

Owner of chimp credits deputy with saving her daughter

■ A Umatilla County Sheriff's deputy shot a Umatilla County woman's pet chimpanzee after it attacked her daughter June 20

By Phil Wright
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Tamara Brogoitti's voice on the 911 call is clear and direct.

"My pet chimpanzee has attacked my daughter," Brogoitti told a dispatcher. "She's bleeding profusely. And the animal has to be shot."

The attack occurred June 20, at Brogoitti's home and ranch on Rieth Road, across from the entrance to the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office. Brogoitti, 68, spoke about the attack and death of Buck publicly for the first time June 22.

"There are no ... he was my son," she said. "What I do want to do, I want to thank the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office."

In particular, she thanked the deputy who had to pull the trigger.

"He sent Buck to heaven and saved my daughter," she said. "It was a horrible thing that happened. For the rest of my life I will thank that man for what he did."

She said the deputy acted with professionalism in a crisis.

"My daughter was losing blood, and emergency personnel needed to get to her," she said. "There were no options."

The body cam video the sheriff's office released June 22 of the shooting shows Buck from a distance in an enclosed patio. Brogoitti is out of view, hiding in a basement with her daughter, but her voice is evident and she directs the deputy to shoot the ape.

The deputy fired once, hitting Buck in the head, killing the 200-pound chimpanzee.

"There was no pain," Brogoitti said. "My beautiful son folded forward and was with God. There wasn't a twitch. ... He just went to be with God. It was horrible, but it had to happen."

Brogoitti said she was at her daughter's side at St. Anthony Hospital, Pendleton. She did not get into what provoked the attack, but said her daughter, 50, suffered bites on her thighs and buttocks. The plan was for her daughter to leave the hospital June 23 and live for a while at Brogoitti's home, where she will undergo physical therapy.



Buck Brogoitti Animal Rescue/Contributed Photo

This photo from 2015 shows Buck, the adult male chimpanzee Tamara Brogoitti cared for at her ranch near Pendleton. A Umatilla County sheriff's deputy on Sunday, June 20, 2021, shot and killed the primate after it attacked Brogoitti's adult daughter.

Brogoitti also complimented the medics who rushed her daughter to the hospital, and thanked the hospital staff for its "unbelievably wonderful" treatment of her daughter.

Sheriff's office flags residence

Brogoitti also did not get into details about how she and her late husband, John Brogoitti, acquired Buck as a baby 17 years ago, only to specify it was not to exploit the animal for financial gain. Buck, she said, never appeared on a TV show, for example.

Umatilla County Sheriff's Lt. Sterrin Ward said the sheriff's office is treating this as it would any other animal attack, referring its report to the county's public health department and the district attorney's office.

The sheriff's office on June 21

released two clips of the 911 call Brogoitti made after the attack took place and she was able to get into the basement with her daughter. Ward explained most of the 911 recording includes pauses with little information while emergency help arrived. The sheriff's office released the two clips, she said, because those segments were the most relevant to helping the public understand what happened.

Ward also said the sheriff's office had "flagged" the Brogoitti residence because of Buck. She said the sheriff's office uses such indicators so its staff can take proper precautions and be safe at certain locations.

PETA warns state

Buck also pinged the radar of the nationwide nonprofit People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. Brit-

"It was horrible, but it had to happen."

— Tamara Brogoitti, Umatilla County resident whose pet chimpanzee, Buck, was shot and killed by a sheriff's deputy on June 20 after it attacked Brogoitti's adult daughter

tany Peet, the PETA Foundation's deputy general counsel for Captive Animal Law Enforcement, issued this statement on June 21 about the attack:

"PETA warned state authorities that Tamara Brogoitti had created a ticking time bomb by engaging in direct contact with a dangerous ape, and now, he is dead and a woman has been mauled because of Brogoitti's refusal to follow experts' advice and transfer Buck to an accredited sanctuary. Since long before the chimpanzee Travis ripped a woman's face off in 2009, it has been clear that attacks are inevitable so long as people continue to treat chimpanzees like Chihuahuas."

Oregon banned possession of exotic animals in 2010, with two exceptions:

- If the U.S. Department of Agriculture licensed the owner of the animal.
- If the owner has a valid Oregon exotic animal permit obtained prior to 2010.

Brogoitti fell into the second category. But according to PETA, Brogoitti was violating state laws and rules and the terms of her permit for keeping Buck.

PETA on April 16 sent a letter and complaint about Brogoitti to Isaak Stapleton, director of Food Safety and Animal Health, the agency under the Oregon Department of Agriculture that issues permits for exotic animals.

PETA's complaint stated the permit the agriculture department issued to Brogoitti lists Dr. Douglas Pernikoff of Glencoe, Missouri, as the veterinarian caring for Buck. Aside from being more than 1,800 miles away from where Buck lived, Pernikoff is not licensed to practice veterinary

medicine in Oregon, according to PETA.

The state agriculture department also requires cages or rooms of certain dimensions and materials to confine exotic animals. But per the complaint, social media posts show Buck would roam Brogoitti's home and other parts of the property. PETA also alleged Brogoitti misrepresented Buck's age to the agriculture department, a violation of the permit.

Debbie Metzler, associate director of PETA's Captive Animal Law Enforcement, said the organization has rescued 13 chimps from private captivity since 2013. Chimps are social animals and can be violent animals, she said. Buck, for his entire life, lacked the companionship of other chimpanzees, she said, and Brogoitti was not following the law.

"We felt it was imperative to inform the state of these violations," Metzler said.

She also said Buck attacking a person was bound to happen.

If Buck's death can serve any purpose, Metzler said, it's to bring attention to the Captive Primate Safety Act, a proposal in Congress that would prohibit the buying, selling and transporting of any live exotic wildlife.

Metzler said this act has been before Congress in the past, but it's never made it to a president's desk for a signature. Passage of the bill, she said, would prevent more horrible situations similar to Buck's.

Metzler also said no one else in the region owns a primate, but PETA is calling on all owners of primates to make arrangements to move them to facilities that can properly care for the animals.

Keeping primates, such as Buck, she said, is "basically a death sentence."

Brogoitti said she still was feeling shock from the traumatic events, but now her attention has to shift.

"The only thing I got to focus on is my daughter," she said, "and making sure she is fully recovered and properly taken care of."

FIREWISE

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The first, in the Pine Creek/Spring Creek area northwest of Baker City, was formed in 2020.

The Eagleton Firewise Community had its second meeting Friday, June 25, during which property owners discussed the project and ways to protect their mountain cabins during what could be a dangerous fire season.

Brandi Sangster, who owns property in the area, said owners had been talking about becoming a Firewise Community for a few years. They decided to pursue the official designation during the COVID-19 pandemic, when some people had more time to devote to the effort.

"After we had a fire back in 2015, everybody saw what can happen," Sangster said. "East Eagle has one way in and one way out and that's why it's kind of dangerous."

Sangster was referring to the Eagle Complex fire, which burned about 12,700 acres in the Eagle Creek canyon in August 2015.

Following the devastating fires during Labor Day weekend 2020 in western and southern Oregon, which destroyed more than 4,000 homes and killed 11 people, more residents, especially those who live in or own property in the "wildland-urban interface" where homes are in or near forests, are interested in protecting their property.

Gary Timm, deputy director of Baker County Emergency Management, has been talking with landowners across the county about the risks. Timm also helps property owners work through the Firewise Community process if they're interested.

"It really depends on the location and if they've got some people willing to



Amy Charlton/Contributed Photo

Property owners in the East Eagle Creek area in the Wallowa Mountains north of Richland gathered on Oct. 16, 2020, to discuss becoming a certified Firewise Community. Krag Peak is in the background.

"Most people understand the risks, especially in the wildland-urban interface settings where the fires are so bad. They don't want to be part of the problem. They want to work together and be part of the solution."

— Gary Timm, Baker County Emergency Management

take the steps," Timm said. "So many people wear different hats; it's hard to find the time."

Timm met with property owners in the East Eagle Creek area for the first time in September 2020, the same month property owners in the Spring Creek Firewise Community gathered for a barbecue to celebrate their first-in-county designation.

Timm said he expected five or six East Eagle Creek property owners to attend the initial meeting.

He was greeted by nearly 30.

"Most people understand the risks, especially in the wildland-urban interface settings where the fires are so bad," Timm said. "They don't want to be part of the problem. They want to work together and be part of the solution."

Among the steps property owners need to make their structures more fire-defensible are removing pine needles from gutters, trimming grass and shrubs, storing firewood away from structures and maintaining a clear driveway so fire trucks have easy access.

Sometimes it is difficult for older residents to do this type of laborious work, and that's when neighbors come together to see what they can do to help, Sangster said.

"We're all good neighbors and friends up there, anyway," Sangster said. "If you need help, there are several of us who are young and spry who can help out."

NORTHWEST BRIEFING

Spare part allows critical chlorine plant in Washington to get back online

LONGVIEW, Wash. (AP) — After a "major electrical failure" at the Longview Westlake Chemical company plant in earlier this month caused chlorine shortages across the West Coast, a local business stepped in to help replace the part and get the plant back online.

NORPAC gave the plant a spare transformer and production restarted on Wednesday, June 23, The Daily News reported.

Earlier in June, a piece of equipment experienced a failure with an electrical transformer and had to be sent off-site to be repaired. Plant officials originally estimated the plant would be offline until the end of June at a minimum.

Chlorination is critical in the water treatment process that disinfects and kills bacteria, viruses and other microbes, and multiple cities asked residents last week to conserve water until the shortage was resolved.

Baker City obtains chlorine for disinfecting its water from a different plant.

Legislature passes bill allowing ballots mailed on Election Day to count

PORTLAND (AP) — Oregonians could mail their ballots up to and on Election Day and have them counted under a bill headed to Gov. Kate Brown.

House Bill 3291 was passed by the state Senate on Thursday, June 24 by a 16-13 vote.

Sen. Rob Wagner, D-Lake Oswego, told The Oregonian/OregonLive that the measure would help decrease voter confusion.

Currently, ballots that arrive at county elections' offices after 8 p.m. on Election Day are not counted.

Under the bill, ballots that arrive in the mail up to seven days after an election would be counted, unless their postmark showed that they were mailed after Election Day. If a postmark is missing or unreadable, the bill would direct elections officials to assume the ballot was mailed before the deadline.

That provision concerned Republicans.

"This is an invitation to fraud," said Sen. Fred Girod, R-Lyons. "What's to stop a box of unstamped ballots from going into the clerk's office?"

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