

# Opinion

## Shoot-outs are dead — long live gun control

We have all heard the statistics. The thousands of deaths and injuries in this country compared to other countries that have some sort of gun control laws. Oswald shot John Kennedy with a gun he bought by mail order from the National Rifle Association's (NRA) magazine. Sirhan Sirhan used a .22 caliber pistol to kill Robert Kennedy. James Brady was left permanently paralyzed when he was shot with a gun that cost 30 dollars. The drive-by shootings, the shots fired by drunk, angry or hate filled people are all made more probable by the accessibility of guns in our society.



Jill Webb

should have no limits on handgun accessibility: 1) gun control laws are unconstitutional, 2) people need handguns for protection and, 3) if guns were illegal then only criminals would have guns, or take care of the crime problem and gun control will not be needed. I'll begin with the myth that gun control is unconstitutional.

The second amendment states "A well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed." As Robert J. Spitzer wrote in the June issue of America, "The Supreme Court has ruled that the Second Amendment safeguards the collective right of citizens to be protected by an armed military, not the individual right to carry any type of gun..." The fact that we do not have a sweeping gun control act is not because of constitutionality it is because of the political clout of gun control opponents. The Supreme Court has consistently upheld gun control laws.

Second, handgun owners often say they need their guns for protection. There are 120 million privately owned guns, and 75 percent of gun owners say self-protection is at least part of the reason for having firearms. But the owners of the guns are not killing the burglars; they are killing innocent people. In a recent study in Washington state, it was found that for each gunshot slaying for self-protection in a gun owning home, there were 43 suicides, homicides or accidental deaths by firearms. To break that down further, when someone was shot with a firearm, 84 percent of the time it was a suicide, 10 percent were slayings during an argument, three percent were accidents, and just over two percent were for self protection. Of those, .05 percent were slayings of bur-



glars. Other than suicides, 55 percent of victims were family members, and 30 percent of the victims were friends and acquaintances. Obviously, the price our society pays in innocent lives is not enough to justify "self-protection."

Finally, gun control opponents say that if we made guns illegal, then only criminals would have guns. This is a catch phrase that does not have much basis in truth. Most organizations do not want to make guns illegal. The seven to 14 day wait to get a background check only makes it harder for individuals with mental problems and felons to get

handguns, not other people. Also, continuing the same thinking, some say that we should crack down on crime, and the need for gun control will disappear. I'm all for cracking down on crime, and part of doing that is taking away criminals' guns. Also, the cost that society pays for handguns is not just reflected in the crime statistics, it is also part of the suicide statistics as stated above. Gun control opponents cry out for tougher penalties while they fight prevention. They speak about how terrible the killing is, while they cherish the instruments of death.

People have to take written and practical exams to get a driver's license. They have to because we know the automobile is dangerous if not used responsibly. We should have the same of laws and exams for guns, which are more dangerous, more accessible, and more deadly. The NRA's agenda with lives, and it is time we, as citizens, looked at the death around and began to pass some laws to make certain that guns are not available to killers.

Jill Webb is a senior secondary education major and columnist for The Battalion.

## Protesting in a parking lot is a today thing to do

It is a bit distressing to see what has apparently become of the art of protest in this proud country, a country founded on the spirit of dissent.



Lewis Grizzard

One needs only to look at this week's Democratic National Convention to realize the truth of my words.

There is something called a "Designated Protest Site" across the street from the Omni on Marietta Street. You're not supposed to protest anywhere else.

There is even a schedule for protesters.

"O.K.," the protest director will say, "Nationalists Movement's time is up. Somebody tell the Legislative Equality for Gays and Lesbians they're on."

Isn't protesting supposed to be more or less spontaneous? How can you have a schedule for protesters? Do you think the Boston Tea Party had to obtain an official time?

Remember the 1960s. People made careers out of protesting back then, and nobody told them where or when they could march around with signs.

Do you know what would have happened in 1968 if somebody had tried to build a designated protest site?

The protesters would have burned it down.

A former protester from that era was talking about the way it used to be:

"When I was in college," she said, "I

had guys calling and say, 'Hey, you want to go out for pizza or burn down the ROTC building?'"

I've looked over the protest schedule, and nothing sparked my interest.

There was a "die-in" Monday morning at 11 to promote the understanding of AIDS victims. We should feel great compassion people afflicted with that disease, but a "die-in" isn't exactly how I want to start my week.

Tuesday, from 9 until 10:30 p.m., the Palestine Solidarity Committee will be on stage. I'll have to miss that, too. I refuse to involve myself with the problems of the Middle East past 7:30. If I do, I have heartburn the next morning.

There's an interesting one Wednesday at 3 p.m. That's when we'll hear from the U.S. Congo Friendship Committee, a New York-based group that opposes the regime of Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire. Didn't he used to be a place kicker at Clemson?

Thursday, the best bet seems to be Students for Jackson at 9 p.m. One thing Students for Jackson want is bilingual education. I'm against that. Bilinguals should not be allowed to go to school with normal children.

A group seeking legalization of marijuana already had its demonstration. "We like pot, and we smoke it a lot," they chanted.

My own activist group, Spam-eaters of America, have decided the protests at the convention are being so regulated, we're not even going to hold a rally.

Too bad.

I thought, "We like Spam and we don't give a damn," had a nice ring.

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## Mail Call

### Call him Deep Throat

EDITOR:

Woodward and Bernstein look out! Richard Williams is boldly forging a new path of investigative reporting. His gripping, in-depth analysis of the selection process has revealed atrocities of a magnitude not seen since World War II.

May the conspiratorial Board of Regents suffer eternal hell upon earth for its effort to select the President of Texas A&M.

Come on, Mr. Williams, turn the page... we're all getting a little "Board" of your monomaniacal columns!!

Mark Cahill '91  
Drue Garrett '91

### It's a mystery

EDITOR:

We have just one question....

Why is it that visitors can park in the student parking lots, yet students can't park in the visitors' lots?

Enquiring minds want to know!

Dave Mendoza '88  
Rosanna Mendoza '90

### In your debt, Mr. Hyde

EDITOR:

Old Ag Hyde, I couldn't resist the opportunity for some questions and comments about your guest column "Homosexuals, please go home" of July 22. How refreshing to read something written by a calm, rational, unbiased, objective guest columnist!

I had a little trouble following some of the logic in your column. Let me get this straight. Will the President's Commission on AIDS find the cure the minute they "admit the truth about AIDS?" I'm afraid that I can't find the connection. You seem to say this is a crucial step. Have you notified Everett C. Koop of this information?

Most people would agree with you that the sexual revolution charged some of the views of the Judeo-Christian morals and ideals or even "destroyed" them. Which of these ideals is the basis of our Constitution? Is the Constitution in danger? It's a good thing we still have our basic freedoms, or we couldn't have this public discussion.

You say that "even you may be the next AIDS victim." It's a good thing we have conscientious folk like you to warn the population about AIDS. Why, next thing you know, they'll be trying to tell people that you have to have sex with an AIDS carrier, share a hypodermic needle with one or something like that to get the disease! Would you believe that some columnists use certain phrases like "you may be the next AIDS victim" to scare people into angering AIDS victims and carriers? Thank goodness we have people like you to educate the populace.

You mean that our administration dollars pay for the GSS? That's funny, the budget office told me that funding for student organizations comes from private donations. Gee, though, it's good to know that you stay on top of things for us.

Rob Pannett '89

### Come on, you Coppers

EDITOR:

Since June 1, I have seen at least a dozen people on mopeds and bicycles being pulled over by University Police. Yet we read weekly in the police report about cars being broken into, property stolen, and, most seriously, young ladies being assaulted.

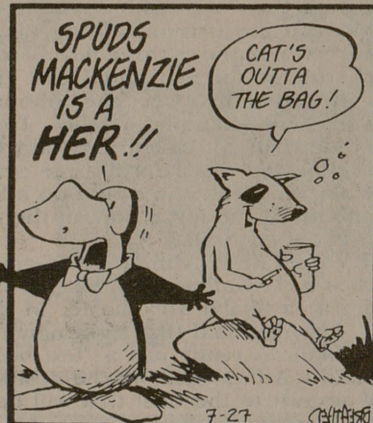
Sounds like the priorities of our police department are screwed up a bit. There are some serious security problems around here and they need to be addressed in a more intense, conscientious manner. It's time for these money-grubbing bureaucrats to look past the dollar signs and start attacking real problems.

Patrick Hays '90

Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length, but will make every effort to retain the author's intent. Each letter must be signed and must include the classification, address and telephone number of the writer.

## BLOOM COUNTY

by Berke Breathed



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