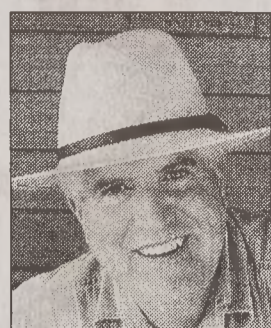


SPORTS

The tackle box gun that can teach you how to shoot

OFF THE PORCH



DICK JONES
Outdoor Columnist

I like black snakes. Oh sure, I get a little upset with them when they invade the bluebird house in the front yard, but overall, I'd say a black snake is beneficial to have around.

Copperheads are another matter; I kill copperheads on sight. I don't know if this applies to copperheads, but in some places, it's illegal to kill a rattle snake. If I lived there, I would be guilty of that law from time to time and I'd have to rely on luck and keeping my mouth shut to stay out of trouble.

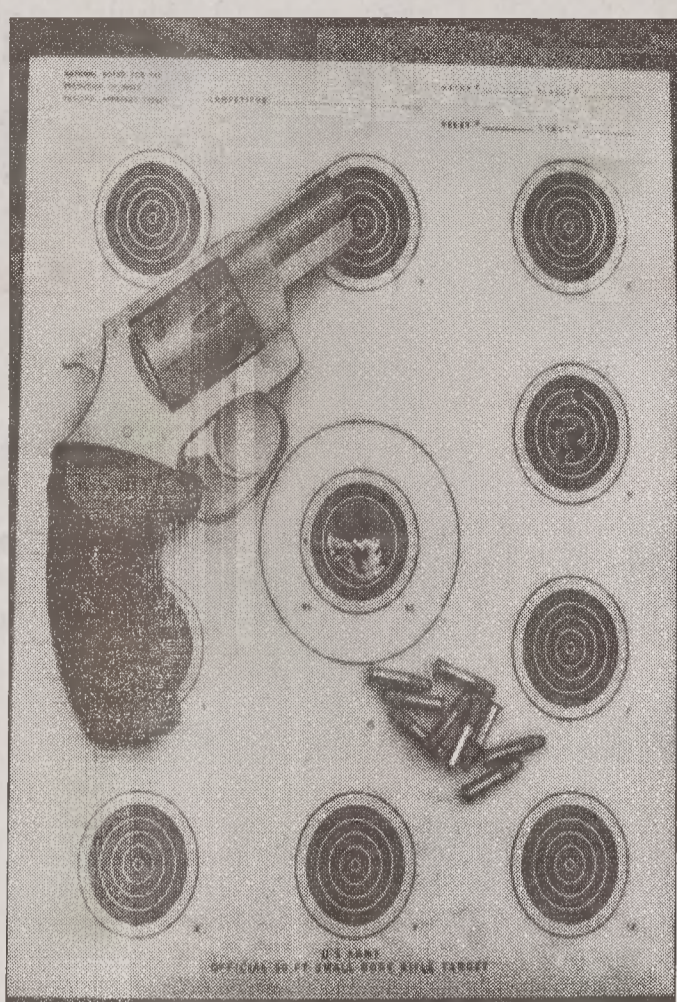
In the 1960s, I had a small Smith and Wesson 2" Kit Gun. The Kit Gun was touted to be the perfect tackle box gun for shooting snakes while fishing. While I liked the adjustable sights, I wondered at the time why S&W didn't make it identical to their incredibly popular Chief's Special. I valued my little Kit Gun too much to put it in my tackle box but I really enjoyed that gun.

I was thinking about killing snakes this week

when I tested the Charter Arms Pathfinder because this gun is perfect for the job. It's also perfect for the person who has a small frame revolver for a home or self defense gun and wants to learn how to shoot it. As a North Carolina Concealed Carry Instructor, I'm often asked which gun is best for personal defense. There are so many different ways people use personal defense guns there's no way to answer that question. I just tell them what I would carry. My favorite personal defense guns is a 2" barreled Charter Arms .38 Undercover. I've had it for over 25 years and it's never missed a beat. I honestly believe you could carry one of these for 100 years and, provided you took reasonable care, it would work as well in 2110 as it did in 2010.

The reason for this reliability is simplicity. There's very little to go wrong because the gun is a simple proven design. The reason I prefer it over many other simple guns is that it's small and light. My Undercover weighs 16 ounces. My wife, Cherie, has an aluminum framed Pink Lady version of the same gun and it weighs 12 ounces; the same as a regular bottle of water.

The stainless steel Pathfinder I tested this week is identical dimensionally to the .38s, but slightly heavier due to the smaller bore. What really makes this



little .22 practical is how much money it can save the owner. No matter which gun a person chooses as a personal defense gun, they must use the gun enough to have a reasonable level of comfort and confidence. Shooting a .38 enough to get that level of proficiency is an expensive proposition at \$25 for 50 cartridges. At \$3 for 50 cartridges, the Pathfinder is a training tool that is operationally identical to the more powerful .38. Realistically, you'll save enough money on ammunition in learning to shoot to pay for the gun.

The 2" Pathfinder weighs in at 19 ounces,

within an ounce of my steel framed .38 with rounds in the cylinder. It has the same fixed sights, the same grip, the same trigger pull, and fits the same holster. The Pathfinder runs about \$375 at most retail outlets. If you desire a more accurate, versatile gun, the 4" Pathfinder is just one ounce heavier and has adjustable sights for just a few dollars more. Both guns also come in .22 long rifle and .22 magnum and there's a combo gun with two cylinders.

I've been told two inch barreled guns don't provide the accuracy one needs in a personal defense situation.

That brings us back to another snake story. About 20 years ago, I noticed a thicket was developing in the woods next to my house. Being too lazy to resolve the problem the way most citizens would, I fenced the little section of woods in with electric fence wire and turned my seven cows into the area. It's amazing how cows love honeysuckle and they were making short work of cleaning out the thicket. As I sat on the porch admiring my work and savoring a Coke, my dog, George, went berserk barking at something. I got up and discovered a largish copperhead coiled up and giving George the stink-eye. The cows had run him out of his lair and he wasn't happy about it. At about ten feet, one shot from the Charter removed the snakes head.

I remembered that little exercise when I was shooting the Pathfinder. When I first got the gun, I shot it a few times and noticed it shot a little low. I mentioned this to one of the engineers when I was in the Charter Arms booth at Shot Show and he told me they knew the guns had the tendency to shoot low and to file the front sight down if I wanted. This week, I took the gun to the shop and took about .054 off the front sight. I cut a few thousandths off and shot the gun until it put the bullets right where I was looking.

There would be no effort at all in taking a snakes head off with this one. Once I got the front sight where I wanted it, I finished up with two offhand six shot groups at seven yards that measured under one inch. That's good accuracy for any defense gun. In fact, it's good accuracy for any gun.

OK, the gun will pay for itself in making you a better shooter, it will outlast you and has a lifetime warranty, and it will take the head off a copperhead giving you the stink-eye at seven yards with the first shot after you've spent your time learning to shoot it well. What's not to like?

Stainless steel, accurate, cheap, lifetime warranty, the Pathfinder is a great training tool.

Dick Jones is a freelance writer living in High Point. He is a retired competitive shooter, and NRA Certified Instructor. He captained numerous National Championship Teams. He is a Distinguished Rifleman and an NRA Certified Rifle, Shotgun, and Pistol Instructor. He teaches N.C. Concealed Carry Classes and does public speaking for clubs and organizations, hosts outdoor events, and helps church and youth groups raise money with outdoor events. You can visit his website at offtheporchmedia.com and contact him at offtheporch52@yahoo.com.

EAST

From page B1

backed up with games due to rain or come tournament time where you play consecutive nights."

East has struggled a bit at the plate, but may have turned the corner in its latest game against Southwest Guilford. The Golden Eagles lost 12-6, but out-hit the Cowboys with many of them going for extra bases.

Weevil gets things started at the top of the lineup with Hawks, Lequire, Justin Hulin and many others capable of driving in a plethora of runs this year.

"I think we are coming around," said Tricarico. "We have some individuals that just need more time in the cage, but overall we are headed in the right direction."

Defensively, East is looking to improve on its performance to this point of the season. The Eagles are not terrible on defense, but have a knack of booting the ball or throwing it away at the worst time.

"Defense has been our Achilles-heel so far," Tricarico said. "It is not so much that we have made a bunch of errors, but that they have been untimely."

Tricarico expects Central Davidson to be the team to beat this year in league play.

Rounding out the East squad is David Lawson, Will Luther, Scott Walker, Luis Tejada, Christian Key, Phillip Coggins and Tyler Pedley.

East begins conference play March 26 at Lexington.

kepley@vtlvetimes.com.

'I think we have more depth in our pitching than we have had in the past.'

— Dan Tricarico
East Davidson Baseball Coach

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The map sold extremely well - until it was lost several years later. Incredibly, the printer entrusted with the original drawing and printing plates declared bankruptcy, then carelessly hauled Higbee's 30 years of work to the landfill.

The few remaining dog-eared copies became a prized fisherman's possession. Professor Higbee was offered \$400 for one of his last maps.

And state agencies were forced to keep their copies under lock and key.

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—Slaton White
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