

Deputies of the Los Angeles County Sheriff Department training with Model 50 Reising submachine guns.

REISING SUBMACHINE GUNS & SEMIAUTO CARBINES *PART II*

The Tommy Gun's Ugly Stepchild

By Paul Scarlata

Photos by: Michael Hughes, Frank Iannamico & Becky Scarlata unless otherwise indicated

From 1940 to 1945, the U.S. Navy and USCG maintained personnel in Greenland, capturing German weather reporting stations, personnel and German ships. Photos show these men were armed primarily with M1903 Springfield rifles and Model 50 Reising submachine guns.¹

While the Marine Corps were only too glad to get rid of their Reising, the U.S. Coast Guard felt that the Model 50 would be ideally suited for issue to their Beach Patrol units — plus it was readily available, and the price was less than one third that of the Thompson.² In July 1942, a contract was placed with H&R for five hundred Model 50s.

Realizing that a submachine gun gave a lonely “Sandpounder” walking a deserted stretch of beach



Greenland, 1941. Members of a U.S. Navy landing party armed with Model 50 Reising submachine guns and Stevens M520/30 trench guns. (USN photo)



Greenland, 1943. A warmly dressed U.S. Coast Guardsman equipped with a Reising Model 50. (USCG photo)



1944. A Coast Guard "Sandpounder," armed with a Model 50 Reising, and a German shepherd patrolling an East Coast beach. (U.S. Coast Guard photo)



Mounted Coast Guard beach patrolmen armed with Model 50 Reising. (U.S. Coast Guard photo)



A Coast Guard port security party. They are armed to the teeth with a variety of weapons including M1911A1 pistols, Thompson M1928 and Reising Model 50 submachine guns, M1903 rifles, a M1918 BAR and a pair of, rather ancient, tripod mounted Colt M1914/17 machine guns. (U.S. Coast Guard photo)

at night a lot more firepower than a bolt action rifle or revolver, three months later H&R received a second Coast Guard order for 20,000 guns. Another reason given for the purchase of large numbers of Reising Model 50 submachine guns was "... because the weight of the (M1903) rifle was too much for the irritable horses."³

Model 50s were also found in the arms racks of sea-going USCG cutters and were used by Harbor Security units. By the end of the war the Model 50 was the submachine gun most commonly seen in the hands of Coast Guardsmen.



Coast Guard beach patrolmen armed with Model 50 Reising. (U.S. Coast Guard photo)



A Coastguardman, armed with a Model 50 Reising, guarding officers from a captured German U-Boat.



A pair of Coast Guard beach patrolmen and their dogs. Both "Sand Pounders" are armed with Model 50 Reising. (U.S. Coast Guard photo)



1944. Members of the Coast Guard Women's Reserve ("SPARS") receiving instruction in the use of the Reising Model 50 submachine gun. (U.S. Coast Guard photo)

In hopes of attracting civilian and law enforcement sales, shortly after the introduction of the Model 50 (2nd Design), H&R announced the availability of the Reising Model 60 Semi-Automatic Rifle. It was mechanically similar to the submachine gun but, as its name indicates, the trigger system was changed so that it was only capable of semiauto fire. In addition,

it had a longer 18.25-inch barrel which was finned on early guns while those on later production guns were smooth. A small number of early production Model 60s were fitted with muzzle compensators.

The USMC obtained a limited number of Model 60s for training purposes and guard duty while some of these were issued to USMC officers and squad

leaders in the South Pacific.⁴ In 1942, the Defense Supplies Corporation purchased 1,700 Model 60s from H&R for issue to defense plants and railroads for arming security guards.⁵

Besides the USMC and USCG, Reising was purchased by a number of foreign governments. One of the first orders came from French authorities in Indochina, who ordered 4,000 Model 50s in 1941, although it is not known if any were delivered before the Japanese occupied the region. That same year, the USSR ordered 6,000 guns and the British another 2,000 which were provided through the Lend Lease Program. According to Frank Iannamico, both the Germans and Finns used Model 50s they captured from Soviet forces during WWII.⁶

Our Canadian neighbors obtained quantities of Lend Lease Model 50s which were issued to the 2nd Battalion of the Seaforth Highlanders who were armed primarily with U.S. weapons including M1917 rifles and .30 caliber Lewis Guns. Others were used by the Veterans Guard of Canada, a paramilitary unit who provided security for military installations and prisoner of war camps.

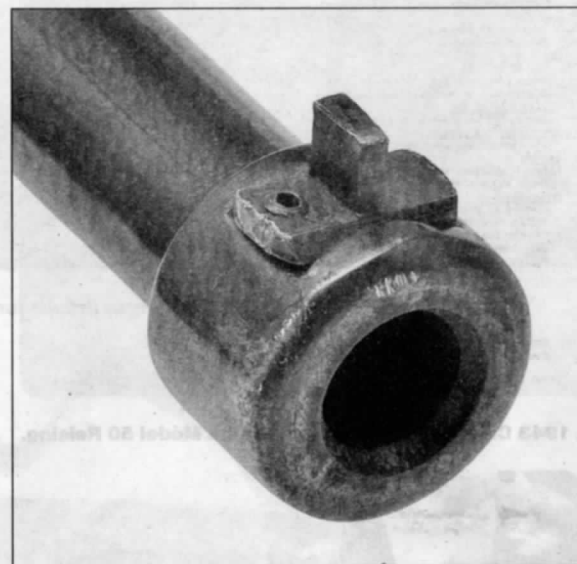
A quantity of Model 50s was shipped to Australia and New Zealand both of whom were under threat of a Japanese invasion. NOTE: In New Zealand in December 1963, two men thought to have been operating an illegal beerhouse business were murdered execution-style with a Reising submachine gun.⁷



The Model 60 Semiautomatic Rifle is immediately identifiable by its longer 18.25-inch barrel.



The Reising's aperture rear sight was adjustable from 50 to 300 yards and the safety lever only has two positions "Safe" and "SA" (Semi Auto). Note the knurled retaining cap on the end of the receiver.



The square blade front sights on both submachine guns and carbines was adjustable for windage and had a lock screw.



A Soviet soldier armed with a Model 50 Reising.



Members of the Canadian 2nd Battalion of the Seaforth Highlanders armed with Model 50 Reising sub-machine guns.

Other Commonwealth armies receiving them included South Africa and the West African Field Force of Nigeria who served with Commonwealth troops in Burma. Limited numbers were also used by the Belgian Congolese Force Publique who served alongside Allied forces in Africa and Burma. The Australians provided numbers of them to the Koninkrijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger (KNIL — Dutch East Indies Army) who used them in the post-WWII guerrilla campaigns against Indonesian nationalists.

Production of the Model 50 and 55 submachine guns ceased for government orders in 1945 after approximately 120,000 guns had been produced. H&R continued production of the Model 60 Semiautomatic Rifle with over 3,000 being manufactured by 1949.

In the post-war years, the remaining Model 50 and 55s in government inventory were provided as military aid to "friendly" nations such as the Philippines who issued them to the Philippine Constabulary. Others were provided to American police forces at cut rate prices or simply given away, along with other surplus military equipment.

After the war, the sale of Reising guns was handled by the Federal Labs of Pittsburg, PA who, despite their name, were a major supplier of weapons and equipment to law enforcement agencies around the world. In the U.S., police agencies and correctional institutions found the Reising attractive because of its selective-fire capability, superior accuracy and low-cost relative to a Thompson. With continuing

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CANADIAN ARMY

SERVICE INFORMATION BULLETIN

REISING, MACHINE CARBINE (.45 THOMPSON)

GENERAL INFORMATION NO. 1

(DATA SHEET for Carbine, Machine Reising .45-in. R.Q. 46-51-94)



Reising: -
System - detachable box
Capacity - 30 rounds
Weight - Filled - 11.40 lbs.
Safety: - right side rear of body
Change lever - incorporated in safety lever
Weight - 6-1/2 lbs.
Length - 30.75-in.
Barrel -
Length - 11.00-in.
Calibre - 0.45-in.
Reising: -
No. of grooves - 6
Twist (one turn in) - 16-in.
Direction - to the right
Rate of fire: -
450 to 500 rounds a minute
Breath locking system: -
Attraction of inclined surfaces
Reising: -
Type - aperture and blade
Range adjustment - 50 to 300 yds.
Ammunition: -
Cart. S.A. Ball .45-in. Thompson Sub Machine
Muzzle Velocity - 900 ft. per sec.
Gander Pressure - 5 tons per sq. in.
Cartridge - rimless
Bullet -
Nose - round
Base - flat
Envelope - brass, copper coated
Core - lead
Weight - 130 grains
Propellant - nitro-cellulose powder
Charge - 5 grains

Issue 1 R-2-45

Page 1

A 1943 Canadian army manual for the Model 50 Reising.



Soldiers of the Koninkrijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger armed with Model 50 Reising.



A Belgian officer and two Askaris of the Congolese Force Publique. The Askari on the left is carrying a Model 50 Reising. (David Albert collection)



Members of the Canadian Veterans Guard. They appear to be armed with WWI-era Mark III Ross rifles. (Photo from: <https://powsincanada.ca/veterans-guard-of-canada>)



A sheriff's deputy armed with a Model 50 Reising sub-machine gun.

demand, between 1950 and 1957, H&R manufactured an additional 5,500 Model 50s, many of which went to Latin America.⁸

The Reising's last hurrah was in 1960 when an order was received for 2,000 Model 60s again most of which went to Latin America.

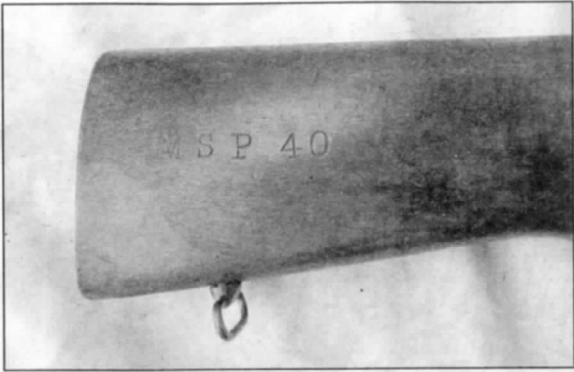
Model 50 and 60 guns saw service with the armies and police forces of, among others, Mexico, Venezuela, Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic and Columbia. They saw action during the Costa Rican civil war of 1955 and, ten years later, during the civil disturbances in the Dominican Republic while others were smuggled into Cuba for use by Fidel Castro's revolutionary forces. It is reported that some were issued to British civilians as self defense weapons during the Malaysian Emergency (1948-1960).⁹

In 1986, H&R went bankrupt and the Numrich Arms Corporation acquired a number of Model 50 receivers and parts which they used to assemble



A Model 50 Reising used by the Pittsburg (PA) Police Department. (Ruben Mendiola, DealerNFA)





Markings on a Model 50 Reising was used by the Michigan State Police.



A tower guard at the Utah State Prison circa 1955. Note the Model 50 Reising and Remington Model 11 shotgun.



A Spanish language manual for Latin American users of the Reising.

complete guns. Most of these weapons have an "S" preceding the serial number and were sold domestically in the early 1990s after being refinished and fitted with new walnut stocks. These stocks can be distinguished by their wider than sling swivels and butt



1947. Members of the Texas State Guard (not the National Guard) armed with Model 50 Reising.



A pair of Model 50 Reising that were used by the Pennsylvania State Police. (Courtesy of Midwest Tactical, Inc.)

stocks and H&R marked plastic buttplates (originals used unmarked metal buttplates).

Test Firing the Reising

My friend, Vince DiNardi, was kind enough to provide me with a Reising Model 60 from his collection. Overall it was in VG condition with a blue finish indicating it was an early production gun. Vince also sent along samples of both 12- and 20-round magazines.

Test firing was conducted with brass and steel cased .45 ACP ammo supplied by Jeff Hoffman at Black Hills Ammunition. The Model 60 was fired for accuracy from an MTM K-Zone rest on my gun club's 50-yard range.



1955. Costa Rican rebels armed with Mauser rifles and a Model 1950 Reising submachine gun.



Cuban revolutionaries some of whom are armed with Reising Model 50s. (Courtesy Frank Iannamico)



This Model 50 was issued to the Fuerzas Armadas de Cooperación de Venezuela. (Venezuelan National Guard)



1965. A member of the Dominican Republic police armed with a Model 50 Reising.



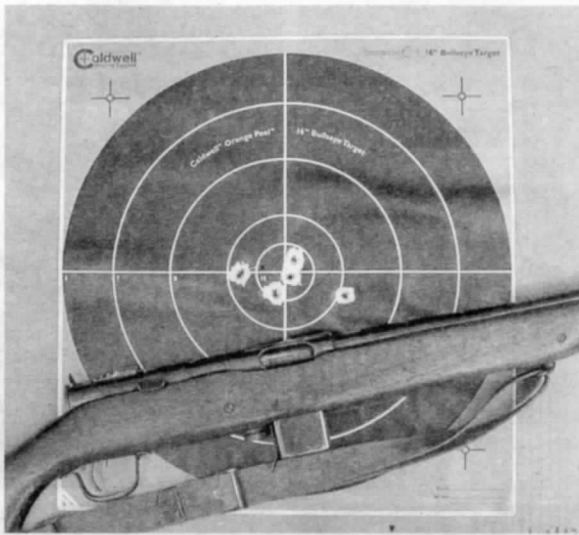
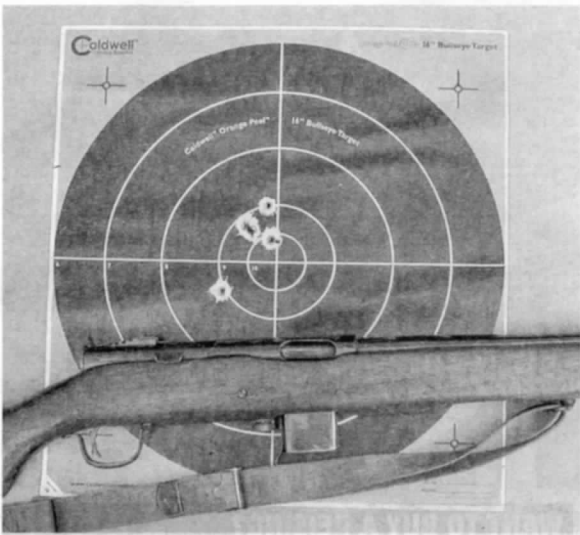
The Model 60 was tested and fired with brass and steel cased ammo provided by Black Hills. Both functioned perfectly.

Both magazines were easy to load to capacity, but it took an inordinate amount of effort to seat a fully loaded 20 rounder while the 12 round magazine slid right in. While I found retracting the action bar awkward rounds were chambered reliably and positively. The rear sight's aperture was a bit larger than I'd prefer but when mated with the square blade front sight it provided fast sight picture.

The Model 60's trigger was relatively light with a crisp let off while recoil was negligible ... in fact, it felt like I was firing a .22 autoloader. After firing six targets I walked to the backstop and found a half dozen well centered groups running from three to 3.5

inches in size which I consider more than adequate for a weapon of this type.

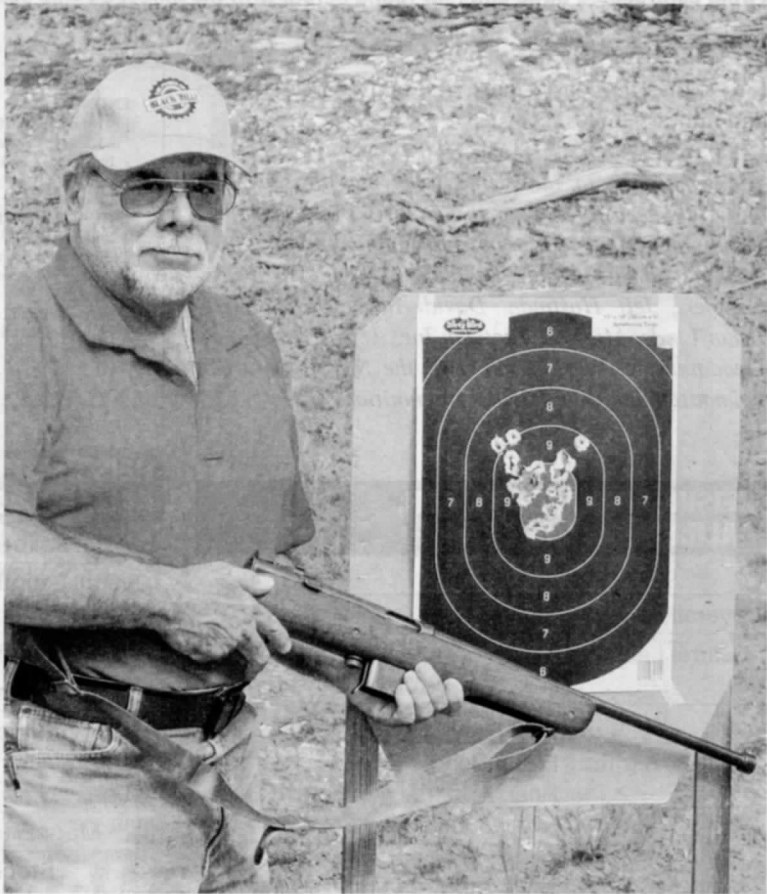
After re-loading both magazines, I paced off what I guesstimated to be 40 yards and set up a combat target. Returning to the firing line I proceeded to fire 32 rounds offhand, rapid fire. As can be seen in the photos, the Model 60 performed very well putting all but one round into the "10" and "9" rings of the target. This expenditure of ammunition revealed another negative aspect of the Reising's design: being there was no way to lock the bolt open, it took the hot barrel an inordinately long time to cool down ... *Ouch!!!*



These sample targets fired from a rest at 50 yards showed the Model 60 to be an easy shooting, pleasingly accurate carbine.



I found the Model 50 to be a fine handling, reliable and accurate SMG.



Shooting offhand at 40 yards I was able to perforate this target in a most pleasing manner.

A few months later, my wife Becky and I drove to Arkansas to spend the Thanksgiving holiday with my brother. He mentioned that his friend, a Class III collector, had a Reising Model 50 (first design) that had, in the past, been issued to the Dallas, Texas, Police Department... and would we care to fire it. "Hell yes!" was my response. After accumulating a supply of .45 ACP ammo, we all met at a local gun club on a cloudy, cold November afternoon.

Like its semiauto cousin, the Model 50 was a sturdy feeling weapon with no tinny, stamped steel parts. Loading it with 20-round magazines we all took turns sending .45 slugs down range and were impressed with its ease of operation and recoil control. Despite its light weight, but thanks to its low rate of fire, substantial stock and muzzle compensator, we found that firing controllable, three and four round bursts was easy.

In semiauto fire, it proved easy to bounce soft drink cans around the backstop. Becky opined that "It's almost like shooting a .22 rifle ... but more fun!" The four of us ran about 300+ rounds through it that afternoon without a single malfunction.

Reising submachine guns were well made from quality materials but were constructed more along the lines of commercial, rather than military, firearms. While both the Model 50 and 55 proved incapable of standing up to the vile conditions of jungle warfare when used in less hostile environments, they proved reliable and serviceable and were popular with American law enforcement agencies, prison guards, security



Firing controllable three and four round bursts with the Model 50 was easy — and fun.

forces, the US Coast Guard and many foreign police and military forces.

*I would like to thank the following for providing materials used to prepare this report: Vince DiNardi, Frank Iannamico (www.machinegunbooks.com), Ken Anshutz, Bruce Canfield, Reuben Mendiola, Frank Goepfert, Jeff Hoffman, David Albert, Frank Arre, Brian Linde, Midwest Tactical, Inc., U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters, Washington, DC, the Naval Historical Foundation and Black Hills Ammunition. **TN***

ENDNOTES:

- 1 www.americanrifleman.org/content/greenland-and-the-strategic-advantage-of-weather-reporting/
- 2 Iannamico, Frank. THE REISING SUBMACHINE GUN STORY. Page 12.
- 3 Bishop, Eleanor C. PRINTS IN THE SAND. THE U.S. COAST GUARD BEACH PATROL DURING WORLD WAR II. Page 50.
- 4 Ibid, pages 28-33 & 50.
- 5 www.smallarmsreview.com/display.article.cfm?idarticles=2938
- 6 Iannamico, Frank. THE REISING SUBMACHINE GUN STORY. Page 14.
- 7 www.wikiwand.com/en/M50_Reising
- 8 For a complete list of users: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M50_Reising
- 9 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M50_Reising

REISING SUBMACHINE GUN, CALIBER .45, MODEL 50

Caliber:	.45 ACP
Overall Length:	35.75 in.
Barrel Length:	11 in. (13.75 in. with compensator)
Weight:	6.5 lbs. (unloaded)
Sights:	Front: Bead Rear: Aperture adj. from 100 to 300 yards
Magazine:	12- & 20-round detachable box
Stock:	Walnut
ROF:	450–500 rpm

REISING SUBMACHINE GUN, CALIBER .45, MODEL 55

Caliber:	.45 ACP
Overall Length:	31.25 in. (stock extended); 22.25 in. (stock folded)
Barrel Length:	10.75 in.
Weight:	7.65 lbs. (unloaded)
Sights:	Front: Bead Rear: Aperture adj. from 100 to 300 yards
Magazine:	12- & 20-round detachable box
Stock:	Walnut with folding skeletonized, steel buttstock
ROF:	450–500 rpm

WANT TO BUY A REISING?

SUBMACHINE GUNS:

Midwest Tactical, Inc.
www.ATFMachinegun.com/reisingm50

Reuben Mendiola
DealerNFA.com/shop/reising-m50-45-acp-excellent-6192/

Rock Island Auction Co.
RockIslandAuction.com/detail/82/1555/hr-model-50-reising-submachine-gun

Morphy Auctions
MorphyAuctions.com/jamesdjulia/item/3752-386/

CARBINES:

Rock Island Auction Co.
RockIslandAuction.com/detail/83/459/harrington-richardson-model-60-reising-carbine

Morphy Auctions
https://Auctions.MorphyAuctions.com/_C_HIGH_CONDITION_H_R_REISING_MODEL_60_45_ACP_SE-LOT503455.aspx

PARTS:

Sarco
SarcoInc.com/submachine-gun-parts-accessories/reising-model-50/

Numrich Arms Co.
GunPartsCorp.com/gun-manufacturer/reising

Apex Gun Parts
ApexGunParts.com/machine-guns/sub-machine-guns/more/m50-m55-m60-reising-45-caliber.html

REISING MODEL 60 SEMI-AUTOMATIC RIFLE

Caliber:	.45 ACP
Overall Length:	40.25 in.
Barrel Length:	18.25 in.
Weight:	7 lbs. (unloaded)
Sights:	Front: Bead Rear: Aperture adj. from 100 to 300 yards
Magazine:	12- & 20-round detachable box
Stock:	Walnut
ROF:	Semiautomatic