

*The following homage to our dear friend Evan Hughes was penned by his long-standing friend Charles Ferry, and was delivered in Evan's honor at the 26<sup>th</sup> annual Vermont Federation of Sportsman's Clubs Banquet, held March 11, 2023.*

## **Evan Hughes, A Patriot's Voice**

Evan Hughes passed away on July 27<sup>th</sup> of last year. He was sixty-seven years of age. His family was beside him. Evan was a self-made scholar, educator and advocate for Constitutional rights, especially the Second Amendment of our Federal Constitution and Chapter 1, Article 16 of our Vermont Constitution.

Evan always supported his thoughtful objective opinions with well-documented case law and research.

"Evan was more than an encyclopedia; he was the library."

"This is what I have learned. This is what I believe is the case," Evan said.

Evan was an American citizen, a Vermonter, Veteran, a Patriot, loving father and loyal friend. Evan was a man of commitment and conviction.

What is Evan's origin story?

Evan grew up in picturesque Poultney. After graduation from high school, Evan enlisted in the United States Air Force. Evan believed that military service was an obligation of citizenship. After his honorable discharge, he was a Poultney police officer, he served with the elite United States Border Patrol, and he was a police officer with the Burlington Police Department. He earned a dual Master's Degree in business and government from Saint Michael's College. East Barre Postmaster was Evan's final career position with the United States Postal Service. Evan Hughes dedicated 26 years of his life to advocate for the Second Amendment and Article Sixteen. He educated, organized and lead Vermont Patriots. Evan testified at municipal and state hearings, and worked with Vermont attorneys, legislators and Governors. Evan worked successfully and co-operatively with Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife Commissioners, game wardens and staff. Evan was the Vermont Federation of Sportsman's Clubs Northern Vice-President and a registered lobbyist at the Vermont Legislature. Evan was a Life Member of, and our Vermont State Representative to, the National Rifle Association of America. Evan was a founder of the VSSA "Vermont Shooting Sports Association" and he invented their \$100 raffle. Evan worked with The Vermont Traditions Coalition, The Gun Owners of Vermont, The Vermont Trappers Association, The Vermont Bear Hounds, The Vermont State Rifle and Pistol Association, The Friends of the NRA, and gun clubs and ranges throughout the state. He brought the Eddie Eagle youth firearms safety program to Vermont. He advocated for Pittman-Robinson Funds for the development of Vermont Fish and Wildlife public shooting ranges. He supported

and he was in turn, helped, by local sporting goods businesses. He sold thousands of raffle tickets. He published letters to the Editor and was interviewed by newspapers, radio and television. He developed and maintained the timely and informative [VTGuns@aol.com](mailto:VTGuns@aol.com). Evan served selflessly and without calling attention to himself. His days, nights and weekends, miles and meals were all *pro bono publica*, “for the public good”. He worked without remuneration. The cause was always the bigger issue. Our legacy of the right to keep and bear arms was more important to Evan than any inconvenience or expense.

Evan Hughes Patriot’s Voice rang loud and clear:

- “Freedom is not Free”,
- “If you and I don’t do it, who will?”, and
- Vote”,

Evan led from the front with integrity and the courage of his convictions.

“What inspired Evan to dedicate 26 years of his life to protecting our Federal and State Right to Keep and Bear Arms?”

I have the answer. It begins on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1996. Evan was driving from his Barre home to the Barre Fish and Game Club range. The Barre City Police stopped him for a traffic violation. Evan informed the officer that his 10mm Glock – Evan called it “Glockzilla” - was concealed on his right hip. Evan believed that no law prohibited him from peacefully carrying his concealed and loaded handgun. The patrol officer patted Evan down several times before he found Glockzilla. Understandably embarrassed and frustrated, and with what he believed was a violation of the City’s firearms ordinance, the officer arrested and handcuffed Evan and brought him to the police station where “differences of opinion” were exchanged. Without a judicial hearing, Evan was handcuffed, transported to, and incarcerated at, The Vermont State Hospital in Waterbury, built in 1890 as “The Vermont State Asylum for the Insane”. When we drive past this hospital let us think about “red flag laws” and recall Evan’s illegal and unjust incarceration.

For three days, Evan was confined at the hospital, deprived of his liberty and interviewed by a mental health worker and a psychiatrist.

“When you are unjustly deprived of your freedom for three days,” Evan said, “it gives you a lot of time to think about what your liberty means.”

Barre City offered a plea deal to Evan to drop the charges against him of carrying a concealed loaded firearm. This plea would have conveniently put the matter to rest. “Lesson learned”, one might say, “I’m sorry and it won’t happen again...I’ll get on with my life....”.

“No harm? No foul?”

“No way!” said Evan.

Barre City had created a Constitutional monster.

Because of the Dillon Rule, municipalities only have the powers granted to them by the Vermont Legislature. And all parties are constrained on questions of firearms ownership by Chapter 1, Article 16 of the Vermont State Constitution which says, *“That the People have a right to bear arms for the defence (sic) of themselves and the State.”* Barre City did not have the authority to regulate Evan carrying his Glock.

Evan appealed his case to District Court, and all criminal charges against him were dropped. Barre repealed their illegal ordinance after Evan’s successful Vermont District Court challenge. Under challenge, Rutland, Montpelier, and Burlington repealed their similar ordinances. Thanks to Evan Hughes and the work of organizations and Vermont patriots, qualified Vermont adults – that is you and I - can legally and peacefully carry a firearm throughout Vermont for the defense of ourselves and our State.

This is a local story with statewide results. It started with a traffic stop right here in Barre. Evan was imprisoned in Waterbury. Today we pass through Barre, Rutland, Montpelier, and Burlington where their illegal ordinances are repealed.

We are all freer because of Evan Hughes and the organizations and Vermont Patriots who supported him.

At his Presidential Inauguration on January 20, 1961 United States President and NRA member John Fitzgerald Kennedy charged American Patriots with the defense of American Liberty.

Think of Evan, please, as I quote President Kennedy:

*We dare not forget today that we are the heirs of that first revolution. Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans--born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace, proud of our ancient heritage--and unwilling to witness or permit the slow undoing of those human rights to which this nation has always been committed, and to which we are committed today at home and around the world.*

*Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty*

*This much we pledge--and more.*

Evan has passed the bright torch of Liberty to us. We hold it high and move forward.

Evan Hughes Patriot’s Voice rings loud and clear to us tonight:

“Freedom is not Free.”

“If you and I don’t do it, who will?”

“VOTE”

From every mountainside, let Freedom ring!

Thank you, and good-night.