

PAL IN A MILLION!

Burns scarred boy so badly all his friends rejected him — except one!

By JOE BERGER / Weekly World News

SHEFFIELD, England — When horrified 9-year-old Matthew Callis was burned almost beyond recognition in a roaring car fire, fairweather friends and classmates turned their backs on the pitiful kid because they couldn't stand to look at the stomach-turning scars that covered his face and body.

But true-blue buddy Jamie Shaw, 10, stayed by hapless Matthew's side for five heartbreaking months, offering words of encouragement,

helping to feed and dress him — and even changing the bandages protecting his hideously charred flesh.

"People said Matthew was too ugly to look at, but he's my friend — and friends aren't ever ugly, even when they're

hurt," said faithful Jamie. "He was burned on the outside, but he was still Matthew underneath."

The touching tale began early this year when another motorist plowed into the car driven by Matthew's bus-driver dad Michael on a busy freeway near their home, causing the Callis's car to burst into flames.

Matthew's parents suffered only mi-

nor injuries in the mishap, but their fun-loving son sustained third-degree burns over 50 percent of his body and has since undergone 14 operations to repair his fire-ravaged face, hands and chest.

"Matthew was a very popular, outgoing boy with a lot of friends and we expected them to stick by him," said his devoted dad.

"But apparently, it was just

too painful for them to be with him and see the horrible damage the fire had done to him.

"Not Jamie, though. Jamie was there at the hospital on that very first day when Matthew was in so much pain, and he's been at Matthew's side every day since then — holding his scarred little hands, staying up with him all night long when he was so plagued by nightmares he was too afraid to sleep, cheering him up when he could barely stand to go on and helping us change those awful, awful bandages.

"It was like having our very own 10-year-old Mother Teresa there to help us out around the clock. I truly don't know if Matthew would be alive today without Jamie."

And now that tragic Matthew has recovered enough to head back to school, he's not sure how squeamish teachers and classmates will react to his return. But he says he no longer worries about that.

"I don't need a lot of friends" said the grateful fourth-grader. "When you have one friend like Jamie, one is enough."



SCARRED-BUT-GRATEFUL
Matthew Callis, left, with his faithful friend Jamie Shaw.