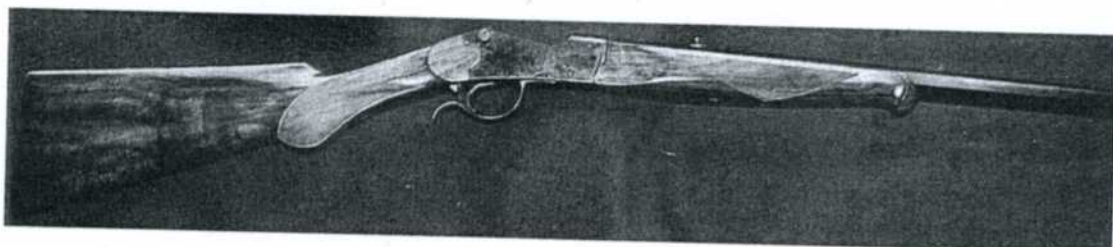


My Mystery Martini Mistake

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Dominick Pisano



From time to time, much as we dislike admitting it, we all make mistakes. This

is such a story. It bears telling because the mistakes we generally make are due to faulty decision making compounded by ignoring basic instincts, e.g., that little voice in the back of your head whispering "don't do it." Let's go back to the beginning.

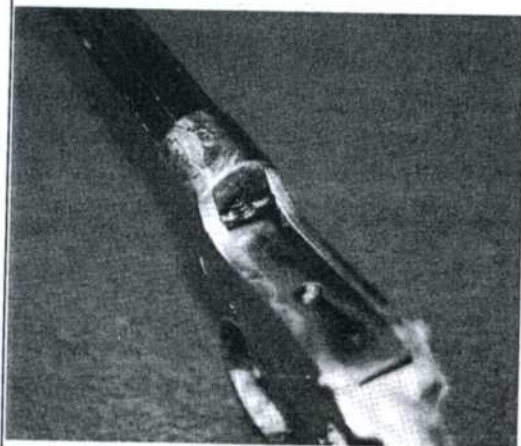
Once upon a time at a Houston Gun Collectors Show I was fortunate enough to have a table adjacent to a gentleman who had an amalgam of guns on his table. Two of them immediately caught my

eye, a Winchester M-97 shotgun and a Martini type single shot. Being the sharp trader that I am I didn't let on that I might be interested. I thought the better part of valor would be to see how the show progressed before making my move. Besides I was determined not to buy anything at this show, limiting myself to taking commissions for my custom rifle business.

On Sunday afternoon both guns were still on the table and I innocently asked if I could look at them. I liked both of them and neither were priced out of deliberation. Still, I held off, sticking to my vow not to buy. Alas, after I got home I kicked myself for missing out on the opportunity. The next week I called the gentleman in question. He told me that he sold the 97 shortly before show closing, but still had the single shot. I cursed myself for missing out on the Winchester but made arrangements to buy the single shot

which I collected later in the week.

Upon getting home I took the single shot apart for a closer examination of my prize. It was a Martini type all right but nothing that I was familiar with. It did not have the Francotte style trigger/trigger guard assembly wherein the entire unit came out of the bottom of the receiver intact with the removal of a single screw. In this case a screw at the top rear of the receiver allowed the breech block to be removed. Another screw at the bottom left of the receiver allowed the gut of the action to be removed. Other than the tipping breech block, it did not look like any Martini I had ever seen. To make matters more difficult the only markings anywhere on the rifle were the Belgian proof marks, and the number 32 on the bottom of the barrel. The extractor told me it was a rimfire. Other than that I was clueless. A search through all of my single shot books shed no light on my "mystery" Martini.



My Mystery-Martini Mistake

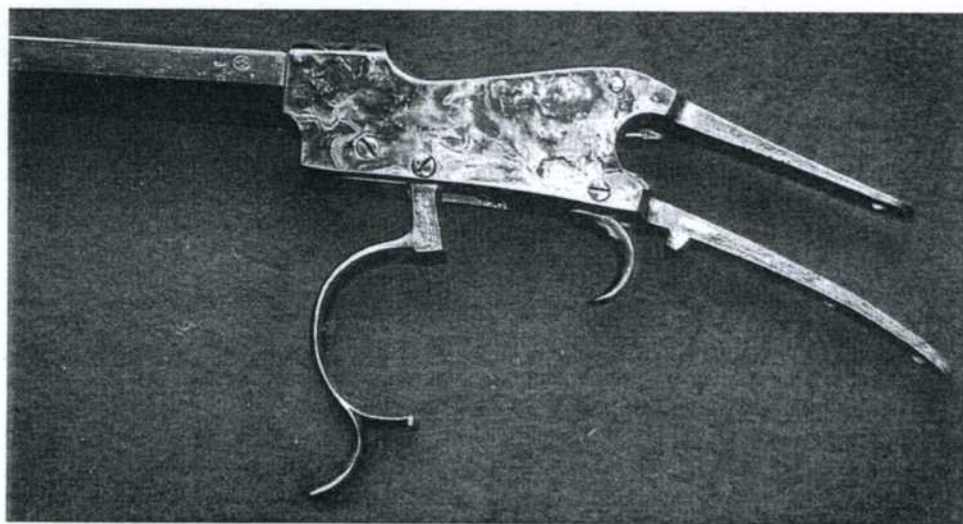
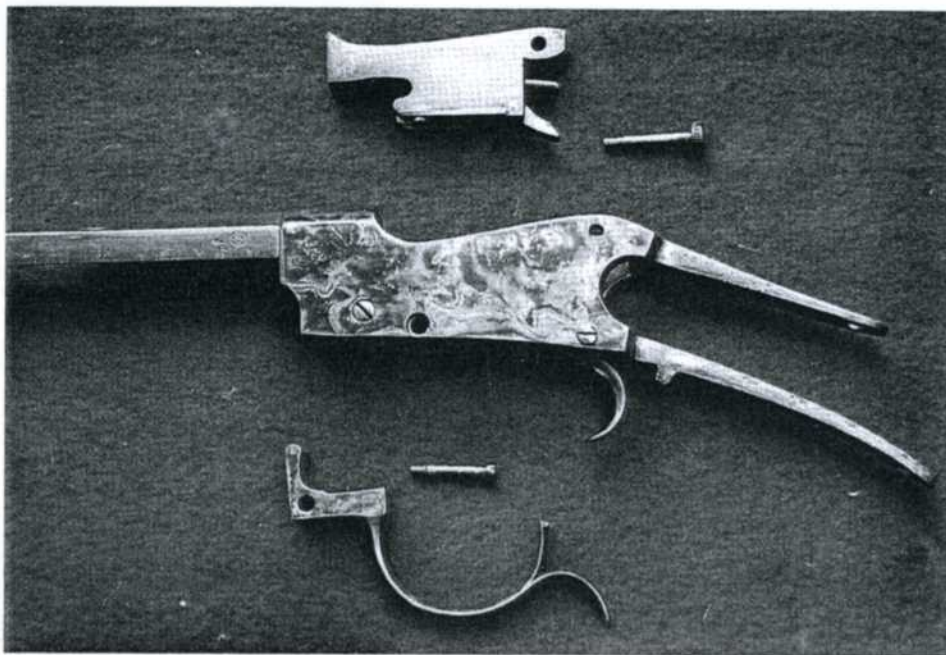
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As for its condition, the action was very tight though the trigger had about a 12 pound pull. Except for some slight dinging the barreled action overall was in very good condition. I can't say the same for the bore nor the wood which appeared to be worm eaten. In other words an excellent *project gun*.

Since I didn't have very much money in the gun as I bought it for approximately 1/5 what a Winchester Low Wall was going for at the time, I decided that I would not go overboard on converting this rifle to bring it back to useful life. The first step I took was to have my gunsmith reline the barrel to 22LR. He also adjusted the extractor by lengthening it. I asked him to polish the frame and barrel as well so I could get a flush fit fitting new wood to the barreled action.

Once I got the rifle back I selected a cherry stock blank that was left over from one of my other woodworking projects. Cherry is indeed a fine wood. It's almost poreless and takes a fine finish. It's rather light in color but I knew it would darken with the finishing process and with age. **This was a major mistake**, as I discovered upon completion of the stock. It was too light and more importantly not in keeping with what a single shot rifle should look like. But I had already spent a lot of time (but fortunately not too much money) on the project so I went ahead and checkered the stock. I put it away to let nature take its course and darken the wood to the rich color cherry wood turns with age. One year after completion, the stock was still too light and the fact that I had made a grievous error in wood selection was reinforced. What to do?

I had to admit to myself that I had erred. This is always difficult. While cherry is a meritorious wood and works very well for jewelry, cigar boxes, small furniture items and toy bins for the grandchildren, it simply was unsatisfactory for a fine gunstock. Sooo, I made up my mind to redo the entire project, or at least the wood part of it. By this time the frame and trigger guard assembly had been color cased, and the



barrel and miscellaneous parts blued. That meant the challenge was compounded because I had to work with finished metal work. But I pressed on.

I selected a nice walnut two piece graft blank, part English and part claro showing the best of both. I had it machined, then

covered the frame with foil tape to offer some protection against marring. I carefully fitted the new wood to the barreled action, finished it and checkered it as well.

Fortunately the foil tape did what I hoped it would do. That and a lot of care on my part and the barreled action escaped unscathed.

The rifle was now completed for the second time and this time I was *pleased* with the results.

In summary: remember there is only one wood for single shots. That wood is the tried and true walnut. Even if it happens to be plain vanilla, it's far better than a light colored wood. That's lesson number one. Lesson number two is be careful how you try to save money because a project of this type involves a lot of sweat equity. As my son is fond of saying, "The poor man always pays twice." Truer words have never been spoken. Lesson number three is own up to your mistake and make it right. Saving old single shots is reward enough, but they must be done in keeping with the best restoration practices. Otherwise the end result is the ruination of the piece.

The project is completed. I am happy with the results, but not happy with the way they were achieved. One more thing. I still don't know any more about the Mystery Martini today than the day I acquired it. Can anyone shed some light on this?~

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STOLEN GUNS !!

One of our long-time friends and subscribers, Mr. J. Eddie Ross of Oklahoma reports the following guns stolen from his home on or about 8/13/2003. Readers, please be on the lookout for these items so that they may be returned to Mr. Ross and the perpetrators of this crime can be traced and apprehended. Please help out!!! Brett Boyd, Publisher

Star Auto Pistol, Lancer mod, blue in cal 22 LR
#HK652598

Stevens Mod 35 off hand pistol cal 22 RF, 8" bbl,
#20973

Smith & Wesson Kit gun revolver cal 22 RF, blue, as
new in box with papers #84756

Remington Mod 11 12 ga shotgun, brown gun, re-
stocked, #97405

Marlin Mod 100 single shot rifle cal 22 RF, "HA"
carved in bbl channel of stock, no serial #

Remington RB #5 mod in cal 30 WCF, smooth brown
gun # 5-24

Star Auto pistol mod DK in cal 380, in plastic box w/
3 magazines, alloy & nickel finish# DK561814

Stevens Premier Mod #8 tip up rifle cal 25-21 recut to
32 Ideal, blue and nickel finish with fancy wood, tang
and bead front sights #25402

Winchester Mod 97 pump shotgun 12 ga, 20" bbl,
brown gun, #640371

Phoenix single shot rifle marked 44 CF cal, relined by
Sonny France to 44 WCF, #3761

Baby Farrow rifle made for his grand-daughter, no
serial number, tipping block like a Peabody, looplever,
pistol grip, integral tang sight, 30" light rd bbl, fancy
checkering and inlays, nickel & blue finish cal 22 WCF.

Peabody Side Hammer Sporter, sporting sights cal
.45 Peabody Sporting, mostly blue on bbl, case turned
silvery, good bore, #5953

Maynard #16 1882 mod with extra fancy wood, all
correct sights, matching numbers, no extra holes or
slots, blue/brown bbl, case turned plum, nice bore serial
number 13975

Any information on these items should be reported
to Mr. J Eddie Ross (580) 332-1949 or to the
Pontotoc County Sheriff's Dept, 100 W 13th St, Ada,
OK 74820; reference complaint number 2003-0570