

## April 26, 2011

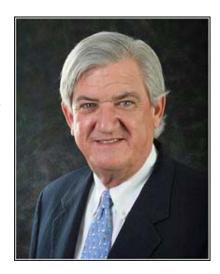
## **Opinion**

Roy Exum: Guns That Are Legal

by Roy Exum posted April 26, 2011

Two weeks ago there was testimony given in Sessions Court about a pair of brothers charged with home invasion. It was revealed that a 10-year-old was Tased and also hit in the face with a pistol as sheer terror took place in a decent home after an attack by admitted gang members.

As I listened, I couldn't help but wonder what might have happened had the mother of that child also had a gun. While many of us cannot comprehend using a firearm against another human being, I can well imagine a mother would indeed retaliate in any way she could against a hoodlum who had forced his way into her home and was battering her child. I have a gun-carry permit.



Some will say it's for self-protection while others, perhaps more correctly, will tell you the growing number of legal permits nationwide is a political protest of sorts, a way for law-abiding folks - who are increasingly alarmed - to show they've had enough of today's hooligans.

I have a pistol for both reasons. I never want to draw it and Lord knows I never want to fire it, but I can't imagine a loved one who is being attacked and not being able to respond "in kind." I am hardly a gunslinger, but, if you haven't noticed, Chattanooga has become a gun-happy place.

This week the Tennessee legislature will join dozens of states that are making it easier to carry guns. There is a bill that would allow firearms on college campuses and another that would allow judges to bear arms. A good number of other states are considering "stand your ground" legislation.

For the record, Wyoming just joined Arizona, Alaska and Vermont as states that allow concealed firearms with no permit whatsoever and, according to USA Today, a dozen more states now say an employer cannot keep a worker from bringing a firearm to work if he leaves it in a vehicle.

It is obvious there is a national concern and, in an adjoining USA Today column, it was pointed out that El Paso, Tex., is located in a very pro-gun state while, right across the Rio Grande, Ciudad Juarez has very strict and rigid gun laws. Juarez – rife with warring drug cartels - is now one of the top murder cities in the world, while El Paso was just named as America's Safest City for 2010.

And that is the fact the anti-gun faction fails to grasp – those with permits rarely shoot other people. Permits aren't the problem and it would be a good guess that in all of Chattanooga's shootings this year, a legal gun permit cannot be found.

With the increase in permits, both in Tennessee and elsewhere, the number of shootings by licensed gun owners has not increased and there are documented stories of how "legal" guns deter crime rather than add to the alarming statistics of random shootings.

Sadly, the anti-gun crowd points toward those who carry legally if, for no other reason, they have

no way to stop those who carry illegally. It's the only piece of fruit they can pick so the "hand-wringers" make a lot of noise that falls on an ever-increasing number of deaf ears.

The best illustration of legal-carry comes from Game and Fish officers who, as a rule, meet those carrying firearms for a different purpose constantly. Do you see where they are shot or threatened? And hunters carry weapons openly, observing rules and taking great safety measures for the most part.

The criminal element, on the other hand, obtains guns in all the wrong ways and the weapons are largely undetected until they are brought into play. Yet the licensed gun owners fall prey to the laws enacted because – what? - they are law-abiding citizens. The equation hardly makes sense.

More laughable is guns on campus. At the University of Tennessee it is a good bet there has not been one reported incident involving a legal-carry weapon, but at least twice, in recent memory, UT athletes have been in possession of guns when they are found by law-enforcement officers. Hello? The good guys aren't the problem and when you hear those cry and squall over changing gun laws, remember "legal" as the key word in all the legislation and remember "criminal" as the word of choice when a bad incident occurs.

So help me there is a big difference.

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