

Mixed Breed Saves Family From Fire

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

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Today, Bruno shows a tough face to the outside world but is a big softie at home. "He's a very playful dog, very loving ... he's a great dog, and we love him," Busto said.

And especially since the fire, Bruno is the most spoiled member of the family.

"He always has his food and biscuits and his little treats," Stewart said. "He sleeps on the bed between us and, yes, I give him a pillow! When I wake up and roll over, I don't hug Paul, I hug Bruno."

Bruno shares a special bond with Stewart, who calls him her baby, but enjoys a relationship of a different sort with Stewart's teen-aged daughter Kristin. Bearing his favorite toy - a squeaky fire hydrant given to him by a news reporter after the fire - he'll run to her side in the morning and try to wake her up. Kristin is generally not amused.

"Bruno will jump up to kiss her and want to play, and he'll bring her the toy," Stewart said, laughing. "Early in the morning, who wants that?"

In fact, Kristin had taken to hiding the toy to help thwart Bruno's dawn attacks, said Stewart, who has rescued it from behind the fridge, from the neighbors yard and even from the roof, much to Bruno's delight. Kristin's complaints about the toy are dismissed.

"I tell her, 'He saved your life and that is his reward!'" Stewart said.

Stewart and Busto won't move anywhere without Bruno. "Let's put it this way," Stewart said, "we owe our lives to him."