

surprisingly, my letter came back marked “No Such Address.”

The envelopes addressed to me—as well as the Ford assassination “attempt” itself—may have been related to another hare-brained scheme to make a “social statement.”

During Fromme’s trial I called the U.S. Attorney who was prosecuting the case, for nothing had been revealed about the reason for those envelopes, and I wanted to know if my family and I were under any real threat. The prosecutor told me that he had no idea why my name was included, then almost as an afterthought asked if I had written anything about or been nationally involved in the “gun control” debate.

When I told him yes, he said: “Oh, that’s it then. *The girls support gun control.*”

What better way to promote a gun law than to assassinate a President—or even to pretend an assassination attempt with an unloaded gun?

Crazy? Sure. You think Squeaky Fromme isn’t?

## *The Insatiable Thirst To Ban Guns*

*July 29, 1988*

**T**here is a silly notion, fervently adhered to by many gun owners, that if our side of the gun issue would just sit down and talk with the other side, we could work out a “reasonable” compromise that would satisfy “society’s need to keep guns out of the hands of criminals,” while imposing little inconvenience upon law-abiding gun owners.

...and the lion shall lie down with the lamb.

If all the evidences of the past have not convinced the utopians that the other side will never be satisfied with a “reasonable compromise,” perhaps the present situation will:

A ban on the manufacture and sale of “plastic handguns”—essentially

guns with less than 3.7 ounces of steel—has passed both houses, and is awaiting either a negotiated agreement or a conference committee to resolve differences before being signed into law.

Not satisfied, the anti-gunners have attached a seven-day waiting period, with police notification of the transfer—including a description of both the buyer and the gun—to the fast-track “must pass” anti-drug bill, H.R. 4916. The bill, already approved by the full House Judiciary Committee (details below), may have been voted upon in the full House by the time you read this.

Not satisfied, the House Judiciary Subcommittee scheduled hearings on H.R. 3978, by Rep. Lawrence Smith (D-FL), which would give the BATF authority to ban all handguns “not particularly suitable for sporting purposes.”

Not satisfied, the lead paragraph of a Page 1 *Washington Post* story says that a Manassas, Virginia police officer was “gunned down with a semiautomatic *rifle* that can be purchased without questions at any Virginia store.”

When will they be satisfied? From the thrust of their arguments, what they have said and advocated in the past, and from the occasional glimpses at their hatred of “powerful rifles capable of long range death” and “quick-firing lethal shotguns,” no reasonable man can conclude that the anti-gunners will be satisfied with anything less than a gunless society—when only criminals have guns.

Without exception, every time a gun law is enacted—usually with the help or acquiescence of gun owners and their organizations—the advocates are soon back demanding yet another “reasonable step” that will work where their previous efforts have failed. That isn’t paranoia, it’s historical fact.

In England, so often held up as a “model for gun control,” all semi-auto and pump rifles *and shotguns* have just been placed in the same almost-totally-prohibited class as handguns. The initial plan, announced last winter, called for the guns to be confiscated without compensation—but that was knocked down by determined opposition of the gun owners, who mounted an unprecedented lobbying effort.

According to a recent letter from the British Home Office (government) to an Arizona friend, Lee Knoper, “There are relatively few sporting purposes for which a conventional shotgun will not serve just as well as a pump action or self-loading one ... those who want to hold such weapons will have to satisfy the police that they have a good reason for doing so.”

Most folks have enough trouble satisfying their wives that they “need” another gun; how would you like to have to satisfy the cops that you “need” each gun in your battery?

The most galling line in that three-page letter: “If the legitimate activities of shooters are to be protected for many years to come against

more harsh measures, then a new package of controls is necessary.”

Isn't that nice? They only enacted these draconian new prohibitions to *help* the gun owners—to prevent something far worse from being enacted. Sound familiar?

*Every* U.S. gun law, without exception, has been enacted with the active support or quiet agreement of the National Rifle Association—each time “to prevent something worse from happening.”

*Every* time the NRA stood in total opposition to a proposed gun law we prevailed, even when defeat seemed inevitable—as it did when the fledgling NRA Institute faced H.R. 11193 in 1976, a so-called Saturday Night Special ban that would have wiped out about two-thirds of handguns, or when we shot down BATF's 178,131 gun registration regulations in 1978.

Those fights appeared unwinnable, but winning them not only stopped the other side, they made it possible for NRA-ILA to go on the offense in 1979 with the original McClure-Volkmer bill, which would have gutted the Gun Control Act of 1968.

But in 1983, NRA-ILA—under different leadership—became more “reasonable,” accepting a dozen gutting amendments to McClure-Volkmer. The law passed in 1986 with a total ban on new machine guns—which had been tightly regulated for 50 years, and had never been a crime problem.

And also in 1986, solid bullets—so-called “cop-killer bullets”—for all handgun ammo and some rifle ammo were banned. (Incredibly, the Democrat Party Platform passed in Atlanta demands the prohibition of those already-prohibited bullets.)

Instead of satisfying the anti-gunners, those wins—the machine gun ban, AP bullets, even the essentially gutted “plastic gun” ban—merely whetted their appetite. Now they're going full-bore for a national waiting period law that will be difficult to stop.

And, as baseball catcher Yogi Berra said, “It's déjà vu all over again,” as we again face House hearings on a “Saturday Night Special” ban—a battle that was won a dozen years ago, but is now resurrected in both Maryland and the Congress.

At minimum it means a major push to ban “non-sporting” handguns in the next Congress, and it probably means a floor amendment to the “waiting period” provision this year. If we fail to win the Maryland referendum challenging the state's new law *banning all handguns not specifically approved* (which will be on the November ballot), we're going to have our work cut out for us in Congress and in many other states.

Further, states from coast-to-coast are flirting with laws to ban some or all semi-auto rifles—and some semi-auto handguns—and that thrust

is already showing up in the editorialized news stories (and editorial cartoons) of the *Washington Post* and other major newspapers. Clearly, semi-auto rifles—not just AR-15s but guns like my Remington 742—are next on the list.

Yet with all these signs of whetted anti-gun appetites and more-restrictive legislation waiting in the wings, some of my friends and fellow gun owners are telling me that we shouldn't oppose such "reasonable" provisions as a waiting period/background check; that a "reasonable" law will put the gun law issue to rest.

I know these folks aren't stupid; and I don't really believe they're simply tired of fighting (most of them have never worked up a good sweat in the gun law fight). Maybe they are embarrassed because they haven't actively participated in the fight, or even contributed to the NRA Institute, or Gun Owners of America, or Second Amendment Foundation, or my fledgling Firearms Coalition.

Maybe it salves their conscience to say that all these gun groups are "too radical," not noticing that they're adopting the theme of Handgun Control Inc.'s advertising. Maybe they are motivated by a desire to be perceived as "more respectable," and hopeful that a "more positive" outlook toward "reasonable" gun laws will exclude them from the virulent anti-gun owner editorials and vicious cartoons.

Whatever those gun-owning friends' motivation, if they think that the waiting period/police notification bill now before Congress is a "modest compromise," one that will slake the thirst of the anti-gunners, they're mistaken.

### Editor's Note

The single exception to the history of NRA either supporting or acquiescing to every Federal gun law now on the books is the 1994 Clinton "assault weapon" ban. Bill Clinton signed that bill half a decade after this piece was originally written. ILA, under the leadership of hardliners, fought the Clinton ban with everything it had—and lost. The tactical loss turned into a strategic victory. The long-term result was the Democrats losing its lock on the House majority and the first sitting Speaker to be turned out of office in a century.

Because of the tough fight, the other side had thrown a ten-year "sunset" provision into the law as a sweetener. No one in Washington, Neal Knox included, seriously expected the sunset to be exercised. But, opposition to the ban bubbled up from the grassroots. By the time 2004 rolled around, Congress, having learned from the previous experience, looked the other way as the sunset provision kicked in.