

GUNS ON THE STREET

WHERE DO WE DRAW THE LINE ON DEADLY WEAPONS?

BY NICK POUST
PHOTOS BY TODD COOPER

NOTE: More interviews at eugeneweekly.com

Guns are so entrenched in American culture that Vice President Joe Biden warned “there’s no silver bullet” to stop the killing. Lane County has gun lovers, gun haters and everything in between. *EW* hit the street and a recent gun show at the Lane County Fairgrounds to find out what people think about guns.

If you buy from a private seller at a gun show or anywhere else, no background check is needed. If you buy a gun from a licensed dealer at a show, you must undergo a background check. A recent gun buy-back in Seattle turned up a missile launcher, and concealed weapons permit applications in Oregon are skyrocketing, but permittees, while required to take a safety class, aren’t required to know how to shoot. Do Oregon and the rest of the U.S. need to tighten up gun laws or is it true that “guns don’t kill people, people kill people”?

Michael Zilkowski, 57,

RETIRED VETERAN IN ARMY AND MARINE CORPS

What do you think about gun ownership?

I think everybody should have the right to defend themselves, their family, and taking away our right to possess guns is wrong.

What kind of feeling do you get shooting a gun?

Well, ever since I was a boy, pulling the trigger and smelling the cordite in the air and the adrenaline rush, it’s just an excitement. If you go hunting and stuff, being able to outsmart your big game or whatever you are stalking, and doing that with a firearm, that’s awesome.

Should there be mandatory safety classes when purchasing a gun?

When I was a kid, every boy by the age of 12 had to go through hunter safety course to know how to properly handle a firearm. So, yeah, I think people should learn how to use a firearm right.

Do you think there should be background checks for purchasing firearms?

It depends on the firearm, really. If we are talking about assault weapons, yeah, I do. If we are talking about hunting rifles or survival rifles, no, I don’t because what a lot of people don’t realize is when you go into the gun shows the U.S. Marshals and the ATF [Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms] are surrounding, walking around, so they know who is not supposed to be there purchasing firearms.

The NRA recently came out and said, “The only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun.” What do you have to say about that?

The NRA has been trying to get me to be a member for years and I don’t agree with their philosophy and all that stuff, no. I think the NRA is an overbloated system that needs to be checked itself.



Patty Sand, 46, BANK TELLER

Do you think there should be restrictions on who can purchase firearms?

Guns sold to the general public? I don’t think there should be any restrictions on it, but I do think there should be a background check, definitely. But I don’t think anyone should be able to tell us whether we can have guns or not.

According to our gun laws, people can buy guns privately and at gun shows without undergoing a background check.

I don’t think that is right. I think that is a little unsafe because what could happen is that gun could be sold and that person could do something bad with it and it will go back to the person who originally registered and bought the gun. They may not be the bad person. I do think there should be background checks done whenever a gun is sold.

What about mental health checks?

Well, you would think that would come up on a background check. We do background checks where I work. I guess if they just started to go cuckoo it wouldn’t be on record, but definitely, that would be caught on a background check, I’d hope.

The NRA said, “The only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun.”

Exactly. I say amen. That’s right. That’s why we have concealed handgun classes to be able to protect from the bad deeds that are going on in the world.



Lilly Smith, 14, STUDENT

Angelica Sanders, 16, STUDENT

Austin Daniels, 13, STUDENT

Do you think owning a gun is a right?

SANDERS: It says in our Constitution “right to bear arms,” so it can’t be that bad, I mean, depending on the person.

Would you consider owning a gun?

DANIELS: No.

SMITH: I would consider it because what if someone is going to kill you? It depends on where you are living.

If someone got you a gun, what would you do with it? Would you sell it, would you use it recreationally or keep it for defense?

DANIELS: I would sell it.

SANDERS: I would keep it by my bedside.

SMITH: I would use it to shoot cans in my own time.

Do you think there should be mandatory safety classes for gun owners?

SANDERS: No, because it’s just like common sense of how to use a gun, what you should and shouldn’t do with it.