

Grandmother found not guilty on charges stemming from dog attack

Written by By Betsy Blevins, Managing Editor
Thursday, 17 March 2011 15:41 -

March 10, 2011 - A local grandmother facing charges of injury to a child was found not guilty last week by a jury. Charlcene Walker was arrested on June 16, 2009, after an incident at her residence 12 days prior where her three-year-old granddaughter, Shaylee Crosson, was mauled by a pitt bull and suffered serious injuries. After nearly a day of deliberation last Wednesday and Thursday, Walker was relieved to hear that the jury panel chosen for her case did not find her responsible for the attack. The not guilty verdict was read around 2 p.m. on Thursday, March 3.

The nightmare for Walker began on June 4, 2009, while Shaylee was at her home for a visit.

"She wasn't even supposed to be here that day - her parents had called and wanted her to come earlier than we had planned," Walker stated.

She states that they were in the backyard playing when Walker went inside to go to the bathroom. She had told Shaylee to come with her, but another woman who was outside with them reportedly spoke up and said she would keep an eye on her. Shaylee later told her mother that same woman gave her permission to go get her bicycle, which is why she left the immediate backyard. Walker says that while she was in the bathroom she had a weird feeling come over her and she went to check on Shaylee.

"I came out the back door and she wasn't there, she was gone. So I told everybody to stop what they were doing - as calmly as I could - and help me look for her," she said.

A man living in another residence on the property was coming out of his home about that time and Walker saw him bolt toward the area where they kept the pitt bull, Buddy.

"I knew then something was terribly wrong," she added.

The man saw Shaylee lying on the ground lifeless with the dog standing next to her looking at her. He was able to get the dog away while Walker scooped her granddaughter up and called for help.

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"She was barely moving and bleeding a lot from her head," she said.

Walker said they called 911, but felt like they could get her to the hospital faster than the ambulance could arrive, and jumped in the car for Bonham.

"I had a little Mustang that could whip through the corners on 78 pretty good, so we got there in about five minutes," Walker stated.

Shaylee suffered severe injuries to her head - having only 20% of her scalp left and deep gashes in her face - and was flown to Children's Hospital in Dallas from Bonham. Once in Dallas, Walker said Shaylee started asking for her "Mimi".

"We were praying - that is the only thing that got us through - the prayers," Walker said. "For her and me both. They said most children her age that sustain that sort of injury do not make it."

Shaylee remained in ICU for eight days and went through several surgeries and procedures in the coming weeks and months.

It's been 21 months since the incident happened and Walker reports that Shaylee, who is now five, is doing good.

"This didn't change her a bit. She has a Great Dane for a pet and loves playing with her dog. She isn't scared."

Shaylee is still mostly bald from the attack, but is undergoing treatment through Shriner's Hospital where they hope to stretch hair-bearing skin from the bottom of her hairline up so she will have hair.

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"She has a wig, but it makes her head itch, so she wears a hat or a bandana, but she isn't self-conscious about how she looks. She could've started school this year, but they are waiting while she is undergoing the treatments," Walker said.

Walker says that Buddy, who belonged to her fiance John, had never shown aggression before that day, and was actually playing with children when John went to see about buying him.

"It was just a freak accident," she said.

When the grandmother saw Shaylee at the courthouse, it had been six months since she had seen her last. Shaylee lives in Odessa, so that makes frequent visits hard.

"Shaylee and I have a special bond," she said.

While this has been a huge relief for Walker, she is holding out hope and saying prayers for her family - where at least one member still holds a lot of resentment against her.

"I understand they have to blame somebody, but I pray they see it was an accident," she added.