On the cover . . .
The Browning X-Bolt Medallion grade .280 Remington is fitted with a Leupold VX-3 3.5-10x 40mm scope in Browning integrated base/rings. Photo by Stan Trzoniec. Marlin M1895SBL inset photo by Brian Pearce.

Marlin Model 1895SBL .45-70
The Next Generation
Brian Pearce

A Tale of Two Rimfires
Remington Model 597 - Winchester’s Wildcat
Al Miller

What’s New in the Marketplace
Inside Product News - Clair Rees

Hill Country Rifles
Custom Corner - Stan Trzoniec

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Page 88 . . .
Eleven years ago, after having a number of boys and figuring that I had it all worked out how to raise them, the doctor announced: “It’s a girl!”

“What do you mean he’s a girl?” was my response. My mind raced with thoughts along the lines of “What do you do with a girl, and how do you raise them? Do they like horses, hunting or guns?”

Before she could even crawl, Ashley showed a preference for pink and lacy-type clothes. The little brown-eyed girl also demonstrated remarkable intelligence, a strong will and a talent for art and music – and has been a joy to raise. Today she enjoys riding and caring for horses, nursing a doggie calf on a bottle, riding a bicycle and has developed skills riding ATVs. When I was instructing her brothers how to shoot, she would tag along, usually happy to just observe, but I would always have her shoot a few rounds to help her understand the principles of shooting, safe gun handling and respect. I taught her the principles of the Second Amendment, the responsibility for every citizen to own guns and master them. She would shoot but did not have an especially strong interest.

Then a couple of months ago, I was asking her what she wanted for her 11th birthday. Without hesitation, she stated “a .22 rifle.”

“Are you sure?” I queried. “Yes, Dad, that is what I really want.” Being that she has me wrapped around her little finger several times, her wish came in the form of a Winchester Model 67A Youth, a great “starter” single-shot rifle.

It didn’t take her long to burn through a carton of ammunition, but in firing that 500 rounds in just a few days, her skill improved immensely. She was meticulous at aligning the sights and holding on target as she squeezed the trigger. Every night after school, she would come home and say “Dad, we need to go shoot my rifle.” It was clear that she was safe enough, and finally I told her she could now shoot on her own if she wanted, but she insisted I come and watch. I might be a trifle slow but soon got the point: She wanted to spend time shooting with me. These are positively the most enjoyable shooting sessions.

As I write these words, that all began just two months ago, and she has continued to shoot practically every day. Frankly, she is ready for a more accurate, precise rifle with a better trigger, sights, etc. to further develop her skills.

A tragic story unfolded locally just weeks ago, wherein a teenage girl found a gun at her sister’s house. Being curious about it, she picked it up and accidentally fired it, killing a nearby friend. The gun did not need a lock, to
be hidden or locked in a safe, but rather the girl should have been taught proper gun handling and respect. That would have removed the “curiosity factor” that children come by naturally to learn. My children have always been given the opportunity to handle guns, shoot them, see how they work, etc. They do not need to “sneak” any gun to look at it, as they know that I am happy to give proper instruction and allow them to handle or shoot with supervision.

With the antigun media and politicians always looking for ways to get a firmer grip on gun control, let’s be certain we take the opportunity to teach every young girl and boy about safe gun handling.

The CCI Hypervelocity Stinger HP

In the late summer of 1976, a family friend, who was working at the CCI/Speer plant located in Lewiston, Idaho, stopped in for a visit at our Council, Idaho, ranch. Knowing I was a serious shooter/hunter, he handed me a bag of loose .22 rimfire cartridges that were rather odd looking, as the case was nickel-plated and longer than a standard .22 Long Rifle (LR) version. He explained this would be a new product for 1977 and would be known as the CCI Stinger features a nickel-plated case that is around .100 inch longer than a standard .22 LR case. Since it is an outside lubricated bullet, the bearing surface has been reduced. The CCI Stinger is a “Premium” hypervelocity load that is designed specifically for hunting.

“Stinger.” He stated to the effect: “It will drive a 32-grain bullet to around 1,700 fps.” (For comparison a high-speed .22 LR typically drives a 38- to 40-grain bullet 1,250 to 1,280 fps, with “standard” velocity loads typically producing around 1,070 fps.) If memory serves me correctly, the advertised velocity of the Stinger was actually 1,685 fps, a velocity that had never been achieved with the .22 LR cartridge and a bullet of that weight. He left me a healthy sample of ammunition to try out, and wanted my opinion of it.

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Rifle 246

The CCI Stinger is not a target cartridge, although it delivers enough accuracy for hunting most small game and pests. The Ruger Model 77/22 was sighted dead-on at 50 yards using 40-grain high-speed ammunition. This target was shot at 50 yards using the center target as an aiming point for CCI Stinger ammunition, which grouped low and to the left. Most rifles will need to be resighted when using the Stinger load.

The hypervelocity load was quickly put to work on Townsend ground squirrels in a Winchester Model 9422, and the results were utterly devastating. Frankly I had never seen a .22 LR destroy so much soft tissue. It was also used to dispatch a couple of trapped coyotes and a number of hay-devouring rockchucks and jackrabbits and was used in rifles, revolvers and autoloaders. In early 1977 the new hypervelocity cartridge was formally announced to the shooting industry. Other ammunition companies followed with loads to compete, but these generally didn’t perform as well and failed to catch as much of the market share as the original Stinger. Today, the hot little CCI round is still selling unusually well, and many .22 LR varmint shooters won’t use anything else.

In order for the Stinger to achieve its high velocity and hold more powder, the case length was increased to just over .70 inch, or around .10 inch longer than a standard .22 LR case. The overall cartridge length does not exceed SAAMI specifications, and pressures are the same, which allows the Stinger to be used in any rifle or handgun designed for .22 LR high-speed ammunition. Being an outside lubricated heel bullet, the shank had to be reduced in length, normally around .195 inch down to around .130 inch. Naturally this reduces bearing surface and pressures, but it also causes the bullet to behave poorly in some rifles with larger chambers or bores that are excessively large. On the other hand, in a quality rifle with a tight chamber, correct lead and precision bore, the Stinger delivers good accuracy.

Over the years I have used it in Winchester Models 52, 61, 62, 9422, Kimber 22 Classic, Ruger 10/22 with custom match barrel and 77/22, Marlin Model 39A, Browning .22 Auto and BL-22, Anschutz Model 1700D, Remington Model 541S and others. Some rifles perform better than others. Even in the best rifles, it will not perform on par with match grade or target ammunition, but it has proven accurate in a number of rifles and is an outstanding pest and varmint load.
As said, bullet performance is devastating on pests such as ground squirrels and similar critters. It is copper washed with only a single cannelure, presumably to hold grease and act as a relief groove for dispersed lead, and is lubricated with a special formula to help reduce bore fouling and prevent leading. The original Stinger featured what CCI referred to as a Pentapoint design that helped the bullet expand and was precut internally to increase bullet fragmenting. CCI no longer references it by that name, and it appears the design has changed somewhat. Nonetheless, it still fragments with utter devastation, at least on small, soft-tissue pests.

In recovering bullets in my own medium, there were a half-dozen pieces that weighed between 2 and 6 grains, with the base weighing 10 grains, and there were numerous smaller pieces. I have found the Stinger to perform well on game up to the size of rockchucks and stringy jackrabbits, but bullet placement becomes important when used on these larger pests due to limited penetration. If the shooter will do his job, however, it has proven decisive.

The advertised velocity of today’s Stinger has been reduced to 1,640 fps with the same bullet weight of 32 grains. In firing a sampling of current ammunition from a Ruger Model 77/22 All-Weather rifle with a 20-inch barrel, a 10-shot string averaged 1,649 fps with an extreme spread of 60 fps. Using a Winchester Model 61 with a 24-inch barrel, velocity jumped to 1,703 fps and the extreme spread ran just 53 fps. (So much for the idea a few have promoted that a shorter barrel in .22 LR will result in higher velocities.) Back in the 1970s, the original Stinger often produced extreme spreads of 140 to 180 fps, and I believe the current load has been improved through updated powder, bullet engineering and strict quality control.

At 50 yards both rifles (equipped with scopes) produced groups of under 2 inches, with select loads grouping around one inch for five shots from the Ruger. That is not astonishing accuracy, as match loads will often group into less than half those figures with the same rifles, but it is certainly good enough to anchor a ground squirrel or other pests at such distances and beyond.

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  $15.95 (5 pads – any combination)
Silencers should be legal on sporting rifles for target shooting and hunting.

Actually, they are. Sort of. In some states. But there’s a catch, or several, as we’ll see.

Silencers aren’t silent, of course, but like an automobile muffler, they make a firearm a lot less noisy than the unmuffled versions, which is why silencers are more correctly called suppressors and should be legal.

Hey, it’s not as if they convert a firearm into a laser death ray. They just reduce the noise.

Hiram Maxim invented the Maxim Silencer for firearms in 1902, modifying it only slightly to become the common vehicle muffler soon after. By the 1920s both were quite popular, but organized crime in cities like Chicago inspired Congress to attempt to outlaw Tommy guns in 1934. Gun mufflers were tacked onto the bill as an afterthought. But this didn’t fly with the Judicial system, which referenced some obscure 2nd Amendment or something. So Congress did what it does best – slapped an extremely high tax on machine guns, short-barreled rifles, silencers and a few other things they didn’t think the average citizen ought to own. Gradually, thanks to radio, novels and Hollywood, silencers became symbols of assassins and the criminal underworld. Oh, and real heroes like Bond. James Bond. Later BATF declared silencers weapons and required that each have its own serial number for tracking, inspiring that famous protest chant, “Guns don’t kill people, silencers do.”

Dick Williams, all-around good guy and PR spokesman (I don’t think he’d condone the term “spokesmodel”) for SureFire that builds suppressors; edged weapons (knives); and really bright, rugged, sharply focused flashlights, explained: “There’s a one-time tax of $200 payable to the ATF for registering a suppressor. There’s also a background check and fingerprinting and sometimes a photo and . . .” In other words, red-tape hoops to jump through, plus a wait of about two months. Today there is such stigma surrounding suppressors that they can hardly be discussed rationally, let alone be proposed for common use.

Well, for practical and health reasons, I’m proposing it. Suppressors are legal in Finland, Sweden and France, for pete’s sake. France! Let’s pause to let that sink in.

My wild theory is that, just as society appreciates reducing the boom of rapidly burning fuels in in-
ternal combustion engines, so would it enjoy knocking some of the blast out of rifles – at shooting ranges and in the woods.

So would I.

I SAID, “SO WOULD I!”

If, like me, you no longer hear all the little birdies go tweet tweet tweet, you’ve been attending too many rock concerts or shooting unmuffled firearms for too many years. I SAID, “YEARS, NOT EARS.” My wife gets tired of translating half the dialog in every movie we watch. Wouldn’t it be humane to save future spouses from a similar fate?
Silence is Golden

Research has shown that regular exposure to small arms fire (firing range training situations, varmint shooting, just plain practice) increases noise-induced hearing loss 10 times over normal. There's damage even when traditional ear plugs or muffs are used. It is suggested that bone conduction of sound waves causes this. A good suppressor can reduce gunshot volume from most high-pressure centerfires from something over 160 decibels (dBs) to under 140 dBs, which is OSHA's maximum safe limit threshold, still far above its safe limit of 85 dBs for chronic noise exposure. Normal conversation is about 60 dBs. The decibel scale is logarithmic, not linear, so 160 dBs is not merely twice as loud as 80 dBs. With every 3 dBs increase in volume, intensity of sound doubles. Combine plugs or muffs with a suppressor and your hearing is truly protected.

Suppressors are legal in Finland, Sweden and France.

So why can't we put these mufflers on our rifles? Crime control? That's what most of us have been told. Silencers are nefarious devices that permit murderers and assassins to terminate their marks in public places. Silent and deadly. In the hands of James Bond, that's good. In the hands of Jimmy “The Hit Man” Bondo, not so good. But silencers aren't nearly as quiet or useful as Hollywood would like us to imagine.

Think about it. When powder suddenly burns behind a bullet in a barrel, the rapidly expanding gases shove the bullet out the muzzle with an ear-splitting bang, just like a punctured balloon. The resulting pressure waves push tiny bones in our head making them vibrate. Wave energy is converted into electrical energy sent to the brain for interpretation. “Hey, I hear a gunshot!” To stop the sound, you must stop those vibrations or pressure waves. Air molecules alone will do this over vast dis-
Mounting a SureFire suppressor involves sliding the unit over the pre-mounted adapter (overlapping several inches of original barrel to minimize overall length and imbalance) and turning the cam ring tight. Total time about 5 seconds.

Most suppressors can be carried in a pocket or belt pouch, ready for quick attachment.

Mounts, which is why you didn’t hear me shoot my moose last fall. Solid objects also absorb sound waves, plus reflect or bounce them in other directions. But solids also transmit them. Think of submariners tapping out Morse code on the steel hull for rescue.

Soft, cushy materials are much better than air at absorbing and dissipating sound. A classic case is the crime movie standard of shoving a handgun in a pillow before discharging it into the victim. This principle is applied in recording studios with their special linings of soft, absorbing, “sound-proof” tiles. But soft materials are quickly destroyed by hot gasses and high pressures, so gun and car mufflers are usually built with metal baffles that redirect the gases, cool them (transferring noise energy to heat that is absorbed and dissipated by the metal) and delay their exit until their energy is partially spent. Suppressors are most effective with closed-breech actions, i.e. bolt, pump, lever, break, falling block. Autoloaders with a slightly delayed breech opening can be suppressed, but the clanking sound of their actions rather ruins the effect. (Hollywood somehow fails to record these noises.) High-cycle-rate autos can’t be suppressed because the sound chamber hasn’t sufficient time to empty before the next explosion comes roaring in. Revolvers are a waste of a perfectly good suppressor. They leak sound at the cylinder gap.

The lower the pressure, of course, the lower the sound, so subsonic ammunition (under roughly 1,080 fps depending on air density) is more effectively suppressed than supersonic stuff. Above 1,100 fps, the bullet itself will crack with a “sonic boom.” As Dick Williams explained, “It all goes bang or pop, but a good,
reasonably compact suppressor can tone down a .30-06 enough to make it almost comfortable to shoot without hearing protection.” SureFire claims its Fast-Attach suppressors (less than five seconds to mount) will reduce “a weapon’s sound signature to well below the OSHA 140 dB maximum safe level.” (A popping balloon is 157 dBs.)

Shooter would be better served with quieter guns.

Suppressor manufacturer Elite Iron of Bonner, Montana, measured reductions of 33 to 38 dBs with its suppressors on a variety of .223 Remington, .308 Winchester, .338 Lapua and .50 BMG rifles. Barrel length and suppressor size, of course, influence these reductions. There will still be the supersonic “crack” of the bullet, but the overall effect is much more acceptable to the neighbors, and that’s the idea. Given today’s crowding – coupled with antigun, antihunting sentiment – shooters would be better served with quieter guns.

Caveat: Don’t think you’re going to improve your hunting success because your buck won’t hear you shoot and miss. It still sounds like a gunshot, just not such a loud one. Some say the quieter sound is more difficult to pinpoint, so critters might act a bit confused. They seem to do that with regular gunfire anyway. A suppressed, closed-breech .22 Long Rifle firing subsonic ammunition can be quieted to the level of, or slightly below, an air rifle, which could make it a deadly poaching tool, although the limited range/power of the round minimizes this. Animal damage control officers at airports, dairies, suburbs and the like use suppressed .22s to remove a variety of critters from rats to whitetails.

Of course, there’s the ugly side of suppressors, too, one of them being just that – they’re ugly. Unless you like the tactical look, an 11-inch, 1.5-pound black can hanging off your custom Model 70 ain’t gonna enhance its classic lines – or balance. There is a partial solution to this problem, however. It’s called the integral

Barry Dueck demonstrates how effectively a suppressor reduces dust disturbances at the muzzle (right) – more than just a convenience when target shooting or varmint hunting from prone in dry landscapes.

LEGAL STATES

Laws often change, so double check the following information. Also know that in at least one state, Washington, suppressors can be owned but not used.

States where suppressors are not allowed for civilian use: Delaware, Washington D.C., Hawaii, Illinois, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Rhode Island, California, Kansas, Missouri, Minnesota, Iowa and Maine.

States where suppressors are legal for Class 3 or 2 FFL dealers only: California, Hawaii, Kansas, Missouri, Minnesota, Illinois, New York.

BUYING SUPPRESSORS

You must buy any suppressor through a Class 2 or Class 3 FFL firearms dealer who should be able to walk you through the hoops. Basically you must get an okay from a local law enforcement official, fill out a registration form with the BATF, get fingerprinted, undergo a background check, perhaps sit for or provide a photo and wait about two months. Oh, and pay your one-time, $200 tax.

PUBLISHING DECIBEL REDUCTION FIGURES

Many manufacturers refuse to publish measured decibel reductions of their products, because not all use a standard system of measuring. Apparently some machines and/or techniques vary greatly. In addition, sound duration isn’t always measured, and that has a big impact on perceived loudness.
suppressor, essentially a baffled, outer wall surrounding the barrel. Ports drilled near the muzzle direct hot gases into the hollow where a baffle system cools and slows them. This makes barrels fatter but avoids the additional length of detachable muzzle cans. Alas, this requires extreme modification of the original barrel or replacement with an after-market suppressor/barrel. Tibbetts America manufactures John’s Guns integral suppressors for a variety of rifles, mostly .22 rimfires, but also Remington Model 700s in some calibers. SRT Arms of Tempe, Arizona, also makes integral suppressed rifles, primarily .22 rimfires and a few low-velocity centerfires, but at least one integral for a .308 Winchester. Permanently mounted integral units reportedly have rather limited life spans due to carbon and lead fouling. Condensation and rust can also be problematic. Some integral suppressors, essentially a long tube stretching back over the barrel, can be removed for cleaning.

Williams pointed out that overall barrel length with muzzle suppressors can be minimized by designing them to fit back over several inches of barrel, as many do. He also admitted cans can be dangerous should they be mounted improperly or vibrate loose. Significantly misaligned, the can can kiss the bullet. This tends to seriously wreck things. But so does firing with snow, cleaning jags or bore sights left in a barrel. This problem is really operator error. If you use a muzzle suppressor, it’s your responsibility to mount and maintain it properly. SureFire claims its Fail-Safe baffles allow bullets to continue safely downrange even if the unit is bent or knocked out of alignment.

Because of the manner in which all suppressors impede gases, they tend to heat barrels excessively and carbon-foul autoloaders rather quickly. Bits of carbon can be blown back into and out the ejection port, as I discovered while firing a couple of suppressed AR-15 .223s. Eye protection and gloves are suggested. I also experienced malfunction with a dirty AR-15. Actions just tend to gunk up after a certain number of rounds through a suppressor, which must itself be cleaned regularly, dried and stored off the rifle to prevent condensation rust. Elite Iron recommends rinsing its units in hot, soapy water and drying with an air compressor. Ultrasonic parts cleaners and the Jofre steam cleaning system are also recommended.

Fortunately, removing a SureFire muzzle-mounted “silencer” is dead simple. Just twist the cam ring and pull. It’s a ratchet mount. This means you can choose to fire your rifle with or without the device, giving you the option of practicing with the suppressor, but hunting without it. A rather
homely mount remains on the barrel, but it isn't much more obtrusive than most muzzle brakes, which, by the way, a suppressor is. Yup, in addition to knocking back the noise, a well-designed suppressor can reduce recoil by 30 percent or more without blowing all those gases back in your face or off the ground below. It's a much cleaner way to shoot. Reduced muzzle jump, reduced sound, no dust cloud, no blast of pressure – suppressors are sounding better and better.

Being an old stickler for accuracy and consistency, I worried about a suppressor ruining a rifle's good vibrations. "Not a problem," Williams insisted, and then proved it by letting me shoot a couple of rifles with and without suppressors mounted. From a bench at 100 yards, a modified Remington Model 700 (24-inch Mike Arco barrel, one-in-11.27-inch twist, five groove, Jewel trigger, McMillan A4 stock, Leupold M4 8.5-25x scope) in .308 Winchester, firing Black Hills 165-grain match loads, grouped five shots into .96 inch with Barry Dueck, head of SureFire's Suppressor Division, at the controls. After a suppressor was cranked onto the rifle, Barry shot a .95-inch group. Point of impact shifted not one iota. I took over and, suppressor off, punched a 1.15-inch cluster with the same point of impact as Barry produced. After mounting the sound reducer, I fired a .75-inch group. If that's accuracy loss due to the can, I can live with it! With a LaRue Tactical AR-15 .223 Remington, 16-inch barrel, one-in-8-inch twist firing 77-grain Black Hills Match hollowpoint ammunition, I notched a .68-inch, five-shot group with a plain barrel, a .70-inch group with the can mounted. Point of impact shifted about .25 inch lower. It has been argued that by reducing high-velocity gases that normally jet past a bullet upon exit from the muzzle, a suppressor reduces gas-induced yaw, improving accuracy.

"When they're designed right and built right," Dueck said, "muzzle mount suppressors usu-
ally improve accuracy. If they change impact at all, it’s by an MOA at most.” Heavy contour barrels do better than light, and a certain thickness is required to cut threads for the suppressor mount.

SureFire’s Chief Engineer Tim LaFrance echoes Dueck. “If groups open up with a can, you have a twisted or bent bore or barrel. Period. We’ve seen it time after time after time. Properly mounted, a suppressor will reveal flaws in a barrel. Excessive yaw will show when bullets touch the can.”

For all their wonderful benefits, suppressors do not appeal to me aesthetically. Neither do I have an overpowering desire to carry one through the elk woods. But on a whitetail stand in the Midwest, a 1.5-pound suppressor and one to 5 inches of extra overall length seems reasonable. Ah, but there’s the rub. Even in the 33 states where suppressors are legal, they aren’t legal for big game hunting. That’s right, individual states set their own regulations on suppressor use, and some (You can probably guess California and New York, but would you have guessed Texas?) are much more stringent than the Feds.

This limits suppressor use to target shooting and perhaps varmint and coyote hunting in a few states that permit it. A few savvy coyote hunters have discovered that a suppressed rifle loaded to shoot subsonic can be quiet enough to give them second, even third chances. Target shooters know that suppressors are useful in rural areas where “new” country dwellers begin complaining about the shooting range they chose to live near but now want removed.

But won’t suppressors increase crime? Not according to research compiled by PhD Paul A. Clark of the Alaska Public Defender Agency. Clark found that “of the federal court cases reported in the Lexis/Westlaw database between 1995 and 2005, there were only two cases of a silencer being used in a murder in the United States.” So-called silenced firearms were discharged in just two percent of all federal prosecutions of firearms cases from 1995 to 2004 – despite the ease with which they can be made at home. Several books on the market detail how to build your own suppressor, but since committing a crime with a silenced gun carries a mandatory 30-year sentence, most criminals just wrap a towel around the murder weapon. This tactic, while as effective as a screw-on silencer, carries no additional penalty.

As Clark noted in his paper, a silencer makes a gun no more effective nor deadlier than one without, so why the irrational fear? It’s not a super weapon, just a sound reducer, and in our noise-polluted culture, that’s a good thing. Look at it as a matter of degrees. If a relatively silent .22 rimfire is legal for hunting, why not .223 or 7mm-08 Remingtons suppressed to be nearly as quiet? Or at least a .300 Winchester Magnum throttled back to sound like a .223?

Getting suppressors approved for hunting will require an education campaign involving solid arguments plus demonstrations to state fish and game conservation officers, biologists, administrators and, especially, commissioners who set the rules. In some states, local politicians and congressmen will need to be included. Moving the status quo is never easy, but we are in the era of political change we can believe in, right? You, your shooting buddies and your gun club could start the ball rolling. Once folks hear that suppressed hunting rifles don’t become silent and deadly, they may come to appreciate the benefits of reduced noise pollution. I know I would. I SAID, “I WOULD!”