

# Making a Difference



*By Genie Jennings,  
Contributing Editor*

Several years ago on the night before a 5-day ski training week, I received an email from the campaign manager for the first candidate to whom I devoted my time, energy, and allegiance. "Check out my Facebook page," it read. I assumed his Facebook page concerned the campaign, and dutifully followed the link.

It was not as simple as "checking it out." First, I was required to register with Facebook. Until that moment I had eschewed social media. After I had jumped through all the hoops and supplied, reluctantly, all the required information, I "checked out" his page, only to find pictures of kids, and anecdotes about the day and his family. Since then I have figured out that most likely he had not personally emailed me, but, rather, it was Facebook raiding his email address book and notifying all his contacts.

A bit perplexed at the time, I left Facebook and returned to my

## World Wide Web

email, only to find a message that "Laura wants to be friends." Laura was the actual real-life friend with whom I had ridden to Vermont for the training. She was staying in the room directly across the hall from mine. However, I confirmed that I wanted to be friends, and Laura and I exchanged some innocuous chatter on Facebook. Back to email, where I learned that another real-life friend wanted to be friends on Facebook. It was rather fun; a little pajama party somewhere in the ether.

Regardless of the talks with my ski buddies, I determined immediately that Facebook was primarily a political asset, most particularly a place to promote Second Amendment issues. We can connect with people all across the country, and all across the globe.

Very early I realized that my "friends" needed separation. Over the years I had come to the understanding that although I might completely and emphatically agree about some fundamental issues with people, we could still be miles apart on other beliefs. There are myriad examples of this phenomenon, but I continued to fight the reality. To be successful in enlisting the most allies, I learned to restrict discussions

to those things on which we agreed, and avoid the issues on which we did not.

I was a bit slow in putting my separation rule into effect on Facebook. I took what I thought was a sufficient precaution of warning people I knew in the real world, that I was quite political and would be crushed if they "unfriended" me. This was not enough. Despite the warnings, I did lose friends. Some of them are truly lost, not just no longer on my social media feed. They were offended at some of my views; I found their necessity of "unfriending" to be completely anathema to the open-mindedness I would expect amongst reasonable adults. (Despite the fact that we were communicating on a site that is reminiscent of junior high.)

So far I have been very pleased with this foray into what is a part of the "new media." There is an opportunity to discuss events and issues with people throughout the world. It is most comfortable to collect like-minded individuals with whom to correspond, but it is also possible to insert my point of view into discussions among those who hold the opposite views. The beauty of this form of conversation is that there is no face-to-face aspect. While it is

possible to have instant chats with back-and-forth that is immediate, it is not essential. Just as with emails, participants do not have to be involved at the same time. There is no physical confrontation.

It is important to remember that the internet is forever. Obviously, not really. Someday there will be something different and this form of information exchange will be as obsolete as the telegraph, and probably as impossible to retrieve as the tapes we once

about being contacted by perfect strangers...for who knows how "perfect" they are.

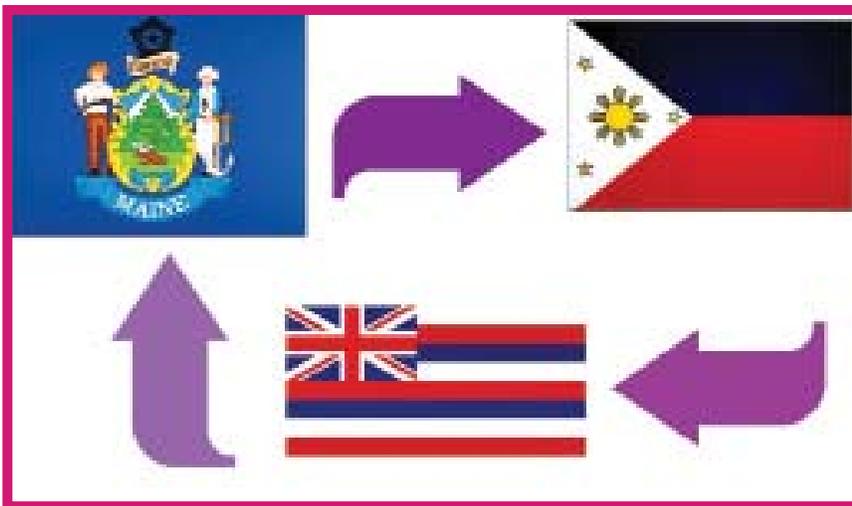
One of the ways people find "friends" is to go to people's pages and look through the list of their friends. I had a request years ago from Mike Melchor who lives in the Philippines. We had four "friends" in common: Larry Pratt and Alan Gura among them.

Over a long period of time we corresponded about what was happening in our countries

They worked together to create legislation that was ultimately accepted. The Philippines now has constitutional protection for the right to keep and bear arms.

The World Wide Web is, indeed, worldwide. The influence we have can be international. My part? Not even a catalyst. Happily, someone chose to ask me a question I could answer. Mike, Sam and countless others in the Philippines did the work. I am so proud of the men who work to make life good for women with guns!

W&G



**Genie Jennings connected via Facebook with Mike Melchor in the Philippines. She connected him with Hawaii State Sen. Sam Slom—and they drafted a constitutional protection to keep and bear arms for the Philippines.**

used. However, in a real sense it is forever enough. Anything shared can be collected by anyone, friend or foe.

The polar opposite of losing friends one knows in real life, is gaining "friends" in the unreality of virtual life. People we do not know decide to read our posts. To an extent this was exactly why I chose to use social media: to get my thoughts concerning what is happening in the country and world out to as many people as possible. However, there is something slightly disconcerting

concerning gun rights. Then, Mike asked me if I could help him draft a "Second Amendment" for the Philippine Constitution. This was outside my area of competence. But I knew just the person who would be able to help. Senator Sam Slom of Hawaii is not only someone who has worked diligently to bolster his state's right to keep and bear arms, he is someone who would be cognizant of the particular mores and concerns of another island nation.

After talking to the Senator, I connected the two men.

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