

Smith & True” Revolver Roundup

mer rested in one of the intercept notches between the five charging holes. Top-breaks were very popular in the waning decades of the 19th Century and opening decades of the 20th Century. My maternal grandfather’s sole handgun was a Hopkins & Allen revolver in .32 S&W. About two years ago, I acquired an early 20th Century Smith & Wesson top-break in the same caliber. With all three, one raises the rear portion of the top strap, to allow the hinged portion of the lower section of the frame, just ahead of the cylinder, to turn down or break open. Once the cylinder reaches the right position, the ejector star is activated, ejecting the cartridge cases. Breaking the action further returns the ejector star to the cylinder for loading.

I fired the best group I’ve ever fired with a Mini Revolver. I was shooting at reactive targets set up in an embankment on the other side of a small gorge, about 25 feet away. According to the *de-facto* rangemaster, a professional photographer and, therefore, a trained observer, all my shots were just a tad high over the reactive targets, essentially at uniform elevation and the five shots strung within a foot or less horizontally.

This would be terrible shooting – even for me – with a full-sized revolver, but was, for me, really good at such a distance with a Mini Revolver. I was using Winchester (www.winchester.com) Supreme .22 Winchester Magnum High Velocity JHPs. Recoil was, of course, nothing; that said, the revolver would rise in my hand, simply because the grip is so small. There is a working rear sight. It’s tiny, but it’s there. The front sight is adequate. The break-top mechanism and ejector star work reliably, allowing something impossible with traditional NAA Minis: a comparatively rapid reload. I had one case that initially stuck. There were no other problems.

The North American Arms Mini Revolvers are beautifully made, reliable last-ditch defenders.

If this Ranger were not one of what looks to be only 500 ever to be made, I’d seriously consider getting it engraved. Although I really like the NAA .22 Magnum Pug and the original 1-1/8” barrel LR model, and various other NAA minis, this Ranger is truly state-of-the-art. It’s a keeper.

I was equally hyped about trying out the 66 2-1/2” .357. I’d owned various K-Frame Smith &

Wessons over the years, and consider my Metalife (www.mahovskysmetalife.com) Custom 4” L-Frame 686 one of the finest handguns I own. But, I’d never tried the 66 2-1/2”.

Sharon and I drove to Augusta in late summer, bringing some trade goods in to Steve. At the time, Steve just didn’t have anything that appealed to me in the way of a handgun. He had some terrific new and used handguns and long guns, but nothing I really needed. I told Steve a few things in which I was interested he said he’d look for them.

A couple of weeks later, Steve mentioned he had some excellent used 66 2-1/2” revolvers. As we talked, Steve recounted how, in one of his early career activities, he’d carried the 19 2-1/2” as a hideout gun and really liked it, the 19 is the same gun, but blued instead of stainless. Steve knows I’m a fan of Crimson Trace (www.crimsontrace.com) LaserGrips and he suggested I’d probably like to replace the factory original stocks. Albeit I would have likely done that anyway, it was a great suggestion. He shipped the revolver to Curry Creek Trading Company (www.merchantcircle.com) in Jefferson, Georgia, my co-operating dealer.

With Winchester 110-grain JHP .357 Magnums in the cylinder, I tried the 66 2-1/2”, experiencing uniformly good results. My best shooting was on a silhouette, at about 21 feet or a little more, getting all six rounds into a lateral string, exactly where I was aiming. I found the single- and double-action pulls to be so perfect, it was as if the gun had been action tuned. My shooting on the silhouette target was with the laser off; but, with the laser on, the 66 2-1/2” performed equally as well. I had adjusted the laser’s

factory setting, bringing it back from 50 feet to something closer to 30.

The 12-year-old young man got to shoot the 66 2-1/2” with .38 Special loads, under the watchful eye of another shooter who

had been working with him throughout. He liked the Crimson Trace LaserGrips so much, I later suggested to his mother that she might want to get him a set for Christmas!

The revolver, be it one produced decades ago or today, is the epitome of “tried and true,” whether one uses it for plinking fun, for sport or in deadly earnest.



The Ranger shown with the Winchester .22 Mag ammo Ahern used in shooting.



Ahern’s three favorite NAA Minis. From left: the 1-1/8” .22 LR Mini, the .22 Magnum Pug and the .22 Magnum Ranger.