

## Dogs leave yard, attack Delray woman

By Dani Davies, Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

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DELRAY BEACH -- Two dogs escaped from their fenced yard and attacked a woman walking on a street near her home, mauling her as helpless onlookers screamed in horror.

The 2-year-old male Rottweiler mixes escaped from their yard at 615 N.E. Third Ave. Wednesday afternoon while owner Keli Nowling was away. They severely bit 33-year-old Marguene St. Juste, who lives next door, damaging her arms, stomach and face. Each time she tried to break free and get away, the dogs would attack her again, according to a police report.

"It was the worst thing I've ever seen. They were killing her," said Molly Carlin, who lives nearby and said no one was able to help St. Juste. "If you tried to wrestle that dog, you would have been dead."

St. Juste was in critical condition when she was taken to Delray Medical Center but improved to fair condition Thursday, according to a hospital spokesperson. Family members declined to comment.

Nowling signed papers today giving permission for county officials to destroy the dogs and sent flowers to the hospital for St. Juste.

"I hope she makes a full recovery, and my prayers are with her," Nowling said. "If I had known they would have been aggressive, I would have put them down sooner."

Nowling said that although the dogs -- named Fuzzy, who was neutered, and Cini, who was scheduled to be neutered -- often escaped from her yard, they usually ended up sitting on her front porch. She put lattice up when they jumped the fence and put blocks in front of it after they dug their way out. Neither dog had ever been aggressive before, she said.

City animal control officer Ginny Feldmann said she knew the dogs before the attack. She has responded three times this year when they broke free from their yard. Nowling was given one warning in July, according to police.

"The whole incident surprises me because the dogs are friendly. I never thought they would do this," Feldmann said. Carlin says the dogs chased and attacked her cat more than a year ago and that she saw them outside of their fence at least once a month. She was on her back porch reading the newspaper around 4:30 p.m. Wednesday when she heard St. Juste's screams. She and her roommate, a nurse, ran outside.

"When we got there, I saw this beautiful young woman in a maid's outfit being mauled by two dogs. They had her by the armpits," Carlin said.

Witnesses tried to care for St. Juste until paramedics arrived. **Police officers used a Taser to stun one dog and eventually put them both into a fenced-in area until a county animal control officer arrived.**

**"That was the worst I've seen in 13 years," Lt. Joseph Milenkovic said.**

Feldmann said that if confronted by an aggressive dog, a person should not run or scream but should stand still, avoid making eye contact and try to talk to the dog to calm it.

Nowling said that neighbors have been taunting and teasing the dogs recently by poking things through and throwing things over the fence and even spraying pesticides in the yard. But she is still left wondering why the dogs she had almost since they were born became aggressive.

"As much as I love my dogs, I have to do the right thing, and I know that I can't trust them," she said. "It's not worth another person's safety or life."

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