

THE NEW

GUN WEEK

SERVING SHOOTERS, COLLECTORS AND ACTIVISTS SINCE 1966



The FN Tactical Police Shotgun (TPS) is all business, and mimics the M4 carbine.

FN's Tactical Police Shotgun Rated Tops for Defense

**Photos & Story
by R.K. Campbell**

Contributing Editor

It may come as a surprise to some, but for most of the history of firearms, the standard weapon of major armies was a *de facto* shotgun. The musket featured a smoothbore and was often loaded with two balls or the infamous "buck and ball" mix. The advent of the rifle changed the face of warfare, putting the shotgun in a backseat to the rifle in terms of military deployment.

The shotgun was too good to die, however, and came back strong in both the Philippine Insurrection and World War I. The Winchester 1897 pump shotgun proved very effective in both wars. Today, the shotgun is still important. It may be used to guard prisoners, but it can also be effective in a tight spot, especially in night battles.

The shotgun remains the premier police long gun for many reasons. Among

the way. For handling heavy loads this is a good choice. I found it quite easy to sling the shotgun or move it out of the way when reloading. I think it is well-suited to police work, especially when there is a premium on training time. The M4 and the TPS share the same basic handling, making transition between the two easier. Beancounters like to cut training time. This shotgun should make everyone happy.

The shotgun has aperture sights which are identical to the M4. This is an important departure from the standard sights found on most police and military shotguns. Even those with sights seldom have really good ones. A combat shotgunner must center his strikes, making a solid hit.

The sporting shotgunner need only land a few pellets on a small target that does not shoot back. These sights are quick on target, the best sights ever fielded on a combat shotgun. Police shotguns get rough

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Freedom Arms Single-Action Model 97s in .44 Special and .32

Photos & Story
by Jim Taylor
Contributing Editor

At a Shootists Holiday back in the late 1990s, Bob Baker of Freedom Arms brought a couple of unique little tool-room guns to show us. The prototype gun was small, smaller than a Colt Single Action Army, but it looked like a miniature version of the big .454 that Freedom Arms builds.

One of the handguns was a 6-shot .357 Magnum, and the other one was a 5-shot .45 Colt. We shot the guns, played with them (after Baker had sworn us to secrecy) and gave him our input. Both the guns were the prototypes of what is now known as the Freedom Arms Model 97.

In 1997 Freedom Arms unveiled the new gun to the public and it was an immediate success. Approximately 10% smaller than

simply ideal for those who shoot Duelist Class in Cowboy Action Shooting. The hammer just lays naturally in the correct position for the follow-up shots when shooting one-handed . . . more so than any other single-action I have ever used. My friend Billy Boots uses the Model 97s exclusively for his Cowboy Action Shooting and has done right well with them.

As soon as the Model 97 was introduced, people began asking Freedom Arms to make it in other calibers in addition to the .357 and the .45 Colt. It seemed that everyone who had a favorite pistol cartridge wanted one in his or her caliber. The funny thing about Freedom Arms . . . they pay attention to the folks that use their guns.

One of the calibers on the "wish list" was the venerable old .44 Special. This cartridge has been around almost 100 years now, and while a few writers have at-



The Freedom Arms Model 97 .44 Special 7½-inch.

visit their website and look over their offerings.

Buffalo Bore Ammunition is known for its "Strictly Big Bore—Strictly Business"-type ammunition. Their specialty ammo is loaded more toward the "top end" and is intended for serious work. Accurate and powerful, they have proven it in the field around the world. You can see all their various offerings on the Internet.

Child-like Excitement

When the Model 97 .44 Special arrived, I was like a kid opening Christmas presents. I did not know what version of the handgun they would send. Opening the box revealed a very nice looking 7½-inch adjustable-sighted model. This would be a great hunting gun and I immediately thought of deer season about three months in the future.

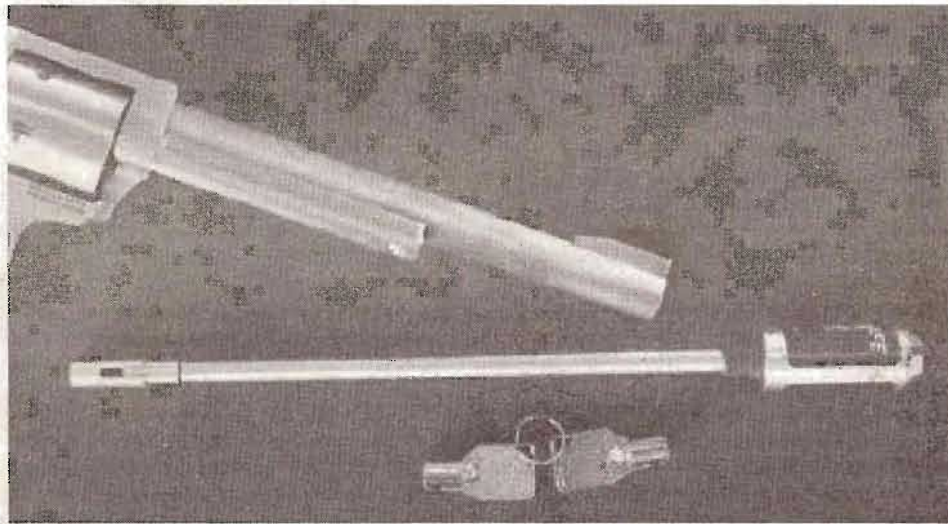
The Model 97 was packaged with Freedom Arms' own type of gunlock. This consists of a keyed rod that inserts into the barrel, protruding into the cylinder.

ran close to 2,000 rounds of Black Hills ammo through the gun. Other than needing normal cleaning, it never gave me a problem with either Cowboy Action loads or the heavier loads I shot later on.

Accurate

Accuracy was limited by my eyesight and trigger squeeze. I fired a number of groups off the bench that resulted in one ragged hole or very close to that at 25 yards. The gun was accurate . . . more so than the shooter!

As deer season approached, I switched to shooting the heavier Buffalo Bore loads. Buffalo Bore produces both a 180-grain jacketed hollowpoint load and a 255-grain hardcast Keith-type semi-wadcutter load. Both are safe in the Model 97. I decided I would hunt with the cast bullet loading and sighted the gun in to hit point-of-aim at 50 yards. I then practiced shooting with these loads, standing up shooting with a two-hand hold. I shot at ranges from 20 yards to about 70 during my practice time.



The unusual but effective Freedom Arms gunlock that came with the Model 97 fits through the barrel and into the cylinder.

the larger Model 83, the gun was (in Baker's words) "...made smaller, lighter for general carry purposes where pure horsepower wasn't necessary. . . ." The gun features Freedom Arms' patented transfer bar safety that has no effect on the trigger



A close-up of the hammer transfer bar safety.

pull with the hammer at full cock.

Just after their release I obtained a Model 97 in .45 Colt with an optional .45 ACP cylinder, and tested it extensively, writing it up for *Gun Week* at that time as well as on the Internet. It was an accurate, easy-packing gun that pointed more naturally for me than any other gun I have ever used . . . and I am a huge fan of the Colt SAA!

Ideal Gun

The shape, size and relationship of the grip to the hammer make the Model 97



tempted to declare it obsolete or dead, reality has proven them totally wrong. It has always been known as an accurate cartridge and over the course of its life won much acclaim.

While it was never produced in more than target loadings until recently, it has been handloaded to more powerful loadings since the early days. Elmer Keith would be the name that springs to most sixgunner's minds when the .44 Special is mentioned. It was due in large part to his experiments with the .44 Special that we have the .44 Magnum today.

Model 97

When Freedom Arms announced the Model 97 in .44 Special there was already a waiting list. People had been signing up for some time saying, "If you build one, I want one!" It was a pleasant surprise when Baker called me and asked if I would like a Model 97 in .44 Special to test. My reaction was "Yes. Please send one."

After the conversion I began to think and plan. My problem is, I have never owned a .44-caliber pistol. Yes, I know, that is probably a serious oversight and may reveal a character flaw in me. I called Black Hills Ammunition Co. as well as Buffalo Bore Ammunition Co. and made arrangements to get some of their ammo shipped so that I could use the gun.

Black Hills Ammunition has been in business a number of years now and has a well-earned reputation for quality ammo. They produce both rifle and handgun ammunition in a large number of calibers and types, from Cowboy Action ammo to Match-Grade rifle ammo. I suggest you



Buffalo Bore Heavy .44 Special ammunition.

When the key is locked small "fingers" open into the chamber area of the cylinder, preventing the rod from being withdrawn or the cylinder turned. It is a very well-built, well-designed lock and reflects the policy of Freedom Arms to manufacture only high-quality products.

On the range, the .44 Special Model 97 proved to be all that it promised. The sights were easy to regulate and I soon had it shooting center at 25 yards with the Black Hills loads. I decided to concentrate on them and wait until it got closer to deer season to use the Buffalo Bore loads.

With that in mind I began shooting the Freedom Arms gun at least twice a week. Over the course of the next few months I

Opening day I was sitting on the deer stand when I saw movement to my left. Looking in that direction I saw several deer coming through the brush and trees.

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The very accurate Black Hills .44 Special ammunition and targets.

Sources

Freedom Arms
314 Hwy. 239, PO Box 150
Dept. GWK
Freedom, WY 83120
phone: 800-833-4432
on-line: www.freedomarms.com

Black Hills Ammunition
PO Box 3090
Dept. GWK
Rapid City, SD 57709-3090
phone: 605-348-5150
on-line: www.black-hills.com

Buffalo Bore Ammunition
PO Box 78
Dept. GWK
Carmen, ID 83462
phone: 208-756-8085
on-line: www.buffalobore.com



The Model 97 is an almost perfect packin' pistol.

Quality Freedom Arms SAs For Hunting or Easy Carry

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As I raised the gun and got ready, a doe trotted out to my right while a small four-point buck was coming directly at me. As I cocked the gun he evidently heard me and stopped, looking up at me from about 50 or 60 yards.

I had what seemed to be a decent sight picture so I thought, "Why not?" and squeezed the trigger . . . and shot right over him! At the shot, deer broke and ran around me and the buck ran right toward me. As he ran past to my left I whistled and he stopped, looking around. I fired again and shot under him! At that shot he ran the direction the does had gone, disappearing in the brush.

No Hit

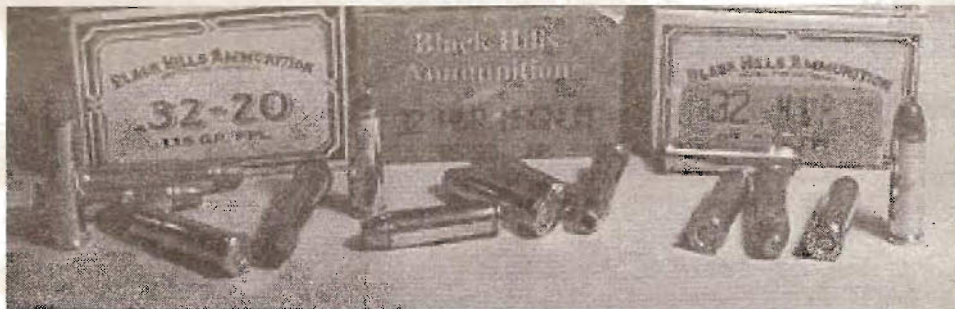
I climbed down and spent some time making sure that I had not hit him. I had seen the misses but wanted to as-

Freedom Arms. This one was even more exciting than the .44 Special—if that is possible. It was a neat little short-barreled fixed-sight sixgun in one of my favorite calibers, the .32-20!

The .32-caliber Model 97 is actually produced in .32 H&R Magnum. The .32-20 cylinder is optional. At the Shootists Holiday 2003, Baker had a prototype .32-20 that he allowed me to shoot, and I had told him then to send me one for testing when they got into production. (Part of the story of developing the Model 97 in the .32 calibers is on the Internet site Gunblast.Com [www.gunblast.com] under an article by Paco Kelly who did quite a bit of the testing).

Ideal Sight

I felt the fixed-sight short model would be ideal for Cowboy Action Shooting, and to my satisfaction, it proved out . . . at least



Three .32-caliber Black Hills loads were used in testing the short-barrel .32 Model.

sure myself it was my mistake and that I did not wound the deer. There was no sign that I even knocked any hair off. It was purely my fault.

The first shot was closer than I thought and I held wrong. The second

for me. The short gun fit my hand like a lost puppy looking for a home. It was fast, easy to get used to, and worked very well. It was also accurate as the targets tell, though to tell the truth, I spent a lot more time clanging metal targets with it than I



My friend Gunner's first deer, taken with a Freedom Arms Model 97 in .41 Magnum.

miss was due to jerking the trigger in my excitement. I have missed deer before and will probably do so again, but I sure did want to collect one with the Model 97 before I sent it back to the factory. However, it was not to be. One thing I know. It was not the gun's fault.

In the middle of shooting and testing the .44 Special, another package arrived from

Louisiana's Breaux Retiring from Senate

Pro-gun, pro-sportsman three-term Democratic Sen. John Breaux of Louisiana intends to retire next year, ending a 30-year political career. His retirement will give Republicans another strong opportunity to pick up a Southern Senate seat in 2004, but it will further thin the ranks of pro-gun Senate Democrats; Georgia's Sen. Zell Miller has also announced retirement plans.

"There comes a time in every career when it is time to step aside and let others step up. For my family and me, that time has arrived," Breaux said at a news conference Monday, Jan. 5, choking back tears several times.

Breaux frequently crossed the aisle to work with Republicans, sometimes angering fellow Democrats and earning a reputation as one of the GOP's favorite Democrats.

"Throughout my years in Congress I have been guided by a simple philosophy—to make government work for everyone. I didn't go to Washington to get nothing done other than argue about whose fault it was when we failed to make government work," Breaux said Monday.

did shooting paper target).

I ran Black Hills Ammunition through it exclusively. The .32-20 Cowboy loads performed in a most excellent manner, as did the .32 H&R Cowboy loads. The hotter 85-grain JHP loads also worked well. Recoil is negligible with them and we were able to run the knockdown targets pretty fast with a little practice.

Milt Morrison of Qualité Pistol & Revolver stopped by the ranch for a weekend and we spent some time shooting the .32-caliber Model 97. By the time we left, he was saying things like, "I am going to have to get one." Which pretty much has been the reaction of those who have shot it.

The Model 97 Freedom Arms is now produced in a variety of calibers. It is available in .22 Long Rifle with an optional .22 Long Rifle Match cylinder and an optional .22 Magnum cylinder. It is also available in: .32 H&R Magnum with an optional .32-20 cylinder; .357 Magnum; .41 Magnum; .44 Special, and .45 Colt with an optional .45 ACP cylinder.

At the end of deer season my friend Gunner came down from St. Louis to hunt deer with me. The evening of the last day I was out with him, I watched him collect his first deer . . . with a Model 97 Freedom Arms in .41 Magnum. It (and he) did a nice job.

What's next for the Model 97? I can't say right now but don't be surprised if Freedom Arms announces some new caliber for the little gun. The weight and size make it one of the more perfect packin' guns on the market, especially for those of us who are enamored with the single-action. When you talk to the fine folks at Freedom Arms, tell them you saw it in *Gun Week*.