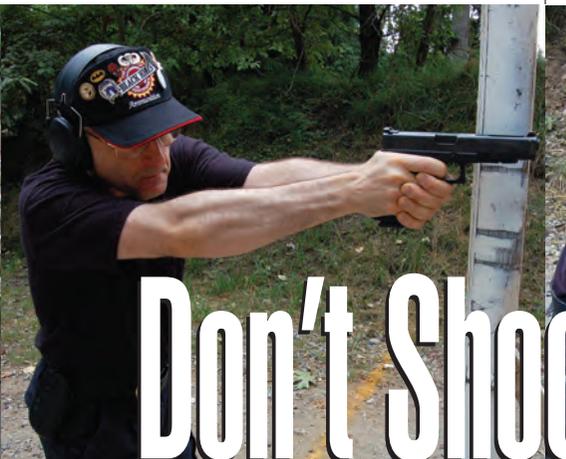


Running like hell – ideally to cover as demonstrated by the author with techniques for shooting around both high and low cover, is a technique WAY under-utilized in serious self-defense firearms training in the author's opinion.



By Duane Thomas

These days there is a great emphasis, at the higher levels of training at most firearms schools, on teaching students to handle “tactical” situations. The problem I have with this is that, almost invariably, the scenarios involved require the shooter to execute house-clearing exercises. In other words, you’re being trained to go looking for targets representing people with guns who want to kill you. This is what I call an “anti-survival” move. I believe that serious self-defense oriented trainees would be far better served by training in how avoid a gunfight, rather than how to go looking for one. I call these skills and mindset “tactical avoidance.”

It’s very interesting to navigate kill houses, stalking cardboard bad guys. However, if you did something like that in real life, with real, armed opponents, it’s a very easy way to wind up dead. In that situation, the advantage is overwhelmingly on the side of the person who is waiting for you. In order to “slice the pie,” “play the angles,” etc. you have to move around looking for your quarry. All your would-be murderer has to do is stay put behind cover and wait for you to wander into his sights. According to the U.S. Army, it will require an attacking force with at least three times the manpower and three times the weaponry to overwhelm an enemy who simply waits behind cover for the enemy to come to them, and that victory will be paid for by the aggressors at a high price in casualties. But when your own life is on the line, the limit of acceptable casualties is zero. House clearing for civilians is a very efficient way of committing suicide.

So why do so many shooting schools teach it? (1) I believe some instructors just don’t know any better; they’re so caught up in their macho fantasies they actually believe this stuff. (2) It’s fun to do! Most students shelling out money for these classes expect to be taught high-speed, low-drag, state-of-the-art, “kill ‘em all let God sort ‘em out” techniques that’ll turn them into steely eyed dealers of death, and by jingo this stalking the bad guys stuff definitely gets the ol’ adrenaline pumping. Most schools’ “tactical” training is one step up from playing cowboys and Indians with real guns.

However, I do think it’s a good thing to have some experience in house clearing. The great advantage I’ve found to this training is that, the more I learn about how easy it is to get killed doing it, the less I ever want to do it for real.

What I’d really like to see at more gun schools, instead of people being trained to do things that would get them killed if they tried them in the real world, is more emphasis on how to avoid a fight. An old friend of mine commented to me many times, “If I looked out my bedroom window one night, saw an armed burglar trying to break into my house, and I was convinced he’d go away and leave me alone if I threw him my car keys...I’d go ahead and throw him the damn keys! The car’s insured anyway, and even if it wasn’t, no material possession is worth my children having to watch me kill the guy.”

Some folks might consider that attitude craven. After all, they opine, do we not have a civic responsibility, should the opportunity present itself, to remove these socio-degenerative goblins from the face of the Earth, for the greater good? Uh-huh, sure. Does the term “sociopath” mean anything to you? Besides, the person you’re contemplating killing is not a “goblin,” nor yet a “dirt-bag” or “scumbag” (or whatever other tedious derogatory term sloped foreheads like to apply to criminals); he’s a human being. No matter what some folks might imagine in their more lurid fantasies, extinguishing this person’s life, in modern day America (as opposed to the Old West or a foreign battlefield) is an act of personal and societal enormity you are not going to casually walk away from afterwards.

Obviously if your life, or the life of someone you love, depends on employing instantaneous, deadly force, then you do it. However that is your last choice. We would like to avoid a situation in which anyone dies. Also consider that if you willfully go looking for an armed opponent, the person who dies might well be you. It makes more sense all around to avoid trouble when possible.

This puts me in mind of an incident that occurred at the 1995 National Tactical Invitationals at Gunsite, in which was set up a mock city that contestants had to wend their way through;