

## Mixed Breed Saves Family From Fire

**In the end, the decision to keep their dog saved this family's lives.**

*C.C. Sandorfi*

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Busto and Stewart roused their children, Kristin, 16, and M.J., 15, and a houseguest who was sharing Kristin's room. M.J. had been sleeping on the living-room sofa, frighteningly close to the sliding glass doors that were the only barrier between him and the blaze.

The sound of breaking glass and the heat of the flames hadn't awakened M.J. or anyone else in the household.

"If it wasn't for Bruno, a lot of us would have gotten hurt," Busto said. "My stepson would most likely have been dead."

Everybody, including Bruno and the family cat, Nipper, escaped safely, although the apartment was severely damaged. The roof of the fourplex unit also was destroyed. Fire officials estimated the damage at about \$50,000. Anaheim Fire Department spokesman Mike Doty said a subsequent investigation found the blaze was caused by a smoldering cigarette butt on the patio.

Fire fighters arrived quickly, but Bruno was feted as the real hero of the day. Local media lauded him as a canine crusader. But his efforts didn't surprise Busto or Stewart, who say Bruno has a history of looking out for family and friends.

"He's been an excellent watchdog," Busto said. "He's protected the family from two home-invasion robberies already." Bruno's barking frightened off the would-be intruders. The dog's demeanor mimics that of Busto, a martial-arts expert contained but fierce when necessary. He's thrown more than a few scares into door-to-door salespeople, solicitors and strangers who unwittingly parked too close to where he stands guard, Stewart said. But Bruno has a soft side, first evident when Busto and Stewart picked him out of a friend's dog's litter. Bruno was the only light-colored pup in the litter, but it was his sweetness that really made him stand out.

"He kind of crawled to me and started crying, so (we) took him," Busto said.