

RICHARD WRIGHT

# Control guns — keep kids alive

Children weren't meant for target practice.

What's wrong with us? Why do more than 5,000 children die from guns every year?

Why do we still fight some form of handgun control if it will save our children?

I'm sorry, but it's not right to see children dying from gunshot wounds. This isn't Bosnia; it's America.

I am a gun owner. I hunt and enjoy the freedom I have to own a weapon. I hunt with my shotgun.

I also have a permit to purchase a handgun if I want to.

I'd like to someday. I've shot handguns before and really enjoy target shooting with them.

But I worry that guns in the hands of children were not meant to be. Little boys and little girls should not have guns. They should be playing with other toys.

It's not right to see children praying to God, thankful they were allowed to live through another night safely, as I saw on CBS' "48 Hours" last Wednesday night.

Children should not have to go to bed wondering if they will be alive in the morning. It brings new meaning to "if I die before I wake."

Yes, the scene was in the hellhole called Chicago, but be it Chicago, Dallas, New York, L.A. or Lincoln, it doesn't matter. Children are the same everywhere.

I wonder if those anti-handgun control people have ever seen the results of a bullet at close range to the head.

I have. It was a suicide I covered. I don't need to describe the scene, except to say I won't forget it.

In the CBS program, children described seeing friends being shot and killed. This isn't television, but real life.

If people can live in relative security from handgun deaths in Great Britain, why can't we? Are we that



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paranoid of our freedoms that we want to risk our children's lives?

Are we that barbaric in our ways that we are willing to put our children at risk?

I'm not talking about the punks and gangbangers, but the children here. It doesn't have to be a drive-by shooting, but children playing with what they think is a toy. Except these toys don't shoot water.

Yes, I am a gun owner who believes in gun control. I will teach my children about weapons and what they do. I'll be strict with them when teaching them about rifles, shotguns and handguns. And I'll keep guns under lock and key.

But no amount of education or locks can be a sure prevention.

Children will always be curious. They will always play with things they are told not to play with. Some, unfortunately, play with guns. They don't realize what they are doing until it's too late.

In today's world of glorified violence, real death is abstract to children.

People don't die on TV; they return in some other role. When people die on TV, it's clean. In real life it's dirty.

I speak from experience. Before moving back to Nebraska, I worked for a newspaper in Dallas. Shootings there were as common as the setting sun.

I've seen the victims, the grieving relatives, the injured. It's a reality check to sit in a room with a mother asking her about her teen-age son

who's in the morgue. It's not something I like to remember.

That scene haunts me now that I am a parent. It's not something I ever want to go through. As a parent, I worry more and more about how violent society is. Not just the violence we see on television from Miami, Chicago and Dallas, but the violence we can see here in Nebraska.

In a recent nationwide survey by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, 20 percent of high school students surveyed say they carry some sort of weapon to school. Eight percent say they carry a handgun as the weapon of choice.

With the number of handguns available to the public, it's easy to see how children can get hold of a handgun.

Therein lies the problem. Stricter handgun control on children and on their parents is a necessary answer to the problem.

Colorado has taken a step in the right direction by making it illegal for 18-year-olds to have handguns. Nebraska tried to do it last year by making parents responsible. I don't see anything wrong with that if it will protect our children.

When put in terms that some of the anti-gun control people can understand, children are our most valuable possession. I will do everything in my power to protect my investment even if it means losing a little bit of my freedom.

My children are worth it.

Wright is a graduate student in journalism and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

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Application forms are available at the Student Activities, Financial Service Office, Room 222, City Union; ASUN Office, 115 Nebraska Union; or the East OSI Office, Nebraska East Union and should be returned by the applicant in person to 222 Nebraska Union or 300 Nebraska East Union. Students must bring their student I.D. cards at the time of application. Students who are unable to personally return their application to the Student Activities Financial Services Office should contact Kim Underahl, Room 222 (phone 472-5667) before September 22, 1993, to make arrangements.

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