

INQUEST: Day two highlights babysitter testimony

Dog's owner relives horror

FROM PAGE 1.

could have touched his tail. Mosley walked between Karter and Hailey and directly toward Courtney. He put his snout on her stomach and didn't jump up but lifted his front feet and immediately latched on to Courtney, right on to the neck," said Reybroek, who then burst into tears.

Reybroek later told the inquest there was no telltale sign the dog was going to attack the little girl.

"I can't explain what happened. I don't know."

Reybroek said as she tried to stop the dog from attacking Courtney, she was also calling the girl's babysitter, Tina Cromwell, who was next door.

"Mosley was attached to her neck on her left side. I had already latched on to his collar and was trying to remove him from her. I remember the kids, Karter and Hailey, started screaming and I started screaming for Tina. I said, 'Tina please help me. This dog is on her and I can't get him off.'"

As Reybroek struggled with the dog, she said she began experiencing severe abdominal pain and had a difficult time walking.

When the babysitter did not appear, Reybroek reached into the dog's mouth with her left hand, straddled the dog and tried to pry his snout apart. She said Courtney was unconscious at that point.

Another neighbour was mowing his lawn next door, but did not hear Reybroek's cries for help.

"I then picked up a garden shovel and started stabbing Mosley in the neck, below his ear, with the hope I would kill him and he would let go. At that point, I then turned to Karter and told him to go get Tina," she said.

Reybroek said she then had to make a judgment call and decided she had better call 911 for help. It was then she realized she had also broken her middle finger in the struggle.

"At that point, Courtney wasn't doing very well. She wasn't breathing. I'm on top of Mosley and he's still attached to Courtney. I thought, if I stay here, she's going to die, so I went and called 911."

Picking up her daughter, Reybroek ran inside the house.

After speaking to a 911 opera-

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— Kelli Reybroek, Mosley's owner

tor, she was told to go back out to the yard. But by then, the dog was walking back toward the house. She contained the dog in the laundry room of the home. He was later destroyed by authorities.

Cromwell later told the jury she ran to the yard after Karter came to get her.

"I said to him, 'What's wrong?' I dropped to my knees and grabbed him. He said, 'There's a lot of blood and I think she's dead.' I had no idea what he was

talking about," Cromwell said.

Cromwell sat on the lawn with Courtney, holding towels to her neck as instructed by Reybroek and the 911 operator.

"I told Karter to stay on the other side of the fence. I was trying to apply pressure on the wound I saw on her neck and he said, 'Wipe the blood off her face Aunt Tina.'"

"I told her that her mom loved her," Cromwell said.

Cromwell's sister, Roxanne McCoy, who lived next door to the Reybroeks, testified on Tuesday.

She told the inquest there were times when Mosley would butt his head against the fence, often causing boards to come loose.

She said it happened once when her son was trying to pick up a ball near the fence and another time when their basset hound was in their yard.

"But I never thought the dog would be angry enough to come after them."

Mosley had been professionally trained and had never shown any previous aggression towards children. In fact, Reybroek said she and her husband chose the bull mastiff because they believed it would be more docile than smaller breeds.

McCoy said her son felt responsible for his friend's death because he had asked for the dog to be let out into the back yard.

"For a long time, he asked me if Mosley still had teeth in heaven and if he could still hurt people in heaven," McCoy said.

The inquest is expected to last two weeks and hear from more than 22 witnesses.

Coroner's counsel Mary Lou Dickie told jurors they will be asked to consider current legislation governing pet ownership, animal registration, dog breeding and training and any programs that educate children about dog safety.

Although there has been a rash of dog attacks in Ontario over the past few years, the Trempe lawyer, Christine Zablocki, said nothing has been done to strengthen current legislation.

The inquest is being held in the East Gwillimbury town hall in Sharon, presided over by coroner Dr. Barry McLellan. It continues today.

DAY ONE



The Trempes provided a collage of photos for the jury to see.

Holidays difficult time, mom tells inquest

BY JENNIFER BROWN
Staff Writer

A young ballerina standing by the family Christmas tree; a softball player posing with her team; a delighted little girl hamming it up with Minnie Mouse, a big sister playing dressup with her brother.

Vivid images of a happy eight-year-old girl.

Images Donna Trempe wanted jurors to see at the inquest into her daughter's death, so they would know Courtney was more than just a victim of a vicious dog attack.

When asked to provide a photo of her daughter for the inquest, the Stouffville mother lovingly created a montage of photos showing "the family's joy."

Just a week after what would have been her daughter's ninth birthday, Donna Trempe took the stand to describe what her daughter was like and what happened the horrible day her first child was attacked and killed by a 120-pound bull mastiff.

She began by outlining the family's life, which revolved around the children's school life and the many activities Courtney and five-year-old brother Carson participated in.

For Courtney, a Grade 2 student enrolled at Dickson Hill Public School, the busy eight-year old loved attending Brownies, dance, swimming lessons and Sunday school.

"She was my joy — that was my job — to watch my children and take care of my children," she told the inquest, recalling that she and her husband John had tried for eight years to conceive Courtney. They went through a variety of procedures before having success with in-vitro fertilization.

When Courtney was born, Trempe said she left her career in advertising to care for her family full time.

"She was a miracle because she was our test tube baby," she said.

Courtney was playing in a yard with two other children when a neighbour's dog suddenly attacked her.

The inquest heard that the dog walked towards Courtney, stood on its hind legs, latched on to the child's neck and wouldn't let go. Despite efforts to keep Courtney alive, she was dead on arrival at hospital.

Donna Trempe said she learned of her daughter's attack while she was in Toronto with her son. As she tried to battle the afternoon traffic to get to the hospital, Trempe finally called 911 for help. A police escort rushed her to Markham Stouffville Hospital, but it was too late.

"When we pulled into the hospital, John was outside and the emergency staff had said they tried for an hour to try and revive her but she had already died," a tearful Trempe told the inquest.

"It has shattered our family." "She was our sunshine, a very special little girl. It's very difficult to look into her room at her bed and at her Beanie Babies, and sit at a table with an empty chair and know she is not coming back. Her brother has lost his best friend, teacher and confidante."

"We find it difficult to celebrate Easter — we remember when she would come running in with her Easter basket of eggs — and Christmas, her favourite time of year."

"And we'll never go back to Disney World. It's hard to look at little eight-year-old girls and wonder what she would look like now."



CHRISTINE ZABLOCKI: The Trempe family lawyer.

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