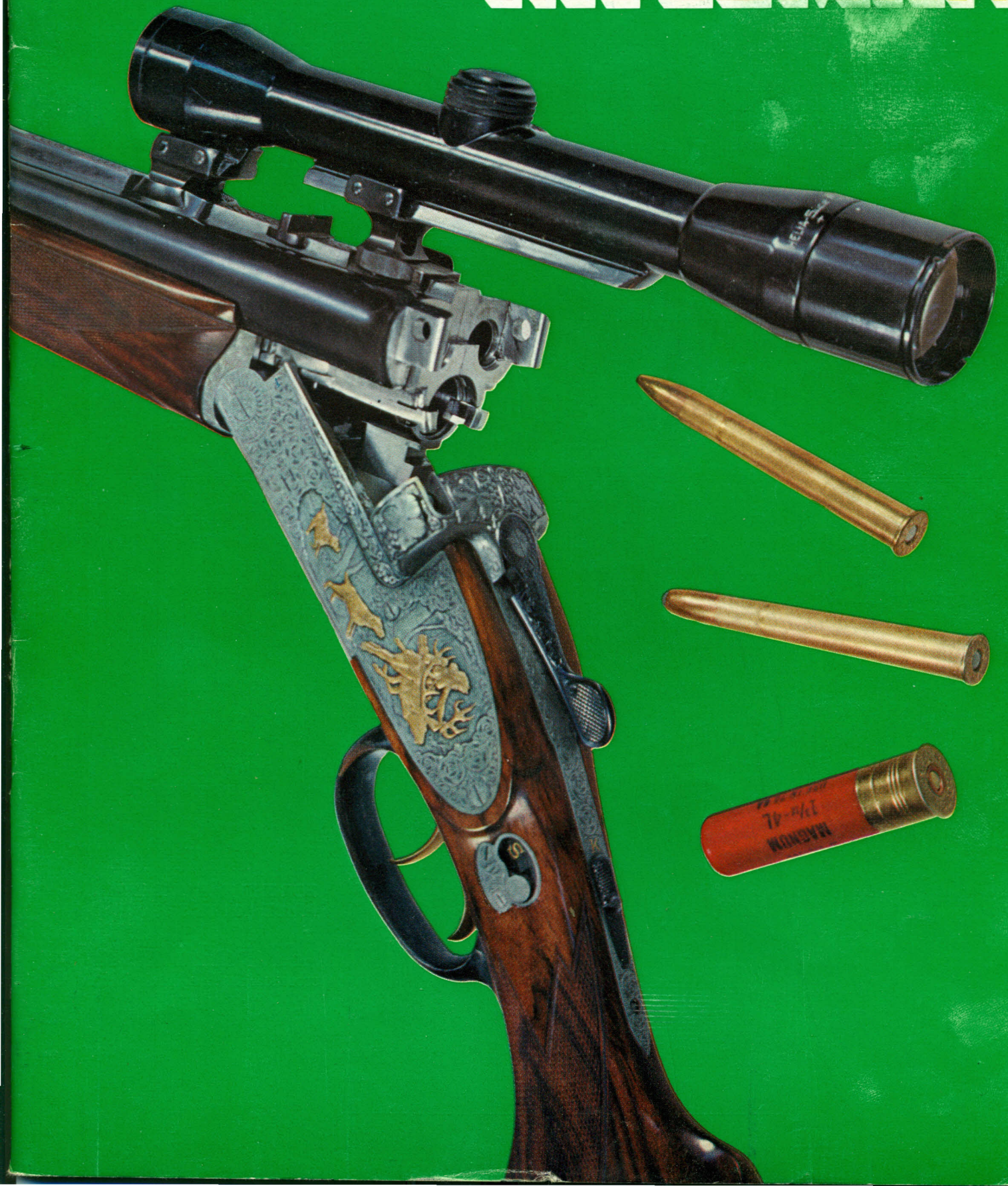


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# THE AMERICAN RIFLEMAN



# 'Wildcat' Cartridge Packs Kick

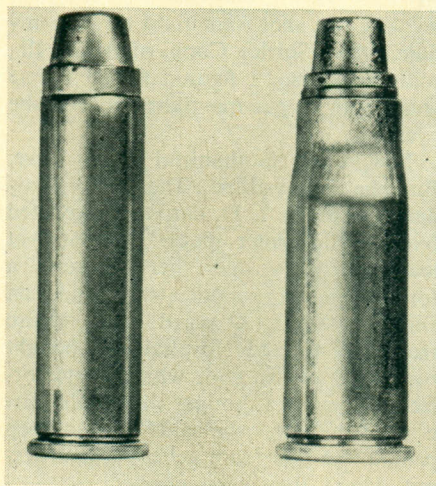
.357/.44 B&D handgun load has shocking power, long range

By BOB MILEK

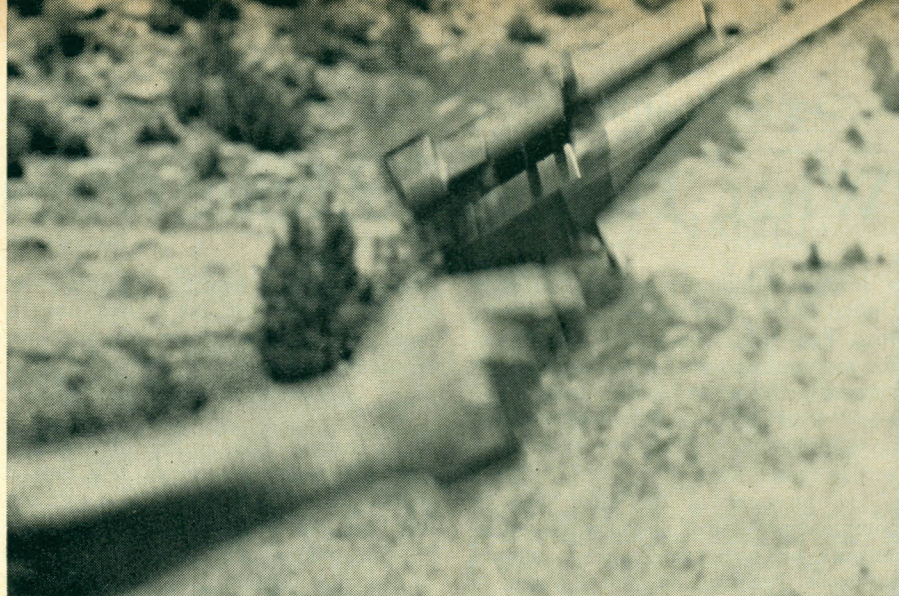
WOULD you like to work with a new magnum-class handgun cartridge with an energy potential like the kick of a Missouri mule? If so, consider the .357/.44 Bain & Davis. The designation of this non-standard 'wildcat' cartridge is as much a mouthful to say as the Thompson/Center Contender pistol chambered for it is a handful to shoot.

Made by necking down .44 Magnum brass to accept .357-inch diameter bullets, the .357/.44 B&D is a stubby, not-too-handsome case with a long, tapered shoulder, short neck, and with a capacity of about 2.28 cubic centimeters. Pertinent dimensions for this case are given in the drawing.

The Contender single-shot pistol, featuring interchangeable barrels chambered for a variety of cartridges, has been well received by handgun hunting enthusiasts. The fact that barrels for this pistol can now be had in .357/.44 B&D chambering is of special import



The old favorite .357 Magnum cartridge (l.) is compared with the .357/.44 Bain & Davis.



The recoil of the .357/.44 is heavy but not punishing.

as this high potential cartridge can be loaded to best even the mighty .44 Magnum in factory handgun loadings.

The .357/.44 B&D isn't new in the strictest sense of the word; an earlier version was reported on by Dan Cotterman in the January 1964 issue of *Gun World*. He called this cartridge the Davis .44/.357, and it was a little different from the Thompson/Center version, having a longer neck and sharper shoulder. Cotterman's tests were carried out with a converted S&W Model 27 revolver with 8¾" barrel.

The reasoning behind the development of this round was to produce a cal. .38 handgun cartridge that actually lived up to the ballistics claimed for the .357 Magnum factory round. Cotterman soon found that in his test revolver the Davis .44/.357 could be loaded to give greater bullet energy than that given by .44 Magnum factory loads.

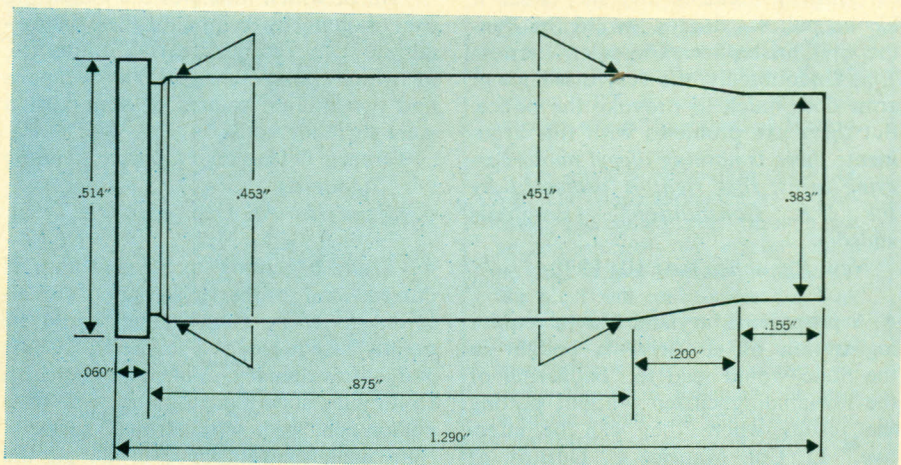
After ordering the .357/.44 B&D barrel for my Contender pistol, I had RCBS, Inc. make me up a set of reloading dies. The .357/.44 B&D cases are formed by merely running .44 Magnum

brass through the .357/.44 B&D full-length sizing die. Case forming requires very little physical effort, but cases must be well lubricated to keep them from sticking in the die. The finished case is 1.290" long and slips easily into the chamber of my Contender pistol, without the need of trimming. I established this as my maximum case length and keep my cases trimmed to that length.

## A wide selection

For my tests, I selected nine different bullets which I felt would give good performance under hunting conditions. Five of these were factory-produced jacketed pistol bullets, three were hand-swaged half-jacketed bullets, and one was a cast lead alloy bullet fitted with gas check.

I chose powders to work with which I felt would deliver the highest possible velocity and energy within safe pressure limits. As with all large capacity magnum handgun cartridges, propellant choice was somewhat limited. Hercules 2400, Hodgdon's H4227, and Unique seemed to offer the best potential. In



Dimension of the .357/.44 Bain & Davis cartridge.

### Suggested Loads—.357/.44 Bain & Davis

Load Number	Bullet Weight (grains)	Bullet Type	Bullet Diameter (inches)	Over-all Cartridge Length (inches)	Charge (grains)	Powder Type	Test Barrel Vel. (f.p.s.) Average of 10 rounds	Test Barrel Energy (ft.-lbs.)	Test Barrel Pressure (p.s.i.) Aver. of 10 rounds	Pistol Vel. (f.p.s.) Aver. of 10 rounds	Pistol Energy (ft.-lbs.)
1	108	Super Vel Jacketed Soft-Point	.355	1.60	26.0	H110	1896	862	26,910	2289	1257
2	110	Super Vel Jacketed Hollow-Point	.3565	1.59	13.0	Unique	1678	688	25,822	1864	849
3	110	Super Vel Jacketed Hollow-Point	.3565	1.60	21.5	2400	1674	685	25,670	1965	943
4	110	Super Vel Jacketed Hollow-Point	.3565	1.59	14.0	Unique	1826	815	37,670	1972	950
5	125	Super Vel Jacketed Soft-Point	.3565	1.60	21.0	2400	1605	715	28,405	1935	1039
6	125	Speer Jacketed Soft-Point	.357	1.60	22.0	2400	1723	824	33,910	2002	1113
7	125	Super Vel Jacketed Hollow-Point	.3565	1.60	25.0	H110	1854	954	35,315	2182	1322
8	137	Super Vel Jacketed Soft-Point	.3565	1.66	20.0	2400	1524	707	25,810	1843	1034
9	146	Speer Jacketed Hollow-Point	.357	1.57	20.0	2400	1656	889	38,515	1791	1040

Remarks: Instrumental velocities with pressure barrel were taken at 20 feet from the muzzle with screens spaced five feet apart. Range temperature varied from 67° to 71° F; relative humidity varied from 52% to 56%. Effective length of the pressure barrel is six inches. It has six-groove right twist rifling, one turn in 10 inches. Load recommendations for loads Nos. 1 and 7 as well as test barrel pressure and velocity data for all loads courtesy of Lee Jurras of Super Vel Cartridge Corp. Velocity and energy data derived in firing the Contender pistol with 10-inch barrel were supplied by author. Instrumental velocities were taken at 7½ ft. from the muzzle of the pistol.

test, Unique proved to give inferior accuracy with all except 110-gr. bullets. Hodgdon's H4227 produced good groups, but only mediocre velocities. Hercules 2400 eventually emerged as the best powder of those I tried, but Lee Jurras of the Super Vel Cartridge Corp. later developed some good loads using Hodgdon's H110 powder. These are given in the table.

I made no attempt to develop any light or mid-range loads feeling that few, if any shooters would desire to use this powerful cartridge for target work. However, I am certain that satisfactory light target loads could be worked up.

Hand swaged half-jacket bullets proved wholly incompatible in my .357/.44 B&D barrel. Colloidal graphite wads employed under seated bullets will greatly reduce barrel leading produced by half-jacket bullets, but such wads cannot be used satisfactorily in the .357/.44 B&D case. When a bullet is seated on top of the graphite wad, it forces the wad below the short case

neck, and it then drops down on the powder charge. Powder granules then adhere to both sides of the wad, causing the powder to burn unevenly, resulting in fliers that ruin groups or miss the target completely. This doesn't happen every time, but does occur often enough to be more than just annoying. I was able to alleviate this problem by placing a wad of cotton between the powder charge and graphite wad, but this required considerable time and care to insure that powder wouldn't leak by the cotton and adhere to the graphite wad. I finally decided it was best to abandon use of graphite wads in this cartridge. Without the lubrication afforded by the graphite wad, excessive barrel leading occurred after firing only a few rounds of the half-jacket bullet loads.

I was also unable to work up an acceptably accurate high velocity cast bullet load. I used the same bullet and alloy that produces excellent results in high powered .357 Magnum loads, so I'm certain the poor results couldn't be charged to the bullet alone. Again, some

of the inaccuracy may have been due to erratic powder burning. As with graphite wads, powder sticks to the lubricant on that portion of the bullet base that extends below the case neck into the powder chamber. I don't believe this was the entire source of my troubles, but the poor groups obtained prompted me to scratch cast bullets from my list of hunting loads.

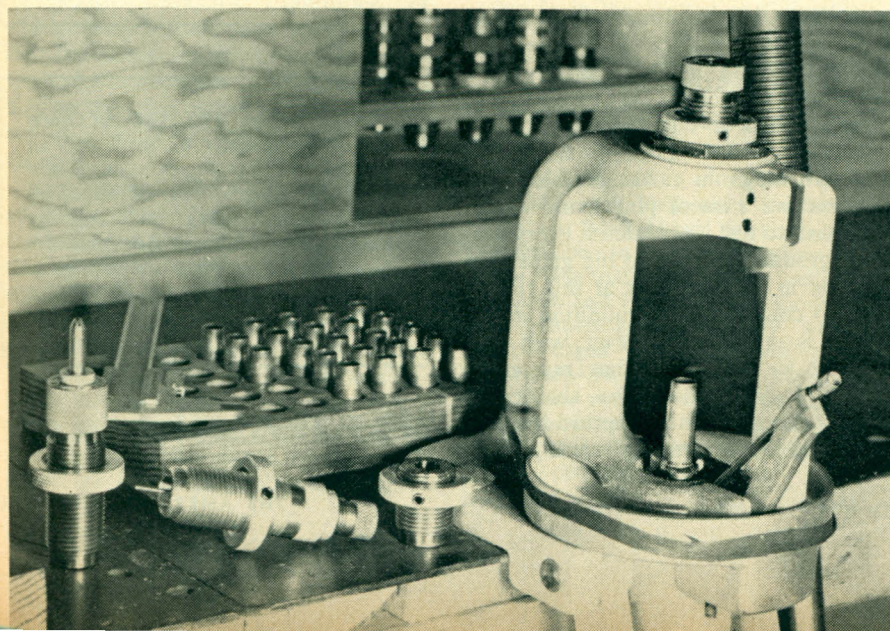
My experimentation so far left me with only jacketed bullets to work with. At first none of these shot well—groups were too large and erratic. All initial jacketed bullet rounds were assembled with a heavy crimp, either on the cannelure or just above the metal jacket, depending on the bullet used. But, when faced with poor accuracy, I started gradually to reduce the amount of crimp. Accuracy improved steadily until my groups were about 50% tighter when only a very light roll crimp was used on cannelured bullets and when uncannelured designs such as the Speer 146-gr. hollow-point were seated friction tight.

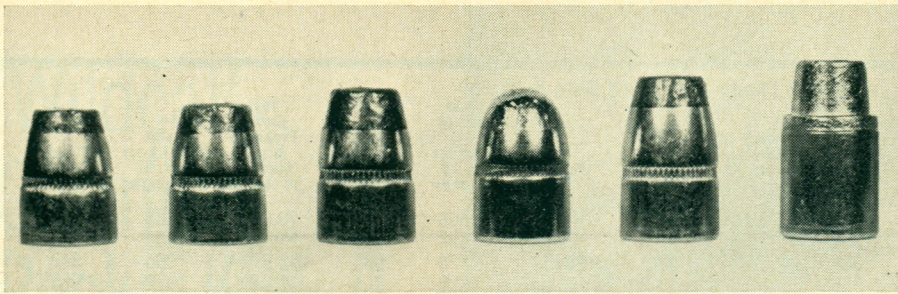
While crimp reduction was an easy solution to my accuracy problem, it is important to note that it worked only in this single-shot pistol. Similar rounds loaded for use in a revolver would require a heavy bullet crimp to prevent recoil from starting the bullets from their cases and possibly locking the gun up tight.

My best groups were obtained with 125-gr. jacketed bullets. The Speer soft-point and Super Vel hollow-point bullets produced comparable results on targets. The 125-gr. Super Vel jacketed hollow-point backed by 21 grs. of Hercules 2400 grouped five shots in just a little over one inch at 25 yds., and shot within 2½" at 50 yds. Groups with the Speer 125-gr. jacketed soft-point and 22 grs. of Hercules 2400 were similar in size.

Considerably higher velocities were  
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Some of the jacketed bullets worked with in developing loads for the .357/.44 B&D were: l. to r., 110-gr. Super Vel soft-point, 110-gr. Super Vel hollow-point, 125-gr. Super Vel hollow-point, 125-gr. Speer soft-point, 137-gr. Super Vel soft-point and 146-gr. Speer hollow-point.

obtained with Lee Jurras' 25-gr. load of Hodgdon's H110 powder behind the 125-gr. Super Vel bullet. However, when fired in my pistol, 50-yd. groups with this load opened up to four inches.

My best heavy bullet load is 20 grs. of Hercules 2400 powder behind the 146-gr. Speer jacketed hollow-point. This load grouped five shots in two inches at 25 yds. and three inches at 50 yds. All of these groups represent respectable accuracy with hunting loads, and compare favorably with those from .357 Magnum, .41 Magnum, and .44 Magnum revolvers.

Data covering suggested loads for the .357/.44 B&D cartridge are given in the table. The velocity for Load No. 7 in a six-inch pressure barrel was 1854 feet per second (f.p.s.). Average velocity for this load when fired through the ten-inch barrel of my Contender pistol was 2182 f.p.s., and it developed greater energy than the advertised factory .44

The .357/.44 Bain and Davis cartridge is an accurate, easy-to-load powerhouse.

Magnum handgun loads rated at 1150 ft.-lbs. at the muzzle.

As might be expected, recoil with .357/.44 B&D hunting loads in the Contender pistol is heavy, but not what I would call punishing. The grip of this pistol is so designed that the web of the hand between the thumb and forefinger doesn't tend to travel up under the hammer when the pistol recoils. But, the shooter will have to keep his knuckles back from the trigger guard or he'll have swollen joints for a day or two.

Twice during my tests, recoil caused me trouble. On the first shot fired through my .357/.44 B&D, the 1.3X scope and its mount were ripped off the pistol and hit me in the forehead. I discovered that the screws I used to attach the scope mount to the barrel were too short. Recoil force tore them out, stripping the two top threads from each of the holes tapped in the barrel. It was necessary to return the barrel to the factory for repair.

The second accident occurred while I was chronographing some loads. This time the fore-end split lengthwise through the center of the screws which hold the fore-end catch to the fore-end. In this instance the culprit was the fore-end lug which loosened from recoil. I was able to make a temporary repair with epoxy, but its ultimate replacement was necessary. Before using your Contender .357/.44 B&D barrel, it would be wise to anchor the fore-end lug screws with Loc-Tite sealant.

I have found the .357/.44 B&D to be a superb magnum cartridge. I look for it to receive a lot of play from hunters who wish to test its mettle on everything from ground squirrels to big game. The only fly in the ointment at this time is that no commercial ammunition in this caliber is available. However, with cases so easy to make and dies reasonably priced, I don't think the absence of factory ammunition will retard the popularity of this interesting cartridge. ■

## N.Y. Crime Rise Follows Gun Bill

NEW YORK City's rifle and shotgun registration and owner licensing ordinance coincided with a distinct increase in crime in the largest American metropolis, to judge by official reports.

Between 1968 and 1969, the first full year of the ordinance's effect, crimes against the person increased by 7.3%, the New York City Police Department reported. The 1,043 cases of murder and non-negligent manslaughter in 1969 represented a 5.8% increase over the previous year.

The ordinance, which was signed into law by Mayor John V. Lindsay in Nov., 1967 and took effect on Aug. 13, 1968, supplemented a New York State Sullivan Law provision which already required registration of concealable firearms.

Although Mayor Lindsay testified before the Juvenile Delinquency Subcommittee of the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee on June 26, 1968 that "gun control legislation is a step that we can take now" to reduce crimes of violence, forcible rapes rose from 1,840 in 1968 to 2,129 in 1969 to indicate a 15.2% increase during the year after implementation of his recommended gun control ordinance.

In addition, aggravated assaults increased by 4.2%, from 28,515 to 29,717, between 1968 and 1969.

Robberies rose from 54,405 in 1968 to 59,152 in 1969—an 8.7% increase.

Motor vehicle thefts increased by 10.8%, from 77,448 in 1968 to 85,796 in 1969.

Burglaries decreased by 1.3% between 1968 and 1969, from 173,559 to 171,293.

Larceny of more than 50 dollars dropped by 11.8%, from 146,319 to 129,136. ■

R. L. Wilson, 27 Lakewood Circle North, Manchester, Conn. 06040, an AMERICAN RIFLEMAN contributor who is writing a book on Theodore Roosevelt's hunting and shooting activities, asks that NRA Members assist him by sending him any little-known information on TR's hunts in the U.S. and abroad.

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