



Lessons from Competitive Shooting for Everyday Life

An Interview with Michael Seeklander by Gila Hayes

A few months ago, we had the opportunity to interview Mike Seeklander. With the increasingly difficult challenge of building and maintaining shooting skills, we were really pleased with the opportunity to ask him about ways to build skills through the fun of competition. The discussion expanded into combining live fire practice and training with dry fire and visualization for skill enhancement, topics that readers who will not compete will also find valuable.

Seeklander is a US Marine Corps combat veteran of Desert Storm and Desert Shield and a former law enforcement officer, with training leadership credentials from both his military and policing experience, as well as a stint as lead firearms instructor at the Federal Air Marshal Academy. In addition, he is ranked Grand Master as an USPSA shooter. After teaching at the United States Shooting Academy, Seeklander formed his own training company, Shooting-Performance LLC through which he offers classes in both defensive firearms use as well as competitive shooting. Many Network members will recognize Mike from his prominent role on the TV program, The Best Defense, several books and DVDs on training and many published magazine articles. Let's go now to the interview format and learn from this noted trainer.

eJournal: Many Network members voice questions about the differences between competitive shooting and preparation for self-defense gun use. They're worried by warnings like, "You'll learn habits in competition that will get you killed in real self defense," or "IDPA only makes you use cover for 1/2 of your body! The part you've learned to leave outside cover will be shot," but I know personally, that at a minimum, my gun handling skills improved much more quickly than if we had not been shooting IPSC in the early days. What is your experience?

Seeklander: I've been shooting IDPA and IPSC or USPSA for years. My career had two parallels. When I started, I was in the Marine Corps and at the same time started IPSC shooting. Later on, I transitioned into being a full-time police officer. I always had in mind the effects

of the competition I was doing and what happens if I get in a shooting on the street.

I've always been a proponent of competitive shooting, as long as the individual competing understands what they are going to get out of shooting matches. They're going to love it. They are going to get some energy from it. They are going to want to do it more. It will make the average person, especially the average police officer who doesn't get to train much, WANT to train because every human wants to be better at something. BUT the rules of the game are different than the rules of defense with a gun. When you're competing, you are testing marksmanship and manipulation skills under stress, that's it!

eJournal: We are told that under stress we will unconsciously do what we have repeated the most and some even say our responses are biased toward what we practiced most recently. In a high stress situation, can we separate shooting habits engrained for competition from the challenge at hand?

Seeklander: A skilled operator of both a motorcycle and a car is able to separate the skills applicable to either. There are a lot of other examples of how our brains can accomplish those things. While I've never been in a defensive incident on the street, I have been shot at in combat, and I can tell you that you are naturally going to be inclined to hide and seek cover if you have any training whatsoever. You are going to want to protect yourself.

When I train defensive shooters how to use cover, I don't care about the rules of IDPA. I care about the minimal exposure possible. As long as you engrain that technique, I believe people will instinctively respond in ways that let them protect themselves as best as they can. We have a natural instinct to seek cover, as early as squirt gun fights from when we were kids. We know to hide ourselves, as long as we don't have the freeze response. The freeze mode typically comes in when we are completely untrained and fear overrides thought.

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Human survival is definitely hard wired, but it can also certainly be trained in to humans. People need to be taught by doing a certain number of training repetitions. I think they'll revert to those if they do training in a static nature and then eventually in a dynamic nature, meaning under some stress, be that paintball or NLTA (non-lethal training munitions), Airsoft or an instructor telling you, "Hey, you need to move into a position of cover when you are firing or get there first."

eJournal: Does competition shooting experience give some default response so the freeze doesn't catch you?

Seeklander: Well, I think the competition shooting will give you the ability to run your gun system SO much better. You have done so many draws so long as you are competing with equipment that is something like what you would use on the street. Competition trains your ability to hit accurately AT SPEED, under stress.

While you're shooting a USPSA stage at speed, you are learning information processing. You are having to process SO many different things—you are manipulating the gun, you're getting back on the sights, and you have to do these things at a speed far beyond the average police officer or military personnel guy's training. My personal experience is that whether in competition or in NLTA (non-lethal training ammunition) scenarios, I could process things much faster than the normal pace at which the scenarios were happening and I think that is because of shooting competition.

eJournal: You were thinking on your feet. In the old days when we shot IPSC, we would do stage walk throughs before our turn to shoot came. Is that recommended, or do those rehearsals cut into the information processing experience you just described?

Seeklander: A lot of my competition course is about the stage walk through, the mental visualization and preparing your brain to do exactly what would be best. If you had the ten best shooters in the world and asked, "Who plans and visualizes a stage more than three times?" in my classes, a couple of the students would raise their hands. Then if I said, "Who plans and visualizes a stage more than ten times?" ALL of the top professional shooters would raise their hands, because all of them visualize and plan for each stage.

I teach the same thing to tactical students, too. I say, "Hey, if you are about to do an entry, you should visualize 'if/then,' meaning if this happens, then I will do this."

eJournal: How can you reliably plan a tactical engagement, not knowing, for example, if a hallway turns left or right?

Seeklander: You CAN visualize, if my partner breaks left, then I'm going right. If he goes right, then I break left, and you can visualize and plan for that, or think, if he goes down, then I can return fire, I can accomplish this or that or whatever.

eJournal: How detailed or specific are your mind pictures?

Seeklander: Very specific, like what I feel on the gun when I am gripping it. I am seeing the sights. For competition, I will break a stage down into multiple components. A stage may call for 30 rounds, so I don't want to try to memorize all of those. I'll think of one component as where I run to this wall and shoot these two pieces of steel and this target, then catch the swinger as it comes out. I memorize that, like a phone number where you can remember three digits, then three, then four digits very easily compared to just a series of digits. I break a match stage down to segments and every detail gets visualized.

eJournal: When you were doing police work, did you employ the same mental strategizing?

Seeklander: I did. I wrote about this example in my book. I was working for an F.B.I. taskforce and they hit a guy who had a large amount of dope and a bunch of cash. This guy was known to be armed and he was known to drive a big dually pick up truck. We knew he would run rather than go to jail, so we had planned a multi-vehicle take down. We were going to block his vehicle in, and I had the lead in front of the cars because I was in an SUV. My job was to lead the block in and then deploy a shotgun and let him know that if he started ramming cars, he was going to get shot. It was complex, because I had to have the shotgun in a place where I could get to it very quickly and I had to draw it from a hidden place and I had to get the car in park so it couldn't roll away. I had all these things I had to accomplish before I even got to taking the safety off the shotgun and pumping the action. So I was rehearsing and visualizing what I had to do. I remember when it went down I thought, "I have already done this." It went that smoothly.

eJournal: Do you think it was easier because you'd practiced visualizing and memorizing a critical sequence of actions all the time for matches?

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Seeklander: Sure! I was already in practice. When I do my drills for competition with my students, even though we are not shooting a match, I have them actively visualize the drill. Let's say I set up a complicated drill where they have to turn and shoot eight shots and reload and shoot eight more in a weird pattern. I have my students visualize that because it allows them practice visualization and memorization so they get better at doing it at a match.

eJournal: Or better at applying those skills to being a more effective human in any number of other situations in their daily lives.

Seeklander: Absolutely! I strongly believe in visualization.

eJournal: How did you come to be such a believer? What led you to this approach?

Seeklander: Mental preparation is very strong in professional athletics and Olympic-level athletes have been doing visualization since probably the 1970s and 1980s. I correlated that to shooting, because I knew that top shooters did stage visualization to get their plan down and then to memorize their plan. I expanded from there and started researching what visualization could do.

When we shoot an IDPA or IPSC stage, we shoot it cold. You don't get to practice three or four times. When I visualize a stage, I'll run it faster and then a little faster in my mind. Then I find that when I shoot the stage cold, I am faster if I have visualized it and programmed it and synched in.

eJournal: Conversely, if we are not at your high skill level, timing is really critical, because it is tempting to shoot faster than we can get our hits.

Seeklander: I call that a speed bump. If you have a tendency to go too fast to get the hits on hard targets, then setting the correct speed on those sure could be part of your visualization.

eJournal: What percentage of live practice should we balance against visualization? It's increasingly important to get more out of non-firing practice when ammunition is scarce!

Seeklander: I think you can combine dry fire with live fire practice and be at a very high skill level, but you will never be as good as you could be without live fire

practice. You could get a lot of practice out of visualizing yourself reacting to the threat, communicating with family members, moving to cover, and combine it with dry fire practice and possibly Airsoft practice with targets in your garage.

At the top end of the competitive game, when we are trying to beat the top 2% of the guys, we have to use live fire. You have to shoot the matches and put in your practice time on the range. But for the person with a defensive pistol who wants to get to a very high level of proficiency, I think you can replace a large portion of live fire with dry fire, and then hit the live fire range routinely enough that you can continue to know what it feels like for your gun to recoil and you can control the recoil.

eJournal: That will help Network members without firing ranges readily accessible. I remember you mentioned having two teaching tracks – the competitive shooting and the self-defense side. How much of the mental training is in your self-defense classes?

Seeklander: About the same amount, though I don't talk about how to visualize a stage. I talk a lot about how to mentally visualize their plan: literally visualizing things like which pocket is my phone in and visualizing what it is going to be like to dial that phone with one hand and those little factors. I also wrote about it. In my book, I have "One Bad Day" visualizations. Every once and a while, when you are driving around, visualize what would happen if you got shot or got cut and visualize fighting through it successfully, utilizing the other hand to shoot or what ever, so if it ever does happen, you don't panic or freeze. Instead, it is "I know how to do this. I can do this."

eJournal: Where can our readers get your books and more information about your classes? Do students come to your location or do you teach nationwide?

Seeklander: Nationwide, though I am out of Tulsa. I do teach nationwide and I am all over this year. My website is www.shooting-performance.com and folks can go on there and find the page that is about how to host a class, all the requirements, all the equipment requirements, all the class descriptions, the locations and calendars. As classes are within a month or two, I post them on Facebook, too.
(<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=1664207023&fref=ts>)

eJournal: I encourage readers to visit those websites.

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It is so important that people train and build up their skills, whether through the excitement and energy of competitive shooting or by participating in one of your defense shooting classes to fill in gaps in critical skills. Either one is sure to be beneficial in its own way.

Seeklander: Because I've been a professional trainer for so many years, my classes are probably a little different than some classes out there. I want the students to leave knowing how to continue to train. I want them to know what they need to do when they are at the range, how to correct a problem, how to visualize a technique, and that's why I wrote the competition book and the defensive trainer. So they can leave the class, and I can say, "Here you go."

eJournal: How do you think a book would work for someone who does not have the opportunity to train with you in person?

Seeklander: If you're a visual learner, you need the supporting DVDs that are available for either book. But the best thing is the interaction that happens at a class. A lot of people start with my books and DVDs, and then they come to me at a class so I can tweak their skill. If

they've been doing my program, they may have an epiphany moment during one of the drills where they say, "Oh! That is what I was supposed to be doing!"

eJournal: Any closing advice on how to improve our shooting skills?

Seeklander: If you're strictly interested in self defense, consider shooting some matches and integrating yourself into the competition environment. If nothing else, you'll meet people who are better shooters and that might turn into having people to practice with. You can shoot a match for no scoring, but still have to get up there in front of your peers and shoot and that is good for you.

eJournal: Thank you for all of your useful advice and all the great discussion points. We'll be reading your book, and I know it would be rewarding to get range instruction from you, too.

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President's Message

by Marty Hayes, J.D.

Wow, what a month it has been! I have a lot to cover, so let's get to it.

First on my April agenda was making plans and putting together all the details of the Network attending the NRA member meeting in Houston. It all worked and we are probably headed to the meeting as you read this. Then, of course, there was the great gun control debate in the U.S. Senate, on which I have a few comments. I watched a lot of the proceedings—the speeches and the voting.

Gun Owners Defeat Obama, Schumer and Feinstein

Of course, there were also several other bit players, the VP, the AG and the Senators who voted for one or another form of new gun control legislation. They all went down in flames...but the threat of the filibuster by Rand Paul, Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio and several other Senators is the only reason American gun owners won. They bargained with Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid to allow up and down votes on all the gun bills and amendments sitting in the hopper, requiring a 60-vote majority to pass any of them.

Several bills, including the Manchin-Toomey bill to expand universal background checks, would have passed and gone to the U.S. House of Representatives if a simple majority had been required. The problem with that bill was that it went WAY too far, creating loopholes that could lead to gun registration by the federal government. Manchin and Toomey should have drafted a simple bill to close the so-called "gun show loophole," making it a felony to transfer a firearm at a gun show without either the buyer or seller confirming the individual is not a prohibited person, and then the bill likely would have passed. Of course, a workable definition of what comprises a gun show would have been necessary, but that shouldn't have been too difficult.

In Washington State, the Washington Arms Collectors (WAC), a club of 17,000 people with a primary mission to hold gun shows, has a rule that states ONLY MEMBERS of WAC can buy or sell guns at a WAC gun show. To become a WAC member, the individual must pass a background check. I have no problem with that, and I am a member of WAC.

I recently purchased a handgun at a WAC gun show. Beyond my WAC member credentials, no paperwork was done, and the seller knew he was selling his gun to a legitimate good guy. I could support legislation that set up something similar. Frankly, I am concerned that prohibited persons do in fact frequent gun shows and buy their guns at unregulated gun shows. Of course, none of this would be an issue, if all people who sell guns privately made sure the buyer was legally allowed to own guns. For now, I am pleased the gun control bills went down to defeat, especially the Feinstein assault weapons ban. The Democratic Senators who voted against it should be applauded for standing up to their party's leadership.

Ammo Still in Short Supply

The ammo shortage has not eased up any, at least as far as I can tell. People are stalking the UPS trucks, waiting for them to drop a shipment off at the local Cabela's or Wal-Mart store, then hitting the gun counter buying up all the handgun ammo they are allowed. My local Cabela's has a two-box limit, but I am told whatever ammo is set out overnight is sold immediately the next morning. As you know, I run a training school, and this shortage is starting to affect our students' ability to attend training. I am aware of other trainers in the industry suffering the same problem. So, I ask you all to resist the urge to stockpile ammo now, when you find it. If you have enough for your immediate needs, let the other guy buy some, too. He might just need it to attend life-saving training.

More Insurance Discussion

I received a call this month from an individual (not a member) asking why we set up the Network's member

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benefits the way we did. He was an "insurance guy" and he wanted to discuss pursuing yet another insurance scheme designed to help the armed citizen during prosecution or lawsuit after a self-defense act.

He was actually very complimentary about what we have done here at the Network, and he seemed to sincerely want to bring to market an insurance product addressing self-defense concerns. Of course, he also asked if we would work with him on a cooperative venture. Of course, I explained that we are not interested in combining our established and workable program to protect our members from criminal prosecution with any insurance product.

I get these calls fairly often. Judging from the plethora of insurance schemes now being offered, it appears that there is a market for insurance. I don't want anything to do with it, but that's just me. You are free to choose for yourself, but as more and more products come on the market, here are some questions I suggest our members ask anyone wanting to sell them an insurance policy, or membership in an organization claiming to have insurance to cover acts of self-defense.

First, I would ask if the insurance company will pay for your own attorney to assist you in your legal defense. Remember, it is YOUR FREEDOM that is at stake. If it is MY freedom involved, you can damn well bet I want complete control over the acts of anyone I hire or agree to represent me in court. Remember, if the jury doesn't like your attorney, they will take it out on YOU! I would not participate in any insurance scheme that did not allow me the right to choose MY OWN attorney to fight for me. An insurance-provided attorney will likely put the best interests of the insurance company first, not necessarily yours.

Ask about limits on the amount of money the insurance company will spend on your behalf. I am currently working on a case where the law firm has spent over a thousand hours working on the defense of the individual. I know this because they have spent probably a hundred hours with me alone, and I am a small part of the case. At the hourly rate for most attorneys...well, you can do the math. Before buying insurance, I would want to determine the level of the insurance company's commitment to my freedom. Any insurance scheme that

puts a limit on those dollars is putting an arbitrary limit on the value of my freedom.

Next, if the insurance policy is simply a plan for reimbursement, paying back your costs if you are acquitted, then you will need to come up with the financial resources to pay your defense costs up front. If you don't have those resources, how in the heck are you going to mount a complete legal defense? Of course, if you are a Network member then you can count on the Network to do as much as we can, and as we grow and get even stronger, we'll reach the point (I believe in the near future) where we have sufficient resources to mount ANY level of legal defense we have to for our members. We have over a quarter of a million dollars in the Legal Defense Fund now, and that number is growing each day as Network membership increases.

We will throw all this strength behind a member's legal defense, but there is a condition on the grant of member benefits to any member that allows for the Network to be reimbursed out of the proceeds of an insurance payout if the member had insurance. Actually, where insurance really helps is if you choose to purchase both Network membership and insurance, because insurance would help with a financial payoff if you lost a civil suit over the incident.

Civil liability is where self-defense insurance really gets tricky. I have yet to see an insurance company address the disparity between their liability limits and monetary awards from wrongful death judgments. Most if not all of the self-defense policies that are written for gun owners have VERY LOW payout limits of \$100,000 - \$300,000. Now, to me three hundred thousand dollars does seem like a lot of money, but that is not a lot of money if a jury decides you wrongfully took someone's life. That young robber you shot and killed has a mother and father who loved him, and they will likely make a case that his life was worth far more than \$300k. So, you, the policyholder, will be on the hook for the rest of the award. I think a minimum of one million dollars is a reasonable liability limit on insurance coverage.

Now, getting back to the insurance angle the original caller wanted to discuss: His idea was to provide a policy for gun owners which WOULD PAY for the legal defense up front. He had my interest at that point,

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because at least he understood that the armed citizen must mount the fight up front, not be reimbursed after the fact. Still, you must understand that any insurance policy written will be conditioned upon an act taking place that is out of control of the insured. For example, if you have fire insurance on your home, you are insured against accidental fire or arson, as long as you are not the one purposely setting the fire. In the case of most self-defense insurance policies, your acquittal is the conditional occurrence, because the court, not you, has control over your acquittal. In this gentleman's plan, the insurance company would pay for your criminal defense up front, and if you were acquitted, you would owe nothing. But, if you were found guilty, then you would owe the insurance company the cost of your defense. I am still not sure how that would work out, so I will wait to see the details of the policy, if it is ever offered.

All of this brings me to the next question. Before I signed on the bottom line, I would want to read any self-defense insurance policy! An insurance policy is a contract between you and an insurance company. You have every right to read the entire policy in detail before you agree to exchange your hard earned dollars for insurance rights. If you are considering joining a membership organization that says they have insurance in the event you make a claim against them and they will pay your claim, then ask to read their policy to make sure you understand the limits of their insurance. I don't think full disclosure is too much to ask, is it?

As I close out this topic, please do not ask us, the Network whether or not XYZ policy is good for you to own. We are not in a position to give you advice on whether or not you should buy an insurance policy. We get these types of phone calls all the time, and we always have to tell the person to simply do their homework and make the best decision they can.

Two Member Incidents in April

While, of course, we do not share the details, I just wanted to tell you that this month two Network members requested assistance after being involved in incidents. The first one had his own attorney, so we just contacted her and provided her with a retainer against legal fees. Unfortunately, the member had to sit in jail overnight because he called the Network's business line after hours, so we did not get the message until the next

morning. Within a couple of hours of getting the message, we had tracked down his attorney, retained her and he was out of jail that afternoon. Remember folks, for after hours emergencies, use the phone number (my cell phone) on the back of your membership card or on the paperwork that comes with your membership card. In defense of this member, he still had the old paper card, as he hadn't renewed since we started supplying hard plastic cards last summer, and the phone numbers had rubbed off. If your card is the old paper one, be sure you can read the phone numbers. If you can't, e-mail me (<mailto:mhayes@armedcitizensnetwork.org>) privately and request the "Boots on the Ground" phone number, and then write it down it.

The second case is still in its' infancy, and details are sketchy, but a Network affiliated attorney is representing the member and things are progressing. For now, I just wanted our members to know that the system we put together in 2008 and 2009 is working well. Both members are grateful for the speedy response and work we are doing. It pleases me to see the Network fulfilling its mission.

Boston Marathon Terrorist Attack

My heart goes out to the families of those killed in the terrorist attack in Boston and to those horribly wounded by the bomb blasts. If there are any Network members who were directly impacted by this cowardly act, please accept my sympathy.

In the wake of this heinous act, I have to ask what the heck is the F.B.I. doing to thwart attacks such as this? The different media outlets are reporting that the F.B.I. knew about the older bomber and knew he had made public statements and videos threatening terrorism. So much for the effectiveness of the watchers who are empowered by the Patriot Act to pick up on this stuff! Sheesh.

I will admit that the follow-up investigation and tracking down the terrorists was very competently done with zeal and professionalism. Good show, law enforcement! Now, the question is whether or not the younger terrorist should be treated as an "enemy combatant." At first, I thought, "Heck, yes!" then I learned that he had in fact

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become a naturalized American citizen. He needs to be treated as an American citizen, no matter how heinous his actions.

Non-Lethal Defensive Force Topic of DVD

Last summer, in anticipation of producing the Network's eighth educational DVD, I filmed a program in cooperation with Rob Pincus, TNM Media and the National Rifle Association. This program is now ready for release, and we will mail copies to members as soon as we receive ours. In this lecture, I address the legalities of use of non-lethal force in self defense, a topic on which we have been asked to comment many, many times. I am the primary speaker on the DVD, and am joined by Rob Pincus and a retired police officer, Kerry Tanner. This educational DVD program will be sent to Network members upon renewal of yearly membership, and it will be sent to the multiple year members as soon as we have it. New members will start receiving eight educational DVDs, of which this program

is one. I want to thank Rob and TNM Marketing for sharing this cooperative, joint venture.

Enjoy the NRA Meeting

For those of you who are attending the NRA meeting in Houston this first weekend in May, please stop by our booth, #2411, and say hi to Brady, Vincent, Massad Ayoob or myself. We all will be representing the Network and talking to gun-owning patriots from Texas and all over America. I find that I look forward to this event much more than the SHOT Show, because this is the time to talk with our members, address any concerns they may have and listen to suggestions for doing a better job of leading the Network. We hope to see you there!

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Attorney Question Of The Month

This month's column concludes a topic we began in the March 2013 edition of this journal. If you have not read the March and April columns, please read them first, as the following information builds on those columns.

The Network stresses how important it is for members to have an attorney with whom they can consult both prior to and after needing to take self-defense actions. Our affiliated attorney lists, sorted by state and available to Network members only, offer a starting place for members' attorney search. The choice of attorney rests solely with the individual member. In the same way, how affiliated attorneys interact with Network members is entirely up to the affiliate. Lawyers, influenced by individual experience, firm policy and how they practice law, prefer to interact with Network members in a variety of ways.

Not surprisingly, then, the following question generated a number of different answers that we hope our members found useful. We asked our Network Affiliated Attorneys—

“How do you recommend a Network member connect with an attorney for a brief consultation to be sure the member understands their state's self-defense laws, as well as assuring themselves that the attorney is someone whom they want as their counselor after self defense?”

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The short and simple answer is to contact the attorney, making sure to state the following:

1. Was referred to the attorney by the Armed Citizens' Legal Defense Network, of which the attorney is a member and where the member obtained the attorney referral.

2. Would like a very brief in-person (or over-the-phone) consult with the attorney to introduce themselves and become acquainted with the attorney.

3. The member is intending to provide feedback to the Armed Citizens' Legal Defense Network regarding their experience with the attorney.

If all of those are communicated and the attorney (or their support staff or their firm) will not set an appointment (even a brief phone consult), then the member should communicate that to the Network, and the Network should consider whether that attorney is a proper affiliate attorney. After all, if the member is ever in a dire situation requiring immediate counsel, it is unlikely that this affiliate attorney could be engaged in a timely manner.

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Most laymen are under the misimpression that they can schedule an appointment with a criminal trial attorney ahead of time—before anything happens—to make a personal evaluation of the attorney for possible future use. Unless the attorney is new in the practice or desperate for the business, that's probably never going to happen. Criminal trial attorneys generally consult only on actual cases where an arrest has been made or there is a possibility of that actually happening in the near future.

An alternative would be where an individual is looking for legal advice on a specific and particular legal issue in order to avoid any potential problems with the law. In the latter instance, a consult fee on an hourly basis is the rule. In those other instances, where an arrest has been made or is probable, some attorneys charge a consultation fee and some don't.

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It depends totally on the attorney. This would also hold true for a person looking for an attorney to list on his or her gun association's self-defense "insurance." Without an actual case, it is generally considered a total waste of the attorney's time for such a consult since it deals with "abstract" vs. real facts. In my practice, I don't even accept such consults if the client is willing to pay my hourly fee. My opinion is that it is a pure waste of everyone's time.

Likewise, it is normal for the attorney's staff to "screen" client calls, and make a determination whether to forward the case to the attorney, or whether it is something the attorney would not be interested in. At that point you might be directly forwarded to the attorney if he or she is available, the attorney might call you back once they're free, or the secretary might set the appointment with you, on her own authority. Again, it depends on the attorney and his or her regular practices. And obviously, if the case is not the kind handled by the attorney both you and the attorney would want to know that ahead of time, so that you don't waste each other's time. All calls to the attorney's office for an appointment or legal advice are confidential, and should come under "attorney/client privilege."

However, if you actually have a criminal charge or one that seems likely, then you will most certainly want to meet the attorney before you make a decision. I normally have a free phone consult with the client where I can find out a few of the details and advise what I would likely charge. If the case is one I'm interested in taking and the client has the funding, an appointment is made where things can be discussed in greater detail. Again, this is my individual way of doing things, and it can vary with other law offices.

The ideal way to "check out" an attorney is by an Internet search. You can get an initial feel from the website, and an Internet search can also reveal lectures, books, and articles he or she has written, etc. However, I strongly advise that anyone charged with a self-defense or weapon crime hire an attorney who is pro-gun, and is either an NRA member, a member of another pro-gun organization, has a weapons permit or all of the above. An attorney—no matter how great they are—cannot properly defend one of these charges unless they are also pro-gun. I've seen that happen in court and I tell folks that it is not improper or unusual to ask an

attorney if they have a concealed weapons permit or belong to any pro-gun organizations. If the attorney is pro-gun, they'll usually be glad to answer in light of the fact they know what you're charged with. If they refuse to answer, I'd go somewhere else for representation.

An attorney must charge a fee that is enough to cover the time he or she will need to put into the case to do a good job. If they don't charge enough, you will not get the representation you deserve and your case will suffer. Likewise, just because an attorney charges more than anyone else doesn't mean they're any good or better than another attorney who charges less. Getting a "cheap" attorney simply to save money is the same as throwing the money away. If the attorney does a lousy job—whether you spent a lot, or next to nothing—it was money down the drain.

The best place to find out about an attorney is from a judge, prosecutor or public defender who knows that attorney's reputation, or going into the courtroom and during a break, actually asking one of the court deputies the names of some good defense attorneys, or what they think of a particular one. Also, you could check with friends or even the personnel at the local gun range to see if they know somebody who is "really good" vs. somebody who just does it. You can also check with the NRA, GOA, Armed Citizens' or any other pro-gun group who they recommend. While most larger organizations do not have any real stats on how good the attorney is, at least you know they are "pro-gun" and took the time to get listed with that organization.

Stephen T. Sherer

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Good question. I have met with three or four members of ACLDN (for a nominal fee, so don't everybody rush over here) at their request to see if they were comfortable with me or would want someone else. We talked about self defense in general, and in one instance I was asked what I would do if I was called at 3:00 a.m. One man had done some Internet research about me, so he already had done some vetting before our meeting.

Continued next page...

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C. Markley Arrington

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Most if not all states have rules of professional responsibility that suggest attorneys should not turn down or turn away legal inquiries and that if an inquiry involves an area of law that the attorney is not familiar with they are referred to an attorney or a legal association that can direct the client to someone who does.

I have consulted several potential clients from this Network via phone. If someone from the Armed Citizen Network wanted a sit-down, I would arrange it.

Bruce Finlay

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<mailto:brucef@hcc.net>

Most competent attorneys are extremely busy, which explains the difficulty getting past the receptionist. Offer to pay for the attorney's time, even if he advertises free consultations. If the attorney will not call you back or respond, find another attorney. I would think that any of the attorneys that are affiliated are competent. The best measure of an attorney's worth is what other attorneys say about him or her. Call attorneys and ask who would be the best at this.

Eric Friday

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If my assistant informs me that a Network member wants to talk with me on a pre-need basis, I usually set up a phone consultation to discuss any concerns, or my qualifications and often will provide some advice regarding my preferred methods of how to report the incident to the police and myself should they have to act in self defense. If there is some reason or the client

requests, I will offer an office consult. I offer pre-need office consults to CWFL holders on a discounted basis, with an additional discount if they are a Network member.

Phone consults are usually sufficient to resolve the potential client's concerns or questions. Office consults are rare for pre-need questions. I think that most attorneys who are part of the Network are well versed in the concerns of gun owners and are more responsive when they know that a person is a member of this organization. My assistant has instructions to prioritize anything having to do with firearms to make sure I am aware of the issue.

John P. Sharp

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I would strongly encourage anyone with questions about self defense with a firearm to contact the office. I would happily discuss the matter with them by phone or personally, as would my partner. Our office keeps a daily phone log and we return our calls promptly upon returning from court. We are also available to answer calls at any time we are in the office and not in client meetings.

Having a sense of confidence in your attorney is vitally important. Knowing your attorney cares and understands your situation and circumstances is extremely important.

No one should hesitate to contact an attorney with questions concerning self defense with a firearm.

A big "Thank you!" goes out to our Affiliated Attorneys for this great discussion. Check back next month for a new topic for the Question of the Month.

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

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Additional Attorney Input

Affiliated Attorney Tim Priebe contacted us last month about an extensive analysis of Colorado's new law that he had just posted as a blog entry on his www.legal-tactics.com website. If you, like other Colorado gun owners wonder what effect the new law has on you, go to <http://www.legal-tactics.com/2013/04/03/new-colorado-gun-law/> and read this in depth blog post. In addition, Tim has a comments section at which he is accepting questions about his blog post, so this could prove a valuable resource.

In light of the timeliness issue, we e-mailed Colorado Network members those links the same week Attorney Priebe brought his blog post to my attention. The positive comments coming back from Network members suggested that not only Colorado members needed the information, but that it would be helpful to members who might travel or do business in the state, as well.

The experience reminded us that many of our Affiliated Attorneys have blogs in their websites, or post discussion points and information on their Facebook pages. An e-mail poll of the affiliates brought the following Internet resources to our attention—

ARIZONA:

MARC VICTOR

<http://www.attorneyforfreedom.com/index.cfm/g/articles-by-marc-victor/f/peaceful-ar15-owner.htm>

Blog: <http://attorneyforfreedom.net>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Attorney-For-Freedom>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/FreedomAttorney>

CALIFORNIA:

KEVIN MCBRIDE

<http://www.mcbride-law.com/>

<http://lawfuluse.com/>

This attorney's practice addresses uses of force by both law enforcement officers and legally armed citizens. He writes, "The main difference has to do with how the conflict started in the first place. LEOs, of course, normally get in a shooting because of a dispatch, SWAT call-up or with on-scene probable cause. On the other

hand, far too many armed citizen conflicts arise because of conflicts between neighbors or related situations. If I were to peg one issue that is extremely problematic for armed citizens it is the 'stand your ground' rule. This has been tragically misunderstood and misapplied in far too many situations.

"But the basic law for LE and armed citizens is really the same at the 'moment of truth'—deadly force may be used in response to a threat to someone's life (or the threat of grievous bodily injury) that is IMMINENT."

JUSTIN THOMAS ALLEN

<http://www.JTAFirm.com>

<facebook.com/JTAFirm>

He comments, "I have been working overtime on the issue of unwarranted gun control on my Facebook page. I use the page to disseminate information about gun control and debate many other issues which are of interest to those that read my articles.

"Using a simple method of communication without beating people up about their views, I am able to reach a lot of those who are undecided or ambivalent on their First Amendment right to associate with groups such as yours and the NRA (which is always being attacked for fighting needless regulations) and the Second Amendment right to bear arms.

"I think brevity is the soul of wit and as such brevity makes my points for me. After a few posts with the opposing view, I will often correct misnomers, if any, and try to treat the posts and discussion constructively, working towards finding viable solutions. Friend me and engage in the conversation: <facebook.com/JTAFirm>"

PETER E. TAUSSIG

This California attorney publishes a blog under a pseudonym at <http://mudgeonsmusings.blogspot.com>

"It contains a good bit of Second Amendment material but it also includes a good many (politically incorrect) items on other subjects," he tells us.

Continued next page...

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INDIANA:

GUY RELFORD

www.relfordlaw.com

www.facebook.com/relfordlaw

Attorney Relford also has a book published, but we'll visit that and other off-line resources in upcoming editions of the journal. For now, you can learn more about it on his Facebook page, as well as a lot of other interesting news and commentary citations.

MISSISSIPPI:

M. REED MARTZ

<http://www.freelandmartz.com/mississippi-gun-laws-and-other-weapons->

OHIO:

DAVID HASSELBACK

bates.hasselback@facebook.com

www.bateshasselback.com

PENNSYLVANIA:

JOSHUA PRINCE

"I actively blog on <http://blog.princelaw.com/>," he writes. "All the firearms law specific sub-blogs can be found at <http://blog.princelaw.com/category/firearms-law/>."

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

Book Review

Your Defensive Handgun Training Program

By Mike Seeklander

352 pages, 8 x 10, paperback

Publisher: CreateSpace; 1st

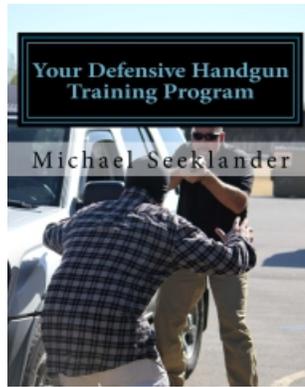
edition (October 14, 2012)

ISBN: 978-1456542511

Paperback: \$27.95; Kindle version: \$15.99; Companion

DVD: \$29.95

Buy at <http://www.shooting-performance.com/training-books.html>



Reviewed by Gila Hayes

This month's review highlights Mike Seeklander's defensive handgun book, so we can learn more from this popular instructor through the printed word. You've already "met" this author through the lead article in this month's journal, now let's consider his instructional concepts.

As Seeklander noted in our interview, a question he strives to answer for students as they leave class is, "How can I continue to train?" Answering this question is the focus of his book, *Your Defensive Handgun Training Program*. He takes teaching defensive handgun skills as seriously as he did his position as lead firearms instructor for the Federal Air Marshal academy, where the loss of life should his instruction prove inadequate was exponentially greater than for one armed citizen defending his or her family, yet the stakes are no less dear for either.

Chapter one starts with a discussion of differences between shooting for defense and championship-level competitive shooting. Though the differences may seem profound, Seeklander notes that, "The common denominator that I am really passionate about is performance. Performance, 'on demand' (without warning), is the common goal of both the professional warrior and competitive athlete. Each seeks the same thing and will only find it one way, by training correctly."

Seeklander explains that although it seems that shooting instructors are a dime a dozen, outside of Olympic-level athletics, shooting coaches are non-existent. "In arguably the hardest sports to master, there are no

coaches," he exclaims. A coach differs from an instructor in that he or she participates throughout the long-term skill development process, he adds. Conversely, firearms instructors are generally in contact with their students for a few days after which they part company, sometimes forever, expecting that the student has learned enough to maintain the skills they were taught. "Then it is up to the student to forge his own path to success or failure," Seeklander writes. He presents *Your Defensive Handgun Training Program* as a bridge between traditional firearms instruction and the kind of coaching that supports top level athletics.

Many books have been written on self-defense firearms skills, but Seeklander believes they lack "actionable information," a deficit he promises to cure in *Your Defensive Handgun Training Program*. "I guarantee that if you follow my program you will indeed train yourself to a high level of preparation," he promises. Reviewing the synopses of the book's chapters reveals a very ambitious program.

Introducing the processes of skill and knowledge acquisition, Seeklander explains the physiological method through which repetition improves "neurological and cognitive ability to process information and fire our muscles (by nerve impulses)." The chapter goes on to identify key elements of successful training, including precise execution of skills, regular practice, measurable improvement and modifying technique to avoid stagnation, among others.

From the beginning, Seeklander urges beginners to obtain hands-on instruction, and in the chapter about setting training objectives, he adds "you will have to possess some knowledge about the skills you are trying to acquire," in order to establish the desired standard of performance. This goes hand in hand with his earlier admonition to practice only correct skill execution, since overwriting a habit requires more than twice the repetitions that engrained the initial habit.

Because little to no action occurs without mental inputs, Seeklander proposes that successfully using a firearm is 100% mental. He gives special emphasis to preparation to use lethal force and notes that with these preparations entrained, the act of pulling the trigger is a nearly automated response when you face a deadly

Continued next page...

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force attack. Mental toughness and a “never quit” philosophy are critical, he continues, and offers recommendations on honing the survivor mindset. He later defines mental toughness as “primarily made up of confidence acquired through training” and he goes on to advise mentally connecting with physical skills by incorporating visualization with training sessions. The end result? “If the learning occurs properly, then the subconscious skill programs will be developed right and applying them on demand and under pressure will be second nature.”

Without exploiting the power of the subconscious, the automation necessary “to perform complex movements at extremely fast speeds” is not possible, Seeklander posits. Remember, subconscious routines are established during practice and training sessions, so make each repetition perfect! The subconscious routines are of critical importance to the armed citizen, because they are the skill sets accessed during extreme stress that requires “conscious decision-making combined with properly ingrained skill programs,” he stresses.

In discussing the power of the subconscious, Seeklander emphasizes the need for perfect practice with the story of a competitive shooter who engrained a habit that caused missed shots on difficult targets. Not only did the habit require hard work to overwrite, but expectations of failure caused by repeated misses had to be changed, too. “Imagine what a training scar like that would cause in...a gunfight?” he exclaims.

Breathing exercises for stress control, coupled with use of a brief performance statement are fully described, as is the power and methods of incorporating visualization into training and practice. These pages expand on Seeklander’s comments quoted in this journal’s lead interview in the greater detail a 350-page book allows.

Additional chapters like the one about the relationship between physical fitness and surviving a stressful, dangerous incident, and handgun technique evaluation are just as full of important information, the details of which we lack the space to include here. Of course, that is the purpose of such a review – to hit the high points and interest you enough that you obtain and use the book!

Equipment selection has two faces and while Seeklander begins the hardware chapter by stressing, “It’s not about the gun,” he also emphasizes the necessity of reliability, ergonomics, accuracy and power

in equipment on which we may bet our lives. Once you have identified a handgun meeting those criteria, master it alone and avoid switching guns, he advises, going on to make recommendations for good, practical equipment.

As the topic turns to technique, Seeklander explains, “Technique is one thing that I don’t get tied to rigidly because I know in the future I will probably have evolved and made slight changes to any technique that I use. You will find yourself doing the same thing as you advance through your training programs and continue to gain skill.” He later adds, “Technique should always evolve. Always search for a better way to do things. Handgun skill has evolved to a very high level. This is due to the integration of top competitive marksmanship and manipulation techniques with tactical operators who have taken what works in a fight and rejected what doesn’t.”

A lengthy and well-illustrated technique chapter follows, concluded with warnings against drawing a handgun in a close quarters attack, tying nicely to Seeklander’s physical fitness chapter in which the reader is advised that the personal protection handgun is only a small part of fighting off an attacker. “Your primary goal during an assault is to prevent yourself from becoming knocked out or down, and to access a firearm when applicable,” he advises, relating gun manipulation to combative techniques.

Your Defensive Handgun Training Program realistically addresses time limitations and ammunition shortages, both of which many readers worry are cutting into their practice. While some live fire is required, a surprising amount of dry fire and mental preparation is recommended. Most of the book’s final 160 pages are dedicated to clearly written drills, diagnostics and commentary about both live fire and dry fire. These pages give specific details including start position, target and distance, action steps, and actions for which to watch, plus visual and mental components that are key to Seeklander’s integrated training concept.

Accelerating skills acquisition through scientific training methods is one of the book’s strongest elements, and learning from this book is made even easier by the summaries and action lists at the end of each chapter, a feature I really liked. *Your Defensive Handgun Training Program* serves as a unique adjunct “coach” to the armed citizen’s participation in traditional firearms training. Get it and use it!

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

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Networking

by Brady Wright

By the time you read this, most of us at the Network will be heading out to the 142nd annual NRA meeting in Houston, in preparation to spend time with our fellow armed citizens who drop by to talk with us at our booth (#2411).

I look forward to this event every year and to seeing and meeting our affiliates face-to-face. As most of you know, I spend most of the year chained to a worktable in a dark garage, laboring away to get all the printed materials out to our members. Occasionally, I get day-old pizza tossed in over the transom. It's a good life, but it is also nice to get out in the light at this event and meet and greet. It goes without saying that I'm also anticipating all the other benefits of seeing the newest guns and gear, hanging with folks from the industry and hearing the latest developments from the NRA-ILA and the Golden Eagles, who do such valuable work on our behalf.

Every month, I get e-mails and calls from many of our affiliates, telling me about the happenings at their business or classes. I share as many as will fit in the column. I also get e-mails and links about Second Amendment issues, various political situations and liberal gun-grab stories. These are always appreciated although my humble focus here is networking and there is usually plenty of that sort of news to fill the space.

I do need to thank everyone who sent in stories and cautions about the Boston Marathon event. We are all saddened by the losses incurred and for the families affected. Our affiliate Rick Cross covered it best when he wrote, "Don't sleep, America. Be aware." This is not the first terrorist attack on us and it likely won't be the last. We must be vigilant, as members here all know.

Many of our instructors are already teaching classes and seminars on situational awareness and if you know of others, or want to share about your own curriculum here, just let me know.

One thing that is happening more and more lately is that many members who have been generally quiet are getting much more active in their neighborhood ranges, classes and stores. The current political climate is stimulating more gun sales and creating much greater interest in defensive tactics, all of which leads folks to need more of the information that the Network has to offer. In the last few weeks, I've heard from a huge list of members with whom I'd not spoken for months.

Keep up the great work and make sure to send me the info about any specific classes or information that you want to let folks know about. We are here to help all of our members get the word out to the entire Network about what YOU do!

Many of you may have noticed a new label on my shipments of booklets and brochures. That's because we are now using Stamps.com as our postage service, which means that all of the shipments now have tracking information. It will be easier to track your deliveries, if you need to, which is a good thing!

As always, if you need any materials in any reasonable supply to give to clients or customers, call or e-mail me at brady@armedcitizensnetwork.org, and get in touch with me especially if you have news to share. If I receive your information, celebration or brag by the 20th of the month, you have a great chance of getting in the upcoming column. Meanwhile, stay safe out there.

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

May 2013



Editor's Notebook

by Gila Hayes

My April editorial in this journal offered more questions than opinions. With how to respond to ever-encroaching government regulation—especially those on armed self defense—foremost in the minds of

most gun owners, I posed several questions in last month's column, including—

Why do people choose to live where government so oppresses their rights?

What would happen if freedom-loving people leave oppressive states?

If we flee oppression, as did our Founding Fathers, will we eventually run out of places to run, or will we establish enclaves of freedom? Are those left behind harmed if armed citizens abandon restrictive cities and states? If we are consistently outvoted should we stay in an area or should we leave?

I invited Network members to share their experiences and opinions about those concerns, and as expected, the responses were opinionated and often forcefully stated. Members shared their personal experiences, and in their stories, I found much that stimulates thought. This will be a long column because I want to share as much of the members' responses as I can. I limited editing as much as possible, just enough to keeping us on topic and at a manageable length. Now, let's see what our members think about staying and fighting restrictive gun legislation or moving away.

STAY AND FIGHT...FOR NOW

Tom responded that he had been asking the same questions I posed—

"I just read your thoughtful and well-written editorial in the April journal. What you described is exactly the conversation that has been going on in my home recently.

"My wife and I and two of our three sons live in Colorado, which I'm sure you know has passed some very bad gun bills, including a magazine limit of 15 rounds, a mandatory background check, and a mandatory background check fee. The bills banning concealed carry on college campuses and the Colorado AWB (assault weapons ban) were withdrawn by the Democrat legislators following ridiculous and inflammatory statements by some of the bill sponsors and legislators – which were gaining negative attention in the state and national media. Due to some very inept and flawed legislative and gubernatorial candidates in the past few elections, the Democrats now control both houses and the governorship. The national Democrat party and strong Bloomberg-funded efforts have pushed through the gun bills.

"I have been thinking about moving but will at least wait and see what happens in the 2014 elections and several recall petitions now being circulated. My sense is the makeup of the state legislature may well change, and perhaps significantly. My family is 'all in' in this fight for our rights.

"Although all three of our sons are in their 20s and currently unmarried, we will likely make choices on where to live based on their location and possible grandchildren in the future. We are watching the developments here, and for now don't consider the laws that were recently passed as reason enough to move out of state."

NOW, I WOULD LEAVE!

Ron addressed the April editorial, writing—

"I'm afraid I have a very biased view on this issue. I would leave! Now, that is. I did leave New York State, although not for that reason. I retired and moved to Arizona for the weather. However, living in NY for most of my adult life for reasons of family and employment, I admit I would not have left earlier because they were the priority. I most likely would have tried to relocate without losing employment, since my company (IBM) did have quite a bit of opportunity in this respect. Absent that, I would have had to put up with the nonsense New Yorkers are going through today.

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"I shot bull's-eye target 50 years ago and had a pistol permit about as soon as I could afford a pistol. I already had a few hunting rifles and shotguns, as that was my primary sport in the earlier years. It was not really possible at that time to get a pistol permit for defensive purposes. About the only reasons allowed were for target shooting or hunting and you had to be able to prove to any officer you were doing one or the other if challenged. At that time defensive guns were not real high on most people's agenda. Crime rates were much lower and most really didn't feel the need for such a weapon. Virtually nobody carried: It was very unusual for other than law enforcement or someone who had to carry a lot of money.

"If I were in the same situation today, my actions probably would be about the same. I would certainly work to try to rectify the situation and fight gun control, but otherwise keep my nose to the grindstone until I could afford a reasonable change. Everybody has their personal priorities and nobody else can speak for them. Obviously, when personal safety becomes a prevalent concern, priorities would probably change."

DEFEND YOUR HOMELAND!

"I read with interest your article regarding states that are hostile to the Second Amendment and whether it makes sense to move from those states to one with a more firearms-friendly environment," John responded.

"As far as voting with your feet and moving, I've always thought that a valid expression of patriotism is defending your homeland, and the literal interpretation of homeland is the land on which you reside. If less people pulled up stakes and ran from problems, the problems could more easily be overcome.

"A case in point is my neighborhood of big, old houses with outstanding architecture. After the city tore down a decrepit public housing project, the residents brought a lawsuit against the local county government, alleging 'historic and systematic racial segregation in the county's public housing communities.' A requirement in the resulting consent decree stipulated that the county set aside 25% of CDBG (community development block grant) funds for economic/community development and housing programs. What these geniuses did with this money was to buy available houses in nice neighborhoods for the mostly non-working residents of the former public housing. When they started moving into working class neighborhoods, the responsible people started moving out, which left more houses for

the county to buy for the societal leeches. The local government destroyed many nice neighborhoods this way, but the government was assisted by the 'run away' mentality of people not willing to defend their homeland.

"I stayed put, buying one of the great old houses and restoring it. Now, my neighborhood is building back up, since people can better see past the scum and recognize the potential of these historic houses and people willing to stay and fight rather than cut and run. I never served in the military and have great respect for those that do serve and have served. However, there is more than one way to defend your country and we need more people willing to do so in their own neighborhoods.

"I don't mean to suggest that it's a decision that will work everywhere and for everyone, but it's one that I wish more would consider. The improvement here in my neighborhood certainly didn't happen overnight – it's actually taken 15 years in my case, during which time my wife and I raised two boys in this neighborhood. I've often second-guessed my decision during the past 15 years, seeing that I potentially increased the risk to my sons. However, they're good young adults now and have plenty of street smarts to carry with them through their adult lives. Sometimes I think that perhaps I did it as a way of compensating for not having served in the military, although that wasn't a conscious thought then.

"For me, the situation I described above serves as a good analog for NOT running from a Second Amendment hostile state. I'd like to think that I'd stay and fight with my votes, but a lot depends on just how hostile the state government is and the current state of societal affairs. I perceive our current society to be at an increased risk of hyperinflation and societal breakdown more now than ever before in my 50 odd years on the planet. I don't think I'd like to be left as defenseless as the President and Vice President would have us, so I'm having a hard time deciding. Being able to carry concealed and having the added security of being able to defend my home with firearms if necessary allowed me to make the decision to stay in my neighborhood and restore a historic house, attracting new, responsible neighbors in the process. I have never needed to draw my firearm in self defense, but if I had been prohibited by the state from defending myself I may have judged the risk too great stay and defend my true 'homeland.' "

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I appreciate the time John took to share his long-term experience beating urban decay and why he decided to stay and fight for change. He gives us much to ponder.

OUR CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY

A member from Pennsylvania who is also named John echoed the ideals stated above when he wrote—

"I live in Pennsylvania, and I am alarmed by the passage of draconian gun laws in neighboring states. Pennsylvania at the present time is friendly towards gun rights, but I am concerned that in the future, Harrisburg will be dominated by the same type of politicians who are completely hostile towards law-abiding gun owners.

"Leaving the state for a more gun-friendly state is not an option for my family and me. This place is our home, and we would not want to leave our extended families, friends, neighbors and livelihoods. I plan to work with grassroots organizations to stop the state and federal government from forfeiting our Constitutional rights. I believe that this is our civic responsibility."

BECOME A FELON OVERNIGHT

Scott wrote—

"I thoroughly enjoyed reading your commentary about whether law abiding gun owners should leave a gun restrictive state or stay and battle it out. I have lived my entire life in Kalifornia and have abided by all the anti-gun rules that have been put in place. With this latest affront to our rights, I am deeply considering moving my family to a more gun-friendly state. I do write letters to my representatives when any bill is brought up regarding guns. But in such a liberal state, my voice doesn't count here. It appalls me to think that while I've been completely lawful with my weapons, the next bill they pass very well make me a felon overnight."

LIKE 1861 ALL OVER AGAIN

I enjoyed a long e-mail discussion with Michael, that started this way—

"In the scenario where everybody moves to a state that recognizes the natural or God-given rights of people (not just the right of defense, but all of them), what is going to happen is that the highly populated states (Northeastern seaboard, West Coast) are eventually going to dominate D.C., and the federal government will simply legally overpower the rights of the states (something that's

been happening bit-by-bit since before the Civil War). Some states will cave in, and some won't, and then we're back where we were in 1861. A map of the Union and Confederate states looks distressingly like typical political maps today.

"The good news is, unlike the 1850s, those powerful progressive states can't really support themselves any longer. Most of their food is either produced in the states they would like to dominate or must be transported through those same states. California, Oregon and Washington are geographically poor allies for New England. A huge segment of the federal armed forces are from gun-friendly states, and, in fact, are currently stationed in those states. It would be really interesting to see D.C. attempt to physically intimidate Texas, for instance.

"Unlike the 1850s, instead of declaring war or allowing a secession to occur, D.C. will probably react the way they did with the 55 mph speed limit. When the first four or five states basically told the feds to go pound sand, the feds quickly (and quietly) abolished the federal speed limit. They didn't want anybody to notice that they actually had no way to enforce such a thing.

"I personally don't think a scenario where everybody stays put and sticks to their guns, so to speak, is even remotely possible given today's politics. D.C. is simply buying votes in those states that support expansion of federal power, which happens to be where money and people are concentrated.

"My two cents is that we bring our families, our bank accounts, our business, our guns, and ourselves to a place where they are welcome. Those places will need to be steadfast in their opposition to the elimination of rights, and will need a strong majority to stay that way. We can let the criminals migrate to a safer place where the pickings are easy. I'd even be in favor of providing free bus tickets as an alternative to prison for non-violent offenders. We could even sign them up in advance for welfare at their destination. It's the progressive thing to do."

When I thanked him for his thought-provoking response, Michael added—

"I understand the thinking of those who want to stay and fight. Although moving may seem selfish on one hand, on the other you are doing a disservice to yourself and

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your beliefs by staying. Assuming you are a productive member of society, when you live somewhere you are supporting that place. You pay taxes, you buy gas, food and services in that community, and by extension the county and state.

“If you pack up your toys and move someplace that likes you better, you bring your productivity to that new place (Rush Limbaugh leaving NYC to move to Florida comes to mind), and in turn are supporting that environment. If you stay, you are rewarding the bad guys, not to mention the jeopardy in which it places you or your family if the need ever arises to actually defend them against a threat while you are in a legally hostile environment.

“Another, more subtle point: When I write my Congressman and Senators (and I do), I know that it counts. The senators here in Georgia are not my favorites (they are both Republicrats), and I'm fairly convinced they would find any excuse to support any expansion of federal power, except that they know their career days are numbered if they make a habit of that. They pretty much need to pay close attention to what we say on issues such as gun control. You can see that in Senate politics today – there are a number of Democratic Senators in middle America that know casting a vote for gun control is effectively resigning their office. If I lived in California, God forbid, the only thing I would expect from writing to Senators Boxer or Feinstein is to have my name put on some sort of unpleasant federal watch list.”

These members have given us a lot to think about – ideas that remain critical as the political forces arrayed against law abiding gun owners regroup and attack again. In their responses, several members asked us to research and publish details about gun laws and pending legislation in the various states. We remind members and readers that the Network focuses its knowledge and resources on protection of its members after self defense, an area that otherwise goes unserved because our nation's strongest gun rights activists must concentrate their fight in the political arena to preserve legal firearms ownership, not on individual court cases.

There are many, many good resources for legislative information, pro-gun websites with information from organizations that have lobbyists in Washington, D.C. and the various states' capitols, getting the facts first hand. These organization include <http://www.keepandbeararms.com/news/nl/disp.asp> and <http://gunowners.org/alertscat.htm> or the more eclectic <http://johnrlott.blogspot.com/> or <http://armsandthelaw.com/> to name only a few. We support a variety of gun rights groups, but leave reporting about legislation to those who are on the scene.

*[End of May 2013 eJournal.
Please return next month for our June edition.]*

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.

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