

Heston Steps Down From NRA

-- Charlton Heston made his last appearance as president of the National Rifle Association on Saturday...--

BACKGROUND:



A recent spate of deadly school shootings — including the April 1999 massacre of 14 students and a teacher at a suburban Colorado high school — has added momentum to gun

control measures long pending before Congress. Among other things, proponents of stricter firearm laws are calling for mandatory child safety locks, tougher background checks, and other controls that they believe will curb the rise of gun-related violence. Such proposals come just months after a host of cities — including New Orleans, Miami, and Los Angeles — filed suit against firearm manufacturers, blaming the companies' marketing practices for violence caused by guns.

Legislation approved by the Senate in 1999 would have applied a three day waiting period for background checks required by the 1993 Brady Gun Act to gun show purchases. The House later approved an amendment to limit the background check to 24 hrs, after which the weapon could be sold if the check weren't complete. (However, the House then killed the bill in July 1999, leaving the fate of gun legislation again in doubt.) Guns sold after the enactment of the proposed legislation would have been sold with safety locks – a factor that critics say could drive up gun prices. In addition, lawmakers want to limit the import of

high-volume ammunition clips manufactured for weapons currently sold in the US.

Gun rights groups say such legislation would infringe on the constitutional rights of law-abiding citizens. They say stricter background checks at gun shows would slow weapon sales, as the waiting period would outlast the gun show itself. Some gun manufacturers have volunteered support for safety locks, but the National Rifle Association has criticized the measure as another attack on gun owners. The NRA, a prominent voice in the gun debate, says firearm control measures wouldn't be needed if lawmakers would enforce current law.

Gun control advocates, including Handgun Control, support even stricter provisions. Among other things, they are calling for a limit of one handgun purchase per month, a move supported by the Clinton Administration. Such groups also advocate raising the legal age limit for ownership of guns to age 21 from the current age of 18. Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.) has announced his support for raising the age limit.

The most recent debate over gun control gained momentum after the April 20, 1999 shooting at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colo. However, the issue of firearm regulations has been a perennial issue before Congress for several decades. Historically, the debate over gun control has peaked following prominent acts of violence committed with guns, such as the shooting deaths of the Kennedys and Martin Luther King during the 1960s and the murder of Beatles icon John Lennon and an assassination attempt on President Reagan during the 1980s.

Gun rights groups contributed more than \$3.7 million in soft money, PAC, and individual contributions during the 1999-00 election cycle, with more than 90 percent of the money favoring Republicans. That's more than \$13 million in

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contributions since 1990. The National Rifle Association was the predominant donor of the gun rights lobby, accounting for nearly 90 percent of the interest's giving over the last decade. Gun control advocates, meanwhile, contributed more than \$394,000 in PAC and individual donations during the current election cycle, nearly 95 percent to Democrats. Since 1990, such groups have given \$1.3 million in soft money, PAC, and individual contributions, 92 percent to Democrats.

Besides political contributions and lobbying expenditures, the National Rifle Association is one of the handful of special interest groups that also spends millions of dollars on independent expenditures and special communications costs. These are unlimited dollars spent explicitly advocating the election or defeat of a federal candidate, such as taking out newspaper ads or sending pamphlets to membership. By law, these expenditures must be reported to the Federal Election Commission and the group or individual making the expenditures cannot coordinate with the candidate they benefit. Between 1991 and 1998, the NRA spent nearly \$12 million on such expenditures, with about \$7.3 million spent in favor of Republican candidates.

Historically, the debate over gun control has generally divided Democrats and Republicans along party lines. Thus, it's no surprise that GOP lawmakers, chief opponents of new gun laws, were the primary recipients of contributions from the National Rifle Association and other gun rights groups. Democrats traditionally have led the charge for stricter gun measures – a fact reflective in the contributions they receive from gun control advocates. However, there are prominent members of both parties who cross partisan lines. Most recently, Rep. John Dingall (D-Mich.) threw his support behind a GOP-led gun bill in the House while Rep. Constance Morella (R-Md.) stood with Democratic leaders in support of tough gun controls. The issue has become so contentious for House lawmakers that Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.) declined to enforce party discipline on the subject.

Senate: Just weeks after the Colorado school shooting, Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.), bypassed traditional committee debate and approved immediate floor consideration of S. 254, the Senate Juvenile Justice Bill. The bill, ultimately amended to include tough provisions on background checks and safety locks, was approved by a 73-25 vote on May 20.

House: The House rejected legislation loaded with gun control provisions similar to those approved by the Senate in May. However, House Republican leaders split the gun debate into two separate pieces of legislation – one focusing on youth culture and violent crime and another specifically dealing with gun shows. Among the more contentious points of debate, gun-rights backers passed an amendment limiting gun show background checks to 24 hours, rather than the Senate-approved mandate of three days. If the check is not completed within 24 hours, the sale automatically would be approved. Unhappiness with that amendment – among gun-control advocates who viewed it as too weak and gun-rights advocates who thought it went too far – led to the bill's demise.

The Senate approved new gun control measures by a vote of 73-25 in 1999. However, lawmakers voted three times on proposed background checks at gun shows, first voting against a three-day waiting period, then approving a 24-hour waiting period, then gave final approval to the mandatory three-day background check.

The House in 1999 voted 218-211 in favor of an amendment that would limit background checks at gun shows to 24 hours. Lawmakers, in a 193-235 vote, voted down an amendment that would have mandated a three-day waiting period. The House then voted to kill the bill by a 280-147 vote.



A Brief History of NRA

Dismayed by the lack of marksmanship shown by their troops, Union veterans Col. William C. Church and Gen.

George Wingate formed the National Rifle Association in 1871. The primary goal of the association would be to "promote and encourage rifle shooting on a scientific basis," according to a magazine editorial written by Church.

After being granted a charter by the state of New York on November 17, 1871, the NRA was founded. Civil War Gen. Ambrose Burnside, who was also the former governor of Rhode Island and a U.S. Senator, became the fledgling NRA's first president.

The NRA's interest in promoting the shooting sports among America's youth began in 1903 when NRA Secretary Albert S. Jones urged the establishment of rifle clubs at all major colleges, universities and military academies. Today, with more than one million youth



participating in NRA shooting sports events and affiliated programs with groups such as 4-H, the Boy Scouts, the American Legion, and others.

Meanwhile, the NRA continued its commitment to training, education and

marksmanship. During World War II, the association offered its ranges to the government, developed training materials, encouraged members to serve as plant and home guard members and developed training materials for industrial security. The NRA's call to help arm Britain in 1940 resulted in the collection of more than 7,000 firearms for Britain's defense against potential invasion by Germany.

After the war, the NRA concentrated its efforts on another much-needed arena for education and training: the hunting community. In 1949, the NRA, in conjunction with the state of New York, established the first hunter education program. Hunter Education courses are now taught by state fish and game departments across the country and Canada and have helped make hunting one of the safest sports in existence.

Law enforcement training was next on the priority list for program development, NRA became the only national trainer of law enforcement officers with the introduction of its NRA Police Firearms Instructor certification program in 1960. Today, there are more than 10,000 NRA-certified police and security firearms instructors.

In civilian training, the NRA continues to be the leader in firearms education. Over 50,000 Certified Instructors now train about 750,000 gun owners a year. Courses are available in basic rifle, pistol, shotgun, muzzleloading firearms, personal protection, and even ammunition reloading. Additionally, nearly 1,000 Certified Coaches are specially trained to work with young competitive shooters. Since the establishment of the lifesaving [Eddie Eagle® Gun Safety Program](#) in 1988, more than 12 million pre-kindergarten to sixth grade children have learned that if they see a firearm in an unsupervised situation, they should "STOP. DON'T TOUCH. LEAVE THE AREA. TELL AN ADULT." Over the past seven years, [Refuse To Be A Victim™](#) seminars have helped more than 15,000 men and women develop their own safety plan using common sense strategies.

In 1998, Charlton Heston, who had found fame as an actor starring in such films as *El Cid*, *Planet of the Apes* and as Moses in *The Ten Commandments* (he won an Oscar in 1959 for his performance in *Ben Hur*), was elected president of the National Rifle Association. He led the fight against gun control and fended off moves for tighter regulation of firearms.

Heston became NRA president in 1998 as the gun-rights group was overcoming a period of internal strife and facing run-ins with the administration of President Clinton. During his tenure, the NRA raised its membership to 4 million members. The group helped send a supportive President Bush to the White House and Republicans take control of Congress. The NRA also pushed the U.S. House to pass legislation limiting lawsuits seeking damages against gun manufacturers and distributors this year and is

gearing up to try and make sure a ban on assault weapons lapses next year in Congress. He has recently announced that he is suffering from a condition consistent with Alzheimer's Disease.

A Brief History of the Brady Bill



The November 1993 passage of the Brady gun-control bill galvanized militia groups, which saw it as blatant government interference with their constitutional right to bear

arms. The bill, which required background checks on gun purchasers and a five-day waiting period, was named for James Brady (pictured with wife Sarah above), the presidential press secretary who was shot and paralyzed in a 1981 assassination attempt on Ronald Reagan. The next February, the Brady Law into effect in the 32 states which have no background check system.

In June, the Supreme Court gutted the Brady Law, ruling that it would violate the balance of power between Congress and the states to require local police to run background checks.

Reagan's shooter, John Hinckley Jr., used a handgun he had bought legally at a Texas pawn shop five months before the assassination attempt. Gun-control supporters rallied around the Brady bill because it erected a small roadblock for those seeking to buy handguns.

NRA at: www.nra.org

Brady Bill at: www.bradycenter.org

Million Mom March at: www.millionmommarch.org

STORY:

(AP) Charlton Heston made his last appearance as president of the National Rifle Association on Saturday, shuffling onto the stage before a crowd of 4,000 NRA members but too feeble to give a farewell speech. The actor, diagnosed with symptoms of Alzheimer's disease, was strong enough to raise an 1866 Winchester rifle over his head and



deliver his trademark line, "From my cold, dead hands."

He received a standing ovation but only spoke three more sentences at the annual NRA meeting Saturday. "Thank you for everything, not only now but for all the years," Heston said. "It has been a wonderful run. I'm going to miss you."

Heston's only speech before members of the gun-rights group was previously videotaped. There were visible signs of the declining health of Heston, the actor who once played larger-than-life figures such as Moses, Judah Ben-Hur and El Cid in a half-century Hollywood career.

During the convention, a frail-looking Heston only made two public appearances, neither lasting more than a half-hour. He needed assistance walking across the stage during a tribute Friday night and during the annual meeting of members Saturday morning. He required some prompting from executive vice president Wayne LaPierre during his appearances and often had a distant look in his eye.

Those issues were the focus of a protest that drew two dozen gun-control supporters outside the convention center where the NRA was meeting. The protest was organized by the Million Mom March, a gun-control group.

Heston left the NRA convention to return to California, even though other board members weren't leaving the convention until Tuesday. He wasn't officially scheduled to step down from the presidency until Monday. Kayne Robinson, former chairman of the Republican Party of Iowa, took over the duties of president on Saturday.

SIGNIFICANCE:

As the NRA's public face for five years, Heston helped steer the organization out of several public-relations disasters — including fallout from the Columbine massacre in 1999 — and even won opponents' grudging respect.

"It helped the NRA immeasurably to have Charlton Heston president of the NRA," said Wayne LaPierre, the group's executive vice president. "Here's a figure the public really does love ... It brought a built-in microphone."

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY:**April 28, 1789****MUTINY ON THE HMS
BOUNTY**

Three weeks into a journey from Tahiti to the West Indies, the HMS *Bounty* is seized in a mutiny led by Fletcher Christian, the master's mate. Captain William Bligh and 18 of his loyal supporters were set adrift in a small, open boat, and the *Bounty* headed for Tubuai, south of Tahiti.

In December 1787, the *Bounty* left England for Tahiti in the South Pacific, where it was to collect a cargo of breadfruit saplings to transport to the West Indies. After a 10-month journey, the *Bounty* arrived in Tahiti in October 1788 and remained there for more than five months. On April 4, 1789, the *Bounty* departed Tahiti. On April 28, near the island of Tonga, Christian and 25 petty officers and seamen seized the ship. Bligh, who eventually would face three mutinies in his career, was an oppressive commander. By setting him adrift in a crowded 23-foot-long boat in the middle of the Pacific, Christian and his conspirators had apparently handed him a death sentence. By remarkable seamanship, however, Bligh and his men reached Timor in the East Indies on June 14, 1789, after a voyage of about 3,600 miles. Bligh returned to England and soon sailed again to Tahiti.

Meanwhile, unsuccessful in their colonizing effort on Tubuai, the *Bounty* sailed north to Tahiti, and 16 crewmen decided to stay there, despite the risk of capture by British authorities. Christian and eight others, together with six Tahitian men, a dozen Tahitian women, and a child, decided to search the South Pacific for a safe haven. In January 1790, the *Bounty* settled on Pitcairn Island, an isolated and uninhabited volcanic island more than 1,000 miles east of Tahiti. The mutineers who remained on Tahiti were captured and taken back to England where three were hanged. A British ship searched for Christian and the others but did not find them.

In 1808, an American whaling vessel was drawn to Pitcairn by smoke from a cooking fire. They discovered a community of children and women led by John Adams, the sole survivor of the original nine mutineers. The colonists had stripped and burned the *Bounty*, and internal strife and sickness had led to the death of Fletcher and all the men but him. In 1825, a British ship arrived and formally granted Adams amnesty, and he served as patriarch of the Pitcairn community until his death in 1829. Today, around 50 people live on Pitcairn Island, and all but a handful are descendants of the *Bounty* mutineers.

WHO YOU NEED TO KNOW:*Fletcher Christian*

Christian was descended from a very prominent family. He was born at the farmstead of Moorland Close on Sep 25, 1764, and was carried over the hill to nearby Brigham church for baptism the same day. The family had control of several other properties..

According to Bligh, Christian was 5 feet 9 inches tall, with very dark-brown complexion, dark-brown hair, strong-made, bowlegged, of a nervous disposition, and subject to violent sweating. He had a star tattooed on his left breast. He has been described as having a pleasing countenance and was a commanding figure. He was distantly related to William Wordsworth. A schoolmate, the local poet Isaac Wilkinson, described him as 'mild, generous, open, humane, sincere, and quick of spirit'. In general, even his detractors admit that he had a likeable personality.

The fortunes of his family, unfortunately, suffered serious reversal. His father died, and his mother was soon on the edge of bankruptcy, with Moorland Close about to be foreclosed. Christian, at an age where he welcomed adventure, went to sea at 18, signing as ship's boy the 'Cambridge', on which Bligh was 6th Lieutenant. He later took two trips with Bligh to Jamaica on the 'Britannia'.

www.thehistorychannel.com

ENTERTAINMENT:

NFL DRAFT

A week after a bullet tore through his torso and lodged in his arm, Dennis Weathersby gingerly settled in front of his tTV and watched the NFL draft with growing disappointment. One team after another passed on the highly ranked cornerback, scared away by the drive-by shooting in California that left him hospitalized for five days. He still has the bullet in his upper left arm.

Police investigated and concurred that Weathersby was an innocent victim of the latest shooting in an area known for gang violence. Instead of going in an early round, getting a big contract and buying his mom a home away from their rough-and-tumble neighborhood, Weathersby went through the first day without hearing his name. Finally, with the first pick in the fourth round Sunday, he went to the NFL's worst team.

The Cincinnati Bengals took a chance on the highly regarded cornerback, hoping his injuries will heal and his past won't become a problem for a rebuilding team.

ENTERTAINMENT:

Potter' Books Return to Library Shelves

(AP) The Harry Potter series is back on library shelves in the Cedarville School District, following a federal judge's order to give students access to the popular books about the boy wizard.

A secretary at the rural school district said Friday that superintendent David Smith instructed librarians to take the books out of a back office and return them to shelves. The school board voted Thursday night not to appeal the federal court order, which was issued Tuesday.

The board drew wrath from national free-speech groups for its June decision to require students to obtain parental permission to check out

the books. The 3-2 decision, which overruled a decision by the district's library committee, came after a parent complained about the books. Plaintiffs Billy and Mary Nell Counts said they feared their daughter, Dakota, would be stigmatized if she were identified as someone who read books the district considered "evil." More than 190 million copies of the novels have been printed in at least 55 languages and have sold in more than 200 countries.

The books written by British author J.K. Rowling have been assailed by some Christian groups for their themes of spells, sorcery and magic. The American Library Association says the books were the most frequently challenged of 2002, but rarely did those challenges lead to restrictions or bans.

The fifth book in the series, "Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix," is due June 21.

Note: Also announced this week author J.K. Rowling is worth 280 million pounds (445 million dollars), making her richer than Britain's Queen Elizabeth, according to the latest Sunday Times Rich List. The writer's success places her at 122 in the overall list, while the queen's fortune of 250 million pounds places her at 133.



The annual survey of the 1,000 richest people in Britain showed that Rowling, 37, the wealthiest woman in the show business section, has more than quadrupled her fortune in the past two years.

Rowling's current financial circumstances are a far cry from those she faced after the birth of her first child, Jessica, 10 years ago. After her first marriage broke down, the single mother lived on 70 pounds a week state benefits in a small flat in Edinburgh, writing most of her first book, "Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone", in a cafe as her baby slept. Publisher Bloomsbury bought the rights to the book and advised Rowling not to use her names Joanne Kathleen on the cover because it believed boys would not read adventure stories written by a woman.

FEATURE:

PITCAIRN COLONY

It is not surprising that the most famous of all mutinies, that of the British HMS *Bounty*, has become ideal fodder for popular history and legend. The mutiny has generated five films (who can think of Fletcher Christian without picturing Marlon Brando?) as well as countless books (including a historical novel by Mark Twain, *The Great Revolution in Pitcairn*).

Set in the paradisiacal islands of the South

Pitcairnese Dialect

I starten. – *I'm going.*
 Bou yo gwen? – *Where are you going?*
 I gwen down Farder's morla. – *I'm going down to Father's place tomorrow.*
 Bou yo bin? – *Where have you been?*
 I gwen out yenna fer porpay. – *I'm going out yonder for red guavas.*
 Foot yawly come yah? – *Why did you come here?*
 Up a side, Tom'sa roll. – *Up at that place, Tom fell down.*

Seas, the mutiny involved a host of colorful characters, including the tyrannical Captain Bligh, the aristocratic Fletcher Christian, numerous uninhibited Tahitian women, and sailors made up of cockney orphans and ruffian adventurers.

What has also helped to perpetuate the romantic fascination with the mutiny is the existence of a small community on Pitcairn Island directly descended from the mutineers and their Tahitian wives.

Living on a 1^{3/4} square mile volcanic speck in the South Pacific that is surely one of the most isolated places on Earth, the contemporary Pitcairn Islanders still bear the surnames of the eighteenth century mutineers (Tom Christian, for example, is the great-great-great-grandson of Fletcher). The islanders speak a dialect that is a hybrid of Tahitian and eighteenth-century English. It is as if history had been preserved in a petri dish.

An isolated volcanic island 1,350 miles southeast of Tahiti, it was named after British midshipman Robert Pitcairn, who first sighted the island on July 2, 1767. Its location had been incorrectly charted by the explorer Carteret, who

missed the mark by 200 miles, and was therefore the ideal refuge.

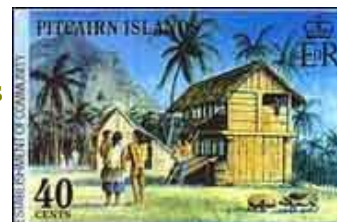


All but a handful of the current population—a pastor, the schoolteacher, etc—

are direct descendants of the mutineers. The only way to reach the island is by ship, but storms and Pitcairn's dangerous harbor have sometimes prevented landings. Pitcairn's thrice-annual supply ships have ran aground on a reef.

Mail service takes approximately three months, and for medical attention, Pitcairners must wait for a ship to transport them to New Zealand, several thousand miles to the west. All are Seventh-Day Adventists who converted sometime after 1886, when an American missionary arrived on the island.

The islanders support themselves by producing postage stamps and making handicrafts, which they sell primarily to visitors on passing ships. Their meager revenue does not cover the enormous costs incurred in keeping the remote island running—electricity, among other things, is exorbitant and cargo costs several thousand dollars per ton to transport. Great Britain has until now subsidized the island, but it is uncertain whether it will continue to underwrite its tiny but costly colony.



There are individuals and organizations around the world devoted to the Pitcairners, their genealogy, and the history of the mutiny (the genealogical tree extends to 7,500). Friends of the Pitcairn Islanders have even launched the island into cyberspace—the Pitcairn Island Web Site is run out of Minnesota. It is now even possible to buy Pitcairn Island handicrafts through the Pitcairn Island Virtual Shopping Mall. Pitcairn has also recently begun to sell its Internet domain name—".pn"—to those needing a unique URL.

Quote of the Week:

If I tell you a funny story for the second time,
please laugh anyway.

-Charlton Heston

Fact of the Week:

One out of three handguns is kept loaded and
unlocked in the home.

Word of the Week:

Cervine (ser'vin) *a.* Pertaining to the deer family.

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And
Have a Great Week!

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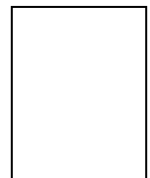
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