



Tactical Talk

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"Militia, when properly formed, are in fact the people themselves ... And include all men capable of bearing arms."

-- Senator Richard Henry Lee, 1788, on "militia" in the 2nd Amendment

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Upcoming OC (Pepper Spray) Class

"When all you have is a hammer everything looks like a nail." Like most old sayings there is a real element of truth in it. When it comes to personal defense, if you're only prepared to use a gun, then that is what you will probably resort to. The fact is that the gun is the tool of last resort for defending ourselves, and it's important to understand we have a wide array of personal defense options available to us.

One of those options is Oleoresin Capsicum spray (OC for short). It is one of the most effective tools in our personal defense arsenal, and everyone should carry and know how to use OC. Rangemaster will conduct an 4-hour OC training class on Monday, December 16, 2013 from 6:00 to 10:00 PM.

The use of OC looks simple - just point and spray, right? That's akin to saying the use of a firearm is simple, just aim and press the trigger. We all know that there is much more to it than that. As with any self-defense technique, you need to understand the basics of the tool you are using and, most important, how to use it. During this class, you will learn:

- ◆ A bit of history of chemical weapons in general and OC in particular
- ◆ How OC is made
- ◆ The key criteria that determine if OC will be effective
- ◆ Selection considerations
- ◆ The effects of OC on the thug and, potentially, on you
- ◆ What constitutes OC failure (Nothing is 100% effective, not even firearms)
- ◆ Where OC fits in the force continuum
- ◆ How to deploy OC in a potential criminal encounter

You will not be sprayed during this class. All training is done with non-active training devices. However, if you choose, you will be exposed to the effects of OC.

The class is \$49.00 and includes all training materials. While participants can be of any age 16 or older, participants should have sufficient maturity to appreciate both the seriousness of the training and the events that might cause them to deploy OC. College-age participants are particularly welcome for often OC is the only tool for personal defense available to them. Participants should wear comfortable shoes, not sandals, flip-flops, or extreme high-heels as there will be movement during the "range" portion of the training. Graduates of this class will be issued OC certification cards.

Enrollment is limited. To make your reservation, stop by or call Rangemaster at 370-5600.

OC is an important part of your personal protection plan and, just like all defense options, training is important. Remember: under attack, you never rise to the occasion. You sink to your lowest level of training.

Oh Deer Me. **By Craig Harper, Rangemaster Staff Instructor**

Last night my wife hit a deer, caving in the right front of the car. A few years back, my son was driving home from work in the early morning hours and avoided hitting a couple of deer. But while he focused on the two bounding away, he didn't see the other two that were trying to cross the same road. That took out the right front headlight. In both incidents, the humans were unharmed. The deer...not so much. A couple of years ago, my wife was hit - broadsided - by a deer on I-55 in Mississippi. (It seems my wife has an affinity for deer encounters.) The deer hit her car left rear passenger door while she was cruising at highway speeds.

This article is not about avoiding deer while driving. Sometimes vehicles and deer unavoidably cross paths. It is really about the broader subject of situational awareness while driving. We know that the single most important tactical principle is alertness; this concept is discussed in every single class at Rangemaster. Yet we often see folks who simply abandon that concept when they drive.

Jumping in your vehicle and immediately locking the doors (you do immediately lock the doors, right?) can give you a cocoon-like sense of security. Drivers often abandon the tactical principles that we know work. What happens:

Our focus goes no further than the car immediately in front of us. Certainly that car is important. At the same time, there is likely traffic all around you; what are those cars doing? What's going on down the road - a quarter or half mile ahead of you? Look even further ahead if the road and/or traffic will allow. What's happening on the shoulders of the road? Could somebody step out into traffic? Is there a road-rage-induced fight happening over there? Shots being fired? It's critical to scan all around to avoid potential problems and to understand the traffic flow so that you can be proactive instead of reactive.



Fixation. In my son's case, he was fixated on the deer he avoided and didn't see the ones to his immediate right. Don't fixate on retrieving items or searching the glove box. Something dropped on the floor of your vehicle will still be there later. Plenty of robberies have happened at fast food drive-thru windows and bank drive-up ATM machines. While commerce needs to take place, it shouldn't come by dropping your guard.

Diverted attention. There is a host of things that will fight for your attention: kids in the vehicle, changing radio stations, slipping in a new CD, searching for that one special song on your blue-tooth-enabled device. All of that divert your attention from the tasks at hand - driving and being alert. (I must admit, dropping a lit cigarette in you lap will divert your attention. Been there, done that.)

"Zoning out" at stop lights. We know that a favorite place for car-jacking and robbery is at stop lights. Staring at the red light does not make it change any faster. Reading the bumper stickers on the car in front of you may be amusing...or infuriating...but it diverts your attention. We can't drop our scan while stopped.

Mobile devices. So much has been written about this - and it is so obvious - that I hesitate to even include it. Yet, since a recent survey of consumers found that 7% of Americans use their mobile device while they are having sex, the real number for those using mobile devices in vehicles must be much greater than the 40%-50% reported. Texting, talking, and web surfing while driving is just plain dangerous. Past the obvious danger when driving, it keeps you from paying attention to your surroundings.

The single most important tactical principle is alertness: on the street, in parking lots, and around your home and business. Alertness is just as important while you are in your vehicle. The two-legged animal is just as dangerous to you as the four-legged variety.



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The “A” Student by Tom Givens

Many are familiar with the “Seven P’s of Project Management”. It occurred to me that are five “A”’s of defensive firearms training. As trainers, we must make our students aware that all of these essential elements must be recognized, trained for, and skill developed in order to ensure a successful outcome in a crisis. As students, we must recognize that owning, or even carrying, a gun is not enough. We must work on or prepare for all of these “A”’s.

ACCEPTANCE For many years I worked as an investigator. While interviewing victims of violent crime, I was struck by how many of them just froze up when attacked, and did nothing to defend themselves. In questioning them about this, they usually said that they were stuck in a mental denial loop, with “I can’t believe this is happening to me” the only thought they could manage. I firmly believe that this is the direct result of spending so much mental energy over the years trying to convince one’s self that “it will never happen to me”. After years of self delusion, when the event comes the victim is stunned into inaction, which can have very bad results. The Bureau of Justice Statistics, part of the US Department of Justice, counts four crimes as the “violent crimes”. These are Murder, Aggravated Assault, Robbery and Forcible Rape. I would suggest that these are the exact crimes one would use a handgun to defend against. According to the BJS, there were 5.8 million of these four crimes in the US in 2011 alone. Thus, instead of “I can’t believe this is happening to me”, your mental reaction must be “I knew this might happen, it’s my turn at bat”.

AWARENESS It doesn’t matter what the subject involves, one cannot fix a problem until one is aware that he has a problem. The one action that most people could take to enhance their personal security would be to become more alert and aware when out in public. Stop talking or texting on the cell phone while walking across the parking lot! Get your head up, open your eyes, and look around. Look for people, activities or circumstances that look odd, out of place, or out of character and are, therefore, suspicious. Watch for people who seem to be paying attention to you. Thugs do not beam down from the Mother Ship and attack you.

AVOIDANCE I will give you a double your money back guarantee that you will win every single violent confrontation you don’t get involved in. Don’t go to specific places while armed that you would not go to unarmed. Resist the temptation to flip off the jerk

who just cut you off in traffic or took the parking space you were waiting for. It’s not worth it. Remember that as an armed citizen, you will be held to a higher standard of judgment and discretion than an average person.

ACTION If, despite your best efforts at awareness and avoidance, you are faced with an imminent deadly threat, you will have to act swiftly and decisively to end that threat. This requires skill at arms. Skill requires work, in the form of training and practice. At a minimum, you should be well versed in these physical skills with your sidearm:

- The ability to quickly, safely and efficiently present your handgun from concealment, or to quickly and reliably access it from its storage space at home;

- Achieve rapid, multiple hits at realistic distances in short time frames;

- Reload your pistol quickly and reliably;

- Be able to fix common malfunctions and keep the gun running.

AFTERMATH One of the dumbest things I see repeatedly and often in TV/Movie crime dramas is when the hero is involved in a fatal shooting and is back on the job the next day, with no further mention of the incident ever made. Life just goes on. In real life—not so much. In all jurisdictions in the United States the shooting of one person by another will be, at least initially, treated as a criminal investigation. You may be taken into custody, searched, handcuffed, even taken to a police facility for questioning. Your gun will be seized as evidence. Depending greatly upon where in the US you are at the time, you may or may not be charged with a serious crime and have to hire an attorney and a bondsman to assist you. If you are fortunate enough to live in a more self defense friendly part of the country, you may be released at the scene after the initial on scene investigation, but that does not mean it is over. Don’t hesitate to seek professional help, whether legal counsel or treatment by a qualified psychologist. Regardless of how justified and necessary your actions may have been, this will be a traumatic experience for you and your loved ones. Be prepared to deal with this.

So, to be fully prepared to defend yourself or loved ones against an attack by violent criminals, remember the Five A’s. Acceptance, Awareness, Avoidance, Action, and the Aftermath should all be given serious consideration before the event, to make successfully dealing with the event more likely .

Rangemaster Firearms Instructor Courses

In October we finished up our string of Firearms Instructor Development Courses for 2013 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. We had a very good class there with students from Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Illinois, and one brave soul who drove up from Texas. Instructor development has become something of a specialty for Rangemaster, and we have refined a very solid three-day program. Here are the dates we have firmed up for 2014, with more in the works.

May 31-June 1, 2014 Advanced Instructor Course, Memphis, TN

June 6-8, 2014 Firearms Instructor Course, West Elkton, Ohio

August 1-3, 2014 Firearms Instructor Course, Memphis, TN

October 3-5, 2014 Firearms Instructor Course, Dallas, TX



The August course in Memphis is our annual event at the home range, which is indoors and is fully air conditioned. For 2014 we have completely revamped, updated, and expanded the student manual for this course. The manual now contains almost 200 pages of detailed information.

Justifiable Homicides by Private Citizens

Here is some recently released information about the number of justifiable homicides in the US, by private citizens (not law enforcement). The numbers are trending upward as more and more states expand private citizens' right to carry for self defense.

Justifiable Homicide
by Weapon, Private Citizen

Year	Total	Total firearms	Hand-guns	Rifles	Shot-guns	Firearms, type not stated	Knives or cutting instruments	Other dangerous weapons	Personal weapons
2008	265	219	171	13	13	22	35	9	2
2009	266	218	167	9	19	23	30	10	8
2010	285	236	170	8	30	28	33	11	5
2011	270	209	156	13	11	29	49	9	3
2012	310	258	193	20	15	30	35	6	11

- ¹ The killing of a felon, during the commission of a felony, by a private citizen.
- Personal weapons refers to the use of hands and feet as weapons.

Comment: Note that these totals only reflect offenders **killed** by private citizens. In large urban areas, due to excellent trauma care, only 1 in 14 or 15 people that are shot die from their wounds. Thus, we can extrapolate that about 10 felons a day are being shot by private citizens in legitimate justifiable self defense.

Mental Preparation for Self Defense, by Tom Givens

Many people, including many who have a carry permit, are not sufficiently prepared to mentally deal with the reality of a criminal attack. Simply owning a gun is not enough. One needs to accept the actual threat level that exists, and be mentally prepared to act in defense of self or family.

For many years I worked as an investigator, and I had a lot of opportunity to speak with crime victims. In addition to asking the relevant questions about the crime, I used these opportunities to inquire about the mental state of the victim at the time of the attack. I found that a very large percentage of these victims had one of two thoughts going on in their minds when they were attacked. These thoughts were "I can't believe this is happening" or "Why would someone want to hurt me?". These questions leave the victim in a mental denial loop that freezes them into inaction, and wastes the precious seconds in which they could have defended themselves. Let's look at the thoughts separately.

"I can't believe this is happening!" This is the result of not knowing the actual threat level, and of continually convincing themselves that violent crime only happens to other people. Well, guess what? To everyone else on the planet, YOU are "other people"!

The Bureau of Justice Statistics is a research unit within the U.S. Department of Justice. For the year 2006, the BJS says that in the United States there were 5,685,620 violent crimes (Murder, Aggravated Assault, Robbery and Forcible Rape). That's right, over 5.6 million, of just these four crimes. That is one serious violent crime for every 54 people in the country. I often hear permit holders say, "The odds of me needing my gun are 1 in a million." Wrong! The odds are 1 in 54, just for the four violent crimes listed here. That is a national statistic, however, so let's look at Tennessee, specifically.

According to the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation (TBI), in 2011 there were 582,893 crimes reported in Tennessee, with a population of 6,403,353. That is roughly one crime for every eleven Tennesseans. That includes all crime, however. The crimes you would use a firearm to defend against involve violence and the possibility of death or serious injury to the victim. Here are some of those crime totals for Tennessee in 2011, with the clearance rate in parentheses.

Murder	390	(264)
Aggravated Assault	28,802	(16,811)
Kidnap/Abduction	1,175	(598)
Robbery	8,168	(2,246)
Forcible Rape	2,131	(839)
Forcible Sodomy	532	(243)
Sexual Assault with Object	273	(85)

TOTAL= 41,471 in Tennessee, in 2011 alone.

That is an average of 114 of these serious violent crimes EVERY DAY, just in the state of Tennessee. So, as you can see, the odds of needing your handgun are not that remote. Instead of "I can't believe this is happening!", your mental response must be "I knew this might happen, now I must deal with it!". If we truly accept the fact that violent crime can occur anywhere, at any time, we can avoid that denial loop and instead, immediately act to defend ourselves.

"Why would anybody want to hurt me?" This is the other thoroughly irrelevant question. Actually,

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whether the attacker is a gang member seeking higher status, or a career criminal who thinks working is for suckers, or a mentally deranged person, or someone with a real or imagined grievance against you—it doesn't matter! The only relevant issue is that he is trying to hurt or kill you and you must make him stop. Later, in safety, his motivations can be dissected, but right now he must be stopped. Now, let's look at some other mental issues.

“I only carry my gun when I might need it.” So, you truly believe that you can foretell the future? You and I need to go to Las Vegas! I'll make certain that nothing bad happens to you, and we'll split your winnings.

As of November 2013, we have had 63 Rangemaster students that I know of involved in an incident in which he/she had to use a handgun in self defense. Not one of those students got out of bed on the fateful day thinking they would need a gun that day, but they all did need one. In 58 of those incidents, the student won the fight, and only 3 were injured. To the best of my knowledge, however, two Rangemaster students have been murdered, after taking some training with us. Both were killed in separate street robberies. Essentially, they were executed for the contents of their pockets. What else did these two have in common? They were not armed on that day. Both decided that they would not need a gun that day, both were wrong, and both are dead. Let's see, 58 out of 58 who were armed won, and 2 out of 2 who were unarmed lost and died. I don't know about you, but I see a clue imbedded there.

“I only carry my gun when I go to _____” This is a variation of the previous mistake. That means that when you carry a gun, you are actually going somewhere where you think you might need a gun. Why go there?

“I have a gun with me, that takes care of everything.” It would be great if things were that simple, but they are not. Your gun will not observe or identify a potential threat. Your gun will not jump out of the holster and defend you. In fact, your gun will not do anything. YOU must do things for yourself. The gun is only a tool.

When in public, always pay attention to the people around you. Look for persons, behavior, or circumstances that appear to be out of place, unusual, unexplained, and therefore, suspicious. Any time you see something or someone who looks out of place, ask yourself, “Why?”. Why is that guy leaned against the wall in the parking garage? Why have I seen that same man in the last three shops in the mall? Why are those two men in “thug wear” sitting in that parked car on the lot? Why is that man just standing there 10 feet from an ATM? Criminals are not invisible and they do not beam down out of the Mother Ship to attack. Get your head up, open your eyes, see what is around you. When out in public, you should be able to answer two questions at any given moment: “Who is around me?” “What are they doing?”.

If you plan to carry a handgun for self defense, I strongly urge you to obtain a copy of Principles of Personal Defense by Jeff Cooper, available on Amazon quite cheaply. This short book is actually an essay Jeff wrote in the 1960's, but it is 100% relevant today. Read it about once a year to keep your mental attitude focused and sharp.

Accept that violence happens to good people. Accept that violence can occur anywhere there are people. Accept that when violence comes to you, only you can protect yourself. You are actually the first responder.

HOLSTERS FOR CONCEALED CARRY

by Tom Givens

Once you have been shooting a while, you quickly learn how much more efficient a mid-size to full-size handgun is compared to a small revolver or auto. The medium to full-size handgun will have a more ergonomic grip frame, it will have a longer sight radius, it will typically fire more effective ammunition and it will carry more ammunition than its smaller cousins. A typical medium to full-size auto will hold 13-18 rounds of 9mm or .40 caliber ammo and be easy to shoot well. I have de-briefed a lot of people after gunfights, and I've never had a single one say to me, "You know, when the bullets started flying I wished I had a smaller, less powerful gun, with less ammo in it". You need to remind yourself now and then that the purpose of carrying a concealed handgun is to allow you to fight for your life in a sudden, extreme emergency. If you reach for that pistol, it means your life or the life of a loved one is in grave, immediate, mortal danger!

Another thing one quickly learns is that, within reason, gun size is not the determining factor in concealment. A well designed holster will conceal a full-sized gun easier and better than a poorly designed holster will hide a small gun. As long as you stick with a reasonable size gun, a good holster will adequately conceal it for most environments. For our purposes, when I refer to a medium sized to full sized gun, I mean a Glock 17/19/22/23, a Smith & Wesson M&P or M&P Compact, a Springfield XD, a Commander size or Government Model size 1911 or something similar. Personally, I carry a Glock 35 every day, fully concealed. That gives me 16 rounds of .40 caliber ammo that I can hit with well at speed.

The easiest way to actually conceal a pistol in this size class is the Inside Waistband Holster, commonly referred to as an IWB. The IWB holster can be had in many configurations and in many materials, including Kydex, horse hide, cowhide, nylon and plastic. In this section we will focus on leather IWB holsters made of cowhide or horse hide. Leather IWB rigs are often more comfortable than their Kydex counterparts and are often quieter. They may also aid in retaining the gun in the holster during a struggle. Good leather IWB holsters are available from a number of sources and we will look at some of the better examples.

The Grand-daddy of them all is the Summer Special as made by Milt Sparks Leather. The late Bruce Nelson was a career undercover narcotics agent with the California DOJ during the 1960's and 1970's as well as an early Gunsite instructor and a master class pistol shot. On a raid one day, Nelson was suddenly confronted by a shotgun wielding dope dealer who appeared from a supposedly "secure" area after Nelson had put his gun away. Nelson was wearing a .45 Commander in one of the flimsy suede metal clip IWB holsters that were available then. As often happens, as Nelson drew his pistol the holster came out with the gun and Nelson had to furiously strip at the cheap holster to skin it off his pistol. The biker with the shotgun started laughing at the spectacle and surrendered having taken pity on poor Bruce. Immediately, Nelson set about designing a better holster which evolved into the Summer Special. Nelson became a leather worker in his spare time and made this holster until his untimely death. He also granted the rights to the design to Milt Sparks and the Sparks Company still makes the holster to this day (www.miltsparks.com). The current updated version is dubbed the Summer Special II and is a fine choice. Dual snap loops with one way snaps secure the rig to that it cannot come out with the gun. A reinforced holster mouth makes one handed re-holstering easy and the holster is sewn smooth side in and rough side out. This gives a slick, fast inner surface and the rough exterior grabs your clothing and stabilized the holster.

Ken Null in Georgia is a respected leather smith who has been around for a long time. One of Null's best Inside Waistband holsters is the UNL. This holster is formed by folding and stitching a large piece of leather to incorporate "wings" around the holster pouch. These leather wings mold to the wearer's

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body after a bit and become fitted to the individual owner. Many users claim this is the most comfortable IWB rig they have used. A belt tunnel secures the holster and the belt tugs the gun in close for maximum concealability.

Kramer Leather makes several IWB designs in horse hide. Horse hide in general is thinner but stronger than cowhide and is an excellent choice for an IWB rig. Horse hide retains its shape well and seems to be a bit less affected by sweat. Kramer uses Chicago screws instead of snaps. The screws allow adjustment of the hoops to fit different size belts and won't come unsnapped while you're wearing the holster.

Back in the 1970's, Lou Alessi made a compact IWB holster for me to fit a Smith & Wesson Model 60, .38, with a 3" heavy barrel. This design was a great departure at the time, featuring belt loops in front of and behind the pouch of the holster. This allowed the holster to be quite thin since there was no leather added over the gun itself. I wore this gun in various undercover and investigative roles, sometimes under just a T-shirt and it concealed remarkably well. Tony Kanaley at Milt Sparks further refined this basic concept into the Versa-Max II which is one of the most widely emulated designs in the holster business today. By placing the belt loops fore and aft of the gun, the entire rig can be very low profile. Also, this wider "footprint" distributes the weight of the gun over a very wide section of the belt, aiding comfort. The holster conforms to the wearer's hip curvature aiding both comfort and concealment. A number of our staff, including my wife, Lynn, use a VM-II to conceal a Glock or 1911 quite well.

The late, great, leather master craftsman, Lou Alessi, also collaborated with pistolsmith Dane Burns to design one of my all time favorites, the GWH. For six years, I wore a full size 1911 every day in an Alessi GWH and my good friend Southnarc wears a full size 1911 fully concealed as a narcotics investigator in a GWH, usually under a casual shirt. Comfortable and fast, the GWH is a subtle design. Alessi Leather is always backlogged for months as most of their production goes to government alphabet agency customers. In looking for a substitute for the GWH, I discovered 5-Shot Leather who offers the Inside Burton Special, a derivative of Lou's design, well executed in quality leather. This would be an excellent choice for all day wear with a 1911 or similar size handgun. Alessi also makes the PCH which is a rather ingenious and very comfortable IWB.

Alessi also offers the Talon holster line which combines a leather IWB with reinforced mouth with a nylon locking belt clip. The Talon clip actually secures the holster in place as the tip of the clip fits into a recess in the holster, and I've never seen a Talon holster come out of the pants with the gun. The Talon will work without a belt, although it works well with one. To be honest, I have seen the Talon clips break after extensive use. Flexing the clip while putting in on/off stresses the nylon and it will eventually break. When that happens, Alessi will cheerfully replace the clip, but that is one reason I use no equipment from any maker that clips onto the belt. My gear all slips on the belt and stays there.

Matt Del Fatti is a retired sheriff's deputy who is also a true artisan in leather. Matt's designs are thoughtful and well executed and his attention to detail is outstanding.

A fairly new maker, Crossbreed Holster, offers an interesting hybrid holster that combines leather and kydex components into a very adjustable rig. The height and cant (tilt) of the holster can be adjusted to suit the user and the broad leather pad shields the user's body from safeties and other levers on the gun. The leather can be trimmed to suit the user's preferences. You will probably want to trim some of the leather above the holster pouch to prevent it curling outward after a bit of wear.

Garrity's Gun Leather offers an IWB very similar to Alessi's GWH, as well as double loop IWB's similar to the Sparks VM-2. Garrity's workmanship is first rate

Among the mass production holster makers, Galco, offers a very functional Inside Waistband holster known as their Royal Guard. The Royal Guard is constructed of horse hide making it thin but sweat resistant. In function, it is very similar to the Sparks Summer Special II. You can get these immediately

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to tide you over until your hand made custom rig comes in a few months from now.

As Bruce Nelson learned many years ago, the cheap, flimsy, IWB with a cheap metal clamp should be avoided at all costs. These rigs are always poorly designed, are usually made of cheap, thin material and often come out with the gun on the presentation. Stay away from these things.

Here we'll look at a properly worn IWB rig to give you an idea of what it should look like. Note how the belt tugs the gun/holster in close and tight to the body. Most of the weight of a loaded auto is in the butt and many outside the belt holsters allow the gun to tip away from the wearer's torso making concealment difficult. In an IWB rig, the belt is on the outside, tugging the gun/holster in nice and close. In the photo you can see how the gun/holster scarcely protrudes at all. Even a shirt would conceal this gun fully. Note also that the belt loops and the belt are matched. These are 1.5" belt loops and a 1.5" belt. That locks the rig in place preventing shifting as you go through the motions involved in your daily activities. It also keeps the holster at the same angle all of the time aiding getting a firing grip on initial contact. This is, of course, a critical component of a fast, secure, concealed, carry presentation.

For more information and more pics, I recommend a discussion forum called The 1911 Forum. Specifically, an excellent thread can be found at forums.1911forum.com/showthread.php?t=196181. Holster info is found in the sub-forum entitled Holsters, Magazines & Accessories. The moderator of the forum is Tony Kanaley of Milt Sparks.

Also, be aware that the high quality leather makers mentioned in this article are small shops of 4-5 employees or even true one man shops. Their production is, therefore, severely limited. The excellent IWB holster designs recommended here, such as a Sparks VM-2, or an Alessi PCH are complex designs that cannot be built in a few minutes. The result is that all of the better makers are back-logged on orders, from six months to a year or more. The end result is worth the wait.

We have taken an in depth look at leather IWB (Inside Waistband) holster for daily concealed carry. There are shooters who find the IWB design uncomfortable or who just don't like that carry mode. For them, there are a variety of OWB (Outside Waistband) holsters. Now we'll take a look at the development of this type of holster and the current options.

The concealed carry of handguns for self defense has been going on since the development of handguns began. John Wesley Hardin designed a concealment shoulder holster in the 1880's, and pocket holsters were common at the turn of the Twentieth Century. The first modern looking holsters that actually conceal a handgun under normal urban men's clothing seem to have appeared in the 1920's. During this time period an awful lot of men routinely carried a handgun. There was pressure to move away from the "Frontier image" and concealed carry started becoming more and more common. Legendary Western lawman Tom Threepersons devised a holster, originally for open carry, that was soon adapted to concealed carry by making the belt loop for a somewhat more narrow pants belt instead of the 2 1/2" to 3" wide gun belt normally worn for open carry. The Threepersons holster is still commonly encountered today, although there are much better designs now available. The main drawback of this design is the belt loop, which is simply part of the holster body, folded over and stitched. This allows the butt of the gun to tip away from the wearer's body making concealment more difficult. El Paso Saddlery first made this holster to Threeperson's specifications in the 1920's and still offer it today. Various other manufacturers made very similar designs and this type was the standard right up to the 1960's.

In the 60's, Roy Baker designed a radically different type of belt holster which he dubbed the "pancake". This was a very flat holster, made of two pieces of leather stitched together, with a belt slot cut in front of and behind the pistol. These dual slots allowed the gun to be pulled up much tighter and closer to the wearer's torso, aiding concealment greatly. Today, all major holster makers offer variations of this basic design. As mentioned, this design is much more concealable. It also tends to be more comfortable as the widely spaced belt slots spread the weight of the gun over a wider section of belt.

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The Galco “Concealable”, the Alessi “Belt Slide”, and the Milt Sparks “CC-AT” are excellent examples of updated versions of the traditional pancake design .

Another similar design is the abbreviated belt slide like the Galco version called the Quick Slide. This is a minimalist holster that leaves much of the gun exposed. Well designed examples like the Galco Quick Slide still retain the gun well and allow the use of similar handguns of different barrel lengths in the same holster.

Some pancake style holsters use slots cut to allow the belt to thread through them. Others, like an excellent holster from custom maker Ma Del Fatti, have closed loops the belt passes through. The Alessi CQC-S and its copies have snap loops fore and aft which allow easy on/off, but are still basically pancake holsters.

Modern holster pioneer Bruce Nelson not only designed the famous Summer Special inside waistband rig, he designed a high riding concealment Outside Waistband holster he called the Number 1 Professional Model. This holster has a very close fitting belt loop on the back of the holster body and a trailing belt loop or slot on an extension of leather behind the pistol. The purpose of the trailing loop is to pull the butt of the gun in closer for better concealment. The Milt Sparks #55BN (BN, for Bruce Nelson), is a currently available rendition of Nelson’s design as the Alessi DOJ model. Don Hume makes a derivative of the Nelson design in its JIT Slide. Although it is very inexpensive and not made of the quality leather of a Sparks or Alessi rig, the JIT is a very serviceable concealment holster.

Rusty Sherrick, a custom holster maker in Pennsylvania, makes a couple of horse-hide holsters that are updated versions of the traditional Threepersons design. The Rangemaster Special was designed to carry a full size pistol comfortably and allow a natural draw stroke without a lot of shoulder rotation. The Speed Draw was designed to give maximum draw speed from a holster that is actually concealable with a full size gun. Both were designed by me and executed by Rusty.

One ingenious design I’ll mention is the Milt Sparks “Mirage” holster. This is actually designed to be worn between the belt and the outside of your pants. The belt passes through a slot in the outer body of the holster. This is a very concealable rig. One advantage is that if you take the gun off and lock it away, the holster can stay on your belt and no one will notice it. I have worn a full size 1911 in one of these under a T-shirt.

Now we will look at holsters made of Kydex and similar materials.

Kydex holsters can be much less expensive than quality leather holsters and the wait time tends to me much shorter for Kydex, even with custom touches. Since it is a very thin material, Kydex IWB holsters can be made thinner than a comparable leather design enhancing both comfort and concealment. Here in the sunny South, a major advantage of Kydex is resistance to sweat. Perspiration will not soak through a Kydex holster nor will it degrade the holster over time.

Some Kydex holsters are noisy making a distinct “clack” when the gun is withdrawn. This could theoretically cause problems when stealth is needed, but I think the issue is over-stated by many. Kydex is much rougher on the finish of your pistol than leather causing faster finish wear on the gun. Blued guns and some of the baked on paint type finished will exhibit wear very quickly when carried in Kydex. Kydex is affected by high heat, so, never leave your rig in a parked car.

CAUTION: Many cheap, inferior holsters are available, such as Fobus line, which are not made of Kydex. They are flimsy plastic that breaks easily and should not be used for serious purposes. The accompanying photos show a number of quality Kydex holsters and their features.

A good concealed carry holster has to meet four criteria: it must be comfortable, concealable, secure,

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and fast. There are a great number of excellent designs today, allowing the user to find the one that fits his body and clothing style. Find the proper holster and you'll find that carrying an adequate defensive handgun is far easier than you may have thought.



Galco Concealable (left, above)

IWB holster, worn just behind the hip (right, above)



Kydex IWB holster

Galco Royal Guard IWB

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Kydex IWB (left above) and Threepersons belt holsters (right above)



Milt Sparks Versa-Max II



Even a full size 1911 is easy to conceal in a IWB holster. Within reason, concealment is more a matter of holster design than of gun size.



Two Day Defensive Shotgun Course, January

The shotgun is the most powerful and effective weapon the home owner or business operator can use to repel a home invasion or a hold-up. It is also the most misunderstood weapon system available to us.

On January 25-26, 2014, Rangemaster will conduct a two day course in the defensive use of the shotgun. Class runs from 9am-6pm both days, with both classroom and live fire training. Students will learn the academic side of the shotgun, including history and development; selection; modifications and accessories; ammunition characteristics, capabilities, and selection; proper cleaning and maintenance; and more. On the range, students will learn the various ready positions and their tactical relevance; shooting technique; reloading skills; and manipulation techniques designed to work under stress. Students will need 150 rds of birdshot, about 50 rounds of buckshot, and 10 slugs. Cost is only \$249 per student. Call 901-370-5600 to register.

Bad Gun Handling Has Consequences

In October, Academy Sports opened a new store in Collierville, where I live. On the fifth day of operation they had their first negligent discharge of a firearm inside the store. An idiot took his holstered handgun out of its holster in the gun department, and in the process caused it to fire. Fortunately, no one was injured. Collierville police responded, and after reviewing the store's surveillance videos decided to charge the doofus criminally with Reckless Endangerment. They decided to charge him because review of the video showed him pulling the gun from the holster with his finger in the trigger guard, which caused the gun to fire. This was in no way an accident—it was pure and simple negligence. Willful negligence like this is usually the result of no training, or inadequate training. I would be willing to bet this dumb-ass “grew up around guns”, and thus felt no need for professional training.

As anyone who has had professional firearms training knows, Rule Three is “Keep your finger away from the trigger guard until your sights are on the target and you have made a decision to shoot.” Your trigger finger should be straight, and cranked up away from the trigger guard, in “register” against a tactile reference point like the flat side of the slide, or the edge of the ejection port. As the gun goes on target, the finger goes on the trigger. AT NO OTHER TIME should the trigger finger be anywhere near the bang switch. Adherence to this rule would have prevented this incident entirely.

Also, if you are going to a gunshop to have a gun worked on, to trade it in or sell it, to find a holster for it, etc—UNLOAD IT AND CARRY IT IN INSIDE A CASE. There is no need to take a gun carried for self defense out of the holster in a gunshop unless you need to shoot someone with it. Stupid, careless, ignorant gunhandling like this endangers us all physically. It also endangers our self defense rights by giving the other side ammo for their arguments against us. Be responsible, get trained, and handle your guns correctly all the time.

Just a few days after this incident, a Tunica County, Mississippi, female Deputy Sheriff shot herself off duty while getting out of her car. She had placed her issue Glock 22 in her purse, loose, not in a holster. As she moved the purse, something in the purse entered the trigger guard and caused the gun to discharge, shooting her in the side. All it takes is a pen, a lipstick, or a key to get into the trigger guard and be moved by shifting contents as the purse is moved. Don't put any handgun into a purse loose and unsecured. If you want to carry in a purse, get a gun purse. These have a separate compartment for the pistol, and nothing else should be in that compartment. If you don't have a gun purse, you need to place the handgun in a secure holster and place that in the purse. If this Glock had been in either a gun purse or a holster, this negligent shooting would not have occurred.

Also in this same week, one of Master Trainer Pat Rogers' students and the student's brother were shot on the parking lot of a 7-11 in Virginia. The student was shot in the abdomen, and his brother took a 9mm to the temple, which exited his forehead, leaving him clinging to life in the hospital in critical condition. The student was not wearing his gun, but had left it in his car. This prompted Pat to observe, “Your car is not a holster. Wear your damned gun.” This is just another form of negligence, resulting in serious injury.

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Tom and Lynn have conducted classes all over the US in 2013, to include courses in Arizona, Louisiana, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia, Florida, Ohio, Indiana, Arkansas, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and Georgia, in addition to classes at Rangemaster in Memphis. Thanks for making 2013 a great training year.