NAA GUARDIAN CARRY
All About Pocket Carry and holsters for this pocket pistol!

By Mike Detty

For a guy that owns a few gun safes full of custom 1911s I'm almost embarrassed to say that one of my most carried guns is a North American Arms Guardian. My .45s have been built by some of the best gunsmiths in the industry and are capable of winning any match or surviving any deadly encounter with the right person behind the trigger.

But the truth of the matter is, I am not a law enforcement officer, I live in a pretty good neighborhood and I don't associate with people that skate the fringes of society. For me, it just doesn't make sense to tote a heavy 1911 around all day. The thought of going about my business completely unarmed is equally distasteful and that's where the Guardian comes in.

I learned early on that the term "pocket pistol" has to be taken with a grain of salt. While the Guardians are small enough to carry in your pockets, these short-barreled, heavy butt (especially when fully loaded) guns want to do cartwheels in your pocket. That's especially troublesome for a gun that does not possess a manual safety. The backstrap of the gun tends to migrate down to the flat bottom of the pocket with the muzzle pointing up. Pocket holsters will prevent the gun from performing these acrobatics and will also keep them from tearing up your pockets. A good holster will also prevent gun oil from seeping through your clothes and also keep pocket lint out of your gun. The holsters discussed in this article also help break up the outline of the pistol. While there aren't any magic holsters that will make the gun "disappear," a good pocket holster will print through your clothing as something other than gun.
Since 1985 serious defense devotees of tiny semi-autos would pay sometimes two or three times the retail price for one of Larry Seecamp's LWS32 pistols. Seecamp's production was limited and as the demand outpaced the supply, prices skyrocketed. Seecamp builds his .32s from stainless steel for its corrosion resistance and incorporates a long and relatively heavy double-action-only (DAO) trigger pull for safety. Without sights, the Seecamp gun is designed for up close and personal protection and weighs just 12.5 ounces. Its spurless hammer sits flush with the back of the slide and is unlikely to snag when drawn from either a coat pocket or ankle holster. Without any external protuberances, with the exception of the magazine heel catch, the Seecamp LWS offers its owners a sleek, snag-free, corrosion-resistant .32 ACP semi-auto that could be concealed just about anywhere. For most shooters the biggest problem was finding one at a price they could afford.

In 1997 North American Arms recognized the opportunity to capitalize on Seecamp's limited production and unmet demand and introduced the Guardian. In an effort to make their new gun distinctly different from the Seecamp, NAA made a number of "improvements" to the design. Most notable is the addition of sights to the gun. While this isn't the type of gun that you would be using at extended ranges it's still nice to be able to use sights. NAA also incorporated a 1911 style push-button magazine release, replacing the heelclip style of the Seecamp gun. A disassembly button was added to the right side of the pistol for easier field-stripping and the magazine safety was deleted. To address the issue of production, North American Arms contracted with Kahr Arms to produce their stainless steel slides and frames.

I own three different Guardians. I bought my test sample when I first received it in 1997. Shortly after reviewing it I sent it off to the now closed firm of Scott, McDougall and Associates, where it was fitted with a set of mini-Novak night sights, completely dehorned and had its trigger slicked up. I carried this gun for a couple years in a
product and is chambered for the hot new .32 NAA cartridge and is built on the .380 Guardian frame. Basically it's a .380 cartridge necked down to accept a 60-grain .32 bullet that sizzles out of the stubby Guardian barrel at an impressive 1200 feet per second (fps). That's roughly 10% more power than a .380 ACP round. My gun features a bright polish job, mini Novak night sights, and stippled front and rear straps. This little beast has a serious bark! Though I don't own one, I did review the .25 NAA Guardian when it was first introduced last year. Built using the same frame and slide of the .32 ACP Guardian, the new gun fires what is basically a .32 ACP case necked down for a 35-grain .25 Hornady XTP bullet. Velocity of the little bottleneck cartridge is 1200 fps.

Looking back through my notes of when I first evaluated the .32 ACP Guardian, a few years back, I found that Winchester Silvertip 60-grain hollow points developed 88 footpounds of energy (fpe). North American Arms' newest bottleneck delivers about 20% more energy from the same length barrel, producing 112 fpe. If you wondered why we need the .25 NAA when we already have a .32 ACP Guardian, keep those ballistics in mind. More horsepower from the same size gun!

**Concealed Carry Rules**

The rules of pocket carry are very basic and common sense but be sure to give some thought as to where you carry your gun and how. First, determine which pocket you want to carry the pistol in. If you'd like to carry it in your back pocket where most folks carry their wallet, make sure you don't have any shoulder or elbow problems that limit your mobility in hip pocket holster. A couple years later North American Arms announced that they were opening a Custom Shop and asked if they could build me a .32 ACP Guardian to my specifications. I chose a Guardian with the reptile-scale cocking serrations, XS close-range night sights, a stippled front strap and a personalized serial number. It's a beautiful little gun! My latest Guardian is also a Custom Shop
accessing your gun. If you are going to carry the gun in an outer coat pocket, make sure the pocket is deep enough that the gun/holster combination won't spill out when bending over or performing normal physical activities. If it's a pocket that uses a zipper or Velcro, you might want to select a different coat for your CCW endeavors. If you want to carry your pistol in your front pants pocket, you need to be absolutely sure that the gun and holster are the only things in that pocket. Gum, keys, money and change need to be carried in another pocket. Do not allow anything to compromise your ability to make a quick and certain grab for the pistol, hinder its removal from your pocket, or work itself into the gun's action. For casual wear, many prefer denim jeans with the pockets on the front of the pants. The problem here is that the front pockets are usually too tight to easily access the gun. A good test here is to ball your fist up and push it to the bottom of an empty pocket. If you can't do so easily, you'll need to find another pocket to secret your Guardian. Dress pants, with their pockets on the side, rather than the front, are usually deep enough to hold a gun and holster without any problems.

**Pocket Carry**

I have to admit that my favorite place to carry the Guardian is in my rear pocket, where most men usually carry their wallet. I carried my original Guardian in a wallet holster for years.

The holster breaks up the outline of the pistol so that it doesn't print as a gun. The wallet holster covers the gun's triggerguard so that it must be removed from the holster to fire. I found it easy to place two fingers under the front strap to lift and withdraw the gun while the holster stays in my pocket.

Another holster designed specifically to break up the distinctive outline of the Guardian is the Holdster from Matt Geissal. Handcrafted from top grain leather, the Holdster
uses high-density foam under the triggerguard to fill out its shape and keep the gun from rotating in your pocket. The gun actually stays in the holster even when firing and has cutouts for access to the trigger and the magazine release and a hole for the middle finger to go through. Lightweight and comfortable, it's easy to shoot with and very effective in disguising the gun. My test sample is made from standard leather, but Geissal also offers the Holdster in exotic leathers like stingray, shark, caiman and alligator. The Holdster has been classified by the ATF as non-any other weapon and is not considered a forbidden wallet holster—it is completely legal to own and use.

The most high-tech holster that I had a chance to test with my .32 ACP Guardian was the Pocket Slipper. Like the other holsters it is designed to make the Guardian print more like a wallet than a gun by turning the gun's profile into a rectangle. The Pocket Slipper uses a polymer clamshell that affixes to the triggerguard and contains a laser that is activated by a button where the third finger rides under the triggerguard. Installation was easy and took just a minute with a Phillips screwdriver. I set up a target at 5 yards and fired as quickly as I could center the laser's red dot and managed to place all 7 shots into a group about 1.5 inches. I was impressed with how bright the laser's dot was, even in the bright Arizona summer sunlight. It's a neat system and I don't see that it sacrifices anything for the benefits that are gained. Because of its heavy recoil, the Pocket Slipper is not recommended for the hot .32 NAA guns.

I obtained a sample of Aker's Pocket Protector and was impressed with its quality. It's a beautiful holster crafted from rugged sharkskin and finely molded to the gun and extremely rigid. It's a simple design, well executed and an efficient and handsome way to carry the Guardian. But if your tastes are more discriminating, there's only one way for you to carry you Guardian. Mitch Rosen offers a finely boned, tan cordovan leather holster with a beautiful reinforcing band made of stingray skin. It is the perfect complement to my Custom Shop .32 NAA Guardian. The thick leather provides rigidity and the dog bone not only breaks up the holster outline but also keeps the holster in the pocket when drawing the pistol. It just goes to show you, you can pay a little money for a holster or you can pay a lot. This one retails for $425, but

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www.akerleather.com

**C.C. Mfg., Co. (Pocket Slipper)**
13874 Graber Ave., Dept CH
Sylmar, CA 91342
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**DeSantis Holster**
431 Bayview Ave., Dept CH
Amityville, NY 11701
800-486-4433
www.holster.com

**Matt Geissal (The Holdster)**
4828 CR 1295, Dept CH
Tyler, TX 75704
903-597-1277
www.artofthehide.com

**Mitch Rosen,** 300 Bedford St., Dept CH, Manchester, NH 03101;
603-647-2971;
www.mitchrosen.com
if you're more interested in utility than beauty, Rosen offers basically the same holster made from cowhide with the rough side out for just $65.

The final holster I've had some experience carrying the Guardian in is the DeSantis Apache Ankle Rig. Made from hypoallergenic, orthopedic-grade neoprene, the ankle holster is one of the most stable rigs that I have used and keeps the pistol from rocking when walking. There's an adjustable retention strap and sheepskin padded lining on the other side of the gun to prevent chafing. The elasticity of the neoprene makes this holster a one-size-fits-all affair. Where I find these ankle rigs particularly useful is for driving, where the sitting position makes access to the front and rear pants pockets difficult. I like to wear my ankle holster on the left leg, where I can easily move my leg to my right hand without anyone outside my car being the wiser. Make sure that your pants are loose enough that you can easily pull your pants leg up to get to the gun. Denim jeans are usually too tight to use with this type of holster, but I found all of my dress slacks worked well.

**Final Thoughts**

Most of these holsters are available through North American Arms website or directly from the manufacturers. This article was not meant to be all-encompassing; there are many holster makers I just didn't have room to include. But I did want to include the holsters that have worked for me as well as some tips that I've gained through experience carrying the Guardian.