REAL-WORLD RESPONSES

For lightning-fast self-defense, top trainer Paul Carlson offers reality-based firearm training!

By **Richard Johnson**

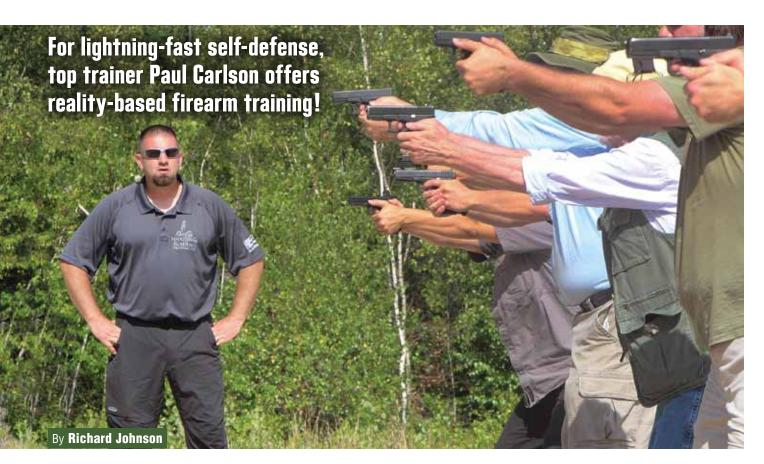**Pushing my children behind me, I reached for my gun and focused on the man I unwittingly let corner us in a shopping center parking lot. Suddenly sensing he had picked the wrong victim, the would-be robber hastily fled, leaving my oblivious kids and me behind.**

Although I had been a police officer for more than a decade, that incident was the first time I had been completely surprised by a potential attacker. The massive and immediate adrenaline dump was unlike the gradually building tension I normally experienced when running a hot call on the job. Although I had studied body alarm responses and trained hard to win violent confrontations, little of my law enforcement training actually prepared me for what I experienced in that very brief incident.

I began searching for training that addressed the situation I had encountered. That's when I met Paul Carlson.

Safety Solutions

Carlson is the owner and lead instructor of Safety Solutions Academy (SSA). At my first class, he said something that to me rang deeply true: Standing alone in a dark parking lot and facing an armed attacker is not the time to wonder if you have the skills to defend yourself with a firearm.

SSA offers reality-based firearms training for armed citizens and law enforcement officers across the country. One of the key things that separates the SSA from other firearms training

courses is the focus on utilizing techniques that work with—not against—the body's natural reaction to sudden, life-threatening danger. When encountering stress, the body attempts to adapt to best handle that event. When the stress is an unexpected attack, the adaptation response can be quite radical. Vision, breathing and cognitive functions can all be significantly affected. SSA teaches shooting techniques that compliment, not fight, the body's reaction to danger.

Fast-Action

When teaching handgun combat aimed at synthesizing reaction and action—and the majority of SSA's curriculum deals with handguns—it helps to have as your example weapon a handgun that works simply and intuitively and can be brought quickly into action. Not coincidentally, the preferred gun manufacturer of SSA and Carlson is Glock.

"When it comes to defending myself, and those that I love, I want as few steps as necessary between myself and those who want to harm me," said Carlson. "A Glock is going to work, and it works well with how my body responds to life-threatening stress."

Simplicity and reliability are the two main features of Glock pistols that Carlson highlights as being critical for success. Carlson's personal carry weapon is the G17 with the grip cut down to the length of a G19.

"Glock pistols are consistent. The trigger on a Glock is relatively light and short compared to those on other handguns. Trigger

press can be an issue for students when they need to make a precision shot. The Glock SAFE ACTION trigger strikes a strong balance between safety and the ability to get reliable hits on targets precisely."

Carlson sees more Glock pistols than any other. He estimates that 40 percent of his students come to class with a Glock, and more than a few students change to a Glock after their own pistols fail in class. The SSA has Glock pistols on hand for students to use if their personally owned pistol goes down during training.

Training Style

Carlson's background is in education. This gives him a unique perspective in educating firearms students in an industry dominated by former military and law enforcement officers.

"Teaching firearms-related content seemed to follow a lifelong pattern of transitioning to teaching topics that I was passionate about," said Carlson. "As a professional teacher, it only seemed natural to share what I was interested in and passionate about with other people."

For a new shooter or one who is trying to build weak skills, a military-style shooting course may throw too much at the student at once. If the student is buried under the accumulation of tactical terms, operator-inspired chic and the barking of range commands, learning can shut down. Intimidation has its uses in some training situations, but in many instances it can be a detriment.

The techniques taught by Carlson focus on quickly responding to an unexpected threat. He does not spend large amounts of training time teaching students how to shoot tight groups. Rather, he helps students find the quickest way to get multiple rounds into the high, center-mass area of a man-sized target.

Students are not taught to fire a specific number of rounds—they are taught to fire until they visualize the threat no longer exists. Carlson told me that no one knows how many shots might be needed in a real self-defense encounter, so he does not want to train students to shoot only a specific number of shots for the sake of making his course of fire easy to manage.

> **" Standing alone in a dark parking lot and facing an armed attacker is not the time to wonder if you have THE SKILLS TO DEFEND YOURSELF with a firearm. "**

Final Thoughts

Sometimes egos can foul up training, and an instructor may hold onto a bad idea or an outdated concept merely because he or she doesn't want to admit that a better way has developed. I saw it far too often in my law enforcement career.

Paul Carlson and the Safety Solutions Academy are a breath of fresh air in the training community. The training program is exceptionally well researched, and it is flexible enough to change as new discoveries are made about how people react in combat. Carlson is not afraid to update his program when necessary, so students will never be taught something that he knows is not the most effective technique.

Carlson is an excellent teacher who goes through great pains to make sure his students get the best training he can possibly provide. His training can be relied on when walking through that dark parking lot. For more information, visit safetysolutionsacademy.com or call 440-678-8551. **PHD**

Caption goes here. Caption goes here. Caption goes here. Caption goes here. Caption here. Caption goes here. Caption goes here. Caption goes here. Caption goes here. Caption goes here. Caption.