

CHAPTER 14

NRA SUPPORTS THE USE OF POINT SHOOTING FOR SELF DEFENSE

The NRA Guide To The Basics Of Personal Protection In The Home was published in 2000.

IT ADVOCATES THE USE OF POINT SHOOTING IN Close Quarters LIFE THREAT SITUATIONS. It also states as fact, the common findings of studies of Police Close Quarters combat. And it recognizes that our Fight or Flight response, with its involuntary physiological changes, kicks in automatically in life threat situations.

In my opinion that is a monumental change for the NRA, which was established in 1871. The NRA has been noted for training in the safe handling and efficient use of firearms, and promoting shooting sports from the local thru international levels. Traditional marksmanship and modern competitive techniques have always been emphasized.

Now, with the publication of the Guide, the NRA recognizes that some of the must be met requirements for accurate **target shooting**, are not applicable in real life Close Quarters threat situations.

The guide covers the basics of safe handgun handling and use, awareness, shooting positions, marksmanship, aiming and firing techniques, cleaning, securing, dealing with Police, legal consequences, and more....

I recommend it to anyone who has a handgun for possible self defense use.

My main interest is in Close Quarters aiming and firing, and that will be my focus here.

DEFENSIVE SHOOTING CONCEPTS

In Chapter 6 - Defensive Shooting Concepts, the Guide states that "...real-life violent encounters occur at very close range, often in reduced-light conditions, and are over in a matter of seconds. One study of Police shootings in a major urban area showed that the majority of encounters took place after dark, at 3 yards or less, in less than 3 seconds, and involved the firing of an average of three shots."

It goes on to say: "Often, either the assailant or the defender - or both - are moving rapidly during the encounter. **Such conditions do not permit the careful alignment of the sights on a specific aiming point on the target.**"

These findings of studies of Police Close Quarters combat, and stated as facts, should be kept in mind as we go along. So should the effects of our Flight or Flight response which also are stated as facts.

They provide an opportunity for the reader to realistically assess what is most likely to happen in a life threat situation, and to determine which means and methods can be employed to best deal with such a situation.

And when stated as facts, they make moot: the must be met requirements of basic marksmanship that are covered in Chapter 7, most of the shooting positions shown in Chapter 8, and they bring into question the Point Shooting method/s proscribed in Chapter 9 - Aiming And Firing Techniques.

Basically, there either will be no time to use them, or conditions will prevent their use, or the effects of the Fight or Flight response will preclude their use.

AIMING AND FIRING TECHNIQUES

In Chapter 9 - Aiming and Firing Techniques, the Guide states that the fundamentals of handgun shooting and shooting positions, only prepares you to use a handgun effectively to protect your life. "It is essential to understand and apply other defense-related skill and concepts, such as defensive accuracy, flash sight picture, point shooting, and ect..."

Of particular interest is the statement that: **"...the ability to keep all shots on a standard 8 1/2 inch by 11 inch sheet of paper at seven yards, hitting in the center of exposed mass, is sufficient for most defensive purposes."**

Photos of 3 targets (8 1/2" x 11"), are used to show shot groupings.

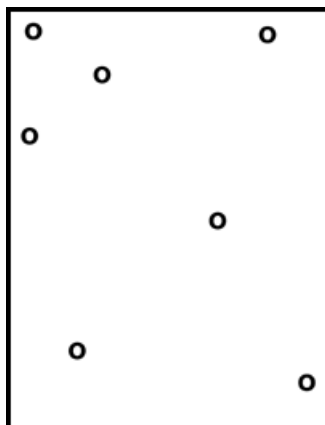
One shows a random grouping all over the target area, with hits close to the top, bottom, and the sides of the target. The text states that: "If your shots are spreading....beyond the maximum allowable group size (an 8 1/2 inch by 11 inch sheet of paper) at 7 yards, you should slow down."

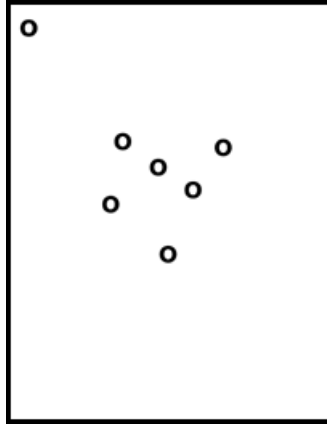
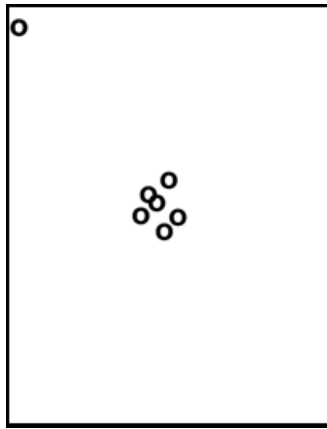
It is my experience that my shots usually will be in a relatively close grouping, with only an occasional hit well up or down, or off to the side.

Another of the targets, shows a tight group of approximately 2.2 inches, and the text states that if you are shooting ragged one hole groups like that, "you probably should be shooting faster."

A third shows a grouping of approximately 4.5 inches, and the text states that the: "group shown....represents good accuracy for defensive purposes." That grouping is about 1/2 the size of the one said to be sufficient for most defensive purposes."

Here are depictions of the targets. They closely approximate those in the Guide.

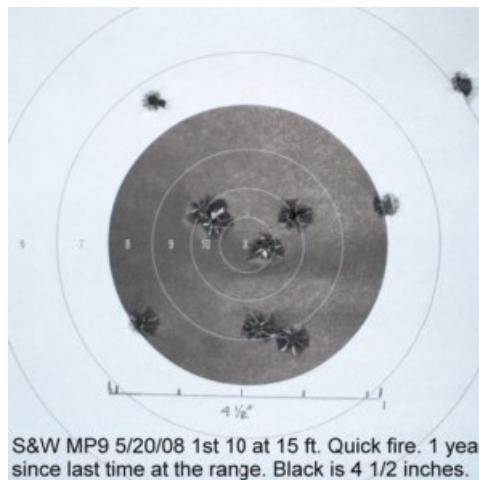


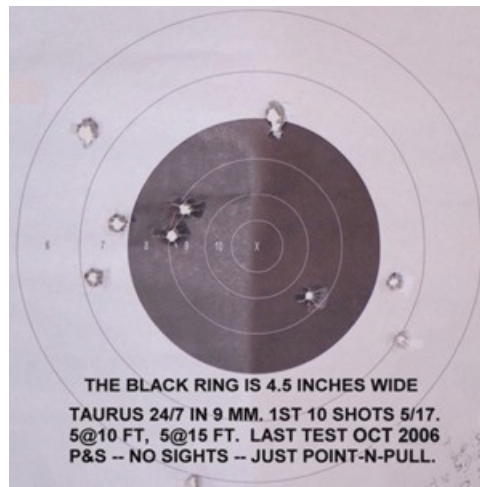


Below are three pics of targets resulting from my visits to the range. I usually shoot at 12 - 15 feet, as the NYPD statistics say that 75% of gunfights occur at less than 20 feet, and that if you are going to be shot and killed, there is an 81% chance that it will be at less than 6 feet, and a 90% chance that it will be at less than 15 feet.

There is a savings grace of sorts to that data. It is that the miss rate in armed encounters is more than 80%, which means that for every five bullets fired at a target, four+ go somewhere else. So, unless you are having a very unlucky day, chances are you will not be in a gunfight, and if you are, you will survive. (The Guide also gives the same miss rate and makes roughly the same comment about it.)

I also, usually shoot as fast as I can point at the target with my index finger, which is along the side of the gun, and pull the trigger.





The black in the pics is 4 1/2 inches. Also, the groups at 15 feet would expand 2.2 inches at 21 feet (that is 1.1 inches out from the center line on each side of the target.)

In Chapter 16 - Confronting An Intruder Or Attacker, the Guide states that: No matter what your level of training or how capable you believe yourself to be in handling stressful situations, you will experience, to a greater or lesser, a number of involuntary physiological changes during a serious defensive situation." That language, as well as the details provided on some of the affects of the Flight or Fight response, is in close agreement with what one finds in the literature and in Bruce Siddle's book Sharpening the Warriors Edge.

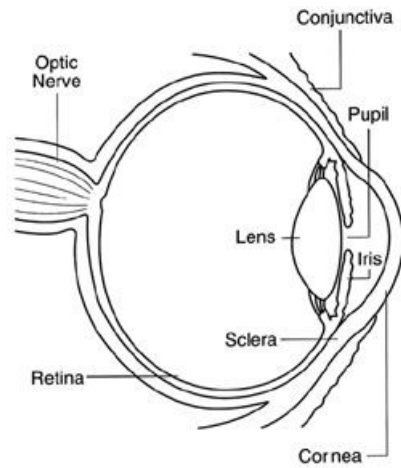
For example, **there will be increase in your heart rate and respiration, and "your pupils will dilate (to take in more light and see the threat better),..."**

The Guide does not state that as the pupil dilates, **the lens of the eye flattens so that we can focus on far objects**. This change in the shape of the lens is a given, and it is very significant in terms of being able to use the sights for aiming. As the eye can not focus on objects at different distances at the same time, **near objects will appear blurry**.

Why that is not mentioned in the Guide is puzzling. I suspect that the reason for that is to instill hope in the reader that the description below of the use of a Flash Sight Picture, will happen as stated. But, that is not reality given the science of the matter.

Could it be the case for some? Sure anything is possible. But for a run of the mill shooter, counting on it, could be terminal.

This drawing shows the pupil and lens of the eye.



Adrenaline will be released into the bloodstream. "This powerful chemical heightens the senses and increases strength, and can also cause trembling of the muscles. This trembling can make it more difficult....to hold the firearm steady."

Rex Applegate, in his book: Kill or Get Killed 1943, said this about gun fighting.

"Visualize the first-class target shot in the following combat situation: It is dark, he is in an alley, a poorly lighted street, or a room in a building. He can hardly see his gun at arm's length, to say nothing of the sights. His muscles are tense, his nerves keyed up to a fighting pitch.

"Suddenly the enemy starts shooting at him from an unexpected quarter.

"Even if he could see the sights, would he take the time to line them up and fire at the enemy's gun flash? Does he take up the trigger slack and squeeze off the shot as he has been taught to do in target shooting?

"Will he make sure that his feet are properly positioned and that he is breathing correctly? He certainly will not! He will grip his gun convulsively, raise it, point or shove it in the general direction of the enemy, and pull (not squeeze) the trigger.

"...In daylight he will do exactly the same thing...."

The Guide (also in keeping with the literature), states that **regardless of its source, stress results in the loss of fine motor skills.** "During an attack, your loss of fine motor control will manifest itself in many ways. For example, you will find it more difficult to load cartridges into a pistol magazine, or revolver cylinder, or to work the combination lock on a gun box or safe."

It also follows that the loss will affect trigger manipulation and trigger control.

The guide also states that **you will experience time slow down.** And **sounds will be inaudible** - even gunshots may sound like a popgun.

You will have tunnel vision and be virtually oblivious to anything going on elsewhere in your visual field. This can cause you not to see additional threats or innocent persons that may be just outside your immediate field of view.

The Guide provides two ways of breaking tunnel vision. (1) Breaking tunnel vision after an attack is stopped is accomplished by first lowering the handgun and then scanning to the left and right of the target area once you determine that a threat is no longer present. The target is kept in view in the

peripheral vision....During the process of scanning the area, your entire upper torso moves with the head so that your eyes and the gun's muzzle track together as a unit." (2) "After firing shots that stop an attack, lower the gun and scan first to one side, then the other. Shift your eyes only: don't turn your head or lose sight of the attacker."

Flash Sight Picture

"The aiming technique most often used to produce quick yet acceptably accurate hits with a defensive handgun is know as **flash sight picture**/ In this technique, the shot is fired as soon as the front sight is roughly lined up somewhere within the rear sight notch...."

Four targets and four depictions of sight alignments are shown in the guide to show where hits on the target will occur given one sight alignment or another.

As stated above, the science says your close vision will be blurred in a life threat situation. Also if you are firing fast, and if you and or the attacker is moving, acquiring the sights for each shot, even if you could focus on them, would be difficult. Also, the gun may be shaking in your hand, and your ability to squeeze the trigger smoothly to the rear may be lost.

Here is a pic of correct sight alignment from the US Army's Combat Pistol Manual. It is similar to the illustrations in the Guide of the sights, and it like them, misrepresents reality to make it easier for the student to see what one is supposed to do. In the Guide, the rear sight is shown as being white, and the front site is narrower and shown as being black.



Here is a photo from the US Marine Corps Pistol Manual of 2003. It shows a real pistol with real sights.



This picture raises serious questions about the stated ability of being able to achieve a Flash Sight Picture in a Close Quarters life threat situation, given the size and color of the sights, the poor lighting conditions that can expected, plus the affects of our natural Fight or Flight response on vision, and a threat who also may be shooting at you as well as fast approaching with your murder on his/her mind.

POINT SHOOTING

The Guide states that "Point Shooting involves simply raising the gun or extending the handgun from a ready position to your normal two-handed firing stance, with the muzzle pointed towards the center of mass of the target, and firing as soon as your arms are in the shooting position." There is

no attempt to align the sights, and you focus on where you want the bullets to strike. The handgun will be below or at eye level, and you likely will be aware of the rear sight or "the general outline of the firearm, and use that as a visual reference to roughly align the gun with the target."

Because of time constraints, lighting conditions, closeness of an attacker, this is the most probably use of the firearm unless one knows an alternative shooting method to use. And I believe that it is unacceptable as I have tried just pointing a gun at a target and shooting, and have had poor to very poor results. Being able to will the bullets into striking the target, is beyond me.

The Guide states that "the use of a thumb-forward two-handed grip (taught in the NRA Basic Pistol Course) aids in point shooting by allowing you to "point" with the support hand thumb, which is held parallel to the barrel."

And the US Army's 2003 combat pistol manual recommends the use of Quick-Fire Point Shooting ..."for engaging an enemy at less than 5 yards...and for night firing."

"Using a two-handed grip, the firer brings the weapon up close to the body until it reaches chin level. He then thrusts it forward until both arms are straight...The trigger is smoothly squeezed to the rear as the elbows straighten."

Both these methods require the use of a two-handed stance which is good as that should put the weapon on your center line, and if you are square to the threat, your chance of hitting the target will improve and you may have no other option.

However, in the NYPD study of thousands of Police combat cases, Officers with an occasional exception, fired with the strong hand.

Also keep in mind that your hand may be shaking, and you may be squeezing the gun tightly, and pulling, not squeezing the trigger. Those actions will torque the muzzle down and around to the left, so your chance of missing will be high.

If you knew about and had tried AIMED Point Shooting or P&S as I call it, you would have the option of using your natural ability to point accurately, to get a fast, automatic and correct Flash Sight Picture + an automatic and correct Sight Picture. And even when you can not see the sights, or you are using only one hand, or if you are moving.

I recommend the NRA Guide as it recognizes most of the realities that must be taken into consideration by the person who has a firearm for self defense purposes. And in my opinion, the Point Shooting method suggested provides a better chance of hitting a target in a Close Quarters life threat situation than does attempting Sight Shooting. The US Army's suggested two handed Isso method (Quick-Fire), or P&S are options to consider.