

Mark
ALBRACHT

Guns out of control

No freedom in a country armed with fear

I must stand awhile on a side of the political gulch opposite the one I'm used to occupying (that being the conservative bank), to take a liberal view on an issue that has waned as of



late but, in light of a recent tragedy, will certainly return to the forefront of blistering debate.

The shooting death of Penn State student Melanie Spalla once again

calls to attention the need for gun control in this country. The Second Amendment will never justify the fact that Spalla can never obtain the degree for which she stepped on that fateful campus. Whatever her aspirations, I merely need to consider my own hopes and dreams to realize the waste in ending life so young — all because a brain went psychotically loopy in a society that has firearms as ready to serve as Big Macs are at McDonalds.

A sizable segment of Americans believe that gun regulation will never result in lower crime rates in this country. In fact, they argue, gun control will only serve to make the hordes of criminals even more menacing to law-abiding citizens who are left defenseless to their whims.

But the facts do not coincide with that mentality. Homicide rates in European countries with weapons bans and countries with serious gun regulations such as Canada are significantly lower than America's

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murder rate. A study illustrates this occurrence by comparing Seattle, Washington with Vancouver, British Columbia. Demographically and geographically the two cities are nearly twins. They are of virtually equal size, equal racial make-up and equal median incomes. But Vancouver averages half the number of murders that occur in Seattle in a given year. A look at the instruments used in each of the cities' murders showed that the number of non-gun killings (i.e. knives, poison, etc.) were nearly identical in the two cities, indicating that the number of Seattle's gun-murders alone was more than the number of *all* of Vancouver's murders combined.

The difference between these cities' murder rates can be traced directly to Canada's strict gun control laws, which have resulted in gun ownership by a mere 12 percent of Vancouver households as compared with 41 percent in Seattle.

I spent an afternoon some years ago out shooting things. This recreation was at the insistence of a friend and, more adamantly, his friends. Meeting these new acquaintances, I wondered how I could possibly contain a link to them. My

friend seemed nothing like the two — not in dress, not in manner of speech. The only common thread they held was the fact that they all really liked to shoot their guns.

As we traversed a secluded grass field, the three armed men destroyed everything the came across: an abandoned car, tin cans, bottles and a water barrel.

My friend and I tended to lag behind, conversing, as the other two scurried about like playground toddlers looking for their next ground-zero. At the end of my involvement in the escapade, they found something lying in the tall grass and excitedly called my friend over. I continued toward them at my own pace. Once my friend was with them, one blasted a shot into the ground where, as I learned upon arrival, had been a quail. There were no remnants of the bird left in the spot, just a red and black crater in the grass. No remnants except a plume of feathers that, 15 seconds later, drifted down on our heads in a macabre avian snow — to which the good ol' boys laughed to no end, doubled over, almost killing *themselves* for lack of breath.

It is for this reason that people so

vehemently oppose gun control. They don't give a damn who else is allowed guns, they shout constitutional rights for the single purpose of protecting their own access to the grisly fun of destroying things.

Studies show that reducing the number of guns in a community does not lower the frequency of such crimes as burglary or assault, but it does reduce the overall number of murders, accidental deaths and suicides quite significantly.

Guns are impersonal weapons, they allow for mistakes made, they make killing physically effortless and anonymous as in the case of a family of tourists that, last year, made a wrong turn down a Los Angeles street. They were ambushed by a street gang that didn't bother to check if they were shooting up the car they had intended.

Incidents like this and any of the various gun-crazy massacres perpetrated in modern America are reason enough to disallow the pleasure a minority of Americans get from lawfully using firearms. But I don't advocate that. These people must realize, though, that a country of 250 million people has no use for 200 million guns. This massive availability of weapons is the sole reason for having the highest murder rate in the industrialized world. America repudates to be the land of the free, but a society in which a young woman is senselessly shot dead at the cusp of adulthood is no society in which anybody can live freely.

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Jessica
KENNEDY

Ace enthusiast

Sister's passion for volleyball is inspiring

We sat in an offset corner, the action awkwardly off to our right. To see, she leaned her little body closer to the rail on which she had propped her feet. To peer around the adult next to her, she pressed into my side.

Aside from an occasional comment, she was intently focused on the happenings on the volleyball court.

Most children get caught up in the band's fanfare and forget about the game. To her, the band was a loud and mildly annoying interlude amid the action.

The only real distractions during the match were an 8-ounce malt, a spilled pop and her siblings.

I had never been to a Nebraska volleyball game before and was unsure of the rules and the players. But on Saturday, she answered all my questions deftly.

I found it interesting that my 8-year-old sister was so involved in the match. She didn't pay this much attention to the Olympics!

While most other girls her age watched the Olympics with dreams of arials, flips and Kerri Strug, Jean, my sister, showed little more than a passing interest in the events on TV.

Nebraska volleyball has captured Jean's mind and soul. And she is not alone in her fanaticism. During the game against Colorado State the

“*Like an 'Ace,' my sister was hooked in one hit. The Huskers captivated Jean with their on-court assaults and amazing team spirit.*”

stands were filled with young aspiring women athletes.

But what does volleyball offer to young athletes that another sport might not? Why does volleyball reach out to my sister, when gymnastics or swimming does not?

Volleyball is a refreshing combination of enthusiastic teamwork and competition. A combination well suited to the likes of Jean.

Jean needs a sports role model. Everyone who has ever seen her knows she has athletic potential. The child has no baby fat — at all. She's solid muscle from head to toe. My feeling is that she just needs a little focus.

To her credit, Jean's tried almost every sport and met with fair success. She enjoys soccer, softball, swimming, dance and running. But none of them ever really held her attention.

Olympic athletes can't hold her attention.

But like an "Ace," my sister was hooked in one hit. The Huskers captivated Jean with their on-court assaults and amazing team spirit.

It was fascinating to watch the dynamics of the individual players working, playing within the parameters of the teams.

I'm a little ignorant about the team — I can't tell you most of the players' names or what the titles of their positions are. But each player seemed to have roles beyond their titles.

Fiona Nepo exuded power and strength. She was always at the net, scoping the Rams' defense and their offense. Her playing was solid; she seemed to have a sixth sense about the positioning of the ball and her teammates.

My sister's favorite player, Husker All-America outside hitter Lisa Reitsma, had an air of dependability and reliability. She always got the ball.

I think it's cool that Jean looks up to Reitsma, an even more gifted player in a sport filled with ranks of talented athletes.

But one player in particular caught my attention. She seemed to

epitomize the teamwork and enthusiasm that are inherently required in volleyball.

This player never actually hit a ball during game play, never pulled her knee pads past her ankles and never lost her smile.

And she wasn't a Husker, really.

Colorado State redshirt freshman Katherine Pettit never ceased to amaze me. From the warm "welcome home" she was given by the crowd to her effervescent enthusiasm for her team to her dedicated participation in team warm-ups.

All this despite the fact that her father was in a wheelchair, 50 feet from her, coaching the team her school eventually succumbed to.

In 10 years that could be Jean. More interested in the team's well-being than forwarding her own success. Enjoying the spirit of belonging to a team and playing a sport that she's still impassioned about.

And maybe that's what was so neat about the game. That both teams were visibly passionate about the sport they're playing and passionate about the people they're playing with.

Oh, and Coach Pettit, I think I may have a recruit for the 2006 volleyball team...

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