

6 People Who Took Justice Into Their Own (Insane) Hands

Real-life vigilantes are usually less like The Punisher and more like two drunken Australians who foiled the robbery of a fast food joint by clumsily flailing after the bad guys with their fists. But, on rare occasions, you get someone with just the right combination of opportunity, courage, and (in some cases) mental illness to take matters into their own hands:

David Hanley Stopped A Plane Hijacking With A Cadillac

Despite the billions of hours we collectively spend in airport security every day, hijackings aren't a very common threat. It wasn't always like that, though. In 1972 alone, 72 different airplanes were hijacked. Today, passengers complain about having to take off their shoes in a crowd of annoyed strangers -- in the '70s, they complained about getting taken to Cuba with a gun in their face. The skies were gripped in the fist of terror! But on June 23, 1972, a hero rose.

It was in St. Louis, where a madman named Martin J. McNally seized American Airlines Flight 119 while it was still on the ground. He was armed with a submachine gun and demanded parachutes and half a million dollars. While the police were delicately trying to defuse the situation, a random businessman was watching live coverage of the hijacking in a hotel bar 10 miles away. He was David Hanley, and he was about to earn the most spectacular DUI in history.

David had an awesome idea that ended in "this" and started with "screw." He got angry and told his friend, "Turn on the radio in a few minutes and you'll hear something that will rock the world." It was a little corny, and stupid since the news would be on the TV his friend was already watching, but David Hanley was a man of action, not words.

A few minutes later, Flight 119 was taxiing down the runway to take off. This is when David Hanley, world rocker, plowed through the airport fence in his wife's Cadillac convertible, sped past all manner of law enforcement, chased down the moving airplane, and fearlessly crashed into the Boeing 727's landing gear at 80 miles an hour. All of that is insane, and here's what's more insane: It worked.

McNally, the man who hijacked an airliner with a machine gun, actually said, "Gee whiz, that guy must be nuts!" It was a move so crazy, even the madman had to admire it. And more than that, it disabled the plane. Hanley suffered some serious injuries, but he beat up an entire airplane. The only fatality was Mrs. Hanley's Cadillac.

"Honey, I have good news. Your car died a hero."

"I'm divorcing you."

But, seriously though, she did actually divorce him.

You're probably thinking, "It was so simple! Why doesn't every hostage situation end like this?" Well, despite the bold ass-kickery of it all, it didn't help. McNally simply grabbed some hostages to shield himself from FBI snipers and stole a different plane. He parachuted out mid-flight, but dropped his gun

and the ransom money. The idiot was arrested a couple days later. He attempted to escape prison six years after his arrest by having a friend hijack a helicopter, but the plan was foiled by a second, completely unrelated vigilante. David Hanley didn't just foil McNally's crime: He started a vigilante trend that followed him his whole life.

77-Year-Old Don Alejo Took On A Cartel Siege

History has shown the world some pretty incredible last stands, but this may be the only one where the defending army is a single 77-year-old man. Don Alejo Garza Tamez had a farm in Mexico, a country recently plagued with drug cartel violence. You may have heard something about this.

It's ... actually become a bit of a problem.

In 2010, some drug cartel members came to Don Alejo and told him they wanted his farm. They weren't interested in buying it so much as just moving in after he fled for his life. They gave him 24 hours to comply. Don Alejo now had a few options. One: Give his farm to the cartel. Two: Call the police and hope they weren't corrupt. Don Alejo picked option three: KILL ALL OF THEM. The cartel didn't know this, but Old Farmer Tamez was a stubborn old man with an objectively absurd number of guns.

Don Alejo told all of his farmhands to take a long weekend. He spent the remaining hours of the ultimatum cleaning his massive arsenal and fortifying his house. He never thought twice about calling the cops, since, as we alluded to before, the police in his area were usually on the drug cartels' side.

By the time his 24 hours were up, Don Alejo's house was a fortress with a rifle at every door and window. When the cartel gunmen showed up, firing into the air like hooligans, Don Alejo just started picking them off one by one. He would fire a shot or two from one location, then rush across the house as quickly as his 77-year-old knees allowed. He'd take up a new firing position with a new gun, then blast new holes into the bewildered gunmen.

The cartel members fell into disarray, and it turned into a long, bullet-flying standoff. Don Alejo almost certainly went into this knowing it was his final act, and he was right. But he went out gunfighting, and the cartel had to literally blow up his house to kill him. When the bullets finally stopped coming from the rubble, the mostly killed cartel gunmen ran like hell, leaving behind four dead and two wounded (and we'll never know how many casualties they took with them). So not only did the cartel not get Don Alejo's farm, six of its members are now fertilizing his crops.

Andre Bamberski Apprehended His Daughter's Killer

This story starts tragically with a French girl named Kalinka Bamberski. She died in Germany in 1982 from an overdose of a date-rape drug given to her by her stepfather, a doctor named Dieter Krombach. Krombach was a vile sack of rat guts with a history of Cosbyish crimes, but Germany refused to prosecute him for Kalinka's death. France convicted him in absentia, but decades of extradition battles did nothing to bring him to justice. So Kalinka's father took justice into his own hands.

This is probably the least likely first sentence in the bio of a vigilante, but Andre Bamberski, Kalinka's father, was a French accountant. He fought and fought to get Krombach extradited through legal channels, yet nothing worked. Then, in 2009, 27 years after his daughter died, a French police station near the German border received an anonymous call. It was a man with a Russian accent telling them where to find Krombach, bound, gagged, and bleeding from his head. Minutes later, the rapist was rescued and arrested.

Who could have delivered this package? The obvious suspect was Andre Bamberski, the man nagging the world to make this happen for 27 years. Suspiciously, he was found in a nearby hotel with 19,000 euros in cash and no alibi. Bamberski said he didn't kidnap Krombach, but he agreed to let someone else do it. It was a story so thin it may as well have been a full confession, but no one is going to throw the book at an elderly accountant for roughing up his daughter's murderer. They set his bail at 19,000 euros, which turned out to be just a lovely coincidence.

"Oh, and you'll have to do community service in, like, your kitchen. In your free time. You know, whenever."

If the intrigue surrounding the case has you on the edge of your seat, you should know: The mysterious Russian informant was Andre doing a funny accent, and if Andre had an accomplice, the courts didn't care. They decided it was just barely illegal to beat the stuffing out of the fugitive that killed your daughter, and ultimately handed him a one-year suspended sentence.

The Gulabi Gang Are Stick-Fighters For Women

So far, most of the vigilantes in this article have been relatively ordinary people -- farmers, soldiers, accountants. The Gulabi Gang from India are a little closer to how we usually picture vigilantes. They dress in bright colors and beat criminals with thematic weapons.

The Gulabi Gang patrol neighborhoods in bright pink saris armed with lathis, traditional Indian fighting sticks. The country has a terrifying female abuse problem, and poor people don't get much police protection. The Gulabi Gang was formed to fix the problem.

They came together in 2006 after a woman named Sampat Pal Devi kicked the stuffing out of her neighbor for abusing his wife. She had learned how to stick-fight when she was younger, and it had finally paid off. It hit her that smashing sticks into rapists and wife-beaters was just crazy enough to work, and since she formed the group, over 400,000 volunteers (most of them women) have joined. They are spread across 11 territories in India and have developed the perfect way to fight Indian crime:

First, they report the crime to the police. This is so often useless that it's more of a technicality than anything else. Second, they go to the man who is beating or abusing his wife and tell him to stop. If he refuses, they beat him with sticks. You may have been expecting some kind of twist, but no. They just beat him with sticks. This often leaves the man unable to abuse any more women and converts his wife into an enthusiastic member of their gang.

It's like Whacking Day, only targeting animals who actually deserve it. Don't misunderstand -- the gang is more than women hitting men with sticks. The Gulabi Gang travels to the poorest villages in India to make sure the government is properly distributing food and recognizing basic human rights. They fight against child marriages, give victims of abuse a safe environment, and help prevent "dowry death," a horrible thing that's exactly what it sounds like. They also help loving couples get married and work to undo India's caste system that keeps women and poor people oppressed. We led with it, but beating rapists with fighting sticks barely scratches the surface of what they do. It's mostly just a job perk.

Marcus Luttrell Hunted Down His Dog's Killers

Marcus Luttrell is what some would call a quadruple badass. He was 1) a Navy SEAL who 2) was the only survivor of a clash between his SEAL team and the Taliban back in 2005, where 3) he was badly injured in the fight and had to walk and crawl seven miles to get away, then 4) had Hollywood base a pro-military, American propaganda movie on his life, called *Lone Survivor*.

But it turns out *John Wick* could have also been Luttrell's biopic. When he returned home from his disastrous trip to Afghanistan, he was given a puppy to help him get through the trauma. He named it DASY, an acronym for his team members he lost in the fight. You've probably already guessed this from this entry's title, but the story is about to get sad.

One night Luttrell was at his house when out of nowhere, he heard a gunshot. He quickly grabbed his pistol and ran to check on his mother, who lived next door. After making sure she was OK, he went down to the road and saw something horrible: His dog had been shot. And not only that, two men were standing in a ditch with it, laughing.

Luttrell immediately went after the two men. He ended up in a high-speed car chase that spanned 40 miles and reached speeds over 100 mph. During the chase, he stayed on the line with a 911 operator and told them he needed authorities because, and we quote, "If I catch them, I'm going to kill them."

Thanks to Luttrell's help and maniacal pursuit, the police were able to catch the suspects. The two were found guilty of cruelty to a non-livestock animal, which is a felony but seems an entirely inadequate way to describe the crime. Still, we're sure these garbage dog-killers are happy with any sentence that keeps a giant prison wall between them and Marcus Luttrell.

Los Pepes Killed A Cocaine Empire

Pablo Escobar turned most of the city of Miami into cocaine during the '80s. He was so incredibly rich that he is said to have spent \$2,500 a month on rubber bands to hold his massive piles of filthy drug money together. The government eventually decided to go after him over the whole "murderous, expansive drug empire" thing, but Escobar had a plan. He decided that if the government was bothering him, he should just get rid of the government.

He began car-bombing the crap out of Colombia and put a standing bounty of \$3,000 on every police officer in the city of Medellin. He started assassinating politicians, judges, government officials, and even the minister of justice. The Colombian and U.S. governments cracked down hard, but Escobar simply paid communists to take over the Palace of Justice, burn down the building, and murder half the Colombian Supreme Court. We repeat: HALF THE COLOMBIAN SUPREME COURT.

Escobar had spies everywhere due to his policy of *plata o plomo*, which we think means, "Take this bribe and be on my side or I will murder you and everyone you've ever met." The government formed a special 200-man incorruptible police squad known as Search Bloc to kill Escobar. Escobar killed 30 of them in the first 15 days. Many Colombians decided that being at the mercy of a murderous drug lord was wrong and rallied behind Luis Galan, a presidential candidate who stood against wanton, rampant violence. Escobar had him assassinated at a campaign rally. Then he blew up an entire passenger jet in an attempt to kill his replacement (who ended up not being on that plane). Also, we should mention, Escobar had a personal zoo full of deadly and exotic animals. He was a full James Bond villain in a movie where every James Bond gets killed in Act 1.

So, who finally brought Escobar down? It wasn't a government sting or a police raid. It was a shadowy group of vigilante assassins known only as Los Pepes. Like all good assassins, they appeared suddenly, seemingly from nowhere. One day, Escobar's henchmen started dying, justice system be damned. Obviously, details are fuzzy when a network of well-intentioned murderers appears, but the group was mainly made up of paramilitaries, police, and rival drug lords -- basically everyone who hated Pablo Escobar. It's apparently hard to take over thousands of drug territories and kill hundreds of people without making a few enemies.

Los Pepes were as ruthless as Escobar. They considered working with the drug lord in any capacity a capital offense. They very publicly assassinated huge numbers of Escobar's men on a daily basis and left signs around their necks signed "Los Pepes." Whenever Escobar set off another car bomb, Los Pepes would just kill some of his lawyers or money launderers. Or they would blow up one of his houses, massacre some drug-related facility, or, in one case, burn down his prized collection of classic cars. One could make the argument that Los Pepes very nearly killed the phrase "two wrongs don't make a right."

It got to the point where top cartel members, hitmen, and lawyers began turning themselves in to avoid a Los Pepes slaying. And, as his support network dissolved, Escobar himself died in a shootout with Search Bloc, an organization with a lot of alleged ties to Los Pepes. It was a murdernado of a life and a double murdernado of a death.