



Publisher's Pen

A gunman enters the building. He scopes out the place. He points a gun at the woman's head and herds her and a female client into the back room. Her husband is there with another client. The gunman orders the women down on the floor and trains the gun between the eyes of the husband. The wife asks, "What are you going to do with us?" The gunman diverts his eyes to her for a second. The husband "takes him out."

The latest installment of "Law and Order"?

No.

Here in our fine city.

Last week, as I passed through my bedroom to prepare for bed, I routinely turned on the evening news. As I walked to the bathroom, half listening, I heard the anchor say, "After a bizarre robbery attempt... man walked into a beauty salon... pulled out a gun demanding money... code word alerted the owner who came out of the back with a gun of his own. The owner who is also an actor and stuntman..."

I *know* him! I flew back into the bedroom as I heard an all too familiar voice.

Rodd Wolff is an actor. Accomplished horseman. Stuntman. Hairdresser. My friend. The victim. Almost.

His code word: "Cowboy."

Last month in this column I wrote, "It is critical to develop a defensive mindset. A plan is way better than no plan," recounting lessons learned at my recent training

at Gunsite Academy. At the time of that writing, I had little idea how powerful and significant my comments were. How timely. How close to home.

"When I saw the intruder's eyes I knew that if I didn't do something we would all be dead," his wife Jo later told me.

As the gunman entered the shop, Jo called out to Rodd who was in the back room, "Cowboy."

Louder.

"Cowboy."

And again, "There's a real cowboy out here."

Their code word for "armed and dangerous."

Rodd and Jo had practiced this scenario for years.

Unlike the stunts that Rodd has performed in numerous films – they hoped that the day would never come where the rehearsals would lead to, "Lights. Camera. Action."

As an actor in many Westerns, this is not the first time that Rodd has had a gun in his face. And he has rehearsed in his mind this very situation. Thus he was prepared. Or as prepared as anyone could ever be.

Rodd, Jo and I sat on my back patio some days after and talked about that fateful day – and the encounter that could have ended quite differently. Here, much in their own words, a summation of the events that happened that day – and some sage advice from the would-be "victims."

Rodd: "It's far more reaching than a code word. Number one, there was informal rehearsal. We knew that when someone comes in and I was in the back, Jo would have to let me know that someone armed and dangerous had come in. I said to Jo we need to be prepared. We picked a word that I would respond to that she

would not forget and would get my attention.

"There were several scenarios. In the first scenario, Jo is behind her desk. So most likely the first thing that's going to happen is that he'll address her behind the desk. The plan was that Jo would say the code word – then I would come out from the back and confront the person. So I figured on a way to disguise the weapon in a way that would not alarm him – something that would not seem odd. I can't do anything if he's focused on me. So Jo has to distract him – knock over a vase on her desk – yell – do something so his eyes would be diverted so I could size up the situation and get a shot off if necessary.

"The next scenario: What if I'm in the back room and he makes his way into my room – and he takes her with him – or has her in the other room tied up? She needs to make some noise, some kind of distraction.

"So initially, everything is on Jo's shoulders – first to

give me the warning and second to distract him.

"It took a split second when she said 'Cowboy' for it to register. By the time I got the gun she said it the second time. By the next time when she said, 'There's a real cowboy out here,' he was in the room."

"You have to have a code word that's not going to alert the intruder. Saying something like 'radishes' wouldn't make sense," Jo added.

Rodd: "The key to success is first having a code word; second, following it; and third, having the element of surprise. Having the element of surprise takes that away from him and takes away the power."

Jo: "The guy came in. It was very

odd. He entered the waiting room and went down the short hallway to Rodd's cutting room which is very private – and peeked around the corner. He was scoping the place out or he knew where he was going. This behavior was weird, so I left my client for a second and said, 'Can I help you?' Then he swung around and came at me and pointed the gun at my head. The gun was cocked. I knew he was real.

"I needed to back up to give time to get this code word out. I needed time and I needed space. I looked him over completely. He said, 'I want your wallet.' I said, 'I don't have a wallet.'

"Then he said, 'I want your cash drawer.' It didn't matter where the cash drawer was – I was taking him to Rodd's room. That was our only salvation.

"You must stay calm. You must size up the situation. You cannot get this individual rattled."

He commanded Jo's client to come to him while holding the gun to Jo's head. He pushed them both through the 30" doorway – still with the gun to Jo's head. Fast. He was angry. He ordered them down on the ground – the gun still to Jo's head.

Rodd had a client in his chair. He had his gun in his hand covered by a towel as if drying his hands and moved to the side of the chair. "I was on my way to see what it was all about. Alice [my client] had no clue."

Rodd: "You can't just run out with a gun in your hand, so you have to conceal it in some way so it's not obvious. What would be more natural than having it in a towel as if you're drying your hands?"

"There was a lot of forethought in this. I thought about it many times for many years.

"I nodded to Jo when she was forced into the room with the gun to her head [acknowledging he knew what was up]. I knew I couldn't react too soon."

The intruder's focus turned to Rodd. He redirected the gun pointing it directly between Rodd's eyes and "told me to lay down flat

Publisher's Pen, continued on page 11

Publisher's Pen,
continued from page 10

on the ground. I looked at Jo and looked at him thinking, where's my distraction?"

Jo: "I said, 'What are you going to do with us?' That distracted him. He didn't think that something would come out of my mouth."

As the intruder redirected his eyes towards Jo it gave Rodd the opportunity.

Rodd: "As soon as he diverted his eyes I had to take my chance as I knew I wasn't getting another one. I knew one shot wasn't going to do it. I hit him three times. I'm a good shot. I could have killed him. I didn't want to. I went for shoulder and arm first.

"Every ingredient, like baking a cake, had to be done precisely the way I thought it through and rehearsed with Jo. You have to make certain to distract him. Maybe it's knocking a glass off your desk – or backing up and making your roller chair fall over.

"I couldn't have done it if I had not rehearsed it in my mind dozens of times. I would have made a lot of mistakes. Shown the gun too soon. Not waited for the opportune time. Not acknowledged to Jo that I was ready.

"I've done high falls – horse falls – I have to hit my mark. You're nervous. So when the director says, 'Go,' you have to be mentally prepared to get your horse going and hit your mark."

Jo: "People do need to think about these things."

Rodd: "I say, 'Son of a gun. It came off just as I wrote it in my head.' I never could have done any of this unless I had rehearsed it umpteen times. This was exactly as it went

down every time that I rehearsed it. You've got to 'play the scene.'"

And play the scene they did.

Their message:

Rodd: "Remember the code. Rehearse. Make up scenarios in your mind. What would you do in this situation? How would you react in this situation? Have an element of surprise. Knowing this may not stop crime – but will hopefully cut down on the number of people who are victims of perpetrators. So much is reported on how many people have been killed by guns. This was a gun that saved four people."

Jo: "People who commit crimes aren't busy people. They're looking for their next crime. They're looking for their next victim. That's what they're focused to do. A plan is better than no plan. Do whatever you need to do to protect your family and your coworkers."

As the Supreme Court struggles to interpret what the forefathers of our great nation intended in the Second Amendment to our Constitution, I know one thing: had Rodd not had a weapon for defense of his family and clients, I would not be writing this as a success story, but as a memorial to my dear friends.

If you missed my March column and would like to learn more about defensive mindset, please e-mail me personally at publisher@CITYSunTimes.com. We are happy to send it to you electronically.

Stay safe.

Warmest Regards,



Hope H. Ozer
Publisher

GUEST EDITORIAL

Tipping Point For Most Consumers: \$4 A Gallon Gasoline

If gasoline prices hit \$4 per gallon as many economists predict, an estimated 65 percent of American car owners say they will dramatically change their driving behavior, according to a survey conducted by Opinion Research Corporation for our association.

According to the survey, 91 percent of drivers are driving less and 75 percent are maintaining their vehicle better because of rising gas prices. Other specific behavioral changes were carpooling (31 percent), purchasing more fuel efficient vehicles (30 percent) and making greater use of public transportation (24 percent).

Driving less might not be an option for you, but performing simple and inexpensive vehicle maintenance will not only save gas money, perhaps as much as \$1,200 per year, but will also improve your vehicle's safety and dependability. The Car Care Council offers these gas-savings maintenance and driving tips:

- Check your vehicle gas cap. About 17 percent of the vehicles on the roads have gas caps that are either damaged, loose or are missing altogether, causing 147 million gallons of gas to vaporize every year.

- When tires aren't inflated properly, it's like driving with the

parking brake on, and can cost a mile or two per gallon.

- A vehicle can have either four, six or eight spark plugs, which fire as many as three million times each 1,000 miles, resulting in a lot of heat, electrical and chemical erosion. A dirty spark plug causes misfiring, which wastes fuel. Spark plugs need to be replaced regularly.

- An air filter that is clogged with dirt, dust and bugs chokes off the air and creates a "rich" mixture – too much gas being burned for the amount of air, which wastes gas and causes the engine to lose power. Replacing a clogged air filter can improve gas mileage by as much as 10 percent.

- Keep your car properly tuned. A 21st Century tune-up can improve your gas mileage by an average of four percent. Fixing a serious maintenance problem, such as a faulty oxygen sensor, can improve your mileage by as much as 40 percent.

These simple vehicle maintenance steps can add up to serious savings. To learn more about how to maintain your vehicle and reduce your fuel expenses, visit carcare.org.

– Kathleen Schmatz,
President & CEO, Automotive
Aftermarket Industry Association

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

This is an insightful and thought provoking article [*Publisher's Pen, March 2008*]. It's important that women who choose to own firearms for self protection understand that gun safety and good marksmanship are only a part of responsible gun ownership. Not all of it.

Awareness training, a defensive mindset and having thought about all possible scenarios in advance is at least as much or more important. That's because having a gun won't do you any good unless you are mentally and emotionally prepared to use it to defend yourself and your

family against criminal attack. Get good firearms training from an established reputable school, like Gunsite. It's an investment you'll never regret; even if you decide that gun ownership is not for you, developing awareness of your surroundings and practicing

those "what if" scenarios could save your life.

– Sandy Froman,
NRA Past President, Tucson

What's on your mind?

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