

B O O K R E V I E W

The Great New Orleans Gun Grab: Descent Into Anarchy

by Gordon Hutchinson and Todd Masson
Paperback, 190 pages plus appendix; Louisiana Publishing, Inc.
(800) 538-4355; www.neworleansgungrab.com

by **BLAINE SMITH**, Associate Editor

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina's assault on the city of New Orleans in late summer 2005, those holdouts remaining in the submerged city—who hoped to protect their property, or who lacked the means to escape before the deluge—faced a triple threat that conspired to snuff out these ordinary Americans: Mother Nature, the criminal element and the very government sworn to protect them from both.

Indeed, as putrid floodwaters poured into the bowl of land occupied by the Crescent City following the most costly storm to ever strike the United States, it was the bureaucrats of law enforcement that not only desecrated every basic human right affirmed a citizen by the Constitution, these self-same protectors of law and order also actively placed in peril the citizenry of New Orleans.

The Great New Orleans Gun Grab: Descent Into Anarchy, by Gordon Hutchinson and Todd Masson, recounts in vivid prose the stories of those Orleanians who chose armed, lawful protection of themselves, their friends and family, property and even strangers over the empty promises and menacing threats of law-enforcement officials throughout the sodden city. Having survived the storm, and

having taken an armed stand against marauding looters, many of those Hutchinson and Masson speak for in *The Great New Orleans Gun Grab* faced their greatest trauma when interacting with those whose job was purportedly to protect the city's citizens. The trauma was nearly always preceded by the loss of Constitutional rights, due process, property and dignity, sometimes followed by harassment, intimidation, forced removal and outright assault.

The ordeal of Patricia Kone, who personified officials' brutality in Katrina's wake when she was shown on primetime television being brutalized, is presented in *The Great New Orleans Gun Grab* in detail, including the lingering effects of her assault at the hands of police over two years later—the pain of a shoulder broken in three places being her lasting memento.

But other, less known yet equally horrific accounts are presented in the book, perhaps most notably the case of Ashton O'Dwyer, an attorney who chose to ride out the anarchy of post-hurricane New Orleans protecting his home, and in course attracting the ire of city officials there.


O'Dwyer became a very vocal critic of the city's mismanagement of the Katrina crisis, eager to enumerate the ineptness of the Nagin city hall to all media within camera shot of his St. Charles Avenue home. Soon, O'Dwyer's incessant, and often comedic, harangues against the powers that be brought the wrath of law enforcement. One evening while sitting in a chair in his driveway keeping watch over his home, Louisiana State Police officers rushed him, threw him face down in the shrubbery and dragged him handcuffed to Union Passenger Terminal, a makeshift jail, where he was denied a phone call to contact his attorney.

There, O'Dwyer was three times pepper sprayed in the face, and shot with beanbag rounds from a 12-gauge shotgun two to three times in each thigh from just a few feet away—all, according to O'Dwyer, without provocation. The following morning he was released with an affidavit explaining the reasons for his

incarceration and assault: public intoxication. O'Dwyer, though, says the reason for his abuse stems from not only his refusal to evacuate, but also his vocal, and armed, defiance of city officials. A lawsuit is pending.

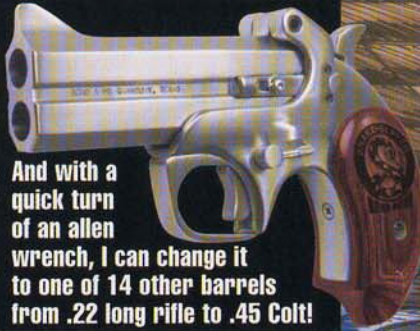
And so it went with many of the other experiences of Katrina victims Hutchinson and Masson relate: armed, law-abiding citizens intent on protecting themselves, family, friends and property from looters suffering harassment and intimidation—and hardcore assault—from law enforcement that seemed accountable to no one. With the looters, these individuals knew the playing field: a thug approaches, fire a warning shot. But it was the unknowable whims of law enforcement officers that most haunted the stalwart denizens of New Orleans and St. Tammany Parish; that transformed the chaos of post-Katrina into pure madness. Would their firearms be confiscated, thus putting them at the mercy of looters?

The Great New Orleans Gun Grab gives dozens of first-hand accounts straight from the flooded trenches of the second Battle of New Orleans. Not all personal accounts related in the book are of city-sanctioned suspension of constitutional rights—though there are plenty. Others tell of the success citizens had in banding together, armed, to protect their mutual interests. Also of note is a section detailing the NRA's fight to, first, make the city admit they had taken thousands of firearms unlawfully, but also to catalog and attempt to return to their rightful owners these illegally confiscated guns.

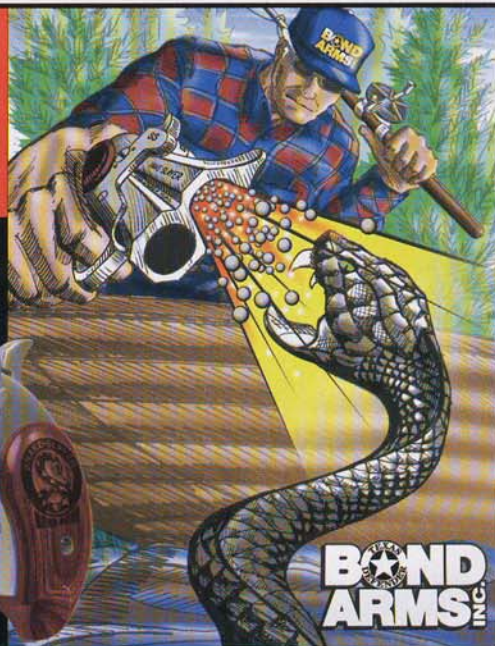
In riveting detail, *The Great New Orleans Gun Grab* has instantly become the standard text on government tyranny in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. As NRA Executive Vice President Wayne LaPierre has noted, if someone says that illegal confiscations of firearms can't happen in America in this day and age, just tell them: "Remember New Orleans!" 

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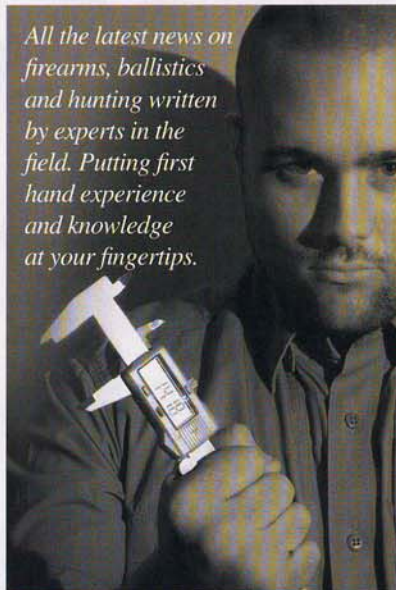
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