



Firearms
Ownership
in America –
Our
Responsibility
for the
Future

Throughout this booklet, we have illustrated Ruger advertisements from each of the five decades of our existence, to illustrate our ongoing commitment to responsible firearms ownership.

Reprints of Ruger safety messages, and instruction manuals for any Ruger firearm, are available free upon request.

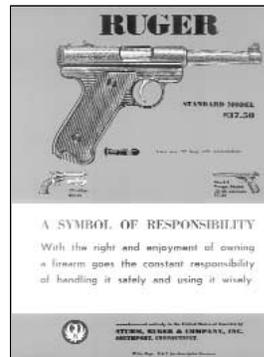
It is entirely appropriate at this point in the history of the Company and the nation to restate our values – that is, who we are and what we would like to see in our country's future.

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“An Ancient and Honorable Enterprise”

Ours is an ancient and honorable enterprise, the oldest in America. Eli Whitney's gun factory marked the beginning of interchangeable, precision manufacturing in America. Sturm, Ruger & Company has been a proud supplier of firearms to over 13 million law-abiding citizens since 1949. Many U.S. Government agencies, and hundreds of police departments worldwide, have used Ruger firearms. The standard training and target pistol for the U.S. armed forces is a Ruger. We have always been a strong supporter of the law-enforcement community. At the same time, our premier reputation has been with law-abiding sportsmen, who use Ruger rifles, shotguns, pistols, and revolvers in perfectly legitimate ways.

Sturm, Ruger was the first company to run full-page firearms safety advertisements, televise public service announcements, and imprint our firearms with a safety message. We have long supported the National Shooting Sports Foundation, the Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers'



1955

Institute, and the many firearms safety programs in effect throughout the nation.

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We have often said that if the tiny few who misuse our products simply employed that degree of thinking and care which we put into their design and manufacture, there would be no firearms mishaps. We must never forget that the vast majority of our customers fully meet all their responsibilities.

“Arms Makers for Responsible Citizens”

More than just a motto, this simple statement has defined Sturm, Ruger since its founding in 1949. Variations of the phrase appear in some of our earliest product advertisements, right up to the present day. We are immensely proud of the fact that we have emerged as the leading American firearms manufacturer based upon the exemplary reputation our products enjoy with the honorable citizens of a great nation – one which cherishes the positive enjoyment of firearms in a free society.

“A Symbol of Responsibility”

“With the right of owning a firearm goes the constant responsibility of handling it safely and using it wisely.” So read one of our earliest safety advertisements in 1955, and it remains true today. Respecting the right to own firearms

bespeaks an extraordinary amount of trust by a government in the wisdom of its citizens; and it is no accident that the freest society in the history of the world permits widespread private ownership of firearms. Concurrent with this inalienable right is the responsibility not to abuse that right by misusing firearms. The national will to prosecute such abuses seems aroused to the point where we are about to consider sweeping reforms to our criminal justice system, which can be a great opportunity.

“Well Meaning, But Without Understanding”

Justice Louis Brandeis once wrote that “the greatest danger to our liberty lurks when government’s purposes are beneficent, promoted by men of zeal, well-meaning, but without understanding.” Treatment of sweeping social issues by firearms legislation is an example of a well-intended measure that, like some other crime-control proposals, can lead to an unrecognizable America in the next century. A repressive society in which many civil liberties are curtailed out of our fear of crime, might easily result. We must not let this happen.

“Who is the enemy?”

The firearms debate has sunk into a public relations game, replete with personal attacks on anyone who disagrees with someone else’s position. The fact is that neither the proponents

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of or those against additional firearms regulation are the enemy – *the violent criminal is the enemy of civilization*, and it is time that decent citizens toned down the rhetoric against each other.

Law-abiding citizens who happen to own firearms for any number of legitimate reasons are *not* the enemy in the battle against violent crime. Calling them the enemy is divisive and misguided. Why is it that the crime rate in the cities, where gun ownership is generally heavily regulated by law, is so very much higher than other areas with much higher *per capita* rates of lawful gun ownership? The notion that “guns equal crime,” without considering the many social factors that go into the making of a criminal, is clearly wrong.

The Government might divert scarce resources and countless police hours in attempts to keep track of 67 million law-abiding citizens and their guns. However, *this is not crime control*. These good people are not the ones that need further controls. They already obey the law.

4



1965

“What Won’t Work”

5

What the average citizen wants is control over violence, not gun bans. Nobody wants guns in the hands of felons, mental incompetents, drug dealers, or unsupervised minors, and their ownership of guns is already precluded by law. Nothing outrages those who comply with the 20,000 gun control laws and regulations already in effect more than the reckless misuse of guns by individuals with no values who shouldn’t be within miles of them.

Lawful gun owners pride themselves on their prudent use of firearms for legitimate purposes and care as passionately about our nation’s future as their non-gun-owning neighbors. Much of the media needlessly angers a principled group of millions of citizens (the true “gun lobby”) by invective and slanderous stereotype. Continued castigation of lawful gun ownership simply will not stop violent criminals. Neither will incrementally repressive gun laws.

Treating the crime problem as a “health problem” is another example of misguided thinking. An intentional gunshot wound is not caused by germs, viruses, or accident – it is caused by a criminal. More properly, this is an issue of public safety.

“An Effective, Measured Response”

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Even though most violent crime is committed by a tiny fraction of the population, these violent felons are misusing illegal guns in all sorts of ways. The question should not be “How do we ban guns from a population in which almost all citizens are law-abiding?” but rather, “How do we minimize the *criminal misuse* of guns?”

Toward that end, we urge consideration of:

- *Instantaneous, point-of-sale background checks*

In the computer age, there is no reason why a person’s criminal and mental health record cannot be electronically checked at the point of sale. There should also be adequate safeguards so that a person improperly denied a purchase can appeal the decision to an impartial fact-finder.

After ensuring, insofar as possible, that a person is an adult, is not insane and has no criminal record, he or she should not be precluded from promptly exercising their Constitutional right to own a firearm. Discretionary permit laws are an affront to law-abiding citizens. Arbitrary government intrusions into their freedom of choice to own a gun do nothing but disarm the wrong people.

- *Prohibition of unsupervised possession of firearms by persons under age 18, with severe penalties.*

While the tradition of adult supervised firearms training and

use is an ancient and healthy one, we cannot condone the unsupervised use of firearms by immature youths. Penalties should be severe for anyone who sells a firearm to a youth in violation of the law. Furthermore, any person using firearms should be treated by our justice system as an adult for the purpose of enforcing any penalties for intentional or accidental misuse of them.

- *Eliminating guns in schools*

We all want our children and grandchildren to be safe in school and become productive citizens. With certain exceptions for educational purposes and for organized in-school and after-school activities, such as rifle teams, scouting, and the like, there is absolutely no reason why guns should be in any school building. Youths who bring unlawful guns to school should be immediately expelled and prosecuted. Of course, any criminal assaults committed with guns in school should be treated as harshly as the law permits for adults committing the same crime.

- *Expanding firearms safety programs*

Despite a manyfold increase in the number of guns and gun owners, firearms accidents have been steadily and dramatically decreasing throughout this century to an all-time low.

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1957

Firearms safety education can and has demonstrably reduced needless accidents with firearms, particularly among younger persons. Yet, any suggestion of such a widespread educational program is immediately met with the response that it is actually “promoting guns.” If we took this attitude toward sex and drug education programs, we would be accused of being naive and immature. It’s time we grew up with respect to the fact that firearms handling is completely dependent upon the mental attitude and ability of the person handling the gun. No gun ever loaded, pointed, and fired itself. Gun safety programs save lives, and the firearms industry has proudly and successfully lead the way, without any government requirement to do so. We invite all who are interested in the safe and responsible use of firearms to join us.

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- *Encouragement of secure storage of firearms and ammunition*

Either a gun is in use or it should be unloaded. This is an elementary gun safety rule. A very few persons leave loaded guns lying about where they are accessible to children, careless adults, or thieves, and this cannot be condoned. There are many ways to responsibly store firearms and ammunition. We have sold many of our pistols in lockable storage boxes. How a gun can be safely and securely stored and yet available for personal protection is completely dependent upon a whole host of individual circumstances. Personal responsibility is the key.

- *Increased scrutiny of retail firearms sales*

A number of years ago, we informed distributors of Ruger firearms that they were only to sell our products to legitimate retail gun dealers. We believe that, in this manner, the products can be properly promoted, their safe operation more adequately explained, and that fewer of our products would end up in the hands of unethical dealers. We pledge to redouble our efforts to stop sales by distributors to those who do not qualify to be on our dealer list.

We urge that the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms also intensify its efforts to prosecute illegal gun sales. We feel that there should be severe penalties for firearms dealers who knowingly sell to unqualified individuals or who knowingly participate in “straw man” transactions in which the dealer knows that an ostensibly “legitimate” customer is actually purchasing the firearm to redeliver it to an unqualified person, or for transport into a prohibited jurisdiction.

- *Ensuring that any proposed legislation adequately protects the rights of law-abiding citizens*

Those of us who have lived with state or city permit systems for possession or use of a firearms know full well that they are fraught with real and potential abuses. Arbitrary denials by systems in which bureaucrats have unbridled discretion over who may possess a firearm, without carefully thought out and objective standards, are an anathema to democracy.

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- *Enforcement of tough sentences for use of firearms in crime*

We must regain the will to expend our resources and separate from society the violent few that cause such a large percentage of havoc. If a mandatory sentence exists for using a gun in a crime, why in heaven’s name isn’t this prosecuted first, rather than as an afterthought, if at all?

- *Rethinking what we accept as “entertainment”*

When was the last time you saw a firearm portrayed in the media as anything other than an instrument of mayhem? The saturation of youth with gory violence in the name of “entertainment” has a desensitizing effect upon their willingness to take up arms against each other. Let’s not pretend otherwise. Guns are constantly portrayed as anti-personnel weapons on television “entertainment” shows and then piously denounced on the same station’s news and editorial broadcasts. Some stations won’t even run televised firearms safety messages because “they show a gun.” The media must bear a serious responsibility in formulating the public’s attitude concerning what constitutes the normal and correct use of firearms.

10



1981

- *Reexamination of social responsibilities, values, and attitudes toward violence*

Many urban leaders have urged that the communities which suffer and inflict the most violence upon themselves must move to a higher level of sensitivity against violence. This is all to the good. Ironically, young urban criminals who prey upon their communities are usually precluded from owning *any* firearms legally, as are their victims. We totally agree that this kind of violence must cease. We must also recognize, however, that the lawful ownership of firearms by rural sportsmen who comply with their own laws has absolutely nothing to do with urban violence. If it were within our power to sweep the streets of illegal guns, we would gladly do so. What we will *not* do is sacrifice the rights of decent people to own guns in an attempt to disarm illegally armed criminals. Promotion of the values of character and conscience that prevent us from harming one another will be the only effective change to this senseless cycle of violence.

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“A Public Safety Challenge”

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The President has correctly stated that the violent crime plaguing our nation is the result of complex conditions that simply cannot be addressed by superficial treatment of serious social issues. We agree that keeping violent felons from so readily obtaining illegal firearms is one extremely worthwhile goal. Preservation of our precious American heritage of enjoyment of firearms by law-abiding citizens in the contexts of hunting, target shooting, collecting, personal protection, and other lawful purposes, is equally important.



1992

We must all work together as never before to preserve the traditions of our American way of life for the law-abiding, yet diminish our tolerance for those who exhibit a reckless disregard for human life and values. We stand ready to participate in any constructive way to add our knowledge and technical expertise to what is emerging as one of the most critical debates of our time.

Sturm, Ruger & Company, Inc.
1 Lacey Place
Southport, CT 06490

— Arms Makers For Responsible Citizens —