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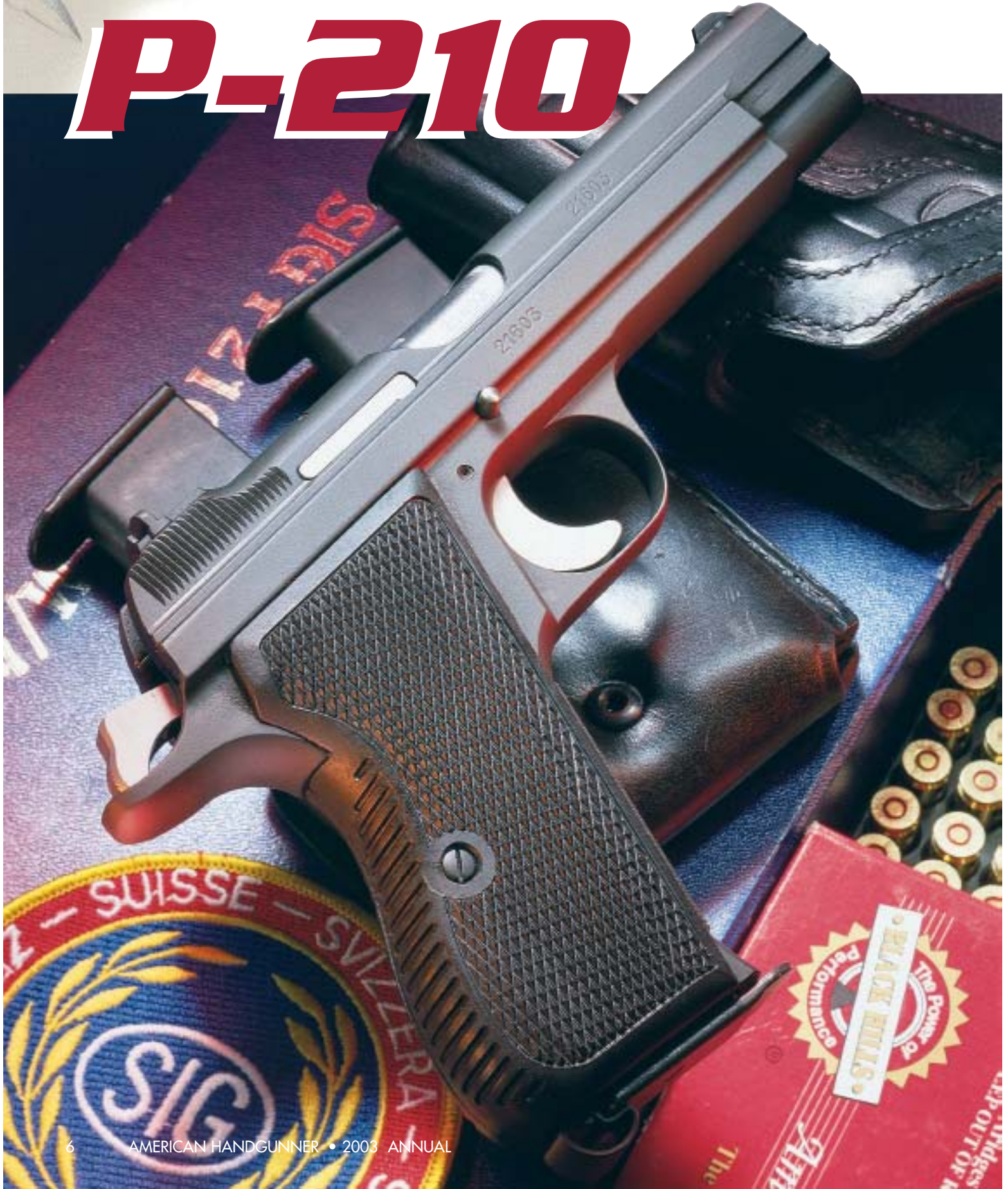
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# VICKERS

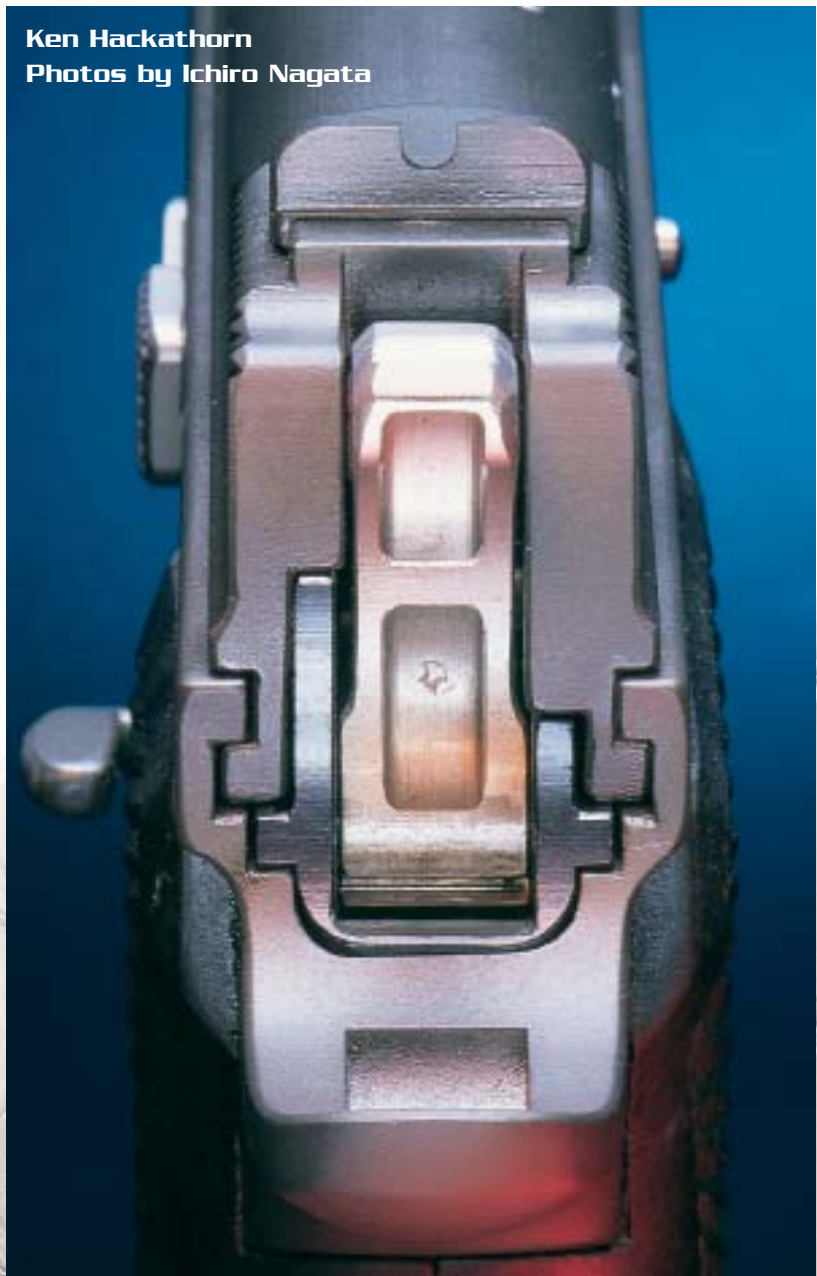
## P-210



**HOW CAN YOU  
POSSIBLY MAKE  
THE LEGENDARY  
SIG P-210 —THE  
WORLD'S FINEST  
9MM— ANY  
BETTER? HAND  
IT OVER TO  
LARRY VICKERS.**



**Ken Hackathorn  
Photos by Ichiro Nagata**



**S**erious students of handguns know there is one autopistol that has always demanded great respect when quality of manufacture and accuracy are discussed— the justly famous SIG P210. This 9x19mm pistol has gained a reputation as the best service pistol in the world. Always expensive, it has earned its legacy as the connoisseur's choice in 9mm handguns.

In my youth I often read about the P210 and I was impressed with the high retail price. It was always at least three times the price of a new Colt Government Model. When I finally got the opportunity to fire a P210, it was indeed very accurate.

In an era when the popular 9mm pistols were the likes of the Luger P-08, Walther P-38, Browning P-35 and S&W Model 39, the P210 out-shot these issue-grade service pistols by a wide margin. The Swiss-made 9mm simply out-classed the other Parabellums.

But, despite the P-210's graceful lines and superb feel, the trim pistol displayed a very disappointing tendency to hammer-pinch my hand at the web between the thumb and index finger. Depressing the manual safety was nearly impossible without changing my hand position, and the heel-release magazine



**Welded beaver-tail and extended safety made the P-210 much more user-friendly.**



was not as fast as the 1911 button.

The sear release on the P-210 is legendary, as the trigger pull on even the basic P-210-1/2 is of match pistol quality. On the P-210-6, the trigger pull is even more refined to near perfection. It could be said that SIG made a service pistol made to match pistol standards.

The slide to frame fit is superb, thanks to the slide rails riding in the frame, thus when you hand-cycle the slide on a P-210, the sensation is that of butter-smooth motion.

### **Rising Prices**

Each time I have considered owning a P-210, the price has convinced me to pass. Then, a couple of years pass, and the cost has risen until I wish I had purchased one when I had last considered it.

A few years ago my shooting buddy Larry Vickers showed me his second P-210. This was a Danish M49 P-210-2 pistol that had been sold as surplus. Vickers had already owned a P-210-5 for years and I have a target that he shot at 25 meters slow fire with five rounds in a group .875"x.675".

Vickers is known as the "David Miller of custom 1911s." Working full-time in the army, he does his pistolsmithing as a hobby. Vickers is more demanding of quality, fit, detail and accuracy work of

anyone I know in the custom 1911 business. His fondness for the P-210 reflects his standards of quality and performance.

We discussed the virtues of the P-210 and what should be done to make it better, a hard call on a gun as fine as a stock P-210. Not long after our talk I finally managed to purchase an M49 P-210-2 Danish pistol from the U.S. importer, D.S. Arms. This is the same D.S. Arms that manufactures the superb U.S.-made FALs from original Steyr blueprints.

My P-210 was a well-used but very serviceable M49, and the cost was more than reasonable considering the price of a new SIG Arms P210-6 is slightly over the \$2,000 mark.

### **Improving The Breed**

After a trip to the range, my earlier impressions of the P-210 were refreshed. The hammer bite was terrible. After only a couple of magazines, my hand was bleeding. Reaching the manual safety for a rapid Condition One carry method was out of the question. The sights were not zeroed, and the amount of light around the front sight blade made accurate shooting a chore. I simple must have more light around a rear sight notch if I am to align a front sight properly. Bifocals suck.

Speed reloads with the heel-magazine were less than amazing. So, a call went



*Original P-210 (top) and Hackathorn's Vicker's-enhanced version.*

out to Vickers and the topic of a "product improved" P-210 was discussed. First, my goal was to keep the P-210 what it is, not convert it into a 1911 clone. If I want a 1911 in 9mm, I'll ask Vickers to build me one.

Any discussion of an accuracy jobs is a waste of time with a P-210. They all shoot. No need of improvements in this department.

Reliability is just fine too.

Trigger job? Nope, you can't improve on something as sweet as a P-210 sear release.

What was needed were improvements in gun handling and the sight picture. Vickers agreed that he would do the job, although he noted that he is a 1911 pistolsmith and doesn't normally do P-210 work. As he says, they are very expensive pistols, beautifully made and certainly the best service pistol right out of the box. But, he has worked on a few and would agree to do mine.

He warned me that if parts had to be

replaced, the cost would be high. I was given to understand that working on a P-210 would not be cheap.

### **The Work Order**

I explained my requirements. I wanted a beavertail frame extension to protect the web of my hand. I'd like a checkered front strap to aid in a positive grip. The manual safety needed to be extended. I'd like to bevel the magazine well to aid in a speed reload. A carry bevel package on all the sharp edges would be nice and of course the sight picture had to be fixed. Lastly, the gun needed to be refinished.

Many P-210 owners like to have the heel release magazine device removed and replaced with a button like the 1911. Vickers offers this conversion using a S&W Model 39 magazine catch. I prefer to keep the heel release for my P-210. While not as fast as the push button modification with a Model 39 catch, it worked quite well once Vickers beveled the magazine well.

Note that the P-210 magazine is a modified Walther P-38 mag, as is the Model 39's. Note also that the magazine and release from the P-38 were copied by the Swiss when they designed the P-210, as well as the shape of the stocks.

Vickers sent the pistol's frame to Pete Single for welding up the beavertail and for checkering. Single is known in the trade as an outstanding craftsman, and his machine-cut checkering is flawless. My frame came back with a nicely contoured beavertail and 25 lpi checkering on the front strap.

The manual safety lever was extended and reshaped to allow my thumb to depress it with ease while executing the presentation of the pistol.

Vickers enlarged the magazine well with a very tasteful bevel job. All sharp corners were nicely beveled and radiused to make gun handling a snag-free experience.

One feature that is noted by all who work on the P-210 is just how hard the

*Continued on page 10*

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## VICKERS P-210

*Continued from page 9*

steel parts seem to be. SIG has always used only the best steel for the P-210 and heat treated the parts so they wear forever. Working on a P-210 quickly wears files and cutting tools. As one of my gunsmith friends said of the P210, "That gun is harder than woodpecker lips."

A new front sight was installed and shaped to give a good index. The rear sight notch of the original sight was milled out to provide a U-notch that was wider than the stock rear sight. Now my sight picture was much more clear and faster to acquire.


Not long ago pistolsmith Wayne Novak showed me a sight job for the P-210 that he offers. Using a Mark III P-35 low mount Novak rear sight and a Novak dovetail front sight with gold bead, the resulting sight setup may be the ticket for the P-210.

After range testing and sight zeroing, my M49 P-210 was sent off to Texas Armament for a beautiful black parkerizing finish. With the original black plastic stocks lightly bead blasted, the final product is not only great looking, but also performs like a precision Swiss watch.

The P-210, like a Rolex watch, has always had a following with people who demand top quality and performance. Both are over-priced and maybe even over-rated, but a Rolex GMT Master has been on my wrist for over 30 years. If the Vickers "product improved" P-210 will shoot with the high degree of precision and reliability for another 30 years as it did for the past 50, it wouldn't surprise me.

Decades ago, many small arms fans liked to point out that no American-made autopistol could equal the quality and precision accuracy of the P-210. Some observers even argued that America could never offer a manufactured gun that could equal the performance of the famous SIG P-210.

Well, that may have been true a decade or two back, but I have a S&W Performance Center Model 5906PC 9mm pistol that not only equals the P210, but also can often out shoot it. The Model 5906PC is much more user friendly, and costs half the price of the current P-210-6.

So, yes, the P210 is still a prize handgun to own, but it is no longer the only Rolex of handguns. Americans have proven they can build a 9mm that will do all that the P-210 can do, and even better. However, if you have ever dreamed of owning a sleek, slim and classic P-210, I know how you feel, and my Vickers P-210 finally fulfilled that craving. 

Readers can reach Larry Vickers at L.A. Vickers Custom, P.O. Box 25551, Fayetteville, NC 28315; phone: (910) 867-4047.

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