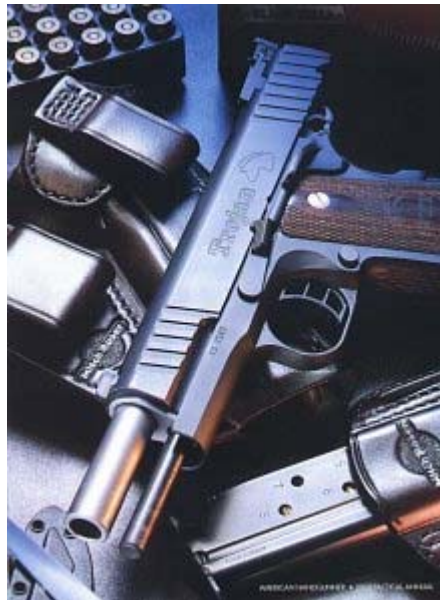




## American Handgunner - Tactical 2003 Annual

# TEXAS' TROJAN WORKHORSE

*Like the original,  
STI's Trojan is full of  
surprises.*



Dave Anderson  
Photos: Ichiro Nagata

A respected player in the tough 1911 autopistol market, well-known for high capacity frames developed for competition - it's safe to say STI is an innovative company. Their double-stack technology has been applied to produce a compact 10-shot defensive pistol called the VIP. And now with their fine Trojan model leading the way, the company is moving into the market of the traditional single-stack.



For a company in existence for not much longer than a decade, STI's progress has been, for lack of a better word, amazing. Its conception harks back to Chip McCormick, who throughout the 1980s roamed the Earth as one of practical shooting's elite. Twice he won the world speedshooting (Steel Challenge) championship, and placed second at an IPSC world shoot. In 1990 he retired from competition, and is now fully occupied making and distributing high quality parts and accessories for 1911-style pistols bearing his "CMC" trademark. McCormick enlisted the Tripp brothers, Virgil and Fred, to design and make parts. Both brothers were (are) engineers, and especially knowledgeable of computer-assisted design and computer-assisted manufacturing. Tripp Research handled development and production while CMC promoted and marketed the product.

### ***It Began With A Game***

As practical shooting grew in popularity in the '80s, competitors demanded matches with higher round-counts. A common complaint heard was: 'I don't want to travel 2,000 miles for a 3-day match and shoot just 150 rounds.' Touché'. Course designers responded with elaborate field stages for 25, 30, even 40 rounds.

Most 1911-style autopistols in major calibers (.38 Super and .45ACP) hold between 8 and eleven rounds. Most high-cap pistols of the time were 9mm, and relegated to score minor. At the time, most shooters felt as long as you could make a running reload, high-caps weren't a significant advantage.

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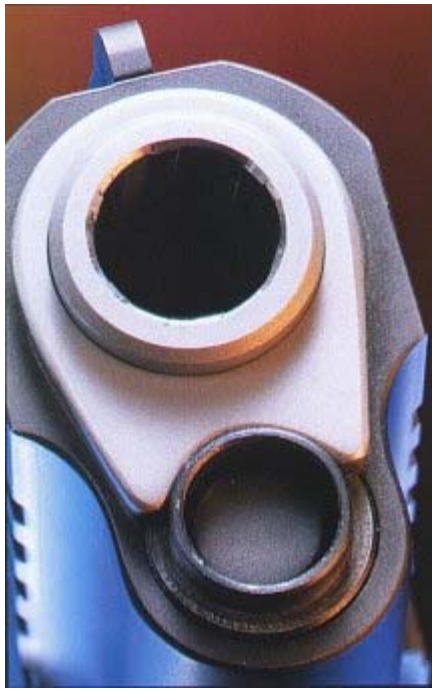
Then some enterprising shooters began adapting clones of the European CZ-75, notably the Springfield P-9, to 9x21 caliber. With handloads the cartridge made major, while the pistols held 16 rounds, even more if the magazines were modified. It quickly became clear that even if the shooter reloaded on the move, not having to reload beat the fastest reload every time. In a sport where stages are won and lost by fractions of a second, high magazine capacity was a decisive advantage.

At the 1990 USPSA nationals, Chip McCormick came to understand this. By early 1991, he and the design team of Virgil and Fred Tripp, manufacturing engineers Sandy Strayer and Ed Minshew, and master pistolsmith Steve Nastoff set out to design a high-cap, 1911-compatible frame.



The team developed a modular concept, a steel upper section fitted to a synthetic grip assembly. By the 1992 SHOT Show they had working models to display, and among IPSC shooters the new frame created a sensation. Here were all the advantages of the 1911 legendary reliability and durability, ideally located operating controls, superb trigger, familiar grip angle and handling characteristics combined with high capacity in the .38 Super.

Wilson Combat was one of the first to put a race gun on the new frame, and they put it in the hands of shooting great Jerry Barnhart. In fall 1992, Barnhart used it to win the USPSA nationals. The modular design has dominated practical shooting competition ever since. By 2001, 41 percent of USPSA limited-class competitors and 57 percent of open-class competitors were shooting STI pistols or frames. In the harsh arena of competition, the correctness of the design and the quality of its workmanship proved itself beyond any shadow of a doubt. Top competitors require the highest level of performance, reliability, and durability. If there were weaknesses in design, materials, or quality of workmanship, competition would have found them.



## ***Birthing Trends***

During the years ownership of design and manufacturing rights changed. In 1994 Sandy Strayer and Virgil Tripp went separate ways. Virgil Tripp retained the STI trademark. Using the "SV" trade mark, Sandy Strayer was, for a time, in partnership with pistolsmith and competitor Mike Voigt.

Then Dave Skinner came into the picture.

Like Virgil Tripp, Skinner is a shooter and a Texan. He is also a knowledgeable businessman. He and his wife Shirley had started a successful electronics business, which they sold to retire young enough to enjoy the rewards of their work. Skinner and Tripp met at local USPSA matches and became good friends. The timing was ideal. Tripp had a great product, considerable engineering talent, and a need for capital. Skinner had the business skills. Though not often as appreciated, growing and operating a successful business takes considerable talent and skill, just as it does to become a top pistolsmith or competitor. After a few years of retirement Skinner was eager to take on another challenge. He purchased STI and the partnership proved successful.

Then came a body blow the 1994 Crime Bill limiting new magazines for autopistols to 10 rounds. Many in the industry didn't see how the company whose only product was a high-capacity autopistol could survive. Which is when those often unrecognized entrepreneurial skills became evident.

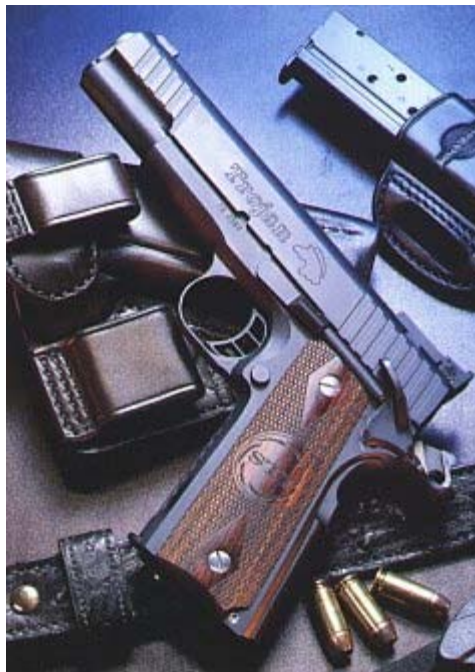
Dave Skinner realized compact, 10-shot pistols could be built using the same concepts that resulted in the 18-shot full-size pistols. Demand for compact, light, reliable and powerful personal defense pistols was expanding dramatically as state

after state passed "shall issue" concealed-carry laws. Others might have given up and moved on, no doubt pleasing the anti-gun crowd. STI chose to survive and prosper. Its product line expanded, as did its reputation for quality.

Among the new products is a line of 1911s built around the traditional single-stack magazine. One would think the appetite for 1911's would be sated, but this never seems to happen. The market hasn't diminished (if anything it has grown), but it has changed. Twenty years ago it was buy a 1911 from a reputable maker, then send it to the pistolsmith to have parts changed and the action tuned and fitted. There were some true master pistolsmiths around, and plenty of "parts changers." Some of the latter did an adequate job for a fair price. Some didn't.

Today's masters still have all the work they can handle, and a custom 1911 from one of them is still the epitome of functional art. However the parts changers have largely disappeared. The modern 1911 incorporates features proven in competition: good sights, extended triggers, slotted hammers, high-ride beavertail grip safeties, extended thumb safeties. They also include less obvious features, such as polished frame and barrel feedramps, properly made and tuned extractors, extended ejectors, and much more reliable magazines.

In the old days it was taken for granted that if you wanted a 1911 to be reliable with anything other than jacketed ball ammunition (and sometimes even with that), a tune-up by a skilled gunsmith was essential. No more. Successful manufacturers of 1911s understand that today's buyers expect, demand, reliability out of the box. The Trojan is STI's basic, full-size 1911. Current caliber offerings include 9mm, .40 S&W, .40 Super and .45 ACP. And it comes standard with the features current 1911 enthusiasts now expect: good sights, an extended thumb safety, beavertail grip safety (built up at the bottom to ensure it is depressed in a normal shooting grip), slotted hammer, lightweight extended trigger, checkered magazine release button. It is a fine example of the "modern" 1911, which to many of us is still the best looking and most useful handgun available.



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### ***Plump Offerings***

STI offers the choice of a fully supported and ramped barrel or a standard unsupported barrel. Both use a conventional barrel bushing, making the Trojan legal for IDPA competition as well as IPSC production class. A one-piece steel guide rod is used. I'll avoid the debate over the utility of guide rods except to say I have 1911s both with and without and don't worry much about either. With conventional barrel and barrel bushing it would be easy and inexpensive to use a regular short recoil spring guide and plug, if this is what the shooter wants.

Sights are a post front and the excellent STI adjustable rear. In appearance and function it resembles the famous Bo-Mar. Sight adjustments proved to be reliable and repeatable. Other sight options are available, including a ramped front sight, a Dawson fiber-optic front sight, and tritium night-sight inserts.

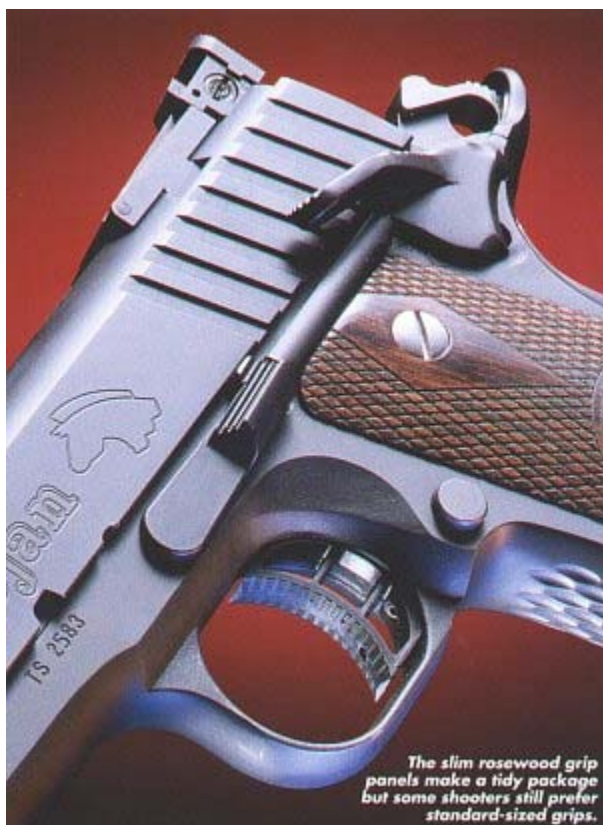
The sample pistol is in .40 S&W. Overall fit and finish is excellent. There is very little play in the fit of slide to frame, yet the slide cycles smoothly and consistently. Barrel fit at both barrel hood and bushing is likewise very good. There are no visible toolmarks. Blue finish is smooth and even. All markings are neatly and evenly stamped and the brand

name and model logos well done. Overall it is a handsome, very well made, quality piece of equipment. A hard-chrome finish is available at additional cost.

Functional reliability proved perfect. Approximately 400 rounds were fired, including several makes and styles of ammunition. All fed and functioned. Magazines dropped free whether the slide was forward or locked back. Five-shot groups, hand-held over sandbags at 25 yards, were in the 2.5 to 3 inch range. Operating controls, thumb safety, grip safety, magazine release, slide stop - all worked smoothly and properly. Thumb safety is on the left side only.

### ***Beauty Marks***

Grip panels are made of thin rosewood, making for a flatter profile and slimmer grip, which is preferred for some hands. The grip frontstraps have a unique, attractive, scalloping which the company calls "STippling." Checkering frontstraps has long been a favorite custom feature, though some shooters feel checkering has faults. It can be painful on the hand during long practice sessions, and snag on clothes. Well done it can be quite expensive, and badly done it looks terrible. The "STippling" looks good, doesn't snag, and provides a secure grip.



Although the thin grip panels look nice and do make for a more slender grip, I personally prefer standard 1911 grips. I fitted a set of synthetic Pearce grip panels, which required the use of longer grip screws that I had to remove from another 1911.

We're currently seeing a shift in practical shooting competition back to single stack 1911s and factory pistols. IDPA is flourishing, as are the new "Limited 10" and factory stock divisions of IPSC. Once again, STI is well positioned with the right product at the right time.

At the current list price of \$970, the Trojan is fairly priced, and it is truly a fine 1911. Options include hard chrome finish, fiber optic or tritium sights, and a drilled/tapped and extended magazine release button. Complete guns and some options are available for immediate delivery, while some options require a one to six-week wait. STI opened a custom shop, so if there's something you want not listed as an option, they may be able to help.

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**STI - Designed to Perform**

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