

The Snubby Chronicles



NOTICE

Firearms are classified as deadly weapons in virtually all jurisdictions. Their use is inherently hazardous. This book is not intended as a substitute for professional training in their use. It is intended for educational purposes only. Neither the authors nor the publisher assumes responsibility for the use or misuse of information contained in this book.

© 2021

Published by Journal Editors of America LLC

All articles and photographs remain the property of their respective creators; they are reprinted here with the permission of each contributor.

Cover photo: S&W Model 37 by C.E. Harris. Stay tuned for his upcoming article, "Loading for the Airweights".

Table of Contents

About this Book.....	3
The Super Snub.....	5
Snubbies I have Known	11
The Colt Pocket Positive.....	15
The Über Snub.....	23
Snub Practice and Self-Assessment (The Snubby Standards).....	31
The Target Snub.....	37
The .38/32 Terrier: S&W's First Hand-Ejector Snub Revolver	41
DeSantis Swift Strips	53
Ankle Holsters.....	59
Snub Revolver Trigger Thoughts.....	65
Super Vel Super Strips	69
.38 Shot Loads	71
Aussie Snubs	75
All Boot Grips are Not Created Equal.....	79
Kimber K6S Speedloader Review	87
The Mice That Roared.....	91
The Colt Detective Special.....	99
Review: Charter Arms 9mm Pitbull	103
Revolvers with Three inch Barrels: Snub or Non-snub?.....	111
How Many Times Can You Reload a .38 Special Case?	115
The S&W 940, a 9mm Parabellum/.38 S&W pocket revolver...	121
Taurus Teardown.....	133

Hyskore Flashlight Grip Review 143
Loaded For Bear: The .38 Special 151
Old is New Again 157
My Favorite Snub 167
Shooting the S&W Model 12 .38 Special 173
Tactical Reloads 181
The Bryce Drill 185

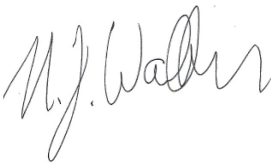
About this Book

Dear Reader,

We hope you enjoy *The Snubby Chronicles*. All credit goes to the authors: Mike Boyle, Andy Stanford, William Bell, Stephen P. Wenger, David Elderton, Tom Givens, Denver Burris, Peter A. Anderson, C.E. Harris, Mitchell Burke, John Russell, Grant Cunningham, Jim Finnerty, Daniel Congioli, William G. Hanley, Steve Collins, Mike Pipes and Frank Groth.

If you enjoy this book, please share it with a friend. The only restrictions are that you can't charge money for it or modify it in any way. If you wish to republish an individual article or photo, you need the permission of the author or photographer.

If you'd like to contribute to our publications, contact us at snubgunstudygroup@protonmail.com.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "N.J. Walker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Nick Walker
Editor

The Super Snub

by Mike Boyle



Smith & Wesson Performance Center Model 686.

Like it or not, the personal defense world is ruled by square guns. Autopistols, both big and small, have become the overwhelming choice for the police and responsible citizens. I carried a pistol for the last 20 years of my law enforcement career and never regretted making the big switch. But despite going with autopistol technology, my backup and frequent off-duty companion remained a small frame, snub revolver.

Despite the popularity of self-loading pistols, the sales of small snub revolvers remain especially strong. New models are continually being introduced and many new shooters have come to appreciate the advantages of the small, easy to conceal snub. Like the seasoned coppers of old, folks who take up concealed carry have discovered a small snub can be carried under all types of clothing and represents the ideal balance between power and concealability.

But why limit ourselves to a small frame snub revolver? What about a snub built on a larger frame? Although they are overshadowed by their small frame cousin, super-size snubs do indeed boast some advantages of their own. In the pre-polymer landscape of the early 1980s, two very different handguns were widely held to be the ultimate concealed carry piece. These intermediate size guns could be carried very discreetly in the right holster and were chambered for serious fight stopping cartridges. The Lightweight Colt Commander in .45 ACP enjoyed a cult-like following and variations on this theme remain popular today. My

The Super Snub

choice was a Smith & Wesson M19 Combat Magnum with a 2 ½ inch barrel. Loaded with Winchester Silvertip .357 Magnums, it was a much more formidable tool than the .38 Special snub I had been issued. I still own that M19 although I no longer carry it. Over the years, it has digested thousands of rounds of ammunition and is the ballistic equivalent of that old pickup truck with 300K on the odometer. I continue to shoot it and occasionally use it as a teaching piece, but it's no longer something I would trust my life to. A few years ago I was looking for a replacement when another S&W offering caught my attention. The S&W Performance Center M686 is built on the slightly heavier L frame and also sports a 2 ½ inch barrel. This premium grade revolver boasts a 7 shot cylinder and a tuned trigger action. I just had to have it!

So why would I want to go armed with dated technology that weighs significantly more than my 9 mm pistol and has less than half the ammunition capacity? A fair question, for sure. I for one am very comfortable with revolver technology and at typical combat distance, I can shoot it every bit as well as my pistol. Capacity may be an issue for the police or military, but I don't think it's a big deal for the armed citizen, where the most likely scenario is going to be one assailant at short range. Unlike a small frame snub, my M686 is comfortable to shoot in extended practice sessions. Even the rude .357 Magnum was tamed by

swapping off the pretty wooden stocks that came with it for a set of soft rubber grips from Pachmayr.

Here in the Northeast U.S., we all have to contend with some very restrictive gun laws. A nearby state limits magazine capacity to 10 rounds, which disqualifies my Glock 19. Not to be outdone, my home state limits the use of hollowpoint ammunition to active duty law enforcement officers. To maintain that advantage in stopping potential, I simply load up with Hornady Critical Defense .357 Magnum and go about my business.

Although I continue to carry and use my Glock 19, particularly in my capacity as a law enforcement trainer, the M686 PC often gets the call. The M686 is a frequent companion while traveling out of state and when hiking around the outback. It's no longer my job to confront people and I am not the least bit concerned about capacity. If you prefer the revolver to the pistol for personal defense, no apology is required. Consider that some people aren't particularly into guns, but require a suitable firearm for self-protection. The super-snub offers better sights, a smoother trigger action and a more comfortable grip, which translates to better hits on the target compared to a small frame revolver. If you can manage it, there is also the option of upping the ante in power. What's not to like?

Ruger, Smith & Wesson, Chiappa and others are all turning out mid-size snubs. If you get lucky, you might even find

The Super Snub

some used classic Smith and Colt snubs on the used gun market although the better specimens command a premium price. While I'm not suggesting that going this route is the best choice for everybody, it may be a perfect fit for some individuals. Unlike autopistols, loading devices are not regulated by government edict and are readily available at modest cost. The rounder contours of a snub makes them easier to conceal than a similar size pistol. In a close quarters confrontation, repeat contact shots are possible and the short barrel of a snub makes a disarm attempt much more difficult.

So pilgrim, pick and choose. For the responsible citizen, modern problems will likely be no different than those of a century ago. Think close, dark and fast. In that scenario, a super-size snub may very well be the ultimate fighting handgun.

THE SNUBBY CHRONICLES

Snubbies I have Known

by Andy Stanford

The first handgun I ever shot was a revolver. So was the first handgun I owned. A S&W .22 Combat Masterpiece and Colt New Frontier .22/.22 Mag respectively. Likewise the first two centerfire handguns in my collection, a 4” S&W Model 19 and a 6” Highway Patrolman. For Christmas in 1976 I got a 4” Colt Python AND a 9mm Combat Commander, which guns I shot in the first few South West Pistol League matches of the 1977 season. From there it was .45 Autos for well over a decade.

As a dyed-in-the-wool Jeff Cooper Clone, I had little use for “minor caliber” weapons. Of course, the Colonel was occasionally photographed with a 2” Model 60 on his hip, purportedly his wife Janelle’s gun. But for the most part, he and his ilk – of which I was certainly one – viewed the snub nosed .38 as the fighting tool of the unenlightened.

The first snubby with which I had any significant hands-on experience was my best friend Dave’s blue-steel S&W

THE SNUBBY CHRONICLES

Bodyguard. Even back in the early 80s, some dark recess of my mind recognized the utility of the little five shooter. It had a vague but strong emotional appeal too, even though Gunsite brainwashing prevented me from acknowledging it consciously.

Next, the borrowed Taurus Model 85 with a bobbed hammer that played a key role at the 1994 National Tactical Invitational. Having expended all but two rounds from my .45 on a house clearing stage, I switched to the snubby, firing an entire cylinder of 158 grain Cor-Bon. Without that backup gun in my hip pocket, I might not have won.

Fast forward to the late 90s. I eschewed my Colt .45s in favor of Glock 9mms, due to the latter's superior reliability and greater cartridge capacity. I had also come to fully realize that the Parabellum cartridge was not the weak sister Uncle Jeff declaimed it to be, likewise the .38 special round. Couple this with a move to shall-issue Florida and the stage was set for a comprehensive caliber conversion.

Cut to the chase, an Airweight S&W Centennial became my daily carry gun of choice, first a satin nickel 442, later a 342, frequently tucked in a pocket and occasionally worn in a Milt Sparks ankle holster. Both guns sported Crimson Trace lasers in boot grip configuration, and the Titanium piece featured a big dot tritium front sight from Ashley Outdoors (now XS Sights).

Very shortly, I came to respect snubbies every bit as much as I did 1911A1s and Glocks, and did penance for my former

scorn by hosting a Snubby Summit at the American Police Hall of Fame. The roster of instructors included our present pistolero patriarch Massad Ayoob, who gave the keynote address. The late, great Jim Cirillo was there too, and one of my regrets is that we didn't recreate Cooper's classic Combat Masters photo with the trainers in attendance.

Nowadays, you'll most often find me schlepping an early 60s-vintage Colt Cobra, replete with hammer shroud and Tyler T-Grip. It generally rides upside down in a Rusty Sherrick copy of the old Berns-Martin Lightnin' shoulder scabbard, with pocket carry taking up the slack in hot weather. I plan to supplement these two carry options with a Bobby Mac ankle rig in the near future.

So there you have it. A full confession. Mea Culpa. I reckon I'll forever be Benedict Andy to fellow Gunsite grads. My sole-surviving Government Model rarely leaves the safe. In closing I offer the following cautionary observation: it's a slippery slope. Need proof? I just took delivery of a Colt 1908 Vest Pocket .25 Auto. Eat yer hearts out, Peter Lorre and Sidney Greenstreet.

THE SNUBBY CHRONICLES

The Colt Pocket Positive

by William Bell



One of the first snubnose revolvers, the Colt Pocket Positive was well-proportioned for concealed carry, had a “positive” hammer safety action and held six .32 Long cartridges; a caliber considered adequate in its day. Photos by William Bell.

THE SNUBBY CHRONICLES

Colt produced the first swing-out cylinder, double-action (DA) revolver, known as the Model 1889. Pulling back on a cylinder latch allowed the cylinder to rotate to the left, away from the frame, on a crane/yoke. This permitted a quick reload or ejection of spent brass by pushing back on the ejector rod. The solid frame was much stronger than the hinged-frame design used by Smith & Wesson. Chambered in .38 Long Colt, the Model 1889 was sold to the U.S. Navy. This medium-frame revolver was also made for the commercial market and offered in .38 Long Colt and .41 Colt. Always with an eye towards the military, police and civilian markets, Colt continued to improve its DA revolvers and in 1893 introduced the New Pocket Revolver in .32 Colt. This small frame DA sixgun could be had with a 2-1/2" barrel, making it America's first truly modern, solid frame snubnose. But more improvements were to come. To prevent an accidental discharge, should the gun be dropped and land on the hammer, an internal, passive hammer-block safety was incorporated in the action. This "positive" safety allowed the revolver to fire only if the trigger was deliberately pulled. Now billed the Pocket Positive, it was rolled out in 1905.

Colt realized that the .32 Colt cartridge was inaccurate and obsolete, so the Pocket Positive was chambered in .32 Colt New Police. It was almost identical to the .32 S&W Long cartridge, but Colt was not about to put a S&W stamp on any of its guns. Both cartridges had a 98 gr. lead round nose bullet at about 780 FPS,

The Colt Pocket Positive

but the Colt cartridge had a small flat nose on its bullet. One hundred years ago the .32 caliber was considered adequate for defense and law enforcement use. Around the turn of the 20th Century the New York City Police Department (NYPD) issued the .32 Colt New Police revolver and in later years female officers continued to be issued revolvers in .32 Long, while male officers received revolvers in .38 Special. Even the Federal Bureau of Investigation had .32 Colt Pocket Positive revolvers in its firearms inventory and FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover was known to carry one.

With its steel safety bar that blocked the hammer at rest, then retracted downward inside the action when the trigger was pulled, the Pocket Positive cemented the DA revolver design that Colt would use in the Police Positive, Police Positive Special, Detective Special, Official Police, and others. The Pocket Positive could be had with a bright blue or nickel finish and a barrel length of 2-1/2", 3-1/2" or 6 inches. Grips were checkered hard rubber and my Pocket Positive with a 3-1/2" barrel weighs just a hair under 16 oz. Initially the front sight was a thin half-circle blade, but in 1927 a Second Issue version was put forth with improved, wider sights and a serrated top strap. The Second Issue could also be had with a 2" barrel. Earlier Colt DA swing-out cylinder revolvers had an angular cylinder release latch or thumbpiece, but the latch on the Pocket Positive was built into

the recoil shield and rounded with a checkered surface at the rear. Overall the Pocket Positive was an attractive and well-proportioned wheelgun; especially the one I own with the 3-1/2" barrel and nickel finish. Colt discontinued the Pocket Positive as war loomed in 1940.

I chose .32 S&W Long cartridges from four different manufacturers to do a mini-shooting test. My first choice was Buffalo Bore, they make a "Strictly Business" load for defensive use that has a 115 gr. flat-pointed, cast lead bullet that my chronograph rates at 753 FPS from the Pocket Positives 3-1/2" barrel. Next was a traditional load from Federal with a 98 gr. round-nose lead bullet; an almost identical load from MagTech was also used. The last selection was from Ten-X Ammunition and this cartridge has a lighter 78 gr. round-nose lead bullet. Other interesting .32 Long loads include a 98 gr. half-jacketed hollow-point cartridge from MagTech and a few manufacturers still make a full target lead wadcutter load with a flat-faced bullet weighing between 98-100 gr.



Common .32 Long cartridges. From l-r: Buffalo Bore 115 gr. lead flat nose reminiscent of the .32 Colt New Police round, a target load with a 98 gr. wadcutter bullet; a modern 98 gr. load and two 98 gr. lead bullet loads with plain and Lubaloy coated projectiles.

I used Birchwood Casey Shoot-N-C bullseye targets at 21 ft. Shooting was done from a standing barricade position with a two-handed hold. From the first target on I suffered from “4+1 Syndrome”: I’d have a nice 4-shot group, which would be ruined by a stray. A good friend who’s a veteran gun writer has started to discount that stray shot as not the gun’s fault; so I decided to follow suit. Using this methodology, my best group measured 0.79” with the Federal ammunition. Second place went to Buffalo Bore with a 1.31” group; 3rd place was MagTech at 1.43” and last was Ten-X with a 1.55” cluster. Point of aim was dead center and point of impact with all loads was right on or darn close. I cocked the hammer for each shot and the single-action pull was crisp and

light, but that shiny round front sight made things interesting for my 64 year old eyes.

For some practical shooting in the trigger-cocking or double-action mode, I loaded six cartridges of .32 Long ammo into the Pocket Positive with a mixture of the test loads. A reduced-size Birchwood Casey Shoot-N-C “Bad Guy” target was sent down 21 ft and I began my shooting string with the muzzle of the revolver barrel resting on the shooting bench. From there the gun was raised to eye level and I shot from an unsupported isosceles stance, with a two-handed hold, using the sights. I fired six shots, one right after the other, aiming center-mass; reloaded with six more rounds and shot them the same way. The bullet impacts formed a cluster measuring about 2.5” in diameter; most slightly left of center as I’m apt to do. I could definitely tell when the hammer fell on a Buffalo Bore cartridge as there was a bit more recoil, but on a whole the Pocket Positive is pleasant to shoot and easily controlled in rapid fire. I find the grip frame with the factory hard rubber grips suit my medium-sized hand just fine, so I’ve never fit this revolver with a grip adapter. The sights were fairly easy to pick up and used more as a reference point than taking a finely aligned sight picture.

The Colt Pocket Positive



The tightest group shot with the Pocket Positive (counting only the 4 center hits sans the “mulligan”) measure just 0.79”. Shooting was done single-action at 21 feet.

With its light weight and small overall size, I think the Colt Pocket Positive is indeed just right for pocket carry. I would definitely pack it in a pocket holster for concealment, as modern clothing is more form-fitting than a 1920’s era “Zoot Suit”. You can also find 6-round .32 Quik Strips from TUFF Products to carry extra cartridges. This makes reloading faster than using loose cartridges and they too are easily concealed. Real world; I wouldn’t intentionally carry a Colt Pocket Positive as my primary

THE SNUBBY CHRONICLES

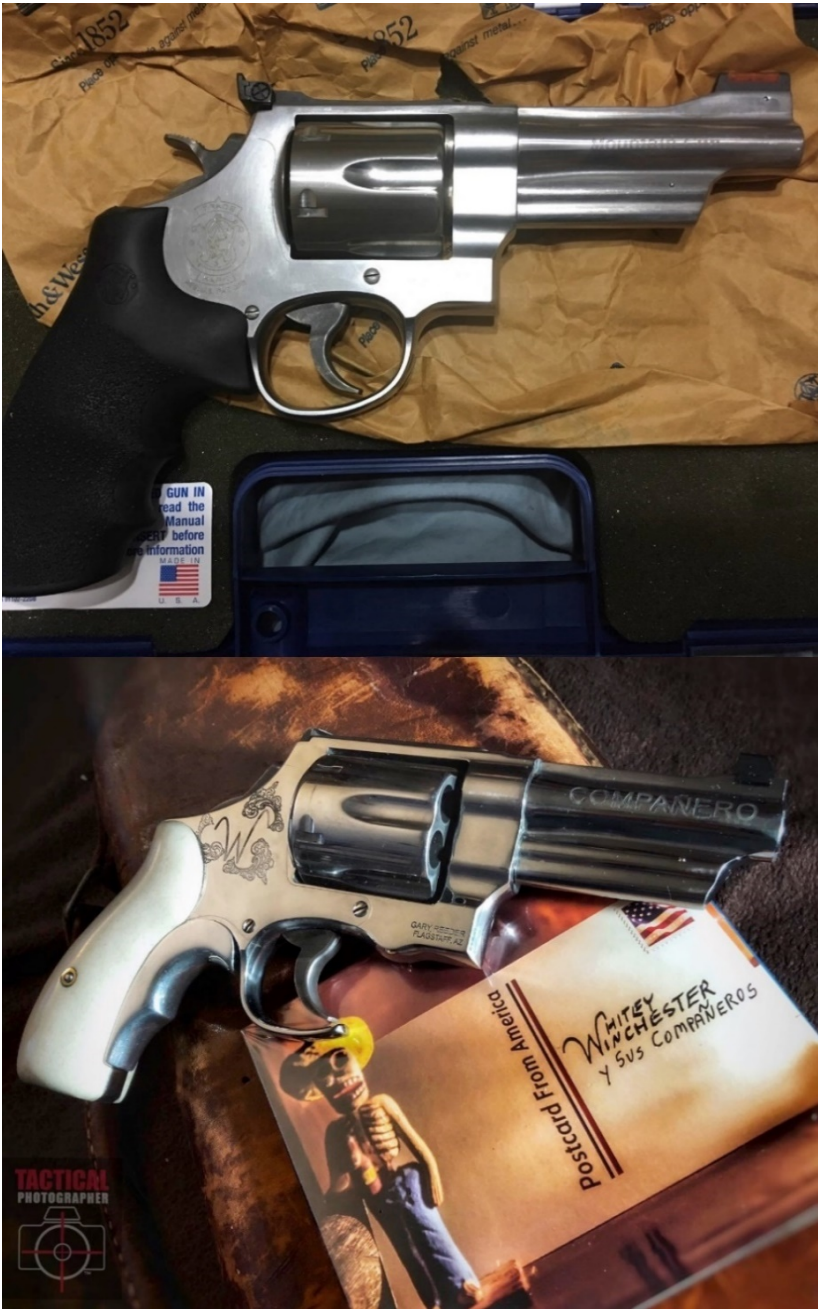
concealed carry weapon today, but with the right loads and good shot placement, it can do the job if need be.

Join William Bell on Facebook at [facebook.com/thefiringpen](https://www.facebook.com/thefiringpen)

The Über Snub

by Andy Stanford

THE SNUBBY CHRONICLES



El Compañero, before and after photos.
Before photo by Kevin Reed; after photo by Don Reber.

The Über Snub

Previously in this book you read the story by my friend and colleague Mike Boyle about his “Super Snub,” a Smith and Wesson Performance Center M686 .357 Magnum with 2½” barrel. I hereby call his bet, and raise it wherever possible.

But first, let’s clear up exactly what qualifies as a snub-nosed revolver. Seems to me the term is based primarily on appearance, namely a shorter-than-average proboscis. Hence, I submit that any wheelgun with a barrel length under 4” earns the moniker. Certainly, the 3½” barreled S&W Model 27 qualifies. By the same criteria, so does the subject of this article.

To continue, the project first came about when I watched the movie *Wind River* – which, by the way, I highly recommend. The Wyoming Fish and Game protagonist, played by Jeremy Renner, schlepped a stainless steel Marlin 1895 lever gun with a stainless scout scope, which he used to good effect in one of the best movie shootouts of all time.

I soon decided I “needed” a short .45-70, and have since procured a new-manufacture 1895 Cowboy model and had it customized by gunsmith Gary Reeder of Flagstaff, Arizona, the mountain college town I currently call home. With a super-low-mount Leupold 2.5x Ultralight scope, it shoots near minute of angle and owns everything within 100 yards like an oversized .22 plinker. But I digress.



Marlin 1895. Photo by Andy Stanford.

In researching ammo to feed this beast, I turned to my buddy Ashley Emerson, owner of Garrett Cartridges of Texas. In addition to impressive .45-70 and .45 Colt ammo, he offers a variety of stompin' .44 Magnum loads. Obsessing about this topic, in turn, resulted in the following detour into revolver land.

Cut to the chase, I figured I also needed a .44 Magnum Smith and Wesson revolver, and ended up with two: a 629-5 mountain gun (with tapered 4" barrel) and a 5" 629-4 Classic (full underlug barrel). My goal then became making one of the guns as different as possible from the other, while still producing a logical result. Gunsmith Reeder and his crew have plenty of experience with wheel guns; hence the means to manifest any product of my imagination was ready at hand.

By coincidence or divine intervention, around this time I read an online article by Michael Janich about Rex Applegate's Colt New Service .45 "Fitz Special," which piece provided the creative spark for my new "Compañero."

The Über Snub

(In case you were wondering: that name – which I had engraved on the right side of the barrel, replacing the laser etched “Mountain Gun” – references my second music album, “Postcard from America” by “Whitey Winchester y Sus Compañeros”. The gun is in part a present to myself to celebrate the release of the new album.)

With a goal clearly identified, namely to create the ultimate big-bore belly gun, work could commence in earnest. The stock Mountain Gun already sported a round butt, so I ordered a pair of suitable Elk Horn grips, sans “bark,” from Patrick Grashorn of Burns, Wyoming. Their natural ivory color is both attractive and retro. These stocks were complemented with a Tyler T-Grip, polished aluminum to match the final finish on most of the metal, to be polished stainless, evoking nickel plating.

Reeder’s Custom Guns shortened the barrel to just over 3.5 inches, recrowned it, cut a 3/8” dovetail for the new front sight, milled down the new Cylinder and Slide fixed rear sight to minimum elevation, bobbed the hammer, and cut down the trigger guard. I also requested an action job, a little custom engraving (including the Whitey Winchester “W” brand on the side plate), plus the aforementioned high polish finish.

The no-brainer option for a front sight was the big dot tritium type from XS Sights. The company makes a 3/8” dovetail sight in five heights, so I started with the middle height and came to a decent close range zero via trial and error. I wanted the lowest

possible front sight to coincide with the point of impact of the 310 grain Defender load by Garrett of Texas. The milled rear sight profile is simply a horizontal line, which provides plenty of windage information. I simply rest the big dot on the center of the line, having fine-tuned windage by drifting the dovetailed front sight.

I guess I should address the elephant in the room, namely: What's with the trigger guard? Isn't that dangerous? Paraphrasing the Texas Ranger answering essentially the same question vis a vis his cocked-and-locked .45 auto: You damn betcha it is! In all seriousness, I don't think it provides any more hazard than a "typical" firearm. That said, like a Glock, a "Fitz Special" requires strict attention to Safety Rule 3: Keep your finger off the trigger unless your sights are on the target.

This is obviously no pocket gun, so an appropriate holster was in order. First, I bought through eBay a Jackass brand shoulder holster (much like the old Bianchi X-15) for a 4" N-frame. This required a half-inch muzzle spacer, which I carved out of hardwood and screwed in place. Next, a custom cross-draw from Davis Leather in Ash Fork, AZ. I have worn the latter scabbard many times with my Milt Sparks 1 3/4" gunbelt, and must conclude that whatever its fighting attributes, this rig is one hell of a fashion accessory in an open-carry state.

Shooting the gun with full-power loads is not a rapid-fire proposition. To be truthful, it is slightly painful. Not excessively

The Über Snub

so, but perhaps analogous to firing 12-gauge slugs out of a standard weight pump shotgun with a steel butt plate. And like the smoothbore, you get something in exchange: superior terminal ballistics. Remember, the .44 magnum is generally touted as a hunting cartridge with the ability to effectively harvest deer-sized game with a single shot. 'Nuff said!

I really like this gun, and have no regrets. Reaction from fellow shooters has been universally positive, with the most common comment being, “Badass!” Given that this gat was admittedly conceived largely with aesthetics in mind, that represents a win in my book. I guess somebody could make a 5-shot Ruger Redhawk snub in .500 Linebaugh, but until they do, I proclaim my über kühl Compañero to be ¡El Snubby Supremo y Numero Uno del Mundo!

THE SNUBBY CHRONICLES

Snub Practice and Self-Assessment (The Snubby Standards)

by Mike Boyle

Snub aficionados are indeed a diverse lot. Some of us are collectors while others are primarily interested in personal defense. Like many snub owners, my interest neatly straddles both categories and while I remain the proud owner of a rare bird or two, I do, in fact, regularly carry a snub for personal defense.

If you are serious about personal defense, practice is essential. I'm fortunate that in my role as a law enforcement trainer, I spend a little more time than most on a range, but most of it is devoted to watching other people shoot. As we all know,

21st Century coppers are shooting pistols rather than revolvers. In view of that, the demonstrations and instruction I provide my trainees are done with a self-loading pistol.

To cut to the chase, I'm not any different than the next guy and I've got to make time for working out with my snubs. Fortunately, the company range is available to me on weekends and I can work in a little fun time with my revolvers.

A challenge we all face is exactly what should you be practicing to make the best use of that all too short available time. To arrive at the best possible answer, I think we need to look at the most likely type of anticipated encounters. Unless you are military, a SWAT cop or traveling in some foreign country, it's unlikely you will be confronting a band of narco-terrorists. How about being the intended victim of some sort of street crime or workplace violence? We might also consider a home invasion or carjacking attempt. If I were a betting man, I would feel these are far more likely scenarios.

With that said, the vast majority of my practice is devoted to firing on one or two targets set at a relatively short range. I draw from concealment and strive to make combat effective hits in the shortest possible time frames. Since violent crime often occurs during the evening hours, I try to work a little low light shooting into the mix. In practical terms, think close, dark and fast.

I supplement my range time with some occasional dry practice at home. With an inert gun (check twice!) basic operational skills such as reloading with dummy rounds and the draw stroke can be covered in the comfort of your home. Dry firing is an excellent skill builder that can be practiced off the range. Many commercial ranges have rules that prohibit rapid fire or drawing from the holster and home practice can make up for this deficit. Be sure to workout with the type of clothing and concealment holster you actually wear.

On occasion, I like to chart my progress and see where I stand. I've long felt the typical police-style PPC course wasn't the best choice to assess shooter potential and one could get a better idea by firing a few task-specific drills that required far less ammunition.

On the surface, "The Snubby Standards" drill does not appear difficult. I can usually knock out a pretty good performance with my mid-size, all steel snubs, but running it with an Airweight or scandium J-frame will give you a whole new perspective. Depending on the target used, you can make it as hard or easy as you like. My favorites include an 8" paper plate affixed to the chest of a silhouette target or the A zone of an IPSC target. If you don't hit the plate or break the border of the A zone, it's scored a miss. It's not important we hit, it's important we hit something important!

THE SNUBBY CHRONICLES

So team, if you're serious about protecting your hide with a snub, get busy. By all means, shoot the gun you really carry. Supplementing your range time with a little dry fire practice goes a long way to building proficiency. And if you dare, try your hand on "The Snubby Standards". Don't be too frustrated if your initial attempts fall short of your expectations. Better to acquaint ourselves with our combat potential on the sterile environment of the range, than a dark parking lot. Stay safe!

The Snubby Standards

A few years ago I designed this drill for self-evaluation. I make no claim this is the ultimate test but it gives me valuable feedback in a number of critical areas including marksmanship, the draw stroke, dual threats and reloading. Best of all, it only requires a handful of rounds. -Mike Boyle

Objective: This drill is designed to measure practical marksmanship potential with a snubnose revolver.

Target: Any humanoid target with a realistic size high value scoring area may be used (IPSC, IDPA etc.) Paper plates may be affixed to any target to create a realistic size, high value scoring area. Steel reactive targets may be used with frangible ammunition. Only hits in high value area count!

Distance: 5 yards except where noted.

Phase One Condition Check: Is it loaded? If not, make it so and holster.

THE SNUBBY CHRONICLES

Phase Two Ready Position: On signal, fire 1 shot, starting from the ready position. Par time = 0.75 second, Superior = 0.55 seconds.

Phase Three Quick Draw: On signal, draw & fire 2 shots in 2.25 seconds. Superior performance = 2 seconds. (all draws from concealment).

Phase Four Two Threats: On signal, draw & fire 1 shot each on two different targets (spaced 3 feet apart). Par time = 2.5 seconds. Superior performance = 2.25 seconds.

Phase Five Reload: Starting in the ready position, fire 1 shot on the signal, RELOAD and fire 2 shots. Par time = 10 seconds. Superior performance= 8 seconds.

Phase Six Long Distance (10 yards): On signal, draw & fire 2 shots standing, drop down to kneeling and fire 2 additional shots. Par time = 7 seconds. Superior performance = 6 seconds or less.

Do not be discouraged! Train hard, Fight easy.

The Target Snub

by Stephen P. Wenger



The revolver in this photo is fitted with the discontinued Uncle Mike's/Butler Creek polymer boot grips designed by Craig Spegel.
Photo by Stephen P. Wenger.

When I first started getting serious with this stuff, I used to volunteer my time to assist Massad Ayoob when he conducted his Lethal Force Institute courses in the Los Angeles area. One year, Mas invited the handgun editor from one of the gun magazines to take the LFI-I course as his guest. At some point during that class, Mas made a comment to the instructional staff that he'd suggested to his fellow gun writer that, since he was already a very good shot with a handgun, he challenge himself by using a 2" revolver for the course. Mas went on to note that the guy had apparently not wanted to risk shooting less than a "possible" score when it came time to "qualify" in the presence of other students so he'd apparently gone into his safe to dig out a 2" S&W Model 15. That was the first that I'd heard of that gun.

Around 1962, the US Air Force asked Smith & Wesson to produce for that service a version of the .38 Special Model 15 – Combat Masterpiece – with a 2" bull barrel. This gun retained the square butt and adjustable rear sight of the Model 15. However, rather than the serrated back strap, it was produced with a smooth backstrap on which "U.S." was marked. According to the Standard Catalog of Smith & Wesson, it was only produced in 1962 and 1963 as the Model 56, also known as the KTX-38 USAF. Reportedly, some 15,205 were produced but, as is typical for

handguns that the USAF takes out of service, most were eventually destroyed.

Again, according to the Standard Catalog of Smith & Wesson, Smith & Wesson introduced a commercial version of this gun, albeit with the serrated backstrap normally used on S&W “target” models, in 1964, as part of the Model 15-2 series. I’m unable to say whether that barrel length was offered consistently through the remaining engineering changes (“dash numbers”) but it is listed as having been discontinued in 1988, when the model designation was up to 15-6. Of note to anyone who might put one of these guns through a prolonged string of fire with hot loads, it was not until 1977 – with the 15-4 – that the gas ring was moved from the yoke to the cylinder.

Fast-forward some twenty-some years and I’m at a Tucson gun show looking to trade off a gun that I’d picked up cheap in a garage sale. Not that I particularly needed it but the one dealer who expressed an interest in my gun just happened to have a very clean 2” Model 15-3 on display and we made a straight-across swap. Frankly, it’s been pretty much a safe queen all these years. While the so-called target sights do allow zeroing with a particular load, not only is the square butt less than optimal for discreet carry behind the hip, it doesn’t fit my size-10 hands as well as the round butt does. Still, one size does not fit all and some folks may want to cull the used-gun market for one of these if they have use

THE SNUBBY CHRONICLES

for a six-shot, K-frame .38 Special revolver with a really short barrel and prefer the square butt.

Stephen Wenger's website is www.spw-duf.info

The .38/32 Terrier: S&W's
First Hand-Ejector Snub
Revolver
by William Bell



Introduced in 1936, the .38/32 Terrier was built as a snubnose with a 2” barrel; this is the author’s newest addition to his Terrier collection.

While Colt started the ball rolling in the late 1880s with solid-frame, swing-out cylinder revolvers; Smith & Wesson (S&W) wasn’t far behind and developed their own “Hand Ejector” or HE models as they termed them starting in 1894, with the first production guns rolling out of the factory in 1896. The 6-shot HE revolver was based on a small I-frame and chambered for the new .32 S&W Long cartridge. The design was later upgraded to one that is similar to S&W revolvers still being made today, called the .32 Hand Ejector Model of 1903. A spinoff of this .32 double-action wheelgun was the .32 Regulation Police, first made in 1917. It had a longer square butt formed by walnut

The .38/32 Terrier: S&W's First Hand-Ejector Snub Revolver

extension-style stocks. Also released at the same time was a .38 Regulation Police chambered for the .38 S&W cartridge that Smith had created in 1874 for their line of small hinged-frame revolvers. It carried a 145-146 gr. lead round-nose bullet, launched at about 685 feet per second (FPS); fairly weak by today's standards. To accommodate the larger cartridge, .38 Regulation Police had a 5-shot cylinder.



In the upper left is the Colt Police Positive; this version is in .38 S&W with a 4" barrel. Clockwise, you have the S&W Regulation Police, plus I and J-frame Terriers.

Back in the day, outfits like Colt and S&W were very amenable to customer needs and special orders could be had for

many non-standard barrel lengths. Colt had already started making dedicated 2" barrel snub guns in 1927, like the Banker's Special and Detective Special. S&W stayed with longer barrels, the shortest factory length generally available was 3-1/4" and the .38 Regulation Police had a 4" barrel. There was a demand by law enforcement, government agencies and the public for a short barrel revolver from S&W and this was satisfied on June 10, 1936 when the .38/32 Terrier was introduced. It was given this moniker to differentiate it from the Regulation Police and it was a .38 built on a .32 frame with a factory standard 2" barrel. The Terrier was an I-frame, but had a round butt grip frame for better concealment. Initially it had the hard rubber service-style grips, but this soon changed to walnut service grips. Finish options were polished blue or nickel and a half-moon front sight with a fixed notch rear sight. Along the way the stocks changed to the Magna-type that came up higher along the backstrap of the grip frame.

For an all-steel revolver, the Terrier weighed only 17 oz., so users were happy to make the tradeoff to a gun with a less-powerful cartridge compared to larger, heavier guns shooting bigger bullets. An attempt was made to give the .38 S&W more power by stuffing a blunt-nosed 200 gr. lead bullet into its short cartridge case. This round was called the Super Police and drove the longer, heavier slug along at 630 FPS. Supposedly, the longer bullet was unstable in flight and would "keyhole" or tumble sideways in the target, increasing the stopping power. This

The .38/32 Terrier: S&W's First Hand-Ejector Snub Revolver

cartridge became the British Army service handgun cartridge in WWII. Given that the .38 S&W could be chambered in small, light, concealable handguns and was popular not only in the U.S., but used extensively in the British Commonwealth countries, it became one of the most widely-used handgun cartridges in the 20th Century.



The J-frame Terrier at the top has a larger trigger guard, flat cylinder release latch, Magna-type grips, and a ramp front sight. Compare it to the older I-frame version.

THE SNUBBY CHRONICLES

As with most other S&W revolvers, the Terrier evolved as the years went by. The action was changed from a leaf mainspring to a coil mainspring; the number of screws went from 5 to 4; but then in 1940 production ground to a halt. Smith & Wesson began producing K-frame Military & Police revolvers in .38 S&W/.38-200/.380 (all the same cartridge) for Great Britain. Once the United States entered the war, this same revolver became the Victory Model in .38 Special and was supplied by the thousands to the government for military and defense-related usage. Terrier production resumed in 1949 and the factory incorporated a new rebound slide-operating hammer block for safety. In 1957 the large sideplate screw near the rear sight was eliminated and the next year S&W started to use early computers for its record keeping and assigned all their handguns model numbers. The Terrier became the Model 32. A huge change came along in 1960 when the old I-frame was replaced by the J-frame and the Terrier became the Model 32-1. Other changes saw the round front sight replaced by the serrated ramp front sight and the flat thumb latch (cylinder release) was incorporated. Towards the end, the traditional thumb latch returned. Demand for the Terrier declined markedly and it was discontinued in 1974.

The .38/32 Terrier: S&W's First Hand-Ejector Snub Revolver



Here is my small Terrier collection from the newer J-frame version, down to the older I-frame model. Note the differences. All have BK Grips grip adapters.

Carrying a Terrier today is probably not a good idea. There are more modern and effective revolvers out there in .38 Special or .357 Magnum and if the gun is used in self-defense, you're likely to have to say goodbye to it for a substantial length of time. Better to just keep it as a collectible and enjoy shooting it. Factory ammo is still readily available from manufacturers like MagTech, Remington and Winchester; good prices can be found surfing the web. Older factory ammo can also be found on eBay, GunBroker.com and other Internet sites. I was in a local gun shop recently and they had boxes of older ammo sitting on a counter for sale. I got a full box of Winchester Super-X in .38 S&W for \$10 and a partial box of Peters .38 S&W for \$5! One of these days I'll find a box of that old Super Police load with the 200 gr. lead bullet.



Old .38 S&W ammunition is often available at gun shops, gun shows or on the Internet at sites like GunBroker.com. I got the full box of almost new Winchester ammo for \$10.00!

The .38 S&W cartridge is also fun to handload. You can duplicate factory performance or make your cartridge loads a bit lighter to take it easy on older guns. Something I'll mention is that the .38 S&W and .38 Special are not interchangeable. The bullet diameter of the .38 S&W is .360" as opposed to .358" for the .38 Special. It also has a shorter and slightly larger in diameter cartridge case; so it just plain old won't fit in a .38 Special. You can handload the .38 S&W using .358" lead bullets, but there may

be a slight loss in accuracy. I order .360” bullets for my handloads and keep the velocities and pressures at factory levels. I’ve found that the Terriers are potentially very accurate; it’s just that the 2” barrel makes for a short sighting radius and is not as forgiving of marksmanship errors as a longer barrel handgun.

I give my Terriers a workout once in a while. The latest shoot-em-up was with my early J-frame Terrier using some handloads I’d put together using 3 different brands of smokeless gun powder. I was shooting off a sandbag, from a bench-rest at 15 yards, cocking the hammer for each shot. The best 5-shot group measured 2.32” with a .360” 145 gr. bullet, propelled by Alliance Red Dot gun powder. Finding a good powder/bullet combination is half the fun and once you have a supply of brass (cartridge cases) “rolling your own” ammo is lots of fun and inexpensive. Outfits like RCBS, Redding, Lee and other make budget priced starter kits that have the reloading press, powder scales, powder charger, and a set of dies. A good handloaders manual is essential as is paying attention while handloading.

My quest for Terriers is not over; that’s what makes collecting fun. I still need a nickel-plated version, an early version with hard-rubber grips and leaf mainspring, and a late-model made near the end of production. Have fun everyone!

Join William Bell on Facebook at [facebook.com/thefiringpen](https://www.facebook.com/thefiringpen)

The .38/32 Terrier: S&W's First Hand-Ejector Snub Revolver



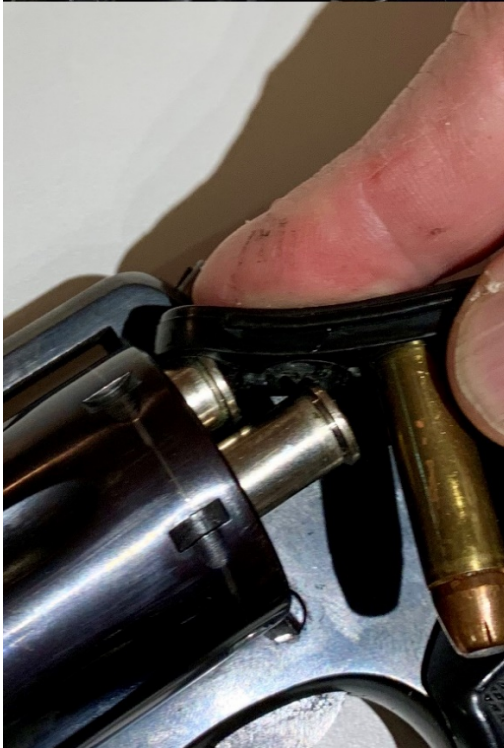
Even with a 2" barrel, the Terrier can be accurate. This 5-shot group was fired from a bench rest at 15 yards using .38 S&W handloads I made with Red Dot powder.

THE SNUBBY CHRONICLES

DeSantis Swift Strips

by David Elderton

Spare ammunition management for revolvers has been an issue that many revolver enthusiasts ignore. The “If I can’t get it done in five...” mentality is real! You likely won’t need a fast reload during the fight to prevail, but what about after the initial encounter? It’s probably over, but maybe not. That’s a great time to reload, don’t you think?



Peeling off the speed strip to load two rounds at a time.

DeSantis Swift Strips

You should carry at least one full reload for any gun you carry, regardless of capacity. The two most popular devices for revolvers are a speedloader and an ammunition strip. The speedloader is faster, but inconvenient to carry. The strip is slower, but it's easy to slip one or two in the pocket and go about your day.

Bianchi Gunleather invented the "Speed Strip" back in the late '70s and still makes it today. It's a viable choice, but a new entry into the field of polymer ammo strips comes from DeSantis Gunhide. I bought a pair to see how these "Swift Strips" match up to the Speed Strips from Bianchi and the "QuickStrip" from TUFF Products, as well as a pair of no-name rubber strips from eBay.

The Swift Strip is lighter than the rest. It holds the cartridge snugly, yet allows a bit more movement than the others. The tab has horizontal texturing, compared to a dot matrix on the competitors. The dots don't allow much purchase, but the horizontal "serrations" really have some bite to them. The polymer used in the Swift Strips had more of a "snap" when seating the rounds into place, while the others quietly enclosed the rim.



From left to right: Bianchi Speed Strip, DeSantis Swift Strip and TUFF Quick Strip.

I tossed all four strips around the backyard. When they landed flat, all four strips retained all cartridges. When they landed on edge, the no-name and Swift Strip each lost two. Hitting the wooden fence, the Swift Strip lost four, compared to the no-name losing two, the others losing zero.

But the Swift Strip retained all cartridges all day in a jeans watch pocket, where I suspect many folks stow away an ammo strip. I find the Swift Strip retention more than adequate for the task.

But how does the Swift Strip compare to the others when loading a gun? I favor the Ayoob ammo strip loading technique where you hold the strip like a scalpel, insert rounds into two chambers, then rock your wrist and arm upward to release the cartridges. (See his YouTube video for the demo at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMAXIT3ZLzs&ab_channel=GailPepin.) The cartridge release of the others felt like pulling a stick out of mucky mud while the Swift Strips felt like pulling that same stick out of a sheet of thin ice. A clean release of the cartridges compared to reluctantly letting go.

But the Swift Strip released the cartridge sooner in the upward rocking motion than the others, for all six cartridges. The no-name released at over 90 degrees, the Quick Strips around 60. Speed Strips released at 45, as did the Swift Strips. The big difference between these two, aside from a crisper release by the Swift Strips, was releasing the last two rounds. The Speed Strip simply did not want to let go, unless you changed your hold to the front of the now empty strip and pulled it back toward you. The Swift Strips released the last two as easily as it released the first four. The Swift Strips consistently cut 1-2 seconds off my reload time for six cartridges, depending what strip I was comparing to.

My overall assessment of the DeSantis Gunhide Swift Strips is positive. I'll continue working with them to determine durability. I have Bianchi strips from the '70s that still work fine,

while some of my QuickStrips cracked and became unserviceable in 2-3 years with little use. For now, Swift Strips are what I'll carry in my Stand Ready Defense Ammo Strip Holder.

If you're looking for a convenient way to carry a reload, consider Swift Strips by DeSantis Gunhide.

Ankle Holsters

by Tom Givens



“For high quality, the Alessi ankle holster is hard to beat.”

-Tom Givens

Many of us carry a small handgun as a second, or back-up gun, in addition to our larger, primary pistol. There are a number of solid reasons for this practice.

First, I teach all over the U.S. and everywhere I go I see good quality, well maintained handguns break during classes. By “break” I do not mean malfunction. I mean a part in the gun literally fails, putting the gun out of action. If your firing pin, extractor, takedown latch, etc. breaks, the gun is a paperweight until you can procure and install a new part. If it happens in classes, it may happen in a fight. If your primary gun becomes non-functional, a second gun could be a literal life saver. Second, you can give the back-up gun to a trained but unarmed companion. Sometimes when I pick up a colleague at the airport, I loan them my BUG until we get to the hotel and he can unpack and put on his own sidearm. Third, in a struggle a BUG may be more accessible than your primary gun.

There are a number of ways to carry this secondary handgun, and over the years I have settled on ankle carry for mine. Here are my reasons for this decision.

Pocket carry just has too many limitations. It is damn near impossible to draw a gun from a pocket holster while seated, whether in a car or at a desk or table. We spend way too much time seated, especially in the car, for this carry mode. In a tangled hand to hand fight, pocket carry would be difficult to draw from.

It is also very difficult to get a gun out of a right front pocket with the left hand, and vice versa.

Some people simply wear the back-up gun on the belt, on the support side, with the primary gun on the dominant hand side. My belt already has enough stuff on it, so I don't care much for this mode, either.

Carrying a handgun in a well-designed ankle holster solves many of these issues. The ankle gun is actually quite easy to access while seated. While driving, a gun on the inside of the left ankle (right handed person) is quite easily accessed by the right hand. Even on my back on the ground, I can get to my ankle gun with either hand if necessary. A well-made ankle rig is comfortable and discrete.

There are several very well designed and well-made choices among ankle holsters. Over the years I have tried several and have settled on some that are very comfortable, adequately secure, protect the pistol from the elements and allow rapid acquisition. My favorites include the ankle holsters from Alessi, Ken Null, DeSantis, and Galco.

If I had to rank them in order of preference, the Alessi and Null rigs would be tied for first place. Both use Velcro fasteners to secure the holster to your lower calf. Both use precise molding to secure the handgun quite well, while allowing a very quick presentation. Both have a compressed felt backer on the holster, to protect your leg . In classes, I routinely set up a double

Ankle Holsters

feed in my primary handgun and demonstrate dropping my primary handgun and drawing my BUG from one of these ankle rigs in under two seconds, from “Go” signal to first shot.

My next choice is the DeSantis rig. This is an elastic rig that closes with Velcro. In the revolver version, an ingenious bit of leather sits behind the trigger guard to keep the gun in place until you grasp it and pull firmly. This is a very comfortable and fast ankle set-up. The Galco version has a thumb-break security snap and very lightweight construction. Both the DeSantis and Galco holsters have a sheepskin pad behind the holster to cushion your leg.

Ankle carry works best with handguns that weigh around one pound, or very little more. Among revolvers, the Airweight Smith & Wessons like the Model 642 and the Colt Cobra or Agent are perfect for this role. In autopistols, the S&W Shield and the Kahr P9 fit the bill quite well. Wear the thing for three or four weeks and you’ll hardly notice it is there from that point on. You may never need that back-up gun, but if you do, you’ll need it very badly.

Connect with Tom Givens on his website at

www.rangemaster.com

THE SNUBBY CHRONICLES

Snub Revolver Trigger Thoughts

by Denver Burris

I was working a qual session on my agency's range a few years ago when a friend arrived to shoot. He'd brought a vintage (my age group's term for older) blued S&W M36 snub, which he said he'd not carried or shot for many years. He wanted to go back to carrying a lighter and smaller off-duty weapon, and he was also thinking ahead to something he'd be willing to carry daily in his approaching retirement.

He wasn't particularly pleased with his results in the course-of-fire. I suspected his primary problem was likely his trigger control. The pace of the course meant it was fired DA, and

he was repeatedly staging the long DA trigger in a slow and jerky manner as he was obviously trying to get the sight picture to hold still. Time to dust off the old revolver skill basics.

I reminded him that trying to slowly “stage” a DA trigger doesn’t do the shooter any favors. Trying to pause and resume a DA trigger in its long and heavy arc creates an extended period of tension and can lessen a shooter’s control over the actual firing point. It also allows more “dwell time” for the sight alignment (and muzzle) to start to waiver and dance. Not something you want in a high stress moment, obviously. Not helpful in a range session that involves firing multiple cylinder loads, either.

A smooth and brisk trigger press helps reduce both hand/trigger finger “time-under-tension” and helps reduce the opportunity for unwanted sight/muzzle wobble. Not fast/jerky. Just smooth and clean. No hesitation once started, but just rolling through the arc. No stopping and starting again along the arc once the decision has been made to shoot. Simple, right? So simple we sometimes tend to forget it.

I told him to take a moment and think back to the days when we carried and shot service revolvers, like remembering how to ride a bike. Just align or index the sights as needed (depending on the distances involved) and then smoothly and briskly pull the trigger all the way through the stroke. No more staging it. One smooth, brisk and continuous trigger stroke once he decides to make a hole appear in the target. It may seem

counter-intuitive, but the faster a good DA trigger pull technique is done, the more accurate the shot can be.

We resumed shooting and he was obviously pleased with the results. He produced some nicely clustered groups of faster hits. He was smiling and said he'd forgotten how much fun it used to be to shoot a DA revolver. The rest of the range qual session was both fun and productive for him.

It's often been said by firearms instructors that it's usually easier to transition a revolver shooter over to using pistols, than the reverse. Learning DA revolver skills is a bit of a steeper climb. It's worth it, though, as it can make for a better all-around handgunner.

Now, we snub nose aficionados might wish to consider ourselves the cream of the crop. The list of attributes that makes short-barreled revolvers so attractive for concealed carry also tends to make them harder to learn to shoot well and effectively, but we work harder at it in order to achieve success.

We also tend to look better doing it while wearing a fedora, too.

THE SNUBBY CHRONICLES

Super Vel Super Strips

by Peter A. Anderson, J.D., Ph.D.

I have carried a concealed revolver since I returned from Vietnam in 1970. Extra ammunition was simply carried loose in a pocket. Several jackets in my closet had a pocket of loose rounds. I had no experience with speed loaders or any other method of carrying extra ammo. When I was offered a chance to try Super Vel Super Strips, I doubted they would offer any advantage over my sloppy ways. Boy was I wrong!

The package I received was priced at \$9.98 and contained a five round strip and one holding six. The packaging stated the strips were “Made in the USA” and a “slick way to carry backup ammunition.” I found the strips offered some real advantages over having loose rounds in my pocket.

THE SNUBBY CHRONICLES

I ran a few drills. When I reached into my pocket, I pulled out a slightly sticky strip holding a complete cylinder reload. There was no fumbling with loose cartridges trying to put them into the chambers bullet first. I did not need to retrieve the one or two rounds I missed the first try. I did not drop any. Reloading was a simple matter of ejecting the fired cases and sliding fresh cartridges, two at a time, into the chambers. My revolver holds five shots. Using the six shot strip was no different from using the one holding five rounds. The cartridges lined up in pairs and slid home. The strips released them easily yet none came loose in my pocket. Reloading a single round if only one shot had been fired was equally simple.

There were other features I liked. The strips were bright yellow. If I dropped the strip, it was easy to spot. Other brands I saw in visits to local gun shops were made of darker material. The strips held the ammo in a neat flat row. This was much less conspicuous than the handful of loose rounds weighing down my pockets.

I am now a convert and am looking for more brightly colored strips. I have several jackets in my closet with pockets holding loaded strips in place of loose rounds.

.38 Shot Loads

by C.E. Harris



Shotshell pattern from a 2" Colt Detective Special.

THE SNUBBY CHRONICLES

In normal times I buy and use the Speer .38/.357 shot loads because they work. They used to be available and affordable, lately there are none to be had anywhere. So I've gone back to loading my own, as I did MANY years ago.

The .38 Special is the smallest case for which loading shot seems to make any sense. It doesn't make any sense to use shot larger than No.8 because there aren't enough of them in the pattern. The Speer .38 loads use No.9. I used No.8 for my recent batch because that was the smallest shot I had. When fired from a 4-5/8" Ruger Vaquero the shot spread about 1 inch per foot of range. At six feet they turn a rattler into snakeburger. When fired from a 2" Colt Detective Special the higher muzzle exit pressure disperses the shot more quickly. Nice even pattern at 5 ft. with the shot evenly dispersed in about an 8" circle. No.8 shot shoot clear through 3/8" plywood at 5 ft. Ten feet is about the maximum effective "snake distance" for hitting a SMALL target using the .38 using hand loaded shot.



Shotshell pattern from a 4-5/8" Ruger Vaquero. Photos by C.E. Harris.

Look at the photo showing the pattern fired from the Vaquero. The D1-C repair center is ten inches square, the inner circle is 4 inches and the outer circle is 8 inches. This is reality. Beyond about 10 feet things go downhill rapidly. With a .44 or .45 revolver you have more shot in the shell and can push the distance a bit.

I took primed .38 Special empties and charged them with the same 3.5 grains of Bullseye powder I use for a standard

pressure 158-grain load practice round. I inserted a .36 caliber Buffalo Arms card wad over the powder and pushed it down firmly over the powder using a 5/16" punch. A Lee 1cc powder dipper throws the right amount of shot for a .38 Special, filling the case to within about 1/10" of the case mouth, leaving enough room to thumb in another Buffalo Arms card wad over the shot. You then use your normal .38 Special seater die, adjusting the seating stem all the way down, as you would loading a flush-seated target wadcutter, and adjust the die to apply a heavy roll crimp at the end of the case to hold the card in. To waterproof the shell brush it lightly with clear urethane or varnish. So waterproofed at both crimp and primer these rounds will stand a full wash, rinse and spin cycle in your jeans pocket courtesy of Momma's washing machine and will still go BANG!

You won't need a lot of these, which is usually why I just buy a box of ten Speer loads about once a year. But if you carry a revolver, you do want some. They are useful and safer for shooting stuff up close than a bullet when you don't want to shoot a hole through the outhouse wall when you have unexpected company at night. YES I carry a gun AND a light to the outhouse and you should too! Good news is that if you want to load your own, these are lead pipe simple to make and do as well as store bought.

Aussie Snubs

by Mitchell Burke

Acquiring a wheelgun in the land of the not-so-free, that is, the alleged “lucky country”, can be an ordeal. For the maniacal few of us that simply must smell the burning nitrocellulose and Hoppes, we are afflicted with seemingly endless red tape. After paying a thousand Australian dollars and what feels akin to selling one’s soul to the government, it is indeed possible to purchase a snubby. Well, sort of. Our political keepers, in their infinite wisdom, have single-handedly prevented gun crime down under by mandating that each revolver and semi-automatic pistol have minimum barrel lengths of 4 and 4.72 inches. Bless their hearts. I won’t bore you with the agonizing intricacies involved in acquiring a firearm in Australia. What I will touch on however is

the prominence of revolvers in the land of Aus and the necessity of training to become a proficient wheelgunner.

As a young boy in the '90s, I recall seeing battered Smith and Wesson Model 10s worn proudly on the hips of cash-in-transit "seccies". Now working in the industry myself, I am glad to say wheelguns are still the go-to. Granted, the plastic-fantastic Glocks are a hit down here among police and civvies, but security and correctional officers use revolvers almost exclusively – the Model 10, 64, and 686 S&Ws being the most common examples. The reliability of the humble wheelgun is rightly hallowed.

In a recent exchange with a colleague, I queried the make of the "antique" he had holstered on his side. I was informed that it was an early model Taurus chambered in .357 Magnum. We discussed the reasoning behind our choice in firearms – the answers were simple. The design of the revolver is such that it is highly unlikely to fail either in training or in a defensive application. The effectiveness of the .357 Magnum cartridge cannot be disputed and with the aid of the right speedloaders (typically the ones with antlers), six of those puppies can be deposited into the target with another six hot on their heels. In a nation where self-defense is illegal, one may even regard the retention of brass casings as a plus. Certainly not me though. Honest.

Here's the catch 22, ladies and gents. While revolvers are arguably superior to the semi-automatics of the day, they present

challenges when the shooter expects a high degree of rapid-fire accuracy or seamless reloads sans training. Suffice to say, dry fire range days and grainy videos of Massad Ayoob will be your friends in overcoming the potential for the muzzle to be skewed off-target during fire and for speedloaders to be fumbled during reloads. We must simply do our part.

THE SNUBBY CHRONICLES

All Boot Grips are Not Created Equal

by Stephen P. Wenger

(Initial Disclosure: Back when gloves were still sold in numbered sizes, I wore a size 10 glove and now buy size Large. The last time that I checked ring sizes, I wore a size 10 on one ring finger and a 10½ on the other.)



From left to right: Hand-carved Craig Spegel boot grip with optional Centennial high horn and “ambi speedloader cut”; note rounded contours. Hogue Bantam Grip; note that unlike the original “overmolded” version, the wooden one has a fairly sharp edge at the bottom. Discontinued Spegel-designed Uncle Mike’s polymer boot grip; while the palm swell is slightly reduced, the contours are still rounded. (Photos by Stephen P. Wenger)

Back in 1978, Craig Spegel invented the concept of the boot grip – a grip that incorporated a grip adapter behind the trigger guard and down the front strap and filled the palm of the hand without sacrificing concealment by extending beyond the back strap or below the bottom strap. Craig must have hands almost exactly the size and shape as mine as his hand-carved boot grips fit me perfectly. I have, however, insisted that he make mine with the right panel symmetrical with the left panel – with what

All Boot Grips are Not Created Equal

Craig calls an “ambi speedloader cut” – so that when I fire the gun in the left hand, my left thumb fits the same way as my right thumb does when I fire right-handed. Sadly, Craig is currently quoting a two-year wait for his revolver grips.

Sometime in the late 1990s, Craig contracted with Uncle Mike’s to design a line of now discontinued polymer grips for them that included boot grips for some of the Smith & Wesson revolvers. For several years these were original equipment on the round-butt J-frame guns that are the focus of this article. Because these grips were checkered, it was necessary to slim them slightly in profile, to allow a cover garment that had slid upward over them to slide back down. They also introduced that ambi speedloader cut, which was not a feature on the hand-carved wooden grips. The other significant difference was that they were never available with the high-horn option for the Centennial models.

Now, to what prompted this article. I had purchased a used 3” S&W Model 60 as a potential loaner to students. It came to me with an “overmolded rubber” Hogue Bantam Grip. Seeking something that would fill my hand a bit more and also dress up the gun, I ordered a boot grip from Altamont Company. The beautiful Altamont grip certainly dressed up the gun but the day after firing about two dozen rounds through it, I noticed some soreness in the base joint of the little finger and the next knuckle. On initial inspection, I realized that the battering has occurred

because the Altmont grip has just a barely discernible palm swell and is more squared to the bottom strap. The rounded contour at the bottom of the Spegel design lets the little finger curl back up onto the grip from under the bottom strap without that battering.

On further inspection, I realized that it also comes closer to the front strap than does the Spegel grip – much like a Tyler T-Grip adapter mounted with the skinny “service” grips that used to come on these guns. I have corrected this issue by curling the little finger under the bottom strap, as some folks used to do when shooting a S&W revolver with service grips and no grip adapter. Depending on the size and shape of your hands, you may actually find that curling your finger under the bottom strap in this manner allows you to get a better 360° wrap with the stabilizing hand, when you shoot two-handed.

All Boot Grips are Not Created Equal



From left to right: Original factory high-horn Centennial grip with Tyler T-Grip Adapter. First-generation Crimson Trace LaserGrip; note that while bottom is rounded, the checkered area is flat, with essentially no palm swell. Altamont boot grip; note the relatively sharp edge at the bottom.

So, let's do a quick review of some of the other boot grips out there. I don't have any experience with some of these other grips so some of the following comments are based primarily on photos from their websites or reports from trusted sources.

Some of the J-frame S&W revolvers still come with a newer version of the Uncle Mike's grip, also available for separate purchase. It has a less aggressive checkering pattern and the projection between the finger grooves looks a bit more rounded.

I am told that they are also slightly narrower, thus offering less of a palm swell.

Hogue's Bantam Grips turns out to be a family of similar grips. As already noted, Hogue's "overmolded rubber" Bantam Grip is very similar in configuration to the Uncle Mike's boot grip but slightly wider. A friend with size 8 hands loves them. The overmolded grip has a pebbled surface. The "fancy hardwood" grips are offered with or without checkering. The Extreme Series in G10 has a pattern of rounded dimples in place of checkering. Note that the inexpensive overmolded grips are made as a single piece that snaps into place and they don't always come off undamaged, should you need to remove them for maintenance on the gun. If these are your choice, it may be a good idea to purchase one or more spares. The hardwood version has a bit more girth with less palm swell, flares slightly toward the bottom strap and is otherwise fairly "square" at the bottom, like the Altamont boot grip. The G10 version of these grips seems to fall midway between the palm swell of the overmolded version and the flare at the bottom of the hardwood version. I availed myself of Hogue's excellent customer service and at their expense sent my wooden Bantam grip back to get the lower circumference rounded as much as they felt they could do. While that removed the relatively sharp edge at the bottom, it did not otherwise give the more rounded contour of the Spiegel designs or of their own overmolded version.

All Boot Grips are Not Created Equal

Precision Gun Specialties offers what they call Hideout Grips. These are a very rudimentary boot grip without the finger grooves. That may be a positive feature for some users, particularly for petite women whose fingers are significantly thinner than those of the average male. That's not the best photo on their website but these grips don't appear to have much of a palm swell – again, possibly not an issue for someone with small hands.

Eagle offers their Secret Service Grips. These resemble the hand-carved Spegel boot grips but appear to have less of a palm swell.

Badger offers what they call a boot grip but it is not a true boot grip in the original sense, as described above, in that it does extend a short distance below the bottom strap. I assume that the ones for a round-butt J-frame revolvers share the rest of the configuration with the one that I own a for a Ruger SP101. They have no significant palm swell and, because the section that comes up through the recurve on the back strap widens rather than narrows, they spread the recoil into the web of the hand rather than into the palm as does the palm swell on the Spegel grips. This is probably not much of an issue with non-Magnum loads but these grips do seem intended for users with man-size hands.

I make no claim that this is a comprehensive review of what's on the market. What I have sought to do is point out some

of the characteristics of some of the different boot grips that may affect their suitability for you. While you may not be able to try on the range before you buy, if you can at least handle or view some of these grips in a store, you may now be better prepared to predict how they are likely to feel when the gun recoils in your hand.

Stephen Wenger's website is www.spw-duf.info

Kimber K6S Speedloader

Review

by John Russell



Kimber K6S with Kimber-branded speedloader.

THE SNUBBY CHRONICLES

I wanted a 3 inch carry revolver and I decided to give the new Kimber K6S a try. It had some solid reviews and I saw no real complaints. Of course, what's a new shooting iron without accessorizing, so I purchased the Kimber branded speedloaders and JOX speedloader pouches. The pouches come in three different belt widths, 1-1/4, 1-1/2 and 1-3/4 inches. I am using the 1-1/2 inch model with a Blade Tech nylon ultimate carry belt. The belt sizing is extremely important because the pouches will not fit correctly or function properly on belt sizes they are not intended for.

The pouches come with foam inserts to muffle the rattle of the cartridges in the aluminum loader. They carry vertically and I prefer to keep them at around 9 or 10 o'clock on my weak side when I'm carrying a strong side belt holster. They sit tall enough to potentially poke your side when you go to sit down if you carry them at 11 o'clock. The tension is adjustable with a rubber grommet so they stay put. I found the Kydex construction to be stiff and rigid enough to keep the loaders oriented properly and allow for deployment without allowing the aluminum loaders to shift and move around.

The loaders resemble the tried and true HKS turn lock design and are simple to use. The JOX loader pouches come with some adhesive skateboard tape grip that you can apply to the flanks to make the slick aluminum easier to grab with damp hands. I found the scalloped design of the loader made for decent

Kimber K6S Speedloader Review

purchase when twisted, so I decided not to use the tape. The Kimber loaders tend to rattle a little more than my plastic Safariland Comp loaders, but when secured against the foam inserts in the JOX pouches, I didn't had any rattles or jingles that would give away that I'm carrying cartridges under my shirt.



Kimber K6S, speedloader and JOX loader pouches.

The Kydex pouches hold the loaders higher above your belt line than traditional leather snap closure pouches do, but offer a slimmer profile and smoother and faster implementation over the traditional style. I think they make a good addition to a solid belt holster for everyday carry. Though slim enough to conceal under a loose untucked shirt, they are probably not ideal

for carry with a snug fitting or tucked shirt, but no speedloader pouch is.

Since I have a Pachmayr Competition loader and a Five Star aluminum loader for the K frame, I tested them in the JOX pouches and found that, though they might work to load the K6 revolver fairly well, they are slightly too wide to properly fit in the pouches, despite sharing a somewhat hexagonal shape.

Comparing the Kimber loader to the Five Star and Pachmayr loaders, it is a bit shorter than the Pachmayr but a bit taller than the Five Star. With the release wheel being the main part that is taller however, it allows for better manipulation for those with larger hands. I wear an XL size glove and found that I had an easier time releasing the cartridges from the Kimber loader than the Five Star loader. The smaller diameter of the Kimber cylinder makes loading from the twist-lock type K frame loaders slightly tricky under normal circumstances and a bit cumbersome with gloves, while the K6 loaders are better sized and allow for a more smooth and precise reload.

All in all, I found the JOX pouches to be a solid piece of kit to add to your carry gear if you carry speed loaders and will pair nicely with a good belt holster. The Kimber K6 specific loaders are ideal if you're looking for speedloaders that aren't just compatible with your revolver, but also directly sized to it.

The Mice That Roared

by Andy Stanford



Early 1960s Colt Cobra. Photos by Colleen Reeder.

The lashup that publishes this book dedicates itself to the snubnosed revolver. That said, one of the primary motivations

behind the organization's founding was to provide a venue for practicing with the firearms actually carried for self-defense by average citizens going about their daily business. Countless small self-loaders serve daily alongside snubbies in this role.

So, the topic at hand is semiautomatics: .25s, .32s, and .380s. For you Eurotypes, that translates to those chambered in 6.35 mm, 7.65 mm, and 9 mm Kurz. I suppose .22 rimfire examples also qualify, though it must be noted that rimless centerfire cartridges have a better reputation for reliability than .22 long rifle ammo, at least in semiautos. (Mini revolvers such as the 5-shot NAA .22 Magnums are beyond the scope of this article.) The primary attribute of these Lilliputian pistols is their small size. They slip easily into a pocket with room to spare, thoroughly unobtrusive.



Colt 1908 Vest Pocket Auto in .25 ACP next to a Ruger LCP I in .380 ACP. Wallet holster is by Davis Leather of Ash Fork, AZ.

The first patent date of several engraved on the slide of my 1927 manufacture Colt 1908 Vest Pocket .25 Auto reads

August 25, 1896, just one product of that prolific genius son-of-a-polygamist-gunmaker's-second-sister-wife John Moses Browning. The piece in question is miniscule, yet functions as flawlessly as any mechanical device can be expected to. Operator error lurks as the biggest potential bugaboo, in the form of a strongly sprung grip safety. (For the record, the original 1905 Browning .25 had only a grip safety, no thumb latch.)

Since the turn of the last century, such pocket pistols have been designed and produced around the world: Brownings, Colts, Berettas, Walthers, Et al. After the U.S. Gun Control Act of 1968, high-quality imports largely disappeared, replaced by cheap, domestically produced examples such as the .25 ACP Raven and Lorcin. Be that as it may, I can't help but believe that even the latter served many an owner in a tight spot unless or until they jammed or broke.

Not too long ago, you had to pony up a wad of cash and get in line for a Seecamp .32 if you wanted a bit more horsepower in the smallest possible pocket pistol. Today, for less than \$300, you can buy a reliable .380 or .32 that is not much larger than the .25s of yesteryear. Significantly smaller than even a 5-shot snub revolver, they pretty much disappear when concealed and usually provide an additional round or two on tap to boot. If extra ammo is part of your SOP, spare magazines trump speedloaders or Bianchi strips hands down, in terms of both convenience of carry and rapidity of reload.

I'm told the most popular handgun currently manufactured is the Ruger LCP .380 and I know several experienced hands who carry one in a pocket, some in violation of their official workplace policy. This gun is made in two versions: the DAO, concealed-hammer-fired LCP I and the striker-fired LCP II, the latter featuring a manual thumb safety. (FWIW, the one that appeals to me most is the LCP I with integral laser.) I can personally vouch for the even-lighter-and-flatter DAO .32ACP Kel-Tec, having owned two examples of this affordable pistol when I lived in Florida, carried in my waistband via the accessory pocket clip. Buffalo Bore makes self-defense ammo that maximizes penetration in both calibers.

Some may question the efficacy of the projectiles fired from anything less than a .45 ACP or .44 Special. My own extensive research indicates that much of the stopping power debate suffers from myth and urban legend and that all handgun cartridges service caliber and below usually just poke small but sometimes deep holes in things. They all possess the potential to change a person's priorities.



Size comparison between the Colt Vest Pocket and the Ruger LCP.

My own limited experience as a lead magnet supports this assertion. Once upon a time, I shot myself in the testicle. Specifically, a stray fragment from a .45 ACP ball round out of my Series 70 made a U-turn upon striking a deep, parabolic rifle crater in a mild steel head-and-torso silhouette 5-yards downrange, then penetrated my pants, my scrotum, and partway into my rightmost cajone.

Cut-to-the-chase, I went down like a sack of shit, lay on the desert sand for ten minutes or so, then hobbled to a nearby vehicle, lying prostrate for another half hour before motoring myself to the local emergency room. With shot placement

confirmed by X-ray, the doctor said it was no big deal, that he could inject me with lydocaine and cut the small piece of metal out. I pleaded, “Could you leave it in!? My nuts have been traumatized enough for one day!” Bottom line: whether the culprit was jacket or core, the offending missile – still there by the way– would have rendered me hors d’ combat.

On yet another occasion a bullet fragment ricocheted off a rock and lodged in my little finger. The impact felt like someone hit my pinky with a ping pong paddle as hard as they could. Got my attention I tell you that! Energy equals MV squared; high velocity projectiles, whatever their diameter and/or weight, are NOT to be trifled with. As a Korean War combat veteran and Purple Heart recipient once remarked to me, “The human body does not take kindly to deep puncture wounds.” And I’d say my injuries described above were relatively trivial compared with a solid hit with a full bullet of any caliber. In a pinch, I’m willing to bet on a mouse gun. YMMV.

My personal plan is to surrender all cash and credit cards if some tooled up n’er do well gets the drop on me. I actually practice doing so. They can have my TV too, and my vehicle if it comes to that. The monetary value of NONE of these things even comes close to the dough I would have to shell out for even a slam-dunk case of self defense. Not to mention the hassle and worry. If however I perceive that he or she is threatening my life or the lives of those I am willing to die or go to jail for, that

qualifies for a mag dump of .25s to the brisket or brain pan. Likewise, if an active shooter enters my environs, that person WILL get sniped from behind cover if I can possibly arrange it.

Then there is the matter of aesthetics. Polymer-framed pistols are simply *tres gauche* in my book, however well they may fill the bill as fighting tools. In contrast, snubby wheelguns have that *noir je ne sais quoi*, particularly in blue worn vintage examples shlepped in sweat stained period leather. Likewise quality blue steel pocket autos from the turn of the last century, which is why I often carry my Cairo-Gutman gat in a never-ending quest for the Maltese Falcon. If you think I am under armed and overly optimistic, so be it. Ya pays yer money and takes yer chances. In any case, I bet most of my chips on a commitment to avoidance, deterrence, and de-escalation. Nobody gets out of here alive. Go to France, dig up Jim Morrison and ask him. Fin.

THE SNUBBY CHRONICLES

The Colt Detective Special

by Grant Cunningham



Post-1972 Colt D frame revolver with hammer shroud. Photo by Dillard Morrison.

Humphrey Bogart. James Cagney. Craig Stevens. Jaclyn Smith. Peter Lorre. Basil Rathbone. Jack Elam. Raymond Burr. Lloyd Nolan. Charlton Heston. Charles Bronson. Walter Matthau. Myrna Loy. And Jack Webb.

What do all of these actors have in common?

At some point, in movies or on television, each one held a first-generation Colt Detective Special in their tightly clenched fist – their character being prepared, if necessary, to pull the trigger. Whether the character was a good guy or a bad gal, whether the gun was fired in anger or justice, the Dick Special (as it's sometimes called) was snubnose revolver of choice for their role.

No other revolver in history had the distinctive profile of the pre-1972 Detective Special. The short barrel, half-moon front sight, and exposed ejector rod gave it a look no other gun had. That unmistakable silhouette on the screen came to symbolize the use of force – for both good and evil.

Birth of a classic

I'm pretty sure the engineers at Colt didn't intentionally design the Detective Special to be photogenic. It just worked out that way. The Detective Special was nothing more than a Police

The Colt Detective Special

Positive Special with a short barrel, and while this combination had been available on special order for some years, in 1927 they made it a regular offering. The short barrel gave the Police Positive a determined new look.

While the engineers may not have had aesthetics in mind, the sales department sure did. The catchy name was added to differentiate it from the more pedestrian model from which it evolved. But that wasn't enough; the new gun needed some appealing ad copy. So, in their 1932 catalog, Colt describes the DS thusly: "There is no more rugged firearm in its size and weight than the Detective Special, and none of more businesslike appearance."

Everyone knew what the word "businesslike" meant. Colt understood their market!

A star is born

During the heyday of film noir the little Colt showed up on movie sets almost constantly. When the newfangled televisions came to the market in numbers during the late 1940s, the cops and criminals of the movie houses came along with them. The Detective Special reached a whole new audience, its "businesslike appearance" matching and punctuating the clipped, rapid-fire speech of the characters who wielded it.

Whether handled by femme fatale or hardboiled cop, the Dick Special had become a staple. In fact, the Colt was so iconic that it's possible to find studio pictures of characters holding snubbies from that "other" big revolver manufacturer mis-captioned as "Detective Special". If it's a snubnose, lots of people just assume it's a Colt!

I'll admit that part of my initial attraction to the Detective Special had something to do with its status as a movie star. I too noticed its "businesslike appearance", and to this day I prefer the look of the exposed ejector rod on the pre-'72 models. Romance aside, it looks "right" – just like its name.

And while today I caution my students to pick their carry gun on more practical criteria, there is something to be said for owning a gun just because you like it. As it happens, the Detective Special still makes a usable defensive tool and a great concealed carry companion.

The fact that it's a looker is just icing on the cake.

Review: Charter Arms 9mm Pitbull

by Stephen P. Wenger

After about two decades of “I’ll snap up one of those if I ever see one for sale,” I purchased a barely used (98% condition) Smith & Wesson Model 547, with a 3” barrel and round butt, ten years ago. This out-of-production model – also made with a 4” barrel and a square butt – was designed for a French police contract. Externally, it looks like a six-shot .357 Magnum Model 13 but the 547 is chambered in 9x19mm and features a special extractor system to allow use of that rimless round without use of a moon clip.

A few months ago, a visitor to my home – let's call her Marie – commented that she'd love to have a revolver that would fire 9mm ammo. However, she'd been told that any double-action revolver that could do so would require the use of moon clips – a feature that did not appeal to her. First the 547 came out of the safe, for demonstration. A walk over to the computer and a visit to the Charter Arms website then showed her that a similar five-shot revolver is currently produced – the only other revolver I know of that will eject rimless cases without the use of a moon clip. With the understanding that it would not be of the same quality as the 547, she decided to order one. If all you want to know is whether the Pitbull is as nice a gun as the 547, it is not and you need read no further. If you want a few details on how they differ, read on.

Having low expectations, I was pleasantly surprised when Marie showed me the newly purchased Pitbull. I was pleased not to find any visible toolmarks in the chambers such as I'd seen in photos of someone else's review of an early one. While far from the greatest trigger I've ever operated, the trigger stroke was heavy but smoother than I'd feared it might be. Then followed a gap of a few months before a brief range session.

Marie has little experience shooting revolvers and most of that has been with the excellent trigger on a .38 Special Ruger LCR. Further, she had mentioned that her own first session with the Pitbull had been disappointing. I decided that I should fire

the gun myself, to get an assessment of how it shot. I set up a life-size, black-and-white photo target and aimed at the tip of the nose from seven yards. I produced a disappointing group of about 3½ inches. I moved Marie up to five yards from the target and began a training session doing ball-and-dummy drills. Long story short, she fired a total of 15 rounds into a group about 10” high and 6” wide.

Neither of these revolvers is designed for rapid reloading. Understand that each uses a spring-activated extractor – mounted on the extractor rod – for each chamber. The S&W 547 is moody about allowing singly fed rounds to drop all the way into the chambers and actually seems to feed more reliably from a TUFF Products QuickStrip. Because the 9mm Pitbull was designed so that the chambers can be bored and reamed.⁴⁰ S&W as well, the spacing of the five chambers in the 9mm chambering is much too wide to allow the use of that QuickStrip. The Pitbull requires each round to be pressed past its extractor with greater pressure than on the intermittent round that does not drop into place in the 547. With the 547, if one or more rounds are not fully seated, pressing the extractor rod far enough to engage the extractor grooves in the cases will seat those rounds as soon as the rod is released but that is not the case with the Pitbull. However, if the extractor rod of the Pitbull is pushed up about one-eighth of an inch, the cartridges can be inserted into the chambers with much less resistance.



Pictured are the Charter Arms Pitbull (above) and the S&W Model 547 (below) as well as a TUFF Products QuickStrip. As discussed in the text, the QuickStrip pairs well with the 547 but cannot be used in the Pitbull. This particular strip will accept rimmed .32/.327 revolver cartridges and rimless .223/5.56mm and derivative cartridges as well as 9mm. On my next order from TUFF, I'll opt for the eight-round version.

The 547 requires decisive action for ejection of spent brass, with the muzzle turned skyward and a firm slap of the extractor rod. The Pitbull may be a bit more lenient in that department but is a bit more demanding in that two-handed technique. Not only is the “throw” of the extractor rod shorter, so is the rod itself. Thus, a user with man-size hands may need to

retrain his hand position when opening the action so that there is room for the other hand to slap the rod through its entire length of travel. While I've never had occasion to fire such ammo in my 547, Charter Arms advises not to use aluminum- or steel-case ammo in the Pitbull.

Speaking of hand size, one nice feature of the Pitbull is that, unlike on many other finger-groove grips, the ridges on the OEM grip seem well spaced for average-size female hands.

Marie chose to spend approximately \$20 more to get the "Blacknitride+" finish because she doesn't like the possibility of light reflecting off a shiny gun inside her darkened home. Charter Arms claims, "With a scratch-resistant surface and extended life in the rifling and chambers, Blacknitride+ keeps your Charter handgun looking – and working – like new!" By the time Marie had fired 25 rounds plus a few dry-fires in her Pitbull, there were already shiny spots worn through the black on both sides of the portion of the trigger that pivots in and out of the frame. That Blacknitride+ coating in the chambers and bore may be why she had difficulty getting a 9mm bore brush through the bore although my Bore Snake of the same nominal size worked fine.

Admittedly, someone else – or even myself, with more time to learn that heavy trigger stroke – may be able to shoot the Pitbull more accurately than we did. Still, it would not be my choice for a hostage-rescue shot. On the other hand, there may be conditions where 9x19mm may be the only handgun ammo

available. Even if the Pitbull will not group much better than my five shots, it should allow placement of five of those 9mm rounds inside the chest cavity of an intruder across an average bedroom or of an armed robber in Memphis, where Tom Givens reports that they typically manifest their threats at distances of three to five yards.

Bottom line in the financial sense: If you are even able to locate a S&W 547 for sale, Blue Book of Gun Values currently lists \$975 for that gun in 95% condition. Blue Book goes all the way down to 70% condition to get to a price of \$475 and that's without the 10% premium for the 3" barrel. With an MSRP of \$522 for the Blacknitride+ version, Marie paid \$455 plus tax for the Pitbull, before mailing in the \$25 rebate card that came in the box. You normally get what you pay for and she got a "functional" 9mm revolver that does not require moon clips. Marie has been shooting about 3" groups from seven yards with her .38 Special Ruger LCR. However, sharing my skepticism about moon clips, she prefers to stick with her Charter Arms Pitbull than to trade up to a more costly 9mm LCR, which would require the use of the relatively flimsy moon clips for five-shot revolvers.

Stephen Wenger's website is www.spw-duf.info



The top five holes were the ones that I fired. Of the 15 rounds that Marie fired – in a set of ball-and-dummy drills – only two strayed out of the 9½” x 10¼” TQ-15 primary zone. Most are clustered around her aiming point, where the chest hair meets the tank-top shirt

Revolvers with Three inch Barrels: Snub or Non-snub?

by Mike Boyle



Model 36 with a 3" barrel.

Back in the Age of Aquarius, I purchased my first revolver. Since all of my heroes carried revolvers, that was the path I followed and it was several years before I even considered buying

an autopistol. When I entered law enforcement, revolvers were still the overwhelming choice and pistols were a pretty much a rarity. A couple of my academy classmates were issued Smith & Wesson M59 pistols, but by and large, wheelguns ruled. Of course, once I got squared away with my service revolver, the next logical step was to pick up a snub for off duty carry.

My first snub revolver was the hard to obtain S&W M60. Although my Chief's Special rendered in stainless steel was a very handy carry piece, I had to really bear down to shoot it well and my performance fell short of what I was able to achieve with my duty revolver. Back at my job, I did note that several gun savvy, senior officers used S&W M36 revolvers sporting 3 inch barrels instead of the usual abbreviated snub tube. This got the wheels in my head turning and I had to wonder why these officers went against the grain and deviated from the pack. Might they be on to something?

For a number of reasons, some obvious and others not, 3 inch revolvers do boast a number of advantages. The short sight radius of a traditional snub leaves little margin for error and most users quickly discover that you have to bear down to get those center hits. This can get especially dicey when you factor in movement, poor light and extreme stress. That extra inch may not sound like much, but it does help the cause. A 3 inch barrel will also yield slightly higher muzzle velocities for better terminal performance and it also helps mitigate muzzle flash.

Revolvers with Three inch Barrels: Snub or Non-snub?

A not so obvious advantage is when you have to reload in a hurry. Small frame, 2 inch snubs have very short ejector rods. There is no guarantee that even smartly smacking that ejector rod will kick spent cases clear of the cylinder. All too often, there is an empty case hung up that has to be manually stripped out, thus delaying the loading process. The longer rods on the 3 inch guns make it far more likely that empty cases will clear on the first effort.

So, what's the downside? Two inch guns are right at home on the ankle or in a pocket. Sure, you make it work with a 3 inch gun but it's considerably more difficult. Finding holsters for 3 inch barrel revolvers can also be a challenge. Selection from the big manufactures is often very limited, however many of the smaller custom shops can set you up in fine style. Belt slide holsters will extend a little lower on the belt and one must exercise greater care in keeping the gun hidden. An inside-the-waistband rig worn under a loose covering garment changes all that and will make you 3 inch gat pretty much invisible.

I've owned and carried a number of 2, 2 ½ and 3 inch barrel revolvers and at one time or another, they all fit into my daily plan. If a revolver fills your everyday carry needs, I still think it's tough to beat a S&W K-frame with a 3 inch barrel. Currently, Colt, Kimber, Ruger and Smith & Wesson are all turning out small and medium frame revolver with 3 inch barrels. If there was no demand, they wouldn't be making them!

THE SNUBBY CHRONICLES

We like to put labels on everything we do, have taste or go. So team, does that 2 ½ Combat Magnum really make the cut as a snub revolver? What about that 3 inch .44 Special? Who cares! If you can hide it and shoot it to a high standard, have at it.



The trio of revolvers clockwise from left to right: S&W M12 Airweight 2", S&W M64 3" and S&W M547 3".

How Many Times Can You Reload a .38 Special Case?

by Jim Finnerty

The most expensive single component in a round of ammunition is the case. Therefore, when you make your own ammo, most of the cost savings is realized because you can reuse the case multiple times.

This begs the question: “How many times can a case be reloaded before it must be scrapped?” The correct (but unhelpful) answer is, “It depends.”

A number of factors affect case longevity. The caliber, the pressure to which the rounds are loaded, the firearm used to fire the rounds, the dies used to reload the rounds (and the way they are set up), and even case composition can all have an effect on

the number of times a case can be successfully reloaded. Generally speaking, lower pressures, tighter chambers, better quality components and dies that are set up to work the case as little as possible all contribute to longer case life.

But you can't build ammo with "optimizing the brass longevity" as the only consideration. Some cartridges run best at higher pressures, some firearms have loose chambers and sometimes you must set up your dies to produce ammo that will run in a number of firearms rather than specifically tailoring it to one chamber (which can result in overworking the brass).

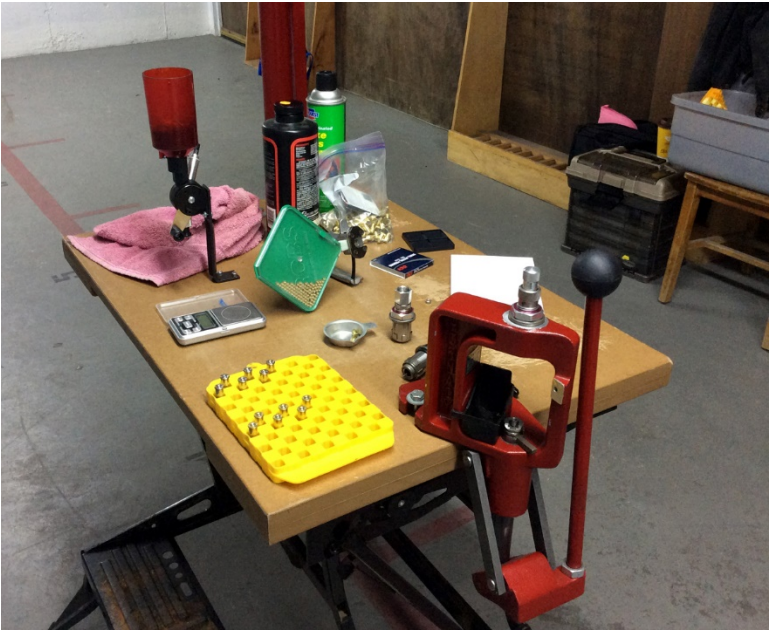
In order to precisely determine how many times a particular cartridge can be reloaded, you'd almost have to test each caliber/cartridge individually.

So, let's do it. Let's see how many times a .38 Special case can be reloaded.

The Test

I brought a portable reloading setup to the range, similar to what I use in the reloading classes. For this test, I loaded the cartridges, shot them, wiped the cases off with a rag and repeated the process until the cases failed – in other words – until I couldn't reload them anymore.

How Many Times Can You Reload a .38 Special Case?



Portable Reloading Bench Set Up At The Range.



Smith & Wesson Military & Police .38 Special (Pre-Model 10).

I started with a dozen once-fired Remington (R-P headstamp) .38 Special cases. Six were plain brass and six were nickel plated brass. I used both brass and nickel-plated brass because I wanted to see if one lasted longer than the other. I loaded and shot all 12 cases until they failed.

Results

Failures were caused by split case mouths. This makes sense because the .38 Special is a straight-walled, low pressure revolver round. The primer pockets won't loosen up, there's no case stretch and the chambers aren't oversized so there's no over-expansion. That leaves "cracks due to work hardening" as the most likely failure mode, which is what happened. During loading, the case mouth is first flared, then roll-crimped and forcibly flattened during firing. It is no surprise that the mouths split because the mouth ends up getting worked much more than any other part of the case.

The splits start out tiny – less than 1/16" long. You can barely see them, but they're easy to feel if you run your fingernail around the case mouth. The first couple of times I detected these tiny splits, I tried loading the case one more time. Although the rounds with the tiny splits fired and performed normally, the extracted cases showed significant (about 3/8" long) cracks. After that I decided to "retire" the remaining cases at the first sign of splitting.

How Many Times Can You Reload a .38 Special Case?

The most remarkable thing I learned during this test was the striking difference in longevity between plain brass and nickel-plated cases. I thought going in that nickel-plated cases would split sooner than plain brass cases. I didn't realize how much sooner. The plain brass cases lasted 3 times longer. The first nickel-plated case failed on the 6th loading and all of them had split by the 15th loading, for an average of 10.5 reloads before failure. The first brass case failed on reload number 28, with one tenacious case hanging on until the 40th reload! The plain brass cases averaged 33 reloads before failure (Table 1).

Table 1. Plain vs. Nickel-plated .38 special brass longevity test

Case Type	Plain Brass	Nickel-plated
First Failure	28	6
Last Failure	40	15
Average Reloads before Failure	33	10.5

Conclusions

When I take the amount of once-fired range brass I've scrounged through the years and combine it with the fact that plain brass cases can be loaded about 30 times, I'm able to conclude that I have enough .38 Special cases to last several

lifetimes. I've also decided that when I buy brass in the future for any caliber, I will opt for plain brass over nickel-plated cases when given the choice.

Jim Finnerty's website is www.MassGunOwnership.com

A Tale From The Back Creek Diaries: A
practical treasure

The S&W 940, a 9mm
Parabellum/.38 S&W pocket
revolver
by C.E. Harris



Expansion IS possible from a 1-7/8" 9mm snub!

In the 1980s Ruger engineers rechambered leftover French Model Ruger Service Six 9mm revolvers to .38 S&W in order to jumpstart a police revolver order for India. The first few thousand India .380 Rimmed Models could use either 9mm

The S&W 940, a 9mm Parabellum/.38 S&W pocket revolver

Parabellum with clips, or .38 S&W without. I've felt this dual-ammo revolver was a "cool" idea, but once the leftover French parts were used up, the balance of the India contract was filled by purpose-building .38 S&W chambered revolvers. My fantasy of a dual-caliber DA wheelie faded until I was gifted an S&W 940 from the estate of a Naval Officer friend who recently passed. I knew that the "Ruger mod" could be done on an S&W and indeed work.

For those unfamiliar with the S&W 940, it was a stainless Centennial J-frame, chambered in 9mm Parabellum with a 1 7/8" barrel from 1991-98. A few were made during 1991-92 having 3" barrels. The advantage of using clipped ammunition in a revolver is its potential for fast reloading. The short ejector rod of S&W J-frames works better with short cases like the .38 S&W or 9mm than it does with the longer .38 Special. The Model 940 was never "popular" because reliable functioning required more care and attention than using a similar .38 Special revolver.



Hogue Boot Grip provides good concealment and recoil control firing 147-grain 9mm loads which exceed .38 Special +P energy.

Most 9mm +P and +P+ LE ammunition causes hard extraction in revolvers because fired brass sticks in the chambers. If chambers are the least bit oily, the tapered 9mm case is prone

to set-back against the recoil shield, causing hard cylinder rotation. This doesn't happen with cylindrical .38 Specials, which are loaded to lower chamber pressure. It takes practice to remove spent 9mm brass from the clips without bending them. A bent clip causes hard cylinder rotation, light primer strikes, and heavier trigger pull. Internet reviewers of 9mm revolvers usually recommend that only new clips be used for defense carry, and that used ones reserved for training and practice only. Potential purchasers of used S&W 940s should inspect the gun carefully, because some users honed or polished chambers in attempts to ease hard extraction. Doing so actually makes the set-back problem worse, because fired cases then don't adhere as well to the chamber walls and more easily "piston" back against the recoil shield. The following advice comes from the S&W user's manual:

"In the Model 940 revolver, some brands of 9mm Parabellum ammunition may cause difficulty in extracting spent cartridge cases from the cylinder. If this situation occurs, thoroughly clean the cylinder charge holes with solvent. If this condition persists, we recommend changing to another brand of 9mm Parabellum ammunition."

The chambers of the S&W 940 must be kept clean, DRY and free of oil to avoid fired brass from “pistoning.” The S&W user manual further states:

“Whenever rimless pistol cartridges are used in the cylinder of a Smith & Wesson revolver, (except M547) full or half-moon clips MUST be used to both position and extract such cartridges. Failure to use ammunition clips with rimless cartridges may result in malfunction of the revolver.”

My experience has been that in firing standard pressure 9mm loads, if the chambers are clean and free of oil, fired brass falls right out. But, firing clipped +P ammo, it usually takes a mighty whack or two on the ejector rod! My revolver fires 9mm ammo without clips, but fired brass must be poked out with a BIC pen or similar object. I've had no problems in either of my two 940s firing standard pressure 9mm ammo, without using the “star clip,” as long as the “duty pen” was kept handy.

I modified the chambers in my 940 revolvers to permit use of either 9mm Parabellum or .38 S&W ammo. This is done by enlarging the ball seat entrance diameter to permit lead bullets of larger diameter to enter and transition smoothly into the .356” diameter chamber throats without experiencing “trailing edge

failure” caused by base upset. I carry clipped 9mm 147-grain JHPs for defense, but use standard pressure 9mm FMJ without clips or .38 S&W reloads for practice and recreational shooting. My 9mm cast loads approximate the payload and velocity of common .38 S&W or .38 Special wadcutter loads, using 3.2 grains of Bullseye with the Accurate 36-142H sized to .358.”

Because people will ask, I will describe the .38 S&W lead-bullet cylinder modification. Be advised doing so voids any factory warranty, so if you choose to do this, you are on “your own nickel.” S&W doesn’t have replacement cylinders for the 940 and I am told they don’t service this model anymore, so consider yourself forewarned. I hand-reamed the origin of the .356” diameter cylindrical ball seats to provide a gentle transition cone of .359” major diameter, using the Brownell’s .22-.32 revolver 11 degree revolver forcing cone reamer and breaking the corner of the case mouth stop surface, so it is less likely to drag a ring off the trailing edge of the bullet base. The reamer’s .375” shank diameter serves as a pilot to align the reamer in the 9mm chambers. Before reaming chambers are swabbed with Brownell’s Do-Drill. The reamer is then threaded onto its T-handle, and the stripped cylinder held vertically with the reamer resting against the chamber stop surface of its own weight, attached to the T-handle only. Using only very light finger pressure, I simply twirled the T-handle, stopping to inspect after every 20 turns. This produced some fine stainless steel “flour” mixed with cutting oil

on the reamer flutes. After wiping the chambers I checked my progress by dropping five soft lead .358" diameter Magtech 158-grain LRN bullets into the chambers, pushing them into the ball seats by hand using a Brownells Compact LE screwdriver handle. I then tapped each bullet firmly into its ball seat with a 2-oz. brass hammer, then tapped them back out to visually inspect and measure them.

Visual inspection showed the lead slugs entered the ball seats smoothly without shaving. Where the bullet foreparts were pressed into the uncut portion of the cylinder throats, ahead of the short 11-degree cone, they measured .356" and the bullet shank at the ball seat entrance measured .3575" after the initial cut, being lightly sized by the modified chambers. So, I oiled the cylinder again and repeated the process, another 20 twirls around all 5 chambers. After the reaming I used a Brownell's 3/8" ball chamfer tool to break the wire edge left on the reamed ball seats of each case mouth stop surface, then slugged the reamed chambers again. Ball seat entrances after the final cut were .359" with a short 11-degree taper to .356," with no sharp corner apparent to visual inspection. Upset slugs entered the origin of the cylinder ball seats without deformation. Factory 9mm rounds still drop in and headspace properly without clips. Factory 146-grain lead RN .38 S&W rounds headspace on the case mouth and bullet ogive, their rims standing "proud" to make up the

The S&W 940, a 9mm Parabellum/.38 S&W pocket revolver difference between the .38 S&W rim and clipped 9mm Parabellum rounds.



Left to right Winchester 147-grain Ranger T-series, Winchester 147-grain generic “white box” from Walmart, Federal 147-grain HST shot into water jugs at 7 yds.

I fired an assortment of factory 9mm loads and .38 S&W 146-grain LRN to see which ammo shot closest to the sights. I confirmed there was no tendency for lead bullets to leave rings in the chambers due to trailing edge failure, a common problem in 9mm revolvers. Test firing after the chamber mod confirmed this issue had been successfully mitigated. Standard velocity 9mm

147-grain ammo exceeded the velocity of Special +P of similar bullet weight fired from a similar snubby. Jacketed 147-grain 9mm and 146-grain LRN .38 S&W factory loads both shot to the sights. But 9mm ammunition with 115-grain bullets struck 4 inches low at 50 feet and 6 inches low at 25 yds.

Keep in mind the stated barrel length of a semi-auto pistol includes the chamber, while the stated barrel length of a revolver does not. So the bore travel and expansion ratio of a 1-7/8" Ruger SP101, LCR or S&W 940 in 9mm is about the same as the 3.1" barrel of a compact 9mm auto such as an S&W Shield. Paul Nowak at Winchester stated the 147gr Winchester Ranger Talon (symbol RA9T) is designed to expand at low velocities produced by the smallest of semi-autos, not substantially greater than .38 Special target wadcutters fired from a revolver of similar barrel length. While unable to find that specific load, I fired several brands of 147 grain JHP ammunition into gallon water jugs from the 940, as well as .38 S&W lead factory loads and my 9mm lead-bullet hand loads.

The S&W 940, a 9mm Parabellum/.38 S&W pocket revolver



Top: Firing standing DA at 25 yards with 6:00 hold .38 S&W LRN ammo shoots to the sights with mild .38 wadcutter-like recoil. Bottom: .38 S&W 146-grain LRN shoots to the sights, sandbagged 50 foot target was fired with center-of mass hold.

THE SNUBBY CHRONICLES

Table 2. Velocity Data for S&W Model 940 Revolver with 1-7/8” barrel and 0.008” cylinder gap

	velocity (fps)	std.dev	Notes
R-P .38 S&W 146-grain LRN	671	26	Shoots to fixed sight POA
CCI Blazer 9mm 115-grain FMJ	1062	26	Point of impact 6” low at 25 yds.
Winchester 9mm 115-grain FMJ	1091	31	Point of impact 6” low at 25 yds.
Federal 9mm A. Eagle 147 FMJ	924	7	Shoots to fixed sight POA.
Winchester 9mm Ranger T-Series 147 JHP	920	14	Good exp., stopped in 3rd water jug.
Winchester 9mm White Box 147 JHP	882	19	Fair exp., stopped in 4th water jug.
Federal 9mm HST 147 JHP	945	8	Impressive exp., stopped in 3rd water jug.

Taurus Teardown

by Daniel Congioli

There are some very fine firearms available on today's market. The question is, how much are you willing to pay? One of America's problems is that no one has a budget and people overspend like there is no tomorrow. Manufacturers and retailers know this and the price of firearms (and everything else) continues to rise.

Budget friendly guns are still out there, however. Taurus has become my favorite of the cheaper lines of revolvers. I hear many people wondering, "how well do they hold up?" Taurus is known for having quality control issues and we often hear of sub-standard guns leaving the factory. Every manufacturer has lemons.

The question is, how many of the good ones do we never hear about, because they work as intended?

I've had quite a few Taurus guns, both auto loaders and revolvers. There was only one that I did not enjoy, a well-worn model 822 purchased used. I own two Taurus revolvers that have been shot quite a bit, so I decided to crack them open and see how they are holding up.

First up is a TALO exclusive 2.5" 5 shot Tracker model chambered in 44 mag. I've had this gun for about 6 months and estimate the round count at around 3500. When I first bought it, I took the side plate off and polished a few of the rough spots. I haven't touched it since, other than scrubbing out the barrel and chambers a couple of times. This gun has had all full bore 44 magnum ammo through it, including a fair number of 300 plus grain full bore "bear" loads. This gun has been exceptionally accurate for what it is. It came with a kind of a bead blasted looking finish, with some rust underneath the grip on the side plate, as well as a bit of rust freckles on the barrel. Once the finish was worn smooth, from holster wear as well as a scotch bright pad cleaning the rust off, it seemed to stop rusting. All the rust that did occur was surface rust, with no pitting.

Taurus Teardown



Overview over the Taurus Tracker torn down to the frame.

Upon taking it apart, I noticed a fair number of shiny spots inside where parts had been rubbing together, maybe a little tighter than they should have been. This gun has a decent trigger and is fairly smooth, but it would probably do it a lot of good to have an action job. The next thing I noticed was the amount of dirt smeared to the inside of the frame and side plate, no doubt having got in there while I carried this gun many days on the job and while working on building my house this past summer. This all cleaned up quite easily with just a tooth brush and a small amount of solvent.



View of the peen holding the firing pin in on the tracker.

The third thing I noticed is that the hammer, or more likely the transfer bar, seems to have left a small peen on the right side of the firing pin housing. It is possible this is factory, but that seems unlikely since the firing pin is pinned in place. I took a small punch and dropped it down the barrel, gently tapping on the face of the firing pin until it was free. After that it was quick work to remove the burr with a small round needle file so the firing pin slides in and out freely. Normally when this is set up correctly, the retaining pin should be under slight spring pressure. But since the firing pin was being held by the burr, the retaining pin could come out freely and become lost if you don't watch for it.



Overview over the Taurus Tracker torn down to the frame.

Moving on to inspecting the frame, there is a small amount of flame cutting right above the barrel on the top strap, but not enough to be of concern. The top of the forcing cone however also shows some gas cutting marks and looking more closely it becomes obvious that the forcing cone was badly cut. This is not a deal breaker, as I've had inadequate forcing cones on much more expensive guns and it's rather easy to ream them out. This one will be getting done as soon as I can find time to unpack my tools.



View of the minor flame cutting and forcing cone on the Tracker.

On the cylinder and crane, the only thing I noticed out of the norm was a small burr on the flat side of each cylinder lock notch. This was easily removed with an Arkansas stone. The notches do not seem to be peened, opened up, or beat out of shape in any way. It is possible this small burr was just left over from when the notches were milled.



View of the burrs on the cylinder latch notches.

Moving on to the inside of the gun, all contact points on the hammer and trigger looked good, with sharp clean edges and no evidence of rounding, peening or being overly worn. Other than being extremely dirty, the internals all are in perfect working order.

Gun number two was a Model 85 in .38 Special that we've had for about four years. This gun was originally thrown in as booty on a trade I made, new in the box. My wife took a liking to it, and it's safe to say this gun has at least 5000 rounds through it, if not more. I'm not sure what Taurus used for a finish on this gun, but it is tough. Four years and several thousand rounds of ammo, having been carried in a holster, and in my wife's purse, and it does not show too much wear. This gun has never had the side plate off of it and is more than due for a good cleaning.

The first thing about this gun and something I don't like, is the way the grip boot attaches with a roll pin through the lower frame. Makes it a real pain to take the grip off and probably has a lot to do with why it's never been taken apart. Once the boot grip is off however the grip frame on this gun looks much more like a Smith round butt, unlike the medium framed Tracker, which has a grip frame shaped more like a Ruger GP100.

Removing the side plate reveals internals exactly like the Tracker model, except scaled down. Cocking the hammer allows the main spring to compress and there is a hole in the guide rod where a paper clip or small wire can be inserted. When the

hammer is dropped the main spring comes right out, followed by the hammer. The cylinder hand uses a coil spring and plunger, which is much simpler to remove and reinstall than any S&W I've ever taken apart. Next, depress the trigger and insert another paper clip into the trigger spring guide and then remove it by lifting up on the guide pin once the trigger is released. The trigger and transfer bar will come right out, followed by the cylinder lock. The cylinder latch can be removed by a simple screw and the firing pin by pressing down on it lightly and removing the retaining pin with a pair of small pliers or tweezers.

On this gun, the firing pin was not peened in place and came out freely once the retaining pin was removed. It was also much cleaner inside than the Tracker, with fewer shiny spots at rub points. The forcing cone is also much neater than the Tracker and actually has quite a nice gentle slide into the rifling. Overall, I couldn't find anything to whine about inside of the gun.

It was the same story with the cylinder and crane. Nothing out of the norm, other than the cylinder having the slightest resistance when turning due to a lack of cleaning and lubrication. Once cleaned and oiled, it spun freely as it should.

Moving on to the inside parts, everything looked good. No rounding on the trigger or hammer contact points and all the springs were solid. The only thing that caught my eye was that the cylinder lock had most of the finish worn off of one side.

With both guns fully cleaned and inspected, I see no reason why they won't go many more rounds and years of service. No doubt, there are some bad guns that come from Taurus. But all manufacturers have lemons. A good friend of mine had a brand new pistol from a big name brand American company that locked up and wouldn't work at all with less than a box of ammo through it and had to be sent back to the manufacturer for repairs. This is one place where Taurus is lacking, but it is my understanding they are working on improving their warranty and repair services. When I think of Taurus, I think of green eggs and ham. Many who talk trash about the brand and the guns have never tried one, and maybe if they did, they would like it. And if they don't? That's cool too, because this is America, and we are allowed to like and dislike what we please. Personally, I like Taurus and wouldn't hesitate to buy another one.

Until next time, stay safe, and don't shoot yourself in the foot.

Hyskore Flashlight Grip Review

by Stephen P. Wenger



Positioned along the right side of the top strap, the “100+” lumen light may result in unwanted reflection off some aftermarket front sights. For reference, there is enough space between the inner side of the light and the edge of the top strap for a thin garment. I know of one user who avails himself of that should he need to slip he gun into the waistband of pajama pants.

A grip that mounts a “100+” lumen flashlight on a revolver that has no accessory rail – what could go wrong?

PLUSSES:

- You get a flashlight that won't get separated from your gun and is operated with the same hand.
- For many years, most people buying S&W revolvers have probably been buying the J-frame guns so that seems like a good choice if you're only going to offer it for one frame size.
- The 100-or so lumen light seems well suited for indoor use. It provides enough illumination across most rooms and is bright enough to cause someone it illuminates at such distances to avert his eyes. Still it is not so much to cause prolonged night blindness to the user when switched off.
- The placement of the cylindrical CR2 lithium battery below the bottom strap extends the grip a bit more than half an inch – about the width of my little finger – in that direction. While that would be a negative for discreet carry, not many holsters will accept the gun with the light positioned just to the right of the top strap and running just over half of its length. For most users, this will be a bedside gun. Couple the three-finger grip with a 2" barrel and you've got the ideal gun for weapon retention if an uninvited visitor tried to rip the gun from your hand.



While this photo – taken in a dark room with no more illumination than that from the Hyskore flashlight – is overexposed, the “whiting out of the front sight is not much exaggerated. In actual use, the illumination of the front sight is bright enough that it’s a difficult to distinguish between the upper, green segment and the lower, white segment.

PLUS/MINUS:

- About that “100+” lumen light... I first mounted the grip on a Model 640-1 that has an XS Sight Systems Big Dot sight (with a long dead tritium insert) up front. With the light in such close proximity to the front sight, the

reflection off it was too much. I then swapped the grip to another 640-1 with the original sight but with the Claude Werner-recommended two-tone paint job: “sublime” green for the upper portion that should be seen with proper sight alignment and white for the lower portion that should only be visible if the front sight rises too high in the notch. That green paint looks like a bright tritium sight when the light is switched on in the dark.

MINUSES:

- With size-10 male hands, I am not troubled by the roughly $\frac{1}{4}$ ” extension of the back strap – which includes a slight cushion for most of its length. However, I suspect that that may be enough to discourage its use by some female users.
- Biggest complaint: Unlike the first-generation Crimson Trace LaserGrip for a J-frame revolver with a thin, short button switch, the Hyskore grip uses a larger, longer button. This makes it difficult to grasp the gun in the normal manner without switching on the light. As a result, I view the combo as a flashlight with a gun mounted on it rather than a gun with a flashlight mounted on it.



Hyskore Flashlight and LaserGrip: Both the light and the “guts” for it ride on or in the right panel. It’s obvious why the grip extends below the bottom strap – a desirable feature for retention of a revolver with a 2” barrel. Not obvious is why Hyskore chose to use that much cover over the back strap, possibly making the reach to the trigger too long for many female and for a few male users. For comparison, note the smaller and more shielded button switch on the first-generation, boot-grip-style.

THE BIG CAVEAT: Weapon-mounted lights point where the muzzle points. Despite the longer, heavier trigger stroke on a double-action revolver, the safe way to use such a light is to reflect it off a light-colored surface such as a floor, wall or ceiling until you have an identified target that may require shooting.

Hyskore Flashlight Grip Review

This reduces the risk of shooting the family dog or cat or the household member who unexpectedly went bump in the night.
DON'T SEARCH WITH THE MUZZLE OF THE GUN.

Stephen Wenger's website is www.spw-duf.info

Loaded For Bear: The .38 Special

by Daniel Congioli



Taurus Model 85 revolver.

The .38 Special is well known as a capable self-defense round, especially with today's advanced loads. However, if one were to

face down anything more than about 200 pounds, I believe the lowly .38 Special would make just about anyone feel undergunned. But how can we level the playing field against larger animals if the .38 Special must be used?

My wife carries a Taurus Model 85 (2" barrel) in .38, and even though I've suggested and offered a bigger gun, she still carries it when out on walks here in rural Alaska. As most know, here in Alaska our main concern in self defense is not usually against human threats, but rather the heavy, large boned four legged critters. When it comes to having to put down a moose, I don't think the .38 Special is adequate with standard offerings. There are several +P offerings from manufacturers such as Buffalo Bore and Underwood Ammo, although the ones I've seen seem to top out in the 158-160 grain weight range. I'm a fan of heavy for caliber bullets and know that there used to be loadings back in the day up to 200 grain bullets. So I set out to make a heavy load that would penetrate better than the standard factory offerings.

Rummaging around on my bullet shelf I came up with some bullets cast from the Lyman #358315 mold. Although a gas check is probably not necessary with the .38 Special, it won't hurt either. A bullet with a bit of flat nose would probably be more ideal, something along the lines of the RCBS 35-200 FNGC, but I don't have any of those left and I am not set up to cast at this time. For those who do not cast, both the Lyman bullet and the RCBS design are available from The Bull Shop custom cast bullets out

of Dell Montana (bullshop.weebly.com/bullets.html) and can be ordered to any desired hardness and diameter.

Looking through various reloading manuals, about the heaviest data I was able to come up with was for a 170 grain bullet. The Hodgden #25 manual does show loads for a 200 grain bullet using HS6, Trap100 and HP38 powders. I finally settled on using Hodgden Universal powder for the first go, since it shows potential to give good velocity with the lighter 170 grain bullets. I decided on a starting load of 3.9 grains and the first rounds were loaded up.

Because of the length of the cylinder on the small revolvers the bullet had to be seated fairly deep past the crimp groove for a total length of 1.565", which was the maximum I could get into the gun.

The first test rounds loaded with 3.9 grains showed the pressure was not too high and the load was bumped up to 4.2 grains. Here in Alaska we are dark by about 4:30 PM this time of year (mid November) so the first groups were fired at 7 yards using a head lamp to see the sights and target. I fired five shots at 7 yards at around 0° F, with a group of around 2". A couple of the holes appeared to be slightly out of round and since the cases slid right out of the chambers I upped the powder charge to 4.5 gr. The Lyman Cast Bullet Handbook shows a max load of 4.5 grains for a 170 gr bullet with 4.8 gr max as a "+P".

Early the next morning I broke out the chronograph and sent 5 rounds over it with the 4.5 gr charge and came up with a average velocity of 855 FPS. I then fired 5 rounds at 7 yards. With good light, this Taurus pistol has surprised me many times with how well it shoots and this group was no exception. Five shots from a standing position measured 0.335" center to center.

The long heavy bullet stayed point-forward during penetration, shooting through almost exactly 5" of a 2x6 board stood on edge, with a charge of 4.5 gr of powder behind it, stopping in the fourth board. The Factory Remington Golden Saber 125 gr +P loads that my wife currently carries in this gun only went through two boards, just leaving a dent in the third. The factory load did not expand at all.

After further thinking, I decided to increase the powder charge again. It is important to note that I am well past any max loads I could find in books. This is a small case and it does not take much powder to make a big difference in pressure. When working with any load near max, it is very important to know how to watch for pressure signs, both with the gun and the fired cases.

The powder charge was increased to 4.7 gr and five rounds were again fired in the dark using the headlamp. This group at 7 yards measured 0.94", which is more than acceptable for these kinds of these short barreled guns. All holes appeared to be perfectly round. At this point cases were taking a bit of pressure

to eject, although I could still do it with just my thumb, but I decided this was hot enough for the small framed gun.

With the 4.7 gr charge of Universal in PMC cases and a CCI #500 small pistol primer, my average velocity was 862 FPS, with an extreme spread of 15, if I cut out the one odd ball shot that went 896 FPS. Out of curiosity I tried this load using a CCI #550 small pistol magnum primer and did not notice any difference in velocity or accuracy.

Accuracy proved to be very good, with most groups being right around the 1 inch mark at a 7 yard “working” distance. Stretching out to 40 yards groups opened up to just shy of 8 inches, but all holes were still round. At 40 yards I was hitting about 1 foot high of my point of aim.

If I am correct in my calculations, the 210 gr bullet at 862 FPS is running around 347 ft lbs of muzzle energy. Buffalo Bore claims their 158 gr Outdoorsman load at 989 FPS from a 2” barrel. They do not have a muzzle energy listed, but I am estimating it to be around 343 ft lbs. Unfortunately this ammo was too costly for me to get my hands on a box to try side by side with the heavy bullet, but I may try to duplicate the load in the future and do some further testing on this heavy .38 Special concept.

Out of curiosity I chronographed some of the other factory .38 Special ammo I had on hand:

158 gr UMC Lead RN

THE SNUBBY CHRONICLES

654 FPS - 150 ft.lb

125 gr Federal Nyclud (old)

809 FPS - 182 ft.lb

125 gr Remington Golden Sabor +P

948 FPS - 249 ft.lb

The 210 bullet gives almost 100 ft.lb more energy than the hottest factory ammo I have on hand and with nearly double the penetration through 2x6 lumber.

I do not recommend going after a moose with a .38 Special, but if it is what's on hand and the need arises, I would feel much better with this heavy +P load. Until next time, stay safe and don't shoot yourself in the foot.

Old is New Again
by William G. Hanley



Handsome stocks and a great Kramer IWB Horsehide rig.

There was a day in modern law enforcement circles when officers felt well armed with a five or six shot revolver and a few

spare bullets on the belt. Far longer than police officers have been carrying semi-automatics, officers have been serving with distinction and wheel guns were the trusted tools of choice. When I started my law-enforcement career in the latter part of the '80s, police departments were well on their way to issuing high-capacity wonder guns that were an advancement over the restricted capacity of the revolver. The issued side-arm that had been the steadfast companion in a cops holster for multiple centuries seemed almost dead.

In the rough law enforcement town where I came up, there was a group of old time detectives that were members of what was then called the 2½” Club. No doubt this name provoked a multitude of jokes unrelated to the true reason for the club's name. The 2½” Club was a group of law enforcement officers, mostly seasoned detectives, who qualified regularly, and at an expert level, with 2½” or less barreled revolvers. From 25 yards to about 3 feet, these officers were noted for regularly shooting a score far above those with semiautomatic pistols. Many of the detectives carried J-frame five shot Chief Specials and some carried 2½” K frames. A few of them owned and revered a shiny blue piece of carbon steel with elegant lines that had the advantage of one additional round of ammunition over a J-Frame. This was the Colt Detective Special.

The Detective Special was one of the first truly successful short barreled, swing-out cylinder revolvers that was mass-

produced and a huge hit with law enforcement. Early models adorned the pockets of big city detectives and eventually some federal agents nationwide. Today, seeing one of these pistols still in service is usually relegated to the fact that it had been passed down within a law enforcement family and now carried as a backup. Some might even allow such a piece to ride around in the glove box of the pickup truck should the odd “vermin” come along that needs dispatching. Those that have them love them, and when seen by astute professionals, they are still a respected tool of the trade.

As the nation has seen an increase in the popularity of carrying concealed weapons, there’s a new crop of improved and handy revolvers. Today’s current Smith & Wesson online catalog lists no less than 50 different configurations of 2½” or less revolvers in calibers from .22 LR to .45. It appears the 2½” club is alive and well.

Many still believe the finest example in the class was the D-Frame Detective Special (DS). For those who have carried and shot them, the DS was not without its detractors. Most criticized the design of the sights as they would easily gray-out against the target. Other complaints included sharp edges, especially around the hammer, and a trigger stroke that while somewhat smooth, was stiff and long. This got me to wonder what a modern design of the Detective Special would look like. While Colt has recently

introduced the Cobra, the mind can only dream what a perfect DS would look and shoot like.

Thank God there are men like Bill Laughridge from Cylinder and Slide, and a few other talented gunsmiths who don't have to leave you in wonderland. Bill and his crew in Fremont, Nebraska know how to improve upon a design and can take a solid workhorse of a pistol and turn it into a modern personal defense instrument.

I sent Laughridge a "Dick Special" made in 1994. I was specific about what I wanted, but flexible enough to respect the skills and knowledge of Laughridge's smiths. My request was simple: improve the trigger, improve the sights and remove the razor-like factory edges found on a pistol. If possible, make it as accurate as possible. What I got back was nothing short of phenomenal.

About a week into the project, I received a call from one of Bill's gunsmiths. He explained the angle of the front sight in relation to the rear sight notch would not facilitate a proper sight picture and the degree of improvement would be nominal with anything less than the replacement of the factory sight. He suggested the removal of the existing front ramp and installing a dovetail mounted post with whatever type of insert I desired. After a short discussion, I opted for a simple white dot. I know, night sights! Fiber optic! These are all the rage and the current crop of fiber optic front sights provide a much improved sight

picture. I wanted to ensure any modification would retain some of the classic lines of the DS, so I opted for simplicity. The result was a front sight that was fast to acquire, and coupled with the lowered rear sight notch, a flash site picture is effortless. Other improvements included the Parkerizing of the top strap and barrel with a dull finish. These simple improvements assure a non-glare sight picture.

Unique to the Colt design is a “bank-vault” lockup in double action. In other words, the cylinder turns into the frame (clockwise) before blastoff. The stroke of the trigger is accomplished by two legs of the mainspring compressing after being tuned. Cylinder and Slide is one of the few remaining shops that understand this trigger action and the timing/lockup. They re-timed and adjusted the action, removing the often-found stacking. A glossy, consistent trigger pull is a must. What started as a 13-14 lb DA pull returned as a decisive 10 lb trigger. It was void of any irregular areas in the take-up and stacking was all but gone. The noticeable differences in the trigger stroke made holding the white dot front sight straightforward. “Front sight, stroke, bang!” I’ve felt lighter triggers, but this being a “duty gun”, I’m pleased with the feedback received during the press. Bill and his crew took the right angles off of the trigger edges and polished its face. They have taken what was an average factory trigger and produced a superb configuration that best facilitates true double action defensive pistol work.



Seamless dovetail front sight and nice charging hole chamfers.

The only other significant improvement to accuracy for this revolver was the barrel crown re-cut to 11 degrees. Many would tell you that such a modification is not necessary for the distances a belly gun would be employed. Having investigated several shootings in my 25+ years in law enforcement, I have learned one thing -- you seldom get a chance to pick the fight. If you could, you would have much more than a handgun. Should you want to make an “x-ring” shot, why not have a pistol that will hold such a group? The accompanying photographs are proof positive that this modification is worth the effort.

With all sharp edges removed from the pistol, and the charging holes chamfered for easy reloads, what was once a right angled, sharp instrument has become a comfortable work of beauty.

Finishing out the pistol is a pair of Walnut Spegel Boot Grips. None better from the master himself, Craig Spegel (a review of Craig’s work can be found on p. 79). Besides, blue steel and gun leather look all the better with fine wood stocks.



Left: Working new front sight with 6 shots rapid at 7 yards. Stringing a bit up and right. Middle: 12 rounds at 10 yards slow. Looking to see POI and accuracy. Right: Checking POI at 3 yards. All DAO. "Like butter."

The proof of the work is found at the range. Bill's crew did not disappoint as demonstrated with 148 gr WC and 158 gr (FBI load). This little Colt is a mustang in the accuracy department and, were my eyes better than what they are, you would see nobler than this.

I wasn't old enough at the time to be a member of the 2½" Club. Today I look back on those men and understand that we owe a debt of gratitude to them that we may never be able to repay. Many of them have passed on, some from cancer, others just from time. None of them ever passed because of being outgunned.

My Favorite Snub

by Tom Givens



S&W Model 12 with bobbed hammer and PGS Hideout stocks.

I own a number of revolvers, including hunting guns, service revolvers in 4", 5", and 6" barrel lengths and several snubs. My

favorite is a well worn Model 12 Airweight K frame .38 Special with a few personal touches. This, to me, is the ultimate snub.

Right after World War II, the US military was briefly interested in lighter weight handguns. This led Colt to come up with the Lightweight Commander, an aluminum framed, slightly more compact version of the Government Model. This gun, along with several others, were submitted for trials, but the Army decided that 3.5 million 1911s in inventory made a handgun switch undesirable. Colt went commercial with the gun, and it is still in production today.

As part of this project, Colt introduced the Cobra in 1950. This was an aluminum framed version of the old faithful Detective Special, and it immediately became a commercial success. The Air Force, looking for ever lighter equipment for crews of the newfangled jet aircraft, asked for a super lightweight revolver. Colt responded with the “Aircrewman” revolver, essentially a Cobra with an aluminum cylinder, dropping the gun’s weight to a mere 11 ounces. Smith & Wesson countered with an all aluminum version of the M&P. Both the Colt and the S&W were scrapped, due to problems with the aluminum cylinders. Even with very low powered ammo, the aluminum cylinders were subject to cracking and failure, so most of these guns were recalled and destroyed.

Smith and Wesson decided to offer the gun with an aluminum frame but steel cylinder and barrel to the public in

My Favorite Snub

1954, and it instantly became a hit with detectives and others who wanted a lighter weight revolver that still held six shots and had a grip frame large enough to get a proper grip. The new gun was called the Military & Police Airweight. In 1957, the model numbering system came on board, and the revolver was designated the Model 12.



S&W Model 12 with 4" barrel.

The Model 12 has been offered in several variations, including 2" and 4" barrels, and either round butt or square butt configuration. I own several and I really like them. One of my favorites is a 4" barrel, round butt model. The action has been slicked up, and a red ramp front sight insert has been installed. There is also a bright horizontal line beneath the red ramp insert,

THE SNUBBY CHRONICLES

for longer range. This gun sports an old Pachmayr grip adaptor and factory stocks, and is a great carry gun.



S&W Model 12 with 2" barrel and bobbed hammer.

My real favorite, though, is a slightly customized 2" round butt specimen. It sports Grashorn American elk antler stocks and a Tyler grip adaptor. The action has been slicked up and converted to double-action only. The chamber mouths are slightly chamfered, to ease reloading, and the cylinder latch has been replaced with one that clears speedloaders. At 19 ounces, this little gem weighs less than a steel frame Chief's Special, but holds 6 shots and has sights I can see. It actually shoots like a service revolver, but with a very compact, lightweight, handy

sidearm. Mine shoots Federal Gold Match wadcutters extremely well, right to the sights, so that is what I feed it.

The Model 12 has gone through some evolution during its long production history. A couple of the changes were very beneficial, so if you find a later production sample you'll have the very best in this type of revolver. In 1962, the front sight was changed from the old, narrow 1/10th inch width to 1/8th inch, which made it much more visible. Early Model 12's have a slightly narrower grip frame than other K frame guns, so standard stocks won't fit. In 1984, the grip frame was changed to match all other K frames, making a much wider selection of stock designs available. The photos show several stock design options for the later model guns.

Good, solid Model 12s can be found on the used market with just a little effort. I think you'll find obtaining one worth the time.

Connect with Tom Givens on his website at

www.rangemaster.com

Shooting the S&W Model 12 .38 Special by Steve Collins

I picked up my Smith & Wesson Model 12 .38 Special in 1999 after reading an article on a customized one that looked really cool. I knew I wanted to have one made up for me! Like most such plans, it fell by the wayside in the face of family, work and finances. I kept it around though, because I liked the way it handled, and I shot it a lot. I qualified for my Kentucky CCW license with it, and even attended an Advanced Defensive Handgun course with John Farnam of Defense Training, International, being the only revolver shooter in the class.



The 642 at the bottom has smaller grip, smaller sights and holds one less round than the model 12 at top. Your concealed carry needs will dictate your choices.

The 2" medium frame guns seem to have fallen from favor in the tidal wave of small, featherweight revolvers and compact semi-autos that are the rage for concealed carry these days. The Model 12, and other guns like it, offers some advantages over the lightweight pocket guns.

Mine is a blued 2” model, round butt. It weighs 19 ounces unloaded. In contrast, my J-frame Model 642 Airweight .38 Special with its Barami Hip Grip weighs 15 ounces, but comes with a smaller grip, sights that are harder to see and one less round. The Model 12 came with the original skinny grips and I tried several different grips on it, until I finally settled on just adding a Tyler T-Grip adaptor to it. Gee, can we say ‘simple?’

The trigger is narrow and serrated, which goes against the current thought that revolver triggers ‘must be smooth and rounded for shooting comfort.’ Nope, I like the serrations; I like knowing my finger isn’t going to move or slide around, and the serrations naturally fall into the first joint of my trigger finger. Coincidentally, I have the same kind of trigger on my Model 19 .357 Magnum as well. The fixed rear sight notch and serrated front sight ramp are the same ones used on the full size Model 10 heavy barrel service revolver, so there’s no surprise there.



Small rear sight notch on 642, bigger notch on Model 12.

Since they aren't made anymore, and I don't think I can replace the frame anytime soon, I refrain from shooting any +P loadings through it. I have in the past, but with the introduction of good standard pressure defense loads designed expressly for

the short barreled revolvers, I see no reason to beat up the gun. My reloads for practice and training are standard pressure, being a 158 gr lead bullet and 4 grains of Winchester 231. Both loads were easy to shoot out of the short barreled K-frame, and were more than accurate enough for what it's going to be used for.

In shooting for this article, I stretched things out to 15 yards to see what the full framed gun would do. Yes, the short barrel can make things difficult at times, but it was a lot easier than shooting a J-frame at that distance, and the K-frame sized grip gave me more leverage for shooting double action, something lacking in the smaller guns. Besides, not all self defense shootings are 'up close and personal,' and knowing my gun is going to be accurate at a greater distance is a comfort to me.

It served as my concealed carry gun for a while, and I toted it around in an old Bianchi 3S Pistol Pocket IWB holster. Even in the heat of a hot Alabama summer, the finish held up fine. I shot it every week, and the only sign is the ring around the cylinder. If the hammer were bobbed off, it might make a pretty good pocket gun. It may sound crazy, but no less an authority than Elmer Keith thought enough of the snubby K-frame to talk about it as a pocket gun in his book *Sixguns* back in 1955. In those days though, men's fashions were a bit different, pants were a bit roomier and coats were almost always worn. Elmer figured that if you were going to use a holster, you could just as easily carry a bigger gun and use this one as backup.



The Federal Nyclad and Hornady Critical Defense are excellent defensive ammo for the alloy guns. Recoil with both is minimal and both loads shot well, if you can hold the gun straight (obviously this day, I didn't!)



Bianchi 3S Pistol Pocket is one of the better off the shelf inside the waistband holsters.

To my way of thinking, if you are a fan of the K-frame guns, such as the Model 10, Model 15, Model 19, Model 66, etc. and use one on a regular basis, then having one of these as a concealed carry gun makes a lot of sense. Most folks are more apt to carry the shorter, lighter gun anyway.

Along those same lines, the speedloader for the six shot K-frames will also work with the Colt D-frame revolvers, such as the Detective Special, Cobra and Agent. This was a hot setup when police officers still mainly carried revolvers, as one could use the same loader and ammo in the primary or backup gun. It is still a viable technique today, especially with the re-introduction of the Colt snubby revolvers.

The concept of a medium frame, short barreled, lightweight revolver has been revitalized by a resurgence of popularity in them fueled by a new generation of snubnose revolver shooters. The Model 12 is an outstanding revolver, and they are still available on the used market, too. Check one out, and I think you'll find it useful.

Steve Collins is a firearms instructor and writer based in SW MO. He is a US Army veteran, a former member of the US Army Marksmanship Unit, and a Master Class IDPA competitor.

Tactical Reloads

by Mike Pipes

A little history, I've been carrying J-frames daily for 25 years. Originally on my ankles as BUGs for a 1911 in .45 ACP (drank the Cooper Kool-Aid real early). Since 2011 I carry Snubby revolvers as primaries and BUGS.

At the HiTS revolver round up in 2015 I asked about tactical reloads for the rotating gun and no one had a plan that I liked so that was the beginning of the road that lead to the O ring retainer. We use to hold a single stack mag with a little finger while manipulating the slide so why not a speed strip?



Speed strip on an O-ring retainer.

Any speed strip works. I use a standard hole punch (leather hole punch is just as good) to punch a hole in the last spot for a cartridge by the tab. Thread any size metal key ring thru punched hole. The keyring needs to clear the tab, 1.25-1.50" is just right. A 1.50" O ring , from any automotive store, is threaded through key ring. Load the speed strip with your favorite rounded profile projectiles and you're ready to go.

I carry one of these on my belt at 3:30 in an IHL speed loader wallet from Dillion. I also carry one in each rear pocket oriented so that my little or ring finger can find the rubber O ring. A full reload is possible or if tac loading I can pluck any empties out , load then let the strip dangle for future reloading. It flips back into my hand with a flick of the wrist.



Use of the speed strip and O ring.

The O ring retainer works on any quantity speed strip. I like 8 rounders so that I have 7 rounds to load with. Clint Smith said that round might be the one that stops the fight.

CYA Mike

The Bryce Drill

by Frank Groth

Target: 11x17 paper, folded at the bottom of the target's support hand and with the face placed at about belt height of the shooter to simulate a bad guy lying in a bed on his stomach. Other photo realistic targets can be used as an alternative.

Distance: Two yards.

Ammunition: Five rounds.

Firearm: Revolver, capacity of five or more, barrel length four inches or less.

THE SNUBBY CHRONICLES

Scoring: Rounds in the T zone are 2 points, rounds in the head area outside the T are 1 point, rounds elsewhere on the visible target are zero. Maximum of ten points possible, the goal is to land at least four shots in the head area of the target.

Par: None, record time and points, strive for continuous improvement in both speed and accuracy. Expert and better shooters will likely perform this in three seconds or less.

Props and equipment: If possible, simulate a doorway using one or two vertical barricades. Shot timer or a coach with a stopwatch of any type.

Learning Objective: This is a high level skills test for both speed and accuracy. It emphasizes establishing a proper grip, a smooth, repeatable draw stroke, front sight focus and trigger control at speed.

Course of Fire:

Shooter will start on one side or the other of the simulated doorway, shooter's choice.

Stand facing 45 degrees away from target.

The Bryce Drill

When safe to do so, load to capacity and safely holster.

On command, or start signal, step forward into the doorway and turn to face target.

When threat is perceived, draw and fire five shots to target head using strong hand only.

Do not draw until facing the target.

Unload, show clear, safely reholster.

Score target, record time.

Background:

This drill is named for the legendary law enforcement pistol fighter Delf A. “Jelly” Bryce. He participated in at least 19 different lethal force encounters across his career with the Oklahoma City PD and, later, the FBI, surviving them all.

Many respected instructors of modern pistol craft recommend, once you have established consistent accuracy, to periodically run drills as fast as you can without losing accuracy, pushing faster and faster until accuracy suffers to determine just how fast you can really go and work on continuous improvement. There are any number of drills designed to do this with the Bill Drill, the FAST drill, the IDPA 5x5 qualifier, or Ernest Langdon’s Close 9 all being examples. There are many others.

Jelly Bryce was, arguably, the fastest man from concealment who ever lived, and he made his living in snappy business suits with large framed Smith & Wesson revolvers carried in a belt holster, strong side. This drill is based on one of his fights which took place on July 18, 1934 in a flophouse hotel on Main Street in Oklahoma City. Bryce and two partners went to the hotel looking for Harvey Pugh, then on bail after murdering a police officer and who had been an associate of the recently deceased Clyde Barrow. The three officers, along with the desk clerk, went to the room of the hotel's owner, a Mrs. Bowen, to talk to her about Pugh and perhaps some of his associates.

When the clerk knocked and then opened the door to the shabby 10x10 room, she stepped back in fright. Bryce, who was alongside her, blocked the door open with his foot and stepped into the doorway to find himself staring down the muzzles of a pair of pistols, held by a man lying on his stomach across the bed. Mrs. Bowen was also sitting on the bed. Before the bad guy, later identified as Ray O'Donnell a gangster associate of Harvey Pugh, could fire a shot, Bryce drew from concealment and fired five shots from his S&W .44 Hand Ejector. Bryce fired so fast that a uniformed officer they had stationed in the lobby testified that he heard only one report. O'Donnell caught four of the five shots fired in his face, some accounts reported the fifth shot found the

The Bryce Drill

criminals body, others reported a miss. It didn't matter to O'Donnell as he was dead. It all happened so fast the other two detectives never got their guns out before it was over.

Notes:

Setting up a prop doorway so that the shooter cannot see the target ahead of time and using photo realistic targets this drill can also be used to test discretionary decision making; i.e. a student / shooter who comes into the "room" and sees an unarmed target should not draw and fire.

The drill can be fired at the end of a match for bragging rights, fired repeatedly to hone speed, or fired cold as a gut check skills assessment.



SG²



Snub Gun Study Group

www.snubgunstudygroup.com