



This wildcat handgun was tested, using Beckman electronic instrument to check velocities. A 150-grain bullet was found to travel at 1970 fps.

up to what is said of the competition? After all, don't they tell 'em that the .357 will goose out at 1400-odd f/s. Regardless of whether it's actually only getting along at 900 to 1200 f/s, the numbers are there in black and white for folks to read and go ga-ga over! I've fired dozens of shots with the .357 through the screens of a chronograph. Without exception, I've been unable to squeeze the trigger hard enough to squirt bullets out at better than about 1225 f/s, regardless of barrel length!

The gun selected for tests on the .44/.357 was the Smith & Wes-

son Model 27, .357 magnum with an 8 $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch barrel. The .357 cylinder chambers can be reamed to accept the .44/.357 rounds. The S & W Model 28 *Highway Patrolman* in .357 magnum also would work for this conversion, but the same is not true of the S & W .357 Combat Magnum, Model 19. This latter gun's cylinder is too small in diameter.

While the strength of our experimental Model 27's frame and cylinder was a matter of fact, the limits of tolerance with a new cartridge of unknown performance were in doubt. For this reason, Davis and I elected to run a number of "Lanyard Loads" — that's the kind you stand back and pull with a long string — to see if the gun would come apart under the assault of high pressures. And pressures are high . . . Of course, the bullets are lighter, up to 158 or 160-grains, than you'd be using in the .44 magnum, but you've got all that expanding gas trying to get out of there in one helluva hurry! Chances are better with a larger "port," such as with the .44. Bring 'er down to .357, and you've partially blocked the exit for these gases. The result is increased pressures.

This explanation is laid out for

the express purpose of not deluding anyone into believing that the .44/.357 is *incapable* of blowing up: It would be possible with too much of the wrong powder. At the same time, it's only reasonable to point to the fact that *any* fairly large centerfire cartridge — and that includes the .38 Special — is liable to cause a blow-up if improperly loaded.

The thing we were interested in learning was whether the .44/.357 could be loaded and fired under ordinary conditions with a comfortable margin of safety. In the gun we used, things proved quite satisfactory. We found, as an example, that maximum charges of 2400, while reasonably good for the "stock" .357, raise the devil in this larger capacity case. I won't mention the velocity we got with 22 grains of 2400 behind the 158-grain bullet in this gun: The load is *definitely not safe!* It is only significant that a cylinder-full of these were touched off without damage to the gun, though four of six of the cases were blown in twain on the first loading. Other ultra-heavy loads also were used.

First tests were run during the evening at the Bain & Davis shop. Bullets from the .44/.357 passed through the Avtron T-333's screens, which were spaced five feet apart, then through a foot-thick eucalyptus log and into a heavy steel bullet trap behind it. I don't recall that any of the bullets coursed through

For sake of comparison, from left, are: .44 magnum round; a standard .357 and the Davis .44/.357. Latter combines characteristics of other two.

