

# GOOD ONES AR15 Triggers

[high-zoot units]

Glen Zediker

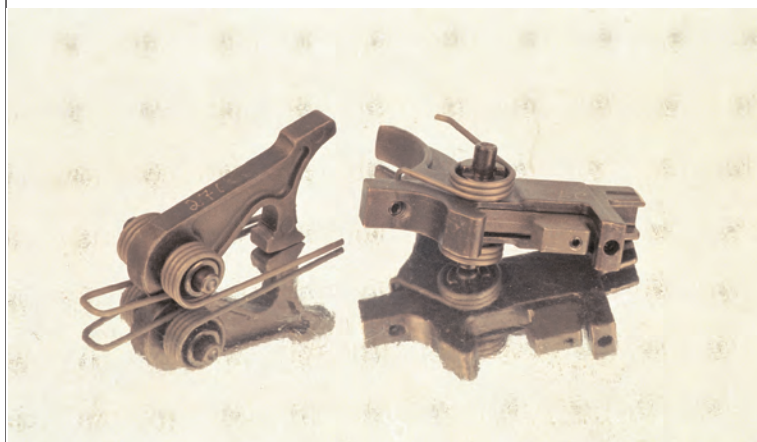
**Left to right: MKII, Jewell, Knight's. Guess which is slowest?**

*ORIGIN: This is a jist of an article I did for another magazine. I added a few things that I don't send to magazines due to space concerns.*

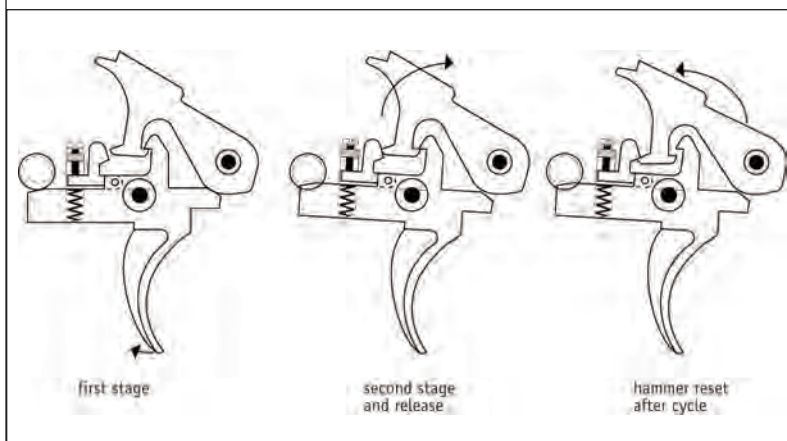


Folks, for starters, forget tuning a stock trigger. Actually, let's not even talk about them. There are a number of aftermarket choices and all are a radical improvement. Most competitive position target shooters, like NRA High Power competitors, prefer a two-stage trigger. That's a trigger that has free movement (that's the first stage) that comes to a stop (at the second stage) and then breaks cleanly from that point. A single-stage has no free movement before the break, or isn't supposed to. Competitive shooters like a two-stage because it's more controllable and predictable. We use the first stage as the start to a shot, and also as a safety valve, of sorts, if we have to back out. Second, it's a way to get a light break weight (the second stage) while maintaining a higher overall

**Here's the Geissele. What makes it better is what makes it best. It's very well made, very easily and correctly adjustable, and it's way on faster than its competition. It is no better in feel or action than a well tuned Knight's, but it took two fairly expensive UPS rides to get mine where I wanted it. Dropped in, none of the other two-stages can work as well as the Geissele.**



**Here's a drawing of an MKII, Charlie Milazzo's original two-stage design. It works essentially like an M14 or M1 trigger. No new ideas, just different ways to make them work. It took some work, by the way, to get that operational in an AR15 platform, and we owe Charlie Milazzo for that fine service. He earned his patent.**



weight (the first stage). Getting the finger onto and then into the trigger simply makes a fellow a more competent offhand shooter. First stage plus second stage equals total trigger pull weight. That's a big deal to NRA and CMP Service Rifle shooters who can't use less than a 4-1/2 pound trigger. The triggers on my Service

Rifles are two-stage, and the second stage is about 8 ounces. That's not a handicap compared to an NRA Match Rifle, which has no minimum pull weight requirement.

The original two-stage was the MKII done up by Charlie Milazzo. Its workmanship and quality, not to mention (duh) its

two-stage engineering, was a major milestone in fleshing out the competitive AR15. Charlie owns the patent and that's been a legal embroilment for a decade now. Right. Most two-stage triggers, like the ArmaLite and



**The trigger and hammer rotate on pins that go through holes in the lower receiver. Precision fit hain't nowhere close to what we'll get in a "housed" unit, like most any other quality rifle trigger design. Warps and wobbles are problems, or can be. They are no problem, or at least less problem, if the pins can't move and are ground true. KNS trigger pins can make a radical improvement in any trigger they can be used with. These pins are done by people who clearly love trigger pins at least as much as life itself. KNS offers a well oversized set with a hole reamer for a perfect fit. Go ahead on, but their standard set works extra well in anything I've tried them in. Get them from Brownell's. Go now. (Oops, though. They're not allowed yet in NRA or CMP Service Rifle competition. External modification.)**

### Single-Stage

**Two-stage triggers may not be the hot setup for everyone. None of the two-stages have a very quick re-set (distance the shooter must let the trigger return from trigger break to allow for the next shot). The practical-type competition shooters probably get more from a single-stage there. Same could be said for varmint hunters and recreational target shooters. Single-stages are less money, usually. Of these, the best I've used is the JP Ent. adjustable. It's been around a good long while now and, correctly tuned it's no excuse for a miss on any target.**



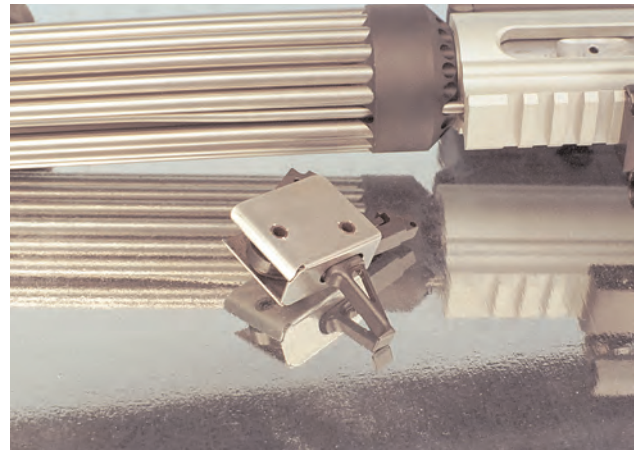
Rock River, et al., are Milazzo clones. None are (nearly) as good. There are others, however, that take a few steps beyond Charlie's original take, or at least take them in different directions.

What's the best two-stage trigger? Easy. Right now, it's the

Geissele. It's the newest of the bunch and perhaps the one that's been looked at the longest, or looked at its competition the longest, but in terms of adjustability and design, it be da bomb diggity. Jewell makes a good two-stage. It has a unique and easy adjustment system and spring arrangement (most others use essentially standard form springs) and drops in pretty smartly. It's a good quality piece of parts. Main problem with it is that it's slow. Lock time is purported to be actually longer than a standard trigger. I see it when shooting in the wind compared to a Knight's or Geissele.

Knight's Armament? Before the Geissele I would have told you it was the best. The sear angle is different than the others (90 degrees) and it's relatively fast striking. It's not easily enough adjustable, for me, but no one can make a mistake buying one.

They're costly (around three hundred dollars) and sporadically available.



### Drop-Ins

**JP offers a "modular" single-stage trigger that's a self contained, non-adjustable unit. This trigger uses the stock pins only to hold the housing. The trigger in the housing has its own set of pins that are contained in and by the housing itself. Couldn't be easier to install. Chip McCormick has one too (shown), and it comes as single- or two-stage. I just got a two-stage and just dropped it in. It's about 3-1/2 pounds spread about 50/50 between first and second stage. It's not, in my estimation, a competition trigger but is worlds better than stock. I like the available flat face very much and would like to see more triggers done that way. Either of**

**these triggers are a plug and play solution for anyone who wants a better trigger, as long as they accept that it probably won't be a great trigger, and, either way, will remain always what it is. That's not all bad.**



### Lock (take your) Time

What's lock time matter that much? Well, everyone's rifle is moving when it's fired.

Even the best prone shooter's position isn't immune from exhibiting some discernible movement, and no one's offhand hold keeps the barrel still for long. The faster the bullet leaves after the trigger breaks, the closer to call the shot will be. Offhand, of course, is where it shows most, and it's even more obvious when there's wind blowing.

What the AR15 has going against it is a hammer. For one. Anything with a hammer is slower than another thing with an inline striker, like most bolt actions have. Lock time on a rack-grade AR15 is around 16 milliseconds. Lock time on an out of the box Remington 700 is about 4. Both David Tubb and Carl Bernosky (both many time national High Power champions) abandoned their SR-25/AR-10 projects with that as a main criticism. Carl in particular liked the rifle George Smith at EGW had constructed, but could not adjust to the slow ignition time. Tubb spent a lot of effort reducing the lock time in his Perry-winning SR-25 through



## **Trigger Tricks**

***Moly Slide! Get it and use it on all bearing engagement surfaces and the trigger will be better. Wondrous stuff. Keep the trigger – the whole thing – well oiled. I mean lube the fool out of it. Just squirt something you like all over everything inside the lower receiver. That also helps keep grit from working on shiny surfaces, especially if there's a primer mishap. I grease the inside walls of my lowers to suspend potentially abrasive grit. Greasy guns are happy guns. Last, if you do many triggers, or do yours over and over and over, get this deal. It's too cool. Brownell's makes this trigger fitting jig that lets you install the trigger on the outside of your receivers using your trigger pins. That's a help and a half. They also make a drop block that protects the lower receiver from a hammer strike. By the way! Don't ever, ever, never let the hammer clank home against the lower. It'll crack your lower. The jig and block are shown here with a Jewell.***



## **SOURCES**

Brownell's  
800-741-0015  
brownells.com

Geissele Automatics  
609-892-7161  
geissele.com

JP Enterprises  
651-426-9196  
jprifles.com

Jewell  
513-353-2999

Knight's Armament  
561-562-5697

Chip McCormick Corp.  
830-798-2863  
chipmccormickcorp.com

***Hate to keep saying this way, but this little ditty here hain't hardly the tip of the iceberg compared to what's in store in the second AR15 book. In that one, there's a whole lot more about installation and tuning tricks, and even a few more triggers!***

lightened hammers and extra power hammer springs, but at even half the lock time of a standard rifle, which he attained, plus a little, it's painfully slow for a shooter used to the relatively instantaneous ignition of a bolt gun. Geissele took this to heart and his trigger is down to about 8 ms dropped in. Wondrous. It's a big deal difference. By the way, titanium firing pins have virtually zero influence on lock time. It's all in the hammer fall.