

# A Hun'ert at a Time

Working a RL 550B to reload some .45 Auto Ammunition



Gary Heartsill

26 June 2020

*What you always wanted to know about  
reloading 'bullets' but were  
afraid to ask; better:*

**"Look how easy it is to reload!"**

## Goal in reloading

If you were going to start a class in statistics, you would need to become familiar with terms like MODE, RANGE, ASYMPTOTIC, RANDOM, COEFFICIENT, REGRESSION, and RELIABILITY.

If you were going to start reloading ammunition you would need to become familiar with terms like CASE, CARTRIDGE, DIE, HEADSPACE, CRIMPING, AVOIRDUPOIS, COST, and CONSISTENCY.

The test now is to note the two words in both disciplines above that means the same thing. What two words in the expressions have identical meaning? What two words mean dependable, solid, trustworthy, agreement, uniform, compatible, invariable, and homogenous?

Of course the LAST ONE in each sentence.

### **RELIABILITY = CONSISTENCY**

This is one of the main reasons for reloading. We reload to make our cartridges consistent AND reliable. We reload the same way everyday to make the same shots go exactly the same way.

End of test one.

The reason for starting with these two words has to do with the seriousness of getting involved in reloading whether one does the reloading manually or by using a reloading press. The seriousness must be accepted as a starter because one will waste his time and money by being shoddy and irresponsible. I say this to maybe save you some money. The parts just to get started manually or even to purchase a new RL 550C will cost you a pretty penny.

The other reason is, or maybe a better one, which means you may not really be serious about shooting reloads or actually doing that much shooting. It takes time to reload just like it takes money to get started.

Ok, some of us waited a few years and now enjoy the fruits of having a handle to pull and watch a 'bullet' fall into a tray – maybe at a pretty good clip – but I will tell you from my handle pulling position in my reloading room I am almost to the point of having the room, armory, and shooting range paid for by doing my own reloads.

Note: *If you don't shoot much keep buying your ammo and don't worry about it...pretty simple.*

A gratuitous reason for reloading comes after you have done it for a while. It grows on you. Maybe it is like taking pride in your work. Getting into the groove of knocking out a hun'ert is like walking back to the house after cutting the grass: "Dang, this feels good!" Well, maybe painting a running board or a fender and stepping back and saying "Ain't that nice!" Meaning, being in the groove is a fine feeling and worth the effort.

Will tell you another. The discipline of reloading teaches patience. You have to plan ahead and watch EVERYTHING you touch – and watch everything you move. This is not the place to 'drop something' and then in frustration punch a hole in the wall or go throw something across the room. No sir. Teaches you to be calm, careful, considerate, conscientious, concise, compendious, and conciliative. Trust me on this...

# The **Blue Press** January 2020<sup>1</sup>



She is a distraction...have noted her before – you may remember.



**RL 550C**

**Any way you look at her this press you have to say "It is just beautiful."  
(See Peyton on page 63 of the January issue.)**

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dillonprecision.com/blue-press-catalog.html> Order your Blue Press Catalog here!

The big four are cases, primers, powder, and bullets.

Cases – any case will do. Well, maybe. Have to check its hole.

Primer – any ole primer will do. Well, a small one won't work. Need Large Pistol Primer.

Powder – any ole powder will do. Well, a double charge (load) may blow your gun up.

Bullet – any ole bullet will do. Well, maybe. Will a .451 work as well as a .452?

Let's start with a Reloading Bench



This 4 x 8 room is in my armory. It was built June 28, 2008. Not much room. It does one only one thing...

Have some brass laid out ready to reload next to my **Dillon RL 550B press**. There are three manual single stage **RCBS** presses on the north end of the bench and across to the right on the middle shelf are two mechanical powder measures (dispensers) and two powder scales.

The bullets are on the shelf behind the RCBS presses next to two styrofoam boxes holding primers and powder. At the top left corner are used primer boxes to be trashed.

Course, I get to stand on my red matt and get to look out the window to the north.

No music is piped in nor does Rush get to speak when I am doing this holey work.



A better look at the east wall looking at the two powder measures, the Ohaus scale, and the RCBS Mechanical scale right below it. The Dillon 550B powder tube is on the right side of the picture showing a little less than half full.

The tray of bullets are .452 semi-wad cutters (SWC) from Williams in Norman touting the Oklahoma "crimson red" lubricant. There are about 300 or so bullets in the tray and will use the rest of the powder in the tube.

**Question:** Which is the best recipe to use on this Dillon 550B for my .45 Autos?

- 4.5 grains Unique, .452 SWC, Winchester large pistol primer, TZZ brass.
- 4.8 grains Unique, .452 SWC, CCI large pistol primer, Winchester Brass.
- 3.5 grains Bullseye, .452 SWC, Winchester large pistol primer, Federal Brass.
- 4.0 grains Bullseye, .451 SWC, Federal large pistol primer, Federal Brass.

Actually, they all will work just fine. Probable would not be any difference between the groupings; however, I would prefer the last line as my first choice.

My loads will use all of these configurations and then some comma but:

1. Powder will be Unique or Bullseye – down to last batch of Unique, rest is Bullseye.
2. Oklahoma .452s are down to about 1500 more to load then the rest will be .451s.
3. Will use WIN LPPrimers for the .452s and FED for the .451s.
4. Have at least 10 different types of brass. Will use the best I have to finish last batch.

Some will argue a great deal of precision is required for .45 Auto. Not really; but to shoot five rounds inside of a three inch bull at 44 feet does require some good measure.



The *handle* is ready to pull down.

1. *The bullet* is sitting level on top of a charged case at **station 3**.
2. As the *handle* goes down watch for the brass case at **station 2** going up to be bellied and getting powder dropped into it. Must watch to see (and maybe guide) the brass so that it fits exactly up into the powder funnel.
3. *Handle* continues all the way down. Start *handle* up, pausing, to make sure you have a visual on the primer anvil in the primer seating cup. If anvil is present, continue up with *handle* to let the primer slide move into position so that moving *the handle* forward, seats the primer in the bottom of the brass case.
4. Cycle the index sprocket, listening for the cha-chink of the crimped cartridge into tray.
5. Slide an upright brass case into **stage one**.
6. Check powder in brass in **stage two**.
7. Check powder in brass in **stage three**. Place a bullet into top of brass – make level.

\* *Handle* down (you are back again to step one)

Watch powder funnel go smoothly into brass – again, may have to jiggle brass a bit. *Handle* all the way down noting brass in stage one the brass gets resized and de-primed. You can sometimes see the de-primed primer get spit into the silver metal catch container.

Pause...Check anvil showing – if not there you have to come back down on the *handle* a bit and pull the primer slide back to get a primer loaded from the primer feed body.

*Handle* forward to re-prime, check both two and three for powder, place bullet on top of brass at station 3 and start the *handle* down. That's it. Ten or eleven must steps...



Looking down, am about eye level with my camera, you can see the handle, stage one, part of three, and stage four. The set up is ready for the handle to be pulled.<sup>2</sup>

**Stage One** – The cartridge is resized, deprimed, and reprimed.

**Stage Two** – Powder is dropped and the case is belled.

**Stage Three** – The bullet is seated to its proper depth.

**Stage Four** - The taper crimp die is in stage four of the toolhead.

Question: Which deserves the most care: brass, powder, primer, or the bullet?

- a. Primer
- b. Primer
- c. Primer
- d. Primer

e. Be careful with your primers – don't force them. There are some other rules about dealing with primers but I have given you the guts of jacking with 'em.

---

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.dillonprecision.com/rl-550c-reloader\\_8\\_1\\_23594.html](https://www.dillonprecision.com/rl-550c-reloader_8_1_23594.html) A first stop to look at the new 550C. Nice video is presented (3:40).

<https://dilloncdn.com/manuals/dillon-bl550-manual-english.pdf>

This is a 20 page Instruction Manual for the BL 550 showing step by step each part to be used to build the Press.

Took this picture showing the primers being laid out and ready to be put in the primer pick up tube, and then dispensed down the primer feed body on the Dillon 550B.



Shows half way through picking the primers up into the pick up tube. Note card for batch number 237 showing the date, recipe, and can number. The trays above the blue paper towels are holding mostly busted or broken brass, primers not working, or cartridges to be redone/fixed/discarded. I'd need six pages to explain all that but maybe whip up an appetite for some interest...meaning they don't always work and may mechanically fail.



Just finished a batch of a hun'ert. Using the Dillon .45 Precision gauge, there in the middle, as I run each 'bullet' in/out of the gauge to make sure it will fit, not get hung up, or have a bulge. Headspace on the .45 ACP, a true rimless cartridge, is the whole body as the rim is no larger than the diameter of the body of the case. It seats on the case mouth at the front end of the chamber. Dropping it in the gauge is like dropping it into the barrel of the gun. The bullet will headspace on the rim or face of the brass.



Here is a six pack getting ready to fill up a ammo can. Takes about 1,000 to do that.



This shows ammo Can 05 loaded up!

Shown below are the parts to reloading a “hun’ert” and features some of the different choices in loading my .45s. For instance I use two Alliant Powder types as in Unique and Bullseye – course, we have talked about the amount of charge ranging from 3.5 grains of Bullseye to 4.8 grains of Unique. A pound of avoirdupois powder is 7,000 grains which will reload 1750 rounds. Bullseye is a faster burning (4<sup>th</sup> fastest of the 100+ powders) powder and is not near as nasty and filthy as the Unique. I can’t really tell the difference in the shooting however.

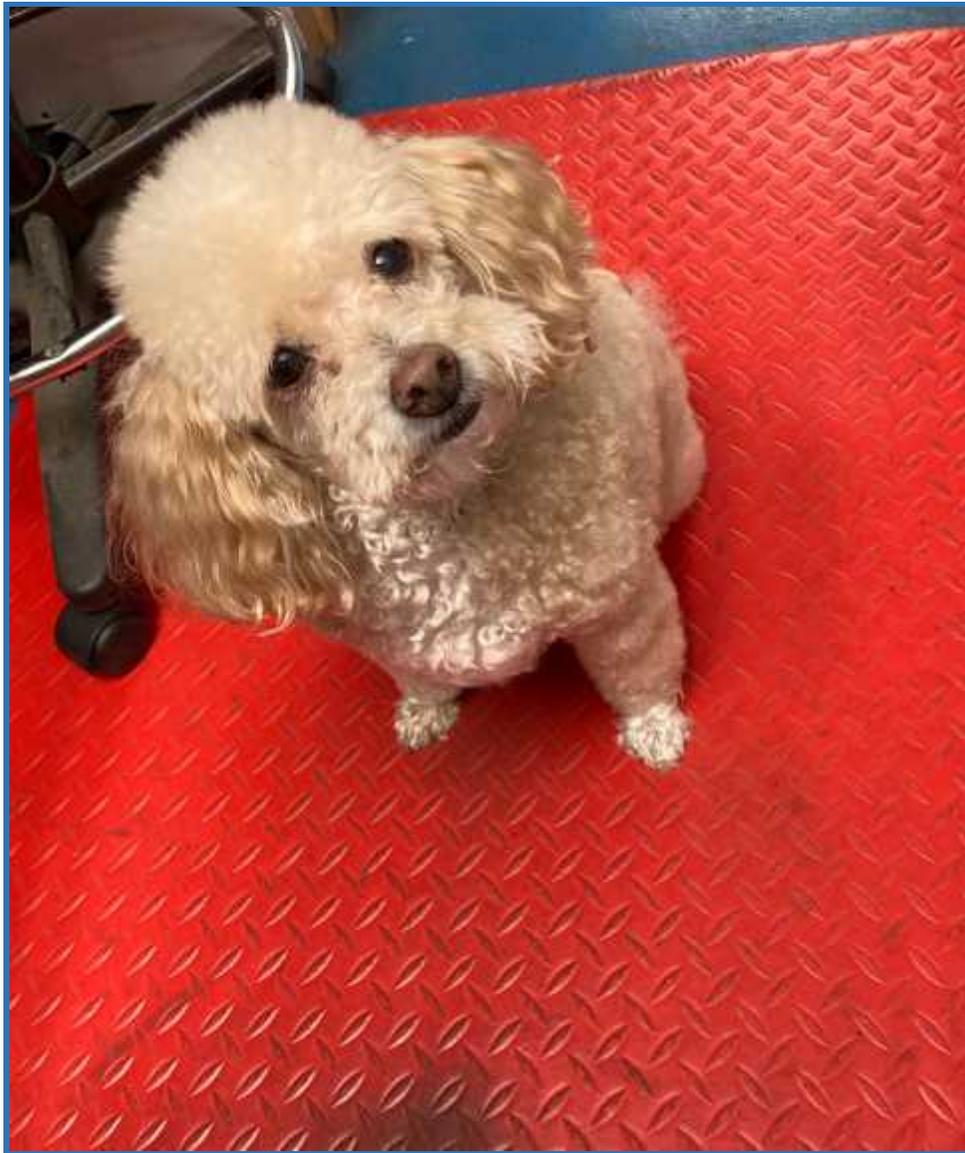
You can see the Winchester Large Pistol Primers (LPP) and Federal right below it. Both are good primers. Have three 200 grain bullets with the Nosler HP (hollow point) right above the two semi-wad cutters below. The left cleaner group is from Dallas Reloading and the Oklahoma Crimson reds are from Norman.

At the top is a hand full of brass – each are about .898 inches long. Then the last 25 are waiting to be gauged before putting into the plastic bag. Note, of course, here is quality control again as I go through each ‘bullet’ and check for cracks, seating, primer, and overall looks. The last check is to look at all 100 of them for the primers to line up.



Let’s say, while I was checking the headspace, one ‘bullet’ would not even start into the gauge. This means it was not taper crimped. I missed it somehow as it did not go through stage four of my big Blue Dillon press.

This is the part I like...I know how to do this...I turn exactly 90 degrees to my left and insert the ‘bullet’ into my third RCBS and cycle the handle manually – clink, and it is done. This is one of the reasons why the three are set just to my left as shown on the page 4 picture. I love it when a plan comes together.



“Are you done yet?”

“I heard the low primer horn go off – another hunert!”

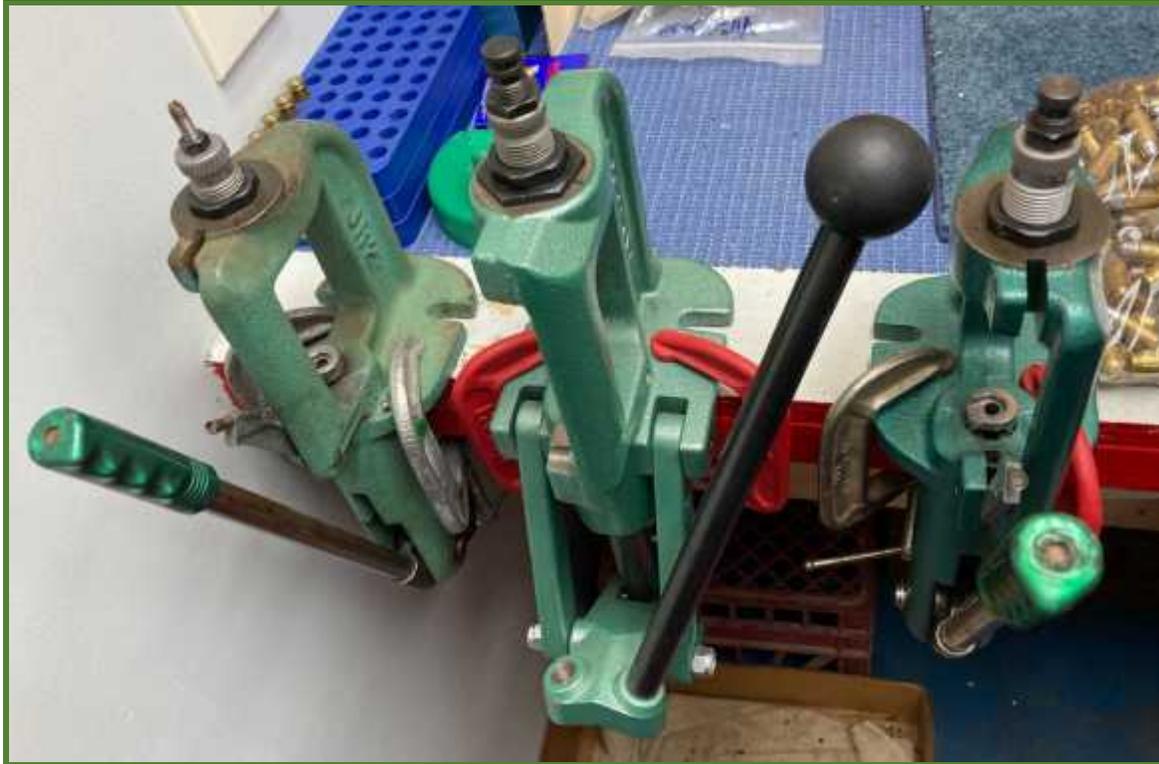
“Time to go to the house – I need my grits!”

(He is serious...)

Let's say I wanted to run a batch of ten or so rounds with another load, bullet, or primer. My Dillon may not be set up for it but it wouldn't take long with my three RCBSs to knock out 10, go shoot 'em, and make a decision on mass producing like I am doing for the 4.8 Dillon Unique reloads. Note: the Dillon has Dillon dies and the set of 3 is RCBS.

My **RCBS 3 DIE SET** (Carbide Sizer Dies)

(Note old RCBS JR2 – still cost me a pretty penny at a gun show in Ft. Worth.



Left to right, the first (sizer/decap) die sizes and decaps the brass, the middle one will bell the case mouth. The third one could be used to prime the case and finally to seat the bullet. **But**, in my case before I use number 3, I will manually insert the primer using a RCBS Universal Hand Priming Tool:



(This little hummer costs damn near a \$100 these days.)

Then, depending on how many I am reloading I will get a tray laid out with primed brass and go to one of my two mechanical powder measures. Last, I will go back to the third RCBS die and seat and taper trim.

(Jimmy started me down this reloading track after John spent some time with us in Tulsa. Jimmy broke it down to where I could really understand and helped me to do this reloading all manual. Then I said to myself "I need to do this quicker...")



You can get the Supreme Master Reloading kit \$400.

<https://www.rcbs.com/kits/rock-chucker-supreme-master-reloading-kit/16-9354.html>



***TIME TO GO TO WORK!***

Oh, I forgot page 63.



It has to be the shotgun...can you see?