On Using Kinetic Bullet Pullers

Over the years that I've been a member of Shooters.com and now at Cast Boolits, I've seen so many posts about failed attempts at using kinetic bullet pullers. The problem is simple: Most people just don't know the trick!

Kinetic bullet pullers, for the little bit they cost, are wonderful tools. They are designed to help the handloader disassemble loaded ammunition. This, in turn, allows the handloader to salvage ammunition components that otherwise would have to be fired just to keep the brass or thrown away altogether for a variety of reasons.

Kinetic bullet pullers are made from extremely high impact resistant polymers (plastic) and are usually fitted with an aluminum handle. There are a few good reasons the handles are made of aluminum. It's light weight, it won't break, it absorbs shock and vibration (a real issue in this application), it's inexpensive (we like that!) and it's easy to mold into the head of the puller. If you're wondering why I'm rambling on about the handle, trust me, it makes a huge difference!

The head is hollow with a closed bottom and an outside threaded opening. There is a open collar with an inside thread that is fitted to the head. The puller should show up with a selection of three or four aluminum chucks or collets. These come in three pieces cut like three pieces of pie. They are bound together with a rubber O-ring that is fitted in a groove machined around the outside of the chuck pieces. That's it, that's the whole package.

The directions that come with the hammer will tell you to choose the appropriate chuck that fits the head of the particular round being disassmbled. You place the chuck on the opening of the hammer body with the flat of the chuck against the top of the hammer head. Thread the collar on the hammer to snug and back off about a half turn or so. Slip the loaded round, point first, into the chuck. The point of the round should force the chuck pieces apart to allow the round to go completely in, bottoming out with the rim of the round catching in the chuck. The collar is then snugged back down and you're ready to pull.

This is all very simple, but this is the point where most people do drastic things and demolish their puller. I once saw a post by a handloader stating that he used his brand new puller by banging it on the top of his concrete patio table. Trust me, these tools are NOT made for that kind of impact and abuse and they most certainly will shatter.

Well, what IS the best way, then? Let's talk a little bit about physics. One of Newton's laws says that for every action, there is an opposite and equal reaction. There is absolutely no give at all in a concrete patio table! You could hit the thing with a truck doing forty miles an hour and you'd tear up the truck worse than the table.

The trick is to find SOMETHING that WILL absorb the impact and allow the puller to function properly. Most people will tell you a wooden table or work bench is fine. I've blown up two pullers banging on a wooden reloading bench. One bench was made of plywood and the other was an oak dining table. Yes, wood is a lot softer than concrete, but tables don't give either when compared to a small thing like a bullet puller. You HAVE to drive the puller against SOMETHING that will give with the impact.

EUREKA!!

I was in a hardware store one afternoon wandering through the tool section when I got hit with a lightning bolt. A WOODEN MALLET! Out came the plastic and it was mine. I loaded up the puller with a mil spec .30-06 round that was fitted with a 163 grain armor piercing bullet. I chose that particular round because the crimp put in these rounds is fantastically tight, not to mention that black sealant between the case neck and the bullet. I had pulled a bunch of that stuff and found it to be the toughest ammo to deal with. I held the mallet in one hand, the puller in the other and drove the puller at the mallet with a vengeance. Because the puller is made of transparent plastic, you can see the round inside the body. I noticed the crimp had given way and the bullet had come out about 1/16". I smacked it again and the bullet jumped half way out of the neck. On the next pass, the bullet was in the bottom of the puller and covered with the old powder.

Three hits and it was done. I had spent hours trying to disassemble this ammo and had beaten the table top untill I was beat with very little results.

The trick is simple: When you drive the puller against the mallet in your off hand, the mallet bounces away from the puller. It's absorbing the shock! Tables, even those made of wood, don't bounce. The puller I use has been in my cabinet for about seven years. That's a long time for a puller to last. I have pulled thousands of rounds of everything from .38 special to .45-70 including LOTS of armor piercing machine gun ammo. The face of the mallet is scared and dinged, but it's still there, too.

Another trick is to put one of those soft rubber ear plugs in the bottom of the puller. It absorbs the shock of the bullet smashing into the bottom and that helps even more in extending the life of the puller. One note on this: Some powder particles will become caught around the ear plug. If you're salvaging the powder from the round, pull the plug out when you're done and tap the puller lightly on the table so as to dislodge the last of the powder granules. We don't need even the tiniest amount of one kind of powder getting mixed into another kind. Let the ear plug relax and you can put it back in. After a couple hundred rounds, you might find it neccesary to replace the foam ear plug. A minor expense to protect your puller, just toss it and stick in a new one.

Go find a good, hard wooden mallet, spend the money on it and go pull bullets. Oh, one more thing: wear safety glasses, OK? Stuff happens and if you can't see, you can't shoot.

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