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English 1  
The Use of The Second Amendment In The Home

The United States Constitution says that U.S. Citizens have the right to bear arms. Even though this guarantee was written with no constraints, there are now laws that limit certain aspects of gun ownership. The reasons for gun control fall under the flag of public safety. Though there are many safety reasons why private ownership of firearms should be banned, these arguments are outweighed not only by the need for protection, but because the limitation of ownership rights could become dangerous to personal freedom.

When the U.S. Constitution was written, some delegates thought Militia was military forces because the Federal Government had its own army to protect the people. The second amendment was made in response to the fear of being helpless before a standing professional army. "Aristotle said that decisions of a leader 'backed by a standing army' would be different from those made by a leader 'awed by the fear of an armed people'" (The Commission on the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution, 28). Elbridge Gerry, a delegate to the Constitutional convention from Massachusetts, was an activist for the right of the Militia to bear arms. When asked what use a Militia has, he responded: "What sir, is the use of a Militia? It is to prevent the establishment of a standing army, the bane of liberty" (The Commission of the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution, 26). On December 15, 1791, Virginia ratified the Bill of Rights, making it, with the second amendment, part of the constitution (The Commission for the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution, 5).

The Constitution does not guarantee gun ownership for just any reason. The second amendment makes it clear that only a well regulated Militia needs arms. "As recently as 1980 the Supreme Court noted that 'The second amendment guarantees no right to keep and bear a firearm that does not have some reasonable relationship to the preservation or efficiency of a well regulated Militia'" (Isaacson, 163). The meaning of the second amendment, as interpreted by pro-gun control supporters, was to enable citizens to protect themselves from and oppressive government, not to allow anyone the power to shoot another human being.

The main reason for gun control boils down to the want for personal and public safety. One upsetting fact about guns is they increase the severity of a crime. "With guns, unlike knives or hands, rage and recklessness are likely to be translated cleanly and quickly into death" (Isaacson, 162). Another upsetting fact is that hand guns are people killers, that is their only use. "With fewer handguns, there are fewer chances to use them. It is as simple as that" (Isaacson, 162). People with guns are more likely to take a life than with upclose and personal weapons like the knife or the fist.

Gun control activists believe that a ban on hand guns would gradually deplete the number of handguns in circulation. This would slowly take care of the cheap Saturday Night Specials, which hold no use to police or sports men, because they only last about 10 years. Little pistols are not needed by ordinary people and can easily be concealed by street criminals. "One in every nine Americans has already been threatened or shot by someone wielding a hand gun" (Isaacson, 162). This statistic shows the effect of the availability of handguns on America. The handgun is not needed except when a person wants to hide a weapon. For home defense, the shotgun is more effective with its wide blasting stopping power, while a handgun has to be aimed exactly on target.

A big problem with keeping guns in the house is the curiosity and ignorance of children. Children are more capable of finding guns than they are given credit for. "Children under the age of 15 suffer approximately one-third of the deaths caused by guns in the home" (Cruit, 18). Even if a child is well behaved and listens when they are told not to touch a gun, they may still succumb to peer pressure and let their friends play with a gun. Not only is a gun dangerous to

children, but the ammunition is as well. A child could be seriously hurt by an exploding bullet which can be set off by being hit by a rock, a nail, or being thrown into the fireplace. Children are unpredictable and they do not know the effect of a gun on themselves or their friends.

Having a gun in the house can also be dangerous because of temperament, rage, and impulse because murder is usually a crime of passion. "If you or someone in your family has a hot temper that leads to rather violent reactions, you should not keep a gun around" (Cruit, 23). Guns are an easy solution to problems in an enraged person's mind. They are quick and clean and most of all impersonal. Enraged people are impulsive and handguns make impulsive actions deadly. "In an all-too-typical case: A retired railroad worker in San Francisco who bought a gun to protect against muggers used it in 1982 to kill a neighbor in an argument over a parking space" (Isaacson, 163).

A gun makes suicide easy and instantaneous. Thousands of people a year commit suicide because of hopelessness and depression. "Although there's no way of knowing if all these people would have taken their lives by other means if a gun had been unavailable, it is reasonable to assume that some of them would not have done so" (Cruit, 17). According to Julian S. Hatcher, in *Firearms Investigation, Identification, and Evidence*, most people would not actually commit suicide if there were no guns available. He states "The chance of suicide if no firearm is present is relatively remote" (Hatcher, 284). Many people who take pills or slit their wrists think better of it before it is too late and ask for help.

Alcohol and drugs play a big role in the misuse of firearms. People who have substance abuse problems may play and joke around with a firearm, creating a hazardous situation. "Fifty-two percent of all murderers act under the influence of liquor or drugs" (Cruit, 17). Drinking or doing drugs mix no better with guns than they do with driving cars. The real danger is that most people with substance problems do not admit to it and therefore do not make a responsible decision with relation to their problem, when deciding to own a gun or not.

There are other ways to protect yourself than having a gun. Some of these ways are having fortified outer as well as inner doors, a good burglar alarm, and a good neighborhood watch organization. Doors need to be made of strong, solid wood and any windows in them should be out of reach of the inner locks in case they are broken. "If you have one or more windows in your door, examine the possibility of breaking one of them from the outside, reaching in, and unlocking the latch" (Cox, 13). With an alarm system one can deter a criminal because most will leave at the sound of an alarm to avoid getting caught. The police can also be alerted with some systems so a burglar will probably go to another, less troublesome house. "Now there are all kinds of options available, including automatic dialing machines to alert a central monitoring station or the police" (Cox, 70). Neighborhood watch is a very effective means of security. In neighborhood watch people are designated to watch the neighborhood at different times to make sure it's secure. When suspicious things happen, these people call the police or a civilian base station, "In all communities, the single most effective aid to deterring crime is the neighborhood civilian patrol organization" (Mc Gurn, 33). Anti gun activists believe that it is not necessary to have guns in the home when there are various ways to protect yourself without them.

The Constitution says that citizens have the right to bear arms in the second amendment. Like most of the amendments, the second is written very broadly so that it can be interpreted in different ways to fit the changing times. To be able to protect oneself is the most basic right of individualism and the right to bear arms is a guarantee of individual freedom. "It protects a basic liberty, one which as a last resort can help us protect all other rights from those who would oppress us" (Isaacson, 164). One of the main reasons why we have the second amendment is so we can fight an oppressive government and keep our personal freedoms. "The right of a citizen to keep and bear arms has justly been considered the palladium of the liberties of a republic, since it offers a strong moral check against the usurping and arbitrary powers of rulers" (Isaacson, 165).

Though guns increase the severity of the crimes committed, the problem is VXX

there. One needs to be able to react to an attack with the same amount of ux: that one is being attacked with. If the person who is acting violently towards another person has a gun, and the second person does not, he or she will not be able to defend themselves because a gun is a long range weapon that cannot be fought against. One can relate this situation to the differences between the attacking U.S. Military and the Army of Iraq, who in comparison, were virtually defenseless. A rational person would want to have their own army as powerful as the opposing one.

Home owned guns are not only dangerous to society, as gun control activists say, the actually can contribute the safety of the society. In Hatcher's book he tells of a situation in a small South Carolina town. Some outside labor organizers threatened to take over private property. The next morning a group of local farmers arrived in town with their shotguns. They were not for either side but private property was sacred to them and the organizers left hurriedly. "It is remarkable today that those regions where the family shotgun stands in the corner of the living room or over the mantel in the style of our ancestors, are almost completely free of organized crime. Neither tyranny or crime flourishes where citizens both own and can use weapons" (Hatcher, 332-333).

The problem with the curiosity of children can be easily avoided. All an adult gun owner needs to do is find a way in which they can hide gun and stay one step ahead of the child. "You must stay well ahead of your children. Don't wait until your kids have grown enough to be able to get to the gun before you move it, you should revise your safety precautions well in advance of that time. To do otherwise would invite disaster" (Cruit, 20). Trigger locks and drawer locks with well hidden keys make the problem of children trivial.

According to gun control activists, there are better ways to protect oneself from intruders than firearms. If a person really wants to get into a home a door is not going to stop them. "One basic fact that you should be aware of, whether you have a gun or not, is that an intruder, whether a burglar, rapist, drug addict, or psycho, can get into your home if he wants to badly enough" (Cruit, 15). No matter how strong a door is, a man with a crowbar can still get in. No matter how much noise a person makes breaking down a door or setting off an alarm, they will still have enough time to get to the homeowner before the police get there. Even when the police are called immediately they still take time to get there and sometimes they do not come at all. "Once a criminal is inside your home, he needs very little time to rape or to kill" (Cruit, 16). If the citizens are disarmed, what are they to do about a maniac who plans to hurt them and will not be stopped by a door or an alarm.

The neighborhood watch, though very effective, does not always work. Most civilians who watch the neighborhoods are asleep when the majority of crimes happen, in the middle of the night. Looking at a statement made by McGurn in *The Woman's Bible for Survival in a Violent Society*, "People become mobilized, they do the job and when the problem subsides, so do they" (Mc Gurn, 33), it can be seen that after a problem has ended people stop paying attention. At this time a person could break into a house unnoticed by neighbors. Now that nobody is watching, the door has been broken down and a person is inside the house, the homeowner is left to defend themselves. One big advantage of a gun is that it is a long range weapon which means long range defence. This means one does not have to get too close to and assailant when stopping them. "Stay at least eight feet away, and make sure that no one gets anywhere near him or between the two of you" (Cruit, 141). With a gun one is safe to sit and wait for the police, making the criminal stay in one place, without having to touch them and endanger oneself in the process.

Although guns are very dangerous and are used in all sorts of criminal activity, they are already out there and the benefits of having them outweigh the drawbacks. U.S. citizens have the right to bear arms so that the most basic rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness can be preserved with force if necessary. Protecting ourselves from others with deadly force preserves our right to life. Protecting ourselves from the oppression of a government, with weapons that can threaten it, preserves our right to liberty. The preservation of both

these rights contributes directly to the pursuit of happiness because a human being cannot be happy without life and liberty.