The Pick Gun

At this point I'd like to introduce another picking tool that most lock

pickers find at least as valuable as their favorite rake.

It uses the principle of percussion, explained earlier in this manual. When

the "handle" portion of this tool is squeezed with a quick and rhythmical motion,

the long needle, which is inserted into the keyway, strikes the bottom pins of all

the pin stacks at once. This energy is transferred to the top pins, which of course

are resting atop the bottom pins in each chamber. Because there is a separation,

however infinitely small, between the bottom and top pins, the energy is not

transferred smoothly and a large rift develops for an instant between top and

bottom pin, sending the top pin up into the upper housing. If very slight turning

tension is being applied to the plug with a tension tool, the plug will rotate if all

top pins become trapped in the upper housing as a result of these continues

percussions.

A much more effective tool developed out of this basic configuration,

using the stored energy of a wound spring inside an enclosed body. The result is

a more powerful striking force, which in fact can be adjusted with a knurled

thumbscrew, and more control.

If you have one of these excellent tools, this is a great time to get some

practice with it. The fully pinned practice cylinder will respond well to the use

of a pick gun, as will most any residential duty lock with a relatively flat key.

Pick Guns - Perhaps the most misunderstood tool to the uninitiated is the lock pick gun as we

choose to call it. Over the years there have existed several versions of this basic tool. The most popular one is pictured in Figure 10. A Taiwan version is shown in Figure 11. Clever those Chinese.

On the outside of the American made version of this tool is stamped the Patent Number

1997362. We are amused at the thought of the Chinese ordering a copy of this patent from the U. S. Patent Office as we did. It just so happens that Patent Number 1997362 was assigned on April 9, 1935 to E. A. Davis for a two compartment water bucket!!!!!!! Seems you just can't trust anyone anymore.

One advertisement for a pick gun tool cautions the reader that complete identification must be provided for ordering this tool which, in the wrong hands, could virtually cause a "crime wave".

This is pure bologna! These tools require as much as much, if not more skill than conventional pick- ing and most agree that a skilled picker with a hand pick is better equipped than someone with little or no skills armed with a pick gun. The only application where this tool has an advantage is on cylinders equipped with mushroom pins or other similar pin design which makes conventional picking a lot more difficult, sometimes impossible. Mushroon pins are discussed in a later portion of this book.

The picture in Figure 12 shows the pick gun being used. It is a two handed operation with one

hand using the conventional torsion wrench to impart a slight turning force. The drawing in

Figure 13 better shows how the pick gun works. Internally, the pick gun is akin to a double

action revolver. Squeezing the long "trigger" forces an internal "hammer" to compress an adjustable spring. Near full compression, the sear releases the hammer for its forward travel at the end of which it hits the pick holder. This causes the pick to travel upward in a snapping motion. If properly held in the keyway it will impart the same motion to the tumbler pins as did the snap pick. The drawing in Figure 14 better shows just how this happens.

Snap guns

Occasionally featured on TV programs about crime or espionage (and

often found listed in the back pages of spy publications and soldier-offortune catalogs) are tools known as pick guns, also known as “snap

guns” or “lock snapping guns”. These tools feature a long trigger handle

which, when pulled, will retract and then quickly release a needle-like

arm. This arm is designed to be inserted into the keyway of a pin

tumbler lock and held such that it will smack into the exposed surfaces

of the key pins when the “snap” takes place, as shown in Figure 5.24.

Figure 5.24 A pick gun or snap gun is designed to be held such that the long needle-like

arm flies toward the pin stacks, contacting the key pins.

In an ideal world, the resulting strike against the pin stacks will take

place simultaneously across all key pins in the same instant and with

relatively the same force, as depicted in Figure 5.25. Newtonian laws of

motion tell us that, like balls on a billiard table (such as the ones seen in

Figure 5.26), energy should transfer through the key pins (see Figure

5.27) and result in movement of the driver pins. If you’re lucky, the

driver pins will fly “upward” (see Figure 5.28), allowing you to turn the

plug if you time everything perfectly.

Figure 5.25 When using a pick gun, one attempts to make the needle arm contact all of the

tips of the key pins simultaneously. This is often very difficult. Not only must the pick gun be

held perfectly level, but there has to be enough room within the keyway for the arm to travel.

This is less and less common on modern, well-engineered keyways.

Figure 5.26 Lock snapping (and bumping, for that matter) relies on basic principles of

Newtonian physics, which can be illustrated via the transfer of energy between balls on a billiard

table.

Figure 5.27 Ideally, energy that is delivered to the key pins will transfer through to the

driver pins.

Figure 5.28 If all goes well, the driver pins will fly out of their default positions for an

instant, allowing the lock’s plug to turn.

Bump keys

As mentioned in the description of Figure 5.25, those a