

# DAN WESSON ADAPTABLE WHEELGUNS

*The inventor's dream guns prove their worth against big game.*



The Dan Wesson 15-2 is an exceptionally rugged, reliable double-action revolver, suitable for most field and defense needs.

**M**y chest was going to explode—I knew it would for sure—and each gasp I made for breath seemed to do nothing but intensify the pain shooting through my whole body. Sweat poured down my face and my legs felt as if they'd give out any second. The shadows were long now—the canyon we were racing up knew sunshine only on the topmost rims—and the air was growing cool.

From far above us, the howl of the hounds told us that they and the guide with them still had the bear at bay. The mournful howls were broken now and then by frenzied yapping, then all would be silent.

"They've got the bear cornered in a den under a big yellow pine," my guide gasped. "Sure hope the hounds don't try to go in after him."

With those words he scrambled up a rocky ledge, struck a game trail and shifted into a trot. I stayed with him, but I knew that I would undoubtedly be struck down by a massive coronary before we reached our destination. Sure we were in a hurry, with the light fading fast and all, but was it worth it?



Milek's faith in the reliability of the Dan Wesson .357 is well-founded. This Idaho black bear was dropped at very close range by a well-directed barrage of double-action fire.

In a shoulder holster under my arm hung a scoped, 10-inch barreled Contender .357 Herrett, my principle firearm on the hunt. But just in case—for that unexpected situation where the Contender might be rendered useless—a Dan Wesson 15-2VH .357 Magnum with a six-inch barrel was strapped on my hip. Two guns, both light and compact when compared to a rifle, but at the torrid pace we were setting up that Idaho mountain near Hell's Canyon, the two felt like hundred pound lead weights attempting to drag me down.

Then, with a rush I rounded a clump of bushes and damn near ran over my guide. He was stopped, observing the chaotic scene in the little clearing. Hounds raced back and forth, bellowing wildly and every now and then one of them would make a rush at a black hole under a big pine. The dog would stick his head in the entrance, then think better of it and back away. A handler was screaming curses at the dogs, my guide was hollering at the handler to get the hounds leashed up and above it all could be heard the ominous low-pitched growling of the cornered black bear.

It took only a moment to size up the

situation. There was no way I could use that scoped Contender. The light where we were was bad enough, but the inside of that den was as dark as an unlighted coal mine.

I unsnapped the quarter-flap on the Safariland holster and drew the Dan Wesson revolver. Quickly I checked to be sure all six chambers were loaded. By this time the guides had the howling pack on leashes, tethered to one side of the clearing, and one man hung from a limb above the den, a Browning .22 rimfire semi-auto pistol in his hand. Cautiously I approached the den, but stepped backward suddenly when greeted by the sharp popping of jaws full of sharp teeth. But, convinced that Mr. Bruin had no intention of coming out, I bent down and peeked into the hole. It was dark, but I could see the gray muzzle of the bear maybe five feet inside.

Well, since he was determined to stay put, I'd have to give him some incentive to come out. Aiming carefully, I put a 150-grain bullet, cast from linotype metal and pushed at 1,200 fps, crossways through his nose.

That did it! With a throaty growl, the bear started my way. When his head ex-

ited the den, I let him have one square between the eyes. To my amazement, he just kept coming, slow but sure. Taking aim, I hit him between the eyes once more, then again. The bear slowed a bit, but it suddenly dawned on me that all I was doing was giving him a colossal headache. I doubted that the rain of .22 bullets pouring down on his head from above was doing much for his disposition either.

Without even thinking, I stepped to the side and when the bear was alongside me—intent on getting the hell away from all the commotion, not on eating me—I put one in his ear and he dropped dead on the spot. Smoke was still curling from between the barrel and cylinder of the Dan Wesson when I shifted my attention from the bear, now being mauled by the pack of hounds, to the revolver in my hand. In what was probably less than 15 seconds, I'd fired five of my six shots. The revolver had functioned perfectly. If it hadn't, we'd have either been blundering around in the dark on the trail of a wounded bear or trying like hell to extract my leg from his gullet.

Performance when it counts—that's what it's all about. Sure, a revolver

#### **DAN WESSON 14-2 AND 15-2 REVOLVER DISASSEMBLY**

1. To remove the barrel, insert the barrel nut wrench in the muzzle, being sure that the tits on the wrench engage the two slots in the barrel nut. Turn the wrench counterclockwise and unscrew the barrel nut until it's free of the barrel. Pull the barrel shroud forward off the barrel. With your hand, unscrew the barrel from the frame.
2. Using the small hex-head wrench on the combination tool provided by Dan Wesson, remove the front sight retaining screw located in the front of the barrel rib above the shroud muzzle. Lift up on the front of the sight blade and remove the blade.
3. Remove the one-piece stock by inserting the large hex-head wrench on the combination wrench into the stock screw in the bottom of the butt and turning counterclockwise.
4. Remove the two hex-head sideplate screws using the medium-size wrench on the combination tool.
5. Remove the sideplate by holding the frame in your hand, sideplate against your palm, and rapping the spike with a nylon or rawhide hammer. The sideplate will loosen and drop into your hand. Do not attempt to pry up on the sideplate to remove it.
6. With the sideplate removed, the action can be operated. Carefully observe how the parts work and the functions each performs.
7. Insert the longer of the two sideplate screws into the hole in the bottom of the spike and turn it clockwise to screw it into the mainspring guide. This holds the mainspring in compression, removing tension from the hammer. Cock the hammer before inserting the screw, then lower it slowly to be sure that tension has been removed.

8. Remove the hand by lifting it off of its pivot, then sliding it forward to disengage it from the hand spring.

9. Using needle-nose pliers, lift up on the trigger return spring to disengage it from the trigger. When disengaged, the front of the trigger spring will rotate down.

10. Grasp the hammer spur and lift up, removing the hammer and the trigger spring. Note how the spring is positioned around the hammer, then separate it.

11. Push the strut sideways to disengage it from the hammer. Be sure to cover the area with your thumb to keep the strut plunger from flying off. Remove the strut plunger and spring.

12. Grasp the trigger with needle-nose pliers and lift the trigger off of its pivot. The connector will fall free of the trigger.

13. Lift out the connector and separate the hand spring from the connector.

14. Remove the crane lock. This half-circle shaped piece may fall free if you hold the frame on its side, left side down, disengage the latch and move the cylinder in and out slowly. If it doesn't fall free, pick it out with a small, sharp instrument or better yet, lift it out with a magnet.

15. Separate the cylinder/crane assembly from the frame and set it aside.

16. Push the bolt down until it's clear of the frame, then lift it off of its pivot.

17. Using a short wooden dowel, press down slightly on the top of the mainspring guide, remove the screw from the bottom of the spike, then slowly release tension on the guide. **Caution:** The guide and mainspring are under considerable tension, so you must be very careful not to lose control of it as

you relax spring tension. It's helpful if you drill a shallow hole in the bottom of the wood dowel into which the head of the guide can seat. This will prevent the dowel from slipping off the guide. Separate the mainspring and its guide.

18. Using a screwdriver, remove the cylinder aligning screw, spring and ball from their location in the frame under the firing pin. **Note:** When reassembling the aligning ball unit, tension on the spring is regulated by the screw. If the screw is turned all the way in, there'll be so much tension that the cylinder won't close. Regulate this tension carefully so that the ball firmly engages the ratchet, but undue pressure isn't required to close the cylinder.

19. Remove the elevation screw from the rear sight by turning it counterclockwise.

20. Using a roll pin punch, drive out the rear sight retaining pin. Lift off the rear sight, being careful not to lose the two small elevation screws.

#### **CYLINDER/CRANE UNIT DISASSEMBLY**

1. Remove the bolt plunger and spring from the crane.

2. Clamp the ejector rod in a padded vise and, with an empty case in one chamber, turn the cylinder counterclockwise to unscrew the ejector rod from the extractor.

3. Pull the ejector rod forward, then pull the crane free of the cylinder. Remove the ejector rod bushing and spring from the crane and pull the extractor rearward out of the cylinder.

4. Drive out the latch retaining pin from the crane using a roll pin punch, then remove the latch and latch spring.

**Reassembly of Dan Wesson 14-2 and 15-2 Series revolvers is accomplished in reverse order of disassembly.**

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should fire five quick shots in stress situations without a hitch, but not all of them will. My Dan Wesson did, endearing it to me for more than just the accuracy and good looks that were so evident during my range tests, or the versatility features that the maker made so much noise about. Reliability—that's been the history of my Dan Wesson 15-2VH on every hunt I've ever packed it on and that's enough to convince me that it deserves to be called a quality revolver.

Dan Wesson 14-2 and 15-2 revolvers are the end result of many years of struggle by their designer, the late Dan Wesson. Dan was a savvy, down-to-earth handgun man, a designer with foresight and dogged determination enough to build his dream gun and enter the ring with the biggies of the business. More than one company, many with more money than Dan Wesson had, have been buried by the fierce competition from Colt and S&W. Dan weathered the storm, though, and his revolvers are his legacy to the sport of handgunning.

There are two really outstanding features of Dan Wesson 14-2 and 15-2 re-

volvers. The first is that the gun's barrels are interchangeable and available in 2½, four, six, eight, 10, 12 and 15-inch lengths. The barrel itself is a round tube threaded on both ends. The end with the most threads screws into the frame. The barrel shroud is a separate piece that slips over the barrel, indexes on a pin protruding from the front of the frame and is locked in place by the barrel nut that screws onto the muzzle of the barrel itself. The revolvers are furnished with a .006-inch feeler gauge that's used to set the gap between the cylinder and barrel.

Dan Wesson was the first revolver manufacturer to lock up the crane in front—ahead of the cylinder—using a heavy steel latch that engages a cutout in the frame. This system has since been copied by other companies, an indication of its strength. It makes good sense to latch the cylinder up front, near the barrel, but there's also need to hold it back at the standing breech to ensure alignment. Dan Wesson accomplished this through use of a spring-loaded steel alignment ball that's set in the standing breech and engages a recess in the center

of the extractor. This isn't a true lock, but it does the job of holding the rear of the cylinder in line.

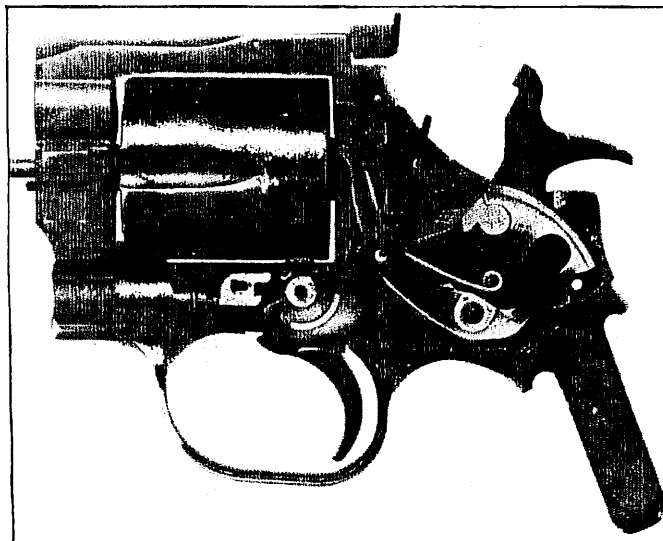
It's this locking system that makes the Dan Wesson revolver so strong. If you have doubts as to the revolver's inherent strength, consider a case I witnessed the other day. The local gunsmith called me to come and look at a Dan Wesson revolver a customer had just brought in. There were some jacketed bullets stuck in the six-inch barrel, the front one lodged back about ½-inch from the muzzle. Others had been fired in behind it, but we didn't know how many. To make a long story short, the gunsmith removed 10 jacketed 110-grain .357 bullets from the barrel. Neither the barrel nor the cylinder/crane assembly was damaged in any way. I'm sure the handloads the shooter was using were far from full-power loads and it was obviously a faulty load that caused the first bullet to stick. Still, firing nine more shots in behind it, even with light loads, had to subject the revolver to some pretty hairy pressures. To survive such punishment, a revolver and its locking system have to be strong.



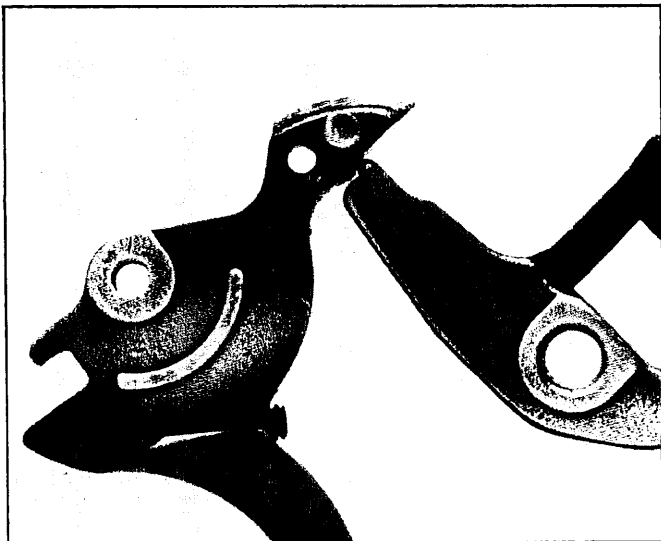
In order to replace the mainspring in the Dan Wesson, the mainspring guide must be depressed. This can be done with dowel.



When replacing the barrel on a Dan Wesson, the barrel/cylinder gap must be measured by use of a .006-inch feeler gauge.



When the gun is cocked, the trigger return spring is bent up and the connector rises. It tips back since sideplate isn't on.



Since the sear notch on the Dan Wesson is relatively small, great care should be used in honing it down for single-action shooting.

Dan Wesson 14-2 and 15-2 series revolvers are of sideplate design and the lockworks are different. A coil mainspring powers the hammer and trigger return is provided by a separate spring. A connector, or transfer bar, is used to transmit the hammer blow to the spring-loaded firing pin set in the frame. Connected directly to the trigger, the connector is raised to a position behind the firing pin only when the trigger is pulled all the way back.

The adjustable rear sight on the 15-2 series is a good one, sturdy and easy to adjust. Instead of the usual slotted head adjustment screws, Dan Wesson uses hex-head screws that aren't susceptible to damage. The 1/8-inch wide front blade is interchangeable and has a colored insert—your choice of white, yellow or red.

In keeping with versatility, three one-piece stock designs are available—over-

size target, combat and Sacramento. If none of these suit your fancy, Dan Wesson will sell you a walnut blank, already inlaid, from which you can fashion a custom stock.

No matter how you look at it, Dan Wesson 14-2 and 15-2 series guns are quality revolvers deserving to be classed right up there with the best that American makers have to offer. When you add dependability to versatility, you come up with a handgun that has a lot to offer.

#### TROUBLESHOOTING DAN WESSON 14-2 AND 15-2 REVOLVERS

Because of the design of the Dan Wesson lockworks, little can or needs to be done to smooth up the operation of the revolver. Probably the most effective thing you can do is to make sure that all pivot points and metal-to-metal moving parts are lubricated properly.

**PROBLEM:** The double-action trigger pull is too heavy.

**SOLUTION:** Shortening the mainspring will improve the double-action pull on Dan Wesson revolvers, but misfires are likely to occur. The company regulates the double-action pull weight about as light as they can and there's not much more that can be gained while maintaining reliable operation.

**PROBLEM:** The single-action trigger pull could be lighter.

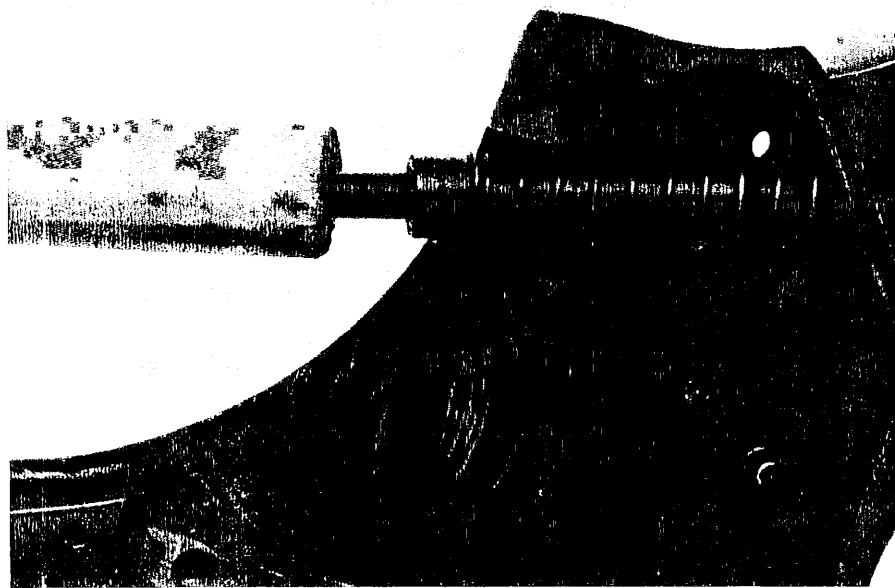
**SOLUTION:** The trigger return spring has the greatest influence on the single-action trigger pull and alterations to this spring—if in fact it can be altered—should only be attempted by a gunsmith with a thorough understanding of of springs. The same is true of any honing work that might be required to remove creep from the single-action trigger pull. Don't try the job yourself. The sear portion on the trigger is located below the upper tang of the trigger and is nothing more than a tiny ridge that catches the hammer. It's extremely difficult to hone and any change in the sear angle will result in an unsafe trigger.

**PROBLEM:** The cylinder is difficult to close and swing open.

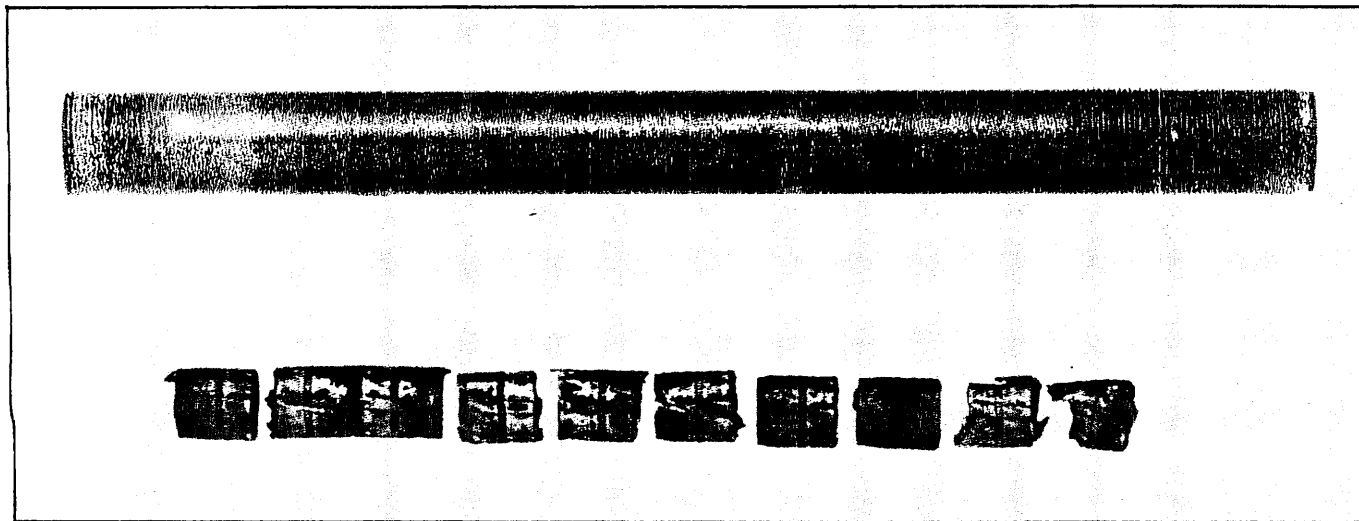
**SOLUTION:** There's too much tension on the aligning ball. Back the aligning ball screw off a little to lessen the tension.

**PROBLEM:** There seems to be a lot of powder, and maybe some lead, spitting back at you when you fire the revolver.

**SOLUTION:** The revolver could be out of time, but most often this trouble is caused by improper positioning of the barrel when it's screwed into the frame. There should be .006-inch clearance between the barrel and the face of the cylinder. Dan Wesson provides a .006-inch feeler gauge to be used when installing the barrel. This gauge should pass between the barrel and the cylinder, but you should feel some drag on it. If the gauge won't go, or passes freely, reset the barrel position properly. This will probably end the troublesome spitting. ●



Drilling a small hole in the dowel prevents the mainspring guide from slipping off.



These 10 jacketed 110-grain .357 cal. bullets were removed from the barrel of a Dan Wesson by a gunsmith. The first one stuck about 1/2-inch back of the muzzle, and nine more were fired in behind it. This practice is most emphatically not recommended, but no damage was done to the gun or shooter. This can be taken as a testimonial to the ruggedness of the Dan Wesson revolver.

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