

60 A KEL-TEC P32...FC

By Sydney Tanner and Jim Nosker

A self-defense weapon's purpose is to promptly stop a threat, when that threat is an individual capable of causing you death or great bodily harm. As such, the ultimate self-defense weapon would be a long gun – neither a 12-gauge shotgun nor a .30 caliber rifle is too much. But since they don't work well for discreet carry, we generally rely on handguns, despite their markedly reduced power.

It would seem to stand to reason then – all things being equal – that when we select a handgun for self defense, we want one with plenty of power. But all things are NOT equal, and that's precisely why plenty of downright small handguns are finding their way into people's pockets and purses.

People's physical limitations often affect their choice of firearms. Years of going to public ranges have led us to suspect that such limitations should be taken into account even more than they are. We've witnessed people trying to master firearms that were just too much for them. No weapon does any good if it's not with you when you need it, or if you can't accurately deliver its firepower when the chips are down.

With those thoughts in mind, several concerns quickly became apparent when Sydney began shopping for a personal handgun. On bad days, her arthritis, shoulder injury and an improperly healed old fracture of her forearm limit how much she can lift more than any doctor ever will. She's also limited to how long and how heavy of a trigger pull she can manage. Trigger pulls need to be light enough and short enough for her to accomplish even on days when her hands don't want to work.

It didn't take more than a couple of trips to dealers' gun counters for the majority of the handguns in stock to be eliminated. Revolvers were mostly too heavy and their trigger pulls too long. Most available metal-framed autoloaders were too heavy. Notable readily available exceptions were Baby Brownings in .25 ACP; Beretta and Taurus .22s, .25s, and .32s; Ruger's LCP; and Kel-Tec's P32 and P3AT.

While even a .25 ACP or .22 LR is better than no firearm at all, there's no reason to settle for a caliber so small when anything more powerful is available. That focused our attention on Beretta's .32 Tomcat, Kel-Tec's P32 and P3AT, and Ruger's LCP. A couple of rounds of .380 ACP downrange eliminated the P3AT and Ruger LCP from the running, leaving the P32 and the Tomcat. Due to its smaller size and lighter weight, the P32 was the front-runner.

According to Kel-Tec, the P32 is the smallest and lightest .32 ACP pistol ever made. We could find nothing that contradicted that. Empty, the pistol weighs six and a half ounces, or about 44 percent of what the Beretta 3032 Tomcat tips the scales at. A loaded seven-round magazine adds another 2.8 ounces. Carry the pistol with one in the chamber and a full magazine, for a total of eight rounds,

and you're still only lugging about nine and half ounces. That's just two-thirds of what the Tomcat weighs empty.

Roughly, the P32 weighs about a third of what a steel-framed snubby .38 Special revolver or a Walther PPK/S .32 ACP pistol does, while only being about half as thick as the wheelgun. It weighs less than a North American Arms mini-revolver or the discontinued Walther TPH, both chambered in .22 LR.

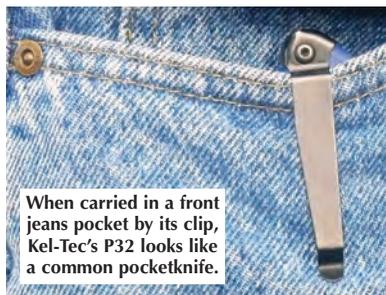
In every dimension, it's considerably smaller than common .32 autoloaders, such as the PPK/S and Mauser HSC and it also comes out on top when compared to other tiny .32s such as the Seecamp LWS, NAA Guardian and Cobra CA 32. The Seecamp and NAA Guardian are a little shorter, but the Kel-Tec is thinner,

weighs less and costs considerably less, plus it carries one more round. While the Cobra costs even less than the Kel-Tec, it's larger in every dimension and it's alloy frame makes it the heaviest of the group of tiny .32s.

With perhaps the exception of the Walther and Mauser, none of these pocket guns have sights anyone would really be happy about. Therefore, the Kel-Tec's notch on the rear of the slide and little bump on the front is neither a surprise nor



Kel-Tec's P32 with pocket clip compared to a Gerber ATS E-Z Out, which is 4.5 inches long.



When carried in a front jeans pocket by its clip, Kel-Tec's P32 looks like a common pocketknife.