



## The Armed Citizen's Secret Weapon for Court

by Marty Hayes, J.D.

Imagine being prosecuted for an act of self defense. To set the stage, let's hypothesize that you were accosted by two unarmed but aggressive homeless people in public, who while not demanding money, certainly implied by asking "for some bread" that your failure to "give it up" would likely result in immediate threat to your well-being. These two are about your size and all three of you are of the same gender. Feeling threatened, you tell them to "back off" and put your hand on your holstered gun. Instead, they close to about ten feet and you draw the gun and yell, "I said to back off!"

The two aggressors stop, immediately take offense and one reaches into his/her pocket for a cell phone to call 9-1-1. Meanwhile, a bystander/witness also calls 9-1-1 to report a crazy person waving a gun around. Of course, you also call 9-1-1 to report that two people just attempted to rob you. Although we are just imagining this situation, it is a scenario that is played out in one variation or another all across America daily.

Are you going to be arrested for assault? Cited for brandishing? Is your gun going to be confiscated? Will you need to post bail to be released from jail? The answers to these questions depend primarily upon jurisdiction and the credibility of the witnesses. Not much you say to the responding officers will make a great difference at this time because it is much safer for the police to make the arrest or confiscate your gun and cite you than it is for them to gamble on whether or not you committed a crime. The witness statements alone, as told by the two homeless people and the uninterested eyewitness (who is, unknown to you, a charter member of Handgun Control, Inc.),

provide probable cause for arrest or to issue a citation.

As a long-serving expert witness in self-defense cases, I know these are the toughest cases of legitimate self defense to defend. Overwhelmingly, the evidence points to your guilt. What if you had a "secret weapon" that you could bring out in court? A weapon so strong and powerful that it would make the judge or jury understand that the stories told by the three prosecution witnesses are not as credible as they sound, and that your actions are not as unreasonable as the prosecution claims. Would you like to have that kind of weapon backing up your actions? Even better than waiting to bring it out in court, would you like to be able to have your attorney use it to convince the prosecutor that his/her case is very shaky and likely to crumble if taken to court?

I know I want that weapon, and in fact, I used just such a secret weapon once in my law enforcement career when a use of force incident I was involved in was referred to the local prosecutor (by my chief, of all people) for criminal prosecution. Now, just what is that powerful secret weapon?

That secret weapon, which can be stashed in the toolbox of every legally armed citizen, is *documented training*.



Taking his own advice, Network President Marty Hayes is a student at Gunsite's 250 pistol course, although he is doing all the drills and tests weak-handed.

While I own a shooting school and profit by training others, any legitimate trainer knows that there are easier ways to make a living. I train folks because I want them to be able to survive being selected as the victim of a criminal attack, and later, I want them to survive the legal aftermath, too, by pulling out the secret weapon of documented training. Going back to our hypothetical example, here is how it works.

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First, understand that the jury gets to view the incident in question through the eyes of the defendant. In fact, in Washington State, we have a 1993 appellate court ruling (*State v. Janes*) that spells out this concept perfectly. See <http://law.justia.com/cases/washington/supreme-court/1993/59022-2-1.html>.

Asking the jury to view the incident through the defendant's eyes means that the defendant can introduce testimony in court about what they knew prior to the incident that led them to believe that a violent attack was likely. That prior knowledge is admissible only if the judge reasonably believes the defendant knew it before the incident. That standard is important because it's common for criminals to attempt to justify their crime by making up a story and telling it to the jury. Most jurors recognize this ploy and so the testimony of a criminal defendant is very suspect.

In our hypothetical, perhaps you, seconds before placing a hand on the gun, saw one or several of the pre-attack indicators that Marc MacYoung explains in the Network's fourth educational DVD (<http://armedcitizensnetwork.org/pre-attack-indicators>), *Recognizing and Responding to Pre-Attack Indicators*. Perhaps the aggressors split up in a flanking motion, or either shifted to a bladed stance, which is indicative of impending physical assault, or maybe one moved a hand toward locations MacYoung identified as places weapons are commonly hidden. Perhaps a flash of memory of MacYoung's lessons on that video lecture convinced you that the two people were not just beggars, but instead two criminals who had planned an attack and were preparing to execute it. Documenting that you knew those indicators prior to the incident lends considerable credibility to your argument of self defense.

In my use of force incident as a police officer mentioned earlier, I saw one individual squaring off against a fellow police officer in a near-riot situation. Acting on my study of pre-attack indicators, I stepped in and controlled the person, ultimately arresting him for disorderly conduct. An investigation was initiated when it was discovered I had arrested the son of the department's senior patrolman and close friend of the Chief of Police. I learned this after the arrest but before writing the use of

force report, so my report included the specific pre-attack indicators I had observed. I attached a copy of a training handout that I had received in an earlier training course to the report. When the local prosecutor reviewed the reports and witness statements, he declined to prosecute and cleared me of any wrong doing.

That is the power of documented training.

Members of the Network receive eight full-length lectures on DVD and a copy of Massad Ayoob's book, *Deadly Force*. This educational package would go a long way in helping an armed citizen document their previous knowledge, and that is a good thing.

I wrote this article while heading home after attending and teaching at the RangeMaster Tactical Conference. At the conference, I was sitting in one of the classes when I realized that all the attendees had an additional secret weapon they could pull out if needed. The trainer could be called into court to testify about the topics they taught the attendee. At the conference, those instructors included Massad Ayoob, John Farnam and Tom Givens, all members of the Network's advisory board, in addition to police trainers John Herne, Fletch Russell, Greg Grecko, John Holschen and many more. Each could testify in court on behalf of the conference attendee who took his class, validating the training received. It would be like having a nuclear bomb as your secret weapon!

Network members, your training needs to go beyond simple competence as an accurate shooter. Attending use of force training with Ayoob, Farnam, Givens and other recognized experts is equally important. Anyone carrying a gun for self defense also needs documentable training in the use of force and instruction on how to recognize impending attack. Our member education package is just a start. The 2017 RangeMaster Tactical Conference (<http://rangemaster.com/2017-tactical-conference/>) would be a great place to undertake that education.

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Please enjoy the next article.]*

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## Getting More Out of Your Training

### *An Interview with Mike Seeklander*

*Interview by Gila Hayes*

Network members are well aware of the value we put on training to improve defensibility of force used in self defense. With summer nearly here, training opportunities are at an all-time high so it's a good time to discuss how to get more out of training with Mike Seeklander, who in addition to teaching Shooting Performance classes has launched a training website, American Warrior Society, with instruction ranging from firearms to physical self defense to mindset and more. Let's switch now to Q & A to learn from Seeklander in his own words.

**eJournal:** For experienced shooters, it's difficult in the brief span of a class to overcome years and years of habit, prior training, and technique learned from other instructors. Still, we need to keep learning. What's your advice?

**Seeklander:** The first step is to understand how the brain works. When you develop a habit, you myelinate nerve pathways. That is how we learn. If you have a habit built—a myelinated system—you can't unbuild that habit. Someone trained in one system or technique over many, many years should understand that they are not going to be able to delete their old habits. If they've trained or shot for ten or fifteen or twenty years they have tens of thousand of repetitions built up. The only way to change is to develop a new and stronger habit.

This is how I tell students to approach material I give them. #1 go to the class and do your best but don't be hard on yourself. The more you are a type A personality, hard on yourself and beating yourself up, the less you are going to hear the instructor. Once we accept that, we can relax and actually receive and start to absorb the information given. As I'm teaching, I see the more experienced students start to fight themselves, beating themselves up mentally, saying, "Man, I can't do this like Michael wants," and they just lost the next 15 minutes of information that I gave to them! That is a key point, because to get the information the end user has to say, "OK, this information is good enough that it is worth it for me to put in the time to change the habit."



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**eJournal:** Forming a new habit takes a very high priority if the instructor says, "What you are doing is physically dangerous! You are going to harm yourself or another, or someone else is going to harm you because you will not be ready."

If I'm your student, I need to be able to hear you and physically implement what you have shown me.

**Seeklander:** There may be a habit that is so important to change, that you are willing to put in the work. You can figure that out as you receive the information in the first place. Then, you say, OK, I know I have 5,000 repetitions of this habit, if there's a better way to do it, it is worth my time to put in at least 5,000 repetitions and then some, to build that new skill set.

**eJournal:** As we get older, many of us struggle through limited strength and agility. When we are already giving it 110% but not succeeding, what do you do with us?

**Seeklander:** People need to think, "How do I do more with less?" How do I control the recoil of a handgun or a rifle with less effort? If I am using less effort, then I am using less mental connection and I am not as fatigued, and I can apply those skill sets across the board.

I'll give you an example: some trainers teach grip mechanics differently than I do. Some of those grip mechanics rely heavily on pure strength. Everything I teach relies on leverage, getting the hands in position to have the maximum amount of skin on the gun, because that increases our friction. Getting our body weight, our palms and our arms and our shoulders and everything behind the gun is a skill that is applicable across the board because instead of controlling it with 50 pounds of pressure, now you are controlling it with 100 pounds of body weight.

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I can teach that to anyone, whether it is an 18-year old college-age female with a weak grip or a strong, former Marine that came back from Afghanistan. Of course, if you have physical limitations, we will have to work around those.

**eJournal:** How does this roll over into tactics? I don't mean for military or police, but perhaps you are teaching private citizens how to get out of a dangerous area without getting blown up.

**Seeklander:** I think what people miss the most often is that real life armed civilian tactics rely a lot on knowing yourself. For example, if I have really poor night vision and I am clearing my house at night, that should dictate how I handle clearing a room. It may be that I have a remote light switch clicker by my bedside that I can click and turn on all the lights in the living room—because they make that kind of stuff these days—or a better weapon mounted light system, or a different light system.

Another example: my personal fighting tactics changed completely last December when I had my right hip replaced. I had never before been faced with a situation where I couldn't throw a good strike, couldn't throw any of my kicks, and I couldn't run. That totally changed how I might personally use tactics against an adversary.

My 74-year-old father-in-law has very severe scoliosis. His back is very weak and he physically cannot get involved in a fight so he goes armed: he carries a handgun all the time. How he is going to deal with someone out on the street and the distances that he can let someone come within his personal space is completely different than me. If a 30- or 40-year-old guy walked up to me, I could not shoot him from 21 feet and articulate that I knew if this guy got closer to me I would more than likely get my back or neck broken and I'd probably be dead. If I did that, I'd more than likely go to prison, but my father-in-law can articulate something completely different than I can.

That is the key to tactics: people understanding their own limitations.

**eJournal:** Is instruction in tactics part of your curriculum?

***“Real life  
armed civilian  
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lot on knowing  
yourself.”***

**Seeklander:** I tend to teach skill sets. I like to think of skill sets as pieces of the puzzle. You can start to apply those pieces of the puzzle in any area, which builds your personal tactical plan.

When I teach tactics, it is the very simple things. Like how do you walk down a hallway if you are going from point A to point B? How do you negotiate the corner of a door? How do you get your body around a piece of cover and look for potential threats? How do you hold the handgun or the rifle so when you look for that potential threat, you can actually see what they have in their hands and say, “They're armed,” or “This is some drunk teenager who broke into my house by accident?” I try to take the same rules and principles I teach in my shooting classes and apply those when I'm teaching tactics.

Tactics have to be practical and useable for the average person. I don't think of them as the tactics that I know from the military or that I would teach to military guys, because those are completely different.

**eJournal:** Those are excellent insights into bridging the gap between willingness and actual physical implementation. It is clear that you have a strong grasp of the science of learning. How does the learning theory work if I'm reading a Seeklander book or blog post or watching streaming video as is occurring many times every day on <http://www.americanwarriorsociety.com/>?

**Seeklander:** Well, that's a brilliant question because it affects the people who are reading this interview, too. Everybody learns differently! I will use the American Warrior Society as an example. There, my partner and I wanted to create an environment where people could choose and pursue their best method of learning. I want real, actionable content from trusted experts on the AWS site, so everything you read or watch, you should leave saying, “Now I know how to 'action' that – I know how to practice it and I know how to research it further.”

So, if you're watching one of my videos, I want your focus on that video. I don't want an ad to pop up that is designed to make you look and click. If you look at an ad and click on it, then you have forgotten about what I am trying to teach you in that video or what you are reading. That's why the American Warrior Society site is ad-free.

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I want people to focus even if it is only for ten or fifteen minutes and they do only one drill.

There are other people that like to read—they love the written word! That is where all of our AWS blog articles come in. Still, unless it is about gear, at the end of every article, you get a set of action steps: Do 1, do 2, do 3.

Other learners need interaction from other people. That is where the forums and the group chats come in. So, we may have a new shooter that just read an article that might have used some acronyms or some phrases that they didn't quite understand, well, that is their cue to go into the new shooter area of our forum and say, "Hey, I don't quite get this!"

On the lower left hand side of every learner module page is an *Ask a Question* form. You fill in your name, ask what ever it is, and boom, within 24 hours, you get a response from myself, and probably one or two other expert guys. That's guys like Michael Janich and Jason Kelly, who coaches the guys who are winning the Ultimate Fighting Championship. I've got some great guys on American Warrior Society and that is the key!

**eJournal:** I love the *Ask a Question* element! So let's say your article discussed clearing a hallway with just one door at the end, but my hallway ends in a T intersection. As an AWS member, can I come on and get instruction about that complication?

**Seeklander:** You sure could! As these questions are being fed to the AWS site, we will publish those questions and answers so that you could go to a list of probably a thousand questions that were asked and answered.

Those questions also guide future website content, because if I get fifteen members telling me, "Hey, Mike, I don't get how to handle a hallway in my house," then guess what? I'm going to get a guy with a video camera to follow me around the house and I'm going to do a video teaching exactly how we need to think about clearing this area or moving through this area: the pros and cons or how you may want to set up a picture or mirror so that you have two angles of view.

**eJournal:** The great thing about video is that not only do learners get visual inputs, we also hear you, even to the

extent of relying on your tone of voice telling us, "Pay attention, this part is extra important," so that we interpret what we see correctly, and those who learn through their ears are getting the information through their best receptors, as well. Next, I'm interested in the mix of experts you've brought together because I believe most of us are way too gun-centric...

**Seeklander:** We are!

**eJournal:** ...When we should have a wider range of abilities, if nothing else to make sure we can get the gun out of the holster and into use. What's the mix on American Warrior Society site to help us expand our defense skills?

**Seeklander:** Maybe 50-50 or 60-40. On top of my whole handgun and rifle series, we have the strike series, the head defense series and a standing grappling series taught by a professional wrestler. If someone shoves a 120-pound female up against that wall, how can you get off the wall? We've got a video that teaches you. How do you get out of a headlock? If someone puts you down on the pavement and starts punching you in the head, how do you stop the punches and how do you get out of that position? It is all on <http://www.americanwarriorsociety.com>.

**eJournal:** That is useful, in light of our concerns about defending against blunt force trauma. Once we've watched them, your videos could become discoverable evidence after a defense shooting.

**Seeklander:** Absolutely. There is a video on striking with open hand, empty hand, closed fist, elbow strikes and the power you can generate from elbow strikes. I can imagine maybe that 75-year old warrior who'd watched these videos could testify, "I watched Mike Seeklander demonstrate on these videos and when I was approached by this guy on the street who had a bunch of tattoos and was big and muscular, I knew that if he hit me with one of his elbows, I would likely be killed," and now he has obviously articulated a legitimate reason for using a gun in self defense.

**eJournal:** Between Shooting Performance classes and now the American Warrior Society, you have a lot going on. What's your ultimate goal?

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***"Information  
is not the  
solution!  
The solution  
is action!"***



**Seeklander:** I had a guy doing some video with me the other day, and he said, "What's your end goal?" and I said, "I will not stop until I have touched every single person in the United States who could potentially use this information!" That means I am probably never going to stop, but that is good! That is what I want.

I have a very specific memory that explains how American Warrior Society came about. I taught a class in which I had an older couple, probably late 50s or maybe early 60s. They both came to class very intent upon training. They had all brand-new holsters and guns and stuff. My first drill is very simple: extend the handgun, build a grip, shoot the target, but she was not making the gun go off. I said, "Why are you not shooting?" and she said, "I can't shoot the gun."

It was a very small gun with a thumb safety, so I said, "Just click the thumb safety down," and she said, "I can't, because I have arthritis in my thumb and I can't manipulate the safety."

I said, "Well, why did you buy this gun?" She said, "Because the guy at the gun store told me to." I have heard that many times from people showing up with holsters and gear that just weren't right for them. I said, man, I need to create something that someone can buy a membership and I can say, what do you want to learn about? Do you want to learn how to throw a punch? Do you want to learn about what it is like to get punched? Do you want to learn about gear? My answers are honest and objective.

**eJournal:** What is it going to cost me to become a member at American Warrior Society?

**Seeklander:** There are two different ways you can buy in. The initiation fee is \$49.95 and then it is \$9.95 a month or you can do it for one year at a time for \$139 or you can get lifetime content access for \$495 and we're giving law enforcement and military a discount.

**eJournal:** And speaking of discounts, Network members can log in and browse to <http://www.armedcitizensnetwork.org/members/coupons> to access a coupon code for a 10% discount off a yearly membership in the American Warrior Society. Likewise, I thank you for encouraging AWS members and your students to become Network members, too.

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*Mike Seeklander is founder of Shooting-Performance LLC ([www.shooting-performance.com](http://www.shooting-performance.com)) and the American Warrior Society. He is also the co-host of The Best Defense, the Outdoor Channel's leading firearm instructional show and a highly sought after tactical and competitive trainer and a high level performer on the competition handgun circuit with numerous championships to his name. This is augmented by more than 15 years of experience in various martial arts in which he holds multiple ranks including a Black Belt in Okinawan Freestyle Karate. In addition, he has authored/produced instructional books, DVDs and has developed hundreds of lesson plans specifically related to basic and advanced firearms training.*

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## President's Message

by Marty Hayes, J.D.

Here at the Network's home office, we are busily preparing for the NRA Annual Meeting May 20-22 in Louisville, KY. Read all about it in our VP's column on page 9. We designed and had a new booth back wall

produced to attract the attention of even the most tired

show attendees. Members, when attending the show be sure to stop by and say hi to Gila, Vincent and me. Non-members reading this should know that we will be offering a discount on new memberships sold at the show, so if you have been sitting on the fence about joining, do it at the NRA Annual Meeting. I hope to see you there.



range rifle so Melissa can cleanly harvest large game, or our personal self-defense handgun, so if that time comes we have to take it out and use it to save our lives, we do not risk the lives of innocent bystanders. While that applies to each member of our operations team, I also know it applies to the advisory board members, Massad Ayoob, John Farnam, Tom Givens, Manny Kapelsohn, Dennis Tueller and James Fleming, too.

Our Network Affiliated Instructors are professionals who teach firearms and self defense for a living, and our Network Affiliated Attorneys are gun owners and

shooters who take the use of firearms in self defense seriously, who have agreed to assist our members in a time of crisis. Even more importantly, the Network membership roll contains the

names of thousands of like-minded people who also train hard, enjoy shooting and take gun ownership seriously. Network members are all part of this select demographic, and frankly, that is special.

## New Goals Met

We recently surpassed 11,000 members in the Network, and have reached the three quarters of a million dollar figure in the Legal Defense Fund. Next time we report back about the membership growth and Legal Defense Fund it will be when we have a million dollars! That should occur sometime in 2017. (Did I just set a goal?)

## More About Training

Did you like the lead article this month? I wrote that article sitting in two different airports on my way back from the RangeMaster Tactical Conference. The conference truly is one of the premier training events held in this country. But in addition to that event, great

## Who Comprises the Network?

At a recent precision rifle course held at my range, I snapped a picture of the Network's Melissa DeYoung, lying in the dirt shooting very small groups a long way away. That got me thinking of the type of people of which the Network is comprised.

We are shooters first and foremost. We shoot guns (and don't tell anyone, okay, but we really enjoy it)! We train hard to be skilled with whatever type of firearm we use, whether is it is a long



training is happening all around our nation, offered by Network Affiliated Instructors, along with other instructors who have not yet seen the light and joined the Network but who are nonetheless great trainers. Never before have more opportunities existed for people to train, not just in tactics, but also the legal considerations.

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A great example is Network Affiliated Attorney Andrew Branca's *Law of Self-Defense* training seminars, which he teaches all across the country (<http://lawofselfdefense.com/classes-and-events/>). Then there is Massad Ayoob and me teaching a *Use of Deadly Force Instructor* course this fall in Wisconsin. This course is being hosted by Massad Ayoob Group Staff Instructor David Maglio through his training company Concealed Carry Associates, LLC. David can be contacted through e-mail at [trnhrd@gmail.com](mailto:trnhrd@gmail.com).

I strongly recommend all Network Affiliated Instructors become certified through the Massad Ayoob Group as a *Use of Deadly Force Instructor*. I know of several people who attended the first one we taught last year in WA State who are now teaching deadly force seminars as part of their business offerings. Part of the curriculum is compiling a complete teaching outline for this discipline, so the instructor can take the outline they receive in class, personalize it for their home area and student population and teach the material. I suspect we will teach more of these in the future, so if you cannot make it to Wisconsin in October, then look for another one in 2017.

As I wrote the last paragraph, it struck me that there is no website listing training courses such as these. I have created a sister page to our Network Facebook page, calling the new one the Armed Citizens' Educational Foundation.

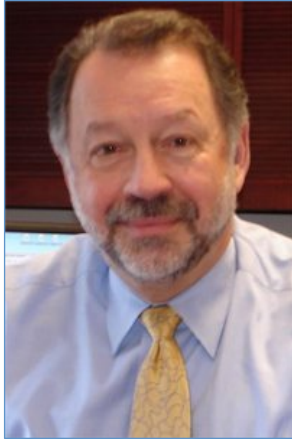
Please join me at <https://www.facebook.com/Armed-Citizens-Educational-Foundation-230820597283923/> if you are a Facebook user, and for those who do not "do" Facebook, please don't write to complain just yet! We are looking for ways to mirror this content at [www.armedcitizensnetwork.org](http://www.armedcitizensnetwork.org). I have found that Facebook is how much of the world communicates today, primarily because it works. Please consider joining, if nothing else, to follow the Network discussions of deadly force in self-defense cases (see <https://www.facebook.com/groups/221594457860509/>). As I get our Educational Foundation's training Facebook page set up, I hope members will also tap into this new page, too.

Until then, take care and remember, I hope to see you in Louisville.

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## Vice President's Message

### Ready for the 2016 NRA Meeting?

by Vincent Shuck

We have posted notices about the upcoming NRA Annual Meeting in previous *eJournals* but this is your official

invitation to join Gila, Marty and me at the NRA Annual Meeting that will be held later this month in Louisville, KY. The meeting will be conducted at the Kentucky Exposition Center, May 20-22.

As noted in the *President's Message*, we will have an expanded booth presence with a new appearance so please look for us and visit us in booth # 4231. Spend some time with us but also enjoy the other 500 or so exhibitors, including every major firearm manufacturer, hunting and outfitter company, firearms collection group, shooting accessories corporation, wildlife artist, knife maker, and much more! Educational seminars, special ticketed events and celebrity speakers are on the schedule to break up your walking time in the exhibit hall. Admission to the meeting is free to NRA members and their families.

Louisville, located on the Ohio River, may be best known for the Kentucky Derby, defined as a two-week party culminating with a two-minute horse race. The "Run for the Roses" is the first leg of the Triple Crown and is held on the first Saturday in May. But even after the Derby weekend, you can sip on a Mint Julep at most watering holes in the city, just like those attending Churchill Downs and the race.

Louisville is also the headquarters for Kentucky Fried Chicken and Colonel Sanders, the company that produces the famous Louisville Slugger baseball bat, and it is the major center of the American whisky industry, with about one-third of all bourbon brands coming from the area. Thus, it's easy to visit a place that serves adult beverages and find over 30 different bourbon labels to sample. It's also the home of the University of Louisville, one of my *Alma Maters*.

Current Network members should stop by the Network booth and say hello to us – it is nice when we can put a name with a face. Bring your friends and encourage them to become Network members while at the meeting!

For more information on the NRA meeting, pre-registration and housing assistance, visit [www.nraam.org](http://www.nraam.org). We look forward to seeing you in Louisville.

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## Attorney Question of the Month

For the past several months, this column has discussed armed citizen interaction with police, including making the 9-1-1 call, what to do after threatening someone with deadly force, and after using deadly force against an attacker who survives to tell his side to police. Now, in this last question regarding use of deadly force and the immediate aftermath, we share the first half of the responses from our Affiliated Attorneys as we near the end of this subject with the following question:

*If an armed citizen shoots and kills someone who threatened them with violence (and it is apparent that the criminal is dead) what if anything should the armed citizen say to police when they arrive?*

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A dead person changes the emotional/legal landscape, for various reasons. The citizen needs to say something, but much less is far more.

I advise as follows: The citizen simply should keep repeating that he was –

1. afraid for his life,
2. that he feels light-headed and needs to sit down, and
3. that he needs to speak with his lawyer.

As example: “I thought he was going to kill me. I can’t even stand right now, I need to sit down. I have to talk to...(lawyer’s first name).”

This is a lot to remember, but armed citizens should think about it from time to time. Write the words, or similar words, down on paper several times—that is an important part of remembering. But don’t keep the writings.

The three statements do very important things. First, they keep the citizen from saying anything else that

could hurt them, like a politician going off-script and creating a scandal. Second, they are buying time, which allows the citizen to calm down some more. Third, they establish that the citizen is in shock from a seemingly dangerous threat. Fourth, a person who feels woozy and cannot stand up is suffering an obvious physical manifestation of shock. Fifth, they begin the legal defense process correctly by asking for counsel, and by creating a reasonable belief of serious or deadly harm. In sum, the citizen is coming across as an ordinary person who has just faced enormous danger, which is exactly what the grand jury needs to hear.

That is the best a citizen can do, and really, it will be amazing if they can do it at all. Talking even a little usually leads to more talking, and more talking, etc. And I’ve never seen a situation where endless talking did not hurt a defendant’s case. But, with a dead person, I would say just a little.

Of course, if the citizen actually can make themselves faint and go unconscious as the police begin asking questions, then I recommend that most of all. Pure shock, no talk. Perfect.

### George Lyon

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My answer is identical to the advice Mas Ayoob gives. “This person attacked me (or threatened me with a deadly weapon). I don’t know if he had any accomplices. [If it is not absolutely clear that the attacker is dead, indicate that you want to press charges if the attacker survives]. The evidence you need to see is here. The witnesses who saw this are there. You know as serious this is. I will cooperate fully with you in 24 hours after I am able to consult with my attorney.” Don’t answer any other questions.

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**Arthur R. Medley**

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This one is a little different. In Alabama self defense is premised on the level of threat so only a lethal threat or fear thereof can be met with lethal force, so the first thing to say is that this perp threatened to kill me or cause serious bodily harm. Thereafter, the response remains as before, steer the conversation. Say, "I just shot an attacker." Since it's unlikely you're a medical professional then simply say the perp appears unresponsive so send police and paramedics.

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In such a situation, you will have one chance to tell your story to the police to show that your actions were fully justified, and telling it while in the midst of that stressful and adrenaline-filled moment is not wise. All you should say in your initial statement is that you will cooperate with the police, but you need some time to calm down before you make a statement. Then you should go over your story with your attorney to make sure that you cover every aspect of justification. Only then are you ready to make a full statement to the police.

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As I outlined in *Aftermath: Lesson in Self-Defense* (<http://www.aftermathbyjimfleming.com/>), interaction with first responders should be limited to self-identification and the statement, "I will not provide any statement, or answer any questions until my attorney is present." And then shut up. This presumes that the armed citizen is in any kind of shape at all, physically, or mentally to make such a statement, and that may not be the case.

With recent Supreme Court decisions on the issue of Fifth Amendment rights and Miranda requirements, interaction with law enforcement officers has become an extremely tricky business. Until you make that statement and then honor it by refusing to engage in any other discussions until your attorney is present with you, anything you say, or actions you take, body language or facial expressions are fair game for use by prosecutors later during a possible trial. Making that statement effectively closes that door. You have the RIGHT to remain silent. *Miranda v. Arizona*, 384 U.S. 436 (1966) Use it.

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1. I was in fear for my life.
2. He had a weapon.
3. Evidence is there.
4. I would like to speak with my attorney before I make any more statements.

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As a former homicide/violent crime prosecutor who has been involved in investigations and grand jury presentments in self-defense cases as well as a criminal defense attorney for 16 years, I think it is vital to get the police on your side from the very beginning. Often the police perception of who is the victim and who is the assailant can color the whole investigation.

Because of that I think just simply saying you are asserting your Fifth Amendment right to remain silent is not the best course of action even though it is certainly within your rights to do so. Rather my experience suggests doing the following (I'd love to say I thought these up myself but they are based on the teachings of the esteemed Mas Ayoob with some tweaking for Maryland law):

1. Be sure to call 911 and remain on the scene as long as it is safe to do so.

[Continued next page...]

2. Officer, this person attacked me, and I was in fear for my life.
3. Officer, here is the evidence (injuries to you, assailant's weapon, broken door, etc.).
4. Officer, these are the people who saw it.
5. Officer, you will have my full cooperation after I get a chance to speak with my attorney.

Then be quiet and contact the Network and/or your attorney. Remember once you invoke your rights to counsel and to remain silent, the police cannot legally question you further unless you initiate another conversation.

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This is a very tough question, in part because different states and even different local police departments treat this type of incident differently. It is, therefore, always advisable to contact a local criminal defense attorney to get specific information for the member's actual location.

Most importantly, I believe it is necessary and advisable to talk as little as possible on the scene. Emotions and adrenaline run very high after any shooting. I often suggest to people that any statement be kept short, simple and to the point. Something along the lines of, "I felt my life was threatened and had no other option but to shoot." I would then tell the police that I am not in an appropriate emotional state to discuss it further at this time.

There is no need to mention getting a lawyer unless the police continue to try asking questions. Agree to set up a time in the next few days to provide a full statement. Provide all contact information such as addresses, phone numbers, etc. so the police can get in touch in the next few days.

While there is certainly nothing wrong with getting a lawyer (and I obviously think everyone should have one for all police interaction) sometimes it can be perceived as a defensive move. That's why I suggest not bringing it up in the first few minutes of interaction with police if possible.

Some police are really going to push for answers. DO NOT FALL FOR IT. If the police keep trying, say you will only answer questions with a lawyer present. The thought of spending a night or more in jail sucks! But, saying the wrong thing when emotional can be far more detrimental down the road.

All experienced police have gone through use-of-force training at some point. Very often they are required to describe the situation and details right after. Most of them get it wrong, leave details out or completely make things up. They are not lying in their training, the mind simply can't process that much information under stress that quickly and will fill in the blanks with what "makes sense." Experienced police will know and understand this completely. Ask the same officer four hours later, they will most likely provide very clear details and acknowledge what they simply don't remember.

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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 more answers to this question.*

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

## Book Review

Reviewed by Gila Hayes

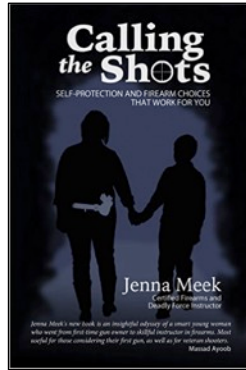
For this month's book reviews we have several shorter books written by Network members.

### **Calling the Shots: Self-Protection and Firearm Choices that Work for You**

By Jenna Meek; Foreword by Marc MacYoung  
ISBN 9780692626580

\$14.99, paperback, 133 pages, illustrated

[http://carryoncolorado.com/Apparel\\_and\\_Books/Book/Calling\\_the\\_Shots](http://carryoncolorado.com/Apparel_and_Books/Book/Calling_the_Shots)



*Calling the Shots* provides empathetic mentoring for women who are interested in becoming armed citizens. Author Jenna Meek introduces, “If learning firearms was not your idea to begin with, [it] makes it that much harder to stay involved when the experience is not pleasant.” Learning about guns does not need to end that way, she exclaims, then goes on to provide guidance and motivation for beginners.

Addressing the student who is new to guns but intent upon buying and learning to operate one, Meek urges studied introspection to consider, “If the need arose, could I take the life of another human in self defense?” as well as to identify the uses this first gun will be asked to fill. Many buy a first gun only to discover it really does not fit the parameters of the intended use, and sometimes that mistake is repeated on the second visit to the gun counter, too. Gun selection considerations include price, ammo availability and cost, as well as repair parts availability, ergonomics and fit, size and weight, recoil, operational simplicity and ease of cleaning, manufacturer reputation and warranty, she teaches. After comparing gun ergonomics to the way some automobiles feel “just right” and others are always uncomfortable, Meek explains that sometimes more than one gun is the best choice – one to carry concealed, one for home defense or sport shooting.

The same philosophy applies to holsters and other concealed carry products, and Meek opines that for women in particular, just one holster rarely covers all the eventualities. After explaining pros and cons for a variety of carry methods, she adds, “The trick here is to find a holster that has cons that you can live with. It’s

the same with guns, by the way.” Additional discussion addresses upsides and downsides of open carry, getting through the first uncomfortable experiences of carrying in public, and a strong argument for carrying inside the home, where many will “ungun” for the sake of comfort.

Responsibility plays a big part in Meek’s instruction, and gun storage is an important issue, she asserts. Families with children also need to teach children about guns, which she suggests can begin with gun cleaning. Satisfy the child’s natural curiosity, she directs, adding, “The more I can teach my son about guns and gun safety in general, the less I have to worry about him trying to learn about them on his own.”

Consider, Meek urges, that guns are not the only dangerous tools in most American homes. Kitchen knives are dangerous, yet while sharp chef’s knives are not left where small children can reach them, neither are they hidden away. The children are simply taught how dangerous sharp knives are and learn at an early age to avoid that hazard, she illustrates.

Adult avoidance of danger is a different problem, and Meek suggests that for many, the time-honored color code of awareness does not compute. Instead, she judges situations by determining if they are “normal, abnormal, or dangerous.” Be observant and determine what is normal in your neighborhood, she teaches, in an echo of the *Left of Bang* advice reviewed in this column several months ago. This is particularly applicable to “fringe areas,” where relative isolation and poor sightlines provide the anonymity a criminal needs. She also touches on setting boundaries.

Near the book’s end, in a chapter on legal issues, Meek admonishes the reader to know the law, understand brandishing, Castle Doctrine and Stand Your Ground statutes, as well as defense of property, pets and other concerns. We appreciate the recommendation she gives for Network membership in this segment. *Calling the Shots* closes with a chapter encouraging training and identifying the ultimate goal: avoiding need to use a gun if at all possible.

Think of *Calling the Shots* as a quick-start guide for new gun owners. It does not detail the intricacies of firearms operating systems, the merits of various calibers, nor does it delve deeply into ballistics, use of force doctrine and legalities, but it gives enough guidance that the beginner can get off to a solid start,

[Continued next page...]

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then, if interested in learning more, start reading longer technical works. Before that can happen, interest and commitment must flourish. *Calling the Shots* is a great way to start down that path.

### **Facing the Active Shooter: Guidelines for the Armed Citizen Defender**

2nd revision 2015

by CR Williams

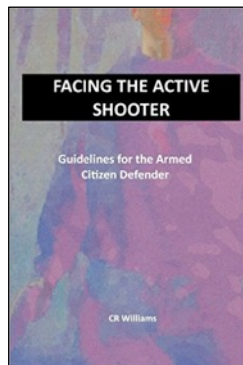
Paperback: 98 pages, 6x9, illustrated

Publisher: In Shadow In Light

ISBN-13: 978-0692260869

\$5.14 at Amazon.com

[http://inshadowinlight.com/index.php/  
books-and-articles/](http://inshadowinlight.com/index.php/books-and-articles/)



“Active shooters have come before. They will come again,” with this stark truth author CR Williams introduces his monograph discussing options and considerations facing an armed citizen caught up in an armed mass murder attack. Although many would like a “hard-and-fast rule-set...do-this-here/do-that-there kind of specific suggestions,” Williams wisely counsels that it is not practical to train for specifics, because, “Everyone’s situation is and will be unique. Everyone starts from a different point even if they are in the same room of the same building when an attack starts.”

Williams posits that in the US, domestic armed terror attacks are most likely to be perpetrated by a single, male shooter armed with multiple firearms. The attack may take advantage of trapping numerous victims inside a building, he suggests, adding that only a few attackers will have prepared the area in advance, as occurred at the Virginia Tech shooting when chained exterior doors slowed police response. Prior planning is more often the hallmark of an attack by multiple armed assailants, he comments.

If the attacker encounters armed opposition his suicide frequently marks the end of an attack, Williams continues, adding that attackers intend to “kill as many people as they can before they die.” Decide in advance to fight without hesitation. Because most mass killers come to the crime scene with no expectation of coming out alive, if you can’t escape, “The only choice you have...is whether you will attempt to end their killing sooner rather than later. Historically speaking, the only way you will do that is to either kill them or provoke them into killing themselves,” he concludes.

Since most armed citizens carry only handguns, what are the odds of prevailing against assailants with rifles, Williams next asks. A study of reported incidents leads Williams to the conclusion that engagements within “pistol range” of up to 20 yards is common, owing to the preponderance of indoor attacks. While killing team members may join up later, it is not uncommon for multiple attackers to separate, so needing to engage more than one or two attackers in close succession is unlikely, he asserts. Move to flank the shooter(s) and move to cover as you shoot, he advises. In addition, watch for their gun malfunctions or reloading and make your move during the pause in gunfire, he adds.

Although armed citizens crave high-speed tactics to improve their odds, Williams writes that to a great degree, it is fundamental defensive shooting skill that lets you prevail against an armed attack. If you’re a well-trained armed citizen, you already possess most of the skills you need, he stresses. What is missing in many, he reiterates, is the mindset and the iron will to take on a murderer in action. Without developing that determination in advance, you may not “get your feet moving in the reality of the actual event,” he warns.

Good physical condition presents tremendous advantages under the stress, maneuvering through a panicked crowd, and assisting family or those in your care to escape, he adds later. Physical condition affects mental condition, and “it’s harder to come up with a plan when your body is demanding air and your muscles are burning from fatigue,” he suggests.

Get in the habit of taking note of the terrain around you, Williams writes. Although we may think of hills, rivers and roads when the word “terrain” is used, it also applies to a maze of office cubicles, a shopping mall or the counter of a fast food joint, he accounts. “How can you use counters, shelving units, racks, stacked merchandise, walls and halls to help you defeat an attack?” he asks. How can an attacker use open areas or chokepoints, cover and concealment against you? he continues. Observe what is around you and use visualization to mentally run through attack and counter attacks in the normal course of waiting in line and other idle moments, he suggests. “Visualization provides us the ability to familiarize our minds and emotions with things we cannot otherwise experience in reality,” he concludes.

Weapon selection is another pre-attack preparation, Williams continues, giving a strong recommendation for  
[Continued next page...]

carrying a magazine-fed pistol in 9mm or larger, and carrying at least one extra magazine or more for low-capacity pistols. Even if escape is your first priority, you must be prepared to fight your way out, he adds. Sure, a snubby revolver or a .380 pocket gun can inflict damage, he writes, "What you can do is going to be less than you want to do when you're trying to neutralize somebody down a hall with a rifle in their hands," he admonishes. In truth, a 50-yard gun—a pistol with good sights, a decent trigger, and of reasonable size—is most desirable under those demanding circumstances, he recommends.

In addition to carrying good fighting equipment, armed citizens need to consider and learn to deploy from covert ready positions, protected ready positions for moving through crowds and close-in shooting positions, Williams next states. With any of a variety of challenges possible, he also illustrates and gives the nod to learning, practicing and mastering braced shooting positions for use when a handgun must be shot accurately at longer ranges.

The next chapter in Williams' book is almost a workbook – an outline encouraging the reader to recognize the irrationality of an active shooter attack, and base his or her responses on best options for survival, which may include escaping, engaging, taking a position of cover and determining how to make best use of that position. Adaptation and flexible thinking are vital, he urges, as is the will to live, weapons skills and trauma wound care, to name only a few.

Williams prioritizes actions likely to aid in survival against a single mass shooter, multiple shooters, at close range and at greater distances. He warns against waiting for perfect circumstances to execute a perfect plan. "A good solution applied with vigor now is better than a perfect solution applied ten minutes later," he quotes George S. Patton. "You will never have all the information you want or need," Williams urges. Make a

decision quickly and act on that decision. He illustrates how this applies to setting up an ambush as well as to making an escape.

Williams addresses surviving additional complications including interacting safely with responding authorities, understanding what happens if the hostiles capture innocents, moving through panicky crowds, inadvertently drawing the attention of accomplices of the shooter(s), avoiding being herded into a kill/capture zone, and quite a few other possible problems.

Woven throughout is the warning that the armed citizen's task is to survive, and while that may require decisively engaging with the shooters, it may also call for escaping, and even possibly leaving behind victims whom you cannot help. In short, this is not the stuff of heroes – it is a blue print for surviving.

Aftermath is discussed, including repeated warnings against actions that will get you shot by responding units. Be prepared for a barrage of questions, Williams warns, and not only from authorities, but from family, friends, the media and even your own need to justify or explain what you had to do to get out alive. The urge to talk is strong, he comments, but he adds a strong warning against seeking 15 minutes of fame.

Williams addresses additional sociological phenomena experienced by those who fight back, and closes with the unpredictability of not only what may happen but also the public's response to it in the aftermath. Still, taking action is better than dying cowering, and this short monograph gives the armed citizen much to consider and a lot to build into mental preparation that will apply to interpersonal violence as well as the active shooter threat it addresses specifically.

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



## News from Our Affiliates

Compiled by Gila Hayes

I'm looking forward to meeting many of our affiliates and Network members at the National Rifle Association Annual Meeting (NRAAM) in Louisville, KY this month. I recently exchanged some emails with affiliated instructor Joshua Gideon of *No Soft Targets*, who has promised to stop by the Network's booth at NRAAM to help put a face to a name—well, actually, put a face to a voice, because Joshua is kicking off *No Soft Targets Radio*, and already has two interesting episodes posted at <http://nosofttargets.com/?cat=9>. He also blogs at <http://nosofttargets.com/?cat=2> where a number of interesting commentaries are just waiting for your reading enjoyment.

I'd like to encourage all our other Network members and affiliates to keep our NRAAM booth #4231 full and busy by stopping by and spending a few minutes talking with Marty, Vincent and me. If, when you stroll by, we are visiting with prospective new members in the booth, please don't just walk past, thinking, "They're too busy!" Instead, stop and join the conversation and if you are moved to do so, please say a few words about why you would not want to be an armed citizen without the protections of your Network membership. Please help us add even more members to the Network. After all, with more of us standing together, we are just that much stronger when we need to fight to protect an individual member's rights after self defense.

Now back to our usual news and observations about the outreach our affiliates make to armed citizens in their communities. Our affiliates are our eyes, ears and voice at the grass roots level, as they urge their students to join the Network, giving them copies of our Foundation's booklet *What Every Gun Owner Needs to Know About Self-Defense Law*. Here are just a few of the affiliates I enjoyed reaching out to last month—

They may call it the *Women's Firearm Academy*, but Victoria Wojciechowski teaches a great line up of introductory classes for both women and men who want to master the fundamentals, apply for Utah's excellent reciprocal carry license, and train on the Academy's shooting simulator. Learn what this energetic Kalispell, MT firearms instructor has scheduled at <http://www.womensfirearmacademy.com/>.

In Oregon, we find Jeff Walters who is certified to teach concealed handgun classes for Oregon, Arizona, Florida, and Utah licenses. Jeff writes that he focuses on topics beyond the basics that the state requires, so his students leave class "aware of and ready for the responsibility that goes along with carrying concealed." He is more than willing to travel to his students' locales for private group classes. His courses not only meet but exceed the requirements for the student to apply for a concealed handgun license in Oregon and Utah. "Meet" Jeff at <http://www.chloregon.com>.

In St. Joseph, IL, our affiliated instructor Jim Sandquist at *Crossline Defense* offers live fire and class room training starting from the most basic gun safety and marksmanship skills, up through using a gun for home defense, concealed carry skills, smoothing out and speeding up pistol manipulations including drawing, magazine changes, and shooting quickly and accurately. On the tactics side of the curriculum, Jim offers training in low light pistol shooting, use of cover, close quarters, shooting while moving, and stress building exercises, to name only a few skills he teaches.

Jim's training philosophy is that the firearm's self defense effectiveness depends on good gun handling and shooting skills. "I'm not going to train you to be an 'operator,'" he quips on his website. "If you want that, join the military. We will teach you what to do, and you will know why we do it...I'm going to train you how to use your firearm for self defense, and because you have trained, you are more likely to access your firearm, engage the threats, and maintain your safety," concludes his succinct goal statement. Learn more at <https://www.crosslinedefense.com/classes.html>.

Janet Swahn is enthusiastically sharing the Network's educational message with her students at *CWP101* in South Carolina. Her Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/cwp101> is a fun mix of educational snippets and class news. Read course descriptions at <http://cwp101.com/shop/> where we note that the Swahns will even help you with the fingerprints that have to go in with a CWP application.

Annette Chapman and her crew at *Pistol Prep Academy* in Atlanta, IL are sharing the Network's educational message with their students in a variety of NRA courses, concealed carry license courses, as well as offering firearms safety and use classes for ladies, couples and

[Continued next page...]

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youth. Their course calendar (linked at <http://www.pistolprepacademy.net/register.html>) is very full. Stay current with Pistol Prep's goings-on at <https://www.facebook.com/PistolPrepAcademy/timeline>.

I always enjoy reading the blog posts Frank Sharpe, senior firearms instructor for *Fortress Defense Consultants*, writes. I appreciated his link to the Network in a valuable post he wrote not long ago about the reality of interacting with emergency medical providers after being involved in a self-defense incident.

Trainers have argued for decades about the armed citizen requesting medical aid after a self-defense shooting, he introduces. Sharpe is a good writer, and he paints a scenario, introducing, "imagine a 56-year-old man with a carry license, borderline COPD, and bad knees, being attacked by a knife-wielding, 24-year-old meth head in a parking lot." After detailing the physiological responses to a life-threatening danger, he explains that as the survivor of a violent event, you may not even know you have been injured until considerably later. It's a great read, so browse over to <http://fortressdefense.com/requesting-medical-attention-after-a-defensive-shooting/> and see what he has to say.

*Fortress Defense* is a self-defense training leader in the Midwest, teaching the armed citizenry of IN, IL, ND defensive firearms skills ranging from introductory

courses, to real-life skills like their *Daily Carry Skills for the CCL Holder*, one handed shooting seminars, rifle courses, *Counter Measures to Terrorist Attack*, and *Emergency Treatment of Gunshot Wounds*, to name only a few. Folks, as armed citizens, we are held to standards higher than simply passing our state's requirement to get a concealed carry license. *Fortress Defense* has many classes to increase the armed citizen's skill and understanding.

Network members, support these affiliates and all the others linked at <http://armedcitizensnetwork.org/affiliates> because they help the Network grow by giving clients a copy of a Network brochure or our Foundation's educational booklet *What Every Gun Owner Needs to Know About Self Defense Law* while explaining the value of Network membership for armed citizens.

Affiliates, please email me about programs, classes, open houses and other events you have scheduled in June, July and August so we can encourage members to attend. In addition, if you are getting toward the bottom of your box of our booklets or brochures, email me at [ghayes@armedcitizensnetwork.org](mailto:ghayes@armedcitizensnetwork.org) or call 360-978-5200 so we can support your efforts to tell your clients about the values of Network membership.

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

## Member Commentary

by Mike Wood

I'm a "gun guy." I always have been. When I was a kid, my buddies read comic books and *Sports Illustrated*, but I studied gun catalogs and read *American Rifleman*. Firearms and ammunition have always fascinated me, and over the decades I've delighted in learning everything I can about them and getting my hands on as many examples as possible.

So, when SHOT Show finally rolls around every year, I'm always eager to see the latest guns, ammunition, gadgets and gizmos. However, I must admit that I'm even more excited to see and visit with my industry friends. We certainly enjoy talking about the new hardware on the show floor, but the part of our discussions that I truly enjoy the most is when we talk about the "software" associated with self defense—the mindset, awareness, training and tactics that are so critical to winning the most dangerous of contests.

It was such a conversation with the Network's own Gila Hayes that prompted me to write this little article, and I thank her for the opportunity to share these thoughts with you.

If you caught my interview with Gila in the November 2014 Network *eJournal* (<http://armedcitizensnetwork.org/our-journal/318-nov-2014-network-journal?start=3>), you know that I'm a big proponent of "software over hardware." I've written extensively in my book and in many articles about the priorities of survival established by our friend, and Network Advisory Board Member, Massad Ayoob. In Mas' model, equipment is the last of the priorities. Instead, mental awareness and preparation, good tactics, and personal skill and competence with your equipment (in that order) all rate much higher than your choice of gear. As tempting as it is to focus on *stuff*, we must never allow ourselves to forget that what you have in your hand is a lot less important than what you have in your head.

Our mental awareness and preparation can help us avoid a bad situation to begin with, by allowing us to recognize a potential danger and take the steps to avoid it. Even if we don't recognize and avoid a situation, our mental preparation will help us to bounce back more



**Make no mistake: Mike likes his guns and enjoys shooting well as much as the next guy. He just knows there is more to prevailing in a self-defense incident than pure shooting prowess.**

*Photo courtesy of author*

rapidly from the shock and surprise of being attacked, and allow us to break the dangerous "mental freeze" which paralyzes the unprepared mind and leaves a person defenseless. Having a trained response on tap, to access when things fall apart, could mean the difference between life and death.

If we find ourselves in an unavoidable confrontation, we can dramatically increase our chances of success by using good tactics. If we use good tactics (i.e., "get off the X," seek cover, command voice) we might avoid injury, convince an opponent to disengage or surrender, effect an escape, or avoid having to use force in our own defense, all of which are very good things. If force becomes necessary, using good tactics will improve your position, enhance the effects of your force, and increase your survivability. For example, moving to cover and firing from behind it will improve your odds of hitting your opponent before he hits you.

This is especially true if you are highly skilled with your weapons and empty-hand defenses. The greater your skill at arms, the greater your chances of stopping the threat quickly, with a minimum amount of force. One or two well-placed shots may end the affair much faster than a barrage of poorly-controlled fire, and reduce your exposure to danger.

Let's leave the theoretical for a moment and consider the example of a Network member coming home from work after the sun is down. Our friend remembers that

*[Continued next page...]*

### **Awareness & Preparation Tactics Skill and Competence Optimum Equipment**

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she needs to stop for some groceries on the way home, so that she can make a late dinner for her family, so she pulls into the parking lot of the store where she usually shops. It's busy there tonight, so she is forced to park in the corner of the lot, far away from the store's entrance. As she walks through the parking lot, she reviews the grocery list on her smart phone's brightly-lit screen, so she can get in and out of the store as quickly as possible.

Can you see it coming? Of course you can. With her head down and her nose buried in a glowing screen, she's not paying attention to her environment, she's robbed herself of her "night vision," and she's dramatically increased her chances of blundering into a dangerous situation. This is the type of victim who later tells the police that the attacker "came out of nowhere."

It wouldn't matter a bit that our friend was armed with the latest wonder blaster, or that she practiced with it once a week, if the first time that she saw her attacker was in a fast blur out of the corner of her eye—just a fraction of a second before his fist caught her on the chin. Your skill at arms and your choice of equipment cannot be relied upon to get you out of the hole you dug with your poor preparation, awareness, and tactics. The fanciest carry gun and fastest draw cannot save you if you walk around in "Condition Facebook."

So keep those priorities in mind. Focus on your education and training, and challenge yourself to maintain a high level of awareness when you're out in public. Learn about the law of self defense, so that you're mentally prepared to know when you're allowed to use force, and won't waste valuable time sorting it out while you're under attack. Practice your skills frequently and seek high-quality, reality-based training. Learn about the tactics used by criminals in your area, and develop counter-tactics and good habits that will help you to defeat them.

Our firearms and associated equipment can be interesting and fun, particularly for hardcore enthusiasts like me. The challenge for us as students of self defense, is to remember that while quality equipment is important, there is nothing you can buy off the shelf that trumps the mindset, tactics and skills achieved through solid training and mental preparation.

Be safe out there!

---

*Mike Wood is a Network member, an NRA Law Enforcement Division-certified firearms instructor, and the author of Newhall Shooting: A Tactical Analysis. Please visit the official website for this book at [www.newhallshooting.com](http://www.newhallshooting.com) for more information.*

## About the Network's Online Journal

The **eJournal** of the Armed Citizens' Legal Defense Network, Inc. is published monthly on the Network's website at <http://www.armedcitizensnetwork.org/our-journal>. Content is copyrighted by the Armed Citizens' Legal Defense Network, Inc.

Do not mistake information presented in this online publication for legal advice; it is not. The Network strives to assure that information published in this journal is both accurate and useful. Reader, it is your responsibility to consult your own attorney to receive professional assurance that this information and your interpretation or understanding of it is accurate, complete and appropriate with respect to your particular situation.

In addition, material presented in our opinion columns is entirely the opinion of the bylined author, and is intended to provoke thought and discussion among readers.

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).

The Armed Citizens' Legal Defense Network, Inc. receives its direction from these corporate officers:  
Marty Hayes, President  
J. Vincent Shuck, Vice President  
Gila Hayes, Operations Manager

We welcome your questions and comments about the Network.  
Please write to us at [info@armedcitizensnetwork.org](mailto:info@armedcitizensnetwork.org) or PO Box 400, Onalaska, WA 98570 or call us at 360-978-5200.



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