

Guns

Paul grew up with guns. Not in his home, but on he saw plenty on TV and in movies. Guns in the hands of good guys and bad. Handguns, automatic weapons, sniper rifles. Paul knew what an Uzi looked like by the time he was fourteen, though he'd never seen one in real life. His real life had no guns.

In his twenties, he purchased a lever action rifle, as he'd seen in westerns, to finally touch a gun. He never fired it, played with it shooting imaginary bad guys—the lever action was cool—then put it in a closet and forgot about it. He saw no sport in shooting living creatures but did respect those who hunted for food. Through most of his life, shootings of people were rare (outside of war.) Guns were for entertainment and people getting food.

But times had changed. The other day, a man drove into a church, shot people inside and set it on fire. His last use of his gun was on himself. When Paul was seven, every weekday morning he walked ten city blocks to school by himself, feeling perfectly safe (he later learned he'd grown up in the worst gang section of Brooklyn.) Never saw or heard a gun in real life. That was then. Now, people walked into schools and shot children.

Paul was outraged. How had his nation been assaulted by violence, by the hate which led to violence? Guns could be purchased by almost anyone. How could they be kept from the hands of those with tragedy on their brains, often ending by shooting themselves? The sole practical solution Paul came up with was to make gunpowder inert so bullets could not be fired. Not an easy task, unless you are a chemicalgeologicalopportunist (an unusual profession, to be sure.) Paul created a device which, using cell towers, blanketed the nation. The invisible waves instantly made all bullets duds.

The result? More tragedies caused by cars and trucks driving into people. Cars became the new guns. Then lawnmowers. Then skateboards.

Although Paul was profoundly dismayed, and saw nothing further he could do, he did appreciate the ingenuity. As for the continuing violence, he sought solutions while staying at home as much as possible. Unfortunately, one day he had to go to the supermarket when deliveries were unavailable.