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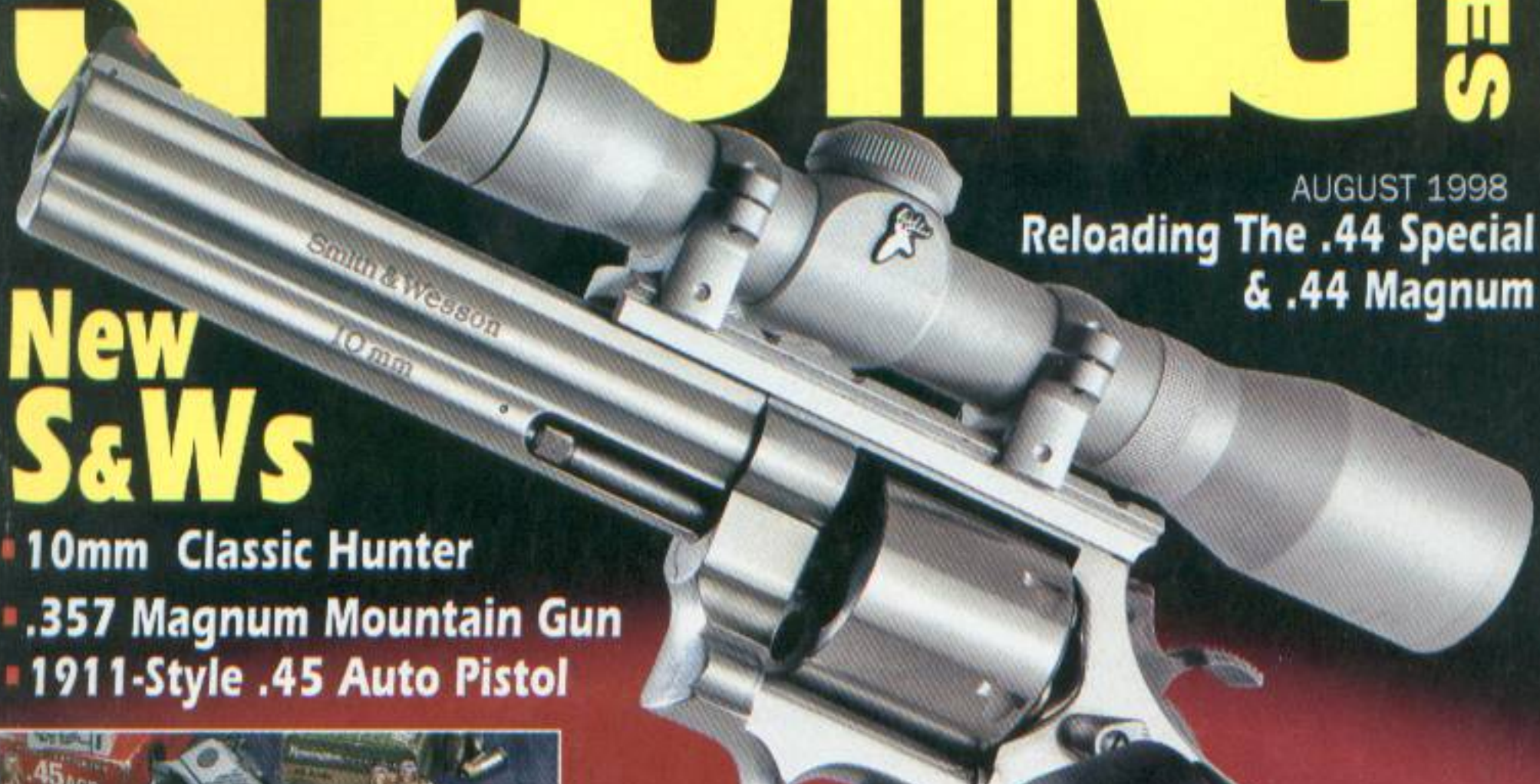
SHOOTING TIMES

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THE SHOOTIST

MIKE VENTURINO

Peacemaker Specialists: Specializing In Colt SAA Restoration & Modification

During the first pre-1900s course held at Thunder Ranch in December 1996, I ended up shooting beside a fellow named Eddie Janis. Janis and I have talked to each other occasionally on the phone during the past few years, but this was our first meeting in person. Before the firing started he impressed me with his sense of humor, calm demeanor, and friendliness. But then when we started the live

firing exercises, he further impressed me with the marksmanship he displayed with a Colt Single Action Army .45. No matter how we shot, one handed, two handed, or with weak hand only, most of his bullets cut a ragged hole in the target.

You may not have heard of Janis, but perhaps you are familiar with the name of his business, Peacemaker Specialists. As the name implies, Janis is focused on only the Colt SAA revolver, and what he offers shooters in regards to that handgun is impressive.

Peacemaker Specialists operates as a collector's restoration service, a parts supplier, and a gunsmithing service for the cowboy action shooter. Janis said, "Catering to both collectors and shooters keeps us thinking on two different levels. Their needs are not the same."

In a restoration project, authenticity is the watchword at Peacemaker Specialists. The hammer's knurling must match the vintage of the Colt, as must the barrel's lettering and caliber marking. Even the shape of the firing pin has changed several times from era to era in the Colt SAA's 125-year history.

Services For Collectors

The services offered for collectors range from small things like rebuilding

a hammer's broken halfcock notch on an otherwise pristine gun to complete restorations starting with only a frame. The options offered include but are not limited to: color-casehardening main frames; rust blueing all other parts; fitting new cylinders, barrels, and internals to match the gun's vintage; and even having replacement stocks of the correct type fitted to the grip frame. Doing this sort of work not only requires exceptional craftsmanship abilities in the gunsmith, but detailed knowledge of the Colt's long and varied history is also necessary.

Something I was glad to hear Janis say was that he absolutely will not touch the finish on an original Peacemaker. Before he will restore a Colt's finish, it has to have been refinished in the past sometime. To me that shows a fine sense of respect for these historical old guns.

Modifications For Shooters

Janis started competing in the cowboy action shooting sport as early as 1986 and began doing business as Peacemaker Specialists in 1991. For most of his adult life Janis has been a competition shooter of one sort or another. He started as a bullseye pistol

(Continued on Next Page)

Photos By Todd Lafgren



Eddie Janis of Peacemaker Specialists is solely devoted to restoring and modifying Colt SAA revolvers.

shooter and then progressed to IPSC style competition. Then, like so many of us old-gun lovers, he was drawn to cowboy action shooting. With such shooting experience behind him, it was no wonder that I was impressed with his grouping ability there at Thunder Ranch!

For the Peacemaker shooter Janis offers several attractive "packages." One example is the Cowboy Shooter's 1880's Package for 3rd Generation SAAs in which the barrel markings are changed to match early Colts, the cylinder flutes and ejector rod end are beveled, the hammer is color-casehardened, and other parts besides the frame are rust blued. One or all of the above options can be picked to dress up a new Colt like an old one. Prices range from \$20 to bevel the ejector rod tube end to \$150 for color-casehardening the frame and hammer.

Cowboy action shooting is a "speed" shooting sport. Most competitors cock the hammer smartly with the weak hand's thumb while operating the trigger with the strong hand. Such use is very hard on the internals of a stock Peacemaker. Janis offers two action modification packages for Peacemakers to make them stand up to constant hard use. One is called the "Saddle Tramp" (\$125). This action job lightens the hammer tension, makes for a crisp trigger pull of approximately four pounds, and deburrs all internals. Custom mainsprings and trigger/bolt springs are installed. The other action job offered is called the "Gunslinger" (\$175). In addition to the above work the gun's owner can specify exact trigger pull, softer springs are used, and all parts are given a glass-smooth finish.

It is worth noting that Janis himself

does all this action work on Peacemakers. He said, "I could hire some assistants and reduce the waiting time involved, but I am extremely particular and treat each customer's gun on a one-on-one basis. Instead of having standard operations that I perform on all guns, each one is given attention in the specific areas where it needs it."

On a personal note, I have had Janis do the "Gunslinger" package to SAAs for my wife and me, and I've never handled smoother Peacemakers. Try as I might, I cannot get one to lock up improperly regardless of how hard that hammer is slammed rearwards.

The special "softer" springs sets are offered as separate items by Janis, but he cautions buyers that they should only be installed by a qualified gunsmith. Otherwise, the result can be a revolver whose timing is off or whose trigger is too light for safety.

Unique Alterations & Custom Touches

Another service offered by Peacemaker Specialists is caliber conversion work. The Colt SAA is probably the easiest revolver to convert from one caliber to another because the barrel and cylinder are the only parts that need alteration. And Janis offers a wide range of barrels in all calibers and lengths (selection and prices vary by availability) for conversion work. When I asked him what replacement barrel was most popular he replied, "The 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch length in .45 caliber, but we are getting many requests from cowboy action shooters for .38 Special/.357 Magnum barrels and cylinders. Colt would do well to listen to that demand and reintroduce the Peacemaker in .357 Magnum."



WOLF EARS DOUBLE HOLSTER RIG

In cowboy action shooting many competitors are turning to double holster rigs, as opposed to having one holster with gun situated for regular draw and the other situated for crossdraw. The reason is safety. With a crossdraw holster, quite often the revolver's muzzle is pointing rearwards towards other shooters and bystanders. Since I regularly compete in cowboy matches and try to always be safety conscious, I had Wolf Ears Equipment make me a double rig outfit for a pair of Colt SAAs.

The holsters of my double holster rig are of the Mexican loop style and have the Cheyenne swell feature between the loops so that the holsters don't hang onto the guns when drawn. The belt is very thin and pliable so that it "grabs" and does not pull downwards on the body.

Wolf Ears workmanship is top notch, and the leather is some of the best I've ever seen. For more information write Wolf Ears Equipment, Dept. ST, 702 S. Pine, Laramie, WY 82070. ■

An additional service offered by Janis for Colt caliber converters is reborning .32-20, .38 Special, and .357 Magnum cylinders to .44 Special, .44-40, or .45 Colt. The price is \$150 per cylinder. It is also worth noting that when Janis rebores a cylinder to .45 Colt, it receives proper .452-inch chamber mouths instead of the excessive .456-inch ones of factory-chambered cylinders.


One service offered by Peacemaker Specialists that I have been using of late is having new SAA hammers color-casehardened. Since the 1920s, Colt has been polishing its Peacemaker hammers bright on the sides, but many traditionalists like the color-casehardened look that was standard before that time. Janis will color-caseharden

modern SAA hammers for \$40 each.

Peacemaker Specialists also offers custom grips in materials ranging from genuine ivory, pearl, stag, and buffalo horn to pearlite and ivory polymer. Also offered are traditional-style one-piece walnut stocks and current Colt production hard rubber types. Prices vary by material used and fitting needed.

After attending the same pre-1900s course at Thunder Ranch mentioned above and detailed in the August 1997 issue of *Shooting Times*, Janis returned home and dreamed up a "Thunder Ranch" package for the Colt SAA,

but I'm saving the details of that one for another story.

The Colt Single Action Army revolver lends itself to rebuilding, customizing, modifying, caliber changing, personalizing, and just plain old improving more than any other handgun except perhaps the Colt Model 1911 auto pistol; in fact, it seems like I am continually in the process of changing one of my own SAAs in some way or the other. Peacemaker Specialists is a great source for this kind of help. For a catalog send \$2 to Peacemaker Specialists, Dept. ST, Box 157, Whitmore, CA 96096. 



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