

38 SPECIAL + P

Charles E. Petty

The very first cartridge I ever reloaded was the .38 Special. I was in my early teens and had been shooting in Boy Scouts and in the NRA Junior program and I wanted a pistol. My mother mailed a check to a company whose ad I had seen in *The American Rifleman*. In due time, a .38 Smith & Wesson revolver of unknown heritage arrived. A neighbor was a police officer, had some ammo and gave me a ride just outside city limits and found a convenient bank of dirt to catch a bullet and the die was cast.

I told of my adventure to a man behind the counter at the sporting goods store and he showed me some used loading equipment and offered to show me how to use it.

After high school, I enlisted in the Air Force. My shooting and scouting activities were listed on the paperwork and when I went to "career counseling" the airman looked up and said, "Boy, have I got a job for you." I trudged across Lackland's sweatbox and was ushered into the wonderful coolness of Col. T.E. Kelly's office. He wore command pilot's wings and a chest full of ribbons. I did the required reporting to an officer speech and he said, "Sit down son."

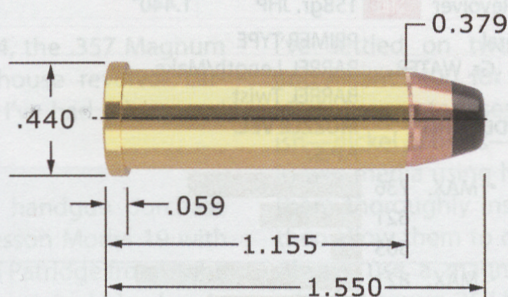
I have no precise memories save for saying "yes sir" and "no sir" a lot. He signed a sheet of paper and I received orders assigning me to the USAF Marksmanship School Gunsmith Section. On my first day, I was given the choice of rifle (M-1) or pistol (1911 .45). I quickly chose pistols and was assigned a bench and issued a tool box.

My on-the-job training was to accurize the 1911 pistol and turn it into a bullseye gun capable of putting 10 shots into three inches or less at 50 yards. When I arrived, there was much talk about a .38 Special 1911 but getting a rimmed case to work was a challenge. Then, I began to see ads from Jim Clark for them.

When I saw Clark's first gun, I was pleased because he did it just the way I had visualized. When Colt introduced the Mid-range in .38 Government Model, the magazine problem was solved. Proving once again that necessity really is the mother of invention.



Charles E. Petty – Contributing Editor (retired) at *Handloader* magazine.



Maximum S.A.A.M.I. Overall Cartridge Length: 1.550"

BULLET CHOICES FOR THE 38 SPECIAL + P

Sporting Handgun™

SPHG JHP

Grain
158



TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Loading the .38 Special with slower burning powders like AA #5 or HS-6 will produce the best results in barrels four inches or longer. In short barreled revolvers, faster burning powders like AA #2 are more efficient.

When loading for the 38 Special, as with any revolver cartridge, seat the bullet so that the top of the cannelure is just visible above the case mouth and then give it a good roll crimp. The crimp should be such that you can just see the case mouth beginning to deform the ridges in the cannelure.

38 Special +P - 158 grain

38 Cal. (.357")

MAXIMUM SAAMI O.A.C.L.		1.550"	TESTED O.A.C.L.	B.C.	S.D.
Sporting Handgun™ Revolver		SHG 158gr. JHP	1.440"	0.182	0.177
CASE TYPE:	Federal	PRIMER TYPE	WSP		
CASE HOLDS:	15.6 Gr. WATER	BARREL Length/Make	7.71" H-S Prec.		
		BARREL Twist	1-18.75"		
POWDER TYPE	POWDER CHG. GRs.	MUZZLE VEL. F.P.S.	LOAD DENSITY (VOLUME)		
Unique	5.1 * MAX.	736	55%		
	4.6	621	50%		
	4.1	505	45%		
AA #2	4.3 * MAX.	821	42%		
	3.8	708	37%		
	3.3	594	33%		
Universal	4.8 MAX.	863	49%		
	4.3 *	749	44%		
	3.8	635	39%		
Power Pistol	5.8 * MAX.	879	50%		
	5.3	802	45%		
	4.8	724	41%		
Hi-Skor 700-X	4.2 * MAX.	910	54%		
	3.7	799	47%		
	3.2	688	41%		
HS-6	6.5 MAX.	910	46%		
	6.0 *	828	42%		
	5.5	745	39%		
AA #5	6.4 MAX.	966	43%		
Most Accurate	5.9 *	874	40%		
Powder Tested	5.4	781	36%		
IMR BLUE	7.7 MAX.	980	64%		
	7.2	913	60%		
	6.7 *	846	55%		
CFE Pistol	5.4 MAX.	990	41%		
	4.9 *	884	37%		
	4.4	778	33%		
Silhouette	5.6 MAX.	999	45%		
	5.1 *	899	41%		
	4.6	798	37%		

BC=Ballistic Coefficient SD=Sectional Density
 *Most Accurate Load Tested **Compressed Load

Use Maximum Loads with Caution
 Refer to page 79 for additional safety information

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