

The Pueblo Chieftain

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Officer alerts 3 in burning house

Officer Carl Pagels is credited with saving lives of three college students; two dogs also are spared.



CHIEFTAIN PHOTO/JOHN JAQUES Jesse Pierson sits on a portable safe that he pulled from his burning house while watching firefighters battle the fire at 3011 Norwich Ave. Watching with Pierson are his girlfriend, Sarah Shiflett (kneeling), and two other friends.



Carl Pagels

**PATRICK MALONE
THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN**

A Pueblo police officer is being hailed as a hero after he roused three college students in a burning house Tuesday morning and helped them to safety.

The Pueblo Fire Department along with police officers responded to 3011 Norwich Ave. at 8:40 a.m. When firefighters arrived, they found the rear of the house fully engulfed in flames.

Three of the home's four residents were present when the fire broke out. They were asleep and had no knowledge of it until Pueblo police officer Carl Pagels pounded on the door to wake them up. Thanks to Pagels' quick actions, nobody was hurt.

"By alerting the occupants of that house, (Pagels) probably saved their lives," said Inspector Gary Micheli of the Pueblo Fire Department. "They realized the significance of what he did, and they were very appreciative."

Pueblo Police Chief Jim Billings said officers are trained not to jeopardize their own lives, even when another life is at stake. But the chief credited Pagels' personal makeup for kicking in and compelling him to do all he could for the people in peril.

"That's what heroes are made of," Billings said.

Micheli said the fire had been burning for some time before it was reported. It had reached the attic of the home and was spreading quickly when Pagels intervened. Micheli said the incident should serve as a reminder that it's important to have smoke detectors throughout any home, and to be sure their batteries are functional.

Also spared from the blaze were two pet dogs. One exited the burning house on its own. The other, a Dachshund named Squirt, was found cowering in a corner during the fire, alive but frightened. Micheli said the wiener dog's low profile, coupled with his shrewd choice to back away from the fire as far as possible, spared his life. Firefighters carried Squirt to safety.

According to a fire department press release, the blaze originated in a back patio. A wooden shed was leveled by the fire, and three vehicles parked toward the rear of the home sustained heat and smoke damage. Fire and smoke damage also affected the home's interior.

Firefighters classified the damage as extensive, but had no estimate of the monetary harm it caused. The home's value is listed at \$105,000 on the Pueblo County assessor's Web site. It was occupied by tenants, one of whom reportedly is the son of the home's registered owner, William Donnell.

Neighbors first reported smelling smoke earlier in the morning, but couldn't find its source.

The cause of the fire remains under investigation.