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A Dirty Harriet Saves Day In Colorado

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Second Amendment: As the Supreme Court ponders what the Constitution means, a volunteer security guard in Colorado shows that the problem with society may not be who has guns, but who doesn't.

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Every time there are multiple shootings, like those that occurred over the weekend at the Youth With A Mission missionary training center in Arvada, Colo., and later at the New Life Church in Colorado Springs, we are lectured about the easy access to firearms in the U.S. and the dangers it creates.

But many are thankful today that Jeanne Assam, a volunteer security guard at New Life, had easy access to a gun when Matthew Murray entered the east entrance of the church and began firing his rifle. Murray was carrying two handguns, an assault rifle and more than 1,000 rounds of ammunition.



If Jeanne Assam had not had a gun at her side, dozens more might have died in Sunday's shooting at New Life Church in Colorado Springs.

Assam, who worked as a police officer in downtown Minneapolis in the 1990s and is licensed to carry a weapon, shot Murray. Had she not done so, more than two would have been killed at the church that day. Two others had been killed by Murray at Arvada. New Life's senior pastor Brady Boyd said Assam's actions saved the lives of 50 to 100 people.

Last February, another disturbed young man from war-torn Bosnia entered the Trolley Square Mall in Ogden, Utah, and began shooting, killing five people. Utah is a right-to-carry (RTC) state but lets property owners post signs proclaiming an exception on their premises.

A sign posted in the mall reminded people that concealed carry permit holders could not bring their weapons inside. Trolley Square was a gun-free zone, except for predators. Fortunately, inside the mall was an off-duty Ogden police officer, who was carrying a concealed weapon in violation of the law, and was the first to trade shots with the gunman. He is credited with preventing the murder of more innocent victims.

Unfortunately, he was at the opposite end of the mall and on another floor when the shooting started. If concealed carry permit holders were allowed to take their firearms into the mall, maybe those five could have been spared or even defended themselves.

Gun-control advocates argue that allowing people to carry guns encourages their reckless use.

But despite dire warnings by RTC critics, neighbors aren't routinely offing neighbors and bodies aren't piling up like cordwood across America in one huge Gunfight at the OK Corral.

Since 1991, according to NRAILA.org, 23 more states have adopted RTC laws for a total of 40. The number of privately owned firearms has risen by nearly 70 million and violent crime is down 38%. In 2005, RTC states had, on average, a 22% lower violent crime rate, 30% lower murder rate, 46% lower robbery rate and 12% lower aggravated assault rate.

Like Trolley Square, Westroads Mall in Omaha, Neb., where eight people were gunned down recently was also a gun-free zone. So was Virginia Tech, where a gunmen killed 32 people in two attacks hours apart.

This Colorado incident comes as the Supreme Court hears an appeal of a ruling by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit in Parker v. District of Columbia. The ruling struck down D.C.'s draconian ban on the private ownership of firearms as a violation of the Second Amendment's right to keep and bear arms.

The D.C. court ruled, among other findings, that the Second Amendment's placement high in the Bill of Rights makes it, and the right to self-defense, along with speech and religion, etc., an individual right.

We think Jeanne Assam and the people she saved would agree.

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