

*Interview stance with
Don Hume Top Security
High Ride Retention
Concealment Holster and
Blackhawk Tactical Pants.*

***Do not stop
training. Stay
in shape! Don't
become stagnant.
Age is no excuse!***

TEACHING AN OLD DOG NEW TRICKS



[BY BRUCE N. EIMER, Ph.D]

The world doesn't seem to be getting any safer.

In addition to the usual crimes, we now have an American city that is the number two kidnapping capital in the world, plus a real threat of middle east-style domestic terrorism. Our law enforcement departments are the thin blue line that protects Americans. At fifty-five, I may be too old to start a new career as a cop, but I can still serve by becoming a Law Enforcement Firearms Instructor. I've been a firearms and shooting enthusiast for more than seventeen years, I've attended numerous shooting schools, and as an NRA instructor for more than five years I've taught classes and coached police and members of the public to learn to

shoot and prevail in a fight. But I can do more. I recently attended the NRA Law Enforcement Instructor Development School (handgun and shotgun instructor) at the Allentown Police Academy in Allentown, Pennsylvania. This consisted of forty-four contact hours over five days with one late night to accommodate reduced light shooting and tactics.

NRA Law Enforcement Firearm Instructor Development Schools develop and enhance instructional and firearm handling skills so that instructors can effectively teach law enforcement officers to win lethal encounters. The curriculum is specifically designed to prepare students to develop and

conduct safe, effective, reality-based firearm training. Classroom instruction and practical exercises on the range did indeed provide us with usable models for building instructional firearm programs for agencies, groups, and individuals. In addition, this school definitely enhanced my firearms knowledge and gun handling skills.

THE INSTRUCTORS

There were three school faculty. The chief and his two adjunct instructors were terrific instructors, clear and interesting lecturers, attentive range officers, good role models, and helpful coaches. They were extremely knowledgeable



While drawing a Glock 19, the user's straightened trigger finger easily disengages the positive retention of Blackhawk's Serpa holster.

and skilled at arms, and clearly had been there and done that. They also practiced what they preached in that they employed state of the art instructional techniques, and they were very good at demonstrating all of the techniques covered.

STUDENTS AND EQUIPMENT

There were a total of 28 students attending school. Most were young, 30-something active duty police officers, and a few were 40-something retired cops and correctional officers. Despite my enthusiasm, at first I felt a bit out of place, given my age, and the fact that I am not a cop. Keeping up with the mostly young cops challenged me to my limits. The chief instructor, a retired cop, and department firearm instructor, was a very accomplished gentleman in his forties. The only gentlemen who were near my own age were the two wonderful assistant course instructors. One is a retired FBI agent who had lots of entertaining and instructive

stories to share, and the other is a veteran, active duty police officer.

Students were instructed to bring their own duty weapons. For handgun school, most students brought Glock's in 9mm, .40 S&W, and .45 ACP, with a few Springfield XD pistols chambered for .40 S&W and .45 ACP, one Beretta 92, a Smith & Wesson M&P 40, and two Smith & Wesson .40 S&W Model 4006 pistols. Most students wore duty gear. Several students wore concealment gear since they worked with plain-clothes officers, but all holsters still had to have retention devices. Most students used 12-gauge pump action Remington 870 or Mossberg 590 shotguns with required slings.

MY EQUIPMENT

Given my goal, which was to pass the courses of fire and graduate from school, I chose to bring my Glock 19, and I was glad that I did! I also brought my Remington Law Enforcement 870 shotgun. My duty gear consisted of Blackhawk's Level 3 Duty Serpa Holster mounted on their ergonomically designed Molded Cordura Duty Belt, mat-

ed to their hook and loop cordura trouser belt, belt keepers, a Blackhawk double snap flap cordura magazine pouch, and a Blackhawk CQC Compact Light Carrier for my Surefire G2 Nitrolon flashlight. I wore my Blackhawk duty gear the first day of school, and then switched to my Don Hume Level 1 retention concealment holster for the remaining four days.

Blackhawk's lightweight, injection molded, carbon fiber composite, Level 3 retention, Serpa Duty Holster employs an Auto Lock System that uses one's natural drawing motion to release the weapon from the holster. There are no unnatural motions or complicated sequences to remember, just grab and draw. Re-holstering is also a cinch. The Serpa Auto Lock System provides immediate Level 2 security upon re-holstering.

My Don Hume concealment gear consisted of their Top Security High Ride open top holster equipped with the hidden release trigger locking device. This holster offered excellent concealment and weapon retention for my Glock 19, and the retention locking device automatically secured my Glock when I re-holstered it. To present the weapon, I simply had to obtain a good grip on my pistol as my thumb naturally traveled down to the trigger guard release. If you carry a gun, you need a strong gun belt to support the holstered gun's weight. Gould & Goodrich's comfortable, doubly reinforced, 1-1/2 inch

FINDING A SENIOR-FRIENDLY FIREARMS INSTRUCTOR

Look for a warrior who has at least celebrated his or her fortieth birthday. Life experience is important! Your instructor should know how to successfully fight through pain, and be old enough to have dealt with the frustrations of competing physically and mentally with younger people. Find someone who has an extensive training background, and who continues to train and go to school. You should look for someone who is not just a warrior, but who is also a true teacher—a person who not only tells you what to do and how to do it, but who also can *show* you how to do it. The instructor you choose should often say, "Let me show you," to demonstrate how it is done. Finally, you should feel comfortable with your instructor, and confident that they care about you, their student. ■

TIPS FROM TRAINING EXPERIENCE

Do not stop training. Stay in shape! Don't become stagnant. Age is no excuse!

Recognize that you will fight as you have trained. Learn to train with pain. Train to win the fight, not just to survive.

There is no substitute for good equipment. Make sure your equipment works, and that it fits you.

Become intimate and competent with your equipment by training with it on a daily basis. Practice drawing your gun from the holster until it becomes a muscle memory, and you have become "unconsciously competent," able to do the task competently without conscious thought.

Training must be reality based. With that said, many useful ideas for drills can be obtained from competition and matches, such as IDPA and IPSC.

Those who carry firearms should take continuing education in defensive firearms use, defensive tactics, and less lethal techniques. When you stop learning, you stop living.

shooter's belt did the trick. It provided a firm platform for a smooth draw, and did not sag when the weapon was holstered. A Don Hume double magazine snap down flap carrier completed the rig.

LEARNING PROTOCOL

All range work was conducted on the academy's outdoor range. Students paired off with different partners, and over the course of the day, each partner alternated between being student and coach. Our three master instructors exposed us to a variety of shooting techniques, training methods, and tactical philosophies.

School covered a wide range of essential survival skills for both weapons: transitioning from long gun to handgun, marksmanship fundamentals, close quarter and long range shooting, weapons handling, gun presentations, ready positions, scanning, two handed and one handed shooting, emergency and tactical reloading, immediate action procedures for clearing stoppages and malfunctions, switching hands,

using cover and concealment, shooting from different positions, challenge command procedures, shooting and moving, addressing multiple targets, reduced light techniques, incapacitated officer techniques, decision making, and tactical problem solving. There were two qualification courses—one for handgun and one for shotgun. For both courses we covered core safety procedures, range safety procedures, range organization, coaching techniques, developing lesson plans, and range drills. To graduate, we had to demonstrate both teaching and shooting proficiency, and pass a written examination. No safety violations were tolerated.

MENTAL AND PHYSICAL PREPARATION FOR COPING WITH THE PAIN!

One of the school mottos is that there are no right handed or left handed instructors—only ambidextrous instructors, as we will have to teach and demonstrate to right and left handed students. This is a good rule, but it proved especially difficult and painful for me

when I had to work left handed with my side-saddle mounted, loaded, eight to nine pound shotgun. After surgery to my right shoulder and low back, this arthritic 55-year old had a hard time of it. Nevertheless, I managed to perform all of the drills and smoke the qualification course of fire through pure willpower. I was determined to pass and show my much younger classmates that I could do it! My self coaching and motivational strategy included the following:

- I performed dry practice in my motel room every night. I made sure to put all live ammunition away and did not allow myself to be interrupted.
- I took the school's mantra to heart and repeated it in my head throughout my waking hours: "*My mind is my weapon. Stay in the fight and I will prevail.*"
- I made sure to read and understand everything in our course textbook regarding the proper procedures for performing each drill.
- I made sure to wake up early enough every morning to have enough time to get myself together before class began.
- I made sure to eat a good breakfast every morning.

CONCLUSIONS

As a result of this training, I believe that my perspectives about armed self defense and training have become more realistic.

It is a personal liability to have no retention device even on a concealed carry holster. I do not consider the tensioning screws retention devices. I understand that on the range, at a shooting course, or at a combat match, it is a lot easier to have an open top holster. But, in the real world of personal defense, you want your handgun secured from unwanted hands, and prolonged violent movement. In my opinion, you should be able to do twenty jumping jacks without feeling it necessary to hold onto your sidearm or holster. It's important to recognize that every time you are in a fight, there's at least one gun involved—yours. After attending LE Instructor School, drawing from my two retention holsters is just as fast as



Don Hume Top Security High Ride Level 1 Retention Holster.

my draw from an open top belt scabbard. A retention holster is not a “trick device”. It is a life saving device in that it can foil a bad guy’s attempted gun grab. Naturally, if one does not train with it and then just wears it on the street, that

may be problematic. So, the solution is to get the right equipment and train, train, train to win the fight.

For CCW, we must not wear too many different holsters, or carry too many different handguns. It can confuse our primitive brains when the balloon goes up. For survival purposes, we should practice working with the equipment we use. We will perform on the street as we train.

Effective law enforcement requires intelligence, well honed skills, and physical fitness. Most cops are really good folks. They deserve our respect, and every advantage that good preparation, training, and equipment can give them on the mean streets. ■

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