

ARMADILLO with a THUMB TRIGGER

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #51 —

A couple of old .22 rifles were always on my pack list for the Nail Ranch hunt in early November. Between morning and afternoon hunts, we always had some time on our hands and shooting old .22 rifles at swinging metal targets was a favorite activity to pass the time.

One of the rifles on this trip was a Winchester Thumb Trigger Model. They only made about 75,000 of these guns between 1904 and 1923, so most people have never heard of it, much less had the opportunity to shoot one – which was one of the reasons I brought it along.

The Thumb Trigger uses the same basic sear/extractor design as all the other Winchester single shot rifles made by Winchester from 1900 to 1963, because they were all made from John Browning's original patent of 1899. But someone came up with the idea that you could shoot more accurately if

you pushed the trigger, rather than pulling it.

So, the Winchester engineers eliminated the trigger and the trigger guard and simply extended the sear out the back end of the action, just below the hammer. The thumb of the trigger hand rests pretty naturally in this position; and after cocking the hammer, it's a simple matter to press the exposed tip of the sear with the thumb, to release the firing pin.

I doubt that this design is more accurate, but it is an interesting idea. One of the fun things about this rifle is to hand it to someone not familiar with the design and suggest that they shoot it a few times. Typically they don't



An interesting animal and an equally interesting gun

notice that it doesn't have a trigger until they have it loaded and try to shoot it. At that time they look at you sheepishly and ask: "where's the trigger?"

One day after lunch, we had been shooting this gun and left it laying on a picnic table, while taking a break from shooting to relax in the shade.

"...it is an interesting idea."

But suddenly I caught a glimpse of an Armadillo walking directly into camp about 40 yards out. Without saying a word, I got up, retrieved the Thumb Trigger and intercepted the Armadillo just as he went into a small patch of brush. One quick shot with the Thumb Trigger and the Armadillo was dispatched – possibly something that hadn't been done with a rifle like this for 75 years.

Midway USA

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Western Camp
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On this hunt, I also got a coyote, with my Winchester Model 94



The first thing you will notice is there is no trigger. But actually there is; it is just below the hammer, and you push it with your thumb.