

## Guns and Gear for Self Defense

### An Interview with Vicki and John Farnam

Interview by Gila Hayes

*Experienced armed citizens owe newcomers more than the commercialized gimmicks so often marketed to shooters, of whom our newest gun owners are the most vulnerable. We owe sound guidance to these newcomers; we owe them the benefit of our experience and hard-learned knowledge, lest all armed citizens suffer public backlash from unwitting, but preventable errors.*

*John and Vicki Farnam are at the forefront of responsible armed defense instruction, teaching a demanding training regimen, free of meaningless fluff, and based on what they well know will be demanded of an armed citizen using a gun in self defense.*

*When we saw John and Vicki at the SHOT Show in January, we asked them if they could synopsise the critical experience and knowledge so badly needed by new students of the armed lifestyle. Here is what they had to say:*

**eJournal:** What are the top two or three issues that all new gun carriers need to work out? Gun selection? Caliber? Concealed carry skills and equipment? What are the leading concerns?

**John Farnam:** Most of what we teach, and most of what we do, is not glamorous; it is just work. There is a world of ignorance out there, as you know, and people will be attracted to shiny things that work like colorful fishing lures to attract attention of a certain segment. I guess I was no different when I started doing this 45 years ago! "Wow, I get to carry a gun," but pretty soon, the gun selected becomes uncomfortable. The first gun you buy, probably won't be the last!

At this show, we see a lot of really silly guns that are marketed as serious guns, but they are too big and too

heavy and bulky to be genuinely useful. Some are really ridiculous. Mainstream serious guns now are polymer-framed, striker-fired, with no manual safety, no decocking lever, no magazine safety, captured recoil spring, and have variable grip-geometry.



There are people who do not have room to conceal a double-column pistol, but they can at least begin to fit a flat, single-column pistol on their body. I have women students whose attitude is far more style-oriented than mine. Any concealed pistol represents a "lump" that she must try to "fit" on her somewhere, but most double-column guns are too much of a "lump" to realistically hide. By contrast, a single-column gun is a good deal flatter, and we might be able to fit that one into her life!

Kahr had the single-column concealment pistol business all to themselves for the longest time, with their excellent PM9. Then came S&W's M&P Shield. Then, the Glock 42 and 43, the Kimber Solo, the Beretta Nano, the Springfield XDS, and the Walther PPS. All these guns are acceptable, I like some better than others, but they're all fine. Of all the ones mentioned, the one Vicki likes best is the XDS in .45 ACP.

**eJournal:** Why?

**Vicki Farnam:** Recoil is very manageable, and it has a good, crisp trigger, and snappy reset.

**eJournal:** Haven't you carried a pistol in .40 S&W or .45 ACP for most of the time I have known you?

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**Vicki Farnam:** Yes, I shot a .40 for a long time, until it caused physical damage to my arm! Now, I have the XDS in .45 ACP, which I like very much.

However, yesterday I shot the double-column Walther PPQ in .45 ACP. It was astounding how soft the recoil was on that gun! When I subsequently shot the single-column Walther PPS M2, in 9mm, I found that my left hand didn't fit it well, and consequently I had trouble with the slide cycling. In order to get enough hand on the gun, I had to have my grip rotated so much that the gun didn't function as well as did the PPQ.

**eJournal:** Is this a gun-fit decision, or a caliber preference?

**Vicki Farnam:** Both! Since I don't carry a double-column 9mm, I revert to carrying a single-column pistol in .45 ACP, because in my mind, that can help make up for the reduced capacity.

**eJournal:** Does your preference for the larger caliber influence advice you offer beginners? Would you start him or her in a .40 S&W or .45 ACP?

**Vicki Farnam:** I would put a beginner in a 9mm.

**John Farnam:** [*Emphatically*] Yes!

**Vicki Farnam:** I think the .45 has two issues: One is weight, especially when a woman is carrying a pistol in a holster or a handbag, the .45, even with only six rounds in the magazine and one in the chamber, is going to be heavier than a comparable 9mm, and she may not like that.

The other is recoil: Recoil of most small .45 ACP pistols may be "manageable," but we don't want to start her there, because we could build bad habits right away. Later, she can upgrade to a .45, if she wishes.

**eJournal:** John, does that advice apply to men starting to shoot, too? What caliber would you recommend for a gentleman's first gun?

**John Farnam:** 9mm. That is the trend right now.

**eJournal:** Is ammunition so much better these days that a 9mm is a good choice?

**Farnam:** That is the bottom line! In terminal effect of high-performance ammunition, there is not enough real difference to justify the discomfort and muzzle blast, and

gun-breaking characteristics, of the .40 S&W and the .357 Sig. Peter Pi at CorBon tells me that he's on the verge of dropping .357 Sig from his product line. He says there is just not enough demand, and there is no reason to tool-up a production line. Demand is so low that in a single day, he can make a year's supply!

.40 S&W will be around for a while, as it has a significant following. .45 ACP will always have a following. Combined, they may make up ten percent of the market; everybody else is going to 9mm!

Here's the history of this: I became a police officer in 1970 – AD! It hasn't been that long ago, but a lot has happened since then. When I became a police officer, we had height and weight minimums—165 pounds and 5'11" or don't bother applying. When your name ended in a vowel, you need not apply. Females needed not apply.

I don't have to tell you how this has all changed since. Now, a significant number of our officers have small hands and minimal upper-body strength. One size no longer fits all, if it ever did! We have to have flexibility. When I talk with chiefs of police and administrators about this subject, I say, "Listen, you must understand this: we are not going back to 1970! Those 110 pound gals you just hired are never going to shoot any .40 S&W caliber pistol well. They are not going to like it, and they are not going to want to shoot it."

Conversely, we can get just about everybody shooting a 9mm comfortably and successfully.

I can't tell you how many people have said to me that those smaller officers should never have been hired. Moot point! They're here, and bleed red blood! We have to train them, and they have to have equipment that fits and that they can genuinely use, instead of imagining that with enough "determination," they can make-do with anything. Oh, please! Don't insult my intelligence! She needs a pistol that fits her hand, and one that does not beat her up. Is that too much to ask?

**eJournal:** You mention gun fit. Thank goodness the private citizen can choose a gun with intelligently designed fit and function. That takes us back to Vicki's comments about the slim Walther PPSM2, or her Springfield XDS, and the way grip geometry influences the amount of strength she can put into gripping it.

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**Vicki Farnam:** First, the gun has to fit! Look at the G42 and G43. The G42 (.380 Auto) fits my hand perfectly! It is the first Glock that I've been able to hold and use competently. But, the G43 (9mm) does not fit my hand. The way the trigger guard is designed, it wants to remove my middle knuckle, whereas the G42 fits perfectly. There are individualized subtleties that can only be discovered through personal experience.

The G43 hurts to shoot. The G42 does not, so I am going to make a choice based on whether it fits my hand, whether it is painful or not painful to shoot, and the caliber that I think is going to work well for me. When I have to choose the .380 Auto, because the 9mm hurts and doesn't fit my hand, I will deal with the .380 Auto!

**eJournal:** That is a sensitive issue! People at the gun range may very well say, "Oh, Vicki, that .380 Auto is not going to knock down a mouse."

**John Farnam:** [*Forcefully*] And I would reply, "I would rather have her routinely carry that .380 Auto, than her have a 9mm that sits in the safe, under a layer of dust!"

**Vicki Farnam:** I think we have to have that flexibility and not be ridiculed, nor discouraged, from choosing a caliber, and a pistol, that really fits.

**eJournal:** The three of us have been at this so many years, we're probably immune to bullying, but that is not true for the person who just this year realized that they want to be able to defend themselves. They are so vulnerable to prejudice and uninformed opinions that are stated as fact. Where can new armed citizens find the help they need?

**Vicki Farnam:** Women usually go to numerous people for advice, probably starting with their spouse. He will suggest, "Oh, you ought to shoot this because..." maybe because it is the spouse's favorite gun, or it is the gun most written about in the gun magazines, or it is the gun that all of his friends have. This is all said without taking into consideration how that gun fits her. It does not consider how the ergonomics are going to affect accuracy and comfort. Maybe it is a good brand and everybody else loves it, but it doesn't fit her hand. Unfortunately, it usually takes a lot of hit-and-miss experiences.

**John Farnam:** One of the more popular drills we do in our classes is "Battlefield Pickup." Get your hands on it, and form your own opinion. I have my opinions, and I will be happy to articulate them if you want, but who

cares? Answer your own questions through personal experience. Get your hands on all of them, and start forming your own opinions about what is most appealing to you, and what is not.

Ultimately, what you are going to get is the product of many compromises. Nothing is ever going to be "perfect;" you are going to give up some things in order to get other things. Ultimately, it is your choice, but you need to have a sound factual basis upon which to form an opinion, not just what Farnam says!

**eJournal:** Where can a beginner get reliable facts?

**John Farnam:** Facts come from personal experience. Listen politely to everyone, but verify through personal experience!

**Vicki Farnam:** ...and facts come from gathering information, and trying over and over; experimenting, borrowing, going to a gun range and renting guns. That takes time and motivation, but you need to do it.

**John Farnam:** [*Grinning*] They can subscribe to the *Farnam Operator Series* and listen to me pontificate! (Editor's note: more information on this resource at <http://www.dtioperator.com>). It is relatively new, and we have over 1,000 subscribers. It is a way for me to share my experience with a bunch of people, but that is not enough. I've got my opinions—some of which are right! [*Chuckles*] But students need that personal experience, and they need to listen to me and to other people, too, because I'm wrong about some stuff—I just don't know which stuff!

All considering carrying a gun for personal defense need to be members of Armed Citizens' Legal Defense Network (<http://armedcitizensnetwork.org>)! The Network provides its members with much valuable information and advice, along with a host of other benefits.

**eJournal:** When choosing a carry gun, what do you think is the lower limit for trigger-pull weights?

**Farnam:** When you look at most pistols manufactured and intended for serious purposes, including the ones I tested at the range yesterday, trigger pull-weight is five-and-a-half to seven pounds.

**eJournal:** Is that heavy enough?

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**John Farnam:** It is a compromise! Too heavy for some. Not heavy enough for others. I think that range is about right, but I know manufacturers are not comfortable with triggers on factory guns much lighter than that. God knows, we have enough accidents as it is!

**Vicki Farnam:** But, some guns, like the little Kimber Solo, have "heavy" triggers. When I tested it, at first, John said there must be a magazine safety, but no, there is not; you just have to keep pressing. Or, for instance, Glock is saying that the G42 trigger pull-weight is five/six pounds, when I would say in reality it is closer to eight pounds. In fact, I had to have mine replaced, because it was so heavy, I could hardly press it.

**John Farnam:** The smaller the gun, the heavier the trigger! Manufacturer won't say that in so many words, but all small guns' trigger-pulls are a pound or a pound-and-a-half heavier than that on full-sized pistols. Manufacturers know that a small gun, like the G42, or the Kimber Solo Vicki mentioned, is never going to see the inside of a holster. It is going to be thrown in a pocket or rattle around in the bottom of a handbag, along with lipstick-tubes and everything else in there. When the pistol spends its life in a holster with a protected trigger guard, even a five-pound trigger is probably fine. For example, the trigger on the Sig 320 I'm carrying now has a five-and-a-half-pound pull-weight.

**eJournal:** Is limited ammunition capacity in the smaller guns you mentioned a problem? Arguments in favor of carrying high-capacity pistols may keep someone from getting a five-shot revolver, when that is actually the one gun they might carry 100% of the time.

**Vicki Farnam:** Let me recount something that happened yesterday at the range: We ran into a holster-maker we've known for a long time who asked me what guns I need holsters for. I said, how about for a S&W Shield? He said, he always liked his Shield, but recently, with things that are happening in the world, he'd decided to go back to carrying a full-sized, high-capacity pistol. He went on to say that he wanted sixteen rounds, without having to reload, and he went on and on. I was thinking, "Know what? That is wonderful for you, but I don't have that choice!"

When you hear somebody make the pronouncement that a small-capacity pistol is "unacceptable," I think how lucky it is that he can make that choice, because it is not a choice that is available to me. Now, when the world degenerates to the point where potentially lethal encounters become a daily occurrence, I will indeed

have to compromise the way I dress, move around, and find a way to carry a high-capacity pistol. No doubt!

However, as the world stands right now, I will opt for my XDS .45, as opposed to a small 9mm, because I perhaps have a little bit more power, if you will. "Power" is a word that defies definition, but when I have my .45, I might be thinking I'm better off, and when I'm thinking I'm better off, I'm less likely to be picked on, and I will be confident when I have to use it.

As John is fond of saying: "*Where you stand, depends on where you sit.*" When I can't deal well with a large-capacity pistol, I want to be able to stand here with confidence and say, "I am satisfied with my choice, at least as world conditions stand right now."

**eJournal:** John, what is your opinion on capacity?

**John Farnam:** There are going to be limits, no matter what you have. There are certain flaws I consider "annoyances," but that I can live with. There are other flaws I consider "deal-busters."

I can live with limited capacity, even slow reloading, when you've done a lot of good practice, including tactics. You have to understand, yes, giving up capacity is a limiting factor. I will go along with that. It's not a deal-buster, when what you are getting in return (concealability) is valuable. I have several snubby revolvers that I carry now and again, mostly as a back up, but sometimes as my only gun.

**eJournal:** What other features can you compromise on, and which are deal-busters?

**John Farnam:** A "magazine safety" is a deal-buster. Absolutely not on your life – no pun intended.

Ambidextrous magazine release buttons are not a good idea, but not a deal-buster. You roll around on the ground, something is going to push that button and you are going to lose your magazine. Just understand it's an issue.

Some manufacturers put it on there, so their marketing people have a little box to check, "Our gun is ambidextrous." I consider most ambidextrous controls to be useless bulk. When you are left-handed, learn to use right-handed guns, because the rest of the world is right-handed, so get over it.

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Forward slide serrations! How stupid can you get? Every time I've seen someone grab the front of the slide, their little finger drapes over the muzzle. I've had students ask, "Should I grind them (forward slide serrations) off?" No, just ignore them! They don't hurt anything, so long as you ignore them. I wish they weren't there, but I also wish rainwater was beer, and I wish I had wings! They are an annoyance, but we can just disregard them.

**eJournal:** New armed citizens have a lot of questions about concealed carry. Personally, I prefer to carry in a traditional holster on a belt. Others do not. When off-body carry is the one way that will allow some to go armed consistently, how can they do that safely?

**John Farnam:** I think some, women especially, really do not have any other choice than to carry off body. Some women are compelled to carry off-body all of the time, but all women are compelled to carry off-body some of the time. Just understand the weaknesses.

You need a purse/handbag that was specifically designed for concealed carry, and that has a competent holster within it. The worst choice is to let your pistol rattle around in the bottom of a handbag, mixed in with a bunch of other stuff. When your pistol is secured within a holster, at least the trigger is fairly well protected. There are any number of companies that make such purses. The best are made by GTM (<https://guntotenmamas.com/>).

I don't consider off-body carry to be a deal-buster. I know instructors who say we are absolutely not going to allow anybody to carry a gun in a handbag. As Vicki would comment, "Easy for you to say!"

**Vicki Farnam:** When we choose to carry off body, then the purse/handbag that we use needs to be efficient in its capability in allowing us to securely store, and to draw, and to reholster.

**John Farnam:** Remember, when the handbag is in physical contact with your body and thus under your direct control, it is a "holster." When it is not under your direct control, it becomes a "storage container," and thus must be "adequately secured!"

**eJournal:** I'll enthusiastically endorse what Vicki mentioned about the need to be able to put the gun safely back in the holster—whatever the holster is!

**John Farnam:** By far, the most dangerous thing that we do with pistols is put them into holsters! Safely holstering/reholstering loaded pistols is a critical skill!

**eJournal:** That must influence holster selection, and that concern applies whether it's a traditional belt-holsters or a carry option like a bellyband, an ankle holster sometimes, a pocket holster, the Flashbang bra-holster (<http://flashbangstore.com/products/the-flashbang>), or a purse/handbag. With some holsters and carry-options, the gun cannot be safely reholstered without putting fingers of your non-gun hand near the muzzle. Is that a deal-buster for you?

**Vicki Farnam:** Some of those choices can be more dangerous to you than carrying a gun in a handbag! I saw some yoga pants, ostensibly with a place to carry a pistol. A lot of women will buy those and think, "Now, I can carry my gun while jogging or attending yoga class," and they never think about having to safely put the gun back in the holster.

**John Farnam:** One of the things I try to emphasize to my students is that bellybands, ankle holsters, pocket holsters, Kangaroo Carry, et al all have advantages, but the one disadvantage that is shared by all is that the holster is "one way." That is: we can draw the pistol quickly enough, but reholstering is slow, requires you to look at the holster, and requires two hands. Sometimes, when it is necessary to get the drawn pistol out of sight quickly, "reholstering" is not a viable option. The pistol will have to go in a pocket, at least for the short term.

**Vicki Farnam:** Safely reholstering into the Flashbang requires much practice.

**John Farnam:** When you use a more traditional, belt holster you have the advantage of being able to reholster quickly, one handed, and without looking.

**Vicki Farnam:** One of the best bellybands I've seen is by CrossBreed (<https://www.crossbreedholsters.com/Product/Modular-Belly-Bands?nosto=pagetemplate-nosto-1>), because it features an integral Kydex® holster. Everything is a trade off! The holster within the bellyband is convenient for quick reholstering, but you have to cinch it tight enough to make sure the holster stays in place.

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**eJournal:** When selecting concealment methods, at what point does “deep concealment” become impractical? How many layers of clothing should we expect to be able to paw through in order to get access to the pistol? What is the “go/no-go line” for accessibility?

**John Farnam:** We have to be careful about kidding ourselves! An example is the patrol rifle, secured in the trunk of the patrol car! We did that for years, and then it became obvious that a rifle in the trunk of a patrol car has no chance of ever being used in a gunfight, which has now been painfully demonstrated more than a few times. As it turns out, we were, in fact, kidding ourselves. We didn't know that from the start, but as situations developed, that rifle never came out, because there was no time to go back to the trunk and get it.

With regard to personal concealed carry, when more than two seconds elapse before you have your pistol in hand, you're probably kidding yourself!

**Vicki Farnam:** No more than two layers of clothing! When you add a shirt, and maybe a coat or jacket over that, that is two layers you have to go through. Any more than that, and I think you are going to spend too much time getting past all the barriers for a pistol concealed deep inside your pants, or deep inside your bra or underarm. I like the Flashbang, because you can keep your shirt untucked, and now you only have to get under one layer. You have to think about accessibility every time you get dressed!

**eJournal:** Tom Givens made a profound impression on me when he said every morning when you get dressed and put on your gun and holster, you should say to yourself, “I may have to shoot someone with this today,” to remain serious about why we carry guns. That same level of honesty must apply to realistic concealment. Now, what about consistency? Should we always carry the gun in the same place?

**John Farnam:** There's another good question. The answer is “No.”

For many, it can't be done, because of the way they dress, the places they go. Women, especially! Sometimes you wear pants; sometimes skirts; and sometimes dresses, so your pistol is probably going to be carried in different places on different occasions.

Men sometimes have less of a challenge in this regard, but if I were a lawyer and had to wear a coat and tie, a

belt holster might not be practical. I might have to alter what I carry, and where I carry it. I might have to entertain several options!

**Vicki Farnam:** We have a lot of students who are doctors.

**eJournal:** Where do you secure a pistol in scrubs?

**John Farnam:** Some put a small pistol on a lanyard/holster, around their neck.

**Vicki Farnam:** Or, some use a bellyband. There is also a thin shoulder holster that goes under the shirt, but over the undershirt, called Kangaroo Carry (<https://www.kangarocarry.com/>).

Even men have different challenges, depending on what they're doing and where they're going. I have learned over the years that when we lock our students into, “It has to be this way,” the gun gets left at home!

**John Farnam:** We have to understand that we are there for the student, and we have to help them find answers, not find answers for them. “Answers” will never be perfect. Remember Farnam's first rule of tactics: “*Do the best you can.*”

Consistency can certainly be argued for, but don't argue for it too passionately, because there are some people for whom absolute consistency just does not work.

What ever we come up with will be the product of a thousand compromises. As noted above, it may not be perfect, but it may be the best we are going to do. As Vicki said, right now, you dress in a particular way, but maybe tomorrow morning, we may all be wearing fatigues and carrying rifles. Our whole conversation will be rendered irrelevant by external circumstances!

**eJournal:** We have got to be aware enough that we adapt and evolve.

**John Farnam:** And do it fast! We have to have the capacity to quickly change-up combinations as necessary. So today, we talk to students and we say, this is how we do things right now. What we are doing right now is probably acceptable, not perfect, but acceptable.

I'm reminded of the story of when Einstein was a physics professor. A student approached him and said,

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"I noticed that all the questions on this year's final exam are the same questions as on last year's final." Einstein said, "Yes, son, the questions are all the same; the answers are all different!"

Maybe that is a good way to put it. The questions don't change; the answers change, depending on a bunch of stuff over which we have no control. We have to be flexible enough to make good decisions based on the best information we can get, and as fast as we can, and hope some of them are right.

**eJournal:** For years, you've taught that it is better to make a decision and go with it than stand around dithering.

**John Farnam:** I'll add: Better that you have a sound, factual basis to rely on, rather than rumors and gun-shop gossip. When you have a solid, factual foundation, verified through personal experience, then you'll make sound decisions. Still no guarantee they are always going to be right, but it will be better quality decisions than when you rely on vacuous myths.

**eJournal:** A subscription to the *Farnam Operator Series* (<http://defense-training.com/2015/dtis-operator-series/>) is one source for facts by which to inform better decisions. How does that work?

**John Farnam:** You can subscribe by the month or by the year, and I put out about one video lecture a week but the subscriber can access any of them. We have filmed some here at the SHOT Show, and more at the range day a few days ago. It all comes down to me trying to relay my years of experience.

**eJournal:** There are also books. Both of you are authors. Vicki, what are your titles?

**Vicki Farnam:** The first book is *Teaching Women to Shoot: A Law Enforcement Instructors' Guide* and the second edition of that book has just come out and is available as an eBook from Amazon and is available in hard copy either from us (<http://defense-training.com>) or from Amazon. The second book is *Women Learning to Shoot: A Guide for Law Enforcement Officers*.

**eJournal:** John, is your fundamental instructional guide, *The Farnam Method of Defensive Handgunning* still in print?

**Farnam:** Yes, and it is now in its second edition, as is its sister book on rifles and shotguns! We have a lot of demand for rifle training now.

**eJournal:** That can only increase if terrorist attacks and other mass murders become more frequent.

**John Farnam:** We teach people to use lethal force to solve security problems they can't solve otherwise. Without a gun you have few options. With the gun, you have a few more options, but there are still no guaranteed outcomes.

**Vicki Farnam:** The very first question you asked us was how do we provide answers to the beginner who is starting to carry a gun. The answers have to start *before* they decide to carry a gun. I am firmly convinced of this.

When the person who comes to a class has not already started thinking about the burden and responsibility that they are taking upon themselves, they are not ready to carry a gun. They first have to be aware of themselves in their environment without a gun. What do they do, and how do they observe what is going on around them when they are not carrying a handgun, so that by the time they make that choice to carry a gun, they are ready for the responsibility.

Learning how to carry must become integral with every moment of your life, if you are going to carry that gun. Too few people think of it in those terms. They think, "Okay, today I will put a gun on, but it has nothing to do with the rest of my life, when I don't think I'm in danger." We have to help our students and plant in their minds that the gun has to become an integral part of their lives, not an appendage, nor fashion accessory, that you attach to your life when you want.

**eJournal:** Words to live by! Thank you so much for sharing your solutions with us here in this interview and for all these years in your classes, books, videos and through example.

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*Learn more about John and Vicki Farnam's work at <http://defense-training.com>, <https://www.facebook.com/defensetraininginternational>, and <https://www.facebook.com/dtiwomen/?fref=ts>.*

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## President's Message

### The Joys of Travel

by Marty Hayes, J.D.

As I write this, I am sitting in Denver International Airport, returning home after a planning session for *The*

*Best Defense* TV show (<http://outdoorchannel.com/the-best-defense>), as seen on The Outdoor Channel. It is always fun to see the guys from the show and the behind the scenes guys, too. I am looking forward to getting to work on the show this year again. Many, many people came up to me at the NRA show last month and said hi, told me how they like the show, and what I do on there. Hopefully we will not disappoint this year.

### Your Papers, Please!

I do have a little adventure to report. The adventure is what happens to travelers who fly, but are clumsy enough to leave their driver's license at home. I would not recommend it. I find it truly bizarre that the TSA group in Portland, OR treats people very differently than the TSA group in Denver.

When I arrived at the airport yesterday morning for this quick trip, I had realized that I had left my driver's license sitting on my scanner, as I had needed to scan it for a separate reason. When I showed up at the terminal, the ticket issuer was happy to take my picture ID in the form of a State Issued Concealed Carry License. Okay, so far, so good. Next stop was the TSA screening process where, with my three different state-issued concealed carry licenses in hand, I told the TSA personnel what happened. "No problem," they said, "please continue." So far, so good.

Of course, there were no problems upon my arrival in Denver. It was upon my return home this evening that I started the process backwards. Again, no problems at ticketing check-in, but then things changed. First, I marveled when I saw absolutely no back up at the security checkpoints.

In fact, it was such a rare event, that I photographed it for posterity.

I approached the ID checker, concealed carry licenses in hand, where the gal asked me just what type of ID this was. I explained and then told her what had happened. She said, "No go, wait here." Oh boy.

The next TSA officer (her name was Anita and I sorta bonded with her) asked me if I had any credit cards. Of course, I had some, so I figured when I showed her that would confirm my ID and all would be good. Nope. She asked someone else about what she should do. She said she would have to "call it in." Well, okay. Whom they were calling I never found out, but I had a pleasant 10-minute wait at a little desk while she talked to someone there. This unnamed official then told my personal TSA officer that she needed to get a "Manager's" approval. By then she was as frustrated as I was by the run-around (I think she had a thing for old, gray-bearded men). So, she left me sitting at the desk and went off to find the manager, but first she asked another agent, a young bearded guy, to sit with me.

The young man was curious about what was going on, so I told him. He asked, "Don't you have any credit cards?" I said, "Yes, of course," and added that I had already shown them to several of his fellow officers. He shook his head and asked, "Well, don't you have a Costco card?" At that time, I kinda laughed and said, "Sure, I do. It is in my wallet!" He asked me, "Well, why didn't you show her? That is all we needed!"

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I showed the guy my picture ID--in the form of my Costco card--and about that time, Anita, my personal TSA officer came back, all smiles and said, "You are good to go; we don't even need to pat you down!" Figuring I had better not push my luck, I simply thanked her and moved on.

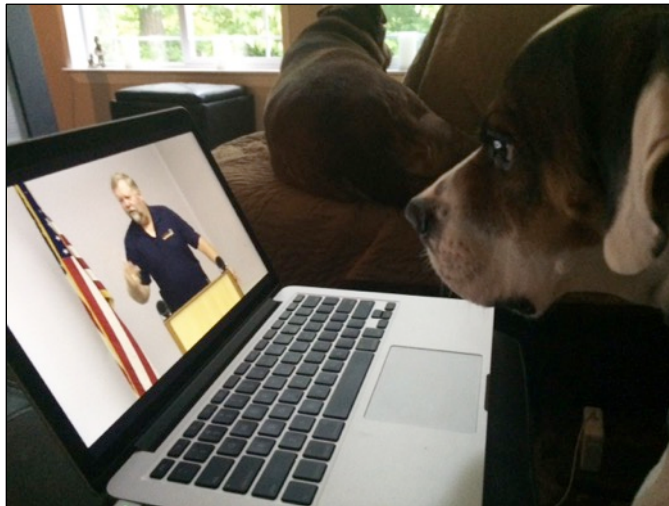
Later, I looked up the TSA regulations (<https://www.tsa.gov/travel/security-screening/identification>) to determine which state issued photo ID is allowed, and the TSA website listed what was acceptable and then in small print at the bottom, it stated specifically, "A weapon permit is not an acceptable form of identification."

The moral of this story is don't forget your state-issued driver's license, but if you do, make sure you have a Costco card with you.

## Knife Defense Education

Back at the Network we recently filmed an hour-plus educational DVD for our members, featuring Network member and *The Best Defense* co-host Michael Janich. His presentation deals with the legalities of using a knife for self defense. The editor tells us that the footage looks good. When it is available to be sent out to you, we will let you know.

Turns out that I have a new fan! While our video editor was working on the footage, his boxer, a deaf rescue



dog named Dozer, became transfixed by my onscreen presentation. We got such a chuckle out of the photo our editor, John, shared that we thought you might find it amusing, too!

## No Fluff, No Puffery

We recently received the following e-mail, from someone checking out the Network:

*"Thank you so much for your quick response. I am an ex police officer and still in the military reserves. I know some of the laws have changed in the 10 years since I have worked in the field. I have been researching different sites to see who has the best policy, but like I said there is a lot of fluff in some of these. Your website seems to be the easiest one to*

*understand and it really goes into detail on all the things it covers, unlike some of the others. Thank you."*

I was greatly pleased to see that our straight-forward approach on our web site and the membership benefits we offer is understood and appreciated.

If you Google the different names of the different programs, you will find out what the gentleman with whom we corresponded is speaking about. Frankly, I don't have the time or stomach for it.

*[End of article.  
Please enjoy the next article.]*

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## Attorney Question of the Month

Shooting someone in self defense is universally recognized as an act of deadly force, but what about self defense with a knife? While a knife can certainly be used as a deadly weapon, often a knife cut is not deadly, not debilitating, and may heal without medical treatment. With that in mind, our question of the month is—

***Does the court always consider the knife a deadly weapon? Are there possible situations in which a person defending him- or herself with a knife might NOT be viewed as attempting to kill another?***

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Yes. Any knife having a double-edged blade or automatic spring release is considered a deadly weapon in Massachusetts. A knife without a double-edged blade is merely a dangerous weapon. But if it is used in a manner intended or likely to cause death or great bodily harm, then that dangerous weapon escalates to being considered a deadly weapon under Massachusetts state law.

**Mitchell Lake, Esq.**

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Connecticut General Statutes § 53a-19(a) provides, "...deadly physical force may not be used unless the actor reasonably believes that such other person is (1) using or about to use deadly physical force, or (2) inflicting or about to inflict great bodily harm."

General Statutes § 53a-3(5) defines the term deadly physical force as, "...physical force which can be reasonably expected to cause death or serious physical injury."

General Statutes § 53a-3(4) defines serious physical injury as, "physical injury which creates a substantial risk of death, or which causes serious disfigurement, serious impairment of health or serious loss or impairment of the function of any bodily organ."

In Connecticut a knife may be considered a deadly weapon pursuant to General Statutes § 53a-3(6) which addresses a "...switchblade knife, gravity knife" or it may be considered a dangerous instrument pursuant to General Statutes § 53a-3(7) which defines the term dangerous instrument to include "...any instrument, article or substance which, under the circumstances in which it is used or attempted or threatened to be used, is capable of causing death or serious physical injury..."

Regardless of the classification, a knife will almost always be considered "...an instrument that was capable of causing death or serious physical injury..." *State v. Torres*, 82 Conn. App. 823, 830, 847 A.2d 1022, 1027 (2004)

The use of a knife in Connecticut will be treated as physical force which can be reasonably expected to cause death or serious physical injury; therefore, the justification for the use of same must be that which would justify deadly physical force.

**Jon Gutmacher**

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I would like to give a very short answer to your question on the use of a knife in self defense in Florida. While a jury may decide whether the way the knife was used was the use of deadly force, or non-deadly force, still the knife itself will always be considered a "deadly weapon." Furthermore, the wounds inflicted by knives are brutal to look at. I therefore suggest thinking of a knife as a "first" defense weapon vs. a backup or emergency weapon is a major mistake.

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Absolutely, yes, in Tennessee where I practice. Guns, knives, cars, beer bottles, picture frames, baseball bats, chairs, an uninstalled kitchen sink...you name it, the utilization of all of those (even if used to defend yourself) will potentially be characterized as a "deadly weapon" in charging an individual with an Aggravated Assault (or even, an Attempted Murder) warrant.

Remember, police officers are not attorneys and, even though they generally mean well will often times, charge the most serious crime available to "fit" the facts. The hope is to get a prosecutor who is seasoned enough and who can think outside the box to dismiss a self-defense case (or mutual combat if a primary aggressor cannot be identified given the facts of the case) as use of justifiable force regardless of the instrument used.

**John Chapman**

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1) Under Maine Law, not every knife is a "dangerous weapon." The case on point is *State v. Jones*, which holds:

A plain language reading of the concealed weapons statute reveals that the Legislature intended to prohibit persons from concealing certain types of weapons and knives based upon their design or primary function. 25 M.R.S. § 2001-A(1)(B). The statutory scheme expressly prohibits bowie knives, dirks, and stiletos from being concealed and expressly exempts knives used for hunting, fishing, and trapping from the statute's prohibitions. 25 M.R.S. § 2001-A(1)(B), (2)(C) (2011).

Even though most knives, including the knives at issue here, are capable of causing serious bodily injury, the plain language of the statute establishes that the Legislature did not intend to prohibit the concealment of all knives. Rather, the statute expressly prohibits the concealment of only those knives that are specifically designed to be "usually employed in the attack on or defense of a person."

For purposes of the criminal code, however (Title 17-A section 2), ANY knife can become a dangerous weapon if it "in the manner it is used or threatened to be used is capable of producing death or serious bodily injury." This likely is a distinction without a difference. When someone comes at you with any significant knife, his intent isn't visible, only the knife.

2) This is related to item 1 above. There is at least one case I am aware of where an "Escrima" technique was used by an old man to inflict numerous shallow cuts on two attackers. If the harm actually inflicted is peripheral, and could with a straight face accompany testimony that "I was just making him let go by cutting the backs of his fingers," the jury probably wouldn't find the necessary "intent" to cause death or serious bodily injury.

Note also that in Maine, Felony Aggravated Assault may be committed where one inflicts "Bodily injury to another with use of a dangerous weapon." If the knife is a roofing knife and the cut peripheral, the result is different than a Bowie knife used to make the same cut. The foregoing does not resolve the separate question of whether the use of a dangerous weapon is ALWAYS deadly force.

Unless the item is a firearm, non deadly force may be inflicted with any knife, hence the lower threshold standards for justifying use of ANY knife than ANY gun.

**Kenneth D. Willis**

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Here is the answer for Wyoming:

W.S. 7-22-101(iv) "Deadly force" means force that is likely to cause death or serious bodily injury;

Sec. 6-1-104(a)(iv). "Deadly weapon" means but is not limited to a firearm, explosive or incendiary material, motorized vehicle, an animal or other device, instrument, material or substance, which in the manner it is used or is intended to be used is reasonably capable of producing death or serious bodily injury;

Sec. 6-1-104(a)(x). "Serious bodily injury" means bodily injury which creates a substantial risk of death or which causes miscarriage, severe disfigurement or protracted

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loss or impairment of the function of any bodily member or organ;

So theoretically you might say that a knife is not a deadly weapon under the statute unless "the manner [in which] it is used or is intended to be used is reasonably capable of producing death or serious bodily injury." It might seem if one did not intend to cause death then the knife was not used as a deadly weapon. I don't see a Wyoming Court buying that argument and I think a knife is always a deadly weapon in Wyoming.

Here is the peculiar answer that Colorado would give this question:

Sec. 18-1-901(3)

(d) "Deadly physical force" means force, the intended, natural, and probable consequence of which is to produce death, and which does, in fact, produce death.

(e) "Deadly weapon" means:

(I) A firearm, whether loaded or unloaded; or  
(II) A knife, bludgeon, or any other weapon, device, instrument, material, or substance, whether animate or inanimate, that, in the manner it is used or intended to be used, is capable of producing death or serious bodily injury.

(III) and (IV) (Deleted by amendment, L. 2013.)

(p) "Serious bodily injury" means bodily injury which, either at the time of the actual injury or at a later time, involves a substantial risk of death, a substantial risk of serious permanent disfigurement, a substantial risk of protracted loss or impairment of the function of any part or organ of the body, or breaks, fractures, or burns of the second or third degree.

In Colorado a knife is clearly a deadly weapon but you don't know if you are using deadly force until you see if the force you used "does, in fact, produce death." A knife is defined as a deadly weapon no matter how it is used.

The Colorado Court of Appeals has said in at least one case that if nobody dies it's not a deadly force case because of the peculiar definition that Colorado has for "Deadly Physical Force." Then it's an excessive use of non-deadly force case, I guess.

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*A big "Thank you!" to all of the Network Affiliated Attorneys who responded to this question. Please return next month for the second installment of our Affiliated Attorneys' comments on this topic.*

*[End of article.  
Please enjoy the next article.]*

## Book Review

### Infringed

by Alexandria Kincaid

270 pages, 1st edition December 22, 2015

ISBN-10: 0996917535

270 pages, 6x9 Hardbound, Retail: \$34.95

<http://alexkincaid.com/index.php/orderbook/184-order-book>

Reviewed by Gila Hayes



Gun laws are often confusing and sometimes contradictory, so we were pleased when attorney Alexandria Kincaid shared a copy of her new book *Infringed* to bring some clarity to this complex topic. In 65 concise chapters, this Boise, Idaho attorney explains how laws are created, passed or nullified, how laws are interpreted, executive orders enacted, how juries work, appeals considered, what is actually Constitutionally protected, and much more, along with a number of definitions of terms for which we *thought* we knew the meaning, but to which the law actually applies its own sometimes counter-intuitive definitions.

The book's instruction on how our courts operate is valuable, with civics so poorly taught these days. Chapter 3 of *Infringed* explains adjudication in court, appeals of court decisions, and how to read court decisions. Kincaid writes about the role of the jury at trial with similar clarity, and this is a good example of her book's educational value. For example, while many think they can depend on a jury of people like themselves to clear them of spurious charges, the author suggests that such an outcome is not a sure bet.

Don't confuse the evidence put in front of a jury with facts, she warns, adding, "Evidence is not fact...Evidence is what lawyers use to prove facts. The jury exists to hear the evidence presented to it by the parties or their lawyers during a trial and to make a decision base on the jurors' collective interpretation of those facts and how the law should apply to them. The jury decides who is lying and who is not," she explains.

This chapter goes on to explain rules of evidence, and the difference between a court deciding a question of law or a question of fact. "Legal questions are for judges to decide. The jury decides what happened and when. The judge will apply the law and make legal decisions, such as whether to allow the jury to hear certain evidence, which jury instructions to use, and often, which sentence is applicable."

Some evidence will be withheld from the jury, Kincaid warns, "During a trial, juries get a brief introduction to the law and are expected to apply the law correctly in life and death situations." Jury instructions are useful outside of a trial setting, as well, she explains, writing, "If you just read a statute, you will not necessarily know how your court interprets that statute when applying it to particular facts," then offers examples to further clarify why we must understand more than just black letter law. As we lack room here to discuss all of the points Kincaid clarifies, the reader is

encouraged to get this book and study it thoughtfully. Trial outcomes are not always just and fair, so the next chapter explains how trial outcomes are appealed, and a later chapter explains why appellate decisions in one court do not apply nationally.

The interplay between state law and Federal law is explained, as Kincaid reveals that you can be tried and punished more than once for the same act if convicted of breaking a state law then later found guilty of violating Federal law for the same act. In addition, cities and counties have their own laws, she continues in the next chapter, and many of these smaller entities are not as sensitive to Constitutional concerns. She gives an appreciative nod to the Second Amendment Foundation for their work challenging illegal restrictions.

Next, Kincaid embarks on a 17-chapter section to acquaint the reader with Federal gun laws, their enforcement and how you may become an "accidental felon." This she illustrates with landmark cases infringing on individual rights. The complexity of these laws and the rulings that explain their application is clarified by short "What this means to you..." sentences highlighted on the pages containing the denser text.

She assigns the greatest numbers of unintentional felonies by gun owners to inadvertently violating either the National Firearms Act (NFA) or the Gun Control Act, both of which were ironically enacted in an attempt to protect America from organized crime. Tax stamps required for certain weapons, post-manufacturing add-ons that transform your legally-owned firearm into a regulated gun, and other details fill these pages.

Thirty some years after the NFA, the Gun Control Act piled more limits on gun possession, Kincaid continues. These restrictions apply not only to violent felons, but to people who accepted a deferred prosecution, are

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underage, were dishonorably discharged from the military, committed for mental health treatment, subject to a restraining order, convicted of misdemeanor domestic violence, and while the definition of those words seems clear, the application of the GCA has not been, she clarifies, illustrating one situation in which gun rights were taken away over the crime of rolling back vehicle odometers although the patchwork of drug laws is a more common reason folks lose gun rights.

Likewise, senior citizens receiving assistance with their day-to-day finances and other needs may find their gun rights stripped away. Kincaid comments that a gun trust can remove the government from that process because a strategy is already in place for the trust's named agent or trustee to step in and manage things. This is a theme about which she has much to say in later chapters. Many reading *Infringed* will be shocked at how intrusive firearms laws are, affecting not only citizens with past brushes with the law, but large classes of citizens like the elderly and veterans.

Kincaid starts her analysis of lawful firearm possession and transport with a four-way chart defining the following factors: firearm, person, location and carrying ability to determine if there are Federal or state issues affecting the legality, or issues with the person in possession or if the firearm has been transferred legally.

Risk from the state-to-state patchwork of laws is highest for those who live close to a state border, and fail to realize that a gun that is legal in their state is not allowed just a few miles from home, she illustrates. Magazines that hold more than an arbitrary number of rounds are a common culprit, and in CT a number of semi-automatic rifles are no longer legal, she accounts. "State gun laws change so rapidly that any published compendium would be quickly outdated," she warns.

Taking responsibility for securing your firearms is the message of the next chapter, as Kincaid outlines the liabilities gun owners face if their firearms fall into unauthorized hands. She relates the case of an Oregonian whose gun slipped from his holster and was left at a movie theater, concluding, "Never forget that your firearm is your responsibility. If other people are harmed by your negligence, you harm the entire gun owning community when the tragedy is publicized."

Gun owners must honor private property rights of others, Kincaid next warns. Armed citizens who want to shop at anti-gun retail stores struggle with this concept,

but she stresses that private property owners are allowed to regulate gun possession on private property. Federal facilities are gun free zones, and a surprising number of places fall into that category. One might not think that touring a cave in Yellowstone Park means entering a Federal facility, but it does, Kincaid illustrates. She emphasizes how gun free zones are anything but safe, asserting that, "states with the fewest gun free zones have the fewest gun-related killings, injuries and attacks."

*Infringed's* final section deals with using firearms for self defense, beginning with a firm endorsement of preparation and training to survive an attack and portray responsible firearms use in self defense to those investigating and possibly adjudicating the lawfulness of what you did. Prior preparation, in addition to training, includes attorney selection, a topic, naturally on which a practicing firearms attorney has strong beliefs. Additional chapters in this section draw the distinction between homicide and lawfully using deadly force, briefly explaining how the defense of self defense might be negated.

I would have enjoyed reading more of Kincaid's thoughts on aftermath management, finding this chapter shorter than anticipated, although *Infringed* jumps back to aspects of post incident management in the book's final chapters. First, she details how the criminal justice system gathers and processes the details that may result in criminal charges after a shooting, how those charges are filed or the facts presented to a grand jury, how grand juries function, and the timelines involved.

In the book's next-to-the-last chapter Kincaid outlines interacting with law enforcement after self defense, recommending reporting the active dynamic of the crime against you that left you with no choice but to be killed or use deadly force in self defense, reporting the incident to 9-1-1, giving a brief statement to responding officers and knowing when to stop talking. Next she explains what happens after indictment, and briefly outlines the steps building up to trial. Negotiated pleas, acquittal or sentencing is sketched out in a few paragraphs.

Alexandria Kincaid has compiled a book of short, quick-to-read chapters that contain a lot of important information for armed citizens. I enjoyed it.

[End of article.  
Please enjoy the next article.]

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## News from Our Affiliates

*Compiled by Josh Amos  
and Gila Hayes*

We have been having a lot of fun here at the Network offices, now that Josh is on the team! With a team member dedicated to affiliate matters, our interaction with the good men and women who have long been telling armed citizens in their communities about us has gone up about 1000%!

Lloyd Mitchell has been a member and affiliated instructor with the Network for years. Lately, Lloyd has transitioned from teaching to purveying shooting accessories and need-to-haves for the shooting community. Lloyd doesn't sell firearms or receivers, but he does sell just about everything else. Lloyd's company is Tactical Gear and Accessories and his website is <http://www.tacticalgearandaccessories.com>.

Lloyd has graciously offered a discount to all our Network members on all products offered on his site. Network members can access his coupon code at <http://armedcitizensnetwork.org/members/coupons>. So log in to the Armed Citizens' Network and do some business with a fellow Network member at a good price. Take that, Amazon! Lloyd is out-doing you, here!

Many of the other responses to Josh's outreach have been just as heartwarming. For example Bill at Mr. Bill's Arms in Kelso, WA wrote us a few words about his little gun shop through which he promotes gun safety as well as Network membership: "I am a very small one man shop, with an O1 FFL, and an O6 FFL for munitions I custom make for customers, mostly hunting ammo, varmint and long range shooting, quite a bit of handgun, too," he explained. "I do limited gunsmith work in my machine shop on a limited basis, I don't advertise but only by word of mouth, and after over 10 years, have more customers than I can take care of, but it is my joy to run a little shop, and try to make sure firearms safety is paramount and the responsible use of arms."

Self-defense training is a lot more than just going to the pistol range! I love the blended curriculum presented by Dave Jenkins, Ian Scott, Wendy Saetta and the rest of Dave's crew at Rochester Personal Defense in Rochester, NY. Their course catalog has a huge variety of concealed carry, Krav Maga, ladies only, reality-based training and tactics, first aid and emergency

prepping, pepper spray, rifle and shotgun courses, to name only a few. Check out his program at <http://www.safeinrochester.com/>. As if he does not have enough going on, Dave is also helping facilitate the yearly conference for the American Women's Self Defense Association, this year in Seattle, WA on August 4-7. Learn more about AWSDA at <http://www.awsda.org/-lupcoming-events/c7mv> and get involved!

We sure do appreciate the efforts of Isaac Espejo, who keeps the Network's materials on display at Henderson, NV's Green Valley Range, a great looking facility (see <http://www.greenvalleyrange.com>). In addition, Isaac teaches gun safety classes on his own and takes the Network's materials to his students in that format, too.

Over the years we've developed some great affiliations with members who are involved with ranges. Just this last month, we set up several with more booklets, point of sale display materials and brochures. Randy Lauer at Thunder Alley in Lincoln, NE is one. He maintains a very active Facebook page or if you don't do Facebook, check out his training and range event schedule at <http://www.thunderalley.us/classes/class-schedule/>.

Network President Marty Hayes is moderating a Facebook site for our Armed Citizens' Educational Foundation on which our affiliated instructors are sharing learning tips and other valuable knowledge. Marty keeps the posts clean and instructional as he does on our use of force Facebook page. Check it out at <https://www.facebook.com/Armed-Citizens-Educational-Foundation-230820597283923/>

Affiliates, please send us an email if you have any special events like open houses, seminars, classes or other interesting tidbits that we can announce in this column. If announcing an event, about 60 days advance notice is best since we publish only once a month.

Also, please let us know when you need more copies of our Armed Citizens' Educational Foundation's booklet *What Every Gun Owner Needs to Know About Self-Defense Law* and our tri-fold brochures by emailing [josh@armedcitizensnetwork.org](mailto:josh@armedcitizensnetwork.org) or calling 360-978-5200.

We're all in this together! Let's work as a team to get the word out so armed citizens in your community have a better understanding of lawful, judicious use of deadly force and what to expect in the aftermath.

*[End of article.  
Please enjoy the next article.]*

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## Editor's Notebook

### Friends and Mentors

by Gila Hayes

While burning the midnight oil to wrap up this journal a few days early so I could go off and spend three days polishing long-range rifle

skills under Chuck Taylor's expert tutelage, I found myself reflecting on how many truly extraordinary men and women teaching in the firearms industry today have guided my personal evolution. It dovetails neatly with the kind of mentorship on which the Network is built. Our print ad campaign focuses on the endorsements of Massad Ayoob, Chuck Taylor, John Farnam, Tom Givens, Dennis Tueller and Tom Gresham.

Tonight's mental meanderings led me to reflect on just a few of the life lessons I've learned on the training range, which include, in no particular order—

Don't quit. This lesson was delivered to my embarrassment (and admit it— isn't that the kind of lesson we remember best?) by Chuck Taylor many years ago during a shotgun class. Now ordinarily, I am amongst the most enthusiastic when they're divvying up the 12 gauge shot shells, but as I recall, we were at the end of a multi-day three gun program, and poor Mr. Taylor was leading students one by one through a moving and shooting drill in which we were to engage steel targets at a 90-degree angle to our path of travel, with the good instructor moving us along at a quick clip such that sometimes we had to shoot at a rather oblique angle while moving briskly past the target.

For reasons that the larger lesson has eclipsed from memory, I blew the shot pattern from my Remington 870 past three or four targets in a row—not a pellet connected. This was by no fault of the instructor—he had prepared us well for the exercise—I just wasn't getting on the sights and trigger well enough to hit accurately on the move.

At the end of the exercise, Taylor explained to the class that they had just witnessed a demonstration of giving up mid-exercise and burning through ammo to get it over with. He and all the other students have probably forgotten the entire episode by now, but I have not, and I would like to think that from it I learned how to buckle

down and do good work even when the challenges seem beyond my humble abilities! It was a good lesson, well learned. We'll see what lessons Mr. Taylor has in store for me this weekend!

Another instructor who made a profound impression on me in so many ways was Jim Cirillo, of NYPD Stake Out Squad fame, also a sought-after instructor when he taught at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC), LE conferences, and in his later years, at select private training facilities. Jim taught me a lot of skills, but the life lesson I want most to emulate was his insatiable curiosity about the world around him and his unbelievable drive to learn anything that he did not already know.

Jim was well known, even in his later years when he was indisputably a master instructor, for remarking during his classes, "Let me show you something new that I just learned from 'So And So' (choose any number of firearms trainer names, Jim read, listened to and learned from them all)!" Then he'd go up to the shooting line talking a blue streak in that inimitable NY accent that he had and showing how he'd made the latest thing he learned work for him.

And make it work he would! It was not always easy for Jim. Not too many years after I met him, he began to admit that he was having a lot of shoulder and arm pain, and for a while, he worked out of an old-fashioned open-fronted clamshell holster, not because it worked better than anything else on the market but because it let him draw his gun despite the limited range of motion his injury accommodated. In later years, he was one of the first people amongst my close circle to have major joint replacements, and oh, the pleasure he expressed at being able to move without pain. Another great lesson taught by example—don't let pain stop you!

Other than Jim, I am fortunate to have not lost to death the mentors who have influenced my professional development. As is true of my memories of Cirillo, I would be hard pressed to name only one life lesson from Massad Ayoob. If I had to choose just one lesson that made the most difference for me, I think it would be Massad's ripple in the pond lesson. In every class Ayoob teaches, he charges his students with sharing what he has taught to them with those for whom they

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care. That way, the lessons Ayoob plants in the student's consciousness spread far beyond the student. The preparation to stop violence against you, understanding of the standards to which society and the criminal justice system will hold your use of force, and the sheer determination to stay safe and "keep your people safe," ripple out from Ayoob, through his students, to the people they care about, and on and on. His lesson? Don't keep what you learn about personal safety to yourself! No matter how humble you feel your grasp of those lessons, have the courage to discuss what you learned with people about whom you care.

Many years ago, while outlining my second book, I badly wanted to include a discussion of firearms use in the field, hunting game for food. At the time, Vicki Farnam was the only female hunter I knew well. I was probably asking all the wrong questions, and in Vicki's typically direct style, she replied that I would do better if I wrote about subjects on which I had close personal knowledge. It was great advice, and I've acted on it over the years.

I have since then had the privilege of participating in a number of meat hunts, so perhaps I'm working up to a bit more personal knowledge of the hunter's craft, but I don't hold forth publicly about it because, truly, Vicki was right: writers need to focus what we know inside and out, backwards and forwards. If you doubt her wisdom, just read what passes for news reporting or editorial commentary these days!

Vicki's husband John Farnam is another inspirational mentor. From John, I have learned how a truly humble person lives, moves through the world, and shares knowledge with others. John is extremely knowledgeable about guns and use of force for defense. Yet, when asked to make an authoritative statement on one issue or another, it is common for John to conclude his observation with, "Well, that is what I believe, but I could be wrong." John is always questing for better ways to accomplish objectives, without getting so bogged down in contemplation that nothing ever gets done.

One of the most important lessons John ever taught me was, "Don't dither! Get moving and do something! If what you do is not exactly the right solution, you still have got to do something, so get moving and solve the problem!"

Oh, and the other thing John taught me? "Are you having a problem? Nobody else really cares! You better

get with it and solve this problem yourself, because no one else is coming to fix it for you!" Yes, most of the things I have learned from John end with an exclamation mark. If you know him, you know that he will give you the important information eloquently and with a serious face, then close it with one of his exclamations and his trademark ironic grin. Don't sweat the little stuff, he'll quote, then add that most of what we stress about is very minor, indeed.

Another instructor who would unpretentiously preface important principles with a humble statement is Clint Smith. I've had the privilege of having rifle, shotgun and pistol training with him, and learned an awful lot about shooting from positions of disadvantage, and in my mind, the most important lesson, getting the lead out and moving off the line of attack!

The other mentor to make a tremendous impression on me about the need to be able to remain composed and shoot accurately under nerve-racking stress, while moving, in crowded conditions, and always, always with accurate shot placement is Ken Hackathorn. Though classes with him always entailed a lot of different challenges, I remember that at the end of the class day, he'd have students draw a little dot or very small circle on the target, and settle down to perform the basics of sight alignment and trigger control, hopefully grouping five or six shots with all the holes on target touching, or if not, understanding what they needed to practice in order to perform at that high level of skill. We may be movin', shootin', and communicatin' but we still have to hit the target where it needs to be hit.

After 25 years as a student of self defense, it is hard to keep this column at a reasonable length. From Network President Marty Hayes (yes, I have been a student in a huge number of classes he taught), I have learned that teams of people working in concert can accomplish amazing things. We continue to practice that lesson at the Network every day.

That's just the tip of the iceberg and like Jim Cirillo, I intend to keep learning new skills until the day I die, so we will have to consider this the first chapter of many more life lessons learned in self defense training.

*[End of July 2016 eJournal.  
Please return for our August 2016 edition.]*

July 2016

## About the Network's Online Journal

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To submit letters and comments about content in the **eJournal**, please contact editor Gila Hayes by e-mail sent to [editor@armedcitizensnetwork.org](mailto:editor@armedcitizensnetwork.org).

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