

Columbia Record August 3, 1986

Dog to get day in court

Bojo the German shepherd granted last-minute reprieve

By PETER O'BOYLE III
Staff Writer

Bojo the dog, accused of biting a Denzville woman and scheduled to die by lethal injection today, got a last minute stay of execution Thursday night. County officials agreed at 7:05 p.m. Thursday that a court hearing would be held before Bojo could be put to death.

Columbia defense attorney Jack Swerling, Bojo's lawyer, obtained the last-minute reprieve after a day of tense negotiations over the dog's fate. "I am pleased to announce that the county has agreed to a stay of execution, pending a hearing," Swerling said Thursday, after he was telephoned by Assistant County Attorney Dennis Aughry.

Bojo, a 2 1/2-year-old male German shepherd, was scheduled to be put to sleep by lethal injection at 2 p.m. today. It was the third biting incident attributed to Bojo, according to a county animal control official who accused the dog of being vicious.

But Swerling said Bojo is innocent. "It's a case of mistaken identity," said Swerling, who has defended numerous humans on trial for their lives in death penalty cases. Bojo's owner, Derek

See Dog, 7-A

Dog

From 1-A

Venable, claims the dog was with his (Venable's) girlfriend in Blythewood, some 20 miles away on July 22, the day of the alleged biting incident. Venable, who could not be reached for comment, told Swerling he has given the dog to his girlfriend, who promised to keep it in Blythewood.



Swerling

Bojo got one earlier stay of execution Thursday morning when county animal control officials agreed that Bojo could be placed with a security dog firm. But that did not work out.

Animal Control Supervisor George Wilson said Thursday that Bojo has bitten at least three people, possibly more.

"He's had a taste of blood," said Wilson. "Once a dog starts biting people, he won't get better, he gets worse."

He said Bojo is unpredictable and allowed the dog catcher to pet

him. "But five minutes later, he was out of control."

"We feel that the dog is vicious and a threat to society," said Wilson. Wilson agreed to a plan to place the dog with a security agency "but the dog was turned down as too mean. They want a dog that barks, not bites people."

He dismissed claims that Bojo is mild-mannered and that in the recent incident another dog actually bit the woman.

"If anybody feels he is not vicious, I would invite them to go near the cage with him," added Wilson.

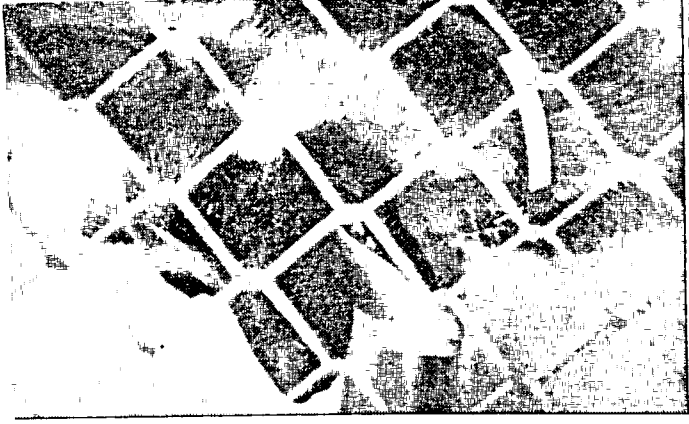
Should the owner obtain a court order blocking the execution, Wilson said his department will comply. County Attorney William Able was out of town Thursday and unavailable for comment.

Nathaniel Wilson, the superintendent of the Columbia animal shelter — Bojo's death row — also claimed the German shepherd is vicious.

"He's a mean dog. He's going to cause a lot of trouble if he gets out," said Wilson.

But Swerling, who owns an English sheepdog and a poodle and is a former board member of the Animal Protection League, said animals should have rights too. Swerling and Venable's father are friends.

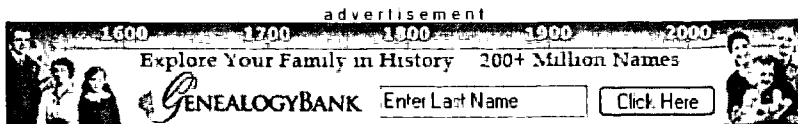
"There's got to be some due process," he said.



Jeff Amberg/The State

'Death Row' at the animal shelter

Bojo awaits outcome of attorney's appeal



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Charlotte Observer. The (NC)

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ANIMAL ASSAULT

DOG ON DEATH ROW GRANTED A REPRIEVE COLUMBIA LAWYER STEPS IN TO DEFEND BOJO

Author: *Associated Press*

Dateline: COLUMBIA

Article Text:

Bojo the dog may get a new lease on life after a well-known Columbia defense attorney interceded before the canine's scheduled execution Friday to question whether justice was being served.

It seems Bojo was accused of biting a woman from Dentsville, but the owner said his dog was in another part of town at the time of the incident.

Jack Swerling, a Columbia lawyer, said Friday that three companies have offered to put the 2 1/2-year-old male German shepherd to work as a security dog to prevent Bojo from being put to sleep.

"We've made the offer to the county and they'll let us know Monday," said Swerling. "There's no need for a hearing unless (county officials) turn down that plan."

The dog was scheduled to die by lethal injection Friday, but Richland County officials agreed at 7:05 p.m. Thursday to discuss the matter with Swerling and consider a court hearing.

The biting incident was the third attributed to Bojo, according to a county animal control officer who accused the dog of being vicious.

But Swerling, who is friends with the father of the dog's owner, said, "It's a case of mistaken identity."

The dog's owner, Derek Venable, says Bojo was 20 miles away in Blythewood

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on July 22, the day of the biting in the community on the eastern fringe of Columbia. Venable said he has given the dog to his girlfriend, who promised to keep him in Blythewood.

But animal control supervisor George Wilson said Thursday that Bojo has bitten at least three persons, possibly more.

"He's had a taste of blood," Wilson said. "Once a dog starts biting people, he won't get better, he gets worse."

He said Bojo is unpredictable and allowed the dogcatcher to pet him. But five minutes later, he was out of control.

We feel that the dog is vicious and a threat to society, Wilson said.

He dismissed claims that Bojo is mild-mannered and that another dog bit the woman in the recent incident. The other dog has not been identified by county officials or Swerling.

"If anybody feels he is not vicious, I would invite them to go near the cage with him," Wilson said.

Swerling, who owns an English sheepdog and a poodle and is a former board member of the Animal Protection League, said animals should have rights, too. He has defended numerous humans on trial in death penalty cases.

"The ordinances involved in the situation do not give a dog owner the right to contest the decision of animal control," Swerling said. "It's serious when you consider it could be anybody's dog."

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