



Ken Hackathorn: Training for Real-Life

by Gila Hayes

Preparation for self defense takes many forms, including the aspect that Network members have recognized: their legal defense. One element in explaining your self-defense actions is the extent of your training and how it influenced your decisions.

If one name consistently surfaces in discussions of reality-based training, it is that of Ken Hackathorn who is notorious for challenging the conventional limits on firearms training. Earlier this summer, while visiting with Ken, I explored his historical perspective on the evolution of defensive firearms training, and his opinions about how to train for armed self defense. (We've added occasional Internet links for readers to whom some of the "old names" may be unfamiliar.)

Ken is imminently qualified to relate this history, first as a student in one of Jeff Cooper's earliest handgun classes, and later as one of the American Pistol Institute's primary instructors for that pioneer. In intervening years, contracts to train military

and police units as well as classes teaching private citizens armed defense have added to the seriousness with which he approaches the topic of training for armed self defense.

This is a long interview, and we hope you'll enjoy the perspective of one who pushed armed defense training for citizens beyond a time when only police and military received formal training in small arms use to the vital enterprise it now is.

Let's go now to our interview with this influential trainer.

eJournal: For readers not yet familiar with you, let's start by asking about how you got started as a trainer, Ken.

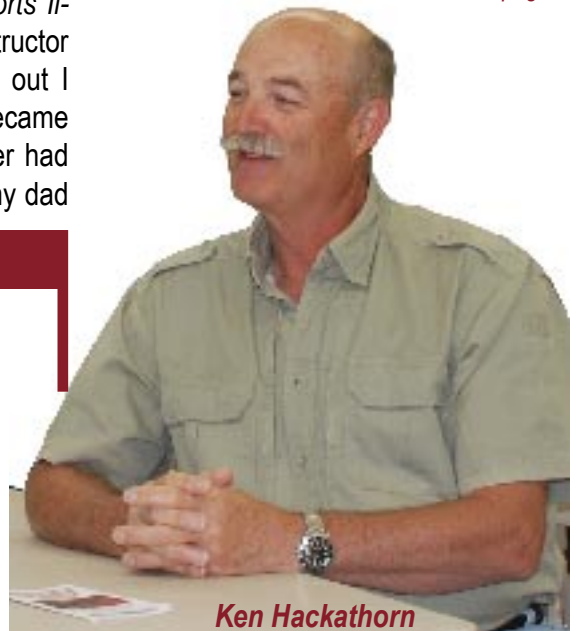
Hackathorn: Like a lot of folks, I grew up with an interest in firearms. In high school study hall, I was looking at *Guns and Ammo* magazine while other guys were looking at *Sports Illustrated*. I was a firearms instructor in the military and when I got out I didn't know what to do so I became a deputy sheriff. My grandfather had been in law enforcement and my dad

had been for a short period of time, so it was natural. While I was a deputy sheriff, my boss sent me to the NRA police firearms school at Camp Perry for two weeks. That was a big step, early on in my life.

Unfortunately, law enforcement pay was extremely low in the early 1970s in Appalachia. I got married and started a family and quickly realized that I couldn't make it as deputy, so I quit and went to work for Union Carbide. The sheriff I worked for was a really good guy and he convinced me to come back as a part-time deputy, which meant that I worked whenever I liked or when they needed me. During that period, I was always involved in firearms training.

eJournal: Was there something that catapulted you beyond training for the sheriff's department?

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Ken Hackathorn

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Hackathorn: In about 1974, I got ahold of [Jeff Cooper](#) when he still wrote for *Guns and Ammo* magazine and I said, "How can I find out more about this combat shooting stuff that you're involved in?" He wrote me back and said, "I'm teaching a school at the Larimore County (CO) Sheriff's department, and if you want, come and take the school."

I decided it was a good idea and drove to Colorado and went through Jeff's class. This was before [Gunsite](#) existed. He still lived in California, but he planned to relocate and to start his own shooting facility. He'd already started teaching some in Europe, Central America, and around the western United States.

eJournal: Before leaving California, Cooper was involved with what became practical shooting competition, an activity which would not too many years later play a big role in your life. Was this class the beginning?

Hackathorn: Wednesday of that week, after the night-fire phase, we all retired to a local watering hole to discuss things. Jeff was quite the entertainer, and he was expounding on the World According to Cooper, when my friend Dick Thomas, who I met there, said, "Jeff, why don't you come back to Missouri and teach an advanced combat pistol class?" Cooper, to his credit, said, "I wouldn't know what an advanced pistol class is." About a year and a half later, Jeff got ahold of Dick and said, "Why don't we do that class in Missouri that you were taking about? Here's a list of people I want you to invite." (For more about the Columbia Conference, check out [this link](#).)

eJournal: Were you on that list?

Hackathorn: I was. What we didn't realize was that Jeff had the idea of forming something called IPSC ([International Practical Shooting Confederation](#)). In the mornings, in the conference room of the local Holiday Inn, we would go over forming a shooting organization. In the afternoon, he would take us to the range, which constituted the advanced class, and was his way of pacifying us so we actually got some training!

When this thing was complete, we had formed an organization and we really believed we had defined combat pistol shooting.

eJournal: But for that era, you had!

Hackathorn: Yeah, we had for the time. Probably for the first three or four years it was state of the art. We were doing things with pistols that no one had ever dreamed of doing. It was a dramatic step forward. Before then what we'd called combat shooting was things like the PPC (Police Pistol Combat) course.

eJournal: And as a deputy, wasn't that the course on which you qualified?

Hackathorn: That was *the* standard. You shot at one single, silhouette target, 50 or 60 shots depending on which version. You had fixed times which were very liberal: you could practically take a nap at some

points. Then Jeff comes along with his emphasis on speed and shooting multiple shots per target and shooting multiple targets!

In the early IPSC matches guys were shooting guns that you carried every day. We didn't know what competition guns were then! And then we started to see guns manufactured that were purely designed to win an event. By the early '80s, we ended up with guns with compensators, special barrels, and the holsters looked like something an orthopedic surgeon had made. You couldn't bend over and pick up a magazine or empty cases off the ground without concern your gun would fall out.

eJournal: What did Cooper say?

Hackathorn: To Jeff Cooper, God bless him, the world was either black or white. To his mind, we could not put any limitations on IPSC to see how the best techniques and equipment would evolve. What evolved was the best equipment and techniques for winning matches. Unfortunately, it had nothing to do with the real world.

eJournal: Yet, despite voicing your reservations about the direction the sport was taking, you won IPSC championships; you were on the World Team.

Hackathorn: In the early days, I believed that IPSC was the ultimate tool for training and that competition had great benefits. I still think that at the time it was. I went to the European championship in '79 on the U.S. team. I worked hard at it and over the first six or eight years of

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Hackathorn stresses a point during our interview.

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IPSC competition, I did quite well. I wasn't the best, but I was often up there. Back then, the best shooters were the guys that had the financial ability to shoot the most.

eJournal: Oh! You weren't pulling a reloader's handle?

Hackathorn: No, I wasn't pulling the handle – that was prior to [Mike Dillon](#). The Star loading machine was the only popular progressive reloader then and cost about \$1,000. That was a big investment. And then you still had to buy the bullets, the primers and the components, so the guys that could afford to shoot 1,000 rounds a month in practice were the guys that tended to be the better shooters. At the time, I wasn't making a lot of money, so I was limited to shooting probably 500 rounds a month, which back then was considered a lot of ammo.

eJournal: That sure has changed! Now, we'll shoot 500 rounds in one weekend and think nothing of it.

Hackathorn: Absolutely! The one thing, more than anything else that produced accurate pistol shooters in America was Mike Dillon and the Dillon reloading machine. It made reloading and shooting affordable for the average guy. Despite arguments about the improvements in guns and equipment, it was quite honestly the ability to manufacture your own ammunition and shoot a high volume that really made the big change.

eJournal: Going back to shooting matches: you later helped set up another competitive shooting organization, [IDPA](#). Why?

Hackathorn: Well, by the late '80s, most of us had seen [USPSA](#) (United States Practical Shooting Association), that's IPSC in the United States, go off on an extreme tangent that had very little to do with reality, in my opinion. I was fed up with it and I disassociated myself from it. Even [Bill Wilson](#), whose company has made a lot of money based upon the 1911 and competition shooting, finally said, "This is ridiculous. I'll start my own organization," and he called me, along with some other people, and said, "We're going to get [competitive shooting] back on course. Are you with me?"

Bill, myself, Dick Thomas, Walt Rauch, John Sayle and Larry Vickers were the original founding board mem-

bers of the International Defensive Pistol Association ([IDPA](#)). We wanted to get back to where you used real guns, the guns you carry for self defense. The end result is that IDPA today, from a competition standpoint, is probably the most relevant of all the self-defense type pistol shooting sports, I think.

But it's *all* good. I tell people if you're shooting cowboy action, at least you're out shooting. If you're shooting IDPA, you're shooting; if you're shooting USPSA, you're shooting; if you're shooting Steel Challenge, you're shooting. Bowling pins? At least you're out shooting and you're enjoying yourself. But if you were to ask me, "OK, I carry a gun for self defense, which of these activities is the most relevant to my needs?" I would probably say, "You should try IDPA."



Learning Skills and Tactics for Armed Self Defense

eJournal: I've been thinking about something you said earlier linking skill improvement to quantities of ammunition fired. To really improve as a shooter, how do you balance dry fire or Airsoft guns against a substantial amount of live fire training?

Hackathorn: I think when you first start learning to shoot, dry firing is very beneficial so your subconscious mind understands aligning the gun with the target and pressing the trigger straight through. Unfortunately, when you put live ammo in the gun, it behaves dramatically different than when you're dry firing and that changes everything because now you've got recoil and muzzle blast. The reality is, you've got to pull the trigger with real ammo.

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Once you begin to develop your skills, most get to a plateau and you want to stay in your comfort zone. A lot of times I'll walk behind a student and they start falling apart. So, I'll ask them why. "Well, I had problems because I knew you were right behind me, and I got nervous and I started jerking the trigger," and I go, "You know what? If the target was shooting back, I guarantee, it would be a lot worse. You need to learn to deal with it."

You've got to learn to stay under control and follow the fundamentals. Good, effective training is where you get an instructor who can explain to you what happened, and say these are the things you need to practice in order to break that bad habit or get beyond that particular problem.

eJournal: Is trigger control more important than sight picture, what you called aligning the gun with the target?

Hackathorn: Sight alignment as we preach it, is really of minor importance.

Given proper gun-to-hand fit, pointing the gun at the target is pretty much a natural task. It's the action of pulling the trigger that causes the gross misalignment of the gun and the bad shots. Remember when people would be shooting badly, and the instructor would say, "Front sight, front sight, front sight"? It's not the problem. It's the fact that they're jerking, or snatching or slapping the trigger. What you've got to be telling to them is, "Press the trigger straight through, straight to the rear."

It took me around 35 years to learn how to press the trigger straight to the rear, and now I'm at the age to where I can't see the sights so you know it's really all about trigger manipulation!

First off, when you combine the recoil and the muzzle blast, the brain says, "Look out!" and you get an involuntary reaction, what we call a flinch, where you want to make it go off and get it over with, which results in jerking the trigger. Add to that that under conditions of stress, you're going to have some degradation of fine motor skills, and pressing the trigger straight through is a fine motor skill.

We've got to learn through practice how to minimize the effects of the loss of fine motor skills. That's why I tell

people, "Training is great but training only teaches you what to practice. If you don't practice, guess what? You're never going to be very good!"

eJournal: How does this all apply in an emergency? What are the chances that we can perform correct trigger manipulation when facing danger?

Hackathorn: Only if you have practiced it! For example, most of us get in our car and stick the key into the ignition by feel alone. We've done the repetitions so many times that our subconscious brain controls the electrical nerve impulses to our muscles, and our hand manipulates it and it goes right in.

In the case of the self defense handgun, if you only go to the range and practice shooting once or twice a year, and then all of a sudden you're thrust into a life and death encounter, your ability to perform the simple manipulation skills to fire that gun effectively, let alone the trigger press, isn't going to be very good. If you're going to go to the range and practice with your weapon only once or twice a year, you've got to be realistic: you're gambling that you're never going to need that gun.

eJournal: I understand that the shooter must learn to run the gun; don't they also need training in tactics?

Hackathorn: Look at firearms and self-defense training as a package. Phase one is the selection of a gun that suits your needs. You want a gun that is safe; you want a gun that is easy to fire effectively; you want a gun that will match your life style. Then the second thing is to learn how to use it effectively. Once you get your CCW, you should say, "I need an instructor to teach me not only how to shoot

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effectively, but also show me the basic fundamental tactics and who ingrains those into the training.”

I’ve always taught and trained using what I call a “crawl-walk-run” theory. If you start with people that can only crawl, you’ve got to teach them to walk and once they can walk, you’ve got to teach them to run. Once you can shoot effectively out to ten yards—and by that I mean you can shoot the target center of mass and cover your shot group with your hand—your marksmanship skills to survive are more than adequate.

The next two things you need to integrate? Shooting on the move and shooting in limited, low light. Let’s be realistic: people don’t defend themselves on a nice, sunny afternoon. Then you say, “But it’s the middle of the afternoon,” but when you go in a parking garage, it is limited light. When somebody tries to break into your home or business or assault you as you come from the restaurant to the parking lot, it’s generally in limited or low light. You need to learn shooting techniques in limited or low light.

We have guns in our homes to protect ourselves. Well, the odds are you’ll need that gun during the night. Wherever your gun is, there should be a flashlight, because your first job is to locate the threat and most importantly identify it. Is that a bad guy? Is that my drunken neighbor who tried to get into the wrong house? Does that guy standing in my kitchen have a gun in his hand or is that a cell phone? You need to know and without knowing that, you’ve no justification using lethal force.

That means, number one, you’ve got to have a flashlight, and number two, you’ve got to know how to use it and a gun together.

So I would say low light shooting and shooting on the move are two skills that are critical to the tactical application of self defense.

eJournal: Your name is inextricably linked with shooting while moving. What made you decide to start teaching shooting on the move?

Hackathorn: I’m probably one of the first instructors in this business to go out on a limb and say we’ve got to learn to shoot while we’re moving. When I first started doing that in the late 1980s, a great many people took umbrage and said, “What you’re doing is unsafe.” Well, in the real world when the shooting starts, nobody stands still.

In the mid-’80s, we started to see surveillance videos,

from stop-n-robs, banks and in some cases, dashboard cams. Once, I was at the FBI academy doing a class and somebody had collected volumes of these surveillance videos. I had some time to kill, so the guys said, “Hey, we got a bunch of cool videos, you want to watch them?”

Like most gun enthusiasts, I was trying to see what kind of guns everybody was using. Later, I thought, you know, I’d better go back and look and see what the actors were doing. I saw real quickly, the common denominator was that nobody stands still in a perfect Weaver or Isosceles stance and exchanges gun fire with the bad guys. It doesn’t happen! People naturally move in the direction they perceive will get them away from the danger.

Handgun-based conflicts do not take place at 25 yards! They take place at really close range and the video shows it. 10 yards is a long shot in the real world! The more I watched, I thought holy cow, here we are as instructors spending a great deal of time telling students, you’ve got to have the perfect stance and the perfect grip. All these things that we dictated as The Right Way were quite often meaningless.

And I thought, I can either continue the dogma that I’ve been taught, or wake up and realize that we need to teach people to survive the real world. We better teach them the techniques that will work. And that’s when I started saying, OK, I’m going to look at shooting on the move in all directions, forward, backwards and left and right, and try and come up with techniques that are not only the easiest to shoot effectively, but are the most natural. In other words, are people going to shoot in motion, with the footwork that I show? Can they replicate it when the bullets are flying?

eJournal: Since that hadn’t been done before, you had to start thinking about how feet move – heel-to-toe...

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Hackathorn: Interestingly enough, we had from the early days of IPSC a famous champion shooter by the name of Ray Chapman—you remember Ray?—who had learned how to shoot on the move to be the best to win the matches. So the techniques he developed were the ones I looked at right away because these were proven to work better than anything else.

Do you remember the “Groucho Walk” from the early days? You had to bend your knees, otherwise you tend to bounce around a lot. So we integrated that as one of the fundamentals to shooting on the move. And there are other things now, but the point of it is, that I started working with it. I made some mistakes but I learned and changed and I started really preaching at the Church of Hackathorn, that you’ve got to learn to shoot on the move. Now, about everybody teaches people how to respond [with gunfire] while they’re moving.

eJournal: Once we’ve got low light and moving mastered, what’s next? A maintenance program? What’s a good guideline for the armed citizen?

Hackathorn: Some people are going to say, “Look I’m going to continue seeking out more instructors to get more diverse exposure.” That’s great! If you can afford it and you have the inclination, I highly recommend it.

If you don’t, at least you should put together a practice regimen. Some people say, “I only have the time and ability to go to the range once a month.” And realistically, for most people, that probably means they will only take 100 rounds out. OK, within that 100 rounds of ammo, why not put together a 50-round practice regimen that is relevant to your self-defense ability: drawing from concealment, shooting on the move, reloading, shooting from behind cover? And it can be very simple, but say, “I’m going to do this so I don’t get rusty.” Remember, under conditions of stress you will rarely attempt any task you don’t have confidence in your ability to do.

Take shooting on the move. So many people’s confidence is built around standing still and shooting at the target. So you get them moving, and suddenly they get the signal to shoot or the target pops out. What do they do? They stop to shoot because their confidence says, “I have to be standing still to shoot effectively.” Well, the reality is, to survive, you need to keep moving to get to cover and shoot effectively while you’re doing it. Practice out of your comfort zone until it is comfortable. When you reach the

point you can shoot as well or nearly as well moving as you do standing still within that ten-yard limitation, you’re there. Then you can move on to something else.

eJournal: In closing, then, what thoughts would you leave us with?

Hackathorn: You’ve got to identify which priorities you find most important. You may say, “My major threat is in my work environment, in my home, in my social environment, when I take my wife or family out to a restaurant or theater.” Where am I most likely to be exposed to a threat? And then address those requirements.

For example, I ask people who keep guns in their homes, “Have you ever practiced what your defense would be if somebody broke into your home? Where would you gather the family? How would you search and clear your own house?” They tell me, “Well, I’m going to call 9-1-1.”

Think about it! Most of the time when you get awakened in the night, you don’t know what it is! Typically, you’re going to take your gun and flashlight and you’re going to go look and see if there is someone in the house, or did the cat knock something off the dining room table.

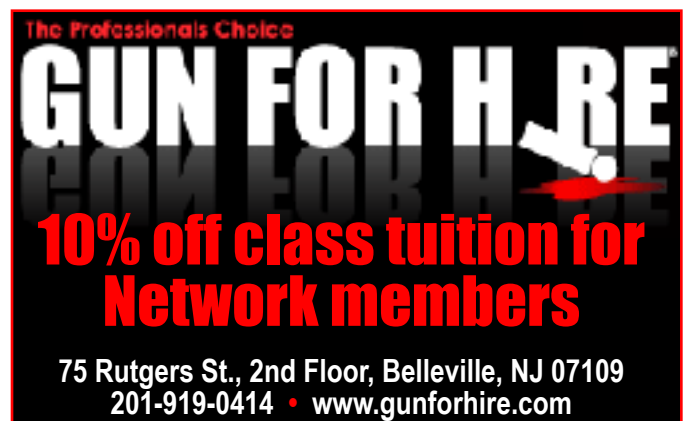
So be realistic and practice and learn where the problem areas in are your own house and how should you go about searching and clearing to make sure you’re in the best protected position and the home invader is in the most compromised position. You need to think about it and do it! Under stress, the conscious, analytical brain doesn’t work very well and making plans then doesn’t work.

eJournal: You must work out the plan ahead of time.

Hackathorn: You’ve got it.

eJournal: Good advice, Ken! This has been illuminating, as speaking with you always is and I sure do appreciate your time and what you’ve done for self-defense gun owners.

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President's Message



Marty Hayes

Words mean something. So do appearances.

For example, if you were in charge of hiring an individual for a public relations job, would you likely hire the well-spoken, well-educated individual wearing a nice suit or hire the very same type of person who showed up in blue jeans

and a t-shirt?

Of course, you would hire the nicely dressed person, all other things being equal. Basic Logic 101.

So, what does this have to do with armed self defense? Quite a bit, I believe. I'll explain.

Let's say you live in an ultra-liberal city in the U.S. of A. But, due to a sane legislature in your state, you still have the right to own any type of firearm for self-defense (with perhaps the exception of a fully-automatic machine gun, so let's take that off the table). Still, you can pick and choose between the AR-15 military style rifles, AK-47 "assault rifles," nine-shot Benelli combat shotguns, and, of course, the latest and greatest high-capacity pistols using the latest and greatest deadly ammunition. And, given this right, you accumulate a nice collection of these firearms, about which there is nothing wrong or illegal. Your collection consists of a couple of AR-15s (also called M-4s), several handguns (both semi-auto and revolvers), and a few basic pump and semi-auto shotguns. You may also be into hunting and own a couple of hunting rifles, perhaps even a lever action 30-30 carbine you inherited from your father.

So, which ones do you keep loaded for self defense in your home?

Assuming it is legal, you can keep any or all of them loaded, and I have been in homes where that is the modus operandi. I have no issues with that, and in fact, it is

perhaps the most logical way to go. Now, I presume for the sake of our discussion, that people have their "go-to" guns, and those are the ones that stay loaded. Again, which do you choose? Do you choose the AR-15 with white light, red-dot sight and tactical sling on it, or choose the Marlin 30-30? Each will fulfill the role of the home defense rifle pretty aptly.

But, also assuming that you live in that ultra-liberal locale, if you choose the AR-15 over the lever action hunting rifle to shoot and kill the individual you confronted on your door step with the tire iron in his hand, and given a murky set of facts and witness statements, which firearm used will more likely than the other result in your arrest and prosecution, all other facts being equal? I think you can see where I am going.

I have given this subject a considerable amount of personal contemplation since reading the appellate briefs of Harold Fish, following his conviction for first-degree murder (www.haroldfishdefense.org). In the appellate brief submitted after Fish's conviction, it was written:

"Fish was grilled about whether the Kimber 10mm was one of the 'most powerful' guns that he owned. [Id. 193-94]. He was questioned extensively about the hollow point bullets that he used. [Id. 194-95]. Fish was asked about the

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Which presents the most benign image? A serviceable 5-shot revolver or a tricked out high capacity semi automatic? You decide.

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impact of a hollow point bullet upon a subject, which admittedly causes the bullet to expand. [Id. 197-98, 257-59]. He was asked about the written training materials that he received when he took a concealed weapons course. [Id. 199-200]. Fish was questioned extensively about the safety mechanism on the 10mm handgun. [Id. 201-202]. He was questioned about whether or not the gun was loaded in the automobile during his drive to northern Arizona. [Id.]. None of this evidence was relevant to the self-defense issue."

Fish did not testify at trial, but instead, the above refers to his Grand Jury testimony. The point is that the prosecutor did everything he could to make Fish look like a crazed Rambo-type gun nut—and succeeded, by the way, as he got an indictment for murder.

In this day and age, the Internet provides a fair amount of really good advice about self-defense considerations. It also provides an incredible amount of extremely poor advice. One of those subjects arises when the topic of guns and ammo come up, and misguided but otherwise well-meaning people spout off saying: "It doesn't matter, all that is important is that the shooting was justified."

This assertion can be made about the type of ammunition (factory v. reloads), type of gun, number of shots fired and other topics of hot debate. The problem with that advice is that a shooting is justified only after the prosecutor, district attorney, and judge or jury decide it is justified. If the prosecutor or district attorney is bent on getting an indictment, he or she will attempt the Harold Fish grand jury protocol, painting you as a Rambo-type gun nut, using your choice of weapon—and perhaps even your entire gun collection—against you.

I would opine that perhaps, if Harold Fish had used a J-frame .38 special, and had fired once instead of three times with his 10mm Kimber, and if he didn't have an expansive gun collection, he might never have been indicted by that grand jury. No indictment means no prosecution.

No prosecution means no conviction, and no conviction means no prison time. Given the emphasis the prosecution made in the grand jury proceedings on Harold Fish's life with guns, I have

to wonder if our Network members, especially those who live in liberal, anti-gun leaning jurisdictions, have a real concern here.

Which leads me back to the introduction, in that appearances do mean something. Maybe not on the Internet, but certainly in the real world. Just ask Harold Fish.

NOTE: Harold Fish's conviction was recently overturned on appeal, with Fish being released from prison after three years. The prosecutor has decided not to retry Fish, but the Arizona Attorney General has stepped in to the case, and is appealing the decision to overturn the second-degree murder conviction. ●

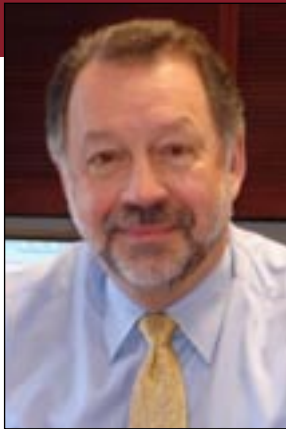


Another choice: Grandpa's bare-bones lever action .30-30 or an AR-15 carbine with fluted barrel, sling, optical sight, laser and thirty-round magazine.



Shotgun selection: Below, a semi-auto with side-saddle to carry more ammunition, black synthetic stock, cheek piece, all accessories to make the 12 gauge faster and easier to shoot compared to low profile pump action shotgun, above, that is only moderately accessorized.





J. Vincent Shuck

Vice-President's Message

Training: a journey, not an event

"Get over the idea that only children should spend their time in study. Be a student as long as you still have something to learn, and this will be all your life." ~ Henry L. Doherty

I can dimly remember my early days on the firing line, desperately trying to hit the x-ring of a bullseye target. As best I can recall, my instructors and fellow shooters offered help and emphasized, stance, grip, sight alignment, trigger press and follow through, even back then! I struggled along, hitting a few x-rings, in spite of my limited skills. I then put down my pistols and focused on raising a family and advancing in the job market. I'm not sure why I saw these priorities as exclusive from shooting, but that's what happened. Later in life, as they say in the movies, I picked up the handgun again and went to work on more exciting and useful shooting skills – self-defense and tactical matters. Different handguns, different range scenarios, but eerily similar skills were needed, except for the awareness and tactics added because of the self defense elements.

Most of us are self-motivated to learn more about shooting. Reading books, watching DVDs, going to the range, and taking classes represent some of the ways to get more knowledge. We are goal oriented and seek relevant skills that can be put to practical use. Shooting skills and procedures to defend ourselves and our loved ones sure qualify in my book as practical. Self defense is serious business, much too serious for the training to be considered optional.

First, you can't trump the importance of basic shooting skills. As I mentioned, when I started learning to shoot,

I heard the same things that I heard when I returned to the training arena to learn self defense and more advance techniques. And, I'm still hearing about them today. There's no getting around the importance of these elements.

All of my training included references and reminders about gun safety. It also addressed accuracy, drawing from concealment, speed, multiple targets, one-hand shooting, moving and shooting, moving targets, decision-making, low light shooting, malfunction clearing, loading and reloading, shooting from odd positions, tactics and how to handle the aftermath of a shooting. Some of the training has been repetitious and some classes presented information in contradiction to information presented in other classes by other instructors. But that's good! Seeing it done differently gives me a chance to process what works best for me.

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Under close instructor supervision, class practices turning and safely drawing in a crowded environment.



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In all of my training, I haven't experienced a really bad class. Sure, some classes have been better than others, but I've always learned something from each event and I've met great people at all of them. There are thousands of formal courses offered each year throughout the country. Visit any gun forum or conduct an Internet search and you can probably find a class, if not nearby, at least in your home state. We all know the names of some "big-name" instructors and schools – search that name if you want to find the scheduled classes for the year (or next year). When I Googled "firearms training" recently, I got over one million possible choices. Of course, not all hits are helpful, but it certainly points out that there are a lot of choices out there. When you are looking for your next class, a good place to start is right here within the Network. Review the Network's Affiliated Instructor list and determine if one is offering a class near you. Many offer discounts to Network members.

You can also find training information on DVDs and in books, and I have a few of these that I review from time to time. However, I've found that hands-on training from a competent instructor is the best way to learn new skills and to make improvements. So, review the training DVDs and books available in the Network's online store (again, with discounts to members) but realize that the presented information should be considered an adjunct to a good training class.

Knowing what class to take can be a challenge but doing your homework in advance goes a long way. If you live near a school that has met your needs in the past, consider



Learning to shoot from disadvantaged positions is part of this class.

taking new classes or the ones offered by visiting instructors. I've also re-taken a class just to see what I can do with a different firearm, such as a revolver. I know some who retake classes and shoot all or part of the class with the weak hand. Few of us can claim that we do not need any further training and the good news is that training works – we respond under stress using the skills and tactics we have practiced. Consider getting to the unconscious competence level a good thing.

Costs of classes, possibly including travel and overnight expenses away from home, are part of any training effort. Most of us have a limited training and shooting budget. I've found that if I allocate an amount for training, I can find ways to save that amount during the year in preparation for the next event. While I don't have a separate savings account for training, I know people who do. I just make sure my training expenses come from funds that are not needed for basic living costs.

Learning how to shoot and defend yourself are worthwhile goals to achieve. But, they represent unique skills that can erode quickly. Thus, retraining and practice to maintain the upper hand should a battle occur are important. Go find a class and make plans to attend.

"Learning is a treasure that will follow its owner everywhere." ~ Chinese Proverb

Vincent Shuck serves as Network Vice President and is President of the Armed Citizens' Legal Defense Foundation. Contact him at jvshuck@armedcitizensnetwork.org.

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New Addresses?

We hope you won't forget to update your membership information with the Network! If you move or change E-mail, you can call, drop us a note in the mail or [send an email](#) with your new contact information. Network members will want to be sure our record of your E-mail is current and accurate, so we can send you periodic E-mail announcements, including one when each new **eJournal** is released.

Affiliated Instructor Question of the Month

One of the Network's great strengths is its affiliation with firearms instructors and attorneys. With the goal of introducing more of these professionals to Network members, in this edition, we are delighted to continue a new feature, the *Question of the Month*. This month, we continue with answers our affiliated instructors gave to the following question:

When a student has trouble with drills in your class, what is his or her greatest impediment to success?

When we asked the question of our affiliated instructors, we got a lot of educational responses, and only wish we had room to print them all. The selection below should help our members get more from their training as they pursue firearms and self-defense skills.

Building Confidence

David Kenik

Armed Response Training

www.armedresponsetraining.com

Chepachet, RI

Confidence. When a student is having difficulty, confidence decreases which creates a vicious downward spiral.

I used to teach the dot drill (1-inch circle targets at 10 feet with very slow trigger movement) in just my advanced classes. I have since realized that it is a great skill builder for new shooters, as well. With a few successful hits, student confidence soars. Once they realize that they can hit if they pay attention, I have them separate more difficult tasks as the class progresses. The draw, for example: as we ask students to build upon their skills, shoot standing still, shoot while moving, draw then shoot, move and draw and shoot, they become overwhelmed and forget the basics of what they just learned. I have them complete the draw stroke, then pause and breathe, then tell them to shoot the target like the dot drill. With that down pat, they can eventually speed up and combine steps.

William Desy

CCW USA www.ccwusa.com

San Diego, CA

First we must determine what might be causing the difficulty. Your mind is your greatest asset, but can also be your greatest enemy. If someone truly believes that they

simply "can't do this," or they find it "overwhelming," that may become a self-fulfilling prophecy. I always reinforce that I have extreme confidence that students can do this, and they need to have the same confidence and focus. Proper mindset is everything!

If the student is still having a hard time, especially due to a mismatch of equipment, ammo or other gear, I always have a .22 caliber available. During a break I will ask the student if they would like to try a different firearm, to help me diagnose the issues they are having. By removing the added stress of recoil, the student can focus their attention to the proper alignment of their sights and a controlled trigger press. This usually results in realizing greater accuracy on the target and greater confidence.

Breaking Old Habits

David Blinder

Personal Defense Training

www.personaldefensetraining.com/

Norcross, GA

Prior experience is often an impediment to learning since few, if any, of us are taught optimal methods to begin with. Unfortunately, an incorrect technique can be learned as easily as a correct one. We often hear that it takes 3,000-5,000 repetitions to ingrain a new technique but I'd argue that it takes that many (or more) to unlearn an improper technique. Depending upon a student's physical skills and abilities, it probably takes 500 or fewer repetitions to learn a totally new skill. It is substantially more difficult to break bad habits than it is to pick up a habit in the first place.

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Build Strength Beforehand

Larry R. Smith www.cwpclass.com

Liberty, SC

Without question the single greatest impediment to some students is a lack of strength in their hands and forearms so that they can grip the handgun firmly and move their trigger finger independently to pull the trigger without disturbing the alignment of the gun on the target. I can correct all the other issues students have, but lack of strength can only be corrected prior to the training.

Learning the Basics

Joe Toluse

Threat Management Training, LLC

www.defensivestressfire.com

Boise, ID

Students will grip the gun in a manner that is comfortable for them. The proper finger placement on the grip and crush grip is normal and comfortable for the seasoned shooter but not necessarily comfortable to the new shooter. Until the new shooter learns and understands the importance of the proper grip they look for something comfortable. It is the responsibility of the instructor to watch for and work with the student who has this situation.

The finger on trigger/finger off trigger is a problem because new shooters see it in the movies and on TV. It is drilled into their minds that the finger goes on the trigger. Only when they receive proper instruction are they introduced to the concept that there is a proper time for the finger on trigger and all other times the finger is off the trigger. Again, it is up to the instructor to watch for and work with this.

John D. Farquhar

Mad Duck www.madduckttc.net

West Elkton, OH

Often it's a lack of understanding of the basics such as sight alignment, trigger squeeze, and proper grip. I keep an oversized set of cut out cardboard sights that I can have the student align on the target, sometimes this points to the cause. They often think more about the gun going off and flinch at the moment they break the shot. I either have

them do a dumpy drill (shooting what they think is a loaded gun) so they can see the flinch, or I have them hold the gun on target, but I squeeze the trigger.

I often provide a .22 caliber pistol to help them gain confidence in their ability. Once they gain confidence, they can usually control the firearm they have. In my basic classes, if they don't have a firearm, I tell them not to get one until they gain the knowledge; they can't learn if they are fighting their equipment.

Blaine Nay www.30-06.org/

Cedar City, UT

One extremely important factor in training a new shooter is gun selection. When students sign up for a class, I tell them to not buy a gun until after the class, that we'll talk about gun selection in the class, and that they'll get to try several different guns to find what they like best.

It really bothers me when a 70-year-old woman brings a Ruger LCP or a S&W Airweight to her first shooting experience. She usually has that gun because "It's cute," her son recommended it, or (worst of all) a gun store clerk recommended it. Small guns are experts' guns, not guns for new shooters, no matter how cute the gun is.

Grandma doesn't get to shoot her "cute" gun until she has mastered shooting with a full-sized gun. If her first shot is with an LCP or an airweight, it'll also be her last. She'll refuse to take a second shot.

We appreciate the many contributions made by our affiliated instructors of which this shared wisdom is only one part. We hope this column helps you feel you know more about our affiliated instructors. We further hope our members will contact these professionals when they need training, and refer friends and family members to them, as well.

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Book Review

In Defense of Self and Others... Issues, Facts & Fallacies—the Realities of Law Enforcement's Use of Deadly Force

by Urey W. Patrick and John C. Hall
Carolina Academic Press
700 Kent St., Durham, NC 27701
919-489-7489 – www.cap-press.com/books/1377
ISBN 10: 1-59460-054-6

299 pages, Retail Price: \$30.00

Reviewed by Gila Hayes

A friend frequently lends me an eclectic mix of books, the most recent of which is the topic of this month's review. Recently, she dropped off a heavy paperback entitled *In Defense of Self and Others* that, though addressed to law enforcement, encourages critical thinking about the topic for armed citizens, as well. This serious volume is definitely a textbook, not a recreational read!

Urey W. Patrick and John C. Hall are recognized experts and authors, each with additional publication credits, long careers with the FBI, and both are sought-after expert witnesses when police officers face legal challenges to how they performed their duties. Urey is recognized for his contributions to the study of terminal ballistics, in particular, and Hall, an attorney, instructor, and author is frequently cited for his contributions to law enforcement policy-making and training.

Why should armed citizens read this book? Despite our nation's heritage of self reliance up to and including using force in defense of self and others, as the title reads, we suffer limited resources from which to research physiological, psychological and sociological affects associated with use of defensive deadly force. Unlike a private citizen, the public servant wearing a law enforcement badge is subject to intense scrutiny when employing force, with little expectation of privacy. Thus, if pursuing a better understanding of the circumstances leading up to, occurring during and following the use of defensive force, law enforcement studies constitute our largest and most reliable body of knowledge.

Many of the notable court decisions about use of force stem from law enforcement and those findings portray our nation's attitude about defense of life. Those attitudes cover armed defense whether by law enforcement or by the

private citizen. For example, when the Preface introduces the principle of judging law enforcement actions by the standard of what was "objectively reasonable" under the circumstances surrounding those acts, the concept of the jury being asked to "stand in the shoes of the accused" is just as applicable to the armed citizen as it is to the cop.

Many principles cited apply equally to any human using force in self defense, though, of course, the responsibilities of the private citizen differ considerably from those of the officers involved in the multitudinous court rulings the book cites.

Determining a reasonable response to threat includes the question of whether an officer must consider the mental state of an assailant in their use of force decision, another principle that is absolutely parallel to the armed citizen's concerns. The authors stress "...it is absolutely unnecessary for an individual to be mentally competent in order to pose a reasonable threat. Actual mental state is irrelevant to any determination in reasonableness in the use of deadly force."

Similarly useful consideration is given to the questions of action and reaction, as well as that of imminent threat, though for the private citizen, the considerable, lengthy and repeated discussions of use of force to prevent escape are all but irrelevant. Frankly, the better coverage of action v. reaction starts on page 101, and if not prone to read cover to cover in an orderly manner, my time might have been better spent starting at this point and then browsing through earlier chapters at leisure.

Still, the paragraphs about the right to continue applying deadly force after wounding but failing to incapacitate an assailant are valuable, and applicable across the spectrum of armed citizen to armed professional. A discussion of less-than-lethal alternatives is equally good, with the authors noting, "If deadly force is justified and an attempt to utilize a lesser alternative significantly increases the risk of death or seriously injury or leads to those results, then it is an exercise in poor judgment." This insight is particularly applicable to armed citizens immersed in environments that promote second-guessing and a morbid fear of fighting back that too often leads to inadequate defenses or delayed responses that result in harm or loss of innocent life.

The highly opinionated Chapter 4 on Wound Ballistics will hold the interest of most armed citizens, and it starts with the wise observation that, "The reality is that immediate

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incapacitation is very difficult to achieve in the human target...and is the underlying rationale for decisions regarding weapons, ammunition, calibers and training," while acknowledging conflicting theories. In any case, readers learn that a human suffering a mortal wound, say a severed thoracic artery, still has about five seconds before the loss of one-fifth of the blood should bring about incapacitation, but even then, oxygenated blood in the brain can "support willful, voluntary action for 10 to 15 seconds." Less serious wounds, though eventually fatal, are cited to illustrate the relatively poor performance of handgun ammunition against determined assailants. "People, whether good or bad, fight and function effectively despite horrific and even fatal wounds, and there is no way to foresee which individual will do so," the authors sagely conclude.

With many Network members serious about their training and skill, the next chapter on liability associated with failure to properly train law enforcement officers promises interesting reading. The FBI's vaunted qualification course, the authors note, is not sufficient alone. Exercises in decision making and weapons deployment under complex and unpredictable circumstances is also required, this chapter teaches. "The goal [of training] is to prepare the Agent/officer to better react to the sudden and unrehearsed imperatives of a deadly force confrontation," they write.

The following chapter dissects physiological aspects of the deadly force decision and delivery, including fight or flight responses, sensory distortion and more. It is among the book's more interesting pages, citing various studies about the time required to make a decision and generate a reaction. For example, did you know that in testing, it has been shown that the processing time is greater when a visual signal is given, compared to an audible signal?

The results and after-effects of the biological alarm response are equally absorbing, as is the discussion of cognitive and behavioral phenomenon. Next, tactical considerations are dissected. "Few, if any, deadly force confrontations will present the officer with an opportunity to take a careful, precisely aimed shot at a stationary subject, selecting a precise aiming point intended to compel incapacitation with minimal delay. Rather, deadly force confrontations are characterized by their sudden, often unexpected onset; by rapid and unpredictable movement of both officer and adversary; by limited and partial target opportunities; by poor light and unforeseen obstacles;

by unexpected and unimagined events; and by the life or death stress of sudden, close, personal violence," the authors explain.

In the section on weapon utilization that is part of chapter 7, as the authors devote considerable persuasion in support of arming agents with double action pistols with 12-pound or greater trigger pull weight and at least a 1/2-inch trigger pull length to prevent inadvertent discharge. Though acknowledging the proper position for the finger off the trigger, they conclude, "It fails the test of actual practice when that same officer steps into that darkened alley believing that an armed and dangerous subject is in there. The officer's finger finds the trigger to eliminate that one additional movement in the event the officer has to use the weapon to protect his life or the life of another. It is inevitable."

They contend that the .356 seconds required during testing to fire with the finger on the trigger measured against the .677 seconds to go from an indexed position to firing the gun represents a sufficient tactical advantage to defend what they call the "tactical reality" of going into an undetermined situation with the finger on the trigger. Like much of their data, this information is footnoted by an article published in the IWBA Wound Ballistics Review, this data from a 1997 edition of that journal.

Don't abandon the book at this dubious contention, however. Though it is impossible to endorse everything proposed, the book introduces valuable topics for study and action. The chapter on tactics concludes with a critical subject: hesitation or unwillingness to use deadly force in the face of apparent deadly danger.

The volume is generously footnoted, so armed citizens wanting to make their own follow up research can also use *In Defense of Self and Others* as an authoritative gateway into additional data on any variety of pertinent topics. ●

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Gila Hayes

Editor's Notebook

Prejudices

"Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

John 1:46 KJV

Prejudice and stereotypes have blinded otherwise rational folks for millennia – from the emergence of the Messiah in Galilee up to the present day, when we are quick to categorize people under labels like Middle-Easterner, Christian, Southern Democrat, lesbian, Republican, moonbat, Bible-thumper, Hispanic, liberal, Democrat, African-American, redneck, survivalist, gang-banger, pro-lifer, peacenik, woman voter, right-winger, Muslim, victim, college student, fundamentalist, white guy, Vietnam vet, Socialist, Arab, soccer mom, cowboy, retiree, racist, girlie-man, Nazi, gay, little old lady, Libertarian, soldier, Easterner, fascist, neocon, Jesus freak, feminazi, American Indian, NRA member, progressive, pro-choice, military veteran.

Did those words create pictures in your mind? Did those images speak to you of one who shared your ideals or one who opposes principles for which you would sacrifice much? But how accurate are our quickly drawn stereotypes of the people we think fit the above labels? Could people on whom we tack these stereotypes have other facets upon which we find common ground?

I've lost count of the number of acquaintances, both personal and professional, who, shall we say, vote a different political ticket. Recently, while visiting an acquaintance whom I'd not seen for over a decade, I noted on the curio cabinet two things: memorabilia from the recent presidential inauguration alongside an accurately shot target. Another friend on whom I rely regularly for guidance, views the world through socially liberal eyes, while a physician I know from shooting classes holds political views I might be tempted to label leftist, if I fell prey to the labeling disease.

Are these individuals about whom I'd be willing to make nasty jokes, apply trite labels, or avoid social contact because their beliefs and politics differ from mine? Never! Were I to shun their company, my life would be the bleaker, and I would lose the chance to appreciate and encourage the inroads they can make into their peer groups as men and women with liberal political leanings who are also committed to their right to own, carry and use defensive firearms.

We welcome your questions and comments about the Network. Please write to us at info@armedcitizensnetwork.org.

sive firearms.

How many individuals have we failed to connect with because the stereotype we slapped on them was at odds with our beliefs? American society has much at stake when allowing for or restricting the tools of personal protection and family defense. As difficult as it is to keep a civil tongue with those who may say, "Some degrees of gun control are desirable," or other blasphemies to our black and white view of gun rights and politics, we owe it to our long-term well being to build bridges between differing ideologies.


Court Watching Resumes

Yesterday, the Supreme Court agreed to hear [MacDonald v. City of Chicago](#), a move that both sides hope will give some clarity to the question about what restrictions States and other governing bodies may impose on gun owners without violating the Second Amendment.

The [Second Amendment Foundation](#) and the [Illinois State Rifle Association](#) brought the suit on behalf of four citizens, challenging restrictions on gun possession for home defense, a gun tax, and a handgun ban.

The Second Amendment Foundation predicted that oral arguments might begin in February, with a decision expected as early as June, 2010.

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The eJournal of the Armed Citizens' Legal Defense Network, LLC is published monthly on the Network's web site at <http://www.armedcitizensnetwork.org>.

We are actively soliciting the participation of writers with expertise in self-defense firearms, the legal profession, and the self-defense training field. If you are interested in contributing to the eJournal, please contact editor Gila Hayes by E-mail sent to editor@armedcitizensnetwork.org.

The Armed Citizens' Legal Defense Network, LLC receives its direction from these corporate officers:

- Marty Hayes, President
- J. Vincent Shuck, Vice President
- Gila Hayes, Operations Manager

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Even if it were not for this excellent turn of events, Court watching would continue to be interesting, as those in the know wonder whether the conservatives on the court can pull together, or if what some have called the most divisive court in history will dash our hopes for decisions overturning incursions into personal freedoms. (Here's a good synopsis of immediate activities the pundits expect from the Court <http://tinyurl.com/yjncq96>)

Meanwhile, as we hold our breath to see how this court will resolve the [*thorny incorporation issue*](#)—basically deciding if gun owner rights rise to the standard of an essential or fundamental human right—the Justices are also scheduled to hear a curious variety of cases ranging from whether or not the government can criminalize depictions of animal cruelty, to the more serious question of whether or not a prosecutor can be sued for allegedly using false testimony to win a conviction.

Gun rights activists aren't the only ones looking to the Supreme Court for guidance, we read (<http://tinyurl.com/yea3kgw>) that the Ninth Circuit Court wants to wait to see what the highest court in the land decides on cases that swing on the incorporation question before they hand down a ruling on [*Nordyke et al. v. King et al.*](#)

Jury Friendly Guns?

Did you agree or disagree with Network President Marty Hayes' commentary this month? While it ruffled a few of my feathers, I found it ironic when just today a friend forwarded this link to a related bit of research from Glenn Meyer: <http://tinyurl.com/ykzal8z> that completely concurs with Hayes' theory.

Don't miss the counterpoint responses at the bottom of that long web page! One attorney writes, "So how does Meyer's discussion of weapons and gender effects influence us in practice? First, something tells me gun users are unlikely to stop and think about how potential jurors may perceive their use of a firearm before choosing between two different assault rifles, or reaching for their bedside Glock when something goes bump in the night."

Custom Holster Auction Up to \$500

The Armed Citizens' Legal Defense Foundation, the Network's non-profit sister organization, is currently holding its first fund-raising auction on www.GunBroker.com. [*Galco International*](#) has generously donated one of their extremely limited edition Miami Classic shoulder holster

systems for the auction with the intention of supporting armed citizens through the Foundation's ability to contribute funding to defray members' legal defense costs. Thank you, Galco, for the generous contribution and for this tangible statement of support for the goals of the Network and its Foundation!

Readers, if you've not yet seen this auction item, go to Gun Broker and enter auction number 141389040 in the search field or just follow this link: <http://tinyurl.com/ygd76nu>. As we close up this edition of the eJournal, 13 bidders have run the price of this \$795 item up to \$500.

This is a fun way to increase the gun-owning public's recognition of the Network and Foundation, as well as giving folks the chance to bid on some nice items contributed by gun and gun accessory manufacturers in support of our mission. The current holster auction ends on the 10th of this month, unless someone chooses the \$795 "Buy It Now" option.

Friendly Coverage

Your Network leadership team has been so busy with the day-to-day challenges of running the Network that we've not been chasing media publicity much lately. Thus, we were pleased when unsolicited, Scott Mayer wrote a nice web article about the Network on the Guns & Ammo Handguns website at <http://tinyurl.com/y87jfp>

We spent several rewarding days with Scott and the rest of Tom Gresham's television film crew earlier this summer when they came to the Firearms Academy of Seattle to film several segments of Gresham's [*Personal Defense TV*](#). While the serious topic of the Network just didn't translate into action-oriented TV programming and we concentrated on shooting skills instead, Mayer graciously learned all he could about the Network, then wrote about our efforts in his column for www.handgunsmag.com.

Guns on Trains

In closing, I want to recognize the Senate passage of an amendment a few weeks ago trying to bring Amtrak gun policies back onto a parallel track with air travel, as was the custom before 9-11. Sen. Roger Wicker, R-MS suggested that the government's \$1.6 billion subsidy should be withdrawn unless Amtrak changes its "no-guns anywhere on the train" policy. It has set off the predictable firestorm, of course, and now we wait to see if the amendment makes it into the final legislation. ●

Armed Citizens' LEGAL DEFENSE NETWORK, LLC



How to join

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We look forward to your participation in the Network as part of a family of armed citizens who passionately care about the right to armed self-defense, and want to protect themselves from the legal nightmare that sometimes accompanies a lawful act of self-defense.

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