

# The Single Shot Exchange

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M A G A Z I N E

A Monthly Journal and Emporium Devoted to Antique & Classic Firearms

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# FINISHING

## Part 2

# A Gunstock

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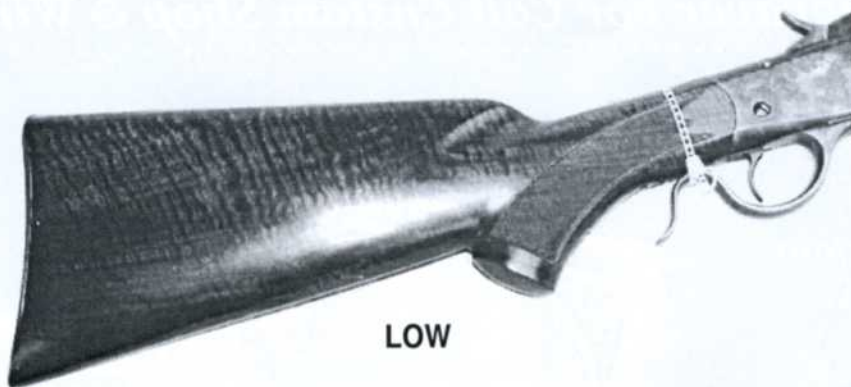
## Dominick Pisano

[www.DomsCustomRifles.com](http://www.DomsCustomRifles.com)

Shortly after my article "Finishing a Gunstock" appeared in *The Single Shot Exchange* several years ago, I received a call from Dorlyn Burgin of Burgin's Gunshop [ad page 9]. She said she liked my finishing technique very much and had had excellent results with it, but asked me how to get a higher gloss finish. At that time, most if not all of my customers asked for and liked the low luster finish I was providing. I told Dorlyn I didn't know how to produce a high luster finish that did *not* look like it was a sprayed on plastic finish. That was several years ago, maybe longer.

In the last two or three years I have detected a subtle change in tastes as more and more of my customers are asking for a higher luster finish just as Dorlyn did. Thus I began experimenting and have come up with just what the doctor ordered.

I begin the finishing process exactly as outlined in my previous article but I discovered through trial and error that if I made certain changes at the 400 grit wet sand stage I could achieve a higher luster finish. The degree of luster (notice I never use the word "shine" as that is still anathema to the discriminating customer) can be controlled from a soft low luster to very



high luster indeed. It's up to the customer as to what he or she wants. Here's the process.

At the 400 grit stage I wet sand as usual, then set the stock aside for 24 hours or so, then scrub it with 0000 grade steel wool. The 0000 steel wool feels soft, almost like

fur, and lightly abrades the finish. I'm very careful not to rub through sharp edges, e.g., the edge around the cheekpiece, etc. It does take some care. Work slowly and carefully. After wiping down the stock to remove any minute particles of steel wool (if you're fortunate enough to own a compressor, use it to blow the stock clean—wear safety glasses).

**TOP COATING.** Make a pad. I use 12 gauge cleaning patches, and carefully fold into a two inch square. Dip the patch into a 50/50 mixture of TruOil and mineral spirits and wipe on a thin even coat finishing with the grain. Do not soak the stock as this thin mixture is likely to run or sag. Set the stock aside to dry through and through. The stock will appear to be dry in 15 minutes or less, but don't be fooled. It is just surface dried. Wait till it's fully *cured* through and through. When it's dry, run your fingers over the stock to check for smoothness. Feel for dust dimples. It should feel pretty smooth if you were careful with the preceding step. Then repeat the steps beginning with the 400 grit wet sand. After a second scrub with 0000 steel wool removing any dust dimples the stock should feel very smooth and have a matte finish. Remove all steel wool debris as before. Now spread a thin layer of paste

wax either Minwax or Johnson's, and rub the wax out as it begins to film over. Don't allow the wax to dry out or you will have the devil's own time buffing it out. Don't be tempted to use a buffing machine. It will likely burn the sharp edges you worked so hard to achieve. I then repeat the waxing process one more time. At this point the stock

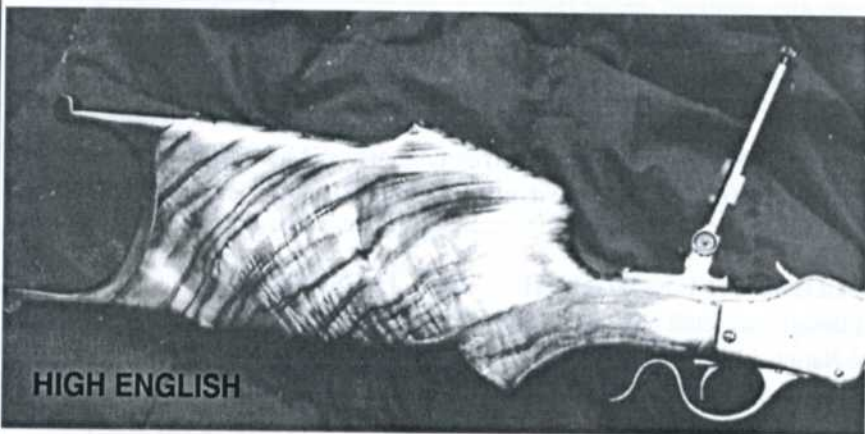
will have a beautiful soft luster and feel nice and smooth. If this is the look and feel that you are trying to achieve, you're done!

If you want a bit more gloss, repeat all the aforementioned steps beginning with the 0000 steel wool. Not to worry, the steel

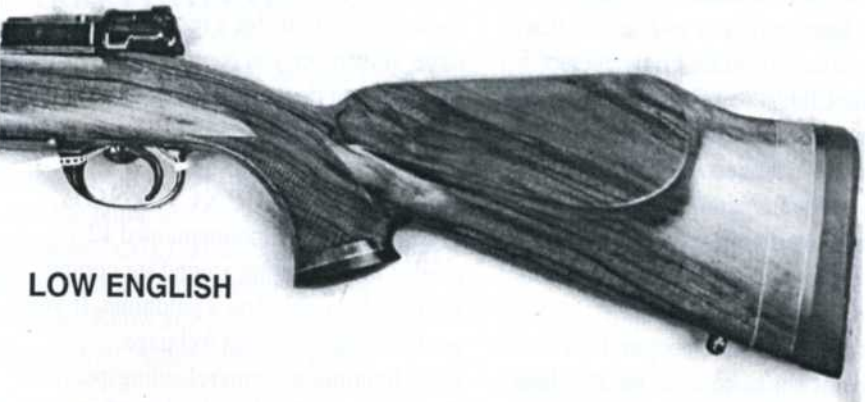
wool will remove all of the wax build up and lightly abrade the stock. Repeat the wet sanding only this time use 600 grit abrasive paper; 600 grit is a pure polishing paper and you will instantly feel its smoothness. After the second wax buffing (again with a soft cotton cloth) the stock will have a very, very smooth high luster. It will feel absolutely caressable, but will not have a plastic shiny appearance. For the customer who wants even more shine (I call it the 50's look) repeat all of the above with 1200 grit abrasive paper.

I have found when working with black or claro walnut, typically much more porous woods than English walnut, each of the above steps must be repeated four or five times to achieve the same level of finish and to guarantee that all the pores are filled. It's the nature of the beast.

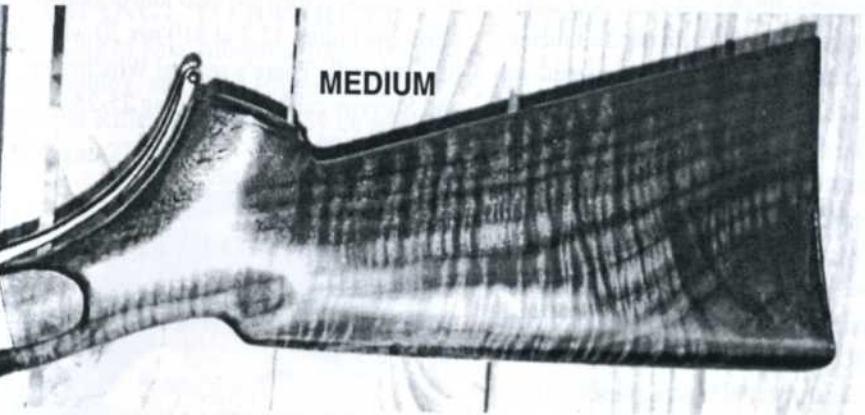
If too much luster is achieved at any given stage, go back one step or even two and repeat. That's it. I think you will find the resultant finish to be very durable, beautiful to look at and feel, and very satisfying.~



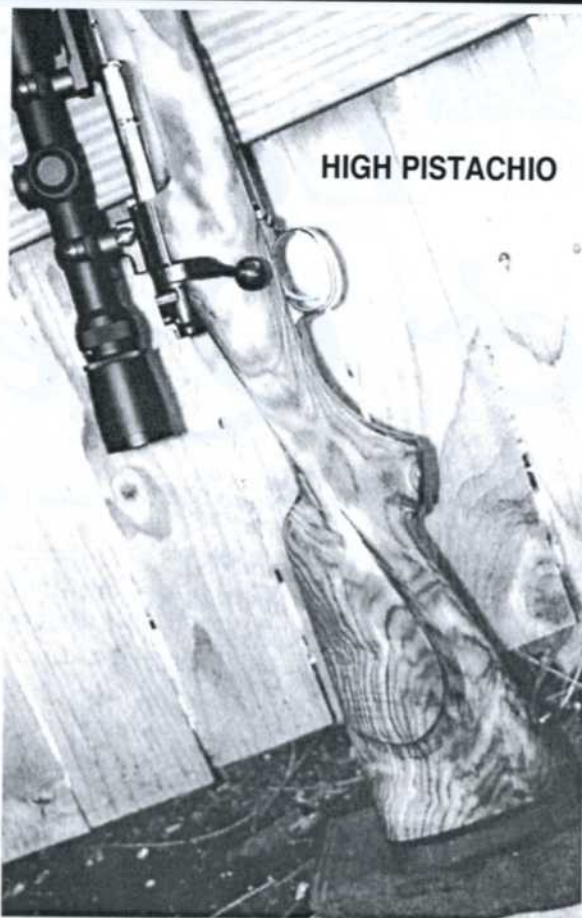
**HIGH ENGLISH**



**LOW ENGLISH**



**MEDIUM**



**HIGH PISTACHIO**



**LOW ENGLISH**