

EXCLUSIVES!

**The name, the tradition,
the uniqueness,
the accuracy...**

WESSON FIREARMS!

**YOU HAVEN'T SEEN
ANYTHING YET!**

By Dick Metcalf





.44 MAGNUM

WESSON FIREARMS
PALMER, MASS. U.S.A.

44 S 0 0 0 5 3 5

*Here's a close-up look
at what Wesson stands
for, what distinctive new
products it's producing,
and what the future holds.*

Turn Page For Story ♦

Photo by Clarence Lynxwiler

The New .38 Special And More

Filling the last hole in its line of quality double-action revolvers, Wesson Firearms introduces a small-frame .38 Special rated for +P ammunition.

It's always good to renew acquaintances with old friends. Last year at the 1991 SHOT Show I was elated to see Dan Wesson Firearms on the exhibitor list (after a few years of conspicuous absence), and was frankly stunned when I strolled into the booth and encountered Seth Wesson and his wife, Carol. After hugs and handshakes, Seth handed me a press release. It read in part, "We are pleased to announce that the fifth generation of the Wesson family has purchased the operations of the Dan Wesson Firearms Company."

Hurrah!

The Wesson Family

No living family name in American firearms carries more history and heritage than Wesson. Seth is the great-great grandson of Smith & Wesson co-founder D.B. Wesson, and the son of the late Dan Wesson, who founded the company that bears his name in 1969, after spending 28 years as plant superintendent for S&W. Lamentably, a heart attack in 1978 took Dan Wesson away from us be-

fore his time, and the firm fell into difficult straits. It changed ownership several times, and in the process, the Wesson family was deprived of its involvement.

But Seth, who as a youngster 20 years ago had worked alongside his father assembling guns in the basement of a converted schoolhouse in Monson, Massachusetts, kept the family tradition alive in his mind. And after building a highly successful manufacturing company in another industry, he and his wife committed their savings and embarked on a torturous series of negotiations and maneuvers that finally concluded with the successful repurchase of the entire Dan Wesson operation. The name of their firm is now the "Wesson Firearms Inc."—"Home of the Dan Wesson Revolver." Seth is president and Carol is vice president. The firm has been relocated from Monson to Palmer, Massachusetts.

Seth and Carol are gun people. Along with manufacturing vice president Ed Arventos (a long-time employee who stuck with the company throughout its travails and assisted the Wessons in

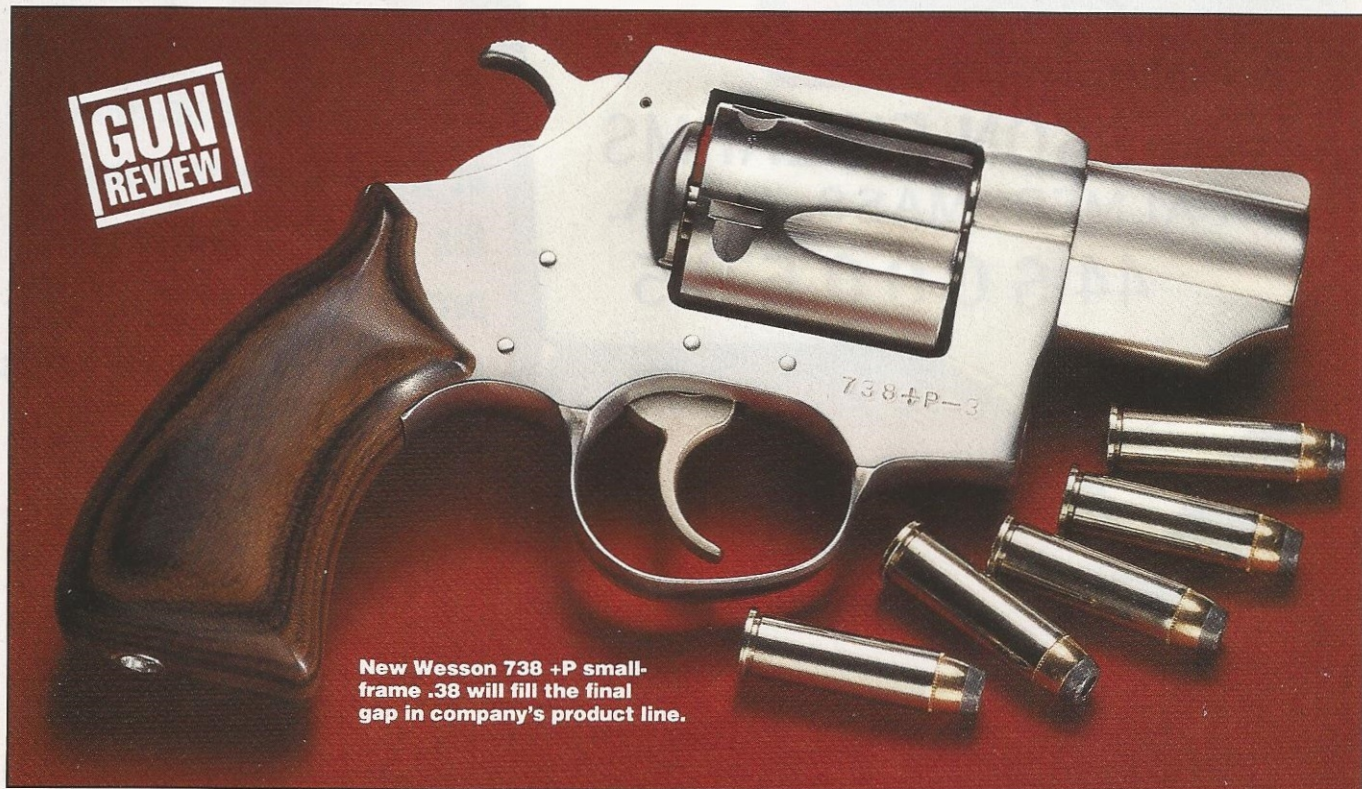
their bid for reconrol) and a tightly knit team of engineers and product specialists (all dedicated shooters and hunters), they have moved rapidly in the past 12 months to demonstrate that the Dan Wesson revolver is still very much alive, and to quickly bring to the market a series of entirely new products as well. All previous Dan Wesson revolver models will continue to be manufactured. Several of the new-concept items are discussed in prototype form in accompanying features.

The first official new-product introduction from Wesson Firearms is the small-frame, five-shot Model 738P .38 Special revolver, initially introduced and shown at the 1991 NASGW Show in Nashville last November. It's well-deserving of the Wesson label.

New +P .38

A small-frame Dan Wesson revolver is actually a concept that was worked on by the company's founder, and early prototypes existed five years ago. The present product is pure Wesson in design: coil-spring action, interchangeable barrels, stud-type grip attachment, and crane-mounted cylinder latch. The initial offering of the Model 738P is intended specifically for the personal defense and law-enforcement markets, and will feature a two-inch barrel, service-style compact grips, and fixed-notch sights. It will be available only in stainless steel (the "7" in Wesson Firearms nomenclature signifies stainless models).

Plans for continuing production of the Model 738P include three- and four-inch barrels, sport-oriented adjustable-sight



New Wesson 738 +P small-frame .38 will fill the final gap in company's product line.

versions, the same variety of grip styles that typify larger Dan Wesson revolver models, and a blue-steel model if there is any demand. The gun is rated for +P .38 Special ammunition (hence the 738P designation), and it is designed to handle an eventual .357 Magnum chambering should the market seek one.

Shooting Times received the first working production version of the Wesson Arms M738P (serial number 3) as a review sample. I found it a most appealing, high-quality little gun. In overall size and heft, it falls between the similar-purpose Colt Detective Special (six shot) and the well-known S&W Chiefs Special (five shot) .38 revolvers. The strength of its construction was apparent with even a cursory examination. It is beefier without being bigger in several key dimensions, leaving no doubt as to why it is rated "+P" and is considered capable of an eventual .357 Magnum adaptation (like the Ruger SP101 in this respect). The trigger-action pull weight was a smooth and drag-free 12 pounds, and the hammer-cocked trigger pull broke at a crisp 3.5 pounds.

New Grip Design

The grip configuration is interesting. Made of a smooth-finished wood, the surprisingly small, one-piece curved-contour stock attaches to the grip "spike" with a single screw, and sits low and well back on the frame, with a notably relieved cutout on both upper surfaces (see photo). For those accustomed to presently popular wraparound grip styles with hand-filling palm-swells and finger-grooves even on small-frame handguns,

SPECIFICATIONS

Wesson Firearms
Model 738P Two-Inch
.38 Special Revolver

Manufacturer Wesson Firearms
Maple Tree Industrial Center
Rte. 20—Wilbraham Road
Palmer, MA 01069
Model 738P
Type Revolver
Operation Double-action
Caliber38 Special
Barrel length Two inches
Overall length 6.5 inches
Weight, empty 24.6 ounces
Safety Internal transfer bar
Sights Fixed notch rear;
ramp front blade
Sight radius Four inches
Rifling Six grooves, 1:18.75 RH twist
Stocks Smooth one-piece Pau Ferro
Capacity Five rounds
Finish Brushed stain stainless steel
Distributor Wesson Arms Co. Inc.
Price \$270
Remarks First small-frame
Dan Wesson revolver

IHMSA INTERNATIONAL										
PRODUCTION REVOLVER CATEGORY										
Place	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th
1988										
1989										
1990										
1991										



WESSON FIREARMS PLACEMENT

the first thought is that this setup wouldn't be very secure in the grasp, or comfortable to fire. Wrong. The grip fits right into the pocket of my average-size hand, little finger curled around the barrel of the butt, and thumb nestled down into the dished-out upper edge. Even my wife, who has small hands, has no problem keeping a grip when firing +P loads.

Dan Wesson revolvers rest their reputation on their extreme accuracy and are also noted for being able to develop higher velocities than other revolvers because of their adjustable barrel/cylinder

gap. So I picked four .38 Special +P commercial loads which have given me better than average results in other short-barreled .38 revolvers (Federal's



As with all other Wesson revolvers, cylinder release latch is located on crane.

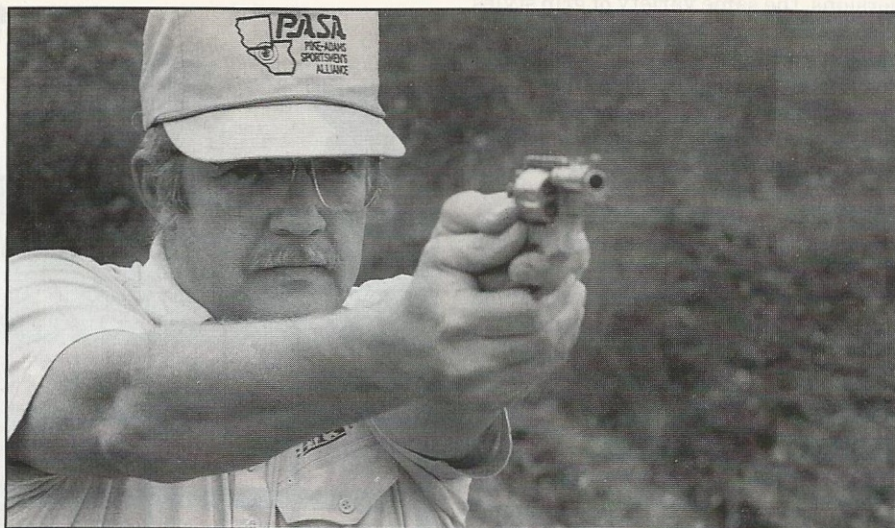


Wesson +P .38 is shown with two other compact .38 double-action revolvers.

Nyclad +P 125-grain hollowpoint, Federal's Hydra-Shok +P 129-grain hollowpoint, PMC/Eldorado Cartridge's new Starfire 125-grain JHP, and Winchester's Silvertip +P 125-grain STHP), and headed out to the range with considerable anticipation. After checking for point of aim (0.5-inch high at 15 meters with the Winchester Silvertip), I fired five, five-shot groups at 15 meters from the benchrest with each of the four. The results were very satisfying.

It's A Shooter

Fifteen meters (about 50 feet) is my standard target distance for snubnosed personal-defense revolvers of this general type. At that range, I'm looking for headshot accuracy, so a four-inch average slow-fire group from a solid rest is my acceptability cutoff. The Model 738P was significantly superior to this standard. The overall combined average for all 20 groups fired with the four loads total was a mere 2.67 inches. The Winchester Silvertip was the most accurate in this particular gun, with a 2.11-inch average. One Federal Nyclad group put five shots




Author fired four different types of +P .38 Special factory ammo in five-shot DA.

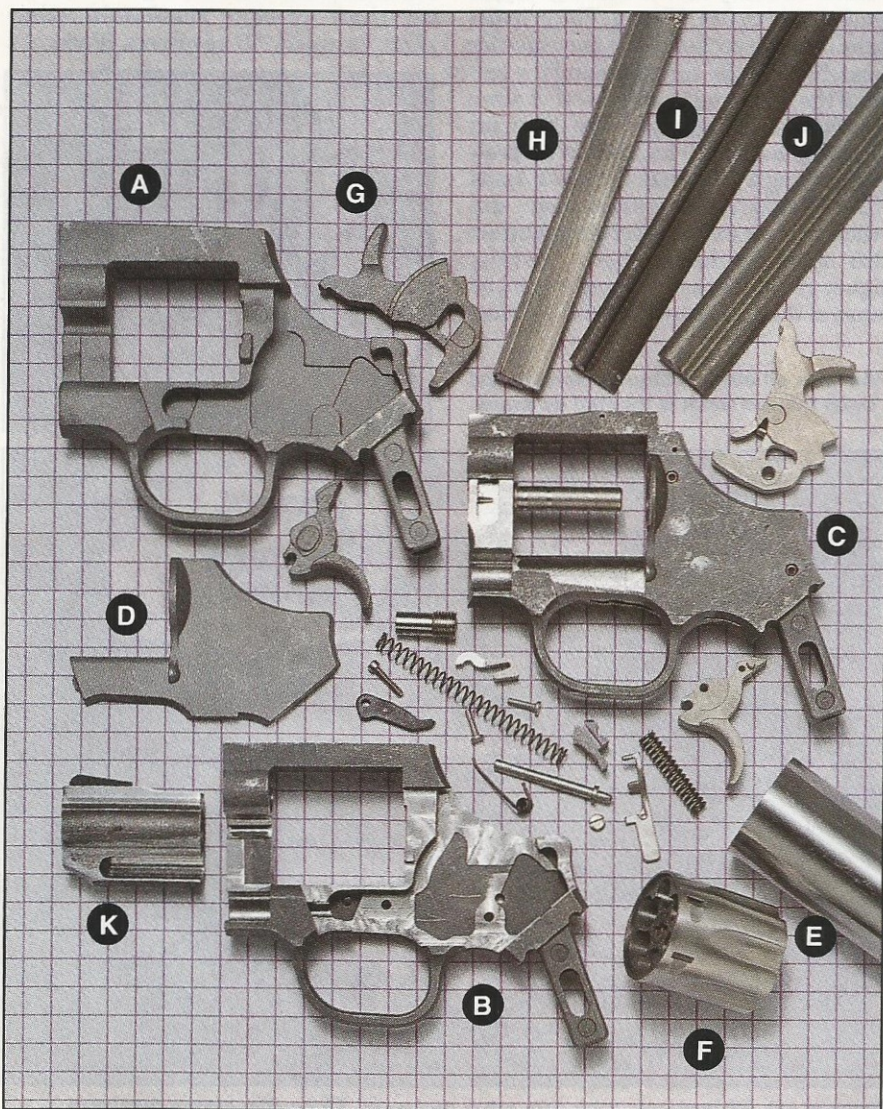
inside 1.75 inches. The gun shoots like a Dan Wesson.

Velocity readings were interesting. The fastest was the Federal Nyclad, which clocked 862 fps average—slightly faster than I get from that load in an S&W three-inch Model 60. The other

three loads were likewise faster in the Model 738P than is normal from a two-inch gun (815 fps for the Hydra-Shok, 799 fps for the Starfire, and 812 fps for the Silvertip).

Barrel/cylinder gap on the review gun gauged at .003 inch. The factory specification is .006 inch (gauge is provided), but the interchangeability feature of Dan Wesson barrels has always allowed the user to gauge more closely for a velocity improvement if he wants. It shows here.

Summary? The Wesson Firearms Model 738P is a worthy addition to the Dan Wesson revolver family. It symbolizes the regeneration of the Wesson company, and is the first of what will hopefully become a continuing series of new products. It shoots like you expect a Dan Wesson to shoot, and it fills the last remaining void in the line, which now ranges from .22s to a snubnosed .38 Special to the massive, long-barreled .357, .375, and .445 SuperMags. If you're considering a compact .38 Special revolver for personal defense or duty, your range of quality choices has just been increased by one. Welcome back the Wesson name. 



Small-Frame Wesson

- A. Small-Frame Casting
- B. CNC-Machined Small Frame
- C. .22 Frame Completely Machined With Hand-Fitted Sideplate And Crane (Ready For Polishing)
- D. Small-Frame Sideplate Casting
- E. Cylinder Stock
- F. Cylinder
- G. Cast Hammer
- H. Cylinder Latch Stock
- I. Strut Stock
- J. Bolt Stock
- K. CNC-Machined Barrel Shroud

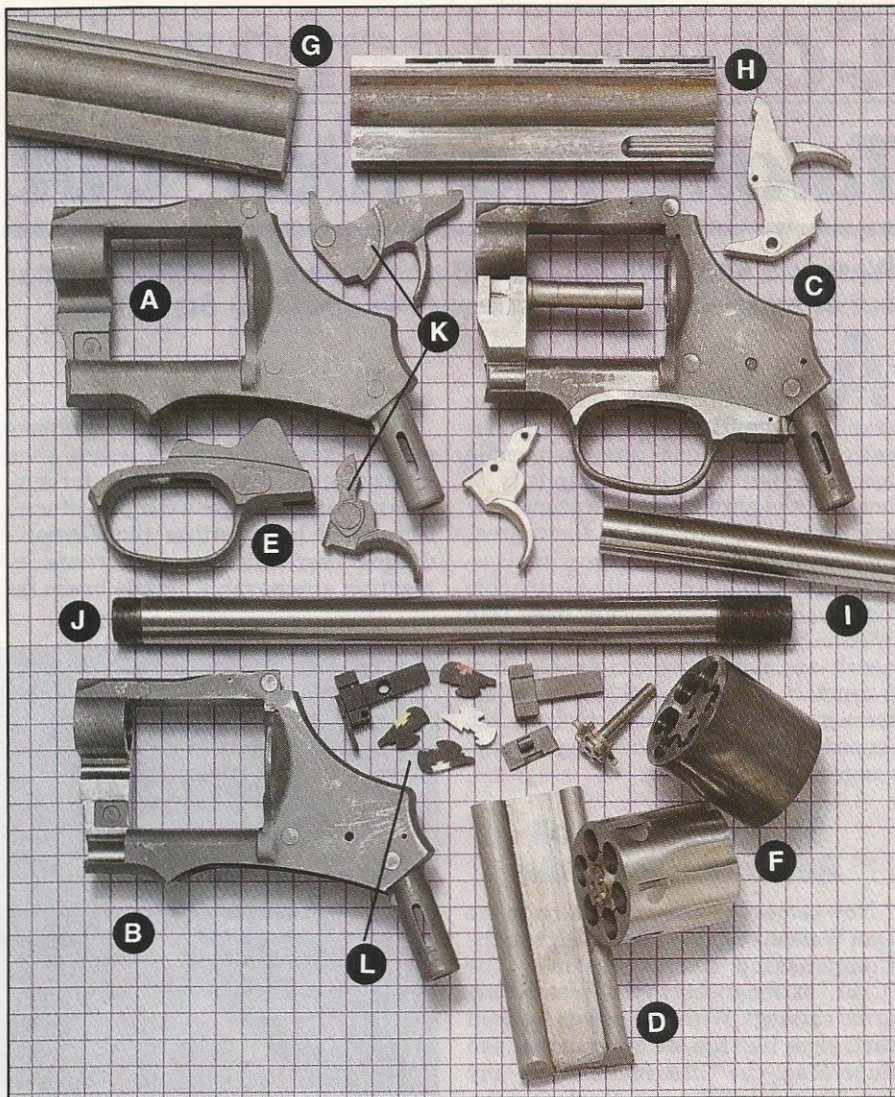
Large-Frame Wesson

- A. Large-Frame Casting
- B. CNC-Machined Large Frame
- C. Hand-Fit Trigger Guard/Crane
(Ready For Polishing)
- D. Raw Crane Stock
- E. Raw Trigger Guard Casting
- F. CNC-Machined Cylinder
- G. Raw Shroud Stock
- H. Machined Shroud
(Ready For Polishing)
- I. Barrel Stock
- J. Machined Barrel
- K. Cast Hammer/Trigger
- L. Cast Rear/Front Sight System
With Color Inserts

More Than 250 Choices

If you include barrel lengths, calibers, shroud types (Standard, Vent, Vent Heavy, Silhouette), stainless and blue finishes, and Pistol Pacs and Hunter Pacs, Wesson Firearms offers more than 250 variations of its DA revolver series. Here's a basic listing of model numbers, calibers, and types of revolvers currently available.

Model No.	Caliber	Finish
22	.22 Rimfire	Blue
722	.22 Rimfire	Stainless
22M	.22 Magnum	Blue
722M	.22 Magnum	Stainless
8-2S	.38 Special	Blue
708	.38 Special	Stainless
9-2	.38 Special	Blue
709	.38 Special	Stainless
738P	.38 Special +P	Stainless
14-2S	.357 Magnum	Blue
714	.357 Magnum	Stainless
15-2	.357 Magnum	Blue
715	.357 Magnum	Stainless
G322	.32-20	Blue
G7322	.32-20	Stainless
32	.32 Magnum	Blue
732	.32 Magnum	Stainless
375	.375 SuperMag	Blue
40	.357 Maximum	Blue
740	.357 Maximum	Stainless
41	.41 Magnum	Blue
741	.41 Magnum	Stainless
414	.414 SuperMag	Blue
7414	.414 SuperMag	Stainless
44	.44 Magnum	Blue
744	.44 Magnum	Stainless
45	.45 Colt	Blue
745	.45 Colt	Stainless
7445	.445 SuperMag	Stainless
445	.445 SuperMag	Blue



Author's Five Favorite WESSON Revolvers

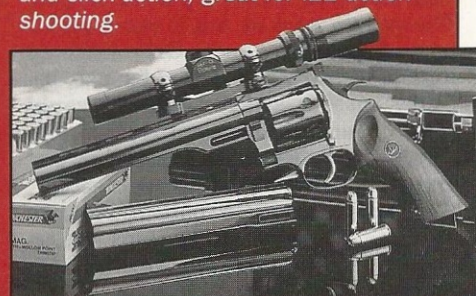
1. Model 44-VH .44 Magnum (Eight Inch) Simply one of the most accurate .44 Magnum revolvers I own.

2. Model 7445-HP .445 SuperMag "Hunter Pac" (10 Inch V) With 1.5-4X Burris Scope. An ultimate heavy-power hunting revolver.

3. Model 740-VS .357 SuperMag (10 Inch) The gun that wins more IHMSA International revolver championships than any other.

4. Model .32 H&R Magnum (Six Inch) In my opinion, one of the best .32 H&R handguns on the market.

5. Model 22-VH .22 Long Rifle (Six Inch) Superb accuracy and slick action; great for .22 action shooting.



Compensator

Taking The "Kick" Out

Wesson's new Compensated Barrel Assembly takes the kick out of super-powerful cartridges like the .445 SuperMag.

A hallmark of the Dan Wesson revolver system has always been its versatility. The unique interchangeable barrel design with its multiplicity of lengths and shroud configurations, the grip attachment stud which allows great latitude in the shape and size of replacement grips, and the easily switchable sights, allow the owner of any basic Dan Wesson revolver frame to configure it for nearly any application imaginable, from a compact light-barreled service or defense gun to a full-lugged, long-barreled, scoped, target-gripped hunting or long-range competition gun.

61 Percent Recoil Reduction Possible

Now comes the newest addition to the Dan Wesson revolver's accessory set: the Compensated Barrel Assembly (or "CBA," as designated in the Wesson Firearms catalog). With full-power loads in cartridges like the .44 Magnum or .445 SuperMag, the CBA installed on any Dan Wesson revolver moderates subjective recoil and reduces muzzle flip by as much as 57 to 61 percent over standard-configuration barrel/shroud assemblies of the same length. It's a neat, effective, and highly useful system.

Followers of the Dan Wesson revolver's history will doubtless remember that when the company's first .44 Magnum revolver was introduced in 1981, it came equipped with a recoil-reduction system called "Power Control." This consisted of eight small holes drilled around the barrel into the bottoms of the rifling grooves about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch behind the muzzle, which vented propellant gases into a slightly enlarged cavity inside the barrel shroud and out through two oblong holes cut on each side of the rib on top of the shroud. The system worked, but it was a nightmare for maintenance. Only jacketed bullets were recommended for use, because cast or swaged bullets would "plate" lead and lubricant residue into the thin space between barrel and shroud and eventually "weld" the two together. And even with jacketed bullets, complete cleaning after every 250 rounds was required to prevent rapid corrosion from burnt-in propellant chemical deposits. Because of this the Power Control system

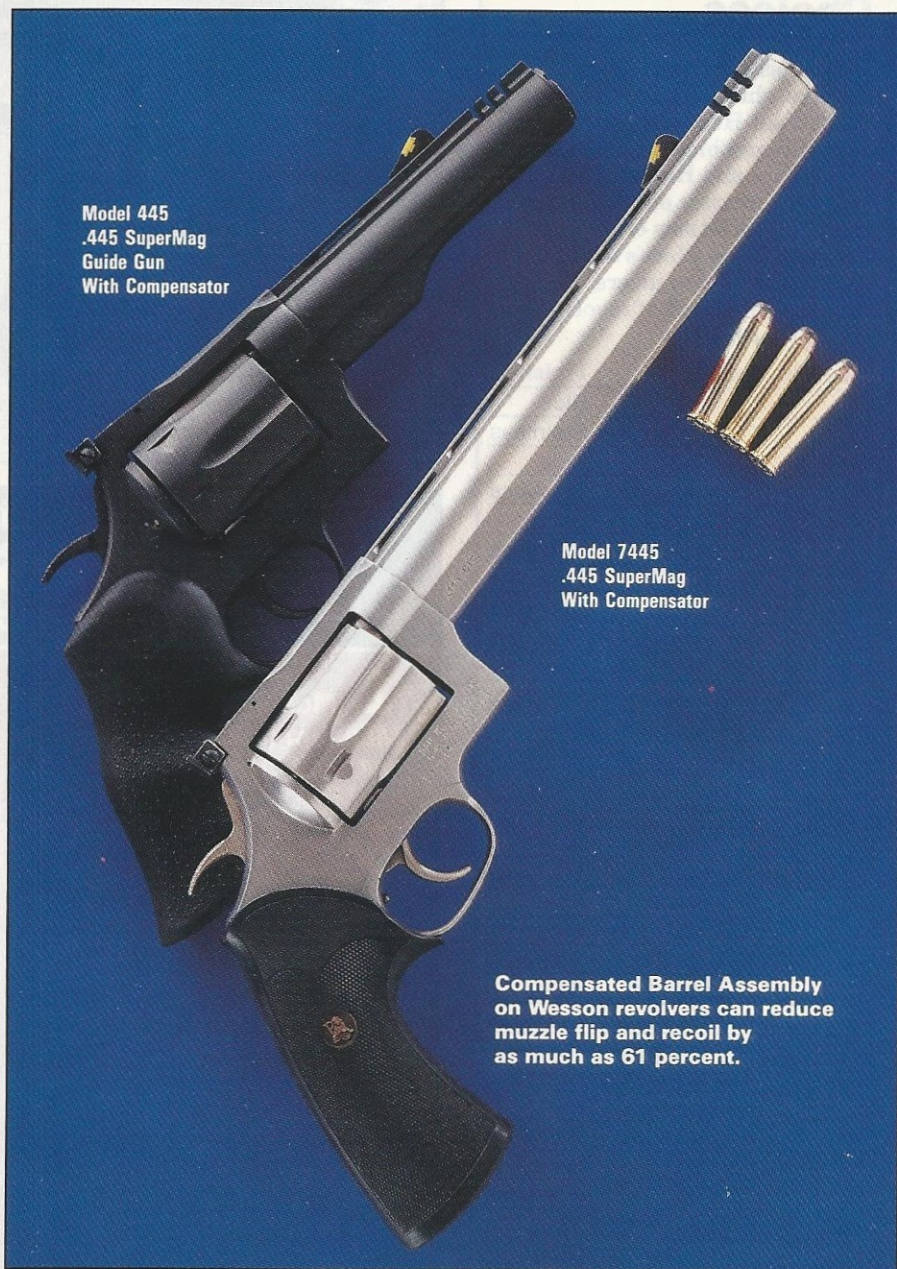
was not wildly popular.

At the time the Model 44 was introduced, I suggested to the people then managing the company that a far simpler means to achieve a compensator effect would be to utilize the Wesson's unique barrel-attachment system by creating a removable muzzle brake de-

vice to screw on the muzzle in place of the barrel nut, thus eliminating residue buildup between barrel and shroud. My notion was not adopted, but the present CBA system has gone one step better and provided an extended forward compensator expansion chamber that is integral with the shroud itself.

Compensator Shroud

Each CBA consists of a standard-format Dan Wesson barrel threaded to fit any existing Dan Wesson frame of appropriate caliber and model, a compensated VH-style shroud (ventilated rib and full-length underlug), a specially threaded barrel nut to lock the shroud to the front of the barrel, a caliber-specific muzzle nut to enclose the front end of the compensator chamber, and a special wrench to install the system. It is impor-

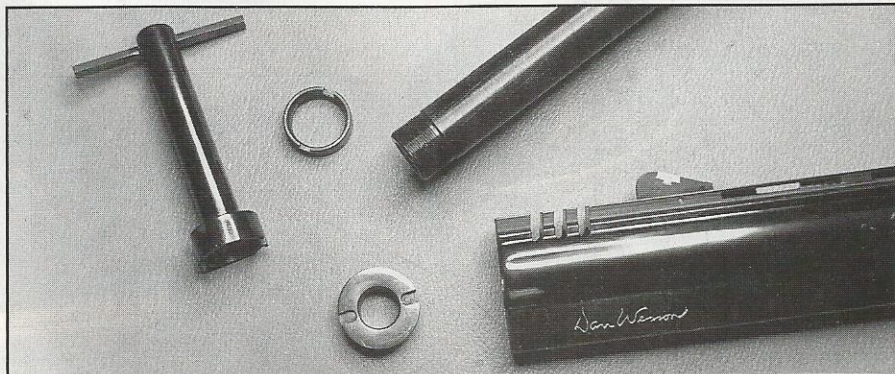


Compensated Barrel Assembly (CBA) shroud is available in Wesson's ventilated rib/full length underlug (VH) format.

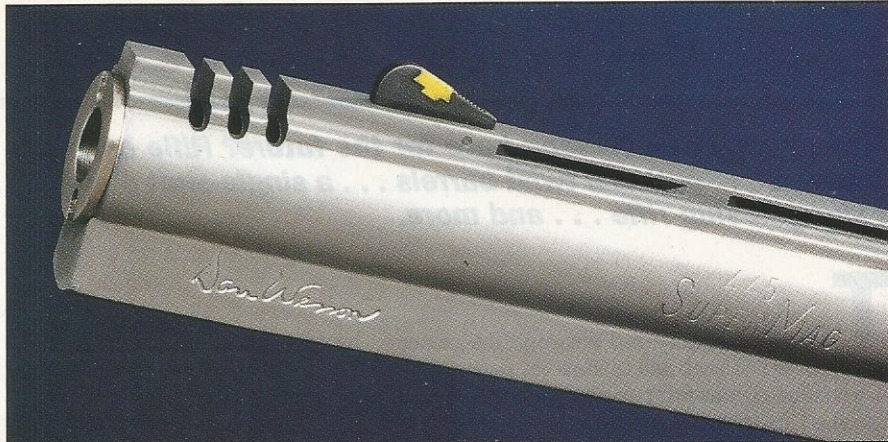
tant to note that while the CBA assembly will install on any Dan Wesson frame, a CBA shroud will *not* install on any Dan Wesson barrels *except* those supplied specifically for that purpose. The barrel's breech threads are common to all frames, but the muzzle threads are common only to the special barrel nut designed to install a compensated shroud.

Installation of the CBA assembly follows the same procedure as changing an ordinary Dan Wesson barrel. With the previous barrel and shroud removed, the CBA barrel is threaded into the frame and properly gauged with the 0.006-inch gauge supplied with every Wesson Firearms revolver. Then the compensated shroud is slipped in place over the barrel, and the barrel nut tightened in place on the barrel muzzle at the rear end of the compensator chamber (the special CBA wrench is extended to allow it to reach down into the chamber and engage the nut). Finally, the muzzle nut is screwed tight over the open end of the compensator to enclose the expansion chamber.

The CBA is easily distinguished from any conventional shroud due to the three compensator venting slots cut laterally across the top of the shroud, and the position of the front sight blade approximately one half inch farther to the rear (about 1½ inches behind the muzzle). The CBA front sight blades are interchangeable, the same as those used on conventional shrouds, but by removal of a drift pin instead of the hex screw used on standard versions. Because the compensator's expansion chamber and vents are integral to the shroud body, they are always positioned properly relative to the axis of recoil, and there is no problem with proper "indexing" as there would be with a screw-on comp (which is why my original notion of using a screw-on compensator to replace the barrel nut doesn't work). In overall length, a CBA shroud is about 1½ inches longer than an ordinary uncompensated shroud for the same length barrel.



CBA consists of standard barrel, VH shroud, barrel nut, muzzle nut, and wrench.



It Works Wonders

Wesson Firearms sent me two review examples of final-prototype eight-inch CBA setups for a Model 44 .44 Magnum and a stainless Model 7445 .445 SuperMag. Both were a cinch to install, resulting in setups with overall barrel/shroud assembly lengths of about 9.75 inches. Both provided a *noticeable* reduction in muzzle flip compared to firing the same guns equipped with eight-inch standard VH shrouds.

Understand now, eight-inch VH-type large-frame Dan Wesson revolvers are not lightweight guns to begin with, and I have always found them to be among the most comfortable of all heavy-power magnum revolvers to shoot. I am not very recoil sensitive anyway. Someone like me, whose profession requires firing hundreds of thousands of magnum-power handgun cartridges annually, learns early to absorb and comfortably ignore recoil, or else finds a different profession. But even to my jaded hands the amount of reduction of muzzle flip was significant, and the heavier and more powerful the loads, the more significant the difference.

Some years back, I had the opportunity to conduct some effectiveness tests of the classic Mag-Na-Port handgun recoil-reduction system with the help of the Cornell University engineering laboratory. I found that with long-barrel magnum revolvers and heavy-power loads, the top level of muzzle-flip reduction

reached was 54 to 60 percent. So the Wesson Firearms' claims of 57 to 61 percent for its test of the .445 SuperMag CBA system are quite reasonable and well within known expectations for effective muzzle brake systems. Subjectively, there is no question in my mind after firing some Mag-na-ported and nonMag-na-ported .44 Magnums along with these Wesson Firearms CBA samples, that the effectiveness of the two systems is quite comparable; and since Mag-Na-Port must unquestionably be considered the benchmark of effectiveness in this area, that's a compliment to Wesson Firearms.

Other Ideas

Other applications and configurations for the CBA will be forthcoming soon from Wesson Firearms. I'll soon get the opportunity to shoot a prototype .445 SuperMag "Alaskan Guide" revolver, with a V-type compensated shroud over a four-inch barrel. It should work great. (A compensated lightweight shroud may seem to embody a certain design confusion at first thought, but when you consider that a person who has to pack a heavy revolver up and down the mountain or through the swamps all day might appreciate the tradeoff of a bit less weight for a compensated recoil reduction at the firing end, it makes sense.)

I also think that a VH-type CBA setup on a four-inch .38/.357 revolver like the Model 715 would be a dandy right-from-the-box Bianchi Cup revolver—heavy barrel, recoil compensation, Wesson's highly slickable short-throw trigger action, any grip style you can imagine, easily installable and readily available barrel/shroud mounts for an optical sight, and overall barrel length about 5.5 inches. It'd be a hell of an action-shooting gun.

Wesson Firearms spokesmen say that supplementary barrel lengths, different shroud configurations, and additional calibers of CBA systems in addition to the initial .44 Magnum and .445 SuperMag setups will become available as customer interest and demand warrants. Let them know what you want. 