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HBO/CABIN CREEK FILMS

Colin Goddard, a survivor of the Virginia Tech shootings, appears in "Gun Fight," an HBO documentary that presents many arguments in the gun debate.

'I was face-to-face with it on April 16th'

BY TOM JACKMAN

Colin Goddard never intended to become a multimedia star. But he also never guessed, sitting in French class at Virginia Tech one April morning, that he would survive being shot four times by Centreville's Seung Hui Cho.

Of the 17 people in his classroom, 10 died. After Goddard became outspoken about gun control, he was enlisted to be the subject of a 40-minute documentary titled "Living for 32," about the 32 victims of Cho's rampage. At the time of the Virginia Tech shootings in 2007, accomplished documentary filmmaker Barbara Kopple already was focusing on the issue of guns in America. Goddard is now at the center of that 90-minute film, "Gun Fight," which premieres Wednesday night on HBO, three days before the fourth anniversary of the shootings.

It's a remarkable movie because it gives extensive, almost equal, time to gun rights advocates. The film begins in Blacksburg but moves to Northern Virginia, where gun supporters had a free gun raffle at the Mason Government Center in Annandale not long after the shootings — partly in response to New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg's criticism of Virginia's gun laws.

The man who won the raffle is asked by someone at the event what he would say to Mayor Bloomberg. He makes a non-family-friendly gesture with his fist in an upward motion, and the raffle participants roar in approval.

Over the course of Kopple's four years of filming, gun rights advocates won two major Supreme Court victories, striking down gun laws in the District and Chicago. "It's been a great three years," says Alan Gottlieb of the Second Amendment Foundation, smiling broadly at the camera. Pushing forward, Larry Pratt of Gun

THE STATE OF NOVA

A new blog from Post veteran

Longtime Virginia reporter Tom Jackman will be exploring every inch of Northern Virginia in a new blog called the State of NoVa — a place he describes as "flush with every nationality, every religion, every fast-food joint. It's got the high life, in the mansions of the rich and powerful in Great Falls and McLean, the chattering social hives of the giant malls in Fairfax and Prince William, and the large enclaves of Arlington and Annandale where no English is spoken."

You can find the State of NoVa at washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-state-of-nova.

Owners of America tells an interviewer, "There shouldn't be any federal gun control law. The federal government has no authority. There should be no federal jail, there should be no FBI, just OUT."

The other side of the coin is dramatically shown: shooting victims being wheeled into emergency rooms, screaming; 911 calls from people who accidentally shot loved ones; thugs in Philly showing off their "jaws" (guns); the crushed families of Virginia Tech victims.

Meanwhile, Goddard went back to Tech and graduated. (He got a B in that French class.) After another school shooting, at Northern Illinois University, he contacted the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence and offered his services.

Now he makes public appearances around the country, often toting "Living for 32" to show to audiences so he doesn't have to recount the grim story over and over. He paces in the back, watching the audience's reaction. At the Sundance Film Festival, "I got to watch Robert Redford watch the film. That was cool."

He also has testified before Congress, weighing in on the need to close the "gun show loophole" and other gun control matters. He does interviews with reporters. And he listens patiently after each of his public speeches as other victims approach and share their pain.

The psychological blowback from a shooting — not just the victims, but the witnesses and those nearby — is "a tragedy that not a lot of people have talked about," Goddard said. He said one of his French classmates escaped unscathed and staggered up to an officer, asking what to do.

"The cop told him, 'Go home,'" said Goddard. The student kept his anxiety and confusion bottled up until he saw Goddard at a recent speech.

The film raises points that Goddard has heard a number of times. If some students had been armed, gun rights supporters say, Cho would have been stopped sooner. "It was gun control that contributed to the tragedy of Virginia Tech," Pratt says in the film.

"When you're there and a man is pointing a gun at you," Goddard says in the film, "it's an absolutely different thing." The film shows an exercise done by ABC's "20/20," in which armed, trained students were unable to respond to a sudden intruder.

Goddard, who lives on Capitol Hill when he isn't traveling, tries to push on in the face of the mighty NRA and its many well-organized supporters.

"I never expected to get to this level," Goddard said. "This has turned a negative into a positive. . . . I'm much more aware of the system we have in this country, how illegitimate it is, how much of a risk it poses to all of us, and that I was face-to-face with it on April 16th."

"Gun Fight" airs Wednesday at 9:30 p.m. on HBO and will enter the network's On Demand queue on Thursday.

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JOHN KELLY'S WASHINGTON

The Fisher of Men and Cowboy, fleeting partners of the street

The one they call the Fisher of Men had picked up the trumpet again, which meant it was time for Cowboy to stop singing. Besides, Cowboy wanted a smoke, and the Fisher of Men didn't like cigarettes. Whenever he saw Cowboy take a puff, he'd wave his hand back and forth, wafting away imaginary smoke. Cowboy got the message.

He wore a black cowboy hat and a pair of black cowboy boots, the toes tipped in shiny brass. His black shirt had two snap pockets on the front. His pants were black, too.

"That's all I wear: black," he said. He pulled out a raggedy-looking cigarette, tobacco spilling from its end. He lit it and took a drag. "That's been going on for years. No shame in being color coordinated."

He laughed. "They call me 'Cowboy' for some reason."

Three or four days a week, the Fisher of Men sets up a sign that reads "John 3:16" near the replica of the Liberty Bell in front of Union Station. He plays a CD of Christian music through a speaker, sings hymns and blows his horn.

"They call him the Fisher of Men because his name is impossible to pronounce," said Cowboy. "He's Korean."

So you two aren't together? I asked. "Oh, no," said Cowboy. "He just likes the harmony." That's what Cowboy provides. When he knows the words, he stands next to the Fisher of Men and adds his voice in counterpoint to ancient hymns he sang as a child in Springfield, Mass.

"I've been doing it five or six years," said Cowboy.

He's been homeless for 10. "Probably 10 years," he said. "Ten or 15. Time is a general blur if you spend your time inebriated."

You're pretty well dressed for a homeless guy, I said.

"You don't have to look like a refugee. This coat" — he motioned toward a leather jacket at his side — "was \$15 in a thrift store. The pants were \$7. The shirt was about that. There's no excuse for looking the way some people do. Of course, it helps for panhandling. I ask for a dollar, I get a lot of, 'You're dressed better than me.'"

We sat with our backs against the back of the Columbus Fountain, the marble facade of Union Station stretching out in front of us in perfect 16:9 aspect ratio. Cowboy said he's barred from going inside, but there was plenty to see outside on this warm Monday morning: Tourists were hunched over maps. Hill workers scurried to their meetings. School groups swirled about, lanyards swinging from their necks.

I asked the question I wonder about every homeless person I see: How'd you end up on the streets?

"I ought to be honest and say laziness," Cowboy laughed. "But I worked plenty of jobs. I worked at Pratt & Whitney in East Hartford, Connecticut, where they build aircraft engines. This was during the Vietnam War. If I made the part right, Vietnamese died. If I made the part wrong, Americans died. So I drank."

He drank when he worked at GE, too, where he built machine guns.

"I'd wake up feeling good, making excuses: 'I won't be in today, my father died again,'" Cowboy said.

He worked for the post office and as a messenger. No one could tolerate his drinking. So here he was.

I asked Cowboy if he regretted his life. "I built this situation. I have to live with it," he said. "It would be a waste of time going around feeling sorry for myself."

Besides, he had more immediate concerns. Rain was in the forecast, but what time would it start? If it wasn't till Tuesday morning, he'd stay here. Monday night, and he'd go to the New York Avenue shelter.

"That's what's perplexing me now," he said. It was noon. No more hymns to be sung. The Fisher of Men folded up his sign, put his PA speaker on a cart and rolled it away.

It was time for me to go, too. I thanked Cowboy for his time and asked if I could ask his name.

"Glenn Haskins," Cowboy answered.

Reuniting?

Is your Washington area school having a reunion? Of course it is — eventually. But if yours happens to be in the next year, send me the details so I can list them in an upcoming column. Send an e-mail to kellyj@washpost.com. Put "Reunion" in the subject line.

kellyj@washpost.com

"Strap the drivers down and stick a needle in their vein. That's the American way of doing things."

— Reader [glenmayne](#), commenting on an item reporting that drunken driving arrests are down in the District and that the city still lacks some basic tools for catching drunk drivers.

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Virginia politics

Cuccinelli: Guns can be carried in church

BY ROSALIND S. HELDERMAN

Virginians may carry weapons for personal protection into places of worship while religious services are being conducted, according to a legal opinion from Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli II.

Virginia law bars carrying weapons in churches and other worship houses while a religious meeting is being held unless a person has "good and sufficient reason."

In an opinion written Friday and posted on his Web site Monday, Cuccinelli (R) indicates that the "right of self-defense lies at the heart of the right to keep and bear arms." Therefore, he concludes, "carrying a weapon for personal protection constitutes a good and sufficient reason under the statute."

But places of worship can choose to restrict or bar weapons if they wish, wrote Cuccinelli, indicating that churches, synagogues, mosques and other institutions have a private property right to set gun rules.

The legal opinion comes in response to an inquiry from Del. Mark L. Cole (R-Fredericksburg), who sponsored an unsuccessful bill last year to make it legal for a concealed weapons permit holder to carry a handgun in a place of worship during religious services with the permission of a religious leader.

If widely followed, Cuccinelli's ruling would have

the same effect — opening places of worship to weapons unless they are barred by the religious institution.

Cuccinelli's opinion is only advisory and does not carry the force of law.

Even so, it incensed gun-control groups, who noted that the General Assembly did not act on Cole's proposal last year.

"This is another example of the gun lobby overreaching and furthering their main agenda, which is to allow any gun, anywhere, at any time," said Lori Haas, of Virginians for Responsible Gun Laws. "Right now, places of worship are not concerned about persons bringing firearms into their buildings. Now they will have to be concerned about it. They have to have a proactive policy to prevent it."

But Philip Van Cleave, president of the Virginia Citizens Defense League, a gun-rights group, called the opinion a "reasonable and fair" ruling that would clarify a vague statute.

Van Cleave said he carries a weapon in church on the assumption that self-defense would qualify as a "good and sufficient reason" under state law.

"I think this will put a lot of people's minds at ease," he said.

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THE DAILY QUIZ

True or False?: Henry Nicholl's article on page E6 of the Health and Science section states that "Fossils recently unearthed in China show that the steppe mammoth evolved there about 1.7 million years ago and gradually spread out across the Northern Hemisphere, replacing earlier forms."

EARN 5 POINTS: Find the answer, then go to washingtonpost.com/postpoints and click on "Quizzes" to enter the correct response.



POINTS EVENTS

Volunteer for Servathon

On April 15 & 16, Greater DC Cares will mobilize more than 8,000 volunteers in meaningful service projects at schools and nonprofits throughout DC, Virginia and Maryland. It's called Servathon—learn how you can be part of this successful tradition! Email volunteer@greaterdccc.org, or call 202-777-4441.

POINTS & REWARDS

Giant Food: Enjoy the best in new spring vegetables and flowers now at your neighborhood Giant store.

Royal Caribbean International: An ocean cruise is a great opportunity to experience some of the world's most incredible destinations. See royalcaribbean.com.

The Washington Ballet: The 2011-12 season presents riveting adaptations of beloved works that will leave you spellbound! Learn more at washingtonballet.org.

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