

Site updated Monday, October 28, 2002 12:33 PM

Search Site:

by Google

NEWS



Brandon Grossutti in front of No. 7 firehall. Photo by Rebecca Blissett.

SITE INDEX

- [Home Page](#)
- [News](#)
- [Opinion](#)
- [Letters](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Entertainment](#)
- [Ad Features](#)
- [Restaurant Guide](#)
- [Back Issues](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [About Us](#)
- [Community Links](#)
- [Cover Art Gallery](#)
- [Websites of the Week](#)

VANNET SITES

- [VANNET Classifieds](#)
- [Astral Reflections Movie Listings](#)

VANNET PAPERS



[Abbotsford Times](#)
[Burnaby Now](#)
[Chilliwack Times](#)
[Coquitlam Now](#)
[Delta Optimist](#)
[Langley Advance](#)
[Maple Ridge/Pitt](#)
[Meadows Times](#)
[North Shore News](#)
[New West Record](#)
[Richmond News](#)
[Surrey Now](#)

RELATED SITES

[canada.com](#)
[DRIVING on canada.com](#)
[Classifieds on](#)
[canada.com](#)
[National Post Online](#)
[Infomart.ca](#)
[Financial Post DataGroup](#)
[Canada News Wire](#)
[Careerclick.com](#)
[Medbroadcast.com](#)
[Real Estate Weekly](#)

Quick action by tenant helps save heritage building

By Mike Howell-Staff writer

Brandon Grossutti is still having trouble breathing after what he did last Friday.

The 24-year-old computer programmer-analyst braved flames and heavy smoke to prevent a raging fire from spreading through a heritage apartment building at the corner of Bute and West Georgia.

He used the Banff Building's firehose to push back the flames whipping through a neighbour's suite on the fourth floor of the turn-of-the-century wooden structure. Luckily, nobody was inside the suite.

"I was nervous that somebody could die and that the whole building was going to be destroyed," said Grossutti, sitting in the kitchen of the No. 7 firehall at Haro and Thurlow with the firefighters who eventually extinguished the blaze.

No human lives were lost, although eight cats perished in the fire that spread through the top floor of the building. That floor has since been condemned, leaving Grossutti and about 20 other tenants looking for new accommodations.

It all started about 11:15 p.m., when Grossutti was half asleep watching television in his bedroom. From his window, he noticed what looked like flames ripping out of a suite about 60 feet across from him.

He grabbed a bathrobe, woke his roommates and took off down the hall with a fire extinguisher that he pulled off a wall. He tried kicking in the door of the suite but couldn't. So he got onto the fire escape and managed to climb in an open window.

Once inside, Grossutti realized the blaze was too big to fight with an

extinguisher, so he returned to the dark and smoke-filled hallway and grabbed the building's fire hose. At this point, he guesses, the manager had put a key in the door for firefighters to get in.

Grossutti entered the suite and dropped down to his stomach, spraying the flames in a corner bedroom that he found out later had spread across a space above the ceiling and into another suite behind him.

"I could only stand it for about 10 minutes. My roommate was yelling at me to get out but I just kept spraying like a madman. I couldn't see anything but the flickering of the flames. Everything else was smoke."

To get out, Grossutti followed the hose back to the tap and then felt his way along the hallway's wall to get to the stairwell, where he was met by a group of firefighters with two more hoses who knocked down the blaze in about a half hour.

"I got outside and I threw up," he said, adding that he quickly hailed a cab to his mother's place. "It was a surreal experience-almost like being in a dream."

Firefighters are still investigating the cause and haven't determined the value of the damage. Although thankful for Grossutti's efforts, they wouldn't encourage him or anybody else to put their lives in danger.

"Fortunately, it worked out in a positive way, but it could have been very negative," said Capt. Jack Blair, noting Grossutti's efforts helped cool down the suite before firefighters arrived.

"It's not something we like to encourage, but we realize every situation is different."

Grossutti didn't suffer any injuries but is having trouble breathing. He's also concerned he may have breathed in the asbestos-laced lathe and plaster in the building's walls.

He still hasn't been able to contact the three tenants of the suite he tried to save, and hasn't heard back from the building's manager as to why there were no sprinklers in the building or why his smoke alarm didn't go off.

For now, he's living with his mother and still reeling from losing his furniture, his artwork, a prized picture of his grandfather, clothes and electronic equipment. He didn't have any insurance and doesn't believe his neighbours did either.

Grossutti knows now he risked his life but said it was an automatic reaction at the time to run and help.

"I don't think there was anything heroic about it," he said. "Anybody else would have done the same thing."

Grossutti has set up a web site (www.wolverton.ca/banff) with details for people who want to donate money, clothing or furniture to victims of the fire. More information can be obtained through the fire department's public education office at 604-665-6070.

[back to top](#)

All contents of this site are copyright by Lower Mainland Publishing Group Inc., A Canwest Company. No re-use of any portion of this site is permitted in any medium without the express written consent of LMPG. Please contact the [webmaster](#) for more information.