



## Publisher's Pen

Dear Readers,

More than 20 years ago – resultant of a midnight visit from a Peeping Tom (a story unto itself), I was advised by the detective investigating the incident to get a gun for self-protection. “Your husband travels a lot. You and Courtney (then seven years old) are home alone. You’re very vulnerable.”

A year passed.

I happened to run into the same detective who asked if I had bought a gun.

“I wouldn’t know what to buy – and, furthermore, I wouldn’t know which end of a gun to point!” I was a recent transplant from New Jersey. We don’t *do* guns.

He was quite insistent as to the importance of being able to protect myself and my young daughter in the event of a home invasion and offered to give me a Saturday afternoon mini-course on “Pistols 101.”

I accepted.

I will never forget how my hands shook holding a firearm for the first time. And it didn’t even have ammo in it!

A short time later, LH, Courtney and I went to Shooter’s World for a family course in gun safety. If there was to be a firearm in the house, it should be respected and we should be well trained in its proper use and care. Buying a gun was a life or death decision in more ways than one. This was no casual purchase.

Fast forward.

In these days of escalating random violence, it is critical to have the ability to protect oneself and one’s loved ones. Our own State Legislature is actively working legislation that would allow people with permits to carry guns onto school campuses. Who ever would have thought that would even be an option?

Whether you support or don’t

support the whole gun “argument,” I am most certain that you will agree that being able to defend yourself in the face of mortal danger is important. There are no “do-overs.” This is life. Or death.

I just returned from a weekend long women’s handgun course at Gunsite Academy in Paulden, Arizona. Located 45 minutes north of Prescott off of route 89, on over 2,000 acres at 5,000 feet elevation, Gunsite is known to be one of the premier firearms training facilities in the world – training military, law enforcement and the private civilian. It is also one of the best kept secrets in Arizona.

There I was with 18 other women from across the United States – early 20s to senior citizens. Some mothers with their daughters. All of us there to become more self-reliant in self-defense and the proper and safe handling of a handgun. All of us committed to not being the victim. Some had never handled a firearm before. Some were more experienced. Improved marksmanship was just one of our goals.

My personal goal was to come away more confident, more self-assured, with more of an ability to marshal my innate survival abilities – and to be a better shot.

Each of us was issued a new Smith & Wesson M&P 9mm pistol. Our four talented female instructors were there to make sure we learned – and we learned well.

Much of what we were taught for personal protection went beyond handgun training. Self-defense. Personal safety. Awareness training. The heightening of our good old fashioned common sense. Plus the reminder: Listen to our instincts.

I’m excited to share some of what I learned with the heartfelt hope that this will help to protect you and yours – and keep you safe from harm. Much of this material was provided with the support and blessing of Gunsite Academy – and I am grateful that they are allowing me to share it with our readers.

It is critical to develop a defensive mindset. A plan is way better than no plan. Dwight Eisenhower said many years ago, “In preparing for battle I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable.”

Make a mental blueprint of what you will do in varying situations. What will you do in case of a natural disaster? What about a crime? What if it is at home? At school? At the office? In a hotel? At the movies? In an airplane? At the mall?

Are you alone? Are you responsible for others?

Along with your family, define your plan.

**What’s the first thing you do?** What “tools” do you have? Is your cell phone readily available or is it on the charger in the kitchen while you’re fast asleep in the bedroom? Mine used to be. It isn’t now. I sleep with it. No wise cracks, please. Do you have a baseball bat? A firearm? Can you get to them? Do you have a table lamp to use as a weapon if necessary? A hair dryer can pack quite a wallop. A ball point pen can be lethal.

**What’s the second thing you do?** Where is your “safe” area? Where are the exits? Where are your children? Are they near you or at the other end of the house? Do you have a plan as to what they should do in an emergency?

**How do you evaluate a threat and who performs which roles?** Who calls 911? What does the other person do? Who is the first line of defense? Have “code words” if it is necessary to communicate a threat in a stealth fashion. A word that you’d rarely use.

When sharing this with friends the evening I returned from Gunsite, one told me he’d talk about fish. Neither he nor his wife eats fish. EVER. “There’s a really great new restaurant in town. I hear the swordfish is the best.” This alerts the other that there is something wrong. For them, a “safe” word might be “steak.” They’re carnivores! For LH and me, “orange” might be our code word. I’d tell LH that I bought a great orange dress. Or, “Bring my orange slacks.” He KNOWS I’d never wear orange. He might say he was going out to get orange juice. We don’t drink it. Now we’ve got a plan.

And to think that spontaneity used to be my strong suit.

**Communication.** How do you contact help?

**Regrouping.** When do you regroup? How? Where do you meet family members, co-workers?

Work with your family to create “What if…” scenarios.

**What if...**

- You notice a strange vehicle in the driveway?
- You notice your front door or garage door wide open?
- You are in your home alone and you hear someone breaking in?
- You *and* your loved ones are home and you hear someone breaking in?

- You are involved in a road rage incident, and the other vehicle will not stop following you?
- Your vehicle breaks down and a stranger tries to help?
- Someone grabs you from behind?
- Someone approaches you with a weapon and demands your belongings (*i.e.*, purse, jewelry, etc.)?
- You are at a stop light and someone tries to get into your car?
- You are approaching an intersection and notice a fight breaking out and people throwing things at passing cars?
- You sense that someone is following you in the mall?

Be intensely aware of your surroundings. It is our nature to always think, “It’ll be O.K.” Or, “Oh, I’m being paranoid.” You’ve heard me say before, and I’ll say it again: In all things, go with your gut. If you perceive a threat – don’t deny your intuition.

There are many resources for self-defense training of varying modalities in our fine state. If you choose to become skilled with a firearm, make sure to get the proper safety training and be consistent with your practice. Every man and every woman should learn self-defense; and every man should have every one of his women – wives (hope you only have one), daughters, mothers – learn to protect herself. Don’t put it off.

Although I truly pray that you never need to have any of these tools at your disposal, it is my goal that having shared just some of what I learned at Gunsite, that you and yours will be safer, more aware of potential threats and ultimately live long and happy lives.

Together.

Warmest Regards.

Hope H. Ozer  
Publisher

**What’s on your mind? We’d love to hear from you.**

Please e-mail your thoughts, feedback, suggestions, kudos and comments to [editor@CITYSunTimes.com](mailto:editor@CITYSunTimes.com).