

person, and she suffers from mental illness. However, her choice of weapon was an automobile. She ran the guy over, intentionally, and killed him and is currently serving time in California in a mental institution because she was deemed guilty but for reason of insanity. So the mental illness aspect of it really hits home with me. I think that is very important to understand, but in the broader picture mental health needs to be an issue that is addressed to an even greater degree, beyond just the owning and purchasing of firearms. I can tell you, as my experience as a police officer, is that the mentally ill were just kind of brushed aside because nobody wanted to deal with it until they committed a crime and then law enforcement would have to deal with it. A lot of that could have been prevented with better mental health. I think that's a whole discussion, our treatment of the mentally ill, right there.

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

I think guns are a great deterrent. Again, as a retired police officer, I have seen it. I had a situation where a guy was coming at a subject with a knife and he shot him because he happened to have a gun. Saved his life, and the other guy died. It's tragic when anyone dies. When you are at the scene of a death, it is tragic, no matter if it was a good guy or bad guy, or whatever you would classify as a good guy or a bad guy. The loss of life is horrific.

I was at the Thurston High School during that tragedy as well and, believe me, you don't ever want to be involved in something like that. I thought that it was ironic that the person that disarmed the shooter was a Boy Scout. He had taken a firearms class and knew when he pulled the trigger and the gun would click he was out of ammo and would have to reload, and that's when he knew it was time to take action. So, again, we talk about responsible ownership, but that was a case, with that whole family dynamic, that situation was just a shame. The loss of life, believe me, I've seen dead bodies, good guy, bad guy. You say bad guy, but that's just a human being. What transpired in their life to bring them to this point? To me, that's the tragedy. Loss of life is always terrible, but if it is you or the other person you want to have an equalizer. I don't think anyone should keep you from having an equalizer if that's the situation.

Rick Jackson, 60, RETIRED IRONWORKER AND GUN MERCHANT

Do you think gun ownership is a right? Do you think people should be allowed to have guns?

I don't think there should be a restriction on the purchasing of guns, but I do think there should be a limit on the capacity of ammunition that people can carry because you are not going hunting with a 20-round clip. Those things are to kill people, and that's it. I mean, we sell up to a 60-round drum. What else are you going to use it for? As far as constitutional rights and everything, I understand the NRA's point of view because I have dealt with them a lot, but they want it to where you can buy anything you want. A Sherman tank, if you had deep enough pockets, sure. But that's not how it should be. You are sort of using the other guy's rights now. So I'm kind of in the gray area, sort of. I'm not pro or con. But I appreciate the right of owning firearms for protection and sport.

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

Yes, absolutely. Absolutely. I'm down with that. I'm also down with the extended profile checks. That's what the big deal is about right now. I mean, they are slamming the president because he wants to do something and nobody's got an idea what to do, and they aren't getting anywhere, so he's got to try to do something and they are going, "No, no, no, no, another one of your deals." Like I said, I'm kind of stuck in the middle. I understand people have their rights but I also think that just because you have that right to do something doesn't mean you should abuse that right.

People can buy guns privately and at gun shows without undergoing a background check. What do you think about that?

If you are an adult, over 21, and you go to a gun show you still have to go through a check. There is a check right there, immediately. If you are a wanted felon, if you have outstanding warrants, I mean, it's not nearly the check that it should be. I don't think it is nearly efficient enough. I don't know what they call it, an on-board check, if you come on board and you want a weapon you get this little check and most people will pass it. I don't know if there is any relevance going on with this sporadic shooting, but if a person is going to do that type of stuff they are going to do it anyway.

The NRA 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?

That's just their demented mindset. They figure an eye-for-an-eye, and that's the way they play it. Live by the sword, die by the sword. I think they really appreciate promoting violence, other than the fact that there are people who like target shooting and like hunting, like I do.

I understand the constitutionality part of it, but I really think this is getting out of hand. This country is just raised on violence from day one. We are just stuck with it. I don't know if there is any end in sight. ■

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