



Lessons Learned

A Frightening Truth

[BY USCCA MEMBER JIM FLEMING OF MID-MINNESOTA SELF DEFENSE INC.]

While teaching a firearm self-defense course this weekend, I was approached by a student with a question.

Recently, while he was out of town, a male individual that he had hired to do some remodeling at his home came to the home after hours. He knocked on the door, and one of the student's children opened the door while the wife was busy cooking in the kitchen and unaware of the visitor. The man walked into the house uninvited. He confronted the wife in the kitchen. She immediately ordered the man to leave the home. He walked to the front door and without saying a word, locked it from the inside and then began pacing about the living room, apparently muttering to himself, touching himself in an inappropriate way, and ignoring the wife's continued orders to leave the home. She became frightened and brandished a butcher knife at the man, screaming for him to leave the home. Her children were huddled, frightened out of their wits behind the mother. The man finally backed to the front door, opened it, and ran off into the night. The woman did not call the police to report the incident, later claiming that, "He didn't really do anything." The husband reported that he has implored her to take self-defense firearms training but she has refused because, "I don't believe in guns."

The student's question was, if the man had suddenly attacked her, would she have been permitted to use the knife to defend herself? The other instructors standing within earshot all looked at each other, their faces stony and somber. They understood the implications all too well. The student had a glimmer-



©ISTOCKPHOTO - IDWORK

ing of understanding. I did my best to answer the question, explaining that a woman, facing even an unarmed male is in a disparity of force situation that justifies the use of deadly force to protect against an attack she reasonably believes is being perpetrated to take a life or cause crippling injury. But there is much left to say about this situation.

One: it happened within twenty miles of my home, to a family just like mine, just like yours. Many times I say to people, "You are not special, you are not blessed. It can happen to you, in your home or on the streets, any time, day or night, and you will not get to choose, because someone else is going to make that choice for you, and they will not give you any warning of their decision. You have got to be aware of that reality and aware of what is going on around you, all the time. Not just when you want to be."

Two: a woman, with no training in the use of edged weapons, who engages in hand to hand combat with anyone, armed only with a butcher knife seized from the kitchen cutting board, has no concept of what that battle will be like or

whether she will survive it. It takes years of intensive training to handle a knife in a fight to the death. And when one trains for such things, they do not do it with a kitchen knife, poorly designed for the task. That fight will be brutal, it will be physically demanding, and it will be bloody. My own father had such a fight in the hedgerows of Normandy, trained as an Army Ranger. He survived, but woke screaming in the night from time to time for the rest of his life, with scenes of that conflict running through his subconscious mind.

Three: A woman who does not "believe in guns" was naively willing to do battle, poorly equipped and trained as she was, because she believed that her life and the lives of her children were in mortal danger. And they were, make no mistake about that. The individual she confronted was trying to make up his mind or steel himself to a task he had already decided to carry out. This was very likely his first time. It will not be his last. I implored the student to contact the police and tell them about the incident and the identity of the intruder.



I hope he does, but I cannot force him to do so. The next victim may not be as lucky. And unchecked, there will be a next victim.

Four: a firearm is nothing more than a tool. It can be used to hunt for food, it can be used in recreational sporting activities, and it can be used to preserve your life in situations where someone else who does not give a damn about you, your family, your children or your right to life, seeks to take it for their own warped or selfish reasons.

A firearm will not carry the day in every instance. It is not a talisman or a death ray. You have to be trained to use it. You have to be trained to develop the mindset to use it if you must. And you have to be trained to understand when you are legally authorized to use deadly force. You cannot use it to scare assailants because many of them are mentally hardened or deranged enough that they will not be scared. The argument made

by blowhards that "the sound of the action of a pump shotgun being racked is enough to scare an intruder into running from your home" is a fantasy. I've had criminals tell me that often enough to know it's the truth.

I invited the student to have his wife come and attend a class, to listen, to evaluate. The four women in the class, each of whom was taking the class for their own private reasons, all reacted more emotionally. "You tell her I said to stop that foolishness and get her butt in here and learn how to protect herself and her family."

I do not believe in the Easter Bunny because I have never seen him, or the Tooth Fairy for that matter. I do believe in guns because I have seen them, owned them, fired them, and trained with them for my entire adult life and before. I am aware, I harbor no illusions about my personal safety, and I fervently hope that I never have to use my training to save my life or that of another human being. But after all these years, I also know that hoping will never be enough. ★

Mid-Minnesota Self Defense Inc.
www.midmnselfdefense.com

DO YOU HAVE A STORY FOR "LESSONS LEARNED?"

Concealed Carry Magazine pays \$100 each for true personal experiences told by USCCA members. Close calls, near misses, and defensive gun uses (with or without shots fired) all teach important lessons! Submissions must be shorter than 600 words; we reserve the right to edit for clarity and space considerations. Send your stories to Lessons@USConcealedCarry.com

