

FEW PISTOLEROS CAN resist the appearance of newly designed or converted handguns. Most avid shooters have in mind design concepts or modifications to basic handguns that would improve functioning or make the pieces more individual.

Customizing has emerged as a significant sub-industry in the gun world, although the actual numbers of guns given full-house treatment for any reason are actually small. Cost is a major

factor. Custom pistolsmiths have come out to show their wares and a whole crop now produce guns and modification jobs to satisfy varying sets of tastes and needs.

Such a shop is Spokhandguns, Inc. (E. 1911 Sprague Ave., Spokane, Washington 99202) that has interesting treatments for the Model 41 Smith & Wesson. Indeed, even the lowly .22 rimfire is now getting major modification treatment.

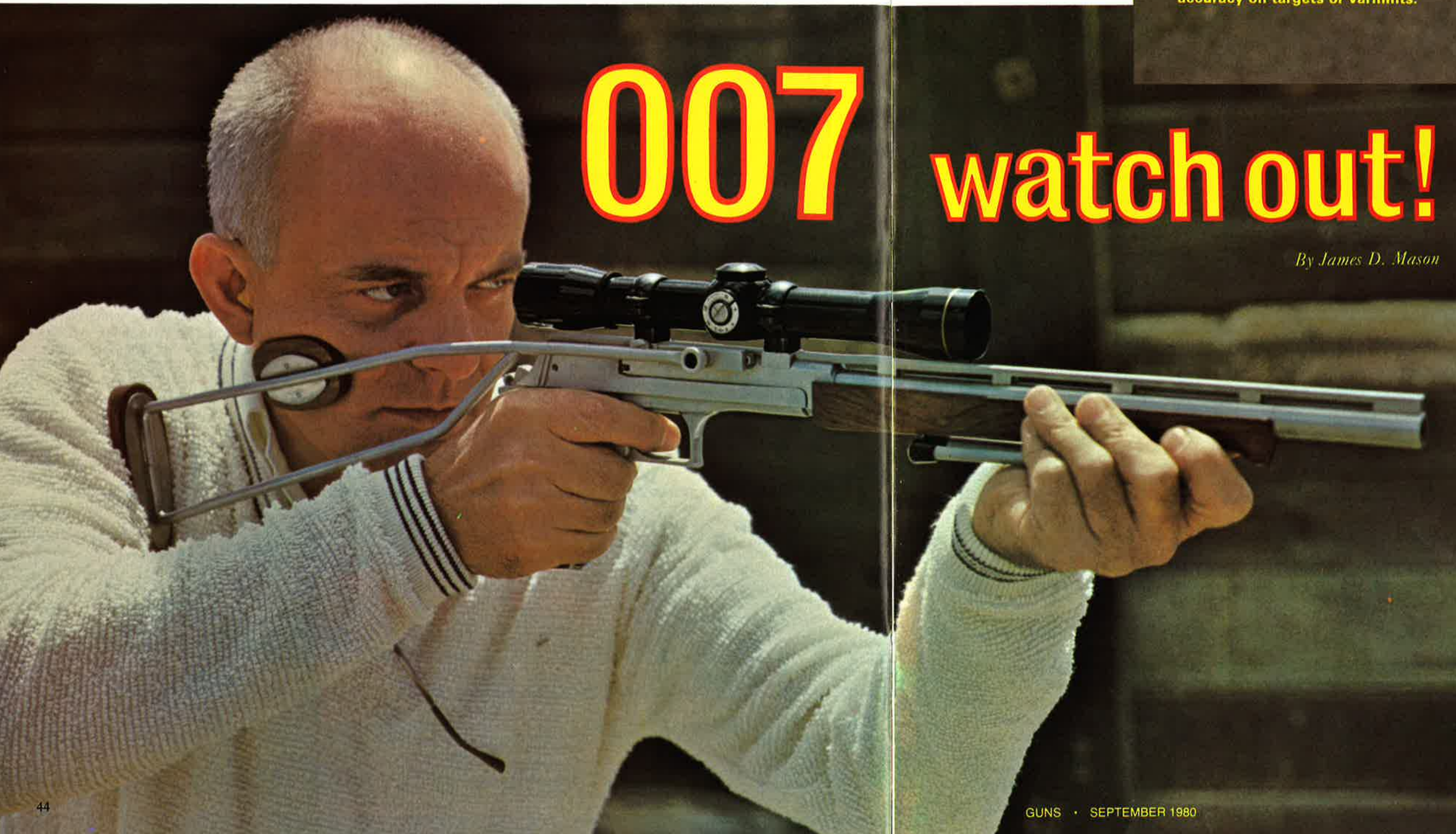
Vern Ewer and Ed Christensen are the smithys that ply their skills on behalf of discerning handgunners. They make two conversions that produce very slick pieces of hardware for field use.

S&W stopped making their short, light field barrel a few years back. That was a shame. The M41 is an excellent field .22 auto with its precise handling and reliability. The factory stocks are a bit "horny," but a little

Spokhandguns Creates S&W M41 Conversions To Satisfy The Man From UNCLE In All Of Us!



Spokhandguns standard M41 conversion makes a great hunting sidearm; while the carbine can provide excellent long-range accuracy on targets or varmints.



By James D. Mason

adroit sanding gives them a decent girth and more casual shape. Installing Herrett's trainer stocks, a shooter virtually duplicates the handhold of the .45 ACP.

The light, short M41 barrel was a bit on the light side, putting the center of gravity a bit too far back in the hand. The 5-inch heavy Bull target barrel does just the opposite; tends to give the gun a bit too much muzzle weight for fast handling afield. So here is where Spokhandguns enters the picture.

Their basic field conversion consists of a 4½-inch cut-back and milled down heavy target barrel that puts the center of gravity just ahead of the trigger guard with optimal mass forward to stabilize the muzzle. The combination does *not* make the gun slow to handle, however. The regular slide is milled down at the rear end to expose the hammer; not enough material is removed to interfere with momentum mechanics of the autoloading cycle. Rear sights are modified to provide a good sharp image to the aiming eye. Front blades incorporate a yellow bead.

The safety lever is one of the most outstanding improvements on the Spokhandguns conversion. It has a very functional pear-shaped thumb lever, grooved for non-slip contact. Safety action is positive and easily worked with one hand, making it very

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New Grips For TC

Thompson/Center's Contender is sporting a new look for 1980. Both grips and forends are redesigned to esthetically compliment the pistol and to improve the overall handling ability of the firearm. Available in either left or right hand models, grips are equipped with a long flowing thumb rest plus finger notching to provide maximum control when the pistol is under recoil and to prevent canting. All wood is selected American Walnut. The forends have a racy, slim semi-beavertail styling. Also there's a new, improved rear sight that "stays put" under recoil.

New calibers such as the .223 Remington have been added and new barrel combinations, particularly in Bull Barrel versions, are now available. Consult our new No. 7 Catalog for details. It's available free of charge by writing to: Thompson/Center Arms, Farmington Road, Rochester, New Hampshire 03867.

normal American products, and, of course, the products of Jaeger's shop. In addition to firearms, the shop also offers outdoor clothing, books, cutlery, ammunition, reloading supplies, optics, gun leather, and most everything else a sportsman might desire. A gift shop is included in the operation with such items as fine crystal glassware, sporting prints, and other such items.

I know of no shop in the United States that is better equipped to satisfy the needs of the sportsman. From blanks of French walnut costing several hundred dollars each, to a box of .22 long rifle ammunition, Paul Jaeger has it. From engraving, to stock making, to bluing, to fixing the safety on a single barrel shotgun, Paul Jaeger can do it.

A final facet of the Paul Jaeger, Inc. operation, a facet that is unfortunately missing in many operations around the US, is a sincere desire to provide the customer with the best possible workmanship, at an honest price, and exactly what the customer wants. Dietrich Apel and his highly qualified crew go out of their way to insure that the needs and wants of the customer are satisfied. I know of no greater compliment that can be paid than that.

Spokhandguns

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desirable for field service. Factory safety design and operation for field autoloaders (particularly on .22's) usually is most abominable. There are a number of design faux pas committed in the name of safety levers. Many holes in shooters' legs and feet can be avoided with adequate safety discipline. The manual safeties on most pistols are so poorly designed that they discourage their proper use by most shooters.

The finish on this M41 conversion is an attractive matte hardchrome plate. This low reflective white metal finish is very popular today and gives an upgraded aesthetic look that makes the gun appear like it was made from stainless steel. Besides having good looks, the Spokhandguns conversion is practical and corrosion-resistant for field use.

The big news from Spokhandguns is a 16½-inch stocked pistol/carbine conversion. Americans are not used to

this configuration, which requires a 16-inch minimum barrel length on a pistol to make it legally into a rifle. Adding a shoulder stock, the long barrel conversion has to measure 26½-inches overall (minimum) to qualify as a rifle with the BATF.

Spokhandguns fits a barrel extension into the original foreshortened barrel body on the M41. This whole assembly is then sleeved with a Douglas air gauged .22 rim-fire liner. A vent rib and scope mounts top off the assembly.

The carbine model shown here has a detachable tubular stock, that attaches to the frame by a gun screw with mating block-and-channel arrangements. Current practice at Spokhandguns is to provide a stock extension made integral with the barrel assembly; mounting the carbine barrel includes the attached stock, making it BATF legal.

Some modified S&W parts are not recognizable, such as a squared-off trigger guard and a solid straight back strap on the handgrip. All wood parts are Coco Bolo and are nicely shaped and finished. The carbine has a small collapsible metal bipod attached to the forend, convenient for steady resting.

Europeans have used stocked sporting pistol/carbines for better than a century. Shoulder stocked handguns were never too popular in the U.S., where short rifle/carbine configurations were more vogue. The lever action Model 66, Model 73, and Model 92, are all examples of the American style carbine. All these guns were chambered for pistol cartridges and did yeoman's service in the West where they were generally considered more practical and serviceable than pistol/carbines.

The novelty of a stocked pistol/carbine conversion is apparent and its appeal is great although the market would be limited. The stock gives a new feeling of control during shooting, but its light weight does not detract much from the mobility of the handgun configuration. A good many shooters would be favorably impressed with the pistol/carbine design if they had the chance to try that particular combination. The shoulder stock is a necessity for using a scoped handgun effectively for "offhand" shooting situations.

The telescopic sight is quite effective for deliberate, controlled shooting. Using the carbine makes one feel

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like a character out of a James Bond spy caper. This "Field Combo" shoots small, consistent groups! Using Remington Hi-Speed rounds, ten shot, dime-sized groups were registered at 25 yards. Accuracy tended to fade after 30 to 40 rounds; cleaning the bore and breech surfaces restored consistent grouping.

Custom pistol conversions don't come cheap. Whether for functional or aesthetic improvement, a lot of skilled pistolsmithing goes into each job. Prices will run over \$500 for the field conversion, and \$1500 is the minimum for a carbine changeover. Prices and delivery (with the expected long wait) are on quotation.

Vern and Ed will probably come up with many new and exciting custom guns in the future. They like new ideas and have the expertise to determine the feasibility of a project and follow it through to completion. If you have an idea for a handgun conversion, and the buck it will take to have it done by top craftsmen, you won't go wrong with Spokhandguns.

.357 MAG = Rams

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with no crimp and we load and fire the revolver as a single shot to keep from pulling the bullets in the other chambers on recoil.

NOTE: The loads listed above were developed for specific pistols and anyone wishing to use these loads should reduce the powder charge by 10 percent and build up the charge in small increments, while monitoring the spent cases for pressure signs. Pistols are individuals, one pistol may thrive on a load which will cause excessive pressures in another.

For the shooter who thinks he would like to get into silhouette shooting, but doesn't feel he has a suitable pistol, I would strongly recommend the Thompson/Center Contender with a 10 inch bull barrel chambered for the .357 Smith & Wesson Magnum. The Thompson Contenders are competition proven to be strong, accurate, reliable and they are inexpensive to buy and maintain.

If you have a weekend open grab a .357 and try the iron targets. Silhouette shooting is the first legitimate year round Magnum pistol sport and it's fun!!!!

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