By Jerry Ahern, Photos by Sharon Ahern*

I've just been handling the latest and most practical version yet of one of my perennial favorite firearms, what used to be called the “AR-7,” but in recent times has been known as the “Henry U.S. Survival Rifle” (www.henryrepeating.com) and is now known as the “U.S. Survival AR-7.” There are new features added to this Henry rifle that debuted as the U.S. Air Force pilot’s survival rifle in 1959 and was made world famous in the early 1960s when Sean Connery used it as “James Bond” in the film version of “From Russia With Love.”

The new features are serious improvements to an already sensational design. The original AR-7, as conceived by Armalite Corporation, housed only one magazine when the rifle was disassembled to stow in its stock. Henry Repeating Arms was able to pack a spare magazine into the stock by slightly enlarging the cavity into which the receiver was nested when the rifle was disassembled, thus enabling the user to leave a loaded or empty magazine in the receiver and still have a magazine in the original magazine compartment. The latest version still only includes two magazines, but a third magazine – eight-round spares are readily available – can be housed in a new magazine receptacle within the buttstock. The prepared individual can have 24 rounds housed with the rifle, loaded in magazines and ready to go.

Additionally, there’s a new front sight insert that’s blaze orange and easy to spot. If you want optics, the newest version has a ridged receiver to facilitate mounting.

I keep a Henry U.S. Survival Rifle in the car at all times, along with a modest quantity of .22 LR ammunition. The Henry AR-7 takes up little room in the car and could be a true lifesaver in a pinch. Henry advises customers, “Don’t leave civilization without one.” I would amend that to say, “Don’t go anywhere without one, civilization or not.” I bought my first AR-7 more or less 40 years ago. Available in black or camouflage, the U.S. Survival AR-7 is essential gear.

A knife is essential gear, as well, of course. Some knives are general purpose, while others are quite purpose specific. Windlass Steelcrafts, through its Atlanta Cutlery (www.atlantacutlery.com) division, is offering a unique piece of equipment for clandestine carry of a fast-into-action, lockblade folding knife. The patented unit features a knife made from the always versatile 420 stainless steel and built into the back of a cellular telephone holster. The belt clip for the holster is part of the knife, clipping the cellular phone case to the belt or waistband or wherever. This is an ingenious design and even the holster for the cellular phone is well designed. You just can’t go wrong with this. A similar arrangement is available to law enforcement, with the knife being built into the back of the badge/shield carrier an officer might wear clipped to his or her belt or wear on a chain around the neck, as was popularized years ago in the Sylvester Stallone and Billy Dee Williams film “Nighthawks.”

Either the civilian or law-enforcement model of this handy, concealable knife could be a lifesaver. The patented design of this classic spear point knife with a 2” blade is quite ingenious. It operates as a frame lock. When the knife is closed, as you look at it from behind the phone holder, you will see a lever on the upper right, which is best described as a blade starter, and is generally referred to as a “trigger.” Pull this trig-