

*The rest of the story...*

## “Gunshots heard”

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*Editor’s note: Longtime subscriber Kathy Mayhew of Wallace gives us a firsthand account of what could have happened when you read “Gunshots heard in the vicinity of Miles Road. Report taken.” in the Sheriff’s Log. It is a cautionary tale for backyard target shooters. Now for the rest of the story...*



***The Mayhew Family’s kitchen window after a target-shooting round entered their home.***

**By Kathy Mayhew**

On Sunday, Oct. 14, a bullet crashed through our east-facing kitchen window and slammed into the refrigerator door.

Five minutes earlier, the typical country weekend target shooting noises were pierced by loud, supersonic cracks that sounded like a large-caliber gun was being fired close in. My husband Lew heard a round zip past him outside and another hit the house or something solid nearby. The window broke just as we were approaching the kitchen phone to call 9-1-1. If either of us had been in the bullets path at that moment, we would have taken a fatal head shot.

After talking to the 9-1-1 dispatcher, we alerted our southern next door neighbor to the danger. A few minutes after the first sheriff’s deputies arrived, she called to say that neighbors on two lots east of us also heard shots ricocheting around their properties. One neighbor went

looking for the shooters, and passed along their street address. By the time we told the deputies, the shooting had stopped. The deputies took our statements, photographed the window and refrigerator, and calculated the bullets trajectory. They looked for possible points of origin downhill to the east, and in due course, left to look for the shooters at the address provided.

They found four men – the homeowner, his friend and their teenage sons, who had been target shooting with handguns, shotguns and long rifles. Surprised to see the sheriff's cars, they were shocked and horrified to learn that some of their shots had ricocheted dangerously around the neighborhood and that one had entered a home. They had been aiming slightly downhill, and, seeing puffs of dirt on impact, thought their rounds were contained. The deputy told us they were chastened and very apologetic. The homeowner offered to reimburse us for damages and vowed to shoot only shotguns on his property in the future.

The deputy asked if we wanted to press charges that would result in misdemeanor citations and fines for all or would we be satisfied to accept apologies and reimbursement. Since no one was hurt and we believed the shooters had received a wake-up call about gun safety, we declined to press charges.

Backyard target shooters, take heed. Our house is about 100 feet higher and 2,500 feet away from where the shots were fired. Don't assume it is safe to simply shoot downslope or into a hillside. Rounds that hit rocks can ricochet up and well beyond your target zone. Rifle rounds can travel thousands of feet and accidentally hit or kill a neighbor inside or outside their home, devastating at least two lives in the process – theirs and yours. Please, be careful out there.

We spoke to the shooter/neighbor by phone, and are in the process of replacing our window and mini-blind. The refrigerator still works fine, and the bullet hole is a daily reminder to count our blessings and live our lives with purpose. Every day is a gift.



***A bullet hole in the refrigerator will serve as a daily reminder of the incident.***