



# BCPO News

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April 29, 2020

## Maple Shade Man Pleads Guilty to Shooting Neighbor's Dog

*Toby, a poodle, was euthanized a day after being shot with an air rifle last summer*

Burlington County Prosecutor Scott Coffina announced that a 64-year-old Maple Shade man pled guilty today in Superior Court to shooting a neighbor's dog with an air rifle last year.

Under an agreement with the Prosecutor's Office, William D. Stroemel, of Fifth Avenue, pled guilty to Possession of a Weapon for an Unlawful Purpose (Second Degree) and Animal Cruelty (Third Degree) in exchange for a five-year term in New Jersey state prison.

The conditions of the plea forbid Stroemel from having contact with Toby's owners, and he must make restitution for the cost of Toby's veterinary care and necropsy. The Hon. Gerard H. Breland, J.S.C. scheduled sentencing for July 29, 2020.

The investigation began on September 18, 2019 after police were contacted by Toby's owners, the Cook family, who live in the 800 block of Greenwood Avenue. They told police that the poodle had been discovered howling in pain by a neighbor the previous day. An examination by a veterinarian revealed that he had been shot in the head. Toby was euthanized a day after being shot.

The investigation, which was conducted by detectives from the Maple Shade Police Department, revealed that Stroemel shot Toby with the air rifle while the dog was passing his home in the street, and then gave the gun to an acquaintance and asked him to hold it for him.

"There are few criminal acts as callous as shooting an innocent dog that is the beloved pet of one of your neighbors," Prosecutor Coffina said. "But Toby was not just a family pet, he was also a therapy dog and helped relieve the post-traumatic stress disorder experienced by a Vietnam War veteran. Such flagrant disregard for life and the impact of one's actions demands serious punishment, and we believe this plea agreement reflects that."

Stroemel, a heavy equipment operator who is also known as Wild Willie, was initially charged with weapons offenses following the discovery of a .22 caliber pistol during the execution of a search warrant at his residence. Additional charges were added after a necropsy was performed and the pellet removed from Toby's head was connected to an air rifle in Stroemel's possession at the time of the shooting.

Stroemel is being prosecuted by Assistant Prosecutor Melissa O'Mara, with assistance in the investigation by Assistant Prosecutor Nicole Handy.

END