

THE MITH OF THE ONE SHOT STOT

IN CANADA
& OUTSIDE U.S.
\$3.95

HANDGUNNER

AMERICAN

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1993

HANDGUNNER®

0mm

67522 T&E



The TRAVELLING GUNSMITH

By Cameron Hopkins

Major shooting matches like the Steel Challenge and the *American Handgunner* World Shoot-Off Championships have a new bonus for shooters interested in learning about do-it-yourself gunsmithing. Master gunsmith Bill Laughridge of the Cylinder & Slide Shop has begun a special tour of travelling classes in conjunction with several of the top matches.

By extending your trip to a match by one day, you can take one of Bill's eight hour seminars which are limited to no more than 10 students for close, one-on-one attention from the instructor. The class we audited was on trigger jobs for the 1911 pistol. We also covered the proper fitting of an ambidextrous thumb safety, which is actually part of a trigger job. Subjects may expand in the future as student demand warrants it to cover subjects like barrel fitting, beavertail fitting

and slide-to-frame fitting.

Bill proved to be every bit as good an instructor as he is a world-class pistol-smith. His lectures were concise and well organized with detailed diagrams and illustrations to show the intricate relationship of the trigger parts in a 1911 pistol.

A constantly reoccurring theme in Bill's class was safety. "I can't stress safety enough," the mustachioed Nebraskan cautioned as he held up a Colt 1991 pistol, "Remember, Murphy *lives* in that sucker!"

Included in the tuition for the class were the basic tools of performing a trigger job, all of which are available from Brownells. The class was issued with a fine ceramic stone (square), a fine India stone (square), a narrow pillar file (fine cut), a square needle file (fine cut) and a can of oil for lubricating the stones. In addition, Bill asked the students to bring a magnifying glass, a small bench vise, a

punch and a ballpeen hammer.

The class focused on how to perform a "manual" trigger job without the aid of fixtures or jigs. The only other tools we used were a Brownells trigger pull gauge to check our progress and an .018" feeler gauge to verify our cutting of the hammer hooks. He explained that anyone can buy



a jig and do a trigger job, but he said it is more important to *understand* the principles of the trigger mechanism to achieve a safe and reliable trigger job.

Bill told the class that he can teach a student how to get a safe three pound trigger, maybe even two if the student has some mechanical aptitude, but he warned against trying to get a sub-two pound trigger. If we feel the need for a super-light trigger, pay a professional, he said, because it takes a great deal more experience than can be imparted in an eight hour class to get a *safe* sub-two pound trigger.

"When you're running a sub-two



Bill Laughridge, with his trademark mustache, points to the rear of the slide to show the students how to check if a 1911 can fire "out of battery" from a faulty trigger mechanism.

pound trigger pull, you're running an Indy car. It goes real fast, but it doesn't last very long," the instructor said.

Another theme that Bill constantly hammered was the need to use quality parts. "Once again, use reputable parts. Don't use unknown parts," Bill told the class. He said you're safe with any of the "name brands," but specifically referenced McCormick, Wilson, Ed Brown and Videki for triggers, hammers, sears and thumb safeties.

The class covered everything that pos-

sibly influences the trigger pull, including a special discussion of how to fit an extractor. "This doesn't have anything to do with triggers," Bill admitted, "But it's vital to reliable functioning and something that's frequently misunderstood. Besides, I want you to get your money's worth in this class!"

We covered how to adjust the sear spring, how to diagnose and cure "trigger bounce," how to file and stone the hammer hooks, how to cut the proper radius and back-radius on the sear nose, how to

check the disconnecter fit, how to fit a trigger and adjust the over-travel stop, how to fit an ambi thumb safety and, of course, how to perform a number of different safety checks on the weapon.

Along the way Bill revealed a number of little "trade secrets" and special insights he's learned in 20 years of pistolsmithing the 1911. I learned more about the 1911 pistol in those 10 hours than I'd ever get from reading a book (the class ran longer than eight hours, but no one complained). There is simply no substitute for hands-on learning and personalized instruction.

One student in the class, Dave Behlan, split his tuition 50-50 with a friend on the condition that Dave would later do a trigger job for his friend after the class. That's one way to get a scholarship! Another student, Blake Bennett, had been planning to work on a stock Government Model but when his fully customized McCormick racegun began to develop hammer follow, he did a trigger job in class on the racegun he would go on to shoot in the Steel Challenge the next day!

The two other students, Bill Larock and Ed Bruno, were serious hobbyists who simply wanted to learn more about the Government Model from a nationally known pistolsmith.

If you're interested in taking a trigger job class in conjunction with one of the major shooting matches, the next class will be Aug. 28 in Quincy, Ill., before the U.S. Nationals. Other classes are being formed for the 1994 season. For more information, contact Bill at the Cylinder & Slide Shop at 245 East 4th Street, Dept. AH, Fremont, NE, 68025 or call (402) 721-4277.

