By Michael Kniss
Contributing Writer

In a recent discussion about contemporary politics, I was informed that stiffer gun control policies would leave our nation’s criminals as the sole owners of firearms. We would then be (apparently) in real trouble, as street gangs, murderers, and thieves would come to rule our great America.

It was then brought to my attention that World War II resulted from just such a situation. Apparently, German criminals were the only people in Germany that owned guns, and this led to the rise of Hitler, Nazism, the Holocaust, and the deaths of countless soldiers on European battlefields. I do not pretend to believe that this line of faulty logic is representative of the political right wing that is opposed to gun control. I continue to hope, in fact, that this lone example of “reason” was the result of a single moment of confusion. Yet, the debate over gun control continues to be extremely relevant in modern society.

As I am constantly reminded by opponents of gun control, the Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States grants every citizen the right to “keep and bear arms.” Yet, the Founding Fathers, in no way, intended for this amendment to be a free license for the ownership of deadly weapons. Instead, its purpose was to protect society’s right to rise up (in arms) against a government of tyranny (and indirectly, to protect the legality of the American Revolution that had recently ended). I do not doubt that had Jefferson, Adams, and Washington been alive today, they would have been as appalled as I at the answers given to the question, “Why do you own a gun?”

“To hunt… Because the 2nd Amendment gives me the right to… To protect myself… To protect my business… Because criminals do… (And my all time favorite) Because I can!”

Of these, perhaps hunting and protection are valid reasons to own guns. Yet, hunting rifles and shotguns are not the weapons that cause thousands of deaths on the streets of our nation every year. Furthermore, we do not live in a vigilante society. The threat of extreme violence as a means of protection in the hands of every free citizen creates a dangerous society. We have police, security personnel, and the National Guard to fulfill our need for protection. As for owning guns because it is within our rights, or simply because we can, I am at a loss to understand the logic. To justify the ownership of a weapon that could potentially end the life of a fellow human being with the argument of democratic freedom is irrational.

Owning a gun can be closely paralleled with driving drunk. We all have the constitutional freedom to drink (after age 21), even to intoxication, and nowhere does the Constitution prohibit driving a car while in such a state. Yet, when drunk drivers are on the roads, accidents happen. Driving under the influence of alcohol greatly increases the probability of mortality on our nation’s highways and local streets. Owning a gun is comparable. Gun ownership often results in deadly accidents. Having a gun in the home, or on your person, greatly increases the probability of mortality in our already violent society.

If we have learned nothing else from the Cold War, we have learned that the safest reality is not one in which we all have the ability to destroy each other. Our mutual fear of each other cannot sustain a tranquil world. Peace and safety do not come through violence, fear, and the threat of violence. Peace and safety come from the absence of such evils.

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Previous “Insensitive Remarks” Retracted

Dear Editors,

I am writing to apologize for some insensitive remarks I made in a letter that appeared in last week’s edition of the Weather Vane (“Ken Says, ‘Go to Ruby’s,’” Feb. 20). In a lame attempt at sarcastic humor, I made some comments about whether homosexuality is a choice, and whether some people feel marginalized at EMU. I regret having made those remarks. I appreciate the recent steps EMU has taken to facilitate discussion on the issue of homosexuality, and my ill-conceived comments did little to reflect that appreciation. I sincerely apologized to all those who were offend-

–Ken Roth