



**Horton's**

# **Michigan Notebook**

## ***Political & Social Commentary***

Volume 1, No. 6 — February 25, 2018

### **Arming Teachers**

**By Steve Horton**

In the ‘good old days’ a female teacher wasn’t allowed to continue working in the classroom once she became pregnant. Apparently, seeing their instructor with a large stomach was considered traumatic for the young students. Or, perhaps, the school board (as a matter of policy) felt a woman couldn’t function in a proper manner given her “delicate condition.”

Now in the wake of the latest school massacre in Florida, there’s a call once again to arm teachers and staff with handguns as a preventive measure. The teachers I grew up with, from elementary thru junior high and on into high school, were, for the most part, a strict bunch. But their main talent was teaching and being role models. Many of them were women—as is the case today, particularly in the elementary. My grandmother was one of them, working for 25 years before retirement. I can’t imagine her or most of the other ladies carrying a handgun, let alone using it with any proficiency.

In fairness to the proposal, I assume it’s a masculine thing and it’s the male teachers, more so than the women, and the younger educators rather than older ones, who would be armed. Still, not all men are gung-ho

types, ready to rush into a hail of bullets from a machine gun-like rifle with their trusty peashooter. And in fairness to women, many of whom nowadays are police officers or in the military, the stereotype of the weaker sex is outdated.

I remember at age 21, having just returned from San Francisco and having little money. A friend of my sister was able to secure me a job at the Metro Bowl in south Lansing as a bouncer, although we were called door men. My job was to check IDs at the entrance of the bar and take care of any unruly customers. For the most part I was pretty lenient regarding the former and rarely encountered the latter. Until one night.

It was closing time and his fellow was sitting at his table, alone, nursing a drink. I went over and told him last call had been given and he needed to leave. In a belligerent tone he told me that he still had a few minutes left. I decided to exercise the better part of valor and went back to my door. Being either nervous or not paying attention, I stuck my hand in my pocket and began rattling my keys.

The fellow looked over and told me to “knock it off, you’re bothering me.”

I was suddenly in unfamiliar territory. I waited until I had no choice and then went over again and told him that he had to leave. He gave me a defiant look, took his sweet time, but finally got up and walked away.

I had a sigh of relief. The next night I told a fellow bouncer, who had been elsewhere the night before, of what had happened.

“Well, you need to be careful,” he said. “A lot of these guys have guns.”

I went home that night, thought about it, and then quit the next day. They weren’t paying me enough money for that kind of risk and, what’s more, I’d taken the job mainly to check IDs, get a couple of free beers as a perk, flirt with the waitresses, and make enough money to get by until a better offer came along. What I hadn’t taken the job for was to worry about some nut killing me.

Teachers are hired to teach, and should be judged accordingly. An ability and willingness to use a weapon against an intruder is a different skill and mindset.

If we’re going to arm teachers, then what we perhaps need to do is take police officers, who have this skill and willingness to act, and train them to be teachers. They might not be that good at conveying “reading, writing, and arithmetic,” but “the tune of their hickory stick” would likely have a stronger sting.

Or better yet, let the teachers do what they do, and the police officers the same. As for guns, if that fellow at the Metro Bowl had one, I’m just glad I didn’t aggravate him with my rattling keys and my request that he leave to the point of his using it.

Had I needed to forcibly evict him, it might have been a close call as to which of us was the stronger. But I would have been no match against a bullet.