

Cambridge Township fire



Telegram photos by Lad Strayer

Tony Brant stands by the ruins of his house, which was destroyed by fire Friday, showing the fireplace area where the fire started.



The view from the downstairs living room in Tony Brant's home, looking up the fire-gutted stairs.

Man loses home in blaze; firefighters scour ruins in search for late wife's ashes

By David Panian
Daily Telegram Staff Writer

CAMBRIDGE TWP. — In October, Tony Brant lost his wife of 47 years.

On Friday he lost his home. While he and his St. Bernard named Puppy managed to escape their home at 12136 Teachout Road as fire engulfed it at about 4 a.m., the ashes of his late wife, Beryl, were still inside.

Several hours later a group of firefighters looked through the rubble of his house for

Beryl's remains. She died Oct. 30, and her birthday would have been Sunday. Brant called all the firefighters who came to his aid "unbelievably incredible guys," but made special note of those who looked for his wife's ashes.

"Her ashes were with me, and five of them spent over two hours looking for them, and believe it or not, they found them for me," Brant said. "This is an incredibly sad time, but without my wife with me I would be absolutely heartbroken."

Brant was awakened just before 4 a.m. by smoke detectors.

"The whole of the attic was on fire," Brant, 67, said Friday evening.

When Puppy saw the fire she ran back into the bedroom. Brant called 911, then dragged the large dog from the house just before the ceiling collapsed.

"She and I were seconds from being trapped in the fire," he said.

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Fire

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Cambridge Township firefighters were dispatched at 3:55 a.m. after Brant called 911.

“When we pulled up it was pretty much fully engulfed,” Cambridge Township Fire Chief Scott Damon said.

After escaping the fire Brant went to his neighbor’s house, barely dressed.

“It was 4 o’clock this morning, and I was sleeping and he was pounding on the door,” Pat Sanborn said. “We’re really a very close neighborhood here. This is where he came in his bare feet and his robe.”

Brant said Sanborn had previously helped him and his late wife, Beryl, when Beryl was ill, and again helped him in a time of need. Sanborn — whose husband, Doug, died five days before Beryl died — said she had left the back door to her house unlocked and Brant had let himself in to try to wake her. He told her his house was on fire.

“I looked out and there was this big, orange ball,” Sanborn recalled Friday afternoon after helping Brant with calls to his insurance agent and others.

“Any lady who would put up with me coming over in nothing but a dressing gown (is unbelievable),” Brant, a British native, said.

Personnel from the Lenawee County chapter of the American Red Cross arrived while the fire was blazing, Brant said. His insurance company arranged accommodations and is looking into finding a temporary house for Brant and Puppy. Brant’s daughter and her fiance traveled from Toronto on Friday to be with him. He also has two sons, one in England and one in Canada.

Crews from the Cambridge Township, Addison, Sand Lake and Adrian Township fire departments battled both the flames and single-digit temperatures, Damon said. The cold



Telegram photo by Lad Strayer

Tony Brant stands in his garage looking into a barrel at the remnants of his antique gun collection. Brant had a large number of collectible guns and pistols, dating back to 1881, in his home, which was decimated by fire on Friday.

weather caused some equipment to freeze up.

The Lenawee County air truck was also on hand to refill firefighters’ air tanks.

Damon and Brant, a plastics and automotive engineer who is a consultant to automotive and chemical companies, said the fire seems to have started in the area of a wood-burning stove. Brant said the culprit may have been a faulty piece of equipment in the attic that distributed the heated air.

Brant had smelled a “deodorant” odor during the evening.

“It didn’t occur to me the house was on fire,” he said.

He went to bed, but got up at about 2 a.m. and checked the house without finding any sign of trouble. Almost two hours later the smoke detectors’ alarms went off.

The high-pitched alarm saved his life, Brant said, and he said others should never “live without a fire alarm, both upstairs and downstairs.”

Brant said along with his clothing and computers, he also lost his collection of guns, the oldest of which dates back

to 1881. Four rifles were saved from the basement.

Damon also was appreciative of Brant’s neighbors who helped Brant and the firefighters, especially with the coffee and doughnuts.

“We’d like to thank them for their assistance,” he said.

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NOTICE OF PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY TO THE QUALIFIED ELECTORS:

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a Presidential Primary Election will be held in the Townships and Cities listed below, in the COUNTY OF LENAWEE, STATE OF MICHIGAN ON

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 15, 2008
 LENAWEE COUNTY**

PRECINCTS

- City Of Adrian – 1st Pct
- City Of Adrian – 2nd Pct
- City Of Adrian – 3rd Pct
- City Of Adrian – 4th Pct

VOTING PLACES

- Ag Building, 602 N. Dean Street
- Ag Building, 602 N. Dean Street
- Ag Building, 602 N. Dean Street
- Ag Building, 602 N. Dean Street