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## Dog bites Harvard resident

By **Corinne Green**/ Staff Writer

Friday, October 14, 2005

There are two sides to every story, but at last week's dog hearing at the Board of Selectmen's meeting, there was no disagreement that Beverly Pero of Harvard was bitten in the face on Sept. 7 by Oreo, a dog owned by Pedro Pirez, 47 Hudson Road. The bite necessitated a trip to the emergency room and stitches. Selectmen heard from Pero, Pirez, his daughter Hanna (who was near Pero at the time of the attack) and the town's Animal Control Officer, before rendering a decision that called for Oreo to be penned at the Bolton residence. Hanna described Oreo, a Catahoula Leopard breed, as her first dog and "best friend," but also said he is "aggressive toward strangers."

Pirez argued that Pero brought the attack on herself. He claimed that she should not have walked into his yard, which is surrounded by an invisible fence for his dogs; Pero said she was following directions to a water spigot at the house.

Describing the incident, Pero said she visited the Pirez property for the first time on Sept. 7 "to check out" the facility; a client had asked her to care for their horse boarded at Pirez's property the following weekend.

Pero said that when she arrived, Oreo and another dog approached her and Brenda Baer, also of Harvard, with whom she shares a pet-sitting business. While Baer pet Oreo (she said she had met the dog once before), Pero said that Oreo growled at her. She said to Hanna "the dog doesn't like me." Pero said that Hanna told her to "ignore him;" Oreo ran away. Pero said she asked Hanna where to access water over the weekend and was told to follow the hose to the house to a spigot. Pero said she did not see it and wanted to locate the source. Feeling uncomfortable about the dog, Pero said she asked Hanna to accompany her while she followed the hose onto the property.

As she walked onto the property, Pero said Oreo suddenly ran back, jumped on her and bit her in the face. She said that Hanna got control of Oreo and pulled him off her. Photographs exhibited by Pero's husband showed a noticeable wound with stitches above the upper lip.

Mr. Pirez said, "I know what the dog did was wrong... He never accepted you." But he said that Hanna told Pero not to go in the yard; the spigot was "inside the dog's boundaries. If you have to go there, you follow the hose," indicating it would be fine to go into the yard on the weekend, but not then. Pirez accused Pero of "crusading against his dog."

Giving background on the dog and her knowledge of him, Animal Control Officer Susan Latham said she had written three warnings and cited Oreo twice for being picked up off the property and without tags; one fine was issued, but there were no reports or complaints of aggressive behavior. When Pero was bitten, Latham quarantined Oreo on the homeowner's property for 10 days as required by law. The dog was then released. Oreo's rabies vaccination was current and there was no sign of rabies, according to the animal control officer.

Latham described Oreo as an intact male, who "considers his home his castle." She said there are about six dog bites a year in Bolton, usually consisting of a nip or a small scrape. "But with Mrs. Pero, Oreo meant business. I find it very disconcerting."

Selectman Ken Troup asked if the dog had bitten anyone else.

Pirez said that Oreo had bitten his son under the eye about three months before when the boy stepped on his tail; stitches were needed.

"Does a stranger get attacked every time someone walks over the invisible fence?" Troup asked. If so, he said that the dog is poorly trained and the property should be posted. "The invisible fence is not enough."

Selectmen Chairman Stan Wysocki agreed and said he was concerned about a child wandering onto the property.

Pirez said that Oreo gets along with Pero's client. Once, when the police arrived

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after an alarm went off Oreo was not a problem, he added. Hanna said she takes Oreo to rodeos and he is fine.

The Pirez's said they have two quadrants of invisible fencing, indicating that at times, the dogs' whereabouts are more restricted than the day Pero visited.

Latham said Oreo could be safe with 99 percent of people, but recommended that Pirez install a chain link fence to provide a physical barrier and "make it safer, so you don't have to worry."

In a burst of emotion, Pirez announced, "The dog is in Georgia on a cattle ranch. I did the responsible thing." He said he did not want to fence in the dog. Pirez said he wanted the opportunity to tell his side of the story because Pero was "crusading against his dog."

Troup said he was concerned over Pirez's placing blame on the victim. He said that the Animal Control Officer makes recommendations with safety in mind. "It is never a matter of the victim having it out for the dog," he said. He told Pirez that it was his [Pirez's] choice to send the dog away. "I would not have recommended that."

Wysocki and Troup agreed that while Oreo is gone, the problem is solved. In a letter they agreed to send Pirez, selectmen will require him to notify them, should the dog return to Bolton. If Oreo returns, Pirez must install a six foot high chain link fence or pen that also extends further under ground. Latham said that state law requires that shelter be provided, if the dog spends any length of time outside; the board agreed to include this parameter.






Catahoula Leopard dogs are described as cattle dogs bred to handle wild cattle and hogs on a Web site dedicated to the breed ([www.catahoulaleoparddog.com](http://www.catahoulaleoparddog.com)). Further, it says they "outwork and outfight all other breeds of stock dogs when protecting their master, livestock and property."

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