

The Critic

JON STUBBS

Something we can all agree on : stricter gun safety laws

As the billionaire gun industry is being backfired upon with lawsuits of heartbroken parents and others who have lost loved ones due to accidental shootings, the NRA and other Second Amendment activists blame the owners of the weapons for not taking the proper safety precautions. So exactly what are the proper safety precautions? To name a few, adamant use of trigger locks, separating ammunition from the weapon, and never leaving a loaded weapon anywhere easily accessible to children all reduce the risk of having a family member become an accidental gunshot victim. These all sound like common sense. However, the Second Amendment guarantees the right to bear arms, not the absolute right to be free of stupidity.

considering that there are about as many guns as people in the U.S. (235 million), many households own more than one firearm. Many of these guns may be claimed to be used solely for hunting or recreational shooting, but just as many of them are intended for protection. It may be an American citizen's Constitutional right to keep a loaded weapon on the nightstand, but it's still stupid. I own several guns, but I don't sleep with them. We're not that intimate. I like to use a bat for protection (even though my neighborhood is not exactly a retirement community). It's hard to accidentally kill yourself with a Louisville Slugger. However, if you want to up your chances infinitely of killing yourself, your spouse or one of your children, lock and load.

state of Pennsylvania, one has to pass a written exam and then an actual driving test. To buy a handgun one only has to be 21, have a felony-free criminal record, and be mentally competent. No test required, no license needed, just come back in five days and your gun will be ready for you, Sir.

I'm a strong supporter of the Second Amendment and an even stronger supporter of gun safety. Gun owners should be required to pass a written as well as an oral exam, where they must demonstrate the proper use of safety mechanisms. Gun owners should be required to purchase a trigger lock or barrel lock for every new gun they purchase. If the firearm owners of America are as responsible as the NRA claims them to be, they will welcome such

legislation.

These laws won't reduce violent crime on the streets, but it may cut back on accidental shootings in the home. Exams won't guarantee that guns fall into safe, intelligent hands, but it's a hell of a lot more than we're doing now.

In this time of radical conservatism and liberalism, politicians and activists are arguing for stricter or less gun control laws. Gun safety is left in the middle. As we argue over if it is Constitutional to own a rocket launcher, mothers and fathers are leaving unlocked, loaded weapons in their children's reach.

Jon Stubbs is features editor of the Beacon. His column appears every three weeks.

About 40% of all households in America own at least one gun. And

To get a driver's license in the

A Flower in the Garden of Life We all have the power

SHANNON WEBER

Have you ever gone to a sporting event that you weren't too crazy about and wanted to be somewhere else? Then when you are in the company of the enthusiastic athletes, cheerleaders and fans, you were glad you came? I remember going to a game and how the enthusiasm from the cheerleaders went to the fans and then went to me. A complete change had come over me. I was glad I was there to cheer the team on. Cheerleaders aren't the only ones with enthusiasm, though.

When was the last time you were enthusiastic about something? Maybe it was before going on Spring Break or working on a project. People in everyday life are enthusiastic about something. According to Jim Davidson's editorial, *Enthusiasm:*

Power just waiting to be used, the point that we should not miss is that the magic power of enthusiasm is already there, with each of us, just waiting to be used. When we are enthusiastic, we can rise to new heights, achieve success or improve a relationship. I remember auditioning for a play in high school. We were told we had to convince the judges that we were going to win the game on Friday. I mustered up all the enthusiasm I had to convince the judges and landed the lead role in the play. To unleash that amount of energy takes a lot from a person, but can lead to a greater achievement.

When you go to the check-out line at a store, do you go to the clerk that acts happy to serve you or the one

that would rather serve you on a cracker? Most people would rather be around someone who is enthusiastic, upbeat and positive than someone who is not. Another example is a representative for an organization. If the representative is excited about the organization, they can draw new members easily. Enthusiasm draws people in to those that have it. When you are with those positive people the enthusiasm rubs off onto you and from you to someone else. People want to be with others that give off a positive attitude. I know when I am feeling down, I like to hang out with those that are upbeat. It helps me get over the sadness and energy to move on.

How could something so great,

that's contagious and brings people together have a downfall? Jim Davidson's answer to this is when our enthusiasm becomes misguided, meaning we get enthusiastic about things that have little or no lasting value. There is a time to get excited and there is a time not to. He's right. If we pour our energy into something useless we feel drained. It needs to be used for things that really matter in life. So getting enthusiastic about homework would be a good thing?

Go ahead and unlock the power of enthusiasm deep inside you. Put it into something that is worthwhile. You may just surprise yourself.

Shannon Weber is the news editor of the Beacon. Her column appears every three weeks.

Gun users, not makers, responsible for safety

By Robert Funk Daily Kansan University of Kansas

Two Brooklyn teen-agers recently were playing with a gun they had bought on the black market when one shot the other in the head. The wounded teen lived and sued the gun industry. A New York jury found several gun makers responsible for the accidental shooting.

The decision, although controversial, opens the door to similar lawsuits in other cities such as Chicago, New Orleans and Miami. It's not really important to understand why the decision was controversial or to evaluate its value as precedent for future suits. It is important to ask why the jury blamed manufacturers for the actions of an individual.

I'll make my point by telling a story. A boy started playing with toy guns (as many boys do), and his parents started to teach him the difference between toy guns and real guns. They told him that although it was OK to point and shoot play guns at the other kids, one must never do that with real

guns. Toy guns don't hurt people, they said, but real guns do. Real guns, like those in Dad's gun cabinet, were very dangerous and were not for kids.

When he got older, his dad (a former Army drill sergeant) carefully introduced him to real guns. The boy started out shooting a BB rifle. He was taught that you always keep the gun pointed at the ground and that you never, ever point it at people. He was taught to be very careful where he shot the gun and to study the background to see whether there was anything there that should be avoided. He was taught to keep the gun unloaded whenever possible and always to use the safety. He was taught that the gun was not to be fired in town. In fact, it never should be out of the gun cabinet except for appropriate use or cleaning. The young man was taught never to horse around with the gun or to show it off to friends.

He slowly moved up the gun ladder, so to speak. He began shooting a .22-caliber rifle and a .410-gauge shotgun. He started with bolt actions, then moved up to semiautomatics. He learned how to shoot a handgun,

again starting with a BB pistol and working his way up. The young man did a lot of hunting and a lot of target shooting in those early years. By the time he was ready to move out of his parents' home, he was fairly well-versed in the responsible use and care of firearms.

Living on his own, he continued to enjoy guns. He no longer enjoyed hunting, but he still enjoyed target shooting. He began collecting firearms. He bought handguns, rifles and shotguns. He got into more exotic weapons, such as TEC-9s, SKSs, AK-47s and tactical shotguns.

The formative years of Timothy McVeigh, perhaps? Nope. The story is autobiographical.

I'm just a mild-mannered student trudging through his final year of classes and preparing to start a career in business. I don't belong to a militia. I'm not even a NRA member. In fact, I'm all for practical gun control such as waiting periods and background checks.

Although I probably have enough dangerous weapons to make most people nervous, that kid in Brooklyn

with the stolen handgun is much more dangerous than I'll ever be. Why? Because my parents did their job.

They taught me to own and use guns responsibly. They taught me to respect the property of others. Most importantly, they taught me to respect life.

One of two things happened in New York. Either the teen-agers' parents were AWOL when they should have been doing their job, or the kid knew about the dangers of firearms and simply put that information aside. If you want to hold someone responsible for what happened in Brooklyn, look to the parents or the kid, as appropriate. Don't blame an inanimate object, and don't blame the people who make them.

Guns don't kill people, people kill people. It's an old cliché, but it still rings true. We can't make the world completely safe, no matter how hard we try. People need to take responsibility for their own actions, and we need to place that responsibility on them.

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A view from the lighthouse Interracial friendships are important

Interracial friendships are an asset that everyone needs to possess at least once in their life. Interracial friendships cause people to learn and experience different cultures. Through being with friends of a different race, one can learn how different their friend's family life, outlook on life in general, values, and religion are as compared to their own. By experiencing a different way of life, one may change their ways or perspective on certain issues.

The Multi-Cultural Council at Behrend is one such place that students can find people of all different races. Everlasting friendships can be formed through activities that the Multi-Cultural Council sponsors.

There is no reason why one should stay within their own culture, because

this limits one's knowledge and experiences. Limiting oneself to one's race is a sign of ignorance and inferiority.

Being exposed to different races plays an integral role in a person's development. It causes one to learn about himself, as a person. It also demonstrates one's acceptance of other races. And, most importantly, it broadens one's experiences.



Letters to the editor: behrcoll2@aol.com

Stereotypically Greek

By Michael Frawley Assistant Editor

What is a stereotype? Webster's dictionary defines a stereotype as, "something conforming to a fixed or general pattern." Now while I do agree that in some cases stereotypes that are given to certain groups are wrong, most people will agree that stereotypes do not grow up overnight, and in some cases are well deserved.

While I hate to keep the argument about fraternities and sororities going, I feel that I must reply to this ongoing discussion. While I may not be a member of the Greek family, I still feel that I am qualified to respond to the editorial my colleague wrote last issue (Going Greek; a lifelong enrichment, 3/4/99) from what I have seen and observed in my three years at Behrend.

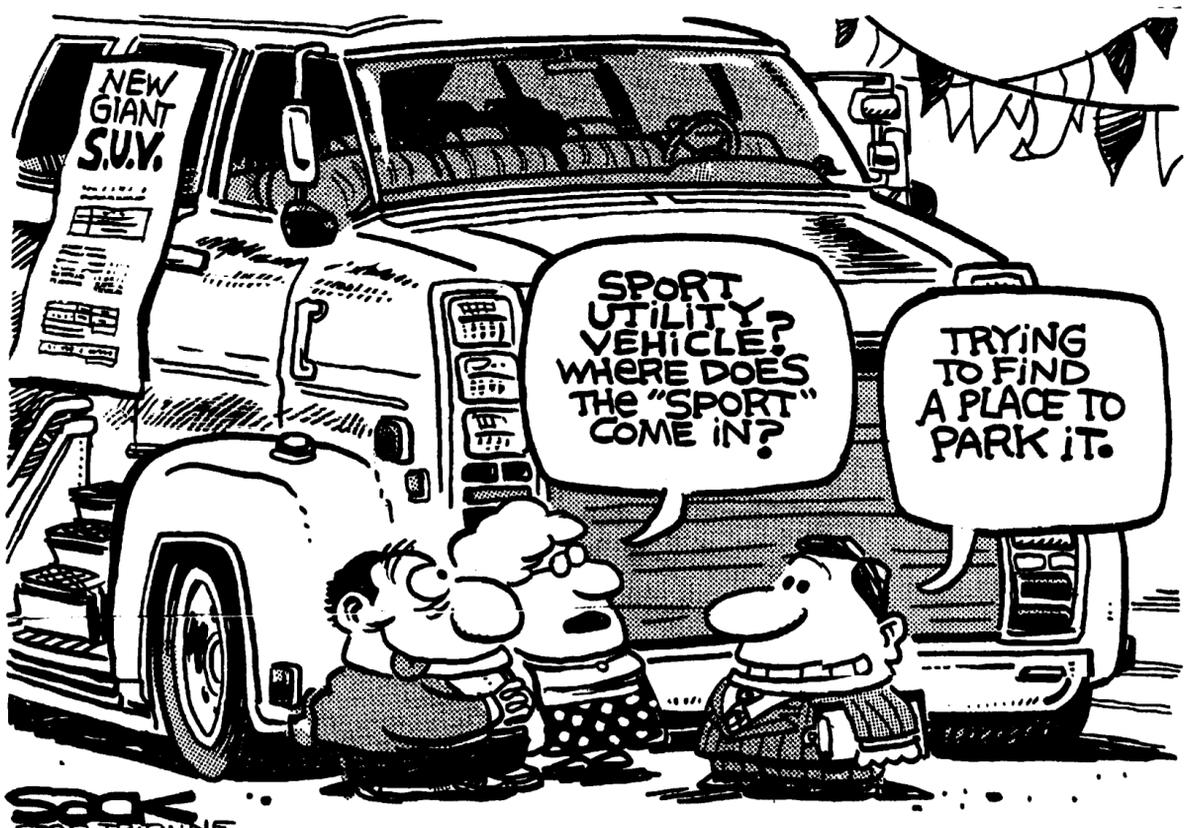
First of all, I do not want anyone to feel that I am anti-Greek. I have friends who are Greeks, and they are very nice people. However, I have never felt the urge to become a Greek. I have never felt the desire to suffer any archaic hazing ritual to have the privilege to wear three Greek letters on my jacket. And anyone who claims hazing does not go on at Behrend is either extremely naive or delusional. I, for one, prize my individuality and do not feel that I need to belong to a group to boost my self-worth.

I think that more people on campus, when thinking about the subject logically, will agree with me that the image most non-Greeks hold of Greeks is well deserved. The stereotypes that Greeks are saddled with are of their own making. Recently, when I arrived at one of my classes early, I happened to overhear a discussion that disturbed me. This conversation between two fraternity members, who were easily identified by the letter

jackets, consisted of a discussion about how much they were going to be drinking at a frat party that night, and the hopes that they would not get alcohol poisoning. What kind of image does that portray of Greek life? I'm sorry, but I, for one, do not feel that this kind of conversation reflects well on Greek life. And I wish that I could say this was an isolated case, but I have heard this conversation repeated all across campus. What a great view of Greek life.

I do not hold any deep seated hatred of the Greek system, and I would have no problem changing my opinion about the Greek system if I could find some reason to warrant this change. Why should people involved in the Greek system deserve respect just because they are Greeks? Shouldn't the Greeks have to earn our respect like any other group? Actions speak louder than words, and ranting and raving about how unfair stereotypes are will not help the situation any.

I know that not all sororities and fraternities behave in the manner that Ryan Van Winkle of Syracuse University describes them, in his editorial, "Face it Greeks, you've asked for ridicule" (2/25/99). I do not agree with everything in his article, and some of his comments went too far, but the basic concept of his editorial was sound. Greeks do not deserve respect just for being Greeks. A stereotype does not grow up overnight. People did not just wake up one morning and decide to say that Greeks drink and party too much. This reputation was earned over time, and it will take time to change. If Greeks want to improve their image they will have to work at it.



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