

# The .44 Magnum cartridge

by Eddie Dunn

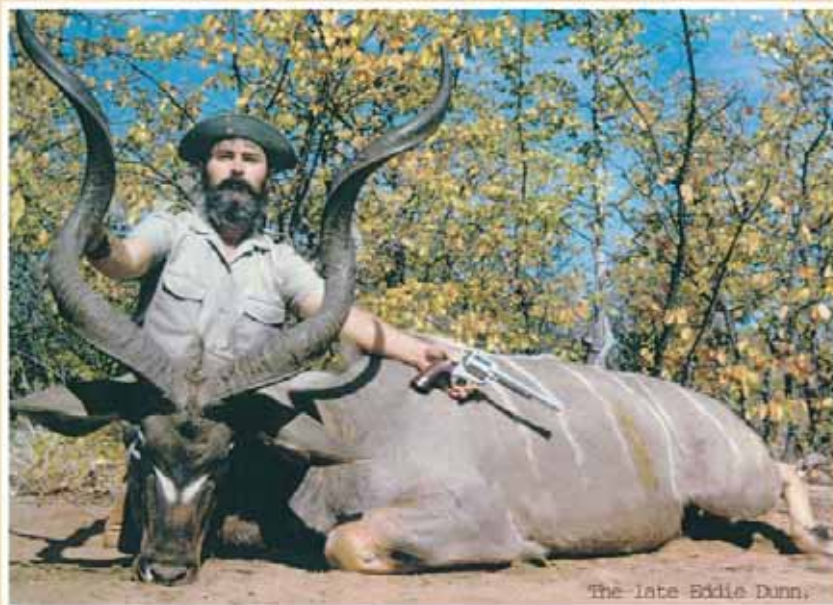
**Prescript: Mauritz Coetzee**

*I met Eddie Dunn*

*in 1976 during a visit to a gun shop. It is still rather easy to remember the extreme enthusiasm with which he talked about hunting with handguns.*

*From this single meeting in a gun shop a friendship developed which lasted for a period of 22 years. We both showed an extreme fondness for the .44 Magnum cartridge although Eddie acquired a .454 Casull revolver in 1982. Eddie also wrote articles for American magazines and had a very solid relationship with Hall Swigget, the well-known American handgun hunter. Together we shared many hours of load development for handguns, the testing of especially cast (lead) bullets for this cartridge as well as time spent just dreaming about the African bush.*

*Eddie also suffered from androgenic depression and fought a hard and courageous battle against this condition. He tragically died in a car accident in 1998. This is one of the last articles he wrote in order to foster handgun hunting as a sport in South Africa. Through this article African Outfitter also salutes a remarkable man and handgun hunter supreme.*



The .44 Magnum cartridge was the brainchild of Elmer Keith, one of America's greatest handgunners who ever lived. Elmer, many years ago, saw the advantage and potential of lengthening the .44 special case to facilitate a larger power charge, the same way the .38 special was lengthened to become the .357 Magnum cartridge.

The .44 Magnum was not initially intended as a loading for shooting *Homo sapiens* of the devilish kind; its recoil and muzzle blast would not allow most handgunners to control succeeding shots quickly and accurately.

The .44 Magnum was and is still a

sport hunting, metallic silhouette and recreation cartridge for the outdoorsman as well as protection in the wilderness against marauding bears, etc. To be quite honest, the handgun hunter does not need the .454 Casull for hunting purposes on plains game in Africa.

Properly hand-loaded with extra heavy flat nose hard cast bullets from 300 to 330 grains at velocities ranging from 1 300 to 1 500 feet per second (fps), the .44 Magnum has given the outdoorsman real game getting capabilities with which just about all species of big and dangerous game all over the planet have been successfully hunted. Extra

heavy solid bullets in this cartridge have the momentum and adequate penetration to take even Africa's big six. The JDJ 315 grain cast bullet is a prime example of the extra heavy bullets available for the .44 Magnum.

Lighter 180 to 200 grain JSP and JHP bullets at velocities of 1 400 to 1 600 fps are extremely good insurance against human attackers who wish to do you serious bodily harm, thus making your day and absolutely ruining theirs. These lighter bullets also do well on game the size of impala, bushbuck, warthog and bushpig.

The 240/250 grain commercial and cast flat nose can be used on game up to kudu. From kudu size upwards and dangerous game the 300 grain plus will have the momentum needed to penetrate the vitals of even the biggest game animals. The larger the beast, the nearer you should get for an accurate and vital shot that will adequately penetrate and kill it effectively.



Reloading, that is bullet making, casting and carefully building up effective loads, is an enjoyable part of the handgun sport and it is important to get good, tight groups with powerful hand-loads; groups that you know will get the job done right, if you do your homework correctly.

This successful cartridge can be down-loaded to .44 special specs, which makes for wonderfully enjoyable hours of plinking where anyone can get involved smashing rocks and drilling coke cans.

For most .44 Magnum shooters, the best all-round load is the good Keith type 245gr. swc cast bullet, driven at 1 300 to 1 450 feet per second. It offers tolerable recoil, good accuracy and can be used for self-protection as well as game getting.

Local powders that are most suitable for this cartridge are S241, S251 and MP300 which are now discontinued. However, we now have S265 which is excellent, giving potential full power velocities throughout the bullet weight range with acceptable pressure levels.

Barrel length is a personal matter. Up to 7 1/2 inches can be carried with reasonable comfort while the longer barrels are more suited for revolvers used in metallic silhouette shooting.

One of the great advantages of carrying a big bore Magnum revolver in the field is that it can be conveniently holstered out of the way. This means that whether you are a forestry officer, game ranger or backpacker, you can go about

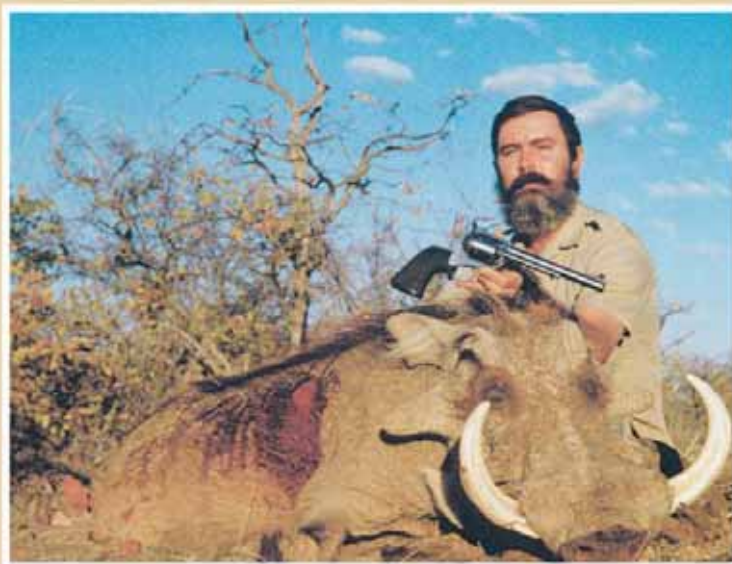


The late Eddie Dunn with some of the trophies he has taken with a handgun (.44 Magnum Ruger Redhawk and Freedom Arms .454 Casull).



your business with both hands free. With the tight loads you can deliver rifle-like killing power to any big and hairy beast that may want to

Edward Sutherland, Ruger GP 100 revolver and a trophy warthog. He was a close friend of Eddie Dunn.



scratch, bite or stomp all over you. Or fetch a buck for the pot or dispatch a venomous snake with shot-shells. In all it is a great outdoor tool but misunderstood by many and its potential, so far, appreciated by only a few.

So next time you head for yonder hills, slip on that .44 Magnum revolver in your favourite leather custom holster and walk unencumbered through the wilds of the African bush country.