I asked Arizona firearms instructor Mark Phillips if he’d ever counseled someone who was looking to relieve themselves of a firearm and what his advice was. Here’s his response in full, edited for clarity.

“Here is MY response and this does not reflect the opinions of the NRA, but my NRA Instructor training and my personal experience is what helps makes up my opinion.

We all have opinions and those are based on our beliefs and experiences. As time goes on we can obtain more information, some valid and some invalid, but I believe that that all goes to help either reinforce our beliefs or allow us to make changes in those beliefs.

For example being 63 years old, I still love to mountain bike in Arizona. But age and experience can alter my approach and willingness to take the chances on the difficulty of the trails I ride on.

The trails and chances I took when I was 30, 40 or even in my 50's and now evaluated with not only the level of difficulty, and enjoyment but also with the possibility of injury that can occur.

I still love the challenge of a difficult trail and how it may take me five or 10 tries at a particular section to master it (ride without dismounting or stopping), but falling...errr crashing, at my age now can bring a whole new level of injury due to loss of muscle mass and bone density that comes with getting older.

So now I choose to ride the less challenging trails and or walk the difficult sections.
I could see the same process going on with some people that own firearms. Time and experiences can and do have an effect on a person's thoughts on the responsibility of owning a firearm.

You had asked "If I had ever counseled someone who was looking to relieve themselves of their firearms". I can honestly say up to this point no I never have. But like you after seeing the news story of the person that turned his in, it did cross my mind as firearms owner and a certified NRA instructor, what would I do if approached by someone in the same situation.

Like religion and politics, not everyone believes the same things. And like these two situations, I would never try to force my opinion on someone and likewise I would not expect nor would I allow someone to force that opinion on me. I will respectfully listen to and conduct a reasoned debate, but past that we are each entitled to our own beliefs and opinions, but not our own facts.

So based on the above reasoning, I would never suggest that EVERYONE own a firearm. Some people I have known just don't have the common sense and discipline to safely own a firearm in my opinion. Just like some people should not be driving an automobile due to age, vision or reaction time.

Now based on my reasoning that as we change and grow, we can shift out opinions on things we believe, I to believe that an individual who owns firearm(s), might, for whatever reason, believe they no longer want to have that responsibility of safely owning firearms.

From a personal and firearms instruction standpoint, I would like to know the "WHY" that change has come about. I would be genuinely interested in what brought that individual to that decision.
As a life long firearms enthusiast and NRA Instructor, I spend a lot of time counseling individuals on selecting the correct firearm for their needs, whether it's for target shooting, hunting or self defense.

Likewise, I would want to understand what lead up to why they have made the change in thinking.

My goal would NOT be to talk them out of the decisions to disown firearms, but to understand the reason to be sure they were making the decision based on facts and not fears or falsehoods.

In the end it is their decision to own or not to own firearms. Again, if they don't feel they can safely own a firearm(s) then there are ways and methods for them to dispose of them.

If they think that giving up their personal firearms will make the world a safer place, for nothing else than thinking less firearms means a safer planet, then that's another whole debate all together. If that is the reason, then by all means give them up.

To accomplish this, there is everything from giving them to a friend or family member that is not a prohibited possessor, to selling them to a firearms dealer, to turning them into the police. With some police departments in Arizona, those very same firearms might be sold at auction back to the law abiding public.

The same way I personally choose not to ride certain mountain bike trails, I can see that there are valid reasons why an individual would choose not to retain firearms they own. Again this is an "individual" decision and should be supported.