

Columbus, Indiana
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Man walks away from home blast



The Republic photo by Jim Marklund

By Paul Wagner
The Republic

Roger McQueary was sleeping early Sunday afternoon after returning at 4 a.m. from working the night shift.

But the peaceful day ended abruptly at 2:59 p.m. when a natural gas explosion blew apart the walls and leveled his one-story Jewell Village home.

Miraculously, McQueary was able to crawl out from the collapsed roof and walk away from the rubble left behind by the blast that broke windows across the street, shook walls and knocked knickknacks from shelves in hoises a block away.

The explosion occurred about an hour after a 2-year-old child engaged the gear shift in his father's van left running in the driveway of an adjacent home. The van struck two cars and the side of McQueary's home, damaging a gas line.

The child, the son of Donald Purvis, was not injured, according to police reports. Purvis was visiting his brother, Doug Purvis, a next-door neighbor of McQueary.

Since there was little damage, Doug Purvis said he had planned to wait and inform McQueary of the accident after he woke up.

Unknown to Purvis, the accident had ruptured the gas line leading to the home McQueary rented from Township Assessor Ted Craig.

An hour later, the furnace kicked on, causing a flash fire that spread toward the broken gas main. An explosion followed, leveling the home, investigators said.

"It sounded like a bomb you hear on television exploding," Purvis said. "I just stood there for a few seconds, and then I came out and saw the house. I walked back in and called 911."

William and Wanda Pace spotted McQueary crawling from underneath a mattress shortly after the explosion as they drove to their home across the street.

McQueary had a bump on his forehead and what appeared to be burn marks on his leg. He was dressed in long johns and shivering from the cold.

Wanda Pace ran across the street to her home to get a quilt to wrap around McQueary, who walked to the couple's home to wait for an ambulance.

He told them he was alone in the house, except for his dog. The dog was later rescued.

McQueary was transported to

Shaken and singed, dog rescued from remains

By Paul Wagner
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East Columbus Volunteer firefighter Katrina Smith knew she might find a dog while searching with a flashlight underneath sections of a roof that collapsed in a house explosion Sunday afternoon in Jewell Village.

But initial reports indicated the dog was a black German shepherd, not a shaggy, brown animal.

So she wasn't sure what she had found at first.

"I thought it was just a furry blanket," she said.

"But then it seemed to move."

Firefighters cut a hole in the roof to see underneath and found

the dog, which belonged to the home's resident, Roger McQueary. They called to it, but it would not come towards them.

Moments later, they cut two more holes in the roof, but the animal resisted rescue attempts.

"We had to hoist it up because it didn't want to move," Smith added.

"I think it was just scared. It was sure happy to get out."

Its fur was singed, but the dog did not appear to be seriously hurt. Children and neighbors comforted the animal after the rescue.

There were reports of two cats inside the home, but firefighters were unable to locate them.



The Republic photo by Jim Marklund

a hole was cut in the collapsed roof, neighbors cheered as the dog was freed from the rubble.

Firefighters attempt to salvage items at the scene of a natural gas explosion in Jewell Village.

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