

# THE DETECTIVE GATZETTE

ISSUE #13  
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THE NEW HOME FOR GATS AND HATS.

Welcome to Snub Noir, the country's only noir-themed, short barreled revolver shooters' association. Membership in Snub Noir offers the short barreled revolver shooting community several unique benefits. In addition to our new quarterly print newsletter, The Detective Gatzette, Snub Noir membership includes a members' blog, training opportunities, an online community, and product discounts from over three dozen revolver service companies, revolver skill monographs and reprints of classic revolver texts. *Contact us at: [info@snubnoir.com](mailto:info@snubnoir.com)*

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# An 856 Courtship

By GS Morris

As the original owner of a Colt's Magnum Carry (First Edition) who foolishly let it slip away, I jumped at the opportunity to take in a hardly worn Colt's King Cobra Carry soon after Colt's 2017 re-introduction of small frame DA revolvers. With only a modicum of dry practice however, the placeholder for the much-lamented Magnum Carry broke both its firing pin and transfer bar. After return from warranty surgery, I bade her an unfond adieu.

Somewhat down and out, I was pleasantly surprised to learn Taurus had also in 2017 added a chamber to their Model 85, dubbing its makeover the 856. I got back into the contemporary six-shot snubby scene when my local shopkeeper offered a secondhand stainless 2" DA/SA 856 out the door for \$250 American. I found the Bainbridge, Georgia marked heater came with a smooth trigger stroke and well-regulated irons. Prior to the start of the practical/nostalgia-based shooting seasons a factory fresh identical twin was ordered up, rounding out the brace for just a little more scratch.

What did I do to fully make them mine? A black Sharpie was immediately taken to the rear sight troughs, à la Mr. Werner. The comfortable shooting and concealable factory boot grips had their thumb rests and a bit of the left panel ears docked, ensuring both HKS and Safariland speedloader clearance. Finally, Ameriglo front night sights were acquired from Taurus' well-provisioned webstore and easily swapped out via roll pin.



Further on the Ameriglos, I had a hunch the oft misunderstood sight was not laid out by chance, and that suspicion was confirmed at the 2023 NRA Annual Meeting when the sight's designer explained to me how the seemingly odd positioning of the tritium vial at the bottom of the sight made for a more useful tool. You see, three distinct sight pictures are possible: top edge for "eye socket" precision at boudoir distances; orange upper third for "flash" sight pictures; and low-light use with target stacked above the glowing tritium vial in the "Straight Eight" manner, or vial used as a 50+ yard "hold-over." That's a lot of options for a measly \$30 clams.

Once maximized, I trained and competed with the 856s throughout 2023. The Brazilians didn't disappoint, that is until a serious character flaw arose; an Achilles' heel which was not finally run to ground until Thanksgiving Week.

Initially, I had blamed a handful of light primer strikes on weak hammer springs. I then began to question my reloads' primer seating depth. Hard evidence was eventually produced after I remembered the old diagnostic of lightly putting drag with thumb and forefinger upon the rear of a closed, empty cylinder while cycling the trigger. The test confirmed the cylinder was slipping, thus allowing it to counter-rotate and cause the previously "fired" chamber to once again fall under the firing pin just before hammer drop. In live fire the problem manifests itself particularly with slow, precision DA work once you're down to the last couple of cartridges in the wheel; the resultant weight imbalance creates sufficient "drag" for the tenuous trigger pawl to lose its grip. Não boa.

When their engineers remedy the cylinder counter-rotation defect, I am confident Taurus will be able to hold the stage with any other maker of duty-worthy "always" snubs. Before that platform fix? I cannot commit to the 856 (but I am told the five shot 605 and 905s do not suffer the same trigger pawl malady).

So, having been jilted by a trio of younger six-pilled belly guns, where does that land this cloyed erstwhile sleuth? Right back into the arms of my old faithful J-Frames and LCRs...At least until a tenderly deflowered Kimber K6 saunters into the joint.

# Speed-Beez: A Non-EDC Use for a Revolver Speed Loader

*By Michael O. Brady*

In the early 1980s I was employed at a plain-clothes corporate security job. We mostly carried revolvers. Why not? Most of the police officers we knew still packed wheel guns and the company provided loaner guns, leather, and free 38 Special training ammo. While I often carried my personal M49 in an outside coat pocket when the company gun rode in a belt holster under a heavy winter coat, the idea of the “New York Reload” was not yet an element of our professional or personal doctrine. The idea of a quick recharge appealed to us. The Bianchi Speed-Strip was an obvious solution and very affordable. Leather-wise, I also made effective use of a DeSantis 2x2x2 belt pouch.

Still, we sought the means to load five or six shots all at once. In those pre-internet days, our speedloader research was conducted mostly by reading gun magazines and talking to our LEO friends. The brands we considered at the time included Hunt/Safariland, HKS, Second Six, Safariland Comp I, and Dade. Our testing was simple, if rigorous. Step One: Drop a filled loader to the floor from waist height. If the loader kept all the cartridges it continued to the next test. The Second Six and Dade loaders did not pass. Step Two: Throw the filled loader against the poured concrete wall of the security office. Only the HKS passed and became our standard. Those were simpler times...

These days I again prefer revolvers over self-loaders. I’ve tried many of the modern speed loading options. The HKS, and similar Five-Star and Pachmayr, twist loaders are still as simple and reliable as ever. The HKS is often the only choice for revolvers located out of the mainstream, such as my 432 UC or K-22. I’ve grown to appreciate push loaders over the years. I feed my GP100 with Safariland Comp II and III chargers. For my J and K-frame 38/357 wheel guns I favor SL Variant or Jet-Loaders when I’m not comfortable relying on a loading strip from Bianchi, Zeta-6, AHolster, or Tuff Products.

My life got a little more complicated when I bought a S&W 43C eight-shot 22 LR revolver, both to serve as an understudy and as a lightweight companion on my daily hikes. While I don’t expect to need, or have time, to reload it in an emergency, I still carry a Tuff Products Quick Strip loaded 2x2x4. At the range I find placing eight minuscule rimfire cartridges in the J-frame’s eight tiny chambers annoyingly slow. There had to be a better

way. Time for an internet search... HKS, Five-Star, and Revision CV (reminiscent of the old J.M. Bucheimer Revolver Reloader in function) all make loaders for the Ruger LCR 22 but none for the S&W eight-shot J-frame cylinder. There is one brand willing to support my habit, Speed-Beez.

The Speed-Beez push loader replicates the classic Dade with modern materials and is offered for many revolvers. So, does the Speed-Beez pass the drop test unlike its progenitor, the Dade? By no means. Drop it from waist height and get ready to scour the floor for loose cartridges. I suspected this was true when I bought it and proved it upon arrival. Will I carry it afield? Nope. So, what is the attraction? I bought the 43C because it doesn’t hurt to shoot, and I can afford to practice with it. The Speed-Beez 317-08 loader simplifies my range sessions, where its limitations are not an issue and its convenience is a plus. The loading block I added to my order holds five cylinder-fulls of cartridges ready for pickup with the loader. It’s much easier for my arthritic hands to set up the block than it is to press single rounds into eight chambers.

As I was putting my gear away after a range session the other day a filled loader rolled off the table. My expectations were confirmed: one empty loader and eight loose rounds skittered across the floor. Still, despite its “tactical” limitations, it remains a sensible solution...

I am indebted to the author of “A History of Speed-loaders” for reminding me of the names of the products we torture-tested back in the day.



*Speed-Beez 317-08 and Loading Block*

# Circle In The Center Target

By Lou Chiodo

I hope this article finds everyone well. Michael J. de Bethencourt saw the target I'm writing about in one of the "Tactical Tip of The Week" I wrote and asked me to write about it. So, here is an explanation of what it is and why I integrate it into training programs.

Those of us involved in firearms use and training use a variety of ways to help develop our skills. Ensuring our firearms fit well and are well maintained is essential because they have to work when needed and how they fit our hand can affect our performance and skill development.

One of the principles I include in training programs is speed and combat accuracy. They are BOTH critical when we discuss the use of the firearms in a fight, as opposed to just shooting for recreation. Here is why: speed without combat accuracy leads to misses. Combat accuracy without speed can lead to getting shot before the suspect is hit. So, valid training is built around using methodology that can provide BOTH speed and combat accuracy.

To assist us in developing speed and combat accuracy, I use the "circle in the center target" to help with that process. The target is as basic as it can be, but provides us with a great way to help us develop speed and combat accuracy together.

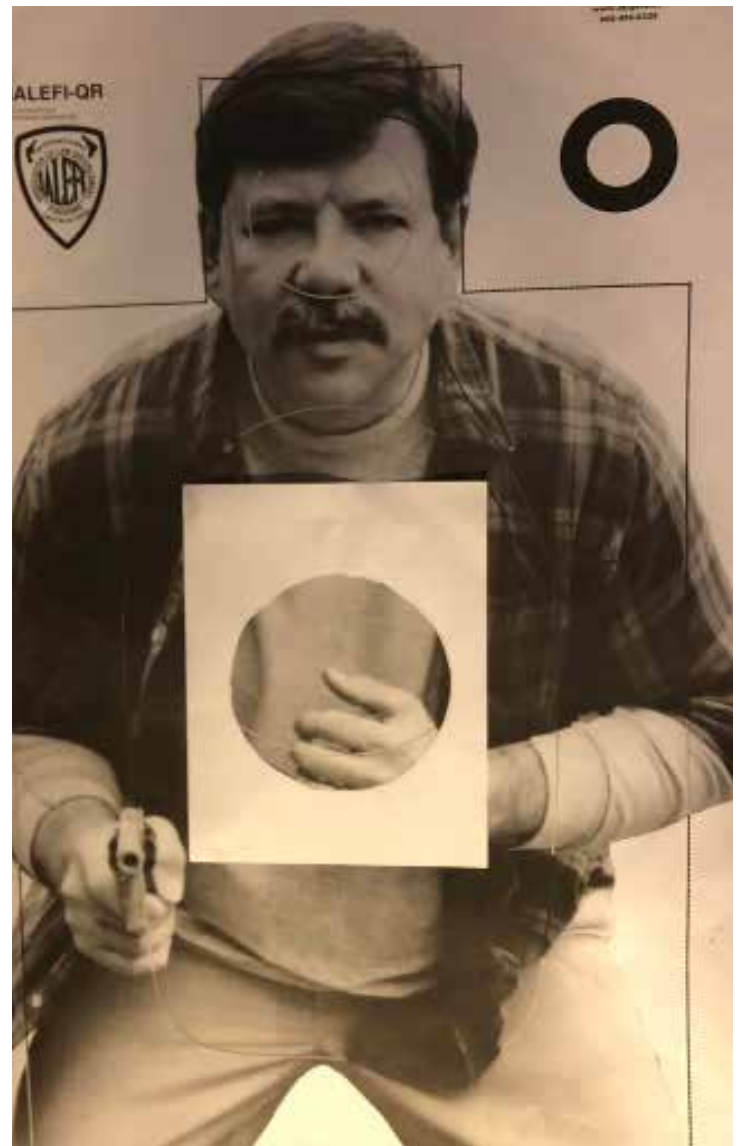
Here is the target – it is simply an 8.5x11 piece of paper with an 8-inch circle cut out and centered on the paper. Why an 8.5x11 paper? When you place that paper on a torso with the middle of the paper at solar plexus height, the area of the body covered by that paper includes vitals that are important for body function. So, the 8.5x11 paper becomes the "X" ring and desired area for combat accuracy.

Let's discuss the 8-inch circle. Without getting too deep into methodology, I teach a system of combat shooting called "Target Focused Shooting (TFS)." As in all combative arts (I have been in and teaching martial arts for 61 years), focus while targeting is critical. It's how our hand-eye coordination works. We establish an "eye-target line" and bring the hand strike, baton strike or handgun/rifle/shotgun into alignment with the line established by us looking at the place we want to hit.

The 8-inch circle serves two important functions. It teaches us to focus intently into the area we want to deliver our shots. It also narrows the area where the vitals are located to assist in getting more effectiveness when attempting to stop a threat.

So, let's get back to speed and combat accuracy. For close quarters combat shooting, the goal is to be able to deliver as many shots as necessary into the vital area (8-inch circle and the 8.5x11 paper) as rapidly as we can to have the best chance of stopping a threat. Each individual will have their own speed and combat accuracy capability based upon their experience and development of combat shooting skills.

As an individual practices, their goal is to work as fast as possible without sacrificing combat accuracy - the hits into the 8.5x11 inch area and 8-inch circle. I hope this helps explain the "circle in the center" target.





## SAP TEST

BY CONRAD C. SZYMCAK

### What is a SAP test?

No, it is not the Civil Service Exam nor any other entrance exam. It is the process of determining the best SAP in town. I could think of a few fellows who could easily be the SAP King, but this is not about SAPs as people. It is about my hero, Nick Nolte (definitely not a sap). It is also about three people who I will introduce further on.

To do this, I was tempted to go back to my 'hood of long ago, Chi-town (or as I call it Shytown), but I decided to conduct the test in my bunker. The scene of the crime is in neither, but in the City of Angels.

Let's journey to Mulholland Falls, the nickname for a section of Mulholland Drive in Los Angeles, California, where many a nefarious character met their doom. The basis of this test is the movie Mulholland Falls (1996). It is a follow-on to my article Persuaders in Issue 9 of the Gatzette.

Mulholland Falls is undoubtedly the best motion picture to show authentic action scenes using a SAP to persuade Nick's opponents to a particular action or inaction. The following picture of Nick holding what appears to be an 11 or 12 inch black Texan SAP. Further scenes show the sap to have a strap. I used this still as the basis of the SAPs used in the SAP test. I purchased the equivalent from three makers. Two provided me with their standard strapped 11/12 inch Texans in black, while the third provided me a custom 11 inch SAP in oxblood.



*Nick Nolte holding an 11-12 inch SAP*

Bakeoff!

Nothing to eat here; move along. We will, however, borrow from the process of judging tasty treats to compare the form, fit, and function of three SAPs to determine firstly, what Nick most likely used, and secondly, the pick of the litter.

Please refer to Mulholland Falls (1996) - Max Meets Allison Scene (4/11) | Movieclips and more importantly the centroid of this dissertation, Mulholland Falls (1996) - This Is My Town Scene (10/11) | Movieclips. Links to these clips are to be found in the "extras" link at Snub-Noir.com.

### Contestants

There are no winners or losers, it is an analysis of features, benefits, and aesthetics. I narrowed my search to three makes of SAPs. The proverbial Momma, Papa, and Baby Bears. Angry Dick (AD), Boston Leather (BL), and Jack Cutting (JC).



*SAP maker LOGOs*

### Angry Dick

Angry Dick (AD), aka Dick Bettencourt, is a sole proprietor, full-service maker of leather products. Dick can be reached at 208-866-7208 or [angrydickgunleather@gmail.com](mailto:angrydickgunleather@gmail.com)

Per the Bettencourt Website:

"Angry Dick Leather products are handmade by Dick & Diane Bettencourt in their home shop, located in Boise ID. Dick's experience and knowledge come from his years spent as a Master Holster maker at Milt Sparks Holsters, another fine leather maker from Boise, ID. This experience is evident in every single piece they make. At Angry Dick Leather, we pride ourselves on producing products that are made to last for generations. We only use the finest American made materials in our products, ensuring that they last a lifetime."

Dick provided me his rendition of a 12 inch Texan with 8oz lead weight, total weight 11.5oz. It is sprung with a circular head that smarts like heck when you smack your palm with it (OUCH!). He sells his products directly from his Website.

### Boston Leather

Boston Leather (BL) was formed in 1938. It is still family owned. I spoke to one of the family partners, TJ Valentino. TJ can be reached at 800-733-1492. BL provides a wide array of leather police products. BL does not

sell direct to the consumer. Their primary reseller is Baton Warehouse (Chris).

BL's Texan contribution to the test is # 5419 at 11 inches with a total weight of 11.125 ounces. This is the quintessential Cop SAP. (For those of you with inquiring minds, "Cop" was first used in place of "to arrest" around 1844. The phrase quickly took hold, and as being "copped" began to be synonymous with being arrested, the word usage expanded to include the person doing the arresting, the "copp-er." By 1846, police officers were being called "coppers" in everyday conversation).

BL's Texan could have been the SAP Nick used, but I think more likely it was a J.M. Bucheimer Company established 1884. They no longer advertise Police Sundries.

### Jack Cutting

Our third Contestant is very private. He is in Romania. His real name is not Jack. I surmise his nom de plume is a play on words. Something like Jack the Cutter. I can hear Jack the Knife playing in the background as I pen this sentence.

'Jack', as his expanded LOGO reads "Impact Devices Artisan" is the real deal artisan. He can be reached through Messenger in Meta.

His Texan is 11 inches and 13 ounces.

### The Contenders



*Edge View*



*Smooth Side*



*Strap Side*

### The Test

My Engineer Mind wants to go immediately to an Excel file, but I shall not. I'll stick with prose with bullet points. Grading will be simple. 1 to 3 for each category.

- Weigh AD 2; BL 1; JC 3
- Thickness AD 2; BL 2; JC 3
- Aesthetics AD 2; BL 1; JC 3
- Flexibility AD 2; BL 2; JC 3
- Edge strike AD 3; BL 2; JC 1
- Face strike AD 3; BL 2; JC 2
- Strap placement AD 2; BL 1; JC 3

### Final Score:

- AD 14
- BL 11
- JC 18



# Performance WheelGun Ammunition from Remington

By Mike Boyle

It would appear that the great ammunition drought has run its course and we have weathered the storm. The COVID pandemic played havoc with the available labor force and the supply chain and as a result, ammunition was in very short supply. Unfortunately, things will never be like before and if you haven't bought ammunition recently, be prepared for some serious sticker shock. But the good news is that you can actually find it!

Some time ago, I noted that Remington was introducing a line of ammunition dedicated to revolvers called Performance WheelGun. But as luck would have it, Remington's effort was temporarily derailed by the pandemic. But I am happy to report that Performance WheelGun is back on track.

The trend in handgun ammunition in recent years has been toward rounds optimized for personal defense or the taking of game, but Performance Wheelgun fills a very different niche. Quite simply, offerings for classic revolver cartridges loaded with lead bullets have gotten very little love of late and can be difficult to find. Performance WheelGun addresses that need and is now available in several different configurations for classic revolvers.

Performance WheelGun ammunition was designed for target and competitive shooting. Top quality components are utilized including Kleenbore primers for positive ignition. All lead bullets in traditional weights and styles are used throughout the line making them not only ideal for revolvers, but lever action rifles as well. At the present time 11 different loads are offered including:



*Performance WheelGun in .44 Special Delivered the Goods*

- .32 S&W 88 grain
- .32 S&W Long 98 grain
- .38 Short Colt 125 grain
- .38 S&W 146 grain
- .38 Special 148 grain
- .38 Special 158 grain RN
- .38 Special 158 grain SWC
- .357 Magnum 158 grain
- .44 Special 246 grain
- .45 Colt 225 grain
- .45 Colt 250 grain

Remington graciously provided me samples of the .38 Special 158 grain SWC load and the .44 Special 246 RN grain load and they did not disappoint.

The Performance WheelGun .38 Special load sent along for evaluation featured a nickel plated case and a semi-wadcutter bullet. Back in the day when revolvers ruled the earth, at least one big city police department utilized a Remington duty load with a semi-wadcutter bullet as opposed to round nosed as they felt it was a better stopper. This is a standard pressure load advertised with a muzzle velocity of 755 feet per second. For informal, non-social use in older guns, this is a far better proposition than hot JHP cartridges. In my Kimber K6 this load proved accurate and mild shooting. I had no qualms at all feeding it to my alloy frame S&W Model 12 Airweight where felt recoil was more noticeable but hardly abusive.

The .44 Special has long had a cult following among old school revolver shooters. Many claimed it was an exceptionally accurate cartridge the exploits of legendary lawmen such as Jelly Bryce also endeared it to the masses. One of my favorite handguns is a S&W Model 624 with a 3 inch which was part of a special run com-



*From This Kimber K6, The .38 Special 158 Grain LSWC Performance Wheelgun Load Was A Top Performer*



missioned by Lew Horton back in the 1980s. The Wheel-Gun 246 grain classic load ran like a top in this gun and produced some spectacular groups on target. It would be just the ticket for those large frame Colt and Smith revolvers of old.

The Remington Performance WheelGun like represents an interesting departure from the current offerings of the contemporary manufacturers and harkens back to an earlier era of time when things were much simpler. If you have a need to feed your pet revolver some quality, classic-style ammunition, you can't do any better than Remington Performance WheelGun.

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## Birth of a Legend The "Baby" Chiefs

*By Dewey Winstead*

It's 1948, the war is over and folks are buying guns again. Your company, Smith and Wesson, is losing out to Colt in the market for a small, dependable defense revolver. The Colt Detective Special rules the roost. You've got the 2-inch M&P, but it's a K-frame and not conducive to pocket carry. So, you get all your engineers together and spell it out...build something to compete with the Colt.

Your engineers set out and come up with a solution. Take your existing small frame revolver, the "Terrier" (available in .32 and .38 S&W), and improve upon it. Lengthen the cylinder, beef up the grip and chamber it in .38 Special. Take the prototype to the 1950 National Police Chiefs' Convention and have them name it. Instant acceptance and a willing group of cops to buy and promote it.

Thus, was born the "Chief's Special", the modern day Model 36 and a building block for all J-frames



to come. But the first guns weren't perfect, they needed to be tuned and improved just a bit. From 1950 to 1953, Smith and Wesson slowly improved the Chief's Special. The first few years of production are now known as "Baby Chiefs"

I have two such examples in my collection. My first was purchased at a local gun store who had it in the case marked as a Model 36. Upon handling it, it felt smaller in my hand and had an "oval" cylinder release, as well as a round trigger guard. I took it home and started some research. I had never heard of a "Baby Chief," but I was looking at one now. One of the last, it has the serrated ramp front sight and dated to 1953.

Fast forward a year and I was set up at a local gun show when a fellow dealer who knew I liked Smiths came up and asked me to look at one he had just bought off a family friend. This one was an even earlier example with a 4-digit serial number and the half-moon front sight of the first production guns. But this one was nickel finished! I didn't even know they made those so I begged off until I could get home that night and conduct some research. After finding out that nickeled Baby Chiefs only made up about .06% of the total production, I quickly met his price the following day. The only downside was that someone had replaced the grips with a set of Jay Scott faux pearl stocks somewhere in its past. I was able to remedy that when a fellow on the S&W forum offered me a correct set of grips for a fair price. Regular J-frame grips will fit these guns, but they are about 1/16th of an inch too long. One of the changes before final design was lengthening the grip just a hair. These guns take the "Terrier" (I-frame) grips, which are a bugger to find in good condition these days.

So, after 3 years of tweaking, Smith had a pocket revolver to compete with the Colt DS. Sure, the Colt had six shots as compared to the Smith's five, but the Smith was smaller and lighter. As the years went by, the Smith became the preferred weapon for pocket carry for a large percentage of the gun carrying population. The Colt seems a bit more "noir" and even I think it looks sexier, but the Smith spawned countless varieties of J-frames that continue even today.

Next time you see an early Smith J-frame, look for a few signs that it might be a "Baby." The sights started out as half-moon front, then smooth ramp, then serrated ramp. Cylinder releases were originally oval, then flat, then the rounded type we see today. All will have the 5-screw frame. The trigger guards on all the Baby Chief's were of a rounded shape, not the elongated oval seen after 1953. This is probably their most distinguishing feature.

Another is the fact that if you're familiar with J-frames in particular, these will just feel "smaller" upon handling.

These guns are still capable defense weapons, even today. Like all early Smith and Wesson's before the model numbering system came about in 1957, they should only be used with standard pressure .38 Special, no +P! They will fit all holsters used for the J-frame.

I consider myself fortunate to have found these for my collection, even if it was entirely by accident. The next time you see "just an old Model 36" under glass at your local firearm emporium, look a bit closer, and may you be as lucky as me!

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## Leave The Gun, Take The Cannoli

### A Handgun Drill

*By Mike Boyle*

**Objective:** This drill is designed to measure shooter performance when firing with one hand.

**Distance:** 7 to 5 yards

**Target:** Any paper or cardboard target with a realistic size high value scoring area.

**Rounds Needed:** 8

**Prop Needed:** White bakery box (string optional)

**Begin Exercise:** The shooter will have a fully loaded handgun in the holster. The bakery box will be held in the support hand. The shooter will move in the following manner-

**Phase One-** Begin 10 yards from the target and begin walking. The shoot signal will be given when the shooter is between 5-7 yards from the target. Fire 2 shots strong hand only. Don't drop the box!

**Phase Two-** As above but begin at 5 yard line but approach 10 yards from the left.

**Phase Three-** As above, but approach from right

**Phase Four-** Face up range, one yard from the target. Walk away on the signal, pivot 180 degrees and engage the target.

**Scoring:** Combine all 4 times. Add one second for any hit on the target outside the high value area. Low time wins!

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Training  
Concepts**



**Lou Chiodo**

This is an awesome book and should be  
required reading for all firearms instruc-  
tors. There is simply no substitute for, and  
no shortcuts to, a comprehensive program  
of firearms safety.

-Ed Lovette Author of *The Snubby Revolver*

[snubnoir.com/chiodo](http://snubnoir.com/chiodo)



# The Smoke Filled Room

By Doc Hannah

BOOK REVIEW- *Gangster Hunters: How Hoover's G-Men Vanquished America's Deadliest Public Enemies*, by John Oller (2024, Dutton Press. Pre-publishing copy made available for review.)

People love an underdog. Some of our favorite stories involve criminals, rebels, and loners, both fictional and real-life, who fight The System, such as Robin Hood, Braveheart, Jesse James, Butch Cassidy & the Sundance Kid, and countless books, movies, and TV shows about gangsters from the 1920s and 1930s. Cops & Robbers stories entertain us with the exploits of the criminals, while reassuring us when the cops win (as they inevitably must, lest The System collapse.)

Before millions of schoolboys in the 1930s wanted to be G-Men, they wanted to be gangsters. Gangster life seemed glamorous, in sharp contrast to real Depression life in America. People resented banks and big business, and so criminals who made them bleed, metaphorically and literally, were elevated as counterculture heroes. The dark, dirty, and bloody parts of gangster life were glossed over on the movie screen, as cinematic violence was artificially sanitized by the Hays Code of 1930, which made the criminal lifestyle more seductive for audiences who paid 25 cents for a Saturday matinee.

Into this social environment rode the bank robbers, road bandits, and kidnappers of the American Midwest. Clyde Barrow and Bonnie Parker became the 1930s' Romeo and Juliet. The newspapers publicized catchy nicknames, such as "Pretty Boy" Floyd, "Machine Gun" Kelly, "Ma" Barker, and "The Fox" (Ed Davis). Their acts of real-life violence against real-life people were often overlooked by the public, while their romanticized lives were fodder for newspapers, newsreels, and movies.

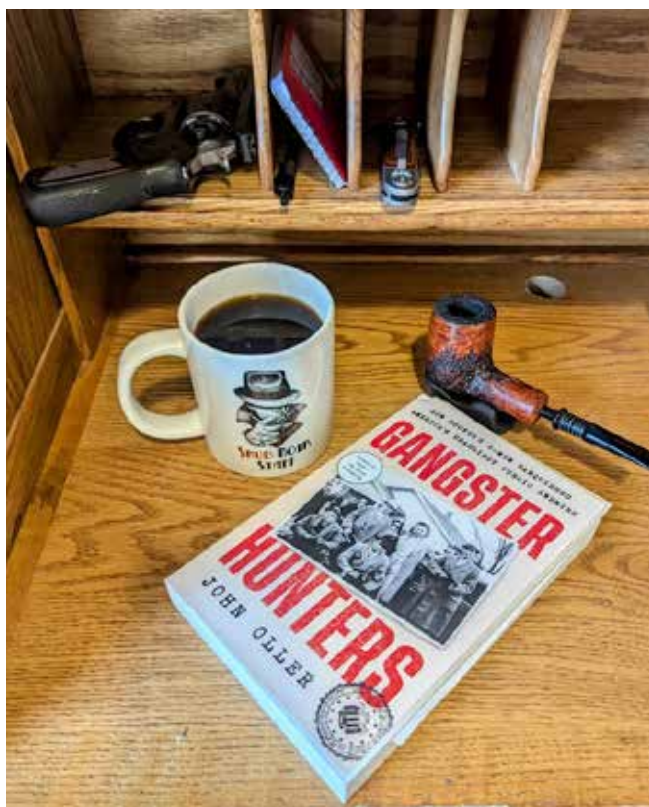
In his new book, *Gangster Hunters* (2024, Dutton Press), John Oller, an attorney and journalist, examined

the three year period of 1933-1936 from the perspectives of the criminals and the lawmen who hunted them. Using official records, interviews of surviving family members of the agents of the day, and other research material, Oller carefully documented the growth of J. Edgar Hoover's Bureau of Investigation from an often-unarmed white collar investigation unit, into the "gangbuster" FBI of the pre-WWII era.

Beginning with the kidnapping of businessman Walter Hamm in St. Paul, MN in 1933, and the Kansas City Massacre, which coincidentally occurred the next day, and carefully following the Midwest crime spree ending with the capture of Alvin Karpis in 1936, Oller told the stories of the public figures, foot soldiers, and ancillary figures in the War on Crime. Oller demonstrated an attorney's attention to detail and a journalist's flair for storytelling to craft a reference book which reads like a novel. The book is unflinching in its descriptions of the violence of both sides, and the successes and failures of the Bureau's manhunt efforts. His exposition on the agents and criminals may best be described as "warts and all".

Oller's book, by virtue of its subject alone, invites comparison to one of the best-written histories of the era, *Public Enemies* by Bryan Burrough (2004, Penguin Books). *Public Enemies* was the source material for the 2009 Michael Mann film of the same name, starring Johnnie Depp as John Dillinger. In fact, Burrough's book is listed in the bibliography for *Gangster Hunters*. I found *Public Enemies* to be more "storytelling" in tone, and *Gangster Hunters* to have more of a "reporting" style. Either would be an excellent reference book for a crime aficionado, and both have a place on my bookshelf.

I have only one criticism of *Gangster Hunters*: Oller chose a couple of anachronistic terms and references which are out of place in the narrative of the 1930s.



Throughout the book, he used a 21st century euphemism, “sex worker”, instead of the period-correct, “prostitute”; and he inserted the phrase, “In the era long before the Me Too Movement” to describe the interoffice romance and engagement of Doris Roberts and Special Agent Allen Lockerman, which resulted in their marriage of more than 30 years. While these may be no more than disagreements about writing style, I found them distracting.

Gangster Hunters is slated for release in print, Kindle, and audiobook in November 2024. I highly recommend it.



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## There's a New Revolver in Town, Part 2

*By Pepe Castillo*

In part 1, I told you about the new Ultimate Carry j-frame collaboration between Lipsey's and Smith & Wesson. The 38 Special version arrived at my LGS (local gun store) first, and then a few weeks later my favorite gun shop operator - Neal - was able to secure me one of the 32 H&R Magnum versions. Sweet!! None of my other LGSs have even been able to get one UC on their shelves. It pays to have friends in low places.

My 432UC cost the same as my 442UC, weighs in at the same 16 ounces, and has the same beautiful and great feeling VZ G-10 grips. Ten trigger pulls averaged 9 pounds 6 ounces, essentially identical to my 442UC. I bought the same matte black finish, and externally the pair are indistinguishable. It's only when you open the cylinder and see 6 holes instead of 5 that you realize that you're holding the 32 Mag instead of the 38 Special. I've begun to think I should have bought the matte stainless version so I can tell the difference without picking them up!

From time to time I play around with staging the trigger. That is, manipulating the trigger to quickly start the cylinder moving but stopping the trigger once the chamber is aligned with barrel — then carefully pressing the trigger to fire with a much lighter and shorter press. It is far easier to do with the k and n-frames because of the greater cylinder mass, but occasionally I try it with a j-frame. Pro tip: Never use this technique for defensive shooting. The fine motor skills needed to do this will not be available to you under the stress of that moment.



(l to r) 32 S&W, 32 Long, 32 H&R Magnum. All will fire in the S&W 432UC.





*An extra chamber in a j-frame is quite handy. (Harmonica not included.)*

Anyway. I was able to stage the trigger with the 38 Special 442UC, but the 432 was another story. I tried to stage the trigger while dry firing, but was rarely successful. Twice, the trigger stuck in the rear position, about where an external hammer revolver would position the trigger when cocked. (See photo) Obviously that is not supposed to happen, and after 50 dry fires I was not able to replicate it. Must have been an errant burr.

For range time I loaded up every type of .32 ammo on my shelves that featured a rim. I don't have any 327 Federal Magnum, which is a good thing because that would not have fit in the cylinder. But 32 S&W (also called 32 Short), 32 S&W Long, and 32 H&R Magnum all do. Nice versatility. The 32 Short barely recoils more than a .22, while the 32 Magnum is stout enough for self-defense or hunting small game. That is a broad capability range.

Again I used 7 yards as a generally expected range for this pocket revolver and shot offhand at about one second per round. The group sizes are below. None are target grade, but this is not a target revolver — and they are certainly adequate for the intended purpose.

Remington 32 Short 88 gr LRN	1.27"
Federal 32 H&R Magnum 85 gr JHP 32HRB	1.51"
Federal 32 H&R Magnum 85 gr JHP C32HRB	1.92"
Smellier & Bellot 32 Long 100 gr LWC	2.32"
Winchester Western 32 Short 85 gr LRN	2.45"
Critical Defense 32 H&R Mag 80 gr FTX	.65"

I started with pulling the very smooth trigger on the 32 Short which was like petting your favorite pussycat. Truly no more recoil than a .22 from this 88 grain bullet

moving at a factory stated sedate 680 fps. Moving up to the 32 Long definitely let you know that you had changed the ammo, but was still pretty mild. Shooting 32 H&R Magnum changed the story entirely.

My first cylinder full of 32 Mag was exciting! The VZ G-10 high horn grips spread out the recoil, though they did still hit that nerve at the base of my thumb - just not as hard as the 38 Special did. The RSO at the range was eager to try it out and he liked the grips a lot. However there was a major problem with the ammo.

I had purchased a quantity of .32 ammo several years ago off Gunbroker when I acquired a Charter Arms Professional in 32 H&R Mag. (Look for a review of that 7-shot snub nose sometime in the future!) A box from that haul was the first magnum in my 432UC. It was loud, it was sharp, and the cases clung to the inside of the chambers like a drowning mariner clinging to a life ring. The next day I still had marks on my hand from unsuccessful strikes on the ejector rod. After finally getting the cases out, I noticed that every single case was split. Every. Single. One. The box was clearly old, but not that old and it did not appear to have been abused. I called Federal Ammunition and they replaced it without any questions.

Fortunately I had recently purchased a box of the same ammo (Federal 32HRB) so I went to that. It was loud and sharp and the cases were reluctant, but they came out with two sharp raps. No split case issues from this box. The final round I tried was Hornady's Critical Defense. I like this round a lot in 38 Special and 9mm, and I figured it would be a good choice for 32 Mag. It spoke with authority and the nickel cases came out easily. But the accuracy — while adequate — was a bit disappointing. Maybe my shooting was just off that day. I'll try again....



*Split Case*

So why 32 Magnum? In a word, capacity and controllability. Okay, that's two words. The round was developed in 1984 to double the velocity and energy of the 38 Special +P. This, while squeezing one more round into a j-frame cylinder and reducing the recoil by using a much lighter bullet. Great idea since a .38 is really a .36, so you aren't giving up that much in caliber diameter - only about 45/1000ths. Ballistic testing looks good, but I haven't heard of any real world defensive use.

Grade: A. I'm a little concerned about the trigger getting stuck in the rearward position. A defensive revolver should leave the factory in perfect condition, but the problem hasn't repeated itself, and I was not manipulating the trigger as designed. I just might leave the .38 in the safe and carry the 32 Mag — I like having that 6th round at hand....

PS: After a month or two, I noticed the Big Green Dot was not longer green. The tritium tube had failed. I contacted XS sights and they sent me a replacement front sight. Then I pulled my 442 out of the ready safe and it too no longer had a properly functioning tritium tube lighting up the green phosphorescence. After emailing and talking with S&W customer service, they also sent me a new front sight. It appears that the first batch of 432 and 442UCs had problems with the tritium tubes failing. Nobody wanted to take responsibility for the failure, but both XS and S&W stepped up to fix the problem. Thanks to both.

PPS: I found an intriguing pocket holster specifically designed for the UC series, intended to protect the sights and allow for a smooth draw. Look for a review of the American Fighting Revolver Undercover Pocket Holster in a future issue of the Detective GATzette.

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## Why Train?

By T.C. Fuller

American men, in the main, often feel as though they are born with three innate abilities.

Tell one that he is going to play shortstop for the New York Yankees, be a chef at a 5 Star French restaurant in San Francisco, or fly a 747 non-stop from Los Angeles to London with 540 souls aboard, and he will generally speaking agree that he needs extensive professional training and practice before he will be able to do any of these well.

But when it comes to driving fast, making love, or shooting guns, well, the average American man will grin and modestly state he may have some skills in these areas. He will have come by these skills naturally, or with very modest levels of coaching by an interested person. When describing his skill set, words like “natural” and “I’m a good...” will enter the chat. It is a shockingly common blind spot.

While untrained skill in two of these areas can be risky, a lack of training with a firearm is incredibly dangerous. When that firearm is carried daily with self-defense in mind, it is even worse. Handguns, particularly snub nosed revolvers, are difficult to operate quickly and accurately. Especially under the pressure of a gunfight. Doing so without professional training is foolish and potentially disastrous.

If you are going to carry a handgun about your person to defend yourself “in the gravest extreme”, it should be a self-imposed requirement that you get trained in precisely how to do that. I mean that both from a physical skill and a legal perspective. It is not just a good idea, it is a critical one.

I choose my words with care here, so read that paragraph once more. For me, the words “self-imposed” are crucial to this discussion. Let me explain.

Your right to go armed is, to my mind, a Constitutionally guaranteed right. If you choose to go that route, great. While I do not think everyone should carry a firearm for defense, I am adamant that everyone must have that right. They can then decide for themselves the direction they want to go in.

If a person does choose to go heeled in this world, they have adopted a very serious course. They have picked up a great deal of interpersonal power. And with that comes significant responsibility (with apologies to Uncle Ben Parker). Carrying a concealed self-defense firearm provides the power to administer deadly force upon another person without prior judicial review. It is



a literal power of life and death. There is very little I can think of, if anything, that rivals that authority.

Knowing that alone, why would anyone not desperately want training in this area?

Because I see the carrying of firearms as a Constitutional right, I do not believe that training should be made mandatory by the state. That opens the door to far too many possibilities for abuse. I also very strongly disagree with the idea that one must be "properly trained" in order to enjoy a right guaranteed in our Constitution. Can you imagine if someone were to require a license if a person wanted to worship in the church or synagogue of their choice? The outcry would be legendary.

And while requiring such training is a philosophical "bad" to me, it does not make such training a bad idea. Far from it. The state should not be able to force you to attend. You should force yourself to attend.

Suppose you own a boat. The state does not require that you learn to swim before you operate that vessel, but that does not make learning to swim a bad idea. One would think that it is pretty stupid to go boating when one is unable to swim. One would be correct.

While a person might have some level of natural ability with a firearm, that is nothing compared to what that same person could accomplish with that ability and solid professional training. I fell into that category when I first started in the FBI in the late 1990s. I believed that I had far more skill than I did, because I had been plinking with guns since I was five. Right next to my father and grandfather, a couple of good old country boys from Oklahoma. I was deadly on tin cans at five to seven yards.

Then I went to the Academy and saw what true professionals were capable of with a handgun.

I have spent the last three decades getting training, coaching, and practicing. I doubt that I am now as good as I once assumed I was. No matter how good you are, training will make you better. Much better.

Our society is litigious in the extreme. Training will help insulate you from making errors that could get you not only injured or killed, it will help keep you out of prison or being civilly sued into life-long poverty. Or both.

You may be completely untrained and an absolutely fantastic weekend plinker with your favorite daily carry roscoe. That no more makes you a gunfighter than owning a plane makes you a fighter ace or owning a hammer makes you a carpenter. Get the training. Put in the practice. Then get more training. Rinse and repeat. It can only serve to make you better and, by extension, make us all safer.

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# **Point: Four, Not More - In Praise of a Reduced Round Count Loading Strip**

*By Michael deBethencourt*

As a live fire association, Snub Noir does a great deal of range time drills focused on snub revolver reloading skills. Notably we work on getting shooters to get back onto the target quickly while balancing ammo count against available spare rounds. In the real world, once upon a time, slow reloading speeds cost lives. One need look no farther than the last few seconds before the murder of Officer Pence at the Newhall massacre.

Over our multi-year research we have come to associate specific tools with a specific round count volume when trying to find the ideal balance between reloading quantity vs available time. All our research comes down to this: Is a self-defense shooter better served with a reloaded snub now or with a filled cylinder later?

Speaking only for myself, I would argue for the former over the latter. In keeping with that view let me state that there is a notable advantage to limiting the on-board ammo count on a loading strip and concurrently, a notable disadvantage to adding additional rounds to the same strip.

Earlier today (as I type this note), I took my 17-year old son (with a six shot K-frame) and his 17-year old friend (with a five shot J-frame) to the range with a number of snub revolvers. I set both boys to two tasks. We loaded two dozen TUFF brand Quick Strip flexible loading strips with four rounds apiece. Against the PACT timer I directed the boys load their snubs with four rounds and then fire one round into a steel plate set at 7-yards away. Each boy conducted this drill five times. We then repeated the exercise having each boy re-load with five rounds. I opted to have the boys reload four-rounds first (cold) in an effort to improve the five-round loading speeds with a little warm up practice.

The results were telling. My son's average speed at reloading four rounds was 7.38 seconds total (or 1.84 seconds per round.) When tasked to reload five rounds his average time was 9.24 seconds (or, again, 1.84 seconds per round) But note that his K-frame left him with two empty chambers to choose from when inserting his final round. My son's friend's average speed at reloading four rounds was 7.51 seconds total (or 1.87 seconds per round.) When tasked to reload five rounds his J-frame his average time was 13.72 seconds (or lengthened to 2.74 seconds per round) This is about par for all the

5-shot J-frame shooters I have witnessed over the years. Inserting one or two rounds into any of the five available chambers in a five shot J-frame is relatively easy. Inserting an additional one or two rounds into the three still available chambers in a five shot J-frame is still relatively easy. Inserting one round into a lone remaining chamber is a very specific, focus and fine motor skill dependent skill. And recorded measurements demonstrate that filling that final chamber will (depending on the shooter) eat up to between 50-to-100-percent again the total time used to load the first four rounds.

Concurrently, though not specifically tested this morning, many folks who try this exam for themselves often conclude: Yes, I'm proportionally much faster loading fewer rounds, but having the option of more rounds on the same strip isn't a disadvantage. My experience suggests that this is not true.

When tested shooters over two decades and two reactions are regularly encountered. First, most shooters finding there is still an available round on the loading strip will habitually try to load that or those remaining rounds in, even knowing that it will often take as much as the equivalent total amount of time it took to load their first four rounds.

Second, despite decades of chiding shooters to discard their used loading strip, shooters with a round or two still on the strip will, again, habitually refuse to discard it. In my experience more than a third of shooters will either frantically clutch the strip while trying to fire their snubs successfully or will opt to stop, store and/or pocket the strip on their person.

Snub Noir is a reenactor's organization. But as reenactors we are also a live fire organization and we are still working with a classic tool that is still used by millions for actual self-defense. There are a number of reloading tools that will let you re-fill a cylinder in the same length of time you will use to partially fill a cylinder. But the loading strip is not one of those tools. Go and enjoy your snub. Please join us at any one of our Snub Noir snub matches. But if you feel the need to carry additional rounds, carry additional loading strips with a reduced number of rounds on the strip. The alternative is to risk the fate of other shooters who ignored a simple self defense truth: Four rounds in a five-shot J-frame is not a gun that is 80-present loaded. It is 100-present loaded four times over. And it is a self-defense tool ready to fire as quickly as you need it to.



# Counterpoint: The Case for Five

*By Shawn McCarver*

By way of brief history, it was recently suggested on the Facebook Snub Noir page that one should plan to carry a five-round Speed Strip with only four rounds because it takes too long to load the fifth round. Naturally, I had to open my big mouth and suggest that one should carry all five rounds (assuming the revolver is a five-shooter) in the five-round speed strip and that if one does not have time to load all five, then and only then, load only the first four, or however many one has time to load, in the charge holes of the revolver's cylinder.

The 1970 Newhall Massacre resulted in the killing of four California Highway Patrol (CHP) officers. CHP Officer Pence had apparently loaded five rounds into his six-shot revolver and did not see the suspect approaching him. As Officer Pence reloaded the sixth round and began to close the cylinder of his revolver, Officer Pence was shot twice from behind at point-blank range by the suspect.

It has been erroneously claimed that Officer Pence was slowed in his reload by "policing his brass" during the shootout, having been required to do so during training. However, there was not one shred of evidence that any of the four CHP officers did anything to preserve their spent cartridges. The brass ejected from Officer Pence's revolver during the attempted reload was discovered on the ground right where Officer Pence had been attempting his reload.

The question becomes whether officer Pence should have abandoned the last round and gotten himself back in the fight. Clearly, he was attempting to load the sixth round when he was shot twice in the head from the back "execution style." It is reported that the killer even said, "I've got you now."

It is impossible to guess whether Officer Pence would have done anything differently had he seen his assailant approaching him. However, keeping your situational awareness in this type of situation seems to be something that could help save a life. Cylinder flutes on a revolver assist in "heads-up" reloading. Had Officer Pence seen the assailant in time, perhaps Officer Pence would have slammed the cylinder shut on his revolver and opened fire on his assailant with only five rounds loaded. Regardless, I will say here and now that if you do not have time to finish your reload, whether you are reloading individual cartridges, or two at a time by hand or from a speed strip, etc., it is imperative that you get back in the fight with what you have loaded, or with your back-up piece if you

do not have time to complete a full reload. Stated another way, if the situation warrants, it is best to get back in the fight even without a full cylinder. Seems perfectly logical.

The original discussion on the Facebook thread centered around the idea that if carrying a five shot revolver, the speed strip should only be loaded with four rounds because it takes too long to load the fifth round and you may not have time. The other side of this argument puts forth the idea that if the round is there, you will try to load it even if you shouldn't. Perhaps, but the question is whether you want to intentionally carry less ammunition on the theory that you cannot train yourself to stop loading if a threat is imminent. After all, it is obvious that loading that last round will take more time. By that line of reasoning, perhaps one should skip the last two or even three rounds (if loading two at a time, that means saving two cycles of reaching for ammo, inserting cartridges, etc.).

To the best of my knowledge it was the instructors who run the Pat Rogers Memorial Match at Gunsite who used a PACT timer to determine that loading the fifth round in a five-shot J Frame took a disproportionately large amount of time as compared to loading the first four rounds. Despite this, what they have never taught at Gunsite or anywhere else except here, as a response to this discovery, is that you should not carry that fifth round because you probably will not have enough time to load it into the last charge hole. I went back and reviewed the CHP training film on the Newhall Massacre and it certainly contains no similar recommendation.

Again, while you may not need it, I have never heard, until it was suggested here, that you should carry less than the full load on a speed strip. After all, you may need them. What needs to occur is more training on "heads-up" reloading to maintain situational awareness, and training to not load that last round if you do not have time.

I understand that loading the fifth round (assuming a five-round cylinder) adds time to the reloading process. I understand that for any number of reasons, it may not be possible due to time constraints to load all five rounds. My recommendation, with all due respect to the opposing side, is to fill up your loading device, in the case of this discussion, the speed strip, to its full capacity. Merely having all of the rounds does not mean you have to use them in the rare instance where you may have to stop the loading process to avoid being shot dead. Therefore, I recommend that you reload in full if you can, and if you cannot, you stop reloading, close the cylinder and get back in the fight. But in all cases, I recommend that you carry a full speed strip (or two) as it is better to have the extra rounds and not need them than to need them and not have them.

## Taurus 856 Grips/Stocks

By Dave DeMoss

*Mr. Bethencourt of Snub Noir posted on Facebook seeking members that had a Taurus 856 .38 revolver. I happen to have 2, so I sent the requested photos and information to him. Last week I received 2 sets of grips/stocks in the mail: "Red" and "Gray".*

*ALL photos that show in place cartridges are SPENT BRASS.*

*In fair warning, I am not a writer, nor a die-hard revolver guy. I have never changed grips on a Taurus, so: on to the Good, Bad, and not so lovely.*

*The 856 comes standard with a "boot grip," fastened with an oversize roll pin you have to drift out. "Left in the photo."*

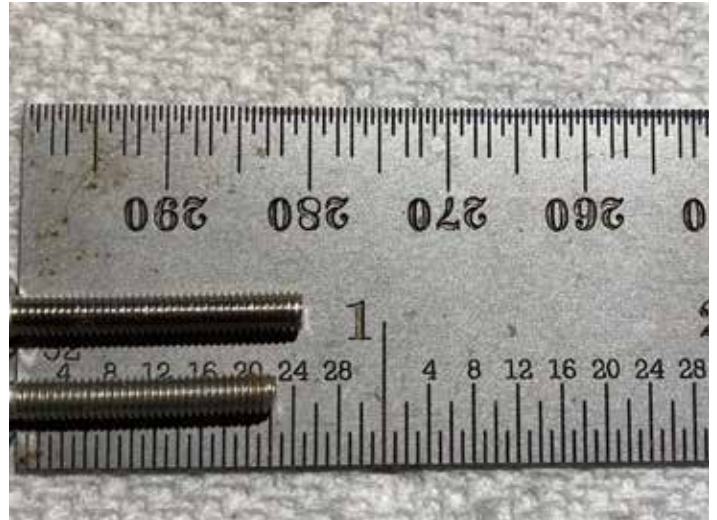


*Pin out, grip removed:*



*Leftmost hole is for the fastening/locator pin*

Installation was straightforward, with one exception. One of the two screws the grips were supplied with was too short to engage the nut on the grip when installation was attempted



The finished install is shown in the next photos.







## Draw stroke: The ignored master skill

*By Michael deBethencourt*

The overwhelming number of shooters you have observed are standing with their favorite handgun in their hand, arms out in front of them perfecting their favorite hand-on-gun grasp, feet in their ideal stance and triggers compressions stroked to near perfection. What is the recital everyone is trying to prepare for and perfect? Between the choice of being the Good Guy or the Bad guy, the one where the participant STARTS with his gun in his hand is the bad guy. The good guy that is required to draw his gun in response. Let me suggest that no serious self-defense enthusiast should ever fire off a round unless it is preceded by a draw stroke. If you are a self-defense shooter, someone responsible for the safety of your family, you will, almost by definition, be RESPONDING to a threat that will require you to flawlessly draw against that threat. Subsequently, let me suggest that nearly ninety-nine percent of our dry fire exercises and nearly ninety-nine percent of our on the range live fire practice should be consumed by perfecting our draw stroke. From Jelly Bryce to Bill Jordan to Jack Wilson, flawless, and limitlessly practiced and perfected draw stroke is the single greatest and clearest indicator that a self-defense practitioner is committed to the safety of himself, his family, and his community. Anything else is roleplaying ... for the wrong role.

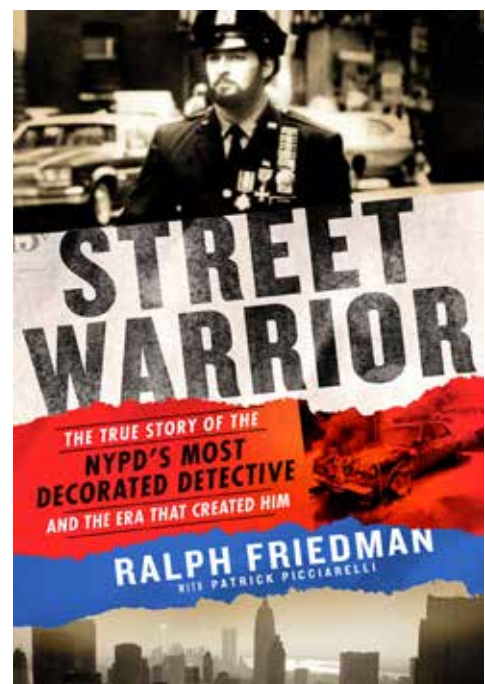
## Vacation Mystery

A couple flies to Hawaii. The husband returns home alone when his wife dies in Hawaii. The police phone the travel agent, ask one question and arrest the husband. What was the question?

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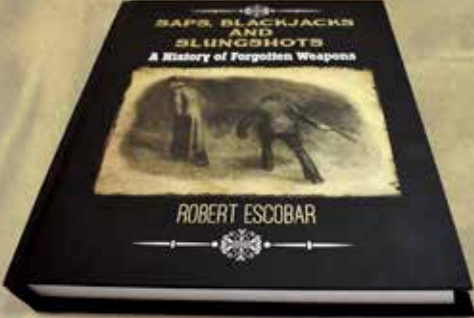
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# Sleuths and Secrets

## L'affaire Laetitia Toureaux Ou Le crime parfait

By T.C. Fuller

Our case begins at 6:30 PM on Sunday, the 16th of May, 1937 in a Paris Metro carriage in Porte Doree.

A train pulls in on Line 8 as usual. Passengers await along the platform, including some planning to board the 1st Class carriage. The train stops, the doors open. Nobody departs the 1st class carriage through either of the two entrances.

The new passengers board.

There is only one person in the 1st Class carriage. It is a young woman, stylishly attired in a bright green suit, contrasting white hat, purse and gloves.



As new passengers enter, the woman slumps over and falls to the floor.

Others rush to her aid, only to find her barely clinging to life, with the hilt of a knife protruding from behind her right ear. Her jugular has been severed and though she is still alive, she will not be for long if the knife is removed. As it is, the knife is serving to seal the wound it has created.

The police are summoned immediately, as is an ambulance.

Thinking that the blade is preventing the woman from talking, and in an effort to be helpful, a responding police officer swiftly removes the knife. The results are predictable and tragic.

The woman is still unable to speak as she is whisked away by the ambulance crew, leaving a blood-stained carriage floor in her wake. She dies en route to the hospital.

There were no witnesses to her murder. She was the first person ever murdered on the Paris metro. But

who was she?

The case was immediately passed on to Inspector Moreaux of La Prefecture de Police de Paris, a stylish if portly fellow. He was jowly, with a receding hairline and a bit of a hang dog appearance. His neatly trimmed mustache, double breasted suit, pressed handkerchief, and preference for Homburg hats completed his look as a classic noir detective.



Moreaux was good at his job. He quickly identified the murdered woman. She was Laetitia Toureaux and his investigation revealed that she was many things: an Italian immigrant, a sister, a daughter, a respectable widow for the last three years, and a factory worker.

She was also a dancer for money, a lover to various paramours, a detective and, perhaps, a spy.

Moreaux launched his investigation and swiftly found that Toureaux was seen boarding the 1st Class carriage, alone, at the station prior to where she was discovered. The doors at either end of the carriage she was in were locked, so nobody was able to exit the carriage into the 2nd Class carriages at either end.

An autopsy was performed by an attending surgeon immediately after Toureaux died. The knife, an 8" flick knife with a bone handle popular with Italian assassins in that time and place, had struck a single, mortal blow. Such people also liked to leave the weapon in their deceased victims as here, in order to "sign" their work. The knife had severed her jugular and carotid, then embedded in her spinal column. Due to the nature of the wound, suicide was ruled out. It looked like a professional killing.



Moreaux was thorough. He followed up on the knife with the manufacturer. It was only sold in two stores in Paris. Crumbling under Moreaux' relentless questioning, both shops had to embarrassingly admit that they had record of any sales.

He checked the handle for fingerprints. Clean. The killer must have worn gloves. Again, professional.

He searched Toureaux' apartment in the 20th arrondissement, an Italian immigrant enclave. He finds it small, but stylishly furnished and full of books and fashion magazines. A woman with aspirations. She had a stack of letters from admiring men, including a John Martain, a sailor stationed in southern France. He was a man with whom she had an appointment to meet at 10 PM in Paris the night of her death. Moreaux quickly found out that though he had requested leave to make that appointment, it had been denied. He had never made it to Paris.

Moreaux continued to dig, putting in the shoe leather such investigations always require. He also found that she had a relationship with a mysterious "powerful" man who would not leave her alone. She had told friends about this, though she never identified who he was.

Toureaux' family had come from a region in Italy known for its Socialist leanings. After Mussolini came to power in 1922, emigres from this region were monitored by his intelligence agents. Moreaux had to consider this as another potential source for her murder.

She worked by day in a shoe factory and was known to be a solid, conscientious worker. At night, however, she frequented many of the various dance halls around Paris. She was often paid as a "professional dancer", a woman who danced with different single men. She worked in the cloakroom of "The Heartbreak Dance Hall". She had worked for the Ruffinak Detective Agency as an undercover investigator, infiltrating companies with strike concerns. She was good at the work.

George Ruffinak had helped her get the job both at the shoe factory and in the cloakroom.

Moreaux went to talk to him. He confirmed that she was employed as a freelancer, gathering information for him in 16 assignments over several months. Ruffinak was impressed by her.

"She was an expert in all of her duties", Ruffinak told him.

If she was spying there, it was another potential source for violent enemies.

Moreaux found that she had been a member of the Republican League for the Public Good, a political organization in Paris. Her membership there had been spon-

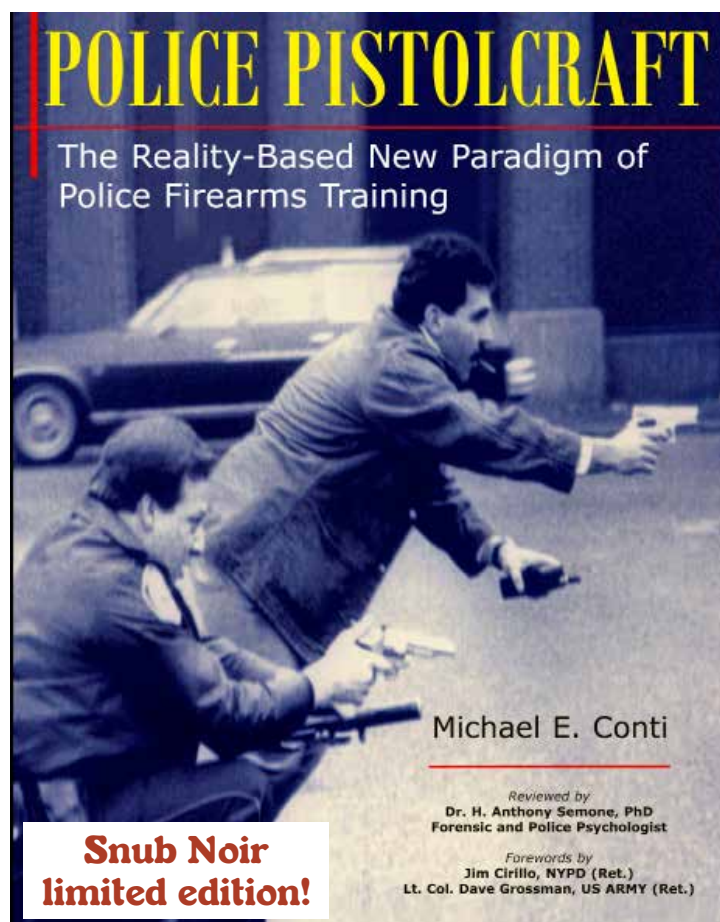
sored by both Ruffinak and a Paris police inspector.

The more he dug, the more questions and potential sources of threat Moreaux discovered. He eventually concluded she had also possibly been working for the French Secret Service and the Italian Secret Service, as well as Ruffinak and the Paris police. She had numerous male attachments. And there was precious little physical evidence at the murder itself.

Moreaux, knowing that he had little hope of ever unraveling this knot and figuring out the precise circumstances of Toureaux' death, continued to investigate and dig. He marched on, interviewing, investigating, interrogating.


What eventually happened? The records were sealed late in 1937. They cannot be opened until 1938, a remarkably long time for a simple murder investigation. Any attempts to open the files and keep the investigation open were summarily crushed by the outbreak of the Second World War.

Convenient, eh?



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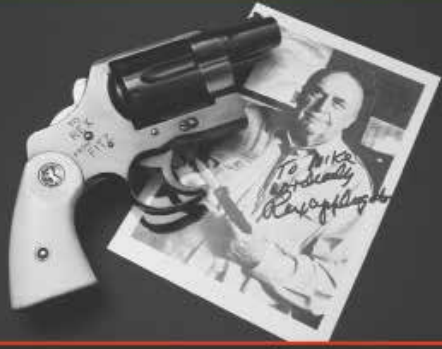


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# Murder by Installment

By Jesse Slater

## Episode 1

At eleven sharp my office door banged open, like the starting gun at the derby. "I need your help, Slade. I've been murdered."

"Mr. Brazelton? I'm a detective, not a spiritualist. You should try downstairs. Mrs. Brookley does a pretty fair number in seances, I bel—"

"No, man. I've been poisoned, but it's a slow one. You are Slade?"

"Matt Slade. All my life."

"I'm Augustus P. Brazelton, Slade."

He wasn't the powerful, confident textile magnate I'd expected, but frail, doddering. His skin looked gray as the lowering clouds at my back; wrinkled as a linen suit that'd been slept in. His shuffling steps were far too frail for a man of fifty two. I checked the casenotes. Had I gotten it wrong? Was he seventy two? Ninety two? The file, when my swimming eyes focused, was upside down. No help there.

"I'm not a sawbones, either. What do you want me for?" They say the early bird gets the worm, I felt like the worm. I had trouble keeping up with this bird, that early.

"I've been to all of them. They say there's nothing to be done; I've got a month, maybe less. No, Slade, I need you to investigate my murder."

"I'm really more the catch the cheating wife kind of detective, or find the employee with the missing cash box. For murder, you want the police."

"They won't touch it. They think I'm a crazy old man, pointing fingers, blaming others for my own bad luck. Slade, do you always try this hard to avoid paying work?"

"Just lately it's been avoiding me." I gave the drawer with the pint of Irish a surreptitious kick. "Maybe I ought to take your money, Brazelton. I could sure use it. But I'm no homicide—"

The old man puffed up red, so red in the face I thought he might check out right then. Then like a leaky tire, he deflated.

"Listen, Slade. I've heard you're good. Gerry Farquahar at the Union League put me onto you, but I did some detective work of my own. You're the best in the city that doesn't work for one of the big agencies, tough and smart—"

"I did sort some trouble for him, but trouble in my line."

"—and I'm willing to pay you well."

"How well we talking? Because—"

"Mr. Slade, money is no object in this case. I have plenty of it, and no time left to spend it. I want to know who killed me, so I can make sure they don't profit."

"Mr. Brazelton, you have my attention. I'll do my best for you, for what my best is worth." That's the mark. Treat him like he's got eagles on his collars. Maybe even stars. Even as I thought it, though, I clenched my fist. Down under the desk, where he couldn't see. The finger I didn't have ached. See, I'd worked for Brazelton before, when I was a lad in his mill.

"Very good, Slade," he said, in plummy, satisfied tones.

I unclenched my jaw to ask, "Who do you see as the prime suspect? Does someone stand to gain by your death?"

He coughed, long and wracking. It sounded like a bedsheet tearing inside his chest. "No...time. That's your..." more coughing, "...job, Slade. Talk to my private secretary, Bianca Woodridge. She can tell you more than I could, in any event."

"You don't keep track of your enemies?"

The coughing fit subsided, and the tycoon of old shone in his raptor's glare. "So many, and so many beneath my notice, you see."

I'll take your money, Mr. Brazelton, but...

"All right. Send this dame in. You've got her with you?"

"No. She doesn't think this is the best way I can spend my time, hiring you."

My ears perked. Oh, no? Why wouldn't Miss Woody-whatever want a dick poking around? "Well, does she work for you, or you work for her?"

"Sometimes I wonder. She should be available at my residence, any time between tea and supper."

He gave me his address, and I jotted it down with the rest of his particulars. "All right, but I'm gonna need some walking around money."

"Of course." He pulled a money clip with a roll bigger than would fit a leather wallet and peeled off some cabbage. "Will that do?"

"It'll do, all right." I took him by the hand, meaning to shake on it, but his felt like a kitten's paw in my mitt. I stopped my squeeze.

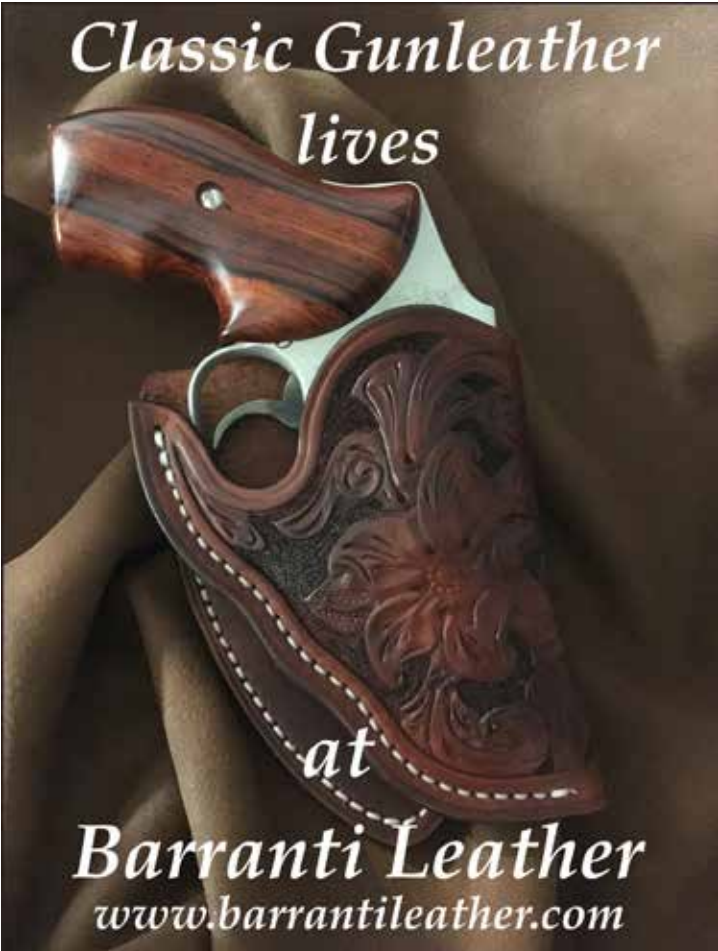
"Thank you, Slade. And remember: I don't have much time, so neither do you."

## Murder by Installment continued


The door banged behind Brazelton, and I paced around the office. I could hear the bottom drawer calling to me, but I resisted. I had time to kill before “tea,” but I was gonna need to be sharp. A few hours in the company of the Irish wouldn’t help. A walk, maybe a hoagie were what I needed.

I collected my hat and raincoat on the way out the door, then patted my pockets. Damn. Something missing. Back to the desk, and I hesitated before I opened that drawer. A sharp yank, and I grabbed the rod. I broke the cylinder and checked the loads on the little Iver Johnson, then slipped it in my pocket. I reached back down to close the drawer, but the bottle stopped me. After all, one belt wouldn’t hurt, would it?

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## Shooting the Bull – Taurus Revolvers

*By Earby Markham*

I was talking with a friend recently about one of the Taurus revolvers he was thinking about purchasing for his first handgun. However, he was hesitant due to some remarks he read in a forum he participates in. He's new to the firearms world and doesn't know what to believe in his online research.

I advised him that in my opinion, the Taurus revolvers built in the last 20 years are very good pistols and represent a good value. He had priced some of the offerings from the Big Three US manufacturers, as well as some of the newer models from others (Kimber), as well as the Taurus 685.

I decided that I would share with him my personal experience with a couple of the Taurus pistols that I've had for some years now.

The one that I've had longest is a 4' Model 94 9-shot 22LR pistol that's been used as a plinker, as well as a trainer for more a dozen people during the 20 plus years that I have owned it. Similar in size to a Smith and Wesson J frame, such as the Models 30, 31, 34-Kit Gun, 63 etc. The only issue that I have ever had with it was that early on, the blued rear sight showed a lot of rust around the sight blade and the sight frame. I contacted Taurus (back in the day when you had to either call or send them a snail mail communication) and they sent me a replacement at no charge. It currently has a rubber Hogue monogrip and I have used some Birchwood Casey Florescent Red on top of some white paint to highlight the front ramp sight.



It's like most DA rimfires, the trigger pull is a bit heavy, but it's still just a fun gun to shoot, and an excellent trainer for the recoil sensitive.

The other bull (Taurus) I own is a Model 85. I don't recall when I got it, but it was after Taurus started trimming the muzzle of the barrels flush. Previously there was an extension on the end of the barrels. In fact, mine may have been an early model when the change occurred, as you can see where the extension was removed, and the end of the barrel left unblued. The gun is also comparable in size with the S&W J frames, especially the Chiefs Special, the Model 36. I admit that I have done some work on it to improve its trigger pull by changing the springs and polishing certain parts. I bobbed the hammer while I was doing it. I found a set of wooden grips for it, the maker unknown, at a gun show. I've stripped them and reshaped them to better fit my hand and to allow speed loaders to clear. I've added some glow in the dark paint on top of some Birchwood Casey white sight paint for a better reference of the front sight in low light. A quick blast from a flashlight charges it up enough to glow brightly for a few minutes. I've carried this in both a DeSantis OWB holster as well as a Bianchi ankle holster for years.

As I explained to my friend, I've trusted these two bulls for everything from training new shooters to the defense of myself and others. I recommended that he go ahead and get a 3" Model 685 for his first handgun.

# The .25 Autos

By Dewey Winstead

Need a gat for your gal? A gun in a garter? Something you yourself can slip in a watch pocket or a pack of cigarettes? Look no further, do we have a selection for you!

John Moses Browning wasn't just a genius with guns, he developed the ammo for them also. The .25, .32, .380 and .45 ACP cartridges were all his inventions. He designed his pistols around these cartridges. The first, and the smallest, was the .25 ACP. Touted as a self-defense round when it came out back in 1905, it has been chambered in millions of guns since. The vast majority of these are small "pocket pistols" suitable for concealed carry by civilized and gentle folk. Quite a few of these guns were first designed in Europe, as, contrary to today, the well-dressed Continental gentleman of the day was usually packing heat. While we may question its effectiveness today, back in the early 20th Century, with no antibiotics and primitive surgery, it was an effective deterrent.

Here we have a selection of a few of the guns available from the early 1900s, right up into the 1970s. I have a fascination with these tiny pistols and pick them up whenever I find one at a decent price.

While I rarely carry one, preferring the .380 for a minimum pocket piece, they are all still capable of providing adequate service. From oldest to newest...

Colt 1908 Vest Pocket Model - This is the granddaddy of them all, chambered in 25 ACP. Based on the FN 1905 pistol, this model was the one Colt could sell to the US market without the FN stamp on it. In production from 1908 to 1948, approximately 410,000 were produced. Six-shot, striker-fired and weighing 13 ounces, it could be slipped into a vest pocket of a suit (hence the name) for a handy little defense piece. Fit and finish were top notch, with color case hardening evident on triggers. Mine is from 1920.

Menz "Lilliput" - This tiny .25 was produced in Germany from 1924 to around 1927. Several other models by Menz were produced into the 1930's. Europe was flooded by many different types and models of small

pocket autos during the 20s-30s. Belgian and German makers were the most represented. Weighing a mere 10 ounces, this 6-shot, striker-fired gun is truly tiny. Amazingly, Menz made an even smaller version chambered in 4.25 mm (.16 caliber)! Mine is from 1925 and came with a small leather flap holster with a German makers stamp inside. Many of these small 6.35 mm pistols, most commonly Walther, Mauser or CZ, were carried by Luftwaffe pilots in WWII because their small size didn't interfere with operations in the cockpit. I wonder if mine was a GI bring back?

Beretta 418 "Panther" - James Bond aficionados rejoice! Yes, this is that "damned Beretta" 25 ACP that

Bond had to relinquish for his PPK in Dr. No. In production from 1919 until the late 1950's in one form or another, this weapon was a favorite of Italian officers in WWII. Commercially, these were first sold as the "Bantam" and later the "Panther." Striker-fired, 8 rounds and with an alloy frame weighing 11.2 ounces, it fills the hand a bit better than some of these other pocket pistols. It has both a manual and a grip safety, and usable sights. It also utilizes the open top slide we find on so many



*Tiny Terrors - The .25 Autos*

Beretta pistols. Extremely comfortable to shoot, I have slipped this one into my pocket on occasion. Mine is from 1959, so probably one of the last out the door.

Beretta 950 - The follow up to the 418, this 25 ACP pistol would be produced from 1952 until the 1980s. Importation was stopped to the US due to the Gun Control Act (GCA) of 1968. Later the gun would be manufactured here in the US to circumvent the GCA. Early guns, like mine, were to be carried with the hammer down on a chambered round, the inertia firing pin providing the safety. Later models incorporated a thumb safety (the 950B and BS). Using the open slide design, the barrel also tips up to load the first round directly into the chamber. Alloy-framed, hammer-fired, 8 rounds and only 9.9 ounces, it conceals very easily. I have an affinity for this pistol, as I carried one (a blued 950BS) with me as a "deep backup" while serving on DEA missions to Colombia



and Peru in the 1990s. I'd carry it down to South America in a boot and field strip it and mail it home after the job was done. This pistol was trademarked "Jetfire" for many years, with its .22 Short sibling being named the "Minx." My nicked model was picked up from a fellow dealer at a show and dates to the early 60s.

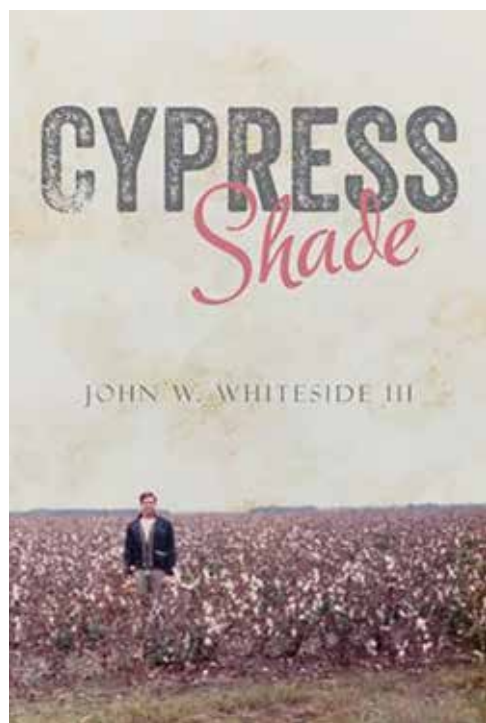
"Baby" Browning - Designed by the same guy who perfected the Hi-Power and gave us the FN-FAL rifle, Dieudonné Saive, this was an improved, smaller version of the FN 1905. First produced in 1926, it continued until 1979, though import to the US stopped in 1968. Some of these 25 ACP guns were issued to MAC-VSOG personnel in Vietnam as "last resort" weapons. Versions of this pistol were manufactured in the US under the brand names "PSP" and "Bauer" when importation was stopped in 1968. Striker-fired, 6 rounds and 9.7 ounces this is the lightest gun on this list. Heavily engraved and fancy versions of this pistol were available from FN. Truly a "gentleman's" pocket pistol, mine was produced in 1968.

Colt "Junior" - After the success of the 1908 Vest Pocket, Colt needed a pocket pistol in its lineup to compete with the Berettas, Galesis and other small pistols coming in from Europe. Colt formed a partnership with Astra, a Spanish gunmaker, to produce a 25 ACP Colt version of the Astra "Cub." The first versions sold by Colt, starting in 1958, were marked "made in Spain." When the GCA stopped importation, Colt brought the Spanish parts to Florida, assembled the guns here, and marked them "Colt Automatic." Production ceased in 1973. Hammer-fired, 6 rounds and 13 ounces in weight,

my sample is from 1972. The pistol would continue to be produced by FIE here in the US, and the guns were sold as "The Best" until the early 1980s.

So, there we have a very small sampling of some of the interesting .25 Autos that can be found floating around today. All of these guns can be found in various movies from the old B&W gangster flicks to such modern noir as *Two Days in the Valley* and *Reservoir Dogs*. The most screen appearances probably belong to the 1908 Colt but the Beretta 950 also seems to be favored in film use, and even the Lilliput makes an appearance in *Metropolis* from 1927! I fired all mine on a gloomy, overcast 80-degree day with about 90% humidity. Ammunition was PMC 50 grain FMJ. Groups were fired at 5 yards as these are "get off me" guns, in my opinion. I fired at a rate of 1 shot/second. Only one misfire occurred, a light strike from the Beretta 418. Ejection and feeding were perfect on all guns.

So, if your moll is looking for a "little something" to slip in her garter for a night on the town, or you need some backup to your main piece, why not try a piece of history? You may be pleasantly surprised!



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# A Review of Vicki Farnham's *FlexCCarry Solutions: A Positive Guide for Off-Body Carry*

By Michael Brady

Like many shooters my age, I've known of John Farnham and his traveling roadshow of defensive firearms instruction since the 1980s. What I didn't know until now is that his wife, Vicki Farnham, is a firearms trainer and author in her own right.

Mr. Farnham recently mentioned that Mrs. Farnham was leading the charge on a new FlexCCarry system for off-body concealed firearms carry. Shortly thereafter Vicki's book dropped. A fresh look at an age-old concealed carry method seemed worth a read so I placed my order...

I've never been a fan of purse carry, as I held several strong opinions I once thought sensible.

Most prominent on the list of reasons to "Just Say No" is the spectre of young children gaining access to mom's pistol with tragic results as attested in too many sad media reports.

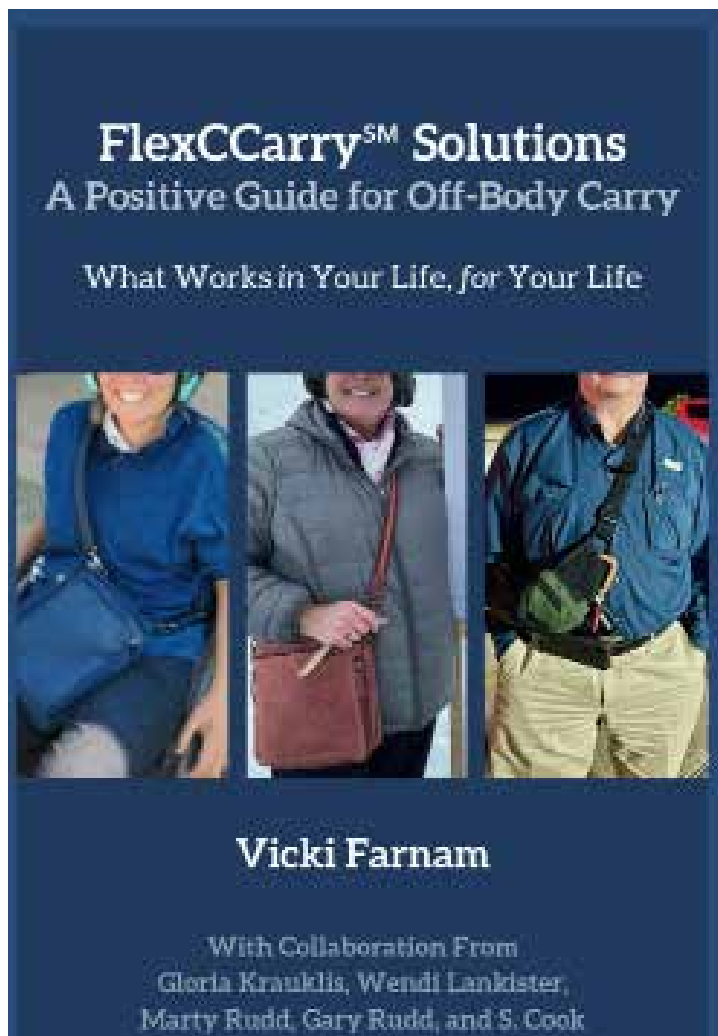
Another risk is purse snatching, where the bag itself is the target of crime. Even a simple snatch and sprint gives a loaded handgun to a fleet-footed offender. Worse, if a violent felon muscles away your bag as their opening move you have lost control of some or all your defensive toolkit.

Next, just sticking a pistol in one's purse, or fanny pack, is a recipe for disaster. Many cases I've seen featured people carrying their pistol in bags not built for the purpose, without a holster covering for the trigger guard, and in the same pouch as car keys, wallets, and other daily essentials.

Then, I hadn't given much thought to how one draws safely and quickly from a bag strapped across their body without muzzling oneself or others during manipulation, so it seemed instruction in the method would call for 1:1 attention on a private range.

Finally, being male, most gun belts and holsters are designed for me, and my clothing options lend themselves to effective concealed carry with a little effort. While I knew this is not true for most women, I didn't share their lived experience or the frustration.

The book arrived promptly. The slim volume is a quick and easy read supplemented with step by step photographs. I finished it in one sitting. Given that it features pages for notetaking I surmise it's intended primarily to serve as an instructional aid for students taking a FlexCCarry class. One might quibble that its \$24.99 price



is high considering it's 80 pages, but the tariff is reasonable once you dig into Vicki Farnham's system.

Purse carry has been a thing since compact pistols existed, so have all the downsides which concern me. "Just Do It" is not a mantra any sensible shooter should be satisfied with. I'm reminded that Jeff Cooper didn't invent defensive handgun shooting, he created the Modern Technique, a system of instruction that guided an average shooter to basic competence in a reasonable time. Vicki Farnham's gift to us is a system featuring safe, simple steps that are easily taught, practiced, remembered, and applied. She presents these concepts in a logical progression throughout the text.

## Advantages

The author outlines the advantages of carrying a side-arm in a DGB (Daily Go Bag). Fashion requirements, inclement weather, Non-Permissive Environments, and physical activities all conspire to create situations where



off-body carry may be a reasonable and, in some cases, essential solution.

#### Design criteria

Author Farnham lists several critical design criteria. The greatest of these is specifying a separate section of the purse or bag in which the handgun, its holster, and perhaps a spare magazine are stored – and nothing else. Other desiderata include best quality materials and manufacture, placement of the section in which the gun is kept at the ready, and concerns about straps and their connections.

#### So many options

I'm not a big purse shopper, so I was amazed at the variety of high-quality carry bags with all the required features available to those willing to a few dollars on their lifesaving equipment. Details such as top or side entry, sturdy straps, and functional zipper pulls are addressed in detail. This is stuff most dudes must be shown. I suspect many women will nod and say "Duh."

#### Holster required

I appreciate the author's insistence on using a form fitting holster to cover the trigger guard that is firmly fastened inside the carry section to create a consistent starting place for the presentation.

#### Drawing safely

Several simple techniques are combined to guide the user to a presentation much like drawing from a strong-side outside the waistband holster. Unlike the days when there was room for only one trainee using a crossdraw holster to be consigned to the far end of the relay, the FlexCCarry system might be safely applied to any number of shooters on a carefully supervised firing line.

#### Reholstering carefully

The stepwise draw stroke is essentially reversed in order to safely and securely reholster. Again, breaking this down into discrete labeled steps makes it possible to program the system into muscle memory.

#### Storage limitations

I still worry about access to an unattended carry bag by the underaged, untrained, or unauthorized. The expedient of using a small padlock to secure the firearm when the bag is not being worn may suffice. As discussed in the text, this solution comes at the cost of speed. There are always tradeoffs, and this is a serious example.

There are a few opportunities for improvement in the next edition.

As the FlexCCarry training system matures, expanding the text in each chapter would increase its utility and enhance the perceived value proposition. Currently it likely serves best as a well-crafted student handbook, but

it could be made a better standalone text for those unable to attend a FlexCCarry course.

While the photos demonstrating the technique are well done, a few more should be added to more clearly demonstrate that the system can prevent muzzling of oneself or other innocents on the presentation and when reholstering.

Vicki Farnham has done a solid job of creating and demonstrating a safe, teachable system that effectively addresses many of the potential downsides of "off-body" carry. In doing so she has moved the concept of wearing a Daily Go Bag onto my list of acceptable carry options. She opened my eyes. Her FlexCCarry Solutions: A Positive Guide for Off-Body Carry might do the same for you.

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