

## TABLOID BABY

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# CELEBRATION FOR A PIT BULL: CRISTINA'S COURT'S DOG STORY BEATS JUDGE JUDY FOR FIRST COURT SHOW EMMY

Cristina's Court, the syndicated daytime courtroom series starring blonde Telemundo crossover Cristina Perez, beat Judge Judy, Judge Hatchett, the People's Court and gay judge David Young tonight for the Television Academy of Arts and Sciences' first Emmy for Outstanding Legal/Courtroom Program.

In a nice twist, Cristina's executive producer is Peter Brennan, the godfather of tabloid television and the original producer of Judge Judy (who was widely credited for guiding the court show queen to her initial success).

The episode that was judged and which won the Daytime Emmy award was Requiem for A Pit Bull, the story of the life and death of the two-year-old family dog that demonstrated Brennan's unique gifts for finding and telling stories that strike a personal and universal nerve. The power of the story was such that influential animal rights groups like PETA and Last Chance for Animals joined the Hollywood crusade to see the segment, the producers behind it, the courtroom TV star who fronted it and the show that featured it, get the award they deserved.

It was "a hair-trigger episode that divided much the nation and pitted two of the country's most intense lobby groups head to head on the case --the gun lobby versus animal rights.

"It stemmed from an incident that took place on an average street in Austin, Texas one day last summer....and a dog named Capone...

"The 911 call told a story":

911: "What's your emergency?" Caller: "A pit bull for about the fifth time just chased me and my dog inside my house...he's very vicious. He growls his teeth and he charges you."

911: "Is anybody hurt?"

Caller: "No but I just killed the dog."

He was a young pit bull named Capone. Was he a playful, friendly pup, motherless and hand fed from the day he was born, as his owner described? Or a vicious, aggressive potential killer on the loose, as described by the man who shot him.

The decision was up to Judge Cristina Perez in TV's Cristina's Court.

Allen Saadeh, 20, and his mother were suing neighbor Louis Cross for killing their family pet with a .22 rifle. Cross, 40, who told Judge Cristina one of his hobbies was hunting, admitted he pumped five .22 caliber bullets into Capone the day he caught him in the yard of his Austin, TX. home.

"It was aggressive, showing it's teeth." Cross said.

"Are you scared," asked the judge.

"I am scared."

Cross said he had previously warned Saadeh about the dog being loose. "I said listen, this is the last time I am coming to you about your pit bull in my yard. I am going to shoot it."

Saadeh said he never took the threats seriously. "He was a very good dog. He was like a little boy to me."

The judge asked Cross to describe the shooting.

Cross said he found Capone in his side yard and the dog growled at him and his weiner dog. He then went back inside the house and took a .22 rifle from his gun cabinet.

"I shot him twice in the head and he stood there and looked at me," said Cross.

"What did you do next?"

"I shot him three times right there (pointing to his ribcage), and he died."

"You shot him five times?"

Saadeh said he searched for his dog for three days before Cross admitted to him that he had shot Capone and thrown the body in a dumpster.

"You murdered that dog," said Judge Cristina.

The winners:

Outstanding Legal/Courtroom Program

CRISTINA'S COURT  
SYNDICATED

PETER BRENNAN, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER  
LISA BRENNAN, SUPERVISING PRODUCER  
ROBIN CRAIG, COORDINATING PRODUCER  
DEAN MANIBOG, SENIOR PRODUCER  
WANDA HENLEY, PRODUCER  
LESLIE BROWN, PRODUCER  
LISA WILSON, PRODUCER  
MICHELLE FITZGERALD, PRODUCER  
GYLLIAN CARTER, PRODUCER  
JUDSON TOUBY, PRODUCER  
SANDRA GIN, PRODUCER  
CRISTINA PEREZ, HOST