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Guns Still Selling At a Fast Clip

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THE ATTEMPTED assassination of Governor George Wallace gave no encouragement to those who would restrict the sale and use of firearms: Sales of guns and ammunition continue to move along at a fast clip.

Although one major retailer, Cleveland's Cook United, announced last year that it would no longer sell handguns in the 96 discount stores it has in 20 states, it remains relatively simple to buy a weapon. Assuming there are no local restrictions, you can order one through the mail.

Anti-gun forces, which want tougher legislation, have been notably unsuccessful. American shooters — or would-be shooters — spent about \$500 million last year to buy firearms and ammunition.

Even as Governor Wallace was being gunned down last month, the arms manufacturers were busy soliciting customers in magazines that go to gun fanciers.

Commando Arms of Knoxville, Tenn., featured its new Mark III, a \$132, .45-caliber carbine that is "accurate, tough, dependable." And it weighs only eight pounds.

Fernwood Gun Supply of Walnut Creek, Calif., advertised a \$12.50 kit that would enable you to assemble a "shootable" .44-caliber derringer.

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MARLIN FIREARMS of North Haven, Conn., celebrated its 100th anniversary by offering a newly-produced "collector's item" rifle that sells for \$135 and is called "Article II." It's called that after Article II of the U.S. Constitution, which guarantees "the right of the people to keep and bear arms."

Stoeger Arms of Hackensack, N.J., boasted that the Llama revolvers it imports are "the choice of police forces around the world."

Zero Bullet Company of Cullman, Ala., report-



Easy to get

ed that it has doubled its plant size and can now turn out 2 million bullets a month.

Many small companies have entered the gun business in recent years, particularly to make the cheap "Saturday night" specials, but the industry is dominated by established companies whose histories go back 100 years or more. And nearly all of these big guns are located where they started — in Massachusetts and Connecticut.

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ACCORDING to the Wall Street Journal, the top gun makers are Remington Arms and Winchester-Western. These same two companies and Federal Cartridge of Minneapolis control an estimated 90 per cent of the ammunition market.

Federal Cartridge is a privately-held company, as are many of the gun manufacturers, but Remington and Winchester are both divisions of huge chemical companies — du Pont and Olin.

Another venerable gun maker, Colt, is now part of — and has given its name to — a New York-based conglomerate, Colt Industries, that holds in its corral Fairbanks Morse pumps, Crucible Steel and Pratt & Whitney machine tools.

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GUN MANUFACTURERS and organizations such as the National Rifle Association and Ducks Unlimited and the Shooters Club of America are zealous defenders of the use of firearms. Some lofty rationale for the use of guns was expressed last month in a cover story that ran in the monthly magazine *Guns*. The writer, D. L. Loughery, pointed to the heritage of violence in America, concluding:

"America cannot disown its firearms heritage — it is a basic fiber of the nation. To the extent the country rejects this tradition it alienates a fundamental part of itself. Guns, gun ownership and gun lore are a proud and essential root of this country, not only in sport and recreation and war but in industry as well. They will remain so as long as the true America survives."

That tradition may explain why we now have just about as many guns in the U.S. — 90 million — as we have passenger cars.