

VARIETIES AND VARIATIONS

The short-barreled version of any rifle is generally called a “carbine” regardless of the rifle type. The “shorty,” sometimes called a CAR-15, is what we know as an AR15 with a short barrel and collapsible stock. Barrel length is usually 16 inches. Can’t be any shorter without a Class III stamp. There have been a good number of different identifications given short rifles. There’s XM177, CAR-15, M-4, and more. They are variants that usually don’t have a lot of honest differences, not so’s anyone would really notice at the range and through the sights. There have been and will be more technical changes in gas port sizes and twist rates, but when we’re looking for something for local use, there’s no point to replicating any issue weapon. The more popular variety as this book gets its first pages inked is the M-4. An M-4 is a flat-topped rifle with a barrel contour made to take a grenade launcher. It’s not really what you want. Keep reading.

There is absolutely no reason that a right-built short gun won’t shoot as well as a Match Rifle. Done right, that’s really what it is. No joke. Buddy Bill Wylde (I call him “Yoda”) is one of the AR15 accuracy pioneers. Bill did a good deal of development with Canadian armed forces. A principal quest, and feat of excellence, was getting 500-meter groups in the 3-inch range using 14-inch-barreled rifles and Canadian issue ball ammo. Astounding, and with regularity. Bill built the rifles much in the same as I did this one: NRA Match Rifles with shortened barrels. One note: Canadian ball ammo is good stuff. The one overriding advantage we have in choosing an AR15 for the base platform for a short gun is just that. There is nothing else made (nothing) that can equal its capacity for accuracy.

M4 4U

The focus of this book, and therefore transposed to the particulars of these rifles, is civilian-owned semi-automatic firearms. I’ve had a good deal of interest and motivation (related) to work up a much more in-depth book on the tactical AR15, and I think I’ll do just that. Few of us have access to “real” military firearms, and the civilian equivalents are not nearly always the same. Without a Class III stamp, and sometimes more than one, it’s terribly unwise to own anything similar to what might be sailing down with a paratrooper in the dead of night.

What, however, I can talk about is, well, AR15s. That’s ultimately what all the code-guns are based on and whether it’s an M4 CQBR or anything else similar the functional considerations, and problems, are universal, as are the solutions. Compromises are inevitable, and understanding the purpose before the purpose-built choices must be made help either ignore or accept them.

My idea, and therefore what I followed along with here, was to build up a couple of zoot-capri short

guns using the best of the best (my opinion) components. One advantage of my competitive focus is judging suitability. Components and concepts are proven in competition quickly because of demanding and high-volume use. “Proven,” in this context, means “known to work.” Parts that break will break earlier. Traps get sprung and then vacated likewise more quickly. Conceptually unsound things lose favor straight away. Another is that, no matter what its intended ultimate purpose, any and every AR15 has to do virtually the same two things: it has to shoot well and it has to shoot every time. I’m not about to say that a rack-grade AR15, in any shape or form, is perfect. I will say, however, that when we mess with an essential component or system there needs to be a sharp eye directed toward the outcome of those changes.

In one way of looking at it, which is of course my way, there’s zero difference between setting up a target rifle for competition use and setting up a carbine for field use. The same thought processes follow the same lines: what’s it need to do, what’s it need not to do, how can I make it do what I need, and (the fun part) where can I get the goodest-goodies?

P8

PROJECT RIFLE

CIVILIAN CARBINE



SHORT GUN ONE

The first carbine I built for this book represented what I thought was the best way for me to go, for you too. I imagined how the rifle might have to be used, thought about using it, and then built it up with the selection of components that would best serve that use. I have the worst imagination possible. I can conceive of so many things going wrong that when I wrestle through worst-case scenario survivability factors, and realize that they’ve faded, I’ve pretty well bullet-proofed my product. I wanted something that was shootable (certainly), accurate (certainly), and also moderate (most certainly), whether it looks moderate or not. Another good word would be “streamlined.” I wanted nothing on it that could defeat its purpose. Its purpose, by the by, is to be deployed in a hurry, easily and effectively.

I wanted this carbine to deploy gracefully, mount perfectly, and let me get a shot away very quickly right on top of my sight. *Badda-bing, badda-bang.* I wanted this one to likewise avoid the functional problems associated with carbines and, as best as it could, exploit the accuracy potential of the essential platform. I really liked what I came up with.

Long being shy of tourist traps, or anything that looks like one, I shied away from anything that, to

me, had the “show” but not the “go.” It was not a rifle I wanted to frighten anyone with. It was a rifle that might come into use at some time when I was terribly frightened myself.

The detail-added text now commences. First thing I said I wanted was superior on-target performance.

It’s easily possible to quantify “accuracy” needed for a shooting exercise, assuming all shooting exercises somehow involve striking a target. If they don’t, then I’d suspect we’re dealing with an angle too obtuse for me to tackle. Most sports have a definable standard, obvious in any event that uses a decimal target. In other target games, such as USPSA events, or in varmint hunting (which I call a target sport), accuracy requirements are harder to quantify, but “more” is always better than “less.”

Some think this a might amount esoteric, but it’s a neglectful assumption that something capable of placing a round anywhere on any target is adequate for genuine success. It is not. Any rifle needs to, at its worst, be capable of shooting a group half the target’s primary scoring area to ensure that the target gets hit when the sights “say” it should. If you want to hit a three-inch wide prairie dog at 300 yards, your rifle had better be capable of shooting a group no bigger than one and a half inches at that distance, and that’s