

Fire...from Page 1A

"I think something vented the home that made the smoke dissipate," Lee said. "We got out safely."

As Union County firefighters arrived, the home was heavily involved, said Union County Fire Capt. Richard Jones.

"Dustin saved that couple wearing just his uniform, and without the aid of turnout gear," Capt. Jones said. "He did what he had to do. He was at the right place at the right time."

Union County Fire Lt. Damon Hood arrived first, just moments after Lee had rescued the Bennetts. He established the fire command.

The garage was completely involved, and the Bennetts' home was 90 percent involved.

"Fire personnel attacked the fire from all sides," Lt. Hood said. "Approximately 35,000 gallons of water was used to get a knock down on the fire."

Fifteen firefighters from stations 1 and 4 fought the blaze, Lt. Hood said.

As firefighters fought the blaze, neighbors in the Ivy Log Estates community rallied around the Bennetts.

They provided the couple with warm clothing, water and compassion.

Larry Bennett stayed in good spirits as his neighbors asked him questions.

One neighbor asked Larry Bennett if he and Lavonne lost everything.

"No, they were able to save my anvil," Larry Bennett replied.



Larry Bennett, seated, is surrounded by family and friends last week following the blaze that claimed the home he shares with his wife Lavonne. Photo/Charles Duncan

Another neighbor told Larry Bennett that she was going to Wal-mart and wondered if he needed anything.

"A new house," he quipped with a smile.

Larry Bennett told his neighbors that he was thankful that he and his wife were able to escape the blaze unharmed.

Material possessions could be replaced, he told his neighbors.

One neighbor told him that his 1971 Ford tractor suffered only minor damages, as the two front tires were lost to the blaze.

"And I just put two new

front tires on that tractor," Larry Bennett said.

Larry Bennett, a 25-year veteran of the Forsyth County Fire Department, watched the Union County firefighters fight the blaze.

"I've been around a lot of fires in my time, but that one burned about as quick as any I've ever seen," Larry Bennett said.

"In 25 years of firefighting, I've never seen one go as quick as that one did," he said. "It started in the garage, one of the neighbors said it was burning in the back of the garage."

One of the obstacles of

fighting the fire was a 1,000-gallon propane tank, approximately 70 percent charged, Capt. Jones said.

"Fortunately, we were able to keep it cooled down," Capt. Jones said. "It vented about three times which was a concern."

The Bennetts' home was a total loss, as was their 2011 Chevrolet Suburban, a golf cart and a new Kubota lawn mower.

The cause of the fire has yet to be determined, Capt. Jones said.

The family is staying with a neighbor in her guest home, Capt. Jones said.

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him what was going on, and he said there were still two people inside the home.

"The smoke was so thick, I couldn't really see anything on the front porch," he said. "I could hear them, I told them to just keep yelling and I'd make my way to them."

"As I got on the porch, Lavonne was there, I started leading her off the porch, but she wasn't excited about getting off the porch. When I got her into the yard, I told Mr. Bennett that I would be back to get him," Lee said. "Lavonne told me that the walker I had carried down off the porch belonged to Mr. Bennett and that he couldn't walk without it. I thought it was her walker."

"I went back up on the porch to get him and we started talking," Lee said. "He told me he was a retired fireman. He was coughing; he was trying to tell me that he needed his walker. I told him to grab on to me, I tried to carry him, and he told me I was a big boy, but I wasn't that big."

"The smoke was thick, it was hot on that porch, and

I told him to hold on, we're getting out of here," Lee said. "We didn't have a whole lot of time."

Larry Bennett held on, Lee helped him to safety and the rest is history.

Afterward, Lee realized he had saved the parents of one of his favorite high school teachers.

"Mrs. (Alicia) Covington was my Home Room teacher in high school," Lee said. "It really is a small world."

The circumstances leading to the rescue seemed to prove destiny was in motion. Lee had stopped at McDonald's to get breakfast for his wife and three small children. It's something he does on a regular basis. However, this time, instead of going inside and talking with regulars, he went through the drive-thru window.

Actually, that morning, Lee was running a bit late.

"I was running about 40 minutes behind schedule," Lee said. "Ordinarily, I've got breakfast to my family by 8 o'clock. Everything just fell

into place for me to be at the right place at the right time to help the Bennetts."

Later, Lee would put on his turnout gear and help extinguish the blaze at the Bennetts' home. He also had a brief conversation with Larry Bennett during a break from

fighting the fire.

"I told him I was proud he and his wife were okay," Lee said. "He's lucky to have Mrs. Bennett. She wasn't about to leave him behind; she stayed right with him until I got there. Now I'll tell you, that's a good wife."



Union County firefighters seek to control hot spots at last week's fire on Ivy Log Creek Lane. Photo/Charles Duncan

Honor.... from Page 1A

It was a team effort in fighting the roaring blaze at the Bennetts' home as 15 members of stations 1 and 4 beat back the blaze. In the aftermath, Union County firefighters were able to retrieve some of the Bennetts' personal belongings, including family photographs, Union County Fire Lt. Damon

Hood said.

"When you have a fire like that one, it's hard to save a whole lot of items from the home," Lt. Hood said. "We were happy to be of assistance and retrieve some very personal items from the home that are irreplaceable."



Firefighters get a knock down on the blaze. Photo/Charles Duncan