

I Will Not Go Quietly . . . My Story

By Valinda Rowe

The letters were placed ominously in the mailbox – so I would know that he had been here – here at my home – here at my door – the scrawled handwriting is still burned into my memory – the threatening words take my breath away and my heart pounds. He intends to kill me, he says my husband will find me floating in the pond . . . he has hung the dead animals around my property to prove he can kill; sympathetic neighbors have cut them down .

The authorities claim their hands are tied because no one has been hurt. As long as I remain inside my own home I am safe, as long as I lock the doors, as long as I turn on the alarms, as long as I remain a vigilant but virtual prisoner. I have taken my safety seriously. I have taken the training necessary to protect myself and the ones I love. I have become proficient with a firearm – my life and my family's life may be dependent on that skill – I am determined to be strong . . . and I will not go quietly . . . I will not give up without a fight. I have a right to protect my life and my family.

I have that right inside my home . . . but what about all the many times I need to venture out? The state of Illinois says if I leave my home I must put my right to defend myself on hold. I and my family must travel beyond our door at the mercy of the one who intends to do us harm.

I remember those years of fear and anxiety, the always watching over my shoulder, eyeing the rearview mirror, checking all around before stepping outside my home, my work, and my church, scanning the parking lot at the grocery store, the drugstore, anywhere and everywhere. I can tell you, first hand, of the helplessness and all consuming fear a woman under threat of death faces in the state of Illinois. My life and that of my husband's was threatened repeatedly by a very sick family member. As long as I stayed inside my home I could legally carry a firearm to protect myself and my family from this violent person. However, every time I had to leave my home the state required me to put my very life on the line because it refuses to recognize my right to carry a weapon for self-defense. I am fortunate to be alive, to be able to tell you it is wrong for the State of Illinois to deny me and thousands of other women the right to protect ourselves.

Another woman and her daughter who lived in a town near me were not so fortunate and are not alive today to speak for themselves . . . the woman was told by her husband to pick out what she wanted to wear for her funeral – because he was going to kill her. Fearing for their lives mother and daughter left their home and reported the incident to the authorities. Like thousands of other women she was issued the only protection available to a woman in the state of Illinois - an “Order of Protection”! Yes, that’s right! A mere sheet of paper! Not long after as she arrived at her new residence after work an eye witness observed the woman’s estranged husband confronting her. This woman, this mother, exercised the only option available to her in this state – she ran . . . literally RAN for her life but this violent man killed her. As she lay dying, her daughter, protected by the same SHEET OF PAPER, ran to her mother’s aid and was killed also.

Self-defense is a basic human right and that is why I am an advocate today for legislation guaranteeing our right to protect ourselves and our families. The right to self-defense is recognized in 48 out of 50 of our great United States. Only two states have yet to recognize self-defense as a basic human right. I am embarrassed to say that my own home state of Illinois is one of the two states that still does not have a right-to-carry law which would honor a law abiding citizen’s right to carry a weapon on their person or in their vehicle to be used for defending their life or the life of another when threatened with violent bodily harm or death.

The biggest objection we hear about Illinois citizens’ having the means to protect themselves is “It will be like the wild, wild west if people are allowed to carry weapons” or “We can’t have people walking around carrying weapons”. But in 48 States – including neighboring states like Indiana, Kentucky, and Missouri and even in the wild, wild west people are doing just that - walking around legally carrying firearms and there are no “wild, wild west” stories to report. I and many other Illinois citizens exercise the right to carry a weapon when we travel outside the state of Illinois by means of non-resident right-to-carry licenses. I have a right-to-carry license from the state of Florida which was issued to me after I gave proof of citizenship, undertook the required firearms training, and passed a finger print and FBI background check. My license is honored in 27 different states which means when I am in those states I am trusted to carry a firearm on my person or in my vehicle. But Illinois does not recognize my right to self-defense – to remain a law-abiding citizen I must stop at the state border, unload and case my firearm,

leaving myself at the mercy of violent criminals who would prey upon my inability to protect myself.

There are over 3,728 violations of orders of protection each year in the state of Illinois.¹ That's 3,728 times that a sheet of paper failed to protect someone in danger - 3,728 times. There are over 72,000 violent crimes committed in this state. I, and every other woman in this state, become a potential victim every time we step outside our doors. Thousands of Illinois women are assaulted, raped, and murdered because they are DENIED the right to protect themselves. In 2005 alone there were 766 murders, 5,982 criminal sexual assaults, 42,264 aggravated assaults, aggravated battery, attempted murders & ritual mutilations.² In 48 other states the right to self-defense is recognized and women there can legally protect themselves and their families with something other than a mere sheet of paper, which such as it is – can only be had if one knows in advance who the potential threat might be! What means of self-defense does a random victim have?

On May 24, 2006 new legislation was passed to guard against identity theft. The legislation was sponsored by Sen. John Cullerton who said. "This legislation expands protections against the fastest growing crime in the nation." Rep. Marlow Colvin added, "It's important that we give Illinoisans all the necessary resources to prevent theft and protect themselves."³ If it is so important to give Illinois citizens the resources to protect themselves against someone taking their identity – isn't it even more important they have the resources to protect themselves against those who would take their very life?!!!

The battle is on! The right-to-carry is coming to the state of Illinois, and it is coming because the women of this state are demanding the same rights the women have next door in Missouri, Indiana, Kentucky, and other states. 48 STATES ARE NOT WRONG. The current legislators in Illinois can go down in history as having turned their backs on defenseless Illinois women who fall victim to violent crimes – or they can go down in history as having restored the basic human right of self-defense to the people of this great state! I urge you to join the fight for our right to defend ourselves and our families.

¹ http://www.isp.state.il.us/docs/cii/cii05/cii05_Section_IV_Pg205_to_216.pdf

Page 208 of Illinois State Police **Crime in Illinois 2005 Annual Uniform Crime Report**
SECTION IV- SUPPLEMENTAL DATA

² http://www.isp.state.il.us/docs/cii/cii05/cii05_Section_II_Pg27_to_198.pdf

Crime in Illinois 2005 Annual Uniform Crime Report
SECTION II - CRIME INDEX OFFENSE/CRIME RATE DATA

³ <http://www.illinois.gov/PressReleases/ShowPressRelease.cfm?SubjectID=2&RecNum=4920>