

CARRYING, 24/7

Story and Photo by Peter Caroline

Friends who are not gun owners have asked me if I carry a gun all the time. My answer is, yes, as much as possible. There are some venues, such as secure areas at airports and courthouses, where it might not be feasible. And the next question is: *Why* do you always carry? My answer is, because I haven't the luxury of being able to determine exactly when a gun might be needed.

In that regard, a defensive handgun is like a fire extinguisher or an insurance policy; you don't know when or if you'll ever need it, but when you do actually need it, you're very glad you have it. Unlike the insurance policy, however, the gun doesn't do you a bit of good in a safe or a drawer. It should be on your person, within instant reach at all times.

Like many of you, I keep several guns handy around the house and in my truck. I also carry a .380 Seecamp in a pocket holster. Unless I'm actually getting on an airliner, that Seecamp is with me always. I'll tell you why.

There's a thin, perhaps indefinable line between paranoia and reasonably prudent behavior. And for many years, I'd carry only when I was going into the city. Our suburban community, north of Boston, seemed to be a safe place. Early in the 1990s, however, something happened that convinced me to carry a gun on a full-time basis. Bob was a good friend of mine. He had been the president of our gun club, and was a dedicated shooter, handloader and gun collector. One Saturday morning, Bob and his wife were sitting in their kitchen, enjoying their coffee. Suddenly, someone appeared at the door. It was a local homeless person that Bob had occasionally treated to a meal. He pushed his way inside, waving a pistol and muttering incoherent accusations. Then he fired one shot, fatally wounding Bob. Unfortunately, although Bob had a number of defensive handguns around the house, the nearest one was in a kitchen drawer six feet away. It might as well have been locked in a safe for all the good it did.

After the shooting, the killer left and was subsequently arrested, tried and sentenced to life in prison, with no possibility of parole.

This is, granted, an extreme example. But just this morning, I read a newspaper headline, "Gunman kills 1, hurts 5 at Seattle Jewish center." Some wacko had walked in the door, announcing, "I am a Muslim American, angry at Israel," and then started shooting. As rare as these incidents may be, their improbability is not a factor if it's you who happens to be in the line of fire. In reality, things may have gone down too fast for anyone in the lobby to defend themselves. I for one would like to at least have had the option.

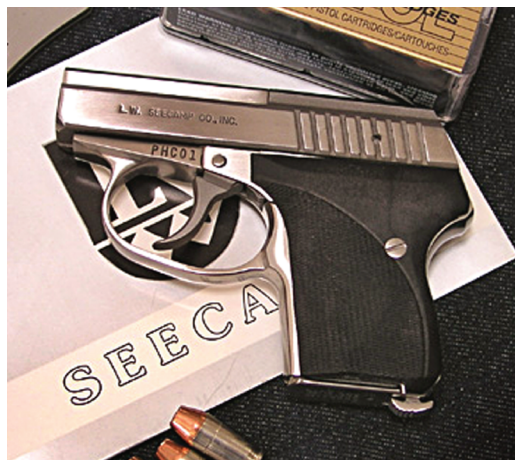
The victims at Columbine discovered to their sorrow that a "gun-free environment" does not

guarantee one's safety. Armed school personnel might have averted a tragedy, as they do in schools in Israel. Simply putting up a sign with a drawing of a handgun inside a circle/slash is reprehensible foolishness. Criminals and crazies don't obey rules; they prey on people who do.

As we gun owners are all too aware, our mass media would have us believe that an armed citizenry leads to "Dodge City, with blood running in the streets, and simple fender benders ending up in a hail of bullets." I must have led a sheltered life; I've had a concealed carry permit since 1957, have

associated with armed individuals much longer, and have managed to avoid all that drama.

We make choices affecting our health and safety every day. Just because you buckle up your seat belt doesn't mean that you intend to have an accident. Ownership of a fire extinguisher doesn't mark you as a potential arsonist. Insuring yourself doesn't mean you're planning to put yourself in harm's way. These are reasonably prudent precautions, as is a gun in the possession of a responsible owner. Think of full-time concealed carry as your own low-cost, pro-active insurance policy... only this insurance prevents loss, rather than recouping it after the fact.



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