

Photography by Bruce N. Eimer, Ph.D

## THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE



Kahr Arms PM9 and Smith & Wesson J-frame revolvers in respectively, Michaels of Oregon, Galco horsehide, and DeSantis In The Pocket holsters.

The other day, I was eating breakfast at my favorite diner, and I observed an interchange that inspired this month's column. A "seventyish" year old "senior citizen", who I knew to be a retired Philadelphia cop, was putting on his coat when an elderly couple seated nearby complimented him on his coat. He responded, "thank you, but you wouldn't like what's in the pocket". That really drew my attention!

Anyone who is into concealed carry (good guys or bad guys) would have been alerted by that foolish comment. Nothing happens for no reason at all. I can only speculate as to this retiree's motives for making such a statement. Some people get a thrill out of hinting to others that they are armed. However, I can certainly say with confidence that it was a foolish comment to make.

The purpose of carrying a concealed handgun is to be armed and ready to defend yourself without anyone knowing you are armed. This capitalizes on the element of surprise if you are attacked. The retired cop's comment gave him away. If I was a Bad Guy, whether or not I knew he was a retired cop, I would have had the drop on him—not good for him!

It is important to remember that Mr. Baddie capitalizes on the element of surprise if he attacks us. Since action beats reaction, and we good guys and gals are forced to react to a spontaneous attack someone else initiates, we are already behind the

speed curve. Therefore, the majority of our training and preparation should take this reality into account.

First of all, we want to minimize our visibility as a "target". We must look confident and keep our heads up, as looking down is perceived by the predatory criminal element as a sign of submissiveness. Also, keeping our heads up allows us a wider range of vision so we can "watch our 6 o'clock" and maintain awareness of our 360-degree world. We must make eye contact when approached by strangers so that we don't look submissive and so we can read what's happening. However, we must do so without appearing unnecessarily aggressive.

It is a bad idea to let on that you're armed. Concealed carry means concealed carry. Looking confident and mentally alert while having that hidden trump card, your concealed handgun and/or knife, accelerates you forward on the power curve. Letting on that you're armed gives potential evil-doers the drop on you.

Living armed is a big commitment. We must adjust our wardrobe around our chosen concealment weapons. That means we must wear clothes that do not allow the visual "gun" to print through. This of course is easier to do in colder climates, where there are more clothing options, than in warmer climates. In warm weather, or in business attire, many of us default to pocket carry of a small 5-shot revolver, or a small 9mm, .380, or .32 caliber pocket pistol. Thus, a good pocket holster is a must; one that

minimizes bulk in your pocket, doesn't print "gun", keeps your gun upright, and stays in place in your pocket when you draw your handgun. I personally favor the affordable pocket holsters manufactured by Galco, DeSantis, and Michaels of Oregon.

Now, with these considerations in mind, let's revisit the element of surprise. If we are the target of a spontaneous, vicious attack, our best chance of prevailing and surviving is to fight back aggressively and viciously—to launch an offensive counter-attack and make Mr. Monster react to us. So, we must naturally train for this. Remember that our reason for carrying concealed is self-defense. Therefore, our training should reflect the realities of how we are likely to need to use our handgun in self-defense. The answer is that it will likely be in a vicious close-quarter attack within a three yard radius with no seconds to spare. This means that we must train to draw our concealed handgun in less than one second, and shoot accurately at the high center of mass (HiCOM) of our attacker repeatedly in less than another second! There will be no time in a close-quarter attack to focus on our front sight and get a sight picture!

Our focus will naturally be on our attacker, our justified target, and we must have trained beforehand to force Mr. Bad Guy to fight on our terms. In order to respond to any external stimulus, an attacker or victim, a predator or prey, must first Observe it, then Orient to it, then Decide on a course of action, and then Act. In an

emergency, this sequence runs a couple of seconds. It is Colonel Boyd's "OODA" loop, and it applies equally to both predator and perceived prey.

Someone initiates a spontaneous attack against us. That makes us "OODA". With proper training, we must reflexively make the attacker OODA and react to our actions—to throw him off balance, so we can take him out of the fight. This is the element of surprise. The principles are:

Blend in. Don't draw undue attention to yourself. Don't give away that you are armed. Keep it concealed.

Don't look like an easy target. Don't look like food. Look confident and alert.

Be trained to respond to a deadly attack quickly and violently to gain the upper hand and make your attacker react to your actions. Throw him off balance and make him "OODA".

Be able to neutralize your attacker before he neutralizes you! This gives you precious few seconds to do what needs to be done.

Louis Chiodo, a former Captain with the USMC, an accomplished martial arts master, a veteran patrol officer, and police firearms trainer with a large, ultra-modern law enforcement agency, and a student of the late Colonel Rex Applegate, trains his students based on these principles. He calls his system "Target Focused Shooting" (aka, "Training For Survival"). His new book, *Training for Success*, explains his training philosophy and it's an important read for defensively-minded senior citizens. The book is available from Lou's company, GUNFIGHTERS Ltd. [www.gunfightersltd.com](http://www.gunfightersltd.com), and its focus is NOT competitive or target shooting, but effectively fighting with a handgun.

In the task-oriented qualification course (TOQC) that Chiodo developed, combat accuracy with a handgun is defined as torso hits. It's all about keeping the dispersion pattern of your shots within an approximately 12 inch by 18 inch area, which is roughly the size of a human torso.

The element of surprise is all about speed and accuracy. But accuracy is not defined as getting all of your shots within a 5inch by 5 inch circle or square. That is not realistic for combat. At the high speed of close quarter combat, your target is the upper torso, aka, your attacker's high center of mass, or HiCOM.

The adversary who doesn't give up, who keeps on fighting until his or her adversary gives up or is neutralized, will win the fight and survive. So, never give up; never give any quarter. If you are attacked by a predator, it is probably because your attacker expects you to give up. So, surprise him!

The State Legislature in Florida, a real Second Amendment state, under the valiant leadership of Governor Jeb Bush, recently passed the "Castle Doctrine Bill". SB-436 corrects a serious problem for law-abiding citizens who choose to protect themselves in the face of attack by violent criminals. This bill removes the "duty to retreat" in the face of attack, and validates the presumption that an attacker on the street, or an intruder to your home, intends to cause you great bodily harm. The bill recognizes the legality of employing deadly force to protect yourself, your family, and others in the face of attack, and prohibits prosecution for defending that which you have a right to defend! Now that's a surprise—especially for the violent criminal who expects quarter!

Colonel Jeff Cooper, in his classic book, *Principles of Personal Defense* (Paladin Press, 1989) explains the key principles of surviving a violent attack: Alertness, Decisiveness, Aggressiveness, Speed, Coolness, Ruthlessness, and Surprise. The principles haven't changed, but our world has grown more dangerous. We all must train to win a fight if attacked; and to win decisively, because in a fight against a violent attacker armed with a knife, a gun, or a disparity of force, there can be "no second place winners".

We must train to take out (i.e., stop, neutralize) an attacker quickly. There will be no time for anything else. If you can find cover (anything that will stop bullets or blunt or edged weapons), use it if you can. Otherwise, stay in motion. Remember that a moving target is a hard target to hit. Integrate into your training regimen:

- 1) A quick presentation of your handgun from concealment.
- 2) Rapid, target focused point and shoot techniques at close quarters.
- 3) Rapid fire trigger control techniques.
- 4) Weapon retention.
- 5) Moving and shooting, and shooting at moving targets.

Dry fire practice workouts should augment your workouts on the range. Several innovative companies have come out with training laser devices for dry fire practice with feedback, such as, BEAMHIT [www.beamhit.com](http://www.beamhit.com) and the Bullite by Rovatec [www.rovatec.com](http://www.rovatec.com). We shall cover these training products in separate reviews in the future.

The late Colonel Rex Applegate was one of the founders of the United States Office of Strategic Services (OSS) formed during WWII, and a forerunner of the CIA. As described in the book by Col. Applegate and Michael Janich (Paladin Press, 1998) on "point shooting", shooting methods that punch closely grouped holes on square paper targets do not work well when the target is trying to put holes in you! In a nutshell, to capitalize on the element of surprise and survive, one has to become proficient in what I like to call "Emergency Response Shooting".

In an emergency (i.e., you're being attacked) and in fear of your life, if you are prepared to survive, you'll stay focused on your attacker, rapidly draw your handgun, point it at your attacker, and keep pulling the trigger until your attacker stops his assault. There is no other viable alternative than to win first place in the fight. So, practice realistic combat oriented, close quarter shooting, and always "watch your six."

Remember, surprise is a gift we can give ourselves. A fight can turn in a moment's notice. So, never give up.

Dr. Bruce Eimer is a hypnotherapist and licensed clinical psychologist, and author in Pennsylvania and the owner of Alternative Behavior Associates [www.hypnosisgroup.com](http://www.hypnosisgroup.com). He is a Life Member of the NRA, an NRA Certified Firearms Instructor in Pistol, Home Firearms Safety, and Personal Protection, a Glock Certified Armorer, and the co-author of *Essential Guide to Handguns: Firearm Instruction for Personal Defense and Protection* [www.looseleaflaw.com](http://www.looseleaflaw.com). Bruce is a member of IALEFI, the International Association of Law Enforcement Firearms Instructors. He can be reached by e-mail at [dtbruce@hypnosisgroup.com](mailto:dtbruce@hypnosisgroup.com).

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