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## Pit bull's courage saves city couple

*The dog is shot and killed while defending his family from three masked intruders*

BY SAMUEL SPIES

TIMES-DISPATCH STAFF WRITER

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Rock

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Three men wearing ski masks burst through the back door and into the kitchen. The first man drew a gun and ordered Travis Rappold, 21, his girlfriend Amanda Searle, 18, and their three friends to lie down.

Enter Rock, Rappold's 75-pound pit bull. The dog jumped up from his seat at his master's feet and ran out from under the table toward the armed assailant.

"They yelled 'get that pit' and I yelled 'get him, Rock,'" said Rappold, recalling last Sunday's incident at his apartment on Rossmore Road in South Richmond.

Backpedaling, the gunman fired once, striking the dog in the chest. Rock kept going.

The intruders fled through the back door and scattered.

Rappold shut the door before Rock could keep chasing the three men.

Moments later, the injured pit bull collapsed as he tried to crawl to the second floor bedroom where he slept.

Rock died in Rappold's arms before he could try to administer first aid.

"Nicest dog in the world, but he was 75 pounds of muscle and pretty intimidating," Rappold said Thursday.

Rappold had rescued Rock from an abusive situation only a year before. When adopted, the 5-month-old pup "was just skin and bones," Searle said. "Travis saved him . . . and he came back and saved Travis."

Richmond police Detective Kevin Hathaway said the victims likely would have "been assaulted and robbed, if not killed, if it were not for Rock, who gave his life defending his owners from harm."

No arrests have been made in the case.

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