

My BACKUP PHEASANT GUN

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #89 —

If the word 'backup' means lesser value or importance, then it isn't proper to call this gun a 'backup', because it's very special to me. You see, a gentleman would always take two shotguns on a pheasant hunt, just in case he has a problem or needs to loan one to a friend; and a backup gun doesn't have to come from the back row of the gun vault.

An old Browning Superposed 20 gauge, made the year I was born, is my favorite pheasant gun and it always makes the trip. My backup is an L. C. Smith 12 gauge, with double triggers, automatic ejectors and 30" barrels. During the 1990's I had it restocked, engraved and

Briley choke tubes installed. Even if it was never taken to the field, it's quite pleasing to the eye -- no matter how close you look.

In my mind, double triggers are the most under-rated feature of a hunting shotgun, as they allow an immediate choice of the choke and the load -- because double triggers are going to

mean two barrels, two chambers and two chokes. For pheasants, I like Improved Cylinder and Modified Chokes, with a 7/8 ounce load of hard #7-1/2 in the right barrel and 1-1/8 ounces of hard #7-1/2 in the left barrel. The right barrel (improved cylinder) is good out to about 30 yards and the left barrel will go another ten. One other thing; side by side shotguns, designed for field use, almost always feature automatic safeties that slide from the fire to the safe position each time the gun is opened -- pretty clever!



A Focchi Trainer round in the right barrel and Winchester AA Super-Handicap Trap load in the left, is a deadly combination on pheasant.

A lot of mental and physical activity happens quickly and often overlaps, when a bird flushes from cover. First, I acquire the bird with my eyes, re-position my body for the shot, raise the gun, push the automatic safety to the fire position, mentally decide if it will be a close shot or far, select the front

"...swing, lead and pull the trigger."

trigger or the back trigger -- as appropriate, swing, lead and

pull the trigger. Of course, any chance at a pair of roosters typically offers one close shot and one farther out, with a quick change of the trigger finger.

At the end of the day, this old L. C. Smith, with two triggers, two chokes and two different loads, simply puts more birds in the bag than I have ever been able to do with a single trigger gun; and that's the reason it's my 'backup' gun for pheasants.



Larry Potterfield

Hecla Dakota Farms
Hecla, South Dakota
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A true pair of roosters and a happy hunter, with his 'backup' shotgun.



This L. C. Smith started life as a standard field gun in 1928, but now has an English walnut stock and forend, with fancy checkering, leather covered pad and modest engraving.