Armed Citizens' Legal Defense Network, Inc.

Home Defense Shotgun Training

Considered from a Legal Perspective

Erick Gelhaus

by Marty Hayes, J.D.

Twelve years ago, Vice President Joe Biden during an interview famously gave the American people some gun advice when asked about Americans owning AR-15s for self-defense. The video clip is at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HHZ7zXLvOkY .

Of course, savvy gun owners scoffed at his comments when he advised if there was trouble at your home, just go out on the balcony and fire two blasts from a double barrel shotgun.

Now, I agree with Biden that a shotgun in the home is a pretty good go-to weapon for home defense, but there are some real considerations that one must understand if they are going to keep a shotgun for that purpose. This article will discuss those concerns.

FAS Owner/Director Belle McCormack with Beretta 1301 semi-auto shotgun.

Recently, I was fortunate to attend a top-of-the-line defensive shotgun course when Erick Gelhaus (Cougar Mountain Solutions https://www.cougar-mountainsolutions.com/) was invited to The Firearms Academy of Seattle (FAS) to teach a course. It was just too good of an opportunity to get a refresher in shotgun use. I taught defensive shotgun courses myself for years when I ran FAS, but it had been quite a long time since I did any serious training with the shotgun, and I was as rusty as a shotgun barrel left out in the rain. (Shotguns are notorious for their propensity to rust.)

Gelhaus is one of the current generation of firearms instructors who recently retired from either the military or law enforcement and chose to share their experiences with the gun-owning public. In Erick's case, he spent many years in the military before he pursued a career in law enforcement, and to put the frosting on the cake, he has taught at Gunsite Academy for over 20 years, which is where I first met him. Consequently, he has the chops to teach this subject matter.

But why does a person need to spend two days and several hundred punishing 12-gauge rounds when, according to Biden, all you need is a double barrel shotgun and the ability shoot a couple of rounds off your balcony? Well, for one thing, if you are intent on actually surviving a lethal encounter using a shotgun as your defensive weapon, you really need some training to learn a myriad of skills and tactics. Two days (or a couple of one-day classes) will cover the material nicely. The following is the outline of what a well-trained individual needs to know if they choose a shotgun.

Choice of Shotgun:

There are two types of shotguns that are commonly used – the pump shotgun (Remington 870 or Mossberg 500, to name a couple of the most popular ones), and the semi-auto, as exemplified by the most popular semi these days, the Beretta 1301. My semi-autos are all 20 years+ old, and work just fine, but if I was going to buy a new shotgun, it would be the Beretta. I thought I'd link a YouTube video about the Beretta, but there are so many of them I couldn't pick just one. If you want to learn about this shotgun, go to YouTube and knock yourself out! Remember though, your choice of shotgun will mean you need to learn the operating system, which I call manipulation. Each one is different, so pick wisely.

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Manipulation:

A person needs to learn how to load and unload, how to effectively store the shotgun for easy readiness but also safely, needs to learn how to fire from the shoulder so it does not beat you up, and learn how to shoot multiple shots and shoot multiple targets, which is not as easy with a shotgun as with a handgun because of the recoil. Learning the above will get you started using a shotgun for defense, and Erick covers the subject efficiently and thoroughly. What I really appreciate is his broad depth of knowledge and the willingness to teach several techniques and then allow the student to experiment with the different techniques. His class is not "it's my way or the highway" as one finds with many lesser-skilled instructors. Of course, as would be expected from a Gunsite Range-master, the safety protocols are strictly enforced. I never felt unsafe during two days of training.

Use of cover:

Given a shotgun's highest and best use is as a home defense weapon, learning how to use cover with it is imperative. Fully one-quarter of Erick's class dealt with using the shotgun from behind cover. Standing, both strong and weak side, kneeling, and one-handed shooting from behind both left- and right-side cover and from each side was taught and practiced.

What happens if during your lethal force encounter you take a bullet to your strong side arm while holding a shotgun? You just can't call time-out; you keep fighting or die. Gelhaus advises to kneel, load and manipulate the shotgun while cradling the gun in your wounded arm, then get back in the fight. Even weak-sided, if you press the shotgun into the vertical cover while shooting, you can hold it steady enough for good, accurate shots.

Patterning:

Do you know how much your shotgun's pattern spreads when using your favorite buckshot load at various distances? The original rule of thumb was 1 inch of spread for each yard farther from the target, with standard 00 buckshot, and a cylinder bore shotgun. Much has changed and with new types of ammunition and different shotguns, one MUST do the patterning for themselves, with whatever type of ammo they choose. A load of 00 buckshot will spread as it leaves the barrel and travels down range, and at some point, the pattern will be so wide that it will be off the target. You need to determine your maximum effective range at which all the pellets stay on the target. In the photo, left, Gelhaus evaluates one of the class patterning targets.

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A final thought about ammunition: If you live rurally, slugs might be a very good option to keep in the shotgun, or at least to keep in an auxiliary carrier so you have a choice. You need to sight in with slugs and need to know your maximum distance. Hitting a human target with a shotgun slug at 100 yards is doable, IF you control all the variables.

A good shotgun course will cover the above subjects, and Gelhaus's course did it well.

Liability concerns create the need to be able to document the fact that you knew the parameters of defensive shotgun use.

For example, if you step outside your home and confront someone who needs shooting, will a pellet or two miss the target and go through the walls into a neighboring house and kill the babysitter? You need to know when someone is too far away to engage.

What if you are in your home? Isn't it better to hunker down behind a corner wall to your bedroom, as opposed to standing in the doorway looking down the hall?

Documented training helps explain why you took the actions you did in an emergency.

One of the great assets of the shotgun is the powerful load it fires, but on the flip side, most shotguns hold only five to eight rounds. Having learned to reload the shotgun under stress would be very worthwhile in multiple-aggressor scenarios.

Then there is the interesting facet of deadly force, that explores using too much deadly force. Would shooting someone with a load of 00 buckshot be too much? If the life you are defending is someone you love, I would not think so.

How many shots did you fire? Using a handgun, it is not excessive force to shoot several rounds, because the power of typical handgun ammunition is pretty anemic. When shooting a .223 rifle, the gun is so light-kicking, as to make firing two to three rounds in a matter of a second standard practice. I live next door to a shooting range where police train frequently, and I hear this type of rapid-fire shooting going on all the time when they are training. Should you do the same with a shotgun? Shoot someone once in a vital area with a standard 00 buck load, and they will likely be out of the fight. Shoot twice, and the second shot's accuracy will be affected by the movement of the individual who will likely be either falling or twisting. Take three shots, and the third is either likely unnecessary or it will miss altogether. An unnecessary shot opens up the armed citizen to the claim he or she used excessive force.

Here's the bottom line: the shotgun, either a pump or semi-auto makes a great home defense weapon. As is true for all other weapons, good, competent training will many times make the difference between a satisfactory outcome and a disappointing one.

About the author: Marty Hayes is founder and president of Armed Citizens' Legal Defense Network, an organization he started to address the issues of post shooting legal issues he was concerned about for his students at The Firearms Academy of Seattle, Inc. which he owned and operated for many years. Marty brings 30 years experience as a professional firearms instructor, 30 years of law enforcement association and his knowledge of the legal profession both as an expert witness and from his legal education to the leadership of the Network.

President's Message

by Marty Hayes, J.D.

Just a short message to go along with the lead article in this month's *eJournal.* We have just witnessed the United States bomb the Iranian nuclear facilities, destroying the Iranian capability to develop a nuclear weapon. There is no doubt in my mind that if Iran could have developed an atomic weapon, they would already have used it against Israel, and just possibly against the United States. Unfortunately, this does not end the threat against the U.S.

It is reported that a multitude of Iranian terrorists have made their way into the U.S. over the last several years, and those Iranians pose a distinct threat to you and I, in the form of what is called "sleeper cells." A sleeper cell is a small group of dedicated terrorists waiting to carry out an attack against a target in the U.S. Think nine eleven for an example.

Along with many others in the training community, I am calling for armed Americans to be ever vigilant in the upcoming days, weeks, and months. I also would like to add my two cents and stress that you should carry your weapon 100% of the time, and it needs to be a weapon capable of hitting and stopping one or more attackers. This means a full-sized handgun (not a snubby or micro-9). If you cannot reliably hit a full, man-sized target at 50-100 yards, upgrade your skills or your gun until you're able to. Be ready to jump into the fray at a moment's notice and have the confidence to prevail.

Self-Defense Considerations for a Young Family

An Interview with Attorney Alex Ooley

Interview by Gila Hayes

The Network team attends conventions for the joy of talking with our people. Earlier this year, I took advantage of traveling to Atlanta, GA for the National Rifle Association Annual Meeting to catch up with Network Affiliated Attorney Alex Ooley and ask him about the adaptations and self-defense preparations armed citizens face as they become new parents. If you enjoy streaming video, there's longer, informal version of our interview on this topic at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KRL-HUz7Ju44 .

eJournal: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to again learn from you, Alex. Last year, you shared insights about teaching self-defense preparation to people in the 30-something age cohort (https://armedcitizensnetwork.org/reaching-young-armed-citizens). This year, we have a great reason to explore a new set of concerns affecting preparation and self defense because you are now a father! This raises new concerns. Now, it's not just you and your wife taking care of yourselves. Now, there are three of you and the little one didn't arrive fully capable of taking care of himself. I'd love it if you could share some of the lessons and the concerns that arise as young armed citizens first become parents.

Ooley: Yes, the most exciting news in my life since we last spoke is that I'm now a father. Our son is almost 16 months old.

eJournal: That great! Before going into how self defense and safety scales for a growing family, we should introduce you to members who may have missed your previous interview. Please tell us a little bit about yourself, your profession and then let's talk about becoming a family man.

Ooley: My name is Alex Ooley and I'm an attorney in southern Indiana. I do mostly criminal defense work which includes self defense. With my father, Mike Ooley, who is also an attorney, I've been affiliated with the Armed Citizens' Legal Defense Network for quite some time. I first learned of the Network in a class with Tiger McKee (who, unfortunately, is no longer with us), the instructor at Shootright Academy in Alabama, who handed us one of your brochures. Reading it and going through that course influenced me to go to MAG 40 with Massad Ayoob.

At the time, I was contemplating whether to go to law school and I decided it was an area of the law in which I had a really genuine interest. Part of my rationale for going to law school was having gone through the course with Tiger McKee and MAG 40.

eJournal: You were born into a military family, and your parents are armed citizens, so you came to this life almost genetically.

Ooley: Yes, it's very nearly genetic. I became very passionate about helping people become responsible armed citizens and that includes not just the firearms training aspect but also the legal aspect and being prepared to address the self-defense question and anything that might come in the aftermath. The Armed Citizens' Legal Defense Network is obviously very valuable for the educational component. I think it really augments the firearms training that people receive because it's not just about the gun; it's about the mind and the mental preparedness to be responsibly armed.

eJournal: Ironically, mindset is the hardest to teach because you've got to get into people's psyches and motivation, and say, "Safety requires you to turn away from some of the things you do." John Farnam calls it "repenting" when he teaches that if we want to keep ourselves and our families safe, we have to make changes in our lives. That's tough.

Ooley: It takes a great deal of humility and I think that humility is often lacking, especially in gun owners. You hear about the Dunning-Kruger effect, where people lack confidence when they first are introduced to a subject but then shortly after, they think all of a sudden that they've become experts. They're unconsciously incompetent and I think to get beyond that state of unconscious incompetence you have to have a degree of humility. The more training you get, the more education you pursue, the more humility you tend to instill in yourself because you realize that you don't and can never know everything.

It requires a great deal of training and education to be responsibly armed as an individual, but it really complicates things when

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you add a spouse or a child to the mix. The dynamic changes significantly and while I wouldn't hold myself out as the expert on this issue, I've given it a great deal of thought in anticipation of a child. Now, having had a child, it is something that really matters to me. Obviously, something I prize most in the world is my son and, of course, my wife. My thinking has evolved just in the 16 months that we've had our child, even though I did give it a great deal of thought beforehand.

eJournal: To be fair, you didn't bring a baby home one day and say, "Oh, my goodness, now what do we do?" You began problem-solving during the pregnancy.

Ooley: There are all sorts of things that you're anticipating and thinking of when you're about to have a child. How are we going to coordinate childcare? How am I going to change a diaper? I thought, I've never changed a diaper. There's no such thing as a tactical diaper change, by the way, there is nothing cool about it and no way to make it cool.

Before I became a father, I read an article on Greg Ellifritz's Weekend Knowledge Dump about a scenario where you are faced with an armed robbery while you have your child. What really stuck in my mind about that article was that your first instinct is to protect or guard your child, but that may not be the appropriate action in that moment. Think about if you're in an armed robbery: if the armed robber has a firearm, holding or trying to get in front of your child, could actually put them in danger, so depending on the scenario, he advocates that, if at all possible, you need to create distance between you and your child, especially if it's an infant.

eJournal: Boy, is that counterintuitive!

Ooley: It is totally counterintuitive, and I was thinking about this as I was holding my child during church, shortly after we hosted Ed Monk's active shooter response seminar. If an armed attacker came into the church, what would I do with my child? If I'm going to engage the attacker, I do not want to be holding my child.

eJournal: But are you going to set him down on the floor and go across the room?

Ooley: Those are the scenarios you have to think about, whether it's the armed robber in the gas station parking lot or the shooter that's walking into your congregation during a church service. How will you handle your child? You have to think it through ahead of time.

What you do may depend on how old the child is: it will be much different with an infant than if you have a 4- or 5-year-old or older child who may be able to take some direction, who you may be able to drill ahead of time. I think you can practice these types of scenarios with older children. It is incredibly important to practice awareness because we talk about awareness and avoidance so much.

If you can avoid a situation, you should do that! I think you can instill awareness in children at a young age without instilling fear. It may be as simple as playing an old game that my brother and I used to play: "I spy." You look around your environment and you say, "I spy …" and describe whatever the thing is, and the other player has to figure out what you described. Maybe awareness wasn't our intention in playing that game, but the practice instilled awareness and cognition of our environment. You can do those sorts of things with your child to instill awareness.

eJournal: We work to keep our hands free, wearing a backpack even if it looks dorky, but we carry babies in our arms. How are you dealing with having one hand tied up holding him the whole time and then, what do you do about the diaper bag in the other hand?

Ooley: You need to think about whether you can handle your firearm one-handed if there is a situation where the threat is imminent. Can you draw? Can you engage the attacker one-handed? Even so, if you can get distance from your child, that's ideal, but if it's an infant and if you can't, how are you going to handle that situation? Are you equipped from a skill standpoint? It's incredibly important to train and think about situations while you're training.

Speaking of trying to have hands-free, I was gifted a baby carrier that looks relatively tactical: it has Molle attachments and a patch that says "Come and Take It" in the shape of a milk bottle, so I've embraced the dorkiness. The difficulty and something you have to think through is getting separation if your child is literally attached to you. That presents another layer of difficulty and is something you have to consider.

eJournal: We shouldn't overlook the debilitating effect of stress on things we normally do without thinking. The challenge is hardening our minds to accept that we may need to fight, and the baby may be in our care at the time. What about mental preparation?

Ooley: My dad and I teach a five-hour legal class about armed self defense and talk about this. One of the things you hear routinely in the aftermath of a shooting, or an attack is how people felt overwhelmed to the extent that they thought, "This is surreal. I never believed that this could happen to me!" None of us can practice that, without going through it. I mean, you can do it with airsoft or with blanks…

eJournal: …but your brain still knows they're blanks.

Ooley: Yes, training can only go so far to replicate stress. The best thing you can do, aside from force-on-force training, is to really think through as many of these scenarios as possible. I think that one of the best resources in this regard is John Correia's Active Self-Protection (https://www.youtube.com/@

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ActiveSelfProtection). He has reviewed thousands of attacks from armed robberies to mass shootings. Watching those situations, and thinking through how you would respond, helps to mitigate or minimize that feeling of being overwhelmed, that feeling that this is surreal, and rather instills a mindset that, "I knew this could happen. I've seen this before and I know what to do." Mental preparation can help you to fight back and have the capacity to think, "How am I going to address this? How am I going to escape this situation," rather than potentially having the freeze response to overwhelming stress.

eJournal: In what detail do you and your wife plan defense responses ahead of time? Do you talk about, "Well, we're going down to the stadium tonight and here's what …" To what granularity do you strategize, detailing who does what and how it works once an emergency is underway?

Ooley: Being on the same page with your spouse is important in lots of areas but I think that there tends to be this sense that, "Oh the man's just going to take care of it or the woman, if she's the one that's trained…"

eJournal: Let's just admit that we are very, very culturally predispositioned to think defense is the man's job.

Ooley: Yes, the division of labor tends that way. That can be okay, but I think that both spouses need to be prepared to do the other's job. If I have the child, I may be the one who needs to leave the situation or if I can, pass him off so that she can leave with him. I think that communicating ahead of time about how you would handle that is incredibly important. It can get to a significant degree of granularity, but it's going to be situationally dependent. Is it at the Little League baseball field? That's going to be much different than if you're in church, for instance, or in a public space like the convention floor we're on today. It is going to be very situationally dependent.

eJournal: We also have to consider places like parking garages or lots where predators know people get in and out of cars and if there's a small child involved, the parent's head is deep inside the car strapping in or releasing the child from a car seat. Talk about vulnerable!

Ooley: That's a great scenario to talk about. It's incredibly important to think in advance about where I am going to park, especially if I'm by myself with my child. How to mitigate the danger there? Maybe I can park in a place where there's nobody behind me or park against a wall. If your significant other is along, they're the person who can stay aware of the surroundings, because when you've got a baby who's crying who doesn't want to go in the car seat and you're focused on that task, it's nearly impossible to be aware of what's going on around you.

eJournal: Going places by yourself with the baby has got to be an order of magnitude more difficult and challenging. Even just driving safely if the child is upset – where does your focus go? That brings us to something else you hinted at that earlier: how parents' safety-focused lifestyle concerns much more than guns. As a parent now, what do you do if there's a natural disaster? Does having a family change decisions about whether to shelter in place or run for it? More generally, how does the prepper's life change when babies come along?

Ooley: There's obviously a lot that can go into considerations about natural disasters. During the first year of our child's life, we had to be concerned that we had enough breast milk or formula available in the event that we couldn't get any. Babies can't eat solid foods, so what are you going to do? There's that sort of preparedness. Then there are questions about whether we have a generator to keep him warm if we lose power in the middle of winter and it gets cold. All those things become much more important when it's not just you.

There are other considerations like the internet, social media and online activities that make identity theft, for instance, very prevalent and another danger in the new world. You have to be worried about your child's identity, privacy, and security. I'm not a tech expert, but you have to think about the access you give your children. What sorts of things can they post on social media? Are you going to post about traveling for vacation and give the world notice that your house is going to be vacant? That might compromise the security of your family, for instance.

eJournal: What if grandma likes to post baby pictures? I know your mom, so obviously not her, but some grandmas might not even realize that can attract a predator. I don't know how young parents are supposed to put their foot down with their own Mum.

Ooley: Those are all things that I've considered and there's more that adds complexity to a preparedness lifestyle when you have a child. I don't have all the answers, but those are things that people should think about and talk through with spouses because having a unified approach is incredibly important to preparedness and to marriage in general.

eJournal: Good point! Now, think about this: what happens when you have two little ones? Or three?

Ooley: I think that as your child gets older there are things the older child can do to help with the younger child. We live in a time where we have so much wealth and prosperity that children often can coast through life. They're coddled and don't have much responsibility, but earlier I alluded to teaching children awareness and avoidance; it's also important to teach them to take responsibility.

What can the older child do to help with the younger child? Maybe the four or five-year-old is old enough to know if daddy

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says "Emergency," that means go to the safe place and take your younger brother or younger sister. I think instilling that sort of responsibility in them at an early age helps cultivate a child who is empowered, who can turn into a responsible adult.

eJournal: You're building a cadre! I wonder about facing the complexities that increase with the child's age. Do you let him go to playgrounds or from your earlier example, go to Little League? Places where children gather attract predators, but we shouldn't restrict wholesome activities. What will you do when the child wants to sleep over at a friend's house?

Ooley: Are we going to send him to a school? What sorts of concerns are there with government schools or private schools? What sorts of security measures do they have? Do they have a school resource officer? Do they allow their teachers to be armed? You don't want to deprive your child of an education, but you don't want to engage in unreasonable risk, either.

eJournal: I'm such a fan of homeschooling, which has gained acceptance over the past several decades. Quite some time ago, there was a tremendous stigma against home schooling. Now, there are a lot of resources.

Ooley: I'm a huge fan of homeschooling, too. Its flexibility is incredibly important. You can teach the values and the principles that you want for your children. As a matter of fact, this weekend at the NRA Annual Meeting I'll be talking with creators of the Tuttle Twins book series that are tailored to young children about the principles and ideas of liberty and freedom. (Watch https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=50uwhtxd3xA) You certainly don't get that sort of education in a public school or even most private schools.

There's also the benefit of knowing what sort of security you have, the sorts of adults that are going to be around your children, and the sorts of ideas to which they will be exposed. Are there sexual predators around? Are there violent people around? When you send your child to a school, you don't know.

I gave an example earlier about starting to instill responsibility in the child. Homeschooling can teach children to take responsibility for their own education, as well. You could do it without homeschooling, too, with things to augment or supplement what the child is doing during the day, but I think instilling that passion for learning and self-learning is incredibly important not only for general knowledge and thinking about the world, but also for preparedness and self defense.

eJournal: Really, you're showing children everything's not going to be handed to them ready for consumption. They have to figure out things for themselves. Maybe they don't want to be an attorney; they want to be a physician. Well, they better start studying the sciences, not the humanities.

One thing you do that I really value is your podcast, *Forge of Freedom*, where topics sometimes parallel books and articles that I'm reading, or I see something new in your commentary or you cite links that reveal a whole new resource. I also detect a philosophical foundation there that I'd like to know more about. Would you talk a little about podcasting?

Ooley: I started podcasting in your booth, actually, in 2019 at the NRA Annual Meeting in Indianapolis when I was a guest with Paul Lathrop on the Polite Society podcast.

eJournal: Later, you were on The Bullet with Paul, too, right?

Ooley: Yes, after we became acquainted in 2019, we reconnected through The Bullet and the Polite Society podcasts, where I was a guest, primarily talking about firearms and Second Amendment-related issues from an attorney's perspective. I really care deeply about the right to keep and bear arms and the Second Amendment, but I care more broadly about freedom, personal responsibility, and cultivating people who can make the world a better place from the bottom up.

I think that freedom is created and preserved from the bottom up not from the top down, not from the government. Through the *Forge of Freedom* podcast, I want to think through and convey these ideas to people who are interested in the same sort of world I am: one where people share and hold values about what it means to be a good person, a good husband, a good father and what it means to live a good life.

I studied philosophy in college, so I bring my passion for liberty and my passion for the right to keep and bear arms to bear in the podcast and teach people the foundational principles of liberty. I talk about a broad range and all sorts of topics. I catapulted from being the Second Amendment firearms-related guest on podcasts to the to the *Forge of Freedom* so I could talk about more than just firearms.

eJournal: I subscribe to *Forge of Freedom* on Apple Podcasts so it is easy to listen while commuting, but others might use Stitcher or other platforms. How can they find you?

Ooley: The easiest place is https://forgeoffreedom.com/ and if you want to watch it on YouTube it's available at https://www.youtube.com/@theforgeoffreedom, Rumble, and Facebook. It's also available on all the most popular podcast streaming platforms so whether it's Apple Podcast or Spotify or Pandora or Amazon, it's available there.

eJournal: The various platforms are great, and I personally like the well-maintained archives, too. A while back, when USAID cuts were a hot topic, I was looking for an episode you did about declines in charity. When I located the podcast and listened to it again, your link to a well-researched author supported the opinion. That's just one of the values I have enjoyed

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being a Forge of Freedom follower. People my age are slowing down, but you and your wife coming on strong, and eventually with the parenting ethos you're bringing to fatherhood, your son and his generation can carry the work forward.

Ooley: That's part of the idea behind the *Forge of Freedom* podcast. We forge the life we want to live, and we build a community with like-minded people to spread our ideas. The way that we think leads to a good, fulfilling life for lots of other people, as well. The idea is to forge that kind of life in your own environment and that freedom more broadly will spread as a result.

eJournal: It's interesting because, we're not talking about herding up in compounds to associate with like-minded people. By podcasting, you have a voice that is heard by somebody in Florida and somebody in California and places in between, making the ideals you discuss so much more generally available.

You know, when I interview you, I never know what parts I don't know *[chuckling],* so returning to the topic of raising children, what do you wish that we'd talked about that we didn't this morning?

Ooley: I'm still in the same camp as you. There are lots of things that I don't know, and I that I don't know I don't know. When I'm new to something or learning a new skill, whether that's firearms or fatherhood, I try to consume as much information as I can. It's hard to decipher all of it and to assimilate it in a way that's applicable. You have to take your own approach, bring some critical thought to what you read, and assimilate it to your own life. I am still going through that process myself.

I try to approach any topic with humility and do the best I can. I'm not going to be perfect. Don't get discouraged when you're not perfect. Continue to learn and carry that humility throughout whatever process or act you're engaged in. That really matters, whether that's becoming a responsibly armed citizen or becoming a good father. Don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good.

eJournal: Well put, and just about the time you think you've got it all figured out, then you'll have a teenager *[laughing].* Any final thoughts?

Ooley: Thanks for having me on. I enjoy our conversations, last year and this time, as well, but this time, I'm a little more uncomfortable. It's so personal; it's also something that I'm still learning, so I'm more vulnerable in this sort of conversation. I hope that people get something out of it. To any parents out there, if you see this on YouTube or read it on the Network website, I would like to hear your thoughts, so don't hesitate to tell me if I'm full of baloney.

eJournal: That is the power of being part of this community. You'll support people who are wondering how to do something and then, maybe there'll be people who can guide you and say, "Well I got through something similar by doing XYZ." Alex, thank you so much for being part of the Network family and for sharing your family with ours.

Ooley: Thank you.

About Alex Ooley: A Network affiliated attorney since the spring of 2017, Alex is a passionate advocate for liberty and the Second Amendment, who has helped numerous clients protect and restore their gun rights. He represents the accused in a wide range of cases, including self-defense and gun-related cases. He and his father operate Ooley Law (https://ooleylaw.com/) in Borden, Indiana. Alex is the creator and host of The Forge of Freedom podcast (https://forgeoffreedom.com/) and is a certified firearms instructor.

Attorney Question of the Month

It is very common for gun owners to also carry knives they may use as defensive weapons where gun possession is prohibited, or as a back up against gun malfunction during a self-defense emergency. As a result, members often ask questions about knives for self defense. For our attorney question column, we asked our affiliated attorneys these questions –

1. ***In your area, what laws apply to carrying a knife?***
2. ***If one inadvertently violated a municipal regulation prohibiting blade length, automatic opening mechanisms, or other knife features, how damaging would the violation be to an overall claim of self defense?***
3. ***If one is found in possession of an illegal knife, what is the punishment and does it affect one's carry permit or right to possess firearms?***

After receiving a number of responses last month, a final commentary arrived that was so good that we carried the topic forward one more month to include this material.

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I read with interest the answers to last month's Attorney Question about knives. All good information! One point I did not see mentioned was this: In the United States, we are generally used to the image and concept of people defending themselves with guns, and it is now possible for individuals in almost all states to carry concealed handguns for self defense. Police carry handguns, and the police use of handguns to shoot criminal attackers is generally approved and accepted by society. Knives, however, are a different thing. Most people (read, "the jury") associate the image of stabbing or slashing people with knives as something done by criminals, not by law-abiding individuals.

In addition, many of us cringe at the thought of being cut with a knife, more so than at the thought of being shot. A psychologist explained to me that this visceral reaction to the thought of being cut occurs because we all have been cut – if only by ourselves, when we slipped while using a sharp knife in the kitchen – whereas most of us have never been shot, so we have no visceral recollection of the pain involved in such an experience. What this means, in my opinion, is that members of a jury may look very much askance at someone who claims self defense after disemboweling another individual, or cutting their arm open, or permanently disfiguring their face with a huge slash. Technically, if one is entitled to use deadly force in self defense, it should not matter what type of weapon is used for that purpose. But imagine that, in defending yourself against a burglar, you used a home-made flamethrower to horrifically burn your attacker to death, with his screams of agony permanently recorded on the 9-1-1 tape. Many juries would have a hard time dealing with that image, and would view you very differently than if you had used a snubnosed .38 revolver that, in comparison, looked very tame and ordinary – like something a "normal" person (whatever that is) would use in defending themselves.

As an expert witness, I've worked in cases involving evil-looking, curved-blade karambit knives, knives with brass knuckles attached, and knives with dragons and black widow spiders etched onto the handles. None of these knife choices impressed anyone as being wholesome and innocent; in fact they created hurdles that counsel needed to overcome in claiming self defense. All knives cut, but some look far more "evil" than others. So, just as with firearms, I urge ACLDN members not only to make all reasonable efforts to avoid, deter, and de-escalate whenever possible, but also to use good judgment in selection of their defensive knives, just as in selection of their guns and ammunition, so as to avoid unnecessarily giving legal opponents arguments and images that can be used against them.

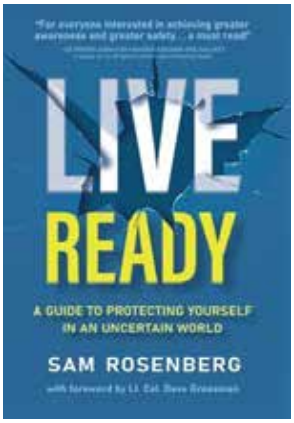
My concerns also extend to those who recommend using a knife, perhaps carried on one's support side, as a defense against an attacker who attempts to grab one's holstered gun. "Just draw your knife and cut him off your gun," as the knife-advocates blithely recommend. I've worked as an expert witness in several weapon retention cases where the defender ultimately had to shoot and kill his attacker. Defending these cases was hard enough; if the defender had used a knife instead of his gun, the legal defense might have been harder still. Again, in using deadly force there may be no technical difference in what weapon or method is used. But many juries will react differently to different weapons and methods. An attempted gun grab is undoubtedly a deadly attack, and must be countered decisively. Nevertheless, ACLDN members should understand the possible consequences of the weapons and methods they use.

A big thank you to our advisory board member and affiliated attorney, Emanuel Kapelsohn, for sharing his knowledge on this topic.

Book Review

Live Ready

A Guide to Protecting Yourself In An Uncertain World



By Sam Rosenberg
ISBN 978-1960378149
eBook, $9.08, $3.05 softbound on Amazon.com, 408 pages

Reviewed by Gila Hayes

John Steinbeck's famous observation that, "The final weapon is the brain. All else is supplemental," echoes across every page of the book I studied this month. The author's approach is right, in my opinion, for several reasons. Many books are sold about self-defense skills, and some are useful as textbooks for training classes, but a "how-to" book intended to teach defensive tactics or shooting technique is doomed because it reaches only one third of the "Tell-Show-Do" instructional model.

Instead, Sam Rosenberg's book, *Live Ready,* "is about developing that powerful, resilient, confident psychology that will carry over to every aspect of your life." His introduction expresses a goal for readers to become "stronger, more resilient, more capable, and better equipped" and right up front, he acknowledges, "This has very little to do with the actual, physical act of self defense; rather, it has very much to do with the idea that humans fundamentally need to feel secure, and that genuine sense of security cannot come from outside forces. That genuine sense of security is entirely up to you."

He theorizes that even highly successful people suffer from the primal knowledge that they are unable to protect their families and themselves. Rosenberg should know; his career has spanned service in the Marines, law enforcement, close protection work, and teaching personal defense skills. A number of *Live Ready's* lessons are introduced through experiences with his clients.

Throughout the book, Rosenberg decries the pervasive "myth of helplessness to which we've all been conditioned." This mistaken belief supposes that the attacker holds all the cards, when in reality, as long as you don't relinquish control, *you* decide the outcome, he writes. Create fear of failure in the mind of the attacker. They might get hurt, killed, or go to jail. The bad guy needs to figure out what creates the least personal risk by "interviewing" victims. The interview is so common, that, in addition to the opportunity for the intended victim to prove they're an unsuitable victim, the pervasiveness of interviews also disproves the idea that violence is random and unpredictable.

News reports encourage the premise that unthinkable violence, like school shootings, is random. That appeals to people, he thinks, because the unpredictable is beyond your control; you can't be blamed if it hurts you. He also decries the common layman's idea that murderers are mentally ill because "crazy or otherwise, their actions are a choice," he writes. Likewise, choosing to defend against violence is a choice we make.

Rosenberg discusses why the often-repeated phrase "fight or flight" is only a partial description of the physiological reaction to life-threatening danger. Facing death, the mind can choose from many options: "fight, flee, freeze, submit, or pretend to submit to create an opportunity to fight back; we may negotiate, bargain, or use deception; the list goes on." He discusses overtraining skills to the level of unconscious competence to remain functional when stress "redlines." Even trained fighters are frightened in real life, where fear in chaotic and unpredictable circumstances makes "complex athletic moves" nearly impossible, he writes, recommending tactical breathing to bring the nervous system under control, lower heart rate, and "bring you back from the Red Zone to the performance zone so you can think and make decisions." The goal "should be to ensure that you can think and make decisions under pressure—that you can override your limbic system's default into tonic immobility or panic, so that you can keep your wits about you."

Rosenberg turns next to how predators approach likely victims. Rule One: "If you're uncomfortable with someone, and that person approaches you (in any way), treat it as an interview." That can vary from asking the time, cat calls, or a challenging, 'What are you looking at?' Each is intended accomplish the same thing, he explains, "engage you in an interview ... to determine whether you are a hard or soft target." The same could be said for most approaches, he writes, but explains "This is why it's so important to know the difference between a normal interaction and a potentially dangerous approach. The key differentiator is: how does the approach make you feel? If it makes you uncomfortable, or it turns uncomfortable, be careful."

Look for "incongruencies, body language and facial expressions, threat displays, and other warning signs...any obvious threat displays, limbic indicators, weapons, or other discernable warning signs," and trust your radar and don't deny that your warning system just went off. Leave, don't engage, "Keep moving, and simply don't respond. Let the Bad Guy know that you see him. Do this by looking at his face or chest, but don't make prolonged eye contact as that can be interpreted as an invitation for further engagement. Regardless of what he says, simply stay calm, ignore the verbal tactics, and keep moving."

When circumstances prevent moving out of range, derail the criminal's plan. Rosenberg teaches "pattern-interrupt" methods to "create a pause to give you the opportunity to keep moving." Don't stop, just say "I'm sorry, I can't help you" coupled with the "stop sign" hand position he teaches. Adjust your words' volume to suit the situation. He writes, "There's no predatory approach interview question that this simple statement can't deflect. If you keep moving and pattern-interrupt the approach in this manner you are sending a clear message that you have no intention of being interviewed, all in a manner that gives you control without disrespecting the Bad Guy."

Disengagement is not always possible. Predators prefer victims who are hobbled in some way. Rosenberg illustrates, "You may be with your young children or elderly parents, or you have your hands full of groceries, or you're otherwise encumbered and just can't leave quickly enough. Or you could find yourself in a

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scenario where ... retreat is not tactically viable, and you have to either back him down or peremptorily escalate to defensive measures," or what started as a benign social situation starts to feel risky.

Your best tool is distance, he stresses first, observing that not only do bad guys like to intentionally create discomfort by invading your personal space, in that situation, "if that Bad Guy wants to hit, stab, or tackle you, you will not have the physiological reaction time necessary to respond." He adds, if forced into a close quarter "interview," what you say is less important than how you speak and the accompanying actions. Quoting popular animal behaviorist Cesar Milan, Rosenberg recommends calm/assertive body language that communicates unwillingness to engage with the bad guy. He adds that it "takes practice and steadfastness, but the mindset is worth cultivating—not only for managing interviews, but for managing all of the difficulties life throws at you."

Rosenberg writes a good chapter on stalkers and social situations that make victims hesitant to stop abusers. He reminds readers, "No matter what the situation, just because someone wants to hurt you doesn't mean they can. Ultimately, you are the final arbiter in the equation, and there are always situational factors you can control," he urges, adding, "you are responsible for your own protection and must make those critical decisions. If avoidance fails, and you must take physical action to defend yourself and your loved ones, you have the power to do so. But first you must be both willing and able."

With this, he segues into his instruction on self-defense use of force. First, he frankly addresses complexity in force options, noting that self-defense instruction needs to prepare students to "recognize danger in advance, manage interviews, and know unequivocally, if they had to take physical action, what that action should be...become problem solvers...within a framework that is technically, legally, and morally viable in the real world." The process needs "to be as simple and intuitive as driving a car."

He tells of a student frozen by indecision, mentally sorting through various options he had been taught. Simplify the decision of what to do in response to attack to one "single, carefully selected, and reflexively trained response" to one stimulus, Rosenberg writes. Escape remains the top priority all along the timeline, be that disengaging early on or using any means available to break contact and get away.

Introducing legal use of deadly force, Rosenberg notes that he's not teaching the laws or giving legal advice, aiming instead to give a foundation so readers can evaluate and choose the best instruction for the discipline. Students grasp principles like reasonableness, proportionality, and immediacy, Rosenberg comments, but express concern over how they're "supposed to figure all of this out in the heat of the moment." He recommends training to develop the defense skills, but also urges readers to make sure "the tactics you learn will be legally compliant." He returns to his book's philosophy, observing, "To me, this is the essence of *Living Ready*. To be peaceful is not to be helpless; it is to have the capacity to do violence if need be, but to never do so inappropriately."

How to reach this state? Decide what you are training for. Choose and become skilled at defense techniques that scale effectively for people of various sizes and strength, work appropriately across a spectrum of dangers, and remain functional under stress. Start your preparation in four steps, he advises.

First, make an assessment that asks the right questions. "Are there vulnerabilities in your life?" Identify them, determine which you can mitigate, set your safety goals and work out how to implement them without loss of quality of life. He illustrates "the Deny, Deter, Defend continuum for every space in which we regularly spend our time," using an example of home security.

The second step is planning. For instance, threats inside the home merit considerably different responses than threats outside, Rosenberg writes. Threats differ, too. If plans suggest sheltering inside the home for long periods, stockpiled supplies like water, medical supplies, and stored foods are essential.

Next comes the step of preparation. Examples include fixing weak locks or easily breached windows, without impeding egress in the case of fire or other emergencies inside.

Finally, remember that provisions alone are not enough. You have to practice. Rosenberg observes, "You can spend all the money in the world on smoke detectors, gas masks, and fire evacuation ladders that your child keeps in her bedroom, but if you don't actually test and train with these devices, how will you know that they will help in an emergency? ... Rehearsing emergency procedures at home might sound over the top to some, but it is the only way to effectively evaluate how your plans and training would work in a real-world situation."

Don't let complexity overwhelm you. Rosenberg writes that being ready to preserve your own life and your family's grows more natural with each practice rep. "Start with the broadest, simplest lessons," he explains, "The more you train, the more your skills improve, and the more natural and second nature your response becomes. The more confidence you gain in your ability to protect yourself, your home, and your loved ones from harm, the less fear the threat of violence will induce."

Your situation is never hopeless, Rosenberg stresses. "Fighting back is not suicide. Suicide is doing nothing. Suicide is having your options taken from you by your limbic system and freezing into tonic immobility, where the decision on whether you live or die falls to the discretion of the Bad Guy," he urges.

He closes *Live Ready* by observing that mindset "ensues" from knowing what to do and how to do it, adding, "True personal power doesn't derive from wealth, or physical strength, or illusions of control; it comes from our capacity to choose our own responses...ultimately, it's the emotional muscle you build that enables you to survive and thrive in this dangerous world."

Editor's Notebook

by Gila Hayes

A couple of months ago, in May, we had a very fun video interview with Michael Bane about the value of competitive shooting. Now that summer is well and truly underway, I hope more of our members are getting out to shooting events. After we published that interview, several Network members shared their thoughts about shooting matches and I find in their examples the strongest inspiration to participate in shooting events, whether that entails a return to matches after a long absence or starting the shooting sports for the first time ever.

What's In It for Seniors?

A long-time member wrote me a note expressing that while he had enjoyed Michael's interview, he wondered, "What do old toots get out of competition? I've read Marty and Mas commenting on the track meet aspect that is a major component of USPSA and IDPA (now). Tom Givens commented on liking irons [fixed sights, not optics] after all those years with them."

Glenn claims the status of "old toot" at 77 years of age. He must remain fairly close to home so he can care for his wife. As a result, the IDPA club is too far away, so he shoots USPSA matches at a closer range. "I'm not going to win anything as my arthritic knees preclude running anywhere," he wrote, "so I just try to get good hits, as do some of the other old toots in the club." Still, he and his fellow seniors find the matches valuable for "drawing, getting on target, getting hits, reload practice, malfunction practice (from guns supposed to be utterly reliable)," he laughs. He mostly competes with a gun he can carry for self defense, not equipment specialized for competition. He adds, "The younger members now are nice to me and help pick up magazines." This gentleman, a retired university prof and researcher, is too humble to acknowledge, and maybe even fails to recognize, that he brings the wisdom of his mindset, persistence, and view of life and its challenges and rewards to his interactions with the younger shooters. I have no doubt competitors are happy to see him on the range and benefit from associating with him.

Set the Right Goals

Another member also lauded the fellowship he enjoys at the local IDPA and USPSA matches. Bob explains, "I compete with myself and usually finish at the bottom (or last) of the competitors." His approach to matches has changed with experience. "In the first years of shooting I would measure my shooting results against my friends and new shooters," he writes, calling that "admittedly the wrong approach considering certain physical limitations." Now, he sets goals of "accuracy and technique," adding that he started shooting in 2007 and in 2016, started to reload ammunition using a Dillon 550B.

He concluded, "Club shooters are generous, and cheerfully offer help in all areas. They have a healthy sense of humor. On occasion I am the target [of their humor]. I can take it. I am happy to 'return fire.' Who does not want to talk about firearms and reloading? I am grateful for the friendships and learning and fun."

Sharing with Others

There's an important theme here, echoed in the observations of the next member to respond. Armed citizens need to associate with fellow gun owners. The fellowship of club members is a strong motivator to keep going back to shooting matches. This fact resounds through the words of JW, a member who joined our Network family this spring, after he graduated from Massad Ayoob's 40-hour class Armed Citizen's Rules of Engagement and Live Fire MAG40.

He relates, "I have been shooting matches since the inception of IDPA and not only enjoy them, but enjoy the type of folks that usually show up." He commented later that totaled up to 40 years in competitive shooting. Today, as a long-time participant at matches, and former U.S. Marine, he's someone new shooters approach with their questions. A very common question, he wrote, is "Will shooting matches increase my chances of survival?" There is no easy answer because so much depends on the individual's "approach to their chosen gun game," he opines, but adds that there are numerous ways to make match shooting more beneficial. Let's consider what he wrote:

"Will shooting matches increase my chances of survival?" The answer is "yes or maybe," he explains, because gun games "can improve accuracy and speed, and [the competitor] would be better prepared to defend themselves with a firearm – especially if it's with a firearm they use in matches.

"Between the two sports mentioned, I feel IDPA may be better for lending itself to defensive skills. A good score in USPSA favors speed whereas IDPA favors accuracy. If you shoot the same stage at the same speed under both sports, non-stellar accuracy will hurt your IDPA score more than it would in USPSA. Between the critical aspects of speed and accuracy, I feel accuracy must be supreme. Speed is good, but of little value if you can't make good hits. Good hits give you the best chance of quickly stopping a threat. Rounds that miss the intended point of impact not only delay shutting down the threat, but if a complete miss, purchase anything they hit – sometimes at great cost financially and mentally.

"How you run stages in your chosen gun game, can improve lifesaving skills, as can the equipment you choose. You have two choices. You can treat your sport strictly as competition or you can treat it as a way to improve lifesaving skills. If it is competition, all well and good, but keep in mind that some equipment guidelines and strict adherence to the rules may not be the best tactical applications for a real life self-defense situation."

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For example, JW continues, IDPA encourages retaining partially spent magazines when reloading in the middle of shooting a stage. USPSA matches give more value to speed, leading to the "practice of dumping a partially loaded magazine to save time between shooting positions." Armed citizens who want to benefit from shooting matches need to consider habits they want ingrained after shooting, and IDPA's "reload with retention" vs. a true tactical reload "topping off with ammunition after you feel the fight is over and have a pause – or before crossing an opening with a gun you feel may be near empty," must be carefully weighed.

Decisions to retain or discard magazines from which a double feed malfunction occurred are also elements in habits self-defense shooters should consider. At matches, dropping a faulty magazine to the ground is fastest, so while it is the common procedure, it is one he doesn't follow. In addition, he finds value in shooting to, and reloading from, slidelock, as well as habituating a tactical reload at the end of a stage. Neither are ordinary match practices, so he suggests letting the folks running the stage know before you start.

Other common match procedures influence shooting from cover, target engagement order, and body shots or head shots. He suggests that with the buy-in of match safety officers, competitors who want to hone their defensive shooting abilities can ignore scoring, accept match penalties and engage the targets in a different order than the stage description designates. The same may apply to shooting more difficult head shots, but let me add that you'll want to alert the folks running the stage in advance, because sometimes head shots, especially from low cover, can go over the berm, so if the stage calls for body shots, check before taking only head shots to challenge yourself. He suggests other ways to test and build your skills, like shooting the entire match strong hand only or with your non-dominant hand. He also likes to occasionally shoot close targets "from a high retention position if it can be done safely," first advising the range safety officer.

Competition guns, holsters, optics, low-recoil ammo and compensators can differ wildly from the guns we carry daily for self defense. JW suggests "Run at least 50% of your matches with your daily carry rig and gun, or at least the same type of gun. If possible, have a set of matching practice magazines so that you don't over exercise your carry magazines."

Imposing reality on match stages is a challenge, but our member strives to imprint tactically-sound responses like making full use of available cover including keeping the muzzle on his side of the barricade, moving aggressively when movement is allowed and shooting when moving, again, where allowed. He has a preference for surprise stages shot without previews.

This kind of influence is really valuable to clubs that put on matches, and although he doesn't acknowledge it, the shooters in JW's area are fortunate to be in his sphere of influence.

Matches and Members

Now that summer is in full swing, I hope Network members will be inspired and motivated by the opinions and experiences and ideas our members expressed in response to our May lead story about being a lifetime competitive shooter. Whether you go out to the range to work your way up to the top ten on the match score board, or go for the friendly and supportive time spent with other armed citizens, or just to knock the rust off your fundamental skills like safely drawing, keeping the gun loaded and running, moving safely with a gun in your hand, and polishing up your accuracy, it's hard to think of a better venue than a friendly match at your local shooting range. Give it a try!

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