



# TIGER VALLEY

TACTICAL INSTITUTE FOR GUN EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

## Training in 2 Dimensions and Fighting in 3

by T.J. Pilling

Training days are great. New shooters are thrilled to be at the range and love the opportunity to shoot. TQ-15's, B-27's, steel reactionary targets, we shoot it all. Thousands of rounds go down range shooting at targets the industry provides us. You can't gripe about the price, paper targets run 33 cents each and even the IPSC are only 45 cents when bought in bulk. We even use the "tactical pie plates" at different levels. They are small, cheap and easy to replace. They force the shooter to use the sights and focus on trigger control. I've always been hooked on the reactionary steel targets. When hit you hear the ring of the steel, you see the white latex paint fly off and you know immediately that you have had a hit. If you use small enough targets, or back the shooters off they can be just as beneficial as any paper targets are. Between relays you just walk down with the roller and you're back in business, no fuss no muss.



Rick Cutler, a great instructor with Tiger Valley, conducted the last evening class we did. Rick was teaching a two-hour module on "Undercover Carry". Shooters worked with the weapons they normally carry on a daily basis. I set up a situation in the next bay that they would have to resolve with gunfire. Shooters were brought one at a time into the bay with limited information about what they were about to do. They were told that the targets they were about to engage reacted like a real person when engaged. If you failed to hit vital areas, the target didn't drop. We were shooting Clint Smith's 3 dimensional targets that you cover with a t-shirt. A balloon holds the target up; there are three zones where balloons can be placed. When asked if they had ever seen this type of target, most said "no". The basis for the engagement was that they had come home to find 3 bad guys in the living area of the house, two in one direction and one at an off angle, all armed with knives.

Now this is in no way meant to demean those who shot the

class. Most never had formal training, other than the 2.5 hours they had just received from us. What happened is an indictment of training techniques and trainers, myself included. Some shooters ran the targets well. They fired one shot at each target and each target dropped, end of story, or maybe not. Again this is not a scientific test since we didn't see what would happen with the same shooters if a problem had arisen. What we saw soon after was interesting. Some shooters would start shooting at one target and forget about the others. Five, six or seven shots at one target with all the time in the world for the other targets, if they were real you'd be chopped to shreds. Some fired the standard "double tap" at each target and were back to the holster before you could say, hey, two are still standing. When targets turned sideways in the wind, shooting stopped with raised hands for the RO to straighten the target front ways. When questioned without the stress of the situation and asked point blank why they had done what they did, most had no explanation.

Holy shit, why don't I use these targets more often? Answer, they are a pain in the butt to set up and are time-consuming to work with. Note to self, who cares? Are we turning out shooters who only understand the dynamics of paper shooting? Are we jumping in their butts if they don't turn out "A" zone hits on bulls eye targets and forgetting the fact that bulls eyes don't attack them? Like it or not, time consuming or not, in the future we are going to use real life targets at the end of our classes. Watching shooters not press the attack, raise hands for targets that are not lined up, double tap and re-holster with no regard for target incapacitation sent chills through my spine. Yes, accuracy and speed are important, but recognizing when and how to shoot during an engagement is just as important. What good is it to shoot all "A" zone during practice and stop shooting during a real deal because it doesn't look like what you experienced during training? NOT ANYMORE...

### **Elm Fork Wednesday Night Classes**

Tiger Valley's October "Undercover Carry" class went great, with some interesting details covered in the above article "Training in 2 Dimensions and Fighting in 3".

November 14's class is "Low Light Pistol". This event will expose students to the tactics and techniques required to successfully employ a handgun in a low-light environment. The majority of armed encounters occur under low-light conditions and success requires the skills to properly identify and engage targets. Required equipment is a handgun,



holster, 200 rounds of ammunition, eye and ear protection, and a light. Any hand-held flashlight is acceptable and a weapons-mounted light is not required.

November 19 is "Combat Pistol". Learn real-life tactics for dealing with with real-life situations. Practice fighting out of a vehicle, multiple adversary engagements, and skills beyond fast and effective bullet placement. We'll have a number of scenarios running simultaneously to provide a wide range of challenges and opportunities to make you a more effective in real-life situations. Pistol, holster, 3 magazines, 200 rounds of ammo, and safety gear are required.

All of these Wednesday night classes are held at the [Elm Fork](#) shooting range in Dallas from 6:30 PM to 9 PM. The cost is \$65 and pre-registration is not required.

### **Upcoming One Day Pistol Tune-Up Classes**

Tiger Valley is offering two special one-day pistol tune up classes in December.

"Pistol Tune Up - Fundamentals" is designed for students with a reasonable level of range competency but who have not had extensive formal firearms instruction. This course will evaluate your current fundamental pistol skills and provide professional instruction in the latest pistol techniques and give you ample opportunity to practice these new skills.



"Pistol Tune Up - Advanced Skills" is for students with significant exposure to the modern operation of handguns. Tiger Valley's Level 1 pistol class or an equivalent is suggested as a pre-requisite for this class. The course will emphasize advanced skills including multiple target engagements, shooting on the move, fast reloading techniques, and will be a fast-paced class.



The time limitations of a one day class prevent these "Tune Up" classes from being replacements for our 2-day Level 1 and Level 2 pistol classes, but provide an easily scheduled one-day opportunity to improve your skills.

Both classes require pre-registration, are \$200 with 14-day advance purchase, and will be held at [Elm Fork](#). Pre-register by simply mailing a check to our office address (listed at the bottom of this newsletter). Payment via our online store will soon be available. Pistol, holster, 3 magazines, and safety gear is required. Bring 500 rounds for the Fundamentals

and 700 rounds for the Advanced class.

### **Trigger Time!**

*by Wayne Dobbs*

Well, we are finally at the end of our series on the fundamentals of pistol shooting in defense of our lives. This month's topic came last for a couple of reasons, not the least of which is that it's very hard to write about without being able to have hands on time with you as a student. Also, this month's topic, trigger control, is hard to effectively teach, hard to efficiently learn for many folks and it's the very first skill to deteriorate when you don't properly and regularly work on your fundamental skills. Finally, this subject is a tough one for me to deal with because I think good trigger control is probably the single most critical fundamental skill that's involved with shooting a pistol really well.



When it's all said and done in the firearms training world out there, I've found that many, if not most of the trainers out there are sometimes deficient on how they teach trigger control. The standard mantra chanted is to "squeeze the trigger" or we yell at somebody struggling on the line to "quit jerking the trigger". All of those "encouragements" are well and good...and almost totally useless! It's not popular these days to speak the truth, but the truth is you don't learn a physical skill by hearing somebody tell it to you. Physical skills are learned by doing them and they should be taught by somebody with a level of competence that knows the difference between the right way and the wrong one and has the ability to correct mistakes on the spot. Properly managing a pistol's trigger is much more difficult than that of a rifle and therefore, I think it requires somebody who is a good fundamental pistol shot to teach that particular skill. It often requires the patience of Job on the part of shooter and teacher to get it communicated and performed properly on a consistent basis! Ask me how I know....

Why, you may ask is trigger control so critical? There are several reasons, some of which are obvious and some a little less so. First, the sight radius on a pistol is much smaller than that of a rifle, which means small sighting errors are magnified much more than a similar error would be with a rifle. Good trigger control minimizes these errors by not adding gross movement to the piece when it's fired. Next, a pistol generally moves around, or "wobbles" quite a bit more than does a rifle and again, gross movement is imparted to the wobbling piece by poor trigger control. Finally, the biggest reason that a pistol requires good trigger work is that

there is generally a big difference between what the gun weighs as opposed to the amount of trigger pull weight required to break a shot. Consider a stock Glock: the gun weighs about two pounds loaded and the standard trigger is about six to seven pounds. No, Virginia, the standard connector does not give you a 5.5# trigger out of the box! So, what you have is a wobbling, short sight radius piece with a trigger two to four times the weight of the gun. Not a pretty picture and one that requires considerable effort to shoot well. When you consider these factors, it should be clear why typical stress loaded pistol shooting events have such poor accuracy performances. It's also why I train folks to such a rigid accuracy standard in training, because I know that in a fight, their performance is going to deteriorate by about 100%. In other words, group sizes will likely DOUBLE in a stress encounter. If we can get them performing at an excellent standard of accuracy within reasonable time frames, then I feel much better about their ability to hit adequately when the big moment comes. Folks that accept "patterns" all over a monster-sized silhouette are already displaying significant fundamental inadequacy and will only get much worse when scared.



For some ideas about learning trigger control improvement from an article, let me say that it begins with a solid, centered and neutral grip on the gun (see the article on that topic for a refresher) and with the trigger finger completely independent of the grip effort of the shooting hand. That's often overlooked which results in folks increasing grip effort as they pull the trigger, which starts moving the gun down and usually to the support side. With regard to the trigger finger, it should ideally be placed with the pad of the first digit squarely on the face of the trigger and the proximal part of the trigger finger (closest segment to your hand) should be parallel with the slide, with no contact between the trigger finger's "body" and that of the frame. Some folks put the end of their finger on the trigger (too little on the trigger) or they have the finger's middle portion or joint across the face of the trigger (too much on the trigger). Both of these mistakes will cause the gun to torque laterally during the press and will cause misses to one side or the other. You may need to slightly adjust your grip or select another pistol platform to achieve this fit. This is important to me because you want to keep the finger pivoting normally and not at the main hand/knuckle junction or you will create unpredictable results. Right now somebody is getting out a Caswell shooter diagnostic card and looking to see if I'm correct. All I will say is that those are virtually useless in diagnosing or

remediating shooter errors because nothing is usually as simple as just one thing going wrong. Plus, if you note, those are for one handed bull's eye shooting. Use those cards for dry fire or live fire targets and you'll get further ahead!

Now that you've established a correct grip and trigger/trigger finger contact what's next? Slack is next and you must learn to smoothly and quickly remove that mechanical slack between the contact with the trigger and where the sear/trigger/bar/cruciform plate/whatever is fully engaged. Once the slack is removed, we smoothly and evenly increase pressure on the trigger in the engagement phase until the shot breaks. Sounds easy, huh? Well, here is where "El Snatcho" looms (to use a Larry Vickers term)! We see this wobbling pistol with the sights somewhat aligned (or maybe perfectly aligned) and we see it drifting around, over and about the target we wish to drill with our rounds. Our little reptilian brains say, "NOW!" when it looks good and we snatch, whack, spank, slap or yank that trigger to get that shot off before the sights go sour on us. We are ALWAYS rewarded by a bad shot when we do that! It doesn't work, hasn't worked and never will work! Folks keep trying it (some for all their shooting lives) and that is why firearms instructors are foul tempered and impatient! Well, maybe not all the time, but I've spent my share of time being frustrated with folks forcing shots by overpowering the trigger. It's like Tony Romo forcing balls: you have bad results and success for the other side!

You have to discipline yourself to accept the wobble zone of the piece, keep the sights aligned adequately for the shot requirements and most of all; you must steadily and smoothly increase pressure as you maintain the sights status quo until the shot breaks cleanly. There is no way to tell you how to consistently do that in an article, but I can do it in a class or training session with you. That's a shameless plug by the way to come to a Level I Pistol class to see what I'm talking about. Once you've learned how to correctly press a trigger, it's your responsibility to go and make it a subconscious routine in your shooting activities. You won't achieve that in a class, but you will start down the road to this capability. It's like a golf swing in that you can learn from a pro and then you have to go and practice that swing and drive balls. By the way, I hate golf, but I've found that there are lots of parallels between the physical/mental learning processes in both golf and shooting.

I would suggest that once you've been taught a correct press

of the trigger that you practice just the press without a target and in a relaxed setting with your eyes closed. Your activity is to smoothly take up the slack, steadily increase pressure until the shot breaks and then hold the trigger to the rear, cycle the slide with the off hand with the trigger still to the rear and then allow the trigger to move forward until it resets. Next, take up any slack that's there and smoothly press again. Do several thousand CORRECT repetitions and you'll be on your way. I really suggest that you don't involve any targets or visual feedback until you've built that subconscious routine. Once you have achieved this level, involve a blank sheet of paper and practice delivering a shot as soon as the sights align...without whacking that trigger. Next, you can involve a target in the dry fire process. All of this takes time and discipline and most folks won't do it. It's a physical and mental skill and if you learn it incorrectly or train incorrectly, then all you do is become an expert at doing it wrong! It's like me learning to play golf by watching a video or hanging out with my hacker buddies: it's not going to produce a good golfer and neither will "learning" to shoot without competent instruction produce a really good shooter.

There's a lot of hard work involved on both the student and the trainer's parts to learn this fundamental and both have to be committed to the task. Now you see why all those cops have been missing!

This has been a great time for me to discuss these topics with you over the past few months and I would love to hear from you with your comments or questions. Feel free to email me ([Detwd114@yahoo.com](mailto:Detwd114@yahoo.com) or [Wayne.Dobbs@yahoo.com](mailto:Wayne.Dobbs@yahoo.com)) and I will get back to you! In the meantime, solid grip and smooth trigger presses!

(Editor's note. Click on these article titles if you missed Wayne's previous four handgun articles, "[Fundamentals - Not Those Again!](#)", "[What's Your Stance](#)", "[Oh, Say Can You See... The Sights](#)", and "[Let's Get a Grip](#)".)

#### **Previous Newsletters Available Online!**

Check out our previous newsletters for fantastic training videos, equipment reviews, and special articles. Find them [here](#).

#### **Upcoming Events**

*November*

- 3-7 Advanced SWAT (Waco)
- 12 Low Light Pistol (Elm Fork)
- 15-16 Advanced Sniper (Waco)
- 19 Combat Pistol (Elm Fork)
- 21-23 [Level 1 Precision Rifle \(Waco\)](#)
- 22 [Undercover Carry \(Elm Fork\)](#)

**December**

- 13 Pistol Tune-Up - Fundamentals (Elm Fork)
- 13 Pistol Tune-Up - Advanced Skills (Waco)
- 14 Level 1 Shotgun (Waco)



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