

TACTICAL

INSIGHTS



By Al Pickles

It was so dark inside the HUD apartment stairwell that SWAT Officer McCully couldn't have read the illiterate gang signs painted and scratched into the walls even if he had been inclined to, which he most certainly wasn't. His full concentration was centered on making it one flight at a time up the eight flights to the fourth floor, then on to the alleged crack pad in 408.

Each flight of stairs took a turn to the right both between and at the specific floor levels. There was an empty, dark well of space between the flights that fell six floors to the basement—some 90 feet. Problem was, the brass banisters had been removed and sold for their salvage metal value and the once supporting balusters had made great cast iron “bats” for the early gang rumbles that carved out turf and established domination of the neighborhood. Consequently, there was no railing in this near pitch black stairwell.

McCully hugged the wall on his left, his Colt AR-15A2 carbine's butt nudging into

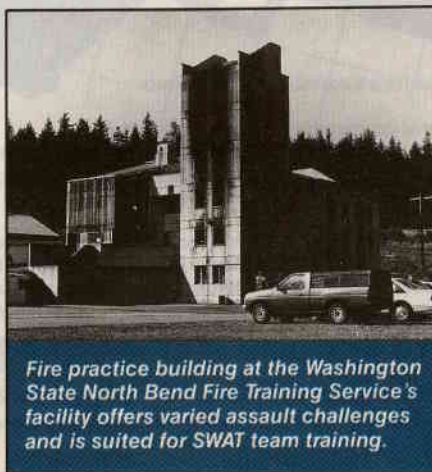
the crook of his right arm as he attempted to sweep the next flight of steps with his flashlight, held high in his left hand. One flight down from McCully, underneath the flight he was quick-sweeping with light, were two more advancing SWAT members assigned to this entrance.

Officer McCully saw the movement and caught sight of a shooter near the top of

the next flight but McCully's sole shot was predictably wild given the position from which he fired the carbine one-handed. The gangbanger lookout had been well adjusted to the semi-darkness and his untrained but instinctive point-shooting served to lift McCully's skull a mite as the two 9mm hollow-points drilled through him at eyebrow level. He bounced off the wall, no doubt already dead, and pitched into the black shaft. The Colt carbine clattered down the hole after McCully but was not the last sound of death heard by the pair of horrified SWAT back-ups.

They would claim, exaggerated by the magnitude of the incident, that the 5.56mm bullet ricocheted within the cement stairwell forever. In their worst dreams—it would do just that.

It would be hard to say that McCully was careless, or that he actually handled the entry wrong. What might be said is that while he displayed uncommon enthusiasm for his assignment, he lacked the extensive training that would have provided many tactical options. And, if a SWAT team needs anything, it needs OP-



Fire practice building at the Washington State North Bend Fire Training Service's facility offers varied assault challenges and is suited for SWAT team training.

Intense instructor-level training scores high marks in shootout survival!



Bill Robnett of the Kent, Washington Police Department, approaches back down slant of roof "at the ready."

Officer Robnett gears-up for SWAT assault training. Use of newest equipment is emphasized.



experience, necessitated by time constraints, provided an entirely different perspective and I was able to analyze concepts, rather than just follow them, as well as spend more time studying their execution.

Training Program

Insights, as a commercial training center, offers more diverse firearms and self-defense courses and "tiered" programs than any school I have yet encountered. Certainly more than any state or federally operated police academy, including FLETC in Glynco, Georgia where I shot every program they had. This, in spite of the fact that the word of Insight's existence has not yet spread much past the Pacific Northwest.

Additionally, Insights has a larger general and specialized instructor staff, men and women with impressive credentials, than any of the nationally—or internationally for that matter—known private shooting schools.

Greg Hamilton, who is billed as "Chief Instructor," is a youngish fellow who seems to have intensely directed his focus during the past ten years, maybe more, towards becoming a trainer in all weapons arts. There would be no sense in my listing his training in military and civilian schools. Suffice to say he has attended, repeatedly, almost every major recognized school and usually aced out their programs. His focus was in becoming exactly what he has become—a Chief Instructor. The beginning of this intense interest, undoubtedly, preceded his time with the U.S. Army Rangers and Special Forces where he carved out an impressive record. More to the point with readers of this law enforcement oriented magazine, Greg is a Certified Firearms Instructor with the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission, a title which I share and can attest to it being one that is not overly easy to attain or retain.

The course I attended was entitled "Law Enforcement Patrol Rifle," a three- (Please turn to page 71)

TIONS. Specifically, and in this fictional scenario, he needed purpose-designed equipment such as a gun-mounted flashlight with a grasp type light switch that would have allowed a conventional shoulder hold with his weapon. Tactically he needed to know that you see much more in this type stairwell if you back up most of the steps. He needed INSIGHTS, or at

least a training program similar to the one offered by Greg Hamilton, the Director of Insights.

This was the first time I have covered a specialized police firearms training program as an observer/reporter rather than writing about a course after I completed it as one of the students—as I have with the most recognized trainers in the field. The

Tribal Officer Don Pickering practices sweeping wall and ground from a roof position presenting least exposure.



Here Officer Pickering is going over the details involved in managing the tactics of ascending a building stairwell.



Moving backwards, the officer advances up stairwell, which, in this instance, provides better viewing of next flight and landing.

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day program including the basics-to-advanced techniques. The course, covering day and night, seemed to me to have a second unadvertised purpose of separating the "wannabes" from the "can do" type. Since the class I watched consisted almost entirely of already certified firearms trainers from several police agencies, they assimilated instruction very quickly.

As a teacher, Greg Hamilton is one of those very few who throws his entire energy behind the concept at hand and boils each step down into rapid fire dialog and easily understood demonstration.

As hard driven as he is, he appears to cover every step in the proper order yet remains constantly aware that there are no absolutes. I was impressed!

Equally as impressive was the location, to which Hamilton miraculously gained access, in which certain phases of the Law Enforcement Patrol Rifle course was taught. Team building entry, in which assault rifles were employed, was taught using the most perfect facilities possible, although usually unavailable. As the accompanying photos indicated, entry tac-

tics were taught at the Washington State North Bend Fire Training Service's vast facilities. These basic training grounds are located within the Cascade Mountain range and feature a large multi-storied fire practice building, as well as ships, fuel tanks, whatever.

The huge cement building presented all manner of entrances, rooms, stairwells and roof configurations so necessary in training fire fighters. It had not previously occurred to me how perfect such a building would be in training SWAT teams in certain tactical facets. Quite obviously it did occur to Greg. The training building had the additional asset of being designed to equally facilitate clear observation of students.

For live firing of all weapons, Insight maintains a new range also located within the Cascades and removed from urban—even suburban—constraints by several miles. That translates to "pack a meal or two" and at least two Thermos of coffee.

I wish it were practical to list and describe all the various courses for police, security and civilians offered by Insights. More than a few have never been offered before by any trainers and I am amazed at what we (police in this case) have been missing. Since it would take a few pages just to list the Insights courses, let me suggest that you send for their catalog and supplement and peruse the offerings.

Insights Training Center, Inc. is located at 240 NW Gilman Blvd., Dept. G&W, Issaquah, WA 98027, (206) 391-4834—and don't forget your fishing gear! ■

Much before Officer Pickering's time, author enjoyed a post retirement Tribal Game Protector position with the same Indian Tribe. Together we recalled some beautiful vistas within the 500,000 acre reservation. Author often patrolled on horseback.

Kent Officer Bill Robnett demonstrates proper hold of Colt carbine while utilizing common duty type flashlight. Note "flag" in gun's port indicating it is unloaded.

