



LOCAL IOWA FIREARM COMPANIES WITH BIG PRODUCTS

■ By Mike Ware

While the Iowa Sportsman has a reach far beyond Iowa, I always view it as the source for what is happening locally. I've spent a lot of time in economic development and I have always believed in the "buy local" motto. I approached Patrick about showcasing a few new Iowa companies and he was thrilled with the idea about promoting some local companies. I sent out some communications to a few I was familiar with and I always keep a file for those folks who have contacted me with their new product or offerings. We ended up narrowing the list down to three businesses that are jumping into the Iowa climate and beyond.

Chris McAninch owns and operates "Guns and More" and he's the apple in ATF's eye. McAninch, for those of you unfamiliar with his name is pronounced "mack" "a" "ninch"... Chris not only peddles guns, but distills his own whiskey, and sells cigars... Chris literally puts the "alcohol, tobacco, and firearms" in ATF. All jokes aside, Chris has been a fun person to know and visit with. He's come up with a great little tool that suits a multiple purpose for every semi-automatic handgun owner. His invention is called the "Handi-Racker". Essentially the Handi-Racker is a polymer block you can slip over your slide and use to rack the slide aft.

Doesn't sound like much, does it? At first it didn't blow my mind either. However, after using it and learning of a local accident in which an officer was shot at the range, it became quickly clear, this inexpensive little tool serves dozens of purposes. Imagine you've got one of those tiny slick little pocket pistols and your arthritic hands are aching from a long day. Grab your Handi-Racker and after you drop your magazine, rack the slide to clear the chamber. You can place your hand on the racker itself or place the racker on a table, door jamb, etc. If you opt to rack it against a solid object, you'll then enjoy the full force of your weight against the slide to fully rack the weapon.

It might be escaping some of you, but the ability to clear a weapon is a vital portion of basic weapon safety. How many times have we been to the range and experienced

some sort of failure to feed or extract? Just grab your Handi-Racker and even the toughest jam will come loose with ease. The important part is twofold for me. First, I can put a huge amount of power into racking the slide where gripping it with another hand may not do the trick. Second, the entire time I'm racking the slide in this fashion, I can have the weapon pointed in a safe direction and without my hand, fingers, or other body parts over or anywhere near the muzzle. Think back to the story in the news about a person injured at the range when their hand was over the muzzle while trying to clear a stoppage. What happened? They were shot and lost the use of their hand.

Chris designed the Handi-Racker in four basic sizes to accommodate the smaller 380 pocket pistols all the way through the monster Glock 21 45ACP weapons. We've made it a habit around the shop to use the Handi-Racker routinely. Now that we use them nonstop, I can't imagine not having them. Whether you're at the range, at your bench, teaching safety to your sons and daughters, or at the bedside table, the Handi-Racker is a great little tool and won't break the bank.

Good ol' Kurtis. He's a tall quiet guy and doesn't have a ton to say. Instead, he puts his effort into his work, and it shows. Kurtis Stockdale started up Accurate Products in recent years and is making production and custom steel gongs and targets for the shooting industry and patrons. I first became familiar with his work when I stopped in a

local gun shop dropping off some smithing work and picking up a new load of weapons that needed attention. I was told his stuff was first rate and priced competitively, but being busy and in a big hurry, I didn't bother with it. I wish now, I'd have stopped and looked it over at the moment. Instead, it wasn't until months later when I was looking for a large quantity of steel for some long range shooting did it click and I reached out to him. Unlike many, he was quick and eager to respond. That's always a good sign. I put together a list of 24 targets I needed to purchase. We held a dialogue and he made some really great suggestions. I really respond well to things like that, as I see it my place with customers to help them and manage their concerns. Kurtis had some great suggestions and we spec'd out a series of target stands in which to suspend the targets I was buying. Since the time I bought those initial targets I suspended from his stands with conveyor belting, I've since bought plate racks, hostage targets, IPSC targets, circles and gongs, and had some custom sniper targets built.

To say we've been kind to the targets would be a tall tale. While I've told them before, it wouldn't be prudent for this article. The AR500 steel he used in my targets is the same high Brinell hardness utilized to line and armor military vehicles. The 'in between' stuff doesn't seem to be too hard on armor plating. Items of extremely high power like the 50BMG tend to hurt it, and with irony, those small ultra-high

velocity steel core pills like the 5.45x39 stuff coming out of AK74s and will pock mark the targets quite a bit. We've literally shot some of ours thousands and thousands of times. We've loaned these targets out for 3gun competitions, and even used them for short and long range sniper competitions. We have yet to poke a hole through one of the Accurate Products targets, and they are holding up swimmingly. Considering how much shooting Iowans are getting out and doing, shooting steel is a great option. While I advocate paper targets for lots of purposes, I really enjoy steel as well. I can hear and see a reaction when I strike my target, and when I use something as tough as a chunk of conveyor belt or big rig rubber mud flap to suspend my steel, I literally have no range trash or clean up. A quick coat of spray paint across the target every time you're done, and your range clean up and preparation for the next session is complete.

We've hauled Accurate Product's steel all the way out to southern Colorado to shoot at distances of 2,000+ yards. I like the way Kurtis does business, I like his product, and his offerings are affordable. Take a look at his offerings.

If I told you Ryan Hoover was a "Tandem Rotor Freedom Fighter" what would you think? Well, you should think he's riding around shooting, hooking, dropping, and slinging in a CH47 Chinook. I'm not sure how he found time working full time for America to build a night vision company in little ol' Iowa, but he did it and did it well.

There are portions of the industry that have absolutely boomed in recent years. However, I'm always cautious of these, as a monster swell in product interest usually precedes a sharp decline. Instead, there are a few market segments that are seeing continual and significant growth and interest. Night vision and items associated with them have been sought after more and more for about the last six years. In days of yesteryear, you'd either be using beat up import surplus stuff from the Russian army, buying high dollar stuff from government suppliers, or cheapo stuff from Chinese companies. Doesn't sound like a bargain on any level does it?

Ryan basically sought to set up a shop so he could buy the components separately and put together the very same quality and models of night vision we see from government suppliers at a better price point. The culmination of years networking and researching put him in a position to build up his night vision product. A self-admitted Radio Shack geek, Ryan hand builds each device himself, purges them with nitrogen, and tests each one extensively.

Just like Chris with his Handi-Racker and Kurtis at Accurate Products, Ryan seeks to actually provide what his customers need. People considering night vision first have to decide whether they prefer thermal imaging devices or more classical infra-red night vision optics. Ryan identified early on that people are hesitant to buy extremely costly devices they know very little about over the internet, and have nearly no recourse for returns. I share that concern. Instead, Ryan keeps demo units in stock for every product he offers. This allows a customer to actually handle, use, and learn all about the product.

The other important purpose this serves is good decision making. Sure, a \$10,000.00 scope will do the trick, but is that the best unit for you to bang coyotes with? Is that the best choice to double for checking your cattle, or mounting on your home defense carbine? Maybe not... Thus, Nightlong Industries has opted to provide demonstrations, hands on use, and consulting so you can make a great choice for what you actually need and will benefit from. When this is done, you can actually pick up a great device for multiple

roles at one fifth the cost of the \$10K biggies if that best fits your budget or needs. Talk about a huge value folks; that is big. I've seen customers come in having spent huge amounts of money on really crappy packages. It isn't my place to condemn their choices, but I always feel bad for them, since I know they spent money poorly. Ryan's approach and philosophy will serve him and his customers well in my opinion.

I've used Chris' Handi-Racker, banged Kurtis' steel from Accurate Products, and picked off teeny weeny targets at great distances with Ryan's Nightlong Industries offerings. These three folks and their businesses reflect a tiny fraction of the great Iowa businesses available to you all. Accurate Products, Nightlong Industries, and the Handi-Racker all have websites and a presence on facebook, but most importantly they support you right back when you choose them. It is a great feeling knowing that when you support an Iowa based company, that same company supports you as well! 🤠

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