

Teenager sentenced in fatal dog beating

Suspect gets six months

BY MATT ELOFSON
melofson@dothaneagle.com

GENEVA — Elizabeth Mills recalled Tuesday hearing the screams and yelps of her six-month old puppy, Bailey.



Yancey



Bailey

Mills testified in the sentencing hearing for 19-year-old James Spencer Yancey II, who pleaded guilty to felony first-degree animal cruelty. Geneva County Sheriff's deputies arrested Yancey in November 2010, and charged him with beating Bailey to death with a metal pipe.

Geneva County Circuit Court Judge Kenneth Quattlebaum sentenced Yancey to a two-year prison term, which he suspended for six months. But he said Yancey would

DOTHAN EAGLE

Wednesday, December 14, 2011

Informing more than 77,000 readers daily in print and online

Fatal

From Page 1A

receive credit for the three months he's served in jail.

Quattlebaum ordered Yancey to serve 36 months probation upon his release from prison. He also ordered Yancey to complete counseling and anger management, along with 40 hours of community service at a local animal shelter, if they allow it.

Mills, the dog's owner, testified at the hearing that Yancey was her neighbor at the time of her dog's death. Mills recalled hearing from the front porch of her home the sound of Bailey screaming.

"I heard her screaming and yelping, and then all of a sudden it stopped," Mills recalled. "I didn't see her until she was dead."

Mills said she and her husband saw a pickup truck with two youths inside speeding away from their property. She said she found Bailey's body in some nearby woods, and her collar hanging from a tree.

"I actually moved three days later," Mills said. "I was scared to be there because if somebody can beat a puppy to death like that I didn't feel safe."

Geneva County Sheriff's Deputy Robert Clark, who responded to the incident, said Yancey admitted to killing the dog, but gave conflicting reasons as to why it happened. Clark said Yancey's two reasons for the offense included defending himself after he was attacked, and that he was defending his own dog who was attacked by Bailey.

Clark said their investigation revealed Yancey was the only person involved in Bailey's death, even though deputies

originally charged another youth, Justin Goldsmith. Goldsmith's charge later was no billed by the grand jury.

Goldsmith testified Tuesday that the incident happened just after he picked up Yancey from his home. He said the offense happened after Yancey's dog and Bailey got into a fight while they chased his pickup truck as it left the property.

Goldsmith said he recalled how Yancey took a metal pipe and struck Bailey three times.

"He grabbed it by the neck and tossed it," Goldsmith said of what happened to Bailey's body.

Goldsmith also said both of them smoked marijuana shortly before the offense happened.

Yancey apologized to the court for what happened, moments before the sentence. Attorney Tommy Scarborough, who represented Yancey, said his client did not attempt to hide what happened by pleading guilty.

Geneva County District Attorney Kirke Adams said his office has been "flooded" with letters and petitions relating to Bailey's death.

"This is a cruel crime. He needs to go to prison," Adams argued. "It's not safe with him running around. You heard from Justin he just discarded the puppy like it was nothing. The community needs to know it's safe from people like this."