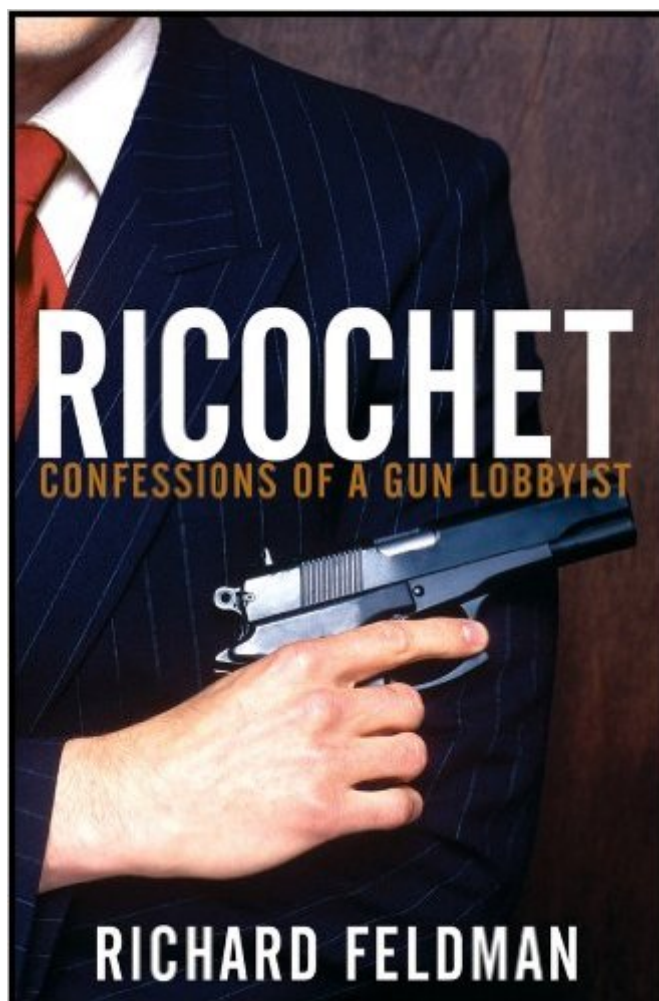


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Ricochet: Confessions Of A Gun Lobbyist



Synopsis

Ricochet Confessions Of A Gun Lobbyist "Ricochet tells the truth. With each page I can hear the echo of footsteps down the Rayburn Building's marbled halls as Feldman tells the intimate story few know and even fewer survive." — Jack Brooks (D-Tex.), former Chairman, U.S. House Judiciary Committee "Ricochet casts an eye-opening spotlight on the shadowy world of behind-the-scenes gun politics. Is it accurate? Absolutely! I was there." — John Aquilino, former Director, NRA Public Education "Ricochet is right on target. Feldman's behind-the-scenes memoir vividly describes America's firearms debate and struggle to win in extraordinary detail. I thoroughly enjoyed it." — John W. Magaw, former Director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I heard mixed reviews about this book, but decided to give it a shot. It is an insider's account of the gun lobby in the US during a very tumultuous time. Mr Friedman came of age as very politically motivated, but with not much experience with firearms. He admits he was initially a believer in gun control. His point of view shifted in his college years and eventually he became a lobbyist for the 2nd Amendment. He is candid in his descriptions and possibly honest to a fault. The biggest eye-opener for me was that Bill Bennett, a degenerate gambler and chicken-hawk conservative, was behind the Bush 89 gun ban. You can count on the left hand of a very bad metal shop teacher how many Steyr AUG-Sa rifles were used in a crime up to that point. Feldman's big gripe is with the

NRA and provides another look at how this organization approaches lobbying. I just take the book as one man's opinion and was interested as Feldman grew up in NYC not too far from where I did.

I wasn't sure what I was going to get when I picked up "Ricochet" but it turned out to be a page turner. Richard Feldman is a skillful writer and an engaging story teller. His prose is easily approachable, passionate, and at the same time, avoids emotional extremes and bumper sticker slogans -- it's easy to see how he has been such a successful lobbyist. The "confessions" aren't ideological regrets, but rather the kiss-and-tell story of internecine warfare at one of America's largest and most powerful lobbying groups. Feldman presents the National Rifle Association to be not exactly the 800 lb gorilla many people had always assumed -- but rather a pack of 80 lb chimpanzees that sometimes work together towards a common goal but also spend a lot of time poking one another in the eyes. At the book's core, divergent factions in the NRA (one spearheaded by Feldman) disagree fundamentally on the best way to bring their cause forward -- the reader can decide which (if either) seems more practical. A fascinating read, whatever your position on guns. "Ricochet" seems to tell a universal tale -- one assumes that the very same types of arguments are going on in the back rooms of Greenpeace or any other lobbying group staffed by passionate and dedicated idealists.

In 1986 I was fortunate to have had a front row seat watching Richie Feldman fight against the forces of darkness in the person of the anti-gun Sheriff of Suffolk County (NY), who was refusing to allow civilians to own the then new Glock pistols. NRA-ILA sent Feldman who had two conversations with the Sheriff, the first explaining that his decision was based on demonstrably erroneous information. When the official did nothing, several months later Feldman told him very directly: stop the foolishness about Glocks, or we're going to take you to court and pull your pants down. The Sheriff folded within the month! I've followed Feldman's career ever since, the savvy (dare I say "pushy?") self-described Jewish-kid-from-the-Five-Towns. I think the "pushy" is what I like the most in his defense of the Right to Keep and Bear Arms. That, and one of his credos: "You fight fire with napalm!" "Ricochet: Confessions of a Gun Lobbyist" is an insider's view from the trenches, and if anyone is concerned that it's an "NRA puff piece," that organization (of which I am a Life Member) will undoubtedly be more antagonistic toward the book than say the anti-gun "Brady Bunch." Feldman chronicles the evolution of the venerable organization from a collection of shooting sports enthusiasts into, under the formidable leadership of Harlon Carter, a dedicated group of Second Amendment stalwarts, and then after Carter's death, the NRA's transformation into a cynical

fund-raising machine with Wayne LaPierre and the PR firm of Ackerman-McQueen running things irrespective of Members' wishes. Along the way Feldman discusses the machinations involved in gaining passage of the McClure-Volkmer bill in 1986, the behind-the-scenes wrangling on the Bernie Goetz "subway vigilante" event, and how the newest threat to firearms ownership rose with the filing of municipal lawsuits against the gun industry. "Ricochet: Confessions of a Gun Lobbyist" is a fascinating and well-told chronicle of the past quarter of a century of the conflict between gun rights activists and firearms prohibitionists. (See [...] for a fuller discussion.)

Sorta like old home week for me...I'd quite agree you can't judge this book by its press or blog reviews. The press naturally picked up on Richard's criticism of NRA fundraising and expenditures, and the bloggers (except me, who refused to blog without reading it) reacted to that. Both made the book seem antigun, when it's very far from that. As I would have guessed, because I last saw the author at the private ceremony to dedicate the bronze of Harlon Carter: Harlon's family would not have singled him out for invitation unless he was respected by them. The book is exceptionally clearly written, and definitely a page turner. I think I took one break from reading its 300+ pages. If anyone wants to see what it's like to be a lobbyist, this is the book for them. Just one episode: at one point NY Gov. Mario Cuomo holds a tense meeting with the author and others, and tries to break the ice by deliberately sitting on a whoopee cushion. It didn't go over very well...

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