

GUNS & AMMO

HANDGUNS

THE COUGAR 8045





The Teflon finished G Man, a handsome pistol faithful to the 1911 template, has the consensus of features most shooters demand in a combat .45

The Safety Fast Shooting System

BY BOB CAMPBELL

I have carried the 1911 .45 caliber automatic pistol for almost thirty years with complete confidence. For most of that time, I carried the handgun in its proper carry mode. That is cocked and locked, Condition One. Hammer to the rear and the slide lock safety on. The grip safety is never deactivated on my pistols. On late model variants I have enjoyed the addition of a positive firing pin block or drop safety. Having seen sidearms dropped or thrown hard enough to raise sparks, I appreciate the many safety features of the Colt 1911.

There is no pistol faster to a rapid accurate first shot than the 1911, and none which allows such rapid delivery of powerful anti personnel loads.

The very action type which gives the pistol its deadly efficiency is sometimes criticized on the basis of safety. While this seems a contradiction politics is often the final consideration. There are many who are genuinely uncomfortable with a cocked hammer near their tender bodies. I have had well meaning comments from the public such as, "Officer, your gun is cocked!"

In revolver days, cocked revolvers did get holstered and we were taught not to startle the man in such a situation but to carefully alert him and let him handle the problem-while we stood clear! Telling a citizen or Chief

the gun is supposed to be cocked lent a kind of cavalier attitude to the carry which was frowned upon. While I believe safety is between the ears and favor the cocked and locked handgun, this is a difficult situation to work through when attempting to have a single action auto cleared for duty use.

SAFETY FIRST

There have been attempts to convert the single action Colt auto to self cocking or double action fire. The Colt Double Eagle was one such disaster. You simply cannot take a single action and install an external drawbar and double action trigger and have a viable double action pistol. The frame of a purpose designed double action places the trigger finger above the trigger, allowing the finger to swing down in an arc and manipulate the trigger. The frame and bore axis differ in a true double action pistol. A lash up just doesn't work, making it a lousier double action than the true



double action. Self cocking levers such as the Caravelle worked in a similar fashion to the Heckler and Koch P7M8, cocking the hammer of the Colt by pressing a lever. But these mechanisms added unnecessary complication to a relatively simple pistol. The problem has been to allow the pistol to perform in its intended fashion while eliminating cocked and locked carry. Well, the locked part was no problem. The cocked hammer was the red flag!

The best answer to the problem yet seen can be found in the Safety Fast Shooting system offered by Cylinder and Slide Shop, Incorporated. Originally offered in a slightly different version by Fabrique Nationale for the Browning Hi Power, the SFS is now offered for both the Hi Power and the 1911. Cylinder and Slide Shop is a long time supplier of quality parts and gunsmithing for both the 1911 and the Hi Power. I have had excellent luck in the past, using their parts in several custom handguns. (The Maximum HI Power, *Handguns Annual*, 2000) The SFS is offered as a factory option by at least one maker of top end 1911s. The firm is High Standard of Texas. There has been some confusion as to who owns the High Standard name, but documentation shows this firm is indeed the real McCoy. You can once again buy a real High Standard target .22 or have yours repaired by trained experts.

Tradition is wonderful, but as far as the 1911 pistol goes the company can stand on its modern merits. This gun is very well executed. I chose to evaluate the SFS in this pistol for many reasons, availability being foremost. The 1911 sent by High Standard is their G Man version. It is obviously intended as a SWAT Team or operator's pistol, built to exacting Federal standards. The pistol is fitted with a National Match barrel and barrel bushing, self luminous iron sights, striking walnut grips, a flat mainspring housing and long trigger, and finished in space age Teflon.

The pistol showed excellent fit and finish. Preliminary inspection showed good slide to barrel and locking lug to slide fit. I could detect no rough spots at any point when working the slide or inspecting the action. According to my RCBS trigger pull gauge, the trigger of the G Man broke at 3.5 pounds. This trigger action would prove to be very crisp. I double checked trigger compression at several points during the test. It never fluctuated. Even today, with 1,000 rounds fired in the gun, the trigger remains crisp and clean. In typical 1911 fashion, the trigger has settled in a little lighter with use. I am impressed with the performance and accuracy of this pistol. As an example, 1911 type pistols have a reputation for requiring a break in period to insure reliable operation. This often wears off high spots or even a too long link. One or even two hundred rounds of full power ammunition is required.

The G Man functioned out of the box. This function continued, with the pistol feeding, chambering, firing and ejecting each round fed it. The SFS system is an option on the High Standard line and a

good one, but the pistol is an excellent performer on its own merits. We did not shortchange the SFS by evaluating it in a less than top grade handgun. In practical terms, it would be just as desirable in an economy grade defense handgun.

The Safety Fast Shooting System would hold little surprises for a user of the Daewoo Fast Action pistol, although the particulars are different. In a cursory

To make a SFS equipped pistol safe, simply press the hammer forward. The trigger need not be pressed to perform this operation—doing so would short circuit the unit.

While the Colt 1911 is a respected handgun, most criticisms revolve around cocked and locked carry.



Safety Fast Shooting System

examination, the SFS is not readily apparent.

To use the SFS, load the 1911 in the normal fashion. Whether dropping the slide on a loaded magazine or actuating the slide by hand, the hammer is in a cocked position when the pistol is loaded. Then things become interesting. The hammer is pressed forward until at rest. It is not in a half cock position but close to the rear of the slide. The slide lock safety pops up when the hammer is lowered, locking both hammer and slide. As an additional safety, a firing pin and hammer block rises. To fire the gun the slide lock safety is released. The hammer springs to the rear, ready for a conventional single action trigger press. The gun has not been converted to a double action or double action only pistol. It is still a single action.

This is a interesting development, both practically and tactically. I was able to test the pistol to its

mechanical and tactical

limits and

found the

SFS system

usable,

even desirable.

Like

many field

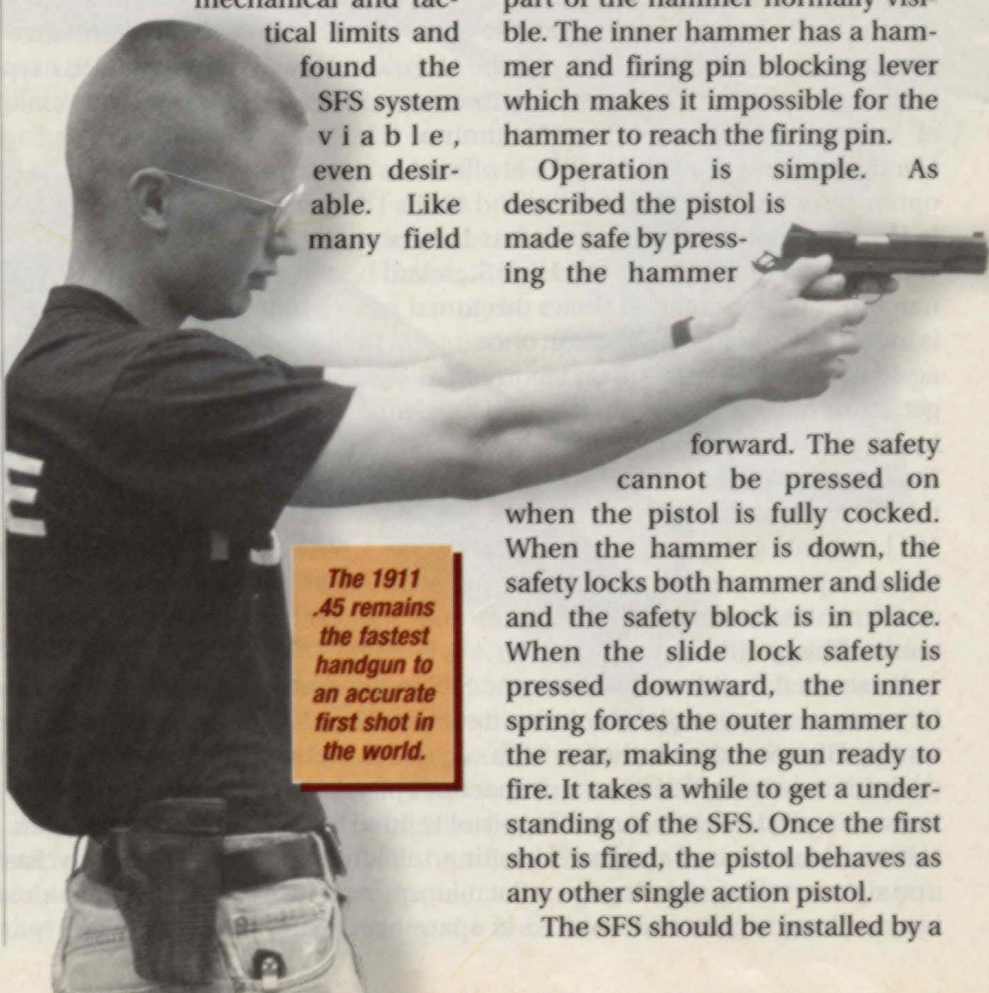
tests the results are subject to interpretation. Clearly, the hard core 1911 fan will cling to his cocked and locked pistol. But a sweeping margin of young shooters and those who normally carry another type of pistol found the SFS equipped High Standard appealing. After a range test even the most jaded 1911 fan admitted the SFS was no liability. It works well.

The SFS is easily installed by a competent gunsmith. There are thirteen pieces, but the 1911 is not complicated by a baker's dozen of parts. Some simply replace existing parts such as the plunger spring, thumb safety (the new unit features a ambidextrous safety), retaining pin, hammer strut, mainspring, and hammer. The two piece hammer is the main component of the SFS. The hammer(s) fit together with a torque ring. There is a spring contained within the hammer. The outer hammer is the unconventional component and the only part of the hammer normally visible. The inner hammer has a hammer and firing pin blocking lever which makes it impossible for the hammer to reach the firing pin.

Operation is simple. As described the pistol is made safe by pressing the hammer

forward. The safety cannot be pressed on when the pistol is fully cocked. When the hammer is down, the safety locks both hammer and slide and the safety block is in place. When the slide lock safety is pressed downward, the inner spring forces the outer hammer to the rear, making the gun ready to fire. It takes a while to get a understanding of the SFS. Once the first shot is fired, the pistol behaves as any other single action pistol.

The SFS should be installed by a



***The 1911
.45 remains
the fastest
handgun to
an accurate
first shot in
the world.***

competent gunsmith. Self defense is too important to leave anything to chance. As 1911s are pretty individual, some fitting may be required. I was warned by another shooter-not anyone at C and S-that the trigger action might be harder with the SFS installed. This did not prove true. Lock time was another question. However, the pistol proved very accurate and consistent with constant trigger action. There would have been vertical stringing if lock time varied and the gun could not of been so accurate. The G Man produced two inch groups with Speer Gold Dot ammu-



The SFS equipped G Man fires single action in the normal manner.

nition, with a few brilliant groups closer to one and one half inch at 25 yards. The SFS certainly does not limit accuracy potential.

The question is how would the SFS perform in a critical situation. The G Man was representative of a properly installed unit in a high grade pistol. I put the pistol to the test.

I collected a large supply of CCI Blazer ammunition for the range test program, for economy, but used Speer Gold Dot 230 grain ammunition for hostage rescue drills. Also, in order to quality the pistol I also fired a quantity of +P loads to ensure the hammer would not 'follow' or ride down with the slide when we did not wish it to. I used a quantity of Federal 185 grain +P Hydra Shock and a smaller amount of Speer's 200 grain +P Gold Dot. The +P Hydra Shock is a powerful, accurate and overlooked loading which produces over 1,100 fps from the G Man's five inch bar-

Safety Fast Shooting System


rel. Again, function was normal in all respects.

When firing the first few combat drills, I found the action of the hammer flying back distracting if not disconcerting. I seemed to be amazed each time it happened! Shortly the novelty wore off and I was making normal runs on the combat course. The Pocket Pro timer showed I was well within normal performance for the 1911. Don't think of the actions the gun is going through, just fire it. With proper attention to sight alignment, sight picture and trigger compression this is a very accurate handgun.

Hostage rescue firing was addressed at ten and fifteen yards. I drew from my Kramer Sharkskin holster, a old favorite for all around use. I could draw, fire, and get a cranial hit in less than 1.25 seconds at fifteen yards and a bit faster at ten yards. Yes, the SFS is viable. I hardly noticed it after a half hour of range drills.

There is literally no difference in handling and firing a SFS equipped 1911 as far as the expected results. A drawback might be that during tactical movement, the hammer must be pressed forward to make the gun safety. It cannot simply be quickly flipped on. We must weigh this possible drawback, but in fact it is simple to learn to quickly lower the hammer by thumb pressure. As in most things, there are trade offs with the SFS.

I had been given carte blanche to test the G Man thoroughly but did not wish to abuse a fine handgun. A light crisp trigger is attainable that will also have longevity, but it takes proper fitting to do so. I dropped the G Man's slide on a empty chamber a dozen times. This



This Blocker Leather holster carries a .45 single action auto with the safety strap interjected between the hammer and firing pin. The SFS renders this carry unnecessary.

is ruinous to a light trigger action. The hammer did follow, not during initial examination nor after five hundred rounds of CCI Blazer 230 grain ammunition. I am impressed.

Examination had shown the SFS should be reliable but I confirmed it in range testing. I expected nothing else from Cylinder and Slide. The final test was a tactical one.

I drew my long time service .45

and the SFS equipped G Man from the same Kramer holster. The Pocket Pro does not lie. Times were nearly identical when averaged over ten draws. There is no penalty in using the SFS.

An advantage of the 1911 is that if we lose control of the handgun, the gun gabber may not be able to figure out how to make it fire. With the SFS system, the uninitiated attempt to cock the hammer. At it's introduction, the SFS befuddled quite a few gun writers. User proprietary advantages are even higher with the SFS than with a standard 1911 pistol.

If you carry a 1911 in your waistband, Mexican style, sans the holster, then you must carry the gun hammer down on a loaded chamber or chamber empty. You can carry the SFS gun hammer down by squeezing the trigger carefully and lowering the hammer as with any 1911,

but this is pointless with a SFS equipped pistol. The SFS gun would answer that problem, although I never carry my 1911s without a holster. When we keep a 1911 at home ready, even if in a holster, it is never cocked and locked. The SFS is another matter. In a holster, at home ready, the SFS allows rapid deployment. This is a personal matter which should be based on the threat anticipated.

If you desire a higher state of readiness than chamber empty

but don't wish to go with cocked and locked carry, the SFS is the most efficient compromise yet developed. Many combat pistols are a trade off or compromise of features. Reliability can never be compromised. The SFS is a reliable system. With proper maintenance and lubrication, the 1911 is among our most reliable handgun types. While admitting a certain prejudice in favor of the 1911, I have realized it is perhaps not a mature but maturing design. The SFS system is one of the

finest genuine improvements to be applied to the 1911 in some time. ■

SFS units for the Browning Hi Power and Colt 1911.



SOURCES

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