

Guns are poor weapon in fighting social ills

WHETHER a person owned a gun was of little consequence when I was a kid. Few ever talked about it. It really was very simple — certainly nothing political. Some families owned them, others didn't.

Today, owning a gun has become a national obsession, reflective of the great frustrations over the social changes we have experienced in the last few decades.

Depending on how you stand on the issue, owning a weapon has become either a badge of patriotism or the sign of a suspected maniac.

Both views are pervasive. Both are more than a little misguided.

We owned guns in our home when I was a child. We had shotguns, hunting rifles, target rifles and, yes, we even had a handgun. My dad, you see, was a cop.

None of us gave it much thought. We certainly didn't have weapons around for self-defense. When in the house, the weapons were disassembled and put away in the same general area as the fishing

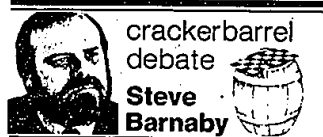
rods and reels. The ammunition was tucked out of harm's way.

WHEN MY FATHER came home from work, he would unload his .38 caliber service revolver, put it in the closet (where us short folks were unable to reach) and take the ammunition upstairs, putting it in a drawer.

Neither did we own weapons to protect against imagined threats like Communists or to protect some constitutional right. We felt neither patriotic nor unpatriotic. We owned weapons because hunting and target shooting were family hobbies and because my dad needed one for work.

The sole benefit for me was keeping drill sergeants off my back during basic training. Unlike some other poor recruited souls, I could regularly hit a target. I was awarded a much desired three-day pass for that expertise.

Frankly, I've always been a tad puzzled over the high emotions brought forth by the gun debate.



That's why I was so disturbed on seeing the responses to the recent Oral Quarrel. The question asked how they felt about having handguns and other weapons in the home for self defense. Throughout, the responses were filled with fear, frustration, disillusionment and, in a few cases, a taint of racism.

GUNS, TO MANY respondents, have become the answer for dealing with society's woes — dealing

with, not curing, mind you.

Racism: "With blacks coming out here to get money for their habit and other things, yes, I do believe we should have handguns, more than one, one for each hand," said one respondent.

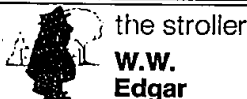
Frustration: "The police are inadequate as far as protection goes," said another.

Fear: "In today's crime-ridden world, I feel we have no other option but to keep a handgun in the home."

Others, of course, referred to the constitutional right to bear arms.

Problems, rather than being tackled through force, must be solved through education. As long as we have persons who lack the capacity to live within the guidelines of civility, who are unable to make rational decisions or who let greed and fear dictate their actions, we will have devastating crime problems.

Whether we do or don't have guns makes little difference in that kind of society.



Suburban pioneer remembers

ALMOST 45 years have gone by since that day in 1938 when the Edgars, on the advice of former neighbors, purchased two acres of the wooded area of an abandoned farm out in the country.

At the time, The Stroller had in his hand a check for \$750 he had earned as the official scorer for the Detroit Red Wings. It was the most money he ever had had at one time.

"What to do with it?" "Why not buy those two acres in the country?" the lady of the house said. "Some day they might be valuable."

So the land was purchased for \$725 (lots now would sell for \$12,000), and the fun began.

THE ACREAGE was right off the corner of Six Mile and Merriman. The roads (they weren't even called streets) were gravel and fetlock deep in mud in the spring.

"Pay no attention to them," the real estate agent told us. "They will be paved in spring." They were paved 25 years later.

The acreage, we learned, was in Livonia Township which had, within its confines, 17 farms. There was an 18-hole golf course at the corner of Five Mile and Middlebelt and another at the crossing of Ann Arbor Road and Ann Arbor Trail.

There were several broken-down gas stations in the center of the township. But there were plenty of trees, and the weeds were a yard high — they hadn't been cut in years.

So we built a home in the woods. A road had to be built so we could move in. But there were no water and sewer lines.

WE ENGAGED a well digger. One morning we passed him on the new road into the woods. He was leaving.

"How's the water?" we asked.

"There ain't none," he replied, "and I don't want to take any more of your money."

"What will we do?"

"The next time you build a house," he said, "drill the well first. God puts the water where HE wants it — not where you want it."

So we dug a cistern, but the water we found didn't last beyond Labor Day, and the first winter we used a road commission water wagon to tap a hydrant a half-mile away. And we had a septic tank that caused trouble from time to time.

THEN CAME the first spring — and the mud. We couldn't make it through the goo. So we parked the car at Six Mile Road and walked in through the mud for an entire spring.

Finally, the township prospered a bit. We then got a sewer, for which we had to pay cash. It was the same with the water. But being young, we had fun.

Soon, the Felician Sisters bought one of the farms and built the large Mother House, and later St. Mary Hospital and Madonna College.

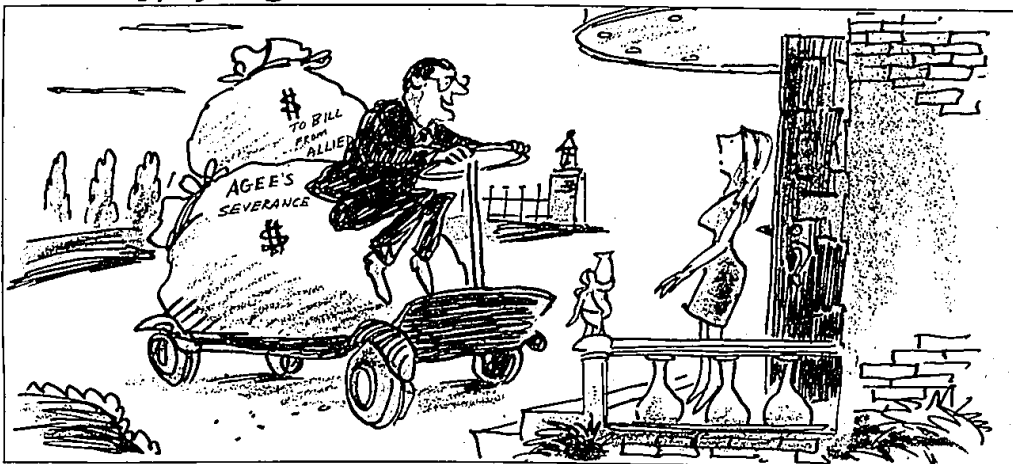
We had been among the first to leave Detroit in the rush to the suburbs. As years went by, more and more followed until General Motors built a big plant on Plymouth Road, and the Sheldon Land Co. opened a new subdivision (city-like), giving a Ford car to anyone who purchased a home. There was no other mode of travel.

Then came the race track, incorporation as a city, 100,000 people and the fanciest city hall in the country.

The famous '49ers who opened up the old west had little on us who made the rush to the suburbs worth while.

Those were happy days despite the mud and lack of water.

'Honey, I just got fired!'



Guest column

Be positively positive with kids

Harriet Hartman, a Southfield resident, is a reading specialist and a frequent contributor to these editorial pages.

The area of child management is of prime concern for parents. We are always looking for ways to improve the way we relate to and communicate with our children.

An important technique to incorporate into your parenting skills is positive reinforcement. This consists of responding in a positive way to the things children do that please you and that you want them to repeat. The theory behind this concept is simple: youngsters seek our attention and approval and are likely to repeat the behaviors that they realize are pleasing us.

With positive reinforcement, our goal is to give praise and call attention to the things children do that we like and to play down (as much as possible) the actions that we do not like. We all use this method, often unconsciously. However, the idea is to do this in a planned, conscious way. Ideally the final result is that behavior is more acceptable and children feel better about themselves.

HOW DO YOU BEGIN being positively positive? Start by consciously using smiles, gestures and verbal comments when your child does something you really like. For example, when the kindergartener

dresses himself and comes to breakfast ready for school, this warrants a positive comment such as, "You did a great job getting dressed. I like that."

Give the children an impromptu hug and kiss when they are doing what you expect. This will surprise them. We tend to take appropriate behavior for granted and let it pass unnoticed. In contrast, we often overreact to unacceptable behavior which results in giving negative attention which we really want to avoid. So often brothers and sisters play beautifully together while mom and dad are busy, yet this passes without comment. Instead, we usually give them our attention when they start to fight. With positive reinforcement, we want to reverse this process.

Another strategy is to comment to others about how proud you are of your youngsters while they are within earshot. This is really the time to say, "I can hardly wait to tell Dad when he comes home." Call Grandma and brag about a special accomplishment at school. Also think about more concrete rewards for good behavior. When the sixth grader returns from school with a particularly successful project, she deserves a surprise such as a special treat or a day off from her household responsibilities.

ON OCCASION, give your child an inexpensive

gift such as a package of stickers, a personalized notepad or a poster. By the same token, when your child brings home an unsatisfactory assignment, it is important for her to hear a positive comment instead of angry or negative remarks.

It looks like you worked hard on this paper, but a lot of answers are wrong. Let's see what happened." This kind of support permits a child to gracefully acknowledge her lack of success without having to become defensive.

Youngsters of all ages respond to positive reinforcement, including teens. Sometimes they are the ones who need it the most but get it the least. Unfortunately, we have a tendency to "get on their case" because our problems with them seem more serious with graver consequences. Nevertheless, the same principle applies: we must remember to acknowledge those times when they do accept responsibility, are careful with the car, come home on time, and help out at home.

It is important for us to shift our mind-set to a pattern of positive responses with negative exchanges kept to a minimum. Although it may take time before you see the results of this technique, in all likelihood this approach will lead to more productive and pleasant relationships among all family members.

— Harriet Hartman

from our readers

Tax hike needed

To the editor:

No one likes paying taxes. And no one relies on a tax increase. But neither do we wish seeing our great state universities lose faculty to other states with more resources at their disposal, or the curriculum at every level of education being gutted to the bone. Nor do we wish knowing that many of the state's mental patients may continue to be warehoused in institutions but cannot be provided with therapy that could increase chances of improvement. We don't like knowing that our elderly relatives who need Medicaid assistance must pay for an increasing number of their prescriptions from their limited income, or that nursing home care must be constantly reduced because the state cannot reimburse sufficiently for the majority of patients who need some government assistance. Despite being the warmest winter in 50 years, special energy money to keep the heat on for low-income families has already run out in some counties, and what will it be like next winter if the weather is near normal, gas prices increase 20 percent as expected, and state money for heat assistance is cut further.

There is no alternative but a tax increase in Michigan, and a temporary measure won't do. Human services cannot be cut further if we are to maintain any semblance of responsible government — or civility. The need for these services increases as the recession deepens, unemployment continues at the highest level in the nation, and federal cutbacks that resulted in a loss of \$1.1 billion in federal funds to Michigan in 1981-82 threaten to grow also. Those who are working and earning must be willing to share with the others. The generosity that is seen in food donations, volunteers at soup kitchens, and private giving must be expanded to meet the needs which aren't readily visible or for those who can't stand in line for their block of cheese. In this day of high technology and a desperate need for understanding of our past and future, we cannot deny our children the opportunity for a full, rich education.

Michigan's problems will not be completely solved with a tax increase, but they will be far worse if we continue to juggle figures and go on reducing every service on which citizens depend — especially those citizens who have no choice but to depend on the government for the services they need.

Marguerite Kowalski
Farmington

Supports Israel

To the editor:

Your weak comprehension of historical reality ("News event goes sour with opposition missing," Feb. 10) does the community a great disservice.

Consider the Holocaust, six million dead while the world stood by.

Consider Arab intransigence, refusing to negotiate for 35 years.

Consider the PLO insistence on Israel's destruction. . . . Consider the media's disregard for countless atrocities and hundreds of thousands of deaths perpetrated by the Arabs against their own brethren. . . .

Consider Israel's open investigation of their "indirect responsibility" for the Beirut massacres. . . .

Consider the hyper-reaction of the media every time Jews or Israelis fail to measure up to standards you do not apply to yourselves. . . .

Consider all that, and then express once more your pious wish that we invite our enemies to revile us in our own sanctuary.

Dan Greenberg
Farmington Hills