

## IN MY OPINION

## IT'S A DOG'S LIFE, BUT ISN'T A PERSON'S LIFE WORTH EVEN MORE?

**It's a sad commentary when the reward money for a dog-killer is higher than that to catch someone who killed a human being.**

Do you know who killed Marianne Wilkinson, 68, of North Richland Hills last month?

It's worth \$10,000.

Or do you know where police can find that Lewisville cabdriver whose daughters wound up dead in a cab?

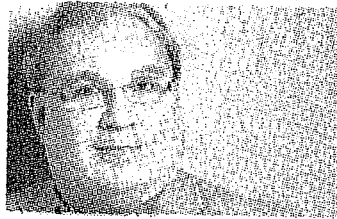
Same payoff: \$10,000.

Or say — any idea who killed a little dog Saturday in Arlington?

That reward is now *more* than \$10,000.

I'm not going to criticize anyone for giving generously so police can find any killer.

But when we post bigger rewards for a dog-killer than for somebody who killed two teenage girls or a woman —



BUD KENNEDY  
bud@star-telegram.com

what does that say?

Callers are still donating more money to help find the killer of Spike, 3 ½, a pet Pom-eranian beaten and then burned in a far south Arlington neighborhood off Turner Warnell Road.

"When somebody will do something like this to an animal, it can grow into violence against humans," said Dallas oilman John Murrell, a \$5,000 donor.

"If we find whoever did this, it might save some human suf-



Amina and Sarah Said. KTVT



Wilkinson Spike

fering down the line."

His Murrell Foundation has donated to other reward funds, he said. But Murrell, a thoroughbred racehorse owner and president of Three M Oil, is best known for contributing in animal cruelty cases.

Other animal welfare organizations have given money

along with Spike's owners, the Villaire family. The donations go to Fort Worth-based Tarrant County Crime Stoppers, which is collecting the reward fund and fielding tips for Arlington police.

"There has been a tremendous public outcry in this case," said Rachel Chutchian of Crime Stoppers, checking on calls referred from Arlington.

"We don't compare one crime to another. We just help any way we can."

Crime Stoppers regularly pays \$1,000 for information toward solving a crime. The organization recently added a \$250 bonus for tips in gang and gun crimes.

Burleson Mayor Ken Shetter is the executive of Crime Stoppers and the Safe City Commission.

"When there's a reward,

what we get is a lot more publicity for the case," he said. "If the added news coverage generates tips and we solve a crime — that's a good thing."

The \$10,000 rewards in murder cases are part of a generous 35-year tradition by Schepps Dairy of Dallas.

The dairy first offered a reward in 1973, when employees were grieving after the killing of a Schepps Food Store clerk.

They got the guy.

The company has extended the rewards to solve the "most tragic" local cases, said dairy spokesman Ed Spencer, a former Dallas police spokesman.

Schepps donates about \$60,000 a year in rewards, Spencer said.

"We want to help police with the difficult cases," he said. "We want to help pursue justice and comfort grieving families."

The Schepps reward program has been so successful that corporate parent Dean Foods has expanded it to other markets, he said.

"It's simple," Spencer said. "We put the money up to help catch somebody and bring them to justice. We've been told over and over by law enforcement that it really helps."

He wouldn't say what he thought of an animal-cruelty case drawing more donations and offering a better reward.

"Unfortunately, it's all a commentary," he said. "It says that we live in a society where some people won't come forward and do the right thing without money."

That's what's truly sad.

BUD KENNEDY'S COLUMN APPEARS  
SUNDAYS, WEDNESDAYS AND  
FRIDAYS. 817-390-7538

It was more like a big cigar.