

2011 Western travel, Education and Open Carry report

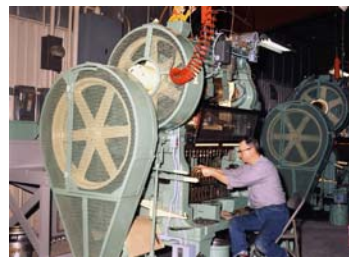
The annual trip to Wyoming began on the sad note of the death of Cathy's Father, Tom Nutter at age 99. That meant two things; we were taking his ashes to Wyoming to spread some from the top of the mountain behind our house and it has freed us to move permanently there in the near future. But more about this trip and firearm freedom.

Driving out we decided to stop at Grand Island, Nebraska - the home of Hornady ammunition <<http://www.hornady.com/>>

If you stop by there most week days before 3PM (earlier on Friday) you can go on a tour of the plant, just call ahead to schedule. The tour takes a little over an hour and covers much of their facility and manufacturing processes. Some of the areas of interest to us shooter engineer types are not open to the public such as the actual loading and the production of brass cartridges - SHUCKS!



There are some amazing items to see such as bullet forming machines that are much older than those using them, lead core extrusion presses and the new multi-axis, turret head CNC machines used to make parts and other tools. By all means take the opportunity to visit them and any other gun related venue. Testing is done on short and one long (15 and 100/200 yard tunnel) ranges so that every new load is worked up and then checked if something changes such as for each new batch of powder. There are dozens of pressure test barrels lined up ready to go.



Next it was on to Wyoming where I would feel the most comfortable open carrying in public and in the vehicle. Our target was the activities around and after Independence Day at Jackson, WY. The first day or two of July we visited some areas where I open carried but Cathy did not.

On Independence day I convinced her to carry her S&W 686+ in a strong side Safariland friction retention holster. This was the first time she ever carried in public, and because her holster did not have a retention device (and to make her more comfortable carrying) I assured her it was OK to load it only with snap caps. We were out to deliver messages that day. I was carrying in a new Fobus strong side - rear draw - paddle holster which can accommodate a mounted light - my night stand rig.



We never ran out of folks to talk to or interesting stories we heard. At the same Independence Day pancake breakfast, where Cathy first open carried, we met a young fellow (Alexander Leinberger, an out of town visitor, age 9) who stepped out of the crowd (lined up behind Cathy in the above photo) and offered to help cook pancakes.



Alexander Leinberger, 9, flips pancakes at the Jaycees' Pancake Breakfast with some help from Lion's Club member Mike Schone.



He made the local news paper, as in the photo above. I like my photo below much better. That is Alex in the middle of a two fisted flip. Oh yes, When you cook up as many pancakes as was served that morning you need a quick-mix crew. That is a utility tub, big boxes of Krusteaz Complete Buttermilk Pancake Mix and a variable speed paint mixer at work in the alley behind the cooks.



But back to the Open Carry.

There were a few places we chose to not carry, places we were going to visit with friends, have dinner and a drink or two for example. I wasn't sure about the rules in other states but on inspecting the web site <opencarry.org> it turns out I need not worry about our travels to Idaho or Montana.

While Cathy did some fishing, but not too much catching, I was usually open carrying and in an over-watch capacity. In Grand Teton Park we visited places like; Pacific Creek, Cattleman's Bridge, Jenny and String lake, Rockefeller visitor center and Phelps lake, the AMK ranch complex of the University of Wyoming at the Leeks Marina area (for two cookouts and seminars), in various stores and shops, etc. On this trip, none of the anti-gun mentality was encountered, none of the Hoplophobes sought us out (there was less publicity this time) and most of the questions were just out of curiosity, not challenging us.



For example, many of the store and visitor staff in the summer time are foreign exchange students, many from eastern Europe and the orient. While shopping at the local Albertsons grocery store late one night, the deli counter manager, John from China, who had excellent English language skills, leaned over the counter for a closer look and asked, "Is that a real gun?. To which I replied that it would not be much use if it were not. He explained that if he carried a gun in China he would have been put in prison. I was tempted to discuss the difference between a citizen and a slave, but did not want to discourage or insult him so I just said I was well aware of the serious restrictions on this freedom in other countries. I then told him about the local firearm instructor that would take him out shooting with almost any type of firearm and where the local gun range was.

At one fishing spot on Pacific Creek, while Cathy was downing some flies, I struck up a conversation with a fellow who was visiting the area with his wife. She was in a conference all day so he was fly fishing. He said he had seen wolf tracks in the mud and heard there were bears in the area. I knew about the bear warnings but the wolf tracks were up-to-the-minute news. As an aside, the wolves will usually avoid humans, especially where and when we were at Pacific Creek. The bears are another matter and if you accidentally violate their space or appear as a threat to their food or their cubs, you can get into big trouble in a hurry.



The strategy here is to AVOID such encounters, the fight you can avoid is one you will NEVER lose. If an encounter takes place I personally would try to turn any attack aside by appearing as large and noisy an opponent as possible. Even a good hard swipe with my steel walking stick across a bear's nose might help. The last resort is 8 rounds of .45ACP 230gr. ball, with one reload of 8 more at the ready. It has stopped bears in the past. Unfortunately, I would have a lot of explaining to do. The lesson of this is to avoid the fight if possible.

The fellow fisherman eventually said he was from back east and worked at Fort Mead, in Maryland, just 5 short miles from my office. He was an accomplished shooter and kindred spirit, despite living in New Jersey for quite a while. He knew the overly restrictive Maryland firearm problems quite well and sounded a bit envious when I invited him to consider moving to Wyoming. Small world.

At AMK Ranch (right photo), at Cattleman's Bridge and many other areas, similar conversations took place. Each conversation was an exchange of ideas and hopefully encouraged the other party to treat those they meet in turn to a similar educational discussion. AMK Ranch is a joint University of Wyoming and NPS project for study and public presentations. We attended two cookouts and lectures while I was open carrying and had some interesting conversations at the picnic tables.



Overall I carried on about 8 walks and several other occasions. The Fobus paddle holster for the Springfield 1911 worked well. Adding a small amount of dense foam padding inside stopped the small amount of play and rattle when walking but otherwise did not affect the function.

Glenn Beck held a "Celebrate America" rally and fireworks display at Driggs, Idaho on Saturday July 2nd. Several thousand folks turned out, about 10 times the population of Driggs, at the Huntsman Estates development, at the golf course stage to hear Glenn, an orchestra and an audio/video presentation mixed with the fireworks. Knowing this was a private development, we chose to not carry that day. Liking things that go BANG, we also attended fireworks on Sunday 7/3 at Teton Village and then on Monday 7/4 - Independence Day - in Jackson.



One of the more important missions this year was to pay respects to others and to add the remains of Cathy's parents, Tom and Alice Nutter at the top of the mountain behind our house. The natural memorial rock seen here rises from the ridge top overlooking Jackson. That makes five resting there - with only two more to go.



Closing advice.

Every chance you get, try to exercise your freedom and to teach others to do the same. I realize you may not be able to be so outspoken as to open carry a sidearm, but there are other tactics you can use to draw out others to discuss firearms and the Constitution. A hat or shirt or even a small lapel pin works just fine. Choose the flag you can wear effectively in what ever environment you are in and be ready to talk to others. Be sincere, be factual and be pleasant. Deviating from any of these will make you a much less effective spokesman. Depending on how the conversation is going, be friendly - entertaining - stern, or whatever works best at that time with that conversation. But ALWAYS, be an active spokesman for Freedom.

It is a lot easier to do that in free states like Wyoming, so if you are tired of Maryland, or some other anti-gun state jerking your chain, if you want to go Gault on them and take your business and lives elsewhere, come on out to freedom in the inter-mountain west. You will have done a lot of pro-gun work and talking in the non-free states, and you will not have to give up your firearm freedom fight. Lots of folks will be trying to sneak into the free areas and bringing their California (New Jersey, Chicago, New England, north west) problems with them. It will, however, be relatively easier to educate or repel them, having got so much hard core training. Move to freedom and enjoy it.

Bob and Cathy, July, 2011