

## Making Cops Sweat To Keep Them Alive

*'The more you sweat on the training field, the less you'll bleed on the battlefield.'*

—a favorite saying of drill instructors

BY ERIC CARLSON

You are a Brunswick County Sheriff's Deputy assisting an FBI agent with a warrant for the arrest of a dangerous fugitive. He is a convicted felon who killed two police officers during an escape.

He is holed up in a motel room. He is assumed to be armed. The SWAT team has cleared the building. You are going in without knocking.

Revolver in hand, you burst through the doorway and down a short hall.

You see the man sitting in a chair. You see a shotgun leaning against the wall. He reaches for the weapon and rises.

"Freeze!" You shout. "Drop the gun! Drop the gun!"

But the man keeps coming. He raises the shotgun to his shoulder and racks a round into the chamber.

You fire, a split second before the blast.

He is dead...but so are you.

The words JUSTIFY YOUR ACTIONS appear on the giant video screen as you turn to face your instructors.

"Why did you wait so long to shoot?" asks sheriff's department training officer Sgt. Don Stovall. "You knew this man had already killed two officers. You saw him turn for the gun. You saw him move toward you."

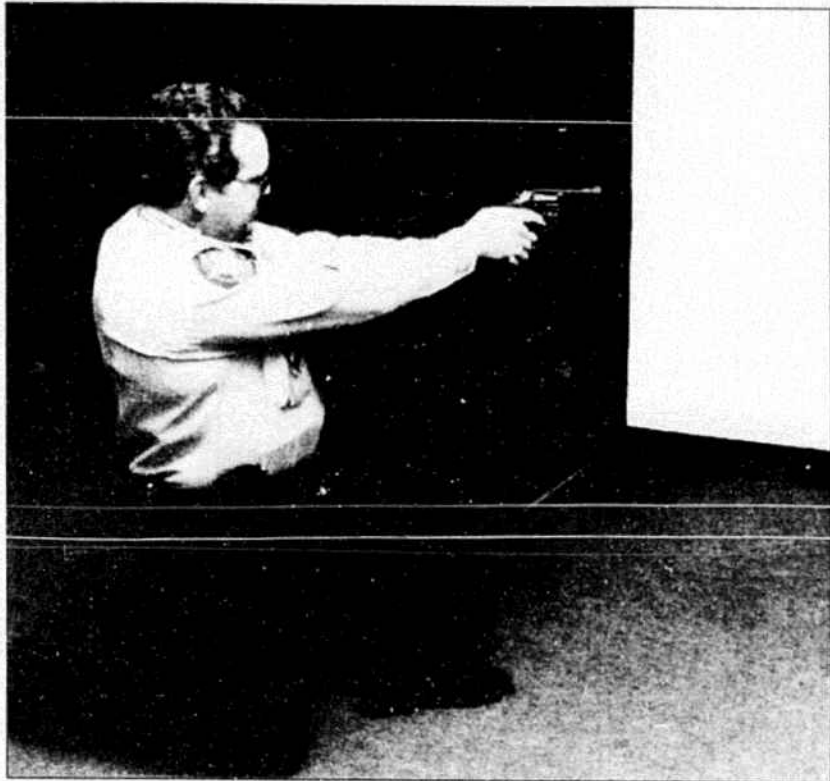
"What did you think he was going to do, kiss you?" Stovall asks. "We're not trying to hurt your feelings or belittle you. We're trying to keep you from getting killed."

That was the point of an intense four-day training session held at the Brunswick County Law Enforcement Association gun range recently. Thanks to a grant from Brunswick Community College, officers throughout the county were given the rare opportunity to test themselves against "FATS," a sophisticated Firearms Training Simulator used by the nation's top law enforcement agencies to train their personnel in the life-or-death art of judgmental shooting.

"It's an invaluable tool," said BCSD firearms instructor Lt. Carl Pearson, who has worked for several years to bring the FATS machine to Brunswick County.

"All police officers have to be trained in the use of deadly force. And we do a lot of firearms training on the range," Pearson said. "But those are familiar surroundings, where you have an instructor telling you when to shoot. This adds the element of the unknown. It teaches you actual street timing. It forces you to make the snap decisions that can prevent you or an innocent bystander from getting killed."

Standing in total darkness, the next officer faces the wall-sized video screen and holsters the specially modified handgun that will record the exact timing and placement of his shots. He listens to instructions from FATS operator Roy Felton of National Firearms Training Inc.,



TAKING AIM against an armed aggressor, Deputy Richard DuVall has only a split second to decide whether to fire. (The camera's flash obscures the video image.)



A SHOTGUN BLAST aimed straight at the trainee climaxes one of the scenarios on the state-of-the-art Firearms Training Simulator (FATS).



DEPUTY Richard DuVall hears a critique of his performance from firearms instructors Roy Felton (left) and Sgt. Don Stovall.



LT. CARL PEARSON (left) explains the operation of the Firearms Training Simulator (FATS) to Deputy Robert Wayne Long.

the Marietta, Ga., firm that uses the machine in seminars across the U.S.

Felton is a former U.S. Marine Corps security officer and a 10-year veteran of the El Paso, Texas, Police Department. He's also a maestro of the FATS machine, selecting from dozens of video scenarios designed to test an officer's ability to make crucial decisions quickly, under extreme stress. He can even change the action as the officer reacts, rattling assumptions and adding unexpected plot twists.

He takes a devilish pleasure in his work.

"OK. You're on patrol. You notice that the car in front of you has an expired registration," Felton says. "There are two men inside. You ask the dispatcher to run the tag numbers. She tell you they are wanted for armed robbery. You hit the blue light and pull them over."

"Have a nice day!"

The deputy pulls his gun, switches it to his left hand and takes cover behind a barricade (as if seated in his patrol car). He begins loudly barking commands, ordering the occupants to put their hands out the windows.

The left door opens. The driver bolts.

"Halt! Halt!" the officer yells. He follows the running figure with his weapon, but he holds his fire.

Suddenly the right door opens. The passenger stands. He pulls a shotgun from behind the seat.

The deputy fires three times. Again the message appears on the screen: JUSTIFY YOUR ACTIONS.

"Good shooting," Felton says. He presses a button and three small dots appear on the screen. The dot on the gunman's arm is green. The two on his chest are red, signifying lethal hits. The screen also displays the officer's reaction time.

"Why didn't you shoot the other guy?" Pearson asks.

"He didn't pose an immediate threat," the deputy answers.

"Good. What did he look like?" asks Pearson.

"You've got an armed robbery suspect loose in the county. Now you've got to get on the radio so we can find him."

"Gee. It happened so fast," says the deputy. "Let's see...White male. About five-ten, 175 pounds. Light brown hair. Flannel shirt. Blue jeans."

"Good description," Pearson says. "Wrong guy."

Felton rewinds the scenario and allows the deputy to watch in slow motion. Sure enough, the driver was a tall, skinny man with black hair, wearing a blue jacket. The deputy had given a perfect description of the man he had just shot.

After five scenarios and de-briefings, Felton shakes hands with each one of his "victims" before they leave.

"If their palms aren't sweaty, I haven't done my job,"

he said, wiping his hand on his pants. "Next!"

You are assisting two federal marshals escorting a visiting ambassador down a city sidewalk to a waiting limousine. The marshals walk on either side of the diplomat while you follow a few steps behind.

A tall man approaches your group, walking quickly with his head down. His eyes glance furtively toward the man you are protecting.

As the trio in front of you draws even with the approaching stranger, he stops.

He turns suddenly toward the ambassador.

He reaches into his back pocket and pulls out a black object.

He begins to raise it toward eye level. He shouts, "Hey!"

The ambassador turns. The marshals reach under their suit jackets as the man advances toward them.

By now you have your weapon out. You raise it to eye level. You draw a bead on the man's torso.

As you begin to squeeze, you see the man put a camera to his eye and snap a picture of the ambassador. He waves in thanks and walks on.

Your heart pounds as you imagine what might have happened if you shot this clueless—but totally innocent—tourist and had to justify your actions.

Your palms are sweating.

"Have a nice day," says a voice in the darkness.

## Basinwide Plan's Purpose Is To Protect Water Quality

Area residents have until March 1 to comment on a proposed plan for managing water quality in the Lumber River Basin, which includes most of Brunswick County.

The draft plan was unveiled Feb. 7 by the N.C. Division of Environmental Management at a meeting in Whiteville attended by only about a dozen people. Speakers included Alan Scott, basinwide planning coordinator in the Water Quality section and Dave Adkins, regional water quality supervisor.

Through basinwide planning, the state aims to balance protection of water quality with growth, development and sound economic planning. The idea is to look at all types of pollution sources, consider their overall effects on the entire basin, and look at ways to protect existing water quality or to restore waters with deteriorating quality.

One goal is to help regulators decide how much waste can be discharged into streams without harming water quality. A key related recommendation calls for holding sewage treatment plants scheduled for expansion to their existing waste loads, which means treatment would have to be improved. Discharge limits for new plants built in the basin would be determined on a case-by-case basis, but are proposed to be fairly stringent.

The Lumber River basin encompasses an area of 3,343 square miles stretching along the North Carolina/South Carolina border from Brunswick County to the Sandhills region in southern Moore and Montgomery counties. It includes most of Brunswick, Columbus and Robeson counties and parts of seven other counties. It includes 2,283 miles of freshwater streams, most of which are classified as swamp wa-

ters. There are another 4,800 acres of waters along the coast that are classified as salt waters, about 90 percent of which are classified as SA (protected for shellfishing as well as all Class SB uses) and the balance, SB (primary recreational uses such as frequent swimming, as well as aquatic life propagation and survival).

Basinwide, nonpoint source pollution appears to be the most widespread reason for water quality degradation, while point sources—specific dischargers such as treatment plants or seafood processing houses, usually with discharge permits—account for about one-third of the pollution in the basin.

The most widespread source of water degradation appears to be sediment, followed by metals such as mercury in fish tissue, and low dissolved oxygen.

Within the entire basin, agriculture appears to be the most widespread nonpoint source of pollution, followed by manmade changes in habitat and urban activities.

In the salt or estuarine waters, fecal coliform bacteria was the only reported cause of impairment, with nonpoint source pollution implicated—agriculture, urban runoff, septic tanks and marinas.

However, no source of pollution could be found for 107 miles of impaired streams.

"What is clear from the plan is that all categories of point and nonpoint source pollution have the potential to cause significant water quality degradation if proper controls and practices are not utilized," the executive summary notes.

At present forestry and agriculture are both exempted from most environmental rules and regulation, such as the Coastal Area Management Act—something Alan

*The Lumber River basin encompasses 3,343 square miles from Brunswick County to the Sandhills region. It includes 2,283 miles of freshwater streams, most of which are classified as swamp waters, and 4,800 acres of salt waters.*

Scott, basinwide planning coordinator, said he thinks should change.

The plan looks at four major drainage or watershed areas within the basin, two reaching into Brunswick County.

The Waccamaw River watershed includes the Waccamaw River. Water quality along the river ranges from good to excellent in the middle reaches, declining to good and then good-fair as it nears the South Carolina border. In these lower

reaches, the state has posted consumption advisories for largemouth bass and blackfish because higher than acceptable concentrations of mercury have been found in fish tissue samples.

The drainage area also includes much of the Green Swamp and Juniper Creek. Their very low pH results in a quite different array of fauna that includes...

The Coastal Areas watershed includes the portion of the basin that flows into the Atlantic Ocean as well as the area including the Shallotte and Lockwood Folly rivers.

Both rivers are estuarine over much of their length and flow directly into the Atlantic Ocean. Studies indicate a rating of good or good-excellent water quality for Lockwood Folly, Royal Oak Swamp and Cool Run. However, closures of shellfishing waters due to elevated fecal coliform bacteria in the lower river are of concern.

Data also suggests a tentative good rating for Shallotte River.

**Basinwide Management Goals**

Longer-term goals include trying to reduce wastes entering treatment plants, recycling of treatment byproducts, staying abreast of new technologies and studying the capacity of swamp waters in regard to waste absorption and water quality. The agency's existing model isn't entirely reliable for swamp water conditions.

The plan also calls for continuing efforts to identify the geographic extent of mercury in fish tissue and the numerous sources of fecal coliform bacteria and controls, and working with agricultural, forestry and development communities to reduce nutrient, sediment and chemical runoff through expanded and improved use of best management practices.

Specific plans for dealing with point (specific discharge) and non-point (general, such as agricultural and stormwater run-off) pollution sources in the near term (the next five years) include:

- when most existing wastewater treatment plants expand, maintaining the existing waste loads for oxygen-consuming wastes;

- on a case-by-case basis possibly requiring more stringent limits at existing plants in areas where documented water quality problems exist;

- continuing efforts to improve compliance with permitted limits; there are dischargers within the basin who are not in compliance;

- improving pretreatment of industrial wastes before they are introduced to municipal wastewater treatment plants to reduce toxicity in effluent;

- increasing surveillance of certain animal-feeding operations for compliance;

- requiring industrial facilities to develop and implement stormwater pollution prevention plans;

- working with other agencies to encourage use of best management practices in target areas, reducing sediment and nutrient runoff into sensitive surface waters;

- working with fellow agencies to implement DEM's own water supply watershed protection, federal urban stormwater and state animal waste control rules.

Public comment will be accepted through March 1. To submit comments or to receive a copy of the draft plan, contact Alan Clark by writing the N.C. Division of Environmental Management, P.O. Box 27535, Raleigh, N.C. 27626-0535 or calling 919-733-5083.