

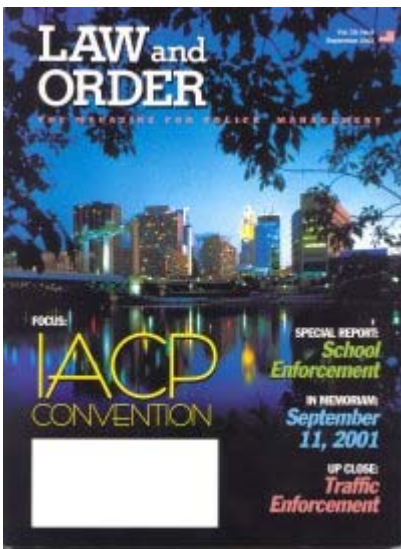


RANGEMASTER
BY DAVE SPAULDING

The .32 NAA Guardian

The Ultimate Back-up?

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The search for the smallest, most powerful pocket pistol has been going on since street officers have understood the importance of such a gun: the back up is just as important as the primary gun; While many of these efforts have met with minimal success, the most recent attempt may very well be the best.

Following up on the introduction of its immensely popular .380 Guardian, North American Arms (NAA) has recently introduced the .32 NAA pistol and cartridge. A partnership between Cor-Bon Ammunition and NAA, this new bottleneck cartridge may be the most powerful palm size weapon yet developed.

Built along the same lines as its popular .380 Guardian, the new .32 NAA Guardian pushes a custom designed 60 grain bullet out of a two and a half inch barrel at over 1,200 fps. While the gun will never be known as a man-stopper with the likes of the Colt Model 1911 in .45 ACP, it very well may set the performance standard for pocket pistols across the globe.

Originally known for its high quality mini-revolvers, NAA first began its production of semi-automatic pistols with its extremely small .32 ACP caliber model. Followed in 2001 by the .380 ACP, it seemed that everything that could be accomplished in small pocket pistols was done. Not so, at least not to thinking of company President Sandy Chisholm.

Chisholm saw the advantages of a bottleneck cartridge from a semi-automatic pistol back in 2000. Wanting something along the lines of a mini-357 SIG for his mini auto pistol, Chisholm contacted defensive ammunition authority Ed Sanow (the editor of Law and Order) and asked him to explore the feasibility of such a cartridge in a pocket pistol. Sanow is the co-author of the highly regarded series of Stopping Power books, which have made many a layman an authority on the subject of defensive handgun ammunition.

The two agreed that a necked down .380 ACP cartridge case necked down to accept a .32 caliber bullet would be the right package. Research and development began with this package in mind.

The development of the cartridge began with a slightly longer case than is normal for a .380 ACP. This permitted the addition of extra powder that would bolster velocity. The rear half of the .32 NAA would be identical to the .380 ACP: same extractor groove, same rimless case, same cartridge diameter and same bolt face engagement. This would also permit the use of that same size magazine as a .380 ACP cartridge.

Original testing was performed with both a 60-grain CCI Gold Dot bullet as well as a 60-grain Homady XTP bullet. The original two loading had velocities around 1,050 fps and 1,115 fps to match the energy from the .380 ACP and .380 ACP +P, respectively. As NAA shifted efforts to produce the .380 Guardian, the .32 NAA was put on hold for a year.

About the time NAA began to once again look at

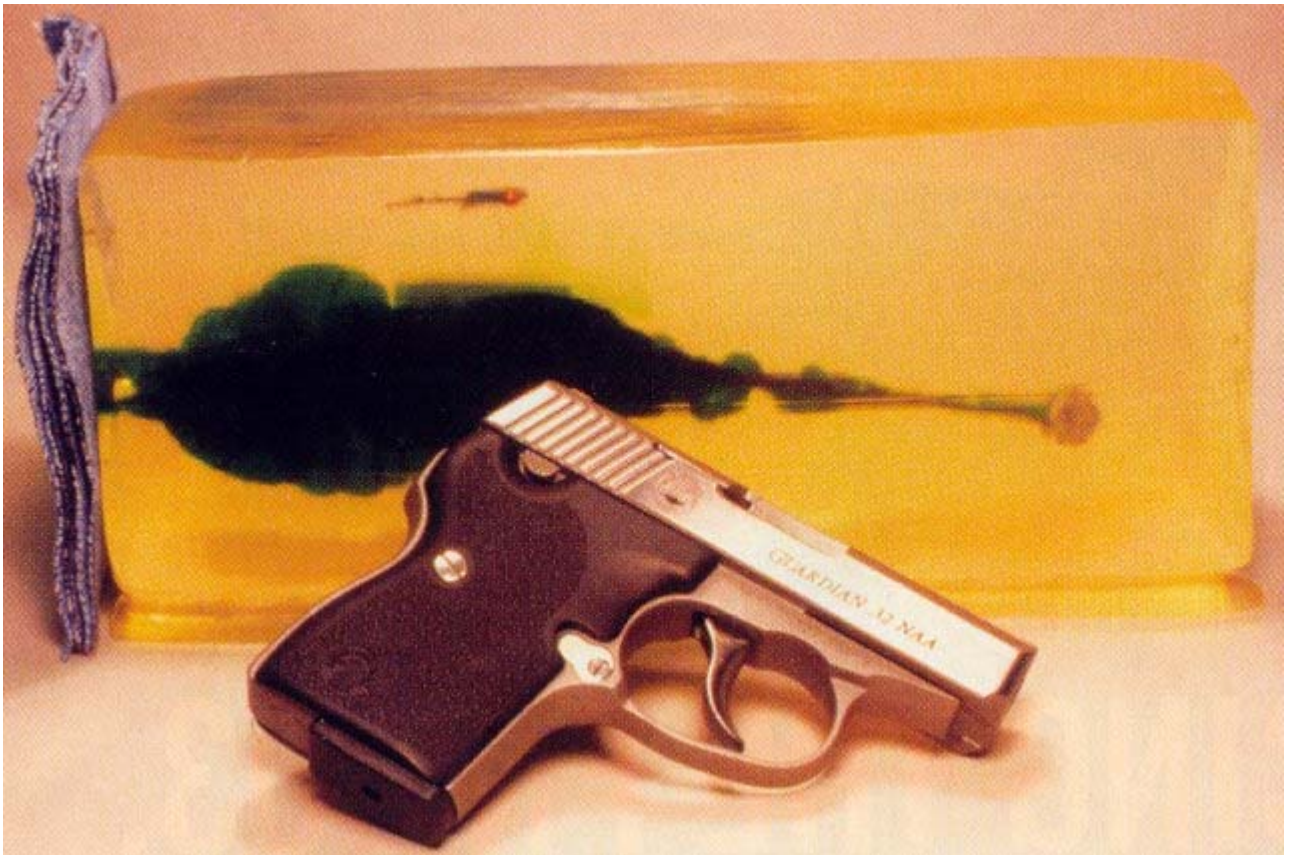


the .32 NAA, the Cor-Bon Ammunition Company entered the development process. Long known for its line of high quality and high velocity pistol ammunition, NAA and Cor-Bon decided to drop the standard velocity, as they felt the new cartridge would offer no advantage over the traditional .380. The combined companies decided to focus on the 1,115 fps speed and work their way up, which proved to be a wise move.

Cor-Bon began to work with Homady to develop a bullet that would perform as required from the new high velocity .32 caliber, a bullet different from their XTP hollowpoint. The new version has a rounder give and deeper hollow point cavity to maximize its performance. To make a long story short, after trying different powder mixtures, the final version of the .32 NAA ended up pushing the 60 grain Homady bullet at a velocity of 1,222 fps with a muzzle energy of 192 foot pounds. At 21,500 pounds per square inch, the .32 NAA has only five percent more chamber pressure than the standard .380 cartridge.

The .32 NAA cartridge is the only pocket gun cartridge to exceed 1,000 fps- the magic velocity that many informed ballisticians feel is the magic number to achieve reliable hollowpoint expansion. In laboratory tests, the .32 NAA was shown to offer more velocity and bullet expansion than the .32 H&R Magnum, .32 ACP, .380 ACP and the .380 +P. It also achieves twice the energy level of the traditional .32 ACP cartridge.

In 10% ballistic gelatin, covered with heavy clothing, the 60 grain .32 NAA bullet expands to .55 caliber and retains 100% on its weight while still penetrating to a depth of eight inches. This has been determined to be adequate penetration for front and rear torso shots. After taking these measurements and placing them into the Fuller Stopping Power Index, it was determined that the .32 NAA has a 62% one-shot stop potential.



This rating is greater than most all .32 ACP and .380 rounds. The new .32 NAA was introduced at the 2002 SHOT Show and NAA was ready to put the gun out on the market to let the buying public decide if the new .32 NAA Guardian was worth all of this research and development. During this same time frame, I was contacted by NAA General Manager Ken Friel and asked if I was interested in evaluating the new .32 NAA Guardian. Ken told me to take my pick of which custom features (from the NAA Web page) would meet my individual requirements and he would see to it that I received one for test and evaluation. Several weeks later, this new pistol arrived at my home.

The gun that I requested had the following custom features incorporated into it. All of these features are available to anyone by contacting the NAA Custom Shop: AO Sight System small dot tritium front sight with V notch rear, heavy matte finish to the stainless steel frame and slide, stippled front and back straps to aid a solid grip and front cocking serrations for press checking the chamber. While there are a number of other modifications that I could have had done to the test gun, none of them met my needs. If a particular feature does not make the gun more user friendly for me, then I don't want it. In this particular case, I could not have asked for any better custom work than what NAA performed on this gun. It was flawless, something that North American Arms has come to be known for.



Because the only ammunition available for the NAA .32 Guardian is full power hollow point ammo, there was no break-in period with FMJ ammo for the little gun. It is quite important for any new semi-autoloader to be broken in with the intended carry load before it is carried on the street. The .32 NAA Guardian did malfunction a few times in the beginning, but most of these were failure to feed malfunctions, which occur quite frequently in many new, top quality firearms. A year ago, when I tested the .380 Guardian for Law and Order, it jammed a few times in the beginning and then became a very reliable performer. I figured that the .32 NAA might do the same.

Actually, the .32 NAA smoothed out faster than the .380 ACP, probably due to the bottleneck cartridge configuration, which generally enhances feed reliability. After the first two magazines, the .32 NAA worked flawlessly, even when I fired it upside down, which is possible if the officer is knocked to the ground during a fight.

The .32 NAA Guardian is made of stainless steel, fires double action only, holds six rounds in the magazine and weighs 19 ounces.

Accuracy proved to be quite good with the AD Sight equipped .32 NAA. Hand held at 50 feet, I was able to shoot groups onto a four-inch Birchwood Casey Shoot-N-C target with boring regularity. Additionally, with repeated fire, the trigger of the little .32 NAA smoothed up quite nicely and ended up breaking my trigger scale right at 10 pounds. The .32 NAA Guardian field strips very fast, requiring the user to merely push in on the take down button (located on the right rear of gun, just below the slide), pull back and then up on the slide. The gun then goes back together with equal ease.

The .32 NAA Guardian is about as powerful of a pocket pistol as one could ask for. It is small, light, well built and easy to carry. It also offers on target power that, before today, could not be gotten in a small back-up/pocket pistol. It certainly deserves a place in your street survival arsenal of equipment.

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We welcome comments: webmaster@naaminis.com

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