

BY J.B. WOOD

## 25 NAA Guardian



**F**or back-up and off-duty use, how about a very small auto in stainless steel, with very light felt recoil and impressive ballistics? Add to that excellent cycle reliability and a double action only (DAO) trigger system, and you have the North American Arms Guardian in the new 25 NAA chambering.

A .25-caliber pistol? Yes, but a very special one, with bullets that usually expand to .40 caliber, screaming out at over 1200 fps, and deliver 126 foot-pounds of energy. It's a long way from the mild, little 25 ACP cartridge.

The NAA Guardian pistol itself needs no introduction. Cops have been carrying the tiny, flat auto pistols for years. These guns are less than an inch thick, 3.5 inches tall, 3.75 inches long, and use a 2.5 inch barrel.

After the introduction of the Guardian in 32 ACP then in 380 ACP, NAA set out to reengineer the pocket pistol for maximum power and feed reliability. Their first new cartridge was the 32 NAA. This is basically a 380 ACP case necked down to fire a 32-caliber bullet. Driven to 1225 fps, Cor-Bon's 60 grain JHP in 32 NAA produces more velocity, more energy and more stopping power than any JHP in 32 ACP or 380 ACP. The load penetrates 8.3 inches of gelatin after heavy clothes, expanding to .55-inch. The 32 NAA is fired from the same Guardian frame as the 380 ACP.

Their latest new caliber is the 25 NAA. This is fired from the same Guardian frame as the 32 ACP. The 25 NAA is basically a 32 ACP case necked down to fire a 25-caliber bullet. The Cor-Bon 25 NAA ammo pushes a 35-

grain Hornady XTP bullet to a sizzling 1,275 fps from a 2.5 inch barrel.

The 25 NAA is best viewed as a 25 ACP bullet with a booster rocket of gunpowder coming from the larger case. The rear half of the 25 NAA is, in fact, identical to the 32 ACP: same extractor groove, same rimless case, same cartridge diameter, and same bolt face engagement. Any gun chambered for the 32 ACP could be rebarreled to accept the 25 NAA with no change to the frame size or magazine. The 32 ACP Guardian and the 25 NAA Guardian are thus virtually identical.

The 25 NAA has 50% more velocity and twice the energy of the average 25 ACP hollowpoint. It also has 50% more velocity and 20% more energy than the average 32 ACP hollowpoint. In bare, 10% ordnance gelatin, the 25 NAA 35 grain XTP expands to .40-inch. The real test, however, is after heavy clothes. After 4 layers of denim, the 25 NAA 35 grain XTP still expanded to .36 inch and penetrated 10-inches of gelatin. That easily surpasses the nine-inch minimum established by the US Border Patrol. Yet the bullet still expanded as designed.

### Gunsmith Fixes a Problem

At this point, let's back up a little and explain how the 25 NAA came to be. I'm in a unique position to tell the story, since I started the whole thing. As it often happens with great ideas, this one was practically accidental. It began with an old Savage Model 1908 pistol that had a "ring" in the barrel.

Some previous owner had lodged a bullet in the barrel, and unwisely fired another one behind it, causing a slight bulge. Then, instead of swaging it back to shape, he filed off the bulge, leaving the wall very thin at that point. I was afraid to shoot it.

Otherwise, it was a nice, old pistol. I thought that I could insert a liner in some caliber less than 32 ACP. A 22 Long Rifle, perhaps? No, that would require changing the breech face, firing pin, magazine, and recoil spring. How about 25 ACP? If I neck down the 32 ACP case, I could still use all of the original components. And, the larger case capacity should give enough extra power to open up .25-caliber hollowpoints, a thing that rarely occurs with the regular loads.

Having never before designed a cartridge, I needed a lot of help. The .25-caliber barrel liner came from Dave

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Brazeau at Phoenix Arms. Clymer supplied the chambering reamer, and RCBS the loading dies. Dave Emary at Hornady worked up the load. With the Hornady 35-grain XTP hollowpoint, the velocity was around 1050 foot-seconds, and bullet expansion was awesome at .360 to .412 of an inch. The cartridges worked flawlessly in the old Savage pistol. In late-1999, the .25/.32 JBW was born.

At the 2000 SHOT Show, I showed it to Sandy Chisholm and Ken Friel of North American Arms, and they decided to offer it in the Guardian pistol. Cor-Bon would produce the ammo. I converted a test Guardian to .25/.32 JBW. Then, there was a problem. The round fed perfectly during firing, but initial loading (pulling back the slide and letting go) sometimes caused the top round of a full magazine to tip over and jam.

There were several reasons: the semi-rimmed .32 case, the short main body of the cartridge, etc.

North American wisely consulted the ammo wizards at Cor-Bon, and a name in ballistics that you all know, Ed Sanow, the editor of *LAW and ORDER*. With longer, uncut .32 Auto brass, they moved the shoulder forward, and made the case rimless. This also gave more powder capacity. The .25 NAA was born. This round is much better than my original.

### Shooting Impressions

For those who have not yet handled a Guardian pistol, it is small, has a DAO trigger system, and is made of 17-7 Stainless Steel with the usual NAA precision. The trigger surface is rounded and smooth, and on the Lyman Electronic Gauge, the easy pull on my pistol averaged 10 pounds.

The magazine holds six rounds, which you can check by numbered holes on the right side. The magazine release is a low-profile push-button that is shielded by the grip panel against inadvertent depression. Regular grips are black polymer with a pebbled surface. The pistol has tiny, fixed sights that don't snag on clothing.

In addition to fitting in the palm of your hand, the Guardians weigh either 13.5 ounces (32 ACP, 25 NAA) or 18.7 ounces (380 ACP, 32 NAA) unloaded. The Guardians fit in a wide variety of nylon and leather in-pants and ankle holsters. However, off-duty, most cops simply carry the bobbed hammer Guardian in their pocket.

In March, 2004, I went out to the range with my 25 NAA Guardian, serial number 00003. (Yes, the originator of the cartridge got some special treatment with the serial number.) At 15 yards from a casual rest it repeatedly put three rounds in the black of a 25-yard bullseye. One group measured just 2.75 inches, which is very good for a little gun with a DAO trigger. The felt recoil was slightly more than a regular 25 ACP pistol and much less than a 32 ACP.

The 32 NAA was announced at the 2002 SHOT Show, with production ammo and prototype pistols available by April 2002. The 25 NAA was announced at the 2004 SHOT Show. The 25 NAA has become only the second pocket pistol cartridge to exceed a muzzle velocity of 1,000 fps. In fact, it far exceeds it at 1275 fps. The first cartridge to do so was NAA's other bottleneck cartridge, the 32 NAA. These kinds of velocities virtually guarantee reliable hollowpoint expansion.

Because of the design of the new cartridge, feeding is flawless. Bottleneck cartridges are legendary for their feed reliability. With the 25 NAA, you are putting a .25-caliber bullet nose into a .32-caliber chamber. Of course it is going to feed. The bullets expand impressively, and there is good penetration. The light recoil means follow-up

shots will stay on target. The pistol is small and concealable, and Mitch Rosen offers an excellent clip-on holster for it. It would be the perfect back-up piece.

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25 NAA



32 NAA