

00:00;19;27 - 00:00;44;13

Stephen Gutowski

All right. Welcome, ladies and gentlemen, to another episode of the Weekly Reload podcast. I'm your host, Stephen Gutowski. I'm also a CNN contributor and the founder of TheReload.com, where you can head over and sign up today if you want to keep up to date with what's going on with guns in America. From a sober, serious perspective focused on reporting and analysis over hot air and opinion, so head over to TheReload.com.

00:00;44;13 - 00:01;04;21

Stephen Gutowski

Sign up for our free weekly newsletter if you're interested, and find out more about that. This week on the show we are going to be talking with, and I'm pretty excited for this up. To be honest with you, this is something I've been talking about for quite a long time. In our industry, in the journalism industry, but we're going to be talking with, gang culture reporter from the New York Times, Thomas Gibbons-Neff, about his new gun beat.

00:01;04;21 - 00:01;08;11

Stephen Gutowski

Welcome to the show, Thomas. Thank you so much for joining us.

00:01;08;13 - 00:01;11;22

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

Yeah, thanks for having me on. Excited to be here. Yeah.

00:01;11;25 - 00:01;17;22

Stephen Gutowski

Can you just start off by giving people a little bit more background on who you are? For anyone who who may not have heard of you before.

00:01;17;25 - 00:01;46;25

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

Yeah, sure. So, I got into journalism around, like, 2014, 2015. I worked for the Washington Post and for the New York Times. Covered, the Pentagon, the US military for a bit. And then I was a, Afghan correspondent and the travel bureau chief for the New York Times and, after that, I cover the war in Ukraine on and off for two years, then just started this beat in, recent months.

00:01;46;28 - 00:02;08;08

Stephen Gutowski

All right. Wonderful. And, you know, I'd be honest with you, you've been highlighting some of your work here at The Reload. In recent weeks, when we've seen some of these pieces you've been, putting out, because I think they're quality pieces and they're. It's something a little different, I think, from New York Times, at least in terms of, approach and focus.

00:02;08;11 - 00:02;40;01

Stephen Gutowski

And really not just the New York Times, but, the journalism industry altogether in major papers don't have gun beat reporters, something I've complained about for, three years, in fact, this this time magazine cover I was on in 2019 with, with lots of other people. They interviewed us for that. And that was one of my things I was talking, I was like, I would like to see the industry, approach guns is more than just, you know, mass shootings, which is where you get most of your, your coverage, from major media outlets.

00:02;40;01 - 00:03;00;02

Stephen Gutowski

And I mean, this that feels like what, maybe some of that is coming to fruition or we're seeing, some increased reporting that in your work is is definitely part of that. Can you just, let well, just take us through a couple of the pieces you've

done now that you've started to speak, because you've got a couple out there that people can, can actually look at and judge for themselves, right?

00;03;00;05 - 00;03;20;26

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

Sure. Yeah. So, I mean, I think the first thing I wrote was kind of an essay about, my relationship with firearms. Before I became a journalist, before I went to college, I was, in the Marine Corps for four years. I was an enlisted infantryman. I did two deployments, Afghanistan. And I grew up shooting before that.

00;03;20;29 - 00;03;48;24

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

And I think, you know, obviously deploying in, overseas, fighting in a war and, you know, I guess partaking in violence, you know, you kind of, you know, you do, I guess, see the other side of, you know, the capabilities of of a firearm or a rifle when it's, you know, not just shooting, steel and paper.

00;03;48;27 - 00;04;14;26

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

And, you know, after that, going into journalism and then covering conflicts as a reporter and then, you know, being a noncombatant without having a, a rifle or any way to defend yourself other than your mobility, and then kind of seeing, you know, watching from the side as people killed each other, with, with firearms and of course, bigger weapons.

00;04;14;28 - 00;04;45;02

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

So, so yeah, that was, that was kind of the first essay. And then I wrote, about gun tubers and I wrote, recently about rooftop defense, the kind of the new American gun store. I mean, you know, the approach to the beat. I pitched it to the to the to the masthead, to the head shed, because I was coming out of, Ukraine, and I think I was a little freaked out from, from covering, stuff that I think, you know, had really, I think, put my head through the wringer.

00;04;45;04 - 00;04;47;22

Stephen Gutowski

At difficult topics, for sure, you know?

00;04;47;23 - 00;05;17;16

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

Yeah. I mean, it was it was just a, just a, a lot, just kind of being, like, activated, nonstop. And so, but I still wanted to contribute to kind of the report because I felt, you know, one of the reasons I was covering, you know, Ukraine in Afghanistan, I did in Afghanistan, and I kind of knew knew my way around, those situations in the sense of, you know, being in danger and how to navigate, that to an extent, a lot of my colleagues and.

00;05;17;16 - 00;05;48;22

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

Yeah, so wanted to contribute to the report. So I thought maybe my, my background, I guess really, you know, I've got tattoos. I've owned a gun, I own a gun. And so I thought, you know, maybe maybe this, this, but. And. Yeah. And I'm, I'm, I'm just starting out on the beat and, you know, my, I guess general idea for, for approaching it is really, you know, I think we were talking, you know, before how many, gun owners there are in America.

00;05;48;29 - 00;06;11;24

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

And anyway that you can, you can humanize just a population that is so easily, you know, othered or put at arm's length because, you know, whether people are afraid of firearms or having grown up around them. And I think, you know, a lot of that is New York Times subscriber base who probably doesn't have as past experience, with firearms as, you know, good portions of the country.

00;06;11;27 - 00;06;37;19

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

And, and much like a foreign correspondent, like, you want to write stories from these places that you might as well be like reporting on the moon. You know, southern Afghanistan is not a place many Americans have been to, but you're trying to tell a story and bring people there and let them kind of, you know, experience that. So the first time, but also kind of understand where, you know, these ideas other cultures are coming from and experiencing themselves.

00;06;37;22 - 00;06;47;12

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

So I thought, you know, that would be a kind of a good, good baseline to start, covering and culture.

00;06;47;12 - 00;07;07;19

Stephen Gutowski

Yes. Yeah. So you so you had obviously a background experience with firearms. You're knowledgeable about firearms. You know, at least to a, to a certain degree. Right. Like you more so than probably most reporters, to be frank. And, which makes sense that that would, set you up to be able to do a bit about firearms.

00;07;07;19 - 00;07;40;00

Stephen Gutowski

And I think it is interesting. You know, to, you know, especially talk about it at The New York Times, which has, you know, an editorial stance that is for further gun restrictions, if not outright bans, oftentimes on, you know, a lot of different kinds of firearms. And then, yeah, like, it has a readership that is leans left and favors more gun restrictions in large, you know, generally speaking, and it's so it's interesting to see, you know, that analogy you use, I think is a really good one.

00;07;40;02 - 00;08;03;15

Stephen Gutowski

In terms of like your average New York Times reader may not or even editor reporter may not have a very good grasp of why people own guns or, or, you know, feel the way that they do about firearms ownership in other parts of the country. Or, you know, not that nobody owns guns in New York, but it's a less common, thing there.

00;08;03;15 - 00;08;22;14

Stephen Gutowski

And, you know, it's it's interesting. So how did that conversation go with, you know, your leadership at the times, like, what was the why did they decide that this was something that would be valuable? Because, you know, obviously, first of all, it's not the only thing you've been doing. Right. You have some other pieces that you've written, even when you've been on this beat.

00;08;22;16 - 00;08;40;02

Stephen Gutowski

And it's not something that the times is traditionally dedicated resources to in this way. So, you know, what was it that maybe change the, you convinced them? I guess, if you brought this to them, what? Why do you think. What did they say? That it was okay, that's. This is a good idea.

00;08;40;04 - 00;09;20;07

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

I mean, the national editor, Jillian. And she, you know, said she'd been looking for someone to kind of. So that so that position were, you know, had wanted more, more storage or coverage on it. And I think, you know, since, being on the beat, you know, the editors have been really, encouraging as far as the kind of story that I've pitched in, in kind of the room that I have to, to land them, you know, no matter how much time that that might take, because I think a huge part, you know, we talked about, being your time's kind of having that that reputation and especially when you're trying to

00;09;20;09 - 00;09;37;12

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

dive into different aspects of, you know, American gun culture, there's a big hesitance. You know, there's really no

reason to talk to The New York Times if you know, you're Daniel DeSantis or BCM or you know who really whoever, because, you know, it's there.

00;09;37;12 - 00;09;39;00

Stephen Gutowski

A lot of distrust among.

00;09;39;02 - 00;10;03;10

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

You know, a lot of distrust. Yeah. And I think, you know, when we talked about kind of writing a story for the subscriber base, I also want to write for, you know, the gun owning community, who might learn something or at least, you know, take something else away from, from the stories that we end up writing. So it's not just kind of it's educational for, for, you know, for, both sides.

00;10;03;10 - 00;10;15;18

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

I think on the gun tube story, I think I saw something like, forum where it was like, oh, the New York Times is just discovering done to, you know, like 15 years later or something, which, yeah, I guess fair.

00;10;15;18 - 00;10;37;28

Stephen Gutowski

But we've, we've heard you guys a little bit about that, to be honest to, to read like, yeah, they do it. And we did these stories, you know, 4 or 5 years ago. But I do, you know, it's still good to see you guys doing them, in the way that you have done them. Right. Because I think the approach is important because, like you said, you know, there's a thought towards the audience that is the primary audience of The New York Times.

00;10;37;28 - 00;11;12;16

Stephen Gutowski

But it's not like you're you're writing just for them to read. Write like The New York Times is the most prominent newspaper in the entire world. And, you're going to get a lot of audience that isn't just subscribers, you know? And, I feel like you want your work so far has, done a good job of, you know, finding people, real people, and then just kind of explaining their, their worldview to, to others, in a way that that's fair, you know, that that's that's how it's come across to me, at least.

00;11;12;16 - 00;11;32;29

Stephen Gutowski

You know, I've read the stories and I've thought, okay, this is, you know, you went out and found people who are doing often interesting things. I mean, rooftop defense, that's an interesting story that, you know, even a lot of your, traditional gun owners might not know about, and certainly breaks a lot of the stereotypes that people have in their mind of Latin American countries.

00;11;33;01 - 00;11;51;00

Stephen Gutowski

And, and it just tells the story of the, the owner of that store and some of the other people in that space. And, which is, I think what reporters should do. Right. And simple. But it, you know, I don't that's why I feel like you're doing an apt description.

00;11;51;03 - 00;12;14;26

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

Yeah. I mean, I again, I think it's great whenever you write a story, whether you're writing about, you know, Ukraine or Afghanistan or, you know, any subject like, you know, it's up to the reporter and I guess editors to an extent, to kind of determine, like, what lens you're, you're approaching the story from, you know, it's it's like you always want to straighten, right, objectively.

00;12;14;29 - 00;12;40;06

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

And, you know, honestly, and I think with, covering especially guns in America, I mean, I think, you know, I haven't written that many stories. I'm sure I will, you know, stumble or mess some things up down the road. But I think, you know, the idea is just really to, you know, don't treat the audience like they're stupid.

00;12;40;06 - 00;13;04;18

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

I mean, they know, you know, the prevalence of, you know, like, they AR 15 are used to mass shootings. Like, we don't need to say that, you know, every time we talk about this very popular, firearm. Right? It's like you don't you don't need to hit the reader over the head with, you know, kind of, I guess I would call them side quests or, you know, speed bumps of of throat clearing.

00;13;04;20 - 00;13;31;03

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

Because I'd much rather spend those words because I have a limited amount, limited space on the actual story. You know, so, so something you can kind of engage with. And of course, they'll definitely be stories where that that is important. Right? You know, I've been focusing on my culture. I'm sure, you know, in the future, there will be another mass shooting that I'll cover and that'll be, you know, violence and crime will be a big part of of writing about firearms.

00;13;31;03 - 00;13;49;02

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

So it's just kind of how it goes. And I think, I think that's hopefully what I bring to the table is kind of wanting to humanize, but also understanding on the back side, you know, that what these things can be, what these tools, weapons, firearms can be used for and what can kind of happen on the back end.

00;13;49;05 - 00;14;14;28

Stephen Gutowski

Sure, sure. And, you know, it's interesting to me because I'm, I approach this has always been, reporters don't most reporters are good reporters. They don't want to misinform their audience. They don't want to mislead people. They don't want to propagandize to them. And the problem with firearms reporting, in my view, oftentimes stems from a lack of, of knowledge and understanding.

00;14;14;28 - 00;14;39;13

Stephen Gutowski

And that really comes from, you know, even much more so than, you know, political bias. And, and that tends to stem from the fact that we just don't have a lot of beat reporters who focus on this issue. You know, you can come from, a paper that that is even, you know, openly left leaning paper or even more, much more so than the New York Times, you know, like the Mother Jones or something like that.

00;14;39;13 - 00;14;59;02

Stephen Gutowski

And, you could still be a good firearms reporter, if this is what you focus on. Is your job right? The Guardian has done this, over the years in the United States, with, with several different, beat reporters, including Avenue Clinton is their their latest one, but, you know, you just have a because you're reporting on it more often.

00;14;59;04 - 00;15;24;21

Stephen Gutowski

You get, a base level understanding of the issue that most reporters don't have. And to me, that's always been one of the major problems is the industry has just focused on this, this small sliver, the most sensational type of firearms violence, which is mass shootings. Right. And understandably so, given how shocking they are, and how much people pay attention to them.

00;15;24;23 - 00;15;48;02

Stephen Gutowski

But, you know, that's obviously a very small that's really even a small part of the story around criminal gun violence in the United States. Right. And then violence is a very small story. As part of the larger, story of guns in America. Like, there's so much more going on with guns than just how people use them for violence.

00;15;48;04 - 00;16;06;05

Stephen Gutowski

That just doesn't get any attention on any consistent basis. And so it's hard for a reporter who is probably doing general assignment stuff. They're doing all kinds of different stories there. You know, a mile wide, an inch deep on all kinds of stuff and that, you know, that that's a town of its own to, to some degree.

00;16;06;05 - 00;16;35;10

Stephen Gutowski

But oftentimes they're just coming in to write about firearms when a mass shooting happens, they don't have any sort of special they don't really have the tools, the knowledge necessary to do it properly. And that leads to a lot of basic mistakes that destroys reader trust. And so, you know, even if I don't know what your beliefs are outside of what I've read from your piece on firearms and the politics of it or anything like that, maybe we would disagree personally on those things.

00;16;35;10 - 00;16;57;00

Stephen Gutowski

But, I would have more trust in your reporting that you're going to do on this because it's something you're going to focus on a lot more and have a better understanding of than your average reporter. And I, I've kind of gone off into a little bit of a monologue here just because it's something I've been talking about forever.

00;16;57;03 - 00;17;27;15

Stephen Gutowski

And it's it's interesting to see a major paper finally do something like this. But, you know, I don't know what is your view of, I guess, media approach to firearms, especially major media outlets up to this point? Like, do you think that this I mean, I would imagine the answer is yes, because you're doing gun bait now, but I mean, is that when you see the failings or the mistakes made in and major media pieces on guns, where do you think the, the problem flows from?

00;17;27;15 - 00;17;35;18

Stephen Gutowski

Because my again, my, my opinion I guess is, it flows from a lack of knowledge or a lack of focus on this topic.

00;17;35;21 - 00;17;55;27

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

Yeah. I mean, I think listening listening to what you're saying, I mean, and I kind of said this and that essay I wrote a few months ago, but, you know, it really comes down to resources, right? I think, you know, I think the times has wanted or been open to covering, kind of this, this part of it or my, my, my views specifically, but.

00;17;55;27 - 00;18;23;11

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

Right. You know, the other stuff, the crime, you know, legal action, what have you, mass shootings that that takes up a lot of the bandwidth. So I feel very fortunate to kind of be at an institution where, you know, I have, that leeway to really kind of focus on, on what I'm focusing on. And I think, yeah, I mean, I, I don't know, you know, it's there's like that.

00;18;23;11 - 00;18;44;09

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

But I mean, I'm thinking back to the Washington Post when I work there and you covered covered the Orlando shooting and San Bernardino, right where it's, you know, the pace of the news. And, you know, if the police are wrong and you amplified what the police are saying and it turns out right, you know, like what the, Orlando shooter used a mix, right?

00;18;44;09 - 00;19;08;00

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

Which I think is a piston gun and, you know, not not gas impingement like an AR 15. And that just kind of turned into this, this whole thing with getting email like angry emails from readers, you know, because, you know, we wanted to, like, generalize and demonize the AR 15 when it was in the air for team. But, you know, like pretty you know, you could argue for days like the mixes are 15 style platform.

00;19;08;00 - 00;19;28;12

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

And I think even today I the language has changed so much where air 15 style you know went from like a AR 15, AR 15 style. You know, it's kind of moved along with, you know, that response because that was yeah, I think in the past years it's it was an easy way to lose trust or at least authority.

00;19;28;15 - 00;19;29;22

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

And.

00;19;29;24 - 00;19;50;02

Stephen Gutowski

How much, I guess, on that front, how much do you put into making sure you get terminology correct? Because I will say, like, there are, you know, certainly if you get very basic, there's very basic terms that if you get them wrong, you're going to lose trust and you're going to deserve to lose. Just like if you don't understand the difference between semi-automatic and fully automatic, something simple like that.

00;19;50;05 - 00;20;13;05

Stephen Gutowski

Or if you make very common mistake that magazine versus clip. Right. There's some of these things that, where it's pretty clear cut that you're just wrong and you just and it's a signal that you don't know what you're talking about. Right. But there's a lot of other things where, where it's kind of, you know, there's a open about this person center.

00;20;13;08 - 00;20;39;23

Stephen Gutowski

Right. Silencer. That is the, the technically the statute term that the federal government uses that the ATF uses. It's what the inventor called them. His company was called silencer co. Hiram piercing Maxim. The most popular company today is called Silencer Co. That that still makes them. And, but at the same time, most people don't like that term in the gun world because it's it's misleading.

00;20;39;28 - 00;21;04;18

Stephen Gutowski

Right. The gun silencers don't actually silence firearm shots. They reduce their sound. So most people call them sound suppressors. And that can be something that you get in fights over similar with what you're talking about with AR 15 applying to and MKS, which is isn't technically on the AR 15, it is air 15 style is sort of you get into it.

00;21;04;18 - 00;21;44;04

Stephen Gutowski

There's a lot of, mealy mouth terms, right? Like assault weapons, just tossing style on to the end of some something. People tend to do that and, and yeah, I don't know if that fixes things, but I'm just interested in your, like, how when you go to write a story and there's going to be some technical terms in there and you have to like I use silencer in recording and I put in, hey, you know, there might be some caveat in the written piece that says, they don't really sense guns or they're more or more accurately called suppressors, but I'll use sounds because most people understand it's not really technically wrong.

00;21;44;07 - 00;21;46;00

Stephen Gutowski  
What's your approach to it?

00;21;46;03 - 00;22;07;29

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

Yeah. I mean, to me, having covered the military and, and now in this field, I think, you know, terminology is extremely important because that is the first, you know, first place you can get written off. I was like a serious, reporter on a subject. So I think that, I mean, really being spot on that, you know, I think in the rooftop defense.

00;22;07;29 - 00;22;31;26

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

Right? I said silencer or suppressor, right. I got both because right at the ATF, you know, like I said, legal term silencer, but it is a suppressor doesn't silence. Firearms. I mean, I think it's a you want to get the, absolutely right to a point. I mean, again, you have limited space so you can't spend, you know, 50 or 200 words trying to get into the nuance.

00;22;31;26 - 00;22;46;17

Stephen Gutowski

But it is something that you recognize the importance of making sure that you're getting at least the very basic stuff. Right? And even maybe, you know, as you said, with the Science or Suppressor, you might even put in, both terms just to show that you understand them, I guess.

00;22;46;20 - 00;23;07;12

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

Yeah. No, I mean, I think in talking about, the rooftop defense story, you know, saw selling, 40 millimeter grenade launchers, right? It's, you know, there's the barrel and the receiver. Those are two separate things. And, you know, how they attach to the rifle, whether it's the barrel or the handguard, you know, just Jordan, it's like, well, they attach the rifle like I'm not going to go down go down that range.

00;23;07;14 - 00;23;09;04

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

Right. It's perfect for that reason.

00;23;09;04 - 00;23;33;14

Stephen Gutowski

So and you know, it is to you brought up like another reason I think it's important that we look like one. You want to have credibility with your audience, but also you can avoid, repeating false information, right? Like, for instance, the, the the UnitedHealthCare assassination. Right. The police came out and they were saying, oh, it's it's, this well, rod replica of this point.

00;23;33;19 - 00;23;46;06

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

It was like one New York Times detective who didn't even know what the, or not, New York Times, NYPD, and the NYPD detective who kind of didn't know what the firearm was, which is, like, speculated and just said just.

00;23;46;06 - 00;24;06;06

Stephen Gutowski

When and I and this was something that I, you know, at CNN and, and I've been lucky with CNN and I think they've, they've been very, good good to me and, and they've come to me for, you know, whenever they have sort of technical questions like this, and we can do really good segments where I'm explaining, you know, various points.

00;24;06;06 - 00;24;37;18

Stephen Gutowski

And that was this was one of them where it's like, okay, the police said this thing and a lot of reporters instincts is just, well, the police said it, so it must, you know, they must know something or they must have good reason to say that that's



not always the case. Right. There there's a very strong assumption, I think, in media across the board that if somebody in law enforcement says something about a gun or somebody who's former military says something about a gun, they must know what they're talking about, because firearms are associated with law enforcement and military and that's and certainly for good reason.

00:24:37;21 - 00:25:02;26

Stephen Gutowski

But that can get you in a lot of trouble, because it's not always true. You know, not every law enforcement officer or military veteran or even generals or what have, you know, that much about firearms. You know, like they're not all experts on firearms. And so this was a good example of that, where some of my you guys speculated, and I understand why you did, given the the silhouette of the gun when you saw it on the video.

00:25:02;29 - 00:25:29;03

Stephen Gutowski

But one thing you can see from the video is that it was a semiautomatic firearm. And there's those, well, rods in the replicas, not in replicas. They're not semiautomatic. And so it could not have been that gun. And this is something I had to, like, vehemently explain this, say, do not repeat this or like, let me go on and explain why that can't be what he's talking about and why it has to be some kind of some and that, you know, turn out to be right when they recovered the firearm.

00:25:29;03 - 00:25:48;02

Stephen Gutowski

But, but, you know, it's an example of like where even beyond just serving your audience, that's and that's a service to your audience, right, to not just take whatever an official says at face value because they might they may be wrong. And, you know, if you can show that they're not correct using evidence, you should do that.

00:25:48;05 - 00:25:54;25

Stephen Gutowski

But it's just an example of why being knowledgeable on the topic matters. Right?

00:25:54;28 - 00:26:31;02

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

And I think the again, like the most public and high profile events where, you know, whether it's the, well, right, or 3D printed, Glock 19, that's what everyone's looking at. So if you misstep in those initial hours or days, right, you could write a million spot on stories about the same topic. But since you've, the well, rod thing was, you know, it was covered over, you know, mainstream media coverage throughout, throughout the entire.

00:26:31;04 - 00:26:56;09

Stephen Gutowski

Newsstand. And I saw people made fun of, reporters for repeating that, you know, in gun spaces. I saw a lot of that, because it's like, well, it obviously wasn't this thing because it couldn't have been physically. And, and that's why, you know, that. And that's something that helps keep your credibility there. Speaking of which, you know, obviously, you know, I'm talking I'm talking about being on CNN and you're New York Times reporter.

00:26:56;11 - 00:27:20;11

Stephen Gutowski

There's there's a clear, as you mentioned earlier, distrust of major media among gun owners, gun businesses and how, you know, how do you approach, you know, winning their, trust to, to do stories on them, like, how is that going so far? What are, you know, how do you show someone that you're not trying and you're not there trying to screw them over, you know, because that's a common concern that you're running too, right?

00:27:20;13 - 00:27:47;26

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

Yeah. For sure. I think that's I'm still trying to figure that out. Right. It's being upfront with what you're trying to cover. I

mean, my I think my background certainly has helped. And I have a few stories under my belt that I could show, whether it's that essay or the gun tube story or, you know, rooftop defense, just kind of this idea of, hey, this is my approach.

00:27:47;26 - 00:28;15;24

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

Take a look. If this this fits or it doesn't. But again, I think that only goes so far because. Right, you look at people in the gun space, gun companies like having the fire, having the New York Times attached to your name is like a negative effect, right. Like it's it shows like, well, oh, you're talking to New York Times like you must be, you know, behind editorial stance and in some way, shape or form or something like that.

00:28;15;24 - 00:28;38;17

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

So I think that it has a, it has a, has a a wall or a ceiling. But I think it in time. Most people I think are, in the case of Saul for for movies that fans, he just thought it was his, you know, place to speak up for his community for, you know, for representing gun owners in the way that he did.

00:28;38;19 - 00:28;49;22

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

And I think there is that, that push and pull, when it comes down to it and trying to find the people who kind of have that and that, yeah, mantra, I guess.

00:28;49;25 - 00:29;13;17

Stephen Gutowski

Yeah, yeah. And then on the other side, I mean, I assume you get pushed back the other way from readers or from, you know, people who would expect The New York Times to, you know, cover the story in a different way than you've done. You know, how do you try to minimize that? You know, like when you get critical feedback, that you weren't tough enough on somebody in the gun industry or what have you, you know, how do you.

00:29;13;20 - 00:29;43;04

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

Think that's going to be expected? And I think at the end of the day, it comes down to just education, right? I mean, they might it might be something in a comment or feelers feels about or that's how I, you know, get an email and it's structured in a way that I've you're always going to miss something. And with limited space, you know, if you try to get everything you can, into a story and it's almost never, you know, oh, you always want more words or more time.

00:29;43;06 - 00:30;06;17

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

So at the end of the day, I just hope for the New York Times subscribers or the people who are not, are coming from the non gun owning or non Delaware community that they, they empathize a little more or learn a little more about, a culture they don't have a lot of experience with.

00:30;06;19 - 00:30;25;12

Stephen Gutowski

Absolutely. And when we started this, this conversation, you describe yourself as like a gun culture reporter. Can you just like give me a little more insight into how you view the what your beat is because that, I mean, you know, gun culture is just I mean, it's fairly expansive term, right? You could cover a lot of things.

00:30;25;12 - 00:30;45;11

Stephen Gutowski

And then your last piece dealt with gun business as a, as part of a cultural. Well, you know, through a cultural frame. And, and frankly, I thought you did a pretty good job of like actually having an understanding of the gun business, how gun companies actually, you know, how the industry works and that, like, guns themselves are not very profitable.

00:30:45;13 - 00:31:08;29

Stephen Gutowski

Most of these dealers are making money off of accessories. Or, you know, interestingly, you got into kind of drop culture, you know, sort of similar to shoes, collectibles and stuff, but, you know, but when you go and think of, what, what am I going to cover this week or next week? In my on my gun, what are the types of stories that you're looking for?

00:31:08;29 - 00:31:10;18

Stephen Gutowski

It's.

00:31:10;21 - 00:31:43;02

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

Yeah. I mean, I think, like, guns are just another vehicle to talk about, like, tons of aspects of American culture, right? Whether it's like the first day of deer season in some places, meaning it's like the day of school off right? And how, like, deer season can shape a community or a gun factory can influence how a town grows around it or, you know, boners and how cloning, rifles from the guy.

00:31:43;04 - 00:32:21;17

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

It's another way to connect with history. I mean, it can really be like anything. And in, in a sense, and I think, you know, right now, as they stumble around trying to figure out what, what stories I'm doing, it's it's really just, you know, throwing spaghetti at a wall and seeing what sticks and who wants to talk and trying to build it out in a way where I get to go see the thing and do or do the thing and learn about these different communities that have formed around firearms and in the United States, and then write about it the best I can.

00:32:21;17 - 00:33:00;16

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

But, the last thing I want to do is, is parachute in or not, give everything the amount of time that I want to write, like a story you can, like, take something away away from. And I think as far as, like we've talked about it, I think on the phone was before. Right. The political side, the legislative side, I think that's certainly an in my realm, I'm definitely a little more scared of that because I think that's that takes just a lot of, you know, knowledge to really write authoritatively on.

00:33:00;18 - 00:33:11;20

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

And I think right now I'm kind of, again, starting to introduce your time readers, general audience to these parts of the country. They just really have, have no experience with.

00:33:11;23 - 00:33:40;24

Stephen Gutowski

So yeah, because I mean, realistically, guns touch pretty much everything. And, you know, American life to something to one degree or another. Like you could cover it from a business perspective. You could cover it from a political perspective. You get it from a sports perspective, right? There's a lot of shooting sports that have become increasingly popular. And in recent decades, you could cover it from a cultural there's a lot of, a lot of broad cultural approach to how you look at guns.

00:33:40;24 - 00:34:02;12

Stephen Gutowski

There's a lot of cultural stories. So, you know, it is it's really not a one man beat. Right? But it's but, you know, that's that's more than what most places will give it. Right? So, you know, it's interesting to you really kick you out and write kind of any story you wanted from any that touches any part of, of, you know, American, society, right?

00:34:02;12 - 00:34:22;07

Stephen Gutowski

I mean, it could be a tariff story, right? You need American gun manufacturers or a largely you know, the gun industry is largely kept most of its manufacturing in in the country, at least for the American brands. There are a lot of imports from other countries as well. But even those manufacturers are going to need to get steel.

00:34:22;07 - 00:34:43;05

Stephen Gutowski

And, you know, their base products from somewhere else could have, you know, the you can look at it from a tower. It could fit into the tariff story that's going on right now. There's all kinds of things right, that, you could approach with this. It's interesting, just to think about how broad the beat really is.

00:34:43;08 - 00:35:03;00

Stephen Gutowski

But, yeah, I mean, I think you've it's been it's been fun to read some of the stuff that you produced so far, as, like you're talking about they're just kind of introducing some of these different characters that exist in the gun world to readers who probably wouldn't know that they were out there in the first place.

00:35:03;00 - 00:35:24;01

Stephen Gutowski

Right. Do you have, you know, I mean, I, you know, if you want to give away any of your stories you're working on right now, but do you have, like, general, topics that you're pursuing next year, you've done gun tubers, you've done, you know, some of these, I would say nontraditional gun businesses. Just kind of.

00:35:24;01 - 00:35:41;13

Stephen Gutowski

The last one is a rooftop, defense, but also, a better way to a was in there have been on their podcast before. They're interesting dudes. You know, what do you have? Sort of a maybe just a general theme for your next piece or next one. Something you're working on right now?

00:35:41;16 - 00:36:03;14

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

Yeah, I think I kind of a hit on it, but definitely like, it's like the cloning community is, is really interesting. For a lot of reasons. And, yeah, 3D printed the 3D. We haven't really talked much about it, but 3D printed guns. Right. How that's kind of seen is the next iteration of gun culture in the United States.

00:36:03;17 - 00:36:23;17

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

And is just a big, big component of whatever's next. So I think there's always, always room to write about that in a way. That kind of gets away. Yeah. Of course, ghost guns is is a term thrown around, but just kind of gets under the hood hood of that in a more humanizing, humanizing way.

00:36:23;19 - 00:36:50;14

Stephen Gutowski

Yeah. The 3D printed gun community is is definitely an interesting one. There's, you know, especially since it seems to tend to be pretty different from your traditional gun owning community, in similar ways to, you know, how, your last story explored some of those, some of the businesses that cater to nontraditional gun owners, but, but also, just like, you know, they tend to be more socially liberal, and much more libertarian.

00:36:50;14 - 00:37:10;07

Stephen Gutowski

I mean, if you're out there printing your own gun, you know, you probably tend to be more libertarian in your political views than, you know, your average deer hunter or something like that. Not that there is an overlap, of course, but, you know, people are complex, but but, yeah, this definitely a very fascinating community.

00:37;10:07 - 00:37;47:26

Stephen Gutowski

And there's even a lot of infighting that goes on in there, for what really is a pretty small, close knit community to, but a lot of, a lot of, fertile ground for stories, I would think, in there. And so, yeah, I mean. What, what's been the reception inside the paper so far? I mean, if so, if you, gotten any pushback for the kind of work you've been doing or is it, been, you know, because I would assume a lot of the people who work there also might find some of what you're doing illuminating, too.

00:37;47:29 - 00:38;12:08

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

I mean, it's been it's been great. I mean, it's been encouraged and well received. It's funny because, it talks about like the, the forum saying, oh, the New York Times just discovered gun to 15 years later or whatever. And then, you know, for a lot of us, we got a lot, you know, a few of the, my colleagues wrote, they never seen that a whole different planet, right down to it.

00:38;12:10 - 00:38;25:27

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

Never heard of it before, never experienced it, didn't know it existed. Right. So it's. Yeah, I guess that's good for purchase of why do negative story in 2020 fives okay. Right. Like there's people who can learn about and.

00:38;26:00 - 00:38;52:05

Stephen Gutowski

You know that's a good point too about you know a forum reaction or someone like myself, you know like, oh, you know, I did this story five years ago or whatever, or I've known about gun tubes since 2005, you know, that's great. But most people don't know these stories. Most people have still think of, you know, the old, like, guy Hunter from, you know, the out in rural area as, as your picture of a gun hunter.

00:38;52:07 - 00:39;11:00

Stephen Gutowski

When that's really not not that those people don't exist, obviously, but, or their stories are important. But that's not everything, right? That's that may not even really be the median face of a gun owner anymore in America. And most people don't get that. I think there's still, you know, there's still a lot of stories to be told that haven't been told.

00:39;11:00 - 00:39;28:02

Stephen Gutowski

And there's a lot of people that even if there's even if someone's written a story similar in the past, didn't you know, it didn't reach the necessarily the readership of the New York Times? Right. Or the audience of CNN right there? You know, there's there's value in that as well.

00:39;28:05 - 00:39;42:23

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

Yeah. I mean, I think I think really over the years, the silos of coverage and, you know, it's a lot of rounds talking at each other, not really bridging bridging between the two.

00:39;42:25 - 00:40;03:19

Stephen Gutowski

So yeah. Absolutely. All right. Well, hey, if people want to first of all, I appreciate you coming on and talking with us. And just giving your perspective and get a better understanding of what the times is doing here and some of your background and how you're approaching this. But if people want to follow this, right, you know, you're reporting what's the best way that they can do that?

00:40;03:21 - 00:40;25:28

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

Yeah, definitely subscribe to the times. That would be a good place. I'm not super active on social media. I should

probably change that. I think I'm on blue Sky, but I don't really know how that works. I mean, it's a lot like Twitter, but I don't really, you know, listening. But, yeah, I think subscribing is probably the best.

00:40;26;00 - 00:40;31;12

Stephen Gutowski

Yeah. So they can Google your name. I think that your New York Times author page will come up. Right?

00:40;31;18 - 00:40;32;19

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

Right. That's what.

00:40;32;20 - 00:40;38;03

Stephen Gutowski

I think. That's the best way to if they want to track your individual stories, that's probably the best way to do it. Yeah.

00:40;38;05 - 00:40;38;19

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

Yeah, that's.

00:40;38;25 - 00:40;40;15

Stephen Gutowski

That's how I usually do it.

00:40;40;18 - 00:40;43;25

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

That's how you do when I, when I send stuff, I'm.

00:40;43;28 - 00:41;04;16

Stephen Gutowski

Sure you'll publish a piece and it'll, it'll get some, you know, people will be talking about it. In fact I think, an open source defense is, really good Substack out there. They will. They had a piece on you. Well, at least on your beat in the New York Times recently that said, I think The New York Times is the best new gun publication out there, right?

00:41;04;16 - 00:41;19;02

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

Yeah. Right. That was that was that was something I think they had like a, like a spring or a, not a print, but a graphic. And it was a, I think a Glock 19 with the New York Times, logo on the slide, which,

00:41;19;04 - 00:41;34;11

Stephen Gutowski

Which is those guys always have really good graphics there. And they're, they always have something interesting to say. So, yeah. I'm not the only one who's noticed your work, in this space. And, and I think other people, if they give you a chance and read what you're writing, we'll probably appreciate it as well.

00:41;34;11 - 00:41;37;15

Stephen Gutowski

So, they should go do that.

00:41;37;17 - 00:41;42;18

Thomas Gibbons-Neff

Yeah. Okay. And hopefully, you know, stick them on the level.

00:41;42;20 - 00:41;58;01

Stephen Gutowski

There you go. All right, well, look forward to reading more from you in the future. I appreciate you being on. That's all we've got for this week. I'm going to hand it off to myself to, talk about another very high quality publication. The Dispatch. We're doing our their ad swap. So I'm going to hand it off to me.