

# Neighbour rescued drug-lab fire victims, son says

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A son wants his father recognized for saving the lives of two people from a Stouffville house fire last week.

Mahdi Hossinzehi says he called 911 and his father, Saeed Ahmed, went in and rescued the people inside, not a Markham firefighter.

When contacted by The Sun-Tribune, Mr. Ahmed, said it was in fact him who got the residents of 55 Merdock Ct. out of their burning home Jan. 31.

Mr. Ahmed, who lives next door at No. 59 with his family, said they were all home because it was a P.A. Day.

He said he saw smoke from the windows

that face No. 55, but when he asked his wife about it, she assumed it was just steam.

But when he took another look, Mr. Ahmed realized his neighbour's home was on fire.

One of his children called 911, while Mr. Ahmed ran next door to help.

## DIFFERENT STORIES

"The (front) door was open and I saw the old lady standing (just inside of it) and she was very confused," he said.

Despite her broken English, Mr. Ahmed figured out her husband was still inside.

"I yelled inside. I heard sound," he said.

Despite the thick black smoke, he entered the home.

"I ran inside. I held my breath. He wasn't too far. I started pulling him out. He was a big guy," Mr. Ahmed said. "I got him out. I got them both out onto the road."

From there, the police took the couple to the ambulance, he said.

Mr. Ahmed's account of the afternoon varies greatly from what Gord Hooper, a 31-year veteran of firefighting told The Sun-Tribune last week.

Mr. Hooper, who was off-duty from the Markham Fire and Emergency Service department at the time, was in Stouffville to run some errands, when he saw smoke coming from a residential area south of Main Street.

He followed the smoke and found an elderly woman standing on the front porch of a house on fire.

Mr. Hooper, a Goodwood resident, said he came to understand her husband was still inside and there may be another person in the basement.

In just his civilian clothes, Mr. Hooper crawled around the main floor looking for the two people.

He was unable to locate the man or get downstairs because when he touched the door leading to the basement, it burned his hands.

While heading back to the front door, he came upon the woman's husband and helped him outside.

The couple was handed over to some of the numerous bystanders, who provided them with shelter until the EMS arrived shortly thereafter, according to Mr. Hooper, who was in the hospital last week being treated for smoke inhalation. He called the burns to his hands "superficial".

The day after the fire, York Regional Police said, "two victims located on the main and upper floor of the home were evacuated by two citizens who provided assistance and shelter".

Police can't say any more.

"I cannot comment on which story is more accurate. That's all part of the investigation, which is non-disclosable to the public or media at this time. Witness evidence is just that, evidence, that should neither be commented on or tainted before a full investigation is completed," said Const. Rebecca Boyd this week.

## TWO CITIZENS HELPED: POLICE

The blaze, which caused about \$450,000 worth of damage, was caused by a drug lab in the basement being used to turn marijuana into cannabis resin, or hash oil, according to York Regional Police.

Mark Edward French, 29, described as the home's basement occupant by York Regional Police, has been charged with production of a controlled substance, possession of a controlled substance and breach of probation.

The fire also damaged Mr. Ahmed's home. He said he has about \$30,000 worth of repairs to make to the siding, which melted and the windows facing 55 Merdock Ct. are broken.

Mr. Ahmed said Mr. French had only been living in the house for about two to three months.

"I never thought of a bad thing," he said, adding he did not see unusual activity, just a couple of people with new cars hanging around. Mr. Ahmed assumes they were friends of the accused.

"I'm really shocked," he said.

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