

GUN SMOKE

SHERIFF JIM WILSON

Big Guns For Rough Country

It is interesting to note that in this day of high-capacity auto pistols, polymer frames, and rapid-fire technology there is still such an interest in big-bore sixguns. However, that is an absolute fact for the simple reason that big-bore revolvers meet the needs of many of today's handgunners. Miles from most big cities, there are men and women who work livestock, outfit hunting parties, and share their rural neighborhoods with dangerous game. Nothing fits their needs and allows them to go about their daily chores like the solid reassurance of a large-caliber revolver.

Just recently a pair of custom revolvers I picked up from Bowen Classic Arms (Dept. ST, P.O. Box 67, Louisville, TN 37777; 865-984-3583; www.bowenclassicarms.com) bear out this way of thinking. For those of you who don't know, Bowen Classic Arms is the product of ace pistolsmith Hamilton Bowen. Bowen is a big, gentle man who loves to take good guns and make them better. Hamilton and I go back way over a decade and, apart from our professional relationship, I simply value his friendship. He is a wonderful combination of perfectionist, story-teller, firearms historian, and innovator. He successfully blends

old and new technology to create really interesting handguns.

Bowen first came to the attention of American shooters when, some years ago, he joined with Ross Seyfried to design single-action revolvers in .475 Linebaugh and .500 Linebaugh. But Hamilton is also known for rechambering the Old Model .357 Ruger Blackhawk to equally useful yet less powerful calibers such as .32-20 and .44 Special. Most recently, he has designed a single-action revolver along the lines of Elmer Keith's famous No. 5 Colt in .44 Special.

In fact, about the only thing that worries me about Bowen is that he has developed an affinity for Penn Baggett. Some might call this a major flaw in judgment. However, Bowen has been accepted into the small circle of misfits and ne-re-do-wells that often gathers at Baggett's West Texas Ranch, along with yours truly.

The guns that I test-fired recently are a good example of the quality of work that one can expect from Bowen Classic Arms. These guns are intended

for rough country and are called the Kenai and the Kodiak. Bowen told me, "These two guns are intended to serve outdoorsmen and women of all stripes, whether hunter, fisherman, bird-watcher, etc., and reflect the very latest in sight technology that we've got to hand."

The Kenai & The Kodiak

The Kenai is built on a stainless Ruger Blackhawk frame and is a four-inch .44 Magnum. It has had the trigger tuned, an extra-length firing pin added, and an oversize lock base pin installed. In addition, the sixgun has had the cylinder faces chamfered in the blackpowder style, a Bisley hammer installed, and a lanyard loop. The receiver and loading gate have been scalloped to further reduce the revolver's weight. However, the most interesting thing is the sights. The front sight is a Weigand DX with an Express Sight Systems tritium dot sight blade. The rear sight is of Bowen's own design and is called the Rough Country Rear Sight. It has a shallow V-notch blade, often called an express sight, and is fully adjustable.

The Kodiak is built on a stainless Ruger Redhawk. It has a four-inch barrel, an action job, an extra-length firing pin, the blackpowder cylinder chamfer, and a lanyard loop.

The front sight is the Weigand DX with a serrated ramp blade with a vertical white line. The rear sight is Bowen's Rough Country sight with a conventional

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The .44 Magnum Kenai (R) and Kodiak revolvers from Bowen Classic Arms are designed for dangerous game use and are built to withstand the rigors of rough country.

square-notch blade.

Bowen went on to tell me, "Both of these guns can be built on factory .44 or .45 Colt guns. For the real power nuts, five-shot guns in everything from .45 Colt to .500 Linebaugh are also available." The Kenai Blackhawk is available at a price of \$995 on the customer's gun. The Kodiak Redhawk is \$850, using the customer's revolver. Both guns can also be ordered with a lanyard for an extra \$24.95. A lanyard, by the way, is a good way to keep one tied to his handgun no matter what happens. Working around water, boats, horses, and such can often result in a mishap and the loss of the handgun. In addition, when sleeping out in bear country, the lanyard keeps the gun handy during those occasional nocturnal bear encounters that can cause a good deal of excitement.

As you can tell, I liked the Kenai and Kodiak revolvers. But, just to get another opinion, I invited Bart Skelton and Shane Jahn to join me at the shooting range to wring them out. Since both sixguns are intended for use against dangerous game, I brought along a supply of 310-grain .44 Magnum ammunition from Garrett Cartridges, Dept. ST, P.O. Box 178, Chehalis, WA 98532; 360-736-0702; www.garrettcarridges.com.

SHOOTING! Worth A Look

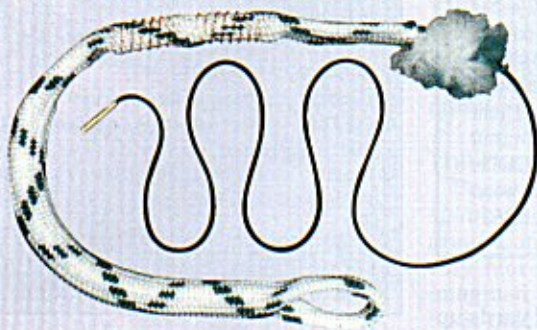
HOPPE'S BORE SNAKE

A tool that has quickly become part of my shooting battery is the Bore Snake from Hoppe's. The Bore Snake is a rope-like cleaning tool that can be used in the home shop or easily carried in the field. Its simple design incorporates a

first-floss area that removes foreign particles, a bore brush to loosen hard deposits, and a main floss area that cleans debris from the bore.

The Hoppe's Bore Snake is available in all popular handgun, rifle, and shotgun calibers and gauges. What's more, it is small enough to be easily carried in a pocket. But most importantly, it works. The suggested retail price of the Hoppe's Bore Snake is \$19.95.

For more information, contact Hoppe's, a Division of Michaels of Oregon, Dept. ST, P.O. Box 1690, Oregon City, OR 97045; 503-722-5797; www.hoppes.com.



This great ammo sports a hard-cast LBT bullet and has a velocity of over 1300 fps. In addition to being a very powerful .44 Magnum load, I have

found the Garrett ammunition to be very accurate.

The Kenai and the Kodiak functioned perfectly during the impromptu shooting session, and both were quite accurate. As I expected, Bart favored the Kodiak Redhawk while I gravitated towards the Kenai single action. Jahn, with the makings of a good politician, said he'd just be proud to own either one. In no time at all, we shot up all the ammo I had brought, just busting rocks and enjoying Bowen's two great revolvers.

A handgunner who is searching for a reasonably priced, reliable handgun to take care of his big-bore revolver needs would do well to consider the Kenai and Kodiak from Bowen Classic Arms. The Bowen Classic Arms catalog is available from the company and costs only \$5. In addition, Bowen is the author of a great book called *The Custom Revolver* (\$39.95 plus \$9.50 shipping and handling) that has quickly become a classic in handgun literature and is a must-read for all serious handgunners. Hamilton suggests that folks visit his website and then contact the shop if they have remaining questions.

While we are certainly fortunate to have so many good, out-of-the-box handguns to choose from, it is refreshing to know that someone like Hamilton Bowen can take a good gun and make it even better. My Bowen custom single actions are among my most prized and useful possessions. I think you'll come to the same conclusion after you've shot guns, like the Kodiak and Kenai, from Bowen Classic Arms.

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