



JUST THE SHOT!

by Kevin Love

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Starsky and Hutch, Charlie's Angels and Dirty Harry all make it look easy — too easy.

So too does most real-life news footage, albeit stripped of the Hollywood glamour.

Slipping the revolver from the holster, raising and firing in one smooth action seems easy, doesn't it?

Sitting there in your arm-chair in front of the television, you're certain you too could calmly fire off a disabling shot at an armed maniac, even in a crowded shopping centre or busy city street.

Forget it. When on the rare, indeed, unique, occasion a pistol is drawn by a member of the A.F.P., weeks of intensive training will ensure that even one shot will carry with it every possible precaution that it will do its job quickly and effectively.

I know what training we take for granted means because this week I fulfilled a long-term ambition and tried my aim with a police Smith and Wesson .38 revolver — and failed miserably.

The fact that the shoot took place on the A.F.P.'s new ultra-modern,

computerised range didn't help me one bit.

With keen eye and steady hand, I've always been convinced that it would be little different from the cap-guns and air-rifles of my youth.

Well, the 12 rounds I fired off at seven metres would have gone straight over the head of public enemy number one and maybe hit some stray sea-gull. And that was with a rock-steady arm, gritted teeth and, I thought, perfect aim straight at that bull's-eye.

"I'm certain the public does think firing a pistol is far too easy — and they are way off the mark", the officer-in-charge of the Operations Training Branch, Chief Inspector Chris Thomson, said.

Former 10th Gurkha Regiment, British Army, and former Australian Army, Chief Inspector Thomson has ultimate responsibility for the use of the new range and the even more intensive training programmes that will be a part of the Force.

Built by the Detroit Bullet Trap Corporation of Illinois, the system at the new A.F.P. complex in the A.C.T. suburb of Weston had its first thorough use by police cadets

and plainclothes detectives recently.

The only one of its type in Australia and among the most advanced in the southern hemisphere, the range features six armour-plated firing booths, complete with loud-speaker systems, overhead electrically-operated rails to bring the target to the shooter for scoring, the ability to programme up to 10 different shooting tests and a fume-expelling air system.

The range can accommodate every type of pistol, from the light-weight self-loading Walpha .22 pistol issued to policewomen to the 7.62 Armalite rifle.

It also includes 16 different types of targets, from the simple circular bull's-eye to the silhouetted "bad-guy" figure and a series of coloured life-size targets that run along rails at the rear of the range.

The running-man system features, among others, an unarmed man and a woman carrying a shopping basket.

These are used in "stress shooting", where an officer is required to shoot from a standing, kneeling and

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LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

prone position only after deciding if the target is friend or foe.

This type of shooting is the rarest and most difficult of all and even those A.F.P. officers openly enthusiastic with the new range concede that the atmosphere of such a situation is impossible to duplicate.

Chief Inspector Thomson, tongue-firmly-in-cheek, suggested an antique wine glass worth at least \$1000 and placed off-centre from a target bull's-eye could be the most effective aid in stress shooting.

"If the shooter misses the glass, he gets to keep it", he said.

But such descriptions are saved only for newcomers unfamiliar with the terms. When A.F.P. members visit the range, it's serious stuff from beginning to end.

Lessons start with a lecture about the legal and departmental requirements of handling fire-arms — so strict that shooting in a shopping centre or a busy city street is just not on — feature terse instructions on loading, taking aim and firing and end with a surprisingly formal warning that it is an offence to leave the range with any live shells.

Cadet police shooters have to pass a strict scoring test over four days and experienced shooters are required to regularly return for re-examination.

Failure at any level means the officer has to return until he can satisfy the force guidelines.

And the ultimate aim?

Chief Inspector Thomson: "In a lifetime, you might only have to use your gun once and it will take only a fraction of a second.

"So there is no way I could describe what that means.

"But if an officer fires off one shot, he needs to know that is all that should be required to do the job.

"If he needs two shots, well, from then on other police officers might be reluctant to link their destinies with him."

A.F.P. Commissioner Sir Colin Woods was asked at his first press conference after taking on the job more than a year ago, whether there would be anything done to alter the public's belief that Commonwealth Police were "pulled in off the street, given a gun, turned around three times and let loose on the public."

If that was ever the case — and no-one in the force, not even those who want even stricter training programmes, will agree with it — it certainly no longer applies.

Not by a long shot.

I, the country Cop, being of unsound mind and worn out body, hereby make my last Will and Testament:

To my Wife:

I leave all my worldly goods, and a big apology for not being home as often as I should and for being so tired when I was home and she wanted to go out. I also take this last opportunity to explain that I really wasn't having as much fun at work as she imagined.

To my Children:

I leave all the wisdom we coppers never had, in the hope that they will grow up to seek sensible employment and not be at the beck and call of a public who doesn't want them.

To the Officers:

Who through the years have supplied us with inadequate transport, poor equipment, impossible stations, poor leadership and who have gone out of their way to make our working lives a misery, I leave all the equipment, in order that it may be melted down and turned into suppositories so that they can do with it what I have been wanting to tell them to do with it for years.

To the Officers:

Who were fair minded and took an interest in us, I leave a friendly wave and good wishes. To the other officers, afore mentioned, I also leave a wave, but add a slightly different finger and wrist action.

To the College:

I leave 390 lbs of

1. Law books
2. Acts of Parliament
3. Orders
4. Regulations

and other assorted bull dust in the hope that some day, someone, will introduce a uniformity of training which will assist the working police officer.

To the Crown Solicitors:

Who withdrew prosecutions or plea bargained against my wishes or in my absence, I leave a pair of sweaty socks and a set of water wings for the next time they try to walk on water.

To the Defence Solicitors:

Who harrassed me, laid allegations against me and called me a liar, under the privilege of the court room, I leave a stone, to be placed under each piece of paper they have to write on and the hope that their wives run off with the local garbage collectors.

Finally, to those in the Force who have prevented the promotion of worthy coppers by:-

1. Malicious gossip
2. Favouritism
3. Using their senior positions
4. Being afraid they would be shown up

I leave the sure knowledge that if I had to do it all over again, I would probably do it all over them.

*Signed: "The Country Cop".
Witnessed By: "His offsider".*