

AGARITA GAZETTE



A Chronicle of the Plum Creek Shooting Society



Agarita Ranch

May 2014

Lockhart, Texas

More Load Your Own

by Long Juan

Last month we discussed reloading components. This month we will discuss the reloading process and the equipment needed.

Assuming you are reloading used brass, the first step when you get home from the range is to inspect your brass. During your inspection, you should look for cracks, dents or other damage to the case. If the case is damaged, discard it. Also check to be sure it is the right caliber. For example, if you are reloading .45LC, you will be amazed how close in size a .44 Magnum or .44-40 case is. It works usually until you try to seat a .45 caliber bullet in the .44 case.

some, try it and then try something else if you are not happy with the results. Most of us are not trying to make the brass look new again, we are just trying clean off powder residue, dirt, etc. When getting a tumbler, be sure to get one that is big enough to hold the number of cases you want to clean at



Thumblers Tumbler

one time, but not too big to fit in your reloading area. I use a 30+ year old mid-size Thumblers Tumbler. It holds 200 .45

Editors Note: Your editor is on vacation. Full coverage of the just-completed Battle of Plum Creek annual match will be provided later this month, including posting of photos on the Plum Creek Shooting Society website. For now, enjoy this abbreviated edition of the Gazette and a few photos of the match on pages 6-8.

cases easily.

Once the brass is inspected, you should clean it. The simplest and quickest way is to use a tumbler with dry media. You can purchase both online, at most gun stores or outdoor stores like Cabela's. There are different kinds of media. I happen to prefer

walnut shells, but everyone has a different idea of what works best. Get

Once the brass is clean, you need to remove the spent primer. Before we go any further, it is time to talk about the rest of the equipment you will need for reloading. Remember we are talking about reloading at the basic level. There are many more pieces of equipment used for reloading, but they are not necessary to get started. In basic terms, you need a press and dies for the caliber(s) you will be loading. Let's start with the press. With the appropriate die

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No *President's Word* or *Long Juan Here* this month. The beginnings of a mustache last month were on **Wildcat Bob**. **El Sabre** was



first to identify correctly. He gets the free match. Others who guessed correctly: **L.W. Hannabass, Six Goin' South, Kit Carson, Kettleman** and **Nueces Slim**.



Find Delta Raider



Hereby mentioned in the dispatches for finding **Delta Raider** in last month's issue of the *Gazette* are: **Sterling Sage, El Sabre, Six Goin' South, Sheriff Robert Love, Artiman, Leo's Lady, Nueces Slim** and **Meadow Biscuit Slim**. If you didn't find **Delta Raider** last month, he was hidden in the belly of the beast (see above). 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!!

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installed, the press is used to decap (remove the spent primer), prime (install a new primer), drop the appropriate amount of powder, seat and crimp the bullet. I suggest you start with a single stage press like the RCBS Rock Chucker or Lee Challenger. Later you can move on to a turret or progressive press if you want more volume and speed. See for example the Dillon XL 650, which with experience will let you reload 800 or more rounds an hour. You will need a set of dies for each caliber you reload. The die set for pistol calibers (most of what cowboy action shooters reload) typically includes three or four dies. The Lee 4-Die pistol set includes a sizing die, a powder through expanding die, a bullet seating die and a factory crimp die. Other die sets sometimes combine expansion with resizing and crimping with seating. Powder is often dropped using a separate powder measure. Our discussion will use the Lee 4-die set as an example. I think Lee carbide dies are a great place to start, although I own dies from a number of manufacturers for use in different situations. A reloading press and dies can be purchased online, at most gun stores and at outdoor stores like Cabela's.



RCBS Rock Chucker

Let's start with de-capping and resizing. The case expands when fired. It needs to be resized to feed into the chamber when the reloaded cartridge is used (re-sizing). The primer was used when the round was fired. It needs to be removed (de-capping) and replaced. Following the instructions provided by the manufacturer, install the appropriate shell holder and sizing die on the press. Insert a clean case in the shell holder and move the press handle to raise the case into the die to punch out the spent primer and to re-size the case. Remember to set something up that will catch the spent primer that is removed. Voice of experience. Lower the case and take it out of the shell holder and place it in a reloading block. Repeat the process until you have de-capped and re-sized all of the brass you are planning to reload during the current session. Using a single-stage press, I usually reload 100-150 rounds at a time (enough for a single match).



A reloading press and dies can be purchased online, at most gun stores and at outdoor stores like Cabela's.

Our discussion is about reloading pistol-caliber cartridges with carbide dies. For other types of cartridges and dies, there are additional steps, e.g., you need to lubricate the brass case if you are not using carbide dies and carbide dies are limited to straight-sided, pistol cartridges.



Lee 4-Die Set



Lee Ram Prime

Now we need to install a new primer in each case. I use a Lee Ram Prime on the press most of the time. It makes seating easy, if not extremely fast. When I want to install primers while watching TV with **Powderkeg Patty**, I use a Sinclair Priming Tool. Similar tools are made by other manufacturers. Be sure to wear safety glasses when working with primers. It's not a bad idea to wear them anytime you are doing any phase of reloading.



Sinclair Priming Tool

Next comes the powder. Assuming you know what powder you will be using, the first step is to determine how much powder you are going to use in each case. That information comes from the reloading data discussed last month. It is critical to use the correct amount of powder. Too much or too little can cause problems. I usually start

Continued next page

with the minimum recommended amount of powder for the type and weight bullet I am using and the velocity I am trying to achieve. I try the minimum and then work my way up, being careful never to exceed the maximum recommended powder charge.



RCBS 502 Scale

You will need a scale of some sort. I still use a simple RCBS 502 reloading scale that I purchased more than 30 years ago. I have a digital scale that I use when reloading .45-70, .45-60 or .38-55 for long distance shooting. It is part of the RCBS ChargeMaster system that lets me drop powder with great accuracy. It is a great tool when accuracy is critical. For pistol-caliber cartridges, that degree of accuracy can be sacrificed for increased speed and convenience.

The simplest and least expensive way to drop powder in the case is with a scoop or dipper of the correct size. One comes with the Lee 4-die set. That works, but is slow and not particularly accurate. For almost all of my reloading, I use a Lee Pro Auto-Disk Powder Measure with the Lee powder through expanding die. Before dropping powder in the first case, I install the disk the instructions say will drop the amount of powder I want. Then I pour powder in the tank. With a primed case in the shell holder, I pull the handle on the press to drop the powder and expand or flare the case mouth to accept a bullet. Neat, simple and accurate. Once the powder has been dropped, the case is removed from the shell holder and placed back in the reloading tray. I



RCBS ChargeMaster System



Franklin Loading Tray

used the scale to check the first couple of powder drops each reloading session. You always need to check to be sure that powder was actually dropped. When you have completed a tray (usually 50 cases), look at all the cases from the top to ensure that all cases have powder and that the level appears to be the same in all cases. If there is no powder and you seat a bullet, you will likely get a squib when the round is fired.

Ask **Lucky Nickel**. If you double charge a case, it likely will burst when the round is fired. Damage to the gun is more than just probable and injury is more than a little possible. Ask **Jake Paladin**. Bottom line, safety is paramount when reloading. Check it once, check a second time and then check it a third time. An incorrect volume of powder in the case is the biggest safety issue you can run into when shooting reloaded cartridges.

We are getting close to the end. It's time to seat a bullet in each case. You will need to adjust the seating die to seat the bullet to the proper depth. With the die correctly adjusted, insert the case in the shell holder, place a bullet in the flared part of the case and raise the ram into the die to seat the bullet. Be careful not to spill the powder. Also be sure to insert the bullet right side up and as level as possible. Voice of experience here. Some seating dies also crimp the case, in which case additional adjustments are required beforehand, but the case is crimped in the same step as the bullet is seated. Just follow the manufacturer's instructions. I prefer to use one die for seating the bullet and a separate Lee Factory Crimp die (FCD) for crimping the case. The one step becomes two. The FCD not only provides a better crimp, it also ensures that the reloaded case is the correct size.

Once the bullet has been seated and the brass crimped, place the finished cartridge in a box or whatever you are

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using for cartridge storage until you are ready to shoot. I find it useful to keep a log of each reloading session. I record the caliber, primer manufacturer, the name and number of grains of powder and the bullet type and weight. As I change load recipes, I can look back in the log if I want to return to a previous recipe.

Before I conclude, I will say again that this article and the one last month just touch the basics. There is much more to learn than what we have discussed. There are many more tools and pieces of equipment that can be used when reloading. For example, as part of my case cleaning and inspection process, I use a tool to clean the primer pocket, another to chamfer the case mouth and yet another to make the flash holes uniform in size. But I digress.

If you are getting into reloading for the first time, I suggest that you read what you

can find about the process. Reloading books/manuals and the instructions that come with equipment are a good start. There is some good information on the web.

For example, you can find video instruction online. Just search for “reloading” on YouTube. You will find a plethora of information. Keep in mind that not everyone who posts on the web knows what they are talking about. If you have questions, ask others you know who already are into reloading.

In conclusion, try reloading. I can almost guarantee you will like it. It’s relaxing. It will save you money, even though it also takes time. If you are into some of the more esoteric cartridges, it will provide cartridges that you might not otherwise be able to shoot.



Dillon XL 650



Stories from Jake (Paladin that is): Army Camel Experiment

One of the wackier ideas in American history, the U.S. Camel Corps, was began in 1856 at Camp Verde, Texas. Reasoning that the arid southwest was a lot like the deserts of Egypt, then U.S. Secretary of War Jefferson Davis approved a plan to experiment with camels. The Army hoped the camels could travel farther and require less food and water than horses. The first thirty-three camels, procured in the Middle East, were landed at Indianola, Texas, in February 1856. Although the camels spat, regurgitated and defied orders - the experiment was generally considered a success. Camels proved their worth during an 1857 expedition to open a wagon road across Arizona from Fort Defiance to California. When the Civil War broke out, exploration of the west was

curtailed and Confederates captured Camp Verde. After the war, most of the Texas camels were sold (some to Ringling Brothers’ circus) and others escaped into the wild. The last reported sighting of a feral camel in the United States was in Texas in 1941. It seems unlikely that any descendants of the camels in the Camel Corps survive wild today in the southwest.



The Camp Verde Store between Comfort and Kerrville still stands as a reminder of camels in Texas

Early Photos from the Battle of Plum Creek 2014



Before heat got to Long Juan before the pre-shoot.
Chili Petin, Lefty Leo, Dragon Hill Dave
& Long Juan



Kid Ghost was a great
tomahawk-throw marshal



Wild Bunch shooters just before hammers down



We were pleased to be joined by Judge Roy Bean, SASS #1, and his wife, Justice Lily Kate, SASS #1000



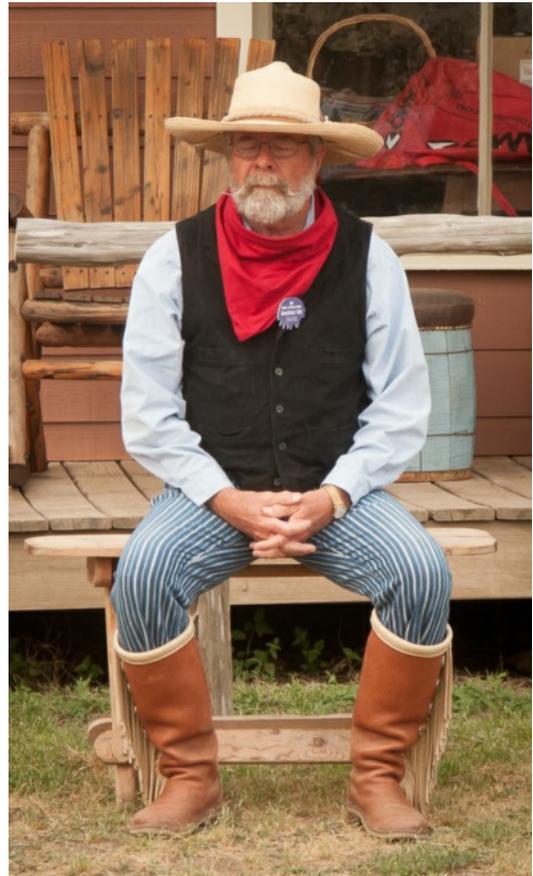
Chief Hides-in-Bushes, aka Dragon Hill Dave, get the match off to a “chopping” good start Friday morning.



Judge Roy Bean & Dragon Hill Dave visit with spectators from Denmark, Mary Anne and Mike, who are setting up a cowboy action shooting club near Copenhagen.



Brazos Belle and her pretty, pink 1911



Handlebar Bob in his pre-match, gamers' meditation

The Austin Light Artillery Battery and Patience get the match off to thumping loud start Saturday morning.



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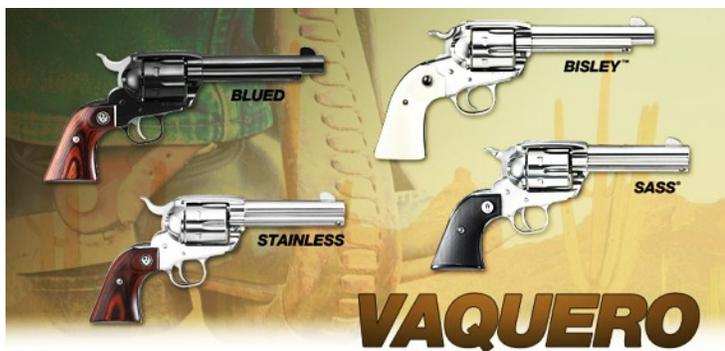
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Caliber	Weight	Config.	Price/500	Price/1000
.38	100	RNFP	32	64
	105	FP	33	66
	125	RNFP	35	70
	125	FP	35	70
	130	RNFP	36	72
	158	RNFP	39	77
	158	FP	39	77
	158	SWC	39	77
.380	100	RNFP	33	65
.38-55	245	RNFP	59	117
.41	215	SWC	49	98
.44	180	RNFP	41	81
	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.