

the action toward its closed position and, just before the bolt locked up in battery the protruding firing pin hit the primer with enough force to detonate the priming compound. The inertia of my hand on the grip was enough to get the powder to burning well and the action, not being locked up, came belting back with great force. Pressure blew bits of cardboard, brass case head and unburned powder out through the ejection port and my soon-to-be-hardbitten features, being right in line, bore the full brunt of the blast. Fortunately, I was wearing a pair of Bausch & Lomb sunglasses and, for several days afterward, I could look in a mirror and see the clear silhouette of the area the glasses had protected, outlined in scabs and scar-tissue. This is but one of at least three instances that have made me rather a fanatical nut on the benefits of wearing eye protection while shooting. Shooting glasses have saved my eyes on at least three occasions. As far as I'm concerned, they are a great bargain, even if they cost \$20,000 a pair. I hope that I can stir up enough fuss to make even one of you members have glasses on some time when you need them. If so, I'll feel well content.

On the basis that anything is possible and some of them are probable, we hate to offer any hard & fast analyses of the unfortunate incident referred to, since we have no facts beyond those given. We suggest, as most likely, a broken firing pin, tightly wedged in its forward travel, protruding from the bolt face as the culprit. Often this would be hard to detect in the demolished fragments of the gun. If the firing pin were retracted to its normal position, we are dubious if the primer could or would be set off, even if protruding from the case head to some degree. The sensitive area is in the center of the primer, not around the outer edges where the bolt face makes contact. Other, rather remote possibilities might include a massive deposit of primer residue in the pocket together with a protruding primer so that the cup was banged violently against the primer anvil (unlikely, but conceded). Or a hangfire of long duration so that the unwary shooter commenced to open the action just as things commenced to let go. The latter, if that were the case, conceivably could have been due to seating the primer too deeply in the first place.

Primers are amazingly trouble-free and goof-proof — if you keep oil away from them! — but if you really bear down savagely and seat them with much too much pressure, usually they will continue to work as intended. In occasional rare instances, you can crush the pellet of priming compound in such a way that the net effect may be to set up a hangfire situation. This is astronomically unlikely but theoretically possible.

We've dragged out the discussion slightly to offer several considerations for cogitation. Probably the most important is that there is a sound basis for following the conventional reloading procedures. Avoid allowing liquid lubricants to get in contact with the powder or priming compound. Do not be hasty in letting your own interpretation of a random, possibly erroneously reported news item inspire a marked deviation from sound reloading techniques as commonly practiced. If you pull the trigger on a live round and nothing happens, KEEP THE MUZZLE DOWN RANGE and wait for a while — say thirty seconds, at least — before opening the action. After ejecting the dud, discard or dispose of it, safely. They've been known to go off later in the shooter's pocket.

NONTE ON SIZING “Perusing the latest (#64) ARA KIRKSITE BULLETS Bulletin, I see references to the difficulty encountered in sizing Kirksite cast bullets. Best thing, — combining low cost and ready availability — is the Lyman #310 tong tool type sizing chamber screwed into a standard loading press, using one of the adapter bushings made for such use. Use the standard Lyman pushrod slipped into a shellholder. Use epoxy to reshape the rod nose to fit the bullet nose as necessary — the bullets being shoved through the sizing chamber base-first. Moly-Dee [molybdenum disulfide] eases the work, but isn't absolutely necessary.

“The sizing chamber may need a little polishing, especially at the throat or lead-in area. Being thin-walled, it may ‘spring’ a little, causing the hard K bullets to come out oversize. This can be corrected by having a plating shop add .001” or whatever's required added as a hard chrome plating to the inside.

“Even better, if you can find one, is one of the old Pacific lube-sizers that screws into the die hole of any 7/8-14 thread press.

“Even the cheapest C-press makes sizing of Kirksite bullets a breeze compared to running them through the Lyman, SAECO or Star lube-sizers. To push things along, install the C-press upside down on your bench — it may look odd, but it works much better and faster for bullet sizing than when mounted upright.

“As for the odd-ball shotshell reloading components and loading data, I suggest contacting this firm:

SANDERSON'S,
724 West Edgewater,
Portage, Wisconsin 53901 ...

The last I heard, they had a wider variety than any other firm I know of. Most of their stock is imported.” — GCN

PRESSURE DATA ON Some several issues back — to 44/357 Bain & Davis be exact, #46 and #48, for June and August, 1967, we discussed the .44/357 Bain & Davis wildcat cartridge in, respectively, the rifle and pistol. For the benefit of interested newcomers, we regard this as one of the more promising and interesting wildcat — that is, not available in factory loading — cartridges we've encountered in a long time.

The cartridge was dreamed up by gunsmith Keith Davis, of

Bain & Davis Sporting Goods,
559 West Las Tunas Drive,
San Gabriel, California 91776

and the version that we worked with represented his second modification of the original concept. The first one featured a rather sharp shoulder and proved to give problems. The second versions features a gentle, 10° shoulder in place of the original 25° configuration. The first, 25° type was reviewed by Dan Cotterman in the January, 1964, issue of GUN WORLD Magazine while a two-part series on the 10° variant appears in the August (rifle) and September (handgun), 1967 issues of the same magazine; all are available at \$1 per copy from the Back Issue Department, Gun World, Box 4038, Covina, Calif. 91722.

In the second test series, we had one of the Australian Cadet Martini rifles rechambered from its former .357 magnum caliber to the 10° 44/357 B&D and reported rifle velocities to 2760 fps for a 115-gr Norma hol-

low point at a whopping 1945 ft-lbs of muzzle energy. Unfortunately, the latter load was regarded as unduly warm, giving problems in extraction in the Martini action but we had foot-poundages in the 1500 bracket with no particular problems.



From left: .44 magnum, current version of .44/357 B&D magnum and original .44/357 with 25° shoulder.

Moving on to the handgun version of the same 10° chambering, we rebarreled a Ruger Hawkeye with a 10" barrel having a .357" groove diameter and a 1:15" rifling pitch and tested it, together with Keith Davis's Model 27 S&W revolver conversion with its 8-3/8" barrel, finding both to be exceptionally accurate and highly satisfactory. The Ruger, with its longer barrel and lack of gas-loss between cylinder and barrel, showed a good edge over the revolver, producing just over 1000 foot-pounds with various loads while the revolver peaked out just short of the 900 ft-lbs level. I still regard this as the logical best choice of something to do with a Ruger Hawkeye if you happen to have one in its original .256 Win mag configuration. Davis recommended a load of 11.0 grains of Unique behind the 115-gr bullet and, using Norma's hollow-point in that weight — the .355" diameter that they make for the 9mm Luger — we had such fine success that we've yet to come up with a better load for this caliber in the handgun. Groups, from a steady benchrest, get down to one inch or a shade better at fifty yards and we've encountered too many expensive rifles that'd not do this well. This particular load generates 1780 fps from the Ruger's 10" barrel for 809 ft-lbs and is pleasant to shoot, with very little recoil. Its performance is a bit puzzling since the bullet is .002" smaller than the groove diameter but we theorize that the concave base upsets to fill out the rifling on firing. Norma modified this particular number recently but we were relieved to find that the new version groups just as well as the original and it now has a little added exposed lead at the tip for more positive expansion in the 9mm loading. At 1780 fps on splattery targets, it is indeed awesome in performance!

A couple of months ago, we had the Ruger, with a batch of the pet loads, at an outdoor range that featured a circular saw blade suspended in front of a high bank about 150 yards from the firing line. The blade, about 14" in diameter, made a deep 'bong!' when it was struck and several of us stood there, burning up the entire supply of ammo, offhand, at the distant circle saw without one miss in the entire batch. I could not help but think of a recent put-down article by the bearer of a famous name in gun-writing circles, he

being the third generation to use it, who opined that no one has any business shooting at anything farther than fifty yards or so. I well and truly wish we could have had his hat on that dirt bank that afternoon.

Unlike some wildcats, the .44/357 B&D is an apple-pie cinch to form from the original .44 magnum brass. One easy pass up into the regular full-length resizing die is all it takes. RCBS, Inc. (Box 1919, Oroville, California 95965) makes the loading dies for it. These are available through Bain & Davis or your local dealer. B&D will rechamber your S&W Model 27 or Hi-Way Patrolman .357 revolver for a cost on the order of \$20 — barrels of 6" or more perform best with it.

I think it's a caliber that deserves better things, a wildcat that rates being legitimized as a factory load and standard caliber. At last report, Thompson-Center Arms Company (Farmington Road, Rochester, New Hampshire 03867) was considering offering barrels in this caliber for their single-shot Contender pistol. I'd talked to Ruger about chances of re-issuing their Hawkeye or, better, their Super Blackhawk in .44/357 B&D but, at last report, they decided against it. There still is hope from the Thompson-Center people. The supply of factory loads will be available when needed. Lee Jurras, of Super Vel Cartridge Corporation (129 East Franklin Street, Shelbyville, Indiana 46176) assures us that he'll tool up to produce .44/357 B&D factory loads any time someone offers a production gun that'll handle the cartridge.

Jurras is a fellow .44/357 B&D fan, with various guns of his own in that chambering. On his own initiative, he's gone ahead to have a pressure barrel made up in this caliber: 6" long, .356" groove diameter, 1:10" rifling pitch. The following load data was (were) compiled in the test barrel at 80°F temperature and 75% relative humidity:

- (1) 110gr Super Vel JHP, .3565" dia., 25.0 gr Hodgdon H-110 powder, CCI-350 mag LP primer, Super Vel .44 mag brass; 1823 fps, 809 ft-lbs, 24,850 psi breech pressure (following loads use same components except as otherwise noted).
- (2) With 21.0 gr Alcan AL-8 powder, 1878 fps and 37,240 psi — NOT RECOMMENDED!
- (3) With 26.0 gr H-110, 1922 fps, 30,500 psi.
- (4) 125 gr Super Vel JHP, .3565" dia., 20.0 gr AL-8, 1746 fps and 37,250 psi — NOT RECOMMENDED!
- (5) With 24.0 gr H-110, 1767 fps and 27,860 psi.
- (6) 160 gr Speer JSP, .357" dia., 18.0 gr H-110, 1289 fps and 15,000 psi.
- (7) With 20.0 gr Hercules #2400, 1630 fps and 40,500 psi — NOT RECOMMENDED!
- (8) 90 gr Super Vel JHP, .355" (9mm Luger) dia., 22.5 gr AL-8, 2025 fps at 32,000 psi for 818 ft-lbs.

It's been our experience that the .44/357 B&D is a cartridge that, out of rifle or handgun, shoots hardly any load badly and many loads superbly. Your editor admits a staunch — just short of rabid — partisanship for the .35/.357/.38 bore diameter since, outside of caliber .30, there is one of the largest assortment of available bullets for it in a broad choice of designs and bullet weights.

I should explain that I've no personal axe to grind in stumping for this caliber. I've got my guns in this but they work so well, I can't help spreading the word. —DAG