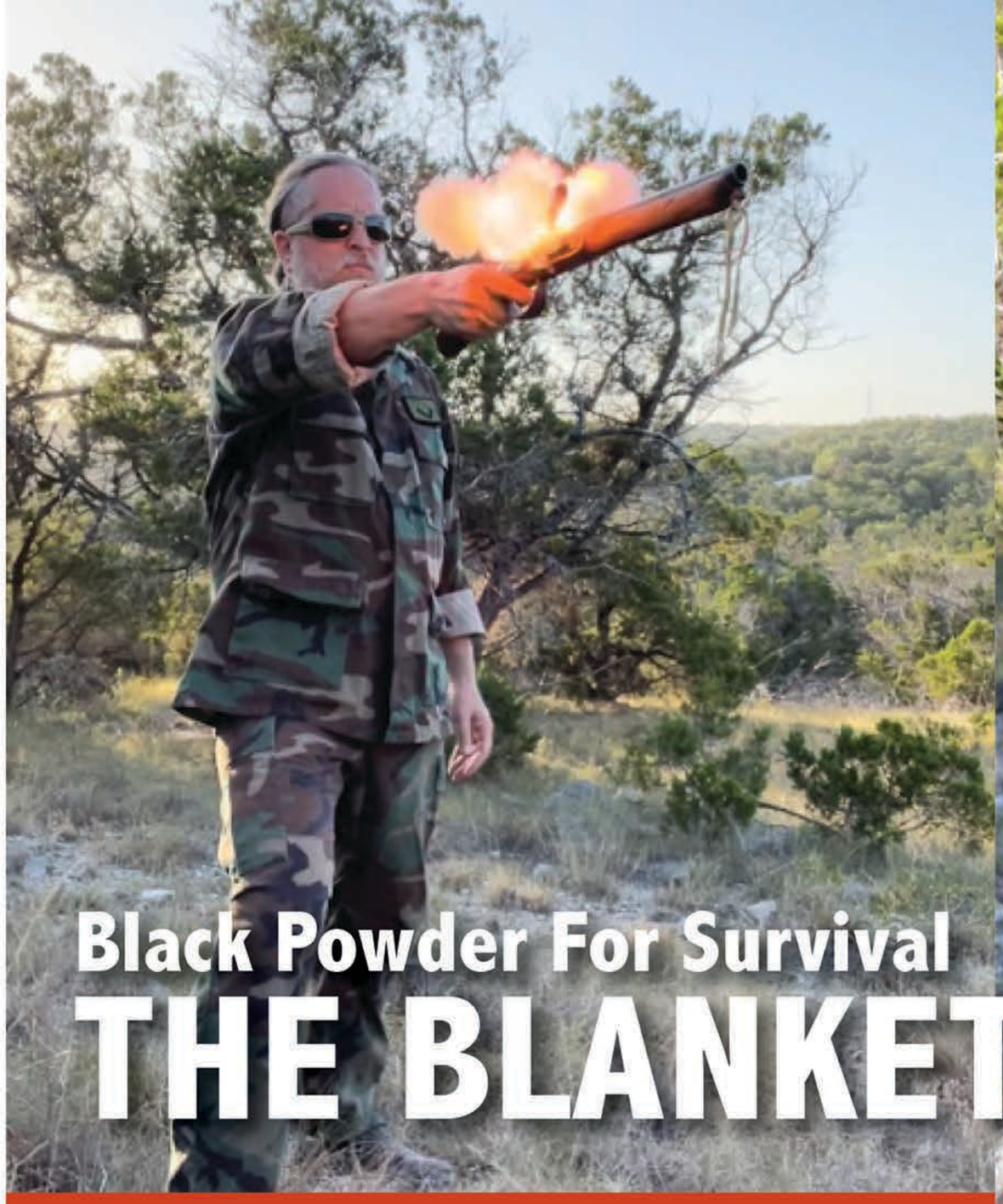

Black Powder For Survival

THE BLANKET GUN

by Paul "Many Rifles" Laster

Years ago, I read an excellent article in *Backwoodsman* magazine about a flintlock musket being the ideal weapon for a long-term survival scenario. This was an interesting idea – and really got me thinking - why on earth would such an archaic weapon be the right fit for survival in a modern age?

As a self-avowed "survival weapons enthusiast" I had to get my hands on one – and since that time – coupled with the black powder experience I'd had as a kid, I have become a proponent of muzzleloaders in general and flintlocks in particular as viable survival weapons and excellent all around "woods guns."

Flintlocks as Survival Weapons

My lifelong pursuit of the "ultimate survival weapon" has led me down many different paths - .22 pistols and .22 rifles, sub-caliber inserts, bows and arrows, blowguns, collapsible spears, and more. All of these are great, and all have their place, but the question remained – does a black powder muzzleloader have a place in the modern survivalist's arsenal?

Looking back in time, there are plenty of excellent first-person references to the frontiersmen and their arms in the settling and surviving in the wilds of North America. Those brave folks had no choice – they took whatever they had access to and didn't think twice about it. The mountain man loading that "second shot" at the Blackfoot war party descending quickly upon him probably wasn't wishing he had a 30-round magazine, but rather that he could "load faster."

Flintlock muzzleloaders on the early frontier certainly had some good things going for them, and that is worth considering. For example, they were simple to operate and easy to repair. Breakage or similar issues could be handled by the village blacksmith or even the frontiersman himself without the use of modern tools. There are many examples in period museums of broken stocks on plains rifles having been repaired with rawhide wraps, brass wire and other field-expedient repairs, whereas a modern AR-15 that would require a CNC-milling machine or similar industrial-age technology to fabricate replacement parts. The lead ball could be recovered from game or a target to be recast into another bullet. The old adage that the flintlock "ran on rocks," was evident in the time it took percussion caps to "move west," though once the supply trains were running, many an old flinter was converted to caps.