Handguns for Self-Defence

A South African Guide

Gerry Gore

Foreword

Ignorance is bliss? True enough, but when ignorance gives precedence to animal instinct there is nothing but disaster for the modern man. The gun, be it pistol, revolver, rifle or shotgun, is a modern 'extension' of the prehistoric club, which explains the chauvinistic wielding of firearms so commonly reported in the news media.

A heartening thought is that the history of pistolcraft has experienced its era of chivalry, evident from the works of many historians, and that gun manners were at one time highly respected and protected by many who cared. The status symbol of the past century was to own a matched pair of guns, highly decorated and preserved in a case marked with the craftsman's name which gave aesthetic value to the nobleman's possession.

In our present time, there are but a few men who have endeavoured to preserve the right of ownership to firearms and even fewer can appreciate the different qualities or even calibres of the available pistols. The great majority, I am sorry to admit, are grossly ignorant of the proper use and application of the handgun, causing nothing but pure frustration to those masters of pistolcraft such as my good friend Gerry Gore.

Many years of experience and awareness for survival, coupled with good gun manners and knowledge of the application of firearms, are excellently presented by Gerry Gore in this publication, which is a worthy addition to the library of every shooter or potential handgun owner.

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Preface

The historical right of the individual to stop an aggressor, by any means at his disposal, from carrying out a threat of physical violence from which serious bodily harm or death could ensue is inviolate and fully recognised by all the judicial systems in the free world. In the same way, the right of a person to defend his home and property against an illegal attempt to deprive him of his possessions is enshrined in the Law and, no doubt, will continue to be so either until the world reaches the Utopian age when criminals no longer prey on the law-abiding or until, bereft of this human dignity, we cease to be free.

A thousand years ago the Saxons were banded into groups of ten families called tithings in which members were collectively responsible for the upkeep of law and order. In a time when there was no standing army, these tithings were the militia. They were subject to call up in defence of the realm and were required to be armed, a practice which was carried on well into the seventeenth century in England and which still continues today in Switzerland.

As this old custom implies, every citizen has a duty not only to help in the defence of his country in the armed forces but also to come to the aid of the police force in the course of their daily war against crime, either when requested by the police or, in their absence, by upholding the law on his own as a responsible citizen. The fact that he has entrusted the guardianship of the law to a police force in no way abrogates the citizen's duty to uphold it.

The most commonly used defensive tool - commonly used because of its convenient size and hence availability - is the handgun, a weapon whose very capabilities render it the least desirable of offensive firearms. The handgun, despite its popularity, is without doubt the most difficult weapon to learn to use efficiently. This book is intended to remove the ignorance surrounding the handgun. It will lead an absolute tyro through the very basic techniques to the point at which, if he practices, he will be able to hold his own on the combat range or face an armed opponent with the confidence that he can stop the threat with the utmost speed and efficiency and the minimum of danger to himself or a bystander.

I make no excuse for the fact that many of the ideas expressed in these pages are those of my tutor and friend, Colonel Jeff Cooper, USMC retired. For nigh on thirty years Cooper has been active in the field of practical pistolcraft, not only as a skilled competitor but also as a coach beyond compare. He has applied his considerable intellect to the analysis of winning techniques on the range and of the results of numerous firefights in which, all too often, peace officers or private citizens died because of inadequate training. This research has culminated in a system of coaching which produces a polished performer, fit and capable of carrying a handgun. Cooper's whole outlook is summed up in three words which have become the motto and creed of the international combat-shooting world. They are *Diligentia, Vis, Celeritas* - Accuracy, Power and Speed - and, if the beginner is to extract the maximum benefit from his hard work, these must become his goals too. Power can be bought with the choice of weapon but only education can lead to the acquisition of Accuracy and Speed. These three tenets are complementary, any two of them being worthless without the third.

It is not that I have followed my mentor blindly. Indeed, on many occasions I have questioned his teachings only to retire in confusion when confronted by his reasoned logic. The world of pistol shooting is not however a world of cut-and-dried rules and what might be accepted today as the best method of shooting may easily be replaced tomorrow by some new technique. All the time the sportsman, in an attempt to improve his performance, tries to by pass established rules and these advances tend to rub off gradually on all those who carry a handgun.

The time has come for the law-abiding to be able to go quietly about their daily routine without fear of the law-breaker. And the way to achieve such a state of affairs where the innocent walks secure is for the innocent not only to carry a firearm but also to be expertly trained in its use.

Introduction

Who Needs a Gun Anyway?

Two characteristics divide us as *Homo sapiens* from what we choose to call the 'lower forms' of life. The first is our ability to design and use tools ranging from simple, basic tools, often thousands of years old in concept but now made with modern skills and materials, to the highly technical devices of the computer age. Correctly used for the task for which it was designed a tool fulfills a necessary function. Misused, however, by its human master, any tool can become an instrument of mutilation, death or destruction - a tool of evil. A tool is an inanimate object - with no mind, no direction of its own and it can never be blamed for the consequences of its abuse.

A firearm is just such a tool. In the hands of the target shooter it has the potential for making holes in a paper target; to the hunter it is the means of killing his quarry; to the soldier it is his personal weapon for defending his country; to the criminal it is a tool of violence; and to the private citizen it may be the difference between life and death in a confrontation with evil. This is the other characteristic of the human race - it is the only species that preys on its own members not merely for food or in self-defence but for gain or 'kicks'.

'A man has just died in hospital after being attacked with an axe ... A boy of five is in the intensive care unit after being stabbed while playing ... Three armed men robbed a firm of R9000 this morning ...' Such is the content of a typical daily regional newscast. Every day there are reports of murder, rape, robbery and violence with unsuspecting, unarmed, innocent people the victims. Crimes for gain, sexual gratification, greed, passion, bravado. Whatever the reason, the person who is unsuspecting and unlikely to offer any violence in return is the quarry for these human jackals - simply because he is a pushover. Only too seldom are the law-breakers confronted by retribution in the form of a trained, well-armed citizen who can stop them in the course of their predations. Too many people these days worry about the criminal and his deprived upbringing and give no heed to the victim or his family. No matter what the criminal's motives or psychological problems may be, of his own free will he puts himself outside the pale of normal consideration. He consciously resigns from the human race an must bear the consequences of his actions.

It is easy to think that nothing will ever happen to you or your family. People who wear blinkers or rose-coloured spectacles argue that we have a perfectly adequate police force to look after us. That may well be. The police may indeed apprehend your murderer or the animal who raped your daughter but this country is so large and the police so few that it is quite likely that you will be alone when you face your bull.

If we are not prepared to uphold the norms and values by which we run our lives, if we are not ready to fight for them if necessary, then civilisation is doomed and our world, if it lasts long enough, will revert to primordial anarchy in which only the ruthless will survive. During the night of Saturday, 9 August 1969 five lives could have been saved if just one person at 10050

Cielo Drive above metropolitan Los Angeles had had a firearm and the ability to use it. This was the night when members of Manson's perverted 'family' butchered the eight-month pregnant Sharon Tate, three of her friends and a young boy. Only when the criminal finds that the price of crime is too high will we be able to walk our streets and go about our daily lives without fear. We have a right to live our lives as we wish, free of the threat of outside interference, but we are the watchdogs of that freedom.

Chapter One: Basic Firearms Knowledge

While it is undeniably true that a firearm can be discharged by an owner who has absolutely no knowledge of weapons, some basic grounding will go a long way towards making certain that such discharges occur only when required. Since some of the terms used throughout the rest of the book are of necessity technical, this chapter will help to draw aside the curtain and enable the tyro to acquire a quick, painless course in the basics. Although American gun terms are usually used in South Africa, English phrases or words are also met with and those that are reasonably common are included here.

ACP

An abbreviation indicating that the cartridge concerned is designed for use in an Automatic Colt Pistol.

Action, double

Indicates that the weapon, be it revolver or semi-automatic, while in the uncocked or Condition Two mode, can, by means of a long pull on the trigger, be cocked and fired. Some weapons can only be fired double action (DA) but normally the user has the option of single or double action.

Action, single

In the revolver fired single action (SA), the hammer, once brought to full cock, remains in position until the trigger is actuated. The single action only revolver (the best example is the Colt Peacemaker) is not a sound choice for a defensive handgun. The single action only semi-automatic pistol (SAP), on the other hand, once fired returns automatically to the full cock position during each subsequent cycle.

Automatic

Used correctly, a weapon capable of a continuous burst of fire stopped either by the firer releasing the trigger or the exhaustion of the ammunition supply. Often incorrectly used to describe a semi-automatic or self-loading pistol which is designed to discharge one shot only, each time the trigger is actuated.

Ball

A single round projectile usually of pure lead used in black powder weapons or, more rarely, reloaded as a means of obtaining short-range practice in the most economical way. In military parlance, a jacketed bullet which has no special function such as Tracer, Armour Piercing or Incendiary.

Barrel

The metal tube along which the bullet is forced by the expanding gases of the burning propellant powder, closed at one end by a breech block or standing breech. In small arms (that is, any weapon designed to be carried by one man an supported by him during firing or using a cartridge normally associated with such weapons), the interior of the barrel is rifled unless specifically designed for use with shot cartridges.

Battery/in battery

An artillery term which, when applied to semi-automatic pistols, indicates that all parts are in the firing position.

Bent (English term)

The notch, recess or projections in the hammer or striker by which they are held rearwards. Full bent is equivalent to full cock, half bent to half cock.

Black powder

Until the introduction of smokeless propellants in 1885, black powder - a mixture of charcoal, saltpetre and sulphur - had ruled supreme for over six hundred years. Black powder or gunpowder is a low-grade explosive easily ignited by heat, sparks or static electricity. It is still used in some commercial and military applications and by owners of original and replica black powder weapons.

Blow-back/spent case projection (English term)

The most simple of the two common types of semi-automatic pistol actions, ideally suited to small cartridges of low power and hence weak recoil such as the .22 Rimfire, the .25 ACP (6.35 mm Browning), up to and including the 9 mm Short. The slide and barrel do not lock together but are held closed during the critical micro-seconds of firing by the energy exerted by the recoil spring and the weight of the slide or breech block. The delay in overcoming their inertia allows internal pressures to fall to a safe level before the case is projected rearwards and ejected, after which the loading cycle starts, using the energy stored in the compressed recoil spring.

Bore

The interior surfaces of a barrel. Bore diameter is the smallest diameter of a barrel measured, in the case of a rifled weapon, across the lands, that is, those parts remaining when the rifling is cut.

Breech (English term)

The chamber or, as defined in *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 'part of cannon behind bore, back part of gun barrel'.

Breech block

A movable seal to the breech or chamber of an artillery piece, an automatic, or semi-automatic weapon. The block may be separate or, as is more usual with handguns, an integral part of the slide.

Breech loader

Any weapon loaded from the breech end of the barrel. Most black powder weapons made before 1860 were muzzle loaders.

Bullet

The missile projected from the barrel of a small arm. Usually a lubricated lead alloy for revolver cartridges and a jacked projectile for rifle or commercial semi-automatic pistol ammunition. For simplicity in manufacture and for economy, virtually every bullet loaded by a hand-loader for use in semi-automatics is of the lubricated lead alloy variety and cast in a mould.

Butt

In handguns, that part which is held by the strong hand an which, in the case of successful semi-automatic pistols, also contains the magazine.

Calibre

From the arabic *qalib*, a mould. Correctly the diameter of the bullet or the greatest diameter of the barrel (across the grooves of a rifled bore), which are often the same. However, the .38 family in particular are not .38s at all. They average out at .357 so should correctly be called .36s. The .44s, with bullet diameters of .429 or thereabouts, should be called .43s. The 9 mm usually have a diameter of .355 to .57 so can also be considered to be .36s. Calibre designations should not be taken as actual dimensions but rather as a nomenclature or indicator.

Cartridge

A complete round of small arms ammunition comprising a bullet, retained to some degree inside a cartridge case. In the case is the requisite amount of propellant powder and in the centrefire variety, a primer or percussion cap situated in the middle of the head, or in the rimfire variety, priming compound inside the rim.

Cartridge case

The doppie, empty brass or casing, which holds the bullet, powder and primer when loaded and which, during the firing cycle, seals the rear of the breech from gas leakage.

Centrefire

A cartridge initiated by a blow on a centrally situated primer normally belongs either to the Boxer or Berdan types. See **Primer.**

Chamber

The portion of a firearm which holds a cartridge or cartridges ready for firing. A revolver may have five, usually six and sometimes more chambers bored radially in its revolving cylinder. A semi-automatic pistol, on the other hand, has one chamber which lies behind the rifling and is an integral portion of the barrel. When measuring barrel lengths, for the revolver the cylinder is ignored but, for the semiautomatic, the chamber is included.

Clip

This is not a synonym for **Magazine,** a mistake which appears in many books and with some regularity in conversation. There are two commonly encountered types of clip, the *stripper* (English term: *charger*) from which prepacked cartridges are forced into a magazine to speed up reloading and the *en-bloc* clip which is inserted in toto to fall out or be ejected when empty. Neither system is commonly in use with handguns.

Cock

The noun is still used to describe a hammer in English terminology. The verb describes the action of bringing a weapon into a fully loaded condition by placing the hammer or striker at full cock.

Condition One

When a semi-automatic pistol is carried with a cartridge or round in the chamber, a loaded magazine in the butt, the hammer at full cock and the safety catch applied. The preferred way to carry a semi-automatic once you are totally familiar with it.

Condition Two

When a semi-automatic pistol is carried fully loaded but with the hammer lowered onto the firing pin - not into half cock, a position which may lea to an accidental discharge in the event of a fall. This mode is unsafe unless the weapon is equipped with an inertia firing pin. Revolvers and double action pistols are normally carried in this way.

Condition Three

When a semi-automatic pistol is carried with an empty chamber but with a loaded magazine in place. Ultra safe and ultra slow into action.

Cylinder

The drum-shaped, revolving portion of a revolver that contains the chambers which advance radially each time the weapon is cocked, so bringing a fresh chamber into the firing position.

Disconnector

A most important feature of the semi-automatic. Automatically takes the trigger out of the firing circuit until finger pressure is released allowing the trigger to return to its forward position. This ensures that only one shot is fired for each actuation of the trigger.

Ejector

In revolvers, can be a simple rod which pushes the cases rearwards. In double action revolvers, usually a device to eject all the contents of the cylinder, fired or unfired, simultaneously. In semi-automatic pistols, a projection against which the base of a case strikes to project it out of the weapon before the slide stops its rearward travel.

Extractor

A hook or claw which pulls a live round or fired case out of the chamber and which retains its grip until the head impinges against the ejector.

Firing pin

A passive device which transmits the blow of the hammer or striker to the primer thereby initiating the propellant charge. There are three main types of firing pin. The first is fixed, an integral part of the hammer; the second pinned or riveted to the face of the hammer; and the third, floating or retained in the frame in a revolver or within the slide of a semi-automatic. In both cases the firing pin is commonly held rearwards by a spring except for a brief period of time at the moment of firing. An inertia firing pin is one which is shorter than its housing. It requires considerable energy transfer to allow it to strike the primer with adequate force to detonate it. Only weapons with this safety feature should be carried in Condition Two.

Full Cock

In our context the state of a single action weapon when the hammer or striker is fully rearwards compressing the mainspring and the sear is engaging the full cock notch or bent.

Half Cock

A deep, intermediate bent designed to catch the hammer or striker if either the full cock fails or the shooter fails to engage these properly. Except with some single action revolvers, this is seldom a safe way to carry a handgun.

Hammer

Transfers the energy stored in the mainspring via the firing pin to the primer. Concealed or external.

Hollow Point

A bullet design featuring a deep cavity in the nose which tends to aid expansion.

Jacketed

A bullet with an outer covering of gilding metal or some other comparatively soft alloy over a core of lead. The jacket allows the bullet to be engraved by the rifling and to reach a considerably higher velocities than can be achieved with lead alloy bullets. A *Jacketed Round Nose (JRN)* bullet is the most inefficient stopper and most unlikely to expand in an opponent. *Jacketed Hollow Point (JHP)* or *Jacketed Soft Point (JSP)* bullets are designed to overcome this shortcoming.

Locked Breech

An alternative to increasing spring strength and the weight of the breech block to unacceptable levels, both of which would have to be done if the blow-back system were to be effective with such cartridges as the 9 mm Parabellum or .45 ACP. (The breech block alone of the Sten submachine-gun chambered for the 9 mm Parabellum cartridge weighs 0.7 kg.)

The most common locked breech system used in handguns is the short recoil in which the barrel and slide are locked together, adding appreciably to the mass of the recoiling parts. After a short travel the barrel is cammed down and stops to unlock the two parts and allow the slide to continue its extract-eject-reload cycle.

Magazine

Normally a pressed-steel housing containing a spring that forces any remaining cartridges upwards, ready to take their place in the loading cycle. In all viable combat weapons, the magazine is both readily removed from and inserted into the butt.

Magazine Release

A button - ideally situated behind the trigger on the left-handed side of a semi-automatic pistol - which, when depressed, releases the magazine. A spring-loaded catch situated on the heel of the butt is frequently encountered and is considerably less efficient than the button already described. Midway in efficiency but still undesirable is a button on the lower, left side of the butt.

Magazine Safety

A device which precludes the firing of a semi-automatic pistol when the magazine has been removed. Designed with the unertrained shooter in mind, this feature totally nullifies one of the semi-automatic pistol's great advantages over the revolver, namely not being out of action during a reload.

Magnum

A cartridge bigger and more powerful than an existing one. For handguns, a copyright term of Smith & Wesson's which applies to three proprietary cartridges: Smith & Wesson .357, .41 an .44 Magnums.

Master Eye

Right-handers usually have a right master or dominant eye, which they use for sighting a weapon. However a significant number of people are right-handed and left-eyed or vice versa. Ideally one should shoot with the master eye looking through the sights and the other open to add depth perception and field of view.

Muzzle

The end of the barrel, at the end opposite to the chamber, from which the projectile exits.

Parabellum (P)

The name coined by Georg Luger for his two cartridges, the .30 Luger (7.65 mm Parabellum) or the 9 mm Luger or Parabellum. The term is derived from the Latin *si vis pacem, para bellum* - if you desire peace prepare for war.

Piece

A term which will be often used in the following pages meaning an artillery weapon or in our context a handgun.

Pistol

Correctly any weapon normally fired with one hand. Thus either a revolver or a semi-automatic pistol. English military terminology for revolver reads Pistol, Revolver, etc, but by usage now it applies to semi-automatic pistols only. Thanks largely to Jeff Cooper, single-handed shooting is confined to the target range while, in our context of personal survival, both hands are used.

Primer (English Cap or Percussion Cap)

A small, metal cup containing a measured quantity of priming compound, which is inserted into a recess in the centre of the head or base of a centrefire cartridge. There are two commonly encountered types. The Berdan primer, designed during the last century in the USA and largely adopted by European manufacturers. The anvil against which the compound is pressed by the firing pin is an integral part of the case and there are normally two off-centre flash-holes leading to the powder. The Boxer system, on the other hand, was developed in England and adopted by the Americans and is now rapidly rendering the Berdan obsolete. The anvil is a separate component and is inserted into the cup during manufacture, but the feature which makes the Boxer primer preferred by the reloader is that there is one central flash-hole, through which a pin can readily be inserted to expel the fired cup.

Priming Compound

A high-explosive mixture used in small quantities to initiate the propellant powder and sufficiently unstable to detonate on receiving a sharp blow.

Propellant Powder

Modern ammunition uses not black powder or gunpowder but nitrocellulose-based propellants, which burn, not explode or detonate. Whereas black powder creates a dense cloud of smoke, propellant powders are virtually smokeless and leave no deleterious residue to cause rust.

Receiver

The lower component of a semi-automatic pistol, of which the butt is an integral part and which contains most of the working parts. Also known as the frame. For some reason, the equivalent part of the revolver is never known as the receiver, simply as the frame.

Recoil

Newton's Third Law states that 'for every action, there will be an equal and opposite reaction', so when we propel a projectile in one direction, we must expect the weapon to react and move rearwards. Fortunately for the shooter, the weapon weighs many times more than the

bullet, so recoils correspondingly less. In most semi-automatics, this reaction is harnessed, to move the reciprocating parts and so cycle the action.

Reloader/Handloader

A person who processes his fired cases, replacing the primer, measuring out the correct quantity of propellant powder and seating a new bullet. Reloading, besides being an interesting hobby, enables considerable cash savings.

Revolver

A pistol with chambers contained in a revolving cylinder enabling the user to fire several shots without reloading.

Rifling

Spiral grooves cut or swaged into the bore of a firearm. These force the bullet to rotate about its own axis giving it stability in flight. The second dimension of a rifled barrel is its groove diameter.

Rimfire

The original priming system used in self-contained cartridges and still used in the .22 Rimfire family. The priming compound, while damp, is forced outwards centrifugally to lie in the fold of the rim. The firing pin or striker, instead of impinging on a centrally situated primer, crushes the rim against the chamber wall detonating the compound. Rimfire weapons should never be dry fired unless a case is inserted to cushion the blow.

Round Nose (RN)

The shape of the nose of the least efficient bullet designed for defensive shooting.

Safety Catch

A device which, when applied, is designed to prevent the discharge of the piece but which can rapidly be moved to the off or 'fire' position. Found on virtually every semi-automatic pistol but on very few revolvers.

Safety, Grip

A safety feature intended to ensure that the piece is correctly held before it can be discharge. More often found on semi-automatic pistols than on revolvers.

SAP

Abbreviation for a semi-automatic pistol.

Sear

Part of the firing mechanism. Pressure on the trigger moves the sear out of engagement with the full-cock notch (or bent) on the hammer (or striker) allowing the stored energy of the mainspring to be released and transmitted via the firing pin to the primer. Trigger pressure must not release the sear if the piece is in the half-cock notch.

Semi Wadcutter (SWC)

The most popular and a highly effective bullet shape. The flattened nose is of smaller diameter than the main body, their junction being characterized by a sharp shoulder which greatly adds to its effectiveness.

Sights

The means by which the shooter takes aim at a chosen target.

Slide

That part of a semi-automatic pistol which reciprocates during the firing cycle.

Soft Point (SP)

A jacketed bullet with an area of lead exposed at its nose to encourage expansion.

Spring, main

Spring which stores sufficient energy to power the hammer or striker.

Spring, recoil/Return

Springs or springs with sufficient tension to hold a semi-automatic pistol firmly in batter, thus significantly slowing down initial blow back or movement. Further compressed during recoil, the energy so stored then being used to force the slide forwards again, in the process stripping a cartridge from the magazine and chambering it.

Striker

An alternative to the hammer and firing-pin system. A striker either has one end shaped as a firing pin or strikes a separate pin but it moves in a straight line powered by its own spring,

as opposed to the hammer which rotates.

Strong Hand

The hand the shooter would normally employ for day to day tasks or for firing a handgun one-handed.

Trigger

Initiates the first stage of the firing sequence. When pressed, is instrumental, in single-action mode, in removing the sear from its engagement with the full-cock notch or bent or, in double-action mode, in cocking the hammer or striker and releasing them.

Wadcutter (WC)

A bullet with either two flat ends or one flat end and a hollow base. Normally used by target shooters, its name derives from the circular discs or wads of cardboard which it punches from the target. Most effective in self-defence cartridges. Designed for revolver use.

Weak Hand

The opposite of strong hand. In 93% of shooters the left hand. In defensive pistol shooting the weak hand is used both to steady the strong hand and to help in recoil control.

Chapter Two: Choosing a Handgun

A handgun is the least efficient tool for self-defence and the most difficult to learn to use. In efficiency it is far surpassed by the shotgun or rifle but it is size that makes it the ideal compromise. The handgun is small enough to be concealed and thus readily available yet, if chosen wisely, also powerful enough to stop an aggressor. The handguns that concern us in the context of self-defence fall into two main categories: the revolver and the semi-automatic pistol (semi-auto). In the face of a threat both will ensure your continued survival but both have their specific advantages and disadvantages and your selection of survival tool must be made on the evidence.

Single and double action

Before examining the two main types of handgun, it will help to define in detail what is meant by single and double action.

Single action revolver

A single action revolver is one that can be fired only after the hammer has first been brought to full cock with the thumb. This type of handgun lends itself to fanning - a highly

inaccurate, rapid-fire technique during which the trigger is held back and the hammer cocked and slipped from under the palm of the other hand. This manoeuvre although very popular in Westerns, is very hard on the working parts of the piece and has no place in real life.

Double action revolver

The double action revolver, with rare exceptions, is one which is capable of being fired both in the single action mode and also by a prolonged and heavy pull on the trigger which indexes the cylinder to align the next round, at the same time cocking the hammer and allowing it to disengage and fall to fire the cartridge.

Single action semi-automatic

A single action semi-automatic pistol is one which may require the hammer to be thumb-cocked for the first shot (if it is not carried cocked and locked, ie, hammer back an safety applied) but which will, after the first shot, remain with the hammer back.

Double action semi-automatic

A double action semi-automatic pistol is normally one which can be fired either as a single action or a double action except that the second shot will be single action. There are, however, a few pistols that are double action only.

The revolver

History

The single action revolver traces its ancestry back to the mid-1830s when Samuel Colt introduced the first practical percussion revolver. At no time did Colt claim to have invented the system - which is just as well, for the Royal United Services Museum in London has on display a snaphaunce .500 monster weighing 2.8 kg and antedating 1650. Remarkably, though, the design of the snaphaunce is almost identical to Colt's first patent which is still used in the most famous revolver of all time: the Colt Model P, the Single Action Army of 1873, or the Peacemaker, call it what you will. The design is basically as follows: as the hammer is thumbed back a hand or lifter rises and engages one notch of a six-toothed ratchet machined on the rear of the cylinder rotating it one chamber, at which point a spring-loaded catch rises to lock the alignment between cylinder mouth and barrel. This design, now over three hundred years old, is still going strong - an enviable track record indeed!

The double action revolver, as made by Smith & Wesson and Colt and Ruger in the USA, by Webley and Scott in England, by Korth in West Germany and by Manurhin in France, is despite its disadvantages a viable and reliable weapon, which with proper care and attention will give years of good service. If I were financially unable to buy a top-quality piece, I would opt for an Astra or Llama, but under no circumstances would I risk my life or money on the cheaper

products of Germany, South America or the Philippines. As a guide, work out your finances, bearing in mind that many firms will give you nine months' credit, and then buy a weapon in the next higher grade. If you feel that you can afford only a cheap and nasty, buy an acceptable Spaniard and if you can afford one of those, go for the best - your life, or the life of one of your family is beyond mere price so that penny pinching on survival could prove to be a very false economy.

The problem with the cheaper weapons is that they are seldom reliable when they leave the factory and have a very limited working life, so limited in fact that many would be beyond economic repair by the time you had acquired your basic skills.

Advantages and disadvantages

The reputation of reliability enjoyed by both types of revolvers is in fact largely a myth. Only as regards ammunition does the revolver merit its reputation. First, when firing, a misfire doesn't have to be cleared and the action merely has to be recycled to bring another live round into the ready position. Secondly, even when fully loaded with hammer own, all springs are under little or no compression and it is capable of using ammunition of widely different bullet designs an power without any risk of a malfunction. For flat use, for instance, where penetration into the next apartment is a very real danger, the reloader can brew up ammunition to minimise the risk. A combination of loads to suit most occasions - two shots for snakes, two heavy manstoppers and two armour-piercers, for example - can also be carried, although a change in their points of impact must be expected for each.

Revolvers chambered for Magnum cartridges have the added bonus of being designed to operate at considerably higher pressures than any commercially available pistols (except the Automag which is so bulky that it can only be considered a hunting weapon) and can consequently drive heavier bullets at higher velocities. In cases when the opponent is behind cover, this gives the revolver an edge over the pistol but can also lead to the danger - even with a torso shot - of hitting innocent people standing behind the opponent. The .44 Magnum, despite Dirty Harry's celluloid example, is vastly overpowered for defensive use although ideal in the sporting field. Any owner of a .44 Magnum would be well advised to carry four .44 Special rounds backed up by a couple of the full-house loads.

With their complex and delicate mechanism, revolvers are subject to far worse malfunctions than semi-automatic pistols. With many parts open to invasion by dust, grit and powder fouling, the revolver can be put out of action without so much as the breakage of one single part. Ammunition itself, reloaded or factory made, can cause such a stoppage; if the bullet is not crimped securely enough and creeps forwards under inertia of recoil, it will lock the cylinder so tightly as to prevent it from revolving. In addition, in many double action revolvers, the ejection rod often comes unscrewed, again preventing the cylinder from revolving and making it virtually impossible to unlock without tools.

The sear - the very small bearing surface on the trigger of the Colt single action (or its modern copies) that engages the cocking notch (or bent) of the hammer - has a tendency to shear off, particularly if the weapon is fanned. If this happens, the weapon has to be fanned or the hammer slipped from under the thumb if it is to remain in action.

During a reload - which admittedly is not often necessary during the course of an interchange with an opponent - the revolver is put totally out of action. Even with a quick loader the reload tends to be a second or more slower than with the semi-auto. Moreover the quick loader, while certainly speeding up the process, is not totally reliable and even an expert can be expected to fumble one in four or five, particularly if he is using semi-wadcutter or sharp-shouldered bullets that have a tendency to hang up on the edges of the chambers.

What is even more dangerous, however, is that, in concentrating on the reload, you have to take your eyes off the target instead of being able to watch his every move. These problems can of course be overcome if you wish to devote many hours over many years to acquiring reloading skill. I have seen that consummate showman, Thell Reed, fire six rounds from a standard Peacemaker, reload and fire another six in under ten seconds - and each a stopping shot!

The cylinder of a revolver chambered for a viable self-defence cartridge is too wide to be easily concealed. To select a short barrel is often not a good solution for, although it may perhaps be easier to conceal, it is not long enough to allow the bullet to reach a reasonable velocity and therefore seriously impairs the ballistic efficiency of the round. In addition the lack of barrel weight to counteract the bulk of the butt and loaded cylinder makes holstering a problem so that restraining straps and other possible hindrances to a fast draw have to be used. It may well be that a 9 mm short pistol is a better choice for defence than a 50 mm barreled .38 special revolver.

The stock design of a revolver seldom seems to fit the average user. Grip adaptors then have to be fitted or custom-built stocks imported to position the hand as high as possible to give a good grip. To control rapid fire it is important to have a high grip since the lower the grip the more the muzzle of the piece recoils upwards, pivoting as it does about the axle formed by the wrist.

The pistol

History

The semi-automatic pistol is, historically speaking, a late starter as it was totally impractical until the introduction of the self-contained cartridge which was developed as we know it, in 1870. The first successful one, designed by Schonberger, was made in 1892 by the Austrian Arms Works at Steyr. The following year saw the introduction of the rather clumsy Borchardt chambered for a 7.63 cartridge and soon to become famous in the Mauser pistol marketed in 1896 and used by Winston Churchill at Omdurman. It is a measure of Hugo Borchardt's genius that this cartridge, under the name of the 7.62 Tokarev, is still use by the Communist bloc.

By the turn of the century the Luger pistol, a second generation Borchardt, had been on sale for two years and John Moses Browning had just introduced his first pistol. Ten years later, with the introduction into American military service of the Browning-designed Colt Model 1911 in .45 ACP, development had virtually ceased as the goals of simplicity and reliability had been attained. Despite a few modifications and simplifications made since, the world today still basically uses the Browning system while the other designs have faded away. The Americans still use the Model 1911; most of NATO carries the Hi Power and the Communists still issue the obscolescent Tokarev. While most Spanish guns are close copies (albeit with some very good modifications), they don't have the close tolerances an superior metallurgy displayed in either the American or Belgian versions.

With their design and introduction of the optional single action/double action mechanism the Germans took a retrogressive step. With this innovation, not only did they lose sight of simplicity, they also lost reliability and at the same time made shooting more difficult. Their aim was to make it possible to lower the hammer onto a chambered round without any risk of an accidental discharge taking place and at the same time make it possible to fire the same round double action if a sudden emergency should occur. Theoretically semi-trained troops or policemen stand a better chance of not shooting themselves or each other but their chances of shooting the enemy are also considerably smaller! The shortcomings are twofold. First, a faulty weapon will discharge the round onto which the hammer is meant to fall safely and, because of the false confidence bred by such a safety feature, gun manners may well be overlooked and the piece pointed at a friend or animate object. Secondly, after actuating the trigger in its long, forward double action position, the trigger finger must be moved to achieve a correct single action release. This is possible but requires considerably more training, which should be taken up with more important techniques. If you remember that a safety catch should merely be a reinforcement of your own good gun-handling techniques, you will see the fallacy of this type of weapon.

After the original Mauser HSC came the Walther P38, a poor design still available to this day. Since the Second World War, the Smith & Wesson models 39 an 59 have appeared as well as a host of continental offerings such as the SIG-Sauer and Heckler and Koch. I once owned a Smith & Wesson 39 but, in desperation, converted it to double action only, and then sold it off as fast as I could for considerably below its value. To be fair, some double action pistols, such as the Beretta Model 92 an the Czech-made Brno Model 75, can also be carried cocked and locked, obviating this criticism. Smith & Wesson have just recently seen the light and their new 39s an 59s can also be carried cocked and locked, or double action.

As for the double action semi-auto, as far as I'm concerned, it was succinctly summed up by Jeff Cooper as 'an ingenious solution to a non-existent problem'. Cooper went on to cite a security organisation in Australia whose members had been carrying Browning Hi-Powers fully loaded, cocked and without any safety catch for several years without one accidental discharge. Safety is in the mind, not in the mechanics of any weapon.

I do not mean to suggest that semi-automatic pistol design reached its apogee in the 1911 nor that it has yet reached it. Indeed, current developments in the gas-operated, rotating-bolt field

may soon see better models but, until then, and until the new models have proved themselves, we can make our selection only from those available.

Advantages and disadvantages

The magazine in a viable defence pistol carries more rounds than does an equivalent revolver and is the key to a rapid reload, taking one to two seconds of co-ordinated movement. This can take place in a slight pause during a confrontation or when running low without any need to take your eyes off the surrounding activity. Although a reload may never be needed in normal use, it is a regular feature of competitions and a distinct possibility in military or police actions. If however a spare, loaded magazine is not available, then a reload will be slower than with a revolver. Should you find yourself without a magazine at all then you have relegated yourself to owning a single shot weapon - presuming there is no magazine safety in operation, in which case you own an expensive cudgel! Almost as bad, certainly as frustrating and equally as lethal, is a damaged or dirty magazine which can cause a series of feeding malfunctions. Any gunsmith will tell you he can cure most such problems - simply by substituting a new magazine!

With the pistol the angle of the butt to the line of the barrel (which affects the pointing qualities), the design of the stocks themselves and the distance to trigger, seem to suit most shooters. The combination of the three tens to make a high grip feel natural and the rotational thrust of the recoil, apart from being spread over a longer period than with a revolver, is therefore reduced.

When compared with the single action release on a similar revolver, the trigger pull on an unmodified Colt or Browning-type pistol is at a decided disadvantage, but compared with the double action pull - which may well require a long 4 kg-6 kg squeeze - the pistol is again at an advantage and the user doesn't have to make a split-second decision on which mode of fire to choose. Although a new, self-loading pistol should feed commercial ammunition without a failure, it may well be highly critical of any cast lead bullets except those which exactly match the contours of those bought commercially. To ensure reliability in feeding and conformity with the Geneva Convention, the manufacturers long ago standardised on a round-nose, full metal jacket projectile. This bullet is the most inefficient stopper there is but, if you are relying solely on factory ammunition, this is all you will be able to buy. The handloader on the other hand will have a choice of many more effective designs but to regain reliability the weapon will need some gunsmithing.

In unskilled or semi-trained hands (which in any event should not be near any firearm) the pistol presents more of a safety hazard than the revolver. In the first place, after firing a shot the hammer is in the cocked position over a live round and requires but a comparatively light touch to effect an accidental discharge. Secondly, people too often believe that the mere removal of the magazine renders the piece unloaded and safe to handle. Thirdly, the state of readiness of the piece cannot be checked at a glance as with the revolver. All these disadvantages are not however defects of the design but of the user.

A high quality revolver is often considered more accurate than an equivalent auto. What is often overlooked, however, is that accuracy is a completely relative goal and what might be an acceptable standard for self-defence or combat shooting would be totally unacceptable to a precision target shooter. The defensive handgunner is interested in getting a solid torso hit within a 127 mm (5 in) radius of his point of aim at any reasonable range and in the minimum possible time. The standard pistol should achieve this purpose up to fifty metres - far beyond normal combat ranges. The target shooter, on the other hand, aims at a considerably smaller mark, at known ranges and under specialised and controlled conditions and will therefore require more of a precision instrument. It is interesting to note that the semi-automatic has virtually ousted the revolver from both the target and combat ranges.

Conclusion

In the final analysis, whether you select a revolver or a semi-automatic pistol is immaterial as long as you buy one of adequate power and top quality. If you feel however that you want to use combat shooting as a sport and a training vehicle, then you must select a self-loader. For my own part, until I receive an unconditional guarantee, inscribed on a gold tablet, that in any confrontation to which I may be party I will never need more than six rounds, I will stick to my Model 1911 Colt with a spare magazine in instant readiness!

Chapter 3: Psychological Preparation

A confrontation with a criminal who has lethal intent on your life or person is a traumatic experience, not least so because it is totally unexpected, giving you little or no chance to react other than instinctively. Unless you have been especially trained to react to a danger stimulus, your normal reaction time will be one of total shock and numbness.

If you are contemplating training for self-defence, then the first psychological threshold that you must cross now before you need to is that, by averting a threat to yourself or someone under your protection, you may be forced into taking life. We are taught from the cradle that life is sacred but the whole history of mankind has been one long story of wars of religion, of conquest, of fighting for independence and of politics. We need look no further than our twentieth century, which is only three-quarters of the way through, to see the bloodiest pages yet. To train in self-defence you simply *must* accept the fact that you are capable of killing. To battle with your conscience in the face of the enemy can lead to even a moment's hesitation and that split second could mean your death.

No one but a psychopath wants to kill, but the instruction given in this book is aimed at enabling you to stop an aggressor and you must accept that, in doing so, you may kill. If deep in your heart you know that you are incapable of taking another life in defence of your own or of those under your protection, then you are not the person to own a firearm.

Mental Preparedness

The colour-coded 'States of mental Preparedness', formulated by Jeff Cooper, are a good guide to moving smoothly and efficiently into action. Even if it were necessary, your nervous system would not allow you to live in a permanent state of instant readiness. In fact trying to do so would actually slow down your reactions to a danger stimulus. The stages, in ascending order of danger are.

Condition White

You are totally relaxed and unaware of your surroundings and probably a long way from a defensive weapon. You could be in bed, in the bath or working in your office. If an emergency occurs now it is probable that, before you gather your wits together, you will have become just another statistic on the crime graph.

Condition Yellow

A state of relaxed awareness, similar to your attitude when you are driving a car. You know what is ahead and behind and you are on constant watch for potential anger. As you put on a gun, you must automatically gear yourself up to this condition, which is one in which you can live for the rest of your life without any mental strain.

Condition Orange

You have a specific alarm - the mental state of a householder going downstairs to investigate a noise, for example. Your weapon may still be holstered and you are assessing the situation. Now is the time in which you plan your actions, and set yourself in readiness. Your reasoning might be: 'If he crosses that spot, then I shall shoot' and that activates your starting signal. You should pass from Condition Yellow to Condition Orange in a second or so.

Condition Red

You have to implement the decision made in Condition Orange. You receive your starting stimulus and react just as you would on the range delivering your first shot, including a draw, in one to one-and-a-half seconds.

No amount of skill with a defensive weapons will be of any use to you unless you are mentally conditioned too. You will have to develop the qualities of *alertness, decisiveness, aggressiveness* and *speed,* all of which find their place in the progression of the colour code.

Your criminal is by nature a coward, furtively preying only on those who are weak, unarmed and unable to protect themselves or their property. Relying on taking you by surprise, and on the fact that most people aren't alert, he doesn't expect any resistance. How then should you, now that you are in the process of learning to survive, regard him? First of all, you must

substitute your fear of him with anger that he should dare to threaten you or try to take your hard-earned possessions. Anger will provide the impetus for your counter-aggression and, by filling your mind with the sole aim of stopping your adversary, enable you to forget your own danger.

You have two other attitudes which you must develop to survive: *coolness,* and *ruthlessness.* Training is a great aid to achieving coolness for a real combat situation is little different from range work except that now your life depends on your performance. Ruthlessness is vital. You must not waste any sympathy on your adversary. No one else can stop a criminal except the intended victim and he must use every means at his disposal without pity or hesitation.

If the criminal is relying on the surprise element, they your resistance will be totally unexpected and will automatically place him at a disadvantage. The best form of defence is a cool, calculated, resolute counter-attack.

Chapter 4: South African Law and the Gun Owner

Although this chapter is fairly short and deliberately not very technical, it is, together with the one on safety, the most important in the book. Knowledge of the Law can prevent you, a law-abiding citizen, from going to prison for using a firearm or any other weapon when in fact you had little or no justification for doing so. The responsibility that comes with gun ownership is immense and only a thorough understanding of the legal aspects will keep you from having plenty of time in which to reconsider your ignorance.

There are two totally separate occasions on which you are allowed to use a firearm or any other convenient weapon against a fellow human being.

Self-defence

The first is in 'Self-Defence'. For a Court to accept that your action fell within the scope of this plea, the following conditions have to be fulfilled:

1. The attack on you must be illegal.

2. At the time, you must reasonably believe that the attack will otherwise result in death, serious bodily harm or grave loss of property, either to yourself or to anyone whom you choose to place under your protection.

3. There must be no reasonable way of avoiding the threat.

4. Your response to the threat must be immediate.

5. You must use no more force or counter violence than is necessary to stop the threat.

Let's look at each of those in turn. First, a criminal who uses a weapon to avoid legal arrest may not plead that he acted in self-defence. Next, to convince the Bench that you were justified in shooting an unarmed man might be difficult, unless you are a woman or the assailant is considerably more powerful than you or you were outnumbered at the time. However, if the opponent is armed with any weapon which can be used offensively, such as a knife, screwdriver, hammer, broken glass, chain, brick or lumber, to name but a minute proportion of the everyday items which can be misused, then you may be justified in using a weapon to counter the violence, unless - and this is the third condition - you are able to avoid the threat by driving or running away or by putting an obstruction between you and him. Fortunately for our civilisation, there is strong academic feeling that to require a law-abiding citizen to flee in the face of a criminal threat is morally indefensible - after all, why should justice flee before injustice? If you do use a weapon to defend yourself, you must do so immediately and not at a later time when you are no longer threatened. You may not, for instance, drive off round the block, then, if you see your assailant again, just shoot him. Finally, if circumstances dictate that you must use a weapon, then you may use only enough force to avert the threat and no more. If, as you are preparing to fire, the felon drops his weapon and surrenders, you may not fire: if he does not and you do open fire, you may shoot only until he ceases to be a threat.

At no stage are you expected to match your weapon of defence against his chosen tool. You are not engaging in an affair honour or a duel but in stopping a threat to your life, limb or property.

The advice of another legendary figure in the world of Practical Pistolcraft, Colonel W. E. Fairbarn, under whose tutelage I started my own career in the field during the Cyprus Emergency of 1956, still holds goo for any handgun owner: 'Never draw a gun unless you are prepared to shoot and never shoot except to kill, but if you have any doubt, do neither. A firearm used as a threat is the sign of an amateur and may well get you killed'.

Making an arrest

The only other occasion in which you may legally use a firearm is when you are acting to uphold the laws of our society by making a citizen's arrest and the felon resists or flees. If there is absolutely no other way for you to effect the arrest, then you may use a firearm or any other weapon to do so. I must point out that there is no legal onus on you to make an arrest, merely a moral duty to accept responsibility.

It is not generally known that a private citizen has exactly the same rights of arrest as a policeman for Schedule One offences, or for any offence for which, on conviction, the Court would have no alternative but to hand down a sentence of six months' imprisonment or more, without the option of a fine.

Schedule One Offences

1. Treason.
2. Sedition.
3. Murder.
4. Culpable Homicide.
5. Rape.
6. Indecent Assault.
7. Sodomy.
8. Bestiality.
9. Robbery.
10. Assault, in which a dangerous wound is inflicted.
11. Arson.
12. Breaking and entering with criminal intent.
13. Receiving stolen goos, knowing them to be stolen.
14. Fraud.
15. Knowingly forging and uttering.
16. Offences related to the coinage.
17. Conspiring to commit any of the above offences.
18. Escaping from custody, whilst being held for committing a Schedule One offence.

If you reasonably suspect that one of these offences has been, is in the process of being or is about to be committed, then you should make it your duty to uphold the Law and to make an arrest. Don't expect help from any bystander. In all probability, he will be busy either looking the other way or very absorbed in the scene but offering no assistance. To those few of you who have done your duty in upholding our civilised standards, I offer my apologies for so sweeping a generalisation, but it is an unhappy fact that too many able-bodied people enjoy the benefits without the obligations which go with them. If you are hopelessly outnumbered or you are unarmed, your social contract does not demand that you throw your life away by confronting the criminals, but if it is within your power to make an arrest, then you should do so. As an interesting aside, it is actually an offence not to come to the aid, when so requested, of anyone authorised to make such an arrest.

There is no statutory law which requires you to fire a warning shot, but legal precedence requires that you must give oral warning and then fire a warning shot, if circumstances allow you to do this safely, before you may even think of firing directly at a fleeing miscreant, and requires you specifically to shoot to disable *not* to kill. Just bear in mind that the onus will be on you to prove that there was no other way that you could effect your arrest, that you were physically unable to catch the felon and that opening fire was your last resort.

If you are the owner, lawful occupier or person in charge of land and this could construed to mean your garden as well as your home, you may arrest any person committing *any* offence without a warrant and you could theoretically use deadly force if necessary to effect your arrest, but if in doubt, don't shoot.

While human greed dictates that it is easier to prey on one's fellow man rather than to earn an honest living, no matter how humble, it remains the duty and right of free men to protect their rights and integrity.

Licensing

Now that you know the responsibilities and liabilities that gun ownership entails, let us examine the licensing procedure itself.

Firearms licensing is the responsibility of the South African Police Force and is performed in the name of the Commissioner of Police. In fact, the Central Firearms Registry in Pretoria is the issuing authority and it has direct access to a computer, which has in its memory banks details of every license owner and firearm and of many stolen weapons.

Let us assume that you have chosen a firearm at the dealer of your choice, who will hand you an application form on which he will have entered details of both the weapon and his business. You now complete your part of the form and take it during office hours to the police station in the area in which you reside - this is not necessarily the one closest to you. If you already own more firearms than there are spaces provided on the form, make a supplementary list and attach it to your application, because failure to list them amounts to a false declaration, immediately detectable when your details are flashed onto the computer screen. The investigating officer will ask you some questions and base his report on your answers. You will certainly be asked how you are going to safeguard the weapon, when it is not on your person an if you fail to supply a satisfactory answer, your application may fail. Unfortunately, you are not asked to prove that you have any knowledge of the law or even of basic gun handling, a serious defect in the Act. Your application plus the report will go through police channels to your District Commandant and then to Pretoria and you should know the outcome within five weeks. If successful, you will receive a letter from the Central Registry asking you to call at your local police station armed with a R2.00 revenue stamp. The cancelled stamp will be affixed to the licence and the licence stuck into the Book of Life. Should your application fail, you have within sixty days the right to reverse his decision. In this event, you must write out a full statement giving merits of your case, including your previous experience with firearms and a full motivation for your needing the weapon and send it by registered mail to The Honourable the Minister of Police, 216 Union Buildings, Pretoria, 0136.

Your licence authorises you to take possession of the specified firearm, to carry it and to buy an unrestricted quantity of ammunition for it. It is valid, in terms of the Arms and Ammunition Act, number 75 of 1969 Section 5, until:

a) the possession of the arm is permanently transferred by the holder thereof to any other person; or

b) until the licence ceases to be valid in provisions of Section 15(1); or

c) until the arm is forfeited to the State by order of a competent Court or is expropriated in the terms of any law.

This means that a licence is issued for life or until you choose to sell the weapon either to a licensed dealer or to a private individual who has taken out a licence for it or until you are declared unfit to possess a firearm for any one of a number of valid reasons at the Commissioner of Police's discretion and without a Court appearance. Section 11 of the Act enumerates these reasons as applying to any person:

a) whose possession of an arm constitutes a danger to the peace or to such person himself or to any other person; or

b) who has discharged an arm at or in the direction of himself or any other person or has threatened or expressed the intention to kill or injure himself or any other person by means of an arm; or

c) who has by means of an arm killed or injure any other person through wanton negligence or wantonly or through negligence endangered the life and limb of any person; or

d) who while in lawful possession of an arm, has lost such arm through gross negligence.

A Court may also direct that you lose the right to own firearms. Once again you do have the right of Appeal, within thirty days, to the Minister of Police.

It is a little known fact that (Section 8):

1) Any white person not being under the age of sixteen years or a disqualified person may, with the prior consent of the holder of licence to possess an arm, and for such period as such holder may permit, have such arm in his possession without holding a licence, provided:

a) 1) the permission of the licence holder is contained in a statement in writing signed by him and setting forth the period for which the permission has been granted and particulars sufficient to identify the arm; and

2) if said period exceeds fourteen days, the said statement has been endorsed by a person acting under the authority of the Commissioner (your Station Commander); or

b) such person has the arm in his possession:

1) in the immediate vicinity of the licence holder or while on any land belonging to or lawfully occupied by the licence holder; or

2) for the purpose of protecting any property or premises, or any game on the land, belonging to or in the care or custody of or lawfully occupied by the licence holder.

The minimum age, therefore, at which you may be granted a licence to possess a firearm is sixteen, provided that you have good cause and your parent or legal guardian's written permission. Without that permission the minimum age is twenty-one. However, any white person over the age of twenty-one, who is in lawful possession of a firearm may allow another white person, who is under the age of sixteen to use that weapon under his immediate supervision. Non South African citizens, provided that they have permanent residence permits, are treated in exactly the same manner, although they will be asked to furnish two character references each time they apply.

Knowingly pointing a firearm, without lawful cause, is an offence, which can also constitute an assault and which could lead to your being shot in self-defence. It is also an offence to be in possession of ammunition for which you neither have a licensed firearm nor a valid collector's permit, issued in terms of Section 32(1)(b) of Act 75 of 1969.

Finally, Section 38 of the same Act requires that:

Whenever any arm in the possession of any person is lost, stolen or destroyed, he shall within *forty-eight hours* after having become aware of the loss, theft or destruction, report such loss, theft or destruction to a policeman on duty at a police station, and shall, at the request of such policeman, furnish him with such particulars relating to the arm as the policeman may require.

When you sell or dispose of a firearm licensed in your name, you must within a few days make another visit to your police station to have that licence cancelled.

There is nothing in the law that lays down the degree of concealment required when carrying a handgun, although there may well be local bye-laws or provincial ordinances, which have a bearing on your area, but as a general rule if it can't bee seen, it can't give offence. To wear it too ostentatiously will only gain you a reputation for being a cowboy and a show-off and will certainly lead to pranksters trying to disarm you.

Security

I should like to emphasise that the security of any firearm in your possession is of paramount importance. The safest and most logical place to keep a firearm is on your person; otherwise your piece should be safely locked away - or simply hidden in the underwear or sock drawer, but in a substantial metal box that is kept locked or, less ideally, in some cunning place of concealment. The glove compartment of a car is never safe and is classified as grossly negligent in the case of loss.

Gun ownership can be regarded as a citizen's right but, like so many rights or privileges, it imposes on those who exercise them responsibilities, both legal and moral, of the highest order and this right must never be taken lightly.

Chapter 5: Stopping Power

Before can even begin to think about choosing a handgun suitable for self-defence or combat shooting, let's discuss the ammunition and in so doing reduce the options.

The vital organs and locomotor centres of the human body occupy a remarkably small area and, rather than deliberately trying to hit one of them in a very short space of time under considerable stress, it is far more logical to try for a solid hit with a bullet of sufficient power to stop rather than kill. A kill therefore is merely a by-product of your primary object which is to stop the aggressor. Any of the available handgun cartridges are capable of killing and if one could guarantee such a shot on every occasion the choice would be simple. Even in a full-scale war, however, deaths run at only fifteen per cent of total casualties which by interpolation means that you run an eight-five per cent chance of not killing your opponent.

There is a vast difference between the energy of ammunition listed in ballistics tables and the ability of that same round to anchor a transgressor. The best way to choose your cartridge is by empirical methods, relying on those cartridges which are known to be effective and avoiding the others like the plague. But even with an effective cartridge, you still have to do your part by placing it solidly in the torso of your opponent!

In the opening years of this century the US Army was involved in the suppression of a rebellion by the Moros, a religious sect in the Philippines. Against these fanatics, the .38 double action Colt revolver, with which the Army had replaced the old .45 Peacemaker just ten years before repeatedly failed to be effective, leading to many avoidable casualties. This problem was rapidly solve by reissuing the .45s. As a result, the Thompson-La Garde Board was set up by the Army, to investigate the whole problem of handgun stopping power. Its researches will probably never again be repeated, conducted as they were with human bodies and live cattle, and led to the adoption of the .45 Auto Colt Pistol cartridge (together with the Cold Model 1911 pistol) as the standard GI (Government Issue) sidearm. Despite NATO standardisation and the almost total Free World acceptance of the 9 mm Parabellum, the 1911 still holds this position in America today. For once, one of history's lessons has not been forgotten.

Basic considerations

When discussing the human body's reaction to a wound, it is quite impossible to deal in absolutes as there are untold variables that affect each particular case in a different way. The target's physical condition, whether he was totally unaware of his danger, whether he had massive doses of adrenalin circulating through his bloodstream, whether he was under the influence of drugs or alcohol, whether or not he was determined in his resolve, whether he was convinced that he was impervious to bullets or whether he was in a frenzy of rage or fighting for his life are just some of the questions to be asked when trying to analyse the reaction of the target. Anyone, for instance, who has done any hunting will know from observation that an animal alarmed or already wounded is far harder to drop than one that is taken unawares. To these variables must be added also the bullet's shape and velocity together with its path through the body.

The Thompson-La Garde Board's deliberations led it to believe that velocity was not *per se* a particularly important ingredient at normal handgun speeds of 650 to 1400 feet per second (200 to 430 mps) unless bone was struck. In that case the higher velocities produced more secondary projectiles of splintered bone. Their findings merely reinforced what had been known for many years - that a relatively heavy bullet of large diameter moving at a modest velocity was the best stopper. The one thing which the Board did prove, however, was that there is in fact little correlation between stopping power and kinetic energy. On paper the energy of the .45 ACP, the 9 mm Parabellum and the .30 Luger 7.65 Parabellum are very similar being 370, 350 and 310 foot pounds. Despite its close parity, however, the .30 Luger proved to be one of the least efficient stoppers.

The chart (overleaf), which relates relative stopping power (RSP) to proven Stopping Probability, clearly indicates that any cartridge of lesser power and diameter than the .38 Special in a revolver and 9 mm Parabellum in a semi-automatic will give you considerably less than the bare minimum fifty per cent chance which you have of stopping an opponent with one solid body shot. It also shows that for self-defence the power of the .45 ACP is almost the optimum in terms of recoil and controllability and that an extra 164 points on the RSP scale gain the .44 Magnum only two or three per cent in stopping probability.

It is for these very good reasons that, under the rules of the International Shooting Confederation, the .38 Special and 9 mm Parabellum are the smallest calibres allowed in competitions. If you value your life, be guided by these facts and follow suit!

For further details on Stopping Power see Appendix, page 154.

Chapter Six: Gun Manners

Before we can even consider the mechanics of handling either a revolver or semi-automatic pistol we must look at the best safety device there is - your mind.

'It takes a gentleman', the first chapter of Robert Ruark's *The Old Man and the Boy*, the account of his upbringing and of the holidays which he spent hunting, shooting and fishing with his grandfather and a host of honorary uncles, black and white, is the best introduction to gun safety I have ever read. It made such an impression on me as a father that I tried to bring up my son in the same way with great success. Ruark's message, which comes through loud and clear, is that gun manners are an attitude of mind and that if you can train yourself or teach anyone else to be a gentleman with a gun, totally aware and considerate of other people's feelings and safety, then you have reached a state of maturity which will affect all aspects of your life.

A faulty firearm, although often used as an excuse after an accident has occurred, is in fact a rarity. If proper gun manners become reflexive no one will be hurt even with a faulty weapon. It is often said that it is the 'empty' gun that kills and while this can be true it obscures the real fact that it is *people* - through ignorance, lack of skill, carelessness, or whatever - who accidentally kill or maim other people an here lies the difference between gun handling and gun

manners. Gun handling is the purely mechanical skill of being able to load, unload, strip an clean a weapon safely. Gun manners, on the other hand, extend over every facet of usage but there are two basic golden rules which, if obeyed consciously and unswervingly for the rest of your life, will bring you the supreme and all-too-rare accolade of being known and seen to be safe with guns under any conditions.

Golden rules

The first golden rule is never to let the muzzle of any gun, loaded or unloaded, point towards any person or object that you are not prepared to destroy. This sounds simple enough and, if every gun user stuck to this rule there would be virtually no more accidental deaths involving firearms. Taken to its full implication though, it means that, at any time and all the time a weapon is in your hands, you must be absolutely aware of where its muzzle is pointing. Anyone who has spent a little time on a range or around people with guns will have experienced one or other of the following situations, both only a finger-twitch away from disaster. In the first case, a shooter has a stoppage often caused by his failure to release the trigger completely during rapid fire. He then turns around to talk to the Range Officer and, in doing so lets his muzzle swing across others on the range, until it finishes up directly in line with the luckless official or spectator. In the second case a semi-auto is unloaded by first (correctly) removing the magazine but then, before working the slide to complete the sequence, pointing the piece to the left without thinking that anyone might be standing there. One problem with a handgun because it is so short and manoeuvrable, is that the muzzle describes a large arc with a comparatively small movement of the hand or body.

A rider to this rule is that you must also be aware of where your bullets are going to strike. We all tend to think that, because a pistol is a comparatively short-range weapon, its bullets will not carry very far and so forget this vital part of gun manners. It may come as a surprise to find out that the 9 mm Short will carry 1000 metres, the .45 ACP just short of 1600 metres, the 9 mm Parabellum and .38 Special 2000 metres, and the .357 and .44 Magnums 2400 metres, while the humble .22 Rimfire is good for 1500 metres. You must always choose a backstop which will absorb the bullets and so avoid the chances of a bullet ricocheting off at any angle for nearly as far as in free flight. To shoot at anything, be it tin, target or game, without knowing where the bullet will land and without first making absolutely certain that it is completely safe, will make a mockery of any other good habits that you have acquired.

The second golden rule is that there is no such thing as an unloaded gun except when you yourself have personally cleared the weapon and the gun has not left your hands since that moment. My father told me of an incident that occurred while he was based in Cairo with the British Army, which well illustrates this rule. The talk turned one evening to handguns. My father produced his pair of Cold Model 1911s, put them on the table, cleared one of them and returned it to the table. A few moments later, to demonstrate a point, he picked it up, aimed at a vase and blew it to pieces. He had of course picked up the other loaded Cold and, certain that it was clear, had carried on. The discharge was deafening and served as an instant reminder that his gun manners had slipped. It is so easy for a round to gain entry into an unloaded firearm that it is

far safer to regard every gun as loaded all the time. Loaded guns are normally treated with some respect; empty ones seem to be regarded as toys.

Guns and Children

On the subject of toys - those cap pistols, so beloved by small boys, are perhaps the worst introduction to gun manners possible. Children get so used to pointing guns at each other with no ill effects (and to seeing so many of their favourite actors on film or TV being shot only to reappear in the next episode) that they have absolutely no regard for the deadly effects of a bullet. In later life they may continue to play cowboys, with real guns, maybe even leading to the death of a friend.

If you are about to or already own a firearm, then you will also probably have to face the fact that you are going to be the guide and mentor to one or more children. Any curriculum should include gun manners. Far too many parents work on the 'touch-that-and I'll-belt-you' technique which is not only negative but pays no heed to a child's natural curiosity, which may one may lead him to looking for the forbidden object and yet another accident will be in the making.

Certainly, while children are small and unable to reason logically, it is your responsibility to make certain that they do not gain access to a gun. But one day you will be asked by Junior if he or she can look at your pistol. You will have to judge for yourself how ready the child is for this new knowledge but my own son's gun education started when he was just over four. He asked to look at my revolver and, very formally, I went through the unloading procedure, made him check it himself an then promptly landed him a smart smack on the tail for allowing the muzzle to point at the family dog. Later that week we went down to a local quarry where I demonstrated graphically what a .357 would to a few tins of water. I then told him that much the same would happen to his mother, me, his baby sister or anyone else he placed in front of a gun which gave him the ability to kill. By the time he was five he could name every part on that revolver and, if he bothered to ask to do so, was able to unload it safely on his own and handle it without giving offence to any of us. When he was almost seven I built him a miniature .22 rifle which he used under my very close supervision and, at nine, he shot his first buck. As I was the owner of a gunshot at the time, young Séan often came in to help out and it was most gratifying to see that his gun manners were considerably better than some of the customers many years his senior. Needless to say, the incentive to sneak a look at my guns was absent and, even if he had been pressurised into doing so by some of his school chums, he was capable of doing it safely.

Alcohol

Alcohol and guns make a potentially lethal combination which can break down your gun manners and easily lead to an accident. The right time for a drink is when the guns have been cleaned and put safely away. I wish that I could find out how many incidents have occurred after a couple of drinks at lunchtime either in the shooting field or in a private home.

If these then are the two golden rules, what other rules are there to reinforce them? First, it is the height of bad manners to touch someone else's firearm without his express permission. If the owner of a weapon fails to prove it safe and you are not certain of the procedure, don't touch it at all and, above all, *never* take his or anyone else's word that it is safe.

Safety catches

Secondly, a safety catch is a mechanical device subject to failure, and should never be relied on to be your final arbiter of safety. On the other hand, it should be taken off only as you prepare to fire otherwise you run the risk of slipping or tripping and having an accident. Finally, your holster should hold your piece securely enough to stop it falling out, yet without obstructing its accessibility.

Summary

Stanley A. Mate, Director of Training for the National Rifle Association of America, summed up gun manners in an article for *The Safety Education Digest* as follows:

Guns are not alone in their potential of hurting people when improperly used. Like many other objects, they are fun to use. But the fun stops when improper use causes a harmful result. A recent slogan, 'Driving is a full-time job', is applicable to shooting as well. The person with a gun in his possession has a full-time job. He cannot *guess*, he cannot *forget, he must know.*

He must know:
How it works,
Whether it's loaded,
Where it's pointing,
Where his target is,
What his target is,
Where the bullet will go,
Where the bullet will stop,
You have a full-time job.

Chapter Seven: Gun Handling

While I don't believe that a single action revolver is a wise choice for a defence handgun, there are plenty of them around and, following the precept that no knowledge is wasted, let us examine the handling of this popular anachronism; after all in a tight corner, any weapon is far better than none.

Single action revolvers

The single action revolver has a solid frame with a semi-fixed cylinder which revolves around a central base pin that is retained by a transverse spring-loaded screw on the left-hand

side of the frame just ahead of the cylinder. The weapon is loaded and unloaded via a gate which swings to the right and which is situated on the right-hand side of the belled standing breech. The hammer must be withdrawn to half cock to release the cylinder locking bolt, allowing the cylinder to be rotated by hand, the loading gate to be swung over and, with a chamber aligned, a round to be slipped in. The cylinder is rotated to expose the next chamber and the procedure is repeated until the loading process is complete. A word of warning here: although the Colt or many of its modern copies is chambered for six rounds, it is generally considered to be a five shooter because the sear is the tip of the trigger itself. This offers a small and comparatively weak support for the hammer even when the safety notch is engaged, rendering the design singularly liable to accidental discharge if the hammer receives a sharp blow, often by being dropped.

Safety and common sense decree that you carry a single action with an empty chamber under the hammer. The Ruger New Models have overcome this failing by having a metal block interposed between the hammer and the frame, except when the trigger is pulled. Unloading the piece is carried out by pulling the hammer back to half cock, swinging out the loading gate, aligning a chamber and pushing back on the spring-loaded ejector rod, which is mounted in a housing on the lower right side of the barrel. When the case has been ejected, the rod is released, the cylinder indexed and the process continued. Because of the small finger area available on the ejector, a sticky case may become a problem. This is best solved by pushing in the locking screw, retracting the base pin and taking the cylinder out to the right - the base pin then be used as an ejector.

The correct way to check that a single action is unloaded is to pull the hammer back until you hear the second click (half cock), open the gate and rotate the cylinder visually checking that there are seven empty holes. Why seven holes when it's only a six shooter? Because then you are certain that it is empty and safe and there is no possibility of overlooking a live round. If the weapon turns out to be loaded, carry out the unloading procedure.

Double action revolvers

The solid frame, swing-out cylinder, double action revolvers as made by Smith & Wesson, Colt and Ruger at the top of the quality and reliability scale and the acceptable Spanish offerings of Astra and Llama are perhaps the most common choice for self-defence.

The design allows for the cylinder, which is mounted on a pivoting crane, to be swung out to the left of the piece and for all the rounds to be ejected at once by pressure on the ejector rod, which runs coaxially within the part of the crane around which the cylinder rotates. At the breech end of the cylinder, there is a spring-loaded, star-shaped ejector on which is also mounted the ratchet by means of which the cylinder is rotated. Pressure on the ejector rod moves the ejector backwards, moving with it any cases or rounds which may be in position. If speed is no object, these may be picked out individually and placed in a pocket or on a table. Speed sequences will be fully covered in a later chapter (see pages 89-92). As you will see, the chief advantage of this system is that a safety check is carried out by the actuation of a single catch

and the swinging out of the complete cylinder.

All these examples have in common the approximate position of the catch which is situated on the left side of the weapon above and behind the trigger guard. But each manufacturer has his own operating design. Smith & Wesson, for example, require that the catch be pushed forward to unlock the cylinder. Colt's catch has to be pulled to the rear, while Ruger has one that must be pushed inwards. The Spaniards normally copy the Smith & Wesson features.

Colt revolvers, which have no front lock or support for the protruding ejector rod, have cylinders which rotate clockwise (when viewed from the rear) probably to avoid putting any strain on the yoke or lock. The Smith & Wessons, which feature a front lock, rotate counterclockwise. This is of no importance, except that, should you have time to load only a single round, you must be absolutely certain that when you close the cylinder it will be the first to come under the hammer. Loading a Colt should therefore always start at the eleven o'clock hole working backwards against its cylinder rotation, while the Smith & Wessons should be started at one o'clock and be loaded clockwise. Your life can depend on such an apparently small detail of gun handling.

All these weapons - I hesitate to call them modern as the Smith & Wesson Military and Police first appeared in 1899 and after some modifications has remained virtually unchanged since 1915 - feature a hammer block to avoid accidental discharges in the event of a blow on the hammer. It is possible to remove this safety device from some Smith & Wessons, either by accident or design, since they will operate normally without them, and I have seen many Government Surplus .38s with them missing. Shortly before I left the Colonial Police in Cyprus, one of my friends - a dog handler who had just been awarded the George Medal for bravery - bent over to play with his dog. His sidearm slipped out of its holster, discharged and killed him - it had no hammer block.

Before you load your revolver to its full capacity check it to make certain that this safety feature is operative. Unload the piece and close the cylinder. With the hammer resting on a wooden surface, push down on it hard. At the same time look through the gap between cylinder and standing breech. If you can see the firing pin protruding, take the gun to a gunsmith or carry it with an empty chamber under the hammer.

All of use have seen films in which the hero or one of his opposition, cigarette drooping out of the corner of his mouth, negligently draws his revolver, checks to make certain that it is loaded and, with a quick, efficient flick of the wrist, slams the cylinder back into the frame. This may be a quick method but no quicker than closing the cylinder under control and certainly the most effective way of destroying the mechanism of a fine weapon. Rather than a sign of expert gunhandling, this movement is the sign of a rank amateur or dyed-in-the-wool moviegoer.

Hinged-frame revolvers

The last type of revolver we will consider is the hinged-frame design, which normally has a release latch on the left-hand side of the standing breech. The best example of this type is the English Webley and Scott which has been on the market in its present form since 1887. It is a well-tried and justly popular design which saw service wherever British soldiers, policemen or administrators found themselves and is often considered to be the best combat revolver there is. It is a great pity that Webley and Scott have not seen fit to market their products chambered for the .38 Special cartridge as well as for the less powerful .38 Smith & Wesson cartridge. The .45 version, however, while being somewhat large and cumbersome, is still a very fine stopper and can be owned with confidence.

There are several reasons for my claim that the Webley and Scott is better than the solid frame swing-outs. Ejection is automatic and occurs just as the barrel drops to its lowest point and, since the barrel is used as a handle, considerable force can be applied both to achieve positive ejection and to clear a sticky case. The butt shape of the Webley is one of the most comfortable, allowing full control of recoil and trigger. Finally, they are reliable and seem to work regardless of mud, sand, or lack of attention.

Semi-automatic pistols

One of the more frequently voiced criticisms of the semi-automatic pistol is that it is less safe than a revolver and if we are discussing extremely low standards of superficial training, then the criticism is valid and the issue of double action pistols and/or magazine safety devices to police or military units, throughout the world, is usually tacit admission by the authorities concerned that their training programmes are inadequate. It is no harder to learn safe and competent handling of a semi-automatic than it is to learn how to operate a pressure cooker, a modern cash register or a hi-fi set - all terribly complicated until you are shown how and are allowed a few supervise practice runs.

Unloading

Unfortunately the uninitiated consider that removal of the magazine is synonymous with unloading a pistol - a totally fallacious view, which has led to countless accidental discharges, but then the uninitiated should not be allowed near a firearm of any kind, unless they are under instruction. Certainly the first movement in the unloading sequence is the removal of the magazine, but the chamber must also be cleared and visually inspected before the piece has been made safe.

'Far too complicated for a woman', is another arrant bit of rubbish gaily uttered - usually let it be said, by a totally uninitiated male, who is himself having trouble with the intricacies of a revolver, without the wisdom or humility to admit his ignorance. The average woman takes a little longer than a man to learn the significance of the 'twiddly bits' or of stripping her piece down into every component part but once absorbed a female student seldom needs to return for

a quick refresher.

One lesson that I have learned over many years instructing is that I must never say to an all-male beginners' class, 'Let's start at the beginning' because many in their heart of hearts honestly believe that they are not beginners but highly skilled performers merely brushing up on a primordial male skill. Women, on the other hand, arrive at a class with an 'I know absolutely nothing about this nasty thing but I want to learn' outlook and are in the main easier pupils.

There are three positions on a pistol where the magazine release catch is normally found - a button just behind the trigger, on the left-hand side, which is the easiest, fastest and so the approved site, since your life may one day depend on those very features which are found on Colts, the Browning Hi-Power, their Spanish copies and in fact all the best designed pistols, which enables the majority of the world's shooters to dump an empty or partially empty magazine while reaching for a spare. Second best (and I must suggest that where your life is concerned, there is no second best), the magazine release is situated low down on the left grip panel, such as on the Beretta model 92. Should you ever be unwise enough to stake your *life*, on the fact that you will *never* require to change magazines in an emergency situation, you can opt for a release catch situated at the heel of the butt. Prime offenders are the Walther P38, the SIG family and a multitude of 'pocket pistols', which are largely ineffective, anyway. This position requires the use of the weak hand thumb to force the catch rearwards, out of engagement with the magazine's floorplate or bottom and then usually the hand must also extract the magazine, which is prevented from falling away cleanly by pressure from the catch, instead of reaching for the spare. When the vital new magazine is finally presented, that catch must frequently be forced rearwards by positive pressure of the back face of the magazine - a very slow, cumbersome an undesirable process, which often causes a stoppage by partially stripping out the top round. The first movement of the 'unload' then is to remove the magazine and to place it under the little finger of the strong hand.

The safety catch is normally situated at the back of the left side of the frame, nestling just under the slide, and ideally situated for actuation by the right thumb. Left-handers should certainly investigate the fitting of a left-hand or ambidextrous safety. On Browning-designed or based weapons, which are in the majority, the safety catch is applied or 'on', when it is in its upper position, and this also locks the slide into battery. Lowering the catch places the mechanism to 'off' or 'fire' an unlocks the slide. Some pistols, such as the Czech model 75, have the catch on the slide itself, a position which seems to be no less desirable. Certainly the least accessible and desirable safety device is one which requires a button to be pushed from side to side, since its actuation is slower. The Walther family of double action pistols forces the shooter either to fire his first shot with a heavy double action pull and then to alter his grip to cope with a shorter single action trigger movement for subsequent shots, or to cock the hammer into single action, since they cannot be carried 'cocked and locked'. Their safety device is placed on the rear of the slide but it differs by being on 'fire' in its upper position and, as it is lowered, it both drops the hammer in preparation for double action fire and applies the safety - the normal way, if you must carry one, is to drop the hammer and immediately return the catch to its 'fire' position. Do not be lulled into a sense of false security, which leads to careless gun handling, by believing that

the hammer lowering device is foolproof - just occasionally, it goes wrong an the piece discharges; far better to make certain that the muzzle is pointing in a safe direction and to let the hammer down under control. *The second movement* of the unloading sequence is to place the safety to 'fire', while keeping the trigger finger outside the guard.

The hold-open catch or slide stop can be operated in two ways, either by the magazine to signal that the piece is empty, or manually when you wish to lock the slide open as a safety procedure or during stripping. Without being dogmatic, the catch is usually found on the left side of the piece, above the trigger, and it often doubles as a major part not only of the stripping process but also of the barrel locking system. *The third movement* of the unloading sequence is to place the thumb of the right hand under the catch and exert an upward pressure.

The fingers of the left hand are now cupped over the ejection port, while its thumb remains on the left side. By pushing right and left hand together, the slide is retracted, any live round ejected neatly into the waiting fingers and the slide locked back.

To summarise the whole unloading sequence: magazine out and placed under the little finger of the right hand; safety off; slide back and locked and any ejected round placed between the fingers of the right hand - a clear indication to all concerned that the piece is indeed safe. One word of caution, however: make a positive turn so that the left side of the body is pointing in a safe direction, since the piece is held across the body, with the muzzle under the left elbow, covering anything to that side - and that can mean several other people on the firing line.

Warning

A very common error in handling a semi-automatic is to examine the chamber without first removing the magazine, a procedure which may well allow a live round to be chambered as the slide is closed, a certain accident in the making. If you wish to check the condition of the chamber for any reason, and you are using a pistol which does not have a solid return spring guide (this projects under the barrel when the slide is drawn back), simply pinch the bottom front of the slide between the index finger of the weak hand and its thumb, which is inserted into the front of the trigger guard.

Loading

Women often struggle to work the action of semi-automatics, but there is a very simple technique which takes all the hard work out of the process and has never yet failed a normal student. With a loaded magazine locked into place, stand square onto your target or a safe direction and hold the butt in your strong hand using the trigger finger as well. Now cock the hammer and place the left hand over the rear of the slide, thumb on the right, using the serrations provide. With the piece rotated onto its side so that the knuckles of the strong hand are uppermost, punch it away, at the same time as the weak hand is pulled smartly rearwards. You will feel when the slide reaches the rear of its travel, so release your left hand and allow the slide to go forward to strip a live round from the top of the magazine. If you practise this at home,

you will soon discover that it won't work with an empty magazine, which will lock the slide back, so try it a few times with no magazine, until your movements are fluid. The fewer times the better, however, since it is bad gun handling to allow the slide to slam forwards, without the cushioning effect of stripping the cartridge and feeding it into the chamber. You don't have to cock the hammer first but you will find that doing so does decrease your effort considerably. Don't be tempted to ease the slide forward under hand control: it is designed to function at high speed and slow motion often causes stoppages.

Carrying

Finally, many people carry their single action pistols in Condition Two, that is hammer own on a live round, as a safety precaution but they overlook the fact that lowering a hammer onto a live round is considerably more hazardous than carrying 'cocked and locked', that is in Condition One. Many pistols do not have an inertia firing pin, so that in Condition Two the hammer is resting against the base of the firing pin, whose nose is in direct contact with primer - a sharp tap or a fall and that round will fire. Nor should the half-cock position be considered as a permanent safety device; it is designed to arrest the hammer should it be jarred, as during a fall, or should the sear or the full-cock notch or bent fail. Drop a weapon in half cock and if the sear snaps, then there will be sufficient energy to drive an inertia firing pin forward to fire the waiting cartridge.

If you must lower the hammer, then do it with the least possible risk of an accidental discharge. Place the tip of the weak-hand forefinger between the front of the hammer and the rear of the slide. At the same time grip the sides of the hammer firmly between thumb and second finger, squeeze the trigger and let the hammer own under considerable control. Practise with an empty piece, but if your hands are oily or sweaty the whole process is fraught with danger and is not recommended under any conditions; the more you handle a piece, the more likely you are to make a mistake.

Correct gun handling must be based on sound knowledge and sufficient practice, with an unloaded weapon, to make all the movements feel comfortable. Only when you are completely at home with the very basics of handling a handgun, or for that matter any other tool, can you progress to its mastery and mastery must be your only goal since it spells survival.

Chapter Eight: Gun Care

To a large degree the quality of service that you will receive from even the best firearm in the world will depend on just one factor - you. Clean, oil and care for it correctly and you will retain both its quality and reliability. Neglect it and you will lose not only your investment and reliability btu also maybe your one chance of survival.

Should you ever have the chance to examine a professional hunter's personal weapons, you will see that, even though they may be old and worn from honest use, they will be cared for beautifully. The hunter knows that both his own and his client's life may at any time depend on

total reliability. The hunter, however, has one great advantage over us - he more or less knows when to expect trouble. We, on the other hand, surrounded by the apparent safety of civilisation, never know when we might have to face a human beast of prey. On a lighter but nevertheless indicative level, many an important combat pistol match has been lost by an avoidable malfunction.

Cleaning your firearm

There are four separate occasions on which you should clean your firearm: daily after firing, monthly, six monthly, and for storage. Note that this procedure always starts in exactly the same way. First, *make certain that the gun is completely empty* and remove any live rounds from the cleaning area.

Daily cleaning

Daily cleaning applies only if you carry or handle your firearm and consists merely of rubbing over the external parts with a slightly oily rag. Rust has lowered the value of more fine weapons than any other single cause and this simple precaution will stop rusting from external moisture, the salts in perspiration and from the acid condition known as poisoned hands, which with some people is a permanent condition but is most frequently found concurrently with menstruation. Aerosol lubricants, like many modern technical advances, are two-edged and pose two dangers, one of which is rust and the other far more serious. Should you direct one of these sprays at metal from close range, the propellant, often freon, cools the metal down very rapidly causing condensation and therefore rust underneath the oil film. The antidote is either to spray onto a cloth and wipe as usual or alternatively to make sure that the firearm and spray nozzle are at least 30 cm (12 in) apart. The other problem is that those aerosol lubricants which are also water repellants are just to efficient; they leech past the bullet and attack the powder or past the primer and kill the compound. Either way the result is the same - a misfire. If your firearm is soaking wet, by all means use a dewatering agent but once if has done its job remove it and make it a rule never to rely on any cartridge which may have been contaminate.

It is clearly impossible to explain in detail how to strip and clean every weapon available to the shooter, so we will look at just two varieties - the Smith & Wesson Military and Police Model 10 revolver and the .45 ACP pistol, both representative of their fields.

Cleaning a revolver

The Smith & Wesson Military an Police Model 10 is one of the most popular revolver designs, being the basis for virtually every other model in that company's extensive range and also the most widely copied.

Monthly cleaning

The monthly or after-firing cleaning may take up a whole ten minutes of your time - a minuscule price to pay for reliability. Push forward the cylinder-release catch that is found on the left side between hammer and trigger. Swing the cylinder out to the left and make certain that the revolver is unloaded. Normal procedure for cleaning any weapon is to insert the brush or other implements from the chamber end of the barrel, so avoiding the rubbing of the cleaning rod or pull-through on the muzzle, a process which will eventually wear the metal away and lead to a loss of accuracy. The owner of the solid-frame revolver has no alternative but to make certain that the rod is centred in the barrel at all times.

Screw a phosphor-bronze brush onto the cleaning rod and pour some nitro solvent onto it. Don't dip the brush into the container as the fouling which may be present will gradually contaminate and weaken the chemicals. Give the barrel several passes, making absolutely certain that the brush exits at both ends before changing direction - to do so while it is inside the bore can, in extreme cases, cause it to stick and will in any case result in extremely rapid wear. Many people worry about using a phosphor-bronze brush because they feel that its use will result in unnecessary barrel wear, but it is in fact considerably softer than the steels use in firearms, so wears first.

Leave the inside of the barrel to soak and turn your attention to the cylinder. Here it is a good idea to use a brush of a larger size to clean the chambers (which are of course larger in diameter than the barrel) and scrub each in turn. Using an old toothbrush, apply the solvent to the outside of the barrel where it protrudes inside the frame and particularly to the section of frame immediately above the gap between barrel and cylinder, which receives a direct application of gas and fouling. Rub down the whole exterior with a cloth dampened with the solvent.

Wrap a clean, dry piece of flannelette onto the jag to dry the barrel and examine it for signs of leading, which appears as dull streaks against the polished steel. If you find such signs, repeat the phosphor-bronze solvent treatment. Dry out the cylinder and, by pressing in the ejector rod, you will also be able to clean under the star-shaped extractor. When the revolver is cleaned to your satisfaction and all the solvent removed, you have finished the hard work. One other point to bear in mind is that you can cause positive damage to the weapon if you allow the end of the brush or the jag to slam up against the standing breech. This process tends to peen the firing-pin hole closed and to create a hollow into which the primer can expand, creating extra drag as the cylinder is rotated.

We are now faced with a problem. It is common knowledge that bare metal rusts quickly and that it is not good practice to shoot through an oiled barrel. These two extremes seem to be irreconcilable but they must be overcome. Oil in the chamber allows the cartridge case to slide backwards rather than to grip the walls of the chamber, greatly increasing the backthrust of the case. Oil in the barrel can create an obstruction which will be overcome in one of two ways - the bullet will either force the oil outwards and leave a ring bulge in the barrel or it will demolish the barrel. The compromise, which is of course simple enough, is to apply a

microscopic film of oil. This leaves us with protection against rust and the slightly less than ideal condition of an oiled barrel. It will be safe to shoot through in an emergency but do dry out the insides when your are off to the range.

I have found that the solvent itself, especially Hoppes 9, gives me good rust protection and I barely moisten a piece of flannelette and run it through the barrel and cylinder. If you can see the oil, then you've used too much. Apply a light coating of a lubricating oil to the ejector mechanism and just a drop to the area where the cylinder assembly contacts the frame. By all means use a standard light machine oil but you will get far better results if you make your own by mixing your choice of light oil with an equal amount of Wynn's Multi-Purpose Concentrate. Oil the outside of the revolver as you do daily, reload, tidy up and that's it.

Six-monthly cleaning

The half-yearly cleaning involves removing the side plate, cleaning off the lubricant and relubing. If you have no mechanical aptitude or are too lazy to get a screwdriver to fit the screw slots, then you are best advised to get the job done professionally. Six months is the optimum period for this type of cleaning unless conditions are very dusty, in which case reduce the time.

First check, as always, that the gun is not loaded. Undo the screw which retains the grip panels and lift them off. Sometimes they are a very tight fit but don't be tempted to use the screwdriver blade as a wedge unless you want unsightly gouges in the wood. Simply rap the back or front strap of the butt several times with the handle of the screwdriver and the panels should start apart on their own. A second-best solution is to replace the screw for a small portion of its travel and then to tap its head, but the danger here is that you may push out the metal bushing. Undo the screws which you will find on the right side and once again tap the butt with the screwdriver handle until the side plate rises out of its recess and remove. The front screw is also the retainer for the cylinder yoke, so swing it out and slide the whole unit off to the front. You can now swab down the innards with carbon tetrachloride (this must be performed out of doors since inhalation of the vapour is dangerous) or a solvent, using a toothbrush and a container into which you can submerge the lock area.

A more efficient method is to unscrew the tensioning screw on the front strap and then remove the mainspring which is hooked onto the lower part of the hammer. Ease up the rear of the rebound lock, making certain that the spring will be under control, and remove it. The next part to come out is the hammer. This is a little tricky since the hand which rotates the cylinder must be pulled out of its recess and the cylinder catch held backwards. It sounds as if three hands are required but it is not too difficult to wiggle the hammer backwards, forwards and upwards until it comes away from its axis pin. The trigger can now be lifted off, although this may also require that the cylinder lock be held out of the way before it is removed. On many models you will have to remove the screw and the spring which is situated just above the trigger guard. Your revolver is now in about as many pieces as possible except for the cylinder assembly. This is stripped down by holding the cylinder and unscrewing the ejector rod, which often has a left-hand thread. All this may sound complicate but, if you have a friend who is 'au fait' with the

process or if you ask your local dealer for a demonstration, it will become both simple and quick. Now you can really clean up the insides and, if your revolver is your constant companion, you will be appalled by just how much rubbish can accumulate. Lubricate sparingly and reassemble. You are free to experiment with molybdenum grease, copper slip, etc, but I have absolute faith in that Wynn's/oil mixture.

Cleaning for storage

f you are going to store the revolver for any length of time, grease it up inside and out and store in a sealed plastic bag. Don't wrap it in a cloth as this will attract moisture or a holster which will contain acids from the tanning process. You can play safe by including a packet of silica-gel desiccant or a slip of VPI (Vapour Phase Inhibiting) paper, but I must confess that, conservative or not, I would not store one of my own weapons for any length of time ungreased. For short term, a slightly thicker coating of oil should suffice - but again no cloths or holsters.

Cleaning a pistol

Similar comments apply to the daily maintenance and storage of a semi-automatic pistol. Once again, every cleaning starts with a safety check that runs in this sequence: Take out magazine - Take off safety - Pull slide rearwards to examine the chamber visually - Eject live round if any - Clear ammunition away from work area.

Since there are many Colts and copies of Colts in the hands of shooters, we shall describe basic field stripping of the .45 ACP. The details may not be completely correct for your particular weapon but the owner's manual or your local gun dealer should be able to help you.

After the safety check - and I make an apology for labouring the point again - apply the safety catch to lock the slide, depress the spring-loaded plunger under the muzzle and rotate the barrel bushing clockwise. Be careful to keep the plunger under control, lest it fly off with considerable velocity to land, as it always does, in the most inaccessible place. Push the safety to the 'fire' or 'off' position and pull the slide rearwards until the back of the hold-open catch coincides with the rear, half-moon-shaped cut-out on the left side. From the right of the piece push the protruding rounded end of the catch to the left and lift clear. Sometimes you will have to give it a little wiggle but no force should be used. You can now pull the slide off forwards, remove the spring and its guide and, by lowering the chamber end, start the barrel forward. You will be unable to remove if from the slide until you have rotated the bushing as far as it can travel anti-clockwise to free its locking stud which rides in a slot machined into the front of the slide.

You will be well advised to strip out the trigger, hammer and associated mechanism for the first two or three times under the supervision of someone who is familiar with the process. It is not difficult, just a little tricky, but if you push the firing pin inwards and slide its retaining plate downwards you can remove the spring and pin without any trouble and gently prise out the extractor, which is also held in position by the retainer plate. When you have cleaned out all the

powder residue and fouling (an old toothbrush and some toothpicks are invaluable timesavers), lightly oil all working and moving parts (pipe cleaners are the simplest way to get into the recesses). Reassemble in the reverse order, remembering to hold the plunger as you rotate the bushing.

While the weapon is stripped, never pull the trigger and allow the hammer to slam up against the frame - a mistake which can either raise a slight burr on the frame or fracture the hammer. Never allow the slide to slam forward either - unless there is a loaded magazine in position - as this stripping and feeding will cushion its forward passage. Failure to observe this rule will lead to avoidable wear and can damage the sear or hammer notch (the bent) beyond repair. Another bad habit, which is unfortunately very widespread, is to place a live round into the chamber, drop the slide and then insert the full magazine.

Normally the top round is pushed out of the magazine by the bottom of the breech face and rises up behind the extractor hook without setting up any stresses. When the first round is already chambered, however, the extractor is forced out sideways to ride over the rim, a manoeuvre for which it was never designed and which can either damage the case or, far worse, lead it to shear off. Little can be more useless in this world than a semi-auto without an extractor. This I found to my consternation during the course of a very minor firefight in Cyprus when I had it happen to me.

Chapter Nine: Basic Skills

Enough of the background and theory - now to the shooting proper. We will assume that you are now the legal owner of a viable combat weapon using a cartridge with the minimum stopping power of the .38 Special or the 9 mm Parabellum.

Until you have a modest familiarity with the basic grip, sighting, trigger squeeze and stance, you will be well advised to practise at home without firing a shot and to avoid the temptation of working from a holster too soon. Unless you wish to start a new fashion and own fourteen suits each with a hole in the front and back of the jacket and four holes in a corresponding number of trousers (as does one acquaintance of mine who omitted the step!) *unload* and put any live rounds away.

If you don's hold a handgun both correctly an consistently, you will never even approach its accuracy potential. Although target-shooting type accuracy is seldom needed in defensive situations, it is always far better to be over- rather than under-skilled.

The grip

Hold the pistol or revolver firmly so that it is a natural continuation of the arm when the wrist is locked in neutral. To get the feel of this position extend the thumb and fingers and with the other hand place the butt into this socket an close the hand. To control the recoil more effectively, place your hand as high up the butt as you can with an auto and as high as is

comfortable with a revolver. The vector of recoil in both cases is a direct line back from the barrel but, since you are holding below this line of force, the weapon will tend to pivot in your hand and the muzzle to rise. If your grip is very low, the recoil will have greater leverage and the muzzle will rise higher - a state of affairs which will slow up the second shot.

Your trigger finger, that is, in a normal hand your index finger, should not be pushed as far past the trigger as possible but should have the pad or at most some part outboard of the first joint doing the work. The further your finger protrudes to the left, the more likely you are to cause the muzzle to pull to the right (if you are right-handed) as you squeeze the trigger. Your grasp should be similar to a firm hand-shake, without whitening the knuckles.

The stance

Since we are not involved in the sport of target shooting but in the basic skill of defensive pistolcraft, we are not bound by rules or traditions. The principal difference between the two disciplines lies in our use of the other hand, both as a support and a recoil reducer. The style which, since its inception and rapid acceptance in the early fifties, has shown itself to be the most successful both on the range and in the street, was developed by a Californian peace officer and bears his name: the Weaver stance. It is the only system which will be taught in these pages.

The classic Weaver stance is marked by an erect body and head with no hint of the gunfighter's crouch. Feet are at about forty-five degrees to the target, the pistol brought up to eye height and the left arm bent. The torso should not be square onto the target but either following the line of the feet or inclining even more towards the target so that you will be shooting across your body. At this stage in your shooting career everything will be new and strange to you, whether you are doing it right or wrong. So, unless you have a cogent physical reason for not getting your Weaver right at the beginning, follow the book. As you progress in skill and knowledge you may make your own minor changes, but minor they should be.

Many shooters hold their right arm straight, while other leave it slightly flexed. Either style is considered to be correct, but I feel that the latter allows marginally better gun control I encourage my students in its use, for reasons which will become obvious in a moment.

The left hand should now be held out with the thumb vertical, the fingers horizontally extended to the right and the elbow hanging low. Into this socket place the right hand. Push forward gently with the right hand, pull backwards gently with the left hand and, thanks to the strong triangular position of your arms and the tension of the push-pull, you have built strength and steadiness - I find it hard to obtain sufficient forward pressure with a straight right arm. The forefinger of the left hand may be moved forward to curl around the trigger guard to give yourself more leverage. (Many combat pistols are modified to make this even more effective, although this technique is seldom used with a revolver.) The knuckles of your right hand should nest into the angle made between palm and second joint of the fingers of the left hand, which must retain its fingers-horizontal, palm-upright attitude; you should consciously stop yourself from rotating the left hand down towards the bottom of the butt or back to the wrist of the

shooting hand - a popular and almost useless celluloid misconception. The left thumb can be used to cock the hammer in single-action fire from a revolver. I use it as a crude sight with the top of any auto for very close and fast work when there is no time to use sights: if the target is to the right of the thumb and above the slide, it is in imminent danger. Do not let your thumbs press against the slide, since the resulting friction can slow down the slide sufficiently to cause stoppages.

Until your basic stances become second nature, there is a tendency to allow the left hand to grip with just the fingers and to allow its thumb to come around over the right thumb. With a revolver this is merely bad style and will result in a considerable decrease in recoil control, but with semi-auto the slide, on its rearward journey, may remove a large slice of your goodself as well.

The left elbow can be held from as low as possible - almost at right angles to the horizontal left hand (my preferred position) - to considerably higher, but not so high that a coach could not pass his horizontal arm under your right arm and over the bend of your left elbow. The low elbow will mean that, when you advance to a kneeling position and are shooting around barricades, you will not have to alter your basic stance.

How to aim

Now that you are feeling a little more familiar with holding your weapon we can progress to aiming. First, however, we must determine which is your master eye because you will find it easier to aim using it even if it means that, as a right-hander, you must bring the weapon further across the body and use the left eye. With both eyes open, point at some distinct object, and, without moving hand or head, close the right eye and see if your finger apparently moves off your chosen mark. Open the right eye and close the left. If your right eye is master, your finger will remain on target. Conversely, if it moves with your right eye open, your left is master. This determined, you will also be able to try shooting with both eyes open, which gives you both better depth perception and a far greater arc of vision. If you have too much trouble, partially close the weaker eye or, if you have to, close it altogether.

Every handgun which is suitable for self-defence will have a front- or foresight and a rear- or backsight and these are set at the factory to hit more or less in the right place with unknown ammunition at an unknown range - although, to be fair, a few makers do give this information together with a test target. In general you choose where you want to hit and then make certain that the firearm is aligned by placing the frontsight on that spot, with its tip in the centre of the U of the backsight and level with the shoulders.

In effect we therefore see this: (Figure of sights.)

In neither combat shooting nor in real life are you likely to be presented with a distinct aiming mark, unlike your target shooter, so you must learn to select an indistinct centre of mass and use that. At this stage, you must learn the golden rule of aiming which is to *concentrate on*

your frontsight. It is an inescapable fact that our eyes cannot focus on three objects, namely backsight, frontsight and target, at different distances at the same time. So concentrate and focus on the frontsight and allow the others to be slightly hazy.

Trigger control

Even if your basic stance and sighting are correct, you can still miss a target - or far worse, an opponent - if your trigger control is faulty. Fortunately, however, you can and should learn trigger control without firing a single round. David Westerhout, the Rhodesian who won the World Championship in 1977, proved this point in an experiment which he carried out with Army recruits. An intake was split at random, half going through normal basic training and ending up with the classification shoot, while the others did nothing but dry firing (that is, grip, aiming and trigger control without firing one live round). At the classification shoot, the second group proved that they had achieved the higher standard. Dry firing will not harm a weapon of quality but this rule does not apply to .22 Rimfire weapons whose firing pins will peen out the chamber wall until a round will not fit, or to some semi-autos, particularly those of Spanish origin. With these weapons the answer is to insert a fired case, to buy a snap-cap - a dummy round with a spring-loaded buffer - in place of the primer, or place a thin strip of leather or inner tube between the hammer and firing pin.

None of us is capable of holding a handgun completely still, which means that it may wander over the target. But, while the sights are indicating a hit in a vital area, an increasing pressure is applied to the trigger. Should the sights drift off that vital area, the trigger pressure is simply held until they are back on again when you continue with the squeeze until the weapon discharges. Whatever else you do, don't be tempted to say to yourself: 'Ah, beautiful, the sights are right on the button. Fire!' If you do this, your trigger squeeze will become a yank, your wrist will flex and you will pull your shot low, left of your intended mark. The golden rule of trigger control is *never* to know exactly when the discharge will take place. Just squeeze until it does, then follow through, trying to hold everything steady. If your Weaver is firm, if you concentrate on that frontsight and squeeze the trigger, you will have learned the basics of the craft and transferring them to the range will be no problem.

Between shots

Since you are still working without drawing from a holster, you have probably wondered what to do with the weapon between 'shots'. There is an unfortunate tendency to relax, switch off the mind completely, lower the muzzle, finger on the trigger and point totally unconsciously at the floor, your toes, or behind you at other people. You *must* know where that muzzle is pointing *all* the time. Both to discipline yourself and to learn a technique which will be invaluable should you ever have to cover one or more opponents until help arrives - which means that you may have to remain relaxed but instantly ready for some time - adopt the Ready position. *With a revolver,* lower the hammer and run your trigger finger along the outside of the trigger guard. *With an auto,* apply the safety, run your finger along the trigger guard and rest your right thumb on the safety lever. Then lower your arms until you can rest your elbows on

your hips, at the same time rotating the hands and piece, without losing your correct grip, so that the left hand is underneath. You will find that you are comfortable yet can regain your firing position in a fraction of a second without pointing at your own or anyone else's anatomy.

Now get in some more dry firing until you are confident that you have mastered these basics for, without them, you will never be effective. Concentrate on that frontsight and squeeze.

Chapter Ten: Of Holsters and Belts

Your choice of holster can, in extreme cases, lead to your demise in an armed confrontation. The holster should neither allow the weapon to fall out during struggle, nor have such a cumbersome or inefficient securing device that you cannot get it undone, nor be able to move from its original position. Cheap holsters are prone to most of these vices - and one or two others as well - so, if you value your life, don't count the pennies when making your purchase.

The requirements of a good carry holster are that it will hold the weapon securely - preferably without any retaining straps - remain in position on the body and offer acceptable concealment with maximum accessibility an comfort. This last, with one exception, means the use of firm, even stiff, leather. Avoid the plethora of cheap (and sometimes not so cheap) holsters which are often advertised as being multi-purpose, shoulder, cross-draw or right-side marvels which are invariably concocted from thin, flimsy leather or high-grade cardboard.

As a general rule, always try to carry your handgun in the same area regardless of what clothes or holster you are wearing. The comedy value of a quick, mental or physical search of your own body, in the attempt to locate your gun will be completely lost on you as your time runs out. Your main options are either the shoulder holster, the cross-draw or the strongside, ie, the same side as your strong or shooting hand, and they all have their merits.

Types of holster

The shoulder holster

The shoulder holster doubtless owes much of its popularity to its Hollywood 'Tough Guy' aura. However, being close to major sweat glands, the leather may smell and the piece rust very quickly, so that daily cleaning will be vital. This type of rig, however, is excellent for use in the bush - particularly if you are also carrying a long gun - and is often a solution for girls when worn under a cardigan or loose jacket. It does have its specialised role to play, particularly if you spend considerable time driving a car, when it stays out of the way of seat belts and is instantly available. I find the best type of shoulder holster for the short-barreled revolver is one which holds the barrel uppermost and uses the rear of the trigger guard and heavy elastic as its retention system. The draw is made by grasping the butt, which is not far above the belt line, and pulling the top strap against the elastic, which stretches an allows the guard to slide out.

The best type for either larger revolvers or semi-automatic pistols is the spring shoulder holster. This retains the piece either by tension around the cylinder or over the slide. It is drawn by a forward and downward pivoting sweep - reasonably fast and well concealed if you have an understanding tailor, who will cut the scye of your coat to fit.

The cross-draw holster

Not so long ago the cross-draw holster enjoyed little or no popularity among educated shooters. This was largely because it was considered difficult to stop the horizontal swing of the piece on the chosen target without overrunning it. Today, however, more and more combat shooters are adopting the cross-draw holster both for range and street use. There are three basic types of carry holster - the most modern is the so-called 'Pancake', which holds the butt well above the belt (very little lower than the shoulder rig) an without the need for the harness, making the piece reasonably accessible even with a buttoned jacket. Alternatives are inside the trouser band itself - using a soft holster, preferably with a spring around the mouth to make reholstering easier - or outside on the belt. Unfortunately you will probably need some positive method of retention for the latter since the weight of the butt, particularly with a semi-auto, tends to make the piece insecure. Another alternative is to use the special grips or hooks which fit directly onto the weapon, allowing you to slip it into the waistband without the danger of it slipping down inside. I don't recall seeing these available for left-handers. It is of course quite possible to wear a handgun butt forward on the strong side - the so-called Cavalry Draw - but it does mean that, as you make the draw, you sweep the muzzle across most of your own vital organs.

The strongside holster

At this early stage in your training, I strongly recommend that you adopt a strongside holster which is safer since the muzzle is never pointed at your rear or side. By all means change over later when you have gained both experience and total familiarity with practical pistolcraft.

The one thing you must remember is that the better concealed your weapon is, the slightly less accessible it will be too. You will be very fortunate to find the ideal holster (if there is one) immediately - most experienced shooters have two or three designs for different uses. The inside-the-pants rig, as made in this country by El Paso under the name of a 'CID Special', is worn only if you are wearing a short jacket or shirt to cover the butt. With a longer jacket you can use either a skeleton holster, such as the Yacqui Slide or the Off-Duty/Secret Agent types, which can be left inconspicuously on the belt if circumstances dictate that you must put your weapon into a safe place during working hours, at a party, etc. It is not usual for any of these holsters to have a retention device and, personally, I have never found one to be necessary.

The full leather strongside holster, depending on design, can hold the butt very high, as with the Pancake, or down at belt level which is easier to use. If you feel you want a retainer, try to find a rig using a device such as a nut and bolt for squeezing the leather itself to increase friction rather than straps with press-studs which don't come undone or get in the way. If,

however, you do choose a holster which uses a retaining strap, make certain that you practise every draw with the strap in position; it is pointless practicing without the strap when you normally carry the piece positively secured. For street use an ordinary elastic band can be used and broken during the draw. For undercover use you will find it more convenient if the butt is angled forwards until the centre of gravity is more or less vertical, presenting the butt to the hand and adding security.

The plastic Snik-type holster is a modern development from which the draw is made not by lifting but by pushing through the open front. Many people are completely satisfied with them. For my own part, however, I have seen too many weapons dropped from them to like them, and I have seen at least two premature discharges into the shooter's own leg, although, to be fair, I have no way of assessing whether it was the design or the shooter at fault.

If you value your own nether regions, don't choose a holster which exposes the trigger at all. In a hurry, either in training or on the street, you may get things a little confused and pull the trigger far too soon with shattering results!

Belts and pouches

The wider your belt, the more comfortable you will be and if you are not comfortable there is always the temptation to leave your piece at home. Some years ago I was urgently in need of the firearm I had just taken off because it was too hot to wear a jacket - a mistake which allowed a knife-wielding robber to get away with the swag!

Another item which should be chosen carefully is a spare magazine pouch. This is best worn on the weak side, upside down, with the bullets pointing forwards, which is all very complicated until you learn the correct technique for a fast magazine change. Again, for maximum concealment, you can position the pouch inside the trousers or have a single or double pouch which slides onto the belt.

When it comes to the question of how and where to wear their gun, women have two major problems - their delightful shape and, of course, fashion. The waisted female form tends to force the butt into the body which results in discomfort and a slower draw. On the combat range this is normally overcome by wearing the gunbelt at hip level, but this solution is impractical in the street. When outer clothing permits, a simple answer is a cross-draw or shoulder rig. The handbag, fitted with a special holster to keep the piece separate, is not an ideal solution, because the bag itself is often the criminal's target. A solution would be, of course, to have an endless stainless steel cable inside and around the bottom of the bag and worn across the body, but this is unfashionable and hence not readily accepted.

Good leather is expensive an almost indestructible if given a little periodic care. Just the occasional application of shoe polish will help and, once a year, a dressing with a good preservative will keep it in tip-top shape. Remember, however, that you are not trying to soften the leather. With use you may find that even a good holster will become floppy and not grip the

piece. If this happens, soak it in warm water for a few minutes, unload the piece and oil it lightly, form the leather back around it and let them dry. Place the weapon in a plastic bag if you are worried about rusting. Don't, as one impatient friend did, pop the holster in a hot oven and forget about it!

Chapter Eleven: The Draw

Since a handgun is a defensive tool, it stands to reason that in most cases the opposition will have the initiative. You must regain the initiative as quickly as possible by being able to get into action quickly. A fast, clean draw is therefore imperative and this means practice and lots of it. Even more important is to remember that the fastest draw possible is when the piece is already in your hand, which is exactly where it should if a situation seems to be loaded against you - if, for example, you are a flat dweller and the bell rings when you aren't expecting a caller; as you get our of your car into a dimly lit, lonely area; when your husband or friend is changing a tyre at night; at any time in fact when you are vulnerable. This does not mean that, at such times, we should all wave firearms about. This would give considerable offence to the innocent and earn you a most undesirable reputation as a 'flasher'. Simply hold the butt normally and slide a copy of a newspaper or magazine under the thumb. The innocent will merely see the paper, while the ungodly will have but the shortest of time to appreciate their error.

The sequence of the draw itself can be divided as follows: the removal of the piece from the holster, a definite punch directly at the intended target during which time the safety catch is pushed off, the weak hand 'collected' and used to stop the forward movement, and the Weaver stance adopted. Speed comes with practice not with a conscious determination to effect a lightning draw - a determination which only too frequently leads to beating your own reflexes and capability and putting a bullet into your own leg.

Let's start this lesson at home with your piece unloaded, your holster on your strong side more or less over the hip bone and your coat off. Only when you have mastered this stage should you go on to drawing from under a jacket. The main trouble with learning to shoot without an instructor breathing down your neck is that it is easy to adopt a bad habit unknowingly. So make haste slowly.

First and most important - do *not* touch the safety catch while the weapon is in the holster or until the muzzle is above your weak hand. Owners of revolvers are often tempted to thumb back the hammer as soon as possible, in which case they run the same risk of shooting themselves, not their opponent. Stand erect and relaxed at an angle of forty-five degrees to your target. Keep your eyes focused on the target - at no time during the draw must your eyes leave the spot where you wish the bullets to hit. You *must know* where the butt is and your hand must move to it instinctively. To begin with, hold your hands in a relaxed handclasp just above your belt buckle, then move one hand directly onto the butt with the trigger finger extended *outside* the trigger guard or preferably along the holster which, as we discussed earlier, should cover the trigger. The weak hand should move forward and up, ready to receive the punch. Practise this until your grip on the butt is correct every time. Continue by pulling upwards on the piece until

it just clears the leather. Rotate your wrist into its correct alignment with the forearm and the whole unit is then punched directly forwards and upwards. Once the muzzle is past the weak hand, the safety catch is lowered by the thumb of the shooting hand and the forefinger assumes its place on the trigger ready to squeeze as soon as the sights are aligned. This punch gives you direction. In a really close-range encounter where time is vital, you would fire as you locked in without sighting. This may be a fraction of a second slower than a one-handed shot from the hip but is considerably more certain of hitting.

Do's and Don'ts

Do stand upright and move your boy as little as possible - a common fault here is to lower the left shoulder. Do raise the piece to the level of your eyes - don't lower your head. Don't be tempted by the gunman's crouch, knees bent, tail stuck out like a Muscovy duck, which, despite its James Bond image, is slower and severely restricts your arc of fire. This position is often made even less effective because pupils are taught to fire in front of the navel or below the shoulder by rough alignment. As the crouch is adopted with the feet square onto the target, should you decide to change to a Weaver stance you then have to change the position of your feet. The same goes for the outdated and considerably less efficient Isosceles position, where both arms are pushed straight out in front making recoil control very inefficient.

If you are carrying a revolver you will have to decide during the draw whether to fire single action - in which case the weak-hand thumb can cock the hammer - or if the situation is more urgent to fire double action. Since your second shot will almost certainly be double action, to aid the decision-making process it may well be wise to use double action for any target within ten metres.

As you gain smoothness so you will gain speed. To vary these home training sessions and to give yourself versatility, practise the draw starting with your strong hand in a pocket as if you were getting out your keys, while lighting a cigarette, from the surrender position, while scratching your back, tying a shoe lace or sitting down. The possibilities are endless and will help to reduce the correct grip to a reflex action.

To begin with don't dry fire at the end of the drawing stroke as you have quite enough to worry about in getting the stroke right. As you gain proficiency run the two exercises together, remembering to concentrate on the frontsight and to squeeze the trigger.

Chapter Twelve: Safety Equipment

Now that you are ready to go down to the range for some shooting practice, you must add to your equipment two vital items for ear and eye protection.

Even if you do only a small amount of shooting without either ear plugs or headphone-like protectors, you will suffer permanent hearing loss. Come away from the range just once with ringing ears and you are on your way to deafness. The best commercially available ear plugs are

those made by Norton or Lee Sonics, while all the available earmuffs are acceptable. I prefer those which fit over rather than behind the head since they tend to stay in place better during assault courses.

Even factory-made ammunition can - and does on occasion for a variety of reasons beyond your control - develop excessive pressures or split a case. If so, a stream of incandescent gases and molten metals can be directed at you and your eyes. It is a very wise precaution to wear safety glasses or to have hardened lenses put into your glasses.

Trigger shoes

While not strictly under the category of Safety Equipment - the opposite in fact being nearer the truth - this seems to be the best time to discuss trigger shoes. A trigger shoe is a means of enlarging the existing trigger so that the trigger pull is apparently reduced because the finger is applying pressure over a larger area. For the target shooter a trigger shoe can be a very real aid to higher scores if his weapon is not already equipped with an oversized trigger. On a combat weapon, however, it can be the cause of putting a series of holes down your own leg! Most trigger shoes extend the trigger sideways far enough for it to project past the trigger guard which is thus left guarding nothing. If you holster the weapon without applying the safety catch, or it slips to the 'off' position (it does this sometimes without any danger, provided you keep your finger off the trigger until the end of the drawing stroke), then push the piece deeper into the rig. The projecting shoe will snag on the leather, then bang!

If you decide that you must have a trigger shoe, file it down to a lesser width than the guard, chamfer the edges a little to help it clear any other snag and throw it away as soon as possible.

Remember that you are the most vital item of safety equipment available and provided that your brain is in control - complete control - your weapon will be safe too.

Chapter Thirteen: Basic Training Course

The standard target which you can make or buy is the International Practical Shooting Confederation's 'Option' design. This features a body 45 cm (18 in) wide and 60 cm (24 in) high with a 15 cm (6 in) square head, bringing the overall measurement to 76 cm (30 in). On the centreline and 38 cm (15 in) below the top of the head, describe a faint 25 cm (10 in) circle. This is your 'V' or vital area. The colour of the target is important - it should be neither black, white, nor any other vivid colour and, later on in your development, it could well be camouflaged. Seldom will your opponent's clothing be distinct or present a definite aiming point, so learn to pick out the centre of a mass and hit that.

As your shooting prowess improves you may be tempted to reduce the size of the 'V' ring but this, however, displays a fundamental error in outlook. When that 25 cm circle ceases to become a challenge in a given time you must either reduce the time limit or increase the number

of shots. Your one objective is to place the bullet inside that circle regardless of its or your position.

The most common mistake made by both shooters and coaches alike is to enforce strict time limits on those not yet capable of attaining them. The net result is that the student adopts the 'Fire now' technique, invariably leading to a flinch which throws the shots low and left (in the case of a right-hander). While, through practice, you can improve on your level of competence, you can build nothing on incompetence. The best way is to make haste slowly, improving on each standard of attainment until you have reached your goal. The first level for which you train will be one shot in one-and-a-half seconds at seven metres with eight of the ten shots in the 'V' ring, the others close by. You should start with no time limit at ll. Then try five seconds, the four-and-a-half until, almost unexpectedly and without undue fuss and trauma, you will find that the time limit is no problem and that you have only to sharpen up the accuracy a little.

How to correct a flinch

If you think you are falling into the habit of the 'Fire now' flinch, which can become so bad that you miss the target altogether at a mere seven metres, enlist the aid of a friend. Ask him to remove your piece from its holster while you remain facing the target. Instruct him either to remove the round in the chamber, apply the safety and to reholster it or to replace it loaded after a suitable pause and clanging of slides. Don't try to work out if it's loaded or not. Just draw and fire as usual. If you are flinching it will be highly visible to both of you as the hammer falls on the empty chamber, or fired case in a revolver, and you flex your wrist downwards. If you have a flinching problem, you can only make it worse by trying to continue with your training programme. You must simply backtrack until you have it beaten and then very slowly build up speed again. To correct a bad case you may require several hours and several hundred rounds of this loaded/unloaded training as well as dry firing at home. Focusing consciously on the frontsight an concentrating on the trigger squeeze should, however, have you back in the 'V' in short order. It will take considerable will-power but work your way back up to your previous level slowly to make absolutely certain that you don't backslide.

On the range

From the moment you step onto the range you must make it a habit to know exactly how many rounds you have left at any time. To shoot a piece empty must be considered a vice which could easily get you killed. Even in training, always start with your weapon loaded to its full capacity. Imagine the consequences of getting accustomed to loading a Browning Hi-Power with, say, six rounds instead of fourteen and then reacting to your training in the middle of a rumpus by dumping a half-full magazine and reloading your weapon while axe-wielding ugly is closing in fast!

To break the monotony of plugging away at the one shot in one-and-a-half-seconds' goal, back off to twenty-five metres and start working towards one shot in two-and-a-half seconds. It

is highly unlikely that you will ever need a handgun at such a range if you have the confidence in your ability to hit targets from twenty-five or even fifty metres, then more realistic combat ranges of four or five metres are so much the simpler.

The double tap

When you have progressed to reasonably consistent performances in the time limit at seven metres you are ready to learn what is probably the most important single technique - the double tap. We already know that using a firearm is a last resort - when it is a matter of your life or his - and at such time your survival is paramount. We also know that, even with a solid torso hit, one's chances of switching off an opponent run from fifty per cent with the 9 mm Parabellum and .38 Special to ninety per cent plus with the .45 and .44 Magnum. This still gives your opponent a very real chance of stopping you. Don't think that two shots of fifty per cent probability will be worth one hundred: they will certainly be worth more than fifty per cent but how much more is unknown. Except during some basic exercises when you are learning other skills, your training is aimed at making you deliver two fast shots as a matter of principle and, if they don't appear to have immediate effect, to repeat the process.

While you have been firing single shots your Weaver stance has been useful but for the double tap it becomes absolutely vital an you will never achieve success without it. You start by taking a deliberate aim at the 'V' ring and squeezing off a very controlled and correct first shot, followed immediately by a second, fired without further reference to the sights. Usually your second shot will print considerably higher up and sometimes over the target, proving that your weak hand is not controlling the recoil. Increase the rearward pull and try again until you have found out how much push/pull you need to control that muzzle climb. Now you must practise until you achieve the correct amount of tension instinctively and gradually work up to two shots in under two seconds at seven metres. Should you start off with your second shot low, then decrease that weak-hand pull slightly.

How to reload

The revolver

Since you are going to be expending ammunition at an alarming rate and will be reloading frequently, now is the logical time to learn how to do it properly - that is, fast and sure.

For most revolvers chambering the .38 Special or larger cartridges, quick loaders are available which dump six new cartridges at a time into an empty cylinder. They are considerably faster than trying to reload round by round but it takes a great deal of practice to perfect the movement. Unfortunately those bullet designs which are most combat effective, namely the full- and semi-wadcutters, cause the most problems by snagging on the chamber edges, while the round-nosed or conical shapes guide themselves in.

Stand in your normal Weaver stance, hammer down, and give yourself the command 'Go'. Actuate the cylinder catch with the right thumb and at the same time slip the left hand so that the fingers push the cylinder out. Your right hand now moves away to grasp a quick loader, while the left turns the barrel vertical. From this position the thumb pushes downwards on the ejector ro to clear the empty cases. The piece is rotated by the left hand to muzzle slightly down in time to meet the loader, which is inserted, stripped and dropped. The cylinder is swung closed by the left hand as the right grasps the butt an you lock back into your Weaver. Fortunately you can practise this technique at home but you will be well advised to use dummy rounds since more than one student has got carried away and pulled the trigger on a live cartridge! When you are fairly proficient in daylight, practise blind-folded or in the dark.

The semi-automatic

The owner of a semi-auto - providing he has a spare magazine on his person and assuming that the weapon was never equipped with a magazine safety or has had it removed - can reload his piece in less than one-and-a-half seconds without taking eyes away from the opposition while retaining the ability to fire the round in the chamber. In an encounter you may be forced to run your gun dry. Normally, however, you should try to reload before you exhaust the magazine. Do this during a natural break in the proceedings or immediately after the affray and before you make certain that the opposition is disarmed and harmless. It is never safe to assume that because a man is prostrate he is no longer a threat!

On the command 'Go', flick the piece slightly to the left so that your right depresses the magazine release button. Meanwhile your left hand, with forefinger extended, sweeps down to the pouch, which should be holding the magazine upside down with the projectile facing your front and at least one-third exposed above the leather. Your forefinger will stop the swing and you simply close thumb and fingers and reverse the movement. The forefinger will automatically find the other hand and guide the magazine into its well, whereupon the magazine is heeled home by the lower hand and the hand rotated back into the Weaver stance. A piece of leather or rubber 3-6 mm thick glued to the base of the magazine will aid the heeling process and virtually guarantee that the magazine is forced home far enough to lock into place. It will also cushion the magazine's fall during training sessions. If the ground is really mucky, you can still practise by dropping the magazine into the waiting left hand which sweeps down to touch the thigh or general position of the pouch and brings the same magazine back again.

Speed loading exercise

The following is a really good home exercise: Place a few pillows on the floor. Make certain that the piece is empty - although you need at least one round (preferably a dummy) in the magazine. Work towards seating the new magazine before the ejected magazine has hit the pillow.

When you can draw and fire two rounds, reload and fire another double tap in less than five seconds, you will know that you are getting fairly proficient. It goes without saying that this

exercise is not a success if more than two shots are out of the 'V'.

Range exercises

So far you have fired at two distances only, namely seven and twenty-five metres, in one-and-a-half and two-and-a-half seconds respectively. In the next exercise you must learn how long you need to place two shots into the 'V' at different ranges. If your draw is good, you may need only one second at three metres and three at twenty-five metres. You must develop a mental clock which allows you the minimum time to score at any range. Set up one target at twelve metres, another at eighteen and a third at twenty-five metres. Stand so that you can see them all. You already know your capability at seven metres, so now draw and place two shots on the first target. Not only will your first shot be slower but the follow-up will be slower too. The unaimed double tap is a close-range technique. Progress back until you have set your clock, then place two shots on each target as part of a string, taking each target in turn. Once you have got the idea, you can spread the targets out sideways so that you must also traverse. To do this effectively your upper body must not change position - the turn must come from the waist and hips. The common fault here is to overrun the target. So learn to stop the swing and align the sights before firing. Near misses have no survival value.

The kneeling position

A very useful position which is quick to adopt, easy to leave and which both aids accuracy and makes you a smaller target either in the open or behind cover, is kneeling. (At close ranges you would probably waste valuable time in taking cover or adopting any position when your sole goal is to recover the initiative by stopping the opposition immediately.)

Adopting the kneeling position with a holstered weapon requires a little co-ordination and the use of a few normally under-exercised muscles. The sequence can be broken down into two distinct movements. Start square onto the target with your feet in the 'at ease' position. On the command 'one' advance your left foot about one pace and simultaneously drop your right hand onto the butt. (You may find it easier to bring the advancing foot into the centre line of the body and to aim the toes at the target.) On the command 'two' drop into a kneeling position without moving the feet, at the same time drawing the piece and locking into your normal Weaver stance - except that the left elbow is now supported on the left knee. The fact that you do not change the position of your arms at all while kneeling is another good reason for learning the low elbow Weaver. Many shooters adopt a very high kneeling position and fail to support that elbow, thereby robbing the position of its greatest advantage. Since physiques differ markedly, there are some people who just cannot adapt to kneeling while others are comfortable sitting on the right heel, others sit on the side of the foot or throw the right leg backwards and rest on the inside of the leg. At first you will have to experiment with the length of your step and the various permutations but persevere - it's a most useful position. Now try five shots standing at twenty-five metres, then five kneeling and compare the group sizes. Kneeling makes it far easier and very little slower since you can expect to get away a well-aimed shot in three or three-and-a-half seconds at the most.

90- and 180-degree turns

One of the more amusing spectacles on a combat range is an exercise involving either 90- or 180-degree turns towards the target performed by amateurs and highly-trained shooters side by side. The amateur, either airborne or deeply involved in an intricate, high-speed pirouette, looks like a 'whirling dervish' next to the trained shooter who makes two flowing, co-ordinated movements and finishes steady and locked onto his target.

Start in the 'at ease' position with your weak shoulder pointing at the target. On the word 'one' drop the foot nearest to the target a step backwards and grasp the butt. On 'two' pivot on the balls of the feet and complete the drawing stroke as you turn towards the target, and lock into your normal Weaver. With practice the pause between the stages is almost imperceptible but, to begin with, make them pronounced.

Now start with your strong side towards the target. On 'one' grasp the butt and advance the weakside leg one pace. On 'two' pivot without the feet leaving the ground and complete the draw. This time you will arrive in a reverse Weaver stance since you will be leading with your strongside leg but you will be just as firm and, after a few practice runs, just as comfortable. When you graduate to Assault Courses and Jungle Lanes, you will frequently find that they have been cunningly contrived so that you cannot adopt a standard stance as per the book, so start learning versatility now.

You will undoubtedly have asked yourself why in these turns you don't move your strongside leg first. The answer is that, since your weapon is on that hip, a distinct movement such as leg forwards or backwards may well move the butt sufficiently for you, if not to miss completely, at least to grip it incorrectly which is almost as bad.

The 180-degrees turn is very similar and is also broken down into two movements. Stand with your back to the target. Since the next exercise, El Presidente, starts from the hands-up position, you may as well practise it now although later you can and should experiment with other hand positions. On 'one' grasp the butt, at the same time swinging the weakside leg behind you, placing the toes outside your strong leg. On 'two' pivot on the toes and ball of the strongside foot and complete the draw. Once again you will find yourself locked into your Weaver.

El Presidente

El Presidente is a training exercise developed by Jeff Cooper during one of his training courses in South America and it is a valuable guide to a student's progress. Many shooters make the error of practicing this course *ad nauseam* until they are really polished performers, like robots in fact. Rather shoot El Presidente occasionally and, if you keep track of your times and scores, you will have a fair indication of your advancement. Place three targets with a one-metre spacing between edges on the ten-metre line. Stand with your back to them, hands up. On the start signal turn and place two shots on each target. Reload and fire another two shots on each. I have seen twelve 'Vs' scored in 7.3 seconds and the average really good shooter will drop only

a few points in eight. When you can do it in ten seconds, with perhaps eight 'Vs' and no dropped shots, then you are ready to graduate from the basic course.

Prone positions

At longer ranges you may well have time to make yourself a smaller target. If there is no bullet-proof cover, you may choose to go prone - a position which also lends itself to use for cover even the kerb of a road. There are at least four positions loosely called 'prone', although supine and foetal better describe two of them. I will describe them all and advise that you try them all and then specialise in two.

My favourite prone position is with my body in line with the target and my left ankle crossed over my right. This turns my body a little to the right, which makes it easy to lower my right cheek onto my right biceps so avoiding the strain of having to hold up my head. My arms are in a Weaver position, although the left arm is now flat on the ground. The lower edge of the weak hand is on the ground while the right is clear. If you rest your right hand too, you may get unpleasantly pinched by the recoiling piece. This is also my chosen position if I am testing the accuracy potential of a new load, and wish to remove as much human error as possible. Some people are quite unable to achieve this cheek-on-biceps position. If this applies to you, try to retain your Weaver stance rather than shoving both hands out into the Isosceles.

The quickest way to assume this particular prone position is to start standing, once again with your feet at ease, facing the target. On the command 'one', grasp the butt, bend the weakside knee until it is almost on the ground and balance yourself by placing your weak hand on the ground. On command 'two', complete the draw and lower yourself into the prone position. You should work for one shot in between four and five seconds at fifty metres.

An alternative which enjoys some popularity in the USA and may be a little easier to learn, is to lie at ninety degrees to the target on your strong side with your feet in any comfortable manner and with your head and arms in the same position as described above. There are two faults which make this side position somewhat undesirable. The first is that you take up a considerable amount of space on a firing line, and the second - considerably more serious - that you expose a large area of your carcass to oncoming fire.

A technique which is popular among Rhodesians is the supine position with knees raised and the weapon supported between the thighs. Care must be taken, however, to ensure that you don't make a sudden modification to yourself! On the start signal, grip the butt and squat. Then, supporting yourself with the weak hand, draw your weapon and roll your body backwards, in order to avoid the danger of pointing the muzzle at your legs. Practise this position at first with an empty piece.

Finally, we have the full foetal position. In this position you lie on your strong side with your knees drawn up and the weapon held horizontally between them. You will have to work out a new aiming mark as well since the piece is unlikely to shoot to point of aim when held

sideways. I suggest that you try drawing as you squat, then flop over onto your side. Once again, to start with practise with an unloaded weapon.

More exercises

A few years ago a New York city policeman, Jim Cirillo, was involved in a shoot-out in a supermarket. In a short space of time he had dropped three 'perpetrators' as the NYPD rather quaintly call their criminals. There was nothing really remarkable in this except that as they tried to make for the door, one only barely exposed hid head abode a gondola while the other two were partially masked by the cashier. Asked how long the engagement had lasted Cirillo replied, 'Three seconds!' He was then asked how he knew so exactly and his reply was, 'I've spent so much time on the combat range, I ought to know'.

Cirillo's hostage shoot

To simulate this situation on the range, place two targets next to each other on the ground. Superimpose another down the centre and wire them together. You can further identify the centre target as the hostage by taping a blindfold across its head or drawing a cross on its body. Place the ensemble on a frame at the seven-metre line. At ninety degrees and ten metres off, place another target on which only a head shot will score. One shot on each target (except of course on the luckless hostage) in three seconds including the draw is par time. Shots through the hostage do not count as a hit on the hostile behind. If you see that you have indeed shot the hostage, you must shoot at the hostile again, otherwise you will incur penalties for both the hostage and a miss. If you buy IPSC targets, you will notice that there are two concentric circles embossed or printed thereon: the 35.4 cm circle which we have already discussed and one of 32 cm (12 in) diameter. The scoring system now used internationally was developed by a Rhodesian Airways captain, Tony Weeks, in the early 70s and is known as the African Count. It rewards not (as many people erroneously believe) those cartridges which produce the greatest recoil but those which in a life-or-death situation are proven to be the most effective. These are known as Major Calibres, namely the .45 Long Cold, the .45 ACP, the .45 Webley cartridges, the .44 Magnum and Special, the .41 Magnum and the .357 Magnum when loaded to maximum. These major calibres score 5 points for a 'V', 4 for inner and 3 for a shot elsewhere. The head is normally considered as a 3 unless the particular course of fire calls for shots to the head. The minor calibres, the 9 mm P, the .38 Special and possibly the .38 Smith & Wesson, score 5, 3, 2 for the same areas. There is a move, as this is written, to change major scoring to 5, 3, 2 and minor to 5, 2, 1, making accuracy of prime importance.

Standards to be achieved

Curb your enthusiasm and make certain that you have learned your basics before moving on. There are already far too many potentially fine shots floundering about in a morass of mediocrity because they are trying to learn their basic skills as they go along. When you can consistently get a sixty or seventy per cent score, within the following time limits, then you are out of kindergarten:

1 shot standing, in 1.5 secs from 7 m 6 times.
1 shot standing, in 2.5 secs from 25 m 6 times.
1 shot kneeling, in 4 secs from 35 m 6 times.
1 shot lying, in 5.5 secs from 50 m 6 times.
2 shots, starting strongside on, in 3 secs from 10 m 3 times.
2 shots, starting weakside on, in 3 secs from 10 m 3 times.
El Presidente once.
Cirillo's Hostage shoot once.

Did I say, out of kindergarten? Well, if you want a fair chance of staying alive on the street, put on your jacket and practise until you can repeat those exercises *in the same times!*

Now you will see the reason for commencing a considerable amount of your training and exercises with your hands loosely clasped in front of you - in this position you are ready for action without signaling your intentions or being in the least belligerent should trouble appear to be in the offing. The weak hand is ideally situated to pull the jacket away, should you be wearing a cross-draw or shoulder rig, while the hooked little finger of the strong hand is custom-designed to engage the jacket and throw it backwards to clear the butt if you are carrying your weapon on that side. You may find that you get a cleaner sweep of the jacket if you carry a bunch of keys or even a spare magazine in the strongside pocket, but, whatever you do on the range, do on the street as well.

Hip shooting

To many people, combat shooting is epitomised by one or more shots being fired one-handed from the hip, often at extravagant distances and very few courses pass by without a student asking when he is to be initiated into this last great mystery of the craft. Their chagrin is manifest when they are told that if there is time, a few minutes might be spent on it.

Certainly there is a place for both one-handed and unaimed shots in combat shooting, but when you consider that a reasonably competent practitioner can draw and fire two or three shots, using the low-handed hold and hit a standard figure target with all of them at three metres in a second, give or take a tenth, then the one-handed hip shot is seen in perspective as the solution to the ultra-close-range confrontation, when you are either holding off your assailant or his rush has brought him well within two metres of you. The time taken to raise the piece from hip level to a solid half-extended two-handed grip at sternum level may be as much as a tenth of a second slower, but by then you are able to see the gun in your peripheral vision and can subconsciously align the top of the piece with the target's 'V' ring, be it cardboard or animate; there is absolutely no reason to attempt this James Bond type shot if the opposition is more than two metres away and you will be but wasting time and ammunition if you practise this evolution over three - just remember that you are learning to shoot to save your life, not to be a fairground performer. One day, a few years ago, a visiting showman, who could draw and fire a blank from his highly modified Colt Peacemaker in .23 of a second, was invited out to a Combat Club and there had considerable trouble in hitting the target at all with a bullet - his times were minuscule as was

his score and survival-potential but when he slowed down to mid .6s and started to hit, he was only marginally better than the average club member. Speed without accuracy is valueless.

As a starting point, with a target three metres away, start your drawing stroke or punch and fire as soon as you think that the muzzle bears and work closer until you are sufficiently skilled to hold the target on the shoulder or around the neck with the weak hand and to draw and fire with the other without fear of hitting yourself; but to begin with, practise by lifting the weak hand well away as you make the draw. Now repeat the three-metre stage and grip the piece in your standard Weaver clasp, but bring the piece midway between the hip and your normal fully aimed stance and try again; at first make the drawing stroke and consciously pause to check the alignment of the piece in your peripheral vision before firing and very shortly you will be placing your shots with more accuracy in the same or only slightly more time. To test yourself and to gain a measure of your own ability, you will need access to targets which turn towards you and then flick back after a definite time, but as a general rule if you have time to draw your piece, you have a little more time to punch it further out and thus gain considerably greater accuracy in less training time. One training exercise, which was quickly laughed into limbo, read, one shot, in one second, holding the piece below shoulder level, firing by rough alignment. Those of us who could, naturally brought the piece up to eye level and aimed, and the same must apply in a defensive situation, if you have the time: *aim.*

When you have worked yourself up to this standard, don't waste all your time, money and effort becoming complacent. Even if all you want to do is retain this basic degree of skill, you must still practise regularly.

Chapter Fourteen: South African Practical Shooting Association

The sport of practical pistol shooting is a very good way in which not only to practise your new skills but also to test your ability against others. If there is no available club, it may well be worth your while to gather together a few like-minded citizens and form your own.

The sport is governed in South Africa by the South African Practical Shooting Association (SAPSA) (PO Box 23933, Joubert Park 2044) and by several provincial associations. SAPSA will on request supply you with full details of how to set up a club, together with sample constitutions, range plans and equipment lists. Affiliation to the Association gives you the right to participate in competitions and covers you or a third party with up to R200.000 insurance cover. The SAPSA is an autonomous body, empowered to issue Springbok colours, which tests aspirant range officers and instructors and issues certificates to successful candidates.

The SAPSA is affiliated to the International Practical Shooting Confederation (IPSC), which controls the sport world-wide. It was my privilege to be the South African representative at the Columbia Conference in 1976, during which the IPSC was founded.

Initially, you and a couple of friends may decide that all this sounds too high-powered for you and decide to go it alone. Even so you will be well advised to adopt the following

SAPSA safety rules and to enforce them rigidly.

Safety Rules

The only alternative to strict range discipline is an accident.

1. The Range Officer has complete authority.

2. The Range Officer may declare any weapon or holster to be unsafe and ban it from the range, until he and the Safety Committee are satisfied that their use be safe.

3. No firearm may be unholstered or passed around for inspection off the firing line or on the premises unless the Range Officer's permission has been granted.

4. On the firing line, no weapon may be touched until the Range Officer so commands.

5. Point a firearm down range only and then only at that which you are prepared to see shot or destroyed.

6. No liquor or persons who have consumed any alcoholic beverage are allowed on the range.

7. No trigger shoe may protrude beyond the width of the trigger guard.

In addition, a Club must decide if its members are forbidden to carry a piece loaded, except when actually on the firing line or more logically if they may carry 'cocked and locked' at all times. A reasonable precaution is to make any newcomer or guest, not known to the Range Officer, and any student undergoing basic instruction unload and carry empty until the RO or Coach is satisfied that they are totally competent.

Chapter Fifteen: Advanced Practical Pistolcraft

The sport of practical pistol shooting has, over the last few years, strayed well away from its founder's principles. At provincial and national competition level it has tended to develop into overcontrolled, highly practiced events favouring those with more money and time to practise at the expense of initiative and instant reaction to the challenge. Having said that, there are many clubs that, within the sporting framework, still demand that one shoots as if one's life depended on it. Your goal, too, must be to set up situations that force the acquisition of new knowledge and new experiences, for only in meeting and overcoming challenges can you advance further. Whatever you do, don't do the other man's thinking for him; by all means set up a course so that each participant must do what you want, but don't be at all surprised when some bright spark does the totally unexpected and wins.

Your basic exercises gave you the basic skills of survival with virtually no application. Now you should learn to use them. The most popular types of match are the Assault course, the Jungle Lane, the Speed Shoot, or the Man against Man. Depending on your ingenuity, you need never do the same thing twice unless the second time is to correct faults.

Assault Course

On the Assault Course the shooter starts in a particular place, standing, sitting or lying down. On the start signal, he has to clear his immediate area and to advance. He advances around, over or through various obstacles shooting in any number of positions at targets placed at unknown ranges, at differing heights and with the odd hostage strategically placed to catch a careless shot. The course finishes with a steel gong that gives the timer (electronic or human) a definite signal.

Situations may include shooting around either side of a barricade, shooting with strong or weak hand supported or unsupported, firing and reloading with your strong arm incapacitated or firing through cunningly placed windows which prevent you from assuming any standard position. There should also always be enough targets to force the lazy counter to run the gun dry midway. The shoot is normally scored by taking points gained less any penalties incurred and dividing by time taken (the Comstock Count, after its American originator). You will, therefore, also learn how to reload on the run and to assume firing position without more than a fraction of a second's pause for balance and target identification. Until we can devise some method of simulating oncoming fires without risk to eyes, this is about as realistic a situation as we can devise. Within these parameters it is excellent survival training - a thinking man's and MS's undertaking.

Although a whole slather of new techniques has just been opened up before you, your basic techniques - focusing on the frontsight and squeezing the trigger - are still paramount. After a hundred-metre gallop, breath control becomes a third vital link - always assuming of course that your grip and Weaver stance are still perfect. The target shooter has time to take a couple of deep breaths to put extra oxygen into the blood stream, release half the next one and hold it, reducing disturbance from heartbeat and chest movement to the minimum. This technique works perfectly during basic exercises and, believe it or not, after a full run. If, however, you take those deep breaths on the run just before you come to a shuddering halt, under these conditions of physical stress, you will come to appreciate the kneeling position which dampens the violent heaving with only a little loss of time.

Cupid or Diana the Huntress may have been able to perform efficiently offhanded but for us mortals it is a wise plan to use any support offered by the course designer or chance. The barricade normally met on a combat range measures approximately 2 metres (6 ft 6 in) square and can represent the edge of a building, a window, a rubbish bin, lamp-post, a car or even a wall.

Safety

Since most of the course involves running with a fully loaded piece, let's first examine how that should be done with due regard to the safety of all concerned. First of all, if you are shooting a revolver, the hammer must be in the fired position, preferably resting on an expended case. This is both for safety's sake and also to avoid an embarrassing click as the hammer falls on an empty case or two should you already have fired rounds from the cylinder. The trigger finger *must* be outside the guard. The pistol owner must apply the safety catch - the top of the strong hand thumb is custom built for the job - whilst the weak hand either goes for a spare magazine, stays in the Weaver position (if the move is short), or aids the running effort. With either type of handgun, the muzzle must be consciously pointing forwards. Never point the muzzle vertically downwards as this places your own limbs in considerable jeopardy.

Since neither social encounters nor combat shooting training take place under ideal conditions on perfectly even surfaces, you can expect to slip in mud or trip over your own feet or other obstacles. At times like these you must hold onto the piece, both because it is your means of survival and because to discard it in mid-air is a major safety hazard to anyone unfortunate enough to be within range. Since you are the closest and largest target you stand a good chance of becoming your own victim!

Techniques

Reloading on the run is not difficult for the pistol shooter and can easily be practiced a few times without scattering magazines liberally about the range - use the magazine out, touch the leg and magazine in the routine you have already practiced. At home you can try changing magazines as you perform a 360-degree pirouette, speeding up the turn as you gain proficiency. It never hurts to practise while performing a slow forward or backward roll either. As the speedloaders for wheel-guns depend largely on gravity to dispense the cartridges, you will have to choose your moments in any such evolutions with some care unless you actually enjoy picking up live rounds.

Shooting from around a corner, be it a window, doorway or barricade, normally offers you the advantages of steadiness and considerable cover. Remember too that you will be expected to peer around cover at normal standing height. If you therefore peer from the kneeling or prone position, you will probably earn yourself a second or two before attracting unwanted attention.

Ensure that the smallest possible area of your own goodself is visible to 'them'. If standing, you achieve this by leading with the outside leg. In other words, if you are shooting around the right side of the cover your right foot will be forward and vice versa with the left side. The forward leg - to avoid being exposed to fire - will be behind cover which means that nearly all your body will be concealed too. The common fault - which costs nothing on the range but which could be unpleasant in the street - is to lead with the inner leg, allowing the outer rearward leg to draw the body outwards to be exposed.

Now that you are reasonably safe yourself you must make sure that you still have 'deterrent' capacity. This naturally involves shooting. There are three basic hand positions that allow you this capability. The worst one - widely used in competition when no bullets fly but dangerous in 'real life' situations - is simply to stick both arms outside the wall, resting the inboard one on the outer edge. While this gives you a good field of fire, it also exposes your head and much of your upper body. In the next style, you place the inner hand flat against the barricade, thumb hanging in space, and use the angle between thumb and forefinger as a rest. This position is weak as the shooting is not efficiently supported but the head is certainly less exposed. Finally, we fall back on our basic Weaver stance and either support the inner arm flat against the cover with just the wrist overhanging or, less comfortable but offering better concealment, put the knuckles up against the outer edge and lean into them.

You may be forced into shooting with one hand only if, for example, you are hanging from a rope or steel ladder. To use the strong hand only requires no special techniques but does come more easily with practice. To shoot weak hand only can be a heart-breaker. There are three short cuts to becoming fairly proficient although mastery needs much practice. Try them all, then try them all again using your weakside eye only. This means you will have to expose a couple of centimetres less of your head when shooting round cover. The first major problem is trying to educate the weakside trigger finger. This, with less strength and coordination, benefits considerably from sessions with a wrist exercise using only the finger to do the pulling. Without this strengthening process you will probably find you tend to pull instead of squeezing. A handgun in recoil tends to shoot horizontally away from the supporting hand. It is easier to control this tendency with the strong hand because its muscles are better developed and easier to cancel out altogether from the full Weaver position. Using the weak hand only you can accept that you will consistently shoot away from the hand and merely compensate by holding off. While this is a reasonably simple memory process at close range, it is considerably harder at unknown distances over fifteen metres or so. Another system takes into account that a body is normally longer than it is wide, and gives the lateral dispersion a vertical component simply by holding the piece canted at 45 degrees. You may well find that cocking the thumb almost upright will decrease the movement considerably. Experiment with both the above positions to see if there is any improvement. If so, practise it and adopt it.

It is possible but not probable that you may have to reload or clear a stoppage with the weak hand only. The right time to learn how to do this is now. Again, practise with dummy rounds to begin with. With a semi-auto, as a right-hander, punch the magazine release button with the trigger finger and apply the safety catch with the thumb. Either place the piece between the knees with the now empty magazine well uppermost or slip it behind the right knee and grip it between calf and thigh. Insertion of a new magazine is now simple and the thumb can slip the safety off at speed as you return to firing position.

The wheelgunner must operate the cylinder release button, probably with the thumb. At the same time lean the piece over so that the cylinder swings out under its own weight. Change grip and with thumb or forefinger, punch the ejector rod. Place the muzzle inside your waistband and slip the piece down until it is secure. On the way up grab a quick loader or separate rounds

and fill the cylinder. Then close the cylinder, either by pressing the fingers against it or by pushing it against the inside of your thigh. If you get a stoppage now there is very little you can do about it.

Stoppages

It is normally possible, however, to cure stoppages in an automatic. They are usually caused by the slide's failure to close completely (return to battery), either because of an obstruction in the breech - a fault with the round concerned - or perhaps a combination of weak recoil spring, dirt and lack of lubrication. Whatever the cause, a quick look down should give you some idea of the problem. If there is no visible obstruction, a smart tap up against the edge of your cover or the sole of the opposite foot should suffice to close the action. If it does not and if you are using a weapon such as the Colt or Hi-Power without a full-length recoil spring guide which is exposed as the slide retracts in recoil, you can push the bottom front of the slide up against the edge of the cover or the welt of your shoe. If you do this make certain that the barrel is *not pointing at your foot.* If you cannot retract the slide in this way, hook the backsight over the welt of your shoe or your belt and push smartly, again choosing a part of the belt which keeps the muzzle away from you. You might suffer a stoppage known as a 'smokestack'. This is normally caused by underloaded ammunition. The fired case, instead of being ejected cleanly, is trapped sticking up by the returning slide where it obviously precludes closing. If using two hands to clear the stoppage, stay in the firing position and simply wipe the offending case towards you. This method may be a little hard on the palm but is almost infallible. If using only one hand, the welt of the shoe is again the answer. Make the movement fast, though, and keep your finger off the trigger.

If there is an obvious mix-up in the breech - the most common is a bullet that has nose-dived and jammed below the feed ramp or an extracted case hitting the wad-cutting rim of the next bullet - the immediate action is to whip out the magazine, retract the slide as described and allow the assorted mess to fall clear. Reinsert the magazine, work the slide again and carry on.

On the move

It could happen in real life - and it certainly will during training - that, while hurrying from A to B an opponent or two appears on the scene. You can either become a passive moving target or a moving gun platform - the former taking less training but not being nearly as effective. If you are at full gallop and know that you have sufficient ammunition, you may decide that sufficient counter-fire from you will not only keep their heads down or seriously distract them but possibly hit them as well. If so, keep going and hope for the best. If, however, you realise that cover is too far away or you are short of ammunition then you must hit, in which case you will have to slow down. Shooting on the move towards your weak side or back hand is comparatively simple. Since you are naturally in a Weaver stance you merely have to shoot each time the feet hit the ground, although it is even easier to wait for each time the weakside foot strikes. Try moving with your knees flexed to keep you more even. The strong side is coped with by firing strong hand only by adopting a crab-like, sideways run if the target is well to your

side or, if more frontal, using your straight Weaver. Once again try to time your shots to your foot falls.

The one fallacy of the Assault Course as shot by followers of the sport of practical pistol shooting is that, with the overall time being an integral part of the scoring, the fleetness of foot is often rewarded above shooting ability and always above what is known as 'combat logic' or basic tactical survival skills. These now play no part in the sport but are still a tenet vital to the martial artist as Jeff Cooper intended.

Designing an assault course

When it is your turn to design an assault course, try marking a start and stop line between each individual scene and stopping the clock while the shooter is in this no man's land. An alternative is to work out a maximum time, to relieve the need for speed but mark down heavily for tactical errors. Try to make the shooter think. Place silhouettes of various weapons on hostile targets for him to shoot in order of danger rather than automatically on distance. You might try a shotgun, a knife, a grenade, a handgun, an assault rifle and a crowbar. Place obstacles - windows, ditches, fences, doorways, hessian or cardboard walls, ropes and ladders - in his path. As in real life, there may be more than one course of action - try to set the course up so that he has to make a choice. Change the colour of some targets and spray paint others to represent camouflage. Avoid solid vivid colours and well-defined aiming marks which seldom occur on the criminal. Whether you emerge from a firefight in one minute or ten is irrelevant. What matters is that you do finally emerge!

Jungle Lane

The Jungle Lane currently suffers the same faults as the Assault Course. Because they are often published and nearly always shown to the contestants before they compete, memory (like running ability) becomes a vital component to a sporting victory. A real life Jungle Lane - best termed a 'seek and destroy' exercise - requires observation and field craft, not speed. In training, try shoots with no time limits, or score a man on how many times he was killed. As umpire you assess the number of 'kills' but as a general rule three seconds exposed to a visible target can be considered a 'kill'. If short of time, stop a shooter as he is 'killed' and send him back to the club house leaving the person who progresses farthest in a maximum time the winner. Always try to foster competition for it is in the heat of the moment that mistakes are made and corrected and reactions honed.

Speed Shoot

Speed Shoot test a shooter's ability to put down fast, accurate fire, under considerable mental pressure. Again, these should be shot cold or unpracticed. Quite often the shooter is made to move a short distance, perhaps only two or three metres - and to make some movement with his shooting hand such as picking up a tin can and placing it on a pole. This tests co-ordination, balance and speed of drawing as well as shooting and reloading ability. Many shooters fare very

well the first time round but not if they have to repeat the shoot within a few seconds. To be faced with two speed shoots one after the other in real life, however, would be rare indeed.

Man against Man

Man against Man shoots are probably the most nerve-racking of all. They involve two people shooting the identical course at the same time, standing side by side, with all the tension and added distraction of hearing the timing of each other's shots. The course can be ultra-simple involving, for example, two inflated balloons, each tied to the arm of a see-saw and weighted down by a heavy washer around its neck. The first hit bursts its balloon, the washer drops and the other arm of the see-saw swings down, signaling the loser.

Night shooting

During the Columbia conference of 1976 Jeff Cooper ran an Advanced Course. One of the highlights was the lesson on night shooting during which I discovered the secret to that art.

We had to shoot from a distance of seven metres at two targets on cross bars attached to one pine upright. The night was so dark that the targets were virtually, and sights totally, invisible, but at the end of the draw-and-fire exercise nearly every shot was centred in the 'V'. Even from the twenty metres, where the targets were totally invisible and the only clue to their whereabouts the very faint lighter vertical support, once again far more shots were on the cardboard than off.

It took me a few minutes to realise that the secret to night shooting is that there isn't one. If your drawing stroke and Weaver stance are good, you will automatically be on target.

Torch techniques

It is standard police practice in many parts of the world to teach the individual officers to hold a torch in their weak hand with the arm fully extended sideways so that the opposition misjudges his whereabouts. This technique has probably saved many lives but it does make return fire both one-handed and unaimed. A competition trick developed on the west coast of the USA may just be the key to even more effective night firing. Hold the torch with an overhand grip in your weak hand with the head of the torch protruding from the lower or little finger side. Extend your strong arm with your piece in it, then sweep the torch underneath and lock the back of your wrists together. This position is almost as effective as the Weaver and, with very little practice, you will be able to harmonise the torch beam and bullet's path without reference to the sights. Now you can search and fire instantaneously and, if you are controlling the torch with the button rather than the slide switch, you can switch off without complicated digital dexterity and move position. Remember to switch the light off before you more, not vice versa!

Concentration

As noted earlier, we train without fear of being hit and so adopt practices that are downright dangerous. It is a fallacy to think that, without this stress, we would be able to concentrate entirely on shooting. David Westerhout, with his enquiring mind and a ready supply of guinea-pigs, ran one group of recruits through a course and then made them repeat it under fire from tennis balls which sting enough to be noticed. Needless to say, scores were lower the second time round but those with the soundest shooting experience were the least worried and therefore better able to concentrate on the job in hand.

Further exercises

Although the basic exercises which we all slaved through served a vital function in helping us attain a reasonable skill at arms, by now they will have become a stultifying influence. With repeated practice they lose their challenge and interest and, in competition, actively hold back the better shooter.

A recent innovation, which I pioneered at the 1977 Eastern Province championships, has been to set the time limits only and to allow the shooter to fire as many rounds as he is able in any way he pleases.

In two of exercises - which have no place in competition but which are both excellent survival training - it is balance that is basically involved. In the first one, stand well away from a sturdy barricade, lean forward and support yourself with your shooting hand. On the start signal, recover your balance by simultaneously pushing backwards with your arm, which continues on to start the draw, and shooting the strongside leg forward into your normal position.

With the other exercise, split the detail into two and make the non-shooters stand close behind their victim. On the signal to start, the front rank carries on with the exercise while the non-shooters try to destroy timing and balance by briefly interfering with the sequence - putting a hand in the way of the shooter's as it goes towards the butt, pushing or pulling on either shoulder during the drawing stroke, pushing behind a knee, tugging on the back of the belt, tipping his hat over his eyes or whatever. For this exercise not only the shooters but also the tormentors must be of an advanced standard: the tormentor can easily force his victim into a dangerous move across or in front of the others. So keep good spacing across the line and *think.*

With a little engineering ability you can organise a moving target. Vary your position and practise from every angle and range, then scatter a few innocent bystanders about the course and start again. You could also try facing the target at two or three metres' range and see if you can draw and hit it before it reaches you. The different combinations are limited only by your ingenuity.

If your basic techniques are shaky, the acquisition of advanced pistolcraft is a long uphill battle. Once these techniques are sound, however, pistolcraft becomes a fascinating, ever-

changing and challenging martial art with sporting overtones. But as with every skill you must practise with some regularity.

Chapter Sixteen: Combat Conversions

Handguns, as all firearms, are designed to fit the average user. It is seldom, therefore, that they suit anyone without some customisation and, to realise full combat efficiency, even further modifications may be required. Some of the modification work is well within the scope of anyone capable of owning and caring for a weapon. The rest is best left to the few expert pistolsmiths available but beware the fly-by-night gun 'butcher' with neither the skill nor the ability to acquire it.

The backsight

The first modification that many shooters insist upon is usually the least desirable - namely the fitting of an adjustable backsight. This may indeed be a very convenient way to bring your shots to a desired point of impact at a given range and to make an easy correction at a later date should you change ammunition or powder and bullet weight but this is the limit of their use. I cannot remember a single match during which the adjustable sight of at least one competitor has not gone out of adjustment or broken and fallen off. The problem with them is that they are not generally designed for continuous use with full power ammunition. By installing such sights you are therefore fitting a weak link and if they can fail during a match they can also fail during a 'live' confrontation. Certainly, many of the sights fitted to handguns at the factory are too low and difficult to find. They can, however, sometimes be modified to give better visibility or changed for fixed sights of a better design. These require a hammer and drift for horizontal adjustments and a file for the vertical, but once set never give trouble. Make sure that the frontsight is too tall to start with; remember always to move your frontsight into the error and to move your backsight in the direction you want the bullet to move on the target. If your frontsight is too high your piece will shoot too low but judicious filing will bring it on target. It is far better to make this adjustment in small increments than to have to return to the gunsmith for a welding job to raise the sight again.

If you have a very minor lateral adjustment to make and the U of the backsight is a trifle small, you can kill two birds with one stone by working (very gently) on an upright which will move your shots to that side.

The safety catch

The safety on the Colt Mk IV Series 70 is a great improvement on that of the original design which was small and very difficult to depress, like the safety on the current Browning. This is perhaps the first priority for modifications. Browning owners are fortunate in that there is a locally made replacement combat safety which sells for less than R20.00. Colt owners, on the other hand, have to buy imported models, which are also available with an ambidextrous blade on the right side of the piece, or have their own catch modified by squaring off the existing

safety and silver-soldering on an extra piece, which is then shaped and grooved to give the thumb a positive grip.

The trigger guard

A modification that I personally like very much is the squaring off and checkering of the front of the trigger guard. This enables me to use the first finger of the weak hand stretched up and forwards to control recoil more effectively. Some gunsmiths add a little spur to the bottom of the guard which serves the same purpose - perhaps more efficiently - but which may give you difficulties when buying a holster. One disadvantage of these modifications, however, is that you come to depend on them, making the emergency use of a standard weapon slightly more difficult.

The magazine

Since the ability to change a magazine with considerable speed is one of the main features of an auto, it stands to reason that anything which will make this evolution more certain is a good one. The chamfering of the magazine well is a modification within the ability of any shooter. All you require is a reasonably new file about 6 mm wide with thick to widen the mouth to withing 1.5 mm (1/16 in) of the outer edge. How far you continue to bevel into the well is a matter of taste but you won't go wrong if you consider the minimum to be 3 mm (1/8 in) and the maximum to be a 6 mm (1/4 in). While on the subject, a very simple modification is to glue a piece of leather or rubber up to 6 mm thick onto the base of all your magazines except the one which lives in the piece because the extra bulk may make concealment more difficult. This pad helps to protect the magazine as it falls during a change. More important still, it makes positive insertion and locking virtually certain yet averts the risk of you pinching your palm between magazine and butt and makes the return into the Weaver hold faster.

Extension magazine

Extension magazine, as their name implies, protrude from the butt, which makes carrying the piece awkward, but they contain more cartridges than the standard magazine. They are of questionable value in the sport of practical pistol shooting but, if reliable, they could well have a viable place as an anti-ambush expedient when no alternative of providing fire-power is available.

Stocks

On the subject of stocks, opinions are sharply divided and experience must be your guide. Many of the checkered factory stocks are so rough that they actually make shooting unpleasant and bloody. If you suffer from them, take a file and sandpaper and smooth them off. Never be too concerned about how a weapon looks as long as it is one hundred per cent working order, well cared for and adapted to your needs. Many shooters use absolutely smooth stocks, their reason being that if they get a poor grip on the piece at the start of the draw they can alter it during the stroke to eye level. Others use the Pachmayr rubber grips which preclude such a

shuffle. Before going to the expense of having the front strap and perhaps the mainspring housing or back strap of the butt checkered, try pinching some medium emery paper under the grips and see how that feels.

Running-in

Before taking a pistol into a gunsmith, make certain that it is properly run in. You must expect stoppages - of decreasing frequency - during the first two hundred rounds. To speed up the run-in clean the piece thoroughly and shoot it during this period without any oil so that the metal surface can mate. Although this period can be frustrating, use it to get invaluable experience in clearing stoppages!

Apart from the general work outlined above each type of firearm has its own peculiarities.

Colt .45 Model 1911

When presented with a fired .45 ACP case of unknown weapon of origin, one of the first things a ballistician looks for is a case mouth bent in on one side. This will him a reasonable pointer to the Colt M 1911. Most unmodified Colts cause this type of damage, which is of course unacceptable to the reloader. Fortunately, however, the cure is simple and is known as 'porting'. The ejection port is lowered 3 mm (1/8 in), the rear edge slightly rounded, then the lower edge beveled downwards and inwards, until it returns to its original shape. This will ensure that the case is ejected cleanly without hitting the slide. Minor modification to the extractor claw may also be necessary.

Most 45s are designed for use with a jacketed, round-nosed bullet. We, however, will probably be using lead bullets of more efficient designs but which often do not feed reliably. The next step, therefore, will be to have the feed ramp polished and the rear of the barrel throated. This modification - probably best left to the expert - means in essence that more of the entrance to the chamber is beveled without taking away any case support - do that and your cases will bulge at the base and perhaps rupture on firing!

Before having the grip safety permanently locked into its depressed position with a lateral screw or a welded extension fitting under the mainspring housing, consider that, if you accidentally drop the piece, you will increase your chances of an accidental discharge. On the other hand, freezing the grip safety does mean that you can fire during an emergency with an improper grip. Try taping it down initially to see if you like the idea.

Many shooters find that the magazine release button is too stiff. This can be quickly and easily remedied by snipping one-and-a-half coils from its spring. Many more find that the web of the strong hand is pinched between the bottom of the hammer and the upper surface of the tang on the grip safety. Here the solution is either to have the hammer bobbed or shortened or to install the ring hammer which is standard on the Colt Commanders. If you do not intend to change the issue-fixed sights, you will get better visibility if you file the back face of the

backsight until it is square vertically rather than curving towards you.

Trigger work, either to remove creep, lighten the pull or to remove the backlash of the trigger once the sear has been released, is not for the casual amateur enthusiast. You will be far better advised to take the piece to a gunsmith and ask him to establish a trigger pull of from 1.6 to 2 kg (3.5 to 4.5 lbs), free of both creep and backlash.

Finally, you may choose to install a recoil buffer. This takes the place of the recoil spring guide, employs an extra spring and plunger coaxially mounted to slow down the final part of the slide's rearward movement and also helps to speed up the return stroke. Another aid is to install a heavy-duty recoil spring which, in conjunction with the buffer, certainly appears to aid reliability and lessen wear.

Browning Hi-Power

In this his last design, John Moses Browning did not use a grip safety. He did, however, put in a magazine safety (by then so beloved by the Top Brass) as a probable alternative to training. Fortunately for us, this nasty device can be removed and thrown away in about one minute flat. All you require is a small pin punch (or panel pin) and a hammer. Check that the piece is empty, try the trigger pull and attempt to drop the magazine which will remain in situ. Take the magazine out, check safety again and remove the slide. Locate the little pin, which is inserted transversely through the trigger, and tap it out from right to left. Holding the butt in the weak hand, look down into the trigger mechanism and locate the tripping lever, which rises vertically in a recess on the right-hand side just ahead of the magazine well. With the end of a screwdriver move the tripping lever to the left and, when clear of its recess, rearwards. The little plunger that protrudes into the front of the magazine well should pop out under pressure from its spring. Replace the tripping lever into its recess and the slide onto the frame. Do *not* replace the pin to fill the hole in the trigger as it occasionally creeps out and causes problems. Retest the trigger pull which will be appreciably lighter and enjoy the free way in which the magazine will fall. Talking of magazines, the release catch will sometimes be pressed by the leather on certain holsters and even, inadvertently, during firing. You could try increasing the spring tension although you will probably feel it requires lightening - or you could remove the catch and file the head down by 1.5 mm (1/6 in) or more if you choose. Make sure, however, that the magazine will release before the catch is flush with the frame. Recut some checkering with a needle file so that your thumb has a firm purchase and the job is over - unless you want to apply some cold bluing as a touch-up measure.

Stars

Most Stars have the magazine disconnector, when fitted, situated under the right-hand grip panel. It lies vertically behind the magazine well where it is retained by a small pin which is tapped through towards the left until it clears the disconnector. Lift the top end of the disconnector where it is close to the trigger so that it can ride past and tap it upwards until it disengages. Knock the pin back into position and reassemble.

Providing that your combat pistol is capable of grouping its shots into the 25.4 cm (10 in) circle at fifty metres from prone, don't worry about accuracy work since this is expensive and tends to detract from reliability.

Revolvers

Wheelguns offer far less cope to the amateur than do semi-autos. You can, however, strip your new piece down and pass the sides of all the parts gently over a fine oilstone to remove slight burrs. This will cut down on friction and slick up the action. If you apply the 50/50 Wynn's Multi Purpose concentrate/light oil mixture, you will certainly feel the difference but obtaining a clean single action pull or a silky double action is expert's work.

If your revolver has the usual skimpy little grips, you will make it far more comfortable to shoot by installing either a grip adaptor - a small rubber or aluminium wedge retained by the grips that fills in the gap behind the trigger guard above the second finger - or buy stocks which do the same, fill the hand better but cost considerably more.

Adjustable sights on a revolver do not suffer from the same disadvantages as those fitted to the semi-autos, which are subject to forces of several thousand Gs during the recoil-stop-feeding-stop cycle. They very seldom give trouble, the best of all being of Smith & Wesson manufacture.

You will, with some frequency, find burrs around the firing-pin hole or deep tool marks across the breech face that cause the cartridges to drag. A fine stone or very, very careful filing should help the problem but revolvers, even top-grade American revolvers, ain't what they used to be.

One minor modification you can make to a revolver's trigger guard is to slim it down slightly on the strong side, then bevel the material slightly so that your trigger finger has absolutely no hindrance yet retains the benefits of the guard. A conversion very popular a few years ago was to cut the front of the guard off entirely. This certainly gave free access but considerable loss of safety. Moreover, a blow to the remaining portion of the guard could move it upwards and jam the trigger.

Should you decide to use your revolver double action only, to avoid having to make that split-second choice, you can have the hammer modified by dehorning or grinding away the spur. This will save the inside of jackets being torn and avoid the risk of it snagging during the draw. In a slow fire situation, single action can still be used by starting the hammer rearwards double action, catching it with the thumb and pulling into full cock. Again, practise this technique with an empty revolver!

Bluing and other finishes

After abuse, the major hazard facing any firearm is rust, be it caused by humidity or perspiration salts. What exacerbates the position is that bluing - itself considered to be a rust preventer - is a rust or oxide deposit and, when oiled, may only be five per cent effective.

Many manufacturers are making their weapons almost rust-proof with the use of stainless steels which are more expensive and considerably harder to machine. As yet, however, there is no stainless-steel semi-auto available in a viable defensive calibre which is reliable.

The alternative, if you seek one, is to have a far more rust-resistant coating applied. The most simple one is hard chrome which is applied to a matt surface so that there is little or no reflection. Most people seem to have just the frame chromed although yours would not be the first to get the whole treatment, but keep the sights black. Other finishes such as Armaloy, Gunkote and Nitraloy also offer lubricating qualities. The first two are imports from the USA where they enjoy some popularity and the latter the development of a Durban gunsmith, John Hall.

Sights

Many of the sportsmen involved in practical pistol shooting paint their sights in differing colours usually red or yellow, which are claimed to give higher visibility and contrast against the standard buff-coloured cardboard target. They would, however, be in for a nasty surprise if their assailant were wearing a red or yellow shirt! Black, fore and aft, is the most easily acquired colour under most defensive conditions.

Gunsmiths

I am not prepared to recommend anyone whose work and capabilities are not known personally to me so there may be some glaring omissions in this very short list. Remember, however, that despite their official gunsmith's licence, butchers are many, and craftsmen are few. If you need work done, before entrusting your piece to an unknown, inspect some of his work and talk to previous customers. If he won't give you their names and phone numbers, leave him alone.

Durban

John Hall, PO Box 39093 Queensborough 4070. Tel: Durban 441537.

John Hall, one of Natal's earliest combat shooters, is a craftsman whose speciality is fine work on fine weapons, be they handguns, rifle or shotgun. As noted above he can apply his own coating Nitraloy. When you remember that most American master pistolsmiths have up to a three-year backlog of work, you shouldn't mind waiting some months in this country.

Kingsports, PO Box 873 Durban 4000. Tel: 69551.

Kingsports in West Street needs little introduction. Hidden in its darker recesses you will find Dick Powell, a good, sound, experienced gunsmith as well as seasoned target shooter and now a combat enthusiast as well.

Pietermaritzburg

Kingsports, PO Box 93 Pietermaritzburg 3200. Tel: 20181.

The gunsmith's department of this branch of Kingsports is run by a Springbok target pistol shooter, Piet van der Merwe, who has considerable expertise.

Johannesburg

Eric Bell, 50 Dewlish Avenue Dinwiddie Germiston. Tel: 34-7525.

Eric Bell is one of the very few if not the only person who served a formal apprenticeship in a South African shop, namely King's in Durban. He can be contacted through ME Stores' various branches or at the above address.

Dave Sheer, 22 Cambridge Road Lombardy West Johannesburg 2142. Tel: 786-9711.

Dave Sheer started out as a jeweller and began full-time pistol-smithing perhaps two years ago. He is the designer and manufacturer of the Combat Safety for the Browning Hi-Power.

Pretoria

George Sankowski, Groeneveld and Hicks, Church Street Pretoria 0002. Tel: 20884.

It is a pleasure to know that old-world craftsmanship is not a lost art and the work that leaves George Sankowski's bench is the proof. He is perhaps more at home with best quality English guns and rifles but his combat work is above reproach.

Chapter Seventeen: Reloading

It is far beyond the scope of this book to go into full details on reloading. It may be as well to point out now that you will in all probability be forced to adopt the hobby if you are to be true to your initial determination to become a competent handgunner.

There are two reasons for reloading. The first is economic and the second versatility and I could even add a third - that it's fun. But let us first of all consider its dangers.

Smokeless propellant powders burn not explode (although it would be unwise to handle them with a lighted cigarette in your mouth). Primers contain a minute amount of relatively unstable high explosive but are safe, providing no sudden blow is applied and that they are stored in their original container which is designed to restrict any explosion. Without careful attention it is possible to put in too little or too much of the right or wrong powder. Never try to inch pressures upwards. Tables are published showing maximum loads and these should be approached with caution and exceeded at your own risk. Make it a habit to check that you have the correct - and only the correct - powder on the loading bench, that your powder scale is correctly set and that your measure is dispensing the predetermined charge. Always check the charge - *never trust to your memory*. Finally, when you are charging cases with propellant, make it a solo task with no one around to distract you.

Economics

Let us assume (optimistically perhaps) that the average retail price of Boxer primed ammunition for the more efficient cartridges is say R50.00 per hundred. Once you have empty cases either from firing live rounds or by buying virgin brass at about half that price, you can reload at a remarkable saving as shown by the following figures for the .45 ACP. (The 9 mm Parabellum, .38 Special and .357 Magnum should cost less and the .44 Magnum a little more.)

Cases	No charge
100 Primers	R2.50
100 Bullets	R3.75
Powder	R0.94
Total	R7.19

The price of the cases has not been included since with care and attention it is not unusual to get well over thirty reloads before retiring them from 'front line service' and placing them into the 'Assault Course only' box when, if they are lost, it is not cause for deep mourning. You should be able to buy a complete loading set including tungsten carbide resizing die, a 'C' press, powder scale and measure for approximately R120.00 or slightly more if you buy imported equipment. Local products include the H & M Safari and Mike Henn equipment all of which appears to give good service and which are single-station presses like their imported equivalents, the Pacific Power 'C' and the RCBS Junior. If you think your reloading horizons will widen out to rifle calibres, then you are strongly advised to buy the local Baccarat press or the Pacific Multi-Power 'C' or RCBS Rockchucker as they offer far greater leverage. Should you pay R150.00 you would still amortise your investment in under four hundred rounds - less than you would use in one of my instructional courses.

You can reduce your costs still further by buying a Lee Production Lead Melting Furnace, a double-cavity die with handles, and a machine called a lubricator and sizer which will apply lubricant to the bullet and at the same time swage it to the diameter of your choice. This equipment will cost you up to another R100.00 and reduce your ammunition costs to the price of your lead.

Advantages

You can buy over the counter many bullet designs which are more effective than those supplied with commercial cartridges for reasons of either shape or weight. If you have your own bullet-casting facilities you will have even greater scope - but only you can decide on your specific requirements.

Reloading will also allow you to tame the big Magnums by reducing their velocity and by so doing to bring them into consideration as viable combat weapons.

In case you are worried about the legal implications of reloading, your firearm's licence is deemed by the Chief Inspector of Explosives as a permit enabling you to buy the propellant powder without further formality than a signature. You are not permitted to possess more than 2.5 kg of powder nor are you allowed to reload for anyone else.

If you are interested in joining the local reloaders' association and rolling your own ammunition write to: The South African Reloaders' Association PO Box 27128 Sunnyside Pretoria 0132.

Chapter 18: Tactical Considerations

The most important tactical consideration is of course that if anyone has to die, your aggressor is the most suitable candidate.

The first mistake the opposition makes is to believe that his naked aggression automatically gives him a moral ascendancy over his proposed victim. He is correct, of course, until he chooses the likes of you, a trained shooter, masquerading as a helpless victim. We have been schooled to believe that the aggressive instinct is a bad one, recessive in 'civilised' people, and despite the fact that most of the advances made by our civilisation have been motivated by this very urge. We now consider aggression as verging on the indecent and when we meet it in its violent nakedness, untrained and unaware, we are cowed into submission instead of reacting with counter-aggression. No criminal will wittingly seek out a strong, prepared victim. Used to preying on 'nice' people who normally comply instantly with his every command, he doesn't expect anything but compliance and this gives you time to launch your counter-attack. Conversely, you can place yourself in exactly the same complacent frame of mind, whilst holding arrested criminals at gunpoint, during the wait for the Squad Car.

The most suicidal move you can make is to allow the opposition to get too close to you - I regard four metres as the minimum distance required. If the opposition numbers two or more don't let them separate. Should you be fortunate enough to have someone to help you, don't stand together. Split up so that you are at ninety degrees to each other, giving both a free arc of fire without endangering the other.

Until you are certain that any person you arrest is not in possession of an additional, concealed weapon, you are in imminent danger. Even when he is 'clean' if you relax at all, he can still kill you. In a town where assistance should only be a few minutes away you may opt for letting the police make the search when they arrive, but there are times when you will have to do it yourself.

Searching a prisoner

Providing that you follow these few basic rules, searching a prisoner should offer you little danger.

--> Do not step inside your four-metre danger zone unless the suspect is so off-balance as to render his counter-attack impossible or slow.

--> Make him understand by your actions and speech that you have complete confidence in yourself and your ability and that you will fire without hesitation at the slightest provocation.

--> Do not allow your prisoner to engage you in a conversation no matter how short, to look backwards, move his arms, shift balance or to distract you in any other way.

--> Once you have decided to move in and start the search, keep the piece as far away from him as possible. If you are using your weak hand to frisk, hold the weapon at your strong hip and change over when searching his other side.

--> Even when he appears to be 'clean', don't relax until he is securely locked away and no longer your concern.

When you are actually searching, be very way of putting your hand into his pockets or the openings of his clothes, as a sudden movement at such a point could turn the tables. Divide his body vertically in half and with your left hand pat and feel his left side, paying particular attention to his arm and armpit. Feel his chest and stomach down to and including his groin. Continue down the front and inside of his leg with careful reference to his boot tops. Feel upwards along the back and outer areas of his leg, inside his thighs and up to his visible neck with a very careful sweep in the small of the back. Back off a few steps, change hands and check out the other half. If you find one weapon, don't take it for granted that there are no more. Remember that a blade or sharpened bicycle spoke can be taped virtually anywhere and that a knife suspended by a length of string can be hidden in the most unlikely places

If you are going to be in close proximity to a prisoner for any extended length of time, make him strip off completely and examine his clothes thoroughly, always maintaining a safe distance and a very cautious eye.

There three more or less approved positions to make your prisoner adopt. In ascending order of preference, they are: lying, standing and kneeling. Incidentally if you are armed with a

rifle or shotgun, you should twist the muzzle until it catches and is gripped by his clothing making it virtually impossible for him to manoeuvre out of the line of fire and of course taking the weight off your arm.

Make your prisoner lie face down, feet together with his hands extended as far above his head as he can get them. Remember to keep the piece as far away from him as possible. The fault with this position comes when you make him roll over for the frontal search during which he can watch your every move and decide if it is worth using a knee or his hands on you.

The classic search is to make the prisoner move well away from a wall, car, tree or other convenient support, open his legs wide, then make him fall forward and hold himself on his finger-tips. Some training manuals further recommend that you place your closes foot around his so that if he moves you can pull his feet out from underneath him. This, however, is an ultra-dangerous technique, First, if he's lucky he can raise his heel sharply right into your genitals and secondly, you show that you have decided to risk a physical maul rather than pull the trigger. Instead, stand between his spread legs where you have the option of kicking him in the crotch or firing, as you deem fit.

Safer than these two positions is to make your prisoner interlock his fingers, place them behind his head, and then kneel down leaning so far forward that he is only just able to maintain his balance. When searching with your left hand put your left leg between his and touching his buttocks. If he seems about to make any move, a quick push will throw him forward. Use your right leg when searching with the right hand.

Should you ever need to search more than one prisoner, a handgun is the weapon of choice, because, with one hand, you can change targets easily should one of the opposition decide to test your amateur status. If using the kneeling position, all you do is place them in line ahead. When you finish one, stand back and make him go to the front of the queue. Then search the next one. Search by feel only and keep your eyes open for any attempt by them to regain the initiative. If you are using a wall, move them sideways as you complete each search but you may find it hard to search and watch at the same time.

House search

We have all seen great epics of celluloid heroism during which the combatants kick open a door and, tommy-gun blazing, follow through at the most dangerous adversary despite the fact that the opposition is totally invisible until our hero is two metres inside the room. If you must go into a room, do your best to locate the opposition and dispose of him before you enter, because he has only a small opening to watch.

The only time that you as civilians may have to perform a house search is when something goes bump in the night or when you come home to find something wrong. In both cases you will have the great advantage of knowing the layout of the house. The correct technique is to slide along the wall as close as you can get to it, preceded by your piece, and to

peer diagonally across the opening at the opposite side of the room. As you clear an area you can advance slightly to open more of the room. Pause for a moment, then make a sudden rush across the opening where you repeat the process. This system works equally well for windows or passages. Bear in mind, however, the army training slogan: 'Cover from view is not necessarily cover from fire'. If it is feasible and the intruder has no other means of exit, take up an ambush position and wait for him to leave the room.

If you are fortunate enough to have assistance and you know or suspect that there is trouble, one of you must stay in cover observing and able to put down immediate counterfire while the other moves. This ruling is nothing new to anyone with a modicum of military training but vital nonetheless. As Sun Tzu, the Chinese military genius, in his treatise, *The Art of War* - a work written some 2500 years ago and on which both Clausewitz and Mao Tse Tung based their writings - said, 'He who knows when he can fight and when he cannot, will be victorious'.

Chapter Nineteen: Advanced Courses

Speed Shoots

Speed Shoots are designed to test, under non-tactical conditions, the shooter's ability to draw and place a number of effective shots on targets at differing heights and ranges in the minimum possible time. Scoring is usually based on taking the total score less any penalties incurred for missed shots or hostages hit divided by time taken. Unless the shooter is limited to the maximum number of shots allowed - an unrealistic approach - it is permissible for the shooter to fire extra shots should he see that he has either missed or connected with a hostage. In this way he avoids the double penalty of both a missed shot on a hostile and hit on the innocent. Hitting a hostage normally incurs the same penalty as a miss. A more realistic approach, however, might be simply to take the value of the shot on the hostage and convert that to a penalty. As very little defensive shooting takes place over ten metres, when you design your own shoots you should place only the occasional target beyond this range, certainly never more than twenty per cent beyond twelve metres.

Quick and Dirty

Stage One

Range five metres. Shooter seated at table with piece (cocked and locked or, for revolvers, hammer down) lying on table top. Hands palm down on table but not touching weapon. Targets required: six IPSC silhouettes and one 250 mm (10 in) gong. Place two targets edge to edge, superimpose a hostage centred on the mid-line, fasten together, then make a second identical set. Set up first group, then leaving one target-width vacant, set up the single target. Leave another space, set up the second group, leave a space, then set up the gong. On the start signal, place one shot on each hostile to score.

Stage Two

Range ten metres. Shooter standing, piece holstered. Continue as for Stage One.

Stage Three

Range ten metres. Shooter standing, piece holstered, facing five IPSC silhouettes, spaced one target-width apart and one 250 mm gong on left of line. Shooter places two shots on any three targets, makes a compulsory reload and, weak hand only, places two shoots on remaining targets, finishing by hitting the gong.

Penalties

For each missed shot deduct ten points. For each hostage hit deduct ten points as in most competitions.

Gongs

Set up five or six 250 mm gongs either abreast, in line or at staggered heights and distances. The shooter who knocks all the gongs over in the shortest time is the winner.

Fives

Set up five IPSC targets, one on the centre line, ten metres in front of the shooter, one at ninety degrees to his left at seven metres and another at ninety degrees to his right at five metres. On the forty-five-degree left line put a target at twelve metres and one on the forty-five-degree right line at three metres. Between the legs of the centre target place one 250 mm gong.

Stage One

Freestyle. Finish with gong.

Stage Two

Freestyle but targets must be engaged from closest to furthest. Finish with gong.

Stage Three

Draw. Change to weak hand only. Continue as Stage One.

Penalties

Three seconds to be added to time for each shot fired out of sequence in Stage Two.

Scoring

A maximum of five points only to be scored on each target (one 'V' or the sum of two or more hits). Targets with less than the required five points to be scored as usual and twice the deficit deducted from the total. Corrected score to be divided by corrected time for each stage and the three factors then added together to find the overall winner.

As soon as it becomes obvious that shooters are getting too practiced with the formal layout, simply alter target heights and ranges. Never bring the gong in closer than seven metres to avoid the worst of lead splatter and possible injury. Again, any shooter who fails to wear safety glasses - especially when shooting at steel targets - is a fool.

Man against Man

Man against Man shoots are also non-tactical but serve to make the participants concentrate on their own shooting while under considerable pressure and in danger of being severely distracted by the other man's firing rhythm. The shooters normally stand or walk within a metre or two of each other and shoot at either identical or mirror-image courses.

The Flying M

The Flying M is perhaps the most famous of the shoots. It was designed by Jeff Cooper together with the late John Plähn. Each shooter requires two IPSC targets, one 250 mm gong and a tin can. The two contestants stand side by side facing outwards at ninety degrees to the centre line. On the start signal they run outwards for three metres and remove a tin can from a post or table with their shooting hand. They now draw, place one shot on each target in any order, then hit their gong which is placed seven metres away on their side of the centre line. Immediately in front of the shooter is a target at fifteen metres. On a line six metres away from and running parallel to the centre line is the second cardboard, target ten metres away from the post on which the can was taken. Depending on the time available, the winner can either be the first shooter to win three of five bouts or the shooter winning the best of three bouts.

Any procedural error - premature starts, touching the piece with shooting hand before the tin is removed, missing a target, missing the gong - automatically gives that bout to the other shooter unless he too is guilty of an error in which case the bout is reshot. The initial direction can be decided by the toss of a coin or by the course director. Thereafter it changes for each scored bout.

The Columbia Fumble

The Columbia Fumble was first shot at the Columbia International Practical Pistol Conference in 1976. Each shooter requires two targets, one gong and a tin can with one end cut out. The shooters stand about six metres apart. The firing line is four metres in front of them. One target is erected five metres away an angle of forty-five degrees from the centre line and the

other twelve metres away directly in front. The gong is set between the two fields at a distance of ten metres. On the start signal the shooters move forward two metres, pick up the can with their shooting hand and place it on a pole on the firing line. The can must be firmly in place before the piece may be touched. They then engage each target by placing two shots in the 'V', make a mandatory reload and then hit the gong.

Procedural errors are the same as for the Flying M, plus the additional ones of failing to place the tin on its pole, engaging the targets in the wrong order and failing to reload. If any of these errors are made, the bout is automatically lost. A shot outside the 'V' is considered a miss. For spectator appeal, you might consider cutting out that circle and placing steel gongs to fill the void.

Balloons

For the simple balloon shoot you will require an upright pole. At the top of the pole pivot a horizontal beam about two metres. At each end of the pivot tie a short piece of string and to simplify matters a cheap crocodile clip. Two balloons are blown up to the same size. A weight - a heavy washer or a circle of thick wire - is slipped around each neck and then clipped onto the string. The first balloon hit will drop its weight and the other will pivot downwards, indicating the loser.

I happened to give a demonstration to the Police during the 60s. The subject was combat shooting such as we knew it in those days - gunman's crouch, weak hand across the chest, with never a semi-automatic to be seen. Part of the introduction involved my shooting at a balloon. I fired my shot, using a maximum load in a .357 Magnum and absolutely nothing happened. An embarrassing titter came from those present which soon turned to gales of laughter as the balloon very slowly started to deflate. Since then I have seen steel plates turn edge on instead of falling, clay pigeons develop a neat round hole instead of shattering, and moving targets stick in the middle of their travel. Any failure of range equipment is to the shooter's advantage. However, since such incidences can be very difficult to referee, it is best to state in the instructions 'you will burst the balloon, knock over the gong or break the clay' etc, and letting nothing less suffice. After all, an armed opponent may one day require a totally unexpected extra shot and, while losing a match may be unpleasant, the results of failing to shoot agin on the street can be far worse.

Another way to make shooters think is to put an optional target in the course, a 15 cm (6 in) falling plate to simulate a felon's head sticking up above a wall or between two hostages, for example. The shooter then has to decide whether to use more time and maybe score bonus points or to omit the challenge.

Skill, without thought, is a poor combination and both need practice.

Appendix to Stopping Power

In his book *Textbook of Pistols and Revolvers* (1935), General Julian S. Hatcher, US Army, set about trying to rationalise the terminal effect of a bullet in his formula on Relative Stopping Power (RSP), which corresponds very closely both with the findings of the Thompson-La Garde Board and the results of many shootings. After a false start in which he attempted to use kinetic energy as one of his factors and obtained results in no way in keeping with recorded facts, Hatcher substituted momentum and this immediately brought his findings into line.

Hatcher's RSP index, which takes into account all the factors that the Board found to be important, can be expressed as the equation

RSP = (W/7000) x 32.16 x V x A x D

where W is the weight of the bullet in pounds, V is the muzzle velocity in ft/sec, A is the cross-sectional area of the projectile in square inches and D is a factor assigned to give due regard to the bullet's shape and material. 32.16 in ft/sec^2 is the acceleration due to gravity.

Bullet weight

The measurement of weight used by shooters is the grain avoirdupois and 7000 go to the pound. The weight of the bullet, W, will be found printed on the box and will be quite accurate enough for our purposes.

Velocity

The muzzle velocity, V, can be read from ballistics tables but, as many manufacturers are inclined to be somewhat optimistic in their figures, the best method is to chronograph a representative sampling in your own weapon which will have its own characteristics.

Cross-sectional area

To save you the trouble of dusting off your school maths, the figures for A, the cross-sectional area of the projectile, are as follows:

Nominal diameter of bore	Cross-sectional area A in^2
.22 (5.6 mm)	.039
.25 (6.35 mm)	.049
.32 (7.65 or 7.63)	.075
.38/357 (9 mm)	.100
.40 (10 mm)	.126
.44	.145
.45	.160

Bullet shapes

The multipliers, D, assigned for bullet shape and material, are as follows:

Bullet shape and material	Multipliers
Copper jacketed round nose	.9
Lead, round nose	1.0
Lead, with slight flat, without sharp shoulder	1.05
Lead, with slight flat, with sharp shoulder	1.10
Lead, with full wadcutter, cup point or semi-wadcutter, jacketed, soft or hollow point	1.25

Cartridges

To save you yet more time with pencil and paper or calculator, listed below are some of the more popular cartridges together with their RSP index. Hatchet's equation is used in these workings.

Cartridge	W	V	A	D	=	RSP
.22 RF Hollow Pt	37	900	.039	1.25		7.46
.25 ACP (6.35)	50	720	.049	.9		7.3
.32 ACP (7.65)	71	952	.075	.9		21.0
.32 S & W Short	88	680	.075	1.0		20.6
.32 S & W Long	98	705	.075	1.0		23.8
.380 ACP (9 mm short)	95	955	.100	.9		37.5
.38 S & W	146	685	.100	1.0		45.9
9 mm Parabellum	124	1120	.100	.9		57.4
.38 Spl Wadcutter	148	770	.100	1.25		65.4
.38 Spl Round Nose	158	855	.100	1.0		62.1
.357 Magnum	158	1225	.100	1.25		111.2
.44 Magnum	240	1470	.145	1.25		293.8
.455 Webley	265	600	.160	1.00		116.9
.45 ACP	250	860	.160	.9		129.3
.45 Long Colt	250	860	.160	1.05		165.9

The RSP index was never intended to be an exact measure of cartridge's potential but it does relate very closely to observed results. For instance, experience tells us that the 9 mm Parabellum or the .38 Special will effectively stop an opponent with one good shot in about fifty per cent of cases and the .45 slightly in excess of ninety per cent of cases. Compare these figures with the RSP figures which show that the .38s average out at a factor of 60 and the 45 at 129 - a close enough correlation for an inexact science. It is interesting to note that the .38 Special target load using a lighter wadcutting bullet at a lower velocity is a marginally better stopper than

the standard round nose.

Jeff Cooper has simplified Hatcher's somewhat complicated mathematics into what is known as 'Cooper's Short Form', which can be worked out on the back of a cigarette box or by mental arithmetic. As normally used it takes no cognisance of bullet shape but this factor can easily be added by using Hatcher's D multipliers. The equation is

CSF = W x V x A

where W is the weight in grains rounded off to the nearest 10, V the muzzle velocity rounded off to the nearest 50 ft/sec, and A is the bullet's sectional area with the decimal point moved one place to the right and rounded off as follows:

Bullet	Sectional area in^2	Area factor (A)
.22	.039	.4
.25	.049	.5
.32	.075	.75
.38	.100	1.0
.40	.126	1.25
.44	.145	1.45
.45	.160	1.60

Let's compare the .38 Special and .45 ACP using the scale.

.38 Spl 158 grs at 855 ft/sec corrected to 160x850x1 = 136800
.45 ACP 230 grs at 850 ft/sec no correction 230x850x1.6 = 312800

The answers are 136800.0 and 312800.0 but for convenience the decimal point is slipped four places to the left giving us 13.68 and 31.28 which is very close to Hatcher's RSP ratio. If you were to multiply 32.8 by 0.9 (the D factor) you would be even closer to 28.15.

Expanding bullets

Lee Juras, founder of the now defunct Super Vel Bullet Company, popularised a new approach to stopping power by designing and marketing jacketed hollow point ammunition which was meant to expand violently on impact. As it is difficult to design a bullet which will work under many different conditions, he ran into the problem of reliability. There are, for example, several recorded instances of these bullets completely disintegrating on impact with a wallet or belt buckle. On one occasion a peace officer fired several shots at a felon, seated in a car with his window closed. The bullets failed to penetrate and the car drove away. There are also many observed cases in which these bullets completely failed to expand even with solid torso hits. In an attempt to gain reliable expansion the trend has been to reduce the weight of the bullet and to increase its velocity, contrary to the findings of the Thompson-La Garde Board. Using the RSP

index let us compare the published data for a 110 grain jacketed hollow point with a muzzle velocity from a 150 mm (6 in) barrel of 1370 feet per second when (a) it expands as planned and (b) it fails to do so:

(a) (110/7000)x32.16x1370x0.100x1.25 = 86.54
(b) (110/7000)x32.16x1370x0.100x0.90 = 62.31.

In a weapon with a barrel shorter than 15.6 cm the muzzle velocity will be considerably reduced and expansion becomes even less reliable, whereas the substitution of a semi-wadcutter bullet in the standard .38 Special round would raise its RSP to 77.58 without the uncertainty surrounding the performance of the Super Vel type bullet. The best that can be said for them is that should they expand, you have marginally improved your stopping power and if they fail you may well die for your faith. There is a Swiss invention, currently available only to bona fide peace officers, which may well prove to be a reliable answer to upgrading the stopping power of marginal weapons. The Gläser Safety slug utilises a hollow copper jacket containing lead shot in liquid teflon and sealed with a plastic plug at the nose. Tests seem to indicate that while it is no more effective than a jacketed hollow point on car windows, belt buckles and wallets, it is regularly highly disruptive on flesh.

If you are a reloader, the last bullet design which you should consider is the commercial jacketed soft or hollow points; you have many more effective and reliable projectiles at your disposal, for a fraction of the cost, providing that you rely on weight and shape. For the non-reloader, the heaviest possible expanding bullet may well increase your stopping power, should it work as planned, without sacrificing weight for speed - human beings have not altered one iota since the Thompson-La Garde tests and if velocity was the least important ingredient, it remains so now.

Accuracy and Speed are of little value without Power and your survival depends on all three.

Afterword

Don't for one minute be tempted into believing that, now you have read this book and perhaps even gone out and bought a viable defence handgun yourself, you are either fit or capable of using your knowledge or handgun efficiently. You will in fact have just sufficient knowledge to be even more dangerous than if you knew nothing.

If you have come to the conclusion that your survival and that of your family could possibly depend on you personally and that our civilised standards depend on our preparedness to defend them, you will also realise that survival can be bought only at the cost of both time and money.

Bill Jordan was for some thirty years a member of the US Border Patrol which is principally occupied in stopping illegal immigrants and contraband crossing from Mexico into the USA. Jordan, a living example of the survival value of fast, accurate firepower, produced a book entitled *No Second Place Winner,* an apt and grim reminder of the probable fate of the loser in a social encounter.

I don't know whether it was he who originated the saying but General Patton is reported as having said, 'I don't want you to die for your country; I want you to make the other SOB die for his'. And this is the intention of this book - to make the criminal or terrorist stop interfering with our right to live our lives unmolested in our country.

If Accuracy, Power and Speed are the indivisible practical virtues of combat shooting, then the moral virtue of Responsibility must be added to complete our role. Remember that the life which your skill may save could easily be your own or that of one of your family.