



"... the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."

EXERCISING THE RIGHT

Two for the Road

Troy Howard, of Denver, North Carolina, may be 71, but the fact that he was a U.S. Marine in his youth is still evident. When his wife, Becky, woke him up at 3 a.m. on June 9 after hearing glass break — which he couldn't hear because as a Marine, a grenade blast damaged his hearing — he grabbed his double-barrel shotgun and got ready to counterattack. As his wife hid in a closet and locked the door, he stood behind the bedroom door and waited for the intruder to try to enter the room. He told the *Charlotte Observer*, "I didn't know how many people were out there. But I wasn't going to let them come in and kill me and my wife. I was standing like a Marine ready to charge."

When an intruder pushed the bedroom door open, Howard slammed the door back shut, and he then pressed the business-end of the shotgun against the bedroom door and fired both barrels, leaving smoking black holes where the barrels had rested. He knew he only had the two loads handy for the shotgun, so he waited in the bedroom for the intruder's next move. After about 30 minutes, he decided to check out the house. The intruder was gone. Howard then called the police.

The police located a blood trail, and they searched the neighborhood until 1:30 p.m., but they didn't locate the intruder.

An investigation into the break-in led police to issue a warrant for 16-year-old Tyler Hice, who, it turns out, was already scheduled to go to court for an April break-in. Hice turned himself into police.

As for Howard, his house is now more fortified; he installed an alarm system and a cordless phone in his bedroom; and he will likely keep extra ammo handy for future incidents.

Little Wind Resistance

In the week of July 1, Tony Gamonal was working on his computer in his West Valley City, Utah, home when he heard noises outside. He looked out and saw two people trying to break in through a downstairs window. He yelled at them, and they fled.

According to kutv.com, "Tony grabbed his shotgun and tried to cut the couple

off by going through the garage door." A police officer was right across the street, and he gave chase to the suspects as well. The officer chased them one way, while Gamonal again tried to head them off. His maneuver worked, and he caught one of the two burglars — a woman. The other burglar, a man, got away. It was not until after Gamonal caught the woman that he realized he was only wearing boxer shorts.

The incident was the second time his home was targeted in two weeks. The first time the thieves struck, they nabbed over \$8,000 worth of goods. Someone also sprayed graffiti on his fence. Gamonal is fed up and plans to defend his home vigorously from now on.

Protecting Their Castles

In the month of July, Jackson, Mississippi, saw two homeowners who shot burglars saved from potential charges by the so-called "castle doctrine," which allows someone to use deadly force to protect his property. In the most recent case, on July 17, a tenant of a south Jackson apartment left his residence to go to the store. According to the *Clarion Ledger*, "As he walked to his car, he saw three men sitting inside a parked Oldsmobile." While the tenant was away, his neighbors heard suspicious noises and called the tenant's girlfriend, who then alerted him.

When the tenant got home, he noticed that the three men were no longer in their vehicle and that his front door had been kicked in. "The resident," reported WLBT Channel 3, "then approached his home and yelled for anyone inside to come out." The three burglars tried to flee out a patio door, and the man opened fire, hitting one of the burglars in the arm and neck, but not stopping his flight.

The police, who were already in the immediate vicinity working a sting operation to try to catch a serial burglar, got to the scene quickly, but the two uninjured men escaped into a nearby wooded area. A man suspected of being the wounded burglar was found hiding in a drainage culvert. It is believed the same three burglars had broken into a second apartment earlier that day.

In a second instance, 71-year-old Edwin

Chinn shot 34-year-old Ricky Braggs after Braggs broke into Chinn's house through a kitchen window. Chinn shot Braggs in the arm and stomach. "Braggs ran about two blocks before collapsing behind a house," the *Clarion Ledger* reported.

Chinn has faced down an intruder in his house before, but on the prior occasion, about two years ago, it was the intruder who did the shooting. Chinn was shot in the back before he got a few licks in with a club and ended the encounter.

Braggs has multiple convictions for burglary. He was last released from prison September 8, 2007. Both wounded suspects are expected to live.

Second Guessing

On an early July night, right after Leonie Burgos, 5'4" and 110 pounds, was dropped off at her home by a friend at about 3:30 a.m., she saw a young athletic man begin scaling the tall wooden fence surrounding her house, intent on entering the yard. She ran into her house, grabbed her pistol, and then went back outside to see if he was in the yard (mistake number one — she should have been calling the police about the trespasser, while guarding the doorway).

The man surprised Burgos and tackled her from behind. She struggled with him and pointed the gun at his face to get the man to flee, even as he covered her nose and mouth with his hand and cut off her breath (mistake number two — a gun should only be drawn for self-defense if you feel there is a possible life-threatening situation; when the man physically attacked and validated the danger, she should have begun shooting and not risked having her own gun used against her).

When the man didn't let up the attack, she pulled the trigger three times, causing the man to flee. According to kxan.com (Austin, Texas), "Thirty minutes later, a man went to the emergency room ... with a gunshot wound to the face." Twenty-year-old Christopher Benavides was arrested. He told police that he was only trying to steal Burgos' cellphone. At the time of his arrest, Benavides already had two outstanding warrants for his arrest. ■

— KURT WILLIAMSEN