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**Should Felons Have Guns?**

**By Kathryn A. Graham**

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Let me duck down behind some cover here. Yes! I think that felons should be allowed to purchase - and carry - firearms.

I'm still down here. Are you finished with the rotten eggs and tomatoes? Okay, I'll stick my head back up.

Felons should be allowed to carry guns!

Before I continue, let me state clearly that I am no happier about armed robbers, murderers and rapists having firearms than you are.

So why do I take this position? It's really a no-brainer. Violent criminals do not go to the local gun store and fill out Brady paperwork to buy their firearms today, but they still buy them on the street and carry them. They will always buy them on the street and carry them, no matter what Herculean efforts are made by law enforcement to stop this. Yet a portion of my paycheck goes toward taxes to support enforcement of an unenforceable law. Police officers who do not have the time to do one tenth of their jobs must waste time and effort trying to enforce said unenforceable law.

The criminals the law was written for completely ignore every single law that inconveniences them, especially this one!

Laws against felons purchasing or owning firearms are a real hand job, folks. It's all just another way your government has of bilking you out of money and convincing you - wrongly - that your government is actually doing something about crime, while it victimizes those who really do try to go straight after a mistake.

What a criminal waste!

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Is the cost of enforcement my only objection to the law against felons purchasing and/or carrying firearms? I only wish it were!

My biggest objection is because our legal system is broken. It is no longer either fair or reasonable. People are labeled as "felons" today who are in no way dangerous criminals.

You don't believe me? Your privilege. But I am going to tell you three stories here that are absolutely true. My only deviation from hard fact is to change the names to protect the "felons" involved, all of whom happen to be personal friends of mine.

Keep in mind that I am a law-abiding citizen - unusually so for this day and age. I am nearly fifty years old. My adult criminal record consists entirely of three minor speeding tickets. Period. I am a concealed handgun license holder, a concealed handgun instructor, and owner/manager of a licensed

investigations firm in Texas. So I've passed a bunch of FBI checks, and I am officially certified to be so clean I squeak.

Why, then, do I count three felons among my closest friends?

Well, let's take a close look at those "felonies."

Case #1 concerns my oldest friend, Terry. She and I grew up during the seventies. We weren't particularly wild compared to the folks we hung out with, but way back in those days Terry did occasionally smoke a little grass. Being a fairly sharp consumer even in her youth, Terry would usually go in with a couple of other folks and buy a quarter pound of grass about once a year. This left her with an ounce or two for personal use and cost her very little money.

Do the math. One quarter pound is four ounces. Up to four ounces was a misdemeanor in Texas, even decades ago when this all took place. Terry never, never bought more than a quarter pound for just that reason. On the occasion in question, Terry had picked up her quarter pound and already delivered two ounces to her other partners. When her house in San Angelo was raided, there was a grand total of two ounces in her freezer.

She was a real drug mastermind, folks. She kept the stuff in her freezer because it would take her a year or more to smoke up an ounce, let alone two.

Why were there four and a half ounces when she went to trial? I'll leave the answer to your imagination, but I'll give you one big, ugly hint. We are talking about the San Angelo, Texas police department here.

Terry did her four years probation and hasn't touched the stuff in the decades since. She was a foster parent for years, and is now the adoptive parent of two beautiful little boys. A criminal? Don't make me laugh!

So why is she forever barred from purchasing, owning or carrying a firearm for self defense? She does

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not even have the right to keep a firearm to defend her children! Is this right or fair?

Case #2 involves a neighbor I have only known for about five years. Iris is about my age, so she was seventeen about thirty years ago. In any event, thirty long years ago, at the ripe old age of seventeen, she stupidly wrote some bad checks and got prosecuted for it. Like Terry, she did her probation, went forth and sinned no more.

Today she is an ordained minister, for crying out loud! Yet, she is legally barred from defending her own life. Does this make sense to you?

Both of the preceding cases were prosecuted in Texas, under Texas law. My third and final case is much more complicated - and much, much more frightening. This was a federal case, and it actually involved prison time.

Brace yourself for a very ugly look at your federal government and the extremely unprofessional reasons behind many prosecutions!

First let me give you the cast of characters here:

Seth was my first husband. He was a police officer and just about the most violent and dangerously psychotic human being I have ever known. As I have told a number of people over the years, Seth taught me what the wrong end of a Colt .45 tastes like. I hope never to see him again.

Bill was my skydiving instructor and a parachute rigger/manufacturer. He remains to this day one of my closest friends.

Karl was a former police officer and gun collector who owned (completely legally!) a number of Class III firearms. He also remains a close friend.

KB was the full time admin sergeant for a nearby Texas National Guard armory, and was known quite well by my husband, Seth, to be an ATF snitch. No friend of mine!

What tied us all together way back in those days was our common sport - skydiving. We also did a lot of recreational shooting down at one end of the Seagoville airport, where there was a garbage dump with a nice rise of ground behind. It was a good, legal, and safe place to plink at the empty beer cans already lying there, well away from any city limits. The airport owner didn't mind at all, and it was free.

Seth, Bill and I were all in the Texas Army National Guard, and Bill and I went away to jump school at the same time in 1980. Seth was violently jealous and completely convinced that Bill and I were having an affair. It happened to be untrue, but even if it had been completely true, anyone who has been through military jump school knows quite well that we wouldn't have had the strength for hanky panky while there. But nothing could convince Seth of this.

Along about the same time, unknown to any of the rest of us, my other friend, Karl, made an unfortunate enemy of an ATF officer. He had one of his Class III weapons at a gun show in Dallas. He

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was walking toward his car to go home, when the ATF agent actually tried to snatch the weapon off his shoulder. Karl was a licensed peace officer who took his responsibility to maintain control of his Class III weapons very seriously. Karl put the agent on the ground, with a pistol to the back of his head, until said agent produced satisfactory identification. The humiliated agent was completely unable to find any justification for arresting Karl, as all of Karl's paperwork was 100% in order, transfer taxes paid, etc., but it was the start of a personal vendetta.

I graduated from jump school, wised up soon after and divorced Seth. I think if I had stayed with him any longer, I would not be here to write this article today. Seth was very bitter and very angry, but like most bullies of his type, he preferred back-biting to a straight up fight. He came up with a plan and talked to his friend KB, as Bill frequently went to KB's armory to shoot at the range there.

Soon after, a new guy started shooting at the same armory and began to actively court Bill's friendship. This went on for a number of weeks. Finally, Bill's new friend admitted that he was shopping for a really good price on an Ingram Mac-10. Bill told him he thought that automatic weapons were a waste of good ammunition, so he didn't know of any, but he said that if he ever heard of one for sale, he'd pass the info on.

Knowing what I know now, I suspect that the undercover snot ball involved was losing his mind right about then.

A couple of weeks later, Bill was out at Seagoville for some other reason, and he was doing a little shooting. A car drove up with a guy and his family, including kids. He said he'd heard the shooting from

the road, and stopped in to talk to another gun enthusiast. Would you care to hazard a guess as to what he pulled out of his car?

Yep. An Ingram Mac-10.

He went on to give Bill a huge sob story about how he and his family were moving out of state (right then) and desperately needed money, and he - you guessed it - wanted and needed to sell the Ingram rather desperately.

Bill always was a pushover. He bought the Ingram for cash, took it back to his office, and called his other friend to tell him gleefully that he'd found his gun for him.

Both buyer and seller showed up to arrest him. Yes, they were both ATF agents.

Correct me if I'm wrong, but I believe that's entrapment, when both sides of the transaction are undercover agents. ATF is not concerned with minor details like the law, however.

The feds offered to drop all charges if Bill would get them some prosecutable info on Karl. Bill told them - quite honestly - that he couldn't do it even if he wanted to, as Karl never, never did anything illegal.

Bill was indeed guilty of failure to pay the transfer tax - a minor offense. There was never any criminal

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intent. But a senile federal judge (Sarah T. Hughes, just about two weeks before she fell off the bench from a massive stroke) prosecuted Bill to the fullest ridiculous extent of the law, and he spent the next two years in the federal penitentiary.

When all was said and done, Bill lost:

1. Two years of his life.
2. His business, as most of his work was for military and government agencies and required a security clearance.
3. His right to vote.
4. His right to ever hold any public office (he is well respected in his community and often asked to run for City Council, etc., but he cannot).
5. His right to ever own another firearm - i.e., his right to self defense.

Why did he lose all of this? Because he dared to treat me civilly and thereby made my crazy ex-husband really angry!

Should he have lost his right to self-defense because my ex was a certifiable nut case? Don't be absurd!

To make matters even more interesting, my wonderful ex-hubbie "Seth" can purchase any firearm he likes these days. His record is absolutely clean. And that's the scariest thought I've had all day.

So should felons keep the right to own firearms?

As long as the system remains broken this way, I say they should.

Got any rotten tomatoes to throw at me?

At a tiny 5'1", Kathryn A. Graham is a licensed private investigator, pilot, aircraft mechanic and handgun instructor in Texas. Also a prolific author, she has written numerous articles, short stories and a science fiction novel. <http://www.kathrynagraham.com/>

## **The Sport Of Airsoft vs. The Sport Of Paintball Part I**

**By PJ Ace**

As the Sport of Airsoft grows in popularity today, many enthusiasts of both the Sport of Airsoft and the Sport of Paintball have debated over the differences and similarities, in the comparisons of both sports. Questions eventually come to the following: Which sport is better? What sport is more cost effective? What is the difference between Airsoft guns and Paintball guns? Finally, which sport is geared toward a larger demographic of people? I will briefly examine both sides of the Airsoft and Paintball argument and hopefully come to an opinion on which sport is emerging and which sport is fading out.

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The initial argument between the Sport of Airsoft and the Sport of Paintball has been the cost differences between each sport. However, if you take a closer look at the costs for each sport you will find that both sports have an initial investment. For both sports, if you want to get completely decked out in every form of equipment available you are looking to spend up into the hundreds of dollars and sometimes into the thousands. There are variations in the pricing, but let's say you use tons of ammo in Airsoft and not so much (which I think is unlikely) in Paintball then you will spend more on ammo for Airsoft (again this is very unlikely). This money can be spent over a period of time if you are not seriously trying to compete in the sports.

Most people continue to talk about the costs and how one sport is cheaper than the other but it depends on what you want and what you are looking for in each sport that will actually determine what you will spend. This includes everything from the gun, equipment and ammo, to the upgrades. In other words, either sport can be relatively cheap or relatively expensive, it all depends on you.

So if the money is not so important (well it's important to most, and trust me I am all about getting the best for my money) what are the differences between the sports that one can draw a clear contrast about? What makes one sport different from the other? One of the major differences are the guns for each sport.

All Paintball guns, also known as "Markers," have a similar style and look, only varying in specifications rather than in styles. There's not much more to the variations except the quality and effectiveness of the Paintball guns. There is hardly any diversity or character when it comes to each gun simply because they are made to specifications.

Airsoft guns have 1:1 scale replicas. This means they actually look like the real thing, so much so that all the guns come with a federally mandated orange tip. It is interesting to note that these guns also come with metal components making even the weight of the replica guns very similar to the actual gun. Plus, you can find many of the guns that you would have some interest in using, like an M16, Sniper Rifle, or an AK47. Some would say this is scary, but others (including the Airsoft enthusiast) would consider this a great way to own an arsenal that is not lethal, nor illegal for that matter.

I know the reader might be saying that as far as cost's are concerned, "one cannot draw a conclusion on which sport out does the other," but as we have looked into the matter deeper we have found that realistic attributes can make a big difference in what you would want to participate in. In fact it makes all the difference for me!

In this part one of The Sport of Airsoft vs. The Sport of Paintball we have concluded that that money or

cost has no bearing on whether the Sport of Airsoft is better than the Sport of Paintball.

PJ Ace is a writer and administrator for

, a site that specializes in airsoft

and paintball.



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