

Defending the Castle

My first house was eight-hundred and twenty square feet, in a “working class” neighborhood beyond the city limits at the edge of hundreds of acres of woods.

I was home alone one day. My days off were Thursday and Sunday, so this would have been a Thursday afternoon.

My (at-the-time) wife had the car with her (the other one must have been in the shop) so it looked like no one was home.

I was back in the bedroom and heard the front door open and someone come in. I glanced out the window but the car wasn't there so it wasn't my wife getting home early.

I grabbed the .22 rifle sitting in the corner and walked to the living room and the front door.

There, in the middle of the room looking a bit shocked, was a boy of around 10 years old. I wasn't pointing the rifle at him, but I had it ready and asked what he was doing in my house. He stammered that he was looking for me. I said *“Well, here I am. What do you want?”*

He couldn't come up with a plausible story and I told him to get out and to never set foot on my property again. As far as I know, he didn't.

A couple of weeks later I heard that several houses in the neighborhood had been burgled— with TVs being the most commonly stolen object. This kid wasn't big enough to carry most TVs of the era (mid to late 1980s), but he was big enough to scope out houses for an older sibling or a parent. I was glad I was paying attention and glad I looked scary enough that I didn't seem worth the risk.

But I did start locking the door when I was home alone.

My yard eventually became scary enough that no one wanted to come near my house, anyway. Not even the meter readers for the electric utility, who told my dad- their boss- that a Satan worshiper lived in that house. They came to this conclusion because there were skulls and strange “ritual objects” in the yard. It turns out they were scared of my tomahawk block and my sling target (which was a cow skull on a crude tripod). Plus, I didn't mow except for a narrow strip right around the house (I've never believed in mowing our lawns). Whatever works, right?

Some defense is active and some is passive. I support the use of both.