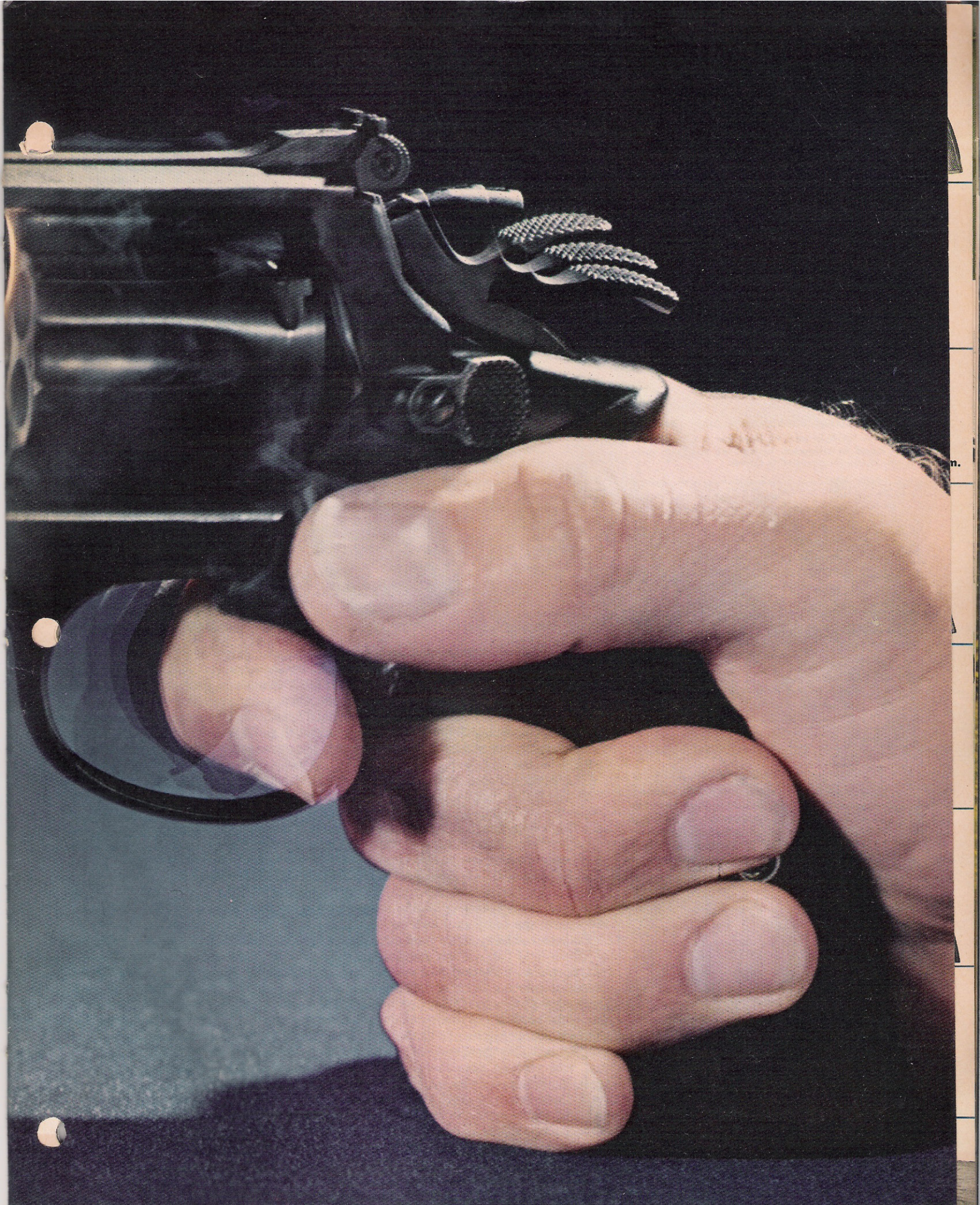


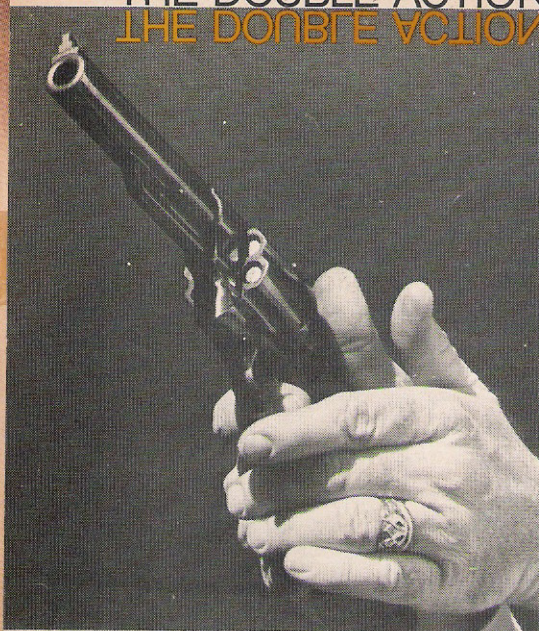
With the
experience
of thousands
of rounds fired,
under all
conditions,
ELMER KEITH
proclaims...

THE
THE
DOUBLE
DOUBLE
ACTION...
ACTION...
TODAY'S
TODAY'S
REVOLVER!
BELOGLEBI

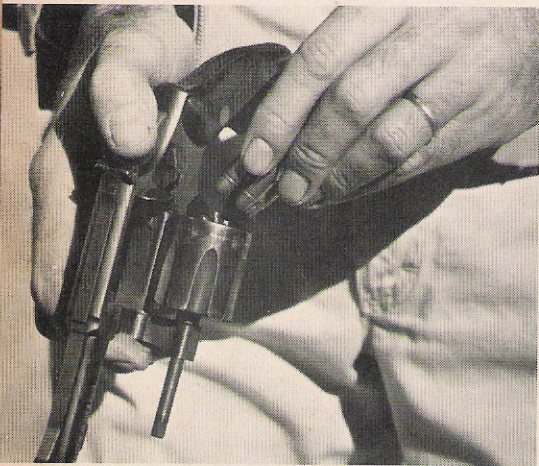
PART II OF A SERIES OF III



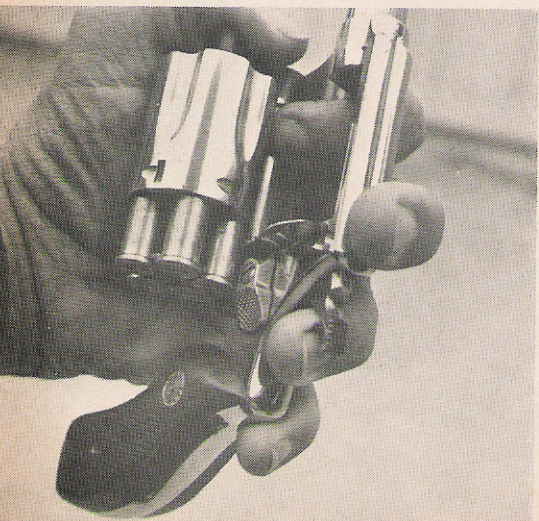
THE DOUBLE ACTION THE DOUBLE ACTION



This hold is one of best for accuracy. Left hand is relaxed, serves as support only.



Double actions beat the singles on loading and unloading, are almost as fast as autos when handled with Weaver revolver-speed techniques. However, short-barrel guns (as below) do not always eject cleanly, as their ejection rods are shorter than standard.



Keith likes the big S&W Triple-lock .44 Specials. With his heavy (near .44 Magnum) loads and a firm rest, these old long-barrelled double actions still perform beautifully out to quite long ranges. 4-inch barrels (below) are still the minimum, in his opinion.



Although double-action revolvers date back to percussion days, the first double actions to come into common use were Colt's old Lightning and Double Action Army and some early Smith & Wessons, mostly break-top ejectors. The old Rod Ejector Colt Lightning and also the Double Action Army had a very poor bolt and locking system. The lightning, in particular, was the gunsmith's nemesis. Later, the side-swing .38 Army Colt and the Smith & Wesson military models came out. The latter were very fine guns but the early swing-out Colts also had a poor locking system.

The army adopted the Colt double-action side-swing cylinder .38 for a time, until the Philippine war, when they found a Moro could take a gun-full of .38 longs and still come on. So, the army went back to the .45 Colt Single Action and Double Action Army for a time.

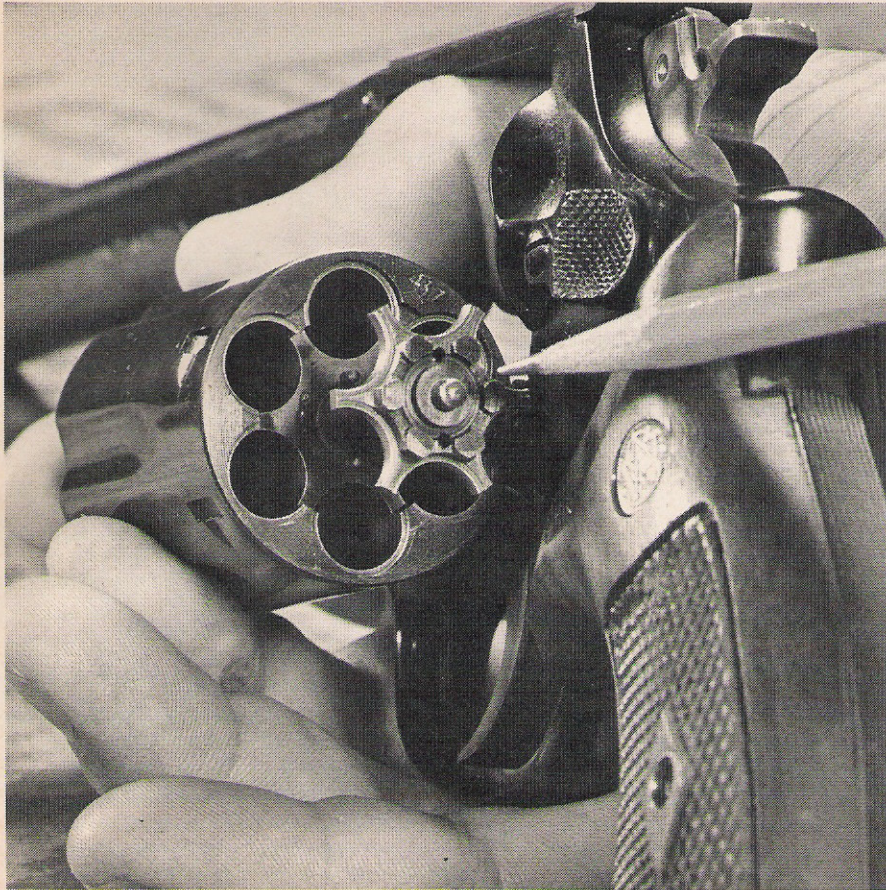
Later, Colt Officers' Models and the New Service Target, both very accurate guns, established many target records. About the same time, the fine S&W target model .38 Special Military and Police models made a reputation as well as the fine old .44 Military and Police in target models. The Smith & Wesson Triple Lock was perhaps one of the finest jobs of sixgun building ever accomplished and these guns now bring very high prices.

Both makes had and do have swing-out cylinders and simultaneous hand ejection of all six fired cases. Early models could be fired by a blow on the hammer when six rounds were carried in them but later models, both makes, carried a hammer block to prevent such accidental discharge. Colt double-action parts were soft and trigger pulls would change, while S&W parts were case-hardened glass hard and soon became the finest of all double actions. The Colt had no front latch for the base pin or ejector, while the S&W did and does. The fine old New Century or Triple Lock also carried a yoke lock making three locking devices for the cylinder and base pin and even today it is a fine piece of equipment. Colts would shake loose in the crane and yoke from heavy loads and also by some fools slamming the cylinder in place, while the S&W guns stayed tight.

Early Colts were the most pleasant to shoot in .44 and .45 caliber as their stocks were thicker at the top of grip, while the early S&W guns had small grips and these did not extend up to the top of the hump on the frame. A great many shooters complained of the recoil on the web of the hand where the frame pounded them.

In the early Thirties, I designed the Magna grip for Doug Wesson with the wood coming up to the top of the hump on the frame and this cured that fault for all time.

Ratchet shoulders on DA extractor may wear, affecting timing and accuracy. The close tolerances of this assembly make it hard to fix. Often factory refitting is required.



The Smith & Wesson, when properly adjusted, has always had the fastest and the best double-action pull, but I have seen some excellent Colt double actions that had been worked over by competent smiths. On the whole, however, the S&W carried the smoother and better double-action trigger pull and their old long action was superior in this respect to the later short action.

Many men with long fingers could cock the old long actions by the trigger pull and then carefully squeeze off the shot. However, Ed McGivern, the fastest and best double-action revolver shot that ever lived used the straight follow-through method. He permitted no hesitation from start to finish of the trigger pull. He once placed five shots in a playing card at 15 feet with a S&W Military and Police .38 Special Target in just $\frac{3}{4}$ of a second on an electric timer.

On other occasions he would, with two four-inch .38 Specials, break five clay pigeons tossed up and out from him, two with one gun and three with the other, shooting with both hands.

Ed and I corresponded a lot in the Thirties and while he claimed to always see the sights when he aimed, photos have proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that he shot by feel of the guns with his eyes on the targets. The guns are shown far below the line of his eyes with the targets. He had fired so many thousand rounds from these guns that he could hit most anything by the feel of the gun the same as friend Bill Jordan does double action today in his exhibitions.

McGivern always claimed that the long action S&W was the fastest of all six-guns or any handgun for that matter. I remember him asking me how I compared an automatic to a good S&W for double-action fast aerial work and I told him that the auto hopped around and I could not get hits nearly as fast as with a S&W heavy duty five-inch .38 Special I was then using. He said he found the same thing true and could get far more hits on aerial targets with revolvers and faster than with any automatic.

Ed wanted a K-22 for his wife that Major Wesson had given me, so I swapped him the K-22 and a five-dollar gold piece for his 6½-inch Target Triple Lock .44 Special with a gold bead front sight. I still have that fine sixgun and once killed three woodchucks at 200 yards with four shots from that gun resting my left shoulder against a woodshed. It was and is a superbly accurate gun. I was using 12 grains of Number 80 and my 250-grain bullets. This was before the advent of Number 2400 Hercules powder.

To my notion, the Smith & Wesson is the finest double action ever produced. I worked 30 years to get the .44 Magnum and my friend the late Carl Hellstrom



Colt Python
.357 Magnum, 6-inch barrel.



Smith & Wesson .38 Special
Centennial, 2-inch.



Smith & Wesson 8¾-inch .44 Magnum.



Smith & Wesson K-38 (Special)
Masterpiece 6-inch.



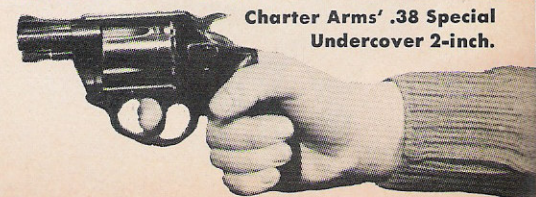
Colt 2-inch Detective
.38 Special.



Colt Officers Model
Match .38 Special Target 6-inch.



Harrington & Richardson
.38 S&W Defender 2½-inch.

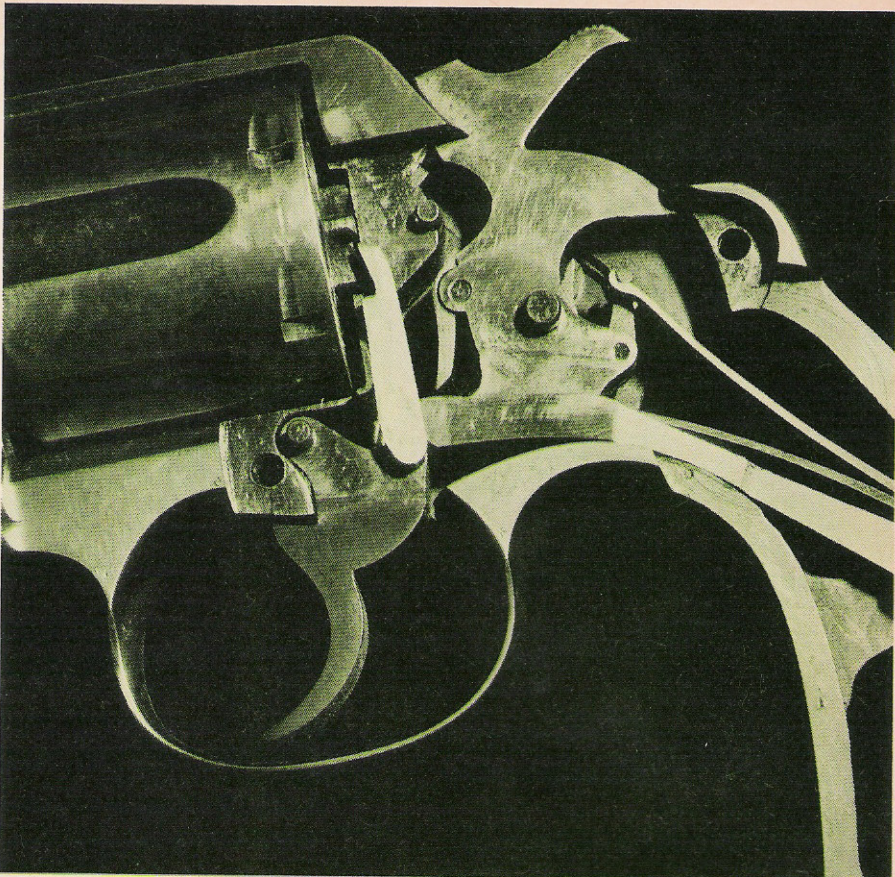


Charter Arms' .38 Special
Undercover 2-inch.

THE DOUBLE ACTION
THE DOUBLE ACTION



Factory-engraved Colt Python has gold inlay and sculpture, with carved ivory grips.



Smith & Wesson "innards" have changed very little over the years that the Military & Police design has been in existence. Note milled parts and simple flat mainspring.



Also a factory-engraved unit, the S&W .357 below is inlaid in both gold and silver.

and the Remington people finally made my dream come true. After its success, it took just one day, with Bill Jordan lending me all assistance possible, to contact the arms and ammo companies and exact a promise from Doug Hellstrom and Bill Gunn of S&W, Earl Larson of Remington and Bill Ruger, himself, to get the .41 Magnum for the police and peace officers of this country. They all report they are still back-ordered on both S&W and Ruger guns. Remington is back-ordered as well, on the ammunition.

With the modern S&W and Colt double actions you have simultaneous ejection and with many accessory loaders now on the market for police use, the next six rounds can be dumped in the cylinder at once making for very fast reloading.

These factors make the modern double action the standard for most all police organizations. DAs and good single actions are the most reliable, fool-proof guns made for the purpose. If one cartridge misfires they have only to pull the trigger to bring the next round into line and fire it. The Smith & Wesson target guns and their late .357, .41 and .44 Magnums are the finest finished, best-tuned and most modern of all sixguns in existence today.

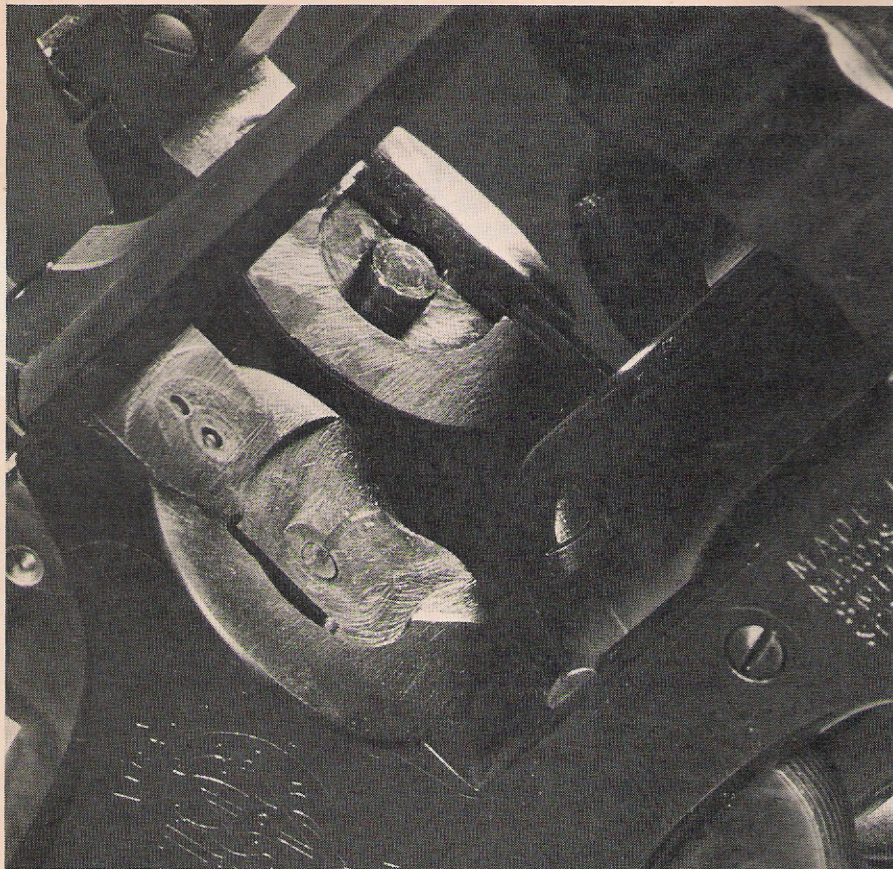
The Colts, without a front base-pin lock, shoot loose in the crane sooner than the S&W guns and do not have much hump at the top of the grip. This hump is necessary for fast work in double-action shooting. For me at least, the S&W Magnum grip fits my hands far better than that of the Colt Officers' Model or the New Service Target. I once put six shots through a gallon can that I tossed up 18 to 20 feet in the air with my left hand, five runs straight before witnesses. This after a whole winter's practice with a five-inch S&W heavy-duty gun that had a superbly fast and soft double-action pull.

In fast double-action shooting you pull the gun back on the target as you pull the trigger, while with an automatic the gun hops all around and you simply cannot make hits as fast as with a properly tuned-up S&W double action.

The S&Ws have also had, for me at least, the best double-action trigger pull. McGivern shot both makes but also claimed the S&W was his pride and joy. Today I consider the S&W .41 and .44 Magnums the finest as they have added the old yoke lock of the Triple Lock. Major Wesson wrote me in the Thirties that he had just had the last two triple locks made for a man in South America at a cost of \$75 each.

Colt and S&W double actions do not point as high for hip shooting and one must practice until he learns to tip the barrels high enough for shot placement as compared with the old single actions, but once mastered they are the fastest guns of all for rapid repeat hits on any target. Properly cared for, they are utterly





Telltale recoil-plate area of the double action often shows condition. Note twin firing pins of S&W (Colt in rear) in foreground — the .22 Jet rim/centerfire convertible.

reliable and no more accurate guns were ever made in powerful cartridges like the .41 and .44 Magnum. I have killed a lot of game with S&W .44 Specials as well as .41 and .44 Magnums and to my notion they are the finest sixguns ever produced.

These two American revolvers have long been the standard of about all police and peace officer organizations, and with good reason. Likewise, I see no possible chance of their being beaten for this purpose. Kenneth Lomont and his father have, with scope-sighted 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch barreled S&W .44 Magnums, (with a load of 2400 and my 250-grain bullet actually) made one-inch five-shot groups from sandbagged benchrests at 100 yards. I know of no other sixgun that has ever accomplished this degree of accuracy. It might be possible, with a long-barreled Colt or Ruger single action so equipped. I seriously doubt if any automatic will accomplish this feat, unless it was a long-barreled Luger with very specially prepared ammunition.

The .41 and .44 calibers are more easily loaded than the smaller cartridges and are under average conditions much more accurate as well. For police use it's darn hard to beat a four-inch .41 or .44 Magnum S&W, and for large men a five-inch would be even better. I see no reason to try to make a pocket gun of these big guns and no reason for ever having barrels under four inches in length for any holster weapon. If you want the finest sixgun currently produced, get a .41 or .44 Magnum Smith & Wesson. Most of our big-game guides in this country are now equipped with Ruger and S&W .44 Magnums and with good reason.

I have long felt that S&W should bring them out with an option of their fine plain-clothes grips as all too many men have small hands or else short fingers like myself and the big target grip is too large and too bulky. Steve Herrett of Twin Falls, Idaho, makes my design of plain-clothes grips that fit me and a lot more people with similar hands and the S&W plain-clothes stocks are very similar. In all shooting, either single or double action, grip the gun high. I always cut about a quarter-inch off the back of these long target hammers so they won't hit the web of my hand. I also thin or narrow the wide trigger down to just $\frac{3}{8}$ inch which feels and fits best for me. Bill Jordan, however, has his own stock design that covers the straps and is long for his huge, long-fingered hands. Sixgun stocks should fit the individual if he is to do his best work with them.

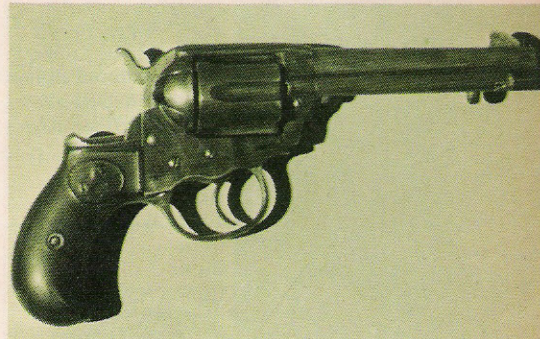
I hope this discussion has made you a little more familiar with our fine American double actions. Bear my points about choice of gun and caliber in mind and I think you'll be able to put a double-action wheelgun to good use in any situation. Next month, we go on to take a look at semi-automatic pistols.



DA revolvers can handle the hottest safe loads, even though there is a fractional gas escape at barrel/cylinder junction.



Many early swing-out DAs like this Colt New Police (1896-1905) chamber common ammo and show a high quality.



Colt's first solid-frame DA, the "Lightning," dates to 1877, was competitive with S&W's break-top DAs. Every DA gives better results with customized stocks, the "blanks" below are for S&W K.

