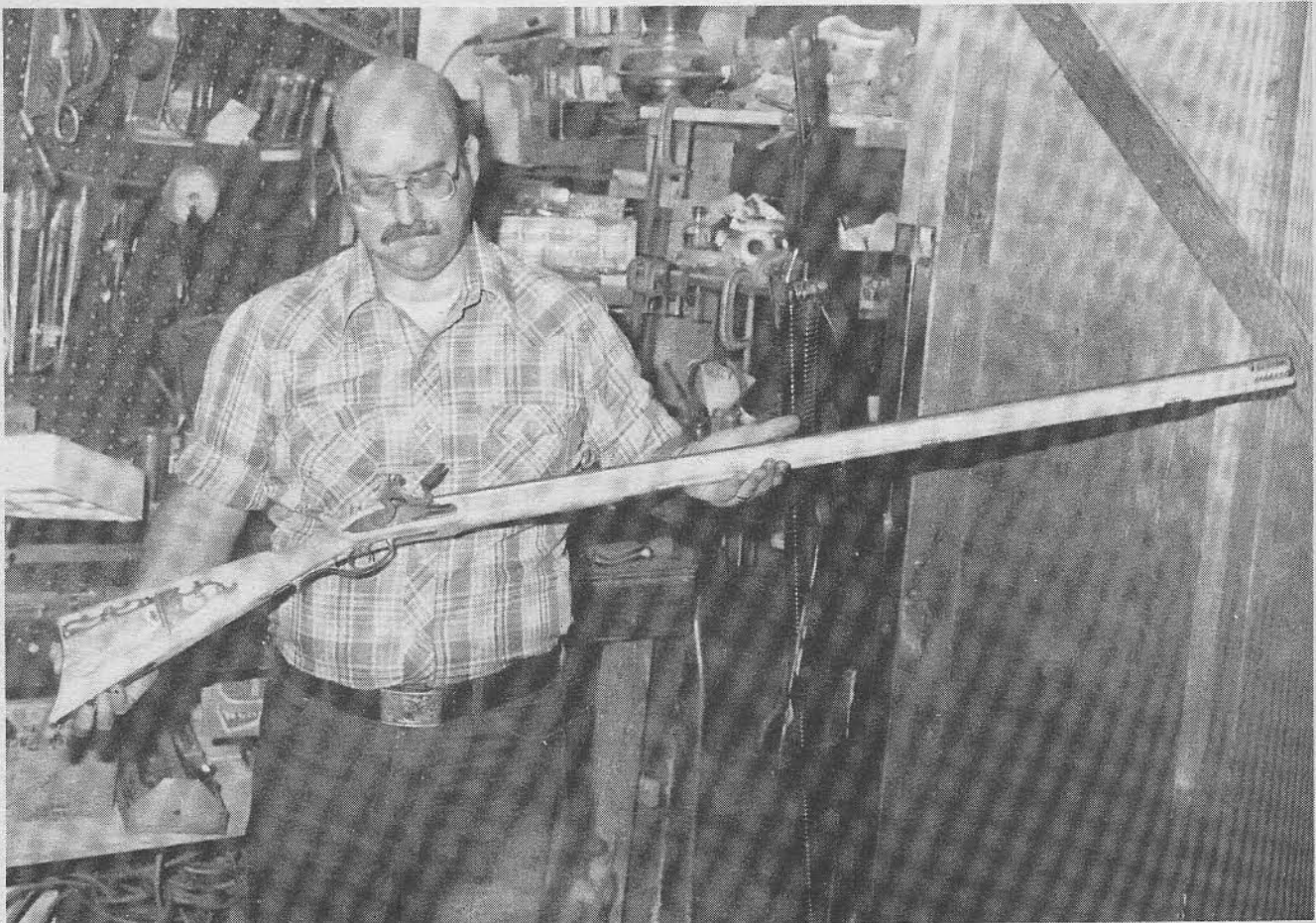
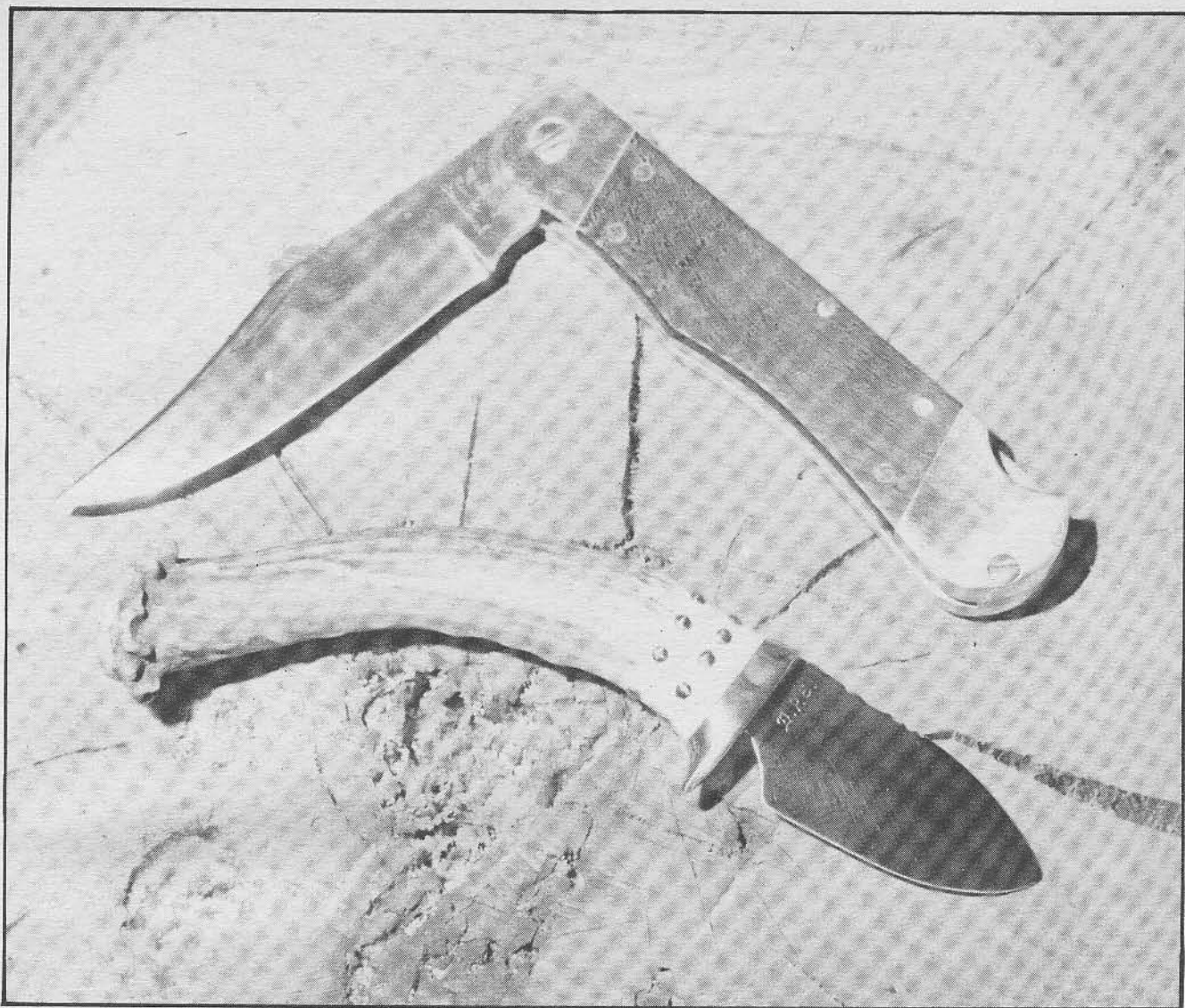


AMATEUR TO PRO

*Today's Hobbyists Are Displaying The
Talents That Lead To Demand For Their Work*

Gunsmithing hobbyist Dennis Emmanuel inspects his progress on the first Kentucky-type flintlock rifle he has attempted to build. The beautifully inlaid patchbox in the stock is the result of a lot of trial and error early in his career.



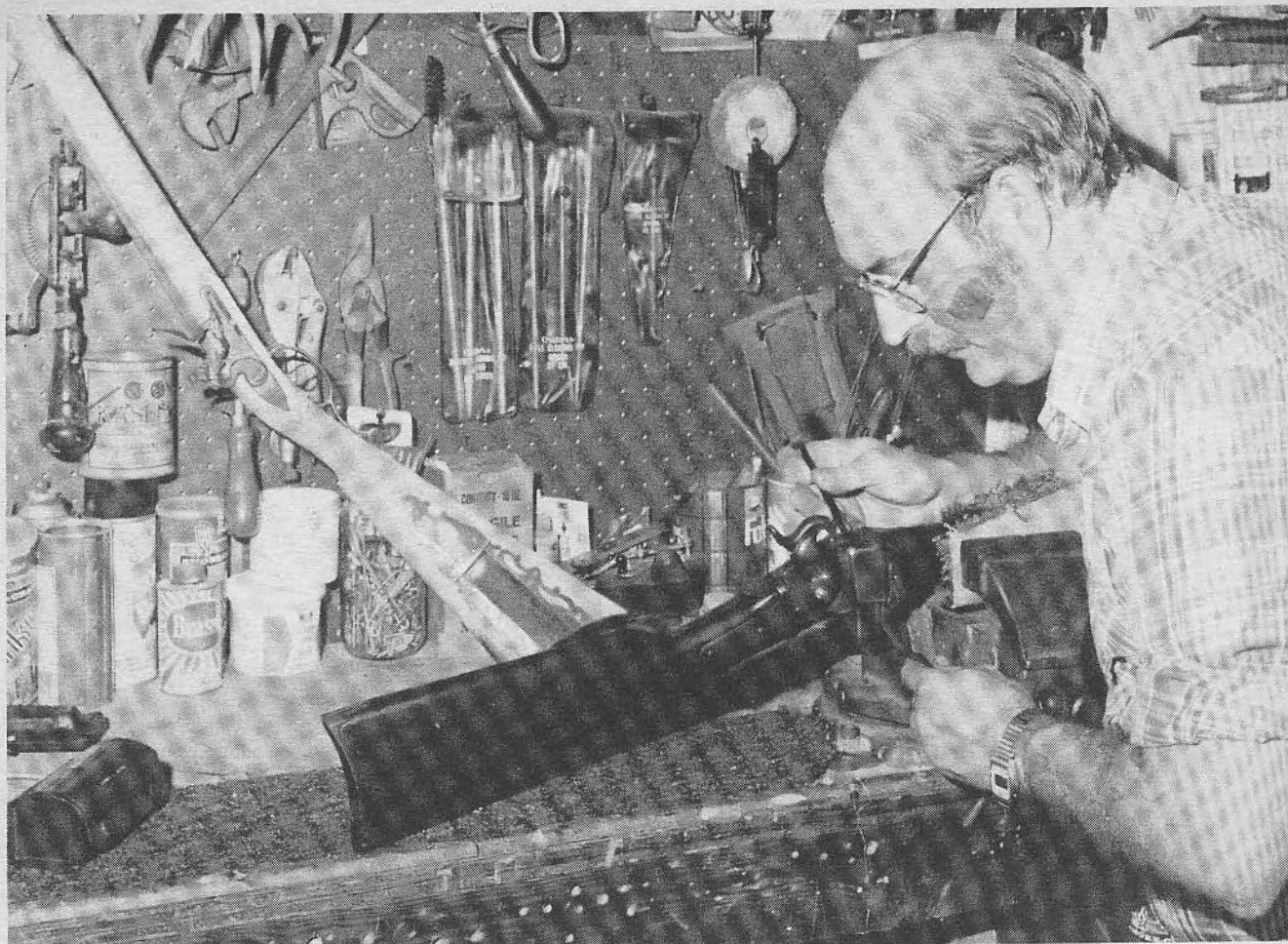


The folding pocketknife and patch-cutting knife both were made by Dennis Emmanuel to accompany his flintlock rifle.

AT ONE TIME or another, all professional gun craftsmen were amateurs. In the beginning, they probably worked on firearms almost solely for the enjoyment of it. Later, as they became more proficient, their skills increasing, they might have undergone an apprenticeship in an established gun shop or factory to further increase their knowledge of what makes firearms tick. Or they may have enrolled in one of the trade schools where gunsmithing was taught. At any length, the desire had to be there to make gun work a life profession.

Most of the professionals I know today work on and

repair firearms as a hobby as well as a daily chore to put meat and potatoes on the table for themselves and their families. Gun work is a real challenge. No two jobs are exactly alike, and when one considers that there are a jillion different types of rifles, shotguns and pistols — to say nothing of ancient weapons such as the snaphaunce, flintlock, percussion and a myriad of early, obsolete cartridge models — it becomes clear that any person who desires to become a gun craftsman must have a highly developed sense of curiosity. No one knows all there is to know about any single subject, but the gunsmith must have a working knowledge of what makes most guns function



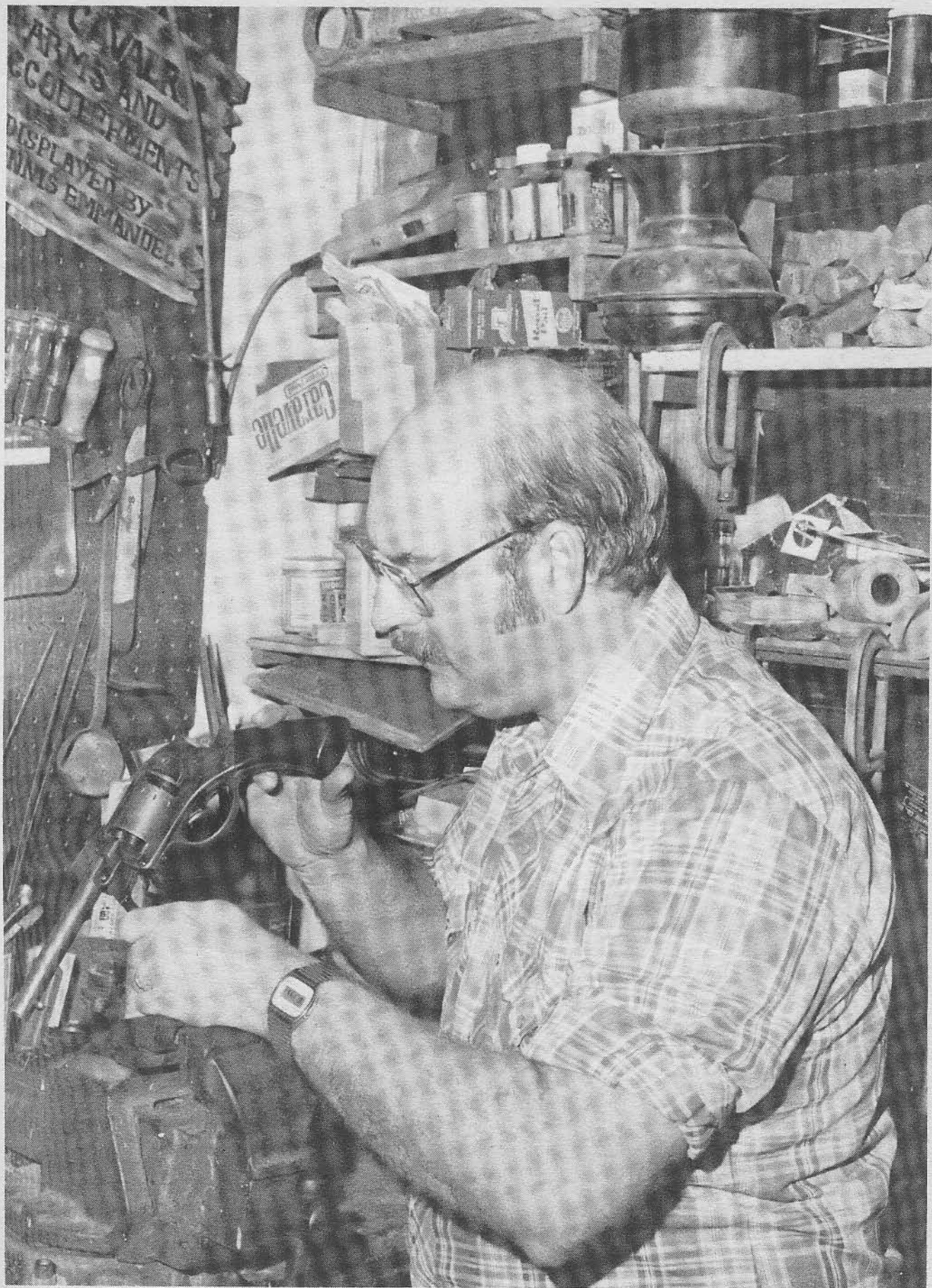
Above: Emmanuel puts the finishing touches on an old Sharps carbine he has repaired for his collection of weapons from the Indian Wars of the last century. (Right) Repair of a Star double-action revolver of the Civil War era is not a chore for the beginning gun hobbyist to undertake. The mechanism requires a good deal of gunsmithing know-how.

and the ability to determine the cause of malfunctions. He must be able to correct those malfunctions, returning the firearm to safe and operable condition.

During some four decades or more in the field, I have seen some pretty sad examples who passed themselves off as professional gunsmiths. I have cringed many times as I watched them perform acts of mayhem on otherwise fine firearms. I have seen unnecessary holes drilled into receivers, parts that were foreign to the gun's mechanism installed, stocks butchered beyond repair and a thousand other atrocities performed on innocent armament. This type of gun hack has never learned to say, "Sorry, but I am not equipped to do this type of work" or "I don't understand this type of action, so am not qualified to work on it." The customer would surely appreciate such honesty. To

proceed on a job with absolutely no knowledge of that particular gun verges on a criminal act. There ought to be a law.

At the other extreme, in every town and hamlet throughout this country countless craftsmen are working in garages, attics and basements to turn out what qualifies as fine work on a hobby basis. In many cases, these individuals will be the professional guncraftsmen of tomorrow. I know several of these craftsmen personally. I have examined many of their finished projects and consider the workmanship to be superlative. Multiply these several craftsmen by thousands just like them located across the entire country, and one begins to have some understanding of the appeal of gun work.





Frank Rosselot's backyard shop is a treasure of modern, obsolete and antique rifles, shotguns, handguns. While gun parts appear to lie about in confusion, the craftsman knows where everything is that he requires.



Rosselot looks over two of his new acquisitions. On left is a Marlin rifle with special order .40-65 cal. barrel. On right is 1886 Winchester in .45-70 he built from spare parts, collecting them over a long period.



Rosselot's latest creation is a sporting rifle that uses a .460 Weatherby case necked up to accept a .50 bullet. He calls this gun his Ideal Dinosaur Plinker.



The huge .50 caliber bore of his sporting rifle is held next to that of a 7mm magnum (right) for the sake of comparison. Rosselot is a firm believer in a big bore.

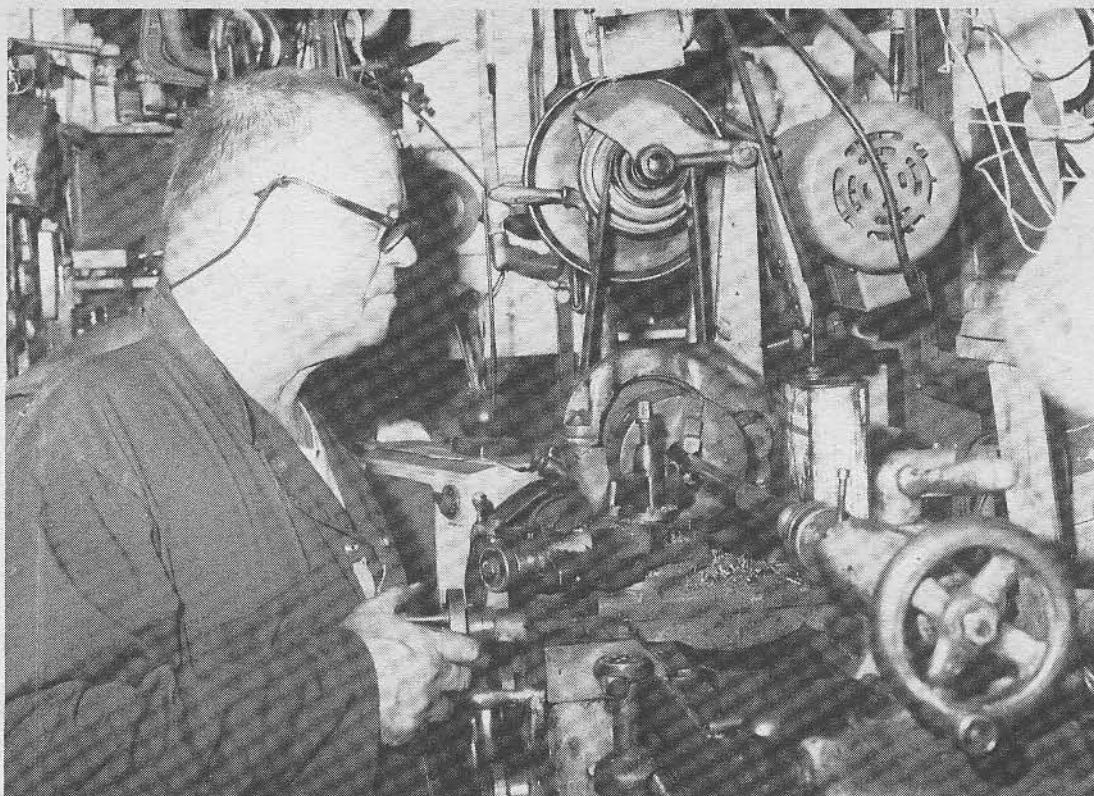
The hobby craftsman's efforts are not limited solely to working on modern firearms. Many turn their talents to making, entirely by hand, operating miniatures of ancient firearms and other battle weapons. These miniatures, precisely made, can easily be sold to interested collectors for substantial amounts of coin of the realm.

One such craftsman, Californian Dennis Emmanuel, has been a gun hobbyist for several years. His shop is quite modest and occupies a corner in his garage. His workbench is also quite small and his tools limited to the bare necessities. There are no handsome lathes, expensive milling machines or even a drill press, yet he is able to turn out some of the nicest work one will ever see. All of his work is accomplished with handtools.

Dennis Emmanuel's hobby of guncrafting began some

years ago when he decided to begin collecting weapons and related items of the U.S. Cavalry from 1860 through 1918. He soon came to realize that for the repair and restoration of certain aged weapons in his collection, he would have to do it himself. Let's face it, how many gunsmiths today know and understand the mechanisms of such rifles and carbines as the Maynard, Spencer, Sharps or pistols such as the Star, percussion Colts and Remingtons. There were Cavalry sabers of the American Indian Wars that needed refurbishing and leather goods galore that needed treating with preservatives after being mended and repaired.

Emmanuel taught himself to do all these things and do them well. Arms and equipment of the era of the American Indian Wars are quite rare, so when a person expends considerable cash in acquiring a sizable array of these rarities,



Frank Rosselot turns a rifle barrel on his somewhat aged lathe in his backyard gunshop. The barrel is to be used on one of the big-bore rifles which he builds for his own use and for other big gun fanciers.

Rosselot built this fine Mauser sporter in .25/06 for a friend over a period of several months. This craftsman expresses a preference for restoring older rifles and carbines such as Marlin, Winchester.



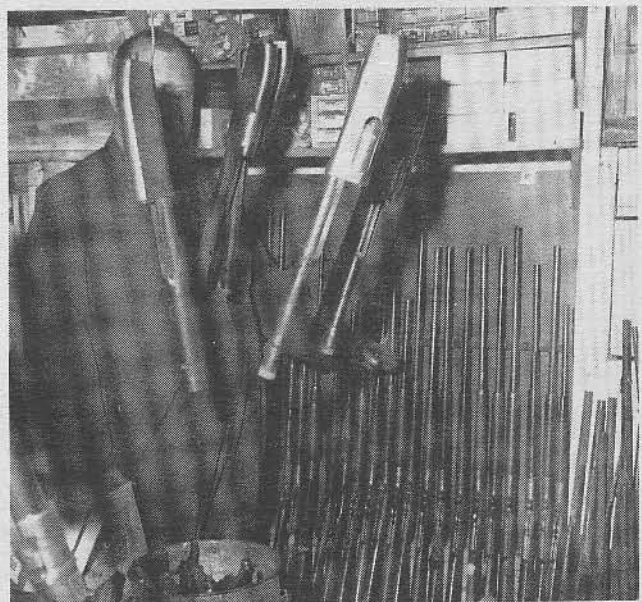


Recently restored by Rosselot, this Marlin rifle in .40-65 caliber is quite rare in that it is equipped with an extra-long special-order barrel from the Marlin factory. Work on such collector items requires a special understanding.

then he wants any needed repairs done in such a way that the work is undetectable.

Aside from working on his outstanding Cavalry collection, Emmanuel also does work for other collectors. The money he earns from his sideline he invests in needed tools and equipment for his shop. In his spare time, he hand manufactures fine miniatures such as percussion gun locks, single-shot pistols and knives. The majority of these mini pieces have been snapped up by advanced collectors. He currently is working on a miniature Hawken Plains rifle and, from what I saw of the parts in the process, it will be a real beauty. Several advanced collectors already are bidding on the rifle.

Rosselot also works on a variety of shotguns, many with collector value, collecting parts to make them operable. At his right are forty-odd aged Marlin's he has reclaimed.



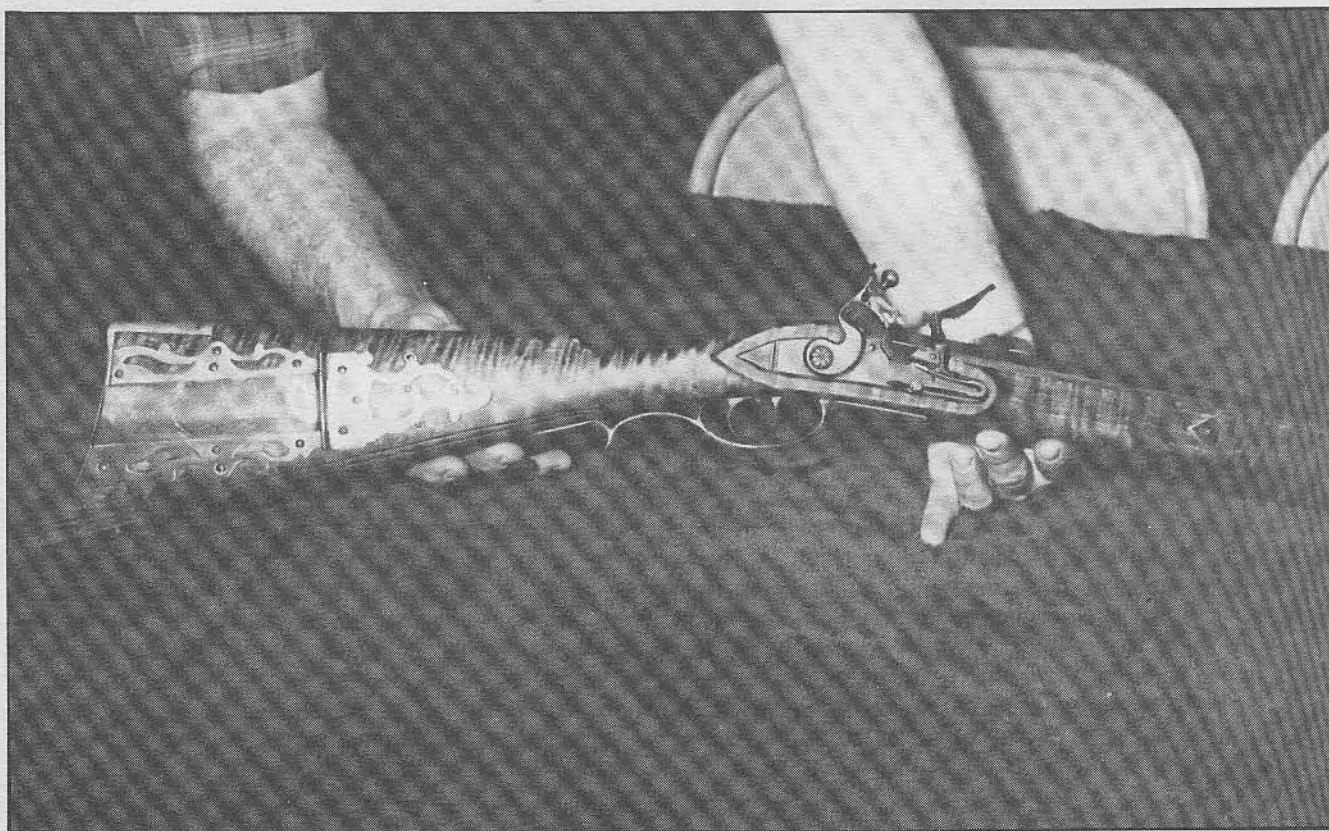
The California craftsman displays pronghorn antelope horns and rack from a deer which he took last year on a Wyoming hunt, using a rifle of his own concoction.

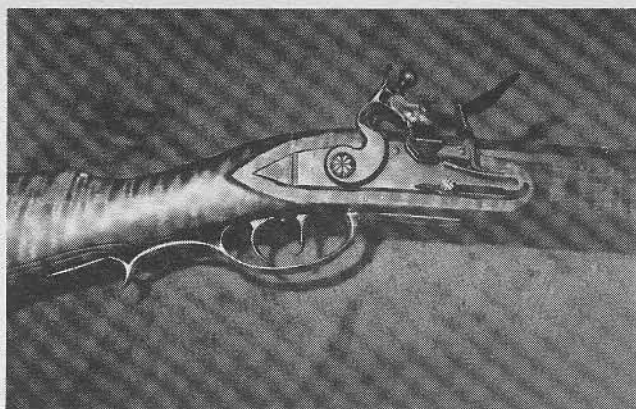




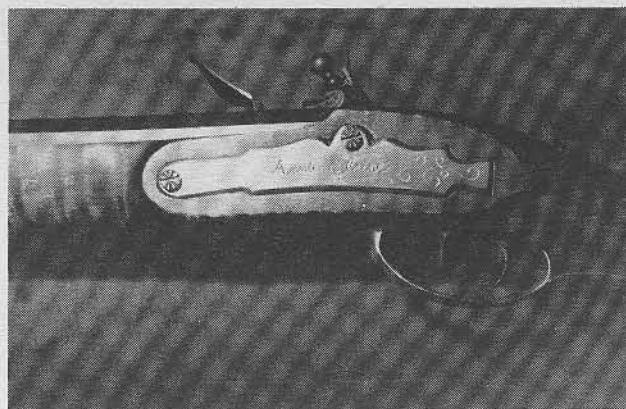
Dennis Emmanuel is justly proud of his completed rifle in Pennsylvania-type configuration after weeks of hard labor.

The lock and stock section of this graceful black powder rifle show the care and craftsmanship exercised in its construction. Note the rifle's extra-fancy patchbox, which features a lid that is activated by a push button.

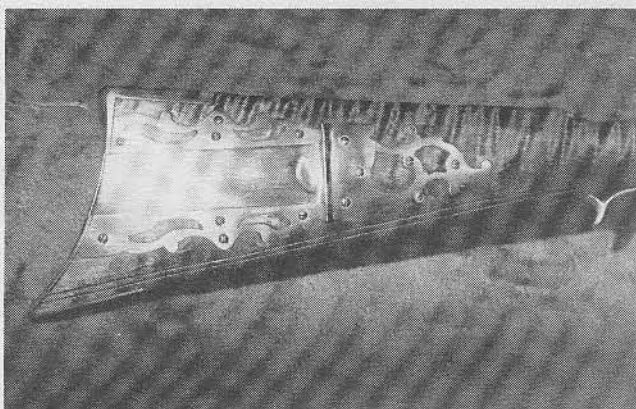




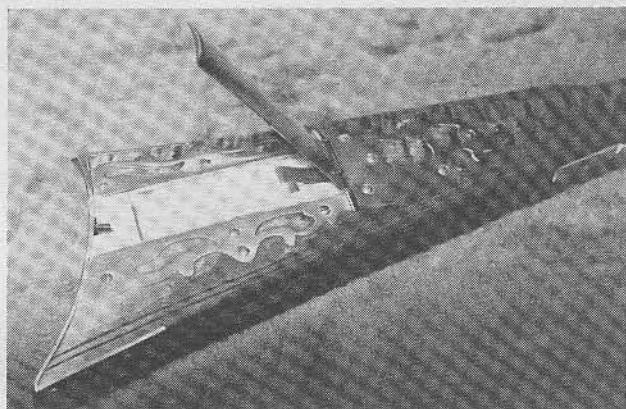
Equipped with a set trigger, the flintlock received added honing and smoothing. Note tiger-stripes on maple stock.



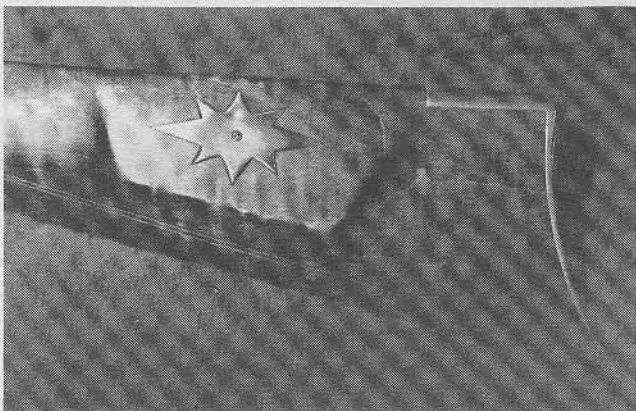
A common practice in Colonial days, Emmanuel named Pennsylvania-type flintlock after his wife and daughter.



Brass patchbox required many hours of careful work to inlay. Iron screws retain it in stock as in originals.



Patchbox lid is opened by pressing a button at the toe of the stock. Recess is for extra flints, greased patches.



Historically typical squared-off cheekpiece has hex star inlaid in its surface. Brass butt plate is circa 1795.

At the time of this writing, Emmanuel was in the process of building a flintlock rifle based on the design of the type produced in York County, Pennsylvania. This rifle sports a Douglass XX grade barrel forty-two inches in length, is

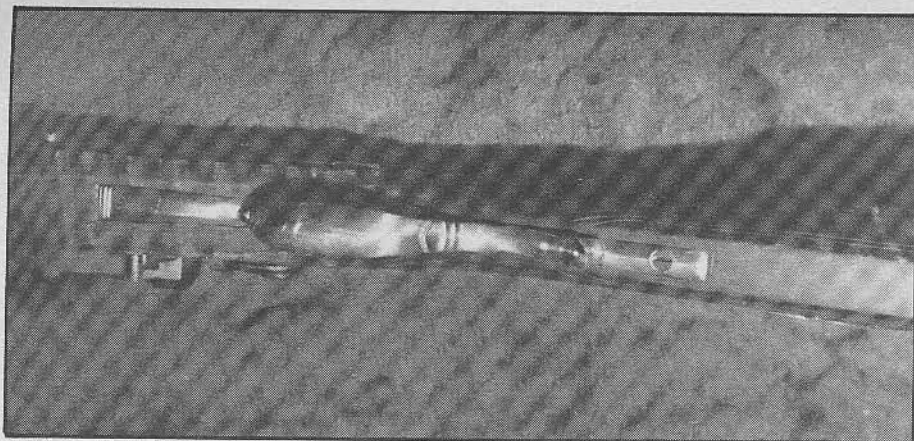
.50 caliber and has an eight-groove barrel. The stock is of premium grade curly maple and the patch box is in the styling of George Eister of York County, circa 1795.

When the rifle was finished, the barrel was inscribed with Emmanuel's name — his first attempt at engraving — and the lock retaining plate bears the name *Annie Elaine*. The Annie refers to his young daughter, while Elaine is his wife. Hence, the name of this graceful flintlock rifle is Annie Elaine.

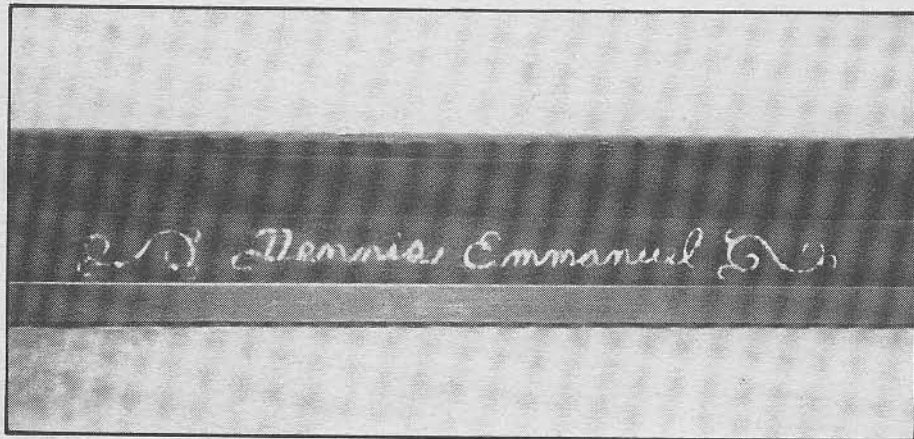
Emmanuel made the front sight from solid silver and hand-cut all inlays. The finished rifle is a piece anyone would be proud to own.

The predictions are that Dennis Emmanuel soon will become well known and in considerable demand by those wanting antique arms restored. Such restoring measures comprise a highly technical phase of gunsmithing, thus there is great demand for craftsmen skilled in this art. Consequently, the pay for a highly skilled craftsman in this field is considerably higher than is the going rate for conventional gunsmithing.

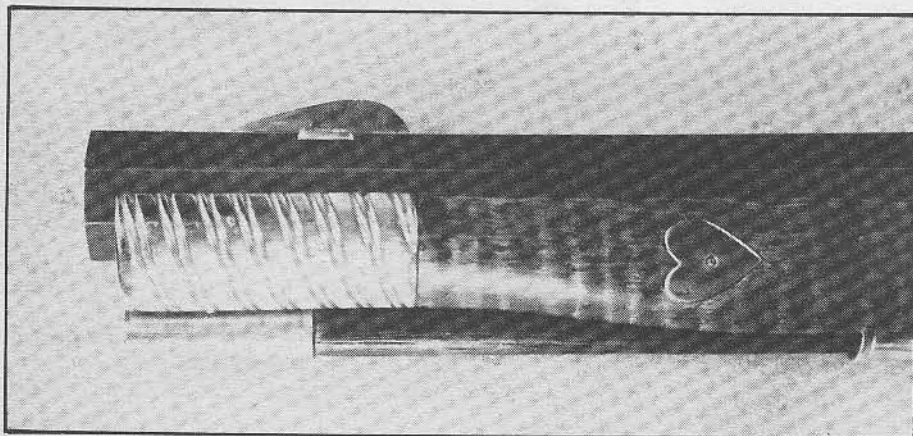
Another craftsman I have known for some years is Frank Rosselot, also of California. His shop is located in a modest building located to the rear of his garage and, when



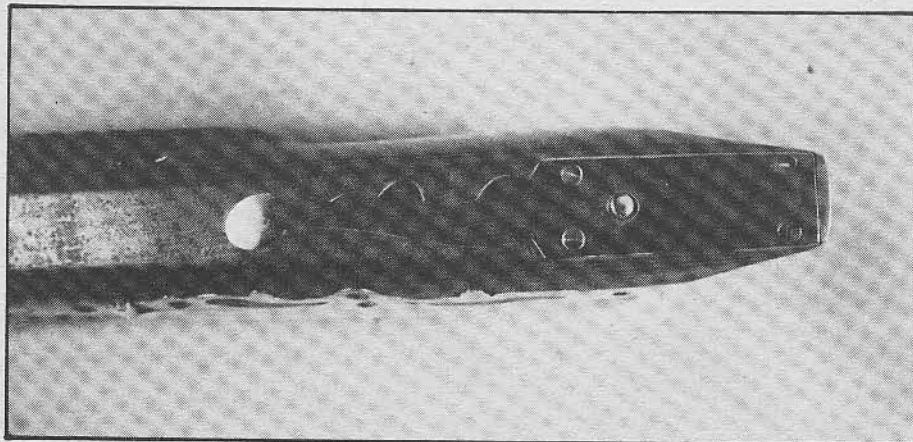
Precisely inlaid trigger guard is of brass, gracefully contoured to the trigger bow and finials.



In his first attempt to engrave barrel, Dennis Emmanuel emulated the style of the late 1700s and inlaid cut with 10-karat gold.



Graceful, unique configuration of this forend cap was Emmanuel's own idea. It required careful file work. Front sight is of silver, while the inlays are of brass.



Toe plate in the stock contains the push button that actuates the lid of the patchbox. Both lid and button are spring-loaded.

Frank Rosselot has tons of older gun parts that he uses in restoration work. He inspects one of his old barrels with an eye to future use.



one enters the shop, the first impression is: "Gosh! Look at all the gun parts!"

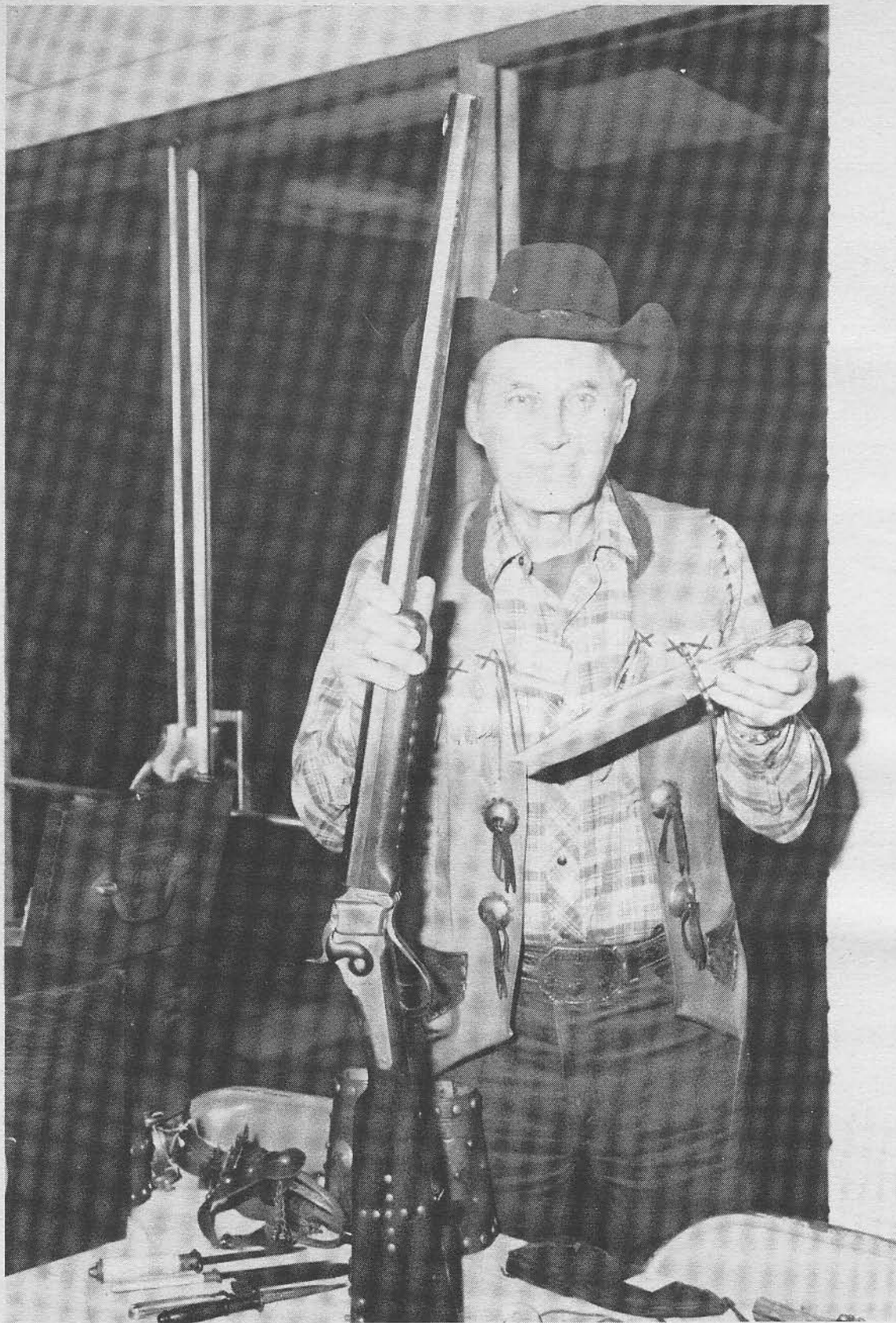
Frank Rosselot more or less specializes in refurbishing older Marlin's, Winchesters, Sharps and any other rifle to which he might take a fancy. He has been a serious hobbyist for many years, as the literally tons of gun parts in his shop will attest. He has a love for big-bore rifles.

Rosselot's equipment includes a somewhat aged lathe, drill press and other machine tools, but he still does most of his work by hand. I have examined several rifles he had rebuilt recently and they were pure jewels. One was a rare 1886 Winchester saddle ring carbine which demands a fat price on the collector market. Another rifle was an old lever-action Marlin Model 1895 in .40-65 caliber. The 1886 Winchester carbine was a special project in that he

always had wanted such a carbine in .45-70 caliber for his own use. The rarity of this model prompted Rosselot to build his own from old parts laying around his shop.

Frank Rosselot insists that most used tools are his assortment of what he refers to as his Mexican milling machines: hand files. His trusty old lathe still is capable of precision work in spite of its stature as a collector item in its own right.

He has traveled to Wyoming each season to bag deer and pronghorn antelope. When the serious hunting is over, Frank Rosselot then goes to a secret spot in the Wyoming hinterlands and snipes ground squirrels by the hundreds. Each rifle he uses is of his own concoction. He has rebuilt, restored, rebarreled and refurbished every rifle he uses on his hunts. Surprisingly, he favors the older lever-action



Harold Ball, an astute gun hobbier, rebuilt, restored this old Sharps buffalo rifle he found in a chicken coop. He made the Bowie as well. Renowned in ranks of collectors, he appreciates need of restoration.

Marlins or Winchesters for these jaunts, all in hefty calibers ranging from .45-70 to .50 caliber. On occasion, he will use a bolt-action.

Frank Rosselot does do some work for friends but basically he considers himself a hobbyist. When a good gun show is in progress anywhere in his area, he will be there, looking for old parts for his beloved, aged Marlins and Winchesters.

Yet another hobby-oriented craftsman I have known for many years is Harold Ball, a Californian like the others. His love is repairing, restoring and refurbishing any item, be it an old Bowie knife, a pair of cowboy spurs or rifles and pistols, related to the winning of the American West.

The latest of his restorations is an old Sharps buffalo

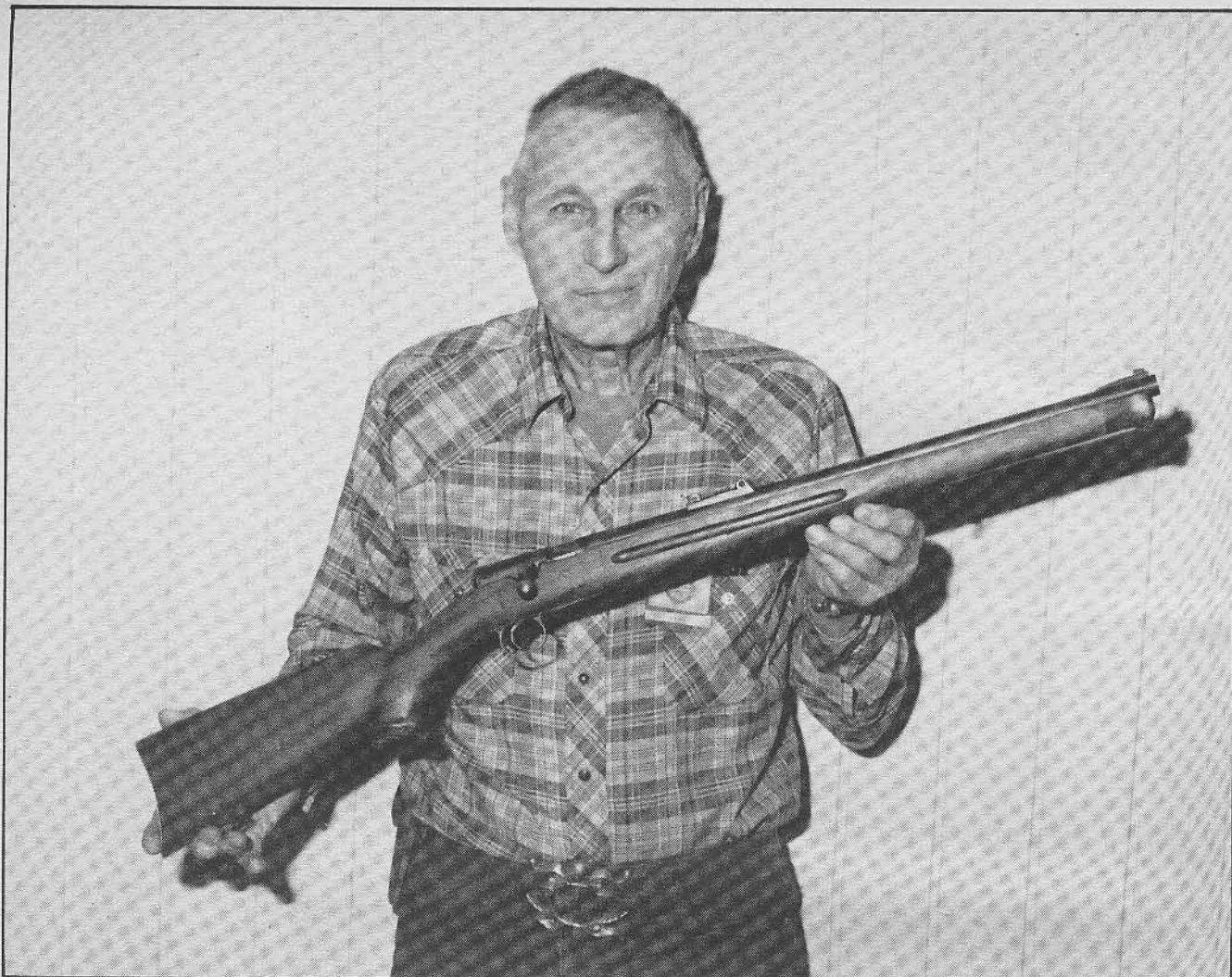
rifle which he terms his "chicken coop" Sharps. Ball found the stock and action of this rifle in the rafters of a farmer's chicken coop. What was left of this old rifle was in need of a barrel, a forearm, sights and other internal parts.

After scrounging for months, Ball was able to locate all the parts needed to put this historic old rifle into operating condition. Ball's purpose in restoring this Sharps was to turn it into a presentable wall decorator. Since it was still in relatively poor shape, even after restoration, he decorated it with Indian-type brass tacks. The majority of firearms used by American Indians are in sad shape when found today, hence the application of the brass tacks added greatly to the eye appeal of this crusty old rifle.

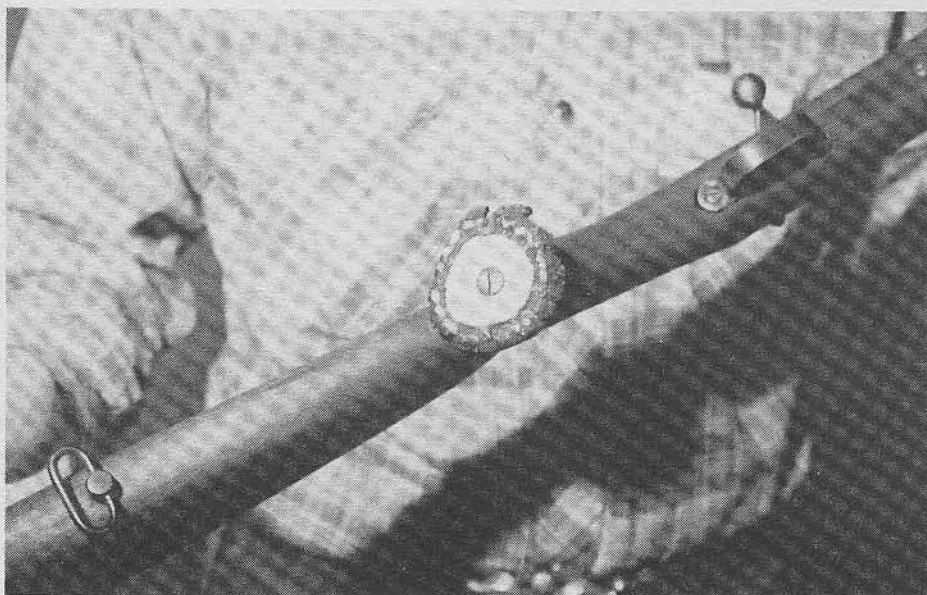
Had it not been for Harold Ball literally saving this fine old rifle even for a decorator, it would have ended up in the

Michaels of Oregon produces an excellent line of rods to clean and load cartridge and muzzleloading rifles and pistols. This rifle rod is completed with a muzzle protector and the essentials required for cleaning bore properly.

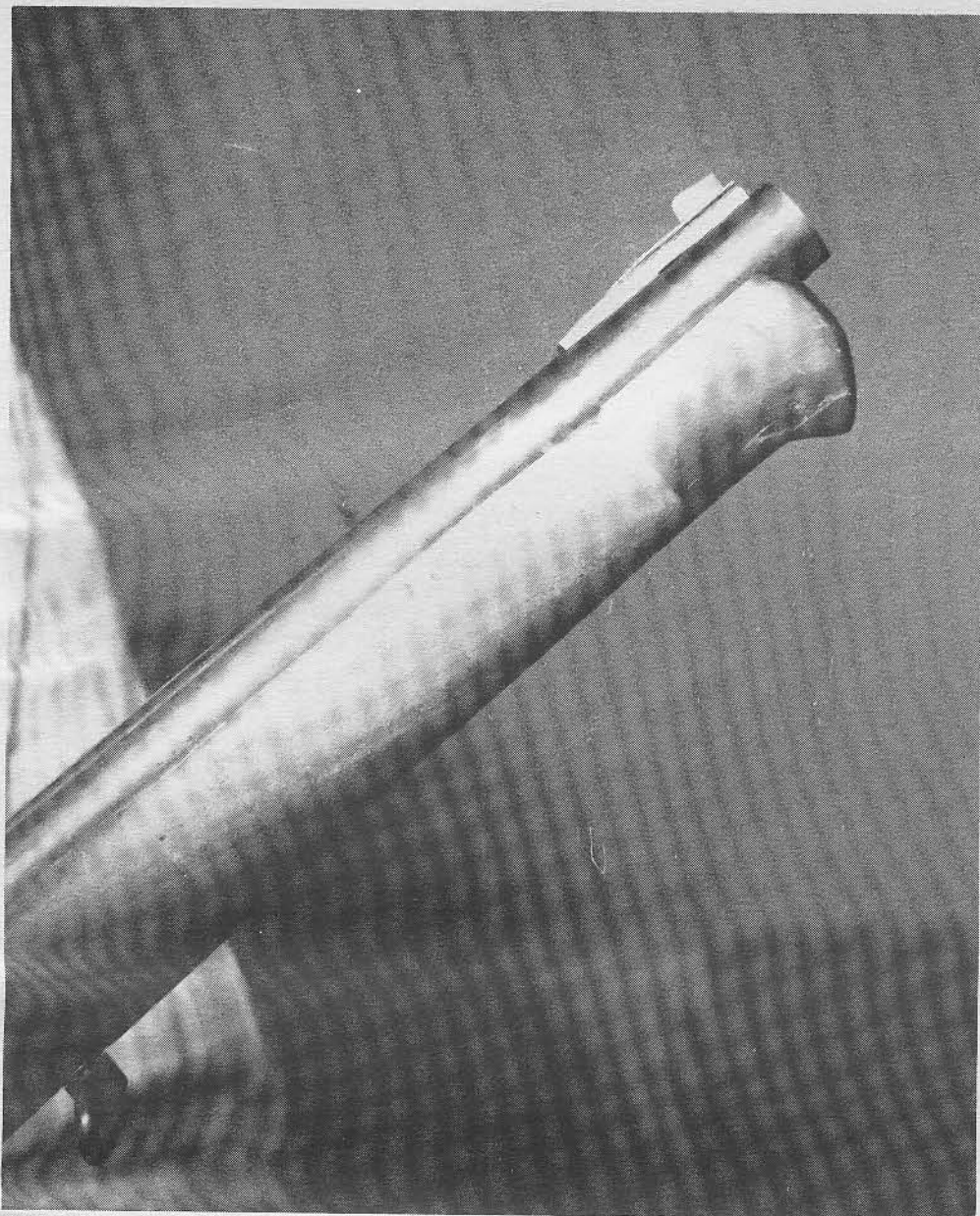




Harold Ball displays the .22 Mannlicher-style Mauser rifle, which he rescued from a trash heap. Starting with nothing but the barreled action, he was able to restore it to fully operational condition, now shoots with it.



Ball capped the pistol grip of the reclaimed Mauser with stag horn to give it a custom look.



Ball added ramp to the cropped barrel plus a buffalo horn schnabel to give the .22 Mauser Oberndorf a custom look.

junk heap, lost forever to collectors of the future. Today this rifle hangs over the fireplace in Ball's den, a rugged and showy decorator item.

Another desirable arm salvaged recently by Ball is an Oberndorf Mauser .22 single-shot rifle which he rescued from a neighbor's trash bin. The barrel had been cut to nineteen inches, it had no stock or trigger guard, but the action and barrel were in better than average condition.

Bell proceeded to restock it in the Mannlicher style, capping the pistol grip with the butt of a stag horn and forming the Schnabel from buffalo horn. Now in typical European styling, this rifle once again is in serviceable condition.

The new gun hobbyist should begin with the most simple projects, then as his knowledge progresses, proceed to the more technical facets of gun work. Perhaps the best approach for the beginner would be to limit his work to nothing but cleaning firearms. It is surprising how much gun savvy can be attained by partially dismantling a firearm and giving it a thorough cleaning. It lets one know quickly just how intricate are the mechanisms of some guns. On more occasions than I will admit, I have had amateurs come to me with guns they had managed to dismantle but couldn't get back together. This is an excellent way for one to learn his own limitations, while gaining knowledge.

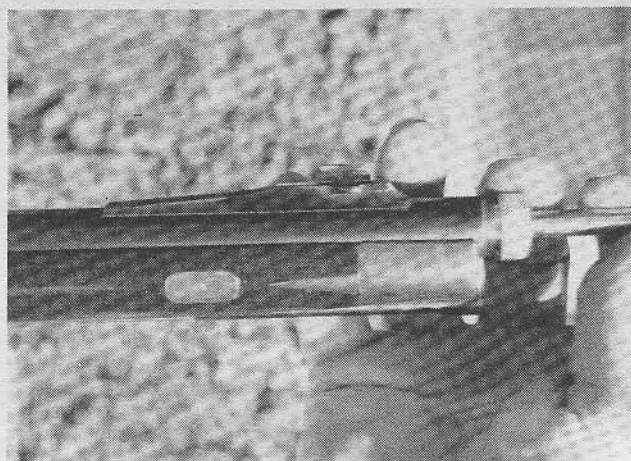
The tools and equipment needed for thorough cleaning

of rifles, pistols and shotguns are minimal and consist of nothing more than a good set of cleaning rods, patches, brushes, solvents, oils and perhaps a paint brush for washing major components in solvent. However, one must use common sense in his cleaning methods. Don't attempt to clean a .30 caliber rifle bore with a .22 rod, or a shotgun with a rifle rod.

Michaels of Oregon produces a complete line of cleaning rods designed specifically for muzzleloading rifles, pistols and shotguns. In addition to the cleaning rods, Michaels has thoughtfully considered the possible wear on the muzzle end of the gun's bore and has introduced a self-centering muzzle guard. This solid brass guard centers the loading or cleaning rods in the bore. It eliminates friction from these rods at the end of the bore that could lead to a malformed muzzle. These muzzle guards will fit any bore size from .36 to .62 caliber.

Another way for the amateur to further his knowledge would be to refinish a gunstock or two. The complete procedure for this operation may be found elsewhere in this book.

Far too many people want to start at the top in any trade, but where firearms are concerned, the basics must be learned first, otherwise one could be in for a lot of headaches from possible clients or disgruntled friends.



Invaluable for protection against undue wear at muzzle is the bore/muzzle protector from Michaels of Oregon. It works equally well with either cartridge or muzzleloaded guns. (Below) Like other gunsmiths, Bish is a believer in hoarding old gun parts for use in his future projects.





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