

# Carrying concealed: A man on the street explains why he's packing heat

Bill McKee, Moscow-Pullman Daily News

Rick Henderson is passionate about many things - family, religion, politics and the right to protect oneself.

A confessed firearms enthusiast, he owns more than a dozen guns, already has a concealed weapon permit and is in the process of getting his enhanced concealed permit. When he's out and about, there's about a 90 to 95 percent chance that he's packing.

He said he occasionally finds himself on the University of Idaho campus, and once he has his enhanced concealed permit, he will carry a firearm there as well.

He's not just a gun-nut, though, and carrying a weapon isn't something he just does because it makes him feel tough.

"From my perspective, it's a God-given right, the right of every human to protect themselves," he said. "No entity that is sanctioned by the government has the right to take that away."

In the home where he grew up near Salmon, Idaho, guns were important tools for keeping the family fed. Henderson started hunting at a young age, and though it's not necessary for him to feed his family anymore, he still hunts occasionally. As much as anything these days, however, he likes to just go out and shoot at the range.

After high school, he spent several years as a nuclear propulsion operator in the Navy aboard the USS Nimitz. After his time in the service, he moved to the Lewiston area and eventually got into law enforcement.

Henderson carried a weapon as part of his job for more than seven years on the Palouse, first for the Nez Perce County Sheriff's Department, then for the Lewiston Police Department. While he said he really enjoyed interacting with his community in that role, he left the job because of how hard it was on his family.

A father of four and a husband, he returned to school several years ago to pursue a career that would afford him more time to spend with his family, and now works in construction materials testing. As a student at the UI, he said there were multiple occasions when he saw people with guns in their vehicles on campus, and said anyone who thinks there aren't already firearms there is fooling themselves.

He had similar feelings about anyone who thinks the people being granted the right to carry guns on campuses in Idaho by SB 1254 might be dangerous.

"Getting an enhanced permit isn't easy. They don't just give them out to anyone," Henderson said. "Those aren't the people they should be worried about."

Most Sundays - aside from vacation weekends - Henderson goes to church, where he said he also carries his weapon. A strong believer in service, he said he enjoys donating his time with other members of the congregation at the Moscow Church of the Nazarene when his schedule permits.

"At no point does (Jesus) say defending yourself is bad. More importantly, at no point does he say defending others is bad," Henderson said in response to a question about "turning the other cheek." "And for the people who talk about the Ten Commandments, it doesn't say 'thou shall not kill,' it says 'thou shall not commit murder.' "

Henderson considers himself a Libertarian-leaning independent who can no longer truly identify with most of the GOP because of their "lack of principles," and believes most mainstream Republicans are moving to the left.

He doesn't necessarily have a problem with that in every area, however - he believes the government has no place in marriage, and should thus have no say in whether same-sex marriage is legal, and that states should have the power to decide what to allow within their borders, like when dealing with marijuana.

But when it comes to questions about gun regulation, and whether or not universities should be able to opt out of SB 1254 if they so choose, there's no question in his mind.

"Absolutely not," he said. "Drugs and marriage, they're not rights that are protected by the Constitution. The right to bear arms is."

In fact, Henderson believes the law doesn't go far enough - he says everyone should have the right to carry on campus. The new law is simply "a move in the right direction," and exemptions should only be made for those with some mental illnesses and felons.

The more people with guns, he said, the safer it is.

He cited studies by John Lott, an economist, political commentator and gun rights advocate, who has published studies that show increasing the number of people carrying concealed weapons actually lowers crime rates.

Henderson pointed to one study Lott did which showed in all the mass shootings over the past 50 years, there has only been one time it was in a place that was not identified as a gun-free zone - in Arizona when U.S. Representative Gabrielle Giffords was shot in 2011.

"You get evil people who are intent on committing evil, they will find a way," he said. "I hope I'm never put in a position where I have to defend myself with deadly force, but I want to be prepared."

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