

AGARITA GAZETTE



A Chronicle of the Plum Creek Shooting Society



Agarita Ranch

April 2014

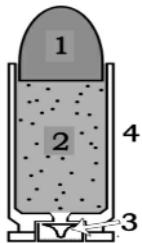
Lockhart, Texas

Load Your Own!

by Long Juan

This is the first part of a two-part article about loading your own ammunition. Many cowboy action shooters already load their own. With the scarcity and high cost of factory ammo, those who do not already load their own may want to get started. Yes, the necessary components can be expensive and difficult to find, but they are generally more available and less expensive than factory ammunition. This article is intended to be a basic primer for those who do not already load their own.

For starters, what you load in your firearm is not a bullet; it's a cartridge. A cartridge has 4 basic components – 1, the bullet; 2, powder; 3, primer and 4, the case (brass). You will need some of each, appropriate for the caliber you plan to load.



 Brass is what holds all the rest of the components together. It is the only component that is reusable. The brass you need is pretty self-explanatory. If you shoot .45 Long Colt, you

need .45 Long Colt brass. If you shoot .38 Special, you need .38

Special brass. Brass is available from Starline Brass, a sponsor of *Ride with Pancho Villa 2013* and *Battle of Plum Creek 2014*, and from other brass manufacturers. I suggest you start by purchasing a batch of 500 cases, but you might be able to bum some already-fired brass off your pards at the range.

You will need some powder. I will be focusing on smokeless powder in this article, but loading black powder cartridges involves essentially the same process with lots more cleaning of your brass. First, you need some load data. There are a number of reloading manuals with load data for lots of different rifle and pistol cartridges (Lee, Sierra, Lyman and Speer, for example). Each powder manufacturer makes its load data available online and in printed form. You need to know the powder and type and weight of bullet you will be using. There are more powders than I can possibly cover in this short article. My current favorite for cowboy action cartridges is Trail Boss by IMR.



Next, you need primers of the appropriate size for the cartridge you are loading. For

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President's Word:

Lots of good news to report this month for the Plum Creek Shooting Society.



Over 100 members.

Our Secretary **Long Juan** has reported to me that we now have 105 members. 33 of them are lifetime members. This met a goal I set when I became president. I wanted us to have at least 100 members. Now we have exceeded that number by five. What great results! But that doesn't mean we're ready to quit. We still want to have as many folks join us as possible. This is especially true because of the next piece of good news I have to announce.

2015 SASS TEXAS State Championship at Plum Creek.

As you may recall we decided we would once again put in for the Texas state championship. We submitted our application to SASS before the deadline on April 1st of this year. I'm pleased to report I've heard from SASS that we are the only club that put in for the state match by the deadline. As a result, we should be awarded the 2015 SASS Texas state championship. This is very gratifying because we applied to host in 2014 and weren't selected.

Now that we will be hosting the SASS Texas State Championship again, those of you who have been volunteers in the past know that I'll be calling on you again. Those of you who haven't volunteered, have the time and can make yourself available, I know we would really appreciate your help as we prepare to put on one of the best state matches anyone's ever seen.

Elroy Rogers. The other piece of good news I have to report is accompanied by some distressing news. As many of you may know, our stalwart supporter of the club, **Elroy Rogers**, has fallen ill and has been unable to come to the range and work as a result. Please give him your prayers for recovery or at least peace.

For the longest time we were concerned about who we could find who would help us prepare targets and do a lot of the other range work that **Elroy** spent so many hours doing for us. Well I'm pleased to report that we found someone who is willing to step up. **Lefty Leo** has dedicated himself to come out to the

www.pccss.org

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range on a regular basis and fix what needs to be fixed, make what needs to be made, and generally be there as great support for the club. **Lefty** had to reach back into his memory about welding because he hasn't been welding for over 20 years but from the results I'd say so far he seems to have remembered it very well. We're very glad to have **Lefty Leo** out there helping us with all the work that needs to be done on the range.

We also have a new Safety Marshal. **Artiman** has agreed to serve in that capacity, another job that **Elroy Rogers** did for many, many years. Look forward to hearing from **Artiman** giving us our safety briefings and making sure that we maintain our excellent reputation as a club where people enjoy a great and safe shooting experience.

Stage screens. Some of you may have noticed that we had some stage screens on each side of Stage 6 at our shoot in April. This is a new innovation I brought back from

Winter Range. The idea is to use these temporary fences to prevent cross-stage splatter. In those cases where stages are near one another, we're going to try out the stage screens to see if we can avoid splatter coming from one stage hitting folks on neighboring stages. We'll see how the experiment works.

2014 Battle of Plum Creek. Next month's shoot is the Battle of Plum Creek, our annual match. We're closing in on our desired number shooters for that match, but if you haven't signed up, it's time. People tell me that folks in Texas wait until the very last minute to sign up for matches like ours. Well folks, it's the very last minute so get those applications in. We'd love to have you join us and I know we're going to have a great match.

See ya at the Agarita!

Find Delta Raider

Hereby mentioned in the dispatches for finding **Delta Raider** in last month's issue of the *Gazette* are: **Hoss**

Roonwright, Agarita Annie, Meadow Biscuit Slim, Shooting Iron Miller, El Sabre, Lincoln Drifter, Big John

Mesquite and **Skyhawk Hans**. If you didn't find **Delta Raider** last month, he was in wagon wheel of the stage (right). He's hidden again this month. See if you can find him. Remember obvious photos that include **Delta Raider** do not count. You have to find him where he's hidden. Good luck!!



Stories from Jake (Paladin that is): "Balls to the Wall"

Early aircraft throttles had a ball on the end. In order to go full throttle the pilot had to push the throttle all the way forward into the wall of the instrument panel. Hence, "balls to the wall" for going very fast. Bet you thought it was something naughty!





Long Juan here! Splatter. The Board, members of the Plum Creek Shooting Society and others who shoot with us are having an ongoing discussion about splatter – lead fragments that occasionally hit shooters and others behind the firing line. Spatter is the result of lead bullets or shot hitting a hard object (steel targets, target stands, etc.) and then ricocheting back in the direction of the firing line. To some extent, splatter is an occupational hazard of cowboy action shooting. It results from shooting lead at steel targets that are not very far away. SASS guidelines for target placement are: Pistol 7-10 yards; Shotgun 8-16 yards; Rifle 13-50 yards. The SASS Match Director's Guide notes that “the bigger and closer the targets, the better.” The idea is to have fun. Shooters like hitting more than missing. Bigger, closer targets make it easier to hit the targets and to shoot more quickly.

Those responsible for setting up the stages we shoot work hard to be sure our target placement is consistent with SASS guidelines. We hear from some shooters that they are too close. Those shooters have asked that we move the targets back. We hear from other shooters that our target distance is one of the reasons they like shooting with the Plum Creek Shooting Society. Those shooters have asked us not to move them any further away. Big matches like Winter Range and End-of-Trail seem to favor closer targets - bigger and closer is better, i.e., more fun.

In the past, our targets distances were often a little further away. Since we moved the targets a little closer, the number of shooters participating in our monthly matches has gone up dramatically. Seems like we must be doing something right. At the same time, complaints or expressed concerns about splatter have also gone up. We have spent a considerable amount of time trying to figure out why. Some of the questions we have asked ourselves include:

- Do we experience more splatter than other cowboy action shooting venues?
- If so, why?
 - o Target distance?
 - o Condition of target, i.e., pitted face, etc.?
 - o Are any of the rounds we are shooting too hot?
 - o Design of targets, e.g., rebar stand, etc.?

- o Stage design, e.g., angles we are shooting?
- o Where are shooters and spectators standing?
- o Adequacy of protection, e.g., screens at loading and unloading areas?
- If our experience with splatter is similar to other clubs, why is it being mentioned so often?
- Do we need to do a better job of briefing and monitoring spectators?
 - o Where they stand or sit while watching?
 - o Safety glasses: Do we have sufficient number of loaners?
 - o Sufficient information provided to spectators about risks?
- What else might we need/want to change to address this issue?

Safety is first and foremost. Safety does not mean there must be no splatter. Anecdotal evidence suggests that we experience no more splatter than other cowboy action shooting venues. We nevertheless must take steps to minimize splatter and other steps to protect shooters and spectators from splatter that does occur. There is no answer that will make everyone happy. If targets are moved closer or further away, some shooters will be unhappy. If we need to replace targets or change the design, it will take time and will cost money. Changes in stage design may result in fewer options, making our matches less interesting. Moving spectators further from the shooting line may make it

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impossible for them to see what they came to see.

For now, your Board has taken the following actions:

- We have moved the targets back a little. The recently revised distances seem about right, but we continue to experiment.
- We have changed shooting angles to try to ensure straight-on engagement of targets as much as possible.
- We are working on target modifications to reduce splatter (moving the rebar more behind the target, angling targets forward to contain ricochet, etc.).
- We have inspected the targets themselves and are replacing those with significant pitting, cupping or other defects that may add to splatter.
- We will continue to brief shooters and spectators and to insist that they wear safety glasses whenever we are shooting.
- We need to be sure that we can provide safety glasses to spectators who show up without them. If we do not have loaners and they do not have their own, they will not be allowed in locations where splatter may occur.
- We will continue our efforts to add effective screening at loading and unloading stations. See also President **Dragon Hill**

Dave's comments about Stage Screens.



The view from Lightning's pocket



Miz Ella through a knothole,
Big Iron Patnode timing

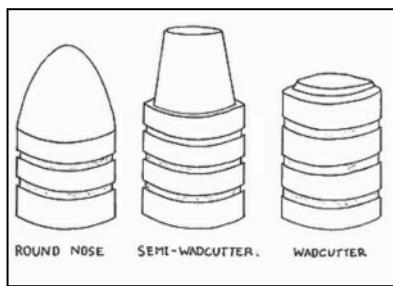
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example, .38 Special requires small pistol primers. .45 Long Colt requires large pistol primers. If you are shooting .45-70 rifle ammo (Cody Dixon or long range), you will need large rifle primers. During the loading process, primers are installed in the head of the case. When the primer is struck by the firing pin, it goes bang and ignites the powder inside the case, which sends the bullet downrange. There are lots of primer manufacturers, including Federal, Winchester and CCI. Everyone has their own favorite.

Mine happens to be Federal, but when there is a shortage I purchase and use whatever is available.



SASS rules require that we use lead bullets. Before you purchase bullets, you need to decide what size and type bullet you



want. There are many different types of lead bullets – round nose (RN), round nose flat point (RNFP), semi-wadcutter (SWC), etc. Most cowboy

action shooters will choose RN or RNFP, at least for their rifles because they tend to feed better. In addition to the type of bullet, you to decide what weight you want. Check the load data and talk to others with whom you shoot. If you have been purchasing ammunition to shoot, look at the box and it will tell you the weight of the bullet. Some examples include .38 - 125 grain or 158 grain; .45LC - 200 grain or 250 grain. You can purchase lead bullets at reasonable prices from **Hopalong Herbert - Longhorn**



Bullets. His selection and prices can be found on the last page of the *Gazette*. Bullets are also available online and from other suppliers.

SASS limits the speed or velocity at which your rounds travel down range (power factor). For pistols the maximum velocity is 1,000 fps. For main-match, pistol-caliber rifles, the maximum velocity is 1,400 fps. Speed is governed mostly by the weight of the bullet and the amount of powder used, but also by the length of barrel and other factors. You can use a chronograph to measure the velocity of your rounds to be sure you are within the applicable limits. For more information, see the SASS Shooters Handbook.

Note that SASS also requires a minimum power factor of 60 and a velocity of not less than 400 fps. There are trade-offs between recoil and sufficient power to knockdown the knockdown targets. For some shooters who try to go as slow/light as they can, there also may be questions about reaching the target. Ask **G.T. Sharps** about his pistol rounds.

That completes our simple discussion of



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nts.
Next



Round-Nose, Flat Point

month, we will discuss reloading equipment and the actual process of loading. By the way, if you are loading already-fired brass, you technically are reloading. If you are loading unfired, new brass, you are loading

Great Hats and Beginnings of a Mustache

Clockwise from upper left: Texas Sarge, Dragon Hill Dave, Artiman & Six Goin' South
Center: Who is that man with the new "stache"? First to identify gets free shoot in June





Long Juan & Lincoln Drifter



Clean-Shootin" Miz Ella & Kickshot



SkinDawg havin' some fun



El Pantero (Black Panther)
f/k/a "Slick"

Bar Diamond, Kickshot & Hoppie resetting the swinger while T-Bone Paul supervises





Hat Creek Mack, without his hat, takes dead, long aim

Good to have Texas Trinity Kid and Texas Two Step back from East Texas



LaDonna keeps great, legible score

SkiinDawg showing that winning form



Kit Carson emulating SkinDawg



Rusty Shackleford showing some good form with his '92



Shotgun Jim, Dodge City Mike and Krazy Kat make the
hike back to Match Stage 1



Don't you
wish you
had a clue
what L.W.
Hannabass
was
thinking?

Rusty Shacklefor's better half, Mia
Jameson, keeps good score too!





Lars
Christopherson
sure looks like he's
having fun, doesn't
he?



Jarhead Jake demonstrates how
GAF shooters reload their pistols
on the clock

Yet another of Six Goin' South's GREAT posse photos. This time it's Posse 3

Left to right: Hoppalong Herbert, Kit Carson, English Bob, Bar Diamond, Bison Jim, Miz Ella, Kickshot, Big John Mesquite, Six Goin' South, Bandera Kid, T-Bone Paul & Skyhawk Hans
Missing: Big Iron Patnode, El Pantero & Frank Longshot





Not sure what's going on here with Nueces
Ranger & L.W. Hannabass?

Lightning McQueen with Whiskey Kid timing



Lucky Chambers, f/k/a Rotten Rascal, f/k/a J.T.
His alias is finally official! SASS #100223!!



Texas Mean Gene keeps a really sharp eye out while
spotting. No one's going to question his call!



Old Bull looked pretty good, while
claiming this was the first match he's
shot in years



Turkey on the range at Agarita Ranch

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Don Herbert (Hopalong) 210-602-6994

Rick Page 210-844-9362

Caliber	Weight	Config.	Price/500	Price/1000
.38	100	RNFP	32	64
	105	FP	33	66
	125	RNFP	35	70
	125	FP	35	70
	130	RNFP	36	72
	158	RNFP	39	77
	158	FP	39	77
	158	SWC	39	77
.380	100	RNFP	33	65
.38-55	245	RNFP	59	117
.41	215	SWC	49	98
.44	180	RNFP	41	81
	240	SWC	52	104
.44-40	200	RNFP	45	90
.45 COLT	160	RNFP	46	92
	180	RNFP	41	81
	200	RNFP	45	90
	250	RNFP	53	106
9MM	124	RN	35	70
	125	CN	35	70
40 S&W	180	FP	41	81
.45ACP	200	SWC	45	90
	200	RN	45	90
	230	RN	51	101
45-70	405	FPT	111	222

*Price increase because of higher cost of lead. Sorry for any inconvenience.