Reviewed by Peter Caroline

Master trainer Clint Smith once remarked, “Your carry gun should be comforting, not comfortable.” For those of us who find it comfortable to carry a small .380 auto or .38 snubby, this is not a comforting statement. It is, however, gospel. And it does give some serious motivation to those of us who always carry, to at least gain some proficiency with the larger handgun calibers and the larger handguns that go with them.

For many years, America’s favorite large carry gun has been the Model 1911 .45. Like many males my age, my first experience with that pistol was in the Army. It was a serious disappointment. I had been told, for years, “That Army .45 is a horrendous kicker; it will knock you on your ass!” I braced myself for my first shot, and squeezed the trigger. My first reaction was, “That was it!!” My coach said, “Eight ring at 10 o’clock.” This was not quite the rite of passage that I thought it would be.

Since that first exposure, I’ve had an enjoyable relationship with the .45 ACP. And I’ve owned a lot of pistols, and revolvers, in that caliber. At the 2012 SHOT Show, I stopped by the CZ-USA booth. They always have lots of neat stuff, and this year was no exception. I spotted one handgun that seemed like it might be the best of all possible worlds, the CZ 97B. This is basically a CZ 75, but larger and chambered for .45 ACP. I’ve had a CZ 75 for years. Great gun with super ergonomics, but I’d prefer something with a bit more authority than a 9mm Parabellum. The CZ 97B is just that. It does everything that the CZ 75 does, just bigger and louder. I handed over a copy of my FFL and requested a sample for review.

It took a few months to get the CZ 97B. Early on, there had been some feeding issues with “flying ashtray” type hollow points, but the CZ people got it ironed out. I opened the box, and my first reaction was, “Gawd, that is BIG!!” Actually, the CZ 97B is about 1/4” shorter than a