



Shooting with the SIG 226 ST.



The passion of biking!

A. Christopher Beglin

I am an expatriate Englishman aged 62, now married to an American lady and permanently domiciled for the last seven years in southwest Pennsylvania. Since October 2005, I have been able to call myself a proud American, having secured my citizenship. I have two offspring from my first marriage, a son aged 30, and a daughter aged 32, both married. I am fortunate that my son lives a mere 24 miles away (by sheer chance), but my daughter however is still in the UK. I taught them both about guns and shooting when they were very young, accompanying me often on range visits. They are still both very competent shots, though sadly as you might expect, my daughter cannot exercise her skills unless on vacation visiting me. Currently I am a proud grandfather four times over from them both.

I also have two step-children by my current marriage, a son and daughter aged near 20 and 22 respectively. The step daughter has had some tuition from me on shooting and I bought her a Bersa .380 for her 21st birthday, following which she later procured her carry permit. My step-son joined the Navy earlier this year and has had good weapon training

with the issue Beretta 9mm sidearm, plus some extra range time with me when on leave. I expect he will, when he is of age, probably facilitate his own carry permit.

My professional career began in 1967 when I qualified as a registered osteopath (not too different from a chiropractor) and I pursued this until 1974, when for reasons of having my own untreatable back problem, had to give it up. I then followed various types of work which included being a night station manager at a London radio station. In 1975, I was lured back to my old college to administer the out-patient clinic. That lasted two years after which I started my own small business, geared very much towards engineering-oriented work, progressing into R&D prototyping tasks and "one-off" jobs. Partly due to work being thin on the ground, I decided in a moment of extreme recklessness in 1992 to consolidate my engineering experience by studying at the University of Plymouth, gaining my "B. Eng Hons Systems 2.1" degree in 1995. It was a sobering experience remembering what it is like trying to "live on fresh air" and have a motorcycle as sole transportation.



ccm profile

Each issue of CCM contains an article that "PROFILES" an everyday individual who carries a concealed weapon. This article is an inspiration to our readers by helping them to realize that they are not alone in their lifestyle decision to always be armed.

Had it not been for reloading, I doubt my shooting would have been so active.

I started shooting originally with air weapons at a young age, and was first active with firearms proper as an army cadet from 1960 - 1963, shooting competition long range rifle at the renowned Bisley ranges with an Enfield .303 Mk IV target rifle. There was also small-bore rifle shooting during that same period. For many years, while I was at college and during my early work years shooting took a very definite back seat. In the later '70s, I resumed more active shooting and bought a new shotgun. Not long after that, I relocated to Devon County in the southwest UK. I soon found and joined a small-bore club, getting into rifle and pistol again quite seriously, and it was not long before I found another club within which to enjoy centerfire and competition shooting in many disciplines.

CCM Interview

Over the years that followed, I built up a collection of some 24 handguns, several rifles and some muzzle loaders. I also got enthusiastically into reloading. Two of the rifles (carbines) were deactivated on a mandatory basis in the late '80s as a result of a ban on semi-autos, thanks to Michael Ryan, who ran amok in Hungerford (Berkshire County) with an AK clone August 19, 1987 (details here for those interested: http://www.crimelibrary.com/notorious_murders/mass/michael_ryan).

It was just the excuse the government needed to remove that aspect of the "privilege"; gun ownership was not a right. Handgun shooting continued until the Thomas Hamilton debacle at Dunblane, Scotland on March 13, 1996 (details can be seen here: http://www.crimelibrary.com/notorious_murders/mass/dunblane_massacre/?sect=8)

Which resulted in a further major extreme restriction of privilege--relinquishing all my handguns in September 1997. I had no Second Amendment to protect my gun ownership in the UK, and I didn't have a legal option to carry either, although I was, from quite an early age, very aware of my own considered inherent human right to self-defense. A short blade was about all I could (legally) carry but I did at least, prior to 1997, have the means to be armed at home with a handgun.

Once settled in America, and a legal permanent resident of the U.S. with a green card, I set about rebuilding my firearms collection, investing much from the proceeds of the sale of my UK property. It was most satisfying to be able to resume the interest fully and again be

able to utilize my retained reloading equipment. Normalcy gradually seemed to return to this near lifelong passion as I found clubs and fellow shooters with whom to share the sport.

As a small means to "give something back," I took an NRA Instructor's course in 2004, and became certified in all four main shooting disciplines as well as range safety officer. I have teamed up with some fellow instructors to run Basic Pistol courses and have also taught the Personal Protection course. It is hoped that in the near future I may also be able to teach regularly at a proposed new range in my area. I try, when possible, to also bring new shooters into the sport and promote RKBA issues.

Pennsylvania is a "shall issue" state and, fortunately, reasonably gun-friendly; although these days it seems ever more obvious that there are many more people around who have a paranoid fear of "the gun" as being, in and of itself, some diabolical piece of inert machinery, capable of mayhem all on its own! Much of this can be attributed to the mainstream media's reporting with a strong bias against guns, even though it seems at times to be little more than disinformation. Our collective battle against gut emotion over simple logic is ongoing and seems to get harder all the time.

My interest in firearms is broad, through many varieties of handgun, hunting rifles and also a number of military surplus rifles. Having "teethed" on revolvers when younger, I still retain a strong affection for those, and confess to also enjoying the large bore versions such as .454 Casull and 45-70.

CCM: Was there a specific incident that caused you to carry a gun?

Chris: No specific incident affected me personally. My prime consideration was exercising a right as well as my own simple compulsion to have an effective means of self-defense. I realized that no one else was going to do it for me and so it was my responsibility entirely. I was already a long-time shooter and from there it was a simple and logical progression.

While not directly influencing my decision to carry, I was also aware of an experience suffered by a friend who was walking unarmed in Pittsburgh. He was accosted by two youths, one of whom was armed, and he was robbed. He offered no resistance which was probably about all he could do. But he was terrified further when the guy with the gun on leaving, turned back and levelled his gun as if to shoot. My friend realized that had he been armed, that could have been his chance to save his life, had the robber intended to actually shoot him. He was lucky and he knew it. Now he carries.

CCM: Have you ever had to use your firearm in a defensive situation?

Chris: Fortunately, no. I am glad to share that status with probably the vast majority of those who carry. I follow the generally adopted common sense code of CCW which is to avoid trouble at all costs, because carrying a firearm is no invitation to a gun fight. Quite the opposite.

CCM: What training methods do you employ? Do you have any recommendations?

Chris: My training is probably never up to the level I would like because most of my shooting is very recreational--plus the effects of age! I shoot in IDPA as much as time allows, and also some PPC 600. These two disciplines are rather complementary by opposites. With IDPA we have fast shooting from various positions against the clock, including



One of many RC airplanes enjoyed.

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I know - I shouldn't smoke!



Some of the guys at Bedford PA, RC Flying club.

obstacles, cover, even on the move. This hones certain skills such as reloads, malfunction clearances, and almost point shooting. PPC however is geared to fixed time exposure of turning targets. This helps skills like draw, fast target acquisition, and perhaps most important, the ability to not only shoot quite fast but sufficiently accurately at many distances, not just close-up.

Apart from what we may call "tactical" training, I am firmly of the opinion that simple, intimate familiarity with a chosen platform is essential. This can be acquired with regular shooting and competition. I consider this also includes familiarity with a gun's internals, and regular dry-fire exercises (which are, of course, carried out with a properly cleared gun). My main range practice usually includes at least two aspects I regard as vital over and above just static paper perforation: shooting on the move, and weak hand drills. As most probably agree, repetition leading to a building of muscle memory is essential in order to facilitate smooth, fast, and safe operation.

CCM: How long have you carried a concealed weapon?

Chris: I obtained my CCW early in 2002. I carry all my waking hours regardless, even though I work from home and live in an ostensibly pretty safe area. The rationale being simply that no one can ever know when something might occur. Two years ago, my wife obtained her CCW and is aware of the value of it, even though she carries intermittently.

CCM: What weapons do you carry?

Chris: I started off carrying a Taurus M85 snub in .38 Spl. This served well but was replaced by a Ruger SP-101 which I liked a lot, and it was less prone to corrosion from sweat. I was placing some reliance on the revolver over a semi-auto at this stage due to almost guaranteed reliability, even if lower on round count (though I always had at least one speedloader on my person). Three or more years ago, having been given a holster that was ideal, I transitioned to a semi-automatic Browning Hi Power. This served for some while until I bought my current carry, which is a SIG 226 ST in 9mm. For me, the SIG is about the perfect carry sidearm. It is, of course, a "full-sized" firearm and thus quite heavy, but weight does not bother me to carry, plus giving the benefits of a more stable platform. The capacity of 15+1 means that I feel reasonably well-equipped even without a spare magazine.

I should, for completeness sake include two other guns: One, a North American Arms Mini revolver in .22 Magnum is a BUG (backup gun) and resides most times when I'm out, in a vest or shirt front pocket. While it is what many call a "mouse gun" it is nonetheless a backup to hand should the primary fail for some reason. The other backup option is the Rohrbaugh R9, a superlative pocket pistol in 9mm which can, at times due to conditions, become sole primary as well as otherwise BUG category.

One very useful extra I employ is Crimson Trace lasergrips. I have those on my SP-101 as well as the SIG. Predictably, they don't do well in very bright light, but once light levels drop they are excellent, permitting unconventional shooting positions and very fast target

acquisition. I practice with open sights of course, including dry fire to improve point shooting skills. But considering situations often occur in subdued light, I rate the lasergrips as most desirable, while acknowledging that they are an adjunct and not a primary sighting tool.

CCM: What type of ammunition do you carry?

Chris: For the old M85 it was just Federal .38 Spl. HydraShock 110 grain JHP. I charged the SP-101 with CorBon 110 grain +P JHP in preference to the 140 grain .357 Mag. loads--controllability being my pre-requisite. Once I was on the 9mm route, I selected Speer Gold Dot ammunition. I use 124 grain standard pressure for the R9 (no +P for that gun) and used the same when carrying the BHP.

With the SIG 226, I carry 9mm 124 grain +P Gold Dot, and if wetpack performance is anything to go by for an approximate assessment, they perform very consistently as well as functioning reliably in the gun.

CCM: What concealment holsters do you use?

Chris: I have always used outside-the-waistband (OWB) holsters. Inside-the-waistband (IWB) did not work for me no matter what I tried. It is a function of build mostly, as well as comfort and what suits me. The snubs were carried in a canted Jim Burke Hi-ride belt slide rig which gives a close hold to the body. Sadly, Jim died in late 2003 and I had Kevin of K&D Holsters make me another near copy because I liked the style so much. While carrying the BHP, I used

a very comfortable Horseshoe Leather belt slide rig (actually sold as being for a model 1911, but the BHP sat just fine). With the SIG as my daily primary the last two and a half years, it lives in another creation of K&D holsters: the "Eagle Defender". Again, a canted belt slide, it suits me admirably. It is also important, as most realize, to have a suitable sturdy belt on which to hang a holster and accessories, as an inferior item will only create problems.

I carry the Rohrbaugh R9 in several modes depending on circumstances, including K&D pocket rig, K&D belt slide, Uncle Mikes #2 pocket holster, and finally, sometimes I use an ankle rig made by ProTech. This small gun can, if need be, go straight into a pocket without any holster.

My final and last ditch option for very deep concealment is a SmartCarry holster. It is rare, because of my lifestyle, that this is needed at all. But I keep it against the very odd time that I do need it because it does what no other form of concealment can do--whether for smallest pocket pistol like the R9, or even up to full size.

CCM: What do you do for a living?

Chris: Over the last several years, I have deviated from my engineering systems path to become involved with web design, data conversion, and image manipulation (as much as anything, due to being asked to do such work). I like to think that I am somewhat semi-retired; I'm lucky to be able to work when there is work and play when there is not!

CCM: Do you have any advice for our readers?

Chris: Can I write a book? First and foremost, I must stress the responsibility that comes with concealed carry. This not a "macho" exercise or any great demonstration of prowess. No, it is the ultimate means to be able to protect oneself as a LAST DITCH RESORT. I always stress the need to avoid trouble at all costs even if the ego seems to suffer. We have no special status, in fact quite the opposite should we become embroiled in a shooting confrontation. I hope to never employ what I regard as my final sanction.

Learn to dress to carry, which means choosing clothes that best enhance the ability to conceal well. Concessions have

to be made to work environment and time of year. This may further affect the individual's choice of carry platform and cover garments. But my advice ultimately is: carry the largest and best you can within the constraints of everyday living, as well as ensuring that personal choice is based on what feels right and fits properly.

I place great importance on situational awareness--even if not carrying. The ability to spot (or sense) a problem in advance is a major way to avoid trouble, using the senses to the fullest extent and not ignoring intuition either. If things seem less than good, then back off if possible. Recently I have become more aware of "task fixation" as being something to be addressed conscientiously. These are instances where we are distracted by such things as using a cell phone and can allow our attention to become much diminished.

I cannot emphasize how vital I consider it for all who carry and operate firearms to keep sharp on matters of safety. Familiarity over the years can breed complacency and lead to the potential for carelessness. We have a duty to ourselves and those around us to act responsibly.

We should do our best to support all RKBA matters, whether by writing to Congressional representatives on relevant matters or just getting new shooters to the range. We are under threat, make no mistake. We all have to put in our small contributions. I am particularly cognizant of this, having lost most of the guns I had in the UK; we are not as protected by the Second Amendment as we might like to think, considering how it is seemingly always under attack.

I also recommend that if people decide to carry, that they do it conscientiously as a full-time habit, wherever legal and practicable. We would not, if sensible, decide on any given day to leave out the spare tire from a vehicle, simply because we think that day we will not get a flat. We do not usually if a full-time watch wearer, decide that one day the watch can be left off, just because somehow we know there will be no need to tell the time. Nothing, could be worse than being caught up in a threat situation, reaching for our means of protection, only to find that it was not there that day. Having a CCW is a dedication. Make it a full time mission even if as I do, you work at home.



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