

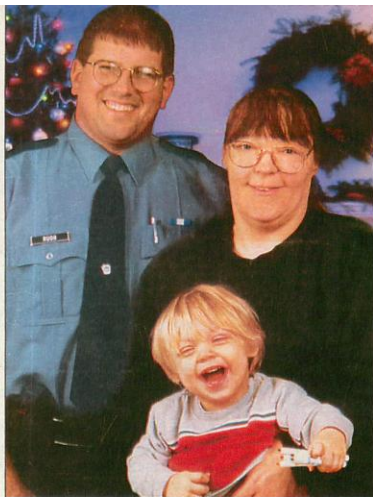
Saved!

Poor baby—3 a.m. and you still can't sleep, sympathized Sandy Harmon, feeling the brow of her flu-suffering husband, Jim. At least you don't have to go to work, she thought, remembering it was Sunday.

Ordinarily, Jim would putter around their Newville, Pennsylvania, home, while Nicole, 11, amused Amber, three, and Sandy tended to 13-month-old Nelson and prepared a big dinner. Usually, they'd all play in the yard in the afternoon.

Sandy smiled, picturing Nelson spinning round and round until he collapsed to the grass, giggling.

With her 13-month-old son trapped inside their blazing house and firefighters miles away from their rural home, Sandy Harmon prayed for a miracle. Instead, she got a hero . . .



"We're still a family, thanks to Trooper Mike," says Sandy, with Nelson.

"Our miracle man—Trooper Mike"

But today, I'll tell the kids to be extra-quiet and let Daddy rest, Sandy decided, falling back asleep.

Suddenly, Sandy felt a tug on her arm and opened her eyes to find Amber, whimpering, "Mommy, hot!"

Noticing how sweaty she felt, Sandy worried, Is she sick, too?

Just then, a loud pop shattered the quiet. What was that? Sandy wondered. Carrying Amber, she hurried into the living room and gasped in horror—just as the smoke alarm began screeching!

Along the far wall adjoining the entrance to the hallway that led to the children's rooms, a sheet of

**"I'll get them!" Jim said.
"Call 911 and get
outside with Amber!"**

flames shot toward the ceiling!

"Jim! The house is on fire!" Sandy screamed, rushing to get the other kids out. But the rapidly spreading flames sent her and Amber reeling.

Just then, Jim rushed into the room. "I can't reach Nelson and Nicole!" she howled.

"I'll get them!" Jim shouted. "Call 911 and get outside with Amber!"

With that, Jim, ignoring the intense heat, leaped through the flames into the hall, calling, "Nicole!"

"Dad?" Nicole, startled awake, cried from her bedroom at the far end.

"The house is burning!" Jim shouted. "Crawl out the window. I have to get Nelson!"

Meanwhile, with the front door awash in flames, Sandy had sprinted for the back door, grabbing the cordless phone on her way.

"Hang onto me!" she said, putting Amber down outside and spotting Nicole after she'd slithered out of her bedroom window.

But where are Jim and Nelson? Sandy panicked, punching 911 on the phone and blurting, "My house is on fire and my baby is trapped!"

Inside, Jim tried to fight his way through the inferno to his son. But the door to Nelson's room was a sheet of flames, and Jim was choking from the smoke and searing heat. I can't go in, but I can't leave him to die! Jim agonized.

Suddenly, he got an idea and raced out the back door. "Where's Nelson!" Sandy shrieked.

"I couldn't reach him!" Jim yelled without breaking stride. "I'll have to smash his window and get him!"

"Hurry!" Sandy cried as Jim ran around the side of the house, snatching up a branch along the way.

"Hang on, son! I'm coming!" he yelled, shattering Nelson's window.

Nelson's crib is just to the left, he thought, boosting himself half inside the chest-high window and groping in the blackness.

But weak from illness, with the smoke stealing his breath, Jim was overcome and slumped to the ground! "Jim!" Sandy cried.

"I have to get Nelson!" he sobbed, struggling to get to his feet.

Where are the fire trucks? Sandy panicked, then realized in horror: We're too far out in the country! They'll never get here in time!

Lord help us! she prayed. Don't let my baby die!

State Trooper Mike Rugh always carried a fire department radio with him. And this night, while he was at the scene of an accident, the radio squawked, "House fire with people trapped" and the address. That's only a mile away! Mike realized, stomping on the gas.

As he roared up to the house, flames shot through the roof. Everyone's okay! he thought, jumping out of his cruiser and seeing the family.

Then Sandy spotted him. "Our baby's trapped inside!" she shrieked, pointing to the window. "Please, help him!"

Oh no! gulped Mike as he raced to Nelson's window and saw the room engulfed in flames. Nobody could survive in there! he despaired.

Then he heard a faint choking noise inside and his heart leaped. He's still alive! But for how much longer? Mike worried, pulling himself halfway through the window.

Please God, prayed Sandy, let him save my baby!

Blinded by the smoke, Mike groped for Nelson's crib. Where are you? he agonized.

Suddenly, his hand brushed against some bars. That's it! Mike thought, grabbing the crib and trying to pull it toward him. But a dresser blocked the way. It won't budge! he panicked, realizing the choking sounds had stopped. Am I too late? Mike anguished.

Please! he pleaded, yanking the crib. Suddenly, it tipped onto its side—and a tiny limp form plopped into his arms! "Gotcha!" Mike said, backing out of the window.

"Nelson!" Sandy cried when Mike stumbled from the smoke with her son. Is he dead? she panicked.

But just then, Nelson gasped and let out a wail! "He's breathing!" Mike cried.

"Thank God!" Sandy sobbed.

Soon, a volley of explosions rocked the house, sending everyone running. When Sandy looked again, Nelson's room was nothing but flames.

Moments later, fire engines roared up. As little Nelson was bundled into an ambulance, Sandy hugged the trooper and cried, "You saved our little boy's life! You're our hero!"

"I'm just glad I happened to be in the neighborhood," Mike smiled.

**Just then, he gasped
and let out a wail. "He's
breathing!" Mike cried**

Incredibly, like his dad, Nelson suffered only minor smoke inhalation and was released from the hospital the next day. With their house destroyed by the fire, caused by a faulty wall outlet, the family moved into a temporary home. And one day, Mike visited, bearing a gift.

"It's for Nelson," he said, pressing his trooper's nametag into her hand.

"When he's older, we'll tell him about the brave man who saved his life!" Sandy wept.

Today, watching Jim play with the kids in the yard of their rebuilt home, Sandy counts her blessings. "We lost a lot, but our family is still whole," she smiles. "Thanks to our miracle man—Trooper Mike!"

—Shari Cohen