

TJ CUSTOM

Beretta 96 Centurion .40S&W



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becomes even
better!**

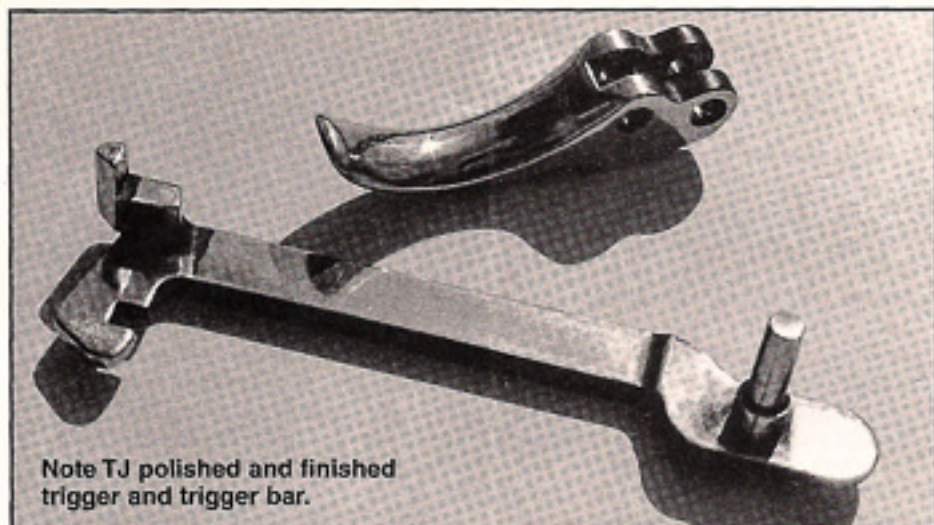
By Dan Branscome

The gun I received for this review came from TJ's Custom Gunworks, in Ontario, California, a Beretta Model 96 "Centurion". The 96 designates the .40 S&W chambering, while the Centurion models mate the shorter barrel and slide of the Compact models with the full size frame.

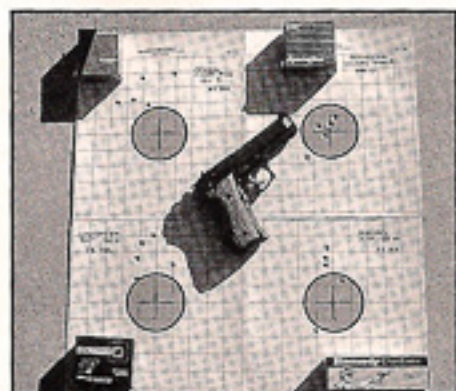
TJ's opinion of the Beretta pistols is that the quality exceeds most other makes today, and if it were not for what he considers the over-large grip diameter it would probably be the autopistol of overwhelming choice. The size of the grip has always prevented me from spending serious time with the Berettas.



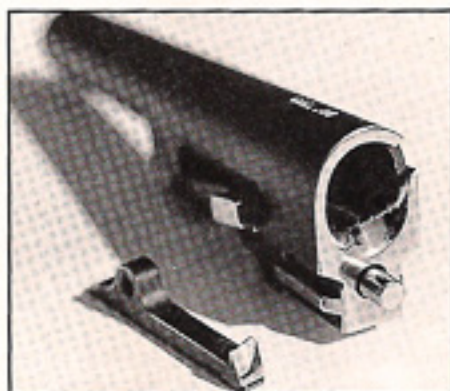
TJ Custom Beretta 96 with Bulman TJ Special holster and Wayne Watanabe tanto.



Note TJ polished and finished trigger and trigger bar.



Custom Centurion with defense loads.



TJ throats barrel and fits extractor.



Custom Centurion qualification target.

Although I have close friends who carry Berettas issued by L.A.P.D. and L.A.S.O., and have had numerous students come to class with Berettas, I never felt comfortable with them. I can manage the large grip, but cannot reliably operate the slide mounted safety. This is not to criticize the Beretta, because I have the same problem with S&W pistols, and any other slide-mounted safeties.

While TJ is most noted for his work on SIG pistols, he can perform his art equally well on the Berettas. The 96 Centurion pictured here has received his "Level 1"

package, which includes his deluxe action job, throat and polish the barrel/feed ramp, fit and polish the extractor, and reshaping the trigger.

TJ's custom work is only visible externally on the trigger, which has been narrowed slightly and reshaped before being polished. RADIUSING the edges and polishing improves the ergonomics, particularly for the DA trigger pull. All other critical moving parts of the action are similarly smoothed and polished, resulting in a wonderfully smooth trigger pull, both single and double action. As it left the box this particular gun had a double action trigger pull of 13.5 lbs, and a single action pull of 5.75 lbs. After TJ worked his magic on it, the DA pull was reduced to 7.75 lbs, and the SA pull to 3 lbs!

What is unique to the Beretta, and is critical to the smooth functioning of the pistol, is the barrel locking block, and according to TJ is the part most subject to failure/breakage, not only on the Beretta, but also on the Taurus clones. TJ extensively smooths and polishes this part to facilitate barrel and slide function. As he does on all autopistols, particular attention is paid to fitting and polishing the extractor. This allows the extractor to slip over the rim of a cartridge that prematurely exits from the magazine, rather than jamming and butting into it, preventing damage to the extractor. This eliminates one of the most

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**SPECIFICATIONS:
Beretta 96 Centurion**

CALIBER: .40 S&W
BARREL: 4.3 inches
OA LENGTH: 7.8 inches
HEIGHT: 5.4 inches
WEIGHT: 33.2 ounces
CAPACITY: 10 rounds (11 L.E.)
PRICE: \$565.00
CUSTOM WORK: \$629.00

ing off the shot, giving me more of a "surprise" than a "surprise break."

As an added bonus, the Beretta Centurion came to me as a package, together with a Watanabe custom knife, in a concept holster designed by TJ and executed by custom holstermaker Josh Bulman. The "TJ Special" holster is the first rendering of a holster with an integrated knife scabbard, which allows weapon selection according to the proximity of the assailant. When I first saw it, it seemed that the knife would interfere with the presentation of the pistol, but that proved not to be the case.

The knife is the work of custom knife-maker Wayne Watanabe, and is simply elegant in the classic Japanese design. The blade is crafted from ATS34 stainless steel, with a handle of genuine rayskin, and is traditionally wrapped in royal purple cord.

Acknowledged as an expert at refining SIG autopistols, TJ feels he does even better action work on the Beretta because of the simplicity of the mechanism. A unique defense package, with each component custom made by a true craftsman, all sure to meet the highest standards of the most discerning customer.

**For more information
contact:**

BERETTA U.S.A. CORP., 17601 Beretta Drive, Dept. CH, Accokeek, MD 20607; (301)283-2191, fax (301) 375-7677

TJ's CUSTOM GUNWORKS, P.O. Box 69, Dept. CH, Ontario, CA 91762, USA; (909) 923-4422

or E-mail brief questions to
Nonsheep@aol.com

Some of TJ's guns can be seen on
the web at:
<http://odaiko.ss.uci.edu/sig/tjcustom/tjcustom.html>

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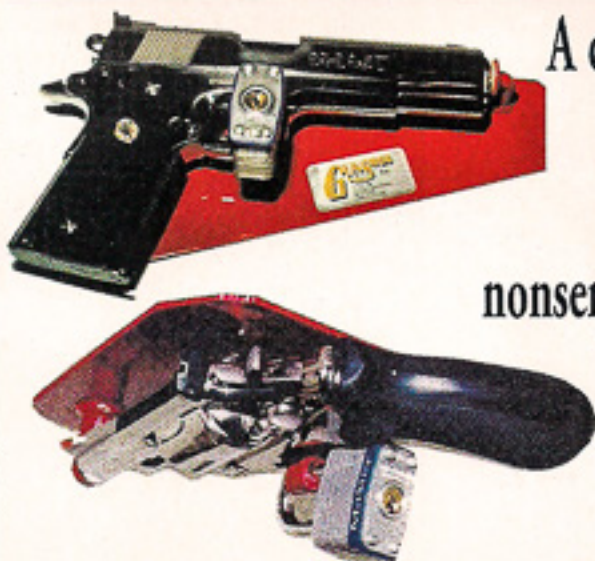
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TJ CUSTOM

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common causes of failures in autopsists. TJ then primer tests each gun to ensure reliable detonation.

The only extras included are the OrangeGlo highlight on the front sight, which can be done to both stock or night sights, and the Hogue Deluxe checkered cocobolo grips, which give any gun a classy custom appearance.

Shooting Impressions

In deference to Beretta's reputation and TJ's craftsmanship, I abbreviated my usual testing protocol to only 50 rounds of hardball to check the functional reliability before proceeding to shoot my regular qualification course of 50 rounds. A score of about 95% is my average on this course (the weak hand only string usually costs me ten points).

The real test is with hollow points, and I fired 10 rounds each of every brand I had on hand. The TJ custom Beretta never malfunctioned once, regardless of bullet type. As for accuracy, the Centurion grouped all of the premium defensive loads in 4 inches or less at 25 yards from the bench, delivering the best group of the day with the Remington Golden Saber 180-grain hollowpoints. In

BULMAN GUNLEATHER

Unseen in the best places

Josh Bulman is a new player in the craft of custom gunleather, and based on the work I've seen, his quality is second to none! Operating from a studio in central Pennsylvania, Josh has been making custom combat holsters for law enforcement and knowledgeable private citizens for several years now, and is now offering his wares to a wider market.

Josh's philosophy is one we can all appreciate: Make it the best it can be. For Josh this begins with function. He makes only time tested, proven designs, which he knows are safe, fast, and consistent.

He makes his holsters one at a time, by hand. He does not use hydraulic presses to fit his scabbards. Every piece is hand molded, ensuring a better fit and superb appearance that cannot be achieved with press molding. The edges are burnished

using a three-step process, ensuring they will stand up to hard use rather than the painted acrylic found on mass produced holsters.

Every holster shown fits superbly, and requires no break-in. I know most of you can relate when I recall the holsters that require a week or two to break in before you would consider using it for defensive carry. You can actually feel the trigger guard of the gun "click" into the molding of the holster. Attention to detail is apparent in every aspect of Bulman Gunleather, from the stitching to my name being stamped into the back of the holster.

Like the "TJ Special" concept holster, Josh will work with customers who have special needs not met by his regular designs. As an example, he is currently working with a police agency to develop a pocket holster specifically designed for jacket pocket carry of a backup gun.

For a catalog, or more information, contact: BULMAN GUNLEATHER, P.O. Box 361 Newry, PA 16665; (814) 696-8615, fax (814) 695-1464; jbhollowers@aol.com

fact, several of these groups were larger than the gun or ammo deserved. My usual mantra for the SA pull of modern

autopistols is "take up the slack, and press". TJ's trigger job left no resistance between "taking up the slack" and press-

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