

Pit bull kills 7-year-old Minneapolis boy at home; Father who went to child's aid was attacked before he shot and killed the dog.

Star Tribune (Minneapolis, MN)

August 17, 2007 Friday

BYLINE: Tom Ford, Joy Powell, Staff Writers

Perhaps, his loved ones can only speculate, young Zachary King Jr. had gone to get a puppy in his family's basement, where their full-grown male pit bull was chained. When the 7-year-old boy's sister came inside to look for him Thursday afternoon, she found him badly bitten and lying bleeding on the floor. She ran to get her father, but it was too late.

The dog killed Zachary, who was about to enter second grade at Hope Academy, a private Christian school in Minneapolis. The pit bull, which had previously bitten other people, went for the boy's throat, police said.

The boy's father, Zachary King Sr., 30, tried to intervene but was himself attacked by the dog, which mauled his arm. The father got a gun and shot the dog to death in the family's home in the 3500 block of Humboldt Avenue N.

Other family members, including at least two of the boy's three sisters, were home during the attack, which occurred about 1 p.m. Father and son were taken to North Memorial Medical Center in Robbinsdale, where the boy was pronounced dead.

The latest attack comes as the number of dog bites is up and as the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul try to find a way to deal with problems related to deaths and injuries caused by pit bulls and other breeds.

Even before the attack, a legislator touched off debate with his vow to try to outlaw in Minnesota five breeds of dogs, including pit bulls.

Police have yet to determine what caused the dog to turn on one of its owners Thursday.

"There needs to be a detailed investigation to get the facts of what happened here before we jump to conclusions that it's possibly a breed deal," said Tom Deegan, manager of Animal Care & Control for Minneapolis.

The boy's grandfather, Robert Lee King Jr. of Minneapolis, said he arrived at the family's house in the Folwell neighborhood after getting a hysterical call on his cell phone from the boy's aunt. The grandfather got there just as Zachary was being loaded into an ambulance.

Robert King said the male pit bull, whose name was Face, was most often kept in the basement. "I didn't trust that dog," he said, adding that the dog acted aggressively toward others and was a big reason he didn't often visit the home.

The boy's family also has a female pit bull that family members and neighbors said seemed more friendly and was allowed to move around the house. The pit bulls recently had five puppies.

Robin King, Zachary's aunt, said family members who were home when the attack happened told her that the boy had been playing outside when he came in and went downstairs, perhaps to play with the puppies. After his sister found him, she rushed upstairs to wake her father and he bolted to the basement.

Police Lt. Amelia Huffman said investigators were piecing together the chain of events, including whether the dog was still attacking the child when his fa-

ther tried to help him and whether the attack on the boy continued while the father went to get a gun.

Animal Care & Control has two recorded contacts about the male pit bull, officials said.

In 2005, the dog bit a trespasser on the family's property. That's considered a provoked bite, Deegan said, which would not lead to any official action. In 2006, the dog left the family's property and bit a man. Although that bite was minor, animal-control officers warned the Kings that any further incidents could lead to the dog being declared dangerous.

Still, the dog did not meet the criteria to be deemed potentially dangerous, Deegan said. The ordinances are quite specific, he said. Once a dog is declared dangerous, the city restricts how it can be exposed to the public. That includes requiring muzzles and 3-foot leashes in public, as well as fencing and kennel requirements for yards. In this case, the family was doing what would have been acceptable, even if the dog had been deemed dangerous, he said.

"We can't control what people do in their homes," Deegan said. "The important piece here is that this was an animal that belonged to these folks and tied off in their home. It's terrible, just a terrible tragedy."

It was Deegan who retrieved the dead dog from the basement. Though the dog was bloodied, there was nothing to immediately indicate that it was being bred to be aggressive for dog fights, he said.

Targeting specific breeds

In June, DFL state Rep. John Lesch announced that he will introduce legislation next year to ban chow chows, wolf hybrids, pit bulls, Akitas and Rottweilers. Lesch was out of the country and couldn't be reached for comment about the fatal attack on Zachary.

Keith Streff, director of investigations for the Animal Humane Society, which serves five metro counties, including Hennepin and Ramsey, said there's no doubt the fatal attack on Zachary will become a touchstone for public debate.

In Zachary's neighborhood, feelings ran high.

"I feel so sorry for the boy, but this is so preventable," said Marleen Witte. "It makes me angry. This should not have happened."

Witte, 55, who has lived on the block for 20 years, said the King family moved in about five years ago and that the father breeds pit bulls.

Another neighbor, Tacuma Elliott, 34, said Zachary King Sr. had cautioned neighbor children to knock before entering the King house because of the dogs. "This is a really bad, terrible freak accident," she said.

Bert Robinson, a cousin of Zachary King Sr., described Zachary Jr. as a spunky, tenacious but quiet boy who adored his father. "He hardly went anywhere without his dad," he said.

Reports of dog bites up

Last spring, two serious dog attacks within three weeks spurred Minneapolis officials to begin looking more closely at the issue of dangerous dogs.

A state health report released in June found hospitals and emergency rooms saw a 40 percent reported increase in victims of dog bites in the state from 1998 to 2005. Overwhelmingly, the report said, victims are familiar with the attacking dog. It also found that most victims were 4 years old or younger and more likely to be bitten while in the home or the yard.

About 8 p.m., Zachary King Sr., his right arm in a bloodied sling, returned to the home with family members. They grabbed some belongings and left soon after. He declined to speak with reporters, though his nephew, Craig Dyar, while holding a picture of Zachary Jr. and his sisters, spoke on behalf of the family.

"My uncle and my aunt lost a son," he said. "[His sisters] lost a brother. ... I just want everyone to keep us in their prayers and let us deal with our loss as a family."

Girl with Down syndrome killed by Rottweiler

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution
ajc.com

July 13, 2007 Friday

BYLINE: TOM OPDYKE; Staff

The backyard gate that was supposed to be locked was ajar, the garage's back door was open.

While mother Florence Pauley and her two other children slept, tiny Tiffany wandered out of the house early Thursday and into the damp morning.

Nobody knows what happened next, but authorities and family members think Tiffany walked about 200 yards up the street from her wood-framed ranch home and into an unfenced yard where at least five dogs were kept.

She walked to the back of the yard, past two other chained dogs to a Rottweiler on a 15-foot chain. Tiffany, 5, has a miniature French poodle of her own and her family thinks she may have tried to pet the Rottweiler.

In the coming hours, no one reported hearing barking or a child's cry. Neighbors and police would comb the neighborhood looking for the little girl with Down syndrome, but they didn't find her body until about 1 p.m. She was lying near the dog, under a tree.

A neighbor helping with the search had knocked on the door of Robert Turner, who owns the dogs, and explained they were looking for Tiffany and wanted to look in his backyard. As the searchers walked around the house, Turner stepped out onto his deck.

"When I got right there, I saw her laying over there. I ran to her. She was just laying there," Turner said.

Carroll County sheriff's deputies said the girl appeared to have been mauled. An autopsy will be performed today.

Turner said authorities took the 10-year-old Rottweiler named Foxie and the two other dogs, a Labrador retriever/Chow mix and a pitbull mix. He said he was allowed to keep two other dogs because they were in kennels.

Lt. Guy Pope said no decision has been made on charges. The three dogs are being kept at an animal control shelter.

Turner said his dogs had never caused trouble before.

"My kids play with them dogs all the time and never get hurt," Turner said. He said his four children are ages 11, 7, 3 and 8 months.

Turner's mother, Patricia Cook, said her son always kept the dogs chained and cared for them. "Nothing wrong happened here," Cook said.

Tiffany's grandmother, Annette Steere, said the family is trying to piece together what led to the tragedy. She said Tiffany had never wandered away before.

Tiffany had not developed verbal skills, Steere said, but "had a smile of grace."

Steere, of McDonough, said the little girl was missing when the family awakened that morning. Tiffany's brother, 7, and sister, 12, hadn't heard her leave.

The girl was reported missing at 11 a.m. from the family's home on Cypress Circle in a neighborhood off Newnan Road, a curling subdivision of clapboard houses behind a chemical plant.

"She woke up and just wandered out. Nobody knows what time or for how long," Steere said. She said the family usually keeps the back door closed and the fence gate locked.

Turner said he had moved to the Cypress Circle home three months ago and did not know the girl or her family.

Next-door neighbor Andre Kotze said the dogs barked anytime he was out in his own yard and sometimes were a nuisance at night.

"If there was a squirrel walking in my yard, they'd be barking," Kotze said.

Just two doors down the street at the Pauley home, relatives stood guard at the door as the engines of media trucks rumbled outside.

"I guess this was an act of God," Steere said. "I can't say anything else.

"She was the sweetest, loving child."

Tiffany would've turned six next month.

Toddler dies after dog mauling

The Globe and Mail (Canada)

BYLINE: ALWYNNE GWILT AND UNNATI GANDHI

A 17-month-old girl was mauled to death by a family dog over the long weekend.

Korie-Lyn Edwards's family had gathered at her grandmother's rural house in Montague Township, about 80 kilometres southwest of Ottawa, for the Canada Day weekend.

About 6:30 p.m. on Sunday, the toddler wandered over to where her grandmother's 10-year-old Rottweiler-German Shepherd was chained in the backyard.

The dog attacked.

"She suffered obviously fatal injuries to the head," OPP Constable Kevin Davidson said yesterday.

Korie-Lyn's parents rushed her to Perth and Smiths Falls District Hospital, he said.

She was then immediately airlifted to the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario in Ottawa where she succumbed to her injuries.

An autopsy was performed yesterday, but results weren't immediately available.

The dog had no history of aggressive behaviour, Constable Davidson said, and it had been socialized with various family members and children.

"That's what makes this situation that much more tragic," the constable said yesterday.

The dog was taken into custody by animal control, and, at the family's request, is scheduled to be put down today.

Constable Davidson said no charges are pending.

No one was at the family's duplex in Smiths Falls yesterday - about six kilometres west of the grandmother's home - where two strollers were in view near a large maple tree with wind chimes in the front yard.

The couple, both in their 20s, had moved in two months ago with their young daughter, said Dino Musca, their landlord. He said he often saw the mother taking walks around the neighbourhood with the girl in a stroller. The family did not own a car.

"They were keeping to themselves a lot, but I know a lot of people in town know them," he said, adding that the mother had come to his house once to use the phone.

Around the back of the home, a Dora the Explorer patio set was clearly visible, along with a large children's paddling pool with toys still floating in it.

On the front door, a sign that read "PARKING FOR PITBULL" was above another that read, "Owners only. Violators better haul ass."

St. Paul Frogtown / Girl on scooter mauled by dog

St. Paul Pioneer Press

BYLINE: BY TAD VEZNER

An 11-year-old girl riding a small motor scooter with an even younger girl on the back was attacked and mauled by a pit bull in St. Paul's Frogtown neighborhood Friday evening.

Jamie Khottavongsa was riding near Edmund Avenue and Virginia Street - less than a block from the Edmund Avenue home where she, her parents and a sibling have lived for years, according to neighbors.

Alyssa Velasquez, 8, who also lives on Edmund Avenue, was riding behind her.

"I saw the dog go under the fence. It ran at us," Alyssa said, referring to the corner home at 354 Edmund where the dog lives. "It just kept biting her. It bit off half her shirt."

Witnesses said the dog knocked the two girls off the slow-moving motor scooter, though Jamie was able to keep on her feet. But the dog kept jumping up and biting into her arms, down to the bone.

While Alyssa escaped unscathed, Jamie was taken to Children's Hospital in St. Paul, where she was in stable condition late Friday. A family friend said the girl's forearms were severely mauled.

Neighbor Anthony Smith, who witnessed the 7:15 p.m. attack, ran across the street to chase the dog away.

"I just seen the flesh on the ground. That was an awful thing to see. He got one arm, then came back for the other," Smith said. "I tried to find a stick, so I could bust its head."

The dog ran away, and Smith helped carry the girl into his yard at 330 Edmund.

But the dog - which had dashed halfway down the street - circled back.

"He tried to come back around and get her again. I kid you not," said Smith, who then grabbed a broom to defend himself and the girl, according to witnesses.

The dog's owner drove up in a van, called his dog inside and drove away, Smith said.

The incident has left the entire block shaken, neighbors say.

"I told her she's not going to go outside until they get that dog taken care of," said Ka Velasquez, Alyssa's mother. "The worst thing is they didn't even apologize or anything," she added, nodding at 354 Edmund, kitty-corner from their home.

"I went trick-or-treating over there," Alyssa murmured.

Smith said the dog has been involved in four other incidents in the neighborhood.

St. Paul animal control officials knew the dog.

"You again," a responding officer said as he walked up to the dog's owner, Juanito Cordero. After a brief talk, the officer impounded the dog.

Cordero, 29, said he was as shocked as his neighbors, whom he has lived next to for three years.

He said he took "Moomoo" - a 3-year-old pit bull he's owned since its birth - outside to relieve itself and chained the dog up next to the garage. That's where he left Moomoo before joining a high school graduation party for his brother, taking place in the family's unattached, open garage.

The dog tore loose of its chain, Cordero said, and ran under the fence, where a piece of his leash was found.

"It's just something I wish it never happened. ... I should have just let him (relieve himself) in the house. It was a split second - not two minutes and he was out," Cordero said.

Cordero acknowledged that Moomoo had bitten at least one other person: a family friend who was in the house at the time.

He said he would have gone over to his neighbors to apologize and see how the girl was, but "you saw them over there with bats and brooms. They were very upset."

There have been several other dog attacks in the Twin Cities in recent months. In April, a 59-year-old woman delivering legal papers to a house in St. Paul's Dayton's Bluff needed skin grafts on her arms when a pair of pit bulls apparently jumped a fence to attack her. In March, there were three brutal dog attacks in Minneapolis involving pit bulls, an Akita and an American bulldog.