

Household Gunowners' Digest

Information, Tips, and Support for the Private Gun Owner

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Words from The Range Bag
by Gwen Patton

Hi, and nice to meet you! I'm Gwen Patton, the creator and Publisher of the Household Gunowners' Digest. Since this is our first issue, I thought I would take a few moments to talk a bit about what this publication is all about, what I'm trying to accomplish, the message we want to send, and the image we want to avoid.

I'm a woman, approaching 40, living with my partner in the Philadelphia suburbs. I have been the victim of physical assault in the past. I have known others who have also been assaulted. I know persons who are afraid for their safety, and the safety of their families, frequently from other former family members. My neighborhood is not a particularly rough one, but if you go just a couple of miles east, things change with startling rapidity. There are crime, violence, drugs, and fear all within a few minutes of my nice, quiet home.

In most circumstances, and for most things, I trust the police department to maintain order. They're a good lot, and they do a decent job. But they're human beings, and there aren't enough of them, and if you look at the law with a critical eye, they aren't actually required to come to my aid or protect me individually. They have a mandate to protect the public, and to enforce the law, not to protect individuals. Their job is to catch those who break the law, but the law itself prevents them from acting until the law has been broken. They can't even guarantee that if I dial 911, that they will respond in time to save me if something is wrong in my home. That is not their fault, and I do not blame them for it. I will not blame them for not doing something that isn't their job in the first place.

It is my job to keep myself safe. It is my job to keep my home safe. It is my job to keep my family safe. No one else's. No one can do it as well, in as timely a fashion, or with as great a motivation. It is my right, my responsibility, and my honor to defend myself, my home, and my family from those who would harm us.

But how to do that, do it well, and do it safely and responsibly? On that point, there is no end of contention. And it is on this point that I diverge from what has become the "common sense" attitudes of my peers and embraced what is now "uncommon sense". I do not have alarm systems and multiple deadbolts and big, snarling dogs and pepper spray. I do not walk to my car with a canister in one hand and my keys in the other, scanning the world nervously. I don't cower in fear, a stun-gun in my purse, hoping that no one will grab me and make me have to use it... because I know I will never get to it in time, and if I do, it's a slim hope at best.

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Instead, I own guns.

Not just one gun. I currently, as of this writing, own THREE guns. I have a 9mm automatic pistol, a .32 H&R Magnum revolver, and a little .22 caliber pistol. I have a concealed- carry permit, issued by Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, and can carry any and/or all of my guns concealed on my person anywhere within the state I want with only a few exceptions. I usually carry the revolver, because it has the highest stopping power for the smallest size of the three weapons I own...but I have carried all three at one time or another. I practice at least once a month, sometimes twice, and am quite skilled with all of them. And believe me, I am ready, willing, and able to defend myself and my loved ones should the need arise.

The people who would tell me -- and have told me -- that guns are dangerous and wrong are legion. I have lost friends because I own guns, much less because I carry them. They have told me that my guns will only get me killed, or stand a greater chance of hurting a loved one than a criminal. I do not believe these statements. They are examples of the "common nonsense" being told about gun ownership, based upon flawed research and anti- gun propaganda. I have done my own research, crunched my own numbers, read my own books, and talked to my own sources. I am not blindly led. I have looked at the logic of the situation, and have found the gun owners to be more correct than the gun haters.

Gun ownership reduces crime. Gun ownership increases safety. Gun use for self-defense increases your chances of escape without serious injury. And criminals do not wish to face a gun when they try to commit a crime. They would far rather face a cowering, fearful, disarmed family of victims than a strong, confident, and armed family of citizens.

This magazine is for the everyday gun owner. It is for the everyday person who wishes to be safe, who wants to carry a gun if the local laws permit, or who wants to have a gun in a safe on the nightstand. It is for the homeowner who no longer wants to be dependent upon 911 for the illusion of safety, but wants to supply it personally. We won't have articles about the best rifle to shoot deer with, or the best technique to take down a liquor-store robber, or the latest and greatest full-auto combat shotguns.

But we will have clear and concise articles on concealable weapons for men and women of average size, not just police officers in peak condition. We will have articles on how to find a good range to practice at, how to select a good gun, how to keep it clean, and how to keep it safe without rendering it useless. We will have articles to bolster your spirits when your friends and relatives yell at you because you have that "dangerous gun" in your house. They don't understand. You want the gun to be dangerous...to those who would harm your family. But to no one else. We'll have articles on that, too.

If you want to write an article, please do! And stories. Personal accounts of how household guns have saved lives, warded off crime, protected families. If you have stories like these, please send them. We can't pay you anything for them yet, but you'll get to see your name in print! Email us and ask for our writers' guidelines, or get them from our website. (See the note at the end of this issue!)

There isn't any other publication quite like Household Gunowners' Digest. There are a lot of magazines for cops, for military- minded people, or for hunters, but nothing for the everyday man or woman who owns a gun for their home. So let's get started. Let's make "uncommon sense" a little more common, shall we?

--- Gwen Patton
The Range Bag

REVIEW: Birchwood-Casey Shoot-N-C Targets
by Maggie Leber

More years ago than I like to admit, I got my first introduction to firearms in the form of membership on a college rifle team. We used match grade .22LR rifles, and learned to shoot from the standing, sitting and prone positions. All sorts of equipment was available to the team: palm rests, shooting vests, shooting glasses...and I soon discovered one of the most useful training aids was a spotting scope.

Even at that young age, I wasn't always able to peer down the range to see exactly where my shot had landed. And obviously, the immediate feedback of knowing you'd made a good shot was important in reinforcing good shooting habits. So the spotting scope was valuable, even though we didn't have enough for everyone at practice to use, and it was far from convenient to peek into after every shot, especially from the variety of positions from which we were shooting .

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from convenient to peek into after every shot, especially from the variety of positions from which we were shooting .

Fast-forward many years to the present. Maggie is now renewing old skills and learning new ones. A trip to a Second-Amendment Sisters "Ladies's Day" gave me the opportunity to try a little of everything at the local rod-and-gun club: pistol, trap, and M-1 carbine. I don't tell the fellow who's there to assist "the girls" that I've shot rifle before, and impress him (and myself) by turning in a respectable performance putting the last nine of ten rounds into the X ring, while he calls my shots through a pair of binoculars. There's just no substitute for knowing immediately how good your shot has been.

So, when I got a permit for concealed carry, and monthly trips to the range for practice became part of my routine, I soon began to look for that immediate feedback. It can be hard to get, even at reasonable self-defense distances, sometimes. I discovered that typical binoculars often can't focus at such a close range. Running the target carrier back and forth after every shot is simply not practical. And I don't have the spare cash right now for a spotting scope.

So I'm happy to tell you I've found what I consider an effective (and cost-effective) solution: Shoot-N-C targets from Birchwood- Casey. These come in a variety of sizes and configurations, and consist of a self-adhesive target bullseye of bright fluorescent yellow plastic coated stock, with a somewhat brittle black overcoating. The result is an easily hung, peel-and-stick black target that draws an easily seen bright yellow circle around every bullet hole, as the black coating for a short distance around the point of impact is pulverized and falls away. Each target comes with four stick-on patches of the same material, so you need not replace the target quite as often.

Most shops at public ranges I've been to stock Shoot-N-Cs in a variety of sizes and shapes, and when I first began shooting regularly, I thought they were kind of a gimmick. After trying them out, though, I think these targets more than pay for themselves in improved effectiveness of training as well as less range time spent in hanging targets and moving them up and down the range.

Next time your at the range, buy a package and give them a try. I think you'll agree they're worthwhile.

You can visit the Birchwood-Casey web site at:

<http://www.birchwoodcasey.com>

Feature: How to Find a Place to Shoot, Pt 1 of 3
by Gwen Patton

Owning a gun is a very strong responsibility. You have at your hand a force that can kill and destroy with a flick of your finger. If you have a permit to carry that tool, your responsibility is even larger -- you must know how to use it, and use it well. You need to be taught how to use it properly, you need to take courses in safety and firearm ownership law, and most of all, you need to practice.

The purpose of the armed citizen is to stop an attacker. Not necessarily to kill an attacker, but to stop him. That may only require showing the weapon, or it may require actually firing it. But if you do need to fire your gun, you need to be certain of your target. When you hit the attacker, placing your shots where they stand the greatest chance of stopping him is critical. You also need to be cognizant of what is behind the attacker, in case your bullet goes through the attacker and past him. What if there is a child behind the attacker? You may need to shift your point of aim so you can't hit the child if the bullet over-penetrates. You need to be sure of your skill so you can place your shots accurately and safely. Missing your target can be worse, if the bullet starts bouncing around the neighborhood.

The key to this is practice. I practice at least once a month, sometimes more. I practice with all of my weapons, even the ones I don't carry on a regular basis, so I don't become rusty with them. I make certain I am proficient with the ammunition I am going to be carrying in the weapon, as the choice of ammo can affect the accuracy, sometimes to a great degree. My little .22 auto pistol is useful for off-hand work, practice with my left hand only, as if I use the little gun at all in an emergency it would be as a backup gun, and likely in my off hand. I practice drawing from an in-the-waistband holster, so I can be sure that I can get to my weapon if I am surprised, or need it in a hurry, and still be accurate.

But all of this implies that I have someplace to practice IN. You need a RANGE. In part I of this article, I will describe one kind of gun range. In part II, I will describe the typical gun club. And in the final installment, I will give tips on where to find both kinds of ranges in your neighborhood.

The choice of a firing range is a complex thing, and it takes into account many factors. Some of them are matters of convenience, some of aesthetics, some of health. Some are matters of economy, and some are even matters of legality. You need to weigh them all very carefully when choosing a range, or you can end up spending a lot of money on a facility

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The first thing to consider is the kind of firing range you want to join. There are two basic sorts: firing ranges, and gun clubs. A firing range is usually a commercial venture, more of a store with a gun range, or a gun range with a store, and is there primarily to do business. They are there to make a profit. They will frequently have guns for sale, and teach classes. Most will sell ammunition, targets, and other accessories as well, and may even rent guns to those using the range if local laws permit.

Most ranges of this sort are indoor ranges, with long, narrow lanes set up in heavily armored and soundproofed areas for the shooters to use. The lanes themselves can be of varying degrees of advancement, from primitive to highly technological. The most primitive have a pile of sand at the far end with a sloping plate of steel behind it to catch the bullets and drive them downward. Targets are manually hung. Range officials must control when everybody shoots and when everybody puts down their weapons so targets may be retrieved and hung, so no one is in front of the firing line at the wrong time. More modern ranges have automated target systems, much like garage-door openers or electric clotheslines that run your targets out to varying distances, and you are free to fire at will. No one goes past the firing line, ever, at those ranges.

The backstops vary at ranges depending on their advancement. The most advanced ranges use a spiralling steel trap, sometimes flooded with oil or water, to slow the bullets as they fly into it. These keep the amount of lead dust from smashed bullets from flying into the air where it can be breathed by the range users. Lead contamination is becoming a big issue in some areas, and some manufacturers are experimenting with lead-free ammunition to try to cut down on the danger of lead poisoning. You should always wash your hands thoroughly after shooting, especially before you eat or put your hands anywhere near your mouth. The residue of lead particles from your bullets can get into your system that way.

Advanced air replacement and filtering systems are required in ranges to remove smoke and metal particles. The most advanced use true HEPA filtering, and you can barely smell powder in the range itself, even when a lot of people are firing. If a range is smoky or hazy, it is a good sign that their air filtration is substandard. Besides being unhealthy, it's uncomfortable and smelly, and hard to see through.

Also, you may want to ask a range how often they clean the lanes, and whether they vacuum them or simply broom-sweep them. The safest lanes vacuum them with HEPA-filtered vacuums. Even the most efficient gun does not burn every grain of gunpowder, and sometimes unburned powder flies from the barrel of the gun to land on the floor of the lane. When a lot of shooters have been shooting for a long time, a lot of unfired powder can collect on the floor from this. If it is simply swept, unburned powder can find its way into cracks and crevices and present a constant danger, should a spark find it! This actually happened once, to a range in the Philadelphia suburbs! The resulting explosion blew out an entire wall of their range. Now they vacuum instead of sweeping.

Many firing ranges offer membership programs. You can save a great deal of money by paying for a membership and getting large, or even unlimited range time. When range time costs anywhere from \$8 to \$20 an hour, depending on the range, it adds up fast. A single payment of \$100 to \$200 can pay for itself in range time savings in no time, depending on how often you practice.

Some things to be careful of with firing ranges:

- o Ask what limits they have on the kinds of guns that can be used there. Some indoor ranges do not allow "Magnum" ammunition to be fired, usually because their backstops are insufficient to stop the high-velocity rounds. Some ranges will allow any weapons, including full-automatic or even long weapons like rifles and shotguns. This may offer increased opportunity for home safety you never anticipated...or may limit you more than you expected. I had to turn down a range because I could not fire my principal carry weapon with the ammunition I would normally carry in it because it was Magnum.

- o Make sure you can bring outside ammunition or supplies to the range. Some ranges that sell ammunition and supplies require that you purchase the ammo and targets you shoot at their range from them. They don't allow you to purchase bulk ammo from the Internet or other lower-cost sources and bring it with you. This can force you to spend premium prices on ammunition you would not normally use, or ammunition you do not necessarily like for one reason or another simply because it is all the range is selling for your weapon. Some brands of ammunition are "dirtier" than others -- they leave more residue in the gun after firing, and require more effort to clean the gun later. Some brands leave more lead fouling in the barrel. Some have less powder, or are differently shaped, or don't feed well in your auto-loader for some reason. If there is another range in your area that does not have this restriction, it is wise to check it out and see if you can do business with them instead. You will benefit more by travelling farther, if necessary.

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o Check prices. Some ranges charge much less than others. Some charge much more than others. Some will give you a cut rate for half an hour, if you want to duck in on your lunch hour.

Some will let you share lanes for a nominal extra charge, others will charge full rate for each person, so you might as well each have a lane to yourself. Some ranges charge outrageously for their hourly rate so they can urge you to buy their memberships.

Be wary...make sure you really want to shoot there for other reasons than just to save money on the range fees.

o Are the people friendly? Nothing can spoil a relationship with a range faster than surly employees. Ask questions. Swap stories. Check out new guns, if they have them for sale. Try renting a new gun for a day and see how you like it, then chat up the salesperson who rented it to you for a while on its merits. Get to know the people behind the counter and see if you can develop a rapport with them. If you take classes at this range, it is likely you will be learning from one of them at one time or another. If you find them surly and uncommunicative, or you find them to be a bunch of Rambo- wannabes, it may not be the right range for you.

This can be especially critical for some people. The Pink Pistols is a national group of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered gunowners who believe in carrying guns for self-defense. They get together to practice on a regular basis, and need to find ranges where the help does not object to gay people coming in, sometimes in large groups, to shoot. If the owners are bigots, the group can't feel comfortable practicing there. Also, some ranges, when approached, have welcomed them, making it clear that the "family" memberships they have will apply to domestic partners equally. So talk to your range owners!

Next issue: The local Gun Club.

Political Aims

ILLINOIS MOTHER ARRESTED ON WEAPONS CHARGES

Court was called to order at 9am sharp. Judge Becker entered and a packed court room of Vana Haggerty supporters rose as one. Illinois gun owners were sending a message: When you arrest one of us, you arrest all of us!

Vana was the second case called and she marched right up to the judge to be charged by the State of Illinois with two counts of Unlawful Use of Weapons.

But why was she there? Did she sell machine guns to gang-bangers? No. Vana Haggerty was arrested on August 4th at the Marion County Fair at her vendor booth where she was selling knives. Mrs. Haggerty is charged with two Class A Misdemeanors.

The initial charge on Mrs. Haggerty is selling a set of Brass Knucks to an undercover cop. The officer came up to Mrs. Haggerty and asked to "Buy a set of Brass Knucks." Mrs. Haggerty told him she only had paper weights that resembled Brass Knucks. So Officer Burgess bought one and arrested her.

Mrs. Haggerty did not sell brass knucks, she sold a paperweight. So called Brass Knuckles only weigh maybe an ounce. No one carries a pair of 8oz brass knuckles around with them. Further, the product was sold as a paper weight according to the catalog Vana purchased the item from.

Her arrest has provoked a search. During the search, Mrs. Haggerty's unloaded, encased .380 is found in her fanny pack. Mrs. Haggerty is handcuffed in front of her children, hauled to jail, stripped naked for a search, given her prison garb and tossed into a cell with so many women they had to lay on the floor to sleep. Because she was going to be charged with a felony she is held Saturday night and Sunday night and then on Monday morning she is released on her original \$100 bond.

This is a clear test case for what is being called the "Fanny Pack Carry" law in Illinois. It is held by concealed-carry advocates in that state that the way the law is written, a firearm may be legally carried by a holder of a current Firearm Owner's ID card *IF* the firearm is unloaded and enclosed in a case. The *type* of case is not specified under the wording of the law, so they claim that a "fanny pack" counts, so long as the weapon is unloaded. State's Attorneys across Illinois do not agree, calling it a "defect in wording", and not the intended meaning of the law. Fortunately for gun owners, the wording of the law is on their side.

do not agree, calling it a defect in wording , and not the intended meaning of the law. Fortunately for gun owners, the wording of the law is on their side.

By the time of her hearing, a charge of carrying a gun on publicly funded land without express permission was added, under the assumption that since she was at the State Fairground, she was on publicly-funded land. The defense being presented is that she had a lease for her booth to sell weapons (knives), so she had "permission" to be there with weaponry.

A legal defense fund has been set up by Concealed Carry, Inc, a grass-roots organization in Illinois dedicated to concealed carry issues.

Concealed Carry, Inc. Defense Fund
PO BOX 4597
Oak Brook IL 60522-4597

This is the second "Fanny Pack" case in Illinois this summer. The first was John Horstman of Elgin, Illinois, found riding his bicycle with his unloaded pistol in a case in his backpack while police were searching for a flasher. Mr. Horstman's case was dismissed, because his firearm was clearly carried within the law, in a zippered case in a backpack.

For more information, see www.concealcarry.org

News from the Home Front
by Gwen Patton

I don't have a story yet to put in this spot. I haven't had my guns for very long, and thankfully, I haven't had to use any of them to deter a criminal...but I'm ready to.

I was recently interviewed by a newspaper about the whole gun ownership thing, and the reporter asked me if I really felt I could use my gun on another human being. I answered without an instant's hesitation.

"Yes," I said.

"That was quick," she said back.

I explained that I had thought about that issue long before I ever acquired a firearm, and that if I couldn't answer an immediate and confident "yes" to that question, I would *not* buy one. It was a matter of personal ethics. I decided that I valued my own life and the life of my loved ones more than the life of a bad guy bent on doing us harm. And I decided that I would never again be the victim of someone who had power over me because they were willing to be more violent than I was.

You see, I was assaulted twice when I was younger...but both times I was too young to even own a firearm. It was also in a state where they don't have concealed-carry permits. And, even worst of all, both times happened at schools. Once, at the age of 12 at a Junior High, and once when I was 18 at college. In dealing with the emotional aftermath of these incidents, I decided that I would take charge of my own defense and take back my strength. I would not be a victim anymore. So I asked myself that very important question... found that I could say "yes" to it, quickly and without any hesitation, and got my permit and my gun.

My gun is a tool of last resort...but if it is a matter of shooting a bad guy or that bad guy hurting or killing me or my loved ones, then I will shoot that bad guy. I will stop him. Period.

Does anyone have a story of their own encounter with a bad guy? Please write it up and send it to us here at HGD. Stories from the Home Front can be of *any* length, unlike any other column. See the submission guidelines for more information!

Submission Guidelines

Household Gunowners' Digest is intended for the person who owns a firearm for personal protection, or for the protection of their family or loved ones. We are always looking for feature articles that address the needs of the everyday person who owns, or is looking to own, a personal firearm. We are not looking for articles geared towards hunting, law enforcement, or military applications.

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For complete guidelines, please see
<http://www.voicenet.com/~ardrhi/hgd-submit.html>

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