inside it were six different deadly force scenarios with which NTI attendees had to deal. One of my own instructors, Greg Hamilton of InSights Training Center, came in 4th that year (on his way in later years to winning the NTI outright several times, natch). Greg is a former active duty Ranger and Green Beret. Looking at that resume you’d expect him to lock ‘n’ load and take no prisoners as he mowed through the NTI like a sickle through ripe wheat...right? “Actually,” Greg told me, “my goal was to make it through all six stages and never have to shoot anyone.”

One scenario took place in a bar (Greg had been “deputized” by the town “sheriff” earlier, so it was legal for him to be armed inside a bar in this fictitious town) where an argument erupted between a man and woman. Things escalated into the former physically assaulting the latter. An obvious conflict between lowlifes, a situation which anyone with a greater than room tempera-
ture I.Q. would avoid – like the plague.

Greg’s response: Moving to the end of the bar, putting its bulk between him and the combat-
ants, and gaining maximum physical distance from the hostilities. However, another NTI con-
testant, who happened to be negotiating an ENTIRELY DIFFERENT STAGE, but from which he could see what was happening on Greg’s stage, LEFT his own scenario and charged over to res-
cue the “damsel fair.” Things swiftly progressed into a physical conflict between our hero and the “woman beater,” Mr. Bad Guy produced a gun, a struggle for the weapon ensued, and the knight in shining armor was shot at point blank range. As soon as the gun appeared, Greg’s reac-
tion was to crouch behind the bar and place his hand on (but not draw) his own gun in its hol-
ster. Period. Other than that he did nothing but watch the show.

After the scenario was over and the trainees’ performance was being critiqued (Greg being praised for avoiding a potentially life-threatening situation and maximizing his own safety, the other guy being told he was a total bozo who’d gotten himself killed) the female role player jokingly asked Greg, “So, why didn’t you come over to pro-
tect me?” His reply: “I don’t protect trash.”

Another scenario consisted of an assailant jumping out with a gun at close range. There was no cover nearby, no time to verbally de-escalate the situation, so Greg did the only brain-like thing: Drew from concealment and shot the guy twice in the chest and twice in the head. Note the differ-
ence in reactions. When it’s at all possible to avoid trouble, do so. When it’s not possible, then you fight for your life. And that’s the way it should be.

Firearms trainers like to set up Shoot/Don’t Shoot scenarios forcing students to visually recog-
nize a target as a threat before firing, or hold their fire should the target be innocuous. In addition to Shoot/Don’t Shoot I’d like to see scenarios in training courses where the “school solution” would be “Don’t Shoot...Run!” Frankly, I think running like hell is a tactical option that is WAY under-utilized as a response in self-defense firearms training.

Here’s an example: I once went through a tacti-
cal scenario at Greg Hamilton’s Advanced Hand-
gun Skills Course that consisted of facing, at a dis-
tance of 10 feet, three USPSA targets representing handgun-armed robbers. To the left rear about 10 feet away was a doorway mockup. As I watched other classmates negotiate this problem I was absolutely amazed. Invariably they stood their ground flat-footed in full view of all three close-
range “killers,” drew their guns and fired up the targets. A good way to die, that, should you ever try something similar in the real world as opposed to on the range.

My approach was somewhat different. At that the timer’s buzzer I instantly sprinted though the doorway! When you’re moving fast, laterally to your attacker – unless he possesses an extremely high skill level – it’s unlikely he’ll be able to hit you. Once I was behind cover (since this was of course a “combat” drill I drew my gun, rolled out and shot all three targets from the safety of hard protection. Rather than stand there and die like a man, by running, within about half a second I was behind solid cover and SAFE. If I’d been doing this in reality instead of at a course, depending on the reactions of my opponents, I might simply have chosen to keep right on goin’ instead of engaging the enemy. As the old saying states, “The best gun-
fight is the one that never happens.”