
**POLICE
DEFENSIVE
HANDGUN USE
AND ENCOUNTER
TACTICS**

BRIAN A. FELTER

Police Defensive Handgun Use and Encounter Tactics

Brian A. Felter

Defensive Weaponcraft Training and Consulting, Inc.



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The information contained in this book follows years of extensive researching, gathering, testing, and developing to present safe and effective methods for using a service handgun. Safe and judicious firearms use and practices are stressed extensively throughout this book. If approached, used, and adopted with good common sense, these methods will serve you well. The author accepts no liability for any injuries to persons or damage to property resulting from the application, use, combination, or adoption of any of the techniques, methods, procedures, tactics, or information contained or implied in this book. Further, the techniques, methods, procedures, tactics, and information presented here are in no way a substitute for departmental firearms training programs.

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*Police Defensive Handgun Use
and Encounter Tactics*

*This book is dedicated to
my father, **Walter T. Felter**,
without whose guidance, years
of teaching, and firearms skills,
this book would not have been possible.*

Foreword

There is very little in this world that is genuinely new. Particularly in the area of contemporary self-defense training, most concepts that serve as the basis for all modern instruction were first thought of and contemplated by our spiritual antecedents long ago. We present-day instructors travel, investigate, experience, observe, research, take what is most useful, and (hopefully) incorporate all of it into a scintillating and comprehensive training program. The best instructors think of themselves as neither progenitors nor guardians of knowledge. We are merely the current trustees. It is our solemn responsibility to incorporate what enhancements we can and pass it on. It follows that the most accomplished of us are the master communicators. The author of this volume, my colleague Brian Felter, is one of the very best communicators around today.

I met Brian for the first time back in 1981 when I was instructing a defensive firearms course in the Washington, D.C., area. At the time, I had been a contract instructor for several years, and like most people involved in defensive firearms instruction, I was living hand to mouth. Brian was both a student and an associate instructor, and we had the opportunity to work together on that and many subsequent occasions.

I continued to write and instruct, and Brian did the same. In this defensive firearms training business we are all so impoverished that independent instructors are not really “competitors,” since we all need each other. We try to work together, sharing information and opportunities. Brian was never one to insist that he was always right, nor would he withhold knowledge from other professionals. He shared it freely. That is one reason we got along so well.

This, therefore, is a book on the subject of defensive shooting, written by one

of the instructors in this field most qualified to do so. Unlike many of the shallow and frivolous contemporary texts on this subject, this volume is authored by someone who has a depth of understanding of this topic rivaled by few. He knows of what he speaks.

In addition, Brian is an excellent and innovative writer. The reader will both enjoy and profit from this manual. Some know. Some can communicate. Brian is one of the few who can do both.

John S. Farnam

Preface

In society, police officers serve as the highly visible symbol of civil authority—engaged in maintaining law and order and functioning as the flux between opposing factions. In their varied role, officers must be prepared to respond and handle calls that extend from the mundane to the lethal. What will each day bring, what awaits on the street: only shift's end will tell.

Day to day, officers nationwide are engaging in a profession that can instantly place them at the center of a lethal encounter, fighting for their lives. In preparation for this possible eventuality, they are issued service handguns and trained at the academy in an effort to provide them with the necessary means for coping with an armed threat as the ultimate enforcement of their authority. All too often, this training falls very short of the desired skill level necessary to deal effectively with an armed threat and regain control of the situation. This is not stated to discredit departmental training; departments are faced with the, at times monumental, task of training and qualifying large numbers of officers with limited resources. This is stated to point out a sizable void that exists between departmental firearms training programs and the *modern*, defensive weapon use techniques, tactics, and training, involving the full spectrum of encounter management. Officers must be provided with the means to fill this void: furthering and expanding the vital *officer survival* knowledge essential when dealing with lethal encounters.

Within the last several years, the fore-thinking segments of the law enforcement community have recognized the need to substantially increase *officer survival* awareness and training. The importance of this need cannot be understated, as the use of firearms in assaults on police officers has increased at an alarming rate. Police officers are dealing with a *newer*, more highly trained criminal element—more and

more frequently arriving on the scene ready for an encounter: wearing bulletproof vests, armed with shotguns and semiautomatic high-capacity handguns, increasingly outnumbering the police officers, and often having the advantage in *both* weaponry and numbers. It is thus becoming more and more difficult to stop the threat effectively and control the situation.

Today, every officer must be provided with *the most modern training in the use of his or her service handgun and its associated tactics and completely versed in all areas of encounter management*. Few things, if any, in an officer's career will be as life threatening as an armed encounter, and he or she must be able to control the immediate environment with the means at hand: *the service handgun and his or her ability to use it effectively*.

This book is the "college course" in the police use of the service handgun. The *survival skills* contained herein are founded in the four factors employed to stop a lethal encounter: *mental set, encounter tactics, weapon use skills, and preparation*. It provides you, the working police officer, with a step-by-step understanding of how these factors work in concert to produce *a skilled weapon user who possesses the tactical knowledge and mental set to control his or her environment should a threat present itself*. The "college course" cuts right to the meat of the subject. You are a police officer, you have been through an academy firearms training program. Now, refine your skills with a course that fully covers the service handgun and all the *survival techniques* necessary to win an armed encounter.

This may be the most important book you will ever purchase for yourself or your family. Read it, learn it, and every time you go 10-8, you will have the skills necessary to be a survivor.

Brian A. Felter

Acknowledgments

In any work such as this, many people are ultimately involved: family, friends, fellow instructors, and others. All of these people have influenced or assisted in the realization of this project in one form or another. I take this time to acknowledge some of them.

My beginnings in firearms use and defensive weaponcraft originated under the tutelage of my father, **Walter T. Felter**. Without his instruction and guidance this book would truly not have been possible. Many of the lessons I learned from my father were to become quite a few of the modern defensive truths of today. I owe a large, loving debt to my father, whose skill and training were the crucible that formed my early and later firearms abilities.

Continuing with my family, my wife, **Bonnie Felter**, contributed extensively to this work by producing all the line drawings contained in this book. As a talented artist, she worked for months on the exacting drawings that provide greater understanding of the techniques covered. Her contributions, for these drawings and in many other respects, are greatly appreciated.

A very special thanks goes to **Jim Horan** for his great assistance throughout this and other projects. A good friend, Jim is also a knowledgeable defensive practitioner and instructor. If a knowledgeable hand was needed, he was always there, at the right time, with many excellent ideas.

Another good friend and associate, **John Pepper**, helped form my understanding of many practical considerations and realities. A master defensive user, he is most noted as the inventor of the excellent "Pepper Popper" reactive steel target, used in practical competition around the world. Throughout years of working together—while experimenting, designing, and running IPSC matches and practical

research tools—a large amount of defensive information was generated. John is a true practical innovator, master shot, and excellent defensive firearms instructor.

The teachings of *Colonel Jeff Cooper* directly influenced much of my defensive thought. Both his written word and in-person instruction clarified many defensive truths. Most of my in-person association with Colonel Cooper was spent with pen and pad in hand, saving the defensive information that this master instructor transmitted. I am truly grateful for the learning experiences he has provided me, which have greatly expanded my knowledge in this field.

John Farnam, another friend and associate and a very talented, well-known defensive instructor, deserves mention here. John has been around for years, developing the fine-tuning defensive techniques that have expanded the art form. During our time spent together and in communicating, many defensive ideas have surfaced and been refined.

Also, the help provided by *Massad Ayoob*, *Ray Chapman*, and *Michael Harries* is greatly appreciated. All three are very well known defensive firearms tacticians and instructors, and through their excellent work in the development of defensive and survival techniques the law enforcement community has greatly profited.

Special thanks goes out to *James Hollmann* for his help with this project. A good friend and associate, Jim is a very knowledgeable defensive weapons and officer survival instructor.

Special thanks also go out to *Dave Tracy* and *Dave Smith*, both of whom are well-noted officer survival instructors, for their friendship over the years.

A man never forgets good partners and friends: *Ken Knox* and *Jim Stewart* are both of these and more. Here's to remembering those early years of gun handling and trips into the unknown.

Special appreciation goes to Beretta's *Warren Barron* and *Birger Boggild*. Both good friends for years, Warren has been a great help on many projects, and Birger's superlative firearms knowledge has expanded my understanding of handgun design and mechanical function. This special appreciation is also extended to Sigarms's *Bob Valentine*, *Rich Turner*, and *Harald Ocetnik*. Both Bob and Rich were very supportive of this project, and Harald supplied information from his extensive firearms knowledge. Special appreciation is also extended to Ruger's *Linda DeProfio*, DeSantis Holster's *Gene DeSantis* and *Denny Gaylor*, Bianchi International's *Richard D. E. Nichols*, and Horseshoe Leather's *Andy Arratoonian* for their assistance in this project.

The unsung hero of this book is *Scott Sorrell*, who was responsible for most of the excellent pictures that were rendered into line drawings. My hat is off to this gifted photographer for the excellent service and quality he provided: a truly professional craftsman.

Finally, special thanks go to several other people for a variety of reasons: *Bob Crovatto*, *Richard Azzaro*, *Jack Janetatos*, *Roger Burgess*, and *Linda Figurowski*.

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Overview of Police Defensive Handgun Use and Encounter Tactics

This book may well provide the most complete coverage of defensive shooting techniques and encounter tactics ever presented under one cover. The techniques, tactics, concepts, and descriptions extend from technical details to tactical methodologies. The information presented can provide you with the survival skills necessary to conclude lethal encounters successfully. These skills are founded on four factors—mental set, encounter tactics, weapon use skills, and preparation—that must function together during the encounter. The reduction of any one of these factors will reduce your ability to survive. This book does not cover just weapon use skills, but provides you with all the vital factors that can increase your survival advantage.

This chapter is an overview of the entire book and provides an initial foundation of history, concepts, and central information that will be referred to throughout the book. As such, it provides you with a working knowledge of how defensive handgun use developed, defines basic terminology and concepts, and provides an understanding of how everything works together.

BRIEF HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE MODERN DEVELOPMENT OF DEFENSIVE HANDGUN TECHNIQUES

Throughout the history of handgun use, from the time the first handgun appeared to the beginning of the twentieth century, techniques to improve the defensive use of the handgun have come and gone. History provides many insights into precursor