

# The Los Angeles Silhouette Club

41 Magnum... (Sunday's Child)

By: PACO

REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION OF [LEVERGUNS.COM](http://LEVERGUNS.COM)

This magnum round is often spoken of as controversial. But I really find it is more opinionated... that is everyone seems to have an opinion about it and it's capabilities. And of course I have mine.

I first used the 41 magnum game harvesting, in a Ruger Single Action Blackhawk. We were enjoying the first planting season in our new wilderness home in 1970. And had just finished planting a 100 by 100 foot garden for family use. I was in the tub washing away the tiredness and dirt. When my wife hurried into the bathroom and announced something big and ugly was in our new garden, lurching on our labors and future food supply.

Dressed only in soap suds and the afore mentioned 41 Magnum, I stepped out on our 44 foot long back deck. Looking down and into the garden about 40 yards away. I could see something large, dark and dirty. But short and somewhat stumpy in appearance, munching our newly planted tomato plants! My first shot was where I figured the shoulder was and the animal went down squealing and screaming so effectively I shot it again, this time in the head... lights out. I went back and finished my bath.

Finally clean and dressed I gave my farmer neighbor a call, to face the music. Explaining that I probably shot one of his pigs, and that I would pay market price for it. He just laughed and told me his pigs were very safely penned in. And in all likelihood I had shot a feral pig. These were somewhat common in the area we were in. Descendants of the pigs released into the wild by the farmers in the 1930s when the market was gone, and they couldn't keep up the feed bills and bank notes.

Manley Chanault my neighbor owned the farm next to us about ½ mile away. He brought over his big front loader, hauled the pig up and out of the garden. Back a ways into the woods we took it's head off, legs from knees down, and gutted it. Those scraps were left for the Southern States Sanitation Service, as we called the vultures. There were so many in those days a whole animal would only last days. (I did keep the tusks).

This feral pig with all the above parts gone, still tipped the cattle scales at just above 400 lbs. It was the largest pig or boar in the wild, I have taken or even seen since then. It's bottom tusks were 5 inches one side and 5 1/4 inches on the other side. I have them mounted on a desk/pen set. They were the largest taken in 1970. I'm sure by now that record is broken, with the introduction of the Russian strain of Boar into the wilds of Virginia, Tennessee,

and a number of other southern states. Interbreeding (breeding between different but related species) certainly by now has taken over and spread far and wide, pigs are very prolific.

The meat was very good, not tough like we thought it would be. It had a bit of a wild taste, but it was pork no doubt. No bacon, but plenty of choice cuts of everything else. Not a bad trade for a few tomato plants.

The load I used on that big pig was commercial. The gun was so new I didn't have brass yet. And in those days I used to shoot commercial loads, and then reload the brass, once I had a good supply. Too expensive to do that today. It was the jacketed hollow point load, out of the six inch barrel. So it was probably a 210 grainer at mayhaps 1350 fps and 850 foot pounds of muzzle energy.

My reload for this round, in my records of the times, shows that I used a 220 grain cast semi wadcutter (Keith) over 20 grains of Herc 2400. This was a warm load... and I have never clocked it's velocity out of that gun. But years later that load out of a six inch S&W mod. 57 gave 1425 fps/992 ft. lbs.

I have owned five 41 magnums of Ruger and S&W manufacture. All of them were accurate and deadly. But so are a lot of guns and calibers. What I find essential about this caliber, is that it is powerful but with a very flat trajectory out to 150 yards. When shooting the iron rams for example, I can always get better scores with the 41 magnum over the 44 mag or the 454 mag. It's not the recoil difference in favor of the 41. Because with a fully loaded 41 and a fully loaded 44, there is little felt difference to me, with the recoil of both.

Besides when you fire thousands of 454 Mag's every year. That is the heavy bat, that makes the other forty calibers seem somewhat lighter in recoil. It is the 41's extensively flatter trajectory, that does it for me. It seems that I have much more chance hitting long range targets with the 41 over the 44 and various 45s.

When I hunt with a handgun, I try to keep live game harvesting to under 100 yards. When using the 357 magnum heavy loaded, on medium game, I try to stay as close to 50-75 yards as possible. One of the things I have perceived, at least for me, is that out to 50-60 yards or so, the heavy loaded 357s and the 41s seem to kill equally. Generally in animals the size of antelope, small deer, and coyotes. Penetration of the 180 grain 357 round seems as deep as the 41 mag 210/220 grain loads (cast semi wadcutters in both).

When bigger game and longer ranges are on the hunt, the 41 outclasses the 357, and since I am wedded to the .357/8 bore size ... that says a lot from me for the 41 magnum. I have killed scores of deer with the 357 magnum. Most 50 to 75 yards, in heavy treed forest type land, but also a number of them out to 100 yards. I find the 357 effective on deer sized animals. But as I have said often, there are better calibers... and certainly the 41/44/45 sized calibers are

heavy hitters, especially when the range gets long. I have always liked the semi wadcutter cast bullet, in the forty calibers. I like expanding jacketed bullets in the 357magnum. Sierra's 170 grain Power Jacket and Remington's 180 grain jacketed/scalloped hollow point are the two that lead the pack for me now. They both will expand, even out at 100 yard plus ranges when loaded to 357 magnum pressures. My heavy load for this bullet is 15 to 15.5 grains of Herc 2400 for well over 1450 fps and 800 ft. lbs. of muzzle energy. But the 220 grain 41 magnum bullet at 1400 plus fps gives over 950 ft. lbs of muzzle punch. And for larger game at over 100 yards especially, it is needed.

Also the 357 (my load) with a 2 inch high impact at 50 yards hits 'on target' at 100 yards and down 9 inches at 150 yards... that's just past it's effective hunting range for animals the size of deer and such. The 41 magnum's drop figures are almost identical to the 357 in these two loads. At 100 yards they are both traveling at 1150 fps plus... but the 41 caliber bullet is carrying 659 ft. lbs. of energy, where as the 357 is more than 150 ft. lbs. below the 41, at 501 ft. lbs. And passed 100 yards, handgun bullets from handguns, need every ounce of power they can carry.

Is this damning the 357? ... Absolutely not! Like I said out to 100 yards, it can be very effective. Inherent in all this long range shooting is of course accuracy and that spells ... PRACTICE... AND MORE PRACTICE. I have a routine that has become known as **Paco's Rule...**

### **PACO'S RULE...**

You want to become a long range rifle or handgun shooter and hunter... then do this...

*One practice round for every yard you think you may shoot at game, out to the furthest you think you might attempt a shot.*

If that is 150 yards, then the minimum is 150 rounds at various ranges, per practice session. Usually I take a 5 gallon white plastic type bucket out with me, and lots of paper patching material. When I am consistently hitting that bucket at all ranges out to the furthest I will attempt a shot... with that gun and load. Then I know I'm ready to hunt with it. I don't like terms like middle magnum, or the 44 magnum's little brother and such in describing the 41 magnum. It is it's own magnum, and it is it's own caliber with plenty of power. And the handgunner that gets to know his gun and load with this caliber, is well armed and ready to hunt.

The reasoning behind Elmer Keith's move from the 45 Colt cartridge to the 44 Special was because the Special being narrower than the 45 Colt round, it left more steel in the chambers and that gave more strength and allowed for heavier loads... Keith made the decision over seventy-five years ago. And time has not changed the truth and efficacy of the facts of his decision. Certainly the same

facts are inherent in the comparison of the 41 Magnum to the 44 magnum. More steel in the chambers of the 41 Magnum, more strength.

The 41 Mag's head size just before the rim is .434, the 44 is .457, and the 45 Colt is .480 (parts of an inch). Since the extra thickness of .023 in steel in the 44 Special over the Colt round, allowed Keith to go to 1200 fps with his 250 grain bullet. The old books I have show a pressure of 18,400 psi with 17.5 grains of IMR4227, and 21,500 psi with 17.5 grains of Herc2400 in the 44 Special (these pressure figures are from a time when a pound of powder was only a dollar/fifty). So obviously the 41 Mag with .023 more thickness over the 44 mag is also going to have more strength.

That's thicker than it sounds, about the thickness of a strong finger nail. It's not so much having that extra thickness in the cylinder steel of the 41 mag, but in actually having that extra thickness inside the bolt cut... that's what counts... Because the bottom of the bolt cut is the thinnest area over the chamber. And most times it goes first, and then the rest of the chamber follows when a revolver blows or scatters. Also important, it's extra strength between the chambers, another weak area... and it is critical to strong guns.

S&W revolvers have the bolt cuts over the chambers... almost in the middle of their six shot handguns. Ruger off sets the cut so it is well into the steel between the chambers, giving a great deal more strength... the Colt and it's clones and most other revolvers are also right over the thinnest part of the chambers or a little to one side... but not enough.

Plus as we have stated before, and certainly Jim Taylor has mentioned and explained it well in his writings... many revolvers that look exceptionally beefy, but are double actions can develop real problems with a constant diet of heavy loads.

Because the double action parts are small, close in tolerances, and not very strong. S&W for example redesigned the lock work on the Model 29 series... probably all of the N-Frames by now, so that the timing and chamber alignment would not go out... with heavy loads. Also the dynamics of shape tell us that the smaller cylinder of the same material is stronger. The cartridge case of the 41 mag cartridge, is then stronger than the 44 cartridge case... made of the same brass and thickness. (That should raise some eye brows and get some comments).

What does all this mean to a Mega-Mag loading of the 41 magnum...? I can safely load my Ruger Blackhawks in 41 magnum, to 50,000 psi. And since the large ammo manufacturers keep most of their magnum loads around 30,000 to 35,000 psi... we are talking a real power jump in my guns. For example 20 grains of Acc#9 under a 210 grain hard cast Keith gives 40,000 psi and 1670 fps/1300 ft. lbs of muzzle energy... not bad. But 18.5 grains of Acc#9 under a

hard cast 240 grain bullet and 43,000 psi 1660 fps and just under 1470 ft. lbs of muzzle energy.

The top hand load in Lee's Modern Reloading for the 240 grain bullet in the 44 magnum, hits just under 40,000 psi with 1548 fps (24/H110) and 1277 ft. lbs. muzzle energy. Now even though the 240 grain 41 mag load here carries about 200 lbs more muzzle energy over almost the same pressure with the 44 magnum 240 grain load... we are still splitting hairs... Hit an elk right with any of the three loads above, and it's winter's meat. Plus as my article on the 44 mag shows it to can be loaded in the right handguns to Mega-Mag loadings that make it almost equal in power to some of the lower 454 loadings...

What I am trying to show here is that the 41 magnum's potential is much higher than is normally thought, not necessarily better than the 44 mag or less in some way. Only that my 41 Mag's in strong guns can do the job on any heavy game animals in the lower 48 states, and much of Alaska's also. And that the 41 magnum has some excellent features to it. Flatness of trajectory, by the way is one of them... along with very fine accuracy with almost all powders. In fact Blue Dot powder while not the top velocity getter, has got to be the top accuracy getter in every 41 mag I've owned. **It's the champagne of the 41 Magnum powders.**

John Taffin's listed loads in his article in Back Issues on Sixgunner.com are very helpful.... So look for that. Pressure figures for the 41 are not really hard to find... but please remember as I always state. Pressure is so tied to variables in handloading, components, tolerances in handguns and temperature, that the listed pressures must be looked at as a phrastic indicator at best.

And a warning I try to give often. I have found and I think it is well accepted today that pressure rises in handguns (or any other guns), are not linear. In other words when some folks look at a suggested load in a reloading book, and find a accuracy load ... say 44 Mag load of 21/Herc2400/240 SWC... at 1325 fps... and a more powerful load beside it of 23/Herc2400/240 SWC at 1450 fps. They sometimes think that 2 grains more powder gave 125 fps between those two loads, so if they go two more grains they'll get to 1575fps! Not a good idea....as we know... but unfortunately done too often with nasty results...

Using the same linear logic with pressure not velocity, is really bad news. Pressure figures are even more dilatory then velocity figures. Looking at 33,000 psi in the load above (21/2400/240), and the pressure of 36,000 psi with 23/2400/240, and then thinking 2 more grains from 23 to 25 will only raise the pressure another 3000 psi can cause real problems.

So I give pressure data as usual for your information as a guide...

One of the surprising powders I have used in the 41 Magnum with light bullets is IMR800X. It gives loads with a 170 grain JHP that just puts the 357 out to pasture. And the Ruger's or N-Frame S&Ws can take 15 grains of this powder under a 170 grainer and it gives almost **1800 fps** for over 1200 ft. lbs. at **40,000 psi**. It is a flying bomb... one feral pig got it in the ribs. We were hunting coyotes and a group of about six pigs jumped up at 30 yards away. (We had a ranch outside of Tucson that had free chase hog hunts) I hit the first one I lined up on in the bunch and let it have a 170/41 mag. The jacketed hollow point didn't exit, but did get fairly deep going through a rib and stopping in the off lung... the damage was extensive and the less than 200 lb porker ran about 40 yards and stopped. I shot it again but it wasn't necessary. I just didn't want a long chase. It died quickly right there.

With Blue Dot 16 grains under a 170 JHP will give near **1670 fps/1050 ft. lbs.** at **36,900 psi** ... but I approach this one carefully when I use a new gun ... because Blue Dot is one of those shotgun powders like 800X, that will geometrically jump in pressure with certain variables. With Herc 2400 and a 210 grain SWC 18.5 grains will give around **1450 fps**. At **35,000 psi** it's a normal 41 magnum load. But 20 grains of the same powder and the 210SWC, gives my Ruger Blackhawk near **1550**, and at 21 grains the primers are beginning to show flatness and real pressure signs. Yet 20 grains of Accur#9 and the same hard cast 210 gr. SWC bullet, will go to **1670fps/1300 ft.lbs.** And only **40,000 psi**. 19 grains Acc#9 with a 210 grain jacketed bullet will put it into around **1600 fps and 42,000 psi**.

But the all time killer bullet for the 41 magnum in my battery is the 240 SWC in the Keith shape or Cast Performance's WFN. 18.5 grains of Accurate#9 under the Keith gives it **1560 fps/almost 1300 ft. lbs.** But the penetration is just incredible. It will go long ways thru an animal as big as an Elk with ease. It had no problem with a steer twice the weight of an Elk. The steer was looping away from me at 40 plus yards, the bullet entrance hit low under the tail, went all the way forward and broke the front right leg!

I have pushed this bullet to near 1650+ fps out of a seven and a half inch Ruger ... **I know the pressure is up to 50,000 psi or higher**. I recommend it to no one ... and it kills medium to large game near the same as the 1400 to 1550 fps. **On paper the 240 @ 1650 to 1700 fps has over 1500 lbs of muzzle energy**.

So go to the Mega loads and Guns to handle them when you hunt the very big and bad game animals. But like I stated in the 44 Mag article... a few hundred pounds more muzzle energy means little inside 150 yards or so, when you're several hundred pounds over 1000 M.E. already. And not necessary if you are hunting normal sized game.

Do I like the 41 magnum over the 44 Magnum? NO!... Do I like the 44 Magnum over the 41 Magnum? NO! Do I like the 45s (heavy loaded 45 colt or 454s) over the 40 calibers... YES! But that doesn't change the real fact that the

41 Mag loaded right will do all that anyone needs for heavy game all over the continental U.S.



Of course if I do need something more powerful, I always have a prize FA 454.

Come to think of it mayhaps that makes the 44 Magnum a middle magnum... 41 Mag/44 Mag/ 454! That's my personal feelings... the 41 is Sunday's child... sunny and bright!

PACO

[The Los Angeles Silhouette Club Front Page](#)   [Index to all LASC Articles](#)