

Alex Peak interviewed by *The Towerlight* on firearms on campuses

20 February 2008

Alex Peak: Hello, this is Alex Peak. Are you there?

Kiel McLaughlin: yea

Kiel McLaughlin: how are you ding?

Kiel McLaughlin: *doing?

Alex Peak: I'm doing just fine. I typically don't answer the phone when I don't recognise the number.

Kiel McLaughlin: i understand, I wish i could do that

Kiel McLaughlin: that's why i went through facebook first

Alex Peak: I'll be happy to answer any questions you like, and can also direct you to others that would have useful information.

Kiel McLaughlin: yea, that would be perfect

Kiel McLaughlin: can I give you a call now?

Alex Peak: Andrew Dodson is definitely someone you will want to talk to. He knows much more about guns *qua* guns than I do. His number is [removed].

The Gun Rights Advocates of Towson (GRAT) never really got off the ground as an official group because of a combination of the school's bureaucracy and, moreover, Suzanne Dissmeyer (the would-be president) having family issues. Last I spoke to Mr. Dodson, he was still interested in possibly founding a group on campus, but didn't know if he'd be able to fit it into his schedule.

I would also recommend contacting the current Vice President of the College Libertarians, Logan Scheel, whose number is [removed].

Could we conduct this interview via AIM? I would prefer an AIM-based interview.

Kiel McLaughlin: Sharon tried getting in touch with Suzanne while I tried calling you

Kiel McLaughlin: we can do it online

Kiel McLaughlin: even though GRAT never got off the ground, what would have been the fundamental mission of the group?

Alex Peak: I don't recall what our mission statement said in particular, but in general we would have stressed the importance of the second amendment to American society, the facts regarding crime rates (which go down dramatically in states that have re-legalised carry/conceal), and the importance of learning about firearm safety. Although the group would not actively disobey the school's gun policy, it would advocate that both the state and the school take a more open mind to the benefits of firearm rights, and work toward allowing carry/conceal both on campus and throughout Maryland. We would not, however, be an group explicitly dedicated to lobbying, but would try to forward our views through educative means.

Kiel McLaughlin: so you believe college campuses would be more safe if permitted students were allowed to carry concealed handguns on campus?

Alex Peak: It's important to remember that the tragedy that happened at Virginia Tech was not prevented at all by Virginia Tech's no-tolerance policy on guns. Let us compare what happened there to what happened at the Appalachian Law School a few years earlier. There was a gun-man on that campus attacking people in much the same manner as at Virginia Tech, except in the case of the Appalachian Law School, the murderer was stopped rather quickly by a couple students who had guns in their cars. I can only imagine how fewer deaths would have occurred at Virginia Tech had the students and faculty been allowed to arm themselves.

(It's also worth noting that criminals agree, almost universally, that they fear an armed civilian much more than the police.)

Kiel McLaughlin: so you think faculty should be trained and armed?

Alex Peak: No one who does not wish to carry a weapon should ever be forced to carry a weapon. But for those faculty members who do wish to be trained and armed, they should not be prevented.

I would not expect that, by allowing carry/conceal on campus (or in the state of Maryland at-large), we would see everyone walking around with firearms. A lot of people simply wouldn't desire to have such weapons. But, by simply allowing the carrying of concealed weapons, we all become safer, as would-be criminals have no means of knowing who has a tool of defence and who doesn't. Criminals like to prey on those who appear the weakest, and firearms are a great equaliser.

Kiel McLaughlin: one of the arguments i've read against concealed carry laws and arming faculty is the fear of students being shot in crossfire and the potential accidents that could occur

Kiel McLaughlin: what is your response to that rebuttal?

Alex Peak: It's very rare that guns need to be used in the first place. And, when they *are* needed, it is very rare that a shot even needs to be fired. There are many examples of women being approached by would-be rapists and, upon brandishing a firearm, scaring away the would-be rapist. Of course, such stories rarely make the news because, after all, why would a news outlet want to cover the story about the bullet that *wasn't* fired? Most of the time, that's exactly what happens: no shot is fired, and the would-be prey lives on.

In the rare instance when a person actually needs to shoot his or her gun to stop a murderer or rapist, the person isn't shooting in a random crowd—he or she is shooting specifically at the murderer or rapist. It is highly unlikely that a person will get caught in the crossfire because, quite frankly, nobody wants to be standing too close to a murderer. People typically try to distance themselves from murderers.

However, let's say, just hypothetically, that someone does inadvertently get shot by a hero who is taking down a murderer. The said hero then bears responsibility for his or her irresponsible handling of his or her firearm. If he or she does not have a clear shot of the murderer, he or she should not fire. So, in short, "it was an accident" is not an excuse I will accept from irresponsible gun-owners.

Kiel McLaughlin: Do you think the general student body would be unsettled by the possibility that the classmate sitting next to them in class may have a gun in his/her bag?

Alex Peak: I can't really speak for other people, especially when we're dealing with many different people who have a variety of different views and philosophies. All I can really say is that I would not be unsettled in the least.

Kiel McLaughlin: thanks for getting in touch with me through this

Kiel McLaughlin: save my number in your phone because I'm sure I'll be calling you at some point for other stories

Alex Peak: Sure. If you need any information about me personally, I'm a senior, a political science major, a former President of the College Libertarians, and founder and former President of Students for Ron Paul. I also serve as Vice President of the Students for Sensible Drug Policy, although that group is obviously un-related to the question of gun rights in a way that the College Libertarians is not.

Kiel McLaughlin: got it

Kiel McLaughlin: who is Andrew Dodson affiliated with?

Alex Peak: Well, he's on the College Libertarian mailing list, but he is not an active member of the group. He's, I believe, also a senior and, I believe, also a political science major. (But I could certainly be wrong about that.) The only group with which I know him to have been actively working was GRAT, but of course that never got off the ground. I also know he works in a firearm shop and knows a great deal about firearm safety (as well as various laws dealing with the right to bear arms).

Kiel McLaughlin: alright, that works

Kiel McLaughlin: I'll give him a call tomorrow

Kiel McLaughlin: thanks a lot for your help

Kiel McLaughlin: the article will be out Thursday

Alex Peak: No problem.

