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**Author:** Megan Doren Metro North Bureau of The Dallas Morning News THE

**Publish Date:** October 24, 1990

**Word Count:** 691

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McKINNEY -- An 18-month-old girl died Tuesday after she and her grandmother were attacked by one of the family's four pit bull dogs, officials said.

The attack occurred in the front yard of the family's rural Collin County home, where the dogs were chained.

The girl's grandfather said Tuesday that the dogs had never before hurt anyone and that the child had played with them before. "She rode those dogs in the house like they were

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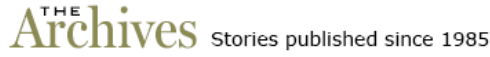
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**1.) Dead girl's family to keep dogs**

**Father doesn't blame pit bulls**

**Author:** Megan Doren Metro North Bureau of The Dallas Morning News THE

**Publish Date:** October 25, 1990

**Word Count:** 796

**Document ID:** 0ED3D135ABD92733

MELISSA -- The Collin County couple whose 18-month-old daughter was killed by a pit bull terrier Tuesday plans to keep its other two pit bulls.

The dogs have been good pets and "it's hard to get rid of something like that that you've been close to for so many years," James Cole, father of Jessica Cole, said Wednesday.

"Before we had Jessica, they (the dogs) were our babies," he said. Shortly after Jessica

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# Family's pit bull dog kills toddler in Collin County

By Megan Doren

Metro North Bureau of The Dallas Morning News

McKINNEY — An 18-month-old girl died Tuesday after she and her grandmother were attacked by one of the family's four pit bull dogs, officials said.

The attack occurred in the front yard of the family's rural Collin County home, where the dogs were chained.

The girl's grandfather said Tuesday that the dogs had never before hurt anyone and that the child had played with them before. "She rode those dogs in the house like they were horses," said Charles Cole, 56.

■ Other victims.

12A

Jessica Anne Cole suffered severe head injuries and bites on her body and was pronounced dead at 12:55 p.m. at North Texas Medical Center in McKinney, officials said.

Mary Jane Cole, 55, underwent surgery for bites on her hands and legs after she and her granddaughter were taken to the hospital by a McKinney Fire Department ambulance, officials said. Hospital officials would not comment on her condition late Tuesday.

Collin County sheriff's Lt. Tom  
Please see DOG on Page 12A.

# Dog kills toddler in Collin

Continued from Page 1A.

Francis said the incident will be referred to a grand jury to determine whether criminal charges should be filed.

The grandmother told officials that she was keeping the child while her parents, James and Debby Cole, were at work. The victim's grandparents live in a house, and the child's family lives in a mobile home at the front of the property, on State Highway 121 about one mile north-east of Melissa, Lt. Francis said.

Mary Jane Cole told authorities that she was getting ready to drive into town from her house. On the way out, she stopped her car at the mobile home. The dogs are kept chained nearby. Mrs. Cole and the girl got out of the car to go inside the mobile home, but the girl pulled away from her, went around the car near the dogs and was attacked, Mrs. Cole told officials.

Mrs. Cole said she rushed around the car, where the dog was still mauling the child. Mrs. Cole was bitten while getting the child away.

At the hospital, the girl's grandfather said that the dogs had never been vicious and that the little girl had played with them.

"I've raised the dogs from pups. They never hurt anybody," said Charles Cole.

The girl's father, James Cole, told Terry Sanner, a field agent for the Collin County medical examiner, that he never left the child around any of the dogs and that the dogs were always chained. He told Mr. Sanner that he raised the 4-year-old male dog from a puppy and that he breeds pit bulls.

"The father was really shaken up," said Mr. Sanner. "He and his father are truck drivers, and normally they would have been gone (out of town) but they'd just gotten in when they were called that this happened."

The dog was picked up by the county animal control officer, then killed at a McKinney veterinarian clinic about two hours after the at-

## DOG BITE VICTIMS

Here are the people who have died from dog-bite injuries in the United States so far this year:

**Jan. 17** — Marjee Lilly, 70, Los Angeles. Victim attacked by two pit bulls while feeding dogs at grandson's house.

**Jan. 21** — Anna Lynn Pagliaro, 5 days old, Florence, N.J. Attacked by the family's Siberian husky while sleeping in crib.

**Feb. 7** — Lillian Butler, 72, Memphis, Tenn. Pit bull escaped from neighboring yard and attacked her.

**March 15** — Tonya M. Elliott, 2½, Forest Township, Mich. Victim wandered into yard where she was attacked by a chained wolf hybrid.

**March 26** — Laurene MacLeod, 35, West Palm Beach, Fla. Police on break-in call sent their German shepherd police dog into house; dog bit victim twice.

**April 9** — Norma Faith Jordan, 4, Coosada, Ala. Two mixed-breed strays attacked the victim in her front yard while her mother was in the back yard hanging laundry.

**April 10** — Paul Mahler, 28 days, Mat-Su Valley, Alaska. Victim's mother entered mother wolf hybrid's pen while wolf was in labor and held infant to animal's face. Wolf's tooth pierced baby's skull.

**April 12** — James C. Mills, 81, Gwinette County, Ga. Details uncertain. Chained pit bull crossbreed found with body of neighbor.

**May 5** — Jerry Lee Cornell, 3, Talkeetna, Alaska. Husky-

malamute sled dog broke a tether and attacked boy at a birthday party.

**May 6** — Gage H. Rache, 6 days old, Lacey, Wash. Victim attacked by husky while sleeping in crib.

**June 18** — Betty Lou Stidham, 57, Memphis, Tenn. Two pit bulls attacked victim for 20 minutes while she was outside getting mail.

**June 28** — Kelsie Provo, 2 months, Dalton, Ohio. Attacked by uncle's pit bull-shepherd crossbreed while watching television with grandmother.

**July 1** — Jason Lee Wilson, 5, Seneca, S.C. Rottweiler-pit bull crossbreed attacked victim while playing in yard.

**July 18** — Tionna Kenny, 6 months, Morgan Park, Ill. Victim attacked by pit bull after mother left child with a neighbor.

**Aug. 24** — Richard S. Stitch II, 1½, Bremerton, Wash. Victim attacked by family's Akita while playing on floor with sister.

**Sept. 12** — Patricia Roberts, 48, Walterboro, S.C. After victim had epileptic seizure, she was attacked by seven stray dogs that she and her husband had been feeding.

**Sept. 26** — Mary Elisabeth Leffew, 1 month, Pima Co., Ariz. Victim was killed by the family's pet husky-malamute as she slept in a bassinet.

**Oct. 23** — Jessica Anne Cole, 18 months, Collin County. Victim was killed by family pit bull dog chained in the yard. Grandmother injured while trying to rescue her.

SOURCE: Humane Society of the United States, Collin County authorities.



tack, said county animal control supervisor Sidney Auten. The dog's head has been sent to Austin for rabies tests, he said. The three other dogs were not confiscated.

"They're (the dogs) not in any legal violation; they are chained up securely," Mr. Auten said.

Mr. Sanner said the girl's father told him he did not think the three dogs would attack anyone.

Scripps Howard News Service, The Dallas Morning News

Jessica's death is the 18th in the United States this year from dog attacks, according to figures from the Humane Society of the United States. The national Centers for Disease Control, which studied dog-related deaths nationwide from 1979 to 1988, estimates there are about 20 such killings annually.

Most victims are children — 70 percent are under 10, according to the study. Pit bulls are the breed most often responsible for deadly attacks — about 42 percent of the fatalities. German shepherds rank second, at 15 percent, followed by huskies, at 12 percent.

Of the 17 fatal attacks documented by the Humane Society of the United States this year, seven were caused by pit bulls or pit bull crossbreeds.

Staff writer Nita Thurman and the Scripps Howard News Service contributed to this report.

# Dead girl's family to keep dogs

By Megan Doren

Metro North Bureau of The Dallas Morning News

MELISSA — The Collin County couple whose 18-month-old daughter was killed by a pit bull terrier Tuesday plans to keep its other two pit bulls.

The dogs have been good pets and "it's hard to get rid of something like that that you've been close to for so many years," James Cole, father of Jessica Cole, said Wednesday.

"Before we had Jessica, they (the dogs) were our babies," he said. At first, after Jessica died, "we said we were going to get rid of all of the dogs, but that was before the shock wore off," Mr. Cole said.

The girl suffered severe head injuries

## Father doesn't blame pit bulls

when the dog mauled her and was pronounced dead at North Texas Medical Center in McKinney. That dog and three others all were on chains in the family's front yard.

The dog that attacked Jessica was taken away by a county animal control officer and killed.

Mr. Cole, who cried as he held a photograph of his daughter, said Jessica used to ride the dogs like horses in the house and that he raised the dog that attacked her. He

said the dog was one of the hundreds he has bred in the last eight years.

Mr. Cole said the other two pit bulls are the mother and grandmother of the dog that mauled Jessica. One of them is his wife's dog and goes everywhere with her, he said.

"Debby said there's no way we're getting rid of Jewel," he said. "She's an average dog and she'll attack a cat like any average dog, but she wouldn't hurt a person for anything in the world."

A fourth pit bull at the house belongs to a friend and was there to be bred. Mr. Cole said the dog would be returned to its owners.

Tearful family members said Wednesday that they had been trying to get Jessica's Please see DEAD on Page 40A.



Jessica Cole . . . was killed by a pit bull terrier Tuesday.

# Dead girl's parents to keep dogs

Continued from Page 33A.

mother to rest all day because she was so upset. But they said it was difficult because friends and relatives kept coming to the house to give their condolences.

"In a way, I hold animosity toward the dog that did this, but I feel remorse that he had to be destroyed, and I don't believe he realized what he was doing. He thought it was a game," Mr. Cole said. "He was like a big puppy, and every time we'd walk out of the house, he'd jump up and want to play. I hate that he had to be killed."

Jessica's grandmother, Mary Jane Cole, who had surgery for injuries she suffered while getting the girl away from the dog, was in fair condition Wednesday and was expected to be released from the hospital this weekend, family members said.

The attack occurred when Jessica pulled away from her grandmother and walked near the dogs.

Jessica's death was the 18th in the United States this year from dog at-

tacks, according to figures from the Humane Society of the United States. Pit bulls are the breed most often responsible for deadly attacks.

But Mr. Cole said he doesn't believe the pit bull is more dangerous than any other breed and believes it has been criticized unfairly.

"There's very little difference if it had been a Doberman, a Rottweiler or a German shepherd or any other animal that could attack," Mr. Cole said. "It's just that they don't have the strength and the jaw pressure that pit bulls do, and with a pit bull they're usually killed a lot quicker."

He called the breed "a victim of the circumstances as much as they're a cause of it."

Mr. Cole said he has been breeding fewer pit bulls because of the bad publicity the breed has received in recent years.

He compared concerns about pit bulls to concerns about trucks in accidents.

"It's not that trucks have more wrecks than cars do, but people are

down on them because they cause a lot more damage," he said.

"We don't have any animosity toward the other dogs. It's just one of those things," Mr. Cole said. "It'd be no different than if she'd fell in a swimming pool."

"In a small neighborhood when everybody hears about something like that, half of the people in the neighborhood will cement up their pools."

He also said the male dog involved in the attack had a different temperament than the three female dogs.

"He was a little more roughhouse and more playful and when you came out to pet him he'd almost knock you down, but he wasn't mean."

"I wasn't there, but I imagine in my mind what happened was that she got knocked down and started screaming and then my mother probably started screaming," said Mr. Cole. "It was just a game to him. I believe he started playing and I think with all the screaming and holler-