



THE SHOOTING STAR

The Official Publication of The Top Gun Training Centre', Inc.
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Issue #1 / 2003

Program 2003:

Many of you have already received our 2003 catalog. Call, e-mail or fax your request.

Most noteworthy are:

1. All course numbers have been revised.
2. The addition of several new 1-day Tactical Shotgun and Patrol / Urban Rifle courses.
3. An all new Reduced Light Shooting course.
4. Quarterly 3-day mid-week courses.

Also:

Watch for our new web site;
www.armed-pilot.com

WELCOME:

After nearly a 3-year absence our popular newsletter is making a comeback in an all new internet format.

This format will allow for more informative articles which are not having to be edited for space/weight/expense purposes. Additionally, you can e-mail me your comments, questions and suggestions directly to kwmays@prodiqy.net.

In this, the premier issue, I have chosen several items which will bring our prior readers up to date and provide insight for new readers on what Top Gun is all about. In this issue:

2003 Update: An all new location and the biggest revision to our programs since 1995.

The West End Gun Club: The benefits of our relocation.

It's All Good: There is no such thing as a bad program.

NRA Members Councils: These enclaves of community political activism are fighting to keep our rights and our guns on the "home front".

"Point Shooting vs Sighted Fire": Isn't it time we quit trying to put a square peg into a round hole?

Upcoming issues will feature articles on:

Integrative Firearms Training©.

The Combat Triad.

The 21st Century Shotgun.

Tactical Movement.

*Force Policies...
Into the 21st Century.*

*The Ethic's, Morals and
Tactics of Self Defense.*

*A Self-Defense Use-of-Force
Protocol for the Armed Citizen.*

Stealth Cover Tactics.

Hostage Survival Tactics.

The Warrior's Edge.

Wound Ballistics.

Tactical First Aid.

So tune in and check it out!

2003 UPDATE!

As many of you know, we have relocated Top-Gun to the West End Gun Club, just off the 15-freeway in the Devore Pass. The benefits to being at West End are tremendous. But more on that in the next article. First, a brief update.

Yes I finally retired, sort of....then the department brought me back as a consultant. I spent two years in Stockton at our training academy...then, in 2002, I spent a half year at one of our facilities in Paso Robles. In the mean time, we have slowly and steadily been rebuilding Top-Gun. The office and storage buildings have been completely reassembled and the deck is mostly poured concrete covered with a 20x30 awning. Additionally an extensive amount of landscaping has been going on and the old "portable" building entry set has been replaced with a much sturdier, permanently erected structure. This summer, plans call for replacing the canvas awning with a new, enclosed solid roof structure.

An extensive amount of program revisions have also occurred for 2003. A broader, much more flexible schedule with the addition of many new 1-day classes and an entire array of mid-week three day courses. We have also resurrected the "Reduced Light" pistol course and have added a "shoot / don't shoot" decisional projection exercise conducted inside one of the sections of the "urban simulator". We have also renumbered our courses with the 100-series assigned to pistol, the 200-series assigned to shotgun and the 300-series assigned to patrol rifle. Our specialized programs have also expanded with the addition of some new "overseas" clients and several new security and law enforcement agencies being added to the list.

So, with our new center now established and a whole new program for 2003, the Shooting Star returns. Or does that mean we now have to call it a comet?

THE WEST END GUN CLUB:

The West End Gun Club is located 1-mile east of the 15-fwy off Sierra Ave. near the Devore Pass. It is privately owned, no lease from some government pin heads, and members have access 24&7. For both we and you it is far better than Burro Canyon. First the benefits to you:

1. **Ease of Travel:** While Fontana / Devore is further out then Azusa, you don't have 30-miles of 2-lane winding mountain road to traverse once you get off the freeway. In fact those who have come out since the move report a much shorter traveling time than Burro ever was, especially with the completion of the 210-fwy link all the way out to Interstate #15.
2. **Access:** Once you turn left on Sierra after exiting the 15-fwy it is only about one mile to the entrance. While the road from there is a gravel, well worn affair, (leave the corvette at home), it is not any worse then the gravel road at Burro and only 1-mile in length instead of 2.5.
3. **Convenience:** The amenities nearby are tremendous. You have hotels, motels and campgrounds; all within easy driving distance. Fitting just about anyone's taste, style and budget. Ontario International Airport is literally minutes away and for entertainment and shopping you have the Ontario Mills Mall between us and the airport.
4. **Range Facility:** Our main training area is a "dedicated range". As a result we are able to install training sets and targeting systems that do not have to be erected/disassembled at every class nor loaded/unloaded from any trailers. This saves work and conserves training time. This has resulted in more shooting time and the construction our interior/exterior training set, (Urban Simulator), used for both "use-of-cover" and "search & entry" training while doing double duty as the "projection room" for the decisional exercises conducted during the Pistolcraft-130 courses .

As for the benefits to us, well I guess you just read them as well. Top-Gun has always been, and still is, an outdoor facility. That means we have to contend with mother nature, but then again we can't escape her anyway. So come up and be prepared for a very good time.

It's All Good!

The world of "professional" firearms training is a rather small community. Some of us have been at it a lot longer than others, but by and large we are very supportive of each others programs. Some, however, just can't seem to help knocking other programs as a vehicle for promoting their own. For those of you who know me it is no news that I am a great fan of Gunsite, Thunder Ranch and John Farnum. I believe that the program at the Burbank Police Department is one of the most progressive in the country and that people like Lew Awyerbuck and Massad Ayoob have done fantastic things to elevate the quality of training in America.

All of those programs I mentioned and many others, including Top-Gun, have good methodologies that offer a variety of techniques from which the participant can choose. And it is when participants go out and experience the different programs, express a good attitude and come to each course willing to try and/or learn new and different things that they actually develop their skills and abilities and get the most each program has to offer.

Still, others seem to think that their way is the only way. That everybody else stinks and that they are the great "Combat Master", "Robo-Cop" or "Ninja-Turtle". On the other end of the scale are those individuals who won't invest in their training at all. Sadly this includes many police and most security officers who are supposed to be armed professionals. They don't want to spend the time, nor the money on it and think that their department's little "quarterly" or "bi-annual" qualification program is all they need.

The fact of the matter is, *all trigger time and training is good*. Regardless of where it is. All programs are good. They are each just different. These difference's are what keeps us on track and focused on the most important aspect of our programs.....the participant! All programs are good because while learning some smart things to do you may also learn some less smart things not to do.

The fact of the matter is, that while you may come out of a two or five day course being a real "speed racer", the skill level will quickly deteriorate unless maintained. So, go out and experience them all. Take what you want, leave what you don't want, while maintaining your skill level.

NRA Member Councils:

An NRA Member Council is a group of "grass roots" political activist who are involved in the political scene in their local communities. They are "non-secular" in the sense that they are not a component of any particular political party. Through their efforts they keep close watch on the local politicians and elected officials relevant to the issue of firearms legislation. The members of these groups get out and canvas neighborhoods and/or volunteer as campaign workers for those individuals who are supporters of 2nd Amendment Rights. They keep airiest of legislative activities on a State and National level, provide members of their group with updates on anti-gun activities and expand their own political participation during critical State and National election periods.

Over the past several years I have made numerous guest speaker appearances before several of these groups at their monthly meetings. I have been extremely impressed with their dedication and their fortitude in fighting a battle which is, at best, an uphill struggle here in the "peoples republic of California".

It is because of that struggle I am urging you to contact your local chapter, they have them everywhere including that "never-never-land" of Northern California, with over 12 chapters right here in Southern Cal. Even if your involvement is nothing more then placing campaign posters in your front yard, you will know through your council which of the candidates supports your freedom.

In recognition of our appreciation for the members efforts Top-Gun has sent each of the Southern California area councils, from Ventura to San Diego, twelve free gift certificates for any of our 1-day courses. The councils can use these any way they wish to raise funds for their organization or as attendance motivators.

For information on Chapter location and meeting times look up MRAMembersCouncils.com on the net and drop by a meeting in your area.

Point Shooting vs. Sighted Fire:

The “roots” of the decades old debate over “point shooting” versus “sighted fire” lay in the rivalry between two icons in the firearms training world; Col. Rex Applegate and Col. Jeff Cooper. During these decades numerous others have added their mix and spin to the issue, until now it seems both camps have built a wall of resentment and hostility between one another. In the middle of the debate is the individual who is searching to find the “Holy Grail” of techniques best suited for personal protection. Few of these “master debaters” knew or discussed the issue with Applegate or Cooper. But we are left with the legacy of their writings. This is what Cooper himself had written on the subject as far back as 1962:

“That with most shootings occurring in light so low that you can not see your sights, you are only 10% prepared if all you have been trained in was “sighted fire”.

So why then has this debate continued to this day? Primarily because of one or more of the following reasons:

1. Some instructors and/or schools have placed and even staked their reputation on one method over another and it is too late to change their “entrenched” position at this stage.
2. The debate is continually being resurrected by us “gun writers”, some of whom have themselves acquired legendary status.
3. A much circulated picture of Applegate from the war years where he is shooting a pistol, one handed, in the old FBI “crouched” position, with the gun being held at waste level. This misleading photo lead the viewer to believe that Applegate’s technique was some kind of “trick” shooting, without having ever read the book.
4. The debate has now primarily fallen into two distinct groups, both of whom are primarily entrenched in the “combat games” shooting sports and are constantly trying to “one-up” each other.

With the increased analysis of both training and shooting incidents since the 1986 Miami/FBI shoot out, numerous discoveries “human performance” under “survival stress” situations have validated various components of both Applegate’s and Cooper’s training doctrines. These confirmations have left us with two distinct items of wisdom that we would be fools to ignore.

1. Applegates belief that it is better to train the individual in techniques which “integrate” with a human beings physiological “stress response” tendencies and capabilities.
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2. Cooper's belief that the "operator's" mindset is equal to and sometimes more important than, their gunhandling and marksmanship skills.

Both Applegate's and Cooper's beliefs were validated by personal observation of men in combat, (European and Pacific theaters) in World War Two. Having met both, I don't believe that either understood the subject from a "scientific" point of view. Thanks to Miami, we do. Over these past sixteen years, numerous studies continue to validate those beliefs and have given us some sound conclusions from which to design training programs and/or make a selection of what techniques to apply. Those being:

1. The "survival stress" of deadly force encounters produce predictable and verifiable deterioration in the person/victim's fine and complex reasoning, motor and vision skills.
2. The vast majority of gun fights occur at distances of less than 9 feet.
3. Relatively few defensive responses occur at distances greater than 30 feet.
4. Most defensive actions occur in reduced light.

Further incident review has also revealed that a large majority of those who were the "most successful" in a pistol fight:

1. Shot with both eyes fixed upon the threat.
2. Could not "remember" seeing their pistol sights.
3. Used "movement" either before, (evasive) or during (dynamic) the event.
4. Used some form of cover, concealment or obstruction.

Irregardless of these factual studies many law enforcement, security and concealed weapons permit programs remain "stuck-on-stupid". Such programs are nothing more than "static" marksmanship evaluation and range safety courses, (qualification). Additionally, virtually all of these "static qualification" programs teach the participant/officer methodologies and techniques that these same studies have revealed were the contributing cause for the failures of those individuals who were the "least successful" in a gun fight.

I am not going to revisit these incidents because there are hundreds of them. Probably thousands more I don't know about. Lets suffice it to say that such qualifications primary depend upon techniques which:

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1. Require the use of fine and complex motor skills and vision capabilities which do not function when human beings are under the effects of survival stress.
 2. Use some fancy “combat technique” that requires the use of cognitive reasoning capabilities which drastically diminish when an individual is under survival stress.
 3. “Allows” the shooter to miss an “acceptable” amount of the rounds they fire.
 4. Has them standing, flat footed, at prescribed distances, using totally unrealistic, overly sized targets.
 5. Uses no movement of any type and if cover is used at all it is usually some, “braced barricade” position at 25 to 50 yards.
 6. Do no verbal warnings and/or other communicative drills.

Often times the the participant must repeat the stages of the “qualification” course dozens, if not hundreds, of times in order to “perform” the course to minimum standards during the testing phase. Then, if they go to any so called advanced training they end up spending an inordinate amount of time and effort trying to “unlearning” the traditional methods in exchange for a more practical technique, whether that practical technique was developed by Applegate, Cooper, Ayoob or some other “progressive” individual.

The “reasons” why law enforcement agencies stay with “static qualification” programs is almost as varied as the number of agencies themselves. The state of affairs in the armed security industry and civilian “CCW” programs is outright appalling.

While great strides in overcoming these paradigms have been made in some law enforcement and security agencies and some individuals in the private sector do seek additional so called “advanced” training, they are the exception rather than the rule. Meanwhile, this seemingly endless debate continues. My conclusion; we can end the argument and conflict of philosophies and then accommodate the “square peg” by simply enlarging the “round hole”. To accomplish that, one must be prepared, and willing, to reassess their program, themselves and why they are training with the gun in the first place.

Assessment One: Evaluating the Training Mission:

For what specific mission is the individual being taught to shoot? At the risk of being over simplified, I'll suggest there are generally four major reasons.

- 1. Recreational.**
- 2. Competitive.**
- 3. Hunting.**
- 4. Combat.**

Some of these categories can become confused when we consider such sub-divisions as sporting competitions that are touted as "combat oriented" when in actuality such *games* foster behaviors on the part of the shooter that would render them dead during an actual deadly force encounter. Even Jeff Cooper, one of the founding fathers of such events, disassociated himself from such "games" when this began to occur. Hunting, on the other hand, at least helps to develop some "field awareness" skills that can do a great deal of good in fostering one's survival in a hostile environment filled with potential enemies. Never mind those hunters who seek out "dangerous charging game" as opposed to those who pursue less dangerous and fleeing species. If you do not think that is true, just ask all the "good ole' country boys" who consistently found themselves on "point" in the jungles of Vietnam. Or look to the examples of such past noted warrior/hero's like Sgt. York, Audie Murphy and the infamous Carlos Hathcock.

Recreational shooters generally don't seek out training at all. If they do it consists mostly of a "safety course" so they don't shoot themselves. Many others "think" they get trained, vicariously, through watching video's. If such were true I'd be making automobile commercials instead of Tiger Woods. "Vidiots" I call them and most of those who make them are simply trying to cash in on some gimmick or convince the viewer that their secret to winning combat games is the only way to go.

And then there are those who train for the act of mortal combat. They may be law enforcement personnel or just armed citizens concerned about self defense. For in reality the dynamic's of their defense mechanism's are just as valid as are the dynamic's of a soldier in combat. Unfortunately, many of them are likewise trapped in traditionalist thinking. They train and practice using techniques designed for the wrong category. They believe that the perfect bulls eye shooter is prepared for terror and having to kill, and they pay no attention to the warrior spirit within them.

Assessment Two: Evaluating the Trainer's Mission:

The trainer or school must make a decision as to which of the four categories they are preparing their students for. At Top-Gun we make no bones about the fact that we are training our students for mortal combat. In that respect there are numerous real,

and scientifically verifiable, psychological and physiological factors that impact the person's ability to think about, do and even see a lot of complex things. What's more, there is an entire series of social "inhibitors", waiting secretly in our sub-conscious minds that cause hesitation at the so called "moment of truth". The anxieties of competition and the controlled fear of hunting escalates to a state of bloody mortal terror, more eloquently called "Survival Stress".

The person who trains people for competition will, rightfully, focus on the traditional concepts of precision marksmanship which are highly dependent upon fine motor and vision skills. The emotions of the student during such competitions is in the realm of anxieties over getting first place or last place. Always knowing, at least sub-consciously, that they can "do better next time". The hunter of large dangerous game on the other hand faces a state of high anxiety and the fear that they might get stepped on by the Elephant. Those who face mortal combat enter a world that transcends mere fear. Where the improperly prepared can first break down psychologically and therefore not do anything physically at all. They quickly discover that "*bull's eye's don't shoot back*" and that the only things that work are their gross motor and vision skills. Because of that we made several critical program design decisions years ago:

1. To focus solely on training people to WIN in mortal combat, not merely survive the more "politically correct" sounding *lethal encounter*.
 2. That Jeff Cooper was right. If you ignore the "shooters" mindset and their "warrior spirit" you were ignoring 90% of the act of shooting in combat.
 3. That Rex Applegate was also right. There are certain physiological things the human organism can and can not do when under the effects of survival stress.
 4. That ALL shooting is *Point Shooting*.
 5. That there is NO SUCH THING as *Un sighted Fire*.
 6. The only thing that reduces the effects of survival stress is the person's confidence in their training, weapon and ability. An instructor's first and most important goal is to build that confidence not destroy it.
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7. Confidence is also built by experience, but it is successful experience.
 8. While you can not truly provide all the dynamic's of real experience in training, you do all you can to replicate it in a controlled training environment.
 9. Instructor's must be completely aware of the power of their wizardry and words and NEVER call their students stupid, (more on K.I.S.S.S. later).

Based upon the responses I received from many "traditionalist" you would have thought that I had violated some eleventh commandment with this philosophy. It was the same reaction I had gotten in 1991 when I suggested that we forget all those fancy "immediate action drills" and just have the person reload the pistol when the damn thing failed to fire.

Assessment Three: The Point Shooting Paradigm:

When you shoot something, anything; is not the gun pointed at it? That's a silly question; of course it is. Then by the simplest definition, ALL shooting is point shooting. For decades, right up to the week of his death, Applegate had to argue that his point shooting techniques were not, never were and never will be "Trick Shooting". That it is a form of "sighted fire".

Assessment Four: The Sighted / Unsighted Fire Paradigm:

Ask the "traditionalist" how many sight systems a pistol has and they will say two; front and rear. They could not be more incorrect if they would say the Earth is flat.

So, how many sight systems does a pistol have? Or any other small arm for that matter. The correct answer is FIVE. This too is simple and also surprisingly applicable to even those who shoot for reasons other than combat. So what are they?

1. **SIGHT SYSTEM-1:** Your eyes. Your level of awareness of your environment. Your perception of the threat. Your orientation to that threat and the plain quality of your personal vision capabilities. Watch what happens when you tell a student to remove their prescription glasses and ask them to shoot. They freak out. During a threat you will "keep your eye on the ball." You will look at, identify and focus on that which is threatening you. Not only that, maintaining situational awareness by constantly scanning, all around you, in a combat environment is an absolute necessity when determining the threat potential of any and all around you and, more importantly, the location/behavior of loved ones, innocent bystanders or team members.
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2. **SIGHT SYSTEM-2:** Conscious/sub-conscious imagery and/or its effect on your perception of the threat. This is often dependent upon the shooter's experience as it is a mental picture of the event in their mind. It is why we use targets that look like "shootable people" and not some weird, overly large, looming black shape, or some bull-shit bull's eye that, by law, is not shootable since it is not doing anything to threaten you. This reduces the chance of the shooter/defender having a "moral brain-fart" because they have never shot a "person" before. From a psychological perspective this is called a "killing enabler". More ably explained in the book "On Killing" by Lt. David Grossman.

 3. **SIGHT SYSTEM-3:** The entire pistol. Its distinct shape when placed in front of your face and pointed directly at the threat. If correctly aligned the pistol "looks" a specific way. In the case of certain pistols, the shape can be so distinct as to be readily recognizable even in reduced light situations. The closeness of the threat can readily require that you fire immediately; without hesitating to align both front and rear sight. Just shoot the SOB*. because it* is in the act of killing you!

 4. **SIGHT SYSTEM - 4:** The front sight. Most of which are designed for precision shooting and are not large or distinct enough to be even visible, let alone distinctively recognizable when the person is under the reduced vision effects of survival stress and/or find themselves in a reduced light environment. That is why we exclusively recommend the Ashley Outdoor, (AO - Express) sights for "fighting hand guns". More importantly, your mind can recognize the front sight on a sub-conscious level far faster than a person will see it on an intellectual level. Trust the "force" Luke, and don't hesitate to fire.

 5. **SIGHT SYSTEM -5:** The rear sight often suffers the same problem as the front. Some small notched, decorated with a bunch of dots half the time, that are at best confusing, and at worst slow the person's response time down while they attempt to align it while under stress. The same Ashley sight is simply a large "V" where the "big dot" goes. Many schools, including Top-Gun, tape over the sights during some portion of the course in order to reduce a person's dependence on them.

To make a determination of which sight system the defender uses we apply a concept called "Zoning". We tell the student not to hesitate for the most "effective" shot; shoot whatever the biggest part of the assailant you can see. It's called shooting "Center of Visible Mass", or (CVM). To wait for anything better, is to hesitate and let the adversary* continue their murderous behavior.

Example: An adversary behind a telephone pole may expose very little of their head and torso while shooting. But like an ostrich they are totally unaware that their posterior is sticking completely out. Well, shoot the center of visible mass. What's

more, move away from the assailant's gun while shooting their mass, indexing and exposing even more of your assailant's CVM as you go. Sound tactics need not be something you learn later or never at all.

Do they need to do this at 25-yards. NO! They need to do this at 10-YARDS or less with 100% shot accuracy. Once they attain the 100% mark, then increase the distance, or better yet, reduce the size of the target. By doing such the "Zoning" equation will now have two factors that determine which "sight system" you need to use:

1. Target size, or CVM and
2. Target distance.

Which of our "sight systems" we use is there for determined by the size of our target, combined with the distance to our target. Realistically our initial 'zones' would look like this:

A-ZONE: 3-5-Yards. Use sight system 1, & 3

B-ZONE: 5-10 Yards. Use sight system 1, 3 & 4.

C-ZONE: Over 10 Yards. Use sight system 1, 3, 4 & 5.

"Manipulate" sight system-2 by providing targets that look like real people, or live re-enactors during "force-on-force" scenarios. Make such scenario's realistic, likely to occur incidents. Under 3-yards Zone-A can even become more compacted should the assailant be "right on top of you" and all you can do is use Sight System-1 because you do not have the room or the time to raise the pistol to your eye.

At Top-Gun we start the shooter out at 3-yards, using one-hand with a human-like target. We get totally inexperienced shooters hitting the target 100% of the time, while moving either right or left out to a distance of 7-yards in one-day! And at extremely quick response times. Most of the time the experienced, traditional shooter has to be motivated to speed up because they want to shoot some "tight-group". Additionally, with the defender's confidence thus established, they reduce the psychological effect of survival stress and come to their next pistol class ready to expand their zone's, reduce the CVM of their target and learn other tactically wise things, like moving in different directions, using cover properly, shooting moving targets and making sound shoot / no-shoot decisions. All while maintaining 100% shot accuracy and learning a little about developing their "warrior spirit".

What Col. Applegate found interesting during my last conversation with him was that we had applied this technique to all firearms, not just pistols, under the philosophy of Integrative Firearms Training©, a concept I will explore further in one of my future articles.

Conclusion:

The need to learn to shoot using front and rear sight alignment is a necessary one. However, it should not be the priority or principle system used when first training an individual for self defense shooting. Placing an individual at the 3-yard line, using a "human" sized and looking target will enable the shooter to make 100% of their shots at a speed necessary for close encounter survival. Once accomplished the distance, size and consequentl need to add the additional sight systems can then be layered into the training regimine.

Like wise, Close-Quarter-Battle requirements and techniques, using only sight system #1, (eyes) and virtually no "elevated" or ey-level shooting should not be introduced until after the shooter has mastered 100% hits on the same "human" target out to 7-yards using at least sight system #3, (front sight).

In between those 3-7 yard exercises, the shooters primary pre-occupation should be focused upon "operating" the pistol administratively using simple gross motor skill techniques AND developing proper trigger manipulation. Trigger manipulation, as we know, is the #One problem in shot accuracy. Pistol operation that is dependant upon too many choices or too much thought process will cause people to "lock-up" mentally, (brain fart) and shut down.
