

# Small Wonders: NAA Mini Revolvers

*By Kathy Jackson  
Contributing Editor*

"Ohmigosh! Is that really a gun?" My teenage friend gushed when she saw my newest acquisition. "It's so small!"

Her nine-year-old sister was right behind her. "Ohh! That is the cutest gun! Where'd you get it? Does it really shoot?"

Indeed, the Mini-Revolver from North American Arms is very small. It is shorter than a coloring crayon and lighter than the 24-count box the crayon comes in. Despite the Mini's



Betcha can't collect just one! Shown (clockwise from upper right) are NAA Minis in .22 Short, .22 Magnum with 1-1/8" barrel, .22 Short, .22 Magnum with 1-5/8" barrel, .22 Long Rifle with 1-1/8" barrel, and .22 Magnum with 1-5/8" barrel. All Minis shown were equipped with factory-standard wood grips.

toylike size, it is a fully functional firearm. (And yes, it really shoots.)

North American Arms boasts that the NAA Mini in .22 Short is the world's smallest and lightest five-shot revolver. As such, the gun has found a comfortable niche in the collector's market. NAA Minis are also offered in .22 Magnum and .22 Long Rifle frame sizes. Barrels are available in 1-1/8" and 1-5/8" lengths; Many aficionados collect all three frames and the company offers a boxed presentation set with matching serial numbers for serious collectors.



An NAA Mini neatly disappears when worn in a neck holster.

Magnum-framed Minis come with a .22 Magnum cylinder, but it is possible to purchase a spare Long Rifle cylinder which will fit the magnum frame as well. This is a good option for those who enjoy practicing with the inexpensive and widely available .22 LR, but who also enjoy shooting the less anemic .22 Magnum round.

NAA offers a large variety of grips and accessories to go with these baby guns. Some, such as the holster grip, are merely functional without being very decorative. Others, such as the genuine mother-of-pearl grips, are merely decorative without being functional. But most are both functional and attractive- oversized rubber or rosewood grips make the grip larger and easier to hold, for example, and belt-buckle holsters can be used to stylishly and "invisibly" carry the gun in open- carry states.

Because there is a plethora of products to choose from in outfitting one, an NAA Mini is ideally suited to the shooter who wants a unique and truly personalized pistol. By selecting grips that please the eye and a holster with the exact look and feel the buyer desires, the little gun can become something really special.

One of the coolest options you can obtain for your NAA Mini is a personalized serial number. Mine: is "KATHYS22." I also equipped it with white pearlite grips so it looks like the little jewel it is. When I showed it to some friends of mine, who know my penchant for naming my guns, I had to confess that the name I had chosen for this one was a particularly awful pun:

Mini Pearl. (At least I didn't leave the price tag hanging on)



As a fun range toy, the NAA Mini-Revolver really comes into its own. Shown, the author is firing a .22 Magnum with a 1-5/8" barrel.

Because the gun is so small, I made a point of showing it to my sons and emphasizing that it was, in fact, a real gun. While I don't make a habit of leaving guns lying around my house for the children to find, mistakes do happen and I wanted to be sure there was no chance this toy-like gun would be treated like a toy if the kids ever stumbled across it when I wasn't around. The boys were all amazed at the gun's remarkable size, but each of them assured me they wouldn't have played with it anyway.



Snug as a bug in a rug, the .22 Magnum Mini lies nestled in the locking rug which accompanied it from the factory.

"Mo-o-om," my eight-year-old chanted while rolling his eyes at my obtuseness, "I know the rules! If we don't know for sure whether it's a gun, we gotta act like it is and we still gotta leave the room and tell a grownup." Smart kid.

Even for adults, it is not easy to internalize such a small object as a gun to which all of the safety rules apply. The gun's simplistic design somewhat adds to this problem, since it is difficult to remove the cylinder on the short-barreled models without putting a finger in front of the muzzle. Fortunately, a single-action revolver is utterly safe

when the hammer is not cocked, so while the manipulation may make safety-rule purists uncomfortable there really is no danger at all in the proceeding. For safety's sake, the Mini's hammer should never be fully cocked unless the gun is either completely unloaded with the cylinder removed for dry firing, or on target and ready to shoot. As for the tendency to forget the safety rules when handling such a small item, this can and should be overcome by constant and serious awareness of what one is doing when handling any gun, large or small.

One safety feature which is well-considered is the NAA's standard "safety cylinder" - a cylinder design which allows the hammer to rest on an inert notch halfway between any of the loaded chambers. This obviates the need to unload one chamber for the hammer to safely rest upon when the gun is otherwise loaded. Of course, one should never let the hammer rest on a loaded chamber because if the gun is then dropped or jolted it could very easily fire.

The NAA Mini design is elegant in its simplicity and there are no superfluous features.

There is no trigger guard. As a single-action revolver, the gun has no real need for one in most circumstances, because pulling the



Pretty grips can dress up an already attractive little gun as much as pretty accessories can dress up a stylish outfit. These real Mother of Pearl grip options caused the author to dub the gun "Mini Pearl".



Many shooters will enjoy the challenge of wringing all possible accuracy out of these little revolvers.

sixteenth of an inch, which isn't much. It doesn't feel like an ordinary trigger, having no takeup whatsoever and no felt movement: It simply and crisply breaks to the rear and fires the shot when enough pressure is placed upon it.

Recoil is negligible but because the gripping surface is so small, it can be hard to keep a good hold on the gun while shooting unless oversized grips are used. This difficulty is most acute when shooting the .22 Short Mini, but noticeable even with the larger frames. In all configurations, the Mini's voice is astonishingly loud.

One would not expect a great deal of accuracy out of a gun with such a short barrel. These little pistols perform well for their size, however. At seven yards, it is not difficult to achieve a 5-shot group measuring three inches or less with the .22 Magnum frame and 1-5/8" barrel. With the shorter barrel, accuracy declines somewhat. Surprisingly, the best target achieved while testing these guns was with the .22 Short (which comes only with the shorter barrel). Fired from seven yards with Remington High Velocity ammunition, the five-shot group measured a little over one and a half inches in diameter.

A distance gun this is not, nor is it appropriate for dedicated target shooting. As a fun range toy, though, the Mini really comes into its own. It is nearly impossible to pull this little gem out on the firing line without attracting curious attention. It is almost as fun to show the gun off as it is to shoot it-and many shooters will really enjoy

trigger does nothing at all unless the hammer is cocked. With the hammer down on one of the safety notches, you could yank on the trigger all day long and nothing would happen except perhaps you'd get odd looks from the people around you. Conversely, while the hammer is being cocked or otherwise handled, it is absolutely essential that the trigger remains untouched by a wayward finger. Without a trigger guard, this may initially be difficult for some people to accomplish safely. It is a good idea for shooters new to the Mini to practice manipulating the unloaded gun until they are proficient in safely operating it.

There is no rear sight. The front sight is a half-moon shaped blade the same color as the frame. Sighting is accomplished by peering along the top strap, aligning the front sight with the target while being careful to keep the top strap completely level.

The trigger is little more than a simple lever with serrations on the front. It moves about a



.22 Magnum Minis and accompanying ammunition.



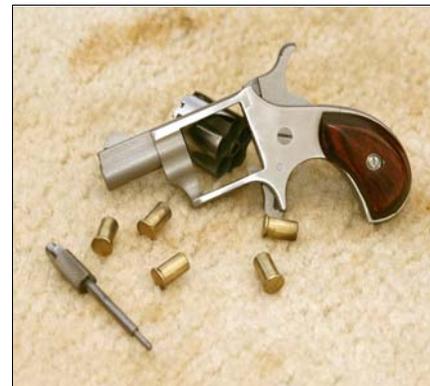
One method of holding the super-small .22 Short Mini is to use the offhand thumb as a grip extension. Place the left thumb firmly along the backstrap of the gun, then make a fist with the right hand around both the grip and the left thumb. Cock the hammer, then lock the right thumb down firmly over the knuckle of the right middle finger to strengthen the fist before firing.

the challenge of wringing all possible accuracy out of these minuscule wonders.

As with most any revolver, cleaning the Mini is simple and easy to accomplish. The gun disassembles for basic cleaning in the same manner as it is prepared for loading and there are no surprises whatsoever during this process. The only possible hitch is the practical difficulty of finding a cleaning brush small enough to completely clear the barrel before it hits the back end of the revolver's window.

In examining the gun while it is apart, quality is visibly high. With such a simple design, it is easy enough to ascertain that there are no rough edges or unfinished surfaces.

NAA includes a small tube of oil in the gun's shipping package. A very light coating of this or another lubricant should be applied to the gun's bore, chambers, and cylinder pin assembly before its first trip to the range and after each cleaning.

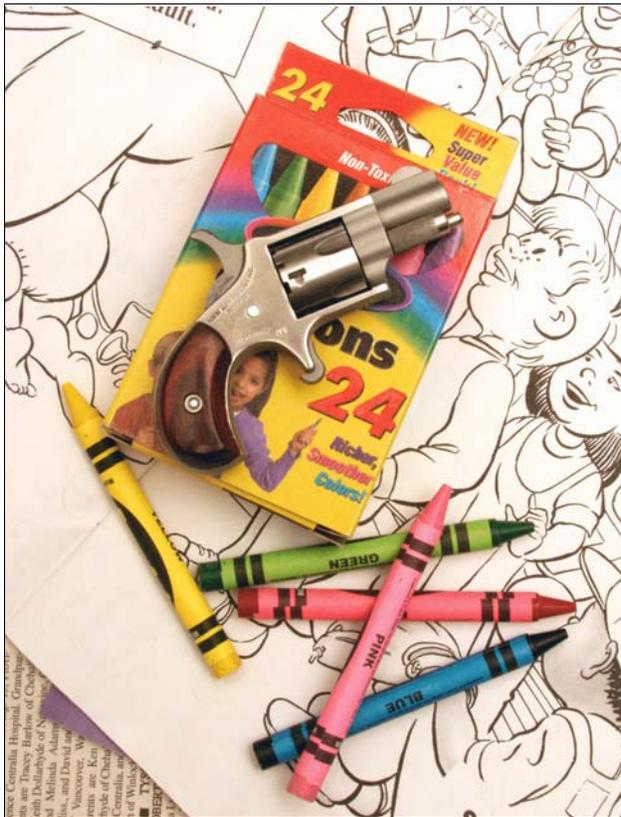


Spent casings surround an NAA Mini .22 Short which has had its cylinder removed for reloading. The cylinder pin assembly is in the foreground and the cylinder may be seen behind the gun's frame.

As I showed these little gems to friends, the comments from longtime shooters and novices alike were very favorable. NAA minis are well-made, adorable to look at, and fun to shoot. The guns are indisputably high quality and the North American Arms company has a well-known reputation for standing behind its products. There is no doubt in my mind that these guns are among the best small-size bangs for the buck on the market today, and it was obvious from listening to the chatter that most people who have handled the guns feel the same way. Among those who were favorably impressed with these miniature marvels, one troubling question kept cropping up: "Is this a good gun to carry for personal protection? Should I use a .22 Magnum for defense?"

Well, now. I would hardly be doing you, the reader, any favors if I didn't answer that one as honestly as I now how. So let us discuss this.

Most reputable firearms instructors want their students armed with .380 caliber or larger. Bigger is better and an attacker is more likely to go down quickly, and stay down, if he is



Smaller and lighter than a 24-count box of crayons, NAA's .22 Short is among the smallest and lightest production guns in the world - so small that it can easily be mistaken for a toy. The gun and crayons are placed upon a page from the NRA's "The Attic Secret: Learn Gun Safety with Eddie Eagle" coloring book, which teaches children who find a gun to "STOP. Don't touch. Leave the area. Tell an adult."

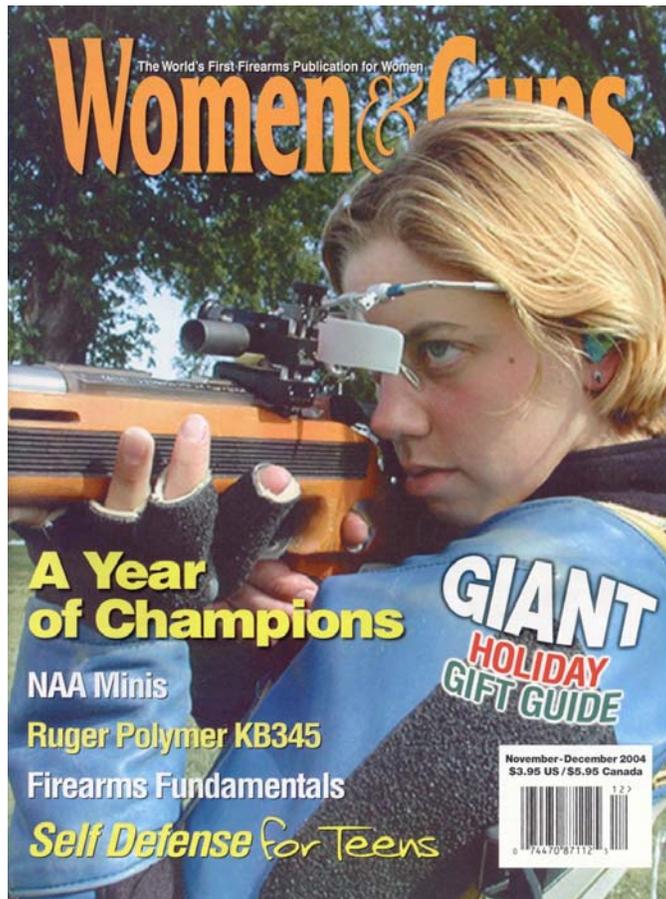
hit with something heavy rather than something light. Everyone has heard reports of attackers hit with lighter-caliber bullets who continue to fight- and some of those tales are very chilling indeed. For these reasons, I believe and recommend that those who can reasonably carry a larger caliber absolutely should do so. In pure shooting terms, a .22 caliber gun, magnum or otherwise, is simply not powerful enough to reliably do the job.

However, people are not all alike and each person's situation is different. Not everyone is able or willing to carry a larger caliber gun. While a small-caliber gun operated in single action is not usually the best defensive choice, it is generally better than empty hands. As my friend Oleg Volk once commented regarding self defense: "A .22 in the hand is better than a .44 in the safe." This is undoubtedly true. If you don't have it with you, you can't use it to defend yourself

There is also a place in the defensive gun pantheon for a small holdout or backup gun. Arguably the two most important qualities for a gun designed to fill this role are that it must be completely reliable and that it must be unobtrusive enough to carry at all times with no exceptions whatsoever. An NAA Mini meets both of these requirements.

If, despite these caveats, you do choose to carry such a small-caliber gun as a defensive weapon, I firmly believe you owe it to yourself to become as proficient with it as it is within your power to do. Bullet placement is important with larger calibers, too, but with a marginal defense caliber it is absolutely essential. So get yourself to a class and don't skimp on practice; it could save your life someday.

While not everyone will see them as defensive tools, NAA Mini-Revolvers are so well-made and so inexpensive that every shooter who is attracted to them could easily find an excuse to own one. Whether filling a corner of the gun safe as a collector's item or used heavily for range fun, an NAA Mini is a terrific little gun. W&G



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