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Town baffled by death

Coroner: Dog had no history of violent behavior

BY BILL ENGLE
STAFF WRITER

CONNERSVILLE, Ind. -- Officials are baffled as to why a family pet turned on its owner Sunday in an attack that killed a Connersville woman.

Phyllis G. Carroll, 63, of 2234 Western Ave., was found dead in the back yard of her home after being attacked by her dog, an 80-pound part chow and Labrador retriever.

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Fayette County Coroner Joe Todd said Carroll was about 5 feet 4 inches tall and 115 pounds.

"This is truly a tragedy," Todd said Monday. "These animals were well cared for, they had plenty of water, plenty of shelter. They had no history of violent behavior."

"It's just uncommon, a very rare situation."

Carroll had two dogs from the same litter, one male and one female. Todd said he believed the male dog initiated the attack. He said he was unsure if the female took part.

The male apparently lunged at Carroll as she carried treats for each out into the yard, Todd said. The dog clamped onto her underarm area, dragging her to the ground and then apparently kept up the attack, eventually biting the woman four times on the back of the neck, severing both carotid arteries and jugular veins, the coroner said.

Carroll bled to death in a matter of minutes, he said.

"We just have no reason why the dog became aggressive," Todd said.

Carroll's son Brad knows the dogs and said they have never been vicious or aggressive.

"It's just a very freakish thing," said Brad Carroll, who lives just outside Connersville. He had both animals destroyed after the attack.

"My mother loved her dogs and never even worried about them snapping at her," he said Monday. "It's unexplainable. Maybe it was the heat."

Said Todd: "Pets are animals and they are like us. When they are hot and uncomfortable they can be cranky."

But Dr. Sally Osborn, a veterinarian and owner of Greens Fork Animal Hospital, said she didn't believe the heat would make a dog attack its owner, though she emphasized she had never seen the dog in question.

She instead pointed to cortisone treatments that Todd said were given to the male dog for an injury to its hind quarters.

"Again, I've never seen this dog but that's a little bit of a red flag right there,"



Palladium-Item photo by Joshua Smith

Bradley Carroll talks about how he is trying to cope with the death of his mother.



Palladium-Item photo by Joshua Smith

Phyllis Carroll's home in Connersville.



PHYLLIS G. CARROLL ATTACK VICTIM

she said. "Cortisone is a steroid and it drives appetitite, increases appetite. That certainly could be a reason for a dog to be on edge, foodwise.

"And dogs are competitive by nature, especially if there is another dog.

"It's certainly a tragedy."

Connersville Police Detective Tom Bates said no one witnessed the attack, but a neighbor called to report the woman lying in her back yard. Bates said he checked police files and found no reports of any animal-related issues from Carroll's address.

"There's never been a problem," said Bates, who is in his 24th year on the Connersville force. "Locally, we've had a few dog bites in my time but never anything serious, nothing life threatening. It's certainly a shock."

Osborn said the chows she has seen in her office have a "higher possibility or probability of biting. They don't appreciate being restrained.

"But they are not going to bite someone in the neighborhood, especially a family member," she said. "They are not that kind of dog."

However, she said, animals are unpredictable.

"Anything with teeth can and will bite. Bites are always a possibility," she said.



Palladium-Item photo by Joshua Smith

Fayette County Coroner Joe Todd explains on Monday how he believes Phyllis G. Carroll died from injuries caused by her pet dog in Connersville.

STORYCHAT

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Quote

Bates, who is in his 24th year on the Connersville force. "Locally, we've had a few dog bites in my time but never anything serious, nothing life threatening. It's certainly a shock."

hmm its only been a couple of months since a womans arm was practically ripped off by a dog. A couple of years ago I remember a young boy had to be taken to Riley as a result of a dog attack.....I just wonder what Bates feels is life threatening??

Posted: Wed Jun 20, 2007 3:45 am

I'm soo sorry for your loss. This is a horrible horrible thing to have happen. I didnt know your family but your Mother looked like a beautiful lady and my heart goes out to you and your family.

Posted: Wed Jun 20, 2007 12:53 am

I am very sorry for your loss, to such an unexplainable tragedy.

Posted: Wed Jun 20, 2007 12:04 am

Sorry about your Mom,She sounded like an excellent role model and Mom. You are in my Prayers 😊

Posted: Tue Jun 19, 2007 10:10 pm

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