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# TOUGHEST MAN ALIVE

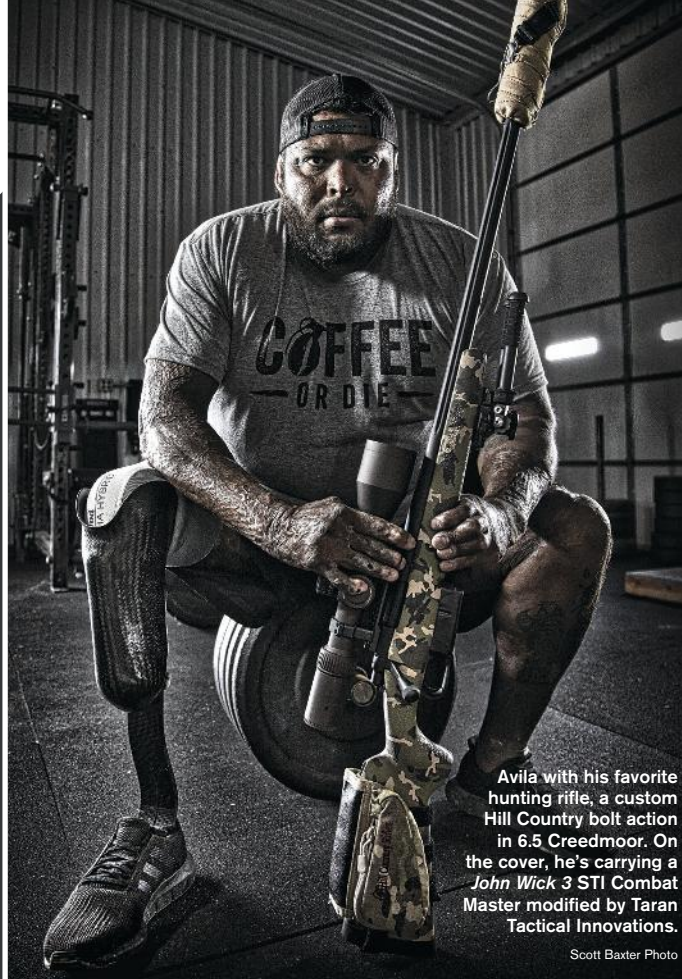


Blown up, severely burned and nearly dead with bilateral femur fractures, Sergeant Omar "Crispy" Avila kept on fighting to help his teammates survive. Courage under fire? Try courage *while on fire!* Tank tough? This guy is simply a tank.

As I type this, it's exactly 12 years to the day that Avila arrived home in Texas from the battlefield in Iraq. Shortly after touching American soil, doctors put him into a medically induced coma for three months while he underwent dozens of surgeries. Then he woke to fight again. That's a recurring theme with this remarkable man.

In my nearly 25 years as a tactical, hunting and outdoors magazine editor, I've worked with a great team of colleagues to produce more than 1,000 issues. And yet I have never met or read about a man as tough as Avila. That's why we've named him our first-ever "Warrior of the Year." After you read his story and check out the accompanying video author Scott Baxter put together for us online at ballisticmag.com, we can't help but think you'll believe the same.

Avila's will to fight through all manner of adversity and desire to inspire everyone to take on life's challenges are one-of-a-kind gifts. This isn't hyperbole; it's a miracle that Avila is alive



Avila with his favorite hunting rifle, a custom Hill Country bolt action in 6.5 Creedmoor. On the cover, he's carrying a John Wick 3 STI Combat Master modified by Taran Tactical Innovations.

Scott Baxter Photo

## "YOU CAN BE A VICTIM OR A SURVIVOR, THE CHOICE IS YOURS."

—SGT. OMAR "CRISPY" AVILA

today. And he's not wasting his second shot at living. If you need some motivation in your everyday life, please let Avila's story enrich and empower you.

Yes, it's understood that it all has to go through U.S. military channels, but we at *Ballistic* see Avila as a prime candidate for the Medal of Honor. Why, Dakota Meyer, another Medal of Honor recipient, once said, "Crispy, you are my hero!" We couldn't agree more.

From military heroics, this issue pivots to iconic Americans in the firearms world, including inventors, manufacturers and today's prominent Second Amendment defenders. Also in store is a special feature on Ronnie and Chris Barrett, whose dominance in military-adopted weapons is second to none. Plus, we have an exclusive sit-down with Venezuela-born-but-American-made top shot Gabby Franco. If her story doesn't make you proud and thankful to be a lawfully, constitutionally armed American, we're not sure what will. —Nino Bosaz



*Ballistic* magazine is now available for digital download at zinio.com. Subscribe for a year and you'll save money to spend on things like guns. Buy it in print at outdoorgroupstore.com.

**WE STAND CORRECTED:** In last issue's Custom Challenge, we stated that the Alchemy Brimstone's trigger was "chromed" when it is in fact aluminum. Pardon the trigger slip.

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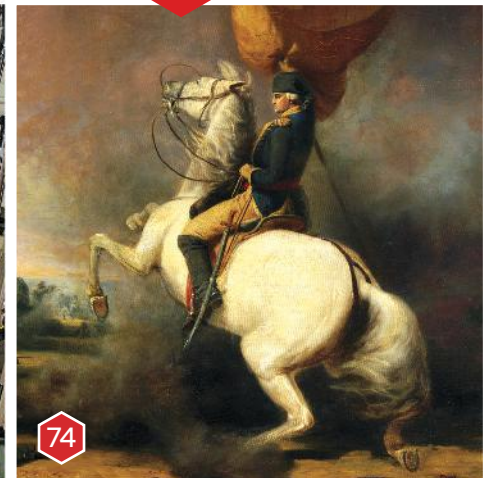
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26



38



74



48



54



92

## FEATURES

### 26 PURPLE HEART OF STEEL

Think you know tough? Find out why we've named Omar "Crispy" Avila Warrior of the Year  
BY SCOTT BAXTER

### 38 THE FATHER, THE SON & THE HEAVY GUNS

A behind-the-bullets look at how Ronnie and Chris Barrett are ruling the military-adopted big-bore arena  
BY SEAN UTLEY

### 48 GUN GREATS

The world's most influential firearms designers  
BY PETER SUCIU

### 54 AMERICAN FIREPOWER

From battlefields to homesteads, here's a look at some of the country's most legendary makers  
BY PETER SUCIU

### 60 MAKERS' MILESTONES

It's a big year for Mossberg and Ruger—here's why  
BY T. LOGAN METESH

### 66 AMERICA'S ADVOCATES

Your rights are still intact thanks to these Second Amendment activists  
BY ALAN KORWIN

### 74 TOP BRASS & COLD STEEL

The best American generals and the guns they carried  
BY PETER SUCIU

### 86 PLUG-N-PLAY FREEDOM MACHINE

Make legal AR lowers, pistol frames and more without Big Brother knowing  
BY WILL DABBS, MD

### 92 AMERICAN DREAMER

Venezuela-born top shot Gabby Franco takes on socialism, the Olympics and Team Walther  
BY MIKE DETTY

### 100 REELIN' & DEALIN'

Your next fishing trip could turn into a nightmare if you aren't properly armed  
BY ANDRE' M. DALL'AU

### 104 ON THE RISE

Rise Armament's 6.5 Creedmoor 1121XR will take your marksmanship to new heights  
BY MIKE DETTY

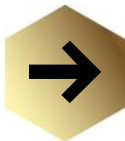
### 118 MASTER BLASTER

Recreating Mad Max's powerful 12-gauge double with Aguila Minishells  
BY WILL DABBS, MD

# MAKERS' MILESTONES

## IT'S A BIG YEAR FOR MOSSBERG AND RUGER—HERE'S WHY

BY T. LOGAN METESH



Two gun companies that are now household names—Ruger and Mossberg—are celebrating milestone anniversaries in 2019. Ruger is turning 70 while Mossberg is now 100 years old. Here's a look at some of the high points in each company's history.

### O.F. MOSSBERG & SONS

Just before the 2019 SHOT Show, Mossberg announced the newest addition to its product lineup, the MC1sc, which is a pistol. While it was a surprise, it wasn't unprecedented. Mossberg was simply returning to its roots.

In 1919, Oscar Frederick Mossberg and his sons set out to create durable, reliable firearms that the average man could afford. Their first product was the Brownie, a .22-caliber, four-shot pistol. It featured four 2.5-inch barrels with a rotating firing pin, weighed just 10 ounces and cost all of \$5.

All told, 32,000 pistols were made between 1919 and 1932. Business was good, even during the Great Depression. At a time when most people had little money or work, Mossberg employed more than 300 people



← Mossberg 500 Centennial Limited Edition



← Mossberg MC1sc Centennial



After 100 and 70 years, respectively, Mossberg and Ruger are still producing top-quality firearms that earn the respect of American shooters without breaking the bank.

and had sold more than 1 million firearms and scopes.

During World War II, the company won government contracts for tooling gauges, training rifles, machine gun parts and Lend-Lease arms, and it even had a subcontract for the British Lee-Enfield rifle. During the post-war years, thousands of gun owners came to really know and trust Mossberg products, paving the way for generations of brand loyalty.

In 1961, Mossberg introduced a firearm that would come to define the brand: the Model 500 pump-action shotgun. Most appealing was the top-mounted safety in a location naturally and easily accessible by the shooter's thumb. The now-iconic 12 gauge then cost \$73.50 and had "features galore." Shooters could choose from six barrel configurations in lengths from 26 to 30 inches and chambered for 2¾- or 3-inch shells. In constant production for almost 60 years, it's been Mossberg's most successful model. In 2013, the 10 millionth Mossberg 500 was made. That's approximately 4,000 manufactured per week for more than half a century.

Over the years, Mossberg has introduced a variety of industry "firsts," such as the first

12-gauge shotgun that could accept 3½-inch shells, the first bolt-action rifle to reliably feed from AR-style magazines and the first range-finding scope, to name just a few.

In 2017, Mossberg introduced the Shockwave, which sports a bird's-head pistol grip and a 14-inch barrel. It's classified simply as a "firearm" because it was never designed to be fired from the shoulder.

Now 100 years old, Mossberg has plenty of reasons to celebrate. It is the sixth-largest firearms manufacturer in the U.S. and can claim more than 100 patents. Staying true to its spirit of innovation and refusing to rest on its laurels, Mossberg has over 70 new products on the market in 2019. Shotguns and rifles make up the majority of the new products, but the MC1sc pistol really stands out. Chambered in 9mm and equipped with a 3.4-inch barrel, the pistol weighs 19 ounces unloaded and is 6.25 inches long overall.

Then there's the company's new Retrograde Series, which pays homage to its past with retro-style 500 and 590A1 shotguns featuring walnut stocks and forends. The 590 Shockwave is also available as the "Nightstick" with the same retro design.

The centenarian company has a simple plan for the next century: "We intend to continue listening to our customers in delivering durable, dependable



← Ruger Custom Shop 10/22 Competition



and innovative firearms to the market. In essence, continuing the Mossberg tradition."

### STURM, RUGER & CO.

Bill Ruger had the design. Alex Sturm had the money. The first Sturm, Ruger & Company "factory" was a small building affectionately dubbed the "Red Barn" near a railroad depot. On September 15, 1949, the duo sold their first pistol to assembly department foreman John L. "Jack" Boudreau. By the summer of 1950, a backlog of orders had grown to a staggering 9,000 units. Sadly, Sturm died in 1951 at just 28 years old, but Bill Ruger continued building the company that bore their names.

Ruger introduced its first revolver in 1953. Other models

like the Blackhawk and Bearcat soon followed. The Deerstalker, 10/22, No. 1 and M77 rifles were added in the 1960s. The 1970s saw the introduction of the New Model transfer-bar revolver, Old Army blackpowder revolver, Mini-14 rifle and Red Label over/under shotgun. The company hit several production milestones in rapid succession:

**1970:** 1 millionth Old Model single-action revolver after 17 years of production.

**1978:** 1 millionth 10/22 semi-automatic rifle (14 years).

**1979:** 1 millionth Standard semi-automatic pistol (30 years).

**1979:** 1 millionth New Model single-action revolver (six years).

**1982:** 1 millionth Ruger Security-Six double-action revolver (10 years).

**1987:** 1 millionth Model 77 bolt-action rifle (19 years).

**2007:** 5 millionth 10/22 semi-automatic rifle (29 years).

**2012:** 1.3 million guns sold in just 228 days (from January 1 to August 15).

In 2000, Bill Ruger Sr. retired after 51 years at the helm. His son took over and retired in 2006, having spent 42 years working there.

Ruger is unique in that it's the only American firearms manufacturing company that's publicly traded on its own. In 2018, the M77 bolt-action rifle celebrated its 50th anniversary and the LCP semi-auto pistol celebrated its 10th anniversary. The company also started the Ruger Custom Shop to produce competition-grade SR1911

pistols and 10/22 rifles.

Now it's 2019 and Ruger is officially 70 years old. Its most recent catalog boasts over 40 different product lines with more than 600 variations, including more than 30 models that are new for 2019. The humble startup of just a few guys now has over 1,800 employees and five factories across the U.S., and while the original Red Barn still stands, it is now home to a real estate company. Sturm's \$50,000 investment sure paid off. Ruger is currently worth \$940 million.

Anniversaries are a time to reminisce. Given the company's success, I think Mr. Sturm and Mr. Ruger would have big smiles on their faces if they were here today to help celebrate. ●

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