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## Vicious dog attacks Coquille man at Whisky Run

By Drew Atkins, Staff Writer

R.J. Russell, 43, of Coquille, has never been apprehensive about large dogs, but that might not remain the case after an episode last weekend.

Saturday morning, Russell was getting out of his car at Whisky Run Beach, he said, with not a care in the world, when a gargantuan St. Bernard launched itself upon him.

"I got out of the car, and the next thing I know I'm on the ground, and this dog is chewing on my leg," said Russell. "It happened so fast, it was almost unbelievable. One second I'm sitting in a car, the next this huge dog is trying to eat me. It was all I could do to just get it off, get into the car and say, 'I need to go the hospital right now.'" World Photo by Drew Atkins R.J. Russell, 43, recuperates in his Coquille home from what he said was a savage mauling by a St. Bernard Saturday morning. The dog and its owner still are at large.



According to Russell, the dog chomped on his right calf for "what seemed like forever," until its owner managed to pull it off. Russell said what happened next is a daze, but that doesn't dull his anger about it.

"I was with my friend, Cory (Clawson), and as I got in the car he told the dog's owner to follow us to the hospital," said Russell. "Next thing we know, we're headed to the hospital and he's taking off in the other direction."

Russell received "more stitches than I can count" at Coquille Valley Hospital, he said. In some places, he said the bites went clear to the bone.

Though he filed a report with the Coos County Sheriff's Office, the attacking dog and its owner, are still at large. Russell described the dog's owner as 6 feet tall, of average build, with dirty blond-brown hair. He was driving a 1970s model beige Ford pickup truck.

According to Sgt. Rod Summers, of the Coos County Sheriff's Office, dog attacks of this magnitude are rare in the area.

"We don't have full-fledged attacks very often at all," said Summers. "We don't get a lot of bites, but we get some. Not attacks, though. If we get any clue at all who it belongs to, we'll try to chase it down."

Dan Henthorn, operator of the Coos County Animal shelter, said the Sheriff Office is responsible for the apprehension of violent dogs. Animal control officers are responsible for deciding the dogs' fate.

"If we were to get a dog (as violent as) that, we'd put it in quarantine for 10 days," said Henthorn. "If it didn't have rabies, after that the owner would have discretion on whether to keep it or have it destroyed. ... We haven't a case of rabies around here in forever, though."

Russell's leg is heavily bandaged and he said he will be visiting the hospital Thursday to see if he'll need rabies shots. Though he said he wants to be reimbursed by the dog's owner for his medical bills, Russell said his main concern is that a savage St. Bernard running free, poised to strike again.

"They should put it down, or at least check it out, see what's wrong with the thing," he said. "If I had been an elderly person, or a child, I would be dead. It was so totally savage."

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