

An Examination of Violent Crime and Freedom in American Society

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I have been an ardent supporter of the Constitution of the United States and the principles of a free and independent American people for as long as I have memory. During these nearly five decades of my life I have watched in frustration as more and more of our personal rights as Americans have been eroded or eliminated altogether in the name of the political expediency of one-or-another special interest group. Yet worse is the result of this political mayhem. America has become a place that is unsafe in a way that is unacceptable to almost everyone. That is the major failure of every politician in America; to provide citizens with a safe environment in which to live and work. It goes even farther as it seems to me that in a frantic panic to make it appear as though they are doing something, politicians are doing what is easiest to pass into law without realizing it is also the thing most likely to guarantee more crime. That thing is to enact legislation controlling the possession and ownership of personally owned weapons, most notably guns.

This became abundantly clear to me in a very personal way one time in the past when my family was faced with a personal crisis involving victimization by a vicious criminal. A madman who demonstrated a propensity for violence was seriously stalking my youngest daughter. In our panic I, of course, called the police immediately. Much to my surprise they were unable to do much. If the criminal happened to come into their custody they would certainly do their best to retain him for a time but otherwise they were under no obligation to provide my daughter or any of the rest of us with any degree of protection. The single piece of advice given to me by the local Sheriff's Department was this: "Buy a handgun and learn how to use it. Your family's protection is your responsibility."

Well, to say the least this left me stunned. I immediately consulted with the family lawyer and found that, yes, what the police told me was true. I was not their responsibility until *after* a crime had been committed. Then they were only obliged to search for evidence to convict the criminal. This would not ensure any of our lives would be safe. This was a major blow to me, because up until this time I had been an active and outspoken opponent of anyone outside of police and military circles being allowed to own a weapon of any kind, with the exception of some for very limited sporting purposes such as hunting and target shooting. I designed weapons for a living for the Department of Defense and felt I was secure in a legally controlled environment where the police would be at my immediate beck-and-call. It was a shock to discover that this notion was a fantasy.

Taking all this to heart, I decided to research the issue from a legal standpoint to try and find out if something had been missed. In the meantime I took the Sheriff's advice, as it seemed the only recourse to avoid a complete tragedy. I acquired a handgun. Because of my long military training I already knew how to use it. Thankfully, this occurred before the laws requiring a waiting period before purchasing a handgun had been enacted. I did not have to wait a long time to acquire protection for my family. I had protection right away. If this happened today, I would have to wait weeks to be able to possess the means to put up an effective defense against criminals.

All I will say about ensuing events is that everything transpired completely within legal bounds. The criminal who had been stalking my daughter found out I had a gun and intended to use it to protect my family. We never saw or heard from him again. It was that simple.

I was still very interested in all of the ramifications of what had happened to my family. I wanted to know the truth regarding all of the controversy I heard about in the news. I calculated I had the

intelligence to make that discovery with a bit of research. I was surprised at what I found out. The information that follows is the result of my several years of research.

It seemed that a lot of the controversy in the popular press centered around two basic issues. First is the main question of the effectiveness of private persons owning weapons as a means of self-defense. It was a very short task to research both sides of the issue and find that the most accurate information in that regard was that espoused by organizations such as the National Rifle Association (NRA), Gun Owners of America (GOA) and Jews for the Preservation of Firearms Ownership (JPFO). The basic information distills to some very simple facts. Although the exact numbers are a matter of small controversy, crime statistics reported to the FBI shows without doubt that privately owned firearms are used in the U.S. to stop over two million crimes each year, many of a violent nature and many without the gun owners firing a single shot. There are tens of thousands of case histories compiled as proof. Then, consider there are scant accidental injuries with firearms. Although sensationalized in the press and other popular media, they are fewer than deaths caused from factors such as skateboards. When was the last time a news crew rolled when some kid was killed on his skateboard? I learned it's just not "newsworthy".

Next, almost all of the murders claimed by organizations such as Handgun Control Incorporated (HCI) as "child deaths" are actually those of young male professional criminals killing each other. For example, if a 22-year-old drug dealer is shot and killed by a rival 21-year-old drug dealer, HCI calls it a "child murdered". I find this notion to be totally ridiculous. Not that it isn't significant or that something should not be done towards prevention, but HCI's agenda is to use these half-truths to enact legislation that would prevent me from owning that protection I acquired for my family so effectively. The legislation they have enacted (such as the so-called "Brady Bill") would do absolutely nothing to stop that criminal from acquiring a weapon and using it to dispatch his rival; even if he has to resort to using a rock. As a result of this discovery I have developed a new regard for groups such as HCI, and it is not favorable. I now consider them to be enabling criminals, period.

The second major area of debate in the media are the issues surrounding the Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America. This was less easy to research as the debate has raged for so long that much of the truth had been obfuscated by layers of less-than-truth and a miasma of misinformed personal opinion. I found this journey of discovery gave me something else. I began to remember long ago lessons from my youth; discussions with my grandfather, my father and other men regarding the nature of citizen responsibility and participation in our system of government. I was stunned to find the information, the truth, so easy to find once I re-remembered where to start looking. My research then evolved into a real labor of love, re-discovering for myself the history of the nation I loved so much and had been working myself for so long to protect. I had to rediscover the reason we must return to the intent of the group of individuals we call the "Founding Fathers" to learn why any of our laws are the way they are. This is necessary because the authors recorded their intentions so all future generations could understand why certain laws were passed and how they were intended to be used.

Now, I take every opportunity to re-educate people I encounter, as much as possible in a considerate, non-threatening way concerning the full meaning of the whole Bill of Rights and the Second Amendment and what it means to us as Americans. For example, it should never be forgotten, first and foremost, that the Bill of Rights are *all* individual freedoms recognized as pre-existing to the formation of the United States and guaranteed to belong, only, to individual citizens - not to any government; state, federal or otherwise. As such, they can never be changed, revoked or modified by any subsequent governments.

Many of us have heard or read the words contained in the Second Amendment, but few understand the meaning that was intended by our Founding Fathers. The Second Amendment remains one of the most misunderstood and misinterpreted of our founding concepts, even by those who hold themselves to be educated. The Second Amendment, in itself, is a simple, unmistakable and eloquent statement of a basic right to freedom and self-defense if you are aware of and can understand the often-quoted intentions of those who drafted it:

"A well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed".

Our founders saw these four simple clauses, these twenty-seven words, as our ultimate guarantee of personal safety against crime, oppression and tyranny, whether internal or external. In order to understand how the Founders understood those words, let us examine them one clause one at a time.

The first clause is "A well regulated militia". This is possibly the most misunderstood few words in all of government. One must remember that the English language was used differently in the days of our Founding Fathers and that many words and phrases had different meanings than we understand today. The "well regulated" part of this clause was intended to mean a level of knowledgeable and expert use of the subject gained through extensive personal experience. The "militia" part meant that group of Americans made up of all able-bodied males who were able to take up arms. It is important to note that the term "able-bodied" had a broader meaning at the time the Constitution was written. It literally meant "all who were able". Small disabilities and illnesses were not considered sufficient to excuse one from the responsibility of bearing arms. Or, as Thomas Jefferson put it, "... it is their right and duty to be at all times armed." Taken together, the parts of this clause meant that the men who were intended to make up the members of a future, unknown, militia must *already* be practiced and experienced in the use of military class arms through constant, private use and practice with their own military class weapons. It was understood and acknowledged that if some real emergency arose there would be little or no time to train green recruits, a situation that became all too evident in future conflicts. (Note: In our present day we should also expand the legal interpretation of militia to encompass all able-bodied females.)

The second clause, "being necessary to the security of a free State", meant that the ability to raise the aforesaid experienced militia - now made up of all trained, experienced, able-bodied Americans - was necessary to the continuing existence of a free nation of people and to the more basic condition of remaining a free people, regardless of whether or not the actual nation survived. I believe that the term "free state" was intentionally included to encompass this double meaning. The original draft of the amendment contained the word "country", but this was discarded during debates in the House committee so that the other meaning of the "condition or mode of existence" of being a free people was the emphasis, not the continuing existence of any government; past, present or future. One must remember that our founders firmly believed that any government only existed through the consent of the governed. It was believed that the people, to remain free, must have the absolute power to eliminate and/or regenerate any portion - or all - of the government in order to perpetuate their freedom, even if it meant resorting to the weight of arms to dislodge a corrupt or tyrannical government. It also means that if the official government and/or the regular military is somehow displaced, overpowered, neutralized or destroyed, the militia - the *armed* people - will act in their stead to insure the continuance of a freedom in America.

The third clause, "the right of the people to keep and bear arms" means *exactly* what it says. This is the *subject* of the entire text of the Second Amendment. This third clause is the unconditional

statement of the right of the people - meaning *all* Americans - to purchase, own, use, transport and carry arms of any sort in any manner they should choose without any interference from any government. This is why the simple term *people* is used rather than militia. Debaters in Congress did consider the use of the word "militia" but decided against it for the more reasonable term, "people". It was meant to emphasize that the right preceded and overshadowed any consideration of militias or governments. The founders recognized that if a free people did not first exist, there could be no eventual militia or a government for a militia to protect. One of our most important founders, Thomas Jefferson, emphasized this thought when he wrote, "all power is inherent in the people; that they may exercise it by themselves... ."

This clause of the Second Amendment might have been plainer if preceded by the adverb "therefore", or if it had been left as it was originally written. The original draft of the amendment as written by James Madison, began with the first clause being, "The right of the people to keep and bear arms ...". I am convinced that one of the reasons the order of the clauses were changed was precisely so that the emphasis would not be placed on the hardware ownership issue but on the reason the weapons must be kept and carried. The reason, of course, was to be able to perpetuate the freedom and safety of the American people at all costs. (Note: arms mean all *weapons*, not just firearms - but it especially means firearms because the intent was for "citizens to possess arms of equal or greater effect than any organized military that might be brought to bear against them"). This is why none other than George Washington, himself, said, "Firearms stand next in importance to the Constitution itself".

Fourth, and clearest, is the clause, "shall not be infringed". This is the absolute statement of intent by our Founding Fathers that the right is inherent in the people themselves and emphasizes that any control of the right of any kind is denied to both federal and state governments. It underscores the degree of importance placed upon this right by our founders. This meaning is underscored in the Tenth Amendment contained in the Bill of Rights. The Tenth Amendment states: "The powers not delegated to the United States ... or any powers the US government are forbidden to have by the collective states are automatically delegated to the power of the collective states or to the people." What people have tended to forget is the all importance of the words "not delegated" in this amendment. This means that this amendment only addresses *rights and powers that are not already covered (delegated)* by the Constitution *and* Bill of Rights. The Second Amendment in the Bill of Rights clearly and unmistakably delegated - *forever* - the right to keep and bear arms to *the people*; thus forever forbidding the governments of the United States and the collective states from addressing those rights in any manner; in other words, "infringing".

How and why George Washington and others felt so strongly regarding the Second Amendment becomes unmistakably clear when one examines the history and evolution of The Bill of Rights and the documents that preceded it and those who wrote them. Although many of the concepts that founded our nation can be easily traced to John Locke a century earlier (who's ideas greatly influenced our founders), some of the clearest intent in what we finally became was written immediately before, during and after the revolution.

In *The Virginia Declaration Of Rights* of June 12, 1776, largely written by George Mason; Mason wrote, "That a well regulated militia, composed of the body of the people, trained to arms, is the proper, natural, and safe defence of a free state ... ". These words preceded by less than one month the Declaration of Independence of July 4, 1776, largely written by another Virginian, Thomas Jefferson.

After the revolution, George Mason and Patrick Henry, another Virginian, refused, among others, to support the new Constitution unless it contained a guarantee of basic rights for individuals. They formed a mutual agreement between themselves and another Virginian, James Madison, who submitted, in May of 1789, a proposed *Bill of Rights* he authored to the Constitutional Convention. In it, Madison wrote, "The right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed; a well armed, and well regulated militia being the best security of a free country ... ". After much debate and several revisions, some of which I discussed earlier, this equally simple statement evolved into it's final form as the proposed Fourth Amendment to the Constitution. It, in turn, was eventually ratified by the states as the Second Amendment as it is quoted above.

What does all this mean?

Simply stated, it means our founders foresaw that the application of an unlimited number of experienced weapons users, armed with weapons of the best military quality and formed into a self-controlled militia outside of the control of a possibly destroyed or corrupt government, might someday be necessary for us all to remain a free people. It is that simple.

This might also apply to threats from any external or internal oppressors, aggressors, tyrants, fascists or others who might try to destroy our individual freedom. Therefore, in order to insure that there will always be an adequate resource of such individuals trained in - and comfortable with - arms, it is the *right and duty of all Americans* to own and carry arms, especially firearms, at all times. This is the real backbone of the very concept of freedom; not to grant a simple right to a "militia" of some sort or to grant a simple right to own some sort of hardware; but a right of *all the people* to acquire, retain and perpetuate the *knowledge and experience of arms* through their *unregulated* ownership and use.

Over the years, one misguided legislative move after another has systematically gnawed away at this, our ultimate guarantee of individual liberty, until it is in real danger of becoming an empty right and sweeping us into a sea of ever deepening tyranny and oppression by well meaning but misguided individuals. Attempting to maintain the status quo will mean the eventual defeat of freedom, as it has already been demonstrated by the growing body of laws that already greatly infringe upon all of our individual freedoms. There are currently tens of thousands of laws on the books restricting the ownership and use of weapons. Most of those laws were enacted in a misguided attempt to curb or control some sort of crime. None have had any effect in eliminating crime, because crime is a human problem caused by the willful acts of humans and humans can always find the means to acquire weapons for the commission of such acts.

George Mason clearly stated, "To disarm the people is the best and most effectual way to enslave them... ." To prevent our enslavement by neo-fascists to a kind of creeping tyranny, citizens must advance a united front to thwart these assaults on our freedom and to preserve and restore important rights to us for all time. To quote Edmund Burke, a British anti-democracy politician and a contemporary of our own Founding Fathers, "By gnawing through a dyke, even a rat may drown a nation". This seems to be what is happening. We are drowning in a sea of untruths doing nothing to solve the issues created by crime. The solution to crime is the elimination of criminals, not decent, honest citizens owning weapons for self-defense.

We must stop trying to make the issue of the meaning of the Second Amendment only a hardware ownership issue. The issue is not that we have guns, only; the issue is the *reason* we must have the unabridged right to own and carry arms. That issue is that we, as Americans, remain free and in

control of the government and retain the power to defend our families, our property and ourselves. The issue must remain that firearms ownership is only a means to that ultimate end.

Our founders saw an armed, honest and responsible populace as not only ultimately responsible for the continued existence of a free people, but also for many less drastic purposes. Any modern police department will spout tons of rhetoric about how they protect the citizens. Unfortunately, they mean the protection of the population in general by the method of apprehending criminals *after* they have committed crimes. None of these organizations will provide protection to an individual citizen. The only persons in the country receiving specific individual protection by a public law enforcement agency are those protected by the Secret Service such as the President, Vice-President and their families and certain members of Congress. The Secret Service has far from a perfect record in doing even this task in spite of their almost super-human efforts in attempting to accomplish that mission. The rest of us are *on our own* just as much as the pioneers on the prairies of old!

When our founders wrote the Constitution they took it for granted that virtually all Americans would be able to protect themselves and their rightful property because they would already be armed under the provisions of the Second Amendment. The founders did not spell out these other purposes for arms as it was considered by them to be a ridiculously moot argument by anyone with any common sense that if the entire populace was already armed and allowed to carry and use those arms as they saw fit, the weapons should be automatically used to maintain their individual property, safety and freedom and that of their loved ones and neighbors. Indeed, the Fourth Amendment emphasizes this opinion. Our founders took it for granted that to be considered free, any body of people automatically had the right "... to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects..." against criminal intrusion. The purpose, then, of the Fourth Amendment was to ensure that the *government itself* did not act as criminals might and violate these same rights of safety and security that they specifically implied were possessed by every citizen. One must remember that at the time these documents were written, there was no such thing as police departments; the police were invented decades later to relieve some of the burden from the average citizen who were too afraid to confront criminals alone, not to replace it; and never to control and direct the citizenry.

Further, our founders would have considered it absurd to even enter into a discussion regarding the preservation of any rights concerning any sporting purpose for firearms. It was taken for granted by the founders that the people would have a sporting purpose; whether it might be hunting or target practice or competition. All of the founders were themselves engaged in these activities and they were considered another American right apart from the Bill of Rights. But the so-called "sporting rights" issue is irrelevant to the Second Amendment. The Second Amendment is not about sporting purposes, it is about the issue of remaining *safe and free* using military hardware. The Second Amendment is not amendable or susceptible for revocation, ever.

In order to preserve our basic civil rights, we must all lay aside any peripheral personal differences that exist in our society and join together in this common cause. Political differences, religious differences, racial differences, cultural differences and differences in the sexes are all secondary to the importance of this single issue of remaining a free people in charge of our own government. We have soft-peddled the issues involving the slow throttling of the Second Amendment in the name of civil propriety for far too long. Those who would think it is acceptable to ignore the Constitution of these United States because of their own personal irrational fears or desires to shirk any personal responsibility, and in-so-doing detrimentally affect the lives of their fellow Americans by impinging their security and freedom for their own petty gains are as much an enemy to the freedom of the American people as any foreign invader. In fact, to so detrimentally affect the ability of a free

American people to defend themselves against possible future foreign attackers by disarming the people might be construed as aiding an as yet unidentified but real enemy. Worse, those who would exercise their own personal freedom to remove and eliminate the freedom of generations of citizens yet unborn are beyond contempt.

These ends can be accomplished legally, calmly and rationally if the good people of this nation are truthfully educated. It is violent criminals who give honest Americans a bad name with the ill-informed. The misinformed must be taught the truth. Arms are inanimate objects. They have no will of their own, no malevolent intent. They can, however, assume the personality of their owners. They can be owned and carried by decent Americans without fear of any harm to anyone. Or, they can be carried by individuals who will them to comply with their own naturally aggressive and destructive tendencies as they continue to hold society hostage. These individuals are called criminals; they must be stopped. Therefore, we must champion and endorse a zero tolerance of crime against persons and property, especially violent and destructive crime. This is why - ultimately - the issue of violent crime in America directly affects the perception of Second Amendment rights as they are misinterpreted by the majority of Americans. This is why we can never hope to secure the blessing of this liberty for ourselves and our posterity as long as there is a predominantly permissive attitude toward criminals. As a result, many places within America that were once free are now functionally owned by criminals. If you do not believe this, try going anywhere you wish. It is not possible.

Along with this philosophy must go laws that mirror this position, or the abolition of old laws that oppose it. I said it earlier but it bears repeating here: The single largest failure of the American political system in general and all politicians in particular is that they have utterly and completely failed in what should be their most basic duty, to provide Americans with the most basic of necessities: a safe environment in which to live and work. This failure must not be ignored. The criminal justice system must be transformed into a criminal punishment system providing justice for the victims while removing dedicated criminals from society. America was once safe, it can be again. Violent criminal attacks have occurred in the past; a schoolyard in Stockton, California, a tower at the University of Texas; a McDonald's Restaurant in San Ysidro, California - they all had one thing in common. They were places that were occupied by scores of helpless, unarmed, potential victims unable to defend themselves. It will happen again. More helpless people will be found and shot by sociopathic maniacs seeking the attention that will be lavished upon them by the popular media and the immortality which that will bring.

We have reached the condition where decent law-abiding Americans are no longer safe anywhere; not even barricaded in our homes. We are not safe in our homes because we are becoming aware that if we are ever attacked and forced to defend ourselves in our homes we will probably be arrested and interrogated by the police and then sued by the criminal's family. This outrageous situation must end. Even if we were safe barricaded in our homes, I would hardly call it freedom. It is the criminals who must be behind the bars, not us. We must be able to reclaim our safety in order to be free. This situation is our fault. It is our fault because we have allowed it to happen by continuing to endorse the same old politics and the same old policies that have continually proven to be failures.

All I can do is ask anyone who might read this is to examine where things are presently headed. The Second Amendment, or any amendment for that matter, can be misused or ignored by governments. The current situation is that the Second Amendment is being severely eroded by those enemies of freedom who seemingly want a police state; one where only the police and the military have arms and the authority to use them and all of us will be compelled to do their bidding.

A simple proof of the erosion of our rights is the constant push to ensure that Americans cannot have weapons equivalent to those possessed by the police and the military. Our founders intended *exactly* that we should have equivalent or superior arms to the military. In The Pennsylvania Gazette of February 20, 1788 in arguments supporting ratification of the Bill of Rights they explained: "Congress have no power to disarm the militia. Their swords and every other terrible implement of the soldier, are the birthright of an American ...".

Those against freedom will not rest until we have no weapons for self-defense at all. This is how a police state is born. This would have been abhorrent to our Founding Fathers and is exactly what the Second Amendment was designed to prevent. They correctly believed that the military (and later the police) must always be under the control of the people. Other nations are even more heavily armed than the U.S.. Israel and Switzerland are good examples. The adults who have weapons there do not cause the crimes either. Adult males there are required to own fully automatic assault rifles and to keep them in working order and to regularly qualify in their use. Those countries do not have the crime problems we do. They do not because their citizens do not tolerate crime.

I believe with all my heart and intellect that America was deliberately founded by our ancestors to be different from every other nation on earth. The difference is wholly in the freedom of it's people. Some of my ancestors fought in the revolution to create that nation. We must not let the freedom they fought for die of neglect. We must not give up until we succeed in defeating this insidious evil. If we do, then we must admit to them that we are no longer free.

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FURTHER RESEARCH NOTES:

Quotations Extracted for Use from the "Founding Fathers" and Others on the Subject:

The Constitution of the United States of America, Second Amendment:

"A well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed."

James Madison (Author of the Second Amendment):

"Americans have the right and advantages of being armed - unlike the citizens of the countries whose governments are afraid to trust the people with arms. If they did, the people would certainly shake off the yoke of tyranny, as America did."

"I believe there are more instances of the abridgement of the freedom of the people by gradual and silent encroachments of those in power than by violent and sudden usurptions."

George Washington:

"When firearms go, all goes - we need them every hour ..."

Thomas Jefferson:

"The Constitution of most of our states (and of the United States) assert that all power is inherent in the people; that they may exercise it by themselves; that it is their right and duty to be at all times armed."

"The strongest reason for the people to retain the right to keep and bear arms is, as a last resort, to protect themselves against the tyranny in government."

"When governments fear the people there is liberty. When the people fear the government there is tyranny."

"I prefer dangerous freedom over peaceful slavery."

"No freeman shall ever be debarred the use of arms."

"False is the idea of utility ... that would take fire from men because it burns, and water because one may drown in it; that has no remedy for evils, except destruction (of liberty). The laws that forbid the carrying of arms are laws of such nature. They disarm only those who are neither inclined nor determined to commit crimes...such laws serve rather to encourage than to prevent homicides, for an unarmed man may be attacked with greater confidence than an armed man."

"On every question of construction (of the Constitution) let us carry ourselves back to the time when the Constitution was adopted, recollect the spirit manifested in the debates, and instead of trying what meaning may be squeezed out of the text, or invented against it, conform to the probable one

in which it was passed."

"Our legislators are not sufficiently apprised of the rightful limits of their power; that their true office is to declare and enforce our natural rights and duties, and to take none of them from us."

Alexander Hamilton:

"If circumstances should at any time oblige the government to form an army of any magnitude, that army can never be formidable to the liberties of the people while there is a large body of citizens, little if at all inferior to them in discipline and the use of arms, who stand ready to defend their rights and those of their fellow citizens."

Thomas Paine:

"Arms discourage and keep the invader and plunderer in awe, and preserve order in the world as well as property ... Horrid mischief would ensue were the law-abiding deprived the use of them."

Benjamin Franklin:

"They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety."

Richard Henry Lee:

"To preserve liberty, it is essential that the whole body of the people always possess arms and be taught alike, especially when young, how to use them."

"A militia, when properly formed, are in fact the people themselves ... and include all men capable of bearing arms."

Patrick Henry:

"Guard with jealous attention the public liberty. Suspect everyone who approaches that jewel. Unfortunately, nothing will preserve it but downright force. Whenever you give up that force (the right to keep and bear arms), you are inevitably ruined."

"The great object is that every man be armed. Everyone who is able might have a gun."

"Is peace so dear as to be bought at the price of chains and slavery? I do not know what course others may take; but, as for me; give me liberty or give me death."

George Mason:

"I ask, who are the Militia? They consist of the whole people."

"To disarm the people; that is the best and most effectual way to enslave them."

John Adams:

"Arms in the hands of citizens may be used at individual discretion ... in private self-defense."

Samuel Adams:

"The Constitution shall never be construed to prevent the people of the United States, who are peaceable citizens, from keeping their own arms."

Daniel Webster:

"God grants liberty only to those who love it and always stand ready to guard and defend it."

Noah Webster:

"Before a standing army can rule, the people must be disarmed; as they are in almost every kingdom in Europe. The supreme power in America cannot enforce unjust laws by the sword; because the whole body of the people are armed, and constitute a force superior to any band of regular troops that can be, on any pretence, raised in the United States."

Tench Coxe:

"The militia, who are in fact the effective part of the people at large ... will form a powerful check upon the regular troops, and will generally be sufficient to over-awe them."

"As civil rulers, not having their duty to the people duly before them, may attempt to tyrannize, and as the military forces which must be occasionally raised to defend our country, might pervert their power to the injury of their fellow citizens, the people are confirmed by the article in their right to keep and bear arms."

Wendell Phillips:

"Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty."

Justice Joseph Story:

"One of the ordinary modes, by which tyrants accomplish their purpose without resistance is, by disarming the people and making it an offense to keep arms."

Thomas Cooley:

"It may be supposed from the phraseology of [the Second Amendment] that the right to keep and bear arms was only guaranteed to the militia; but this would be an interpretation not warranted by the intent ... The meaning of the provision undoubtedly is that the people from whom the militia must be taken shall have the right to keep and bear arms, and they need no permission or regulation of law for that purpose."

The Pennsylvania Gazette; February 20, 1788:

"Congress have no power to disarm the militia. Their swords and every other terrible implement of the soldier, are the birthright of an American ... "

Gazette of the United States, October 14, 1789:

"The right of the people to keep and bear arms has been recognized by the General Government; but the best security of that right after all is, the military spirit, that taste for martial exercises, which has always distinguished the free citizens of these States ... Such men form the best barrier to the liberties of America."

Independent Gazetteer, 1791:

"Whenever people...entrust the defense of their country to a regular, standing army, composed of mercenaries, the power of that country will remain under the direction of the most wealthy citizens..."

Abraham Lincoln:

"This country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing government, they can exercise their constitutional right of amending it, or their revolutionary right to dismember or overthrow it."

"We, the people are the rightful masters of both congress and the courts - not to overthrow the constitution, but to overthrow men who pervert the constitution."

THE BIBLE:

Genesis:

27:40 And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother

The First Book of Samuel:

13:19 Now there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel: for the Philistines said, Lest the Hebrews make them swords or spears:

13:20 But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his share, and his coulter, and his axe, and his mattock.

Joel:

3:10 Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong.

Luke:

11:21 "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe."

Luke:

22:36 "But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one."

NOTE: The Bible records that a man without his cloak was regarded as "naked" (I Sam. 19:24 - KJV). The cloak was often a man's most prized possession. It was used as a covering when it was cold at night (Exodus 22:26, 27), It indicated his social status and displayed his family's colors. To consider selling it would have been regarded as a very serious business in it's day.

The American's Creed

I believe in the United States of America as a ¹ government of the people, by the people, for the people; ² whose just powers are derived from the consent of the governed; ³ a democracy in a republic; ⁴ a sovereign notion of many sovereign states; ⁵ a perfect union, one and inseparable; ⁶ established upon those principles of freedom, equality, justice and humanity for which American patriots sacrificed their lives and fortunes. ⁷

I therefore believe it is my duty to my country to love it; ⁸ to support its constitution; ⁹ to obey its laws; ¹⁰ to respect its flag; and ¹¹ to defend it against all enemies. ¹²

The American's Creed was developed by William Tyler Page, clerk of the United States House of Representatives in 1917, in answer to a national contest for such a creed. He incorporated in a brief, clear statement the basic American traditions and ideals, as expressed by the founders of our country and by its leading statesmen and writers.

Key to the The American's Creed:, 1. Closing words of Preamble to the Constitution; 2. Lincoln's Gettysburg Address; 3. Declaration of Independence; 4. James Madison in The Federalist, No. X; 5. Speech by Daniel Webster, Jan. 26, 1830; 6. Preamble to the Constitution; 7. Adapted from closing words of Declaration of Independence; 8. Speech by John Hancock; 9. United States Oath of Allegiance; 10. George Washington's Farewell Address; 11. War Department Circular, April 14, 1917; 12. Oath of Allegiance.

OUR DEMOCRACY

To you and me, America is the finest country in the world. But it is not just the land we love, it is also the kind of life for which America stands – our democracy.

It is your duty as an American to help keep that democracy alive. To do this, you must know the true meaning of America, you must believe in her form of government, you must be willing to do your part to keep America great.

The American's Creed sums up, in the words of great Americans, the things for which America stands. It points out your rights and privileges and your duties as an American citizen.

". . . I BELIEVE IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA . . ."

The United States of America -that's the name of our country, given it by the men who founded it. United, the people of America have worked to give it its present high standards of living.

United, we can go on to even greater prosperity and happiness.

" . . . AS A GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE, FOR THE PEOPLE . . ." Of, by, and for the people - not just some of them, but all of them. Not just the rich or the poor, not just people of one race or one creed, but all the people - the people to which the Declaration of Independence refers when it says: "All men are created equal ." -not equally gifted or equally rich, but equal under law.

" . . . WHOSE JUST POWERS ARE DERIVED FROM THE CONSENT OF THE GOVERNED . . ."

Every year, on Election Day, adult Americans have the right and duty to go to the polls and cast their vote about the way they want to be governed. The will of the majority becomes the will of the people - but nothing interferes with the right of the minority to think and say what they like.

" . . . A DEMOCRACY IN A REPUBLIC. . ."

The word "democracy" itself tells of our form of government. It has come to us from the Greek: demos, the people, and krates, to rule. But imagine more than 180,000,000 people getting together some place at one time to rule a country! Such "absolute" democracy works all right in a small body of people, but it wouldn't work in a whole country where the people are spread out over millions of square miles. Our democracy is therefore the "representative" kind of democracy in which the governing is done by representatives who are elected by the people and are responsible to them. A country ruled in this way is called a "republic."

" . . . A SOVEREIGN NATION OF MANY SOVEREIGN STATES . . ."

The government of our nation is located in Washington, District of Columbia, the capital of our country. Here, the Congress enacts federal laws, the Supreme Court interprets them, the executive branch of our government carries them out. But in addition, fifty separate state governments in fifty state capitals enact laws to suit the conditions of their "sovereign" states.

" . . . A PERFECT UNION, ONE AND INSEPARABLE . . ."

The aim, of the Founding Fathers was to establish "a perfect union." But they realized that no union could be "perfect" if it were based solely on human beings with all their faults. They therefore relied on Divine Providence in setting up what they hoped would be a "perfect union." Today, in the motto of our country, we express that same conviction that our union can be perfect only by God's help: "In God We Trust."

" . . . ESTABLISHED UPON THOSE PRINCIPLES OF FREEDOM, EQUALITY, JUSTICE, AND HUMANITY FOR WHICH AMERICAN PATRIOTS SACRIFICED THEIR LIVES AND FORTUNES . . ."

Thousands of Americans gave their blood to create our democracy. Millions of loyal men and women have fought to keep it. In the struggle, more than half a million died on the battlefields. The willingness of these many Americans to die for our country should make all of us even more determined to live for it.

" . . . I THEREFORE BELIEVE IT IS MY DUTY TO MY COUNTRY TO LOVE IT . . ."

America is your country - her soil feeds you, her laws protect you and give you "the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." America deserves your love. America has a right to expect you to express that love in your deeds, in the way in which you train yourself for American citizenship.

“ . . . TO SUPPORT ITS CONSTITUTION . . . ”

The Constitution of the United States explains your rights as a citizen of our country - your right to religious liberty, to freedom of speech and of the press, to assemble peaceably, "to petition the government for a redress of grievances," to be secure in your person and property, to justice under law. By supporting the Constitution you keep all these rights. But remember that the rights that are yours are the rights of others as well. You have the right to worship God in your own way - see to it that others retain their right to worship God in their way. You have the right to speak your mind without fear of prison or punishment - ensure that right for others, even when you do not agree with them.

“ . . . TO OBEY ITS LAWS . . . ”

The laws of our country, the laws of your state, are written by the representatives of the American people for the good of all Americans. These laws govern much of our behavior in our daily lives. They draw the line between what is right and what is wrong and protect us against those who may want to do us ill. By obeying them you strengthen them and main - the protection they afford.

“ . . . TO RESPECT ITS FLAG . . . ”

The flag is the symbol of our country. When we show it our respect we show our respect and love for all that is America - our land, our people, our way of life. As a young American you may have learned how to handle the flag respectfully, how to display it, how to salute it. By following this teaching all through your life you will always know how to pay the nation the respect it deserves.

“ . . . AND TO DEFEND IT AGAINST ALL ENEMIES.”

It is fervent prayer of all of us that never again shall American men die on the battlefield. The way to ensure this is to help keep America strong and prepared to stand up against any foreign power that might desire to destroy us. But it is just as important to defend America against the enemies within our own borders - enemies who sow the seeds of distrust among our people, who try to stir up hatred, who attempt to ruin others by lies and smears, who break our laws.

The American's Creed is your creed as an American. By studying the creed you will know what is expected of you. By following it you will prove yourself a true American.

The Historical Notes: The American's Creed was a result of a nationwide contest for writing a National Creed, which would be a brief summary of the American political faith founded upon things fundamental in American history and tradition. The contest was the idea of Henry Sterling Chapin, Commissioner of Education of New York State. Over three thousand entries were received, and William Tyler Page was declared to be the winner. James H. Preston, the mayor of Baltimore, presented an award to Page in the House of Representatives Office Building on April 3, 1918. The Speaker of the House of Representatives and the commissioner of education of the state of New York accepted the Creed for the United States, and the proceedings relating to the award were printed in the Congressional Record of April 13, 1918. It was a time when patriotic sentiments were very much in vogue. The United States had been a participant in World War I only a little over a year at the time the Creed was adopted.

The author of the American's Creed, William Tyler Page, was a descendant of John Page, who had come to America in 1650 and had settled in Williamsburg, Virginia. Another ancestor, Carter Braxton, had signed the Declaration of Independence. Still another ancestor, John Tyler,

was the tenth president of the United States. William Tyler Page had come to Washington at the age of thirteen to serve as a Capitol Page. Later he became an employee of the Capitol building and served in that capacity for almost sixty-one years. In 1919 he was elected clerk of the House. Thirteen years later, when the Democrats again became a majority party, they created for Page the office of minority clerk of the House of Representatives. He held this position for the remainder of his life.

Referring to the Creed, Page said: "It is the summary of the fundamental principles of the American political faith as set forth in its greatest documents, its worthiest traditions, and its greatest leaders." His wording of the Creed used passages and phrases from the Declaration of Independence, the Preamble to the Constitution, Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, and Daniel Webster's reply to Robert Y. Hayne in the Senate in 1830.