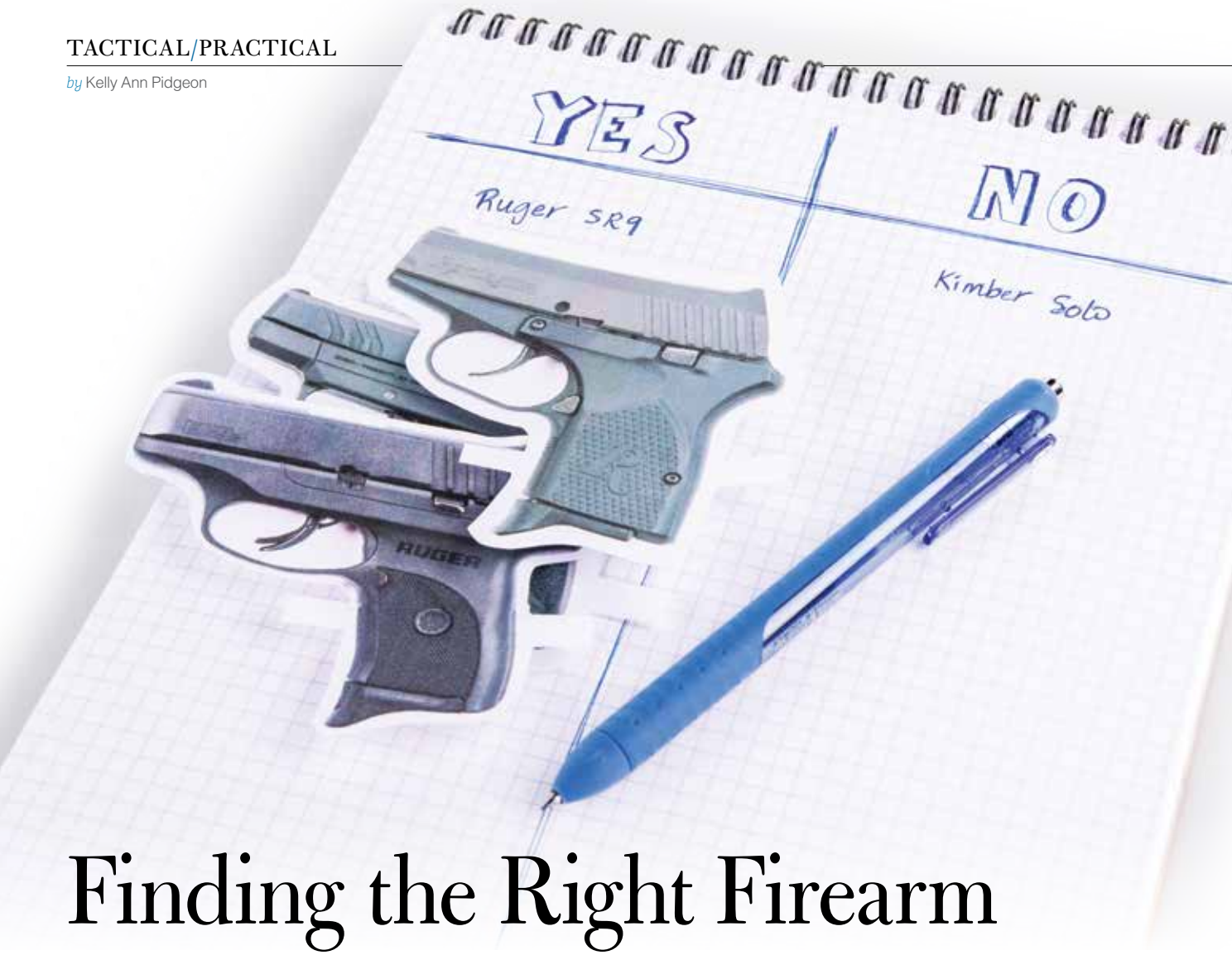
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by Kelly Ann Pidgeon



Finding the Right Firearm

'What Gun Should I Get?'

I can't even begin to count how many times I've heard that question. Unfortunately, there's no right answer. Sure enough, whichever one you get, you're probably going to want a different one after that.

Gun shopping is difficult. There are so many choices — make, model, caliber, action — but let's not forget how fortunate we are to *have* so many choices.

When I took my first concealed carry class, I took the Kimber Solo that I'd recently bought. It was beautiful, sleek, enjoyed a good reputation and concealed very nicely, but I shot it poorly. It was very finicky with the ammo it would reliably run, and it really didn't fit me well. I thought it did while I was at the gun shop, but guns, unfortunately, aren't like shoes. You generally can't try them on and walk around for a while before buying.

Bellying up to the cases at the gun shop can be a fairly intimidating outing for a new shooter, as it was for me. When you're new to firearms, you don't have enough experience with them to know all the brands and specs and how each gun operates. And, when you're new to this, like anything else, you don't always know what questions to ask. There are so many choices and so little time, and almost everyone is operating within some kind of budget. And some of the guys behind the counter ignore you or stare at you as if to say, "Are you going to choose something, Miss?"

But back to my permit class. I'd luckily also taken my full-sized gun along. I asked the instructor if I could go get it. "Of course," he said. So I retrieved my Ruger SR9, the first gun I'd purchased for home defense. It just felt right, and I shot it well. Sure enough, I was doing much better right away — so much so that the instructor said, "You need to be able to carry that gun, or find the same one in the smaller version. You have just found your wife."

My wife?

He went on to say, looking at all the guns that were present, "You can have many girlfriends, but you only have one wife," meaning *the* gun for you. I still use that analogy with my students to this



day. It makes sense, and, at the same time, it's silly and the ladies laugh at it. They laugh at it, but they get it.

When looking for your "wife" — that gun that's best for you — you must first and foremost determine reliability and consistency. It doesn't matter how nice a pistol or revolver looks if it's unreliable. When something bad happens, you want to be certain that the gun is going to function properly every single time. Reading independent reviews can be super useful for this, but keep in mind that information on manufacturers' websites will almost always read favorably.

Second, search for a good fit, by which I mean make sure the gun is the correct size for your hand. I've twice made the mistake of neglecting to do this. To size up the gun, get a proper grip on it (completely unloaded, please) and properly place your trigger finger onto the trigger. Now look at the amount of space between the frame of your gun and your index finger. If there's little to no space, that gun is most likely too big for you. If there's a big gap between the frame and your index finger, that gun is most likely too small for you. Look for Goldilocks: just the right amount of space. This will ensure a nice, even-pressure rearward press.

So you researched reliable guns and found one that seems to fit well in your hands. Is it comfortable? Do the grip panels feel good, or are they digging into your palms? Do you like the finger grooves on the front strap, or would you prefer a flat front strap? Is the gun too heavy for you to hold for a while, or is it manageable? Press the trigger. Is it too heavy or is it just right?

Now try the gun on. Yep, right there in the store. Ask for a holster and tuck it in. How well is it concealed when worn where you prefer to carry?

Cost is another considerable factor. Is it going to break your bank? I wouldn't suggest trying on a "champagne" gun when you have a "beer" budget, but I do ask that you consider what you're buying a gun for in the first place. I recall a student who said that she bought a cup of coffee every day for $6. What that indicates to me is that giving up two or three months' worth of coffees would buy her a really nice, really reliable gun. Deciding to become a responsibly armed citizen does come with a price, but it's a price worth paying.

Only you can answer these questions. Not the man behind the counter, not your husband, not your BFF, not me. You and only you. And when you do answer these questions, you will have answered that first question of, "What gun should I get?"

Your firearm needs to fit right and be comfortable, you need to be able to wear it all day and it has to be able to do its job. You might not hit it right the first time, but there's always a second time. Most places will take trade-ins. Or you might just want another one. And another one. And another one. I've been known to say that guns are like a pair of black shoes: You can't have just one!

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IT'S IN THE BAG

I'm new at all this, so I have a decision to make. Realistically, for me to conceal carry, I really think the handbags that are designed specifically for this are my best option. Could I get some input on pros and cons? I'm small, live in Florida (100 degrees most days) and don't wear baggy clothes.

Rhonda, via Women's Community

Rhonda,

Off-body carry of firearms in bags of just about any kind is often the subject of some heated discussions. The main issue is that you must be in control of your purse or handbag at all times. It's easy (and tempting) to set the bag down in a shopping cart, on a chair or in the backseat of a vehicle — and that could open up opportunities for unauthorized users, including children, to get into the bag and access the firearm. A lot of people also believe a purse is not a good option because you might not be able to get to your gun fast enough.

My opinion is that you need to do what is safe and best for you. And you need to safely train with whichever option you choose.

And, for what it's worth, I still often use purses for my backup gun. But I prefer the cross-body styles that are "on" me at all times and that, since they are hands-free, are more easily accessible.

Hope that helps!

Beth Alcazar
Associate Editor

COLOR BLIND

Are you a fan of colored or decorated firearms (pink, purple, blue, pink camo, etc.)?

Basic pistol student, in class

Dear student,

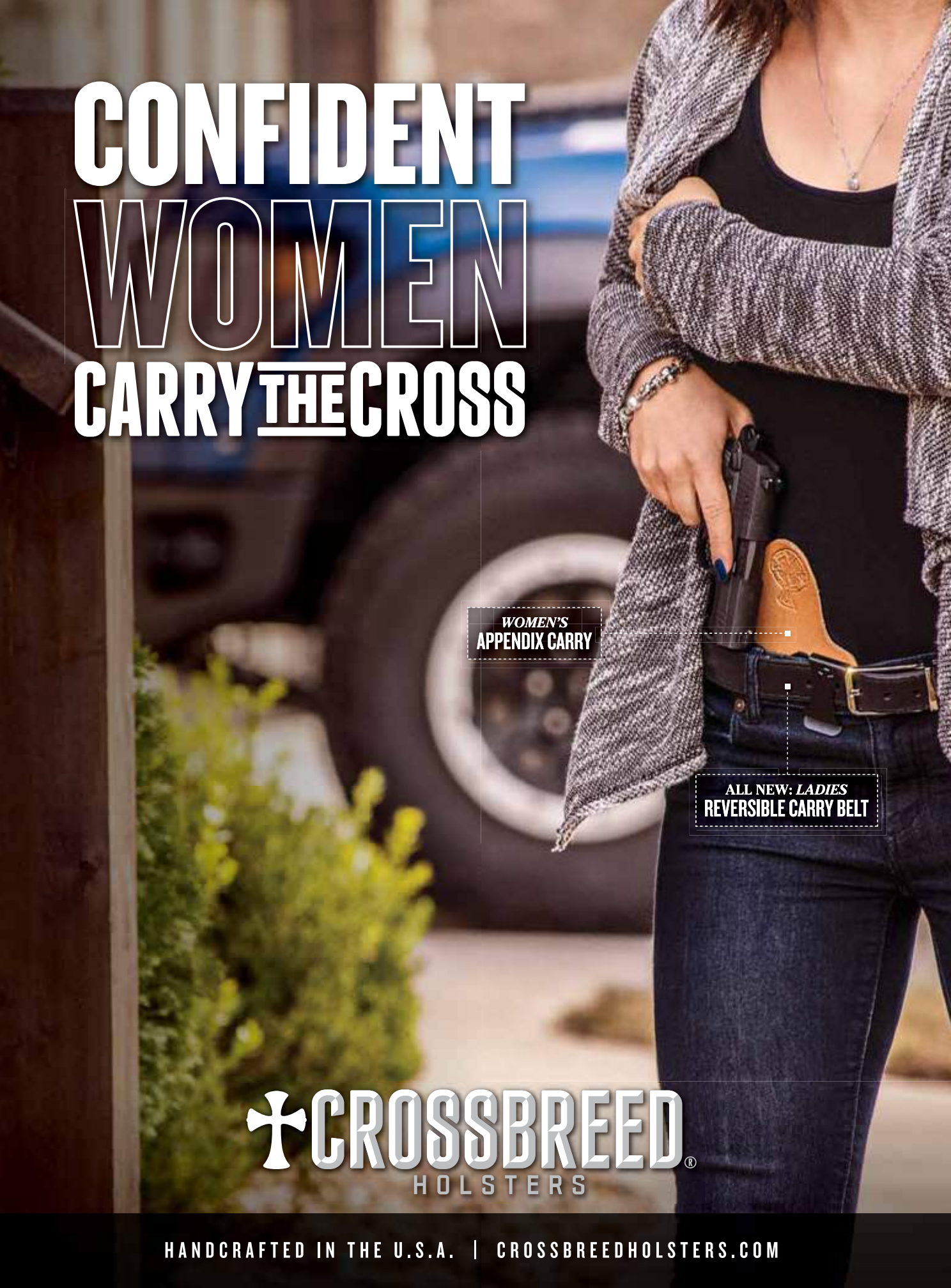
In the very beginning of my firearms journey, I was a bit unsure of — and perhaps against — colorful guns, especially pink ones, because I felt that gun manufacturers weren't really serious about women's true wants and needs. But as I grew more comfortable and confident with firearms (and as my gun collection grew), I found that I was drawn to some of the "prettier" or more colorful models. And now I even have some myself (like the Kimber Sapphire, Onyx and Bel Air).

All in all, I love the idea of women making their weapons their own. Just keep in mind that, nowadays especially, real guns can look fake, and fake guns can look real. We also learn that, for defensive purposes, it's best to choose a gun straight from the manufacturer without adding any unusual bells or whistles — think bedazzling or Cerakoting, not adding a laser or a flashlight.

Be sure to always store guns safely and securely, and make sure you are informing, helping and even training others — especially children — to be cautious and careful.

Best,

Beth Alcazar
Associate Editor


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BY THE NUMBERS *by* Carla Dickmann

ONE GUN...

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Great Grips

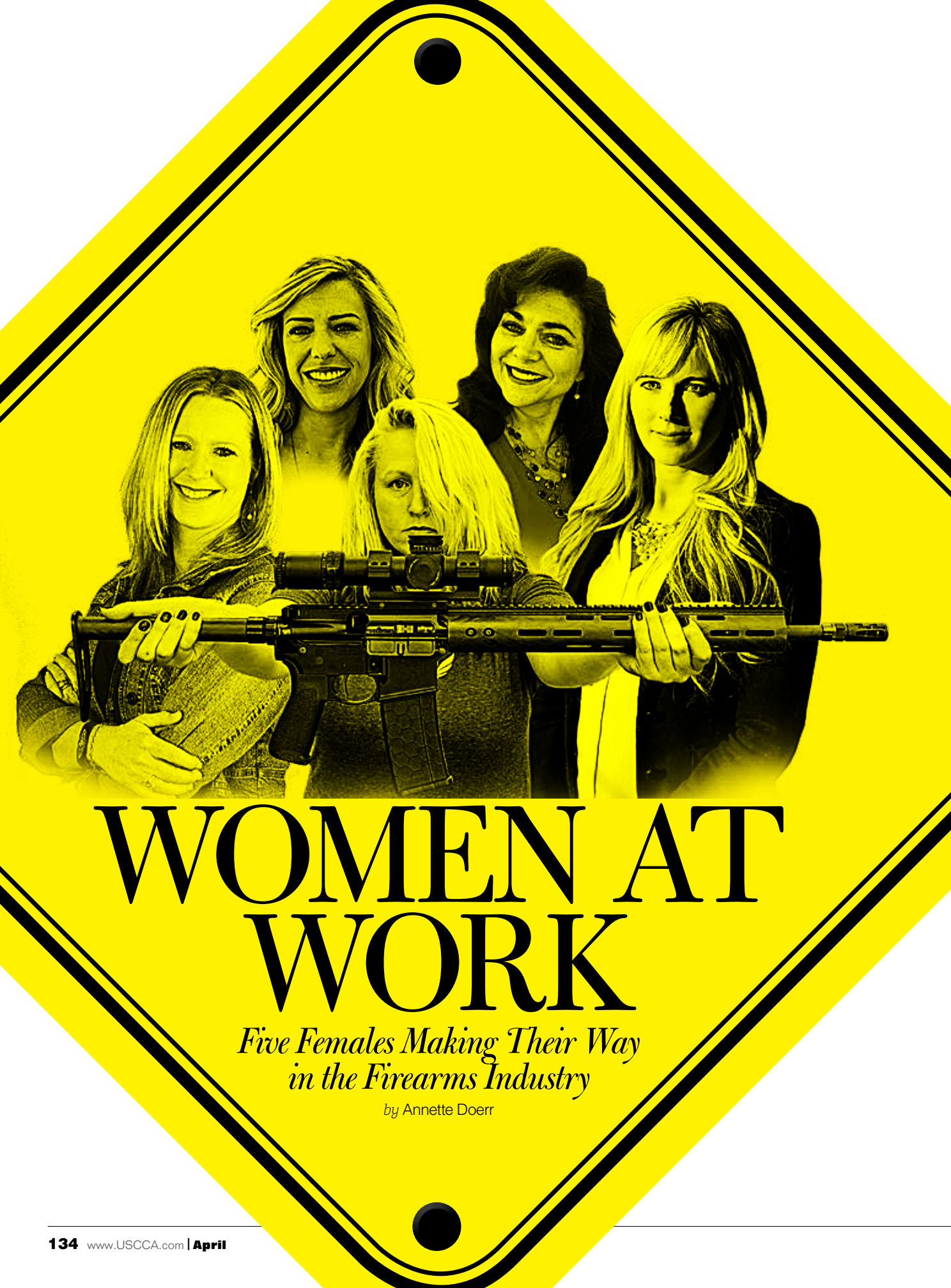
SIG Sauer P238 Two Tone

(L): Fluted Polymer Grip Panels, OEM

(R): Kirinite Purple Pearl Grips, Spresser Custom Grips

All Dressed Up

I'll admit it: I'm a jeans-and-ponytail type of girl. It takes me 10 minutes to get ready in the morning, and I'm known around these parts for sporting flip-flops in the snow. Comfort reigns supreme in my world. And style? Well, I don't have much. But even I had to admit that the gray fluted polymer factory grip panels on my SIG Sauer P238 weren't anything to write home about. Enter these gorgeous Kirinite purple pearl numbers from Spresser Custom Grips out of Riceville, Tennessee, and suddenly my sidearm's a showstopper. Now if I could just learn to walk in these heels...



WOMEN AT WORK

Five Females Making Their Way in the Firearms Industry

by Annette Doerr

The stereotype of the firearms industry being a male-dominated, good ol' boys' club couldn't be farther from the truth. Women are changing the face of the industry, and they're doing it with great success. From company owners to engineers and everything in between, hard-working, professional women are leading the way in what used to be a male-dominated industry.

I took a look at five such women. Their stories are as unique as the women themselves. Here are five amazing women who are living their dream jobs in the firearms industry, finding success and personal reward.

KAT AINSWORTH

Outdoor Writer

Ainsworth is a gun writer's gun writer. She doesn't just talk the talk; she walks the walk. Ainsworth's articles have appeared on too many websites and in too many print magazines to list. If you've read something she penned, rest assured she's researched it thoroughly, knows it inside and out and means what she says.

What do you love most about working in the industry?

The ability to pursue my passions full-time. It may sound cliché, however, my degrees are not directly applicable to this industry, and my choice to become a full-time outdoor writer was a major life decision. Training in self-defense and CQB tactics, hunting all types of game, studying ballistics and working on guns are just a few of the things I count myself fortunate to be doing for a living.

What's the best part of your job?

Last week I was hunting black bears, sitting in the Sierra Nevadas, watching the sun rise through the trees, and I had a "Man, am I lucky!" moment. A month earlier, I was doing low-light training and practicing AR-to-pistol transitions with John Farnam. Weeks before that, I was clearing shoot houses at Gunsite. As an outdoor writer, I'm able to share my knowledge and experiences while also training — and reading, and working — to learn even more. And, hey, who wouldn't love a job where you're constantly surrounded by guns, ammo and everything that goes with them?

What one piece of advice would you give to someone looking to work in the firearms industry?

Network and grind hard. This industry takes hard work and persistence, but it's also about who you know. Don't hesitate to introduce yourself or ask for introductions — and when the time comes, be the person willing to make those introductions for others.

Technically, that's two, so here's a third: Don't write about what you don't know. Learn. Experience it. Disassemble and re-assemble that AR fifty times. Practice firing a 1911 at 50 yards until you learn drop and drift and trigger control. Learn it, love it, live it … and then, and only then, do you teach it through the written word (or video). The industry no longer has Elmer Keith, Jeff Cooper or Pat Rogers, and more's the pity. Maybe someday, it could be your name spoken in revered tones. Think on that, and make your move.

NATALIE FOSTER

Host of Love at First Shot *and Creator of* Girl's Guide to Guns

Beginning as a blogger, Foster created the very successful *Girl's Guide to Guns* blog, which she still runs. She can also be seen hosting NRATV's hit show *Love at First Shot*.

What do you love most about working in the industry?

I truly love hosting Love at First Shot *for so many reasons, especially being able to travel this amazing, diverse, beautiful country meeting female shooters (or soon-to-be shooters) of all walks of life and experience levels. The firearms community is not just for the people we often picture as the stereotypical gun owners. Everyone has a place in this community, and that is one of my primary objectives with the show: to let women know they are welcome in our ranks, no matter their backgrounds. Communicating that message to newbies is probably my favorite aspect of working in the gun industry. I want outsiders to feel that our community has an open-door policy, and I try to inject that sentiment into every aspect of the work I do.*

What's the best part of your job?

The incredible friendships I've been so blessed by over the years. I've gotten to know so many smart, thoughtful, caring, patriotic people through this job, and I'm so grateful for each and every one of them.

What one piece of advice would you give to someone looking to work in the firearms industry?

I think the most important thing to remember is that a rising tide lifts all boats. We are all in this together, and though we may differ in our opinions about certain things, it is important to keep the main goals — preserving our 2nd Amendment and sharing this passion with others — at the center

of what we do. Safety is No. 1, of course, and you can never have too much education and training.

Also, I'd say that if you're uncomfortable with a teacher or a range or even a particular gun, keep looking to find a better fit for you. The gun world is vast and varied. You're almost guaranteed to find something that works for you. And, if you can't find what you're looking for, follow the grand tradition of so many American female shooters and create it!

◆DAWN HILLYER

Owner of HidingHilda, LLC

Hillyer literally turned fear into a career. The victim of a relentless stalker, Hillyer began carrying a gun out of necessity to protect herself and her children. Working in a professional setting, she was unable to find a functional way to carry her firearm (which she named "Hilda"). Seeing a void in the industry, Hillyer set out to create HidingHilda, which has become a go-to name for concealed carry purses and accessories.

What do you love most about working in the industry?

The people for sure. Whether it's the retailers, customers, new or experienced shooters, or trainers, I love the camaraderie of 2nd Amendment supporters. There is also a national pride that goes along with the empowerment carrying a firearm provides.

What's the best part of your job?

Helping women gain or sometimes regain their power and sense of security. But I love bringing a little style to it, as well. I encourage women to be pretty and badass; we should be both! I get to make a difference. I get to be a part of a movement, an important, life-changing one at that. It is so great to see women supporting and encouraging other women.

What one piece of advice would you give to someone looking to work in the firearms industry?

It's not just for men anymore! Ladies, be your own hero!

◆ASHLEY HLEBINSKY

Firearms Historian, Curator of Cody Firearms Museum and President of The Gun Code, LLC

Hlebinsky manages more than 7,000 firearms, ranging from the 1200s through the modern day. In addition to her duties as curator, Hlebinsky is president of The Gun Code, LLC, where she serves as a firearms consultant, freelance firearms writer, NRA-certified firearms instructor, international lecturer, on-camera firearms historian and television producer.

What do you love most about working in the industry?

I love how welcoming everyone has been to me. As a historian, I function tangentially to the industry more often than actually in it, and I have found that when people have requested my services for various historical projects, there's an enthusiasm to learn about how the industry has functioned in the past in order to inform the present and the future. Plus, I get to shoot lots of cool guns.

What's the best part of your job?

With my job, I get to learn something new every day. There's always something new to learn. And with all the companies that exist today, that will never change.

What one piece of advice would you give to someone looking to work in the firearms industry?

You never will know everything, so don't pretend to. Know your strengths, but even more so, know what you don't know and seek help when you can.

◆CHERYL TODD

Owner of AZFirearms and Pot of Gold Estate Auctions and Co-Host of Gun Freedom Radio

Todd, a self-described serial entrepreneur, hosts the weekly *Gun Freedom Radio* show. She also owns AZFirearms, which she describes as "the biggest little gun shop in Arizona." She speaks to the value of her 2nd Amendment rights through the lens of self-protection and works to instill those values in the generations to come. She's also actively involved in the D.C. Project, representing her home state of Arizona.

What do you love most about working in the industry?

I love having the opportunity to speak to people across the globe about the importance of self-protection and the unique blessings we enjoy in the United States under our Constitution, Bill of Rights and the 2nd Amendment. As a mom and a grandma, I am passionate about protecting those rights for future generations. And as a small-business owner of AZFirearms, I work with my customers and clients to help them choose the best tools for protecting themselves and their families.

What's the best part of your job?

The shooting sports are filled with wonderful, warm and welcoming people who share a passion for safety and freedom. And the best part of my job is getting to meet and talk with people from every walk of life and then connecting them to a wider network of fellow patriots, which, in turn, connects us all to the larger firearms community through safety classes, rights organizations and gun clubs across the nation. On Gun Freedom Radio*, we begin each show with a quote by Ronald Reagan. He stated, "Freedom is only one generation away from extinction, and we must do all in our power to pass those values along to the next generation." My job is focused on doing just that in every way I can and with every new relationship I help connect.*

What one piece of advice would you give to someone looking to work in the firearms industry?

I have met the most incredible people whose common bond is patriotism. Firearms ownership is an extension and an expression of that patriotism. My one piece of advice for every American citizen is multi-layered but vital to all our futures. That advice is to read the Constitution, read the Bill of Rights, understand your rights, get informed and get involved in the voting process. Having that basis of knowledge will protect your rights and the rights of all future generations and, in the process, it will protect the industry.

TRAILBLAZERS

These five unique individuals are just a tiny sampling of a long list of successful women who are helping to pave the way in the firearms industry. While their backgrounds and careers differ, one common trait bonds them into a professional sisterhood: hard work. All we can say is keep grinding, ladies.

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LUXURY RANGES

RAISING THE BAR

by Sara Ryan

As I walked through the doors of The Alamo by Lotus Gunworks in Naples, Florida, it was immediately apparent it was more than just a typical shooting range. Rows of purses, holsters, clothing, ammunition and some of the latest concealed carry gear on the market were perfectly placed on racks and shelves, spread across a spacious hardwood showroom floor. In every direction, there was a wall adorned with rows of seemingly every type of gun imaginable.

Flat-screen televisions and a snack area peeked out among several state-of-the-art glassed-in shooting bays. I was greeted warmly by a female staff member and escorted to the Presidential Suite via private elevator. I looked around at the oil paintings, leather sofas and kitchenette and then thought about the private shooting bay a couple doors over. I couldn't help but think to myself, "Yeah, I could get used to this."

All drooling aside, I wondered if the luxurious decor and variety of amenities were a distraction from the core mission of training shooters. After all, plenty of us have gone out to the backyard and balanced soda cans along the fence line to improve our shooting, and traditional shooting ranges have been churning out marksmen for decades.

> "Are ranges like this a good development for the concealed carry community? Is this the image we want to project?"

Are ranges like this a good development for the concealed carry community? Is this the image we want to project? Initially, I wasn't so sure. After some research, however, I found that surprising accessibility, commitment to customer service and enhanced skill development options might be improving the face of modern ranges forever.

A BIGGER TENT

In my experience, the shooting community as a whole is very open-minded, freedom-loving and eager to share knowledge with newbies. Of course, private gun clubs continue to have their place, and I don't begrudge them at all. However, it is no secret that the industry's demographics are changing, and many of the new modern luxury ranges are being built within the busy commerce centers of urban and suburban communities. These highly visible businesses are potential industry stewards and must help make shooting more accessible and inclusive. They need to help make a "bigger tent," so to speak.

At first glance, many of the luxury ranges I looked at seemed out of reach for the average shooter. Crystal chandeliers, marble flooring and leather-appointed cigar lounges do not exactly scream affordability. If it looks and smells like a private country club, then it must have the same price tag, right? Well, yes and no. Even though some ranges charge $5,000 to $10,000 initiation fees and additional monthly dues ranging from $150 to $500 for exclusive private memberships, most of them are surprisingly affordable for Jane Q. Public to walk in the front door and spend an hour shooting.

For example, at The Alamo's Presidential Club, individual members pay a $4,995.99 initiation fee and then $149.99 per month, ongoing, for all of the club's exclusive amenities. Membership is limited to 300 people, and access to the club's lounge and shooting bay is controlled on the second level via private elevator. If you want the best in an exclusive gun club experience, this is it.

At the other end of the spectrum, Jane Q. Public can walk in the front door and buy an hour of range time for $16. If Jane wants to become a member at just the range portion of the club, she can pay $35 per month for unlimited range access. For the price of only two hours of range fees, the membership includes one free gun cleaning per month, discounts on almost everything the club offers and a complimentary machine-gun experience on her birthday each year. Now that's economic inclusiveness!

Tiered membership programs succeed at giving customers what they desire from the club at appropriate price points and result in a more inclusive overall club offering. Most luxury clubs allow non-members to pay hourly lane fees from $16 to $35, depending on the day of the week and the type of lane (pistol vs. rifle). Range-only memberships typically have small initiation fees and then monthly fees that seems to hover around $35, allowing members discounted or unlimited range access for the cost of one or two visits per month. Of course, the top levels of membership cater to wealthy clients and corporate members who will pay top dollar for exclusive access to all of the club's amenities and services. To sum it up perfectly, The Alamo Director of Training David Patterson stated, "We have Ferraris and pickup trucks in the parking lot."

In addition to offering a wide range of price points for range access, I found that many of the new ranges

have gone out of their way to offer different products and services for women, my favorite of the industry's changing demographics. Luxury ranges spare no expense in this area, and many have dedicated female staff working the sales floor, overseeing the line as Range Safety Officers and teaching various levels of classes. Most clubs offer a variety of women-only classes, host ladies' nights with special discounts and regularly bring in guest instructors or speakers to host women-oriented events.

Another way luxury ranges expand the tent is by providing for families who want to bring kids and enjoy the range together. Of course, many anti-gunners will yell and scream that the ranges are encouraging violence and creating little 2nd Amendment monsters. I'll sidestep this debate for the sake of brevity, but I'd say most of us who actually own guns and train with them understand that kids who are taught to respect firearms and use them properly are more likely to remain safe and responsible gun owners for life. Youth programs are nothing new, and many traditional ranges offer programs for young shooters, but luxury ranges have the floor space, range staff and kid-friendly amenities like snack bars and game rooms to make a family full of new shooters a lot more comfortable. Almost every range I checked offered family memberships at reduced rates.



SERVICE AND SAFETY

Just one peek inside Frisco Gun Club in Dallas or Stock & Barrel Gun Club near Minneapolis and you can instantly tell these are nothing like your dad's range. Spacious, professionally designed showroom floors, squeaky clean designer-stone bathrooms and luxury lounges with leather furniture are standard-issue. Plenty of well-lit shooting lanes help reduce wait times and keep firing line crowds to a minimum. Glassed-in shooting bays give family and friends a way to take a break and still watch the action. Improvements in ventilation technologies provide a cleaner and healthier range environment — a top concern among many of the women I teach.

Smart and clean design, state-of-the-art ventilation systems and adequate lighting make for a great atmosphere and contribute to overall range safety to be sure, but staffing is perhaps the most critical component of safety and quality customer service. Gone are the days when a couple of range personnel try to manage the gun sales counter, range check-ins, phone calls and, oh yeah, keep an eye on the firing line. More invested money usually means more insurance, stricter enforcement of safety rules and a larger budget for RSOs.

During my visit to The Alamo, Chief Range Safety Officer Collin Einsmann walked me through the various shooting bays and explained how the company views range safety as part of its customer service and strives to have one RSO for every three shooters. This is a fantastic standard to say the least. Rangemaster Jesse Granese and many of the RSOs are former military/LEO and are instructors as well. More eyes on the firing line is always a good thing, especially with new shooters, and it's a nice bonus if the RSOs can provide a bit of encouragement or instruction if the shooter requests. Many of the private members-only areas have a dedicated concierge/RSO/instructor who will attend to every need. Most clubs have the budget and space to offer on-site gunsmiths and expansive gun-rental counters.

Speaking of gun rentals, this is one part of the luxury range experience that I find particularly valuable. One of the major points I emphasize to my beginner students is that there is no better way to decide which pistol best suits you than to take it for a test drive. Most of the ranges I surveyed have more than enough gun rentals, especially pistols, for customers to find out which suits them best or to just have a bit of fun learning about a new gun or caliber. The Alamo has more than 120 guns available for rent at $15 per hour, and you can swap out your gun for a new one as many times as you like. On the opposite end of the spectrum, if you're looking for pure exhilaration, most luxury ranges offer fully automatic rifles for rent as well. The pinnacle is the amazing variety of Machine Gun Experience rental packages available at Lock & Load Miami. Wow, could I have some fun at that range!

More convenient scheduling options, like priority lane usage for members, advanced lane reservations and even 24-hour biometric access, are a few of the other services customers can utilize to get to the firing line more often. I can attest to how busy the ranges here in southwestern Florida get in March and April when all the snowbirds are here and spring break is in full swing. Busy professionals might only have a quick lunch break to sneak in some range time, and the ability to schedule ahead of time or take advantage of priority lane usage helps mitigate the risk of a long wait. I've learned firsthand the difficulty of balancing my life as a mom of two with my life as a shooter. I have to admit that I would probably go to the range more often if I could go later at night after the kids are in bed.

To round out their convenience offerings, most of the clubs I researched offer some sort of food option on the premises, ranging from small snack bars and

coffee shops to full-service restaurants. Many offer private locker rooms, fitness areas, cigar lounges, conference rooms and game rooms too. Services for members often include valet parking, gun storage, gun cleaning, a gunsmith, laundry, lane reservations and even private event planning. Many of these products and services serve to enhance the social aspects of club membership and provide networking opportunities for professionals and members. More power to them, as long as they are able to keep range staff focused on the essentials. The bottom line for many is that there are only so many hours in a day, and many of the amenities found within luxury ranges that might seem to "distract from the core mission" allow busy people to multitask and to make time for the important stuff — you know, like shooting!

DYNAMIC SKILL DEVELOPMENT

I know how fun shooting can be, but, ultimately, guns are serious tools, and we should all seek to promote more consistent training and skill development from our students and peers. Interest in concealed carry has grown over the past decade, and Pew Research Center states that 67 percent of gun owners name protection as their main reason for owning a gun. The people in this category who are serious about protecting themselves and their families need to do more than just go to the range and blast away with smiles on their faces. With larger budgets, more space and plenty of staff, luxury ranges have a great opportunity to capitalize on the trend toward personal protection and to help improve the overall skill level of the average shooter.

I think the Frisco Gun Club website puts it best: "The Frisco Gun Club is not just pure luxury … it is also a gun club designed to challenge your marksmanship skills. Determine the difficulty level of your experience with hands-on target operator consoles and individual control screens." To that end, Frisco Gun Club offers a comprehensive Dynamic Shooting Series that includes "movement and/or changing environments and scenarios." Dynamic shooting is one of the best ways for shooters to train in a more realistic manner, and many ranges are employing modern computerized target systems that allow programming for rotating targets, shoot/no-shoot scenarios and changes in distance and time to make you think on your feet with your firearm in hand.

To supplement live-fire training, many ranges are employing computerized simulation systems to help customers add dynamics and mental gymnastics to their training regimens. For example, Athena Gun Club in Houston offers different levels of simulation based around the prior shooting experience of the customer. Using a SIRT pistol or other similar laser-equipped firearm, a customer can work through different "bad-guy" scenarios on a giant projection screen. Taking it even further, Reload Gun Range in Tarpon Springs, Florida, offers "a 300-degree immersive training platform … [with] ... optional Threat-Fire device that safely simulates enemy return fire with an electric impulse, reinforcing performance under pressure." Using the latest in recoil-enabled laser guns, this type of simulation seems to be the next best thing to a live-fire shoot house.

THE CHICKEN OR THE EGG

To sum it all up, I'll ask a simple question: For the same price, would you rather drive a Ferrari or a clunky old Pinto? Both will get you where you're going, right? I'll admit that my favorite local range is barebones in comparison to the luxury gun clubs I reviewed, but, as many shooters before me have proved, it isn't the fanciness of the range that makes the marksman. On the other hand, I certainly like to be spoiled on occasion, especially when it comes to shooting my favorite guns. If ranges like The Alamo can maintain focus and deliver top-notch customer service at every price level, promote more consistent range safety and enhance customer skill development, it is easy to conclude that they are an excellent option for most of us and will benefit the shooting community as a whole.

After all my research, one issue remains unresolved in my mind. I still wonder if different types of people interested in shooting are driving the development of luxury ranges or if luxury ranges and their amenities are drawing different types of people through the front door to see what the fun and skill of shooting is all about.

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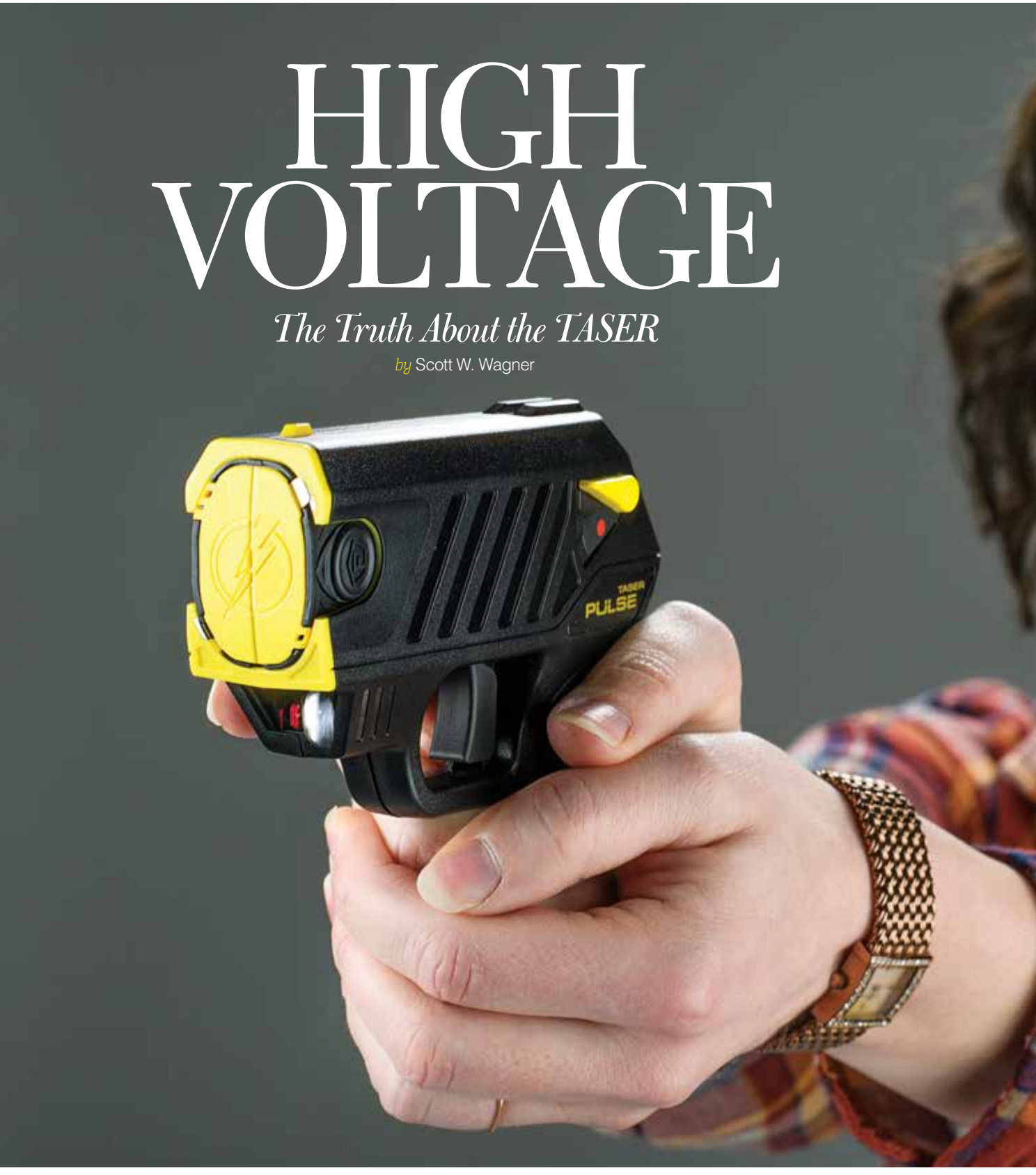
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HIGH VOLTAGE

The Truth About the TASER

by Scott W. Wagner





The word "TASER" is actually an acronym. It has nothing to do with the "Phaser" from *Star Trek* or even a laser. The word was created by the original inventor, Jack Cover. He was a fan of the "Tom Swift" series of boy's adventure books from 1911 and the later second-generation series in the late 1950s that I read as a kid. One of the books in the series was *Tom Swift and His Electric Rifle*. Cover modified that a bit into "T.homas A. S.wift's E.lectric R.ifle," and thus, a name was born that became legendary in law enforcement circles as well as in society in general — "Don't tase me, bro!"

FIRST-HAND INSTRUCTION

In 2005, one of my best friends, Mike, a probation officer, and I went to a TASER law enforcement instructor school in Port Clinton, Ohio, in order to become certified to train law enforcement personnel in the use of this amazing device. Back in those days, in order to become a certified instructor, you had to volunteer for a five-second TASER exposure or "ride" as it was called. (Sadly, TASER no longer requires that, which I think is a big mistake.)

Mike and I were looking forward to the experience with some trepidation. I'd heard from some fellow police instructors — guys who I considered to be very tough — that the TASER ride was one of the most miserable experiences they'd ever been through. That certainly didn't help our anticipation.

What makes the TASER so special is that, unlike an inexpensive "stun gun," which requires the device to be pressed into an attacker so the electricity can flow between two closely spaced probes, it can be operated in the aforementioned contact mode or by firing two barbed, stainless-steel, harpoon-like probes through the air. The probes are attached to conductive wire that's contained in the cartridge, which gives a maximum stand-off distance from the target of around 15 feet. The barbs keep the probes anchored in the skin, and, in order to be deployed effectively, the actual maximum distance you should be from an attacker when using a civilian TASER is 10 feet.



Like other non-lethal self-defense tools, such as flashlights, tactical pens or chemical agents, TASERs have many advantages and disadvantages to consider before using.

When the probes hit and stick, 50,000 volts of electricity are delivered down the wires. The amperage is very low, so there is no possibility of the charge being fatal. If the probes attach to the body properly, the electricity is delivered over a much wider distance than the couple of inches over which a basic stun gun delivers its electricity. At 10 feet, the probes' spread is about 18 inches. That probe spread is what causes neuromuscular incapacitation (NMI) rather than just a pain impulse. Oh, the pain is still there, but NMI means that, even if you could form the thoughts in your brain to tell your body to do something like fight or run, the electrical impulses are preventing the message from going from your brain to your muscles.

Voluntary exposures were done in 2005 by firing probe spreads into participants' backs. (The back contains the most muscle mass, and the more muscular you are, the worse the TASER hurts.) Before the exposure, some of the instructors were a bit worried about the probe barbs. Everyone soon found that the barbs were the least of their concerns. It actually felt good when they were yanked out.

When it was my turn to be exposed, I stood with two other students supporting my shoulders. The instructor doing the firing shouted the mandatory "TASER, TASER!" warning. I remember hearing the "pop" of the nitrogen cartridge that powers the probes out of the cartridge … and then the impact. Since the probes are energized as they fly through the air, the effect began immediately upon contact. I never felt the barbs going into my skin. What I did feel was a Velociraptor dinosaur grabbing me around the spinal column and shaking me. Time slowed down, and I proceeded to experience the longest five seconds of my life.

I had two — and only two — thoughts running through my compromised brain. One was, "Why the hell did I want to be a TASER Instructor?" The second was, "I can't breathe!" No one had warned me to take a deep breath before the exposure, and, as I was loudly yelling something along the lines of "ARRRRRRGGGGGGG" (not a pirate imitation), I had soon exhausted all the air I had on board. Because my back muscles locked, I couldn't suck in more air, which meant that the last two seconds were very miserable. Oh, and did I mention that I couldn't stand and had to be lowered to the floor?

When those eternally long five seconds were over, I could breathe again. I'd never been so happy that something was over.

TASER BELIEVER

The experience made me a believer in the device. At the time, I was working for the Union County, Ohio, Sheriff's Office, and with TASERs costing what they did — around $800 at the time — our agency couldn't afford to buy them.

Since I'd vowed that I would not work the street without one, I bought one myself and carried it there for six years. I had the chance to deploy it during a SWAT team raid against a 265-pound drug-dealing outlaw biker. He was also a combat veteran, as well as a 5th degree black belt martial arts instructor. The TASER kept him from getting to a handgun in his bedroom. That was the first time we deployed the device on a team mission. It was a beautiful moment, and the suspect was controlled and cuffed without injury — to him or to us.

The folks at TASER realized that, with their weapons system perfected, they could market a modified version to private citizens. Initially, that was a modified law enforcement X-26, the "C" model. But the decision-makers at TASER decided they could do better in tailoring their device even more. TASER kept one of the basic concepts of the X-26C alive when the company designed two newer models. That basic concept is that the civilian TASER is NOT a device designed to help capture an offender like the law enforcement version is. Rather, it is a device to allow a defender time to escape his or her attacker.

Unlike law enforcement TASERs, civilian models run for — wait for it — 30 seconds. I break out into a cold sweat when I think of what 30 seconds must be like.

The idea behind the 30-second jolt is that the private citizen defender can run away, leaving the TASER running while the attacker stays incapacitated and experiences deep regret for his attempted attack. (BONUS POINTS: If you have a police report documenting the legitimate use of the TASER in repelling a criminal attack, TASER will replace the one you left behind if it is not recovered. Talk about a guarantee!)

AN IMPERFECT WEAPON

Since I acquired my TASER in 2005, I have exposed approximately 200 "volunteers" — police cadets — to the five-second ride. Not one failed to be very obviously affected and incapacitated.

But the TASER is not a perfect weapon. It's more or less a single-shot deal. With the exception of the Law Enforcement X2 version, which can rapid-fire two "shots," any other TASER is a single-shot device capable of being reloaded. That said, there are also a number of things that need to come into play for a TASER to work.

For maximum effectiveness, both probes must hit and stick into not only clothing but also skin.

The civilian models, known as the TASER Bolt and the TASER Pulse, need to be fired at ranges of 8 to 10 feet to achieve

proper spread and affect as large an area of muscle mass as possible. This keeps some slack in the wires if the attacker twists.

Frontal shots, which probably are the most common in individual self-defense situations, should be directed at the waist/upper thigh area, since there is less muscle mass on the chest of the average person than on the back. The projected laser dot — make sure you spend the extra money for a TASER with a laser sight and LED light — shows where the top dart will land, while the lower dart diverges directly down from it at an 8-degree angle.

The probe wires must stay connected as the charge runs or the electrical connection will be broken. However, even with only one probe in an assailant, if you touch him or her with the cartridge end of the TASER while it's running, you will complete the circuit and deliver the NMI effect.

Anytime someone is wearing a heavy coat or outer layers on the upper body, target the legs (thighs). Usually there is only one layer of clothing there. Don't try to target arms, as the effect will be minimal.

Thoroughly consult all instruction and video materials before use.

While all these points sound like a series of difficult hurdles to overcome, they really aren't. The vast majority of law enforcement TASER exposures in the field are effective at stopping assailants. Any miscreant who has previously experienced a TASER exposure is likely to back down when he sees your laser dot on his body and hears you yelling, "Get away or you WILL be tased!" That has worked plenty of times for cops too.

EFFECTIVE TOOL

As I mentioned, there are currently two civilian TASERs available. The TASER Pulse has a pistol-shaped grip and a safety switch similar to the law enforcement model. The TASER Bolt, which I own for off-duty use, has a sleek shape to it, without a pistol grip, which actually is in the style of the very first TASER. It does not look like a firearm, in case it is accidentally exposed. It is compact and uses a different on/off switch. Both models have an MSRP of $399. The Training Packs are $69 and include two non-conductive practice cartridges, a practice target and two active cartridges.

Remember, there is no perfect self-defense device, and sometimes even firearms fail to stop threats. There are also self-defense situations in which the use of a firearm might put you in legal jeopardy, and that includes areas where firearms carry is not legal. The TASER is not legal in every locale, so check the website before buying. They are NOT legal in airline carry-on bags but can be checked through. As with everything else self-defense-related, always double-check your local laws.

A TASER is a great device to have in a layered self-defense system. From personal experience, I can tell you it's intimidating and effective.

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HE SAID, SHE SAID

"He Said, She Said" provides an opportunity to consider the same issue from different perspectives. In this column, Executive Editor Kevin Michalowski and Associate Editor Beth Alcazar share some thoughts about the following question: "Permit holders do their best to keep their concealed weapons concealed. But what if your gun 'prints'?"

Beth Alcazar



Women often have a harder time with "printing" than men do because of the shape, style and material of our clothing. In order to avoid the problem of your gun becoming noticeable to others (whether perceived or actual), you can keep these few things in mind.

First, ask yourself if your gun and holster are the best options you have for concealment. You might need to invest in a smaller or lighter gun, you might need a different holster or you might need to rethink where you carry that gun-and-holster combination. People have successfully carried concealed weapons on all areas around their waists, under their arms with shoulder holsters or tank tops, on their ankles or thighs, and even attached to their bras. You need to carry to suit your body type.

Second, be willing to compromise. Maybe that chiffon blouse isn't the best choice for concealed carry. Or perhaps you can add a jacket, cardigan or kimono to help hide that firearm-and-holster outline. Just be willing to rethink outfits and possibly give up some fashion luxuries. There's no doubt that safety always trumps style!

Third, test your clothes and your gear in the mirror and look for any possible issues. Raise your arms all the way up. Extend them all the way forward. Bend down to mimic the motion of picking something up off the floor. Sit down on a chair. Try any other movements that are normal for you throughout any given day. You can even record yourself on video from a few different angles or ask a loved one to observe you. Do you see a peek or a print when you go through any of those motions? If not, you're probably good to go. If so, you might need to readjust here and there or try something else to better camouflage your carry gun.

Fourth, don't worry so much. Unless you can get in trouble in your area for a noticeable concealed gun, learn to relax more when you are armed. Reject the urge to check your firearm or touch it to check if everything is "still good." Remember that you are a responsible gun owner, that you are carrying legally and that it is completely your right to do so.

Kevin Michalowski



Concealed carry means your gun should stay hidden until it is needed to save a life. Officially, a gun "prints" when the outline of that firearm shows through the cover garment. I don't really have a word for what you call it when someone can see some of the gun — or the entire thing. ("Flashing" just doesn't seem appropriate.) Printing can be a big issue. Some people don't like guns. Some people, if aware that you have a gun, will try to take it from you. Some states call even accidental display of a legally permitted firearm "brandishing," and you can be charged with a crime. (Massachusetts, I'm looking your way on this one.)

I have a standing rule I employ with my kids; it started when they were very young. If they notice my gun in any way, they are to grab my hand and whisper, "Cover that up." The phrasing is important, because I don't want them saying the word "gun" in our local department store.

So, what do you do if your gun prints? You have a few options. You can get a different gun. You can get a different holster. You can get a different cover garment. You can change where you carry the gun. My first choice to prevent printing is to carry my gun in an inside-the-waistband (IWB) holster. This means the holster, my pants and my shirt cover the gun and break up the outline. The downside to IWB carry is that one must typically buy pants one size larger to fit the gun inside the waistband. Those who are a slave to fashion might not wish to do so.

Switching up your gun or your cover garment are also options. Try to match your everyday carry gear to the environment. I don't think you will carry a full-sized pistol while wearing shorts and a tank top in the heat of summer.

Changing where you carry can also be a big help. If you consider your nose at 12 o'clock and your right arm at 3 o'clock, it is pretty clear that a gun carried right at 3 o'clock will likely print more than a gun carried at 2 or 4. Move things around so you can be comfortable and discreet.

Effective concealment is a matter of trial and error. You have to match your desire to be protected with your fashion sense, your comfort and, in some cases, your budget. You will never know what works for you until you try it.

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