

No Safe Places

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Recently, there were two Christian musicians who were leaving a recording studio and were murdered for two dollars and their car. Initially, I paid little attention to the news reports nor did I listen to the names of the two victims. Three days later, I received an e-mail from a woman friend who had received her CHL by taking my course along with her son and daughter. The e-mail read, "Hi Don, my son, Steve, was murdered Thursday. His funeral is at...."

I sat there stunned. Steve had been licensed through my instruction. I had been to a couple of activities that he and his mother attended - in both cases they were armed. I knew Steve's mother believed as I do that you never go anywhere unarmed if it is legal to carry in those places. I did not know Steve as well as I did his mother, but I found him to be very likable and smart. In fact, I later discovered that he was probably a genius. Of course after getting that terrible news, I couldn't help wonder if he was armed that night. I assume that he wasn't because of the deadly results of his encounter with two heartless thugs. Both criminals were captured the next day. A television interview showed that one of them was almost proud of what they had done. Apparently, he is feeling good about being a "gangsta" now."

I attended Steve's funeral wishing that I could ask if Steve had been armed that awful night, but knew it would be totally inappropriate to ask such an insensitive question. After the funeral service was over, I watched as the ushers allowed the family members to leave the sanctuary first. I couldn't help notice that Steve's mother and sister were carrying handbags made of nylon that were an odd shape. Of course, it was obvious to me why they were carrying those bags and what was in them.

I waited my turn to give condolences to Steve's mother. Then as I approached her, she said in a voice that was a mixture of crying and disbelief, "Don, Steve didn't have his gun! He always carries his gun! When he comes to my house, he has his gun on him under his shirt. He doesn't go anywhere without his gun! Don, he didn't have his gun! In fact, when the police were telling me about the shooting, I asked them where Steve's gun was. They said that they had not found his gun so I told them that the criminals have it. Later, we found it at his home."

I was sick. The tragedy was bad enough, but for him to be killed on one of the few nights where he had forgotten to take his gun seemed to rub salt into the wounds of those of us who cared for him. I am always amazed at how many people who have taken my CHL class do not carry all the time. Some almost never carry a pistol. And yet, here was a case where someone who practically always heeded my advice to be armed at all times was killed while the others who continue to walk around in an un-armed condition, in a mental state of white, don't pay the price that Steve did. No, I don't want those others to pay that price. It's just that they are more likely to be hurt or killed than those who do carry where it is legal. The irony cannot be ignored.

One of the reasons that I became a CHL instructor was because of a conversation I heard during my first renewal class. An elderly gentleman asked the instructor, "I live in a nice neighborhood. My wife and I go walking nearly every evening. Do you think I should take my gun with me?"

Incredibly, the instructor replied, "Well, that's a personal decision that you will have to make for yourself."

I wanted to scream, "Of course, you should! There are no safe places!" In fact, I was so stunned at the stupid answer that I didn't say what I was thinking. I still feel guilty about not speaking up. However, I do speak up now. Throughout the classes that I teach I use examples, many of actual shootings, to show the need to carry all the time. One such example is an appeal to logic. I ask the students if you could turn off and on your fire insurance at will, would you ever turn it off because there was little chance of a fire on a particular day? Of course, you wouldn't! But, that's exactly what you do if you decide to leave your home un-armed. You have chosen to let yourself be vulnerable to a mean world that can take you or your loved ones from this world for two dollars or for your tennis shoes.

There are no safe places! One woman who took my class has for many years worked as a contractor in federal housing, i.e. high crime areas. Unfortunately, her employer will not let her carry her gun in her car (she can't go in the federal buildings armed), but she has never needed a gun in those high crime areas. On the other hand, she has needed a gun for protection three times in "safe areas."

She started carrying a gun at seventeen because the police would not believe that she and her boyfriend had been robbed and that she had nearly raped (she said that she was in her menstrual period or she would have been raped). The police did not believe her because at that time there had never been any crime in the Fort Worth Botanical Gardens (this occurred in the 1960's). This "safe place" soon became a hot spot of rape and murder during the following year causing it to be fenced and closed at night. Fortunately, the gang of youths were caught and convicted of multiple rapes and murders.

Those of you who are instructors have probably had many stories of similar need for a gun for protection told by your clients. I use real life stories as much as I can, but I am still frustrated at how many people have the "it won't happen to me attitude" and don't carry all the time. I have finally decided that few people really take to heart my cajoling and warnings. Fortunately, many have, but I want to be even more effective in getting that point across since not only are they safer being armed, but we are too.

Since many of you who are reading this newsletter are instructors, I invite you to e-mail me if you have found effective methods to get the point across that it is important to be armed. Hopefully, there will be enough information that I can pass it on to others via this newsletter. If you have something that will help, please e-mail me at happydad1@sbcglobal.net. If I do write another article on that subject I will give you credit for your ideas.

I truly believe it is important for us to teach our clients and friends that CHL holders should be armed whenever possible and this safety advice is just as important to teach as it is for

us to teach conflict resolution and the use of deadly force required by the state. I hope you agree. Be armed; be safe.

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