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The “DT” Turnbull Restoration single-action .44 Russian/S&W Special features color case frame and hammer and ivory stocks. Below, the .45 Colt is fitted with a 5.5-inch barrel, stag-horn stocks, color case frame and Bisley-style hammer with mid-coverage engraving. Photo by G. Hudson.

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through premature wear and loosening. I would suggest cutting that load by 1.5 grains to a maximum of 23.0 grains of Hodgdon H-110 with the 300-grain Hornady XTP bullet seated to the lower cannelure/crimp groove for an overall cartridge length of around 1.74 to 1.75 inches.

As to priming, try both standard and magnum and see which is giving the best results with the powder(s) you are using. Regardless, choose a primer with a cup constructed to handle the 37,500-psi pressures the 10mm Auto can generate.

I have not had any experience handloading the 10mm Auto case with small primer pockets. I did contact a Federal Cartridge technician, who assured me the capacity is more or less the same as cases with large primer pockets. Data should be interchangeable but be sure to start 10 percent below maximum listed loads. As to priming, try both standard and magnum and see which is giving the best results with the powder(s) you are using. Regardless, choose a primer with a cup constructed to handle the 37,500-psi pressures the 10mm Auto can generate.

For use in the Colt Anaconda .44 Magnum, the 300-grain Hornady XTP should be seated to the lower crimp groove when charged with 23.0 grains of Hodgdon H-110.
Q: I can't seem to find the reference, but I recall that you mentioned somewhere that your sons used the .250 Savage on deer. Have you any experience handloading that cartridge? If so, can you suggest a couple of powder charges with the 100-grain Barnes Triple-Shock X-Bullet? I am using my dad’s Savage Model 99 that is about 40 years old. Thanks in advance for your help, and keep publishing the best gun magazine available today!

– B.D., Boise ID

A: In my own Savage Model 99 .250 Savage, I developed a load containing 34.0 grains of Hodgdon H-414 with the Barnes Triple-Shock and worked up to a maximum charge of 36.5 grains, which was the most accurate load tried. The load was assembled in a Winchester case, capped with a CCI BR2 primer and seated to an overall length of 2.464 inches. According to my notes, groups ran 1.1 to 1.5 inches, and pressures were maximum in the Savage.

Q: I've been reading several letters concerning the .41 Special and have begun to have my .41 Special built, but it will be on a Smith & Wesson L-Frame Model 686. My reason was if I were...
going to carry a large frame in .41, I could just download the magnum. The L-Frame would be neat, but I am afraid it will suffer the same fate of the 696 in .44 Special. I was wanting to load a 220-grain bullet to around 1,000 fps. Would the L-frame handle this or should I just scrub the project? What is your take on the .41 Special?

I enjoy your writings a lot. Thanks.

– D.L., via e-mail

A: I agree with you, as there is really no need for a .41 Special being built on a large frame revolver, as the .41 Magnum would offer greater versatility with full-power or heavy loads, or can be fueled with midrange or light target loads. Your idea of having one built on a Smith & Wesson L-Frame Model 686 is excellent (It was first converted as long as 25 years ago.) and will handle a 220-grain bullet driven 1,000 fps.

Judging from the mail I receive on the .41 Special, there is substantial interest. I think it is a great cartridge, but its commercial success would be dependent on being offered in the correct guns and with appropriate factory fodder. I would like to see the gun strong enough to drive 200- to 220-grain bullets 1,250 to 1,300 fps, with a midrange load in the 950- to 1,000-fps range. Thus loaded it would prove versatile enough for hunting deer-sized game or self-defense applications.

The medium-sized Smith & Wesson L-Frame converts well to .41 Special, a cartridge that has promise.
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Many shooters have received a bad case of “sticker shock” when shopping for ammunition, resulting in a surge in handloading tool sales (according to RCBS, Lyman, Hornady and Redding). Likewise, components such as bullets have risen significantly in price, limiting the savings. For example commercial bullet casters are reporting a five times price increase for lead alloys in just the past three years. Most metals are in a similar price mode with jacketed bullets from Speer, Sierra, Nosler and Hornady taking substantial price hikes. This has encouraged many shooters and handloaders to begin casting bullets to save money.

While meeting with Tom Griffin of Lyman Products at the 2008 SHOT Show, he commented to the effect that they have recently seen a huge increase in bullet casting moulds and equipment sales. Casting bullets to save money is a great idea, and bullets of proper design, alloy and quality can offer outstanding accuracy, minimal barrel wear, great terminal performance on game and will achieve greater velocities than a jacketed bullet of the same weight. It is also gratifying to use a favorite sixgun to fire a cloverleaf group, drop a pronghorn buck or roll a tin can along at 75 yards with handloads using bullets you made. And in the event that commercial bullets were not readily available, having a supply of lead ready to produce bullets is comforting. For the above reasons, I have long been an advocate of bullet casting.

I don’t know how many times I have heard shooters comment: “Oh, I don’t want to cast bullets . . . it’s too messy.” or “It’s a hot chore.” or “It’s too much work.” My first thought is that they have never cast a bullet, as it is none of the above. Now, don’t laugh, but I would liken it to fishing. It is a time to relax and ponder, a quiet time if you will. In my younger years, I often set aside a day to cast from 5:00 A.M. until long after dark. All metals were
Sixgun Moulds and Loads

Standards . . .
Past and Present
previously alloyed for various moulds and applications, and two, 20-pound electric pots were run to keep pace while running multiple single-, double- and four-cavity “gang” moulds. This was productive, as at the end of the day, many thousands of bullets were piled up and ready for sizing.

Today, however, usually only one or two hours are spent casting at one time. In this manner other daily work and duties can be performed in addition to casting. If performed on a regular basis, this will usually keep me caught up with my shooting/bullet needs. This is by no measure difficult, but in contrast is enjoyable, a time to kick mental gears into neutral for an hour or two. If you want to save money, take up bullet casting, or “fishing” without all the mess. You will no longer be at the mercy of bullet designs offered by commercial casters, and there is complete control over alloy, bullet size, lubricant and quality.

**Lyman Products Corp.**

The Ideal/Lyman company (today known as Lyman Products Corp.) has been offering bullet moulds and casting accessories since at least as early as 1884. Company founder John Barlow sold the Ideal Manufacturing Company to the Marlin Firearms Company in 1910, which was eventually sold to the Lyman family in 1925. The Lyman family played an important role in modernizing the company, helping handloaders make the transition from loading black-powder cartridges to smokeless powders. Keep in mind that black-powder cartridges were difficult to overload, as they could be stoked with a compressed charge (without a scale) then topped with an appropriate cast bullet, resulting in a safe load. Smokeless powders, used in either black-powder cartridges or mod-
ern smokeless cartridges, required more finesse and education, without which they could be potentially dangerous. As a result Lyman aggressively designed bullets and published reloading manuals to help educate shooters on how to assemble and correctly use load data. By midyear 2008, the Lyman 49th Reloading Handbook will be available and promises to be the most comprehensive to date.

Lyman currently offers a large selection of moulds to produce rifle and pistol bullets, along with casting furnaces, bullet sizer and lubricator, H&I sizing dies and all the accessories for producing top-notch bullets from start to finish. Pistol and revolver moulds are made of suitable steel and are available in one-, two- and four-cavity versions.

In many instances, Lyman moulds and bullet designs have become classics, a standard reference that others are often compared to. Perhaps the most popular line of cast sixgun bullets of all time was designed by Elmer Keith for Lyman (Gun-sight) during the 1920s and 1930s and are commonly known today as “Keith” bullets. Another excellent bullet is the Thompson-designed semiwadcutter (SWC) style that features a gas check, generally shoots well and has likewise become a favorite of many sixgunners. And there are additional designs that are worthy choices for revolvers and pistols.

**Lyman Cast Bullet Loads for the .38 Special and .357 Magnum**

After previously designing a .44-caliber bullet in 1928, about 1930 Keith designed two Lyman bullets for the .38 Special. Elmer was an advocate of power, as he had been loading the Colt Single Action Army and Smith & Wesson .38/44 Outdoorsman (N-Frame) revolvers to substantially increase velocities over factory fodder, which played an influencing role for the development of the .357 Magnum cartridge in 1935. Most designs of the period left something to be desired in terms of long-range accuracy and terminal performance on game. Keith set out to improve upon both. The first mould was Lyman 358429 that cast a 173-grain bullet (in solid form). It featured the Keith trademarks, including three, full-caliber driving bands that measured .110 inch (top), .100 inch (middle) and .140 inch (bottom) in width. The crimp groove was deeply beveled and allowed a heavy crimp to hold the bullet in place but also helped obtain consistent powder ignition. There was a single square bottom grease groove of generous size, and the meplat (or flat point) was around .250 inch wide. The bullet was seated with a generous portion of the nose out of the case, which increased the powder capacity and thus re-

**Above, Lyman mould 358156 in hollowpoint persuasion expands reliably. Right, Elmer Keith designed Lyman mould 429421 for his heavy .44 Special handloads in 1928. It has become widely popular in the .44 Special (left) and .44 Magnum (right).**
Lyman currently offers a large selection of moulds to produce rifle and pistol bullets.

For standard pressure .38 Special loads (17,000 psi), I use the 173-grain Keith bullet with 4.0 grains of Winchester 231 for nearly 900 fps from a 6-inch barrel or 5.0 grains of Alliant Power Pistol for over 900 fps.

For heavy frame revolvers such as the Smith & Wesson .38/44 Outdoorsman and Colt Single Action Army, 12.5 grains of Alliant 2400 will produce over 1,200 fps, or 14.0 grains of Hodgdon H-110 produces essentially the same velocity. Both loads exceed industry pressure recommendations for the .38 Special and should only be used in the revolvers mentioned or guns designed for the .357 Magnum cartridge. Use only in +P .38 Special cases that are void of the cannelure.

Using the above 173-grain Keith bullet in some .357 Magnum revolvers may be a problem, as the nose measures .375 inch long, resulting in an overall cartridge length of around 1.665 inches. Keep in mind that it was designed prior to the .357 cartridge being developed in 1935, and many revolver cylinders are too short to allow this bullet to be crimped in its crimping groove and keep the overall cartridge length from exceeding the cylinder length. Examples include the Smith & Wesson Models 27 and 28, Colt Python, Trooper, Trooper MKIII, MKIV, King Cobra and several others. Some suggest crimping this bullet over its front driving band, but this substantially reduces case capacity, will increase pressures and is not suitable with the load data represented here.

For .357 Magnum revolvers that will accept the 173-grain Keith bullet (when properly crimped in the crimp groove and with an overall length of around 1.665 inches), such as the Smith &
Wesson Models 19, 66, 686 and Ruger New Model Blackhawk and others, try 15.5 grains of Hodgdon H-110 capped with a magnum primer. This load will run 1,350 to 1,400 fps from most revolvers with 6- to 7½-inch barrels. Two other suitable loads include 14.5 grains of Alliant 2400 (for 1,300 to 1,350 fps) or 12.5 grains of Accurate No. 9 (1,300 fps). The last two loads are best (with lower pressures and improved accuracy) if capped with a standard non-magnum primer.

Another Lyman cast bullet that gives top-rate performance in almost all .357 Magnum revolvers is mould 358156. This bullet was designed by Ray Thompson more than a half-century ago and features double crimp grooves, a gas check and two grease grooves. (The first grease groove is small and just forward of the gas check.) For use in most .357 Magnums, it is suggested to seat bullets to the upper crimp groove and use the lower crimp groove as a “third” grease groove. The gas check will wear barrels faster than a plain-base bullet, but wear is at a substantially decreased rate when compared to jacketed bullets. Nonetheless, it is desirable for .357 Magnum revolvers that are prone to leading and will usually (but not always) cure the problem. Being a gas check design, the Thompson bullet takes longer to produce than a plain-base counterpart and gas checks increase the cost about $25 to $30 per 1,000, but the end product is worthy. If care is taken to produce quality bullets, an accurate revolver will cluster five shots into .5 to 1.0 inch at 25 yards, which is plenty accurate for any traditional iron-sighted handgun hunting I might tackle.

In solid form the above bullet weighs around 160 grains when cast of Lyman No. 2 alloy and with a gas check installed. In hollowpoint form, I generally cast bullets softer to assure reliable expansion, which weigh around 155 grains and are devastating on coyotes, badgers, raccoons, etc. Bullets should be seated and cramped firmly into the upper crimp groove for an overall cartridge length of around 1.575 inches.

With today’s slightly faster burning Alliant 2400, 14.5 grains is generally considered a maximum charge with the above bullet, which produces around 1,400 to 1,450 fps from 6- to 7½-inch barrels and remains an excellent load. Another favorite load includes 15.5 to not over 16.0 grains of Hodgdon H-110 for essentially the same velocity. For continual use in lighter frame guns, such as the popular Smith
While I prefer a larger-caliber revolver for everyday use ranging from plinking to defense to hunting, nonetheless the .357 Magnum boasts of unusual versatility. In the hands of a skilled shooter and hunter, the above loads are capable of taking deer, pronghorn, black bear and long-range jackrabbits.

**Mould 358156 was designed by Ray Thompson more than a half-century ago.**

While I prefer a larger-caliber revolver for everyday use ranging from plinking to defense to hunting, nonetheless the .357 Magnum boasts of unusual versatility. In the hands of a skilled shooter and hunter, the above loads are capable of taking deer, pronghorn, black bear and long-range jackrabbits.

**CAST BULLETS AND LOADS FOR THE .44 SPECIAL AND .44 MAGNUM**

Lyman offers several excellent bullets for handloading the .44 Special and .44 Magnum cartridges. The most famous in the lineup includes the Keith bullet, designed by Elmer in 1928, while living on Lookout Mountain along the Old Oregon Trail near Durkee. The Lyman mould number is 429421, which casts bullets at 250 grains, features a plain base for ease of casting, limited barrel wear and base obturation to help seal the bullets’ bases against gases. There are three full-caliber driving bands with the forward one cutting a full-caliber hole in paper or game, regardless what has been stated differently in recent years. There is a single, square-bottom grease groove and the meplat measures around .270 to .300 inch diameter (depending on era of mould). A deep and beveled crimp groove keeps bullets from jumping crimp and assures reliable powder ignition. Although, primarily designed for Keith’s heavy .44 Special handloads, the same bullet is a natural in .44 Magnum six-guns as well and is the most popular hand-cast bullet ever used in that caliber.

There was a period when the folks at Lyman also changed Elmer’s .44-caliber bullet to feature a rounded grease groove, and they narrowed the width of the driving bands. Today, the square-bottom grease groove has returned, and the width of the driving bands are close to the originals, but the bullet weight is now listed at 245 grains.

I have used an original mould for the above 250-grain Keith bullet in a variety of .44 Special and Magnum revolvers at velocities ranging from 700 to 1,500 fps. It demonstrates accuracy at all speeds and has proven itself at long distances. It has also been used to take pronghorn, black bear, mountain lion, coyotes, mule deer, whitetail deer and elk, not to mention diseased livestock that had to be put down. I have a pretty good idea of how it per-
forms in the field. It will easily drive through deer, elk or black bear broadside and leaves a full-caliber exit wound.

In a previous edition of *Handloader*, I have presented detailed loads and pressure levels for various .44 Special revolvers. With the above 250-grain Keith bullet, 8.0 grains of Alliant Power Pistol will produce around 1,000 fps in most revolvers, is within SAAMI pressure limits of 15,500 psi and is suitable for all revolvers in good condition. For those using Smith & Wesson N-Frame revolvers (Model 1950 Target or Model 24) or USFA Single Action Army revolvers and wanting a bit more power, 16.5 to 17.0 grains of 2400 will produce 1,200 fps but is generating 25,000 psi. The point being, make certain these loads never find their way into a “weak” .44 Special revolver. Both loads should be capped with either a CCI 300 or Federal 150 primer.

Although I use a variety of bullets and loads in .44 Magnum revolvers, the above 250-grain Keith is a proven standby, the one I use most. For a reduced load, 7.5 grains of W-231 produces just over 900 fps from a Smith & Wesson Model 29 with a 4-inch barrel. For heavy loads suitable for all revolvers, 24.5 grains of H-110 capped with a Federal 155 primer produces over 1,300 fps from the 4-inch barrel Smith & Wesson or 1,400 fps from a 7½-inch Ruger Blackhawk.

Many years ago I cross-referenced more than 60, .44 Magnum loads containing more than 10 different cast bullets in four revolvers, checking each for velocity and accuracy. The project required many thousands of rounds and literally took months. The single most accurate load (averaged from all revolvers) consisted of the Lyman bullet over 21.0 grains of 2400 – for around 1,400 fps in most 6- to 7½-inch barreled revolvers – capped with a CCI 300 Large Pistol primer (non-magnum). I have used this load considerably in the last 30-odd years, and it remains a top choice.

Another notable Lyman cast bullet is mould 454190, a 255- to 260-grain bullet (depending on alloy) that seats to an overall cartridge length between 1.575 and 1.580 inches.
will exceed 1,500 fps from a 7½-inch barrel. Mould 429244 casts bullets at 255 grains and is an excellent alternative to the 250-grain Keith bullet, especially if a revolver is prone to barrel leading. Powder charges may be interchanged with the 250-grain Keith bullet, but keep in mind that due to the gas check, pressures will be somewhat higher. With increased interest in heavy-weight bullets, Lyman offers a 305-grain bullet with mould 429650. A load that is unusually accurate includes 20.5 grains of H-110 capped with a Federal 155 Large Pistol primer that produces 1,250 fps from most revolvers with 6- to 7½-inch barrels.

For those wanting rapid expansion, Lyman mould 429640 produces a 250-grain bullet with an unusually wide and deep hollowpoint design known as the “Devastator.” The design is interesting, but I have just started to develop loads and data, so will discuss its performance in a future issue of Handloader magazine.

CAST BULLETS AND LOADS FOR THE .45 COLT

Long before bevel-based bullets and reduced power factory ammunition appeared that was designed for the sport of cowboy action shooting, .45 Colt factory loads from Remington and Winchester contained 250- and 255-grain bullets, respectively, that were conical shaped with a relatively small, flat point. There was no crimp groove, but bullets were crimped on the ogive. Smokeless load velocities were advertised at 870 (and later 860) fps. Most of the Colt’s reputation has been established with this load. It has taken a variety of big game (including deer and black bear for me) and has ended the career of many outlaws, stopped high-headed longhorn steers from goring cowboys or their horses, not to mention finding favor with Gen. George S. Patton during World War II. When fired from a revolver with correct internal dimensions, the load is accurate even at long ranges. The cartridge profile allows it to drop into chambers as slick as butter and actually assists in fast loading.

Lyman mould 454190 is a faithful profile of the original bullets and is the one I use most in vintage Colt Single Action Army revolvers. It features a plain base, double grease grooves and depending on alloy, drops bullets at around 255 to 260 grains. As a side note, I have seen a number of handloaders use the upper grease groove as a crimp groove, but the bullet was designed to be crimped on the ogive with an overall cartridge length of 1.575 to 1.580 inches.

A load that has always given low extreme spreads and is accurate is 6.0 grains of Alliant Red Dot, which effectively duplicates original .45 Colt smokeless-era loads by producing around 860 to 870 fps from a 7½-inch barrel. If a little more velocity is desired, try 11.0 grains of Vihtavuori 3N37 for near 1,000 fps.

Lyman Products offers many other moulds and bullet designs that are worthy of discussion, but that will be for another day. If you’re not casting your own bullets, you are missing out on fun, independence and some mighty fine ammunition.
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