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## Pit bull kills 91-year-old Detroit woman

Joel Kurth / The Detroit News

**DETROIT** --Neighbors called her Mother Stiles, an elderly gentle woman with a generous spirit, bad hip and hulking pit bull, Butch.

Today, they're both dead, and shocked friends are wondering why the dog turned on her.

Neighbors found the white dog coated in the blood of its 91-year-old owner, Mary Stiles, about 3:30 p.m. Monday in the kitchen of her brick bungalow on Tyler near Linwood on Detroit's west side.

The woman who was known as a neighborhood matriarch was pronounced dead on arrival at Henry Ford Hospital, and animal control officers are testing the dog -- which was shot at least twice -- for rabies.

"I can't understand what would make him go off like that, but in the end, he went after everyone," said Charles Wilson, 72, a neighbor who shot the dog with a hunting rifle before police officers finished it off.

"He was going nuts."

At least one other Detroit area person has been killed this year by pit bulls. A 6-year-old Hamtramck girl was killed in April on Belmont Street when she was attacked by two dogs.


Stiles was a house cleaner whose health limited her movement and caused membership at church, New Greater First Baptist, to bring services and communion to her on Sunday. Wilson's daughter, Diane Lyons.

The dog, which was about 90 pounds and 10 years old, belonged to Stiles' grandsons, Bykes, who died earlier this year. The dog frightened some children, barked, but seemed to Stiles, Wilson said.

Stiles was alone in the house when the dog attacked. Wilson said his grandson, Tom Lyons, who lived with Stiles to look after her, called him after the incident. When V

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entered the house, the sight was agonizing, he said.

"It was a mess. I came back and got my gun. There were kids in the street. I yelled 'Don't run.' They were scared, then the dog came out with blood all over its face, nasty."

Wilson said the dog was between two small groups of children in the street and was ready to attack. That's when Wilson fired. Moments later, police arrived and shot the dog. It started to attack them.

"That dog never did anything like this," said Dell Watt, 46, who lives across the street from Stiles.

Watt and others described Stiles as a sweet woman who was a great cook. Wilson remembered her Thanksgiving stuffing. He moved into the neighborhood off Davis Street in 1970. Stiles was already a longtime resident.

"She was the best," Wilson said. "You will not find a woman in the last 50 years who cared for herself better or cared so much about the community. You had something to talk about. If you needed advice, you went to Mother Stiles."

Watt said Stiles was a fixture on the front porch of the neighborhood, which is rife with vacant lots and dilapidated buildings.

"She was so sweet," Watt said. "Anything you needed, Mother Stiles was there for you."

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