

Reising's .30 Caliber:

ALMOST AN M1 CARBINE

A forgotten WW2 prototype returns to bark once more.

By Sgt. Gary Paul Johnston

In 1940 the U.S. Ordnance Department decided to seek a new weapon for close support which would provide more range than the Model 1911 .45 caliber pistol. Specifications were provided for a semi-automatic (and later a full auto) carbine which would be a departure from tradition in that it would not be a shorter version of the existing infantry rifle (the M1 Garand). This new carbine was to be a totally new weapon weighing just 5.5 pounds, and would fire a new intermediate range .30 caliber cartridge with a 110 grain bullet at 2,000 fps.

When the specifications were released, several manufacturing corporations were invited to submit designs to meet them. Among these companies were Auto Ordnance, Hyde, Savage, Springfield Arsenal, Woodhill, Harrington & Richardson and Winchester. We all know the ending to the story. The Winchester design won, largely because its action resembled that of the M1 Garand, and also because it was an efficient design. The M1 Carbine went on to live a life of its own, seeing a half

Author found it hard to tell he wasn't shooting the real thing when shooting the H&R .30 Carbine. The little gun ran quite smooth, and never malfunctioned despite 15 degree temperatures.



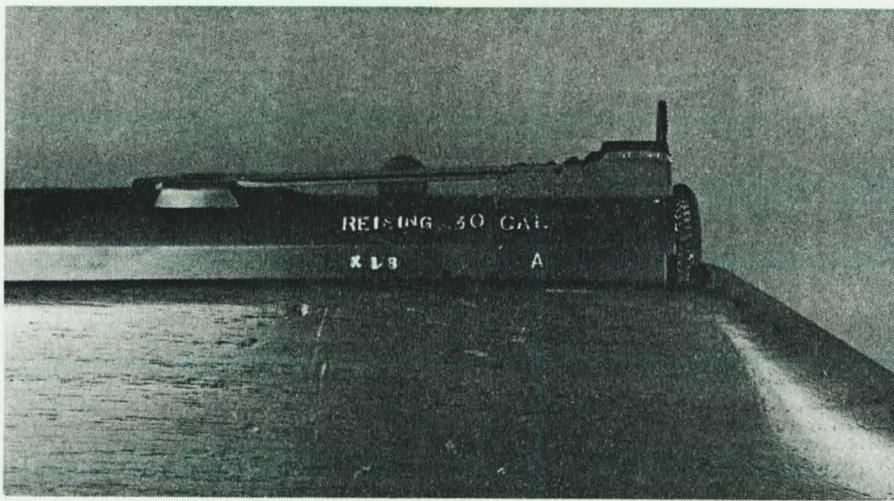
Sgt. Gene Pretzeus holds the H&R .30 Carbine (left) along with the M1 Carbine. Though quite different mechanically, the H&R Carbine feels and handles much like the M1.

dozen military variations, and several commercial ones, and the weapon is still in service in some countries.

Other Test Rifles

But what about those test weapons which were submitted for the M1 Carbine trials by the other companies competing for the original contract? Like so many other experimental weapons, they were either destroyed or forgotten about in a dark corner of some arms room, and if we're lucky we might see a photo of one of them from





The H&R prototype .30 Carbine we tested is the only one known to survive after military testing in 1940, and it bears serial number X18. This weapon was also built in a selective fire version. Our test piece was finished and fitted nicely, and it showed obvious signs of much hand work.

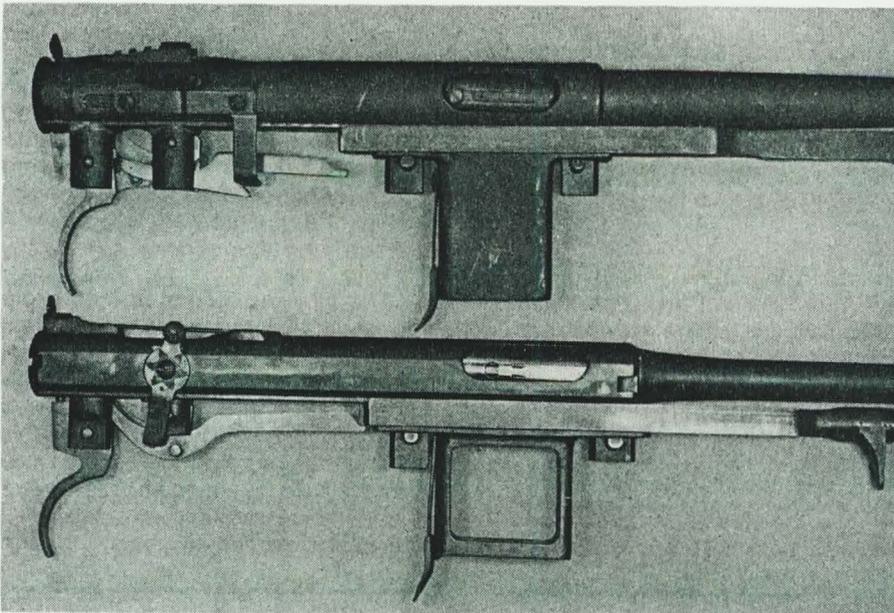
time to time. That is why we recently felt so fortunate, not only were we able to examine one of the original test carbine prototypes submitted to the Government, but we shot it too!

The experimental U. S. Carbine we tested was that submitted by Harring-

Reisings used a delayed blowback rear tilting bolt mechanism, and were actuated by a cocking handle recessed under the forend.

Basic Reising Design

Not surprisingly, the .30 Carbine H&R submitted for tests was built on a system which evolved from the .45 caliber Model 50 Reising. Instead of being a delayed blowback, however, the action is positively locked by the rear of the bolt being tilted up into a



ton & Richardson, of Worcester, Mass., and bore serial number "X18." H&R made a variety of weapons through the years including military arms like the M1, M14 and M16 rifles. Prior to that, they manufactured the Model 50 series of .45 ACP caliber submachinegun for the United States Marine Corps which had been designed by one of H&R's chief engineers, E. G. Reising. Many of these Reising SMGs are still in service with police departments across the country, and the gun was made in a semi-auto only carbine version as well. These .45

The H&R Reising Model 50 .45 caliber SMG (top) is compared with the receiver of the Reising .30 Carbine. The carbine, while noticeably different, evolved from the Model 50, but uses a locked breech instead of the retarded blowback system of the SMG.

recess in the top of the forged steel receiver. There it is locked and unlocked by the camming action of the slide just as in some pump action shotguns, but the Reising Carbine is gas operated. The piston is mounted at the front of the operating slide, and enters a gas

(Continued on page 77)

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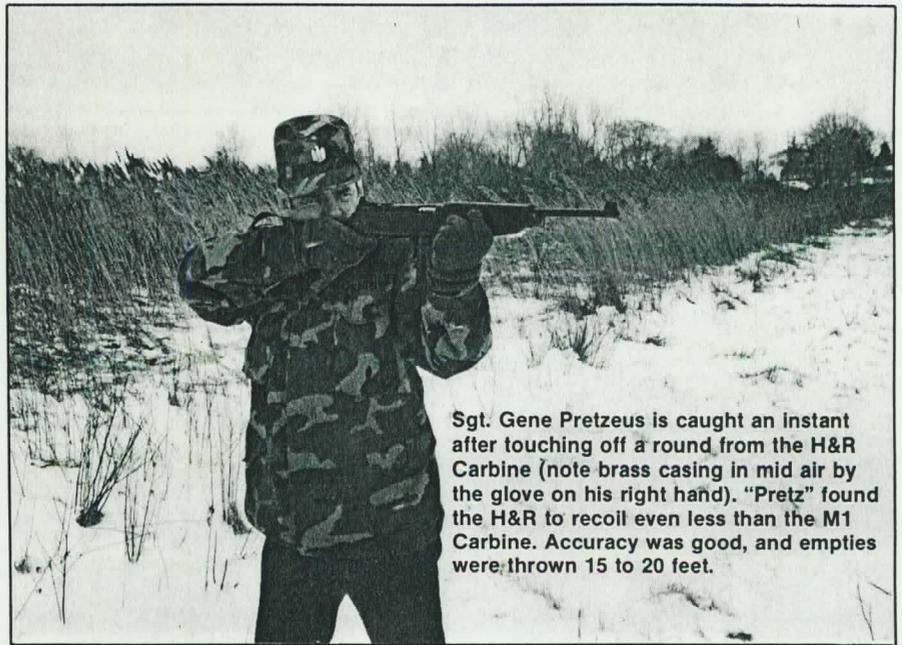
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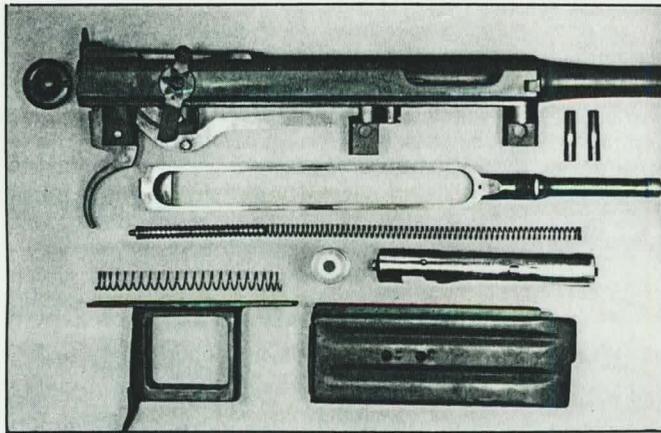
Almost An M1 Carbine

(Continued from page 25)

cylinder not unlike that of the M1 Garand, but much more shallow. Gas which is bled from a port in the barrel enters this cylinder, striking the piston, driving it to the rear. Remaining gas then vents out the bottom of the open forend. The action is relatively closed off from dirt, and the cocking handle, as with the .45 Reising, is in a recess under the stock. Since this cocking handle reciprocates, it could present a hazard if fingers of the support hand entered during firing. A pivoting safety switch is located on the right rear of the long receiver, and the weapons uses the same heavy cylindrical striker mechanism as the Model 50. The trigger pull, and lock time, is sluggish as is common with mechanisms of this type.



Sgt. Gene Pretzeus is caught an instant after touching off a round from the H&R Carbine (note brass casing in mid air by the glove on his right hand). "Pretz" found the H&R to recoil even less than the M1 Carbine. Accuracy was good, and empties were thrown 15 to 20 feet.



The Reising .30 Carbine field strips fairly easily for cleaning, and does not have an excess of parts. Still, it is easy to see why it was not chosen by the Military, as it appears rather delicate in some areas. The magazine of our test piece held only 12 rounds.

While built on the Reising system, the H&R .30 Carbine was designed around a number of inflexible U.S. Military specifications, and so, resembles the M1 Carbine to a surprising degree. Similarities are seen in the stock, handguard, band and swivel, front sight and especially the cut in the buttstock for the oiler. These similarities give one the overall impression that the weapon is more M1 Carbine than not.

Delicate Parts

We must say that we consider the M1 Carbine generally somewhat of a flimsy weapon, and the H&R prototype shares this trait. The rear sight does not seem as if it would take a good bump, and the trigger guard is held to the

stock by wood screws as is the case with the Model 50 SMG. The receiver group is retained in the stock by one master screw along with the barrel band. The magazine catch, too, is in essence the same as that of the Model 50. While the mechanism is fairly well closed to dirt, it would seem difficult to remove foreign matter should it enter the action, and this would, no doubt, cause malfunctions. The magazine is a double column type which tapers up to a single feed like that of the .45 caliber M3 and some other SMG's, as well as many current 9mm pistols. The magazine of the prototype carbine shown here holds 12 rounds.

The receiver of the Reising .30 Carbine is extremely long for the cartridge it uses, measuring 9.5 inches against 6.5 inches for the standard M1 Carbine. This unnecessary length translates to inefficiency, and to keep the Reising's overall length reasonable the barrel was made only 16 inches long as compared to 18 inches for the M1 Carbine. The result is a loss of an estimated 75 fps in muzzle velocity. With all this, the Reising Carbine is still

37.75 inches in overall length as compared with only 35.6 inches for the M1.

Test Fire

Understandably anxious to shoot this rarest of .30 Carbines, we gladly put up with 15 degrees and a 30 mph wind, with frequent trips to the truck to thaw out. The little Reising never missed a stroke, and threw empty cases 15 to 20 feet. Accuracy appeared to be good with offhand shooting at 50 yards, and we all agreed that the overall impression was that we were firing an M1 Carbine.

The Reising .30 Carbine was also later made in a full auto version which fared no better than the semi-auto model we tested. While it is easy to see why Winchester's .30 Carbine entry was judged superior to the Reising, the latter is still no slouch as far as the breed goes. It is smoother in operation than the Winchester, and with refinement could have been much improved. All in all, it is an interesting part of our small arms history. ■

CHARACTERISTICS: H&R .30 CALIBER CARBINE

CALIBER:	.30 U.S. Carbine
OPERATION:	Gas, semi-automatic
BARREL LENGTH:	16 inches, four grooves
OVERALL LENGTH:	37.75 inches
WEIGHT:	5.6 pounds
FEED:	12 round detachable staggered row box magazine
SIGHTS:	Front post with protective ears, rear adjustable for elevation and windage
MUZZLE VELOCITY:	1900 fps (estimated)
STOCK:	Black walnut
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