

V. Defensive Uses of Firearms

I. Self-Defense: Armed and Unarmed (2nd Edition)

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Foreword: If you are reading this guide, you know that crime can happen to you. Neither I nor anyone else need waste time documenting the prevalence of violent crime. My purpose here is to provide information, ideas, and perhaps some persuasive arguments, not to present a single, all-encompassing type of self-defense. Your job, as a reader, is to approach this document with an open mind; when you hit a concept that you don't agree with, define the "why" of your disagreement. Nothing says I'm absolutely right. I make no claims of being an "expert", only an inquisitive and moderately experienced practitioner willing to share my insights. This isn't a multiple choice quiz with one answer; there is more than one possible strategy or solution. But whatever you choose to do, think about your reasons. I don't expect anyone to agree 100% with what I have to say...but if it makes you think, I've done my job.

This isn't a "gun-only" document. I am personally a proponent of gun ownership for responsible citizens, but if you don't like, don't want, or can't have a firearm, I'm not going to berate you. There is still much valuable information to be garnered from this document. But the emphasis is on firearm defense. The reason for this is two-fold; first, there is plenty of good information available elsewhere on personal security without a firearm. The wealth of information makes it redundant to cover here more than briefly. I trust that you can uncover information about securing your house or dealing with international terrorists, and so the information here on those topics is presented only as an introduction to make you think about the topic. The other reason is that while there is much information on non-gun defense, there is very little on defense with a weapon, particularly with firearms, and what does exist is often incomplete or contradictory.

I hope, in this guide, to provide you with a consistent philosophy and strategy for dealing with crime, armed or unarmed. Again, I make no claims that the information is exhaustive, but it does at least touch on most topics dealing with defense. This guide is aimed at the novice, the non-defensive-trained gun owner, or as a refresher/reinforcer for a more experienced defensive gun owner. I have tried to keep the details at a level where the novice isn't confused, and to explain the terms completely, without patronizing a more advanced audience.

This is a "pro-self-defense" document, and for this I make no apologies. If you don't believe that you should use force, and perhaps even kill, if necessary, to defend yourself, please don't waste time reading this. Buy yourself a Nerf bat or a plastic flower, and hope that you don't ever become the target of a violent crime. I'm not going to spend a lot of time convincing you to believe as I do--I expect that if you are reading this, you already share the sentiment that your life is worth more than that of your attacker--but I make no attempt to avoid displaying that sentiment. I've also tried to make the reading not too dry or pedantic. I make no promises that any piece of this information will absolutely save you--as Marc "Animal" MacYoung points out, "There ain't no guarantees in a fight,"--but I think it will equip most readers with enough information so they can, if they choose, become better able to defend themselves.

Good luck, and good reading.

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Introduction:

Violent crime is not only pervasive in today's society, but it is also becoming increasingly random. If it was ever true that a particular social position, occupation, or selection of domicile guaranteed you safety, it certainly is not true today. One need not quote statistics; simply by examining the daily paper, one can determine that violent crime is alive and well, and that criminals don't restrict their targets to the poor or unvirtuous. Some blame this upon the courts and the police, on their ineffectiveness at keeping violent predators "off the streets". Others argue that the lack of "family values" or "social mores" is responsible for the current predicament. Some even blame the proliferation of weapons for the actions of criminals and call for restrictions and bans upon these tools. The masses scream for "those politicians in Washington and elsewhere" to solve these problems through legislation.

While laws may be enacted prohibiting this and restricting that, by definition, it is the habit of criminals to ignore these laws and perpetrate crimes. A law that prohibits stalking isn't much comfort to the victim who can't identify her stalker. Similarly, there is little comfort for the rape victim that her attacker might face longer sentences if she is unable to stop the rapist. The arguable deterrent value aside, laws are only words on paper, with no physical manifestation except for the actions of police and authorities who typically aren't around when a crime is committed and who aren't responsible for your personal safety in any case.

Anybody can be a victim...but being a victim is a choice; you don't have to acquiesce. You can fight back and defend yourself, though admittedly at risk to your tender hide. Some people will argue that this is a foolish attitude; that if you fight back, a criminal might hurt you. This line of reasoning ignores the fact that what criminals do is hurt their victims. Even when they don't perform physical injury, the theft of possessions is synonymous with the deprivation of the time required to purchase those possessions. Also, criminals aren't likely to acknowledge, nor abide by, the unspoken contract, "If you give me what you want, I won't hurt you." Police files are replete with instances where victims gave in and got a knife in the ribs or a bullet in the head.

The goal of this guide is not to convince you to purchase a firearm, or indeed, any weapon. It is, rather, intended to give you the information you need in order to make informed, judicious decisions about personal defense. After reading this, you may decide that you don't want a weapon; so long as you understand the consequences of your decision, no one has any right to argue with it. But you'll have made a decision, rather than default by indecision, and you'll know the risks. For some people, this might be undesirable, but the rational, intelligent person, will welcome the addition of more information and opinions.

The topic of self-defense could fill volume after volume with opinions, ideas, case studies, and so forth. This guide is intended to give the user a basic familiarity with self-defense, and specifically the tools of that act, particularly the firearm. Others may have differing ideas or opinions. This doesn't mean that either are wrong. The bottom line is that you have to select the opinions and the tactics that work best for you, and you are the best person to make that decision.

It is not my intention that you should do anything illegal. Quite the contrary, it should be stressed that it is in your best interests to avoid any illegal act, particularly since all actions will be questioned in a defensive shooting. In some areas, the very actions you may take to defend yourself effectively are illegal. For people who live in these areas, their choice may be to prepare the most effective defense legally permissible, and to work to change the law to something more rational.

I. Attitude

"There's no such thing as a dangerous weapon; only dangerous men..."

Robert A. Heinlein

While popular thought holds otherwise, the single most important aspect of self-defense is attitude. With it, a lone, unarmed defender might hope to defend himself against multiple armed attackers. Without it, the biggest, baddest .50 AE Desert Eagle with all the trimmings is of no use. In a defensive situation (that is, a situation in which someone is threatening you with violent physical harm) the attitude must be "It's him or me!"

But there is more to attitude than just saying to yourself, "If someone attacks me, I'll defend myself." One must cultivate a sense of awareness and presence, an aura that, when needed, tells an attacker, "If you mess with me you might win, but it won't be worth the piece of flesh that I will tear from your hide!" This has little to do with macho, chest-out- gut-in-get-the-hell-out-of-my-way-you-little-worm manner, and more to do with being aware of your surroundings and convincing yourself of your own abilities in defense. Indeed, walking around with a chip on your shoulder will cause you more trouble, but a polite demeanor in front of an attitude of determined self-preservation may keep you from harm. Violent criminals are often bullies who resort to physical bulk and weapons to subdue their targets, and when faced with stubborn opposition, will often retreat. This isn't to say that puffing your chest up will cause a mugger or rapist will leave you alone, but if you act, instead of reacting, you take the initiative and you gain a measure of control over the situation, hopefully to the extent of causing the attackerers to seek a "softer" target.

Attitude is very simply the will to live, to persevere in the face of opposition. In order to persevere, you must be willing to defend, and while this doesn't mean becoming a bully or inconsiderate louse yourself, it doesn't call for half measures. Be polite, to the point of accepting verbal abuse--if nothing else, should circumstances lead to a "situation", witnesses will be able to testify that you did everything you could to defuse the situation--but when the time comes that blows are thrown or bullets start flying, your sole interest is in the preservation of your self, your family, and your acquaintances. (Note that there is a distinction between "social fighting" which is prevalent among certain segments of society, and combat, which is an all-out, maim and kill scenario. The terms "defensive situation" and "combat" refer to the latter.)

The topic of attitude will appear again and again, because it is the heart of self-defense, without which all martial arts are ballet and all weapons are dangerous toys in the hands of the unwilling and possibly incompetent. You don't "shoot to wound" (n or "shoot to kill") or "take prisoners" in a combat situation; if the attackers surrender, fine, but don't expect or plan on it--you want to drive them off, if possible, and incapacitate them if not. Your only interest is in your survival, and that of your associates, not in punishing, or being merciful, to your attackers. There is no chivalry in combat; once the gun clears the holster, it is a matter of survival, and prizes aren't awarded for fighting clean or giving the other guy a chance. He had his chance when he decided to put the drop on you. He isn't giving you any breaks, and you shouldn't do him any favors in return.

Keep the idea of attitude in mind while reading this document. Attitude is what allows a 40 pound wolverine to attack a 600 pound bear--or what allows a 120 pound woman to drive off a 250 pound rapist. A J-frame .38 Special doesn't hurt, either, but you'll find that it isn't absolutely necessary. The tool isn't the key. A skilled defender should be able to defend himself with whatever is at hand; dedicated weapons, like a gun or a club if possible, improvised weapons like a pool cue, hairbrush, or bare hands and feet if not. It is the attitude, as much as any other factor, that defines the defender's ability to survive. Cultivate it, and keep it in mind while reading.

II. The Basics

A. What kind of weapon should I select for self-defense?:

There are people who claim to support the right of individuals in self-defense, but are repulsed at the notion of using a weapon for that purpose. For some, the selection of a weapon is acceptable if that tool is not **primarily** a weapon, like a baseball bat or a kitchen knife. Others endorse some weapons, like sprays or stunners, but reject the notion of using more effective weapons, like a firearm, even when the situation is so dire that, both legally and morally, lethal force is condoned.

Others claim that individual self-defense isn't necessary; we have police to do this job. Even if this were true, it isn't a very practical notion. Police officers are rarely around when a crime starts, and even if you have the ability to immediately contact the police, there is no guarantee that the police will arrive in time to stop the attack, or even protect you if they do show up. The theory behind the current fast-response 911 systems is that a victim will have "instant access" to police assistance --but even if you do have immediate access to a phone, the reality is that in major cities there are so many 911 calls, and so few responding officers that you can expect to wait dozens of minutes before response... and criminals are rarely thoughtful enough to attack you while in reach of a telephone, or to permit you to draw your cell phone and dial up the police. Even if you are put on the top of the response queue, the police still have the delay of physical distance. They aren't going to jump straight through the phone, nor stop criminals by telekinesis, and if you are lucky and they can find you quickly, you can **at best** generally expect a five minute response, by which time the criminal can easily have stolen your car, kidnapped your child, beat en you senseless or shot you.

It is a common misconception that police are obligated to protect individuals; even if they had the man-power to provide individual protection to everyone under threat, they aren't required to do so, and in fact you cannot successfully bring suit for damages if they fail to protect you. This has been established in several court cases over the years, such as *Riss V. the City of New York*. (See Peter Kassler's "Police Have No Duty To Protect Individuals" for summaries of multiple cases in which courts have ruled that the police are not responsible for individual safety.)

These facts are not stated with the purpose of scaring the reader into purchasing a gun or other weapon; in all fairness it must be noted that neither a firearm nor any other weapon guarantees that the defender will be safe from harm. But it is an established fact that personal safety is a matter of personal responsibility, and depending on police to do that job for you is not only pragmatically foolish, it is also legally incorrect. Your local police chief or prosecutor may not want to admit it, but they can't protect you, 24 hours a day, nor are they legally obligated to do so.

If you decide to purchase a weapon, the first thing you need to do is analyze your needs, requirements, and limitations. There's no point in procuring a weapon that is unsuitable for your needs, or that is more powerful than you can reasonably handle. The average person clearly does not need, nor can easily handle, a snub-nosed .44 Magnum. On the other hand, a .22 LR target pistol or .25 ACP "vest gun" is probably inadequate as a main home defensive gun. With respect to firearms, the best suggestion is to select the most powerful caliber that you can fire reliably.

You might, for instance, determine that you want a weapon to carry on your person, in which case you'll probably select a compact weapon, like a handgun or a telescoping baton. Or you might determine your needs to be for home defense, in which case a shotgun might be well advised. Whatever they are, your needs are best determined by you, and before decide upon and procure a weapon, be certain that it meets the criteria of your situation.

If you already have a gun or other weapon, and don't wish to purchase another that might be more suitable, then you'll have to alter your tactics accordingly. Any weapon is generally better than no weapon, and while a scoped hunting rifle isn't the most desirable weapon for home defense, it will certainly discourage most predators. You are better off with a defense-specific weapon, but if the situation doesn't allow for such, or you are caught unprepared and must use what is at hand, then do so while understanding the limitations of your selection.

On the other hand, after reading this document, you may decide that you don't want a firearm. That is fine; some folks just don't like guns, and there are others aren't responsible enough to possess them. If you feel that you fall into one of the above categories then the best advice is to arm yourself with whatever weapon you feel most comfortable and hope for the best. But there is no practical reason than any adult responsible enough to operate a motor vehicle can't safely handle and possess a firearm. (Certain caveats exist; it may be impractical to safely keep a firearm in a home with someone who is clinically suicidal or suffers from other mental trauma, but in the vast majority of situations, including a household with children, there are enough products and safeguards to make firearms, when stored properly, statistically less dangerous than cleaning solutions or the bathtub.)

Occasionally, someone desires to have a replica weapon, or a real, but unloaded gun, in order to "scare off" attackers. This is an exceptionally bad idea. The person with the non-gun may choose to draw the gun prematurely, with the mindset that "It's not a real gun, so nobody can get hurt," escalating an otherwise manageable situation. Even worse, an attacker might later justify shooting by claiming that he was shooting in self-defense. Occasionally, someone gets the idea to load a weapon with blanks to avoid harming his attacker; this is an equally bad, if not worse, idea for the same reasons. If you aren't prepared to carry a real, loaded firearm, don't carry one, or something that looks like a gun, at all. See Appendix A for an anecdote about using a non-gun for defense.

B. Types of weapons:

There is sometimes a confusion about what a gun or other weapon can do for you. No weapon can "protect you"; it is simply a tool which you may use to protect yourself. All weapons require some training to become proficient, and without both the attitude to use the weapon and the awareness to deploy the weapon while you still have a chance, no weapon, be it firearm or pepper spray, is of any use whatsoever. As previously stated, although the focus of this document is primarily upon firearms, other weapons are covered as well; even if you choose to carry a firearm, a "non-lethal" weapon is also desirable in circumstances justifying the use of force, but not "lethal force", or circumstances where drawing a firearm might escalate the conflict because the attacker decides to shoot or stab you before you "do" him. Here is a list of the basic types of weapons suitable for defense and their intrinsic strong and weak points.

Club, baton: The club or baton is, historically, the earliest of weapons. Even in our "civilized" days, it is the most ready and the least restricted, for any solid object that is light enough to be handled but heavy enough to inflict damage is suitable to use for defense. Clubs range from the PR-24 batons used by police or the collapsible batons like the ASP to the baseball bat or two-by-four. One good, but less than obvious baton is the C- or D-cell Maglite-type flashlights. One can carry these nearly anywhere, with the ostensible purpose of illumination, while being relatively well armed. When striking with an unlit flashlight, one should hold it just behind the head, striking with the cap end. If lit, hold it near the base and use the reflector end to flash the attacker in the eyes, dazzling him, then swing or thrust forward, inflicting lacerations with the reflector lip.

Whip, flail: The flail has a history in warfare, and has the advantage of being compact for its reach, but anyone who has casually handled a whip or chain knows that such weapons are difficult to control. One popular type of flail are nunchuku, or "nunchucks". They look impressive, but have very little practical use in the modern world. They were used by the Okinawans because they were a common agricultural implement (a flail for grinding rice) but they have no practical application today. These are best left for the movies. Still, a belt, or doubled rope with keys makes a decent improvised weapon.

Sprays: The most common sprays are Mace and Oleum-Capsicum "pepper" sprays. The pepper sprays are

unquestionably more effective than Mace (Mace takes a few seconds to react) and are by far the most popular. Many of these sprays also incorporate a brilliant permanent dye to mark the attacker for later identification. Sprays are fine as far as they go; however, they don't always live up to their manufacturers' claims. (See "Dan's Pepper Spray Challenge" in Appendix B.) The effectiveness of the spray depends upon concentration, type of spray (streaming or fogging), and the ergonomics of the weapon. The dinky "keychain" models are difficult to manipulate--without a natural orientation, they can easily be turned toward the user in a stress situation--and don't have the range or duration to be reliable. The larger models, particularly those with a pistol-type grip, are easier to use and have greater duration, but must be stored in a large purse or bag of some kind. In any case, the effectiveness of sprays varies with the individual. Some people are barely fazed by them, while others defecate in their pants. Aggressors who are intoxicated have a noted resistance to sprays. Sprays are also very dependant on environmental factors; in rainy or humid settings they may not be so effective, and wind will disperse the spray, particularly the fogging kind, perhaps even blowing it back into the defender. Some note that police carry these sprays, but the observation springs to mind that these same police also carry handguns and batons. In short, while sprays can be a valuable weapon in the arsenal of a defender, they are not to be relied upon as a sure thing. In sum, the effectiveness of sprays is highly variable.

Electric stunners: These aren't just glorified cattle prods, they develop high voltage discharges that are supposed to overload the nervous system. In reality, the effectiveness of these weapons is even more marginal than sprays, and few police departments issue them. They are defeated by thick clothing, mental state and distance. They are very unreliable weapons at best.

Knives: There is an old saying, "Never bring a knife to a gunfight." The knife, while enjoying a reputation in literature and history, is particularly undesirable as a defensive weapon. It has all the negative aspects of a firearm (potential lethality, vast unintelligible legal restrictions) without the positive aspect of ranged defense. A knife requires the defender to engage the aggressor(s) at close range, allowing similarly armed opponent an equal opportunity to wound the defender. Using a knife well also requires significant training which is not widely available. A knife that is really suitable for combat has a fixed blade of no less than 6" in blade length, like the Applegate-Fairbairn; one will find that legal and social restrictions on carrying such a knife in public are often greater than those on firearms. The smaller folding knives that can be opened with one hand, like the Spyderco and Benchmade brands can be used for defense but all knives work as stabbing or slashing weapons that cause bleeding. Unless the wounds frighten an attacker away, gradual blood loss leading to unconsciousness is the knife's only ability, and this is not instantaneous, despite the depiction of knife attacks in the movies. The knife's real-world effect is to slow an opponent down rather than stopping him with one or two forceful hits. Using a knife for defense is really a desperate situation; if you have a choice, select a better weapon.

Firearm: A firearm is not a bulletproof shield; if a gun makes you feel ten feet tall and invincible, you are better off without it. It will get you into trouble you should have walked away from. But the firearm is the most efficient means of self-defense available, permitting a smaller and weaker defender to effectively neutralize the size and strength of a larger attacker, or multiple attackers, at long range and from behind cover. Against an attacker armed with a gun, a firearm is probably the only effective response, unless your attacker is foolish enough to come within grappling range. Whereas a martial arts skill can take years to build to any degree of effectiveness, training to use a gun effectively may take only hours. And some people who purchase a gun for self-defense find shooting a pleasurable recreation they had not anticipated.

There are several obvious disadvantages to firearms, but these are often exaggerated by people who don't "like" guns. Some will point out instances where people were accidentally injured by a firearm, or quote statistics such as, "You are 43 times more likely to be injured by your own gun, or to injure an acquaintance than you are to defend yourself." While it is true that firearms are dangerous if handled improperly, you are more likely to be injured in a car wreck or suffer any number of household related injuries than to be shot with your own weapon, and you can reduce this chance to negligible levels by practicing safe gun handling whenever you are around guns. Out of the 200 million or more civilian-owned firearms in this country, only a handful are ever involved in an accidental shooting, usually as the result of poor handling practices, and the number of accidental shootings has decreased steadily since the beginning of the century even though the number of privately owned firearms has multiplied.

As for statistics "proving" that guns are more dangerous to you than to criminals, they are hotly debated with equivalent statistics "proving" the converse. The previously mentioned 43:1 is addressed by Gary Kleck, in his book Point Blank, where he demonstrates that more than a million Americans use a firearm in self-defense every year,

most without firing a shot, saving many lives for each accidentally lost, by a factor possibly as large as 600 to 1.

It has been stated by certain feminists and gun control proponents that the gun industry has targeted women for sales by using scare tactics, and that women are better off to rely on police rather than using a firearm because they are more likely to hurt themselves than to use a weapon in self-defense. One Congresswoman even stated that, "Women are virgins when it comes to guns. They should stay that way." Aside from the fact that many women are not "virgins" when it comes to firearms, one wonders at the logic of so-called proponents of women's liberation claiming that, while women should in other areas strive for self-reliance, they should rely on the government to provide for their personal protection. The claims that women cannot effectively use firearms are repudiated by the many women who have used a firearm for self-defense, without harming themselves or bystanders in any way. As for scare tactics, while it is true that the gun manufacturers have published statistics t

hat demonstrate that women are more likely to be victim of violent crime and have made appeals based upon the woman's desire to protect herself and her family, the anti-gun lobby has certainly used exaggerated scare tactics to argue against gun ownership. To claim that firearms cannot be used for self-defense by a woman flies in the face of facts and good sense, and for self-labeled "feminists" to imply that an otherwise intelligent and responsible independent woman is incapable of handling a firearm is preposterous. On whose side are these "feminists"? As this isn't a treatise on the fallacies of gun control, we'll stop here, simply noting that, if handled responsibly, a firearm is more dangerous to your attacker than to you, a belief shared by many attackers, according to surveys of convicted felons.

Other drawbacks do exist. Possession of firearms is restricted in some areas, and personal carry of firearms even more so. Firearms, like most weapons, require a degree of proficiency, particularly handguns. Firearms also require considerable responsibility. Finally, the firearm is truly a "lethal weapon"; that is, there is no way you can discharge a firearm at someone without a significant chance of killing or maiming them. (This is true with all weapons of consistent effectiveness, but particularly true with firearms.) The topic of firearms will be covered in considerably more detail later in this document, but suffice it to say, the firearm is the most effective personal weapon, but also the one requiring greatest responsibility, particularly in view of the perception of firearms in society today.

C. Responsibility in gun ownership:

As previously mentioned, there is considerable responsibility involved in owning a firearm. This is partially pragmatic--one must handle the firearm safely, and keep it secured so that children, and other people of lessened responsibility can not access it--and partially social, in that gun owners are often perceived as being insane or untrustworthy. Gun owners, therefore, have a responsibility to demonstrate the stereotypes untrue. This means learning how to handle their weapon properly, ingraining this behavior like an instinct. Many long-time responsible gun owners find themselves handling water guns and staplers in the same fashion they would a "real" gun, out of habit. There are a wide variety of rules about gun handling. Some are basic and inarguable, but in the quest to make gun handling idiot-proof, there are other impractical (in terms of defensive value) and widely disseminated "rules" like unloading a gun before entering a house, never chambering a round until preparing to shoot, etc. Some of these "rules" had their origin in specific activities, such as competition target shooting in an indoor range, or in a hunting camp, where all firearms are unloaded at the end of a day's hunting before relaxing in a lodge. Anyone can list all possible ways to prevent a firearms accident; one list had over 50 rules! Fortunately, most of these "rules" are either redundant or extraneous. As defined by Col. Jeff Cooper (USMC, ret.) of GunSite and "practical shooting" fame, there are four fundamental rules for responsible gun handling. These rules are:

- All guns are always loaded. (Note that it does not say to pretend the gun is loaded. It *IS* loaded.)
- Never let the muzzle point at anything you are not willing to destroy.
- Keep your finger off the trigger until your sights are on the target.
- Be sure of your target (and what is behind it.)

These rules are explained in greater detail in Appendix C. Suffice it to say that someone who follows these rules religiously will be unlikely to have any kind of "accident" and should never have one involving injury, save for a very rare catastrophic malfunction of the firearm.

When ever you pick up a gun, remind yourself of these rules. Never violate them. If you find yourself violating them,

set the gun down and walk away for a minute. If someone else is violating them, call them on it, and if they persist in their activity, walk away, taking anyone you care about with you. These rules should be as instinctive as "breath in, breath out," for any gun owner. In pursuit of this goal, the NRA as well as many local clubs and hunting organizations offer classes on gun safety, usually at a very inexpensive price. These are well worth the cost, even as a refresher for the experienced gun owner, and especially as an introduction to safe gun handling.

You will want to secure your arms when not in use. This may mean a gun safe; however, safes are slow to open and inconvenient from a defensive standpoint. For defensive use, the weapon must be available, meaning either you maintain physical control over the weapon at all times (carrying it on you) or invest in one or more of the safety devices on the market, ranging from trigger locks to bedside safes that open via an easily mastered but difficult to deduce pattern. Under no circumstances, does hiding the gun, storing the gun separate from the ammo, but readily available, or keeping the weapon in a loaded but unready state (i.e. an automatic with a loaded magazine but empty chamber) suffice. Children are quite clever and inquisitive; they will find hidden guns, climb to get those that are "out of reach", figure out ways to manipulate the gun into action, and so forth. With small children, the gun should be absolutely secured by a locking mechanism. With larger kids, it's a judgement call as to whether they can handle having a firearm "available" in case of dire need. In any case, children should learn about safe gun handling in a program appropriate to their maturity. The NRA's "Eddie Eagle" program has several stages, in which children are taught not to handle firearms without any of the ulterior anti-gun baggage of other programs. What it teaches is very simple; when you see a gun, "stop, don't touch, walk away, tell an adult." Once kids are old enough to handle firearms under direct supervision (this too is a judgement call) the parent should permit the child to handle the gun and, when ready, learn to shoot it in a safe, responsible manner. Permitting a child to handle firearms at a young age, to see them used in realistic, positive pursuits like target shooting, and to learn the method of operation of firearms dispels the aura surrounding guns that is projected by the media. They learn that a gun is a tool, and like a hammer or saw, should be handled carefully. Older occupants should learn gun safety, too, if nothing else.

D. Use of lethal force:

The term "lethal force" is somewhat misleading; it doesn't mean that when you apply "lethal force" that you are attempting to kill someone, but rather you are using a defense which has the potential for lethality in order to incapacitate or drive off an attacker. Truth be known, any effective defense has some measure of lethality; a large portion of murders occur with clubs, knives, and even bare hands. Any time you put your hands on another person "in anger" you take their life into your hands. It is amazing, and humbling, how easy it is to kill another person. While an experienced martial artist or streetfighter can sometimes put down an attacker with little chance of permanent injury, there is always the chance of maiming or death from an underestimated strike or incidental damage. A firearm is even worse in this regard; there is no place on the human body that one can place a shot which doesn't allow for the possibility of death. Shots to the arms and legs may hit arteries that can bleed a person to death long before medical help is available. It goes without saying that shots to the head, heart, spine, or lungs can be quickly fatal. Drawing a weapon and pointing it at someone is always a matter of life and death, to be done only when lesser options are unavailable. It should never be a casual threat or a "warning". In the words of one wise instructor (who was talking about knives but the same applies to firearms) "Don't draw it unless you intend to use it. Don't use it unless you intend to kill. Don't kill unless you are prepared for the consequences."

E. Types of firearms:

There are three basic classes of firearms--rifles, shotguns, and handguns. The first two fall under the legal classification of "longarms", which typically have different legal requirements. Each has a particular range of applications to which it is suited.

A rifle is a long barreled, stocked weapon that is intended to be used at long range. Rifles for defensive use are usually semi-automatic, or lever-action, and are designed for combat, like the AR-15 or the FN-FAL. These guns lend themselves more to a riot-type situation than urban/ suburban home defense or personal defense, but for the rural home owner, those deep in bear country, or those who are without the benefit of available law enforcement they may have their place. Rifles are often described as offensive weapons, to be used at long range against a known attacker, whereas shotguns and handguns are more defensive, close-in weapons.

A shotgun externally resembles a rifle in that it has a long barrel and a stock, but it fires a large variety of projectiles,

from birdshot and buckshot to slugs. Buckshot, #00 through #4 is a commonly used as a defensive load, though those in urban environments who are worried about neighbors may opt for a birdshot loading, which retains effectiveness close in while reducing penetration. Shotguns, like rifles, are bulky, but they are the most effective personal defensive weapons. Shotguns for defense are usually semi-automatic or pump action, but the side-by-side "coach guns" are a reasonably good choice, and even the old over-and-under bird killer is a devastating weapon which an intruder will not take lightly. A note about shotguns, however; some people like the fact that the racking of a pump action shotgun, or the snapping closure of a break-open shotgun makes a distinctive, threatening sound. These people argue that there is a deterrent value in this. Be this as it may, it also tells your intruder, "Hey, I don't keep my gun fully loaded" and gives away all tactical surprise, not to mention the inherent risk of feed jam by manually working the action in a crisis. Unless you have some other reason for keeping a shotgun with a chamber empty, you are better off keeping chamber loaded and preserving the element of surprise. When the time comes, a verbal warning, "Get out!" should be sufficient. Why give your attacker any breaks? (The same holds true for an autoloading handgun...how many times have you racked the slide and had the bullet jam...in the dark...drowsy from sleep...under pressure?)

Handguns are the most common weapon for self-defense. Despite the relative ineffectiveness of even the most powerful handguns (when compared with a shotgun or high-powered rifle), they are often selected because their size and low bulk permit them to be stored and carried far more easily. Handguns for defense are usually classified as revolvers, either double action or double action only, and pistols, autoloader, or semi-automatics (sometimes miscalled "automatic") which come as single action, double action, and double action only. Revolvers carry the ammo in a cylinder which contains several chambers, while an autoloader keeps its ammo in a magazine, typically inserted into the grip frame of the gun and feeding of ammo into the chamber is accomplished by a reciprocating action of the slide from recoil or exhaust of the previous firing.

The terms, single action (SA), double action (DA), and double action only (DAO) are often a cause for confusion, even by experienced gun handlers, as they have different meanings for revolvers and autoloaders, and so these will be defined in greater detail below.

Single Action (SA):

Single action means pulling the trigger accomplishes one action, allowing an already cocked hammer to fall and fire the cartridge. For a revolver, single action means that the trigger action does not cock the hammer. As with "Old West" guns, the hammer must be cocked manually by the shooter before every shot, and are also very slow to reload. This takes on a different meaning for an autoloading pistol; it still is defined by one action of the trigger, that being the release of the hammer, but since the reciprocating action of the slide recocks the hammer on every shot, there is no need to manually cock the hammer except for the very first shot.

Double Action (DA):

A double action revolver is a gun in which the trigger action performs two actions; cocking the hammer and releasing it, resulting in a longer, heavier trigger pull than a single action revolver. The advantage is speed; one need not adjust his grip and cock the hammer each time in order to fire the gun multiple times. A double action revolver can also be fired in single action mode, by manually cocking the hammer each time, then pulling the trigger. This has an advantage in hunting and target shooting, in that the trigger pull is lighter, giving greater potential for straight shooting, but has little practical application in self-defense. Some experts claim that thumb-cocking the hammer on a revolver creates greater liability.

A double action autoloader is a bit different. Like the DA revolver, the action of the trigger also cocks the hammer when it is down; however after the first shot, the action of the slide cocks the hammer, so that the gun then functions like a single action autoloader.

Double Action Only (DAO):

A double action only revolver operates in the same way as a DA revolver except that hammer cocking is not available. A DAO autoloader operates like a DA autoloader, except that every shot is in double action mode. In most cases, the hammer on a DAO weapon is bobbed, and in the case of an autoloader, may be entirely concealed within the slide.

There are a few guns which defy the above classifications, like the squeeze-cocking H&K P7 or the "Safe Action" Glock pistols, but for the most part guns fall neatly into the categories, and the rest can be represented as one or more of the above. (i.e. the Glock is essentially a single action pistol, etc.)

The selection of firearm should be based upon need; a defender might find need for two or more different types of weapons. One might select a shotgun for home defense, and a revolver for on-the-road or concealed carry. However, if the budget is tight, one may have to compromise. An option might be to select a snub-nosed "K-frame" revolver as a double-duty home defense/concealed carry gun.

Selection of a rifle for defense is based upon a very narrow need; defense at a distance. Shotguns are more general, but it is difficult to go wrong with any pump action or better quality autoloading shotgun on the market. Handguns are another story; there is such a wide variety of prices, features, and qualities, that it can be dizzying. The best advice is to do some research, rent some guns at a range and try different features in a controlled setting, and take a class to be exposed to the various types of firearms.

F. Selection of caliber/ammunition:

Selection of a firearm for self-defense is more than just selecting a type of gun. Generally with shotguns and handguns, the selection of caliber and ammunition is important. Caliber refers to the diameter of the bullet that a firearm shoots, or to the diameter of the barrel, though sometime convention supercedes practicality, e.g. a ".38 Special" is 0.357 to 0.358 inches in diameter. Rifles and pistols are usually classed by the measurement of the bullet, while shotguns are classed by an older method.

The caliber of a firearms relates to several factors involving how the ammunition performs. Although caliber is important, it is not critical and there are several other factors for a potential gun buyer to consider. With regard to ammunition, there is penetration and rated effectiveness. There are many effective calibers that are too powerful for some people to shoot for defense. Some types of ammo may be inappropriate in certain situations; shotgun slugs in an apartment, for instance. And some types of ammo are underpowered for effective defense. Still, good shot placement counts for more than super-premium ammo, and the differences between one type of ammo and another are often outweighed by the differences between one shooter and another. Below, the different factors in ammo selection are considered.

Rifle ammunition: As previously stated, the rifle chambered in centerfire calibers is not a particularly good defensive weapon, for home defense. A rifle chambered in a pistol caliber is more acceptable and may be a good alternative for someone who, for some reason, does not want or cannot use a handgun. However, the "rifle-caliber" rifles in chamberings like .308 or .223 provide far more range and penetration than the typical homeowner needs for home defense, with the possible exception of riot. The penetration from such calibers is such that it may pose a grave threat to others within several hundred feet, even through intervening walls. Still, if a rifle is selected for the purpose of self-defense, soft point, hollowpoint, or prefragmented ammo is strongly suggested, as it reduces penetration and increases the effectiveness of the round. Any caliber above .22 rimfire is generally potent enough for defense.

Shotgun ammunition: Shotgun ammunition comes in three basic types--slugs (basically, a big bullet), birdshot, and buckshot. Slugs are used primarily to in hunting or long-range (for a shotgun) shooting. Slugs suffer from the same overpenetration problems as do rifle bullets. Sabot slugs are just slugs encased in a plastic sleeve or "discarding sabot". Birdshot is finely sized shot (like tiny ball bearings), ranging from the size of fine dust (#12) to fine gravel. This type of load delivers lethal energy at close range but loses energy quickly, making it appealing for the apartment dweller concerned about overpenetration. #8 birdshot, for instance, is quite lethal out to 10 meters, but loses potency quickly after that. The third type of load is buck shot. These are larger shot designed to penetrate the hide of moderate to large wild animals at range, and so is quite effective on attackers. While #00 ("double ought") is often the selection of police and the recommendation of gun store clerks, #1 or #4 is a better general selection for both long range and close work.

The common defensive bores for shotguns are the .410, 20 gauge, and 12 gauge, although 28 and 16 gauge shotguns are sometimes pressed into service. The shotgun, in any gauge, is a devastating close quarters weapon, though it should be noted that the myth that one need only direct the gun in the general direction of the target is false. While the shot does spread or "pattern" as it travels, the spread is not great enough to permit indiscriminate aiming; at ranges at which the spread is notable, the penetration has dropped off enough that the weapon is no longer effective. Chokes,

constrictions in the barrel, are sometimes used to guide the pattern. Chokes range from cylinder (no constriction) to full (considerable constriction, resulting in a tighter pattern.) In general the pattern won't make that much difference at defensive ranges with the 12 and 20 gauge bores, but a full choke creates a more concentrated hit which is somewhat more likely to stop an aggressor. At apartment or home distances, most shot patterns will only expand to about the distance between two shirt buttons.

While there are "magnum" loads for the .410, 20 gauge, and 12 gauge (usually requiring a longer than normal chamber), it is often better to stick with the "standard" loads for reduced muzzle flash and recoil, particularly with the 12 gauge. At defensive distances, a solid hit with a load of #4 buckshot will almost certainly drop an intruder in his tracks, regardless of whether it is a magnum load or not.

Handgun ammunition: Handgun ammo is a topic subject to frequent and often emotional debate among defensive shooters. Because handguns are terribly underpowered when compared with any shotgun or rifle and because handguns are more difficult to shoot, even the slight advantages of one caliber or one load over another are perceived to be important. Some gun owners are great proponents of a particular caliber and will demean all other calibers in favor of their preference. This is particularly true of proponents of the .45 ACP, the .357 Magnum, and the 10mm Auto. Some prefer the "light and fast" loadings, while others prefer slower, heavier bullets with greater momentum. While this can make for fascinating technical arguments, the truth is that any caliber and load that can consistently penetrate deep enough to cause incapacitating wounds is sufficient for defense; all else is a fiddling few percentage points of effectiveness. There is some argument as to what caliber is the minimum for defense, but it is widely accepted that anything below the .38 Special, or perhaps the .380 ACP, is an abandonment of stopping power for concealability or cost.

The term "stopping power" is often used in reference to the relative ability of a particular caliber and load to stop an assailant. This term is misleading for several reasons. For one, "stopping power" is not a quantity measured in units of power (like watts), but is rather a statistical value that would be more correctly referred to as "stopping potential". A second reason is that the typical measurement used to determine stopping potential is the "one-shot stop". Of course, if an attacker continues attacking, the defender shouldn't stop with one shot, but it also begs the question of the statistical reliability of the number--the statistics are culled either from reports of actual street shootings, often neglecting other factors, or from unrealistic tests on animals.

Finally, while the stopping power or stopping potential might represent the relative ability of the load, it is the placement of the bullet, controlled by the shooter, that determines just how effective the hit will be. A 10mm that misses the head isn't nearly as effective as a .380 in the chest, regardless of the relative stopping potentials. The difference in skill between one gun wielder and another is generally far greater than the differences in "stopping power" between one load and another. A buyer is better advised to select a weapon that meets his criteria, and then learn to shoot it well, rather than spend time agonizing over the fractional percentage points that one load has over another.

The common defensive handgun calibers include the .380 ACP, .38 Special, the .357 Magnum, the 9mm Parabellum (also known as the 9mm Luger), .40 S&W, .45 ACP, 10mm Auto, and the .44 Special. These are listed not because they are inclusive; there are other calibers that will suffice quite well, but these represent the most commonly available defensive calibers.

There is some overlap among the guns in these calibers and the ammunition noted above. The .38 Special is identical in diameter or caliber to the .357 Magnum but has a case length which is 0.1" shorter than the .357. It can be fired in a revolver chambered for the .357 Magnum. The same holds true for the .44 Special in a .44 Magnum, and the .32 Long in a .32 H&R Magnum. The reverse is not true; magnum ammunition will not fit or fire safely in guns chambered for the Specials. Also, one may not fire .22LRs in a .22 Magnum revolver, as the magnum cartridge has a larger outside diameter as well as being longer.

Rounds like the 9x21mm, the 7.63x25mm, the .38 Super, and so forth are effective calibers, but they are rarely found on dealer shelves, and are used mostly by competitive shooters who reload their own ammo. Calibers like the .25 ACP and the .22 Long Rifle, while perhaps better than no gun at all, cannot be relied upon to penetrate enough for stopping, and so are relegated to backup or deep concealment weapons. Because the defensive guns chambering these rounds are often cheap or simplistic, the most reliable type of ammo should be used, even at sacrifice to expansion and nominal stopping potential.

It is better to select a caliber that you can afford to practice with regularly. The .357 Magnum is widely recognised as being the "top stopper", but it is too powerful for many people to practice with frequently. .38 Special revolvers, 9mm and .45 ACP autoloaders all have proven records of defensive use. Their ammunition is available from military surplus or factories at reduced prices. The .40 S&W, the 10mm Auto, and the .44 Special are effective defensive calibers, but the ammo is less common, and therefore more expensive, and in the case of the latter two, firearms themselves may be difficult to locate. One caliber might be marginally superior to another in stopping potential, but more practice with less expensive ammo can more than make up the difference by improving shot placement.

For handguns, the hollowpoint bullet has become the leader in defensive ammunition. Early (1st generation) hollowpoint bullets were just lead slugs with a hole in them. They had problems feeding in autoloaders, didn't provide reliable expansion, and were not highly regarded. Newer (2nd generation) hollowpoints were designed out of softer materials, have smaller cavities to encourage feeding in autoloaders, and were somewhat more reliable at velocities above 1100 feet per second. The newest selection of hollowpoints (3rd generation) are designed to be capable of expansion below the older thresholds by using a variety of features. For instance, the Federal Hydra-Shok has a post in the center of the hollow which keeps the cavity from becoming plugged. The ill-starred Black Talon, recently reintroduced as the SXT, used a combination of a hard jacket, soft core, and a sump drilled in the bottom of the cavity to release pressure and force expansion. Other designs, like the Federal Golden Sabre, the PMC Starfire, and the CCI Lawman/Gold Dot, make use of designs tailored to handgun velocities to assure performance.

There have been some claims that certain hollowpoints are "killer bullets", that they can "slice through police armor." The "armor-slicing" characteristics can be easily dismissed; the soft, expanding nature of these rounds actually makes them less likely to penetrate any kind of body armor, and they don't expand before striking the armor in any case. There are others who feel that hollowpoints do not belong in the hands of citizens who do not face life-or-death confrontations every day. They argue that police, who face violence more often, need these bullets to defend themselves, but that ordinary people don't need them at all. Such rationale has been used to pass laws in places like New Jersey, where possession of hollowpoint ammunition is illegal. Frankly, this implies that possession of these bullets is paramount to intent to kill. In reality, no handgun bullet is designed to kill and none can be expected to do so on demand. What hollowpoint bullets are designed to do is save lives.

This last statement bears elaboration. Hollowpoint bullets are designed to stop an attacker with the least number of shots fired. They are designed to transfer as much of the bullet's energy into impact and shock. Roundnose bullets, which may zip through tissue with minimal disruption may require the defender to shoot his attacker more times in order to get him to stop attacking. The attacker shot with roundnose bullets still bleeds, but he does not feel the same shocking, stopping impact that a hollowpoint bullet produces.

Why does this effect of hollowpoints save lives? First, the sooner an attacker is stopped in his attack, the less likely a defender is to be killed. If a shooting takes 15 seconds to stop an attacker, that could mean the attacker still has time to stab his victim to death or return fire with his own gun. Second, fewer bullets necessary to be fired, and the more of those which stay inside the attacker, present less hazard to bystanders. In an intense situation, not every bullet will hit the intended target, and of those that do, roundnosed bullets are more likely to travel through an attacker with enough energy left over to kill a bystander. Third, one or two hollowpoints used to stop an attack means an attacker with two to four holes to stop bleeding and repair. Four or five roundnose bullets are likely to mean six to ten holes, each leaking blood out and air in. Hollowpoint bullets are more likely to result in a live attacker after surgery. This has been documented by several police departments who switched from standard roundnose lead ammo to higher-powered hollowpoints. Their results: fewer dead cops, fewer dead crooks, and fewer dead bystanders, including fellow cops.

It is your life on the line; police use these bullets because they are effective at stopping perpetrators, and you should too. Realize that any bullet can kill, and any time you point a gun at someone your intent is to stop, but the possibility of killing exists. Whether you are in one gunfight or twenty, you want the best chances that you can reasonably obtain. If you are concerned about liability from using "killer bullets" then select the same brand that the local police force uses. This way you can always point out that you were just using what the police consider best.

Some people reload ammunition; while this doesn't generally "save" money, given the capital investment and time spent reloading, it will let you shoot more ammo for the same cost. Reloads should not be used for defense unless absolutely necessary, for two very good reasons. First, while an experienced, conscientious reloader will rarely have a bad loading, it can and does happen far more often than with commercial loads. Unless you trust your reloads 100%,

they shouldn't be used for defense. A second reason is one of liability; a lawyer might make an issue of the fact that you "created a special, deadly round designed to kill, rather than wound an attacker." This is drivel, of course, particularly since most reloaders use the same components and powder charges as do the ammo manufacturers. However, the recent "Black Rhino" hoax should adequately demonstrate that neither the news media nor the public at large understands the design and capabilities of various types of ammunition, and a sufficiently motivated prosecutor or liability lawyer might convince a jury to accept his twisted interpretation rather than the plain truth. Reloading is a good way to get more practice for your dollar, and it will let you load practice rounds that are identical to commercially available loads, but for defensive use, it is best to use factory loadings from reputable manufacturer. It is unlikely that you could develop a significantly more effective load in any case; modern hollowpoints have a velocity "window" outside of which the performance of the round drops, and you certainly aren't going to improve upon the reliability of commercial ammo.

G. Purchasing the firearm:

So, as you can see, selecting a firearm is a multi-faceted decision. No one firearm can be all things to all people, and many gun owners find it necessary to own several types for various needs. One certainly wouldn't use a snub-nosed gun for target shooting, or a .22 target autoloader for deer hunting. Different jobs require different tools. The same applies to defense; you may find it useful to procure more than one weapon. As long as the purchase is within budget, there is no harm in this and it gives you a "backup", in case your primary arm needs work, is stolen, or is otherwise unavailable.

Whatever you do, do not select a gun based upon media appeal. The high capacity autoloaders are popular on the big screen, but in reality that capacity is rarely used by the lone individual, and can be difficult for those with small or even moderately sized hands to operate. Name appeal is something to watch out for, too. With many guns, you are paying for the name in addition to the quality, while a lower priced gun from a reputable, but not as "brand name" a manufacturer might be just as suitable. The big name makers have had their problems in quality control in the last few years and have put out some duds, while the smaller hardworking makers have consistently improved their quality. Price is not a very good indicator of quality, particularly in handguns. Most good handguns range from \$250 - \$800, with good guns at all price points. It is more important to get information about the features of the gun or guns that you intend to buy than just relying on price as a guide.

For most people buying a firearm is a fairly major purchase. The investment of several hundred dollars is not one that is taken lightly, and so you want to be certain that you get a gun that is reliable, from a store and a manufacturer that will stand behind their product. Some manufacturers are very conscientious about customer service and will go above and beyond the required in order to please a customer. Others, particularly some of the importers, are apathetic or even rude to customers. The only way to find out which is which is to listen to other gun owners, participate in forums where such information is available, or talk to the experts in the field. The problem with this is that there is a plethora of conflicting information from all sources mentioned above. Some gun owners become enthralled with a particular design and promote it above others, exaggerating the strengths and ignoring the weaknesses. Others will, from one bad experience, completely forego a manufacturer. The gun magazines might seem like a good place to get information, and indeed they are a good way to pick up the jargon, but with respect to firearms reviews, they too often tend to glaze over the sore points, or return a gun unreviewed rather than to give it a bad review. Gun magazines are, in large part, supported by the advertisements of major gun manufacturers and distributors who send them their guns to test, and so the results often end up like a Playboy centerfold; you get to see all of Miss Monthly's prime assets, but what you aren't told is that she snores in bed or blows milk out her nose at when she laughs. There are a few publications that present test information in a more objective fashion but you are still left waiting for them to cover the gun you want to buy.

A good source of information is a local, well-respected gunsmith. He can tell you of the problems he's seen in different brands of guns, what to look out for and what is really useful. Still, the purchase of a gun, like a car, is a somewhat chancey thing, so before you purchase a gun you want to make certain that the dealer will work with you to make right any problems with the gun.

Before you go to the gun store, you'll want to select a few models to look at so as not to fall victim to impulse buying. Be clear on what you need, set a budget for yourself, and know the brand names, calibers, and model numbers. (Most gun publications publish an annual "Guide to Guns" type magazine which will show you what is available. In addition, many gun collectors will have pricing guides that will outline the cost, features, and so forth.) When you get to the store, don't let the clerk or dealer push you around. This is a particular issue for women; although "Woman's Lib" has

come a long way, even in the gun store, one sometimes encounters a clerk who knows that a woman *couldn't possibly* want a .357 Magnum. The same holds true for a novice man who doesn't know the jargon. If you get such an attitude, be polite, but firm. If you feel pressured to purchase something you don't want or need, leave and find another dealer. If the prices are higher than they ought to be, try haggling down if it's your style, but if that is ineffective, shop around and try to get a better deal. At this stage, even if you are interested in handling a particular model, your first words in the store should be, "Just looking."

When you pick up a gun to try it out, first remember to follow the Four Rules of gun handling. Check the chamber, don't point it at someone (point it at the floor, if necessary) and keep your finger off the trigger. Check the pointability of the gun; pick out a target, close your eyes, point it at the target, and then check the alignment of the sights. If you have a problem aligning the sights, the gun may not point well for you. You may also want to try out the trigger; if so, ask first, as some dealers are rather sensitive about this, and point it at the ground or some other barrier. Try a selection of guns, and if there is one in particular that you like, you might ask to see another of the same model if they have one on hand, to compare the trigger pull. If you are undecided or unsure, consider your purchase for a day or two, and then go back if you still want the gun.

In a nutshell, a firearm for defense should satisfy the following criteria:

Reliability: It should go without saying that the gun should fire every time one pulls the trigger on a loaded chamber. Most guns, even on the lower end of the scale, manage to do this, although every manufacturer puts out the occasional dog, or even a bad design. It is important that once you select a gun, you train with it to ensure its reliability. Possessing a gun which can't be relied upon is almost worse than having no gun at all. Revolvers come in first here. The mechanism is simpler, and there is no problem with variances in ammo or grip. Some autoloaders, particularly the lightweight ones, sometimes suffer from "limp wristing", holding the gun too loosely, which damps out the reciprocating motion of the slide and results in a feed jam. Some auto loaders, particularly straight-blowback guns, like most .380's, are very finicky about the ammo you use. You should fire 100 or more rounds of the defensive ammo you intend to use through your gun to ensure reliability, accuracy, and so forth. This is particularly true with an autoloader. On the other hand, autoloaders can stand more abuse; the mechanism of a revolver is more delicate, exposed to dust and dirt, and with extensive use will eventually get "out of time". This isn't a great concern with a defensive gun that is fired a couple of hundred times a month at the range, but with a revolver bought used, it may be a hidden problem.

Functionality: This is different than reliability, because functionality is a subjective measure of how well the shooter likes and can use the gun. Some complain of the complexity of autoloaders, and particularly the "wonder-nines" with slide release, safety, decockers, magazine release, etc. You should be able to manipulate the gun you select in the dark and under stress. This ability evolves with how much you practice with the gun; more practice reduces concerns about greater complexity. The revolver takes points here, too, as most revolvers have only two controls; the trigger and the cylinder release. Some double action only (DAO) and the Glock "Safe Action" autoloaders come close to that level of simplicity, but one must still learn how to clear a jam or misfire. With a revolver, there is little question of clearing jams; if a revolver jams up on you, it will likely require the services of a gunsmith. A revolver won't jam up from a misfire though; if the round doesn't go off, you pull the trigger and advance to the next chamber. Misfires are fairly uncommon with good quality ammo, but revolvers get points, particularly with novices, for simplicity.

Reasonable Power: Despite the fact that handgun ammo suffers in comparison with the stopping power of rifle ammunition, the handgun is a much lighter package, and is held less securely than a long arm. Above a certain level of power in a handgun, the amount of blast affects accuracy and the recoil delays a followup shot considerably. An S&W .44 Magnum with a 2.5" barrel is probably overkill. Still, there is a lower limit to defensive rounds; anything below a .38 Special is probably not enough to ensure reliable stopping even with good accuracy. A .380 is a compromise; more power than pocket pistols in .25 or .32 but (typically) smaller than a .38 snub, but unless small size is demanded, as in a concealed carry situation, a .38 Special is as usually as low as one wishes to go. In revolvers, the calibers which offer stopping power, controllability and availability are the .38 Spl., the .357 Magnum, and the .44 Spl. In semi-auto pistols, the best choices are the 9mm, the .40 S&W, and the .45 ACP. Other calibers are available, but these are the best first choices.

Accuracy: The gun rags often report how "Gun A groups 2.5 inches with Brand X ammo, and Gun B groups 3.25 inches with Brand Y ammo." Setting aside the lack of scientific or statistical rigor in the measurements made in gun reviews the truth is that in a defensive situation, which is likely to occur at close range, in the dark, against a moving

target, average group size obtained at 25 yards in bright sunlight isn't going to mean a whole lot, and frankly the defender will be doing well to hit the target in the torso. The defender may not have time or opportunity to adopt a two-handed "Weaver stance" or even to look at his gun and align the sights. Practical accuracy is a measure of how well the shooter can shoot the gun under a variety of realistic conditions. Much of this has to do with training and most folks can become reasonably accurate with any weapon. Few will be capable of as much practical accuracy as the intrinsic "bench rest" accuracy of the gun. Still, there are some characteristics of a handgun that improve practical accuracy.

For instance, how good are the sights? Are they rudimentary "notch sights", or are they of usable size and geometry? How well does the gun "point" naturally? How does the gun feel? Is the grip too large or too small? Does the frame cut into your hand somewhere? Is the trigger way too heavy or creepy? The more comfortable the gun is to handle, the more naturally accurate it will be for you. Some of these characteristics can be altered; grip size can be changed by fitting aftermarket grips to the gun. This is usually a very efficient move; the right grips usually makes a big change in pointability and typically costs under \$20.

Fitting your needs is the most important criteria, and this fact is often lost in the confusion of calibers and grips and finishes. Once you are in a gun store, it is easy to forget which features you need in a defensive firearm and which are unimportant or in the way. If you anticipate home defense only and have decided on a shotgun, don't get sidetracked looking at revolvers. If you are anticipating concealed carry, ignore the big .45's and .44 Magnums. If you are just learning to shoot, the blast and recoil from a snub-nosed revolver or compact automatic may be a hinderance rather than a help.

H. Accessories:

You'll probably want to purchase some sort of accessories for your gun. There are a lot of accessories that some gun advocates will define as "necessary". In truth, some may be, like extra magazines or aftermarket grips, (depending on your circumstances) while others are just plain useless for defense shooting, and overpriced as well. Some people like to customize their firearms in the same way that others customize their car; it makes them feel like the gun is more personal. In some cases, the confidence this brings can even help their shooting.

Holsters: Holsters are only used for handguns, though there are scabbards for rifles. The primary purpose for a holster is to secure the weapon and to protect clothing. While some people choose to carry a handgun in the pocket or waistband, and this method will work in a pinch, if you have any intentions of carrying a handgun for any length of time it pays to invest in a holster, both in terms of protecting the gun and in comfort. Holsters range from the very inexpensive (around \$10) to as much as you want to spend (for custom holsters), and while price isn't a specific indicator, holsters do tend to get more comfortable and easier to use as the price goes up.

Holsters come in two basic materials: leathers of various kinds (cowhide, horsehide, sharkskin) and synthetic materials like nylon. The leather holsters are usually more expensive and require more care, but for some applications leather is preferable to synthetic holsters, as leather can be molded to the exact type of gun (eliminating the need for retention straps) and is more comfortable to wear. The nylon holsters generally come in "one-size-fits-all" for any general gun type, which while convenient for the user who may holster several different weapons in the same holster, they are usually not as sturdy (for keeping the weapon from flopping around during movement) and require a retention strap to hold the gun. Synthetics definitely have the edge when it comes to durability and resistance to abuse; while some types of leather are close to maintenance-free and are quite durable, you won't see anyone wadding up a leather holster and throwing it in the trunk, to come out as good as new.

The term retention strap has been mentioned several times, and it is significant enough a feature on a holster to be worthy of mention: the retention strap is simply a strap that goes across the gun in some manner to retain the gun while it is holstered. On inexpensive or low-threat holsters, this strap is usually some kind of snap or loop that must be released as a separate motion from unholstering the gun. On most duty and concealed carry holsters, though, the retention strap is actually two straps that meet and are arranged so that one can snap open the strap in the same motion as drawing the gun.

There are three basic classifications of holsters:

Low-threat holsters are intended to keep the gun secure, but not to provide a particularly fast draw. These are fine for

occasional carry or plinking, in low-threat situations. There's no need to splurge unless you really want a leather holster; for the se applications, the synthetics are just as good. Flap holsters (that is, a holster where the flap covers most of the grip of the gun that would otherwise be exposed) are good for carry in forests and fields, where rain is a threat and branches can snag the gun. In this situation, if you need a gun, your awareness will give you time to open the holster without need of a fast-draw.

Duty, garrison, or high-threat holsters are holsters which are worn on the belt and which are designed for situations in which a quick draw might be necessary. Depending on your application, you may go with an inexpensive but professional synthetic rig, or with a more expensive leather rig. (Police usually wear leather holsters and belts, while private security tend to go more with the synthetics...which is more of an indication of the purchasing practices of an open-budget government organization compared to a private, profit-making company rather than the relative quality of one material versus the other.)

Most duty holsters, even expensive leather ones, have a retention strap so as to thwart attempts by an attacker to take the wearer's gun. We'll talk about handgun retention later, but bear in mind that retention straps do more than simply secure the gun against unintended dislodgement.

Duty holsters are good for police and security, as they are fairly secure, easy to draw from, and tend to keep the weapon from flopping around too much, but they aren't very good for concealment, as they usually ride fairly low on the hip. For concealment, a third type of holster is required--a especially dedicated concealment holster. Concealment holsters come in a wide variety of styles and configurations, which will be discussed more thoroughly in the Concealment section later on, but suffice it to say that in selecting a concealed carry holster, cost is a secondary issue. Concealment holsters are generally selected to be worn on a daily basis, under clothing, near the skin, and usually on a narrow dress or jeans belt rather than a thick and wide duty-style belt. Most folks who carry concealed on a regular basis agree that leather is superior to synthetics when it comes to a "regular" concealment holster, though the "fanny pack" style holsters and some others are exempt from this. Selection of a concealment holster is also something of a personal choice; what works for one person may not work for another. Again, this will be covered in greater detail later, but be aware that concealment holsters are generally more expensive than other types, because of the more demanding requirements of that type of holster.

Of course, you need not purchase a holster at all, if the weapon is purely a home defense gun, or if you intend to carry in the car, bag, briefcase, etc. Be aware, though, that if you keep the holster near, but away from your body, you must be certain that whatever you are carrying the gun in is secure (i.e. don't lay it down in the daycare while picking up your kid) and it will be a slow draw. Awareness will help to negate the "need for speed" in a crisis, but all things being equal, it is often better to have the gun on the person, though this isn't always possible or convenient.

Aftermarket Grips: While some firearms come with excellent grips (the side panels on the "grip" of the gun) others have grips that are poorly suited to defensive shooting, are the wrong size for a particular shooter, or are too slick for some users. Fortunately, aftermarket grips can be had for most handguns. These are made of wood, rubber, or nylon and other synthetics. Custom grips can be had in various styles like exotic hardwoods or mother-of-pearl, among other materials, but for defensive guns the first three are best. Rubber grips make the gun easier to maintain a hold on, and many are designed to absorb some recoil as well, with excellent results. However, rubber grips can sometimes be too spongy, and tend to "print" (show up) on clothing in concealment applications. For those who like synthetic grips but find rubber too spongy, grips are made of nylon, derlin, and other synthetics which are durable and may provide a better grip shape than standard grips and don't print. Grips range from about \$20 for rubber or synthetic grips, to \$50 for plain hardwood grips. (Custom wood grips can be had for as much as you care to spend, with proportional amounts of decoration or gaudiness.) Even the polymer framed Glock and HK USP can be improved by the addition of rubber slip-on grips. While aftermarket grips are a matter of personal preference, many guns can be improved measurably by the addition of aftermarket grips and some manufacturers have started putting them on their out-of-box guns. Adding aftermarket grips is usually the most effective and cheapest improvement one can make to a gun.

Aftermarket Stocks (for longarms): Aftermarket stocks can be had for many weapons. The synthetics are popular because of their low maintenance requirements, and can be had in flat, neutral colors that won't reflect light well. One feature that is popular is a pistol grip. While one often sees actors in movies firing a pistol-gripped rifle or shotgun one-handed, the real purpose of the pistol grip is two-fold; to make a magazine loaded weapon easier to handle while loading and unloading, and to permit the shooter to maintain a tighter, more natural grip on the gun in close range

shooting. The pistol grip also arguably makes the gun easier to retain in a snatch situation. Another feature that is even more poorly displayed in movies and less useful over all is the folding stock. While a folding stock does allow the stock to be folded up, reducing bulk, firing the weapon with the stock folded pretty much precludes the use of sights; on shotguns, this is detrimental to accuracy, and on rifles, this makes the gun next to useless at any range. Furthermore, folded stock weapons, by their nature, tend to be a little more delicate and don't absorb recoil nearly as well as a fixed stock weapon. The stocks are often hard to manipulate and may pinch the user. Movie tactics aside, there is really very little use for a folding stock on any weapon, save for the person who wishes to store the weapon with the stock folded in a limited space. For most users, there is no everyday application. Shotguns that have a pistol grip and no buttstock fall into the same category, except that there is no buttstock to fold out. Such weapons can be used by specially trained people who require a low-bulk weapon, but they are difficult to use, not nearly as accurate as a full-stock weapon, and essentially useless for any normal defensive application.

Sights: Good sights are important for accurate shooting, and while some guns, particularly the small caliber "pocket pistols" and derringers hardly need sights, most guns should be well equipped with a good pair of sights. Fortunately, most modern firearms come with at least decent sights, but sometimes a gun owner wants an upgrade.

Fixed sights are just that; fixed. On autoloaders, this usually means that the rear sight can be drifted "for windage", i.e. to shift the point of aim to the left or right, but moving the point of aim up or down requires the services of a gunsmith. Adjustable sights, while permitting the user to easily change the point of aim, tend to be more delicate, more bulky, and more expensive. Defensive pistols are usually seen to come with fixed sights, but for most guns aftermarket adjustable sights can be had for a moderate price. A variety of "sighting systems" are available; while in the past standard "black" sights were common, the current trend is toward "bracketed" or "three-dot" sights that show up better in low light and are easier to align in combat. Also popular are tritium-filled luminescent "night sights" which glow. While considerably more expensive than non-luminescent sights, they are effective for low-light shooting, but some shooters worry about the visibility issue of having several glowing dots on the gun.

Red-dot sights and laser sights are currently very popular with the competition crowd, and seem to find their way into many movies, but contrary to what you might see and hear, they aren't particularly desirable for defensive shooting. Red-dot sights tend to be fairly delicate, and because they force the shooter to look through a tube, they limit vision to a tunnel, which is undesirable in a defensive situation, not to mention that they are too bulky to fit in a standard holster and usually deny the use of the regular iron sights in case the red-dot sight fails. Laser sights are even worse; again, delicate (though the modern LED lasers are much more durable than the gas tube lasers of a few years previous), the battery tends to go out with little or no warning, but worst of all, in any kind of dust, smoke, or fog, a red beam will point straight back to you, making you an extremely visible target. Plus, laser sights typically only work at dusk or darker; fortunately, most modern laser sights, and nearly all that are promoted for carry weapons, are small and do not preclude the use of iron sights. Still, they are mostly expensive toys, and the average user would be better advised to spend the \$200+ with which he might purchase a laser instead upon the equivalent purchase cost of ammunition for training.

One other "sight"-type accessory that is somewhat popular is an underbarrel flashlight. This is, again, a popular one with Hollywood directors, but isn't as useful as it seems, and as pointed out by one firearm novice, "I wouldn't want to have a light shining which makes a perfect target of me!" Exactly! The use of a flashlight in a combat scenario will be discussed later, but as for underbarrel flashlights, they are, like lasers, an expensive toy which, if used improperly (or perhaps at all) will result in a reduction of tactical capabilities. Plus, using the light as a flashlight, but not intending to shoot, violates Rule II.

Rifle and shotgun sights are something of a different matter. Most standard rifle and shotgun sights are pretty poor (either being intended as an aftersight on a scoped gun or for bird hunting, in the case of a shotgun). The best recommendation is the "ghost ring" aperture sight which are like peep sights but large, permitting a fairly wide field of view.

Magazines and Speedloaders: It is often quoted by many people that the average gunfight lasts less than three shots. While the truth of this statement cannot be denied, it is also true that it is a statistic, and you are not. It is desirable to have extra ammo available, in case you run out, and having the ammo in a spare magazine or a speedloader makes it that much faster to reload.

A magazine is a device which holds and feed the ammunition into the chamber of an autoloading weapon. (In contrast, a "clip" simply holds the ammunition but has no feeding device, and the clip, ammo, and all, is inserted into the fixed magazine of a fire arm, as in the Broomhandle Mauser.) Magazines vary in price, and because of the recent high-capacity magazine manufacturing ban, high capacity magazines tend to be quite expensive, making it a definite consideration when purchasing a gun. While magazines can be had from aftermarket suppliers, it is often better to purchase factory magazines unless the quality of the aftermarket magazines is assured, as some (not all) aftermarket manufactures use inferior materials.

A speedloader is a device that allows a shooter to load the five or six chambers of a revolver at once, rather than one or two at a time. Speedloaders are somewhat bulky, but they do speed reloading of the gun considerably, with practice. Speedloaders tend to run at about \$6-\$10.

For some guns, particularly the small backup guns, speedloaders or extra magazines may not be necessary, or even available. For larger, defensive caliber guns, however, they are recommended in most circumstances.

Compensators: The compensator (a port or ports cut into the barrel to bleed off gas in order to reduce felt recoil) can be valuable on some guns, particularly if the shooter is arthritic or has low hand strength, but they do increase muzzle blast and flash, as well as causing a moderate reduction in bullet velocity. Some manufacturers now offer compensators as a standard feature on their guns; if you purchase a gun and decided to have a compensator installed, have it done by a competent smith, preferably one who specializes in that type of work.

Trigger Job: The trigger job is the mainstay of the competition crowd, as it reduces trigger pull (and may clean up a rough or crunchy trigger), but most defensive guns have adequate, if not exceptional triggers. If you decided to have a trigger job done on a defensive gun, select a competent smith (again, preferably one who specializes in such jobs--there are several mail-order gunsmith "houses" that will do this with guaranteed quality) and check the gun thoroughly (both by inspection and by firing) to be certain that the gun is reliable and safe to carry. A bad trigger job can damage the sear, causing the gun to fail, or worse, causing it to go off spontaneously. A carry gun doesn't need a 4 lb. competition trigger.

Extended safety, extended magazine release, extended slide stop, etc: In general, for a defensive gun you'll want to avoid any accessory labeled with the term "extended". This usually means that it is designed for competition use, and often, because of the longer moment arm on the part, it is more susceptible to breaking (particularly with the slide stop). Also, these parts tend to complicate and bulk up the weapon; an extended magazine release, for instance, makes it easy to drop a magazine accidentally. There is some argument for an ambidextrous safety, and possibly for some other features, but most are largely unnecessary and overpriced.

III. Training

"Sit boy, sit. I said SIT! Good boy! No, no, don't get back up! SIT! Damn it..." -- Commonly overheard monologue at dog training seminars.

Seriously, gun training isn't just a trip to the range, or a four hour safety and handling course, or even a \$1000 "Expert" course at Thunder Ranch. While professional, structured training is recommended (in accordance with interest and budget) this is just an opportunity to pick up technique which will be enforced by later practice. Training is an ongoing event; a shooter should always be conscious of gun safety. Grip and trigger technique are psychomotor skills that must be exercised or they will degenerate. While standards of training vary, there is hardly such a thing as too much; the more you practice, the better you'll be, so it pays to put in as much time and money as you reasonably can, particularly when learning to shoot, but even after you've mastered the skills, you'll need to refresh with a trip to the range at least once a month, combined with regular dry-fire practice when you can't make it to the range.

A. Basic gun training and handling:

Basic gun safety and handling is best learned from an instructor who can correct your mistakes and prevent you from reinforcing bad habits. The best way to find a class is either to contact the National Rifle Association or a local gun club. Basic safety and shooting classes shouldn't be very expensive; in fact, many instructors charge just enough to cover expenses, so if you are quoted a price that is way out of line, shop around.

Although previously stated, it is so important that it bears saying again: Know the Four Rules of Safe Gun Handling by heart, and live by them. Every time you pick up a gun, go over them in your mind. The rules are:

- All guns are always loaded. (Note that it does not say to pretend the gun is loaded. It **is** loaded.)
- Never let the muzzle cover anything you are not willing to destroy.
- Keep your finger off the trigger until your sights are on the target.
- Be sure of your target (and what is behind it.)

You should cultivate a good understanding of the function of all common firearms--after all, you may find yourself in a situation in which you must use or disable an unfamiliar firearm, perhaps even an attacker's gun. A good training course should allow you the opportunity to try several types of guns and some gun ranges will let you shoot everything on the rental rack for a fixed hourly charge.

B. Know your gun:

While you should be familiar with the operation of different types of firearms, you should have a particular knowledge of your arm, so that you might pick it up in the dark and know the operation by touch and instinct. You ought to be able to check if the gun is loaded, reload the gun, clear a jam, operate the safety controls, and field-strip and return it to battery exclusively by touch. If you keep a gun in the home, by the bedside or in the bedroom, you should know exactly where it is, how to get to it, and the condition of the gun. Consistency is a big factor here; always keep your gun in the same place. If you decide to move it to a new place, practice going and drawing the gun in the dark for a few minutes to retrain yourself.

The same is true if you carry a gun on your person; try to carry the same gun, carry it in the same place, and in the same condition all of the time. Sometimes this isn't feasible; for instance, a gun owner who carries a concealed weapon may carry a gun in a IWB holster while in business attire, but in a fanny pack in more casual situations. In such a case, practice drawing from each holster, and be aware which one you have on. When you practice, use your carry gun and draw from your carry holster in a variety of positions (sitting, standing facing toward the target, facing away from the target, etc.)

You should be able to operate the safety mechanism by instinct. The only reason you'll draw the gun in public is to use it, so disengaging the safety (if the gun has a manual safety) should be an automatic part of drawing the weapon; when you draw it for other purposes, you'll leave the safety engaged, of course.

C. Mental preparation:

It has been said before, and is worth saying again, that the only reason you should draw your weapon is in preparation to use it. Don't draw it to threaten, or frighten, or impress; if it comes out of the holster anywhere except the range or your home, you ought to be prepared to discharge it at another person. You must be mentally prepared, so that, while understanding the consequences of shooting someone, even when fully justified, you are of the attitude of "Him or me!" Once you've made the decision to use the gun, the rest should just be tactics; there should be no mental debating or emotional anguish once the gun is drawn; the shooter should accept the fact that he will, in all likelihood, shoot and kill the attacker. If the attacker sees the gun and backs down, then don't shoot...but don't draw expecting him to back down--draw, expecting to shoot and having already placed conditions (if he makes one step closer, I'll shoot) based upon the legal and practical conditions of the situation.

This kind of preparation is difficult to cultivate; it isn't something learned by a linear process. Martial artists and boxers sometimes cultivate this as part of their "attitude training". Basically, envision, in your mind, practical defensive situations. Impose real, practical limits, and do the first thing that comes to mind, running through the scenario in "real-time". Once you've completed the scenario analyze what you did; think about what you should have done; what was rash or wrongheaded. Think about the players; if there is more than one attacker, did you leave a blind spot where he could hit you? Were you justified in shooting?

This kind of "fantasy" can be very useful in analyzing your attitudes and actions, and if used constructively, can help you revise your tactics. If you approach it honestly, you'll find that there are considerable limitations to your ability; unlike in action movies, the bad guys won't come one at a time, and you'll be lucky to handle three attackers.

This also means learning the laws and examining a few cases involving self-defense and liability; these will probably alter your attitude, too. If you had any visions of rushing in to stop a crime in progress or shooting an attacker and riding into the sunset, this will put a bucket of dirty mop water on your ideas. Even in a justified shooting you can expect to suffer exceptional emotional and financial drain, and so you'll hopefully give consideration to avoiding the kind of confrontation in which it becomes necessary to draw your weapon.

D. Basic marksmanship:

Marksmanship is a very important part of training...which is not to undermine the importance of weapon familiarity, tactics, and especially attitude. While in all probability, you will not exercise much of the skills of basic firearms marksmanship--most shootings take place at near- touching range, where sights become superfluous and the basic skills of marksmanship are dumped in favor of speed--but every shooter ought know and master basic marksmanship skills. Anybody can walk up to a man sized target and hit it at seven feet (well, nearly anyone, though there are many documented cases where people have failed to hit their targets even at that range); at greater range though, a basis in marksmanship, combined with the coolness to aim the gun rather than "spray-and-pray" (random, movie-style firing), will permit you to hit an attacker at a distance while his meager skills prevent him from getting anything by a unlikely random hit on you. Most people, and particularly criminals, which by and large are totally untrained in firearms marksmanship, can't hit the broad side of a barn at 30 feet; if you can reliably hit a man-sized target at that distance, you'll have a distinct edge.

Dry fire: Dry fire is the practice of firing an unloaded weapon in order to maintain and improve shooting skills while not on the range. It can also reveal handling errors which are masked by recoil. When dry firing, one must first ensure that the weapon is unloaded. It is best to unload the weapon, put the ammo in another room, and then check the weapon again. Even when dry-firing, it is important to follow the rules of gun safety; use a backstop (a stack of bound papers will work) and make certain that no one will cross the path of the gun; it only takes one time for a tragedy, so don't pass these precautions off as unnecessary.

Many shooters go out and burn up box after box of expensive ammo while barely gaining skill, or in some cases, reinforcing bad habits. Using dry fire can significantly reduce the amount of live ammo you must shoot in order to become proficient. Trigger technique, from start to release, can be examined in detail, and many exercises, like sight alignment, can be performed in dry-fire.

There is some concern that when dry-firing a weapon one can damage the firing pin when the pin hits something other than the intended primer. While in some of the cheaper .22 pistols dry-fire can damage the chamber wall, most guns have no problem with a moderate amount of dry-fire, and some actually require a dry shot as part of disassembly. Still, if the concern exists, fake rounds called "snap caps" can be inserted into the chamber, which will accept the energy of the firing pin, reducing the stress on the pin. If you do dry-fire frequently (or even if you don't) you should be in the habit of checking the firing pin, which is one of the components most likely to fail.

Trigger control: One of the most important aspects of hitting the target is trigger control. You'll notice, if you watch movies, how most actors tend to jerk their weapon every time they pull the trigger. While they always seem to hit their target (thanks to the magic of FX technicians), in real life such poor control would cause the bullet to fly off to the side, failing to hit the target and possibly hitting a bystander.

There are actually several aspects to trigger control; when to place the finger, how to place the finger, and the grip of the hand on the gun. These factors should work together so that when the trigger is pulled the sights remain on target throughout the action. There should be no jerking except the slight action of the hammer when the sear is released. You shouldn't aim the gun to compensate for poor trigger technique; this won't work anyway, as bad trigger technique isn't consistent enough to compensate for. Acquiring good technique may require a modicum of grip strength training, but it really depends much more on performing the action correctly and consistently than in the strength of the grip.

The most common mistake in gun handling that happens anytime an inexperienced person (like a action-movie lead) handles a firearm is that the person immediately placed their finger in the trigger guard, and frequently resting on the trigger. This is, of course, a major violation of Rule #3 and one that you should strive to avoid. When handling the weapon, learn to draw the weapon *and place your finger along the frame, outside the trigger guard*. The only time your finger should go inside the trigger guard is when you have aligned the sights on target, and the only time the finger

should touch the trigger is as an immediate precursor to firing. Different experts have different suggestions about finger placement, but one of the best suggestions is to place the finger above the trigger, along the frame, slightly bent so that the finger only need drop down and sideways into the trigger guard. This should be one of your drills, both when dry-firing and range practice, to the point at which it becomes automatic. Many weapons have some kind of obstruction on the frame--the Glock as the takedown lever, S&W revolvers have a frame screw, Beretta-type autos have an external disconnect--so use whatever tactile cue works for you, or place a glob of nail polish to create your own cue for finger placement.

The placement of the finger on the trigger is an issue of debate. Some people maintain that one should always place the pad of the finger (before the first joint) squarely upon the trigger, regardless of action type. While this may work for the large-pawed and those with great hand strength, many find it difficult to keep the sights on target while drawing the long action of a double action weapon. For those with small hands, some guns, particularly double-stack autoloading pistols, may be nearly impossible to manage with the finger in this position. For that reason many people use the first joint of the finger, which keeps the rest of the finger snugged up against the frame of the gun and tends to stabilize the action of drawing the pistol. This is a situation in which the best thing to do is the one that works for you; you aren't target shooting, the gun you'll be using is likely to have a trigger pull in excess of 6 lbs--quite possibly as much as 12 lbs--and one technique doesn't work for everyone.

The grip style is one of the most important and least mentioned factors in trigger technique. One need not strangle the gun in order to maintain a good grip, but a sloppy, weak grip will definitely contribute to bad technique and poor shooting. First of all, although you may use a two-handed grip, the non-shooting hand should only provide support or bracing for the shooting hand; the grip should be a function of the shooting hand alone. Some firearms have the front of the trigger guard "dished", in accordance with a grip technique that came into fashion a few years ago, in which one placed the index finger of the non-firing hand on the front of the trigger guard. This is an inadvisable technique; for one, it promotes dependency upon a two-handed grip, and for another, most shooters, particularly when tired or stressed, tend to use the finger to pull one way on the trigger guard, setting up a "dynamic tension" triangle in which the firing hand resists the pull. While this can result in a stable grip, it tends to fatigue the firing hand prematurely. An equally solid grip should be possible by judicious placement of the gripping fingers and support of the firing hand by the non-firing hand.

As previously mentioned, the placement of the firing finger is dependant upon the gun and the shooter, and while some small-pawed people may be effectively unable to use large guns, most people can handle just about any gun with the proper hand grip. The thumb may or may not be used to "lock down" the weapon and keep it from turning in the grip; in single action weapons this is optional; some professional instructors prefer a "thumb up" grip. On double actions, and particularly with revolvers, the thumb is generally held down to counteract torsion on the gun. The middle finger should also be used to counteract torsion. It should be locked down tightly AROUND the grip of the gun, with the third segment braced against the trigger pull. The last two fingers, being the most distant from the pivot point (at the web of the hand) are in the best position to counteract the moment arm of the trigger forces--as such, these should be braced primarily to prevent fore and aft movement of the grip.

If you go to the range, and find that your shooting isn't as good as you think it ought be, you'll want to try a few minutes of dry-fire to make certain your trigger technique is correct. Concentrate on technique; in basic marksmanship, the release of the sear should be a surprise.

Sight alignment: Sight alignment ought to be a pretty simple task; unfortunately, many people get it wrong. It isn't enough simply to put the sights on target; they need to stay there throughout the pull of the trigger. Most handgun sights are designed to be superimposed upon the target, and many have "three dot" markings so that the dots should be aligned. The dots (or the profile of the sight, if it is just a plain black sight) should be in line, neither above nor below. Ideally, one should have both eyes open, using the firing-side eye to target. However, some people have a problem called cross-dominance, in which the dominant eye is on the opposite side as the dominant hand. This makes it difficult to focus the sights in the normal manner. There are two ways to combat this; either closing the dominant eye, so that the firing-side eye is the only targeting eye, or cock the head so that the dominant eye is in line with the sights and the firing-side eye can't see the sights. Either is an imperfect solution, but the only other alternative, retraining the eyes, is not a trivial feat.

When bringing the sights to bear, the front sight should precede the rear sight in vision, so that the front sight appears

first, and then the rear sights come up and nestle the front sight. Target and IPSC shooters are often taught to follow the sights, but in a defensive situation you'll want to keep your eyes on the situation. Accordingly, you'll bring the sights in the line of vision, and once they are up you should focus on the front sight, complete the aligning process, and fire. This entire action should take a fraction of a second, and should be so automatic that there is no thought involved. Once the sights are on the target, you should endeavor to maintain them in the same location; if you find them wavering significantly, don't attempt to "take an average" and fire when they swing through the target point. Rather, work on your grip, or if you are fatigued, take a break. In a defensive situation, the adrenalin will make you jumpy anyway, so training in keeping the sights steady, even in basic marksmanship, goes a long way toward becoming an accurate shooter.

Stance: There are probably as many stances as there are firearms "experts", but the three basic, accepted stances are the isosceles stance, in which one stands with the legs as two members of a triangle, the Weaver stance, where the non-firing leg goes out in front, bent at the knee with two hands holding the gun, and the "New Technique" stance, in which the user stands face front, with the knees bend (like the horse stance in many forms of the martial arts), again with two hands. These stances are better seen than discussed, and each may have their place, but the Weaver seems to be the most popular.

While stance is important, in many defensive confrontations you may not have time to adopt a traditional stance. It is important to get into a stable position (the recoil probably won't knock you over but you'll be better able to hold your sights on target) regardless of the particular stance. This will be discussed later.

Use targets: Knocking cans around the range can be fun, and for certain exercises can even be instructive, but for learning basic marksmanship it is nearly useless. You should start with paper targets; the holes show where you are hitting, which will help you identify your mistakes. A target can be used for several times by using "pasties", stickers, or even just a marking pen to identify previous holes. The silhouette targets are very popular, but for basic marksmanship aren't really necessary; the first thing you need to learn is to place the bullet on target. You need not even use standard targets; with a printer you can make your own, or you can paste stickers onto a piece of paper, or any set up which creates a point of aim from which to measure your deviation. (Barney stickers are a particular favorite of many shooters, as are the PostScript Barney targets available at certain Web sites.)

Using a paper target requires a stand. While you can nail a target to a tree, this isn't a very good ideal; some hardwoods are actually hard enough to ricochet a bullet back to you, and of course, it damages the tree. There are portable stands one can buy, but any decent handyman should be able to knock up a reasonably portable target stand from scrap lumber. Large cardboard boxes also make good disposable stands, particularly if one is placed on top of another.

Target shooting is generally done around 25 yards with a pistol; however, most defensive shootings occur at dramatically less distance. If you are training only for defensive shooting, the best advice is to select the longest distance you intend to fire (for instance, if you are a homeowner or a business owner, select the longest straight-line distance in your house or business) and work up to it, starting from around 7 yards. The accuracy you will get is a function not only of your skill, but of distance and the intrinsic accuracy of the gun and ammo as well. The "group size" (the distance between the two most distant hits) will vary from gun to gun and ammo to ammo, but if you can place a group at point-of-aim which you can cover with your hand, you are doing pretty well (for that distance). In any case, 25 yards is about the maximum training distance for a handgun; although accuracy at greater ranges can be attained by experienced shooters, this is about the best anyone can be expected to do under fire, and if you can place your shots well at this distance you are well prepared, in terms of accuracy skill, for a defensive shooting.

One final note: When you are done practicing, clean up your mess. Pick up your brass (even .22s), clean up any cans or food wrapping and take it all with you. Don't leave a mess and please don't shoot glass. Many public ranges have been closed due to vandalism or just plain carelessness on the part of a minority of shooters. Don't spoil the fun for everybody; leave the place as clean as you found it, if not cleaner.

E. Defensive Training:

Defensive training is quite a bit different than basic marksmanship. While a marksman is only expected to perform in good conditions, using a standard stance, a defensive shooter might have to fire from a variety of positions, in various poor conditions, with tactical disadvantage, and of course, while opponents are charging or firing back. While it isn't

possible to simulate all of these conditions, a defensive shooter must train so as to be prepared for such events. A shooter who is experience only in punching a round paper target in good lighting with a two-handed stance is not prepared to draw and fire from a sitting position, in the dark, at the silhouette of an attacker.

Tube Training: The term "tube training" refers to gun handling information learned from watching movies and television. You have probably already noticed a certain animosity in this document toward such techniques. Let me go so far as to say that virtually anything you see on the movies or the television about handling, using, or firing a weapon is incorrect, if not actually dangerous. Such tube training is better used as a lesson on what *not* to do when handling a firearm. This includes shows like "COPS" which often show police officers handling their weapons in incorrect and unsafe ways. Even actors who are noted for their real-life knowledge of firearms handling often handle firearms improperly on screen, presumably at the behest of gun-ignorant directors.

In a real defensive situation you don't blast away with reckless abandon. Unlike the movies, the bullets don't just disappear if they fail to hit the criminals. They can hit innocent people, and even if they do hit an attacker they may pass through him, posing a danger to those on the far side, a situation known as overpenetration. You can be held liable for this, both in civil and criminal court. Also, in the movies, the good guy's gun can often fire as many shots as needed without running dry at an inopportune moment. You don't have the luxury of multiple takes, so pay attention to reality. In the movies, the bad guys all fall immediately from a flurry of martial arts blows and a hail of gunfire, while the hero, if he does manage to get shot, takes a "flesh wound", and in macho fashion usually denies needing medical treatment. In reality, criminals may not go down on the first shot, or the fifth, and you can easily be injured. Nobody is going to yell "Cut!" if you screw up, so learn real-life tactics.

Two particularly bad demonstrations of "tube training" are in the loading of weapons. Actors are often shown loading a revolver and then flipping the cylinder shut, which is not only bad technique but also may damage the gun by bending the ejector rod and the crane. The cylinder should be eased, quickly but gently, back into position by the non-firing hand. Similarly, with semi-automatic weapons, actors are shown placing a round in the chamber and releasing the slide. This, too, is improper and may lead to a breakage of the ejector, or in some cases, premature detonation of the round as the firing pin extends outside its tunnel when the slide falters and the ejector strikes the rim of the casing. When loading a semi-automatic handgun, rounds should only be fed from the magazine. If you want to load the gun to full capacity, a full magazine should be inserted, a round chambered, and then the magazine removed, topped off, and replaced.

Defensive shooting schools:

There are many schools dedicated to training defensive shooting. Some of the most popular are Gunsite and Thunder Ranch, but there are also smaller schools of roughly equivalent quality. Selecting one is mostly a matter of talking to people who have been to those schools, and questioning instructors.

Are these schools worth the cost? It depends; obviously, most defensive shooters don't go to these schools, and many perform adequately without such training. On the other hand, these schools will re-enforce good technique and will permit a shooter to train under more realistic situations than he might otherwise be able to set up. Those who have an interest in shooting may certainly find them worth their while, and any edge is an advantage, but attending one of these classes isn't an absolute necessity, if one reads the literature on defensive shooting and trains regularly, one can probably reach roughly the same level of competence, though perhaps at greater eventual expense and time.

Training on your own:

You may decide that you don't want, or can't afford, to attend one of these schools. Even if you do, you'll still do some training on your lonesome, at least as a refresher. In self-training it is important to avoid re-enforcing bad habits, like placing the finger on the trigger prematurely or bad sight alignment.

First of all, again you'll want to train under somewhat realistic circumstances. Getting involved in "practical" shooting might seem like a good way to pick up skills, however, while the original intent of so-called "practical" shooting was to emphasize and investigate real-world techniques, practical shooting has become a sport, involving the use of extremely specialized, non-defensive weapons, and tactics that are inadvisable at best. Most tactical shooting courses have the shooter firing at ten or more targets, requiring high magazine capacity. Most occur at ranges between 20 and 50 feet, in bright daylight, with easily identified targets. The targets don't usually weave or dodge, and the never, ever, shoot back,

nor is the shooter generally encouraged to seek cover before firing.

In a real defensive encounter, you will probably be accosted at close range, often in the dark, and otherwise in circumstances that you would not have chosen. Your attackers will probably be within 7 yards, and quite possibly within touching distance. You may or may not have the opportunity to seek cover, but your first instinct ought to be to look for cover while drawing your weapon, rather than plunking down into a stance out in the open.

You don't want targets shooting back, of course, but you might imagine that they are. For instance, you might want to simulate taking cover, giving yourself a time limit in which to hit the target, and if you don't make it under the limit, YOU "got hit". Learn to use barricades and other forms of cover and concealment. When using a barricade, it is usually best to stay a little back from the barricade rather than snuggling up to it, so as to be able to take full cover more quickly. You might set up "enemy" and "friendly" targets, and try to only hit the "enemy" targets. You'll also want to practice drawing and firing from sitting, lying, and prone positions; you may have to defend yourself from a carjacker, or someone who breaks into your hotel room while you are sleeping. Try to practice for any situation in which you might find yourself. The best way to practice is to set up drills; keep running through these drills, and if necessary, record your performance to see how well you are doing and what you need to concentrate on. Many drills can be done at home, with dry-fire.

You'll want to pay particular attention to drawing from your holster, or from however you carry your weapon. People often flub the draw by grabbing clothing, or gripping the gun improperly, particularly when under stress. Practicing your draw should be another drill, and it should be one smooth motion, from holster to aim. If you wear a jacket, the non-firing hand may be used to sweep clothing out of the way. While you are at it, you might try drawing with the non-firing hand; you may find yourself in a situation in which your strong hand is injured, forcing you to shoot with the weak hand. You need to learn to draw and fire with the weak hand as well as the normal shooting hand. Because you are learning by "muscle memory" it is important to keep the gun in the same place; don't change carry methods or the placement of a home defense gun frequently, and if you do, spend some time re-training your instincts.

Another drill, besides drawing and aiming, is clearing a malfunction. On a revolver this is either trivial or impossible; either the bullet doesn't fire, you pull the trigger and advance to the next chamber, or the mechanism fails, rendering the gun useless until it is taken to the gunsmith. With an autoloader, however, failures can occur due to bad ammo, loose grip, or just a happenstance, like clothing being caught in the ejection port. You should learn to clear these failures automatically, using the "tap-rack-bang" drill; that is, when a failure occurs in which the ejection port is closed, you should tap the bottom of the magazine with the heel of the hand, rack the slide, and pull the trigger. If the ejection port is open, either with a "stovepipe" jam in which a spent cartridge gets caught in the port, an "ejection failure" in which the spent cartridge remains in the chamber, or a "twin feed" in which the magazine attempts to feed two bullets at once, causing a jam, the slide should be locked back, the magazine partially removed, the offending cartridge or loaded round removed either by plucking it out, or if loose, turning the gun upside down and shaking the offending mass out, tapping the magazine back into place and racking the slide if necessary. These drills should become nearly automatic. Of course, if you have a "backup" weapon, you'll want to draw it first rather than mess with clearing a jam, but if not, you need to take cover and clear the malfunction immediately.

One category of techniques that are popular with many of the would-be combat shooting "experts" are "flashlight positions". Like stances, there are as many out there as there are "experts" and each proponent seems to have his own favored position named after him. While a flashlight can be a useful thing in a defensive situation, it's a bad idea to stand behind a flashlight, making a beautiful center-of-mass target. It is better to wait in the shadows and cultivate night vision rather than give away any degree of tactical surprise, particularly if you know that your opponent is armed with a firearm. Furthermore, these positions preclude the use of a more stable, two-handed grip. Unless you are a member of a SWAT team or really want to look cool at expense to your safety, you can ignore these tactics.

Point shooting:

Point shooting is a topic so controversial that it demands its own discussion. Some people simply do not "believe" in point shooting. To them one must always index the sights visually, or you are in violation of safe firearm handling. Others endorse it thoroughly, praising it beyond its realistic abilities. In truth, point shooting is a technique that has its advantages and limitations, and it is a mistake to dismiss it out of hand or to adopt it universally.

First off all, point shooting is NOT "spray-and-pray", unaimed shooting. It is, rather, a technique by which one aims the gun through hand-eye coordination. This is not unlike the way an experienced driver can drive a car without constant visual indexing of the car against the sidelines. Of course, when one goes through a narrow aperture or around an unfamiliar curve, one might resort to a frequent visual index to assure that the car stays on the road. The same is true with point shooting; with a fire arm with which the shooter is familiar, at close range, it can be relatively accurate, but with an unfamiliar firearm or at a larger distance, such fire might not be considered "aimed" at all. It is without a doubt that in terms of accuracy and shot placement alone, visually indexed fire is superior to point shooting, and no experienced shooter would claim to be a better shot by point shooting than by visual aiming. Why, then, would one resort to point shooting?

While in accuracy terms point shooting may be an inferior technique, there are tactical concerns which might make aimed fire disadvantageous. For instance, an attacker might be upon you before you can fire your weapon. In such a case, were your weapon a ready drawn but unaimed, you would not wish to bring the weapon up to eye level and extended out to arm's length, exposing it to a grapple. In such a situation you would prefer to keep the weapon low and close to the body where an attacker will have less chance of taking, or possibly even seeing the weapon. Another case might be a situation in which you fire from a non-standing position; for instance, let us imagine hypothetically, that you are the target of a "bump and jack" car-jacking. By the time you regain your wits, your attacker might already be at your door, having broken or preparing to break the window. Your best option is to hit the gas, but if a car or other obstruction is in front of you that option may not be available, and your next option is to use your firearm. Will you turn fully and extend the gun at eye level, or will you simply point the gun in the direction of the attacker (who is, in this scenario a few feet away, at most) and fire? A third reason you might use point fire is that the background lighting may be insufficient to permit you to align the sights. While this is an argument for luminescent sights, the possibility still exists that you may be able to identify a silhouette as an aggressor but have insufficient light to see the sights. In such a situation a defender might spend several seconds trying to align sights while an opponent has the opportunity to fire or charge.

Opponents of point fire argue that these cases are irrelevant, that no trained fighter should allow a potential attacker to get this close before drawing a weapon. While this may be true, the truth is also that this can happen; you might be tired, or for some reason unobservant, and even if you are following tactical procedures fully you can still be the target of an unavoidable maneuver. "Experts" who argue that this CAN'T happen are denying the fact that it does happen, and fail to recognize that on the street, unlike the range or the dojo, such things can happen to the best of fighters, not to mention the average Joe, and such a claim is parallel to the sensei who fails to teach falling technique on the grounds that his students shouldn't ever have to fall. There are no guarantees in a fight. Don't bet that someone can't do it; be prepared for it.

That being said, point shooting is no replacement for aimed fire. As previously stated, when tactically possible, aimed fire is always preferable. Point shooting is a supplemental technique, to be used when aiming visually would take too long or would expose the weapon to a snatch attempt.

The maximum range of point shooting depends upon the shooter, but few people can reliably hit a target beyond 30 feet with point shooting. Thankfully, this is probably the longest distance one would ever wish to fire without aiming; at 30 feet it takes a fast man around 2 seconds to reach the shooter, by which time a shooter can fire four or five rounds. Since the vast majority of shootings take place at less than 30 feet--in fact, many occur at touching or "melee" range--point shooting becomes a very valid technique.

In point shooting the gun should stay close to the body. There are several forms of point shooting; one which is popular is the "rock-and-lock" style in which the gun is held by the ribcage, facing the same direction as the shooter. Another form is to keep the forearm of the shooting hand at the same level as the floating ribs, moving the torso as necessary. My personal variation on this is to put the nonshooting arm above the gun to thwart snatch attempts and deflect brass that may fly up into the face. If this is done, it is important to keep the arm out of the line of fire; I place my hand at chest level, straight across, with the elbow pointing forward. Whatever form you select, based upon what feels most comfortable to you, be certain to keep the nonfiring arm out of the way; with the gun so close, and particularly when trying to stop a snatch, it is easy to let the arm cross the path of the barrel, so train against that instinct. It is important to be consistent when point shooting; after all, you are doing this all by hand-eye coordination, so keeping the stance and hold the same is very important in order to develop consistent accuracy. Train for a variety of positions in which you would have to use point shooting. For instance, you might be sitting, or standing but turned to the side, and so forth.

When training for point shooting, start close, with the target at 10 feet or less. When point shooting, include drawing from holster as part of the drill (and be careful to obey Rule #3.) Once you've mastered shooting at that range, move the target out a nother 5 feet, and repeat. You will probably be surprised at how fast range can deteriorate accuracy; there will come a point at which you simply can't hit the main torso area of the target (if you are using a silhouette target) accurately. For most people, this is somewhere between 15 to 30 feet. This is the maximum range at which you should consider point shooting.

Point shooting requires constant training, just as does visually aimed fire, but with point shooting this is imperative; the only way you have to determine where the bullet is going is how your body "knows" the proper position. If you select a new weapon, you'll also have to practice with it, going through the whole routine, as it is likely to throw off your sense of aim. As with any psychomotor skill, you must exercise it in order to maintain it, but people are visually oriented, and without the direct visual cues a skill becomes significantly more difficult and more easily forgotten.

Do not bother trying to learn some of the "tactical" point shooting skills shown in the movies and on the television. Skills like firing while jumping through the air or firing while rolling across the floor are just plain useless; whatever method you use to fire, if you aren't in a stable position, it is unlikely that you will hit anything, and certainly not while your point of aim moves rapidly or rotates from your perspective.

Point shooting is a difficult skill; don't be frustrated if at first you have little success. Concentrate on trigger technique and dry firing practice, and spend a few minutes every range period in point shooting, and you will develop a skill for it.

F. Melee and "empty hand" defense:

The term "melee" refers to close combat in which the participants do not use any kind of projectile weapons; unarmed or "empty hand" fighting is a special form of melee in which the participant does not have any weapons save his hands, feet, and other appendages (and, of course, the grey one between the ears.) The distinction is less than people often imagine; the use of melee weapons (clubs, knives) is really nothing more than an extension of unarmed fighting. The weapon is used in the same way that a natural "weapon" would be, except that it allows the user greater range and/or penetration.

It is not the purpose of this document to serve as a primer for unarmed self-defense; that is a topic that manages to fill up many volumes of books written by people more experienced than myself, and even then it is questionable that one can learn unarmed combat from any book. Rather than attempting to cover the topic in detail while endeavoring to be brief, I will instead highlight the topics of interest, give a few suggestions as to appropriate and inappropriate forms, and reference the reader to one or more of the books in Appendix D which covers this topic in greater detail.

The reader might ask, "If you aren't going to cover this topic in detail, why cover it at all?" The response to that is that although this manual is written with the firearm-possessing defender in mind, anyone who carries a weapon for defense ought to be prepared to fight unarmed if required. You might find yourself in a situation in which you wish to defend yourself without drawing a firearm, or in a situation in which your opponent is too close to permit you to draw your arm without risking a snatch. In such a situation, a modicum of unarmed fighting skill can give you the ability to escape or create a barrier of distance from which you can better defend yourself. Unarmed fighting doesn't require great strength or a funny pajamas and a dark-hued belt; it requires a basic understanding of what part of the body hurts the most when hit, what part of the body is best used to hit other people in order to cause them to hurt or stunned, and how to put the two together to place an effective strike in an effective place. Being able to execute a back-spin kick/crescent kick combination is impressive, but an elbow to the temple or a fist to the bladder is often just as effective and much easier to learn.

In unarmed fighting, the tendency of most people, no doubt based upon years of this portrayal in movies, is to throw a punch at the face. Not only is this obvious, it is often ineffective, not to mention injurious to the fist in question. While the face has several good targets, these tend to be more of the stunning sort; no one ever died from a black eye, and while a broken nose might hurt, it won't stop an attacker from pummeling you into the ground. The jaw, where such hits are usually aimed, contains one of the most powerful muscles in the body, and the mandible is an arch shape which as any structure engineer can testify, is able to withstand considerable force before fracturing. (In fact, most "broken jaws" aren't broken at all, but rather dislocated from their socket.)

On the other hand, targets like the kidneys, the bladder, and the solar plexus are poorly armored and very effective stoppers when struck solidly. Furthermore, they are uncommon targets among the uninitiated so that while an attacker might instinctively shield his face, he will often leave other targets open. The knee is a particularly good target; it is very difficult to protect, fairly easily damaged, and once someone takes a good knee shot, they will go down and stay down.

One myth of unarmed fighting is the "ball shot". Strikes to the groin are old hat; anyone who has been around the block knows of them and expects one. They aren't always effective, either. There are folks who, by virtue of experience, can take a solid groin strike and keep on moving. They might be crossing their eyes when they walk for the next few days, but they'll ignore the immediate pain in favor of imprinting their fist on your body or sticking a knife between your ribs. Groin strikes are better saved as a secondary move, after the opponent has opened himself up and you've stunned him.

Effective unarmed self-defense begins with balance. The reason a lot of black belts get pummelled on the street is that while they've gone through the ranks and learned all sorts of gee-whiz moves, they left their balance back with their yellow belt...if indeed it was ever stressed at all. Anytime you get off balance you are prone to attack. If you stay in balance, your ability to withstand attack becomes much greater, because you aren't fighting yourself to stay up as well as fighting your opponent. Most styles of karate and other martial arts teach several stances, but the basic theme is to stay low, keep your feet at least shoulder width, and keep the front knee bent, both for enhanced balance and to better withstand knee shots. You want to keep th at balance when moving, so it is important to practice standing and moving in stance until in a fight it becomes a natural reaction. It is easy to knock someone down when they are standing straight up, feet together; it is not so easy when they are in a deep, wide stance. If you train in some form of martial arts (karate, boxing, etc.) or spar informally with friends, practice keeping your balance.

The second most important aspect of unarmed fighting is blocking. You should learn to block an opponent's strikes so that they don't hit you; the "stand and take it" attitude may work for John Wayne in the movies but black eyes and busted noses are no fun, so learn to block. A block is actually a strike; blocking should be a snapping motion attacking the striking member, which should stop the attack, injure the offending arm or leg, and open the opponent to subsequent strikes. Learn to throw multiple blocks, and how to recognize when a punch is coming at you and what type of block works best to stop that type of punch. If you studying martial arts formally, train hard on the blocks; a double butterfly kick may look more impressive, but a solid block has more utility.

Strikes are what most people think of when fighting, but there are several martial arts forms that have little to do with striking. In aikido, for instance, an opponent is taken down simply by using his own momentum and imbalance against him. Such skill takes time to develop, but it does prevent one from bruising the hands and feet, and provides an apt demonstration to the importance of maintaining good balance. Strikes can be broken down into four basic categories; feints, jabs, grapples, and thrusts. (In his book, *_Cheap_Shots,_Ambushes,_And_Other_Lessons_*, Marc MacYoung refers to these as Setups, Rattlers, Maimers, and Nighty-Nite Bunny Rabbits, respectively.) Feints, jabs, and thrusts can be done with any striking surface (fist, feet, elbow, etc.) while a grapple is pretty much limited to the hands.

A feint is a type of strike that may make light contact but is really intended to trick your opponent into losing his balance or opening up a better target. Feints use arm movement only (or whatever limb is striking); no weight is committed. (Commitment describes the amount of inertia put into a strike; an arm strike uses only the strength of the arm, while a more powerful strike might us torso or hip movement as well.) A jab is a more potent blow, intended to make contact and do some damage. It usual ly requires a greater degree of commitment, with a corresponding amount of damage. (An exception is the vaunted "2 inch" and "3 inch" punches of expert martial artists, but these require a degree of skill that is irrelevant here.) A grapple is a differe nt type of strike; while the grappler make slap or hit the opponent, the main damage comes from the grabbing action. For instance, a grappler might strike the groin, but then grab and squeeze the, uh, well, you get the idea. A grappler might hit the face and then attempt to gouge the eyes or tear the ear off. (Yes, this is gory stuff. However, in a combat situation, your duty isn't to protect your attacker or succumb to queasiness. You want to live, and to do that you want to take down the attacker in the most efficient manner possible. If this means gouging, tearing, or ripping, so be it...he made the decision to attack you, and so the responsibility is his for making the mistake of attacking the sheepdog rather than the sheep.) Grapples can be very effective moves, but require quickness. While they are done primarily with the hands, they don't really require great hand strength, though long fingernails are of benefit. A thrust is a very powerful blow, usually requiring the commitment of the entire body. Many inexperienced fighters throw thrust-type blows as the first shot, putting themselves off balance. A thrust is better thrown after the attacker is stunned or tired, when he will not be as likely to

block effectively.

Flashy maneuvers involving spinning or kicking above the waist are very popular with some of the Oriental martial arts crowd, but in fact these moves will get you hurt or killed in a real fight. When performing this type of move the defender is usually off-balance. In the case of a high kick, he is also opening himself to a very easy counterattack, due to his off-balance state, exposure of targets, and time required to connect. Most streetfighters advise against high kicks, preferring to kick for the knee or shin.

Although not popular in commercial fighting sports like boxing or kickboxing, sweeps, reaps, and throws are very effective maneuvers that require little strength on the part of the user. A sweep is a forward motion of the leg which sweeps one or both legs out from under the opponent. A reap is basically the same action as a sweep except it is a reverse motion of the leg; the reap is more powerful than a sweep, but takes longer to get the leg into position. A throw is done by pivoting the opponent across the hip or back, using the leg strength to lift and propel the opponent. When executing a throw it is important to snug the hip up to the opponent, keeping the hip below the intended pivot, and just back into the opponent while pulling him around the pivot. Properly done, there is very little one can do to resist a throw.

When performing a sweep or throw the most important action is to stay low in stance and maintain balance. Often, when these are done in the movies or by inexperienced people, raw strength is used to execute the action, but the proper way uses the imbalance and inertia of the opponent to force him against himself. It often helps to do something to put the attacker off balance; for instance, if you are preparing to throw someone, it is beneficial to put an elbow in his solar plexus to prevent struggle while executing the throw. Another point is timing; timing is everything in a sweep or throw, not only in executing the initial act but in delivering the opponent to the ground. A well timed throw will open an opponent up and force him to hit the ground spreadeagled with head, elbows, and ankles slamming against the floor, while a different timing will jerk the opponent from harm (useful when practicing without a mat.) There is really no way to describe the timing; it has to be experienced.

Martial artists also practice trapping, wrestling, and holding maneuvers. While some of these can be useful, others are not, in terms of open combat, and you don't want to stand around with an attacker in a wrist bend while his friends bear down on you enmasse. In any case, the individual actions are too complex to describe in words; it is best to reference a well illustrated book, or better yet take a course to gain an understanding of these types of moves.

It is important to learn what targets are effective; as previously mentioned, the head isn't a particularly good target for most strikes, though it does have some interesting possibilities for grapples. Good general targets are the floating (lowest) ribs, the solar plexus (below the sternum), the kidneys, the bladder, the spine, the knees and other major joints, the collarbone, throat, and the feet are all good targets for a variety of moves. This is a topic that has many aspects and it is recommended that you procure one or more of the self-defense books in the appendix or receive training at a self-defense school to better appreciate the utility of various targets.

Unarmed defensive training:

The above paragraphs barely scratch the surface of unarmed fighting; you certainly can't learn it from just reading a book, any more than a person could become an expert marksman from reading sniper manuals. You must go out and practice, preferably with someone else. What you practice and how much you practice is dependant upon you; clearly, a middle-aged professional woman isn't (probably) going to go down the the local boxing gym and spar with the amateur fighters. For most people, a passing familiarity with the aspects of unarmed fighting is all that they will have interest in, or time for. There is certainly no level at which one knows "enough" or is good "enough" that he need not learn more so...so if you learn, learn what you think will be most useful to you.

Safety is an important consideration; a new move should be tried slowly, until mastered, and then the speed of the attack and defense accelerated. Some of the available safety gear isn't particularly useful, as it is designed for straight kickboxing, but a punching bag or pads are useful to get a feeling for the penetration of a strike. (Kickboxers, used to light contact fighting, often revert to type in a fight, failing to deliver penetrating, damaging blows.)

It is questionable that you can learn fighting from a book at all, and learning by experience (whether real or simulated) is a slow process in which mistakes are made that are not readily caught and corrected. If you really have an interest in

unarmed fighting, it is suggested that you take a course in unarmed self-defense that is conversant with your desired skill level. There are many basic self-defense courses available--most targeted at women--which emphasize basic moves and attitude over rigid stance and movement, and which place the defender in simulated attack situations. Model Muggings is one group that does this; they have obtained quite a degree of effectiveness in permitting their students to repel attackers in real situations with bare hands and improvised weapons. There are other groups like this as well; check your phone book or with the local police.

If a higher level of skill is desired, enrollment in a self-defense school which teaches ongoing classes is recommended. Some, but not all of these, are based upon one form or another of Oriental martial arts (tae kwon do, kenpo, aikido, jujitsu, etc.) When looking for a school, if you are interested primarily in defense, it is important to look for real application of their teaching. Many schools and styles cater almost exclusively to competition use--this is particularly true of tae kwon do and shoto kan--and what they teach can get one killed on the street. Some schools are big trophy cases, or hand out belts rapidly, to maintain interest (for a testing fee, of course.) You don't want this; what you want is a school that teaches hard fighting. Schools that combine several styles are generally more practical than "traditional" style schools. Any instructor can look impressive; a test of his school is to see how impressive his higher belt students are. When selecting a school, talk to the instructor; ask him what he thinks the most important part of fighting is (hint: attitude). Explain what you are looking for, and ask him about other schools and styles. If he says a lot of derogatory things about other local schools, he's probably not a good instructor...he should be promoting his school and style, not trying to bash others. It is also good to talk to his students and see how they like the school, and if permitted, attend a couple of classes. Don't get too worried about the formalities; if the sensei (instructor) is abusive or overly negative, or demands very rigid customs and formalities, then you'd probably be better with another school. You aren't joining the Army and going to boot camp here, and the more unpleasant a school the less likely you are to attend. This isn't to say that the instructor should not demand respect or should permit horseplay in class--quite the converse--but there is a fairly clear line between being strict and being abusive, and there are some (usually inferior or unconfident) instructors who cross that line.

While most formal training comes from schools that utilize one or more of the Oriental martial arts, there are a lot of "retireds" out there who are as expert, if not more so, than most black belts. Most don't advertise or sell their skill, but if you are associated with one, he would be a good source for "informal" training. Many of these folks have been in real combat and will have some good insights on "real fighting" as opposed to sparring in the dojo.

If you attend a formal school, you'll probably be required to wear some kind of uniform, both to make the class look sharper, and to save wear and tear on street clothes. This is fine for the dojo, but you'll want to practice your moves in regular street clothes sometimes; a move that might work in a loose-fitting ghee might not be so easy in a suit and tie, and kicking barefoot is a lot different than kicking in boots. Ghees are worn in most dojos because they are practical, but also because they were traditional "street wear" in the Orient when these styles were developed.

G. Armed melee defense:

Armed melee defense is a lot like unarmed defense, only with weapons that have better penetration and/or distance. Many of the tactics are the same, but you'll emphasize the weapon's greatest abilities. It is important to remember that even when fighting with a weapon, you aren't limited to that weapon; you can use your other hand and feet also, a point which many people forget.

When using a club or similar striking weapon, most people aim for the head, as this is what is generally done in movies and on television. While it may be popular, it isn't particularly effective. The head is an obvious, mobile target that requires the defender to move the weapon well into the line of sight of the attacker, making the attack vulnerable to both parry and counterattack. The head itself, while containing the delicate brain, is the most heavily armored part of the human body and can absorb a surprising amount of damage, particularly if the attacker is intoxicated. Strikes with a club or similar weapon should attack the joints, particularly the wrists and knees, the solar plexus, the floating ribs, the kidneys, and the spinal column. A bump on the head or a broken nose may hurt an attacker, but a busted knee cap or shifted kidney will put him out of the predator business long enough for you to make your exit.

Knives are another story. Blades aren't particularly recommended for defense because of the attributes previously mentioned; however, if you are going to use a knife for defense, you'll want to go for targets that bleed the fastest or disable arms and legs. Expect to get cut if your opponent has a knife; the common wisdom among streetfighters is that

in a real knife fight, one combatant goes to the emergency room and the other to the morgue. The longer the blade, the better, and fixed blade knives are preferred for combat, as there isn't any locking mechanism to break and collapse the blade on your hand, but in most circumstances people are forced to carry folding knives with relatively short blades. A sword is a somewhat better weapon (though even more difficult to conceal) but still isn't particularly good; the range increase isn't that much, and while a sword-wielding opponent is probably a menacing sight, swords to require some skill to use without hacking off some of your own body parts.

Throwing knives are preposterous defensive weapons. Not only is the amount of knife-throwing skill required to be able to throw a knife at any given distance accurately more than that required to shoot a handgun, the knife is not as effective a weapon. In any case, blades of all sizes should be handled with the same care accorded to firearms. It is certainly not recommended to carry a knife for defense, or use one except as last resort.

Armed training schools and seminars are less popular than unarmed styles, partially because unarmed styles have "sport appeal" and partially because the carrying of a weapon is considered reprehensible enough to make it an unpopular pursuit. Still, there are some around which are worthwhile; if this is your interest, look for one.

IV. Strategy and Tactics

Strategy and tactics are the nuts and bolts of self-defense; a good strategy and set of tactics can turn the tide in your favor, even if you are surprised, outnumbered, or outgunned. Strategy is the overall goal and plan, e.g. "If there is an intruder in the house, I'll get my family to the safe room/defensive core and call the police from there." Tactics are the specific implementation, such as methods of defensive shooting or specific measures taken to stop an attack. Developing a good defensive strategy isn't difficult; it simply takes a little bit of thought and good sense. You must continue to review your strategy and update your tactics to conform to your situation, though. Different or transient situations require differing strategies and tactics; a strategy that will work well for a home owner might not be acceptable for a business owner.

It is futile to talk about strategy without mentioning tactics--you can make grandiose plans, but if you aren't equipped to carry them out, they are for naught--and conversely talking about tactics without note to strategy is to emulate the headless chicken, so tactics and strategy will be discussed implicitly. But bear in mind the difference between them; you can change tactics while leaving the strategy intact, but without a strategy, a means toward some goal, the tactics are nonsense.

We'll first look at general strategy and tactics that apply to all situations and then look at some specific defensive strategies.

A. General strategy:

The overall strategy, of course, is to survive; in addition, you might include protecting your family and close associates, property, etc. This seems blatantly obvious, but many people forget this and take actions that are not within this strategy. Your job (presuming that you are a citizen) is not to enforce the law, punish wrongdoers, obtain retribution, and so forth: these functions are performed by other, better endowed institutions. Perhaps you feel otherwise; if so, that is your choice, but understand that you are accepting greater risk and greater liability. No matter how just your purpose, you may find yourself arrested and tried for chasing down a criminal or enforcing your own justice.

On the other hand, it should go without saying that you should not rely upon police response to provide for your absolute protection even in areas where 911 service is available. Clearly, the existence of the 911 system in most areas has not reduced crime to acceptable levels, and even a good response time is not fast enough to prevent someone from shooting you. In some areas, or in some situations, response time may be hours or not at all. Your strategy should be rooted in the fact that your personal safety is **your** responsibility.

Your strategy should include an understanding of the legal limitations of your authority: in general, this means that you may only exercise lethal force to:

- Defend yourself against a lethal threat

- Defend other innocent people against a lethal threat
- Stop a violent felony crime in progress (rape, murder, armed robbery, perhaps arson)

In general, you may not use lethal force to:

- Stop a criminal from fleeing a crime scene once the crime has been committed (unless he presents a clear deadly hazard to others)
- Prevent an unarmed criminal from stealing or vandalizing property
- Defend yourself against purely verbal threats
- Threaten people who commit non-violent crimes (trespassers, protesters, etc.)

These are general guidelines; the specifics differ widely from state to state; in some states, you may use lethal force to defend property at certain times, and in others you may be required to retreat to a point of no escape before considering the use of force in defense. The state penal laws tell some of the tale, but there is also the matter of public sentiment, legal precedent, and the political bent of the local prosecutor to take into account. A prosecutor might put you in front of a grand jury, even if the law says you are in the clear...or he might refuse to press charges, even if you were in technical violation of the law. Whether your strategy involves staying inside the legal boundaries or not is your decision, but you would be well advised to know what those boundaries are. The best source of that information is a lawyer who specializes in criminal defense law; what you should look for is a lawyer who understands the local political scene and is familiar with the precedents rather than a lawyer who simply repeats the legal codes back at you.

Obviously, it is to your benefit to plan your strategy to stay within the law, but there are some unfortunate situations where defending yourself and complying with the law conflict, and in such situations the decision rests with you. The best alternative is to go someplace where your right to protect yourself is legally recognized, but this isn't always convenient or even possible for many people, and so there often comes a decision between the pragmatic and the legitimate. The harrowing experience of Bernhard Goetz, who shot four aspiring young punks in a robbery attempt, should serve as a reminder to those who chose to carry a gun despite the legal consequences.

Most people think of defending against an attack in terms of physical defense, i.e. combat. This is certainly one mode, but it is a last resort; the idea is to take action to prevent a potential attack from coming to the point at which blows are thrown or bullets start flying. There is a lot that can be done to stop an attack before it gets to the physical confrontation level, and this should be a part of your defensive strategy. In developing defensive strategy, there are four basic modes of defense:

AWARENESS means being aware of your situation, your surroundings, and your own limitations. If you live or work in a bad part of town, be aware of your surroundings. If you are out late at night, without accompaniment, understand that your likelihood of being a target of violent crime is considerably increased; don't linger or wander aimlessly. If you think someone is following you, take a detour, or stop in a well-lighted area and permit them to pass. Some might consider this paranoid; these are usually the same folks who wonder how it could have happened to them when they do become the target of a crime. In truth you are investigating your surroundings and assessing your situation instead of wandering blindly into an ambush. By paying attention to your situation, you are not only giving yourself lead time and eliminating the advantage of surprise in the case of an attack, but you are also projecting an aura of awareness. Criminals like targets that are "soft", who aren't paying attention or preparing to defend themselves. Some attacks can be stopped simply by turning around, looking the attacker straight in the eye, and asking "Do you need something?" An attacker expects submission; by taking the first move and establishing dominance, you may throw a potential attacker off his stride and cause him to re-evaluate his intentions. And if he wasn't an attacker, the worst you've done is look a little foolish, if that. You'd look more foolish in the morgue.

Preparation means taking steps to be ready to defend yourself. Purchasing and learning how to use a gun, taking a self-defense class, or determining a defensive strategy are all types of preparation. Some might consider this "looking for trouble", but you are, rather, "hoping for the best and preparing for the worst." In being prepared, having a strategy and the means of self-defense available, you'll have the ability to deal with an attack, whereas an unprepared person might just panic or give in.

Mental preparation is just as important, if not more so than physical preparation. It doesn't matter if the defender is armed with the most high tech, fastest firing weapon available; if he or she freezes in indecision or fear, the armament

is useless. It is best to think through all common situations and come up with conditional ("if...then...else") decisions, so that when they are faced with that situation, your decision has already been made, and all that remains is to execute the best tactics to achieve your predetermined goal. Not only does this free up your mind for tactical decisions, but it also permits you to make the decisions without the pressure of immediate actions, so that you have time to review those decisions and adapt to make them better, both strategically and legally.

Prevention means staying out of harm's way or convincing the attacker that you are a hard target; that it will cost him more than he can expect to receive. Staying out of bad areas or taking action to inhibit a stalker are efforts of prevention. By running up the banner and demonstrating to an attacker that you are aware and prepared, you are possibly preventing an attack.

Combat is the ultimate defensive act. There are some who argue that you should never engage in combat, that you should submit rather than "lower yourself to violence." Others encourage awareness and prevention, but gloss over a combat situation by claiming that a properly prepared person will never need to fight. In a word, bullshit. The efforts you make, being aware, preparing against and preventing an attack, may reduce your likelihood of being the target of crime, but there is always a risk. If you aren't prepared to repulse a predator, with lethal force if necessary, you aren't prepared to defend yourself at all. It is an extreme circumstance, but one that is all too common, as the perusal of any big city newspaper will demonstrate all too well. Victims come from all races, all social classes, all walks of life and economic circumstances; criminals don't care about the unmarked "crime-free zones" that many people seem to think exist, and they aren't swayed by your gentleness or devotion to your family. A violent criminal considers you a "mark"; don't do him any favors by trying to show mercy until you've ended the attack and have control over the situation. A violent attack is no time for social work.

Most people just assume that it won't or can't happen to them; that it is always someone else, with less virtue or faith in the law who is attacked. They don't prepare--after all, that would be paranoid--and then when they are targeted, they wonder how it could have happened to them...if they are still alive. By being aware and prepared, ready to respond, with force if necessary, you stand a much greater chance of coming out of such an attack alive.

Awareness, prevention, and preparation are really the big factors in self-defense. However, because combat is such a desperate and immediate situation, it tends to get the most attention in the literature and in self-defense training. While not belittling the need for good combat tactics, understand that a good sense of awareness combined with preparation may stop many attacks, and will better prepare you for combat should the situation arise.

B. Cover and concealment

If you are unfortunately enough that a situation, despite your efforts, escalates to combat, your goal is to end it as quickly as possible, opening up an escape route for yourself, driving off your attackers, or incapacitating your attackers. Your purpose isn't to punish, no matter how desirable that may seem, nor to seek out or hunt down your attackers. Your interest should be in your self-preservation; that means that, especially in a gun fight, the first thing you'll do is take cover or concealment. Once under cover, or concealment, you've bought yourself some time to make plans, draw your weapon, clear a weapon malfunction, etc. Seeking cover can do more to preserve your life than any weapon; no firearm will stop a bullet (except in the unlikely chance that the bullet happens to hit the gun), but good cover will.

The distinction between cover and concealment is often misunderstood. This can be a lethal mistake. Cover is an obstacle that will stop an attack, like a solid core door or the engine block of a car. Concealment is an obstacle that may hide you, but that cannot be relied upon to stop a bullet. Some barriers look like cover, but are actually concealment; the average sheetrock residential wall, for instance, won't stop any bullet unless it happens to hit a stud. Ignore claims of how bushes will deflect bullets; the people who make these claims are distinctly unwilling to stand behind a bush and have someone shoot at them to prove it. You want to take cover if possible; if not, then use the most secure form of concealment.

When taking cover, don't hug up against it. Leave yourself some room for mobility. Always watch your flanks, particularly if there is more than one attacker, and look for other cover to which to retreat. If you are forced to use concealment rather than cover, keep in mind that concealment will not stop a bullet. Any time you expose yourself (as in to return fire) you should change position as much as possible in order to defeat attempts to hit you by firing on your previously concealed location.

Body armor:

Also of note is "portable cover"; that is, body armor. Body armor, which in modern terms is Kevlar(tm) fabric sometimes reinforced with other materials, is a useful item of apparel if you are threatened, but it isn't the absolute defense as incorrectly claimed by some people. A bullet-resistant vest will stop a round if the bullet is below the rating of the vest, and if the bullet hits the vest, rather than hitting you in the arm, leg, or head.

Body armor comes in for basic ratings, Levels I-IV. Level I body armor is very lightweight armor that is rated to stop the less powerful cartridges; while it is the most comfortable to wear, it is also the least effective. Level II is the most common type of body armor; it comes in a different sublevels, but basically it will stop most common handgun rounds and some of the weaker rifle rounds. The addition of "threat" or "trauma" plates, which are inserts that fit into the vest which will stop more powerful rounds, can increase the protection of the vest, but make the vest even more uncomfortable and bulky. Level II is generally the heaviest type of body armor that can be comfortably worn on a daily basis. Level III armor is designed to stop all handgun rounds and most rifle rounds; it is uncomfortable, but tolerable, to wear for extended periods of time and police officers who work in high threat areas will sometimes be seen with this armor. Level IV, or "threat armor", incorporates hard panels (like the aforementioned "threat plates") and will stop virtually all handgun and rifle rounds, but is very heavy (weighing in at around 50 lbs) and uncomfortable to wear, and so is generally seen in use only by SWAT teams and the like.

Level I and Level II armor are typically available for sale to civilians through some outlets, although there are locales which limit the purchase of these types of vest, and there is currently (as of 10/95) an effort on the federal level to restrict sales of these vests to law enforcement only. Level III and IV vests are generally restricted to law enforcement sale, and since these types of armor can't really be concealed except under a loose raincoat, they don't hold much application for the typical defender. Not all makes of armor are equal. Some brands are notably more comfortable, are better designed, or give more coverage, and the state of the art is constantly improving. Vests made even a few years ago are surpassed in protection and comfort while reducing weight and bulk. Some companies offer similarly rated vests for substantially lower prices, but it is important to compare the individual features of each vest, trying them on if possible.

If you chose to purchase a vest, bear a few things in mind. First of all, a vest only works if you are wearing it; a Level I vest which is comfortable enough that you will wear it every day offers far more protection than a Level III vest which is so hot or bulky that you only wear it when the weather is cool or your clothing permits. Cost is a fair indicator in vests, and the cheaper vests tend to be less comfortable. Also take note of the manufacturer's specific claims about protection; the rated levels don't tell the whole story, as some of the multi-weave vests will stop a knife, while similarly rated single weave vests won't. Second-hand vests can be an inexpensive way to go, but understand that vest material breaks down with usage, so examine the material for wear. If you do buy a vest, be certain to follow the manufacturer's instructions about cleaning to keep the vest in top condition, especially if you wear your vest on a regular basis. Also, look at how much protection the vest design offers; some vests offer add-on side, neck, and groin protection, which can be particularly important in a high-threat environ.

A vest definitely improves your chances of surviving a gun fight, but it isn't a panacea; one consideration is that an attacker might shoot for a non-protected area, particularly the head. It is important that if you wear a vest, it is concealed, so as not to give encouragement to such wit. Another is that an attacker might use a weapon for which the vest doesn't offer full protection. Level II vests won't stop high powered rifle rounds, and some will not stop knives. Fortunately, most urban criminals tend to use low powered handguns (media frenzies about "high powered assault weapons" to the contrary) which have no chance of penetrating through vest material.

One factor that has received much media attention, but that you really need not worry about are armor-piercing bullets. These supposed "cop-killers" that received so much media attention a few years ago, and then again recently in the bogus "Black Rhino" circus, are made of a dense, hard, sharp bullet, usually covered by some kind of Teflon(tm) coating. While they certainly will penetrate most types of body armor, the original design, the KTW, was designed FOR police officers to better penetrate through windshields and other barriers which stopped or deflected conventional rounds. The Teflon(tm) coating does not increase the penetration of the bullet; rather, it was designed to prevent the bullet from being deflected by sticking to hard, slick surfaces like glass, and actually impedes the penetration of the bullet somewhat. At any rate, these "cop-killers" are rarely seen, outside of special tactics law enforcement units, and have never been used to kill a police officer in any recorded instance. Even before NRA-backed legislation that banned

commercial sales of such ammo, it was rarely found on dealer shelves, and it is so extremely unlikely that you will ever come across an attacker armed with such bullets that it bears no practical consideration.

C. Predator Types:

"Know your enemy as you know yourself, and you may fight a hundred battles without defeat."

Paraphrased from Sun Tzu's The Art of War

As a victim of violent crime, you don't really care what motivates your attacker...or do you? Perhaps you don't care about his bad childhood or unfortunate lifelong addiction to drugs (after all, you didn't cause his problems) but by understanding his motivations, you may be able to prevent an attack, or cause your attacker to back off. In pursuit of this idea, we'll run through the common criminal or aggressor types.

Violent Drunk/Stoned Aggressor: Some people become aggressive when intoxicated or under the influence of drugs. Because they are under the influence, they can be very difficult to deal with. It is generally thought that defeating such a person is "easy", because most people associate intoxication with reduced coordination, but this is not always the case, particularly with crack cocaine or other types of non-depressant drugs. In addition, an aggressor under the influence may not feel pain and can often take considerable damage. It is usually best simply to leave the situation and wait for the person to sober up. If this is not possible, then the next best thing is to take the aggressor down and restrain him until he is sober.

This type of attack often occurs in domestic situations, and it is an unfortunate fact that many times police won't respond to domestic disputes, or place it low on response priority, despite the fact that such disputes can easily escalate in violence, of ten to murder. If you live with such a person, consider moving out, getting a divorce, or whatever is appropriate, until the person recognizes that he/she has a drug/alcohol problem and gets treatment. The problem won't go away by itself, and as long as you are there, there is no motivation to correct the problem. For women and children there are programs that help them escape this situation.

If this occurs to you with a stranger as the aggressor, as in a bar or public event, the best thing to do is either contact the most convenient authority (barkeep, bouncer, manager, or police) and let them take care of it. If this doesn't work, or there is no authority, then the best advice is simply to leave, and don't go back for a while. You don't need to spend the night in "The Tank" for someone else's poor behavior, or pay for Mr. Beernut's hospital bill after you break his arm, and with any luck he'll probably cross some other individual that will take care of him, preferably a police officer. If you have to confront such a person, speak softly and be prepared for uninitiated violence, but it is better to let the authorities handle this if at all possible.

Flasher: Flashers are almost always harmless, though demented, people who are rarely violent. The best course of action you can take is to ignore them or report the incident to a nearby policeman.

Trespasser, vandal, petty thief: Trespassing, while perhaps annoying, isn't generally a felony offense unless the trespasser makes threats or performs some act of vandalism or thievery. Even then, except in limited circumstances, you may not use force to stop the action, though you may bodily impede their actions. However, it is usually smarter to inform the police and, if possible, collect evidence (photographs or video recordings) from a distance, rather than risk confrontation, particularly with gang vandals.

Voyeurs (Peeping Tom): Voyeurism itself isn't a violent crime, and generally isn't a felony, but it can be an indication of stalking, and voyeurism is often a first step for serial rapists or murderers, so such an attack, while not being violent itself, should be taken very seriously. The best thing to do is to try to identify the voyeur and file a report with the police again. Should he later attempt a more violent act, you then have previous documentation of his actions.

Bully: When you say the word bully, most people think of the guy in sixth grade who was held back three years in a row and made a living taking other kids' lunch money, but bullies come in all shapes, sizes...and ages. Bullies don't exist just in grade school; there are adult-grade bullies too. If you can be patient enough and avoid such, these type of criminal tend to weed themselves out by picking on the wrong person or taking an openly illegal act and ending up in prison; however, this usually doesn't happen soon enough. Your parents, or some other adult, probably told you at one

time, "If you stand up to a bully, he'll leave you alone because he doesn't really want to fight." For those who didn't learn it on the playground, here's an important clue: bullies may not *want* to fight, but most will in order to maintain the image. Don't push or resist a bully unless you are prepared to defend yourself. If it is a matter of giving up a seat or letting a wild driver pass you, you might as well give up the issue; it isn't worth your time and risk, and sooner or later he'll pick on the wrong person and get pounded but good. However, giving into a bully just encourages him; if it is someone you deal with on a regular basis, you'd best think of either challenging him, or arranging your situation so you don't come into contact with him.

If you have to physically fight a bully, go full-force; even if you don't "win", if you can put some telling blows on him, he'll likely avoid you in the future. He'll forget what he did to you, but will remember what you did to him. But expect some sizable bruises, if not hospital time. Also, watch out for his friends (such as they may be.) Bullies sometimes travel in packs, and it goes without saying that you shouldn't expect a fair fight.

Bullies aren't just the guy down at the local bar; one might as well class sexual harassers, liability suit "attackers" and the like to be bullies as well, although of somewhat different nature. One can't generally use physical force on such, as esthetic ally appealing as that may be, though, ladies, if a guy grabs onto you without permission, he's asking for a broken nose. This type of harassment is really beyond the scope of this guide, though.

Burglars: A burglar is a type of thief who attempts to steal by stealth, preferring to prey on unoccupied homes. It is a popular saying that "Burglars aren't armed." Don't believe it; it may be your last mistake. A burglar usually won't attack, except in self-defense, but he may well be armed, or arm himself with available weapons. Any individual who breaks into your home should be considered armed and dangerous until proven otherwise. It is important to identify that the intruder is *not* a family member or roommate getting a late snack, or sneaking in/out of the house after curfew; in order to avoid this type of confusion, it is best to set up some kind of signal with other family members or home occupants. It is also important, in intruder scenarios, to be as patient as possible, and try to identify the intruder before taking any aggressive action.

Robber: A robber is a type of thief that attempts to steal by the threat of physical force. Robbers may be armed or unarmed; in either case they should be considered dangerous, and treated accordingly. Sometimes robbers will kill to eliminate witnesses.

Advice on what to do about robbers is highly varied; some say that you should give them whatever they want; after all, nothing in your wallet is worth your life. Some even go so far as to consider robbery just another form of taxation, and routinely carry "throw-down money" to appease a mugger, the idea being that he'll take the money and run. (Conversely, some consider taxation to be another form of robbery, but that's another issue.) Others argue that even if you can trust the implicit agreement ("Give me your money and I won't hurt you,") that robbery is more than just property; that the robber steals your honor and desecrates the "social contract" or the purpose behind civilization, and that it is a moral imperative to resist robbery at every opportunity. Your philosophy on this is up to you, but you'd best work it out before you are faced with such a situation, but remember that whatever you do, you may still have to defend yourself anyway.

Kidnapper: Abduction is often a prelude to rape, molestation, or murder, and so should be considered an extremely violent crime. Most states that permit the use of lethal force to prevent common violent crimes include kidnapping in that range. If you are the target, you should do everything within your power to prevent an abduction; once you are out of the public, you can't depend on any assistance if injured, and less if any chance of escape. This is a desperate situation, and it calls for desperate action, but if you are going to be injured, better it be on a public street than in a remote location. If you view someone else being kidnapped, it is a judgement call; the best thing to do is to get all the pertinent information, relay it to the police as conveniently as possible, and if possible follow the kidnappers at a distance (preparing to make your escape if necessary) to determine their destination. Whether or not you should intervene is a judgement call; it places you and the victim at risk, both physically and in civil liability, but you may determine it to be necessary.

Child molester: Oddly, child molesters *usually* aren't violent when confronted, and view what they do as being beneficial to the child in some twisted fashion. There are exceptions, of course, but generally the best course is to contact the police with the pertinent information.

Rapist: Rapists come in a different grades, from the "date rape" to the lone serial rapist to the gang rape. "Date rape" often seems to be a situation of misunderstanding; one party simply wasn't aggressive enough in declining. This isn't to say that it isn't a crime--"No" means "No", and that is all a person should have to say--but many "date rapes" could probably be ended with a poke to the eye or a clamping action to the, uh, "wedding tackle", combined with a more forceful statement. Some date rapists, however, may progress to the more violent stage, which require stronger counter-action.

The lone (or several) stalker- or serial-rapist is a more serious act, requiring greater force. Sometimes this type of rapist can be thrown off by a show of awareness; more than once a woman has driven off a potential rapist by turning, looking the stalk er straight in the eye, and asking, "Can I help you?" However, this action is not strong enough for every situation.

The gang rape is perpetrated by a group of people (if one can refer to a rapist as a "person"), who might ordinarily not perpetrate such an act, but together go into a "dog pack" type mode. As with feral dogs, eliminating the leader will sometimes, but not always, stop the act, and with groups of three or more, the likelihood of standing ground and successfully defending is poor. It is best to flee if possible, or take cover and fire at range if not.

When encountering a rapist, there are some people who advise that if the initial defense does not work you should "give in and pretend it isn't happening to you," rather than to act and risk injury or death. Given that rapists often severely beat or kill their victims in addition to the main event, I can't understand the validity of this advice. Others advising using a "stink bomb" on yourself or defecating and vomiting, claiming that a rapist won't want to touch a victim who is so soiled. Again, this is another claim that is not backed up by the empirical evidence; after all, the rapist isn't a gentleman come calling with flowers and chocolate. He isn't after sex, primarily, but domination, and such superficial defenses are hardly more adequate than a plea for mercy. Furthermore, as a victim, do you really want to crap all over yourself because someone else attacks you?

It is my experience that the people who best survive a rape are those who fight back. In virtually any rape situation, I would advise defense, violent and decisive, over passivity or self-despoiling. Certainly, a rapist may respond in kind, but it is likely that he would anyway, and the more damage you can do to him, the easier it will be for police to identify him, even if you are dead. Retribution from the grave may not be gratifying to you, but if you are going to die anyway, you might as well take him with you, or at least maim him or leave identifying marks on him, and the "go to hell" attitude of fighting just might convince the attacker to select a less aggressive target.

Murderer: Murderers come in all forms, from the guy who kills his adulterous wife or his cheating boss, to the punk on the street who kills for fun. If you know that you may be the target of an attempted murder, the best thing to do is to contact the police and file a report; the police probably won't do much to protect you--your personal safety isn't their responsibility, and most departments don't have the man-power to provide more than a nightly drive-by anyway--but in case it does come to a show-down, if you survive you'll have documented the motivation of your attacker, making both your criminal and civil defense much easier.

Troublesome, though, are the "random" murders, committed not in deliberance, or even in the heat of passion, but rather just "for fun", often by adolescent sociopaths. It is difficult to defend against such an attack; you won't know that you are a target until the bullets start flying or you feel a knife in the gut, and because there is no motive, there is often no clue as to who the attackers are, or why they selected you. Your likelihood of being attacked is greater if you live in an area populated by such predators, but that doesn't mean that if you don't live in such an area that you don't have to worry; drive-bys are sometimes performed in wealthy neighborhoods, and even in smaller towns, as the gangs move out of the inner city. People experienced with gangs can identify gang punks by their "colors" or markings, but the uninitiated will only see poorly dressed kids, until someone makes the wrong move and attracts the attention of these feral animals.

Thrill killers: Thrill killers are usually a serial-type killer that masquerades as another type of criminal. They aren't after your money or your watch, though they'll take it, tricking you into submission, and then kill you for the "thrill" of killing. This is one reason *not* to appease robbers, or at least not to believe that they won't hurt you.

Stalkers: Stalkers are a special type of criminal; most violent criminals are either close associates who select you for a reasonably clear motive, or a stranger that selects you because you look rich, are a convenient target, or so forth, and

the crime is usually a one-time act. A stalker, on the other hand, may either be an associate or a stranger, but selects a victim based upon some kind of fetish, and will continue to stalk the victim until either caught in the act of committing some kind of crime or complete an act, like rape or murder. Stalkers are particularly troublesome since much of what they do isn't technically illegal in many places, or they take actions that are anonymous enough that they can't be traced back to the stalker. Stalking is a topic that is broad enough to deserve its own strategy section, and so we'll go into greater detail on this later.

D. Concealed carry:

"Why concealed carry?" This is a question posed by many people, particularly in situations in which open carry is legally permitted (if not socially accepted.)

One reason is the tactical advantage in carrying a concealed weapon. If properly concealed, the attacker doesn't know you have a weapon, and so if you chose to draw your weapon, he won't know what you are doing, hopefully until you've got the drop on him and are in control of the situation. More importantly, he won't target you in order to take your weapon. Another point is that owning a gun does no good unless the owner has it on him when he is attacked; if the attack occurs outside the home, a gun in the bedstand is of no use whatsoever. Yet another reason is that concealed carry serves as a deterrent: in a society where a significant portion (even only a few percentage) of the population is armed, albeit not openly, the criminal is gambling that the defender isn't armed and won't respond with force. Sooner or later, unless he is a statistical anomaly, the criminal is going to lose that bet; even in Washington, D.C., a criminal will run into an off-duty FBI agent and receive a 10mm slug for his trouble once in a while--more so in places where Joe and Jane Citizen go armed. Furthermore, the fact that your neighbor carries a gun concealed protects you even if you don't; the criminal isn't going to know who is carrying and who is not. And, of course, since some people are uncomfortable with the idea of even responsible citizens carrying guns, concealed carry will keep weapons out of the public view while permitting responsible citizens to defend themselves.

Some will point out that criminals can take advantage of the process, or that responsible citizens, habitually armed, will act more aggressively and blow other people away when they get mad. As the purpose of this guide is not to debate gun control, we'll keep the statistics in check and simply note that in places where concealed carry is legally permitted, this simply isn't the case. As for criminals carrying concealed, it seems obvious that a violent criminal who decides to commit a crime with a firearm will hardly be concerned about a misdemeanor concealed carry charge, and most criminals, even if they can pass the licensing requirements, won't bother to go through the process; nor will the lazy or irresponsible.

In speaking of concealed carry, it must be made clear that the focus is on "concealed". Concealment doesn't simply mean carrying a Sig P220 in a hip holster and throwing a jacket over it, for this isn't concealed to any but the most superficial of observations. In order to obtain the full advantage of concealed carry, the weapon must be concealed from any casual observation, and preferably from anything less than a "pat-down". This means a particular selection of weapon and holster or carrying method.

Selection of weapon: The weapon you select must be small enough that you can conceal it. For on-body concealment, this usually means a compromise of power vs. size; few people can effectively conceal a full-sized handgun. Fortunately, there are many good, high power compact and subcompact handguns on the market today which are adequate for self-defense, as well as collapsible batons and other forms of concealable weapons. It is important not only that the weapon is small, but also as light as possible while maintaining enough weight to handle the recoil, for a heavy weapon will become tiresome to carry, and will tend to show. For off-body carry, much larger weapons, up to some of the smaller longarms, can be carried; the disadvantage is that you may not have the weapon at hand when you need it, so you need to use awareness to give you sufficient time to get your weapon and ready it.

Carry methods: On-body carry means a holster. You can carry a weapon in a pocket or waistband as an expedient, but this will wear quickly (both on your clothes, and on your nerves as you frequently have to readjust the weapon.) Concealment holsters range from the inexpensive synthetics, starting at \$20, to cow leather, horsehide, or other more exotic materials. When it comes to concealment, it is often better to pay a premium price for one holster which will work well, than to go through a number of holsters that work poorly. The clip-on and paddle style holsters are convenient if you take off and put on the holster frequently, but aren't the best for concealment and have poor retention characteristics, i.e. the attacker can grab the gun and holster right off your belt. Concealment holsters come in a variety

of types, with some extremely propriety, but the most common are outlined below:

- **High-ride hip:** these ride on the belt at the hip, just as do duty holsters, but ride higher so that they can be concealed by a short jacket. These are good for some, but for others, particularly short people or women, they tend to push into the ribs and may hold the gun so high as to be hard to draw. They aren't the most concealable, either, but for people who can wear them they are a fast draw.
- **Pancake:** Pancake-style holsters are like high-ride holsters except they are kind of an oval shaped, partly formed holster into which the gun fits. The advantage is that the gun rides snug against the wearer, reducing movement and keeping the gun from printing against a jacket. They do suffer the same problems as high-ride holsters, though.
- **In-the-waistband (IWB):** IWB type holsters are probably the most convenient type of holster, because for most people they offer the best concealment with the fastest draw. They are uncomfortable for sitting, though, and tend to push the butt of the gun into the kidney. It is important, if you select an IWB holster, to get one with a brace that holds the mouth of the holster open even if sat on while empty, so that one-hand reholstering is possible.
- **Small-of-the-back (SOB):** SOB holsters are popular for some guns, as they hide well, but again they are uncomfortable to sit with, and they push the butt of the gun into the kidney or spine. In addition, some note that if the wearer were to fall backward onto the holster, the wearer could have a spinal injury due to the placement of the butt of the gun. (I am not aware of any case where this occurred, but there it is.)
- **Cross-draw holsters:** Cross-draw was once more popular. In some cases it can be very fast, but because the arm has to cross the body, it is a visible draw which can be stopped at melee range simply by restraining the drawing arm. Cross-draw holsters suffer from the same problems with fit, feel and concealment as high-ride holsters.
- **Shoulder holster:** The shoulder holster is very popular with the Hollywood types, but it has one of the slowest draws of "conventional" holsters. Also, a shoulder holster can be very uncomfortable to wear, especially with a heavy gun, and the best shoulder holsters are custom jobs that are specially fitted to the customer. The adjustable, "one size fits all" rigs require endless adjusting for good concealment, and are still slow to draw. The shoulder holster isn't particularly well-concealed; it tends to flap around, and the heavier models will show through a jacket under stress.
- **Ankle holster:** The ankle holster is good for concealment mainly because most people don't bother to look down there, but it is a slow draw (requiring you to first pull up the pants cuff and then draw the gun) and is suitable only for small, lightweight guns; an all-steel "J-frame" type revolver is pushing the weight limit. Ankle holsters can also cause long-term orthopedic damage with consistent wear.
- **Pocket holsters:** Pocket holsters fit in a pocket (hip, back, or jacket) and serve to protect the gun and clothing as well as assure a smooth draw. They are convenient for small handguns, and they disguise the outline of the gun well, but they may not be as secure as a belt holster.
- **Belly bands:** The belly band is a band, much like an athlete's elastic knee brace, that goes around the abdomen, holding a gun underneath the shirt of the wearer. The belly band is very concealable, even with larger guns, but is slow to draw from and uncomfortable to wear, particularly when sitting.
- **Fanny pack:** One can use a normal fanny pack to carry a gun, but the holster fanny packs offer a quicker, smoother draw (usually by some kind of velcro closure.) The problem is that knowledgeable people might suspect that your pack conceals a weapon, particularly if it doesn't have a label or is overly large; however, the variation in size, style, and construction of normal packs minimizes this concern. Of greater concern, however, is the idea that a criminal might demand that you remove your pack, suspecting that your money or other valuables are inside, forcing the issue even if you decide not to draw. Fanny packs aren't appropriate for formal occasions, either, but they are convenient when carrying in casual situations where you couldn't otherwise wear a holster.
- **Other systems:** There are many, many other systems, most of which are variations on the above. When evaluating such systems, you should look at how well the weapon is secured, both in normal movement and in a snatch/retention scenario, how comfortable the holster is, how well it will conceal with your intended dress, and how well the holster will work with a variety of sitting and standing positions. Most of the non-conventional systems provide greater concealment, but at greater cost to comfort, accessibility, or safety.

For off-body carry, the options open up. There are some specifically made concealment bags or briefcases that will conceal a weapon, but with a degree of imagination there are any number of methods that can be used even to conceal a weapon as large as a shotgun. A shopping bag, a box, a briefcase, a present, a gym bag, or any number of common items may be used to conceal a full-size weapon. However, you must maintain control over your bag, particularly if small children or terminally incompetent people are around.

Choosing to carry: Choosing to carry can be a big decision. It does require responsibility to carry a weapon day in and out; it means constant weekly practice, both in safety and firing. It means wearing clothes and selecting a weapon and carry system to keep the gun out of sight at all times. It also means behaving responsibly at all times. This ought to be true whether or not you carry, but particularly so if you are armed. When carrying, you especially do not want to get involved in a pointless confrontation, lest for some reason you draw your weapon, or your aggressor spots your weapon and attempts to take it from you. Fortunately, most people find that when they carry a concealed weapon with an understanding of the effects and the civil liabilities, they tend to behave less aggressively so as to avoid engaging in a confrontation, giving meaning to the truism, "An armed society is a polite society." This isn't to argue that everyone should be armed or that this would eliminate violence, but the folks who go through the process and understand the consequences are less likely than the average to initiate or participate in a physical confrontation.

In some areas, carry is permitted; however, the degree of permission varies from state to state. In Vermont, for instance, no permit is required. Any citizen who can legally own a gun can strap it on and go about his business. In other states, a permit process, varying from token to impossible is required. Some states have recently liberalized their laws so that any responsible citizen meeting certain criteria can obtain a concealed carry permit. In other states, the issuance of permits is left up to the local law enforcement; some disperse permits without prejudice, others reserve issuance as a privilege for the rich and politically connected, or at least only to those whose job requires carrying large sums of money. In many states, however, obtaining a concealed carry permit is impossible, or nearly so.

If you determine that you need or want to carry, but the law says otherwise, then you have an unfortunate decision: obey the law, defend yourself, or move someplace where you can carry. The latter is not a possibility for most folks, and so the problem is posed: obey the law and risk being defenseless, or become a de facto criminal in the eyes of the law, even though you take no action that is harmful to any other law-abiding citizen. I cannot, as a matter of course, advise you to do something illegal, but this choice is up to you, and the responsibility is yours. What you do depends not only on the law, but also on local law enforcement; in some places and with some departments, even though it may be illegal, if you are clean-cut and aren't acting like a loon, officers will pass off your violation. In others, particularly where the sheriff or chief is a strong opponent of gun ownership, you can expect to be arrested and prosecuted to the extent of the law, if not further.

When travelling to other states, you might check their laws on concealed carry, should you wish to carry. (The NRA state firearms law summaries are available at <http://www.nra.org/NRA-FALAWS.html>, or in pamphlet form from the NRA.) Some states have reciprocity with other states; that is, if you have a permit in one state, it is good in another state. Other states offer out-of-state licenses. And some states permit no carry at all. Make the necessary preparations.

E. Defense in the home:

Defense in the home is the best situation for the defender (aside from not being attacked in the first place.) The defender is, quite literally, on home turf; he knows the layout, has the opportunity force the invaders into following his plan, and in a situation requiring lethal force, is on the best legal ground to claim self-defense. Any aggressor stupid enough to break into someone's house while the homeowner is home, who refuses to leave when ordered, isn't going to evoke much sympathy from a jury.

Strategy: In most states, you are secure in your home. You can't be forced out by intruders threatening physical injury, and so a basis for self-defense on this issue is clear, particularly so since the situation is likely to be more clear cut than a street encounter and a jury is likely to be sympathetic to a man or woman defending against a home intruder. This isn't true in all states, though; certain states, such as Massachusetts, require the home owner to retreat from the home, if *at all* possible, before using force in defense, and such laws are enforced to the point of absurdity. If you live in such an area, all I can do is encourage you to move someplace civilized, where your right to be secure in your own home is recognized by the legal authority. In most locales, you'll be exonerated for defending yourself in your home.

Your strategy, then, should be based on the idea of staying in the home and defending from there. Some people claim that you should "shoot to kill" the intruders; if you don't, they'll come back and sue you or attack you. Perhaps you feel this way; if so, don't relay your strategy to the police; a prosecutor may consider this to be "intent" even if your shooting was justified. Your goal should not be to kill, but rather to incapacitate or drive off your attackers; if they die in the process, too bad. If they go away, fine; unless they were gunning specifically for you, they'll probably select a lighter target next time.

Prevention: There is much you can do to prevent a burglary or attack; however, since this information is widely available, I'll only cover it briefly, trusting that you can do the minimal research required for greater detail.

For one, you can forget the signs proclaiming "This house protected by Smith & Wesson" or "I dial 3-5-7 for emergency." They have little if any deterrent value (presuming that the intruders can even read) and may actually make you a target for someone interested in stealing your guns. They will do one thing for you; a lawyer, particularly in a civil case where the criteria is only preponderance of the evidence, can claim that this constitutes intent on your part to kill the intruders, thereby forcing you to pay the intruders or their surviving family for defending yourself. The signs may be cute, but they are best framed and displayed in the game room, to be removed in the case of an actual shooting.

Exterior lighting is a good start; forget about leaving the lights on in the house, through; all this does is let criminals see that there is no one home, and give them illumination to select the good stuff. Lighting on the outside, however, is a considerable deterrent, particularly if used around probably entry points. Get rid of the privacy fence; it will offer criminals the same privacy it offers you. Unless your neighbors are in the habit of peeking over the fence periodically, it is a liability. Trim back the bushes; thick jungle is pretty to some, but near the house it offers concealment.

Locks on to doors are good, but in terms of general defensive value, the more expensive locks aren't better than the mid-range ones. Most common criminals are more likely to kick in a door or break a window than to pick the lock. Rather than spending extra money on high grade locks, you are better off buying a good, re-enforced deadbolt on a solid, well-mounted door. Doors should be secure front and back; it is no good buying a solid front door while having a flimsy, hollow core back door. Sliding doors are a liability; they can be easily shifted out of the track. The dowel in the track method works pretty well, but isn't foolproof, so if you have to have a sliding glass door, it is worth it to buy a better, secure one. It should go without saying that arcadia-style doors or multi-pane French doors are next to worthless. Windows are a prime entry point, and hard to defend against short of putting up bars, which can make a home seem like a prison. Still, criminals would rather not break a window, so they are of some deterrent value, particularly if the neighbors are watchful. However, windows are worthless if not locked, or if the lock is not secure. In extreme circumstances, glass can be replaced with polycarbonate, which will resist some bullets and most impacts. If you live in a high threat area, inserting steel plates into the walls might not be out of the question, but if the situation is to such a point, it is probably time to think of moving someplace else.

A neighborhood watch group is an excellent idea, even in rural areas where neighbors may live a mile more more apart. By keeping in fairly routine contact, neighbors can determine if anything suspicious is going on. Also, many rural sheriff and police departments have programs that allow citizens to become reserve officers to back up full time officers.

Alarms: When the topic of alarms comes up, most people think about electric alarms, but alarms can range from the mundane to the elaborate. The purpose of an alarm depends on the design; some alarms, generally the cheaper ones, are designed to alert the homeowner, while at home, of an intruder. They won't have much if any effect while you aren't home. The other, more expensive alarms, will call up private security or the police, and help to protect your home while you aren't there.

What you select should depend upon your circumstances; if your home has nothing to steal, then it would be foolish to install an expensive alarm system to protect your home while you are not there. Simply capacitance door knob alarms work pretty well, as do cheap, do-it-yourself magnetic switches and alarm tape. Knick-knacks on the windowsill, or plants on the ground below the window (where an intruder will step) also serve to inhibit entry and alert the homeowner.

A dog can be an excellent alarm as well as a weapon; however it is important to know what you are getting into when obtaining a dog. First of all, you **do not want** an "attack dog". Many attack dogs are trained by poorly trained, if not incompetent trainers who beat the dogs into aggressiveness; the dog may be aggressive, but he'll also be impossible to control, and may turn on you. An attack dog is a legal liability, and many locales have gone to banning certain breeds of dogs, which can turn a \$2000+ asset into a liability. If you decide that you need an attack dog, be certain to get one from a known, reputable trainer who trains the dogs consistently; this will require your participation the the training process, and you will have to spend time main taining the training.

Attack dogs are generally unnecessary, however. Most criminals would rather not find out whether that big, black dog in

the hallway is grinning or growling. Many dogs, even good natured ones like the Labrador Retriever, are protective of their owners and know when to defend their master, while posing no threat to the family or friends. Mid-sized dogs, like the Chow or larger terriers, can also be aggressive enough to defend against an intruder. And even though smaller dogs, like small terriers, don't go much beyond nipping at the ankles, their barking can still warn a homeowner of an intruder.

One need not buy a pedigree to obtain a good defender; a mutt is as desirable, if not more so, but it is a gamble on the intelligence and protectiveness of the dog. However, considering what the AKC has done to some "guard" and working breeds of dog, a pedigree may not be much more of a guarantee. A dog isn't for everyone, though. One must treat a "defensive dog" with some amount of love and attention. Buying a dog and chaining it in the backyard won't accomplish anything; the dog will probably bark at anything, or nothing, in order to get attention.

If you want to put more into a security system, the best kind are the "service" kind, that tie into a central point, from which police or private security may be dispatched. Such systems may also offer fire detection as well. These systems are expensive, but if you have a lot of valuables or irreplaceables in the home, they may well be worth it. You have to factor in response time into the protective value, though. If your average police response time is 45 minutes, then you might be better off to invest in a secure safe or complete insurance coverage, and hope for the best.

A word about "booby traps"--don't use them. They are a legal liability, particularly if some innocent person is injured. If a burglar can sue for injuring himself on a loose skateboard while on a "job", you can bet that he'll sue you for everything you have if he injures himself on a deliberate trap.

Selection of Weapon: A home defense gun need not be compact, like a carry or concealment weapon. As such, the best home defense weapon is probably a shotgun. It is devastating at close to moderate range, accepts a variety of loads, and is more easily learned than a handgun. However, the bulk, particularly in tight circumstances, may be a problem. Any long gun is difficult to move around a house with. It gets caught in doorways and spends much of its time pointing at the floor or ceiling. In any case, a full-sized handgun makes a good backup, or a reasonably good main home defense weapon.

When selecting your weapon, bear in mind the penetration of the round, particularly if you live in an apartment complex, or townhouse. Also, you may take into account legal and political factors; if your local prosecutor is extremely anti-self-defense and anti-gun, he may attempt to make an issue out of your AR-15 or Evil Black Synthetic Pistol Grip Stocked Heat Shield Equipped Laser Sighted Mossburg 590 Defender.

If you can't have a firearm, then your options go to non-firearm projectiles, sprays, clubs, and blades. The crossbow can be effective, but slow to reload; if you select the crossbow, you'll probably want to have two or more at hand. Sprays are marginally effective, and used inside will tend to affect you as well, so use the streaming or foaming kind as opposed to area sprays. Clubs are reasonably good, plus the fact that in the home you can use some pretty evil implements, like crowbars or claw hammers, while claiming that it was "the only thing at hand". Blades include knives, swords & sabres, spears, and axes. As previously discussed, knives aren't particularly desirable, but if it is all you have, a butcher knife is usually better than bare hands, so long as it isn't taken from you and used against you. A sword is somewhat better; it is unlikely that a single intruder will take it from you, but it is hardly an optimum weapon. One author speaks highly of the sword, even for the untrained, but a sharp sword can be as dangerous a weapon to the untrained wielder as to the assailant, and an unsharpened sword is of no use at all. Spears and axes are somewhat specialized, and rare weapons, and instruction in their use is rare, but they can be effective, albeit less so than a firearm. Still, if the options don't permit a firearm, blades of any kind may be a reasonable alternative.

Tactics: The tactics of home defense are rather straightforward in concept. Your goal is to defend your family from your house. Your tactics should aim at driving attackers out of the house, or dropping them. If you are using a firearm, you want to maintain as much distance as possible; you have the advantage, both in range and of knowing your house. Select cover, take aim, and then give one verbal warning to the intruders. If they fail to heed, and you've identified them as not being a roommate or a family member, then you can generally take it that they mean harm. In some states you can open fire, period; in others, the intruder has to visibly threaten lethal force or display a weapon; determining this can be a neat trick in the dark, but turning on the light may give away your position.

One useful tactic is to defend one room from the next room; using proper preparation tactics, you can create cover in

one room and observe the attackers through the doorway to the next room. This also allows you to turn on the light, exposing the attackers, while remaining under cover. The chemical glowsticks can also be used to illuminate the next room, but you must be careful about deploying them; you don't want to show off your own position.

Since you are on your own turf, you might as well take advantage of predetermining the lines of fire and erecting backstops to prevent bullets from hitting your family or your neighbors. A backstop can be anything from a steel plate to a tightly packed bookshelf. You want your bullets, and those of your attackers, to bury themselves in something harmless and you'd like to set up the situation so that your attackers are in a position of no cover, while you have ample cover.

In any situation where there are other occupants in the home, it is important to set up a procedure in case of emergency. All non-active family members should make for the safe room or defensive core, while the defenders arm up and take predetermined positions. The group should have keywords for particular circumstances, like "clear" for no active attackers in vision. Also, all family members should have a keyword identifying them, so that in case of a situation where the identity of the "intruder" is undetermined, the defender can make certain that the "intruder" is not someone after a midnight snack or on a bathroom run.

Just as with a fire drill, it is important to run defensive drills, to maintain and update defensive plans, as well. This need not be a daily event once the drill is down pat, but it ought to be run and updated every couple of months. If it is inconvenient or unsafe, one need not actually bring out firearms; just getting into position and so forth is generally sufficient, though each defender ought to practice getting to the firearms in the dark, under simulated conditions. As you perform drills, the best tactics for your situation will become apparent.

A few more words about tactics are in order. First of all, you don't want to have to hunt down your intruders; you would rather they come to you. Let them make noise, stumble around, and so forth, while you get set behind cover, and someone else calls the police. Hunting them down can give away tactical surprise and cover. If you come home and find intruders in your house, unless there is some pressing need to enter the house (as in they are raping your wife or daughter) don't attempt a houseclearing. This is a job for police wearing body armor and backed up by other officers. If the attacker's vehicle is in sight, you might disable the vehicle (cutting the gas line, breaking a key off in the ignition, or ripping out the spark plug wires and/or rotor cap are good) and take cover or go down to the neighbors to call police. Laying in wait outside the home is a poor idea; you can't shoot them just for stealing property (in most locales). You can jump out in front of them, but you will expose yourself to attack, which is a very poor strategy, and the police might mis-identify you as one of the attackers and shoot you. Better to disable the vehicle, or get the license plate, and wait for the police.

If you live in an area where police response is non-existent, you may consider taking action, but do you really want to risk your life for replaceable goods? This isn't a rhetorical question; as some will point out, it isn't just property. The stuff you own represents the time you spent to earn it, and it will take you more time and effort to replace it. But in stepping out, you risk both your life and civil, and possibly criminal, liability. Be certain that you understand your priorities before you take drastic action.

Defensive Core vs. Safe Room: Some home defense experts recommend a "safe room", that is, a room with a secure door and a phone, possibly with armored walls. A safe room is a good concept for some situations, but can easily become a deathtrap, if the attackers decide to burn the house, and it won't do anything to stop them from taking your property while the 911 dispatcher assures you that the police will be on site "in just a few more minutes". A better concept is the defensive core; a room or hallway which connects to several rooms in the house, from which one may defend, or retreat into another room and thence retreat out of the house. This allows you to defend against intruders who come in from one of several directions, with flexibility. The defensive core, like the safe room, should have a phone as well as a fire extinguisher, and possibly armored walls. Non-defenders should be moved into an adjacent, non-occupied room that has access to the outside, while the defenders fight. The defenders will draw attackers' return fire, if any, and the number of people in the way of this should be minimized.

Miscellaneous: Most of these scenarios postulate living in a house, but if you live in an apartment, you can adapt many of these tactics. Perhaps you can't have dogs, or have an alarm installed, but capacitance alarms and stuff on the windows is still allowed. Apartments have poor security; occupants change frequently, so one doesn't get the "neighbors looking out for each other" that one might get in a decent urban or suburban neighborhood. Even "security

apartments" aren't particularly secure; one resident might be a criminal, or a criminal might enter the complex through an open, ground level window. Getting in a shooting will probably get your lease revoked "for cause" but that will probably be the least of your worries.

A house is better, but people rarely design a house with lines of fire and defensive cores in mind, so your house may not be the best set-up for defense. You can either remodel, or more likely, work around the drawbacks and utilize the advantages. If you do build a house, keep in mind the security aspect. You need not build a fortress, unless you are a millionaire or a particularly attractive target for crime, but you might as well incorporate defensive strategy into your home, so long as it doesn't significantly effect the cost or comfort.

F. Defense while traveling:

Defense while traveling is considerably different than defense at home. The situation is intrinsically less clear, there is no general assumption that you were in the right, or that you were even the defender. You have to demonstrate that you had reason to defend yourself rather than retreat, in order to claim self-defense. Depending on where you are, you may want to avoid conflict, even at expense of your property.

Strategy: The strategy in defense "on the road" is to stay out of trouble. If conflict comes into play, you want to stay alive, and, if possible, make your escape. This isn't a "home = castle" situation; if you shoot someone on the street, the police will automatically assume that you weren't justified until you demonstrate otherwise.

What you do depends on where you are; if you are travelling in your home area, i.e. to work, grocery store, etc. then you know the area and the laws. If they favor self-defense and you were legally carrying the weapon...don't stop worrying, but you have a good chance of proving your innocence and avoiding prison. If you are in a different state, or a different part of the state, the situation might not be the same.

Tread carefully, but you may have some confidence in the fact that even in the most anti-gun areas, people still tend to sympathize with the victim. If your act was clearly just, but your weapon unpermitted, you may suffer some misdemeanor or even minor felony charges, but you still have a decent chance of getting out without serving hard, felony time, unless you had the misfortune to attempt to defend yourself in someplace like Massachusetts or Washington, D.C. If you are in a foreign country and you are a religious person, pray. Many foreign countries, even so-called "civilized" nations, recognize no inherent right of self-defense; if you defend yourself, even with bare hands against a weapon, you might see considerable jail time, possibly without trial or hearing. This doesn't occur exclusively in places like China or Turkey; one can expect this kind of treatment in Japan, France, or England. Don't expect the U.S. State Department to come to your aid, either. The State Department, in recent years, has shown an abominable disregard for the treatment of American citizens abroad, even when the nations don't follow their own laws in prosecuting a defender. If you get involved in an incident on foreign soil, hope and pray that the authorities aren't having a bad day, because no one else will come to your aid, letter writing campaigns by Amnesty International excepted. In short, self-defense abroad is truly a matter of last resort.

Self-defense on the open sea is something of a different matter. There are pirates (I kid you not) but they tend to hit cargo vessels rather than private boats. In the case that you are accosted by pirates, the best bet is to take cover and try to take them at range. Fortunately, unless you are in territorial waters, there is very little you cannot do in self-defense; fully-automatic weapons are perfectly legal (though they may have to be locked up in port) and unless there are reputable witnesses to say otherwise, it is unlikely that you will be tried for any crime...if indeed, you choose to report the incident. It is advisable to stay out of the drug lanes, as these will probably be the most frequented by would-be pirates, but defense on the open sea, compared to defense on land, is pretty much a free-for-all. Still, for most, this is an unlikely circumstance.

Prevention: Because the situation is constantly changing, it is harder to prevent an attack. But there are a few things you can do. If you are in your "home area", know the surroundings. Take different paths to work, both to prevent being tracked and to learn escape and alternate routes. Keep the doors on your car locked at all times, and keep the windows rolled up far enough that someone can't reach in. Turn the radio off in traffic, and keep your eyes peeled. Watch out for over-aggressive drivers, drunks, and police or fire vehicles. Don't challenge aggressive drivers; if they want to be an asshole, let him hit someone else--better that he is well in front of you rather than right behind you. Make a routine of checking the mirrors, the speedometer, and the front view. When coming to a stop, leave yourself room to escape, even

if it means jumping the curb. Don't drive an expensive, flashy car; carjackers and car thieves don't always pick the ritzy cars, but your odds are better if you are in a serviceable but bland mid-level car than in a Corvette. Learn defensive/escape driving techniques, including cornering, bootlegging, and so forth. Keep a weapon available, but secured; a center console might work, but you might need to make a special holster that attaches to the seat and securely holds the weapon. If you walk, carry a weapon with you: a walking stick or cane if nothing else. Walk on the left side of the road, facing traffic, and try to stay off the road. If a car stops, get well off the road, and answer any queries from at least 10 feet away. Don't walk in unfamiliar areas; before you walk, drive through. Try not to walk at night; if you must, wear light colored clothing and watch for loiterers, particularly in shadows.

If you are travelling on vacation, blend in; don't look like a tourist. If you have to carry a camera, carry it in a purse or bag. Carry a wallet, but only keep a few dollars in it; keep your credit cards, money, and driver's license secured in another pocket, in a money belt, or in a bandage on your calf, and don't take it out in public. Don't wear expensive jewelry. You may not have a choice about a rental car, but the rental sticker is easily removed with a hair dryer. Don't display a map; keep it down in the lap, or stop at a restaurant for directions.

If you are travelling in another country, first of all *learn the language*, at least enough to call for the police and demand to see the American Consulate. (Also learn "Please", "Thank You", "How much?" and "Where is the bathroom?" These four phrases will serve the majority of your non-defense needs, and make the locals so much more polite in deference to your attempt to speak in their dialect.) Carry your passport *clipped inside your clothing* and do not lose it. Definitely carry traveller's cheques, but also have some local cash, and if you have a friendly local guide or associate, learn the proper way, amount, and personage to which to apply "squeeze". (While "bribery" in the United States is universally considered criminal and unethical, it is a way of life in other countries; so long as you know to whom and how much, and aren't trying to smuggle or break any significant laws, it can smooth the way considerably. You MUST understand the process, though. Offering too little, to the wrong person, at the wrong time, or for the wrong reason, can cause a lot of trouble.) While we're at it, don't smuggle; that privilege is reserved for drug smugglers and diplomatic pouch carriers. Smuggling is a big no-no in most countries, and what might seem to be a harmless act can land you in prison. Understand the local customs, both social and bureaucratic. This requires research, but is well worth it, both in accelerating the process and staying out of trouble.

It is advisable to stay out of trouble spots, but this isn't always possible. Life is full of risk, and it seems that many of the most beautiful spots are also areas of trouble. Understand, and accept the risks, and do what you can to minimize them...but have fun.

Alarms: Travellers won't be installing major alarms systems in their hotel rooms or cabins, but there are portable alarms and door stops that work reasonably well. It is advisable to select good quality hotels, but be aware that, particularly overseas, what seems like a good hotel might be teeming with thieves. Don't leave valuables in your room; keep them with you, ship them home, or have them locked in the hotel safe. A cellular phone, whether at home, on a continental vacation, or abroad, is a good idea if you are in cellular range.

Selection of weapon: Selection of weapon depends on your situation and local laws. If you are in your home area, or in the US in an area with CCW reciprocity and carry a concealed weapon, your best choice is a handgun. If you can't carry a gun legally, then you have a decision to make; break the law, or carry a lesser weapon. Of course, on an aircraft, you can't carry most weapons at all, though you can check them in with luggage, if they are legal at the destination.

Carrying a weapon abroad, any weapon, is a dangerous proposition. Most nations simply will not permit foreign nationals to carry defensive weapons; for instance, none of the Commonwealth nations permit visitors to carry so much as a knife or spray for self-defense. The best bet is to carry a "non-weapon" like a cane, or learn some empty hand defense. Even then, in defending yourself, you are put at risk; and nowhere else is a "walk away" such a desirable action.

Tactics: Your tactics will vary with your situation, but they should all focus on the same goal; get the hell out of there! You aren't on home ground, you have no advantage, and unless you are lucky, you may not have cover. If you are in a car, keep going; don't stop or get out to shoot. Your car is 3000+ pounds of mass; moving at even 20 mph, it develops more kinetic energy than most rifle bullets. If you are being fired upon, or a carjacker has grabbed on to you or the car, put it in gear and don't stop until you've cleared the area; don't worry about body damage to the car, keep moving. If you have a carjacker hanging on, try to scrape him off or squish him against a barrier or other cars. Firing from a car is

a tricky, problematic issue; first of all, the report is contained in the car, making it very loud, possibly causing permanent hearing loss with powerful calibers. Don't stick the gun outside the car, though, lest it be snatched. Trying to shoot someone while moving, even if you aren't driving, is very unlikely to succeed; Van Damme movies to the contrary, you won't hit anything if firing while balancing on the seat of your motorcycle. If you are walking, take cover and get off the street. Make for a public place, restaurant, store, whatever, and have the clerk or proprietor call the police. In a riot situation, keep moving; drive through riots, and if a crowd of violent rioters is in front of your car, pull around and don't worry about running a few of them over. The lesson of Reginald Denehey is clear; don't stop, don't get pulled out...keep going until you are clear of the riots, and then go some more. Keep the radio on to an all-news station that will let you know where the riots are thickest, but don't bother trying to read a map; keep your eyes on the road and head for a major highway. The same applies to an out-of-state location. Avoid trouble spots, and if need be, don't worry about damaging the car. (You did buy insurance, right?)

Tactics in a foreign country are somewhat different; first of all, know the customs. In some countries, pickpocketing is an accepted, if not respected, profession and assaulting the pickpocket is asking for trouble...so don't carry your valuables in the obvious places. Don't get angry at store clerks, if you are so prone to at home. Treat others with respect, even if you don't like them; accept the fact that as a tourist, you are a chump, and you are going to get ripped once in a while. Don't get into violent arguments, and *do not* start a fight with a local; you don't know who is relatives are, and you'd rather not beat the snot out of the town constable's son.

If you are accosted and despite your efforts, get into a violent confrontation, it is a situational decision as to what action to take. Walking away can have serious consequences if you are caught, but then, so can hanging around and reporting the incident, even if you are in the right. The better you understand the local customs, the better you can make that decision. If you are arrested, demand the American Consulate (presuming the nation you are in maintains diplomatic ties with the US) but don't expect too much help from that angle.

Basically, when you are on the move, you are at your most vulnerable. You can't make concrete plans, and in the best of situations you have to demonstrate the need for self-defense, whereas in home defense, it is often presumed that the defender was in the right.

G. Defense for the store owner:

The store owner or clerk has some advantages, and some significant problems, with defense. In some places, store owners receive preferential treatment from the law; they may be permitted to carry a concealed weapon on their premises, or to obtain a CCW license because they carry large sums of money. A hold-up situation is pretty clear cut; when the surveillance camera shows a criminal sticking a gun in the clerk's or owner's face, there isn't going to be any question of intent. It is also expected that store owners are a general target for crime, and so a defending store owner may have presumed innocence on his side from the beginning. Police response will probably generally be better than in residential crime, because stores tend to be accessible and easily identified.

On the other hand, the store owner has to worry about protecting his customers; although some states have laws which protect a store owner defending himself during a robbery, many states do not, and injured bystanders (as well as the attackers) may sue the store owner for damages. Clerks and other employees of large companies may be punished or fired for defending themselves from an attack; at least one national pizza delivery chain forbids drivers to carry any kind of weapon, despite the inherent dangers of that job. Another national convenience store chain fired an employee for leaving the building after an attack to obtain the license number of the getaway car, even though his action led to the apprehending of the robbers.

Strategy: The strategy for a store owner or clerk should be to stay alive, protect customers, and keep from being robbed, in that order. If you are an employee of a company which forbids self-defense, then you'll probably not care whether the criminals take the money or not, but private store owners and loyal employees have a stake in preventing theft.

Prevention: Obviously, you'll want to select a location or job such that your risk of robbery is minimized. Convenience stores, gas stations, package stores, and the like are prime targets for robbery, as are late-night restaurants. The high crime neighborhoods are usually apparent, but criminals don't always restrict themselves to the bad neighborhoods, so any store proprietor should be prepared for robbery.

Many gas stations and convenience stores have signs on the door warning that the register has no more than \$20 at night. Perhaps this deters some criminals, but it certainly doesn't prevent robbery, particularly by a crackhead who needs only enough for his next "rock". Surveillance cameras don't usually deter criminals, but they often do make a good record of the incident. Alarm systems that contact police or private security are a good idea for any business with a storefront; preferably with several alarm buttons that can be activated by the foot or knee, leaving the hands free. It is preferable to have several weapons available, concealed in positions where one might reasonably expect to touch during a robbery. (Hint: under or in the cash drawer is a bad idea, but under the stool is pretty good.)

Having a "hard reputation" is beneficial; even in a high crime area, after a store is hit, and the owner defends it successfully a couple of times, criminals tend to shy away, preferring to hit the easier stores. Of course, you don't want to give your customers the impression that the store is a likely target, nor do you want to let criminals know what they are in for, so you'll want to keep your preparations concealed.

Alarms: As previously mentioned, if you have an alarm, you'll want to have a system which has several manual buttons which can be activated by the knees or feet. An alarm should be silent. However, if you are in a remote location, or police response is extremely slow, an alarm may be nearly useless, and you'll have to depend upon your own wits to protect yourself.

Selection of weapon: Selection of weapon, again, depends upon your circumstance. If you are on your own, a handgun is probably the best choice, for the sake of concealment. It is best to have several weapons available from different positions, but concealed so that they cannot be seen even by a casual glance behind the counter. You may also want to conceal a weapon on yourself, though this brings along the same problems as with general on-body concealment. If bulk is not a problem, or if you have a back up person in a concealed location, a shotgun is an excellent choice. Weapon and ammo should be selected with the forethought that there may be customers in the store and that overpenetration is a definite consideration.

If you are an employee who risks being fired for defending yourself, it is a judgement call whether to draw a weapon. Since your employers aren't doing anything to protect you, you shouldn't place any value on their money or products, but that doesn't mean that the attackers won't kill you to eliminate witnesses anyway.

Tactics: As in home defense, you'll want to lay out probable lines of fire. For a convenience store or gas station, you can assume one person at the counter, perhaps another at the door, and maybe one more in the getaway car. You'll try to avoid hitting customers, but if you are the only one with a defensive weapon, saving your own life will also increase their chances. You'll want to take out the attackers in the order that they pose the most danger to you. Street criminals seldom have any shooting skill, particularly beyond touching distance, so expect to engage the nearest attacker first, unless he both unarmed and no real threat to you. Sometimes only one attacker will be armed. Use your cover and plan the area so that robbers will be in the open as much as possible.

You may have a second defender in the store; if so, tactics should be worked out beforehand. Each defender should have an arc of fire that does not cross another defender (though the arcs might cross each other.) It is beneficial to set up lines of fire such that there is no place the attacker can hide. If he is caught in cross-fire, he can't respond to, nor dodge, both shooters at once. Remember, too, that your goal is to drive him out if possible, so leave an exit route open.

You won't be able to do a lot to protect customers, other than ending the firefight as quickly as possible, but at least you can practice to hit your target, instead of missing and hitting a bystander, and using ammo that won't penetrate through an attacker (such as hollowpoints or pre-fragmented ammo.)

H. Defense against stalking:

Stalking is a peculiar crime. Unlike most crimes, which are either profit-motivated, or crimes of passion that occur once, the stalker likes to play a game with his victim, not unlike a cat who's caught a mouse. A stalker may be an associate, an ex-lover, a disgruntled employee, etc. but can also be a stranger, or a barely known neighbor.

The stalker views what he (or she) does as being perfectly justified and rational, and will, when caught, attempt to rationalize his motives. One might place the stalker in one of two categories: the amateur and the professional. The "amateur" is usually the ex-lover or the ex-employee. His reason for stalking is at least understandable, if not

reasonable; he basically has some kind of unfulfilled relationship which requires the participation of the victim. While annoying and even dangerous, these stalkers are easily identified--they don't usually take great pains to conceal themselves from the victim because they seek contact with the victim, and the newly legislated laws that prohibit stalking can be used against them.

The "professional", on the other hand, may have a reason for stalking the victim, but it may not be readily apparent. His reason may involve some kind of fetish, or some perceived slight which went unnoticed by the victim. He tends to prefer anonymous contact, by phone or by peeking through windows. He may be experienced; since stalking and rape have not been considered to be crimes on the same level as murder or even armed robbery, there are career stalkers who get caught every once in a while, spend a couple of years in prison, and then are released to stalk again. The professional is exceptionally dangerous, because unlike the amateur, he will use tactics to defeat your attempts to identify and bring the law to bear on him. If he is experienced, he'll know his way around the legal system, and will know what he can get away with. Because he is an unknown, he can deny deliberate contact, or even attempt to turn the tables and portray the victim as the aggressor. He may try to taunt you into taking inadvisable action. But however desirable it may be, or however many times you've caught him peeking through your window, you can't shoot him or beat him up. If you do, expect him to paint you as the attacker.

Strategy: When dealing with stalkers, the first thing to understand is such people are obsessed. Don't expect them to come around only when it is convenient for you. You need to be prepared at all times. You want to identify the stalker, not only for yourself but for the authorities as well. You want to develop information on this guy, so if you have to go to court, to get a restraining order or because of an "incident", you want to show that he's the bad guy and you are the victim, not vice versa. You also want to keep from being compromised; not only should you be prepared to protect yourself, but you need to know what you can and can't do to apprehend the stalker. The last thing you need is him filing charges on you or your spouse for assault.

Prevention: Avoiding being the target of stalking is a matter of lifestyle. If you frequent "pick-up" bars and live freely, or habitually become involved in abusive or obsessive relationships, your likelihood of being the target of a stalking is vastly increased. It should go without saying that extra-marital affairs and the like are very likely to become stalking situations, particularly since the other participant may be obsessive, deceitful, or otherwise unbalanced. But in many stalking incidents, the victim did nothing to encourage the stalker, and so stalking is a problem that anyone might face. Stalking isn't limited to male stalkers either; stalkers can frequently be women. Surveys show that a significant proportion of the population has been the target of some kind of stalking incident, ranging from petty vandalism by an ex-lover to threats of rape and murder.

If you know you have a stalker, you must take all the usual steps to prevent an attack, *all of the time*. Any time you are out of your house, you must be aware of your surroundings, particularly at night. At home, doors and windows should be shut tight, and all of the usual passive measures should be taken. An alarm system is a good idea, as is a cordless phone, but neither is a replacement for a weapon; in the event that the stalker decides to make his final move, he may just come right through the window, alarm or no, and even the best police response may be too slow.

Don't expect the police to provide personal protection for you. Even in situations where you are in immediate danger, police have no obligation to protect you personally, and most departments don't have the man-power to provide for you with a personal escort. In general, the best you can hope for is a once-a-shift drive-by from a police cruiser. If you are being stalked, your best chance for defense is your own action.

Tactics: Because stalking is an on-going event, it is better thought of as a war rather than merely a confrontation. As in war, you'll want to do some "intelligence gathering", i.e. getting evidence that demonstrates your stalker's intent, though your purpose is to set up a collection of data. If the stalking results in an arrest, and you go to court, you want to be able to slap a 3" thick folder full of photographs, dated police reports, phone logs, and other records demonstrating that you were the target of a stalking. Many stalkers, particularly the professional kind, will attempt to deny or rationalize their actions, and the lies can be very convincing to a jury, but a photograph showing the stalker climbing a fence or peeking through a window is more convincing and harder to deny. One might say, "the camera is mightier than the sword". A good camera, preferably one without autofocus or other user-friendly but slow-action devices can be more effective than a weapon in putting a stalker out of business. Report every incident to the police; they may become tired of coming to your house, but every incident will be a matter of public record, and each serves to thicken the stack of evidence. A restraining order, which prohibits the stalker from entering a certain area around the victim or the

victim's home or job, is a good first step, but remember; it is only a piece of paper. Its best value is in court, where you can demonstrate that you took all legal means to prevent contact with the stalker.

In terms of defending against the stalker, remember that especially with the professional, he might try to bait you into doing something stupid. Do not let this happen; it destroys your credibility and may cause you considerable grief. If you are a friend or protector of a stalking victim, the stalker may attempt to cause you to take inadvisable action simply to get you out of the way. Don't draw a gun on him, or beat him up, unless your reason is good enough to present to a jury. Carry a weapon, be prepared to use it, but realize that stalking is a game of cat and mouse, and you can't act prematurely or you'll be on the wrong side of the legal system.

You should, in addition to preparing for defense, try to alter your schedule and otherwise confound stalking attempts. It may come to the point at which you feel you need to move; if so, be careful that the stalker doesn't follow you and find your new location. This can be difficult; if he sees that you are moving, he may wait and attempt to follow. When moving your possessions, take them to a friend or relative's house first, or drive with a "chase car" well behind the moving truck, looking for shadow wing vehicles, and take a complex, unlikely, route. It will help if the phone and utilities are in someone else's name. Although these records aren't publically available, it is a relatively simple task for the experienced person to obtain access. Of course, you'll want an unlisted phone number, and you may want to consider switching banks, credit cards, and so forth. You may need to find a new job; if the stalker knows where you work, he can follow you from there.

If it sounds like you have to live your life around the stalker, you are half right. Stalking is such a nebulous crime that it is difficult to draw the line between coincidence and stalking, and the stalker will do all he can to blur that line in his favor. This is why it is so important to establish his action in the matter; when the stalking comes to an head, you want to be able to stand clear and demonstrate the justice of your action. In the past, stalking was often considered obnoxious, but essentially harmless behavior by an obsessive person, particularly in domestic situations. Fortunately, many states have recently recognized that stalking is a precursor to far more serious crimes, and have erected statutes that make it easier for the victim to avoid the stalker, and easier for prosecutors to try the stalker.

I. Defense in a riot/looter situation:

A riot or looting is one which the urban homeowner may have to deal with. During a riot, police response may be very slow, or absolutely nonexistent. Despite that fact, you might be asked or even ordered to leave your home or business. Doing so, and relinquishing protection of your home to the police may be your best option for personal survival, but there is absolutely no guarantee that the police *will* stop or even contain the rioting. The 1993 Los Angeles riots should serve as warning to anyone who completely trusts police protection and assumes that trouble always happens somewhere else.

Strategy: You have to make a decision here--are you going to stand and protect your property, or maximize your personal chances of survival? This may depend upon what your neighbors do, as well as your own personal desires; if the neighborhood sticks together and sets up an armed defensive perimeter then there is a good chance that the rioters will select another neighborhood or business to attack. Note that many of the Korean businesses, whose owners were well-armed, survived the 1993 LA riots relatively unscathed, while other businesses were destroyed.

Prevention: If you are in a riot hot spot, there isn't a lot you may be able to do to prevent it, but getting involved in community affairs might help. Preventing the rioters from hitting your business means a display of force; most rioters aren't well-armed and will turn at the sight of a business-owner with a gun, but don't count on every rioter being so compliant.

Tactics: Show force, but don't expose yourself, threaten rioters unduly, or display force away from your property--the police may arrest you for doing so even while the rioters are smashing your windows and making off with your property. You can't fire freely on the rioters, particularly if they are unarmed, nor can you rely on the police or National Guard units to maintain position and contain the riots. In the LA riots, police and the National Guard were continually ordered to retreat rather than to engage the rioters, out of fear of a "Kent State"-type incident; indeed, many National Guardsmen were issued weapons but no ammunition. Put plywood over windows, get into good cover, in or on top of the building, and hope for the best.

Riots may last from a few hours to a few days, so be prepared. Expect to do without water or electricity. Alarms may not work, or may be triggered all the time. You may not have power to heat food, and you will probably need several of flashlights to identify threats. Unless you have enough friends to hold off an army, you need some way to find out what is happening beyond your vision. If a huge mob is heading your way or a fire is getting out of control, you will need to leave in plenty of time, by a pre-arranged safe route. Expect to fight small fires and treat minor wounds yourself.

J. Defense in hostage situation:

A hostage situation might range from an armed robbery gone wrong to a hijacking by international terrorists making impossible demands. While the reasons and the grade of criminal may be different, the outcome is usually the same: the hijackers are up a creek because the relevant authority generally can't or won't deal with them. The determining factor in a hostage situation is often not the caliber of the criminals, but of the responding force. Unfortunately, as a hostage, you may well be in far more danger from the authorities than your captors. Your captors don't want you dead; if they have excess hostages, or you act aggressive, they might kill you to make a point, but you are their shield from authority, and you are worth more dead than alive. The police or government won't generally see it that way, though, and will want to end the conflict as soon as possible, often by the use of force and even when unnecessary.

Strategy: As a hostage, your best strategy to stay alive is to stay the hell out of the way. Don't try to bully the captors. If anything, try to identify with them (at least in deed, if not in thought), but don't push it. If it comes to the point where the authorities attempt a rescue, don't try to "help"; again, your best bet is to stay down and take cover.

Prevention: Prevention involves all the normal actions to prevent crime; avoid crime areas, etc. Hostage situations will usually occur on the spur of the moment as the criminals' plans fail, and so the criminals won't know what to do. You might be able to make use of the initial confusion, but most likely the criminals will decide to "wait it out" until it becomes apparent that they are not going to get out of the situation.

In international travel, there are certain spots and certain carriers that are noted for their propensity as targets, and the traveller would be best advised, if possible, to avoid these. Still, terrorism is largely a random act, and there is little you can do to avoid the random cafe bomb or rooftop sniper.

Tactics: Very popular are the genre of action movies involving a hero in limited circumstances, surrounded by terrorists, who uses his wits, might, and incredible martial arts skills in order to remove the captors one by one, usually culminating in a final showdown with the main bad guy. While this theme makes for exciting movies, it doesn't have much to do with the reality of a hostage situation. In the unlikely situation that you are not immediately taken hostage by the captors, your best bet is to lay low, or if possible, effect your escape, not to run around trying to silently remove the attackers one by one.

Several books have been written on the psychology of hostage negotiation, both from the outside and as a hostage. Don't place too much faith in what they say--terrorists don't always follow the manual, and the people who write these things usually do so from the comfort of an orthopedic chair--but it is true that captors often identify with their hostages, particularly in long-term hostage situations. If this occurs, you should make the best of it, talking about home, family things rather than international politics or the likely future of said criminal.

As previously stated, your biggest threat comes from the authorities. While the longer the incident goes on, the more likely the terrorists are to give up, the opposite is true for police or authorities. The site commander may grow tired after hours of negotiation and authorize a "dynamic entry" even if the situation doesn't call for it. A dynamic entry usually starts with some kind of distraction; sometimes the assault team will blow a hole in a wall, both for entry or distraction, or they might fire tear gas, "flash-bangs", or flaming magnesium grenades, or all of the above, in order to distract the captors. When the team enters, they will fire at anything that appears threatening, i.e. anything moving, so your best chance is to get behind cover, get down, and play dead. Do not jump up and try to struggle with a captor, or take his weapon and try to shoot other captors. If the negotiations drag on for hours and seem to be worsening, or the captors refuse to negotiate or make unreasonable, impossible demands, then you can expect a dynamic entry. Authorities usually expect innocent casualties during an assault, so don't depend on their willingness to protect your life as an individual; the assault will be planned to minimize innocent casualties, but the primary goal will be to protect members of the entry team and take out the captors, not to protect the hostages.

V. Aftermath

A. If you capture your attacker:

Generally, it is better to drive your attacker away. Trying to capture an attacker is much more difficult. He has no compunction about harming you and you are restraining yourself from harming him. The advantage is all his, and all he needs is a moment of indecision or inattention to hurt you. Even if he is seemingly disarmed and you are holding a gun on him, he may have another weapon hidden. If he appears hurt or dead he may be "playing possum" in order to get you to drop your guard.

If your attacker is injured, you might be civilly liable in moving, restraining, or even trying to aid him. While it may seem heartless, if your attacker is wounded, the best thing you can do is take cover, keep your weapon at ready, and await the arrival of the authorities. You can't bang him over the head with your gun or a club to knock him unconscious; it is rather dangerous, both for you and the attacker, and it isn't always effective. It should go without saying that you can't walk over and kill the attacker with a coup de grace shot either; this is considered execution and is very, very illegal.

If the attacker surrenders, then you have a quandry on your hands; you don't really want to deal with an able, conscious attacker. If you face more than one attacker, the odds against you are much worse. If they do surrender, remain behind cover. Demand that they turn around, lower (not drop) their firearms or other weapons to the ground *one at a time*, and then drop to their knees, facing away from you, hands clasped on top of their head. If they refuse to comply...well, you can't shoot them unless they actually charge or appear to be drawing a weapon. Do not attempt to frisk or secure the criminals if the police are on the way; that job belongs to the police, who usually perform such act in pairs or groups.

If you don't have any expectation of the authorities coming to secure the attackers, your options are reduced to either driving them off or securing them yourself. If you choose the latter option, be advised that you are putting yourself at great risk in doing so; you can't justify shooting the attacker until he makes a move, but once you've approached the attacker, you've removed the advantage of range, and he may attempt to grapple with you, or draw a concealed weapon.

If you do decide to secure the criminal yourself, you'll want to restrain and then frisk the criminal. This is not done in the manner shown on television. Although some police department still use this method, they do so only in pairs, and even then there is a better way. If there are more than one attacker, have them line up in front of each other, one facing the next one's back, so that the forward guys can't see what you are doing. Order the first attacker to drop to his knees and clasp his hands at his head, as before. Then order him to fall to his face, without using his hands. Once he is lying down, prone, have him take the right ankle and put it behind the left knee, (or reverse if you are left handed), and then fold the left leg, capturing the right leg. Approach the attacker, holstering your weapon (if you have a club type weapon you may want to draw it) and put your weight against the leg, immobilizing his legs. Then, restrain the arms; handcuffs or shackles work well, but so will strong plastic one-way ties, wire, duct tape, or superglue. If you use rope or cord, use several loops around the wrists and tie the knots securely, using a secure hitch followed by several tight knots. It is inadvisable to attempt tying the legs, as even a secured criminal can kick while you attempt to tie the legs, and you'll probably want to move them around, anyway. If you do decide to secure the legs, through a temporary restricting loop (like a lasso) around both ankles first and then make a more secure bond as with the arms. When you are done with one attacker, move him so that you can see what he is doing and go on to the next one. Be prepared for a struggle; he may attempt to wrestle your weapon away from you or draw one of his own.

Once you have secured him, then frisk him, first patting and then rumpling the clothing, looking for both bulky and flat weapons. Check thoroughly; ignore derogatory comments. Once you've determined that he doesn't have any weapons, remove his belt, shoes, and all contents of the pocket including comb, keys, etc.

Securing the attackers works best when you have a partner who can keep his weapon trained upon the criminals while you tie them up. You'll want to be careful though, not to cross his line of fire. If you have to keep the criminals tied up for an extended period of time, don't bother unsecuring them to go to the bathroom or for feeding; this just opens up the opportunity for resistance. Make certain they are given water--you don't want a criminal or civil suit for negligence--but they should be able to survive a few days without food. Don't lock them in a room unless it is completely secure; it is better to keep them under observation, or, after securing them, seek out the authorities.

Securing the criminals yourself may be the only viable option in certain situations, but it is very dangerous, even with a partner, and should be undertaken only in extreme need. It is almost always better to await the authorities or drive off the criminals.

B. Altering/leaving the scene:

Altering or leaving the scene of a crime (even if you were the victim) is a crime, sometimes a felony, and so in general, you do not want to do this. Some security experts and police officers give bad advice in this regard; more than once, a police officer has advised a potential defender that if he had shot a trespasser outside the home, he should drag the trespasser in the house and claim that an intrusion had taken place. This is an extremely bad idea. Modern forensic science has progressed to the point where forensicists and forensic pathologists can develop amazing amounts of information from seemingly insignificant clues. Unless you are intimately familiar with their methods and are extremely cool-headed, it is unlikely that you will remove all evidence of tampering and any indication of tampering is enough to start an investigation.

Another favorite method of altering the scene is the throw-down weapon, sometimes used by, shall we say, rather pragmatic police officers. The throw-down weapon is an extra knife or a gun which is carried. If a defender is involved in an incident where the attacker ends up dead but turns out not to be armed, he puts the weapon nearby, first adding the attackers fingerprints. This tactic is well-known to forensicists and if they suspect that a weapon is a throw-down (i.e. there is only one set of prints on the grip and none on the magazine or ammunition) then this may be enough to cause a full-blown investigation.

Another action which is discouraged is leaving the scene of a crime. Even in a justified shooting the defender can expect to go through much effort and expense to demonstrate his "presumed" innocence, and so walking away from an incident can seem a desirable act, particularly in light of the fact that so many murders go unsolved. Be wary of this line of thinking, though. You may leave considerable evidence behind identifying you, or there may be witnesses you didn't see. As with tampering with evidence, if you walk away from the crime and your identity is discovered later, a jury will tend to side against you because of your reluctance to come forward. Leaving the scene of a crime, while perhaps not as criminal as tampering with evidence, is still a crime. If you leave the scene, the presumption is that your attackers are dead (so that they can't identify you). If this is the case, understand that there is no statute of limitations on murder, so you will spend the rest of your life a hunted man, never knowing if someone might uncover a clue to your identity. If your shooting was just, you are often better off to face the consequences and clear your name.

C. When the police come:

First of all, when you or someone else calls the police, be certain that the dispatcher has a good description of you, and relays the fact that you are armed. If you are holding the criminals at gun point, relay that fact too, lest the police think that *you* are the attacker. The dispatcher may demand that you immediately disarm; (this is standard policy for many departments), but until the police arrive on site, you are the only guarantee of your own safety, so you'd best stay armed. Once the police arrive, let them take over; don't argue unless necessary. Make a display about disarming; move slowly, place the weapon on the ground, and follow their instructions. They may initially take you into custody as well as the attackers, to assure their safety; after all, they don't have a score card and they may not know who is the perpetrator, so comply with the police and calmly explain the circumstances.

Whether to make a statement then, or await legal counsel is a questionable matter; in general, even if you are completely right, you are better off talking to a lawyer first. Explain to the police, "Look, I'd like to talk to you, but this is such a serious matter I think I ought to talk to a lawyer first." Don't be swayed by argument or threat; it is your right both to be silent and to communicate with a lawyer. Better you talk to a lawyer first than to make a mistake which goes into the police report and returns to haunt you later.

Be polite to the officer taking the report. While the report *should* be unbiased, an officer can and usually will bias it with his own observations; if you are belligerent, the officer may bias it against you. Don't count on politeness biasing the report for you, but it never hurts; that report is primarily what the prosecutor will use in determining whether to press charges or not. Don't admit to anything not 100% legal--you have a Fifth Amendment right from self-incrimination--and don't make up elaborate stories; your best bet is simply to tell the truth, as clearly and concisely as you can. If the incident occurs with other defenders, you might want to verify the details before the police arrive, but

don't conspire to change evidence or lie; again, the police will probably find discrepancies in the stories, particularly when they question the defenders one at a time.

D. Legal consequences/Demanding legal counsel:

As previously stated, you should talk to legal counsel before submitting a report. This is your Constitutional right, although some police officers may try to convince you otherwise. If you have already talked to a lawyer or keep one on retainer, keep his number on you, and make him your first phone call, or have someone else call him.

If at all possible, hire a private lawyer. The law requires that you be provided with legal assistance, but this usually means a "public defender" who is overworked, underpaid, understaffed, and possibly poorly qualified. In general, public defenders would rather plead out a case, even if it is winnable, to reduce their workload--they get paid by the hour or are salaried, not by the number of cases they win. A private attorney will be expensive--you may be forced to mortgage your house or sell possessions, but you stand a better chance of coming out in the clear. Your lawyer will be in the best situation to advise you, so listen to him, but if you think his advice is bad, don't be adverse to getting a second opinion.

The legal consequences of a shooting, even in what is clearly self-defense, can be devastating. However, as many gun owners point out, "It is better to be tried by twelve than carried by six." You can't be tried if you are dead, nor can you protect your family or enjoy your possessions. Although jury decisions can be obtuse, juries typically try hard to come to a rational decision, and it serves well to remind a jury that they are in control of their own fate, to the point that they may contradict the letter law if they see fit.

Once you are tried for a specific crime, and found not guilty, you cannot be retried, unless by a different court, or a different charge, or for accessory charges to the main event. Legal battles can drag on for years, draining your patience and your pocketbook. This is especially aggravating when the prosecutor is doing so only for political brownie points. It helps to have supportive family and friends, and in the case when the charges aren't justified, but are a political attack, public support and media attention can help remind an errant public servant for whom he works.

E. Civil liability:

Even if you are found innocent of criminal charges, you can still be held liable for civil damages, either by the attackers or by their surviving relatives and associates. Unlike criminal court, in civil court you can be sued any number of times for damages, and re-sued later if damages were deemed to be insufficient. Civil suits only require a preponderance of evidence, as opposed to the "beyond a reasonable doubt" criteria of criminal cases, and so it is quite possible to be acquitted of a criminal charge only to have to pay thousands or millions of dollars in damages arising from a civil suit. You can countersue, if the suit is frivolous, but that is expensive, too. Besides, while you (hopefully an upstanding citizen of some consistant, if not extra vagant, means) have property to sue for and a steady position and social status to maintain and protect, most criminals own little, and have few qualms about pulling up roots and taking off to some other area, making it difficult collect on such a suit even if you win.

Civil liability can arise even from situations where the shooting was entirely justified. It isn't a matter of guilt or innocence; it is a matter of specific compliance with the law. In one fairly recent case, a child used his step-father's handgun to shoot and kill an adult home intruder who was with a armed with a sharpened screwdriver. No criminal charges were filed; however, the attacker's surviving relatives filed a civil suit on the step-father, claiming that he was negligent in allowing his step-child access to a firearm, and that this negligence led to the death of the attacker. QED. While exoneration from criminal charges never hurts in a civil case, it is certainly no guarantee of winning a civil suit, so be prepared. You may want to do some legal shell-games, like setting up trust funds for your children or selling your house to your wife or relative for a nominal fee, so that you personally have little to lose in a settlement. This might seem dishonest, but in the current situation, the game is rigged against you, and you can lose even when you are right, so you want to make certain that your family is taken care of if you lose.

If you are a store-owner, you have some special considerations. Customers may sue you for putting their lives in jeopardy, and if an innocent person gets shot, even if not by your gun, you can be held liable in many states. If you are a store-owner considering armed defense, it would be wise to keep a lawyer on retainer, particularly if you work in a high crime area.

F. Social consequences:

The social consequences of a shooting can be extensive, ranging from emotional problems to threats from survivors. The social consequences can, in some cases, be more significant than legal or civil consequences; even if you are found innocent of wrongdoing, people may view you as a killer.

First off all, let's dispell the modern myth of post-shooting traumatic disorder (PSTD). There is no doubt that you will probably suffer some amount of emotional anguish; unlike the movies, bad guys don't just fall down and die, they usually make quite a mess, and the agony can leave a significant impression on you. People will probably accuse you of being a murderer, and our society holds that the elimination of life, even in just cause, is unfortunate and perhaps reprehensible. Even when you are in the right, you may feel some amount of guilt; this is normal, but it should not be overwhelming.

It is easy to say, "If someone came after me, I'd shoot the &\$%# and then piss on his grave," but the reality may be somewhat different. We've all been brought up (I hope) to have some measure of respect for life, and killing someone, even in defense, goes against that training. However, if you are a normal person with a supportive family and friends, or are capable of handling your own emotional distress effectively, this shouldn't pose a chronic problem. Most defenders are more happy to be alive than sorrowful for killing their attacker.

Nightmares, or periods of introspection are normal for such an infrequent emotional trauma, but if they don't reduce in frequency and intensity, or you feel depressed or suicidal, it is important to get help, quickly. This may involve a religious leader, a relative, or a psychiatrist, but whatever you do, don't just ignore it.

You can put a handle on your emotions, but you can't control those of others. Friends and relatives may shy away from you, thinking you to be irresponsible or criminal. If public opinion is against you, you may have trouble locally or get fired from your job. Other people, "violence groupies", may try to get you to reiterate your experience, asking you questions like, "How did it feel?" or "Would you do it again?" The best thing you can do is try to go on with your life; don't encourage people by talk ing about it publically (you probably won't want to, anyway) and just try to show people that you aren't a danger; you are just Joe or Jane Public, trying to make your way through life, someone who had the unfortuante circumstance to have to kill another person. Be careful about what you say for legal, too.

One thing you may have to worry about is retribution; criminals may have friends or family that demand vengence and may harrass you, or even attack you. If this occurs, make certain that the police know, although as with a stalking situation, there may not be much that you can do about it. You may have to move to get away from social sentiment or vengeful relatives, leaving your job, selling your home, and forgoing your friends and relatives. In the movies, a defender may kill the badguy, and then drive away into the sunset with the pretty girl; in real life, it is never that simple. You can expect great expense, emotionally draining legal shenanigans, and underhanded harrassment and even outright revenge.

But it is better than being killed, or seeing a loved one killed or raped.

G. What if you get shot:

If you get shot, the first thing to do is to end the conflict, as quickly as possible. If not before, your life is truly on the line now, so be quick and dirty about it. Next, you want to get medical help. If help is not available, raise the injured body part to reduce blood loss, and cover yourself to prevent shock. If you, or another defender, has a chest wound from which bubbles are issuing, get a piece of plastic, like a trashcan liner or a large sandwich bag, and cover the wound, using pressure for a seal. It helps to have a sharp utility knife for cutting away clothing and the like. It is best not to move the injured unless necessary, but if it is a choice between remaining in the line of fire or moving the wounded, move them. Remember, too, that you can be civilially liable, even if you aren't personally responsible for the wound, so unless you are sure of what you are doing, it may be best to await medical help. In general, don't bother helping your attackers; it opens you to civil suit, physical attack, and transmission of blood-borne diseases. Your attackers made their choice, and accepted their fate, when they decided to attack you.

It is wise to take a "First Responder" class as preparation for defense. This may do more to save your life than the super magnum advertised in the latest issue of "Guns and Glory", so make it a serious consideration.

If paramedics respond, understand that they will probably refuse to help you until you disarm and hand over the weapon. They don't know who you are or what you are doing with the gun, nor do they care; they just want to go home at night. It is safest, if you are able, to unload the gun as gun handling is not generally a required skill for paramedics. The paramedics *should* check in your weapon with your other belongings, but if it is lost, so be it; you can buy another gun, but you can't buy another leg, or another life.

VI. Appendicies

Appendix A: A true story of "defense" with a fake firearm by Tom Faller.

Back in '82, I was a poor graduate student intending to finish my thesis and move to Houston, where a nice job in the oil industry awaited. I was living in Iowa City, a town that not only had little crime, but didn't even have a "bad" section. Even with 35+ bars downtown, it was usually safe to wander on foot at all hours.

Nobody in my family had ever used guns while I was growing up. My younger sister had bought a gun in the '70's, after being attacked, but my general attitude while growing up was "I didn't like them". As the prospect of moving to Houston drew nearer, I decided to look into the question again.

I couldn't afford a pistol, but I could afford a realistic-looking Crossman pellet gun that looked exactly like a S&W .357 and fired six rounds. It was big, it was heavy, and it made a good "training gun" as I tried to anticipate carrying it around, keeping it safe but available at home, and dealing with it in my head - the most difficult part.

Well, I finally moved to Houston, started hitting the gun shops and reading the ads, and my first pistol was a .22 Ruger Single-Six, a single action 5 1/2" barreled pistol that was only \$125, but was indeed a real gun. Now I had a real gun at last.

Unfortunately, it wasn't much of one. I shot it at the range a couple of times and enjoyed it, but when there were noises outside my back door, it didn't seem like much comfort. In another six months, I'd bought a Remington 870 shotgun with a 20" barrel, which was more comforting, but I still was without something handy and portable that would do the job. I was looking at .357's, .44 Specials (the Charter Arms Bulldog was hot at the time), and .45's, but couldn't decide to cough up the money - especially when a Ruger Ranch Rifle was just a bit more...

One night, about a year later, I pulled into my parking spot behind my apartment. My girlfriend and I were living in a "nice" area, with security gates, and a big wooded lot in the middle of a circle of townhouses. It was North Houston, a very busy area, both commercially, and with new residence homes going up all over. The complex had been very quiet since we'd moved in.

As I got out of the car, a black guy, about 20, jogged down the drive I'd just driven up on. A few seconds later, a large dog followed at a gallop - an odd pair out jogging, but I'd seen stranger before. Two seconds later, a white guy, also about 20, ran up and yelled "Stop him! He broke into my neighbor's car!"

The dog belonged to Bachelor #2, who had just walked out his back door with the dog and had seen a pair of feet poking out of his neighbor's car. We both gave chase until we got around the corner of the building, at which point we lost sight of our burglar. We decide to go back and get guns and then poke around to see if we could find the guy.

I know. Stupid. Wait, it gets worse.

I went back inside and went to my closet. I looked at the shotgun - too obvious, and it might get me shot. My Single-Six wasn't much of a pistol to intimidate anyone. I picked up the Crossman and stuck it in my waistband. Outside, we looked into the woods, but didn't try to go in. The dog had lost track of him, or perhaps wasn't a tracker at all. The other guy had a baseball bat - his gun was at the shop. We gave up after a few minutes and went to tell his neighbor about the break-in.

While I was out poking around, several thoughts went through my mind. First, that pellet gun was absolutely useless for trying to stop someone. If I told them to halt and they came at me, what was I going to do? Second, if the guy had a

gun, or had gotten to one, he could shoot me and claim that I'd pulled on him first - and I'd be stuck with "terroristic threats" and a hole in my side if I were lucky.

That made me decide to make a decision. I looked around, and the next week, purchased a Ruger .357 and a used Bulldog. I went to the range and practiced with both. I got used to having them in the house, and dragged my girlfriend to a Deputy's Safety course, where she could fire several guns and learn how to handle them. She still wouldn't touch one, but I felt that she wouldn't hurt herself if she changed her mind someday.

Well, the Ruger was stolen about seven years ago and the Bulldog was sold to a cop for a backup gun. I've replaced both with better guns. I've still got the Crossman pellet gun, though, and I still play with it in the yard. It isn't any substitute for a real gun though. The trigger is lousy - no relation to even the crummiest handgun, and the balance is strange - but it's still a fun toy. It might scare someone until they looked at the little bitty hole in the barrel and for the cylinder holes - but I'd rather use a .22 than bluff again.

I've heard the argument about your gun getting taken away and used against you. While I don't want to put down anyone's feelings on the matter, it seems to me that this is a learned response, and not a genuine attitude - that is, it's something that people think they might do because they've seen it happen on TV or have been told that if you don't want to shoot someone, it will absolve you of the guilt of what happens when they do take it away from you. I think that in real life, you'll be going 90 miles per hour to pull the trigger before your attacker takes another step, or that you'll use teeth, claws and toenails to fight letting go of it. Fear is a powerful thing. I expect to use my fear to help me hang on to my gun, should the chance occur.

I also expect, from my experience, that someone with a pellet gun would pull it out *before* it was needed, because there's the mental conditioning that "it's not really a deadly weapon", or "I'm just going to scare them anyway". Either attitude can make an attack more likely, if your attacker decides that your body language means that you aren't serious about hurting them.

My advice is: don't bluff. Don't make a threat unless you really mean to follow through; if someone can't handle a gun, get them the strongest self-protection they will follow through with - spray, flashlight or big dog. If they're unsure about guns, get them to a range with a competent teacher and let them see that a gun won't bite them.

Tom Faller

Appendix B: Dan's Pepper Spray Challenge by Dan Day

The Rules: You withdraw the contents of your savings account in cash. Put it in a bag and hang on to it. Acquire a can of your favorite pepper or tear gas spray. Draw a line on the ground. You stand on one side and I'll stand on the other. If I can cross the line, take your bag of money away from you, and carry it back over the line, I get to keep it.

Of course, if you wanted to make it a more realistic simulation of a self-defense situation, I'd be allowed to bring any weapon(s) I can lay my hands on, but you could only bring whatever you normally carry with you to work or school every day. Oh, yeah, and the modified rules say I can fracture your skull or cut your throat if I think it'll help.

You may wonder what you win if the pepper spray **does** stop me. Why, you get to keep your money, and whatever pieces of your body you can still locate when it's all over. That's fair, isn't it? After all, it's the same deal you're agreeing to when you trust your money/girlfriend/life/ whatever to a can of pepper spray. If it works, good; if it doesn't, you lose big-time.

If you think your pepper spray would be effective in stopping me, you have nothing to worry about, right? Let me know when you're willing to volunteer for this little demonstration, I'm willing to participate any time, anywhere. Just like the thieves on the street, I think a temporary burning feeling which leaves no lasting damage is a small price to pay for a chance at all that money. So how reluctant are you to accept this challenge, and why? Has your enthusiasm for that pepper spray begun to wane yet? If you're not willing to risk your money on your pepper spray, are you willing to bet your **life** on it?

Of course, using a gun for self defense is not infallible either, but there are two differences between the gun and the

pepper spray: First, a gun is more effective at stopping an attacker than a short-range aerosol which is just as likely to affect you as your attacker and which can't be aimed worth a damn, especially in even a mild breeze. Second, if you're carrying a gun in the above "get the money over the line" challenge, I wouldn't even *try* to take your money. Why? Because while I'm willing to risk temporary pain (the pepper spray) for a chance at your money, I'm not suicidal enough to risk getting shot for it -- and neither are most criminals. Think about it.

Appendix C: Jeff Cooper's Rules of Gun Safety

>From The Modern Technique of the Pistol by Greg Morrison, Gunsite Press, pgs 8-10

RULE I: ALL GUNS ARE ALWAYS LOADED

There are no exceptions. Do not pretend that this is true. Some people and organizations take this rule and weaken it; e.g. "Treat all guns as if they were loaded." Unfortunately, the "as if" compromises the directness of the statement by implying that they are unloaded, but we will treat them as though they are loaded. No good! Safety rules must be worded forcefully so that they are never treated lightly or reduced to partial compliance.

All guns are always loaded - period!

This must be your mind-set. If someone hands you a firearm and says, "Don't worry, it's not loaded," you do not dare believe him. You need not be impolite, but check it yourself. Remember, there are no accidents, only negligent acts. Check it. Do not let yourself fall prey to a situation where you might feel compelled to squeal, "I didn't know it was loaded!"

RULE II: NEVER LET THE MUZZLE COVER ANYTHING YOU ARE NOT WILLING TO DESTROY

Conspicuously and continuously violated, especially with pistols, Rule II applies whether you are involved in range practice, daily carry, or examination. If the weapon is assembled and in someone's hands, it is capable of being discharged. A firearm holstered properly, lying on a table, or placed in a scabbard is of no danger to anyone. Only when handled is there a need for concern. This rule applies to fighting as well as to daily handling. If you are not willing to take a human life, do not cover a person with the muzzle. This rule also applies to your own person. Do not allow the muzzle to cover your extremities, e.g. using both hands to reholster the pistol. This practice is unsound, both procedurally and tactically. You may need a free hand for some thing important. Proper holster design should provide for one-handed holstering, so avoid holsters which collapse after withdrawing the pistol. (Note: It is dangerous to push the muzzle against the inside edge of the holster nearest the body to "open" it since this results in your pointing the pistol at your midsection.) Dry-practice in the home is a worthwhile habit and it will result in more deeply programmed reflexes. Most of the reflexes involved in the Modern Technique do not require that a shot be fired. Particular procedures for dry-firing in the home will be covered later. Let it suffice for now that you do not dry-fire using a "target" that you wish not to see destroyed. (Recall RULE I as well.)

RULE III: KEEP YOUR FINGER OFF THE TRIGGER UNTIL YOUR SIGHTS ARE ON THE TARGET

Rule III is violated most anytime the uneducated person handles a firearm. Whether on TV, in the theaters, or at the range, people seem fascinated with having their finger on the trigger. Never stand or walk around with your finger on the trigger. It is unprofessional, dangerous, and, perhaps most damaging to the psyche, it is klutzy looking. Never fire a shot unless the sights are superimposed on the target and you have made a

conscious decision to fire. Firing an unaligned pistol in a fight gains nothing. If you believe that the defensive pistol is only an intimidation tool - not something to be used - carry blanks, or better yet, reevaluate having one around. If you are going to launch a projectile, it had best be directed purposely. Danger abounds if you allow your finger to dawdle inside the trigger guard. As soon as the sights leave the target, the trigger-finger leaves the trigger and straightens alongside the frame. Since the hand normally prefers to work as a unit - as in grasping - separating the function of the trigger-finger from the rest of the hand takes effort. The five-finger grasp is a deeply programmed reflex. Under sufficient stress, and with the finger already placed on the trigger, an unexpected movement, misstep or surprise could result in a negligent discharge. Speed cannot be gained from such a premature placement of the trigger-finger. Bringing the sights to bear on the target, whether from the holster or the Guard Position, takes more time than that required for moving the trigger finger an inch or so to the trigger.

RULE IV: BE SURE OF YOUR TARGET

Know what it is, what is in line with it, and what is behind it. Never shoot at anything you have not positively identified. Be aware of your surroundings, whether on the range or in a fight. Do not assume anything. Know what you are doing.

SUMMARY

Make these rules a part of your character. Never compromise them. Improper gunhandling results from ignorance and improper role modeling, such as handling your gun like your favorite actor does. Education can cure this. You can make a difference by following these gunhandling rules and insisting that those around you do the same. Set the example. Who knows what tragedies you, or someone you influence, may prevent?

Appendix D: Suggested Reading

First of all, there are certain books (or types of books) that you might want to avoid. That is, if you want to stay alive. Many so-called defense books perpetuate myths and suggest procedures that may seem okay in the dojo, but don't work for diddily in the streets. Books to avoid:

- Books about "ninja death touches" and the like; the kind that offer the promise of instant self-defense.
- Books on traditional martial-arts styles. These styles can be effective, but many of the techniques are intended to be used by people who have years of experience and conditioning. If you want to put in this much effort, join a martial arts school.
- Military manuals. These are universally bad and uninformative, and teach the reader just enough to get killed.
- Any book that promotes flashy techniques (spinning heel snap sidekick to the opposite kidney). You are looking for simple techniques that will work for you under stress.
- Sucker punch books -- these techniques only work on suckers. Never underestimate your opponent.
- Any book by Dr. Ted Gambordella. This guy has no idea what he's talking about. Ignore him.

The following is a list of books on the topic of armed and unarmed self-defense (along with a short critique) that I feel are extremely good. Most of these are available from Loompanics Publishers. The address for Loompanics is

Loompanics Unlimited
 PO Box 1197
 Port Townsend, Wa 98368

Unarmed Self Defense

Cheap Shots, Ambushes, and Other Lessons by Marc "Animal" MacYoung. If you read only one book besides _Armed Defense_ on this entire list it should be this one. This is not your typical book on self-defense; it has a bare minimum of information about how to hit people and so forth. Instead, it talks heavily about awareness, perception, and motivations. It is one of the few books I have ever read that holistically covers the topic of unarmed (and armed) self-defense. There are no diagrams detailing the x-number of striking points on the human body, and no tables that determine how long a man bleeds from a certain artery before he is dead; the book isn't even organized in a linear manner, but the information that it provides is extraordinarily useful. It covers the information from the viewpoint of someone who has been in combat, rather than some theory-spouting pogue sitting behind a desk. I cannot recommend this book more highly.

Fists, Wits, and a Wicked Right also by Marc MacYoung. This book details more about the actual workings of a fight. It doesn't have a lot of those cute little diagrams with lines going every which way either, but it does tell the ordinary person (one who can't punch through 1/2 inch of solid bone with his pinky finger) where and how they can strike to be most effective. It also debunks several of the myths that the movies have perpetuated. Although this book is not as utterly important to read as Cheap Shots, it is highly recommended.

Black Medicine, Vols. 1-3 by N. Mashiro. The third volume, _Low Blows_, is particularly good, as it presents detailed, simple techniques. Highly recommended.

Subway Survival by Bradley J. Steiner. This is a good book for people who live in urban areas. The procedures in this book can apply to all crowded situations, not just subways.

A Bouncer's Guide to Barroom Brawling by Peyton Quinn. A good addition to Cheap Shots, as it deals with some of the same ideas, but not required.

War With Empty Hands by Lenox Cramer. A good book in its own way, but I hesitate to recommend it for someone with no martial arts experience. Definitely a supplementary item.

Sun Tzu's _The Art of War_ various translations. Interesting ideas that are applicable to all forms of confrontation. Good reading.

Armed Self-Defense

Armed Defense by Burt Rapp. An excellent book on armed self defense for the individual, homeowner, and businessman. If you read only one book out of this entire list, read this one. Highest recommendation.

In the Gravest Extreme by Massad F. Ayoob. General an excellent book on armed self-defense, although I disagree with a few of his points.

The Truth About Self Protection, by Massad F. Ayoob. A thick paperback-sized book that covers many of the possible levels of self-protection, from unarmed through armed, and offers advice on alarms, locks, dogs and non-lethal weapons.

Armed and Female by Paxton Quigley. Ms. Quigley is a former member of Handgun Control, Inc. who decided that firearms have value in personal defense after all. There are a few technical flaws in her book, but it is very informative,

and it approaches the topic of armed self-defense from the perspective of a novice. She has a new book out, also.

The_Street-Smart_Gun_Book by John Farnam. Farnam, like Ayoob, teaches a self-defense school. The book covers awareness, shooting tactics, weapon retention and mistakes to avoid in defending inside your home.

Several magazines are good regular sources for articles on self defense. The most popular are those explicitly devoted to guns or martial arts, but they assume that the choice to defend has already been made. Some articles bear mention because they appeared in the "straight" media, the magazines which don't focus on self-defense.

These articles are arguments for effective self-defense with a firearm. They may be more effective in persuading someone who feels that they need a gun, but don't like the image of one, or feel that it puts them in unwelcome company.

"Letter From An Angry Reader", by Chip Elliot. Esquire, September 1981 This is the best argument I've read that gun owners aren't all paranoid rednecks. Elliot makes the case that if upscale Americans are afraid of crime, they'd better do something person ally about it. As with most Esquire articles, it is extremely well written and persuasive.

"Firearms: No Right Is An Island", by Joe McConnell. Whole Earth Review, Winter, 1992. A very matter-of-fact article which discusses the failings of gun control assumptions and laws and suggests some positive solutions. Aimed at the liberal whose experience with guns comes solely from the movies.

"The False Promise of Gun Control", by Daniel D. Polsby. The Atlantic Monthly, March, 1994. Attacks the "popular" solutions of gun control by giving facts and pointing out the implicit dangers to freedom. The thinking person's rebuttal to gun control arguments.

"Would I Be Safer With A Gun?", by Ann Japenga. Health, March/April, 1994 A woman's magazine article which faces off experts on both sides of the gun safety issue, and presents four personal stories of women's experience with guns. Two are positive, one negative, and one is neutral, but the section, as a whole, is positive and has very useful information for women on the actual effectiveness of common defense objects (with input from Mas Ayoob).

Finally, there is a magazine which offers high-quality advice, gun reviews and a unique voice to the self-defense forum. "Women and Guns" is published monthly by the Second Amendment Foundation. Several editors and writers are firearms experts and noted trainers, and most are women. For a very different look at armed self-defense issues, pick up a copy.

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http://www.survivalprimer.com/2005CallToArms/Vision_A_Call_to_Arms_2005.htm
Vision A call to Arms Chicago Earthquake, Russian Invasion, God's Impending Judgment of America, Booklet. With Extra Copies of the Russian Invasion Map, originally called the "Hand Map." The entire basic content, in written form, of what was called, the "A Call to Arms" Tapes.

http://www.survivalprimer.com/index_NWSS.htm **Nuclear War Survival Skills** BY Cresson M. Kearny. This page contains a link to a complete copy of the book, from two sources. On this site, I have broken the large 40 megabyte file from Oak Ridge into chapters. As well, the on-line Book is contained on this site. The Pictures in the PDF files are much easier to see.

http://www.survivalprimer.com/Russian_Invasion/index_Russian_Invasion.htm **Henry Gruver's Vision of America being invaded by Russia.** The intent was to create a one-CD record of the essence of what he said. Accordingly, the cuts are relatively short. Ideally, people could make their own CD, and pass it around to others.

http://www.survivalprimer.com/PaulsGuns/Pauls_Guns_Manual.htm **My own take on survival guns**

http://www.survivalprimer.com/PaulsGuns/0_start_Ruger_Compact_45.htm **Ruger Compact 45 is a fine weapon.**

http://www.survivalprimer.com/a_word_on_Sunday/newkukrindex.htm **Survival Talk, Kukri-** New Kukri Index. "Quite simply, the Kukri is one of the best fighting / survival knives of its size. It can cut with the power of a hatchet, but also be used for skinning or fine carving..." the Gurka Kukri The power of a chop, with the action of a slice. The curved blade of the Gurka Kukri presents itself to its target at an angle, such that the blade has a slicing action, yet you swing it. Think about how much easier it is to slice across, say, a cut of meat. Now do that same action, with the power of a chop. If I had to choose one knife, and leave the rest, it would be this one.

http://www.survivalprimer.com/KukriService/Kukri_Service.htm **New Kukri Knife that I recommend.** - final choice I made for one survival knife

http://www.survivalprimer.com/index_Weapons.htm **Guns, Weapons, Pistols**

http://www.survivalprimer.com/PaulsGuns/22lr_marlin_model_60_22_cal.htm **22LR Marlin Model 60 22 Cal.** Autoloading Rifle. breakdown and cleaning file popular with many.

http://www.survivalprimer.com/index_new_sniper_all.htm Rifle Marksmanship, Army Sniper Manual

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