

HOLD ON TO YOUR GUN! WEAPON RETENTION MEANS SURVIVAL

If you carry a gun, it is for self-defense. As a responsible gun owner and concealed carry permit holder, the last thing you ever want to do is to have to use your defensive handgun for self-defense. The last thing you ever want to happen is for someone else to use your own gun on you or on anyone else! Both horrible scenarios can be prevented through proper equipment selection, the judicious and tactical use of well rehearsed avoidance and disengagement strategies (Farnam, 2005), and learning some basic weapon retention skills.

As senior citizens, most of us are no longer the strongest kids on the block. Therefore, it is essential that we use our heads, as opposed to relying on brute strength for self-defense. What we need is to learn ways to hold onto our guns using good tactics and quality equipment.

SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

If you are a responsible gun owner, you would never leave a firearm lying around unsecured in your home or in anyone else's. When your defensive firearm isn't on your person, you lock it up in a safe or a lock-box, so it is secure and inaccessible to unauthorized persons.

If you have a concealed carry permit and are carrying one or more guns on or about your person, then wherever you go, there's always at least one gun present in that situation. That means that you must keep these guns secured at all times! They must be inaccessible to all unauthorized persons. That means everyone but you! That is one of the reasons that, unless you are a uniformed patrol officer, open carry is a bad idea. A recent, tragic case illustrates this point.

An off-duty officer was responding to an on-duty brother officer's call for back-up with an arrest. He arrived on the scene in plainclothes, with a .38 special revolver carried in an open-top belt holster. The off-duty officer was disarmed by the suspect who shot him and the arresting on-duty officer. The case ended tragically, as the suspect emptied the last .38 special round into the downed, uniformed officer's head, murdering him execution style, in cold blood.

This is why uniformed patrol officers carry their duty-side arms in Level II or III retention holsters. Open carrying of a handgun in anything but a Level II or III retention holster is irresponsible. On the other hand, when you carry concealed, your firearm is (or should be) out of sight and protected by one or more layers of covering garments. This gives you the element of surprise, should you ever have to draw your weapon. However, if you get into a close quarter tussle, or if you are in a crowded place and being brushed by a lot of people, your concealed weapon could be compromised. Therefore, it is worth evaluating whether or not to carry concealed in some type of retention holster.

For concealed carry, a quality, Level I retention rig with a thumb break retention snap strap, such as the ones illustrated, makes a lot of sense. At the very least, if you have to run, or find yourself in any position other than straight up and down, this will give you a comfortable extra edge of security.



Above: Don Hume IWB Clip-On with Thumb Break

Below: Don Hume Double Nine Thumb Break Scabbard



Above: Gould & Goodrich Three-Slot Pancake Holster

SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM

The solutions to the problem of firearm retention cut across four categories: (1) attitude and mental preparedness, (2) physical preparedness, (3) good equipment, and (4) well rehearsed psychomotor skills for protecting your weapon against a gun grab.

1. Attitude and mental preparedness:

First of all, you must always be aware of your 360 degree environment. Never let down your guard. If anyone is going to be surprised, let it be the bad guy. Never have to say after the fact, that you never saw it coming. Stay aware and stay alive. Watch for potential danger cues in your immediate environment. A guy walking toward, you wearing heavy, baggy clothing, with his hands in his pockets, who is avoiding eye contact would be a clue. We have covered the topic of "psychological preparedness" in other articles in this column.

If you carry a defensive handgun, you must have the training and mental resolve to use it should the totality of the circumstances justify the use of lethal force in the defense of your life. Your training should also include how to protect and hold onto your gun in the face of a vicious attack. You must realize that if someone tries to take your gun away (other than a police officer who has made the decision to detain you), they are probably going to try to murder you with your own gun if they succeed in getting it, and thus, they constitute an immediate, lethal threat.

2. Physical preparedness: If you carry a gun, you must always protect and secure it from unauthorized hands.

You must always be aware that you are armed. You must never get too close to the wrong people. Maintain healthy physical boundaries. Protect your personal space. Do not let anyone violate it. Know where your gun is at all times.

This is a good argument for carrying the same gun in the same holster all the time, so as to develop a subconscious muscle memory of where your gun is. This is also a good argument against carrying too many guns or a different gun each day. In an emergency, when you are on auto pilot, you could reach for a gun that is not there, or that is someplace else!

There is such a thing called the "interview stance" (Farnam, 2005). You are facing a stranger in a bladed and well balanced position, and keeping your distance. Your strong/gun-side is canted away from the person opposite you, and you are leading with your support-side foot and hand. Your gun is protected and you are ready to move if you have to.



Above: John Farnam in the interview stance.

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It is also very important to maintain an appropriate level of physical fitness: strength, speed, flexibility and cardiovascular endurance. You will need all of these resources in a fight.

3. Good equipment: Good equipment means carrying a quality handgun that has reliable, built-in, internal safety mechanisms. It means thinking about whether it makes sense for you to carry a gun that has proprietary, external, manual safeties. For example, a frame-mounted or slide-mounted safety/decocking lever enables you to render your semi-automatic pistol sterile when indicated. Another user controlled safety is a magazine/trigger disconnect in a semi-automatic pistol, such that the gun will not fire without a magazine in it. If someone gets a hold of your gun, such features can buy you precious time.



Above: Smith and Wesson Model 3913. This quality, 9mm pistol has both a slide-mounted, manual safety/decocker and a magazine disconnect.

Good equipment means a quality holster that retains your gun, but also allows for a smooth draw from the holster and presentation of the gun when indicated. In addition to the quality Gould and Goodrich

and Don Hume concealment belt holsters with thumb breaks and the Don Hume inside the waist band (IWB) clip-on holster with thumb break (pictured above), you may wish to consider carrying a pocket pistol in a good pocket holster. Pocket carry is virtually immune to a holstered gun grab and it also enables you to capitalize on the concealment element of surprise should you need your weapon.

A well designed, Kydex, inside the pants (ITP) rig, such as Brian Hoffner's Ultimate Shirt Tucker, can also provide excellent retention, adjustability of



Hoffner's Ultimate Shirt Tucker ITP with Glock 19.

the draw, and all day comfort, so you only know your pistol is there when you think of it. Hoffner's rig has an adjustable allen screw for adjusting the retention and ease of draw of the firearm.

If the circumstances dictate, carry in a quality shoulder rig that positions the gun horizontally, in an under-the-armpit holster, equipped with a thumb break may be what is called for. Both Gould and Goodrich and Don Hume make quality rigs of this type.



Above: Gould and Goodrich Shoulder Rig for a Glock 30



Above: Don Hume Shoulder Rig for a Glock 30

Don't ignore the fact that a J-frame size snubby revolver will conceal securely in a well built ankle holster with a built-in retention strap and attached calf support strap, such as this one manufactured by Gould & Goodrich.

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Above: Gould & Goodrich Ankle Holster with Smith 337 J-frame Revolver

4. Well rehearsed psychomotor weapon retention skills:

It should be obvious that proper training is critical to success in whatever we do. That training should consist of the acquisition of necessary survival skills and the proper exercise and practice of the techniques learned on a repetitive, regular basis, for skills reinforcement and maintenance. Attend a good class given by a reputable instructor. Then watch training videos to reinforce what you learned, as well as to expand your skills repertoire.

I recently attended Massad Ayoob's Lethal Force Institute II (LFI-II), wherein I learned weapon retention and disarming

skills based on the Lindell Weapon Retention System. This excellent course will be reviewed in a future issue of the magazine.

Weapon retention obviously is the opposite of disarming. If a bad guy takes away your weapon, you must get it back (i.e. disarm him), and regain control of your weapon (or shoot him with a back-up gun) to avoid getting murdered. Also, there are situations in which you may need to employ weapon disarming skills when a bad guy draws a lethal weapon (e.g., a knife a gun or even a baseball bat!), and obviously intends to use the weapon on you or someone you have a duty or good reason to protect.

Certain criteria must be met for retention and disarming to be effective:

1. The psychomotor skills have to be simple to learn and retain.
2. The techniques have to work against a larger, stronger assailant. This is known as the "Bambi vs. Godzilla" criterion.
3. They must work with any duty or concealment holster.

In the past, retaining or regaining control of your weapon was simply thought about as a matter of brute strength. The strongest person won. However, all that changed after the 1970s and 80s when Jim Lindell, Chief of Unarmed Tactics with the Kansas City PD, was tasked with the goal

of coming up with teachable techniques for preventing officers from being disarmed and shot with their own guns. He came up with a system of structured weapon retention and disarming techniques. These proprietary techniques are now taught in police academies throughout the country. They are also taught in Massad Ayoob's LFI-II, III, and IV to certified, card carrying, good guys and gals.

Lindell's methods focus on the use of leverage vs. brute strength. This is obviously important for female officers and older officers, as well as for civilians, and us old geezers like me.

Impact isn't enough; we need leverage. By 1986, Lindell had trained all of the KCPD officers and his program saved many cops' lives. Now Massad Ayoob is carrying on this noble work, but he is also training qualified, law abiding civilians who have a license to carry a concealed firearm. The information is proprietary—in the same way that the knowledge of how the safeties work on your carry gun or home defense shotgun are. You do not want the knowledge falling into the wrong hands, literally. To learn how to do it, you have to take (and be eligible to take) Ayoob's training at the Lethal Force Institute.

Without giving away any proprietary secrets, the basic formula is: (1) secure your weapon,

(2) move to a position of advantage over your attacker, and (3) release the weapon and regain control over it. Obviously, once you learn the nuts and bolts of the techniques, you have to practice them.



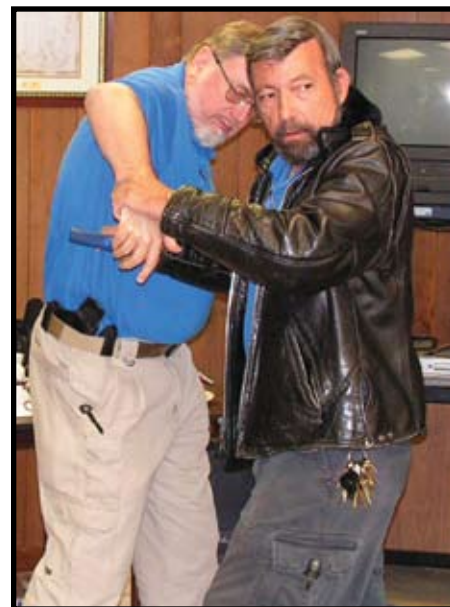
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LFI Senior Instructor, Steve Denny, and Massad Ayoob demonstrating how to recover from a gun grab, using a blue training gun.



Above: LFI Senior Instructor Steve Denny, defending against a gun grab by LFI Instructor, Herman Gunter.

Quite to the contrary of what anti-gun, anti-self-defense and anti-Second Amendment types opine, learning this stuff is not about learning to kill. It's learning how to save lives.

- Rule #1 is: have a gun.
- Rule #2: is hold on to your gun.
- Rule #3: is keep your gun.
- Rule #4 is: sometimes you have to kill the wolf to save the lives of the sheep and the sheepdog.

And the life you save one day could be either your own or that of a loved one. Are you a sheepdog or are you a sheep?

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800-624-9049
www.ayoob.com

John S. Farnam (2005). *The Farnam Method of Defensive Handgunning (Second Ed.)*. Boulder, CO: DTI Publications, Inc.

303-443-9817
www.dtipubs.com

James W. Lindell (1981). *The Handgun Retention System: A Training Text for Law Enforcement Officers*. Kansas City, MO: Odin Press.

TRAINING RESOURCES

Massad F. Ayoob. *Police Bookshelf and the Lethal Force Institute (LFI-I through LFI-IV)*.

800-624-9049
www.ayoob.com

Bennie Cooley. Idaho Falls, ID: Crisis Resolution Training Consultants.

208-525-3329
www.benniecooley.com

John S. Farnam. Defense Training International.

970-482-2520
www.defense-training.com

GEAR

Gould and Goodrich. Lillington, NC 27546.

800-277-0732
www.gouldusa.com

Don Hume Leathergoods. Miami, OK 74355.

800 331-2686
www.donhume.com

Hoffner Holsters. Houston, TX 77093.

888-597-2643
www.hoffners.com

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