

# At the Fire

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Shaffer hurried to the side of the house and broke the picture window cutting her left elbow in the process. She pushed the hose in and tried to climb inside. The room was ablaze.

Earlier in the day she had been staining a door, and when flames went to the ceiling, fumes may have exploded, and apparently the stain can did. In the clothes closet were fabrics that tend to be fast burning.

She ran outside yelling for help.

Neighbors, the Ron Crafts arrived and two men stopped. An effort was made by one man to get on the lower roof and enter the bedroom where the baby was. This didn't work. The window wouldn't come out.

Meanwhile a passerby went to the nearby George Keck residence where the Columbia Falls message center received the fire call at 4:17 p.m.

Mrs. Peterson homeward bound saw the Shaffer home in flames. She used her CB radio. "Please someone call Plum Creek and get word to my husband, Wayne Peterson...."

Shaffer was getting out of the shower after basketball practice at the junior high gym. Allen Jacobson, a junior high teacher, was at his home two miles north of Columbia Falls on a ridge above the valley. He and sons, Gary and Brian were feeding cattle, when they heard fire sirens and trucks. They figured it was at the golf course or Shaffers, and got into their car and went down to help. Jacobson asked Mrs. Shaffer:

"Can I help?" She replied: "Get Dave." Jacobson hurried back to school, told Shaffer: "Your house is on fire." Dave finished dressing in the car.

Columbia Falls Volunteer firemen soon to be followed by the Bad Rock Volunteer Department had already arrived about 4:30 p.m.

Fire Chief Don Anderson told how Rob Hedstrom, a 6'6 fireman equipped with an air mask and tank went up the stairs in the hot, flaming interior. He found Kandie on the floor near a bed, face up, not burned. He cradled the little girl bringing her out from the fire. It was within a few minutes of the department's arrival.

Fireman Gary Purdy tried mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. Don Schrock and Howard Piper went to work with the Columbia Falls Volunteer Ambulance's cardio pulmonary resuscitator without result. They took the little girl to North Valley Hospital, Whitefish, where she was pronounced DOA (dead on arrival).

Meanwhile Fireman Hedstrom followed by Fireman Ed Toren returned upstairs

through the flames and dense smoke looking for the little boy.

A bell sounded indicating Hedstrom's air supply would be exhausted in two to three minutes. The firemen made a hasty retreat and in the process had to jump. Hedstrom injured an ankle and the edge of his fire suit was burned. Chief Anderson commented: "That was much too close."

Chief Anderson noted the fire had 21 Columbia Falls volunteers and six from the Bad Rock department who also brought a truck. Over 10,000 gallons of water were used in this stubborn residential fire that kept firemen and equipment at the location into the night.

About an hour after Kandie was found, Fireman Purdy was able to get into the same northeast bedroom and he found Warren on the floor next to a bed. He wasn't burned but there were effects of heat.

As the attractive little boy was carried out, many men had lumps in their throats.

Chief Anderson expressed appreciation to John Taylor of Pacific Power & Light who disconnected "hot lines" and