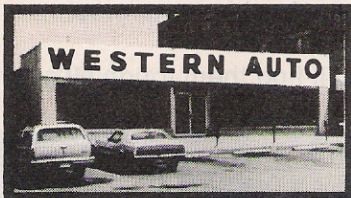


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WESTERN AUTO



GUNNOTES

By Elmer Keith, Executive Editor

The conclusion of "Return Of The Single-Action."

PART III

At one time, Colt used to advertise they would furnish single-actions with barrels longer than standard at a cost of one dollar per inch over the 7½-inch barrel. Legend has it that Ned Buntline, a dime novelist of the 1870s and '80s, ordered four of them with very long barrels and gave them to such celebrities as Earp, Masterson, Tilgman and Cody. Although this legend is unfounded, Colt collectors have named these long-barreled models the Buntline Specials. Some were fitted with excellent tang carbine rear sights, and they were very accurate long-range guns. I seriously doubt that they were ever used for quick-draw and close-range gun fighting. Any fast gun man has only to try one for quick draw work to decide how hopeless such a ten or 12-inch barrel is for really fast work. The gun must be hung very low where it is in the way both riding or walking, or else one would have to turn a back somersault to get it clear of the holster. It was, however, an excellent arm in the hills for game shooting or a longer-range gunfight. If used with both hands, the long-barreled Colt becomes a very accurate long-range six-gun.

Over the years, the movie industry has done much to keep the old gun alive, especially among the younger generations—more so than has any group of shooters or collectors. The present showing of a great many 20-plus year old films combined with modern Westerns, has created an even further demand for Colt and other makes of single-action six-guns. The

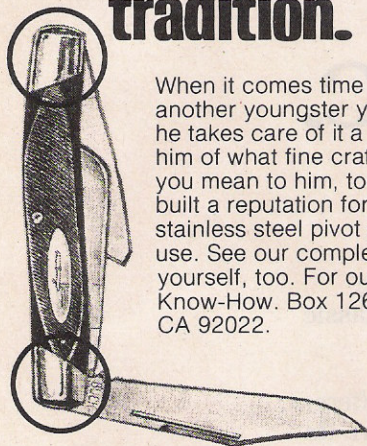
fact the old gun balances and points better for fast hip shooting than any other design for the first shot adds further to the demand. Combine this with the proven fact that the old single-action grip absorbs recoil with the least punishment to the hand when using heavy loads and you have another pro-argument for the single-action. It is also one of the safest guns made for the horseman.

Great Western guns have been chambered for the .44 Magnum. I understand, but I consider both the Colt and the Great Western frames and cylinders too small for safety with this great cartridge. To properly and safely handle the .44 Magnum cartridge—which is fast becoming the most popular of all six-gun calibers among cow punchers, mountain men, and guides—the frame of the Colt (and the old Great Western) single-action will have to be redesigned and made larger and longer. The cylinder will also have to be increased in both length and diameter. A redesign of the old Colt 1880 vintage flat-top target along the lines of the guns remodelled by Harold Croft and I in the twenties would be just the thing. It should be fitted with the best fully-adjustable target sights. The flat-top frame should also be extended back over the nose of the hammer. A lower, sharply-check-

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Elmer Keith receives such a volume of mail that it is no longer possible for him to individually answer all correspondence. Only letters with a self-addressed, stamped envelope will receive a reply.

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
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	100 Yd. Expan.	Muzzle		25 Yds		50 Yds		Test Barrel V
		V	E	V	E	V	E	
.38 Special+P 110 JHP		1039	264	995	242	940	216	1280
.38 Special+P 125 JHP		1032	296	995	275	975	264	1310
.357 Magnum 110 JHP		1349	445	1225	367	1155	326	1775
.357 Magnum 125 JHP		1289	461	1195	396	1110	342	1725

Expanded Bullets: .38 2" bbl 100 yds.; .357 3½" bbl 100 yds.



Smith & Wesson
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GUNNOTES

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ered Bisley-type hammer with wide thumb piece should be employed, as well as a wide trigger that is perfectly contoured to the trigger finger. The incorporation of one-piece grip straps and two sizes of grips would further improve the gun. One grip should be the present standard, and the other the old 1848 square-backed Dragoon grip for men with large hands. Springs should be strengthened, and a coil mainspring should be added that would make cocking easier with less chance of damage to the safety and half cock notches in the hammer. An all-coil combination bolt and trigger spring that is unbreakable should be mandatory. Barrels could run from 4¾ inches for the peace officers who want a short single-action, up through the full gamut of lengths—including the 5½-inch, 7½-inch, and the 10 or 12-inch barrel Buntline.

Bill Ruger is, at present, a very long jump ahead of Colt in the production of modern single-actions with his famous Blackhawk in .357 and the larger version in .44 Magnum. His separate spring-loaded firing pin is a big advantage when using heavy loads in the .44 Magnum. His single-action .44 Magnum Blackhawk frame and cylinder are of ample size for the powerful cartridge with either factory or hand loads.

Over the years, the single-action revolver has remained one of the most popular handguns in the world. Its colorful history, balance and good looks along with its reliability keep it in the most-popular handguns class. Original black powder and pre-World War II-vintage Colts are bringing incredibly high prices at collector's shows today and the demand for shootable versions of this favorite old six-gun is causing many companies to reproduce this famous old sidearm.

Colt still produces their "old standby" in .357 Magnum and .45 Colt caliber. Their gun, to this day, is almost identical to the original 1873 model with the exception of the changes I mentioned earlier in this report.

Iver Johnson has imported the Cattleman series of single-action guns and will soon have a .44-40 caliber version available.

Navy Arms has a line of European-made single-actions that include the "Buntline" model, the 1875 Remington replica, and several "peacemaker"-styled six-shooters in various chamberings such as .22 Long Rifle, .22 Winchester Magnum, .357 Mag., .30 M1, .38-40, .44-40, and .45 Colt.

Interarms has recently introduced the big .44 Magnum Dragoon single-action. All told, there are over a half-dozen companies that currently have single-

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GUNNOTES

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action revolvers in their lineup. Proof positive that this old workhorse has sti got plenty of life in it.

The single-action has been with us and served us well for over a century. It will no doubt be with us for a great many more years to come. Treat it as a gun and a tool, not a plaything—and it will never let you down.

• • •

.45 AUTO BELT CLIPS

Browne & Farr Manufacturing, Incorporated, 1775 Wilwat Drive, Suite 1, Borcross, GA 30093, is now producing a very practical belt clip for the Colt .45 auto. It is easily installed by removing the grip on the right side and placing the sheetmetal of that portion of the belt clip under the stock and retightening the screws. It in no way interferes with the function or the use of the gun and holds it firmly and securely under the waist band of your pants. I used to carry a .45 auto as a second gun. At times I would just shove it under my belt on my rear right hip cocked, with the safety on and the butt facing frontwards. No doubt these clips will do nicely for this sort of carry, and, also eliminate the bulk and expense of a special holster. The best part is the price; only \$3.98.

.45 COLT JHP BULLETS

Speer and Hornady have now come out with a new jacketed soft-nosed hollow-point .45 caliber 260-grain bullet for the .45 Colt cartridge.

These bullets are designed for maximum expansion and would be very good against man-sized targets, but I would not recommend them for really large game. My past experience on some 40 large domestic bulls, as well as big game from deer on up to elk and moose shot by friends, has proven that the jacketed soft points as well as hollow points don't penetrate too well in the .45 and .44 calibers. For those who will shoot these bullets, I recommend 14 grains of 2400 using Colt single-actions and 17 grains of 2400 for those using the Ruger Black Hawk.

Hard-cast bullets of 240 grains in both the .44 Magnum and the .45 Colt give much deeper penetration in big game than any soft-nose jacketed bullets which use a soft lead core for quicker expansion using the same powder charges. As a general rule jacketed bullets set up higher pressures as well.

Reports from Alaska with the .45 Colt and the .44 Magnum on big game have proven my Keith 250-grain hard-cast slug to be most effective at a times and under difficult conditions. On the other hand, police officers using the .45 Colt want a bullet that will not penetrate too deeply and offer maximum shock effect.