

The Wallace Street Journal

By David Bond

Where the NRA and I Part Company

Wallace, Idaho – If we're reading the newspapers correctly, the Big Issue down in Boise this year is whether college students should by law be allowed to carry guns on campus, having jumped through the necessary hoops to obtain a concealed-carry permit.

On its face, it seems like students should have that right. The National Rifle Association certainly thinks so. But let's take this a step further. Does that mean you have the Legislature's permission, with its police powers, to pack a gun into my house over my objections?

Because when you walk on to a university campus, you've done so with their permission. You've established your admission credentials, they have invited you to attend and partake of their schooling and even their housing.

Nobody sent you, at gunpoint, onto that campus. You are there of your own volition and you agree to play by their rules. That might even mean paying for your tuition and not walking into your 8 a.m. underwater basket-weaving class buck-naked.

Same rules apply at our house. You knock on my front door, and I decide whether to let you in, or not. Personally, I don't care if you're packing heat, because I probably am, too, and I waste a lot of lead on paper to ensure I can handle this particular tool properly and wisely.

But I could just as easily change my mind, and decide that I don't want anyone wearing guns into this house except me. That is my right as a free man. If you choose to disrespect my choice and my right to choose who I let into my house, then then don't come a-knocking. Nothing personal here, just business.

Seems to me that an institution like a college deserves the same rights I have. You enter the university on their terms, not yours, and you don't get to start making up your own rules. Your proper response, my young student, is just not to attend the place. Ho harm, no foul.

The National Rifle Association has picked this fight in Idaho because it is a not-for profit “association” that thrives on tax-deductible dues. I know the outfit quite personally; my beloved father served on the National Rifle Association's board of directors for many years, back in the Joe Foss days. I toured their magnificent gun museum in D.C. back in 1968 with my dad and I used to have rather frequent telephone conversations with Neil Knox before he kacked.

I like just about everything the NRA does, except when it whirrs up political peeing matches in little states like ours. I wear the NRA sticker proudly on the back of my Jeep and 4-Runner, and on a window here at the house.

But I also know how non-profits like the NRA function: they are fund-raising organisms first, then they'll get around to the issues we members care about. You could probably conclude the same thing about the multitude of non-profit anti-cancer societies, or the AARP.

I mean, think about the AARP? Have they ever supported a Republican? They're supporting a political party, not old people, and they're not getting my money. The AARP exists first to support their office

buildings, and stir up fear to scare us into supporting them. So does the NRA, sad to say. They're low on wood-polish, so let's wind up the yokels.

My NRA would quit meddling in campus and state politics and and revive the Civilian Marksmanship Program. The CMP is loosely based on what the Swiss Army does. Issue every free man and woman an Army-grade rifle, free of charge, with the obligation that you be taught to use it properly. That might sound a bit like gun registration, but you can still own guns privately bought.

What the Civilian Marksmanship Program creates is a well-regulated militia. Yeah, the Army knows you own one rifle, and its serial number. But you know where the Army lives, too. In a lodge I belong to that's called fellowship.

Will the NRA ever make the Civilian Marksmanship Program its top priority again, and quit beating up on my private Idaho? Yeah, sure, about the time AARP quits sending me free credit cards. Something needs to change here.