

Making a Difference



*By Genie Jennings,
Contributing Editor*

Years ago when I met Valinda Rowe she told me "...the two hardest groups of gunowners to activate are the trap shooters and the cowboy action people..." The same is true about people who live in states with good Second Amendment provisions in their constitutions, and few infringements in their laws. They are not worried about losing their guns or their hobby. They feel secure. I don't know any cowboy action shooters, but I can tell you that the trap shooters, even those in gun-friendly states, are waking up.

Last week I attended my first rod and gun club meeting of the year. It is not so much that I am a fair weather gunner, as that I am a cold weather ski instructor. My rare early year attendance was to beg for help with a new project I had been offered.

Although I arrived about 10 minutes early, I had to park along the road almost to the gun range parking lot. Some people had to park in that lot far from the clubhouse. The room was packed. Lots of new

Two Sides of Activism

faces. Several new women. A friend sidled up to tell me *sotto voce*, "Floyd is looking for you." It sounded almost sinister. Why would a member of the board of directors be looking for me? "He wants to talk to you about something my father would like to do."

What the man wanted was the formation of a political action committee in the club. They were willing to give money to do something, they were not sure what, to influence our federal legislators. Perhaps hire a lobbyist. Send a petition. Something. They considered me someone who could give guidance. Someone who "knows people."

For the past few years I have called myself the News And Government Committee, and given a report each month I attend on what is happening in the realm of gun rights. I purposely chose the title for the acronym, NAG. I would like to think that the nagging has finally paid off, but I know that is not the case.

For people who have recognized the danger of losing the foundation of our liberties, it is frustrating to wonder how bad things need to get for the majority of people to notice there are severe problems. Hence Valinda's complaint. Hence my committee name. It would seem things have gotten bad enough. The giant is rousing.

I cautioned the gentlemen of the club that they should look at the by-laws to be sure they

would not be endangering the club in any way before forming a PAC. However, I suggested that we could start immediately by gathering contact information for people who would be willing to call or write their congressmen and senators when legislation was being considered. We are near the border and our club members are from both Maine and New Hampshire. Lots of legislators to contact! Plus, everyone has friends who can be encouraged to do the same.

Neither of the founders wanted to address the meeting, so the NAG explained what we wanted to do. Many in the audience signed up to be on our committee of correspondence. There was a lot of discussion about Internet sites and groups to join to get information first hand. Everyone was encouraged to let me know when they found things, so the whole group could be advised, as well as the club's Webmaster. We don't need a lobbyist: we are the gun lobby!

The other side of activism was the reason I had gone to this particular meeting. (If you discount the Universe sending me because there was going to be an opportunity to further our cause.) I have been asked to help establish a Shooting section in the 2013 Maine Games.

For several months I had looked at what other states that have such a program do, and tried to elicit interest and volunteers

amongst my email and Facebook friends. The officers and a few key members of the trap shooting group at the club were supportive of participating. I was seeking the approval for holding a full-day session, which would mean closing all three ranges to the members for one Saturday in June. Also, of course, I was looking for volunteers to run the courses and work at a variety of activities during that day.

We will be having competition for a variety of age ranges. There will be men, women and children involved. We will have a venue that is family-friendly. We will be able to demonstrate the safety and fun that surrounds gun usage. We can show a positive face to our activity at a time when the public has been and continues to be worked into a frenzy of fear by our opponents.

This was not the case when the project was first considered. The leader of the Maine Games has tried in the past to get a shooting segment. He offered it to me because he has followed my Introducing Women to the Shooting Sports on Facebook.

Our rod and gun association sponsors a Boy Scout troop. In addition to producing a substantial number of Eagle Scouts, our troop promotes shooting. We have a nearby club in New Hampshire that has a healthy shotgun program with their 4-H group. There are young children who learn to safely handle a variety of firearms. This spring we intend to showcase them.

The other part of activism is “normalizing” gun usage by both enlarging the number of gun owners and users through education, and also letting the

public know that there are nice, friendly men, women and children who enjoy the shooting sports in a safe way. There is a campaign underway to make people afraid that their neighbor or their children’s “friends” parents might possess a firearm. We want to show that while your neighbor or your child’s friends’ parents might, indeed, own a gun, that is not something to fear. It is the character of your neighbor and your child’s friends’ parents that matter, not the tools they know how to use.

(By the way, Valinda Rowe is a friend from Illinois that I from Maine, met in Kentucky at a Gun Rights Policy Conference. Look her up. There is an activist!)

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News

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have consistently been creeping higher for the past couple of years.

The current surge was ignited by a combination of factors, it appears. Obama’s re-election in November started the trend, and talk of banning so-called “assault weapons” and their standard capacity magazines that erupted following the Sandy Hook tragedy which added momentum to the buying spree.

Gun shop shelves across the country quickly emptied of rifles and carbines based on the AR-15 platform, and magazine sales have been brisk. Ammunition has also been selling strong for the past few months.

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