

# “MICHAEL CAN'T MISS” AND OTHER MYTHS PUT TO REST...

BY MICHAEL WARE

## MYTH #1 - MICHAEL WARE CAN'T MISS...

When Patrick, my publisher, and I were talking about the subject and content of my next article for the Iowa Sportsman I pitched him an idea about debunking some myths in the community. “You mean like Michael Ware can’t miss?” he replied. We chuckled as unfortunately for me, there isn’t even the slightest shred of truth in that little ditty. While I’d love to earn the monikers associated with being a crack shot, I’ve come to terms with the fact on my best day I can’t hold a candle to Annie Oakley’s worst performance. Sure, I’d love to attain the skill and marksmanship of folks like Vasily Zaytsev, “Gunny” Hathcock, Lyudmila Pavlichenko, and Simo Häyhä, but it’ll have to remain a wish I suppose. I’ve shot with a lot of people from many countries with vast back grounds. There are some that have a natural talent for precision shooting, and I’m not one of them. I have to work for every round I place on target while others make it look effortless and whip me every single time.

So now that we have the big item crossed off the list, or at least have the humor content of the article out of the way, we can get down to business.

## MYTH #2 – GUNS ARE RARELY USED FOR SELF-DEFENSE...

I was just reading a study by Kleck, and according to their data just under 2.5 million times a year in the United States a citizen uses a gun in self-defense. That was a staggering number to me. If you compare the nightly news blather and see the occasional negative use of a firearm by a criminal and then compare it to two a half million instances of stopping an attack or crime? Wow. That is quite a different outlook on firearms. This particular myth was one I didn’t have a full grasp upon and I’m tickled I happened across the information.

## MYTH #3 – HOLDING YOUR PISTOL SIDWAYS GIVES YOU BETTER CONTROL WHEN FIRING...

This one ranks right up there with “pass gun control – it’s for the children” with me. While I’m not sure at what point it became cool to hold your weapon sideways and yell “GLOCK FO TAY” as

you fire your handgun, I can assure you you’re opting into the low IQ crowd with smashing success. I’ll never forget hearing one of our trainers, Rick Largesse, remark to a student in class about this foolishness. “The sights being placed upon the top of the weapon aren’t a design flaw,” he said. “They’re actually there for a reason.” I found humor in this and busted out laughing. As usual, I was the only person who laughed when it was clearly meant to be serious. My ill-timed outburst aside, Rick was right. Besides, if you haven’t had the pleasure of turning your pistol on its side while steering the ejection pattern and hot brass right into your eyes, you haven’t lived. Right? Wrong...

## MYTH #4 – DRY FIRING DAMAGES YOUR WEAPON...

There are nearly no firearms built today that require the firing pin to fall on only a rim or primer. I’ll grant you there were some older firearms that lasted much longer before repair if you avoided dry firing. However, they number in the sub 1% range. I dry fire all the time, always keeping safety rules in place mind you. A large part of training is dry fire practice. I sit there all the time with an empty case balanced atop my pistol and dry fire at the duplex wall socket in the basement lounge. I bet I’ve laid the hurts





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to that little sucker 500,000 times now. I've also worked very hard to hone my trigger control, follow through, and reset with this method. Dry firing is not only good, but encouraged in my book. If you want to drop in a snap cap or dummy round for good measure, go right ahead. No worries.

## MYTH #5 — PISTOLS OR SHOTGUNS WON'T OVER PENETRATE WALLS IN YOUR HOME, A RIFLE WILL...

I know this one flies in the face of some of the conventional thinking, but this boils down to pure science. This is also a two prong consideration.

Ammo choice is a bigger factor here in my opinion than the blanket choice of which type of weapon is 'best' for home defense. While a gross exaggeration, consider the difference between rolling a pinewood derby car down a ramp into cardboard box versus a bowling ball. Sure the car you and your son worked on for hours gets there quickly. It also stops quickly upon hitting the cardboard. This is your lightweight rifle bullet like the .223 Remington. Now consider the bowling ball. Is there anyone who thinks the cardboard box will hold back the ball after it gets rolling? Nope. This is your 45 FMJ ammo or 12ga slug. Granted, you can alter these with different ammo choices, but the small rifle chamberings in average speeds will work just fine for your home defense needs. Sorry guys, it is just basic physics. If you're worrying about what your AR15 bullet will do after

it passed through eight walls of three houses, ricochets off your neighbor's car window, and brings down a 747, I'm not sure you're acting on the best information available.

## MYTH #6 — YOU CAN POUR SAND IN THIS AK47 AND IT'LL RUN...

Sorry folks. Pour sand in anything and your results will be poor at best. I don't care what firearm it is, your

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lawn mower's gas tank, or grandma's chocolate pie. Sand isn't your friend and isn't welcome. The parts in the weapons with even the loosest tolerances will not accommodate having thousands of pieces of hard grit introduced. What you think you saw on a movie or in a test was debris covering the weapon, not being poured inside it. Pour sand inside your weapon only if you want to experience a horrifying failure.

## MYTH #7 — SILENCERS ARE SILENT...

We've been over this before. The baffles in the modern suppressors do a great job of allowing gas to rapidly expand and cool, thus lowering the noise level. However, you'll never remove the sonic crack of a bullet breaking the sound barrier. Suppressors are gun mufflers, not silencers. That noise you hear when

your favorite TV star shoots a suppressed weapon is something like "PFFT," right? That noise is actually the sound of Hollywood getting it wrong for the purposes of dazzling you. Silencers are silent? PFFT...

## MYTH #8 — CARRYING A GUN WITHOUT A ROUND IN THE CHAMBER IS SAFER...

I try not to throw up in my own mouth when I hear somebody exclaim this in my shop. Thankfully it is happening less today than years ago. I've got news for you. If you don't have the confidence or training level to be comfortable with carrying a loaded weapon, then don't carry it, and hold off until you do. There's nothing wrong with that. I was really apprehensive the first few times I carried. That's normal. The silly notion that you should carry without a round in the chamber will get you hurt or worse. You're not going to have the benefit of chambering a round and getting ready to roll in most scenarios. Besides, from a brain wave perspective, folks tend to ignore the safety rules for basic firearm use since they don't consider their firearm to be loaded. This is a mistake that will manifest itself in a big problem. If you carry, carry loaded, or don't do it until you're ready to. Period.



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## MYTH #9 — REVOLVERS ARE MORE RELIABLE THAN SEMI AUTOS

Uhhhh, nope. Sure, there are magazine springs that can go bad. There are safeties to be manipulated prior to utilizing the firearm. One has to know there is a round in the chamber and the mag is fully seated. But here's the reality. Quality magazines with quality springs aren't something that go bad overnight. Some folks don't replace them for decades. The safeties are internal for many weapons now, and even an external safety is a very simple thing to manipulate if you're trained and familiar with your firearm. I will freely admit, I believe the revolver to be easier and simpler to use overall. Training and practice mitigate this easily.

The other consideration is that of quality. Buy a cheapo revolver and you haven't bought much. So regardless of revolver or semi auto pistol, quality makes the difference.

## MYTH #10 - NOTHING SMALLER THAN 9MM IS ACCEPTABLE FOR PERSONAL DEFENSE...

A common misconception has been that smaller calibers tend to be poorly suited for self-defense. This particular myth is slippery, but tackling it should provide some perspective. According to the FBI statistics in the 19,000+ evaluated cases up to 2012, just as many people successfully saved their own lives with a 22LR as compared to a 44magnum. That is a tiny fact from a large and thorough report. Many people look at that and instantly assume the long standing myth of how much a caliber matters is void. There is some validity to it, but it comes with some knowledge we should consider and be fully cognizant of.

The simple fact is, shot placement matters more than caliber. If you're sporting a 50AE Desert Eagle, it won't matter much if you can't put rounds on target. Alternately, low power chamberings won't inflict much shock and damage in lots of cases. Sounds almost like a catch 22, doesn't it? It is. I don't know about you, but I doubt I'll be shooting that many naked people in the act of self-defense. Thus, the ballistic gelatin tests tend to be of little help to me. Take their testing gelatin, drape a leather jacket and a denim shirt over the gelatin block and fire into it, and

the results are far less spectacular. The jacket and shirt really suck the 'wow' out of the potential terminal ballistics.

So how do we quantify this? Well, we have to be honest about what we choose and why we chose it. Deep within that FBI report was the mortality rate for these numerous instances. Take a wild guess at how many people were turned around and the attack upon the victim stopped. Then try to envision how many attackers bought the farm as a result? Darned few. Completely compiled, most states were in single digits percentages. Caliber didn't seem to matter in most cases. Shot placement did. While the self-defense weapon worked in many cases to stop an attack, the number of times an attacker lived was over 9 of 10 times.

What do I advocate? 9mm and above... I hope to place a very skilled shot if God forbid I'm ever forced to defend my life or my loved ones. However, much like my billiards game, I want an average shot to count. Thus, if I choose a chambering with more potential power I hope it will render an attacker stopped or reversed faster. I'm always concerned about those high on drugs. It has been relayed to me by many in law enforcement that few crank heads are stopping when the deafening noise of a weapon is used in close quarters. Whether it is a bear attacking you or a home invader, the noise of a gunshot typically helps stop the threat. This isn't always the case with a meth head. This notion places more emphasis on calibers that are powerful for me. While I'm not a huge fan of calibers like 380 and below, I'd rather see someone carry a pocket rocket than nothing at all. This myth is a twister. I agree with the FBI reports that caliber doesn't seem to matter, but the number of 22s used were 30 times more than the 44s, so the sample sizes are skewed somewhat. If I were Joe Blow, I'd concentrate first on shot placement and training, with a very close second consideration on caliber choice if you catch my drift.

Even in the debunking of myths and explanation of misunderstood reality, you still see things like the basic safety rules, practice, and good training to be universal. Shoot safely and shoot often friends.

