

ISSUE #12  
OCT 2024

# THE DETECTIVE GATZETTE



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## A Better Mousetrap

By Michael O. Brady

Some statisticians argue that the lawfully armed private citizen minding his or her own business is unlikely to need to reload even a five-shot belly gun during the average self-defense scenario. Of course, being the loser of that unfortunate lottery could easily result in dire consequences, so it seems prudent to pack along some spare ammo. These days the two most common methods to refill our wheel guns are speed loaders or speed strip loaders. Many of us prefer using a strip loader for everyday carry due to their reduced bulk and flat profile. There is another advantage; loading strips are not impeded by any factory or aftermarket grip shapes, unlike many speed loaders.

In October of 2023, Alan Miller, proprietor of AHolster, asked for volunteers to field test some new “speed strip” loader prototypes. I at once raised my hand and promptly received several five-socket loaders to try. I tested them in the weeks preceding the 2023 Pat Rogers Revolver Roundup and then brought them along to the three day shoot.

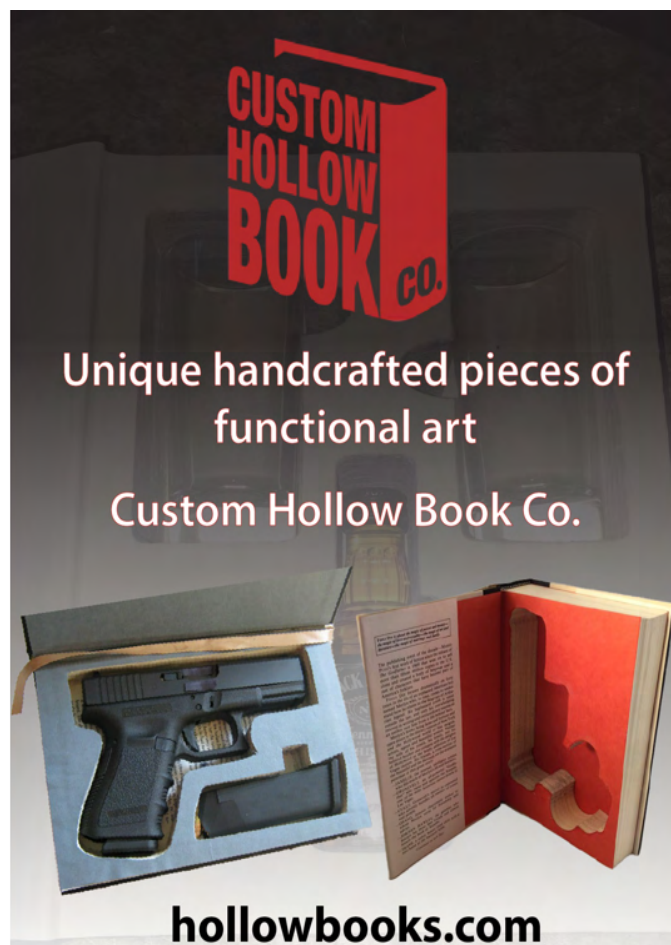
Alan’s strips are different from others primarily in their method of manufacture. Rather than being molded they are 3D printed using TPU-95a, a thermoplastic polyurethane filament. The biggest improvement is a much thicker handling tab; I “double-dog-dare you” to tear one. The AHolster loaders are a little stiffer to load but then hold the cartridges very firmly. Yet they easily release cartridges into the cylinder chambers, whether one or two at a time. Our editor, Michael de Bethencourt, reports that “these new strips are less floppy than Speed Strips in hot weather and less inflexible than the Quick Strip in cold weather.” My climate is moderate enough not to stress the temperature tolerance of any of my loaders; that and I carry my loading strips in a trouser pocket, so they rarely get hotter or cooler than I do.

As an old school user of Bianchi Speed Strips and a satisfied user of Zeta6 J-Strips, I had come to prefer the Tuff Products 8-round Quickstrips, as I could load them 2-0-2-0-2 for a fumble free recharge. Happily, I read a recent article curated by respected trainer Greg Ellifritz who noted the AHolster Speed Strips had gone into production and were now offered in five, six, and eight-shot versions for 38 Special/357 Magnum cartridges. I placed an order for the largest strip and waited but a short time for them to arrive. They perform as expected, holding the cartridges firmly while serving them up easily. I’ve

yet to lose a single cartridge in a pocket or even when dropped to the ground.

So, how does one keep a strip loader handy? For many years I relied on the “drop it in a convenient pocket” solution. The longer eight-socket loaders can tax the limits of some trouser pockets and call for a different solution. I like having my strip loader oriented consistently when I reach for it, so I’ve taken to carrying mine in a pocket pouch from Simply Rugged, who also makes strip loader pouches for both horizontal and vertical belt carry.

The Aholster Speed Strip Loader is currently offered at a promotional “three for the price of two” price of \$8.97 + \$4.00 flat rate shipping. Fulfillment is quick. Satisfaction is high. Give this new mousetrap a try.



# A Tribute to Ed Lovette

By Michael de Bethencourt



As I write this, two weeks earlier on Sunday, October 21, 2024, we lost Ed Lovette. To his wife he was a husband. To his three daughters he was a father, and to his country he was a patriot. To everyone at Snub Noir, he was our founder emeritus, our mentor, and, most importantly, our friend. Many years ago, at Andy Stanford's Snubby Summit, I first met Ed. His book *The Snubby Book* had been out for a while. I read it in a single sitting and was thrilled to finally have a chance to meet the man himself. I also had an uncountable number of questions about running the snub, and an equal number of questions on so much of the material that he shared in his bimonthly "Combat Handguns" column. As soon as I caught up to him at the conference, he endured all my questions with amazing grace. He had some fascinating insights into the material I was asking about, and an equal number of sly stories on the incidents that prompted his conclusions. From that weekend until his passing, which measured into decades, Ed suffered my nearly weekly phone calls and my multiple weekly e-mails. He always sounded happy to take my calls, and never seemed to be put out. In every phone call, he would ask about my wife, "Miss Heather" as he called her, and he and I would share a moment speaking of his wife, who he was fiercely in love with and who had passed a number of years earlier. On very rare occasion I would try, every so slyly, to get

him to drift over to some of the insights that he came to while he did work for the US Government. No matter how slowly I tried to work him on to the topic he always gently turn the conversation in a direction so that he could address my inquiry without ever crossing a line. Notably, there was always an amused chuckle in his voice whenever I tried to peek under the tent. Ed was an encyclopedia of revolver material and firearms history. Whenever I had trouble locating some obscenely esoteric bit of revolver history or archaic technical element and all my usual resources failed me I would turn to Ed. With the patience of a great mentor he would listen to my question and then, more often than not, supply me with the information I was looking for. But not always. Sometimes he would listen to my question, roll it around in his head for a second or two, and, having worked out on his own what was the question behind my question, he'd give me an entirely different piece of information than that which I had asked for, while concurrently solving the root of the problem I was actually trying to deal with. He would pull this little wizard's trick many times before I had worked out for myself that, while I was groping among the trees, he was generally offering me a path through the woods. We all have, I hope, a great friend with whom we share common interests and with whom we can argue fiercely over some small element yet never lose sight that the faux dis-

agreement was part and parcel of the great friendship. I was lucky enough to share that dynamic with Ed. Though I did come to suspect a pattern in some of his positions. If I suggested that the airweight J-frame was the near ideal embodiment of the pocket snub, he'd give me some thoroughly logical argument for the Ruger LCR. If I argued for the S&W m12 K-frame as the apex belly snub, he'd give me some guff in favor of the Colt Agent. If I proposed some new project using the SP 101 as a starting point, he'd grind my gears with some irritating point-by-counterpoint argument in favor of the Kimber. And, God help me, if I ever opened the topic of the spare ammo carry value of the flexible loading strip over his unassailable position on the total dominance of the speed loader. All of which, by the way - every one of these contrarian positions - he was in error on. It took me forever to work out he was (generally) always playing with me, like a gunowner with a laser on blue gun having fun letting the house kitten run wild in circles after that never to be reached red dot. Except on the subject of speed loaders over loading strips. There must have been some incident in the course of his career that led him to know with metaphysical certainty that the presence of a speed loader would have and/or did in fact save the day, where the use of a flexible strip would have or did in fact fail. I have long suspected that the incident also must have involved an event that came to pass while Ed was in the service of the country, given his totally uncharacteristic intractability on speaking of the backstory. And on this topic I always respected his recalcitrance. On the subject of research, Ed always encouraged me to put more time into my revolver research and supported all our snub revolver association efforts. When Paladin Press closed up shop and, book by book, the supply of *The Snubby Book* dried up, he was very receptive to letting us re-print and update the material. But with a firm and unequivocal insistence that he would accept nothing in the way of payment nor royalties. He was emphatic that anything we might see for the new copies was to be used exclusively for the support and promotion of our snub shooter association efforts. At one time an opportunity came to him to work with another fellow interested in handling the future printing of his book but he declined the offer. This was notable because I only found out about his declining the offer from a third party. Ed's sense of commitment to his word extended so completely that he didn't think it worth noting to me that someone reached out to him, and he reflexively stuck to his word and our joint effort without drawing attention to it. Some years ago, Ed decided that he would no longer conduct his two day snub training

program. He put out the word this program would be his last. I jumped at the opportunity to attend within minutes of my hearing of the program. Horrifyingly, the airline I was flying to attend the program canceled the original flight schedule for the day. Worse, they only notified the passengers hours before the flight, where was no way to get a flight out in time and I was going to miss the first day. I arrived the next day torn between heartache over missing the first day and joy over having not missed the second. Several hours into the second day Ed unceremoniously asked if I speak on some snub material while he attended to some small issue or other. I tried explaining that I brought nothing and had planned nothing and didn't want to offer any information that might run counter to the points he had and/or would be making. With his perpetual mischievous grin and the twinkle in his eye, he patted my shoulder and left me and his students to whatever was going to transpire. I remember little of the material I offered but no one seemed overly disappointed. When I asked him if he was worried that I could have disappointed his students, nearly all who were also personal friends of his, Ed suggested later that evening that he had faith in my ability to hold my own. There is nothing as ego inflating like knowing your mentor trusts in your abilities while he leaves you in the pool he himself filled with sharks ... and then walks away with confidence. Over the many years that followed I came to love Ed more and more. Even the tiny technical point on snub handling that we could never manage to see eye-to-eye on (after all, arguing over snub techniques is the handgun enthusiast's version of debating how many angels can dance on the head of a pin) it was always great, good-natured and an enormous amount of fun. Then, about three weeks ago, Ed called me to tell me he was ill. There were some options to deal with the situation, and I expected that it would all work out. Then a week went by and I could not reach him. Worry crept into my heart. A few days later his daughter reached out to me to tell me her dad had passed. I cried like an infant. I noted to his daughter that Ed had shared with me that he was ill, but he never let on how ill he was or how little time there might be remaining. She suggested to me that he must have thought a great deal of me as he had not shared any of that information with many of the folks around him. Ed Lovette lived, loved and passed on his own terms with an unshakable set of standards and values. I remain eternally grateful that he chose to let me be a tiny part of both that life and his life.



# Grips from Hamre Forge

By Michael Boyle

An advantage revolvers hold over pistols is the fact that if you don't like the way your hand connects to the gun, you can change the grips and realize an improvement. Since coming on the scene in the late 19th Century, the factory grips on double action revolvers have proven less than satisfactory and this is particularly true with snubbies. During rapid fire the grips of a Smith & Wesson J-frame torque in the hand and make it very difficult to maintain a strong purchase. I can only guess that the panels found on classic Colt snubs must have been designed for some alien race because they are wide on the bottom and thin up top, opposite the human hand.

Fortunately salvation is only a screwdriver away and a number of companies offer aftermarket grips that in many cases are superior to factory issue. These grips can be made of wood, rubber and synthetic materials and can be quickly retrofitted to your pet revolver. In many cases recoil control, concealability and user comfort are greatly improved.

Grips made of wood such as walnut and rosewood can certainly be pretty and my modest battery includes a number of revolvers so equipped. Some are indeed very functional and others less so. Rubber grips remain very popular and back in the day, my service revolver was outfitted with a set of Pachmayr Grippers. Rubber grips are less likely than wood to shift in the hand during rapid fire and also diminish felt recoil transmitted to the hand. My .41 Magnum Mountain Revolver wears a set of rubber grips which tames recoil when firing stout loads and this makes for a far more pleasurable shooting experience than with original wood grips. On the downside, light clothing tends to cling to rubber grips which could create an issue with a gun worn on the waistband under an untucked shirt.

Recently I had the opportunity to check out a pair of grips from a relatively new company that have much to offer users of snub revolvers. Hamre Forge, a family owned outfit based in Maine, started with a clean sheet of paper and has come with a product that may be just the ticket for those who favor snub revolvers for discreet carry.

First up for consideration is the Hamre Hook. These grips are thin, lightweight, made of carbon fiber reinforced nylon and natural texturing keeps them from shifting in the hand. A stainless steel screw is used to affix the grips to the grip frame. The right side panel features a

hook extension at the top which allows user to secure the gun to the top of the waistband without using a holster.

I affixed the Hamre Hook grips to my much abused S&W Bodyguard; it worked as intended. Truth be told, my arms are on backwards and this left hand shooter was able to meet with a degree of success by placing the gun behind the strong side hip and using a "twist" draw to get the gun into action. Due to the placement of the cylinder latch, it is impossible to make left hand variant as the hook would block the cylinder release. Hamre Forge also markets a full set with a bonus hookless right panel for conventional holster carry so you can switch back and forth.

A Kimber K6s has become a favorite snub in recent years and Hamre Forge Boot Grip has proven to be a perfect mate. The same hard wearing material as the Hamre Hook is used in its construction and I have come to appreciate the no slip hand contact in rapid fire drills. It also fills in the critical space between the front strap of the grip and trigger guard which aids in rapid DA fire. Unlike the wood grips I had on it previously, speedloader clearance with Safariland, HKS and 5 Star Speedloaders was very good. Additionally, my clothing did not hang up on the grips of the gun during my daily routine.

Hamre Hook should enjoy a solid future in a crowded field of aftermarket grip manufacturers and models are available for a number of other popular snub revolvers. For further information on the line, go to [www.hamreforge.com](http://www.hamreforge.com).



*The Hamre Forge Boot Grip aids in concealment and offers improved control in rapid fire.*





The Hamre Forge Hook secures the revolver to the waistband without a holster

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## Inside The Suicide Special Revolver



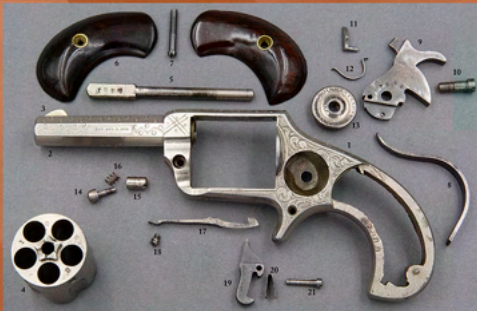
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# There's a New Revolver in Town

By Pepe Castillo

There's a new revolver in town, and it's an impressive one. I first heard about this new collaboration between Lipsey's of Baton Rouge and Smith and Wesson as I was listening to a Patreon episode of American Fighting Revolver. If you aren't familiar with Lipsey's, they are a major player in the distribution market, and are famous for collaborating with firearm manufacturers to make limited runs of special edition firearms. Perhaps it's a barrel length or finish that the factory didn't offer, or a snub nose with a brass bead front sight and a Novak rear, and so on. They don't sell directly, but you can go to their web page and find a plethora of specialty arrangements that you can have your LGS (local gun store) order for you. Just be sure to wipe the drool off your keyboard before you reach for the phone or head out the door. Pro tip: Check out all your LGSs to find out who does a lot of business with Lipsey's. That's the retailer Lipsey's will support first when the whole country is trying to get a new, limited edition model.

Their plan was to develop the ultimate j-frame revolver for concealed carry, with primary inputs of better grips, better sights, better trigger, and enhanced durability and longevity. At Shot Show 2024 they displayed four revolvers in 2 calibers and 2 finishes: .38 Special and .32 H&R Magnum; matte black and matte stainless. They named it the Ultimate Carry, and rather than a dash number the letters "UC" follow 442/642 or 432/632 on the frame.

I told my LGS (Bob's Gun Shop in Norfolk, VA) my preferences as to finish (black) and caliber (.32 H&R Mag), but said I would take whatever showed up first and then backfill with the other. When Neal called and said Lipsey's was sending a .38 and it would be here by the end of the week, I had a hard time sleeping. It took through the weekend, but it finally came.

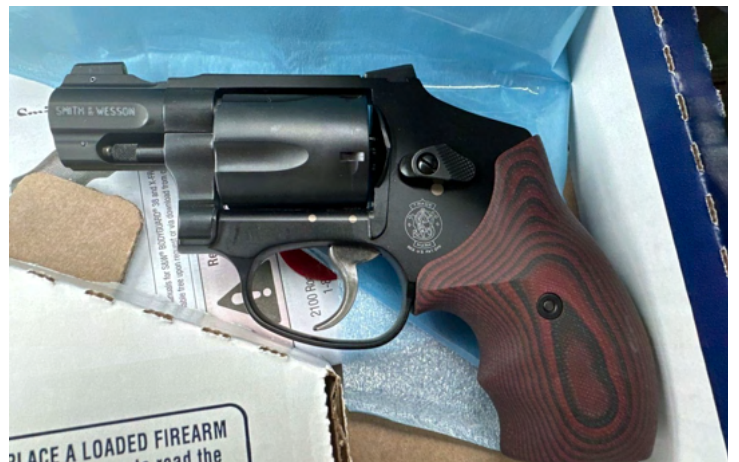
First impressions. The revolver weighs an even 16 ounces and the much touted VZ grips look good and feel great. VZ's wine colored G-10 grips and the black frame look really great together. The matte stainless looks pretty good too, with black accents and black and gray grips. A lot of time was spent developing these "high horn" grips and they have received great reviews. The barrel is sleeved rather than the traditional single piece, and the front of the cylinder is lightly beveled to aid in reholstering.

Fit and finish are very well done. The pull is smooth and at less than 9 pounds 4 ounces, it is well under the normal heavy pull for which j-frames are infamous. Some

redesign work was done on the internals to achieve this, and I would not be surprised to see Smith carry it over into other j-frames as a new dash model. Titanium pins are visible as you look at the side of the frame, and they are part of the enhanced reliability and longevity package. The chambers are chamfered only slightly, but it's enough to ease loading. Surprisingly the cylinder is not cut for moon clips. I'm sure that was discussed during the design, and cost was the reason it wasn't done. Speaking of cost, MSRP is \$750 and retail is showing up at \$710. I will probably seek out a place to have my cylinder machined for moonclips, because they will help ensure a complete ejection of all the empty cases simultaneously despite the very short ejector rod.

Sights are easy to see. Big green XS up front and a Novak in the back. The Novak is drift adjustable, and the Big Dot is pinned in place. So they are changeable if one felt the need, though I have a hard time imagining what would work better. The Big Dot just hangs in the u-notch perfectly.

I was excited to get to the range with my shooting partner Jim, a fellow Coast Guard Distinguished Pistol Shot. I've been working to cure his one major flaw — he doesn't much care for revolvers. This was going to be another opportunity to change his thinking. So I demonstrated. I loaded 5 DoubleTap 148 grain wadcutters and pulled the smooth and light trigger. Misery ensued. Pain racked my hand. I gripped harder and tried again. I gently laid the gun down with exaggerated carefulness, turned around and walked it off. These beautiful grips are perfectly designed to hit a nerve at the base of my thumb and it was like hitting my thumb with an 8 pound sledgehammer!



*Critical Defense Lite 90 gr*





*MagnaTech 148 gr WC*

By way of explanation, I have some nerve damage in my dominant hand and I have an unfortunate tendency to grow extra nerves — mostly where they are not generally helpful. So lightweight j-frames in serious social calibers are unpleasant, but are usually shootable for a few cupfuls.

So I picked up my Colt Light Weight Commander and loaded up 230 grain ball to do some shooting and calm my hand down. After 25 rounds or so, I decided to try the UC again and pulled out a box of Winchester Defender +P 135 grain pills. Loading up, I took a deep breath and touched the first one off. I haven't felt pain like that since my wife grabbed my fingers while they were awkwardly crossed, and squeezed with her piano playing-strong hands during the birth of our first child! (I was smarter for child number two...)

Okay, my first range day with the Ultimate Carry turned out to be 3 rounds. I didn't even bother to see where they hit. So, key point: not everyone's hands are the same and hundreds of people have shot these grips and loved them. You probably will too. They just don't work for me. If they don't work for you, don't ditch the gun — just pull out a T-15 driver and get different grips. Any j-frame round butt grips will fit.

Back home I looked at my grip collection for possible replacements. The S&W Diamondback Pro is great at dampening recoil in small guns, and it covers the back strap so it gives a decent length of pull to the trigger. But it's a big grip and seemed out of place on a gun I feel should be able to be pocket carried. The Pachmayr Compac is a good grip I have on couple of my j-frames, but it extends below the grip frame and requires fairly big pockets as well. Stock wood j-frame grips with a grip adapter would do well size-wise, and I think I have a pair of stag grips somewhere that would look great, but on or from a supported position — but this seemed to me to be a most likely scenario for this revolver.

Critical Defense 110 gr	0.46"
Critical Defense +P 110 gr	1.23"
Gold Dot LE +P 125 gr	1.27"
DoubleTap 158 gr WC	1.46"
Critical Defense Lite 90 gr	1.82"
MagnaTech 148 gr WC	1.96"
Winchester Defender +P 135 gr	2.08"
Gold Dot Short Barrel +P 135 gr	2.26"

This is a light gun and not one I personally would choose to put a lot of rounds through in one sitting. But with the grip change, I managed to shoot 50 rounds of standard and +P without the nerves at the base of my thumb protesting too much. Ok, they did tell me that the one cylinder of Winchester Defender +P 135 grain was enough!

Sooo, should you get one? Um....heck yeah! If you get the 32 Mag, call me to see if mine has arrived yet and we'll do a deal if I'm still waiting. That's a 6-round baby, and the ballistics on the round look pretty good. .32 caliber seems to be making a resurgence. Charter Arms made a 7-shot (The Professional) five or so years ago, and with Smith making one now, I think the .32 will be cemented in place as a modern caliber once again.

One caution. Many pocket holsters bury the gun deep into the concealment material. The back of the Novak rear sight has sharp corners and edges and can dig into the material, slowing your draw and accelerating wear on the holster. Ditto for that big, gorgeous, green front sight. That's not a dig on the gun, just part of knowing your firearm and your supporting equipment. So get a sight channel in your pocket holster.

Grade: A+. The original run was 4,000 guns, but I'll bet they make more. a 16 oz revolver, I wanted something that could absorb some of the recoil. I kept looking.

Aha! My 36 no dash was sporting Houge Bantams — rubber grips that expose the back strap and bottom of the grip, and then fill in behind the trigger guard with a couple of finger grooves. And they are a "high horn" design which gives good width for recoil control at the top of the grip frame — but with somewhat pliant rubber instead of hard G-10. Fortunately I had a second Bantam grip hanging around waiting to be paired up with a sweet ride, and so it was done.

Next week, back to the range. The gun was lighter now at 14.2 oz instead of 16 and every ounce counts when you get down into those numbers. DoubleTap 148 grain wadcutters got the nod to start off again, and joy, joy, joy!

*Continued on pg 15*

# Fallen Chief Credited for Helping Slow ‘Most Wanted’ Man

By Jefferson Weaver

Fair Bluff Police Chief Bradd Cribbs was a man of his time, rough and tumble though it was.

His North Carolina town was growing in 1923; Fair Bluff was like many other small Southern communities. It was a boom time for the economy, as U.S. agriculture products were in high demand at home and overseas. The timber industry was also on a slow but steady rise, with lumber, shingles and cabinet wood replacing the naval stores of the previous century.

The county’s first “modern” tobacco market was built in Fair Bluff in 1896, bringing with it a bounding economy that was exploding in the years immediately after World War I.

Farmers, loggers, speculators and shysters were drawn to the railroad towns like Fair Bluff and Cerro Gordo. Thanks to the Volstead Act and Prohibition, bootleggers made sure there was a ready supply of illicit whiskey, regardless of the best efforts of local and federal law enforcement. During the times the markets were open, or the timber buyers paid their men out, more than one timberbeast or farmhand was willing to shell out a few dollars for a quart of locally-brewed moonshine or a bottle of liquor smuggled down via the railroad.

Enter Brad Cribbs.

Chief Cribbs became well-known for his ability to handle things on his own. Records aren’t entirely clear as to whether Cribbs was the only officer in Fair Bluff at the time (it seems unlikely) but he had the ability to draft civilians to help enforce the law. County constables and sheriff’s deputies were also available to help, but the nearest backup at the time was Cerro Gordo’s part-time police force. There were no radios, and few telephones.

Cribbs was recognized in the Wilmington Star and other newspapers as not tolerating “lawlessness and mischief” in his town. He was widely respected as a tough, no nonsense but fair chief who loved his town and respected the law. Until Hurricane Matthew destroyed records at a store in Fair Bluff, visitors could see the account book where Cribbs purchased his .32-20 Colt revolver when he was hired as police chief. The town purchased the ammunition.

So when Chief Cribbs discovered a robbery in progress at a store downtown on a Thursday night in January 1923, he didn’t hesitate to head that way.

Gunfight on Main Street

Cribbs had no way of knowing he was facing the “notorious” Robert Williams, also known as “Bob.”

In language that would never be allowed in the modern media, Williams, who was black, is consistently referred to as a “negro” or “colored,” a common practice at the time. He’s also often referred to as “fiendish,” “crazed,” “desperate” and “murderous.”

Williams was a fugitive from New Hanover County, according to the Jan. 29, 1923 edition of The Robesonian newspaper. He had escaped from prison and jail five times, including breaking away from a chain gang. His convictions included robbery, larceny, “pistol carrying” and other felonies.

Cribbs confronted Williams (depending on the account) in the store or as he was exiting. Both men opened fire, Williams with a handgun that one news account (without attribution) said was stolen. Luck had run out for both men – Cribbs took a round through the upper right chest. Williams was hit with a .32-20 bullet in the leg, causing a serious injury, but he managed to escape.

As Williams fled “into the swamps,” citizens and the storekeeper rendered what aid they could to Cribbs. He was quickly loaded onto a train that was at the siding in Fair Bluff, and rushed to Wilmington. He died in Bullock Hospital in Wilmington early the next morning.

Meanwhile, law enforcement officers as well as vigilantes began hunting for Williams, who was described before the robbery-shootout as “the worst outlaw around these parts since the Lowery Gang,” a reference to Henry Berry Lowry of Robeson County.

Even though he didn’t stop the bandit, Cribbs was praised in newspapers as having wounded Williams badly enough to slow his escape.

Outlaw on the run – again

It wasn’t Williams’ first retreat from vigilantes, nor was it his first gunshot wound. The Wilmington Star reported that he was shot “in the head” during a running gunfight with a Brunswick County posse. That gunfight lasted for several miles, and came about after Williams “terrorized” several communities in the wake of a prison break – his third. That capture came after weeks spent by Williams hiding in swamps, abandoned farms and with friends.

Williams robbed stores, held up individuals, and stole



from isolated homes until one victim raised the alarm in time for the men of the community to take up pursuit, along with a group of manhunters from Wilmington.

Prior to that incident, Williams was first sentenced to be part of a chain gang in New Hanover after a violent robbery. He escaped the road crew, but was later recaptured and sent to the state penitentiary – from where he escaped again. Recaptured in New Hanover, he was again placed on a chain gang at hard labor along the roads. “His escape followed quickly,” a reporter noted. Captured yet again, Williams was ordered back to Raleigh to complete a five-year sentence for “highway robbery,” prior to being returned to New Hanover. He escaped from the state penitentiary again, however, and eventually ended up in Fair Bluff.

Despite being wounded, Williams almost made good his last escape.

After slipping through the woods to the railroad station at Cerro Gordo, Williams stole a mule and buggy. He made it as far as an unnamed swamp near Whiteville, where he abandoned the buggy and hid for several hours.

Around 10:30 p.m. on Jan. 27, Williams limped out of the swamp to ask a passerby for a ride to the town of Bolton. He was instantly surrounded by “possemen” who took him into custody and placed him in the county jail.

Racial tensions were on the rise throughout the region at the time, and the trial record notes that the prosecutor (then called a solicitor) and the judge took steps to ensure no members of the Ku Klux Klan were empaneled on the jury. That didn’t stop angry supporters of Cribbs from making their feelings known around the jail and courthouse.

At the request of the sheriff, members of the Wilmington Light Infantry were deployed to Whiteville to bolster security at the courthouse and jail through the trial.

Later coverage of the chief’s killing pointed out Williams’ “tendency to violent mayhem” and credited Cribbs with “making the fiend’s escape much harder, and his capture easier.”

#### Swift justice?

The modern court system often takes years to bring a murder case to trial, but that wasn’t the case in 1923. Even by the standards of the time, though, Williams’ trial proceeded with a dizzying speed -- he was arraigned, tried and convicted in less than nine hours.

The Monday after Cribb was slain, Williams was brought before the bar to face a murder charge. The grand jury handed down a true bill of indictment at 11:30 a.m., and Williams was arraigned in front of Judge N.A.

Sinclair. He pleaded not guilty.

Special prosecutor Woodus Kellum wrapped up the state’s case by 5 p.m. He was defended by Donald McCracken (“law partner of District Attorney T.B. Tucker,” the reporter notes) and Attorney D. Proctor.

“The defense offered very little evidence. McCracken and Proctor addressed the jury briefly asking that justice be done,” The Horry Herald reporter wrote.

Williams received a less-than-vigorous defense, according to the trial coverage.

“The nearest either approached to (requesting) mercy was the plea of Proctor that the jury return a verdict of murder in the second degree,” the Herald notes. “Solicitor Kellum. in a scorching denunciation ... demanded the full penalty of the law to be invoked.”

The jury received the case at 8 p.m. and returned a verdict of guilty after 15 minutes’ deliberation.

In the typically sensational writing style of the period, the Herald reporter briefly described Williams.

“Williams sat stoically throughout the hearing, his face betraying not the slightest interest in the proceedings. He seemed more like a wild beast at bay than a man on trial for his life.”

While Williams may have been emotionless, there was still drama in the courtroom as Williams was brought back in to hear the verdict.

“There was but one hint of violence that came early when Williams was led into the court room by a squad of soldiers. As the negro took his seat in the dock someone in the audience yelled ‘Lynch him!’ but the speaker was quickly seized by the soldiers and ejected from the courtroom.

“There was evident, however, an undercurrent of unrest while the jury deliberated briefly on the case; there was low mumbling which even the presence of the military did not entirely assuage and fears were expressed that an outbreak would follow the returning of any other verdict save first degree murder.”

Williams came close to being lynched, but Sheriff J.O. Ammons and Jailer Louis Spivey “had single-handed beaten back a mob of 300 men that rushed the jail where Williams was confined,” an Horry County newspaper reported.

“With drawn revolvers the sheriff and jailer awaited the attack...and firmly refused to evacuate. For half-an-hour the issue hung in the balance; then the mob evidently without a leader, sullenly gave way, but hung in the vicinity of the jail.”

The additional WLI personnel apparently arrived just in the nick of time.

“Only the arrival of Capt. R. S. McClelland and his W. L. I. last night saved the life of Williams, is the opinion of county officials here,” The Herald reported.

A mob of 500 men was gathered in the outskirts of the town when the automobiles bearing the troops whizzed through the lone street between Vineland and Whiteville at 10 o'clock. A cordon of guardsmen was quickly thrown about the jail and all automobiles and pedestrians were stopped by the soldiers and the streets absolutely cleared.

“When the soldiers arrived they found the sheriff on the verge of exhaustion from lack of sleep and the way open for a more successful attack on the county bastille.”

Another bizarre indication of how times have changed is seen when the Herald reporter notes that, while some members of the lynch mobs apparently claimed membership in the Klan, sources told The Herald that this was not the case – in part because Klan members were considered “upright members of the community” who would need to be at work the next day.

“Fare you well, Sheriff”

Williams was reportedly defiant until the very end.

While he didn't deny killing Cribbs, he did ask the sheriff witnessing the execution to deliver a final message, according to several accounts.

“Fare you well, Sheriff,” he reportedly said. “Tell the boys I hope my death will be a warning to them. Put it in the paper, sheriff.”

Even Williams' death in the electric chair was macabre fodder for the news media.

Williams was strapped down in the electric chair at the state prison, and a water-soaked helmet put on his head, as was standard procedure. But instead of speeding the execution, the “water hat” may have made matters worse.

“The first shock given to Williams caused the water-soaked helmet on his head to set on fire (sic), and he also foamed at the mouth,” according to “Gruesome Spectacles: Botched Executions and America's Death Penalty,” a book published by death penalty opponents.

The shock still wasn't enough to kill Williams, so a second burst of electricity was required. The second shock lasted “several minutes,” according to multiple accounts, “apparently causing him great agony.” The execution caused at least one state representative to sponsor legislation to bring back hanging as the preferred method of capital punishment. State prison officials instead beefed up the amperage of the electric chair, which gave way years later to the gas chamber and eventually, lethal

injection.

Williams' execution was part of multiple studies of executions, race relations and Jim Crow laws of the early 20th century. Nearly a century after his death, multiple academic references can be found to the violent criminal whose career spanned five counties. His case is cited in law school texts, civil rights debates, and other works, as well as vintage newspapers across the state.

Records on Cribbs, on the other hand, are limited to short references in newspaper articles leading up to his murder and family histories. He is remembered every year at the Columbus County Peace Officers Memorial Service. Twelve officers from Columbus County have died in the line of duty.

Cribbs is best remembered by family members who have carried on his legacy – three generations of his descendants are in law enforcement.

The store that Williams burglarized went through multiple new businesses through the decades – and was robbed at gunpoint in 1937, without gunplay -- before being damaged by historic flooding in Hurricane Matthew in 2016. It was restored and was reopening as a gift shop when it was hit again by worse flooding in 2018, with Hurricane Florence. The store front is now on the demolition list for a downtown redevelopment project.

When the building is demolished this year, with it will go one of the last monuments to a law enforcement officer whose .32-20 revolver helped stop an outlaw.

Ironically, the officer who was dedicated to improving the quality of life for his town, rousting drunks, chasing thieves and single-handedly breaking up fights, is not as well-remembered as the outlaw who shot him on a cold January evening in 1923.



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# The Raven P25- The Everyman's Gun Created by an Anti-Gun Law

By Tinker Pearce

Ok, I try to keep my content apolitical, but when the reasons the gun exists are political it's hard to avoid. When black people started showing up armed to protect themselves when protesting for Civil Rights a lot of people got scared and stuffed provisions into the GCA 68 to limit the availability of inexpensive pistols, which at the time were almost all imported from Europe. It was straight-up an attempt to deny the poor and minorities access to armed self-defense.

They say 'nature hates a void,' and so do markets. People wanted cheap guns, and in 1970 George Jennings stepped up to help fill that void with an affordable, reliable pistol that anyone could afford. Chambered in .25 ACP, it was a straight-blowback single-action striker-fired pistol. It was a small gun and had a capacity of 6+1. It wasn't by any standard a great pistol and .25 ACP is nobody's idea of a man-stopper, but they were cheap and reliable. Mission Accomplished. They sold something over three million of them over the years.

One thing you hear a lot about these guns is 'Pot-metal POS.' Let's get this straight- Zamac isn't 'pot metal.' Zamac castings were used by the like of Colt, Ithaca, Erma and other major manufacturers. Properly used it's a pretty useful material, and it's easy to cast and cheap as chips.

These guns catch a lot of crap as a 'Saturday Night Special' and a gangster gun used by criminals. A few were undoubtedly used by criminals but by and large according to statistics and interviews of convicts they very much preferred larger, more intimidating and effective guns. This was not a gun for criminals; it was a gun for single mothers working two jobs to feed their kids. A back-up for underpaid police officers. Something a gas-station at-

tendant in Appalachia could put in their pocket 'just in case.' It was a gun for the poor, and for all of its flaws we should celebrate that very American egalitarian nature.

Back in the mid-'80s a guy owed me forty bucks and paid his debt by giving me a new Raven. I didn't think much of it and I don't remember if I ever carried it but I did shoot it a lot. The sights aren't much, the trigger isn't good and the grips is tiny. But none of that makes the gun inaccurate; it's just hard to shoot well and I relished the challenge. Before long I was shooting palm-sized groups at 15-20 yards, and the totality of focus required to do that made it a great stress-reliever. I probably put a thousand rounds through that gun before I parted with it, and while I expected it to break at any moment it never did.

No mistake, these are cheap guns and were never meant to last forever. If you buy one it would probably be prudent to replace the recoil spring and maybe the striker spring; these do wear out over time. Reliability issues can usually be solved by tweaking the magazine feed-lips with a pair of pliers.

Raven Arms produced these guns from 1970 to 1991, when their factory burned down. In that time they made about 2 million guns. He sold the design to Phoenix Arms (also owned by his family) and with some minor tweaks to the design they produced another million of them. Pretty successful for a 'pot-metal POS.'

I suppose in its way the Raven actually was a great gun; it offered protection and peace of mind to a lot of folks that couldn't afford better and to my way of thinking that's pretty great.



An advertisement for High Desert Cartridge Company. At the top left is a logo for "NCCC" (National Cartridge Company) featuring a bullet. To the right of the logo is the text "HIGH DESERT CARTRIDGE COMPANY" with an American flag graphic. Below this is a large yellow headline: "HIGH QUALITY AMMUNITION". Underneath the headline is a paragraph: "OUR AMMUNITION IS MADE IN-HOUSE AND HAND INSPECTED TO ENSURE THE QUALITY AND PRECISION THAT DELIVERS RELIABLE ACCURACY ROUND AFTER ROUND." Below this are three bullet points: "QUALITY START TO FINISH ATTENTION TO QUALITY.", "INTEGRITY PRECISION ROUNDS WITH A PERSONAL TOUCH.", and "RELIABILITY ACCURATE ROUND AFTER ROUND." At the bottom is a call to action: "GIVE US A CALL OR STOP BY TODAY!" followed by the address "915 S. COLUMBUS AVE., GOLDENDALE, WA" and the phone number "509-772-2726" and website "HIGHDESERTCARTRIDGE.COM". The background of the ad shows a close-up of several brass rifle cartridges.





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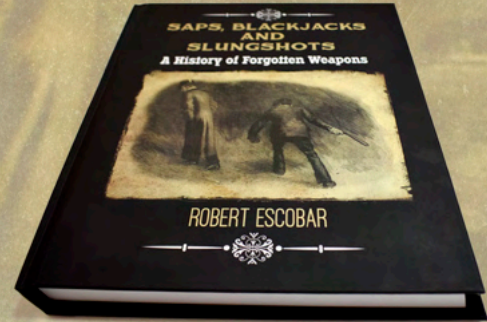


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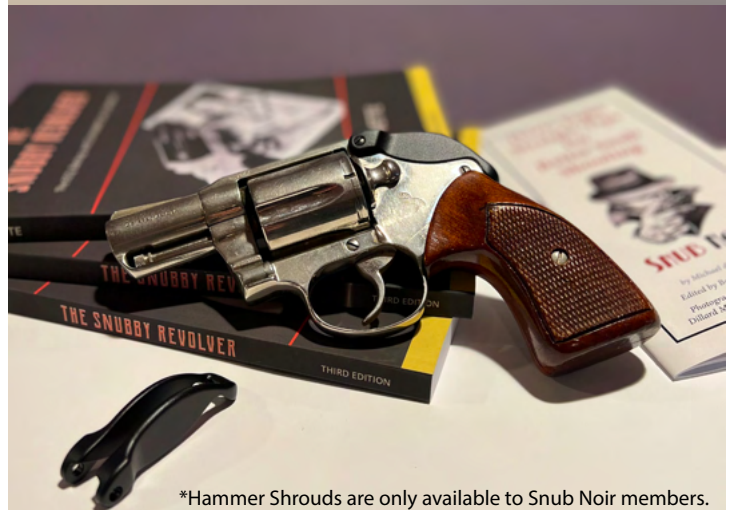


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# Speedloaders for the \*NEW\* Colt King Cobra

By Dave Goodrich



When the new Colt King Cobra was released, I knew I would have one. New stocks, new front sight, and clipping the hammer spur made it, I thought, perfect. There was one problem and that was reloading it.

I have carried Safariland Comp 1 and Comp 2 for a decade now and they are my favorite. Easy to load, easier to use, secure, and totally reliable. Unfortunately, Safariland no longer makes them for this revolver.

Scouring the internet for suggestions, I found dozens, if not multiple dozens, of people recommending the use of a K Frame speedloader in the King Cobra. So of course, I tried my K Frame speedloaders only to be disappointed. Some may consider “a little jiggling” to be acceptable in using a K Frame speedloader with a King Cobra, but I found using them to be more like convincing a three year old to eat brussels sprouts. A lot harder in the doing than the planning.

I searched out several other speedloaders that were reported to work or I thought might work. The speedloaders I purchased included: the HKS for the D frame Colt, the Zeta K clip, the Packmayr, 5 Star D6, and the much vaunted SL Variant. I already had the Safariland Comp 2 and HKS for the S&W K frame to test with. Before I go any further I have to state that I bought the SL Variant because it was advertised for the King Cobra. I suspect it is for the OLD King Cobra, because it simply did not work, at all. I followed the tuning instructions in a futile attempt to make it work to the point that I am now quite adept at taking it apart and putting it back together after it is adjusted too far. I really should have called before I ordered it. My only option now is to search out and purchase an old model King Cobra, Lawman, or Colt Trooper. It makes no sense to own a speedloader I cannot use. Purchasing a new, old model, revolver is just the

right thing to do.

For me, a speedloader needs to do one seemingly simple task. Effectively drop the rounds into the chambers in a reliable and repeatable manner. No jiggling, no swearing, no extra manipulation, no luck. But it is not as simple as it sounds. Not all speedloaders are capable of that task with every brand of ammunition. Reloading under duress is not the place to test fine motor skills.

In practicing with a S&W M60, 2020 Python, and S&W M629, all using Safariland Comp loaders, I found that inserting the rounds rewarded me with an audible “plunk”. I rarely missed on the first attempt and the misses were easily corrected with a slight movement. Insertion and release required nothing more than gravity to be successful.

After several weeks of working with the new speedloaders, and the familiar speedloaders I know work in my revolvers, I came up with what I call the plunk test.

The plunk test is quite simple. With the revolver held vertical in the normal position for reloading, insert the speedloader under its own weight, no force or jiggling, and release the rounds. They should fall freely into the chambers and the speedloader fall freely off the cylinder. If that doesn't happen, the speedloader is not suitable for defensive use, in my opinion.

Only two speedloaders passed the plunk test. The 5 Star D6 and the Zeta K Clip. The Zeta does not release its rounds in the same sense as the other speedloaders though it drops readily into the cylinder under its own weight, but it never pulled cartridges out when peeling the K Clip off either, so I called it a pass. The HKS DS nearly worked, but the clearance between the loader body and the frame was too tight. The King Cobra cylinder is very close to the frame and there is just not enough





space for the HKS speedloader body. The King Cobra has a gap of .035 between the chambered cartridge rim and the frame. In comparison, a S&W K frame has .075 clearance. It seems so little, but it matters. In all fairness, the HKS DS is not advertised specifically for the new Colt King Cobra.

Was this a fair test of the speedloaders I selected? No. None of the speedloaders are marketed for the new Colt King Cobra so I cannot fault the manufacturers for speedloaders that did not work.

I have since bought two more 5 Star D6 speedloaders. They are not the push release speedloaders I use and love,

## There's a New Revolver in Town Continued

I fired 5 shot groups from every type of .38 Special on my shelf. For me, the sights are well regulated for 110 and 125 grain ammo at 7 yards, with lighter bullets hitting low and heavier bullets striking high. (The designers say they regulate the .38 Ultimate Carry for 135 grain Gold Dot +P Short Barrel at 15 yards.)

I was already a fan of Critical Defense ammo for its ballistics (also that it's not a felony hollow point as I drive through New Jersey!). And - Happy Day! - my gun LOVES Critical Defense standard and likes its +P sibling, as you can see from the chart. Gold Dot LE +P would be my next choice if I ran out of Critical Defense. All groups were 5 shots offhand at 7 yards with a second or so between shots. I could have shot slower, at a longer range, or from a supported position — but this seemed to me to be a most likely scenario for this revolver.

Critical Defense 110 gr	0.46"
Critical Defense +P 110 gr	1.23"
Gold Dot LE +P 125 gr	1.27"
DoubleTap 158 gr WC	1.46"
Critical Defense Lite 90 gr	1.82"
MagnaTech 148 gr WC	1.96"
Winchester Defender +P 135 gr	2.08"
Gold Dot Short Barrel +P 135 gr	2.26"

This is a light gun and not one I personally would choose to put a lot of rounds through in one sitting. But with the grip change, I managed to shoot 50 rounds of standard and +P without the nerves at the base of my thumb protesting too much. Ok, they did tell me that the one cylinder of Winchester Defender +P 135 grain was enough!

Sooo, should you get one? Um...heck yeah! If you

get the .32 Mag, call me to see if mine has arrived yet and we'll do a deal if I'm still waiting. That's a 6-round baby, and the ballistics on the round look pretty good. 32 caliber seems to be making a resurgence. Charter Arms made a 7-shot (The Professional) five or so years ago, and with Smith making one now, I think the .32 will be cemented in place as a modern caliber once again.

One caution. Many pocket holsters bury the gun deep into the concealment material. The back of the Novak rear sight has sharp corners and edges and can dig into the material, slowing your draw and accelerating wear on the holster. Ditto for that big, gorgeous, green front sight. That's not a dig on the gun, just part of knowing your firearm and your supporting equipment. So get a sight channel in your pocket holster.

Grade: A+. The original run was 4,000 guns, but I'll bet they make more.



*Critical Defense 110 gr (standard pressure)*

## About the Model 66 on the Cover

Smokey P. is a working Undersheriff in Oklahoma and this revolver is from his private collection.

It was purchased in December last year as a gunsmith special. The rear sight was broken badly, and the internals were rusted and flaking.

Smokey removed the rear sight after slotting the rounded-out screw and then turned his attention to the internals. He removed everything and cleaned the frame. He got into his parts bins and decided to replace the internals with original S&W case colored parts from a Model 19. He thought the contrast would look nice and he was right!. A few evenings later he reported taking it to the range and it functioned flawlessly. An amazing rescue that started out as an unloved classic.

Of equal note, the cuffs were laser engraved by Smokey himself and turned out better than could have ever dreamed. They were cut on an OmTech 20W fiber laser-3 passes at 600mm/sec.





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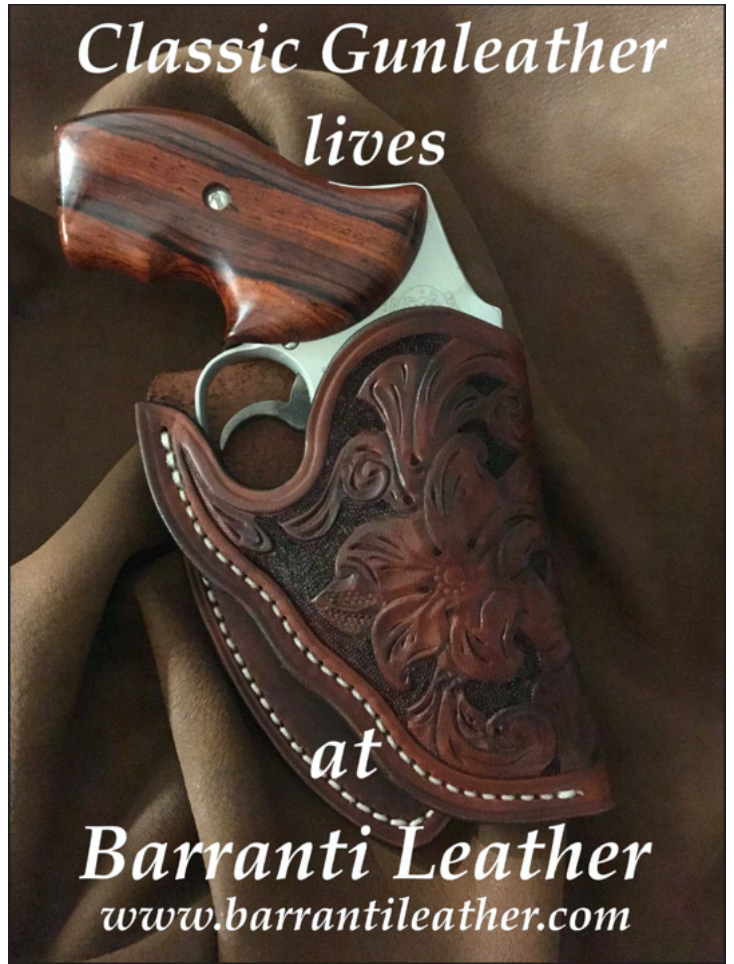
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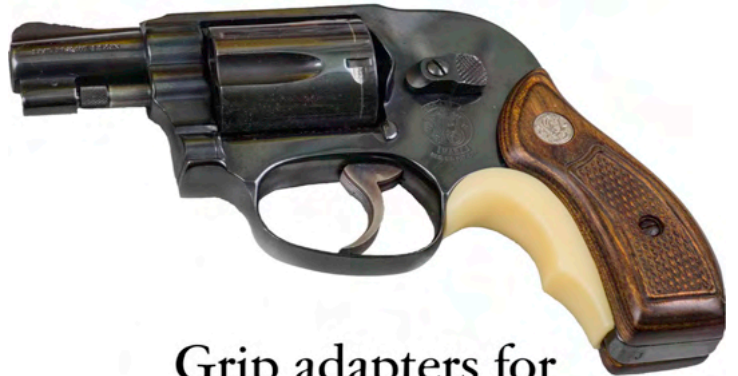


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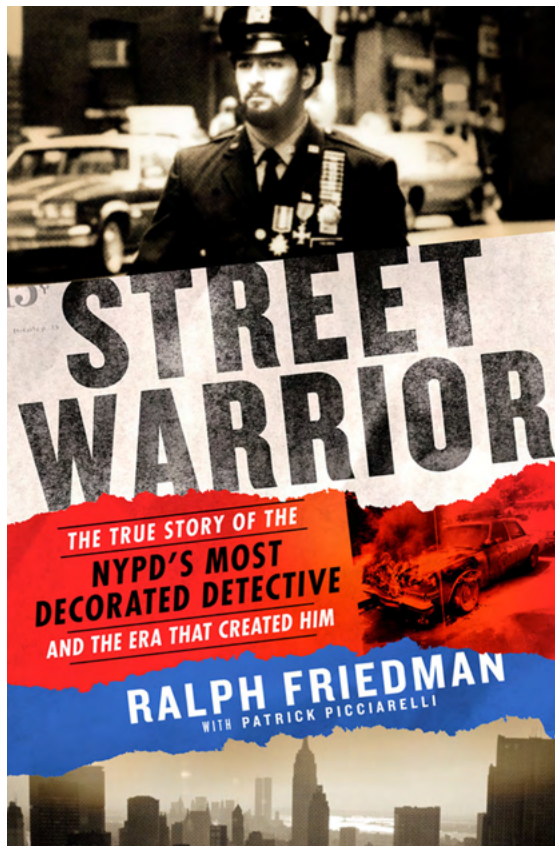
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# The Diamondback Firearms SDR

## A New Snub with Space Age Looks

By William Bell

If Buck Rogers was going to carry a snub-nose gat, I think he'd go for the new SDR from Diamondback Firearms. By the way, SDR stands for Self-Defense Revolver. This polished stainless steel sixgun certainly has the futuristic looks for a space jockey. As Snub Noir readers, like me, you can see that the SDR has some features borrowed from other popular wheelguns. The frame, dovetailed rear sight and cylinder release latch is much like the Kimber K6s. The cylinder design is pure Ruger LCR, and its trigger guard size and shape reminds me of the Colt (new) Cobra. Above the front portion of the trigger guard, on the right side of the frame is a round button. If you swing out the cylinder, then press in on the button, the cylinder and crane assembly can be pulled forward and removed, just like on the Taurus 692/992 revolvers. The SDR also has the same cylinder lock-up points as a Smith & Wesson, and the shape and size of the grip frame are much like the J-frame.

Diamondback Firearms has pulled out the stops on the SDR's fit and finish, which are top notch. It is chambered in .357 Magnum, so will also take .38 Special cartridges. It has an empty weight of 21.2 oz. and a true 2-inch barrel. At the muzzle is a 45° precision target crown that protects the rifling and preserves accuracy. On top of the barrel, a roll-pin secures an orange fiber-optic front sight. At the back of the frames top-strap is rear sight, which is black, and has a square notch. On either side of the notch are green fiber-optic filaments. The sights are low-profile and provide a good sight picture. The double action (DA) trigger pull is smooth and non-stacking, with a pull weight of 9-11.5 lbs. The single action (SA) pull is crisp and breaks at about 3.5 lbs. The smooth-faced trigger is 0.25" wide, and the SDR has an exposed hammer, with a serrated spur. Its transfer bar mechanism prevents accidental discharges unless the trigger is deliberately pulled. Grips are made by Hogue and are their black rubber combat style with pebble-grain texturing and Diamondback logos. The SDR comes in a black nylon zipper case with a safety padlock and owner's manual.

I chose two .357 Magnum loads and three .38 Special loads for the SDR shooting evaluation. First was Federal's American Eagle .357 cartridge, with a 158 gr. JSP bullet. Fiocchi provided their .38 Special cartridges with a 158 gr. JHP. My other .357 load was Hornady

American Gunner, with a 125 gr. XTP-HP bullet. The two other .38 Special loads were the Remington-UMC with 130 gr. FMJ bullets, and Remington's Golden Saber, with a 125 gr. brass JHP, rated +P.

I used an indoor range for the accuracy potential evaluation. Shooting was done SA, from the bench, using a sandbag rest, and a folding stool. A multi-bullseye target sheet was utilized and sent down to the 10-yard line. Three 5-shot groups were fired using each of the 5 test cartridges. Between the SDRs light weight and the Hogue grips that exposed the backstrap of the grip frame, the .357 Magnums kicked like a mule, so I put a shooting glove on my right hand. My tightest group was made with the Fiocchi .38 Special 158 gr. JHP. A nice 0.77" 4-shot cluster was ruined by a flyer that opened up the group to 1.28." This load's three-group average was 1.79." The group averages were splendid, with none over 2.5." You can see the rest of the group data in the performance table. Point of aim/point of impact was good, given the different bullet velocities and weights.

At an outdoor range I performed my chronographing chores to record bullet velocities out of the SDR's 2-inch barrel. That info is shown in the performance table. Next, I attached a realistic-looking "bad guy" target to my stand. The thug facing me had a roscoe pointed in my direction, so deadly force was justified. The target has light grey scoring lines, outlining the 5, 4 and 3-point scoring zones. Remington-UMC supplied me with plenty of their .38 Special 130 gr. FMJ ammo, so I decided to use it for the mini-Hogan's Alley course. For this shooting session I dug through my holster tub and came up with a vintage Bauer Brother paddle-back hol-







ster that was once popular with plainclothes coppers. The SDR was loaded and 6 rounds slipped into a speed strip, which I pocketed. A total of 24 rounds would be fired; from up-close-and-personal, to 10 yards from the target. Every shooting stage began with the SDR holstered; all shooting was DA, and reloads were performed when needed.

Simulating a physical encounter, I placed my support hand against the “bad guy” and gave a shove, moving back slightly, and making my play. The SDR was held close to my side to prevent a gun grab and I fired two quick shots. Then, stepping to my right and back a few feet, where I triggered 2 more rounds, strong-hand only, the weapon pointed instinctively.” Now, to create some distance, I backed off to the 5-yard line, and fired my last two rounds point shoulder. Withdrawing to the 7-yard line, I sought cover (simulated by a folding table on its side), and reloaded with the speed strip. At this distance I used the sights, a two-handed isosceles stance, and shot three double-taps, pausing between strings to check the threat. I again reloaded using the speed strip. Seemed the



thug had a “bullet-proof vest,” after I fired two shots center-mass, I aimed one at his head. I did the same thing with the next 3 rounds. I reloaded from behind cover, then moved back to the 10-yard line. Here, the folding table simulated a barricade. I took a kneeling position on the right side and fired 6 well-aimed shots. The shoot-out was over. If all hits were in the 5-Zones, the possible score was 120 points.

I ended up with 107 out of 120. Of the 22 center-mass shots, 13 scored 4 points each; still they were all in the K-Zone. I was pleased with my two head shots. They were side-by-side, right in the bridge of the thug’s nose. I found the SDR easy to control in rapid fire, using the standard-pressure .38 Special loads. Recoil wasn’t bad and the Hogue grips helped keep down the muzzle flip. I



felt the little sixgun pointed naturally and the cylinder release latch never cut up my right thumb. The fiber-optic sights were fast to acquire with the contrasting green and orange, plus they provided an outstanding “flash” sight picture. I had no issues with the DA trigger pull and with the cylinder open, gun muzzle up, a slap to the short ejector rod with my palm punched out the empty cases every time. I’ve had years of experience with speed loaders, no worries there, and the old Bauer holster did just fine. I would, like to see Diamondback offer a 9mm conversion cylinder assembly so cheap 9mm ammo could be used for practice. In the end, this old retired LEO would not hesitate to pack an SDR for protection.

Diamondback Firearms: [www.diamondbackfirearms.com](http://www.diamondbackfirearms.com)



Diamondback Firearms SDR Specifications

MECHANISM: Traditional DA/SA revolver w/transfer bar

CALIBER: .357 Magnum/.38 Special

CAPACITY: 6 cartridges

BARREL: 2.0"

OA LENGTH: 6.53"

EMPTY WEIGHT: 21.2 oz.

SIGHTS: Fiber-optic front, fixed fiber-optic rear

FINISH: Polished stainless steel

STOCKS: Hogue DB Firearms-branded, black rubber

MSRP: \$777.00



New from Diamondback Firearms is the SDR; this stainless steel, six-shot .357 Magnum has a 2-inch barrel and a host of features it shares with other popular wheelguns.

Diamondback Firearms SDR Performance

Cartridge Federal American Eagle .357 Mag. 58 gr. JSP

Average Velocity 934 FPS

Best Group 1.49"

Average Group 2.08"

Cartridge Fiocchi .38 Spl. 158 gr. JHP

Average Velocity 713 FPS

Best Group 1.28"

Average Group 1.79"

Cartridge Hornady American Gunner .357 Mag. 125 gr. XTP-HP

Average Velocity 1172 FPS

Best Group 2.15"

Average Group 2.38"

Cartridge Remington-UMC .38 Spl. 130 gr. FMJ

Average Velocity 756 FPS

Best Group 1.41"

Average Group 1.90"

Cartridge Remington Golden Saber .38 Spl. +P 125 gr. BJHP

Average Velocity 819 FPS

Best Group 1.92"

Average Group 2.22"

NOTE: Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in feet per second 10 ft. from the muzzle by an Oehler Model 35P chronograph, and accuracy in inches for three 5-shot groups at 10 yards.





# WINCHESTER MODEL 1907:

## EARLY SELFLOADER SUPREME

By Michael Boyle

I have long fancied firearms that are a bit beyond the ordinary. My modest collection includes examples of many popular firearms which I shoot on a regular basis; however, I remain intrigued by those odd ducks.

Nearly 40 years ago, one of my shooting buddies reported that he had lucked into a unique auto-loading rifle manufactured by Winchester. Few details were provided and my mind raced with possibilities as I drove to his home. Imagine my surprise when he broke out a Winchester 1907 rifle chambered for .351 SL cartridge. Prior to that encounter, I had known of the existence of such a rifle, but never had the opportunity to examine one.

Compared to many other Winchester classics, such as the M70 or M94, the 07 was never produced in great numbers. It did, however, fill a unique niche and remained in the Winchester line for 50 years. To say the least, the 07 boasts a very storied past and was, in fact, one of the first weapons to be used in aerial combat. In the Depression Era, it was widely used by both gangsters and forces of good. Of late, the concept of a "patrol rifle" has been the hot ticket in the law enforcement community, but the 07 filled that role over 80 years ago.

### Particulars

The Winchester Model 1907 was the most successful of three centerfire autoloading rifles designed by Thomas Crossley Johnson. Initially, Winchester introduced the Model 1905 chambered for the .32 SL and .35 SL cartridges. Neither round was especially powerful, but they set the stage for better things to come.

Despite the fact that the .32 SL has been labeled one of the most useless cartridges of all time, it is the forerunner of the .30 carbine of World War II and Korea. Stretching the .35 SL resulted in the more powerful .351 SL. And, for those who believe life begins at forty, there was the hard hitting Model 1910 chambered for the .401 SL.

Like its stablemates, the 07 is a blowback operated, semi-automatic rifle. Blowback operation required a fairly heavy action, and weight of the total package is more than what you would expect for an intermediate power cartridge. Cartridges are fed via a detachable box magazine located just forward of the trigger guard. Both five and ten round magazines were available and new copies are available from Triple K. The action of the 07 can be manually cycled by bringing a rod located under

the barrel to the rear. A slotted screw at the rear of the receiver can be backed out to break the 07 down for routine cleaning and lubrication.

Most 07's were the standard model with a plain walnut stock; however, some deluxe variants with checkering on the forestock and pistol grip were also made. Police models with sling swivels, a fixed rear sight, and barrel sleeve to accommodate a Krag bayonet were also manufactured.

Measuring 40 inches in length, the 07 proved handy to use in tight quarters. This quality caught the attention of the French military who felt it was ideal for trench warfare and ordered roughly 5,000 copies during World War I. Barrel length is 20 inches and this classic self loader tips the scales at 8 pounds. I wouldn't categorize the .351 SL cartridge as hard kicking, but the blowback action creates a very unique sensation of rearward thrust.

Open sights were standard on the 07 rifle. Tang mounted and receiver mounted sights were available as a factory option.

### .351 Winchester Self-Loading Cartridge

The .351 SL was introduced as a more powerful replacement for the earlier .35 SL.

In the horsepower department, performance is much closer to the magnum handgun cartridges than a full power rifle round. The slightly tapered case measures 1.38 inches in length and is typically loaded with a 180 grain bullet. Muzzle velocity was advertised at 1870 feet



*Ammunition in .351 SL has not been loaded by the major manufacturers for 50 years.*



*The .351 SL cartridge (center) is flanked by a contemporary .223 Remington (left) and a .401 SL (right).*

per second, yielding 1400 foot-pounds of muzzle energy. The major manufacturers ceased turning out .351 SL ammunition around 1970, but it is still available from smaller custom loaders.

I've encountered .351 SL ammunition loaded with both soft point and full metal jacket bullets. Factory ammo is quite old and should be carefully inspected before firing. Shooters who own rifles chambered for odd cartridges have been known to hoard ammunition and in the case of the .351 SL, I plead guilty. If you like, the .351 SL can be reloaded and both jacketed and cast lead bullets are available if you look hard enough.

The .351 SL never developed a stellar reputation for accuracy, nor is it powerful enough for hunting big game. It has been successfully used for the taking of small deer or even bears and at one time it was a popular number for jungle hunting in Central and South America. As an anti-personnel round, the .351 SL was quite satisfactory at short to intermediate range.

Other than the 07, the .351 SL was never chambered in any other rifle. I have a copy of an old Thompson SMG manual, which lists the .351 SL as a factory option. At least one prototype was manufactured, but the Thompson SMG in .351 SL was never put into production.

### Blazing New Trails

At the outbreak of World War I, a small number of Winchester rifles were purchased by France, Britain, and Russia. Most notable were the rifles purchased by the French, who converted many to fire full auto. The French also manufactured their own 10 round magazines and purchased over 1.5 million rounds of .351 SL ammunition. The handy, fast firing 07 was highly regarded by trench raiding parties.

Perhaps the most unique footnote regarding the 07 was its role in aerial combat. In the early days of World War I, aircraft were used as spotters, and enemy aviators

often acknowledged their foes with a wave of the hand. That situation didn't last and before long shots were being exchanged. Great Britain purchased a number of 07 rifles which were pressed into service with the Royal Flying Corps for use by rear seat observers.

Throughout the 1920s and 30s, the 07 was used by the criminal element and law enforcement. This Winchester selfloader was utilized by the Dillinger gang and Baby Face Nelson. It was also favored by Border Patrol Agents in the Southwest U.S., who got into frequent exchanges of gunfire with Mexican banditos. Border Patrol agents frequently taped a pair of 10 round magazines together for better continuity of fire.

Winchester 07s were used extensively by prison guards and police departments. At least one large agency here in New Jersey held on to their 07's well in to the 1980s, until scarcity of ammunition necessitated their withdrawal from service.

### My 07

A Winchester 07 occupied a spot on my "wish list" for years, but I was never able to make the right connection. The examples I came across in the used gun rack were either in rough shape or commanded too steep a price. About 20 years ago, I came across a fine example and after a bit of horse trading, it was mine.

My copy was manufactured in 1955 and was among the last turned out by Winchester. While not exactly showroom new, metal and wood are in excellent shape for a 69 year old rifle. At some point in time, the previous owner removed the factory sights and replaced it with a Lyman peep and front post with a white insert. This setup is similar to the ghost ring arrangement on my shotgun and is very fast to pickup.

From a casual rest, I was recently able to put five shots into a spread of about 2-1/2 inches, from a distance of 50 yards. This hardly qualifies it as a tack driver, but considering its intended role, I was quite pleased. Even more surprising were the results of chronographing some vintage 180 grain loads from Western. Measured muzzle velocities averaged 2024 fps, significantly faster than original specs. Not too shabby for ammunition that is probably older than I.

The Winchester Model 1907 represents a milestone in the evolution of the self-loading rifle. Despite the fact that it was a technological dead end, it was a harbinger of things to come. Today, autoloading rifles chambered for intermediate power cartridges are commonplace, but in 1907, this T.C. Johnson design was in a league of its own.



**Table I  
Specifications**

Action Type - semi-automatic, blowback operation  
Caliber- .351 Winchester SL  
Feed System - 5 or 10 round detachable magazine  
Length - 40 inches  
Barrel Length - 20 inches  
Weight - 8 lbs.  
Sights - open, aperture sights available as an option  
Produced - 1907-1957



*The Winchester 07 was an innovative design used by both the forces of good and Depression-era gangsters.*

**A Few Notable Noir Terms You Should Know.**

Taken from Tom Woodward's noir crime novel *Shortening Shadows* and used with permission.

**Alderman:** A man's pot belly

**Badger game:** Blackmail practiced on a man who is lured by a woman into a compromising situation and then threatened by her male accomplice

**Chinese angle:** A strange or unusual twist or aspect to something, as in "You're not going to find a Chinese angle in this case."

**Dead soldier:** An empty bottle, as in "Two scotch bottles, one a dead soldier."

**Eel juice:** Liquor

**Fortune tea cakes:** Up to around World War II, fortune cookies were known as fortune tea cakes

**Ganef:** A thief, a rascal (Yiddish)

**Hoover flag:** Pockets turned inside out on a man's pants, indicating that he had nothing

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