

# Metalform 9mm Magazines <sup>69</sup>

By Duane Thomas

The combination of the 9mm Parabellum cartridge and the 1911 auto pistol has recently become quite popular. It has much to offer: the unbeaten trigger pulls of the 1911, with the light recoil and extremely affordable ammunition of the 9mm. Problem: Most such guns don't work reliably. This may be traced to the design of the magazines. The solution is the single-stack 9mm 1911 magazines made for Springfield by OEM manufacturer Metalform, and sold (naturally) through Dillon's *Blue Press* (on Page 57, to be specific).

The 9mm Parabellum is considerably shorter in length than the .45 ACP cartridge around which the 1911 magazine was designed. When the breech-face hits the base of the cartridge in the feeding cycle, pushing it forward and (ideally) out of the magazine and into the firing chamber, the cartridge nosedives. With a longer round like the .45, the bullet nose hits the angled feed ramp before it's had time to nosedive much and everything proceeds from there beautifully. With a 9mm, the distance from the magazine to the feed ramp is so long that doesn't always happen. The classic malfunction with a 9mm-chambered 1911 is very distinctive: The round winds up driving straight into the feed ramp and it stops, partway out of the magazine.

To get around this problem, the classic 1911 single-stack 9mm magazine has a spacer in back. This moves the cartridge forward in the magazine, so it will hit the feed ramp before it's had a chance to nosedive enough to cause a problem. At least that's the theory. In reality, this system just doesn't work very well.

I recently was trying to debug a 9mm 1911 with serious nosedive/failure-to-feed issues. I tried everything, new barrel, new extractor. Nothing worked. But people deeply into the 9mm 1911 kept saying to me, "Springfield magazines, Springfield magazines." Examining this design, I discovered it's quite different than the classic spacer-at-the-rear approach. The Springfield/Metalform 9mm mag was actually designed by Grand Master Rob Leatham. According to Derek Dibble of Metalform, Rob came up to him at the SHOT Show with a magazine he'd kind of jury-rigged up, and said to him, basically, "9mm 1911 magazines suck. Why don't you build this instead? This would work." They looked it over, they tried it,

they liked it, they built it. It works. These are the magazines currently supplied with all Springfield's full-sized 9mm 1911s.

In the Leatham/Springfield/Metalform single-stack 9mm 1911 magazine, rather than having a spacer in back, the round inserts all the way into the mag just like normal with no spacer. But in order to decrease the front-to-rear length of the tube down to 9mm length, Robbie figured out that you could accomplish the same thing by grooving the front of the tube, like the grooves you see on the sides of 9mm/.38 Super/.40 S&W/10mm 1911 mags. This also allows us to take the very upper front of the mag tube, where it's been grooved in, then bend it back out. This in effect forms a sort of "pre-feed ramp," an angled piece of metal that

catches the front of the 9mm cartridge before it can nosedive very far at all, and funnels it up and into the chamber.

My previously mentioned 9mm 1911, with standard design magazines, when hand cycling loaded rounds through the gun had a serious example of the so-called "chunk-chunk effect" as rounds slammed hard into the feed ramp and then (usually) chambered. When firing the gun with live ammo it was the same thing; some-

times it cycled, sometimes I got a nosedive malfunction. With the Metalform magazines, by contrast, and changing nothing else (I even reinstalled the original barrel and extractor) the gun hand cycles loaded rounds so smoothly it feels like the action is closing on air. Literally, the only way you can tell you're cycling loaded rounds instead of just exercising an empty gun is the sound.

Man, you'd think that Rob Leatham guy actually knows what he's doing.

Since switching to Metalform 9mm magazines, the only malfunction I've experienced was with one magazine that actually came from the vendor (not Dillon) with a crushed-in feed lip. Those who think gunwriters get specially selected, perfect products, take note. Though I straightened that feed lip with a pair of parallel jaw pliers, still I wasn't able to restore the mag to full functionality. I donated that particular magazine to the garbage can, and my 9mm 1911 has worked perfectly ever since.

So if you have a malfunctioning 9mm 1911 and can't figure out what to do, I have two words for you: Metalform magazines. You'll thank me later.

DP

