

# Loads for Vintage Shotguns

*by Tom Ceretto*

Every fall I get requests for low-pressure loads for vintage shotguns. Most of the requests this year have been for vintage 12 gauge side-by-sides. I have an old Parker that was made in 1928 that my father acquired in 1932. Even though it has fluid steel barrels and my dad and I have shot 1 1/4 ounce field loads through it, I no longer do so. I generally shoot 7/8 or 1 ounce loads powered by a single base powder.

It is easy to assemble very low-pressure clean burning shells with single base powders. The powders I have used in the past to load vintage shotgun shells are IMR PB and SR7625 and Alliant American Select. All three powders are easily found on dealers' shelves and have been favorites of reloaders for many years.

I suspect that most of the requests I have gotten are from grouse and partridge hunters. Even though the recipes I am offering are safe for vintage shotguns, I do not recommend using them in Damascus barreled shotguns unless they have been re-proofed by someone competent to do so. Never shoot any smokeless powder shells through a Damascus barreled shotgun that has not been re-proofed.

I have used the following loads for hunting ruffed grouse and shooting skeet and sporting clays in the past.

Case: 12 ga. Federal Gold Medal  
Primer: Federal 209A  
Powder: 21.5 gr. American Select  
Wad: CB 1100-12  
Shot: 7/8 oz. lead  
1,290 fps@6,900 psi

Case: 12 ga. Federal Gold Medal  
Primer: Federal 209A  
Powder: 19.0 gr. American Select  
Wad: CB 6100-12  
Shot: 1 oz. lead  
1,200 fps@5,910 psi

Case: 12 ga. Federal Gold Medal  
Primer: Federal 209A  
Powder: 20.5 gr. American Select  
Wad: CB 6100-12  
Shot: 1 oz. lead  
1,250 fps@6,790 psi

I recently shot the above 7/8 ounce load at sporting clays. It demolished biodegradable clay targets with alacrity through improved cylinder and light modified barrels when I pointed it correctly. Recoil and report are very mild.

Case: 12 ga. Remington STS  
Primer: Remington 209P  
Powder: 22.0 gr. IMR PB  
Wad: Remington TGT12  
Shot: 7/8 oz. lead  
1,250 fps@6,000 psi

Case: 12 ga. Remington STS  
Primer: Remington 209P  
Powder: 25.0 gr. IMR 7625  
Wad: CB 1100-12

Shot: 1 oz. lead  
1,250 fps@5,900 psi

Case: Winchester AA HS  
Primer: Winchester 209  
Powder: 26.0 gr. IMR PB  
Wad: CB 1118-12  
Shot: 1 oz. lead  
1,250 fps@6,200 psi

The six loads listed are the only ones I have personally loaded for my own use. I had to go back and look at my old notes for some of the loads. Recently I have been loading 7/8 ounce loads in Federal Gold Medal cases using American Select. There are many loads listed in the Alliant and IMR reloading guides that can be used in vintage shotguns.

The criteria I use when selecting loads is to keep pressure below 7,000 psi. There are many recipes in reloading guides that are under 7,000 psi using double base powders, but I like to use single base powders when recommending loads for vintage shotguns. The reason for this is that single base powders generally have a slower chamber pressure rise than double base powders. If your vintage shotgun is in good condition with solid steel barrels, feel free to use faster burning double base powders like Clays, Red Dot or 700X with recipes that have pressures below 7,500 psi in 7/8 and 1 ounce loads.

### **Federal Supports Non-Shooting Causes**

As all of you are quite aware, ammunition manufacturers have long supported conservation organizations like Pheasants Forever, The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and others with specially designated ammo releases that share the profits with those organizations. Recently Federal Cartridge Company made a special run of ammunition supporting breast cancer research. I am sure some of you have noticed pink Federal Cartridge Company empty pink shells or empty pink boxes lying about your gun clubs. Or even better, you may have purchased and shot some of those Top Gun pink loads. I hope you did. It was the first time a special run of ammo was designated for an organization not connected with the shooting sports or hunting that I am aware of. Breast cancer research is something my wife Sallie and I support because my daughter was diagnosed with breast cancer. It was detected early and she has made a full recover from her surgery.

Federal is now manufacturing red white and blue ammo in specially designated boxes in support of the Wounded Warrior Project. As a partially disabled veteran myself, this program is very dear to me. Please look for the special Top Gun loads with the red white and blue ribbon on them when you are purchasing ammunition. They are excellent loads at an attractive price and your purchase supports a very worthy cause. I vowed when I started writing to never shell a manufacturer's product, but I will make an exception for this program. Buy them.