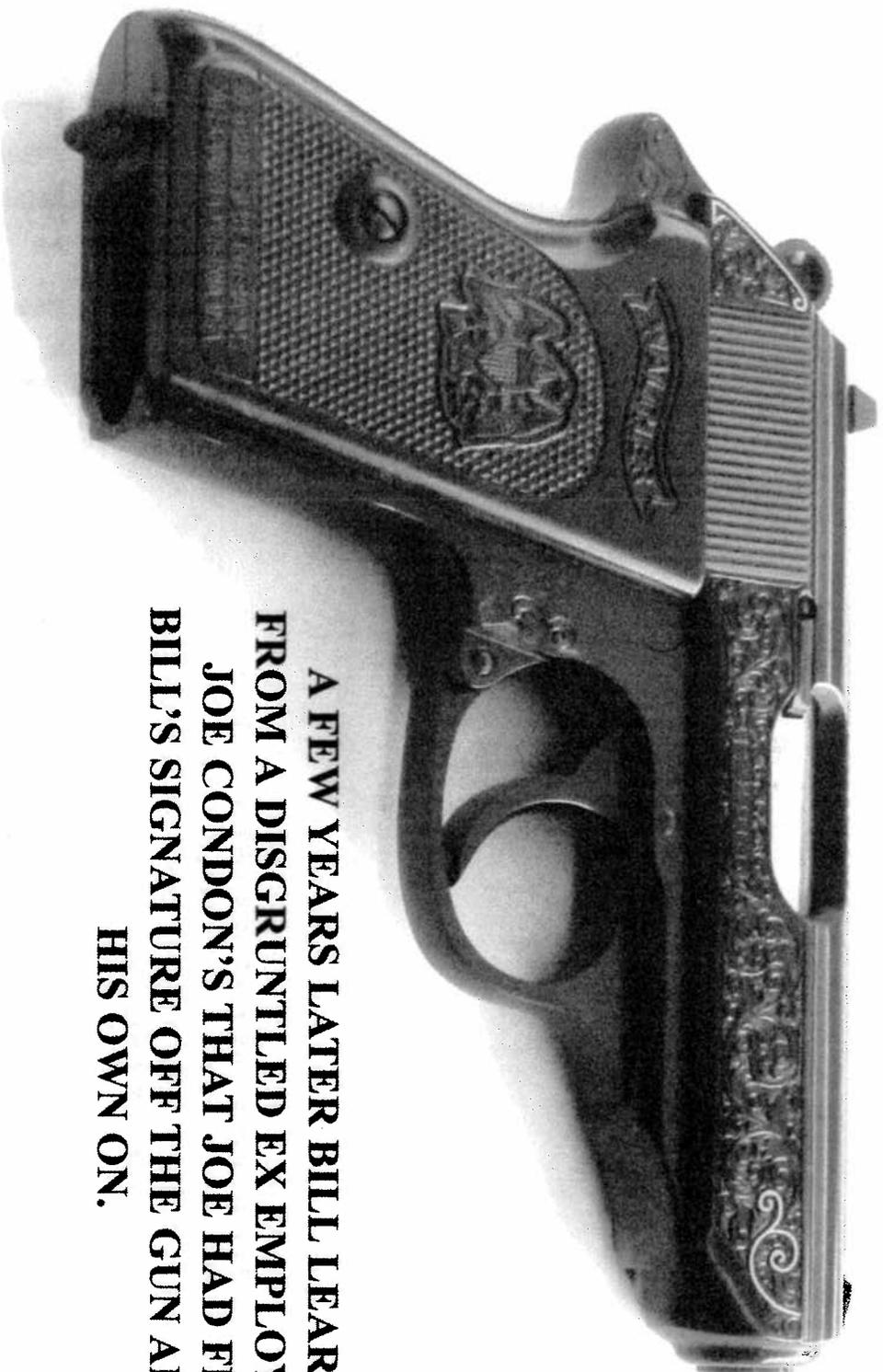


ELVIS PRESTLY'S WALTHER PPK

UPON MOVING TO LAS VEGAS IN 1974, BILL DID A GREAT DEAL OF SUB CONTRACT ENGRAVING FOR JOE CONDON, A GUN ENGRAVER / MAGIAN. THE SECOND JOB BILL DID THROUGH CONDON WAS A PPK SIMILAR TO THIS FOR ELVIS IN DECEMBER 1974.



A FEW YEARS LATER BILL LEARNED FROM A DISGRUNTLED EX EMPLOYEE OF JOE CONDON'S THAT JOE HAD FILED BILL'S SIGNATURE OFF THE GUN AND PUT HIS OWN ON.

BILL MAINS AND THE BUFFALO SIGNATURE STAMP

WHEN BILL FIRST STARTED ENGRAVING FOR COLT, ON A CONTRACT BASIS, HE WAS TOLD THAT THEY DID NOT WANT THE ENGRAVING SIGNED. THIS DID NOT SIT WELL WITH BILL, SO HE MADE A SMALL BUFFALO STAMP AND STARTED STAMPING EACH FRAME BELOW THE CYLINDER PIN. NOTHING WAS EVER SAID, SO MOST OF THE MAINS FACTORY ENGRAVED GUNS BEAR THE BUFFALO STAMP. ALTHOUGH BILL LIVED, AND DID MOST OF HIS ENGRAVING AT THIS TIME, ON A BEAUTIFUL 100 ACRE MOUNTAINSIDE 90 MILES SOUTH OF BUFFALO, HIS OFFICIAL BUSINESS ADDRESS WAS AT THE G&R TACKLE CO, THE LARGEST HUNTING AND FISHING STORE IN BUFFALO NY.

BILL ALSO USED THIS STAMP ON MANY OF THE MAINS KNIVES WHICH HE MADE IN THE EARLY 1970'S.

COLT FACTORY "IN-HOUSE" AND CONTRACT ENGRAVERS OF SINGLE ACTION ARMY REVOLVERS (1958 THROUGH 1979)

ENGRAVER'S NAME	YEARS OF EMPLOYMENT	NUMBER OF SINGLE ACTIONS ENGRAVED
ALVIN HERBERT	1954-1968	65
ALVIN WHITE	1961-1976	45
EARL BIEU	1964-1970	2
BILL MAINS	1967-1972	121
DENNIS KIES	1968-1972	11
ROBERT BURT	1970-PRESENT	34
W. DANIEL CULLITY	1971-1973	13
LEONARD FRANCOLINI	1972-1979	21
DANIEL GOODWIN	1974-1979	3
GEORGE SPRING	1975-1977	5
STEVEN G. KAMYK	1976-PRESENT	2
BRYSON GWINNELL	1977-PRESENT	5
ENGRAVING SAMPLES		4
UNIDENTIFIED ENGRAVERS		12
TOTALS		350

"The most prolific of the Colt postwar Single Action Army engravers was Mr. Bill Mains. Mr Mains was known to apply more engraving to a gun than what the Colt factory engravers in Hartford, Connecticut, and other contract engravers were doing per any style "A," "B," or "C. Mr. Mains did a lot of his engraving in Buffalo, New York, and thus those guns engraved there have a small Buffalo stamp on the front edge of the frame."



BELIEVE IT OR NOT, THE FIRST SINGLE ACTIONS BILL ENGRAVED FOR THE FACTORY WEREN'T COLTS AT ALL, BUT THIS PAIR OF DAKOTA ARMS REPLICAS. "GUESS THEY WERE TRYING ME OUT", BILL SAYS. HE WENT ON TO ENGRAVE MORE SAA'S THAN ANYONE ELSE.



IN HIS COLT FACTORY ENGRAVING DAYS BILL SOMETIMES PLAYED HEAD GAMES WITH FUTURE COLLECTORS. THE FACTORY WOULD SEND A CASE OF 12 TO 15 GUNS, ALL WITH CONSECUTIVE SERIAL NUMBERS, AND A LIST OF HOW MANY A, B AND C GRADES THEY WANTED. BILL WOULD OFTEN PURPOSELY ENGRAVE AN A, B AND C IN CONSECUTIVE NUMBERS. ALTHOUGH THESE GUNS USUALLY WENT TO DIFFERENT DEALERS, MANY OF THESE "SETS" HAVE BEEN PUT BACK TOGETHER BY THE COLLECTORS

BILL THINKS ONE OF THE REASONS HE WAS GIVEN SO MANY GUNS TO ENGRAVE WAS THE FINISH ON THE RAW STEEL PARTS WHEN HE RETURNED THEM. HAVING A COMPLETE GUN RE FINISHING BUSINESS AT THE TIME, BILL ALWAYS TRIED TO RETURN THE GUNS IMPECCABLY POLISHED AND READY FOR THE BLUING OR NICKEL PLATING TANKS. THESE GUNS WERE "PRODUCTION ENGRAVING" TO BILL. HE WOULD LINE UP 4 TO 6 BOXES OF PARTS AROUND HIS WORKBENCH AND ENGRAVE ALL OF THE CYLINDERS, ALL OF THE BARRELS, ETC. WHILE TRANSFERRING THE PATTERN FROM PART TO PART WITH MODELING CLAY

THE COVERAGE CONTROVERSY

WHEN BILL FIRST STARTED ENGRAVING FOR COLT IN 1967, ALL HE HAD TO GO BY FOR COVERAGE WAS THE CATALOG SHEET OF THE DAY WHICH STATED THAT GRADE "A" HAD APPROXIMATELY 1/3RD COVERAGE, "B" 2/3RDS AND "C" VIRTUALLY FULL COVERAGE, SO THAT IS WHAT BILL DID. IT WASN'T LONG BEFORE THERE WERE COMPLAINTS FROM THE FACTORY THAT BILL WAS DOING TOO MUCH COVERAGE. IN FACT, BILL HAD INADVERTENTLY INVENTED THE "D" GRADE, AS THEY TOOK HIS FIRST "C"s AND CALLED THEM "D"s. BEFORE LONG BILL WAS ASKED TO FLY UP TO HARTFORD FOR A CONFERENCE ON WHAT FUTURE COVERAGE WAS TO BE.

WHY THERE IS NO MENTION OF BILL MAINS IN "THE BOOK OF COLT ENGRAVING"

THE AUTHOR, R.L. WILSON WAS PURPOSELY KEPT FROM KNOWING BILL WAS ENGRAVING SOME OF THE GUNS BECAUSE HE WAS THE MANAGER OF THE FIRM "A.A. WHITE, INC. ENGRAVERS". THIS CONGLOMERATION OF ENGRAVERS THOUGHT THEY WERE GETTING MOST OF COLT'S ENGRAVING WHEN, IN FACT, MOST OF THE SINGLE ACTIONS WERE BEING SHIPPED TO BILL. ODDLY ENOUGH, WHILE BILL WAS WAITING IN THE LOBBY OF THE PLANT TO MEET WITH THE PRESIDENT GORDON WALKER AND AL DEJOHN, CUSTOM SHOP MANAGER, ON THE COVERAGE ISSUE, LARRY WILSON WAS THERE ALSO. AFTER ASKING SOMEONE WHO BILL WAS, HE CAME OVER, INTRODUCED HIMSELF, AND ASKED "WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?" BILL REPLIED "OH, I'M JUST VISITING."