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A lawbreaker confesses, learn from his mistake

Sunday, March 26, 2006

 EDITOR'S **NOTE** DAVID C. KAMINSKI

Last weekend, I broke the law. Anger got the better of me. Please learn from my mistake.

It was a cool, sunny Saturday morning, eight days ago, when I set out for a 2-mile jog. My running route comes out of my Market Heights neighborhood, goes down Harvard Avenue NW to 25th [Street](#), then heads east to the North Branch of the Stark County District Library. At the library, I either [turn](#) around or head into Weis Park to turn back toward Harvard.

Lots of joggers were out on that Saturday morning. Some were out with their dogs. All but one of the dogs was on a leash. An unleashed dog is always potential trouble for a middle-aged, slow runner, in case you wondered.

I turned the corner at the library and started into Weis Park. Jogging across the St. Haralambos Greek Orthodox Church field were two men and a smallish black dog. This would be the unleashed dog that I mentioned above.

As the men reached the street, they stopped to wait for the dog, [who](#) had stopped in the church's field for a biological break, so to speak.

The dog caught up with the men about the same time I did. As I was running past the dog's master, it got the wrong idea about my intentions. In a flash, it was attempting to take a bite out of my right thigh.

I said something about the dog's parentage, which was accurate but nevertheless vulgar. It had ripped a hole in my jogging pants. The owner offered to buy me a new pair. I waved him off and cursed again. As I kept on with my run, he called back and said he can do something about my pants. I waved him off again. I should have yelled, "Use your money to buy a leash."

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End of story until I got home. Then I discovered the bite marks. I don't think the dog punctured the skin. It just pinched hard enough to produce blood blisters that bled at the touch. This was a pet, I thought, sure to have had rabies shots. I applied some antiseptic and went on with the day. However, under city law, I had the obligation to report the dog bite to the health commissioner within 24 hours, and I did not. Such a report could have led to a quarantine of the dog — which I would not have minded at all. Failure to report could lead to a fine of \$150 and court costs. I'm at the court's mercy.

It is the same fine that the owner of the dog could have faced for having the animal unleashed in a public place, unless you don't consider the field owned by St. Haralambos a public place. Perhaps it was trespassing instead.

Canton Assistant Police Prosecutor Melissa Day helped me understand the law as it applies to dogs running free and humans who are bitten. I won't make that mistake again, and I urge you not to, either.

Report a dog bite, for your own sake and the sake of others. If you own a dog, keep it on a leash in public places.

Finally, if anyone needs a character witness against a black dog in the Market Heights-Ridgewood area, let me know.

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