

Orlando Sentinel Commentary  
Oct. 4, 2007

## Gun control doesn't protect us -- guns do

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Tiffany Barwick and Michael Ruschak asked the cops to protect them from Barwick's former boyfriend.

She told them he had harassed her, threatened to kill her, bought a gun and sent an image of her riddled with bullet holes.

A Seminole deputy advised her to get a protective court order. We all know how effective they are against the criminally obsessed.

The deputy also would send her complaint to the State Attorney's Office, which is akin to tossing it into the Grand Canyon.

There is a lesson in all this.

The cops can't protect you.

The cops could not protect Erin Belanger and her five friends who were beaten to death by Troy Victorino and his band of thugs in Deltona.

She begged police for help in the days leading up to the assault.

"Can I ask you a question?" she said to a 911 dispatcher. "What can I do?"

Or better yet, what could they do?

Nothing.

I am not knocking the cops, just acknowledging reality. There are a thousand threats in the Big City. Picking out the real ones from the bluster is an impossible task.

Given this reality, given that Central Florida is turning into a bad Mad Max sequel, my liberal belief in gun control is getting wobbly.

I'm not advocating selling machine guns and cop-killer bullets at Wal-Mart. But if somebody faces an immediate threat, I have a hard time understanding why they need to wait three days or longer to buy a handgun for self-protection.

Shouldn't we be allowed to go to a reputable gun store, get a lesson in how to use a specific weapon and buy it after the background check?

The stated reason against this is that some ill-tempered lout will blow a fuse, run off to Guns R Us, buy a Glock and open fire on his spouse, neighbor, boss or co-worker.

One might assume someone this prone to venting with a volley already has a gun, locked and loaded.

A 2000 report in the Journal of the American Medical Association, hardly part of the gun lobby, showed cooling-off periods did not reduce homicide rates or overall suicide rates.

After examining 51 studies on various gun-control laws, including mandatory waiting periods, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention concluded in 2003 that there was "insufficient evidence" to say they reduced gun violence.

It seems we pass laws that feel good without a lot of proof they are doing any good.

Maybe I need a good slap from Ted Kennedy, but I almost buy the National Rifle Association argument that the primary target of gun-control laws would be the people who shoot them at ranges, then lovingly oil and ogle them before safely locking them up.

As far as keeping guns away from bad guys, gun-control laws work as well as crack cocaine-control laws. My footnoted reference on this would be our crime blog.

We even have high school kids in Orange County firing guns in the air at high school athletic events.

If there were no guns, I would say allow no guns. But since all the wrong people already have them, and the cops can't do much about it except match their firepower, then it may well be time to arm thyself, citizen.

When Florida liberalized permits for concealed weapons in the 1980s, critics predicted a Wild West bloodbath. It never happened.

Responsible gun owners don't use guns irresponsibly. Go figure.

Until the cops get better at enforcing gun control on those who shouldn't have guns, a better alternative for the rest of us is gun education, gun classes and secure gun storage.

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