

The author and his K-frame .357 Smith & Wesson Night Guard.

Trained, resolute, armed senior citizens increase their chances of surviving a violent attack.



Doug Childers of Bear Creek Holsters makes the prettiest and most functional leather pocket holster for S&W J-frame snubbies I've ever carried. This one is my new everyday J-frame carry.

THE CODE OF THE ARMED SENIOR

[BY BRUCE N. EIMER, Ph.D]

News Flash: Recently, at a Phillies baseball game in Philadelphia, an argument began between two groups of men over some spilled beer.

The argument grew into a melee, and security guards threw everyone out. Afterwards, in the parking lot, three men from one of the groups jumped one man from the other group who was trying to leave the angry and violent scene. The three men beat, kicked and stomped the other man to death. By the time the police arrived, it was too late. The victim suffered severe head trauma and was pronounced dead right there by medics. All I could think of after reading this headline news story in the Philadelphia Inquirer was that if the victim had a gun on him, he might have been able to save his life. This would have been a clear case of the justifiable use of deadly force in self defense. The three murderers started the

violence, escalated it, and had a marked disparity of force in numbers and size over their victim.

Carrying a gun regularly is a big commitment and responsibility. It's not always convenient, nor is it always comfortable. However, as noted firearms trainer and gun writer Clint Smith of Thunder Ranch is fond of repeating, the concealed firearm is not meant to be comfortable; it is meant to be comforting. In our increasingly menacing society, staying relatively safe and staying armed seem to be synonymous. As you grow older, when you lose some or many of your physical powers such as size, strength, flexibility, stamina, endurance, prowess, stealth, speed, and reaction time, you become more

vulnerable to predators. This is how it works in the animal kingdom and it's the same in the human kingdom. Fortunately, the gun can serve as an equalizer of sorts, allowing you to even the odds or tilt them in your favor. God in his infinite wisdom may not have created all people physically equal, but old Sam Colt saw to evening the odds.

THE CODE

Few violent criminals fear the gun or other deadly weapons. I have never heard of a hoplophobic violent criminal! However, jailhouse interviews reveal that many (though not all) violent criminals *do* fear the resolute person holding the gun. A resolute senior citizen holding a gun on you is someone



The author (right) soaking up the wisdom of Massad Ayoob, left.

THE CODE

1. Own at least one handgun.
2. Keep at least one handgun loaded at all times.
3. Keep at least one loaded handgun on you.
4. Be prepared and ready to use it if it becomes necessary.
5. If you have to use it, don't hesitate.

to fear. It's like a cat backed against the wall. You're going to get hurt unless you back off. What does the cat have to lose but his life?

When you've been alive for six decades or more, you've seen a lot and have had numerous experiences and scrapes. At this point in life, you either have the instinct for survival or you don't, and you wouldn't have lived this long if you didn't. So, whether or not you've consciously thought about it, you have in fact internalized a code of rules that guide your life, and they work! If you believe in armed self defense and have chosen to live the armed lifestyle, whether recently or long ago, there is a code of rules that guide this lifestyle choice. This code is not very complicated. Actually it is quite simple. It's all about staying alive and healthy for as long as God intends. After awhile, the code of the prepared armed senior citizen became crystal clear. It's something to live with.

THE ARMED SENIOR CITIZEN'S CODE AND PRINCIPLES OF SELF DEFENSE

The Armed Senior Citizen's Code is largely common sense, but its tenets form the groundwork for effective armed self defense for anyone who is committed to life. Permit me to elaborate on its five tenets.



A member of the Sportsman's Gun Club on the line at Delray Shooting Center, Delray Beach, Florida.

1. Own at least one defensive handgun.

Two is better than one, and three or four are even better, but one is a basic minimum and necessity. However, it is not enough to just own a gun! There are a number of corollaries to this tenet.

The first and primary corollary is that you must know how to use and maintain your defensive equipment. Therefore, you should read your owner's manual and if you are new to guns, you should get competent hands-on instruction. When you really need to use your handgun is not the time to be figuring out how to most efficiently work its manual safety or decock the hammer! You also need to keep your guns clean. Your guns, as emergency rescue equipment, should be kept in good condition. That requires regular cleaning, adequate lubrication, and periodic inspections and function checks.

A second corollary is that you should join a gun club and attempt to make like-minded friends. One of the secrets of success and happiness as well as personal safety and security is building a support network of human resources. This can be done by making friends with available individuals whose talents and abilities complement your own. Not only will you have fun, but you will also benefit from the camaraderie. If you have online access with a computer, check out several quality online

discussion forums where you can make friends and share knowledge. Some recommendations would include:

- www.DefensiveHandguns.com
- www.USConcealedCarry.com
- www.WarriorTalk.com
- www.smith-wessonforum.com

Some worthwhile blogs include George Hill's www.MadOgre.com and my www.PersonalDefenseBlog.com.

A third corollary is that you need to go to the range and shoot regularly. You need to practice regularly so that you become comfortable and accurate with your defensive handguns. You must make shooting them a basic reflex. So join a gun club or range. You'll meet nice people and it's cheaper than paying by the hour for range time.

A fourth corollary is that you should also practice handling your unloaded defensive handguns at home. This is called "dry practice" and it can build and strengthen your muscle memory for gun presentation, gun handling, and gun operation. Dry practice develops your unconscious competence in gun handling.

2. Keep at least one handgun loaded at all times.

You should keep at least one of your defensive handguns loaded and accessible to you at all times. When you need it is not the time to be fumbling around

loading it. Loaded means a round in the chamber and a fully charged magazine in a semi-automatic pistol, and all chambers of the cylinder loaded in a revolver. This is also called "Condition One" and it's the only condition in which to carry a defensive handgun.

3. *Keep at least one loaded handgun on you.*

What good is your .45 in your bedroom drawer when you are out and about? What good is it if it's unloaded, disassembled, or locked in a safe if your home is invaded? When your duty defensive handgun is not on you, keep it loaded, secured and immediately available. When you are carrying, your gun should be hidden, but instantly accessible. That means concealed and out of sight. From a tactical standpoint, I am not an advocate of open carry because it compromises the valuable element of surprise. For example, if you are sitting at the counter of your favorite breakfast place open carrying a sidearm and some armed nut enters the joint to plug

the cook because he had a bad meal, whom do you think he'll target first? Carry concealed.

4. *Be prepared and ready to use the gun you're carrying if it becomes necessary.*

Prepared. What does "prepared" mean? It means having the right mindset, the right equipment for you, and the training to use your equipment competently and to employ deadly force if you are facing imminent deadly peril. When the proverbial balloon goes up and adrenaline is being dumped into your bloodstream during your body's alarm reaction, good training prepares you to go into reflexive mode.

Ready. "Ready" means being willing to do whatever you have to do, including using deadly force, to prevail. It means being willing to fight for your life. It means refusing to lose. It means committing to the principle that if it's your life versus the life of a violent criminal who has targeted you as his prey; you will not hesitate to take his life.

Necessary. What does "necessary"

mean? It means that your life or the lives of those whom you care for are in imminent deadly peril and it is necessary for you to take immediate action if you and your loved ones are going to survive. You will know it if this "gravest extreme" arises, in which the use of deadly force is both necessary and justified. I would recommend reading Massad Ayoob's classic book, *In the Gravest Extreme*, to learn more about the issues involved.

For deadly force to be justified, the person threatening you must have the immediate means, the immediate opportunity, and the demonstrated intent to cause you grievous bodily harm or death right then and there such that you are in immediate jeopardy. It's either your life or your attacker's, and if you did nothing to bring the situation about, or cause the situation to escalate to a life and death confrontation, you are justified in using deadly force.

Doctrine of competing harms. In his Lethal Force Institute (LFI) training Ayoob talks about a jurisprudence concept called the "Doctrine of Competing

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Harms” which is pertinent here. This refers to the fact that the law (and most reasonable and prudent, law abiding citizens) will typically excuse the breaking of a law to prevent the commission of an even greater harm.

Disparity of force. Ayoob also talks about the fact that when there is a “disparity of force” in favor of a stronger, more dangerous, unlawful aggressor, the weaker would-be victim is justified in employing a force multiplier, including deadly force, if that’s what is necessary to save his or her life. This would apply if a man attacks a woman, a younger, stronger, or bigger man attacks an older, weaker, or smaller man, or a number of men attack one man.

5. If you have to use it, don’t hesitate.

Finally, if you have to use deadly force, such as a gun, in self defense, you cannot afford to hesitate because you will not have time to dawdle. The situation will unfold, or unravel, fast. Hopefully, you will have seen it coming

so that you will have had some time to take judicious measures to avoid the “gravest extreme”. However, this will not always be possible in our imperfect and unpredictable world. Hesitating in a deadly force encounter can get you killed. Fractions of a second will count. Time may seem to slow down. You will have tunnel vision on the threat. Only training and the will to prevail (a good dose of luck won’t hurt either!) will enable you to break your tunnel vision, maintain a cool head, and save yourself. In most gunfights, the person who scores the first shots gains the winning advantage.

So, there you have it. That’s the code. It’s simple. It’s based on common sense, and it spells S-U-R-V-I-V-A-L. Stay safe, and live a long life. ■

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