

# Gun sense

Encouraging safe firearms use should also emphasize safe storage of the weapons.

Imagine you're shopping for mascara at the Galleria and a bullet comes whizzing by. The perpetrator is a mall-walker who dropped a backpack with an improperly stored gun that discharged. This isn't a wild-eyed fable. Witnesses say something like it happened in the Galleria this month. An accident like this could have been deadly.

In recent years, Texans have gained the right to carry guns in more places, yet too many gun owners remain uniformed, naïve or careless when it comes to gun storage. The Legislature should authorize a statewide campaign to better protect innocent and unsuspecting Texans from injury or death by teaching effective storage practices.

As everyone agrees that gun owners should responsibly store their weapons, such a campaign wouldn't step on gun owners' Second Amendment rights. The only thing that is subject to debate is the source of funding for a statewide campaign.

The National Rifle Association opposes using taxpayer dollars on the grounds that private sector education efforts are sufficient. The Eddie Eagle GunSafe children's accident prevention program has been taught to nearly 3 million Texas children since its inception, according to an NRA spokesman. In addition, "licensed firearm dealers are already required by law to provide gun-safety literature and make secure firearm-storage devices available for purchase."

Given modern technology, gun owners do have a lot of storage options. But owners don't always practice safe storage. In this state an estimated 200,000 children live in homes with loaded, unlocked guns, and 600 Texas children are killed or injured by firearms every year, according to the nonprofit organization Texas Gun Sense.

A trio of accidents in our area, reported by the Chronicle's Andrew Kragie, brings home the urgent need

for a public-awareness campaign concerning gun storage. In July, a 5-year-old, a 7-year-old and an 11-year-old shot themselves. The 5-year-old died two days after the accidental shooting.

In Texas, there are also 1,900 suicides annually by firearms, according to Texas Gun Sense. Public health experts agree that some of these also could be prevented with an awareness campaign targeting safe storage.

There are two worthwhile bills on gun storage pending this session. The Legislature should act to pass the gun safety bill introduced by state Rep. Joe Moody, D-El Paso. The bill lowers the state licensing fee for handguns if gun owners prove that they have the means to safely store their firearms.

It's possible that the Moody bill could run into the headwinds from another bill authored by state Sens. Robert Nichols, R-Jacksonville, and Joan Huffman, R-Houston, to eliminate the fees for original and renewal of licenses to carry in Texas. If the Nichols-Huffman bill passes, it would eliminate the revenue the Moody proposal relies on.

Regardless, the Legislature can find a creative means to fund this much-needed public safety campaign. In the field of motor vehicles, lawmakers direct upward of \$65 million annually in education and safety efforts such as "TALK. TEXT. CRASH." to increase motor-vehicle safety and to decrease the motor-vehicle fatalities that occur in our state.

Because the number of firearm fatalities is comparable to the number of motor-vehicle deaths in our state, surely lawmakers can find a source of revenue to pay for a safe gun-storage campaign. The campaign would fall squarely within the Texas Department of Safety's stated vision to "proactively protect the citizens of Texas."

"UNLOAD. LOCK. SAFELY STORE." needs to be a message that the state, along with the private sector, transmits to all gun owners.



## LETTERS

### Prosecute him

Regarding "Teen accused of killing bald eagle charged" (Page A4, Thursday), what a reprehensible example of lack of respect for our country. Mr. Delgado obviously didn't know what the bald eagle stood for due to lack of education or just flat did not care.

For the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to decline to pursue prosecution is a slap in the face to all U.S. citizens. When two laws or broken and no action is taken, what does that say about the bureaucracy that we call government?

Taxpayers pay the salary of these people, and taxpayers are the same people should hold them accountable for doing their jobs.

*Bob Pope, The Woodlands*

### College disparity

Regarding "Senate panel passes bill to ditch Texas college set-aside financial aid program" (chron.com, Thursday), the Legislative Budget Board reports that 106,000 poor students received these set-aside funds, for a total of \$240 million. Most of these funds go to students with family incomes under \$50,000.

There is a crucial fact to emphasize: Empirical evidence documents that relatively wealthy students at universities already receive far more than their fair share of subsidy. Research findings published by the American Enterprise Institute in "Cheap for Whom?," co-authored by researchers Jorge Klor de Alva and Mark Schneider, document this unfair disparity between rich and poor college students. They reveal: "Among not-for-profit institutions, the amount of taxpayer subsidies hovers between \$1,000 and \$2,000 per student per year until we

turn to the most selective institutions. ... Among these already well-endowed institutions, the tax subsidy jumps substantially to more than \$13,000 per student per year."

The authors conclude: "If the country is to retain its competitive edge, it must reverse the current policies that result in providing the lowest levels of taxpayer support to institutions that enroll the highest percentage of low-income, nontraditional and minority students — the fastest growing segments of the population."

Terminating tuition set-asides would widen this disparity between rich and poor students. If SB 18 passes, will the Legislature replace the funds denied to low-income students?

*Ron Trowbridge  
Trustee, Lone Star College System*

### Get to work

Regarding "Patrick predicts bathroom bill win" (Page A3, Friday), will we need to carry our birth certificates with us when we use a restroom, regardless of gender? This is no joke. Any American who has traveled to Europe knows how restrooms are laid out over there. Europe does not discriminate in these types of frivolous issues. One restroom for females and males. A lot of bars and restaurants in the U.S., especially in small towns, have only one restroom. All I want is for men to put the seat down when they leave!

When it comes to children in a restroom, it is the responsibility of a parent to accompany them in and out.

Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick and Austin need to get working on jobs, education and health care.

*Cecily M. Ryan, Kingwood*

# Thumbs up, down

Gary Cartwright, 'McRaven for governor,' NASA news, Loo-tenant Gov. Patrick

There are only a couple of Texas storytellers in the league of Gary Cartwright. The sports/true crime/screenplay/magazine writer died this week at 82, but not before bringing a new kind of journalism to the state as one of Texas Monthly's first hires. If you haven't read "Blood Will Tell" about the T. Cullen Davis murder trial, hit "buy" on your Kindle right now. Cartwright was gonzo until the heart attacks started coming, but he never lost his touch. When Dallas quarterback Don Meredith failed to complete a comeback in one game, Cartwright crafted this lead: "Outlined against a gray November sky, the Four Horsemen rode again. You know them: Pestilence, Famine, Death and Meredith." One of the great lessons from Cartwright and his cadre, including Dan Jenkins and Bud Shrake, was an internal competition: Jenkins told the Dallas Morning News, "We laughed a lot, we joked a lot, and we kind of wrote for each other and tried to outwrite each other."

UT System Chancellor Bill McRaven is no stranger to difficult circumstances. He tracked down and killed Osama bin Laden and was responsible for bringing Saddam Hussein to trial. This week, in a speech to students and faculty at the Moody College of Communications, his alma mater, the retired admiral minced no words in talking about the Trump administration's de rigueur attacks on journalism. "We must challenge this statement and this sentiment that the news media is the enemy of the American people. This sentiment may be the greatest threat to democracy in my lifetime." To that we say, "McRaven for governor."

It was a very good, make that otherworldly, week for NASA. Using a Chilean telescope, the agency announced the discovery of seven exoplanets about the size of Earth. They could have environments capable of sustaining life. Then came news that Ellington Airport is receiving a \$1 million grant as it reinvents itself as a spaceport.

The Thumbs staff switchboard has been lighting up all week. We don't avoid taking calls,

but the same can't be said for our U.S. senators. Readers have been complaining that it's impossible to get through to John Cornyn (202-224-2934) and Ted Cruz (202-224-5922) to express opinions — happy ones, angry ones — on issues. Cornyn claimed his telephone system simply couldn't handle the volume.

In the case of Cruz, protesters held a town hall meeting in Houston without him. Meanwhile, U.S. Rep. John Culberson chose to hide out from protesters inside the secured gates of Lakeside Country Club, where he met with a Republican women's groups, and no one was complaining about anything other than mushy okra in the gumbo. The only winners were off-duty HPD officers hired by the club to keep protesters at bay.

This seems so simple: When you're elected to office to represent all the people, it's shameful to hide out from even the loudest dissenter.

At least Loo-tenant Gov. Dan Patrick is taking telephone calls. The man behind Texas' "bathroom bill" received 10,000 responses — most of them by telephone — in the two-week period after the bill was filed. The opposition to Patrick's effort was overwhelming: 9,800 said get rid of the bill; 200 favored it. Meanwhile, Gov. Greg Abbott dressed down the NFL for suggesting Texas was acting in an unacceptable, discriminatory fashion. "The NFL needs to concentrate on football and get the heck out of politics," he said. Good luck with that.

This page editorialized against state Sen. Paul Bettencourt's misguided bill to kill the Harris County Department of Education. The little-known agency is dedicated to supporting education for the most vulnerable at all ages and stages of life. But the trustees over there don't always work and play well together. On their next agenda is a misguided effort to suspend participation in Head Start.

More than 1,200 area kids get food, health screenings and learn how to prepare for kindergarten thanks to this program. The suspension effort is a move by conservative trustees to reject federal funding, and it's wrong.

# Young victim needs our love

By Lisa Maisano-Norman

Our daughter came home Wednesday with the tragic news that one of her fellow classmates lost both of his parents earlier that morning in a gruesome scene at their family's home. The 11-year-old witnessed his father stabbing his mother to death and made the call to 911. Moments later, after Montgomery County Sheriff's deputies arrived, one officer shot the father as he lunged toward them with knife in hand, according to news accounts ("Deputies kill Conroe-area man who fatally stabbed wife at home," Page A3, Thursday).

The scene is one that no person, let alone a child, should ever witness. Yet, it will be a scene that will forever be burned into this child's memory. You cannot "unsee" such a thing, or forget it.

So the question came to me as I was praying for this boy and his family: "How do I pray for him, Lord?" Strangely, two thoughts came to my mind. The first was Hurricane Ike, and the second, my mother's terminal cancer diagnosis.

Hurricane Ike was only the second hurricane I had experienced, and the first to actually affect our home and the neighborhood we lived in. It was a mess; there was damage and destruction all around us. What I remember most from that time though, were the incredible friendships that were formed. I had never experienced such a sense of community. We helped each other clean up, we shared our food, we talked, laughed, we got to know each other. None of that changed the mess or damage, but the experiences will forever be linked in my heart and mind. I was starting to get the

picture.

The next thing that came to my mind was when we received the crushing news in 2015 that my mom was diagnosed with Stage 4 lung cancer. A nonsmoker all her life, and generally a healthy woman, diagnosed with a terminal disease? It was a shock. But when I think back over these past two years, the cancer is more of a backdrop. What stands out the most is the outpouring of love and support from family and friends. My mom still has cancer, but forever linked to one of the most difficult things our family has gone through to date, is love.

So, through those memories and thoughts, the answer came. For this young man and his family, I pray that forever linked to this tragedy will be the overwhelming experience and outpouring of love. That when his heart and mind inevitably take him back, love will be what he thinks of first. That, over the years, somehow, the graphic details will lose their razor edges, dulled by the outpouring of love and support.

May it be the love, our young fellow traveler, that guides you, and your family through this. And to the rest of us who have an opportunity to demonstrate that love, let us do our very best.

*Maisano-Norman is a resident of The Woodlands.*

## BIBLE VERSE

Because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it.

*Numbers 14: 24*