I have carried a wide variety of 2” barreled revolvers over the years, mostly .38 Special or .357 Magnum caliber, in both five-shot and six-shot configurations. For simplicity, reliability and ability to function with a wide variety of loads, they can’t be beat. If you want a more emphatic cartridge, your choices get interesting. Years ago, I had a Colt Model 1917 .45 ACP revolver that had been given the “Fitz” treatment...barrel cut to 2-1/2”, grip rounded, hammer spur shortened, and best of all, the front of the trigger guard was removed. It was a fearsome looking beast, and no real fun to shoot. A more recent super-snubby was the S&W Model 500ES, a .500 Magnum X-frame with a 2-3/4” barrel. It was allegedly designed as part of a grizzly-country survival kit, but it was a toss-up as to whether you’d rather fire this gun or be eaten by the bear.

More realistically, there is a good compromise that provides more than adequate defensive capability plus acceptable recoil. It’s the .44 Special, a cartridge that’s been around since Teddy Roosevelt occupied the White House. Introduced in 1908 in the legendary S&W Triple Lock, the .44 Special achieved some notoriety in the 1970s when chambered in Charter Arms’ .44 Bulldog model. And just recently, Taurus USA introduced their five-shot Model 445 Ultra-Lite in .44 Special with a 2” barrel. Unlike earlier .44 snubbies, which were meant to be carried a lot and fired only in “gravest extreme,” the 445 Ultra-Lite is a pleasure to shoot, which means that practice will no longer be a chore.

Although the 445 weighs only 22 ounces, with an overall length of 7”, recoil is diminished considerably by Taurus’ proven Ribber Grip®. Its soft rubber ribs conform to your hand and do a spectacular job of cushioning recoil. Unlike the smaller caliber snubbies, the 445 features a grip that you can get your whole hand around, and doesn’t leave your little finger hanging out in space. The 445 is available