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 HB 693

Aubyna

From: "Gary Marbut/MSSA/TOS/BIT" <mssa@mtssa.org>
To: "Aubyn Curtiss" <aubyna@interbel.net>
Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2005 10:24 PM
Subject: Orlando, Florida story

Aubyn,

The story is pasted below.

Let me know if you need anything more.

Gary Marbut, president
 Montana Shooting Sports Association
<http://www.mtssa.org>
 author, Gun Laws of Montana
<http://www.mtpublish.org>

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 From *Armed and Female* by Paxton Quigley (1989)

Beginning on Page 14

Clearly, armed citizens are a real threat to criminals. One of the most convincing cases illustrating the deterrent effect of gun ownership comes from a highly publicized effort to train women in firearms use, cosponsored by the Orlando, Florida, Police Department and the Orlando Sentinel Star.

There had been a series of very brutal rapes in Orlando in 1966, and during that time, according to police captain Jack Stacey, residents, mostly women, were buying two hundred to three hundred guns per week. Most had no idea of basic gun safety or operation, or how and when to use a gun for protection. The Orlando Sentinel Star had an anti-gun editorial policy and vehemently disapproved of these gun purchases. Martin Anderson, publisher of the newspaper, and Emily Bavar, editor of the newspaper's magazine supplement, went to the chief of police, Carlisle "Stoney" Johnstone, and insisted that he do something to stop the sale of handguns to women. Chief Johnstone said that he could not stop the sale of guns, because the law permitted the purchase of handguns in Orlando. As discussion continued, it was decided that, since it wasn't possible to prevent handgun sales, the only alternative was to make sure that the women buying guns knew how to use them. The paper and the police department would cosponsor a gun-training program for women. The newspaper ran a front-page story announcing that the gun-training course would take place in a city park the following Sunday.

Neal Knox, a retired journalist familiar with the story, told me that the first class of "Emily Bavar's Pistol Packin' Posse," as it was termed, was scheduled, and newspaper personnel and police made preparations for as many as four to five hundred women. To everyone's utter amazement, more than twenty-five hundred women showed up, carrying every type of firearm under the sun, some loaded and some unloaded. Knox talked to one officer who was there who said he was never so scared in his life. Apparently the cars were parked blocks away from the park, and women were walking all over the place armed to their teeth. Some had their guns holstered, others had them in their purses or pockets, and the rest had them in their hands. "It must have been some sight," laughed Knox.

Not wanting to be known for the massacre at Lake Eola Park, the police department and newspaper decided to fall back, take cover and regroup. They obviously weren't set up for those numbers, and they told everybody to go home. They quickly organized a three-class-per-week program, with women clipping application forms from the newspaper and the Orlando Sentinel Star staff arranging appointments. Five months later, they had trained more than six thousand women.

Charley Wadsworth, who administered the newspaper's portion of the program, insisted that at the time that they were not trying to play upon anyone's fears, but they felt that if a woman has a pistol in the house she shouldn't be afraid of it.

Even Emily Bavar learned how to shoot, and she commented to Neal Knox, who was writing for Gun Week, that one of their big problems was that many women would show up every week just to practice. She also said that Chief Johnstone had told her that, although the policemen were putting in their own time for the program, it would lighten their work in the long run, thanks to the tremendous deterrent effect on crime,

As a result, the rape rate in Orlando, Florida, fell from a 1966 level of thirty-six to only four in 1967. Before the training, rape had been increasing in Orlando, as it was nationwide.

Five years later, rape was still significantly below the preprogram level, even though, during the five years after the training, rape climbed 308 percent in the surrounding Orlando metropolitan area, the Florida rate escalated 96 percent, and the national rape rate increased by 64 percent.

Another result of the Orlando training is that, while most other crimes escalated or remained steady in Orlando in 1967, violent assault and burglary decreased by 25 percent each, making Orlando the only American city of more than a hundred thousand in population in which crime declined in 1967.

Neal Knox telephoned chief Stoney Johnstone a year later and asked him if any of the women had used a firearm to defend herself. Stoney said no, not to his knowledge. Knox wanted to know if any of his women had turned a gun on her husband or boyfriend. Stoney replied no, and added that there also hadn't been a single accidental shooting. "And believe me," Stoney said, "we looked closely at that -- I had dreams of my pension disappearing."

Knox, and other experts who have analyzed the Orlando phenomenon, contend that the rape rate decreased because of the media publicity, and because the women were armed and trained. No one ever fired a gun or even pulled a gun to protect herself. What brought about the results was that the women knew how to use a gun and the newspaper was continuously telling the would-be rapists that they were trained.

End of segment

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