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National News

The 'Angel' in a Shoot-Out
A dot-com billionaire dives deep into the gun war

By Matt Bai
NEWSWEEK

October 9 issue— Andrew McKelvey made a fortune finding the Next Big Thing. In 1967 he borrowed \$18,000 and turned it into TMP Worldwide, a leading seller of yellow-page ads. Five years ago he bought little-known Monster.com, the job-placement Web site that made him a billionaire.

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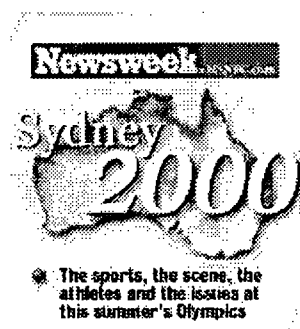
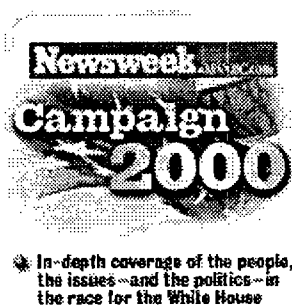
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BRINGING PERSPECTIVE TO BREAKING NEWS

NOW THAT HE'S 65—and gets around on a 110-foot yacht and a jet that once belonged to the golfer Greg Norman—McKelvey's been reflecting a bit. He spends most nights at home in Manhattan, and he says he can't stand a lot of the stuffy rich people he meets. "I told my children, 'I am not leaving you a lot of money,'" he says. "I want to give it all away."

Last year, haunted by school shootings, McKelvey



started donating to Handgun Control Inc. and the Million Mom March. But he was frustrated by slow progress and decided that if he was going to get into the gun-control "business," he'd have to be the guy in charge. Now McKelvey—a registered Republican whose last political cause was the Goldwater campaign—is hurling himself into one of the nation's nastiest debates. His new group, Americans for Gun Safety, debuts this week with ads in Colorado and Oregon, where voters face referendums on background checks at gun shows. The spots, made to make headlines, are expected to feature a senior Republican official backing the initiatives, although the group was keeping that person's identity secret last week. McKelvey's already spent or committed more than \$12 million, and friends say he'll part with considerably more—likely making Americans for Gun Safety the best-funded gun-control group in the country.

Until now, McKelvey's chief hobbies were golfing, yachting and getting married, which he's done six times. ("I like change," he deadpans.) He's using most of his millions to establish a new foundation dedicated to sending rural kids to college. Yet gun violence seemed like an especially urgent issue. He joined the board of Handgun Control last year after funding the group's lawsuits against the gun industry, and quickly found himself in an internal debate over its name, which, he said, "does them absolutely no good" with a wary public. Instead, he envisioned a new group that would reach out to mainstream Americans, including gun owners, who don't want to choose between avid anti-gunners and the NRA. Most Americans, McKelvey said, would rally round "common sense" solutions like greater enforcement of existing gun laws and safer gun designs to prevent kids from using them. He decided to borrow from his business expertise, creating a nonpartisan group that would work on a McDonald's-like model; national ads would push like-minded people toward a Web site, which would then feed them to local "franchises" in every state, all using the same logo and strategies. McKelvey decided to fund the venture but stay decidedly in the background. "I'm not a spokesperson kind of person," he says.

Even so, McKelvey's group is already offending some veterans of the gun-control movement by acknowledging a right to own guns—unheard of in the gun-control camp. Even Handgun Control, considered a moderate force in the movement, won't go there. "We support the right of law-abiding citizens to own and use guns, flat out," says Jonathan Cowan, the former chief of staff at HUD, who was hired by McKelvey as president. "But we also believe that with the right to own guns comes responsibilities." Cowan reached out to an alliance of more than 30 statewide gun-violence groups and made them an offer: agree to become a

chapter, and McKelvey's group will provide \$60,000 a year for staff and equipped offices. It's a great deal for dedicated foot soldiers—many of them victims of gun violence—who couldn't even afford computers or full-time help. The 28 that have signed on so far include grass-roots groups like Stop Hand-gun Violence in Massachusetts, which pushed for tougher laws—and saw gun-related murders plunge by 56 percent. "Our angel has arrived," says John Rosenthal, the group's founder.

Not surprisingly, the gun lobby and the industry

aren't looking at it that way. "I'll put 4 million NRA members up against all the millions of dollars you have any day of the week," says NRA spokesman Bill Powers. At an inaugural meeting last week in Oakland, Calif., McKelvey told his troops he's "sick to death" of hearing about the NRA, period. "The last thing I'm going to do is start explaining to the American public why my competition is bad," he says. A

creature of the comparatively civil world of corporate dealmakers, McKelvey may not fully grasp what he's in for as the gun lobby's newest nemesis. He seems to think he can remain above the fray, and he shrugs off the idea of gun owners' retaliating with a boycott of his company, a favorite NRA tactic. "With 17 million hits on Monster last month?" McKelvey scoffs. "Good luck." There's probably no point in trying to bleed Andrew McKelvey of his hard-earned money, anyway. He's getting rid of it as fast as he can.

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