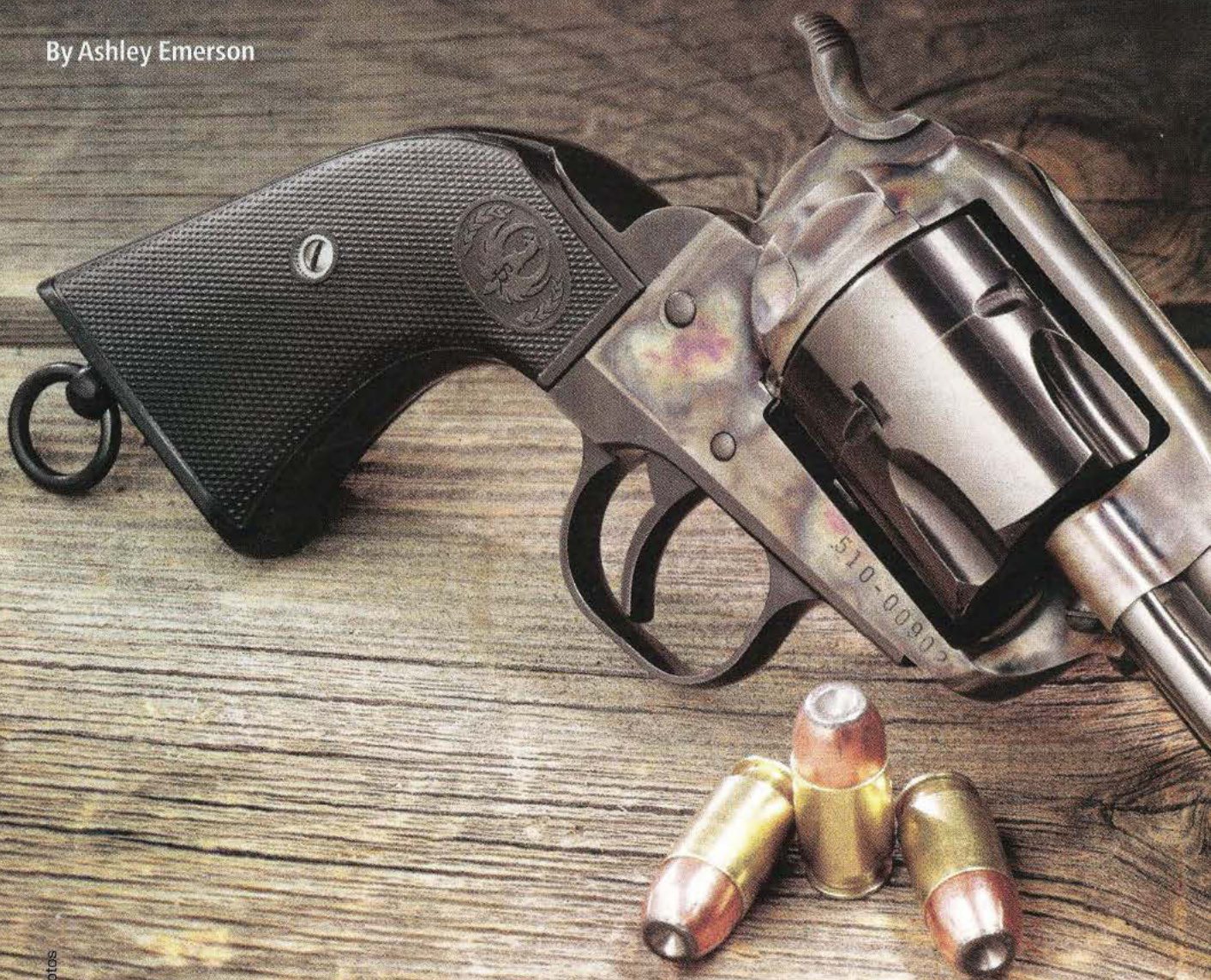



MEDIUMS... WELL-DONE

Ruger's resurrected medium-frame single-action platform is the perfect "raw material" for customization.

By Ashley Emerson





A couple of years ago I read *The Custom Revolver* by Hamilton Bowen. In the second chapter, titled “Raw Material,” Bowen covers the three frame sizes of Ruger single actions, explaining that the medium frame that had been produced in .357 Magnum in what is now known as the Old Model was not carried over in the New Model back in 1973.

Not having been particularly wound up about smallbores and non-magnums in my misspent youth, I’d never had a medium-frame Ruger. However, once I’d been enlightened by Bowen’s book, the Old Model .357 shot to the top of my “must have, cool old gun” list—not that I needed another .357 but because I wanted the frame for a future custom project.

My best friend gave me a really nice Old Model .357, but before I could make up my mind about what to do with it, Ruger announced the return of the New Flat Top. That gun has been covered everywhere, so rather than rehash what the New Model Flat Top is, I want to discuss what it can be. In short, it represents the most important development in custom-revolver raw material since the Vaquero.

I am sure every custom revolversmith out there has been tinkering with the new medium frame, and one day I was talking with Bowen about other matters when the subject came up. It was apparent that he was fired up about the new gun and its possibilities, and since he was coming out to Texas, it would be a good opportunity to see some examples of what he’d done and burn some powder.

The five guns Bowen brought to Texas covered the spectrum of medium-frame possibilities pretty well. There were two on the Old Model platform and three on the New.

Old Model .44 Special

First up to bat was a classic conversion that had started life as an Old Model .357, which Bowen had converted to .44 Special (like the Skeeter Skelton guns back in the 1960s). It’s a pretty basic conversion. Bowen rechambered the factory cylinder and rebarreled it with a Super Blackhawk barrel cut to 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches, then fitted it with one of his custom front sights. It also features a BCA target-style rear, an action/trigger job, oversize locking base pin and a

black-powder cylinder chamfer. Although it’s nothing fancy or exotic and sports a factory-type blue, Bowen says it’s one of his most popular conversions.

And it flat *shoots*. Bart Skelton helped us beat a swinging steel plate into submission with it using a Buffalo Bore .44 Special load featuring a 255-grain Keith bullet at about 1,000 fps (www.buffalobore.com). The next morning I used the same combo to shoot a doe at around 40 paces, and the .44 Keith bullet worked as advertised. The deer, shot through the lungs, ran 50 yards and fell over dead, just like Skeeter (or Elmer) would’ve told you would happen.

Old Model .32-20

The second Old Model gun was in .32-20. This is Bowen’s favorite item for general-purpose blasting. By necessity it’s got a custom cylinder and barrel, and since the gun had the factory-installed safety kit in it, that’s how it stayed. I can attest to the fact that the Ruger safety kit did not keep Bowen from bringing off a great trigger job. This gun also has the smaller XR3 Flat Top grip frame and grips.

FINAL NOTICE
of
PRODUCT RECALL
VEKTOR CP1 AND CP1N

If you own a Vektor CP1 or CP1N Pistol
Please read this notice

WARNING

If you possess a Vektor CP1 or CP1N, Please do not attempt to load or use the firearm. Do not attempt to repair the pistol. Do not have it repaired by your local dealer or gunsmith.

PRODUCT RECALL

It has come to our attention that a small percentage of the Vektor CP1 and CP1n pistols may accidentally fire when the loaded gun is dropped or bumped. If this occurs, it might cause injury of death to the shooter or bystander. This recall is an effort to demonstrate Vektor's commitment to product safety and quality. Vektor will purchase the CP1 or CP1N from each owner.

WHAT TO DO NEXT

Vektor has established a special project office to handle the recall of the CP1 and CP1N pistols. As an owner, you will need to register for the recall program.

Owners will receive a reimbursement check in the amount of \$300.00 for their participation.

In order to participate in this program, you must return your CP1 or CP1 N pistol to our special project office by August 23, 2006.



To Register please contact our Special Project Office

On Line Registration:
www.regcen.com/vektor

Or call Toll-Free 1-877-831-8313



Both ends of the power spectrum: Bowen's Old Model Blackhawk (top) is in .32-20 and is an ideal jackrabbit blaster. The stainless New Vaquero conversion handles the .44 Magnum—thanks to the installation of a five-shot cylinder.

Most of the guys who have .32-20s built shoot 100- or 120-grain bullets at warp speed. Myself, I don't care for a .357-like *whack* from a popgun (it annoys me like a screaming child) and prefer more sedate loads. Either way, this is about the coolest gentleman's jackrabbit blaster you could have.

New Vaquero .44 Magnum

The third gun is built on the New Vaquero frame and answers the No. 1 question I and many others have asked about the new medium-frame Rugers. It's a five-shot .44 Magnum. How can

that be? Simple: Bowen's New Model medium-frame guns all have custom five-shot cylinders that are the same diameter as those on the six-shot factory big-frame guns.

Yes, you heard right, friends. The outside diameter on a Bowen five-shot cylinder for the new medium-frame guns is the same as the outside diameter on the factory six-shot large-frame guns. Additionally, because the new medium-frame gun has a chamber circle centerline .040 inch smaller in diameter than the large-frame gun, you get an additional .20 thickness from the chamber wall to



Bowen's customized New Model .45 Colt Blackhawk features his Flat Top Rough Country rear sight and a Weigand DX interchangeable front.

the outside of the cylinder.

Of course, going to the five-shot cylinder adds meat between the chambers and places the bolt-stop notches more advantageously for strength. These cylinders are slightly shorter than the large-frame cylinder, and while they were long enough for any 300-grain load I had, the Garrett 310-grain Hammerhead was a hair too long.

All three of Bowen's New Model medium-frame guns are line bored and have black-powder chamfers and oversize locking base pins, plus all the tuning and frame modifications that go with a Bowen full-on custom large-frame Ruger.

New Model .45 Colt

The second of the New Model guns is in .45 Colt. I picked this one first to do some hunting with because it had Bowen's new Flat Top Rough Country rear sight and a Weigand DX interchangeable front. The rear had a narrow white outline and the front a bright white vertical stripe.

This is my favorite arrangement for a hunting handgun. If you add an additional cylinder in .45 ACP/Auto Rim and another front-sight blade regulated for ACP ball, you might have the ultimate all-around custom blaster (it's only money).

I loved this gun and took it hunting using Grizzly .45 Colt Plus-P 300-grain LFNGC ammo at 1,250 fps (www.grizzlycartridge.com). The first time out, a doe volunteered for testing at about 45 yards. In and out, through the lungs, 50 yards, dead deer—no drama, just solid performance.

Shortly afterward some wild turkeys showed up. One came within 50 feet, and I couldn't resist since I was sitting on a couple of turkey tags. I took the high back shot because that's where you shoot through with a cast bullet if the gobbler won't hold its neck still. I rolled that one and took the other as well. A deer and two turkeys with three shots will make you appreciate great sights, a great trigger and great ammo.

Medium but Cool .50

The last of the new guns is the showstopper of the bunch. It is a lightweight conversion of the New Vaquero done in .50 GI and is the gun featured in the article's lead photograph. If you aren't familiar with this cartridge, it was brought out in a modified 1911 pistol and will toss a 300-grain bullet out at 700 to 800 fps. I believe the handloads Bowen had were handcast 320-grainers at 750 fps. The gun/load combo proved unbelievably accurate, not to mention fun to shoot. Details included Doug Turnbull case-col-

Everything you need to reload your own ammunition

LEE PRECISION, INC. DEPT. 306 4275 HIGHWAY U HARTFORD WI 53027

Send \$1.00 today for a 32-page catalog, or see the products in action at www.leeprecision.com

LEE

LEE PRECISION, INC. DEPT. 306 4275 HIGHWAY U HARTFORD WI 53027

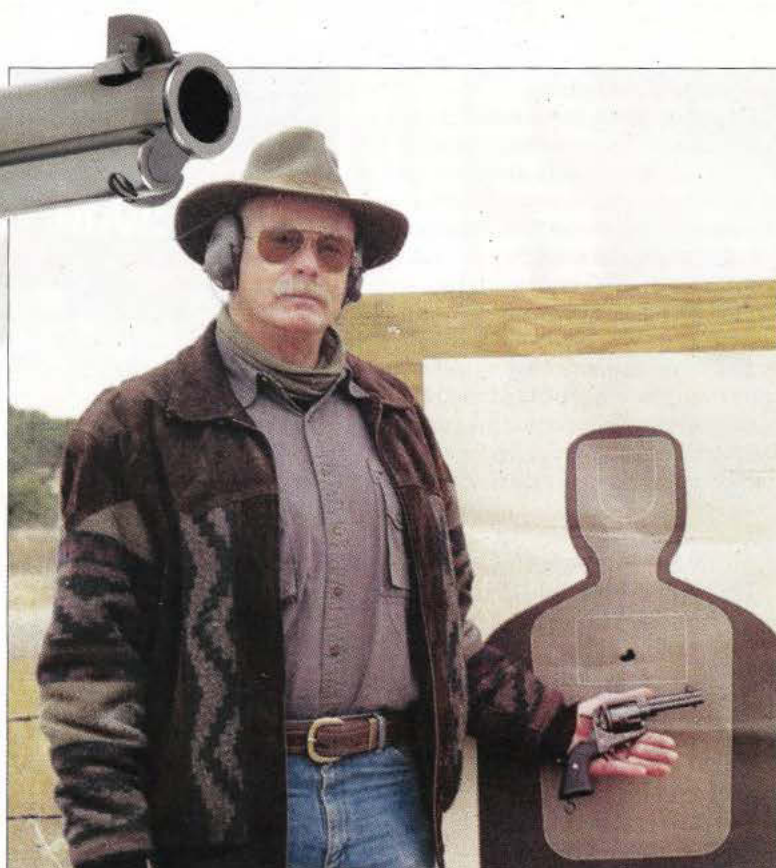
LETHAL THREAT: PSL - SNIPER RIFLE OF JIHAD
COMBAT ARMS
MILITARY • LAW ENFORCEMENT • HOME DEFENSE
WEAPONS OF THE WAR ON TERROR
BUILD A REAL THE HIGH MOUNT
FUTURE OPTICS CHINESE \$1.95
FURTHER ON OPTICS: SWEEPING ON SHOTGUN BY THE JOHNSON: ON REPLACING THE #506

On Newsstands NOW!!!

Pick up your copy today



New-age New Vaquero: At seven yards, the author found the .50 GI Bowen mini-Bisley to deliver stellar accuracy using hardcast 320-grain loads.



oring, Bisley hammer, dove-tailed front sight and a lanyard ring. This gun is so cool you can't keep your hands off of it. That thin barrel with a big .50-caliber hole in the end is hard to ignore.

On the outside, these medium guns all have a lot in common, but there are some pros and cons you should know about. The biggest difference is that the Old Model works like a Colt in that you put it on half-cock to open the loading gate

and rotate the cylinder. You also carry the Old Model hammer-down on an empty chamber (this is assuming the gun is an unaltered original and has not had the Ruger safety kit installed). Some people like the old-style action and like the way it sounds when you cock it.

For the most part, the Old Model is great for building clas-

sics such as the .44 Special and .32-20. However, it isn't a viable candidate for line boring or a five-shot conversion, and parts are becoming hard to come by.

The New Model, on the other hand, has few troubles. The new pawl isn't too hot, but Bowen changes it to a Power Custom free-wheel version in the standard action tune-up, and from there it is pretty straightforward—like the large-frame guns. The new medium frame is much easier to set up for a good line-bore job, and its lockwork allows the possibility of five-shot cylinders. The ability to add a Bisley hammer is another plus for the new medium frame.

Usually, I am not too hot on anything that's been "improved"—especially guns—but if you like custom single-action revolvers like I do, this new and improved Ruger medium frame is probably the best customizing "raw material" to come along.

So of the guns Bowen brought to Texas to show me, which would I choose for myself? If money were no object, I'd just have him put a Bisley hammer on the .44 Magnum, send along an extra .45 ACP/AR cylinder for the .45 Colt and send all five to me. But I suffer from champagne taste and a water budget. It's a shame hunting and shooting don't pay better. I am no closer to my answer, but I will have better dreams.

For more information, contact Bowen Classic Arms, 865/984-3583, www.bowenclassicarms.com.



This Old Model .357 Blackhawk was converted by Bowen to .44 Special. It's reminiscent of Skeeter Skelton's pet guns of the 1960s.