

InSights Training Center

by Sonny Jones

While many serious students of defensive handgunning aspire to attend the so-called Big Four firearms academies, the time and expense of doing so is often prohibitive. Fortunately, a solution exists.

There are a growing number of "third generation" trainers around the country, operating regional training academies, who are beginning to make a name for themselves. In most cases, the names are well-deserved, because many of this latest crop of aficionados have studied with all of the acknowledged masters. Some have even advanced that combined knowledge of pistolcraft another evolutionary step. One such trainer is Greg Hamilton, who along with Lisa McKay, runs Insights Training Center in Washington state.

Hamilton and McKay originally got together when mutual business associates were planning a new indoor shooting range for the Seattle area. Although plans for the range were eventually shelved, the two went on to found InSights, Inc.

Lisa McKay was essentially recruited into the position of instructor by the aforementioned investors, who were savvy enough to realize the growing interest of women gunowners. With an extensive background in all types of sporting activities, McKay quickly applied her natural abilities to the shooting sports. She currently acts as assistant trainer, along with more recent additions to the Insights staff, John Clarke and John Jones.

The primary driving force behind InSights, Greg Hamilton, is a former Army Ranger. Following a four-year enlistment in the elite special operations forces, Hamilton worked as an instructor for John Shaw, a trainer of some renown

before his academy, the Midsouth Institute of Self Defense Shooting (MISS) began to concentrate primarily on military training contracts. While with MISS, Hamilton began to realize that his true interest lay in the civilian market, an area where he felt proper defensive training could truly make a difference in people's lives.

While Hamilton's military background remains a strong influence, it is present mainly in the "walk-through, talk-through" method used to inculcate refined technique into new students' shooting skills. What that means is this: Hamilton demonstrates a particular technique at full speed, then breaks it down into a step-by-step sequence of individual movements. Students then master each step of the slowed-down sequence, under close supervision to ensure proper technique, before attempting to put it all together into one fluid movement.

That method of training is a basic concept for InSights, providing the

framework for students to leave the class with the capability to improve shooting skills on their own. InSights' literature details live fire and dry fire drills so that students "can practice by themselves," says Hamilton. "If you follow those drills, you can become extremely good."

Constant Refinement

At Insights office in Issaquah, Washington, a wall stands filled with certificates of completion from a wide variety of training programs (many related to self-defense but not necessarily to firearms), attesting to the InSights philosophy of constantly improving and refining the information passed on to students. With each of the trainers represented by multiple framed documents, and more advanced training scheduled for all of them, the wall of certificates is a dominant feature of the room's spare design.

The focus seems fitting, for from those diverse sources come, piece by piece, the unique total approach

to defensive shooting offered by this young training academy.

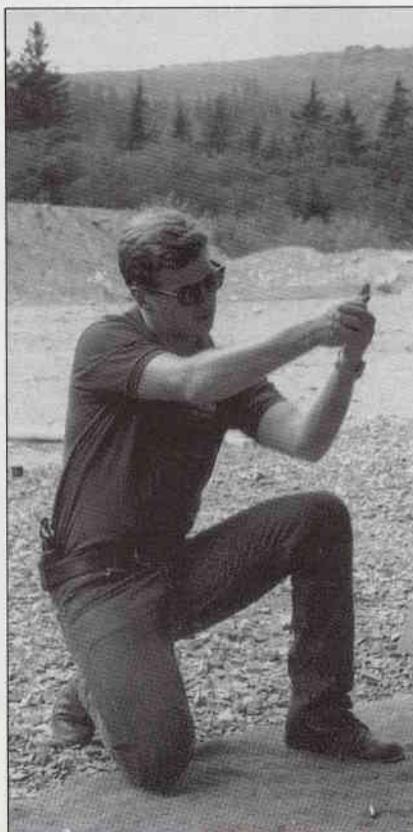
Hamilton does not discriminate in the appropriation of upgrades to his technique. For instance, some students are surprised to find elements of competitive shooting utilized in InSights defensive drills. One prominent example is the stress Hamilton places on economy of motion, or the elimination of superfluous movement during execution of shooting drills—a concept also strongly emphasized by IPSC masters.

About InSights Courses

Basic level courses, involving more lecture than advanced courses, are conducted primarily at InSights office and classroom in an office/retail complex in Issaquah, an upscale community about 25 miles from Seattle's airport. (The price for each class is \$100) The actual shooting portions of any given course are conducted on a private range about 30 miles further into the Cascade mountains. For those who have never visited the Pacific Northwest, the scenery is breathtaking. InSights' range is located in the shadow of several mountains, near a meandering river several miles from the nearest paved road. Carved from the side of an incline, the range is fairly new, with an earthen backstop. The site has a covered shooting area with benches, but beyond that facilities are limited to parking areas and a Portajohn set within walking distance. Most shooters pack a lunch, for the nearest restaurant is inside a truck stop about six miles away.

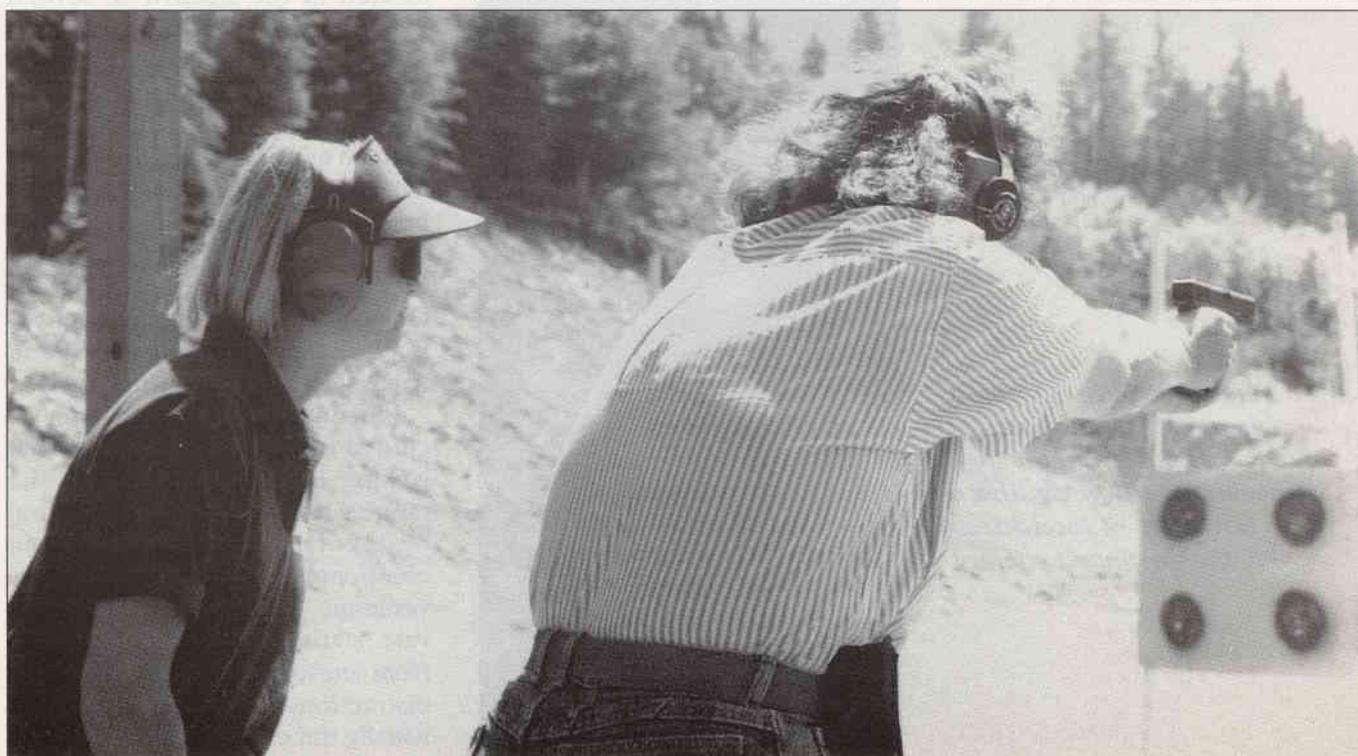
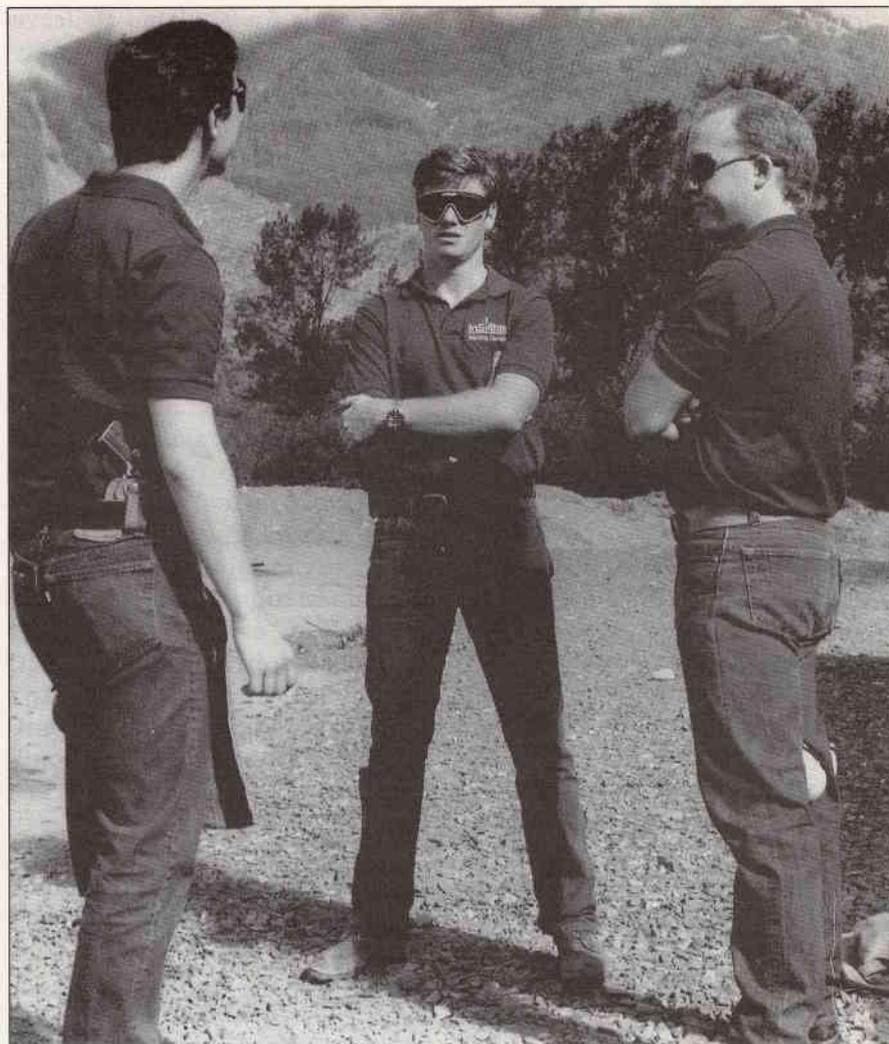
Personally, I enjoyed the secluded sight. Although somewhat lacking in modern facilities, the range's setting amidst the natural beauty of the mountains more than compensated for that slight inconvenience. In addition, the its private status afforded us freedom from curious onlookers and the distractions of other shooters, as is usually the case on a public range.

InSights' Greg Hamilton demonstrates a modified Weaver stance from the high kneeling position, against a backdrop of spectacular Pacific Northwest scenery.



A description of InSights' general defensive handgun class, which I recently took, includes instruction on stance, grip, sight alignment, trigger control, malfunction drills, slow fire accuracy, rapid shots on single and multiple targets, tactical and speed reloads, ready positions, the draw, strong and weak hand shooting, and proper tactical response to self defense shooting. The intermediate course develops these skills further, and adds shooting from behind cover and from kneeling and prone positions. But

Instructors (l to r) John Clarke, Greg Hamilton, and John Jones discuss the finer points of a technique, right. Below, Lisa McKay looks on while a student practices one of InSights' accuracy drills. Once past the basic gun handling courses, students spend little time in the classroom. While some brief lecturing is done on-range, most of the instructors' efforts are concentrated on coaching individual student's skills.



these words, printed in a brochure, cannot adequately convey the slight but discerning variations on currently accepted pistolcraft technique that make InSights' program unique.

For instance, during the intermediate course, I became familiar with a subtlety that has increased my speed and accuracy considerably. While the normal tendency seems to be to grasp a handgun very tightly with both hands, this refinement stresses relaxing the strong hand and gripping tightly with the weak hand. The result: a more relaxed and flexible trigger finger, which allows for a faster and more controlled trigger press. (You can test this concept yourself, by merely holding out your strong hand and flexing your trigger finger while holding the hand with muscles tightened, and then with those same muscles relaxed. See how quick and limber your trigger finger is with a relaxed grip?)

It is this recognition of good sound technique, along with the willingness to incorporate superior tactical modifications into an effective survival strategy, regardless of the origins of either, that is continually changing the definition of state-of-the-art defensive handgunning technique.

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