

# My Dinner with Andy

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**Sadly, there's a moderate to high likelihood that we'll see a bone fide SHTF event, of unknown magnitude, in the near future. This story relates to preparations for such an event and the adage, "no good deed goes unpunished."**

When I made my living as a factory rat I was considered to be, by my co-workers, somewhat of a firearms expert. I earned that status by proving that along with "talking the talk," I was more than capable of "walking the walk." Because of that status I received, and honored, more than a few requests to guide co-workers in their desire to arm themselves in an effort to provide their own personal protection. I always felt it was my duty and responsibility to use my experience and knowledge to help others. I was taught that's how society works. One of those requests stands out among the rest.

One day my co-worker, Andrew, who everyone knew as Andy, asked if I could take him and his wife, Andrea, who everyone knew as Andi, to the firing range. Andy, Andi, and their family were a typical American family in that they assumed every store would be well stocked and open for business anytime they wanted or needed something, 24/7/365. As a result they had enough provisions in their home to sustain their family for, at the most, three days. It took a few years, but I was finally able to convince them they needed to plan ahead and eventually they had a two week food supply. They still refused to believe any event could require a larger buffer than that, but I had to admit that a two week supply was vastly superior to a three day supply, even if a large percentage of their new stash was frozen food. We still hadn't delved into the need for water and medications and a plethora of other probable needs, but this was a work in progress. They had begun to see a need for providing their own security and defense and were interested in purchasing a firearm. The range trip was to familiarize them with their options.

Over the following months one range visit turned into two, then three, and finally four. Each new visit was justified by, "we're pretty sure we know what we want to do, but..." Each visit began when the range opened at 9:00 AM and ended sometime after lunch. The last one ended just in time for dinner. Each time I provided the venue, the firearms, and the ammunition.

Normally, I hand-load almost all of our ammunition. The exceptions being the majority of shotgun shells, any rimfire rounds, bulk purchases of 5.56X45 mm. NATO or 7.62X39 mm., .25 ACP, and .32 ACP. My handloads are at least as safe and are considerably more consistent than factory ammunition. I have verified my consistency claim by test firing my hand-loads and factory ammunition over my chronograph. My velocities are at least 50% more constant than factory loads. Having established that, guests always fire factory ammunition that I purchase. Not all hand-loaders go to the pains that I do to produce safe, consistent loads and I don't expect my guests to entrust their lives to my diligence. I've been hand-loading since I was ten years old and my sons have fired my hand-loads their entire life. I trust my work, but I also look for ways for things to go wrong and ways to avoid prospective problems and liabilities.

The point I'm making is that my outlay for ammunition alone, for twenty-some hours of firing, was considerable. These people were, at that time, friends, and my guests. The range visits were my treat. Originally, I'd made an offer and they'd accepted. The three subsequent trips I'd been asked, and I accepted. After all, isn't that what friends do for friends? I had to admit I was beginning to feel like I was being used; like I was being taken advantage of. It didn't help when, at the end of each day, the boys and I policed our own brass... with an audience rather than extra helpers.

When I was asked to provide a fourth range visit I asked if there was a reason for one more trip. I was told that Andy and Andi had all but made a decision and just needed a little more

familiarization with one specific weapon. At this point I suggested they may want to pick up a quantity of ammunition since mine was running low. I suggested a place where they could get a good deal and I was pleasantly surprised when they arrived with a small amount of their own ammunition. I was a little surprised at the rate their ammo was expended throughout the day. It was almost like they were paying for their own ammo. In fact, they only used about 25% of the ammo they'd brought. When quitting time came Andy quickly picked up what was left of their ammo and put it in the trunk of his car. It was a hot, sunny day and I must have been suffering from heat stroke. I'd thought there was a possibility they'd offer us the remainder of the ammunition to defray the cost of the previous trips. It wasn't like they were going to need it because they still didn't own a firearm.

On the way to the restaurant where we were going to meet, for dinner, with Andy and Andi, my sons suggested I see a doctor in regard to the delusions I was having so frequently. That was the first time I was completely convinced that I'd raised two kids to be smarter than I am.

Our dinner progressed much as it had any of the other fifty times we'd dined together. We'd all finished our meals and I was waiting for a lull in the conversation so I could ask the obvious question. When such a lull presented itself I asked, "Well, have you made a decision on your choice of weaponry?"

Andy got a big grin on his face while Andi began studying the floor. He was extremely pleased with his decision. "We've done better than that," he began. "When everything goes to Hell we're coming to your house. It's the only sensible solution since you already have a lot of guns and food and stuff."

That revelation rendered me completely slack-jawed. My mouth was literally hanging open, but the surprise wasn't yet complete. "We're also bringing the kids," Andy announced proudly. I have to assume he meant the two adult children and the daughter-in-law, because I didn't ask.

There are times when I'm not really quick on the uptake. I was waiting for the maniacal laughter and thigh slapping that is a natural part of any supremely horrible joke. All I got was a pause so pregnant it must have been going to deliver quadruplets, at the very least. Mike, my youngest, knew someone had to break the ice but he remembered he was raised to know that children should be seen and not heard and to be quietly respectful when the adults were speaking. He reached over and gently lifted my lower jaw until my mouth was closed. When I looked over at him he quietly mouthed the word, "flies." That cracked me up and again, I was functional.

I collected my thoughts and slowly and clearly started the final two paragraphs of a statement I've made many times to those who've devoted considerable time, effort, and money and who've made sacrifices to increase their chances of survival when society turns ugly. I fear we'll see one of those times soon and I think all of us could benefit from giving this position some thought.

**"After you've scrimped, saved, planned, learned new skills, and made endless sacrifices to create an environment conducive to you and your family's survival in a suddenly dysfunctional world, there's one final consideration you should address. Think of all those who've ridiculed you, made fun of you, questioned your sanity and your intelligence, and who made you the brunt of endless jokes. These are the same people who went about life without a care in the world and who told you life's too short to waste so much precious time preparing for something that'll never happen because, 'that can't happen here.'"**

**"When the day you've prepared for arrives and you lock and bar your doors, a group will form outside your door and they'll loudly remind you that they're your loved and trusted friends... the ones that have always been there for you... and that you must open your door to let them in. They'll remind you that you owe them that much. Remember that they're not your friends anymore, and then, realize that they never really were."**

Andy and Andi got up from the table and left without saying another word... and without paying their share of the bill. Life's full of surprises. That was not one of them.

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