



Getting Started In Cowboy Action Shooting



An Exciting Shootin' Guide for Bandits,
Bushwackers, Lawmen, Cowboys, Outlaws,
Crooks, Desperadoes & Other
Assorted & Sundry Characters!

by Captain George Baylor

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And now a word from the lawyers...

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About the Author



*Captain George Baylor,
Texas Rangers, Command-
ing Company A, Ysleta,
Texas 1881*

This publication has been reprinted with the kind and generous permission of Mr. Curt Rich, also known as Captain Baylor. The full version of his absolutely wonderful website can be found at www.curtrich.com. It's filled with facts on Mercedes-Benz, guns, philosophy, cowboy action shooting, every day life with your pets, being a certified MB dealer, and of course real-life experiences.

Curt has been selling Mercedes at Star Motor Cars in Houston, Texas since July 1, 1981. Along the way he has won numerous awards in addition to making a living. For example he won a nationwide contest among Mercedes-Benz sales professionals on product knowledge. The contest involved several levels of competition culminating with a game show at the Plaza Hotel in New York City. Winning involved a sudden-death playoff between Curt and another contestant after tying through the regular competition.

Before getting into the car business, Curt was an officer in the U.S. Army, serving in Vietnam during 1969-70, receiving 12 decorations including the Bronze Star with V and the Purple Heart (latest count shows 15. Apparently I miscounted campaign stars, and I didn't know MACV personnel got a group award until lately). He wrote about his wartime experiences in a novel, *The Advisors*, published in 1986 (now out of print).

A car nut from puberty he joined the Sports Car Club of America in 1964 and competed in most forms of competition, becoming National Rally Champion in 1977 and again, this time with his wife, Debbie, navigating, in 1991. In both cases he competed in Class A, where the big boys play. At the end of the 1991 season Debbie and he retired from rallying. He holds the title of Grand Master with over 200 lifetime points, equivalent to winning 20 national rallies outright.

He also competed in Solo II and SCCA racing, winning several Solo II regional championships. At one point in time he won 11 in a row, so his car was reclassified nationally to a faster class. Then he only won 10 in a row. After he quit racing he became an instructor for the Porsche Club of America. He never owned a Porsche, but after a PCA track session in which he passed and harassed a lot of much faster Porsches with his Mercedes-Benz 190E 2.6 Sportline, the chief instructor asked him to be an instructor.

He ran *Car and Driver's* One Lap of America in 1994 and was set to run it again in 1995 when he was stricken with a rare optic nerve disease (Anterior Bilateral Non-arteritic Ischemic Optic Neuropathy). While he can still drive, his night vision is shot, so a week long, round-the-clock drive doesn't sound like as much fun as it used to.

Along the way he continued his study of weaponcraft begun in the Army and actively competed in International Practical Shooting Confederation (IPSC) pistol matches from 1982 to 1992. He received considerable training from Jeff Cooper's American Pistol Institute/Gunsite Training Center, the Ray Chapman Academy, and Thunder Ranch. In 1999 he started competing in the Single Action Shooting Society. His success at selling cars and Mercedes and Volvos in particular he attributes to a few principles:

1. Don't lie.
2. Don't steal.
3. Treat others as you would like to be treated.
4. Know more about the cars than the customers.
5. While most people think the job involves fast talking, the secret is fast listening.
6. Hard Work = Good Luck.

He lives in Houston, Texas, with his much younger wife, Debbie, whom he refers to as "the Redhead" in the newsletter, and three Persian cats and a dog named John Moses Browning.

Organizations:

- Life member, Vietnam Veterans of America
- Life member, Military Order of the Purple Heart
- Endowment member, National Rifle Association
- Life member, Texas State Rifle Association
- Life member, United States Practical Shooting Association
- Life member, 100 Club of Houston
- Life member, National Motorists Association
- Life member, Single Action Shooting Society



*Captain George Baylor
And the Redhead*
photo courtesy Major Photography
512-447-7504

Introduction



Cowboy Action Shooting is the fastest growing shooting sport in the country. It's world wide. It exists in places where getting firearms is difficult and expensive such as Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and Austria. The Single Action Shooting Society is approaching 40,000 members, and over 50,000 people participate in the US every year. Over 10,000 people are starting at it every year in the US alone (judging by the new SASS member numbers). The simple fact is it's fun.



Major events take place all over the country involving hundreds, sometimes thousands of people. This is a scene of part of vendor's row at Winter Range 2001, the U.S. National Championship, where the shooting field is limited to 500 shooters, but conventioners and vendors add a few hundred more. You could go to a match like that with a pocket of cash or a credit card and get almost everything you need to shoot the sport from guns to clothes to hearing protection to guncarts, etc. If you need a set of 1876 pattern U.S. Cavalry

boots or a red paisley wild rag, it's probably here.

Cowboy Action Shooting is the only shooting sport with a dress code. You should be dressed in costume. The efforts put into the costumes are remarkable. Contestants can be 1. Real 19th century figures, 2. Fictional 19th century figures, from novels, TV, or movies [all of the Sacketts



(photo courtesy of Major Photography, 512-447-7504)

are portrayed. There's a *Hoppy* and a *Paladin* (and a *Wire Paladin* and a *Texas Paladin*, etc.), and every Clint Eastwood or John Wayne character, etc.] 3. A made up 19th century character. Aliases range from *Judge Roy Bean* and *U.S. Grant* to *Three-Eyed Willy* to *Meadow Muffin* to *Dirty Dances With Wolves* to *Trudy Grit*. (The one which caused me to roll on the floor was *Squatz-tachute*). Each shooter is required to pick a unique alias, and since there are 45,000+ members in SASS, this is difficult. Each alias must be different, or, no doubt, we'd have 250 *Paladins* and 200 *Rowdy Yates*, etc.

To get started, visit the Single Action Shooting Society (SASS) website and find a club near you. Their website will tell where they shoot and when. Go and watch a match. Talk to the shooters (while they're not shooting or loading). I've never talked to a CAS shooter who wouldn't tell you all of his secrets. I've heard World Champions give load data to people they didn't know, and shooting hints are freely given. Everyone there wants more shooters. Most shooters will even loan their firearms and leather gear to help you get started.



Three-Eyed Willy, a character to himself, has suggestions for picking an alias at his website.



Gunsmoke, Texas has a whole lot of buildings like this, administration on one side of the street, shooting stages on the other. It is a very impressive place, built entirely by the members. They will have 60-150 shooters. They shoot on the third Sunday of the month.



Welcome to Gunsmoke, Texas, a dedicated Cowboy Action Shooting facility near Columbus, Texas.

Shooters' meeting at Gunsmoke, Texas at their annual match, Trailhead. Gunsmoke, Texas is operated by the Teas Historical Shootist Society.

There are two clubs in Houston. The other one is the Tejas Pistoleros. Their facilities aren't as fancy yet, but they're working on it, and they're very friendly to beginners, especially beginners without full old western clothing rigs and all 4 required guns.

Things You'll Need - Guns



Capt. Baylor's well-used Ruger Vaquero, .45 Colt, 4-5/8" barrel. 40,000 rounds and counting. This is a full-charge black-powder load.

You'll need 2 single Action revolvers, one pistol caliber lever action rifle, and one side-by-side shotgun without ejectors or an external hammer pump shotgun (Winchester '97) or lever action shotgun (Winchester 1887--blackpowder only unless one of the promised replicas actually becomes available).

Some notes on them:

Pistols

We will start with the assumption that you want something resembling Colt Single Action Army revolvers and then talk about alternatives. 90%+ of SASS shooters use something resembling the Colt SAA. Those trying to get started on the cheap can find used Ruger Blackhawks for \$250 or so. These will put you into the Modern Category (adjustable sights, smokeless powder or black powder). New or used Ruger Vaqueros (Fixed sight revolvers put you in traditional class if you use smokeless powder, Frontier Cartridge if you use black powder or black powder substitute). New ones cost \$350-400. Clones of Colt SAAs start at \$300 and go to \$1200 or so depending on brand. Colt SAAs are available from SASS starting at \$1290 each but require 3-12 months for delivery. (One of mine took 10 months, including 2 months at which it sat at

EMF. The second took another 6 months. When I called the factory it was "stuck in a repair loop." Judge Roy Bean told me he waited for an engraved gun for over 19 months, and he's SASS #1!) The same Colt SAA without your SASS member number as a serial number has gone down, and I've seen them advertised in the \$1500 range, and .357s are available again, though not from SASS. If you have shootable Colts, shoot them. If you don't or don't want to tie up that kind of money, use clones or Rugers or Colt Cowboys. Using the substitutes and ordering the Colts for next year is reasonable if you're financially able and *want* Colts. Nearly all of the national and World Champions shoot Rugers for their reliability and sight picture. Ignore the anti-Ruger, anti-Colt rhetoric in the SASS Wire.



This is Judge Roy Bean's second SASS Colt, meaning serial #1SASS to match SASS1 given him by Colt some time back. the one mentioned above, shown at Winter Range 2002, finally arriving after, I think 19 months. It's heavily engraved, though, which slows things down. At the time he showed it to me, it was going to go away to Bob Munden for an

action job and Eagle Grips for real dead elephant ivory stocks. A collector's item like this isn't necessary for CAS. Most of the champions use Rugers that cost less than the ivory on this gun.



This Ruger Blackhawk, because of its modern, adjustable sights, would put you into the MODERN Category. A lot of beginners start there because they already have one or more Blackhawk. As a category, however, the TRADITIONAL Category is the one most popular, overwhelmingly. It requires 2 pistols with fixed, period-correct sights. Other categories: FRONTIER CARTRIDGE, using black powder or black powder substitutes in all weapons. Pistols would otherwise fit in Traditional Category, meaning fixed sights. FRONTIERSMAN: Fusing cap and ball (percussion) revolvers and SXS shotgun, shooting black powder or substitutes in all weapons. DUELIST: Shooting

a fixed sight revolver with one hand. GUNFIGHTER: Shooting a fixed sight revolver in each hand. There are also LADIES MODERN and LADIES TRADITIONAL and LADIES DUELIST plus senior men and ladies (over 60 years of age) and Elder Statesmen (over 70). Recently a new category was formed, 49ers, for people 49 through 59. Shortly after that, Shalako Joe, a 19 year old, won the World Championships for 2002, making a lot of 50 year olds glad they won't have to compete against him for a while in category. Not all matches will have all categories. For example Frontier Cartridge and Frontiersman might be combined into BLACK POWDER.

Recommendation: If they fit your hand, get Rugers. They're usually ready to go out of the box

and need little or nothing in the way of repairs for thousands of rounds. If you're flush, you can shoot them while waiting for your custom Colts. If you must have Colt clones, I recommend those by Cimarron Firearms. Cimarron Firearms is located in Fredericksburg, Texas. Their guns are Uberti-made. Several importers import Uberti guns, but Cimarron sets very high standards for Ubertis in fit and finish. Some are assembled and finished in the US. They will cost more than some imported by other importers, but usually they will be closer to ready to use. If they're not, Mike Harvey, and the staff at Cimarron are very helpful in warranty work.

By Colt clones I mean guns that are copies of either 1st Generation Blackpowder Frame Colts or Pre-War Colts (minor frame and sight differences). Some are more authentic than others. US Firearms makes Colt clones of all U.S. parts. They are extremely high in quality, and, except for the matte-blue finished Rodeo model, priced accordingly. AWA Firearms, a fairly new company, actually bought Armi San Marco and is producing high quality Colt clones and other guns. They seem to be over their growing pains, and their customers praise them highly. EMF Company, Inc., owned by SASS #2, General U.S. Grant, has been importing Italian replicas for a long time. Their current Colt clones are Uberti, though in the past they were ASM. Navy Arms Company was the original importer of Colt clones, beginning with a 1851 Navy in the fifties. Uberti USA imports, what else, Uberti replicas.

If you have small hands, note the information on the Cimarron Lightnings further on.

Expect to have to send any Colt or Colt clone to a good specialist gunsmith for an action job. Otherwise the innards will likely grind each other to bits and fail. Most clones are Uberti-made. Current production EMF, Taylor, Uberti, and Cimarron are Uberti-made.



Is it a Colt SAA or a Colt Cowboy?

I've also been impressed with late production Colt Cowboys. Out of the box they're pretty much ready to shoot, light cocking pressure, slightly heavy trigger but usable. I would still have a good specialist gunsmith do an action job. Early Cowboys had problems and got a bad reputation. They will cost more than Rugers, less than some clones, but they say COLT on them, feel exactly like Colts, and have a transfer bar safety. Not bad.



This is a Colt Cowboy. You can tell it from a Colt SAA by the transfer bar and flat-faced hammer reminiscent of a Ruger.

Other clues, they only come blued, and they come with black Colt stocks with the rampant Colt emblem, but without the eagle. They feel just like a Colt, and this one had a pretty good trigger out of the box. Fit and finish, unlike early samples, was exquisite. Side by side with a Colt SAA you can tell the case hardening is brighter on the "real" Colt. While SASS rules require loading only 5 rounds at a time, the Cowboy can be loaded with 6 rounds safely as can the transfer-bar equipped Rugers.



This is a "Real" Colt, a Single Action Army, 3rd Generation, 4-3/4" barrel, Colt .45 Caliber. The brighter case hardening, real bone charcoal casehardening, is visible even in the photograph. This one is a SASS Colt. You can get a new Colt SAA cheaper through SASS than almost anywhere, and it'll have your SASS Badge # as its Serial #, ie. SASS12345. Order 2, and the mate will have 12345SASS as its Serial #. It'll take over a year to get it probably, and it'll still need gunsmithing when you get it. But it's a real Colt. Currently both of mine are away at Peacemaker Specialists for action jobs and real dead elephant ivory.



This is a "Real" Colt and a Ruger Vaquero. You can see how much bigger the Vaquero is. Power Custom will sell you a Colt-sized Ruger grip frame, but the balance is still different. The Ruger has the superior sight picture, and you'll notice the lower angle of the hammer means you can see the sights when the hammer is down, another advantage. But the main advantage, aside from cost, is the Ruger is hell for stout, both in action and cylinder strength.

Barrel length:



The most popular barrel length is probably 4 5/8" or 5 1/2". It's quick handling makes up for the short sight radius, and we're not shooting at long distances anyway.

The SASS Wire is always full of people asking which barrel length they should get and which caliber. The answer to the barrel length is get whatever you want. I've shot with more than one World Champion. One shot long barreled Blackhawks. The two others shot 4-5/8" Ruger Vaqueros. Barrel length doesn't matter if you're comfortable with it. Your persona could be a factor. If your alias is a fictional character with a funny sounding name ("Wild Mill Hickenlooper" for example), you can use anything. If you're playing a 1875 Army officer, your gun should be a gun used by an 1875 Army officer, a 7-1/2" barreled Colt, Vaquero, or Clone or a 7" barreled Smith and Wesson Schofield (or clone). You get the picture. (But no one cares. Lefty Longridge, traditional class World Champion 2000, dresses as an Army sergeant but shoots 4-3/4" Stainless Steel Vaqueros. They didn't take his world championship away from him. John Wayne used Colts (and clones, Great Westerns) in movies set as early as 1840, and one of SASS's rules is: The Duke Can Do No Wrong. Don't let your "persona" overwhelm you. Shoot what you want.



Moon shoots 7.5" barreled Cimarron Thunderers (Colt SAA clones with birdshead grips, guns that never even existed in the Old West). He also shoots Gunfighter, meaning right gun with right hand, left gun with left hand, both guns fired alternately on stages allowing it.

As for calibers, I would recommend .38 Special for economy and future competitiveness. I don't think any of the top guns are using .45s anymore. If you want one of the new Colt SAAs, they're again available in .38. The Colt Cowboy is only available in .45 Colt. Some of the clones are not available in .38/.357. (I use 45 Colts because I was given bad advice when I started out, but I'll never be a top gun. Don't use me as an example if that's your goal.)

Expect to have your gun tuned by a gunsmith unless you buy a Ruger. Even a clone with a seemingly smooth, light action might need mods to keep it from eating its innards due to out-of-spec tolerances. Most Rugers just need a spring kit to be good for thousands of rounds. But I wouldn't consider using a clone or a Colt SAA without having a good specialist gunsmith work it over.

If you're REALLY into this sport you'll shoot more rounds in a year than, say, an active Texas Ranger would shoot in a lifetime. A Colt SAA or clone without perfectly adjusted parts will destroy itself in short order. Every serious competitor I know using either a Colt SAA or a clone has had a gunsmith at least look at it. I could be wrong, of course, and obviously exceptions do occur.

GUNSMITHS I CAN RECOMMEND WITH A STRAIGHT FACE:

(No particular order)

Hawkeye Pierce--Local Houston CAS Gunsmith--verlea@ev1.net

Coyote Cap Gunworks -- Cap is the shotgun wizard, whether you shoot a Winchester '97, a Stoeger SXS, or a Bounty Hunter SXS, he will make it work better than you ever expected.

Lee's Gunsmithing --Orange, California based CAS gunsmiths. Many of the top shooters use their guns. They're the only ones I know of who can make a percussion 1860 Army reliable.

Peacemaker Specialists--Edward Janis, proprietor. (530) 472-3438. Eddie specializes in Colts, not Rugers, not clones. He is not cheap. He was recommended to me by Clint Smith of Thunder Ranch. Clint is very stingy in his recommendations.

Just because a gunsmith isn't listed here doesn't mean they're not good. I haven't dealt with every CAS gunsmith. I am pretty picky about who works on my guns, however.



Sundown Jones demonstrates the ridiculous end of barrel length, firing 18" barreled Buntline Specials in Frontier Cartridge (Black Powder Cartridge). His buscadero holsters are strapped to his ankles. He won Cartridge Black Powder at the Tin Star CAS Open 2001 and finished in the top ten.

I've concentrated on Colt 1873 replicas and look alike. You don't have to shoot those. You can shoot any nineteenth century single action revolver or replica or look alike. There are Smith and Wesson clones, including one now by Smith and Wesson of the 1875 Schofield. I have seen several of the clones at matches. They are very complex firearms and generally have more problems than Colt clones. Many gunsmiths can't disassemble and reassemble them. Their quick-reloading advantage won't be used very often, certainly not at major matches, where reloading stages take too much time. The Smith and Wesson modern version is beautifully done and uses modern coil spring innards, so it should work quite well. It does cost \$1495 at a local Houston gunshop.

I've also seen a number of cartridge conversions, generally of 1851 Navies. The now out-of-production Armi San Marco built Cimarrons seem to be good for 2,500 rounds between trips to the gunsmith. For me, in the summer, that would mean less than a month. The new Uberti-built Cimarron conversions seem better, but don't expect Ruger-like longevity.

Cap and ball pistols are also used. They have a category, Frontiersman, at major matches. At smaller matches they will shoot against black powder cartridge pistols. Aficionados who want to use them will do so without any advice for me. They do require a lot of time reloading them. They appear at first glance to be the most inexpensive way to go. But black powder and substitutes are more expensive than smokeless, so expenses will catch up. As they have the basic Colt action, the C & B Colt clones should be gone over by a good Colt-clone gunsmith.



This is a Ruger Old Army, the choice for Frontiersman. .

This is a "Colt" 1860 Army used by Ten Bears at Winter Range 2002. Highly modified internally, his pistols didn't hiccup all week.



Rowdy Yates, of Lee's Gunsmithing, is the man to talk to about Cimarron 1860s. I'll let him describe the package in his own words: *To make these guns reliable we install cap guards similar to the original Cooper. Trim the sides of the hammers about the same width as Remington and solder in the guards to the frame. With the hammer down this modification cannot be seen. We also install larger and taller front sights and square and open the sight notch on the hammer. The action is smoothed and timed and the sear and hand hardened. Forcing cone opened and cylinder edges broken but not chamfered. The package runs about \$150. The sight work is an additional \$65 but well worth it. The 60s are a love hate relationship and will definitely not hold up like the Rugers but they are good for style points.*



Yes, you get more style points if your 1860 Army looks like it went through all 4 years of the Civil War in the holster of a Confederate cavalryman.



Bottom Dealin' Mike's son Rob demonstrates why you can't shoot "Gunfighter" style in Frontiersman. On the left is a Colt 3rd Model Dragoon, and on the right is a Colt Walker. Both have dropped their loading levers and hopelessly locked up the weapons unless you (a) tap the levers up on the opposite wrist, no doubt scaring the heck out of all assembled with 170° violations in mind, or (b) lay one down, fix the other. Lay it down. Fix the first. Not good. This is also an example of why these 4 lb. + guns aren't used that much in Frontiersman. But they look good. (Photo stolen from Bottom Dealin' Mike.)

If you're an IPSC master class shooter coming to CAS for competition, you'll probably get Ruger .357s and shoot light .38 loads. (This isn't a bad place for a duffer to start, either). If you're in this for the history, the fantasy, and the relaxation, get what you want. I will make two

recommendations: As soon as possible, get 2 guns of the same caliber. We've found .44-40 cases which had obviously been loaded in a .45 Colt at the range. Not good. Also make both guns shoot to point of aim. Having one shoot high left and the other low right will guarantee misses when you forget. Ideally both guns should be the same model. Every time I see one particular competitor with a Colt clone and a Remington 1875 clone I know that competitor will miss with one gun and shoot well with the other.



T.X. Cleanshot shoots his Navy Arms Schofield replica in a cloud of black powder smoke. He has no problems with the Schofield using Clean Shot, but if you use real black powder, be aware that some gunsmithing will be required. Navy Arms and Smith and Wesson do not put in a grease groove which was on the base pin of the originals, and the base pin will bind, sometimes after as few as 3 or 4 rounds. The Navy Arms replica fits .45 Colt cartridges, but T.X. Cleanshot uses Schofield rounds, which are shorter and thus fit. The Smith and Wesson requires Schofield rounds.



From here it looks like the same gun, but this is Jake McReedy's .44 Russian Navy Arms #3 Russian replica. .44 Russian is the father of the .44 Special. The sights are quite different from the Schofield as well as a lot of other features.

T.X. Cleanshot opens and instantly unloads his Schofield. This feature is why most cowboys who buy them buy S & W replicas. But don't do it for this reason. You won't reload under the clock that often. We did it once at the Tin Star CAS Open 2001, and that's the only time I can remember doing it at a major match. There are shooters who keep a Schofield in their gun cart for a reloading stage. But as Capt. Ira Aten says, if you're doing that, you've got the wrong sport. If your blood pressure isn't lower after shooting than before, you're doing something wrong. Shoot Smith and Wessons because you like them as T.X. Cleanshot does.





Women and men with small hands have been buying the Cimarron Lightning, left, bottom, like hotcakes. Shown compared to the full-sized Cimarron Thunderer, a Model P with birdshead grip frame à la the original double action Colt Thunderer, the Lightning is markedly smaller. The availability of this gun has made the difference for some women, enabling them to shoot in this sport. It comes in .38 Special only (which means .38 Long Colt rounds will function, an advantage for Black Powder shooters). (Photo courtesy of Cimarron Firearms.)



This is Deadeye Dawn's Lightning. It's a 4-3/4" barrel, but the ejector is about 3" long. The grip size is perfect for her feminine hand. I recommend at least the 4-3/4" barrel for sight radius, the longer, the better. When I mentioned something in the SASS Wire about 3.5" not being long enough, Miss Bubbles said, "Most women will tell you 3.5" is not enough."



Deadeye Dawn shoots 2 Cimarron Lightnings (quite well)

I don't yet have photos of the new Ruger Vaquerito, a small-framed gun in .32 H & R Magnum. It can solve the small hands problem. Unfortunately, it's in .32 H & R Magnum instead of .38 Special. Theoretically the .32 offers less recoil, but a .38 can be loaded awfully light, and the cost of reloading will still be less in the .38, not to mention easy availability of ammunition.

Rifles:



The 1860 Henry reproduction is historically accurate and doesn't seem to have many feed problems, but loading is a problem, especially if you have to reload on the clock. Some ranges dis-

courage them because of rumored blow ups of the mag tube. I haven't found any first-hand accounts, but it's possible. They require flat nosed bullets for sure and should be loaded carefully. If you have a hankering for a Henry, find a Henry shooter and pick his brain. All Henry reproductions are made by Uberti. Quality does vary by importer. Cimarron claims to have the highest standards among Uberti importers, and I have found nothing to dispute this. But Uberti, the manufacturer, is not immune to quality control problems no matter what the brand. The Cimarrons will have all of the original proof marks and the like. Original Henrys were all rifles, no carbines. But you can get various models which never existed until now.

Henrys and 1866 Winchesters should be shot only with light SASS loads no matter what the caliber. Rumor has it the military version is stronger because North-South Skirmish Association rules require hotter loads than SASS. Whether this is true or not, it has sling swivels, making it the one to get. A sling to a rifle is like a holster to a pistol. While it might be historically accurate, since there's no handguard, firing a lot of rounds, especially with black powder, will make the barrel very hot. (Cimarron Henry shown)



Madame Rose shoots her Winchester 1866 saddle ring carbine. Capt. Baylor is partial to saddle ring carbines because of their authenticity for Texas Rangers. The saddle ring does get in the way for left-handers, but he deals with it.

This is probably the most beautiful of the cowboy rifles and carbines and is quite popular just for its beauty.

The 1866 Winchester reproduction (or "Improved Henry" as it was known until the Winchester '73 came out) is historically accurate and cured the problems of the Henry. They're also available in .38 special. Most rifles are .357 Magnum and need magnum length cartridges for reliability. With an 1866 Winchester reproduction you can shoot the same .38 Special load in both rifle and pistol. The above is a Cimarron in the beautiful and historically accurate charcoal blue. When you see it in the flesh, you'll know why they call it bluing when current guns are all black.

Women shooters: The '66 is heavy.



Cimarron 1873 Saddle Ring Carbine in their "original" finish. Though fairly new, this gun looks a hundred years old. It's a popular finish on Cimarron guns.

The 1873 Winchester reproductions historically accurate and seems reliable of the samples I've watched. Lefty Longridge used one to a World Championship. The removable side plate of the 1873 cured a problem of the 1866. If it is jammed, say with a .45 Colt round stuck inside your .44-40 Winchester, you can remove the side plate to clear it as Texas Ranger George Lloyd did in a fight with Apaches in 1879. (Now that I've disassembled a '73, I wonder how in the world he did that!) He did it under fire. You won't have to. It is also easy to clean and thus favored by a lot of black powder shooters (though Marlin's ability to clean from the breech end pleases some of them.) (Carbine shown. Also available in short rifle, rifle, and sporting rifle configurations).



Winchester '73 Short Rifle in action. This is a very popular combination. The sights are better on the rifle than the carbine, but the 20" barrel gives you the handiness of the carbine. It's marginally heavier because of the octagonal barrel. This one's got the case-hardened receiver.

Women shooters: The '73 is heavy.

Rossi-built '92 carbine. The 19" ROUND barrel and band-mounted front sights mark it as a carbine instead of a Short Rifle.





Deadeye Dawn's '92 is no replica, but a real Winchester '92 in .38-40.



It is a Saddle-Ring Carbine, too.

The 1892 Winchester reproduction is available in clones from Navy Arms now and once under its manufacturer's label, Rossi. Ones which have been gunsmithed seem to be great guns. Out of the box samples often are quite finicky and trouble prone. Expect to spend money on a gunsmith. When you find several gunsmiths specializing in smoothing the actions of a particular brand of gun, odds are that gun is rough out of the box. '92 shooters who have 'smithed versions rave about the smoothness and reliability of their '92s. Several name shooters have used them to great success. There is also a Japanese one imported by U.S. Repeating Arms, the holder of the Winchester trademark. The Winchester version does not seem rough out of the box, but it has a non-period safety on the tang. Marble has a tang mounted peep sight which works with that version. The Navy Arms version is available in blued form and in stainless form in carbine, short rifle, and rifle, even a brass-framed, stainless steel barreled model which looks great but obviously never existed.



Companero just got this brass framed stainless steel Navy Arms '92 rifle. This never existed in the old west, but it's an awfully pretty rifle.

Women shooters: The '92 is lightweight. A '92 carbine or short rifle would be considerably lighter than a comparable '66 or '73.

The 1894 Winchester generally should be avoided. The action was designed for longer cartridges than pistol caliber, and I've yet to see a reliable example. (E-mails aren't necessary if you have one. There's probably a reliable Jaguar out there somewhere, too.) If you have one and are financially stretched, obviously you'll need to use it and learn how to defeat its idiosyncrasies and live within its limitations. I'm told that it is so complex inside that only gunsmiths should detail strip it. The '94 Marlin and '73 Winchester are not that complicated. The Marlin is the simplest of the two.



Capt. Baylor shoots his Marlin Cowboy in .45 Colt at Winter Range 2001. The Cowboy is the latest version of the 1894 Marlin, with deep cut Ballard rifling, best for lead bullets, 24" barrel, and Marble Buckhorn rear sight. It was designed specifically for CAS and works magnificently at it. This one has the stock rear sight removed and replaced with a flip up sight. It is fitted with a Marble Tang Rear Sight used as a Ghost Ring.



And here he fires a full charge black powder load (Clean Shot) at the Tin Star CAS Open. Lots of smoke.

The 1894 Marlin is hated by the historians, loved by the competitors. Most of the ones you see at matches were not gunsmithed but worked out of the box. There is some smoothing which can be done, and the mainspring can be replaced by a lighter spring, but if you keep the screws tight, it'll work stock.

Mine needed a gunsmith for drilling the extra hole for the Marble's Tang Peep Sight. Don't try to drill it yourself. The receiver is HARD. I replaced the stock mainspring with a Bunkhouse spring kit and got light primer hits. I added small washers as spacers and added washers until the light primer hits went away. The lighter spring lightened the trigger pull as well as the cocking effort. The action, smoothed by 20,000 rounds, is very light and smooth. The Marlin needs a lot of cleaning if you're shooting Black Powder. The crossbolt safety bugs some people**, but it has a set screw which can be tightened so it will stay in the "fire" position. You could also get a small C Clip at a hardware store and C Clip it in the "fire" position. Additionally, Clyde Ludwig, P.O. Box 26156 Wauwatosa, WI 53226-0156, ph: 414-536-1101, has built a replacement which looks like a screw in the receiver. \$12,95 including shipping and handling (cashier's check or money order only). It's made from blued steel. Installation takes 10 minutes or less.

DISCLAIMER: If you're using your Marlin 1894 Cowboy for anything else but CAS, don't replace or deactivate the safety. A cross bolt safety is superfluous for Cowboy Action Shooting because of strict rules concerning loading, unloading, and gun handling

**One Western Action Shooting organization, not SASS, doesn't like the cross-bolt safety so much that they don't allow Marlin's and Winchester's with external safeties at all. If they had any events in my neighborhood, which they don't, I'd show up with the Marlin with the Ludwig modification just to see what they said.

Women shooters: The Marlin is pretty lightweight, and a lot of women shoot them. They only come in 24" barrels in Cowboy form, though 20" carbines have been made in .357 and .44 mag. Currently Davidsons sells a 20" Short Rifle in .45 Colt, and Marlin has just come out with a Competition version in .38 Special with a 20" barrel. I've seen several with barrels cut to 20" by gunsmiths, and the users weren't all women. 20" is a barrel length favored by a lot of shooters. (5 times World Champion Tequila shoots a 20" Marlin Cowboy.)

Caliber:

Caliber for the rifle should be the same as for your pistols as soon as you can afford it. I've seen .45 Colts stuck in .44-40s. Fortunately no one was shooting at the shooter, but his stage was ruined. I've also seen .44-40s which had been stuffed in .45 Colt chambers.

Barrel length? Again, a personal thing. I think 19-20" is perfect, but as the eyes get older the longer barrels work better. The Marlin was only available in 24" when I got mine, and I've left it stock. If you start with a .38, you can get the Competition version if you want 20". Davidsons still has plenty of the .45 Colt 20" models, too. I've seen 30" barrels work. 16" barrels are too short. 19" carbines are the practical minimum. Your rifle should hold 10 rounds in the magazine. More isn't necessary (nor desirable in The People's Democratic Republic of California. One of the reasons I purchased a '73 Winchester Saddle Ring Carbine is I could take it to future End of Trails without worrying about being arrested for violating their idiotic gun laws--since corrected. The other reason is I wanted it because that was the weapon of 1880s Texas Rangers).

Sights:

The various rifles come with period correct sights. Some have small notched flat rear sights. Some have semi-buckhorn. Marble makes replacements for most with flat, semi-buckhorn, or full buckhorn, as well as small flip-up sights which go in the dovetail for the stock sights. These are available in various heights and with flat or semi-buckhorn shapes. Marble Arms no longer sells them direct, but Brownells does.

The Marlin Cowboy comes with a white diamond rear sight. At some major matches the rule against colored sight inserts is enforced. So when you get your Marlin Cowboy, turn the sight insert around or black it with flat black paint/magic marker/laundry marker, etc. As a Gunsite graduate (3 times), I learned about the "Ghost Ring" and its advantages for speed shooting. Therefore I had mounted a Marble Arms Tang Peep Sight on both rifles. With the insert removed, it's a near perfect ghost ring. I keep a flip up sight in the original dovetail just for checking to make sure the Marble hasn't gotten out of adjustment. It's fast and accurate.

Recommendations: Marlin 1894 Cowboy II in .357 magnum or one of the new Competition models in .38 as your first gun. They need very little in the way of maintenance and last like iron. They need three things in addition to occasional cleaning: 1. Keep the screws tight. 2. Keep the screws tight. 3. Keep the screws tight.



Sundown Tex shoots his Winchester '97 at Winter Range.



Major Calvin N Hobbes shoots his Stoeger SXS at Winter Range 2001, taking 4th in Cartridge Black Powder.

I thought I'd managed to get into a gunsmith free sport after IPSC. I bought Ruger pistols. No gunsmithing needed. I bought a Marlin Cowboy. No gunsmith needed until I wanted the ghosting sight. I can accept that. But, boy, gunsmiths have sure been necessary for shotguns.

Winchester '97--faster than a double on long stages, used by most of the top guns. Absolutely requires a gunsmith. The gun should be at least checked over by a good gunsmith. They're all 40-100 years old. They have 100 parts. Parts break. A good gunsmith with experience in '97s is a requirement if you're going to use it extensively. After having mine break and hang up at various times I finally had gunsmith Coyote Cap do a full race job on it. I do recommend his work, for '97s, Bounty Hunters, and Stoegers. **Norinco '97** -- 4th generation models seem to have the kinks worked out. Send it immediately to Coyote Cap, however. The difference between his guns and stock ones is unbelievable. Yes, the Norinco is made in China. Tequila now uses one after having a 75 year old Winchester break and take him out of the World Championships.

Doubles--must not have ejectors. Can have hammers or be hammerless. Most hammerless guns are not designed for CAS. Shooting the shotgun is secondary. Targets, except for aerial targets which plague some events, are usually 10 yds away and stationery. You should be able to hit them with #9 Winchester Featherlights. But every stage starts with the shotgun empty and ends the same way. Pick up most shotguns, open the lever, and note that the barrels, unsupported, will tilt back up and try to close, making it difficult to load them.

(Note on loads: At Winter Range the shotgun targets have been a pain in the neck. They're knockdowns with springs to keep them upright. You have to knock them over far enough for the day-glo base to show. Though they seem to be getting easier, most competitors use hotter loads for this event, Winchester lights or equivalent, 1-1/8th ounce, rather than Winchester Featherlights.)

Your double should be:

1. Easy to open. Thumb pressure should do it. It shouldn't require breaking the shotgun over your knee.
2. The barrels should hang down enough for you to load two rounds with one hand, the other holding the butt of the gun, preferably at your shoulder.

3. The empties should fall out when you tilt the barrels or jerk the open shotgun rearward. If you have to pick the empties out, the chambers need to be polished with a flex-hone kit. Brownells sells them. Use their flex-hone oil, nothing else. Follow the instructions.

I've had 3 hammerless doubles:

Stevens 311--had the failure to stay open problem. I had a gunsmith install Wolff Springs to cure it. They were too light. Another gunsmith, Jerry Mosley, fixed all of its problems. The barrels will hang open now.

EAA Bounty Hunter--Out of the box it'll stay open if you push the lever to the right to open it, then to the left to hold it open. It requires too much pressure, however, in the 2 samples I've had. I did see one which was easily workable by a 12 year old boy. His father explained that the gunsmithing exceeded the cost of the shotgun. But the shotgun only cost me \$200, and I won another. So I sold that one to pay for the gunsmithing (Coyote Cap). Now I use it a lot. It pops open easily and hangs open without reverse pressure. Recoil is virtually gone. Pattern is wider, so hits are easier. Still misses aerial targets, though. Rounds drop out unless you're using Clear Shot, in which case you need a chamber brush between stages. (Recommended for all powders, smoky or smokeless.)



*Captain Baylor's
Stoeger Coachgun belts
out a warm black powder
round at the Tin
Star CAS Open.*

IGA-Stoeger Coachgun--Out of the box it will stay open. It's not as easy to open as I'd like, but it might lighten with use. The IGA-Stoeger is very plain to the point of ugliness. The stock on my example, didn't have stain all the way to the end of the stock. The finish is dull and workmanlike. I like it. I don't have to worry about it falling over and getting dinged (though that would get me a stage DQ.) I found one, after much looking, for \$299. I did the following to it:

- a. Flex hone the chambers to facilitate rounds falling out. They do, most of the time.
- b. Polished the mating surfaces of the opening-closing/locking mechanism so it will pop open easily. It does.
- c. Deactivated the automatic part of the automatic safety. You're on your own if you do this. Mine is not used for anything but CAS and never gets loaded except on the line. My home defense shotgun is a Remington 870.

After a few hundred rounds it works pretty well. It only shoots Black Powder (or BP substi-

tute) loads because in Traditional Category I'd shoot the '97. Sometime later I got another Stoeger that became available at a good price and sent it to **Coyote Cap**. Now it's my primary shotgun. Big bead up front, VERY easy to open, rounds fall out if you keep the chambers clean, 40 oz. triggers (as specified), internal modifications so it won't eat itself up in a few years, 3" chambers, opened up forcing cones, light recoiling with my heavy BP loads.

All of the new hammerless doubles and some hammer doubles have automatic safeties which flip to the on position every time the shotgun is opened. This means you'll have to practice putting the safety on every time or have it deactivated. The Bounty Hunter can be deactivated and reactivated at will. The Stevens and Stoeger require cutting a part and thus aren't restorable to politically correct status. **I do not advocate deactivating any safety of any firearm. If your shotgun is also used for another purpose, such as home defense or hunting, it is doubly important that the safety not be deactivated.** It is not illegal to deactivate it for Cowboy Action Shooting.

External Hammer SXS Shotguns: A lot of shooters like the external hammer guns for their authenticity. To my knowledge no top competitor shoots one because they do take longer than a hammerless double. The now defunct by federal regulations Rossi Coach gun is quite popular, causing the prices to rise. The EAA Bounty Hunter is a low priced gun with external cocking levers which look like hammers. The ones I've seen seem serviceable. EAA now has one with real external hammers, but I haven't seen any in action.



Companero fires his EAA Bounty Hunter with external cocking levers, simulating a hammer double.

Winchester 1887: This lever action shotgun is rare at matches because it's rare period. Tri-Star promised a high quality replica, \$1195, but it never quite happened. Norinco is promising one now at a low price. If you have to have a lever action shotgun, that's the way to go. If you use an original, stick with black powder or black powder substitutes.

Gauge:

If you're buying, get 12 gauge. You can get Winchester Featherlights and get less felt recoil than with a 20 gauge, and if you encounter hard-to-knock down targets, you can use hotter loads. Dad's old 16 gauge is legal, but it's a pain in the neck getting cheap ammo. Ditto 10 gauge.

Clothing

Put on something vaguely cowboy like and show up. Hopefully you have some cowboy boots of some sort and some blue jeans which don't have a designer label, a long sleeved shirt, and a cowboy hat. There is **no costume police** (except on the SASS WIRE). You will not be shown the door or harassed. If you like the sport, make an effort to come up with a complete cowboy costume. But there's a name shooter locally who dresses just like he does the rest of the time. Fortunately his normal dress is boots, blue jeans, and a long sleeved shirt.

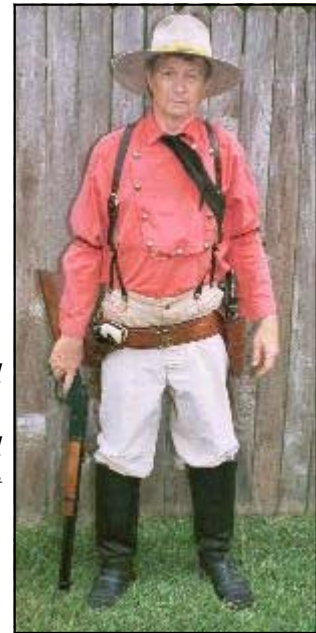
At some local matches and at all big matches are vendors selling more authentic 19th century wear. Pants should have button fly and use suspenders if you're buying something new for the sport.

If you want to go beyond that to chaps, spurs, vest, or even military uniform, etc., knock yourself out. It's fun, not a requirement.



Men: *I started with the costume on left, but you don't need to go that far at first.*

After a couple of years the shirt and pants have gotten realistically faded. The leather gear, hat, tie, boots, and rifle are different, though that's just another rifle, er carbine in this case, not a replacement. I'm 25 lb. lighter, so it all looks a little big on me.



Arizona Billy Tilghman and friend, Arizona Chris Masden and Maggie Hall at Winter Range.



Period correct pants use suspenders and have a little sewn on belt in the back for adjustment. There are photos of cowboys wearing them without suspenders, but I sure don't know how they keep them up. (Hell on Wheels2000, Cheyenne, Wyoming)



Major Ned Prentiss dresses authentically despite the weather. When the rest of us are in minimal 100° weather costumes, he's in full costume



Moon can be counted on for an interesting costume. This hot day he dressed in full Indian garb. Amazingly, none of the cowboys shot him, despite the warpaint. (Use about a quart of sunblock if you dress like this.)

Some comments on boots for CAS:



These are what most men start with, historically accurate, high tops, cathedral stitched one piece fronts, high Cuban heel, square toes. The spurs look accurate and make a lot of noise when you walk. But there are two problems here. Cowboys rode horses wearing these. They're great for that. CAS shooters **walk and run** in their boots. Wear these, and you'll be a candidate for podiatric care. They will seriously hurt your feet wearing them on a 3 or 4 day CAS match.

Do note that in one of the exhibits at the Cowboy Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City are a pair of 19th century boots which look just like Ropers. So if your feet are only comfortable in Ropers, or if you can't afford new \$200 boots for a sport, wear your Ropers. No problem. If your feet are damaged, wear what you can. The other shooters will understand. If you're competitive for first overall in a major match, you should wear something appropriate for the character, not Tennie Lamas or boots with basketball treads.



These are Civil War issue boots (from C&C Sutlery), with correct Civil War spurs and spur straps. They aren't as fancy as the cowboy boots, but you can walk in them due to a 1" walking heel (leather heel replaced with rubber for safety on wood floors). They are deliberately unpolished. They show scars from the spurs. These spurs are much more practical than the big ones. The big ones will trip you when running, and you have to take them off to drive, etc. These, you don't. Since they were Civil War issue, no one can say they're not accurate. Copies of them were made for a long time. The 1876 pattern US cavalry boot is only slightly different. Similar boots could be expected to be available to civilians at the sutlers at Army posts. So they're correct with any Ranger costume and many cowboy costumes.

I see a lot of guys, usually big guys, with lace-up boots. Their feet are shot, and that's what they can wear. No one ever says anything about it. If you can't wear cowboy boots, do what you can. Remember, NO COSTUME POLICE.



Proof that there are no costume police. Now this was a summer day in Texas, so shorts and T-shirts were permitted as long as you had a cowboy hat and boots. Capt. Samuel Clayton wore Tennie Lamas with his costume.

The "Gamer's" Costume -- on the SASS WIRE the malcontents, drunks, and whiners who have taken over the Wire often complain about Gamers. A Gamer is someone who beats them because he shoots better. The whiners want to win first overall but never practice or work on their guns. But if you're a competitive shooter, meaning you're likely to win something, you'll want a costume that doesn't slow you down but still is within the spirit of the game. For that some suggestions: Boots--whatever works for you. If you need Ropers, wear Ropers. Texas Paladin has the ultimate costume for the competitive shooter as he can wear black jeans, a real belt, ropers, any black long sleeved shirt, and a black hat, and his Paladin buscadero rig, and he's Paladin. He's also unencumbered by vest, spurs, chaps, etc. If you want to wear these things, knock yourself out. You're after style points, not trophies at the end of the match. Just don't expect both. And

don't complain if someone in Ropers beats you 30 seconds a stage. It wasn't the costume, dude. If you're portraying a 19th century cowboy, not a silver screen cowboy, the basic shirt and suspenders, proper pants, and comfortable, low heel boots and a hat will do the job. I've had the vest, watch chain, coat, scarf, and stampede string get in the way on matches.

I have drawn my gun and found the watch chain wrapped around it and my wrist. Managing or eliminating those items that get in the way is worthwhile. Putting the gunbelt OVER the vest makes a vest usable. Dealing with the watch chain so you won't draw it is reasonable (watch pocket of pants, chain attached to suspenders, stuffed in pocket, etc.). Or don't wear a pocket watch. Keep your wrist watch in your gun cart or your pocket. Chaps should be cut short so you can walk and run, or eliminated altogether. Cuffs weren't even authentic, but a lot of people wear them. I don't think they slow anyone down, though. I still wear a bandana or scarf, but I stuff it inside my shirt when I shoot.

Why You Can't Go Wrong With a Bib Shirt:

Bib shirts are authentic, colorful, and available in several different styles. They can be worn with or without a vest to handle the weather. And John Wayne wore several in various movies, and one of the rules of SASS is "THE DUKE CAN DO NO WRONG!"



This is a real 1880's red bib shirt with ocean pearl buttons from "Cowboys & the Trappings of the Old West" by William Manns and Elizabeth Clair Flood, a great reference if you're trying for an authentic look.



This one is on display at the Cowboy Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City: This verifies the authenticity of the style and of shirts with collars in general. Not all shirts had collars. The bib was designed to keep wind from blowing through this shirt when out on the plains.



Miss-Elain-e-ous, at Shootout at Buck Creek 2000, wearing a costume she made herself. Only in Cowboy Action Shooting can a high school girl tell her parents she's going to dress as a "fallen woman" and get encouragement. She's won awards with both the costume and her shooting. (Note Cimarron Lightning revolver)

Shotglass, during hot Texas weather, just wears her undies out in public. Since she's playing a Soiled Dove, she can do that. (She wasn't then, but she's shooting a Cimarron Lightning now.)





You don't have to shoot to wear Victorian Era clothes to CAS events.

Deadeye Dawn dresses in the less naughty garb of a frontier woman. She's shooting black powder and does it with the men because there's no women's black powder class. (Note Cimarron Lightning)



Powderpuff, at Trailhead '01 won Women's Traditional. She also wins costume contests with her realistic costumes. They're not always easy to shoot in. Her costumes are always realistic and make no concessions to the demands of stages designed by men who don't wear floor length skirts too often. She's shooting a full-sized 5.5" barreled revolver. Her leather gear looks authentic, too, though a nice lady didn't wear a pair of matched six-shooters on her hips while in town to shop too often.



Then there's the Cowgirl costume, either movie or Wild West Show. Looks good, and you can shoot wearing it. Note the Buscadero holsters, almost a necessity for women because of their body shape. Also note the Cimarron Lightning pistols. They're hard to find in stock because every woman in SASS seems to want one.

Same rules apply for starting out. In the old west women wore men's clothing while working, so you can, too. Frankly, the men in the sport want more women in it so much they don't care what you wear. A lot of the top shooting women wear pants, suspenders, shirts, and boots while shooting matches for practical reasons. Authentic long dresses trip them up running and going prone (not a common problem, but it's happened). And they get destroyed shooting matches. So they save the Victorian Ball Gowns for the Saturday night costume party. Others go all out all the time. Again, it's fun, not a requirement.

Remember, you can also dress like a TV or movie character, so authenticity isn't required. Check out some of those old movies and their 1930's cowboy

fashions, with belts (belt loops are a 20th century invention) and "smiley face" shirts and the like. One local shooter shows up looking like Gene Autry or Roy Rogers at matches. Ditto goes for women. You can dress like Dale Evans and find it's a pretty practical costume.

And yes, some of the ladies dress like soiled doves. One was given a penalty at a match for popping out of her low cut fantasy soiled dove costume, not, obviously, by me. Again, it's fun. Dress the way you want to.

Leather Gear

I've gone to an all San Pedro Saddlery rig. This setup was designed after much confering with "Big Ed" Douglas at San Pedro. The holsters are from the "Territorial Leather" Collection, and ordinarily would be "Budget" holsters, but these are lined with slunk. (Ask Ed.) They're straight drop, about the only thing that works for me with the big, honking Ruger Old Army. The holster lip is rolled so I can reholster on the fly without looking.



It's the standard belt (taken up 4 inches at no charge).

Above that is a shotgun belt. It holds 8 rounds in pairs but separated about the right distance for a double. It also holds 12 rounds of .45 Colt. At the loading table I load the rifle with up to 10. That leaves 2 for the occasional load on the clock situation (with one for droppage.) The belt is

cut on a reverse bend to help the shot shells angle outward. Yes, the shotgun belt is technically a little high. It should be below your navel. I must have just pulled it up.



The SASS Life Member's badge is on a San Pedro Saddlery badge holster sized to fit my previous (wider) belt.

Here's a close-up of the holster. Practical, realistic, and well-made. Behind it is a custom made double loop scabbard for my Randall Sportsman Bowie. Randall knives and I go way back, so I had one made for CAS. There's a scabbard a lot like this at the Texas Ranger Museum and Hall of Fame.

"Big Ed" at San Pedro is like Dillon Precision. The guarantee is no BS. If you're not happy, he'll make it happy, with a smile, no matter what it takes. There are a lot of good leather shops in CAS. I buy from Big Ed because of his attitude as well as his products. Both are top notch.



Left, Alfonso's of Hollywood "Duke" rig, left handed (including, to my surprise, a left-handed belt), with strong side and cross draw holsters.

You'll need a gunbelt and two pistol holsters and an ammunition carrier for 8 or more shotshells.

The choice in leather gear is overwhelming. There's no way a beginner can make a good choice without help. On the other hand, a bad choice will still hold your pistols and look western. It might not be as fast as someone else's rig, but that won't matter for some

time unless you're an IPSC master class shooter just come from IPSC and planning on being World Champion within 2 years.

Real old west characters didn't use TV buscadero rigs with their guns halfway to their knees and their holsters tied down. They used higher riding rigs which would work on horseback and would protect the weapon and keep it from falling out. With the technology of the day that meant holsters which would be unbelievably slow in a modern fast draw contest. Fortunately in the old west they didn't have fast draw contests. Only once did 2 men meet on the street at high noon and the winner, Bill Hickok, spotted the other guy 2 shots before he took careful aim and killed him. The other guy had started shooting at 75 yards. Rumor is Hickok used two hands.

Among the choices to make are whether you want a strong side holster and a cross draw holster or a left and a right. If you use the cross draw you'll have to use (and exaggerate at some places) the little two-step dance they'll teach you at your first match so you don't break the 170° lines when drawing AND REHOLSTERING. If you opt for a left and a right you'll have to switch to your strong hand when you draw. Reholstering, with your weak hand, is easy and quick. You can holster one pistol as you draw the other. You can do this with the crossdraw if you shoot the crossdraw pistol first and shift the fired pistol to your weak hand and holster it while drawing the other pistol.



Texas Paladin uses two strong side holsters, so when he draws the "weak side" pistol, he has to shift it to his "strong" right hand, which he is doing here.

It's when you re-holster that you'll find out if you bought a good set of holsters or not. YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO REHOLSTER WITH ONE HAND. If you have to use your other hand to "open up" a collapsed holster, it's a bad thing. It might be a perfectly historically accurate holster, but it's slowing you down in a speed event. More importantly, it's also not good because you have to sweep your weak hand with the muzzle, violating the rule, "Never let the muzzle cover anything you're not willing to destroy." (Jeff Cooper).

Kirkpatrick Leather makes a lot of the winner's rigs. They look Old West, plus have features such as a rolled holster lip for easy re-holstering, and locking screws to keep your holster in place.



Here's an example of the "Tequila" Cross-Draw rig from Kirkpatrick Leather.

This was designed to be an affordable holster that still offers all the features of a top competition rig. (this is the same rig that Richard "Tequila" Young wore to win the SASS World Championship 5 times!) The lip of the holster is stiff and molded rolled outward to facilitate re-holstering with one hand. The molded rolled outer lip is

hard to find on most holsters because most holsters are too soft and don't have it.

A lot of people are going to the double strong-side holsters now. It's strictly a matter of personal preference. Tequila won the World Championship with a cross-draw, Evil Roy used a strong-side. Just wear whatever you're more comfortable with. Here's some examples of the more popular strong-side rigs among cowboy shooters (from left to right - Tequila Classic Rig, Long Hunter Rig and Evil Roy Rig).



They're all custom-molded to fit your six-shooter and have the rolled holster rim for easy re-holstering. The Long Hunter and Tequila have muzzle forward cants. The Evil Roy doesn't.

A great resource on the internet is a free 21 page guidebook called "The Complete Shooter's Guide To Cowboy Action Holsters and Gun Leather". It's got lots of tips and advice about the different types of holsters available, explains what to look for when buying a new holster for Cowboy Action Shooting, plus how to take care of your leather gear so it lasts a long, long time. There's also a free online color catalog. You can get the free guidebook and free online catalog at www.CowboyActionGunLeather.com (By the way, this is a working link.) That means you can click on it and go to the website right now.)

You can invest anywhere from about \$200 to \$500 for a good basic rig. On the other hand, there are several good holster makers willing to make fancy carved, silver trimmed rigs for a lot more money if you have it to burn. Whatever you decide, make sure you do your research. If you buy right and take care of your rig, it'll last you for years and years.



This shows a more economical rig, from San Pedro Saddlery. It looks good, is well made, and probably will never wear out. Lacking the steel lining of the Alfonsos and made of heavily oiled leather, the holsters are quite supple, which is probably realistic. However, reholstering is hard. When I bought it, it fit, but that was when I weighed 25 lb. more. The belt is on its last hole now. Since the photos were taken Big Ed of San Pedro has corrected the reholstering problem. The lips now have a pronounced outward curl, and the gun goes right back in.



This is "Jack Houston (as the Lone Rider). His father played The Lone Rider in the movies, but someone else just beat him to the alias. He dresses as B-western cowboys. Here he's dressed as Gene Autry, with blue jeans, fancy boots, and a double buscadero rig, carved, nickel trimmed. The guns are stainless Vaqueros in .45LC. He will be a different B-western cowboy at each match, having a lot of fun with it and having some neat costumes.

You're not required to use a historically correct outfit. If you're playing a movie or TV cowboy, you can use a buscadero rig. (For that matter, you can if you're not. Nobody cares.) Buscadero rigs look good, but they're hell to sit with, uncomfortable on horseback, and not authentic. It's generally conceded they were designed in 1916, but there's a photo of Commodore Perry Owens with a reverse buscadero rig, and Texas Ranger Captain John Hughes had an early precursor to the buscadero rig.



Texas Ranger Captain John Hughes early Buscadero rig at the Texas Rangers Hall of Fame and Museum in Waco, Texas.

Other high quality leather makers include BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO: Kirkpatrick Leather, John Bianchi's Frontier Gunleather, San Pedro Saddlery, El Paso Saddlery, GALCO, Old West Reproductions, and a few hundred custom makers who show up at SASS matches.

You will need two holsters, a gun belt, and either a shotgun slide or a separate shotgun belt. You should be able to carry at least 8 shotgun shells. If you shoot at Gunsmoke, Texas, you should be able to carry at least 14 shotgun shells.



Two views of a belt designed as a gun-belt but used by me as a secondary belt for shotgun shells and when there are pistol or rifle reloads on the clock. It holds 2 shells together in as quick a method as is SASS legal. The maker was "Man From Laramie," which I believe is out of business. Too bad. It's a good belt. This was replaced by the San Pedro Saddlery belt on the previous page, a lighter, more comfortable belt that holds the shotgun shells the proper distance apart, a small thing, but it speeds up loading.

Other Things You'll Need - Guncarts

Recommendation: If you're buying a guncart, the Simple Gun Cart from Cal-Graf Design seems to be the best value for the money. Carts from the Off The Wall Guncart Company seem to be excellent quality as well. You can spend as much money as you want for a cart, and then some people use golf carts or 4x4s as guncarts, so they spend even more. But it isn't necessary. You could just carry your rifles from stage to stage and put ammo and such in saddlebags over your shoulder.



The Simple Cart from Cal-Graf Design arrives unfinished and partly assembled for \$190 with the wheels shown, less with other wheels. Careful assembly and finishing can make it last a lifetime. This design is unlikely to be made illegal due to rules changes. Though actions are closed on the rifles in this photo, actions must be open now, and any gun cart you get should accommodate open actions. Keep this in mind if building one, especially if you use a SXS shotgun.



Captain Baylor turns a "Simple" Gun Cart into the world's most expensive "Simple" Gun Cart.

Gunther Cartright's personal cart from Off-The-Wall.



This is a 4 gun breakdown guncart from Off-The-Wall Guncart Company. Available in various woods and in kit form, prices range in the 4 gun breakdown cart from \$245+\$42.50 shipping up to over \$500 with some woods.

As of the time of writing, vertical and horizontal carry are legal, but actions must be open at all times, whether cased or not. In 1999 the big bone of contention was a threatened rule change to require vertical carry. That didn't go through. By early 2001 the change to require open actions in carts or cases had preliminary approval. There were some angry people on the SASS Wire. Most ranges in Texas already required open actions. I wouldn't worry too much about possible future rules changes. Who knows? By 2004 we might have to disassemble the guns to go from stage to stage, assuming politicians everywhere haven't followed the People's Democratic Republic of Massachusetts' lead in banning cowboy guns altogether. (If you haven't joined the NRA, please do so NOW!)

Capt. Baylor's Earlier Carts:

If you're making one from scratch, building one from a little red wagon doesn't require cabinet maker's skills.

A Basic 4 gun wagon cart with horizontal carry will cost circa \$100, \$50-70 for the wagon, \$20 for a box, \$20 for pickup truck gun racks. A Winchester box like the one below will cost \$60±. A good scrounger can do it for less.



While Captain Baylor's little red wagon guncart worked very well for carrying 2 long guns, 4 in a pinch, horizontal carry is frowned upon in some areas. This one was easy to pull uphill and won't tip over easily because of the low center of gravity. He reverted to this one after pulling a heavier wagon with vertical carry up the hill at Tin Star Ranch one time too many. The cooler was for hydration of the shooter. The squeeze bottle was Ballistol/water for gun cleaning (I no longer use Ballistol and field-

clean with Windex/vinegar, oil with Rem Oil). The other big bottle has vinegar/water for fired cases using Clean Shot, not necessary if you shoot that new fangled modern smokeless stuff. There's a small gunsmith screwdriver kit in there and cleaning rods and such plus a shotgun belt just for the outrageous 14 round shotgun stages at Gunsmoke, Texas.



The Winchester box opened up reveals, clockwise, starting at left, hearing and eye protection, etc., rifle ammunition, hot shotgun loads, regular shotgun loads, pistol ammunition (all loaded with Clean Shot for Black Powder Cartridge/Frontier Cartridge competition.)



This was the bigger, fancier guncart, based on a large #29 Radio Flyer All Terrain Wagon. The rack folds down. It worked well, but it was heavy. The big inflatable tires didn't usually make it any easier to pull uphill or over rough terrain.

Capt. Baylor has spent as much on the various carts as buying a good one from Off-The-Wall, Longhorn Leather, or Cal-Graf would have cost in the first place. There's a lesson there.

Safety Equipment



Bright orange in the ear protection with a clear tube to a Walker's Game Ear I gives 31 decibel protection and the ability to turn the Game Ear on and off, volume up and down, to hear the stage briefing and not hear loud noises. This set up isn't cheap. Plain foam ear plugs are the best bang, or lack thereof, for the money.



The glasses are Col. Riddles' Period Correct Shootin' Specs. Col. Riddles is a SASS Shooter, and his wife has had a lot of medical problems lately, making buying from him a good idea, but the glasses are good, too. These have polycarbonate lenses with the focal point being the rifle front sight. They come with plain polycarbonate. Note the side shields. <http://www.homestead.com/colonelscaspage/cowboyshootin.html>

Safety glasses and ear protection are mandatory when near the line. Use good, full coverage glasses. Don't use small round glasses just because they look period correct. One story: I was working as timer at Shootout at Buck Creek 2000. A lady was shooting a .38. The targets were relatively close and were not properly tilted down. She shot a low velocity round and hit the target. The round came straight back at me. My glasses had slipped down my nose because I was reading the timer. The round went above my glasses but into my eye, cutting the lid and bruising the eye. A visit to an ophthalmologist was necessary, and it was a near thing. Now I use an elastic strap to keep my safety glasses tight on my eyes.

Cowboy shooters use in-the-ear protectors. This isn't as good as ear muffs. You need 31 decibels sound reduction. Again, don't scrimp. The electronic in-the-ear protectors are expensive, but they're a good investment.

Your First Match



Find a club near you using the SASS website. Their website will probably have a map and/or instructions. Both Texas Historical Shootist Society and Tejas Pistoleros in the Houston area have good website instructions/maps.

Gunsmoke, Texas, a permanent Cowboy Action Shooting facility outside of Columbus, Texas, is a good place to start.

The club will probably have a contact phone number. You might call him. He'll probably tell you to come on out whether you have all of your equipment or not. If you have everything, no problem. If you're short a pistol or a rifle or a shotgun ask if you can borrow one. Any club I've been involved with encouraged beginners, so loaner guns are always available.

Get your gear together the night before. Make sure everything is in the car. Name shooters have gotten to matches and realized they forgot their guns. I once went back in the garage for something and found my pistols on the floor.

Arrive early. Beat the crowd, yes, but the real reason is new shooters have more paperwork to do than repeats, and you may have to qualify. Qualification isn't difficult. You just have to shoot the pistol, rifle, and shotgun to demonstrate safe handling. Misses are allowed.



Listen up at the shooters meeting. Poses will be assigned then if they haven't already. A posse is just a group of shooters that will shoot together all day. Each posse will start at a different stage so that several stages can be shot simultaneously.

Each posse will have a posse marshal. Tell him you're a newcomer. He will probably assign someone to help/watch/mentor you.

Everyone on the posse works when not shooting or getting ready to shoot. Since you're a beginner you'll probably be assigned to pick up brass, something not requiring experience.

When it's your turn to get in line, put the required amount of ammunition on your body. I put rifle rounds in a small leather pouch on my belt and pistol rounds on my belt. My shotgun belt holds 12 pistol/rifle rounds, too. Others use loading blocks or ammo boxes. Carry the exact number you need, and you won't put in too many. This is a no-no. Shotgun ammunition, of course, goes in your shotgun loops. Extras are okay. You'll drop some.

Then carefully take your long guns from your gun cart. Don't sweep anyone. Move the muzzles to vertical as expeditiously as possible.



Go to the loading table. Lay the guns down facing down range, pistols, too. In this instance, Capt. Baylor is acting as loading table monitor for the shooter ahead and monitoring the loading of his pistol. Normally a worker is assigned to this job. In this instance, we covered each other.



Lay the ammunition needed for the rifle down. Count the rounds.



Make sure the rifle is unloaded. Lower the hammer carefully. Load the rifle with the designated rounds. A designated contestant should be monitoring this. This is the time when conversations stop, and you concentrate on counting rounds. Put in one too few, and you'll suffer a miss or an on-the-clock reload. Put in one too many, and you risk a safety violation.





Then load the pistol(s) with 5 rounds (each). With Colts and clones it's load one, skip one, load 4, loading gate closed. Hammer to full cock then down carefully on an empty chamber. Let the loading table monitor see what you're doing. With a Ruger you can load 5 and make sure an empty chamber is under the hammer.



Check visually to make sure the empty chamber is under the hammer. Show the loading table monitor and get his/her okay.

Relax. Visualize the match. Remember the order. For example, "Rifle first, 3 targets, sweep left to right three times. Ground rifle on hay bale. Pistol one, 5 rounds on 5 pistol targets left to right. Reholster. Pistol two, 5 rounds on 5 pistol targets right to left. Reholster. Shotgun. Sweep 2 swingers left right twice."



THE START: Starting positions vary. At this stage at Winter Range 2001, it was facing uprange with a cup of coffee in both hands. At the start signal, drop coffee, turn and begin the stage.



In this stage at a Tejas Pistoleros monthly match we started at Cowboy Port Arms and engaged rifle targets first, three targets, swept left to right three times, then safely grounded rifle on the wall by the door, action open...

Ground rifle safely--if a weapon falls down it's a stage DQ. If it's loaded it's a match DQ. Take an extra half second to make sure. A name competitor in trophy position had a shotgun fall on his last stage at Winter Range 2001.



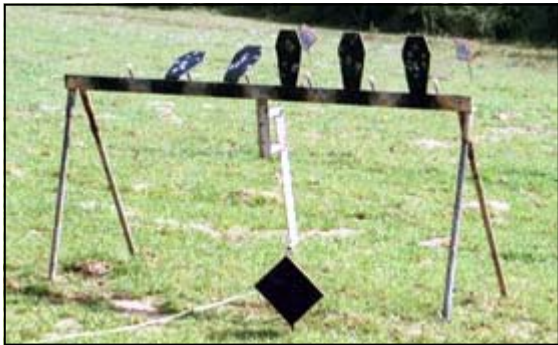
... moved to left window to engage falling plates, drew first pistol (from crossdraw holster).

If you use a crossdraw holster, do the crossdraw dance to make sure you're not sweeping anyone. Be aware of the angles. Exaggerate the cross draw dance to make sure the people watching see you do it.



Ideally it's...

Bang-Clink

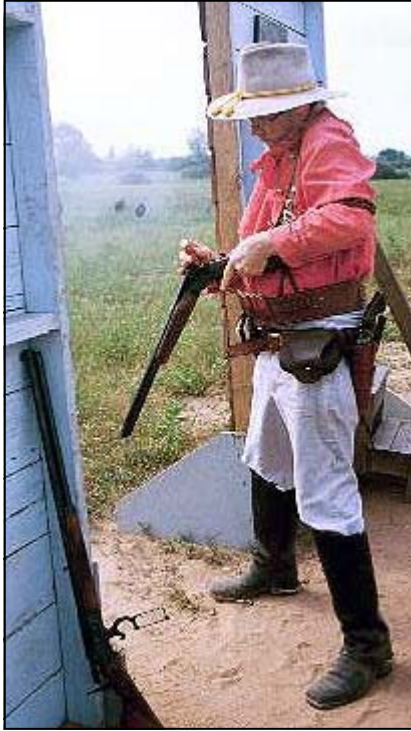


Bang-Clink



Bang-Clink

*Now reholster safely. The second pistol engages another set of targets, usually in a prescribed order. Then reholster safely. **DON'T SWEEP ANYONE WHILE REHOLSTERING!***

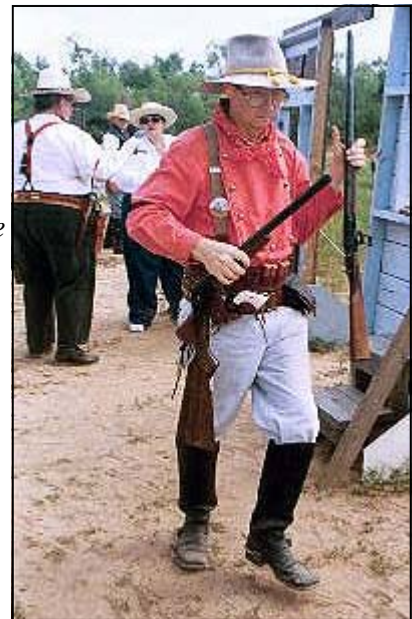


Retrieve shotgun and engage swingers 1 & 2 left to right three times. That is black powder smoke.

Then shotguns. Shotguns start empty and end empty. If the shotgun isn't the last weapon fired (and it should be for timer activation purposes), emptying the chambers is required before leaving it.

"Muzzles up. Proceed to unloading table," should be the command from the timer operator. Time to get out of the fog of battle and concentrate on safely unloading the weapons.

When finished, STOP. The timer isn't running. You can do things at normal speed now. Don't get DQed now. MUZZLE UP if you have a long gun in hand. Pick up your other long gun if needed. Move to the unloading table. Sometimes workers will



pick up your grounded long guns. They may be a long way from where you ended up.



DO NOT pick up brass. If brass is picked up, and it is in all but big matches, other contestants will do that for you. You should clear the shooting area and go to the unloading table in a timely manner.

Place the long guns on the unloading table, muzzles down range.



Rack the action on the rifle several times and look down the chamber and in the loading gate to make sure it's really unloaded. If you're using a '97 shotgun, do the same with it. With a double just look at the open chambers.

At the unloading table carefully show that every weapon is unloaded to the unloading table monitor (usually the previous shooter. You'll become the unloading table monitor for one shooter).

Don't take this lightly. The accidental/negligent discharges I've known about could have been avoided at the unloading table.



Unload both pistols and show clear. If you only shot one pistol, you have to show both clear.



Then take your long guns to the gun cart. Don't sweep anyone. There are people in some areas, hopefully not ones where I shoot, where this would be considered a violation because the muzzle of the rifle isn't pointed straight up. When you pick up your long guns at the unloading table, keep them pointed down range. Pick them up. Point the muzzles up or down, but don't let them sweep to the side.

Have a drink out of your stash (water, Coca-Cola, Gatorade, no Redeye) and start getting ready for the next stage or to work this one. Keep yourself hydrated and relaxed. This is fun.



Monthly matches don't usually have big parties, but big matches do. This was the party at the Tin Star CAS Open 2001. The party was held at Tin Star Ranch because they waited too long to hire a hall. The food was great, and the Margaritas better. John Taffin says the three aspects of Cowboy Action Shooting are shooting, fellowship, and shopping. Big matches provide all three. If you took the fellowship out, it wouldn't be a fun sport. It's more than just shooting.

And as far as shopping, all these people didn't make their outfits. They bought most of them somewhere. If you haven't already, come to your nearest CAS club and join in the fun. Cap'n Baylor will be looking for you.

Some Musings On Costume Contests

One month in the summer, Moon showed up to a match in his Indian/Native American costume. I thought, "Now there's an original costume. Took real guts to wear it. Too bad he wouldn't win anything at most SASS costume contests." But then, neither would Captain Jarrett in his historically perfect Indian Wars Captain's outfit, Crow Dog, Buffalo Bill, Barkeep, or someone dressed as a Bengal Lancer-at all too many SASS costume contests.



If you have only "Best Working Cowboy" and "Best Cattle Baron" as costume categories for men, where do you put Moon?

I've seen a lot of contestants put considerable effort into their costumes. I've only seen one match put similar effort into their costume *contest*, maybe 2.

Hell On Wheels hired an outside "Living History Expert". Now there's a job title I didn't know existed before then. But he worked out well. He knew his stuff. And he had several categories to choose from.

Winter Range had the fancy dress contestants go through a line to be analyzed by the judges. This isn't a bad idea as it makes sure the judges see everyone who is interested in the costume contest.

At most matches the costume committee, often one person, chooses the winners. With the normal shortage of workers, getting ANYBODY to do this job is hard enough. Getting experts at this to do the job is nigh on to impossible. But try. Ask the local historical society, college history department, etc. Try to get someone who doesn't know the contestants. That judge will be judging costumes, not picking most popular. At Longhorn Crossing, unable to find an outsider, they used one of the vendors, Cowtown Katy. She knew clothing and could be objective. For the "shooting" costumes, contestants showed up at her tent with their costume contest entry/judging form on Saturday between 9 and 1. For the "party" costumes, she and the costume contest chief had a table to which one reported if one wanted to be judged. In both cases the judge(s) asked questions about the costume and the character.

And at most matches there aren't enough categories, and the categories have limitations. Like many of the contestants, I don't "play" a cowboy. I play a historical person who was an Indian fighter, soldier, lawman, and legislator. When the categories are "best working cowboy" and

"best cattle baron," I know I'm not included. If you're going to have only two awards, it should be "best shooting," and "best dress." Leave it open to everyone.

Judging these costumes, assuming you want to do it correctly, is difficult. The judges should know what is historically accurate (in the classes, if there are any, which count that, excluding Silver Screen, for example). This is difficult. Most judges, for example, seeing a cowboy wearing roping cuffs and batwing chaps will think the contestant has gone the extra mile in adding authenticity to his costume. I've seen the winners of "best working cowboy" be the guys with the most leather more than once. However, both were invented long after the cattle drive was history. They would be authentic for a 20th century cowboy. A working cowboy during the heyday of the cattle drives might wear shotgun chaps on the drive, not batwings, and no cuffs. I



seldom see shotgun chaps worn. They're a pain to put on and take off.

The judge(s) need to know 2 things:
1) Who are you? 2) When are you?

Captain Samuel Clayton reports to the costume judging table at Longhorn Crossing. Prudy Perkins and Cowtown Katy handle the tough job of judging, made easier by categories and criteria for each. They're asking Capt. Clayton "Who are you and when are you?"

A cowboy in a brand new working outfit would be historically unlikely unless he had just gotten paid at the end of the cattle drive and spent his pay on a new outfit instead of whiskey and wild women. But, if the judge asked, Who are you and when are you? And he answered, "I'm Teddy Blue Abbott, and I just reached Dodge City and bought this here new outfit, summer of '73," then the clean new clothes would be historically correct. Otherwise the cowboy who left his hat and clothes on a fence post in the weather for 3 weeks and then put them on and rolled in the dirt in the parking lot would be more correct. If he smelled really bad, he should get extra points, but then I wouldn't want to encourage that. There is a point of excessive authenticity.

If he said, "what was the question?" the judges can move on. This person didn't come for the costume contest. That's okay. Most people don't.

A double buscadero rig would cost you points in the historical categories as being unauthentic. If you were playing The Lone Ranger, then it would be appropriate.

Remember 75-80% of contestants don't care about the costume contest. It doesn't mean they're not playing the game. It just means they're not playing the *costume* game.

As far as categories go, the more categories there are, the more winners, naturally. This isn't a bad thing as we like to see people win things. That's why we have awards. You can have as

many or as few as the club wants. Some suggestions, budget and committee expertise permitting:

Men: Best Shooting, civilian, Historical-meaning not that you're trying to be Wyatt Earp, (though you can be) but you're not a silver screen character. You're, say, a typical 1880 Texas Ranger or 1873 town marshal, or 1866 town doctor, etc. Then Barkeep, who does not play a cowboy, or Crow Dog, who plays an Indian, can compete with Buffalo Bill or Teddy Blue Abbott, etc. The criteria should be historical accuracy of the entire outfit, including leather (This class can be combined with the next one if needed).



Maverick is wearing a historically accurate Rough Rider costume (Sam Elliott wore it in the movie "The Rough Riders.") This isn't a "Best Working Cowboy" costume, but it is accurate, unusual, and interesting. It needs a category like, "Best Shooting-Military, historical." The cowpoke next to him would be in "Best Shooting-Civilian, historical." (When this was published in The Cowboy Chronicle they noted that his "Shotgun Bra" is seriously illegal.) Huntress, sitting down, would qualify for "Best Shooting-Cowgirl, Historical."



Major Ned Prentiss would qualify for the category "Best Shooting, Civilian, Historical." Considering the fact that he's accurate for 1875 down to his underwear, 1875 period firearms and powder, black, he more or less epitomizes the category.

Best Shooting, Military, Historical: The criteria should be historical accuracy of the entire outfit. Several shooters have adopted military personas. They should have a class instead of being eliminated as soon as the classes are announced. Judging this requires really knowledgeable judges. The uniforms varied from year to year, and availability of components in some remote forts was so poor that half of a trooper's outfit might be civilian. Officers wore mostly their own clothes. George Armstrong Custer designed his own uniform. The judges would need to question the contestants about the aspects of their costume if unsure.

Best Shooting, silver screen/fantasy. The criteria should be how well the contestant matches the appearance of a silver screen character or genre. The twin buscadero rig with nickel silver conchos is part of that. He shouldn't be competing against guys who are trying to be scrupulously historically accurate. He's trying for a different effect. The fantasy costume, like Gunzilla's, should go here.



Jack Houston Appearing As The Lone Rider epitomizes the Silver Screen category. Everything in the costume is out of '30s B western movies. The buscadero rig belonged to "Jack Houston," who played The Lone Rider in several '30s movies. His son plays the part now.



Best Dress, military, historical.

Best Dress, civilian, historical.

(courtesy Major Photography)-Col. George Baylor, CSA, shown with his lady, "The Redhead," SASS 25034 doesn't fit under "Best Cattle Baron." But when there's a Best dress-military category, there's a place for his costume. But it takes a good judge to determine, "is it authentic?" (He carries only Confederate money. Col. Baylor was a cavalry officer put in a staff position. You decide.)

The Redhead would be an example of the category "Best Dress-Historical"

These can be combined to Best Dress, historical if needed.

Best Dress, silver screen/fantasy. The criteria should be how well the contestant matches the appearance of a silver screen character or genre. If you're combining classes, combine this with Best Shooting, silver screen/fantasy as just Best Silver Screen/fantasy.

Women:

Best Shooting - Cowgirl, historical-bear with me. This is for the woman shooting in *pants*. The Cowgirl started in the 1890s, but women had to wear pants before this when doing "man's" work. They would wear men's clothing (no, I have no class suggestion for men wearing women's clothing) or whatever was available. So the "cowgirl" could be a 1880s ranch wife working on the range or a 1895 Wild West Show performer, for example.

Best Shooting - Ladies, historical-This is the class for women shooting in *dresses*. Shooting these matches in a hoop skirt that touches the ground has got to be exceedingly difficult. But we see women who, if they took their guns off, could look right at home on the front porch of a ranch or sodbuster's house or the one room schoolhouse. (Ladies did not wear two pistols when going to the General Store.) This is the category the schoolmarm, the historically accurate soiled dove, and the clerk at the dry goods store go.



Here's a perfect example of a "Best Shooting-Fantasy/Silver Screen." If, on the other hand, she showed a photo of a Wild West Show performer wearing this outfit, she could be in "Best Shooting-Cowgirl, Historical."



Powderpuff shoots in a historically accurate lady's outfit, long dress and all. She is an example of a "Best Shooting-Ladies Historical."



Deadeye Dawn is an example of a "Best Shooting-Ladies Historical."

Best Shooting - fantasy/Silver Screen. If you look like Dale Evans in any of her movies or Natalie Wood in *The Searchers*, this is the place for you. (She was dressed as an Indian maid, but not like any Indian maid in real life 1870s.)

Best Dress - historical. The criteria should be historical accuracy of the entire outfit.

Best Dress - fantasy/Silver Screen. Okay, this is easy. Look at some of Shotglass's costumes or Buckskin Bunny. Their Soiled Dove costumes are pure fantasy. Someone portraying a real soiled dove would be in Best Dress - historical. Fantasy Saloon Girls were in a lot of movies.



Shotglass, who is usually pretty outrageous herself, won "Best Dress-Fantasy/Silver Screen" as "Diamond Lil." It's definitely a fantasy costume.

Best Junior Boy and Girl, of course, and sub-junior, lots of awards in these categories, such as shooting and dress. They're the future of the sport.

Best Couple, historical

Best Couple, Silver Screen

The wife/girlfriend/significant other who dutifully accompanies her man to these events and "plays the game" of dressing up but who doesn't shoot should be eligible for these category awards, or have **Best Non-Shooter** among the women's categories.



Optional: **Most Original/Most Outrageous, male and female.** Gunzilla is both original and outrageous, but neither historical nor silver screen.

If Sexy Sadie doesn't epitomize "Most Outrageous," then what does?

The categories should have a place for Crow Dog's Indian, Buffalo Bill Cody, Captain Jarrett, Arizona Calamity, Buckskin Bunny, Lone Rider, Barkeep, the occasional Bengal Lancer or Boer, and all of the shooters who DO dress as cowboys and their ladies.

More Guncarts

VERTICAL CARRY GUNCART

Every time the Territorial Governors meet much of their time is spent discussing vertical vs. horizontal carry guncarts. They would *like* to require vertical carry. They have read Cooper and know about Rule 4. Never let the muzzle cover anything you're not willing to destroy. This is a good example of a wagon made into a vertical storage cart. It's stable and won't tip over easily, and it won't point the muzzles at the owner when he pulls it. The latest ruling is horizontal



carry will still be legal, so if you have one, especially an elaborate one, breathe a sigh of relief. But if you're building one, you might consider building one with vertical carry. I have one of each. One of my favorite shooting sites is Tin Star Ranch in Fredericksburg, possibly the finest CAS shooting facility in the world. But it's all uphill. My vertical carry guncart is heavy. A small Radio Flyer Town and Country Wagon with horizontal racks on the side is much easier to pull up the hill and less likely to fall over (you can't fall off the floor). Some ideas follow.

A NOTE ON SAFETY OF VERTICAL VS. HORIZONTAL CARRY GUNCARTS:

The push for vertical carry guncarts is because people complain that guns are being pointed at them in horizontal carry racks. If you're carrying a long gun **in your hand**, then it is imperative that you carry it vertically, muzzle up or down. Some ranges have muzzle up rules. Some muzzle down. Follow the regs. If it's in the cart, it's safe wherever it's pointed. It's getting it in and out of the cart which bus people. If you pull it out of a cart, you're sweeping someone unless you're careful. When I use my horizontal carry little red wagon, I'm careful to always park it near the firing line and pointed toward the firing line. Then when I put guns in and take them out I can avoid sweeping anyone.

The danger is you'll close the action and then pull the trigger with a round inadvertently in the chamber. The only accidental (negligent?) discharges I know about occurred with vertical guncarts. The owner closed the action and pulled the trigger on a live round. This indicated a chain of events had gone wrong.

1. The unloading table monitor had failed to do his job. CAS is obsessive about safety. One of the keys is that all loading and unloading is monitored! If you're an unloading table monitor,

Make sure you clear every weapon put on the unloading table or worn by a shooter, even if it wasn't shot. All long guns should be racked multiple times.

2. The owner closed the action while the gun was in the cart **and pulled the trigger**. Don't do that! Leave the action open. When you close the action to put the gun in its case back at your vehicle, lower the hammer carefully. Don't just pull the trigger. One of the BIG NAMES of Cowboy Action Shooting recently got his name used in vain on the front page of the Cowboy Chronicle for pulling the trigger on a long gun in a vertical carry guncart and firing off a round, fortunately without injury other than to his eardrums and pride and nerves.

Firearms are inherently dangerous. **You can NEVER, NEVER, NEVER let up on safety!**

A GOLF CART

This is a vertical cart which is a very simple, easy to build design. The big, complicated wagons aren't *required*. They may be fun and make you the center of attention, but all you need is a safe way to carry your guns, ammunition, and *stuff*.



LITTLE RED WAGONS



CAPT. BAYLOR'S LITTLE RED WAGON

I started with a "little red wagon," a Radio Flyer Town and Country wagon, the most popular basis for a guncart in this part of the country. Wagons in general dominate. In other areas where the emphasis is strong on vertical carry, purpose built vertical carry guncarts are predominate. A beginner can put together a wagon guncart in a couple of hours for not too much money. The wagon is

\$50-60. It has been through several iterations, first as a horizontal cart, then 2 different versions of vertical rack cart. In an attempt to get a better, bigger cart, I built one from the big Radio Flyer #29 All-Terrain wagon which sports inflatable rubber tires but costs \$129. After fighting with it getting it in and out of the truck, pulling it uphill, etc., I reverted to basics, keeping the big wagon for places which require vertical carts. I modified the wagon to use the

Winchester box (Colt Blackpowder Arms, \$60 or so), removable, as the front of the cart, which means I can sit on it. It uses pickup truck gun racks and holds 4 long guns, the ammo box, the all important cold liquids cooler, the Nikon camera (not shown for some reason, duh), and spare leather gear, black powder cleaning gear, etc., etc. Every corner is braced, making it pretty strong. It's light enough to pull uphill at Tin Star Ranch and low enough it won't tip over.

MUCH MODIFIED LITTLE RED WAGON



This started life as a Radio Flyer #29 All Terrain Wagon. I'd used a Radio Flyer Town and Country wagon, a smaller wagon with regular tires. This one has big, fat tires, which roll better on the rough terrain of CAS shooting ranges. It does not roll as well as some of the vertical guncarts with 16-20 inch wheels. Vertical carts are the easiest non-powered carts to move around on difficult terrain. The wagon carts like this carry a lot of "stuff."

OTHER WAGONS



This wagon belongs to Texas Paladin, one of the best duelists in the country. It's a well-used Radio Flyer. Nothing was built on. Gun cases are used for the long guns and boxes take care of ammunition, etc. He's been using it for a long time. Obviously it works for him.



This is a variation. It uses the pickup truck gun racks unmodified. It has a steel bed and inflatable tires.



Gus McCrae's cart is big and hefty, starting with a heavy duty wagon. He uses leather scabbards for the rifles, and a rack for the double. Doubles create a problem. Vertical racks have to be designed so they'll stay action open. With a horizontal rack this is easier, but it does negate using a scabbard. A scabbard works for a Winchester '97 and all the rifles, though.



A STAGE COACH

FANTASTIC! This is on ELABORATE, BEAUTIFUL guncart. This shows the lengths some people will go to with their carts. This one stores vertically. I would imagine its owners have a pickup truck. Anyone telling you CAS is an inexpensive sport neglected to mention the Club Cab Pickup at \$35,000 to carry your guncart.



A SADDLE

Another neat idea, a saddle on the cart. The gentleman next to it owns it. Note the hat, John Wayne, Rio Bravo. He sits on the saddle when holding conversations.



CONESTOGA WAGON #1

Here's a miniature Conestoga wagon without roof. Note the wheels. Note the barrel on the side. Neat, huh?



CHILD'S BUCKBOARD

This beautiful wagon was built for the owner's son as a play wagon and converted to be a guncart. Even the wheels were hand made. His son was seen riding on the wagon at the meet. A reader said he had a duplicate now retired to be a flower wagon.



CONESTOGA WAGON #2

This impressive Conestoga wagon turns heads. Yes, it requires a big vehicle to bring it. It does disassemble.



DOUBLE DECKER

Here's a double decker made from a garden wagon. Several of the little red wagons were ATV versions with big off road tires, easier to pull than skinny standard models.



WAGON BUCKBOARD

Nice cart. Another variation of modified child's wagon. Angled carry might mollify the vertical carry fanatics, but maybe not. They are pointed at the person pulling the wagon.



BUCKBOARD TOO

Another handmade one using a wagon chassis. Beautiful wood. Built-in box in the front and Winchester wooden ammunition box in the rear. Colt Blackpowder Arms carries the Winchester box.



THE ULTIMATE GUNCART

This is a 1/3 scale chuckwagon and equipment, handcrafted in the fashion of an 1880's style chuckwagon. The wheels, running gear, and wagon box are all made from red oak. The tool boxes, seat, and chuck boxes are made from pine. This is available from Roger Peterson Design, 6430 Fairbrook St., Long Beach, CA 90815. Phone (562) 421-2400. The chuckwagon, hold on to your John B., is \$3300. 38" H, 42"L x 14". Front wheels 14" dia., Running gear with pull handle, rear wheels 17" dia. Working brake assembly. Chuck box with five drawers, drivers seat and foot rest, canvas with 4 bows and cleats, tool box right side, tool box front, water barrel. There are accessories and other model wagons as well. Thank goodness this wouldn't fit in my SUV so I won't be tempted to save my pennies.

We're expecting someone to bring a shetland pony to pull one of these elaborate wagons soon.



At Winter Range 2001 I saw the latest edition of this fantastic cart:

As one Texas shooter, Sundown Tex, said, "I can't decide whether to buy a EM Horton guncart or a new pickup." Aside from the cost, the thought of pulling that from the parking lot to The Alamo at Tin Star Ranch is pretty intimidating.

FREE! Cowboy Action Shooting Resources

Howdy! I hope you've been enjoying your Cowboy Action Shooting book.

Here's a few more resources to help you get started. By the way, these are all working links. That means if you're online and connected to the Internet right now, **just click on the links and you'll go right to the website.** Otherwise, just copy and paste the website address into your browser.

First, for more info on how to choose your cowboy alias, check out Three Eyed Willy's website at:

www.billpalmer.com/alias.htm

The following site has a listing of some of the aliases already being used in SASS. Remember though, this site only has about 7,800 aliases and there are over 50,000 shooters in SASS! But it's a good starting point and should give you lots of ideas. The website is at:

www.pineywoodsplace.com/aliases.html

If you're looking for a place to shoot, here is a fantastic website. It lists most of the ranges that have Cowboy Action Shooting. Plus it lists their contact information, location and sometimes even a map of how to get there!

All you do is put in your city or postal code and it'll tell you the closest cowboy ranges to where you live. It doesn't have ALL of them listed, but it has most of them. It's at:

www.WhereToShoot.org/search.asp

If you're looking for some cowboy gear, here's an exciting website where you get a free online guide called "**The Complete Guide To Cowboy Action Gun Leather**". This free online guide reveals wagonloads of important tips and advice and everything you need to know about Cowboy Action gun leather. Plus, you'll learn the answers to all the questions people usually ask when they're buying a new cowboy holster, plus answers to questions about taking care of the one you may already have. There's also an exciting free online color catalog. You can get it at:

www.CowboyActionGunLeather.com

Finally, if you're looking for some how-to instruction, I highly recommend you mosey on over to www.tequilashootingschool.com 5-time SASS Cowboy Action Shooting World Champion "Tequila" has put together a series of instructional how-to videos to help you get started the right way. Plus, you can also get a free Cowboy Action Shooting newsletter. It's a great resource and you can get at:

www.TequilaShootingSchool.com

If you have any other questions, or need any help with anything, don't be shy. You can email me at laredo@cowboyactionshootinginfo.com