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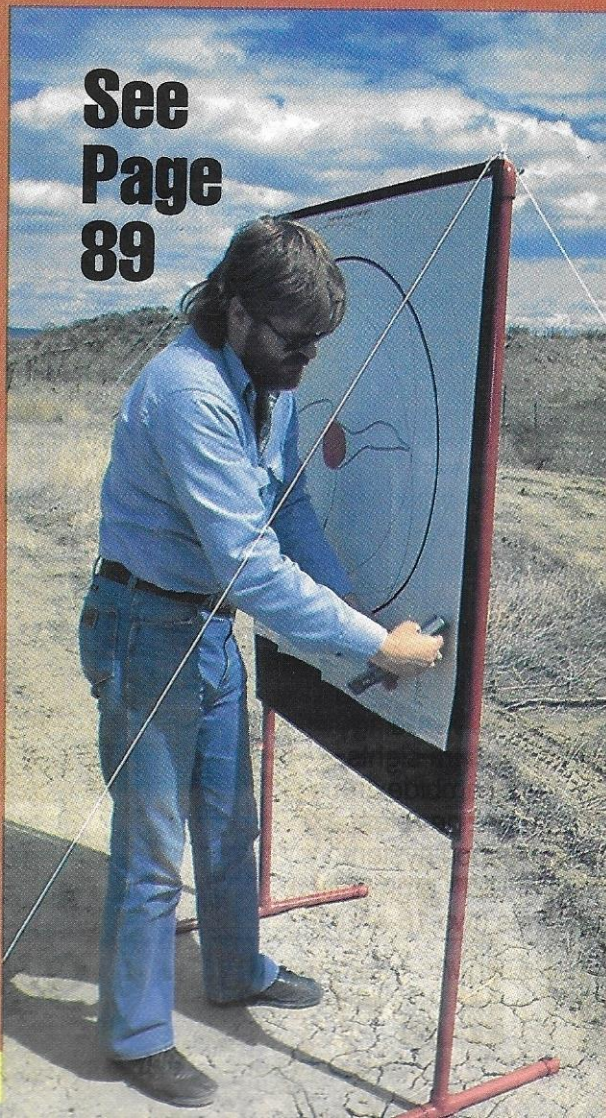
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As a police firearms instructor and a student of small arms, I've been fascinated by some of the recent trends in the field of duty side arm selection. The most fascinating is not so much the marvelous technology being applied in this field, as it is the cycles and ironies exhibited when viewed over the span of the 20th century.

By now, almost everyone has heard the turn-of-the-century stories about the failure of the .36-caliber (.38 Long Colt) revolvers used by our military against the Moros of the Philippines. This experience led to the reenlistment of the aban-

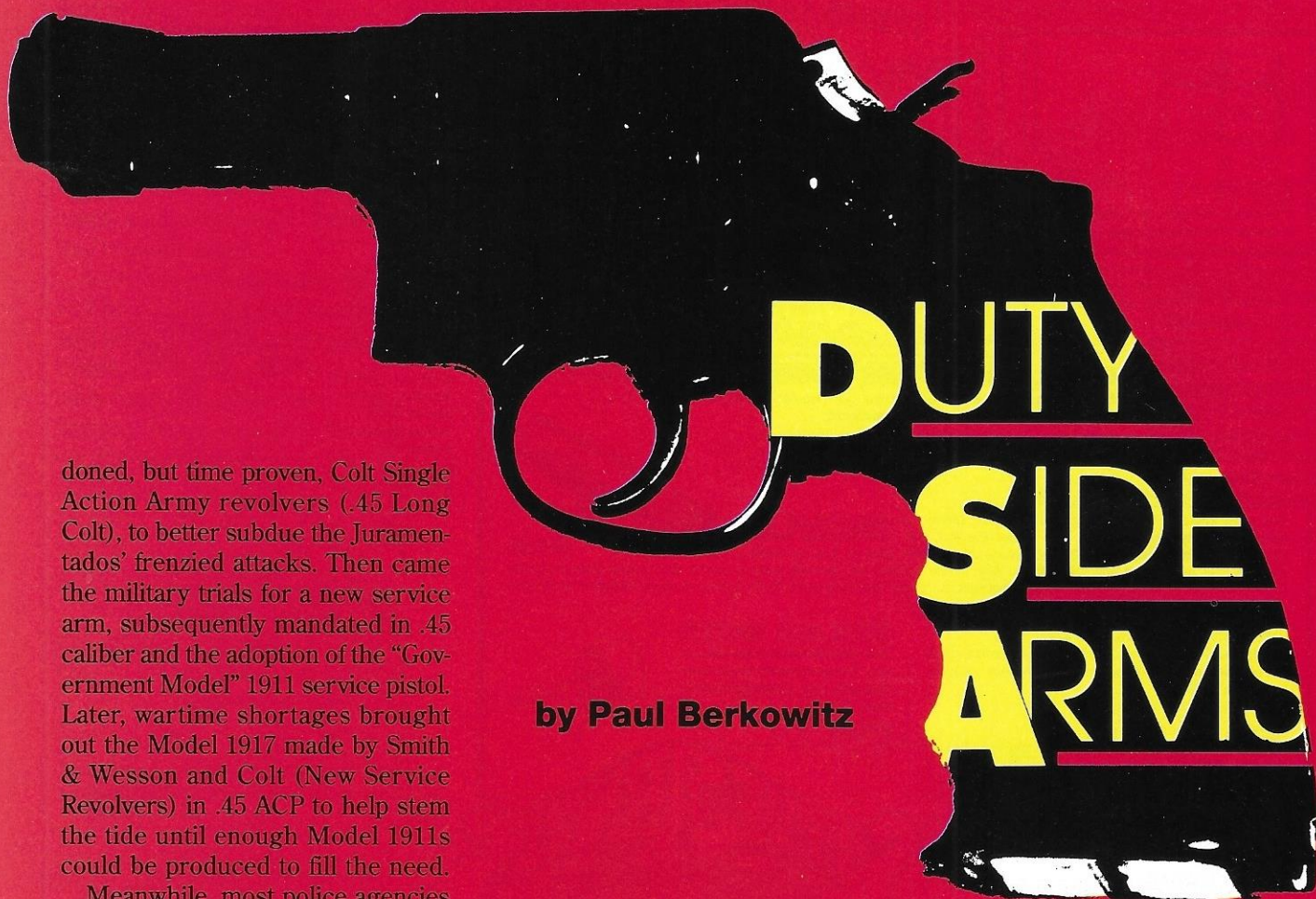
(mostly in the form of the .38 Special cartridge), failing to draw parallels between themselves and the military, and worried about issues of reliability in spite of the Government Model's proven performance in military tests. For years, very little change occurred, with the American police establishment pretty much sticking to its traditional .38 Special revolver and the military sticking to its .45-caliber Model 1911/1911A1.

Along about the 1920s and 1930s, seeing a need for something better than the slow-moving .36s, many police agencies started looking to increased velocity for a solution to inadequacies. Some looked to the

adoption of the .38-44 in the heavy-duty revolvers, and then the .357 Magnum, introduced around 1935 as utilized by the FBI, along with limited use of the .38 Super.

It seems like almost forever that the FBI and other "feds" have been viewed as leading the way in American law enforcement, on the cutting edge of police technology. With their sanction of the .357, other police agencies followed suit, and the .357 began to catch up with the .38 Special revolver as an acceptable piece of ordnance for law enforcement. Later, even most of the more conservative police agencies followed suit by adopting some form of "Super Vel" ammo, as

R E F L E C T I O N S O N



done, but time proven, Colt Single Action Army revolvers (.45 Long Colt), to better subdue the Juramentados' frenzied attacks. Then came the military trials for a new service arm, subsequently mandated in .45 caliber and the adoption of the "Government Model" 1911 service pistol. Later, wartime shortages brought out the Model 1917 made by Smith & Wesson and Colt (New Service Revolvers) in .45 ACP to help stem the tide until enough Model 1911s could be produced to fill the need.

Meanwhile, most police agencies held fast to the .36-caliber revolver

by Paul Berkowitz

O F T H E 2 0 T H C E N T U R Y

pioneered by Lee Jurras and ultimately emulated by most big name ammunition manufacturers. Then, in the transition from the 1960s to the '70s, the Illinois State Police broke stride. For the first time on a large scale, a semiautomatic, 9mm pistol was adopted as a standard by a major police organization. The double-action 9mm seemed to be an idea whose time had come.

Since then, we've seen the advent and widespread acceptance of the so-called "Wondernines": high-capacity 9mm (.36 caliber) semiautos with virtually every conceivable variation being tried and adopted, from the S&W Model 39/59s and their ever-growing list of descendants, to the VP-70 and P-7 squeeze cockers by H&K, to Glock's ultra-high-capacity "safe action" systems with their consistent five- to eight-pound trigger pull and lack of any external safeties.

Accompanying all of these advances in firearms technology has been a series of wound ballistics studies, each of which has been touted as The Answer. Thompson and LaGarde set the stage with their now famous (infamous?) tests that led the military to its adoption of the .45-caliber standard. Then, in the 1970s, the LEAA set the ballistic world upside down when it announced that, with its "computer man" and temporary cavitation theory, it had proven that the slow-moving .45 was markedly inferior to the high-speed .36. This last study gave police departments everywhere all the ammunition they needed (pardon the pun) to validate a conversion to the 9mm and high-capacity weapons systems, or to adopt the Treasury Department's +P+ or similar loads.

Now, as we look forward to the 21st century, we are confronted with the FBI's discovery (!) that large-caliber, heavy projectiles, at moderate velocities, cutting big holes and penetrating deeply, are the most effective stoppers for use in police side arms. Meanwhile, the military has spent untold millions for the need to convert to the 9mm

for its service side arms, in an effort to meet NATO standards. Enter the Beretta 92F.

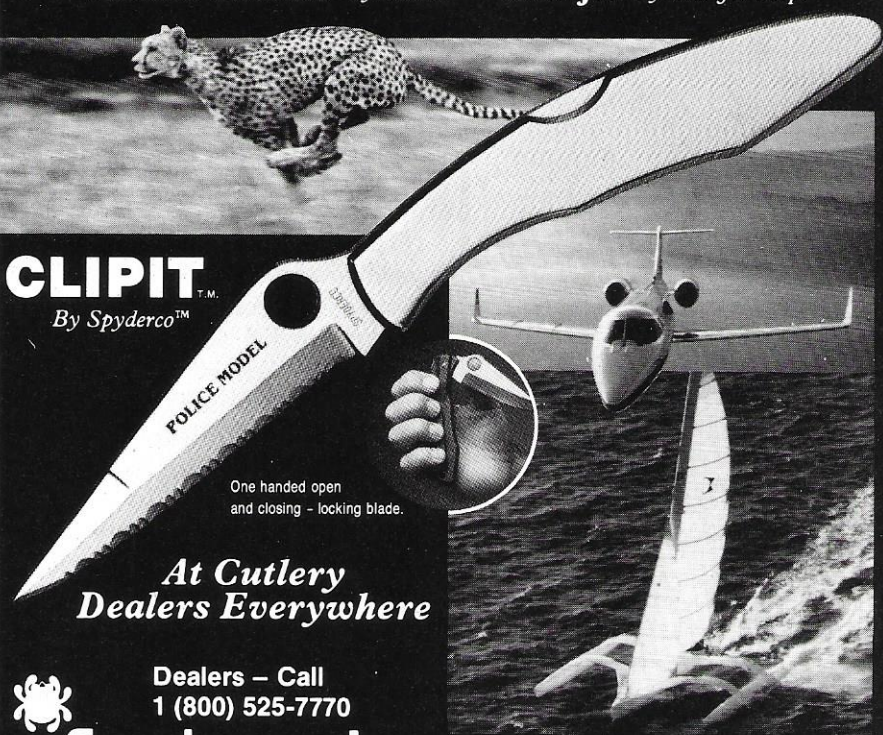
If this all sounds too familiar, it should. I recall vividly my first impression upon reading the November 1989 issue of the *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*. Who would have guessed that Julian Hatcher, Elmer Keith and Jeff Cooper knew what they were talking about? A critical reading of the article and subsequent discussion of the study itself (as presented on LESTN) still raised some questions. How do they justify testing custom-loaded 10mm rounds against only one or two pre-specified factory loadings of .45 ACP? My overall impression of the study remains that they orchestrated a test designed to prove the 10mm's superiority over the .45 as well as the 9mm. Another way to view it is that they custom produced a 10mm round to exactly meet their own test standards, while looking only to factory-produced ammo in .45 for com-

parison. "Bigger bullets make bigger holes, which in turn make bigger wounds." "Don't count on bullet expansion for success in a handgun cartridge." But accuracy is a function of far more than just caliber. They make match barrels and ammunition for the .45 ACP too you know, not to mention hardball, softpoint, hollowpoint, semiwadcutters, flatpoints and hundreds of other variations, all of which may influence penetration. Even after discussing these issues with the FBI firearms training staff at Quantico, the most striking unanswered question I came away with was how they could declare the 10mm "clearly superior" to the .45 when they acknowledged they had not yet even tested most of the available alternatives in .45 ACP, including the Speer 200-grain "flying ashtray." Still, we find ourselves acknowledging, once again, that bigger is better where defensive handgun ammunition is concerned.

We seem to have come full circle

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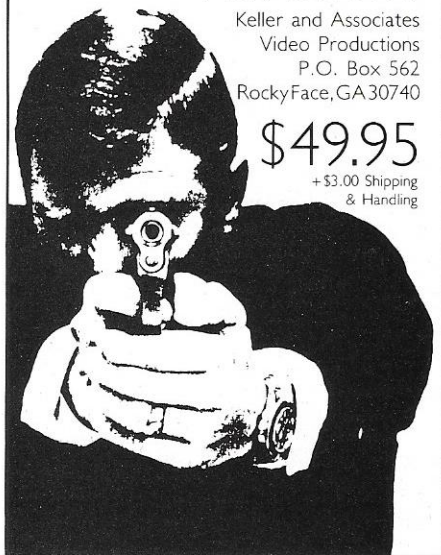
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in a hundred years' time. Or perhaps we could more accurately describe our journey as having come full spiral! Between the military and civilian law enforcement, we've certainly come a full 360 degrees, but we've somehow not ended up, respectively, in the same places we started. We've discovered (?) again, that where handguns are concerned, big, heavy, medium-velocity bullets outperform small, light, fast bullets, The American police establishment is now looking to .40-.45-caliber handguns as the standard, while the military has revised and gone the way of .36-caliber (in the form of the 9mm).

Finally, there arises the question of delivery systems. While the semi-auto seems to have at last gained wide acceptance in both police and military circles, debate remains over what configuration it should take. The old Government Model (as well as its descendant, the Browning High Power), with its ergonomically designed, frame-mounted safety, calls for a cocked and locked carry (in spite of the military SOPs). This "condition one" carry works just fine, but seems to frighten most untrained observers. Then there are the myriad of Walther-based double-action systems like the S&Ws, Berettas, etc. All have external slide-mounted thumb safety systems (admittedly awkward to manipulate) along with the long and rough trigger cocking systems, followed by relatively short single-action pulls for follow-up shots. Critics of these systems point out that the unnatural safety systems, along with the double-action feature, make these weapons difficult to use. Another wrench is added when someone brings up the question of carry mode. Should these weapons be carried hammer down/safety on, or hammer down/safety off? Proponents of one side express concern about the officer who becomes disarmed and has his weapon turned on him by the bad guy, who then needs only to point the gun and squeeze the trigger if the safety is carried "off." The other side argues

that, in a crisis, the officer can't count on remembering to manually disengage the awkward safety when he or she needs the weapon for defense. This safety system controversy persists, with no consensus on which is proper.

It is the controversy of safeties that has generated the design of another category of handguns altogether. These include the superb Sig-Sauer double-action series pistols, with no external safety systems at all, but only decocking levers, as well as the H&K P-7 series of squeeze cockers. Most recent among these designs is the Glock series pistol, which now promises to carry magazines full of 10mm, .40 S&W and .45 ACP, as well as 9mm ammunition.

But even now we hear protests about the *lack of a safety* on these most recent designs. "There's no way for the officer to intentionally disarm his or her weapon in the event it gets taken away," they say. These parties view the safety as a "kill switch" to be activated in the event of a police disarmament. Also, particularly with regard to the H&K and Glock, complaints are voiced about the trigger being too light, especially when there is no manual safety at all (dismissing the H&K's squeeze cocking system).

The argument fundamental to double-action design is that the safety is derived from the relatively long and hard trigger pull for the first shot. Overlooked is the fact that all subsequent shots are single-action: i.e. light and short. If this single-action mode is unsafe for the first shot, what makes it safe for the second, third, fourth, etc.? It's odd that nobody is clamoring for double-action police shotguns or rifles. Where these long arms are concerned it seems that cocked and locked single-action works just fine. Contradiction seems to be inherent. Either we can control the trigger or we cannot. Opponents of these systems make strong arguments that what makes this style of weapon difficult to control is not so much the individual trigger action employed, but the transition from

one pull to another.

This is not to say that the double-action semiautos cannot be mastered and safely controlled. They most certainly can, as demonstrated by the world class shooters who use them (such as John Pride of the LAPD), but it is clearly the case that these weapons can be mastered not so much because of, but *in spite of* their trigger systems. It is interesting to note that, typically, the double-action systems that are easiest to use and receive the highest ratings for use in police circles are those that exhibit the *least* difference between trigger pulls for first and subsequent shots (such as the Sig-Sauer). Note the extraordinary efforts to which Smith & Wesson has gone in the last decade to improve their trigger actions.

One could speculate that, ultimately, someone will develop and market a system where there is no discernible difference between double- and single-action pull. This will reflect attainment of the ultimate in double-action systems.

Reflecting on all the pros and cons expressed by the proponents and detractors of the various delivery systems, it seems reasonable to surmise that the ultimate police side arm would be a semiauto that:

a) chambers a .40- to .45-caliber cartridge,

b) has a consistent, shot to shot trigger pull and,

c) has an ergonomically designed manual safety device that keeps the weapon safe from unauthorized use, while reliably affording easy and natural deactivation by the officer.

Wouldn't it be ironic if someone discovered that such a weapon had been around for a hundred years but had been overlooked because people were frightened by the way it looked when it was carried?



SNIPER

(continued from page 82)

drill against a profile of a sentry on guard duty. This sentry had the gait of a man and even an occasional rise and fall because a man moved the target across the field of fire from inside a trench. You only get the pace of a man from shooting at a man. Gone were the mistakes in bullet lead from previous days. This target ate lead with nearly every trigger pull from every sniper.

All prepared for a final exam, each sniper team deployed to the second story of a building. From this common vantage point, we were required to find an unknown number of targets at unknown ranges. And we were reminded of the third rule of police countersniping. Never hit a hostage. Naturally, all hostile targets were using hostages as cover. A three-inch sliver of head and body were all we had to hit.

As a drill taken directly from police logs, the ranges varied from 100 yards to eight yards. From two stories up, the eight-yard target was at a steep firing angle and also close enough to make scope parallax a critical issue. We did not crawl on our bellies over half of Kentucky and perfect our breath control, firing positions and trigger control to miss now. They stacked up those bad guys like cord wood after this drill.

This article covers only a portion of the instruction and drills from the five-day Countersniper Three. This was a tough course. Clint Smith has high standards, high expectations and a solid grasp of police reality. In fact, just like police work, some of the exercises were genuine hard work. What you get from it all is a vast range of experience with your rifle and scope. You get the absolute confidence that only comes from having "been there."

For more information on countersniper training or other firearms instruction with the handgun, shotgun, urban rifle or submachine gun, contact Clint Smith, International Training Consultants, P.O. Box 528, Huntertown, IN 46748; (219) 637-9800.

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