



www.voicesforpets.org

## December 2013 Marks the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Voices for Pets

Dear Pet Lover,

I am going to tell you a story. It's a painful story that you may have heard before. But it warrants sharing again and may remind you of why we must continue our mission in the years ahead.

Voices for Pets came into existence in December 1993 in response to the lack of serious prosecution of cruelty to animal cases.

In 1993, a Danville man, Ryan Robbins had just returned from a year of military training and was showing off his military skills in front of 15 young people. Jingles, the family cat, became his victim. He first tried to wring Jingles' neck. When Jingles didn't die, he struck her against a kitchen cabinet three to five times. Still alive, Jingles was beheaded with a meat cleaver.

When questioned by police, Robbins said this was no big deal at the Virginia Military Institute and he had a hard time believing this should be treated as a criminal matter.

Ryan Robbins was charged with a misdemeanor and fined \$200. He did not see the inside of a jail cell.

We have come a long way since 1993, when it was standard to only charge a misdemeanor with no jail time for individuals like Ryan Robbins. In the early days of Voices for Pets, we were able to successfully press for felony charges but many of them were plea bargained down to misdemeanors. Today thanks to hard work on the part of Voices for Pets volunteers, along with your support, we have become primary voices of influence in several important areas:

The pursuit of the most basic rights for animals – the right to be free from the intentional infliction of fear, pain, torture, suffering and death.

Meaningful punishment against the perpetrators including and especially felony charges with jail time.

Changing legal policies, advocating for enforcement of existing laws as well as influencing the outcome of specific cases.

The education of the public: in schools, in booths, in neighborhoods, in the news, in court, on television – we have been able to reach out to our communities and help people know and better understand what's going on and what caring individuals can do to make a difference. And, so many of you have! **Thank you.**

But of the many phone calls we now receive from all over the country, in just the San Francisco Bay Area alone -- every week -- about ten on average are serious calls about senseless violence against pets.

Following up on these cases is time consuming and expensive. Space doesn't allow us to write about every cruelty case we respond to. In previous newsletters, we've highlighted a number of our successful cases. Unfortunately, we now enclose one of the many stories where justice was denied.

We have come a long ways, and have had many successes **and** disappointments. Still we have certainly been an agent of change for the better. And without the many of you who have helped: attended court hearings or helped with phone calls, letters, petitions, mailers and donations, we would surely not be able to make such a claim!

It has been 20 years of struggle, running on empty and looking for a gas can, but our case load has continued to grow. Since the economic downturn of 2008 donations have not met expenses. We understand that the hard times influenced where your dollars for assistance were allocated. But, we're hopeful that you can now assist Voices for Pets with a donation of any amount in this very important mission.

Again, thank you for your assistance and support in our efforts to make our communities a safer place for animals and ultimately humans as well. Our "clients" are rich only in the many gifts they give us daily: their love, companionship, affection and trust. The work we do on their behalf is one way we thank them for enriching our lives. We wish you and your furry friends a safe and joyful holiday!

Leroy Moyer, Director  
Voices for Pets

30 DAYS OF SERVICE, PROBATION

# Man sentenced in animal cruelty case

## German shepherd that nipped at kids stabbed in 2012

By Malaika Fraley

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MARTINEZ — A 38-year-old Walnut Creek man who killed his 10-month-old German shepherd with a hunting knife was sentenced Wednesday to 30 days of service in a sheriff's work program and three years' probation

after pleading no contest to misdemeanor animal cruelty.

Todd Powers did not appear at the sentencing, but his attorney, David Larkin, changed Powers' plea.

Powers stabbed and slit the throat of the dog named Seven in April 2012.

He told authorities he thought he had to kill the untrained puppy because it had been nipping at his young children and had killed some backyard

chickens.

"Mr. Powers, I don't think, realized some of the options he had," said Larkin, who had successfully petitioned to have Powers' felony charge reduced to a misdemeanor at a preliminary hearing last month by arguing that Powers did not act with malicious intent.

"I think he thought it was his responsibility and he did it to protect his family," Larkin said.

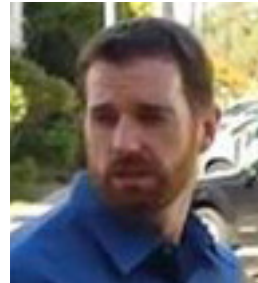
The case outraged animals lovers who learned of the killing from Walnut Creek-based nonprofit Voices For Pets, which submitted about 1,500 signatures asking Judge Bruce Mills to reject the Powers' negotiated plea deal.

"What this man did was certainly felony behavior," Voices For Pets Director Leroy Moyer said after the sentencing. He said the disposition reminds him of when, perhaps 20 years ago, people were unlikely to get jail time for animal abuse, if they were arrested at all.

"I feel this case is a perversion of justice, certainly an insult to how far we've come," Moyer said.



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Dear Pet Lover,

Just as each victim is an individual, each cruelty case is individual as in the case of the stabbing of a 10 month old German shepherd named Seven. He was killed in April 2012. Even though the body was found and two witnesses said 37 year old Todd Powers had killed Seven and when presented with overwhelming evidence, Powers broke down and confessed to stabbing Seven with a hunting knife, he was not arrested.

Eight months later in November 2012, Voices for Pets received a phone call out of the state of Virginia. The caller said that Todd Powers of Walnut Creek, California had stabbed and killed a 10 month old German shepherd named Seven with a hunting knife. The caller also said Powers had previously killed the family cat named Cricket. The caller was concerned for the safety of Powers' wife and three children, all under six years of age. The caller asked if there was anything Voices for Pets could do to bring about an arrest. I said we would do whatever we could.

On July 16, 2013, fifteen months after Seven was killed, Todd Powers was arrested and charged with felony cruelty to an animal. **SO WHY DID IT TAKE FIFTEEN MONTHS TO ARREST POWERS?**

Law enforcement, including animal control does not routinely and seriously investigate crimes against non-humans. In this case, in April 2012, Contra Costa Animal Control Officer Paul Madsen received a call from a fellow police officer in the state of Virginia who reported the stabbing of a dog in Walnut Creek, California and advised the use of caution when going to the residence as Todd Powers owned multiple guns and a lot of ammunition.

Officer Madsen spent the time necessary to investigate, gather evidence, impound Seven's body to be examined by a veterinarian and wrote a well written report.

The higher ups at Animal Control put the report in a file cabinet and forgot about it until Voices for Pets began to agitate. Yes, agitate. I am proud to be called an outside agitator. When it became evident that the killing of Seven would be made public, the report was finally sent to the Contra Costa District Attorney's office and fifteen months after Seven was killed Powers was arrested and charged with felony cruelty to an animal.

Todd Powers stabbed Seven twice in the chest with a hunting knife, then cut Seven's throat. Seven was registered and had an I. D. number tattooed in his ear. Powers cut off Seven's ear so that the body could not be traced back to him, then placed Seven's body in a garbage can for disposal.

Seven was not full grown and still very much a puppy. A veterinarian who examined Seven's body testified the puppy bled to death and took 10 minutes to die.

In 1988 The People of the State of California through our legislators determined that in cruelty to animal cases some acts are felony behavior.

Judge Mary Ann O'Malley said she didn't consider the act felonious and reduced the charge to a misdemeanor. Judge O'Malley's moral compass is not in tune with society.

District Attorney Mark Peterson's office gave Powers a plea bargain of 30 days alternative work program and three years unsupervised probation.

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