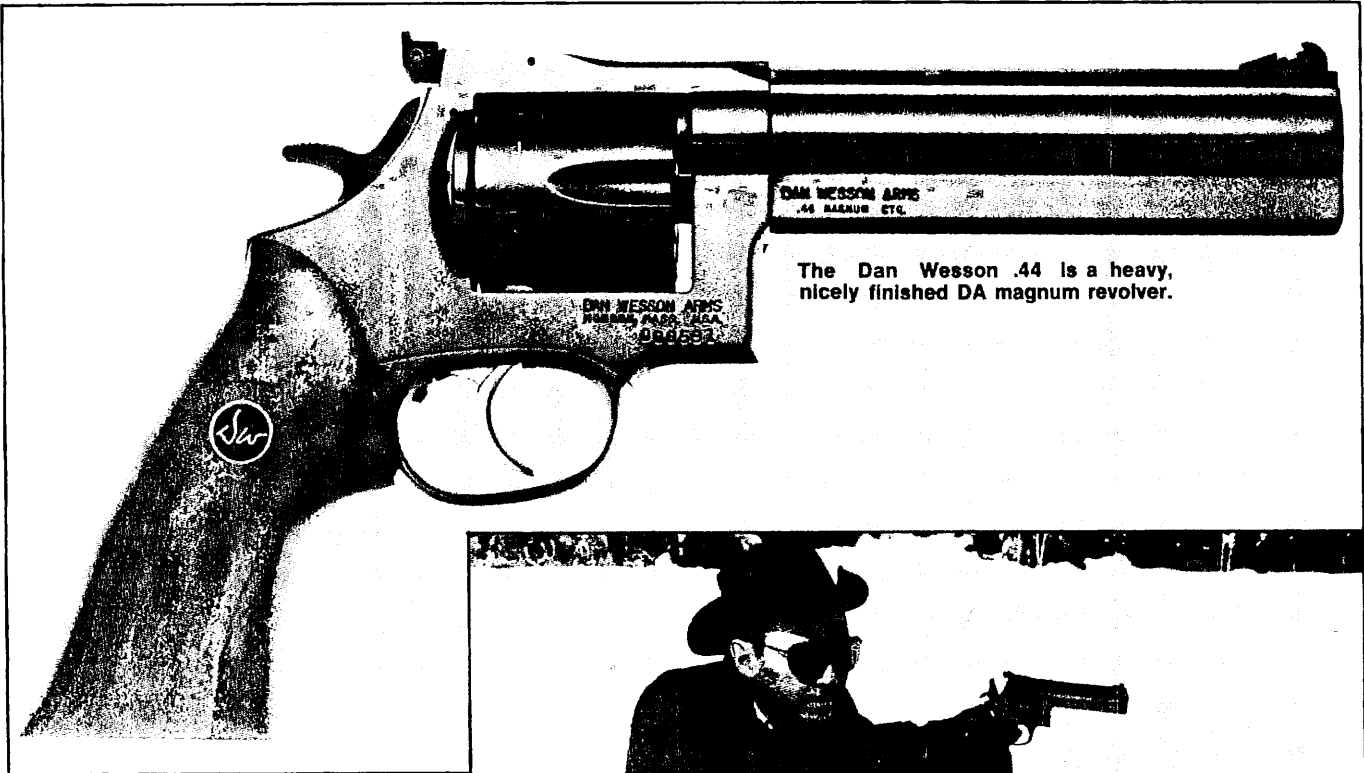


# A MASSIVE NEW DAN WESSON .44

*This heavyweight of the double actions is a handful of power and accuracy.*



The Dan Wesson .44 is a heavy, nicely finished DA magnum revolver.

**T**he cottontail sat not over 30 yards away, his body partially hidden by sagebrush. His head, though, the part of his anatomy that I had to hit if I hoped to claim any meat for the table, was in plain sight, silhouetted against the snowy landscape.

Dropping into a sitting position, I raised the new Dan Wesson .44 Magnum and settled the blade of the front sight under the rabbit's eye. When everything looked right, I squeezed the trigger. The heavy revolver bucked in my hand, the muzzle jump somewhat retarded by the gun's unique muzzle venting system. My Dan Wesson .44 had just accounted for its first head of game.

I don't make a practice of hunting cottontails with full-power .44 Magnum loads, but in this instance I couldn't resist the temptation. I'd had the Dan Wesson for only a few days—just long enough to work up some loads and sight it in—and it needed christening in the field. Since cottontails were the handiest game around, they would get the honor of being the first game for the massive magnum revolver.

That day I managed to bag a limit of cottontails—five—and missed only two



Shooting the big .44 Magnum is more pleasant due to Dan Wesson's muzzle venting system that retards recoil. It should be popular with hunters and silhouette shooters.

shots. Even better, all of the rabbits were head shot. In every instance the Dan Wesson performed admirably, giving me no trouble whatsoever mechanically. Its performance was the same when I later took it out for a go at jacks. It's a heavy revolver, but with a cartridge like the .44 Magnum, gun weight works in the shooter's favor.

The Dan Wesson .44 is the third revolver in the company's line of quality double-action guns. It's a massive piece that tips the scale at a whopping 58 ounces with a six-inch barrel, making it the heaviest double-action .44 Magnum revolver on the market. Finished in a bright, polished blue, the Dan Wesson is as attractive as it is heavy. Contrasting

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with the bluing is a polished steel trigger, its face smooth and wide, and a one-piece walnut stock proportioned to fill the hand, yet not so big that the shooter can't control the pistol under recoil. The stock is uncheckered as it should be when heavy recoil is involved.

A quick once-over would give you the idea that the Dan Wesson .44 is just a jumbo copy of the Dan Wesson .357 Magnum and .22 revolvers. But such isn't the case. In the Dan Wesson .44 we have a completely new revolver design. This one incorporates a solid frame and is of the component design pioneered by Ruger. By this I mean that it can be field stripped into four basic units—the frame assembly, barrel assembly, trigger assembly and the cylinder/crane assembly. When so field stripped, all routine maintenance of the revolver can be

handled without further disassembly.

Of modern design, it uses a transfer bar to transmit the hammer blow to the spring-loaded firing pin that's set in the frame. The transfer bar is hooked to the hand which in turn is hooked to the trigger. The trigger must be pulled all the way rearward in order for the transfer bar to rise to its position between the firing pin and the hammer nose. When uncocked, the hammer rests against the frame and the transfer bar is positioned below the firing pin. No blow to the hammer could cause accidental firing of this revolver.

Power to the hammer is supplied by a coil mainspring, the bottom of which seats in the spike to which the grip attaches. The top of the mainspring nestles against a shoulder on the hammer strut. In operation, this mainspring is the prime

factor in the weight of the double-action trigger pull as well as being responsible for driving the hammer down against the firing pin.

Trigger return power is supplied by another coil spring, this one located in the trigger assembly. On my pistol it appears that this spring is a little on the heavy side, resulting in a single-action trigger pull weight of 4¾ pounds.

As on other Dan Wesson revolvers, the cylinder/crane unit latches up front where a steel latch engages a cut in the frame. At the rear, the cylinder is held in alignment by a spring-loaded ball, set in the standing breech, that engages a depression in the center of the extractor.

The bolt on the Dan Wesson is a massive affair that protrudes up through the bottom of the cylinder cutout in the frame. Positioned rearward and well to

### DISASSEMBLY OF THE DAN WESSON .44

**1.** Insert the barrel nut section of the combination wrench (provided with the gun) into the muzzle, being sure that the two tits on the wrench engage the corresponding notches in the barrel nut. Turn the wrench counterclockwise to loosen the nut. Remove the nut from the end of the barrel.

**2.** Pull the barrel shroud forward off of the barrel. If the shroud seems a little tight, tap it a couple of times gently with a nylon or rawhide mallet to loosen it so that it pulls off easily.

**3.** Using the hex-head wrench mounted on the barrel wrench, remove the hex-head screw from the barrel rib at the muzzle just under the front sight and lift the front sight blade out of its recess in the rib.

**4.** Grasp the barrel and unscrew it from the frame.

**5.** Insert the large end of the hex-head wrench that forms the end of the combination wrench into the head of the stock screw and remove the stock screw. Pull down to separate the stock from the grip tang.

**6.** Remove the mainspring retaining screw from the right rear side of the frame. With the hammer cocked, insert this screw into the bottom of the spike and screw it into the bottom of the mainspring guide until pressure is released from the hammer.

**7.** Drift out the hammer pivot, left to right.

**8.** Insert one end of the combination wrench handle into the recess at the back of the trigger guard. Using the spike as a pry point, depress the trigger assembly latch and separate the trigger assembly from the frame. This is accomplished by pulling the trigger slightly rearward while pulling down on the trigger guard. Set the trigger assembly aside, we'll deal with it later.

**9.** Lift the hammer up and free of the frame.

**10.** Depress the latch and swing the cylinder out to the left. The crane lock should fall out, but if it doesn't, lift it out

using a magnet or a pair of tweezers.

**11.** Pull the cylinder/crane assembly forward and separate it from the frame. Set this assembly aside.

**12.** Push down on the bolt from the cylinder cutout in the frame and it will fall free of the frame.

### FRAME DISASSEMBLY

**1.** Insert a wood dowel (about ¼-inch in diameter) into the hammer cutout in the frame so that it rests on the mainspring guide. Invert the frame so that the free end of the dowel rests against your bench. Push downward so that the dowel depresses the mainspring guide slightly. Holding this pressure, remove the mainspring retaining screw from the bottom of the spike and gently release the mainspring pressure. Remove the mainspring and guide.

**2.** Insert a screwdriver into the hammer cutout in the frame and remove the aligning ball screw. *Caution:* This screw is sometimes very tight. Be sure your screwdriver bit fits the slot so that the screw head isn't damaged. Remove the screw, spring and cylinder aligning ball.

**3.** Using a *roll pin punch* of the proper size, drive out the firing pin retaining pin, then remove the firing pin bushing, spring and firing pin out the front. *Note:* This is not recommended unless absolutely necessary because of the extremely close-tolerance fit of the firing pin bushing in the standing breech. As I see it, the only time this operation is required is if the firing pin or the firing pin spring is broken and must be replaced.

**4.** Raise the rear sight as high as possible. Using a roll pin punch, drive out the rear sight retaining pin and lift the rear sight clear of the frame. Be careful not to lose the elevation springs located under the sight.

**5.** Drift out the strut pivot pin in the hammer body and remove the hammer strut, strut plunger and spring.

### TRIGGER UNIT DISASSEMBLY

Before attempting any disassembly of this unit, study it carefully and note the relationship of the hand to the con-

necter and the fit of the hand spring.

**1.** Grasp the connector and pull its pivot out of its seat in the hand. Twisting slightly, disengage the hand spring from the hand. The hand spring will remain attached to the connector during this operation.

**2.** Remove the hand spring from the connector.

**3.** Pull the trigger rearward and separate the hand from the trigger body.

**4.** Again using a roll pin punch, drive out the trigger assembly latch retaining pin and remove the trigger assembly latch and spring.

**5.** Pull the trigger rearward and insert a small pin in the hole in the end of the trigger spring guide. Release the trigger and the pin should prevent spring decompression.

**6.** Push out the trigger pivot pin and remove the trigger, trigger return spring and trigger return spring guide. With the guide clamped in a padded vise, compress the trigger spring, remove the pin inserted earlier and separate the guide from the spring.

### CYLINDER/CRANE UNIT DISASSEMBLY

**1.** Remove the bolt plunger and bolt plunger spring from its recess in the end of the lower leg of the crane.

**2.** Clamp the ejector rod in a padded vise or grasp it with padded-jaw pliers and unscrew it from the extractor by turning it counterclockwise. Pull forward to separate the crane from the cylinder.

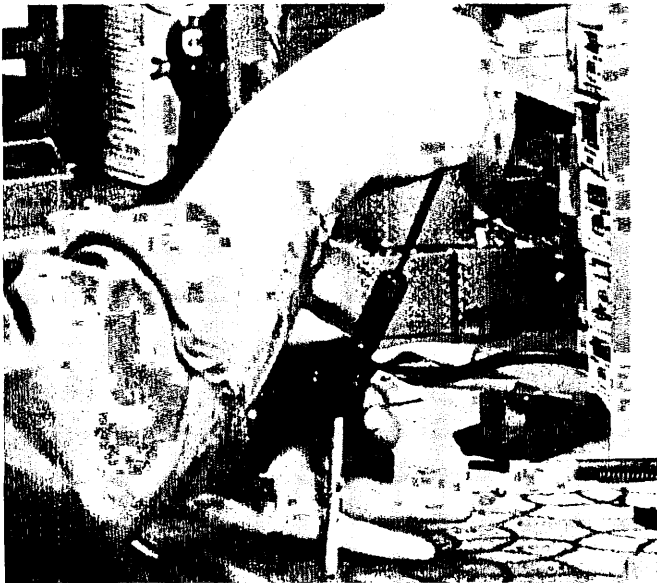
**3.** Separate the ejector rod, ejector rod bushing and ejector spring from the crane.

**4.** Pull the extractor rearward out of the cylinder.

**5.** Using a small hex-head wrench, remove the latch retaining screw from the front of the crane.

**6.** Remove the latch and latch spring from the crane.

**All components of the Dan Wesson .44 are reassembled in the reverse order of disassembly.**



Removing the screw from the bottom of the spike releases the mainspring tension. A wooden dowel holds spring and guide.



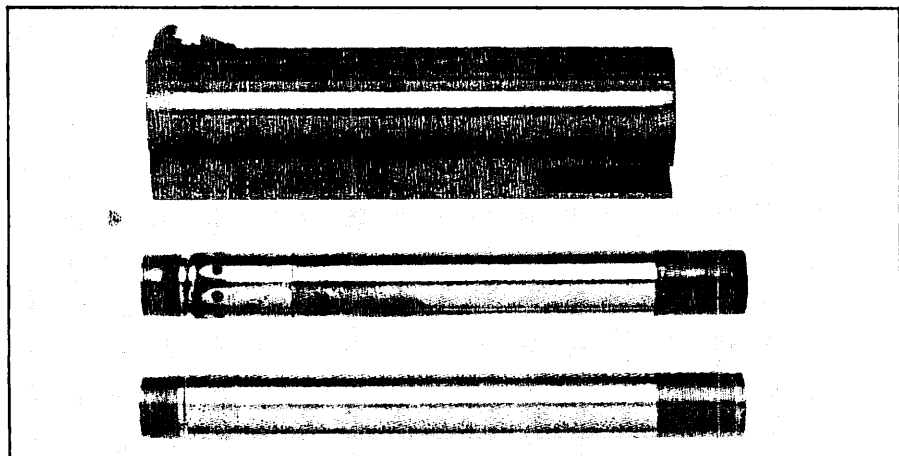
Single-action trigger pull on the Dan Wesson .44 may be reduced by shortening the trigger return spring. Here Milek clips a coil.

the right side, it engages bolt cuts in the cylinder that are offset far to the side of each chamber where they don't rob the chamber walls of strength.

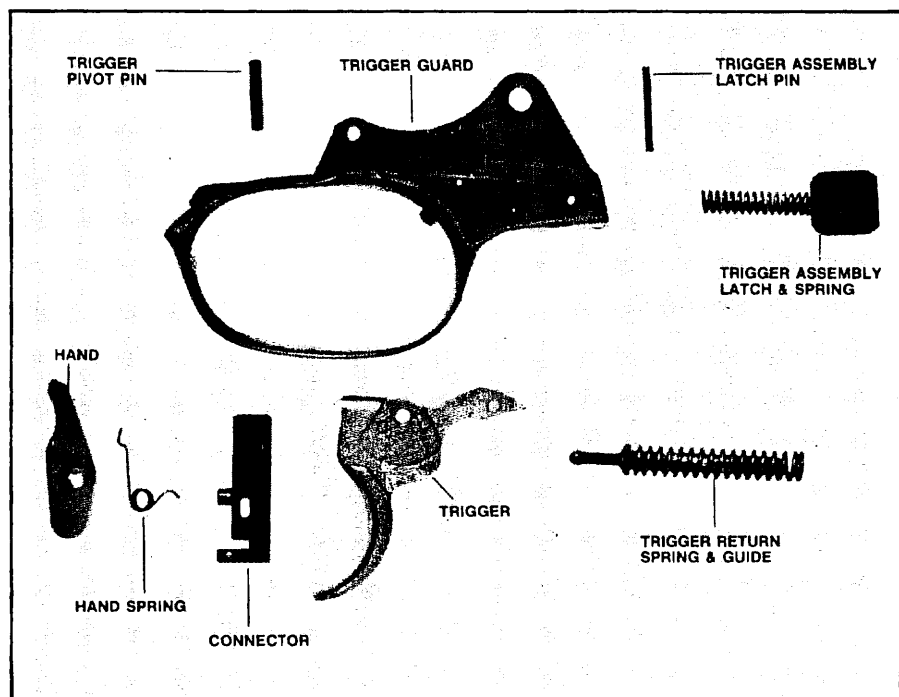
Dan Wesson revolvers are famous for their interchangeable barrel feature and on the .44 this innovation has been retained. Four, six, eight and 10-inch barrels are available for the .44, but only six and eight-inch barrels can be purchased on complete revolvers from the factory. Four and 10-inch barrels must be bought as separate accessories. A new wrinkle with the .44 is your choice of plain barrels or ones with Power Control ports. The ported barrels are designed to vent some of the powder gas near the muzzle, thus creating a downward force that reduces muzzle jump. These ports, eight in all, are located approximately .720 inch back of the muzzle and are equally spaced around the circumference of the barrel. Since a shroud fits over the actual barrel, it too must be ported. There are two ports on the shroud, one on each side of the rib back 1½ inches from the muzzle. While the barrel ports are circles .116-inch in diameter, the shroud ports are .35-inch long and .132-inch wide.

As I mentioned, you can get either ported or unported barrels for the Dan Wesson .44. All shrouds are ported, though, to eliminate the possibility of someone using a ported barrel with an unported shroud. The manufacturer recommends that only jacketed bullets be fired in barrels with the Power Control ports, the reason for this being that lead from cast or swaged lead bullets may build up around the outside of the ports.

There are also some special cleaning chores that go with ported barrels. After shooting 250 rounds, or after each firing session, the shroud should be removed and both it and the outside of the barrel must be scrubbed thoroughly with solvent. Then, before reassembly, the outside of the barrel and inside of the shroud should be lightly oiled. The reason for



Muzzle venting ports show on the upper barrel (center). Both ported and unported barrels are available for the Dan Wesson .44. All barrel shrouds (top) have ports cut in them.



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this is that corrosive moisture from the hot gases tends to deposit between the barrel and the shroud. If allowed to remain for any length of time, this can seriously damage both the shroud and the barrel.

To change barrels on the Dan Wesson .44, you insert the barrel wrench portion of the combination wrench furnished with the revolver into the muzzle and turn counterclockwise to loosen and remove the barrel nut. You then grasp the shroud and pull it forward off of the barrel. The barrel can then be unscrewed from the frame by turning it counterclockwise. A new barrel is attached by screwing it into the frame until slight pressure is felt on the .006-inch thick feeler gauge, supplied with the gun, when it's slipped between the front of the cylinder and the rear of the barrel. The shroud is then slipped over the barrel and the barrel nut tightened.

All Dan Wesson .44 revolvers are equipped with good adjustable sights. The rear unit has positive click stops for both elevation and windage. Instead of the slotted-head screws used on most sights, Dan Wesson uses hex-head adjustment screws. The hex-head on the small end of the combination tool fits these screws. The rear blade has a square notch with a white outline.

The 1/8-inch wide front blade is available with a red, white or yellow insert. Of tapered design, it fits into a mortise in the rib and is interchangeable. To remove the front blade for replacement, you simply

remove the small hex-head screw set into the front of the rib above the muzzle and below the sight. It takes only seconds to change the front sight, so it's no chore to change to the one whose colored insert matches the light conditions under which you're shooting.

Overall, the Dan Wesson .44 is a big, strong, well-made revolver that deserves to be ranked right up there with the best double actions available today. It's a very accurate revolver and if properly maintained, it should give you a lifetime of trouble-free service.

### TROUBLESHOOTING THE DAN WESSON .44

Because the Dan Wesson .44 is a new revolver, it's impossible to even guess at what may eventually prove to be its weak points—if in fact there are any. However, having used the Dan Wesson for just a short period of time, I've been able to find two things, both involving the trigger pull, that may require attention. These are listed below.

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

**SOLUTION:** Reduce the tension on the main spring by clipping coils to shorten the spring. However, I urge that you exercise extreme caution with this task. Don't even attempt it unless you feel that the double-action pull is unsatisfactory. Clip only 1/4, maybe 1/2-coil at a time and be sure to check the pull weight each time before clipping more from the spring.

**Caution:** Shortening the mainspring may result in misfires or hangfires, so attempt this alteration only when you understand the job. Should you shorten the spring too much, your only recourse is installation of a new spring.

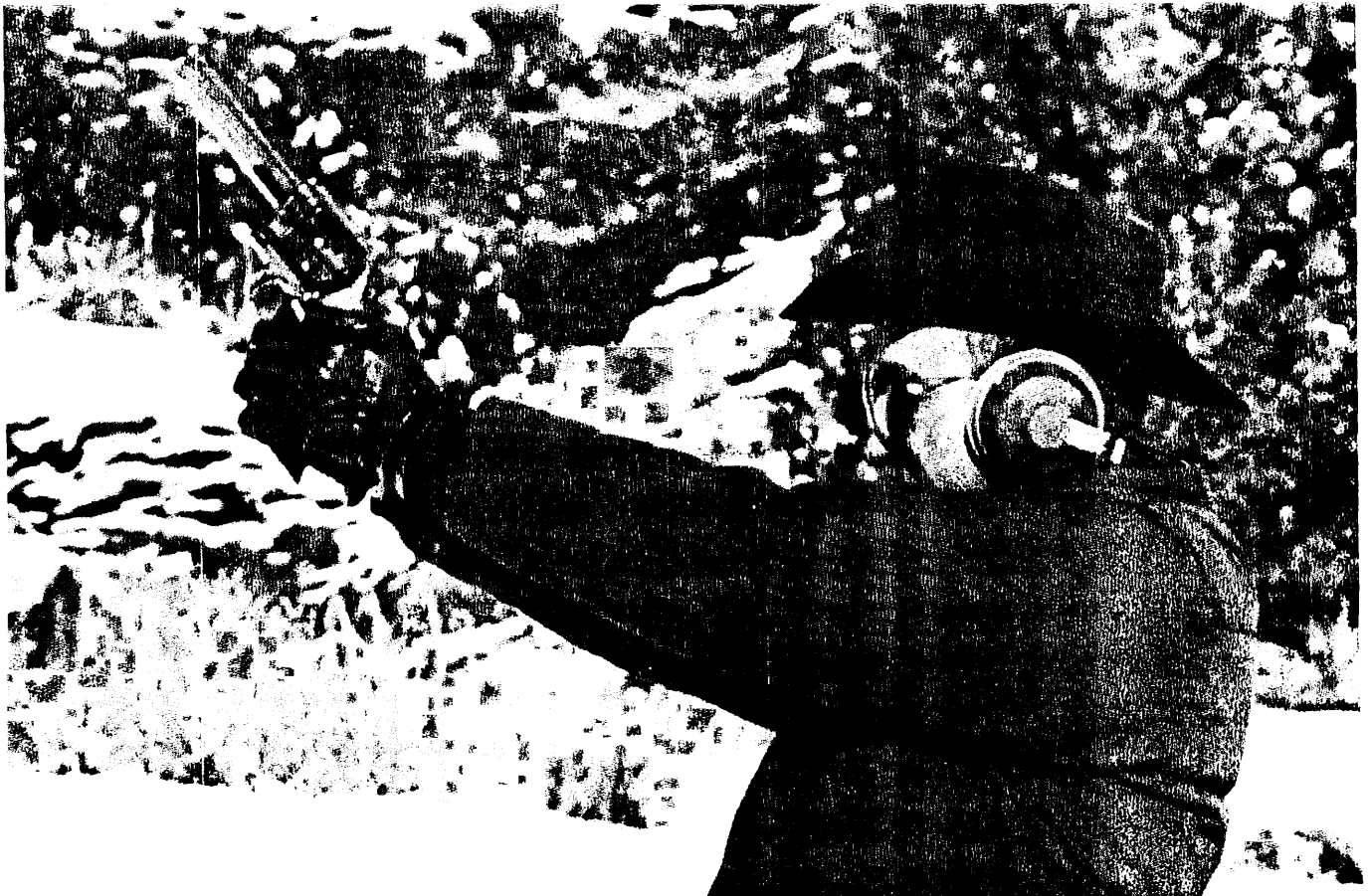
**PROBLEM:** The single-action trigger pull is too heavy.

**SOLUTION:** Much of the weight of the single-action trigger pull is the result of the pressure exerted on the trigger by the trigger return spring. To understand this, measure the pull weight with the Dan Wesson .44 completely assembled. Then, remove the trigger assembly from the frame and measure the force required to move the trigger rearward. On my Dan Wesson these weights were 4 3/4 pounds and three pounds respectively. After shortening the spring, the single-action pull on my Dan Wesson was reduced to 3 1/2 pounds.

Take your time when shortening the trigger spring. Cutting off just a little too much will result in failure of the trigger to return briskly to the at-rest position. Then, too, if the spring is too short, you may even notice some slack in the trigger when it's returned to its forwardmost position. Working with springs requires patience. Get in a hurry and you'll undoubtedly do more damage than good.

**PROBLEM:** The ejector rod loosens under recoil.

**SOLUTION:** Place a drop of Loctite on the threads of the ejector rod to lock them in the extractor. ●



Weighing 3 3/4 pounds with a six-inch barrel, the Dan Wesson .44's weight does a lot to tame the heavy .44 Magnum recoil.

