

## Features

# Dog's tragic death sickens pet owner

By LISA BOONSTOPPEL-POT  
The Herald

When George Binden of Acton saw his best friend and loyal companion of seven years lying dead in a pool of blood, he was sickened.

But that feeling soon turned to anger and disgust when a police investigation revealed his pet may have been brutally killed.

Anyone who owns and cherishes a dog can understand the range of emotions Mr. Binden and his wife MaryAnn have gone through since their beloved 'Sheba', a faithful companion of seven years, went missing on February 17.

Sheba and Lady, the Binden's other German Shepherd, were out for a jaunt on the Binden's 50 acre property at R.R.3, Acton. Like many pet owners with sizeable property, Mr. Binden raised his dogs on the freedom of the farm, away from the restricted existence of life on a chain.

The two dogs wandered to the back of the property and into Grand River Conservation Property called the 'Ospringle Tract', starting where the Binden property ends.

By mid-afternoon, Mr. Binden felt the dogs had enough enjoyment and exercise and called out for the pets to return to the farm yard. Only Lady came loping home.

By late afternoon, there was still no sign of Sheba and Mr. Binden decided to search for his dog. For hours, he and his brother-in-law searched the property and the conservation area. When darkness fell and Sheba hadn't been found, Mr. Binden began to suspect the worst.

His suspicions were shockingly confirmed the next morning when Sheba was found with one limb dangling from a piece of skin and a gaping hole in her side, dead.

"I felt like my kid had been shot," remembers Mr. Binden. "I felt totally heartbroken. I'll never be able to find a dog with her temperament and personality."

Being that Sheba was a friendly, unaggressive purebred German Shepherd, Mr. Binden couldn't understand why anyone would have reason to, or want to, shoot his dog.

"If my dog was a threat to anyone, especially to people or domestic livestock, I would have killed her myself," he said.

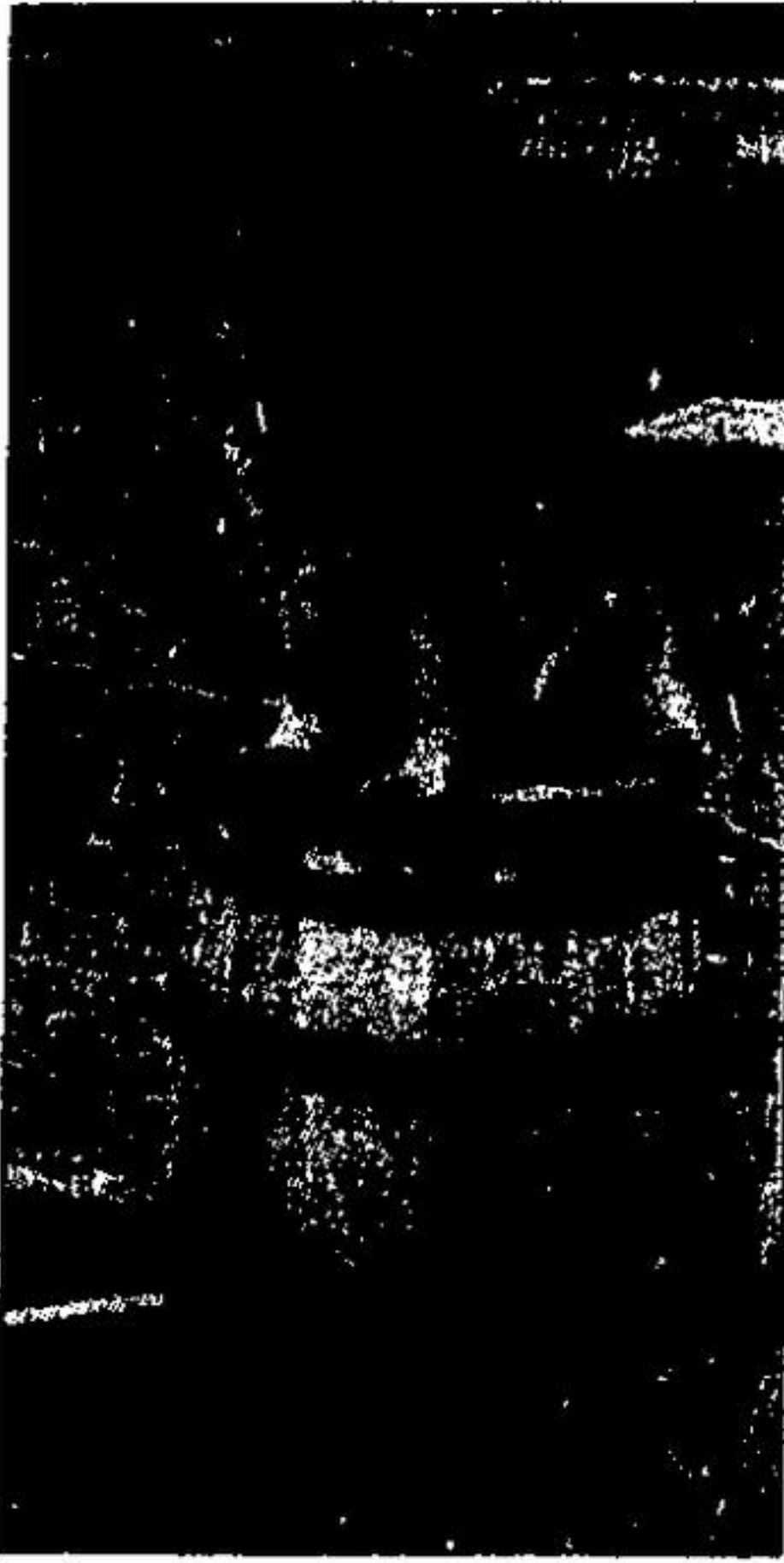
Feeling that a grave injustice had been committed, Mr. Binden resolved to research all by-laws and government acts regarding dog liability and protection. He also resolved to see that the shooting incident was investigated by police.

There are basically two acts governing dogs. One is the Dog Licensing and Livestock and Poultry Protection Act and the other is the Dog Owner's Liability Act.

Bob Ustrzycki, Halton Hill's by-law enforcement officer, explained that the Dog Licensing Act doesn't give anyone justification to shoot a dog or dogs found running at large on your property.

"But it does give farmers the authority to shoot any dogs found bothering livestock or poultry," said Mr. Ustrzycki, "if it's attacking or chasing your livestock. If there's a dog in with your calves or if it turns on you, you can shoot it," he said.

The act itself states "any person may kill a dog that is found killing or injuring livestock or poultry, that is in a township or village between sunset and sunrise straying from the premises where the dog is habitually kept or that is found straying at any time, and not



Sheba was a seven-year-old purebred German Shepherd with an inquisitive and friendly nature. She was found lying in a pool of blood after not returning home after an afternoon excursion.

under proper control upon premises where livestock or poultry are habitually kept."

The other dog law, the Dog Owner's Liability Act, is new provincial legislation, said Mr. Ustrzycki. Before, if a dog bit or attacked a person or domestic animal, the case could be taken to court where it would be decided whether the dog should be destroyed or not. With the new legislation, the dog can be destroyed and its owner charged up to \$5,000 if he knowingly permits his dog to bite or attack, said Mr. Ustrzycki.

In Mr. Binden's case, where his dog was shot on Grand River conservation property, nobody had any right to shoot the dog, according to Ministry of Environment officials who said no hunting

of any animals is allowed except during hunting season and there is no hunting season on dogs. As well, shooting isn't allowed on any conservation land on Sundays, the day Sheba was killed.

Mr. Binden also investigated laws surrounding the use of guns in Ontario.

According to the Criminal Code of Canada, any normal shotgun or rifle can be shot on private property as long as the gun owner has a permit and license for the weapon. 'Normal' means the rifle or shotgun isn't fully automatic, isn't equipped with a silencer and doesn't have a barrel length under 457 mm or over 660 mm overall length.

But handguns have a different set of rules. Constable Earl Soley, a firearms officer in the Chief Provincial Firearms Office of Ontario, said handguns are considered restricted weapons.

"It's very difficult to get a Firearm's Acquisition Certificate and Registration certificate for a restricted weapon," he said. The only reason people can own a restricted weapon is if it's used to protect life in a lawful profession, owned as part of a bonafide gun collection, used at a legal gun range or gun club or possessed as a keepsake.

"I want people to know when you can and can't shoot a dog and what kind of guns are allowed so they won't lose a pet like I did," said Mr. Binden, in explanation of his research into dog and gun laws.

For Mr. Binden, knowledge of these laws came too late to save his pet, but they did allow him to fulfill his other desire, to see that justice was done.

After police investigated the incident and determined that the dog did die from gunshot wounds, they charged a neighbour of Mr. Binden's in connection with the shooting.

Michael Schotesh of Concession 3, Erin Township, was charged with mischief, killing an animal other than cattle and unsafe storage of a firearm. He'll appear in Guelph Provincial Court, criminal division, on March 15 at 10:00 a.m.



George Binden of R.R.3, Acton, strokes Lady, the only dog he has left since his purebred German Shepherd, Sheba, was shot to death while running in Grand River Conservation property. (Herald photo)

# Georgetown resident wins scholarship in Spanish studies

By LISA BOONSTOPPEL-POT  
The Herald

When Rosemary Davison of Georgetown started studying Spanish because she was dating a Hispanic, she never expected to major in Hispanic studies. She also never expected to become so good at her studies that McMaster University in Guelph would award her a \$4,000 scholarship to travel abroad.

Miss Davison, 21, is one of three McMaster students who won the A.G. Alexander Scholarship, awarded to students on the basis of excellence in modern languages. Miss Davison's excellence in Spanish language and Hispanic culture caught the school's eye though Miss Davison never expected to excel in Spanish.

Five years ago, Miss Davison started dating Francisco Mora, and decided to take a beginner's course in Spanish to help her communicate with his family who, back then, were just beginning to learn the English language.

But her personal interest in Spanish soon developed into an academic interest and she decided to major in Hispanic studies at McMaster University, after graduating from high school.

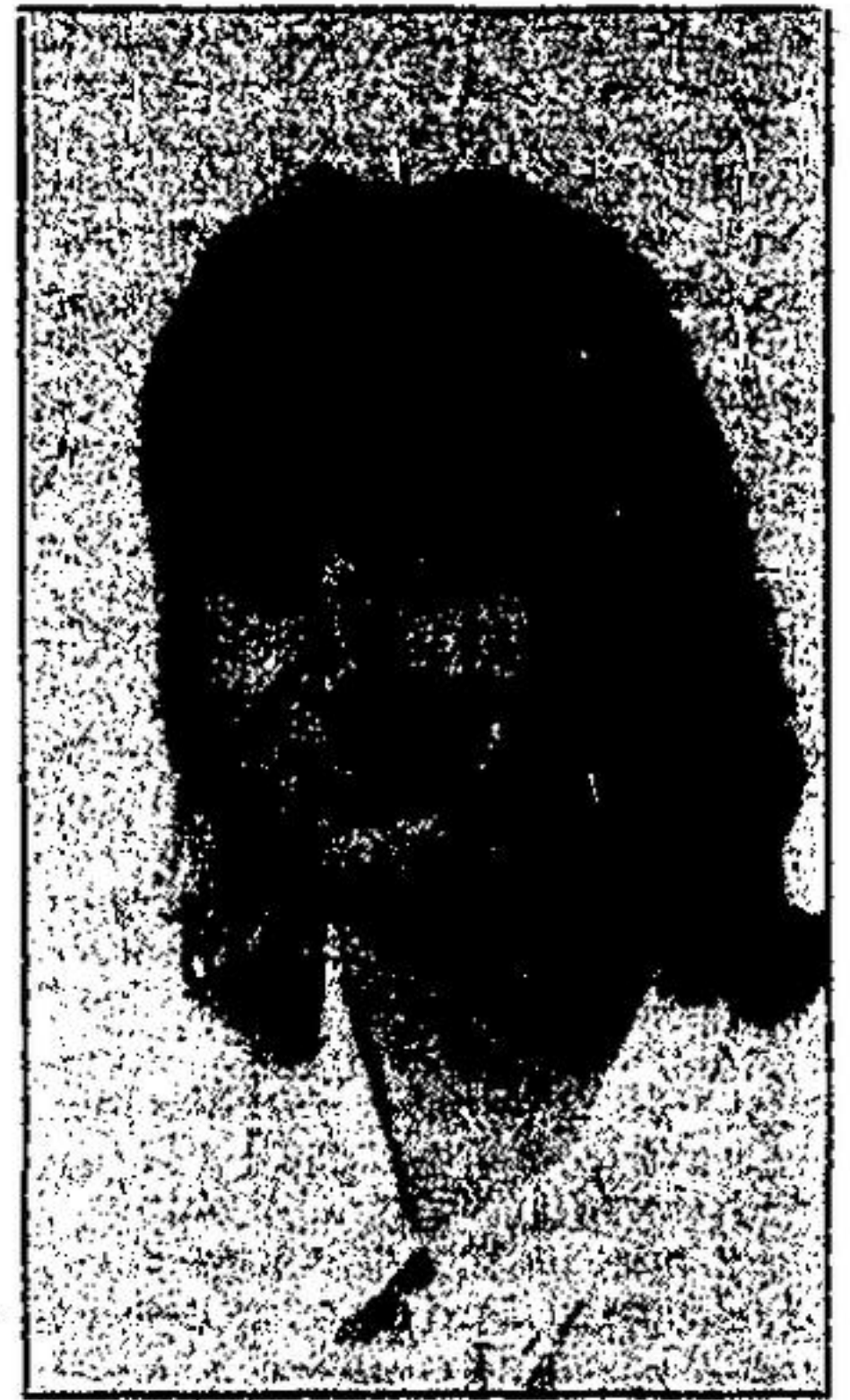
"It's such a beautiful and colorful language," said Miss Davison. "I like literature and poetry and studying Spanish allows me to learn about all the things I'm interested in through the perspective of another culture."

She's now in her third year of studies and her courses, lectures and assignments are all given in Spanish. "I can hold a conversation in Spanish but I don't think I'm bilingual because I haven't been immersed in Spanish culture yet."

After this summer, she will be truly bilingual because she'll be spending the holidays in Mexico. Although the scholarship money will pay for her trip, Miss Davison had already decided to spend this summer in Mexico and had saved funds to do so.

"I had already planned the trip to Mexico before this scholarship and had told one of my professors about my plans," said Miss Davison. "He was the one who urged me to apply for the scholarship and gave me a written recommendation. I was surprised to get a phone call informing me I'd won the scholarship but I was really ecstatic."

While in Mexico, Miss Davison plans to study Latin American Literature at La Universidad Autonoma del Estado de Mexico in Toluca City near Mexico City. When she's not in class, she hopes to travel to places like the Yucatan Peninsula where the ruins of the ancient Mayan Indians are located. Another place



Rosemary Davison

she is eager to see is Jalisco since one of the famous Mexican writers she studied based many of his stories in this area. Moreover, she wants to experience the culture of some coastal cities and towns in Mexico.

While becoming fluent in Spanish and immersing herself in the Hispanic culture has never been a life-long goal of Miss Davison, she thinks her personal interest in the culture will expand her job and career opportunities in Canada.

"North America does a lot of business with Spanish-speaking countries, and now with the possibility that Canada might enter a free trade agreement with Mexico, the job opportunities are expanding," she said. "I don't know exactly what I want to do yet but I know I want to convey the fascinating aspects of this culture to Canadians whether it be teaching Spanish or working in a related profession."

She said her main reason for travelling to Mexico this summer is "to extend my education beyond the classroom. You can only learn so much from behind a desk, listening to a professor. I want to experience it for real."

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