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Gun owner apologizes for handgun accident

By Glenn Matlock

DULUTH, Aug. 6, 2002 – An antique firearm accidentally discharged at a small political gathering being attended by Congressman Bob Barr last week.

Nobody, including the congressman, was injured. However, the bullet did shatter a plate-glass basement door in the home of Barr supporter Bruce Widener.

Widener apologized and took full responsibility for the accident.

“The gun is almost 100 years old, and I was not aware that the gun was loaded. ... I apologize to Congressman Barr and the guests at our home for the incident,” Widener said in a prepared statement.

On Aug. 2, along with a handful of guests, Widener was showing Barr a pre-1911, semi-automatic Colt handgun, which he kept locked in a cabinet in his basement.

The gun is a very small semi-automatic. It does not have a hammer and is designed to carry in a pocket. Although there was no magazine in the weapon, unknown to Widener, there was one bullet loaded in the chamber.

As Widener was handing the firearm to Congressman Barr the gun accidentally discharged, Widener said.

In fact, proper gun handling on the part of the congressman likely prevented a serious accident, Widener said in his statement.

“I ... am thankful [Barr] was careful to always keep the weapon pointed in a safe direction even though he didn't know it was loaded,” Widener said in his statement.

Barr, who is a staunch 2nd Amendment supporter and a board member of the National Rifle Association, said the accident “underscores the importance of proven gun safety measures, especially when owning and handling

antique firearms.”

“It’s very fortunate no one was hurt and this firearm was pointed in a safe direction,” Barr said.

Barr is running against Congressman John Linder for the 7th Congressional District seat.

WSB-Radio talk show host Neal Boortz, a Linder supporter, tantalized listeners on his morning show Tuesday, Aug. 6, with the story without revealing Barr’s identity.