

**PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO CONNECTICUT FIREARMS LAWS
JANUARY 24, 2012**

TESTIMONY OF JAY GREER

As a shooter of rifles, shotguns, handguns, and on a few occasions – .30 and .50 caliber machine guns - for more than 70 years (see APPENDIX A for details) and a member of the NRA, I firmly believe it's high time to strengthen the current Connecticut statute relating to "assault weapons." (General Statutes § 53-202a) As the recent horrific shootings in Newtown amply demonstrated, the present statute is totally inadequate. That statute should be amended to (a) ban all semiautomatic rifles with detachable magazines; and b) reduce the number of "military features" permitted on semiautomatic pistols and shotguns from two to one.¹ I also believe these changes should be accompanied by a ban on detachable magazines for such weapons that have a capacity of more than seven (7) rounds.

It is critical to note at the outset that all semiautomatic rifles and semiautomatic pistols are primarily designed to kill human beings. While semiautomatic shotguns can be used for hunting or shooting clay pigeons, one with a detachable magazine that holds more than 5-7 rounds must also be considered a weapon that is primarily designed to kill human beings.²

A semiautomatic rifle with a detachable magazine is a very efficient machine for killing people. Indeed, that is what it's primarily designed to do. While not as lethal as a fully automatic weapon, it can fire up to 45-60 rounds a minute, each one of which can kill a person.³ As noted below, I believe all semiautomatic rifles with detachable magazines should be banned.

¹ One pro-gun source has characterized such "military-style features" as collapsible stocks, flash hiders, and pistol grips as "cosmetic features."

² I can say from experience that the use of semiautomatic rifles, shotguns and handguns with detachable magazines on ranges is primarily intended to make shooters more accurate and, hence, more effective killers. That shooting such weapons on ranges can be a source of personal satisfaction to the shooter is irrelevant to the issues relating to the regulation of lethal weapons.

³ In theory a submachine gun can fire far more rounds per minute but not without reloading. Even a drum magazine can hold no more than 100 rounds. Further, the actual rate of fire of a submachine gun is lower than the theoretical maximum because of the need to reduce recoil, which necessitates firing in bursts. A fully loaded drum magazine is heavy and makes the weapon to which it's attached cumbersome and to some extent reduces its effectiveness. As in the case of the July 20, 2012 Aurora movie theater shootings, drum magazines can also be attached to semiautomatic rifles.

A reduction in the number of “military features” on semiautomatic pistols - from two to one - should be enacted. Any semiautomatic pistol with a detachable magazine having a capacity of more than seven (7) rounds should be banned. Further, any pistol that has an ammunition magazine that attaches to the pistol outside the pistol grip should be considered an “assault weapon” and should be banned. Any semiautomatic shotgun with a detachable magazine with a capacity of more than seven (7) rounds should be considered an assault weapon and banned. (See APPENDIX B for details regarding shotguns.)

As stated above, semiautomatic weapons with detachable magazines are principally designed to kill people. The lethal range of a semiautomatic rifle is at least 500 yards. That of a semiautomatic handgun is well beyond 100 yards, although it’s only accurate to about 30 yards. The lethal range of a semi-automatic shotgun is roughly 55-80 yards using standard buckshot and less if using birdshot.

USE OF FIREARMS FOR SELF-DEFENSE

The fundamental principle in using a firearm is not to point a gun at anyone you don’t plan to kill. Hence, using a firearm for self-defense means being prepared to kill another human being. This obviously imposes very heavy responsibilities on anyone planning to use a firearm for self-defense

My understanding from my pistol instructor – a retired policeman and approved NRA instructor - is that Connecticut law (General Statutes §§ 53a-18, et seq.) requires one armed with a gun to retreat in the face of a threat until there is no reasonable alternative to shooting the person (or persons) making the threat. There is no hard-and-fast rule, but someone more than 100 feet away – however threatening – will probably not be considered an appropriate target for using a firearm in self-defense. My instructor gave me the impression that it’s imprudent to let a threatening person get closer than 25 feet. This strongly suggests to me that, except in rare circumstances, using a semiautomatic rifle designed to kill human beings up to 500 yards away is not likely to be legal under Connecticut law.

In addition, using a semiautomatic rifle carries with it the potential for “collateral damage,”⁴ i.e.,” killing or injuring innocent bystanders within at least 500 yards. The

⁴ Using a semiautomatic rifle for self-defense in one’s home or business is completely inappropriate because it’s designed to kill people at long range and not intruders into the confines of a house or place of business. It’s cumbersome, and the high velocity of its shots creates an enormous potential for causing collateral damage. According to experts I have read, a handgun and/or a pump shotgun loaded with #4 or #5 birdshot backed up by buck shot rounds are much more effective weapons in the hands of someone who’s been properly trained to use them. (See APPENDIX B)

potential range of collateral damage from semiautomatic handguns is much less but still significant, especially in a confined space, where the higher number people likely to be present increases the likelihood of serious or fatal injuries from random shots or ricochets. Even shots that hit an intended target can penetrate the target and injure or kill another person. A semiautomatic shotgun is less likely to cause collateral damage because its pellets have a much lower penetration capability than either a rifle or a pistol. However, because of the spread of its pellets it can cause much more devastating injuries at close range than a handgun.

DETACHABLE HIGH CAPACITY MAGAZINES

A semiautomatic weapon with a detachable high capacity magazine is particularly deadly. The greater the capacity of the magazine, the greater the likelihood a shooter will kill or injure more people. Newtown provided a recent graphic illustration of this, but it is hardly unique.⁵ I believe there is a very strong case for banning all semiautomatic rifles with detachable magazines on the grounds that they are essentially military/law enforcement weapons and suitable for use only by well-trained members of the armed forces or law enforcement agencies.

Detachable magazines for semiautomatic handguns are essential components of such weapons. Banning them entirely would make semiautomatic handguns useless for self-defense. At the same time, limiting the capacity of detachable magazines for shotguns and handguns will reduce the deadly potential of such weapons in the hands of unsuitable people.⁶ In my opinion a reasonable limit would be seven (7) rounds.

My own experience is that an average shooter – whether of a semiautomatic handgun or shotgun - is not likely to be able to fire more than 7 shots in the brief time typically available to deal with an attacker. Conventional theory says that someone 17 feet away armed with a knife can close that distance within 3 seconds, which is time to fire one or two shots at most. Further, while firing rapidly increases the number of shots fired, it dramatically reduces the accuracy of those shots, even under non-stressful conditions like those on a target range during a practice session.

⁵ At Virginia Tech in 2007, Seung-Hui Hou carried two handguns and 19 ten-round and fifteen-round magazines, which he used to kill 32 people and wound 17 more before killing himself. At the 2011 Tucson shooting, Jared Loughner reportedly used a 9 mm Glock 19 semiautomatic handgun with a 33-round magazine. In the 2012 shooting in the Aurora movie theater, where 12 people were killed and 58 wounded, James Eagen Holmes used a semiautomatic rifle with a 100-round drum magazine. When the gun jammed after firing 30 rounds, he used a Glock 22 semiautomatic handgun with a 15-round magazine.

Finally, firing a lot of ammunition rapidly significantly increases the risk of injury or death to innocent bystanders, even if it does stop the threat.

The use of firearms – particularly semiautomatic weapons - for self-defense is a complex subject. (See APPENDIX C) It involves not merely shooting a large number of shots in a short space of time. Rather, it entails deciding – possibly in a split second under highly stressful conditions – that this is an appropriate occasion under Connecticut law (See General Statutes §§ 53a-18 et seq.) to shoot, then shooting and hitting your intended target with two or three shots.

This involves being very well trained not merely in handling firearms but, even more importantly, knowing when to use them and when not to do so. It requires being capable of dealing appropriately with a wide variety of threats under highly stressful conditions. (SEE APPENDIX D) My own experience and research suggests that this requires not only careful training but also constant practice. Even then, the potential for serious injury or death to innocent bystanders and/or to the person using a handgun for self-defense is significant.

As a member of the Connecticut Board of Firearms Permit Examiners for the past 15 months, I have listened to appeals from numerous people who have either been denied a pistol permit or had their permits revoked. My distinct impression it that most of them have no training in or appreciation of the complexities of pistol self-defense or concealed carry, which having a pistol permit allows.

The Basic NRA Pistol Permit Course, which is a prerequisite for obtaining a pistol permit, and which I took to get my permit, doesn't touch on either of these subjects. Indeed, I understood from one NRA pistol instructor, who spoke off the record, that the NRA forbids its instructors for its Basic Pistol Course from teaching either of these subjects.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Grandfathering - There are arguments for grandfathering existing weapons and high capacity magazines – because there are so many in the hands of law-abiding citizens. However, I believe the destructive potential of such weapons and magazines is so great that they should not be grandfathered. Obviously, it will be necessary to create protocols for retiring such weapons and magazines in a reasonable length of time and with appropriate means for providing legal owners with adequate compensation for their property.

Universal Background Checks – A substantial number – perhaps as many as 40% - of handguns are bought and sold without any background check of the purchaser. Although this was not the case in the Newtown massacre, the destructive potential of any firearm in the hands of an inappropriate person – convicted criminals, people with serious psychiatric problems, or a history of domestic violence - is such that the background of every purchaser of every firearm should be checked at the time of purchase or other transfer.

Registration – To reduce the incidence of trafficking in handguns, which cause the majority of gun-related deaths and injuries, all handguns should be registered not less often than annually. (This will also provide law enforcement officers and other first responders with information that will prepare them to deal with any firearms likely to greet them when they are called to deal with an emergency.) At the time of registration there should be a background check of the registrant and the payment of an appropriate fee to cover the administrative costs involved. The registration should include a representation by the owner that the gun is still in the possession of the registrant or an explanation for any handgun previously registered why that gun is no longer in the registrant’s possession. Further, the registrant should provide evidence that the manufacturer or a qualified gunsmith has examined the gun being registered within the past three years and determined that it is safe to operate.

Safe Storage – To reduce the incidence of theft of firearms, which is the source of a significant number of guns used in crimes, there should be stronger criminal penalties and civil liability for failure the owner of a firearm that is used in a crime who fails to provide proper security for that firearm.

Permits/Licenses – To assure that only “suitable “ people can purchase firearms of any kind, including long guns, and ammunition for them, licenses should be required for all such purchasers.

Internet Sales – To reduce the chances that a purchaser of a firearm or ammunition will not be subject to a background check, Internet sales of firearms and ammunition to Connecticut residents should be prohibited.

Restriction on Firearms Purchases – To reduce the risks of trafficking in handguns, purchases of handguns by Connecticut residents should be limited to one per month.

Administrative Costs: There will administrative costs involved in implementing the foregoing recommendations. I haven’t yet tried to calculate them and would need input from the various government agencies involved to do so. These costs should be recoverable through the various registration and license fees referred to above. A buyback program for banned weapons and high capacity magazines would have to be separately funded. Imposing a per-gun tax each year during the buyback period could do this.⁷

⁷ Considering the estimated **annual** cost of gun violence to society in the US is roughly \$175 billion, and the out-of-pocket cost to the taxpayers is roughly \$12 billion, it seems only fair that gun owners bear a share of this burden. As there are reportedly between 200 million and 300 million guns in the USA, an annual tax of as little as \$600 per gun could cover the entire cost to society and an annual tax of only \$40 per gun would cover the entire out-of-pocket cost to the taxpayers. Presumably, a portion of such a tax could be devoted to covering the cost of a

CONCLUSIONS:

A. Semiautomatic rifles with detachable magazines of any capacity are principally designed to kill people at long range and, as such, have no legitimate civilian use and should be banned.⁸

B. Semiautomatic pistols and shotguns with detachable magazines having a capacity of more than seven (7) rounds may be appropriate for use by military or law enforcement personnel but are not suitable for civilian use and should be banned.

C. Detachable magazines with a capacity of more than seven (7) rounds are not useful for self-defense on semiautomatic shotguns or handguns and are likely to cause unacceptable collateral damage, i.e., kill or severely injure innocent bystanders and should be banned.

D. There are various other ways to strengthen Connecticut firearms laws that should improve public safety. Considering the terrible waste of human life and the enormous costs to society of deaths and injuries caused by firearms, adoption of such measures is entirely reasonable and is highly recommended.

E. While adoption of such measures will not eliminate all deaths and injuries from firearms, it will very likely reduce them and therefore will pass constitutional challenges.

F. The above list is not exclusive, and adoption of the listed measures should not preclude the adoption of other measures that will likely enhance public safety.

APPENDIX A

January 24, 2013

program to buy back banned semiautomatic weapons and high capacity magazines.

⁸ I recommend a complete ban on semiautomatic rifles with detachable magazines because of the well-established practice of firearms manufacturers designing weapons to defeat the ban. Gun manufacturers might more usefully find ways to design weapons that can only be fired by the registered owner. Cost and reliability are obvious issues, but given the ingenuity of gun manufacturers, developing weapons that resolved these issues should not be beyond their capability. A manufacturer who did this should be able to develop a profitable market for its wares.

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Born: Manhattan, New York City, August 18, 1932

Education: Yale College, AB 1954
 Harvard Law School, LLB 1961

Employment: Lawyer -LeBoeuf, Lamb & Leiby and successor firms – 1961-1997
 partner 1970-1997

Military Service: Midshipman, USNR-R - 1950-1954
 Ens., LTJG, USN - 1954-1957
 LT, LCDR, CDR, USNR-R - 1957-1967
 (Naval Aviator)

Marksmanship Experience:

| | | |
|--|---------|------------|
| First shot rifle (.22 cal.) | | 1940 |
| First shot pistol (9 mm) | | 1941 |
| First shot high caliber rifle (.30 cal) (1903 Springfield -1942; M-1 | | 1943-44 |
| Junior member NRA | | 1942-1950 |
| Junior Member Pound Ridge (NY) Rifle Club | | 1942-1950 |
| Jr. Record for Army "E" course (.22 cal/100 yds. - 200 possible) - 195 | | 1948 |
| Army "C" Course (.30 cal) (200 yds.) Expert Rifleman | | |
| 1945 | | |
| Dewar (.22 cal) Course (50/100yds) (400 possible) | 398-22x | 1950 |
| NRA Junior Expert Rifleman | | 1948-49 |
| Senior Member Pound Ridge (NY) Rifle Club | | 1951-1964 |
| Senior Member NRA | 1951- | 1970; 2013 |
| Yale University Rifle Team | | 1951-1954 |
| Potomac River Naval Command Rifle Team (Captain) | | 1956-1957 |
| Marksmanship Officer – AEWRON 13 | | 1956-1957 |
| US Navy Expert Rifleman | | 1956-1957 |
| Machine guns – .50 caliber (1953); .30 caliber (1955) | | |
| Occasional shooter - rifle .22/.30 cal; shotgun -12, 20 and 28 gauge; | | |
| pistol .22/.38/.45 cal | | 1957– date |
| Active shooter – pistol .22/.38 cal./ 9 MM | | 2012 –date |

Qualifications/ Memberships:

| | | |
|---|--|-----------|
| Connecticut Pistol Permit holder | | 2012-date |
| Connecticut Against Gun Violence -Member – 2010 -date; Director | | 2011-date |
| CT Board of Firearms Permit Examiners (Member) | | 2011-date |
| Political Party – Republican | | 1950-date |

APPENDIX B

Shotguns – use against still targets:

The shotgun has several advantages when used against still targets. First, it has enormous [stopping power](#) at short range, more than nearly all [handguns](#) and many rifles. Though many believe the shotgun is a great firearm for inexperienced shooters, the truth is, at close range, the spread of shot is not very large at all, and competency in aiming is still required. A typical self-defense load of [buckshot](#) contains 8-27 large lead pellets, resulting in many wound tracks in the target. Also, unlike a [fully jacketed](#) rifle bullet, each pellet of shot is less likely to penetrate walls and hit bystanders. It is favored by [law enforcement](#) for its low penetration and high stopping power.

On the other hand, the hit potential of a defensive shotgun is often overstated. The typical [defensive](#) shot is taken at very close ranges, at which the shot charge expands no more than a few centimeters. This means the shotgun must still be aimed at the target with some care. Balancing this is the fact that shot spreads further upon entering the target, and the multiple wound channels of a defensive load are far more likely to produce a disabling wound than a rifle or handgun.

Law enforcement

In the US and Canada, shotguns are widely used as a support weapon by police forces. One of the rationales for issuing shotguns is that even without much training, an officer will probably be able to hit targets at close to intermediate range, due to the "spreading" effect of buckshot. This is mainly a myth, due to the already stated fact that the spread of shotgun at 25 ft averages 8 inches, being very capable of missing a target. Some police forces are replacing shotguns in this role with carbine rifles such as [AR-15s](#). Shotguns are also used in [roadblock](#) situations, where police are blocking a highway to search cars for suspects. In the US, law enforcement agencies often use [riot shotguns](#), especially for crowd and riot control where they may be loaded with [less-lethal](#) rounds such as [rubber bullets](#) or [beanbags](#). Shotguns are also often used as [breaching](#) devices to defeat locks.

Military

Shotguns are common weapons in military use, particularly for special purposes: see [combat shotgun](#). Shotguns are found aboard Naval vessels for shipboard security, because the weapon is very effective at close range as a way of repelling enemy [boarding parties](#). In a naval setting, [stainless steel](#) shotguns are often used, because regular steel is more prone to corrosion in the marine environment. Shotguns are also used by [military police](#) units. [U.S. Marines](#) have used shotguns since their inception at the [squad](#) level, often in the hands of [NCOs](#), while the [U.S. Army](#) often issued them to a squad's [point man](#). Shotguns

were modified for and used in the [trench warfare](#) of [WWI](#), in the [jungle combat](#) of [WWII](#) and [Vietnam](#) and are being used today in [Iraq](#), being popular with soldiers and Marines in [urban combat](#) environments. Some U.S. units in Iraq use shotguns with special [frangible breaching rounds](#) to blow the locks off doors when they are making a surprise entry into a dwelling.

Home/personal defense

Where local laws permit possession and such use is legally sanctioned, [pump-action](#) and [semi-automatic riot shotguns](#) in common law enforcement may also be available on the civilian market, and such shotguns are a very popular means of home defense for many of the same reasons they are preferred for close-quarters tasks in law enforcement and the military.

Design features for various uses

Compared to handguns, shotguns are heavier, larger, and not as maneuverable in close quarters (which also presents a greater retention problem), but do have these advantages:

- They are generally much more powerful.
- The average shooter can engage multiple targets faster than with a handgun.
- They are generally perceived as more intimidating.
- On average, a quality pump-action shotgun is generally less expensive than a quality handgun (self-loading shotguns are generally more expensive than their pump-action counterparts).
- Shotguns are, in general, not as heavily regulated by legislation as handguns are.

When loaded with smaller shot, a shotgun will not penetrate walls as readily as rifle and pistol rounds, making it safer for non-combatants when fired in or around populated structures. This comes at a price, however, as smaller shot may not penetrate deeply enough to cause an immediately incapacitating wound; those who recommend birdshot for minimizing wall penetration also suggest backing it up with a larger buckshot if the first shot fails to stop the threat.

SOURCE -WIKIPEDIA

FIREARMS SELF-DEFENSE

The Reasonable Man Doctrine

By Marty Hayes, J.D.

Posted: March 23, 2010

At first I intended to write about one of the sexier aspects of self-defense as it pertains to the legal arena, perhaps something about the “21-foot” rule (and why it is not a rule at all), or maybe why shooting someone in the back isn’t necessarily murder (even though the pinheaded DA thinks it is). But, since the logical structure of teaching anything (and I feel that is what I am doing with this series of articles, teaching) is to lay the proper foundation for learning, my responsible side won out over my creative side. So let’s do it right and examine some basic concepts in armed self-defense, starting with the “Reasonable Man Doctrine.”

The cornerstone of American Jurisprudence is the Reasonable Man Doctrine. Unless your case centers on some obscure legal technicality, the Reasonable Man Doctrine will be used extensively throughout your self-defense trial. What would a reasonable person have done under the same circumstances, knowing what you knew at the time? That phrase, my friends, will be your lifeblood during the episode of your life that will likely define you as a man or woman.

Did you act reasonably when you drew your pistol? Was it reasonable for you to have thought the person was armed? Would it have been reasonable for you to take some action other than shooting? Was it reasonable to fire six shots? Was it reasonable to use hollow point ammunition? Or even (brought up at the last trial I testified at) was it reasonable for you to use a gun that doesn’t have a safety? Seriously, the DA made an issue of the defendant’s Glock, trying to paint it as somewhat unreasonable to have used a fully loaded Glock 19 because it didn’t have an external safety! Sheesh.

In a self-defense trial, the jury will be tasked with the chore of deciding if the amount of force used was reasonable. In order to have a chance of success, you will need to take them on a slow trip down the road to what it means to be a responsible armed citizen, and why, given your background, experience and training, the choices you made when you were forced to use deadly force in self-defense were reasonable.

But before you get a chance to utter a word in court in your defense (other than the words “Not guilty, your honor” that you said at the preliminary hearing), the prosecution will have had their way with the witnesses they decided to call, the

police officers whom they play golf with on Saturday afternoons, and all under the watchful eye of the judge, whom they financially supported in the last election.

So, when it becomes your turn to show your side of the case, you had better have it planned out well in advance and in as much detail as time and money will allow. First, your attorney will have cross-examined the prosecution's witnesses, and perhaps gotten some of the prosecution's evidence disallowed through legal objections. That helps, but blowing a hole in the prosecution's case isn't likely going to be enough, because you probably have already met the elements of the crime you are being charged with. You did purposely shoot the other guy, right? If so, then that one simple fact likely proves you guilty, absent the circumstances of self-defense. It is those circumstances that a reasonable person (a juror) must know, feel and fully understand in order to vote for your acquittal.

Remember that the eyes the jury should be viewing the evidence through should be your eyes. That is why your testimony is critical. How will the jury know what you saw, felt, heard, smelled, etc. unless you tell them? How will they know what you were thinking unless you tell them about your past experiences, education and training?

If your defense strategy is to discredit each and every witness the prosecution brings forth, resulting in the prosecution's case being like a smelly fart in the deliberation room, you will still lose. The jury will hold their collective noses and vote to convict, because you didn't give them a reason to let you go, and you met the elements of the crime.

Instead, open that door and let the fresh air in! You need to explain to the jury that you have received training in self-defense law, and it was that training that led you to believe your life was in danger. You need to articulate to the jury that you reasonably believed the person or persons you shot possessed the physical ability to cause your death or inflict serious physical injury upon you. Then make them understand that the attackers were in a close enough proximity to use that ability against you, that they indeed had the opportunity to kill you.

After this, you must also show (and this is likely the most critical part of your testimony) that you reasonably believed that the attacker or attackers were intending to, or were actually in the act of, using that ability and opportunity to place your life in jeopardy, and that you did what any reasonable person would have done under the same circumstances, that being shoot to save your life.

And the icing on the cake will be, even if you live in a state where you have the right to stand your ground and defend yourself, that you had no choice. There was no out, no better option. After all, if there had been a better option, wouldn't you have taken it? I certainly would.

Each self-defense case is unique, but they all have one common theme: to show to the jury that your action, i.e., the horrible act of shooting and killing or shooting and maiming another, was actually justified because it was the reasonable thing to do. And most importantly, to show that they (the jury) would have done the same thing if they had been in your shoes. Keep that foremost in your mind when deciding if you need to pull the trigger in self-defense.

APPENDIX D

JANUARY 24, 2013

FIREARMS SELF-DEFENSE – THE COMPLEXITIES

Are There Holes in Your Training Resumé?

By Marty Hayes, J.D.

Posted: June 4, 2010

A person needs to attend formal firearms training courses for at least one, if not two, very good reasons. The first reason is, of course, to learn how to use the firearm safely and competently for self-defense. This necessitates a critical look at your lifestyle and priorities, and examining where your skills are lacking. Do you live in a crime-infested urban environment, where bars on your windows are practically mandated, or do you live in a rural area, where your German Shepherd will alert you to any approaching hominoids? In these diametrically opposed circumstances, the skills and layers of protection you need to employ are not the same, although in each case, there are definite security issues.

Start Young

Skill at arms can come outside of formal training. Many people rely upon past military training as their basis for knowing how to shoot, while others rely upon competition to sharpen their self-defense skills. Additionally, many people were taught as youngsters how to shoot firearms, and in my opinion, this is where a young boy or girl's initial training should occur. I happen to be married to a lady whose father felt it was necessary to teach his two daughters how to use that .22 rifle he kept by the back door of the farmhouse. What a pleasure it was for me as an instructor to begin teaching her how to use a handgun for self-defense, as she didn't have to fight through a fog of mixed brainwaves to learn the lessons she was being taught. There was no fear of guns, nor any moral re-programming necessary for her to understand that it was okay to use deadly force if threatened with the same. Her father (a God-fearing man) had taught her that before she was a teenager.

Train To Gain Confidence

Even if you have acquired the ability to shoot guns safely and competently, you must also examine how confident you feel in your role as your own number one protector. Do you feel confident in your skills and abilities? Do you find yourself fearful at times, even though you have your concealed carry handgun with you? If so, take it from a guy who has devoted most of his working adult life to helping people gain this confidence: Get some training.

There has never been a better time in America's history to find good trainers. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of folks teaching their fellow armed citizens how to use guns for self-defense.

But what type of training should you seek out? There has never been a better

time in America's history to find good trainers. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of folks teaching their fellow armed citizens how to use guns for self-defense. If your budget permits, you can get any type of training you want. Plus, training is fun. Yep, just like golfing and motorcycle riding. It really is fun to learn how to use a firearm skillfully. One of the greatest pleasures in my life is seeing the confidence build in people who were once, even hours before, apprehensive and fearful.

Legalities of Self-Defense

What does all this have to do with the legalities of self-defense? To answer that, you must put yourself in the shoes of a typical juror, deciding if the defendant on trial used a reasonable degree of force in self-defense. This takes us into the second reason for attending training courses, that being to document your knowledge of self-defense law and if you were capable of assessing whether or not your life was in danger. I cannot stress enough how critical it is for the armed citizen to be able to tell a jury, in their own words, the type of training they have received, and why they acted the way they did in that particular situation. When analyzing a claim of self-defense, a jury should be able to look at the incident through the defendant's eyes, seeing everything the defendant saw and knowing everything the defendant knew. In other words, you have the right, in open court, to let the jury know what was going through your mind at the time you pulled the trigger. You have the right to explain what you saw, what you heard, and what you were feeling at the time you pulled the trigger. You also have the right to educate the jury as to what you knew about self-defense considerations, within certain bounds.

Document Your Knowledge

The first limiting factor is: Can you document your knowledge? How do you know that a person who is half a dozen steps away from you and armed with a contact weapon already possesses the ability and opportunity to kill you, if he so chooses? The ability to document your knowledge of the Tueller Drill (sometimes erroneously referred to as the "21 foot rule") is vital to your being able to introduce this into court. There is a saying in the legal arena: "If it isn't documented, it didn't occur." What that means for the armed citizen is that if you cannot show the judge that you were trained or otherwise cognizant of the premise behind the Tueller Drill, you likely will not have an opportunity to testify to that. You show this through your training resumé, including notes, written material and videos that were presented in class. The other boundary that a judge might put in the way of your testifying as to what you knew is making sure that any tenets of law are discussed by the judge and attorneys, not the defendant or witnesses. I once testified in a case where the judge disallowed a training manual to be admitted into evidence because it contained explanations of the law. I believe that training manual was critical to the defense, but it didn't get in. An appealable point, for sure, and I hope the lady who was convicted and is now in prison brings it up on appeal!

Presentation to the Jury

Another question you must ask yourself regarding your training resumé is, how will this play to a jury? If the training courses you have attended all fall under the "Warrior Prince" label, and contain course descriptions that would make the average person wonder if John Rambo is sitting in front of them, I submit you have a problem. You and I know that most course descriptions are designed primarily for marketing reasons and not courtroom defense. But if all you can show a jury is that your training consisted of classes on how to efficiently kill your fellow human beings, and is deficient in showing that you also took considerable time, energy and money to learn when and under what circumstances deadly force is warranted, then I know you have a problem. Don't let holes in your training resumé turn what should be a relatively straightforward case of self-defense into a prosecution and conviction. Balance your training in how to kill with legal and moral training regarding that decision. You will be glad you did, and you might just learn a thing or two in the process!