

THE COURTNEY TREMPE INQUEST

Medical team fought to save Courtney's life

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statistics on dog bites are not kept by municipalities or the department of health. There is also no central reporting facility for dog bite statistics in the province.

Whitchurch-Stouffville senior bylaw officer Keith Saunders testified that owners should have to show they have taken precautions to prevent further biting by their pet before being released from the pound.

"If a fence was broken which allowed a dog to get through and bite someone, it should be repaired first. They should have to take responsible steps to make sure it doesn't happen again."

The inquest also heard from an animal pathologist who performed the autopsy on the bull mastiff that killed Courtney.

Nothing could have got that dog off, short of it deciding to let go or killing it... This dog had the widest jaw I have ever seen, including some timberwolves.

Dr. Margaret Stalker of the University of Guelph told the jury she found nothing unusual about the dog and saw no evidence it was suffering from any illness, such as epilepsy, which may have caused a sudden outburst.

"I certainly looked at a long list of possible problems in this dog's brain and didn't find them," Stalker said Friday.

In earlier testimony on Thursday, the jury heard that a team of doctors, nurses and emergency personnel struggled to save Courtney's life, but her injuries were too extreme.

Markham-Stouffville Hospital pediatrician Dr. Helen Tsui recalled the efforts she and a team of seven doctors performed to try to revive Courtney.

The graphic details were too much for Courtney's mother, Donna. She left the room sobbing as Tsui described the team who cared for Courtney, and the



Courtney Trempe died of serious injuries to her neck, a Markham Stouffville Hospital pediatrician testified this week at the inquest into Courtney's death.

procedures they used to try to save her.

Soon after, the dog's owner, Kelli Reybroek, also broke down and left with her husband.

Tsui told the inquest two emergency doctors, one specialist, two surgeons and an anesthesiologist went to work immediately when Courtney arrived at the hospital at 3:39 p.m. — about 40 minutes after the attack.

According to Tsui, Courtney had lost about a litre of blood and died as a result of two serious injuries to her neck.

"The immediate loss of a large amount of blood causes hypertension, which leads to unconsciousness in a very short time," she said.

Courtney had been playing at a home in Stouffville when she and two other children went to the neighbour's house. One of them asked to play with the dog, named Mosley.

The bull mastiff, weighing between 118 and 130 pounds, lunged at Courtney's neck. Reybroek, who was eight months pregnant, tried but couldn't pull the dog away from the girl's neck.

A dental expert told the inquest that there was no way Reybroek could have pried the dog loose, based on his examination of its jaws during an autopsy on the dog.

"Nothing could have got that dog off, short of it deciding to let go or killing it. No amount of

tugging is going to get this dog to let go," said Dr. Robert Wood, a forensic dentist from Princess Margaret Hospital. "This dog had the widest jaw I have ever seen, including some timberwolves."

CORRECTION

A headline published in *The Stouffville Tribune* Thursday, April 29, incorrectly stated Donna Trempe testified at an inquest into the death of her daughter, Courtney, that a dog attack was unprovoked. Trempe never discussed this issue at the inquest or at any other time with the media.

The Tribune regrets the error.

HOW IT HAPPENED

Here is an outline of the events that took place on April 29, 1998, when eight-year-old Courtney Trempe was killed by a dog.

■ 2:45 p.m. — Courtney arrives at the home of Roxanne McCoy. She and two other children decide to play in the next-door neighbour's back yard. Her mother was in Toronto. Courtney was being watched by a neighbour, Tina Cromwell.

McCoy's son Karter asks the neighbour, Kelli Reybroek, if the children can play with her dog, Mosley, a 118-pound bull mastiff.

Minutes later, the dog grabs Courtney by the neck. His jaws lock and Reybroek can't pry the dog free, despite breaking a finger and using a shovel during her frantic efforts to open his mouth.

■ 3:04 p.m. — Reybroek's 911 call is relayed to Markham ambulance service. Paramedic Rick McTeer and partner Joanna Caldwell are dispatched to the scene.

■ 3:07 p.m. — Whitchurch-Stouffville Fire Chief Bill Brown also receives the call at the fire station and is first on the scene. He is just half a mile away and knows exactly where he is going because he, too, lives on Cam Fella Boulevard.

■ 3:10 p.m. — fire trucks arrive on the scene with oxygen and other resuscitating equipment. An eight-month pregnant Kelli Reybroek is observed to be in distress but she waves Brown off, urging him to help Courtney in the back yard. Brown instructs a firefighter to stay with Reybroek then heads to the back yard.



BILL BROWN

Fire chief first to arrive at the scene and to see victim

"We recognized it was small girl with a very severe wound from the left ear to the centre of her throat — I observed a large amount of blood," he told the inquest.

■ 3:14 p.m. — paramedics arrive.

■ 3:17 p.m. — McTeer joins Brown in the back yard with Courtney.

"Her breathing was not adequate to sustain life," McTeer recalls.

■ 3:22 p.m. — Courtney is carried to the ambulance and hooked up to life-saving equipment.

■ 3:26 p.m. — the ambulance leaves for Markham Stouffville Hospital with Brown on board to assist paramedics. While en route, paramedics notice Courtney's condition is deteriorating. Three minutes from hospital, she has no vital signs.

■ 3:35 p.m. — the ambulance arrives at the hospital.

■ 3:39 p.m. — Pediatrician Dr. Helen Tsui is called at home and asked to come to the emergency room immediately.

■ 3:50 p.m. — Donna Trempe receives a phone call from her husband John, telling her Courtney has been bitten by a dog. She leaves Toronto and tries to battle her way up the Don Valley Parkway.

■ 3:56 p.m. — Tsui arrives at the hospital and finds a team of doctors trying to stop Courtney's bleeding. They give the girl blood and life-saving drugs but her trachea and carotid artery were punctured.

"It was a very aggressive resuscitation," recalls Tsui. "When the trachea has been punctured, it is fatal."

■ 4:14 p.m. — Courtney is pronounced dead.

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