



Defending Against School Shooters

An Interview with Dr. David R. Walker

Interview by Gila Hayes

When mass shootings are reported, few create as much anguish as attacks that kill school children. In contrast to vociferous but ineffective cries for new laws, a few proactive school administrators are addressing causes leading a student to attack fellow students, coupled with sensible defensive precautions to decisively stop threats against students. For a number of years, I have followed the school safety efforts of a Network member who is a small town Texas school superintendent. Dr. David R. Walker has instituted an armed school defense program that is effective and has the support of the school board, the community, the school staff and the students.

Christoval Independent School District's Guardian Plan has armed staff since 2013, an all-encompassing effort in which students, staff and administration all participate. The result is safe schools that focus on turning out self-sufficient, well-prepared graduates without taking on the atmosphere of an armed fortress. I had gotten bits and pieces of the Christoval story from Dr. Walker over the years and was privileged recently to have a long talk with him about his work to create a safe learning environment. I believe Network members will be as inspired by his work as I am.

Let's switch now to our familiar Q & A format to learn about the Christoval School District's Guardian Plan and how Dr. Walker has trained and armed school staff to protect students.

eJournal: Seven years ago, Christoval Independent School District (ISD) undertook the gargantuan effort of responsibly arming school staff to protect students and teachers against an active killer attack. Please tell me what drove you to create the Guardian program.

Walker: On Dec. 14, 2012, we learned of the children and adults that were lost at Sandy Hook. This tragedy was the catalyst that spurred us as a school district to investigate our safety needs and research our options. The subject of a Guardian Plan had been broached when I was hired in the summer of 2008, but as I was new to the job, we had many irons in the fire and so the idea stayed on the backburner.

eJournal: What were some of the options you considered and why did you reject some in favor of arming school staff?

Walker: I believed that an armed presence would deter most evildoers wishing to do harm at our schools. If an active killing event should still happen, at least the threat could be immediately met and stopped with a dynamic force.

Limited operating funds could not support a school district police force or a school resource officer (SRO). However, armed civilians with specialized training proved to be a very promising, efficient and common sense solution. In my research, I was fortunate to find Superintendent David Thweatt of Harrold, TX ISD, who had created a Guardian Plan for his district back in 2007.

Luckily, Harrold ISD and Christoval ISD used the same school law firm, at the time called Eichelbaum Wardell Hansen Powell & Mehl, P.C. (www.edlaw.com). Cheryl Mehl was the lead attorney for my school district so we already had a working relationship. She had written the school board policy CKC (LOCAL) also known as the Guardian Plan for Harrold ISD, and she provided that district, and later ours, with legal opinions that supported the policy.

Editor's note: See policies at [https://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Download/1138?filename=CKC\(LOCAL\).pdf](https://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Download/1138?filename=CKC(LOCAL).pdf) and [https://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Download/1138?filename=DH\(LOCAL\).pdf](https://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Download/1138?filename=DH(LOCAL).pdf)

On Jan. 30, 2013, Christoval ISD Board adopted the Guardian Plan authorizing certain individuals to carry firearms, creating policies to authorize us to have firearms in district vehicles and allowing certain firearms. There were really no other models to follow or outside

[Continued next page]



February 2020

resources, so much of our Guardian Plan was developed internally. Supt. Thweatt and Mrs. Mehl were a huge help!

eJournal: Back in 2013, you were on the cutting edge. How have options for protecting Texas schools changed since then?

Walker: Of the slightly more than 1,000 school districts in Texas, there are about 250 school districts that have an armed program like ours. Others use the school marshal program, a state program that is not as commonly used or as popular; the larger districts have their own police force, and others contract a school resource officer.

eJournal: You once told me that in your early work with the Harrold ISD superintendent, he had identified four guiding principles, which supported your selection of the Guardian Plan over other school safety options. Could you tell me about the principles?

Walker: First, the Guardian Plan acts as deterrence. Gun Free Zones make a school a soft target. I use the analogy of a schoolyard bully preying only on the weak.

Second, there is no wait time on law enforcement and other first responders. The Guardian response is immediate and dynamic. At Sandy Hook, it took over nine minutes before officers entered the building. Ask yourself, "What is your LE's best reasonable response time? How many lives would be lost?" Until a building is secured by law enforcement, EMS and fire responders usually have very limited or no access. When incidents involve critical blood loss, victims can lose consciousness in under a minute and die in under 2½ minutes.

Third, with the Guardian Plan, multiple civilian individuals are armed with very specialized training. They do not have to have the broad spectrum of training that police officers have. Guardians are tasked with having to deal with certain, specific threats.

Two years ago, the cost of having one school resource officer averaged between \$150,000 to \$180,000 a year. Even if Christoval ISD could afford this, the district would have only one SRO. I do believe that a uniformed presence is important, but one armed person would leave too many gaps on our campuses. For far less money, we have multiple armed personnel throughout the district. As David Thweatt said, "They are peppered

throughout the building like fire extinguishers." Having multiple individuals adds to the deterrence.

Fourth, it is an anonymous program, meaning that most people do not know the identities of the Guardians and where they are in the building. Everyone may know where one uniformed law enforcement officer is in a building; however, they would not know who and where the armed faculty and staff are. Again, this acts as a deterrent to anyone planning to do harm.

eJournal: You've mentioned the extreme short fallings of the Gun Free School Zone Act that became U.S. law in 1990. Were there Texas laws that impeded arming school staff?

Walker: There is a caveat in Section 46.03(a)(1) of Texas Penal Code, which allows school districts to designate certain individuals to be armed. The Texas Legislature put this in place in 1995. In 2007, Harrold ISD and then in 2012, Christoval ISD found a way to use this law in a way that would add another layer of protection within the respective school districts.

Later, when current Texas Gov. Greg Abbott was our attorney general, he was asked to write an attorney general's opinion about the legality of our Guardian schools and the new TX School Marshal program. He wrote that if the armed person is designated by the school district, it is legal with some caveats.

eJournal: If I read correctly in the 2013 AG's Opinion, the School Marshal program would have limited you to one marshal per 400 students and it is very police-focused. By contrast, you've stressed that your armed staff members are "armed civilians with specialized training," not police.

Walker: From the onset, I knew that there are three groups within our free society where firearms are used to address threats. There is the law-enforcement route, the military route, and the civilian route. We are civilians who just happen to have specialized training in one area.

eJournal: By contrast, a lot of defensive firearms and tactics training is infatuated with SWAT or warfighter skills. How did you decide what to base armed teacher training on?

Walker: I spent a lot of time developing a program that would fit a civilian application at school. I became an

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avid learner and attended many seminars and conferences. I read countless articles and conferred with individuals from various local to national agencies. It was very important for me to act as a filter, to assimilate what I learned into a civilian-based program that was appropriate for our district. It had to be tactically legitimate.

I found my biggest resource in Mr. Chuck Taylor of the American Small Arms Academy chucktaylorasaa.com. You will see my letter of appreciation on his website. Chuck's extensive background proved to be the vital piece of the puzzle to having a top-notch program. Because of his passion for giving schools the means of keeping students safe, he became a friend to the district and a role model and mentor to its Guardians. Mr. Taylor and I spent countless hours working together. His knowledge and expertise perfected the program. *(Editor's note: See Mr. Taylor's comments at the end of this article.)*

eJournal: I also had the privilege of attending pistol, shotgun and rifle classes taught by Chuck before he retired and I wouldn't trade those experiences for anything. In light of his military background, I find it interesting that you turned to him.

Walker: Although Chuck has an extensive résumé that includes training US forces, militaries from other countries, numerous LE agencies, and private security, he does have an extensive background with the civilian application. Additionally, his experience includes stopping an active killer in a setting that was very comparable to a crowded school filled with innocent bystanders. His program worked seamlessly in a system such as a school district. Moreover, he has experience serving as an expert witness. As a practitioner, he possesses more than just theory. He has firsthand knowledge and experience from multiple deadly force encounters and can speak on the tactical, physiological, and psychological aspects of a gunfight. He fit everything in my rubric.

In just a short time working with him, I recognized what kind of treasure I had found. I leaned on and relied on him for much of this. His training has saved our lives because it kept us from placing ourselves in a bad situation by not knowing any better. This has resulted in him becoming a true, once-in-a-lifetime friend.

eJournal: What training does a prospective Guardian undertake?

Walker: It is more than just target shooting, as some might think. Not only must a certain skillset be acquired—one that has to be executed under adrenalized stress—but there is a mindset and rationalization that has to occur, as well. Training includes the use of graphic targets as opposed to just silhouettes. The Guardian has to diagnose the problem, identify the threat, respond accordingly, and have proper shot placement.

The initial training is purposely five days long and it includes low-light and night shooting. The individual has to battle through some physical and mental stress on the range. It is not like boot camp, but it is stressful, especially for someone new to firearms. The cool factor of getting to carry a handgun quickly wears off as the individual realizes the implications and responsibilities. Guardians have to know how to respond as a lone-responder, how to work as a team, and how to interact with law enforcement once they arrive. Other skills such as communication and emergency medical trauma are required, too.

The training is reality-based and requires problem-solving skills. Over the course of the week, the individual is transformed into a responsible trained civilian school employee who has some specialized skills.

When we first started our Guardian program, someone from a neighboring school asked, "What would you do if the bad guy is in the middle of a corridor and one person is coming from the south end of the hall and the other from the north end of the hallway. You are going to have good guys shooting at one another!" Well, the solution is training. With training, you don't shoot at one another. Training shows how to protect against that: you can change angles, you can move, and a lot else. There is also a high concentration of innocent people in the area so you do have to be very mindful of shooting and angles and tactics so that you are not hitting any innocent bystanders. It is very, very challenging.

eJournal: After initial training, how do you help the Guardians keep their edge?

Walker: Structured practices take place throughout the year. This allows for questions that might have arisen from a previous incident and fine-tuning of fundamentals that may have eroded during personal practice time. I always try to provide my Guardians with literature, reports, videos, or any other information that would be useful or at least generate a discussion or self-reflection.

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I routinely send them things that address mindset, tactics, skills and gear. Presently, I am reminding them about situational awareness.

eJournal: How often do you qualify and what happens if a teacher fails to qualify?

Walker: We have developed qualifications for pistol, shotgun and rifle/carbine that are officially done at least yearly. We work with anyone who is struggling, which is rare, and help him or her become successful. Training, guided practices, and qualifications take place throughout the year. Handgun skills deteriorate very quickly so it is important to keep those skills sharp.

eJournal: Do participants move in and out of Guardian roles? Is there much attrition or a tendency to lose enthusiasm?

Walker: Rarely have I lost anyone and when I do it is usually because they have changed jobs or retired. I hope that my methods are empowering and give them buy-in.

eJournal: You mentioned that a staff member might have to confront a threat as a lone responder, but might also team up with other armed staff, and then when law enforcement arrives on scene, they have to be able to safely transition protective duties to arriving officers. Those represent considerable differences and demands made on the teacher or staff member.

Walker: Just in general, when there is an attack, typically, a lone police officer has to deal with it, or it is a lone citizen that is being attacked, so a lot of our training focuses on having to deal with one-on-one threats or one Guardian taking on multiple attackers at once. You might be at the front office during the morning and parents are coming in and out bringing lunch money or whatever, and a gunman walks in. Well, guess what? You have been nominated to take care of this problem.

Knowing that there is a likelihood that you are not going to have backup or someone standing right there with you, makes how you would deal with that problem right at that time different than if you were in a team. Now, let's say instead that we are in the cafeteria and there's more than one armed person that happens to be in the cafeteria, too. If something happens, it is important that you have the communication and other skills to work together. If and when you are linked up with another person, then one person is in charge. I have seen the

same thing in law-enforcement training in my area from which we have been able to learn and benefit.

eJournal: Keeping the edge and avoiding complacency is a challenge for individuals and for organizations like schools. Have you had any wake-up calls?

Walker: In my school district, we have had to confront people and through a show of force, we have been able to de-escalate and have them leave. As far as an actual shooting, that has not happened. Thank God and knock on wood, a Guardian in the state of TX hasn't yet had to shoot.

eJournal: I expect much of that is due largely to how tuned in you are to evolving situations that might hurt your students. I've been told that school safety options range from lock out, lockdown or even evacuation. First, how controlled is access to student-occupied areas during the school day?

Walker: It is our daily practice to have doors locked at all times. Certain doors are on a controlled access system. Certain doors and windows are bullet resistant or have a safety film.

eJournal: What dangers might lead to lock out, lockdown or evacuation and how frequently, if at all, are those precautions implemented? Let's start with lockouts.

Walker: I wish that I kept a diary on this so I would have specifics. Since I didn't, let me speak in general terms. Not including drills, but for actual or perceived emergencies, we handle anywhere from 15 to 20 threats a year. Using the U.S. Secret Service's Threat Assessment Model, threats can be categorized in an upside down pyramid—meaning the base is on the top and the point is on the bottom—in this order: Identifying potential threats, assessing threats, and managing threats. By being able to intervene sooner, we can prevent and mitigate more threats.

A lockout is a time of heightened awareness; however, normal school business is conducted inside of the building, including class changes. During a lockout, access to the building is restricted and no one may enter or leave the building. Depending upon the situation, if we did allow controlled access, a law enforcement officer or a school official would have control of it. Safety protocols dictate that I cannot speak too much on this subject.

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I estimate we have between one and five lockouts a year. Anything from a dangerous animal on the playground at the elementary to criminal activity in the area would necessitate a lockout. Usually, a lockout involves some sort of criminal activity occurring in the area. Past incidents have included armed fugitives fleeing from the law.

For example, in the fall of 2018, we had two fugitives fleeing from the law who were headed in our direction. Again, in the fall of 2019, we had an individual that fled a car wreck and was on foot. Our school district and a neighboring school district were both placed on a lockout. Later in the fall, many of the schools, including Christoval ISD, choose to go on a lockout for part of the school day as an added precaution when notice of a statewide threat was sent out. At the time, it could not be determined if it was credible or not so we decided to play it safe. If a police chase gets close to the school, we can move from a lockout to a more secured lockdown.

A lockdown occurs when there is an immediate or perceived immediate threat in or outside of the building. When a lockdown occurs because of an armed threat, we use the CRASE (Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events) training established by ALERRT, which utilizes when appropriate the Avoid, Deny, Defense protocols. Read more at ALERRT.org and <http://www.avoiddenydefend.org/>.

I cannot recall a lockdown during the current 2019-2020 school year, but I estimate it becomes necessary anywhere from zero to three times a year. We did have a very notable lockdown that occurred on Oct. 30, 2018, a day that I will never forget. It involved a deranged individual who was trying to gain entry on the playground at our elementary campus. It turned out there were eight outstanding warrants for his arrest.

eJournal: Have you ever had to evacuate?

Walker: Yes, on April 14, 2016, a student posted a bomb threat and what appeared to be a bomb on social media.

eJournal: With these experiences under your belt, what key lessons did you take away?

Walker: Training of staff and including the students as stakeholders is vital. They have to know the “why” so that there is more ownership. One person cannot do it

all. One has to be able to delegate roles and responsibilities and have persons cross-trained. We have to make time for training and practice. You cannot wing it. All of our staff are taught protocols, but they are also taught how to think and act in a fluid environment. The old adage of being able to change horses in mid-stream is very applicable in this kind of dynamic scenario.

Communication is key. Others within the district need to know there is a threat and outside agencies need to be alerted. It is like nuclear radiation, the ones closest to the problem need to know first. Whoever can make the alert first already has my permission to take the initiative and get everyone in the building alerted and then call outside agencies, like law enforcement. We have redundancies in place to help ensure that the alert is made because communication always breaks down in emergencies. There has to be a unified common language to ensure everyone is on the same page.

eJournal: Does that mean codes or does that first observer call out specifics about the threat and location?

Walker: We give a concise, common-language message following the Standard Response Protocol™, which was created by the I Love U Guys Foundation <https://iloveuguy.org/> and adopted as a toolkit by the Texas School Safety Center <https://txssc.txstate.edu/>. Any information like location of threat and description of attacker that can be used to help avoid and respond to the threat is given, too.

eJournal: What firearms options are available to teachers if someone attacks the students and staff? I ask because we’ve talked about training to use handguns, but I believe your safety plan also includes rifles and shotguns.

Walker: After the initial training, there are several routes and roles a Guardian can take. Some are trained and qualified on long guns such as rifles/carbines and/or shotguns. Most of the employees are Guardians, which take on both the offensive role and defensive role when dealing with an attacker. Some are in a Defender or Defender-Protector role only by acting in a defensive role of protecting students if the students cannot be evacuated—for example, being in a locked down classroom and having an attacker trying to gain access or protecting students on the playground from an attacker.

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A Guardian runs toward the sound of gunfire. A Guardian works in a defensive and offensive way, dynamically confronting a threat to stop it immediately. The goal is to stop the killing. You have got to stop the killing before you can stop the dying and start the recovery. Active killing attacks last until the killer or killers are confronted and taken out, or they commit suicide or give up and turn themselves in. But until they're met with dynamic force, their goal is to continue the killing.

eJournal: Who owns the various weapons?

Walker: Handguns are teacher-owned, but must be approved and have approved ammunition. One philosophy behind this is that the employee will incorporate carrying a handgun in their personal lives. It will give them ownership of their personal and family's wellbeing and help them maintain a state of situational awareness. Other school districts provide a handgun. We do not. Full-size handguns in recognized calibers (9mm, .40 S&W, and .45 ACP) are the most effective handguns in an active killer event. The two most prevalent makes and models carried by our Guardians are the Gen. 3 Glock Model 17 and Smith & Wesson M&P 9mm. Both are 17+1 capacity, full-size handguns.

Shotguns, rifles and carbines are supplied by the school district, along with ammunition.

eJournal: Are Guardian teachers expected to be armed any time they're at work at the school?

Walker: If you want to be a Guardian, the expectation is that the weapon will be on you. There are common sense exceptions for Guardians with jobs like a coach who has to get into a T-shirt and shorts and work out with the athletes. Procedures are in place about where to store the weapon for those situations so that access cannot be gained by a student. As soon as the class is over and they can get their weapons back on-body, they do.

eJournal: Are there teachers who don't necessarily carry a gun all the time, but who have been trained to use firearms secured in the school facilities?

Walker: We started in the Guardian role in 2013 and as time progressed, I had employees who were very, very interested in being a part of the program, but were not necessarily prepositioned to run to the sound of the gunfire, but they were good Mama and Papa Bears.

Those teachers and staff, like teachers elsewhere who have taken a bullet standing between their children and a killer, certainly were not cowardly but some were just not wired to volunteer to step out into the hallway or to run across the playground to take on a threat; however, they would defend their students and colleagues to their last breath. Was there somewhere else in this program that they could be a useful asset? I thought so.

By way of definition, a Guardian is meeting the threat in an active, dynamic way. If a teacher or staff member doesn't think he or she can take on the additional responsibility of carrying a handgun all day long in that role, he or she can be a Defender.

A Defender goes through the full five-day handgun training, because there is so much involved and I need them to make that mindset convergence and to develop a skill set, but after the five-day pistol training, they are then trained and qualified to use a shotgun.

I've had other teachers who said, "In my private life, I carry a handgun on me all the time, but I am not going to be charging down the hallway into a wall of lead," so I have designated them as Protectors, as someone who is in a defensive role. They are definitely qualified to use a handgun, and they carry a handgun on them, but again they are just going to be acting in a defensive role, and have a handgun on them in their classroom, or when they take their children out on the playground, or out on a field trip, for example. They may also be qualified on a shotgun.

Shotguns are secured in classrooms and other areas, where Defenders, Protectors, and Guardians can gain access. We know that at close quarters a shotgun is a very effective tool. If you look at a typical classroom, it is the perfect range for a shotgun. A handgun is the least inconvenient thing to carry around with you all day, but it does not match the potency of a shotgun. Some Defenders are also qualified with a handgun, and while they don't carry it on them, they have access to it. Given a choice, I would much rather have a shotgun with an ounce of 00 buckshot versus handgun, but that may not be available under certain circumstances. Again, the shotgun is secured and out of sight, but in an accessible location.

There are Guardians who are also qualified to use our rifles, usually an AR-15, in either the shorter carbine type, or the standard length AR-15 rifles. These come in
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handy for parking lots, playgrounds, and long hallways. We have some hallways that are 50-100 meters long. A Guardian at the end of the hallway who has a concealed and secured AR-15, can be deployed depending on the environment and depending on where entry is made. Let us not forget that these can be effectively used in close quarters. Typically, AR-15s are safer when it comes to not having too much penetration because of high-velocity projectile/cavitation and fragmentation. I have some Guardians who are qualified on all three weapons because of their roles.

It is circumstantial. As John-Michael Keyes of the I Love U Guys Foundation says, "Tactics are intel-driven, but ultimately the environment drives tactics." If the school is in lockdown and a teacher is in the classroom trying to deny entry, the shotgun is a good tool. There may be a situation for which the rifle is a better tool, and a Guardian will always have their handgun concealed on them.

eJournal: You are bringing all of your resources to bear against the problem—whatever that problem may turn out to be.

Walker: Everybody has a vital role. To paraphrase one of General George S. Patton's famous speeches, every person is important, including the guys in the supply trucks bringing ammunition, food, and equipment, or the guy that boils the water so we don't all get the GI runs. Having Guardians, Defenders and Protectors has increased the coverage. We have an attitude of "all hands on deck." Our individual employees are taking ownership, and it is very empowering all across the school district when people say, "Even if I don't carry a gun, there is something that I can do. I can apply a tourniquet; I can help with grief counseling." This experience has been amazing and empowering.

eJournal: Through this conversation, I can see that there is a lot of depth to Christoval's Guardian Plan. In the interest of keeping this interview to a readable length, I would like to break here and come back next month with a discussion of how your community, students, school board and the emergency services providers in your area feel about and participate in the Guardian Plan for Christoval ISD, as well as your views about causes of school violence.

Readers, there is a lot more to this! On the following page, don't miss my conversation with Chuck Taylor about his experiences teaching the Christoval school

staff. Also, please watch for our March journal for more of Dr. Walker's story. Until then, Dr. Walker, thank you for sharing your experiences with us. We look forward to learning more next month.

About our source: Christoval ISD Superintendent Dr. David R. Walker has been an educator for 20 years, having started his career in education teaching in a juvenile jail. He next taught high school, while he was completing the educational requirements to become a superintendent of schools, including earning his M.Ed. and Ed.D. degrees from Stephen F. Austin State University, and post-doctoral work from Lamar University. In 2008, he joined the Christoval ISD team as its superintendent of schools, where he has earned recognition for improving career and technology opportunities for students, as well as leading the way on school safety, as we have been discussing here.

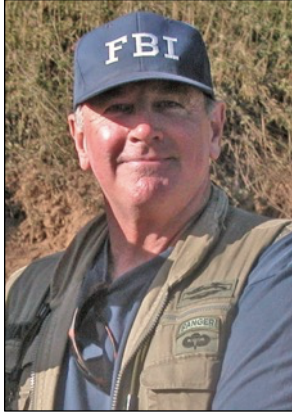
He was 2015 Superintendent of the Year in TX Educational Service Center Region 15 and in the top 20 finalists for the Texas Superintendent of the Year. A recognized leader in school safety, his publication credits include Active Shooter Events: The Guardian Plan, coauthored with Pauline M. Sampson and published in the School Leadership Review (see <https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1026&context=slr>) and he has given a number of very well-received public presentations about the Guardian Plan, including co-presenting on the topic of options for ensuring school safety at the Texas Association of School Administrators 2019 Midwinter Conference.

As a shooter, Dr. Walker has well over 1,000 hours in Active Killer and firearms training including ALERRT Level 1 Active Shooter training with Simunitions®. He performs at the advanced level in tactical handgun, shotgun and rifle/carbine, and he aspires to one day attain Chuck Taylor's Handgun Combat Master™ and ultimately the 4-Weapon Combat Master™ ratings.

Read more about Dr. Walker and his school district at: <https://www.click2houston.com/news/2018/08/21/more-school-districts-arming-teachers-staff/>

<https://www.conchovalleyhomepage.com/news/christoval-isd-stem-academy-building-ribbon-cutting/>

<https://www.elpasotimes.com/in-depth/news/2019/10/24/texas-mass-shootings-deaths-el-paso-walmart-odessa-sutherland-springs/4008425002/>



Chuck Taylor's Role in Preparing the Christoval School Staff

*In arming the school staff of the Christoval ISD, Dr. David Walker relied heavily on the knowledge and instructional expertise of a giant in the firearms field, Chuck Taylor. Although Taylor has since retired from teaching, his contributions to armed Americans continues through the wealth of previously published books and articles, including [The Fighting Rifle](#), [The Complete Book of Combat Handgunning](#), [The Combat Shotgun and Submachine Gun](#) and [The Gun Digest Book of Combat Handgunnery](#), to name only a few classics. He has authored hundreds of magazine articles over the years, as well, including pieces published in *SWAT*, *Soldier of Fortune*, *Combat Handguns*, and many more. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to ask Chuck to tell us a little about his work with Dr. Walker and the Christoval ISD staff.*

eJournal: In taking hobbyist-level shooters and teaching the skills that would let them operate in a really stressful environment and a heavily populated area, what concerns did you have to address and how did you do that?

Taylor: I got into this thing because my heart was right there with them! I mean, the idea of these kids being in a gun-free zone is ridiculous. Gun-free zones terrify me. They create soft targets that are easy for anybody to attack.

The idea of a high population-density environment troubled me a lot. I went in and I watched the dynamic of how the students moved in the schools and eventually I showed them how to move tactically in the schools. I was able to take their training from there.

At the outset of training, I realized it would be necessary to reinforce fundamental shooting and gun handling skills before we could move forward to more advanced skills. It really doesn't matter how sophisticated you get, if you can't hit what you shoot at, who cares? You cannot be effective. I went through all the fundamental skills in their order of importance, then moved forward into level I, level II, level III or, for lack of a better term, basic, intermediate and advanced.

I would go to Christoval and I would have them in class for five days at a time. At the basic level, I taught loading, tactical loading, malfunction clearing and how to draw the gun properly. That actually went a lot easier than I expected. They were fired up. Their hearts were in the right place and that made it a lot less difficult for me.

We didn't have anybody who feared guns, but we did initially have a few that were uncertain. A few of them struggled. They lacked confidence in their own ability, but we manage to solve that. Every now and then, I had to spend a few extra hours after the classes, to bring

them along, and I was able to do that with relative ease because they wanted to do it. There was no resistance.

The Christoval school board was tremendously supportive of Dr. Walker and that was very encouraging to all of us. They have been very good about funding things like equipment and ammunition. They are not stingy about it. They are doing it right. That helps a lot! In fact, one of the school board trustees even built a 100-yard rifle and pistol range on his ranch for us to train on. He has a ranch outside of Christoval and he also has a construction business in San Angelo, so he had the heavy equipment.

Toward about the end of the intermediate level, I started introducing tactical problem-solving, like responses to the right, left, or the rear and things like that. As we got into the more advanced levels, the time constraints became more difficult and stringent, because I wanted them to be able to solve whatever problem they had to face and do it right now. My worst nightmare was a prolonged gunfight in a school hallway! They need to hit what they should hit and get it over with. I tried to build their skills to as high a level as humanly possible, given the circumstances.

As we got past the intermediate level and more and more into problem-solving, we began working in two-man teams and started working on communication. Believe it or not, my biggest problem at that point was people not talking to each other. I have seen this even with SWAT teams and military special ops teams. In a training environment, it seems they are almost looking at it like, "I'm the only one here." Well, no, you're not. You have a teammate. You've got to communicate with each other or somebody's going to get killed and it's not going to be the bad guy. We managed to get that taken care of.

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Everything we did with handguns was concealed carry. Some of the more amusing anecdotes came about because some young gals apparently had seen some James Bond movies and they wanted little thigh holsters and stuff, and I said, “No, that isn’t going to fly. I want it around your middle. I want it concealed. I want it accessible. If you can’t get that gun out with reasonable speed, you are in trouble. So, let’s get serious.”

I advocated they should not get involved with tiny little guns because they’re just too doggone hard to shoot and they don’t have any stopping power anyway. We settled on the Glock 17 and the M&P 9mm. Those are great pistols—they’re easy to shoot, they’re easy to understand, and they are good, solid, reliable service pistols. They loved them!

We were actually kind of surprised that as the program began to evolve, more people wanted in. That was pretty interesting, but I suppose it’s typical. I think a lot of people initially thought, “Oh, it would be cool to carry a gun,” and then they found out how much responsibility went with it. You can thank Dr. Walker for that. He was not interested in what you and I might call “tacticool”—he was interested in getting good, solid, responsible people who understood what their mission was and how to accomplish it. He deserves a lot of accolades.

I also taught what to do if they encountered a law enforcement officer. I’ll be honest with you, that worried me! The teachers wear identification that is readily noticeable, but under stress things can get weird. The officer is not going to know what is going on, and at that point he doesn’t know as much about what has happened as the teacher does. I taught them how to deal with unexpectedly meeting a law enforcement officer running down the hallway with a gun in his hand.

It took a little bit of time for me to make them truly understand that they are the first responders. Like it or not, simply by being there when the event unfolds, they are the first responders. It takes time for the cops to get there, no matter how hard they try, God bless them, they can’t get there fast enough.

Over and over again, I emphasized, you go to the sound of gunfire and you take this guy down or you are going to have more and more and more casualties. There is no other way to do this. The guy is going to start the fight, and you have to expect that people are going to get hurt and maybe even killed before you get to the spot where the school shooter is. You are going to have to eliminate the threat and then you are going to have to deal with law enforcement.

I advised them not to get involved in building searches with the cops, because they are not trained to do that. Let the cops do their job once they get there. The problem is in the five minutes before the cops can possibly get there. Tom Green County is a big old rural ranch county and there are a lot of times that the deputy might be on the other end of the county and that is half an hour away. He can’t possibly get there fast enough, no matter how hard he tries.

After that, it was a question of maintaining skills and every time I went down there, I introduced new tactical problems, hostage situations, and being able to move to get a clear shot in a crowded environment. That was an interesting problem-solving process. Everybody had a good time with that one, but it worked! We were able to come up with methodologies that worked in that high population-density environment.

Learn more about Chuck Taylor at <http://www.chucktayloramericansmallarmsacademy.com/aboutchuck.html> . Regretfully, Taylor is no longer teaching classes (so don’t annoy him by writing to ask for a class schedule, please), but Network members are encouraged to read his books, many of which are classic reference works for anyone seeking a fuller understanding of small arms and their use for armed defense. Online, Taylor’s articles have been published by Tactical-life.com and Ballisticmag.com. His influence on established firearms instructors is indisputable, as his name is listed prominently in the training résumés of many. While not as public, Taylor’s very positive contributions gave Christoval ISD’s Guardian program a solid foundation, and that accomplishment deserves recognition, too.



President's Message

Legislative Testimony

by Marty Hayes, J.D

It has been a very interesting month here at the Network, at least for me. That is because this past month has been all about Washington state politics. Something that most of the Network members (except for the Washington members) did not realize until this message, is that the Network has been working with WA state Senator Lynda Wilson <http://lyndawilson.src.wastateleg.org/> to get a bill passed in Washington State to create an exemption for self-defense legal subscription programs (that is what they call us) from the clutches from the Washington State Insurance Commissioner.

You see, after 11 years, somehow our offering memberships in Washington became an issue for the insurance commissioner, and he decided to investigate us, alleging that we're selling insurance without a license



L-R: Robert Schneider, Tom Walls, Diane Walls, Henry Harbert, Dr. Dan Rybicki, Bill Martin, Senator Lynda Wilson, Marty Hayes, Gila Hayes, Dale Walters, Linda Williams and Jonathan Clemens. Not pictured, Josh Amos, who kindly served as photographer.

(what they call a Certificate of Authority) and that we were insuring criminal acts. In April, when we first received a notice of investigation, we tried to explain to them that we were not doing what they alleged, but they failed to understand and have been holding us under their thumb for nine months. We had hoped to have the whole affair behind us long ago, but for whatever reason, they keep dragging it out. A few months ago, we were in conversation with Sen. Wilson, and she explained how we might be able to get legislation passed that provided relief from the insurance commissioner, so we worked on putting together a bill to do just that. The bill can be viewed at this link <http://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/biennium/2019-20/Pdf/Bills/Senate%20Bills/6043.pdf?q=20200131055826>.

Yesterday we got our first chance to pursue passage of the bill, when we gave testimony in the WA Senate Law and Justice Committee. That hearing can be viewed at <https://www.tvw.org/watch/?eventID=2020011373>. The video is very long, and our part does not come until the end, but we did get the chance to give our argument for why the bill should become law. If you want to watch the

20-minute hearing, our bill comes up for discussion at the 1 hour and 24 minute (1:24) mark on the video. What you will see first is the Senate Law and Justice staffer giving her view as to what the bill means. That report does not quite hit the mark, but it is close. Next, Sen. Wilson gives her reasons for sponsoring the bill. I then give about four minutes of prepared testimony about the Network, followed by two of our Network members, Dr. Dan Rybicki and Jonathan Clemens. They both gave compelling testimony as to why the Network is important and why they support this bill.

We were also joined at the hearing by eight additional Network members who signed in to lend their support for the bill. I am very grateful for each member's willingness to take the time out of their lives to show the committee that Washington citizens support the Network and this bill.

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February 2020

The question on everyone's mind is this: what chance do we have to get the legislation passed? I don't know, but given the fact that a very small number of bills put forward ever actually become law, I don't give it very good odds. The bill has to be voted out of committee, put on the Senate floor for a vote, and then if it passes the Senate, it goes over to the House for the same action. On the other hand, we have the House bill going through the same process, so who knows? Finally, if it passes both chambers, it still has to be signed into law by our governor.

What I do know is that it feels good to be fighting this fight, because if there is one thing that I have consistently done many times in my life, is to stand on a principle for a just cause and not back down. At times, it has cost me professionally, but I wouldn't change anything.

We have another hearing of the same type in the House of Representatives this coming week. It is scheduled for Feb. 5, at 1:30 p.m. in hearing room D, in the O'Brien Building. If any Washington member can attend the hearing, I think they will enjoy being a part of the



Our Network members giving their testimony to the WA Senate Law and Justice Committee. I'm sitting on the left, Dr. Rybicki is in the center, and Jonathan Clemens is to the far right.

legislative process and we will appreciate your show of support, too.

We have a couple more weeks of the political drama to get through, and I will be busy with the second quarter of this game. I want to express a sincere thank-you to all the Network members who wrote to their representatives and members of the Senate Law and Justice committee to voice their support for the bill. Thank you, Network members who attended the hearing, with an extra measure of gratitude to Dr. Rybicki and Mr. Clemens for their public testimony. I know that testifying is not easy. And lastly, a big thank you to Sen. Wilson for her unwavering support of the Network and her work in getting us this far.



Attorney Question of the Month

Network members have questions about self-defense shootings that occur in and around cars. Late last summer, news reports about a spree shooter who killed seven people and injured more than 20 while driving around Odessa, TX, before he was shot by police gave rise to questions that we posed to our affiliated attorneys. We asked:

Setting aside the many tactical and marksmanship issues associated with shooting from vehicles, if an armed citizen faced a similar situation in your state, do laws that prohibit shooting from or across roads and from vehicles make an exception for self defense?

What legal issues could you envision arising from shooting back if caught in a moving attack?

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ArmedDefenseLaw.com

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This article analyzes the hypothetical situation of whether a person who is properly licensed to carry a handgun in public (Armed Defender) would violate Texas state law by discharging that firearm, in the context of an otherwise lawful self-defense (including defense of others) shooting, while upon, or across, a roadway, or from, or at, a motor vehicle.

“A person commits an offense [of disorderly conduct] if he intentionally or knowingly discharges a firearm on or across a public road.”¹ Discharging “a firearm on or across a public road” is a Class C misdemeanor²; however, discharging “a firearm in a public place other than a public road” is a Class B misdemeanor.³

¹ Texas Penal Code § 42.01(a)(9).

² An individual adjudged guilty of a Class C misdemeanor shall be punished by a fine not to exceed \$500. Texas Penal Code § 12.23.

³ An individual adjudged guilty of a Class B misdemeanor shall be punished by: (1) a fine not to exceed \$2,000; (2) confinement in jail for a term not to exceed 180 days; or (3) both such fine and confinement. Texas Penal Code § 12.22.

Regarding the discharge of a firearm from, or at a motor vehicle:

A person commits an offense [of Aggravated Assault] if the person commits assault as defined in Sec. 22.01 and the person: (1) causes serious bodily injury to another, including the person’s spouse; or (2) uses or exhibits a deadly weapon during the commission of the assault.⁴

An offense under this section is a felony of the second degree, except that the offense is a felony of the first degree if: the actor is in a motor vehicle, as defined by Section 501.002, Transportation Code, and: knowingly discharges a firearm at or in the direction of a habitation, building, or vehicle; is reckless as to whether the habitation, building, or vehicle is occupied; and in discharging the firearm, causes serious bodily injury to any person.⁵

Felonies in the second degree are punishable “by imprisonment in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice for any term of not more than 20 years or less than 2 years” and by a fine not to exceed \$10,000.⁶

Felonies in the first degree are punishable “by imprisonment in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice for life or for any term of not more than 99 years or less than 5 years” and a fine not to exceed \$10,000.⁷

In our hypothetical situation it appears our Armed Defender would appear to have some exposure with regard to the Texas law that proscribes discharging “a firearm on or across a public road,” a misdemeanor.⁸

Additionally, if our Armed Defender was even mildly successful in terminating the felonious aggression that was being committed by the assailant, it is likely that our Armed Defender would also have some exposure under the statute which criminalizes Aggravated Assault,⁹ a second-degree felony.¹⁰

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⁴ Texas Penal Code § 22.02(a)(1-2).

⁵ Texas Penal Code § 22.02(b)(3).

⁶ Texas Penal Code § 12.33(a-b).

⁷ Texas Penal Code § 12.32(a-b).

⁸ Texas Penal Code § 42.01(a)(9).

⁹ Texas Penal Code § 22.02(a).

¹⁰ Texas Penal Code § 22.02(b).

If our Armed Defender discharged his firearm from a motor vehicle and was successful in neutralizing the threat by inflicting “serious bodily injury” on the assailant, our Armed Defender would seem to have a very good argument that our Armed Defender did not commit a felony in the first degree, as our Armed Defender’s actions were not “reckless.” Indeed, our Armed Defender intended to—and did—stop the deadly threat posed by the assailant, which by definition, is not reckless conduct.

However, if our Armed Defender, while shooting from a motor vehicle, inadvertently injured or killed a hostage or other innocent person, our Armed Defender’s conduct might be deemed “reckless” and thereby expose our Armed Defender to criminal liability for a first-degree felony.

That’s the bad news. The good news is that although our Armed Defender may be exposed to criminal liability, our Armed Defender may also be able to take advantage of one or more affirmative defenses.

An “affirmative defense” is defined as “[i]n pleading, matter asserted by defendant which, assuming the complaint to be true, constitutes a defense to it.”¹¹

This author, some years ago, attempted to elucidate for a misinformed instructor who taught the statutorily-required course for applicants who were seeking a Texas concealed handgun license, that an “affirmative defense” is not a statement by a criminal defendant that the defendant did not engage in conduct that might constitute a crime; rather, an affirmative defense is an admission that the defendant did, in fact, engage in such conduct, but that the defendant was legally justified in doing so.

This explanation of an affirmative defense might sound like a lot of legal “mumbo jumbo,” but it is, nevertheless, quite important.

The typical criminal defendant goes to court and pleads “not guilty,” and, thereby, compels the government to attempt to prove, beyond a reasonable doubt, that the defendant committed each and every element of the charged offense. The defendant need not say anything in his defense and, indeed, the government may not compel him to say anything.

A defendant who asserts an affirmative defense, on the other hand, admits that he committed the acts that constitute the charged offense, but then asserts that he was legally justified in committing those acts.

Thus, once a defendant asserts an affirmative defense, the focus of the criminal case is no longer on whether the defendant committed the acts that constitute the offense. The focus is now on whether, given that the defendant did commit the acts in question, whether the defendant’s conduct was legally justified.

Texas, in the context of the hypothetical situation faced by our Armed Defender, recognizes and has codified, among others, the affirmative defenses of necessity and self defense.

Consistent with our foregoing definition of an affirmative defense, Texas law provides that “It is a defense to prosecution that the conduct in question is justified...”¹²

“Justification,” for the purposes of our Armed Defender, could be established by showing that the acts in question constitute self defense or were otherwise necessary.

Regarding the affirmative defense of self defense, Texas law states that:

...a person is justified in using force against another when and to the degree the actor reasonably believes the force is immediately necessary to protect the actor against the other’s use or attempted use of unlawful force. The actor’s belief that the force was immediately necessary as described by this subsection is presumed to be reasonable if the actor [acted reasonably, within certain statutory parameters that are consistent with well-settled principles of self-defense law]...¹³

A person is justified in using deadly force against another if the actor would be justified in using force against the other under Section 9.31; and when and to the degree the actor reasonably believes the deadly force is immediately necessary to protect the actor against the other’s use or attempted use of unlawful deadly force; or to prevent the other’s imminent commission of aggravated kidnapping, murder, sexual assault, aggravated sexual assault, robbery, or aggravated robbery.¹⁴

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¹¹ Black’s Law Dictionary, 6th edition, p. 60 (1992).

¹² Texas Penal Code § 9.02.

¹³ Texas Penal Code § 9.31.

¹⁴ Texas Penal Code § 9.32(a)(1-2).

In setting forth the affirmative defense of necessity, Texas law states that:

Conduct is justified if the actor reasonably believes the conduct is immediately necessary to avoid imminent harm; the desirability and urgency of avoiding the harm clearly outweigh, according to ordinary standards of reasonableness, the harm sought to be prevented by the law proscribing the conduct; and a legislative purpose to exclude the justification claimed for the conduct does not otherwise plainly appear.¹⁵

The law of self defense can be complicated. The foregoing summary merely “scratches the surface” of the subject. And, as members of the Armed Citizens’ Legal Defense Network likely already know, the responsible armed defender must constantly strive to maintain and increase one’s knowledge and proficiency with the tools of armed defense; foremost among those tools is knowledge of the law and mental preparedness.

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CT has a series of laws that restrict firing over roadways, discharge of a firearm in an unsafe manner and discharge within city limits. Self defense is an affirmative defense and as such could be raised as a defense to any of these charges. But, how does this work in this scenario?

In CT, self defense of yourself is based on a reasonable belief that you are in imminent risk of serious bodily harm, whereas defense of third persons has no reasonable belief protection.

Also, in CT, a car has no castle doctrine so you have a duty to retreat if you can do so safely. If a guy outside your car has a knife and you can just drive away, the law would require you to do so.

But what if you were protecting a third party who cannot retreat while you are in your car? A very unusual question for civilians although not as unusual for cops. Cops do on rare occasions return fire from within their cars on public roadways and there are similarities.

As a civilian, if you have a clear shot at a reasonable range to stop an imminent threat to a third party who cannot safely retreat, the self-defense provisions could be used. And why would anyone not use a car as cover in a gunfight?

Let us phrase the question this way—You are in a car that is not moving and your windows are down. 20 feet away a man is stabbing an unarmed 4-year-old girl who cannot get away. You are in a public roadway. Could you lawfully take the shot from your car over a public road to protect the child? The answer is yes. What if the child turns out to be a movie prop and while you reasonably believed it was a child, you were wrong? In that case, you have no defense and the charge will likely be murder.

So, the answer is yes, but only in a very narrow range of circumstances. As Clint Eastwood famously said, a man must know his limits.

John R. Monroe

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In my state (Georgia), it generally is illegal to fire a gun from a vehicle (moving or stationary). There is, however, more than just an exception to this rule for self-defense situations. If you validly use self defense, you are immune from prosecution for violating gun laws. If you are nonetheless prosecuted, if you raise your immunity as an issue, you are entitled to a hearing on the issue of your immunity before you are tried (i.e., you do not have to wait and raise it as a defense in your trial).

The legal issues most likely to arise from shooting back in a moving attack are related to the increased risk of errant rounds when shooting from a moving vehicle. You could be charged with “auxiliary” crimes such as reckless conduct (for people that might be in your line of fire), and other crimes or torts if you happen to hit innocent bystanders.

A big “Thank You!” to our affiliated attorneys for their contributions to this interesting discussion. Please return next month for additional commentaries on the question that we didn’t have room to include in this edition.

¹⁵ Texas Penal Code § 9.22.

Book Review

Concealed Carry Class

The ABCs of Self-Defense Tools and Tactics

by Tom Givens

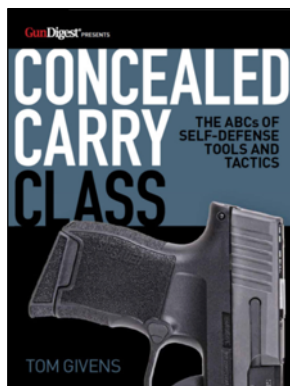
272 pages, 8 1/2x11, paperback

\$24.99 paperback or \$23.99 digitally delivered PDF

<https://www.gundigeststore.com/product/concealed-carry-class-the-abcs-of-self-defense-tools-and-tactics/>

Publisher: Gun Digest Books (Jan. 14, 2020)

ISBN-13: 978-1946267955



Aggressiveness: “If I have to defend my life with a firearm, I will use it vigorously, with all the violence, aggressiveness and commitment I can muster, because my life is at stake!”

Speed: “You must also develop a quickness in your ability to assess developing situations and make sound decisions.”

Coolness: “All shooters experience a degradation of skill under the extreme stress involved in a real life-and-death shooting confrontation. The more skill you have, however, the less you will lose when placed under sudden stress.”

Ruthlessness: “Absolute single-mindedness of purpose... Hit him fast, hit him hard, hit him with everything you have, and then assess and if needed, hit him some more.”

Surprise: Use a page from the bad guy’s playbook. You are likely smarter and better trained, but if he can catch you by surprise, he holds advantage. Turn the tables, Givens advises, “If attacked do something he does not expect. Action is faster than reaction. Make him react to you, not you to him you. You accomplish this by doing what he least expects, which is a violent, explosive counterattack.” He illustrates application of the seven principles through the OODA loop sequence of observe, orient, decide and act.

Because there exist “people who are not normal, rational, socialized or civilized” it is difficult for many to recognize and react in time to a predator, Givens elaborates, defining mental states through which one should shift, depending on conditions. Jeff Cooper applied color codes to each state, and most of our readers are familiar with his system. The correct state of mind is important! Givens stresses, “I can say without reservation that the system saved my life on several occasions. Not what kind of gun I had, or the brand of ammo, but this mental system.”

In the next chapter, Givens discusses fear, observing, “Courage under fire is not a matter of being without fear. It is a matter of being able to control fear, accomplish your mission, which is to stay alive.” Admit that you’re afraid, but before dwelling on failure, take control—combat breathing is a good tool—and focus on getting

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Tom Givens, our advisory board member and a well-known popular armed defense instructor, distills his teachings on mindset, personal protection, and the armed lifestyle in a new Gun Digest book, just out in January. As a fan of Tom’s practical assessment of and responses to violent crime faced by citizens of all ages, genders and walks of life, I am happy to see his instruction for those going armed compiled in an easy-to-read format that serves as a great refresher for old hands and a compelling introduction for those new to firearms.

Givens opens with a quick review of national crime statistics, touching on workplace violence and the need to be armed at church. He moves quickly into legal concerns, giving a nice and sincerely appreciated recommendation for the Network. The chapters, 30 in all, are short and easy to read.

Givens’ chapter on *Appropriate Use of Force* defines the circumstances under which force used in self defense is justifiable, giving examples of ability, intent, imminent jeopardy, and preclusion and how each fit into justification to use force in self defense. Givens comments that students frequently ask the wrong question: “Can I shoot him if...?” explaining that the better question would be “Do I have to shoot him?”

Identifying the common interest in guns and gear over mindset and attitude, Givens elaborates on seven key principles originally taught by Jeff Cooper in his treatise *Principals of Personal Defense*. Readers will greatly benefit by his commentary on each and to fuel reader interest, here’s a brief synopsis:

Alertness: “If you know who is around you and what they are up to, you are in control.”

Decisiveness: “Always do something, immediately.”

the job done. Always have alternatives, turn anger into motivation, and accept the element of fate, he advises.

Techniques for mental conditioning make up the next chapter. "If you have been programmed through training to respond correctly, you will. Panic is simply the lack of a pre-programmed response," Givens introduces. Read newspaper crime reports, ponder what the victim should have detected, and if you were that victim how you would react. This programs your subconscious to avoid behavior that makes you a victim and gives you practice every "single day in making tactical decisions."

In his next chapter, he offers a variety of mental exercises to increase awareness and speed up tactical decision-making. There is, Givens comments wryly, a difference between vision and observation. He discusses gathering intel for personal safety, stressing, "Make no mistake, the law-abiding populace of this country is at war with the criminal subculture, and the gathering of accurate intelligence on the enemy's identity, location and strength is a vital part of your overall defensive strategy." He aims to increase reader ability "To recognize subtle danger signs that will be present prior to an assault."

Givens recommends rules of engagement "thought out, verbalized and firmly planted in your mind in advance" to aid proper use-of-force decisions that must be made at the speed required in real life. This is sometimes referred to as a premade decision and identifies the conditions under which you would use lethal force. "Make a commitment that you will fire only as a desperate measure to terminate a threat to your own life, or the life of an innocent third-party."

Later, in discussing the aftermath of a self-defense shooting. Givens notes common psychological after-effects. He states that one who carries a gun for self defense must make a full commitment to self preservation. "In advance, long before you actually carry a gun, you must work out your own personal rules of engagement. You must be confident in, and comfortable with, your decision not to let some scumbag take your life away from you...To carry a gun responsibly, you must recognize that you might have to use it, unhesitatingly, immediately to terminate a deadly threat to your own life or that of a loved one."

Givens dedicates several chapters to equipment: gun options, holsters for concealed carry, defense ammunition and stopping power. His chapter on gun safety and responsibility starts with the comment that he investigated 200 negligent shootings and only one genuine gun accident during his law enforcement career.

Even with a mechanical malfunction, no one should be killed or injured if the person handling the gun is keeping it pointed in a safe direction, he explains. If someone is harmed, the cause is negligent disregard of the four cardinal rules of gun safety. Those rules must "become literally part of our character...adhered to at all times in all places, without exception."

While this book's chapters focus on the various aspects of armed self defense, interspersed throughout the book are one-page informational discussions that range from religion and self defense to the dangers of being taken to a secondary crime scene. Those "briefs" give the reader a nice break and provide vital information in small segments.

Shooting techniques, holster work, proactive and emergency reloads, ready positions, low-light work and competition all get a chapter. Givens outlines realistic and effective practice plans, including a discussion of practicing drills applicable to real-life scenarios. He is a proponent of photorealistic targets depicting a human assailant, "to help create the correct response at the subconscious level." For simple scored targets, anatomically correct scoring rings, like the IALEFI-Q, get his nod.

Explaining that tactics is a huge topic demanding an entire book, Givens hits the high points of use of cover, movement, distance, and other vital principles in a brief chapter. Build a practice plan around specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely (S.M.A.R.T.) training goals to maintain and increase skills between formal training, his next chapter advises. He provides specific recommendations for formal training, as well as resources ranging from blogs to DVDs. He closes with a variety of drills for practice and skill evaluation.

I thoroughly enjoyed the refresher Tom Givens' *Concealed Carry Class* provided. It is a good asset to any shooter's library. Get it, read it, share it.



Editor's Notebook

by Gila Hayes

The variety of questions my team and I answer daily is diverse and sometimes we are a little surprised how many basic questions come

from members who have been part of our family for years and years. Sometimes the questions smack of wishful thinking—maybe if I ask nicely, I'll get some extra goodies. As I often respond, "Nothing wrong with asking!" I thought our readers might enjoy a taste of some of the questions and answers—and as a useful side effect, you'll know a little more about how your Network membership benefits work and what we do to make sure we're good stewards of the Network's all-important Legal Defense Fund – reserved for all the expenses of mounting a vigorous legal defense after self defense. After all, no matter how easy it is to be distracted by minutiae, we best succeed by always keeping our highest goal firmly in mind.

I am frequently asked if Network membership includes free non-emergency consultations with attorneys to answer questions about gun laws, to help with concealed carry license problems, to provide reliable legal advice about issues like carrying a gun in a school facility, to name only a few areas of concern.

Here's a response I recently sent a member: You asked if the Network would pay for a consultation to explore carrying guns at non-school events held in a school facility. No, we cannot pay for that. The Network pays members' legal expenses after lawful use of force in self defense. Attorney consultations for other legal issues are not included in our membership benefits. As stewards of the Legal Defense Fund, it falls to us to grow and maintain a strong Fund for post-self-defense legal expenses, in keeping with the reason our members have joined our Network family. If we withdrew several hundred dollars for each member to consult with an attorney on non-emergency matters, we would quickly nickel and dime the Fund into insolvency.

Another common question is how a member gets help if he or she has to use force in self defense while on vacation or a business trip that takes them into another state where they do not know an attorney. One member

asked if it even made sense to try to determine the name and contact information of attorneys practicing in a city he would be visiting for only a couple of days. It was a great question!

I suggested: If you were going to be in an area for a number of months, then it might be worth the time to log in to our website and use the interactive map under the Affiliates tab to become familiar with attorneys in that region, but for general travel, other members have found it a better use of their time to call Network President Marty Hayes after a self-defense incident and ask him to connect them with an attorney in the locality where the problem arose.

Connecting members with attorneys is, in fact, a service Marty has performed for members in well over half of our member-involved cases because many of our members hadn't found an attorney close to home, either. Please understand that you're never stuck with the attorney he suggests, you can always say, "No, don't pay that attorney for me," or "Yes, please pay him or her and get that lawyer working on my behalf!" We're never going to interfere with a member's attorney choice, but we'll certainly help if asked!

If you're logged in, <http://armedcitizensnetwork.org/our-affiliates> lists affiliated attorneys and Network-affiliated instructors within a 200-mile radius of any location you type into the "Enter a Location" field at the upper right side of that webpage before you click the "Search" button. Ignore any warnings about your browser's geolocation settings, and type in any city, state or zip code and hit "Search."

You could definitely make that search if you were in an area for a long time and wanted to check out who on the affiliation rolls was close by, but frankly, if it were me traveling, I'd just make sure to have Marty's after-hours phone number (printed on the back of your membership wallet card) handy and ask him to step in and assist if something as serious as self defense had occurred.

Another common discussion arises when a member explains they won't be renewing their spouse's Network membership because he or she has quit carrying a gun or has not applied for a license to carry a concealed weapon. In light of how much money the Network has expended over the past 12 years on legal expenses to defend non-gun self defense, we are compelled to gently ask, "Does your spouse carry pepper spray they might use on an attacker? A mini-baton or a knife?"

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Might your spouse strike a violent attacker's head with an elbow or knee?" All of those are serious use of force responses to being attacked and it would be a really good idea to have legal representation to explain why it was necessary and reasonable.

On a related topic, sometimes members explain that they aren't sure they will renew their memberships because they have moved to a state with very strict gun laws and won't be able to get a license to carry. After expressing our condolences, we often comment: "The Network may be more important to you than ever, because we pay attorneys to defend members after self defense through any legal means, not just guns."

As amply illustrated in our January journal's [review of member cases](#), we assist members who have defended themselves through a variety of legal means. Ironically, the punishment for fighting off an assailant with your fists can be loss of your gun rights and carry license. Your good fortune in being able to survive on the street through physical force alone may not extend to legal survival in the courts, so the Network is there to help you fight the criminal justice system.

Sometimes, we answer questions from members who wonder if they will be sent a membership wallet card when they renew. The answer is yes, and then we start to explore whether renewal cards we mailed weeks before got lost in the mail or lost in the member's home. Many years ago, hoping to create a hard-to-overlook mailer for our renewal cards, I bought a supply of bright goldenrod-colored business-sized envelopes with prominent maroon lettering stating *"Important: Contains Membership Renewal Documents."*

I'd hoped fewer cards would be lost with the brightly colored envelope. Alas, it still happens. In this day-and-age where everyone from AARP to the NRA sends out "membership" materials, it is worthwhile, members, to be sure others in your home who handle and sort mail are made aware that your Network membership is a valuable service for which you pay membership dues, so the few envelopes we send out yearly need to make it into your hands, not the trash can. While we always happily make and mail replacement cards, this is a little step you can take to avoid the frustration of waiting and waiting for your membership renewal card only to be told it was mailed weeks ago when you call to inquire.

The last topic I'm going to bring up is probably the toughest question we answer. Distilled into its most

simple expression, people want to know, "How do I know this isn't a scam?" I understand – trust has to be earned. In our situation, we are asking members to trust that we will help you after you have had to do the one thing you have worked your whole life to avoid – fighting to save your life from a violent criminal's attack. In fact, you and your peers have been doing such a good job of avoiding fights that you don't know anyone you can ask for recommendations because none of your associates have had to go through the legal aftermath.

It's not like trying to choose an auto repair technician or a family physician for whom recommendations are many. There are, though, several good ways to make this difficult evaluation. The first evaluation concerns the company's actual work, and that is why I dedicated so much space to discussing Network member cases from the previous decade in last month's journal.

The other legitimate evaluation comes from industry leaders who, through their broader scope of experience and professional training, are highly qualified to offer recommendations. That is the rationale behind armedcitizensnetwork.org/defensefund/advisory-board. While we are very proud of our professional association with each member of our Network Advisory Board, their video commentaries about the Network bring many years of experience to the question of "Why should I trust the Network?"

Finally, hearing why customers choose one business over another is helpful. In the Network's case, I would not say we have "customers" in the usual sense of the word, and instead we consider you a Network family member. Testimonials are an aspect of our Network's reputation that I have been guilty of not sharing as much as I should. Now and again, we quote member emails and comments in this journal, but I have never managed to create a compilation of member comments.

There's no time like the present! May I trouble you, dear member, for a brief explanation of why you chose to be part of our Network family? A few short paragraphs are all it takes, and in keeping with our tradition of protecting member privacy, we'll attribute your comments to "Your First Name from Your State." Please send your reasons for being part of the Network family to ghayes@armedcitizensnetwork.org and know that you're helping others realize the importance of being part of the Network, which in turn strengthens our ability to provide for the legal defense of all our members—maybe even you. I'll appreciate your help!



About the Network's Online Journal

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