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Rampaging retriever attacks 81-year-old New Bedford woman

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NEW BEDFORD — Germaine T. Jorge said she was walking home from the Mass at St. Joseph-St. Therese Church around 9 a.m. Tuesday when a "big yellow dog" ran from behind a house and bit her.

"It hurt so much. It was terrible," said Jorge, 81, of New Bedford, who was bitten near her hip. She was given medication after being treated and released from St. Luke's Hospital.

"That dog had an ugly face and he was mean," she said.

Jorge managed to walk home because two men who were at the church for a funeral ran across the street to distract the dog.

They definitely got the animal's attention.

The dog — identified by animal control officials as a 14-year-old male golden retriever that bit someone two years ago — tried to attack one of the men, who was directing the funeral at the church.

Freddy Cunha of New Bedford said he was driving on Acushnet Avenue when he saw a large dog, jumping and standing on its hind legs, next to a man wearing a suit.

Cunha assumed the dog was playing until he saw the animal put its paws on the man and push him to the ground. The animal appeared to be scratching at the man and trying to bite him.

Cunha turned his vehicle onto Duncan Street and headed toward the dog on the sidewalk.

"I scared him for a little while," said Cunha, who grabbed a screwdriver and walked out of his vehicle.

"The dog started to come after me until it saw this woman across the street. Then it went after her," said Cunha, explaining how he and the other man got between the animal and the woman.

"I told her 'Just keep walking,'" Cunha said. "It was coming after me. I called the cops and said 'I'm going to kill this dog unless you guys get here quick.' I was ready to go to battle with this dog."

City Animal Control Officer Emmanuel Maciel said the golden retriever tried to attack him when he arrived at the scene. Uniformed patrol officers drew their weapons until Maciel managed to subdue the dog with an animal control stick.

"It took a lot to get this dog under control," Maciel said.

The animal's licensed owner, identified as Theresa A. Pimental, 52, of New Bedford, has been issued a citation for failure to restrain a dog, according to Maciel. She will appear at a later date at New Bedford District Court.

Maciel said it appeared the dog's co-owner, Arnold Pimental, was walking the dog on Duncan Street when it got away from him.

Meanwhile, the golden retriever — Maciel said his name is Champ — will be held at the New Bedford animal control shelter for a 10-day quarantine until a vicious dog hearing is held at police headquarters.

Under a current city ordinance, a dog can be euthanized for a second violent offense. Maciel said records show that the dog bit someone in the city two years ago. Police Chief Ronald E. Teachman will decide the dog's fate following the hearing.

"The owner knew this dog had a temperament problem, and did he do anything to protect public safety? He didn't," said Maciel, who has criticized a recent proposed City Council ordinance that would place restrictions on pit bulls, such as requiring them to be muzzled when outside.

"People need to be responsible with their dogs, period," Maciel said.

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