



Staff photos by Andy Hern

From left: Carol Hurt, Jo Ann Mull, Mary Bradley, Martha Hogan, Linda Davis, Clara Powell, Annie Bly Hill, Louise Hendrix, and Jerry Richards.

College Trains Pistol-Packing Mamas

By **BOBBY HILL**

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Beware male chauvinists. Western Piedmont Community College is turning out female sharpshooters.

The first all-female class on small arms safety — pistol shooting — recently graduated.

Of 11 women in the class, eight qualified with .38-caliber pistols Monday at the WPCC firing range.

"I've enjoyed teaching a bunch of women," said instructor Jerry Richards. "Some of them are as good as men."

Richards said the most difficult task for the women is "getting used to the weapon itself. They're afraid of it," he said, indicating the pistols strapped to the waist of each woman.

"I was scared to hold a gun," said Mrs. Mary Bradley. Now she says she has respect

for the weapon, but not fear. "I'm proud of myself. I did real well last week."

Monday was the culmination of the six-week course. The class met once a week with Richards, who is a qualified instructor by the National Rifle Association. The students fired 200 rounds of ammunition throughout the course, learning how to shoot from various positions.

A majority of the women said they have weapons in their home. They offered a variety of reasons for taking the course. Some said their families urged them to do it for their safety.

For Louise Hendrix, it was a matter of "expanding my knowledge." She said lessons on the philosophy of Kant or Aristotle would not accomplish the same purpose. "For the first time, I have shot a weapon," she said philosophically.

Jo Ann Mull said she was the only member of her family who was unfamiliar with firearms.

Confidence in the normally masculine world of weapons — that's why most of the women took the course. "They call me Dead Eye," said Mrs. Clara Powell, sounding like a graduate of a Dale Carnegie course.

The course is offered through WPCC's Continuing Education department. Instructor Richards is a candidate for sheriff against Republican nominee Lee Brittain. "All these girls want to be my deputy," Richards said, predicting the outcome of the November election.

And the women seemed to have enjoyed Richards as an instructor. Like Mrs. Mull said, "He's not had to fuss at us — just occasionally."