

Armed at Home: Strategic Realities An Interview with Massad Ayoob

Interview by Gila Hayes

Live in a bad neighborhood? Been subjected to threats of violence? Does the nightly news have you worried about home invasions? These and many other reasons may lead the armed citizen to think that answering the door with a gun in hand is the best solution to an unexpected knock on the door late a night. Network Advisory Board member Massad Ayoob says, "Don't do that!" That may seem counter-intuitive until one probes deeper into issues identified through Ayoob's depth of experience and training, as well as the strong legal-concerns viewpoint he brings to his use of force classes. Ayoob is trainer of international reputation, court recognized expert witness on use of force matters, and author of over 20 books, plus countless magazine articles and recorded lectures.

In the following interview, Ayoob details court cases stemming from armed citizens going to the door with a gun in hand to respond to an unexpected knock or to investigate suspicious noises outside the door. We switch now to our Q & A format to preserve the clarity of Ayoob's observations.

eJournal: I was a little surprised when this topic came up, Mas, because on the surface, it is pretty easy to understand one who is not a deep thinker subscribing to the idea of a gun in the hand when opening the door as a reasonable response to crime. What cases support your advice to certainly be armed and ready, but keep your hands empty?

Ayoob: We had one in 2012 in Lake County, FL. The police officers are looking for a very dangerous suspect and knocked on this fellow's door. He is aware, apparently, that there is a manhunt underway for said dangerous subject and he opens the door with a gun in his hand. The deputies perceived the gun pointed at them, and they drew their weapons, opened fire and killed him. That would have been July of 2012 in Lake County, FL.

I was consulted on one many years ago, in the Pacific Northwest. The consulting attorney was a plaintiff's lawyer. He wanted me to speak for his client who had gotten drunk with his girlfriend, and as he pointed out, "He was in his own home: he has every right to get drunk with his girlfriend."



And he and the girlfriend are arguing loudly, and as the attorney said, "A man's home is his castle, and you have every right to argue loudly." I would not argue that, either. The neighbors also had a right to call the police. The police come knocking on the door. The guy flings the door open with his .38 and as the attorney said, "By God, a man hears an unexpected knock on his door, he has got a right to arm himself!" By and large, I would have said, "Yes!"

He opens the door with the gun pointing right at the officers, and they drew their Glocks and shot him. The guy was damn lucky to survive the shooting. I said, "Sir, I can't help you! If I was the cop in that situation and the person opened the door with a gun in his hand, I would have thought I was in deadly danger and I would have shot, too."

So, the bottom line is, first, in this day and age, if I were to answer the door to the proverbial unexpected knock at 3 o'clock in the morning, I would not answer the door without a gun, either. I would also have it where someone on the other side of the door could not see it until I felt a need to show it to them. As I have told my students for many years, the single person most likely to

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knock on your door at 3 in the morning is the police coming to tell you that at 2 in the morning they recovered your stolen car that you didn't even know was missing because it was stolen out of your driveway at 1 and you went to bed at 12. The officers open the door, and they see a gun pointed in their direction, and what the hell are they supposed to think about it. If your son or daughter were that police officer, what would you expect them to do?

It seems to be a recurring problem. There was a case in New Jersey a few years ago in which a young millennial guy who lives at home with his family hears a noise outside, looks and sees people with flashlights moving around the cars in the driveway. He doesn't want to wake Mom and Dad so he grabs his Benelli 12 ga. pump, flings open the door, and will say later, "I racked the shotgun to scare them."

He succeeded in that. He scared every single one of those police officers in his driveway that were looking for a burglary suspect they had been chasing. At least one of those officers perceived the barrel of the shotgun to be pointed in his direction. Miraculously, the young man was not shot. He actually was arrested for felony aggravated assault on a police officer, went through a year-long legal nightmare and I have to say, the kid was damned lucky, he had a sympathetic jury that acquitted him.

The bottom line is, we have got to tell ourselves first, in this day and age, why are we opening the door for an unknown person at 3 o'clock in the morning at all?

eJournal: So these tactics went off the rails long before the gun came into the equation?

Ayoob: Exactly! In each of these cases, the gun in the hand was just the last really bad card in a hand full of bad tactical cards. If nothing else, initiate a verbal conversation about who is at the door. Now, when I started in this business, you had to be as rich as Bloomberg to have intercoms, let alone closed circuit TV. For God's sake, that technology now is so cheap you can buy it on Woot! for less than some of us spend on our daily ammo bill at the gun shop. There is no reason not to be able to know who is there before that door opens, and not be in a threatening position.

There was another case recently also in FL, in Manatee County, within the past week. An elderly gentleman

opens the door to the unexpected knock, opens fire and ends up killing a woman who is sitting in a car at the curb. She was a neighbor lady and there were two people with her knocking at the door—her daughter I believe and her brother-in-law—who wanted to ask if he had seen a lost dog.

For whatever reason, this guy opens fire, kills the woman out in the car. He is an elderly gentleman, very elderly, and that may or may not have played a factor in it.

The bottom line is, little good happens when people open up that door. If you are going to open the door, have the gun where it is not visible. I, personally, am an advocate of home carry. I put my gun on in the morning when I put my pants on and I take it off and put it by the bed when I undress for bed at night. If walking around the house at night with a gun on your hip is uncomfortable or not part of "Life with Father," a J-frame or a LCP in your pocket is something to consider.

The hand on the gun in the pocket is not an immediately threat. Your body gun-side edged away from door as it opens and the hand behind the back is not an immediate threat. I would not recommend having gun in hand and hidden behind back, because if you open the door and it is the police, what are you going to do with it? Are you going to say, "Hi, there! I have a gun in my hand!" and then you will be looking down the muzzles of theirs?

Hand on holstered weapon, or if nothing else, scoop up the pistol and put it in your waistband, but make sure the pistol you keep to scoop up is one that you can safely put in the waistband. Every single manufacturer of striker-fired pistols will tell you do not put this gun anyplace where there is not a holster, including pocket or waistband.

A cocked and locked 1911 with the thumb on the hammer and the safety engaged, a double action revolver, or a double action auto hammer-fired with the thumb holding the hammer down is reasonably safe under those circumstances. Then, your first words can be, "Oh, good evening, officers. Can I help you?" There is no sudden movement; there is no dropped gun, and as they say at Holiday Inn, the best surprise is no surprise!"

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eJournal: This strategy puts us firmly into pistol-land. The case I originally read about involved a man who picked up a shotgun he had ready by the couch. I believe the police officers at the door saw him pick it up and approach the door with it. The jury eventually gave him a pass on it, but no one wants to go through the year of legal entanglements he did or risk being shot by police if it doesn't go well. So long guns make it even harder if you must go to the door.

Ayoob: Unless you are on your own remote farm and you hear the coyote howling outside and it has been eating the rabbits out of the hutch. That is one thing. Stepping outside the door in a suburban area after hearing someone screaming outside, well, any of us, especially if we live somewhere where we know that police response time might take a while, are going to have that urge to go out and protect. You step out with the 870 or the AR in your hand until you find out that the screaming is the neighbor's ten-year-old niece and nephew who are visiting and it is a Friday night so they are allowed to stay up late. They see you with a long gun and call in and say, "Oh, my God! My crazy neighbor was going to murder my children with an evil assault weapon," y'all are going to have a downhill fight with the authorities there.

If you feel you must step out of the house, the concealed handgun prevents that sort of misunderstanding from happening. Remember, if it is some kind of an emergency the responding officers may, as in one of the cases that I mentioned, be in plain clothes. Just because they don't look like the recruiting poster from the local police department, does not mean they are not police!

I tell my students, yes, your home is your castle, but that does not mean that you are allowed to have an execution chamber in it.

eJournal: I see several lessons in the case of the young man with the Benelli standing in the doorway. First, you had better understand your state law as regards what our attorney friends might call curtilage, and what you are allowed to do beyond the front door of your domicile if your state law says, "You are allowed to use deadly force against an intruder up to this line, but not beyond."

Besides, I think each Network member must do something more elemental, and that is draw a line or set the triggering point at which resorting to deadly force is the reasonable step, and before that you do not draw or show the gun. What will I use deadly force to defend;

what is less important? What kinds of actions prompt my decision to bring out the gun?

Ayoob: You have to have a thorough knowledge of when can I take someone at gun point vs. when can I shoot them. You have got to know what the formulas are. You are going to be judged by the formulas. There is literally an infinity of possibilities, and we have to tailor our actions the way the court will judge them and the court will judge by those formulae that I teach and that Armed Citizens' Legal Defense Network teaches, essentially is:

Ability: *The opponent has the power to kill or cripple,*

Opportunity: *They are capable of immediately employing it, and –*

Jeopardy: *It is obvious to any reasonable and prudent person that they have an immediate or manifested intent to do so.*

All that is going to be seen by the courts as it must be seen by us, the practitioners, through the lens of the reasonable person doctrine: "What would a reasonable and prudent person have done in that same situation, knowing what that defender knew?"

eJournal: The third leg of that triad—does jeopardy exist?—is such a key element and to go to the illustrative case you mentioned of the young man racking the shotgun in his front door, one has to ask, "What was the threat at that point? What jeopardy could he cite from some people looking around the family's parked cars?"

Ayoob: He thought they were people stealing the cars, and he said he wanted to scare them away. One of those bad cards that you want to throw away if you are dealt it, is "Gee, I use my gun to scare people."

The irony is, if you study these things as you and I have the overwhelming majority of defensive gun usages do end as soon as the bad guy sees that the good guy is armed and ready to use it. The irony is that it only seems to work when the person wielding the gun makes it clear to the opponent, "This is the case: I'm not the guy who goes into the gun shop and says, 'Hey, can I get a gun with rubber bullets because I don't really want to hurt anybody.'" They are not scared of your gun! They are scared of you.

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My definition of a predator, among others, is expert in prey selection. They may not use terms like “body language,” but they are very fluent in it. It is literally what they do. I’ve found the bottom line is that if you know, “I know where the lines are. If this guy crosses that line to harm me and my children, I am going to shoot him down,” he will generally pick up on that. If he doesn’t, well, that may be the day that you become the exception to the rule, and you shoot him.

Getting back to the gun in the doorway, one thing I’ve been seeing for a quarter century or more, is that judges and juries alike are very forgiving of defense of the invasion of the home. But you step out that door, no matter what the state statutes say about curtilage, the jury sees that as you were not defending the castle, you lowered the drawbridge and went marching out on a crusade. You went looking for trouble.

“Looking for trouble!” You will hear that phrase come up from opening argument to closing argument to every press conference by prosecutor and the plaintiff. “He went looking for trouble...He was safe where he was, but no, he had to go out and play hero. He had to play vigilante. He had to slake his bloodlust.” Pick one. We see that all the way back to the early 1990s in Baton Rouge, in *Louisiana v. Rodney Peairs*.

Peairs was the young man who shot and killed the young Japanese exchange student. Because of the bizarre confluence of circumstances that led to that, he was acquitted on the manslaughter charge. There absolutely was reasonable doubt as to whether it was reckless or not. In the civil case, *Hattori v. Peairs*, brought by the family of the deceased, he was absolutely hammered in civil court.

Now, Peairs and his attorneys appealed that. If our readers care to look it up at http://www.leagle.com/decision/19951171662So2d509_1981/HATTORI%20v.%20PEAIRS they’ll see in its opinion sustaining the verdict against Peairs, the court of appeals said, look, if this man had simply kept the door closed and stayed inside that young man would be alive and none of this would have happened. Peairs and his family were in no danger. He chose to open that door, step out and start the confrontation. I’m speaking here from memory, those are not the exact words but that most certainly is the gist of the decision. We have seen that again and again with judges and juries.

Once you open that door, if you step out, you are viewed as having gone looking for trouble.

eJournal: That is a sobering lesson. There is more to this than expected and we’ve covered more points than I’d anticipated. Can you summarize it in closing?

Ayoob: Plan A: Don’t open the door unless you absolutely have to—unless you absolutely have no other choice.

Plan B: if you do have to open the door, I would certainly have the gun ready and I don’t blame you if you do, too, but I would want it to be a handgun. I would want it to be discretely concealed so it would not be visible yet be instantly accessible to me if I needed it.

A final thought on the recommendation to install closed circuit TV or at the very least an intercom. The kinds of folks who belong to the Network have thought this out. They are practical people. If they lived in fantasyland, they would have spent their Network membership dues on another box of ammo or an entry fee to a shooting match.

Every damn one of us has someone in our family who thinks the world is moonbeams and butterflies, and “No one would ever want to hurt me, and you are paranoid to have those guns!” When that person is alone in the house, that person is the one who is going to open the door and find out it is the big, bad wolf. And that is the one whose life you are going to save if you install that closed circuit camera and that intercom. It may actually be more important in likelihood and frequency of exposure than the tactical advantage it gives to the serious kind of practitioner who belongs to the Network.

eJournal: Once again, you’ve given us much to think about and some practical steps we can take. Thank you, Massad, for the very positive influence you’ve had on us.

Our Advisory Board member, Massad Ayoob, is one of the pre-eminent fighting handgun trainers in the world. He is directly responsible for training thousands in justifiable use of deadly force, safe gun use and effective defense techniques. Visit his website at <http://massadayoobgroup.com/schedule/> to learn more about his classes.

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President's Message

by Marty Hayes, J.D.

We are looking forward to some very good things this coming year. We are closing in on having \$1,000,000 (that's one million dollars, folks) in the Legal Defense Fund, despite needing to fund a defense for a member

this month. Membership totals are also closing in on the 13,000 mark, which is just phenomenal. One thing that really helped last month was getting a mention on the Hickok45 YouTube channel. The star of the show, Hickok45, is a Network member and out of the blue, he posted a segment about the Network and why he joined. Our phones started ringing off the hook, and we had a wild week in the office following that mention. Goes to show you the power of word of mouth advertising and social media. We welcome the several hundred new members joining us last month.

Then, out of the blue again, I got a request to go on CNLive, which is a TV Talk Show on NRATV with Colion Noir as the host. For those on the gun Internet, you have undoubtedly seen Noir's articulate and entertaining political comments regarding the gun issues of the day. I have been a big fan of these, but frankly didn't know he had a TV show, too. After receiving and accepting the invitation to be a guest on the show, I spent the next couple

of days researching his program. The research? I sat in front of the TV and watched his show. Thus, when the time arrived for me to go on the show, I was very familiar with the format. We had an interview on Skype about the Network that lasted for about 10 minutes.

Unlike other hosts with whom I've been on the air, Noir is very accommodating and let me talk and get my points out. I hate it when a host primarily wants to hear his or her own voice, and talks right over their guests. We didn't have time to really get into the issues of armed self defense and the legal issues surrounding it, but we did get to talk about the Network (one of my favorite subjects).

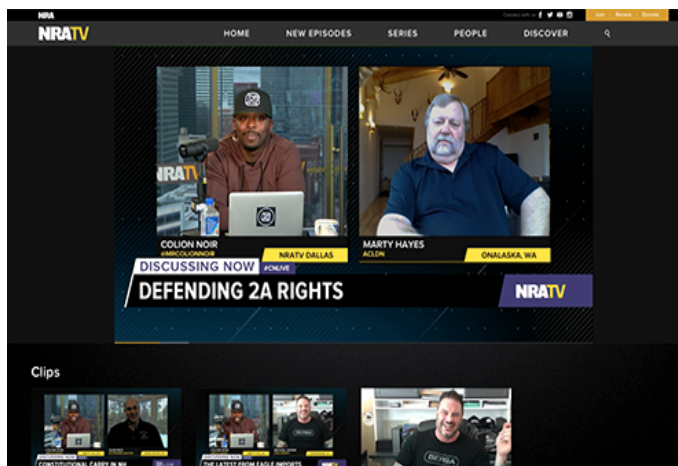
Thank-you to Colion Noir and NRATV! I highly recommend the show for our members.

At the start of the month, I fielded a phone call from a fellow who was involved in an ongoing dispute with a repossession company, who kept trying to get his truck. The police had been called several times. He wanted to discuss joining the

Network so if he had to shoot someone to resolve the repossession issue, he would have the funding for a legal defense!

So, I talked with the individual and politely turned down his request to become a member, as solving his issue really was not the reason we started the Network. This got me thinking about pre-existing conflicts and whether or not we would go to bat for an individual who joined up while such a pre-existing situation was on-going. I can think of a nasty divorce/child

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custody situation, and of course, there are ongoing disputes with neighbors over property lines. So, for any of you who are reading this, but have not yet joined the Network but who are also involved in an existing dispute, we are not the organization for you.

The month of February ended on a high note for me, when I got a Facebook message that one of our Network members, Paul Lathrop was in the area and wanted to meet up. Paul is a long-haul trucker, but he doesn't get out to the West Coast much. I had missed him a few weeks ago, so I agreed to meet him at a local I-5 truck stop and break some bread together.



Paul hosts *The Polite Society Podcast* on which I have been a guest in the past. He was the guy who ran afoul of a misguided law enforcement and prosecuting attorney's office in Nebraska, when he was arrested for supposedly brandishing a pistol and making "terrorist threats." For the next several months, they made Paul's life a living hell. His attorney used the truck stop surveillance video to show the prosecutor that there was no brandishing of a pistol involved. You can hear the whole story on this podcast episode, in Paul's own words <http://traffic.libsyn.com/politicsandguns/387.mp3>.

Paul was not a Network member at the time of the incident, so we were not able to draw money out of the Legal Defense Fund to help. Having offered a little assistance to find the right attorney, I then did my best to publicize the story. I asked if any Network members felt like helping him out a little, and many of you responded. With your help, he raised the money for a good legal defense and the charges were dropped. In talking with Paul, I learned that the police are still keeping his gun as evidence, so getting it back is the last thing before this problem is over. Paul's story is a classic example of how a law abiding gun owner can get wrapped up in the legal system for doing absolutely nothing wrong. It was fun to finally get to meet Paul and share a meal together.

I am going to sum up this rather short message this month with a little political commentary. Since President Trump's inauguration, this country has suffered a concerted effort by a mainstream media that hates him to attempt to destroy the President. It seems as if the major TV networks, cable news networks and Internet news providers have lost any sense of objectivity, and are simply hostile to the President. They are working

day and night to find any reason to take him down. Contrast this with the kid glove treatment afforded the former occupant of the White House and his Secretary of State, in which these same "fake news" providers overlooked scandal after scandal. So be it. We need to move

ahead for the sake of the nation, but how can we do that, in the face of such overwhelming opposition to the President?

I do not know that answer, but I do know that in addition to the national battle ahead, we also have local battles. For example, in my own state of Washington, the anti-gun politicians proposed legislation to implement a registration/licensing scheme for all "assault weapons" and another bill imposing a so-called safe storage scheme which would have required people to keep their guns (for the most part) under lock and key at all times. The good news is that with some quick action by many good people, we were able to defeat these bills. At the same time, we know that these anti-gun politicians will be back during the next legislative session, and that they are likely to try to achieve their goals through an initiative process. They will attempt once again to have their way.

We must be vigilant, and even if some of you live in a state where there is no way this type of political activity would gain traction, keep in mind that we are all in this together. That is where I expect to spend my political effort in the foreseeable future, and I will let our President and Congress fight the national fight.

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Please enjoy the next article.]*

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Attorney Question of the Month

This month, we explore an interesting question with several affiliated attorneys in hopes of better understanding the challenges attorneys face when arguing a self-defense case at trial. Upon the suggestion of one of our Affiliated attorneys, we asked—

How many of our affiliated attorneys have been involved in self-defense cases where they have made motions to the court for a jury visit to the crime scene? What issues were they attempting to resolve with the visit? What sort of success did they have with the court in getting the motion granted? What limitations were they confronted with during the visit?

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A Motion for a Jury View in certain cases is a brilliant, yet unusual, piece of trial strategy.

In a self-defense type of case, under the right circumstances, you might be able to let the jury feel the fear and intimidation in a certain environment that your client, as a criminal defendant, may have faced at the time he/she was forced to use self-defense.

Here in Missouri, we call such a motion a Motion for a Jury View.

Many years ago, I volunteered to help a young man who was charged with Murder in the 2nd Degree. He was a U.S. Army veteran. He was on duty at an inner city gas station when he faced an individual who had been troublesome in the past. The individual had been known to carry a gun by certain individuals in the neighborhood.

On the night in question, the individual came on the premises, stole some merchandise and walked away. He grabbed inside his jacket and turned toward the gas station employee. The employee, believing that the individual was pulling a gun, drew a pistol and fired one

shot. Unfortunately, the individual was struck by the lone shot and died.

No gun was found on the individual by police. However, numerous individuals had gotten close to the individual before police arrived and the opportunity existed for the weapon to be taken from him.

The neighborhood was one of the highest crime-riddled portions of the community, where gunshots at night were a frequent occurrence and bars covered the windows of most homes. Violent crime was rampant in the neighborhood and the station had been robbed numerous times recently.

I wanted the jury to feel the atmosphere of fear and intimidation that workers in that neighborhood felt on a nightly basis. I filed a Motion for a Jury View and the Court granted my Motion.

We had a sequestered jury.

Under color of darkness, the sequestered jury was brought to the gas station scene by bus and allowed to observe the gas station, the positions of the shooter and the individual who was shot, as well as the lighting conditions.

A Court Reporter accompanied the jury to record the proceedings. A very strict format was followed and no questions were allowed and no notes were allowed to be taken by the jurors. As I recall, the judge accompanied all involved to the scene.

Security was provided for the jury due to the high crime nature of the location. While at the scene, people from the neighborhood shouted threats at the jury and a bottle was thrown towards us by a passerby.

The particular judge in our case was known to be adventuresome, creative and progressive. He was a big fan of demonstrative evidence and a great trial judge.

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I believe this type of view, when appropriate, could be a very valuable asset to your case in certain matters involving self defense. However, one should expect the Court to weigh factors such as cost, security for the jury, possibility of outside influence and the potential for the probative value of the visit being outweighed by the prejudicial nature of the visit to one party or the other.

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I have not done this. That said, one thing that is true about the process of crime scene processing is that it is "inherently destructive." After the crime lab gets done, all the fine bits will have been photographed, sifted and piled up in a heap.

Indeed, the new imaging tech may make the need for a "view" archaic. Multiple computer driven cameras taking thousands of images make a collage that allows one to "fly through" the scene, even looking behind and over things. That should be the first order of business to obtain in discovery.

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I have had one case where we were unable to resolve the matter prior to the necessity of a trial. In that case, I represented the owner of an armed security agency who shot someone while on duty and under attack. We could not negotiate a solution to the case that would have allowed the owner to keep the security company due to licensure qualification issues.

In that case, we considered requesting that the jury be taken to the location since the attacker had jumped from a second story balcony and charged across the

property despite warnings to stop by the armed and uniformed security officer. In reviewing the issue we determined that the cost and delay of a jury view was not only unnecessary but perhaps even a risk that we wanted to avoid. Part of the reason for this is that the security officer had called 911 when he arrived on scene to request that a patrol car be dispatched and he had the training to remain on the phone with 911 until the officers arrived. Although they did not get there in time, the 911 audio record documented without dispute my client's statements, observations and repeated warnings to stop.

Another consideration was that the law enforcement photographs were adequate to show only the aspects of the scene that we wanted the jury to see. Further, we already knew that what was written in the reports was good for us even if the investigating detective was inexperienced and decided to bring the assault charges despite the evidence.

Finally, since we already had a firm box around the evidence that the jury would see of the scene, we did not want to take them out there and show them the location which would give them a chance to see the scene after it had been fixed up, in daylight (the shooting was at night) or to be distracted with other issues like how easy it might have been for the security officer to run away or seek shelter among the cars in the parking lot. We did not want the jury speculating on anything but preferred to totally control the information that they received in that case.

Now, this is not to say that this would be our approach in each case – it was just our decision based on the facts of that case.

A big "Thank you!" to each Network Affiliated Attorney contributing to this interesting discussion. Please return next month when we'll have a new question to ask our Network Affiliated Attorneys.

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Book Review

Watch Your Back: How to Avoid the Most Dangerous Moments in Daily Life

by Roger Eckstine

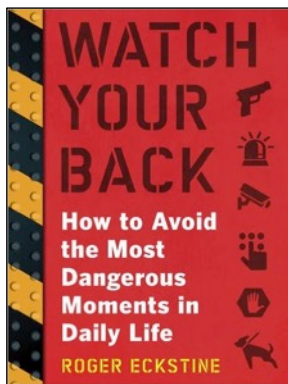
Skyhorse Publishing (Sept. 20, 2016)

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8"x10" Paperback, color illustrations, 192 pages

\$17.99 paperback; \$9.99 Kindle

Reviewed by Gila Hayes



A few weekends ago, I spent an enjoyable, rainy Sunday afternoon reading Roger Eckstein's *Watch Your Back: How to Avoid the Most Dangerous Moments in Daily Life*. This book is an unusual treatment of the fundamentals of personal safety, written in an extremely cerebral manner, but then illustrated by real-life strategies. In his opening chapter, the author notes that *Watch Your Back* picks up and expands into personal defense topics that weren't germane to his Shooter's Bible title, *Guide to Home Defense*. This book's academic approach is offset with lavish color photos and by examples from many other life pursuits, like safety equipment embraced by race car drivers, for example.

The first step in personal safety, Eckstein asserts, is to preempt the danger entirely. Smart drivers do this daily, he illustrates. To avoid being overwhelmed and failing to act, put preemptive strategies into play one simple step at a time. This also bypasses the aversion some have to acknowledging danger, because each step is small and simple. Among key elements taught, he stresses that in order for preemptive safety steps to be effective, consistent implementation is required and he recommends making precautions a habit, so the reader is ready should self defense become necessary.

Teaching by dissecting specific situations is an interesting strategy and Eckstein uses it well. For example, he details countering the dangers of showing and selling real estate. In addition to spelling out safe ways to meet the prospective buyer, cull out predators before going to a property with them, and safely host open houses, he explains that most predators work by separating the victim from the "herd," and they make good use of isolation. Protective strategies highlighted are specific to real estate sales work, but the principles have broader applications.

A great majority of *Watch Your Back's* instruction deals with safety in and around cars. That's valuable, in light

of how much time most people spend in traffic. Even something as mundane as a stop for fuel presents opportunities for thieves, and Eckstein teaches habits that preempt being the victim. He explains really seeing what is around you instead of just giving a perfunctory scan, and illustrates red flags that recommend driving past one gas station to a safer one. Of course, being able to

pick the safest area requires stopping long before the tank is empty, another aspect of preparedness. He outlines streamlining steps like paying at the pump that require close attention, during which your attention to the small read-out screen makes you vulnerable to a surprise attack.

Eckstein commits a considerable number of pages to the mitigating hazards attached to taxi and limo driving, but the lessons are interesting and can be adapted by anyone who uses a car. When he recommends a thorough scan before getting out of the car, he explains, "You must train yourself to comprehend and react to what you see. This means becoming more judgmental." The driving chapter, like the others, closes with a great synopsis the reader can convert into reminders on which to build new safety habits.

Is it safer to stay in the car or get out at certain venues? Eckstein explores risks assumed when we use conveniences like fast food, drive through banking, dry cleaner pick up and drop off windows, or if we just stop and jump out of the car to drop off mail or a movie, for example. When entering a parking lot, drive around and scrutinize nearby people, "like a suitor asking permission to take your daughter on her first date," he illustrates. If your first scan doesn't turn up any red flags, look a second time and concentrate harder, he adds.

Additional chapters discuss handgun selection, safety and accuracy, road rage dangers, fender bender melt-downs, learning to maintain composure and control under threatening circumstances, various degrees of armoring for the vehicle itself, fitting out an emergency bag for vehicle carry, and surviving terrorists or active shooters in "soft target" areas.

Watch Your Back is interesting reading and I took away several lessons that I will implement in my daily life.

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Please enjoy the next article.]

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News from Our Affiliates

Compiled by Josh Amos

This month, I get to write my column on someone of whom I am a big fan.

How great is that? We came into the Armed Citizens' Network office several Fridays ago and the phones were buzzing and emails were falling like the rain too often does here in Washington State. It took us a minute to work it out, but we soon learned that the Armed Citizens' Network was the subject of a favorable review by the one and only Hickok 45 on his YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xGctxhqkP10>.

For those of you who don't know, Hickok 45 is the online handle of a popular gun commentator who for the past ten years has been reviewing a very wide range of guns and ammunition on YouTube. He has a great, down to earth, yet expert style that has earned him millions of followers. Quite frankly, I, myself, am a big fan. I like Hickok 45's style and his reviews have helped me avoid making some...shall we say...impetuous purchases.

Although he primarily concentrates his video presentations on guns and shooting, Hickok 45 said that he had fielded so many questions about post-incident support plans that he decided to talk about the option he chose for himself. He spoke on his video solely as a satisfied member and did so with no prompting from us! His video came upon us a total surprise.

Readers, please look up Hickok 45 online and "like" his videos on You Tube. You would be showing some great support to a fellow Network member!

With that said, I am sure that like current members Hickok 45 and Paul Lathrop over at the Polite Society Podcast, we have other members who are doing all kinds of outreach on social media. If you have a podcast, a YouTube channel, or some other outreach, let us know about it and we will see if we can add some Network members to your fans!

This month I would like to spotlight our Network Affiliated Instructor Howard "Chip" Fitch, who owns the Gun Whisperer in Alexandria, VA. Chip has a good training program and a great website with many well-written gun related articles. That's all good, but the reason I want to spotlight him is a recent call I got from him.

Chip is also a Lieutenant Colonel in the United States Marine Corps and is deploying overseas this summer. This means that he will be "out of the office" for a year, but rather than just letting his affiliated instructor membership with the Network fall through the cracks, Chip, showing the professionalism for which Marine officers are known, called us directly and let us know what is going on.

Of course, we are proud to accommodate Chip during his absence because we appreciate his service to our country. When he deploys, we will put his membership on hold while he is out of the country and start things back up when he returns and begins teaching again. His situation brings up a great topic: communication between the Network and its affiliates. Affiliates, it means a lot to us when you follow Chip's great example. If you are going to be away from your business for more than 90 days, all we ask is that you let us know. We'll suspend your affiliation and membership and ask you to contact us when you are back at work.

When you come back and can start sharing the importance of Network membership with your clients again, we can start up your Network affiliation and membership. It would be so much better than the concern that grows into frustration when I email and telephone to check in on an affiliate only to find phones disconnected, emails bouncing or going unanswered.

My final affiliate honorable mention for this month goes out to Frank Le Fevre from Saginaw, MI. Frank is an instructor and he also is the owner of the online store Saginaw Arms. In addition to good buys on guns and gear, Frank's website showcases the classes he teaches, facts on Minnesota gun law, links to the Armed Citizens' Legal Defense Network and my favorite feature, a current, 2017 class calendar!

As an affiliate, Frank caught our attention with the number of new members that mentioned his classes when we asked where they had heard about us. He is doing a great job of telling his students about the Armed Citizens' Legal Defense Network. Thank you, Frank!

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

March 2017



Editor's Notebook

by Gila Hayes

In February, the Network enjoyed an unexpected jump above our usual growth. As can happen with exposure to a new market, we saw an interesting trend in the questions from folks who

wanted to know about membership. Their questions reveal the worries and concerns of a new demographic.

Predominant in this latest round of queries was concern about whether the Network would assist with legal expenses after a member uses a non-gun option in self defense. The folks asking the question have progressed beyond the immature idea, "I've got a gun. What else could I possibly need?" and it was nice to answer questions from serious people who have really thought through their self-defense options.

As our Network members already know, we consider any legal use of force in self defense serious enough that the member needs the benefit of legal advice before questioning by police. Using an intermediate force option doesn't mean the member will not face very serious legal consequences! An assault conviction, for example, can cascade into revocation of a concealed handgun license, or possibly restrictions on possessing or purchasing firearms.

A possible assault charge after using intermediate defensive force, while serious, is only one element in the decision of how to respond to a threat. Killing, crippling or endangering the life of another human being is a response reserved for immediate and unavoidable danger of death or grave physical injury, as our Advisory Board member Massad Ayoub has taught for decades. But what to do if, reading the cues in the moments before the attack escalates to deadly, you see an aggressor building emotional and physical momentum toward a life-endangering threat while you still have a second or two to interrupt it at a lower force level?

Might a painful or temporarily disabling physical tactic stop a confrontation before it can escalate into so serious a danger that in the end, it can only be stopped by deadly force? As an example, several years ago, a

Network member was on a golf course when he was assaulted. He thrust out a golf club that was already in his hands to interrupt the attacker's forward lunge, and in so doing cut the attacker's arm.

Because blood was drawn, the police were called, although on its face, the incident seemed fairly minor. Imagine our member's surprise when the police confiscated his golf club and charged him with assault. The lawyer we paid on behalf of the member got the charges dropped. In that anti-gun city, failing to aggressively counter the assault charge could very well have resulted in loss of that older gentleman's gun rights for the remaining years of his life.

A society hostile to self sufficiency doesn't understand that there's no time to dial 9-1-1 when an aggressor is amping himself up to escalate beyond yelling or shoving, trying to elicit a return insult or other response he can use to justify a brutal attack. The aggressor needs to be stopped before he initiates a full-scale beating. Obviously, escape would be desirable, but what if it's not possible? Introducing a gun prematurely shifts the blame onto the armed citizen for supposedly escalating a shoving match into deadly force.

Imagine that you've used a Taser®, pepper spray, or an improvised weapon and you get out of a dicey situation without being severely injured. When you call 9-1-1 and the police come, the incapacitated, bruised or cut aggressor and his friends swear that you brutally attacked him without any reason. Eventually, both stories are told in court, but since yours were the actions that finally stopped the brewing fight, what you did gets the most attention. The criminal justice system feels compelled to punish people for brawling, and if one guy ends up convicted of a low-level felony, an overburdened court system moves on, satisfied that the someone was made to pay for disrupting the peace.

This is not the time to throw yourself on the mercy of the law. Too much room for misunderstanding exists! You need an attorney, possibly an investigator, expert witnesses and other defense efforts, and that is why the Network stands behind its members providing the funding to assure those services are available.

*[End of March 2017 eJournal.
Please return for our April 2017 edition.]*

March 2017

About the Network's Online Journal

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

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

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