

Dog poisonings leave Trinidad family devastated

By MIKE GARRETT
The Chronicle-News

For 10-year-old Angelina Donnelly-Montoya, losing Muffin, her adorable 2 1/2-year-old female Pomeranian-Yorkshire-Terrier puppy March 31 to what she believes was a deliberate and malicious act of anti-freeze poisoning is just about the most devastating thing that could ever happen to her.

The Donnelly family also nearly lost their other dog, an Italian Greyhound, to the same ailment.

The family, including her mother Rebecca and grandmother Kathleen, strongly believe that antifreeze was placed in the family's West Colorado Avenue fenced-in backyard two weeks ago by someone living in the neighborhood. They received a threatening letter using curse words against the Donnellys and their two dogs several months ago, despite the fact that Las Animas County Sheriff Jim Casias is a next-door neighbor. "Muffin was her best friend in the world," said Rebecca.

"We're pretty sure we know who it is because most everyone on our block is real friendly and we all get along well," said Rebecca. "But there is a certain neighbor guy on the block who is kind of grouchy and tries to make trouble for others."

Rebecca and Angelina described the ordeal they went through when they first noticed Muffin, who joined the family in May of 2008, throwing up uncontrollably and stumbling around the house Tuesday morning, March 30. She and their greyhound had been let out into their yard around 6 a.m. for a couple of hours.

They took Muffin to Fisher's Peak Veterinary Clinic on Santa Fe Drive where longtime veterinarian Skip Aaroe performed blood work on her before reporting that Muffin was very likely suffering from antifreeze poisoning. Rebecca noted that no signs of antifreeze had actually been spotted anywhere on their property before or after the incident, although it may have all been consumed by their two dogs.

The Donnellys then rushed Muffin up to Southern Colorado Veterinary Internal Medicine in Colorado Springs, thinking they might have an antidote to the antifreeze poisoning. "If it was given soon enough, it could save them," said Rebecca. By then, Muffin was getting drowsy and still throwing up.

After leaving Muffin at the clinic, they drove home only to find their other puppy Sirius, also throwing up, although not as badly as Muffin. Rebecca said they couldn't determine if Sirius drank from the same antifreeze backyard puddle or had gotten into some of the messes left by Muffin.

They rushed Sirius up to the Springs clinic as well. They were able to

"I probably see it (antifreeze poisoning) somewhere in the neighborhood of three to four cases a year. It's not always malicious and can be accidental. Someone may drain the antifreeze from their vehicle and without thinking leave it set there in an alleyway or driveway and a thirsty dog goes trotting through there. But this is the third case I've seen in probably the last three months and maybe for the last six months. Most of them are fatal, especially if they drink a good dose of it."

- Veterinarian Skip Aaroe

save Sirius life although he still requires daily treatment. The family wound up staying the night in the Springs with Rebecca and Angelina holding and petting their puppy much of the night. Despite the clinic staff twice administering an antidote, Muffin had to be put to sleep early the next morning. "When they were giving her shots, I kept thinking my dog was going to live," said a tearful Angelina.

"Angelina was real heartbroken and took it real hard," said Rebecca. They buried Muffin at the family ranch out in the county. "If someone knew that this was a little child's dog, they would have had to be a pretty evil person to do something like that," Rebecca said.

To help cushion the loss of such a loved one, a family member last week purchased another puppy for Angelina to care for. Animal lover Angelina also sells gourmet pet treats at Trinidad Farmer's Market during the summer, donating half her proceeds and any leftovers to Noah's Ark.

The family plans to file a police report this week, hoping an investigation will lead to the perpetrator. Although they could find no evidence of antifreeze in their yard, Rebecca said whatever it was that killed Muffin had to be placed there since their dogs could not get out of the confined chain-link fenced yard. "She was never out of the yard." Donnelly also found a strange, greasy-looking bone in the yard that day. Rebecca said bone tests at Trinidad State Junior College's chemistry lab (where her mother Kathleen works in public relations) determined that the bone had grapeseed oil and painter's putty on it.

Rebecca also noted that during that night, the indoor-sleeping dogs woke her up with lots of barking and whining as if they sensed someone was prowling around the yard. At first they thought it might



Photo by Mike Garrett

Ten-year-old Angelina Donnelly-Montoya holds her new puppy given to her recently to help cushion the loss of Muffin, her beloved 2 1/2-year-old Pomeranian-Yorkshire-Terrier to possible antifreeze poisoning at their West Colorado Avenue home March 31.

be bears that have recently been spotted in the neighborhood. She said an acquaintance living in that neighborhood also told her someone had tried to tamper with his dog last year by throwing tainted meat over his fence. "He told me that four other dogs in that neighborhood had been poisoned last summer."

She wants to distribute fliers throughout their neighborhood to gather more information from people whose dogs may have been tampered with. She said the 30-year Colorado Springs vet told her he had only treated one other case of deliberate antifreeze poisoning. Angelina said she also has a friend at Fisher's Peak Elementary whose dog was killed by someone who had tainted its food.

She acknowledged that Muffin, who graduated from obedience school and was very protective of her, was something of a yapper that barked at any nearby commotion. Rebecca said the dog's barking from the yard during the day was mentioned in the threatening letter she received. "But if it was a huge problem, I'm sure we would have heard something from Sheriff Casias, who has a dog, too. When she barked too obnoxiously, we brought her inside."

Aaroe said last Friday that antifreeze poisoning is relatively common in Trinidad with some cases being accidental when a pet drinks fluid leftover from a driveway leak. He said the blood tests he ran on Muffin first suggested the possibility that she had ingested antifreeze. The Colorado Springs clinic was then able to confirm the positive result for antifreeze poisoning, he said.

"There is a relatively

new antidote for antifreeze poisoning, but you have to reach the dog quickly. Time is of the essence," said Aaroe, noting he can save a pet if treated right after it is seen drinking antifreeze. A relatively new antifreeze poisoning blood test is also out there, although few veterinary clinics offer both the test and treatment, he noted.

"I probably see it (antifreeze poisoning) somewhere in the neighborhood of three to four cases a year," said Aaroe. "It's not always malicious and can be accidental. Someone may drain the antifreeze from their vehicle and without thinking leave it set there in an alleyway or driveway and a thirsty dog goes trotting through there. But this is the third case I've seen in probably the last three months and maybe for the last six months. Most of them are fatal, especially if they drink a good dose of it." How much antifreeze is consumed per pound of body weight is also a determining factor if a dog survives, he added.

He said cats are also sensitive to antifreeze, can walk through a puddle of it and then clean its paws and be poisoned by it. "Most of the cases that I've dealt with have involved an animal that has gotten loose after jumping out of a fenced yard or the people have a habit of letting them out to roam around and they get into it when they're out on their excursions," Aaroe said.

Pet owners should always be on the lookout for any antifreeze leaks left under parked vehicles and always dilute them with lots of water or soak it up with an absorbent, Aaroe cautioned.

Dorothy Best lights up Raton

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she created page layouts. Then she tried writing, surprising herself when she proved an effective newspaper reporter.

Years after leaving the Raton Range, she returned for a stint as classified advertising manager. "I hated it!" she recalls. "I was much better on the editorial side than the business side." She decided to start her own store in the back of Alan's Radio Shack business, opening "Eureka! Books!", which lasted from 1992-1997. Supplementing the bookstore, she created Funaloons, a gift balloon business.

All along, for more than 10 years, Dorothy took classes at TSJC. By 1999, she had 32 credit hours and wanted to earn a degree. She moved alone to Albuquerque to attend UNM full-time. She and Alan spent every other weekend together, trading off between Albuquerque and Raton. "We eventually even built a house for me to live in," she recalls, "because I was 'livin' in the hood' and Alan didn't find that acceptable."

In 2002, Dorothy returned to Raton with her new bachelor of university studies degree. She calls it a "designer degree" with its concentration on film studies, folklore, and creative writing. Next, she set her sights on filmmaking, establishing Head in the Cloud Productions, encouraged by Albuquerque filmmaker Chris Scheuler, winner of 14 Emmy Awards. Her first film, "We Were Poor But We Were Rich", documented life in Colfax County coal camps between 1900 and 1955; it featured interviews with many people who had worked or grown up in the coal camps. With her first project, she won her first of four Telly Awards.

She went on to produce

films for the State of New Mexico and the state park system. She produced a TV show called "Up to Our Pass in the Arts" for Trinidad's local cable station. This month's 95th birthday celebration at the Shuler Theater will feature Dorothy's short documentary on the historic theater. She has a TV pilot making the rounds, a cooking show called "The Ranger's Pantry." She's written two full-length screenplays. She's looking forward to making a short film called "Defused" in Raton.

Oh, and she's opening her own store in June. Chicorica Lane will be a "kitchen, bath, quilting, crafts, and surprises" store located next to Radio Shack in downtown Raton.

She and Alan enjoy vacation trips. They spent last week with their son Dwaine in San Diego, where he's a Web site designer who moonlights as a set painter for theater productions. Daughter Alana is a software analyst for large law firms in Albuquerque, where she's raising Dorothy and Alan's only grandchild, 15-year-old Erika Bailey. The youngest, Nathan, has remained in Raton where he works for Radio Shack building custom computer systems and providing computer service training.

Even as she stands proudly beside her 4 "Tellys," Dorothy's mind is increasingly engaged in creating her new business, with its grand opening two months away. Like Alan, and with Alan, she enjoys temporary escapes from work, driving from their Bartlett Mesa home to Sugarite State Park to hike around Lake Maloya and its many nearby trails. The two are nearly inseparable after 40 good years. Best of all, there's so much more to come, and it all looks good.

State Congressional delegation urges continued spending ban on Piñon Canyon

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In its March newsletter, PCEOC noted that such an expansion would cost Southern Colorado communities \$27 to \$76 million annually, based on economic data compiled by Salazar and Congresswoman Marilyn Musgrave. "This includes lost tourism and hunting revenues, cattle sales, agricultural salaries and hay sales.

"Wind (turbine) development on 100,000 acres would generate an additional \$25 to \$35 million annually. Natural gas fields east of Interstate 25 could also become a reality as energy prices rise."

The newsletter goes on to say that Army estimates of expansion economic benefits would bring in only \$5 million in annual salaries and \$4 million in maintenance costs to the area economy. "A good trade? Pro-expansion politicians say expansion is about jobs. They are right, expansion is about the loss of private sector jobs and Southeastern Colorado

businesses in the hope of creating taxpayer-funded jobs near Fort Carson," the newsletter states.

Witnesses called during Trammell pre-trial hearing

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resulting in death, stemming from the July 2009 death of her two-month-old son, Ethan. Trammell, who was 17 at the time, was with her infant son, his father, Ronald James Walker, and two others, and were allegedly drinking in a Trinidad motel room on the evening of July 3, 2009. The infant reportedly fell off a bed onto the floor and was not breathing. Trammell previously testified that she had left the room to smoke, leaving the infant with Walker, and that when she returned, she found Walker performing CPR on the infant.

After doctors determined that nothing else could be done, the baby was taken off of life support at Memorial Hospital in Colorado Springs and died on July 9.

At the time, Trammell was charged with possession of a scheduled II controlled substance, and possession/consumption of ethyl alcohol by an underage person. During a search of the room, police discovered a large quantity of alcoholic beverages and a pill bottle containing Vicodin pills.

Walker also had been charged with child abuse resulting in death, but pleaded guilty to a lesser charge of contributing to the delinquency of a minor (Trammell) and was sentenced to serve two years in the Department of Corrections and three years of mandatory parole.

During the pre-trial motions hearing last Friday, Trinidad Police Department Det. Sgt. Phil Martin, who investigated the incident, testified that Ann Trammell told him afterward that

she had been drinking but that there were no signs of extreme intoxication, and Martin said he believed that she had been crying. Martin had been called as a witness by District Attorney Frank Ruybalid.

Under cross examination by defense attorney Cobea Becker, Martin testified that Walker and Trammell were separated prior to the interviews that he conducted with each. Martin said that Trammell asked to see her son, Ethan, several times, but she was not allowed to call the hospital.

Martin said when Ann Trammell's mother, Elizabeth Trammell, arrived at the police station, that she "appeared to be concerned and became upset when I informed her what was going on." He said the exchange between the mother and daughter was "extremely hostile" as they yelled at each other.

Martin concluded his testimony by saying that Ann admitted that she had consumed three beers and a shot of Jim Beam whiskey.

Becker then called Elizabeth to the witness stand. Elizabeth said she'd received a phone call from social worker Nicole Dominguez, who told her that Ethan had been hurt and had been airlifted out of Trinidad. She said she was told to go to the police department.

"Did you want to go to the police department," Becker asked her.

"No, I wanted to go see Ethan," Elizabeth responded. "I was very angry and very upset that I couldn't go to the hospital." She added that she was still "very angry" when she arrived at the police department and saw her daughter. "I was focusing on Ethan and I just wanted to go

see him."

On cross-examination by Ruybalid, Elizabeth said she had been sleeping when she received the phone call and it was around midnight when she drove from her residence in Allendale to the police department. She said she did not recall discussions at the police station concerning getting an attorney or the "emancipation" of her 17-year-old daughter. Emancipation is the legal process that gives a teenager who is 16 or older legal independence from his or her parents or guardians.

"I was focusing on my grandchild dying," Elizabeth said.

Wrapping up last Friday's hearing, Becker told the court that she'd filed a motion on Jan. 25, but had not yet received anything regarding medical experts' testimony that may be used in court. She also said that so far she's received no autopsy photos. Ruybalid said that Becker did have access to more than 800 pages of discovery that included reports from four different doctors.

District Court Judge Claude Appel ordered the prosecution to provide a written report by April 23 on which doctors and findings that it intended to use in court, as well as any autopsy photos that it planned to use.

Ruybalid told the court that he could not say what happened on the night of July 3, 2009, adding that the only person who knows is Ann Trammell.

Judge Appel then reminded Ruybalid that it was the prosecution's burden to prove guilt. "If you can't prove it, this case might get bounced," Appel said. "This might not even get to trial."

THE CHRONICLE-NEWS
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(USPS 110-040) 200 West Church Street • P.O. Box 763, Trinidad, CO 81082
(719) 846-3311
FAX: (719) 846-3612

Members Associated Press - Colorado Press Association.
Periodicals Postage Paid For At Trinidad, CO.
Published Daily
Except Saturday and Sunday
©2006 The Shearman Corp.
www.thechronicle-news.com

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Business Hours:
Monday - Friday
8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

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