

## "POCKET PISTOLS"

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In early September my telephone rang and when I answered it was my three-year-old niece from Arkansas singing "Happy Birthday" to me. That was great, but then she said, "You sure are old". I didn't really need to be reminded of that fact even though it is true.

When the call came in I happened to be holding a Remington pocket Derringer chambered in .41-caliber rimfire. Yeah, it is an original and I wish it had a home in my safe, but like my getting younger, it is not about to happen. A very good friend is the proud owner of this little gun and intends to keep it that way. I have a copy made by "brand X" in .38 Special caliber that actually shoots pretty well at close ranges.

Guns of this or similar designs have been around since the 1700's at least. Small pocket pistols were originally single shot muzzleloaders and were flintlock, or later, percussion primed. Good citizens--and the not so good folks--liked the small, concealable handguns. Later, the two shot versions and still later, a multi-shot piece called the "Pepper Box" and a few other similar pocket pistols became popular.

There were numerous designs, calibers and configurations of small but deadly pistols available in the early days. Colt made at least three different single shot rimfire and centerfire Derringers. Remington produced the "Elliot", which was a strange looking beast in .32 caliber along with the famous over and under double barreled derringer in .41 rimfire. There was one called "Reid's, MY Friend, Knucklebuster", also in .32 caliber. Colt had a small pocket revolver in both .32 and .38 calibers, and Smith & Wesson's sequel was the "pocket .32"--none of which had trigger guards. Several companies came out with small pocket size, break-top revolvers in .32 to .44 caliber.

Colt and Smith & Wesson both had short-barreled handguns: Colt's "Store Keeper" and S&W's "Short Schofield". These were actually cut down versions of their larger single action pistols that were very popular in that day and time. Both were pretty fair hideout guns. Not too long after 1900 both Colt and Smith & Wesson brought out short barreled five and six shot double action pistols in their revolver lines. Small semi-automatics in various calibers came along and were very popular before, during, and since the "Roaring 20's". One of the most popular gangster autos was Colt's "Pocket Automatic" chambered in both .380 and .32 auto rounds. They were small and fit the body flat, and were very concealable and comfortable to carry. A lot of these old guns are still in use today.

Colt made both the "Detective Special" and the "Cobra" (the air-weight version), chambered in .38 Long Colt and .38 Special six-shot models until just a few years ago. Both were dropped from production but I have heard that they may be brought back onto the market. Smith & Wesson made a six shot snub nose in the old Military and Police guns that later was dubbed the "Model 10" and could be acquired with either a square or round butt grip. This gun was built on a "K" or medium size frame.

Later, Smith & Wesson came out with their little "J" framed, five shot revolvers also in .38 Special. These guns were, and are, in several configurations including the "Chief Special" with an external hammer, the "Body Guard" with its shrouded external hammer and the "Centennial", which had an internal hammer system. The early "Centennial" models had a grip squeeze safety located on the grip backstrap, which was a carry over from the Smith break top or "Lemon Squeezer" produced in the early 1900's. On the newer model Centennials the grip safety has been discontinued. Smith & Wesson now makes all of their "J" frame guns in .357 magnum and they will of course still shoot the .38 Special cartridge. I personally feel that for most people there is too much recoil with the .357 magnum round in this small frame gun. It's great if you can handle the "buck and beller" but most people can't hold it well enough to get back on target rapidly; besides, it hurts your hand.

Ruger has an excellent five-hole revolver dubbed the "SP101". This little cannon comes with a rubberized factory grip that cushions the recoil somewhat. It, too, is in .357 magnum and also fires the .38 Special rounds. Again, I feel that it is somewhat overpowered in .357. The .38 Special +P's will work well at close range and are much more comfortable to shoot.

Now days there are literally dozens of makes and models in both revolvers and semi-autos that are small and very concealable. Some of these do not fit the true picture for a pocket pistol. The S&W "J" frames, Ruger's "SP101", along with revolver clones by Taurus, Rossi, and Charter Arms, do fill the bill. I personally carry a nickel plated Smith & Wesson old model 49 "Bodyguard" loaded with 158 grain soft cast Keith type semi-wadcutters, over a maximum powder charge. I've carried the gun for forty years when I am unable to pack a bigger more powerful pistol. I do not now, nor have I ever felt undergunned while packing this little pocket rocket even though I prefer a larger caliber and higher capacity handgun for defensive usage.

Colt, Kimber, Springfield, Smith & Wesson, Ruger, Taurus, Khar, Beretta and Kel-Tec, to mention just a few, all make very small and compact semi-autos that work well. They all have guns chambered for most of the popular calibers. I feel that the .380 caliber is as small as I want for a primary defense gun as it is a light weight with little stopping power, even though James Bond #007 used in all of his movies and one-shot killed everybody on the screen. It really doesn't work quite that easy or well. I do know of several occasions when the .380's, the little .32's and even the high-speed .22 Long Rifle rounds have done in bad guys quiet nicely.

I still do not recommend the .25 caliber automatics for self-defense. It just does not have the stopping power needed to do the job. I might add I saw a fellow shoot another man square in the forehead with a little .22 short and it lodged against the outer wall of the skull. The intended victim literally beat the hell out of the attacker and did not suffer many ill effects from the wound. The bullet was removed in the Emergency Room and the man was released. Thick headed, I guess.

The Derringers that we mentioned earlier are still around and in calibers from .22 up to and including .44 magnum. I don't think I care much for the big .44's. In fact, these guns are really dangerous. They can fire accidentally if dropped or bumped and in the larger calibers these guns are not normally made strong enough to be safe with that amount of chamber pressure. One of the safer two-shot Derringer is the double action High Standard. These Derringers in .22 Long

Rifle and .22 magnum work with a long double action trigger pull and that in itself is the safety feature. Even though High Standard Company is no longer in existence and these guns are not in production there are some of these guns still around. They work very well if you are unable to carry something better. One of these guns rode in my shirt pocket for many years. North American Arms has a little Derringer that is a five hole in both 22 LR and 22 magnum calibers. They are a little hard to hit with at any distance, but up close and personal they will work and are extremely small and can be hidden in the palm of your hand. You do not have to have excellent accuracy if you shove the gun up his nose. Please note that none of the tiny pistols are really designed as first line defensive firearms but they will work in a pinch.

Proper bullet placement with any of the small caliber pocket pistols is necessary as they do not have the stopping power that is available with the .357 magnum or any of the .40, .41, .44 and .45 calibers. At extreme close ranges--and that is where most personal attacks occur--headshots work best. The longer your attacker is upright and or conscious the greater your chances are of being killed or injured. The attack has to be stopped as near instantly as possible. Pinpoint accuracy is not a must if you shove the pistol into the bad guy's face. I doubt if he will care or know the difference as to whether you are shooting a .22 or a .45 under that circumstance.

Oklahoma's Concealed Carry Law, S.D.A., *does not prohibit* a permit holder from carrying a backup pistol. I highly recommend that you do so. Ideally, the backup piece is of the same caliber and make and model as the primary pistol. This way ammunition, magazines or speed loaders are interchangeable. You want as big and powerful a handgun for backup as possible. ***You won't need it unless you are in deep trouble, wounded, or have lost the use of your primary pistol.*** Under those circumstances I really want something bigger than a .22. However if twin guns are not possible and you carry a large frame semi-auto or revolver as your primary concealed weapon, you may choose, as I have on many occasions, to carry a little "J" frame Smith or equivalent as the backup. I know a lady that carries a Compact Kimber 1911, in .45 ACP in an inside-the-pants holster in her waistband under a loose fitting blouse, plus a little Kel-Tec .32 automatic in her bra. She says this works very well. Both guns are totally concealed and are within easy access if she has to grab one. This is not my choice, but it works for her!

Somehow my little Smith & Wesson "Bodyguard" with its homemade Elk horn grips (I ate the Elk that grew the grips) fits my needs very well. It also sports a Melvin Tyler T-Grip adapter that fills out the hollow space at the front of the small grip. It feels good in either hand. It won't snag or drag as it comes out of my pants or jacket pocket. It can even be carried in a boot holster or shoulder rig. These Pocket Revolvers can be fired from inside a coat or jacket pocket with no effort or warning. One can even walk around in the mall with your fingers wrapped around the gun's grip inside a coat pocket and no one is the wiser. You are ready for action if it's called for.

These guns can be much faster getting into action than their big brothers because their use can come as a complete surprise. No, it is not my normal concealed carry choice because I am one of those "Full Figured Folks" that can conceal a larger and more powerful pistol upon my person. I do use the little snubbie a lot during the summer when clothing is thin and I don't want to wear much to cover it up, and also in the winter when heavy clothing restricts my ability to draw my primary pistol quickly.

Pocket Pistols have been around for an awfully long time and will be here long after I'm gone. That is, they will be here unless we close our eyes and let the anti-gunners get them outlawed. These guns are not "Saturday night specials". They work every night and even in the daylight.

Keep your Pocket Pistol handy. In this day and time you just may need it. Besides, sometimes it's better to be sneaky than real good.