

Mixed Breed Saves Family From Fire

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

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In the end, the decision to keep their dog saved their lives. Paul Busto, 33, and his wife Laurie Stewart, 40, had spent the past year wrestling with a dilemma: Should they hold on to their 3-year-old dog, Bruno, or give him up for adoption?

It wasn't that Bruno wasn't a great dog he was. But it was increasingly difficult to find a landlord who'd agree to have a 90-pound Rottweiler-Chow mix as a tenant.

Added to that struggle were mounting veterinary bills, as Bruno battled a chronic eye infection, and the cost of food and biscuits. Friends and family urged the couple to find Bruno a new home. But it was difficult to give up the friendly, playful dog they'd had since puppyhood.

"I was thinking of getting rid of him, but I couldn't," Stewart said. "It's like your child."

Finally, Busto and Stewart found an apartment complex in Anaheim, Calif., that allowed them to bring Bruno.

Six months later, Bruno proved they'd made the right decision in keeping him.

One night three weeks before Christmas, Bruno attacked the couple's closed bedroom door in a frenzy of barking and whining.

Groggy with sleep, Busto went to see what was wrong. "It was around 3 o'clock in the morning, and the dog was barking," he said. "I heard some sort of glass breaking and went running out there. I was thinking I was facing an intruder, but it was a fire."

The blaze had begun outside on a patio but rapidly engulfed the apartment, Busto said. "The flames were all the way up to the ceiling. It went up along the [outside] wall and in through the roof into the attic."

"The glass was breaking just as I came out and the flames were coming in," said Stewart, who'd followed him into the living room with Bruno.