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Shoot the messenger

by BRIAN LOCKHART

Over the course of the past couple of years, my doorbell has rang numerous times, announcing the arrival of unexpected visitors.

My normal course of action when the doorbell rings is to get ready for this ? answer the door.

Over the course of those few years, I have met several local realtors offering their services, several people selling home maintenance services of various kinds, a kid selling popcorn as a fundraiser for his school, yes, I bought the popcorn, a next-door neighbour kid selling greeting cards, I bought those too, and one really cute Girl Guide under the supervision of her mother, selling cookies.

The Girl Guide was very polite and very nice, so yes, I supported her troop and bought some cookies.

I only had one unusual circumstance, when the bell rang close to 11:00 p.m. That time I looked through the window to see who it was because it was a little later than usual time to drop by someone's house. In that case, I saw a uniform. It was a local police officer inquiring if I had seen or heard a hit-and-run accident that occurred at the house across the street. We had a nice chat.

Never once, when answering the door, did I pick up a baseball bat, golf club, frying pan, or other blunt instrument to use as a weapon. Never once did I prepare a rifle and load a round into the firing chamber just in case I didn't like the looks of the person and thought I might have to fire a shot to ward them off.

Never once did I feel threatened because a doorbell rang.

This past couple of weeks have seen several absolutely ridiculous shootings south of the border. Usually, I won't comment on foreign news, but because it comes to me through my news feeds and these incidents are so insane, I think they should be examined and used in comparison to gun-related crime and shootings in Canada.

In Kansas City, Missouri, a 16-year-old kid arrived at a house to pick up his siblings. He had the right street number, 115 Northeast, but he had arrived at Northeast Street rather than Northeast Terrace. It was an easy mistake.

The homeowner responded to seeing an unknown person on his porch by shooting him. The kid was shot once in the arm and once in the head. He did survive.

In a rural area of New York State, four young women were in a car, looking for a friend's house. They pulled into a driveway and realized they had the wrong house. They backed out and were getting ready to drive away. The homeowner opened fire on them, killing an innocent 20-year-old woman.

In Texas, an 18-year-old cheerleader and a friend arrived at a supermarket - a place the cheerleading academy often uses as a meeting point. The girl was going to her own car but mistakenly opened the car door of a similar vehicle. She apologized to the driver, who then opened fire, hitting both girls and injuring one seriously.

The shooter was a 25-year-old man. What possible threat could he have felt from an 18-year-old woman who was walking away and apologizing?

States that have a so-called ?stand your ground' law don't seem to take gun violence too seriously, as long as you're on your own property. The reasoning is you should be able to defend your home.

Well, yes, I think we should all be able to defend our homes and families if a person has entered our dwelling with the intent to do

harm.

Sometimes, deadly force may be necessary, although, in Canada, that is extremely rare.

However, opening fire on someone because they are on your propertyis insane.

In the case of the New York incident, a totally innocent young woman is dead simply because they entered the wrong driveway.

There is no reason to kill anyone simply for being on your property.

Even if someone was breaking into my home, I would not pull out a firearm and shoot ? for the simple reason I don't want to be responsible for killing a human being.

Americans have a constitutional right to have firearms. However, that should not mean you can blast away just because you don't recognize someone as a friend.

If you feel the need to cock your pistol just because your doorbell rings, you need to either visit a psychiatrist to have your paranoia problem taken care of or move to a desert island where you won't have to be bothered by interaction with other people.