



My Sidearm

By Marko Kloos

Smith & Wesson, Model 13, three-inch heavy barrel. This is what rides on my belt when I'm dressed, and what's sitting on the nightstand when I'm not.

It's not a very remarkable or valuable gun. They made tens of thousands of them between the mid-1970s and the mid-1990s. The backstrap and the underside of the trigger guard are worn down to a sort of dull-gray kind of color, and there's wear on the barrel sides at the muzzle end that comes from holstering the gun a few thousand times over the twenty-five years since it left the factory. It was made in 1983, right in the not-so-stellar Bangor Punta period at Smith & Wesson. Except for the Pachmayr grips, it's bone-stock. Book value for a Model 13 in this condition is right around \$300. It only holds six rounds, and it doesn't have attachment points for lights or lasers. The fixed sights don't glow in the dark, and it's made of nothing but plain carbon steel, with all the weight and maintenance penalties inherent in that material.

However, when I pull this gun out of its holster, it feels so familiar to my hand that body and tool essentially become one once my fingers wrap around that Pachmayr grip, and my trigger finger indexes on the frame above the trigger guard. I can reload the gun from a speed-loader or a strip without looking at it, since my

fingers can index frame and cylinder, eject the empties, and charge the six holes in the cylinder without me having to pay direct attention to that little dance. When I pick it up, it feels right in a way no other gun does.

When we talk about guns for personal defense, we often get tied up debating capacity, caliber, size, auto-vs.-revolver, 1911-vs.-Glock, .45-vs.-9mm, and a hundred other arguments where people try to convince each other of the superiority of one over the other on the basis of

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paper statistics and anecdotes. What seldom gets consideration in those debates are the intangibles: how the gun feels and points in the hand of its owner, how the sight picture is as familiar to him as the sight of his own face in the mirror, how the weapon is such a synergy of form and function

in his hand that he can nail empty shotgun shells off the berm at 25 yards with it, or how its reliability and simplicity inspires confidence in him that is unmatched by anything else ever found in a gun store display case.

It may not be much to look at, and its monetary value may only be a few hundred dollars, but you'd have to be nuts to think that its owner would let go of it at any price, for any reason. Some things cannot be adequately quantified by numbers on a spreadsheet, or valued by mere legal tender.