



BY LOUIS AWERBUCK

While the mindless arguments over the pros and cons of the Weaver vs. Isosceles handgun shooting stances continue ad nauseam, the importance of one-handed pistol shooting is often overlooked.

Reasons necessitating single-handed operation vary from injury and transitioning from a primary to a secondary weapon, to simply needing the use of the nonfiring hand to hold a phone, radio or steering wheel. Whatever the case may be, a gunfighter needs to be adept in his ability to both manipulate and accurately fire his carry pistols.

And the operative word is *accurately*. There is no excuse for not having the same level of marksmanship left- or right-handed as one has when operating a pistol with a two-handed hold. The only obvious detraction would be a lessening of target visibility in poor light conditions if the handgun is not fitted with a dedicated flashlight.

Invariably, two of anything is better than one, unless it's IRS auditors, and such is the case with one-handed pistol shooting. The trick is to utilize different muscles, tendons and overall shooting platform as those used when firing from a Weaver, Isosceles or any of the other two-handed "revolutionary" new name-it-after-yourself stances.

Although the Weaver stance was finally given a name by Colonel Cooper in the 1950s—named for Sheriff Jack Weaver—it has been used by boxers, martial artists and archers since Moses was a corporal. It uses geometry—specifically a simultaneous horizontal and vertical triangle—combined with "push-pull" isometric tension to, in essence, allow one's upper body to become akin to a tank turret. This enables the shooter to achieve fast target acquisition and control of both muzzle flip

and recoil for follow-through and/or quick follow-up shots, if the latter are necessary. The Weaver also allows a wide arc of fire without having to shift one's foot position. In essence, it's a rifle shooting platform, with the shooting arm stiffened and the hand extended to meet the support hand. This simulates the same net result as is gained from a rifle stock, except for the cheek/stock weld.

The Isosceles comprises a single horizontal Isosceles triangle, which obviously necessitates both arms being straight, combined with "neutral" hand pressure. Favored by many, it can cause problems when confronted by an assailant at a different elevation to the shooter or when trying

Obviously, within gun-grab distance, close-quarters techniques—such as clamping the firing wrist alongside the pectoral muscle—have to be employed.

At any further distance, however, the elbow *must* be locked. What most people do is squeeze the gun like they're trying to extract blood from a turnip. The problem is that while a firm firing grip is always preferable, the wrist and elbow are the stabilizing fulcrum points.

You can strangle a handgun until males give birth, but with an unlocked wrist and elbow, the weapon will torque and twist off target after primer ignition *but before the bullet exits the barrel*. That's why some shooters malfunction a semiauto even

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to use cover to full advantage. Most people use a personal hybrid version of both techniques for gunfighting.

Once one is forced away from the Warm Weaver Womb or Idyllic Isosceles because of a fight having gone to hell in a handbasket, the panic sets in. No longer comfortably ensconced in a familiar, secure firing platform, the basics start breaking down. Obligated to shoot one-handed by circumstances beyond your control, anatomical principles are violated, leading to the inevitable Alamo reenactment—and a firestorm of outgoing projectiles hitting everything except the intended target.

Adept one-handed shooting of the pistol in a gunfight is dependent on a locked wrist and, if distance allows, a locked elbow.

with a death grip on the weapon. And that's also why the term is "limp-wristing" and not "limp-gripping."

Similarly, an unlocked elbow will cause high projectile impact, though not necessarily weapon malfunction. Some shooters prefer stepping in with the strong foot, and some prefer to leave their feet the same as for their two-handed shooting, but the criterion again is that the upper body needs to be in tank turret mode, as the target may not be facing straight on, belt buckle to belt buckle—and this applies whether you have to operate right- or left-handed. The bottom line is that misses are nonnegotiable.

You may have to move your head laterally to acquire the sights with the

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eye/eyes that you normally use. You may have to slightly cant the top of the pistol inboard to strengthen the wrist fulcrum and afford it rigidity. It's all a matter of personal trial and error until you achieve a balance of what works for you on demand—Musashi's "striking without thought and without form." One system that won't work is the Hollywood/banger horizontally held pistol technique. Stemming from an Israeli draw-from-the-holster-and-fire system, it does not produce precision hits. Yes, an Olympic target shooter took the Gold 60 years ago using this technique. No, it won't get you surgical hits in the street with a large-bore defensive pistol in a for-real contact.

Another suggestion is not to use the "clenched-fist technique," whereby a shooter uses a fist support hand against his chest to facilitate added isometric tension to his shooting stance. It is usually accompanied by an exaggerated diagonal leaning in of the entire body toward the target. The question, of course, is if you have the use of your support arm and the muscular power to clench the fist, why would you be shooting one-handed anyway? You shoot one-handed because you have to, not because you choose to do so. On a target range maybe, but in a do-or-die conflict, that's tantamount to taking a pistol to a shotgun fight.

Whichever system you settle on, make sure it works under battle conditions, before the fact. Undoubtedly, quick, accurate sustained fire is more difficult one-handed as opposed to firing a handgun using two hands, but that's no excuse for not attaining proficiency.

It takes a lot of practice, but so does playing a violin or being a race driver. The subtle difference is if you mess up on a violin, the worst you can do is make a sound like a mating tomcat. If you screw up on the track, you can get a lot of other drivers hurt.

Don't put yourself out on a limb simply because you've lost the use of a limb. There are two definitions of the word "unarmed." ●

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