



'Neighbour from hell' convicted

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Ralph Scala, 37, had a rag covered in accelerant pushed through his ex-employer's door after being fired for threatening employees.

Ralph Scala, whose victims include an 86-year-old, had their tires slashed, cars keyed, windows broken

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Ralph Scala was the neighbour from hell.

For years, the 37-year-old man terrorized nearby residents and businesses, slashing tires, breaking windows and in one case, had a rag soaked with accelerant pushed through a door.

Usually, he would hire local youths to do the deeds after he came into conflict with neighbours in the Dundas St. W. and Quebec Ave. area, escalating the slightest misunderstanding into a major dispute.

Yesterday, the former food delivery man pleaded guilty to 49 charges, including mischief, criminal harassment and threatening

"An entire community was terrorized," Crown prosecutor Jody Milstein told provincial court Justice Kathleen Caldwell.

Victims included an 86-year-old woman and a 3-year-old girl.

The level of concern about Scala was so great that neighbours gathered 119 signatures on a petition for "immediate action to help save the neighbourhood," the prosecutor said.

Finally, after a lengthy police investigation, father and son were arrested last July.

Dressed in an orange jail-issued jumpsuit, his dark hair combed back, Scala calmly listened as the prosecutor detailed a litany of his crimes.

He nodded politely when asked if he agreed.

Scala had rocks thrown through the windows and door of Free Times Donuts on Dundas St. W. after its owner asked him never to return.

"Hey, you bitch, your place will shut down," he told her.

A resident on Quebec Ave., where Scala and his parents lived, was harassed over many months and repeatedly had her car keyed and tires slashed.

In March 2008, Scala threatened a former friend, saying, "You better watch your back." The man's car tires were slashed several times.

James Yeoman reported Scala's harassment of his family started in 2003 when Scala's pit bull attacked his dog. As Yeoman tried to pull Scala's dog away, Scala attacked, beating the smaller man in front of his wife and then 3-year-old daughter, the prosecutor said.

Scala would later stand under Yeoman's daughter's bedroom window and brag about the beating.

Last April, Scala yelled to him as he drove by, "So that's the car you drive," then took down the licence plate number. The family car was then repeatedly keyed and slashed.

Scala was fired from the Lotus Inn restaurant after being charged with threatening two employees and damaging two vehicles. Last April, the eatery's front windows were smashed on three occasions. A rag soaked with an accelerant was also stuffed in the front door.

One night last July, a youth hired by Scala used a slingshot to fire a rock through the window of an 86-year-old woman's house on Quebec Ave. Scala twice flooded her lawn with a garden hose.

"This particular vulnerable elderly victim was quite fearful," Milstein said.

She alleged Scala trained his dog to be aggressive, leaving him unmuzzled and off the leash to frighten passersby.

Defence lawyer Gordon Goldman said there is no evidence the dog hurt anyone.

Scala's father, Felice Scala, 62, who is alleged to have partnered with his son in some of the mayhem, watched in court. On bail, he faces a separate trial on four charges.

Four victims and local Councillor Bill Saundercook (Parkdale-High Park) also attended the Old City Hall courtroom.

Scala's sentencing begins today, with victims reading their victim-impact statements in court.