

GoMemphis

Defense of self, family is a personal duty

Guest columnist Will Dougan, 30, is director of music ministries at a local church.

August 17, 2003

"Legitimate defense can be not only a right but a grave duty for one who is responsible for the lives of others."

- *Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 2265 (1997)*



By Lance Murphey

Will Dougan: "I grew up in rural Madison County, where guns were a part of life, not something to be feared.... A gun was and is a tool."

Sponsored Links

The question "why do you choose to carry a firearm?" has haunted me.

[American Cancer Society](#)

No matter who you are we can help.
www.cancer.org

I am a fairly normal guy. I love to eat barbecue, I pay taxes, I vote. I'd like to take my wife out more often (to eat barbecue), I attend church and I'm a baseball fan - just like many other men in Memphis.

One thing that makes me different from some of those men is that I carry a gun. I do so because I truly believe that preserving the safety and well-being of my wife, my children and myself is my duty.

Do I think there are villains around every corner waiting to pounce? Certainly not. To quote the Boy Scout motto, my intent is only to "be prepared."

[National PTA](#)

Thousands of resources for parents and teachers. everychild. onevoice.
pta.org

I carry a spare tire in my car, have emergency supplies at home, and always wear my seatbelt, all so that I will be prepared. I have used my spare tire twice, never used the emergency supplies and found my seatbelt's restraints necessary only once. So why do I still maintain all those safeguards? Because I know that when I do need them, I'll need them desperately.

For me, a handgun is much the same - a safeguard. I carry it and train with it just in case I ever need it.

[Peace Corps](#)

Redefine Your World Service, dedication, idealism.
www.peacecorps.gov

I hope never to need my gun. I avoid places I think might not be safe. I pay close attention to what is going on around me, so that I can stay one step ahead of potential dangers. I do not look for trouble nor go around with a chip on my shoulder.

I love my family more than anything on Earth. I want my children to grow up, go to school, move out and give me grandchildren. I want my wife and me to live and love each other until death do us part - when we are very, very old. The thought of losing them or having them lose me makes my eyes well up and lodges a lump in my throat.

[Habitat for Humanity](#)

Donate your car to Habitat or other charities. Tax deduct.
www.donationline.com

I grew up in rural Madison County, where guns were a part of life, not something to be feared or mistrusted. We all had them, we all used them, and we all respected them.

A gun was and is a tool - nothing more, nothing less. You would never know my gun is there; it is safely tucked away in a manner that renders it harmless unless it is called upon. When you are at my home, there is no sign of a firearm; they are all stored in locked safes.

I take my duty as husband and father seriously. Part of that duty is being willing and able to protect my loved ones - from drugs, economic dangers and physical threats. The words of my father ring in my ears: "With great privilege comes great responsibility." I carry a gun because it is my responsibility

alone - not that of the police, nor the government, nor the community - to defend the precious lives that God has entrusted to me.

Although I have great distaste for the possibility of taking a life, I recall the words attributed to St. Augustine: "Though

defensive violence will always be a 'sad necessity' in the eyes of men of principle, it would be still more unfortunate if wrongdoers should dominate just men."

Fathers are like sheepdogs. We must be persistent, gentle, playful and, at times, ferocious. On occasion, we must become like the wolf that threatens our flock.

For me, that means owning, carrying and undergoing extensive training with a firearm, so that when the wolf appears out of the shadows, I will be prepared to defend what the Master has given me.

[MORE COLUMNIST COLUMNS »](#)

Copyright 2003, GoMemphis. All Rights Reserved.