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Jealous Dog Kills Child Trying to Stroke Its Back

Fighting frantically to wrest 21-month-old Marguerite Theresa Derdenger from the **tenacious** death grip of a jealous pet **bulldog**, the mother, Mrs. Drucilla Derdenger, and grandfather, Albert Lange, waged a heart-rending but futile battle for the baby's life last night in the front room of their flat, 1742 W. Sixth St.

The animal suddenly turned on the child when she tried to stroke his back. Clamping its jaws at the base of the girl's neck, the dog **held on grimly**, growling as the desperate mother and grandfather fought to pry the baby loose.

Holds Grip Several Minutes

The mother's cries of fear and grief mingled with Lange's harsh commands but the dog **steadfastly refused to relax his** grip on the child's neck for several minutes. When Marguerite finally was snatched from the dog's jaws, she was rushed across the street to Dr. Gilbert R. Owen, 1800 W. Sixth St. He pronounced the girl dead.

Grief-stricken Mrs. Derdenger said last night that the dog had not been too friendly with the baby but never before was vicious. She said the dog, Woof, had, however, shown some jealousy toward the child.

Tries to Rub Back

The tragedy occurred while the family was in the living room shortly before 7 p.m. Mrs. Derdenger was lying on the floor while her father massaged her back for relief of pain. The child, trying to emulate her grandfather, sought to stroke the dog when he lunged at her without warning.

Mrs. Derdenger, whose husband, Staff-Sgt. Charles P. Derdenger, is stationed at Camp Barkeley, Texas, said she had owned the **5-year-old** animal all its life.

Immediately after loosening his grip on the child, the dog

rushed under a bureau in a stairway hall and refused to come out despite repeated entreaties until officers of the City Humane Department arrived to take it to the W. Ann Street Shelter. They had to rope the dog to remove it from the hiding place.

The mother requested that the dog be killed and officials of the animal shelter said it would be held 10 days for observation of rabies, then they would comply with her request.

Police Det. Lts. Charles P. King, C. F. Detrich and Eugene Bechtel investigated.

Killer Dog Faces Gas Chamber for Death of Infant

LOS ANGELES, Feb. 14 (UP)—Woof, a jealous five-year-old **Staffordshire bulldog** who last night turned from a family pet to the vicious killer of his mistress' 21-month-old daughter, today cowered in his "cell" facing a sentence of death by gas.

The 35-pound dog grabbed little Margurite **Theresa Derdenger** by the neck and crushed her spine and skull with his fangs before her mother, Mrs. **Druclla Derdenger**, could loose the grip of his teeth.

Woof was ordered killed by grief-stricken Mrs. Derdenger, wife of Staff Sgt. Charles P. Derdenger, stationed at Camp Barkley, Tex. Authorities said they would comply after holding the tan and white female for 10 days for rabies observation.

Confined in solitary at an animal shelter, the dog cringed when anyone spoke to it and groveled on the floor.

The tragedy took place in the home of Margurite's grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Albert F. Lange, where she and her mother were making their home.

The child was rushed across the street to Dr. Gilbert R. Owen, who pronounced her dead.

Mrs. Derdenger said she had had the dog for five years and that he had been a playmate and guardian to the child since its birth. She said she had been lying on the floor and Woof made playful overtures and tried to lick her face. She had just ordered him away when little **Marguerite** toddled over to her mother and began to hug her.

Snarling, suddenly the dog leaped at the child, sinking his fangs into her neck.



Times photo

TRAGIC HOME-COMING—Sgt. Charles Derdenger arrives home to comfort wife, Drucilla, in sorrow over death of their baby daughter killed by pet bull terrier.

Father of Baby Killed by Dog Arrives Home

There was an arm to lean on yesterday for tragedy-shaken Mrs. Drucilla Derdenger, mother of 21-month-old Marguerite Theresa Derdenger, who met death in the jealous jaws of Woolf, the family's 5-year-old bull terrier—it was that of her husband, Sgt. Charles Derdenger, who arrived home by plane on emergency furlough from Camp Barkeley, Texas.

"It's horrible. I can't believe that it happened," the baby's father said grimly.

Asked if he agreed with his wife's decision to have Woolf executed, Sgt. Derdenger replied "I really haven't thought about it. All I've been concerned with is my wife's health."

Under Doctor's Care

The couple then disclosed that Mrs. Derdenger has been under the care of a doctor. He is the same doctor, across the street from their residence at 1742 W. Sixth St., who pronounced little Marguerite dead when Mrs. Derdenger rushed the child to him after Woolf had released her limp little form.

Meanwhile, Lester Lev, Deputy City Attorney, ruled that the order for the dog's death, signed by Mrs. Derdenger the morning after the tragedy, is legal.

"The owner of a dog has a legal right to order the animal's death," Lev declared.

Under Observation

Exact date of Woolf's execution has not been set but it probably will be in about 10 days. This is because the dog is under observation for possible rabies inasmuch as the 45-pound female terrier also bit Mrs. Derdenger and the child's grandfather, Albert Lange.

Mrs. Derdenger has said that she intends to be present when Woolf is put to sleep "because I want to be there to see that it is done, that Woolf is not given to anyone else and allowed to kill another child."

Her husband echoed her stand on the matter, declaring, "Yes, this must never happen again." Because his furlough is for only 10 days, it is doubtful if Sgt. Derdenger will be here when Woolf goes to the lethal chamber at the Ann Street Animal Shelter.

Funeral Tomorrow

Although members of the staff at the animal shelter said that Woolf looked as if she once had pups, the Derdengers said yesterday that the terrier-killer never had babies of her own.

Private funeral services for little Marguerite will be held tomorrow at the Wright & Callanan Mortuary. Interment will be at Calvary Cemetery.

Dog Granted New Reprieve

Stay of Week From Execution Given Baby-Killing Terrier

Woolf, the Staffordshire bull terrier who fatally bit her 21-month-old mistress, Marguerite Theresa Derdenger of 1742 W. Sixth St. last Feb. 13, yesterday won another week's reprieve from the gas chamber, but not without debate.

In a packed courtroom Superior Judge William R. McKay continued the matter of dissolving a restraining order against the dog's execution until next Friday when Morris Lavine, attorney for Grady Terry, cocktail parlor operator and dog enthusiast, was unable to appeal because of illness. Terry had obtained the original stay last month.

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Parents' Lawyer Objects
Atty. Joseph Scott, representing the parents of the victim Sgt. and Mrs. Charles P. Derdenger, however, spoke his piece on the restraining order.

"Let's set the record right," Scott thundered. "The restraining order states the dog merely bit the child. That dog killed the child. I know what these parents are going through. I had a child who died after being bitten by a dog 25 or 30 years ago."

Outside the courtroom, efforts to learn more about Scott's tragedy were shrugged off by the white-haired lawyer with the comment, "That was a long time ago. Let's drop it."

Representatives of the City Attorney's office argued against the order which has kept Woolf alive despite orders of the parents to have the dog executed for the crime. They pointed out that a dog generally is recognized as personal property of the owners and said it was common practice to have dogs put to sleep.

Controversy Ends as Woolf, Baby-Killing Dog, 'Put to Sleep'

Woolf is dead.

The baby-slaying female Staffordshire terrier about which there has been so much controversy since she killed her playmate, little 21-month-old Marguerite Theresa Derdenger, last Feb. 13, was "put to sleep" late yesterday.

The dog was released to William W. Coen of 720 S. Columbia St., a friend of the Derdengers, from the Ann Street Animal Shelter, where she had been imprisoned since the tragedy.

Although Coen and the Derdengers were reluctant to discuss Woolf's fate, Atty. Joseph Scott, who has represented them in litigation which arose over

their order for the dog's death, disclosed last night that the Derdengers had informed him that Woolf "had been taken care of—asphyxiated, I guess."

The dog's release to Coen immediately followed a ruling by Superior Judge Emmett Wilson that injunctions previously obtained against destruction of the animal were invalid.

Woolf became a killer when, apparently in a fit of jealousy, she clamped a tenacious grip on the neck of little Marguerite Theresa in the Derdenger apartment at 1742 W. Sixth St. and, despite frantic struggles by Mrs. Derdenger and her father, Albert Lange, held on until the child was dead.

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