Ahern Under the Gun: Is it Time to Upgrade Your Gear?

By Jerry Ahern, Photos by Sharon Ahern

These days, with all the political and economic uncertainty in the world, it’s the wise person who will upgrade his individual defensive equipment when the opportunity presents itself. As anyone who knows me will attest, I am not a shotgunner. That said, I have a Remington (remington.com) 870 12 gauge 2-3/4” that I’ve owned for close to 25 years. I cannot remember the last time I fired it, but it has to be at least a dozen years ago – probably longer. It started out as an ordinary 18-inch barrel police shotgun that I got in a cross-country trade through FFL holders with my old friend Sid Woodcock. I added the extended magazine tube. Then, I sent it out to another of my old friends, Lynn “Trapper” Alexiou at Trapper Gun (586-776-7581), writer, pioneering gun video producer, gunsmith, spring maker and refinisher. Trapper applied his superb satin nickel finish to the Remington, to guard against rust. I’ve had various stock arrangements on the weapon, but eventually settled on no buttstock at all, using the Pachmayr (pachmayr.com) “Vindicator” kit instead, which consists of a Pachmayr Grip style pistol grip that replaces the buttstock and a matching fore-end.

The shotgun stayed that way for many, many years – until just two weeks ago, as this is written. I acquired a Surefire (surefire.com) Model 618LFG Six Volt LED Tactical Light. My son-in-law, Danny, was over, and he and I had a couple of gun-related projects on tap, one of which was to install the Surefire unit. The first thing to do after verifying for an unloaded condition was to release what I’ll call the barrel band that supports the extended magazine tube which actually comes out better than 1/4 inch beyond the shotgun. Next up was to loosen and remove the nut holding the extended magazine tube in place. SureFire supplies a tool that enables you to get the barrel clear of the original magazine tube and out of the action. Once you’ve done that, simply slide the old fore end unit off and put the new fore end on. Reassemble the weapon. With the 870, however, we noted that because of the extended magazine and the LED unit that is part of the new fore end, the prudent thing was to move what I call the barrel band further forward. When I had Trapper refinish the shotgun, he also, kindly, ported it for me, with a series of small holes, two rows each, on either side of the barrel. Moving this barrel band forward covers a few of these holes, but doing so was unavoidable. Once the fore end was in place, we put the batteries into the light and were ready to go. On the right hand side of the unit, there are two switches. These are master on and off switches. Push the forward switch on the right hand side. Now, as you would hold the pump normally for a right-hander, use your left thumb to depress the forward switch on the left side of the unit. That turns on the light and makes a really interesting picture on the wall when the sling swivel drops down in front of it! When you don’t want the light on anymore, push the rear switch on the left hand side. When you know that the light will not be needed, as in setting the weapon aside empty, push the rear switch on the right hand side and the light cannot be activated.

If it sounds complicated, it isn’t. The LED puts out 80 lumens and has an approximate run time of two and one-half hours.

In addition to the model for the Remington 870, Surefire also offers models for similar Winchester and Mossberg pump shotguns, although the installation procedure is a bit more complicated. If you’re familiar with your weapon, though, you won’t find it a problem.

Adding powerful illumination to your defensive shotgun gives the weapon increased versatility. The powerful light can disorient an attacker and may assist in scaring off or subduing an attacker without having to fire a shot. The 870, equipped as it is, is a handily operated defensive tool for the home or RV, with a seven-round magazine capacity and a protective finish, a weapon short enough to be wielded in confined spaces. Remington and Surefire are names to count on.

A lot of people count on the full-size .45 auto, the 1911A1, and its variants. While perusing a firearms publication not long ago, I noticed an advertisement for Pacific Canvas & Leather Co., Inc. (pacificcanvassandleather.com); I was attracted by the use of nicely done period-looking sketch art, rather than photos. And, here was a holster company I’d never heard of! I saw a number of interesting items in the ad, including a