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M OST men have a hobby—all men should have, as a recreation, pastime or diversion from their regular work. A very good friend once wrote me, “Whenever you find a man without a hobby, they had just as well put him to bed with a shovel, as he will never be worth a dime.” I think that there is a lot of truth in this statement.

Like many another, for years I have been using the old Peacemaker and trying to improve its shooting through the use of better sights and ammunition. I have tried many different front sights, from the Sheard and Lyman down to the common rifle sight dovetailed into the barrel. I have also tried cutting out the rear notch into a square or Patridge rear, using small files for the job. It is very easy to improve the rear sights thus. The rear notch should be wide enough to permit of one’s seeing a little light on each side of the front sight, in order to properly center it. How often I have wished for good adjustable sights that would bring the point of impact and point of aim together, for my heavy loads. Many times I’ve worked up loads to shoot right with the fixed Colt sights for elevation; then in case the gun shot to one side, I would bend the front sight by placing the sharp side or edge of a cake of type metal under the base of the sight, while someone friend, often the better half, held the gun. Then with a hammer and some soft metal, such as brass, copper or type metal, for a ranch, I would drive the whole sight over into correct line. This method, if done right, leaves the sight straight up and down, as it bends the whole sight at the base and will correct most guns laterally. It’s often quite a job to get an S. A. A. with fixed sights adjusted for one particular load. These guns frequently come from the factory shooting high, low or out of line, unless one specifies that his gun be sighted up before he leaves the factory.

The Colt factory furnishes but one standard model of the S. A. A. now, in plain and fancy finish, though at one time they did furnish flat-top Bisley and S. A. A. models with target sights. It’s a simple matter at the factory to adjust sights on the S. A. A. I have worked on, my friend Fitzgerald remove the extractor tube, slip a polished steel rod of land diameter into the barrel and clamp same tightly in a special barrel vise, with padded jaws to fit the contour of the barrel; then slip his hammer handle through the cylinder space in the frame and turn the barrel to correct line, though sometimes it requires some sighting shots and additional moving to get it just right. That’s all very nice if one has the tools, but we on isolated ranches and in the hills have no such tools, and do not care to be without our guns from three to six weeks, or more, either.

My good friend, S. H. Croft, put in a lot of time, thought and money improving the S. A. Colt. He was working to obtain a light-weight weapon for self-defense purposes. However, a combination of some of his improvements added to the regular weight 6-gun makes the last word in a fine, trigger S. A. for target or game shooting. Mr. Croft has designed the changes necessary to convert an ordinary S. A. Colt into the most trigger single-action imaginable, either in the Featherweight model, or, at my suggestion, in a heavy, all-around 6-gun.

Mr. Croft had four models of Featherweight guns made up from S. A. Army and Bisley Colts, which I described in previous issue of the Rifleman. He worked out and had made up his No. 3 grip, which is perfect. At about the same time, or a little later, I. O. O’Meara finished up his pet 6-gun. Both he and Croft used the Bisley back strap and S. A. A. guard and front strap. The Bisley back strap is bent to the same angle as the S. A. A. When O’Meara had finished, I found that his grip and Croft’s No. 3 were almost identical. For a gun to be used with trigger this No. 3 is the latest and best grip ever put on a 6-gun.

In giving Mr. Croft’s Featherweights an extensive and thorough try-out, I discovered their strong points, as well as their weak ones. Personally, except for a pocket gun, I prefer the S. A. A. left full weight. Croft designed these for pocket guns, however. I favor leaving the extractor on, unless the barrel be cut down too short for it to work. Of the different Croft grips, No. 1 was standard S. A. A., while No. 3 was the best grip of all. For the slip gun the regular S. A. A. grip is the best, and about the only one that can be used.

The S. A. A. is one of the best-balanced and easiest handled of 6-guns. The regular S. A. A. back strap, while by far the best shaped of any on the market, and the only one for the slip gun, does not come up as high in back as it should to completely fill the hand. By bending and welding the Bisley back strap to the same general contour as the S. A. A., and combining with the S. A. A. guard and front strap, we have the No. 3 grip.

Needless to say, after playing with Croft’s guns a while I decided to have one of my S. A. A. guns worked over to incorporate some of Croft’s improvements, with a few ideas of my own thrown in. Croft supervised the job. He and Mr. Neal K. Houthin, of Philadelphia, made the sights, which are duplicates of the sights on the No. 1 Featherweight, with these exceptions: I had a cross pin put through the front-sight band, and a set screw put in the rear of the flat-top frame and against the rear-sight base, to lock the sight against a possible blow.

Mr. Croft had Mr. R. F. Sedgley weld up the frame into a flat top, and extend it back over the top of the hammer; and also fit the new type base pin and catch. This pin is a tool-steel job, and is a very close fit. Mr. Sedgley also made the No. 3 grip, welded the base onto the S. A. A. hammer to fill the long cut in the top of the Bisley back strap, and made the wide trigger, which of course required some cutting out of the trigger hole in the guard. The hammer is one J. D. O’Meara had previously fitted with Bisley top for me, by dovetailing and brazing in the Bisley thumb piece. O’Meara also made and fitted the walrus ivory stocks. Sedgley made and fitted the new type mainspring. He and Croft designed this very excellent spring for the S. A. A. It is not as liable to breakage as the regular S. A. A. spring and is very much more sensitive and quicker than the standard spring, and the gun cocks as easily as when Newman’s “far country” spring is used. This Newman spring is unbreakable, and the best for absolute reliability. The Croft-Sedgley spring is without a doubt the fastest in action of any S. A. A. spring, and should improve the S. A. greatly for target-shooting.

We decided to call this gun model No. 5. The sights are square, or Patridge; the rear adjustable for windage in the same manner as the S. & W. target sights. The front-sight blade is adjustable for elevation by the turning of a screw in the rear of the base. This gives very close micrometer adjustment, with a locking screw on the side of the base. This type of sight and blade gives maximum sight radius. The front sight elevates at the muzzle and not an inch to the rear, as on most target 6-guns. The front sight is fitted by means of a barrel band, base and band being one piece of steel. Two blades were made for this gun. One of them I am going to have fitted with a full type gold bead.

I had long wished for a wide trigger instead of the narrow S. A. A. one placed in the left side of the guard. Croft had one made by Sedgley for this gun that seems to fit perfectly the contour of my trigger finger. This trigger is set back close to the guard, which greatly improves the gun, to my notion. It gives about the same difference in
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the feel of the gun as there is between the old and new model .45 Auto. Colt. This also helps one to properly squeeze the trigger without exerting pressure too far ahead and to one side, as on the regular S. A. triggers. All 6-gun cranks that have ever used a Bisley-topped hammer on their S. A.'s prefer it to the regular hammer.

The new type base pin has a large head that is easily grasped to remove the pin, instead of the regular head that one usually had to use the head of a shell on to pull it out. Unless the regular S. A. is fitted with an extra strong spring in the base-pin catch, the recoil will drive the pin forward, and in some cases tie up the gun. This new catch is a lever that swings into a square cut in base pin, and no amount of hammering can loosen the pin. At the same time it is very easy to remove the pin for cleaning. A spring plunger locks the lever.

The illustration is an exact likeness of this gun. However, one must handle and shoot it to appreciate the excellence of its grip and balance. The grip has very close to the same angle as that of the regular S. A.; and the gun is quickly aimed and fired. The gun is a natural pointer to any one used to the S. A. A.

Mr. Houchins fitted the barrel up very close to the cylinder, for smokeless powder. Both he and O'Meara do a very good job of fitting barrels and cylinders.

The flat-top frame is extended back about one-half inch more than standard, which adds materially to the sight radius and to the general beauty of the gun. The front-sight blade is coated and tapered, pinned to the barrel. The trigger pull is around 3 1/4 pounds, and is very clean and snappy.

Using a charge of 5 grains of Bull's-eye and a 250-grain cast bullet sized to .431, I have put five shots under a silver dollar at 15 yards with the right hand, and all five under or touching a dollar with the left hand; and I am not a target 6-gun shot. Such accuracy is good enough for me and will suit me when I need it. Understated, I can not hold that well at all times.

For self-defense and quick draw these sights can be improved by having the front blade a straight tapper from rear to top, and non-adjustable, so there will be nothing to catch on clothing or holster. Also the rear sight can be made lower by eliminating the adjusting screws, and driving the sight to where it will fit. After this is done, then locking with a set screw or by tinning and sweating.

To my notion this is the finest and best Colt in existence. I know there are many with inlay work and finer finish, but they lack Colt's many improvements, which are to me worth far more than all the inlay work, as they are a real help in handling a bullet where I wish it to go. For general excellence of grip, balance, sights, trigger and without, I do not think this gun can be improved upon.

Last spring I killed with this gun over 59 magpies, around two dozen crows and hawks, six horned owls, and a bobcat, to say nothing of over a hundred blacktail jack rabbits and a few woodchucks. It does to obtain good, reliable, accurate reloading tools for the .44 than for the .45 Colt. The bore diameter of Colt's .44 Special guns does not vary to anything like the extent of the .45 Colt. I have seen .45 Colt guns with groove and cylinder diameters measuring only .450, which with a heavy load is very apt to sap the old Peacemaker. Remember, the .45 Colt has been built for over half a century, and several different generations have bored the various guns; so it is any wonder that guns of various ages vary in bore diameter.

If a man wishes the most powerful handgun, and still wishes to use only factory ammunition, then the .45 Colt is the one best bet, with Remington black powder loads. However, if he wishes to reload, then the .44 Special is the best of them all. The walls of the cylinder in the .44 are thicker than in the .45, also the round of the barrel; and the .44 will stand more pressure with safety than the .45. The .44 Special is more accurate and can be safely loaded to give equal or often better velocity than the .45 Colt with the same weight bullets.

I am all through with heavy smokeless loads in the .45 Colt. F. C. Ness worked up a charge of 16.3 grains of No. 80 behind my .45 Colt bullet of 260 grains. This load gave 935 feet per second, with around 15,000 pounds' pressure, and was by far the best and most powerful load I ever used in the Peacemaker. However, it took just seventy-odd of these loads to crack the rear end of the barrel in four places, and bulge the walls of all chambers over the bolt cuts, in my wife's pet 6-gun. This gun was No. 335000, and in perfect condition. These cartridges were loaded by the B. & M. factory and charges carefully weighed. So nothing but black in the .45 for me. I have found that King's Semi-Smokeless is the dirtiest of all powders in a 6-gun, though excellent in a rifle.

I designed my .45 Colt black-powder bullet of 360 grains some three years ago, and lately Mr. Croft had an exact duplicate made up in .44 Special. He had two weights of bullet made up, one of 260 grains and one of 280 grains, as man-stoppers. I worked up to a maximum charge of 15 grains No. 80 behind the 260-grain bullet. I believe this load develops 1,000 feet per second, as it gives over 2 inches more penetration than the Ness load in the .45, or the Remington black-powder load. Both this .44 Special bullet and my .45 Colt bullet have short seating depth and extend nearly flush with end of the cylinder, which leaves room for really powerful loads. These bullets also cut down the jump from cylinder to barrel, and improve accuracy. They were designed to give maximum shock up to 50 yards. However, I have traded several long-range kills on jack rabbits at over 100 yards, and some up to 150 yards. This 15-grain charge with the Croft 260-grain bullet is a maximum load, and I am sure that a load of 14 grains of No. 80 is just as accurate and a lot easier on the cylinder bolt cuts.

I fired several hundred of these heavy loads without damaging a new .44 Special Colt. So, at the least, these .44 Specials do not get the bolt cuts, which can well be expected when you use a 6-gun with such heavy charges.

I started in with a light charge of No. 80 behind the 280-grain bullet, and gradually worked it up to 12 grains before the powder burned very well, finally stopping at 15 grains as the maximum safe load. This really is an awful load, hard to report, and recoil fully as heavy as the heaviest .45 Colt black loads. I used bullets of around 1 to 10 in and lead. Never shoot bullets in a 6-gun that can not be shoved through cylinder mouths by hand. For these maximum loads bullets should be not over two thousandths over size of grooves. All charges should be carefully weighted to one-tenth of a grain.

These loads both burn well, and will stay in a 2-inch circle at 15 yards like a possum in a hollow log. I really believe the 280 grain bullet too long and heavy, and with its very blunt nose, like the old .41 Colt, for long-range work; and what 200-yard shooting I have done not indicate that it is very accurate at this range. Such bullets are amply accurate for the purpose in-
tended—namely, as man-stoppers up to 50 yards. The 260-grain load seems to be considerably more accurate at long range. The 280-grain load is, I believe, the most pow- 

erful man-stopper in existence. The blunt point delivers an awful wallop. Couple that 

with its extreme weight and fairly good velocity—858 feet per second with 15,000 

pounds’ pressure—and it is bound to knock all the fight out of most any sized man 

if hit anywhere between the pelvic bone and 

where his hair ought to be. However, these 

bullets are not the thing for target-shoot- 

ing or for game-killing at a distance of over 

50 yards.

The experts all advocate a small powder 

space for smokeless powder. I believe they 

mean powders like Bull’s-eye and No. 5. 

At any rate, my experience leads me to 

believe just the opposite when using No. 80.

I find Bull’s-eye at its best when bullets 

are seated down to standard depth; yet 

with No. 80 I can load more much more powerful 

loads when I have more powder space.

After fouling with different bullets in the 

6-gun for years, and carefully noting their 

effects on game and their grouping on the 

target, I have finally designed what I hon- 

estly believe to be the best all-around 

bullets in existence. I drafted this bullet for the 

.44 Special to go with my No. 5 gun. 

I found that to suit the target shooter a 

bullet must be long and heavy, with correct 

balance; and must be extremely accurate. 

Last, but not least, it must cut a clean hole 

in the target. To be extremely accurate at 

long range it must have some taper at the 

point and have a long bearing on the lands. 

It must provide space for plenty of lubri- 

cant. The base band must be wide to in- 

sure accuracy. There must be a wide band 

of groove diameter in front of the crimping 

groove to carry the sides of the cylinder 

and insure proper lining up of the 

cartridge in the chamber. The bullet must 

have a good crimping groove to properly 

hold it in the case against recoil.

It should be perfectly flush with the end 

of the cylinder, to cut down the jump as 

much as possible. It must provide sufficient 

powder space for heavy loads of black or 

No. 80, and still provide correct space for 

accurate medium loads of Bull’s-eye or No. 5. 

The S. & W. cylinders are shorter than 

the Colt; so this had to be taken into con- 

sideration in designing the length of bullet 

point. My bullet seats 

flush with the end 

of the S. & W. cylin-

ders, and nearly so in 

the Colt.

Now the question 

of killing power. A 

bullet must have a 

blunt nose like my 

.45 Colt or Croft’s 

.44 Special, or 

have a flat point like 

.44-40. The two 

first-named bullets 

are the best as 

regards point for 

long range, so I used the flat point. A 

long, tapered point bucks the wind better 

than the short .44-40 point. Then again 

enters that question of wind-cutting on the 

target. To get both an excellent long-range 

missile and one that would cut a clean hole 
in the target or game, I designed my bullet 

with a long, flat point, with a wide band 

just ahead of the crimping grooves. 

This band has a square shoulder at the forward 

edge, and cuts a clean hole to a certainty. 

It also lines the cartridge up perfectly. 

As I size them they measure .431 in diameter. 

The base of point, just forward of this band 
makes .378; the flat point is about .280 in 
diameter. This makes a bullet with enough 
taper to insure maximum penetration on 

heavy game, and one that will tear tissue 
at the same time.

So far I have used this bullet on a great 

many jack rabbits and ducks, and have killed 

several trapped coyotes with it from No. 5 

gun. It is the most accurate bullet I have 
ever used, and tears an unbelievable large 
hole in game. I have shot several jack 

rabbits up to and including 150 yards, and 

even at this distance the bullet never fails 
to knock all the run out of them. Many 

that I shot broadside had a 2-inch hole in 

their opposite side where the bullet emerged. 

Now I am going to make a statement that 

many will doubt: A jack rabbit will stand 

just as much killing as a man, and I have 

seen both killed with 6-guns. I have had 

any number of jack rabbits run off after being shot 
broadside through paunch or lungs with the 

heaviest .45 Colt loads with standard bullets. 

Many of them I never found.

I worked up a charge of 53 grains of 

Bull’s-eye behind the new Keith bullet, for 

use in No. 5. This is a fine medium load 

and wonderfully accurate in this gun, even 

at long range. For my other .44 Special 

guns I loaded up to 35 grains of FFG black 

by pouring the powder through a long tube, 

to settle it in the case. But it is with No. 

80 that I developed the best long-range 

load. I started in with 12 grains and worked 

up to 13.5 grains’ weight. This last is a 

very powerful load, shoots very flat and 

accurate as an accurate as its lighter cousins. 

It must develop very close to 1,075 feet per 

second. I believe the pressure to be not 

over 15,000 pounds. It might be possible 
to increase this charge to 14 grains; but I am 

content with it as it is. It also a bullet 

endwise through a coyote as if he were 

so much cheese, and messes him up in great 

shape inside. I found 13 grains to be a 

wonderful load and not as hard on bolt cuts. 

My Colt guns made .4293 to bottom of grooves, and I size bullets down to .431 for 

these loads. Recently I killed a duck at 

75 yards with this bullet and 53 grains of 

Bull’s-eye in gun No. 5; also several porcui- 
pines at around 50 yards, and jack rabbits 
at much longer ranges, all with one hit each.

I was shooting at a big white jack at 300 

yards, and though I did not get him I put 
on bullet just under his belly and one 

within an inch of his back. Many will 

doubt that a man can shoot a 6-gun this 

accurately. However, Mr. Croft saw me 

demonstrate this summer, killing an eagle 

and several jack at 150 yards. For this 

long-range work I nearly always lie down on 

my back and hold the gun between my 

knees with both hands, though I have killed 

jacks at 150 yards while standing. I have 

another position which I use a great deal 

for this long-range work. I lie on my side, 

prop my head up with one hand and rest my gun 

arm along my right leg.

Anyone wishing to reload with this bullet 
can obtain moulds from the Lyman Gun 

Sight Corporation, Middlefield, Conn. 

The bullet will be known and catalogued as the 

Keith .44 Special. The photos show the 

bullet even better than I can describe it. 

A mould will also be made by Lyman for 

this Keith bullet in hollow-base type, to use 

14 grains No. 80 for long range.

I wish to stress the fact that anyone reloading with No. 80 should first and the groove diam- 

er of their barrel, and keep their bullets 

sized to not over .0035 larger than this size. 

See that bullets will slip easily through cylin-

der mouths by hand. Weigh all powder 
cartridges carefully to one-tenth grain, and 
crimp as nearly the same time each as possible. The above loads referred to all 

had bullets cramped in their proper crimping grooves. One should start in with a 

light charge of powder and carefully work up to the desired load.
THE LAST WORD
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sired power, watching primers and noting if the cases extract easily, as they should. If this is done and one uses common horse sense, he need not be afraid of No. 80 in a 6-gun. One more thing. Bullets for maximum loads should always be very hard. Though a soft bullet of 1 to 20 or 1 to 15 works beautifully with medium powder charges, and also upsets well on impact, a bullet should never be used softer than 1 to 10 or with heavy No. 80 loads.

What we really need now is an improvement in 6-gun powders; something suitable alike for small, medium and heavy loads, and that will bulk well, so that it can be loaded through the Ideal measure. It should not be sensitive to climatic changes, as is

No. 80. One should never load a maximum load of No. 80 without first testing with lighter loads, as this powder dries out from heat; hence different cans purchased from different parts of the country may vary in the一点点一点load. Bullets with such powder can be very stable, but it is more or less erosive. We could get such a powder as I have outlined above that would be no more erosive than black, then we would have the proper thing: in view of the vast strides the powder companies have made in the past few years in modern rifle powders, I do not think it is too much to hope for something better for our belt artillery.

Anyone wishing my bullet for the standard pistol powders can order the 255-grain flat-base mould, while those desiring a mould for No. 80 and long-range work, with high velocity, can specify the 255-grain hollow base. I have suggested that if possible the moulds be made with an interchangeable plug in the base, so that one can, by turning the plug, cast either the Keith 245-, 255- or 265-grain hollow-base bullet. If you have requested that this hollow be made very narrow across, thereby leaving heavy walls around the cavity, so that, when the bullet is cast hard, it will be practically impossible for the powder gases to expand it. I believe the Keith 255-grain plus 14 grains of No. 80 will develop close to, if not fully, 1,100 feet per second.

I believe, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that my new bullet is accurate and capable of performing with the very finest of holding. I should like to see just what it will do in the hands of a skilled target shot.