

Putting the Gun Genie back in the Bottle



It's like draining the pool after the child falls in and drowns. Now that we have a proliferation of guns in this country, folks are suggesting we stop the "proliferation of guns." Now that we have assault rifles in our homes, folks are saying we need to stop allowing it. Now that we have little children being murdered in schools, folks are saying we have to stop the senseless killings. Now that this nation is already sliding down the slippery slope of self-destruction of our own citizens, our own principles, and our own morality, folks are saying "STOP!"

Nineteen years of writing this column and knowing we have been at this point before in recent history, I searched my archives and found an article from 1995 titled, 220 Million Guns. The piece cited facts about the NRA and its stranglehold on politicians; it also discussed how the NRA said President Clinton would take their guns away and how its members were making every effort to assure he would not be reelected. Sound familiar?

In 1995 we had one gun for every person in the country. Now we have 300 million guns, one for

every person in the country; it is obvious that our gun production rate is keeping up with our population growth rate. Additionally, in 1995, we had guns on the streets that fired a gazillion bullets in a few seconds. So what's changed? There was outrage then, and there is outrage now. There were calls to stop the madness and those same calls go out now. Newsflash, that Genie is out of the bottle and I don't know if we will ever be able to put it back.

Even as photos of six year olds and their grieving families are flashed before us on television every waking hour, most of our politicians are unwilling to cross the NRA by saying what needs to be said and doing what needs to be done to stop the madness. Even as some of the NRA members speak out against assault rifles being available to the public, the leaders of the NRA only offer tepid responses to our latest mass shoot-

ing. Maybe it's due to the \$300 million the NRA commands from its four million members and the large contributions it makes to the politicians. Uh-Oh, I think I said something.

I am not so naive to believe that anyone who is determined to do harm to people will not be able to do so even if guns were not available to the general public. For instance, Timothy McVeigh chose another weapon of mass destruction to kill children and David Koresh chose religious dominance, and he was certainly complicit in the destruction of those children who remained with him in the Waco inferno.

Some are now saying that schools should be locked down and have double doors like those found at banks and other facilities. Those changes would not stop another determined, evil, maladjusted, malcontent from standing outside the school with an as-



James Clingman's



sault rifle and firing on children as they leave. And what are we going to do about theaters and malls and churches and restaurants and trains and buses and stadiums and concerts and college campuses and public streets?

Once again, and as usual, this nation is suffering from its own lack of will and political backbone when it comes to the last for money and power. Rather than saying no to organizations like the NRA, politicians and citizens alike have acquiesced to a trend that has caused us great harm. Now it's the children, as it was in 1995 in Oklahoma City, which again causes us to lament and call for rules and procedures to put the Genie back into the bottle.

All the talk about gun buyback plans and banning assault weapons is too late, they are already out there. And as Charlton Heston once said, you will have to pry the guns out the dead hands of those

who own them now. ^{white} ^{spare} It is our fault that we have come to this place, and it is a reflection on the dreadful state of our society, the richest, most educated, and most prosperous in the world, to have our children mowed down like enemy soldiers on a battlefield by a fellow citizen. But that's where we are in 2012, all because we failed to act decisively and appropriately decades ago.

In 1989 after students were killed in Stockton, California, the ban on assault weapons was put in place five years later in 1994. It was left to "expire" ten years later under George W. Bush. Expire? Did that mean it was okay to start shooting kids again?

No, I do not have an answer. All I do is pray for this nation, for those in charge of it, and for our young people. Yes, we need to ban assault weapons; yes, we need to take better care of the mentally ill; and yes, we need better legislation of gun laws; but we also need Divine intervention to put the gun Genie back into the bottle. I believe that is our only hope at this point in our history. Maybe the children who died are having that discussion with God right now.