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Schwartz Says Dog 'Just Launched'

By Leann Holt

Journal Staff Writer

When Bob Schwartz crawled into bed with his two American bulldogs Saturday night, it was no different than any other night, the governor's crime adviser said.

Around midnight, Axel— a 120-pound male with a massive head and powerful lower jaw— decided he didn't want Schwartz to nudge him from his spot on the bed.

The dog attacked his owner, sending Schwartz to the hospital with lacerations to his forearms that have temporarily impaired the use of his hands.

"This guy just went," Schwartz said of his pet of four years. "He just launched. I don't understand why this happened without any warning of any kind."

Schwartz was released from the University of New Mexico Hospital on Sunday with multiple stitches in his arms but went to Presbyterian Hospital on Monday for follow-up care.

Because Schwartz was unable to bend his fingers around the telephone Monday, his 16-year-old son held the receiver to his father's ear for an interview with the Journal.

Schwartz said that, even though the extent of his injuries is not clear, he expects to make a full recovery. He said he may be back at work in a few days.

Schwartz's son, Michael, who was sleeping in the next room during the attack, was the one who ultimately pulled the dog off his father and drove him to the hospital.

"I was absolutely terrified," Schwartz said. "We're both stunned."

The irony of the situation is not lost on Schwartz.

It was Schwartz who wrote the legislation this year that makes New Mexico dog owners responsible for dangerous animals. Felony charges can be applied to owners of dogs that have been deemed to be dangerous and then seriously injure or kill an animal or person.

Rep. Miguel Garcia, D-Bernalillo, said his heart fell when he found out that the "governor's point man" on the bill had become a victim of his own pet.

"Without Bob's testimony, that bill would have gotten nowhere,"

said Garcia, who sponsored the bill in the House. "Because of Bob, our children and our communities are safer because it's not easy now to keep a dangerous dog."

Depending on the city's animal service investigation into the weekend incident, Schwartz could be court ordered to get his dog special training, licensing or confinement. He also could be ordered to put the dog down.

Schwartz said he is seriously considering putting him down voluntarily, because the animal meets the criteria for a dangerous dog— criteria Schwartz developed.

"I have to decide if someone else can take this dog and keep it away from anybody else or pets," Schwartz said. "If I don't have confidence in that, then I'm confronting the decision of putting him down. I don't want anyone else to have to go through this."

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