

Neighbors rush to douse house fire

By EMILIO ALVARADO
STAFF WRITER

RP 9/3/93 P. 1
home at the time.

Quick action by three neighbors armed with garden hoses is credited with saving a house from fire yesterday.

The fire broke out shortly before 6:30 p.m. at 130 Rainbow Lane, which is just off Amesti Road. Ron Hart, operations chief for Salsipuedes Fire Department, said that when firefighters arrived, they found neighbors Ken Wilson, Frank Valenzuela, and John Haas battling the fire at the duplex with garden hoses. Valenzuela and Wilson were later treated at the scene for minor smoke inhalation.

Hart said the fire started in the bedroom and quickly produced thick, heavy smoke that engulfed the apartment. The occupant, Connie Ventura, was not in the apartment at the time, but her 6-year-old son and a 17-year-old baby-sitter were at

The boy ran out of the apartment as soon as the fire started, but the baby-sitter went back inside a couple of times, Hart said. It is not clear whether she thought the boy was still inside or whether she wanted to save some of the valuables in the apartment. She was taken to Watsonville Community Hospital, where she was treated for minor smoke inhalation and released.

Damage to the apartment was confined to the bedroom and is estimated at \$2,500 to \$3,000, Hart said. The cause is still under investigation.

The fire was contained in about 10 minutes, Hart said. But if it hadn't been for the trio taking on the fire, the house could have been a pile of smoldering ashes.

* "Ten more minutes and that house would have been gone," Hart said. "Basically, they saved the house."