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Idaho Common Sense™



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Concealed carry permits - right or privilege?

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This summer the Supreme Court issued its ruling on the meaning of the Second Amendment. I believe they correctly understood the Founding Fathers intentions; affirming that the "right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed." But, they did not settle all issues surrounding gun ownership; including if the government can require more than just a background check to get a concealed carry permit. Pistols and revolvers are common firearms. Therefore, the right to own them is resolved. But, is a concealed carry permit a right protected by the Second Amendment, is it a privilege, or is it both?

Several years ago, I paid the fee, waited for the needed background checks, and received an Idaho permit to carry a concealed firearm. I then applied for a Utah permit, which required taking a class. I assumed someone with a vigilante mentality would teach the class. I could not have been more wrong. To the contrary, he stressed our goal is to recognize a "bad" situation developing and flee, avoiding the potential for a lethal encounter. He repeatedly stressed that the bullet you fire will hit something; hopefully the target. But, it will hit something and you own that bullet until it does. A sobering thought. Still, the goal is to flee an escalating situation, avoiding a lethal encounter and never using your firearm.

A great class; but is this class enough education to carry a loaded gun with competence? Did this class instill the judgment and skill needed in a life and death situation? We never fired a gun. Are the instructor's admonitions enough to prepare someone for a lethal encounter? Last

month I changed my opinion on concealed carry permits. I used to believe the permit was a right, as long as the individual could pass the background check. That is until I attended a defensive pistol class at Gunsite Academy in Pauldin, Arizona. The instruction encompassed the "combat triad;" mindset, gun handling and marksmanship. We worked hard every day with lectures, gun range time, and simulators; culminating in exams at the end of the week.

A part of the mindset teaching at Gunsite is to pay attention to our surroundings without interfering with our normal life; what they call "relaxed alert." We learned to recognize when something is out of the norm, switching to "specific alert." This places us in the correct mindset for the potential of the situation escalating to "prepare for action;" when we would mentally say, "If he or she does this, then I will do this." The ideal outcome, of course, is to recognize a bad situation developing, fleeing well before it escalates.

Beyond discussing the stages of alertness, mindset education also included discussions on the psychological aspects of being in a situation where you are forced to take another human being's life. Moreover, if one of us were unfortunate enough to be in a lethal encounter, could we perform properly and be able to recover mentally from the nightmare?

The gun handling instruction focused on the safe handling of a pistol with uncompromising adherence to Gunsite's four safety rules: "All guns are always loaded. Never let the muzzle cover anything

you are not willing to destroy. Keep your finger off the trigger until your sights are on the target. Be sure of your target."

Marksmanship is needed for two primary reasons. The first reason is obvious. You must be able to stop the person trying to kill you or someone else. Second, you want to lessen the risk of missing the target because of the potential damage the bullet could do. Simply, you want the bullet to stop the target and stay in the target.

Although I earned marksman I status, I also realized I wanted more training. I want to return for at least one more week, either a repeat of this class or another class. Moreover, as instructed, I will regularly practice, maintaining the skills needed to competently carry a concealed firearm. That way if I ever decide to carry a concealed firearm, I can do so confident in my training and preparation.

My experience at Gunsite modified my opinion that a concealed carry permit is a right and not a privilege. Although I agree with the Supreme Court that owning firearms is my right, protected by the Second Amendment; the option to carry a concealed firearm is also partly a privilege and should require proper training. I do not believe requiring this training would "infringe" on our "right to keep and bear arms." To the contrary, it would enhance that right by acknowledging the profound importance of a concealed carry permit and the responsibility that comes with that permit. Realistically, shouldn't a concealed carry permit be both a right and a privilege?