



# MEMBERS UPDATE

February 2024

## Self-Sustainable Home Water Supply

- Debt-Free Home Building (How You Can Do It Too!)
- Your Home Away From Home: Picking A Gun Range
- Top 10 Shooters To Have In your Arsenal Right Now
- Military Technology In Your Hands To Protect Your Family Now

***Next Issue: Best Non-Firearm Weapons***

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# CONTENT



**02**

## **Debt-Free Home Building (How You Can Do It Too!)**

I have many friends who have built— or are currently building— debt-free. I want to touch on some of the ways other people I know are accomplishing this.



**06**

## **Self-Sustainable Home Water Supply**

Did you know that the average American uses between 100 and 156 gallons of water per day, per person? That's 400 - 624 gallons per day— or an astonishing 12,000 - 18,720 gallons a month— for the average American family of four! That's a lot of H2O!



**11**

## **Military Technology In Your Hands To Protect Your Family Now**

We will have a look at how to make that gear and equipment you paid for work to keep your family comfortable in the times when your lives may be thrown out of whack by unforeseen circumstances.



**16**

## **Top 10 Shooters To Have In Your Arsenal Right Now**

The guns we will discuss here are not only iconic but will save your six in any situation they are needed, whether it be hunting to eat or walking away from a self-defense situation.



**20**

## **Your Home Away From Home: Picking A Gun Range**

Newcomers to shooting face the challenge of selecting the right gun range. It involves considerations of skill, accessibility, and budget, but ultimately, both indoor and outdoor ranges offer valuable opportunities.

**Next Issue:** Best Non-Firearm Weapons



# DEBT-FREE HOME BUILDING (HOW WE DID IT)

In a recent article, I talked about how my family and I built our home(s) debt-free, but I know our approach won't work for everyone— and that's okay. Some of the things we did to build debt-free are universal and can be applied by everyone, but others are somewhat exclusive to us. For example, not everyone will have a pension from which to draw. Many people need to work full-time to make ends meet, and it may even be necessary to work more than one job to accommodate the build. I have many friends who have built— or are currently building— debt-free for whom that is the case. I want to touch on some of the ways other people I know are accomplishing this.

## ONE SIZE— AND METHOD— DOESN'T FIT ALL

One example is that of my friends, Jill and Johnathan. They have been building their debt-free dream home, a large, gorgeous log cabin, on their property in the Northeastern part of the U.S. for the past nine years. Due to the frigid climate and having two young children, they opted not to reside on the property full-time during the build; instead, they rent a small apartment in which they live during the winter months and move into a camper trailer on the property during the warmer months to maximize their investment. This allows them to live frugally but still be comfortable when it's cold and maximize their building time when it's warm. To

afford to live and build, Johnathan works a full-time job, and they build the cabin every spare moment they can when he is home. They also made other smart decisions... such as purchasing a sawmill and using trees from their property to build their cabin... many of which had to be felled to make room to build anyway. As is evidenced by the length of time they have been building (and depending on the size of the structure), this option can take a significant amount of time to accomplish because you are splitting your money and time between outside expenses, employment, and your build. However, there are many options available for a temporary living while you build— each with its own set of pros and cons.

Another example is that of my dear friends, Chase and Pamela, who are in the process of building a home with their four children on their homestead in Montana. They opted to take a different route than most. They decided that their time and money would best be spent with Pamela as the primary breadwinner, working two jobs— a part-time job in town and another remotely from home— while Chase focused all his efforts on building their home and, with the help of his two older girls, homeschooling and caring for their children. In this way, they have been able to expedite their build process much faster than my friends Johnathan and Jill did. Another thing they did differently than Johnathan and Jill is that they started with a much smaller structure and poured all their focus into

getting it dried in before winter. Their first winter was spent living in what amounted to little more than a one-room cabin with an unfinished and open loft space. Initially, they hung blankets and sheets to act as walls separating their living space, but as they continued to build inside the cabin as winter progressed, they eventually got real walls erected where needed.

## THE POSSIBILITIES ARE LIMITLESS



Some people choose to live in a myriad of different style tents, while others invest in yurts. Many people opt to live in an RV full-time on their property while they are building... sometimes even despite freezing climates. Mind you, none of these are for the faint of heart, and I have seen many a family pack up after their first winter here and head for sunnier shores... but many others stick it out and are successful. Another school of thought is to build a tiny home in which to live while building your larger home; it takes much less time, money, and materials to erect a temporary, small, livable space that you can later repurpose. You could also start with a basic wooden “shed home”—by purchasing an already constructed, bare-bones shed from your local shed builder or big box store and having it delivered to your property.

There are many benefits of opting for a tiny or shed home over an RV (for the sake of brevity, I’ll classify any camper trailer or motorhome here as an “RV”). They are much easier to winterize— not only can you add a wood stove for cooking and heat (something that, while technically possible with an RV, isn’t advisable from both a safety standpoint and an insurance one), but you can also better



insulate it. This is one of the biggest pitfalls of an RV in the winter. Unless you purchase an RV with an Arctic package, they often have very little insulation to speak of. This often results in frozen or broken water pipes as well as difficulty keeping the interior warm. It also creates a significant amount of moisture due to condensation, which makes it difficult to keep things dry inside your home, thus leading to a very uncomfortable living environment as your walls begin to sweat... and, worse, mold. This situation is only exacerbated by using the onboard propane heater as propane produces a “wet” heat— which means it creates a lot of condensation on its own. Of course, much of the difficulty of living in an RV or a tiny/ shed home while you build is negated if you live in a mild climate. In that case, provided you are healthy and physically capable of doing so, there is very little to deter you, so long as you don’t mind sacrificing a few creature comforts in the short term to get ahead in the long run.



If you want to live in an RV while building your home but are concerned about the prohibitive size or inclement weather challenges, there are ways to mitigate this. Here are a few of the solutions some of my friends have used—the fastest and most economical of which is to build a lean-to onto your RV. Not only will it add valuable real

estate to your living space, but it also increases insulation and opens the possibility of adding an alternate heat source, such as a rocket or wood-burning stove. Adding the lean-to will further protect your RV from the elements on the side to which it is attached, and by installing a wood stove, you essentially add a heated room that will help heat and dry your RV if you leave the windows and doors open between the two. Another option is to first build a shop inside where you can park your RV to keep it out of the elements and expand your “indoor” living space. A shop or a pole barn is a relatively quick, easy, and affordable solution for those who want to get started but are worried about living inside a small, often poorly insulated space like an RV. A metal shop can be similarly constructed and outfitted for both functionality and living, and it doesn’t have to become your permanent living quarters. If you have more money than you do time, you can also purchase these as kits that are quick and easy to erect on your own or with some help. Metal shops or pole barns are the perfect solutions for those wanting to build but who are concerned about the weather or limited living space that an RV provides. I have seen people do everything from just getting the roof on them in time for winter to provide more protection from the elements to getting them entirely or partially dried in to use a wood stove inside to expand their living quarters.

## SOME OF US WERE BORN IN A BARN



Many people here have opted for building a “barndominium.” A barndominium is just what it sounds like: a combination of a barn and a condominium— basically, a barn with an apartment above it. It has become a popular construct for

those wanting to build their own homes without a lot of money with which to get started.

Most people utilize the lower part of the “barn” for storage and vehicles in the long term. Oftentimes, they will park a camper in the lower half of the barndominium and live inside that until better living accommodations can be built inside the “barn.” I have also seen parts of the lower level of the barndominium later configured into additional rooms, bunkhouses, or mother-in-law suites for guests— complete with small bathrooms and a kitchen.

Once you have the frame and roof built, you may decide to just use the dry space as a sort of a “yard” to stretch your legs or let your kids play while staying dry during inclement weather. You may opt for completely drying in the entire structure so that you can have a larger heated space to park your RV. From there, you might begin building small rooms here and there on the lower level to enable you stretch out a bit more, or you might get straight to building the condominium portion of the barn. The sky’s the limit when it comes to building a home of your own... you are only limited by local building codes and your creativity... These are just a few ideas from what we’ve done personally, and what I’ve witnessed others doing.



We started in a 24-foot motorhome on our current property— a little cramped for the four of us— until it was warm enough outside for us to start stretching out a bit. We had an extra tiny little cabin named The Gypsy Wagon that we brought with us. It was 6’ x 12” with a twin bed and a dinette that converted into another twin bed. Once it warmed up enough, sometime in June, our boys opted to move out of the cramped RV and into that. Shortly thereafter, being thoroughly sick of

the tiny camper bed, my husband and I bought a 12'x12' screened-in patio gazebo, built a platform for it, set up our bed, and moved into that for the rest of the summer. Upon building our first chicken coop, we (illogically) determined it was way too cute to let our chickens ruin with chicken poop, so we decided to turn it into a bunkhouse instead. One of our boys promptly moved into it for the remainder of the summer... so we effectively had 4 respective living spaces for the summer. The property had an existing old, rundown (completely uninhabitable) cabin on it that served us well for storage as well as a covered porch that functioned nicely as an outdoor kitchen for the summer.



## IT'S ALL FUN AND GAMES UNTIL IT STARTS SNOWING

We did something similar to Chase and Pamela in our current home, although on a larger scale since neither of us had to work away from home, and we had the added assistance of our boys. Still, it was a real challenge to get dried in before winter as we had an exceptionally long, wet spring and couldn't get equipment in there to begin clearing until late in the season. We weren't even able to begin building until almost October. With those stressful time constraints in place, some adjustments to our original cabin design had to be made to expedite getting it dried in before it began to snow— but that's the real beauty of building yourself: you can change anything you want, any time you want. In an attempt to meet that daunting deadline, we initially decided to build a smaller cabin and add to it the next year. That decision served us well, but we still didn't quite get dried in before it began to snow, and when we finally did, our roof only consisted of OSB and tar paper as we ran out of time and money to get the roofing metal. We spent the next few weeks frantically trying to get the insulation installed in the cabin before it got too

cold; we spent much of the winter with buckets and pots strategically placed around the cabin to catch the numerous leaks in the “roof.” Occasionally, the weather would clear, and the roof would dry enough for us to get up on it to make repairs and patches. It wasn't the most comfortable winter we've ever experienced in a home, but it was bearable because it was our home. The tar paper served its purpose and got us through until spring, when we had to remove it all and start anew (not cost-effective or advisable). That's when we discovered Ice Shield roofing material. Sheesh! Wouldn't that have been nice to know about earlier??!

**“The Most Difficult Thing Is The Decision To Act, The Rest Is Merely Tenacity.” - Amelia Earheart.**

It isn't always going to be easy, and very little will be perfect— in fact, I can almost guarantee that it will be one of the hardest things you've ever done— and you are going to make plenty of mistakes, but very little in life worth doing is “easy.” How could you not make mistakes when embarking on such a huge undertaking? It is important to stay positive and keep perspective. One of my favorite things about building my homes is that I get to take my time and live with what we are building to see how it functions for us before having to completely commit to a design. There have been many times when an idea that we had put down on paper turned out to be completely impractical or nonfunctional in practice, and we easily adjusted and remedied it. Because of this, my home is exactly what I want, and very rarely have I uttered the words, “I wish we would've” when considering any facet of our home. Don't get me wrong; we made plenty of mistakes and have even had to redo a few things, but we kept persevering. While our home is nowhere near finished, every bit of it is a custom masterpiece of our own making, is 100% debt-free, and most importantly, is OURS.

We aren't special, we haven't done the impossible, and we worked incredibly hard for all of it... the same can be said of all those I mentioned in this article. If there is a takeaway from what I have said here, I hope it is this: It is possible to build your home— without hiring anyone and without incurring debt— and the ways to broach such an undertaking are only limited to your imagination, dedication, and willingness to succeed. Don't let anyone convince you otherwise!



# SELF-SUSTAINABLE HOME WATER SUPPLY

By Nikki Mulder

## WHEN IS ENOUGH, ENOUGH?



Did you know that the average American uses between 100 and 156 gallons of water per day, per person? That's 400 - 624 gallons per day— or an astonishing 12,000 - 18,720 gallons a month— for the average American family of four! That's a lot of H<sub>2</sub>O! In contrast, according to the U.N. Water Organization, the average citizen of France uses half that amount, while the average citizens of India and Mali use a paltry 38 and 3 gallons of water per day, respectively. Most of us know that it is advisable, for emergency purposes, to store a minimum of two weeks of water using the following calculation: one gallon of water per day per individual (a little more for persons who are pregnant or ill, or who reside in hotter climates.) Considering those numbers, it is clear that while water is essential to life, the amount of water we use vastly differs from the amount of water we need; while we may only require a gallon (or less) of water for drinking purposes to keep us healthy and alive, it is quite likely that we are going to want to use more than that for cooking, hygiene, and other purposes. So, what does that look like? Well, the answer to that question will vary greatly from person to person, so I will address it from a personal perspective.





**“You Can’t Get Too Much Winter In  
The Winter.”  
— Robert Frost**

Before moving off the grid, our water statement indicated that our regular water consumption (for a family of four) averaged around 8,000 gallons per month! Now, after nearly eight years with no water other than that which we collect ourselves (utilizing multiple methods), that seems like an obscene amount of water to me! With only two 55-gallon (food grade) barrels— one of which had a spigot— we found it incredibly easy to calculate our water usage for our first off-grid winter. One of the barrels, which we located by the door leading out to our deck, served as our “melting” barrel; we continually filled this with clean snow. As the snow melted, any heavy debris— rocks, dirt, etc.— would sink to the bottom of that barrel. The remaining debris was filtered out using a pitcher to transfer the water from our melting barrel into our kitchen barrel through a layer of muslin we draped over said kitchen barrel and secured with the barrel lid ring. That water was then used for everything in the household (with an additional level of 0.1-micron filtration for any water used for drinking or cooking). That first year, we calculated our water usage during the months that we were exclusively melting snow, and were astounded to find that we had only used 480 gallons of water in five months! That’s an unbelievable average of 5.33 gallons of water per day! Granted, we washed most of our laundry at the laundromat, didn’t always eat at home, and there were even a few times when I broke down and splurged on a hotel room for the night just so we could all get long hot showers— “long” being a relative term that generally meant 10 minutes.

Spring and fall saw us using somewhere in the vicinity of double what we did that first winter, as those are our rainy seasons. Water was far easier to come by, and we were even able to occasionally fill our 275-gallon intermediate bulk container (IBC) tote. If we weren’t incredibly frugal with that water, we would find ourselves in July and August, our “drought months,” having to make runs into town to fill a tote and carry it back up the mountain. Since that time, our water consumption has steadily increased, as we make incremental changes and upgrades to our home.

The biggest jump in our water consumption came this past fall when we finally got a well dug. Unfortunately, because it was dug so late in the season, we were unable to get the well connected to the cabin before winter set in, and we could no longer break through the frozen ground. On the flip side of that coin, our well turned out to be Artesian, with a steady 3-5 psi naturally occurring at the wellhead... meaning that we can get water from our well without even using a pump. Since installing our well five months ago, our water consumption has doubled from around 7 – 8 gallons per day to around 10 – 15 gallons per day. Also, when we finally got running water inside the cabin last month (via water lines plumbed into a 55-gallon barrel inside our pantry), our water consumption jumped to an all-time off-grid high (for us) of around 23 gallons per day. Even though that is still a minuscule amount of water compared to that of the average American, it is demonstrative of how a simple modern convenience like indoor plumbing can affect usage and create waste.

## **SAVE WATER AND IT WILL SAVE YOU**

Now that we’ve discussed water consumption and what to expect when considering water usage, let’s explore the different ways we can develop a water supply and how to store it. There are so many options available for storage— everything from a simple 55-gallon barrel and 275-gallon (IBC) tote to hugh in-ground and above-ground cisterns. There are also many ways to collect water and sources— of course, this is the part where I am obliged to advise you to check with your local laws



to see which, if any, of these is legal in your neck of the woods, yada-yada-yada. In our case, while we predominantly use barrels and IBC totes to store our water, we collect from many different sources.

The simplest and most obvious source you could collect from (other than a well) would be if you had a groundwater supply such as a creek, pond, lake, or spring from which you could draw. Sometimes, it is possible to cultivate an underground spring into a viable water supply. We managed to tap into a spring on our property and cultivate it into a pond that supplies the vast majority of our animals' water during all but the frozen months. Another possibility may be to dig a shallow well. We dug a 15' shallow well, installed a hand pump, and got about a gallon per minute— unfortunately, it does dry up around July.

If none of those options are available to you, one of the easiest and (usually) most accessible sources for sustainable water supply is via rain catchment. Catching rain can be as simple as running a gutter along your eaves with downspouts strategically placed at one or more points in the gutters and routing the water into some form of container— buckets, barrels, totes, or something else— placed beneath those downspouts. You could also design a rainwater harvesting system that routes the water from your roof to a large cistern (either above or below ground). These cisterns vary in size, and depending on the amount of precipitation your area gets, the size of the cistern you install can be configured to supply enough water to meet all of your household and landscaping needs. The same design can be used for any barn, garage, or outbuilding you have and can help supplement and even completely provide for all your garden, orchard, and livestock needs— contingent, of

course, upon the size of your garden or orchard and the number of animals you have. I am fond of roof rain catchment and harvesting, as it is an easy, simple, inexpensive solution with very little overhead or upkeep. We place a barrel with a mesh screen to catch larger debris under our downspout. During the high pollen season, we may need to further filter the water through muslin or another type of cloth to filter the pollen out, but that's about it for our non-potable water.

If you are looking for something a little more thorough, there are different kits or diverters on the market that you can purchase. Many of these kits are designed to filter debris more thoroughly and/or divert the first “x” number of gallons of water that comes off your roof away from your storage point to help prevent some of the roof debris (leaves, pine needles, dust, pollen, etc.) from contaminating your water source. Some systems even have U.V. filtration. I have never used them personally because our rain is sporadic, so it is quite possible that our roof would get a nice cleaning every time it rained, and it would stop before we collected any water for our use. I just haven't been able to bring myself to waste that much valuable water... especially when I never know if that's all I may get until it snows! Some people may wrinkle their noses at it, but when you look at it like this... Have you ever bathed or swam in a lake, pond, or creek? Well, there are quite a few more critters with access to those bodies of water than there are to my roof. And we do filter all our drinking water!

## SUSTAINABILITY MEETS CREATIVITY— DO WHAT YOU CAN



Of course, depending on your location, rain catchment may not be much of an option. I know several states see very little to no precipitation throughout the year. That's where trying to create a sustainable water supply can be tricky. In some of those places, if you do not have access to an alternative water supply, such as a stream, creek, spring, or pond, it may be that the best you can do is focus on conservation and being creative in the use of your water. In this case, you may want to look at setting up a greywater system that recycles used water from your sinks, showers, and washing machines for outdoor watering. Of course, you will want to use caution when using grey water to water your garden... it may not be advisable to do so depending on the types of soaps, chemicals, or solutions you use in your household. Generally speaking, greywater with biodegradable products is safe for plants, but I would use extra caution regarding what I water my food crops with.

Rain catchment may also not be much of an option in the winter in cold climates; however, as I discussed earlier, if you are fortunate enough to get a significant amount of snow during those months, that is an excellent alternative. Snow gathering for household water purposes has its own set of pros and cons. Some of the biggest pros for me are that there is almost always plenty of it where I live, and it tends to be cleaner and easier to filter through our filtration system than our rain catchment is. The biggest cons to snow collection are that it is time-consuming and takes up a significant amount of space. Not only do you have to collect the snow by hand and melt it down to convert it into water, but you receive very little reward for your effort when considering you only get approximately one inch of water for every 10-12 inches of snow you collect!

If you happen to live in a climate that sees freezing temperatures with very little precipitation in the winter, or if you happen to experience an unusually "dry" winter, things get a little more complicated, and more forethought is necessary. Because we never know what our winter is going to look like, and knowing how much water is our "bare minimum" to get us through those months, we do our best to go into winter with as much water as possible. It generally rains here for most of

October, and we do our best to collect as much of that as possible. We ensure that we roll into the frozen months with no less than two full 55-gallon barrels and don't dip into them until everything is frozen and we have no other options available to us. In the meantime, we use a fourth barrel to continue collecting what we can while we can and bring in, filter, and store as much of that "extra" water as possible in drinking water storage containers inside the cabin. A few years ago, we encountered a freakish winter with only a smattering of snow (with no accumulation) well into February. At that time, we had only been using two barrels of water, as it had always been plenty to get us into the snowy months. We found ourselves in a position to have to repeatedly buy five-gallon jugs of drinking water in town to get us through until we got a decent snowfall. Not ideal at all! That's when we added that third barrel to the equation.



In our former cabin, we had a seasonal creek created by spring melt-off that we would draw from for as long as we could in between rains. At our current property, we are fortunate enough to have an annual creek— although two summers ago saw such a dry spring and drought-filled summer that our creek was scarcely a mud trickle by July, so we know better than to count on that to always be an option for us. In some areas, your local fairgrounds, public parks, or RV parks may provide you the

ability to fill large containers of water that you can carry back to your homestead.

Building a sustainable water supply is a process; each of us will have our own circumstances that will dictate what works best for us. For instance, what works for us here in the Mountains of North Idaho may not work for someone in Arizona, but I hope I have given you a few new ideas on which to build. We are by no means experts on the matter, but each year, as we get further along, we gain a little more foresight and become a little more prepared to handle any curve balls or shortcomings. The

addition of our well was a huge leap forward in helping to be better prepared. Although it is not the end all be all of our water woes (wells can and do dry up), it does give us a significant advantage. We will always utilize water catchment for our orchard, gardens, and animals... and we will always have water catchment capability for our cabin, if necessary, but we now have a little more room to breathe as we are not having to spend so much of our valuable time chasing that life-sustaining liquid gold: Water!



# Military Technology In Your Hands To Protect Your Family Now

By Eric Austgen



There is nothing that gets people fired up more than the subject of taxes. One may see both sides to the gripe, but the only fringe benefit to come from this form of strong-armed robbery is the availability of all the surplus and defective goodies we have purchased for national defense purposes. We have discussed some of the magical treasures one can find in their local store or government auction. However, this time around, we will have a look at how to make that gear and equipment you paid for work to keep your family comfortable in the times when your lives may be thrown out of whack by unforeseen circumstances. Of course, if you think about it, you actually bought it a second time, so it would be best to get full use out of unloved tech to keep the ones you love safe.

## Feeding An Army

No matter what size your family happens to be, you will want to make sure that your cooking equipment will be able to literally serve a small army. As a general with a Napoleonic complex once pointed out, “an army marches on its stomach.” This wise observation is just as applicable to keeping kith and kin nutritionally squared away.



Your best bet for a large-scale feeding frenzy, or at least for fifty people and under, you could do no better in the surplus world than the M59A US Army Field Range Stove Compact Cooking Station and Accessories. This baby does everything your full-sized kitchen can do, only out in a field, or the garage, or wherever you have space to stick it. It can easily tackle baking, boiling, roasting, grilling,

or deep frying all the family's favorite foods from a time when the world made a bit more sense. Now, as you can imagine, with the capabilities of a small field kitchen, this thing will have a little weight to it, but it takes up very little space to compensate. As with all surplus, please make sure that all components come with the stove, most importantly the burner unit. The accessories for this stove are too numerous to include. However, I will say that everything that you need in your home kitchen to complete meals will be found with this stove. The price will vary between private surplus dealers and government auctions. On the private end, this stove will be about a grand if it is complete and in relatively good shape. It's impossible to pin down the feds on how they price things, but when they are eager to get rid of things, bargain basement prices can be found. Whatever route you go for purchase, please have in hand a list of the parts, accessories, and corresponding numbers, if any. You may get lucky and find an intact specimen or you might need to piece it together, which is where your list will come handy, in case the government gets greedy and sells off the parts individually. Whatever condition you may find it, the field stove is more than worth the price and effort of owning a complete unit.



A smaller field stove that can be stowed away in a bug out bag is the USMC XGK EX Small Unit Camping Stove. This little beast cooks up food in a jiffy, boils water in nothing flat, and could probably thaw a frozen cow in a half hour. The reason this stove can produce a flame so hot is its use of kerosene, white gas, JP-8, and diesel as

fuel sources. Two twenty-two-ounce bottles come with the stove, along with two jets and fuel lines designed to handle the different liquids. The base plate and fold-out arms are large enough to support a one-gallon pot safely. The stove is also supplied with a simmer plate, repair kit, and waterproof bag. The whole affair weighs in at about two pounds and is reasonably priced in the \$250-\$270 range, depending on where you shop.

A quick last word when it comes to filling bellies and keeping up strength concerns the storage of food that has a fairly long shelf life. Stocking up on MREs will help to supplement or provide a primary food source for when things have gone completely south. They should be eaten sparingly or a portion at a time throughout the day as these things are packed with three thousand or so calories, and unless you will be doing enough physical labor to burn them off, slow and steady wins the race. The gradual consumption of the meal throughout the day will spread the calories around. If not, that's usually when bathroom scales collectively moan.



## Preparation For Every Season

Whatever part of the country you call home, you might find the need to dress accordingly for each season. Others are lucky enough to wear shorts and flip-flops year-round. Either way, we are all bundling up or shedding layers depending on the weather being experienced.

The concept of layering is still a mystery to those fresh arrivals to places where the cold seasons are particularly harsh, or as is the case in my state, can rear its ugly head at a moment's notice, even in summer. Those folks will be overcome with joy to discover that the army has their back in that department, and as the government goes, they did a pretty bang-up job. The US Army developed the

Extended Cold Weather Clothing System, which is essentially a layer-based apparel framework that has been tested in places varying from moderate to sub-zero climates. The system is composed of 7 levels, beginning with one's underdrawers and working up to a rather cozy-looking arctic parka and pants combination. The intermediary levels are comprised of field uniforms of different weights, designed to fend off the cold when the mercury starts taking a beating. One may purchase the whole package, albeit in pieces, from one's surplus source, or if you aren't too keen on parading around in camo uniforms, desiring rather to blend in with society, comparable civilian substitutes can be made. As hot weather dress is kind of a no-brainer in that loose clothing and shade will be key, many well-stocked stores will carry a ton of T-shirts and shorts in colors and materials conducive to tropical and desert conditions. The boonie hat is an excellent shade source and is available in camo patterns and solid colors. The hat looks like a fishing cap with a wider brim and vent screens in the crown. The design of the hat has been copied by armies from other countries in case you fancy something different.

Now that we have figured out how to go about our day in relative comfort, our attention turns to finding the best possible way to slumber when a bed may not be available. It is generally a good idea to stay off the ground when sleeping afield. This is why it would be ideal to purchase a simple army cot for any climate or a neat jungle hammock affair with heavy-duty mosquito netting surrounding it for hotter weather. You may also wish to add a roof over your head to keep the elements at bay. The basic two-man pup tents can be combined to make larger tents and should be made of canvas for the best results. If one has a need for a larger tent set up, say something in the neighborhood of a field barracks or mess hall, they should enquire with the government auctions or find a dealer who is well connected.



Finding ways to stay warm through a frigid winter's night can be frustrating if one doesn't have the right gear. The military cold weather sleeping bag is perfect for bitter nights that see temperatures drop to -10 degrees Fahrenheit. It is constructed of a cotton outer shell and lining, with a polyfill insulation. Due to its status as surplus, it would be wise to inspect those available to find the one with the least rips and tears to repair. One can greatly enhance the snugness of their warm cocoon by laying a surplus foam sleeping pad on the ground, if you can't avoid it, or on the cot. It will further insulate and give a modicum of cushiness to better pass the cold nights.



## Health And Wellness

No matter how well we plan for different situations, good ole Murphy has a way of showing up to prove us otherwise. The primary threat to the wellbeing of you and yours is an accident causing bodily injury, or worse yet, death. Should any of your loved ones be injured in any manner and you are miles away from getting to help or help coming to you, an investment in a trauma kit to help stabilize and minimize further injuries would be outstanding. As trauma kits go, the contents of the military version are virtually the same as the civilian EMS counterpart. The only difference is that the military kit includes tourniquets, blood clotting powder, and, in some cases, sutures and needles. These kits should also have basic OTC medications added to them to treat a variety of minor ailments. Extras or leftovers of prescription meds, especially antibiotics and those needed by family members, should be

stowed in the kit in case the primary supply runs out or the doctor is no longer “in.”



There has been a great deal of war talk flying around to the point where anxiety levels are being ratcheted up to astronomical levels. The types of weapons at the disposal of world leaders are quite nasty and almost always fatal when encountered without sufficient protection. All branches of the military carry and train with the Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical suit. The suit consists of a jacket, pants, and gloves. The N, B, C - rated gas mask and hood tops the whole thing off. It is made from cotton, nylon, and polyurethane foam impregnated with carbon and activated charcoal. All of this is laid down in several layers to complete an effective barrier. The gas mask should also be purchased at the same time, along with replacement filters. It may be difficult to get a size suitable for smaller children; however, you might be able to bundle them up in adult-sized suits as much as possible. You may also look elsewhere for gas masks if the G.I. issue doesn't fit smaller children. The Israelis make masks in all sizes, with fresh filters readily available due to consistent production. Also, have no fear, as these masks are also rated the same as U.S.masks, so they will be just as good at keeping that nasty crap out of your lungs.

## Covering Everyone's Six



Depending on how well-stocked your arsenal may be, there is always room to add more firepower, especially military firepower. The selection of firearms afforded to the average “Joe” at government auctions will be severely limited. Military models made for legal public consumption by private companies are a better avenue to explore. Naturally, you will want to take as many firearms and ammo as possible in a bug out situation, a want that is impractical in many scenarios. A couple of different compact firearms to bring along when stealth and high caliber ammo conservation are paramount would be the civilian model of the Air Force M6 survival rifle made by Springfield and Henry's AR-7 rifle. Both are available in .22LR with the M6 chambered for a .410 shot shell as well. The M6 folds up for storage, while the AR-7 hardware fits snugly into the plastic buttstock, which incidentally, is buoyant despite the metal parts stowed inside. Either weapon is worth chucking in a bug out bag for a rainy day.



When it comes to edged surplus weaponry, the list can be quite exhaustive. Blades from as far back as the First World War can be purchased, and owing to their solid construction, can still be employed with lethal effect. The knuckle duster trench knife is more in the collectible end of surplus, but you will be thanking yourself if you can track one down to own. The Marines have contributed the iconic Ka-Bar for traumatically effective close-quarters tussling. The army has never settled on a dedicated fighting knife; rather, they depend more on the M4 bayonet to accomplish tasks requiring such a weapon. It has evolved from a thin to



beefier blade with a notch machined into it. This notch is fitted to a nut on the scabbard to create a pair of wire cutters. Though U.S.-issued knives are some of the best around, it shouldn't limit you from exploring bladed offerings from other nations' militaries as well.



Another aspect of keeping your family safe is making sure you are aware of what is going on in and around the perimeter of your location. This can be easily achieved with binoculars during the day. However, when the cloak of darkness descends, it will be time to break out the night vision goggles. It should be noted that out of all the compact carry gear mentioned previously, this will be a major purchase should you decide to pull the trigger on it. Most base models start out at five grand, with more advanced wizardry contained in the eleven and twelve-thousand-dollar models. These goggles can be worn with a head harness or mounted on a helmet. They may also be handheld in the same fashion as binoculars. When it comes to gaining the upper hand in any situation that concerns you and your family, purchasing and using night vision goggles will greatly enhance your ability to make night into day.

Most surplus military equipment has a civilian counterpart or something darn near close to it to give it a run for its money on the free market. The reason that surplus should be looked at first is that, despite its fate, it still has many good years of use ahead of it. In addition, the military has rigorous specifications for everything, which means it is much more reliable than some of the corner-cutting vendors in the civil sector. Another concern with surplus goods is the reason they were deemed as such. Much of the equipment seen in stores or auctions are usually there due to minor

imperfections and not quite up to muster, which in civilian parlance basically means nit picking control freaks going on a tear. However, the military's pickiness is the civilians' gain in keeping the homestead safe. What better way to ease one's mind than knowing they have the gear and equipment tough enough to protect and defend a nation held dear to many, only to use it in their home to protect the ones they hold most dear. So, until next time, dear reader, stay safe and let's be careful out there.





# Top 10 Shooters To Have In Your Arsenal Right Now

By Eric Austgen

The collecting world is a fascinating place. One can see that by the myriad of junk swapped on eBay on a daily basis or the parade of treasures that turn out to be flops on the Antiques Roadshow. Those in the collect and use end, rather than the collect and admire crowd, especially gun collectors, have their favorite go-to tool that will get the job done for them, first time, every time. When it comes to firearms, many gun owners are simply not satisfied with buying wall hangers of iconic and useful weaponry; no siree, we want to own these shooters for use, to admire, and have others ogle it at the range. The guns we will discuss here are not only iconic but will save your six in any situation they are needed, whether it be hunting to eat or walking away from a self-defense situation.

## The Gun Colt Never Lived To See



Since its inception in 1873, the Colt Single Action Army has gone through four generations

of production due to the westerns being churned out by Hollywood at a frenetic pace on the silver and small screen from the early fifties to the

present. Colt got the hint, not to mention a pile of letters from customers, and began production of its first single action since 1941 in the mid-fifties. Throughout the generations, the SAA has undergone minor internal modifications to improve the design but has kept the original exterior aesthetic. Colt started production of the current generation with the advent of the cowboy action shooters in the mid-nineties. The 4th generation Colt has eight different calibers to choose from and is available in the original barrel sizes of 4 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>, 5 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>, and 7 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>. The Edsel of the Colt firearms is the Cowboy model that was introduced in 1999. Purists didn't like it much because the three distinct clicks heard when thumbing the hammer back were absent, and a transfer safety bar was introduced so that the hammer could rest on a loaded chamber without fear of accidental discharge. Traditionalist opinions aside, it is a very effective sidearm and I would much prefer to have a full cylinder rather than leave the hammer on an empty chamber that will most likely get me killed. These irons start right around a grand and start going north in price unless you go with the Cowboy; this, you can pick up for between five and seven Franklins, depending upon how the dealer's feeling that day. Whatever caliber,

model, or generation you choose, the SAA will be a great enhancement to your collection and well-being.

## The Enduring Design Of Browning



It is usually said of all the greatest artists and innovators throughout history that their work is only appreciated well

after their death. In the case of John Browning, this was a Catch-22. While alive, his weaponry designs were definitely admired by those who used them in desperate fights on battlefields throughout the world, but as far as the users knew or cared, their sidearm came directly from the Colt factory. The who did what kerfuffle when it comes to the M1911A1 has long been settled. One other thing that has been settled is the 1911's effectiveness as a firearm capable of stopping power and reliability in a tight squeeze. The fact that it remained in the U.S. Army inventory for close to eighty years and has been a heavily copied design is a testament to the reliability that every shooter depends on for an all-around carry weapon. That said, there are a variety of 1911s and their clones on the market. Many of them are sensibly priced in the mid-hundreds, slowly climbing up into the low thousands for different models and manufacturers. These firearms also come in a different number of calibers for those who are not fans of the original .45 ACP round. Although caliber is important, the selling point of this gun is the durable and simple design, which has stood the test of time and battle and has come out the other end victorious.

## The Need Of An Army Benefits The World



Portrait of a man. A man who was founder and head engineer of a company that had zero experience in firearms. A man

whose only contribution to the world before then was a knowledge of polymers. This man with limited experience in one area would use his polymer-crammed brain to unwittingly create one of the most popular personal defense sidearms,

nauling his name, or at least his products' name, into the pages of.... The Twilight Zo.... er, um, history. The Glock 17 came forth due to the wants of the Austrian Army to replace their Second World War era Walther P-38s. When this firearm went to trials, it beat the pants off of eight other models of handguns furnished by five well-respected European gun manufacturers. This, due to its reliance on previous, proven designs from other pistols and modern construction methods from synthetic materials lighter, sturdier, and more cost effective. The DoD even flirted with replacing the 1911 with the Glock 17, but they are a fussy bunch and made demands that Glock was not able to accommodate. Although there are other models of Glock pistols available, the tried and true 17 is now in its 5th generation and still plugging away at a nominal four- to six-hundred-dollar price tag. This generation has all the improvements and changes from previous generations while focusing on reliability and ergonomics. The newer generations also allow for easy sight switches and accessory installation. It is still chambered in the reliable 9mm, and if you're lucky to live in a state that doesn't have those pesky magazine capacity laws, a thirty-three round capacity magazine can be used; highly impractical for concealed carry, but great for ridding your house of vermin at zero dark thirty.

## You Need To Start Somewhere



Since the mid-sixties, Ruger has been manufacturing a reliable and affordable little plinker chambered in .22LR. The Ruger 10/22 semi-automatic rifle is a fine example of an all-round firearm to keep handy at all times. This rifle is extremely versatile in form and function in that it can be used for hunting, target practice, survival use, and, in a pinch, self-defense. The variety of aftermarket accessories for this weapon makes it very user-friendly, and one may custom-build their own from Ruger parts or the many simulacrums floating around on the market. The 10/22 is available in eight different models, with varying barrel lengths from the factory. The weapon is fed from a ten-round rotary or a 25- and 15-round capacity box magazine. Prices will also vary from three hundred fifty to

just a bit south of a grand. On the whole, this is a simple, nice little range rifle to have around if you're going after some light game or if you're doing work around an expansive property; it will definitely be a nice compliment weapon to your EDC.

## Watching The Detectives



Back in the late forties, Smith & Wesson was getting crushed by Colt's sales of its Detective Model chambered in

the more powerful .38 Special cartridge as compared to the anemic, antiquated .38 S&W round in the Smith & Wesson Terrier model. The engineers went back to the drawing board and redesigned the five-shot Terrier to handle the hotter round. The result was the first of the "J" frame model compact, snub-nosed revolver with a beefed-up cylinder, frame, and coil mainspring. The "Chief Special" was manufactured from 1950 until its retirement in 1999. The all-carbon steel gun has since been remanufactured to run both .38 Special and the hotter .38 +P rounds. It is still a five shooter, but with the ability to fire a round just a notch or so below a .357 in a small, easy-to-conceal package, one will have an advantage over any would-be assailant. The barrel is a little less than two inches in length, so that will mean plenty of proper gun control techniques if you are shooting +P ammo. The \$850 deduction may seem like a small fortune, but being it is a small frame, short-barreled revolver that bites as big as it barks, it will be well worth incurring the small loss in expense.

## One Adam Twelve, See The Man



While the snub-nosed revolver is more closely associated with the plainclothes division of the thin

firearm for their beat cop brethren is the pump action shotgun. More specifically, the Remington 870 pump action shotgun. This shotgun came out in 1950 and was greatly favored for its more modern, reliable construction, which was easy to take down and maintain. The inexpensive cost didn't hurt either. Two million of these puppies were sold by 1973 to humans across all walks of life, from civilians to those in public and national safety concerns. These shotguns come in more than a variety of models and can be chambered for .12, .16, .20, .28, and the .410 shell. Base models will run you from about \$400 and up, with other models commanding prices close to \$1000. The longer barrel models are ideal for hunting, survival, and self-defense. The Tac-14 model is the shortened barrel version, perfect for defending yourself in close quarters.

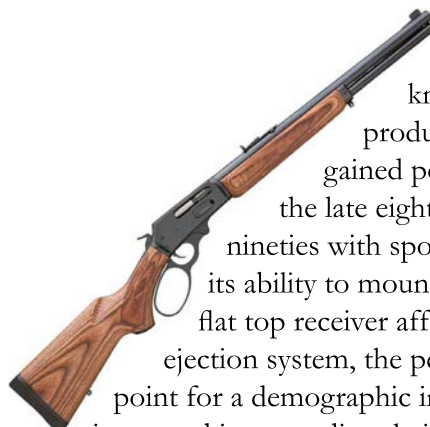
## Military Tested, Military Approved



The Mossberg 500 shotgun came into being a mere ten years after the 870 hit the shooting scene. In that time, more than ten million of these buck and slug slingers have been sold. I could extol the virtues of this shotgun; however, I'm not entirely sure I could give it an endorsement higher than that of the military's assessment of it. This is the only pump action shotgun to have undergone the Army's rigorous Mil-Spec 344e test and be deemed Mil-Spec. Three thousand shells were put through the shotgun on a simulated battlefield, and it passed close inspection with flying colors. That alone should attest to its reliability in less-than-ideal conditions. The weapon is perfect for sport, hunting, self-defense, and like the 870, there is a short barreled version available for home-field advantage. This shotgun is also chambered for the same shells as its competitor. However, most models will range in price between \$500 and \$700. When it comes to both shotguns, it will all come down to which model and caliber is best for you, and as it's difficult to choose between two pieces of perfection, you might as well own both just in case.

## The Underdog Has Its Day

For more than a century, Marlin had been producing a level action rifle that was getting outsold by



Winchester's more well-known and used product. The Marlin gained popularity in the late eighties into the nineties with sportsmen due to its ability to mount scopes on a flat top receiver afforded by a side ejection system, the perfect selling point for a demographic increasingly interested in expanding their optimal field of view through optical experimentation. They are also built larger and sturdier to handle high-powered cartridges, such as the .357, .44 Magnum, .41 Magnum, and .45/70. One may also purchase rifles chambered in .22 if so desired. There are five different series of rifle or carbine to choose from, all of them selling from twelve to sixteen hundred bucks, though that is dependent on model, finish, and caliber. Although known for its prowess in the field, its lethality can be applied to home and self-defense situations, especially if you run the same ammo through your sidearm, as it will make a great backup weapon if things don't go exactly as planned and the cavalry is hours away.

### "Military Style" And Actual Military



The ninth and tenth weapons that should be in your inventory we have spent some time exploring before; however, they are still worth mentioning, as their reliability and popularity have never waned. Also, their usefulness as all-around weapons has been proven many times over. One of these is the AR-15, a weapon that certainly needs no introduction since it's one of the most liked and hated weapons currently occupying space. Since many states have limited the use of the AR-15 for hunting purposes, it has become something of a symbol of personal defense in and out of the home. Like its equally popular competitor, the 10/22, the AR-15 has a myriad of different aftermarket accessories and parts

to make one's heart sing with joy over building a gun to their specification and comfort. Oh, if only marriage could be that way. The price spectrum is all over the place with ARs, and a trip to the gun show will help in determining what you might expect to spend, especially if you did your homework beforehand and have an idea of what you want in mind.



Another firearm that may require a trip to the gun show is the M1 Garand. After faithfully serving the US military in two wars and a brief cameo in an advisory capacity, it was sold off to all interested parties. These interested parties included foreign militaries and the civilian populace of the United States. Though in all honesty, many M1s sold or leased to foreign lands sometimes make their way back home and onto a dealer's table at the gun show. Other than checking out gun shows, local or online stores, or auction sites, the best way to acquire an M1 is through the Civilian Marksmanship Program. They take possession of M1s returned from friendly countries that leased them since importation of sold American-made weapons from outside the US was banned in 2013. It may seem impossible to find one with certain restrictions in place; however, with close to five and one half million of these rifles having been made, it shouldn't deter you from doggedly tracking down a weapon that combat soldiers proved could be versatile and effective to handle any job it was given.

As you may have guessed, the overarching theme here has been reliability and versatility, with a sprinkle of pedigree and longevity thrown in to sweeten things a bit. However, you might also notice that each of these weapons is an effective backup for each other in that should you ever find yourself in a situation where you will need to burn through each firearm and its ammo; you will be able to sustain the highest level of firepower until the threat is neutralized or your rescue has been assured. It may sound worst case; however, it would be easier on the mind knowing that you had the best firepower around with zero fear of man or beast. So, until next time, dear reader, stay safe and let's be careful out there.

Anyone new to shooting can find it a daunting experience just to get up and running. One of the concerns facing a new shooter is what kind of gun range they wish to utilize. We will have a quick look at in- and out-door ranges and what to look for when taking stock of your own situation.

Indoor ranges are ideally suited for those who don't like to contend with the mercurial nature of the planet's weather. These ranges have climate control and lighting features to improve one's accuracy. They also have traditional shooting lanes separated by partitions where one can practice with paper or electronic targets. Speaking of electronic targets, many indoor facilities have simulated ranges where a mix of reality and fantasy converge to give the shooter a realistic shooting scenario in a controlled environment. Indoor ranges take safety very seriously, and that is why most places will have an advanced ventilation system to ensure continuous clean air, noise reduction materials, and operate under strict protocols with range officers in attendance to maintain said protocols.



## Your Home Away From Home: Picking A Gun Range

By Eric Austgen

can be set at whatever distance the shooter wishes to practice. This allows for greater flexibility in shaking up a shooter's routine and improving their skill set. For those exploring shooting disciplines not confined to self-defense, multi-purpose ranges would be a great place to start. They cater to those who like to engage in the leisurely activities of trap, skeet, archery, and long-distance precision shooting.

Now that you have a rough idea as to what kind of ranges are out there, let's have a look at a couple of backend considerations that need to be factored in.

Depending on where you are in firearm ownership, from beginner to advanced, always look for a range that is on par with and/or can improve your skill set, with the facilities and on-site resources to address your every need. One should also look at the distance and accessibility of the range, including drive time, weather conditions, hours of operation, etc. Finally, shop around and see what kind of deals these joints have going on to get new shooters into the lanes; there are many, I assure you. This will be solely dependent on your budget and how often you anticipate visiting the range.

There is really no downside to either range, as both will afford any shooter the ability to hone their skills no matter where their taste runs or what area of the world they happen to reside.

Outdoor ranges are an excellent place for shooters to negotiate and train for real-world problems in a natural, anything-goes setting. Depending on the location and cash flow, these types of facilities may contain all or a couple of the following ranges - fixed distance, variable distance, and multi-purpose. The fixed lanes have paper, electronic, or steel targets set at a certain distance to plink away at. Variable  
20 ranges generally use paper or electronic targets that

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