

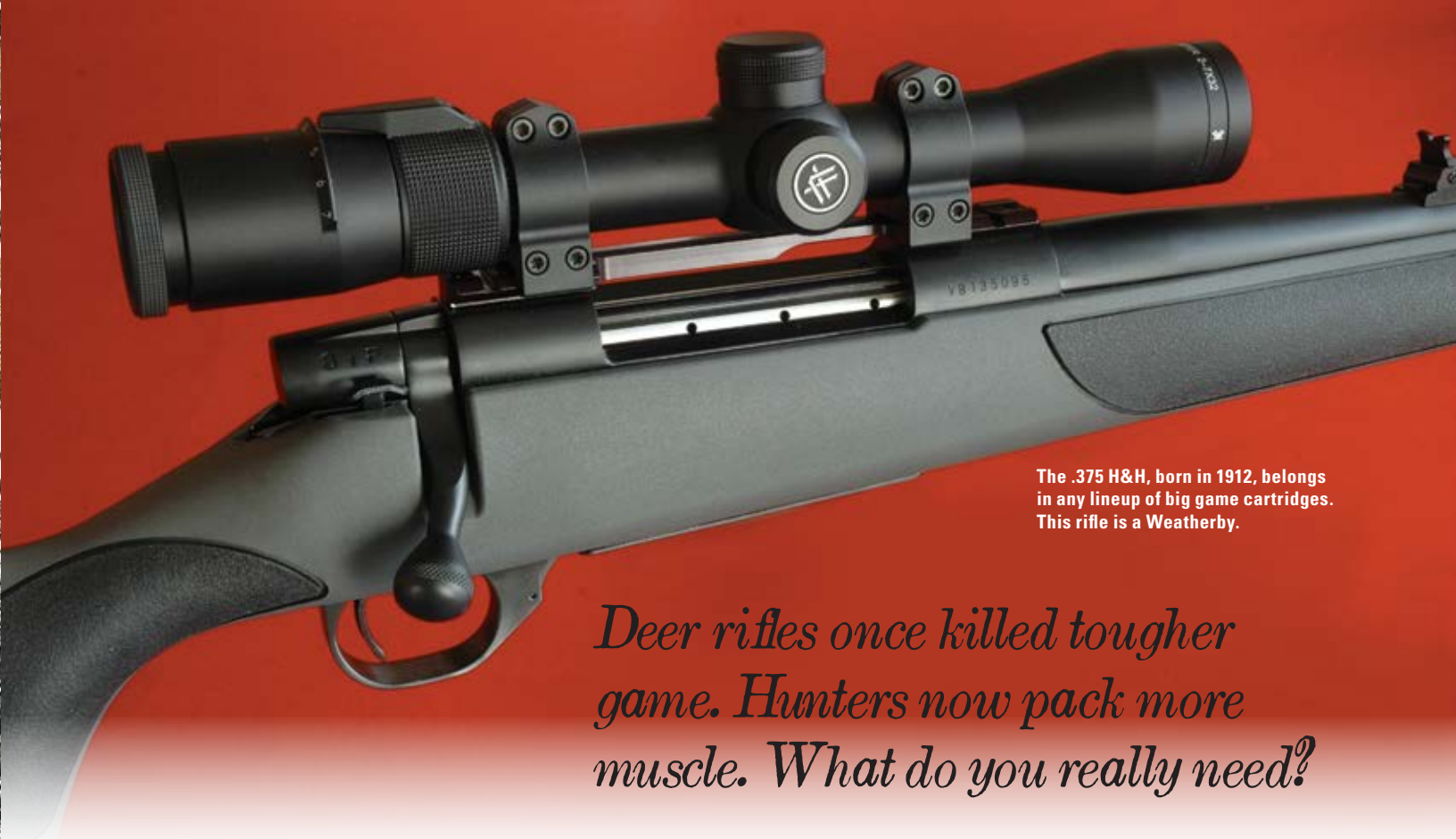
WAYNE C.
VAN ZWOLL

B&C PROFESSIONAL MEMBER
Photos Courtesy of Author

Loads for North American Heavies



Most big game is shot in or near cover, where traditional rounds with long, heavy bullets still excel.



The .375 H&H, born in 1912, belongs in any lineup of big game cartridges. This rifle is a Weatherby.

Deer rifles once killed tougher game. Hunters now pack more muscle. What do you really need?

Three elk galloped through the lodgepoles crowding the field of my 3x Leupold. I triggered the Model 70 as the reticle passed a shoulder. The bull nosed in, then rose and staggered forward. Again he endured a two-ton swat from my .338, wilting at the third shot.

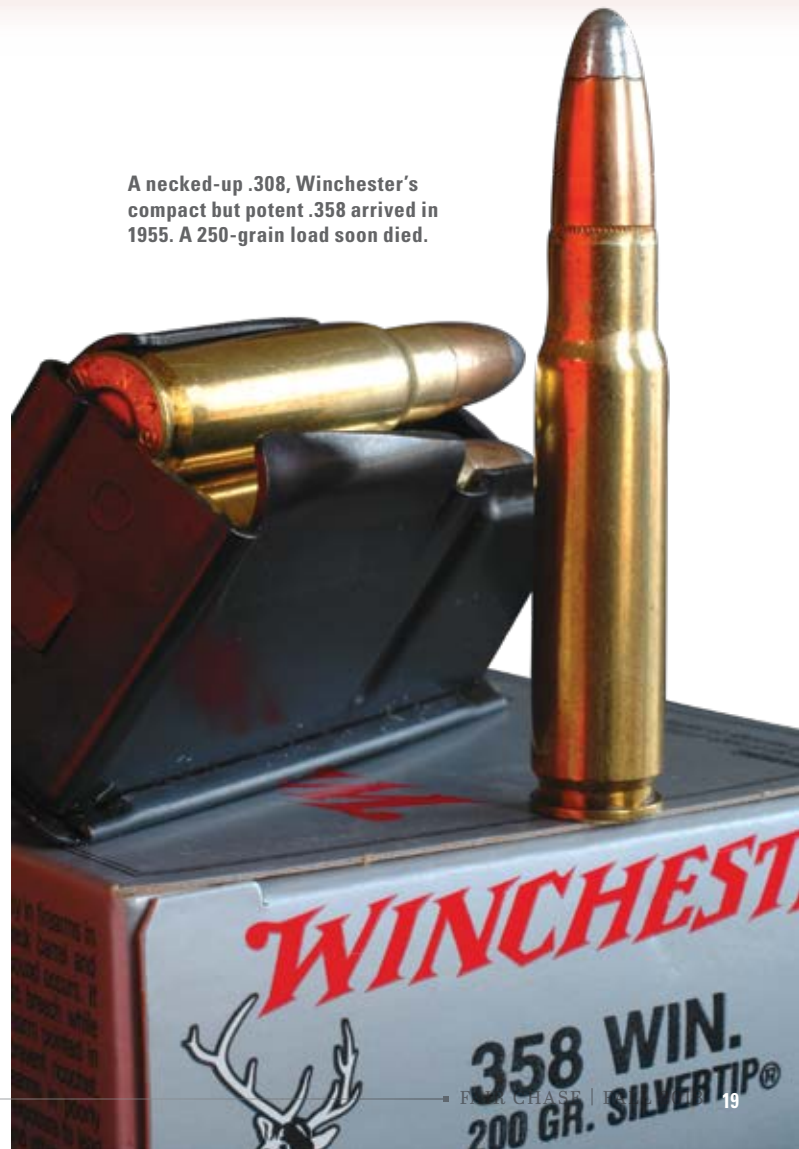
Later, bulls would fall to single hits from my .30-30 and .32 Special, loads with half the muscle of the .338. If there's a universal bullet-energy threshold for killing elk, it's elusive!

Arbitrarily lumping cartridges in game-labeled categories is perilous. James Jordan downed the biggest whitetail of a century with a .25-20, which most hunters would consider marginal for deer, even under ideal conditions. Doug Burris shot his top-listed mule deer with a .264 Winchester Magnum, its bullet packing *six times* the smash of the .25-20. Excessive force?

Half a century had passed between these two kills—decades that largely replaced iron sights with scopes and Jordan's lever-action carbine with Burris' Sako bolt rifle. Hunters were shooting farther in 1972 than in 1914, expecting more from their bullets. Definitions of "deer rifle" changed with the times.

The same is true of rifles and cartridges for tougher game: elk, moose, and the big bears. Current rosters of popular loads lack many once carried by trappers, miners, ranchers and homesteaders shooting for meat and in defense of life and property.

A necked-up .308, Winchester's compact but potent .358 arrived in 1955. A 250-grain load soon died.





Teddy Roosevelt's first big game rifle, an 1876 Winchester in .45-75, had less muscle than a .30-30.

When members of the Corps of Discovery failed to stop grizzly bears with black powder rifles at the dawn of the 19th century, Meriwether Lewis forbid further engagements without backup. But other men would have to learn for themselves. In his book, *Thirty Years of Army Life on the Border*, Colonel R.B. Marcy described how, after missing a grizzly bear with his rifle, he dispatched cavalymen with Colt Navy revolvers. They got within a few paces of the bear and fired "10 or 12 shots" to no visible effect. A better-armed soldier managed to down the animal with his .44 Dragoon. A post-mortem showed none of the 36-caliber balls had driven "deeper than about an inch into the flesh."

Teddy Roosevelt was a bit better served with his first rifle, an 1876 Winchester bought when he was 22. The .45-75's 350-grain bullet left at 1,380 fps. Its 1,480 foot-pounds fell well shy of a .30-30's punch.

Decades later, near Slave Lake, Alberta, trapper Bella Twin would have been delighted for such a rifle. Choosing to hide in bushes when she saw an enormous grizzly approach, she decided to fire as the bear passed within a few feet. The .22 rimfire bullet from her single-shot Cooney Ace 1 dropped the bruin. Then one of the top-10 grizzlies on Boone and Crockett's list, that bear still ranks 28th!

Cap-and-ball revolvers and single-shot .22s have lost their shine for shooting big bears. Ditto the .220

Wilson Arrow. Also called the Wotkyns-Wilson Arrow, this 1940s wildcat is die-formed from .220 Swift cases with a steeper 30-degree shoulder to reduce brass stretch. Its 45-grain bullets clock the same as from the Swift. While the Arrow would hardly pass muster as a "stopping" load, it was all a seal hunter had when he suddenly came upon a big Alaska brown bear. Unwilling to disengage, the beast rose to its full height. Fearing he'd lose in a foot race, the fellow "poked the rifle at the bear's head and pulled the trigger." His bullet zipped between teeth and disintegrated in the brain.

Farther south, a shepherd chasing a grizzly from his flock by moonlight with a .30-30 couldn't place bullets as precisely. By the time he'd emptied his Winchester's magazine and was shoving in more rounds, the bear had turned its attention on him! It dropped at his feet after the 14th shot.

By the early 1950s, hunters in Alaska's signature bear country were choosing loads that even now seem practical—the .30-06 with 220-grain bullets, for example. The .348 Winchester and the wildcat .450 Alaskan on .348 brass served lever-rifle buffs in Winchester's M71. The .300 and .375 H&H Magnums held sway too. Smaller bores got less fanfare, though belted 7mm wildcats gave good account. The 7mm Mashburn downed tough game worldwide in the hands of *Field & Stream* Shooting Editor Warren



With stout 300-grain bullets, the .375 H&H is a favorite of brown bear guides, and serves ably in Africa.



These .30-06 loads show a wide range of bullets. The 220-grain round-nose (left) is, alas, all but gone.



Page. The limitations of the .270 and kin had much to do with the bullets of the day. “The few times I’ve had to kill a brownie head-on with my .270,” wrote one hunter, “I’ve [needed] three or four shots, [plus] a head or chest shot from the side.” From a defensive viewpoint, added another, “you don’t get many side shots.”

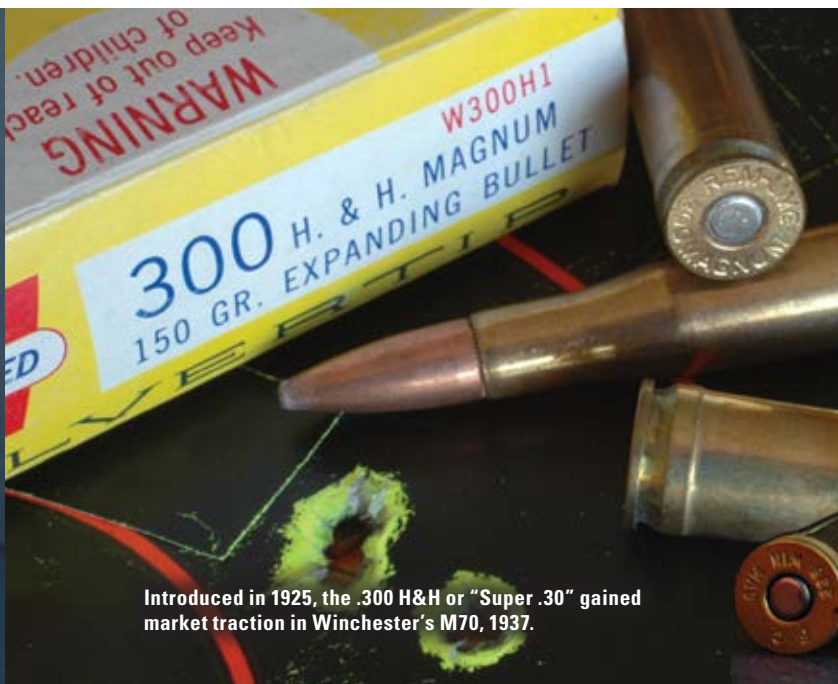
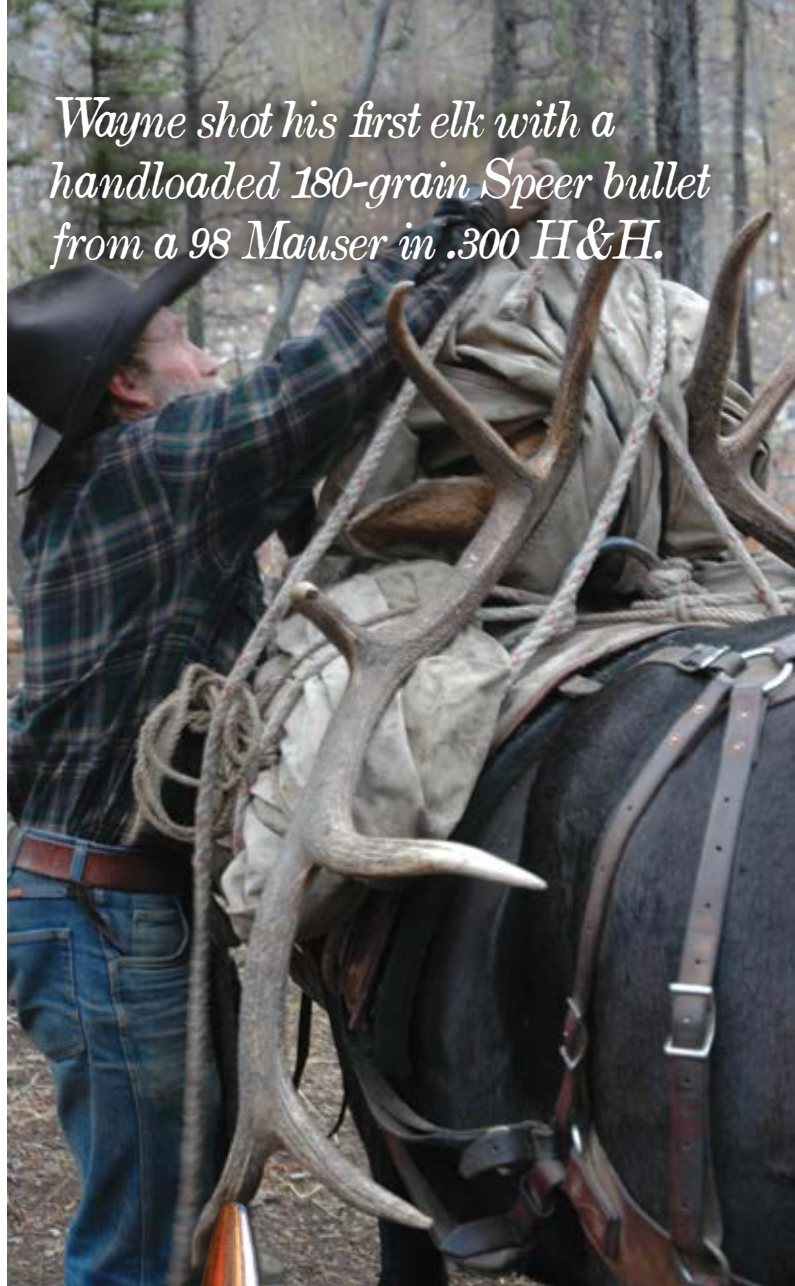
The .300 H&H, or Super .30, was the magnum between its 1925 debut and Weatherby’s blown-out version in 1945. Because it required an action longer than any built around the .30-06, the .300 H&H sold modestly until it appeared as a charter chambering in Winchester’s Model 70 in 1937. A decade later Remington gave it an even more affordable home in the Model 721. Enthusiasts used it on elk, moose and big bears, and liked it. Writers of the 1940s and ‘50s, like Clyde Ormond, put its 180- and 220-grain loads on the “A-list” for the biggest North American game. Round bullet noses were still in style, and the high sectional density of 220s exiting at 2,620 fps ensured deep penetration. A long shot at tough animals was just inside iron-sight range,

and the tsunami of sharp-shouldered .300s was yet to come. By the late ‘50s, hunters were speculating about a .300 Winchester. In 1961 the .308 Norma would meet their assumptions.

Weatherby’s .300 got a market boost after the debut of his Mark V rifle in 1957. The next year, hunters were blessed with Winchester’s .338 Magnum, in a 25-inch-barreled M70 called the Alaskan.

Almost certainly, the .338 owes its genesis to Charlie O’Neil of OKH fame. O’Neil, with Elmer Keith and Don Hopkins, copyrighted their brand in the late 1930s, with the advent of .285, .333 and .334 OKH cartridges. The .285 and .333 were based on .30-06 brass, with no changes besides neck diameter. The .334 was a .300 H&H necked up (or a .375 necked down) and given a sharp shoulder. The first .333 and .334 OKH rounds used .333-diameter bullets imported from England, where they served Jeffery’s .333. Later Fred Barnes made 250- and 300-grain bullets for the OKHs, and Speer a 275-grain. In 1949 Don Hopkins and his wife Marge started hunting in Africa. Don

Wayne shot his first elk with a handloaded 180-grain Speer bullet from a 98 Mauser in .300 H&H.



Introduced in 1925, the .300 H&H or “Super .30” gained market traction in Winchester’s M70, 1937.



The .338 Magnum arrived in 1958, two years after Winchester’s first short belted magnum, the .458.

wanted a .33 with the muscle of the .334 but on a case to fit .30-06-length actions. The .333 OKH Belted resulted. Its 2.50-inch hull foreshadowed that of Winchester's .338, though it retained the steep H&H case taper. Idaho shooting writer Bob Hagel used a rifle in .333 OKH Belted and "killed many, many head of North American game."

By the time Winchester fielded a .33 magnum, a shift to .338-diameter bullets was on the boards even in wildcat circles. (The OKH team made the change, coming up with the .338/06.) The rimmed .33 Winchester, announced in 1902 for the 1886 rifle, had fired 200-grain .338 bullets. Why follow the Brits? The .338 Winchester Magnum had less body taper than its H&H parents and a 25-degree shoulder. It sent 200-grain Power Points at 2,900 fps, 250-grain Silver-tips at 2,700 fps. Its 4,000 foot-pounds almost matched the pop of the .375 H&H. A 300-grain .338 load at 2,450 fps succumbed to a market sweet on fast bullets.

For his 1972 hunt, Ted Kelly chose a Browning rifle in .338 Winchester. A blizzard delayed bush travel and confined Kelly and his guide to their 6x8 tent on an Alaskan glacier; but they persevered. When Kelly got his shot, "I [saw] water spray off the bear. He went down flat, but bounced right back up and charged us. My second shot knocked him down again, but he was back on his feet [instantly]." Ditto after a third hit. The fourth dropped him in a swale, where "he began slamming the ground [sending] roots and mud flying 30 feet into the air." In its 1977 records book, B&C ranked Kelly's grizzly 14th of 235 entries.

Winchester's .338 doesn't allow dozing during recoil. Early on, its violence no doubt turned some hunters away. But the magnum era had just begun. The .338 has since gained traction at market—as much among elk and moose hunters and safari-bound riflemen as among those after big Alaskan bears.

A growing selection of .33 bullets and factory loads has favored it. Federal "High Energy" .338 ammo appeared with 225-grain Trophy Bonded bullets at 2,940 fps, 250-grain Nosler Partitions at 2,800, adding 100 fps to the round's initial chart speeds. Hornady countered with Heavy Magnum loads. Surveys I took in the 1990s showed the .338 is one of the five most popular cartridges among elk hunters. I've seen several big elk shot with .338s and can't recall any escaping. A six-point bull that took a 210-grain Nosler Partition in the chest at 80 yards collapsed on the spot. So did one quartering off at three times that range. Another, hard-hit at 200 steps, stayed afoot long enough for my client to launch another well-aimed 250-grain Partition. I once bailed off a horse to fire at an elk trotting through slash 100 yards away. My Power Point drove through the heart to the off shoulder. The bull folded within a few yards, dead on his feet.

For a buffalo hunt in Australia, I chose an iron-sighted .338, though my outfitter had urged a .375. Sneaking up on a huge bull, I loosed a Barnes X-Bullet through the front ribs. In a second, the beast was on its back, hooves in the air. Later in thick cover, I crept close to another buffalo. My bullet penetrated to the far shoulder, smashing into the massive knuckle so hard that the bone, thick as a truck axle, snapped several inches from its terminus! The bull rocketed through short yards of jungle, then plowed to a stop.

Weatherby's elegant, full-length .340 Magnum came four years after Winchester's .338. Loaded by Norma, it trumps the .338 by 200 fps, shooting as flat as a .270 with bullets of nearly twice the weight. At 100 yards, the .340 packs as much energy as the .338 at the muzzle. An elk I shot with a Mark V was quartering off in snowy timber when my Partition struck. The bull vanished as if jerked to earth.



Browning revived Winchester's 71 with beautiful and accurate replicas from Japan's Miroku factory.



Winchester replaced its 1886 with the 71 in 1935. This fine but costly lever rifle was dropped in '57.

In 1963 Winchester announced what would become one of the most popular cartridges for North American big game. The .300 Winchester Magnum didn't appear in the expected form of a necked-down .338. Based on H&H brass, it had a shorter neck and a slightly longer case than 2 1/2-inch belted magnums like the .338. Booting 180-grain bullets at over 3,000 fps, it outpaces the .300 H&H by 150 fps. Friskiest loads bring a ton of energy past 400 yards. Its versatility and chambering in affordable, lightweight rifles have given the .300 Winchester the "all-around" status once reserved for the .30-06.

Since the '60s we've been inundated by squat, rimless magnums and belted and rimless magnums the size of syringes. Some strike me as useful—the .30-06-length Dakotas on .404 Jeffery brass, the .300 Remington SAUM, the .338-06 A-Square and .338 Federal. The .300 and .338 Ruger Compact Magnums are efficient,

comfortable to shoot. I adore John Lazzeroni's short-action 8.59 Galaxy, on par ballistically with the .340 Weatherby. Hornady's .300 and .338 Marlin Express give lever rifles the punch lost when Winchester dropped the Model 71 .348 in 1957.

Like the .348 (its true diameter), .35-caliber (.358) cartridges get less love than they deserve. My short list of standouts include the .35 Whelen, a necked-up .30-06 wildcat adopted by Remington in 1987. I've used it on moose and elk and like it very much. Its 250-grain factory load, alas, has vanished, leaving only a 200-grain softpoint at 2,650. You'll get equal muscle from the belted, short-action .350 Remington Magnum announced with the Model 600 Magnum bolt rifle in 1965. The 600 and 660 Remingtons were dropped in 1971 and have something of a cult following now. About 150 fps shy of the Whelen and .350 Magnum, the .358 Winchester on the .308 case arrived in 1955 in Winchester's Model

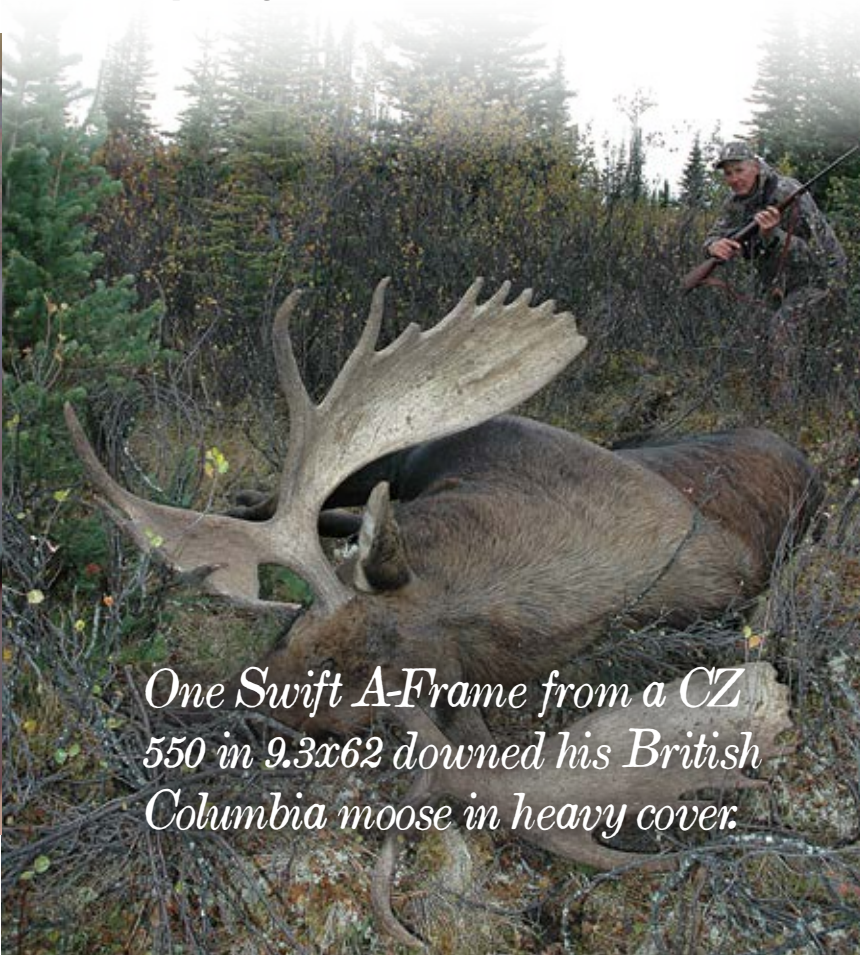
70 Featherweight. Like the similar but later .338 Federal, it's a champ in lightweight rifles. A Browning BLR in .358 is the go-to "moose and mountain rifle" for one of my correspondents in Alaska. With a 2 1/2x Leupold in Talley rings, it weighs just 5 3/4 pounds! Handloads nudge 250-grain bullets toward 2,400 fps.

A .35 with real reach is Norma's .358 Magnum, essentially a .338 Winchester that kicks 250-grain bullets a tad faster. At 300 yards a bull elk wilted instantly to a chest hit with a 250-grain Swift A-Frame from my re-barreled Mauser. The .358 Norma shares relative obscurity with another excellent round, the 9.3x62. Developed in 1905 by Berlin gunmaker Otto Bock, it drives 286-grain .366-diameter bullets at 2,400 fps. In



The .338 Marlin Express adds reach to lever guns. A Grey Bull scope on this Marlin helped Wayne hit this plate with six increasingly distant shots, prone, from 100 to 600 yards!

The 9.3x62 (right, introduced 1905), excels with 250- to 286-grain bullets. More punch than a .30-06!



One Swift A-Frame from a CZ 550 in 9.3x62 downed his British Columbia moose in heavy cover.

About bullets....

While ordinary softpoints have taken kilotons of heavy game over the decades, bullets that plow deep and retain their integrity during upset excel—bullets like the Nosler Partition and AccuBond, Swift A-Frame, Federal Trophy Bonded and Norma Oryx, and the lead-free Barnes TSX and Hornady GMX. Weight retention has challenged engineers as velocities have risen and sectional densities have fallen. Sectional density (SD)—a bullet's weight in pounds divided by the square of its diameter in inches—affects flight and terminal action. The high SDs of heavy bullets trade high starting speed for better speed retention and penetration. Bullets with highest SDs have round noses to pack maximum weight within length limits imposed by the rifle. Blunt missiles satisfied hunters firing over iron sights; now shooters insist on pointed noses, whose profiles more obviously contribute to high ballistic coefficient. Some fine, heavy game bullets (220-grain .30s, 275-grain .338s) have vanished, ignored by riflemen with visions of—and optics for—quarter-mile shots.

Up close, a spitzer bullet has nothing on a heavier round-nose. Besides bringing more momentum to the task, the blunt bullet is traveling slower. Neither bullet will have lost much of its exit speed at, say, 75 yards. The more violent impact of the faster bullet means less predictable upset and penetration. Early bullets at 2,300 to 2,500 fps killed well partly because they trundled reliably through muscle and bone to carve deep, straight channels. That result is still available to hunters who dismiss as unnecessary a pointed nose. For most shots at game, it is.

Best bullets? Bonded lead-core .30s, .33s and .35s that expand like this and drive to the far shoulder!



colonial Africa this cartridge proved so popular—and lethal—that in some places it's still permitted for dangerous game in the face of regulations specifying a .375 bore. A pal who shot dozens of elephants took all but one with a 9.3x62. I've used it on moose, mountain goat and in Africa on gemsbok and eland. Norma and Hornady loads, with rifles from CZ, Ruger, Sauer, Mauser and other makers, have recently shone a light on the 9.3x62.

Not that these .30s, .33s, .35s and the 9.3x62 trump all other options for elk, moose and big bears. But they tender an enticing mix of bullet weight and velocity with manageable recoil. (Okay; so does the .375 H&H!) Smaller bores limit bullet weight to under 180 grains; bigger bores doom their heavier bullets to steep arcs. "Super-magnums" like the .338-378 Weatherby maul you without adding practical benefit. Consider that at

Justly popular, the .300 Winchester was introduced in 1963. The new 200-grain load is a dandy!



Popular in Africa for over a century, Germany's 9.3x62 handily drops tough antelope like hartebeest.