

Family Dog Fatally Attacks Owner's Mother

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By [Kelly Jackson](#)

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(KSDK) - A family pet is being blamed for the death of an Affton woman. A 7-year-old German shepherd, owned by the woman's son, is believed to be the culprit.

The family of Linda Mittino, 69, says she was a lifelong animal lover who loved the dog, despite the fact that she was attacked once before. Both lived with Mittino and her ill husband.

"Who would expect it to turn on her? She's the one who fed him, gave him treats, she'd get right in his face and kiss him. We just knew he wasn't totally right up there," says daughter Linda Boenzle.

Boenzle's brother found their mother after something went terribly wrong Monday morning.

"He noticed my dad was still in the kitchen in his wheelchair at 10 o'clock (Monday) morning with his clothes on and the lights on and he thought that odd.

"So he went searching for my mom and he went into the bedroom and found her on the floor between the two beds in a pool of blood."

Authorities don't have an official cause of death, but say Mittino had multiple bites.

Just three months ago, her daughter says Bear, who weighs about 120 pounds, nearly killed their mother in another incident.

"That particular dog did not like his collar grabbed at all, but she wasn't thinking and she grabbed that collar and that dog turned around and put her flat on the ground and started mauling at her," says Boenzle.

But Mittino survived that attack and wanted to keep Bear in the house. It's something her family now regrets.

"I know my mom was more concerned with him hurting somebody else and then he got her. One time is enough but everybody is blaming themselves that we didn't do something the first time, but when it's your pet you don't know what you will do," says Boenzle.

Mittino's son was too upset to talk on camera. He believes Bear was abused while in someone else's care for nearly a year, and was never the same again.

Bear is now in the care of Saint Louis County Animal Control Services.

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