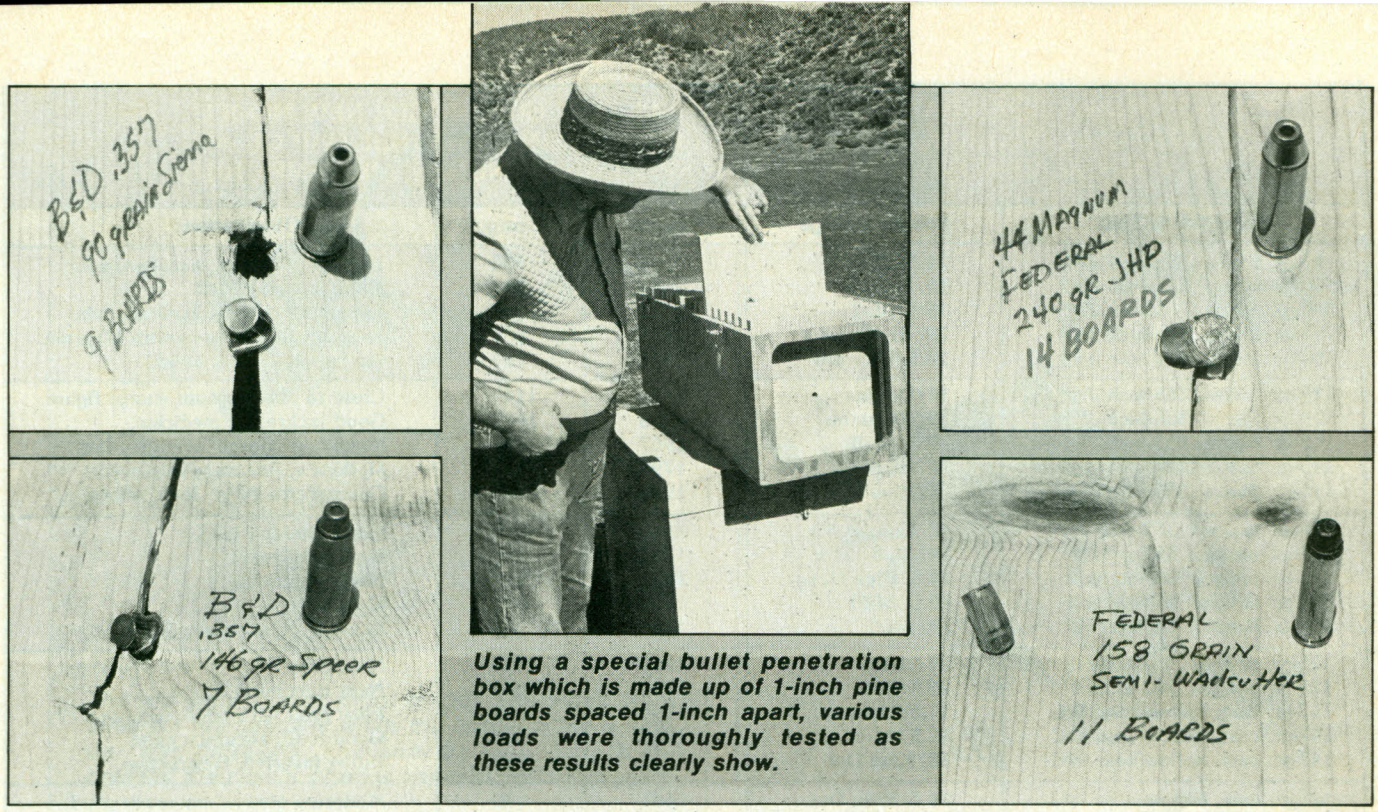

Using a special bullet penetration box which is made up of 1-inch pine boards spaced 1-inch apart, various loads were thoroughly tested as these results clearly show.

one could buy at his local gun shop.

That's exactly what gunsmith Keith Davis of Bain & Davis Custom Guns was kicking around one evening back in May of 1963. Davis asked me what I thought of necking down a .44 Magnum hull while giving it a short, fairly sharp shoulder and enough neck length to suitably accept 158-grain bullets. It was just possible, we surmised, to create a *true* .357 Magnum. The more we kicked the idea around, the more intriguing it became.

Our final selection for the conversion was the Smith & Wesson Model 27 in .357 Magnum with an 8⅜ths-inch barrel. Davis designed the reamers, roughing and finishing, and, within a week we were ready to improvise cases.

With the proper RCBS die set up the neck shrinking process was easy. We had the ammo loaded, somewhat conservatively, with charges amounting to 17 grains of 2400 behind 158-grain Remington jacketed, soft-point bullets. Notably, a charge of around 16 grains of 2400 is about tops for the .357 Magnum. The .44/.357, as Davis and I named this original (but later to be slightly altered) version of our wildcat,

The evolution of the .357/.44 Bain & Davis Dreadnaught stemmed from the effectiveness of the .357 Magnum and the sheer brute force of the renowned .44 Magnum. This super-successful cartridge deserves recognition as "Wildcat of the Year!"

represented a capacity increase of 7.5 grains, that is, to the base of the seated bullet. I should caution the reader at this point that the measurement was no more than a means of determining capacity increase and is definitely not recommended for reloading purposes.

A Beckman electronic-digital chronograph was set up within the Bain & Davis establishment using a five-foot screen spacing. Using velocity averages taken from series of five-shot strings, our first revelation was that the relatively light 17/2400 load resulted in 1,235 fps for the .44/.357. We had thus bested the 1,225 fps we obtained from a factory round using a regular .357 cylinder in the same revolver with its 8⅜ths-inch barrel. By way of comparison, a factory

.357 Magnum
Federal 158-grain SWC

.44/.357 B&D (Old Style)
158-grain Solid Lead

.357/.44 B&D (New Style)
Speer 90-grain JHP

.357/.44 B&D (New Style)
Speer 146-grain SWC HP

.44 Magnum
Federal 240-grain JHP