

North American Arms' Tiny Stainless-Steel Lifesavers

By Monte Dunn

For almost as long as I've been a gun owner, I've admired North American Arms Mini Revolvers. Finally, about 15 years ago, I purchased their .22 LR model. It always shot straight and its stainless steel remained brilliant - even after being ridden hard and put away wet. It wasn't the easiest gun to control, but what really tiny hideout gun is? I still have that gun. It still looks and shoots great.

Back in 1998, North American Arms threw down a challenge to Seecamp. Seecamp's DAO .32 ACP mini-auto had become such a favorite (as a back-up, deep cover and - in some seasons and with some clothing - a primary carry gun) that it often sold for two to three times its list price. Law enforcement and knowledgeable gun owners were Seecamp's market.

There was clearly a demand for a gun smaller than many .25 autos that fired the more-powerful .32 ACP. Now, North American Arms was putting its own .32 miniauto on the market. Its name was "The Guardian." Like the Seecamp, NAA's new auto was stainless steel. The Guardian was similar in looks to the Seecamp, but featured a 1911-style magazine release, could fire all bullet shapes and brands of ammo (the Seecamp was useless without Winchester Silvertips), had sights and was easier to disassemble.

At the range it proved to be accurate, with groups smaller than two inches at 15 feet, and less than four inches at 30 feet. I fired these groups one handed, double action, rapidly, with no failures (slower fire resulted in tighter groups). The one

anomaly I experienced was that the case from the last round fired tended to stand up straight in the ejection port. Not really a problem since it told me the gun was empty, and since one has to pull back on the slide to

chamber the first round of the next magazine, it just means one needs to hold the gun at an angle so the empty case falls free.

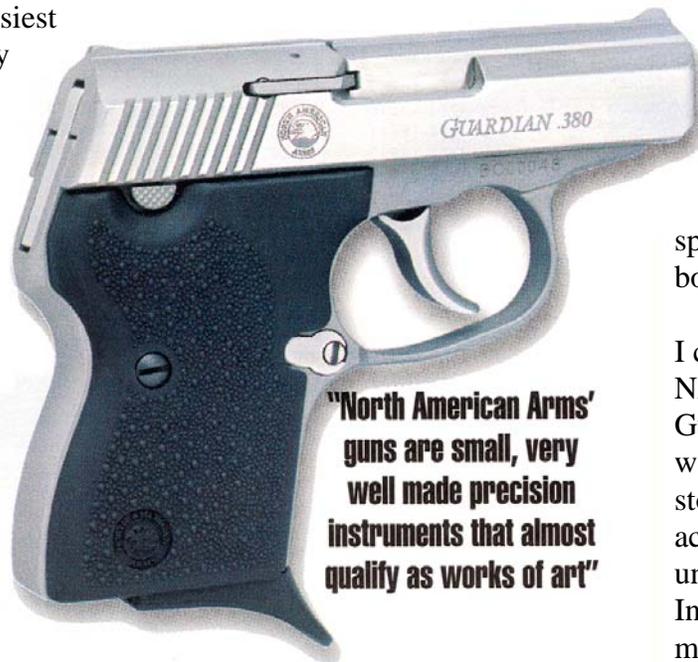
Owning a new concealed-carry Guardian put a nice spin on "Y2K" - the year I bought mine.

About five years later I called Ken Friel about NAA's new .380 ACP Guardian. Talking with Ken was a delight - he told two stories about NAA .22s in action. Both involved undercover drug operations. In the first, the officer was to meet a very cautious "broker" on the beach, wearing only a

Speedo. So, where to hide even a mini-gun?

"John Law" had his mini-revolver stashed in a waxed soft-drink cup. Result: One very surprised lawbreaker in custody. In the second, our undercover peace officer walks into a drug house full of bad guys. He's supposed to be unarmed. He did have a mini-revolver hidden inside of his "ten-gallon" hat. He was given more than a casual pat down and the gun was found. Big trouble? As it turned out, the bad guys thought it was so cute that they insisted it be part of their deal. Result: The sting went down and the felons had to face a gun charge, too!

Ken also told me about NAA's Custom Shop a very happy addition - which offers all sorts of beautiful wood grips; melt and polish jobs; XS and Novak



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sights (including tritium), a Gutter Snipe tritium sight; and scalloped slide serrations, front serrations and stippling to improve one's grip. NAA also offers a full line of accessories for all their firearms, including holsters (pocket and belt), lasers, etc.

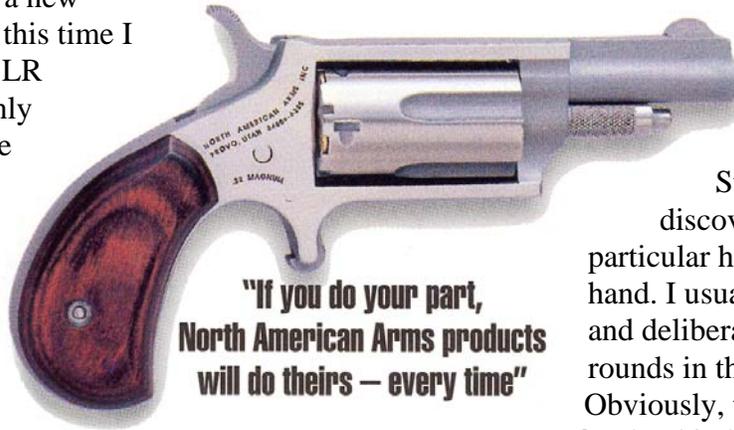
After studying the catalog Ken sent me, I finally made up my mind. I ordered a .380 Guardian with stippling on the grip frame, a Gutter Snipe tritium sight, a custom serial number, and while I went with standard grips, I did order stainless grip screws. I also decided that a new Mini-.22 was in order, but this time I wanted a .22 Magnum/.22 LR convertible. On this, the only customization would be the serial number.

Once the order was in, I waited with baited breath for a call from Jim's Bait and Tackle (my local FFL dealer). When the package arrived at Jim's I headed right on up (Jim was just about to leave on a hunting trip), looked over the contents, did the paperwork and headed home. The precision and quality of both guns reminded me of fine jewelry.

At my gun club, I found out that my 60-year-old eyes probably would have done better with XS or Novak sights, but at 15 feet I shot three magazines and just left a ragged hole at 12 o'clock with a center hold. At 30 feet, everything stayed in the black. Again, the Guardians are DAO pistols designed

for pocket carry, and without a manual safety, a heavy trigger pull is the only safety you've got! Unlike my .32, all the empties cleared the ejection port.

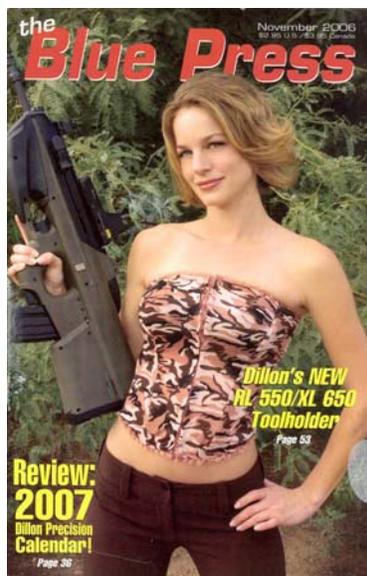
Early on, the little .380 jammed once with a UMC "yellow-box" round. That didn't repeat itself then or since. Ken told me my gun was originally part of a law-enforcement-agency order (needless to say, he didn't identify the agency). It's often a life-or-death matter not to be caught with a "cop's gun" when working undercover.



The .22 Magnum revolver was another example of a gun being more accurate than I could shoot.

Strangely enough, I discovered that I could shoot this particular handgun better with my left hand. I usually can't. When being slow and deliberate, I can keep all five rounds in the 10 Ring at 20 feet. Obviously, this gun isn't really made for that kind of shooting. Like the

Guardians, one reason these guns exist is to fight your way to a more powerful gun. That said, there still remains the "fun factor." North American Arms' guns are small, very well made precision instruments that almost qualify as works of art. They're fun to own and fun to shoot. This is good, because if you're going to use them for protection, you'll have to be accurate. That takes practice, but if you do your part, North American Arms products will do theirs - every time.



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