

20 Ahern Under the Gun: Hope for t



Large photo: Ahern's Mini-14 with the Butler Creek folding stock, a ProMag magazine and an ordinary carrying sling that Ahern has had for well over a quarter of a century. **Inset photos:** 1) Ahern demonstrating the folding stock, starting in the closed position. 2) Folding open the stock. 3) Ahern shoulders the weapon. 4) Ahern grasps the pistol grip with his left hand, freeing the stock with his right so that he can fold it closed. 5) Back to the closed position.

By Jerry Ahern, Photos by Sharon Ahern

Making a firearm more versatile in these days of uncertain politics, uncertain future and certain shortages only makes good sense. Back in 1999, as part of revving up for the possibility of some or all of the dire Y2K predictions coming to pass, I bought a Ruger Mini-14, stainless, with a nice looking hardwood stock. The Mini-14 was and is a bargain in .223 rifles and has the advantage of looking rather innocuous to the layman. I left the rifle just as it came from the factory – until 2009. Years ago, I'd had another Mini-14, but with a factory folding stock. Ruger stopped offering that option, but I had always seen it as appealing. A folding stock detracts not at all from a rifle in such a caliber's functional qualities, but adds greatly in convenience and portability. I wanted a folding stock just like that original Ruger version – or, as close to it as possible – for my current Mini-14. No longer was I interested in the rifle having an innocuous appearance. So, I started looking around.

I found just what I was looking for from Butler Creek (butlercreek.com). Butler Creek offers a wide range of replacement stocks, of course, among these blued and stainless folding models. Their stainless steel folding stock for the Ruger Mini-14 was perfect for my needs.

The typical Mini-14 of the type I own – nowadays, you'd have to buy the Ranch Rifle – was sold with a hardwood stock and a black upper handguard. I never saw the combination of brown wood and that black handguard as being attractive. The stainless steel has a matte finish and isn't very reflective at all, which is good in this context. The stainless steel butt portion of the Butler Creek stock is a pretty close match to the stainless steel of the Ruger. The black plastic portions of the stock make a nice color match to that black handguard. The butt stock portion has a practical rubber recoil pad that would do a good job with recoil absorption.

The stock locks in both the closed and open positions. To open the stock, depress the top of the hinge, where the folding stock turns out. There is a healthy sized spring here. To close the stock,

you can do the same thing or just grasp the pistol grip in one hand and push the entire buttstock slightly downward to release it. The stock pivots quite easily.

The stock's fore end and the pistol grip have good looking and practical checkered panels for added tactility. The angle of the pistol grip is quite natural and one is afforded an easy reach to the trigger.

The original Mini-14 has a length of 37-1/4" and runs 7-1/4 lbs empty. With the Butler Creek stock in place, you're looking at 37-1/4" overall length as well. With the stock folded, length is down to 28". Weight with the Butler Creek stock in place is 7 lbs, 10 oz, sans magazine. This is very little additional weight.

The portability issue afforded by a folding stock cannot be denied. In some circumstances, my rifle's change in appearance might likely be interpreted as imparting to it a "menacing" look. That was not the intent; but people who feel menaced when merely looking at someone's firearm are going to feel menaced anyway. I use an aftermarket ProMag (promag-industries.com) high-capacity magazine with my folding stock Mini-14. Black as well, it's at once practical and adds a nice cosmetic match to the rifle. ProMag, of course, is widely respected for the quality of their product.

One last feature of the Butler Creek replacement stock is that is set up to accept Uncle Mike's Quick Detachable sling swivels. That is not a big shock, since Butler Creek and Uncle Mike's are part of the same corporate family.

Weapons selection is a serious business and always has been. The Brits, for all their silliness about civilian firearms ownership, take their choice of military weapons quite seriously. Such is certainly the case with the Blackhawk UKSFK, the knife Blackhawk (blackhawk.com) is making for the United Kingdom Special Forces. The UKSFK knife was designed for this specific purpose. It will be recalled that the Brits have some rather special tastes in "commando" knives. One of the most famous and controversial knives in the world is the