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GUNS & AMMO

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THE AUTO MAG STORY

.22 ACCURACY--A
QUESTION OF PRICE?

HUNTING BONUS:
COUGAR!

SHOTGUNS
OO vs O

FIELD
TESTS:

BROWNING
CITORI

RUGER
SPEED SIX

VIRGINIAN
SINGLE ACTION

BUDISCHOWSKY
.25 AUTO

"YOUR POLICE"

THIS MONTH

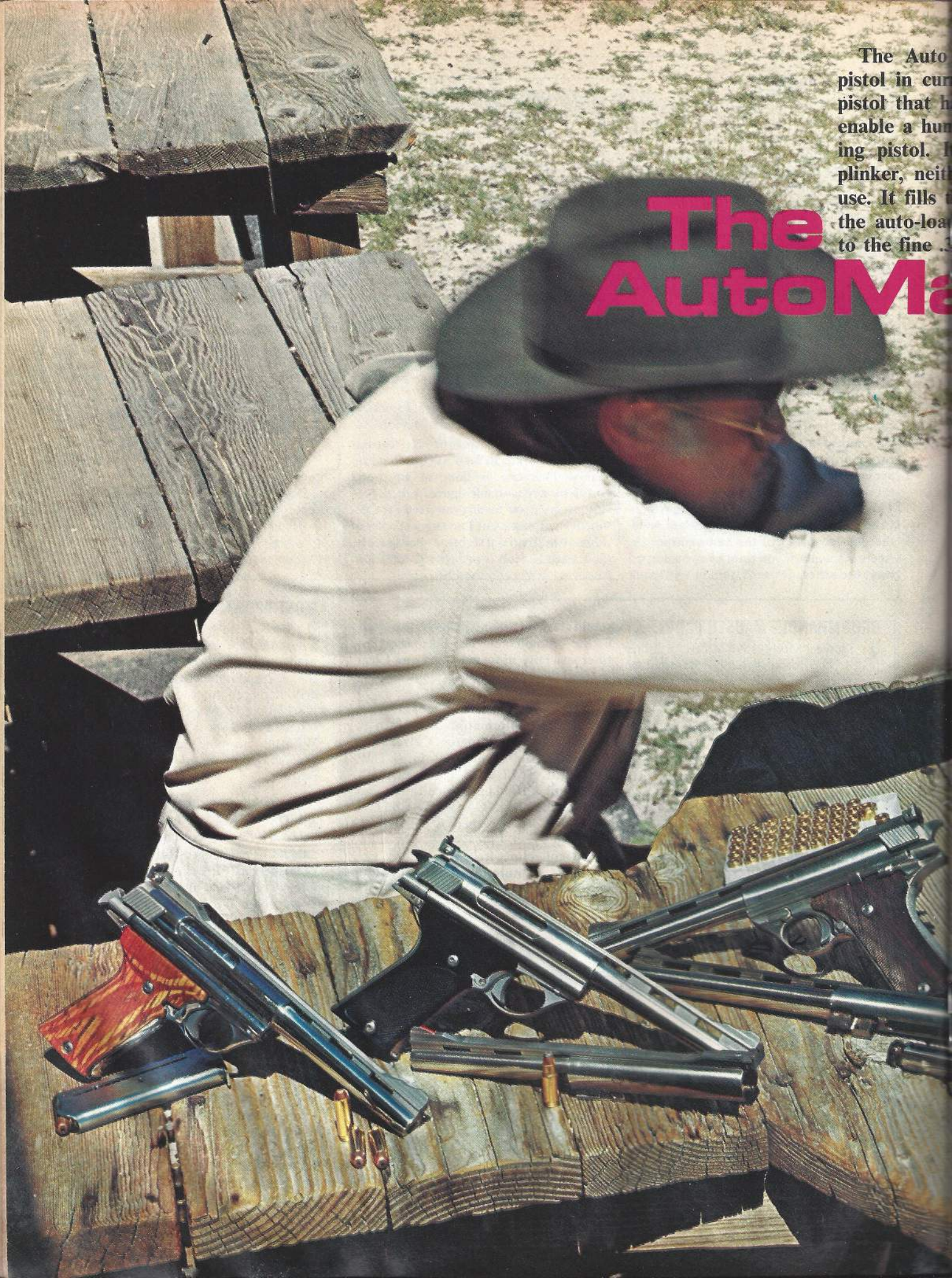
U.S.
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HIGH STANDARD AUTO MAG
44 AMP MODEL 180
EL MONTE, CALIF.
PAT. PENDING

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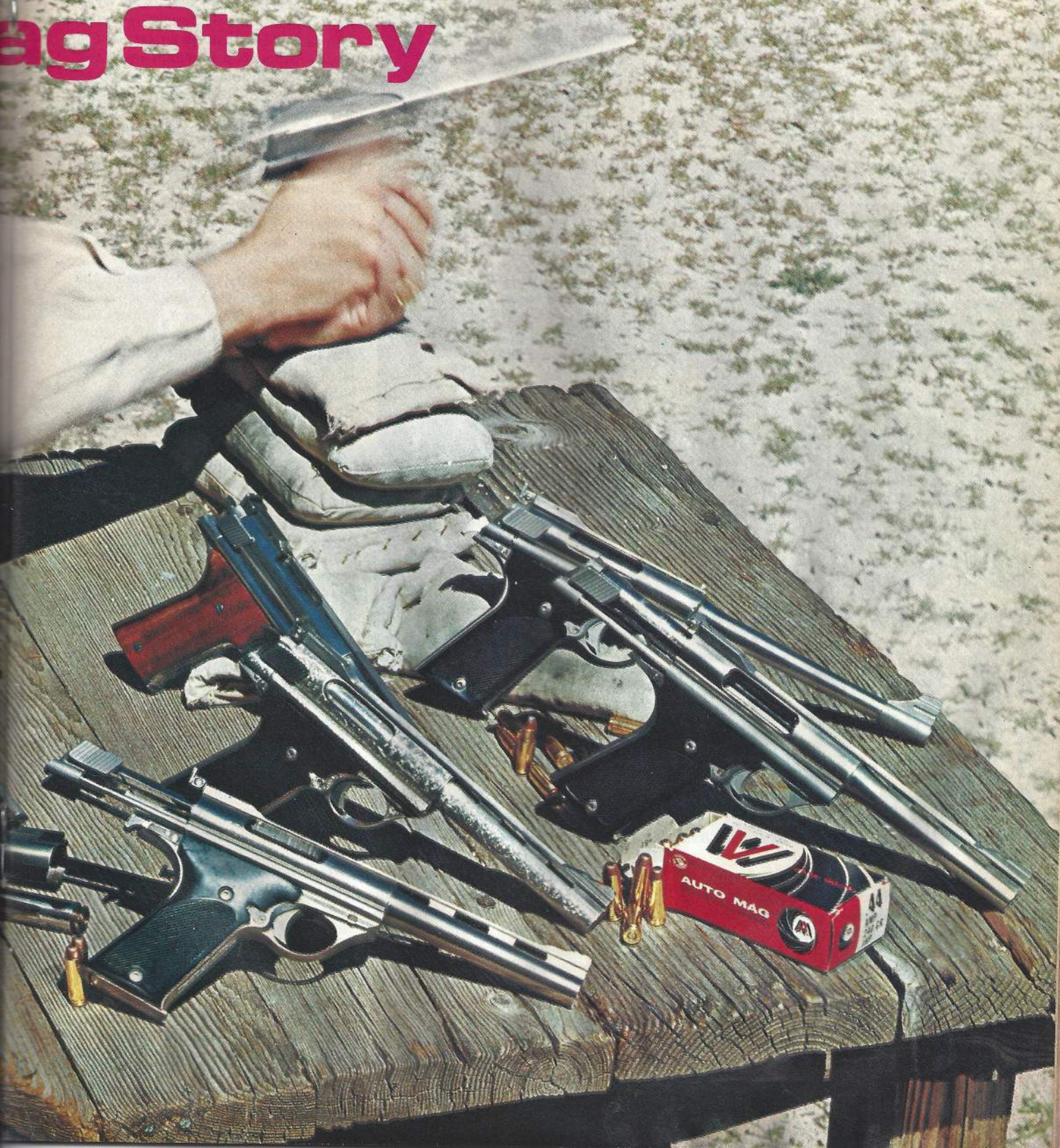
The AutoMa



o Mag is the most powerful auto-loading
urrent production. It is a highly specialized
has been designed for a single purpose; to
nter to take large game with an auto-load-
It is not for the target shooter nor the
ther was it designed for military or police
the gap in handgun production by offering
ing fan a pistol giving comparable power
357 and .44 Magnum revolvers.

Historically speaking the Auto Mag spans just a few brief, and at times stormy years. The first production Auto Mag was delivered in October of 1970. The credit for the initial concept for this powerful auto-loader belongs to Harry Sanford, formerly a Pasadena, California gun store owner. Harry would be the first to admit that while his design is new, the idea for a Magnum auto-loader is far from new.

Mag Story





All .357 and .44 Auto Mag barrels (except for original hand fitted prototypes) are interchangeable for any frame, bolt and magazine assembly. This pistol is shown with the .44 barrel installed and the .357 barrel above. The bottleneck shape of the .357 Auto Mag cartridge, shown above the straight-sided .44, provides for more reliable feeding.

Allen wrench is used to disassemble the Auto Mag. This is a modern approach that does away with bugged up screw heads and scratches made when an ill fitting screwdriver slips.



A comparison of (left-right) standard .44 Magnum, .44 Auto Mag, .357 Auto Mag and standard .357 Magnum cartridges. The Auto Mag cases are essentially trimmed and sized .308 rifle brass. While the two .44s perform about the same, the .357 Auto Mag has a much higher velocity than its rimmed counterpart.

Back in 1895 the Gabbet-Fairfax, better known as the Mars pistol, was first produced. It was chambered for a number of proprietary Magnum cartridges ranging in caliber from .360 to .472. Production ceased about 1903, and both the ammunition and the pistols are rare collectors items.

The Auto Mag is probably unique in modern gunmaking annals. Working with an idea, but without the vast technical and financial resources of a modern arms company, the Auto Mag took form

as a hand made creation milled and filed from a chunk of steel. Initially designed with double action capabilities this prototype was dropped before reaching an operational shooting level. However, much had been learned and the work continued on. Finally, after years of time, sweat and money, Harry Sanford had a shooting prototype of the .44 Auto Mag. He also had no more financial resources. In order to obtain finances necessary for the final engineering required for production tooling Sanford found it

necessary to sell out the controlling interest in the Auto Mag Corp.

Quite a few .44 Auto Mag pistols were made at the Pasadena Auto Mag Corp. before the axe fell. Although a viable product was being manufactured the costs of getting it into production had just been too great; the Pasadena Auto Mag Corp. went into bankruptcy. Chapter One of the Auto Mag story ended on a disastrous note.

The patents and the physical parts and machinery of the defunct Pasadena Auto Mag Corporation were bought up by the Thomas Oil Company who set up the T.D.E. Corporation to manufacture the radical new pistol. A new plant was opened in North Hollywood, California to manufacture the Auto Mag. Harry Sanford was hired by the new owners to oversee the building of the pistol that he had had the foresight to envision and put into production. Soon the new plant proved too small to accommodate the continuing orders and the Auto Mag plant was moved to its present location in El Monte, California.

Now bearing its third designation the T.D.E. El Monte Auto Mag began to interest others in the firearms industry. Although only experimental .357 Auto Mag pistols had been built by the original Pasadena Corporation, the T.D.E. Auto Mags built in both North Hollywood and El Monte were offered in this caliber as well as the original .44 Auto Mag.

Lee Jurras, of Super Vel fame, and an ardent hunting handgunner, became enthused with the product. After downing an antelope at 217 yards with the .357 Auto Mag he lent his prestige to the new pistol by ordering 100 Lee Jurras Special Auto Mag pistols bearing special serial numbers and fitted with Jurras designed grips. The initial response was so favorable that Jurras is now offering matched .44 Auto Mags, again in the special number range, but with an X designation signifying the .44 caliber. It is possible for the favored few to own a pair of Lee Jurras Special Auto Mag pistols in .357 and .44 Magnum with matched serial numbers.

As well as the limited edition Super Vel will offer regular production Auto Mags. By the time this issue of GUNS & AMMO hits the newsstands it is quite possible that all of the Lee Jurras Special Auto Mags will have been sold and only regular Auto Mags will be available.

At this writing most of the Auto Mags coming off the assembly line at El Monte bear a new name; High Standard! Don Mitchell, Vice President of High Standard, unveiled the High Standard Auto Mag at the recent NRA Convention in Atlanta. Don Mitchell has also redesigned the grips for a more comfortable hold, but as the grips are not yet in production I suspect that the first High Standard Auto Mags will come through

with the regular T.D.E. grips. In view of the initial order that High Standard has placed with the T.D.E. Corporation it would seem that, at least for the immediate future, most of the production of the Auto Mag will be controlled by High Standard. I may have gone out on a limb with that last statement, but one thing is sure, the Auto Mag is certainly receiving a lot of top level consideration.

Despite the brief time that the Auto Mag has been manufactured it offers a fertile field for the collector. The original Pasadena Auto Mag was offered in .44 caliber only, and with standard 6½ inch barrel length. Some of these pistols were specially serial numbered bearing the owner's initials followed by the number, others had the letter 'A' followed by the number. Then we have the North Hollywood and El Monte Auto Mags in both .44 and .357. The .44's are all fitted with 6½ inch barrels but the .357 comes in either 6½ inch or 8½ inch with the latter having an un-ribbed barrel. Finally there are the Jurras and High Standard .357 and .44 models, again having variations in grips and barrel lengths. All in all the Auto Mag collector would be hard pressed to put together a complete collection of these pistols even though they have been out for such a brief time.

Putting history aside, most advanced handgunners will want to know just how the Auto Mag behaves. Weighing in at 57 ounces for the .44 and 54 ounces for the .357, both with 6½ inch barrels, the pistol is obviously not in the hide out class. It is big and bulky as a pistol, but viewed as a replacement for a rifle it comes into its own. Either packed in a shoulder holster or riding on a belt rig it leaves the hunter with both hands free to negotiate rough terrain. As a hunting gun the Auto Mag obviously demands a great deal from the shooter. While the Auto Mag churns up some really exciting pistol velocities and energy all this power is valueless if you can't hit what you're aiming at. Shooting game with a pistol requires that the shooter find out just how far he can accurately shoot, and then limit his shooting within his accurate range.

For those who demand the ultimate in a big bore auto loader the .44 Auto Mag is in a class by itself. Generally speaking it will shoot bullets of comparable weight to a revolver, but gain about 100 feet per second over the revolver. The .357 Auto Mag is a horse of another color. It is possible to boost velocities some 500 fps over what can be obtained in a revolver! This dramatic increase really puts the .357 Auto Mag into top contention for a hunting pistol. The 137-grain Super Vel bullet can be blasted out at 1940 fps with a breech pressure of 48,000 psi giving, for a pistol, almost a string taut trajectory. In the hands of a trained pistolero the .357 Auto Mag extends the range that one could normally

expect to connect with a game animal.

Kudos aside the prospective owner of a Auto Mag should carefully examine what he wants in a pistol before buying the Auto Mag. The Auto Mag can be likened to a finely tuned race car, you wouldn't buy a race car to go to the market in, and you shouldn't purchase the Auto Mag unless you are serious about working with a pistol that must be kept in tip top shape. To carry the race car analogy one step further you might visualize the lead footed driver who puts his

foot in the carburetor and doesn't finish a 500 mile race. If you stuff the Auto Mag with the hottest loads you can cook up and then just blast away you are going to end up with something wearing out, and soon! Since the Auto Mag operates at 45,000 to 50,000 psi with normal loads it takes enough of a beating without pushing matters.

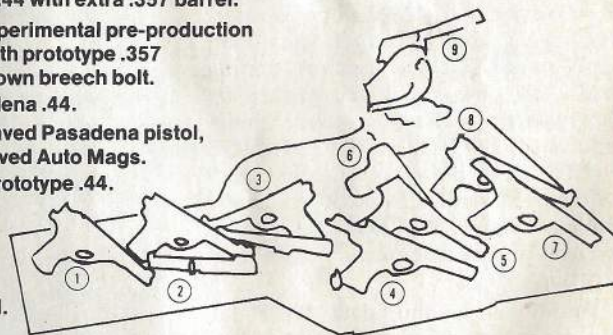
This train of thought naturally leads to the question of reliability. Here the Auto Mag can be touchy. For one thing it MUST be loaded to relatively hot loads



Allen wrench is all that is needed to completely field strip the pistol. To insure proper functioning the pistol must be stripped down, thoroughly cleaned and lubricated before using. Handloaders should use clean burning powder and stay away from such powders as 2 0 which will quickly foul the gun.

Some shooters complain that the Auto Mag's recoil is too severe. Here the author's nine-year-old son is shown with the .44 Auto Mag in full recoil. If the shooter finds it necessary, Mag-Na-Porting will reduce recoil nearly 40 percent.

1. Lee Jurras Custom Series
2. North Hollywood .44 with extra .357 barrel.
3. One of the first experimental pre-production Pasadena pistols with prototype .357 barrel fitted with its own breech bolt.
4. Production Pasadena .44.
5. Serial #001 engraved Pasadena pistol, one of the few engraved Auto Mags.
6. The hand made prototype .44.
7. El Monte .357.
8. 8½-inch barrel .357.
9. High Standard .44 shown in recoil.



in the 45,000 to 50,000 psi category or it will not function. The recoil of the Auto Mag is pretty stiff and as the pistol recoils it tends to drive the cartridges in the magazine downward and the bolt could go into battery before the top cartridge can rise into place to be caught by the bolt on its forward travel. To counter this the magazine springs on the Auto Mag clips are extra heavy and the inside of the magazine should be kept lightly lubricated to insure free movement of the follower and spring.

One modification that is highly recommended is to have the barrel Mag-Na-Ported. This can cut recoil by as much as 40% while losing a negligible 15 to 20 fps in muzzle velocity. Cutting down on the recoil improves the feeding from the magazine and also makes shooting far more pleasant. Honing the bolt cam surfaces and the recoil rod chambers will also greatly improve functioning. Lastly the pistol should be properly lubricated as per the owner's manual and 50 to 100 rounds should be fired through it to break it in.

The Auto Mag, as with any self loading pistol, is dependent on perfect ammunition. Up to the present time the only factory ammunition was the .44 Auto Mag cartridges made by CDM in Mexico. By the time this article appears both .44 and .357 Auto Mag ammunition will be available from Super Vel. As most Auto Mag pistols will probably be sold to people who are advanced shooters and reloaders the appended lists of handloads should prove to be helpful in working up a load. G&A is indebted to Mr. Kent A. Lomont of Lomont Precision Bullets, 4421 South Wayne Ave., Fort Wayne, Ind. 46807, for this information. Mr. Lomont cautions maximum loads must NOT be used as starting loads. All loads should be worked up slowly starting well below any maximum load listed. DO NOT INTERCHANGE CASES! CDM brass has a greater capacity than brass made from .308 or .30-06 and loads safe in the CDM cases may be too heavy in the cases formed from military brass.

Additional loading data for H-110 powder accompanies the factory owner's manual, APPROACH IT WITH CAUTION. Mr. Lomont has isolated three different burning rates. There is no way that the handloader can identify these different lots so care must be used in loading H-110. To produce the same pressure these different lots require a charge of 22, 25, and 27-grains. It will be left to the reader to imagine what would happen if the handloader used 27-grains of a lot of powder that only required 22-grains to reach maximum pressures.

As a final note, those wishing to dress up their Auto Mags with the laminated grips issued with the Jurras Special Auto Mags can order them from Mr. Lomont at \$35 list price.

LOADS FOR THE .44 AUTO MAG

All loads in once fired CDM .44 Auto Mag cases, once fired and trimmed to 1.296 cal. CCI Magnum Pistol Primers and over all length of load 1.600.

POWDER TYPE	POWDER CHARGE	BULLET	VELOCITY FPS	COMMENTS
W/W 296	26	180-grain Super Vel	1385	Good functioning load not max. but ran out of powder room. The velocity of this load with Mag-Na-Port 1677.
	27		1465	
	28		1483	
	29		1558	
	30		1597	
	31		1643	
	32		1688	
WC295	33	180-grain Super Vel	1724	Not max but no more room for powder. Good load
	30		1637	
	31		1691	
	32		1737	
	33		1788	
2400	27	180-grain Super Vel	1537	Not maximum, could probably reach 1800 with around 30.5 grains.
	28		1643	
	29		1709	
W/W 296	28	200-grain Speer	1494	200-grain. Hornady 1481 Mag-Na-Port 1568 Good working load Maximum
	30		1614	
	31		1653	
	32		1704	
W/W 296	22	240-grain Sierra HC	1284	240 Remington 1423; 240 Speer 1395; 240 Norma 1411; Good working load
	23		1311	
	24		1372	
	25		1442	
	26		1490	
2400	27	240-grain Sierra HC	1534	Maximum Powder too dirty fouls gun too fast.
	28		1538	
	29		1595	
	21		1170	
	20		1167	
	21		1247	
	22		1307	
W/W 296	23	265 Hornady	1352	Good working load Good working load Maximum Mag-Na-Port 1456
	24		1400	
	25		1459	
	26		1502	

All vel taken from 6 1/2 inch barrel. No responsibility assumed for any of the loads listed. Start well below any maximum listed.

Mag-Na-Port greatly reduces the recoil of the Auto Mag. It also increases the life of the gun. It is almost mandatory that it be used for best functioning.

LOADS FOR THE .357 AUTO MAG

All loads used CCI large pistol magnum primers, with cases trimmed to 1.296 and reamed neck wall of .015.

POWDER TYPE	POWDER CHARGE	OVER ALL LENGTH	CASE & BULLET	VELOCITY FPS	COMMENTS
W/W 296	24.5	1.575	110-grain Zero Lake City .308 fire formed & trimmed	1925	Good working load
	26.0			1975	
	27			2080	
	28			2100	
	29			2230	
	30			2295	
W/W 296	24.5	1.585	110-grain Zero CDM Auto Mag fire formed & trimmed	1880	Maximum Notice lower velocity with the slightly greater capacity CDM Cases.
	26			1960	
	27			1990	
W/W 296	24	1.585	125-grain Zero Lake City .308 fired formed trimmed	1825	(Vel. 1871 in CDM Case) Good working load Max
	25			1900	
	26			1993	
	27			2084	
W/W 296	21	1.575	150 Sierra HC	1653	Good working load Maximum
	22			1749	
	23			1840	
W/W 296	22	1.585	158 Remington	1670	22.5 grain good working load Max.
	23			1835	

NOTE: All vel. taken from 6 1/2 bbl. add approximately 150 fps for 8 1/2 inch barrel. Mag-Na-Porting the 6 1/2 barrel greatly reduces recoil and usually results in the loss of 15-20 fps in velocity which is negligible.

Other loads which will work most 6 1/2 and 8 1/2 guns are the following:

W/W 630	27	1.560	80-grain Super Vel Lake City .308	Good load
W/W 630	25.5	1.560	90-grain Super Vel	Good load
W/W 296	31.0	1.600	105-grain Super Vel	Good load