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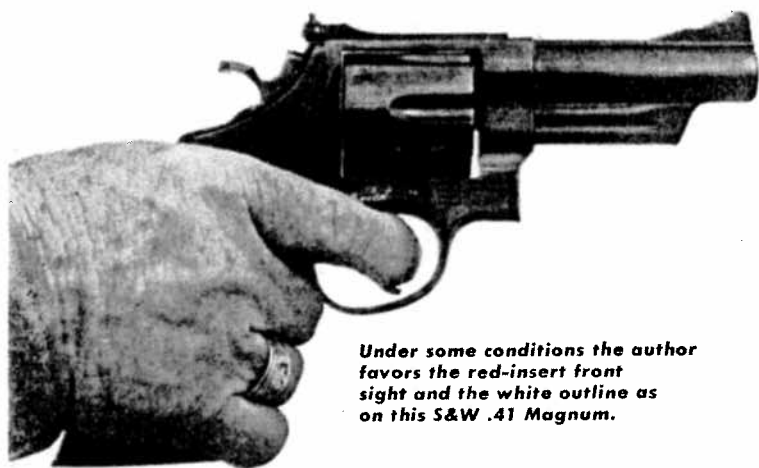
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Under some conditions the author favors the red-insert front sight and the white outline as on this S&W .41 Magnum.

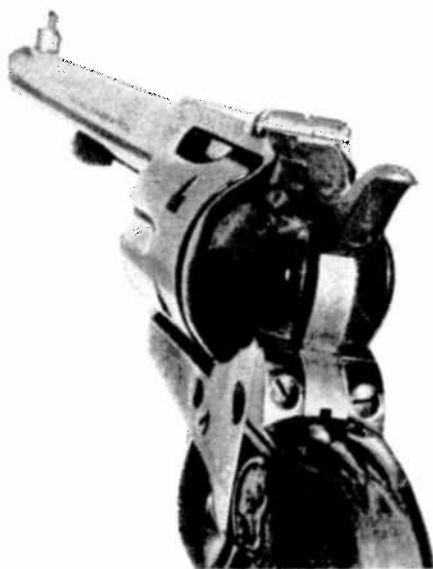
Over the years we have tried and used every conceivable type of sights on various sixguns and auto pistols. From the old blade front and hog wallow rear, through the whole gamut of bead and U type notch to the Patridge square type and even the wide angle English V with platinum center line. We have even used scope sights on the Remington Bolt action single shot .22 high velocity pistol and the Ruger single shot .256 caliber. These latter two are the only ones on which I would personally have a scope. The Bushnell scope and mount worked best, but I cannot see a scope on a sixgun for any possible use other than ammunition testing. The field of view is too small to follow running or flying game, or quickly spot game or for defense work. If you are going to mount a scope on a handgun then let it be one of the two single shot pistols mentioned above. However, let every man scratch his fleas in his own way, I'm merely stating my preference.

To me a sixgun is a tool, a handy powerful tool that you

SEEIN' SIXGUN SIGHTS

SIGHTS AND SIGHT PICTURES HAVE BEEN THE SUBJECT OF MANY DISCUSSIONS. HERE IS THE LAST WORD FROM THE EXPERT WHO WROTE THE BOOK.

BY ELMER KEITH



The rear sight on this Colt Single Action Army is adjustable for windage by gently tapping to the left or right. While size and shape of the notch isn't a target shooter's dream, the 'old timers' managed some fine shootin'.



Another view of the Single Action at left. The front sight is the bead type which is adjustable for elevation by loosening the base screw.



This highly engraved Single Action is of the "flat top" variety and is fitted with a Bisley hammer and adjustable "target" sights. The front and rear sights are adjustable for elevation and windage respectively. A shooter's eye view of the under-cut front sight (right) reduces glare and "looks" black.



can draw and shoot in a quarter of a second, or taken in both hands can kill game from squirrels and rabbits to elk and deer, or a bear if occasion demands, to say nothing of saving your hide if you should be so unlucky as to get into a gun fight. The sights should be such as suits the eyes of the individual. Young shooters with very sharp eyes often like fine sights, some like the U type rear notch with round bead front. Others, myself included, prefer the Patridge

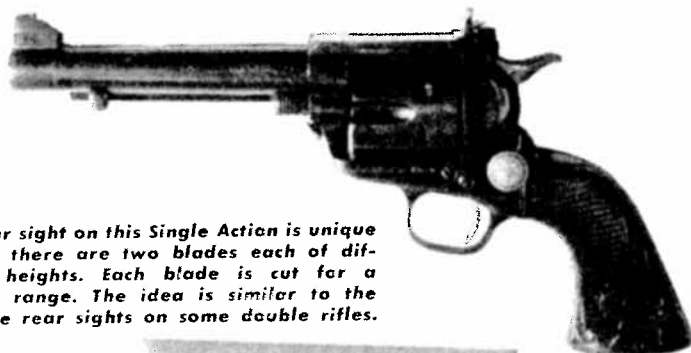
square sourdough type front blade and the square rear notch. In either type the notch must be wide enough to permit the shooter to see a good strip of light on each side of his front blade to be sure he is centering it in the rear notch.

I personally like rather wide sourdough type front sights from one tenth or one quarter inch in width and corresponding square rear notch with plenty of width. I also like the English wide angle V back sight with platinum center line and blade front. The S&W red insert as furnished on their fine magnum sixguns is excellent in most light but the plastic comes loose and cannot be smoked for target work. I prefer an insert of gold to the red even though it does not show up as well under some conditions. Some of my best pistol shooting has been done with an S&W 1917 reworked and sighted by Neil Houchins of Philadelphia. It has an extended rear Patridge sight dove-tailed into the top of the frame and a full one-fourth inch blade front sight. I have done excellent shooting on running game and flying birds with a four-inch S&W, .44 Magnum and have killed bear, elk, deer and caribou as well as numerous pests from coyotes to eagles. The four-inch, or a longer barreled version, is to my notion, along with the Ruger single action, in the same caliber, about the best handgun a man can pack for game. There is no better gun for the peace officer than a four or five inch barreled S&W or Ruger in .44 or .41 Magnum caliber.

Extra long barrels are out, as far as I am concerned. I have tried several of the so called Buntlines with ten to 12 inch barrels and cannot shoot as well with them as I can with shorter barrels. The 7½ inch Ruger Dragoon or Colt .44 Special target, or S&W Triple Lock .44 Special, or 6½ inch .44 or .41 Magnum S&W are the longest barrels I will have. The extra long barrels place the sights so far apart that they do not show up in the same focus, and also are much harder to maintain for a true and accurate sight picture. The sight picture is the secret to all fine, or long range pistol shooting. You must see it clearly without conscious effort, maintain it perfectly and then squeeze off the shot as it comes to bear on the game, or the correct lead. The trigger pull must also be such that the gun fires without conscious effort when the sight picture bears perfectly in relation to the game or target. If too hard, you have to squeeze and hold for too long. The first sighting is the clearest.

With fine sights, such as a small round bead and a U type rear notch you also need very sharp eyes that can focus perfectly and maintain the sight picture. For my part I prefer a wide square top front blade to any and all round beads as you can hold elevations much better. Narrow deep rear sight notches of either the U or the square type tend to throw shadows when the sun is on one side or the other from the shooter and make him shoot off. Likewise the sunlight on one side of a round bead will also make you shoot to one side. With a wide blade front sight and wide square type rear with plenty of width to allow a good strip of light on each side of the front sight, you have no problem, and you can see

continued on page 68



The rear sight on this Single Action is unique in that there are two blades each of different heights. Each blade is cut for a specific range. The idea is similar to the multiple rear sights on some double rifles.

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SIXGUN SIGHTS

continued from page 29

that perfect sight picture without effort or consciously trying to line up the sights. The wide angle English V throws no side shadows at all, and the blade or bead front shows up in the bottom of the V perfectly and you can do very fine shooting with such a sight. It is also one of the fastest sights of all. Remember young eyes can see fine sights perfectly but older eyes are far better off with wide sights both front and rear. The younger shooter can also use them just as well, once he gets used to them.

In long range shooting you simply hold the top of the blade above the level of the rear sight and with enough practice you can learn exactly how high to hold for various ranges, with the target perched on the top center of the front blade. I once designed a front Patridge type sight for the late D.W. King. He and S&W furnished it on their target guns for a time. It had three narrow gold bars spaced evenly down the face of the front blade and you could soon learn how much sight to hold up, and with a wide shallow Patridge type rear it made a most excellent long range sight. The Gun Re-Blue Company, now long gone, made and fitted these Keith front sights for a time but they are no longer made. The S&W red insert front target sight can be used in much the same way by holding the top of the red square level with the top of the rear sight for point blank range. Then for longer range, hold up half of the red above the rear sight blade. For still longer range, hold all of the red portion of the front sight above the top flat of the rear sight. Perch an equal amount of black sight blade, under the red square, over the top of the rear, which for even greater range, will take you out to darn long sixgun range. Never try to cover the target for longer shots with the point blank sight picture. Learn to hoist up some front sight over that rear sight, while you keep the front sight perfectly centered in the rear notch and perch the target on the top center of the front sight. It is not difficult at all once you learn the correct sight picture for various ranges. I have taught many gunmen to do good long range shooting in a day's session using this method. Many of them had previously thought a sixgun effective only at point blank range.

Those using a scope on a sixgun for very slow deliberate pest shooting can of course hold the cross-wires over the target the same as when used on a rifle. For some reason few shooters today have learned the old timers method of holding up some front sight in the rear notch above the level of the rear sight. I have seen many wide angle English V sights marked 100 to 300 yards on the

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one standing rear sight. For this reason the head was held down in the bottom of the wide angle V for point blank 100 yards, and for 200 yards the bead was held about half-way up from the bottom to the top ears of the wide angle V, and for 300 yards they held the bead level with the top of the wide angle V, and could thus be sighted for any range from 100 to 300 yards. The same sights can be used in the same way on sixguns. In fact, many flat top sixguns can be fitted with a wide angle V back sight, with platinum or gold center line. Even the English sight with several leaves can be fitted to flat top frames and the various leaves be filed down to shoot to the correct ranges with one given load.

Getting back to the sight picture, take a standard 25 yard pistol target and shoot a ten shot group with your usual sight picture on that black bull's eye. Then take another target and turn the back toward you and shoot at the center of the big white card and you will find nine times out of ten, you shoot a smaller group when shooting at the big white square than when you are trying to see your sights imposed on or under a black bull's eye. The reason for this is that you have a perfectly clean white square of paper on which to impose your sight picture, and consequently you see the sight picture more clearly. You will often find when you reverse the target that you have made a higher score shooting at the center of the paper than you did when trying to aim on a black bull's eye with black sights.

If you have to wear corrected glasses, then it's best to have them adjusted to show a perfectly clear sight picture even though the target may be slightly blurred. Concentrate on that sight picture as it is important and you accomplish better pistol shooting even though the target itself may be slightly out of focus. In all aimed pistol shooting, that sight picture must be seen clear, sharp and maintained. Hip shooting and so called point shooting is something else. For all hip shooting, pay no attention to the gun, but focus the eyes on the target. Concentrate on that alone, point the gun as you would your forefinger and shoot. Practice will enable you to point that gun as accurately as your finger, whether slowly and deliberately or in a quarter of a second of fast draw. Always poke the gun out and at the target, just as you would your finger, and fire when the gun is extended. Sure, some of the cap snappers can fire faster with the butt slanted to the rear, although they almost do a back somersault trying to get the gun out and fired in the fastest possible time. Accuracy does suffer as a consequence. The closer the gun is fired to the top of the holster the less accurate will be the shot. When the gun is thrown toward the target in

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a quick fast poking motion and fired, it then lines up with the target. The same in aerial work at cans or bottles in fast double action work, poke the gun at the target as you pull through the long heavy double action pull and after each shot again poke it at the target for repeat shots. While a good sight picture is essential in fast shooting at aerial targets, with enough practice you will often catch yourself hitting said targets by the feel of the gun alone and with your eyes focused on the target.

I remember one winter in the thirties, Charles J. Kohler of Saginaw, Michigan, wrote me and asked if I would carry out an experiment for their revolver club. They claimed they did not believe that Ed McGivern could put six shots through a gallon can tossed up 18 to 20 feet, double action before the can hit the ground. With this in mind they gave me a .38-44 heavy duty S&W five inch .38 Special and 500 rounds of Western ammunition, and I set to work. Not having anyone to toss the cans as McGivern did, I simply held the can in my left hand and the gun in the right, raised the gun as I tossed the can upward. As the can hit the top of its height I started double action shooting. I practiced all winter, firing six rounds, then snapping on the empties several times to save my firing pin. Then I reloaded with live rounds and repeated the procedure. After several months of practice and using up all that ammunition, as well as a couple of cartons of .22 Long Rifle from a K-22 S&W I called in three witnesses, tossed up a gallon can and proceeded to hit it with all six shots, five times straight. I wrote Kohler that I knew Ed McGivern never mentioned doing any stunt until he had done it many times but they would not believe it, so I carried out the practice and proved that it could be done even when the shooter tossed his own cans up to 20 feet. Many times when a slug would hit the rim of the can and spin it off to one side, or over my back, I caught myself continuing to hit it by feel of the gun alone and without any sight picture. I also have a picture of McGivern breaking five clay pigeons thrown in the air at once, with two four inch barreled guns, breaking three with one and two with the other. Ed always claimed, in his writing, that he saw and used the sights, but this picture clearly shows the five puffs of smoke from the broken clay targets and the guns held well down below a line drawn from his eyes to the targets. This proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that he was doing it by point shooting and not aiming. Also the targets were far too widely spread and broke too close together as to preclude the possibility of his shifting his eyes from one gun to the other. Ed had shot

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so long he could place a slug anywhere he wanted, at close range on either still or moving targets, by feel of the gun alone. Many people now doubt Ed McGivern's skill, but there is no doubt in the minds of a great many old Montanans who knew him and watched him shoot. He burned more powder in double action shooting than any living man, and to my notion was the fastest double action shot as well as one of the best that ever lived.

Bill Jordan is another one of the fastest guns who ever lived and equally deadly with fast or slow double action shooting. Bill does not even have a hammer spur on his guns and shoots double action with his eyes focused on what he wants to hit. He can split a card across a table or break aspirin tablets at six to ten feet, by simply focusing his eyes on the tiny target and shooting double action by the feel of the gun. I think Jordan is a far faster man than McGivern ever was, when it comes to quick draw and hit. Bill Jordan is so fast, he can hold a Ping-Pong ball on the back of his hand some six-inches over the butt of the gun, draw and shoot, while the Ping-Pong ball falls down in his empty holster. Bill pokes his gun at the target, McGivern also pokes the gun at the target and pictures prove this to be true.

Good sixgun shooting is all in practice and a perfect sight picture for aimed shooting. Learning to focus the eyes on the target alone is the big thing in all point or fast draw shooting, also poking the gun at the target. The farther out the gun is poked at the target before it is fired, the more accurately will the shot be placed. There is a vast difference between snapping a cap for time, or a wax bullet fired by the primer alone, to handling a heavy .44 Magnum with full loads in fast double action shooting. I have heard many say the .44 Magnum was too slow to get in a quick second shot because of recoil. I question the need of a second shot if they plant that first one, unless there is more than one target, in which case you can always shift targets as you pull the gun down out of recoil and poke it at the next target.

For real fast shooting the double action S&W is actually faster when used by trained men, than is the automatic. I found this out shooting at aerial targets and wrote McGivern about it. His reply was he found the same thing to be true, stating, "The automatics hop around all over the place and cannot be pulled back on target as you can a double action." He found the .45 automatics, the Super .38 and older .38 Colt automatics all slower when trying to make six hits on gallon cans tossed up 18 to 20 feet, than with the double action S&W .38 Special and I found the same thing true.

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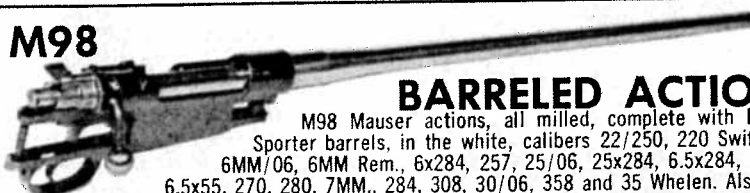
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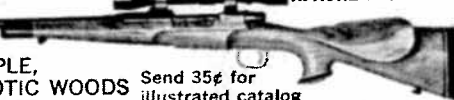
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The Last Word

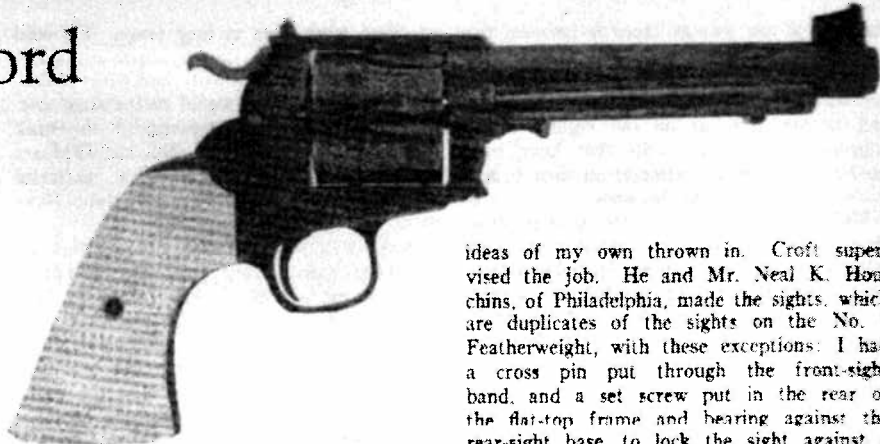
By ELMER KEITH

MOST men have a hobby—all men should have, as a recreation, pastime or diversion from their regular work. A very good friend once wrote me, "Whenever you find a man without a hobby, they had just as well put him to bed with a shovel, as he will never be worth a d—." I think that there is a lot of truth in this statement.

Like many another, for years I have been using the old Peacemaker and trying to improve its shooting through the use of better sights and ammunition. I have tried many different front sights, from the Sheard and Lyman down to the common rifle sight dovetailed into the barrel. I have also tried cutting out the rear notch into a U, or a square or Patridge rear, using small files for the job. It is very easy to improve the rear sights thus. The rear notch should be wide enough to permit of one's seeing a little light on each side of the front sight, so as to properly center it. How often I have wished for good adjustable sights that would bring the point of impact and point of aim together, for my heavy loads. Many times I've worked up loads to shoot right with the fixed Colt sights for elevation; then in case the gun shot to one side, I would bend the front sight by placing the sharp side or edge of a cake of type metal under the base of the sight, while some friend, often the better half, held the gun. Then with a hammer and some soft metal, such as brass, copper or type metal, for a punch, I would drive the whole sight over into correct line. This method, if done right, leaves the sight straight up and down, as it bends the whole sight at the base and will correct most guns laterally. It's often quite a job to get an S. A. A. with fixed sights adjusted for one particular load. These guns frequently come from the factory shooting high, low or out of line, unless one specifies that his gun be sighted up before it leaves the factory.

The Colt factory furnishes but one standard model of the S. A. A. now, in plain and fancy finish, though at one time they did furnish flat-top Bisley and S. A. A. models with target sights. It's a simple matter at the factory to adjust sights on the S. A. I have watched my friend Fitzgerald remove the extractor tube, slip a polished steel rod of land diameter into the barrel and clamp same tightly in a special barrel vise, with padded jaws to fit the contour of the barrel; then slip his hammer handle through the cylinder space in the frame and turn the barrel to correct line, though sometimes it required some sighting shots and additional moving to get it just right. That's all very nice if one has the tools, but we on isolated ranches and in the hills have no such tools, and do not care to be without our guns from three to six weeks, or more, either.

My good friend, S. H. Croft, put in a lot of time, thought and money improving



the S. A. Colt. He was working to obtain a light-weight weapon for self-defense purposes. However, a combination of some of his improvements added to the regular-weight 6-gun makes the last word in a fine, trigger S. A. for target or game shooting. Mr. Croft has designed the changes necessary to convert an ordinary S. A. Colt into the finest trigger single-action imaginable, either in the Featherweight model, or, at my suggestion, in a heavy, all-around 6-gun.

Mr. Croft had four models of Featherweight guns made up from S. A. Army and Bisley Colts, which I described in a previous issue of the RIFLEMAN. He worked out and had made up his No. 3 grip, which is perfect. At about the same time, or a little later, J. D. O'Meara finished up his pet 6-gun grip. Both he and Croft used the Bisley back strap and S. A. A. guard and front strap. The Bisley back strap is bent to the same angle as the S. A. A. When O'Meara had finished, I found that his grip and Croft's No. 3 were almost identical. For a gun to be used with trigger this No. 3 is the latest and best grip ever put on a 6-gun.

In giving Mr. Croft's Featherweights an extensive and thorough try-out, I discovered their strong points, as well as their few weak ones. Personally, except for a pocket gun, I prefer the S. A. left full weight. Croft designed these for pocket guns, however. I favor leaving the extractor on, unless the barrel be cut down too short for it to work. Of the different Croft grips, No. 1 was standard S. A. A., while No. 3 was the best grip of all. For the slip gun the regular S. A. A. grip is the best, and about the only one that can be used.

The S. A. A. is one of the best-balanced and easiest handled of 6-guns. The regular S. A. A. back strap, while by far the best shaped of any on the market, and the only one for the slip gun, does not come up as high in back as it should to completely fill the hand. By bending and welding the Bisley back strap to the same general contour as the S. A. A., and combining with the S. A. A. guard and front strap, we have the No. 3 grip.

Needless to say, after playing with Croft's guns a while I decided to have one of my S. A. A. guns worked over to incorporate some of Croft's improvements, with a few

ideas of my own thrown in. Croft supervised the job. He and Mr. Neal K. Houchins, of Philadelphia, made the sights, which are duplicates of the sights on the No. 1 Featherweight, with these exceptions: I had a cross pin put through the front-sight band, and a set screw put in the rear of the flat-top frame and bearing against the rear-sight base, to lock the sight against a possible blow.

Mr. Croft had Mr. R. F. Sedgley weld up the frame into a flat top, and extend it back over the top of the hammer; and also fit the new type base pin and catch. This pin is a tool-steel job, and is a very close fit. Mr. Sedgley also made the No. 3 grip, welded the base onto the S. A. A. hammer to fill the long cut in the top of the Bisley back strap, and made the wide trigger, which of course required some cutting out of the trigger hole in the guard. The hammer is one J. D. O'Meara had previously fitted with Bisley top for me, by dovetailing and brazing in the Bisley thumb piece. O'Meara also made and fitted the walrus ivory stocks. Sedgley made and fitted the new type mainspring. He and Croft designed this very excellent spring for the S. A. A. It is not as liable to breakage as the regular S. A. A. spring and is very much more sensitive and quicker than the standard spring; and the gun cocks as easily as when Newman's "far country" spring is used. This Newman spring is unbreakable, and the best for absolute reliability. The Croft-Sedgley spring is without a doubt the fastest in action of any S. A. A. spring, and should improve the S. A. greatly for target-shooting.

We decided to call this gun model No. 5. The sights are square, or Patridge; the rear one adjustable for windage in the same manner as the S. & W. target sights. The front-sight blade is adjustable for elevation by the turning of a screw in the rear of the base. This gives very close micrometer adjustment, with a locking screw on the side of the base. This type of sight and blade gives maximum sight radius. The front sight elevates at the muzzle and not an inch to the rear, as on most target 6-guns. The front sight is fitted by means of a barrel band, base and band being one piece of steel. Two blades were made for this gun. One of them I am going to have fitted with a Call type gold bead.

I had long wished for a wide trigger instead of the narrow S. A. A. one placed in the left side of the guard. Croft had one made by Sedgley for this gun that seems to fit perfectly the contour of my trigger finger. This trigger is set back close to the guard, which greatly improves the gun, to my notion. It gives about the same difference in

the feel of the gun as there is between the old and new model .45 Auto. Colt. This also helps one to properly squeeze the trigger without exerting pressure too far ahead and to one side, as on the regular S. A. triggers. All 6-gun cranks that have ever used a Bisley-topped hammer on their S. A.'s prefer it to the regular hammer.

The new type base pin has a large head that is easily grasped to remove the pin, instead of the regular head that one usually had to use the head of a shell on to pull it out. Unless the regular S. A. is fitted with an extra strong spring in the base-pin catch, the recoil will drive the pin forward, and in some cases tie up the gun. This new catch is a lever that swings into a square cut in base pin, and no amount of firing can loosen the pin. At the same time it is very easy to remove the pin for cleaning. A spring plunger locks the lever.

The illustration is an exact likeness of this gun. However, one must handle and shoot it to appreciate the excellence of its grip and balance. The grip has very close to the same angle as that of the regular S. A. A.; and the gun is quickly aimed and fired. The gun is a natural pointer to any one used to the S. A. A.

Mr. Houchins fitted the barrel up very close to the cylinder, for smokeless powder. Both he and O'Meara do a very good job of fitting barrels and cylinders.

The flat-top frame is extended back about one-half inch more than standard, which adds materially to the sight radius and to the general beauty of the gun. The front-sight band is sweated and taper-pinned to the barrel. The trigger pull is around 3½ pounds, and is very clean and snappy.

Using a charge of 5 grains of Bull's-eye and a 250-grain cast bullet sized to .431, I have put five shots under a silver dollar at 15 yards with the right hand, and all five under or touching a dollar with the left hand; and I am not a target 6-gun shot. Such accuracy is good enough for me and will get meat when I need it. Understand, I can not hold that well at all times.

For self-defense and quick draw these sights can be improved by having the front blade a straight taper from rear to top, and non-adjustable, so there will be nothing to catch on clothing or holster. Also the rear sight can be made lower by eliminating the adjusting screws, and driving the sight to either side to line up, then locking with a set screw or by tinning and sweating.

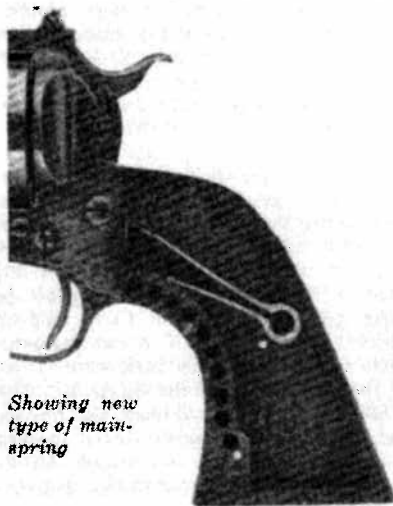
To my notion this is the finest and best Colt in existence. I know there are many with inlay work and finer finish, but they lack Croft's many improvements, which are to me worth far more than all the inlay work, as they are a real help in landing a bullet where I wish it to go. For general excellence of grip, balance, sights, trigger and hammer, I do not think this gun can be improved upon.

Last spring I killed with this gun over 50 magpies, around two dozen crows and hawks, six horned owls, and a bobcat, to say nothing of over a hundred blacktail jack rabbits and a few woodchucks. It does

excellent work even at long range. I should like to see the Colt factory turn out a duplicate of this gun in plain and fancy finish, and am quite sure it would find a large sale. I wish to take this opportunity to thank Messrs. Croft, Sedgley, Houchins and O'Meara for their painstaking care and masterful workmanship; and also my friend John Newman, who gave me the ivory.

Now, four months after I wrote this article, the walrus ivory grips had shrunk to such an extent that I was forced to take them off and have the gun restocked, this time with carved elephant ivory, which will not shrink. The right stock has a carved Mexican eagle perfectly executed, which still further improves the already excellent grip. The raised carving is rough and fills in the palm of one's hand.

It has been quite recently that I have changed from .45 Colt to .44 Special caliber for my 6-guns, for a number of reasons. For one thing, I have found it much easier



Showing new type of main-spring

to obtain good, reliable, accurate reloading tools for the .44 than for the .45 Colt. The bore diameter of Colt's .44 Special guns does not vary to anything like the extent of the .45 Colt. I have seen .45 Colt guns with groove and cylinder diameters measuring only .450, which with a heavy load is very apt to scrap the old Peacemaker. Remember, the .45 Colt has been built for over half a century, and several different generations have bored the various guns; so is it any wonder that guns of various ages vary in bore diameter?

If a man wishes the most powerful handgun, and still wishes to use only factory ammunition, then the .45 Colt is the one best bet, with Remington black-powder loads. However, if he wishes to reload, then the .44 Special is the best of them all. The walls of the cylinder in the .44 are thicker than in the .45, also the rear end of the barrel; and the .44 will stand more pressure with safety than the .45. The .44 Special is more accurate and can be safely loaded to give equal or often better velocity than the .45 Colt with the same weight bullets.

I am all through with heavy smokeless loads in the .45 Colt. F. C. Ness worked

up a charge of 16.3 grains of No. 80 behind my .45 Colt bullet of 260 grains. This load gave 935 feet per second, with around 15,000 pounds' pressure, and was by far the best and most powerful load I ever used in the Peacemaker. However, it took just seventy-odd of these loads to crack the rear end of the barrel in four places, and bulge the walls of all chambers over the bolt cuts, in my wife's pet 6-gun. This gun was No. 335000, and in perfect condition. These cartridges were loaded by the B. & M. factory and charges carefully weighed. So nothing but black in the .45 for me. I have found that King's Semi-Smokeless is the dirtiest of all powders in a 6-gun, though excellent in a rifle.

I designed my .45 Colt black-powder bullet of 260 grains some three years ago, and lately Mr. Croft had an exact duplicate made up in .44 Special. He had two weights of bullet made up, one of 260 grains and one of 280 grains, as man-stoppers. I worked up to a maximum charge of 15 grains No. 80 behind the 260-grain bullet. I believe this load develops 1,000 feet per second, as it gives over 2 inches more penetration than the Ness load in the .45, or the Remington black-powder load. Both this Croft .44 Special bullet and my .45 Colt bullet have short seating depth and extend nearly flush with end of the cylinder, which leaves room for really powerful loads. These bullets also cut down the jump from cylinder to barrel, and improve accuracy. They were designed to give maximum shock up to 50 yards. However, I made several long-range kills on jack rabbits at over 100 yards, and some up to 150 yards. This 15-grain charge with the Croft 260-grain bullet is a maximum load, and I am sure that a load of 14 grains of No. 80 is just as accurate and a lot easier on the cylinder bolt cuts. I fired several hundred of these heavy loads without damaging a new .44 Special Colt S. A. in the least, except for a slight burring of the bolt cuts, which can well be expected when one uses a 6-gun with such heavy charges.

I started in with a light charge of No. 80 behind the 280-grain bullet, and gradually worked it up to 12 grains before the powder burned very well, finally stopping at 13 grains as the maximum safe load. This really is an awful load—sharp report, and recoil fully as heavy as the heaviest .45 Colt black loads. I used bullets of around 1 to 10 tin and lead. Never shoot bullets in a 6-gun that can not be shoved through cylinder mouths by hand. For these maximum loads bullets should be not over two one-thousandths over size of grooves. All charges should be carefully weighted to one-tenth of a grain.

These loads both burn well, and will stay in a 2-inch circle at 15 yards like a possum in a hollow log. I really believe the 280-grain bullet too long and heavy, and with its very blunt nose, like the old .41 Colt, for long-range work; and what 200-yard shooting I have done did not indicate that it is very accurate at this range. Both bullets are amply accurate for the purpose in-

tended—namely, as man-stoppers up to 50 yards. The 260-grain load seems to be considerably more accurate at long range. The 280-grain load is, I believe, the most powerful man-stopper in existence. The blunt point delivers an awful wallop. Couple that with its extreme weight and fairly good velocity—853 feet per second with 15,000 pounds' pressure—and it is bound to knock all the fight out of most any sized man if hit anywhere between the pelvic bone and where his hair ought to be. However, these bullets are not the thing for target-shooting, or for game-killing at a distance of over 50 yards.

The experts all advocate a small powder space for smokeless powder. I believe they mean powders like Bull's-eye and No. 5. At any rate, my experience leads me to believe just the opposite when using No. 80. I find Bull's-eye at its best when bullets are seated down to standard depth; yet with No. 80 I can load much more powerful loads when I have more powder space.

After fooling with different bullets in the 6-gun for years, and carefully noting their effects on game and their grouping on the target, I have finally designed what I honestly believe to be the best all-around bullet in existence. I drafted this bullet for the .44 Special to go with my No. 5 gun. I found that to suit the target shooter a bullet must be long and heavy, with correct balance; and must be extremely accurate. Last, but not least, it must cut a clean hole in the target. To be extremely accurate at long range it must have some taper at the point and have a long bearing on the lands. It must provide space for plenty of lubricant. The base band must be wide to insure accuracy. There must be a wide band of groove diameter in front of the crimping groove to snugly ride the throat of the cylinder and insure perfect lining up of the cartridge in the chamber. The bullet must have a good crimping groove to properly hold it in the case against recoil.

It should seat nearly flush with the end of the cylinder, to cut down the jump as much as possible. It must provide sufficient powder space for heavy loads of black or No. 80, and still provide correct space for accurate medium loads of Bull's-eye or No. 5. The S. & W. cylinders are shorter than the Colt; so this had to be taken into consideration in designing the length of bullet point. My bullet seats flush with the end of the S. & W. cylinders, and nearly so in the Colt.

Now the question of killing power. A bullet must have a blunt nose like my .45 Colt or Croft's .44 Special, or have a flat point like the .44-40. The two first-named bullets are not the best as regards point for



Testing one of Croft's Featherweights at 300 yards

long range, so I used the flat point. A long, tapered point bucks the wind better than the short .44-40 point. Then again enters that question of wad-cutting on the target. To get both an excellent long-range missile and one that would cut a clean hole in the target or game, I designed my bullet with a long, flat point, with a wide band just ahead of the crimping groove. This band has a square shoulder at the forward edge, and cuts a clean hole to a certainty. It also lines the cartridge up perfectly. As I size them they measure .431 in diameter. The base of point just forward of this band mikes .378; the flat point is about .280 in diameter. This makes a bullet with enough taper to insure maximum penetration on heavy game, and one that will tear tissue at the same time.

So far I have used this bullet on a great many jack rabbits and ducks, and have killed several trapped coyotes with it from No. 5 gun. It is the most accurate bullet I have ever used, and tears an unbelievably large hole in game. I have shot several jack rabbits up to and including 150 yards, and even at this distance the bullet never fails to knock all the run out of them. Many that I shot broadside had a 2-inch hole in their opposite side where the bullet emerged.

Now I am going to make a statement that many will doubt: *A jack rabbit will stand just as much killing as a man*; and I have seen both killed with 6-guns. I have had any number of jacks run off after being shot broadside through paunch or lungs with the heaviest .45 Colt loads with standard bullets. Many of them I never found.

I worked up a charge of 5½ grains of Bull's-eye behind the new Keith bullet for use in No. 5. This is a fine medium load

and wonderfully accurate in this gun, even at long range. For my other .44 Special guns I loaded up to 35 grains of FFG black by pouring the powder through a long tube, to settle it in the case. But it is with No. 80 that I developed the best long-range load. I started in with 12 grains and worked up to 13.5 grains' weight. This last is a very powerful load, shoots very flat and seems just as accurate as its lighter cousins. It must develop very close to 1,075 feet per second. I believe the pressure to be not over 15,000 pounds. It might be possible to increase this charge to 14 grains; but I am contented with it as it is. It slips a bullet endwise through a coyote as if he were so much cheese, and messes him up in great shape inside. I found 13 grains to be a wonderful load and not as hard on bolt cuts. My Colt guns mike .4285 to bottom of grooves, and I size bullets down to .431 for these loads. Recently I killed a duck at 75 yards with this bullet and 5½ grains of Bull's-eye in gun No. 5; also several porcupines at around 50 yards, and jack rabbits at much longer ranges, all with one hit each.

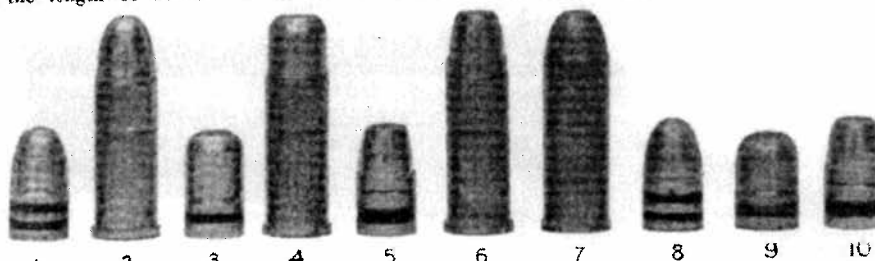
I was shooting at a big white jack at 300 yards, and though I did not get him I put one bullet just under his belly and one within an inch of his back. Many will doubt that a man can shoot a 6-gun this accurately. However, Mr. Croft saw me demonstrate this summer, killing an eagle and several jacks at 150 yards. For this long-range work I nearly always lie down on my back and hold the gun between my knees with both hands, though I have killed jacks at 150 yards while standing. I have another position which I use a great deal for this long-range work. I lie on my side, prop my head up with one hand and rest my gun arm along my right leg.

Anyone wishing to reload with this bullet can obtain moulds from the Lyman Gun Sight Corporation, Middlefield, Conn. The bullet will be known and catalogued as the Keith .44 Special. The photos show the bullet even better than I can describe it. A mould will also be made by Lyman for this Keith bullet in hollow-base type, to use 14 grains No. 80 for long range.

I wish to stress the fact that anyone reloading with No. 80 should first find the groove diameter of their barrel, and keep their bullets sized to not over .0025 larger than this size. See that bullets will slip easily through cylinder mouths by hand.

Weigh all powder charges carefully to one-tenth grain, and crimp as nearly the same each time as possible. The above loads referred to all had bullets crimped in their proper crimping groove. One should start in with a light charge of powder and carefully work up to the de-

(Continued on p. 30)



1—Standard bullet for .44 Special and Russian. 2—The loaded cartridge. 3—260-grain Croft Man-Stopper, .44 Special. 4—Loaded cartridge. 5—Keith .44 Special, 280-grain. 6—As loaded in cartridge. 7—.45 Colt factory load, for comparison. 8—255 grain standard bullet for .44 Special. 9—Keith .45 Man-Stopper. 10—New Keith .44 Special bullet

5. D. G. Place, Lima, Ohio	349
6. Harvey B. Taylor, Las Vegas, N. Mex.	343
7. H. D. Fashbaugh, Monroe, Mich.	341
8. S. S. Yeaton, Annapolis, Md.	330
9. Frank L. Yoran, Tarrytown, N. Y.	262

DISQUALIFIED—CERTIFICATE NOT RETURNED

10. Luther W. Mumford, Wymore, Nebr.	175
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NOT REPORTED

11. C. D. Wild, Janesville, Iowa	
12. G. L. Noland, Columbia, Mo.	
13. Dr. Carl W. Wahrer, Sacramento, Calif.	
14. Lt. F. M. Alexander, Fort Missoula, Mont.	

BULLETIN NO. 26—FEBRUARY 25, 1929

SLOW-FIRE 20-YARD PISTOL MATCH—31 ENTRIES

Conditions.—Open to all; 40 shots slow fire.

Name and address	Score
1. Victor A. Sharrett, Doylestown, Pa.	366
2. Harry S. Menkel, New York, N. Y.	366
3. Walter A. Gear, Cleveland, Ohio	361
4. H. D. Fashbaugh, Monroe, Mich.	359
5. E. Mannie, St. Louis, Mo.	359
6. J. W. Aitken, Overly, N. Dak.	357
7. D. G. Place, Lima, Ohio	352
8. A. H. Amick, Jr., Cumberland, Md.	349
9. R. Wilzewski, Fort Bliss, Tex.	347
10. Norman Sterrett, Beaver Falls, Pa.	344
11. H. A. T. Harris, Westfield, N. J.	342
12. Jules A. Gredalis, New York, N. Y.	339
13. Sgt. Karl Krauthelm, Honolulu, T. H.	338

14. Kenneth W. Wright, Chanute, Kans.	327
15. H. M. Webster, Hartford, Conn.	322
16. Hubert W. Amundsen, Plainfield, N. J.	327
17. David Armitage, Philadelphia, Pa.	325
18. G. A. Hughes, Youngstown, Ohio	317
19. Raymond D. Bierly, Buffalo, N. Y.	315
20. Glenn H. McClellan, Buffalo, N. Y.	314
21. Fred B. Monell, Jr., New York, N. Y.	307
22. Renny Nichols, Buffalo, N. Y.	296
23. Daniel F. Cain, Buffalo, N. Y.	296
24. Edward J. Betts, Buffalo, N. Y.	292

NOT REPORTED

25. Dr. Carl W. Wahrer, Sacramento, Calif.	
26. W. M. Christophers, New York, N. Y.	
27. Raymond J. Brown, South Grange, N. J.	
28. Tom Threepersons, Gila, N. Mex.	
29. Philip P. Quayle, Kings Mills, Ohio	
30. J. S. Crowther, Jr., Cleveland Heights, Ohio	

DID NOT SHOOT—TARGETS RETURNED

31. Oscar C. Eidman, Belleville, Ill.	
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BULLETIN NO. 27—FEBRUARY 25, 1929

TIMED-FIRE 50-FOOT PISTOL MATCH—8 ENTRIES

Conditions.—Open to all; 40 shots timed fire.

Name and address	Score
1. C. D. Wild, Janesville, Iowa	376
2. R. Wilzewski, Fort Bliss, Tex.	374
3. Sgt. Joseph Might, Fort Ontario, N. Y.	372
4. D. G. Place, Lima, Ohio	369
5. G. A. Hughes, Youngstown, Ohio	363

6. H. D. Fashbaugh, Monroe, Mich.	358
7. W. R. Gildard, South River, N. J.	313

NOT REPORTED

8. G. L. Noland, Columbia, Mo.	
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BULLETIN NO. 28—FEBRUARY 25, 1929

TIMED FIRE 20-YARD PISTOL MATCH—20 ENTRIES

Conditions.—Open to all; 40 shots timed fire.

Name and address	Score
1. G. A. Hughes, Youngstown, Ohio	387
2. Harry S. Menkel, New York, N. Y.	383
3. H. D. Fashbaugh, Monroe, Mich.	381
4. Walter A. Gear, Cleveland, Ohio	380
5. J. W. Aitken, Overly, N. Dak.	378
6. Hubert S. Miller, Cincinnati, Ohio	378
7. D. G. Place, Lima, Ohio	377
8. R. Wilzewski, Fort Bliss, Tex.	377
9. Kenneth W. Wright, Chanute, Kans.	375
10. H. W. Amundsen, Plainfield, N. J.	373
11. Fred B. Monell, Jr., New York, N. Y.	370
12. J. S. Crowther, Jr., Cleveland Heights, Ohio	370
13. H. M. Webster, Hartford, Conn.	366
14. J. A. Gredalis, New York, N. Y.	364
15. G. H. McClellan, Buffalo, N. Y.	356
16. H. A. T. Harris, Westfield, N. J.	349
17. Raymond D. Bierly, Buffalo, N. Y.	342
18. Daniel F. Cain, Buffalo, N. Y.	332
19. Renny Nichols, Buffalo, N. Y.	317

NOT REPORTED

20. Tom Threepersons, Gila, N. M.	
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THE LAST WORD

(Continued from page 17)

sired power, watching primers and noting if the cases extract easily, as they should. If this is done and one uses common horse-sense he need not be afraid of No. 80 in a 6-gun. One more thing. Bullets for maximum loads should always be very hard. Though a soft bullet of 1 to 20 or 1 to 15 works beautifully with medium powder charges, and also upsets well on impact, a bullet should never be used softer than 1 to 10 or 12 with heavy No. 80 loads.

What we really need now is an improvement in 6-gun powders; something suitable alike for small, medium and heavy loads, and that will bulk well, so that it can be loaded through the Ideal measure. It should not be sensitive to climatic changes, as is

No. 80. One should never load a maximum load of No. 80 without first testing with lighter loads, as this powder dries out from heat; hence different cans purchased from different parts of the country may vary in the permissible load. Bull's-eye I have found to be a very stable powder, but it is more or less erosive. Could we get such a powder as I have outlined above that would be no more erosive than black, then we would have the proper thing. In view of the vast strides the powder companies have made in the past few years in modern rifle powders, I do not think it is too much to hope for something better for our belt artillery.

Anyone wishing my bullet for the standard pistol powders can order the 255-grain flat-base mould, while those desiring a mould for No. 80 and long-range work, with high

velocity, can specify the 235 grain hollow base. I have suggested that if possible the moulds be made with an interchangeable plug in the base, so that one can, by turning the plug, cast either the Keith 248-grain or the 235-grain hollow-base bullet. I have requested that this hollow be made very narrow across, thereby leaving heavy walls around the cavity, so that, when the bullet is cast hard, it will be practically impossible for the powder gases to expand it. I believe the Keith 235-grain plus 14 grains of No. 80 will develop close to, if not fully, 1,100 feet per second.

I believe, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that my new bullet is accurate and capable of performing with the very finest of holding. I should like to see just what it will do in the hands of a skilled target shot.

That Good Old American Spirit

**"We Have
Just Begun
To Fight!"**

is still existent among riflemen, even though it may show signs of dying out among others of the citizenry. Beaten twice by both Swiss and Swedes, we are going back in 1929 to fight it out again—this time on the home ranges of our Swedish friends at Stockholm. You may not be able to go over and shoot it out shoulder-to-shoulder with the others at Stockholm in August, but you can help the lads who wear the Red, White and Blue on their shooting jackets to put up a good fight by seeing that they are well equipped and live comfortably while they are on foreign soil.

Use the blank below to send in your contribution to the 1929 International Team Fund. "We have just begun to fight!" Let's carry the battle to the other fellow on his own grounds!

I wish to be credited with \$..... as my contribution to the 1929 International Team Fund.

Name

Address

NOTE.—International Team contributions are promptly acknowledged and subsequently are published in *The American Rifleman* magazine.

stints of guiding, outfitting, ranching, pack stringing and law enforcement work. Although he has hunted widely in Africa and the Americas, most of Elmer Keith's time has been spent in his homeland of the West Central states—Idaho, Montana and Wyoming. Yet, his correspondence and frequent visitors from all over the world have served, since the 1930s, to keep him ever in the forefront of the arms and ammunition world, both as a writer and

Specially made Colt .44 Special Single Action with long-range sights. Just one of many research projects Elmer Keith has undertaken in his lifelong handgun study.



consultant to the major manufacturers. His decade-plus as GUNS & AMMO's Shooting Editor has permitted him to travel widely for both magazine promotion and arms experimentation on our behalf.

Many of the other candidates, as well as most judges, can have similar biographies written about them. But, when all the votes were cast early this February in Shelbyville, Indiana, Elmer Keith was unanimously chosen by a distinguished jury of his peers.

Many other members of the trade, the writer included, were invited to attend the

Super Vel award and its attending activities. About three days were consumed in rounding up this motley bunch of handgun lovers, and treating them to a look at what goes on in Super Vel's Shelbyville

L to r: John Amber, Master of Ceremonies of the Super Vel Awards; Adolph G. Wolter, Sculptor/designer of the award bronze (Mr. Wolter is in Who's Who in American Art); Lee E. Jurras, President of Super Vel.



42 GUNS & AMMO / MAY 1973

home. A major feature of the trip for all of us was a tour of the new plant. Most of us took it the afternoon before the awards banquet.

Much larger than the original facilities, the Super Vel plant has space to double output, as needed. Current production numbers in the many millions of assorted pistol rounds, owing to major police and government contracts now being filled. Super Vel ammunition may be controversial in some circles, but plenty of purchasing agents are evidently ordering nothing

else but Super Vel ammunition.

Although skillful reloaders have always been able to improvise high-velocity pistol loads and the necessary expanding-point bullets, Lee Jurras put Super Vel on the map by offering well-designed readymade jacketed hollow point pistol bullets. In addition, his were soon available as loaded rounds which would achieve high velocities in 4 and 6-inch barrels. Since then,

Super Vel plant tour turned up many elaborate lab setups like these pressure/velocity guns in an underground 50-yd. range. TV screen shows target groups.



Many shooters know Lorraine Keith as "Ma" Keith; Elmer credits his wife with much of his success in life, including encouraging his handgun endeavors.

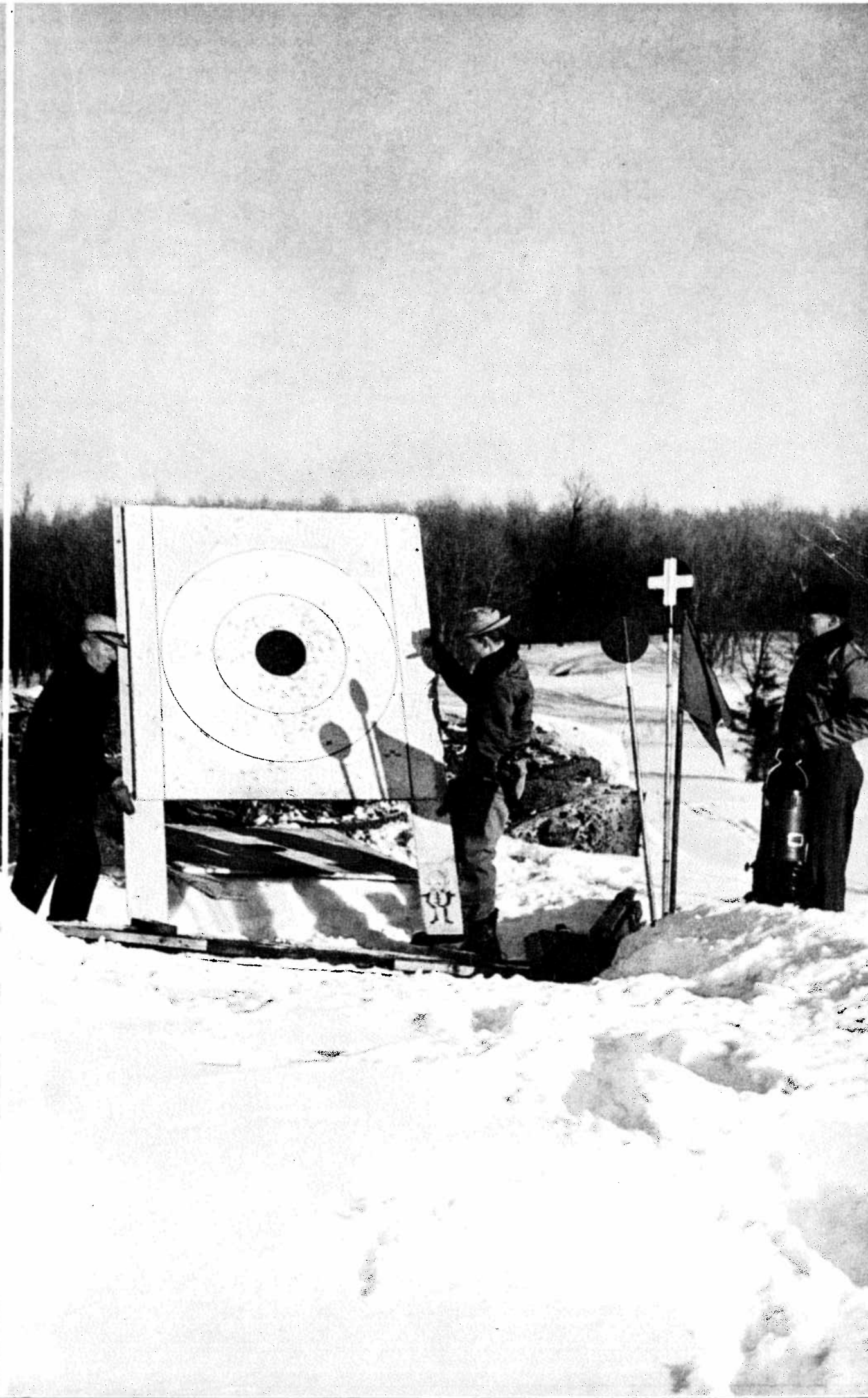
other makers have also begun offering large selections of similar cartridges, but Super Vel has become a sort of generic term for all such loads—rather like "Coke" is for "soft drink."

Since Super Vel, more than any other manufacturer, owes its existence to the great number of handgunners here in America, Jurras decided it was time to do something for the sport. Building up

continued on page 86

JANUARY
1951

AMERICAN RIFLEMAN





The Voice, the Pen, the Vote . . .

As reported not long ago by *Chicago Tribune* staffman James Doherty, eight Illinois state's attorneys have expressed the view that the laws governing the carrying and use of pistols in Illinois are inadequate and need revision. Also in the *Tribune*, state director of public safety J. O. O'Donnell marshalled some of the figures which bear on firearms legislation in Illinois. Said O'Donnell, according to the *Tribune*, more than seven hundred persons were killed in Illinois during the twelve months of 1949 "by bullets in their bodies". Actually, over half of Mr. O'Donnell's deaths "by bullets in their bodies" were suicides. (Even his murders, he was quoted as saying, included some justifiable homicides.)

The inference of a proposed suicide-control law is obvious to the point of absurdity. If we are going to control guns so people can't kill themselves with them, we'll have to do something about bridges. And clothes-lines and Lysol. And razor blades. Chicago might even have to do something about Lake Michigan.

In justice to the people of Illinois, and particularly to the men who propose and frame the laws of the state, there is every probability that they will come up with a sane, constructive solution to their problem—one that will penalize lawlessness and carelessness with firearms and at the same time not discourage their legitimate use.

Cook County, in which Chicago lies, is not the only locality where trouble signs are appearing on the firearms front. Storm signals are up in Maine. In California there is every indication that 1951 will see the introduction of at least one bill aimed at the general control of firearms. New Jersey, too, can be expected to develop as a hot spot of proposed antigun legislation as a result of the Unruh and Ingenito 'massacres'.

These will not be the only states in which restrictive firearms legislation will be proposed during the coming months. As an odd-numbered year, during which as many as 45 of the 48 states legislatures may convene in regular session, 1951 is certain to produce a bumper crop of antifirearms attempts, crackpot and otherwise. Judging from past experiences, most states will see at least one proposal affecting the possession and use of firearms offered in the intended interest of safety, game conservation, or police efficiency. Not all of these bills will be bad. Some will provide sorely needed moderni-

zation of existing state laws. Others will provide constructive solutions to new problems. The obvious, however, if we are not prepared to sort gently the good from the bad, and to fight energetically those bills, in any guise, which would restrict the of United States citizens to possess legitimate weapons and to become proficient in their use. In these anxious times we must not let ourselves be stampeded into support of a law against Lake Michigan just because somebody uses it occasionally to commit suicide.

So far, the members of the NRA have a near perfect record in combating restrictive legislation. During 1949, also an odd-numbered year, when the majority of state legislatures were in session, an amazing number of bills was introduced which would, if enacted, have restricted in one way or another your right or that of your neighbor to own a gun. Not one bill on a national, state, or big-city level became law. Again, during the year just ended, 1950, though not insignificant, number of such bills were introduced. Once more the victory was complete.

Unfortunately, fighting for one's rights and freedoms is a full-time job. Far from indicating a time of rest and relaxation, the end of one fight is the beginning of another. The NRA member stands in the forefront of a campaign which will probably be as active and as long as it was in 1949. Fortunately, you have allies—the sportsmen of his community, the patriots, the patriotic organizations. He has potent weapons at hand in his voice, his pen, and his vote. Again this year, as in past years, the NRA's legislative section is making advance preparations for prompt and effective reporting to NRA members of actions in every legislature in the country.

The real fight must be fought at home, however, at your home—through your elected representative. The NRA can, and will, rush information on pending legislation to members in the affected areas, but that information is valueless unless you make up your mind as to its virtues or shortcomings, and express your opinion to the people who will vote for or against it. Your voice . . . the weapons of the citizen . . . are the voice, the pen, the vote. In this year of national emergency, it is up to them to protect yourself, your community, and your state against the dangers of ill-advised firearms

John Paul

SIXGUNS

By Elmer Keith

FOR OVER THIRTY YEARS I wore a sixgun as regularly as I did my trousers. Without it I did not feel fully dressed. It was a tool, and a mighty useful one at that. I still like to have a good gun in easy reach at all times.

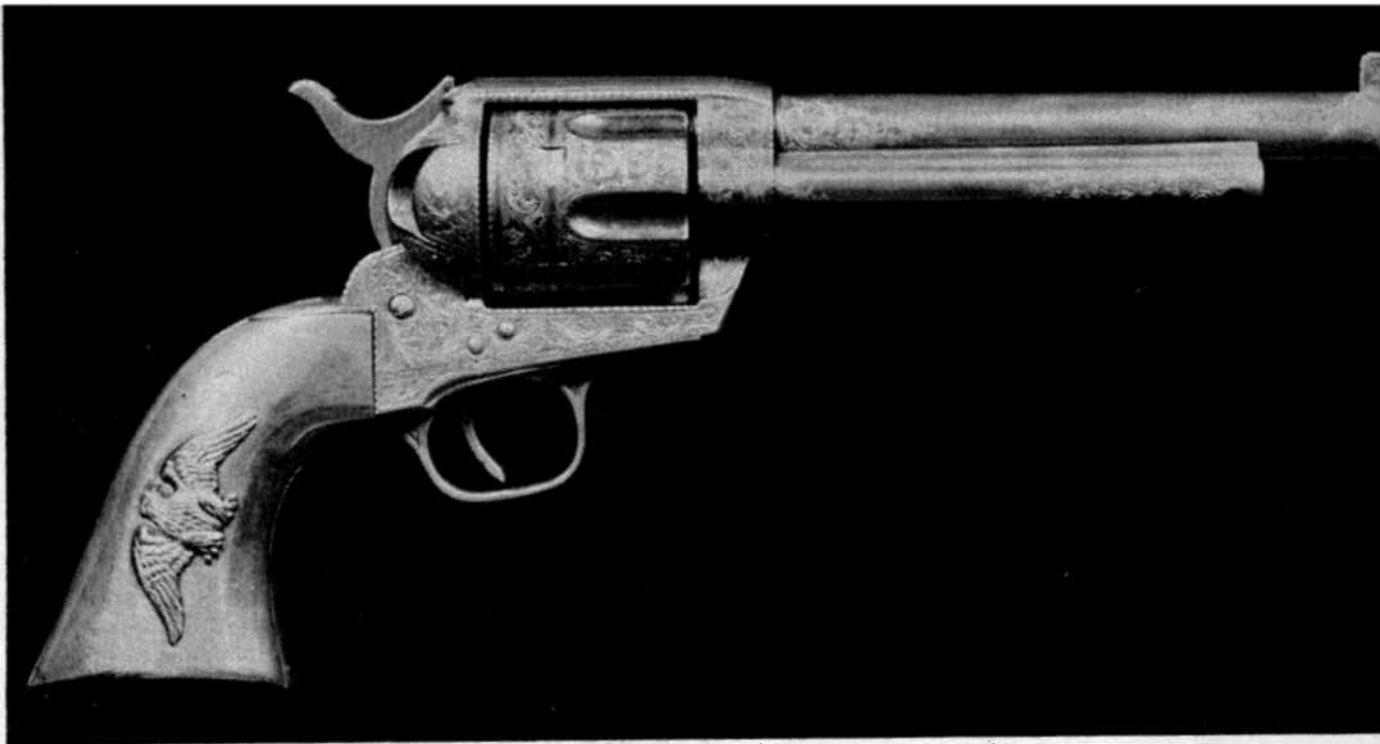
During those years I tried out, on both stock and game, every make and caliber available—everything from the .36 Navy Colt, .44 caliber Dragoon, and single-action Army Colt down through modern revolvers and semiautomatics. During that time I killed three elk, seven mule deer, one whitetail, three black bear, one record cougar, and one mountain goat with a sixgun, not to mention coyotes, bobcats, eagles, and a Mexican javalina. Over the years the small game ran into the thousands but the only record kept was on blue grouse when I killed from 41 to 43 of the big birds for three successive years with a sixgun. I remember killing 125 jack rabbits on the Pahsimeroi in three days when testing one of the first .357 S&W Magnums. In over twenty years of big-game guiding, I also trailed and finished with a sixgun many animals of all species that my parties had wounded.

On two occasions I had to stop mad cows I had roped. They wound me up and threw my bronc and then came for me with sharp horns. On another occasion I had to get out of bed, saddle up a bronc, and go to the rescue of a local butcher who had tried to kill a big Durham bull with a .41 Colt by planting the slugs in the bull's forehead. The beast had put the butcher up a tree and, as it was cold weather, he was fast freezing when the neighbor called. When I rode up close to the tree, the bull charged. A single 255-grain .45 cal. Ideal slug, backed by 40 grains of FFG black powder, in the forehead from my old 5½-inch single action Colt did the trick. The bull stuck his nose in the ground and turned over on his back with all four legs stiff in the air, his tail stretched out toward my bronc, then he relaxed in death.

On another occasion, a mean outlaw bronc I was riding stuck his foot in a badger hole and turned a somersault over me. He knocked most of the wind from me and came up running, kicking me with his hocks because one spur had caught around the stirrup leather and held my boot in the stirrup during the roll. Three .45 Colt slugs angling upwards

Single-action Colt with elaborate engraving by R. J. Kornbrath

A frankly opinionated review of revolvers and loads by a Westerner who uses his sixgun as daily tool



Another decorated single-action Colt. In .44 S&W Special caliber, this gun with 6½-inch barrel has gold-plated hammer, cylinder, and grips. Engraved by Oliver Kuhl of Oakland, Calif., the gun is the property of F. R. & R. E. Morrissey of that city

from where I bounced along the frozen ground did the trick. The third one reached the spine and put his hind quarters down, and I simply planted the fourth in his brain—and had a long hike home packing a heavy saddle. But for that Colt single action, I would have been dragged and kicked into doll rags.

On one trip out to Ovando, my sixgun kept my partner and I in meager food supply for six days while we travelled with a pack string of twenty-three horses. The grub horse had busted a yellow jackets' nest and bucked off down the mountain and across a river. When we found her, there was no food left in the pack. We lived by that sixgun alone for those six days.

Far more often the sixgun was needed to kill a rattler, collect a mess of grouse or sage hens, or a rabbit for the cow dogs' dinner. Whether I had to roll out of the blankets to kill a porcupine that was eating up the pack outfit, or clean the pack rats out of some cabin I wished to sleep in during a rainy night, or simply heave a slug in front of a band of running horses to turn them toward the corral, the old sixgun was always near and handy. It was a tool of the trade.

On other occasions the old gun was packed for social purposes—when serving on sheriff's posses, hunting cow thieves, or to back our honor and judgment. I still remember seeing one cow thief squirm when I watched him and his three riders while my partner cut four of my steers from two cars of beef that he was preparing to load on the train. Those steers had my brand, badly blotched, and the wattle cut off their noses, but I would have known their hides in a tan yard, so I took them by force. Suffice to say, I would have been pushing up daisies over twenty years ago instead of writing this article now had I not carried and known how to use a good, heavy sixgun. Probably only an old range rider or a hill-billy will understand or appreciate my statements. Times change and rustlers now use trucks. One of my brothers-in-law lost twenty head of steers this past summer and still has found no trace of them.

Guns were usually carried in a shoulder holster or, more often, in an open-top, quick-draw belt holster that left both hammer and trigger fully exposed. The bottom of the belt holster was tied to the leg or to the chaps so the gun would not fly up and hit the elbow when riding a pitching bronc. Holsters were just large enough to accommodate the gun, and

the belts were more often than not combination money a cartridge belts of double-soft chap leather. We never see any of these huge *buscadero* Hollywood corsets in use the range, nor did any of the old gun fighters I knew in younger days use such an outfit.

Helena, Montana was settled in the late sixties, largely Confederate Civil War veterans. I knew, lived, and hunted with several of these men, most of whom owned or carried good sixgun, either an old cap and ball Colt or a more modern single action. Now they are all dead and gone, and the modern trend seems more to small-caliber target guns. C has even stopped manufacture of the best gun they ever built—the single-action Army.

I witnessed three gun fights when a kid in Helena and was not much impressed by the results from the .38 Special. One, one man proved the quicker on the draw and a couple of .38 Specials through the heart stopped his opponent even though the opponent did draw and fire two shots that hit the pavement short of his executioner. In another, a cop planted five .38 Specials in a gunman's chest, about center, yet the gunman emptied his break-top .32 at the cop. One bullet I thought the first, hit the cop right over the heart but went through a notebook and lodged in the bottom of his blood pocket. One more went through a kid's leg as he was peacefully engaged in eating noodles in his booth and the rest came through the front window over my head and flattened against a building across the street. The gunman then threw the gun at the cop and it also went through the window and across the street. He died as he was carried up the hospital steps. Another time my friend Bill O'Connel, the night cop around the N. P. Depot, killed two holdup men who had stuck up a saloon, with one shot each from his .45 Colt single action. Their one return shot only went through a transom window over Bill's head as he entered the saloon.

The .22-caliber sixguns and semiauto pistols are useful just one thing—target practice and competition. They can also be used effectively on very small game with high-speed hollow points occasionally. The .32-20 and .38 Special factory loads are far better small-game loads as a whole, but lack power for any serious social purposes, for shooting game of any size, or for use against mean stock.

I have killed three mule deer with the .32-20 low-velocity smokeless soft-point load, and the cartridge proved entirely

adequate. I have also killed a couple of muleys with a K-22 S&W at close range, working on the backs of their heads double action. I had walked out on the edge of a small cliff and a big buck and a doe appeared just under me at about six yards range. A quick shot, double action, to the back of the head put both of them down, but each got up on its feet almost instantly. Two more shots were taken at each and then the gun was empty. Both were down and kicking but I had hardly reloaded when both were up again. Then I started shooting at the back of the neck, just to the rear of the skull. When the gun was again empty, both were dead, but I will never try that stunt again. Another time, I had put two 172-grain .30-'06 slugs in a big mule buck and he went down. Not wanting to shoot him up any more, I borrowed Jim Robbin's Colt Woodsman and proceeded to empty the gun in him. I hit the deer between the eyes with the first shot and heard the tiny slug whine as it ricocheted away. As the buck ran past, I put the rest of the magazine in close behind the shoulder. The buck went a couple hundred yards and again lay down. I approached to within 30 yards as he lay in the sage brush watching me. I bounced most of another magazine off his skull before one bullet went through the tiny nerve hole over the left eye and killed him. No more .22's for me on anything bigger than bull frogs, squirrels, or cottontails.

Contrary to popular opinion, the .32-20, .38-40 and .44-40 soft-point factory low-velocity loads will expand very well on deer and if bones are struck, turn wrong side out. Yet the bullets will not expand in pine wood, simply smearing off the soft point and leaving the jacket intact. I wore out completely one .32-20 barrel with both factory loads and handloads in game shooting. I have also shot a .38-40 and a .44-40 a great deal. All three cartridges are bottlenecked and the chambers are much too long for the body of the case. When fired, the cases expand nearly to the mouth, leaving only about half of the original neck and requiring considerable resizing to reload them. I used to use No. 80 powder and the 260-grain .40-82 Winchester bullet sized down to fit in the .38-40. The combination was superbly accurate from a 5½-inch single-action Colt, and a real killer on anything, but constant resizing made for short case life and I finally gave it up. The .44-40 is by far the best of these three rifle cartridges, and it was old-timer Ashley Haines' favorite sixgun load, but the .44-40 does its best work from a long 7¼-inch barrel owing to being loaded with rifle powder. I never could get much penetration with factory .38-40 or .44-40 loads from a sixgun, and soon came to prefer longer, heavier bullets that would give better penetration on stock or big game when the necessity for such use arose. A factory .38-40 load almost cost me my life while monkeying with a wounded bull elk. The bullet simply splattered on the elk's skull, and did not penetrate. Had the cylinder not been loaded alternately with heavy black powder loads, that bull would have ended my hunting. With both cartridges, the case body is large and the neck short for short bullets. The charge must be held down religiously to safe pressures or it will bulge the bolt cuts in the cylinder.

I much prefer the .44 Special and the .45 Colt cartridges for sixgun use. For the handloader, the .44 Special is by far the best of all sixgun cartridges for serious work, either target, defense, or game killing. The cylinder walls are thicker over the case body than in the .45, and the cartridge is superbly accurate. The old black powder loads with 250-, 255-, and 260-grain government bullets and 40 grains of FFG black powder gave 900 feet in the .45 Colt and would surely penetrate. I planted a 250-grain Remington black powder load in the seat of a goat's pants and it penetrated through to the left shoulder, which it broke. On broadside shots on both elk and goats, it went clean through unless heavy shoulder bones were hit. The .38-40 and .44-40 factory loads stopped

under the skin on the off side on lung shots on elk. With the heavy 260-grain .38-40 handload, penetration was excellent.

Another .45 Colt load that gave excellent accuracy and penetration was the Winchester 300-grain .45-90 lead bullet sized down to .454 inch and backed by 35 grains of FFG. It killed mule deer and wounded elk well and was very accurate. I once had a case head separate with this load, blowing the loading gate out of the gun and cutting through the side of my trigger finger. That case had been reloaded many times, however, and the load was safe enough in good cases.

The factory .45 Colt pointed bullet punched a rather small hole through game and would not expand unless it hit a heavy bone. With that bullet I shot a great many grouse with little damage to the meat. In search of the best sixgun bullet, I designed a blunt-nose bullet (No. 454260) for Belding & Mull but found that it or the same design worked out for the .44 Special in 260- and 280-grain was not accurate at any great range, so we dropped them and designed another bullet for Lyman. First in .44 Special, 250-grain solid and 235-grain hollow base or hollow point, then in .45 Colt 250-grain, later in .45 semiauto rim 240-grain, and still later in 173-grain solid and 160-grain hollow base or hollow point .38 Special, these Keith bullets have proven ideal, for me at least, for all sixgun work in twenty years of continuous use. They cut full caliber holes in anything and penetrate almost as well as the old pointed .45 Colt black powder load in solid persuasion. In hollow-point design, they will expand at velocities of 1000 feet or more, and at 1200 feet are very destructive to all game and ruinous to small game.

The Keith 160-grain hollow point, backed by 13.5 grains of 2400, from the Colt single action (*Continued on page 37*)





Colt Bisley model with horn grips

SIXGUNS

(Continued from page 13)

or Shooting Master, or the S&W Heavy Duty or Outdoorsman will simply blow a grouse to bits and wings. The legs and neck will fly off at all angles when the bird is centered. The Keith 235-grain .44 Special hollow point, backed by 18.5 grains of 2400, is even worse in its destruction of living tissue. It's certain death on either elk or deer if placed in the lungs broadside at close range, but it will not penetrate quite as well as the 250-grain solid in bone or when meaty portions of an animal are struck. Bob Hagel killed eight treed cougar last winter with a .44 Special 4¼-inch barrel single-action Colt using these loads. He said the hollow point was much the best for a chest or lung shot and the solid bullet best for shoulder shots to break the big cats down so they would not fall out of the tree full of fight.

Last spring Charley O'Neil's dog started barking in a den. O'Neil got a small flashlight and a P-38 filled with 9 mm. Luger ammo. He crawled into the den expecting to find a bobcat. To his surprise, he faced an old sow black bear and a couple of yearlings. The sow came for him when he tried to back out so he shot her through the brain. Then one yearling came out right over the top of O'Neil, taking off most of his shirt, undershirt, and some skin. While he was killing the other yearling, the dog ran the first one back over him again. When the fracas was over, he threw all three bear out of the den and came out with a lot of respect for the penetration of the 9 mm. Luger full-patch load. He and Bob Hagel are now engaged in making rifles, a much safer pursuit than killing either cougar or bear with a handgun.

I have tried both the Super .38s and the 9 mm. Lugers on game, also the .45 semiauto, for many years and they are one and all far inferior in actual knock-down power to the heavy

revolver loads. A friend emptied a Super .38 Colt into a cougar's chest at close range in a tree but the big cat jumped out and ran a short distance. One heavy .44 Special or .357 Magnum or .45 Colt in the same place would have done the business. Metal-patched bullets from the semiauto pistols are simply not as good stoppers as are the soft lead bullets of the revolver, but the .45 Colt semiauto has more actual shock on game than either the Luger or the Super .38. I have shot enough game with all three to prove the point, to my own conclusion at least.

For a defense gun against man, the 1917 S&W semiauto rim is a fine, fast gun, and one can carry a couple of the three-shot clips loaded with .45 auto ammo, preferably of the new Remington and Peters 185-grain wadcutter type, and have a very quick reload.

The late Frank Waterman carried a nickel-plated 7¼-inch single-action Colt .45 all his life. His dad had given it to him new when Frank was a kid in Wyoming. Frank was past seventy when he died last year. That old Peacemaker had killed all species of game in Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho except buffalo. When on a Wyoming elk hunt, a sportsman had downed a big bull elk and the guide borrowed Frank's .45 Colt to go back and pack out the elk as he did not want to bother with a rifle that day. They were working up a brushy creek bed to the kill, and the sportsman was some one hundred yards to the rear as usual, when the guide turned around a big willow bush and found the elk. A big grizzly was eating on the carcass. The bear instantly rose to its full height and the guide drew Frank's old Peacemaker. Aiming just under the chin of the big grizzly, he squeezed the trigger. The heavy 260-grain bullet backed by Frank's 40-grain black powder load went in under the chin and broke the grizzly's neck, and the bear went down like a sack of beans.

I once loaded some .44 Specials with the Keith 250-grain solid and 12 grains of No. 80 for Charley Stauffenberg. He carried a New Service Colt for that cartridge. One fall, when in need of his winters meat, Charley ran onto a bull moose standing broadside. Holding his gun with both hands, he aimed for the heart and shot once. The bull lurched away but only went one hundred yards and lay down and was soon ready for the knife. The flat-point Keith bullet went through the middle of the heart and bled him out nicely.

Some nineteen years ago I loaded a large quantity of the very same load for James T. Maxwell, of Omaha, Nebraska, for use in Africa in a 6½-inch S&W. Maxwell later reported that he had no trouble at all supplying twelve men with all the antelope meat they could eat by using that gun and load alone. He said it killed the small and medium antelope about as well as a rifle during a six-week period of African hunting in Kenya and Tanganyika. Recently I had another letter from the good Doctor saying he had just tested some of these same loads after all these years and they still shot as well as ever.

With the advent of Hercules 2400 powder I dropped the use of No. 80 entirely as 2400 proved a much better propellant, giving far less pressure than No. 80 and even higher velocity.

Throughout the West and North, many men—prospectors, surveyors, cow punchers, trappers, and wood's loafers—who must make long trips into the back country, often by back pack only, and who cannot carry a rifle handily, need a good dependable heavy sixgun. The best guns for the purpose today are the Colt single-action, and the S&W Magnum and 1926 target models. The guns should have accurate target sights which suit individual preference as to width of blade or bead and general type but the sights should be adjustable so they may be correctly zeroed for any desired load. If the Colt single-action is preferred, then it should be target sighted by King Gunsight Co., Pachmayr, or some other reliable

gunsmith. The best rear sight is the S&W click adjustment target rear, with a suitable band or ramp front sight base and blade sight. The S&W target guns, both the Magnum and the 1926, come equipped with perfect sights, and front beads or blades to suit individual preference can be had to order.

For loads, I believe the .357 S&W Magnum and .45 Colt to be the best in factory loads, and the .44-40 is not so far behind, some shooters preferring it to the others. If the shooter is also a handloader, or wishes to purchase heavy handloads from Moody's Custom Loads, Helena, Montana, or another custom loader, the best caliber is the .44 Special. The factory .44 Special makes a fine grouse and small-game load and is also an ideal target load. The Keith 250-grain solid bullet or the 235-grain hollow base or hollow point can be loaded with 18.5 grains of Hercules 2400 and bullets sized to .001 inch larger than groove diameter and cast one part tin to 16 parts lead for solids and one to twenty for hollow points and you have the most powerful handgun loads in existence.

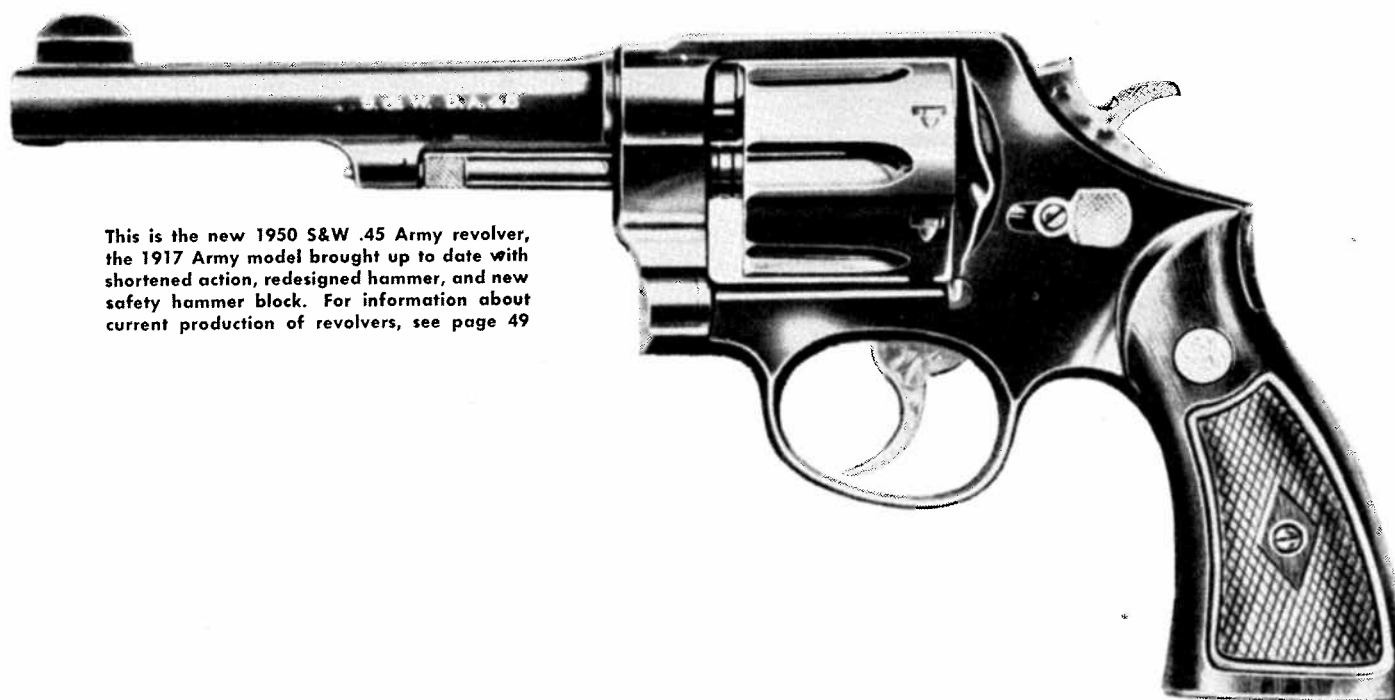
The factory .357 Magnum is very good but it is not nearly as good a killer as the above mentioned .44 Special handloads. Col. Doug Wesson killed elk, antelope, moose and grizzly with the .357 Magnum, but the fact remains that the heavy Keith .44 Special loads are a lot more powerful. The factory .38 Special can also be used in the Magnum as a grouse or small game load; wadcutters in full charge are particularly good small-game loads. If you want to reload for the Magnum, use 13.5 grains of 2400 behind the Keith 173-grain solid bullet or the 160-grain Keith hollow point in .38 Special cases. For the longer Magnum case, use 14 grains of 2400 with the 160-grain hollow point or 13.5 grains with the 173-grain Keith solid and barely crimp the case over the front band of the bullet. The fact remains, however, that the .38



Special case, with Keith bullet and 13.5 grains of 2400, is a more accurate load at any range, even to 600 yards, than is the factory .357 Magnum or the Keith bullet from the Magnum case when the case is crimped over the forward band. Bullets should be of same temper as above for the .44 Special and should be sized to not over .001 inch above groove diameter.

In the .45 Colt, the standard factory smokeless load is a good one though a only about 800 feet velocity. It is accurate and will penetrate well. The old Remington 40-grain black powder load was much more powerful, and handload can be made up with the Keith 250-grain Ideal bullet and 18 to 20 grains of Hercules 2400, always keeping bullets sized to not over .001 inch above groove diameter and crimping in the bevelled crimp groove. In the .45 Colt, we have much thinner cylinder walls than in the .44 Special and for that reason the .44 Special has a much greater margin of safety. The bullet, being the same weight as for the .45, also has more sectional density and will penetrate better, so for the handloader the .44 Special is absolutely tops. The factory .44 Special 146-grain bullet is loaded to only 750 feet velocity and both the .357 Magnum and the .45 Colt, as well as the .44-40, beat it badly for killing power in factory loads. But carefully handloaded, the .44 Special comes to life. For all social purposes, when a gun is needed in self defense against man targets, the .357 Magnum is the smallest cartridge I would consider. The heavy Keith handloads described above are, however, much better stoppers, and a man hit anywhere between the top of the skull and the pelvic bone with one of them in .44 Special or .45 Colt will not shoot back.

Automatics are totally dependent on perfect ammunition for certain functioning and are, for that reason, a second choice for a defense gun. If a jam or a misfire occurs the two hands are needed to clear the jam and get the gun in action again. For that reason, they are never as reliable as a good cylinder gun when one's life is at stake. ♦ ♦



This is the new 1950 S&W .45 Army revolver, the 1917 Army model brought up to date with shortened action, redesigned hammer, and new safety hammer block. For information about current production of revolvers, see page 49

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Page 5

The Grand Old Man



***Elmer Keith
1899 ~ 1984***

My earliest memory of a favorite gunwriter is of The Grand Old Man himself, Elmer Keith. He bridged the gap between the cowboys and frontiersmen of yesteryear, and modern day outdoorsmen and peace officers. His writings would take me to another time and place, when game and wilderness were plentiful.

He was on the cutting edge of firearm and ammunition development, with much of his work being done before he was barely 30 years old! There isn't much done today in the sixgun world that can't be traced back to him. His favorite handloads for the 357, 41, 44 special and magnum and 45 Colt are still widely known and used today by knowledgeable shooters. They worked then, and continue to work now.



***Elmer Keith with his prized No.5
and Lawrence 120 holster.***



*The original No.5 and floral tooled
Lawrence 120 holster.*

In Pursuit of the No.5

Considered the finest custom revolver ever crafted, Elmer Keith's No.5 revolver is also one of the most copied. We live in what most feel is the Golden Age of Custom Gunsmiths. At the request of a growing number of customers, many of these Gunsmiths are now crafting their own versions of the No.5 revolver. One of these purists is my good friend, Fermin Garza.

When Fermin was asked by writer and sixgunner John Taffin why he had built his own version of the No.5, he replied...

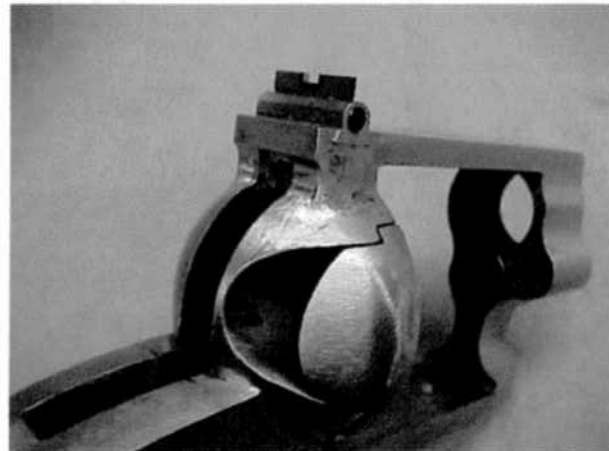
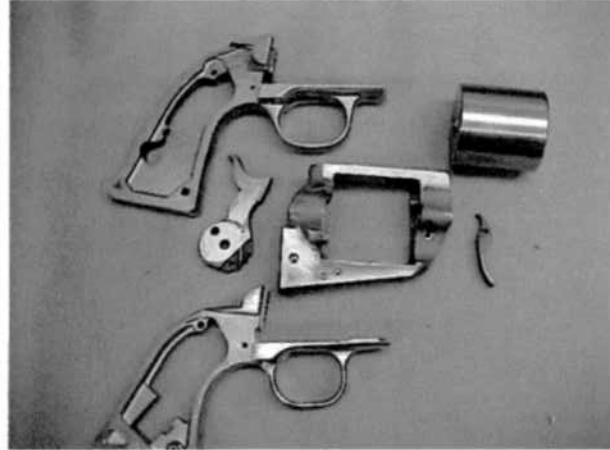
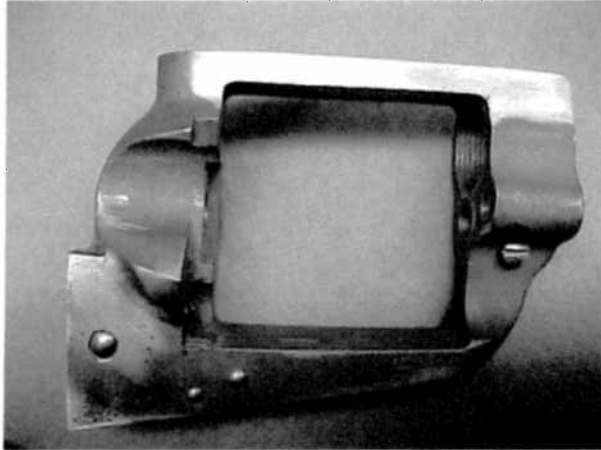
"I have given it considerable thought. Clearly the idea is to honor The Grand Old Man and dean of sixgunners, Elmer Keith. There will only ever be ONE Elmer Keith. No other man will be able to fill his boots. I certainly don't have any such ideas. On the other hand, think of the opportunity to explore a trail long cold that Keith once traveled. To seek out the very finest craftsman and challenge him to build from scratch the finest sixgun in the land. A sixgun to last a lifetime. A sixgun to always keep to hand to answer any call. A sixgun to be sure that even after 80 years, old world craftsmanship and the memory of The Grand Old Man live on."

~

Fermin C. Garza

Fermin wanted to duplicate the original No.5 as closely as possible, with a few exceptions: the use of stainless steel for the major components, coils springs throughout, a frame mounted firing pin, a lengthened and recessed cylinder and the grip frame lengthened slightly. This required a gunsmith well versed in welding and machining parts from a blank piece of steel. Fermin enlisted the talents of gunsmith Alan Harton for this task. Beginning with a raw, stainless steel

frame casting, Alan began the welding and milling needed to transform the blank steel into the No.5. Much care and effort went into duplicating the sights, topstrap, basepin latch and grip frame as can be seen in the accompanying images.





Custom Gunsmith Alan Harton, Fermin Garza & the No.5



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