

## the armed senior citizen: carrying comfortably



Ease of carry or comfort is a big issue for all of us who carry, but especially for senior citizens. Many seniors have back problems and other physical challenges that make it painful or stressful to lug around a 1 ½ - 2 pound handgun all day long. People with wide girth and excess baggage in their middle tend to have trouble comfortably concealing a pistol worn either inside the waistband or in a belt scabbard or belt slide. Keeping one's pants up, even with a good gun belt, is just one of the problems encountered, and it's no fun to have to keep hiking one's pants up all day long! There has got to be a better way.

I know that noted firearms trainer Clint Smith has said that "a carry gun should be comforting, not necessarily comfortable." And there are many other sayings to this effect, for example, "While for day to day concealed carry, there is no gun small enough, in a gunfight, no gun will be big enough." However, there is truth to the saying that a "mouse gun" (a .22, .25, .32, or .380 caliber) in your pocket is better when you need it on the street than your .45 left at home.

Seriously though, day to day concealed carry can be a stressful chore if you cannot wear adequate cover garments and you live and work in an environment that is, to say the least, not gun friendly. I personally like to carry my Glock 23. However, especially as the summer rapidly comes upon us, it is becoming more and more of a chore. So, what's the solution? Sooner or later, if one insists on carrying uncomfortably, one will stop carrying. That is not a good answer to the problem.

Is the answer to carry a mouse gun? Perhaps. Certainly this option is better than no gun at all. Now, I am very partial to certain small caliber semi-autos such as the Seecamp .32, which is made like a Swiss watch and is very reliable. In fact, the Seecamp .32 or .380 riding in my front or back pants pocket in a DeSantis Nemesis pocket holster ([www.DesantisHolster.com](http://www.DesantisHolster.com)), in a Don Hume front pocket or hip pocket holster ([www.DonHume.com](http://www.DonHume.com)), or in a [PDS Nylon Concealed Carry Holster](#) is a favorite carry of mine.

This powerful little gun made by L.W. Seecamp Company of Milford, Connecticut ([www.Seecamp.com](http://www.Seecamp.com)) can be concealed virtually in any situation, and offers a great compromise in terms of its power to size ratio. There are times, however, where a more powerful option that is very comfortable and very concealable is desirable. I am talking about carrying a lightweight, small frame, five-shot snubby .38 Special or .357 Magnum revolver, such as a Smith & Wesson J-frame, or a small frame five-shot Taurus.

From the standpoint of power to size, these small frame snubby revolvers have it all wrapped up. True, they are only five-shot guns. On the other hand, the typical mouse gun carries seven to eight shots, but mouse guns are typically pretty difficult to shoot fast and accurately at any distance further than bad breath range.

Snubbies offer many advantages for daily carry by senior citizens, and people who are physically challenged in one way or another. Snubbies are simple. They do not have manual safeties. They do not have slides to manipulate under heavy recoil spring tension. They do not have magazines to load with rounds of ammunition under heavy spring tension. Snubbies do have heavy enough triggers that serve the function of being a mechanical safety. That is, you do not have to worry about firing the revolver by accident. It requires a long, deliberate, intentional trigger pull.

As aptly summarized by Syd Weedon on his very informative website, The Snubnose Files

([www.snubnose.info](http://www.snubnose.info)) , in his article entitled, "Age and the Snubnose", "Revolvers are easy to load, simple to operate, and reliable. Compact revolvers are generally more comfortable to carry and more flexible in their modes of carry than autoloaders. For those facing physical challenges, it is clearly the best option."

Snubby revolvers seem to have been invented for pocket carry. Their contours make them ultra-comfortable and concealable in a pants or jacket pocket. The exception would be if you are wearing a pair of pants or shorts with exceptionally shallow pockets. However, those pockets would have to be really shallow! I can fit my five-shot snubbies in a pocket holster in all of my cargo shorts, blue jean, and khaki pant pockets.

However, another problem is that the small frame revolver is difficult to master at distances greater than seven yards. Add a pair of Crimson Trace Lasergrips, and now you have a solution ([www.CrimsonTrace.com](http://www.CrimsonTrace.com)). These laser sights are now made for many of the mouse guns and all of the popular small frame Smith & Wesson revolvers.

In essence, Lasergrips make these small guns easier to shoot, and give you command control over a greater range. In fact, I have come to feel that my snubby is sort of naked without a pair of Crimson Trace Lasergrips on. Equipped with a set of Lasergrips, you can carry in your pocket a .357 Magnum revolver stoked with .357 Magnum, .38 Special hollowpoint, or .38 Special +P ammunition. With adequate practice, you can come to feel quite confident that you can defend yourself should you suddenly be thrust into a situation that requires deadly force. Furthermore, you can comfortably carry five or six additional rounds in a Bianchi Speed Strip in your pocket ([www.Bianchi-Intl.com](http://www.Bianchi-Intl.com)). Alternatively, you can carry a New York Reload, which is a second snubby in another pocket.

There are plenty of models from which to choose such as a Smith & Wesson aluminum frame Airweight (model 442, or 638, or 642), or a scandium frame Airlite (model 340, 340PD, or 342PD), or one of Smith's new M&P 360s or 340s. Carrying a lightweight snubby (or two) in your pocket is a great compromise in terms of concealability, comfort and power, and with adequate practice (and a set of Crimson Trace Lasergrips), quite comforting as well.

If you choose to go this route, make sure that the pocket holster you choose is not bulky, and that it covers the trigger guard. Also make sure that the pocket holster is specifically made for your model snubby, and is designed so that it stays in your pocket when you draw the gun and does not come out with the gun! That would be like hearing a CLICK when you expect a BANG!

There is a great advantage in being able to just stick your defensive revolver in your pocket and feel it disappear. You can carry it comfortably all day long without straining your back or sides and barely feel that it's there. But, knowing that it is there is very comforting. You can safely put your hand in your pocket and discreetly touch your lightweight snubby from time to time to remind yourself that you are well armed. You can sit down without feeling pinched, and get up without losing your pants! These are things that folks who don't carry take for granted, and these are things that those of us who sometimes carry full size pistols don't take for granted!

With the snubby, as with any handgun that you choose to carry, there is a caveat. You must practice with your carry gun. Small revolvers, especially those equipped with laser grips, can be shot precisely, but this requires training and practice. You should practice shooting drills with your snubby. Go slowly at first. Speed will come. Remember smoothness leads to speed. Don't sacrifice accuracy for speed.

Practice shooting using your snubby's sights. Practice point shooting your snubby at appropriate distances without the use of sights. Practice shooting your snubby with two hands and practice shooting it one handed, with both strong and weak hands. Practice your reloads. Practice drawing your snubby from your pocket and firing. Also do dry practice drills with your snubby at home to practice trigger control and sight picture acquisition, sight picture maintenance, and follow-through. In this regard, the reader is advised to refer to Kathy Jackson's excellent dry fire practice protocol which appeared in the May/June 2008 issue of this magazine.

In my next installment of this column, I shall focus entirely on laser grips and look at laser training

exercises and tactics. So, until then, carry concealed comfortably, be prepared, and stay safe.

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Bruce N. Eimer, Ph.D. is a licensed clinical and forensic psychologist, NRA certified firearms instructor, Florida and Utah concealed firearms instructor, and a professional writer who co-authored the Essential Guide to Handguns: Firearm Instruction for Personal Defense and Protection. As a co-owner of Personal Defense Solutions, LLC ([www.PersonalDefenseSolutions.net](http://www.PersonalDefenseSolutions.net)), Bruce offers individual shooting instruction and teaches concealed carry and handgun safety classes. He can be reached at (215) 938-7283 or [Dr.Bruce@PersonalDefenseSolutions.net](mailto:Dr.Bruce@PersonalDefenseSolutions.net)

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