

THE ORDINARY GUY

"He kicked in the door and took about two to three steps and shot me in the neck while I slept."

Bloodstain marks the spot where home invader David Brown fell at the hands of Jim Butler.

"ON A COLD FEBRUARY NIGHT IT ALL CAME TO AN E

"I agree 100% having been through a stalking situation ourselves; my wife and I learned some very valuable lessons."

[BY MARK WALTERS]

"We sought and received a full order of protection from the courts. In my opinion, the paper was completely useless. Our attacker violated this order numerous times and yet the local Sheriff Department couldn't find this freak. He lived about a half mile from our house and despite my seeing him twice a day and doing as the Phelps County Sheriff Department suggested. (do not approach/confront...let us do our jobs.) He never was apprehended. He continued to stalk, peek in our windows and threaten us. Each time we reported....same result...nothing! After pleading with law enforcement to do something...anything, on a cold February night it all came to an end!"

The above post appeared in the USCCA discussion forum on 8/20/2008. The thread was titled: "What do you do about a stalker?" I placed a call to the writer, USCCA member Jim Butler. My

interview with Mr. Butler sent chills up my back. The Butlers' account of terror is something no human beings should have to go through. Jim and his wife, Suzanne, have allowed me to pass their story on to you. Read it carefully and more importantly, learn from it.

FEBRUARY, 2003: THE NIGHTMARE BEGINS

"We started having problems with a neighbor. My wife didn't notify me at first. She caught him peeking in windows and she didn't want me to have too bad a reaction to that, I suppose," Jim told me as our discussion began. "When I first became aware of what was happening, I was on a business trip in California when I got a phone call around 2 am. My wife had caught him peeking in a window again and called the Phelps County Sheriff. They didn't see him at first and when they came back they were able to spot him. That's

the night that it started. That was in February of 2003."

The neighbor was 44 year old David Brown. Jim told me, "He lived in a trailer on his sister's property about a half a mile from us. He didn't have any electricity or running water and lived kind of like a hermit. We took a little bit of pity on him because he obviously didn't have any money or anything. We offered him small odd jobs around our place, cutting grass, feeding our horses when we were out of town, things like that."

After being spotted by deputies that evening while Jim was in California, David Brown barricaded himself in his trailer. This resulted in a SWAT response from local authorities. During the standoff Brown armed himself, threatened deputies, and refused to exit his residence alive. After nearly two hours, a county sheriff hostage negotiator persuaded him to come out without violence. He was taken for psychiatric

The victims, Jim and Suzannë Butler.



ND”
evaluation and found to be mentally fit. Brown was later charged with first degree trespassing and resisting arrest.

Little did the Butlers know what had really begun for them on that February night in 2003.

SUMMER OF HARASSMENT

As the harassment began after Jim returned home from California, the Butlers' lives were never “normal” again. “We’re doing everything we can legally, to keep him away from the house,” Jim said. Suzanne applied for a protective injunction within 24 hours of the first incident, which the courts granted immediately.

“Occurrences of him coming around, though, did not stop. In fact I confronted him one time in front of the house,” Jim told me. “Apparently he was coming into the house when we weren’t there, and he would take a handful of change, grab a couple of beers out of the refrigerator,” Jim said. “He would never take anything like a stereo or TV and I really had no proof he was there other

than the little stuff like that. I suspect he gained access by the garage door opener. He must have had the code and I have no idea how many times he may have entered the house.”

Throughout the spring and summer and into the fall, the harassment of the Butlers became regular and frequent. Each time it happened, the Butlers made a report to law enforcement. Jim told me that the county sheriff was called to his property at least every two to three weeks to make another report about Brown’s activities.

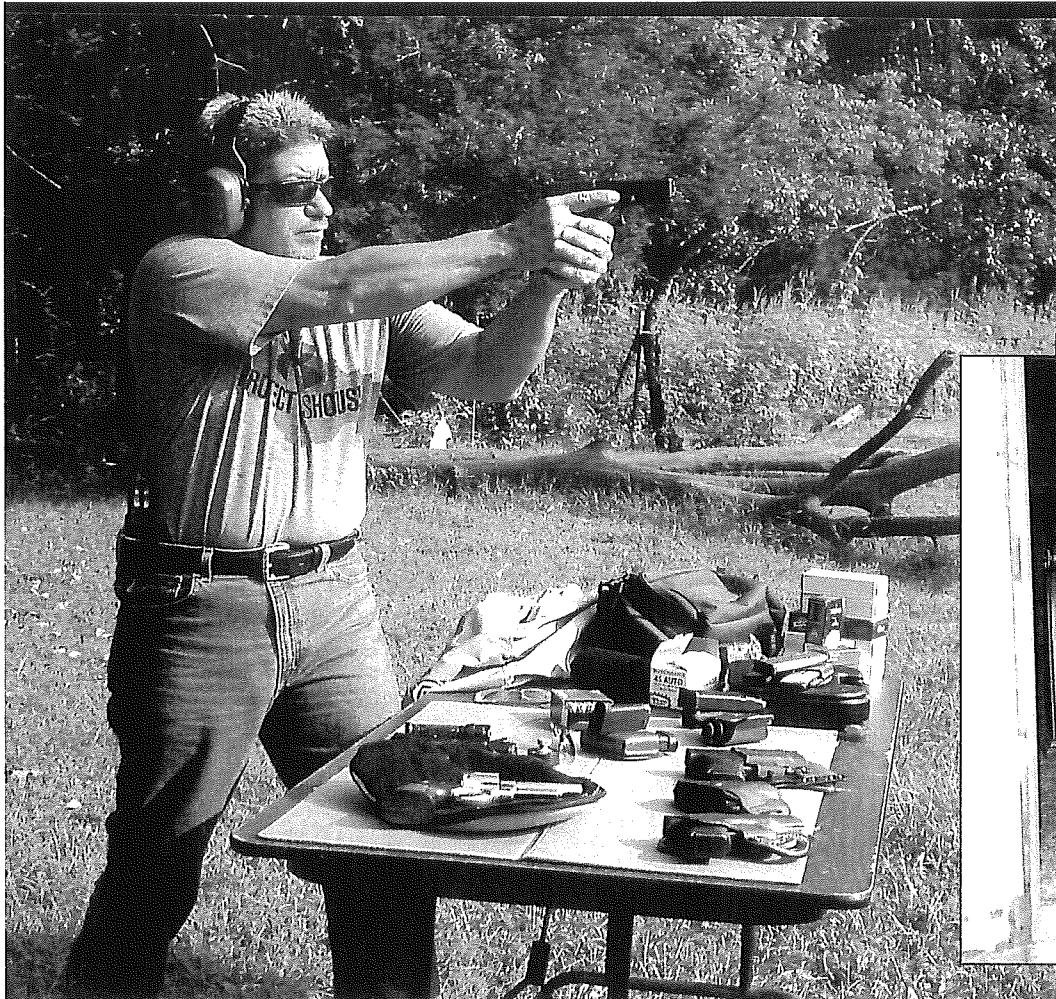
The Butlers would hear loud cars pass by with the occupants shouting obscenities, as well as occasional gunfire from passing vehicles. Their frustration levels rose as they spent many months trying to get this man arrested while it seemed as if nothing was being done by local law enforcement to prevent David Brown from repeatedly violating the injunctions against him.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

There were repeated violations during

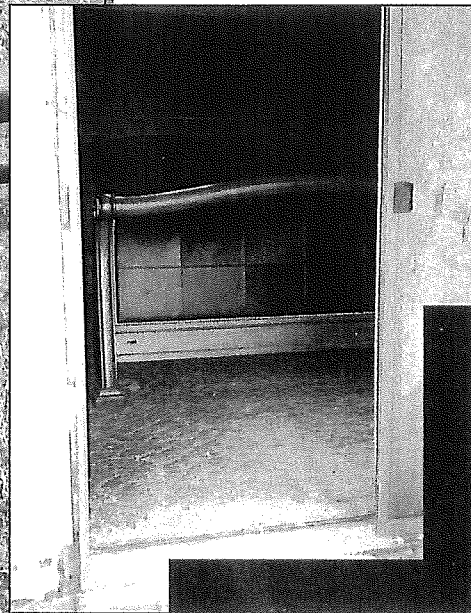
the ten months following the February incident, but still no arrest. The couple lived in a constant state of alert when home, cautiously waiting and listening, and remaining armed at all times both inside and outside. Jim and his wife began spending more time training with their firearms. Both purchased new guns: Jim a Glock 21, and Suzanne a Glock 19. Having grown up in St. Louis, Suzanne was not familiar with firearms, but she now spent a significant amount of time training with her husband. Jim told me that part of this was by design, so that the neighbors would hear the gunfire coming from the Butler property as a form of deterrence. It didn’t work.

On Christmas Eve, 2003, Jim was heading towards the house when Suzanne called. She had beaten him home by just a few minutes. As she exited her vehicle she noticed flashlight beams inside the house. A moment later, she was confronted by David Brown as he exited her home. A scuffle ensued and Suzanne was injured. Brown es-



left: Jim Butler regularly trains on his property, as does his wife Suzanne.

below: Entrance to the bedroom used by home invader David Brown to gain access to the Butlers as they slept.



caped into the darkness. Phelps County Sheriff's officers responded in conjunction with the Missouri State Highway Patrol, and charges were drafted against Brown. The home was dusted for prints, and the Butlers gave statements. Brown was not apprehended that evening, but now had four warrants for his arrest.

Angered and enraged by the apparent ability of David Brown to elude capture, and frustrated by what appeared to be a lack of effort by the sheriff's department, the Butlers were prepared to handle Brown themselves if necessary. The authorities would later determine that David Brown's sister had been using a police scanner to warn her brother of attempts to find him.

FEBRUARY, 2004 - THE END

David Brown seemingly disappeared for a while. "He knew he was in trouble now," Jim said. "His court dates were coming up and we didn't see him for a while. As my frustration grew, I made repeated trips to the sheriff's department to tell the captain that this had to stop, that this was going somewhere I don't want it to go. I don't want to get hurt, I definitely don't want to hurt any-

one, but this has to stop. I'm worried for my safety. I don't know if someone is going to take a shot at me from the woods or someplace." Jim was informed that he had the right to defend himself in his home and "all that nonsense."

"Now I start seeing him (David Brown) again and each time I see him I call and report him," Jim said, "yet he was still never picked up."

It's now February 4, one full year from the initial encounter. Upon arriving home from work, Jim and Suzanne see what appears to be a large party at David Brown's sister's house. Arming themselves, they watch intently throughout the evening, but the Butlers have no idea what is about to happen.

Jim later told me, "It's a very bitter, cold night. It gets to be about 11 o'clock. I said, 'Honey, I don't think anything is going to happen. I'm going to bed.'" Jim went to bed and fell asleep while Suzanne worked in the kitchen on the computer. He continues, "I was asleep and Suzanne had just came to bed. He [Brown] was obviously watching for that moment we both went to bed so he could catch us both in bed. He kicked in the door and took about two to three

steps and shot me in the neck while I slept."

The bullet wound to Jim's neck grazed near his artery but didn't sever it. Jim told me, "As I sat up then he shot me with a rifle in the chest." Jim rolled toward the nightstand to grab his gun while Suzanne, unaware of whether her husband was alive or dead, in an act of total heroism sprung forward and grabbed the rifle barrel from the madman standing at the foot of her bed.

She was subsequently shot in the hand and in the wrist, with the shot to her wrist exiting near her elbow. "Despite being shot twice, she doesn't let go of the rifle. She doesn't know my condition, and they are struggling over the gun. I began screaming and fired four times above them to get them to separate. As soon as I got enough separation and I could shoot, I did. I unloaded the rest of the magazine at him." Jim recalls, "I emptied the first magazine, reloaded and fired two more shots."

David Brown hit the floor and died within seconds.

"HE SHOT ME, HE SHOT ME," Suzanne was screaming. Jim then sprang from the bed to his wife. "Honestly, I

didn't even know I was shot. I can't really describe it. I wasn't sure if he was going to spring up so I kept going back to make sure he was still down. I don't know how many times I went back to the room to check on him, maybe three or four times. I go into the rest of the house and turn on all the lights."

After the gunfight Suzanne left the room immediately to call 911.

Emergency 911: "Emergency 911."

Suzanne Butler: "I've been shot!"

Emergency 911: "You've been shot?"

Suzanne Butler: "Yes, me and my husband!"

Emergency 911: "How many people have been shot?"

Jim Butler: "My wife, myself and him, he's laying on the floor!"

Emergency 911: "Where is she hit?"

Jim Butler: "She is hit in the arm!"

Emergency 911: "What about the guy lying on the floor?"

Jim Butler: "I think he's dead!"

The couple, now hysterical, waited for authorities to arrive. Not knowing who may show up from the party down the street, Jim refused to put his gun

down when he heard someone come up to him from behind.

"Drop the weapon!" commanded the first responding officer. Jim refused out of fear and shock, but eventually he set the gun down. The officer never drew his weapon on Jim. "At this point you don't know who's on your side," Jim said later.

As the house filled with emergency personnel and law enforcement, the dead man's sister, Jane Helgersen, made an attempt to rush into the home. She was immediately tackled by authorities and charged with hindering prosecution and resisting arrest.

The Butlers were taken to Phelps County Regional Medical Center and released within 24 hours. In addition to the two gunshot wounds he received, Jim also suffered a broken ankle during the gunfight. The bullet fired into his chest resides there to this day.

David W. Brown received four shots to the upper body including right shoulder, upper chest, right chest, and right lower chest. According to the autopsy report, all four shots produced mortal wounds.

In addition to the Ruger 10-22 rifle with which he shot the Butlers, Brown was carrying 75 rounds of ammunition in his pockets, a .22 handgun, and a fan-pak which contained latex gloves and additional ammunition. Police would later surmise that he intended to murder the Butlers and then commit suicide.

Jim and Suzanne Butler stayed with relatives for the next month, going home daily to retrieve the mail and check on the property. They have since moved back into their home with a certain feeling of cautious relief as the stalker and home invader's family still reside down the street. Other than some hard stares and occasional horn blaring, the couple has been free of harassment. ■

[Mark Walters is a NRA Certified Instructor in three disciplines, a member of NSSF and a vocal Second Amendment activist. He is a member of GeorgiaCarry.org and encourages readers to write him at theordinaryguy@comcast.net]

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