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Car crash victim smuggled monkey into U.S. in '07

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Gypsy Lawson has been indicted for smuggling a pet monkey into the United States from Asia, but she claims that she returned to the United States from her Asia trip and bought the monkey, a rhesus macaque, in California. Apoo the monkey used to sleep with Lawson's dog Albert. Courtesy of Gypsy Lawson (Jesse Tinsley / The Spokesman-Review)



By **Meghann M. Cuniff** 
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A woman who smuggled a monkey from Thailand to Spokane in 2007 died when her pickup truck went off the road four miles south of Northport, authorities said Wednesday. Gypsy R. Lawson, 31, of Northport, was driving south on state Route 25 possibly around midnight, when her 1986 Nissan pickup went off the road to the right in a left-hand curve, the Washington State Patrol reported. The pickup rolled over and struck trees. The crash was not discovered until morning. Lawson, who was not wearing a seat belt, died at the scene. Lawson and her mother were convicted by a federal jury in December 2008 of smuggling an exotic monkey into the United States. Lawson hid the young rhesus macaque monkey under her blouse and pretended to be pregnant while passing through U.S. customs after visiting Thailand in November 2007 with her mother, Fran Ogren of Northport. Ogren emailed "NE Washington Witches and Pagans" while traveling home and asked for "last-minute energy" to help them safely smuggle the monkey home, according to previous reports. The federal investigation into the primate began when Lawson and her boyfriend, James Edward Pratt, visited a Fashion Bug store in north Spokane and told a clerk about the smuggled monkey. The clerk called federal agents. The monkey was tested for infectious diseases after being quarantined in California. It was then sent to a primate rescue facility in Oregon. Lawson was sentenced to 60 days in federal prison, followed by three years probation. She was awaiting a probation revocation hearing scheduled for Sept. 13. Her probation officer said in court documents filed in April that Lawson had failed to pay anything toward her \$4,507 fine since August 2011 and had not found a job as required. She also failed to complete any of her required 88 hours of community service. Lawson's monkey case was in the news about the same time a monkey on the South Hill, Chico, was euthanized after he escaped from his home and bit several people. Chico's owner, Amy Leann Hensley, later was sentenced to federal prison for her part in a diploma mill scandal. Hensley was married to Robert Ruth, who attempted suicide at the jail on Friday. Ruth is accused of helping Charles Wallace, who shot two sheriff's deputies last month, and had been arrested last week for suspected domestic violence against his new girlfriend.

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