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The WOMAN'S GUN PAMPHLET

a primer on handguns

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SAFETY FIRST

1. Always handle a gun as if it were loaded.
2. Never point a gun at anything you do not intend to shoot.
3. Know what is behind your target before you shoot.
4. Never accept a gun from someone or pick one up without checking for yourself to see whether it is loaded.



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WHO WE ARE

We are a group of women who have spent our lives living in danger of attack from men. In other words, we're just like you.

At different times in our lives we each have tried different ways of defending ourselves: taking self-defense courses, carrying knives, "Halt" (dog mace), screwdrivers, etc. We always tried to go places with friends or else we stayed home a lot. Then, over a short period of time, we began to get guns.

Some of us were never around guns and got them without knowing anyone else who had them, and some of us had had gun experience in the past and had friends who owned them. While in the process of trying to find out more about guns, we realized how difficult it is for a woman to get the necessary information. It could be difficult enough or frightening enough for her to give up entirely. Lack of knowledge may cost her time and money. The same mystique that keeps us isolated, unconscious, and vulnerable also keeps us unarmed.

When we began to share our gun learning experience we realized not only how much easier it became but also how much more fun it was. When we realized how much effort we could have saved ourselves if we had begun talking sooner, we decided that one of the best things we could do for the women's community and women's movement was to share our collected knowledge in a feminist gun pamphlet. This has been our effort at sharing.

We don't claim that everything in this pamphlet is the best advice you can get, or the last and complete word on handguns. We are still learning. The options in your area may be very different from ours. And even the 'experts' don't agree on everything. But we do think that we have reached a place where we can responsibly give advice and information. We will be delighted when another group of women puts out a revised and expanded edition.

While we all share a similar outlook, the various sections of the pamphlet represent the experiences and opinions of the individual writers. We made no attempt to reach a consensus on everything.

Hopefully, G.C.R. (Gun Consciousness Raising) groups will spring up all over.

INTRODUCTION

Being a woman in a world run by men you find that your life is in constant danger of one form or other. Going to work in the morning (or especially if you work in the evening), going to the grocery store, or just taking a walk down the street can be a danger-filled experience. Women with cars are spared a lot of worry about protecting themselves when they leave their homes, but they still must worry about the danger from attack in their homes - half of reported rapes occur in the woman's own home. Then there's always walking from your car to where you want to go - that's often quite a distance. Women who must rely on buses, walking, or hitchhiking for transportation are in even more danger.

The danger of attack on us all the time is very real, yet most women don't take it really seriously enough to do something in a realistic way to defend themselves. Even when all our friends around us are being raped and mutilated - even when our very selves are attacked - we still are slow to really do something to protect ourselves. And there are very real reasons why this is true. For men to maintain a successful oppressive patriarchy, women must be defenseless. If we feel helpless then we will be afraid to escape from ties with men and male institutions. (All men are capable of rape and murder; all men are potential rapists and murderers. That includes both the stranger on the street and men you know well - frequently relatives.) We will be maintained by a rapist of our choice to protect us from other rapists.

When we do manage to terminate all our connections with men, then we are still left with the well-planted electrodes of passivity in our brains. We either take no measures to be constantly ready to defend our own lives and the lives of other women - or we carry hesitations, doubts, the feelings that: "I don't really know if I could fight back;" "If I had a knife or gun or black belt in the martial arts, I don't know if I could kill a rapist attacking me - I don't want to hurt anyone." We either feel too weak or too magnanimous to want to protect ourselves.

And the painful, disturbing thing is that none of us knows, when it comes down to it and it is our life or the attacker's life, if we could really

kill. And it is never so clear cut as your own life at stake. Too many women have submitted to rape with the idea that by not resisting they were protecting their lives, and they probably felt they were doing the best thing up until the moment they were actually killed by their attackers. And women too often are trusting of men to the point that they endanger their lives.

THE ONLY WAY I'VE FIGURED OUT TO TRY AND ELIMINATE THE ALL-NURTURING MASOCHIST IN EACH OF US IS TO REMEMBER THAT THE MAN OR MEN WHO ATTACK, RAPE, MUTILATE, AND TRY TO KILL YOU, HAVE AND WILL DO THE SAME TO AS MANY WOMEN AS THEY CAN. WHILE YOU DEFEND YOURSELF, BEAR IN YOUR MIND ALL THE WOMEN YOU LOVE THAT YOU ARE FIGHTING FOR, ESPECIALLY THOSE YOU KNOW WHO HAVE BEEN ATTACKED.

The options a woman alone has for protecting herself are to build her body into a weapon or to carry a weapon. It is always a good idea to learn some form of martial arts, but it takes years to be completely effective (even though one hour of training is always better than none) - and situations can always arise that are difficult to handle, no matter how good a fighter you are - such as a gang of men armed with guns who are attacking you.

I am always a believer in weapons: hat pins, screwdrivers, clubs, switchblades, machetes, "Halt" (sold in your local pet shop), etc. But most women are not as familiar or skilled in fighting with such objects as men are, and it seems to me that the least effort a woman has to make to defend herself, the better off she is. It's too easy to freeze or hesitate out of fear - fear of the situation and fear of hurting anyone - and weapons can be taken away. Most weapons. Except for one that is rather hard to take away and that can be used from a distance with the least possible effort - a gun. After years of trying to figure out the most reasonable way to defend myself, I've discovered that a gun makes the most sense. (A gun is also cheaper to obtain than a black belt.)

Women often relate one of three ways to a gun: "It's horrible, male, and deadly; I won't go near it." "I don't like guns at all, but they seem to be the only way I can successfully defend myself, so I carry one." "I love guns, I go shooting on the range lots, and I have the cutest little set of revolvers, automatics and antique rifles that you've ever seen. Next week I'm getting a cannon." The last may seem a little weird, but imagine getting yourself a sweet little .38 special snubnose that

goes with you everywhere and you realize that FOR ONCE IN YOUR LIFE YOU ARE NOT AFRAID - not when you sleep at night, not when you take a walk alone in the woods, not when you go to the corner store - then you almost begin to like that male death machine which will protect your female life. Then it's not so weird to get excited about learning to shoot well - and it's a real skill. And you never know what fear you've been living in until it's gone.

The first difficulty in obtaining gun consciousness is that most women are taught that guns are out of their realm of reality - like high paying jobs and self-respect. And that is part of the male propaganda - that women be afraid of guns - because men are afraid of women and a woman with a gun in her hand is indeed a wonderful fright. (For one thing, it is well known that women are much better at manual skills than men, so women invariably are better shots - once they get it in their heads to get a gun. Many marksmanship championships are won by women.) Until the last couple decades (and still in most rural areas today) guns were as natural a part of someone's life as a screwdriver or can opener. Everyone had one and knew how to use one, including many women. Guns were used for protection and to get food. Once you get past the psychological hurdle of getting a gun, in most places you can indeed walk in a store, order a gun, wait the legal length of time, and go home with a gun of your own - a gun of one's own!

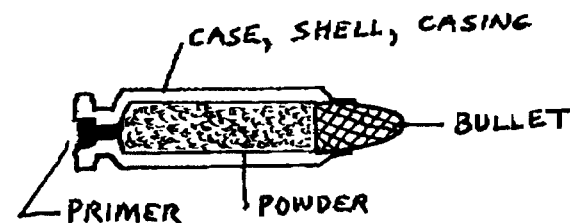


TECHNICAL INFORMATION

I have found that the more I know about the guns I handle and the ammunition they use, the more comfortable I am when using them. We also felt that the more we knew, the safer we would be, and safety is a high priority for us. Aside from that, guns and ammunition are expensive. Knowing the proper language helped us overcome our initial awkwardness when talking with salesmen. They generally tend to show off when dealing with women. I found this to have a side benefit, in that the salesmen would discuss guns and gun handling at great length with me, whom they assumed to be totally ignorant. Men buying guns were not given nearly as much information. I'm sure most of them were just as ignorant as me.

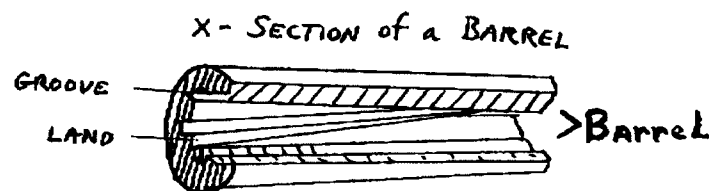
BALLISTICS

Ballistics is the study of the projectiles fired by guns.



CARTRIDGE The figure above shows a typical cartridge, made up of a brass shell or case, a powder charge, a primer, and a bullet. The whole thing is called a cartridge or round. A cartridge made for a shotgun is called a "shell." All guns are made in such a way that when the trigger is pulled, a pin called a FIRING PIN snaps forward and hits the cartridge primer. The PRIMER is filled with a substance that explodes on impact of the firing pin, sending a flame into the part of the cartridge that contains the powder. The POWDER burns very rapidly, building up a tremendous pressure. This high pressure dislodges the bullet from the mouth of the cartridge and drives it down the

barrel of the gun. The BULLET is the only part of the cartridge that leaves the barrel. Barrels on most handguns and rifles are RIFLED, that is, the insides of the barrels have GROOVES cut into them in a spiralling fashion, running the length of the barrel. (Most shotguns and muskets do not have rifled barrels.) As the bullet is pushed through the barrel, it is gripped by the grooves and by the barrel surfaces between the grooves, called LANDS. This grip on the bullet by the lands and grooves gives it a spin which tends to stabilize the bullet in flight.



There are two diameters to a barrel, the groove diameter and the land diameter. The groove diameter is larger, and is known as the BORE. Bullets are made as close to groove diameter as possible.

The bullet leaves the barrel moving very fast - anywhere from about 700 ft./sec. to about 4000 ft./sec., depending on the type of gun. The ENERGY of a bullet depends on the weight and the velocity, or speed, of the bullet. It is proportional to the weight of the bullet and to the square of its velocity. This means that if you

double the weight of the bullet, you double its energy. But if you double its velocity, you quadruple its energy.

Bullet weight is measured in grains (485 grains = 1 ounce) and energy is measured in foot pounds.

In general, the killing power, or stopping power of a cartridge is dependent on the energy: the greater the energy, the greater the killing power. It also has a

lot to do with other factors, especially the construction of the bullet. A bullet can be constructed so that if the energy is strong enough it can smash through a large car engine. It can also be constructed so that even if it were fired with the same energy, it would explode on impact and penetrate only a short distance into whatever was being

hit. The difference has to do with how soft or hard the metal is that the bullet is made out of, whether it has a JACKET or not (encased by another metal), and whether or not its tip has been hollowed out. A bullet made out of soft lead, which is not jacketed, and has a hollow point, will MUSHROOM (spread) on impact, almost instantly. A bullet of high energy, fully jacketed and with a solid tip, could travel through the wall of one house into another house, killing a neighbor. Bullets are made with all sorts of combinations of the above characteristics, with varying penetrating abilities.



A few types of bullets:
(A) Round Nose; (B) Spire point; (C) Semi-Wadcutter; (D) Wadcutter; (E) Hollow Point Semi-Wadcutter.

CALIBER refers to diameter, either to the diameter of a particular bullet or to the diameter of the barrel of the gun.

English or American cartridges have calibers designated in hundredths or thousandths of an inch. [For example: .30 (meaning thirty caliber) or .30-06 (meaning thirty-ought-six caliber). These are both thirty caliber cartridges but are very different in terms of size, weight, and energy. The 06 designation identifies that particular cartridge as having been invented in 1906.] European calibers are expressed in millimeters, such as 9 mm. or 7.65 mm. (very popular handgun calibers, comparable to a .38 or .32 American handgun).

The caliber is the BORE diameter, the larger of the two diameters of the inside of a gun barrel. This is so that a gas tight seal can be formed in order to build enough pressure behind the bullet to propel it out of the barrel at a high rate of speed. Remember that caliber refers only to the diameter of the bullet and not to the dimensions of the cartridge case. In popular usage, the word caliber refers to the specific name of the particular cartridge, not to the diameter. But technically, caliber and diameter are the same.

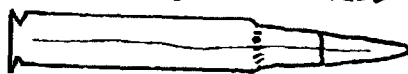
If you want to know what to expect from a particular cartridge, you can look up all the information you will need in a

Ballistics Table. The table will list all the cartridges made, their weights, energy, and velocity (velocity in a table refers to MUZZLE velocity, the velocity of the bullet as it leaves the gun). It will also tell you about TRAJECTORY.

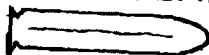
(Trajectory is the path the bullet follows after leaving the gun. Since gravity is being exerted on the bullet at all times, it travels in a slight arc gradually falling to earth. A cartridge fired at a target 200 yards away will hit slightly below where it would strike at 100 yards if you aimed at the same spot.) The Ballistics Table will tell you how you should adjust the sights of the gun to be accurate at 100 yards (information you are more likely to want to know about if you are using a rifle rather than a handgun.) You should be able to find a Ballistics Table in any large Gun Digest. Ask your local gun dealer or check the library.

VARIETY OF AMMUNITION Since there is a large variety of ammunition of the same caliber, how do you know what to buy? Not all cartridges of the same caliber are interchangeable. As a matter of fact, they seldom are. Cartridges that are not interchangeable have different names. Many rifle cartridges can be distinguished by having the years they were developed follow the caliber, e.g. 30-06 refers to 30 caliber Springfield cartridges developed in 1906. So 30-30 is another 30 caliber cartridge. They are very different looking, and are not interchangeable.

30-06 SPRINGFIELD



30 CARBINE



PROPER CALIBER In handguns, the .38, .38 special, and .357 magnum, all have the same bullet diameters, but the cartridges are not interchangeable. The .38 special cartridge is twice as powerful as the .38, and the .357 magnum is twice as powerful as the .38 special. Each of these guns is chambered to handle the "explosive" power of a specific cartridge. A .38 revolver is unable to absorb the power of a .38 special cartridge - or a .357 magnum cartridge. A .357 magnum cartridge can be chambered in some .38 special guns (it may fit), so be careful, especially if you are borrowing ammunition.

The proper caliber ammunition for your gun is engraved on the barrel. If for any reason you are unsure, ask for help. For example, an automatic that has 9 mm. Kurz engraved on the barrel is not referring to the standard 9 mm. automatic cartridge at all. Kurz means "short" in German and refers specifically to the American .380, which is equivalent to the European 9 mm. Kurz.

.22 Ammunition comes in Short (S), Long (L), and Long Rifle (LR). Most people buy long rifle, the most powerful of the 22's other than 22 Magnum. Be sure your gun is chambered for it before you buy it. One good reason to learn to shoot with a .22 is that the ammunition is less expensive.

RELOADS For target practice buy the cheapest ammunition possible for your gun. .38

Special ammunition is a very popular caliber, and can frequently be obtained as RELOADS (used casing, reloaded). This is usually done by a gun enthusiast who contracts with local gun stores. There is a higher incidence of MISFIRING (cartridge will not fire) in reloads than in factory loaded ammunition, so check on the reliability of the person reloading for you. If you are dealing with an established gun store, they have already done the checking, so you needn't worry. Our biggest problem with reloads has been that sometimes they don't chamber properly (they fit too tight in the chamber) and the cylinder won't revolve. We return them for replacements. Learning to reload is not difficult, but the initial cost for supplies and equipment is expensive. Working collectively cuts down on the expense, and can mean a big savings if you plan to do a lot of shooting. Army surplus ammunition is cheap and the quality is good. However, the caliber variety is limited. Get it if you can.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS For self-defense purposes outside the home, we recommend a soft lead, non-jacketed type cartridge, hollow point if it is available. These bullets are very lethal, and will probably kill anyone they hit.

Our position, as I see it, is this: As women, we know we are not instinctive killers, but if we have to shoot to protect our lives and the lives of other women, we will. I'm thinking about my old civil rights days, and how we used to sit around singing "We Shall Overcome." Remember the verse "We are not afraid"? That was not the truth. We were terrified. I'm not so terrified any more. I know how to use a gun and I will. We recommend the hollow point cartridge because if you miss your target, it cannot pass through a wall and injure someone you did not intend to shoot. It also lessens ricochet. Self defense shooting is usually very close range. A fully jacketed bullet could pass through your attacker into someone else. Each one of us has decided on our own what kind of ammunition to use.

For inside the house, we recommend what is called "Shellshot," a buckshot type cartridge made

to fit .38 special and .357 magnum revolvers. It is probably not accurate beyond 10 or 15 feet, and probably will not kill, but should stop even the most determined rapist. You can get it at your local gun store. The advantages of "shellshot" are that it cannot pass through walls, that its 'spread' makes accuracy less necessary, and that it cannot be traced.

COST OF AMMUNITION

The cost of ammunition runs about like this for a box of 50.

| For Revolvers: | | For Automatics: | |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------|
| .22 | 88¢ - \$1.20 | .25 | \$4 |
| .38 | \$7 - \$8 | .32 | \$4 |
| .38 Special | \$7 - \$9 | .380 | \$7.50 |
| .357 Magnum | \$9 - \$10 | 9 mm. | \$8.50 |
| Shell Shot | \$1.60/box of 6 | | |

Army surplus ammunition and reloads will be cheaper than the above estimates.

You will run across the words rim fire (RF) and center fire (CF) frequently when reading ballistics tables. These designations refer to the location on the cartridge where the firing pin must strike in order to activate the primer, rim being along the rim of the cartridge, and center being in the center. A gun calibrated for rim fire ammunition cannot fire center fire ammunition. Your gun is calibrated for one or the other.

HANDGUNS

Handguns are definitely short-range weapons. For most people, 25 yards would be a maximum range in terms of reliability. Initially, we would recommend shooting at 15 yards or less. If you are using a snub nose .38, even 15 yards can be difficult. With practice, you should become competent quickly.

Basically, handguns come in two kinds, REVOLVERS and Automatics or Pistols. A revolver is like what the cowgirls used to carry. The picture on Page 14 shows a revolver with a 4 or 6-inch barrel. The same gun having only a 2-inch barrel would be called a SNUB-NOSE. A model frequently chosen by detectives, as they are easily concealed - usually in a shoulder holster or in a small inside-the-pants or belt holster.

The revolver has a CYLINDER, which usually swings out and which usually has five or six

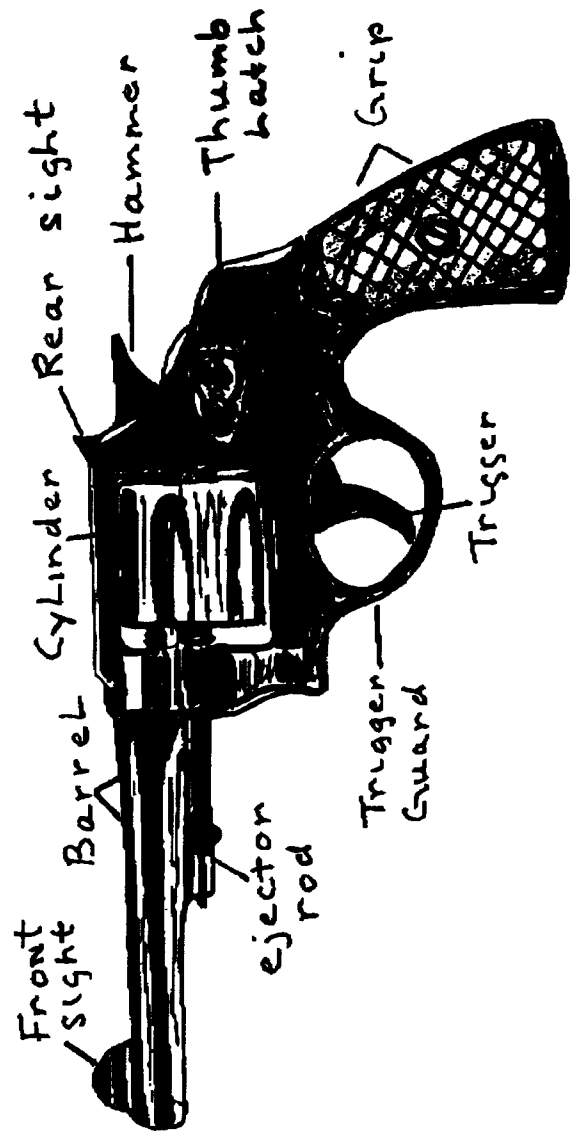
CHAMBERS into which cartridges fit. As the cylinder revolves, one chamber at a time lines up with the barrel, and the cartridge can then be fired. Pulling the trigger lines up the cartridge by rotating the cylinder to the proper position, and causes the hammer to spring forward, firing the round. Thus, the emergence of REVOLVER as the name of this type of gun. After you fire all the cartridges, you must swing the cylinder out, eject the empty cases, and load the chambers with new cartridges.

Newer revolvers can be fired in two ways, SINGLE ACTION and DOUBLE ACTION. In order to fire single action, you have to cock the gun first. You pull the hammer back with your thumb until you feel it click into place and it doesn't snap back when you let go of it. To fire the gun, you can now give a slight squeeze on the trigger and it will go off. That is single action firing. Double action is simply squeezing the trigger until the gun fires. The difference is that for single action you cock the gun before firing, and for double action you don't. We tend to prefer guns that can be fired double action as well as single action, because in a life-threatening situation, you might not have time to get your thumb up there to cock it.

The other kind of handgun is the AUTOMATIC Automatic or Pistol. Automatic refers to the action of the SLIDE which encloses the barrel of the pistol. When a shot is fired, some of the energy coming from the spent cartridge is used to force the slide back, ejecting the spent casing, chambering a new round, and cocking the hammer, all in a flash. So once the first round is fired, the gun is automatically cocked for each successive round. The pistol which is cocked automatically like this can be fired by squeezing the trigger with only a small amount of pressure. The first round must be chambered manually. Automatics have removable clips that contain anywhere from 5 to 14 rounds. If you want an automatic, it is best to get a good one - cheap ones are especially likely to jam on you.

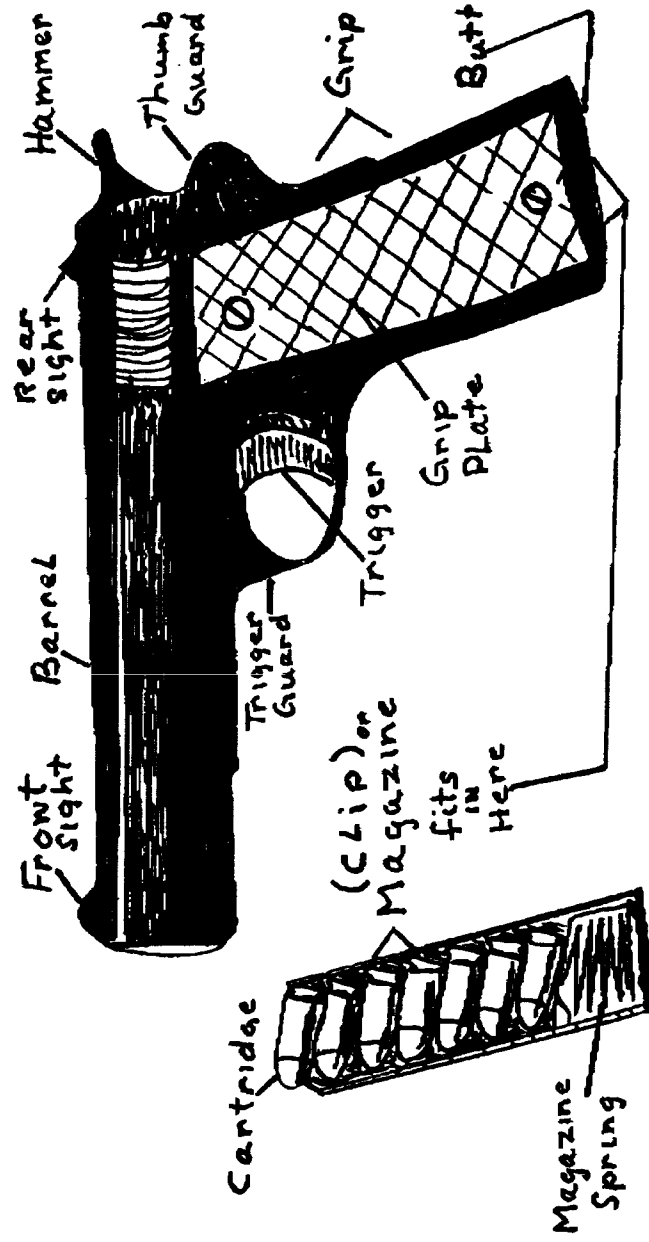
What's the best for you, a revolver or an automatic? That's hard to say. VS. Automatics and revolvers each have their advantages. The automatic has greater fire power (more shots can be fired quickly). Each cartridge has to go from the magazine up a ramp into the chamber. It is this mechanism that causes jamming to sometimes happen. Even the best quality larger caliber automatic will occasionally jam. With practice, a cartridge which

Revolver



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Automatic or Pistol



13

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is jammed can be quickly corrected. Jamming is especially likely to happen if soft point ammunition is used, where the soft lead tip may catch on the ramp. Also, if you have a misfire (the cartridge does not go off) the slide must be pulled back by hand to clear the unfired cartridge and chamber a fresh one. This takes valuable time in a self-defense situation.

If you have a misfire with a revolver, you simply pull the trigger again, which will rotate the next cartridge in line with the barrel. (Actually, with modern commercial ammunition, misfires are extremely rare.) The revolver, on the other hand, takes longer to reload. With an automatic, you can even carry a spare loaded clip. So an automatic has greater firepower; a revolver has slightly better reliability. (The military uses automatics; the police usually use revolvers.)

Automatics are flatter than revolvers, hence are more concealable. But any pistol of caliber .380 or more is probably heavier than a .38 snub nose revolver. Firing automatics usually takes a little more getting used to than revolvers, and automatics are a little more difficult to operate in that it is possible (if you aren't holding the gun safely) to get cut by the slide when it moves back.

In deciding which handguns we would buy, our considerations were these: safety, stopping power, cost, size, and weight.

SAFETY: Some guns are not safe in that they cannot withstand the load they are supposed to be chambered for. These cheap guns are called "Saturday Night Specials." It is unclear to me exactly what constitutes a Saturday Night Special, but this much I know: they are cheap, unreliable, poorly built, and can explode in your hand when fired, or else jam and not fire at all. Before you buy a gun check a reliable source to see if the brand is a good one. Just because a gun is cheap does not mean it is unsafe, nor does being expensive necessarily make it safe. Check first. Don't be talked into buying until you know. You can always come back. Be suspicious of a "this is a chance of a lifetime" deal.

There are other guns we consider to be unsafe and impractical for self-defense purposes because the cylinder (in a revolver) does not swing out and so it is difficult to see whether they are loaded or not. They also cannot be loaded very rapidly.

Poorly constructed automatics usually cost a little more than poorly constructed revolvers.

STOPPING POWER: Anything below a .38 special revolver or .380 automatic may not stop a rapist enraged that you are pulling a gun on him. In other words, .22's, .32's, and .25's are not recommended for self-defense. There are some .22 magnums available which are powerful enough to be considered safe by our standards in terms of their stopping power.

COST: Guns of the quality and caliber we recommend for self-defense cost anywhere from around \$100 to \$160. Low caliber guns to be used for target practice cost from about \$70 to \$150. Prices are rising rapidly, so these are the best estimates we have now.

SIZE AND WEIGHT: This is a consideration if you plan to carry a gun (laws vary, locality to locality). Small size, light weight guns are great to carry. However, the lighter the gun, the greater the recoil; and the shorter the barrel, the less accuracy possible. Most women have chosen a light, small, .38 special snub nose revolver. Some have chosen heavier model revolvers or automatics.

On the following pages are some brand names and models of handguns we feel are worth mentioning. There are, in actuality, dozens of models of each type of handgun. For example, Smith & Wesson and Colt each make five or six different models of snub nose .38 special alone. The models we chose to list are only representatives of these types. If you should buy a gun from one of the companies we mention you will be buying a quality gun.



| BRAND NAMES | MODELS |
|---|---|
| <p>STURM, RUGER & CO.</p> <p>Not considered to be in the same league as Smith & Wesson or Colt, but tests have shown that guns manufactured by this company are remarkably reliable and accurate. They are simply designed so maintenance is considered to be lower than average.</p> | <p>Standard or Target Automatic Caliber: 22 LR, 9 shot magazine Barrel: 6 or 4 3/4 in. Weight: 36 oz. Price \$66-\$80 The target model comes with movable sights and is the more expensive of the prices quoted.</p> <p>Security Six Revolver Caliber: 38 Special, 6 shot Barrel: 2 3/4 or 4 in. Weight: 33 1/2 oz. Price \$110</p> |
| <p>SMITH AND WESSON</p> <p>Any gun made by Smith and Wesson is of excellent quality.</p> | <p>Chiefs Special Revolver Caliber: 38 Special, 5 shot Barrel: 2 or 3 in. Weight: 19 oz. Price \$105</p> <p>Bodyguard Model 38 Revolver Caliber: 38 Special, 5 shot Barrel: 2 in. Weight: 14 1/2 oz. Price \$108</p> <p>Smith and Wesson also makes some excellent target models, around \$140.</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>HI-STANDARD</p> <p>Most widely used target pistols made. Quality is excellent. \$120-\$150.</p> | |
| <p>BROWNING</p> <p>Probably the finest quality target automatics made. Too expensive for our tastes. Most models over \$200.</p> | |
| <p>CHARTER ARMS</p> <p>Makes the least expensive quality snub nose .38 special revolver on the market. Small and light.</p> | <p>Undercover Revolver Caliber: 38 Special, 5 shot Barrel: 2 or 3 in. Weight: 16 oz. Price \$97</p> |
| <p>COLT</p> <p>Generally accepted as the finest quality American revolvers made. Smooth, reliable, and expensive.</p> | <p>Detective Special Revolver Caliber: 38 Special, 6 shot Barrel: 2 in. Weight: 22 oz. Price \$150</p> <p>Cobra Revolver Caliber: 38 Special, 6 shot Barrel: 2 or 3 in. Weight: 16 oz. Price \$150</p> <p>Agent Revolver Caliber: 38 Special, 6 shot Barrel: 2 or 3 in. Weight: 14 oz. Price \$150</p> |

For those who especially love target shooting, the Colt 45 ACP pistol is really fine if you can afford it. The Colt 45 ACP can be a good investment because it is the handgun used by the military and therefore there is a plentiful supply of army surplus ammunition. The gun will cost from \$170 up.

Smith and Wesson, Colt, and Browning all have discontinued the production of small 25 caliber pocket automatics. They can still be found in good condition used. These small handguns are very popular because of their small size and light weight. Even the Colt, which is considered the finest pocket automatic made, jams easily. If you wish to purchase a small pocket automatic, one chambered for 22 LR (long rifle) might be a better bet. The energy behind a 22 LR is far superior to anything a 25 can deliver. As far as we know, there are no small pocket automatics around which can deliver the fire power and reliability of a quality snub nose 38 special revolver. The one redeeming feature of the pocket automatic is its lightness and concealability.

We have only described American made guns. The reason is simply that we had more information about them. There are, of course, some excellent quality foreign made guns.



BUYING YOUR GUN

Once you have decided what you want in a gun and what type to buy, you have two decisions to make: where to get it and whether to buy it new or used.

WHERE New guns can be bought in gun stores, gun departments of some sporting goods stores, and gun sections of some department stores (e.g., Sears, Wards). Department stores and sporting goods stores usually carry mostly hunting guns and equipment, which usually means rifles and not handguns. Used guns can be gotten in gun stores, gun shows, pawn shops, classified ads, and ads at gun clubs.

We have only bought new guns, and we got these at gun stores. Partly this was because we knew very little and depended largely on the advice of salespeople. We didn't feel able to judge the quality of a used gun, and a malfunctioning gun seems practically useless and even dangerous. An unreliable gun is in many ways worse than no weapon at all in a self-defense situation.

USED However, we now know of women who have gotten good used handguns from gun stores. So we **GUNS** offer the following advice on buying a used gun.

Unless you feel pretty confident about judging a gun's condition we guess that the two best places to buy a used gun are gun stores and gun clubs. In our experience, pawn shops are about the most expensive place to buy a gun and the guns there are not in good condition. A gun store will probably guarantee the gun. We don't know anything about gun shows, but have been told the prices there are high. We have been advised that used automatics may be less reliable than used revolvers. (More can go wrong with a badly cared for automatic.) A target shooting model is likely to have been used a lot and hence is not a good bet.

Try to get a gun in nearly new condition. Check for barrel wear. In a new barrel the rifling is perfectly sharp and shiny. In a used barrel, there may be pitting and corrosion, and the rifling may not be sharp.

Check the external finish. Usually a gun well cared for on the outside will be in fine shape on the inside. Check to make sure that everything works. Take a look at the hole through which the

firing pin protrudes. If it is oval, or not round, this indicates a lot of wear.

When looking at a revolver, check the clearance between cylinder and barrel, and check the amount of play when you push the cylinder forward and backward and when you try to rotate it. Some clearance and play (jiggle) is normal, but it should not be excessive. Also, look at the front of the cylinder - dark eroded rings around the chambers are a sign of much wear.

Since good handguns in good condition go up in value, you aren't likely to save a lot of money buying a used gun. And you won't have much choice of model or make since there aren't many for sale. (People don't tend to sell their handguns.) So, if you know exactly what you want, you may have to wait a while before you find it used. But stores do occasionally have good used handguns at reasonable prices, so ask. Unless you ask to see used guns they probably won't offer to show them to you.

Generally, we have found that reputable gun stores are honest and helpful. We were intimidated and scared the first times we went in, mostly because we thought of buying guns as somehow illegal and suspect. Nothing could be further from the truth. Now we realize that gun stores are like any other sport or hobby shop. Remember - guns are legal, shooting is a respectable and legitimate sport. Most gun store people love guns and want everybody to have them, use them, and enjoy them. They will be delighted to see you. They love to answer questions, and give advice. You probably won't be the only woman in the store - lots of handguns are now being sold to women. And, most men who work in gun stores take a (very paternal and slightly amused) pleasure in selling guns to women.

Most gun stores advertise in the yellow pages. You can call and ask questions about prices and stock. Find a store with a large selection and preferably with a gunsmith. Guns, like any machines and tools, need repairs and adjustments. We have had minor problems even with expensive, new guns. A good gunstore will make free repairs on guns they sell. And gunsmiths are a marvelous source of advice.

Go to a few stores. Get a feel of the store; check the selection; talk to the salespeople. Compare advice. (Especially if you are interested in used guns - check prices in several stores.) Buy, if possible, where you like the store and trust the salespeople. If you practice a lot you will come

back to the store often - for advice and supplies. The people in the store will get to know you. So pick a store where you feel comfortable.

Most gun stores carry the major U.S. brands STOCK and selected imports. However, they rarely carry all models of each brand and rarely have all makes and models in stock. Handguns are relatively scarce now; the demand far exceeds the supply. So prices are rising rapidly. Guns sell quickly. In our experience stores get shipments in and sell them in a few days or weeks. Thus, even big stores may not have the gun you want when you go there. Usually the salesperson will show what they have in stock. You will probably have to ask about other models not presently in the store. Go to several stores if possible to see what is available. Ask about the differences in models, what the salesperson recommends and why. Sometimes new stock will arrive in a few days; sometimes it takes weeks. If you really know exactly what you want, ask to put down a deposit - sometimes the guns are sold out before they arrive in the store.

Besides guns, big gunstores carry all WHAT A GUN the equipment and accessories that go STORE HAS with the sports of target shooting and hunting - ammunition, cleaning kits, holsters, books, ear plugs, carrying cases, etc. What you need to buy partly depends on why you want your gun.

You will need to buy some ammunition. Probably shellshot (huckshot) for around the house, regular ammunition, and reloads (if possible) if you intend to practice.

You should buy a cleaning kit. Even if you only fire your gun a few times, you need to clean it each time, and you should give it a periodic cleaning to keep it in good condition. Remember, you are probably buying your gun to save your life if you should need it. A gun in bad condition is useless. It is possible to buy the parts of a kit separately, but you probably won't save any money that way.

Guns are loud. Get something for your ears. Stores sell relatively expensive ear phones. These may not be necessary. A good paid of ear plugs will work well for most people. Stereo headphones, if you have them, are a helpful addition.

If you intend to carry your gun on you, get a holster of some sort. It's real dangerous to stick a loaded gun in your belt or pocket. When it drops you can dent the sights and there is a possibility that the gun may fire on impact if the hammer is

struck forcibly. Guns carried in a purse are easily taken from you. Never carry your gun in something that can be snatched away. Unfortunately, you really can't tell the most comfortable way to carry your gun until you try it. So try to get a feel for the holster in the store. Salespeople know why we want a holster and they don't ask questions. So just tell them that you want to see holsters - shoulder and belt ones. You will need a holster if you want to take your gun camping with you, or wear it around your home.

MECHANICS In most states you can't simply pay and walk out with your gun the same day.
OF BUYING Usually you need to put down a deposit.
A HANDGUN fill out lots of forms, and then wait a period of time (about a week) while the police run a check to make sure that you don't violate the local regulations (e.g., that you aren't a felon). Regulations and procedures vary from state to state and county to county. A phone call to a gun store will tell you exactly what you have to do. (Ask things like what you have to bring with you in the way of ID.) If local regulations seem too restrictive, try the next county - it may be quicker and easier. Generally, the salespeople don't like the forms and regulations any more than you do. They are pretty hostile to any attempt to limit the sale of guns.

In some areas the procedure in buying a gun from an individual is different than from a store. For example, if you buy a gun from a friend you may not have to fill out the forms and go through a police check - all you may need is a bill of sale. You may be required to know the person who sells you the gun.

Generally, there are less stringent requirements for buying non-concealable firearms like rifles and shotguns.



CARE OF YOUR GUN

Guns are pretty sturdy, but they do need care. Obviously you want to avoid dropping a firearm on the sidewalk, or using it as a substitute for a hammer (except, possibly, should you need to use it on the soft head of a foolhardy would-be attacker). If somehow your gun does get thrown around, you will need to check it, or have a gunsmith check it afterwards to be sure it still works properly. But actually the way most guns get ruined is by rust. So gun care consists mainly of protecting guns, inside and out, from rust.

The "blue" finish on the outside of "OUTSIDES" most guns will be damaged just by handling, unless you polish it. It's handy to keep a slightly oiled diaper, bandana, or other soft cloth around to wipe fingerprints, sweat, skin oils, and other grime off your gun's outsides after handling. Every time. Or you can use a silicone-treated cloth sold specifically for this purpose.

It's not a good idea to store a gun in a leather holster, because leather "sweats" and can cause rust. Store guns so they can breathe. And, of course, protect them from scratches and nicks.

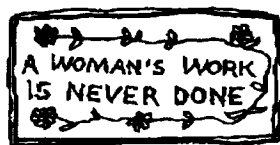
The insides of guns can also rust, "INSIDES" especially as a result of being fired and then not cleaned promptly (within a day or two). The deposits left from shooting draw moisture from the air which corrodes the metal, regardless of what the ammunition manufacturers say. To clean your gun, you need a bore solvent, gun oil, cleaning patches (they're just little pieces of flannel, so if you shoot a lot you can save money by making your own) and a cleaning rod with various attachments. All these items come in kits for various caliber guns, or you can buy the items you need separately. The whole thing costs about \$5, and you can get it in the same places you can get guns, as well as, occasionally, in discount department stores.

If you buy a kit, look inside it to see if the solvent or oil has leaked all over everything - which is pretty common. You might as well get a kit that isn't a mess, and where the patches aren't all soggy and useless. And then, when you take the kit home, take the oil and solvent out and keep them upright somewhere.

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The kits have directions inside that are fairly clear. If you buy the equipment separately or if you have any questions, you can ask the gun store folks, even a store where you didn't ever buy anything, and they're usually glad to help. (Probably that's because they enjoy being reminded they know things you don't know.)

Even if you don't fire your gun for a long time, but just keep it (or carry it) around, you probably should give it a cleaning every now and then anyhow, just to be sure it's protected from dirt and general moisture, particularly in a damp climate. A well maintained gun maintains its financial value and is always ready to save your life. A rusted or lint-clogged gun simply may not work when the time comes that you need it, and even if it does work, firing it will probably damage the gun.



SAFETY

HANDLING GUNS Remember that the reason for owning a gun is to make your life safer.

If you are going to be serious about protecting yourself you have to be serious about safety in how you handle your gun and in where you keep it.

The basic habits to form are:

- 1) ALWAYS KNOW WHETHER THE GUN IS LOADED, and
- 2) NEVER POINT A GUN, LOADED OR UNLOADED, AT ANYONE OR ANYTHING YOU DO NOT WANT TO DESTROY. (This includes what is near and behind what you aim at. Bullets will go through some things and ricochet off others. Also, you might just miss your target.)

If you don't know how to check whether a gun is loaded, find out before you pick it up. It's not always obvious. For example, even if the ammunition clip has been removed from an automatic, there can still be a cartridge already chambered, so that if you pull the trigger it will fire.

When you pick up a gun or someone hands it to you, immediately check for yourself that it is unloaded, even if you already saw someone else check it. It is never silly or bad manners to be cautious around deadly weapons.

It is customary for safety reasons when you pass a gun to someone else to have the gun's chamber open (if that's possible with the particular gun.)

It's a good rule when looking at a gun (or dry firing or cleaning or showing it to a friend, etc.) to keep all ammunition in a different room, especially if more than one person is handling the gun.

PROPER AMMUNITION When you load a gun, be certain that the ammunition you use is meant for that particular gun. Just because it "fits" doesn't make it appropriate or safe to fire it. See the ballistics section for an explanation of this important point. If you are in any doubt, call a reputable gun store and ask.

SAFETY CONSCIOUSNESS It's hard to know how to say strongly enough that all these rules are always important, even if you're new at all this and have a hard time remembering everything, and even if you're an old hand at all this and guns don't seem so scary any more. A friend tells how she was practicing dry firing at the knobs on her kitchen cabinets. While she went to answer the phone, her roommate cleared

the table, neatly replacing the ammunition in the revolver. A moment later when our friend came back, she found her gun where she had left it, picked it up, and destroyed in an instant a cabinet and a lot of what was in it. It was fortunate the bullet didn't go through the wall and kill someone in the next apartment. And she shook for a long time thinking, what if she had carelessly - or "playfully" - pointed the gun at her roommate instead... Both these women learned right then the importance of super-safety consciousness. And they and we urge you to remember why every safety rule is important, and make sure your friends remember too.

At this point it may sound like it's just too dangerous to own a gun. That's what happens when you make a strong case for safety rules. But we strongly feel that IF YOU DO OBSERVE SAFETY RULES, IT IS VERY MUCH LESS DANGEROUS TO HAVE A GUN AROUND THAN NOT TO HAVE ONE. For every story of an injury caused by a gun, we all know a hundred stories of women who were terrorized, hurt, or killed because they didn't have guns.

Many of us think of guns the way we think of cars. We may not really like them, we know that they kill (cars, actually, far more so than guns), but still they can become part of our lives - contributing to our survival, our sense of control and comfort. And we try to keep these dangerous possessions as safe as possible by using them with clear heads and following safety rules.

Another thing. A car's brakes can slip, it can roll over somebody all by itself. Guns aren't made like that - the firing pin cannot set off the primer unless you pull the trigger. There just isn't any way it can shoot at you as you walk past your dresser drawer.

Which brings us to the question of where to keep guns. Many women have been raped, robbed, and killed in their own homes.

For this reason, some women have chosen to wear their guns while at home. But when guns are "put away," as they commonly are, there are many considerations in deciding where to keep them and whether or not to keep them loaded. In making this decision for yourself about your own gun, think always about how quickly you can get to it and have it ready when you need it. But also think about whether a roommate or a guest might stumble upon it while looking to borrow a pencil in your desk drawer, or socks from your dresser. Think about whether a child (yours, your child's friend, your friend's child) might happen to find it. Can everyone who might

find it be told you have it and be trusted either not to handle it or to handle it safely? The issues are different for everybody. For one person it can be okay to leave a loaded gun anywhere in her house. For another a high closet shelf might make sense. Or you might want to look into the inexpensive locking devices on the market that keep the trigger from being fired by holding it in position within the trigger guard. If you do not have a dog to warn you if an intruder enters your home while you're asleep, you will not want to leave your gun where the intruder can find it and use it against you.

About children. Think the way you do about yourself. Certainly a gun could kill them - but one reason to have a gun is to protect them. And if you can make them and their friends safe around medicines in your house and around chemicals you might have under your sink, and around your gas and electric appliances and tools, surely you can make them safe around your gun with some careful thought.

There is also a different sort of safety EARPLUGS point connected with firing guns. Firearms are loud, particularly the higher calibers, and exposure to this noise over a period of time will damage your ears. Firing at a shooting range means exposure to everyone else's noise as well as your own. So you must protect your ears. Sporting goods stores sell headsets which are very effective, but usually expensive. Earplugs (there are many kinds, at sporting goods stores and sometimes drug stores) may also do the job for you, and much more cheaply, especially if you are not planning to do a lot of shooting. But be careful. If you experience any, even temporary, hearing loss or "ringing" in your ears after shooting, with whatever protection you use, you are in danger of these effects becoming permanent and you must find a way either to increase your protection or to decrease the noise. Some people's ears are more sensitive than others', and potential deafness is nothing to fool around with, so pay attention to what your body tells you.

Finally, guns are expensive, so, like TV's and stereos, they get stolen. You might think about this when you're deciding who you will and won't tell that you own a gun and where you keep it.

LEARNING TO SHOOT

WHY We firmly believe that if you have a gun you should learn to use it. Think about what you want the weapon for and what you need to learn to be able to do what you want. Even if you only intend to keep it in your dresser drawer to be used when someone breaks into your house, you still need to learn to aim, fire, and control it. A few of us were scared of our guns and regarded them as alien rather than the friends and comforts that they are. It wasn't clear that in a tense situation we would have been able to overcome that fear of the unknown to fire them. A few times at the gun range took away that strangeness - the guns became something that we understood, controlled and loved. And, practically, even a new gun may not work properly. You need to fire it to find out if, for example, the cylinder sticks, the sights are wrong. It is important to become familiar with your gun. For example, I have found that automatics take some getting used to.

At the range, a few of us were scared by the first shot: the noise, the recoil, the power, and the knowledge of the potential to kill in what we just did. For a few of us it took a lot of courage to fire the second shot. Others of us were less scared. (Oddly enough, those of us who were the most scared at first are now addicted to target shooting.)

You bought your gun for protection. It can't help you if you won't use it. Don't take the chance of being paralyzed by fear and uncertainty at the crucial moment. Don't have a gun if you can't or won't use it. The best way to start to find out whether you can is to learn to shoot. Once the mystery is gone, a gun will probably seem like an integral and pleasant part of your life. No one really knows if she will really be able to shoot someone if she has to - but pulling a loaded gun and not being prepared to follow through is worse and more dangerous than not having a gun at all.

If you have a woman friend who can teach you, you are lucky. Many women don't. That is why we are writing this pamphlet.

FINDING A TEACHER We have lately found, to our surprise, that we do indeed know women who can shoot; but they never told us and we never asked. If you feel comfortable about it, ask your friends. You may be

surprised to find that your Aunt Sally or your best friend is a sharpshooter.

If no one you know can teach you, try to find a friend who also wants to learn and do it together. While it is perfectly possible to learn by yourself, because of our initial unfamiliarity with the world of guns it was nice to have company. Besides, it's just more helpful and fun to do things with other women.

FINDING A PLACE In some areas it may seem somewhat of a hassle to find out where you can legally and safely go to shoot. We have all heard stories about simply going out into the woods and setting up a target. Actually this isn't so possible in most areas - it's illegal and I think unsafe. I want to be sure that I'm not accidentally going to hurt another woman or a deer on the other side of that tree, not to mention the tree. Unless you know of a friend with land in the country where it is safe and legal to fire a gun, you may have to do what we did - go to a gun range.

Ask your friendly gun store where the local ranges are, how to use them, what they cost. (Gun stores want you to use your gun. You may really love it, become addicted, and buy more guns. And every time you fire it that means more ammunition sales for them.) Ask them if they know anyone who teaches classes. Sometimes local Junior Colleges teach shooting, especially if they offer degrees in police training. Often policemen enjoy (!) teaching women to shoot. Although most police are poor shots, seldom practice and certainly cannot teach you, in most places you can find some qualified policeman who teaches short courses on using handguns for self-defense for women.

If finding a teacher doesn't seem possible or acceptable, we have found that it is perfectly possible to learn and teach ourselves with the aid of a few good books and by asking advice from the gun store and other shooters at the range, and by watching and helping each other. Most male gun lovers adore helping beginners, even women. Don't be hesitant to ask the man next to you for advice. While there is, of course, some patronizing from men, we have found that it is less than we expected. And it decreases as they realize you are serious, coming often to the range, and getting to be a better shot than they are. Men tend to 'respect' women with guns and a knowledge of how to use them. After all, isn't that one of the reasons to get a gun?

DRY FIRING Before firing your gun, you may want to read a little more than this pamphlet. (We wrote this in the hope that if it was all you had, you could learn to shoot from it. But obviously this is just the bare essentials.) You may also want to practice dry firing (firing without ammunition) to get a feel for your gun and to practice aiming. Dry firing is perfectly safe for any center fire gun. **DO NOT DRY FIRE A .22 OR ANY OTHER HAND-GUN THAT USES RIM FIRE AMMUNITION.** If you do, you can ruin your firing pin by hitting it on the edge of the cylinder. Center fire cartridges have the primer located in the center of the base and the firing pin strikes the cartridge in the center. Rim fire cartridges have the primer within a thin rim about the base of the cartridge and the firing pin hits the cartridge on or toward the outside rim. Hence in an unloaded rim-fire gun, if the firing pin moves a fraction of an inch it can hit against the gun and become damaged. That's why it is not a good practice to dry fire a rim-fire gun. (Most .22's are rim fire. Most other guns aren't.)

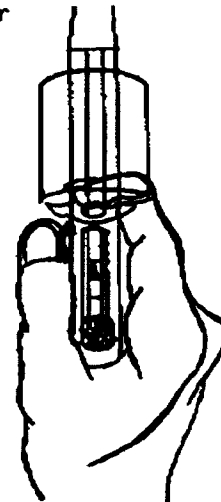
EXPECTATIONS Now a few words about learning to shoot. From our experience, reactions and expectations vary greatly. Some of us wanted to hit the bull's-eye the first time, and others of us were pleased simply to get the bullets on the target. Some of us had no fears about firing and handling guns. Some of us develop manual skills easily. However, some of us were afraid of guns and have trouble (or think we do) in manual skills. Some of us were hesitant and got momentarily discouraged learning to shoot. What happened the first time varied a lot. Some of us had trouble with the recoil. Some of us hit the target and some of us didn't. Different things discouraged, disappointed and elated us. But we all came to the realization that being a competent shot with a handgun is easy. All it takes is enough practice and patience. Any woman can. Learning to shoot is like learning any other skill - some people take longer than others. But unlike many other skills, being able to handle a gun gives you an incredible sense of control over your life and pride in being able to use a powerful weapon.

Don't have unreasonable expectations. First, it is impossible to hold a handgun still. You will always move your hand a little. Gripping too tight in an effort to steady your gun will only make the tremble worse. Second, don't expect to be very accurate with a handgun, especially if you are shooting long distances, double action, or with a

snub nose. Accurate double action shooting can't really be done at distances over 20 to 25 yards.

HOLDING YOUR GUN The manner in which a handgun is held is important for accuracy, and correct grip should be practiced until it becomes automatic. Spread your hand out to form a V,

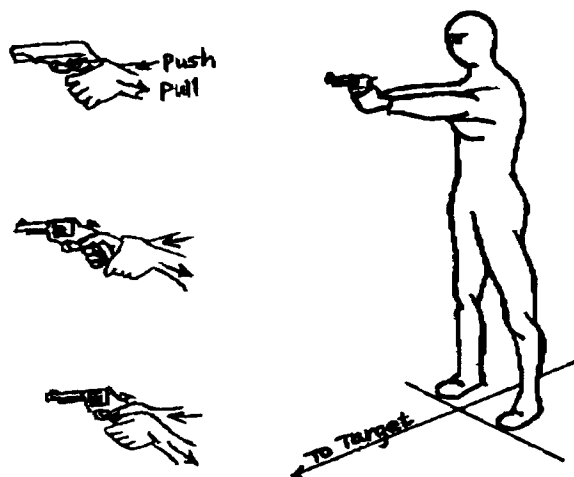
with your thumb on one side and four fingers on the other. With your other hand, lodge the gun solidly into the V, then close your fingers around it. The trigger finger should enter the trigger guard comfortably with the first joint of the finger resting on the trigger. The thumb should be applied against the frame on the opposite side, either on a level with the trigger finger or slanted slightly downward.



The grip on the gun should be high enough so that you have firm control and so that the revolver, especially, doesn't feel too heavy. Be sure that the gun is not slanted to one side or the other, as this will cause the shots to center low and to the side of the bull's-eye. Apply trigger pull directly backward, without any side pressure.

It is a very individual matter what makes a particular gun comfortable. I have small hands and yet I have found that I like a big grip and a heavy gun. Some of us are happier with light and small snub nose .38 specials. There are little metal pieces that can easily be added to the grip of most good guns that will increase the size. (Of course, if you have the money you can go to new grips, even custom made ones.) If you are going to be doing a lot of shooting, how the grip feels in your hand becomes very important.

SHOOTING STANCES There are many different shooting positions. For initial shooting, we suggest that you face the target and use two hands. Put your feet a comfortable distance apart, say 12-18 inches. Hold the handgun in the center of your body, arms extended forward, as shown in the picture on the next page. If you are right handed, the gun is held in the right hand, with the left in any of the three positions shown in the picture on the next page. Use whichever is comfortable. (Note: if you shoot automatics, the last position is probably the safest. In the first



two you are likely to have the supporting hand hurt by the slide when the gun fires.) Relax your legs. Stand straight. Try not to lean or tilt your head. Keep your arms firm but not rigid. Tensing too much will cause even more unsteadiness and moving of the gun. You can't hold a handgun perfectly motionless. The idea is to minimize wobble, not to stop it altogether.

After you are comfortable in the two-handed stance, you should try the one-handed side-stance. Face the target, then turn away about 45 degrees. Feet should be well apart but comfortable and shoulders level. Outstretch your arm and point the gun at a target, and close your eyes for a few seconds. When you open your eyes, if the gun is still pointed at the target your angle of stance is correct. If your gun has drifted right or left slightly, you should shift your position accordingly. (Shift your feet but don't twist your body.)

Be sure to raise the gun high enough so that you don't have to lower or tilt (cant) your head to align the sights. The arm should be straight, but not so rigid as to cause tremors. The wrist and elbow shouldn't "break" under recoil; rather, the arm should bend upward at the shoulder to absorb the recoil. Put the hand not holding the gun in your pocket or on your hip - don't let it hang free.

The positions described above are the usual target practice stances. In actual self-defense



situations you may want to rest your gun hand(s) on a steady surface such as a table, dresser, car. You may also be able to use the resting place for protection and concealment. For example, rather than stand in full view of your assailant, you may be safer and your aim more accurate if you kneel behind a large stuffed chair, resting your gun on the chair arms. In fact, it might be a good idea to take a survey of your house, noting the good cover points for self-defense. Remember how the FBI on TV always dash behind a car and rest their guns on the fenders? Well, this is about the only accurate and helpful gun information you can pick up from the media.

When holding the gun and stance are comfortable, you are then ready to try some aiming and dry firing. Single action handgunning (manually cocking the gun before pulling the trigger) is easier than double action (pulling the trigger without first cocking the gun), so you should start with it by cocking the hammer of your pistol or revolver.



As the sights line up on the bottom of the bull's-eye, as illustrated above, start your trigger pull slowly and deliberately. If the front sight moves away from the target, hold the trigger pressure but don't release any. As the sights return on target, reapply trigger pressure. You shouldn't know exactly when the gun will fire. Hold your breath while pulling the trigger, but no longer than 15 seconds. If you haven't fired by then, put the gun down and rest.

When you sight, get the sights in focus (closing one eye may help); the target should be slightly blurry. Most guns are sighted for a certain distance. This means that when shooting at a shorter or farther distance, you may have to sight higher or lower than the bottom edge of the bull's-eye. Also, many guns, even new ones, have the sights slightly off. And the ammunition can affect where the gun has to be sighted. All this variation means is that until you know your gun and your ammunition and your ability, don't expect to get a bull's-eye every time. E.G., if you are consistently hitting to the left it may be the gun sights or it may be how you

pull the trigger.

Now you are ready to fire your gun. Try **FIRING** not to jerk the trigger; acquire a smooth, though quick, backward pull. Next to good stance and aiming, a proper trigger pull is most important for accurate shooting. It takes time to get used to the feel and action of your gun. I find that I have to fire every new handgun many times before I am comfortable with how it handles.

Snub noses, light-weight, or large caliber guns have a considerable recoil. Recoil is the (backward) reaction of the gun to the (forward) force of the explosion which fires the bullet. (Remember Newton's Law about opposite and equal reactions?) You will feel less of a recoil if the caliber is small (since there is a less powerful explosion), or if the gun is heavy or the barrel long (since either of these will serve to absorb some of the force). Most of us were pretty astounded the first time we experienced the recoil of a snub nose .38 special. But you will get used to it surprisingly quickly. The recoil usually tends to send the end tip of the barrel up, so you may develop the bad habit of trying to compensate for this by lowering the gun the instant before you shoot. Another bad habit is to flinch in anticipation of the recoil. If you find yourself doing either of these, a good solution is to try firing your revolver with a few chambers empty. If you rotate the cylinder before you fire you won't know which are the empty chambers. If you don't know when an explosion (and hence recoil) will occur, you will lose the habit of anticipating it.

When you pull the trigger, the gun may not fire. This is very rare with modern ammunition. It could be either a **MISFIRE** (the cartridge doesn't fire) or a **HANGFIRE** (a delay of a few seconds between when the firing pin strikes the cartridge and when the cartridge fires). If this should happen, always keep the gun pointed in the direction of the target. Wait 10 seconds. Then you can either fire again or remove the unfired cartridge.

We will describe shooting at a range **THE RANGE** since that is all we have done. The ranges that we know of charge a fee of several dollars for each use. Ranges are usually associated with a gun club. If you plan to practice often, consider joining the club. The yearly dues may be less than the total of daily fees. In our experience, using a range is very simple. You pay the fee, sign in, and go to a target. You can usually stay as long as you like. Each range has a

set of safety regulations. Learn and follow them.

Here are some general safety rules, applicable and necessary anywhere you are shooting:

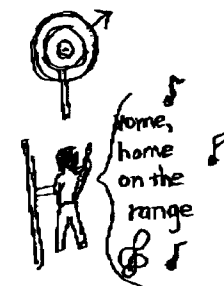
- 1) Never load your gun until you are at the exact place from which you intend to fire (your firing point).
- 2) Always unload your gun when not handling it.
- 3) Always unload your gun before leaving the firing point.
- 4) Never point your gun anywhere except at your target.
- 5) If the cylinder on your revolver swings out, always carry it that way. When the revolver is placed somewhere (and not holstered) always have the cylinder out.
- 6) With an automatic when you are not firing it, remove the clip and check the chamber for a bullet.
- 7) When not firing or carrying your handgun, leave it resting in a safe place in open view, unloaded and pointing toward the target.

If you're at a range there will be announced definite times when all shooting stops and you may enter the shooting area to remove or look at your target.

I have never seen women act silly or irresponsible at the range, so I hesitate to remind you how important it is to be careful and to obey the rules. However, I have been careless or forgetful. So I appreciate it when I am reminded to be more safety conscious. Men, however, are often incredibly dangerous in the casual way they handle their guns. Don't be afraid to tell them so, and if that doesn't work tell the person in charge.

Take a pair of earplugs. The noise adds to any fear and tension you may have, besides giving you an incredible headache. Cutting out the noise cuts out a lot of the problem.

There are many different methods for **STEP-BY-STEP** learning to shoot. The following is **METHOD** what seemed to have worked best for me. Most books tell you to make every shot count and to shoot very little (10-30 rounds) per time. While this makes sense, I found that I needed a few times at the range of not so careful shooting. There were too many things to



remember at first and I still wasn't comfortable with my gun. After I got accustomed to my gun I began to concentrate on improving my shooting one step at a time. First I would concentrate on aim, then on stance, etc.

I found that starting at a short distance helped. (I like 15 yards or less at first.) It is easy to see progress and to perfect accuracy. This is particularly important if you have a snub nose, since they aren't very accurate at distances greater than 25 yards.

I also started facing the target, using two hands and shooting single action. In other words, I believe in making it as easy as possible at first. When I can control that situation, then I make it a little harder: trying side stance, double action, etc.

Likewise with aiming. First, all I wanted was to get the bullets on the target. Then I tried to group them (not necessarily on the bull's-eye). Then I tried to place them where I wanted them. Then I moved to a further distance and started the sequence all over again.

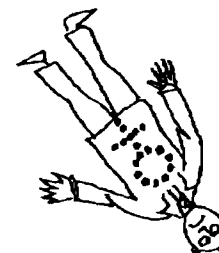
If you want your gun only for short-range self-defense, at home or outside, then a few times at the range should be sufficient. All you need to be able to do is place most of your bullets on the target at 15 yards. If you can do that, you can probably get them in an unwanted male in your house at 8 yards or less. Remember, handguns are strictly short-range guns. It is difficult without much practice to be accurate at over 10 yards, let alone hit any moving target.

You may want more. If for any reason you want to be a better shot, that will require a lot more time, practice, and money. It is easy to use up to \$4 worth of .38 ammunition in an hour. (Economics will soon lead you to 'making every shot count.') There are two ways to cut expenses for ammunition. One is to use reloads. You may be superlucky and know someone who loads their own. Or you may find a gun store that carries them. They usually cost about half the price of regular ammunition. The other way is to get a .22 for target practice. .22 Ammunition costs about 1/6 of regular .38's. So, if you intend to practice a lot, you will quickly make up the price of your .22. (I have a .22 which I love even more than my .38 special. I like its weight, precision and familiarity.) When I go to the range I take my .22. I usually shoot a higher caliber only enough to get used to the gun. It's my .22 that

really teaches me to shoot.

I want to close this section on learning to shoot with some thoughts on the expense. A good gun is expensive and getting more expensive all the time. The initial outlay is a lot: gun, cleaning kit, ammunition, range fees. However, unless shooting becomes a hobby, that is really all the money that you will have to spend on your gun for the rest of your life. Guns require no upkeep except a periodic cleaning. That is actually a pretty inexpensive way to save your life.

If you decide that you want to become proficient with handguns, regular target practice is necessary. If you join a gun club and practice primarily with a .22, each session at the range need not cost more than \$2 or \$3. With practice, you will be delighted by the continual progress, the feeling of losing yourself in the concentration, the joy of feeling at one with your gun, and the knowledge that you, a woman, are superior to most men with a lethal weapon.



THE LAW

When I first thought about buying myself a gun, I imagined there would be all kinds of laws preventing me from getting one legally or keeping it in a handy place where it would be most comforting and useful. It turned out that local laws here didn't make it very hard to buy and own a gun. And although it is a misdemeanor to carry a concealed firearm, the chances of being searched by an official pig seem less than those of being attacked by a rapist. Of course, you wouldn't want to carry your gun when you expect to be in a place where police search is likely, like at a lesbian bar or at a political demonstration, or if you think you may be suspected of shoplifting.

LAWS VARY.
CHECK YOUR LOCAL
GUN LAWS.

Knowing the federal, state and city laws might help you make decisions about how to keep yourself safe from the law enforcers as well as from other rapists. However, I discovered that it's not so easy to find out what the laws are because, (1) they are constantly being changed; (2) much law is created in courtrooms by judges' interpretations of written statutes; and (3) lawbooks are not always available or understandable.

Places to try for information are: your local library; a law school library; a public legal aid office; the local police or sheriff's office. Write to the Office of City Clerk for a copy of the city penal code on firearms and other weapons; the State Printing Office for state laws; and, of course, the U.S. Government Printing Office in Washington D.C. for federal laws (under the Alcohol, Firearms and Drugs Administration).

This was my experience in researching local laws where I live: A local policeman I asked told me that a permit was required to carry a handgun, even if it were not concealed, and that permits are very, very hard to get. Any knife carried must have a blade less than three inches long and must not be concealed. The Kung Fu weapon called Nun-chako sticks is illegal to carry. There is no law against being skilled in martial arts, the pig told me, but he doubted that many women would "have what it takes" to achieve that skill. (Watch for new laws once they decide we can use our bodies as weapons.) I asked him if it was legal to carry a

small can of hairspray, Lysol, Halt, etc., to stun attackers with. He warned me that I could get into legal trouble using a spray on an attacker, because it might cause him permanent respiratory damage! (In fact, Halt and similar sprays are considered a felony to own and carry in many states.)

As I asked more questions, he seemed to become increasingly agitated at my determination to find a legal way to defend myself. He volunteered the information that even if someone breaks into your own home, in order to justify using a deadly weapon or a deadly martial arts blow, you must be able to prove beyond any doubt that your life was really in actual danger. And you must be able to prove that you tried every possible way to escape without fighting back, and that you were, so to speak, "backed up against a wall." (Remember when they used to say you were presumed innocent until proven guilty?) This pig told me of several incidents where women were convicted of murder for shooting men who had broken into their homes and raped them.

After this disgusting dialogue, the pig had the nerve to ask me jokingly where in the world I wanted to go that seemed so dangerous that I would need a weapon. (We all know how safe we are at home!) After all, he asked, didn't I have some man to protect me at home and on the streets? If I didn't, then I was really "asking for it."

It seems clear that this "peace officer" is more concerned with the rapists' safety than with that of the victims. When lawmakers and law enforcers are on the rapists' side, as they seem to be, they use the laws in the most punitive way possible. It's important to remember how much power of interpretation and enforcement rests with the police, the district attorney, the judge and the jury. And as women become stronger and more of a threat to male dominance, we will have no law on our side but our own.

In my search for handgun laws, I discovered that a magazine called Guns has been printing a series called "Know Your Gun Laws." They feature a different state's laws each month. I'm not trained in law and am not qualified to give legal advice; I extracted the following information from their reprint of Title 2 of the Penal Code of California to give you an idea what kinds of issues they cover. **BE SURE TO CHECK ON THE DIFFERENT STATE LAWS AND THEIR HABITS OF ENFORCEMENT.**

1. It is a felony to own a black jack, sling shot, billy, sandclub, sandbag, saved off shotgun, or metal knuckles. It is a felony to carry con-

cealed any explosive substance other than fixed ammunition, any "dirk or dagger."

2. It is a misdemeanor to carry a firearm concealed on your person or in any vehicle which is under your control or direction, unless you have a license to do so. Licenses are issued by the sheriff or chief of police. (Firearms carried openly in belt holsters are not concealed, nor are knives carried openly in sheaths suspended from the waist. The law does not mention whether they are referring to loaded or unloaded weapons, so it is not clear to me whether or not it is legal to carry an unconcealed loaded firearm.)

Certain exceptions to this law are listed, including (a) members of shooting clubs, while at a target range or while going to or from the range; and (b) licensed hunters or fishermen while going to or returning from hunting or fishing expeditions. If the gun club member or hunter is driving or walking through a "public place," the gun must be unloaded.

Section (h) of Article 2, under Title 2, Chapter 1 of Code 12031, is a very important item on the list of exceptions: "Nothing in this section is intended to preclude the carrying of any loaded firearm, under circumstances where it would otherwise be lawful, by a person who reasonably believes that the person or property of himself or another is in immediate danger and that the carrying of such weapon is necessary..." This phrase makes me think that the law it refers to applies to unloaded guns, and that the only time you can legally justify carrying an unconcealed loaded gun is if you can prove immediate danger as they define it. As I am not a lawyer, I cannot be sure that this is the right interpretation.

I wouldn't count on Section (h) to keep me out of court, but if I were in court defending my right to carry a gun, I'd want to use it as part of a feminist defense.

3. Any U.S. citizen over 18 years of age is permitted to keep a loaded weapon in her residence or place of business, including any temporary residence or campsite.

4. It is a "public offense" to possess or control a concealable firearm if (1) you are not a U.S. citizen, (2) you have ever been convicted of a felony, (3) you are addicted to any narcotic drug.

5. If you are convicted of committing or trying to commit a misdemeanor or felony with your gun, the gun will be confiscated by the police, in addition to whatever other punishment is imposed.

(I understand that any weapon can be confiscated by a cop at his will, and you can later claim it at the pig station if they cannot prove any crime. If you're a minor, the pigs will release the weapon only to your parent or guardian.)

6. There is a five-day waiting period between the time you buy a handgun and the time you're allowed to take it home with you. During that time, the registration form you filled out at the store is sent to your local police department or sheriff's office, to the State Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation, and to the FBI.

Another way to buy a gun is, a good friend can buy the gun in her name and then make out a bill of sale to you. This can be written on an ordinary receipt form that you get at the dime store. DON'T LOSE THAT BILL OF SALE. It's your only legal proof of right to ownership.

Some of the questions asked on the registration form at the store are: Where do you work? (A job is not legally required, but looks good.) Do you have a history of psychological disturbance? Are you addicted to drugs? Are you a U.S. citizen? Have you ever been convicted of a felony?

It is a misdemeanor to sell any firearm to a minor (18 or under). Written consent of a parent or guardian allows you to sell a firearm to a person who is 16, 17 or 18 years old.

7. It is illegal to change or remove any identifying words or numbers of a gun, including the name of the maker. If you're found in possession of such a gun, it will be assumed that you were the one who changed the identifying marks.

8. You have to apply for a special permit if you want to buy a "machine gun" or "automatic weapon." This law applies to guns that shoot a number of rounds on one trigger pull, but not to so-called automatic pistols which shoot several rounds in succession but require the trigger to be pulled for each bullet. The latter are actually semi-automatics and do not require a special permit to buy.

9. Possession of a silencer is a felony. (This is also a federal law.)

It seems that there's hardly any way to keep your firearm handy and practical without breaking some law. What this seems to say is that, at least in California, for example, the choices are:

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It seems that there's hardly any way to keep your firearm handy and practical without breaking some law. What this seems to say is that, at least in California, for example, the choices are:

- 1) Carry no weapon against the high probability of attack;
- 2) Carry a concealed weapon requiring skill, strength, and close contact fighting, such as a knife, blackjack, Nunchako sticks, Hilt, etc., and risk arrest for a felony, or;
- 3) Carry a concealed gun, making it possible to defend yourself at a safer distance and without great physical strength, and risk arrest for a misdemeanor.

It's interesting to note how often women take the risk of carrying illegal drugs, punishable as a felony, without the fear and awe that they show in relation to guns. Apparently much fear is dispelled by familiarity and group support.

So be sure to research your own state and city laws. Some points to check:

1. Do you need a permit to carry the gun openly?
Who is allowed to get permits?
2. Do you need a license to carry it concealed?
Who is allowed to get licenses?
3. Is it totally prohibited to carry a gun, openly or concealed?
4. Is carrying a gun within reach in a car considered the same as carrying it on you?
5. In all of the above, is there a distinction made between loaded and unloaded guns?

Laws also vary about where you can practice shooting your gun. Usually the only legal places to target practice are official gun ranges, National Forest lands, or private land outside of city limits with the permission of the landowner.



New York State has the most repressive gun laws. For instance, in New York, applying for a permit to buy a handgun involves submitting three personal references, six photos of yourself, fingerprints, a \$20 fee, and filling out a long questionnaire. They allow only three reasons for owning a handgun: (1) for target shooting (you must prove membership in a gun club); (2) to protect your "premises and property," (3) to transport valuables. (You'll notice that this list does not include protection of your own body.) Even if you meet requirements for gun ownership, there is a delay of months before the forms are processed. If you are found with an unlicensed gun, the penalties are stiff.

New York laws are the model for those who would like to see government agents hold a monopoly on ownership and use of firearms. It seems most likely that other states and the federal government will soon adopt similar laws. This would be a logical step in the destruction of constitutional rights that the various government agencies are working at daily. It's getting harder and harder to keep informed about the new repressive laws being passed about every aspect of our lives.

As usual, the mass media lays the groundwork for acceptance of the new laws and attitudes, and so it gives us a glimpse or warning of what's to come. A special TV movie pictured the tragic and danger-ridden life history of a revolver ending with a scene where a little boy accidentally blows his brains out with it. The movie was followed with a plea to all good, safety-conscious citizens to turn their guns in to the nearest police station. What a chilling, ominous demand! After all the stories we've heard about unarmed women being raped by police, often after having called for help against another rapist. After seeing the films and reports of armed police and soldiers forcing unarmed Jews into concentration camps, and unarmed Japanese-Americans into American concentration camps. After reading of camps being prepared in the U.S. in recent years. Being aware of the deepening economic depression and of the increase in violent crimes against women. They want us to turn in our guns?!!!

My own decision to get a gun was very difficult but the knowledge that it may soon be almost impossible to buy one forced me to decide quickly. (And from the traffic in the gun store, I could see I wasn't the only one thinking along those lines.)

THOUGHTS ON INEZ GARCIA

Inez Garcia is a brave woman who shot and killed one of the men who raped her some fifteen or twenty minutes after the rape took place. She was found guilty of second degree murder and is now serving a five year to life sentence at the California Institute for Women in Fullerton, California. Because of the clear ramifications of this decision for all women, the case has reached international proportions.

The situation of Inez Garcia has meant that a lot of women are more afraid of the consequences of defending themselves with a gun, when actually it should help women to decide their only choice is to pick up a gun. The tragedy of Inez's situation is that she was not able to shoot her attackers before she was raped. She did the next best thing - she went after them later and had the satisfaction of killing one of them. One less rapist is free because of the courage of Inez Garcia. But the way that the trial progressed, or rather regressed, seems to say that it is not safe for a woman to defend herself from attack even in her own home.

If Inez's case was presented somewhat differently, however, it may have been easier for the court to understand: as ludicrous and absurd as it may sound, if it was not a case of rape but instead a case of Inez saying she was trying to protect or retrieve her private property that had been stolen, then she may not even have been brought to court. Money is the one thing men understand, since it's their invention - and it's the only thing they can understand women killing anyone about. Money is sacred, but a woman's life is not - to male eyes. Even where it is legal to carry a gun if you think your life or your property is in danger, if you're a woman, it had better be your property you've protected, because they cannot understand how you can take seriously an attack on your body. And now that has been recently re-defined in a court of injustice so that we are sure to know. We are expected to disarm ourselves - for our own protection. This means open season on women by all men.

The full meaning for all women of the outcome of the railroading of Inez Garcia was most clearly stated in an interview with Juror Samuel Rhone, one of the twelve jurors who convicted her:

Q: Could a woman ever get off on the ground of self-defense if she killed the man during the attack?

Rhone: No, because the guy's not trying to kill her. He's just trying to screw her and give her a good time. To get off the guy will have to do her bodily harm and giving the girl a screw isn't doing her bodily harm.

Q: What if the attack is violent?

Rhone: If he's raping and pounding his fists on her you understand and right away afterwards she shot him. She'd get voluntary manslaughter; she couldn't get off.

Q: What part did rape play in your deliberations?

Rhone: Well some brought up the rape but then someone threw up their hands and said, "She's not on trial for killing a man for raping her; there's no proof of rape."

Q: Was the rape discussed a lot?

Rhone: No.

Q: Did you say anything about it?

Rhone: When I was discussing I was mostly fighting the women. I asked them about the heat of passion and they said they'd have cooled off. I told the women that when I leave here I'll have less fear of raping a woman now than I did before. At least I know that if I get shot she won't get away. You see what I mean. Before I didn't know. If she did shoot me, she wouldn't get off. If she shoots me she'll get hers anyway.

Q: What did the women say?

Rhone: They thought I was kidding. They said you don't mean that.

Q: Did you mean it?

Rhone: I wasn't joking. They took it for a joke. I didn't. I was thinking of all the men out there reading it. I told them that.

He is so sure of his position of safety that he dares to be completely honest. It's obvious that he doesn't even consider rape an attack, thanks in part to the male media depicting rape as pleasurable. He does understand, however, that he is safer in raping women since he voted to convict Inez.

It's also interesting to notice how television is reflecting the political situation for women in this country. For years women have been fair game as rape, torture and murder victims on television, and now they present a made-for-TV movie which is billed as a "comedy" in which a man is "raped" at

gunpoint by women. This piece of male fantasy shit shows clearly how men cannot understand rape. One more piece of propaganda saying that rape is correct male conduct and women had better not only submit, but enjoy.

Now is not the time for women to disarm for fear of retaliation. Now is when the attack on women is mounting and women must be prepared. If men have nothing to fear from the law when they attack us, then they better fear for that gun in our little female hands. And you can always say he was after your purse. The lesson many women have learned from the trial is that you don't have to wait around after defending yourself. If the situation doesn't look good, you don't have to turn yourself in.

Inez Garcia has said:

"I have spoken to a lot of people who have been raped and they keep quiet about it like me . . . I think it's about time someone came forward."

"I feel anyone who has been raped has the right to kill back."

"I am not ashamed of what I have done. I was afraid and I had to defend myself. I would like other women to know about my case. I think they can identify with me. And if they had the same thing happen to them, they will know how I felt. Maybe it will stop more rapes."

"My victory is that a lot of women know about me - a lot of people know about me - and they believe in the same idea I do, and they support my idea, and that to me is a victory. Even though the law and the system here is fucked up in the United States which it is, to me I won. And if I have to go to jail for something I believe, I'll gladly go to jail - with my honor, with no regrets, and I'll be very proud to go to jail - period - and I won't regret it."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

There are lots of books on handguns - from manuals on taking your gun apart to fancy picture books of old pistols. For the beginning shooter we have made a list of good books, most of which contain basic information about the care and handling of handguns. Some large gun stores have a wide selection of books.

BOOKS

- Chapel, C.E., The Art of Shooting. Barnes. \$4.
 Freeman, P.C., Modern Pistol Shooting. Faber and Faber. \$4.
 Gaylor, Chic, Handgunner's Guide. Hastings House. \$3.
 McLean, Donald, U.S. Pistols and Revolvers. Normount Technical Publications, Wickenburg, Ariz. 85358. \$3.50. (Normount publishes lots of interesting books on firearms. Write them for a list.)
 Riviere, Bill, The Gunner's Bible. Doubleday. \$2.
Self-defense. (This is a pamphlet published in 1969 by the International Liberation School. You may be able to find copies around in radical bookstores.)
 Weston, Paul, The Handbook of Handgunning. Bonanza Books. \$5.

OTHER SOURCES

- Annual editions of Gun Digest and Guns Illustrated. These contain articles of varying interest plus listings and specifications of practically all available handguns and rifles. The new ones sell for \$5-8. Sometimes you can find old ones in used book stores.
 The National Rifle Association (NRA) publishes many useful and relatively inexpensive booklets. Write them for a list at: 1600 Rhode Island Av. NW, Washington D.C. 20036.
 There are several magazines devoted to handguns. Two are:
Gun World. Capistrano Beach, Ca. 94624. \$7.50 a year.
Guns. 8142 N. Lawndale, Skokie, Ill. 60076. \$9 a year. This magazine has been running a useful series on the gun laws of various states. Write them for the issue that has your state laws.