

## **Prepare for the unthinkable, as though it was inevitable**

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I truly have not done much compared to so many of the warriors I have interviewed, and whose stories I include in this book. But I have done a few interesting, exciting, dangerous and stressful things in my life, and throughout my warrior life, I have worked hard to prepare myself should I have to die. I do not plan on it happening soon, and I am not going down easy. I intend to be very hard to kill. But should it come to that, should I have to die for my country or my family today, I think I am as ready as any man can be. I think I can play the great game with my life as a stake and love every minute of it.

However, what I am not prepared for is some bastard putting my spouse and my kids in danger. I think that I would probably lose my professional objectivity should their lives ever be on the line. That is when it stops being a game... and starts becoming deadly serious.

Many warriors have told me that the worse thing that could happen is that they would suddenly be in harm's way while their loved ones were with them. If you agree, if you think that is the worst thing that could happen, then that is the most important thing you should prepare for. Consider this real-life case, told to me by one warrior leader, and his amazing warrior wife.

An officer got a call on a man rampaging through his house shooting a rifle. The chief of police happened to be nearby with his wife in his personal car, which had a police radio. He heard the officer ask for backup. He told dispatch he would cover the call.

At the house, the officer approached the front door as the chief covered just off to the side. His wife remained in the car, but she could see everything going on. In one explosive instant, the gunman burst from the front door armed with a .30-30 rifle and fired a round into the officer's chest killing him instantly. The chief hurled himself off to the side but a bullet smashed through his shoulder, causing arterial damage and profuse bleeding. He scrambled across the yard as .30-30 rounds kicked up chunks of dirt all around him, and took cover behind a small tree as more rounds ripped away pieces of bark.

Fading fast from blood loss and with his right arm out of commission, he used his left hand to pull his sidearm, braced it on the ground, and emptied his magazine into the wall next to the front door where the man had taken cover. It worked. The bullets penetrated the wall and the suspect collapsed to the floor with a major leg wound, and began bleeding to death. Out in the yard, the chief lay bleeding to death, too.

He was saved, however, by his wife's quick actions. As soon as she saw what was happening, she grabbed the radio microphone and, in a calm and professional voice, provided dispatch and cover cars with all the necessary information. Backup arrived quickly, secured the scene, and took care of the injured parties.

The chief's wife knew what to do because he had prepared her for this very possibility.

Have you prepared your spouse for combat? Your kids? Your parents? Everyone says that the trickiest part of preparing the spouse is when you say, "Do exactly what I tell you." (Just this once!) After that, the priority is:

Separate yourself from me. I'm going to be drawing and returning fire. If I can, I'll move away, but you must move away from me immediately. Seek cover if you can't get away. Play dead if you can't seek cover.

One law enforcement trainer told me that he has rehearsed two signals with his wife: "Go" and "Stay." "Go" means to get out of there. "Stay" means she must put her hand on the back of his belt and use him for cover. This is one officer's answer, which makes him prepared.

It is vital that you prepare your family members to "Get help." Or, "Call 9-1-1." Or, "Use my radio." Have your loved ones rehearsed dialing 9-1-1? Remember, their fine-motor control will deteriorate, as will their near vision. Your life and their life might depend on their ability to poke 9-1-1 when their world suddenly comes unglued. Say you are a police officer and you toss them your hand-held radio. Do they know how to use it and know what to say? Do they know how to use your patrol car radio and know what to say? Have you told them how to identify and describe you should something happen when you are off duty? "My husband's a cop. He's got on a white shirt and blue jeans. The guy who is attacking him has on a maroon shirt. Send help for him, please." Have you told your loved ones that if you are down not to go to your body? Tell them you might be playing dead and you do not want them to deliberately enter the kill zone. Preparation, not paranoia.

### **Preparation. Preparation. Preparation.**

Remember that in World War I, World War II and Korea more combatants are disabled by stress than were killed by the enemy. Later we will discuss Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in detail. One of the most important things we will learn is that the DSM, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association, the "bible" of psychiatry and psychology, states that PTSD is caused by "intense fear, helplessness or horror," in a life-and-death situation. By teaching your loved ones what to do at the moment of truth, not only do you save lives physically, but you can also save them from the trauma of fear, helplessness and horror in their moment of truth.

Denial kills you twice: once because you are physically unprepared at the moment of truth and might die in the incident; twice because you are psychologically unprepared and, even if you physically survive, you are likely to be a psychiatric casualty when your "house of cards" collapses. Denial kills you twice, and it can kill your loved ones twice. In the same way, preparation saves you twice, and it may save your loved ones twice.

My dad was a cop, he began his career on a beat and retired as the chief. He and my mother have both passed on and I would give anything to have another 20 minutes with them. My dad bought 20 extra years one day in a supermarket. He carried a gun nearly every day of his life, and he knew that if there were trouble my mom would grab him by his arm. So for a lifetime he always

made sure she was on his left side. I almost never saw them together without my dad being on the right and my mom on his left.

One day as they shopped together in a supermarket, a man came around the corner of an aisle, saw my dad and pulled a gun. He was someone who dad had previously put in jail, and he was not a happy customer. As expected, my mom grabbed my dad's arm, his left arm. But his right hand was free and he pulled his gun. Then mom's training kicked in and she cut behind him and dashed off to call for help.

My dad resolved the situation ... in a satisfactory manner. But I could have lost them both. I got an extra 20 years with them because my dad spent a lifetime preparing for that one day. Their grandbabies would have never known them if their grandpa had not been a warrior who carried a gun and walked the warrior's path for a lifetime in preparation for that one day.

Dr. Piazza puts it this way to all his students:

If you are feeling that maybe you should forget about carrying a gun or using a gun as a means of self defense because the responsibility and liability is too great, let me validate your awareness that you do face a great responsibility and huge potential liability. However, let me remind you that there is nothing in this world more valuable than your life and the lives of your loved ones.

Rudyard Kipling put it this way in a poem about the warriors, who he called, "The Sons of Martha":

They do not teach that their God will rouse them a little before the nuts work loose. They do not teach that His Pity allows them to drop their jobs when they dam'-well choose. As in the thronged and the lighted ways, so in the dark and desert they stand, Wary and watchful all their days that their brethren's day may be long in the land

Can you do that? Can you walk the warrior's path for a lifetime, standing "wary and watchful" all your days to prepare for that one day that will buy your kids and your grandkids 20 extra years with you? You might even buy someone else's grandchildren 20 extra years with them, making your brethren's day "long in the land" because you were there and you were ready.

That is what warriors do.