County holds tight reign on guns

On target: Oak Park resident Steve Beck shoots targets at the Double Action Indoor Shooting Center and Gun Shop in Madison Heights.

Gun permit issues, however, increased by about 19 percent in '97

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STAFF WRITER

As a pharmaceuticals salesman who carries drug samples in his car and travels more than 100 miles a day, Rey Patriarca of Birmingham would like to have a concealed weapons permit.

His wish grew more intense after hearing that another salesman at the pharmaceutical company that employs him was held up at gunpoint for the drug samples in his car.

But Patriarca hasn't applied for a concealed weapons permit because he's certain the Oakland County Concealed Weapons Licensing Board would deny his application. "I've heard it's impossible to get," he said.

While the county board would likely oblige Patriarca's application due to the elevated need of his occupation, according to CCW safety certificate instructor Murray F. Moorhatch, it does hold a tighter rein on the licenses than nearby counties.

"They are personally against the permits. It's their personal philosophy," said Moorhatch, whose CCW safety certificates — a state requirement for the permit — are valid in Oakland, Wayne and Macomb counties.

But Oakland County staff attorney Edward Cibor, who sits on the licensing board as a representative of the Oakland County Prosecuting Attorney's Office disagreed with his assertion, citing an increase in the number of CCWs issued last year.

"I think the board tries to be responsive to the needs of applicants," he said. "There has been an increase in the permits, a significant increase."

In fact, the board issued 2,720 CCWs in 1997, about 19 percent more than in 1996.

Although Michigan statute defines CCW requirements, county licensing boards are afforded some leeway in setting local policy. Ultimately, they have the power to grant or deny permit applications in their jurisdiction.

Each board is comprised of one representative from the county prosecuting attorney's office, sheriff's department and Michigan State Police.

Although Oakland County does not keep a statistical profile of residents who possess concealed weapons permits, officials say the most common applicants are:

- **Men**
- **Hunters and target shooters**
- **Law enforcement agents**
- **Small business owners**

Permit applications are received by local police departments, who take fingerprints and order federal and state criminal history records. The application is then submitted to the county board.

"As a board, we want to respond to the *needs*, as opposed to the *wants*," said Cibor of Oakland County's licensing board, which routinely issues permits to law enforcement agents, hunters, target shooters and business people.

The board also grants CCWs to individuals seeking a handgun for personal protection, if they can document an elevated need, said Cibor.

"The fact that threats were directed to a person" might justify issuing a permit for personal protection, Cibor said. "You examine on a case-by-case basis. ...The prosecutor's position is that where there is a showing of responsibility, good judgment and competence, we would join them in their request."

However, Oakland County's documentation requirement bothers many gun enthusiasts, including Al Allen, general manager of Double Action Indoor Shooting Center and Gun Shop in Madison Heights.

"I think that any citizen that feels that their safety is in jeopardy ought to be issued a CCW," he said, citing Macomb County's permit policy as one he prefers.

Unlike Oakland County, Macomb County does routinely award the permits based on personal protection, Allen said. "Macomb County takes the point of view that if you don't have a criminal history or a history of mental illness, they won't deny you a CCW."

In fact, Macomb County did grant significantly more of the permits — 4,174 — in 1997. Wayne County estimated the number they granted last year at 2,100.

While Oakland County issued more CCWs last year than in 1996, they granted 593 more in 1994.

But Southfield Police Chief Joseph Thomas, who said the number of permits issued to Southfield residents was declining, aligned Oakland County's strict CCW policy with a larger philosophy of controlling crime, rather than with the personal opinions of the licensing board.

"It is more difficult to get a handgun in Oakland County than anywhere else in the state," Thomas said. "Simply because we try to control anything like that. Even the sentences for crime in Oakland County are the maximum. We're very strict. ...We take a dogmatic approach."

Thomas also theorized that fewer county residents were seeking handgun permits.

"People are finding out that approximately 83 percent of the weapons purchased for home protection are used against family members and friends, not burglars."

Gun purchase: At right, Rey Patriarca, of Birmingham, learns about the new firearm he is purchasing from Double Action Indoor Shooting Center and Gun Shop employee Craig Hassa.

OAKLAND JOURNAL

Oakland Journal is a roundup of Oakland County news and notes collected from government, school, civic, community and neighborhood sources. Please write: Oakland Journal, c/o Oakland County editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009. Our fax number is (248) 644-1314.

4-H COURSE

A 4-H Dale Carnegie Course will be held for those ages 15 to 19 who have been in 4-H for at least a year. The "Take Charge" course will run every Saturday from 12:30-4:30 p.m. from Jan. 31 to April 25 at Hope Methodist Church in Southfield. The course is designed to help 4-H members increase their leadership and communication skills.

CONCERT BENEFIT

Oakland County Cable Communications Corporation will tape at no cost the Rackham Symphony Choir's "Hearts and Voices for the Homeless" concert at 8 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 23, at First Presbyterian Church of Royal Oak, 529 Hendrie Boulevard. The concert will benefit Doorstep Homeless Shelter, a division of Metro Emergency Services. For information about the concert, call (313) 341-3466.

KID'S FAIR

Oakland County Parks will provide funding for Kid's Fair '98 at The Palace of Auburn Hills on Sunday, Jan. 25. Parks staff will host in-line skating demonstrations and the Bumpa Bounce, a giant inflatable bouncer. Adults can pick up coupons for discounted entry to The Fridge, a refrigerated toboggan run and sign up to win an Oakland County Parks Summer Fun Passbook. Oakland County Parks are located at Booth 14. The Kid's Fair runs from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information, call (248) 858-0906, TDD: (248) 858-1684. Website is www.co.oakland.mi.us.

AAUW MEETS

The Oakland Branch of the American Association of University Women will hear state Rep. Nancy Quales, D-Southfield, speak about her first year in Lansing when they meet at 12:30 p.m. Monday, Jan. 26, at the Salvation Army Church, 3015 N. Main, Royal Oak, between 12 and 13 Mile roads. Visitors and prospective members are welcome. Call (248) 362-2131 for more information.

JEWISH ADULTS MEET

Single and married Jewish young adults, ages 21-35, in the tri-county area are invited to meet at 8:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 27, at the Old Woodward Grill, Birmingham. The event is sponsored by the Jewish Federation Young Adult Division, and is one of YAD's many social, political awareness and cultural programs. For information, call Marc Berke at the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit, (248) 203-1458.

POSTERS ABOUT WOMEN

The Diversity Committee of Oakland Community College's Orchard Ridge Campus will host a post exhibit in honor of African-American History Month, Jan. 26 through Feb. 20. Entitled "Black Women: Achievements Against the Odds," the exhibit consists of posters on loan from the Michigan American Association of University Women. For more information, call the Womencenter at (248) 471-7602.

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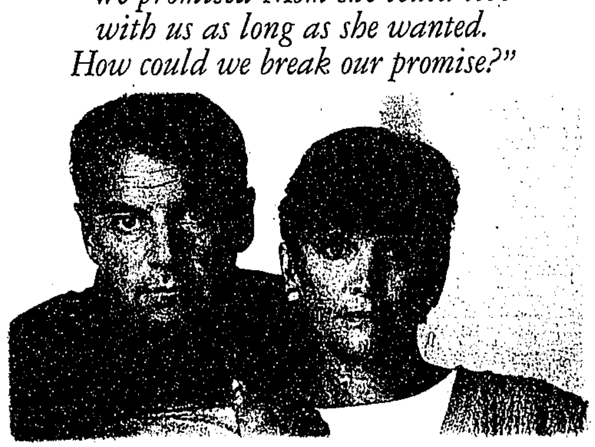
"We promised Mom she could live with us as long as she wanted. How could we break our promise?"



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