

Only in New York is Tyranny Still Alive

An open letter to the press; another Day of Infamy

Commentary by David Petronis, December 7, 2011

In regards to the Daily Gazette report on Thursday, December 1, as one of the characters of the article, I'd like to respond first to the headline which stated, "Gun Sale Sting Shows Law Gap" and secondly, to what I consider a foolish remark by the Attorney General, Eric Schneiderman, that "guns are freely available to all at Gun shows."

I take personal offense to the word "sting" used in your headline. The meaning of that word today automatically denotes that if a "sting" was in progress, then the target of that operation must somehow be criminal. Our organization does not engage in criminal activity nor do I personally. I am President of New Eastcoast Arms Collectors Associates and the purpose of our organization is to promote the furtherance of our gun collecting hobby by providing a forum where firearms can be traded or acquired and educational displays presented for and by members at meetings known as Gun Shows. As founder and Chief Executive Officer, along with my wife Cathy, acting as Secretary and Treasurer, we organize and promote these gun shows; we have done so since 1982. We have never had a bad incident or problem of any sort and during these past 30 years have provided well attended, safe and enjoyable events throughout the northeast from the borders of Maine to Pennsylvania. Evidently we are now somehow to be looked upon as criminals by New York State Attorney General, Eric Schneiderman. Your word "sting", to me, infers that he was right and our past three decades of professionalism in organizing, promotion and advertising mean nothing.

I'm not quite sure if the Attorney General believes that, in general, our hobby and in particular, our Gun Shows are places where we as criminals gather to do evil but let me assure you all, that concept is as far from the truth as possible. Gun Shows have been held throughout New York State for decades with no problems. May I inquire of his uttering's quoted above that "guns are available to all at Gun Shows"; is that supposed to be news? Would it be safe to assume that baseball bats are available "to all" at a Baseball Sports Show? Or even metal machines comprised of tons of deadly steel are available "to all" at a Car Show. Ridiculous as it may sound, yes guns are available to buy, sell and trade at Gun shows.

But, even we can be sensitive to those who don't agree with the concept of freedom loving people who like to buy guns. So, Cathy and I decided to call some of our gun shows "Arms Fairs", copying the English terminology used in Great Britain and Europe. That sounds sexier but we still do indeed display and hope to sell deadly weapons, including pointy swords and sharp instruments known as kitchen knives. In fact, I have seen on occasion a "Winchester" marked baseball bat; a weapon of choice to many, perhaps all.

The New York State Attorney General appears to be convinced that there is no existing law concerning the operation of a Gun show, whereas one certainly now does exist. He contends that his "Operation Background Bust" was to point out to the New York State Legislature and to the Governor that the loop holes in this non-existing law need to be addressed by the respective bodies and enact a new law or correct this perceived problem. In so doing he has sent me and other gun show promoters a Subpoena to appear before him and present certain documents and to testify under oath that I "conspicuously post ... signs", "notify all firearm exhibitors... in writing that a Federal Firearms Background Check must be completed" and that "I require the dealers to perform the check;" among other things.

In fact, there is an existing law governing the aspects of running a gun show, and even a designated group of New York State Troopers charged for its' implementation at shows. The law now governing gun shows is under the NY State Consolidated Laws, General Business and is Article 39-DD, Sale of Firearms, Rifles or Shotguns at Gun Shows and is

defined in Section 895 thru 897. This law states, albeit vaguely, that the “grounds” where a show is staged need to have certain worded signs posted at all entrances’ and an additional four signs throughout the show; this we now conform to and have done so since notified of these regulations. We also notify in writing all “dealers and exhibitors” who are attending our shows that all sales of modern firearms to individuals must be preceded by a National Instant Criminal System background investigation, commonly known as a “NICS check”.

This we also do but this same rule applies to all “persons” entering the show who plan on selling or buying a firearm at the show or even if two individuals meet at the show, discuss the purchase of a firearm which one of them own and leave the show together. They are still legally liable to obey the show regulations of the NICS check if they sell or transfer that firearm discussed whether now done at the local mall or in McDonald’s parking lot. But where do the “grounds” of the show rule end? Does it still pertain to the possibility of two neighbors meeting at the show by chance and then conducting an innocent sale at one’s own kitchen table? I don’t quite know how to regulate that scenario; I leave it up to the reader to decide my liability in this instance.

The worst part of this scenario, “the gun show loophole”, is that the Attorney General expects me or other show promoters to either control or somehow prevent this perceived “illegal” practice. And let me explain to the reader that this rule about individuals having to perform a NICS check when selling, trading or giving a personally owned firearm to another individual if done so as in situations described above is only for us New Yorkers. Also only for us is the connotation of “dealer or exhibitor” status applied to any individual who walks on the “grounds” of the show with a firearm that he or she intends to offer for sale or trade to anyone at the show. That new status given to any person in that situation is why the NYS AT issued a press release acknowledging that ten “Dealers” were arrested in his “Sting.”

Or an even more bizarre situation, say at our Arms Fair in Saratoga Springs, one we have run for nearly thirty years with no problems or incidents, is for me as a promoter to control the action on the public streets or far edges of any parking lot being used to attend our show. An example being that a person legally entitled to sell his or her own firearm, and upon entering the “grounds” of the show and the intent being on attending the show and carrying the firearm to the entrance, evidently is breaking the law if sold to anyone during this trip to the front door. I hear in conversations that this may have been the case that I am now being investigated for. I have seen no clear explanation to this point of exactly what I have done wrong; but I have been “targeted”, so states the Attorney General’s letter. The regulations state that this person is a “dealer” because of the intent on selling and is now governed by these rules being on the show “grounds.” I have to admit, I may have been lax in catching all criminals with this intent as they enter my “show grounds”. Is it that I must now hire a security force to man the streets and lots of Saratoga to discourage an undercover agent, terrorist, wife or husband beater from accosting unsuspecting quasi criminals from engaging in their Second Amendment right? I suppose the AG’s intent is that I will be forced to do so.

The highest ranking Attorney General in the land, Eric Holder, went before Congress and was not required to testify under oath pertaining to his knowledge of the “Fast and Furious”, “Gun Walking” scheme orchestrated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, BATF, and the US Attorney General’s Office. But I, the low man on the totem pole of injustice, a lowly gun show promoter, is being subpoenaed by the most powerful arm of the NYS Law to bring three years of unattainable records and to testify, under oath, in a proceeding to discover whether I broke any reprehensible laws governing your freedoms to buy or sell firearms “on the grounds” of my shows. Plus, show that I have photos of me posting the required signs. I have to prove this accusation is false a week before the Christmas Holidays but Eric Holder can stall the Congressional Investigating Committee till Hell freezes over in producing any pertinent information on his “sting.” His officials lost track of 2000 “Assault Weapons” heading to Mexico but our NYS AG is convinced that the real problem is the three his agents snared here in New York. Could there possibly be a smokescreen to use up news columns? Perhaps “Fast and Furious” is meant to be screened by footloose and fancy shenanigans of Eric Schneiderman’s office. But, two wrongs don’t make a right, right?

The vagueness of the laws and regulations produced by the liberal progressives to control gun sales are, I believe, by intentional design. The vague practice makes it nearly impossible to comply. Here we have viable show promotion businesses or local gun shop owners who want to obey the rules and regulations set forth and simply go on with business. But to now, somehow, find a non-existing "Loop Hole" that can be used to try to shut us down and shutter up the neighborhood sport shop, I think, is a little far reaching. The First Amendment to our US Constitution guarantees me the right to confront this blatant use of government power through my spoken words or in print. The most important of all the Amendments, however, is the Second one written down by our Founders; it guarantees all of us the right to defend ourselves, our families, our homes and our way of life, the Right to own firearms! The Second Amendment protects all the others and ourselves. Let us not let it be tread upon.

I have had many calls of inquiry and then of support from many of the public who have attended my shows and also from our NEACA Members. Many of these people have asked whether a letter of support stating our practices at the shows have always been "above board," usually surpassing the actual regulations; yes, that would be helpful. At least to Cathy's and my own piece of mind; and to you all, I say, thank you! And yes, send those letters to your local paper, the main stream press and to the NYS AG's Office. Show your support of someone who has stringently obeyed the laws and probably irritatingly reminded all of our show attendees by word and by practice that we all must conform and beware. I urge you to show the support of our local shows and our NEACA organization. But most of all show how many of you engage in our gun hobby or, at least, in your strong belief of our Second Amendment Right.

It has been said to me that our New York Attorney General is an anti-gunner, a staunch liberal in favor of eliminating gun shows and possibly our gun rights; I personally have no knowledge of those insinuations. I do believe, however that he may have his own agenda. A lot of progressives feel that gun control is righteous and will save lives. As a conservative and freedom loving individual I happen also to believe that gun control is good and that it enables me to hit what I aim at. Two words with such diverse meaning, no wonder we are a 50/50 Nation today.

I noticed in Attorney General Schneiderman's press release that three of the eleven guns purchased by his undercover "stingers" were termed "Assault Rifles." What amazes me here is that they didn't target more of this type of gun, after all, Assault Rifles we all know, are inherently evil. Perhaps the owners of these type weapons were smarter than the other guys who were claimed to have been told that each undercover purchaser was unable to pass a NICS Check but the individuals sold them to the undercover stinger anyway. Doubtful, but who am I to say otherwise. I actually know gun owners who have swallowed the yarn purported by the anti-gunners and now believe the fallacy that these types of guns have no inherent usefulness; not for hunting, they are sure. Well, let me explain something to those gun owning hypocrites.

Back when the Redcoats formed their battle lines and stood the tallest men in the fore making their formation as intimidating as possible, each of those combatants carried the most deadly assault weapon of the day, en mass, the flintlock Brown Bess musket. And when an American Rebel took aim and shot an English Officer with a long barreled flintlock sniper rifle they considered it murder and highly unsportsman like. Those were the assault weapons of our American Revolution and they have been upgraded ever since. Today each of those guns is highly prized. In fact, at one of my Saratoga Shows we had on display the gun that was purported to be the one that fired the "shot heard round the world" at Concord. Just one of the many educational displays NEACA has brought to the general public. School kids should be brought to these events to view what many have never even heard of; the tools that made America the power she is today.

The M-1 Garand assault rifle of WWII fame, the gun General Patton referred to as the greatest single item that won the war, is still revered today and used in what was once known as the Civilian Marksmanship Program. A basically defunct program which taught what it implied; being able to hit your target with an assault rifle. And then the individual could purchase one of these deadly weapons, own a piece of history and be one of the modern minutemen if called

upon to defend the homeland. One of the greatest deterrents to any crazed invader of our Country; an armed citizenry! That same Garand may have stormed Omaha Beach at Normandy or used as the greatest "Assault Weapon" in March of 1945 and pried from the cold, dead fingers of some brave US Marine lying in the Sands of Iwo Jima. Who are you to say this type of gun has no inherent value?

Guns and gun owners alike have been the targets of the unrelenting leftist gun grabbers who have controlled the halls of Albany for decades. They never give up; they continue to pile on regulation upon statute upon unnecessary law. Only in New York, and several other "progressive states," does a man in his castle need to retreat thru a back door when the front one is being broken down by a thief in the night. Some say, not true, but blow the brains out of the next perpetrator who invades your space in a threatening manner and see who gets locked up. The protection of one's own life and those of friends and family, or even your own property, should be inherent in our law. Is it? And is it still possible for an individual to buy a gun for that protection? Or sell one that he doesn't want or need anymore? The answer to those queries is yes. But when an individual walks the steps from a parking lot to a gun show, instead of a parking lot in a Mall, why does there need to be another law? Only in New York does that need exist. You New Yorkers have let your freedoms escape you! One by one, year by year, election by election you have not seen the big picture; you have not remembered your forefather's treasure spent nor blood spilled to guarantee your casual use of the ballot box. You, we, as gun owners and believers in preserving and honoring the history of our ancestors; of the Founding Fathers determined bravery and wisdom in penning the Second Amendment, all of us need to take back our New York State freedoms. Do this in the next election! And begin this process now.

Plus, I have another idea. A true grass roots movement to organize and support the truths that are self evident, those that set men free, that all of us are created equal and have equal rights and shall not be abridged, so help me GOD. This movement should begin today and I will have an outline soon on my website at www.NEACA.com. We should take the approach of the well known anti-gun group AARP and every New Yorker who owns a gun or believes as gun owners do, that the right to do so exists, should be a member.

The population of New York State is listed somewhere around 19,500,000 people and the estimated number of gun owners about 6,000,000. Add to those the folks who simply believe in the Second Amendment but have not yet exercised their individual right to own a firearm and you may have a total of 7,000,000 or more; that numbers over one third the total population! Would you believe only a small portion of those people have joined the National Rifle Association? Why then, would the NRA spend their money on a losing battle in our home state when we won't even try to help ourselves? They won't; they will go national when the likes of Kirsten Gillibrand brings any new proposals that try to beef up these irresponsible infringements on our gun rights to the US Senate. Till then, it is up to you to fight your own bully! I and others have been trying to organize New York gun owners for years to no avail; it is time you all stood up. When counted and organized you are a formidable force! The time is now and the election of 2012 is nearer than you may realize.

Every believer should plan on sending \$8.00 of your hard earned money to form an organized membership of like minded individuals who will soon become a voice to be listened to in a force that will need to be addressed. We can do this under the auspices of an existing entity or can form a new one. I seek volunteers who are willing and able to begin this with me and I want to hear from you now. The New Year will bring a new beginning to the downtrodden New York gun owner; the one no one cares about and no one hears about. No one will help you until you help yourself. Organize, theorize, liberate and perpetuate a new beginning! Let us make a healthy soup from the ingredients of tyranny we have been handed. Begin today to stir the mix.

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