



REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

Alternatives:

All of this pain dulls you down. What did I do? How did I cope?

For starters, I carried a snub revolver in my weak side pant pocket. After I shed the sling, I moved to strong side pocket carry. Boy, am I glad that I have logged thousands of rounds with my snubby and that I am used to carrying one in my pocket.

I also turned to my Crimson Trace Laser Grip equipped snubby. The advantages of having a laser grip on your snub are:

1. You don't have to bring the gun up to your line of sight to aim.
2. You don't need to acquire a traditional sight picture.
3. You have a greater "wobble zone" which you can gauge with the movement of the laser dot.

The virtues of the snub revolver's simplicity make it an ideal choice for me when I am physically and mentally down. As I got to feeling better I phased back into carrying my Glock 26 in a weak side belt slide holster. The high ride put too much strain on my strong shoulder when I would draw the gun, so strong side carry was out at first. Gradually, I evolved back into carrying on my strong side in a vertical drop belt scabbard rig. Too much of a forward cant hurts my right shoulder when I draw.

With this condition, economy of motion in the draw is really necessary! However, I discovered that practicing drawing a triply-checked, unloaded Glock from my strong side belt holster has been good physical therapy! I compulsively practice my fast draw from the holster anyhow. Here was another opportunity to do so with a mission.

I also discovered that teaching helped my physical rehabilitation. I had a few beginning students who wanted very much to learn "the secrets" of concealed carry. There is nothing like this to motivate me.

The point of this article is that when you are physically challenged, you must make reasonable accommodations so that you can still go armed. Many people think that they can't carry when they are feeling weak. They think that you can only carry when you are strong and healthy. Well, the truth is that if you want to remain healthy, you should carry at all times—especially when you are feeling weak and vulnerable, because one never knows when it's your time to meet the boogeyman. Any gun, even a "mouse gun," in my opinion, is better than no gun at all. But there is a better alternative!

The Defensive Snub Revolver

I believe that a .38 special snub revolver, given its size to power ratio, is a reasonable accommodation if you cannot carry more gun with a larger caliber and greater firepower. After all, so many of us normally talk about .45's, practice at the range with our 9mm pistols, and yet carry a .38 special or a .32! One big firearms retailer in Oklahoma City reports that the one handgun they sell more of than any other, week in and week out, is the Smith and Wesson Model 642 snubby .38 Special revolver!

Most customers purchase the 135grain Speer Gold dot round to carry in their new snub. Interestingly, the Glock 19 and 23 are in second place.

The Essentials of the Defensive Snub Revolver

I recently had the opportunity to take a class on the essentials of the defensive snub revolver taught by Michael de Bethencourt. Michael is the director of the Massachusetts-based Northeastern Tactical Schools, and he also teaches at the Smith and Wesson Academy in Springfield, Massachusetts.

Michael's forte is the snub. He handles snub revolvers like no one I've ever met. He's developed a scientific and teachable system for carrying, shooting, and maintaining the snub all of which he covered in his packed one-day course.

Getting ill is no picnic. Over the past year, I have been burdened with increasing shoulder pain associated with bursitis and a bilateral shoulder impingement syndrome. Recently, I had to have surgery on my right (strong arm) shoulder to shave off a spur, relieve the inflammation, and release the impingement on my rotator cuff. Complications after general anesthesia necessitated my having to wear a urinary catheter for a couple of days. Too much information? Not really. I am leading to the point of this article.

Carrying a catheter and a bag is painful! I was in no mood to carry a handgun strapped to my hip as well. But, isn't this when we most need to have a means of personal protection—when we are most vulnerable?

Well, I didn't want to go out, but I had to because I had work and personal obligations. It was bad enough going to and coming home from the hospital unarmed. My wife drove me, but she's not the protector in the family. I'm the bodyguard.

For the first 24 hours after surgery, I had to keep my strong arm in a sling. To make matters worse, after shedding the sling since the surgery, I still have weakness, limited range of motion, and pain in the shoulder that was operated on.



Michael de Bethencourt teaching about snubs.

This excellent class opened my mind to the versatility of the snub as a main carry firearm of choice, as opposed to its being relegated to the status of back-up gun.

Your main carry firearm should be with you 100% of the time. Given the excellent choices of light weight, small frame snub revolvers made by companies such as Smith and Wesson and Taurus, this is not unreasonable. Carry in a pocket holster is probably the most convenient way to always have a snub with you.

Of course, snubs do have limitations. Most carry only 5 or 6 rounds. Sights are typically very rudimentary, the trigger is heavy, and the gun has a high bore axis which makes recoil control an issue, especially with a lightweight handgun.



Snub in a DeSantis Nemesis pocket holster.

In this class, Michael taught us how to circumvent these limitations and much, much more.

First of all, Michael taught us that it is possible to shoot the darn things quickly and accurately. At typical gun fighting distances (9 feet and in), a traditional, perfect sight picture is seldom necessary. Just point, acquire an instantaneous "flash sight picture," "stress point" front sight index, or silhouette index of the gun, and shoot.

In this class we did the lion's share of our shooting work one-handed. After

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Flash site picture.



Cover garments are not necessary.

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all, the snub is a "hand-gun" not a "hands-gun."

Michael took the class through a shooting drill that drove home how natural it is to point and shoot these little, but powerful, guns. First, we shot a five shot string at 9 feet with no time limit. No one had trouble keeping their shots within the hole. Unbeknownst to us, Michael timed each of us. Then he halved each of our times and had us shoot another five shot string within that time limit. Each student kept all five shots in the hole at half the allotted time! Then, Michael took each of these times and had each student shoot a third five shot string within that time limit. And again, everyone halved those times and kept most rounds within the hole!

The point of the exercise? That most of us take much too long to shoot. When we practice, we ought to shoot at the paper target with the mindset that it is a homicidal maniac coming to murder our loved ones. That's something to get your adrenaline flowing and keep you from taking your sweet time!

In one very long day (8:30 AM to 8:30 PM), Michael de Bethencourt took



All in the hole.



One-handed shooting.

us through all of the essential foundations of the defensive snub revolver: Snub nomenclature, daily snub function check skills (check tightness of the cylinder release screw, yoke screw, and the ejector, check cartridge head space), concealment holster and stock/grip options for the snub; how to choose the proper ammunition for your snub, one- and two-hand grip fundamentals, trigger contact and control, alternative shooting stances, drawing/presenting your snub from concealment (a retention draw), flash sight-picture, "stressfire," and silhouette sight picture drills, speed shooting fundamentals, practical administrative and speed loading skills, subconscious cylinder indexing, partial cylinder loading tactics, loose round, speed strip and speedloader loading tactics, coat pocket shooting drills, and emergency contact shooting skills.

Michael's methods are unconventional (e.g., how to reload), but well thought out and make good sense. I learned a lot from this class and strongly recommend it.

Is a Snub the Carry Gun for You?

Recently, I had the opportunity to work with a pair of beginning students (a charming husband and wife) who were out to purchase their first handgun. I introduced them to the revolver first, but neither one took to it like a duck to water. Neither student demonstrated the manual dexterity nor motivation necessary for learning the revolver's manual of arms. It just didn't meet their wants or needs. However, they both took to the Glock 17 auto-loader and ending up purchasing a Beretta 92 full-size pistol to get the manual safety. Their plan is to use their first gun as a "house gun."

The snub is not for everyone, and in my experience as a firearms instructor, many first time gun owners and "one-gun people," prefer auto-loaders. However, for many experienced pistoleros, the snub comes in handy for many reasons, and many "gun people" own crates of them.

Michael de Bethencourt's partial list of snub advantages as re-stated in an excellent article by Ralph Mroz in *Combat Handguns* and my own points include:

1. Minimum maintenance required.
2. Superior point and shoot reliability.
3. Easy to see live round indicator.
4. Simple manual of arms.

5. Similar manual of arms for all double action revolvers.
6. Not ammunition sensitive as are many auto-loaders.
7. Easy to correct a misfire—just pull the trigger.
8. Revolvers can make contact shots.
9. Convenient to conceal in a pocket or wherever.
10. Revolvers can shoot through clothing if necessary.
11. Not sensitive as is an auto-loader to a poor grip.
12. The heavy and long trigger provides another safety mechanism.
13. Great size-to-power ratio. .38 Special +P's and .357 magnums are serious calibers with good "stopping power."

The best gun is the one you have with you at the time that you need a gun. A snub revolver in your pocket is a reasonable accommodation when you do not want to wear a belt holster and want to have a gun immediately available. If you do want to wear the gun on your person, but not in your pocket, you can try a nice, tight-fitting belt scabbard such as those made by Desantis, Galco, or J.W. O'Rourke Leather.

One particularly beautiful and practical holster is an inside-the-waistband (IWB) handmade by John O'Rourke of J.W. O'Rourke Leather. The one I received was molded for my Ruger SP-101, an excellent carry snub and one of my favorite .357 magnums. The holster fits like a glove and the workmanship is superb. The leather pancake holster John sent me for my Glock 26 is also



Ruger SP-101 in an O'Rourke IWB.



S&W Models 340PD, 642 and 638.

very nice. It rides tight to the body for good concealment and has a near vertical drop, which is good for my shoulder!

My favorite light weight snub types for concealed carry in order of preference are:

1. The Smith and Wesson Bodyguard style (with the shrouded hammer) in an Airweight model (e.g., a Model 638. Around 15 oz. empty.)

2. The Smith and Wesson Centennial style (with the totally internal hammer) in an Airweight model (e.g., a Model 442 or 642. Around 15 oz. empty.).

3. The Smith and Wesson Centennial style Airlite models (e.g., 340PD, 342PD. Around 12 oz. empty.).

I am least partial to the Chiefs Special style with the external hammer. The hammer tends to snag and a cocked hammer creates a hair trigger. These guns are meant to be shot double action only for both safety and tactical reasons.

I would definitely say that carrying a snub is a reasonable accommodation. They have a simple manual of arms, are easy to carry, and are fast into action. They may in fact be the perfect carry gun—for some people.

Sources:

Michael de Bethencourt. Northeast Tactical Schools. 8 Kingsbury Lane. North Billerica, MA 01862. Phone: 978-667-5591 www.snubtraining.com

DeSantis Holster and Leather Goods. 431 Bayview Avenue. Amityville, NY 11701. Phone: 800-424-1236 www.desantisholster.com

J.W. O'Rourke Leather Products. P.O. Box 1296. Hartselle, AL 35640. Phone: 877-680-5789 www.gun-holsters.com

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