



Theo Turner, Jr. Is "The Man"

It was a low-key, laid-back Sunday afternoon in January 2014 at the Turner house. Until, that is, a grease fire started in the kitchen as Brandee was making lunch. She yelled for her husband, who grabbed what he thought was a full fire extinguisher. It was empty.

Things escalated quickly. Theodore Turner, Sr., grabbed the pot and headed for the side door to throw it into the snow. His oven mitts caught fire. He could no longer hold the container. His twin girls and the family dog, Chico, were in the living room. His son, Theo, then almost 11, was about halfway down the kitchen steps that lead outside. Their eyes locked as fiery grease splashed onto Theo's legs.

The boy's long nylon basketball shorts melted to his skin. His socks melted to his feet. Brandee quickly scooped up her son and threw him in the shower. When fire and rescue arrived at the scene, his parents realized just how severe Theo's injuries were. With second- and third-degree burns, layers of his skin simply sloughed off his lower legs and feet. Theo went directly to MetroHealth where he spent three weeks in the burn unit. Skin grafts from his thighs covered his legs and feet.

Doctors released Theo as soon as he was stable, and sent him home.

Despite the pain and stiffness, Theo forced himself to walk. He went into his parents' room, to his father's side of the bed and they both began to heal. The two have since developed a deep bond.

Theo's father gave him a song to listen to, to help him focus when he had to have his wounds cleaned and his bandages changed, reminding him that he was stronger than he knew:

...Somewhere I heard that life is a test

I been through the worst but still I give my best

God made my mold different from the rest

Then he broke that mold so I know I'm blessed (this is my world)

Stand up now and face the sun

Won't hide my tail or turn and run

It's time to do what must be done

Be a king when kingdom comes

Well, you can tell everybody

Yeah, you can tell everybody

Go ahead and tell everybody

I'm the man I'm the man I'm the man

Yes, I am. Yes, I am. Yes, I am ...

Now 13, Theo is an active, animated teenager with a passion for basketball and video games. When he grows up, he wants to be a physical therapist. To celebrate their family's fortune and faith, the Turners honor Theo's journey every year on the anniversary of the fire.

