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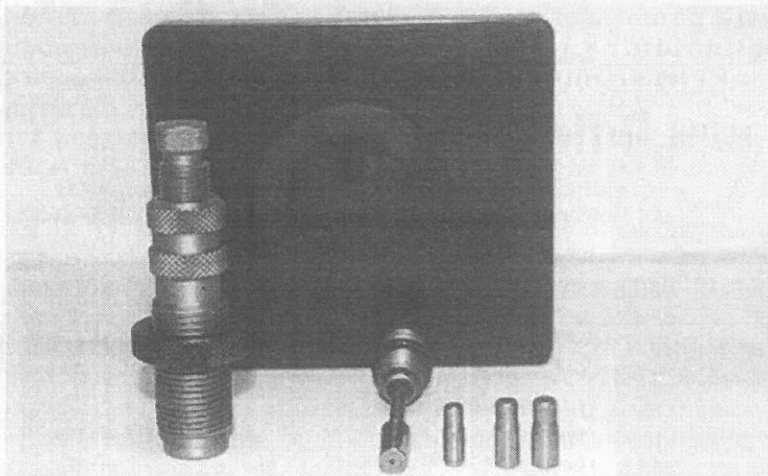
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FORMING CASES



Tapered neck expander sets, such as these from CH4D Die Company, make necking cases up a lot easier and practically eliminate both neck splits and the need to anneal cases before expanding necks more than one caliber.

MANY PEOPLE WOULD REGARD CASE-FORMING AS A RATHER ARCANE SUBJECT THESE DAYS. After all, wildcatting is neither as popular nor as necessary as it was in the days before such a proliferation of factory loads existed as we now have. However, an instance that I was recently told about brings home the twin lessons that case-forming is still needed from time to time and that the "art" of doing so is not as well known by younger shooters as it once was.

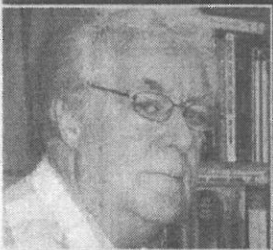
It seems that a friend's son purchased a rifle chambered for the 7mm Winchester Short Mag a few years ago, but now is unable to find ammunition for it. Being a budding handloader, the young lad decided to buy some more readily available .270 WSM and simply neck it up to 7mm.

While this seems logical, it is simply a bad idea. When Winchester brought out their line of short magnum cartridges, but before actually building any in 7mm, they realized that in some rifles chambered for the .270 WSM it would be possible to insert a loaded 7mm WSM round, and if fired, this could prove disastrous. The Winchester engineers, therefore, did the same thing Remington had done years ago with the .280 Remington — they moved the case shoulder forward for the 7mm WSM. When a shorter case is fired in a longer chamber (assuming the firing pin will be able to set the primer off at all), the fired case

will stretch to fill the chamber. Too much stretching can cause the case to separate just forward of the solid portion of the case head — not a good situation. This was happening to my friend's son.

In this particular instance, there were several things the young lad could have done. He could have seated the bullet out far enough to engage the rifling, thereby holding the case rim against the bolt. Sometimes this will permit the case to expand to grip the chamber wall and the case will stretch at the thinner neck/shoulder area rather than in front of the solid case, and sometimes this will prevent a case separation. Or he could have necked the case up to 30 caliber, then partly back down to 7mm before loading. Theoretically, this will again hold the case firmly against the bolt and will allow only the shoulder to move forward, thus creating a new case. Or he could have used my favorite method of fire forming — the so-called Cream Of Wheat (or C-O-W) method.

With this method, you take a primed "parent" case, dump in 5 to 15 grains (depending upon the size of the case) of a fast-burning powder such as Alliant Bullseye, then fill the case up to the mouth with C-O-W. (Yes, some other cereals will work, but of all the ones I have tried, C-O-W works best.) Next, insert a wad of some sort over the C-O-W (I use the wax-type stuff dentists use to make impressions of your teeth; simply place the wax sheet over the case and press a wad into the mouth.) Lightly lube every other case (I use R.I.G.) to assure the case sets back upon firing, and load the case into the chamber. This can be a bit of a trick if using a rifle with a controlled round feed type of bolt, but unless you have 10 thumbs, I'm sure you'll figure it out. Take the gun outside, and with the muzzle pointed upward, pull the trigger. Out comes a 99-per-



**PRO STAFF
J.C. MUNNELL:**

J.C. Munnell has been an avid handloader for over 30 years. His interest spans European combination guns to the most powerful revolvers, and includes all facets of predator and varmint cartridges. His loading room houses more than 150 sets of dies from conventional to exotic. He is first and foremost a passionate experimenter who takes the art of rolling your own to a new level.

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FROM THE BENCH

cent formed case fitted to your chamber. I have lost precisely one case — out of literally thousands formed — using this method and I strongly suspect it was defective to begin with. I also form Ackley Improved cases this way.

A word of caution or two: The ejecta can be dangerous at close range (remember Jon Eric Hexum), and the sound of the firing is almost as loud as with a fully loaded round. The first time I tried this, it was in my basement with the barrel pointed into a large and full plastic trash can. After the dust settled — and there was much of it — and I could hear what my wife was yelling, I meekly swept up the whole darn room, dusted everything off and then took her advice and got the blazes out of the house. Likewise, don't even do this outside if you have close neighbors — a trip to the range will

save friends or a visit from the local constabulary. Still, this method will serve for much of the case-forming you are likely to have to do. If the case is of the proper head diameter and is of generally the proper configuration, i.e., rimless, bottle-neck, etc., this will form the case with far less stress than would firing a loaded round.

Other case-forming operations are quite often simple, such as necking up or down brass in order to form a wildcat such as a 6.5/06 from .25-06 or .270 Winchester, or making a .224 TTH from 6mm Remington. Even such complex-appearing operations as making a 9x57 Mauser from .35 Whelen are actually just a matter of pushing the shoulder of the .35 Whelen case back and trimming the case.

RCBS offers many case-forming sets (available from Huntington Die Specialties) for such complex opera-

tions as making .256 Winchester Magnum from .357 Magnum. Less radical forming can often be done with dies on hand if you have been around long enough to accumulate a few dozen different die sets. Years ago, I successfully made 5.6x61 VHSE cases from Norma 9.3x62 brass, using five different dies already on hand, although some, like the 7.5x55 Swiss dies, were fairly exotic in their own right.

Hornady, for instance, along with CH4D Die Company, will custom-make all sorts of strange and wonderful dies with which you can perform absolutely fine case-forming operations. CH4D's Dave Davison once made me a swaging die with which to form a belted case from a .30-06. In this instance, it was a .224 Ackley Belted Express, but believe it or not, the .240 Weatherby Magnum was originally formed from .30-06 in this

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FROM THE BENCH

manner. Likewise, Hornady offers hydraulic case-forming dies which can be used in a standard "O-type" press with the simple addition of a special shell holder. A few years ago, I had the good folks at Hornady make one of these rascals for me to form a 9.3 Payne Express — a radiused-shoulder rimless .348 Winchester Improved of sorts.

Then, too, many of the formerly obsolete American blackpowder rounds and wildcats are now available from such sources as Buffalo Arms and Quality Cartridge, often even properly head stamped. Also, many of the metric rounds are now imported through places like Huntington Die Specialties. While this obviates the necessity of, say, making 9.3x74 R cases from .444 Marlin brass, it's still necessary to form 11.15x65R cases from the 9.3x74R, but at least now it can be

done. Also with the availability of new 7.62x54R and 6.5x53R cases, once again 10.75x52R brass can be made — very important for all three people who own a rifle so chambered! Yeah, I'm one.

Even the old Newton rounds, like the .30 and .35 Newton, can now be formed, thanks to the relatively new .375 Ruger case. The .280 Ross, long obsolete, can even be made from this stuff; all you need are the correct forming dies.

Then, too, if you are simply cheap (like me) or just have some extra time on your hands and someone has given you a lifetime supply of .30-06 cases, you could make brass for your favorite .25-06, .270 Win, .280 Rem., .35 Whelen, or your .308 Win, .22-.250, 9.5x57 Mauser, or 6.5x.270 Improved Stegall for that matter. While some people would look with horror

on anyone so life-challenged as to wish to do such things, I find it fun, and it sure as blazes beats watching some damnable reality show on television or sitting in front of a computer or smart phone watching mechanical aliens beat the bejeebus out of quasi-intelligent giant radioactive squids.

Case-forming sure ain't rocket science, although it does take some thought and some imagination. 🐾

INDUSTRY CONTACTS:

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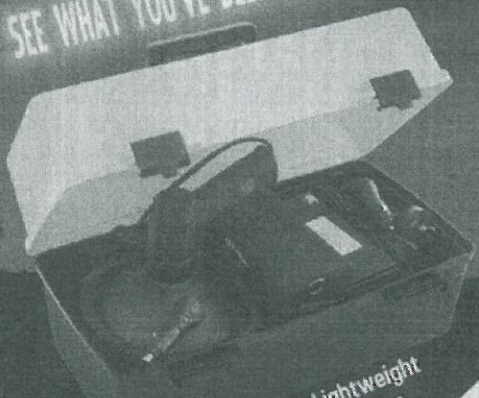
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