

Defensive Strategies



By Lyn Bates,
Contributing Editor

In the last issue we listed some of the ideas, habits, and little choices we make all thorough our lives that put us in unnecessary danger, and may even facilitate our demise at the hands of some determined criminal. Here are some more. It is OK if you keep score while you read. How many apply to you?

“What I saw and heard and did was exactly what really happened.” Under stress (and a life-threatening confrontation will be one of the most stressful events of your life) nobody has a perfect perception of what is going on. By focusing your attention on the threat, you won't see things that you would normally see, such as a police badge or bystanders. You won't hear things that you would normally hear, such as people shouting, or gunshots. The threat will almost certainly seem larger and closer than it really is. Counting your own shots may be impossible. Events may appear to be unfolding in slow motion, or in

More Ideas That Can Kill You

fast forward. Your memory after the event will be far from perfect, because of all these things. That's why it is important not to say much to the police afterward until you have had a chance to recover. If you make statements to the police that turn out later to be factually wrong, they will be interpreted as deliberate lies, not honest mistakes.

“The police will immediately understand that what I did was the right thing.” You know you did the right thing. Are you wearing a visible halo around your head? No? A white Stetson? Then how is the responding officer going to know that you are the good person? The responding officer is not your friend. He (or she) is going to follow police protocol, starting with the fact that you clearly shot someone. Trying to explain what happened won't necessarily make it better, for all the reasons mentioned above about how your perception of some facts will probably be incorrect. The best thing you can do is to say that you were attacked, you were in fear of your life, you had to stop him before you were injured or killed. Say that you will cooperate fully as soon as you have had a chance to recover, and to talk to your lawyer. If the police try to get you to say more, especially if they read you your Miranda rights, say absolutely nothing except that you want your attorney.

“A gun is all I'll ever need to take

care of any situation.” Guns are great tools to defend against life-threatening attacks, but they are not suitable for many less critical situations. In most states, you can't use lethal force to protect property, and shouldn't. So what are you going to do if someone tries to steal your car, or your money? If all you have is a gun, you will have to let your money or your car go with that thief. If you have less lethal options available, such as pepper spray or unarmed fighting techniques, you might have a chance to use them to save your property.

“If I think I might have an intruder, I'll get my gun and search my home.” Even though you know your home well, you won't be able to search it in complete silence, without being seen. An armed intruder who is hiding will have a very good chance of surprising you before you find him. A pair of intruders has an even better chance of overcoming your defenses. A better strategy is to retreat immediately to the safest room of your home, where you can lock yourself and your family in, access your gun, and phone the police. Then stay there, behind cover, until the police arrive. An ensconced defender has an excellent chance of survival, even against a gang.

“When I have my gun with me, it is OK to stop being aware of people around me, because I'll have time to react.” If you are daydreaming

when bad things start to happen, you very well might not have sufficient time to react. Reaction time favors those who are constantly aware of their surroundings. If you aren't aware, that is, you are in Condition White all the time, you are endangering yourself. If you are aware, in Condition Yellow, you will have time to recognize and avoid a problem, or more time to deploy your gun properly.

"I love running or walking with my iPod turned up really loud." Did you read about the man who was running on a beach, wearing an iPod, and was killed by a small plane in trouble that was trying to make an emergency landing on the same beach? He probably never heard the plane approaching behind him. If he couldn't hear the noise of a plane, you would not be able to hear trouble approaching you from behind on the street. Trouble comes from all directions, and you need to be able to hear what is going on around you. Don't wear an iPod like that. (If you absolutely must wear one, keep the volume as low as possible, so you can still hear other sounds.)

"I know I'm a good shot, so if I ever have to shoot in self-defense, I know one shot will be all that will be necessary." There is no such thing as a reliable one shot stop. Even if you have the best ammunition and hit in the best location, that shot might be lethal, but it won't be lethal instantly. It may well take minutes for that perfect shot to take full effect. In the meantime, your assailant can still be very capable of continuing his attack, by gun, knife, club, or hands. In order to stop him, you will probably have to fire more than once. You should plan to keep firing until it is clear that he is no longer a threat. And when you stop firing, you should keep your gun and atten-

Purse Carry Results



Lyn Bates reports that 10 women responded to her recent inquiry about carrying a handgun in a purse: Nine women carried exclusively in a purse, one exclusively in a fannypack. Of the purse carriers, five carry a semi-automatic, two carry a revolver, and two switch between semis and wheel guns. Now that they have thought about shooting through the purse if necessary, they would. One might even change to a revolver specifically for that eventuality.

tion trained on him, because you might need to start firing again if he continues fighting. Get behind cover, reload if you can, and be ready to shoot again.

"With my gun, I know I can go anywhere, any time, and I'll be safe." If you would not go to that part of town, or into that business, or to that party without your gun, you should not go there with your gun. Don't do stupid things, in stupid places, with stupid people. A gun is not an all-access pass to dangerous, inappropriate locations.

"If someone with a knife or club attacks me, I should let them get close before I shoot, because they aren't a danger at a distance" Close and far here need to be quantified. Almost anyone with a contact weapon who is 21' away can sprint and reach you with their weapon before you have time to draw and shoot. So it is reasonable to draw, if not shoot, when your attacker is that far away, or even a lot farther. It would also be good to move sideways while you are defending yourself in this situation.

"Once I'm at home, I put my gun in the safe, because I won't ever need it here." Your gun should either be on your person in a holster, or in a

fast-access device designed to hold a loaded gun such as a lockbox, not a big gunsafe. If you have to get to your gun quickly, a dial lock on a safe will be impossible to manage in time; buttons on a lockbox will be manageable. Your top priority should be keeping the gun away from children and other unauthorized people, but only seconds away if you need it.

"I'll fire a warning shot if possible." Not a good idea. Warning shots take time, time your attacker(s) can use to kill or injure you. Also, a warning shot fired in a random direction could easily hit an innocent person. If you try to make the warning shot safe by firing it into a safe place, that takes even more time, and you have to take your eyes off your attacker to find that good resting place for the warning shot. If you have a revolver, a warning shot seriously depletes the supply of ammunition you might need for your attacker. And finally, the law will consider your warning shot the use of lethal force; if you don't have reason enough to fire directly at an attacker, don't fire at all.

W&G