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LEE JURRAS AND HIS AUTO MAGS

**"The Auto Mag is designed for the true handgun aficionado. A specialist's handgun, for the handgun hunter desiring maximum performance in the field."
Lee Jurras, 1975.**

By Rick Maples

No man has created more excitement in the Auto Mag world than Lee E. Jurras has. Special order options and a limited number of each custom model being produced has resulted in some of the most desirable, collectable and rare Custom Auto Mags ever.

It all began in 1973 when Harry Sanford, President of Auto Mag Corporation, (also inventor of the Auto Mag) sent Lee Jurras, Founder and President of Super Vel Cartridge Corporation, a .44 Auto Mag with an extra .357 barrel to see if Lee could make some Auto Mag ammunition.

This was a good move for Auto Mag Corporation since Super Vel was an innovator of the first commercially available concept of high-performance, high-velocity centerfire handgun ammo. Super Vel would soon be commercially producing ammunition for the Auto Mag.

In 1974 the worldwide sales, distribution and warranty service rights to the Auto Mag pistol were assigned to

L. E. Jurras & Associates. In addition to distribution, sales and warranty, this would also include supplying of parts, accessories, special tuning and custom modifications. Lee Jurras, a noted international handgun hunter, author and pistolsmith, had hunted from Africa to Alaska and taken over 125 head of medium and large game

with a pistol. Again, a good move for Auto Mag Corporation. Harry Sanford could now better concentrate on the production of his very fine pistol.

From 1974 to 1976 between 1,100 and 1,200 standard Auto Mags were sold by Lee Jurras and Associates. These L. E. Jurras distributed Auto Mags carried the conventional T. D. E. (Trust Deeds Estates) markings plus the Lion Head logo of the Lee Jurras firm. You could order an Auto Mag in .357 AMP (Auto Mag Pistol) or .44 AMP in 6.5-inch vent rib, 8.5 or 10.5 inch non-ribbed barrels.



The Lee Jurras Custom Model 200 International. Advertised as the world's most exotic hunting handgun. This handgun was designed and built for the affluent sportsman and collector. Opposite page shows a standard Auto Mag.

LEE JURRAS AND HIS AUTO MAGS

Along with the standard Auto Mag, Mr. Jurras produced 100 custom .357 Auto Mags. These had polished and Mag-Na-Ported barrels and custom laminated wood grips made by Clint Teeters and Lee Jurras. All this came in a special carrying case. These custom Auto Mags were also marked L.E. Jurras Custom Model 100 and with a special serial number LEJ 001 through LEJ 100. All had 6.5-inch vent-ribbed barrels with serial numbers LEJ 080

through LEJ 090 inclusive having 8.5-inch non-ribbed barrels. The 6.5-inch version was Lee's second favorite Auto Mag. Lee recalls "making several memorable shots" with this Auto Mag. One was an antelope in New Mexico killed from the prone position at 217 yards and this was witnessed by a pleasantly surprised good friend George C. Nonte. Also present were Ray Speer and New Mexico Game Warden Pete Nylander.



Scoping the hills for game is Lee Jurras on the left with a Custom Model 200 and right is Indian guide Clifford Chee with a Custom Model 300. Mescalero Apache Reservation in New Mexico, circa 1976.

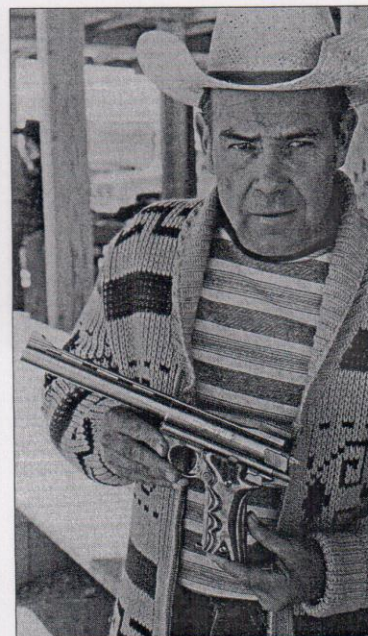
The next 100 custom model 100s to be produced were in .44 AMP. These carried the same serial numbers as the 357 AMP custom 100s but were followed by an X. These were also 6.5-inch vent-rib barrels with LEJ080X through LEJ090X inclusive having the 8.5-inch non-ribbed barrels.

Then came the .41 JMP (Jurras Magnum Pistol). These had the same serial numbers as the .357 AMP custom 100s except 100-3 was marked on the frame under the grips. There were only 35 of the 100 .41 JMPs completed; the remaining barrels were sold separately. One could have purchased all three models with matching serial

**Sold for \$2,100
the first time.
Second time \$6,500.**

numbers. An instant collectable. It has been estimated that 26 of the .41 JMPs were sold to those who already owned the matching serial numbers in .44 & .357 AMP. Again, documentation is difficult to obtain or does not exist. These special Auto Mags offered the ultimate to serious handgunners.

One could have also purchased one Auto Mag, let's say in .44AMP, then



Lee Jurras at Ft. Bliss Rod & Gun Club firing range with his one-of-a-kind Auto Mag, the .41JMP metallic Silhouette. El Paso, Texas. Circa 1977.

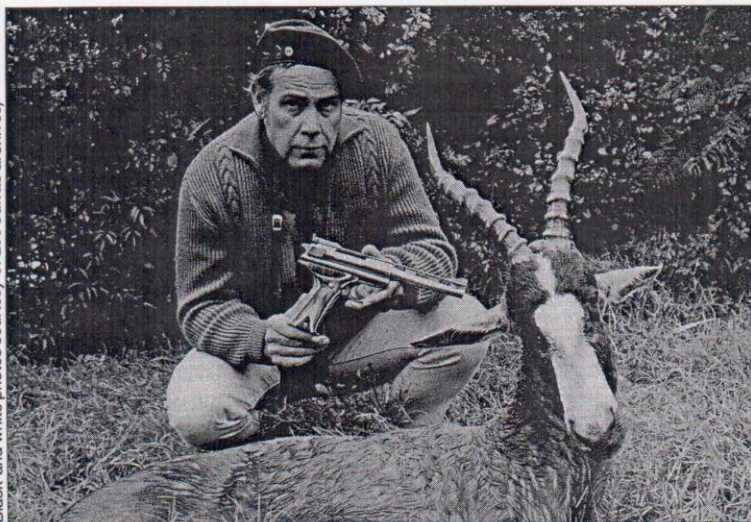
(Black-and-white photos courtesy of Lee Jurras archives)

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Lee Jurras poses with a record-class Blesbok taken at 85 yards with his Custom Model 100 .357AMP, serial number LEJ001. South Africa circa 1974.

purchase a .41JMP barrel only and a .357 AMP barrel only and have the ability to shoot all three calibers on the same frame. This was accomplished by just simply changing the barrel (which is easily done by retracting the bolt and rotating the barrel latch) and changing to the appropriate ammunition. The same magazine, bolt etc. is usable with all three calibers. This is because the .41JMP and .357AMP are simply necked .44AMPs. A concept that was ahead of its time.

In 1974 Lee Jurras organized Club de Auto Mag International. This was a club for Auto Mag aficionados. There was a monthly newsletter dealing specifically with Auto Mags. There were stories from members, classified ads, technical help, etc. This was a great newsletter with a wealth of Auto Mag information. With people on the staff like Lee Jurras—Editor & Publisher, Major George C. Nonte—Technical Editor, J.D. Jones—Field Testing, Kent Lomont—Field Testing and Harry Sanford—Technical Advisor, how could it be anything but a great newsletter? Now Auto Mag pistolero owners had a way of exchanging information and ideas. By May 1975 there were 700 club members. The L.E. Jurras' Auto Mag newsletter was first published in April 1974.

In that first issue, L.E. Jurras Custom 100s in .357 AMP was advertised for \$487.40 with 6.5-inch ribbed barrel. The 8.5-inch non-ribbed barrel version was offered for \$25 more. In that same issue it was announced that TDE was commissioned to build 100 cus-

tom 100 .44 AMPs with matching serial numbers, with a \$499.50 price for 6.5-inch ribbed barrel and \$524.50 with 8.5-inch non-ribbed barrel. Later in 1974 an issue of Club de Auto Mag

International newsletter announced the introduction of the custom 100 in .41 JMP for \$595. These custom 100s are very desired by Auto Mag collectors, but even more desirable custom Auto Mags were to come.

The first stainless steel, semi-auto magnum production pistol.

Lee remembers developing custom variations as he thought them up: "These were day-to-day thoughts and ideas from my prototype shop." Lee was a tinkerer and builder and this had to result in some very interesting and innovative Auto Mag custom variations, as indeed it did.

First was the Custom Model 200 International. Advertised as the world's most expensive and exotic hunting handgun, it had all the custom 100 features. Plus a polished barrel and frame. Trigger, hammer and bolt jeweled. Came in .357 AMP, an 8.5-inch barrel with a 6.5-inch rib, scoped and a detachable shoulder stock. There were two types of base and rings for the Custom Model 200.

LEE JURRAS AUTO MAG RETROSPECT

Caliber:	.44, .41 and .357 Auto Mag.
Construction:	Stainless Steel.
Grips:	Black Plastic & Custom Wood.
Barrel Lengths:	6.5-inch rib (most common). 8.5 & 10.5-inch non-rib.
Weight:	44 AMP—3.6 pounds with 6.5 inch rib barrel.
Magazine capacity:	7 rounds.
Manufactures and Variations:	
Auto Mag Corp. (AMC):	Known as Pasadena Model.
Trust Deed Estates (TDE):	Known as North Hollywood Model.
(First address). (TDE):	Known as El Monte Model.
(Second address). (TDE):	Variations: High Standard Model. LEE JURRAS Models.
Trust Deed Estates/Ordnance Manf. Corp. (TDE/OMC):	Known as "B" series. (Solid bolt).
Arcadia Machine & Tool (AMT):	Known as "C" series. Last company to produce the .44, .41 and .357 Auto Mag.
Model Numbers:	
AMC & TDE:	180 .44 Auto Mag & 160 .357 Auto Mag.
TDE/OMC & AMT:	Changed 180 to 280 & 160 to 260.
LEE JURRAS:	Model 100, 200, 300, 400, 500, 600 & Metallic Silhouettes.
Serial Numbers:	Pasadena A0001 - A3300. North Hollywood A3400 - A05015. El Monte A05016 - A08300. High Standard 132 Auto Mags marked with "H" in serial number. LEE JURRAS LEJ001 - LEJ100 (.357 AMP). LEJ1X - LEJ100X (.44 AMP). LEL001 - LEJ100 (.41JMP) Also marked 100-3 on frame. Only 35 .41JMPs were completely assembled. Various Custom Models either marked with standard TDE serial number or Custom serial number. Example: LEJ01. B series B00001 - B00370. C series 50 marked with "C" serial number prefix. 50 marked Last 1—Last 50.
Dates of manufacture:	1971 to 1982.
Total built:	Less than 9,000.
Inventor:	Harry Sanford.

LEE JURRAS AND HIS AUTO MAGS



Lee Jurras sights in his Custom Model 200 International prior to a deer hunt at the Mescalero Apache Reservation in New Mexico. Circa 1976.



Lee Jurras's work bench with final assembly and inspection of a Custom Model 200 International before shipment to a fortunate customer. Note Auto Mag frame on bench to left of carrying case ready for next assembly. Lee Jurras custom shop, Hagerman, New Mexico. Circa 1976.

Kent Lomont made the first generation and Jim Herringshaw made the second. The scope was a Leupold M8-2X. This scope seemed to hold up the best under the recoil of the Auto Mag. The International was not only a beautiful work of art but very practical. This was Lee's favorite Auto Mag. Lee took "quite a few head of game" with the International (serial number LEJ01). Numerous smaller game and varmints were also taken with this gun. Lee recalls, "It had great accuracy. On jackrabbits it just made a red mist." In the 1975 Lee Jurras/Auto Mag brochure, the price was listed at \$3,250 plus \$200 Federal Transfer Stamp required for having a shoulder stock. There were 12 of the custom 200 Internationals built.

Documentation is difficult to obtain on Lee Jurras custom Auto Mags, (which only adds to their already existing mystique). Original photographs are equally rare and very desirable. Lee stated, "never thought the Auto

Who would believe an antelope taken at 217 yards with a 6.5-inch .357 Auto Mag Pistol? The three who witnessed it.

Mag would get to the interest level and historical value it has."

The Custom Model 300 Alaskan followed. This model was a .44 AMP with a detachable shoulder stock and sling but with a 12.5-inch non-ribbed barrel and no scope. The original shoulder stocks were of the aluminum tubular type (for both the Models 200 and 300). The shoulder stock was designed to be used as a steadying device and during development the Alaskan was fired 200-300 times with no problems. However, during the Mescalero hunt, Lee's friend Dean Grennell fired the Alaskan (serial number LEJ-01) several times like a rifle, letting the stock absorb the recoil (shooting a special load 265-grain bullet at 2,000 feet per second is a lot of recoil to absorb). The tubular stock developed a slight bend from the free recoil and would not allow the butt plate portion to retract into the main tube. Consequently, Lee developed the solid stainless steel shoulder stock with the lightening

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The hard-hitting, bone-busting, beautiful Lee Jurras Custom Model 300 Alaskan .44 Auto Mag. With its 12.5-inch barrel the Alaskan could drive a special loaded 265-grain jacketed bullet 2,000 feet per second.

cuts. There was a total of two of the tubular shoulder stocks and eight to 10 of the lightening cut stocks produced for both the Models 200 and 300 (some were produced and sold without the stock.) The Alaskan was listed in the same brochure mentioned earlier for \$945. Only nine of the Alaskans were made.

The Backpacker was designated as the Custom Model 400. This little beauty had a 4.5-inch ribbed barrel and came in .357 and .44 AMP. A ¾-inch section was removed from the frame for a shorter grip. The clip was also modified to fit the new grip, which resulted in reduced magazine capacity from seven rounds to five. Perfect for backpacking where dangerous game may be present. Only five of these beauties were made. Also in the same aforementioned brochure the Backpacker was priced at \$785. In a latter brochure the Backpacker was listed for \$1,175.

The International, Alaskan and Backpacker are indeed rare Auto Mags, but Auto Mags that are even more rare were on the horizon.

The Grizzly Model 500 was a beautiful Auto Mag. There were four of the 8.5 and 11.0-inch non-ribbed polished 44 AMP bull-barreled Grizzlies made. A total of only five Grizzlies produced. Scoped, second-generation mount and wearing bone macarta or laminated wood grips. Original advertised price was \$1,295.

Condor Model 600 was another

beautiful Auto Mag. Having a 14.5-inch octagonal or 16.5-inch round non-ribbed, polished .44 AMP barrel with a regular or gold-anodized scope riding

on top. You could have a choice of macarta or custom-wood grips. Quite impressive and only one of each made. Both originally priced for \$1,475.

A .41 JMP Metallic Silhouette was Lee's third favorite Auto Mag. With the

"It had great accuracy. On jackrabbits it just made a red mist."

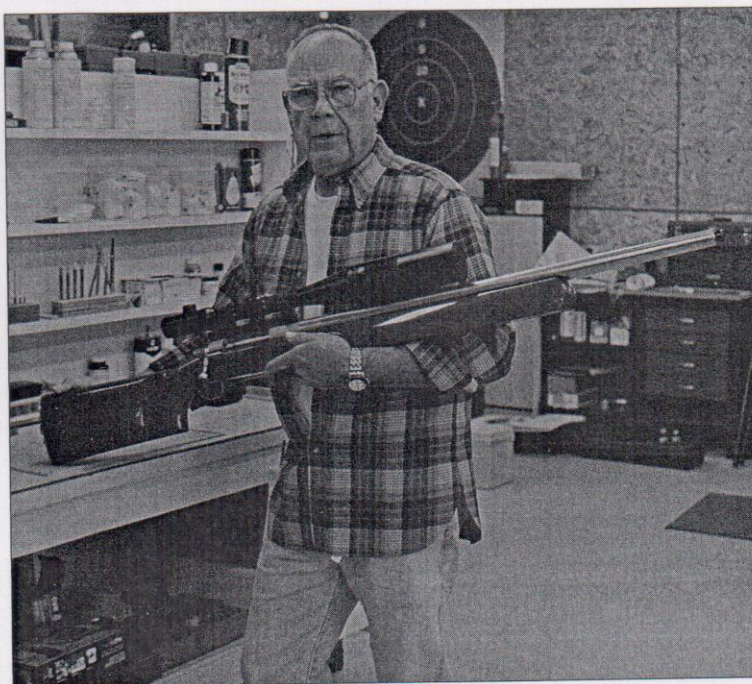
8.5-inch ventilated bull barrel, custom laminated wood grips it was a real tack driver. This was the only one of these built. Sold for \$2,100 the first time. Second-time buyer paid \$6,500. Since then it has been resting in an exquisite collection in the company of other equally fine and rare Auto Mags.

A .357 Metallic Silhouette was also a one of a kind. This one had an 8.5-inch .357AMP vent-rib barrel and custom dark chocolate macarta grips. If that was not unique enough, it also had a rear peep sight!

AUTO MAG BALLISTICS

Caliber	Muzzle Velocity	Muzzle Energy
.357 AMP w/137 gr.-JSP	1,875 f.p.s.	1,050 ft/lb
.41 AMP w/170 gr.-JHP	1,850 f.p.s.	1,295 ft/lb
.44 AMP w/180 gr.-JHP	1,800 f.p.s.	1,295 ft/lb

Data from L.E. Jurras Auto Mag brochure 1975.



Today Lee Jurras concentrates on custom rifle work. He's shown here with his latest creation, a .338/378 1,000-yard target rifle. Photo by author.

LEE JURRAS AND HIS AUTO MAGS

Another one-of-a-kind custom Auto Mag was a .41JMP with a 10.5-inch barrel and bone macarta grips and marked, Lee Jurras, Custom, Hagerman, N.M. original price, \$995.

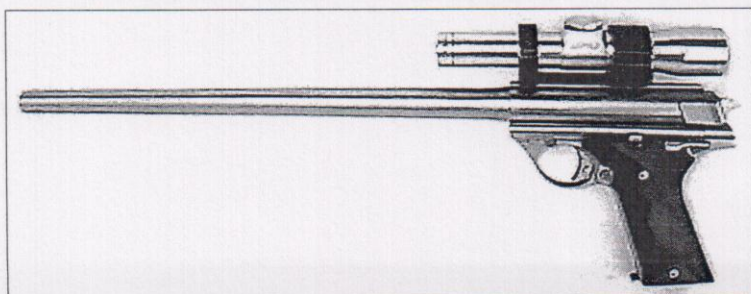
Probably the main reason for such small quantities of these custom Auto Mags (there were less than 9,000 total Auto Mags produced) was the price. As you can see from the prices mentioned earlier in this article, that was a lot of money in the '70s. But one must understand the Auto Mag was not only the first production all stainless steel pistol but was the first production all stainless steel, semi-auto, magnum pistol! Lee Jurras Auto Mags are now worth much, much more than their original price. If you are every lucky enough to see one of these Custom Auto Mags in person, you will be able to instantly see what Lee Jurras means when he says "there was more labor of love put in these Custom Auto Mags than what they sold for."

With the options that were available and the ability to custom order barrels in various lengths and caliber combinations, polishing of barrels and/or frames, Mag-Na-Porting, grips in macarta, domestic or exotic laminated wood, scoped, shoulder stocks, custom



"Club de Auto Mag International" patch that said you belonged to The Auto Mag club.

tuning and modifications, has made for a great variety of Lee Jurras Custom Auto Mags. Some of these being one of a kind, resulting in a great challenge for the collector. Also for the collector are various accessories and publications. There were also clip pouches; hip and shoulder holsters (made by Safariland) all marked with the lion head logo of the Lee Jurras firm. Four Lee Jurras Auto Mag brochures were published during



The one-of-a-kind 16.5-inch-barreled Custom Model 600 Condor is a beautiful example of a Lee Jurras Custom Auto Mag.



Auto Mag .357 AMP and .44 AMP was ammo distributed by Lee Jurras and associates.

this time. Auto Mag factory owner's manual. The Auto Mag Club offered jackets, patches, lighters and pens to its members, all with the Auto Mag club emblem, Auto Mag or Lee Jurras logos. Also, Auto Mag ammo loaded by Super Vel and packed in Super Vel marked boxes. These are all rare items and very difficult to find, but when you do find them and are able to purchase or trade for them, it is very exciting. The Auto Mag Club newsletter has great historical value; it's probably the best way to learn about Auto Mags during this time period. About 15 issues were published.

What is Lee Jurras doing these days? Lee and his lovely wife live in the Midwest, and Lee continues to be involved with guns, mostly custom building and blueprinting long-range rifles.

Although the chances of owning one of these rare and beautiful Lee Jurras Custom Auto Mags is about as rare as the guns themselves, it is still enjoyable to be awed by pictures of these magnificent firearms, read about their history and dream of someday maybe owning one. If Auto Mag production had continued, one wonders what other ideas for the Custom Auto Mag would have come from the mind of Lee E. Jurras? ☆

If you would like to comment about this article or correspond with the author about Auto Mags, he can be reached at automag45@hotmail.com.