



S&W Model 27 backgrounds C-H forming and reloading dies used in tests. Bullet is the excellent Remington softpoint 158-grain, .358 in diameter.

No one was out to "get" the .44 magnum — to top it for power — when this thing started. The idea was to come up with a cartridge that would measure up to factory claims for the standard .357 magnum. Someone, in checking energy figures, just happened to notice that the 1291.5 foot pounds for Milburn's 150 grainer at 1970 f/s was appreciably greater than the factory-loaded .44 magnum 240 grainer at (so they say) 1470 f/s. Energy for this load would run 1149.6 foot pounds. The .44/.357 thus tops the lordly .44 magnum! This, it is worth adding, is conceding the fact that the factory claim of 1470 f/s for the 240-grain .44 magnum bullet is correct. This is supposed to be from a 6½-inch barrel.

Again referring to Askins, and the writer's experiments with the .44 magnum, the factory loading will not achieve this 1470 f/s. It won't achieve it from a ten-inch barrel, or from an eight-inch tube, much less from a 6½-inch barrel!

Though I have not personally worked with the Ruger Carbine with its eighteen-inch barrel, As-

kins went on to run factory handgun rounds through this longer tube. Velocity average finally came up to 1462 f/s, just shy of the 1470 f/s claimed from a 6½-inch handgun barrel!! This infernal crazy quilt of claims and rebuttals is enough to turn a feller to stamp collecting, I know, but when you read one thing and subsequently discover another is true . . . Well, it deserves reporting.

Thus far, two protracted chronographing sessions have been carried out with this new cartridge. The first, as mentioned, with the Avtron T-333, then another with a special Beckman Instruments unit. The prolix of the .44/.357 would involve confessions about difficult case extraction. Fairness demands that any mention of difficult extraction be accompanied by the explanation that it occurred with ultra-heavy loads only: Ordinarily, extraction was good for a magnum cartridge of this type. The same set of qualifications would apply to cylinder rotation . . . It was satisfactory, save with the very heaviest of loads. Most will agree that these rules will apply with any heavy centerfire round in a revolver.

I haven't mentioned the use of either Bullseye or Unique in this case. Light charges of Bullseye are in order for short and mid-range

target work, though no experimenting with them yet has been carried out. Unique, burning more slowly than Bullseye, was tried. I found one of the most pleasing loads for this round to be 12.0 grains of Unique with a 140-grain swaged, half-jacket bullet. Velocity ran to around 1460 f/s with energy up around 662 foot pounds. Momentum, incidentally, held up with all these loads. For comparative "stopping power" momentum figures, multiply mass (bullet weight, in grains) times velocity (in foot-seconds). Divide the result by 7000 to express in pounds.

Somewhere I seem to remember reading about a British experimental autoloading handgun called the *Mars*. This one was supposed to have launched 158-grain .357 bullets at velocities of around 1750 f/s. That's a bit more than has been done thus far with the .44/.357. I further seem to recall reading that the *Mars* pistols were abandoned in the face of hopeless impracticality. I don't believe that will be the fate of this new revolver round. Keith Davis is ready to make additional conversions for about \$20 each and C-H Die Company is standing by with .44/.357 reloading dies. From here it looks as if the popularity of the .44/.357 could spread nationwide! ●