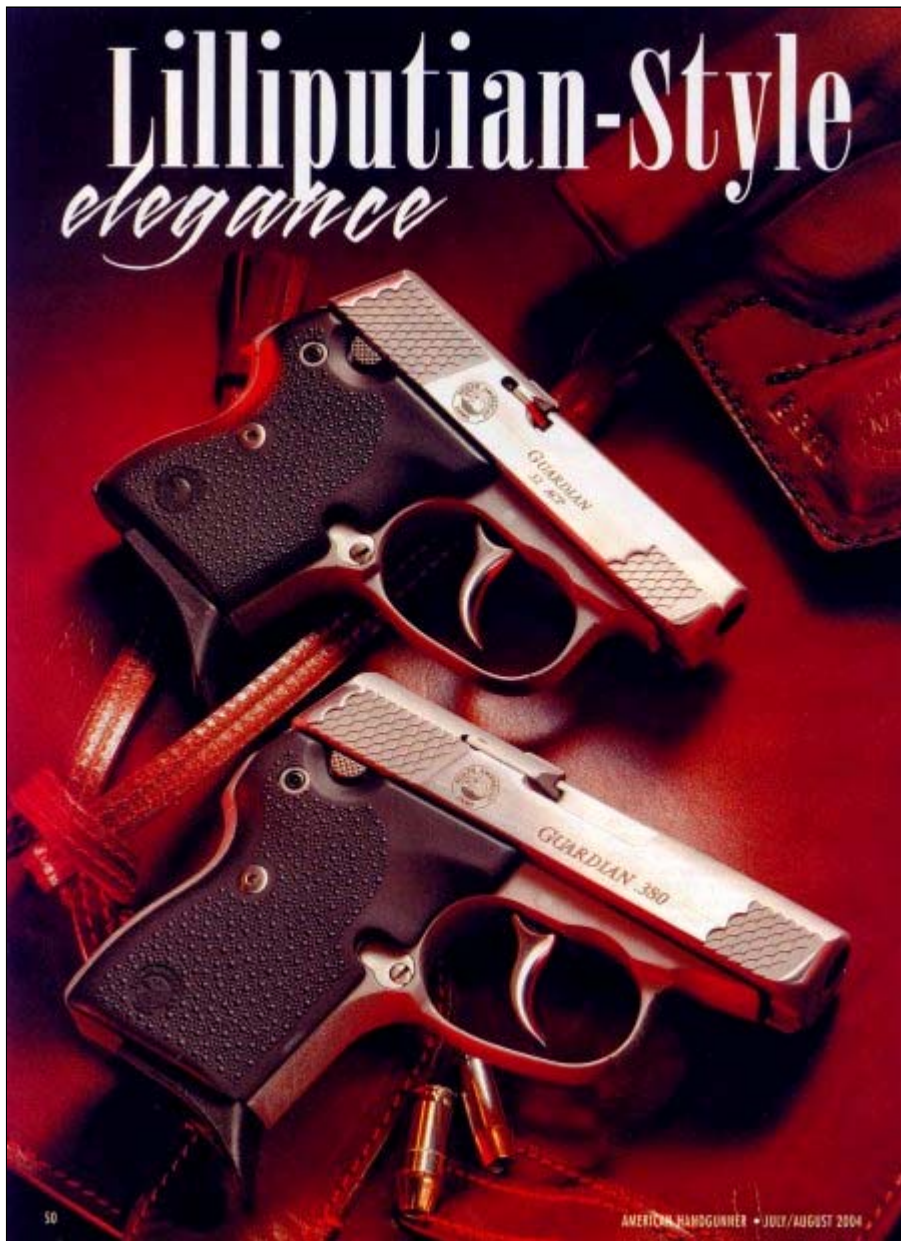


# NAA's Pocket Rocket Guardians

*roy hurtington*

Lilliputian-Style  
*elegance*



It'd be easy if they weren't so damn appealing. Just like miniature ponies, scale model airplanes and Mini-Coopers, cool, tiny things simply make you want to go all wiggly and goo-goo. They may be "mouseguns" but gads, they're hard to resist. Plus, they are a gun - sort of. Aren't they? But still, if I had a quarter for every instance a little gun prevented something bad - really bad - from happening, I'd be sailing in my 60-foot motorsailer right now.

I've always admired high quality small autos. When the TP-70 came out in the '70s (remember that one?), I was hooked. Stainless steel, double to single action, safety on slide, a real hammer and everything. The tiny sights even worked. But in .25 ACP, stopping power was more a frame of mind than a reality. Then there was a dearth of high-quality tiny autos that fit my bill of "safe and reliable to carry" with a round in the chamber.

Some notable exceptions showed their faces over the years, and only fairly recently North American Arms introduced their tidy semi-autos. Famous for their equally nifty teeny-tiny single action .22 revolvers in a grab-bag full of styles, their entry into the self-defense auto market came at a time when the whole "shall-issue" thing for CCW carriers began to really take hold.

Their offer of a stainless steel, compact auto in .32 ACP, as opposed to .22 or .25, helped to generate plenty of interest. Another important thing came into play too. While the Seecamp was a high quality, very desirable pistol, they were as scarce as a set of overalls on Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills. Buyers took to the new NAA Guardian like hungry bass to a sure-fire lure. "Mouse-gun Madness" be damned, people liked little guns and the NAA was one of the best things going.

### **And Even Better Now**

The NAAs used some new manufacturing methods that helped to meet the demands. From castings to metal injection molding (MIM), NAA kept the gun reliable and affordable. What a concept, eh?

Ken Friel, of NAA, is proud of their accomplishments. "As the success of the .32 became apparent, it was a natural progression to the .380," he said. NAA also partnered with Kahr to supply machine work and Taurus supplied both engineering and MIM parts to make the package complete. Now there were two in the family and the



ball was really rolling.

CorBon pitched in and helped to think-up the .32 NAA caliber - a necked-down .380 that drives a .32 caliber bullet at around 1,200 fps. That's some hot stuff out of such a tiny gun and if you want to go there, feel free to. But wear your muffs and scrunch-up your face when you shoot it

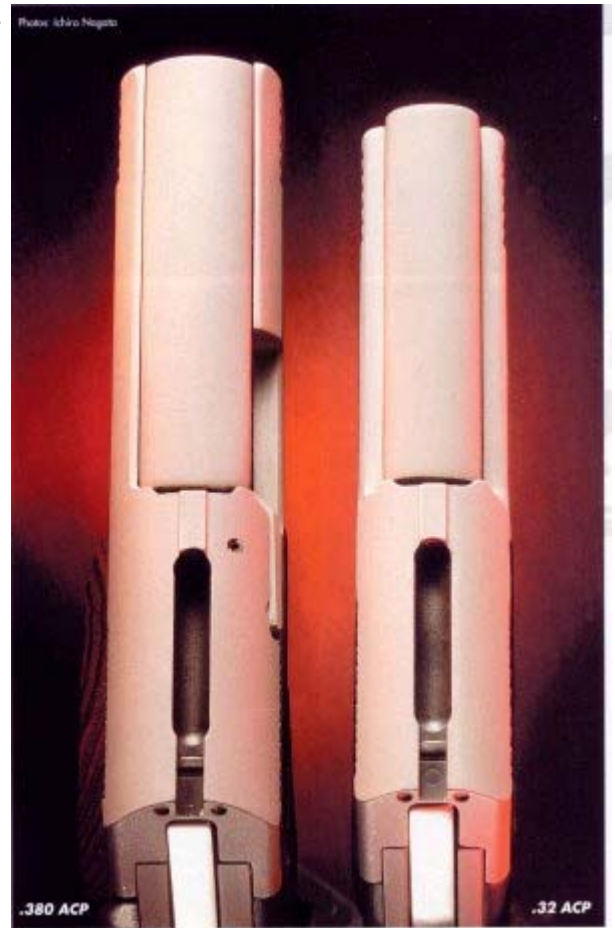
I'm afraid I wasn't inclined to do so, but from what I hear from Jim Gardner, my co-conspirator and editor of Guns Magazine (who actually did shoot one), it bites and barks a bit. Of course, when Jimmy returned from the range that day, his eye brows were singed and I couldn't help but notice he was just a bit wide-eyed. I'll stay away for now, thank you. But then again, I know there's lots of you out there who'd have great fun with it, so go for it.

The Guardians are all DAO with no safeties on the outside to muss things up. The mag release rides comfortably in the exact same place as on your beloved 1911, there's an external extractor and a neatly-bobbed hammer to keep things from catching at the wrong time. There's a long list of options, like porting (honest), a zillion sights and sight combinations (even tiny Novaks that you'll want on other guns too) and scallops, stippling, custom grips and lots of holsters and other goodies too. If you can think of it, you can probably have it.

Pocket guns are usually plan-Jane guns, but you can spiff-up a Guardian to make it memorable. Sort of a pride of ownership thing, if you ask me. And being so small, it's a real pleasure to carry them around. They're kind of like jewelry, but with an interesting twist, as it were. Jewelry that fights back?

The .32 weighs in at only 14 ounces while the .380 tilts the beams at 18 ounces. Neither will weigh your britches down and easily get lost in a coat pocket. Which is what this kind of gun is all about. The .380 is a bit bigger than the .32 (bigger cartridge, bigger gun, see?). But the .380 is still within spittin' distance of being awfully tiny. If I had my druthers, I'd opt for the .380 and call it even. That might just be my own non-objective thinking because with modern ammo, the .32 seems to do about as well as the .380. But then again, we like .45s over .40s and .40s over nines. Fickle, aren't we?

Either caliber can also handle any commonly available bullet design, from light to heavy, which is a plus over the Seecamp designs. Honestly? With these small calibers, I'd be inclined to shoot FMC "ball" ammo to get reliable penetration. But that's just my opinion and I'm sure I'll get irate letters telling me how I must be living under a rock to not know about modern ammo. I do, and I've seen much of it fail to perform out of small guns. In a



perfect world, you bet. In my world... I'll stick with ball more than likely. Besides, a .380 Guardian would only be along to back up my "real" gun anyway!

### Shootin' Fun

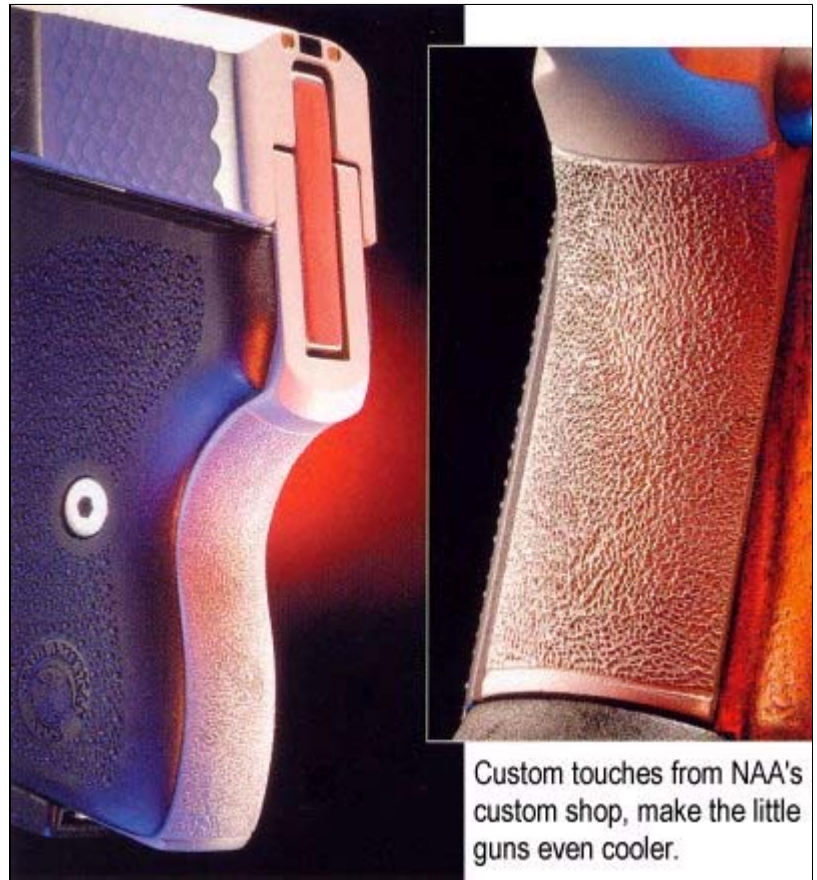
As much as I didn't want to like it, I'm afraid the .32 flavor won my heart over badly. It is just a bit smaller than the .380 and well, it's that "tiny" gun thing again. It just felt too cool not to like. I know, I know, I tried to convince myself of the superiority of the .380, but all to no avail. My heart cried-out for the .32 but my brain said .380. Kind of like buying the Ford Pinto over the Mustang. Just so you know though, I bought a Mustang.

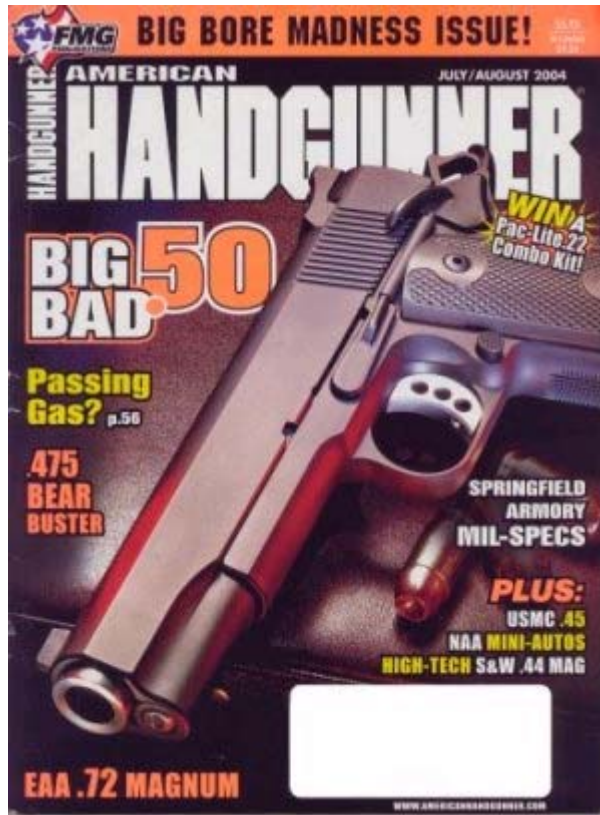
We shot these little guns at stone-throwing distances of around ten yards. If you sit down and take your time, you can manage groups of around 2", believe it or not. But, you have to "keep a stiff wrist" when you do shoot them. Being so small, the slide relies upon your stout arm and grip to recoil against, or else they complain of feeding problems. Stiff wrist equals reliable pistol. An easy equation and not at all unusual with an autopistol, especially a tiny one.

The sights on the test guns were sort of "buried" in the slide and actually worked very well. We had our doubts when first seen, but once shots began to get fired, the bullet holes appeared where we intended so we laid our fears to rest. We kept saying, "Cool" all the time. They were fun to shoot, although the .380 jumped some in recoil. If you had a lady-shooter we'd be very careful to make sure she was an accomplished shooter before going with the .380. The .32 would manage just fine though. Still, I'm a firm believer little guns are for experts, so keep that in mind either way. Little is cute, not easy to shoot.

Ken says NAA has a strong law enforcement program so if your agency is shopping for a back-up give them a call. They'd love to supply test guns and can even custom serialize them and offers factory direct pricing on department letterhead.

I liked these guns lots and I think they work best as back-ups to "real" guns. Ours ran just fine, trigger pulls were manageable and nothing broke while we had them. At around \$400 for the .32 and \$450 for the .380, they won't break the bank of Mom either. So there you go.





From American Handgunner  
July/August 2004 Edition  
[www.americanhandgunner.com](http://www.americanhandgunner.com)