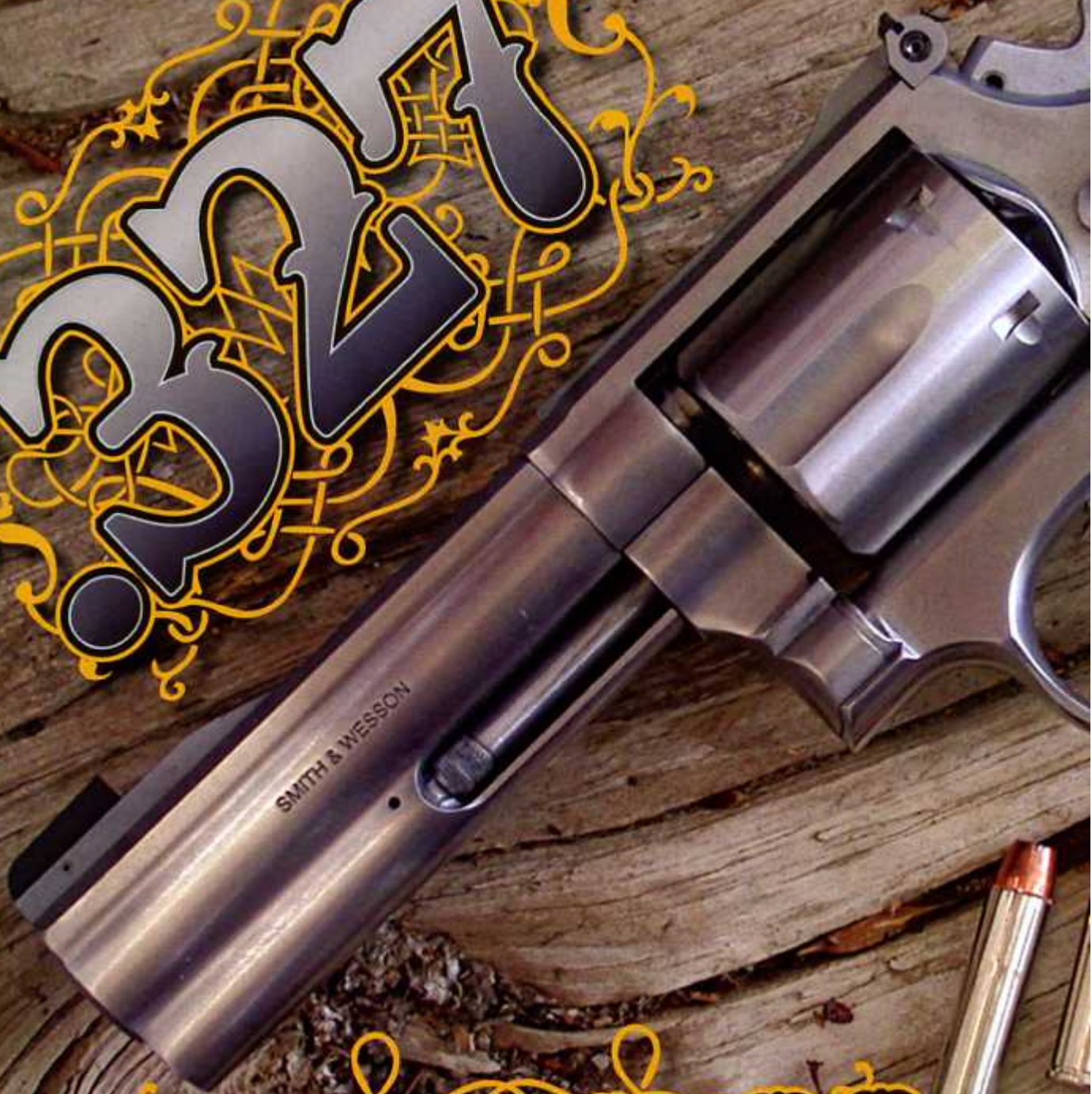


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AMERICAN HANDGUNNER • 2009 SPECIAL EDITION



John Taffin

# HAMILTON BOWEN STYLE

**W**e live in an amazing time and this is ever so true when it comes to firearms. I love the old classic sixguns of the 1950s and earlier. But I have to admit today's revolvers are stronger, usually more accurate, relatively less expensive, and definitely more readily available. When it comes to custom sixguns, they were very scarce in 1950 and earlier with very few well-known

sixgunsmiths plying their trade. Today I can make a long list from memory of superb craftsmen who can build the finest sixguns possible. At the top of that list is Hamilton Bowen of Bowen Classic Arms.

### ***The Master Craftsmen***

I first met Hamilton in the mid 1980s when we were both much younger and he was just starting to

make a name for himself as a top custom revolver maker. The first two of his creations I shot were five-shooters, a .500 Linebaugh on a Ruger Redhawk and a .44 Special on a Ruger Security-Six. In the more than two decades which has passed since that first meeting Hamilton has done just about everything, which is possible to accomplish in customizing a sixgun.

Not only has Hamilton done



Be still my heart! Hamilton Bowen's 7 1/2" .327 Federal Magnum Single-Six.

just about everything there is to do with a custom revolver, he also wrote the book which not so coincidentally is titled *The Custom Revolver*. When I was a kid I spent hours looking over the few rare pictures I could find of custom sixguns. Most of these were found in the old articles by Elmer Keith and also in his book, *Sixguns*. The cover and first chapter of

Hamilton's book is basically dedicated to Elmer Keith and his #5 Single Action. Both the original and Hamilton's re-creation are chambered in .44 Special.

The rest of the book is more of the stuff dreams are made of as Hamilton explains and pictures just about everything there is to know about the custom revolver. He has chambered about everything possible

in a sixgun including the .475 and .500 Linebaughs and also the maximum length versions of these cartridges — the problem with making customs in these calibers is they have to be test-fired. You can bet Hamilton's favorite cartridge is not found among any of these big bores!

### Making Treasures

I have had him do several conversions for me on Ruger .357 Old Model Blackhawks, turning them into .41 and .44 Specials. However, one of the neatest single action sixguns I have was built by Hamilton using a Colt Single Action instead of a Ruger. Starting with a .44 Special from which I had stolen the barrel and cylinder for another project, Hamilton made a new unfluted cylinder, fitted an 8 1/2" barrel, and matched up a post front sight with a Smith & Wesson rear sight. I finished off the project with a pair of one-piece ebony stocks checkered in the fleur-de-lis pattern by Paul Persinger. It's one of the prettiest, and certainly one of the best shooting sixguns I own.

This special Colt Single Action is chambered in Hamilton's favorite cartridge, at least it appears to be so to me, from meeting with him at many



Test results with the Bowen Classic Arms custom .327.

