



Mike McCollum

Little Aaron Pyne gets a welcome-home hug from his mom, Lorraine, yesterday afternoon after wandering away from his home in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

Busy day for Salsi firemen

Yesterday was a busy day for firemen at the Salsipuedes Fire Department.

First they raced to the foothills to find a lost child.

Then to Murphy Crossing to extinguish a burning car.

Then back to the mountains for a medical emergency.

Then back to Murphy Crossing for another car fire.

And finally, just when everyone might be settling in for a night's sleep, a real barn burner — back at Murphy Crossing.

The firemen's day began at 12:24 p.m., when they were called out to the home of Lorraine Pyne on Mt. Madonna Road to help search for her 2½-year-old boy, Aaron.

The searchers found the boy in 45 minutes. He'd walked over two ridges and into a canyon off Gaffey Road — between one-

half and three-quarters of a mile, a department spokesman said. But he was okay, except for a few scrapes and lost shoes.

Then, at 2:02 p.m., firemen were called to Highway 129 and Murphy Crossing Road, where they extinguished a fire that destroyed a car.

Back to the station in time for a medical aid call on Summit Road.

The Highway 129-Murphy's Crossing intersection was a bad one for cars yesterday. A second car caught fire there at 6:42 p.m. That fire was confined to the engine compartment.

Finally, the barn burner. At 2:44 a.m. this morning, a fire was reported in a barn at 76 Murphy Crossing, adjacent to the labor camp.

While firemen fought the flames that eventually con-

sumed the barn, Santa Cruz County sheriff's deputies evacuated 35-40 people from the labor camp — some of whose buildings were 10 feet away from the burning barn.

When the flames were out, firemen found four 55-gallon steel drums — two empty and two filled with liquid. The Watsonville Fire Department's hazardous materials team and inspectors from the Santa Cruz County Environmental Health Department determined that the fluids were motor lubricating and transmission oils — not considered to be an environmental hazard.

The fire is labeled as "one of suspicious origin." There was no electrical power to the barn and nothing inside that might have kindled the fire automatically, authorities said.

—Bob Smith