

CANADIAN FIREARMS JOURNAL

MAY/JUNE 2022

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CANADA'S NATIONAL FIREARMS ASSOCIATION

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CANADIAN ***FIREARMS JOURNAL***

May/June 2022



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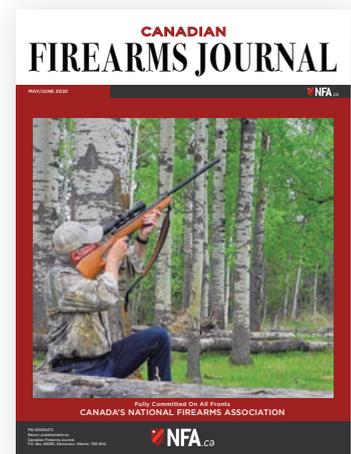
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MISSION STATEMENT

Canada's National Firearms Association exists to promote, support and protect all safe firearms activities, including the right of self defense, firearms education for all Canadians, freedom and justice for Canada's firearms community and to advocate for legislative change to ensure the right of all Canadians to own and use firearms is protected.

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On The Cover

Springtime is a great season to do a little pest control with airguns, which is what's happening on this issue's cover. With winter in the rear-view mirror, it's a good time to get out and exercise the trigger finger, something which can be done with airguns just as well as with rimfire or centrefire firearms. And the limited range of airguns means some old-fashioned hunting skills must be dusted off to be successful. With the cost of conventional ammunition rising constantly, airguns are becoming more popular every year. In this case, that's a Benjamin Trail .22 calibre pellet rifle being put to use on some treetop targets, including squirrels, magpies and crows. Shooting at elevated targets is best done with a shotgun or a pellet rifle, as both have very limited ranges for any projectiles which may miss the intended target. Caution is still warranted, of course. 



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From The Editor's Desk

Al Voth

A Nation of Riflemen



As I write this, the Russian move into Ukraine has been going on long enough to shock us into the reality that this is going to be a bloody, drawn-out affair. It appears the Russian military is not advancing as quickly as they'd anticipated, as they've run into a Ukrainian resistance which seems to be strategic, competent and far more motivated.

Right now, it looks to me, from my distant armchair, like Ukrainians with rifles are keeping the Russians huddled in their armored vehicles. I doubt anyone reading this missed the fact the Ukraine government was handing out as many rifles to its citizens as it could when the invasion unfolded. This, while the Liberal government works hard at disarming us. I think Ukraine figured out the importance of a nation of riflemen to a country's defence much too late, but I'm guessing they have the message now.

For any nation to occupy another

country, they eventually must put boots on the ground and walk the streets. A nation filled with skilled rifle shooters makes that an extremely risky proposition.

Historically, nations seem to look at citizens with rifles in one of two ways: either as a national resource or as a national problem. The latter is certainly the case in Canada, and I doubt what we're seeing in Ukraine will change any minds in the current Liberal government.

Instead of treating us like a plague, the government should be providing funding for the building of shooting ranges, just like they do for soccer fields and tennis courts. They should be encouraging local, regional and national shooting competitions, and even providing ammunition for these events. The Swiss, for example, know the value of a nation of shooters, with the Finns not far behind, but Canada still considers us a national problem that needs to be eliminated.

By the time you read this, the conflict may well be over, or NATO could be involved in a shooting war with Russia, or, God forbid, things have gone nuclear. Whatever happens, it's clear that a nation of riflemen and riflewomen are a vital part of any nation's defence strategy. So, don't wait for the government to recognize your value. It's not coming from the Liberals. We'll have a chance to change that at the next election, but in the meantime, do what you've always done. Stay proficient with your firearms, maintain a good supply of ammunition, shoot in competitions, go hunting and pass on your skills to the next generation. If you own a rifle and know how to use it, you are a valuable asset to our country. Perhaps someday our politicians will wake up to that fact, say so publicly, and recognize it via legislation. In the meantime, we can rest in the knowledge that we know who we are, and we understand our value.



President's Message

Blair Hagen

Canada's Spring

As we enjoy spring 2022 and Canada awakens from the dark cold of winter and shakes off government mandates and the suppression of rights and freedoms, the traditional activities of Canadians are also re-emerging.

It's about time.

Our gun clubs and ranges are re-opening, our gun shows and sportsmen's events are restarting and, as weather permits, Canadians are getting out into the wild, unconquered parts of this nation to enjoy their firearms culture and heritage.

You need to do this, too.

It has been six long years of oppression and attacks by Justin's Liberal government, and two long years of oppression by provincial, city and municipal governments as well. Canadians have been divided, folded, spindled and mutilated by government and bureaucratic policies and agendas in recent years, and I know all of us have had enough. We just want to resume being Canadians.

Justin and his elite Ottawa cronies are hoping that we have forgotten what being Canadian is. His agendas, his attacks, his stripping of our historic rights and freedoms were geared towards teaching us how to be Canadians molded in his own image. That image is a bizarre and stunted one.

It's one where we are bereft of rights and freedoms and beholden to Ottawa bureaucrats and out-of-touch politicians for privileges and handouts. A pat on the head, and a gift of being allowed to keep an ever-shrinking part

of your income and wealth, or to have somebody else's income and wealth redistributed to you for the price of your vote.

When 50,000 Canadians of all stripes and backgrounds (in some cases with their kids) showed up in Ottawa to protest, Justin and the mayor of Ottawa declared them a "fringe minority" and essentially called them "un-Canadian." The mayor sent the Ottawa Police after them and Justin dropped the War Measures Act on the entire country, seizing the bank accounts of the opponents of his government.

Pardon me, that was the Emergencies Act. That's a kinder, gentler term for the theft of your rights and freedoms.

It isn't working. That isn't Canadian.

This country has been beaten up by regulations and mandates, abused by bureaucratic fiat and subjected to daily two-minute hates by foaming-at-the-brain talking heads and putrid mainstream media pundits, but Canada has not lost its spirit, has not lost its drive and has not lost its love of freedom and the celebration of our rights and culture.

How many of us haven't even used a firearm in the last two years? Cancelled hunting trips, closed ranges, locked down, locked up and confined to dark rooms and dank basements in a world gone strangely mad, unfamiliar and unfriendly.

It's time to end it. Let's start, right now.

The challenges are still there. Massive inflation, skyrocketing prices, the hammering cost of living every Cana-

dian family now copes with, courtesy of irresponsible Ottawa politicians, are going to make it much more difficult. However, all of us need to rediscover our great firearms culture and heritage through our traditional recreational pastimes and activities.

If we don't, two things happen: first, we'll go out of our minds and, secondly, we'll forget what we're fighting for. The connection to those tools that we love and cherish, our connection to the earth, sky, friends, family and the intellectual, physical and spiritual joy that all those things bring us. Sensory overload, metaphysical exhilaration.

Life.

Lock and load. Burn powder, if you can afford it. Lend a friend some ammunition. Share the joy.

The Conservative Party leadership race is on, and Canada's National Firearms Association will be in the thick of it, communicating to you which candidates want to celebrate and advance our rights and culture and which do not. Then we'll separate the wheat from the chaff and get on with the job of defeating Justin, his failed government, his failed ministers and his failed agendas.

We've done it before in the very recent past and we will do it again. Politicians need to be reminded that being allowed to form a government in Canada is a privilege accorded to them by Canadians, not a right, and Canadians will take that privilege away from them when they do not act in the interests or well being of Canadians.

And that time is coming. Soon.

Message du Président

Blair Hagen

Le Printemps Du Canada

Pendant que nous profitons du printemps 2022 et que le Canada s'éveille d'un hiver sombre et froid, pendant que nous nous débarrassons des règles sanitaires et la suppression de nos droits et libertés, les activités Canadiennes traditionnelles réapparaissent à leur tour.

Il était temps.

Nos champs et clubs de tirs ouvrent leurs portes à nouveau, nos expositions d'armes et les événements de sports de plein air reprennent. Grâce à la collaboration de mère nature les Canadiens sortent conquérir les parties sauvages de notre nation pour profiter de la culture et du patrimoine des armes à feu.

Vous devez le faire aussi.

Nous venons de subir 6 longues années d'oppression et d'attaques de la part du gouvernement Libéral de Justin et 2 longues années semblables de la part des gouvernements provinciaux et municipaux. Les Canadiens ont été divisés, pliés, brochés et mutilés par le gouvernement et ses politiques et programmes bureaucratiques depuis quelques années et je sais que nous en avons tous ras le bol. Nous voulons juste redevenir Canadiens.

Justin et ses acolytes élitistes espèrent que nous ayons oublié ce que c'est d'être Canadien. Son idéologie, ses attaques, ses dépouillements sans précédents de nos droits et libertés ont été conçus pour nous enseigner comment devenir des Canadiens moulus à son image. Cette image est bizarre et rabougrie.

Elle est dépourvue de droits et libertés et est dépendante des fonctionnaires d'Ottawa et des politiciens déconnectés qui offrent l'espoir de recevoir de quelconques privilèges et paiements. Une petite tape approbatrice sur la tête

et le cadeau de pouvoir conserver une part de vos revenus et richesses, ou la redistribution de la richesse des autres pour gagner votre vote.

Lorsque 50,000 Canadiens de différents genres et origines (certains même accompagnés de leurs enfants) ce sont présentés à Ottawa pour protester, Justin et le maire d'Ottawa les ont décrit comme étant une minorité marginale et essentiellement "non Canadiens". La police d'Ottawa fut envoyée par le maire et Justin déclara la loi sur les mesures de guerre dans tout le pays. Les opposants de son gouvernement ont eu leurs comptes de banque saisis.

Excusez-moi, c'était la "Loi sur les mesures d'urgences". C'est un terme beaucoup plus doux et gentil pour décrire le vol de vos droits et libertés.

Cela ne fonctionne pas. Ce n'est pas Canadien.

Ce pays a été bafoué par des règlements et des mesures sanitaires, abusé par des ordres bureaucratiques et fait victime par deux minutes de haine quotidiennes infligées par des têtes écumant du cerveau et des soit disant experts issus des médias nauséabonds, mais le Canada n'a pas perdu ni son âme ni sa motivation, et il n'a surtout pas perdu son amour de liberté et de la célébration de nos droits et culture.

Combien d'entre nous n'avons même pas utilisé une arme à feu depuis les deux dernières années? Des voyages de chasse annulés, des champs de tir fermés, verrouillés et des confinements dans des chambres sombres et des sous-sols humides. Un monde fou, inconnu et hostile.

Il est temps d'arrêter. Commençons maintenant.

Nos défis sont toujours présents.

L'inflation élevée qui affecte la vie de toutes les familles canadiennes, gracieuseté des politiciens irresponsables d'Ottawa. Notre vie deviendra beaucoup plus difficile.

Nous devons néanmoins redécouvrir notre culture et patrimoine des armes à feu en pratiquant nos activités et passe-temps récréatifs.

Si nous ne le faisons pas, deux choses vont arriver; Premièrement, nous allons virer fous et deuxièmement nous allons oublier la raison d'être de notre lutte. Le lien que nous avons avec ces outils que nous aimons et chérissons, notre lien avec la terre, le ciel, nos amis, notre famille et la joie physique, intellectuelle et spirituelle que tout cela nous apporte. Une surcharge sensorielle, une exaltation métaphysique.

La vie.

Verrouillez et chargez. Brulez de la poudre si vous en avez les moyens. Prêtez des munitions à un ami. Partagez la joie.

La course à la chefferie du Parti Conservateur a commencé et l'ACAF y sera bien impliquée. Nous vous informerons quels seront les candidats qui veulent célébrer et promouvoir notre culture et nos droits versus ceux qui ne le veulent pas. Ensuite nous allons nous concentrer à défaire le gouvernement gâché de Justin ainsi que tous ses ministres et programmes.

Nous l'avons déjà fait dans un passé assez récent et nous le ferons à nouveau. On doit rappeler aux politiciens que le droit de former un gouvernement au Canada est un privilège qui leur a été accordé par nous et que nous pouvons retirer ce privilège lorsqu'ils n'agissent pas pour les intérêts et le bien être des Canadiens.

Ce moment arrive. Bientôt. 



Vice-president's Message

Rick Igercich

World Events

I sit in my hotel room in Nuremberg Germany with the stark realization that I am a short distance away from a raging war to the east, which started a mere four days ago at the time of this writing.

The NFA is in Germany to attend World Forum on Shooting Activities (WFSA) meetings to discuss key issues in the firearms world that affect Canadian firearm owners now and in the future. Only a stone's throw away lies the place where the Nuremberg Nazi war crimes trials took place, after the Second World War. An eye-opening reminder of what can happen when governments abuse their powers, such as seizing firearms from law-abiding citizens, imposing unjust mandates and controlling the will of their citizens.

As I speak to my colleagues from around the world, I realize that things not only have drastically changed in Canada, but also around the world. In Canada, we are facing Justin Trudeau's Order in Council ban of 1,500 types of firearms, with the deadline swiftly approaching, only to be overshadowed by other events happening in Canada.

The trucker convoy, which took place in Ottawa as a peaceful protest, has been disbanded using the *Emergencies Act*, which replaced the former *War Measures Act*. This is legislation intended to be used only in the gravest extremes. The *Emergencies Act* has never been used before and the *War Measures Act* only used three times, once during each world war and once by Pierre Elliot Trudeau, our current prime minister's father. Apparently, the wildfires of Alberta, the floods in British Columbia, the railway blockades, the Oka and Ipperwash Crisis, and the Red River floods did not meet the bar to implement these acts, but the truckers with their bouncy castle in Ottawa did.



The act was quickly rescinded, when Justin Trudeau realized he would have a difficult time getting Senate approval and his edict would likely be sent back to the House of Commons, which in turn could lead to a non-confidence vote. Not to mention Canadian and world investors getting jittery and considering pulling their funds out of Canadian banks because the government now had the power to freeze them.

As far as world matters go, there are several issues which are of great concern to Canadians, including the banning of lead projectiles, plastic wads and mercury in primers. Clay targets are also on the list because of the PAH (polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons) used in their manufacture. At the United Nations, committees have been formed to push forward the marking and tracing of all firearm parts, not just the frame or receiver. There has also been a resolution to mark and trace all ammunition, with limits to the amount of ammunition a person can possess.

So, where does this put law-abiding Canadian firearms owners? In my opinion, we are in a very bad place. What happens in Europe eventually bleeds into Canada. Our present government supports and bows to the United Nations with absolutely no regard as to what most Canadians think.

The good news is, Canada's National Firearms Association, with its non-government organization status at the world level and access to the United Nations and *Arms Treaty* talks, will be in the forefront with a strong voice to prevent such restrictions and bans from taking place. NFA and its world partners working in unison are a strong voice, which cannot be ignored by the powers who wish to totally remove civilian firearm ownership around the world.

In Canada, the NFA will continue to educate and lobby officials at all government levels, as well as challenge unrealistic laws and mandates. We will continue to reach out to firearm owners, gun clubs and non-firearm owners alike across the country. 



NFA

FREEDOM.
SAFETY.
RESPONSIBILITY.



Politics & Guns

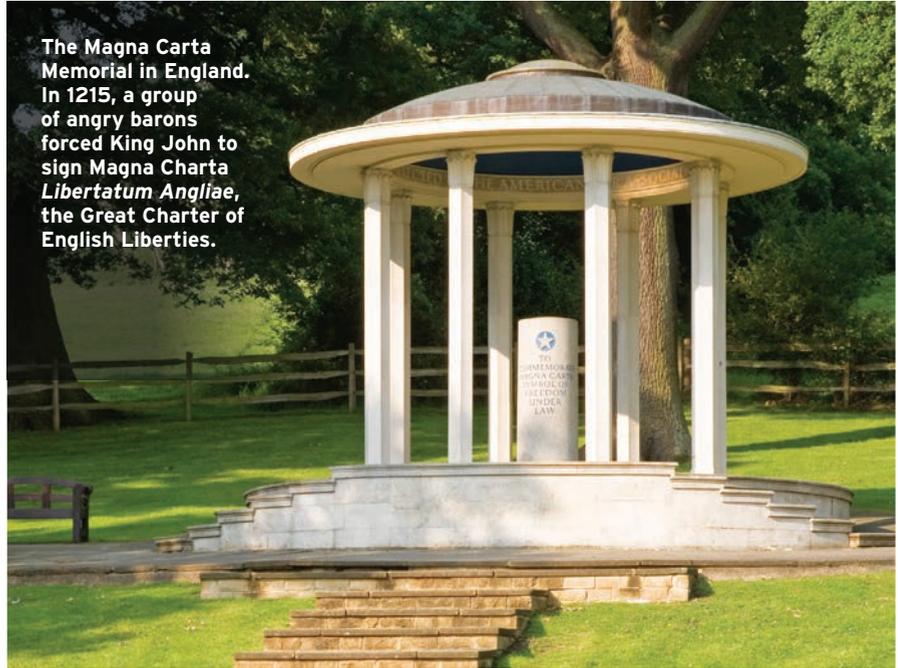
Bruce Gold

The Rule Of Law

To understand the enormity of Trudeau's arrogant governance, it is necessary to fully understand what "rule of law" means. In 1215, a group of angry barons forced King John to sign *Magna Charta Libertatum Angliae*, the Great Charter of English Liberties. Much of this charter dealt with medieval issues which have no relevance today. However, clause 39 (in the 1215 charter), established a right to due process and the supremacy of the law over the king (government), which is still in effect. It states: "No free man shall be arrested, or imprisoned, or deprived of his property, or outlawed, or exiled, or in any way destroyed, nor shall we go against him or send against him, unless by legal judgement of his peers, or by the law of the land."

This bedrock principle is our defence against arbitrary governance by politicians, bureaucrats and police. Some of the most fundamental events in our history revolve around this principle. The English Civil War (1642 to 1651) was a contest between parliament and the king over how the realm would and should be governed. King Charles I and his son, Charles II, both believed that since they had inherited the throne, they had been picked by God and therefore ruled by "divine right." Therefore, the king was not subject to parliament or any other earthly authority. The Royalists' loss of the bloody civil wars led to the supremacy of parliament and over time the rise of representative government based on universal suffrage. The *English Bill of Rights* (1689) further cemented the principle of the rule of law, as well as the establishment of our constitutional monarchy.

The principle that the law is supreme is the bedrock on which our legal and political system stands. The *British North America Act, 1867* (*Constitution Act, 1867*) required that Canada adopt a constitution "similar in principle to the United Kingdom," which includes the rule of law principle from *Magna Carta*. This



The Magna Carta Memorial in England. In 1215, a group of angry barons forced King John to sign *Magna Charta Libertatum Angliae*, the Great Charter of English Liberties.

principle has also been described as "fundamental justice." Modern courts are inclined to describe it as "principles of statutory construction," deriving from the *Constitution Act 1982* and *Constitution Act 1867*. The rule of law includes that the law is supreme over officials of government, as well as private individuals, and not a matter of arbitrary power, and the exercise of all public power must find its ultimate source in a legal rule.

THE POWER GRAB

The Liberals saw the opportunity to use gun laws (again) as a wedge issue to support an electoral bid for a majority government. They based this on the well-established fact that the general public was concerned about violence, knew very little about guns or gun laws and could be alarmed by the term "assault weapon." They decided to use the powers the Firearms Act delegates to the governor in council to change firearm's classifications. This delegation compounded the legal mess wherein

a mere change in regulation (classification) had immediate impacts on criminal law. In this case, a change to prohibited status created tens of thousands of instant criminals. To back up this political stunt, the Liberals refused to give a legal definition to the term "assault weapon" so they could present it as different to different audiences and shift it as necessary to win any disputes.

TRUDEAU'S LIBERALS REJECT THE RULE OF LAW

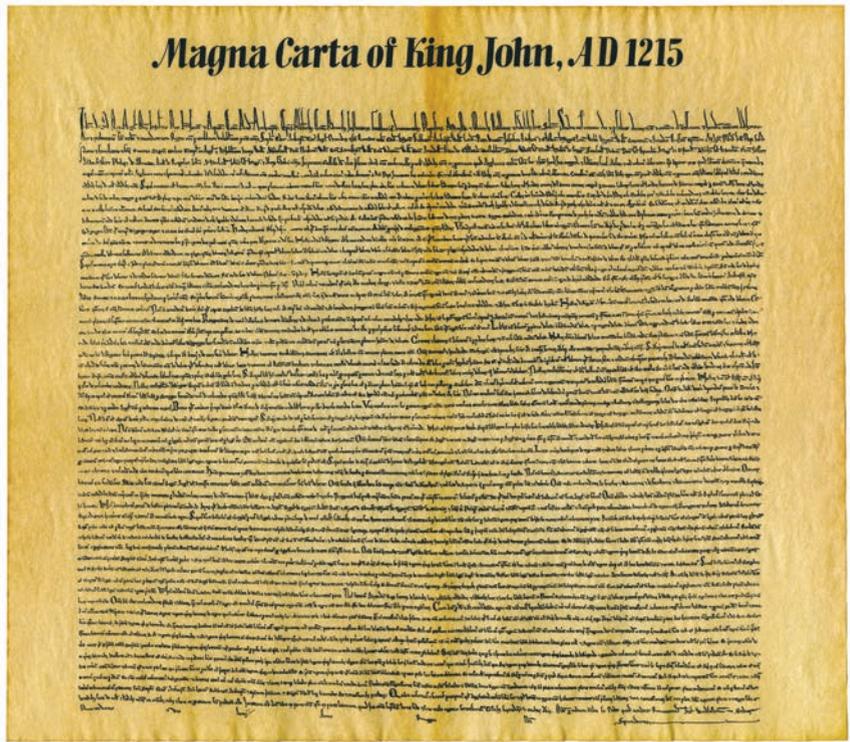
The current legal mess called the Firearms Act rests on the secretive process the RCMP uses to classify millions of different firearms into three categories. The legal uncertainties of this process have been known for years. The utter refusal of the Liberal government to remove uncertainty by giving a legal definition of "assault-style firearm" or the term "variant" reduce the whole matter of classification to mere subjective opinion. This is a very questionable way to administer criminal law. This muddle forced the Liberals to ban firearms based on specific model iden-

tification, rather than the non-existent legal definition. Any certainty to the law added by listing specific model types was then instantly removed by the inclusion of current and future undefined “variants.”

Having tap danced around one problem, without actually solving it, the Liberals now found themselves with another. The law was in the way! The *Firearms Act* establishes a legal right for firearms owners to appeal the change in classification through a reference hearing and lays out a required process that must be followed when changing a classification. The *Firearms Act* also states that the owner must be informed how the decision was made and that the provincial judge of the reference hearing shall make the decision based on the evidence.

Now, the Liberals could have gone to parliament and amended the *Firearms Act* to remove this legal right, or they could have simply left the matter to be played out in thousands of provincial court hearings. Instead, they decided to overturn the rule of law and govern by the unconstitutional practice of ruling by decree. They did this with the decree of a nullification process (also called administratively expired), which had no basis in law.

They then attempted to deny the owners’ legal rights by denying them access to the courts, claiming the provincial courts had no jurisdiction to hear the case. The Liberals used the technical argument that since the decision to ban was made by the governor in council instead of the registrar of firearms, it was not a decision but a matter of policy. Hence, the decision of the governor and council was not a decision, and the ban was just the legal effect of this decision but not a decision. This ignored the fact that the governor in council did not have the legal right to create new classifications, nor did it have the legal right to amend the law. They compounded this by claiming Cabinet confidentiality, so all evidence supporting the reclassification was now secret. This legal manoeuvring immediately reduced the court to either a rubber stamp that simply took the government’s side or required it to automatically find against the government because they had presented no evidence to support their reclassification.



THE COURTS CHOOSE LIBERTY

The Ontario Court of Justice in *R v. Cipriani et al.* has ruled that since an erroneous reclassification would impact the vital property interests of an applicant, the government must provide “all information regarding the development and use” of the algorithm used to identify the firearm, to establish if the firearm had been correctly classified. This ruling rejects the claim that the government doesn’t need to produce evidence even if the law requires it. Despite the fact the Supreme Court has ruled that Canadians have the right to know why government decisions were made, the government is appealing the ruling on grounds of national security.

The next major decision was the Court of Queen’s Bench Alberta ruling in *R v. Smycot*, (also called *Canada v Stark*) that the provincial courts did have jurisdiction to hear reference hearings. This is critical for two reasons: it rejects the Trudeau government’s argument that a legal right can be voided by a process that has no basis in law. This decision explicitly rejects rule by proclamation inherent in the whole nullification process and notes that nullification has no standing in the court because it has no basis in law. It also affirmed that the law

Magna Charta Libertatum Angliae: “No free man shall be arrested, or imprisoned, or deprived of his property, or outlawed, or exiled, or in any way destroyed, nor shall we go against him or send against him, unless by legal judgement of his peers, or by the law of the land.”

cannot be changed by simply calling what you are doing something else.

These rulings reaffirm the rule of law, that the government is not above the law and must act within the law and must obey the requirements of the law. A legal right established by parliament and written into law cannot be removed by a simple declaration. The governor and council must act within the law and cannot assume powers not specifically delegated by law.

This act of arbitrary governance was a direct violation of *Magna Carta* and the principle that the government must also obey the law. Further, Trudeau’s actions cannot be dismissed as a bureaucratic mistake, since the government’s lawyers have consistently argued in numerous courts that the government can rule by decrees which have no basis in law. Perhaps Trudeau and company calculated that by demonizing guns and gun owners, the courts and Canadians in general would accept this as a thin edge of a wedge to change the very nature of our legal and political system.

Preserving Our Firearms Heritage

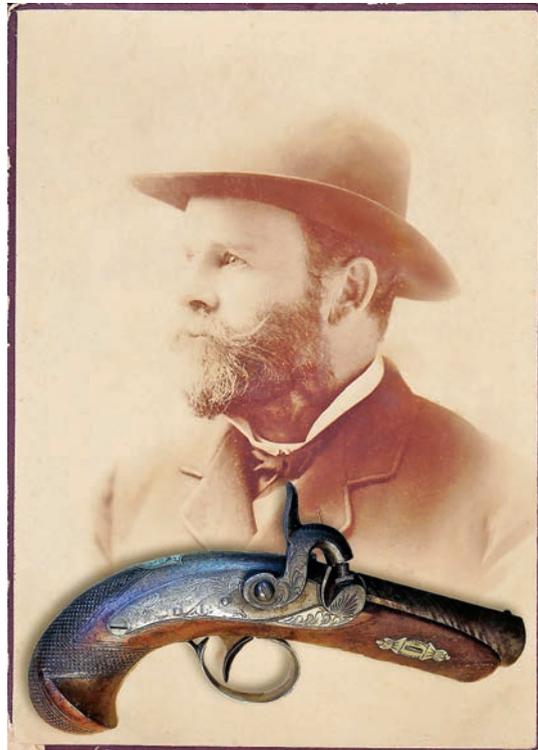
Gary K. Kangas

Canada & Guns - A Historic Perspective

Canada has been a firearm-owning culture since the arrival of Europeans. The use of firearms for hunting and defense is an integral part of our Canadian story.

That story begins when Samuel De Champlain established a settlement at Port Royale, Acadia (Nova Scotia), in 1608. He then established another settlement at what is now known as Quebec City. The First Nations were welcoming and assisted the new arrivals in surviving the harsh frontier conditions. They were also instrumental in saving the recent inhabitants from all manner of misadventure, and in return the new arrivals treated First Nations as friends, allies and trade partners. The First Nations gave the newcomers land to establish farms and trading forts. Co-operation between the French and First Nations was the key to survival for all in early frontier Canada. The French further responded by defending the Huron from inter-tribal rivalry, threats and incursions. The trade relations were amicable, with the First Nations providing goods and services while the French provided technology, such as firearms and training in their use.

As the seigneuries (a form of land distribution) were established, all the inhabitants were expected to be members of the militia, with all households required to keep firearms and ammunition on hand. The French issued Fusils to the seigneuries and in the later 1600s began to standardize the French trade gun. What is known as the C Fusil were made in two styles. The Fusil Ordinaire was not decorated, and the Fusil Fin had engraving cast into the butt plate, comb and trigger guard finials. By the 1730s, the Fusil was re-issued as the simpler type D.



A Wells Fargo Agent's .40 calibre Philadelphia derringer, Victoria, BC, 1850s to 1860s.

The next model of trade gun by the French was the Fusil-de-Chasse, which was a much fancier firearm, with furniture which could be brass or iron and stocks of high-grade fruit woods. The First Nations people would often trim all these types of trade guns with their own interpretation of style, tacking them out with brass tacks, adorning trigger guards with horsehair and fabric ornaments, as well as beaded or braided decorations.

The next chapter is the arrival of the English and the Hudson's Bay Company, and again a vibrant trade relationship is established. Once more, firearms were the key trade items, with the simple functional workhorse of the frontier known as the North-West Trade Gun. The French and the English were careful to maintain the friendship and support of various

other Indigenous peoples. The newcomers and First Nations all carried guns, with Hudson's Bay traders and the employees inside the fur forts carrying handguns, as these establishments served not only as stores, but were also financial institutions. The North-West gun of the Hudson's Bay was not nearly as elegant as the French version; however, it endured into the 20th century. The First Nations liked the North-West gun as they could remove the butt plates, sharpen them and use them as hide scrapers. They would cut the barrels off at various lengths so they could be used conveniently on horseback, with the shorter ones called canoe guns. Sometimes they would shorten them to

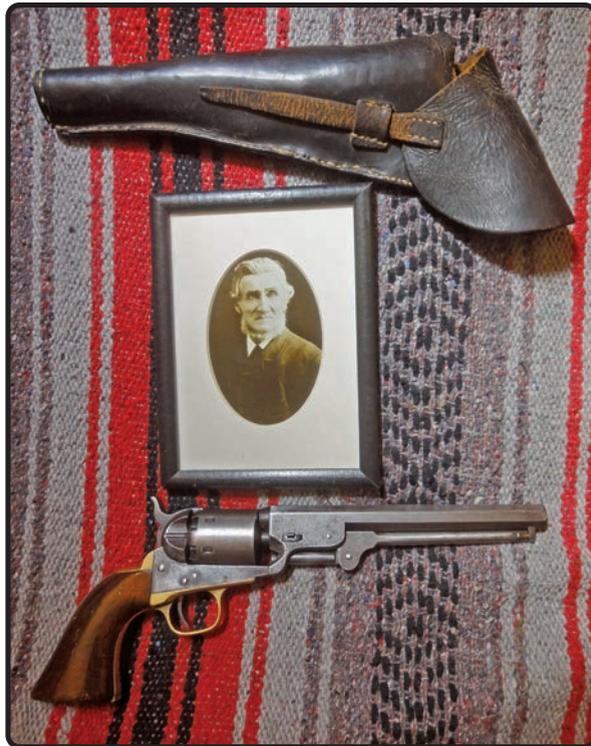
nearly pistol length. This particular firearm was functional on every level. The final permutation of the trade gun was issued as a Fowler style gun with very fine stocks, silver inlays and engraving. The Hudson's Bay version in modern language is called 'The Chief's Grade' gun.

The French traders and English Hudson's Bay men married First Nations women who were able partners who understood survival in an unforgiving environment and were capable of defending the family. These wives were also ambassadors and negotiators who were familiar with the trade practices and the culture. The Scottish Hudson's Bay men were very acceptable to the First Nations, as the Scots understood the clan tribal system. The use of firearms in Canada was viewed as natural to all the frontier inhabitants.

As European migration moved westward, and fur forts were established on the west coast, the Hudson's Bay was becoming the dominant organization. The friction between the French and the English came to a head in the 1760s with the advent of what in Europe was called The Seven Years War and in Canada known as The French and Indian Wars. The alliances that had been established in the early days now were employed in deciding who would prevail in Canada.

The relationships between First Nations and the Hudson's Bay Company endured well into the 20th century. The Hudson's Bay men supported the Kwantlen First Nations (The River People), defending them during an armed incursion of American First Nations into their territory. There are numerous other accounts of Canadian frontiersmen supporting First Nations in tribal confrontations.

As the population of Canada expanded, the use of firearms for hunting, defense and target shooting began to emerge. The establishment of gun clubs in Canada is a fine example. The legal use of firearms was never held in question. The misuse and illegal use of firearms by miscreants and criminals was dealt with swiftly and severely. Canada did not witness big gun fights and lawlessness as some regions of the United States endured. The law in Canada was



**Orangeville, Ont.,
postmaster's 1851
Navy Colt, 1860s
to 1870s.**

other gun clubs can trace their histories to the 1870s and '80s. In the 1890s there was a surge of handgun clubs nationwide. Victoria, British Columbia, and district had gun clubs in the 1890s. Shooting ranges prospered throughout the region. There were also hunting trains that left downtown Victoria for up island destinations. Hunters, with dogs and guns, could board early in the day to go hunting, as guns were just a routine part of Canadian culture.

The peaceful, legal use of firearms is part of the Canadian story, continuing into the 20th century. All outdoor occupations and recreators carried

always established first. Constabularies were created in the east as early as 1759. Other early agencies were the Toronto City Police in 1835 and Quebec City and Montreal in 1838 and 1840. In 1867, provincial police forces were put in place to patrol rural areas in the east. In western Canada, the BC Police and the Victoria City Police were established in 1858. The Northwest Mounted Police (aka RCMP) was created in 1873 to patrol Alberta and Saskatchewan. Manitoba had provincial police very early on, in 1871. These police agencies operated with restraint and were respected, which is a

Canadian tradition. They were genuine peace officers, rather than law enforcers. The carrying of guns to protect life and property was a tradition and part of the fabric of Canadian history.

In this era the growth of gun clubs became a national culture. The history of gun clubs in Canada and the first shooting sports associations were formed in the 1860s to accommodate the growing interest in target shooting. The longest continuing association is the Dominion of Canada Rifle Association established in 1868,

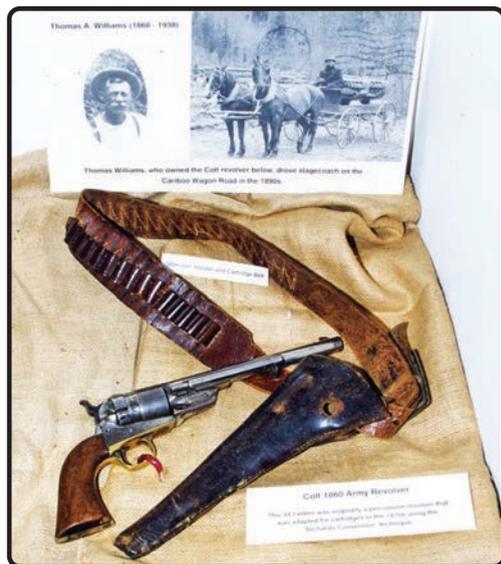
including trappers, guides, surveyors, cowboys, timber cruisers, hunters, stagecoach drivers and more. The list is endless. In the mid 1900s, Canadian photographers began to record a varied mix of guns carried by all types of individuals. The arms pictured include muzzleloaders, all types of conversions and the latest cartridge arms. In the 1890s and early 1900s, the Eaton's and Hudson's Bay catalogues illustrated and advertised firearms which could be purchased through the mail. Everything from percussion arms, shotguns, repeating rifles in both bolt-action and lever and the early semi-auto rifles, plus Mauser, Iver Johnson, Colt and Smith & Wesson revolvers. The selection was very wide.

Canada is known for the peaceful, legitimate use of firearms and ranks in the top 15 of firearm ownership worldwide. It has always recorded low homicides and very modest crime rates. Historically, Canada is a safe, law-abiding culture and preserver of our firearms heritage.

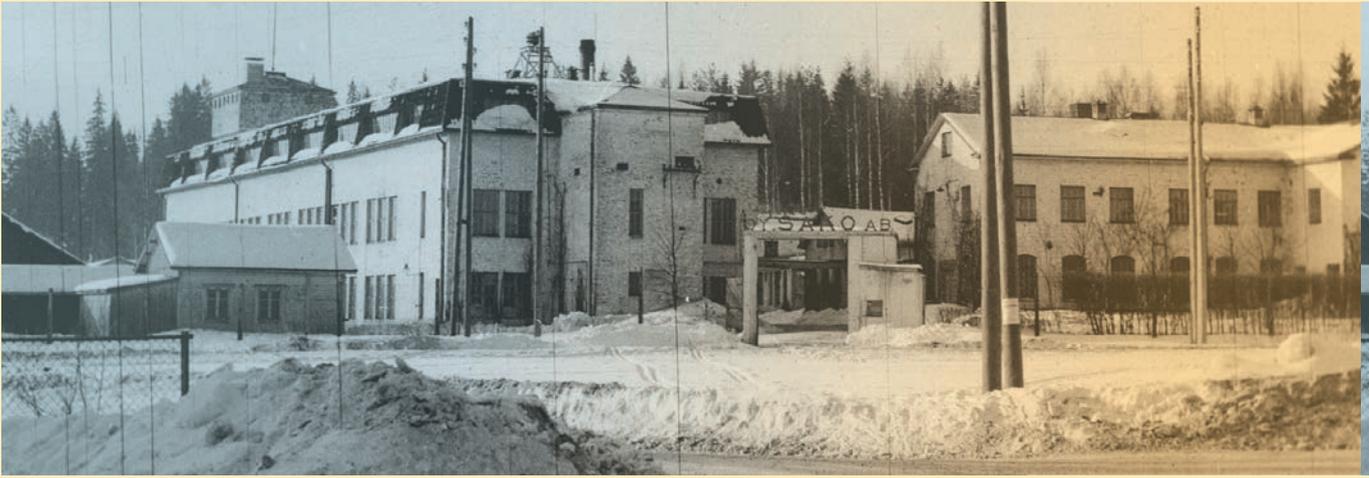
Stay tuned for part two.

Sources:

Wikipedia, The Canadian Encyclopedia, Britannica Canada, History of Firearms Canada, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Track of the Wolf.



**BC stagecoach
driver's 1861 Colt
conversion, 1890s.**



SAKO TURNS 1000

A century of quality rifles
BY T.J. SCHWANKY



I recently had an opportunity to sit down with Stoeger Canada's general manager, Spyros Chrysochou. We talked about the 100-year history of Sako rifles, and he helped me gain a deeper understanding of how these rifles first found their way into Canada and why Canada is Sako's second-largest market in the world. April 1, 2021, marked the official 100th anniversary of Sako, an arms company whose roots were founded in first repairing and then manufacturing firearms for the Finnish Civil Guard. But Sako's origin can be traced back to 1919 when they operated as a gunsmith shop, repairing Russian-made firearms for the Finnish Civil Guard. It was in 1921, however, that Civil Guard Firearm and Engineering Company (Suojeluskuntain Ase-ja Konepaja Osakeyhtiö) became financially independent of the government, and this is regarded as the beginning of Sako as we know it today.

In 1927, the Sako acronym emerged, and the plant was moved from Helsinki to Riihimäki, where it still operates today. In 1928, Sako introduced the M28, a replacement for the Civil Guard's M24 and an upgrade for the Finnish Army's M27. That was also the year Sako began manufacturing ammunition. Sako really began to take off in the late 1930s with increased orders for ammunition, and the plant saw its first expansion. But, with fear of the Russians or Germans taking over the Sako plant during the Second World War, ownership

of Sako was turned over to the Red Cross and the manufacture of arms and ammunition was ceased until 1946. Many of the machines in the factory were sold and manufacturing in the plant was shifted to items like lipstick cases and wooden shoes.

In 1946, the company returned to its roots of producing firearms, with the L46 model carbine. While originally designed for use during the war, the L46 quickly found favour with Finnish and other European hunters as well. In the early 1950s, some Sakos started showing up in the United States, being sold by Abercrombie and Fitch. By 1953, the US was Sako's largest market, despite having relatively poor representation. Some Sakos were finding their way into Canada at this time as well, but it was a very limited market. In the 1960s, distribution of Sako in North America was taken over by Ithaca and North American sales continued to grow, with an increasing number of Sako rifles finding their way into Canada. In 1962, Finnish Cable Works bought Sako from the Red Cross and then in the late '60s, Nokia, the now technology giant, purchased Sako from Finnish Cable Works.

In the 1970s, profits began to spiral downward, primarily due to low profitability from government military contracts. Sako and Tikka merged during this period to help bolster civilian sales. Then in 1977, Nokia bought Stoeger Industries in North America to serve as their

distributor in the US. Stoeger was one of the first mail-order catalogue companies, specializing in gun parts, in addition to their book publishing business that included the Shooter's Bible. They also ran the largest gun store in New York. It was also in 1977 that Stoeger Canada was formed and became the distributor for Sako and Tikka in Canada, reporting directly to Nokia in Finland.

In 1985, Sako merged with the state-run firearms manufacturer, Valmet, and then in 2000, Beretta bought Sako from Nokia, where ownership continues today.

One of the keystone moments for Sako was the introduction of the Sako 75 in 1996, Sako's 75th anniversary. This was the first rifle fully designed and manufactured by Sako and it set in motion a path for rapid growth. But, under the ownership of Nokia and Valmet, it was obvious that the company was not well structured for significant international growth and would benefit from being part of a larger firearms company. This was when the large Italian company, Beretta Holding Group, became interested in Sako and procured its shares.

The Sako 85 replaced the 75 in 2006, Sako's 85th anniversary. Based on the 75, the 85 was developed primarily to take advantage of new manufacturing techniques but offered a few upgraded features. The line has not seen a major change since, and many were surprised when Sako, rumoured to have something

big coming for its 100th anniversary, offered no new models. It did introduce the S20 in 2020, a hybrid rifle with an aluminum frame and a unique action, but it was only offered in two models, a hunting and a target configuration, and was not a replacement for the 85. Unfortunately for Sako, the world was in the grip of a pandemic in 2021, its 100th anniversary, and with SHOT Show in the US and IWA in Germany cancelled, it was poor timing to bring much new to the market. Sako fans are still hoping for something big in 2022, but there was no announcement around the SHOT or IWA shows.

Sako and Tikka have seen steady growth in worldwide sales since that time, including the one millionth Tikka off the assembly line in 2020. While Statistics Canada doesn't track brands of firearms imported into Canada, they do track country of origin. From January to September 2021, Finland was the second-largest ex-



ABOVE: Sako can trace its roots back to 1919, but 1921 is considered the beginning of Sako as we know it today.



BELOW: The current Sako factory in Riihimäki, Finland.



porter of rifles to Canada, behind the US, and Italy was the largest exporter of shotguns to Canada, speaking to the strength of the Beretta brands in Canada.

Spyros credits much of the affinity that Canadians have for Sako and Tikka rifles to the fact that Canada and Finland share many cultural and geographic similarities. Canada currently ranks number two in the world for sales of Sako rifles. Stoeger Canada operates independently from Stoeger US and brings in rifles that fit our specific regional needs. This is why Canadian consumers may not have ready access to all models produced by Sako, nor models that are common in the US, although dealers have access to order all models.

What's in store for Sako's second century? According to Beretta Holding's executive vice president, Franco Gussalli Beretta, Sako will increase both military rifle production and

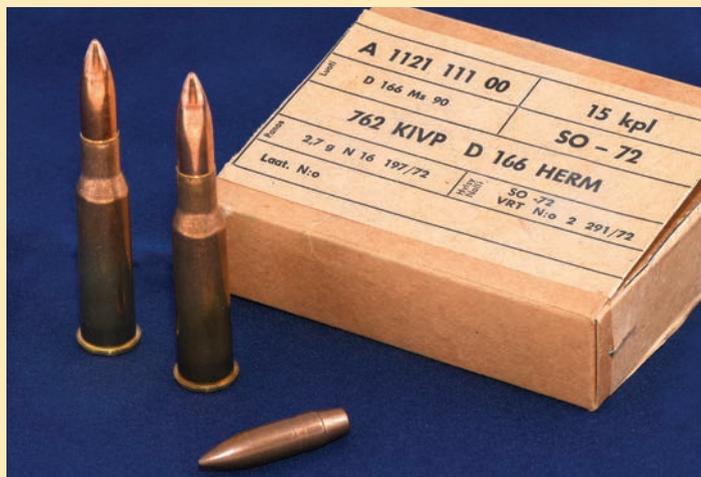
RIGHT: The most recent Sako model is the S20, introduced in 2020.

BELOW: The legendary Sako Model 85 is so named because it was introduced in the company's 85th year.



look to become a big player in worldwide ammunition sales. They are also committed to increasing technology, with expanded use of materials like carbon fiber and to offering ballistic applications to compliment their rifles and ammunition. Sako has always had a strong European influence in both their design and choices of chamberings, but we've seen a move to more North American-style rifles in their Carbonlight and Finnlight line and in the rapid adoption of the 6.5 PRC for their S20 line of rifles. The 6.5 Creedmoor can also be found right across their line of 85 rifles. There's little doubt, with North America being their largest market, that they will continue to cater to Canadian and US shooters and hunters, with future designs and choices of chamberings.

Sako sold 113,000 rifles in 2020 and produced over 11 million cartridges, both production records for the Finnish company. Sako boasted 98 million Euros in sales in 2020 and employs



LEFT: Canadian hunters rely extensively on Sako and Tikka rifles.

approximately 320 people in its Riihimäki plant. Many of the workers have been there for decades and some are second generation. The company produced a short documentary celebrating their 100th birthday, and it's available to watch on their website: www.sako.fi. Watching this video makes it obvious those who work for

the company are extremely proud of what they do. With Beretta's manufacturing and worldwide sales experience and such a proud and dedicated workforce, look for new sales records for Sako in the coming years and some exciting new products geared to North American hunters and shooters. 🇫🇮



MOSSBERG'S 940 WATERFOWL PRO

Downing ducks & geese with Mossberg's newest
BY KEN BAILEY

Building on the success of their 940 JM Pro, a 12-gauge auto-loading shotgun designed for the 3-gun competitive shooting fraternity, Mossberg recently unveiled the 940 Pro Waterfowl, targeted, as the name suggests, to the hunting community. I've long appreciated Mossberg's ability to balance product quality with consumer pricing, so was thrilled when, in October 2021, I had the opportunity to join Linda Powell, Mossberg's director of media relations, and three other outdoor writers on a waterfowl hunt in central Saskatchewan to put this new shotgun through its paces.

The 940 series of shotguns are the successor to Mossberg's 930 series, which were launched in 2006. The impetus for the evolved model originated within the competitive shooting fraternity. They wanted a shotgun that 3-gunners could load more quickly, and which allowed easier access to controls, says Thomas Lynch, Mossberg's senior design engineer for the 940.

"Our vision for the 940 was an autoloader that was competition-ready right out of the box, with no modifications required. Beyond the improved loading and control features, we wanted to rethink ergonomics and how our shotgun would fit shooters of different statures. As such, the 940 series has a fully adjustable stock, including length of pull (LOP) – from 13 to 14.25 inches – as well as drop and cast."

More specifically, says Lynch, competition shooters wanted features that facilitated quad loading. In response, the 940 features a wider, more open loading port, and a reconfigured elevator and mag follower.

"The 930 also had a reputation for gumming up easily, requiring frequent cleaning," says Lynch. "So we redesigned the gas system. The 940 will handle up to 1,500 loads between cleanings."

Lynch advised that the cleaning threshold may be less than 1,500 rounds when shooting waterfowl

loads, which tend to be dirtier than target loads. But, even if it were only two-thirds of that, 1,000 hunting rounds is more than 99.9 per cent of waterfowling will shoot in a season. I confess to not being very diligent about cleaning my shotguns, so I relish the idea of being able to wait until season's end to do so.

As noted, the first iteration of the 940 was the 940 JM Pro, the competition gun. It proved to be so popular that a waterfowling version was a natural next step.

"Our goal was to build a more robust shotgun that can withstand the rigours of waterfowling, with improved functionality and cosmetics at a competitive price," says Lynch. "The 940 JM Pro was the ideal platform upon which to build, and we carried over the improved ergonomic and performance features to the 940 Pro Waterfowl."

I arrived at Tyler Mann's renowned Saskatchewan Goose Company lodge in mid-October, eager to hunt and to field-test the 940 Pro >

Waterfowl. I'd heard that Mann runs a first-class outfit, from meals and lodging to the all-important hunting opportunities, and was keen to experience it all for myself. I must say that I felt comfortable and at home from the first moment I walked into the spacious and nicely appointed lodge, and every impression from then until I left for home three days later did nothing but confirm the sterling reputation of Mann's operation.

My hunting companions would be Ron Spomer, the renowned gun writer from Idaho, Brad Fenson, a prolific Canadian outdoors writer, and Chris Ingram, a freelance outdoor journalist from Vermont. Spomer, Fenson and I have known one another for decades and have shared previous hunting camps, but this would be my first time hunting with Ingram. Joining us would be Mario Friendly, vice-president of brand innovation, marketing and sales for Final Approach, the well-known maker of waterfowl decoys, blinds, apparel and accessories; Darryl Demoskoff, with Tourism Saskatchewan; and Mossberg's Linda Powell. All in all, it was an experienced and knowledgeable crew, well-positioned to give the 940 Pro Waterfowl a thorough wringing out.

Now, I should make it clear that I'm not really a "gun guy." Nor am I a particularly hard-core shooter. I'm a hunter, first and foremost, and I generally consider shotguns to be no more than tools of the trade. As such, I need them to be well-balanced, reliable and easy to operate; I want them to fit reasonably well, too. Further, I don't want to have to worry about maintenance anymore that absolutely necessary. All in all, when hunting waterfowl, I don't want to be thinking about the shotgun in my hand; I focus on the birds and expect my gun to shoot where I'm pointing it, every time I pull the trigger.

The 940 Pro Waterfowl I'd be shooting throughout our hunt was waiting for me upon arrival. An initial inspection revealed it to be handsomely clad in Truetimber Prairie camouflage and revealed some of the external features I'd heard about: the oversized bolt handle and bolt release, making them easy to operate when wearing gloves; the HIVIZ fibre-optic front sight; and the extended XFactor proprietary

Mossberg choke. The ability to change chokes without needing a choke wrench is one of those small but meaningful features of some shotguns. The truth is most of us don't change chokes frequently, but it's nice to be able to do so simply and quickly should the need arise. I popped the choke out easily, confirmed it was modified, and then reinstalled it. I also noted that the XFactor choke was ported, which would reduce muzzle jump, making for quicker second and third shots.

What I couldn't easily see, but knew from having done my homework, was that Mossberg put considerable thought into the materials and coatings used on the 940 Pro Waterfowl. The 28-inch barrel is chrome-lined, they've applied a boron nitride coating to the piston assembly, magazine tube, sear, hammer and action spring tube, a phosphate coating on all other internal components, and Cerakote

on the receiver and barrel exterior. Each of these applications contributes to the gun being resistant to water, salt and other contaminants, and helps lubricate it, contributing to the smoothness and reliability of operation. In large measure, it's these treatments that allow Mossberg to boast of 1,500 rounds between cleanings.

Over three days, I shot the 940 Pro Waterfowl on morning and evening hunts for ducks and geese, including Canadas, snows and white-fronted. On some hunts, the birds responded beautifully and shooting distances were near point-blank by waterfowl hunting standards. On other hunts, the birds were considerably less co-operative, particularly the snow geese, which made for extended shooting distances.

I experienced no operating failures, save for one empty shell case that got stuck in the action on the way out: in my experience, that's typically the re-

RIGHT: The oversized bolt handle and bolt release make for easy operations, even when wearing gloves.

BELOW: Mossberg suggests that the 940 can handle 1,500 rounds before requiring a cleaning, more than enough to get most shooters through the season.





ABOVE: Coatings inside and out help make the 940 Pro Waterfowl nearly impervious to water, salt and other contaminants.

BELOW: The author and some early results with the 940 Pro Waterfowl.

sult of a slight problem with the shell, not with the shotgun. In any case, it was inconsequential, and none of the others in our group reported any problems, either. Aside from that, the shotgun performed beyond my expectations. It balances well between the hands, and I found it to be just slightly front-heavy, which I prefer, as

I believe that helps keep your barrel moving on the all-important follow through, in turn translating to more downed birds.

At six foot, two inches, I'm taller than average and have correspondingly long arms, so I prefer a longer LOP. My Mossberg came with the LOP set to the maximum of 14.25 inches and the stock fit me surprisingly well; I saw no need to make changes. Powell, meanwhile, who is short in stature, preferred her length of pull at 13 inches, on the short end of the scale; fortunately, the 940 Waterfowl Pro easily accommodated our respective preferences.

Mann's operation lived up to all expectations and, save for one afternoon when the snow geese behaved like, well, snow geese, we enjoyed a target-rich experience. On one memorable afternoon, joined by a couple locals, 11 of us shot a limit of 88 ducks, and still the ducks kept flying. Through the days, I shot as well as I normally do when gunning for geese and ducks; I made most of the shots I should have, missed a few that were gimmes and made the odd one here and there that surprised me. Best of all, seldom did I find myself thinking about the shotgun in my hands. It operated easily and flawlessly, even while wearing gloves, and shot where I pointed it – I'm not sure I could have asked for more.

The 940 Pro Waterfowl costs considerably less than many, if not most, of its competitors. When I asked Lynch how Mossberg can do that, he replied, "The Mossberg motto has always been more gun for the money. We put a lot of effort into increasing manufacturing efficiencies and continuously invest in our plants and equipment to realize those efficiencies. Further, we do a high volume in shotgun sales, which helps distribute overhead and keep the price point down."

At about \$1,200 CAD, the Mossberg 940 Pro Waterfowl is a great option for waterfowl hunters seeking a reliable autoloader packed with features and offering value for the dollar. 



WEATHERBY'S VANGUARD XRS

A factory-built chassis rifle
BY LOWELL STRAUSS





The Vanguard features MDT's standard AICS pattern 10-shot polymer magazine.

Upgrading a factory rifle with an aftermarket chassis system is a good way of improving rifle accuracy and makes for a fun DIY project. But when a rifle has all the components of a precision rifle, straight from the factory, it's something that gets me excited. The Weatherby Vanguard XRS, chambered in the versatile 223 Remington, is tricked out with accuracy-enhancing features. I got my hands on this ready-made precision rifle and put it through its paces. Come on the tour with me!

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The Weatherby Vanguard XRS rifle features a Vanguard action (Howa, made in Japan) and a #3, cold hammer-forged, 1:9 twist barrel fitted in a flat dark-earth MDT XRS chassis. This rifle is aesthetically pleasing; the contour and length of the barrel suit the chassis and create a balance point in front of the magazine. The XRS forend comes with M-LOK slots for

mounting accessories and attaching ARCA or Picatinny rails. Heavy-duty sling swivel studs on the fore and aft of the chassis make sling mounting and bipod attachment a breeze. The rifle's rubberized vertical grip provides a grippy surface for all weather conditions, and its shape facilitates a smooth trigger squeeze. The stock can also accommodate a QD sling swivels if that's to your liking.

Good marksmanship starts with a consistent grip and cheek weld, which allows the natural alignment of the shooter to the target. The XRS chassis has an adjustable fit in two dimensions. First, the XRS has spacers in front of the recoil pad to adjust the length of pull between 13.25 and 15 inches. Additionally, a quick-adjust cheek piece ensures personalized cheek placement and aligns the eye with the centre of the scope. This is an invaluable feature with today's high-magnification riflescopes, with large objective lenses perched high above

the bore axis.

Compared to most wood and synthetic stocks, the MDT action-specific V-block bedding system ensures optimal fit and function, maximizing accuracy. The chassis is CNC machined from 6061 aircraft aluminum for strength and rigidity. It provides out-of-the-box reliability and doesn't require learning new skills or a gunsmith to assemble. The Vanguard's integral recoil lug fits snugly with the chassis recoil lug's mating surface. The front-action bolt threads into the beefy machined recoil lug's base – a design that eliminates movement between the action and the chassis, maximizing accuracy and repeatability. The chassis maintains a consistent shot-to-shot relationship between the barreled action and the stock during and between shots. Its design generously free-floats the barrel, and the stiff #3 contour barrel dampens harmonics.

The XRS chassis allows for a detach- ▶



LEFT: Bolt gas ports allow high-pressure gases to escape laterally in the event of a ruptured case or pierced primer.

BELOW: A three-position safety means the bolt can be opened with the safety on in the middle position.

able box magazine, and the single-stack design aligns the cartridge with the chamber, requiring less effort for the push-feed bolt to glide the cartridge from the magazine into battery. The Vanguard XRS rifle includes MDT's standard AICS pattern 10-shot polymer magazine. I find modern polymer magazines both rugged and reliable, and this one is no different, working flawlessly during my range sessions. A robust, ambidextrous magazine latch is located at the front of the trigger guard. Pushing the paddle-style mag release forward allows the magazine to drop freely from the rifle for quick mag changes.

UNDER THE HOOD

A quality trigger is essential to top accuracy, particularly at longer ranges. The Vanguard XRS includes an adjustable two-stage trigger with a relatively wide, flat trigger shoe. The tactile feel of the shoe is nice; it fits my finger perfectly, while small ridges on the shoe provide some grip. The trigger's uptake through the first stage is light, and the second stage is exceptionally crisp, with no perceivable creep. Spring tension cushions the trigger overtravel, making a good trigger squeeze a non-issue. My test rifle's trigger came from the factory set a hair over three pounds, a good weight for gloved hands. In these warmer months, I've lightened the trigger to



its minimum pull weight of about 2.5 pounds. Trigger adjustment is an easy operation, removing the action from the chassis and then adjusting a single screw on the front of the trigger.

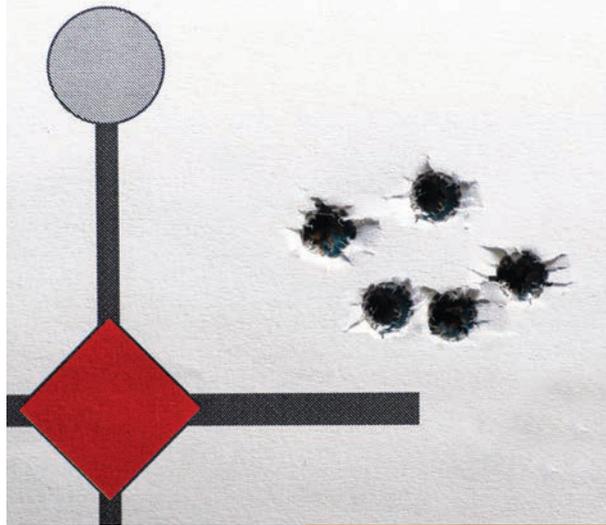
Barrel twist rates for the 223 Remington are all over the board, from the slow 1:14 twist to twice that at 1:7. Weatherby uses a 1:9 twist for this rifle, which hits a sweet spot for a range of bullet weights. The 1:9 twist, according to online twist rate calculators, is not too fast for lighter 55-grain bullets but fast enough to stabilize up to 70-grain monoliths and 75-grain traditional lead-core bullets. With this twist rate, the Vanguard XRS is an ammunition omnivore.

One look at the Vanguard's bolt and it's plain to see that Weatherby takes shooter safety seriously. The most noticeable feature is three gas ports on the side of the bolt body, which allows high-pressure gases to escape laterally. In addition, the fully enclosed bolt sleeve redirects high-pressure gases and brass particles in the event of a case rupture or pierced primer. It's peace of mind in the unlikely event of a catastrophic failure. The bolt body has longitudinal flutes, reducing its bearing surface, minimizing binding and smoothing cycling. The bolt cocks on handle lift, and the movement is buttery smooth.

I love a three-position safety on a field rifle for the simple reason that the bolt stays closed on safe. More than once, when using rifles with a different style of safety, I've accidentally and unknowingly opened the bolt by brushing against my jacket or trees, losing ammunition! However, a three-position safety's middle setting allows shooters to work the action while the safety is still engaged. It's the best of both worlds.

The Vanguard action is drilled and tapped for mounting optics. It uses the same base footprint as the Remington 700. Two-piece bases for Remington 700 bases work fine; however, I learned that for a one-piece Picatinny rail, the spacing between the front and rear holes differs from a Rem 700. Buying a Vanguard-specific rail solved that problem.

The fit and finish of the Weatherby Vanguard XRS are excellent. Both Weatherby and MDT make top-quality products, with tight manufacturing tolerances. It is little surprise that the



LEFT: 07: The Vanguard XRS is an accurate rifle, shooting five-shot sub-MOA groups for the ammunition tested. Shown here is the best group, measuring 0.88 inches

BELOW: The MDT XRS chassis features an action-specific V-block bedding system that beds the action and free-floats the barrel.

chassis system perfectly fits the Vanguard action. The finish on the metal action and barrel surfaces is smooth, as was the finish on the MDT chassis. Because of the tight tolerances, removing and reinstalling the barrelled action is painless.

THE NUMBERS

Like all Vanguards, the XRS chassis model includes a sub-MOA accuracy guarantee of shooting a .99-inch or less three-shot group at 100 yards with premium ammunition. The Vanguard XRS held a sub-MOA five-shot group (which is even more impressive) for all but one of the loads I evaluated. I tested the rifle's accuracy using 62-grain Hornady Black (best 5-shot group at .88-inches), 53-grain Hornady Superformance Varmint, 69-grain Sierra HPBT Handload and 62-grain Federal American Eagle (biggest five-shot group 1.21 inches; a three-shot group would have made the cut).

The Vanguard XRS rifle weighs 4.3 kilograms or 9.5 pounds. I installed a Leupold VX-3HD 4.5-14x40, bumping the total weight to 4.9 kilograms (10.8 pounds). The extra mass in a chassis-system rifle provides an incredibly stable shooting platform and soaks up the minimal recoil of the 223 Rem. MDT sells an additional one-pound forend weight for the XRS chassis from their website for shooters who want even more recoil-nullifying mass.



FINAL THOUGHTS

Weatherby's Vanguard rifles are known for quality and performance at a reasonable price. The Vanguard XRS fits that mould perfectly; in Canada, the Vanguard XRS currently retails for \$1,389 – a competitive price for a competitive rifle. Likely more cost effective than piecing together a similar DIY build.

MDT chassis are popular aftermarket upgrades, and manufacturers like Weatherby have taken note. By incorporating the benefits of an MDT XRS modular chassis with their proven Weatherby action and adding a heavy target barrel and adjustable trigger, they've created a complete package that will be a hit with target shooters and varmint hunters alike.

When custom upgrades are available in a factory rifle, it's a winner in my books. Weatherby hit a home run with this combination. 🍀

GUNS FOR GOPHERS

Tools for battling a rodent plague

BY AL VOTH



ISTOCK



TOP: Gophers are small targets, so an accurate rifle is a necessity.

TOP RIGHT: Semi-autos, like this customized Ruger 10/22, make great gopher guns.

BELOW: A bipod or tripod support is necessary for longer shots, in this case with a CZ in 17 Hornet.

Technically, the word plague refers to a disease. However, in common usage, the word has also come to mean a severe overpopulation of a certain species, often insects, reptiles or rodents. Some places in the world have plagues of locusts, others of rabbits, while in the US feral hogs are reaching plague proportions. In western Canada, we occasionally see plagues of ground squirrels, known locally as gophers.

I grew up on the western plains with these pint-sized rodents and have been hunting them since I was 12 years old. That was over five decades

ago, so I've shot a lot of gophers. Just about every kid living on the prairies has shot gophers as a rite of passage and is intimately familiar with them. However, Canada is a big country and many of our readers have never even seen a gopher, so I thought it time to acquaint those readers with this ritual of spring practiced on Canada's prairies.

THE TARGET

Certainly, gopher populations, like many other creatures, move in cycles, with periods of highs and lows occurring at seemingly regular intervals. This is normal and expected. But when one of these population peaks coincides with ideal environmental and food conditions, the result can be a perfect storm of circumstances that sends populations through the roof, with the single best descriptor being plague.

Gophers are nothing new; they were around when the prairies were virgin grassland roamed by vast herds of bison. And while the bison are gone, the gophers aren't. They have adapted to man's presence and thrive on his crops. I've seen the rodents so bad they've eaten entire fields of crops, to the extent farmers couldn't justify starting up the combines to harvest. And it's not just harvest that's affected. A farmer once told me that one spring while seeding, the ground collapsed under his air-seeder, dropping it down onto the frame because the gophers had done so much tunneling in one corner of the field. ▶



I've seen gophers tunneling in graveyards to the extent they tilt over headstones. Their tunnels in irrigation canals and dikes can cause these structures to fail and result in flooding and the loss of scarce and valuable water. Also, cattle and horses seem to have a knack for stepping in gopher holes and damaging their legs. Just last year, a farmer told me he had to put a cow down because she broke her leg in a gopher hole. Meaning one gopher cost him over \$1,000.

Southern Saskatchewan and southern Alberta are the two areas most likely to see these population spikes, but gophers can be found in shootable quantities over most of the prairies.

In many of these areas, the country is wide open, and the people are few. Here, agriculture is life with drought, hail, disease and grasshoppers also conspiring to destroy the livelihood of farmers and ranchers. They don't need crop-destroying gophers added to the mix, so farmers welcome gopher shooters.

THE METHOD

Poison is a common method of controlling gopher populations, but it obviously has consequences down the food chain. Farmers and ranchers realize this

and are reluctant to use it, but sometimes it's either poison or go broke.

Once, when coming out of the local breakfast spot one morning, I spoke with a farmer whose pick-up truck box was level full with containers of poisoned grain. His work for the day was to distribute the poison. However, no one I spoke with that day liked the idea of poisoning and most refuse to use it around livestock, close to farmyards or areas frequented by wildlife. Even so, I've heard several unconfirmed reports of wildlife poisoning, while also hearing concerns about its lack of effectiveness on the target species. One authority in the provincial Department of Agriculture reports that for poison to be effective, it must kill 70 per cent of the target. So far, 40 to 55 per cent is the best they've been able to achieve.

When gopher plagues hit their peak, it's not uncommon for landowners to board shooters at no charge and to buy their ammunition. They know that

BELOW: When stretching out cartridges like the 223 Rem. or 204 Ruger a spotter is a huge asset.



100 per cent of the varmints centre-punched with a 40-grain hollow point are dead. It's a record poison can't match.

The long weekend in May usually coincides with the young ones emerging from underground and their presence increases target opportunities at least five-fold. The latter part of May and all of June is prime hunting, and then things start to slow down gradually through July and into August.

The best way I've found to hunt gophers is to walk the fields with a rifle and a rest system, such as a bipod or shooting sticks. Of course, if one were to use a centerfire, a shooting bench at one end of the field provides a lot of shooting.

THE GUNS & AMMUNITION

The relatively uncaring attitude of gophers to human presence means all shooting can be easily done within 100 yards, which makes gophers the perfect game for rimfire shooters. Any accurate rifle and scope combination will work fine, although I prefer semi-autos because of the instant point of aim adjustments the self-loading mechanism allows in the event of a miss. And missing is easy, as gophers are a small target, much smaller than the prairie dogs which inhabit the US plains.

When it comes to gopher ammunition, any good Long Rifle hollow point will do the job nicely right out to 100 yards. But I recommend staying away from solid points, as they just don't kill as effectively. When injured, gophers behave like any other burrowing animal and immediately dash for their burrows. Even though gophers are pests, I believe they still need to be killed humanely, so my goal is to always try and kill them above ground. If they don't make it back down their holes, you've achieved a humane kill. The ability to send a quick finishing shot is another reason I like semi-autos when using the 22 LR cartridge. ELEY's hollow point loading is the accuracy winner in almost every rifle I've tested, but offerings by Winchester, CCI, Federal and Remington can be highly effective too.

Of course, there are other rimfire options, specifically the 22 WMR and the 17 HMR. If you're what I call a "seeker of the red mist," then these



LEFT: Pistol calibre carbines, here in 357 Magnum and 9mm Luger, are fun on gophers, but ammunition costs can add up quickly.

are first-choice calibres which deliver good kills out to 200 yards. Yes, the cost of ammunition is considerably more, but the terminal effect leaves little to be desired. The 17 HMR in particular is a favoured calibre among gopher experts because rifles in this chambering are typically very accurate and the projectiles less affected by wind. Modern loads like Hornady's 17-grain V-Max in the 17 HMR or their 30-grain V-Max in the 22 WMR are devastatingly effective on gophers. As usual, when shooting rimfires, be sure to test several brands in your rifle(s) to see which is the most accurate.

The next step up is centrefires, and if there was ever a centrefire cartridge designed for gopher shooters, it's the 17 Hornet. However, you'd best be prepared to handload, as buying enough factory ammunition for a day in a gopher-infested field will break most of us. It's no trick at all to handload the 20-grain V-Max to 3,500 feet per second, making it 1,000 feet per second faster than the rimfire version, and dramatically increasing range and terminal performance. Spectacular airtime is the rule with this cartridge, which has an effective range out to 300 yards, with my personal best be-

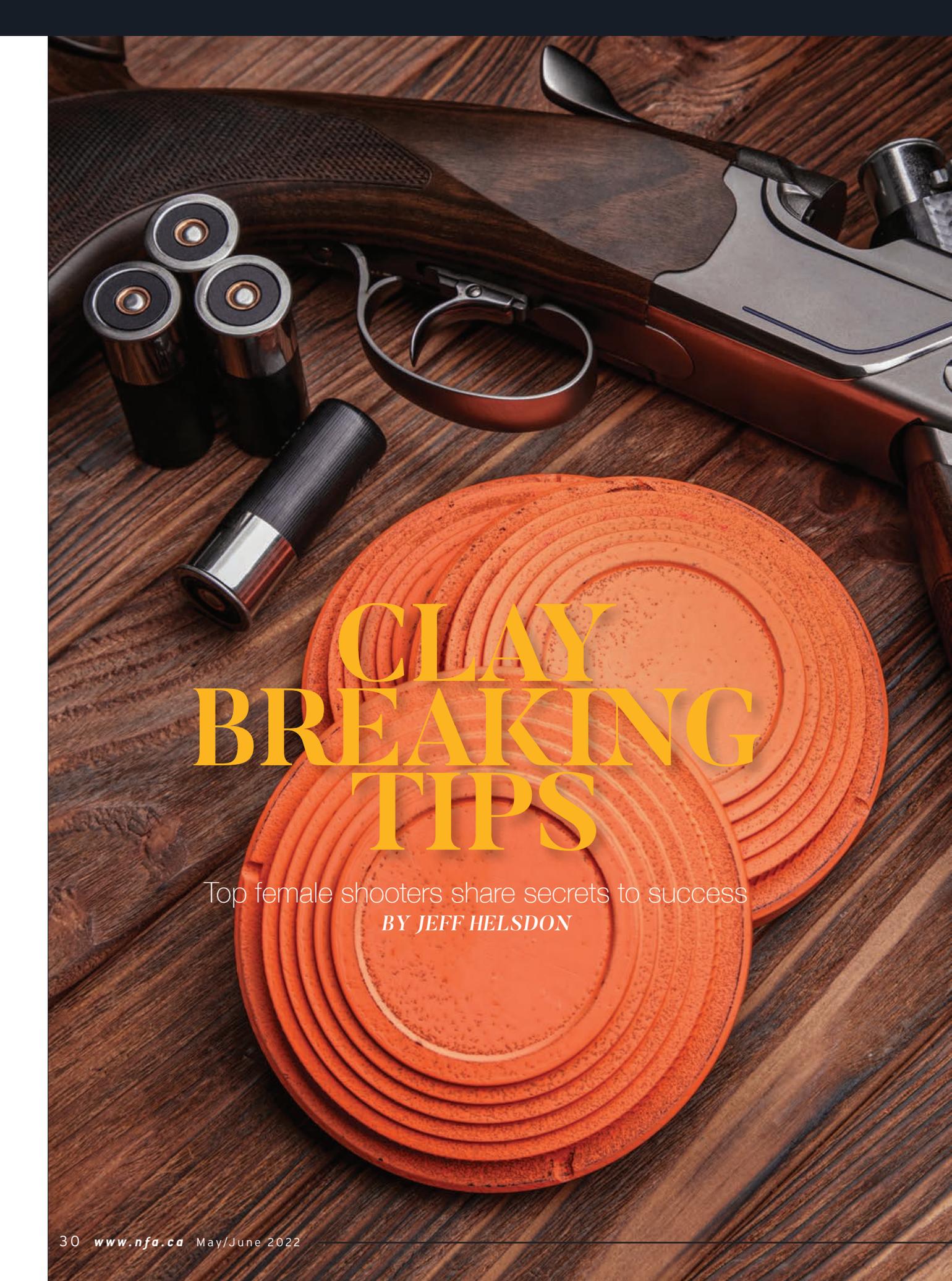
ing 325 yards.

The older 22 Hornet is a great gopher cartridge as well, as is the 17 Fireball. The 223 Remington is great too but can require a lot of discipline to prevent burning out the barrel if you're in a target-rich environment. You'll need a sub-MOA rifle though, which eliminates many of the modern semi-auto sporting rifles we have available in Canada right now. An accurate AR-15 would make an ideal gopher gun, but, of course, we're not trusted to own them.

Most of my shooting in this calibre has been done with bolt-actions and reduced loads. For these, I use a 40-grain bullet designed for the 22 Hornet and load it down to Hornet velocities (about 2,800 feet per second). These reduced loads are cheaper, quieter and there's less muzzle jump, allowing the shooter to see the impact in the rifle scope. However, with a highly accurate 223 Rem., full-power loads and a stable support, it's fun to see how far away hits can be made. It's something I haven't done enough of, simply because while trying to hit a 500-yard gopher there will be 40 others giving you the equivalent of a rodent finger at 75 yards. And they all need killing.

Just about anything will work on gophers. I've known people to shoot them with shotguns, 45-70s and deer rifles. The 25-06 is as large as I've gone, and it's definitely overkill. The current crop of pistol-calibre carbines are great for gophers, as long as the accuracy is there, and you can afford to feed them the ammunition required for a day's shooting. Again, hollow points are the most fun.

So, you can see it's hard to go wrong in choosing the tools to shoot gophers. It's an opportunity for gun owners to get a lot of live-target trigger time while performing a valuable service for the agricultural community. 🍷



CLAY BREAKING TIPS

Top female shooters share secrets to success

BY JEFF HELSDON



While the shooting sports have long been male dominated, women are making more inroads all the time. At the last Olympics, Lynda Kiejko was the only Canadian competing in the shooting sports, contending in 25-metre sport pistol and 10-metre air pistol.

Female shooters have also shone on the international stage. Canadian Susan Natrass paved the way, being the first female to compete in Olympic trap shooting in the Montreal games in 1976. She appeared in five more Olympics, making her one of the elite 122 people who competed in six Olympic games. Her top finish was sixth in Athens 2004. Natrass' list of accolades is impressive and distinguished. She has won multiple medals at the Pan Am Games, Commonwealth Games and the World Trap Championship. She won the Lou Marsh Trophy for Canadian athlete of the year in 1981 and is an Officer of the Order of Canada.

Cynthia Meyer was the last Canadian to compete in Olympic trap, finishing seventh in 2016 in Rio de Janeiro in women's trap. Her best finish was fifth in double trap women in Sydney in 2000.

Today, a new generation of women are smashing clays and winning at the local, national and international level. Three of them shared some of their secrets to success.

TOP-LEVEL SHOOTER

As a member of the Shooting Federation of Canada's women's trap team, Alberta resident Lindsay Boddez competes for the country at the international level in Olympic trap. No country automatically gets a berth at the Olympics, spots must be won at the Championship of the Americas or the Pan Am Games. Once the spot is earned, which could happen two years before the games, a shoot-off is held closer to the games' date to determine who will go. Boddez won a silver medal at the 2011 Pan Am Games and was an alternate for the Rio games, missing by only one target.

The trail to the highest level started with Boddez, who is now 47, shooting ATA when she was 16 at the encouragement of her father, Art Majeau, and her uncles. Then, when she was in her early 20s, she started shooting international trap at the encouragement of her father's friend, Fred White. She was at her first nationals at the age of 23. A significant challenge is that interna-

tional trap fields are far more difficult to find than ATA facilities. In fact, there is only one in Alberta, near Edmonton, and there are only nine total in Canada. Boddez's solution was to have her husband build an Olympic wobble trap at her home in 2011.

As a Canadian firearms safety course and hunter education instructor, as well as a certified coach through NCCP, Boddez likes to share shooting advice.

"Gun fit is so important," she said. "It determines your success and will ensure you are consistent." She struggled with gun fit until her husband bought a Perazzi MX-8 for her 40th birthday. She said getting the right advice is important on gun fit. "There's a lot of people who don't know gun fit as well as they should," she said. She likes an adjustable comb gun to get the perfect fit, and said when the gun is mounted, and her finger is on the trigger, she should be able to take her thumb and scratch her nose. Boddez also advised it's important to hold the gun tightly to your shoulder. She said the shooter's face should be tight to the comb of the gun.

Following the same routine is also important in regard to mounting the gun and the shooter's stance. Boddez finds her eye hold is different on the trap house than with ATA, and shooters use a different stance. She finds most shooters don't change their stance when shooting ATA. "I find with ATA, people don't open their stance so they can adapt," she said.

And, of course, Boddez said one of the largest issues is the mental game. She said mental performance training is important in your pre-shot warm-up and how a lost target is dealt with. For this reason, the national team has a mental performance consultant, in addition to the Shooting Federation of Canada having a kinesiologist to help the shooters. "This is big – especially in Olympic trap – 99 per cent is mental," she said.

Speaking to the example of an ATA shooter who hit 99 straight three times, but kept missing the last target, Boddez said it's entirely mental. "You put the outcome before the process," she said. "You need to shoot one target at a time."

Boddez sings to herself when she shoots so her mind stays focused. If she has a loss, she closes her eyes, visualizes the shot, and then reaches into the air beside her and pretends she is hitting the delete key on a keyboard, and ▶

then moves on. "If you dwell on that loss, it starts to get in your head," she said.

Boddez focuses on shooting when she calls for the target, saying, "I shoot 100 per cent reflexive, it's automatic." She also doesn't count targets, or those of her competitors. "I'm not competing with them, I'm competing with myself," she said. "That's a big thing if you are on a squad with people you are competing against, not to count the other person's targets."

After the round is done, she will confirm her own score, but won't look at anyone else's. "I find even in ATA, you can count backwards quickly," she said, saying it doesn't help to know other people's score. "You should be just trying to better yourself instead of shooting against someone else. And shooters who are serious should find a coach to assist them."

WINNING AT ATA

Jennifer Arnold, 33, is a relatively new shooter, but has been winning at ATA competitions.

The Ontario resident first shot trap more than eight years ago when her trap shooting father asked her to go. "The gun was probably the same height as me and we probably did that twice a year," she recounted. "The last couple years, I thought I wanted to get into this."

A shooter at Hamilton Gun Club, one of Arnold's first steps was getting a gun that fit her. She chose a Remington 870 and then moved to a Canuck over/under trap gun. "It's important to find a gun that fits you correctly," she said. Once she overcame the gun issue, Arnold quickly realized winning at trap is about the shooter's frame of mind. "A lot of it's a mind game," she said. "You have to be in the right mindset. You can be a fabulous shooter, but if your mind is off, you won't do well." Arnold said people get down on themselves in competition if they have a bad round, or event. "If you do bad, you let it go."

Last year was her first shooting ATA – although you wouldn't know it from her competition results in 2021. At the provincials last year in St. Thomas, she was the winner in singles preliminary, handicap preliminary, doubles preliminary, Joseph Soos handicap champion, Dan Gris doubles champion, high overall and handicap open and high overall. This event was a change for Arnold, from the usual 300 targets she would shoot in a day at an ATA shoot, to 1,000. A couple of things to keep in mind is Arnold shot handicap with a one-yard penalty be-

RIGHT: Madelene Scola is making waves in the international trap world, taking first place at the US Grand Prix and winning the Ontario Provincials.

BELOW: It takes a lot of ammunition to become as proficient at breaking clays.



cause she hadn't shot enough registered handicap targets. She also had never shot doubles before.

She went into the provincials with no expectations, while she said others were counting on winning. "If you're cocky, you might not come out on top," she said.

Arnold's goal is to work towards the Ontario Provincial Trapshooting all-star team for lady 1, which is for competitors under 55. When interviewed, she was learning the challenges of shooting winter interclub league in southwestern Ontario. Her strategy was to use a battery heated jacket to stay warm, so she didn't need to bulk up. She is also an NFA field officer.

THE NEXT GENERATION

At 20, Ontario resident Madelene Scola represents the next generation of competitor. She is an intense, dedicated competitor who only got into shooting seven years ago.

Her father, David, was a national-level fencer and started into archery as a family activity. Then, when taking national coaching certification for archery, he met a shooting coach. After her father found he loved Olympic trap, he convinced Scola to give it a try. Although she initially had some trepidation about guns, she first stepped on the range in April 2014 and took part in her first competition in 2015.

"In late 2016 or early 2017, I found my passion for international competition and made my decision to get serious with it," she said. She won the provincial championships this past summer. However, Scola considers her greatest accomplishment was winning first at the US Grand Prix in 2019. "I was the only woman in the competition, and it was just such a rewarding experience," she said. "I was just jumping up and down when I won."

Starting shooting as a teenager, Scola had to show tremendous discipline to

balance her high school classes and being in other countries to shoot trap. She would often take schoolwork with her and, more than once, took a red-eye flight home and was in school the next day.

Part of being a top-level shooter is gun fit, part is mastering your shooting form, but 90 per cent of it is mental game.

"You need a certain degree of mental discipline to perform the same action over and over." She shoots a Beretta DT-11 that is modified to fit her.

Admitting she is hard on herself, Scola found she was competing three or four years before she realized fun and camaraderie at the competitions was important. "You need to go in with a very open mind," she said. "Your main goal should be to just enjoy the competition; feel the emotions of being under the pressure in competition."

Having a strong support team is also important. This is not necessarily just about shooting form, but having someone to discuss the emotions of competition. She said the emotions of competition "can be exhausting." Discussing what she is feeling in between rounds has helped her shoot better.

In international competition, listening to music is not allowed while shooting. But Scola turns to music in between rounds and has routines to help her manage her emotions. Over time, she has noticed certain patterns as she progresses through a round, and the changes in emotions that accompany it. Scola can now recognize those warning signs and stop her mind from going into the situations that translate into missed targets.

It's important to keep positive and stay focussed. "It reduces mental fatigue and doesn't let your mind spiral off into hypothetical situations." As for the all-important question of dealing with missed targets mentally, Scola said she quickly looks at how to fix it and then lets it go. "No matter how much you worry about it, or kick yourself, you're not going to get it back," she said. "If you continue (to worry about a miss), then you'll end up missing the next one."

Scola has not yet set her goal as a shooter, as she is focusing on university, studying kinesiology and athletic therapy at York University. "I've gotten so much out of my career already and it's just begun," she said. "A little bit of a question mark at the end, but I'm not focusing on it."

If that future includes an Olympic run, it's too early to say. 🏆

RIGHT:
Jennifer Arnold, who won big in ATA competition in Ontario last year, is also an NFA field officer.

BELOW:
Lindsay Boddez is a Canadian firearms safety course and hunter education instructor, as well as a certified coach through NCCP.



INTERNATIONAL/ OLYMPIC TRAP VERSUS ATA TRAP

THE TRAP SHOOTING done at most gun clubs in Canada is the format used by the Amateur Trapshooting Association (ATA). This is the 16-yard, handicap and doubles trap most readers will be familiar with, where one machine that oscillates between 22.5 degrees of centre throws targets at a prescribed height at speeds of 68 to 70 kilometres an hour. International or Olympic trap has 15 machines in a bunker, which throw targets at almost twice that speed, and with much more variation in target presentation.



FEEDING THE GHOSTS

Handloading for the SMLE
BY ROSS OEHMS

The Short Magazine Lee Enfield (SMLE) rifle and its 303 British ammunition has a long history in the British Commonwealth. The cartridge was initially adopted by the military in 1888 as a black powder load, then adapted to smokeless powder in 1891. In its various guises, it was the standard load in the British Commonwealth until 1950, seeing use in both rifles and machine guns.

Initially, the projectile was a 215-grain copper-nickel jacketed one, propelled by 71.5 grains of black powder, it was boxer primer and produced about 1,830 feet per second in velocity. In 1910, the British introduced a 174-grain spitzer projectile, at a speed of 2,440 feet per second, which remained the standard round for the rest of the service life of the cartridge. The 10-shot magazine was loaded via the use of stripper clips, which held five rounds. The clip, complete with ammunition, was simply inserted in a cut-out in the receiver and pushed into the magazine with the rifleman's thumb.

FIRST WORLD WAR STANDARDS

During the First World War, rifles straight from the factory were shot

by known marksmen and those that could shoot a three-inch group at 100 yards were put aside as sniper rifles. This applied in the UK, but I am not sure if it applied elsewhere. In a similar vein, troops at the front tested each batch of new ammunition for accuracy. It should be noted that some 20 countries produced more than 200 variants of the military cartridge.

SECOND WORLD WAR AFTERMATH

Aside from military use, the rifle/cartridge combination was the mainstay of Commonwealth rifle clubs for many years. In addition, in many countries after the Second World War it filled a void in the hunting communities until civil production and relaxation of import laws caught up to demand. It may reasonably be suggested that, in some cases, the combinations used were inappropriate. In turn, this led to the development of wildcat calibres. However, there is plenty of historical evidence that the 303 British did the job, provided the projectile arrived at the correct destination.

MODERN BRASS

Feeding old rifles with modern-day components is certainly acceptable,

but there are several considerations to keep in mind. As a starter, all old rifles should be checked over by a competent gunsmith for possible problems. Handloaders should be particularly aware the action is not as strong as the Mauser 98, which locked at the front of the bolt, whereas the Enfield is a rear locking design.

Also, because the 303 British was a military cartridge, the chambers had been sized generously enough to function with dirty or contaminated ammunition, thus the tolerances were substantial. This can pose a problem for the handloader. In addition, the cartridge case was never envisaged to be reloaded.

Firing modern-day brass in these old chambers will result in some case growth. Different sized screw-on bolt heads can help, if you can find them, as they can tighten headspace. However, totally resizing the brass after every firing will get you well on the way to a potential case head separation due to excessive case stretching. Case life can be relatively short, so it is vital to measure case length after each firing cycle and not exceed the maximum of 2.222 inches.

Because of the generous chambers, >

batches of cases should only be used in one rifle, keep them separate from cases used in any other rifles. Also, do not full-length resize this brass, neck size only. To increase case life and continue to provide accuracy, anneal the case necks each time they come across the reloading bench – this will ensure that the case neck grip on the projectile is consistent. If you fail to anneal, the ductile properties of the brass will change with each firing cycle. The effect of annealing on both case life and accuracy is most noticeable.

I didn't own an SMLE chambered for the 303 British cartridge until the mid-1990s, when I acquired a full wood No 1 Mk 3, fitted with a peep sight, and manufactured in Australia in 1943. We load developed it, initially using Winchester and Norma brass, Winchester standard primers and 150-grain Hornady spitzer projectiles. A lot of water has flowed under the bridge since then, making it time to look at the SMLE and its cartridge again.

MODERN AMMUNITION & COMPONENTS

For the shooter wishing to use commercial cartridges, there are quite a few to choose from.

From Europe, there are at least two suppliers, Sellier & Bellot and Prvi Partizan, both with 150 and 180-grain projectiles in spitzer and round-nosed configurations. The offerings from the US include cartridges from Remington, Winchester, Federal and Hornady, all in the same weight range. While Hornady, Sierra and Speer make a range of suitable component bullets, finding them in a gun shop these days can be difficult. In similar fashion, powder availability can be challenging.

A quick look around the dusty fringes of my reloading area produced an adequate supply of new Remington, Norma and Winchester cases. To ensure some uniformity, all cases were lubricated and run over the sizing die to ensure perfectly round case mouths, the primer pockets checked with a uniformer, the lubrication removed and case mouths lightly chamfered inside and out.

PROJECTILES & POWDER

The only bullets available were custom hollow points in 130 and 150-grain weights. We have noticed

RIGHT: The author handloads for an Australian-made No 1 Mk 3 SMLE.

BELOW: Five-round clips are the most efficient way to reload an SMLE.



in the past on several occasions that while the load density was higher with a slower powder, the velocity may be slightly lower; however, the subsequent group was better than any other. It was, in my opinion, worth an initial try.

First up was the 130-grain Protector Point projectile, but we immediately ran into a common problem. Most projectiles in this weight range are now out of date and are no longer listed in the various loading manuals. Our only references were two in number, the Hodgdon Manual #26 listed H4895 powder at a maximum of 43 grains. The only other manual listing a similar projectile weight was the Australian Woodleigh, which showed a maximum of 45 grains.

This sort of problem occurs from

time to time and the solution I've used for 30 years is to average the weights and use this as the new maximum, which, of course, should not be exceeded. We have never had a problem using this averaging system.

Thus, the 130-grain Protector Point using H4895:

LOAD	AV VEL	GROUP
44.0 grains	2,726	1.10 inches
43.0 grains	2,663	0.78 inches
42.0 grains	2,575	1.68 inches

We fired four additional groups of three shots each for the 43-grain load, and they averaged 2,767 feet per second, with an average group size of 0.90 inches. Overall velocity with this load averaged 2,776 feet per second and an average groups size of 0.88 inches.



RIGHT:
Necks
cleaned
up and
chamfered,
ready to
reload.

BELOW:
Pictured,
130, 150 and
180-grain
projectiles.



The 150-grain load was also the subject of some variation. Varget was about middle of the road, with Hodgdon quoting a maximum of 43 grains, Speer 45 grains and Hornady 40.8. This averaged out a new maximum of 42.9 grains.

Thus, the 150-grain Protector Point using Varget:

LOAD	AV VEL	GROUP
42.9 grains	2,566	0.70 inches
41.9 grains	2,378	1.29 inches
40.9 grains	2,282	1.48 inches

Unfortunately, some of the follow-up data for the best group of 0.70 inches using 42.9 grains of powder was lost, so we used the additional groups from the 41.9 grain load. These four three-shot groups averaged out at 2,392 feet

per second, with an average group size of .97 inches, for an overall average of 2,388 feet per second and an average group size of .89 inches.

All loads were shot at 50 yards, bearing in mind the peep sight. Much of the shooting was done by Cameron, my second son, as his eyesight is better than mine and I must admit he can outshoot me!

PROCESSING USED CASES

At the end of the load development process, there are always a pile of used cases. There are many ways to process them to make them fit to be used again, and with the price of components these days, anything that extends case life is a positive. I've used the following for some years:

De-prime the cases in a universal

decapper and then clean the primer pockets with a primer pocket uniformer, this will both keep them clean and at the correct depth. My preferred method to control case length is a specific calibre form and trim die – simply file off anything that is outside the die and re-chamfer.

Remove the lubricant and then clean the cases in an ultrasonic cleaner. For the cleaning solution, use a level teaspoon of citric acid with a level teaspoon of cream of tartar in one litre of water, plus an unscientific squirt of household detergent. Normally, two eight-minute cycles do the trick. Rinse then dry. Replace the liquid when it becomes dirty, as it's inexpensive.

Then, after resizing, clean the cases of lubrication and anneal each case with a gas torch. Check for length and trim if necessary. It is said in hydraulics that cleanliness is next to Godliness, in my opinion perhaps this applies to reloading also. We have used this system for more than 10 years.

CONCLUSION

Shooting old military rifles is just plain fun, and perhaps that is why it's so popular. Some can shoot surprisingly well considering their age. Stay within sensible loading boundaries and there won't be any problems. 🏆

TRAIN YOUR BRAIN

The mental game in precision shooting
BY TIMOTHY FOWLER





Good gear is important, but you can't buy skill. Training and practice are the only way to get there.

Job one is overcoming the caveman's brain.

As sophisticated as you may think your brain is, the primary operating system of homo sapiens' cognitive centre was originally designed for a caveman, but significant parts of the design persist. When the stress of a tricky shot ramps up, your caveman's brain takes over, responding immediately with the classic flight or fight preparation: large muscle groups flood with fresh, oxygenated blood, breathing cycles increase and your focus moves entirely and solely to the threat. Your body prepares to run away or to stand and fight.

MEET YOUR INSTRUCTOR

Kris Caprarie is a law enforcement professional who teaches people to overcome the caveman brain while consciously focusing on the critical tasks at hand. For police in high-stakes tactical situations, this means being able to think clearly and strategically, while at the same time having the skills to execute whatever that clear thinking indicates needs to be done. Caprarie teaches civilians how to shoot accurately under pressure. Hunters may not have those high-stakes tactical situations to manage through, but the desire to tag a monster bull elk that shows himself for only a moment across a valley certainly can mess with your ability to

execute a calmly released shot.

Caprarie started in firearms like a lot of folks. He joined the reserve military to fund his university education. Shortly after that, he went into law enforcement, starting in patrol. Soon he was selected to participate in the tactical unit. He became responsible for high-risk calls and specialized as a sniper for years on that team. He was the senior sniper accountable for instruction when he left the team.

He started competing about 2007 at BCRA (British Columbia Rifle Association) events in Chilliwack, BC. He moved on to the PRS (Precision Rifle Series) when it was in its infancy. He participated in the Canadian International Sniper Competition, a two-week event for snipers of NATO to come together and compete against one another. He has had the responsibility of incident commander responsible for a division. Now he is responsible for teaching new members tactics surrounding high-risk calls – how to resolve higher-risk calls with the minimum amount of force necessary.

MENTAL GAME

I interviewed Caprarie recently to get his take on what makes a good shooter. The discussion was interesting. Yes, we need good equipment, but the truth is modern firearms are pretty accurate. We practice. This is good, but

we may need instruction on using the correct basic procedures because we need to practice the right stuff.

Beyond equipment and practice, our discussion turned quickly to the mental game. The truth is we need to practice under some stress to be able to execute an accurate shot when we face challenges. For hunters, this means being prepared to shoot from various positions, using an assortment of rests. There is nearly always some time pressure when hunting. This means learning how to manage your mind when under the pressures of competition and time for competitive shooters.

Caprarie said, "When I see somebody struggling, I think, I've been there, made those mistakes as well." This ability helps him be a good instructor.

"Stress is the top-tier issue to manage once shooters become competent. It is controlling the caveman's brain." Caprarie said, "The way your brain works is, the less familiar you are with a situation, the less time you have to make a decision or set up and the higher your perceived liability, the higher your stress level. It doesn't >

matter whether it's shooting at the range or dealing with a high-risk situation. The more familiar you can become with a situation, the lower your stress. That's what training does. We're trying to make you familiar with as much as possible, then speed up your ability to interpret what's happening and give you that time you need to settle in for the shot. That's what training is attempting to do. We're trying to make you as familiar as possible with as many situations as we can and put it into the unconscious mind."

Caprarie added, "We need to master those fundamentals so that we can assess what's happening as we start to ramp things up. You want to get things from unconscious incompetence, where you don't realize the mistakes you're making, to conscious. Then we need to put it in an unconscious competence. As an example, you've probably slid your bolt closed across your mag and it doesn't pick up a round – you don't have to pull the trigger to figure that out. You felt it because you've done it so many times. What we're trying to do is free up your conscious thought for those things that you can't train for. Maybe the branch breaks that you were resting your rifle on? You've got free mental space to transition to the next tree.

"I learned this early in my career. I was shooting, probably in 2009, and happened to be partnered up with a European champion pistol shooter. We were out shooting on the world stage against all these teams, including NATO, and I was his partner. He shoots and shanks it badly. I remember looking at him, he doesn't say anything; he works the bolt, turns the dial and centre punches the next shot. We see a lot of guys curse themselves. He didn't, he just focused on all that matters. Focus on the next shot. That's it. Nothing else matters.

"Everything starts with sound fundamentals. Everybody wants to race to the finish line. They want to buy the kit to get themselves there. But if you have a .22 or a .223, work on your fundamentals."

TRAIN FOR YOUR PURPOSE

Caprarie said, "Train for your purpose. I see a lot of guys lying on their bellies, trying to shoot tiny groups. It

Caprarie says, "Write it down in a notebook. When you write things in a notebook, it becomes a mental contract."

doesn't matter how small your group is when you're lying warm, well fed and well rested. You've gone out on a nice 20-degree day – not too hot, not too cold – you're shooting great groups. That's nice to know that your rifle is capable of that, but that should be a confirmation group at the beginning of your training and then maybe a confirmation group when you put your rifle away. Otherwise, shoot to what your objective is. If you're training for hunting, get into hunting positions. Guys chase small groups when they need to read the wind. Base your training on your objectives. If you're sheep hunting in the mountains, go find a place where you have to shoot across valleys. Learn to read the wind because that's what is going to get you on target.

"I love gopher hunting because it's a smaller target, especially when they stand up. And they don't stay there forever. You have to be familiar with your equipment, be familiar with that bipod setup and be on target quickly. What's the wind doing? Now – break the shot."

BREATHE

Caprarie said, "Stress management is a big piece of this puzzle, and the first thing is to breathe. Simple. This comes from sports science. So, breathe. Deep breathing, take a deep cleansing breath: four seconds in, pause for four seconds, exhale for four. Repeat. When you get stressed, take a quick assessment of what's happening to



your body, you start breathing shallow and rapid, your fingers will begin getting tense because whether we like it or not, we've evolved to fight when we get stressed, it's a fight or flight response. We're trying to overcome that response; our big muscles take all our blood because we're getting ready to throw a punch or we're getting ready to get the heck out of there and sprint. We need to breathe; we need to get things out of our amygdala and back into our conscious brain of our cortex."

VISUALIZATION

The strategies don't end there. Caprarie continued, "Mental rehearsal is important. The ability to visualize how things are going to play out before they do is essential. I do a lot of hunting along pipelines. When I get into my position, I visualize where all the trails are, the crossing points I've already pre-scouted, I will have my ranges in place, I will test fire those positions, so that when that big buck of a lifetime steps out, I'm not going, 'Oh crap, what distance is that?' A deer in the rut is not going to be there for long. He's cruising. I'm going to have probably three-and-a-half seconds to get that shot off. I visualize it. Mental rehearsals. In competitions, we use it a lot. The more realistic



struggle with, but typically, that's where we'll fail. Something will pop up. And that's what's going to bite us in the butt in a competition."

GET FOCUSED TRAINING

Focus will pay off in the end. "Ammunition is expensive, especially now," said Caprarie. "So invest in some training. Many people don't do that because the cost of training scares them away. They figure they can go out and do it on their own. Good professional instruction will save you money in the long run. The amount of money it will save you in ammunition alone is worth it. Do it. I still do it. Even I will still subject myself to training periodically to ensure that something new hasn't come along, or maybe a new technique or just a new connection with an instructor that gives me an a-ha moment. Invest in professional training; it will save you \$1,000s in ammunition. Obviously, there's a cost associated. Typically, it's a minimum of two days. We can tailor courses if somebody wants to work on a couple of things. I've done one-on-one training with individuals where we work for a couple of hours together, just to kind of hammer out some bugs. Typically, the courses are two days because most people have weekends off. You'll have your fundamentals then, you'll have your wind reading, you'll have your positional and they'll complement each other. They're building blocks."

Even as accomplished shooters, we have much to learn. It was a pleasure to talk with a professional expert marksman, and I will be booking some training this next season. Caprarie and his associates provide training to military, law enforcement and civilians. Visit www.callsign66.ca for more information. 

sights, sounds and smells you can visualize, the better off it is. You're trying to make yourself as familiar with the situation as possible."

Caprarie underscored how important it is to practice shooting from positions you will be using in competition or when hunting.

BREAK DOWN THE GOALS

Set goals and break them down into manageable chunks or segments.

Caprarie said, "My son had a good learning experience when we shot our bull elk at Suffield this past season. We were 5.3 kilometres from the nearest road and had to drag it out. I'm like, don't worry about it, just get to the next hill. When we get to the next hill, we'll take a break. And then once we get to that hill, we get to go downhill through a valley, it'll be a nice easy walk, we'll take a break before we go up the next hill. Just break it into manageable chunks. Because if he's thinking, I've got five-and-a-half kilometres of this, he's not going to be able to make it. Break goals down into manageable chunks.

"As for training, the same thing, when you're going out to the range. Have actual, specific objectives in

mind when you train. Whether it's the fundamentals today, or to make my gun one MOA, or whether I want to work on tripod shooting. Have manageable, specific goals when you go to the range. One of the big things that I see too often is someone saying to themselves, 'What am I going to go out and do today? Guess I'll figure it out when I get there.'"

WRITE IT DOWN

Caprarie emphasized, "Write it down in a notebook. When you write things in a notebook, it becomes a mental contract. It makes you buy-in, commit to it a little bit more. Always write the two or three things down you want to do that day. Have specific goals. That's a big thing. Learn to enjoy the practice, learn too that you need to push yourself. Nobody likes to do what they

to talk with a professional expert marksman, and I will be booking some training this next season. Caprarie and his associates provide training to military, law enforcement and civilians. Visit www.callsign66.ca for more information. 

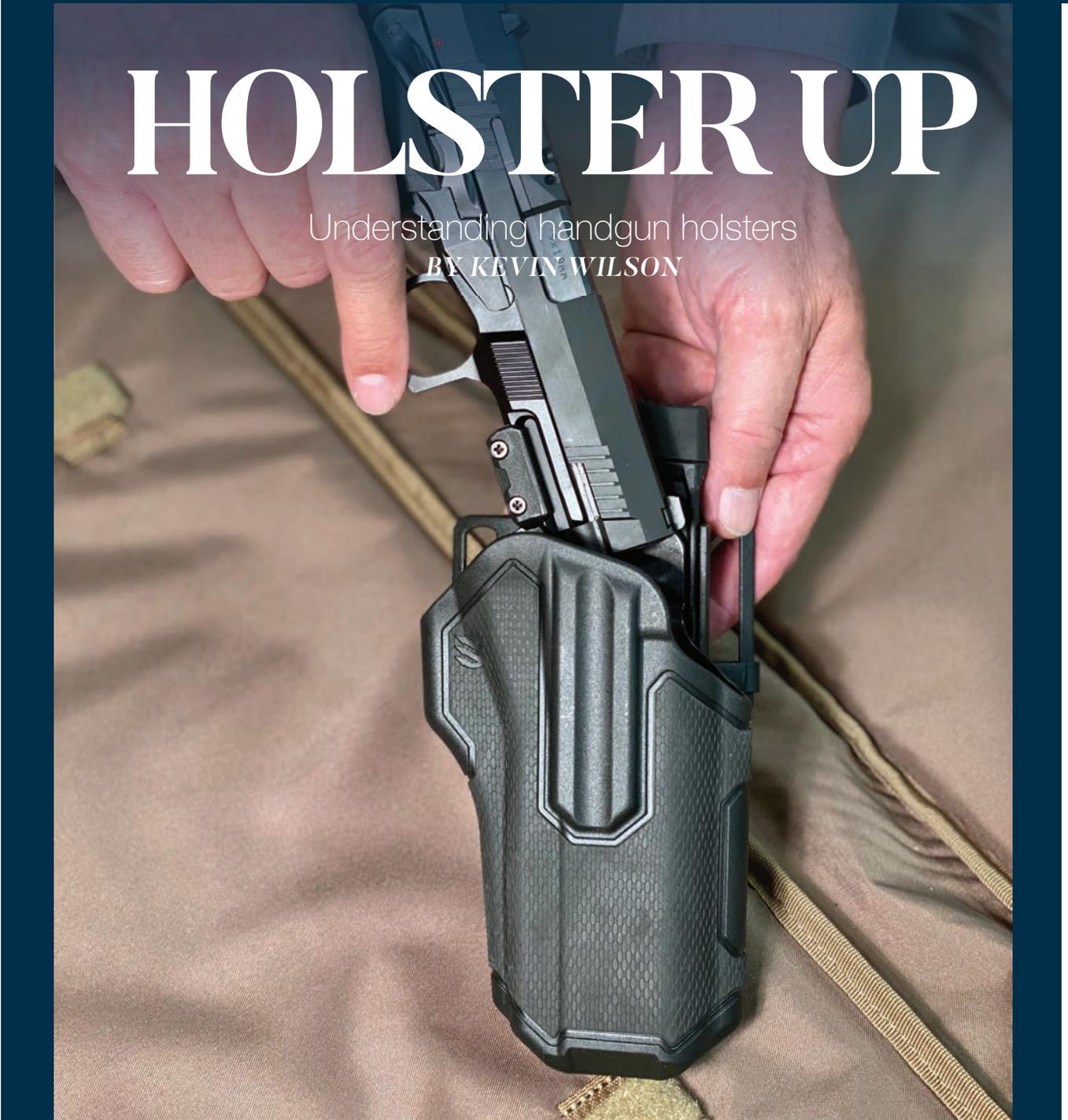
A recent hunt with his daughter netted Caprarie both a mature whitetail and a 180-class mule deer.



HOLSTER UP

Understanding handgun holsters

BY KEVIN WILSON



Shooting handguns is fun and a tremendous skill to develop. It opens a world of recreational and competitive opportunity, along with practical requirements for those who carry professionally. But here's the thing, it's unsafe, if not impractical or even unlawful, to walk around with a pistol or revolver in your hand. Depending on when and where we shoot or carry with a permit, not to mention a host of practical reasons why, we need a holster to accommodate our specific needs and constraints.

Believe me when I say no two holsters are alike. Whether we're dealing with duty holsters, competition holsters, tactical holsters, quick attachment systems or concealment holsters, each is different. In Canada, tactical, duty and competition holsters are the most popular, but oodles of different configurations are designed for special purposes, and with precise retention characteristics in mind. From tactical to western, understanding what each of these is will help you better choose the most suitable holster

for your own use.

All told, the possibilities are almost endless. Unfortunately, Canada's highly restrictive firearms laws and the safety rules at most ranges prohibit the use of unique designs like shoulder, cross-draw or inside waistbelt concealed carry holsters. The reality is we're functionally limited to using open carry hip belt holsters only. So, for this article, we'll limit our discussion to these. If you're in the market, here are a few points to consider before making your purchase.

RETENTION RATINGS

All handgun holsters are assigned a retention rating based on functionality. So, when you're shopping around, the first thing you'll notice is that each fits into one of three level designation categories. Technically, there is a fourth category as well, but they would be considerably rare for most applications. The level refers to the number of mechanical retention features, or functions, that must be disabled to draw the handgun from the holster. For the purpose of this article, we'll talk about the most common. These include level 1, level 2 and level 3 designs.

A level 1 holster is best described as one that holds the firearm by friction only. In other words, it requires only one action to draw it. Most level 1 holsters are designed to target retention at the trigger guard to minimize wear on the slide or frame of the handgun. It often requires a reasonable amount of force to pull the firearm out, and on many designs the amount of friction is adjustable. However, with a bit of practice, it's simple and quick to draw a handgun from a level 1 holster. In Canada, we usually see these worn at ranges or at competitions without higher-level holster requirements. A variety of basic injection-molded and leather holsters fall into this category. They're generally lightweight and simple to use.

Of course, our strict handgun laws allow almost no accommodation for concealed carry; however, in the US and other less-restrictive jurisdictions, many concealed carry holsters would be classed as a level 1.

Level 2 holsters are designed with two retention mechanisms. Aside from friction, these require another mechanical step to prevent the handgun from being drawn. Most commonly, this involves friction and either a strap or thumb release.

In most jurisdictions, law enforcement personnel, who are at a higher risk of being shot with their own firearm, use a level 2 or higher holster, something like the Safariland Level 2 Duty Holster. These models use ergonomic friction and a thumb-activated release button for instant access. The idea being that the added retention provides extra safeguards to prevent it from being pulled either unintentionally or by someone other than the officer wearing the holster. In Canada,

RIGHT: The Safariland ALS is a great example of a simple level 2 holster. It's lightweight and easy to use, with an adjustable friction fit and thumb release button.



LEFT: This custom-made level 2 Solely Canadian pancake holster is one of the author's favourites. Friction fit with a snap strap, its slim design is solid and comfortable to wear.

BELOW: Many of today's injection-molded and Kydex holsters have a thumb release button that must be depressed to deactivate a retention feature.



we may also see these at the range, in competitions or used by civilians with an Authorization to Carry (ATC); people like trappers, professional outfitters and hunting guides, or others who face ongoing wildlife safety risks in remote wilderness areas.

It's worth noting that anyone applying for a wilderness ATC must use a specific type of level 2 holster. In other words, guidelines state that the permit holder's holster must be an outside-the-waistband, specifically designed to be worn on a belt around the waist, outside of clothing and have at least one strap with a snap closure that retains the firearm securely in the holster. Further, the holster must be designed to completely cover the trigger. For my own purposes, I had British Columbia-based Solely Canadian make two custom Kydex level 2 holsters for my 1911. One is a level 2 competition holster that has a thumb release which flips the slide strap forward, and the other is a level 2 pancake design with a thumb release and snap strap. If you're interested in designing a custom fit holster to suit your specific needs, I highly recommend contacting them.

Then there's the level 3 holster. Most LE personnel in Canada are required to use these on the job. In keeping with the retention descriptions, as the name suggests, these holsters have three distinct mechanisms which must be activated to draw the firearm. With safety as a primary concern, a level 3 holster not only restricts the carrier's quick access, but also that of anyone trying to snatch the gun away from the authorized carrier. Some designs have both a thumb and side button, along with a friction fit. The Safariland ALS Mid-Ride is a classic molded level 3 holster, as is the Blackhawk Serpa Auto Lock Duty Holster. Both models use an ergonomic friction fit, a thumb-acti-

vated release button for instant access and variable hoods to keep the pistol locked down tight. In many designs, overcoming the third level of retention requires a specific manipulation of the gun during the draw.

GUN SPECIFIC

Of course, not every gun fits in every holster. Many makes and models are designed for either a specific gun or a family of firearms. Add custom accessories like a light or sight and you need to make sure the holster you're looking at can accommodate those as well. I had challenges in finding a proper level 2 holster for my Kimber 1911. As venerable as this platform is, it isn't as popular as the more affordable polymer-frame handguns. My choices for the 1911 were more limited, but I did find a Safariland ALS that's made to fit a Colt Government 1911, Springfield Armory 1911, a Wilson F111, Kimber 1911, S&W 1911 and an STI/SVI.

In comparison, there a lot more options for polymer-frame handguns. To illustrate the specificity of holsters, as an example, my level 3 Safariland ALS Mid-Ride holster is made for either a Sig Sauer P220R, P226R ITI M3 or TLR-1 and an SFX200 or LAS-TAC 2 light. It literally won't fit most other guns set up with different accessories. By comparison, my Blackhawk Multi-Fit Omnivore is considerably more versatile. It's designed to fit 150 different semi-automatic handguns with an accessory rail. My point? Before opening your wallet, make sure the fit and functionality of the holster is right for you and your handgun.

CONSTRUCTION

Handgun holsters are available made from a wide assortment of materials. From coarse fabric to leather, injection-molded polymers and thermoplastic/Kydex – the options are plentiful. Personal choice again comes down to application, preference and regulatory requirements.

A couple issues ago, I wrote about my first handgun. The first-ever holster I purchased was for that 1911. It was a gorgeous leather holster made by Bianchi. I like leather and, in reality, there are comparatively few level 2 options on the market for a five-inch 1911. I did a lot of research and, based on a recommendation from a friend in Georgia, I ordered one. Don't get

me wrong, I do like it, but I faced two distinct challenges. For my purpose, the fit was far too tight, even after applying a leather conditioner. It's broken in now, but even still, the leather is too tight. Similarly, the snap strap was also too tight in the beginning. This made the holster awkward to use for some time. In turn, I researched options. I discovered the more rigid injection-molded polymer and thermoplastic Kydex mentioned earlier.

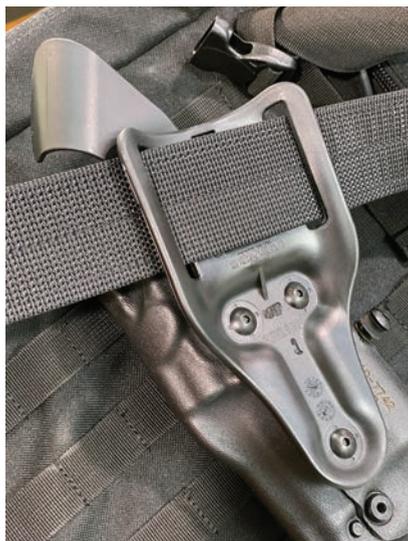
I know some backcountry guides who prefer to carry a revolver. Some are biased toward leather holsters and still others prefer a heavier-padded Cordura fabric design to holster their handgun. Arguably though, I would still suggest that, at least in Canada, semi-automatic pistol holsters made from injection-molded plastic and Kydex are the most common. Leather is still king when it comes to revolvers. And if we want to open a whole other topic, the world of competitive

cowboy action shooting requires a totally different genre of holsters. Even still, they are leather-made and worn on a hip-belt.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Handgun holsters are made for either right or left-handed carry. When you make your purchase, make sure you have the correct one. An equally important consideration is the belt you plan to hang it on. Everyday dress belts don't work, they're just too soft. Picking up a properly reinforced gun belt, to accommodate your holster, is a priority. I've found either Brownell's or Ellwood Epps to be two of the best one-stop venues to buy one. Whatever you buy, make sure it will fit or marry well with your holster. Consider the width to ensure that the belt will fit through the holster loops. Tactical belts will vary in width. Some will be 1.50 inches, others 1.75 inches and still others are wider. Duty belts in particular are designed to be stronger, as they typically need to hold more weight.

In the end, buying a holster is about getting the one that's best suited for your application. Consider your requirements and any features you deem to be important. Think safety, comfort, practicality and necessity and you're sure to get one you'll be happy with. 🇺🇸



ABOVE: A properly reinforced gun belt is a priority. Always consider the width to ensure that the belt will fit through the holster loops.



RIGHT: Form-fitting leather holsters are nice to wear, but you should be prepared to treat them with a conditioner and break them in extensively.



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MAKE A PARACORD GUN SLING

An attractive firearm accessory that doubles as a survival tool

BY JEFF HELSDON

Looking for a tough rifle sling that doubles as a do-it-yourself project? A paracord gun sling can be the ticket.

Paracord is short for parachute cord. It's tough. Paracord 550 is rated to have a breaking strength of 550 pounds of static weight, it's elastic, and it's mould and UV resistant. In an emergency situation, the paracord can be unraveled and used for a multitude of purposes associated with survival, such as rope, fishing line or a tourniquet. Paracord is not the same as nylon rope. It has a tighter weave and is made from multiple strands.

There are two ways to make a paracord sling. If the end desire is an adjustable gun sling, purchasing a gun sling kit from Paracord Planet (www.paracordplanet.com) for around \$17 US is likely the easiest way to go. For those who aren't concerned about adjustable length, just buy a set of sling swivels from a gun store and a roll of paracord.

To start, take the two pieces of the 14-foot cord (if using the kit) and melt the ends with a lighter, then push them together and hold until it hardens. Do the same with the longer pieces from the kit. If starting from scratch without a kit, consider the 14-foot piece is the first weave in a 22-inch length. Measure the end length of the sling desired, then measure the

amount from the roll based on 14 feet for 22 inches. Cut the pieces and fuse together. It's better to have too long a piece than too short of one. Then duplicate this with a piece about 15 per cent longer than the first one. Like the kit, two different colours can be used.

Once the cord has bonded together, fold the shorter pieces in half, with the joint just off centre to make it easier to hide. Push the doubled-over cord through the square ring on the end of the adjustable webbing in the kit. If not using the kit, push through one of the sling swivels. Make a lark's head knot by pulling the ends through the loop. Take the loose ends, wrap around the body of the ring or

swivel, and pull in between the existing cords. Now pull tight. The loose ends should be in the centre of the four-strand-wide knot.

While being careful not to twist the cords, put the loose ends through the other swivel. Wrap each cord around the swivel twice, with the loose ends on the outside. Adjust the length between the ring and swivel to 22 inches with the kit. If making the sling without the kit, the length of the cords should be adjusted to the desired end length.

From this point, the entire basis of the sling is based on the cobra weave that is central to most paracord projects. It is the same with either the

EQUIPMENT/MATERIAL

OPTION A: Paracord DIY gun sling kit

OPTION B: Two rolls of 50-foot or longer paracord, which can be different or the same colours, and two detachable swing swivels

- Lighter
- Scissors
- Tape measure or yard stick

TIPS

Using a clipboard or something similar to hold one end makes the project simpler to complete.

Don't use a bright colour for the accent if the sling is to be used on a turkey or waterfowl gun.

If you have sufficient cord, a third layer of cord can be added to make the sling wider.

Buy high-quality paracord.

Watch one of the many available YouTube videos on how to make a sling.



1] The Paracord Planet sling kit before starting.

2] The square plastic ring with the cord attached prior to starting.

3] Then the cobra knot starts at the swivel end and works towards the square plastic ring.



complete do-it-yourself sling or the kit.

The cobra weave is done taking the cord on the left, bringing it over the middle two cords, and then placing it under the right cord. The right cord is then wrapped around the back of the middle two cords and is pulled through the loop on the left side. Then pull the knot tight, pushing it up so it remains tight. Then the whole process is repeated, but reversed. This means starting by bringing the right cord over the middle two and under the left cord. The left cord is then wrapped around the back and pulled through the loop created by the right cord. After pulling tight and shoving the knots tight, the process is repeated for the entire length of the cord.

After reaching the opposite end, cut the cords, leaving a quarter inch of stray cord. Melt these loose ends with a lighter and flatten them against the weave with the side of the scissors.

Next, the longer pieces of cord are needed. Start by turning the sling around and positioning the joint where the two pieces were fused together in between the first row of woven cord. Then turn it back over and tie the first cobra weave. The goal is to have the second row of cord fit between the bumps from the first row. Again, cut the cord when you reach the end. 🛠️

4] The first layer of the weave is complete when reaching the square plastic ring.

5] The second row of the weave starts with the knots lying in between the bumps from the first row. This photo shows the cobra weave used in both the first and second layers.

6] Knots of the second layer overlap the first layer and fall in between. Start with the joint between the two pieces of cord behind the sling so it won't show.

7] Burn the end when done with a lighter and flatten the end while hot.





Legal corner

Guy Lavergne, Attorney at Law

Suppressors (Silencers) In Canada

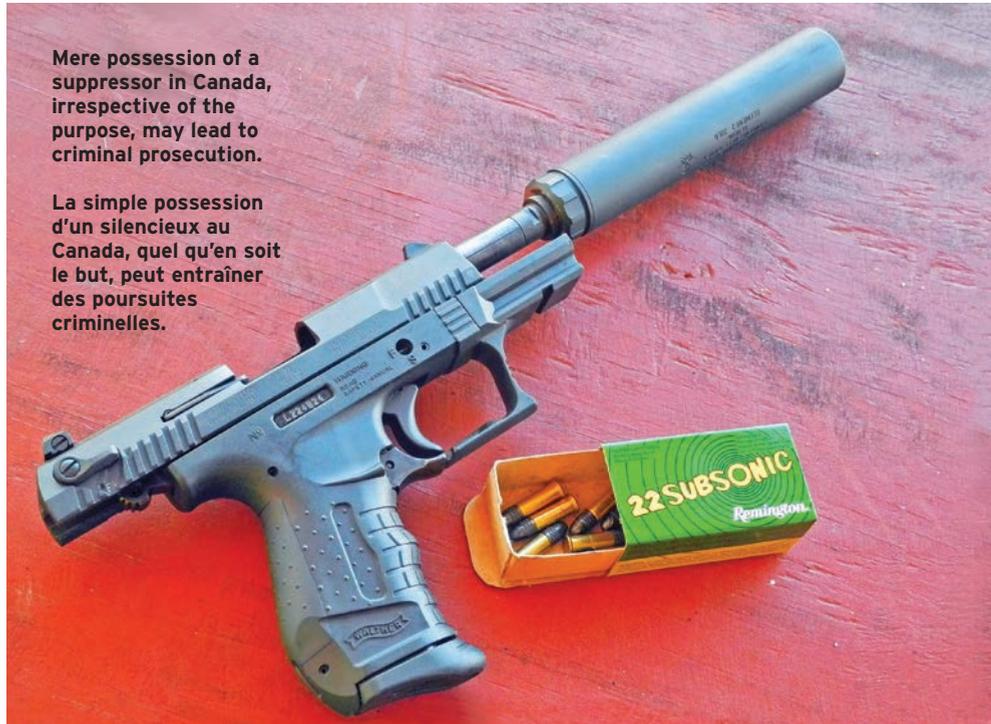
Canada has some baffling (pun intended) rules and laws. One of those pertains to suppressors (silencers). Per subsection 84(1) of the *Criminal Code*, they are classified as prohibited devices.

Simply put, since the mere possession of a prohibited device is a criminal offence (per Sections 91 and 92 of the *Criminal Code*) and there are no licences available to individuals to possess them, mere possession of a suppressor in Canada, irrespective of the purpose, may lead to criminal prosecution.

The offence is that of possession, not usage. Intent is irrelevant. A person who possesses a suppressor to protect their own hearing, or to diminish the sound nuisance to others when shooting, is viewed in the same light as an assassin who plans on committing a murder with a suppressed firearm.

In Canada, the prohibition of suppressors appears to be based upon the misguided belief that they allow a person to discharge a firearm without any or with very little noise. We can probably thank Hollywood for that belief. The reality is quite different. Suppressors do indeed reduce the sound level of firearms, but only to the extent that they make it tolerable and safe for other people in the immediate vicinity.

Canada's take on suppressors is not unique, but it is certainly at one end of the spectrum. Indeed, there are other countries, where gun control is as extensive or even more extensive than it is in Canada, where ownership of suppressors is legal even though, in some instances, licensing is required. At the other end of the spectrum, there are jurisdictions where usage of suppressors when shooting is encouraged because it is viewed as beneficial both for individuals who legally use firearms and for those who might be inconvenienced by the associated noise.



Mere possession of a suppressor in Canada, irrespective of the purpose, may lead to criminal prosecution.

La simple possession d'un silencieux au Canada, quel qu'en soit le but, peut entraîner des poursuites criminelles.

WHAT IS A SUPPRESSOR?

Per Wikipedia: "A silencer, also known as a sound suppressor, suppressor or sound moderator, is a muzzle device that reduces the acoustic intensity of the muzzle report (sound of a gunshot) and the recoil when a gun (firearm or air gun) is discharged, by modulating the speed and pressure of the propellant gas from the muzzle and hence suppressing the muzzle blast. Like other muzzle devices, a silencer can be a detachable accessory mounted to the muzzle or an integral part of the barrel."

The relevant excerpts of the *Criminal Code*, in French and English, read as follows:

84(1)

prohibited device means

(a) (...)

(c) a device or contrivance designed or intended to muffle or stop the sound or report of

a firearm,

• (...)

dispositif prohibé

• (...)

appareil ou dispositif propre ou destiné à amortir ou à étouffer le son ou la détonation d'une arme à feu;

• (...)

The French language version is somewhat different from the English version. Indeed, a proper translation of the French version of paragraph c) would be: "a device or contrivance appropriate for or intended to muffle or stop the sound or report of a firearm." Thus, the French version appears to be of broader scope than the English version. Pursuant to the French version, the device purporting to be a suppressor may have been designed or intended for other uses or purposes, but it may still be considered as a prohibited device if it is appropriate for suppressing the sound or report of a firearm.

I mention this because of a couple of

recent news stories that have caught my attention. In those instances, overseas sellers (mostly from China) sold or shipped devices that purported to be solvent or oil filters. Once threaded upon a gun barrel, those devices worked as suppressors. There are reports of individuals being criminally charged, and others being merely warned, after ordering such devices. Obviously, in those instances, police took the view that the broader (French) definition was to prevail. I am unaware of whether those charges stuck.

Other aspects that I want to touch upon is that the definition does not require the device or contrivance be attached to the firearm, or that it be meant to be so attached, and there are no size specifications. Arguably, a large baffle or other sound-absorbing contraption, even of large dimension, could be viewed as being a suppressor and thus a prohibited device. However, it is likely that “device or contrivance” refers to something that is personal property, as opposed to materials that have been incorporated or permanently attached to real property. Nevertheless, a range owner/operator wishing to install such a system would be well advised to first obtain clearance from the chief firearms officer before doing so.

WHAT ABOUT FAKE SUPPRESSORS?

I have seen and read a few discussion threads on social media where the use of fake suppressors is being discussed. Obviously, a fake suppressor would be one that looks like a real suppressor but fails to achieve any significant noise reduction. Although such a device would arguably be legal, I am unable to find a single reason (other than theatrical use) why owning such a contraption would make any sense or procure any benefit. In my humble opinion, possessing such a device is asking for legal trouble.

Obviously, anyone showing up at a hunting or shooting venue in Canada with a fake suppressor would draw the attention of onlookers, and potentially that of law enforcement officers. From that point onwards, few good things can happen. Although the perpetrator is unlikely to be convicted, there is a chance that he/she may be put under arrest and his/her firearms seized while the police further investigate. This may take weeks or months. In the meantime, the local chief firearms officer will be notified of the incident and despite the firearms seizure, the CFO may proceed to revoke the perpetrator’s firearms licence without awaiting the outcome of the charges or even asking whether charges will be laid at all. In other

words, possessing a fake suppressor, albeit legal, is a poor idea.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HAVE IN STORE?

While I am not in favour of mandating the use of suppressors at ranges or for hunting purposes, I can most definitely see some of the potential benefits which could result from permitting their usage. For range users, use of suppressors would lower the associated sound pressure and noise levels and lessen the risk of hearing damage. It would also lessen the resulting noise that neighbours may perceive as a nuisance, thus rendering the activity more socially acceptable and lessening potential conflicts.

Unfortunately, until such time as a federal government has the courage to admit that the current legislation is ill advised, that cannot legally happen. If it does ever happen, I would not be surprised in the least if a licence of some sort were to be required for possession or purchase of suppressors. Although such a scheme would not deter or prevent crime, it might have the effect of allowing the use of devices that can reduce some of the risks and inconvenience associated with the usage of firearms. 🇩🇪



Nathaniel Milijour



Rubrique Juridique

Guy Lavergne, avocat

Pour Armes À Feu Au Canada



There are jurisdictions where usage of suppressors when shooting is encouraged.

Il existe des juridictions où l'utilisation de silencieux, pour la chasse et les activités de tir, est encouragée.

Le Canada a des règles et des lois parfois déconcertantes. L'une d'elles concerne les silencieux destinés aux armes à feu. En vertu du paragraphe 84⁽¹⁾ du *Code criminel*, ceux-ci sont classés comme étant des « dispositifs prohibés ».

En termes simples, puisque la simple possession d'un dispositif prohibé est une infraction criminelle (en vertu des articles 91 et 92 du *Code criminel*) et qu'aucun permis n'est disponible aux individus à cet égard, la simple possession d'un silencieux au Canada, quel qu'en soit le but, peut entraîner des poursuites criminelles.

L'infraction est celle de la possession et non de l'utilisation. L'intention

n'est aucunement pertinente. Une personne qui possède un silencieux pour protéger sa propre audition, ou pour diminuer la nuisance sonore pour les tiers est considérée sous le même jour qu'un assassin qui prévoit de commettre un meurtre avec une arme à feu munie d'un silencieux.

Au Canada, l'interdiction des silencieux semble être fondée sur la croyance erronée qu'ils permettent à un individu de décharger une arme à feu sans émettre aucun son ou avec très peu de bruit. Nous pouvons probablement « remercier » Hollywood pour cette croyance. La réalité est toute autre. Les silencieux réduisent effectivement le niveau

sonore des armes à feu, mais seulement dans la mesure où ils les rendent tolérables et sûres pour les autres personnes à proximité immédiate.

Le point de vue du Canada sur les silencieux n'est pas unique, mais il se situe certainement à une extrémité du spectre. En effet, il y a d'autres pays où le contrôle des armes à feu est aussi, voire davantage, étendu qu'au Canada, où la propriété des silencieux est légale même si, dans certains cas, un permis est requis. À l'autre extrémité du spectre, il y a des juridictions où l'utilisation de silencieux lors de séances de tir est même encouragée parce qu'elle

est considérée comme bénéfique à la fois pour les personnes qui utilisent légalement des armes à feu et pour celles qui pourraient être incommodées par le bruit qui en résulte.

QU'EST-CE QU'UN SILENCIEUX?

Selon Wikipédia: Un silencieux, **suppresseur** ou **modérateur de son** est un dispositif qui peut être ajouté à une arme à feu, à gaz ou à air afin de réduire le bruit (grâce à des chicanes) et le flash lumineux qu'elle produit lorsqu'un coup est tiré, et ainsi gagner en discrétion.

Pour ce faire, le silencieux prend généralement la forme d'un tube cylindrique pouvant s'adapter à la bouche du canon et dont le mécanisme interne, qui varie en fonction des munitions utilisées, permet de détendre les gaz ayant servi à la propulsion du projectile, afin d'atténuer autant que possible leur libération dans l'atmosphère. Les extraits pertinents du Code criminel, en Français et en anglais, se lisent comme suit:

84(1)

prohibited device means

(a) (...)

(c) a device or contrivance designed or intended to muffle or stop the sound or report of a firearm,

• (...)

dispositif prohibé

• (...)

appareil ou dispositif propre ou destiné à amortir ou à étouffer le son ou la détonation d'une arme à feu;

• (...)

La version française est quelque peu différente de la version anglaise. En effet, une traduction correcte de la version anglaise du paragraphe c) serait : «appareil ou dispositif conçu ou destiné à amortir ou à étouffer le son ou la détonation d'une arme à feu». Ainsi, la version française semble avoir une portée plus large que la version anglaise. Conformément à la version française, un soi-disant silencieux peut avoir été conçu ou être destiné à d'autres utilisations ou fins, mais il peut néanmoins être considéré comme un dispositif prohibé, s'il est propre à supprimer le son ou la détonation d'une arme à feu.

Je mentionne cela à cause de quelques nouvelles récentes qui ont attiré mon attention. Dans ces cas, des vendeurs étrangers (principalement de Chine) ont vendu ou expédié au Canada des dispositifs qui étaient prétendument des filtres à solvant ou à huile. Une fois enfilés sur un canon d'arme à feu, ces dispositifs fonctionnaient comme des silencieux. On rapporte que des personnes ont été accusées au criminel, et que d'autres ont simplement été averties, après avoir commandé de tels dispositifs. De toute évidence, dans ces cas, la police était d'avis que la définition plus large (Français) devait prévaloir. Je ne sais pas si ces accusations ont donné lieu à des condamnations.

J'aimerais également mentionner que la définition de « dispositif prohibé » n'exige pas que l'appareil ou dispositif soit attaché à l'arme à feu, ou qu'il soit censé être ainsi attaché, et il n'y a pas de spécifications quant à sa taille. Il est donc possible qu'un déflecteur ou un autre engin insonorisant, même de grande dimension, pourrait être considéré comme un silencieux et donc comme étant un « dispositif prohibé ». Cependant, il est probable que les mots « appareil ou dispositif » désignent quelque chose qui est un « bien meuble » par opposition aux matériaux qui ont été incorporés ou attachés de façon permanente à un bien immobilier. Néanmoins, un propriétaire ou exploitant de champ de tir qui souhaite installer un tel système serait bien avisé d'obtenir d'abord l'autorisation du Contrôleur des armes à feu avant de le faire.

QU'EN EST-IL DES FAUX SILENCIEUX?

J'ai vu et lu quelques fils de discussion sur les médias sociaux où l'utilisation de faux silencieux est abordée. De toute évidence, un faux silencieux ressemblerait à un vrai silencieux, sans toutefois être capable de réduire le bruit de manière significative. Bien qu'un tel dispositif soit vraisemblablement légal, je ne suis pas en mesure de trouver une seule bonne raison (autre que l'utilisation théâtrale) pour laquelle posséder un tel engin aurait un sens ou procurerait un quelconque avantage. À mon humble avis,

posséder un tel dispositif équivaut à courir après le trouble.

De toute évidence, toute personne se présentant dans un lieu de chasse ou champ de tir au Canada avec un faux silencieux attirerait l'attention des personnes présentes, et potentiellement celle des agents de la paix. À partir de ce moment, très peu de bonnes choses peuvent arriver. Bien qu'il soit peu probable que la personne en question soit reconnue coupable d'une quelconque infraction, il y a de fortes chances qu'elle soit arrêtée et que ses armes à feu soient saisies pendant que la police poursuit son enquête. Cela peut prendre des semaines ou parfois des mois. Entre-temps, le Contrôleur des armes à feu local aura été avisé de l'incident et, malgré la saisie des armes à feu, le CAF peut procéder à la révocation du permis d'armes à feu sans attendre le résultat des accusations ni même demander si des accusations seront portées. En d'autres termes, posséder un faux suppressor, bien que légal, est une très mauvaise idée.

QUE NOUS RÉSERVE L'AVENIR ?

Bien que je ne sois pas en faveur de l'obligation d'utiliser des silencieux dans les champs de tir ou à des fins de chasse, je peux très certainement voir certains des avantages potentiels qui pourraient résulter de l'autorisation de leur utilisation. Pour les tireurs, l'utilisation de silencieux diminuerait la pression acoustique et les niveaux de bruit associés, réduisant ainsi le risque de dommages auditifs. Cela réduirait également le bruit que les voisins pourraient percevoir comme une nuisance, rendant ainsi l'activité plus socialement acceptable et diminuant les conflits potentiels.

Malheureusement, tant que le gouvernement fédéral n'aura pas le courage d'admettre que la loi actuelle est mal avisée, cela ne peut pas se produire légalement. Si jamais cela se produisait, je ne serais pas du tout surpris qu'un permis quelconque soit requis pour la possession ou l'achat de silencieux. Bien qu'un tel système n'aurait aucun effet sur la criminalité, il pourrait néanmoins permettre l'utilisation de dispositifs qui peuvent réduire certains des risques et des inconvénients associés à l'utilisation d'armes à feu. 🚫



Made in Canada

Lowell Strauss, Photos by Brendon Milleker

BM Knife & Tool

I consider a knife an essential tool. Opening packages, breaking down boxes, slicing an apple and cutting rope are all in a day's work for a hard-working knife. I also appreciate



high-quality tools. And in the world of knives, custom blades from boutique makers are at the top of the list.

In searching for my next fixed-blade knife, I found BM Knife & Tool. Brendon Milleker is the custom knifemaker behind BMKT in my home province of Saskatchewan. BMKT makes a unique line of pocketable, fixed-blade, everyday carry knives and larger knives for hunting and the outdoors.

THE ROAD TO KNIFEMAKING

Milleker's love for knives started as a child after receiving a lock-blade knife as a gift. Years later, he began collecting knives, eventually creating custom linen micarta scales for some of his favourites like the Emerson A100.

"I've always been a creative person, and designing and creating knives was a natural progression," said Milleker. "I turned to YouTube to learn the basics, and then through trial and error, I taught myself how to build knives. I make knives that I'm proud to have my name on!"

"I liked the idea of a pocketable, everyday carry fixed blade – one that rivals the carryability of a folder. For that, the knife needs to be compact and slim. Nobody wants a bulky knife for pocket carry," noted Milleker. Before creating his first custom knife, he prototyped 15-plus blade shapes. He settled on a small, fixed blade with a drop point, calling it the EDC1.

FRESH IDEAS, MODERN MATERIALS

Over the past five years, BMKT's EDC1 line grew from the original Drop Point, adding new blade shapes,



including Sheepsfoot, Wharncliffe, Tanto and Bowie. Other blade shapes and sizes emerged too. The Ember and Father Hunter are two of several different designs. Milleker selects modern steels like AEB-L, Nitro-V, 1095 and 01 Tool Steel. These steels provide optimal hardness, edge retention and sharpness for the blade and its intended use. Kydex is the material of choice for BMKT knife sheaths. For the EDC1 line, Kydex is ideal because it is thinner than leather, so it doesn't add unnecessary bulk to the pocket. It also provides better retention.

OVERWHELMING DEMAND

Milleker makes as many custom knives as time permits, yet the popularity of his knives, like the EDC1, Bowie and Father Hunter, means the demand has outgrown production.

"When I announce a new run of knives, they typically sell out within five minutes," commented Milleker. "Last year, I found a reputable OEM manufacturer to produce small batches of my EDC1 line. I call them the Field Spec knives to differentiate them from my custom ones. The Field Spec knives meet my quality stan-

dards for blade hardness and workmanship." The Field Spec line allows more customers to own a BMKT-designed knife without waiting for a BMKT hand-crafted knife.

If you prefer to get a BMKT hand-crafted knife, Milleker suggests putting your name on his mailing list. Those people are the first to know when his handmade custom knives are available.

HEIRLOOM QUALITY

BMKT heat treats and tests hardness for his custom knives in-house. Milleker's creative flair, attention to detail and technical skills allow him to produce the highest quality blades. This quality control ensures that his knives arrive at the customer ready to work. He said, "Nothing leaves my shop until I want to keep the knife for myself. The fit and finish and attention to the smallest of details are what separates my work from others."

For more information about BMKT knives, visit his website at BMKT.ca. On Instagram ([instagram.com/bm-knifeandtool/](https://www.instagram.com/bm-knifeandtool/)), you'll find outstanding images of beautiful BMKT blades. Milleker also has a mailing list where subscribers receive news and alerts when knives are available for purchase. 

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