

My name is Kristin Silverman. My name is often invoked in newspaper articles, podcasts and anywhere else the issue of Act 250, slate and property owner's rights come up for debate. I recently watched coverage of the commission hearing with slate company owners and interested landowners. Again my name, pictures of my property, and my family's story came up in the conversation.

I am a full-time kindergarten teacher in Granville, NY. I am mother to two small children, ages 7 and 11 years old. I have lived in this area my entire life. Born in the Rutland hospital, raised in Hampton, NY, educated in Granville, NY, higher education degrees Castleton (when it was still a college) and my masters degree from the College of St. Joseph. Unlike the Gaschel's (who spoke before the committee on that day), I was familiar with the slate industry. I grew up with the Camaras, the Tarans, the Boones...When I rode the bus to school each morning on my way to Granville, NY, I can remember the piles of cast off slate and homes near them. Maybe not ideal to some interested property owners, but slate and homeowners coexisted for as long as I can remember. When my husband and I purchased this home we asked our realtor about the quarries. We were told, "It would take an act of congress to open those back up. They 've been closed for decades". There is a slate mill across from the property, owned by the Taran family. I knew the Taran family and also knew the mill was something we could live near. We looked at property maps at the Town Office. The Taran land surrounded ours. They had no intentions of mining that land, just working their milling operation. With that we purchased the land (not for any reduced price because we were near a quarry as Shawn Camara falsely stated at the Commission hearing).

My family lived on the property happily until almost 9 years later. One early morning I was sitting in my kitchen when I smelled the overwhelming smell of diesel and heard machinery. When I went out to explore, I found an excavator operated by Hilltop Slate, working under 60 feet from my backyard. When I went to the Tarans about this they too were surprised.

You see what my husband and I were blind to was a thing called, "Mineral Rights". Although the Tarans owned the property, everything you could see, Hilltop (Daniel Boone) owned the mineral rights, everything under the ground.

They worked all hours of the day. If the light was there so were they. Weekends. Sometimes as early as 5:30 in the am.

As I mentioned, I grew up with many of the slate company owners. When I found out who owned Hilltop Slate, Daniel Boone, my brother's friend from high school, I had no problem calling him. Unfortunately I mostly spoke to his secretary (Dan was "out of the office" REPEATEDLY). When I finally did get to speak to Dan, he was very sympathetic, apologetic. He even gave me a number to call him directly if we ever had issues again. When I did try this number, the person that answered was not Daniel Boone. Daniel Boone had given me a fake number.

We went to the Town of Poultney hoping they could help/protect us in some way. They repeatedly told us it was a civil matter.

We went to the EPA, MSHA, even Bill Burke in Rutland at the Act 250 office. Everyone was sympathetic but no one could help.

We even met with a group of local quarry owners. Although they agreed Daniel Boone and Hilltop were not operating in a way that these owners manage their quarries, they admitted there was largely nothing that could be done except sue Hilltop. These same quarry owners said that if we were their neighbor they would have bought us out and have been done with it.

At first Hilltop was an annoyance (noise, diesel fumes, fast cars, litter on our property, etc). Eventually they began blasting. At times this was under 90 feet from our well head. The sludge pumped through our well repeatedly clogged the filters and at one point was so bad we lost water for a number of days and were forced to move in with my parents for a time. My children had to give up their

beloved chickens because we could no longer provide water for them on a constant basis. My mother did our laundry.

There was no warning that came with the blasting. One day there was a loud noise. That was how it started. Never a horn or signal, neighborly knock for a "heads-up". Nothing. Sometimes when I was in the yard you could hear someone from near the pit yell, "Clear" just as an explosion was detonated. Blasting wasn't occasional. It happened sometimes daily for a period. Sometimes on weekends.

Some of these blasts sent "fly rock" (rock from the blast) the size of my husband's foot into the road and onto our property. Someone from the quarry would drive up the road after the blast pushing the "fly rock" back towards the pit. Our well was damaged and our foundation buckled in towards our fuel tanks. Our 165 foot deep well was damaged (although Shawn Camara claimed my well was not deep enough and that blasting "hydrates" wells) according to an engineer that we hired. Our foundation that had stood strong for nearly 200 years was now in danger of knocking over the fuel tanks.

Fearing for our safety and our home, we did seek litigation against Hilltop Slate. Because of the monetary amount of the law suit, it was going to be handled in Federal Court. When we finally got to mediation with Hilltop and our lawyers, we realized we were "out of our league". I am a teacher. My husband is a factory worker at Hubbardton Forge. We had already spent tens of thousands in lawyers, engineers, tests, etc. Coming up with upward of \$50,000 was not a possibility.

We settled. Not for enough to fix the house. We paid back most of the money we borrowed from friends and relatives. We fixed the problem with the fuel tanks. We put the house on the market for what we owe. We are looking into the foreclosure process because the damage and location of our property to the quarry have made the property worthless.

This process has taken 2 years. We stand to lose everything we worked and saved for.

What has changed in this area from when I was a child riding the school bus to Granville and now is that slate is disappearing. Granville is no longer the "Colored Slate Capital". This is due in part to restrictions wisely put in place in the state of NY and because slate is a limited resource. It took millions of years to make and there is a finite supply. As quarry owners get more "desperate" chasing the slate vein is going to bring more of these conflicts to our states and towns.

Slate may offer money as a business to the state but at what cost. If you look at Poultney from the air now and ten years ago the landscape has changed. Mountains have been turned to rubble. Pits swallow the landscape. As Vermont experiences more and more precipitation, slate quarries take away that vegetation that is crucial to preventing further erosion of the earth.

What legacy will you leave for our children, tourists and residents who also pay taxes and should have the same protection of liberties?

Adding to the permitting process means slate has to operate like marble and granite and other extraction industries. They will continue to operate and maybe, just maybe, a family like mine will continue to find solace in the Vermont ideals I was always so proud of.

What I cannot wrap my head around is that slate quarries and property owners should not have to give up their rights. An ounce of protection for property owners would be pounds of good. Individual property owners and small neighborhoods should be able to coexist with slate quarries.