

Pistol Shooting: The Art (Part 1)

by Edwin C. Hall

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This will be an experiment to see if enough interest is generated to make this into a series. Please provide feedback (negative or positive) to help me tailor this to an interesting text.

First, let's discuss the old saying, "The masters know the secrets. They just won't tell us." If you listen close you will find that they are telling us the secrets. We're just not listening with the same background. As we travel along our paths, we pick up little bits from here and there. We add those little bits together at our own pace and suddenly, "Oh! That's what they meant!" The really interesting part is that a short time later we see it again, in yet a different light. Each is correct. Each is the answer. But each is perceived differently. The same thing happens when we try to help another new shooter. We try as hard as we can to explain something, but can see that it isn't understood the same way we meant it. The trouble with printed media, is that there is no visible immediate feedback, as there is with a conversation. Whether this series is useful or totally off-track let me know.

OK, I'll get on with it. It's been said that shooting is 95% mental by some, 97% by others, etc. Let's just say that it is all connected to a mental aspect in one way or another. You must learn (mental process) the physical aspects as you grasp the fundamentals just as you will learn the attitudinal effects. I hope over the next many months to touch on a large variety of those "fundamentals" and a few "advanced" areas as well, all in a mental vein. Fundamentals are great to revisit all along the way. As mentioned earlier, we view the same item differently, the further we go. Sometimes we'll pick up a little extra from that discarded "beginner's" information. Even when we explain that concept to another, we are listening for content. After all, we don't want to tell them the wrong thing. So we evaluate as we explain, and it takes on a new meaning even for us.

If we take the fundamentals as explained in so many areas by so many teachers, we have grip, stance, natural aim, mental pictures, etc., etc., etc. I propose two words to keep in mind through all of this: comfort and consistency. If you want to have fun and do well, do it in comfort so you can obtain consistency. I hope to hit on some finer points, but these are the overall items of importance. Bring everything back to these two ideas, and you will progress at a rapid cadence. Remember earlier when I mentioned the mental part? In order for any idea to work, you must at least accept that it might work, even if that acceptance is displayed as a little doubt in the belief that it won't work. If you fully know that something won't work, you're right. Put that energy into accepting that it might, and it might. Better yet; if you know it will work, it will. If this seems a little too "deep" good.

Let's talk comfort. The more comfortable you are with something, the more you'll be able to repeat it. Hmmm, sounds like consistency. OK, let's swap over to consistency then. In order to have a projectile travel through the same hole in the same fashion, it must be propelled in the same manner. Technically, that would mean to have the exact same pressures in the exact same place on the machinery which caused the projectile's propulsion, and the pressure exerted by the expanding gases, the friction caused by the barrel and even to some minute degree, the way the air was encountered, and on to an infinite set of other factors. Having all those factors identical would be supreme consistency. Fortunately, the target makers have provided us with a little larger area to work with. We don't have to shoot them in the same

hole in pistol competition, so we can let those infinitesimal areas alone for now. We'll visit them later when we're trying to give our scorekeeper a difficult time figuring out all those multiple hits that had to have travelled through that one hole in the X ring.

Have I mentioned how to stand yet, or how to hold the gun? I have too. Sorry, I thought you got it; Comfortably. Oh! You mean in reference to the target. Forget the target! It just messes us up. Go somewhere with a blank wall (take your gun), preferably of a light color. No, not a light color gun, a light color wall. Stand comfortably. There's that word again. Grip the pistol. Close your eyes. Now lift the pistol up to a comfortable place even with your line of sight. Do not move the pistol. Open your eyes. Look at the front sight or dot without moving your wrist in any way. Is the rear sight in line with the front, or is the dot in the center of the scope? If not, can you correct it by moving your head slightly or your entire arm at the shoulder only? If this cannot comfortably be done, I suggest changing your grip slightly and trying again. The optimum to work for, is the ability to bring the pistol up with your eyes closed and then open them to find the perfect sight alignment. Notice that sight alignment does not include a target. Notice also that the sight picture is not static. That jiggle is part of the proper picture. So is that slow swaying. They will decrease as you practice your hold.

OK, enough for now. I rambled for awhile and then gave some thoughts on comfort and consistency. Then I finished with some ideas for establishing the optimum hold with the best sight picture. I have to go shoot in the league now. Hope to see you there. I'll try to have more in the following newsletters if there is interest. Have fun.