



# North American Arms .22LR Mini Revolver

By: George Hill

Provo, Utah is an interesting little city. It has a few distinctions that set it apart from other cities. Most notably, Provo is home to BYU (Brigham Young University), a nice college, famed at one time for its football program. Provo is home to other colleges as well, so much so that anyone you see between 18 and 28 is probably attending one of them, and those older have probably already attended one or more. (I have two years under my belt from Provo.) It's a nice place, with little crime and lots of Mormons. As a group, Mormons are only threatening if you have a fear of Jell-O and other bland foods. Liberals in California and New York call this part of the country "fly-over country" because they would rather the whole section of the nation just not exist. After all, Al Gore didn't win a single county in the 2000 Presidential Election. They've never forgiven us for that. But then again, we are not apologetic about that either.

Utah has a long and proud history in the firearms industry, which still causes continued discomfort with the anti-gun, liberal idiots. The pinnacle of "gun genius" was a Mormon more famous to shooters

today than Joseph Smith. You may have heard of him, John Moses Browning. The Brownings had a nice little shop in Utah. Browning, as a company, still operates out of Utah, even if most of its manufacturing is in Belgium and other places.

Another nice little gun factory in Utah is found in Provo—North American Arms (NAA for short). NAA may not have pioneered automatic handguns or revolutionized lever action rifles, but they do what they do well. They make some nifty little handguns for very specific purposes, namely for concealed carry, which is what makes NAA of particular interest to us.

A long time ago, before I came to appreciate and be irritated by the idiosyncrasies of Provo, I carried a small .22 caliber mini revolver. Sometimes I'd just carry it in my pocket, in a pouch or even on a key chain. I actually flew Delta Airlines several times with the little pistol as my keychain. (This was years before 9-11-01 and I wouldn't think of doing it nowadays!) I always had it on me... going to church, to school, to the movies, on dates... I just always had it. Most of the time, I carried something bigger, like a

.45 ACP or 9MM automatic. It was then that I considered myself to be "packing." But I always had that little .22 on me. I eventually sold it to a fellow for a couple hundred bucks worth of trade-in value on another pistol. After that, I used a small Spyderco as my new key fob.

I only shot that little pistol on a few occasions because I tended to just forget about it. I've come to miss that little wheel

## NORTH AMERICAN ARMS MINI REVOLVER SPECS

Caliber	.22 Long Rifle
Barrel Length	1 1/8 in.
Length	4.00 in.
Height	2 3/8 in.
Width	13/16 in.
Weight (Empty)	4.5 oz.
Cylinder Capacity	5 shots
M.S.R.P.	\$193.00

gun for some reason. A few weeks ago, I picked up a new one on a lark, a whim that I couldn't explain at the time, and I have no rational reason for it now. Since then, it has always been with me, doing the same duty as my previous mini, which is being there all the time, at the ready.

The .22 rimfire is a fun category of cartridges. There is the wee little .22 short, the .22 Long (which you hardly ever see anymore), the almost universal .22 Long Rifle and the .22 Magnum. North American Arms sells little revolvers that can handle all these, including black powder .22s. NAA is also working on a bigger mini that will be chambered for .32H&R Magnum. That should be a fantastic CCW option!

Let's just look at the .22 Long Rifle for a bit. You can buy a small box of shells for just a couple of bucks. For 3 bucks, you can buy a little box of Wild Cats or Thunderbolts, or some standard velocity Remington. People say that shooting is an expensive hobby, but that's hogwash. Whoever says that has forgotten about the .22 rimfire. You can do a lot of shooting, and I'm talking a whole weekend's worth, plus a couple vanilla Cokes, and still get change back from a thin ten dollar bill. The only cheaper hobby than that is, well... nothing is cheaper than that. A small box of .22 is cheaper than a gallon of gas.

I was amazed at the selection of loads that I could fire out of this NAA

Mini. CB Caps just might have proven to be the most fun, even if they are pretty useless. If you plan on keeping the mini on you "just in case", the best loads are the new "Velocitor" or the "Mini Mag." These rounds pack about as much punch as possible—say that ten times fast—for the non-magnum rimfires. Aquilla makes some loads in .22LR that are great, but you are not as likely to find them on a store shelf, at least not in Provo, or where I live, out in the middle of nowhere!

Loading and unloading an NAA Mini is simple. Pull out the cylinder pin, remove the cylinder, and then use the pin to punch out the empty .22 shells. Then reload the cylinder, put the cylinder back into the frame, and put the pin back in to hold it together. It's easy. But it's not quick. If you are in a confrontation, quick reloads are not going to happen.

Now, I live in "the West" and I'm steeped in old West lore and tradition, even more than I want to be. By the time you read this, I'll have finished playing the roll of "Jake" in the Outlaw Trail Theater's production of "The Star of Justice." It's a period piece about a local sheriff and his dealings with Butch Cassidy, Sundance, and their gang of outlaws. It's a true story. Jake is a lead roll and requires an actor of such skill and nuance, with such a range of acting, singing and dancing, with sophistication that... well... okay, they had no one else to

play the roll and I was dumb enough to say "sure." Anyways, back in "the day," some gunfighters would carry with them extra revolver cylinders, preloaded and ready to go. When the gun fighter wanted to reload quickly, he would drop out one cylinder and replace it with another one. This was much faster than reloading each chamber one at a time during a fight. However, that practice pretty much went out the door with the advent of the metallic cartridge, so that technique would be of limited value here. You would be surprised at how many times I've heard that suggested for the NAA Mini. Really, any attempt at reloading at all during a conflict is of limited value with an NAA Mini. You have 5 shots. Make the most of them.

The most effective use of a mini, if you have to fire it, would be to close with your opponent, screw the barrel into his ear, and then fire it. Eye sockets and nostrils would also do well, but let's not kid ourselves. A gun like this, especially in .22 (Magnum or not) is your last ditch option. These things are the knot at the end of your rope. You would use them only if other options are out of the question, such as running away, screaming for help, or using something else as a weapon, such as an Oldsmobile. What you want to do is to use the mini in a way that allows you time to get away, get help

*Continued on page 20*





or get a bigger weapon. No .22 is going to reliably stop a threat in its tracks, and especially not one from a short little pistol.

For an end-of-the-rope knot such as they are, these little things are gems. They are made extremely well and very efficiently by folks who are dedicated shooting enthusiasts. NAA is very proud of their product. I now work at a gun shop selling guns all day long and I'm enjoying it. One of the guns we have on the shelf is the mini. I've heard on a couple of occasions, one customer saying to another, "Those things are junk." Hold on a second... No, they are not. Far from it. They are milled out of solid billets of heat-treated stainless, using some of the latest computer-controlled mills out there. The parts are hand-fitted and polished by guys who know guns. After they are finished, they are given to a guy who inspects each one by hand and fires them. I know; I shook this guy's hand and he showed me the process. Now, no process is perfect and sometimes something could slip by, but I'm telling ya, we would be so lucky if other manufacturing joints worked as carefully and with such skill and attention to detail as North American Arms. And just so you know, this mini I have here, I paid for with my own cash. I'm not selling NAA here, I'm just being frank. I've been to a couple of other places that built guns, and let me just say this: I wish to heaven that NAA built 1911s or rifles! (Sandy, I'm begging ya!)

Okay, I've given you the backdrop on these mini's, so now let me tell you how it is firing them... It is a blast! After firing custom 1911s and purpose-built 9MM

combat guns, the mini is like chomping into a Moon Pie for the first time since you were a kid. It was a treat. I had a lot of fun with it. No one will mistake a .22 for a defensive pistol caliber, or at least they shouldn't. For defense, you want as much penetration as possible. Stick with a good, high velocity or better .22 load, and don't kid yourself thinking a hollow point is going to be beneficial. From a short tube like these have, .22LR is going to give you a good, deep penetration if you are up close, and it should go deeper than a knife blade. That penetration is going to make the difference.

Even the wimpiest of the .22LR loads responded with a nice snap and bang. These wee guns have a bit of a Napoleon complex to them. They really think they are hot stuff the way they snap and bark, much like some small dog breeds that I know of. They are difficult to shoot well with, and in shooting them, you can enjoy the challenge of shooting as if it was your first time. The small, wood grips that come standard on them are just too small. They make a slightly larger, western-style grip that helps out. The cowboy-style grip looks very cool too, but I think that the best option for grips are the black, plastic, folding grips that let the mini flip out like the blade of a pocket knife. They give you enough handle to hold on to, and really don't take up all that much more space. I also like the fact that you can clip it to your waistband for easy carrying.

I did find one problem with my mini that I am obligated to tell you about. First off, I don't know if this is a problem with my individual example, or if this is a problem with the line. While firing the snappiest of

the .22 loads that I tried, upon the last shot of each cylinder, the retaining pin fired loose. It did that with every cylinder full of the Mini Mags.

Also, with the Mini Mags, the thing would dang near jump out of my hands. But really, for what the gun is for, I can't fault it for that. It's designed to give you an option when you are facing your final option. I've talked to a detective who said that while working undercover, the NAA Mini was the most gun he could carry. That's guts right there. I'll be honest. If I was in harms way when any .22 was the best gun that I could have... I'd take door number 2.

I do feel more comfortable packing a mini as a level of force up from my Kershaw Leek, but if you needed anything smaller, you would pretty much just have to roll with a folding knife. In fact, my mini is actually smaller than my Kershaw Boa and about the same size as my Leek. I am asked all the time for "smaller and lighter" handguns. As if small and light were the ultimate qualities in a gun. This is it, the smallest and the lightest going. Doing it any smaller or lighter than this would be just silly. The mini is it. Well actually, you can go smaller when it comes to caliber. You can get minis in .17 Mach 2 or .17 HMR if you like. A contact shot from a .17 Mach 2 would certainly clear a bad guy's sinuses. An NAA Black Widow in .17 would make for a super fun pistol. The Black Widows have longer barrels, better grips and better sights. They are plinkers and are not made for CCW work, but considering their size, they would carry just fine. I don't think a .17 would be a better choice for defense, and I don't think that you would be able to shoot a Magnum unless you had the bigger grips.

NAA makes several different products, but the .22LR Mini is their number one seller. There is a good reason for that. It's a dandy little shooter. Consider it as an addition to your arsenal, but not as a primary carry gun, unless you work as a lifeguard on Bay Watch. Then it might be all the defense you could carry, maybe as a back-up to a rolled towel with a wet end. Take a towel, roll it up into a rat tail, moisten the end, and snap it like a whip. OUCH!

**For More Information:**  
<http://www.naaminis.com/>

**George Hill is an NRA Certified Pistol and Personal Protection instructor and the writer and publisher of MadOgre.com. Visit his website for more information on MadOgre.**  
<http://www.madogre.com>  
 Photography by the Author.