

# Defensive Strategies



**By Lyn Bates,  
Contributing Editor**

Long term readers of this magazine know that I do a series of “Lessons in Reality” articles, interviewing women who have successfully used guns for self-defense. When I started out, finding those stories was quite difficult. Some came via word-of-mouth from friends or friends of friends, some came from the NRA’s Armed Citizen column, and some came from news reports.

The personal ones often involved no shooting at all. In most defensive situations, that is exactly what happens—the mere presence of a gun in the hands of a woman *clearly willing to use it* is enough to discourage most criminals, stop them in their tracks, and send them running. Situations that came from newspapers or the NRA magazines were based on situations that had been reported to the police. A story makes the “Armed Citizen” column if it originally came from a local newspaper, and the newspaper most likely got it from the local police who were called after shots were fired. Situa-

## Woman Shoots Man

tions that were resolved with a gun but without any shooting, seldom get reported to the police, and almost never make it into any newspaper.

So, finding successful self-defense stories involving a woman and a gun used to be difficult and time-consuming. That made it seem that very few women actually used guns properly and effectively to protect themselves and their families. But then came the Internet. Now many news organizations not only have their archives online, but they are easily searchable. Better yet, many interested people are taking news clips from their local TV stations and posting them on sites such as YouTube.

Suddenly it has gotten a whole lot easier to find these stories. If you have any doubt, just look at these reports, from credible news sources, on YouTube.

CBS reported, in 2009, about an Oklahoma woman who was on 911 for 10 minutes or so while a man was trying to break into her home. She lived alone, was 57 years old, and, luckily, had a shotgun. She repeatedly, calmly, said she didn’t want to kill him, but when he got through the door before the police got there, she had to shoot him. The police dispatcher had told her that she had the right to protect her property with a gun. The man was killed.

Also in 2009, a drunken man named Donald Case, in the Catskill Mountain area of New York State, went to his ex-wife’s home, spoiling

for a fight. His sister-in-law shot him in the leg when he refused to leave. At the time of the report, she had not been charged with anything, he was in custody.

Ronnie Preyer, a man with 11 felony arrests and 9 convictions, raped a 57-year-old woman in her home, and a few days later returned to break into her home again. She reported the rape, the police increased patrols in her neighborhood, and she got a shotgun. When he came back, she called 911, and got her gun. When he broke through her door, she shot. Police arrived “in seconds” to find Preyer dying in the back yard. No charges were filed against her.

A California mother found one intruder already in her Santa Paula home, and another outside. She fired a handgun at the one inside, and both fled.

In Gwinnee County, Missouri, a woman in the shower was attacked by a would-be rapist. They fought from the bathroom to her bedroom, where she managed to get her hands on her .22 caliber pistol, and shoot him.

In Albuquerque, New Mexico, a 19-year old-man with a history of robbery and aggravated battery tried to break into a woman’s home. She called 911, and had to shoot him in the head.

An 89-year-old Iowa woman named Beatrice Turner used an antique .22 revolver to stop a man breaking into her home. She fired once, aiming at his head. Beatrice

missed him, but scared him off. Police arrested him right outside her home. Oh, yes, the police were kind enough to reload the revolver for her.

Another elderly woman, 84, shot a very old revolver, a vintage .38 Police Special, at a man who had kicked in her door and was coming toward her bedroom. She had inherited the gun, and had never fired it before. Although she missed him, the shot at chest level was enough to send him running. Police did not confiscate her weapon. Her neighbors are "quite proud" of her.

Donna Jackson, 57, was home alone when someone started breaking in by throwing a patio table through a window. On her 10-minute-long 911 call, you can hear her say that she got her shotgun, that she does not have a room to safely retreat to, but she goes into a small bathroom. "I don't want to have to kill this man," she tells the 911 operator repeatedly, but I'll kill him graveyard dead," she declares. The 911 operator agrees, "You have to protect yourself." "I will," Donna says. He was acting crazy, she shoots and kills him. No charges filed against her. "Entirely justified," the DA said.

There are also occasional, bizarre, almost funny stories, such as the 92-year-old woman who shot a man because he would not kiss her. Well, OK, fortunately that one was Internet fantasy.

And yes, there are sad stories, like the woman who ambushed and shot a man she met online, then killed herself. Or the woman without health insurance, who shot herself with a .25 because that was the only way she could get medical services for a shoulder that had been injured and extremely painful for a month.

A Tulsa, OK, woman shot two men who wanted to rape her. (How did she know? They broke into her

home, first asked her for money, which she gave them, and then told her to take off her clothes.) She got her gun and shot and critically wounded them both: Darien Carter, 18, and Daniel Holman. Authorities agreed that she did the right thing.

In Indiana, a woman briefly dated Ryan Bergner. He would not leave her alone when they broke up; he stalked and harassed her. She filed six complaints with the police against him, but he did not stop. A friend loaned her a gun for protection. Bergner finally broke into her house, she retreated into her bedroom, he got in there and tried to strangle her. She shot him three times, and killed him. No charges were filed against her.

In all these situations, virtually all of the comments added to the postings support the shooters.

These incidents are not rare, and all of them involve shots being fired. Think of the hundreds or even thousands of other situations where a gun saved someone without being fired, without being reported to the police. Guns save lives, save women from rape, and (in a few states) legally save property.

Interestingly, in most of these cases, no charges were filed against the women. So at least some police and prosecutors understand that justifiable self-defense happens, and when it does, that justifiable conclusion should be reached as soon as possible. Not everyone has to go through the legal aftermath that all of us instructors warn about. Hope for the best, be prepared for the worst, and you won't end up any worse than these women did.

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