



Get a Grip

There are practical reasons for changing out the factory grips on handguns. Those with large hands might go for the Bill Jordan designed Trooper stocks from Herrett's to get a better hold on that .44 Magnum. Bill was 6'6" so to my small hands these are like grabbing a two-by-four. Those with shorter digits like me can opt for reduced size revolver grips and thinned panels for automatics.

Pachmayr rubber handgun grips, introduced in the early 1960's revolutionized the handgun market by easing the pain of recoil and providing a more positive grip purchase in nasty weather. The excellent soft rubber grips from Hogue are in the same vein.

My choice for the most ergonomic grip shapes ever are the classic Colt single-action designs from 1851 to 1873 and the mighty Browning Hi Power. However, even these can be improved upon based on one's hand size and handgun use such as protection, hunting or target shooting.

The availability of aftermarket grips from factories and custom makers has never been greater. The aforementioned Hogue, Inc. has geometrically expanded their line through the years to include the wide selection of rubber grips, plus Nylon Monogrips, and choices of exotic hardwoods, aluminum, titanium and G-10. Check those choices and firearms they fit at www.getgrip.com.

Custom grips are an easy addition to



A pair of Colts with Eagle Grips "Ultra Imitation Ivory."

doll up a favorite handgun, get a perfect fit, and exercise freedom of choice.

Eagle Grips has long been at the forefront in providing factory size grips for single actions, double actions, and semi-auto pistols covering a wide range models. In addition they provide custom fitting and fill custom orders. As an example, there are enough minor variables in the shape of Colt single action handgun grip frames that one size does not fit all.

The extra charge to send an entire handgun or the grip frame and trigger guard for custom fitting is well worth the price. Some of the available grip materials include rosewood, ebony, walnut, buffalo horn, stag, elk and Mother of Pearl. Though real ivory grips are many a shooter's expensive dream, Eagle's Ultra Imitation Ivory is handmade to create the grain and texture as close to the real thing as I have ever seen.

A walk on the

wild side is provided by their new "Art Jewel Collection" made from a proprietary process creating what they call "Kirinite" grip panels that come in a myriad of colors and patterns. Scroll all the photos at www.eaglegrips.com.

A pair of highly respected custom makers are Craig Spegel and Kim Ahrends. Spegel's "Boot Grips" have long been a favorite for concealed carry since 1978. Made by hand to a perfect fit they come either smooth or checkered in such wonderful wood as black walnut, Bolivian Rosewood and Macassar ebony. The grip can be had with a 3/8-inch extension for wider hands and still be compact. Spegel specializes in Smith & Wesson revolvers, Browning Hi Power and 1911 type semi-autos. See www.craigspege.com.

Kim Ahrends began building custom 1911's in 1980 and starting crafting grips in 1982. His 1911 experience makes his shop a great source for thinner grips. As promoted, "These stocks are cut thin for smaller hands and or to better conceal. The stocks are serrated for an improved purchase. Due to their thin profile custom grip screws and bushings are included." In addition to choices of wood, Ahrends offers several choices of checkering for his 1911 grips including, diamond, tactical, combat, and skip checkering. Several



Smith & Wesson's Mountain Gun (top) with Ahrends "Round Butt Finger Groove" stocks and .44 Mag. with Spegel "Boot Grip."

choices are available for Smith & Wesson revolvers in both his "Tactical" and "Retro" lines. Make your pick at www.ahrendsgripsusa.com.

The new girl on the block is Esmeralda O'Sheehan and she has quickly established a reputation for not only craftsmanship, but an uncanny ability to seek out some of the finest wood products on the planet. The Exotic Grips by Esmeralda website states she pursues "only the top 2% of exotic woods" and she knows many special sources.

Her biography reveals, "Esmeralda's father is Irish and her mother is Peruvian, and she credits this background for her lively and hi-spirited nature, 'being young and adventurous, I always wanted to travel & see places. I ended up trekking through the rain forests of Central & South America, eventually living for 7 years in Costa Rica and Nicaragua."

Her many choices of wood include such exotics as Andean alder, tulipwood, Amboyna burl, and leopardwood. Also, walnut fans are covered. She creates grips for several types of handguns. Not only can you special order from Esmeralda, her up to date website features several



Colt 1911 carries Rio Grande Custom Grips "Don't Mess with Texas" and the Ruger Bisley has Exotic Grips by Esmeralda.

creations ready for purchase. Let your keyboard do the shopping at www.esmeralda.cc.

Sometimes we do things just for the fun of it and that is where Rio Grande Custom Grips comes in to play. Their grip design features full-color, full-coverage images. Their ever growing selection of "stock" designs is supplemented by custom designs created from customer supplied images. If you want a punisher skull, coiled rattler, America eagle or

happy face you can have it. If you want to send them a picture of your business card or favorite dog to be put on a set you can even have that too.

Rio Grande Custom Grips are molded using a high strength, engineered polymer that provides the toughness and durability. Their patented method provides an extremely rugged image that is salt, oil, solvent, water, impact and abrasion resistant. Your mind can really wander at www.riograndecustomgrips.com. ★★