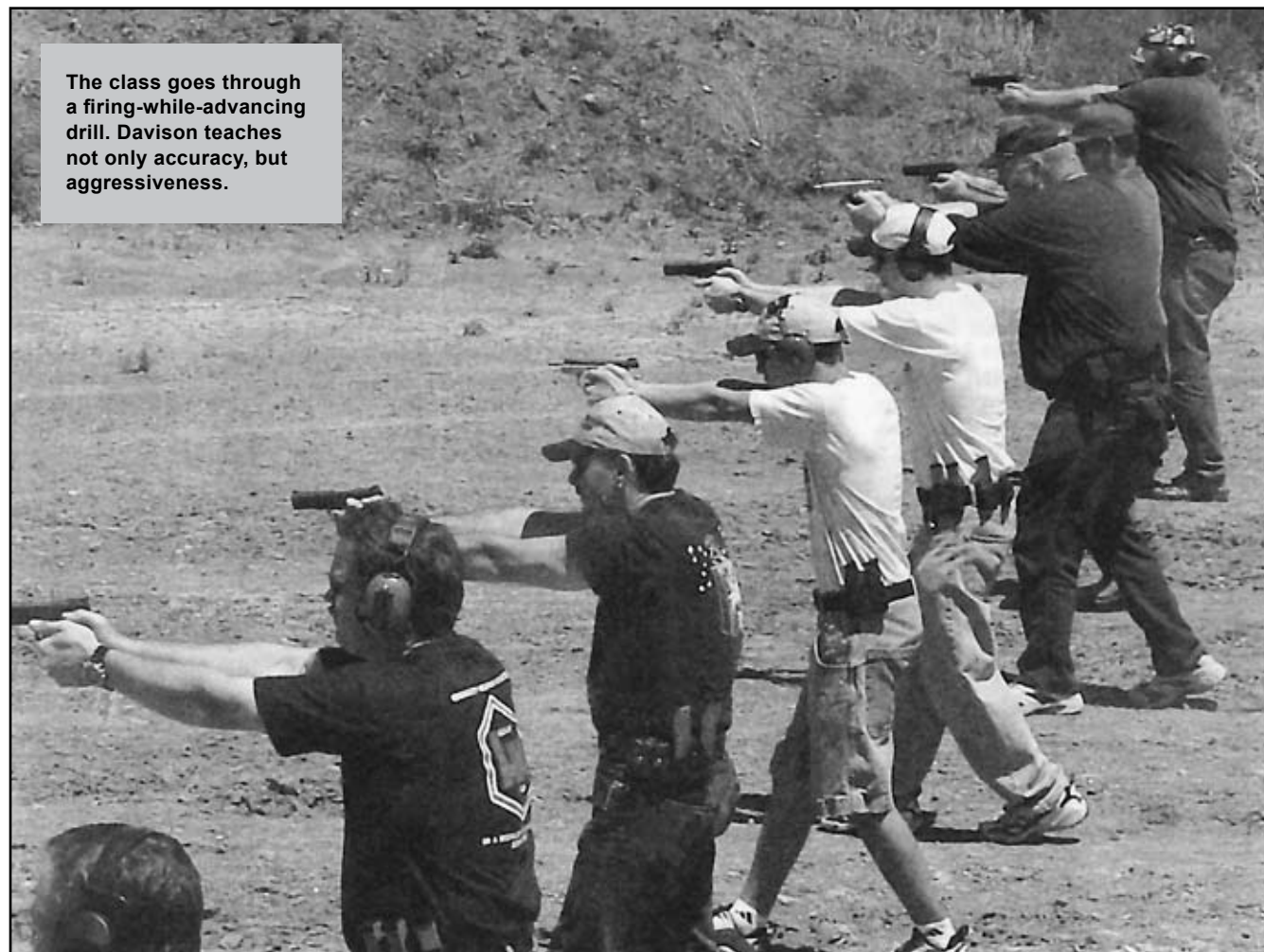


GET BACK IN THE FIGHT /

Win the fight

In north Texas, at the Tac Pro Shooting Center

The class goes through a firing-while-advancing drill. Davison teaches not only accuracy, but aggressiveness.

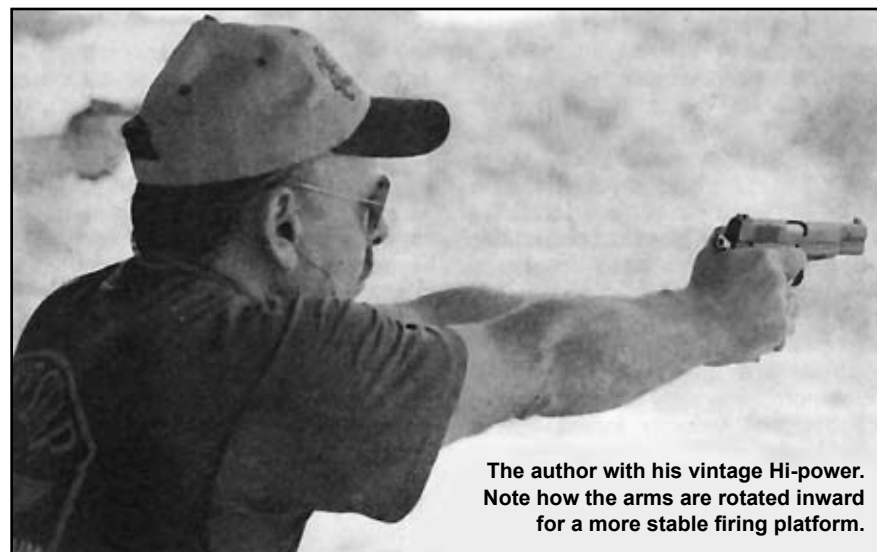


By Brad Potter

Photos by Gary Marcum

Bill Davison knows his stuff. The founder, owner, and chief instructor of the Tac Pro Shooting Center teaches with obvious authority. A 15-plus year career with the Royal Marines and Britain's Special Forces gives Davison the insight and experience to bring unique shooting instruction to his North Central Texas facility. Davison (who prefers "Bill"), with his wife Alice, founded the 550-acre shooting club and training center in 1998 after moving from the United Kingdom. Tac Pro Shooting Center features pistol, rifle, and sporting clay ranges, and includes one of the few 1000-yard rifle ranges in the state.

The center is open daily to the public and also offers memberships, which



The author with his vintage Hi-power. Note how the arms are rotated inward for a more stable firing platform.



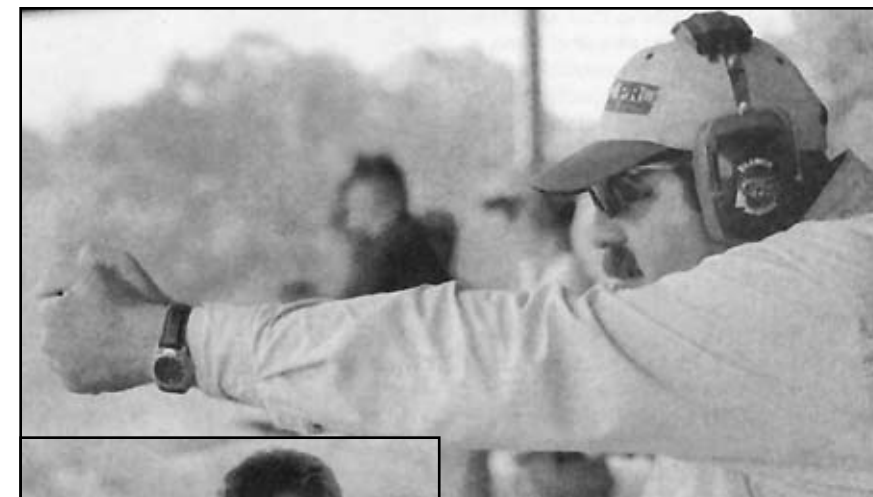
Brian Marcum goes through an immediate action drill to assess a stoppage.

ease the cost of frequent shooting. Members also get a discount on classes, supplies, and range fees. Although Tac Pro Shooting Center hosts quarterly three-gun matches, its biggest attractions are Bill's personally taught classes. During his military career, he was in charge of training for British counter terrorist and several police forces. He has seen action in Northern Ireland, along with some areas he's not at liberty to discuss. He has also provided executive protection services for wealthy individuals and heads of state. So when Bill tells his students to seek cover during a stoppage drill, it's apparent to everyone that he does so for a good reason.

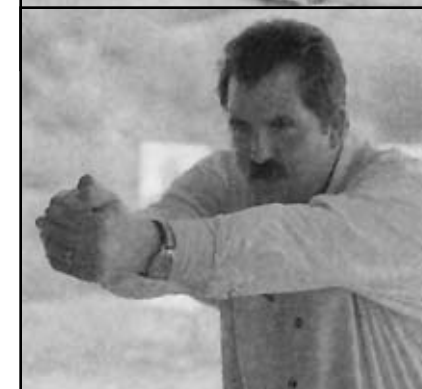
Tac Pro Shooting Center offers primary, intermediate, and advanced classes in pistol, rifle and shotgun, as well as submachine training with the Center's 9mm Colt SMGs. I recently took the primary pistol class and spent an enjoyable three days learning just how much I didn't know about tactical pistol shooting.

Safety First

Day one turned out to be all classroom. Usually each day starts out with class lectures and ends up on the range, but a steady drizzle kept us inside. Safety is the first concern at 'Bill's Range.' Although my seven classmates and I were fairly experienced shooters, Bill went over the rules from square one. He covered range commands, where to point our weapons, and the indisputable fact that the Range Officer's (RO's) word is law. An interesting result of our "where to point the gun" talk was that most folks were at first uncomfortable with Bill's instructions. We all wanted



Bill Davison demonstrates the proper stance, arm, and shoulder position. Note how shoulders are rolled forward slightly to better control recoil.



Front view of Davison's stance and grip.

to point the muzzle at the ground when chambering a round. Bill reminded us that ours was a tactical pistol class and we should always keep our muzzles pointed at the threat (in this case, our targets). We soon got accustomed to the change.

Bill uses plastic drill rounds in the course, and emphasized a fundamental rule of firearms training - never allow live rounds in a drill round setting. The rest of the morning the class learned about the physiology of shooting, particularly in combat situations. Bill covered the aspects of short- and long-term memory that affect how the body "learns" an action. More than 2300 repetitions of a motion like acquiring the correct sight picture are necessary before the action becomes automatic. Even then, regular practice is required to maintain the muscle "memory." Bill is very keen on not perpetuating bad habits. One could fire off thousands of practice rounds, but if the technique isn't proper, as Davison says, "You're just wasting time, money, ammo, and

breathing up the oxygen on my range!" Worse still, the shooter with improper habits continually teaches his muscles the wrong way to operate the weapon. Proper stance, grip, breathing, sight alignment, and trigger pull were also covered that day. Then Bill issued drill rounds and we commenced to learn immediate action and stoppage drills. This vital practice occupied us the remainder of the day, and brought out the best aspect of a Tac Pro Shooting Center class: no one ever need question that it is a "practical" pistol class. The skills he tries to drill into his students are the ones they'll need in an actual gunfight. Everything is geared toward coming out on top in a deadly confrontation.

Immediate Action Drills

First Bill taught us what he meant by "immediate action." When the weapon stops going bang, it's important to quickly do something about it. Immediate action, prior to assessing the stoppage, means seeking cover from fire. Cover from fire versus just plain cover (or concealment) means getting behind something that will stop bullets. Bill mentions curbs and even a foot or so of water as possibilities in a pinch when more solid objects are in short supply. In an open setting such as our range, cover from fire meant dropping to one knee to make us smaller targets.

Only then could we assess and deal with the problem. We learned about the three types of stoppages (slide fully forward, slide to the rear, and blockage in the body), and how to clear them and get "back in the fight." He ended each drill command with that key phrase. We weren't practicing just to raise our IPSC scores. This was stuff that could keep us alive—a powerful message for our little group. Our class, by the way, ranged in age from 13 to 55, and no one missed the focus of Bill's training: win the fight.

A great bonus of taking a Bill Davison class is that he doesn't charge extra for anecdotes. His stories from personal experience are powerful reinforcement that much of what he's teaching was truly learned the hard way. Bill is also still obviously a student at his craft, though. He studies and reviews relevant incidents and files them away for future classes.

During our discussion about training and long-term memory, Bill related a story about a shootout that took place a few years before semi-autos mostly replaced revolvers in law enforcement. When all the noise stopped, the good guys were found to have pockets full of brass! It turned out that their range officer insisted that they eject their revolver cases into their hands and pocket them to keep the range tidy. The officers had trained that way for so long that once they were knee-deep in a real shootout, they perfectly duplicated what their bodies had been taught. Their long-term memory had simply taken over. Imagine how much quicker those reloads might have been without pausing to pocket the spent cases!

As one would guess, our training centered on learning to repeat the proper drills and ingrain them in our long term memory. We started at the extremely close range of three yards. Over the next two days, Bill progressively moved us out to 20 yards. Our goal remained the same—put all the shots in the same hole while keeping them in the cardiovascular triangle (CVT).

This teaching puts Bill at odds with some other contemporary firearms instructors, who tell their charges to always fire at the target's "center of mass."

In most cases, he says, this will result in a hit through the midsection that will irritate, rather than incapacitate an attacker. Learning to place shots in the triangle formed by the Adam's apple and the chest puts the heart, lungs,



Davison provides instant feedback to Connor Marcum during a live fire exercise

and spinal cord in the critical hit zone. Bill will tell you that when your life is at stake, your sole aim should be to immediately stop the threat. Thus, we dutifully directed all our practice rounds at the CVT.

Most students fired more than 1000 rounds in two days. We began with single shots, working on proper trigger usage and sight alignment, then progressed to one and finally three magazines at a stretch. Single stack fans like this writer fired fewer rounds but got more reloading practice (at least that's how I defended the use of my venerable Colt Combat Commander).

Actually, I was illustrating one of my favorite Bill Davison aphorisms. We heard it when we got to the almost requisite discussion of 9mm high capacity versus .45ACP single stack pistols. Bill favors and preaches shot placement and lots of it as opposed to firing fewer, albeit heavier, bullets. During our three-magazine drills on the range, the silence as my pistol ran dry was, as they say, deafening. I went into my immediate action and stoppage routine as my high-cap classmates kept blasting away. Imagine that feeling in a real fight.

Once we had mastered keeping most of our rounds where Bill told us to put them, we moved on to shooting in motion. The person who stands still during a fight isn't likely to be in it very long. Our primary class introduction to shooting while moving consisted of advancing and retreating while practicing the shooting techniques we'd learned earlier.

Stance, grip, sight picture, front sight, trigger, recovery, stoppage, back in the fight. That was the litany Davison repeated as he guided each student individually through the initial 15-yard

movement drill. The intermediate and advanced classes cover more drastic motion and include the draw and moving and shooting from behind various cover situations.

Following our movement drills, we practiced applying our skills from kneeling and prone positions. Bill continually emphasized that fights are anything but static and predictable. He also kept reminding the class of the 2300 training repetitions required to ingrain an action in long-term memory and, of course, that our goal was to ingrain the correct action.

Final Notes

Our three days flashed by way too fast. Hands were sore from seating mags and clearing stoppages. Some seldom-used muscles ached a bit. But overall, everyone felt much more confident that they would come out on the standing end of a gunfight. Bill Davison's class proved to be some of the best instruction I've received in any discipline. Had my flying or scuba classes been as thorough or authoritative as Bill's, I would have needed lessons from Chuck Yeager and Jacques Cousteau.

The Tac Pro Shooting Center is about an hour's drive west of Fort Worth on State Highway 108, six miles south of Interstate 20. The nearest motels are in Stephenville, a quiet town of 15,000 about 14 miles south of the Shooting Center.

Contact Bill or Alice Davison at (254) 968-3112. Tac Pro Shooting Center is also on the web at www.tacproshooting-center.com, where you can find class and match schedules, rates, and other information.