The receiver was drilled and tapped on the left rear for a Lyman Model 57A receiver sight, which accompanied the rifle. We chose to test the rifle with the scope because mounting the aperture would have required removing the barrel-mounted rear sight with its step-adjustable U-notch. It was dovetailed into the barrel, and we didn’t want to tamper with it. There was a dovetailed front bead without hood.

At the range, we verified the owner’s claim of outstanding accuracy. We fired groups with CCI Stingers, Federal Gold Medal Match, and Winchester Power Point ammunition. We also tried it with Federal .22 Long Hi-Power and with CCI Short hollowpoint ammunition, and it fed everything flawlessly. The Winchester 69A preferred Stingers, giving average groups of 1.0 inch at 50 yards. We were very pleased with this rifle’s handling abilities and performance. It’s easy to see why the owner has such faith in this Winchester, and why he put so much time and effort into making it into a unique custom rifle.

The bolt was finished in what appeared to be chrome plate. The handle was slightly loose, a common condition on the Winchester Model 69 rifle. This looseness doesn’t harm its function. There were two extractors. Ejection was by a fixed block within the action, just behind the magazine. Ejection was positive except for the last round in the magazine, which seemed to come loose from the extractors and lie in the raceway on opening the bolt after the last shot. The bolt was easily removed for cleaning by pulling it rearward, depressing the trigger, and sliding the bolt out. There was a stamped safety lever at the right rear of the action. Forward was the “Fire” position.

The fit of barrel to stock was very good, with no effort to free-float it. The Weaver B4 was mounted in a Weaver Tip-Off base that was securely clamped into milled slots on top of the receiver.

The customizations mentioned before were wide ranging, but not necessarily expensive. The original trigger guard was a bent and curved strip of metal that had the appearance of having been tacked on as an afterthought. The owner inletted the trigger guard into the wood so it appeared to be an integral part of the rifle instead of just stuck on.

The owner had also been reshaping the trigger guard, a trigger job, slight stock reshape, and a new oil finish. The reshaped stock was nicely contoured at the wrist and pistol grip. Original stocks on Winchester Model 69s did not have these flowing lines, and they had no checkering, much less wrap-around. The forend tip had also been reshaped to a contour reminiscent of pre-’64 Model 70s.

Original 69A rifles had trigger pulls that were generally a bit creepy and broke at 3 to 5 pounds, depending on the luck of the draw. The trigger on this gun pull broke cleanly at 1.5 pounds with zero creep and minimal overtravel.

Marlin Model 80-DL

Our recommendation: Our Marlin had a gorgeous piece of walnut of excellent color, grain, and even some fiddle figure in the buttstock. This wood alone would surely cost well over $100 today, but that’s one of the