

# PERSPECTIVES

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# Gun control is a matter of respect



## A STEREOTYPE REBELS

REBECCA NEWELL

Gun control ... I'm a firm believer in it.

I truly believe that anyone who owns a gun should damn well know how to control it.

I was raised in rural (insert Hicksville here) Oregon and am descended from a long line of Irish cops, so it's no huge surprise that I learned to shoot a handgun and rifle by the ripe old age of 12. And though I don't personally hunt, I took classes to receive my hunter safety card while in middle school.

Under the close supervision and instruction of my father, an avid sportsman, I not only learned to properly load and fire a weapon, but I also learned the respect for the weapon that *must* accompany gun handling.

But our Second Amendment right (for those non-poli-sci majors, the right to bear arms) became even more near and dear to me last year. To make a very long, emotional story very short, a man from Sweet Home broke into our neighbor's house looking for an escape vehicle after shooting two people in a dispute, killing one. While he held a gun to the head of one of our neighbors, the other escaped, seeking refuge in my parents' home. My parents weren't home, only my 16-year-old brother Matt, who was baby-sitting my 6-year-old little brother.

When the neighbor — a 13-year-old boy — managed to relay the situation and immediate danger to Matt, Matt and the two boys hid in his closet, called 911 and then loaded his own weapon.

A side note here: My parents own a gun safe containing what many city dwellers would believe to be a small arsenal, but the purpose of the safe is for protecting the weapons from theft in case of a robbery, as well as keeping them out of the hands of little ones. As a result, my brother didn't know the combination that would have allowed him access to a handgun.

So Matt loaded his .22 rifle, basically a bird gun, and prepared to defend his house and family. And I wish I could conclude this story by saying the murderer left our neighbor's house and disappeared into the night, but he didn't.

This criminal broke down our front door — yes, he broke the frame of the door using his body weight — and stepped across the threshold of our home and our sense of security. When he ran past the hallway where my brother was positioned, guarding the doorway of the room where my little brother and the neighbor hid, the man pulled his 9 mm on Matt and fired.

Thank God the chamber was empty, and my brother had the presence of mind to fire his second weapon. Matt fired two shots, one of which lodged in the wall. The other bullet found its mark and pierced the intruder's upper body, broke through his torso and hit the wall behind him.

But the intruder didn't fall. Instead, he ran through our house and escaped through the back door. Despite bleeding



Bryan Dixon Emerald

from the bullet hole and exit wound, he managed to terrorize two more houses. In the first, another neighbor scared him off with a weapon, and in the last he stabbed an elderly lady (who survived), stole her van and escaped.

After two weeks on the loose — two fear-filled weeks when we thought the intruder might return in retaliation — he was apprehended and charged with 27 felonies, including murder, assault, breaking and entering, using a deadly weapon, etc.

I cringe to imagine how that night might have ended differently for my family if my brother had not possessed the skill and confidence with which to use a weapon. Matt's confidence and skill came from being raised in a household where people respect firearms. Do I believe that our problems could be solved by regulating gun use? No. There's a saying, "When you outlaw guns, only outlaws have guns."

Addressing a more controversial side of the issue of gun control, I don't support the sale of weapons without background checks, or to minors — as I believe the responsibility of teaching a minor to use a weapon belongs to the parent. In light of the tragedy of school shootings, it's obvious we have a problem, but it isn't about gun control; it's about controlling our youth. We need to stop using accessibility to weapons as the excuse for why we

too regularly read stories of kids firing guns in school. Fundamentally, it goes back to the role played — or in most of these situations, not played — by the parents.

People kill people, and that has nothing to do with a lack of knowledge or control of firearms, but with a lack of respect for human life.

Rebecca Newell is a columnist for the Oregon Daily Emerald. Her views do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald. She can be reached at rnewell@gladstone.uoregon.edu.

### CORRECTION

In Monday's story on arson ("Series of arson crimes baffle Eugene Police Department," ODE, May 7), a copy-editing error made it sound as though the Earth Liberation Front claimed responsibility for a recent arson. The group did not claim responsibility.

The fourth full paragraph of the story on page 5 should have read, "Romania Chevrolet was allegedly targeted in June by Jeffrey Luers and Craig Marshall. In a communiqué distributed by Portland-based Earth Liberation Front spokesman Craig Rosebraugh, an anonymous group claimed responsibility for the recent Romania arson and said it set the fire out of respect for Luers, Marshall and the environment."

The Emerald regrets the error.