

# Pet English sheep dog once attacked maid, police say

By Rich Swenson  
staff writer

The pet English sheepdog that allegedly mauled to death an elderly Birmingham woman Wednesday night had attacked the family maid in August causing an injury that required medical treatment, Birmingham Police Chief Edward Ostin said.

King Boots, the dog that Wednesday attacked and killed Gertrude Monroe, 87, has been placed in the city dog pound and probably will be destroyed, Ostin said.

The daughter of the victim, Kathryn Schwab, and her husband Charles, who own the dog, are fighting the city's attempt to have the dog destroyed. But the city will stick by its decision, police Capt. Millard Squire said.

"We're going to go ahead and pursue a court order to have the dog destroyed," Squire said Friday. "The medical examiner said the woman was alive when she was attacked by the dog. She was mauled very badly — there was extensive damage."

"It would appear that we have a real problem with the dog."

THE OAKLAND COUNTY Medical Examiner's Office, which performed an autopsy on Monroe Thursday, reported that she died of head injuries — caused by the dog's attack.

"The dog chewed on the back of the neck and almost severed the spinal column," investigator Chet Staniec said. "She bled quite a bit at the scene."

The elderly woman may have fallen on the animal at her home at 912 S. Glenhurst before the attack.

Kathryn Schwab was at home with her mother but in another part of the house. She told police her mother had been sitting in the den and was starting to walk to another section of the house when she "slipped or fell" on the 8-year-old show dog named King Boots, Ostin said.

HER DAUGHTER rushed into the den when she heard the commotion.

Schwab freed her mother from the dog's grasp, pushed the animal into the backyard and called police. Schwab was subsequently treated for shock at William Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak.

Birmingham's Emergency Medical Service paramedics were called at 8:30 p.m. The victim was pronounced dead on arrival at Beaumont Hospital.

Monroe could have suffered a stroke before falling on the dog, Ostin said. The family said she had a history of having strokes.

But the medical examiner's office found no evidence of a stroke, Staniec said.

Wednesday night was not the first time the dog has attacked a person. Stitches were required to close the bite wound the maid received in the earlier incident, Ostin said.

"We've had dog attacks before and some that have been vicious," he said. "But they've never been fatal."

The Schwabs have raised English sheepdogs for years and are building a kennel in Rochester.

KING BOOTS is a well-known show dog and has won numerous awards. One of the animal's veterinarians described the 60-pound dog as "gentle."

He found it hard to believe that the dog mauled the victim to the extent that has been reported.

"From my experience, it's never been an aggressive dog — at least not in my hands," Mr. Bradford Theodore said Friday. "The dog had a very nice temperament. I could always handle him, no matter what the situation."

English sheepdogs are as a whole "good natured, happy-go-lucky animals," Theodore said. But if cornered or scared, they, like other dogs, have "an adrenalin response" to protect themselves.

"When the dogs get nervous, they get a big surge of adrenalin. They either fight or run away."

"If a dog is sleeping and is awakened abruptly, it will sometimes turn around and snap — but it's usually a very quick, one-time bite. It's hard to believe King Boots would've mauled her that aggressively."

Law enforcement officials can destroy dogs without their owner's permission, but only with a court order, Theodore said.

"If the dog is deemed a menace or dangerous, it can be put to sleep. But the police can't euthanize (destroy) a dog without going through the court system."

Two national animal groups — Fund for Animals and the American Kennel Club — have come to the defense of King Boots.

"It's absolutely unthinkable that an English sheepdog would attack anybody," said Donald Lane, spokesman for Fund for Animals. "It's not an English sheepdog's nature. The dog was trying to help the woman."

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