

Lightweight Ranch Sixguns

By Fermin C. "2 dogs" Garza

As a boy, I was more than willing to work all day long at the ranch for the opportunity at the end of the work day to shoot some 22's. Of an evening, we often hunted cottontails. I watched my Dad and big brother have many a duel taking turns with their 22's. My Dad had his treasured Colt Woodsman. My big brother had a drift rear Ruger Old Model 22. Only head shots counted. A hit anywhere else on the little bunnies would earn you some harsh words. Rattlesnakes were often encountered at much too close range. More than once my blood ran cold until said Rattler was dispatched.

I still head out to the S. Texas brush country every chance I get. While I have come to prefer the longer barreled sixguns for actual hunting, the shorter lighter guns in my band of sixguns get the call when chores are on the list. Fixing fence, filling feeders, and even open and closing gates all come with various hazards and one has to watch where he plants his boots.

The recent explosion in Texas of the hog population is astounding. Shooting them on sight, trapping, and other means of extermination don't seem to be making a dent in my area. Worse, I have been told by many Ranchers that Rattlesnakes no longer rattle. The theory is this behavior evolved as a means of self defense against being eaten by hogs! I have not experienced that scenario but can tell you that the last Rattler I encountered was a really big one. He ran from me for about 3 feet before he adopted his "S" posture and made clear he was the apex predator and would be happy to hammer me. As always, I had a "Ranch Gun" with me, in this case a pre lock Smith 317 .22 LR and when negotiations broke down I settled his hash for good. For the 317 Smith, I chose a Barranti Leather Northwest Mountain Companion. I specified a hammer thong for retention.

I have a custom .32 H&R magnum by Harton that I call "Le Coup de Grace" for all the trapped hogs it I have killed with it. Easily to carry in Barranti's classic Hank Sloan holster. No disrespect to the fans of the .22 LR, my 32's have replaced all my 22's for "killing" service. My short barreled Single 7 .327 Federal is even better. Even on tough critters like our big corn raiding Raccoons, the .327 Federal is a sure killer.

The new Ruger LCRx .38 Special was love at first sight for me. I bought it and promptly called Mike Barranti and ordered another Northwest Mountain Companion holster. I again specified hammer thong as I want maximum security. If you got it hung up on the brush and dropped it, you might not realize you lost it as it's truly a feather weight. This one is a dandy. Light and powerful and can be loaded with CCI shotshells that begin to manage a meaningful payload. About the only problem I can see with it, is that it is actually so light, one could forget it was on their hip.

My favorite short light .357 Magnum is an older Smith and Wesson model 19 4". I pestered "Doc" Barranti until he conceded to build me a one of high ride hip holster. This is the kind of sixgun Skeeter called a favorite. Powerful and accurate and easy to carry.

My big bore choice for Ranch chores is none other than the .44 Magnum 329 4". I have to admit that shooting this one with factory level .44 Magnum ammunition is about as much fun as beating on your big toe with a ball peen hammer. I keep mine loaded with 44 special ammunition. It is considerably easy to carry all day for it's lightweight and packs plenty of power as well. It makes a handsome and deadly package in a Barranti Hank Sloan holster. I might add I ditched the Smith and Wesson factory "V" rear and glow front and had Ray replace them with a standard notch rear and custom front blade.

While I'm not as willing to do Ranch work all day just to do a bit of shooting, I can if I have to and am content in my battery of Ranch sixguns and holsters. As a matter of fact, my brother and I have to head out this afternoon to get the Tractor/brush hog ready to mow for the upcoming season. I got a choice to make.



Ruger LCRx 3" .38 Special in Barranti fishscale Northwest Mountain Companion.



The Ruger LCRx is a true featherweight at 3".



A pre lock Smith 317 .22 LR in a Barranti Northwest Mountain Companion.



Custom .32 H&R Magnum Ruger Vaquero by Harton. Leather by Barranti with 6 shot belt slide and fishscale stamped Hank Sloan holster.



A big Texas Rattler that refused to surrender!



Perched on the sill of my deer blind, the 317 Smith stands ready for Ranch Chores.



On the right is Rugers .327 Federal Magnum in a custom carved Barranti M44 holster. On the left is a Harton lightweight custom .32-20 WCF/.327 Federal Magnum in fully carved Barranti Longhorn Companion.



Always faithful, the Smith 19 4" .357 is a real powerhouse in a compact package. Barranti "one of" prototype high ride fishscale stamped shuck.



The Smith 19 really performs. 25 yard group with .357 handloads wart and all.



The Smith and Wesson 329PD is a big bore lightweight. Barranti Hank Sloan with 6 shot belt slide. A hard kicker with full loads becomes significantly more manageable with 44 special ammunition.