



# ARMED SENIOR CITIZEN

BY BRUCE N. EIMER, PH.D

## WHAT'S YOUR STANCE?

Dr. Bruce with handgun and John Farnam with rifle.

**M**any of the people you see modeling stances with a handgun are young, flexible model types who have not had too many bones broken and do not have other joint issues like arthritis. They can model themselves into a classic Weaver or Isosceles posture as many of us have been indoctrinated is the ideal or only way. Then I try with my arthritis and all the other ills the flesh is prone to, and it really bothers me that my postural profile departs from the ideal I get from reading this stuff. So what to do?

### PURPOSE OF THE STANCE

This past weekend I had the opportunity to train with my master firearm instructor, John Farnam in his Advanced Defensive Handgun course. John and his wife and partner, Vicki Farnam co-direct Defense Training International. While we were at it, I asked John to help me better understand a few subtleties about my shooting stance. I thought I'd share my questions and his answers with you.

This is a really important issue to address because as we age, many of our physical abilities (e.g., strength, flexibility, endurance) decline. However, we still need to practice and retain the ability to make accurate hits with our defensive firearm of choice. Let's not kid ourselves. Having a consistent stance is just as important a

consideration in combat handgunnery as it is in target shooting.

So I asked John, "Sensei, I don't look exactly the way I think you're supposed to look when I do the Weaver or Isosceles stance. Is this going to work?" And what does my Sensei tell me? Basically he answers, "Don't worry about it and do the best you can."

The basic goal of any stance is to put your handgun up into the position where it does the most good. Your stance functions to align your point of aim, your front sight, your rear sight, your dominant eye, and to get all four points into a straight line. Your stance is your shooting platform for launching your bullet. As such, in order to deliver the bullet quickly and accurately, a consistent stance (launching platform) is very important. We need to hold the handgun the same way every time. We have a problem if we are all over the place. The problem is that we are shifting the whole aiming burden to our dominant eye and overloading our eye where our body should be aiming the gun.

John explains the importance of your stance in the tactical operation of the handgun in his latest book, *The Farnam Method of Defensive Handgunning* (Second Edition, DTI Publications, 2005). This is one of the best how-to books on gun fighting I have ever read. I strongly recommend that everyone who carries a gun read it at least twice. John's wife, Vicki Farnam, and her co-author, Diane Nicholl, clearly present even more detailed

*Continued on page 36*

**TOTERS™**  
Jeans designed to "TOTE" a handgun  
*Diane Collins*  
waist 28 - 42 - \$74.95  
waist 44 - 60 - \$79.95  
30 - 32 - 34 Inseams  
Custom Sizes Available  
[www.totersjeans.com](http://www.totersjeans.com)  
1-866-455-1327



John Farnam's fighting handgun stance.



Bruce's fighting Weaver stance.

step-by-step explanations of how to employ the Weaver and Isosceles stances and the fundamentals of marksmanship in their excellent new book, *Women Learning to Shoot: A Guide for Law Enforcement Officers* (DTI Publications, 2006). Both of these books can be purchased directly from Personal Defense Solutions:

[www.PersonalDefenseSolutions.net](http://www.PersonalDefenseSolutions.net)  
215-938-7283

### WHAT AFFECTS CONSISTENCY AND WHAT DOESN'T

The crux of the problem is what do we do when we have pain or physical limitations that prevent us from achieving the ideal stance? Will that affect consistency? The answer is, no, it doesn't have to. A less-than-perfect stance can still function to consistently deliver the front sight to the target.

Let's examine some of the common ways your stance may deviate from the ideal Weaver or Isosceles launching platforms: which deviations will mess up your speed and accuracy and which ones will not.

1. When employing the Weaver stance, is it a problem if your elbows are too far out? Is that going to hurt anything? The answer is, no.

2. If your gun rotates slightly counter-clockwise when you employ the Weaver stance, is that a problem? The answer is, no. Don't worry about it.

3. What if you are trembling? Don't worry about it. Trembling won't make you miss. The front sight will be vibrating a little. Just hold it on target as steadily as you can and press the trigger. You'll be fine.

Here some things you should worry about:

1. Don't jam your head into your shoulders. There's nothing to be gained. A bowed head is a signal of submission. You will also remove the articulation from your neck and shoulders which will interfere with your mobility and ability to scan for threats.

2. Make sure your thumbs and your fingers are in the same place on the grip every time. Changing thumb and finger positions will change the bullet's point of impact. Keep the same grip for all medium to large auto-loaders. Small auto-loaders such as Kel-Tec's, Seecamp's, Beretta .32's, etc., require some modification. Revolvers require a different grip than auto-loaders, but consistency is necessary for each of your guns.

3. Should I raise my head to look through the bottom portion of my progressive bifocals in order to bring the front sight into focus? The answer is, no. Leave your head in its normal position and stop worrying about how sharply in focus your front sight is! A fuzzy front sight will



Capitalize on all the range of motion in your neck you can get!

work just fine. Accept the fact that your days of seeing a sharp front sight focus are probably over.

#### 4. Should I grip the gun convulsively?

No. Don't shoot with a convulsion or a spasm. Just let the gun take over. The gun will do its job. Think of yourself as holding a fire hose and just bringing the stream of water onto the target.

5. Don't fight recoil. The gun is going to jump in your hand. It's not going to hurt if you have the right gun for you. If recoil does hurt, then you have the wrong gun. While you should not fight with the recoil,



Get a grip and stick to it.



You don't have to do this!



Don't override the recoil.



Don't do the jerk!

you should not just ride it either. Riding the recoil serves to exaggerate it, and this brings the gun much further up than it needs to be before it settles down.

6. Don't anticipate the recoil and shove or jerk the gun forward to fight the recoil. Let the gun recoil naturally; it will settle. You need a firm grip—not a death grip. A firm grip will handle the recoil just fine. Shooting a gun is a process. The process



Maintain your grip!

will go off naturally if you don't try to over-control or over-think it.

7. Another common error is to compulsively and obsessively keep re-adjusting your grip. Hold the front sight on your point of aim and press the trigger. Nothing needs to move except your trigger finger.

8. Your stance should keep you balanced. Don't lean too far forward or backward. Keep your feet on the ground. Remember: If you have to draw your gun on someone, you must be prepared to fight. Your stance should be a fighting stance.

The purpose of a fighting stance is to keep you stable so you can not be knocked off balance by your opponent. The boxer's stance must serve to protect him from his



A balanced stance.

opponent's blows. In a combat situation (a fight), you must stay balanced so you can be mobile.

You need to have your shoulders directly over your hips and your hips over your knees and feet so you can fight in any direction without being compelled to move your feet. You limit yourself to fighting only the person directly in front of you when you thrust yourself forward, and if your opponent is smart, he will outflank you and take the upper-hand.

*Continued on page 38*



**Single Action 5 Shot Mini Revolvers**



Magnum Frame  
5 1/4" x 2 7/8"  
6.2 oz.

Long Rifle Frame  
4" x 2 3/8"  
4.5 oz.

Available Calibers: 22 Magnum, 22 Long Rifle  
17 HMR, 17 Mach2

**Double Action, 6+1 Guardian Pistols**



380 Frame  
4.75" x 3.53"  
18.72 oz.

32 Frame  
4.36" x 3.32"  
13.57 oz.

Available Calibers: 380 ACP, 32 ACP  
32NAA, 25NAA



Holster Grip

Belt Buckles

25NAA 32NAA  
35 gr. JHP 60 gr. JHP  
1200 fps +



Holsters



Wood Grips

**North American Arms, Inc.**

2150 South 950 East  
Provo, UT 84606-6285



**Call 1-800-821-5783**

or visit our website  
[www.NorthAmericanArms.com](http://www.NorthAmericanArms.com)  
For your FREE Catalog

## WHEN YOUR SHOOTING PLATFORM IS INADEQUATE:

There are situations in which it may not be possible to get into a good shooting platform or stance—for example, when you are behind cover or concealment. Another situation would be if you are physically disabled to the point where you can not adequately align your point of aim, front sight, rear sight, and dominant eye so as to get all four points into a straight line. This could be due to diminished eyesight, upper extremity range of motion limitations, or being confined to a bed or wheelchair, among other factors. For these situations, good technology, along with good training with the right equipment, may provide a viable solution. I am talking about laser sights.

A laser sighting system can facilitate accurate shooting from behind cover and concealment and in low light stress-fire conditions. That is why S.W.A.T. teams using full cover behind ballistic shields often employ laser sights. If you have to hide behind an automobile engine block, a bed, bookcase, or some other available barricade, shoot from a prone position, or shoot with your weak hand, a reliable laser sighting device on your handgun may still afford accurate shot placement.

LaserMax is a company that has been making reliable laser sighting devices for the major brands of handguns for years.

Their sights are rugged, user-friendly, and easily installed by you, the end user, internally in your handgun as close to the bore of the firearm as possible. This allows for the closest and most consistent relationship between your point of aim and point of impact. Because LaserMax sights feature a distinct on-off switch that can be easily activated by both right-handed and left-handed shooters, there's no need to alter your grip and compromise your shooting accuracy to activate the laser beam. Additionally, the laser need not inadvertently reveal your position while you're drawing from your holster.

**A training aid:** Last but not least, an intuitive, easy-to-operate laser sighting system such as the LaserMax can help new shooters learn sight picture and trigger control more quickly. Both live and dry fire practice with a good laser sighting system in your handgun can help you develop good trigger control and reinforce your muzzle discipline.

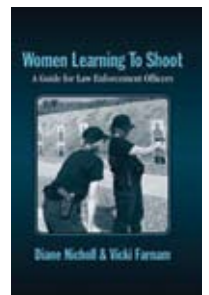
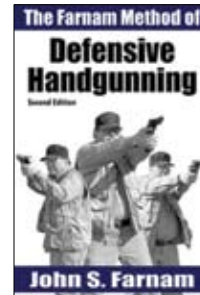


LaserMax in a Glock.



LaserMax laser sights are available directly from the manufacturer, or from authorized dealers such as Personal Defense Solutions:

[www.PersonalDefenseSolutions.net](http://www.PersonalDefenseSolutions.net)  
215-938-7283



## REFERENCES:

John S. Farnam (2005). *The Farnam Method of Defensive Handgunning*. (2nd Edition). Boulder, CO: DTI Publications.

Diane Nicholl & Vicki Farnam (2006). *Women Learning to Shoot: A Guide for Law Enforcement Officers*. Boulder, CO: DTI Publications.

## SOURCES:

Defense Training International. P.O. Box 917. LaPorte, CO 80535.

[www.Defense-Training.com](http://www.Defense-Training.com)  
970-482-2520.

LaserMax. [www.LaserMax.com](http://www.LaserMax.com)  
585-272-5420.

Personal Defense Solutions  
[www.PersonalDefenseSolutions.net](http://www.PersonalDefenseSolutions.net)  
215-938-7283 (938-SAVE).

Bruce N. Eimer, Ph.D. is a board certified, licensed, clinical and forensic psychologist, NRA Certified Firearms Instructor, NRA Life Member, Glock Certified Armorer, a Utah Dept. of Public Safety Concealed Firearms Instructor and an Author in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. As the co-owner of Personal Defense Solutions, LLC, Bruce teaches concealed carry classes and NRA Basic Pistol and Personal Protection courses, as well as offering individual shooting instruction. He also teaches CCW classes that prepare people to apply for a Florida Non-Resident Concealed Carry Weapons Permit which is honored by 28 states. For more information, he can be reached by phone at 215-938-7283 (938-SAVE) and by e-mail at:

[Dr.Bruce@PersonalDefenseSolutions.net](mailto:Dr.Bruce@PersonalDefenseSolutions.net)

or [CCWInstructor@PersonalDefenseSolutions.net](mailto:CCWInstructor@PersonalDefenseSolutions.net)

For a schedule of upcoming classes, you can log on to the PDS website:

[www.PersonalDefenseSolutions.net](http://www.PersonalDefenseSolutions.net)

Bruce is also the co-author, with Stephen Rementer of the Pennsylvania Lethal Weapons Institute, of the *Essential Guide to Handguns: Firearm Instruction for Personal Defense and Protection*, which is published by: Looseleaf Law Publications - [www.LooseLeafLaw.com](http://www.LooseLeafLaw.com)  
800-647-5347