

# Making a Difference



By Genie Jennings,  
Contributing Editor

## Home Alone

I got into the rapist's car. As ordered I walked quietly past all the people who could have helped me, and I got into the car. Now, I could be taken to an isolated area to endure horrors before death. With every step I had known I was doing the wrong thing, and my brain was racing wildly, trying to find alternative actions to no avail. I obeyed the man who had overtaken my will, and got into the rapist's car.

Thankfully, not literally. In reality what I did was leave my seat to sit across from the instructor at the table at the front of the room. For a few minutes I resisted his order to arm wrestle, while still searching for a plan to protect myself. Ultimately, I obeyed and was promptly pinned to the table.

The poster at the entrance to the lecture hall read: "Yea, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I fear no evil. For I am the meanest SOB in the Valley." I believed it. Paul had been one of the volunteer NRA rifle in-

structors for several of my women's programs. He is proficient with all kinds of firearms as well as martial arts.

He was one of the instructors, and we were there to learn. He was the authority in this first section, and as the class began we allowed him to establish outrageous parameters for our responses. The result was that while I knew I should refuse to approach his table, I left my seat and went to the front of the room.

I spent the rest of the day considering my responses. The next day before the class began I approached Paul and told him my conclusion: I got into the car. As a perfect teacher should, he had allowed me to figure out things for myself. That was two and a half years ago, and I have never forgotten the lesson.

How many times have we heard the admonition to not go with someone? Do not let an assailant take you to a more secluded place. Do not be afraid of being hurt a little, because you are going to be hurt a lot. Unfortunately, knowing something and putting it into effect are miles apart. That is why we take courses, and why we practice. If we never need the skills, that is a wonderful thing.

There are five basic responses to perceived danger. *Fight*, if the danger is imminent and immediate. *Flight*, the best response, means,

simply, leave the area. If we freeze, we are powerless to do anything. *Posture* is a pretense, either "puffing up" to appear more powerful, or making ourselves look insignificant. To *submit*—the worst response—is to do what you are told to do. Remember one thing: do everything necessary to NOT get in the car. "You are not going to get out of the car alive, so you might as well die in the parking lot," as one of our clinicians put it.

Just as owning a firearm, learning about self-protection both inside and outside the home, is the same as having a fire extinguisher in the kitchen. We are prepared for something we hope will never occur.

Timing is everything. Many, many years ago, my husband and I took a three-week canoe trip down the Allagash River in northern Maine. We saw *Deliverance* the week before we left. I was in a very poor frame of mind for a wilderness adventure.

"Self-Protection Inside the Home" was a two-day course that included both lectures and range-work. It began the day after my husband left for a two-week trip. Being home alone is not an unusual situation, and I was quite comfortable going to the gun club. There is nothing like a bunch of gunmen to make one feel safe and secure. Until we began role playing in earnest. The entire class was lined up,



each with an instructor because we were live-firing downrange. Our scenario was a home invader at the door. We were told to tell him to go away. Loudly and firmly. Then we were to shoot, because the intruder had breached the door. The first time everyone sort of *said*, "No. Go away." The second time most of us were saying it fairly loud, and after a few sessions we were screaming. You could feel the adrenaline coursing through your neck. We shouted and shot. My vision was entirely centered on the target that was the door, and I could definitely see a man rather than paper.

When we were halted for the last time, my heart was pounding, and my back was covered in sweat. My hands were shaking after I had holstered my gun, and my breathing was ragged.

We had *homework*. How safe was the house? I went everywhere, and could find not one thing that was good for protection, although there were many pieces of furniture that would serve for hiding.

A "safe room" should have a door with a deadbolt and a telephone that cannot be cut off. An intruder does not need to cut wires, he need only take another phone off the hook and there will be no service. In this age of cell phones, this might be a moot point. Unless, like me, you do not have a cell phone. At the time I did not even have an extension phone in our bedroom. (Hint: tape your address and phone number on the phone so you can give the information to the emergency operator when you call. The chemicals that will pour into your bloodstream in a crisis situation will make thinking clearly difficult.)

After determining that my house

was not safe according to the criteria of my class, I set about to change as much as possible. I got a phone to put on my bedside table, along with my loaded .357 Magnum. I made a shopping list of things it would be good to have, such as a light stick to which a key could be attached and thrown to the police when they came, so they would not have to break down the door. My homework was done.

When I went to bed, it occurred to me that I would be at a disadvantage if I turned on the light and an intruder were outside the room in the dark. He could see me but I would not be able to see him. In addition I would want to be sure that anyone coming in was indeed a stranger and not a family member. The obvious solution was a small nightlight at the top of the stairs. I could see whomever was there, but they would not be able to see me. It took a while to fall asleep even after I had solved that little problem. I had figured out that what troubled me about the morning's session was that I had gotten into the serial killer's car.

The second day was even more intense. We fired from behind barriers; we rushed the intruder. Adrenaline whooshed through our arteries. At home I found the nightlight for the hallway.

A subtitle for the class was "The Importance of Responsible and Ethical Firearms Use." A gun should be the last, not the first, reaction to danger. Deadly force is only appropriate when there is no other alternative. However, if there are no other alternatives you must understand that there is no such thing as a "fair fight." There is no "fair" when you are in danger.

There are four stages of mental awareness, and we must learn to

live in the higher states.

*Unaware* is immersed in other things and oblivious to our surroundings. We get distracted by shopping, our kids, loading groceries into the car, talking to our friends, using headphones.

*Aware* allows us to avoid situations that might be problematic. We should plan for everything that we do. The more planning we do, the less likely we are to have to use the last resort. Where we park our cars in the parking lot, and how we carry packages to the car are simple every day situations. Having your keys out before you approach the car or your house. Looking around at who and what is nearby or on your way to your destination, so you can change your path if something looks amiss.

*Alert* means that you establish thresholds for a next action. Make a plan that works for you. This means thinking through possibilities for trouble, and considering a way you could get yourself through it. What would you do "if"?

For instance, imagine you are home alone and a stranger comes to the door and asks to use your phone. The first threshold might be, you stand behind the closed door and tell him you will make the call for him. He could either give you a number or leave. If he leaves, the situation is over. But, maybe he insists he needs to come in. Threshold two is you tell him he can't, and you want him to leave. If he becomes belligerent or refuses to leave, you could tell him you are calling the police. If he does not go, you call. Should he try to break in, you can tell him you have a gun, and he must leave, or you will shoot. If he comes in,

**Home Alone  
Continued on Page 53**



you shoot. You do not fire a warning shot. If he leaves at any point, the situation is over. If it went past the second threshold, it would not be a bad idea to report the incident.

A couple of years ago there was a home invasion in northern New Hampshire in which a college professor and his wife were killed. When the news broke, another person a few miles away reported that two young men had come to his home and asked to use the phone. They were not given entry although they were very insistent. The homeowner had refused to open the door, and let them know he was armed. The professor and his wife were apparently more hospitable.

*Alarm:* the time between reaching the last threshold and implementing the plan depends upon your mindset. Do you believe in your plan? You must work this out before you ever need it.

The plan requires a threshold for each next step. The plan is to not have to reach the last resort. Your reaction has to kick in much earlier. It would be wise to examine all the things you do so you can eliminate unsafe practices. Be aware of your surroundings. Do not make yourself vulnerable.

There might be a fine line between preparedness and paranoia, but it doesn't hurt to err on the side of being a scout. And, don't watch scary movies or take self-protection courses when your loved ones are away. Although, on second thought perhaps my added tension was what cemented the lessons so clearly.

W&G

## Brady Campaign Supports ATF On Multiple Long Gun Reporting

By Dave Workman,  
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While Iowa's Sen. Charles Grassley continues probing possible connections between a federal gun-running sting operation and the murder of a federal officer in December, the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence has thrown its support behind another federal effort to force gun dealers to report multiple purchases of semi-automatic long guns.

Those reports would go to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), the agency now in Grassley's sights. The controversy broke wide open in late January when Grassley began inquiring how two guns allowed by the ATF to be purchased by a suspected gunrunner from a Scottsdale, AZ, gun shop ended up at the scene of a fatal gunfight that left Customs and Border Protection Agent Brian Terry fatally wounded last Dec. 14.

Fueling Grassley's zeal to get the truth was a letter from Assistant Attorney General Ronald Weich, speaking for ATF Acting Director Kenneth Melson, in which Weich asked Grassley to stop having his staff interview ATF agents about the case. In response, Grassley sent a bristling letter to Attorney General Eric Holder asserting that he was being stonewalled.

In a statement supporting the Obama administration's effort to require multiple long gun transaction reporting to ATF, Brady Center President Paul Helmke wrote, "Our weak gun laws have enabled ruthless Mexican drug cartels to arm themselves with vast military

arsenals from American gun dealers, who sell traffickers countless AK-47s and AR-15s in bulk."

There was no mention of the hundreds of firearms about which Grassley has inquired. Quoted by the *Washington Times*, Grassley noted in his letter to Holder that the indictment of suspected gunrunner Jaime Avila Jr. mentioned "approximately 769 firearms" that were apparently involved in one part of the Arizona sting, nicknamed "Project Gunrunner," that resulted in 20 arrests, including Avila, who was arrested on Dec. 15, the day that Terry died of his wounds.

However, only 103 of those guns were recovered, leaving Grassley to wonder, "So, where are the other approximately 666 weapons referenced in the indictment? Why did the ATF not seize them?"

But Helmke's statement ignored this, focusing instead on a long-standing allegation that American guns are flowing steadily across the border to arm Mexican drug cartels.

"As a result, our gun violence epidemic has become not just a public safety and public health crisis in the US, but a national security and foreign policy crisis as well," Helmke wrote. "While our friends in Mexico have fought bravely against these US-armed drug criminals, the Mexican government has asked Washington to bring some sanity to our gun laws, making it harder for dangerous people to get weapons of war. We strongly support the Obama Administration's proposal to provide law enforcement with notice