The Story Behind CCW Safe (posted Feb 17, 2021)

00:00
Mike Darter
Hi, Mike Darter with CCW Safe and I've been asked to tell my story about a shooting I was involved in which later became the creation for CCW Safe. I was a police officer in Oklahoma City. Started in 1991, went through the academy. I was there until 2001 and then worked from 2001 to 2011 for the ATF out of Dallas running a violent crimes program. So in 1996 I was on a team called Impact. We were a plainclothes street level team that worked street level felonies.

00:45
I happened to work on a lot of narcotics cases, but it was a really cool team. We had like eight people. We would work anything if it were robbery or homicide, robbery had some cases going on that they wanted us to do surveillance on or homicide or whatever case that was brought to us that was in our division we worked on. When we weren't doing anything, we would just drive around and look for things. Because we were plainclothes and unmarked cars, we would typically drive around and find people that we knew were targets of narcotics investigations, practice surveillance on them, and sometimes we'd end up with good cases just off of traffic stops as we noticed them making stops or whatever.

01:48
Really, probably the funnest time I had in law enforcement. So that team, we worked our own investigations, we had our own files, we worked our own confidential informants, we got our own warrants. Once we got the warrants, we actually hit the house. We're kind of a self-sufficient team. We would always have one or two or more uniform guys with us when we hit the warrants. And on this one particular day, we had an informant that was a reliable informant who had worked for us in the past, got us some really good cases.

There's one suspect, one individual who had gotten out of prison was a gang member in a white supremacist group/gang dealing again back on the street. She - the confidential informant - told us about this individual.

02:58
Made a buy from the house and when she came out of the house we always did a debriefing of what happened in the house. The informant stated there was a firearm. She saw a firearm. He pulled it out. He showed her. He was bragging about shooting two or three black guys who had come in and tried to do a home invasion. We tried to corroborate that through 911 calls, through hospital reports, through CAD, through everything. We couldn't find anything, any evidence of that actually happening.

03:37
We kind of thought, well, there's a female informant. He may have been just kind of trying to impress her. But nonetheless, we knew that he had this story in his head, and if we were to kick in the door, then we had a pretty good idea of what might happen.

04:00
So, we pushed that too at the time, we had a full-time TAC team or we had a TAC team that would run all the high-risk warrants if it were a case like this.

At that time, we would train with the TAC team and they would train us and how to do entries because we did - I think in the two years that I was there - we did probably close to 400 warrants.

We were running warrants. We were running a lot of warrants at that time and they were a lot of immediate entry - no knock or not knock and talk. After the shooting I was involved in, the teams, there were four teams like that throughout the city in different divisions, they kind of went to more knock and talk warrants rather than immediate entry warrants. But we had trained with the TAC team and they would train us on entry tactics and most of the warrants that we got were immediate entry high-risk warrants.

05:02
That this case was one that had a little bit more that we knew there was a really good chance of something happening if we hit that house. And I don't remember exactly what happened, but it got kicked back and they weren't going to run the warrant.

And so I looked at my lieutenant and at the time I had 5 years on and typically when somebody does something for five years typically that's when they're kind of at the top of their game. They're really considered I guess a professional.

So my partner and I had about the same amount of time in. We went and talked to our lieutenants and I can't remember if something happened to prompt this but my lieutenant said we're going to hit this house and I so I said okay. He said put it on the board.

So, we put it on the board, which meant we would go out and we would send another team or another two or three officers to go do a drive-by on the house and see what the structure was like, where the windows, where the doors were, where the pipes were on the roof. So, we could kind of develop what we knew about the house inside with what we already had from the CI. So, we had a pretty good idea of the layout of the house.

06:34
And we want that because when we hit the house, we want to know exactly or as best we can what we're going into. And so, we put it on the board. We got all the team listed out. We got the officers, the uniformed officers to come out.

And we had a van, unmarked van that we would hit the house. And typically on the east side of Oklahoma City, whenever you turn that corner, then everybody on that block would be yelling, you know, police, popo, and everybody just start running. Well, this warrant was on the west side.

07:08
So, I remember turning the corner, pulling up to the house, and when we pulled up to the front of the house, there were a couple kids playing out in the front yard. There were some kids out in the front yard and the neighbor ran out and grabbed the kids and ran back in the house. Which was different from what we normally get cuz we normally get, you know, as soon as we turn the block, they start yelling. And everybody's running.

But I remember when that happened and that was I guess a pretty good foreshadowing of what even they knew was probably going to happen at that house. We exited, went up, knocked on the door, and announced police. We typically wait one to two seconds, slam hits.

08:01
At the time, I was always number two man in the door. I'm 6'2. My partner at the time, who was always number one man in, was about 5 '8. And we would run in pairs.

So the first two in, then the slam was number three and then one, two, slam, three, four, five, six and we typically run in pairs so whatever room we go into, one and two would take this room three and four would flood to the next room, five and six flood to the next room. We could clear a house, it was a dynamic entry, we could clear a house extremely fast. Most of the houses we hit were anywhere between 1,100 square feet to 1,500 square feet and we would flood that house in seconds.

And this house immediately upon the slam entering and entering into the house, my partner, if he goes, if he directs one way, then I'm going to direct the other way. And as soon as he went in, I saw him kind of go right. I went left.

09:14
And as soon as I came in, I saw the suspect laying on the couch. His head was away from me and he started rolling up with a firearm and it was the firearm. I remember the confidential informant saying that he had this huge gun and it was a 357 revolver.

When he rolled up, it looked like a huge gun. I saw a muzzle flash and I immediately engaged.

I thought at the time that he, I saw the firearm rolling up, saw the muzzle flash, I thought he shot my partner because immediately I had I experienced a tunnel vision that went on right in on his firearm.

10:08
I experienced a - and we've talked about this before - but the physiological effects that you're going to experience if you're involved in any critical incident. But I experienced tunnel vision. I experienced auditory exclusion, which I think I remember hearing a couple pops, but never heard the shots until the last shot.

But I engaged. I also experienced a definite slowdown in time. I remember the first shot off as he was, as his hand was coming up. I remember the first shot I remember seeing the impact on the back of his hand and I was using that. I was using that shot for my shot placement of the second, third, and fourth shot. Just walking him up his arm. And he was laying in a way to where the shots were going in the arm into the body.

11:22
Like I said, I thought my partner had been shot because I saw this muzzle flash. I fired and fired four rounds. At the time, I didn't know. I kind of learned this as we were going through the investigation and through the civil lawsuit, the expert who came in.

And I think Gary had talked earlier about, you know, he didn't know if he was talking about his shooting. And you didn't know if he was saying these things because it was something that he experienced or something he was told or something that came out in the investigation.

12:00
And that's kind of the same way my story was trying to piece that together even now 20 years later when I've talked about this multiple times. I fired four shots, stopped and at that time, he had started to withdraw and drop the firearm.

I remember the firearm dropped on his stomach. He reached up. He was trying to get the firearm again. He got it. I fired three more shots and at that time he started to curl into a fetal position. And I saw foam from his nose start to come out.

Figured that was a lung shot pushing out. And I knew at that point that it was pretty much over. So I kept my position. I immediately looked to my right because that's where my partner was thinking that he had been shot. Looked to my right and came back to cover this individual.

13:08
When I did, my partner was standing there. He was standing. I could see that he wasn't shot. What I learned later was when he came in, he came in, went right, I went left. He saw that threat coming up.

So he fired one round in a kind of a manner like this running to his right and his firearm stovepiped. So as he was tapping, racking, clearing his, I engaged. By that time, I look at him, come back to the suspect. I start tapping on my arm. You know, telling him to get here because this has now gone from a dynamic entry to we're going from a dynamic to a limited entry at that point. At that point, we were locking everything down right there. I tapped on my arm.

14:00
I said, "Mike, come to me." I said, "Watch your back." And I said, "Watch your back." Because I saw a dark hallway behind him. Well, right as I said that, I hear five shots, and the father came out from the back, grabbed my partner around the neck, grabbed his gun hand, and like I said, my partner was 5'8", 150 lbs. And this guy was, I don't know, he's like 6 foot, 240, 250 lbs.

Starts pulling him back into the hallway. Well, he turns, fires one shot, and I guess by that time, you know, my tunnel vision, I think when I turned to check on my partner, I think that opened up. I think my auditory opened up. And then I heard another shot and it sounded, that one shot, sounded as five shots. So, we exited the house. I remember getting out on the corner. I got another magazine, reloaded. I didn't know exactly how many rounds I shot. I do remember ejecting one out on the corner.

15:12
And I remember telling everybody, "Lock down the house, lock down the back, lock down the side." I thought at that point we had a full militia in the house cuz I didn't know what was going on with those last shots. The father came out, walked out, collapsed on the front porch.

I could tell that he was not going to make it. His chest was blown open. Came out, collapsed. And I looked at my partner and I said, "Who is that?" And he said, "That's who you saw behind me." I was like, "I didn't see anybody behind you. I saw a dark hall. I saw a dark space behind you." So at that point, we had to reenter the house. We had everything locked down. We re-entered the house. My partner and I went through. One suspect was deceased on the front porch, one was on the couch.

16:03
We went into the kitchen and the rest of the team went back, secured the back of the house and I remember it was like a, it was like a crazy circus house because I remember we're standing there in the kitchen and we're sitting there and I you know we're looking at each other and we're like holy [expletive] this just happened and we turn around and there's a converted garage door behind us. So we opened that, we go out to clear that and it had like a wall that went out and then around the corner and there was a bed.

So we kind of cleared what we could and we had to go around this wall to clear what was is like a small closet space there, open space. So you know, he was lower. He got down. And I had his bulletproof vest holding on to it.

17:01
We were like, "Okay, let's go check around the corner." We push around the corner and it's a water bed. Like we start rolling across the bed. And at that point, I was just like, "Get me out of this house. I am done with this." So, we clear that house and so we get up, we exit, we go out the house and immediately other officers, I remember Glenn Holkum was the first one I saw and he was a guy I grew up with.

Who's kind of like a, he was an older brother kind of figure to me. He comes running up, grabs me, hey, you're good. You're good. Takes me out to the car, puts me in the car, and I remember Gary was talking about calling his wife and his parents.

And I remember that I wasn't married at the time, but my mom, I called my stepdad who was a fighter pilot for the Navy. And I called my mom. I sit in the back of the scout car. I call my mom. She answered. I said, "Hey, what's going on?

Can I talk to Bob?" "Yeah, here he is." And told Bob, I said, "Don't let mom watch the news tonight." He's like, "Why?" Told him. I said, "Man, we just been involved in a shooting. I know I'm going to be on the news. Don't let my mom watch it." So, that was like a big deal to me, too.

I was like, you know, I just didn't want her to see that. So, anyways, we were taken down. We did, you know, Gary interviewed me at the homicide office.

18:28
It was done, like, within hours, within probably an hour. I actually - I remember scuffing my shin when I stepped off the porch. I, like, raked my shin. So, they made me go to the hospital. Went to the hospital, got released, then went to the homicide detective office. Met with Gary, did the interview.

And like I said, at that time you were able to tell you gave your account and did the interview and then came back like a week later or days later to make sure you know, everything was good.

19:04
And that was one of the big changes that we saw from then to now of the 24 hours, 24 to 48 hours. But yeah, it was, as Gary was telling his story, a lot of those things come up.

You know, I remember sitting on the couch that night still trying to figure out what happened. I remember getting a call from one of the other team members and he's like, "Oh man, we got all kinds of stuff." And I was really kind of worried.

I was like, "Man, I hope we get something out of this house," because you know there a lot of the a lot of the warrants we ran especially on the east side we get very minimal amounts out of the house. But I remember trying to piece it all together.

So, you know, I think creating this company, I have a pretty, you know, valuable, lesson learned, especially through the civil lawsuit part, to be able to recognize, you know, what this company is, what it means, and what it does, you know, for other people and for our members. So, that's my story.