

SPECIAL ISSUE Reloading Gear, Tips, Techniques

GUNS & AMMO

EXCLUSIVE

**FREEDOM ARMS
.475 LINEBAUGH
BEHEMOTH**

FIRST LOOK!

**KIMBER
.45 PRO-GRADE
Stainless Ultra Carry**

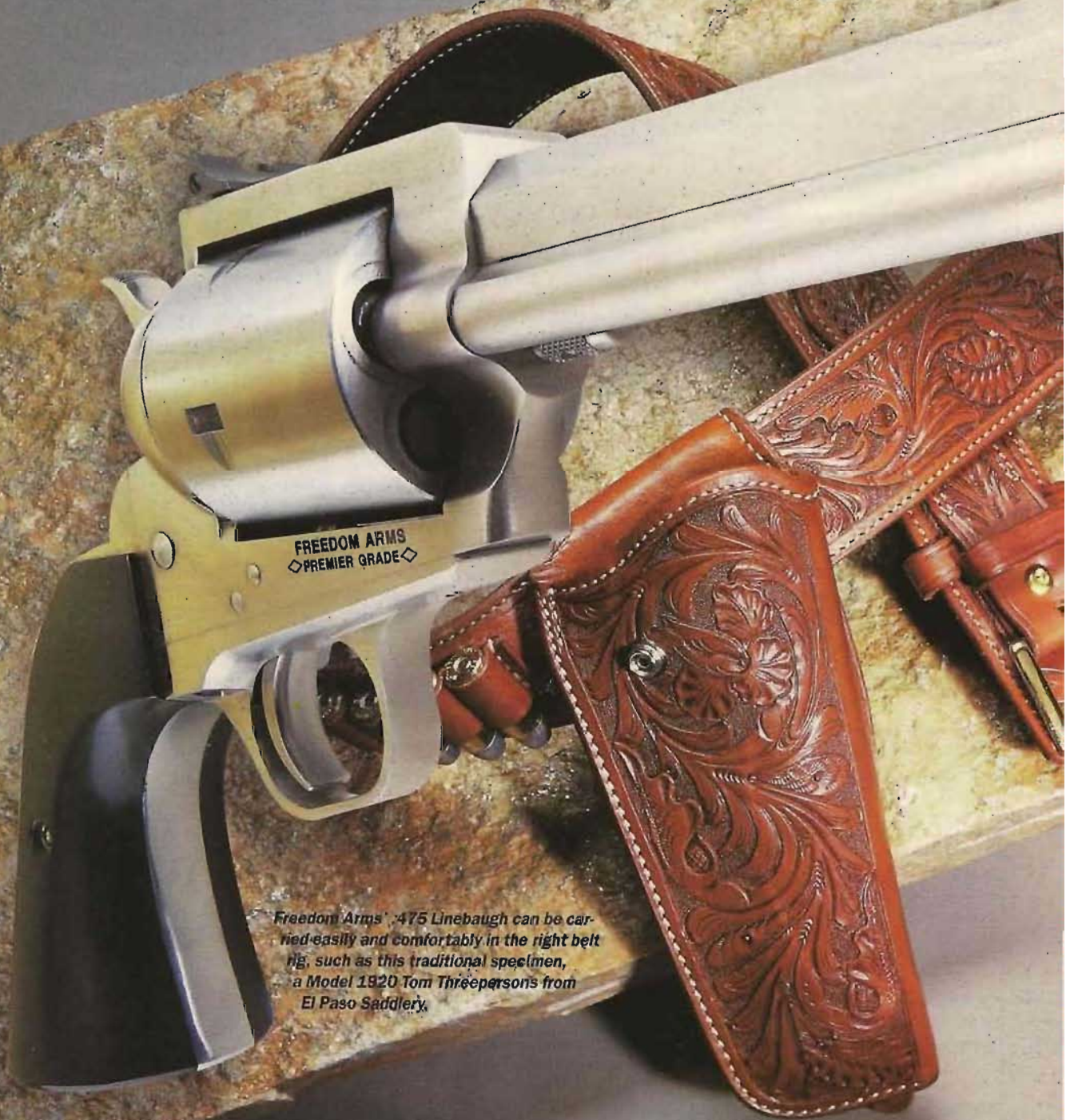
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SIXGUN SUPRE

All You Can Handle



Freedom Arms' .475 Linebaugh can be carried easily and comfortably in the right belt rig, such as this traditional specimen, a Model 1920 Tom Threepersons from El Paso Saddlery.



Freedom Arms' Premier Single Action is Now Available in .475 Linebaugh, Combining Old West Appeal with Africa-class Stopping Power.

By Brian Pearce

During the 20th century, we have seen many significant handgun cartridge developments, particularly ones designed for hunters. This power trend began with the development of the .357 Magnum in 1935 and the .44 Magnum in 1955 and eventually the .454 Casull in the early 1980s. The latest powerhouse started as a wildcat design by well-known Wyoming gunsmith/inventor John Linebaugh, and is officially known as the .475 Linebaugh. With its heavy bullet and incredible penetration, it can decisively handle the largest game on earth.

The cartridge has been around for more than a decade, but it wasn't until 1998 that Buffalo Bore Ammo introduced factory loads and Freedom Arms elected to chamber its five-shot single action for this awesome cartridge. The new gun—known as the Model 757—meets the needs of even the most power-hungry handgunners.

For the past 12 years, G&A's Ross Seyfried has written of his hunting exploits with the .475 Linebaugh. Most of his hunting and shooting has been with custom-built Ruger Bisleys built by John Linebaugh and Hamilton Bowen. And while custom bullet makers have offered jacketed bullets, Ross has mostly used his own hard-cast bullets from LBT moulds. When Ross wanted to have the ultimate revolver built, a magnificent gun he called "Number 13," (see "Playing Favorites" October '98 *Guns & Ammo*) he had it chambered for the .475 Linebaugh, a cartridge

that he referred to as "the ultimate extreme in revolver power."

BACKGROUND OF A BRUTE

Certainly most readers have heard of this round, but please bear with me as I take a moment to brief unfamiliar readers on its development. In 1986, John Linebaugh introduced a new wildcat—based on the .348 Winchester rifle case—that would later become known as the .500 Linebaugh. The case was cut off to 1.4 inches, and Veral Smith of Lead Bullet Technology (LBT) offered moulds for cast bullets weighing 440 grains with a diameter of .512. John's first .500 was built on a Ruger Bisley, had a five-shot cylinder and was capable of throwing 440 grain bullets at close to 1,300 fps. But within a year Winchester announced that .348 Winchester ammo would be dropped from the line.

Concerned with brass availability, Linebaugh began searching for another case as a basis to build another cartridge that would deliver similar power. He settled on the grand old 45-70 Government. With its large rim and relatively straight case, it seemed a natural choice for a big revolver cartridge. After cutting it to 1.4 inches, extensive experiments began with various barrels with different rates of twist and LBT bullets in several weights. After much trial and error, the right combinations were found and the .475 Linebaugh was born.

A "REAL WORLD" REVOLVER

In 1987 I had the opportunity to test John's first .475. It was capable of driving 380-grain

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bullets at over 1,500 fps—or 430-grain bullets at 1,350 fps! Accuracy was superb, as groups measuring 1 1/2 inches at 50 yards could be obtained. Pressures were very modest, as full-house loads typically produced only about 40,000 psi, proving to be relatively easy on revolvers. And best of all, this extremely high level of performance came in a package that was compact and could easily be carried in a traditional sixgun holster. Linebaugh custom guns only weighed 2 ounces more than a Ruger Super Blackhawk with the same barrel length!

Over the next 12 years, the popularity of the .475 and .500 grew, and many other pistolsmiths also began building custom guns as demand increased. However, John Linebaugh and Hamilton Bowen remained as the two premier gunsmiths, and both report that the number of custom guns built in each caliber have been very similar (Winchester never totally stopped offering .348 brass, so the .500 has continued to thrive).

LOADS AND COMPONENTS

The problem with wildcats is that not everyone reloads, and for those that do, dies are expensive, and trimming and turning brass can be time-consuming. All of these concerns have now vanished

SPECIFICATIONS

FREEDOM ARMS MODEL 757

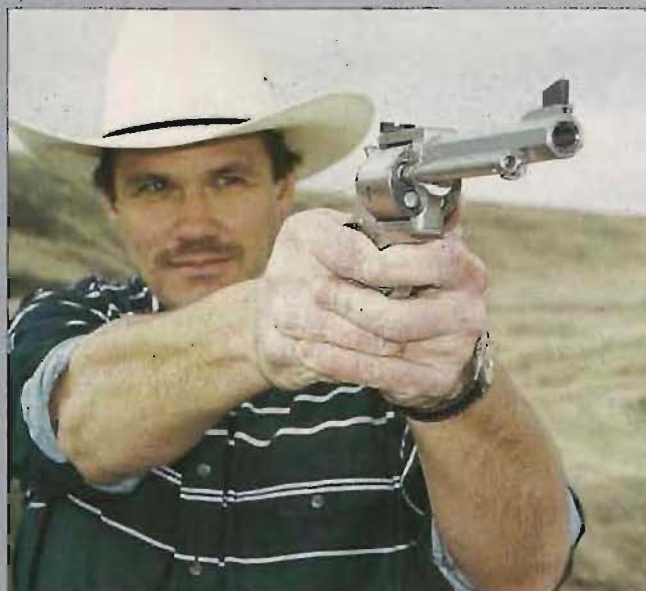
Caliber:	.475 Linebaugh
Action type:	Single action
Finish:	Stainless steel, brushed satin
Barrel lengths:	4", 6", 7 1/2" inches
Rifling Rate of Twist:	1-in-18 inches
Weight:	50 ounces (6-inch octagon barrel)
Trigger Pull:	4.5 pounds
Capacity:	Five shots
Safety:	Hammer block, safety bar
Sights:	Adjustable rear, interchangeable front
Grips:	Impregnated hardwood or black micarta
Options:	Fixed sights, octagon barrel, engraving, grips, custom serial numbers
Suggested Retail:	Premier Grade \$1,820 Field Grade \$1,400 Add \$445 for octagon barrel

with the introduction of factory loads for both the .475 and .500 Linebaugh from Buffalo Bore Ammo (BBA). This ammo is first class, as brass is made by Starline (800-280-6660) under exclusive contract for BBA, and is properly headstamped. Hard-cast LBT bullets are offered in Wide Flat Nose (WFN) and Long Flat Nose (LFN) styles, and are designed for serious big game handgun hunters, offering deep penetration and bone breaking qualities. There is even a "reduced" or mid-range load available.

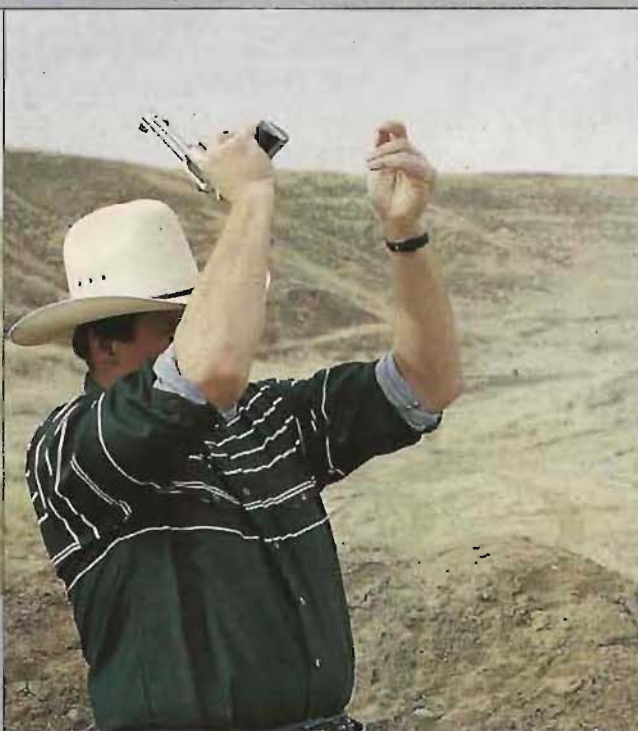
As mentioned earlier, the .475 is taken from the .45-70 case that features a very large rim diameter measuring .608. This is simply too large to fit in the cylinder of Freedom Arms revolvers. One custom gunsmith, Jack Huntington (805-942-7026), has been converting Freedom Arms .454s to .475 Linebaugh for several years. He had been turning .45-70 rims down to a .540 diameter to fit in the compact cylinders of Freedom Arms guns. For this reason, Tim Sundles, owner of BBA, had his brass manufactured to this same .540 diameter rim in hopes that the folks at Freedom Arms would chamber this impressive cartridge.

HODGDON PRESSURE DATA .475 LINEBAUGH (8-INCH BARREL, 1:20 INCH TWIST)

BULLET WEIGHT	POWDER/GRAINS	VELOCITY	PSI
385-grain Cast	H110 27.0	1,435 fps	45,300
385-grain Cast	H4227 25.5	1,342 fps	41,700
385-grain Cast	Titegroup 7.0	854 fps	23,700
420-grain LFN	H110 25.0	1,304 fps	36,700
420-grain LFN	H4227 24.0	1,243 fps	37,100



Hold onto your hat! The .475 Linebaugh has real recoil with full-house loads. Author Pearce suggests that shooters not try to "fight" the gun or hold it down; however, a firm grip should be applied. That's as good a piece of advice as you're likely to get for dealing with 420 grains of lead at around 1,350 fps.



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HANDLOAD DATA .475 LINEBAUGH FREEDOM ARMS MODEL 757

BULLET WEIGHT	POWDER/GRAINS	VELOCITY	GROUP
LBT LFN GC 401 grain	231/9.0	915 fps	.80
LBT LFN GC 401 grain	HS6/13.0	1,000 fps	1.00
LBT LFN GC 401 grain	H110/28.0	1,420 fps	1.20
LBT WFN 400 grain	HS6/15.0	1,125 fps	1.50
LBT WFN 400 grain	H110/27.5	1,380 fps	1.25
LBT LFN 420 grain	H110/26.0	1,350 fps	.95
LBT LFN 420 grain	HS6/15.0	1,140 fps	1.30
LBT LFN 445 grain	H110/24.5	1,310 fps	1.30
Commercial BRP 395 grain	H110/26.0	1,300 fps	1.35

Test results from a sandbag rest at 25 yards. Velocities obtained from an Oehler Model 33 at a temperature below freezing. All loads used Large Pistol Magnum Primers Only!

After many months of R&D and coordination with John Linebaugh and BBA, the gun is now in production. Interestingly, with the availability of factory ammo, John Linebaugh has also been buried with orders for his custom built Ruger Bisley's.

SERIAL NO. K0104

I ordered my Freedom Arms test gun with an optional 6-inch octagon barrel, black micarta grips, in the top-of-the-line Premier Grade with fully adjustable sights. Having had ample experience with the .475 Linebaugh, I knew this slightly heavier barrel would help take some of the sharpness out of the recoil. It is very striking in appearance—so much so that my test revolver was on display at the 1999 SHOT Show in Atlanta. The octagon barrel also seems to be in character with the gun and cartridge, as it is a blend of old school with modern technology.

My test gun is serial number K0104 and displays excellent fit and finish. The

frame is made from heat-treated 17-4 PH stainless, providing incredible strength. The chambers are countersunk and line bored—the latter contributing to the gun's excellent accuracy. Chamber mouths measure .476, which proved to be just a shade tight on WFN style factory loads, as rounds had to be pushed into the chamber the last 1/2 of an inch. Cylinder lock-up was extremely tight with no detectable endshake or sideplay. The barrel/cylinder gap was held tight at only .001 and the forcing cone is cut at 3 degrees. The .475 features a new firing pin and housing

that's a distinct improvement from previous guns, as it can be changed or removed in seconds with a screwdriver.

The cylinder's overall length is 1.790—the same as the .454 Casull. This requires bullets to have a shorter nose of approximately .360 rather than .400, the length developed for Linebaugh and Bowen guns. The .400 length nose will chamber and doesn't protrude from the end of the cylinder. However, the possibility of the bullet creeping out of its crimp slightly during heavy recoil poses a chance of locking up the gun, so the shorter .360 nose bullets should be used. For the most in reliability, a maximum overall cartridge length of 1.740 is about ideal.

To accommodate this shorter nose length, I contacted Veral Smith of LBT to build moulds with the new Freedom Arms in mind. Four designs were developed with a .360 length nose, including a 400-grain plain base WFN, and three gas check LFN designs weighing 401, 420 and 445 grains respectively. Gas checks are available from Bullet Swaging Supply (303 McMillan Rd. West Monroe, LA 71294-1056). I sized and lubed all bullets to .476, using an RCBS H & I sizing die.

Current factory loads drive a 420-grain bullet at an honest 1,350 fps from a 6-inch barrel in either a WFN or LFN designs. Idaho's winter weather finally permitted me to chronograph factory loads, and while they were only a few feet

TEST RESULTS WITH FREEDOM ARMS .475 LINEBAUGH WITH BUFFALO BORE AMMUNITION

BULLET WEIGHT	ADVERTISED VELOCITY	ACTUAL VELOCITY	GROUP
420-grain LFN	950 fps	945 fps	1.40
420-grain LFN	1350 fps	1,347 fps	1.30
420 grain WFN	1350 fps	1,341 fps	1.10

Test results from a sandbag rest at 25 yards. Velocities obtained from an Oehler Model 33 at a temperature below freezing.



The .475 has been tested in Africa on large and dangerous game, and can penetrate 4 feet of heavy bone and muscle. Here (left to right sequence), it busts up a 40-pound cement (that's not cinder!) block with sledgehammer dispatch.

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per second below their advertised rates, the temperature was well below freezing, so I have no doubt that on a 70-degree day, they would clock at near 1,400 fps.

A LOWER, SLOWER OPTION

BBA also offers a reduced load that I feel is a real key to the success of this cartridge, as it drives a 420-grain bullet at a comfortable 950 fps. Recoil is similar to shooting a Ruger Super Blackhawk .44 Magnum, but the reduced .475 Linebaugh has a slower recoil. The gun may rise just as much, but not as quickly. The low pressure of this round also changes the noise from a sharp crack to a dull boom. I have let two people fire the new Model 757 with this reduced load. Although neither of them normally enjoy shooting .44 Magnums, they actually found it very reasonable and nearly comfortable. This reduced load is still very powerful and makes an excellent everyday choice.

I was anxious to see how the new gun would perform with both factory and handloads, so I headed to my shooting bench with 150 rounds of Buffalo Bore factory ammo and 200 rounds of my

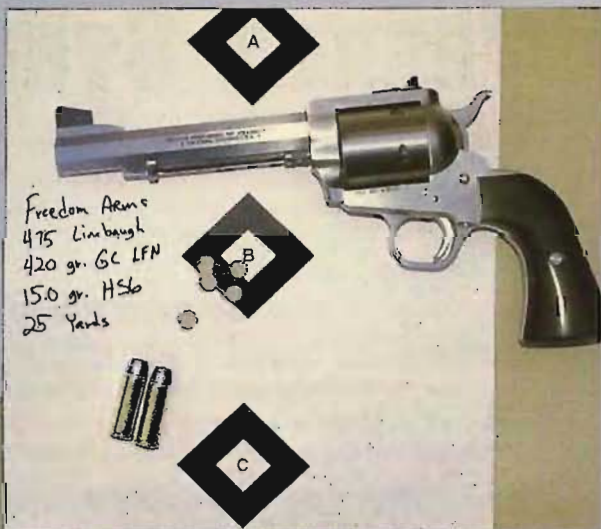
handloads. These included a reduced load with a 401-grain bullet at 900 fps, some mid-range loads driven by HS6, and full-house loads using heavy doses of Hodgdon H110, with the aforementioned bullets ranging from 400 to 445 grains. I included a commercially available bullet from Roger Barnes (BRP 719-633-0658) a LFN



It's shown next to a Ruger Super Blackhawk .44 Magnum (bottom) for comparison. The Model 757 weighs a modest 50 ounces with a 6-inch octagon barrel. This permits carrying the classic single action in a hip holster (right) such as this fancy hand-carved El Paso Saddlery Model 1920.



Despite its extreme power, the Freedom Arms Model 757 (top) is a "real world" handgun in terms of size.



Full-house factory ammo from Buffalo Bore performed very well with 25-yard groups measuring less than 1 1/2 inches (above), but for everyday field shooting and plinking, mid-range leads using HS6 are very accurate (above right), yet still more powerful than a .44 Magnum.



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design weighing 395 grains. Hawk Inc. (609-299-2800) offers a line of jacketed bullets for the .475 that produce good accuracy. However, I will not provide this load data in the accompanying charts, as it has not yet been pressure tested.

With the reduced loads, I knew I would actually enjoy most of my shooting sessions. With full-house barn burners, I had planned to shoot only a very modest number of heavy rounds per session to keep from developing a flinch. However, with a rapidly approaching editorial deadline, my shooting sessions had to be extended beyond what I would normally shoot in a single day. These prolonged sessions with full-house loads began taking its toll on my hands and

even seemed magnified in Idaho's cold winter weather. While I am not especially fond of shooting gloves, I was fortunate to have a new pair of Uncle Mike's leather shooting gloves, and they really took the edge off of felt recoil.

GOING FOR GROUPS

After firing a basic sight-in, I settled down on my sandbags and as expected, the gun performed exceptionally well. In fact, I'm am certain it is shooting better than I can hold with iron sights. At 25 yards, five-shot groups measuring just under an inch proved possible, at least when I would do my part! The gun was not at all particular, as all handloads and factory ammo grouped under 1 1/4 inches. To recognize the gun's full accuracy potential, a scope should be used.

Unfortunately, I didn't have a correct SSK base and rings on hand to mount a scope. This was fine however, as I prefer my single actions with iron sights anyway. And besides, putting a scope on an octagon barreled .475 is about like putting a satellite dish on top of a locomotive!

While testing from the bench is great for checking accuracy and load development, it can be punishing to wrists and hands, so I was happy to have this portion of my shooting session completed. When dealing with heavy recoil, shooting offhand or in a sitting position is much easier on the shooter than from sandbags, as it allows the arms to move more freely with the gun during recoil. Since I wanted to test the gun and bullets at long range, I settled in a comfortable sitting position and used a 16-inch steel plate at a measured 300 yards. After minor sight adjustments, this big single action was dropping



Seventeen-year-old David Kynoch fires the new Freedom Arms .475 Linebaugh with Buffalo Bore "reduced loads." These drive a 420-grain cast bullet at a modest 950 fps and make a great "everyday" load. Recoil is comparable to a .44 Magnum.



The new Freedom Arms .475 Linebaugh, requires a shorter nose of .360 (right) rather than the .400 length nose (left) originally designed for Linebaugh-converted Rugers.



In order to help soften the recoil of the mighty .475 Linebaugh, author Pearce used a pair of shooting gloves from Uncle Mike's.



The .475 Linebaugh (left) is larger and more powerful than the thumping .454 Casull (right). Like the Casull, it's intended for large, heavy game.

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bullets on target with regularity. The only times it missed was when it failed to adjust for my flinches! The best performance came with the 401 and 420-grain LFN-style bullets with gas checks. The 445-grain LFN performed well, but it seemed to be on the outer limits of bullet weight for this caliber.

WHO'S THE BADDEST IN THE LAND?

I didn't perform any penetration tests, as the .475 Linebaugh has proven itself both in ballistic gelatin and in the field. I will say, however, that I am not aware of any other revolver that is capable of as much penetration. This factor, combined with the .475's large bore, makes it the ultimate dangerous game revolver.

I have already been asked how the .454 Casull compares to the .475 Linebaugh. This is a difficult question, as they are two distinctly separate cartridges. However, the .475 operates on sheer horsepower with bullet weight

and large bore diameter. This is accomplished at only 40,000 to 45,000 psi, versus the 65,000 psi of the .454 Casull. In a nutshell, the .475 simply out-powers the .454, with larger wound channels and deeper penetration.

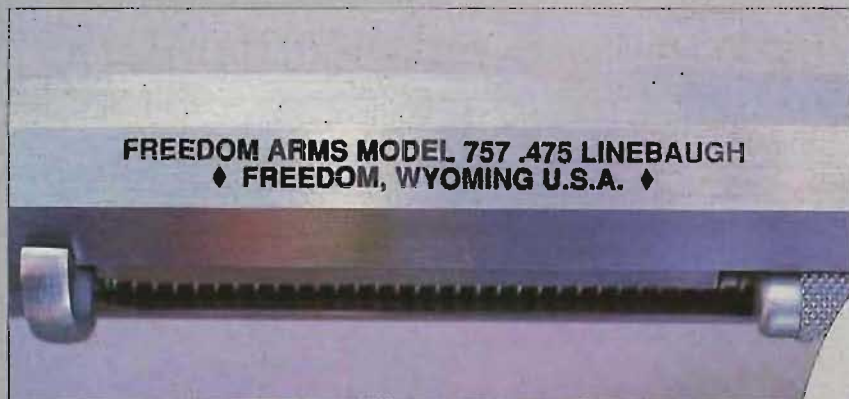
I've interviewed several hunters who have had the opportunity to use this cartridge in Alaska and Africa. One hunter, Otto Candies Jr., has taken three elephants with the .475. All were one-shot kills. One enormous crop-destroying bull was taken at 60 yards with a frontal brain shot with a 400-grain Trophy Bonded Solid driven at 1,360 fps. After completely penetrating the skull, the bullet lodged in the bull's neck at the third vertebra for an impressive 48 inches of penetration through the heaviest bone and muscle. When turned on Cape buffalo, the .475 can penetrate completely through both shoulders. Reports of the big .475 being used in Alaska on large moose and brown bears have also demonstrated extreme effectiveness.

For those who like to calculate power in

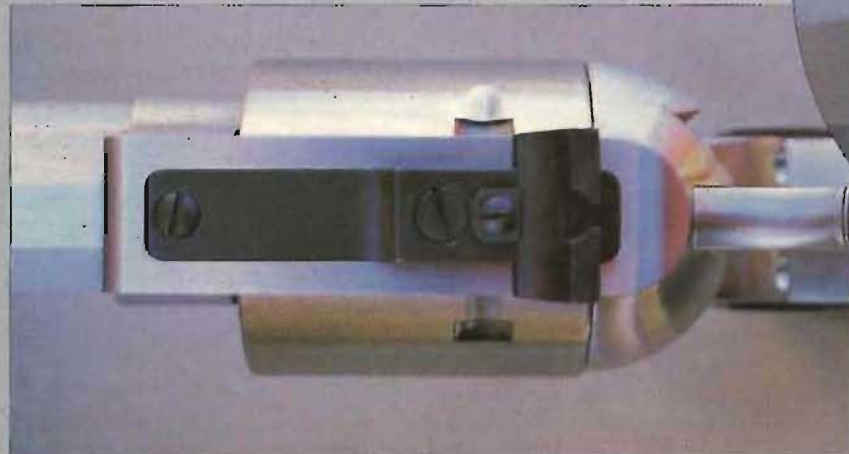
energy foot-pounds, (a method I don't subscribe to) the .454 will send a 300-grain bullet at 1,625 fps for 1,759 ft.-lbs.. The .475 can drive a 325-grain bullet at 1,850 fps for an impressive 2,470 ft.-lbs. of energy. Some will wonder why I have little faith in foot-pounds of energy as a measurement for effectiveness. While this example may be extreme, let's look at the 22-250 Remington with a 55-grain bullet at 3,680 fps with 1,654 foot-pounds of energy, and the .45-70 Government's 405-grain bullet at 1,330 fps with 1,590 foot-pounds of energy. The .45-70 will easily penetrate through several feet of big bones and muscle, while the tiny 22-250—with 64 more foot-pounds of energy—will generally only penetrate 4 to 7 inches on heavy game, if no bones are hit. However, on varmint-size game, the .22-250 is more effective than the .45-70. Obviously "foot-pounds" is not a good measurement for killing power. The well-known "Taylor Knock Out" scale is a much better method of measurement.

For this reason, I favor tough, non-expanding bullets driven at 1,300 to 1,450 fps from a revolver, providing deep penetration in heavy game. This is where the .475 really shines. Four hundred and twenty-grain bullets driven to these modest velocities fail to turn up the highest numbers in foot-pounds, but they're the most reliable large-game medicine obtainable from a practical-size revolver.

With full-house loads, recoil of the
(continued on page 92)



The Model 757 is a thoroughly modern single action, yet the octagonal-barreled version appeals to the author's sense of the traditional—so much so that he prefers to leave it "unscoped."



The .475 Linebaugh is a serious big-bore hunting revolver for large game. The front sight (above) can be easily changed in just seconds. The fully adjustable rear sight (left) is easy to remove, and the frame is drilled and tapped to accept a base for mounting a scope if desired.

metric MISFIT or UNLUCKY number?

bullet up to 3,150 fps, also gaining the accuracy-enhancing efficiency inherent in short, fat cases.

Whether we're talking factory cartridges, wildcats, or proprietaries, where does the 6.5mm fit in? The Europeans view it as an "all around" hunting caliber, with many Swedes swearing by their 6.5x55s for hunting the European moose. With the right bullet there's no doubting the 6.5's capability to take very large game, but we Americans generally prefer somewhat larger calibers for game like elk and moose. At least I do! We also tend to prefer somewhat smaller calibers for our varmint shooting. Mind you, a fast 6.5 is spectacular in a prairie dog town, although even the milder 6.5s have too much recoil for high-volume varminting. In a pinch, sure, but I don't see the 6.5s as dual-purpose varmint/big game rounds, any more than I see them as elk/moose/bear cartridges.

Instead, I think the 6.5s fall into essentially the same niche as the .270—perfect for game such as pronghorns, deer, sheep, goats, and on up to caribou. Keep in mind, too, that there are really two distinct flavors of 6.5mm cartridges. One flavor is characterized by the 6.5x55 Swede and .260 Remington, but includes virtually all of the older 6.5s. The second flavor is much faster, typified by the .264 Winchester Magnum, the European 6.5x68, and Lazzeroni's 6.71 Blackbird—but including the large-cased wildcats.

The first group is not quite as capable

as the .270 Winchester, but offers less recoil. I think cartridges like the .260 Remington and 6.5x55 are best-suited for medium-range work, and tend to find favor with hunters who like to stalk in close and are adept at picking their shots. The second group, typified by the Lazzeroni 6.71 Blackbird, is more capable than the .270 Winchester, offering better ranging capabilities and more downrange energy. There is, of course a third "flavor," typified by the 6.5mm Remington Magnum and Lazzeroni's 6.71 Phantom. In performance on game, this group is virtually indistinguishable from the .270 Winchester. Again, that isn't damning with faint praise! If you get the fever to be different from everyone else, choose a 6.5 and stand apart.



Open country is the natural habitat of the 6.5s. Europeans use them all the way up to moose, but the author feels they are best held at the "large deer and caribou" level.



Pronghorn antelope are ideal game for the 6.5s. The milder cartridges are perfect for hunters who like to stalk; the faster 6.5s are well-suited for reaching out.

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(continued from page 52)

.475 is significantly more than the .454. It should only be used by experienced big-bore handgunners. It is so intense that as loads are increased in velocity, every 25 fps can be felt in added recoil. This is especially true when bullets weighing over 400 grains are driven past 1,350 fps.

When any new cartridge is introduced—especially a proprietary one—there is always the question of how it will survive in the marketplace. From this standpoint, let's look at what the firearms industry is now doing to gear up for this newcomer. For 12 years, RCBS has offered die sets in "Group K," which are expensive and special order only. They have now moved them into "Group B" that carry the same basic price as a set of .44 Magnum dies, and are reviewing the possibility of offering them with a carbide sizer. They are also in process of designing at least one, possibly two bullet moulds. Speer is currently working on a 400-grain Plated Soft Point bullet that should be available very soon. Hawk, Inc., is currently offering jacketed bullets ranging from 265 to 400 grains. Hodgdon has included pressure data and handload information in its Data Manual #27. Ruger and Taurus are reviewing the possibility of chambering guns for this new powerhouse. Time will tell, but to me, the future looks very bright for the .475 Linebaugh.

To complement this new gun, I ordered a fancy carved cartridge belt and Model 1920 Tom Threepersons holster from El Paso Saddlery. This design is an old favorite of mine as it combines good support and quick access in a trim package. The hand carved floral design is nothing short of magnificent and provides the rig with a 19th-century flavor.

My only criticisms of the Model 757 are minor and can easily be fixed. The upper edges of the grips panels are sharp and can cut the hand during extended shooting sessions. A little rounding would go a long way, and less flare at the base of the grip panels would help foster a firmer grip. And last, the trigger guard could have its edges rounded slightly. In spite of these very minor problems, I am very impressed and pleased with the new Freedom .475 Linebaugh. It carries all the beautiful lines of the traditional single action, yet is thoroughly modern with piano-wire coil springs and the best steels available. If you have been waiting for the ultimate in big-bore revolver power, the wait is over.