



Alameda County Fire Department **NEWS**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Good Samaritans Help World War II Vet and His Wife Escape from Devastating Fire

Union City—On Thursday, January 5, 2012 at 10:02AM, Alameda County Firefighters responded to a report of a house fire at 115 Wendy Court in Union City. Firefighters responded quickly to find heavy smoke and flames billowing from every side of the one-story, three-bedroom home. A thick column of smoke could be seen from two miles away.

The one-alarm response of four engines, one truck, one heavy rescue and two Battalion Chiefs was immediately upgraded to a second alarm response to help prevent the spread of the fire to neighboring homes. A quick knockdown of the blaze resulted in the cancellation of the second alarm response within 10 minutes of the upgraded assignment.

Prior to the arrival of firefighters, two Good Samaritans, 25 year-old Kevin Ricketts of Fremont, and his co-worker, 25 year-old Jonathan Baldwin, also a resident of Fremont, aided the two occupants of the home, an 86 year-old World War II veteran and his 77 year-old wife away from the home as heavy smoke and flames engulfed it.

While on their way to pick up an item from a local business, Ricketts and Baldwin noticed a column of smoke from Whipple Road and instantly decided to follow the smoke to see what was going on. They traveled further down Whipple Road to Ithaca St and then turned on to Wendy Court where thick black smoke was surging out of windows on each side of the home. Believing that someone could possibly be trapped in the home, Ricketts and Baldwin screamed into the open front door to see if anyone was inside, despite being confronted by thick smoke. Hearing no response, Ricketts and Baldwin continued to yell from the front and the side of the home, hoping to receive a response from someone.

Less than a minute later, after making as much noise possible to alert neighbors and potential trapped occupants, Ricketts and Baldwin heard a commotion coming from the rear of the house in the backyard area. A male voice off in the distance directed them to call 9-1-1 and Ricketts and Baldwin responded by letting him know they already had. Moving toward the sound of the voice and noise from the commotion, Ricketts and Baldwin quickly opened the side gate of the home, and rushed to the elderly couple to assist them in moving away from the side of their home as smoke filled the air.

Thanks to the alert actions of the two Good Samaritans, there were no injuries to community members, however, the couple's two cats, Paxil and Jack, are still unaccounted for. Fire Investigators determined the cause of the fire to be an electrical heating device in the rear bedroom of the home. No injuries to firefighters were reported.

It took 21 firefighters less than 20 minutes to knockdown the fire. With the exception of the garage, the fire completely destroyed the home that was built and purchased by the couple in 1961. The displaced occupants plan to stay with family members and declined assistance from the Red Cross. The neighboring home located at 123 Wendy Court, sustained a broken window and moderate damage to the roof as a result of the fire.

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