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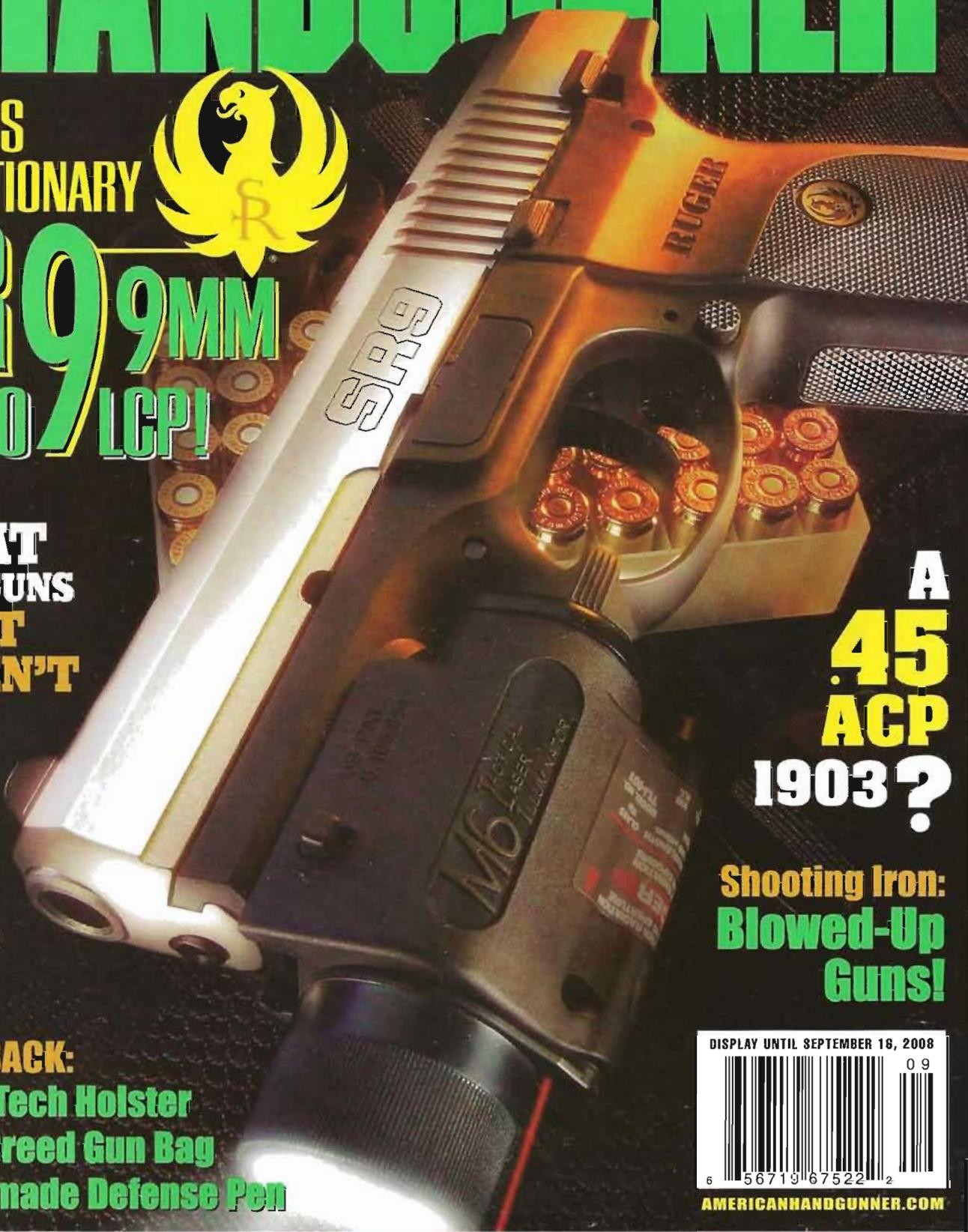
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1903?

Shooting Iron:
Blowed-Up
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RUGER'S LCP

The new face of Ruger: the SR9 17-shot 9mm and the LCP seven-shot .380.



JOHN TAFFIN

In those wonderful pre-politically correct days when I was a kid they were called "belly guns." Those with cylinders were known as snub-nosed revolvers while semiautos were usually called "pocket pistols." For me, whether it's a revolver or a semiauto, if it fits easily into the pocket, it's a pocket pistol. James Bond carried a Walther .380 pocket pistol, and I'll always remember Alan Ladd slamming the cylinder shut on his snub-nosed revolver. I wonder how many neophytes ruined revolvers by emulating him? My earliest recollection of a small gun was in Chester Gould's comic strip — Dick Tracy used a Colt Detective (Dick) Special.

Ruger Who?

It all began in 1949 with a semi-auto .22, and then the new, up-start,

Ruger, introduced the .22 Single-Six in 1953. For decades, Bill Ruger concentrated on handguns for competition, hunting and outdoor use. I don't believe the thought of a pocket pistol ever really crossed Bill's mind.

The closest Ruger ever came, until now, was the SP101, introduced in 1988; offered in .22, .38 Special, 9mm, .357 Magnum and just recently .327 Federal. The SP101 is a bull-strong small

revolver, however it weighs 27 ounces, which is a lot more than most people would like in a pocket pistol. The .357 Magnum S&W in my pocket right now weighs less than 12 ounces!

For the first time in the company history, which now spans 60 years, Ruger is offering their first true pocket pistol — the Ruger LCP. LCP stands for "Lightweight Compact Pistol" and this little gem is chambered in .380. It



Buffalo Bore offers three .380 +P loads which turn the Ruger LCP into a Potent Pocket Pistol indeed.

When the Ruger LCP is in the ready-to-fire condition, the hammer is visible.



The Ruger LCP .380 comes with this zippered pouch.



The most accurate round fired in the Ruger LCP was the Winchester SXT 95.

5 SHOTS = $\frac{3}{4}$ "
WINCHESTER SXT 95
786 FPS

A POTENT .380 POCKET PISTOL

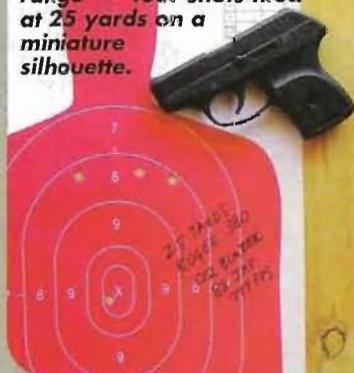
was announced just slightly before the 2008 Shot Show, and it was a rip-roaring success, with thousands ordered by dealers at the show.

Pistol In-Hand

Sometime in the 1980s the push for CCWs began, and now more than 40 states have a permit system. Ruger's management certainly recognizes the market for dependable, concealable, pocket pistols and is going after it with the LCP.

Most experts (whatever that is ...) consider the .380 to be the minimum caliber for a pocket pistol. I don't know I agree with that, and have often carried a .22 Mini-Gun in a shirt pocket. It's certainly no .45, however it's easily concealed, comfortably carried and certainly to be preferred over a rock or a stick — mostly. And the .380 is certainly a better choice. The .380 has

Yes, it will do fine at "long-range" — four shots fired at 25 yards on a miniature silhouette.



LOAD	MV	5 SHOTS/ 7 YARDS (inches)
BUFFALO BORE 100 HCFN	1,090	2
CCI BLAZER 88 JHP	777	1 $\frac{3}{4}$
FEDERAL 90 JHP	862	1 $\frac{1}{4}$
HORNADY 100 FMJ	821	1 $\frac{1}{4}$
HORNADY FRONTIER 90 JHP	698	2
WINCHESTER 95 SXT	786	3/4

TEST-FIRE: RUGER LCP .380

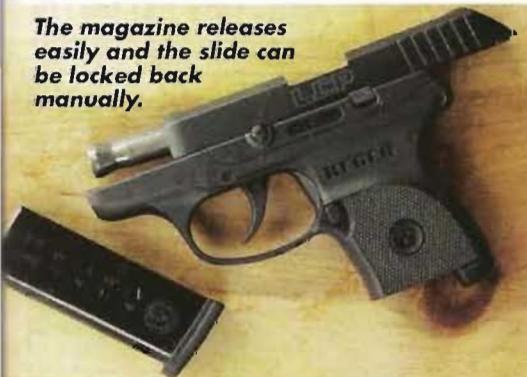
always been popular and Skeeter Skelton often carried a Walther PPK .380 as his law enforcement back-up gun. With today's ammunition, new possibilities as a defense round have been opened. More on this shortly.

The new Ruger .380 LCP is compact, with a barrel length of 2.75",

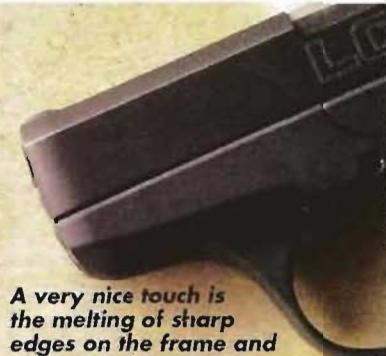
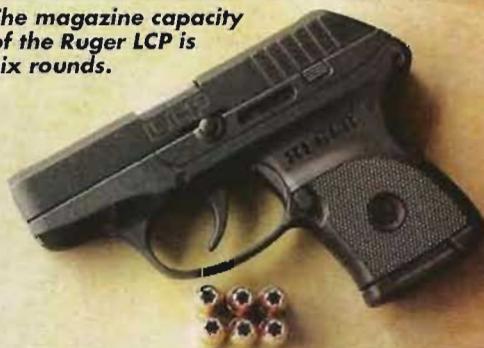
height of 3.6", overall length of 5.16" and a width of only .82". A hardened steel slide is matched up with a glass-filled nylon frame. Mag capacity is six, and sights are extremely small, with a square notch rear machined into the top of the

Continued on page 111

The magazine releases easily and the slide can be locked back manually.



The magazine capacity of the Ruger LCP is six rounds.



A very nice touch is the melting of sharp edges on the frame and slide of the Ruger LCP.

RUGER LCP

Continued from page 79

slide, matched with a miniscule front sight, integral to the slide.

I was actually surprised at how well I could shoot the LCP with such miniature sights; especially since this is a DAO pistol with a trigger pull of 6¼ pounds. But make sure you allow a complete trigger re-set before trying to shoot again!

There are no sharp edges to be found on the LCP. In fact the front of the slide and frame have been melted, making it very easy to slide into a pocket. The molded-in grip panels are checkered, and there are miniature thumb-rest or trigger finger channels molded into the top of the grips. "RUGER" is molded into each of these channels, for a nice esthetic touch. Thanks to the rounded edges on the frame, there's no biting.

However there is one problem, which is totally subjective. Virtually every polymer/nylon-framed DA pinches the bottom of my trigger finger. This's no problem when firing a few rounds, however when doing a test with many hundreds I always tape my trigger finger. This is especially true when firing a Glock and, sadly, also with the new LCP.

The magazine release is on the left side behind the trigger guard and the

LCP does not stay open after the last shot. There is a manual slide hold-open to lock the slide to the rear. This little .380 does *not* have a magazine disconnect and can be fired without the magazine in place. The magazine drops easily when the latch is pushed, and it never released while the gun was being fired. The mag release is biggish, and if you are going to pocket-carry the LCP you should definitely use a pocket holster. A view port allows you to see if a round is in the chamber. A nice feature, is the fact the hammer is flush with the back of the frame and visible when the LCP is in the ready-to-fire position.

The LCP is a locked-breech action, using a tilting barrel design, like the classic 1911. Because of Ruger's reliance on this solid system, I can tell you function was absolutely flawless with every type of ammunition used. It never stuttered, never failed to feed and never failed to eject.

It Shoots!

We shot the LCP with 10 different loads at a self-defense-sort-of-distance of seven yards. I certainly didn't expect the accuracy received from this little pistol, especially because it can be a handful with some loads we tried. Using loads from CCI, Federal, Homady and Winchester in weights from 85 to 100 grains with muzzle velocities in the 700-850 fps

range, groups averaged about 1½". Winchester's 95-gr. SXT with a muzzle velocity of just under 800 fps grouped its five shots into .75" at seven yards.

Buffalo Bore offers three +P .380 loads, and although they are even more of a real handful in the Ruger LCP, they certainly offer the highest possible capabilities from .380 rounds. Their three offerings are a 100 grain HCFN (hard cast flat nose) clocking out at 1,100 fps from the 2.75" barrel of the LCP, and placed five shots in 2"; the 95-gr. FMJFN does 1,030 fps with five shots in 1¼" and the 90-gr. Speer Gold Dot JHP also comes in at 1,100 fps with five shots in 1¼". Recoil is fierce with these loads, however they are about as potent as a .380 can be. If ever needed in a serious situation the recoil won't even be noticed.

Just for fun, we fired the LCP at 25 yards, mainly to see just what possibilities were there. I was pleasantly surprised by shooting at both miniature and full-sized silhouette targets. This .380, even with its very small sights, is well above minute-of-man. The Ruger LCP offers a lot of performance in a very small package. MSRP is only \$330, but if you live in California or Massachusetts the powers-that-be say you cannot be trusted with such a pocket pistol. Imagine that.



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Magazines not included.

THE SIXGUNNER

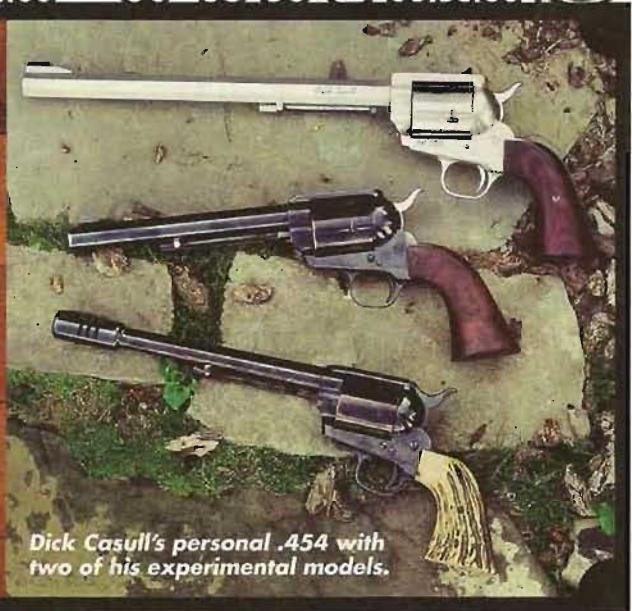
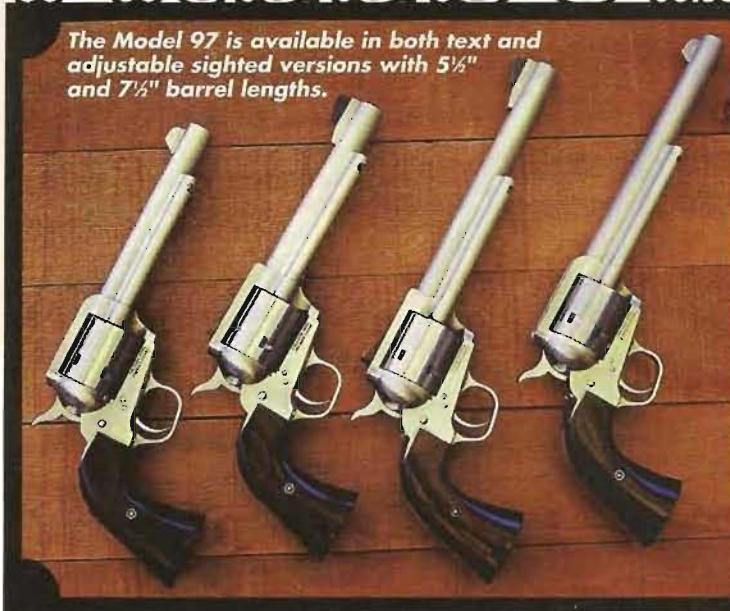
John Taffin

A great candidate for the title of Perfect Packin' Pistol, the 4 1/4" Model 83 chambered in .454 Casull.



FREEDOM ARMS

The Model 97 is available in both text and adjustable sighted versions with 5 1/2" and 7 1/2" barrel lengths.

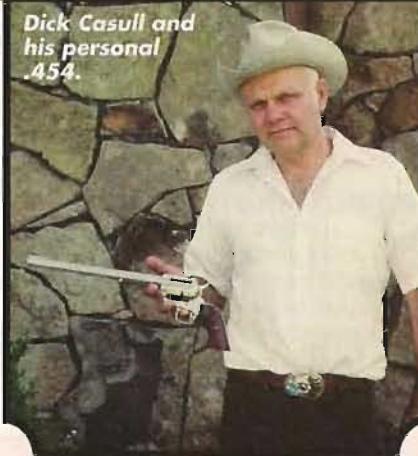


Dick Casull's personal .454 with two of his experimental models.

25 YEARS OF SIXGUN PERFECTION

In the early 1950s there was one man who did not believe the weak label attached to .45 Colt. In fact he was using .45 Colt for his experiments with high velocity sixgun ammunition. At that time .45 Colt brass had just become available with solid head construction, while .44 Special brass was still of the balloon head style. This young Utah gunsmith had a dream and a goal. The dream was to achieve 1,800 fps with a 230 grain bullet in a standard-sized sixgun while the goal was to do it safely. Had Dick Casull listened to the "experts" of the time the .454 Casull would never have arrived and Freedom Arms would not be celebrating their Silver Anniversary of building the world's finest single action sixguns.

Casull began experimenting with his ".45 Magnum" even before the .44 Magnum arrived. He was quite limited



Dick Casull and his personal .454.

in what revolver he could use for his special loads in that the only one suitable was the Colt Single Action. Ruger's much stronger Blackhawk was still several years into the future. Casull discovered very early the .45 Colt cylinder would not even come close to what he was trying to achieve as he

bulged many cylinders in the early stages. With heavier loads, cylinders burst and top straps blew.

Now What?

If a conventional six-shot cylinder was just not strong enough to contain the pressures, the obvious answer would be a five-shot cylinder that would give greater strength and more metal between chambers. By using 4140 steel and five-shot cylinders made as large as possible and still fit the frame window of the Colt Single Action, Casull achieved 1,300 fps with a 230 grain .45 hard cast bullet. He then turned to special heat-treating and in 1954 using a Colt Single Action .45 with an oversized five-shot cylinder, Casull hit 1,550 fps with 250 grain bullets.

Remember this is two years before the .44 Magnum and his results are 100 fps faster with 10 grains more



An assortment of .22 Mini-Guns from Freedom Arms.

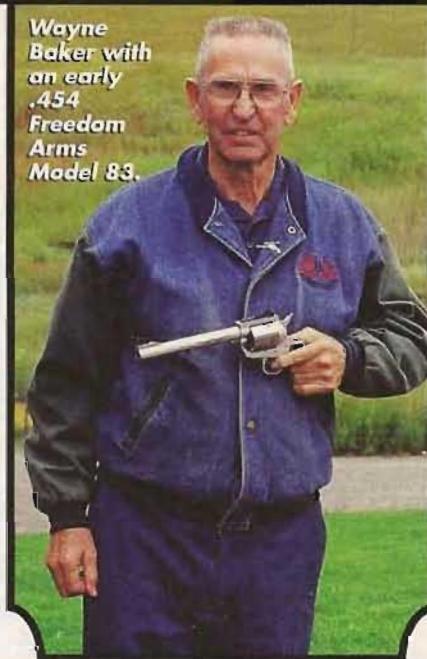


The Freedom Arms .357 Magnum allows a significant increase in the power level of the original Magnum.

bullet than the factory loaded .44 Magnum of 1956. Casull had the power but he was concerned about the margin of safety, so in 1957, he decided to build his own single action frame. Using 4140 steel for the frame and 4150 steel for the cylinder, the first ".454 Magnum" was created. In the early 1960s, reports of Dick Casull and his .45 Magnum started showing up in gun magazines. At the time, Casull was also converting Ruger Super Blackhawks to five-shot .45s.

Several attempts were made to turn his dream sixgun into a production revolver. It would not be until Dick Casull and Wayne Baker came together this would be realized. In March 1979 Baker and Casull began Freedom Arms, producing .22 Mini-guns. Four years later, in October 1983, the first factory built five-shot .454 Casull left the Freedom Arms factory, located in the Star Valley area of Freedom, Wyoming. The .454 Casull revolver was now a reality, however it would be several years before it was widely accepted by the general shooting public.

This was also about the same time I was getting serious about a writing career. Relatively speaking, very few people in the industry knew who I was or where I was coming from. I decided to call Wayne Baker and found a most personable man who was willing to trust me with one of his expensive revolvers. He sent me a 10" Premier



Wayne Baker with an early .454 Freedom Arms Model 83.

Grade .454 that was soon outfitted with silhouette sights. I used it for the long-range game, switched to standard sights or a scope for hunting, and also fired thousands of heavy test loads through my first, but not last, .454.

Along the way I was able to introduce several other writers to the wonders of the .454. This test gun was subsequently purchased and today remains as tight as the day it left the factory. My first article on the .454 Casull appeared in these pages in 1986, with that article definitely

helping to begin my writing career with *American Handgunner*. The art department did an exceptional job in laying out the first published extensive handloading information for the .454 and those pages were tacked up in reloading rooms all over the country.

The Best

From the very beginning, the Freedom Arms .454 revolver, now known as the Model 83, has been built to exacting tolerances. Cylinders are line bored (the best way) and revolvers are not assembled by reaching into a box or bin and taking out the cylinder, the frame, and the barrel and putting them together. They are in fact hand-fitted from the very beginning of mating one particular cylinder to one particular barrel and frame. Many other manufacturer's firearms are built to a certain price level. Freedom Arms does it the opposite way, that is, they build the best possible revolver their machinery and craftsmen are capable of achieving and then set the price. That price is high, however Freedom Arms makes no apology for it and it is a rare purchaser of a Freedom Arms revolver who would say it's not worth the price. I have yet to find such an individual.

No one ever expected to see a production revolver that would be more powerful than the .44 Magnum and to also be

Continued on page 104



Two favorite sixguns of silhouetters:

The Freedom Arms Model 83s in .22 Long Rifle and .357 Magnum.



The Model 97 in .45 Colt is about 90% the size of the Model 83 .454.



The Model 83 .41 Magnum will shoot heavyweight bullets accurately.

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SIXGUNNER

Continued from page 49

able to do it in such a portable package. Consider this, standard factory loading of the .44 Magnum in the 1980s was a 240 grain bullet at around 1,400-1,450 fps. Factory ammunition for the Freedom Arms five shot .454 Casull revolver consisted of bullet with a hard lead core with a heavy .032" copper jacket. Using my 10" .454 revolver the factory 260 grain bullet load clocked out at 1,884 fps, and the 300 at 1,690 fps.

Using H110 I was able to duplicate both loads using the factory jacketed bullets. Dick Casull also designed two gas checked cast bullet molds especially for use in the Freedom Arms .454. With my handloads, the 260 clocks out at 1,986 fps, while the 300 breaks 1,800 fps. This is with 34.0 and 32.0 grains of H110 respectively. J.D. Jones designed a special 340 grain flat-nosed cast bullet that also achieves 1,800 fps using 32.0 grain of H110 in the same 10" revolver. Recoil? Don't even ask!

Times were tough for Freedom Arms in those early days. It was not easy to convince even most writers the .454 was something they even needed to look at, which helped even more to make the finest factory built revolver in a superb big game hunting chambering a tough sell for several years. Finally the word did get out and the .454 became a favorite choice of serious big game hunters. However, Freedom Arms wisely realized some diversification was necessary as everyone did not need or even want the power of the .454, and yet many shooters had the desire to own such a masterpiece of revolver engineering and manufacturing. In February 1986 Freedom Arms offered their first Model 83 chambered in .45 Colt, followed one month later by the .44 Magnum.

Freedom .44

The Freedom Arms .44 Magnum maintained the same five-shot cylinder and line-boring operation as its older brother resulting in as-near-as-possible perfect barrel/cylinder/frame alignment. This made it nearly perfect for long-range silhouetting, and once the infamous IHMSA price ceiling rule was reversed it became a favorite on the firing line, and very quickly the revolver choice for the top shooters. As with the .454 Model 83, the specially designed grip of the .44 Magnum minimizes felt recoil as much as possible.

In the 1980s I used both the .454 and .44 Magnum 10" Freedom Arms Model 83s for competition set up with silhouette sights. When hunting season arrived, the .454 received a change of sights for the field. I soon added two

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closely followed by the CCI Pistol Match load at 1 1/4" and the PMC Match Rifle load at 1 1/4". This is not from a heavy-barreled target rifle, but a revolver, a sixgun, with five separate holes that must each line up with the barrel. This is precisely why Freedom Arms are worth the cost.

The .357 Mag.

One year later, in January 1992, Freedom Arms added the .357 Magnum to the Model 83 line. Now Silhouette shooters had a superbly accurate centerfire revolver with minimum recoil. For silhouetting the FA .357 had a 9" barrel instead of the 10" barrel available on the .454, .44 Magnum and .22LR Model 83s to be able to make the four pound competition weight limit. Originally, as a follow-up to the .454 Casull and 252 Casull, the .357 was the 353 Casull. Now it is simply the Model 83 .357 Magnum.

However, with the .357 Magnum chambering in the Model 83, whole new vistas arrived for the original Magnum of the 1930s. How about 160 grain jacketed bullets at 1,750 fps, 180 grain jacketed bullets at 1,650 fps and 200 grain jacketed bullets at 1,500 fps? That is 400 fps faster than I can safely achieve with my pet 8 3/8" Smith & Wesson .357 Magnum. For several decades my standard heavy .357 Magnum loading has consisted of Lyman's #358156GC over 15.0 grains of #2400. From the 9"-barreled Model 83 the muzzle velocity is 1,640 with groups of 1/4" at 25 yards, 1 1/2" at 50 yards. Outstanding performance.

The .50 AE

In December 1993, Freedom Arms went really big bore by chambering the Model 83 (it was originally the Model 555) for the .50 Action Express. The original .50 Action Express was designed by Evan Whildin and chambered in a Desert Eagle that was a true .50, that is, the groove diameter was .510" as were the bullets, and the bore diameter was .500". The ATF said no, semiauto handguns may not be more than one-half inch in barrel and bullet diameter. So barrels were shrunk in diameter, and bullets are now .500" in diameter. This means the .50AE cannot be loaded with the .510" bullets of the .500 Linebaugh. CCI's Lawman Factory 325 JSP clocks out of the 7 1/2" barreled Model 83 .50AE at 1,342 fps, while my handload using the Speer 325 JHP does just a shade under 1,500 fps with 21.0 gr. Blue Dot. For cast bullets I use a 385 grain LBT flat-nose over 32.5 grains of H110 for 1,460 fps.

Even More

Freedom Arms had two more big bores to introduce in the Model 83 before the turn of the century. In

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December 1997, the Model 83 .41 Magnum arrived first as the Model 654. As I discussed the .41 Magnum project with Randy Smith and Bob Baker of Freedom Arms in 1996, I shared that many factory .41 Magnums would not handle heavy bullets much over 220 grains, very accurately. The problem had to be barrel twist and Freedom Arms addressed this with a barrel twist of 1:14. Heavyweight bullets that used to provide shotgun style patterns at 50 yards, now will shoot in a .41 Magnum. Both the Cor-Bon 265 grain Hard Cast and the new Federal 250 grain Hard Cast factory load designed for hunting will stay right at 1" at 50 yards. These loads are designed for the deepest possible penetration with the .41 Magnum and achieve muzzle velocities of 1,400 fps and 1,300 fps respectively.

**The dream was to
achieve 1,800 fps with
a 230 grain bullet in a
standard-sized sixgun
while the goal was
to do it safely.**

At 100 yards Hornady's 210 grain XTP over 22.0 grains of Accurate Arms #9 for 1,750 fps is unbelievable in its performance. The first three rounds fired from the Model 83 .41 Magnum measured 7/8". With the next five shots, three went into 5/8", four into 1/4", and all five were a most satisfying 1/2" at 100 yards. This is not only the most accurate .41 Magnum I have ever had in my hands, it is simply the most accurate centerfire revolver I have ever shot.

In April of 1999 the .475 Linebaugh arrived in a Model 83. In 1996, Freedom Arms started experimenting with one of their Premier Grade five-shot revolvers chambered in .475 Linebaugh. It was my privilege then to fire the newest big bore but I was unable to share anything about it until they were ready to introduce it. The cylinder of the Freedom Arms features enclosed case rims so it was necessary to reduce the rim diameter of .475 cases made from .45-70 brass to fit the Freedom Arms cylinders. Naturally, Freedom Arms was reluctant to introduce their revolver in .475 Linebaugh until factory ammo was available. Once Buffalo Bore began offering a factory load for the .475 Linebaugh that had the necessary small rim, the .475 Linebaugh Freedom Arms

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revolver became a reality.

With Buffalo Bore's loads, all assembled with hard cast bullets, the 420 grain LBT-LFN (Long Flat Nose) "light load" does 1,000 feet per second from a 7½" Freedom Arms .475 Linebaugh, while the full house load with the same bullet achieves 1,380, and with the 420 grain WFN (Wide Flat Nose) muzzle velocity is 1,330 fps.

of the big bores, the .41 Magnum, the same might be said for this chambering which arrived as a five-shot Model 97 in April 2000. Friend Penn Baggett, who has hosted me on many a turkey, javelina, and whitetail hunt on his ranch outside of Ozona Texas, pronounces the .41 Magnum Model 97 as the perfect ranch revolver.

The Freedom Arms Model 97 Pre-

“This is not only the most accurate .41 Magnum I have ever had in my hands, it is simply the most accurate centerfire revolver I have ever shot.”

Since the advent of the .475 Linebaugh in the Freedom Arms Model 83, Hornady and Ruger teamed up to produce the .480 Ruger which is nothing more than a slightly shortened .475 Linebaugh. Buffalo Bore also offers factory loaded .480 Ruger ammunition with a 420 grain bullet at 1,100 fps from a 7½" barrel. Using this load in a 4¾" Freedom Arms Model 83 fitted with a .480 Ruger cylinder, I took a huge 1,200-pound trophy bison with a broadside shot at 35 yards. Penetration was complete; in one side and out the other.

miere Grade chambered in .22 Long Rifle in the arrived in July 2002. In addition to the Sporting Grade cylinder, two extra cylinders are available, a Match Grade .22 Long Rifle, and a .22 Magnum cylinder. I have found that with either the Sporting Grade cylinder or the .22 Magnum cylinder, groups of less than one-third inch at 25 yards are not uncommon with the proper ammunition. This is another great little sixgun from Freedom Arms.

Smaller/Lighter

In 1997, the Model 83 was joined by the Mid-Frame, which is now appropriately known as the Model 97. The Model 1997 is about 90-percent the size of the Freedom Arms standard Model 83, and as expected, is built to the same exacting tolerances and specifications as the original. It is slightly smaller than a Colt Single Action Army, and to me the grip frame feels much like the old Colt Bisley. The first Model 97 arrived not as the traditional Freedom Arms five-shooter, but rather a true sixgun chambered for six .357 Magnum rounds. Available with both adjustable sights for field use and fixed sights for the Cowboy Action Shooters, the Model 97 is available with standard barrel lengths of 4¼", 5½", and 7½".

The arrival of the 21st century also saw the arrival of three more Freedom Arms single actions. The Model 97 .32 Magnum with an extra .32-20 cylinder has proven to be an extremely accurate and easy shooting sixgun and my hopes and prayers were answered with the advent of the Model 97 in .44 Special. Finally Freedom arms looked back at the Model 83 and chambered it in their very own cartridge, the .500 Wyoming Express.

Freedom Arms offers their Model 83 in both the Premier Grade finish as well as the matte finish Field Grade. Regardless of the finish both guns are built exactly the same way and with the same materials. The Model 97 is offered in Premier Grade finish only. There are many barrel lengths and sight options available and Freedom Arms also offers a full line of both hip and shoulder holsters with the hunter in mind.

Wayne Baker, founder and first president of Freedom Arms is now basically retired from that position, while Dick Casull is out on his own with Casull Arms. Freedom Arms is now under the charge of Wayne's son Bob Baker With 25 years behind them, I asked Bob if he had any plans for a special 25th Anniversary sixgun. He has already been thinking about this for the past several years, so hopefully we will see a special Silver Anniversary revolver, possibly a pair in a fitted case.  I'm looking forward to it.

For more info: Freedom Arms, (307) 883-2468, www.freedomarms.com.

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