

# Opinion

Have a Happy  
Father's Day

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## Have guns will cavil

BY JOE KLOCK, SR.  
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

In recent months, I have written columns on such diverse and provocative subjects as business greed, the priesthood, ethnic relations, marriage, abortion and obesity. No subject, though, ever produces as much negative reader reaction as do my occasional sallies into the battleground of gun control. And here we go again ("LOCK AND LOAD!") I'm at a loss to understand, much less accept, the quibbling arguments that are raised every time a suggestion is made that firearms should be regulated - even including restrictions on assault weapons and armor-piercing ammunition.

Any move in such directions, however minuscule, raises the fear in some of total confiscation of weapons by a government running jack-booted over the constitutional rights of law-abiding citizens. This isn't about any such draconian measures, or even first steps that way.

Neither do I deny the wisdom of enforcing all laws presently on the books regarding the ownership, use and misuse of privately-owned weaponry, so let's not get bogged down in that pointless "either/or" peeing contest. The strident screams on both extremes of the debate drown out voices of reason and compromise.

Only two simple questions are posed here:

1. Why not register guns?
2. Why not license gun owners?

Automobiles are registered, in part, so that the owners can be traced in the event the vehicles are stolen or involved in illegal activities. Registrants are keenly aware of their accountability, even in absentia, so they tend to be pretty careful about who gets access to their wheels.

Granted, this does not prevent abuse by the law-deriding segments of our society, but it certainly mitigates the mayhem that would exist without it. Likewise, people are not privileged to drive unless and until they have shown themselves capable of doing so without endangering the lives and property of others. Again, although it is an imperfect preventive, without operators' licenses our roadways would be as hazardous as snake pits. Neither registration nor licensure should be seen as a threat to sportspeople, collectors, defenders of the Constitution and protectors of home, family, business and themselves. Nor do they have anything to hide if none of their reasons for packing or storing rods are illegal, immoral or hazardous to others.

That tired argument about registration and/or licenses being a first step toward confiscation is a reach comparable in credibility to the famous "Rosemary" stretch, offered as an explanation of incriminating gaps in the Nixon White House tapes.

Such a total ban would require at least an Act of Congress and, if the more militant NRAmuses are correct, repeal of the Second Amendment. These events are as likely to come about as mandatory lie detector tests during political speeches and court testimony. Aside (although it is beyond the range of this discussion): The argument that the Second Amendment grants individuals the unrestricted right to forever hold their pieces is a croak that even Davy Crockett (who shot him a bear when he was only three) would recognize as such.

Back on target: While a thumping majority of Americans favor reasonable gun controls to at least lessen the carnage we presently endure, only a few in our midst favor the extreme of complete disarmament. Yet the caviling of gun-huggers continues, dramatized by Charlton Heston's histrionic "from my cold dead hands" challenge at this year's NRA convention. Add that organization's threatened boycott of Smith & Wesson for "buckling to government pressure" by equipping their pistols with childproof locks. (Can you imagine that? Next thing you know, they'll be putting kid-resistant caps on baby aspirin...and THEN what?) Recently, a powerful force entered the fray, on the side of compromise. Regardless of their age, I doubt that any readers could now run ten steps with lollipop sticks in their mouths without hearing an echo of the same familiar voice from the past that cautioned them against playing in mud puddles and taking candy from strangers.

Thousands of these gentle warriors forewent the pampering of Mother's Day at home to demonstrate for sensible gun control. They want registration, licensure and mandatory locks to protect children...that and nothing more.

Why? Because they're the Mothers...that's why! (Did you really have to ask?)

They were motivated by the same instincts that have stationed them between danger and their loved ones since the dawn of time. Arrayed against their common-sense approach is a noisy minority of extremists who are apparently blind to the basic problem. What problem? Quite simply, that there are too many guns too easily available to too many people who might use them unwisely, including both good people and bad guys.

What to do about it?  
"Listen to Mom," sez I. She might not always be right, but when it comes to playing with fire...or firearms...she's not likely to be wrong!

## Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Many Oregonians have good ideas for improving government, and those ideas deserve public recognition. The 2000 Oregon Better Government Competition can help promote them. Organized by the Cascade Policy Institute, the Competition seeks ideas for improving Oregon State and local government. A total of \$40,000 in awards and honoraria is available for the winning ideas. The entry deadline is June 30.

A distinguished panel of independent judges, which includes former Oregon Secretary of State Phil Keisling, will select the winners.

Winning ideas will be promoted throughout the state and across the country.

From the three previous Competitions, fourteen of twenty-six winning ideas have been introduced as legislation, seven have passed into law and others have been acted upon at the local level.

You should enter the 2000 Oregon Better Government Competition if you have an idea for improving some aspect of Oregon Government. For guidelines, call (503) or refer to [www.CascadePolicy.org/bgchome.asp](http://www.CascadePolicy.org/bgchome.asp).

Sincerely,  
Angela Echardt  
Program Director

## Justice Dept. finding should close book on King's murder, but probably won't

BY EARL OFARI HUTCHINSON  
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Yet another Justice Department probe into the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. again found that King wasn't killed by Mafia hit men, the FBI, Army intelligence, racist hate groups, or black ministers. He was murdered by a two-bit hood, James Earl Ray. For the third time since King was murdered in 1968, Justice Department investigators ripped apart the tissue of lies Ray grew fond of telling over the years, that a mysterious "Raoul" had framed him, that Memphis prosecutors pressured him to accept a deal to cover-up the conspiracy, and that legions of secret conspirators aided and abetted him.

These are flat out fabrications that Ray conjured up to salve his conscience, grab media attention, and cash in on the notoriety of the case. Jerry Ray, Ray's brother, Jesse Jackson, the King family, and of course, conspiracy buffs, swallowed them hook, line and sinker. When a Memphis jury in a much publicized civil lawsuit brought by the King family ruled last December that King was the victim of a contracted hit, conspiracy theorists went into delirium. This gave new lease on life to their claim that Ray was a Lee Harvey Oswald type patsy of government agents or organized crime figures.

The press and conspiracy theorists gleefully glossed over the fact that the court produced no smoking gun documents or credible eyewitness testimony to back Ray's delusions that he was the fall guy in a vast plot to kill King.

The big puzzle is why conspiracy buffs have been so willing to go to the barricades on the trumped up word of a loathsome, discredited con man? The King assassination had none of the dangling loose ends of the Kennedy assassination. From day one police and investigators had the goods on Ray. His fingerprints were on the murder weapon. He was at the crime scene. He fled the country. And he quickly and voluntarily confessed to the murder. The key to the puzzle can be summed up in these words, the FBI.

Despite the Justice Department's convincing report that Ray murdered King, the FBI still has not answered many questions about the secret war it waged against King from the late 1950's to the day of his murder. According to voluminous public documents

released to researchers and government investigators, FBI director J. Edgar Hoover and the Justice Department relentlessly tried to tie King to the Communist party. The assault on King was more than Hoover acting out his paranoid obsessions against a man whom he considered a dangerous subversive, it was a war against the black movement. And Hoover decided that the cheap and dirty way to win that war was by discrediting the most respected and admired symbol of that movement.

Many of those dirty tactics employed by FBI agents against King are now well known. They deluged him with wiretaps, physical surveillance, poison-pen letters, threats, harassment, intimidation, and smear sexual leaks to the media.

During its investigation of the assassination, Hoover claimed that the FBI did not find a single fact to indicate any conspiracy in the assassination. Ray was the man and the FBI slammed the book on the case. It was the "lone nut" assassin theory repeated again. There is, of course, no proof that the FBI or other government agents killed King. But the ferocity of the FBI's secret war against him and the many questions the FBI probe did not publicly answer about Ray's travels, his possible links to white supremacist groups, and conservative business groups in the South, and the role of government agents that were at or near the Lorraine Motel the day King was killed have created deep public suspicions that Ray didn't act alone and that the FBI didn't tell the complete truth about King's murder. Those same unanswered questions left enough wiggle room for conspiracy theorists to have a field day trying to unravel secret plots, cover-ups and finally blame the government for killing King.

The Justice Department probe proved for the umpteenth time that the government, racist groups, and organized crime figures did not issue orders to kill King. And to make sure that there were no charges of cover it smartly kept the FBI out of the investigation.

Yet its finding can't and shouldn't absolve the FBI of its disgraceful, destructive and illegal campaign against King. The climate of suspicion and hostility it created toward the civil rights movement made it possible for Ray to murder King. And ultimately the FBI still must share some of the blame for that. Sadly, this will be more than enough to fuel the conspiracy theorist's cherished fantasy that anybody and everybody but Ray killed King.

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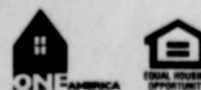
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