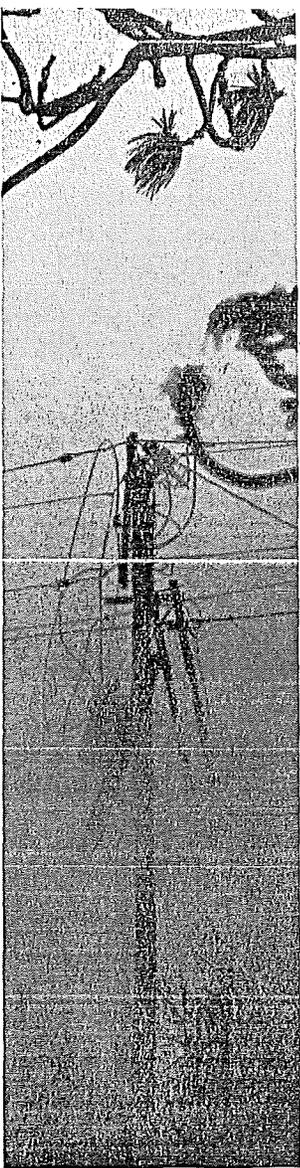




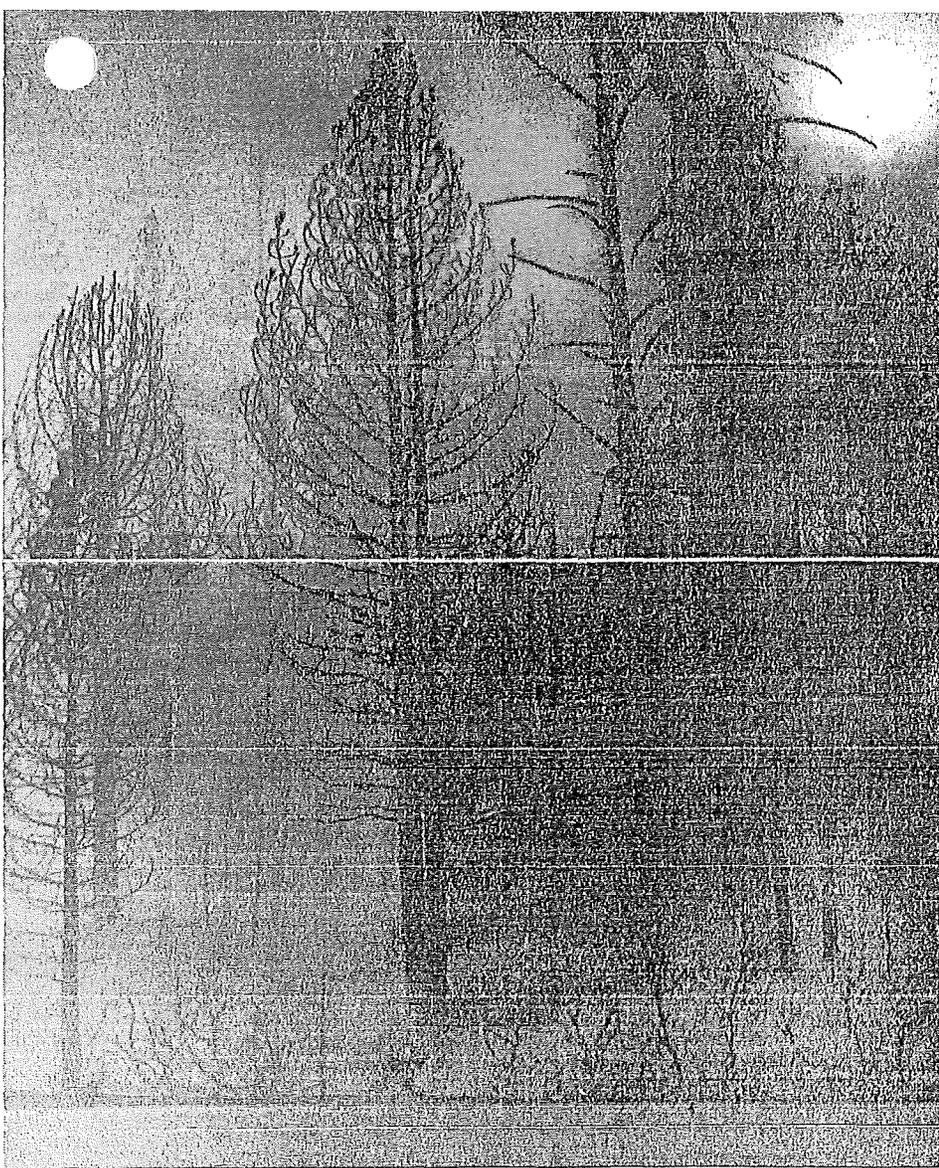
IT WAS HOT and smoky for firefighters.



POWER COMPANY employees work on downed poles.



DOWNED power lines were a common sight.



BLACKENED PINE TREES are backlit by a setting sun Wednesday off a side road.

SF EXAMINER 7/3/89



27 Homes Hit by big fire in Alpine County

6,000 tinder-dry acres aflame south of Tahoe

By Steven A. Capps
OF THE EXAMINER STAFF

WOODFORDS, Alpine County — A "very costly, very severe" wildfire continued to rage unchecked through tinder-dry brush and timber here Thursday, destroying at least 27 homes and damaging more than 50 other buildings. No deaths or serious injuries were reported. One firefighter received minor leg injuries from falling debris, said U.S. Forest Service spokeswoman Sandi Sullivan.

State Route 88, the area's major road, remained closed between U.S. 395 in Nevada and State Route 89 in California.

By mid-day, the blaze, apparently set by human hand Wednesday morning, had burned over more than 6,000 acres of timberland around this Alpine County village.

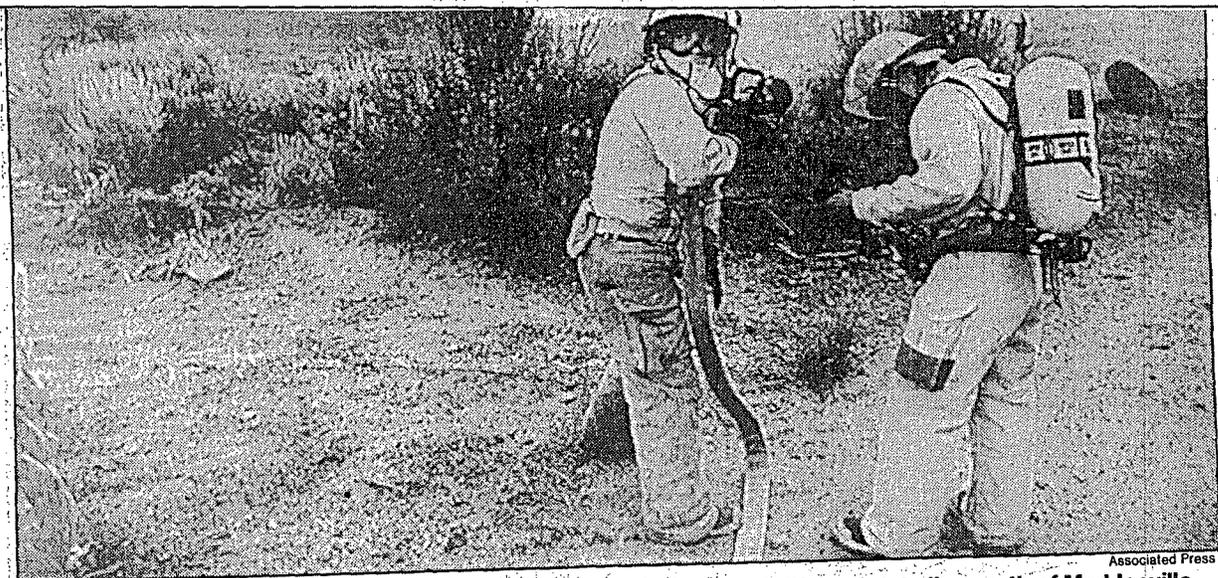
Besides Woodfords, it had done some damage in the Mesa Vista, Alpine Village and Paynesville subdivisions.

As gusty winds began to pick up again after calming

Fire levels one of 27 homes in its path as it raged through thousands of acres in Alpine County

Associated Press

— See FIRE, back page



Associated Press

Nevada Forestry Division firefighters battle wildfire Wednesday near California state line north of Markleeville

FIRES

— From A-1

overnight, forestry officials said they could not predict when the fire could be brought under control.

"Right now, we're just trying to slow it down," said one firefighter on the line.

Sullivan said that while the fire was not spreading as "wildly" as it had Wednesday afternoon and night, it was still far from being either contained or controlled.

Unusually dry conditions caused by last winter's lack of snowfall was providing ready fuel more typical of the fall than mid-summer, officials said.

Contributing to the difficulty of stopping the wildfire was the typical July heat and wind in the Sierra. The National Weather Service said temperatures in the fire area would go as high as 95 degrees Thursday afternoon, with winds gusting to 40 mph or more.

"The forecast is for some thunderstorms this afternoon," Sullivan said. "And the wind may come up again. We'll just have to wait and see what the weather does and whether it helps."

The rapidly moving fire started before noon Wednesday in the Crystal Springs Campground. Authorities said the blaze was "man-caused," but they were not certain whether it was deliberately set.

"That's all we know pending a

complete investigation," Sullivan said.

Alpine County Superior Court Judge Hilary Cook, who owns a home in the canyon, said he had heard a report it was started "by some kids playing with matches" but couldn't confirm that.

Cook and more than 250 other residents of the area were forced to flee their homes in the early afternoon Wednesday. As of Thursday morning, Cook said he understood his home, and two others nearby belonging to relatives, were still standing.

High winds whipped the blaze into the Mesa Vista subdivision outside Woodfords, which is south of South Lake Tahoe.

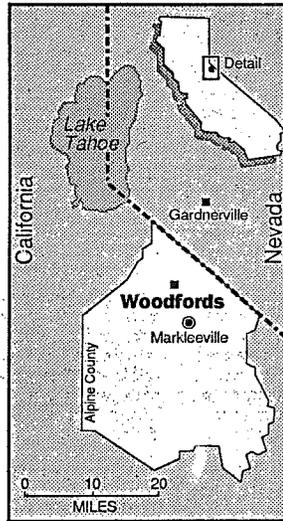
"When we left, there was a solid wall of fire going 40 mph," said Ellie O'Toole, who fled her home with her husband, carrying two guitars and a set of tools. Their home was not damaged. "We just thought we would never see our home again."

The fire moved so fast it endangered firefighters, some 900 of whom came from agencies elsewhere in California, Nevada, Idaho, Wyoming and Utah.

Ronan Thornhill, a Nevada Division of Forestry official, said firefighters had moved into Woodfords but quickly had to pull out as flames advanced. "Before we knew it, it was everywhere," he said.

Forestry Division commander Jim Reinhardt added that conditions were so dry that the advancing fire line was shooting streaks of flame a quarter mile ahead of itself.

Five air tankers, three helicop-



been saved but that an undetermined number of others had not been.

Thursday morning, firefighters were digging a fire break along the southern edge of the blaze in an attempt to prevent it from reaching the Sierra Pines mobile home community two miles south of Woodfords.

Alpine County Sheriff Larry Kuhl said the fire was so intense — smoke from it could be seen as far away as Reno and Carson City, 60 miles away — that it was difficult to make an accurate assessment of damages.

He said at least 27 homes in two subdivisions had been destroyed and another 50 damaged. Sullivan said numerous outbuildings had been destroyed.

"It's a very costly, very severe fire," Reinhardt said.

Evacuees, some of whom had only a few minutes to flee the flames, were taken to an elementary school in Woodfords but had to leave it as well as the flames advanced. Some were taken to the county seat, Markleeville, and others were taken to Gardnerville, Nev., to the east.

There was no power or telephone service in Markleeville.

ters, five bulldozers and 80 fire engines were being used in fighting the flames.

Reinhardt said the landmark Woodfords store and other buildings in the center of the town had

July 31, 1987



Bee/Dick Schmi

Dan Bennett and his fiancée, Jeri Enright, comfort one another as firefighters mop the ruins of the home of Bennett's father, Alpine County Supervisor John Bennett.

1,500 firefighters battle to halt ravaging Alpine County blaze

By Chris Bowman
Bee Staff Writer

WOODFORDS — Armed with everything from airplane tankers and helicopters to shovels and water cans, 1,300 firefighters from five states Thursday fought to control a stubborn eastern Sierra blaze that rivals the biggest forest fire in California this year.

Ripping through dry sage, mesquite and pine in the Toiyabe National Forest, the fire has blackened over 6,500 mountain acres, destroyed 24 houses and driven 750 people from their homes.

Authorities reported late Thursday that they had contained 40 percent of the fire, and firefighters had completed 10 miles of a firebreak — with another 12½ miles to go.

John Russell, head of a task force of agencies fighting the blaze, predicted that it might be Saturday before the fire is completely contained. The fear

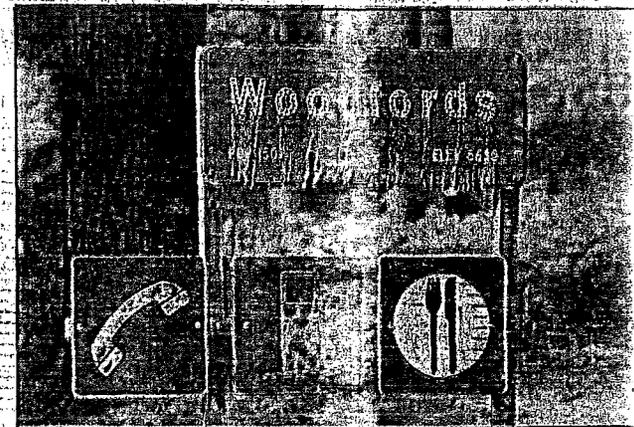
of heavy winds lingered, although the 35-mph blasts that created a firestorm Wednesday had slackened significantly Thursday.

Fed by that wind, the blaze spread with speed that apparently surprised some U.S. Forest Service firefighters. An Alpine County sheriff's deputy and a local volunteer firefighter both said the leader of the first Forest Service team on the scene called local volunteers off the fire. But the blaze quickly outstripped available manpower.

Some local residents expressed anger that the volunteers initially were sent home.

In addition to the homes destroyed, 56 houses and dozens of outbuildings were damaged. The fire ravaged some of the Sierra's most scenic land, scarring jagged scapes that rise and fall majestically.

Power and telephone services were knocked out in



The Woodfords town sign bears mute testimony to the fire's heat.

See FIRE, back page, A28

SACRAMENTO BEE JULY 31, 1987 PA1

Fire

Continued from page A1

Woodfords, and telephones were out in Markleeville. Highways 88 and 89 in the fire area were closed Thursday night when thick smoke cut visibility to a minimum. The blaze comes at a time when state and federal forestry officials have warned of bone-dry conditions that have increased the fire hazard in California wild lands.

Fire had blackened over 40,000 acres of forest statewide this fire season — before the massive Sierra blaze. Thursday's assessment of the Sierra fire means that it easily rivals the 6,420 acres burned earlier this month in the Modoc National Forest.

On Thursday, residents of the cabins and homes some 15 miles south of ice-blue Lake Tahoe sadly began returning to the rubble and charred land that was once a ruggedly beautiful mountain paradise known for fishing and serenity.

They pondered the future and spoke of how fire is an ever-present fear in these mountains.

"I got up this morning and I didn't have any place to take a shower," said Alpine County Sheriff's Deputy Skip Veatch. "So I went to brush my teeth and I didn't have a toothbrush."

Veatch, who lost his home and most of his possessions, slept Wednesday night in one of the few available bunks — in a county jail cell.

"We chose to live here for obvious reasons, but we knew the risks," said Veatch. "We always hoped it wouldn't happen, but it was always in the back of our minds."

U.S. Forest Service spokesman James Nelson said the fire — which started around 11:30 a.m. Wednesday in a narrow canyon just north of Highway 88 — was thought to have been caused by "human negligence . . . a cigarette or a campfire." No definite cause has been determined.

Jerry Snow, another U.S. Forest Service spokesman, said three firefighters suffered minor injuries. One twisted his knee, a second received a cut above an eye and the third was overcome from heat exhaustion.

By Thursday, one edge of the blaze had moved through Woodfords and was headed northeast toward the Nevada border. It moved through Paynesville but did little damage, Nelson said. Then it shifted and headed north, avoiding Fredericksburg as it burned the steep ridges in the direction of Jobs Peak.

Firefighters labored to keep the fire from moving through and around some 3,400 burned-out acres left a year ago by a blaze near Fredericksburg.

They watched hot spots near islands of dry grass and fought to outflank the blaze's southern advance toward trailer parks near Markleeville; and they burned and cleared a 10-mile-long swath in hopes of stopping the southward progress.

"It's setting up for us pretty good right now," said Nelson. "If we don't get the tough winds, there is an end in sight."

Meanwhile, families left homeless by the blaze coped with their losses at an emergency shelter set up at the Douglas Junior High School in Gardnerville. Others sought shelter in the homes of friends.

Some 158 residents of subdivisions such as Alpine Village, Shiville, Cherry Springs and Mesa Vista registered with the Red Cross at the shelter.

Snow of the Forest Service said the fire started in Acorn Canyon, a narrow chasm north of Highway 88 near the Crystal Springs Campground. The fire raced up a mountain to the north of the highway, then jumped to the south of the road before heading through Woodfords, a former Pony Express Remount Station.

Then it jumped back and forth across the highway, burning some buildings but missing others.

Alpine County Sheriff's Deputy Bob Tucker, on duty in the fire ravaged subdivision of Mesa Vista, said he learned of the fire from a motorist about 11:30. He radioed his department, which notified volunteer firefighters.

He said the fire was so small at first that he couldn't see it. But volunteer fireman Dave Fontana did see it — it was about 24 feet square — and drove the fire truck he operated as close as possible. Since his department doesn't have equipment to fight canyon fires, he called for Forest Service help from Markleeville.

Tucker said it took the Forest Service 15 minutes to roll three engines; and that the head of the contingent told Fontana to go home.

"He was walking up and down the highway saying, 'No problem,'" said Tucker. The deputy said the man in charge told him that the fire should be contained by a river next to Highway 88 and by rock outcroppings near the blaze.

Tucker recalled that the supervisor said, "There's no more need for your group to stand by."

"We said '10-4' and rolled our rigs out," said the deputy. "If they had asked the volunteers to stay there when the fire was started, we wouldn't be here now."

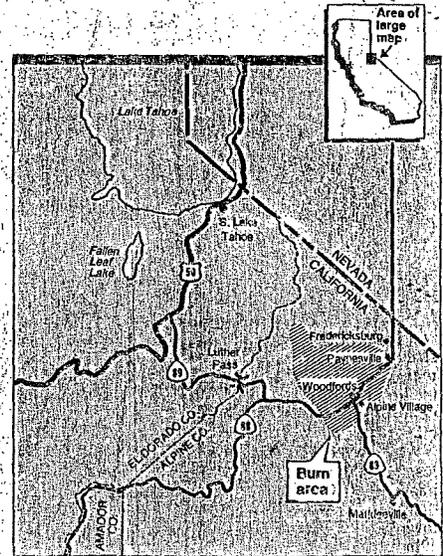
Snow, the Forest Service spokesman, said he did not know if the Forest Service fire team leader actually called off the volunteers. He said typically volunteers may be sent home for their own safety.

But the fire was fast-moving. It consumed 500 acres within five hours after it ignited. But in the next two hours, another 1,500 acres were blackened; and 12 hours after it started, 5,500 acres were burned.

At 6 p.m. Wednesday a computer analysis of the fire showed it would take 600 firefighters to contain it, but only 300 were at the scene with another 250 on the way. By Thursday, firefighters were arriving from agencies in the Sacramento area and other parts of California, as well as from Nevada, Oregon, Idaho and Utah.

Fire officials put the cost of fighting the blaze through Thursday night at \$560,000. There were some 90 engines, three helicopters, four air tankers, eight bulldozers and dozens of "hot shot" teams equipped with axes and axes.

This story was compiled by Bee staff writer Tom Coakley. Staff writers Ken Payton and Bill Walker and Associated Press contributed to the report.



Bee graphic



Associated Press

Brush Fire Burns 6,000 Acres on California-Nevada Border

Firefighters in Nevada near Markleeville, Calif., getting ready to do battle with a blaze shortly after it started in the Sierra Nevada. The fire destroyed at

least 27 homes nearby in Woodfords, Calif., and by yesterday afternoon some 1,500 people were fighting it. No serious injuries have been reported.

not complete?

Fire crews slowly making gains

Tahoe daily tribune 7/31/87

By JOHN DUNBAR
Tribune Staff Writer

Containment is slowly coming within reach of 1,300 firefighters who continue to battle a stubborn timber and brush fire that has turned at least 6,550 acres of rolling Sierra wilderness in Alpine County to little more than charred rubble.

In two days the blaze has swept across steep terrain east of the Tahoe Basin in the Toiyabe National Forest from

See more photos on Page 12

Woodfords to Fredericksburg, destroying 27 homes, forcing 250 people to flee their homes and dropping ash 30 miles north on Carson City.

Besides the 27 homes, a U.S. Forest Service spokeswoman said "innumerable" barns, sheds and other outbuildings were leveled by the fire.

The \$4 million blaze was reported 40 percent contained this morning by the spokeswoman.

"I can tell you this — we won't contain it today or tomorrow," John Russell, head of a task force in charge of the blaze, said Thursday. "A lot depends on the winds and how good our crews are."

Winds are expected to kick up again around noon today, which may rekindle hot spots that continue to smolder mainly in the Acorn Canyon near Crystal Spr-

(See FIRE, back page)



Tribune photo by Scott Locker

EMIGRANT TRAIL residents view the remains of one family's two-story house destroyed in the Woodfords fire. Ironically, the blaze spared another home just yards away.

Besides, because the helitanker takes on water from rivers and lakes near fires, its turnaround time is short: "12 loads of 4,500 gallons of foam an hour," Bacon said. "Traditional fixed-wing tankers haul 2,000 to 3,000 gallons. We figure if you turn around every 45 minutes you've got a fast system," he said.

The new technology is all part of an effort to get a leg up on the forces that burn — especially this year in a fire season that, thanks to much lighter than normal seasonal rainfall, is expected to be a rough one.

The California Department of Forestry (CDF) is running a similar experiment from its Bieber, Lassen County, station.

"This stuff (foam) has deep penetrating capabilities. It eliminates all the viscosity of water, and it just sinks in," said Bill Tele of Sacramento, CDF's chief of fire control operations. Also, it costs less than the gum-thickened fire retardant now in common use, 11 cents vs. 60 cents per gallon, he said.

It may help, but not enough to enable firefighters to get the upper hand on Mother Nature, because the Golden State's ecosystems were largely shaped by wildfire. They are tolerant of it, and some — the giant Sequoia, for example — need fire to reproduce.

Although the federal and state governments spend about \$90 million a year on fire management and suppression in California, wildfire disasters recur. They are particularly likely in seasons like this one, where light rainfall have made the forests and the chaparral communities than normal.

fire danger "is at mid to late August levels," said Richard D. Harrell of San Francisco, Forest Service fire management specialist for the Pacific Southwest Region.

What professionals fear is another year like 1985. Between July 2 and 11, Southern California was hit by 40 fires, 14 of them major. The entire state firefighting system was thrown into an emergency mode: 331,000 acres burned, 170 homes were damaged or destroyed, 10,000 people fought on the firelines and air tankers dropped 666,000 gallons of fire retardant.

The brute fact is that California's native vegetation is supposed to burn. But given the concentration of most of the state's 23 million people in fire-prone areas, public safety considerations won't permit nature to take its course.

Consequently, the Forest Service, CDF, Los Angeles and other county fire departments have since the early 1970s developed a whole range of early detection, resource management and inter-agency coordination techniques to nip wildfires early.

Air tanker pilots have infrared photographs of the hot spots in a fire even before they take off. Lightning strikes anywhere in the state are recorded almost instantaneously. Some fire camps have their own meteorologists. "Firescope," a multi-agency project based in Riverside and managed by the state Office of Emergency Services (OES) stitches the state's major fire-fighting agencies together in a computerized information sharing and resource management network. Aerial cameras can spot a baseball-sized fire from 10,000 feet.

The system is so refined that fire danger throughout the state is rated daily. A fire boss or "incident commander" can actually adjust



the strength of the attack on the fire hourly. When multiple major fires afflict the state, the Multi-Agency Coordination System, which has the big picture, calls the shots.

Even so, the reality of firefighting in California is that the firefighters just about stay even.

The explanation is paradoxical. "One reason we're not doing better is we're so damn good at what we do," Harrell said. "Weather here goes from too cold to too dry and doesn't give decay bacteria time to work, so there is a net accumulation of woody biomass which fuels wildfires, he said.

Current statistics illustrate the efficiency Harrell asserts: the 5,286 wildfires reported to CDF through

engines and 58 bulldozers. The Forest Service and the Los Angeles County Fire Department are comparably equipped.

Despite the high tech advances in firefighting technique and equipment, "the basic firefighting tool is still going to be the shovel, the McLeod, the Pulaski, the fire truck and the hose," said Bacon. (The McLeod is a combination hoe and rake; the Pulaski a single-bitted axe with an adze-shaped grub hoe extending from the back.)

The only new pieces of equipment added in recent years are chainsaws and the Swedish brush hook, used by crew leaders for light chopping.

While CDF's firefighting budget has risen gradually to the \$300 million level, the Forest Service, which is responsible for 20 million acres in California, has been tightening its belt. The federal government budgeted \$276 million for fire protection and suppression in 1980; last year it budgeted just \$265 million.

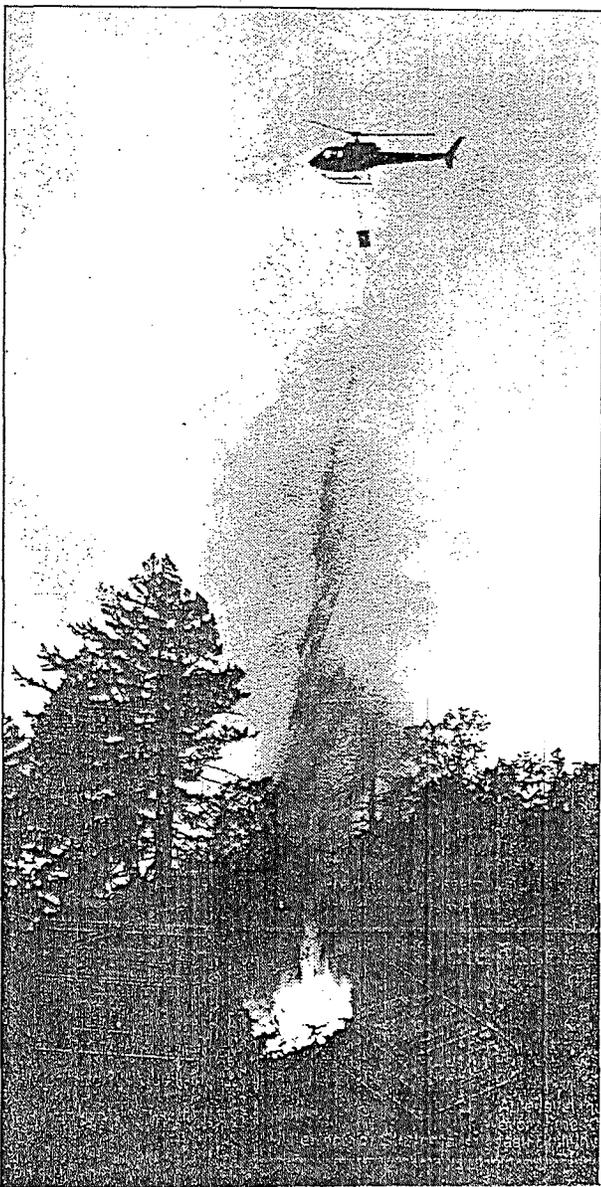
That fiscal retrenchment has been felt at the forest level in manpower and equipment cuts, closure of lookouts and the abandonment of trails.

"We can't get people to a fire faster now than we did when I came here in 1977," said Gary Mangus of King City, fire management officer for the Monterey Ranger District of Los Padres National Forest.

"We used to have five engines, a 15-passenger copter, a helitack crew, three 10-man crews, 14 prevention positions and three lookouts," Mangus said. "This year we have three engines, four patrols — one person pickup-pumpers — and one lookout. We basically have lost 'em over the years to budget reductions." In 1977, Mangus' district had a budget of about \$850,000 for firefighting. This year it is \$450,000.

California firefighting has become even more difficult in the past decade because of urban encroachment on the wilderness, the so-called "urban interface." That encroachment means, among other things, that firefighters can't simply "kick up a scratch line" around a fire and wait for it to go out; they have to go after it aggressively.

A classic example of an urban interface fire occurred last month in Pebble Beach, causing \$18 million in damage and the loss of 37 homes. The Forest Service is now



Examiner file photos

looking at that fire ex post facto, putting it on a computer, as it were, to see if it can serve as a predictive guide in the future.

Bill Ruskin of Felton, the vegeta-

tion management specialist for San Mateo and Santa Cruz counties, who is doing the study, acknowledged, however, that "we can't describe nature with numbers."

Firefighters gaining on huge blaze in Woodfords

By Courtney Brenn/Gazette-Journal

WOODFORDS, Calif. — Toiyabe National Forest officials expect by this evening to bottle up the raging brush and timber firestorm that engulfed this Alpine County community, leveling 24 homes and blackening 6,600 acres of wildlands.

The 290 Woodfords-area residents, forced to evacuate when the wind-whipped inferno bore down on their scenic communities Wednesday, were finally allowed to return home Friday.

Nearly a fourth of them, however, had no home to go to.

But the fire on Friday no longer threatened any structures, and firefighters continued mopping up hot spots and digging fire lines.

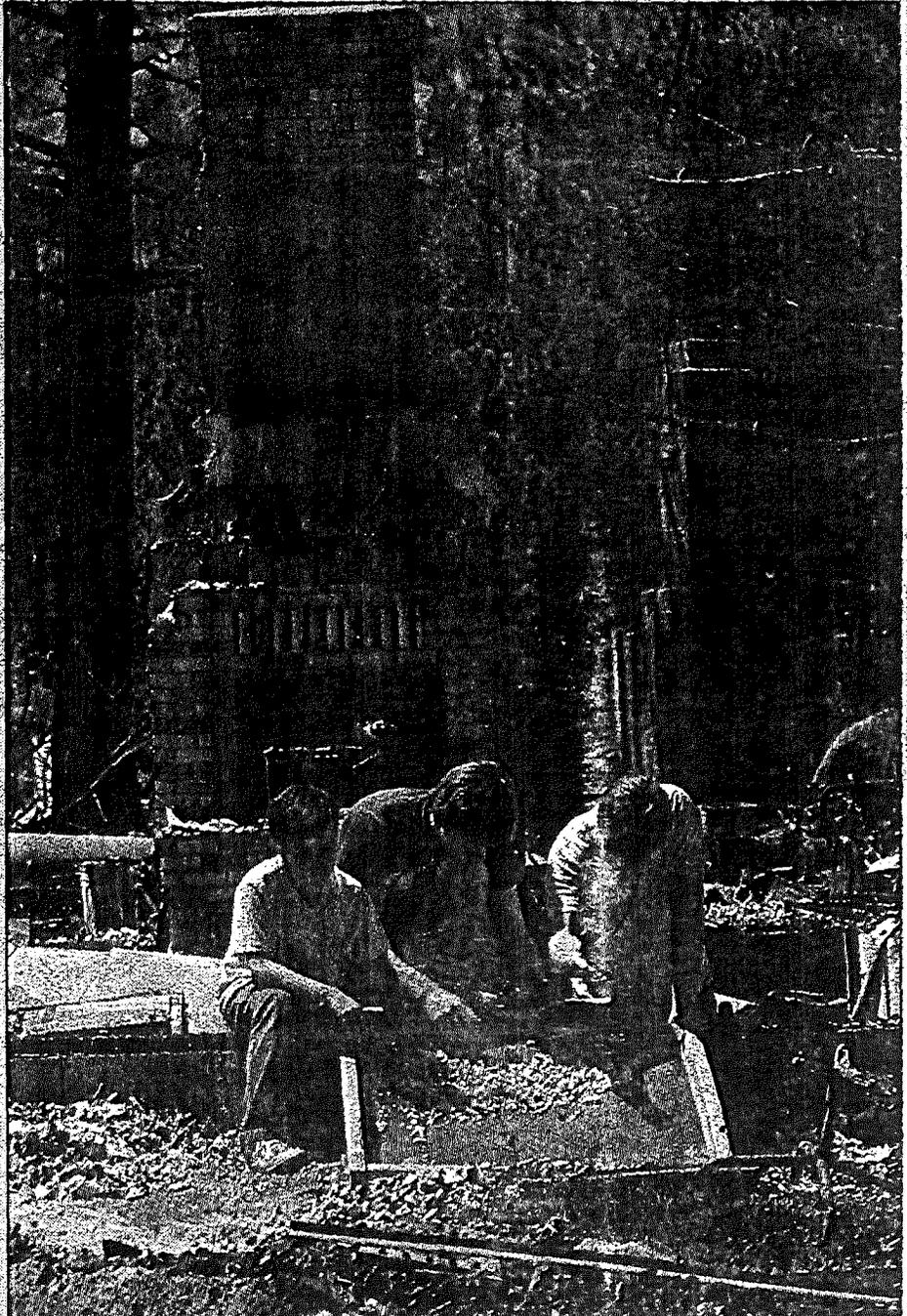
A few among the 1,500 firefighters who came from six states to help battle the blaze left Friday to fight other fires in the region after the worst of the Woodfords fire seemed to be over.

By Friday five firefighters had suffered minor injuries, including a fractured hand and a puncture wound.

The total cost of fighting the fire, including bringing crews in, providing six tankers and feeding the workers, approached \$1 million. Damage estimates, meanwhile, climbed toward \$3 million.

Firefighters had an easier time Friday in large part because temperatures cooled and winds calmed from Wednesday's 35-mph gusts that turned the blaze

See WOODFORDS, back page



Marilyn Newton/Gazette-Journal

SEARCHING: John Enright, left, helps brothers-in-law Jeff and Dan Bennett sift rubble Friday at the Woodfords home of the Bennetts' parents. The trio found only a few coins melted together in the China cup where they were kept.

On page 1C

- Fire-bomber pilots a different breed
- Rehabilitating the forest

Woodfords

From page 1A

into a firestorm. "She's about winding down," Toiyabe National Forest spokesman Jerry Snow said Friday night. "Now we're down to man, pick and shovel, and fire."

John Russell, leader of the interagency task force fighting the fire, said hundreds of miles of power lines had fallen and crews continued efforts to restore electricity. Telephone service remained spotty, although a bank of pay phones was set up in Woodfords for use by residents.

Fire officials predicted the fire would be contained by 6 p.m. today and under control by 6 p.m. Sunday.

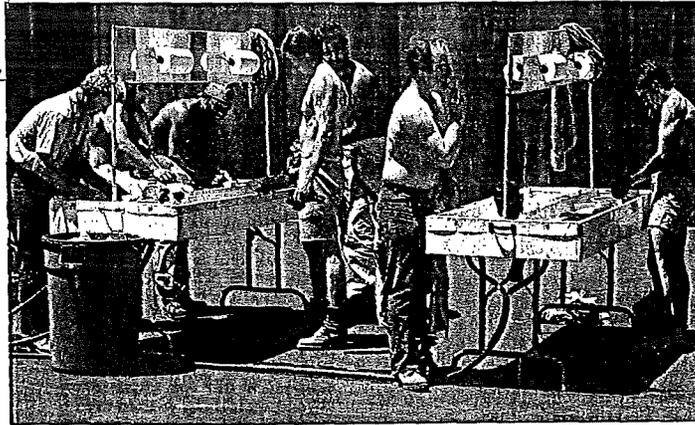
A fire is contained when a fire line has been built around it and it is no longer spreading. A controlled fire is virtually extinguished.

The fire had already burned through the residential area of Woodfords and by Friday night most of the blaze was in the higher mountains, Snow said. He estimated the elevations of the areas burning Friday at about 6,500 feet, while the entire blaze had burned at elevations ranging from 5,000 to 8,000 feet.

The fire started in Acorn Canyon, a narrow chasm north of Highway 88 near the Crystal Springs Campground. The blaze raced up a mountain to the north of the highway, then jumped to the south of the road before heading through Woodfords.

Highway 88 at the Nevada state line, and the Highway 89 and U.S. 395 junction were reopened Friday after having been closed since Wednesday.

Officials investigating the cause of the blaze had not determined whether the fire was intentional or accidental. Earlier, they had all but ruled out natural causes,



Marilyn Newton/Gazette-Journal

BREAK IN THE ACTION: Firefighters use portable sinks to shave, wash and do laundry at a camp at Diamond Valley School in Woodfords, Calif., Friday.

but were beginning to consider the possibility after an investigation Friday.

"The thrust right now is they're looking into whether (the fire) was human-caused," Snow said.

Nate Leising and Larry Dodds of the U.S. Forest Service said their search of the area where the fire began had produced no obvious signs of arson or accidental cause and their interviews had not turned up anybody who saw the fire begin.

Leising said there was a remote possibility lightning strikes during storms two weeks earlier could have started a small fire that smoldered until Wednesday's winds fanned it into an inferno that tore through Woodfords and two subdivisions. At least 100 families live in the area.

In addition to the 24 destroyed homes, six houses were severely damaged. But Snow said all of the homeless families had places to go Friday.

"The neighbors and so forth overwhelmingly jumped in to help them," Snow said. "I don't believe anybody was in need of the Red Cross shelter. People were opening up their homes to them. One woman provided a home she has that was vacant."

As the danger subsided, townspeople picked through the ashes of their homes and barns and garages. All pondered the fickle nature of the blaze that hopped across roads and property lines, sparing some buildings, ravaging others.

Along Route 89, Eileen Merrill watered a lawn that — complete with hedges,

petunias, marigolds, begonias and a rock garden — stood out like an oasis. A mere 20 yards away, Merrill's trim green lawn gave way to bulldozed piles of manzanita that lay before a backdrop of charcoal-black earth and the burned skeletons of trees.

In Alpine Village, where the fire destroyed about 20 homes, Mike McCormick faced a worse fate as he poked through the rubble of his parents' house.

All that remained of the two-story wooden home and garage were three incomplete stone and cement walls, a stone staircase, and several Franklin stoves. His parents' car, its tires gone and paint stripped by the heat, rested on the ground with its window glass melted into smooth, curved Dali-like shapes.

McCormick had made a pile of all he rescued from the rubble: Two metal beer steins, a tire iron, a cast-iron frying pan and casserole dish.

The Alpine County Chamber of Commerce has established a relief fund for the victims, chamber president John Brissenden said.

Donations can be sent to the Woodfords Fire Disaster Fund, care of the Alpine Chamber of Commerce, P.O. Box 265, Markleeville, Calif. 96120.

Brissenden said the community's efforts are being directed toward survival: finding housing and clothing for those who lost everything.

"This community is coming together beautifully to work toward a common goal."

Alpine County officials are meeting with representatives of the state Office of Emergency Services today to determine if Woodfords should be declared a disaster area. Brissenden said there is little the state can offer the community other than forwarding the disaster area request to federal officials.

Alpine County Supervisor John Bernett, whose home was burned to the ground, said that supervisors will meet Tuesday night to pass a resolution urging Gov. George Deukmejian to make financial aid available by declaring the fire a state emergency.

As the fire eased in fury, the debate over whether Forest Service fire crews initially misjudged the blaze's potential continued to flare.

Deputy Sheriff Bob Tucker said Thursday that the person in charge of the first Forest Service crew to arrive at what then was a small blaze told Woodfords volunteer firefighters they were no longer needed.

On Friday an angry Alpine County constable, Ed Schalbert, who had lost his home to the fire, observed: "It was a fire that when it started could have been put out in two or three hours."

"We don't understand why people (Woodfords volunteer fire department) were released and told 'Go home, we don't need you.'"

Forest Service spokesman Jerry Snow said the service's firefighters acted properly. Crews with equipment were initially sent back from the fire for their safety, he said.

Schalbert said he had contacted the office of Rep. Norman Shumway, R-Stockton, about the episode and a Shumway aide in Stockton said the staff would check it out.

"Will we look into it? Sure," said district representative Jack Sieglock, "But I don't know if you would want to call it an investigation."

"I think the most important thing at this point is to get the fire out and then look at the whole situation: Whose homes were burned, what caused the fire ... everything."

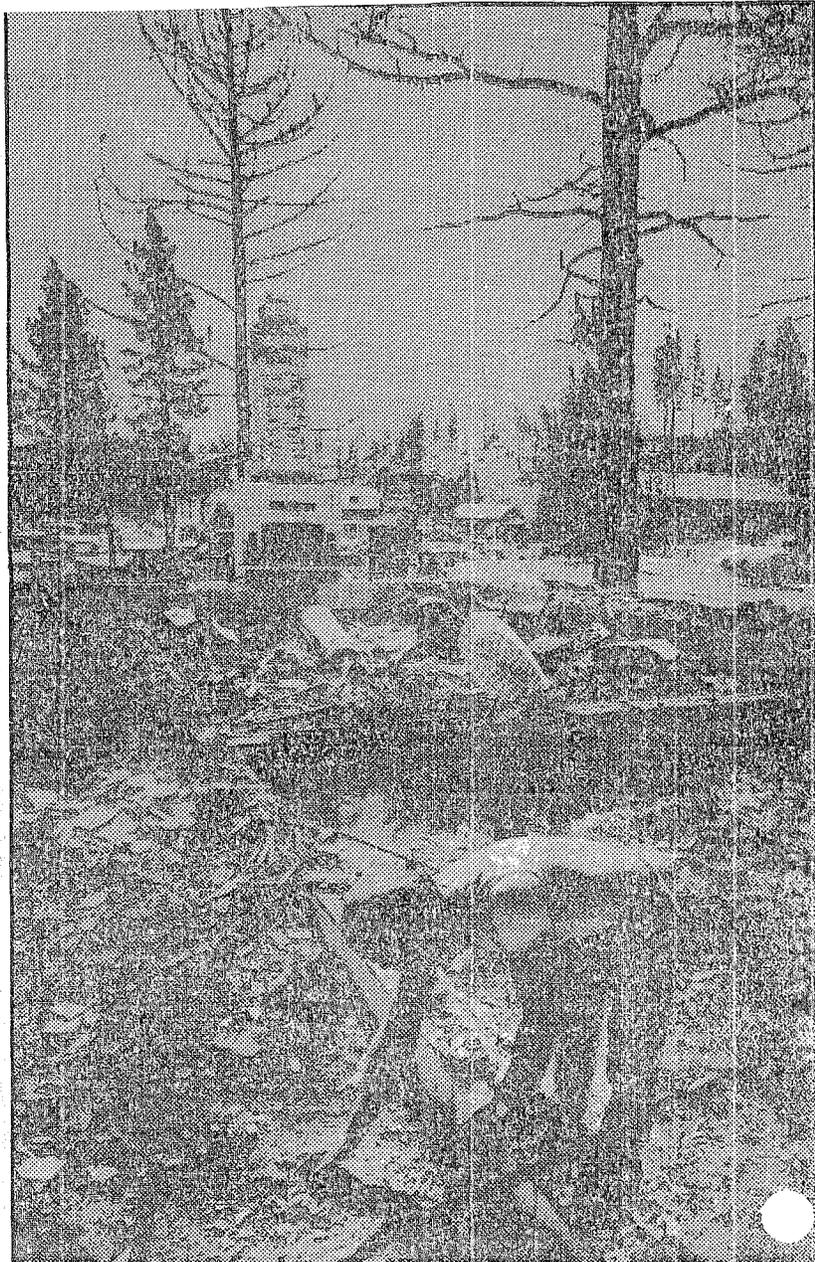
Big Sierra Blaze May Be Contained By This Evening

8/1/87

S.F. Chronicle

BY MICHAEL MALONEY/THE CHRONICLE

Denny Doyal (foreground) helped his father sift through the ashes of the family home near Woodfords



*By Bill Gordon
Chronicle Correspondent*

Minden, Nev.

Firefighters working in dangerously rugged terrain won the advantage yesterday over a fire that has destroyed more than 6,500 acres of brush and timber and 24 homes in the Sierra Nevada.

U. S. Forest Service officials predicted that the fire would be fully contained by tonight and controlled by late tomorrow.

About 450 firefighters used shovels and chain saws to clear a fire line to contain the blaze at the 7,000-foot level of a mountainside in the Toiyabe National Forest, just west of the Nevada state line and south of Lake Tahoe.

"It's plain, hard grunt work," Forest Service spokesman Jerry Snow said yesterday. "We can't move equipment into the area. They're walking in with hand tools."

Five Injuries

Five firefighters suffered minor injuries, mostly because of falls or falling debris.

The fire was considered to be 40 percent contained yesterday and the 22-mile-long fire line was expected to be complete by today.

The fire burned completely out of control from the time it started Wednesday until yesterday, Snow said. Firefighters started to make progress against the blaze thanks to lighter than expected winds and higher than normal humidity, he said.

Some in the area have charged that poor Forest Service management allowed a 24-square-foot fire near Woodfords in California's Alpine County to grow into a fire-storm. They blame a Forest Service supervisor's decision to send Alpine County volunteer firefighters elsewhere early in the firefighting effort.

The fire destroyed 24 homes in Woodfords.

Volunteers

Snow said that volunteers were sent to protect nearby homes in-

stead of trying to contain the blaze alongside a specially trained Forest Service crew was because of the steep hillside on which the fire had started.

"When they (the Forest Service crew) arrived at the scene it was a very steep, rugged terrain in which we could not get or use the water tanker truck," said Snow. "It was a hand crew type of situation in a very unsafe area."

A total of 1,300 firefighters remained at the scene yesterday after officials sent 200 back to their home bases. The estimated cost of fighting the fire, which has been blamed on the negligence of a camper or hiker, reached almost \$1 million yesterday.

Preliminary estimates of the loss to houses and other property were placed at \$4 million.

The National Fire Information Center in Boise dispatched crews from the U.S. Forest Service and state forestry departments from states — California, Nevada, Oregon, Idaho, Utah and Arizona — to fight the blaze.

10-Hour Shifts

The firefighters have been working 10-hour shifts and resting at a command center at Douglas County High School in Minden. Scores of cots filled the school's gymnasium, and cooks filled the kitchen.

Two additional "spike camp" near the fire line were established yesterday to give the front-line firefighters a nearby place in which to sleep, eat and wash.

Dan Smithers returned to a spike camp in Woodfords yesterday morning after 10 hours on the mountainside.

"It's steep and dangerous and hard to work up there," said Smithers, appearing almost too tired to talk or walk to the portable showers. A member of the Texas Canyon Hot Shots firefighting crew from the Angeles National Forest near

Los Angeles, Smithers declined to say how close the fire was to being contained.

"I'm just another tool," he said. In 12 hours he would be back at work.

Other firefighters worked in residential subdivisions and other areas charred by the fast-moving flames. They moved slowly across the eerie landscape smothering any smoldering hot spots to prevent their being fanned into flares by the wind.

'This Is Different'

Steve Parr, a firefighter from the Sierra National Forest near Fresno, carried a shovel through the Alpine Village subdivision near Woodfords. Many of the houses in the area were reduced to concrete foundations and a few charred skeletons of bicycles, children's swing sets or bedsprings.

"When a fire's really ripping, it's exciting to get out there in the middle of it to fight it," said Parr. "This is different. I don't like to see this."

Denny Doyal worked nearby in the ashes of his parents' home, sifting through one shovelful of ashes at a time and occasionally plucking out a blackened silver dollar.

No other mementoes survived the blaze from which his parents escaped with only the clothes they were wearing.

"You bet we'll rebuild," Doyal said. "This is survival country. You do what you have to do."

The Alpine County Chamber of Commerce has established a fund for the families burned out of their homes by the devastating fire in one of the state's least-populated counties. Tax-deductable contributions can be sent to the Woodfords Fire Disaster Relief Fund, c/o Alpine County Chamber of Commerce, P.O. Box 5, Markleeville, Calif. 96120.

Woodfords fire contained

Reno Gazette Journal
Aug 2
1987

But residents say firefighters could have done better

By Don Vetter/Gazette-Journal

WOODFORDS, Calif. — While firefighters encircled a blaze Saturday that devastated this mountain hamlet, residents questioned firefighting tactics that they claim heightened \$3.5 million in damages.

Toiyabe National Forest officials said the 6,600-acre blaze was contained at 6 p.m. Saturday and is expected to be under control by 6 p.m. today.

The fire, which broke out Wednesday, destroyed 26 homes and severely damaged six others, said National Forest Service spokesman Mark Hummel. The Alpine County Sheriff's Office reported an additional 100 homes, garages, barns and other buildings suffered at least minor damage.

The fire left nearly a quarter of the families in the small community homeless.

It cost the six agencies that fought the fire \$1.2 million for their efforts, Hummel said. The firefighter contingent, which once numbered 1,500, was dropped to 1,000 Saturday as mop-up crews canvassed the burn area.

Meanwhile, former Alpine County Commissioner Jack Doyal called the firefighters' efforts "extremely disorganized," and at one point the crews ignored his pleas to douse a hot spot near his son's home.

"If we fought the war like we fought the fire, the Germans would be sitting in Washington," Doyal said.

While flames roared through the Alpine Village subdivision, Doyal claims Interior Department fire crews did nothing, telling him they weren't trained to fight structure fires.

"There was some fresh-cut pine that we had just cut for firewood that was scorching my son's house," Doyal said. "Well, I got on one of those big trucks and saved my son's home and I had to deck one of the firemen to do it. . . I gave him my best Sunday punch."

Doyal, 66, said nine homes in the Alpine Village subdivision were destroyed, including his \$100,000 three-bedroom home.

He is asking for a congressional investigation into the Woodfords blaze.

"My reason for being vocal is I'm hoping the federal government can organize itself," he said. "When disaster hits, you expect so much more. They came out with good intentions, but they lost it."

Capt. Don Haldeman of the California Department of Forestry, said there is no policy that restricts wildland crews from fighting a structure fire. The Alpine Village incident is being investigated with all of those involved being interviewed, he said.

"What may have happened could have something to do with tactics, though it's inappropriate to comment at this point without interviewing all of those involved," Haldeman said.

But Doyal said the tactics could have caused more harm than good. The one-way dirt road into the Alpine Village subdivision was often blocked by fire trucks, he said.

"There are a hell of a lot of people out here who if ever got organized, they may have been able to turn this around," Doyal said.

Ed Schalbert, who also lost his Alpine

Woodfords

From page 1D

Village home, said there is talk of a town meeting early this week to assess what the community can do about their charges of a "disorganized" firefighting effort.

"The consensus out here is that the fire never should have gotten out of hand," Schalbert said.

Some Woodfords victims are considering a class-action suit against the Forest Service, he said.

Many residents were angered that the person in charge of the Forest Service crew told Woodfords volunteer firefighters they were no longer needed.

The fire started in Acorn Can-

yon, a narrow chasm north of Highway 88 near Crystal Springs Campground. The blaze raced up the mountain to the north of the highway and then jumped to the south of the road before heading through Woodfords.

Witnesses said winds fanned the inferno which sometimes stormed through heavy, dry fuel at 40 mph.

Investigators continued their efforts Saturday to pinpoint the cause of the fire, although they said arson is unlikely.

Nate Leising and Larry Dodds of the U.S. Forest Service said their search of the area where the fire began had produced no obvious signs of arson or accidental cause. Interviews have not turned up anybody who saw the fire begin.

Woodfords fire cooling down

By Chris Bowman
and Ilana DeBare
Bee Staff Writers

WOODFORDS — The fire that blowtorched this tiny Sierra resort town last week, turning 27 homes to ashes and charring 6,600 acres of forested canyon land, is expected to be fully controlled by this evening, federal fire officials said.

On Saturday, firefighters finished carving "break lines" around the massive black patches in the rugged Carson Range 15 miles south of Lake Tahoe. The lines — dirt trails cleared of vegetation — and the absence of strong winds helped to arrest the fire, the fourth to scar this region in as many years.

As of 6 p.m. Saturday, officials declared the blaze "contained."

"That means we're reasonably confident the fire won't escape those lines," said John Russell, a federal Bureau of Land Management official from Denver in charge of the fire fight.

Today, crews will converge on smoldering spots within the charred areas, Russell said, which should bring the fire fully under control by this evening.

Fire investigators Saturday combed a one-acre patch of a steep canyon slope they had flagged as the area where the fire mostly likely started.

The investigators said they found evidence that people recently had been in the area, but found no sign of any incendiary device. They said they believe the fire was started accidentally in this area on the north side of

See FIRE, page B6

B6 The Sacramento Bee • Sunday, August 2, 1987

Fire

Continued from page B1

Highway 88.

The blaze, which involved up to 1,300 firefighters from five Western states, had fewer than 500 hard-hatted crew members on the fire lines Saturday. Another 700 stood by at a command post in nearby Minden, Nev., in case afternoon winds rekindled the fire. But the fire remained confined to smoldering stumps.

Alpine County officials roughly estimated the damage to private homes at \$3.5 million, a big chunk of real estate for a county with fewer than 1,500 residents.

"The fire destroyed 3 percent of our tax base," said Dolph Frisius, assistant to the county Board of Supervisors.

County assessors said Saturday their survey of destroyed homes increased from 24 to 27, including a trailer.

Supervisors are considering waiving building fees for residents who plan to rebuild, Frisius said.

Most are planning to rebuild, said Doranna Tognotti, a Woodfords resident who was working as a volunteer in the American Red Cross relief station there.

"Most people had insurance," Tognotti said. "Everyone I've spoken to has said they're going to rebuild."

Ethel Sandell, another local Red Cross volunteer, agreed.

But she said, "To think about rebuilding on the ashes, that takes a lot of guts."

Officials with Toiyabe National Forest were assessing damage and rehabilitation strategy for the charred hillsides and canyons on the eastern face of the Sierra Nevada.

A team of five environmental experts began work Friday studying how water, soil, vegetation, animal life and cultural resources — including a local cemetery — were affected by the fire.

By Saturday afternoon, they had begun compiling suggestions for the most immediate measures needed to prevent erosion and mud slides this fall.

"Right now, we're talking structures to help prevent soil movement, to try to hold it and hope we can get seed on it," said Greg Clark, supervisor of the Carson Ranger District of the Toiyabe National Forest.

Even with emergency measures such as check dams and reseeding, homeowners in the valley could face mud

“To me personally, that’s the real significance: another chunk of deer winter range gone.”

— Rick Jameson, head of the land rehabilitation team

slides this fall, members of the rehabilitation team said.

"People who live at the mouth of the canyon are going to be looking up at unstable slopes," said Rick Jameson, head of the team. "While the risk (of mud slides) is always there, you increase the risk significantly when you take off the vegetation."

The fire damage to plant and animal life in the area may take decades to repair, Jameson said.

Of the grasses, brittlebush, manzanita, and sagebrush that grew on the lower hillsides, the first to grow back probably will be the easily ignited cheatgrass, Jameson said. The Rocky Mountain mule deer that browse the lower slopes in the winter do not eat cheatgrass and can no longer depend on the 4- to 6-foot-high brittlebush for cover.

"They'll just come down here and if there's no suitable winter range, the herd will just become smaller and smaller," Jameson said. "There's not a great deal of that winter range left along the frontier because it's being built on more and more . . . To me personally, that's the real significance: another chunk of deer winter range gone."

The Jeffrey and Ponderosa pine that covered the steep hillsides may not grow back for years — and is unlikely to be replaced by the Forest Service, Jameson said.

"Typically, tree planting is done in sites that are considered economic timber sites," he said. And there has never been much of a timber industry on the steep, dry mountainsides around Woodfords.

"Nobody wants to pay for replanting a hillside for aesthetic purposes," he said.

Sierra blaze quelled

Tahoe Daily Tribune 8/3/87

WOODFORDS, Calif. (UPI) — Hundreds of weary firefighters finally controlled a 10-square-mile range fire that started Wednesday and quickly roared out of control to destroy 26 homes south of Lake Tahoe.

The U.S. Forest Service announced Saturday night that the 1,500 men and women on the line had thrown a 23-mile ring around the blaze. About 800 firefighters spent Sunday dousing hot spots and the Forest Service declared the fire controlled about 5:30 p.m.

The fire, believed to have been caused by a careless smoker or camper, was initially fanned by 30-mph winds that produced a wall of flame that roared along the ground and jumped from treetop to treetop. It forced hundreds of residents and campers to flee, dropped ashes on Carson City, Nev., 30 miles away and sent smoke over Reno, Nev., 60 miles to the north.

But on Friday the winds slowed and firefighters gained the upper hand on the fast-moving blaze.

The cost of fighting the blaze was put at more than \$1.2 million and total damage was estimated at more than \$4 million, according to Forest Ser-

Blaze

(Continued from Page 1)

vice fire information officer Don Haldeman.

The fire charred 6,550 acres at altitudes of 8,000-9,000 feet in Alpine County, destroying some timber but mostly bitterbrush, a plant favored by deer. Firefighting crews also attempted to protect the devastated watershed from rapid runoff by winter snowmelt by digging small trenches in the trails.

The 26 homes destroyed were located near Woodfords at the intersection of Highways 88 and 89, both of which were closed for two days. Haldeman said 103 homes were saved. Dozens of barns, sheds and other out-buildings were also destroyed.

State News

Big fire in Sierra controlled

Cause of blaze remains unknown

WOODFORDS (AP) — Firefighters controlled a blaze late Sunday as investigators continued searching for the cause of the fire that destroyed 24 homes and caused close to \$5 million damage to this Sierra Nevada community.

Authorities believe the fire, which broke out Wednesday and blackened 6,600 acres before being contained on Saturday, is believed to be accidental, said Nate Leising of the U.S. Forest Service. It was declared controlled about 5:30 p.m. Sunday.

The arson investigation is being hampered by the extremely rocky terrain, he said.

Federal and state fire damage assessment teams combed through the area and Alpine County Sheriff Larry Kuhl reported they estimated the value of the damaged and destroyed homes at \$5 million.

That figure does not include the value of the contents of the homes, he added.

"And there are things that can't be counted," Kuhl said. "People come here for the aesthetic values, for fishing and all that."

The fire broke out in a steep canyon west of the Nevada border and left a fourth of the approximately 100 families living in this tiny hamlet homeless.

Some local residents complained that the Forest Service response to the fire was too slow and volunteers who showed up at the scene immediately after the fire began should not have been dismissed.

But Kuhl disagreed. "I don't see anything that they could have done differently, even looking back and second-guessing," he said.

Winds gusting up to 40 mph combined with the steep countryside helped to quickly whip the fire into an inferno that was difficult to reach with water, the sheriff said.

About 1,000 firefighters remained at the scene on Sunday. Three firefighters suffered minor injuries — a twisted knee, cut leg and a case of heat exhaustion.

Sierra Blaze Just About Under Control

By J. H. Doyle

An army of 1,500 firefighters nearly succeeded yesterday in controlling a timber and brush fire that destroyed two dozen mountain homes in a Sierra Nevada community south of Lake Tahoe.

The 6,600-acre Alpine County blaze was expected to be controlled, or substantially put out, by 6 p.m. yesterday, a spokesman for the U.S. Forest Service said. About 70 percent of the blaze had been contained by Saturday afternoon.

Almost 300 residents of Woodfords who had been evacuated from their homes when the fire threatened their community were allowed to return yesterday. But 24 homes were consumed by fire, and six others were seriously damaged. The firestorm also leveled numerous barns and sheds.

At least five firefighters suffered minor injuries during the four-day fire, officials said. The firefighting costs have exceeded \$1 million, and the losses from the fire totaled nearly \$5 million.

The fire started last Wednesday in a wooded area of the Sierra Nevada, 25 miles south of Lake Tahoe, and was fanned by winds of up to 35 miles per hour. Firefighters took advantage of a lull in the breeze this weekend to help put out the fire.

Investigators believe the blaze was probably caused by a careless smoker or camper.

Meanwhile, residents criticized the firefighting effort. Jack Doyal, a former Alpine County Commissioner whose \$100,000 house was destroyed by the fire, has called for a congressional investigation into the fire, the Associated Press reported yesterday.

Doyal contends that the firefighters were disorganized and could have done a better job. Other residents are planning a town meeting to discuss the situation and a possible class-action suit against the U.S. Forest Service.

California Division of Forestry Captain Don Haldeman said the complaints are under investigation.

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S.F. Chron. 8-4-87

Alpine County Is Declared a Disaster Area

By Bill Gordon

Fire-scarred Alpine County was declared a disaster area yesterday by Lieutenant Governor Leo McCarthy, acting for vacationing Governor Deukmejian.

A 10-square-mile forest and brush fire last week destroyed 15 primary homes, as well as 10 residences used as second homes, in a picturesque canyon south of Lake Tahoe. Another home had major damage and five others minor damage, according to the state Office of Emergency Services.

The fire caused damage estimated at more than \$4 million.

"The disaster goes beyond the ability of local government agencies to deal with the problem," McCarthy said at a Capitol news conference.

The Office of Emergency Services is seeking federal help from the Small Business Administration and other agencies, he said.

The disaster declaration also prohibits replacement homes from being reassessed at higher tax levels. McCarthy said he will ask Deukmejian to place the California Conservation Corps on call if local roads need to be shored up later this year.

About 1,500 firefighters from six states battled the flames last week at a cost of more than \$1.2 million. The fire, believed to have been caused by a careless smoker or camper, blackened 6,600 acres of land near Woodfords at the intersection of Highways 88 and 89.

The fire started on Wednesday and was declared under control on Sunday.

Fire site now disaster area

SACRAMENTO (UPI) — Lt. Gov. Leo McCarthy, acting Monday for vacationing Gov. George Deukmejian, declared a disaster area in part of Alpine County where a range fire destroyed 25 homes south of Lake Tahoe.

The 10-square-mile blaze was declared controlled during the weekend after it forced hundreds of residents and campers to flee, dropped ashes on Carson City, Nev., 30 miles away, and caused damage estimated at more than \$4 million.

"The state proclamation is issued when the disaster goes beyond the ability of local government agencies to deal with the problem," McCarthy said at a Capitol news conference.

He said the state Office of Emergency Services was seeking possible federal help from the Small Business Administration and other agencies.

McCarthy said he also would ask Deukmejian to dispatch the California Conservation Corps to the area if needed to shore up local roads threatened in the winter by fire-caused erosion.

OES officials said Monday that the fire destroyed 15

Ranchers mad over fire effort

MINDEN, Nev. (UPI) — Veteran ranchers with lands in California and Nevada assert that they were prevented by law enforcement officers from helping fight the initial stages of the forest fire that blackened 6,500 acres last week near the Nevada line.

Clarence Burr said Monday he and others were threatened with arrest when they attempted to bring in heavy equipment to battle the flames, which Burr said might have stopped the fire in the early stages.

Fred Dressler, 89, said the people in charge of the battle against the flames did not know the area's back roads. He said the ranchers in the old days used to fight the fires by hand and "now we've allowed you to burn it up."

Burr, Dressler, law enforcement officials and foresters met in an informal session Monday to air some of the problems in

Fire TDT 8/4/87 (cont)

(Continued from Page 1)

primary homes and 10 residences used as second homes. Another home had major damage and five others minor damage. It was still undetermined whether the area would qualify for low-interest federal loans. Many property owners had full coverage through insurance, the OES said.

At one point, 1,500 men and women battled the flames at a

cost of more than \$1.2 million. The fire, believed to have been caused by a careless smoker or camper, was fanned by 30-mph winds and eventually blackened 6,550 acres at altitudes of 8,000-9,000 feet.

The fire was near Woodfords at the intersection of Highways 88 and 89, both of which were closed for two days. Don Haldeman, a U.S. Forest Service spokesman, said 103 homes were saved but dozens of barns, sheds and other outbuildings were destroyed.

USFS imposes campfire restrictions

Campfire restrictions prompted by high fire danger, lack of rain and drying vegetation took effect today in the Lake Tahoe Basin, the Forest Service announced.

Campfires will be allowed only in developed recreation sites. Portable stoves using gas, jellied petroleum or pressurized liquid fuel can be used outside developed sites, but a campfire permit is needed for their use.

(See USFS, back page)

USFS

Tahoe daily
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(Continued from Page 4)

Smoking is permitted only in developed recreation sites or in enclosed vehicles.

Welding or operating a torch with an open flame is banned without Forest Service authorization.

Use of explosives without Forest Service permission also is prohibited.

The restrictions will remain in place until the fire danger is reduced by a change in the weather. Tougher restrictions could be imposed if the fire danger increases, the Forest Service said.

Violations of the restrictions are punishable by a maximum fine of \$500, six months in jail, or both.

The restrictions do not apply in the Tahoe Basin portion of the Desolation Wilderness.

Woodfords begins recovery amid controversy

By JIM DIPESO
Tribune Staff Writer

Tahoe Daily Tribune
8/5/87

The fire crews are scanning the naked hillsides with infrared equipment, on the lookout for "hot spots" and praying that a lightning strike doesn't touch off more flames.

Insurance adjusters and state disaster teams are adding up the dollar losses.

The government is giving victims a break on taxes and building permit fees.

Donations are pouring into a receiving center at Turtle Rock Park.

And amidst heavy criticism from residents that

firefighting agencies mismanaged the job, the Forest Service and others are critiquing their performance.

A week after a forest fire roared through Woodfords, scorching more than 6,500 acres, destroying more than two dozen homes and causing millions of dollars in damage, Alpine County has begun the long road to recovery.

The close-knit community in California's most sparsely populated county has pulled together to help thy neighbor.

(See WOODFORDS, back page)

Woodfords

(Continued from Page 1)

"It's amazing how people have come together in a community cause," said Jack Doyal, whose home burned to the ground. "You really can't say enough about it. It's the American people in time of need."

A tangible definition of generosity can be seen at the community room at Turtle Rock Park, just off Highway 4 and 89. Tables are piled high with clothing, lamps and other miscellaneous household goods, including a child's microscope and camera.

Up on the bulletin board are names of people with heavy appliances available. The list included Eric Jung, chairman of the Alpine County Board of Supervisors. He had a spare refrigerator.

There's so much clothing, in fact, that the woman overseeing the operation hopes donors will bring by other items such as furniture and garden tools.

"I had no idea we'd get this much," said the woman, who asked that her name not be used.

People also are thinking about the wildlife who suffered from the fire. Hay has been donated by Carson Valley ranchers to be used as deer forage, said Dave Zellmer, Woodfords fire chief. The fire consumed bitterbrush that deer rely on for winter feeding.

The Red Cross has helped the fire victims with emergency food and clothing, said Ethel Sandell, a Markleville resident and Red Cross volunteer. So far, 27 people have come in for help, she said. "I'll be open for three more days," she added.

On Tuesday, Doyal dropped by Turtle Rock Park with his twin sons, Dan and Dennis, to pick up some items and begin rebuilding his household. "Where do you begin?" he mused.

Doyal said he's still numb from the loss of his home, but plans to begin reconstruction as soon as he gets the check from the insurance company.

"It's been three days and I still have no feeling about it. It doesn't seem like it happened," said Doyal, a craggy-faced man wearing a baseball cap reading "slave" on the front.

Insurance will cover the tangible losses, but like the other victims Doyal lost personal items that are priceless. "There's so much. The family history, albums, jewelry, the sterling."

Ed Schalbert, whose Alpine Village home also burned down, had a "steamer trunk" full of Navy memorabilia, such as scrapbooks and matchbooks from Pearl Harbor warships, that he had planned to donate to a naval museum.

Another victim planning to rebuild is John Bennett, another county supervisor. "You bet. You've got to live someplace," he said.

Schalbert and Bennett were among the fire victims who believe the Forest Service botched their job and allowed a small fire to become a conflagration.

"They were just standing there with their fingers in their ear," Bennett remembered about Bureau of Land Management crews when he and his wife were fleeing their burning home.

One of the residents' complaints is that the Forest Service sent Woodfords volunteer firefighters away from the fire in its early stages. That folly allowed a small fire to run out of control, they charged.

"We were turned away," said Zellmer. "At no time, did the Woodfords volunteers feel secure that the situation was under control," he told the supervisors, who discussed the fire and its aftermath at their regular meeting Tuesday.

Schalbert wants an independent investigator to look into the fire's handling. "It's sickening and disgusting and shouldn't happen again," Schalbert said angrily to the supervisors.

Later, he said enough reliable witnesses could be found to verify the complaints. "They are reputable people. This isn't just barroom talk," Schalbert said.

Jung said he has asked the state fire marshal and Rep. Norman Shumway, R-Stockton, to sit in on the upcoming critique of the fire.

The Forest Service said they understand the fire victims' anger, but maintain they and other agencies did a good job fighting the blaze. Make that a "hell of a job," according to Greg Clark of the Toiyabe National Forest.

Clark said he didn't have enough information on the reports volunteers were shoed away, but added "we need the volunteers."

"I understand the stress and trauma that this kind of thing causes. The reaction and the animosity are a natural thing," said John Swanson, district ranger for the Toiyabe National Forest.

At the same time, many residents are "blind to the work that was done. They are blind to the fact that although 26 homes burned, 100 were saved. They wouldn't have been without the incredible professionalism and selflessness of the firefighters. There were some genuine hero stories," Swanson said.

Firefighter Will Waldron of the El Dorado National Forest took the complaints in stride. "It's expected when homes are lost," he said. "Think of all the homes we did save."

Those who lost uninsured homes may be eligible for government assistance, depending on what state disaster assessment teams find out. An official of the Office of Emergency Services said that if 25 primary homes and-or businesses with at least 40 percent uninsured losses are tallied, loans could be available from the U.S. Small Business Administration.

But of the 26 lost homes, only 15 were primary residences, the official said.

There is no eligibility for temporary shelter assistance from the government, but owners of summer rentals are being contacted to see if they'd be willing to rent to fire victims on a long-term basis, said Mary

R-C
8-6-87

Alpine rebuilds after fire destroys 24 homes

'A dream house in the mountains'

by TREVA ZELLER
Staff writer

From the windows of her dream house, Janis Doyal still can look beyond the blackened, scarred land and see her distant mountain stream.

Like others living where the Acorn Fire did some of its worst damage, she and her family will stay, rebuild and wait for another breath of life. This is still their home.

"We were one of the lucky ones," said Doyal the day after last week's 6,550-acre blaze swept through her Alpine Village neighborhood.

Her family's yellow, two-story home is one of the few in a row of houses still standing. It suffered some smoke and exterior fire damage.

Their once beautiful mountain view suffered the most, instantly transformed into images of twisted debris, charred trees

and blackened ground.

"We moved up here because of the beautiful scenery," Doyal said. "It was my dream house in the mountains."

Then she motioned to a distant canyon.

"But I can still see my little stream. It's still my home and it's still my mountains."

Doyal, her husband Lynn and their three children will plant more trees in the once abundant-

Continued to page 6

Rebuild: Dream homes lost

Continued from page 1

ly green timberland, realizing that during their lifetimes they won't see the land as it was.

"That's part of living here; you take that chance," said Lynn Doyal, who grew up in Alpine County. "It's an opportunity most people don't have so we're not going to give it up."

Only two houses away, his father Jack's house burned to the ground. The two men worked desperately side-by-side to save both homes.

"My father-in-law, after his house burned down, went to try to save his son's house," said Janis, smiling. "He even decked a firefighter to get it watered down."

Jack and Elyse Doyal, long-time Alpine County residents, own Hope Valley Resort. Elyse stayed and watched the fire come down on their home from a nearby ridge, where the resort is located, as her husband came down to help.

"I was saying all afternoon, if that doesn't get my house I'm going to chop down those trees," the 63-year-old Elyse said on Thursday, motioning to the scorched limbs next to what little remained of her home. "I guess I don't have to worry about it anymore."

In the aftermath, she looked for evidence that her home was once there, amazed that there was no trace of a fence yet a large china bowl emerged a little scalded but without a crack.

"You know where everything was," she said, appearing numb as she roamed through the rubble. "You remember where everything was, and you wonder what's under there."

She pointed to a cake pan, a

now gutted washer and dryer, tops of canned fruit jars — reminders of their daily lives.

"When you look at it you can see the room, how it was."

Despite their setback, the elder Doyals also plan to stay. Elyse Doyal already has a new floorplan figured out for their summer home.

Meanwhile, they have another place to live near the resort, although the Alpine Village home contained many of their belongings.

“

It's still my home...still my mountains.

”

"We'll go on; we're not going to let this stop us," she said later, adding that their home was covered by insurance.

Others in the small Woodfords community this week will begin the task of cleaning up, starting over.

Bob and Catherine Parker have the option of living in a trailer offered by friend Edna Hellwinkel until they can rebuild their home.

"We still have a propane tank left," said Catherine, a Diamond Valley School teacher who lived with her husband in the home for 25 years. "We only had about 10 minutes to evacuate. We did get all our animals out."

The Doyals and others in the

Alpine Village gave credit to assistant sheriff Skip Veatch. Residents said Veatch and his wife remained calm during the disaster despite the loss of their own home.

They both helped other residents evacuate and brought food to firefighters.

The fire, which broke out

Wednesday (July 29) in the steep Acorn Canyon near Crystal Springs, destroyed 24 homes and caused major damage to six others, the Alpine County Sheriff's Office reported.

Officials said an additional 100 homes, garages, barns or other buildings suffered at least minor damage around Woodfords. About 103 homes threatened by the fire were saved.

Alpine Village, a subdivision of about 20 homes just south of Highway 89 on the way to Markleeville, was one of the hardest hit with the loss of at least 10 houses, the sheriff's office said.

Homes also were lost in the Mesa Vista Estates and other outlying areas near Woodfords, which escaped the Fredericksburg fire last year.

Almost all Crystal Springs homes near the origin of the blaze were saved by firefighters.

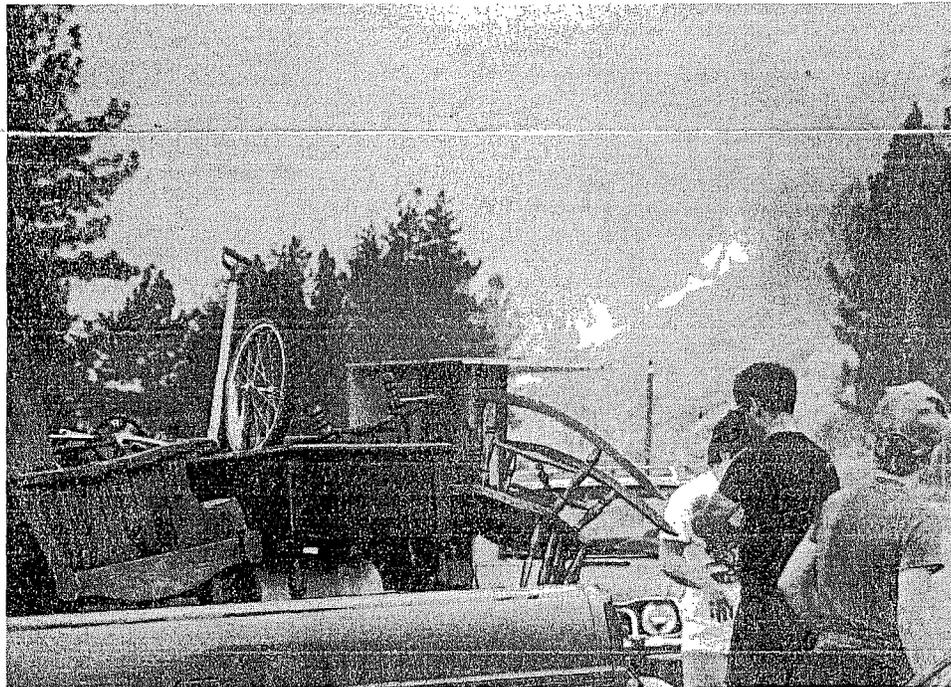
On Monday, California Lt. Gov. Leo McCarthy signed a measure allowing a tax break for homeowners who rebuild, and the area was declared to be in a state of emergency.

The Alpine County Chamber of Commerce has set up a relief fund for victims of the fire. Anyone who wants to contribute can send a donation in care of the Woodford's Fire Disaster Fund, P.O. Box 265, Markleeville, Calif. 96120.



SHOCKED. Elyse Doyal surveys the remains of her Alpine Village home that burned to the ground last week, amazed to find a china bowl still intact. Like other Woodfords residents,

Doyal and her family plan to stay in their mountain community and rebuild. R-C photo by Treva Zeller



EVACUATION. Markleeville resident Norman Reuther comforts fellow motorist Sandy Stierlin, far left, as they stop briefly just after escaping a wall of flames. Both stopped to

help evacuate the family of 13-year-old Clint Celio, far right, near Woodfords. The Celio home ultimately survived. R-C. photo by Treva Zeller

R.C.
5/16/87

Ham radio operators were link with outside

Amateur radio operators did what they're supposed to do: During the Woodfords fire, they worked round the clock to send messages in and out of the area where telephone lines were down.

Bob Andrews, who is a replacement dispatcher for Alpine County Sheriff's Office, has a sheriff's base station as well as his amateur radio gear at his Alpine County home. He also is equipped with emergency power.

At Carson Valley Middle School where an emergency shelter was set up there was also an amateur radio station to relay messages back and forth.

According to Andrews and Gardnerville amateur radio operator Ray Watley, amateurs from Lake Tahoe, Gardnerville and Carson City and Reno manned the radios beginning at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday and on shifts through Saturday.

During the first few hours, Andrews said, the amateurs relayed messages to and from the California Office of Emergency Management.

Watley said that in the early hours of the fire the "hams" sent messages about houses burned or damaged and the location of residents.

Then, they relayed a great many "health and

welfare" messages to and from the fire area and the Red Cross emergency center at the Carson Valley Middle School.

According to Andrews, during an emergency the government radio bands are kept busy and there is no room for residents who want to send messages to loved ones or find out where a friend might be.

Amateurs fill this void.

"There are many, many amateurs, and they all jump in at the drop of a hat to do emergency work," Andrews said.

Helping Andrews set up the station at his home was Mauro Capone, and coordinating the Red Cross site was Lou James of Reno. Sheila Warner of Carson City obtained hand-held radio sets from Truckee Meadows Fire District for the amateurs to use.

Among the operators at both sites were Jack Frost of Fish Springs, Bob and Sharon Grissom and Gaylord Schmatt of Gardnerville, Curt Foltz and Dick Williford of Carson City, Al Stinger of Reno and Mike and Natalie Sherrick of Sparks.

Bear Valley and the City of South Lake Tahoe lent power generators for the Alpine communications station.

Woodford's Fire Disaster Fund

PO Box 265

Markleeville, Calif. 96120

Mystery man saves dog

by LISA WIXON
Staff Writer

It's the first night of a major fire. Confusion settles in as people evacuate, homes and trees burn, and the fire rages out of control. How many busy firemen would pay attention to a stray dog wandering around with some unobvious minor injuries?

Not many. But a very special one did.

No one seems to know the identity of the firefighter who saved Prince, a large German shepherd who had gotten lost last Wednesday at the Alpine fire. Although Prince survived without any major injuries, his paws were burnt and his hair was singed.

According to Della Wood, the owner of the dog, the fire engines had scared him and he had fled the neighborhood. When found, the German

shepherd had been sent to the Red Cross via an evacuee, where Terri Dickerson of Terri's Pet and Grooming volunteered to keep him overnight. Not having the facilities, Terri sent him to the animal shelter in hopes he could be reunited with his family.

The family, meanwhile, had begun to give up hope, until Don Balliette, grandson of Della Wood, was in a local bar and overheard some firemen talking about a lost German shepherd that had been recovered. Excitedly asking the group of firefighters for further details, Don recognized the description and dashed over the the animal shelter to retrieve his grandmother's dog.

Thanks to a heroic firefighter, Prince is back at home now (although the scenery has changed a bit) recovering from his wounds. And thanks to the heroic firefighter, the large German shepherd still has a home.

Community pulls together as fire ravages Alpine

It will take several days before a critique of the 6,550-acre Acorn Fire is completed, according to U.S. Forest Service officials, who said land rehabilitation efforts have already begun.

This week, evacuated Woodfords residents started the task of cleaning up near the 24 homes destroyed in the blaze, which broke out Wednesday in Acorn Canyon, near Crystal Springs.

More than 1,500 firefighters working the blaze declared the wind-whipped Acorn Fire extinguished late Sunday. It caused an estimated \$5 million in damages.

The Alpine County Sheriff's Office reported that an additional 100 homes, garages, barns and other buildings suffered at least minor damage.

Federal, state and local volunteer firefighters were able to save 103 homes. Other major structures saved included the Mt. Sierra Church, Caltrans station, the telephone substation, the Woodfords Fire Department, the Alpine County maintenance yard, Woodfords Auto Service, Woodfords Guard Station, Woodfords Station and Woodfords Inn.

U.S. Forest Service officials believe the fire was caused by human negligence.

Some federal and state agency firefighters have had to respond to criticism about how they handled the blaze in the first few minutes when units first arrived, sometime before 11:30 a.m.

However, a routine investigation won't be completed for several days, a Forest Service Spokesman said.

BLM spokesman Ron Barrett denied residents' charges that his agency and the U.S. Forest Service bickered over whose land the fire was on, causing a delay in firefighting efforts.

He said BLM crews went to the fire as soon as the Forest Service determined they were needed.

BLM keeps one engine crew in Markleeville to cover the agency's land in the area, which is

close to the Forest Service's boundaries.

Meanwhile, Carson Valley residents oblivious to federal, state and county lines worked with Markleeville residents in offering support for disaster victims.

Many residents had about 10-15 minutes to evacuate, with only the clothes on their backs and their pets. More than 100 eventually found their way to an emergency Red Cross center set up at the Carson Valley Middle School, seeking comfort, information or a place to sleep.

Red Cross volunteer Bobbie Brown said their efforts went much smoother than usual with an outpouring of support from Carson Valley residents, who offered everything from food to places to stay.

Local school officials also opened their facilities for a command center at the Douglas High School and the Red Cross center at the middle school.

For several days, Minden-Gardnerville became the center for hundreds of firefighters as well as local and national news reporters.

Mary Lou Shipton, director of the Carson Valley Chamber of Commerce, like many others, only got about an hour's sleep Wednesday night while helping coordinate supplies for the nearby victims.

She estimated that at least 11 local businesses offered goods and services to the disaster victims, including a local thrift shop that opened its doors and allowed those residents to choose what they needed.

"We realize there may be countless others," she said, adding that stories of heroic deeds during the past few days will no doubt go untold because there are so many.

"The most amazing thing is people in this Valley don't volunteer, they just do," Shipton said.

She said the one family that lost a home even turned around and donated 50 pounds of meat.

"They'd been through all this horror and they turned around and did that," Shipton said. "There was nothing we needed that we couldn't and didn't receive two-fold."

As far as local residents are concerned, the Alpine County area seems like another extension of Carson Valley with the two communities sharing family, friends, homes or workplaces.

The Ham radio operators were the only communication link to the fire area, and as far as Markleeville, until phone service was restored gradually this weekend. The amateur radio operators and the Red Cross were among other volunteers who deserve a lot of credit, Shipton said.

They took phone calls from concerned residents from as far away as New York who heard about the fire on national news.

"The people who were evacuated were going through enough emotional trauma," Shipton added. "They didn't need any more, and these people saw to it they didn't have anymore."

Red Cross workers said they were overwhelmed with the number of homes offered for people to stay.

Emergency service and insurance centers remained open in Diamond Valley this week for victims.

Volunteer firefighters with both Alpine County and the East Fork Fire Protection District were credited with saving many homes as well as land. Rancher Clarence Burr said Dave Gamble's Genoa crew helped save land near the Diamond Valley School.

Volunteer groups from Douglas and Alpine counties stayed on with the U.S. Forest Service and state forestry division firefighters to protect homes through Thursday.

Douglas County sheriff's deputies helped Alpine police evacuate victims and keep watch over the homes after the disaster to avoid thefts.

Residents, Forest Service swap charges afterward

As attacks against the 6,550-acre Acorn fire ended Sunday, criticism of fire-fighting practices in the Eastern Sierra seemed to spread as fast as the wind-whipped blaze did a week ago.

Federal agencies who spent five days battling the brush and timber fire found themselves on a different defensive front by Monday, responding to both fire victims and long-time Valley residents who accused them of forgetting the basics.

Several people who gathered this week praised individual firefighters but railed against "the system" and "chain-of-command" used today for attacking this region's major forest fires.

It's a system that devotes too much time organizing area agencies and too little time attacking a fire in the first crucial minutes, residents said.

The U.S. Forest Service also turns away landowners whose property is threatened, according to residents, although they have years of experience fighting fires and are more familiar with the area.

These critics went head-to-head with state and federal fire crews Monday when all were called together in Minden. A public hearing also was held before Alpine County supervisors Tuesday.

In the wake of these and other accusations, U.S. Forest Service officials in command of last Wednesday's fire said some problems do exist in initial response for this area.

However, they also pointed to the increasing number of homes built in remote timberland and the need for residents and local governments to take an active role in clearing brush from structures and taking other fire preventive steps.

With new homes in the path of fires, federal and state fire crews have to give greater priority today to the protection of lives and structures, according to Terry Randolph of the Toiyabe National Forest.

"It's probably something we need to work out," he said Monday about the initial two hours of a fire. "However, by 5 p.m. (Wednesday) 80 engines, who knows how many Cats (bulldozers) and other equipment converged."

Because the fire was so large and spread so fast, it was a real problem assigning equipment and trucks gathered on the area roads, according to Randolph.

"We did have a man in control of the fire. But as rapidly as events were unfolding, things were changing. Granted, some things fell through the cracks."

Firefighters also were hampered in securing air tankers for the initial attack because of construction going on at the Douglas County Airport, Randolph said.

As a matter of routine, the U.S. Forest Service and other agencies expect to critique the first two hours of Wednesday's blaze, which destroyed 24 homes near Woodfords and caused considerable damage to several others.

It will be several days before that critique is completed, they said.

"I feel pretty bad about the loss of homes," Randolph said. "But I'm proud we were able to save 103. A lot of fine, young people busted their butts and put their life on the line."

But residents who are mad about seeing three major fires in Alpine County during the past four years said problems stem from the initial attack and bureaucratic regulations.

Many are talking of a class-action suit against federal agencies, and others said they may request congressional investigations. The Alpine Board of Supervisors is considering separate action.

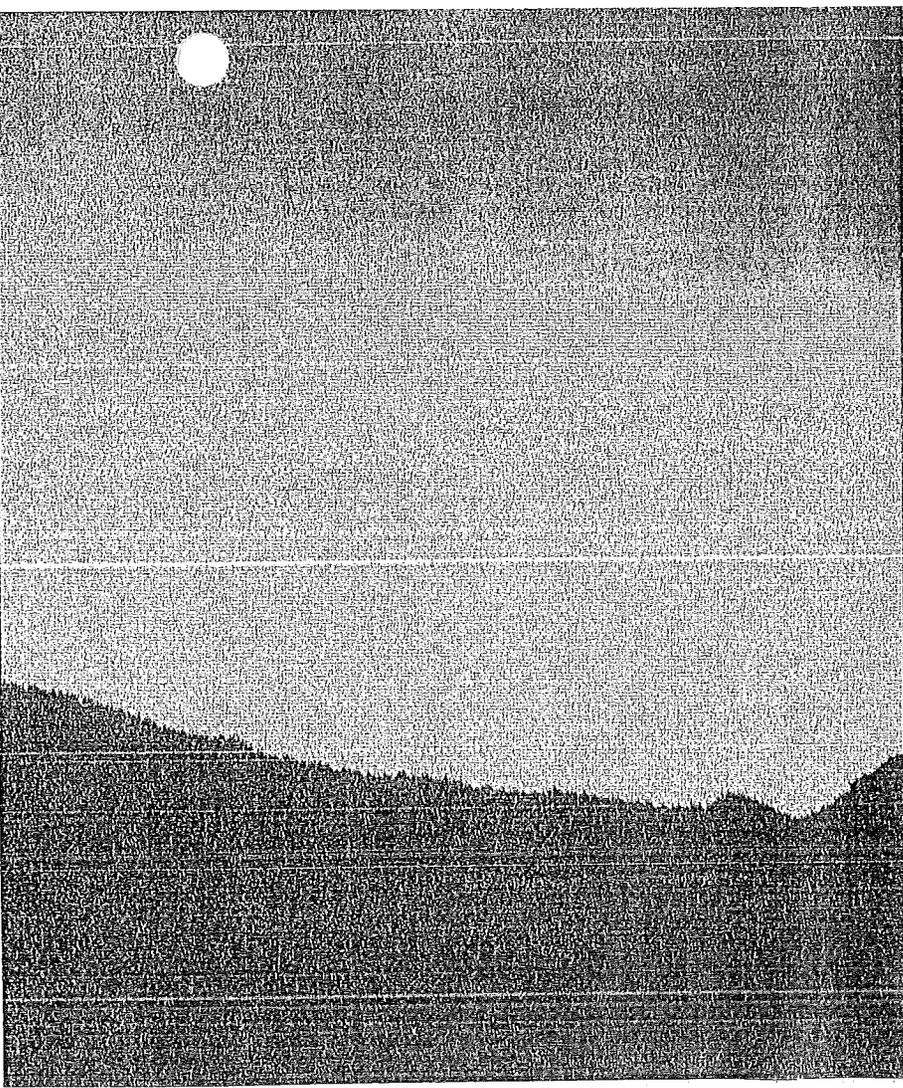
Throughout the Woodfords community this week, people said the good firefighters' hands are tied by bureaucracy. Others went as far as saying some agency firefighters stood by the road and watched a once-small fire get out of hand when they could have put it out with shovels.

"They have to go through this long chain of command before they can even pump water," said Bob Stephens, a volunteer firefighter of some 14 years and owner of Woodfords Auto.

He said some agency firefighters told him as the fire was raging that they weren't authorized to pump water on structures.

"The Forest Service has too many in command," he said. "They have some really good men, but by the time they go

Continued to page 7



Heavy smoke from the Acorn Fire near Woodfords turned the late-afternoon sun a bright red last Wednesday. The fire eventually destroyed 24 homes before it was

brought under control Sunday. For more photos, see pages 6 and 7. Jay Aldrich photo

R-2
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Residents: Leaders criticized for not a

Continued from page 1
through the chain of command it's too late. They're too busy assessing the fire and not fighting the fire."

Some Woodfords Fire Department volunteers also were mad that they were sent home after being one of the first to respond to the scene.

Woodfords Fire Chief Dave Zellmer said he's conducting his own interviews and investigation into what more could have been done initially.

"It's normal procedure when guys get on the fire to make a judgment of whether it's a volunteer-type fire or a Forest Service fire," Randolph said, adding that volunteers may be needed elsewhere if another fire breaks out.

"This was on a cliff with 7-10 mile-an-hour winds. We didn't know it would kick up to 35-mile-an-hour winds. The weather changed."

Joe Smith, a retired U.S. Forest Service worker of 34 years, said he's watched the agency in the past 10-15 years "centralize" with policies that get further away from the local community.

"When we were fighting fires we never had any days like this," said Smith, who was near the fire scene Wednesday when it first started. "Maybe we didn't have as many people living in different areas, but when we hit a fire, we hit it with everything we had."

He added that federal agencies actions today are based on a fear of liability instead of giving everything they've got in attacking small blazes.

But according to Randolph, his district has tackled some 120 fires this season and only two got away from agencies.

Residents suggested the agency go back to a policy of actively sending out local residents with fighting resources before the fire season reaches its peak.

Wednesday's fire, which officials say was started by human negligence, caused the most property damage in recent years. Total damage estimates have reached \$5 million.

they would burn me out," he said this week. Burr also saw his property damaged in two previous fires in the past few years.

Burr and other ranchers who own large amounts of land in both Carson Valley and Alpine County complained they were at first barred from the area and then delayed from attacking the fire's eastern flank.

Burr, Fred Dressler, Larry Pedrett, Mel Schwake Jr. and Kenneth Hellwinkel said their actions finally saved the Diamond Valley School and Woodfords Indian Colony.

They had started clearing a fire line near the school until Douglas County crews arrived to back them up, Burr said.

But delays — when they were

more than the individuals," Burr said.

"Before, it would be up to us people — no questions were asked; we worked together. The important thing was to save our property."

Among those outraged this week is 89-year-old rancher Fred Dressler, who owns some of the largest land-holdings in both Carson Valley and Alpine County.

Dressler said he was almost arrested for acting without federal authority when he tried to enter with a bulldozer and a hand-picked crew of local residents. He said those residents have been fighting fires for years.

"In my days, whoever got to a fire first was the boss," Dressler said, adding that landowners were never held back from protecting property.

At Monday's meeting, Douglas County Sheriff Jerry Maple suggested that landowners who have equipment and know how to fight fires be issued an I.D. card so they can quickly cross roadblocks and help protect their property.

He said not all emergency personnel brought in to work on a major disaster would know Fred Dressler or other ranchers well-known to the community.

Police had to order residents to evacuate for their own safety on Wednesday, Maple added.

KINGSBURY THREAT

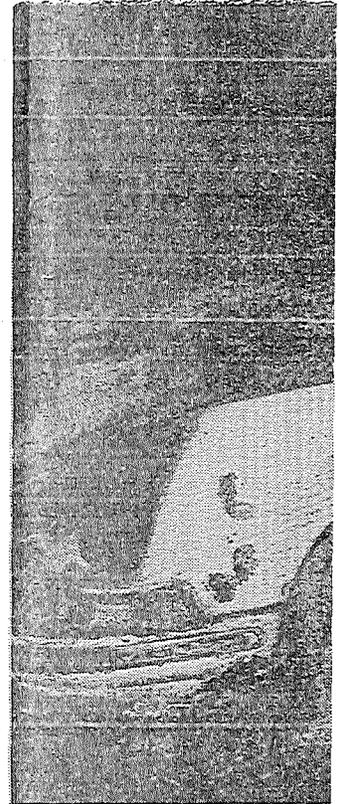
Both Driscoll and U.S. Forest Service officials said the more-populated Kingsbury Grade is as much at risk with decaying vegetation and drier conditions that helped fuel last week's fire.

Randolph said local governments as well as residents should be willing to spend the money toward fire preventive steps.

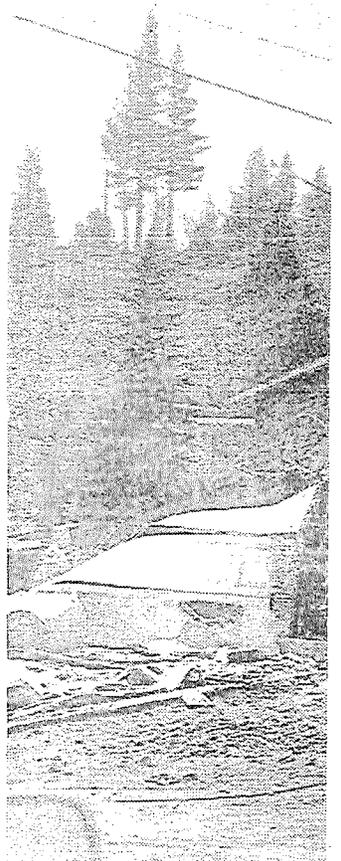
"We're going to be talking about this situation again," Randolph warned. "We need to take a look at a cooperative effort for such things as greenstripping and fuel breaks. We need to get people to get rid of those damn shingle roofs and clean up vegetation."

“
We need to take a cooperative effort for such things as green stripping and fuel breaks. We need to get people to get rid of those damn shingle roofs and clean up vegetation.
”

held back at roadblocks and questioned because their private bulldozers for clearing brush weren't properly authorized — cost another hour or more that could have saved Burr's property, according to the ranchers.
The ranchers said they spent



HOT CAR. This is really found by photographer "tourguide," Sgt. Leo Joh



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FIREFIGHTING THREAT

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HOT CAR. This is really a hot car, a Porsche found by photographer Jay Aldrich and his "tourguide," Sgt. Leo Johnson, of the Washoe

Tribal Police. This was a fickle forest fire, burning to the ground some cabins and leaving others untouched only a few yards away.



Alpine Country Faire to benefit fire victims

Event is Aug. 15-16

In the wake of the devastating Woodfords fire which destroyed 26 homes, the Alpine County Chamber of Commerce announced that the Alpine Country Faire will benefit the fire's victims.

Many Alpine County residents lost homes and livelihoods in the July 29 firestorm which swept through Woodfords Canyon.

Proceeds from the Aug. 15-16 fair will go into the Woodfords Fire Disaster Fund established and administered by the non-profit chamber of commerce.

The annual fair is held in Woodfords' sister town, Markleeville, Calif.

As part of the benefit, the fair organizers are inviting all the neighboring volunteer fire departments to participate in the annual tug of war championships. The tug, one of the more popular events at the fair, is staged over a local mud hole.

Defending champion team Cal Silver Miners, who have won the coveted award three times out of the six years the tug of war has been held, will "dig in deeper" once again to stave off challenges from the local Forest Service, BLM and volunteer fire departments.

The fair is replete with booths of handmade art and craft items, food and beverages. Indian tacos and acorn muffins are some of the local specialties offered this year.

The 10K Fun Run kicks off the

fair at 8 a.m. Saturday. This year, the annual race has been expanded to include a 2-mile striding (walking) race. Seniors enter free and are encouraged to participate in this fun and healthy event.

The tug of war's first heats follow the Fun Run at 9:30 a.m. Playoffs continue Saturday afternoon at 6 p.m. and Sunday at 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. when the championship title will be determined.

The "Flexable Flyers" are scheduled to set the beat at the street dance, 4-10 p.m. Saturday.

There will be a diverse menu of music both days. Besides the "Flexable Flyers," Saturday's entertainment includes the Lost Coyote band and Carson City's Country Cousins Square Dance Club. On Sunday, entertainer Dan Murphy, Eric Jung of the Goonge Bros. Band and the Alpine Trio will keep fair-goers tapping their feet.

Woody Owl and Smokey the Bear will be on hand to entertain youngsters.

Other activities include a kids' arcade, the library's book sale, an art competition and gallery show and raffles all day both days.

For information on the fair and for Woodfords Fire Disaster Fund donations (tax-deductible) contact the Alpine County Chamber of Commerce, P.O. Box 265, Markleeville, CA 96120 or call (916) 694-2475.



BENEFIT. Proceeds of the Alpine Country Faire will go to the Woodfords Fire Disaster Relief Fund. The fair is set for Aug. 15 and 16, and will feature, among other events, the annual tug of war. Shown above are last year's winners, the Cal Silver Miners. Nancy Thornburg photo

Fire-fighting pilots say it's 'just a job'

by JOYCE HOLLISTER
Staff writer

Guys who fly into forest fires to drop fire retardant admit their job can be dangerous, but they'd rather do that than crop dusting — which they say is really crazy.

"It's a good way to make a living," said Chuck Sheridan, a pilot from Klamath Falls, who along with co-pilot Mike Quirk worked on the fire in Woodfords last week.

"I'd say it is more dangerous than flying an airliner at 30,000 feet," he said with a smile. "I think crop dusting is more hazardous. I'm flying at 150 feet 30 minutes a day if that. Crop dusters are 6 feet off the ground for hours."

Sometimes, as there was with this fire, there are lots of smoke that makes visibility poor and turbulence that can buck at the airplane about.

Sheridan didn't seem to think this was more dangerous than driving.

"It's like anything else. Once you've done it, it becomes routine. After eight or 10 years it becomes a job that you enjoy."

The minor accident that put one of the planes out of commission and drew lots of press and television attention was also just routine to Minden-based pilot Sonny Morrison.

The landing gear on his C-119 Fairchild, known as the "Flying Boxcar," was stuck. He landed the plane on its belly, with some minor damage to the underside of the plane.

He and co-pilot Richard Slack were unhurt, and the pilot totally unruffled.

Asked if he would have done the same thing, Sheridan said without hesitation that he would.

What all the pilots seem to share is a love of



PILOTS: Chuck Sheridan, left, and Mike Quirk are pilots based in Klamath Falls, Ore. They came to Minden last week to fight the Woodfords fire from the air. R-C photo

flying and a disinclination to be bored.

Sheridan said he learned to fly as a civilian (meaning non-military). He was a flight instructor and did charter and corporate work.

He flew the air attack plane (which scouts out fires), became a co-pilot, then a captain.

Quirk, on the other hand, comes from an Air Force background. His father was a 30-year veteran and he himself was in the Air Force for 10 years.

"I like it (fighting fires from the air)," Quirk said. "It's a lot more fun than regular flying. You don't just take off, go someplace, and land. You have to think about it."

When dropping fire retardant, the trick is to drop it at just the right height to be effective: if too low, the heavy retardant can do more damage than good, if too high, it disperses too much.

"We want it to come down pretty much like rain," Sheridan said.

The retardant used is no longer borate, which was a soil sterilant. It may have put out the fire, but borate then made the soil useless for reseeding.

The substance dropped now can be one of several products, but all of them contain phosphates that act as fertilizers when the time comes to restore plant life to the burned area.

"Ecologically, they don't cause any damage," Sheridan said.

Where the pilots drop their load depends upon their objective, he said. Most of the time they want to hit the edge of a fire, to stop it. Other times, they hit hot spots, and in case of a few

Continued to page 10

Air attack: Fire bombing is directed from ground

Continued from page 1

drops during the Woodfords fire, they dropped retardant on top of the ridge.

Pilots are directed by the command center of the fire fighters from the ground.

"They decide what the fire plan will be and tell us where they want it, or sometimes we follow a lead plane if there is one," Sheridan said.

The pilots are in constant radio contact with the ground. At three minutes away from the fire, they are given their target. If there is a lead plane, they follow it in, then make the drop.

"We have eight tanks that we can drop, one, two, four, or all, or in a trail. We can drop all eight tankers in line or any combination we want."

The first day of the Woodfords visibility was poor because of the smoke, and it was pretty windy.

"It was tough," Sheridan admitted.

The next day was "quite routine," and the third day (Friday), the planes didn't fly at all.

The difficulty for pilots as well as the fire fighters was that structures were involved.

"There's more pressure on you when there are structures. You want to be sure you protect the house you're trying to save," Sheridan said.

"The first day, it was windy and the smoke was bad. It was hard to see the targets."

The airplane that he and Quirk fly (the co-pilot flies the plane, according to Sheridan, and the captain does the thinking) is a former Eastern Airlines airliner.

Some planes used are World War II-era B-17s, commonly known as "Flying fortresses."

Sheridan's plane, a DC-7B, resembles the passenger airplane it once was because only the seats were taken out. The luggage carriers are still in place.

The fire retardant tanks are completely external and they hold 3,000 gallons of retardant.

According to the Bureau of Land Management, the fire retardant costs 70 cents a gallon.

Mike Campbell, who was in charge of the air operations during the fire, couldn't give an estimate of how much the air attack cost. He did say, however, that it was cheaper here because the fire was so close to the reloading area.

Planes made their runs from the Douglas County Airport north of Minden and returned to be reloaded and refueled.

There was a total of eight aircraft used in the fire, Campbell said. The pilots work for private companies which contract with federal and state agencies for the fire season, May to September.

One is based in Minden (the hapless "Flying Boxcar") and one is based at Stead. Others come, when needed, from Klamath Falls, Ore., Boise, Idaho, Grand Canyon National Park, Fresno, Grass Valley and Columbia, Calif.

The plane in Minden is contracted by BLM. Campbell himself is from Boise. He directs the air fire fighting operations in the Great Basin area, roughly Nevada, Utah, Southern Idaho and parts of Wyoming.

At different locations in the Western states, different agencies share the cost and the management of a fire, and set up incident command teams.

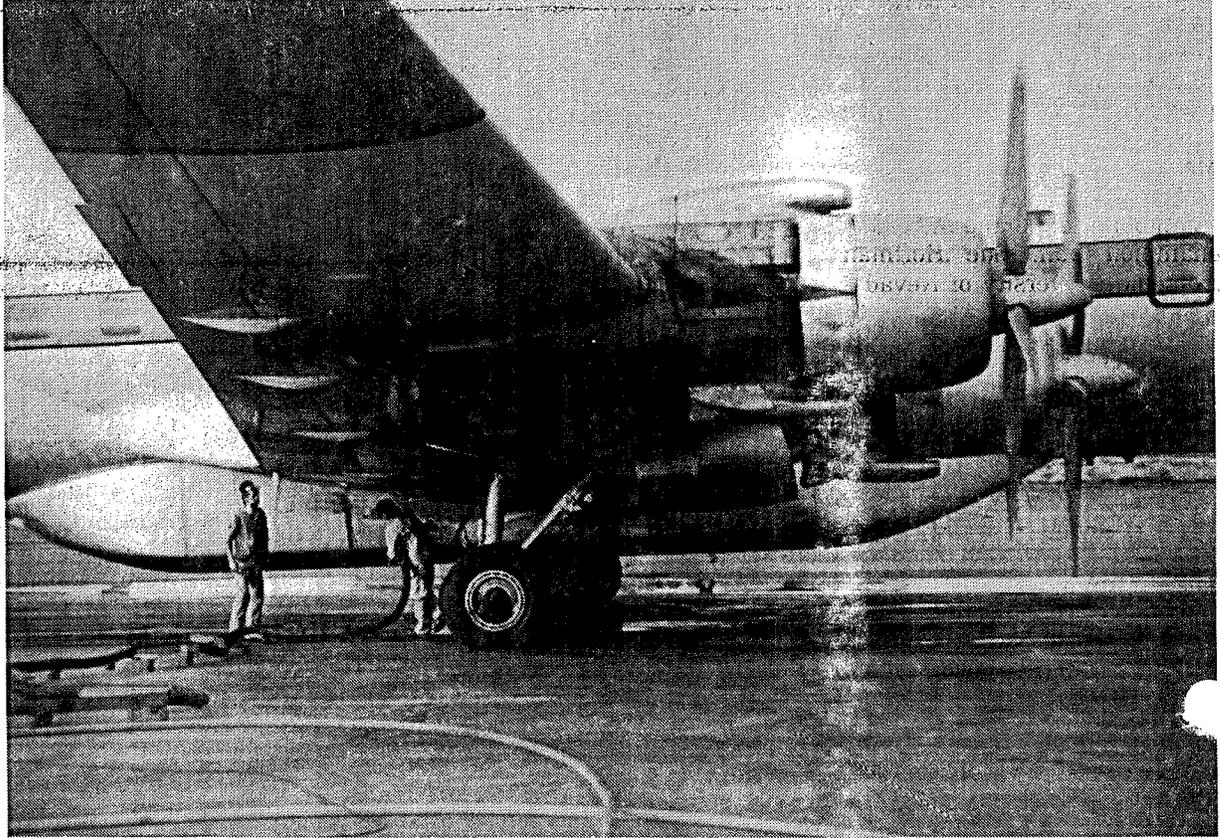


BELLY LANDING Sonny Morrison, a pilot based in Minden for the Bureau of Land Management, landed his C-119 Fairchild,

better known as the "Flying Boxcar," on its belly after the landing gear stuck. Morrison had been dropping fire retardant on the

Woodfords fire. Morrison took the landing in stride. Pilots say fighting fires from the air is just another job. Jay Aldrich photo

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RELOADING. Fire retardant is pumped into the tanks of a fire fighting airplane at the Douglas County Airport during the Wood-

fords fire. The retardant is also a fertilizer, which helps to improve the soil for reseeding later. R-C photo

Scorched yards need lots of water

Record Courier 8/6/83

by TINA FIXMAN
Special to the R-C

Victims of recent fires in both Lakeview Estates in Carson City and the Woodfords fire can take some very positive steps towards restoring their landscapes.

Assessing the damage can be done with help from several sources: State Forestry, Soil Conservation Service, the Cooperative Extension Office, and for fire insurance estimates, look to area horticultural experts — qualified nurserymen and horticultural consulting services.

SAVING DAMAGED PLANTS

These professionals can help paint a more accurate picture of what in the yard is salvageable. Experts I visited with pointed out that in the Lakeview area there are conifers that were badly scorched, yet six weeks later the trees are pushing new growth. It takes a trained eye to identify what is or isn't saveable and even then there may be surprises.

Other conifers are virtually non-recoverable as evidenced by the oozing from all areas on the trees where the cambium layer has been damaged.

All agencies said the single most important step you can take to restoring the landscape to satisfy its greatest need: water.

Irrigating trees, shrubs, evergreens, even lawns slowly and deeply over the coming months can be the turning point for these badly stressed plants.

Patrick Murphy, State Forester, said that watering, particularly through the winter months, should not be overlooked.

Having been scorched and/or exposed to intense heat has left many plants in a much drier than normal state, and stressed plants are more vulnerable to secondary infections.

Fighting back by watering can be the key element in whether or not the plant is able to continue growth next spring.

Secondary infections can be in the guise of diseases or insects.

Nevada State Entomologist, Jeff Knight, said there are several types of borers that can possibly move into burned areas causing further stress to conifers.

Usually, though, they just finish off trees that would have otherwise died.

Certain other groups are directly attracted by fire, but they must be present in the area to begin with.

There are several chemicals that can be used on damaged trees. They leave chemical barriers that prevent the borers from fulfilling their full life-cycles. Sevo and lindane are apt to be on shelves in Nevada nurseries, but you can check with the Cooperative Extension Service horticulture department for further chemical listings.

Spraying should be done to protect trees you feel are in the "gray" area and need all the help they can get to resume growing under nearly stressless conditions.

REVEGETATION

Revegetation is designed not so much to beautify the landscape but to help in erosion control as well as next year's fire control.

Nevada State Forestry is working up an 80/20 cost sharing program to revegetate the Lakeview burn. Here they'll split the cost of reseeding with homeowners directly, using a mixture of hardy, perennial grasses to not only stabilize the soils but help outcompete the upcoming fall crop of cheat grass.

In fact, Forester Patrick Murphy said it's not so much for erosion control, but to fight back the onslaught of cheat grass, that it's so important to establish grasses.

Cheat grass is an annual grass that germinates in late summer and early fall. It provides that touch of green to the landscape in the winter, then dries the following May. Cheat grass is a fire fuel that summer fires rage through.

The forestry service in Nevada is planning to use either Nordand or Siberian grass, but crested wheat grass or other drought-tolerant, perennial grasses are suitable.

It may be difficult to locate some of these grasses, but local nurseries and government agencies should be able to provide you with sources.

In lieu of these tougher grasses which are deeply rooted and well suited to our arid conditions, locating fescues or perennial rye grasses should be easier. Though they won't tolerate as little water as crested wheat or some other types, perennial fescues and ryes can be used successfully in areas close to homes where there is adequate

Continued to page 10

RC Aug 6, 87

Restoration: Plenty of water

Continued from page 1

water to keep them irrigated both during germination and the subsequent growing season.

Another type of seed to consider would be wildflower seed mixes for areas closer to the house where a more aesthetically pleasing quick cover is needed.

Several types of mixes are available, though not inexpensively. California poppies, blue flax, penstemons, daisies, gaillardia and purple cone flower are all examples of perennial or reseeding annuals that would be suitable to use in our climate.

They will need water for germination as will any new seed.

Timing the application to coincide with our naturally occurring moisture puts you into a who-knows-when situation. If possible you can reseed later this fall using the weather to your advantage...cooler days mean you'll need less water to keep the seed moist during germination.

The remnants of the timber in the form of ash is a source of both phosphate and potash as well as being a sort of bittersweet mulch that can benefit any reseeding you do.

Replanting of larger trees and shrubs can begin right away. Warm soils, and the coming cooler days will mean good starts on any type of plant material especially for next spring.

They'll have a new root system established and can begin more quickly to take the place of those lost in the recent fires.

California residents should contact their state forestry service to see if there are other programs available to them to help in the revegetation process around Woodfords.

Nevada residents can contact any of the state and federal agencies listed at the beginning of the column to update themselves with accurate information as to which agencies are involved in any revegetation programs and what the specific recommendations and steps are for the fastest recovery possible.

2cord
Courier
8/6/87

Investigate, but don't forget heroes

After every large fire in our experience, there have been at least a few complaints about how the effort was handled by those in charge of putting it out and protecting property.

Our opinion

Even the Fredericksburg fire last year, which many of those involved said was handled textbook-perfect, created some controversy.

Never before, however, have we heard so many complaints, so many people who are absolutely convinced that had the fire been handled differently, and earlier, much of the damage to private property could have been avoided.

So overwhelming are the complaints from people who were on the scene, a high-level investigation should be undertaken as soon as possible, not to make scapegoats out of any of those involved but to see if there are any ways that those problems can be prevented the next time. And as sure as nature made trees and wildlands, there will be a next time.

The complaints should not be allowed, however, to obscure the heroism and the fine work done by the many men and women who worked so hard on the fire, to be known forever as the Acorn Fire.

It would be folly for us to try to single out all of those who were involved, saving many homes just as others were lost, helping those who were without homes and without belongings. To do so would surely risk missing somebody.

A couple of examples should suffice: the Red Cross for quickly setting up a relief center at Carson Valley Middle School, Coventry Cross Thrift Shop for opening its doors wide for those in need of clothing, the insurance companies that sent disaster teams here before the fire even was extinguished, and, of course, the many firefighters on the ground and in the air.

For their difficult, hot, dirty, dangerous work, we owe these men and women from all walks of life — whose attitudes were probably best demonstrated by the aw-shucks borate-bomber pilot who saw his feat of bringing a plane in for a successful belly landing as just part of the job — a debt that can never repaid.

Forest Service defends fire effort

By JIM DIPESO
Tribune Staff Writer

RENO — The U.S. Forest Service defended its handling of the Woodfords fire at a Thursday press conference, but also said that unpredictable winds fanned the flames out of control on the fire's first day and overwhelmed their forces.

Dave Zellmer, chief of the Woodfords fire volunteers, said Thursday he is still not convinced that the suppression effort was properly handled and vowed to continue pressing government officials for an investigation of the situation.

The Forest Service believes the fire was human-caused, but has not pinpointed a specific factor, investigator Stan Fitzgerald said. Arson has not been ruled out, he added. "Physical evidence" has been found at

Shumway to visit Alpine

By JIM DIPESO
Tribune Staff Writer

Rep. Norm Shumway plans to visit Alpine County Aug. 19 to look into the handling of the disastrous Woodfords fire, his chief of staff said Thursday.

The visit will be a "fact-finding" trip to investigate complaints from Alpine residents that the Forest Service and other firefighting agencies mismanaged the blaze and allowed it to run out of control.

The 6,550-acre blaze broke out July 29 and was

(See SHUMWAY, Page 15)

the fire's origin point, but he did not disclose details.

The Forest Service also announced a \$145,000 program to rehabilitate scorched slopes to prevent erosion and flooding dangers.

Jim Nelson, supervisor of the Toiyabe National Forest, strongly defended his firefighting crews against charges from Alpine County residents that the fire attack was mishandled.

"There were a lot of heroes, a lot of people who did a hell of a job fighting the fire and risking their lives," Nelson said. The Forest Service is critiquing the fire battle, a study which will take months, fire officer Terry Randolph said.

Fire analyst Alan Pinkerton said that without the suppression effort, the fire could have exploded to

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Fire

(Continued from Page 1)

25,000 acres in four hours. The blaze, which broke out around 11:30 a.m. July 29, was controlled Aug. 2 at 6,550 acres, with 26 homes destroyed and others seriously damaged. More than 1,500 personnel from federal, California and Nevada agencies took part in the \$4 million battle.

Management of the effort was more than sufficient to fight the blaze as first reported," a Forest Service handout said.

"Our review indicated that our judgment calls were correct," Nelson told reporters. "I didn't see how any homes could have been saved." A total of 103 homes were saved from destruction, according to the Forest Service.

But a strong wind of 30 to 35 miles per hour that came up later in the afternoon overwhelmed the fire crews and forced them to retreat from the intense flames which were 50 to 75 feet high and moving with the speed of the wind.

When that happened, Nelson said, "you cannot stop that ... There was nothing we could have done to stop it till it started laying down later that night," he said.

Zellmer contends that the fire could have been knocked down before the wind came up if the Forest Service had allowed his responding crew of five volunteers to head up the steep slopes where the fire began and attack the flames with their hoses, rakes, shovels and "pissbags" — five-gallon water containers with portable pumps.

Nelson said the Forest Service decided "the pumper and the volunteers wouldn't have been useful on the steep slopes." Two volunteers manned the pumper, while three others arrived in private vehicles, Zellmer said.

The chief explained that when his volunteers arrived on the scene shortly after 11:30 a.m., a USFS fire manager told him the men were not needed. "My people were ready," Zellmer said, and asked repeatedly if they could lend a hand.

"What really bothers me, they told us if we were fighting the fire we'd stomp around and destroy evidence. That really rubs me," Zellmer complained.

The volunteers stayed on the scene for nearly an hour until a smoke alarm call came into their station from Mesa Vista, about five minutes away.

The volunteers were recalled

structures, explaining they were trained for wildland fires only.

Randolph said that is a Forest Service policy. "We don't have the equipment on our brush rigs," he said. "We'll call in city fire departments and volunteers to help protect structures."

On another matter, Nelson said that after investigation he was "not aware" of an incident in which an Alpine County supervisor appropriated a Forest Service engine and used it to fight the fire.

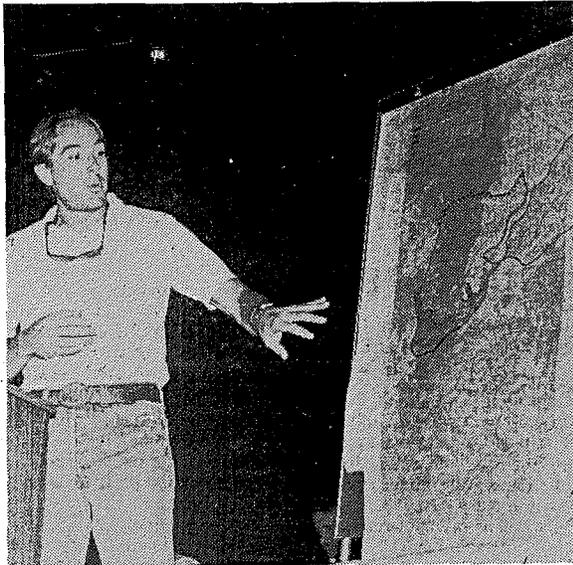
Supervisor Chris Gansberg, Jr., said the engine was being repaired in a building threatened by the flames. He said Thursday that he and another man took it out and used it to protect structures.

"We pumped for about 2½ days," Gansberg said.

Forest Service officials initially threatened him with arrest "because it was all dirty and the hose wasn't curled up right," but Gansberg said he "straightened out" the situation with Greg Clark, a Toiyabe official.

On the rehabilitation, Clark said it will include seeding of 1,860 acres, cutting dead trees and laying them laterally on 160 acres of slopes, stirring up fire-damaged soil on another 140 acres to prevent rapid runoff and constructing check dams on 0.8 miles of stream channel.

A meeting will be held Monday at 9:30 a.m. on land rehabilitation for Woodfords property owners, Clark said.



Tribune photo by Jim Dipeso

ALAN PINKERTON, a U.S. Forest Service fire analyst, explains his department's efforts in fighting the 6,500-acre fire near Woodfords at a press conference in Reno Thursday.

Friday, August 7, 1987

Shumway

(Continued from Page 1)

declared controlled Aug. 2. More than two dozen homes and numerous outbuildings burned to the ground. Dozens of other homes were damaged.

Many of the fire victims, county supervisors and the chief of the Woodfords volunteer fire department have called for an independent investigation of the suppression effort.

Among their complaints are

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But Chris Seeger, Shumway's chief of staff, said that it is not time yet to set up a formal investigation.

"I think it is premature at this juncture to have a Shumway commission if you will, as has been suggested. He recognizes the unhappiness on the part of the residents. It's a very tragic situation. If there are areas where improvements can be made, he'll bring that to the attention of the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service," Seeger said.

Officials Defend Rejection of Aid At Big Sierra Blaze

United Press International

Reno

U.S. Forest Service officials, under attack by citizens of Alpine County, defended the handling of last week's devastating brush fire that destroyed 24 homes and charred thousands of acres in Woodfords, Calif.

Toiyabe National Forest Supervisor Jim Nelson said all indications were that Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service crews could control the Sierra blaze when it broke out July 29 in a canyon campground.

Citizens in the small community 30 miles south of Carson City have complained that the federal agency turned away volunteers and mismanaged the fire, contributing to property losses estimated at \$5 million.

Volunteers Rejected

Some residents charged that volunteers from the Alpine County Volunteer Fire Department arrived early on the scene only to be sent away, and that firefighters did nothing to save homes.

But Nelson said that the volunteers were not needed at the time. He said the volunteer crew was trained primarily in structure fires, and none were threatened initially.

The blaze, however, quickly turned into a ravaging inferno, whipped by 35 mile an hour winds and fueled by tinder-dry brush.

"We could not have predicted the drastic wind change, Nelson said. "It was an unanticipated event."

He said that as the fire spread beyond control, firefighters were forced to take a defensive stance to

protect lives and property.

"At that point there was no amount of resources we could have used to stop it. If the winds hadn't changed, we would have gotten that fire," he said.

Nelson said the winds created a firestorm, sending burning debris hundreds of yards through the air and shooting flames 200 feet high.

"When that happens, you're dealing with a different strategy," Nelson said. "You have to take a defensive post, and the first thing a lot of guys have to do is virtually run for their lives."

Computer Projections

He said that computer projections calculated it would have taken 600 firefighters on the scene to stop the fire within an hour after it started around 11:30 a.m. He said 400 were on the lines by 6 p.m., and by midnight an army of 1,300 had arrived, equipped with more than 100 engines.

Nelson praised the more than 1,500 firefighters who battled the blaze, saying they did an outstanding job.

"They risked their lives out there (and) saved the majority of homes without losing one life or having one significant injury. That's a remarkable accomplishment considering the situation we were in."

Fire manager Stan Fitzgerald said that investigators determined "the fire was caused by a human being," and possibly was deliberately set.

"We have not ruled out arson," he said.

Record Courier 8/13/87

In the wake of a terrible disaster

Though the Woodfords fire brought many individual lives to a standstill, life in Alpine County spills over and continues, gathering the bits and pieces of tragedy into eddies and absorbing them into the main flow.

The community came forth spontaneously to support those whose lives and livelihoods were wiped away. With little formal organization, neighbors and friends joined together to help sift through the ashes, clean up the mess, solicit and distribute donations.

A deluge of donated items from areas as far away as Reno and Sacramento have filled the Turtle Rock Park building and kept volunteers working for days, sorting, folding, storing.

Fire victims can drop by Turtle Rock Park this week to pick out things they need. The remaining items will be sold this weekend in a huge rummage sale, proceeds benefitting the disaster fund set up by the Chamber.

In a meeting last Sunday even-

ing, called by the local volunteer firemen and publicized by hand-delivered notices, over 100 residents gathered in the Woodfords fire station to discuss the question of improved fire protection for this county which has experienced four out-of-control fires in four years.

The meeting was to muster local support to pursue legislative and other relief for what is locally perceived to be neglect towards Alpine County not only with fire prevention and suppression but with federal disaster aid as well (though such a large percentage of the eastern Alpine County community was affected by the disaster, the dollar figure of the damage does not meet minimum federal requirements, making it hard for the victims to receive low-interest loans).

Rumblings continue over the issue of fault in the extensive damage caused by the fire.

Several investigations are in progress. It will probably take months to unravel the tangle of

Letter from Alpine

by HEIDI HOPKINS

conflicting reports on how the initial fire was and was not controlled.

But life does go on.

A week after the Dalton Boys Artworks' beautiful Mesa Vista studio (uninsured) was vaporized in the fire, the Dalton Boys took their second best of show award in as many shows, winning the top honor in the Alpine County Art Commission's annual art competition.

Partners Jim Cone, LeRoy Wickham and Terry O'Toole will attend the Artisans' Miniature Sale in Anaheim this weekend. They hope to return with enough orders - and enough deposits - to begin replacing the tools and supplies they lost in the fire and get on once again with their business.

The commission's art show will be on display throughout Country Faire weekend in the

art gallery in Markleeville. Though there are relatively few entries in the show, the quality of the pieces is excellent. The show is a treat which shouldn't be missed.

First place winners in the art show were: Lady Jill Mueller, watercolor; Kevin Jones, acrylic painting; Terry O'Toole, sculpture; Carolyn Vaughn, clay; Fred and Diane Holt, utilitarian art; Donna Catotti, graphics; and Sandra Woizeski-Wallin, drawing. Judges were artists Gina Gigli, Carol Spain and Don Langson.

Country Faire activities begin this Saturday at 8 a.m. with the annual Fun Run. The tug of war follows the run and booths open at 10 a.m. Saturday's activities conclude with the street dance until 10 p.m. Sunday's activities include the tug of war finals. All proceeds from the fair will benefit the Woodfords Fire Disaster Fund.

Donations to the disaster victims may be sent to: Disaster Fund, P.O. Box 265, Markleeville 96120. Donations are tax-deductible.

Fire response critique set

Chief to moderate session

East Fork Fire Chief Bill Driscoll will moderate a panel of agency firefighters involved in the first 12 hours of the Acorn Fire in a closed session tonight.

The workshop at the Carson Valley Inn will open to the public about 9:45 p.m. after a 2½-hour closed session, according to Driscoll.

The critique will seek solutions to problems in the initial response, including how area agencies can better coordinate efforts as emergency crews arrive on scene, Driscoll said.

He said the first hours will remain closed to allow more constructive and candid talk of what went wrong in responding to the July 29 fire that burned 6,550 acres in Alpine County.

Firefighters hope to come up with a list of recommended changes that will be available to the public, unlike past years, according to Driscoll.

The intent is to find better protocol for all emergency crews — ranging from California Highway Patrol to local volunteer firefighting crews, Driscoll said.

"My personal feeling is in the get-going process we have to iron out some wrinkles," said Driscoll, who was asked as chief of the East Fork Fire Protection District to oversee the critique.

"This is not a special meeting just for this fire. These critiques are done on all fires. This is not a roast or a glory session. It's merely to say we had these problems, these are the solutions."

The U.S. Forest Service came under attack from Alpine County residents who say the agency could have done more in attacking the fire that destroyed 24 homes and caused major damage to six others.

The U.S. Forest Service was the lead agency in command of the blaze, which started about 11:30 a.m. on July 29. On all major fires in this region, other emergency crews in Nevada and California are called in under a mutual aid agreement.

Some agencies on the Acorn Fire included BLM crews, state Division of Forestry crews from Nevada and California, U.S. Forest Service firefighters and local volunteers.

At tonight's session each firefighter will be giving a time limit to speak, identifying perceived problems, Driscoll said. No rebuttals will be allowed.

"If a person presents a problem, he will be asked to present a solution," Driscoll said.

"Once a fire overwhelms an area to when other organizations arrive on the scene it's nothing but chaos. This is not necessarily for bringing order to that chaos but making available more resources that are more responsive to people on the fire who initially responded.

"When you're dealing with a number of area agencies a certain amount of chaos is going to occur."

Driscoll said firefighters will be asked to stay for the open session at which the public will be allowed to ask questions.

Forest Service officials held a press conference last week responding to resident's attacks on their handling of the blaze. Residents also were mad that the agency sent local volunteers away early in the fire.

Toiyabe National Forest spokesman Jim Nelson said the agency acted appropriately in the beginning stages, including

Continued to page 3

Fire: Critique set

Continued from page 1

the decision to send away volunteers whose fire trucks wouldn't have been useful on the steep slope where the blaze started.

He said unforeseen strong winds, gusting more than 30 miles per hour, turned the initial effort into a defensive situation. He estimated the fire would have reached 25,000 acres in four hours without the agency's efforts.

Within an hour and a half of the fire being reported, Nelson said several crews, three engines and two tanker planes were on the scene.

He said 400 firefighters were battling the blaze by 6 p.m.

Meanwhile, many Woodfords residents who lost property in the fire met Sunday night. They will seek a possible contract for fire protection services with the California Division of Forestry, according to one spokesman.

Record Courier 8/13/87

Phone calls

Editor:

It's been said that you never can tell when you'll need to make a phone call.

That has never been truer than last week, and, on behalf of Contel, I'd like to publicly thank the Alpine Village resident who aided in the arrest of two individuals accused of looting a burned-out cabin in Alpine Village on Saturday, Aug. 1.

As our workers were restoring telephone service to the last few houses in Alpine Village, an elderly woman asked one of our workmen if there was any way she could make an emergency phone call. She had seen two individuals looting one of the burnt-out homes and wanted to call the owners to see if they had given permission to

Letters to the editor

anyone to clean out the homesite.

One of our supervisors, Ron Wilcks, hooked up a test set so that she could call the owners. The owners contacted the sheriff, and the two individuals were arrested for looting the destroyed home.

I'd like to take this opportunity to praise two of our cable splicers, Gary Jordan and Paul Barrett, who discovered some telephone connecting equipment, damaged in the fire in the Christianson Camp area along Carson River Road. The equipment fed telephone lines into a burned area that was assumed to have no habitable buildings left.

Gary and Paul hiked through the area and discovered a pregnant woman who had returned to her trailer, which somehow survived the fire. They immediately hooked up temporary telephone service to her trailer from the one good telephone line left in the connecting equipment with the help of installation and repair technician Larry Cowden.

Two hours later, she called the paramedics, and her healthy son was born in the charred wilderness.

Contel salutes all its employees who pitched in to restore service in the aftermath of the Alpine County Fire. We're proud of them, for they exemplify our high standards of service.

JIM McFARLAND
Customer Service Manager
Contel
Gardnerville
Aug. 11

Thanks

Record Courier
8/13/87

Editor's note: The following was addressed to Sheriff Jerry Maple. It is published at the request of the writer.

I would like to thank you, your administration and the members of your department for the help extended to my department and the citizens of the county of Alpine during our Acorn fire disaster.

Douglas County can certainly be proud to have such dedicated people within their ranks. You, your officers and the many search and rescue volunteers conducted yourselves in truly, the highest tradition of law enforcement.

I commend you and your staff for an accomplishment that resulted in the preservation of the lives and homes of many of our citizens. I would appreciate it if you would thank those involved on my behalf.

LARRY KUHL
Alpine County Sheriff-Coroner
Markleeville
Aug. 7

Record Courier 8/13/87

Search on for missing man

Parents and friends are asking for help in locating a 34-year-old Jackson, Calif., man, Dennis Palmer, who has been missing for more than a week.

According to the man's father, Albert Palmer of Fredricksburg, Dennis apparently left Jackson Aug. 3 to make the 1½-hour drive to help his parents after the Woodfords fire nearly burned them out of their home.

When he hadn't arrived by that evening, Palmer and friends went looking for him.

"We checked both sides of the road (Highway 88) the next day, all the way to Jackson," Palmer said, "but there was no sign of him."

He hired a helicopter to search both sides of the road this week.

On Monday, Palmer and another man decided to check a dangerous pass called "the spur" on the highway, but got lost on foot themselves with no food or fire for two days.

"We found 22 cars, but no sign of our son," Palmer said.

After finding their way out yesterday, one of Dennis' friends from Jackson flew a plane over U.S. 50 to Fredricksburg just to check another route.

Palmer has checked with coroners in Sacramento and Stockton, but there are no unidentified bodies. He also contacted airports in San Francisco,

Stockton and Sacramento to try to locate Dennis' pickup truck.

The highway patrol has been notified, according to Palmer.

Palmer fears foul play may be involved.

Dennis is 5 feet, 11 inches tall, has long straight brown hair and brown eyes, a full beard and mustache and weighs 170 pounds.

He was last seen driving his 1980 half-ton 4X4 GMC pickup. It is two-tone brownish-orange and beige, Palmer said. The California license plate number is 1423428.

Anyone with information is asked to call the Douglas County Sheriff's Office or Palmer in Fredricksburg at (916) 694-2200.

Bear Joins Pig, Dog And Woman in Tent

By Kenneth Gosting
Chronicle Correspondent

Bear Valley, Alpine County

A bear, a pig, a German shepherd and a Berkeley woman named Forest all came together in a melee in a tent in the woods near this appropriately named town.

When it was over, the dog was chasing the bear up a tree, and Forest Rosengren was holding on to the squealing pig for dear life, Forest Service officials said yesterday.

The unwitting perpetrator in the Sunday incident, rangers said, was Daisy, a 110-pound pig, who suddenly turned Blondy, a wild-bruin friendly to local villagers, into a pork-craving beast.

"Evidently, bears have a real affection for pigs as bacon," explained Bruce Ungari, a recreation specialist for the Stanislaus National Forest.

Daisy and the German shepherd, the only unnamed party in the tale, had checked into the Pine Martin campground with Rosengren, the Berkeley woman.

From the start, Daisy proved to be a source of problems because Pat O'Leary, the campground attendant, had to decide whether the pig

was a pet or livestock. Livestock is banned from campgrounds.

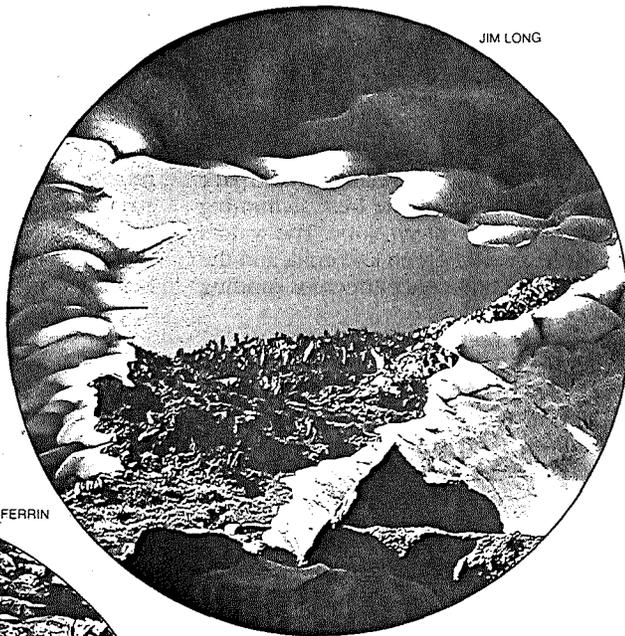
Rosengren convinced O'Leary that since Daisy was a pet because she is a star attraction for a foundation that brings animals for visits with hospitalized children.

While Rosengren, executive director of the Furry Friends Foundation, and her two animal companions took a nap to celebrate their victory over the rules, the 2-year-old black bear rushed the tent, Ungari said.

Once inside, the growling Blondy found himself facing the suddenly awakened German shepherd, whose angry barks turned the bear on his heels and sent him rumbling out the front flap toward the tree.

A screaming Rosengren, holding the squealing pig with a six-foot leash trailing behind, found safety in her car while O'Leary lured the angry dog away from the tree with a steak.

O'Leary, Rosengren, Blondy, Daisy and the dog somehow all escaped injury in the brawl, Ungari said.



JIM LONG

Snow cave, Mokelumne Wilderness



LYNN FERRIN

Stanislaus River at Big Trees

of grass. Babies coo from front-yard yard playpens. All this may be mundane stuff for country folks, but sweet indeed to frazzled escapees from the city. There's a touching plaque in front of one house: "Albert A. Michelson, 1852-1931, lived here during childhood. He was the first American scientist to win the Nobel Prize. Physics, 1907." Michelson measured velocity of light, ether drift, stellar diameters. Imagine all that germinating in the mind of a small boy, in the middle of the 19th century, in li'l ol' Murphys.

If you get restless, there are a few attractions outside town: the Stevenot Winery and three limestone caves: Moaning Cavern, Mercer Caverns and California Caverns.

For overnighters, Murphys offers two historic hostleries. The venerable Murphys Hotel, which dates from 1855, has some rustic rooms in the original building and a modern motel annex—and a busy restaurant and bar. You'll be in impressive company—guests who once registered here include Mark Twain, Ulysses S. Grant, John Jacob Astor and Horatio Alger. (Why Murphys? People came from the world around to marvel at the Big Trees, and this was a good place to stop for the night.)

Down the street is a friendly bed and breakfast inn, Dunbar House, in an 1880 Italianate Victorian. After dinner, its ample white porch is nice for listening to the crickets and the gurgling creek and staring out into the very dark night.

When you can wrench yourself away from all this small town Americana, head for the high country. The first major distraction up State Route 4 is a roadstand called the Red Apple, which dispenses fresh cider, apple popsicles and spiced apple donuts. (Last summer it had two signs posted side by side: "Yes! We are open!" and "Sorry! We are closed!")

drive to Murphys, 2,000 feet up in the shady woods. It was founded in 1848 by John and Daniel Murphy, who amassed a fortune in gold by using local Miwoks to work their claim. They opened a trading post here, and Murphys became a prosperous gold boomtown which shipped more than \$15 million in gold and was home to some 5,000 souls (considerably more than today).

Amble down the main street, poking into century-old stone buildings with rusty iron doors. Lollygag on a bench. Poke around the Old Timers Museum (open in summer 11 to 4, Thursdays through Sundays). Slip into the Peppermint Stick; your teeth will cringe as you order up a butterfat and sugar fix: say mint ice cream melting under slurpy hot fudge topped with a glacier of whipped cream and a red-dye cherry.

Now work that off with a long walk through the back streets of town. Dabble your toes in cold Murphys Creek in the pretty town park. A mewling kitten may follow you for a few blocks. A horse comes to the fence to beg for a handful

Another few miles up State Route 4 is a must-stop: the U.S. Forest Service visitor center in Hathaway Pines. Inside you can pick up all kinds of papers and brochures to help you enjoy the high country of the Calaveras Ranger District—this part of the Stanislaus National Forest along the Ebbetts Pass road. Best investment is \$1 for the map *Stanislaus National Forest*. A new map of the Carson-Iceberg Wilderness should be published later this summer. Also on sale here are topo maps, field guides and other publications to help you enjoy this area. And it's the place to get a wilderness permit if you plan to do any backpacking.

The giant sequoias on parade at Calaveras Big Trees State Park were probably the first ones seen by early settlers. The word spread to an incredulous world, and during the 1850s travelers streamed here from everywhere to see for themselves. Entrepreneurs stripped the bark off one of the trees and reassembled it in exhibition halls in New York and London. On the remains, Big Stump, they built a dance pavilion which later became a church and a newspaper office. (The felled trunk became, it is said, a saloon and bowling alley.)

They gave the most impressive trees some dumb names, like Damon and Pythias, Siamese Twins, Belle of the Lawn, and The Three Graces. (They even named them after real people. There are perfectly nice sequoia trees called Alexander von Humboldt, Avonia Jones, and Commander Elmer Reynolds.) An easy one-mile trail wanders through the North Grove where these luminaries stand; it can be done in a wheelchair (available at the Visitor Center) and there is a guide in Braille.

The park also has several miles of hiking trails, a couple of large campgrounds popular with families in summer, a few secluded walk-in "environmental campsites," picnic areas, divine swimming in the Stanislaus River, and a busy summer schedule of campfire programs and ranger-guided walks. Some dedicated volunteers run the small visitor center, which has a slide show and exhibits on the park's natural history: pressed wildflowers, birds and mammals. Several good natural history books and park trail guides are for sale here, too.

However, the best thing in the park is the South Grove, where you can experience the *Sequoiadendron giganteum* much as the "discoverers" did, or even the Indians who had always known and revered these majestic trees. It also will give you a sense of those prehistoric forests of sequoias and other redwoods which dominated the entire northern hemisphere millions of years ago.

The South Grove spreads along the valley of Big Trees Creek for about three

plating dragonflies and fingerling trout, then scramble on up to Rock Lake. Later, come down to an early supper, and thrill to a full-dress performance of *Rigoletto*. (If you can't get tickets you might be able to catch a rehearsal.)

The country east of Bear Valley is a classic alpine landscape of bright creeks flowing through wildflower meadows beneath granite towers and lingering snowfields. To the north of the highway is the Mokelumne Wilderness; you can get a good view of its deep, forbidding canyons by driving up to the Mt. Reba Ski Area, where there is an overlook. (For hikers, access to the Mokelumne is easier from the Carson Pass road farther north.)

The best hiking for casual visitors, whether they're out for a day or a week, is south of the highway, in the new Carson-Iceberg Wilderness. It was established by the Wilderness Act of 1984, which also expanded the Mokelumne Wilderness. Says Jeffrey Schaffer, author of a definitive new guide to the wilderness: "Most of the Carson-Iceberg Wilderness is very lightly used. If you avoid the lakes which are within easy hiking distance of the big campgrounds, you'll see few if any people even over a weekend. Mostly, this is a great wilderness area if you like canyons, rivers and peaks, and it has some excellent fishing streams."

Major trailheads along State Route 4

are at Lake Alpine, Silver Valley, Stanislaus Meadow and the Mosquito Lakes. Others are at the Highland Lakes, a beautiful 5-mile drive from the highway, and from Ebbetts Pass and Wolf Creek in the Toiyabe National Forest on the east side.

Beyond the Mosquito Lakes, the road climbs to 8050 feet at Pacific Grade Summit, then drops into Hermit Valley, where you can see remnants of the wagon road from Murphys which ran through here in the 1850s before heading north toward the Carson Pass. That route is probably the same one used today by the 4WD road running to the Blue Lakes.

When you reach Ebbetts Pass, at 8,730 feet, it's nice to get out and stretch your legs, read the historical marker, walk a ways along the Pacific Crest Trail which crosses the highway nearby.

East of the pass, the highway skirts the Kinney Reservoir and drops through an up-and-down country of shimmering aspen trees, lodgepole pine and fast-flowing creeks. To sample the backcountry here, a splendid walk is up Nobel Creek through a very dramatic canyon, past beaver ponds and alongside the swift, shallow waters. Hummingbirds are often at work among the wildflowers, and high above are snowfields and old lava flows. (You'll find the trailhead at the sharpest switchback.) After a couple of miles, the trail climbs

steeply up to meet the Pacific Crest Trail; it eventually connects with routes to the Highland Lakes and down the Wolf Creek drainage.

Further down State Route 4, you'll pass the site of Silver Mountain City, founded by Scandinavian miners in the 1860s. According to the marker, 3,000 people lived here when the place boomed; now you can look through the chain-link fence at the melting walls of the old city jail.

The Ebbetts Pass highway deadends at State Route 89, which climbs east over Monitor Pass. Turn left instead, and in a few miles you'll reach wonderful little Markleeville, seat of Alpine County. There's an excellent historical museum here, where you can spend a pleasant hour or so learning about the silver mining and pioneer days. And for a grand finale to your Ebbetts Pass explorations, drive the four miles up to Grover Hot Springs State Park and soak for a while in the big meadow pool. ◊

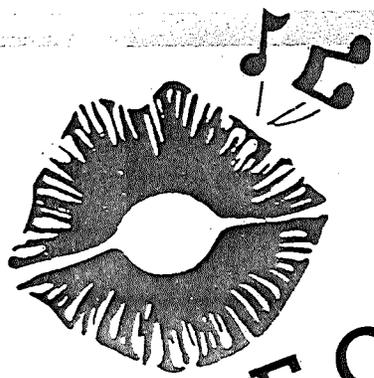
If you're going...

Best CSAA map to use is *Lake Tahoe Region*. Campgrounds are listed in the AAA California-Nevada Campground Directory under Arnold and Bear Valley.

For information on attractions of Alpine County, contact Chamber of Commerce, P.O. Box 265, Markleeville, CA 96120; phone (916) 694-2475.

Continued on page 62

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NEVADA'S OTHER VISITORS

By Marge Knorr

Among Nevada's many visitors are some who fly here but never see the inside of a casino or stand in a buffet line. Birds find the open ponds, desert shrublands or mountain forests reason enough to visit.

West central Nevada has some of the best bird watching anywhere, according to Fred Ryser, ornithologist at the University of Nevada, Reno, who recently published *Birds of the Great Basin*. This is the most comprehensive work ever written about the bird life of this region.

Ryser, a silver-haired man with the piercing eyes of a naturalist has studied the birds of the Great Basin for more than three decades. He says more than 350 species occur in the Reno-Tahoe area, and many can be seen from a car.

In the area where the Great Basin meets the Sierra Nevada, the overlapping of vegetation types provides a wide variety of birds. For example, it is possible to see an American white pelican in a marsh in east Reno and, a short time later, see a water pipit in the alpine tundra just west of town.

For good birding in the Reno-Tahoe area, Ryser recommends visiting different habitats at different times of the year. There is excellent birding right in Reno. Almost any day of the year you can see golden eagles, hawks or owls.

At Virginia Lake, a few blocks south of the casino area, one can usually see mergansers, several species of grebes, cormorants, coots and sometimes rare ducks, such as the Barrow's goldeneye. Overfed Canada geese are everywhere. They would like to take over Virginia Lake for their own sanctuary and are often a nuisance to motorists, pilots and golfers. A glance up in the trees around the lake is likely to produce some roosting black-crowned night herons.

Idlewild Park, on the Truckee River just a few blocks west of downtown, is a good place for water birds in the winter, and while there visitors should look for mergansers and water ouzels in the river.

Honey Lake, about an hour's drive north of Reno, is another good area for wintering waterfowl. You might see whistling swans, snow geese and wintering hawks, especially the ferruginous hawk.

In the valleys, look for birds of prey, such as Coopers, sharp-shinned, rough-legged and redtailed hawks. Prairie falcons

usually are numerous in the Carson and Washoe valleys, south of Reno. Goshawks and ferruginous hawks are less common, and if you're lucky, you might see a merlin (pigeon hawk).

Spring birding in the Great Basin is especially rewarding, as there are many migrants during these months. Virginia Lake occasionally has some diving ducks, such as ring-necked, canvasback and scaups. Loons are sometimes seen here, too. The wood duck (a dull name for a fancy bird) has been seen in small numbers around Virginia Lake at all times of the year.

One of the most spectacular sights around Reno is the American white pelican at Pyramid Lake. The largest nesting colony in North America is on Anaho Island, now a national wildlife refuge. These magnificent birds arrive about mid-March and remain until the end of August. It is certainly worth the short drive northeast of Reno to see them in action.

Ospreys, also known as fish hawks, pass through here in the spring and are occasionally seen fishing in the lakes and ponds. They may be nesting around Lake Tahoe or Marlette Lake.

For sheer drama, there is nothing quite like the strutting sage grouse. Some ancestral strutting grounds are located in Honey Lake Valley, a short distance from Highway 395, north of Reno. Ryser's description of the courtship pageant, which occurs in March and early April, is fascinating.

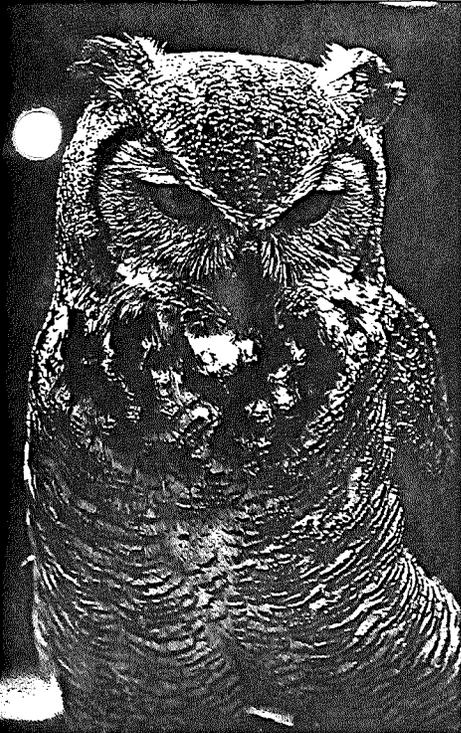
In the spring, some time should be spent around mud flats to see migrating shore birds. Stillwater Wildlife Management Area, about 35 miles east of Reno, is well-known for wading birds such as ibis. The Fernley Wildlife management Area also offers mud flats and marshes. Washoe Lake is a little closer to the city and a good place to see phalaropes, little shorebirds that swim rather than wade.

There is a marsh in east Reno along Steamboat Creek that is excellent for water birds in the spring. Shorebirds such as the black necked stilt and willet can often be seen there.

Verdi, a small town just west of Reno, is a good place to look for birds of prey, such as Coopers, sharp-shinned, rough-legged and redtailed hawks. Prairie falcons usually are numerous in the Carson and Washoe valleys, south of Reno. Goshawks and ferruginous hawks are less common,

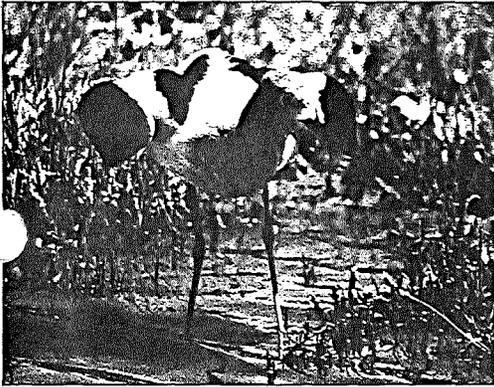
Great horned owl.

STEPHEN TRIMBLE





BOB GOODMAN



STEPHEN TRIMBLE



STEPHEN TRIMBLE

Clockwise from top: White pelicans at Pyramid Lake, Yellowheaded blackbird, an American avocet at Carson Lake. Below: Red-tailed hawk.

good place for birding in the spring. A drive down the old road past the firehouse and over the old bridge is likely to produce kingfishers and water ouzels along the Truckee River. The hooded merganser has been known to nest there.

Summer days in the Great Basin are often very warm, so bird trips during the summer should be carefully planned to avoid the mid-day heat. Visit the shrublands at lower elevations early in the day or later in the afternoon when it's cooler and the birds are more active. It's possible to see towhees, sage thrashers and burrowing owls in the lower shrublands.

There are some fascinating sparrows to see in the lower elevations. Fox sparrows are everywhere in Nevada, but one may also see lark sparrows, sage sparrows and the handsome black throated sparrows.

A good summer itinerary is to do the lower shrublands first, then move to the pinyon-juniper woodlands in the Virginia foothills where pinyon jays flock to harvest pine nuts. Finally, proceed up State Route 431 (Mount Rose Highway) to Lake Tahoe, stopping along the way to look for woodpeckers. The white-headed woodpecker

is seen occasionally near Galena Creek. Williamson's sapsucker is an uncommon bird you might be lucky enough to see. Another one to look for is the red breasted sapsucker. In the lower elevations you are more likely to see yellow bellied sapsuckers.

Hermit thrushes are usually singing in the forest a short distance off the highway. Their haunting, flute-like songs are among the most memorable in the bird kingdom.

In the open areas, there are dark-eyed juncos and white crowned sparrows nesting. By mid-July, when the wildflowers are blooming profusely, this is tremendous hummingbird country. One is likely to see such hummingbirds as the black-chinned, rufous and calliope, North America's smallest bird.

Around Lake Tahoe, the most unusual bird to look for is probably the pileated woodpecker, almost the size of a crow. There are still some around—they've been seen at Bliss State Park on the lake. Other birds to see there are Clark's nutcrackers, solitaires, mountain and western bluebirds, Steller's jays, juncos, several species of swallows and chipping sparrows.



STEPHEN TRIMBLE

Sierra fire victims fed up with Forest Service

Upland 8-16-87

By Steven A. Capps
EXAMINER SACRAMENTO BUREAU

WOODFORDS, Alpine County — Some residents of this tiny Sierra community say the federal government so badly botched the job of fighting a big forest fire here two weeks ago that they no longer trust them with their lives or property.

In town meetings and at local

gathering spots, the talk up here on the eastern slope of California's least-populated county is of throwing the U.S. Forest Service firefighters out and inviting state firefighters in.

The controversy stems from a forest fire two weeks ago, the fourth major blaze in this area near the Nevada-California state line in as many years. More than two doz-

en mountain homes were destroyed in the most recent blaze, and 6,500 acres of land were charred.

Eastern Alpine County is one of only two areas in the state where private forested lands are not protected by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. Instead, the CDF contracts with the U.S. Forest Service to pro-

tect much of the area because its fire stations are closer than California's.

The system is used in one other remote area near Reno. In turn, the CDF protects some federal lands within California because its stations are closer.

But in Alpine County, many peo-

— See FIRE, B-8

next page

ple have found the system confusing and frustrating, and the frustration of local residents grew considerably during the latest fire.

As the blaze grew, one member of the Alpine County Board of Supervisors took a Forest Service fire truck that was sitting idle in a local service station and used it to fight the fire himself.

There were angry stories of long-time ranchers who were prevented from taking their own bulldozers into the area to protect their own property, which later burned.

"There's two kinds of Forest Service people," said the chief of the Woodfords volunteer fire department, summing up the more rabid local sentiment. "The ones that screw up and the ones that cover their asses."

The fire started in a rugged canyon just west of here July 29. The blaze was relatively small at first, but gusting afternoon winds swept it out of the brushy ravine and onto several forested ridges in the afternoon.

Some people, particularly Woodfords Fire Chief Dave Zellmer, believe the fire could have been put out before it spread, and that not enough was done to protect homes once it did get out of control.

Woodfords volunteers were the first to arrive at the fire when it broke out about 11:30 a.m. on a steep mountainside in a rocky canyon near the Crystal Springs campground. No one yet knows how the fire started but investigators believe it was caused by people.

Zellmer said his volunteers reported the fire was "about the size of a pickup hood" when they got there. The first Forest Service firefighters arrived a few minutes later and told the volunteers to leave, that they were not needed.

Zellmer said it was a long time before the Forest Service even began fighting the fire. "My people were concerned because the fire was still burning and they (Forest Service firefighters) were still putting on their clothes. All this time they were telling them, 'No problem,'" Zellmer said.

"So my guys get even more con-

cerned and the Forest Service tells them, 'We don't want you up around the fire because if it's man-caused, you might destroy evidence.'"

"They kept telling us it was their fire, they would take care of it," he said.

Three hours after the fire started, it was out of control and Zellmer called for mutual aid from all nearby departments in California and Nevada. Eventually, 1,500 firefighters were called in from four states.

Zellmer laid some of the blame for initial delays on bureaucratic wrangling between the Forest Service and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, which also has fire-fighting responsibility in the region.

"Here you've got two big bureaucracies at loggerheads," Zellmer said. "I've seen them at a lightning strike arguing about who has jurisdiction. It becomes a game with these people and the losers are the people of Alpine County."

"We want the Forest Service out of here," he said.

California forestry officials have not shown a great deal of interest in taking over the area. "CDF has for years contracted with the USFS, and this incident does not change our position," said Deputy Chief Dick Ernest. "We want it to remain this way."

The Forest Service has maintained that it fought the fire properly, especially given the extreme conditions that developed after it started. Afternoon winds forecast at 15 mph developed to twice that.

"I won't apologize for our firefighters," Jim Nelson, Toiyabe National Forest supervisor, said at a tense news conference in Reno after the fire. "We saved 100 homes without any injuries."

He said Woodfords volunteers were sent away from the blaze because their fire truck and equipment was designed to fight structure fires, not wildland conflagrations.

Under the fire protection system in eastern Alpine County, Zellmer's volunteers are supposed to be responsible for structure fires, while

the federal government handles wildland blazes.

Another problem facing federal firefighters is the changing nature of the area, Nelson argued. More and more homes are being built in remote areas, he said, and residents need to do more to protect their own property.

Still, some residents think the immediate answer to their concerns is to shift wildland fire protection to the state, whose firefighters presumably would live in the area they would be assigned to protect.

"I'm not saying that if we get those red (CDF) trucks in here, there aren't going to be any more fires," said Zellmer. "But the Forest

Service fights fires here for a living. We put out fires for survival."

It would probably take years for the CDF to move in. The local Board of Supervisors would have to petition the CDF to drop its contract with the Forest Service, which expires next summer, and build a new facility here.

Eric Jung, a supervisor from Bear Valley, said the board is considering the idea. "There's a lot of anger right now and not a lot of information at this point," he said.

Assemblyman Norm Waters, D-Plymouth, has promised to help the local board if it decides to petition for state fire protection.

Alpine wants feds to probe fire effort

Tahoe Daily Tribune
By JIM DIPESO
Tribune Staff Writer 8/19/87

The Alpine County Board of Supervisors Tuesday formally called for a federal investigation of the Woodfords fire, after the chairman said organization of firefighting efforts "flat out didn't work."

The board also decided to look

into having the California Department of Forestry handle fire protection of private lands in the county, instead of the U.S. Forest Service, target of heavy local criticism over handling of the fire.

The supervisors acted following an Aug. 13 workshop firefi-

(See ALPINE, Page 14)

Alpine

(Continued from Page 1)

ghting agencies held in Minden to explore problems that came up during the fire, which broke out July 29 and destroyed more than two dozen homes and charred 6,550 acres. Supervisors Eric Jung and Chris Gansberg Jr. attended that meeting.

Problems raised at the meeting were numerous. They included poor communications and coordination, inability to find the keys to open up fire hydrants, spotty information on where water could be tapped, inadequate water tender service, slow air support, insufficient clearance of dry vegetation on private property, inadequate sightseer control, inefficient use of personnel and equipment, and downed power lines blocking fire engines.

Alpine County District Attorney Hank Murdock said lawsuits against the Forest Service are on the way. "It's no longer a vague maybe, it's positive fact," Murdock said.

Jung, chairman of the Alpine board, said he hopes an investigation will point out solutions to "shape up the whole firefighting process."

"The overall organization was terrible," Jung said. Individual firefighters "didn't know who was in charge, who to talk to in the field," he complained.

Jung said he wants Rep. Norm Shumway, who will hold a 7 p.m. town meeting at Turtle Rock Park tonight, to lead the investigation. The Forest Service should not lead the probe, Jung said.

The Forest Service presently provides fire protection to Alpine County's private lands under contract to CDF. The supervisors will look into having CDF handle fire protection directly, although Jung said he wanted to move with caution "so we know what we may be getting ourselves into."

Alpine resident Len Doyal urged the board to strongly consider CDF protection. He provided a letter from a Tuolumne County resident which said CDF has an "aggressive" fire prevention and attack program, while the Forest Service "seems bent on ignoring" fire protection needs.

But the Forest Service and a CDF representative said organization of the fire battle was effective.

"The organization was superb given the conditions," said John Swanson, Carson district ranger for the Toiyabe National Forest. "I've never seen any better and I've been involved in a lot of large fires."

He said it is easy for laymen to believe that the "organized chaos" of a fire battle is not being handled well.

Dave Ortegell of the CDF's Tuolumne-Calaveras ranger district said, "There are always some problems in the initial attack of a major incident. It is perceived by the outsider as not being terribly organized."

Swanson said the Forest Service will be "happy to cooperate with an investigation."

In addition, he said the "Forest Service in no way opposes the proposal made by the board. We'll do what we're asked to do. If the board wants to go with CDF, that's fine with us."

Swanson said the major problem that came out of the Minden meeting was communications. "We've got to be able to talk to each other, to

know where to go, where the priorities are," he said.

He said the Forest Service is "making progress" on improving its communications.

The communications problem involved more than radios, said Bill Driscoll, chief of the East Fork Fire Protection District in Douglas County, who organized the meeting.

"It was communication in every form. It was the local people not knowing the Forest Service's protocol and procedures. It was the Forest Service not knowing the local people's capabilities," Driscoll said.

Another set of problems involved "inefficient use of local resources."

"What I hoped to accomplish was to develop a list of difficulties, everybody take them home and see if it will help them," Driscoll said.

But he warned that fire disasters are inevitable in areas where people live close to fire-prone forests and wildlands.

"To say this won't happen again is really naive," he said. "You assume a certain amount of risk when you move to the lake up there or the Carson Valley down here. You can't expect firefighters to prevent that completely," he said.

Sac. Bee Aug 20, 1987

They're burned up with anger

Fire victims attack Forest Service

By John Cox
Bee Staff Writer

WOODFORDS — The fire was moving with the sound of a thousand freight trains when it hit Jack Doyal's house, and he knew there was no saving it.

Doyal ran down and threw himself into an irrigation canal to withstand the heat and ran back to his son's house just across the road.

Its yellow paint was liquid to his touch. Thermal-pane windows were cracking. Flames were licking up the sides of a woodpile of rich pine 20 feet away. Lynn Doyal's house was about to go.

Right there in the dirt road in the middle of this hell were three U.S. Bureau of Land Management water-pump trucks paid for by Jack Doyal's taxes, and crews of several young men — doing nothing.

He screamed at them, "This house is going to burn if we can't get water on it!"

"I'm sorry, sir," he recalls the young government man saying, "but I cannot fight structure fires."

Doyal replied that a burning woodpile was not a structure fire, but his rage was too much to contain.

According to Doyal, the 66-year-old welterweight let go with a right-hand punch that caught the young man squarely on the left jaw and knocked him flat.

Then Doyal yanked the hose from a reel on the truck, sprayed the

Fire

Continued from page A1

woodpile, and Lynn Doyal's house was saved from the fire of Acorn Canyon.

Around the canyon on another front of the fire, where the pine forest gives way to chaparral above Carson Valley, Ellen Guyette ran down to where a U.S. Forest Service truck was parked with the young crew inside, doing nothing.

She pleaded with them to drive up and help save her house. They rolled up the windows of the truck and drove up the road, leaving her there, hysterical, on her knees in the dirt.

Her house, heavily damaged but saved by volunteers, still stands in the charred land.

In Reno, Forest Service information officer Jerry Snow noted that Forest Service crews are not trained for structure fires, but "when there's homes threatened, we do everything we can to help protect those homes." He said the agency knew of no instance when help was denied.

But Alpine County, a mouse of a California county with 1,200 people and less than 700 registered voters, is roaring mad.

About a third of what was once a beautiful mountain settlement is gone — 24 houses burned to the ground in the first nine hours of the fire July 29.

Now there is this enormous scar — 6,600 acres that look like the landscape of some black planet. A thundershower last week raised the stench of wet ashes.

Local officials and townsfolk are demanding an investigation of the way federal agencies fought the fire — or didn't fight it. But the political clout of this little area on the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada south of Lake Tahoe is so slight that

residents fear their voices won't be heard.

"We might not be valued so much in other people's eyes, but it's everything we have," said county Fire Chief David Zellmer, a volunteer. "It's valued as much as the governor's mansion sitting in Sacramento, when you come right down to it."

Acorn was the third disastrous Alpine County wildfire in four years, and people are frightened by what they see as a pattern of federal agency arrogance and ineptitude.

The first call came at 11:32 a.m. that Wednesday. Hardly more than a single tree was burning several yards up the steep, rocky south side of the canyon above the west fork of the Carson River three miles west of town.

A Forest Service crew was first on the scene. Zellmer says the Woodfords Volunteer Fire Department was told almost immediately on its arrival that it was not needed and not welcome, that this was a Forest Service job.

The Forest Service report called the decision to release the volunteers "a sound one and in retrospect (it) turned out to be extremely wise in that the truck was available for structure protection, rather than tied up with the initial attack."

Indeed, according to Zellmer, it was described by one Forest Service official as a "textbook situation" that provided an ideal "training session" for the crew. And if it were a man-caused fire, they didn't want volunteers stomping around up there destroying evidence.

It so happened that among many who stopped there about then was Lyle Smith, who retired after 35 years with the Forest Service, including nine years as ranger of this Toiyabe National Forest district.

"They didn't seem to be in any hurry to get a line around that fire," Smith recal-

led last week. Winds were calm, and less than an acre was burning even an hour after the first call, but nobody was sent up there to do the shovel and water-pack "grunt work" of putting it out.

Instead, an air drop was ordered. It took 45 minutes for the small tanker to clear the mountaintops from Sonora, and the borate it dropped didn't put out the fire. Still, at 1:10 p.m., Toiyabe headquarters at Washoe Lake, Nev., radioed the Forest Service commander to order "all volunteers away from the fire."

About 2 p.m., afternoon winds, which are common to the area, came down the canyon and the fire took off to the east.

About 3 p.m., volunteer Chief Zellmer issued an emergency mutual-aid appeal to all surrounding communities.

Shortly thereafter, he watched in horror as a Forest Service pickup truck stopped along Highway 88 maybe a quarter mile ahead of the flames. Two men ignited thick manzanita underbrush, telling Zellmer they were creating a backfire firebreak, and then sped away.

"Then we had two major fires," he said. It was this second fire that ignited Jack Doyal's and nine other houses in the little Alpine Valley subdivision, Zellmer maintains.

"I'm not saying this fire might not have done the same thing," he said of the approaching firestorm, but the uncontrolled backfire "took precious time away from us."

The Forest Service review called the backfire "prudent and in line with normal procedure."

It took several days to douse the flames completely, but all the damage was done between early afternoon and nightfall that first day.

Touring the devastation last week, Zellmer pointed out numerous places where volunteers from throughout the region

pitched in — and where federal firefighters refused.

"They just flagrantly wouldn't help," he said. One Forest Service crewman told him, "You find my supervisor, and he'll tell me what to do."

County Supervisor Chris Gansberg Jr. commandeered a Forest Service tank truck left idle in a Woodfords repair shop and when he returned it he was threatened by the Forest Service with arrest.

Smith, who considers himself an expert on the subject because of his nine years as a Toiyabe ranger, said the Forest Service has created a "bureaucratic monster" that is unable to move quickly.

"They have to amass huge amounts of men, money and machines before they can attack a fire," he said. "By that time, the fire has gone over the mountain."

The Forest Service report categorically rejects Smith's description.

"After reviewing the actions that affected the suppression actions taken on the fire, the reviewers concluded that the actions taken appeared to be appropriate and the success of the Acorn fire was that suppression efforts saved over 100 homes," the Forest Service said.

These may not be the last words on the subject, however. Rep. Norman Shumway, R-Stockton, asked last week for an investigation by the Department of Agriculture, parent agency of the Forest Service. Local officials continue to press for more independent probes at the state and federal level.

Meanwhile, says Zellmer, tales of the Acorn fire are generating alarm in other communities that depend on federal fire protection.

"All these people, clear over Kingsbury grade, clear down the west side of the Carson Valley, they're scared to death right now," he said. "They have every right to be."

Sac. Bee
Aug. 20, 1987



Bee/Dick Schmidt

Alpine County Assistant Sheriff Henry "Skip" Veatch was left homeless by last month's

Woodfords blaze. Residents say U.S. Forest Service crews failed to act fast enough to keep

the fire from spreading beyond a tiny area. The agency says it followed proper procedures.

Chacon's career: It's academic now

by DAVE PRICE
Sports editor

8-20-87

Sam Chacon was asked if he had any goals for his future at the University of Pacific. It was intended as a tennis question; his reply was academic.

"Just to get myself through school and get my degree from a good college; my goal is to be a general practitioner," the recent Douglas High graduate said.

"Tennis is a sport for life. I'll always play, even if I'm just playing club tennis for fun."

This is the same man who has been a court success for the past seven years, working his way from beginner to one of the best in Northern Nevada. Make that one of the best in the past decade, according to his coach, Scott Buell.

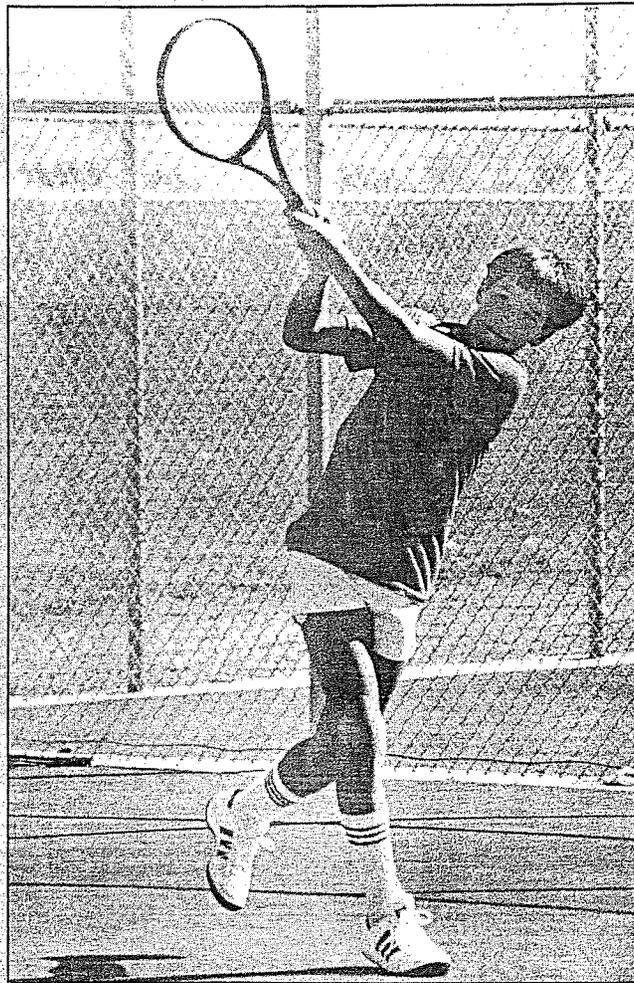
"I think he's one of the top players in Northern Nevada in the last 10 years," contended Buell, a teaching pro at Bally's tennis club in Reno. "He's been an outstanding high school player, and I think he'll be an outstanding college player, too. It's a little tough to say how far he'll go; he'll just have to take it year by year and see what happens."

"It'll be interesting to see how he does. I think you'll see a big improvement because he really hasn't had a chance to play with top-level players, day-in and day-out, like he will down there."

Chacon has enjoyed more than passing success on the court already. There have been several successes on the Northern California Tennis Association circuit, which led to his selection last summer to a U.S. junior team that toured Europe. On the home front, he reigned as a Governor's Cup state champion in the boys 16-year-old division in 1985, thus becoming the first player outside of Las Vegas to achieve that feat.

He was a standout at Douglas High, highlighted by a Northern Nevada AAA zone tournament singles crown as a junior in 1985. He also racked up a string of 83 straight victories against league opponents before a back injury forced him to default against Reed's Hyo Chan Lee.

Four years ago, Douglas High tennis coach Bruce Clark offered this description of Chacon, then a 5-foot tall, 105-pound freshman: "People see this little kid who's 5-foot tall with a Dutch



THEN AND NOW. Sam Chacon has grown, and not just physically since he was a 5-foot freshman at Douglas High in 1984. He now has his sights set on pre-med studies at the

University of Pacific in Stockton. He graduated from Douglas High with a 3.75 grade point average, which should come as no surprise because his mother, Joan, was a

Fulbright scholar and now teaches in Douglas County, and his father, Sam (a native of Bolivia), works as a civil engineer in Reno. F-C photos

8-20-87

Chacon: Looking ahead

Continued from page 1

(Lisa, 15) who is right behind him."

His parents, Sam and Joan Chacon, have always been there to watch their two children play tennis.

"We've been to all of them. We didn't get to go to Europe when Sam was on the U.S. junior team, but those were the only matches we've missed," said Joan Chacon, who doubles as the girls tennis coach at Douglas High (her alma mater).

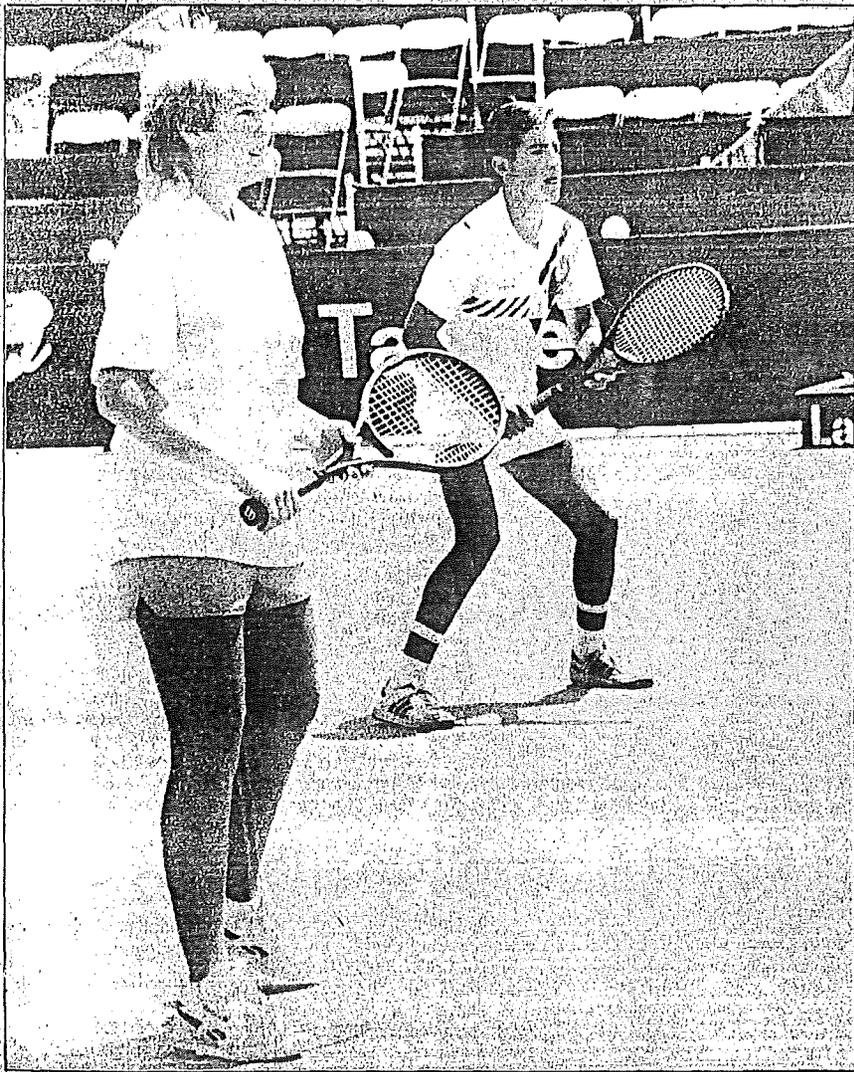
"It has taken up a lot of time. It has been worthwhile, though, because both have gotten a lot out of tennis," she added. "Both are competitive,

they have been since they were very young; and they're both willing to work hard at something, no matter what they do."

At this time, however, Sam Chacon said tennis isn't the main concern in his life. He's looking forward to four years ahead at the University of Pacific in Stockton, Calif.

"Academics is definitely No. 1. That's why I chose Pacific: It's high in academics," Chacon said. "I want to play on the team down there, and I want to play the best I can.

"I would think the NCAAs would be a possibility because down there I'm only gonna get better."



BIG TIME: Sam Chacon receives a taste of tennis in the big time during this doubles match with Andrea Jaeger during the 1985 Mija Festival at Harvey's.

Boy haircut and think they've got it made. Then, before they know what's happened, the score is 4-love and it's all over with. Those who go to the tournaments know how good he is, though."

Chacon has grown considerably since then but, at 5-8, is still no physical giant. Surprisingly, though, his is a backcourt game — a power game.

"He hits the ball as hard as anyone in Nevada," Buell said. "He's really a fireplug out there. It's amazing to see somebody his size hit the ball that hard. The only problem with that is that he's been susceptible to injury."

Ah, the injury bug. Last August he suffered pulled muscles in his lower back, an injury that nagged him through his high school season and resulted in a layoff of more than six months. It was the first time in seven years he had been away from tennis for any extended period of time.

"Those were the hardest six months of my life," Chacon confessed. "It was kind of nice to just be able to rest and take it easy, but it was starting to get to be habit. I need something to do."

"It's great to be back in competition again." He played for the first time at an NCTA tournament in Vallejo earlier this spring. Then the pain returned again, forcing him to rest until summer.

"I was disappointed. It was my first time back and I played really well. I beat two players who were ranked higher than me. I got to the quarters; all the big guns were there."

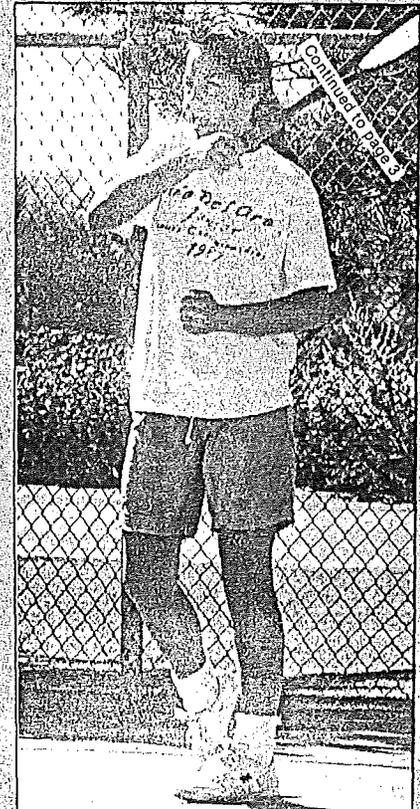
He seemed to be completely recovered, but then he suffered a groin injury that knocked him out of contention for a title at the Governor's Cup Northern Nevada qualifying tournament. He had advanced to the semifinals and was leading Ryan Burgess (the eventual state champion) when he was forced to retire. The injury prevented him from playing in the state finals this past weekend in Las Vegas.

"It seems like every time I get going, something else happens," Chacon shrugged. "This has been a bad year for me as far as injuries."

That doesn't detract from his ability, both on and off the court.

"Sam is a pretty incredible kid. It takes quite a commitment to reach the level he has," Buell said. "A lot of it comes from family support. His

parents drive him in to Reno to play once or twice a week, plus the 10 to 15 tournaments a year in northern California. Not many parents would do that. It has paid off with Sam, and he has a sister



STATE QUALIFIER: Lisa Chacon, 15, earned a third place finish in the girls 16-year-old class at the Governor's Cup state tournament last weekend in Las Vegas. Chacon lost her semifinal match to Susie Agassi on Saturday but bounced back to beat Beth Sylvis to claim third place on Sunday. Chacon will be a sophomore at Douglas High School this fall. R-C photo

Congressman tours Alpine in wake of fire complaints

Record Courier 8/20/87

by TREVA ZELLER
Staff writer

U.S. Rep. Norm Shumway was scheduled to tour the fire-torn Woodfords area Wednesday in light of a request for a congressional investigation into the handling of the July 29 Acorn Fire.

Alpine County supervisors Tuesday made the request for a separate probe into the fire, which last month burned two dozen homes, charred 6,500 acres and caused more than \$5 million in damage.

Residents claim the U.S. Forest Service underestimated the fire's potential. They also question the agency's early decision to turn away volunteer firefighters.

Shumway also was expected to attend a 7 p.m. Wednesday town meeting at Turtle Rock Park on Highway 89, where supervisors are expected to present their resolution.

Supervisors requested that investigations be separate from the one being conducted by the Forest Service. The federal probe should address use of local

volunteers, better preventive fire protection and improved fire communications between firefighting agencies.

The Forest Service is conducting its own investigation, which is not expected to be completed for several days.

"We're aware of the concerns by many people and we're trying to be as responsive as possible, but we don't want to cut any corners," Forest Service spokesman Doyle Hanks said.

Last week, agency members from California and Nevada as well as the Forest Service met to

go over problems in the initial response. Thursday's panel discussion also sought ways to improve inter-agency protocol.

East Fork Fire Chief Bill Driscoll, who moderated the closed session, said he hoped agency officials would take to heart a list of problems and suggestions from the session.

A breakdown in communication between agencies was the common thread in discussions about what went wrong during the first minutes of the fire, Driscoll said.

"The main problems were

communications and not responding fast enough, or not recognizing the magnitude of the fire fast enough," Driscoll said following the meeting.

"We didn't get as many solutions as I was hoping for; maybe it was the constraints of time. Where it goes from here is up to the individual agencies."

As a result of the meeting, Driscoll said he would arrange for local volunteers to train with Forest Service personnel. Volunteers will continue their own training and occasional sessions with the Nevada Division

of Forestry and BLM.

"Hopefully it will provide some person-to-person contact so that a person in a green uniform is a person and not just a Forest Service uniform," Driscoll said. "It's also to better understand their procedures and improve communications."

Woodfords residents have formed a committee, which is seeking more protection from the California Division of Forestry. Spokesman Lynn Doyal said residents feel that the state agency would be more responsive to local needs.

Baker pulls together successful fair

Record Courier 8/20/87

Judy Baker did a bang-up job on last weekend's Country Faire.

In just six weeks she pulled together good music, activities and enough booths to make the event one to be proud of.

The fair has a ragged history. Weakened by political struggles, circumstances (fires and what-not), apathy or exhaustion, each year it has been pulled together by frayed threads.

In its seven years, the fair has ridden the fluctuating tide of Markleeville's fortunes, tenuous at best. Still, it is a fun time each summer.

Judy showed her propensity for fun in the string of bands she lined up. The music was a highlight of the fair. Saturday's music lasted into the evening with local musician Dan Murphy and the Flexible Flyers providing tunes and laughs at the street dance. They shut down at

10 to the disappointment of the crowd, most of which arrived "fashionably late."

Judy said she was pleased with the fair.

She ran around at her wit's end the last two weeks gathering all the loose ends. She gives a lot of credit to her husband Bill for his help and to her two daughters, Melissa and Kerstin, who put up with late night dinners and a wildly irregular schedule.

That the Bakers are currently camping out in Indian Creek campground looking for a place to rent in Alpine County didn't help. Several recent job changes for Bill Baker have left the family unsettled and without a home. Since the fire, there aren't too many places available, not that rentals are ever easy to find here.

Even without a phone or the usual amenities, Judy pulled it

Letter from Alpine

by HEIDI HOPKINS

off. Thanks, Judy!

The Markleeville General Store tug of war team wrested the championship trophy away from defending champions Cal Silver Miners. In the children's division, the Camp Fire team out-tugged the Up With Kids team.

EXERCISE EQUIPMENT

Up With Kids has purchased exercise equipment for the Woodfords Community Center.

The "weight room" now has a rowing machine, exercise bicycle, weightlifting machine and kick bag for karate practice.

Up With Kids also provided the center with a volleyball set,



horseshoes and a ping pong table.

The equipment is available for public use and a schedule is currently being drawn up.

Goodbye to summer, hello to fall

This Wednesday the school bus grumbled its dinosaur way through town, incontestably making the change of seasons. Fall is here.

Days are still hot but the nights breathe down with a familiar coolness. Mornings are crisp. Leaves are beginning to turn. The last of the hollyhock

Letter from Alpine

by HEIDI HOPKINS

blooms wave goodbye to summer.

Gone are the full creeks and brassy winds of a month ago. Children leave off their summer sport — dam building, the evening bike rides, the long mornings fishing — it's time for school.

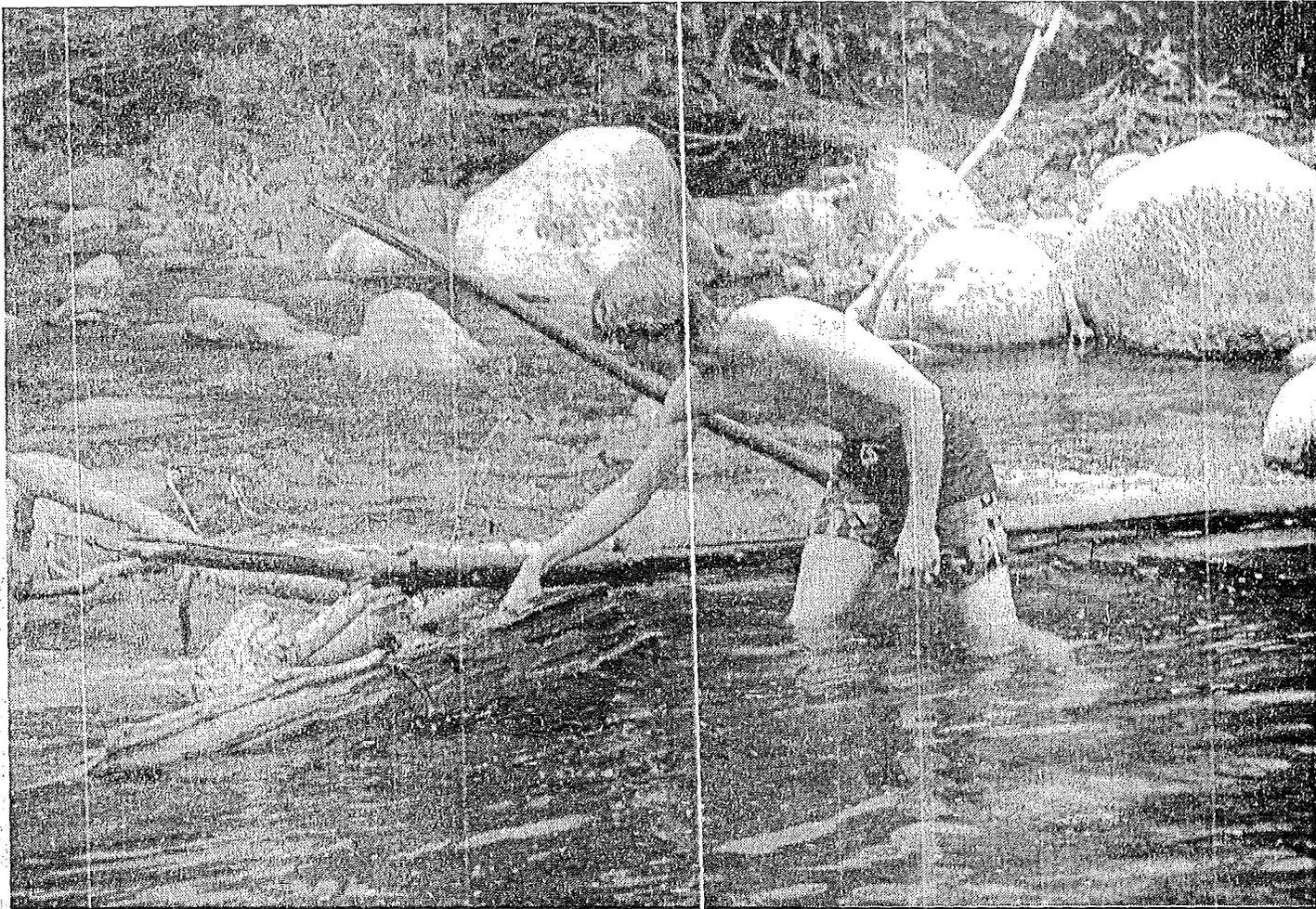
Chattering and bright with new clothes, new books, new hopes they migrate like swallows back to the school's halls. Some have flown the nest to Douglas High, facing the challenge of a new school in a new state.

Older residents measure their

Continued to page 9

Missing

REC. COURIER 8-27-87



SUMMER'S OVER. George Coyan was one of many youngsters who worked on the dam at the local

swimming hole this summer. But now the creek is low and the kids

are back in school. Fall is on its way. R-C photo by Heidi Hopkins

Top topic of 'Chat with Chic'

Record Courier 8/27/87

by TREVA ZELLER
Staff writer

U.S. Sen. Chic Hecht, R-Nev., said Tuesday he will ask federal Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service officials to work out problems in their inter-agency attack on this region's forest fires.

The handling of the recent Acorn Fire topped a list of con-

cerns heard by the senator during a stop in Minden on his annual "Chat with Chic" tour.

Residents and Douglas County commissioners Jerry Bing and Bob Pruett attended the informal meeting at the Douglas County Administration Building that morning.

The senator also heard several Lake Tahoe issues, ranging from the apparent loss of federal fun-

ding for a Douglas County Sewer Improvement District effluent project in Genoa to lands taken off the county tax rolls.

"We'll get our heads together," Hecht said. "These are the types of problems you don't hear about in Washington."

He urged many people to write their complaints in letters and

Continued to page 10

Hecht: Holds town meeting

Continued from page 1

use his staff to communicate at the federal level.

But it was discussion about the forest fire just south of Gardnerville that prompted many local comments, including those of state Sen. Lawrence Jacobsen of Minden.

He said problems seemed to boil down to policy differences and a communication breakdown among federal agencies and local groups.

"The BLM and the Forest Service operate under different policies," Jacobsen said. "We have to make sure we know those policies."

He added that in the past this region's leaders met regularly to solve firefighting problems despite interstate differences, with the Woodfords area considered almost part of Douglas County. Those discussions included local volunteer firefighters, he said.

"When there are inter-state relations, nothing's going to run smoothly because you don't know who the boss is," Jacobsen said. "But we've grown somewhat apart. The federal agencies have grown to a point they think they don't need us anymore. Well, they do need us initially."

He said there were many accounts from residents about federal firefighters who stood idly by while the Acorn Fire raged out of control.

"If they're going to fight fires with different standards than the

people who live here, then it doesn't work," Jacobsen said. "It creates bitterness among those who live here."

Hecht said he will meet with the BLM director and the chief of the U.S. Forest Service to discuss their handling of recent rangefires.

Some of Hecht's aides toured

“

We'll get our heads together. These are the types of problems you don't hear about in Washington.

”

the fire-damaged areas in Woodfords Tuesday afternoon. Hecht stuck to his scheduled tour of the Bently Nevada manufacturing sites in Minden.

Hecht's staff suggested that the senator help push for greater reseeding efforts in the valuable Sierra watershed and that he coordinate efforts with U.S. Rep.

Norm Shumway, who represents Alpine County.

"Although the fire was confined to California, many people here own water and grazing rights in Alpine County," staff member Pete Kelley said.

Alpine County supervisors last week urged both Nevada and California congressmen to seek a congressional investigation into the handling of the Acorn Fire.

In other discussion Tuesday, Weed Control District manager Phil Nalder asked if Hecht could gain federal support for a five-year weed spraying program. Much of the area that has to be sprayed is on federal or state lands, he said.

Certain noxious weeds harm area farmers who can't sell hay because they may have the weeds on their property, Nalder said.

On Tahoe issues, Bing and Pruett said greater federal concern should be given to the loss of property taxes for local governments in the Basin.

When lands are bought by the Forest Service, local taxes are dropped. However, counties still have to pay for services, Pruett said. He suggested that the Forest Service help pay for some services.

Hecht also heard concerns from residents who are pushing for a traffic light near the Zephyr Cove resort to cut down on numerous accidents. They are seeking Forest Service funds to help pay for the light.

Record
Courier

50 YEARS AGO

Sept. 3, 1937

8/27/87

The Record-Courier

TWO MEN ARRESTED. Two prominent Reno men were arrested at Red Lake, Alpine county, last Sunday by Game Warden R.J. Little for violating fish and game regulations of the state of California. The game warden specifically charged one man was fishing with three set poles while the other was getting along quite nicely with two poles.

FRENCH RESIDENTS HOLD PICNIC. The French colony of Gardnerville enjoyed a delightful picnic at the Joe Sario ranch, a few miles this side of Bridgeport last Sunday. Following a day of sports of various kinds a picnic dinner was served that was thoroughly enjoyed by those in attendance.

IMPROVEMENTS MADE IN ALPINE JAIL. Three new steel cells of the most modern type have been installed in the jail of the Alpine county court house at Markleeville. Bullet-proof screens have been placed over the windows. In connection with this improvement, an oil burning furnace is being installed in the court house, which will permit proper heating of all county offices and court room which was not possible with the heating plant installed when the building was erected.

3ACRE AUG 29, 1987

Fritz Thornburg
Box 156
Markleeville

Ca 96120

The Record-Examiner

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Thursday, August 27, 1987

Congressmen hear complaints about firefighting

Congressional inquiry not likely

by TREVA ZELLER
Staff writer

A congressional probe into the Acorn Fire is unlikely, according to U.S. Rep. Norm Shumway, who told Woodfords residents last week he will pursue other avenues if necessary.

"I will get the Forest Service report, and, if I don't see objectivity in it, I will pursue it to a higher level," Shumway said. "I

don't want to see this happen again."

He suggested the federal General Accounting Office, because federal funds for firefighting are involved, or the Department of Agriculture, the authority over the Forest Service, could do separate objective investigations.

The congressman, a Stockton Republican, made the remarks after touring areas damaged in

the July 29 blaze that destroyed 24 homes and left several others substantially damaged.

Alpine County is within Shumway's district. He had scheduled many weeks in advance to attend a local town meeting and altered that agenda to make the tour.

Alpine County supervisors last week requested that congressmen from California and

Continued to page 10



CONGRESSMAN TOURS. U.S. Rep. Norm Shumway listens to Woodfords volunteer fire chief Dave Zellmer, left, who points to where the Acorn Canyon fire started. Zellmer also gave the congressman pictures showing the fire's size when volunteers arrived, saying that

local firefighters could have put out the blaze early on if they had been allowed to. In the background are Alpine County Supervisor's Assistant Dolph Frisius, left, and Supervisor John Bennett. R-C photo by Treva Zeller

Shumway: Tours fire area

Continued from page 1

Nevada seek a separate congressional probe. Many residents have attacked the U.S. Forest Service's handling of the blaze, including claims that the agency underestimated the fire's potential.

"If I can expedite the (Forest Service) reports I'll do so," Shumway said. He said a full Forest Service investigation may not be completed until October.

The congressman kept quiet during most of the tour last Thursday, listening to the complaints of residents.

After hearing one claim that a BLM crew refused to put out a blaze near a home because they were trained only in handling wildland fires and not structure fires, Shumway remarked, "It seems like to me the first thing to do is to put the fire out and then ask questions."

He said residents had legitimate concerns based on what he saw and heard. But he added that he also wanted to talk to U.S. Forest Service officials and read their reports.

Supervisor John Bennett, who lost a home, said residents weren't out to hang anybody for mistakes. They are only interested in seeing that it doesn't happen again, he said.

However, the most outspoken critic during the tour was Woodfords volunteer Chief Dave Zellmer. He said that at least 31,100 acres have burned in the

past few years near his station.

"More than half of that burned can be attributed to Forest Service backfires," Zellmer said. The backfire method of attack involves lighting a fire several feet ahead of another to create a

“

I will get the Forest Service report, and, if I don't see objectivity in it, I will pursue it to a higher level.

”

“break” in vegetation.

“Sir, we're just about burned out,” he told Shumway.

“There's very little left to burn outside of Markleeville itself. That's why we need your help.”

Zellmer claimed that

volunteers who were on the scene were prepared to fight a fire estimated early on at only 24 square feet in the steep Acorn Canyon. However, federal authorities kept them at bay and finally turned them away after almost an hour, according to Zellmer.

“We were prepared. We kept saying we've got to do something up there,” he said. “They said they didn't want volunteers up there because, if it was a man-made fire, they'll destroy evidence. Nothing was said about putting the fire out.”

Backfiring was done unnecessarily, expanding the fire instead of helping to stop it and before enough units could stand by, according to Zellmer.

He said those in command did not call for mutual aid from Douglas County and Carson City for almost three hours. He added that he has witnesses who were motorists in the area when the fire was first noticed.

Forest Service officials have said they would address concerns in their investigations. However, some have said that the turning away of volunteers was a mutual decision and that locals weren't equipped for the steep terrain.

They've also said that organization of the attack went well considering the speed and intensity of the fire as well as weather conditions.

Alpine: Shumway

Continued from page 1

wood piles against their estimation of the next winter, change their car's oil, add antifreeze to the shopping list, wistfully look over the things they planned to finish in the warmth of summer but which somehow slipped through the cracks in all the bustle of fun and confusion and tragedy.

Ready or not, fall is here.

POLITICAL PLACEBO

Probably no one was inspired with confidence in our elected officials during last week's meeting with Representative Norm Shumway who was making his standard pre-election rounds.

Many issues were raised at the meeting — the Equal Rights Amendment and the constitutionality of federal ownership of land — but the primary focus of the evening was the Woodfords fire and what Shumway could (and should) do to help the county.

With the bland rhetoric of the politician, Shumway fielded the emotional speeches which alternately pleaded for and demanded redress after the disaster.

Lyle Smith, Douglas County planning commissioner and former U.S. Forest Service district ranger in this area, read a scathing statement about the Forest Service's decline in fire suppression effectiveness.

Ex-congressional aide Jack Cox, son-in-law of Ed Schalbert whose home burned to the ground, brought tears to many



**CONGRESSMAN
NORM SHUMWAY**

eyes with his description of the four cardboard boxes of things sifted from the ashy rubble — all that remained after a lifetime of marriage. Cox tried to put Shumway on the spot as to what precisely the congressman was going to do. Shumway hedged with aplomb.

Still, Shumway was probably impressed with the size of the crowd and the intensity of the emotions expressed. Turtle Rock Park was filled to capacity. The crowd was noisy and animated. Politicians remember these things.

Shumway said the issue was not appropriate for a congressional investigation but that he would “pursue other avenues.”

I don't think Alpiners are going to wait on Shumway. They'll pursue their own avenues. The issue is not dead.

Season ends

These three Carson Valley Bobby Sox recently completed their successful season. Left to right are, Carson Valley Minors members front row, Annette Ferrey (manager), Lori Baumann, Lorena Phelan, Jannell Cox, Michele Hendon, Julie Whitacre, Amy Tobias, Roxie Whitacre (chaperone); back row, Rick Baumann, (coach), Jenny Wagner, Joyie Vigil, Diane Hunter, Kelli Strickland, Mary Ann Weimer, Carol Mortenson, Gretchen Stephans, Shelly Neth, Ross Whitacre (coach).



Carson Valley White Majors are, from left, front row, Sylvia Simmons, Jenny Valenzuela, Carrie Dawson, Alecia Alexander, Jackie Simmons; back row, Lynn Ann Simas, Deanna Simas, Ginger Carlson, Julie Carlson, Stacy Rogers, Christy Leegard, Peggy Pedrojetti (manager), Connie Estabrook (coach). Not pictured: Mary Pedrojetti, Dana Sullivan, Traci Sullivan, Melanie Wadding, Speedy Dawson (coach).



Record-Courier

9/3/87

Class of 1967 holds a reunion

The class of 1967 at Douglas High School celebrated its 20th reunion with a dinner-dance at the Carson Valley Inn.

Playing all the oldies for the group was Capt. Buddy of KGVM-FM.

The reunion dinner was held Aug. 15, and, the next day, a Sunday, a volleyball game featuring young and old was played after a family picnic lunch at Lampe Park.

Special guests of the class were faculty members and

spouses Jerome Etchegoyhen (DHS principal at the time), Joie Gagon, Mr. and Mrs. Earl Jarrett and Mr. and Mrs. Ed Atencio, all of Gardnerville; Mr. and Mrs. Al Modispacher of Victorville, Calif.; Mr. and Mrs. Grayton Burton of Rexburg, Idaho; and Mr. and Mrs. O'Neill Sanders of Reno.

According to class member Kathy Mortimer, "It was a great weekend renewing old friendships."



REUNION. The Douglas High School class of 1967 held a reunion last month, which included dinner at the Carson Valley Inn. Top row from left are Jim Terry, Jerry Maple, Terry Jacobsen, Brent Howerton, Larry Barr, Cathy Rockholm Crawford, Lance Modispacher, Lois

Barr, Nathan Leising, Vicki Pedrojetti Thurner, Gary Gregory, Bonnie Park Rasavage and Mike Kozimko; middle row, Sam Ludel, Gaye McCollum Simmons, Linda Jepsen Stevens, Ken Thran; Laura Howerton Muncy, John Adams,

Jean Jackson Turnbeaugh, Kathy Yim Godding, Kathy Kyle Mortimer; and front row, faculty members Ed Atencio, Earl Jarrett, Jerome Etchegoyhen, Joie Gagon, Helen Modispacher, Grayton Burton and O'Neill Sanders. Not pictured, Tonja Dressler. Jay Aldrich photo

\$28,000 donated to victims of Woodfords area fire

The Record Courier 9/3/87

So far \$28,000 has been donated to the victims of the Acorn fire near Woodfords and more is still coming in, according to Alpine Chamber of Commerce secretary Dody Halvorson.

Checks have been made out to 30 different families who have lost homes or possessions and a total of \$10,000 has been distributed. The remainder of the money will be parceled out

this week.

Amounts as high as \$1,000 per donor and as low as \$10 have been mailed to the Woodfords Disaster Relief Fund, Halvorson said.

Many donations come from people in Southern California who have friends in the area, she added.

A benefit will be held at Bear Valley for the fire victims Oct. 10 and 11. For information about the Disaster Fund or the Mt. Reba Mountain Bike Rally at

Bear Valley, call the chamber at (916) 694-2475 or write Alpine Chamber of Commerce, P.O. Box 265, Markleeville, Calif. 96120.

Anyone who can donate large appliances, such as washers and dryers, refrigerators and freezers, should call 782-7421 or 782-7334.

These are the numbers for Larry and Pat Wallace and Regina Erb, who along with Nonie Higley and Leona Justinich, are coordinating the Woodfords Fire Relief Center in

Gardnerville.

"Lots of people would like to donate stuff but they don't want to drive down to Woodfords," Mrs. Wallace said.

The Stor-All Co. in Gardnerville donated the use of a storage unit where items may be dropped off. Hay for stranded deer and wild horse herds may also be donated (see Letter from Alpine, page 14-A).

Food is welcome, too, in the form of canned and other non-perishable items. Food may be placed in special barrels at

Raley's Supermarket in Gardnerville.

Mrs. Wallace said that many people in Carson Valley probably feel that all has been done that can be done for the fire victims, but that isn't true.

"When you lose a house and everything, it's going to take a long time to get back on your feet," she said.

Twenty-four homes were burned to the ground and several others badly damaged in the fire that raged through Woodfords in late July.



NEW TREE. Members of the Douglas High Students Against Driving Drunk (SADD) chapter welcome a new tree planted in memory of Sarita Uhart. The previous one had been cut down by vandals. From left are Monique Reno, Hope Biersdorff, Jennifer Johnson, Eric Whitacre, Leah Weissman, April Liput, Melanie Owen and Eric LaClare. R-C photo

Reward offered for tree-cutter

Douglas County School District maintenance department personnel still are offering a \$100 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the vandals who cut down a tree dedicated to Sarita Uhart.

The tree was sawed off at the base earlier this summer.

Chief of maintenance Andy Costa said, "We don't want to let this die. We have a message: We're going to find out who did it one way or another."

A new tree was planted by Jim and Kay Kay Velasquez, owners of Velasquez Nursery in Gardnerville. The Greenhouse Garden Center of Carson City also had offered to donate a new tree, Costa said.

The tree, a plaque and garden benches were dedicated in the memory of Miss Uhart, who died in a drunken driving accident in 1985.

In the wake of the accident, a Students Against Driving Drunk (SADD) chapter was formed at DHS and a Safe-Ride program was begun (the Safe Ride program resumes Sept. 11).

The SADD band Mirage, made up of a group of DHS students, has gained national recognition with a song they dedicated to Miss Uhart entitled "The Sad Song."

Anyone who has information concerning the tree cutting may call Costa at 782-8140 days or 782-4687 evenings.

The Record Courier
9/3/87

ANONYMOUS GIFT. Tammy Shannen Veatch is all smiles after receiving this Chatty Patty doll from an anonymous Carson Valley resident. Douglas County responded like a sister to Alpine County's many needs following the Acorn fire disaster. For more details, see Letter from Alpine. Tom Nagel photo



Douglas responds to Alpine

Three-year-old Tammy Shannen Veatch was the youngest victim of the Acorn fire. Nothing was saved from her home, the only home she had ever known, except the family and their pets.

In one of the many acts of generosity shown to those who lost homes in the fire, an anonymous Carson Valley donor sent a Chatty Patty doll specifically to Tammy Shannen.

As the story was told to Tammy Shannen's mother, Edie, a Carson Valley grandmother had found the "talking" doll at a garage sale. She fixed it up with clothes and accessories and gave it to her granddaughter. On receiving the doll, the granddaughter said she knew that a little girl had lost everything in the fire and she would like the doll to go to that little girl.

"Tammy Shannen is thrilled with the gifts," said Edie.

The doll reached Tammy Shannen through a group of Carson Valley residents, one of the many networks of people that responded to the disaster. Larry Wallace, Nonie Higley, Leona Justinich (all Raley's-Gardnerville workers)

Letter from Alpine

by HEIDI HOPKINS

Larry's wife Pat, spontaneously got together to help the fire victims.

Wallace gives credit to Nonie Higley for spearheading the group. "She's a whirlwind," he said.

They talked to customers in line at Raley's and got permission to put up barrels for food donations in the store. Higley and Erb got KGVM to advertise the group and its efforts. They worked with Ellie O'Toole from Alpine County in distributing donated items.

According to Wallace, Carson Valley residents and businesses were overwhelming in their help.

Wallace, a member of the Gardnerville Volunteer Fire Department and friend to many Alpiners, said he lost his home to fire when he was young and knows the pain and feeling of loss. He did something about the

said.

"I helped the Veatches go through the debris. There was Tammy Shannen, dirty as sin, helping mommy sift through the ashes. Chris [Tammy Shannen's brother] found his bicycle in the ruins of the garage and you should have seen him riding off down the street on that clackety old thing. The tires and seat were burned off but the chain still worked."

Wallace found a bicycle to give to Chris, too.

Wallace explained that the local Stor-All donated storage space and they are still soliciting donations, especially large appliances, to be stored until the burned homes are rebuilt. The group can be reached at 782-7421 or 782-7334. Hay is also needed to help feed the local deer herd that lost another significant portion of its winter range.

The Alpine County Chamber of Commerce reports that cash donations to the disaster fund have reached \$30,000, well on the way to its goal of \$50,000. Donations may be sent to: Woodfords Fire Disaster Fund, P.O. Box

Record-Courier
9/3/87

Sorensen's plans annual benefit

Sunday, Sept. 13 is the date of Sorensen's Resort's annual Birthday BBQ Benefit for Alpine County volunteer firefighters and the Alpine Children's Center. Sorensen's is also celebrating its 111th year.

The chicken and ribs barbecue with all the trimmings will be held from noon to 8 p.m. with games, prizes, clown and face-painting for the kids.

The Alpine Trio and Sweet Potato Band will perform all afternoon for listening and dancing pleasure. Volleyball, horseshoes, hiking and fishing are activities people can enjoy during the day. Lodging is also available for those who wish to make a weekend of it.

Cost is \$6 for adults; \$4 for children. All proceeds to benefit the local firefighting associations and children's center.

Tickets may be purchased in advance at Aladdin Flowers and Lucky Liquors in Gardnerville; Woodfords Station and Sorensen's Resort in Alpine county.

Sorensen's Resort is located just east of the Highways 88/89 junction in Hope Valley and just 15 miles south of Lake Tahoe.

For more information, call Sorensen's Resort at (916) 694-2203.

save



Wreck

A Gardnerville woman was seriously injured in an accident Tuesday on U.S. 395 near Johnson Lane when a truck hit her car broadside. Leah Matlack, 23, was later taken by Care Flight to St. Mary's Hospital in Reno. The Nevada Highway Patrol said

Matlack, who was turning left onto the highway from Johnson Lane, failed to yield the right-of-way to a truck heading north on U.S. 395. She was listed in intensive care Wednesday morning. R-C photo by Sandi Wright

Open house planned

Markleeville now has archives

by HEIDI HOPKINS
Special to the R-C

Opera in Markleeville? Yes, Markleeville once did boast an opera house, a brewery and a thriving population of 2,620 residents.

Today, there are fewer than 400 residents, in the town and fewer than 1,200 residents in all of Alpine County. As for opera, Alpine County doesn't have even a movie theater within its borders.

The curious history of Alpine County is documented in the county's collection of records dating from 1864 and now preserved in the newly-established Alpine County Archives.

The archives will open officially Tuesday, Sept. 15, 6-8 p.m. at an open house in the county library in Markleeville. The public is invited. Books, maps and photos will be on display to celebrate this recent addition to Alpine County's facilities.

The Alpine County Archives was completed after 15 months of intensive work by archivist Dr. Inez Dillon Prinster. She was aided by her assistant Mary Wood and Alpine County Historical Records Commission members: chairwoman and project director Nancy Thornburg, County Clerk Karen Keebaugh, Librarian Dianne Deadrich-Rogers and public members Elta Turner and Heidi Hopkins.

"I had the unique opportunity to organize and create an entire archives," said Dr. Prinster about her experience in Alpine County.

It's seldom that an archivist would have an opportunity to organize the complete historical records of any entity, much less those of a county government...123 years of records and many of them complete!"

For 15 months Dr. Prinster's desk was covered inches deep in notes, lists, papers and books, all attesting to the complexity of the job she faced. An archivist needs to keep abreast of state archival law, current conservation and preservation techniques and archival practice to properly establish an archives, she said.

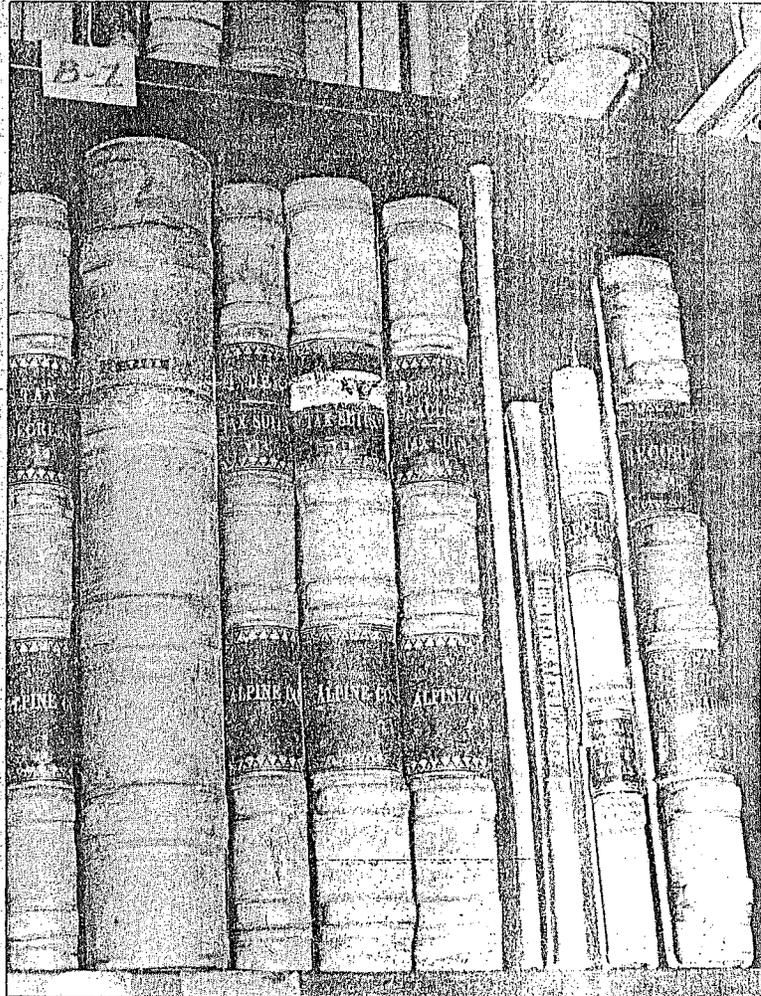
Dr. Prinster was hired through a grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission. Written by Thornburg with the help of the records commission, the grant provided funds for a trained archivist to appraise, inventory, accession and index all of the extant county records which had been stored in various states of disarray since the founding of the county in 1864.

The project received supplemental funding and support from the county Board of Supervisors.

"The condition of the records here was fairly typical of many county and municipal archives," said Dr. Prinster about the piles of cardboard boxes stuffed with molding documents she found on her arrival. She explained that California has few codes governing archives and that most counties don't have the funding or the time to seek grants to remedy the situation.

"It's a shame. Many valuable records have been lost either through the tossing of old files or damage due to improper storage."

Alpine County was commended by the California State Archives at the annual meeting of the County Historical Records Commissions. Not only was an archives established to house Alpine County's historic records but a comprehensive disposition schedule for county records was worked out, a project requiring an immense amount of research and coordination within the county.



"This group has worked together better than any group I have been involved with," said commission chairwoman Thornburg about the Historical Records Commission. While involved in the project, the commission met on an average of twice a month and never lacked a quorum, she said.

Among the many items in the archives are hand-painted maps of early Alpine County detailing fences and cabins, records of sole proprietorships by women (recorded in a separate book from "regular" sole proprietorships), and court cases including the inquest for E. Roushe, unfor-

tunate namesake of Hangman's Bridge south of Markleeville.

The public will be able to utilize the materials in the archives through the Alpine County Library. Hours are those of the library, currently Wednesday-Saturday, 9-5 p.m., Tuesday 10-7 p.m. Requests for information will be handled as time allows. Requests by phone or mail are recommended. Copies of documents may be made by the librarian and her assistants for a fee.

For information and fee schedules or a copy request form call the library at (916) 694-2120.

ARCHIVES COMPLETED. Dr. Inez Prinster (above) spent 15 months sifting through boxes of moldy documents and fine leatherbound books — the nearly-complete collection of Alpine County's historical records stored in the courthouse basement. Through a grant, Alpine County was able to organize these documents, dating from the founding of the county in 1864, and establish a county archives. R-C photos by Heidi Hopkins

Save
✓

The Record Courier

9/17/87



Top Tiger

Lisa Chacon swept past eight straight opponents at Wooster and Reed last week, a performance good enough to earn Douglas High School's Athlete of the Week award. Chacon, a sophomore, carried a 12-0 Northern Nevada AAA record into a showdown Tuesday against Manogue. The award, co-sponsored by Douglas High and McDonald's, is selected weekly by athletic director Randy Green. R-C photo

Douglas tennis team young

In recent years, individuals like Mark McKibben and Sam Chacon have made Douglas High School boys tennis a force to reckon with.

McKibben is now at the University of California-Davis, Chacon at the University of Pacific in Stockton. And Douglas coach Dan Paterson is facing a rebuilding job this fall.

"We have 15 players out, but half of them are freshmen,"

Paterson said. "It's tough for them because they're having to play against juniors and seniors, but they're coming along. Hopefully, they'll develop into good players a couple of years from now."

The Tigers have five returnees from last season, including seniors Aaron Tucker, Jason Rule and Erick LeClaire, as well as juniors Aaron Black and Matt Byrne.

Tucker is the team's most experienced player, having played the past three years for the Douglas varsity. He has played doubles in the past, but his partner, Dax Godkin, has transferred to Carson High and won't play tennis this fall.

Tucker was a bright spot for Douglas in a 21-7 loss at home to Reed last Thursday, as the senior won all three of his singles matches.

The Woodfords fire

It has been four weeks since the Acorn fire occurred. During those four weeks, there has been no effort made by our state representatives to visit Alpine County. U.S. Rep. Norman Shumway, R-Stockton, held a town meeting on Aug. 19, but that had been scheduled before the fire occurred. He refused to respond to requests for an investigation into U.S. Forest Service management of the fire. He indicated that he would take "appropriate action" after the release of the Forest Service report. Two reports were released late last week, and the only action is that Shumway has announced that there will be no congressional investigation.

The Forest Service maintains steadfastly that no errors were made on its part. Having the Forest Service conduct its own investigation is the same as putting the fox in charge of watching the chickens. Alpine County requested the State Fire Marshall to conduct an investigation into this 6,600-acre fire, which resulted in the loss of 24 homes (28 percent of the livable structures in that area), damage to many others and the loss of several small businesses. He refused. Yet he has agreed to investigate a 500-acre fire near Mammoth in which one home burned.

There have been four large fires in three years in the Woodfords area. A total of over 31,000 acres

have burned. This is certainly not common. Something is obviously very wrong.

An independent investigation into Forest Service management of the Acorn fire is badly needed, and time is of the essence. The longer the span of time between the fire and the investigation, the less accurate memories will become. Also, we are probably still facing at least two months during which fire conditions will remain extreme.

The problems which concern us are not unique to Alpine County — they are common throughout the Sierra. Concerns over Forest Service management practices have been voiced for years both here and in neighboring communities and counties. Many people here are convinced that the Forest Service is incapable of carrying out its obligation of protecting property and lives, not because of lack of dedication on the part of on-the-line firefighters, but because of middle- and upper-level policies, and bureaucratic apathy and incompetence. And we feel that the situation is growing steadily worse.

JOHN BENNETT,
Supervisor,
District 3,
Board of Supervisors,
Alpine County.

Markleeville.

9-1787 We need some normalcy

"What we need now is some normalcy again," said Dave Kirby, owner of Woodfords Station. "Summers tend to be stressful for us up here and this summer was particularly so. I'm glad Labor Day is over. Maybe things will settle down a bit. We need to get back to our lives."

Dave sighed. July was the best month ever for his five-year business. It was a real boon following on the heels of his worst winter ever. Then came July 29 and the Woodfords fire.

Dave sees it all, sitting at the crossroads of Highways 88 and 89, serving coffee daily to a crowd of regulars. He's a warm and personable man who runs a solid business — open 11 hours a day, seven days a week. He sails through Alpine County's social and political cliques unscathed, independent and liked by most. His business invites the sharing of news and gossip but, he said, "I mainly listen."

Dave heard a lot about the Woodfords fire over the counter. It was all anybody talked about during August.

"The Forest Service didn't have the guts to stand up and admit they might have made some mistakes, that they were sorry and they'd make amends to those who suffered financial loss as a result of the fire."

The people at Woodfords would have suffered less if they could have had some personal response from the Forest Service, he added. "We're a forgiving bunch of people."

According to Dave, residents aren't going to let the issue drop. They are making changes in the way things are which is a positive step for the community. And, he notes, most of them are going to rebuild.

Kirby had other things to

Letter from Alpine

by HEIDI HOPKINS

business. His wife Lynda was seriously injured last October in a head-on collision with a drunk driver. The family has spent the past year working with Lynda in her struggle to regain her former health. After a year of therapy and personal determination Lynda is back on her feet and will probably resume her work at Caesar's Tahoe sometime next month.

It was a joy watching Dave and Lynda dance together at Sorensen's birthday party last Sunday.

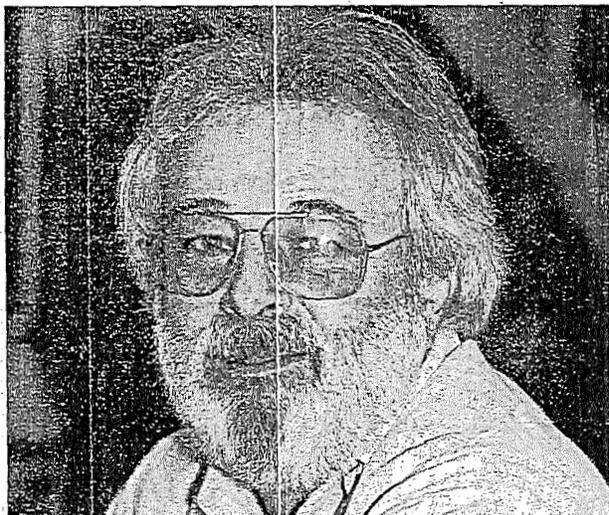
"Tenacity," Dave called it. "You see it in the plants that are starting to sprout back after the fire. You see it in the people who are beginning to talk about their futures again."

The county was dealt another blow this September with the death of Leah Dawn Matlack following a car accident in the Carson Valley last week.

"She always was smiling," said resident Marie Bravo of the 23-year-old Grovers Hot Springs lifeguard. "This community can't afford to lose people like that."

Leah's friends are planting a tree in her honor.

I hope things settle down. It has been a stressful summer. Maybe we can look forward to fine fall colors and some rain.



DAVE KIRBY

Small things considered

CHECKING OUT THE COMPETITION. Looking through the daily newspapers that cover Douglas County, I came across the following headlines in stories about the school district's recent parent survey: In the South Lake Tahoe newspaper last Friday (Sept. 11) — "Douglas schools get an 'A'; Survey respondents say they're happy with quality of education."

Two days later, a story based on the same survey, appeared in the Carson City newspaper with this headline — "Parents flunk Douglas County educators."

You can find our story on the survey elsewhere in today's

paper.

...
THE GRASS IS ALWAYS GREENER. A trip to Apple Hill is always dangerous. That mountainside community, made up of some of the friendliest people in the world, seems like the idyllic refuge from the workaday world.

Many of those who have made their homes there work "real" jobs most of the year, tending their apple orchards when they can. Then they spend a hectic fall selling their apples, juice, crafts and baked goods (some simply marvelous concoctions, like a sour cream apple pie or an apple cheesecake, both of which are out of this world) at retail in mostly small (though occa-

sionally very large) bake shops to the ever-growing crowds that seek a respite on the cool hillsides.

It may even be a better getaway than Carson Valley; the folks there certainly appreciate visitors more.

But it's still the farmer's life, a bigger gamble than a slot machine in Nevada — in farming you get but one pull on the handle each year. If "early freeze" comes up on the reels, you're out of luck.

Not to worry this year. The Apple Hill folks claim they've hit the jackpot — a big crop, large apples and lots of sugar. Best in recent memory, they say.

Taste for yourself. It's a 1½-2 hour drive to Apple Hill, just this side of Placerville on U.S. 50.

...
UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES. It's open season on

the U.S. Forest Service. Already under fire for allegedly letting the Woodfords blaze get out of hand last month, the Forest Service also has been the target of Douglas County commissioners' guns fairly regularly this year.

Most recently that consisted of refusing to take property at Lake Tahoe purchased by the Forest Service off the tax roll. That won't make much difference to the Forest folks, who aren't going to pay property tax bills regardless of what Douglas County commissioners say.

Besides, the loss of property from the county's tax roll isn't the Forest Service's fault. It is national policy, reaffirmed on several occasions, to take land in the Lake Tahoe area out of private ownership. The legislatures of Nevada and California have stated that policy; so have the federal

courts; so did Congress and the President as recently as 1980, when they approved the Santini-Burton Act; and so have the voters of Nevada as recently as just last year.

On the other hand, the commissioners' action last week will affect someone: Two property owners who paid their taxes in advance and then sold land to the Forest Service will not be able to get refunds they were due (albeit small ones) because the commissioners refused to approve them.

...
INTENDED CONSEQUENCES. Also the target of the commissioners' big guns is the East Fork Swimming Pool District.

That's nothing new. Even people in Clark County are mad at the Valley pool district.

A couple of the commissioners have complained from Day 1 of the pool project,

although they on several occasions gave up opportunities to drive the project in whatever direction they wished.

They've argued all along that the pool project should be treated just like any other project in the county, regardless of the cost to taxpayers.

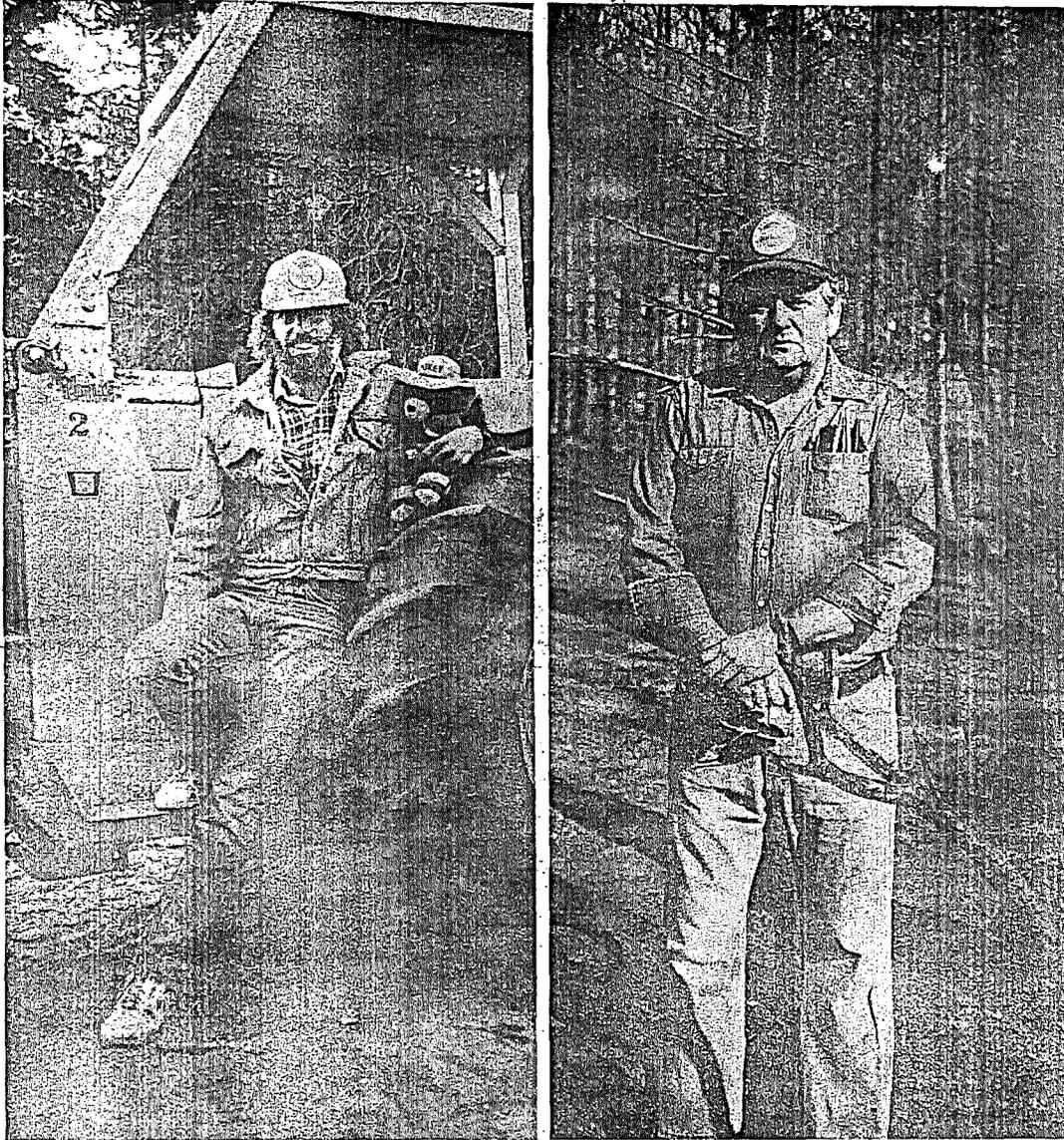
Pool trustees have not come crying to the commissioners, although they have at times grumbled elsewhere about some of the expensive work the county has forced them to undertake.

So they asked for a little help from the commissioners. They were turned down, rightly in my book, but the anger with which the rejection was offered suggests some deep feelings that go beyond the details of the project.

Commissioner Mike Fischer suggested a joint meeting to get grievances out in the open. It's not a minute too soon.

THE T A H O E READER

Sept. 1987



John Cassidy, once accused of starting last year's Fredricksburg Fire, and Woodfords Volunteer Fire Chief, David Zellmer, claim that last month's devastating 'Acorn Fire' didn't have to happen. Politicians are posturing, the U.S. Forest Service continues its investigation and those of us who live in forests and wildlands panic at the first sign of smoke.

The Politics of Fire

Everyday, life begins in Woodfords, California (population 150) at the Woodfords Station, a sort of coffee shop and not-so-general store. Over 300 baseball caps hang from the rafters, a cup of coffee is fifty cents and the *Sacramento Bee*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and the *Nevada Appeal* are sold along with the monthly *Alpine Enterprise*, which is Alpine County's own publication.

At the counter sit the locals: Older men whose faces are lined from years of exposure to the blazing sun and freezing cold, younger men with long hair and beards, women in business suits stopping for a cup before the drive to Tahoe or Carson, Native Americans who rarely indulge in gossipy camaraderie, two lesbian lovers. They are all here, the threads of varying colors and textures which comprise the fabric of Alpine, California's most sparsely populated county.

David Kirby, a man with silvering beard and hair, a slight paunch and a preoccupied manner, pours coffee behind the counter and takes customer's checks at the cash register near the front door. He is, like many of the long-term residents, a member of the local volunteer fire department.

The television over the counter broadcasts an aerial video of the blackened hills which have officially been termed the 'Acorn Fire.' As the camera pans the area of Woodfords, the counter-sitters slowly shake their heads in disgust.

The screen door creaks open and a young man with close-cropped hair, black laced boots, dark green trousers and a lighter green t-shirt walks in. When he is given a cup of coffee, he grasps it with both hands and drinks it quickly. One by one the counter-sitters turn to stare at the young man sitting at the farthest table.

At Woodfords Station the upper echelon of the social strata is represented by a seat at the counter. When a non-local walks in, there is a tacit communication that they are to sit at the tables, and that they will be served in good time. Locals come first.

Up drive the Hertz rentals and Bay Area BMWs, and in walk the Reebok-ed tourists with their styled hair and twenty-five dollar T-shirts. They sit at the tables and you can almost see them deliberately absorb the local color. They are in the country and it is oh so *fresh*.

The tourists sense the discomfort of the young man dressed in green, the tension in the air is palpable, a young woman in a "Big Ten" school sweatshirt captures it all in her journal. Looking over her shoulder one reads, "... the back of their necks are sunburnt and that must be where the term 'redneck' originated."

The young man takes a dollar bill from his pocket, folds it neatly and sets his cup on top of it. He leaves. The conversations at the counter resume. A man in a sport shirt asks Dave Kirby, "Do you take American Express?"

One of the older men and one of the younger men are sitting side by side, each wearing green and white caps which read 'Woodfords Volunteer Fire Department.' They watch as the young man gets into his green, U.S. Forest Service truck.

The Politics of Fire

The first news reports were melodramatic and coyly insensitive, trying to capture the pyro-drama unfolding at the California-Nevada border. Camera crews closed in on residents sifting through the burnt rubble of their homes, hoping to catch a teary-eyed woman clutching a fragment of china. They succeeded and the whole nation watched.

Bold headlines screamed "27 Homes Destroyed, 6,500 Acres Blackened, State of Emergency Declared..."

But as the ash settled, as electricity and telephone service were restored, as highways were reopened and evacuated residents were allowed to return to their homes the headlines were more sobering, "Residents, Forest Service Swap Charges,

the area's third major fire in three years; a total of 30,000 plus acres of wildland have been destroyed.

Locals call last month's fire the 'Woodfords Fire;' U.S. Forest Service officials call it the 'Acorn Fire' (a reference to the canyon in which the fire is thought to have originated). Whatever it's called it cost reportedly cost 1.5 million dollars to contain the blaze, 5 million dollars in property was destroyed. Crews totalling 1,500 individuals were brought in from 6 western states and 250 residents were evacuated.

Chief Zellmer claims that the U.S. Forest Service displayed poor judgement in the early stages of the fire. He gives a detailed account using his department's radio dispatch log and information

to the California Department of Forestry (CDF) which contracts with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) at 3.2 million dollars annually, as part of a 5 year contract. In turn, the USFS contracts with the BLM to help it with fire suppression. On the morning of the fire, a BLM truck happened to be at Woodfords.

"During this time," Zellmer continues, "I had five, six, seven; seven, I think, firefighters at the scene ready to go—shovels and back pump (five gallon container carried on the back with a hand-operated pump) in hand. We were ready, and numerous times my personnel asked the Forest Service, 'Hey, what can we do? Let us help.' They said, 'No, this is a classic textbook situation. We've got a rocky bluff right here, we've got the river right here and there's no wind, no breeze.

"Also at this time, my people kept saying alright, let's go up and put it out and take care of it that way.

"They were telling us that they had it under control, that they didn't want the volunteers up around the point of ignition because they were afraid we would stomp on evidence in case it was man made.

"Helsel told Vietch the volunteers were not needed; to go home. Exactly 59 minutes after the fire was first reported, at 12:31PM, we were told by Gary Helsel, that there was smoke over in Mesa Vista [a residential subdivision]. So my people went over to check it out. We didn't know if it was smoke from this fire or if it was another fire. My people checked the area, we did see some smoke, but there were no flames. At 12:55PM my engine was back in the barn at Woodfords; that's an hour and 23 minutes from alarm, to back to the barn.

"Then at 1:10PM, 15 minutes later, Toiyabe National Forest dispatch called all units in Alpine County to secure any of the volunteer fire departments. In other words, tell them to go home; they are not needed.

"At 2:24PM we were told to roll and stand by at Crystal Springs for structure protection and at 2:27PM we come out of the barn rolling. At 2:33PM I called for mutual aid."

Zellmer emphasizes that during the first two hours of the fire, his department was told on two occasions by USFS personnel to go home.

"The first hours are where most of the controversy is," Zellmer sighs. "After that it was total confusion."

Although the USFS has not been particularly forthcoming about the fire, (claiming that the "investigation is ongoing") they have released statements defending their actions.

Jim Nelson, supervisor of the Toiyabe National Forest has stated: "Our review indicated that our judgement calls were correct. I didn't see how any homes could have been saved. The pumper and the volunteers wouldn't have been useful on the steep slopes."

Jerry Snow, public information officer for the USFS, stated: "We put everything that we had on the fire. We didn't have the crews and we didn't have the people. One reason some homes survived while others perished," Snow said, "was God didn't mean for some of them to burn."

He blamed dry brush and highly flammable shrubbery next to homes for igniting structures. But Zellmer counters that several of the homes which burned had vegetation totally cleared away and it was simply the heat of the fire which

caused them to burn.

Terry Randolph of Toiyabe National Forest stated, "I feel pretty bad about the loss of homes, but I'm proud we were able to save 103. It's normal procedure when guys get on the fire to make a judgement of whether it's a volunteer-type fire or a Forest Service fire. This was on a cliff with seven to ten mile per hour winds. We didn't know it would kick up to 35 mile per hour winds. The weather changed."

The Reader's initial interview with Fire Chief Zellmer took place over lunch at Sorensen's Resort in Hope Valley. John Brissenden, the proprietor of the resort says, "Contrary to the Forest Service, who doesn't live here, we know

One reason some homes survived while others perished was God didn't mean for some of them to burn."

—Jerry Snow, Public Information Officer for the U.S. Forest Service

which way the wind blows and it blows hard every afternoon. When they have a Forest Service person who lives here for 15 years, there may be some trust in the community."

An area across from Crystal Springs Road, approximately 200 yards up a canyon incline has been determined as the point of ignition for the fire. It is the spot Zellmer spoke of earlier.

Presumably, the Forest Service has taped off the area in order to conduct their investigation. Early reports blame the start of the fire on "human negligence."

But all that seems beside the point. All parties agree (tourists, Woodfords Volunteer Fire Department personnel, U.S. Forest Service personnel) that when the fire first broke out, it was confined to an area of approximately 24 square feet.

Zellmer and his personnel contend that had they been permitted to climb to the area, they could have extinguished the fire with their shovels and back pumps before the afternoon winds started up. The locals knew the winds would soon begin to gust down canyon as they do almost every afternoon.

"If anybody had gone up there, I don't care what kind of hat he wore, it could have been stopped while it was still a small fire," he says. "It was something like 34 to 36 minutes before they had one person up there and we're talking only 200 yards.

Lyle Smith, a retired Forest Supervisor, Toiyabe National Forest (he was with the U.S. Forest Service for 34 years) claims that he has observed the Forest Service consistently institute policies in the past 10 to 15 years that alienate it further from the community. "When we were fighting fires we never had any days like this," Smith said. "When we hit a fire, we hit it with everything we had."

Smith went on to contend that federal agencies' actions are, more often than not,



Reader Photo

John Cassidy: Federal charges filed against him for starting the Fredrickburg fire have been dismissed

Volunteer: Feds Let Tiny Fire Grow, Fire chief Calls for 'Acorn' Probe...

Inadvertently, Woodfords Volunteer Fire Chief David Zellmer has become a media star. He is quick to point out that he has been interviewed by 40 different media, from major networks to the *New York Times*. He has also learned to spell his last name carefully, and to display an adeptness with the press.

But unlike most individuals who deal with the news media, Chief Zellmer is not a diplomat. He is certainly not a politician; he is, simply put a resident of Alpine County since 1955 who speaks his mind.

"You bet your ass I'm bitter," Zellmer says. "I live with these people. I work with these people. I socialize with these people. They're all my friends. Their kids and my kids were raised together."

The wildland fire which started on July 29 eventually blackened 6,600 acres and destroyed 28 homes in 6 days. It was

gathered from interviews with volunteers who responded to the fire.

"The fire call came down at 11:32 AM," Zellmer begins. "There was a tourist driving down Woodfords canyon on State Route 89, eastbound. Skip Vietch (assistant sheriff) Gary Helsel (U.S. Forest Service, middle management person) and Bob Tucker (deputy sheriff) were standing near Woodfords Auto just talking. The tourist stopped and said, "Did you guys know there was a fire up the road?"

"They were only three or four minutes away. As Skip was leaving Woodfords, he called dispatch and this is where the 11:32 came in. Woodfords Volunteer Fire Department (WVFD) was dispatched to the fire. They responded immediately and right behind them came the BLM [Bureau of Land Management] engine. And WVFD was immediately told that this was a Forest Service wildland fire and they would take care of it," Zellmer explains.

The responsibility for fire protection on private land in Alpine County belongs

based on a fear of liability rather than a sense of the need for action.

"Over the years I think the philosophy of the Forest Service fire personnel has become that they are God," Chief Zellmer says. "They're the only professionals.

They indicate this all the time. Right here, telling us to go home. 'Them guys, they're just a bunch of mountain guys; they don't know what they're doing. We don't want them around.'

"They get to thinking that their helicopters and bombers [airplanes which drop chemical retardant] can do it all. All of a sudden they don't need us grunts. I still got a hoe, a shovel, the pack on my back... I'm sure there's a need for infrared and helicopters, but there's still a need for us guys to do the hand work," he concludes with exasperation.

Zellmer quotes USFS personnel as stating that the fire, while it was in its early stages, was a textbook situation that they intended to use as a 'training exercise.' "Go ahead," he says, "and tell those guys whose 27 homes are nothing more than black char... that's a hell of a raining exercise."

Many residents claim that they were prevented from saving their homes by law enforcement. They also claim that in many instances USFS personnel refused to help fight structure fires because they were not trained to do so or because they had not been given orders to do so by their supervisors.

"We had a lot of problems once the fire got rolling," Zellmer said. "Our mutual aid people came in from Reno, Carson City, Truckee Meadows, East Fork, Tahoe... Those guys would come in and say, 'Chief, what do you need, where do you want us?' I'd say, 'Freelance. This is total chaos. Pick something. Do something.'

"The only people I can honestly say

You don't fight fire with fire on a windy day. It's that simple."
—John Cassidy

that refused me [help] was U.S. Forest Service. They stood right there and said, 'Find my supervisor.' I can honestly say that on a stack of bibles," Zellmer says.

The Fire Chief cited incident after incident of a lack of cooperation between himself and the USFS. "There were two 4,000 gallon Forest Service tankers sitting at the Diamond Valley School [used as a staging area]," he says. "I was running out of water at Crystal Springs. We were holding our own, but I could see it was starting to get us.

"It had already melted the reflectors off the trucks, all the hose bed covers were burnt and gone and the paint was dripping down the side of the trucks.

"One of the sheriff's deputies goes over to the school and says, 'Hey, the Chief needs some water at Crystal Springs and the guys say, 'Sure.' They start up the trucks and a Forest Service guy comes waving his hand and says, 'F—the Chief, he ain't running this.' " Zellmer concludes.

On the issue of backfires (a situation where controlled fires are intentionally set to remove fuel in the path of an incoming fire), Zellmer becomes clearly eloquent.

"A canyon is not the greatest place to

put a back fire; especially with winds that are parallel with the canyon. Whenever you set a backfire you have to have some sort of line; either man made or natural. And most of all" says the Chief, "you've got to have some kind of crew to back up on the other side because the wind will blow the embers across.

"They backfired here on Crystal Springs road with winds in excess of 35 miles per hour. There was no line except for some roadway and there were no engines for back up. Two Forest Service people came in, torched it and got in their pick up and left.

"The fire went across the pavement, got into a dense growth of manzanita, created its own wind and that's what went through Woodfords and Mesa Vista.

"The next day after the fire had burned through," the Chief recalls, "they came back into Crystal Springs and on the south canyon wall there was nothing behind those houses but nice vegetation. They had bombed [dropped chemical retardant] and even established a line up on the ridge. They came in the next day and backfired that whole ridge. It's one big charred hill that never needed to be burned in the first place."

The Acorn Fire is the fourth in a series of annual fires that have plagued Alpine County. Last year there was the Fredricksburg Fire which was smaller in scale (burning 3,400 acres), but no less controversial.

At the center of the controversy is a 37-year-old man named John Cassidy. Cassidy who was then and is now a member of the Woodfords Volunteer Fire Department, is a native San Franciscan who came to Alpine County 12 years ago for its tranquility.

At the time the Fredricksburg Fire (1986) started, Cassidy was operating his back hoe near the area of origin. Federal investigators charged him with starting the fire because the machinery he was using allegedly did not have a spark arrester.

Cassidy maintains that he saw the fire start, but that it was some 300 feet away and upwind from where he was working. Several witnesses claimed that at least seven vehicles were in the vicinity (including a motorcycle) as well as children at play.

Nonetheless, Federal charges were brought against Cassidy (they have since been dismissed) and he endured nearly a year of attention from both the Federal and State government personnel. He is still charged with failure to use a spark arrester on grass-covered land under the California Public Resources Code, a misdemeanor.

"Just look at this John Cassidy deal," Chief Zellmer says with characteristic Alpine County loyalty. "He ran around here for years, making a living, doing a good job, the best he could, without a spark arrester on his tractor. He didn't know he needed one. He's done work for the state, the Federal government and the county. They never told him he needed one and they hired him to do the work.

"Then they think he may be the one who started the Fredricksburg Fire. But in years past they never said a word about a spark arrester. So where does the onus fall on something like this?" Zellmer asks.

John Cassidy leans into you as he talks, and jabs the air with a Camel filter to make a point. He always makes direct eye contact and he possesses a wit which

is generally directed at himself. He refers to himself as the 'Fredricksburg Firebug' and tells of a time when the volunteers were discussing getting jackets made up and he picked the name 'Sparky.'

But the humor is there to ease the pain. John Cassidy who came to Alpine County to be alone, has been deeply scarred by the Fredricksburg ordeal.

He is currently clearing a site for a new subdivision on Crystal Springs Road, directly across and downwind from the origin of the Acorn Fire. "When I saw the smoke" he says, "I thought, oh no, another one's starting near me."

He was (along with Dave Kirby, Bob Tucker, Skip Vietch, Jason Cook and Bobby Stephens) one of the initial volunteers to the 11:32 A.M. dispatch on



Flander Photo

David Zellmer, Woodfords Volunteer Fire Chief

July 29. Along with his fellow residents he fought the fire for its duration.

Cassidy tells of a time shortly after the fire was brought under control. "We were all on the ground just exhausted. And this reporter from the *Record-Courier* comes up and starts asking us questions. She gets to me and I tell her I don't want to talk about it. She keeps pressing and Zellmer interrupts and tells her who I am. She looks back at me," Cassidy laughs and says, "You're still here?"

The story is illustrative of something that frustrates Alpine County locals and baffles outsiders. The residents of this community possess a sense of loyalty that borders on self-righteousness. And that loyalty is based on trust and honesty.

Cassidy's fellow residents rallied around him throughout his ordeal, and he fought the Fredricksburg Fire as well as the Acorn Fire. Of course he did; he lives there.

In a place where a sense of community is strong, the fabric becomes more tightly woven in times of tragedy.

"What really bothers me" Cassidy says

"Is the older people. They can't start over. And this fire didn't have to happen. On a windy day, you don't fight fire with fire. It's that simple."

The Alpine County Chamber of Commerce has set up a relief fund for local residents. Hoping to raise a total of \$50,000, the committee has already raised \$27,000 (mostly in local contributions) and distributed \$10,000.

California Lt. Gov. Leo McCarthy declared a state of emergency, thereby giving residents who lost their homes a tax break when rebuilding, as well as the possibility of obtaining low interest federal loans for reconstruction.

Both Senator Chic Hecht of Nevada and Representative Norm Shumway of California have done a lot of posturing

about the possibility of pushing for an investigation of the fire, but no really strong commitments have been made (Alpine County has approximately 700 voters).

"The beauty of it's gone," Chief Zellmer says. "And in our lifetime, we'll never see it again.

"In my office I don't have no big diplomas or anything that makes me on the same level as 'experts.' I don't even pretend to be. But we at Woodfords and Markleeville, we know how to get out there on our trucks and put water where it's needed," Zellmer continues. "It may not be according to the book, but it's a survival thing to us—not just a job and that makes us work harder."

—Don Regis-Bilar

Additional Research: Candace Kelly, Lake Tahoe; R. Alan Pryor, Lake Tahoe and Alpine County

Something is wrong in the forest. A rising undercurrent of restless worry pervades...*danger*. The smoke fills the air as fear spreads like the wildfire behind it.

Run—run fast, get out, where is out? The doe springs off as panic rises leaving the fawn confused by the noise and heat and the live coals that burn her tender hooves. *Run—the pain is great but the fear is stronger.*

And the fire burns. The lungs gasp for air but smoke fills them. Panic beats with the rhythm of her pounding heart. Skin on fire, delicate ears nearly burned away, eyes blinded by smoke, muzzle bleeding—the fawn's final collapse is near.

Then, a shift in the wind, and the fire burns on a course around her. Some of the panic dies, smothered in exhaustion, but the pain and thirst go on and on.

So it would seem for one small survivor of the recent Woodfords fire. When a fire rushes through their domain, wild animals only want to get away, but they don't know how. According to Cheryl Millham, Director of Lake Tahoe Wildlife Refuge Care, "Wild animals do not think. The fires throw them into a panic and they only want out."

Cheryl and her husband maintain the wildlife refuge in their home. It is an independent, non-profit, volunteer organization whose function is to raise and rehabilitate and release orphaned or injured wildlife. Although they had no official capacity to cross into the active fire zone, they stood ready to receive the injured survivors of the fire referred to them by the Department of Forestry and the fire fighters.

Cheryl says that birds have the best chance in a fire. Most can fly high above the flames to safety. However, the ones left in the nest don't stand a chance and July is nesting season for many of our native species. Small mammals scatter and run. They don't have the sense to burrow below the fire and are often caught within the flames. The ones that do go underground still face the possibility of suffocating as smoke fills their holes.

Deer and domestic animals can outrun the fire, but in their panic, they are often trapped by the flames. They have no directional sense and have been known to run straight into the path of a fire. One fire fighter reported seeing a young buck do just that; he only made it about 50 feet or so before he dropped and was consumed by the blaze.

FIRE BURNS MORE THAN FOREST AND SCRUB Wildlife in the Flames

Cheryl reminds us that, "The main thing is to be aware that animals *can* live through a fire, but many have injuries that need medical care and should not be picked up..." Anyone seeing a sick or injured animal may call Cheryl Millham at 577-CARE.

Elwood Davis, Fish and Game Commissioner for Alpine County, estimates that five percent of the deer herd in the immediate area (roughly 20 animals) were wiped out. Most affected were the fawns, though it is hard to say how many. July is the heaviest fawning month, so there were many fawns to fall victim to the flames. Very young fawns can easily get separated from their mothers in the confusion, and those that survive are easy prey for predators, the dogs and coyotes that are part of the natural clean-up crew.

One such orphan was found by a resident of the fire area and taken to the wildlife refuge. The two month old fawn had extensive burns to her ears and some parts of her body. Her hooves were badly burned. The hardened outside covering was totally burned away by the live coals leaving the tender flesh exposed and prone to infection. She was also having difficulty breathing due to smoke inhalation.

Much loving care and feeding were necessary to bring the tiny creature back from death's door. But Cheryl Millham is happy to report that the little doe is doing very well. Half of her ear tips that were burned will never recover, but her hooves are growing back (much like a fingernail would) and the infection caused by the burns is gone. Although kept in a special area on carpet donated by a local merchant, soon she will join the other fawns at the refuge until late September. At that time, they will all be released together into the wild. The delay on their relocation is to allow hunting season to end so that the animals will have as much a chance as is possible.

Their chances may be slim, indeed, for the major effect of the fire will be felt by the deer this winter. The area of the fire was approximately 6800 acres. Of that, about 3000 acres was prime deer feed.

The sage and bitter brush that is the natural winter range for deer has been burned away. This loss, when added to the loss incurred by the Fredricksburg fire of last year (that borders the Woodfords fire area) has had the cumulative effect of nearly wiping out most of the deer winter range. It will be many years before the brush returns. This will cause great hardship to the deer. Those that do not move on to other feeding areas will starve.

Rick Jameson, the fellow in charge of the committee for rehabilitation of the fire area and Forest Hydrologist for the Toiyobe National Forest, paints a bleak picture for the deer herd. He says, "Although some consideration is given to the wildlife, there is more concern about erosion control than deer winter range. The deer could possibly be left out on a limb because emergency burn funds must go to re-establish ground cover. This ground cover may not necessarily be what deer prefer for winter feeding."

The deer have come back to the fire area, so says Elwood Davis. They have

been observed scrounging around for small islands of greenery. The Fish and Game Department has dropped off hay to bolster their decreased food supply. Mr. Davis has hopes that some local funds will be found to provide hay for the deer this winter when times get really tough. He says, "This will be a necessary measure to take some of the load off the ranchers because the starving deer will be into their hay reserves."

Even now, the returned deer are foraging along the fringe area of the fire, eating all available plants and flowers in the yards of those residents spared by the fire. Historically, deer, even elk, almost always return to their home ground after a fire, even though there is no food available and they are forced to forage in other areas. Some misguided instinct keeps the deer on the barren waste that was once their home, leaving them to face the ravages of winter and possible starvation.

This writer can only hope that the care and kindness extended to save one small fawn from the effects of the fire will not be wasted.

—P. J. Wilson

Ms. Wilson, who is originally from Saranac Lake, New York, has resided at South Shore for six years.

A Forest May Not Re-establish Itself

It's Not Second Nature

My first visit to Alpine Country following the Woodford's (Acorn) Fire was a very reluctant one. Having seen portions of other recent fires in that area as well as many other Eastside Fires (east of the Sierra Nevada crest) in the last forty years, I thought I knew what to expect.

I was wrong.

What I saw was far worse and much more disturbing than any previously encountered, at least in this part of the west. Obviously, part of the reason for this was the losses incurred directly by the people involved—the real and personal property destroyed.

While these losses cannot be discounted, I was vividly reminded of an old fire prevention poster (produced, I believe by Caterpillar Tractor circa 1950's) depicting a logger obviously exhausted and dirty from fire-fighting, leaning against his Cat with an area of burned forest in the background. The caption read: "Did you ever see a forest die?"

Fires in other areas may cause greater losses but other conditions—soil, climate, species, etc.—permit or even encourage nature and man to bring them back in a reasonable length of time (with varying degrees of both difficulty and success). The conditions are then at least similar to what existed before.

But this ability of nature and man to re-establish an area does *not* exist with most of the eastside areas.

To the east of the Sierra Nevada lies the area known as the Great Basin—a desert by definition—and a precise line or boundary between what is desert and/or what is non-desert is difficult, if not impossible, to draw; vegetation, precipitation, watershed and other factors yield differing lines. Any area adjacent to such vastly different geographic features would be in a state of transition.

The overall trend in the Great Basin is towards drier conditions with or without man's activities. If this is true, then does it not follow that the desert may be expanding albeit very slowly and that any area changed in a major way—such as by fire—may not return or be returned to its former condition...at least not in our lifetimes?

Save your pictures.
Did you ever see a forest die?

—R. Alan Pryor

Mr. Pryor is a registered professional forester in California and Maine. He has taught Forest Technology in California community colleges and been a forest consultant at many locations in the west.

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The Record Courier 9/24/87

Hecht calls for probe of Acorn fire

U.S. Sen. Chic Hecht of Nevada Monday called for a new investigation into recent forest fires in the Eastern Sierra after a meeting with top U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management officials.

Hecht made the request after meeting with Forest Service chief Dale Robertson and BLM Director Robert Burford in his Washington, D.C., office.

He called the meeting following his "Chat with Chic" tour Aug. 25 in Minden, where he heard complaints from Nevadans involved in the recent Acorn Fire in Alpine County just south of Gardnerville. Some

Nevadans lost property in the California fire and complained that local firefighting efforts were hampered by federal "bureaucracies."

Others said the federal agency botched the initial attack on the July 29 blaze by using inappropriate backfires before crews were ready and not calling in air tankers early on.

The agency leaders also heard charges that some firefighters stood by while homes went up in flames.

Some of Hecht's aides toured the Woodfords fire-damaged area Aug. 25.

"Many of these people lost

everything they had," Hecht said in a news release. "They have legitimate concerns that serious mistakes may have cost them their homes — mistakes that must be prevented in the future." Burford and Robertson agreed to the new investigation and told Hecht that any mistakes in policy or execution would be remedied, according to the news release.

Also attending the Monday meeting in Hecht's office was State Sen. Dean Rhoads of Tuscarora, Nev., chairman of the Legislative Committee on Public Lands.

Rhoads asked what remedies

would be available to Nevadans who lost their homes in California, either low-interest guaranteed loans or government liability for damage from fires that may have started on government lands. The agency spokesman reportedly said both alternatives would be considered.

Hecht also asked that all burned acreage be rehabilitated and reseeded to prevent erosion and future fires.

"If federal funding limits become an impediment to any of these absolutely vital programs, I will do everything in my power as a U.S. senator to clear the way for them," Hecht said.

Hollywood comes to Markleeville

Several local Alpiners made Hollywood history last week in the "on-location" shooting of CBS's new TV series, High Mountain Rangers.

The Alpine County Courthouse was the location for the first episode in the series which will be aired beginning in January. Locals Judy Farnsworth, Bob Watkins, and two Alpine County visitors Harry and Tommy Fryed were hired off the streets to assume various walk-in roles in "The Trial of Jesse Hawkes." Deputies Rick Stevens and John Crawford were hired to play themselves. For \$75 a day, it wasn't bad work.

The Alpine County Courthouse never saw such bustling! The

building, whose customary silence is broken only by the hum and swish of quiet office work and the friendly chatting of the county workers, was crowded with people rolling cameras through the halls, untangling the spaghetti of electric cords, calling on their walkie-talkies for an actor, a rehearsal, a take or a coke.

They kept the justice court clerk busy with their requests for signed warrants and other judicial props. ("I'm using different file numbers than we use in the county," explained Justice Court Clerk Linda Helsel with a blush.)

The show is produced and directed by Bear Valley's

Letter from Alpine

by HEIDI HOPKINS

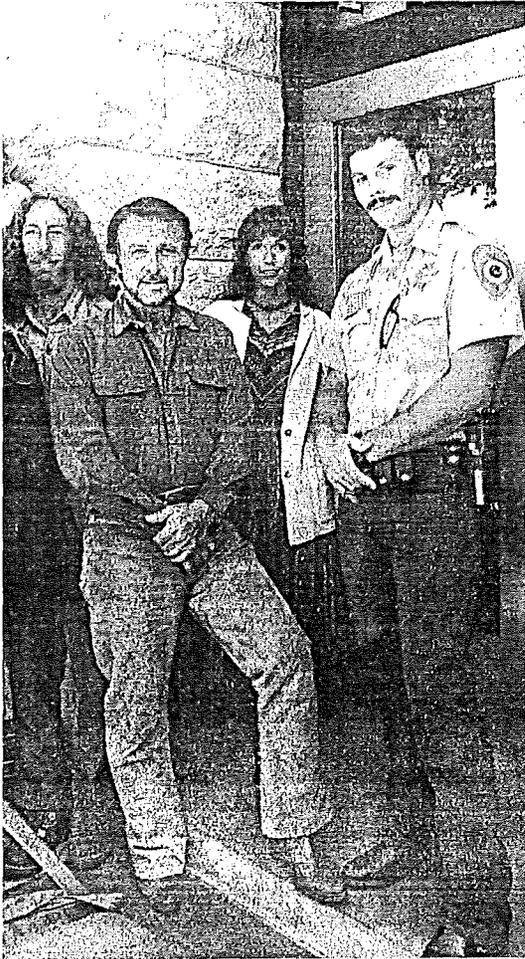
Robert Conrad. He also stars in it along with his two sons, Shane and Christian.

Conrad presented the idea for the show in a film produced last year. Though generally panned by local residents, the producer obviously felt the movie had sufficient merit to warrant a TV series (and sufficient merit to warrant production costs averaging over \$200,000 a day, with five to six working days for each final, hour-long TV show).

The 50 crew members and cast will be based at Lake Tahoe for the next three months to shoot the entire series.

The "rangers" wear skintight grey stretch pants and the actresses all are tall, thin and blond, nothing of which relates to Alpine County or the Sierra. Of course not. This is Hollywood!

Lights, reflecting screens, camera tracks, production vans, intent crews and general mayhem filled the courthouse parking lot for a week, drawing onlookers to Markleeville. The General Store's Bob Rudden reported good business as a result of the filming but, he added, it was hard to provide change for all those \$100 bills.



Local stars in the series are director Robert Conrad, Judy Farnsworth and Rick Stevens. Not shown, John Crawford. For details, see Letter from Alpine. R-C photo

Alpine seeding

due this month

Record Courier 10/11/87

Efforts to plant \$255,000 worth of seed in the Woodfords area is expected to begin in the next two weeks to minimize erosion problems from last summer's Acorn Fire.

Project director Mark Johnson said drilling on private lands to plant about 40,000 pounds of seed should start next week. A contract for aerial drops of seeds in steeper areas should be finalized in the next two weeks, he added.

"We hope to be done with aerial seeding by Oct. 15," Johnson said. "The drilling will take at least 20 days, if the weather is good. We hope to be done with that by the end of October."

The multi-agency effort is being carried out by the California Conservation Corps, Alpine County, the U.S. Forest Service and the California Division of

Forestry. Nevada Division of Forestry inmate crews also will do hand work.

However, the work will not solve all the erosion problems expected in the first year, according to Johnson. Those problems will be even greater if this year's runoff is high or even average, he said.

"If we had all the money in the world, we wouldn't be able to stop all the erosion that will come off the slopes and into the creek," he said. "But once the plants are established, it should really provide some erosion control."

Residents who want to give input on where work is needed can contact Leonard Turnbeaugh of Alpine County at (916) 694-2255.

The Acorn Fire started near Crystal Springs in late July, destroying 24 homes and 6,500 acres, about half private lands and the rest forest lands.

Fire investigators

seek local testimony

Record Courier 10/15/87

An Acorn Fire investigative team is seeking public testimony tomorrow from those who have input or criticism about the way the July 29 blaze was handled.

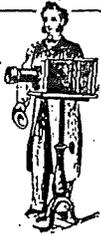
The deadline is Friday, Oct. 16, when the independent team will hear testimony, according to Dolph Frisius, assistant to the Alpine County supervisors.

People interested in talking

with team members can contact Frisius at work (916) 694-2287 or at home (702) 265-2463 Thursday or even Friday for an appointment.

The new investigation was called to address Alpine County residents' concerns that the U.S. Forest Service botched the initial attack on the fire, and claims that homes could have been better protected.

You said it!

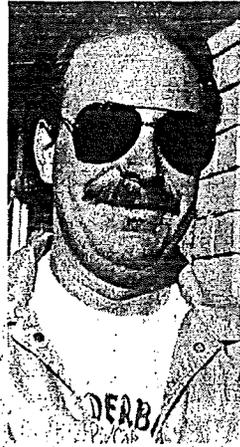


How has the football strike affected you?



KAREN HAMANN
Counselor

My husband, who's a big football fan, gets more projects done around the house.



TOM BINGGELI
Painter

It hasn't whatsoever. I think most wives would appreciate that answer. I guess it's not American to say you don't like football.



KIM SAGERS
Clerk

I enjoy having Sundays with my husband and not have the TV blaring.



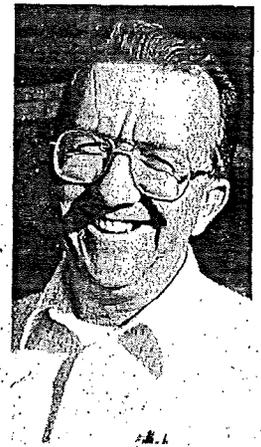
DARIENNE PAINTER
Cook

My husband is a baseball fan, so I don't really care.



SHIRLEY BUNDY
Housewife

I'm angry. I love pro football. I'm not really pro-owner or pro-football, I just miss my football.



DALE BOHLMAN
Postmaster

I'm getting more done around the yard, but I'm going through withdrawals. There's nothing else to do.

The Record Courier 10/11/87

Friends honor Leah Matlack

Over 100 friends from Alpine and Douglas counties joined together on the Hawkins Ranch to honor Leah Matlack who died following a car accident in the Carson Valley.

Letter from Alpine

by HEIDI HOPKINS

Leah had recently moved to the old Hawkins place surrounded by its ancient apple trees and pines. She was carefully fixing up the ramshackle building, chinking the cracks for winter.

She was a lifeguard at Grovers Hot Springs and was known to many of the hot springs "regulars" for her open, friendly manner and warm heart.

Dorothy Betts of Marklee Village said she will always remember Leah leaning over the hot springs fence, watering the wildflowers on the other

side.

"She took good care of things," said Dorothy, who rented her home to Leah for one winter.

The Giglis, often daily users of the hot springs, said that Leah radiated such enthusiasm and love for people that, in turn, everyone responded to her.

Leah's corneas were donated for use by another, something which Gina Gigli found truly appropriate: "Leah walked in beauty. Maybe another will see things as she did."

Seventy-five-year-old Bob Jackson of Markleeville (Leah called him "Hot Springs Bob"), developed a friendship with Leah during a hard time in his life following the death of his wife. Leah was there to greet him when he arrived at the pools. Because of problems with his vision, Bob couldn't always recognize everyone else in the pool. Leah would let him know who was there. If she was not busy herself, she would sit down for a chat.

"She liked people. She loved to hear of their travels," he said.

Leah included Bob in her life. She drove him places when he couldn't drive himself. He'd take her out to dinner and the two would share stories and friendship.

Though a daily user of the hot



LEAH MATLACK

springs, Bob never wore out his welcome with Leah.

"She'd give me a warm, welcoming hello each day as if she hadn't seen me for a month."

"And that's what I think now: When I get to those pearly gates myself, Leah's going to be there with her 'Hello, Bob! Guess who's here!' And she'll tell me all about things."

INVESTIGATORS TO SEEK victims' complaints

Record Courier 10/8/87

An independent review of the July 29 Acorn Fire that destroyed 6,550 acres will be conducted Oct. 15-17.

A team will analyze suppression response and visit residents affected by the fire as well as county officials and firefighting agency members.

The review team will complete its study and issue a report by Oct. 31, according to Forest Service Regional Forester Stan Tixier.

"Members of the community are encouraged to present facts or express their concerns to the review team," Tixier said. "However, you must have an appointment to do so."

Those with input can contact the Alpine County Board of Supervisors at (916) 694-2281 for an appointment.

Members of the review team are Gary Togle, fire specialist for the National Fire Protection Association; Donald Perry, chief of the Santa Barbara County Fire Department; Dick Day, with the California State Department of Forestry; Lowell "Lody" Smith, state forester

with the Nevada State Division of Forestry; and Roy Percival, BLM associate director.

Also on the team will be Dick Bacon, state fire planning and analysis member with the U.S. Forest Service; Kenton Clark, director of fire management for the Pacific Southwest Region; Doug Bird, director of fire management in the Intermountain Region and an Alpine County representative.

Alpine County residents have complained that the U.S. Forest Service botched early firefighting efforts. They claim the agency set inappropriate backfires and did not call in air support early on.

Agency leaders also heard charges that some firefighters stood by while homes went up in flames, claiming they were trained to handle wildland fires, not structure fires.

"We believe that this review will help identify ways to improve cooperative wildfire suppression activities along the Sierra Front, especially where homes are involved," Tixier said.

Lisa Chacon top-ranked in Northern AAA

It should come as no surprise to find the Chacon family's name on top of the Northern Nevada AAA tennis ladder.

Sam Chacon was one of the league's best boys, if not the best, during his four-year varsity career at Douglas High School. He graduated in June, but now his younger sister has stepped up to the top of the girls bracket.

Lisa Chacon is the league's No. 1-ranked girls singles player, a position the sophomore has earned by racking up 36 consecutive victories to date during dual match play.

She extended that streak last week as she beat eight opponents to help the Douglas girls team

win at South Tahoe and Incline. The Tiger girls defeated South Tahoe on Tuesday, 15½-12½, before strolling past Incline on Thursday, 24-4.

"The girls are playing beautifully. They've really started to come around late in the season," reported coach Joan Chacon, whose Tigers are fifth in the Northern AAA standings with a 5-4 record.

In addition to Chacon, juniors Crystal Morrison and Dina Gigli have been consistent performers in singles play this season. Both have experience: Morrison has played No. 1 doubles for Douglas the past two years; Gigli played in the No. 2 singles slot last season and doubles as a

freshman.

Both contributed to last week's wins against South Tahoe and Incline. Morrison beat each of her eight opponents, and Gigli went 3-1 in the two matches.

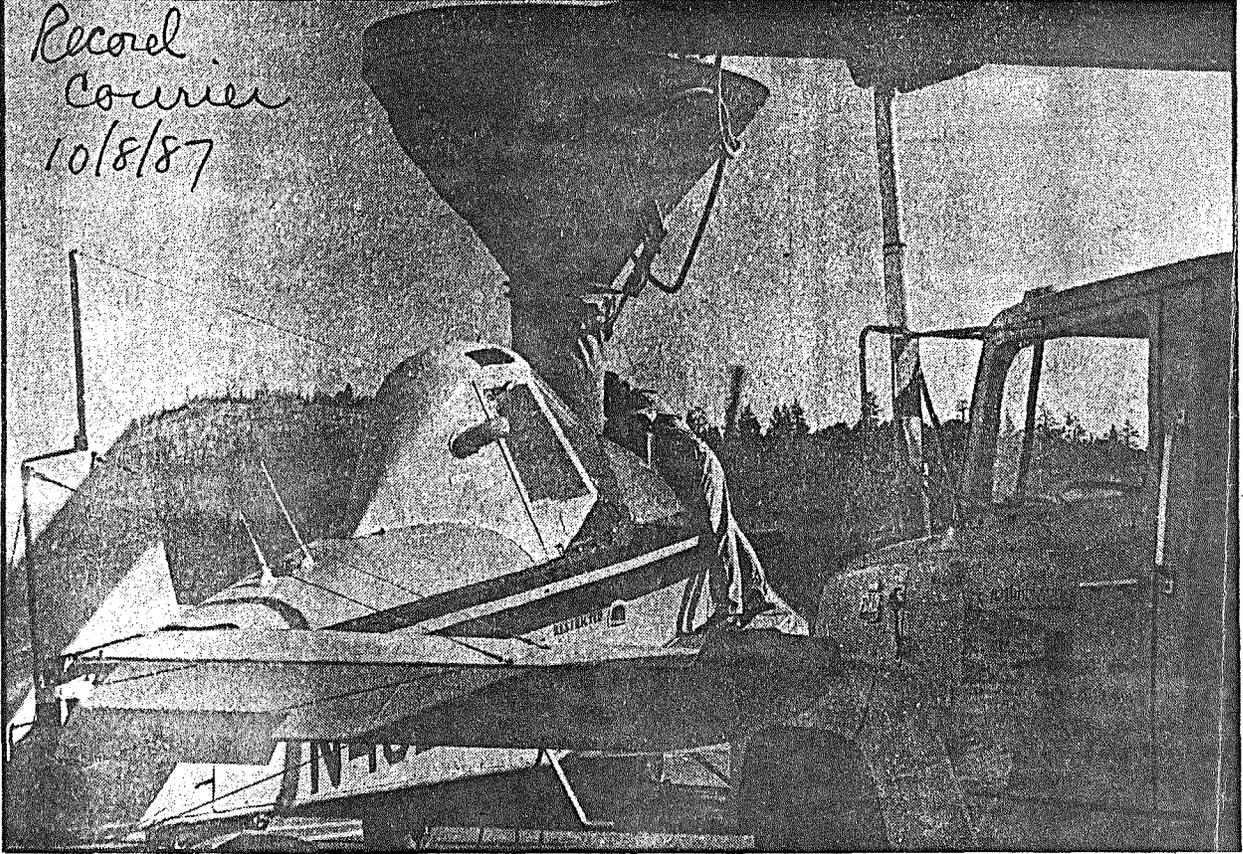
Chacon has come a long way herself. Last year, she compiled a 41-3 record that was fourth best in the league, but then lost in the zone tournament quarterfinals. She has beaten everyone so far this season, including a Sept. 15 win against Manogue's Kerri Garcia, the Northern AAA zone tournament runner-up a year ago.

Chacon boosted her stock last weekend by earning consolation honors at the Northern California Junior Grand Prix Cham-

pionships in Santa Clara. She advanced to the 16-year-old age group semifinals, where she dropped a three-hour marathon to Cory Hughes of Modesto, 1-6, 6-3, 6-4. Chacon came back to beat Jaina Moultrie of Berkeley in the consolation match, a noteworthy win because she had lost to Moultrie in the Nevada State junior tournament finals in August.

Douglas' regular tennis season will come to an end today when the girls team plays host to Hug while the boys squad travels to Hug. They then will have a week off before the Northern AAA zone tournament Oct. 16-17 in Reno.

Record
Courier
10/8/87



FILLING UP. Airplane contractor Gary Dibble helps load grass seeds into an awaiting aircraft. Aerial drops of seeds began Tuesday over higher slopes damaged in last summer's

Acorn Fire. The \$350,000 project should cut down on erosion problems this winter. R-C photo

Alpine reseeding project off to flying start in Sierra

by TREVA ZELLER
Staff writer

Reseeding efforts in Alpine County took off Tuesday with the help of two Turbine Thrust airplanes, carrying seed for aerial drops in the fire-damaged Sierra slopes.

Simultaneously, drilling work to plant seeds began on lower slopes in an effort to cut down on erosion problems expected this year.

"The goal is to reduce erosion in the long run," U.S. Forest Service project director Mark Johnson said.

"There should be real protection by next fall. It would be 7-10 years if we waited for natural vegetation to grow back. This is simply to close the window down to 1-2 years."

Agency officials hired crop duster Gary Dibble for the aerial

work, which took only one day. Drilling is expected to take 20 days if the weather stays good.

Officials are beginning work almost three months after the July 29 Acorn Fire destroyed 6,550 acres and 24 homes in the Woodfords area.

They estimated that 200 structures could be susceptible to wind and water damage with the start of winter storms and the loss of vegetation, which normally slows erosion.

An eminent hazard is blowing dust and ash, and flooding could occur with mud and debris build-up in rivers and streams.

But the biggest foe in rehabilitating the Woodfords area are loose soils, according to Johnson. When different grasses take root, it should prevent winds from blowing the soils against structures, he explained.

Some of the expensive seed —

costing a total of \$256,500 — could take root this fall, according to experts.

Federal and state officials took quicker action following the Acorn Fire because of the many structures in the fire area that could be damaged further by erosion, according to Johnson.

Work on last year's Fredericksburg Fire won't begin until this fall.

"Where the fire occurred this year there are real high winds," Johnson said. "When the winds kick up it can blow particles against a house and rip paint off and damage windows."

At least two homes in the Voight Canyon area are in danger from flooding because of their location, Johnson added. Improvements to 500 feet of stream channel will be completed to protect one home.

Continued to page 6

Alpine: Reseeding underway

Continued from page 1

Congressmen who heard residents complaints about the handling of the Acorn Fire, including Nevada Sen. Chic Hecht, have urged quick reseeded efforts.

However, the rehabilitation work also takes on a different priority when comparing both fires, according to Johnson.

In last summer's fire, more homes are involved, the area's terrain is different and winds are more volatile, he said. And this year's fire damaged more erosive National Forest lands,

he said.

"With the Fredericksburg fire, there was more a mixture of lands and mostly ranchlands." Seeds wouldn't have taken in some of the more rocky terrain damaged in the Fredericksburg fire, Johnson added.

Crews working on the Acorn Fire area will plant mainly perennial seeds, which stay green longer, Johnson said.

Work will not include tree planting because mostly brushland was destroyed, according to Johnson. Enough timber

survived to allow natural regeneration, he added.

Work also will include contour felling and fertilization.

The Soil Conservation Service is funding 80 percent of the project with the Alpine County supervisors and California Division of Forestry providing 20 percent funding on private lands.

Work will be done on 5,110 acres of the 6,550 acres damaged. Total cost of the project is estimated at \$233,000 for the private land and \$110,000 for forest lands.

Record Courier 10/15/87



Top Tiger

Lisa Chacon is Douglas High School's first repeat athlete of the week winner of the fall season. Chacon, a sophomore, earned the recognition by capping a perfect 44-0 Northern Nevada AAA regular

season with wins against Carson and Hug last week. Chacon will be top-seeded in girls singles coming into the Northern AAA tournament this Friday and Saturday in Reno. R-C photo

Review calls for better cooperation

AC 10-22-87

Authorities should make better use of volunteer fire departments and local resources in battling this region's forest fires, a leader of an Acorn Fire investigative team said.

But the U.S. Forest Service, the lead agency handling the July 29 blaze, used appropriate firefighting strategies for the conditions on that day, according to team leader Gary Tokle.

Tokle made the announcement of the team's general findings this week following a three-day review Thursday through Saturday.

More specific findings are expected to be released in a report after Oct. 31. The report will correspond with the findings of Alpine County's own investigation.

It's expected to suggest steps for improving communication among federal, state and local residents involved in fire protec-

tion.

"We're trying to make our report unbiased," said Alpine County Supervisor Don Jardine, a member of the team. "We told everyone we weren't a grand jury looking to hang anyone. We're looking for the facts."

Those who want to place blame for what went wrong during the July 29 blaze may have to look to other investigations being conducted, according to Jardine.

Some fingerprinting may be seen in the county's independent study or by any investigations conducted by those suing the federal government and the Forest Service.

"This was not a witch hunt," Jardine said about the team study. "I was a little surprised to find that some of the things reported as fact were rumors."

As an example, he said some complaints suggested that the

Forest Service and BLM fought over who had jurisdiction at the fire site, which allegedly caused delays.

"There may have been some (argument) but we never heard any hard evidence."

The panel had access to the Forest Service's own investigations into the fire and a preliminary report from Alpine County's investigator, R.L. Byornsen.

Some Alpine County residents have criticized the Forest Service's initial attack on the fire, claiming that authorities spent too much time organizing and not enough time attacking the blaze when it was small.

Other charges were that the Forest Service set improper backfires that expanded the fire instead of stopping it.

Woodford's volunteer fire chief Dave Zellmer said his crews could have put out the fire early

on but members were sent away. In turn, Forest Service defended that decision, saying that the volunteers were not properly equipped to handle a wildland fire in the steep canyon.

In addition, some residents charged that homes could have been better protected by federal firefighters who said they were not trained to handle structure fires.

The 10-member investigative team included federal, state and private representatives who are recognized as authorities in the field of fire management.

About 26 people testified during two days of hearings at Turtle Rock park. They included ranchers, Forest Service and BLM officials, fire experts and local residents.

Residents are seeking greater fire protection from the California Division of Forestry.

Investigators' reports differ slightly on fire response

TREVA ZELLER

Staff writer

Two separate probes into the Acorn Fire disaster found that a lack of communications among agencies led to major problems in the initial attack of the July 29 blaze.

They also cited Alpine County's lack of an organized disaster plan and interagency training as contributing to a breakdown in the initial attack.

"The working relationship between the local and federal agencies with disaster management responsibilities were less than totally effective in managing the Acorn Fire," a review team report said.

There also was a lack of a common radio frequency, it said.

Both studies released this week were in response to residents' claims that the U.S. Forest Service botched the in-

itial attack on the fire and could have done more to save homes. The fire destroyed 24 homes, damaged at least 50 others and burned 6,500 acres.

However, the reports differed slightly on whether actions taken by the Forest Service were appropriate.

According to a review team consisting mostly of fire experts, the agency's actions were appropriate for the observed conditions.

However, Alpine County's own investigator, R.L. Bjornsen, found some faults with Forest Service action, but he stressed that the outcome could very well have been the same.

Bjornsen, who retired from the Forest Service after 30 years and now runs his own fire investigation company, interviewed more than 60 people over a one-month period. He submitted a draft report to supervisors at a meeting this week.

A main problem seen by Bjornsen during the initial attack was that incident commander viewed the fire from a slight distance rather than at the fire site. The commander thought he had an adequate view of the fire and did not want to bother firefighters, Bjornsen said.

The incident commander also called off some engines and resources when he first reached the fire, about 15 minutes after it was reported, according to Bjornsen.

"The focus then zeros in on whether there was sufficient sensitivity to the fire's potential for escape, given the existing and predicted weather."

"There should have been no modification of resources called for in the initial response under the Toiyabe dispatch plan. An irrefutable, time-tested doctrine of wildfire firefighting is hit 'em hard, hit 'em fast, keep them

small."

In his draft report, Bjornsen said conditions were extremely dry on July 29 and afternoon winds were easily predictable.

"Not enough attention was given to fire danger conditions existing on the day the fire started," he said in the report.

The fire was first sighted about 11 a.m. in a rocky hillside with an average 70 percent slope. Large boulders were just north of the fire and vegetation blocked a good view of the fire.

Crews that arrived immediately set up fire lines and hoses but were hampered by winds, terrain and the erratic nature of the fire, which kept jumping lines, according to Bjornsen.

"During my interviews a consistent remark was made that the fire did not seem to be doing much in the early stage, appeared easy to control, and they thought the firefighters were not

continued on
next page

aggressive enough in their attack."

But that's how it would appear to laymen and those viewing some distance from the fire, Bjornsen added. The view was deceiving because of rocks and vegetation, and the fact that dry fuels made combustion almost complete, producing little smoke, he said.

"Fire line construction often is a slow, methodical process, especially when one is working on a steep slope," he said. "Typically a lay person would be deceived into thinking the action was too slow."

Bjornsen cited several factors that caused problems in the initial attack. Once the blaze jumped the front line, it became a literal fire storm and little could be done, he said.

There were long lapses when water wasn't available and the radio linking the incident commander with a foreman at the

site was not operating properly, according to the report.

It was never clear whether volunteer firefighters were told to leave, according to Bjornsen, who added that the incident commander did not know those crews were nearby.

Bjornsen agreed with agencies that volunteers weren't properly equipped for this type of wildland fire.

There also was an hour's delay in the arrival of an air tanker to drop fire retardant because nearby resources were tied up, according to the report.

Bjornsen interviewed residents, volunteer firefighters and agency firefighters as well as witnesses during the initial attack. The fire is believed to have been man-caused.

"There were undocumented cases where people became frustrated with lack of initiative by agency personnel to fight

Continued to page 6

continued



Report: Cooperation needed

Continued from page 1

structure fires," Bjornsen said. But he added that the rumors were not substantiated and mostly firefighters put their life on the line to protect structures.

"A bystander asked a group of agency engines to take action on some threatened houses," he said. "They (agency firefighters) were out of water but were severely criticized before they could explain."

Bjornsen also found that lack of fire prevention measures contributed to some structure loss.

He supported retention of the Forest Service as the agency responsible for wildland fire protection on state and private lands, under an agreement with the California Division of Forestry.

Among recommendations listed in both reports were:

- The Forest Service and appropriate counties, including Alpine County, should complete pre-attack plans for the Sierra Front area. Alpine County should become more involved.

- The Forest Service should take steps to provide ap-

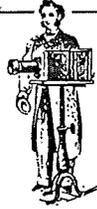
propriate public information training to all involved in fire activities.

- The Forest Service should offer interagency training for area firefighters, including volunteers, in Alpine County.

- Alpine County should assist in providing basic structure fire training to wildland fire agencies.

- An Alpine County fire marshal should be hired to coordinate volunteer departments and to carry out new Alpine County ordinances for fire protection measures.

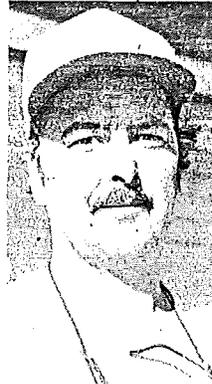
You
said it!



What do you
think of
billboards in
Carson Valley?



JUDY WARREN
Business services
I don't agree with them for aesthetic reasons, but I understand the tribe's reasoning. I understand that the tribe is trying to be more self-sufficient and I applaud them for that, but I don't think this is the way to do it.



MICHAEL WARREN
Firefighter
I think it's wrong. They look ugly no matter where they are.



MARY HONDA
Mother
You can't print what I'd like to say. I don't like it. I think they take away from the beauty of the land, and they detract the driver.



ROBERT LANGE
Receiving clerk
I have no reason to say they shouldn't go in. I don't have any objection to them. What I'd like to see is a light go in at Pinenut Road and Highway 395.



BARBARA PHILLIPS
Teacher
I'm not sure. There are some people who put them up tastefully and some who do not. I haven't seen them (the new billboards) yet.



MADELIENE MELLBERG
Retired
If they're not all bunched together, they don't necessarily detract from the landscape. But I wouldn't like a bunch of them down there (south of Gardnerville). That's what I call honky tonk.

Overheard

Record Courier 10/22/87

gram through the Rotary Club of Reno. She lives in Tonopah.

Barnes is student-teaching at Silver Peak Elementary School in Goldfield and expects to graduate with a dual degree in elementary education and special education in May of 1988 at the University of Nevada-Reno.

Barnes has four sons and three grandchildren.

She says, "I believe my life has become far more diversified since leaving" Gardnerville.

•••

Mark A. Nagel, son of Thomas A. and Judith I. Nagel of Markleeville, has been promoted in the U.S. Air Force to the rank of airman first class.

Nagel is a biomedical equip-

ment maintenance specialist at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, with the 3261st Medical Services Squadron. He is a 1983 graduate of Douglas High School.

•••

Air Force Reserve Airman 1st Class Christopher R. Mantynen, son of Robert E. Mantynen of Markleeville, has graduated from the U.S. Air Force aircraft maintenance course at Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas. He is a 1981 graduate of Santa Rose (Calif.) High School.

•••

Send news of people in Douglas County to Overheard Editor, The Record-Courier, P.O. Box 158, Gardnerville 89410.

Births

The Record Courier 10/22/87

Aaron Estes

Caroline and Kenneth Estes of Gardnerville are the parents of a baby girl, Aaron Margaret, born Oct. 7 at Carson-Tahoe Hospital. Aaron weighed 6 pounds, 10 ounces at birth.

Arianne Smith

Tina and James Smith of

Wellington are the parents of a baby girl, Arianne Marie, born Oct. 8 at Carson-Tahoe Hospital. Arianne weighed 7 pounds, 6 ounces at birth.

Benjamin Wood

Mary and Russel Wood are the parents of a baby boy, Benjamin John, born Oct. 14 at Carson-Tahoe Hospital. Ben-

jamin weighed 9 pounds, 4 ounces at birth.

Erika Smokey

Teresa and Stanley Smokey of Dresslerville are the parents of a baby girl, Erika Nowel, born Oct. 2 at Washoe Medical Center. Erika weighed 9 pounds, 5 ounces at birth.

Tennis

Lisa Chacon

third at zone

Lisa Chacon breezed into the girls singles semifinals during Northern Nevada AAA zone tennis tournament play Friday in Reno. Perhaps it was too easy.

Chacon, who came in as the No. 1 seed in the girls bracket, stumbled in the semifinals Saturday morning at the Plumas Courts, losing a two-set decision to Joanne Klum of Reno. Klum won, 6-2, 6-4, to advance to the championship round, where she was beaten by Manogue's Kerri Garcia.

Chacon did return to the court less than 30 minutes after her defeat and outlasted Reno's Christy Marsh in a three-set battle for third place, 3-6, 6-3, 7-6. Chacon won the tie-breaker by a 7-5 score.

The Douglas sophomore now advances to the state AAA tournament Friday in Las Vegas.

The top four players from the Northern and Southern zone tournaments qualified for the state final.

Chacon was given the zone tourney's No. 1 seed after going through the regular season with a perfect 44-0 record. She reached the semifinals by dispatching three straight foes, including Douglas teammate Dina Gigli, Michele Trease from Carson and Reed's Ann Shebler. Chacon lost just one game along the way, but the ease in which she won may have turned out to be a detriment, according to her coach and mother, Joan Chacon.

"I think it was too easy. It was tough to get up for a hard match after having three easy ones like that," the Douglas coach said.

Incidentally, Klum beat Chacon in the zone quarterfinals last year.



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FUN RUN. The Coyan family of Markleeville were among the runners in the Just Say No fun Run recently. From left are Josh, Adam, Wanda, Gary and Gary Coyan; not pictured, George Coyan.

'Say No' Fun Run raises \$50

The Diamond Valley "Just Say No" Club donated \$50 of its \$100 proceeds from an Oct. 11 Fun Run to the Woodfords fire Disaster Relief Fund.

T-shirts bearing the Just Say No logo were given to all contestants, which ranged in age from 5 years to adults. Fruit and juice were provided by the Alpine County chapter of "Up With Kids."

According to Lynn Walker of "Up With Kids," there are 35 members of the Alpine Just Say No group, and there are plans to sponsor chapters at schools in Douglas County through the Douglas County Recreation Department.

Michael and Judy Warren of Markleeville are dedicated sponsors of the group in Markleeville, she added, who worked hard to get kids in the area involved.

Just Say No clubs include groups of children aged 7-14 who are committed to not using drugs or alcohol. The first club was formed in inner city Oakland in January 1985. It was inspired by a talk by First Lady Nancy Reagan. There are now more than 10,000 clubs nationwide.

The clubs will be organized at Douglas elementary and middle school levels first, Walker said. President of a fledgling group at

Carson Valley Middle School is Albert Ramirez.

Among the prizes to be awarded at the Fun Run were Raley's gift certificates, Carson Valley Inn dinners for two, Outdoorsman gift certificates and pizzas.

This week is Red Ribbon Week, sponsored by Californians for Drug-Free Youth of the California Department of Alcohol and Drugs. Its motto is "Drug-free youth will make a strong America."

Red ribbons decorate cars, the school and even the local police car, according to Walker.

"People are so supportive of the program," she said.

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Alpine officers elected

The members of the Alpine Student Council Officers for the high school students of Alpine County who attend Douglas High School recently were elected.

President is Curt John; vice president, Amber McGeein; secretary, Dinamarina Gigli; and treasurer, Rick Taylor.

Members of the Student Council Advisory Board are Jason Warren, Ann Robinson, Renee Halvorson, Joey Chandler, DeeDee Dressler, Cassandra Fred, George Coyan, Brandon Hesel and Beaver James.

10-29-87
- Reward Courier -



Still working

Members of the Pine Grove 4 Conservation Camp clear charred brush and timber nearby homes as part of continued rehabilitation work from last summer's Acorn Fire. The conservation crews are low-security inmates

who are trained by state officials in firefighting and clean-up. A conservation camp is proposed in Alpine County and will be considered by supervisors in November. R-C photos

TV film crew shoots at Markleeville's Cutthroat Saloon

by LYNNE WOODWARD
Special to the R-C

It was your usual, smoke-filled bar, complete with Friday afternoon drinkers, but the quiet was extraordinary until the director yelled, "Cut; save," and then it seemed that everyone exhaled at once.

In Markleeville's Cutthroat Saloon, patrons remarked that the normally garrulous proprietor, Mario, known for his salty remarks, was unaccustomedly quiet. He was helpful even to an electrician who climbed onto a box to disconnect the garish neon beer sign glowing across from the bar.

Only when the chain broke on the big light over the pool table, did Mario look agitated. A few minutes earlier and a couple of the "High Mountain Rangers" principal actors might have been hit by the falling light.

Things may never be quite the same at the Cutthroat, known more as a mountain man's watering hole than the sort of establishment where one would

find an unfailingly polite, handsome blonde actor, Christian Conrad, ordering an anchovy pizza.

One of the surprises about the crew for the proposed TV series was the courteousness of the entire company. Two Cutthroat regulars, engaged in a long-term shuffleboard contest, grumbled loudly about being asked to quit. They were mollified by the film crew's invitation to sit at the bar as film extras.

Not so fortunate was the young woman who entered in full makeup and rhinestone-studded T-shirt, loudly proclaiming that she has just caught all the fish at Indian Creek Reservoir. After her second tequila gold, she was 86'ed by Mario, her chance at stardom totally dashed.

Over and over, four crew members were pressed into service to "smoke it up." Then they stood around the pool table, puffing wildly on cigarettes before the actors could speak.

A real ranger, the company's technical adviser, lounged against a wall, observing as a

cluster of young actors discussed a planned "assault on Dead Man's Peak."

They discussed it endlessly, peering over a map, eating pizza and shooting pool, repeating the same dozen lines under hot cinema lights, as the scene was shot from different angles. On take nine, as if on cue, each one muffed his lines, until the director cautioned, "Keep your energy up, even though this is a map scene."

Perhaps the most relaxed member of the crew was a handsome, dark-haired actor, who said in his role he has an affair with someone's wife, but he had been killed off in a scene shot the day before.

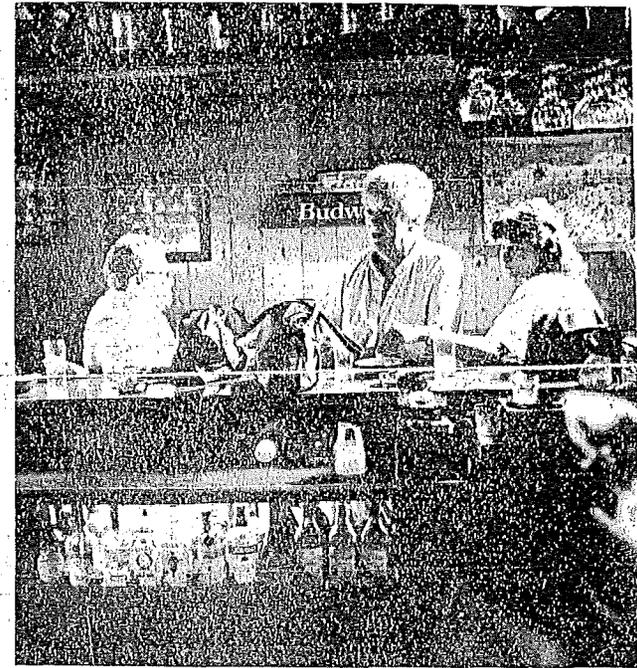
Also sitting off-camera, sipping a soft drink, was the very-recognizable actor, what's-his-name, who played Dr. Buzz Stryker for a year on the TV soap "General Hospital." In "Rangers," he's the good brother, trying to calm an obnoxious sibling who is spoiling for a fight with the rangers.

One of the "locals," attractive Kathy Thomas of Sparks, actual-

ly auditioned for her role as a waitress. She wasn't given a full script, but was told where and when to appear, always asking, "Who ordered the double anchovy?" For this, she earned about \$350 for the day's work — and a tale to tell her five adult children.

The reporter's offscreen role was to hold the pizza in a hall closet and hand it to her. Since all is not reality in the movies, it must be revealed that the real anchovy pizza was trashed in favor of a more-colorful hamburger pizza, which went from piping hot to agglutinate cold during the afternoon retakes, before it, too, was consigned to the garbage.

During two hours' observation from the hall closet, the plot never really did unfold, and when Kathy said that the filming might continue to 9 p.m., your reporter staggered out of the dark, smoke-filled bar, tripping over electrical wires, hysterically grateful for fresh air and sunlight for the drive back to Gardnerville.



SCENE. The inside of the Markleeville Cutthroat Saloon was the scene of the filming of a Robert Conrad TV show. R-C photo

TV show in Alpine County

The Record Courier
10/29/87

12-year-old tries hand at acting

by LYNNE WOODWARD
Special to the R-C

For 12-year-old Tommy Kerley of Gardnerville, "High Mountain Rangers" may signal a film debut. The new TV series, scheduled to be shown on either Monday or Wednesday nights beginning in January, has been in production for a month around the eastern Sierra.

Shooting last week was in Alpine County, where local merchants were generally happy about the increased business brought by the actors and film crew. (See related story, page 2)

At the Shady Lady Restaurant in Markleeville, a waiter remarked that the filmmakers were extraordinarily pleasant people.

Tommy thinks so, too. For his role, shot at Lake Tahoe, he was coached offscreen by one of the series regulars. He was handed

a script with a half dozen lines, told what to do and when to speak, and, like the trouper he is, he did it.

His scene was shot with only three retakes. Riding astride a horse behind actor Christian Conrad, Tommy points out the spot on a mountainside where his "younger brother" is trapped. The scene will appear in an episode entitled "The Competitors," scheduled to be aired about the third week of the series.

In the story, Tommy has slithered down a mountainside to find help for his little brother. He doesn't fall onscreen, but he gets pretty well scratched up with makeup. And his new Levis, already torn at the knees, worked out perfectly, said his mother, Nancy Kerley, since he was supposed to get scuffed up by his climb. In one scene, Conrad actually did take a fall on

some sharp rocks, but complained only mildly that "these aren't rubber, you know."

During his day of shooting, Tommy did his school work in a motorhome offstage, taught by the wife of one of the actors. When he returned to his classes at Carson Valley Middle School, his mother reports that he was actually ahead of his classmates.

During the filming, the two of them also ate lunch on location with the film crew and actors, including Robert Conrad, father of one of the "rangers."

Tommy had tried out for the role, along with dozens of other youngsters, at the urging of drama coach Joe Gianpapa of Pacific Performing Arts in Sparks. The affable young actor was the last to read, but his naturalness caught the attention of the casting crew, and the role was his.

Previously, Tommy appeared as the young George M. Cohan, singing and dancing in a Carson Valley Theatre Co. production of "George M!", and the "Horseshoe Review" staged here last summer by Peggy Hernandez of the Sierra Nevada Dance Company and voice coach Karen Chandler.

He has been promoted by Hernandez, his mother says, and has been coached by Gianpapa and Chandler for drama and voice, but, if the series stays on the air, this will be Tommy's first "professional" acting experience.

Did he like it?

"You bet I did," he says enthusiastically, his eyes dancing.

And what will he do with the \$300 earned from his day's work?

"A present for my mom," he said — and maybe a new pair of Levis.

RC
10/29/87



SCRIPT. Tommy Kerley reads his script for a TV program. R-C photo

The Record Courier
11/5/87

Volunteers help seed in Alpine fire area

On Saturday (Nov. 7), a group of volunteers from as far away as Reno will meet at Douglas High School to lend their hands as part of the U.S. Soil Conservation Service's Earth Team Volunteer Program.

The group will meet at 8:30 a.m.

They will help with the reseeding of burned-out areas of Alpine County below Emigrant Trail Road and above Highway 88.

Jane Martin, local organizer of the group, coordinated the effort through the Minden SCS office, which will provide equipment and technical support and guidance. Weather permitting, the group will hand seed areas that are too rocky or steep for drill seeders.

The SCS has contributed 80 percent of the funds through the Emergency Watershed Protection Program for erosion stabilization and rehabilitation of the private lands damaged in the Acorn Fire, with the California Department of Forestry and the Alpine County Board of Supervisors each contributing 10 percent.

Museum tour for students at DVS

by LISA WIXON
Staff writer

One almost feels like an outlaw upon entering the damp, dark and eerie jail cells on display at the Alpine County Museum located in Markleeville. Recently, the students of the Diamond Valley School found delight in visiting the quaint museum that for them, was full of surprises.

Mary Southerland, director of the museum, and her assistant, Sheila Morgan, led kindergarten through 8th grade students who had the opportunity to visit the museum before it closed for the season.

The museum closed on Oct. 25, and has remained open longer than usual due to favorable weather conditions and extra funds from the Chamber of Commerce.

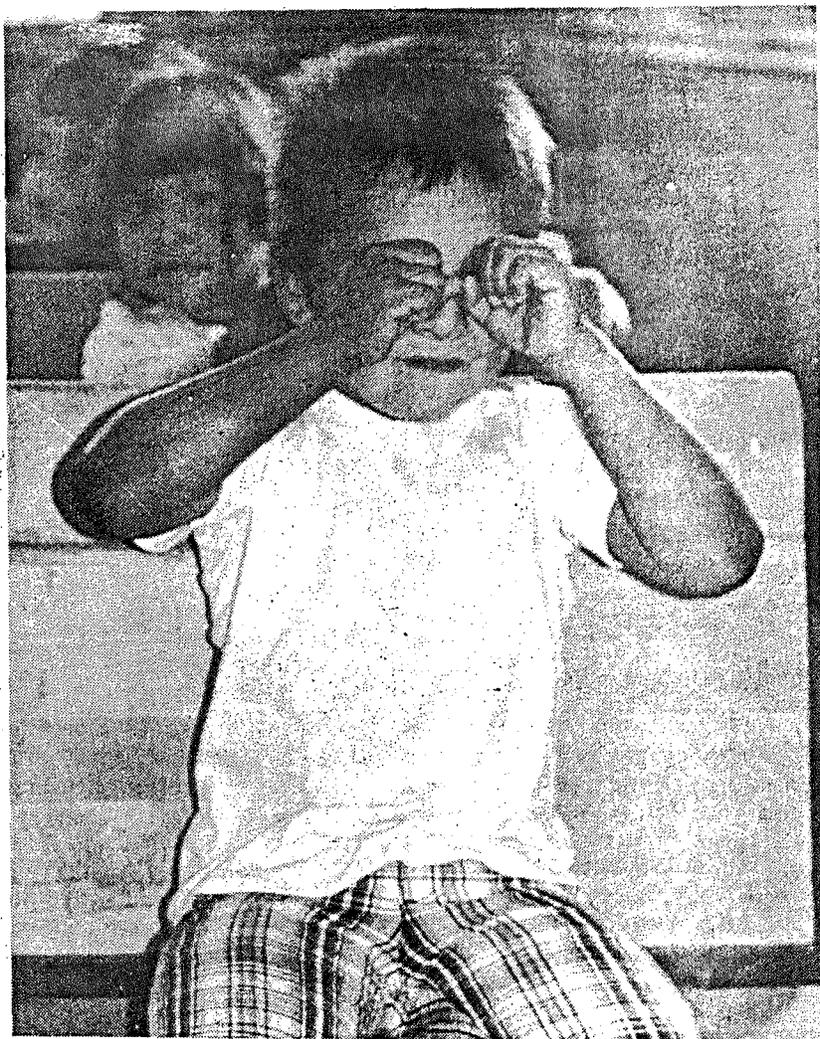
The museum includes the old Bill Webster school house that was built in 1882, containing the original desks. In 1968, to

celebrate the centennial of Markleeville, the students drew pictures on the schoolhouse walls and signed their names. It was thrilling for some of the 150 young visitors to see their parents' signatures on the walls.

Among the students' favorites included a mannequin in the "general store" because it "looked so real." Also there was a blacksmith shop display that had bellows to show how it actually worked.

They felt the highlight of the museum was being able to go inside the old jail cells, originally brought over from Silver Mountain City, Calif. by wagon in 1875. They were then used at the old courthouse until a new jail was built.

According to Southerland, a special mining exhibit is planned for next season, which begins late spring. She says they hope to get original or copies of old photos taken in the Alpine area. Anyone with information to share should call Mary Southerland at 782-2738.



FIELD TRIP. Waylon Donero closes his eyes and pretends he is back in 1882 when this school house, now part of the Alpine County Museum, was still in use. All Diamond

Valley School students had the opportunity to visit the museum before it closed for the season. R-C photo By Lisa Wixon

Alpine couple publishes Calif.

community's Enterprise

RC 11-12-87

Villa Gigli press takes on newspaper

by JOYCE HOLLISTER
Staff writer

Gina and Ruggero Gigli say they always wanted to run a little newspaper, but up until now they've had too many other things to do.

"When we first moved to Alpine County 14 years ago," Gina said, "and there was no newspaper at all, Ruggero said, 'Let's start a little newspaper.'"

Gina's answer was no; they were too busy with other things.

Then the Alpine Enterprise was born, via Dr. Greg Hayes and a non-profit corporation (Alpine County Forum). There were a few different editors and volunteers; then Heidi Hopkins took over running the publication for the past 2½ years.

Hopkins left for Bay Area, and, when she first talked about leaving a few months ago, Ruggero started in again.

"Let's do it," he said.

Gina's standard answer, "We're too busy," came readily back, but finally, she said, "I just wore down."

They took over the paper in

September and their first issue came out Nov. 1.

"I have to admit I always did want to do something like that," Gina said.

The Alpine Enterprise is no longer published under the auspices of a non-profit corporation, but is now a publication of Villa Gigli Press, the Gigli's printmaking operation.

Gina is an artist and Ruggero an art promoter and food and wine consultant.

Even in the short time that they've had the newspaper, Ruggero said the advertising and circulation has already greatly increased. He said it's because everywhere he goes to consult on food and wine (such as to Kirkwood ski area), he talks people into buying an ad and a subscription.

People in the wine country where Ruggero often travels, Gina said, are interested in Alpine County and Lake Tahoe, and so buy ads or subscriptions, too.

He also picks up news tips.

Ruggero convinced Gina that the Alpine Enterprise could be a

good business for them because of his contacts, but they both look on the paper as belonging to the people.

"We hated to see the paper go down after all the hard work people put into it," Gina explained. "We are owners, but we want it to be the people's paper as it has been, and we encourage all kinds of writers and photographers."

Gina changed the paper's format from three to four columns, and so the first issue was a lot more difficult to put together because it was different.

She said she changed the format because of advice from friends in the graphic arts, and because Ruggero likes it: It is easier to fold in half and read, held in one hand. It reminds him of his subway-riding days in New York.

Gina is the editor and Ruggero the publisher and business manager. She does the layout, too.

She writes a food and wine page called the "Menu," and each month she plans to feature

Continued to page 2

exotic recipes from famous chefs that she knows, plus a local recipe because "we have marvelous cooks right here."

In the first issue, for example, she wrote about a Spanish chef that she and Ruggero met at Sterling Vineyards in California, and a very congenial sort of guy.

When they walked into the kitchen and began talking to him, she said, "He didn't have a fit or anything." (Some chefs can be temperamental, and don't appreciate being interrupted by people they don't know.)

"I like to do interviews with artistic types, creative people. I have reporters write the political science because I don't

like to be involved in it, but I know it's necessary in the paper," Gina said.

Her reporters are Wilma Rule, who along with Irving Krauss is also a proofreader, Judy Baker and Donna McGeein, who also does feature articles.

"We have the sheriff writing and the director of public works and etc., etc. — all the people in the community, and organizations, they're just writing away. We have all kinds of columnists," Gina said.

Also helping the Giglis with the paper is production assistant Barbara Howard.

"I love it. I really do," Gina said. "I've spent sleepless nights and many, many long hours but I

know it will get easier."

The next issue will feature winter sports, the big attraction in Alpine County. Gina also hopes to delve into historical pieces, especially because Alpine County was recently blessed with professionally organized archives.

Gina is not new to writing. She has written for the Nevada State Museum (her book on Dat So La Lee is available at the museum), Nevada Magazine, WestArt Journal and the Nevada State Journal (now the Reno Gazette-Journal).

Ruggero said that when they were thinking of taking over the Alpine Enterprise, he called old

friend and former Nevada Gov. Mike O'Callaghan, who now operates successful newspapers in the Las Vegas area.

"I called him up, and I said, 'Mike, Guess what? It looks like I'm taking over the paper in Markleeville. If I need help, will you help me?' And he said, 'Yes, just call up anytime.'"

"If I have that support of Mike, I can do anything in the paper," Ruggero said with a rich laugh.

It seems like the taking over of the Alpine Enterprise has lived up to the Gigli's expectations.

"We love to do it and we really like to see the paper getting along and doing better," Ruggero said.



NEW OWNERS. Ruggero and Gina Gigli of Markleeville just published the first issue of the Alpine Enterprise now under their ownership. They say they've always wanted to "own a little newspaper," and are enjoying the work. Jay Aldrich photo

This World Nov. 15, 1987



One-Room School in the Mountains

One-Room School in the Mountains

William Poole DETOURS

Bear Valley Road, Bear Valley, Alpine County

The Tom Selleck bulletin board started years ago as a joke, a conversation piece, Trish Fedderly says.

She was teaching sixth grade at the 400-student Ready Springs School over in Nevada County at the time. Her students found out that she had a soft spot for the hunky "Magnum, P.I." star, and started bringing her pictures. Soon the pictures went up on a bulletin board, and when Trish's students would run into her husband, Jim, in the halls of the school, they would be sure to let him know. "Mr. Fedderly, Mr. Fedderly," the kids would shout, "do you know that Mrs. Fedderly has pictures of Tom Selleck in her room?"

All that was five or six years ago, before Trish Fedderly left Grass Valley to become half of a two-teacher team at Bear Valley School, the only elementary school in western Alpine County. Trish teaches eight of the school's 22 students — every pupil in grades four through eight — and the Tom

William Poole, a San Francisco writer, dispatches his Detours column biweekly from somewhere on the road.

Selleck bulletin board is still with her: half a dozen smiling pictures beside her desk.

But these days, the students don't have to ask if Jim Fedderly knows of his wife's secret longing. It is fairly obvious that he must. Jim is the other teacher at Bear Valley's one-room school — and at no time in his workday is he more than 75 feet from Selleck's manicured mustache and mischievous smile.

No one knows exactly how many one-room schoolhouses there are in California. The number changes from year to year. In 1983, the California Department of Education compiled a list of 41 one-room schools in 22 counties serving nearly 800 students; no one is sure how many schools have been added or subtracted since. I picked the Bear Valley School from the state's list, partly because I liked the sound of Jim Fedderly's voice and enthusiasm on the phone. "It will be fun," he said. "Come on up and take a look."

Bear Valley is on State Route 4 — a level area of open fields, granite boulders and lodgepole pine on the western slope of the Sierra at about 7,000 feet. Beyond here, a side road climbs uphill to the Mount Reba Ski Area (the community's prime employer and reason for being), and the highway starts a long, hard pull toward Ebbetts Pass.

There is little to set Bear Valley apart from mountain resort towns across the country. Billed as a four-season recreational community, the village sprang to life with

the ski area in the 1960s. There are a couple of ski lodges here, and a sports shop and a heavily timbered building holding a grocery store, cafe, post office and boutiques.

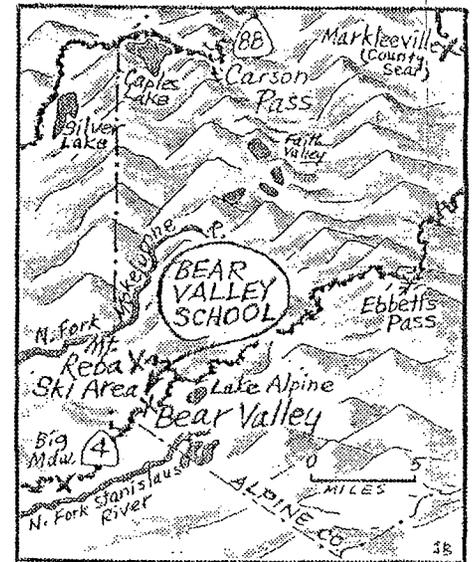
North of town is a residential subdivision, more than 200 prosperous, alpine-style houses climbing the first ranks of surrounding hills. The great majority of these are vacation homes, some incorporating rental units, in which most of the town's 150 year-round residents live.

I find the school set apart on the edge of the village, near where the road starts to climb the hill into the subdivision. It is a substantial split-level building, about a dozen years old, built of brown-stained lumber in a mountain-modern style. On three sides, cool granite boulders and lodgepole forest edge close to the big windows. On the fourth side is a playground, and banked into the hill is a sturdy 40-foot-long wooden tunnel, which in the snowy months provides the only access to the school's sheltered entryway.

Last spring, a small bear tried to wrestle the school's big boxy trash bin from the entryway out through this tunnel, giving up finally to peel back the bin's top as if to say "Oh, never mind, I'll eat it here."

This bear was later seen curiously peering into the school's lighted windows at a PTA meeting, as if studying animals in a zoo.

I learn these things from Jim Fedderly, who soon arrives on a bicycle. He is all in blue — corduroy jeans and windbreaker — a spare, gentle-looking man in his middle 40s,



with glasses and a full, gray beard.

His wife, Trish, arrives a short time later. She appears a few years younger than her husband, and has spirited brown eyes and a quick smile. "Come on in," Jim says, shaking my hand. "The place isn't exactly what you think of as a one-room school."

The first elementary school classes in Bear Valley were held in 1963, by a teacher named Allie Huberty, and opened at Jerry and Kay Mettler's home on

See Page 8

Acorn smolders

RC 11-19-87

Editor:

People in pain sometimes lose sight of the distinction between tragedy and help, between emergency and response. One man says the Forest Service burned down his house. Fire doesn't burn houses; agencies burn houses.

Some people assume that agencies possess godlike powers to prevent natural disaster, and that the occurrence of such tragedy indicates an agency's failure. People wish for an ultimate parent to shield them from hardships. If only we lived in such a world! Some people become enraged when they discover that this is not so.

I'm sorry for the people who lost their homes. It IS tragic. Unfortunately there are no guarantees in this life, and it isn't always someone's fault when disaster strikes. Emergency response personnel and insurance sometimes mitigate disaster, but neither can be expected to remove all risk.

As for firefighters and their managers, they are neither perfect nor all-powerful. They've got a tough job to do with limited resources. Sometimes firefighters are welcomed into communities with banners and parades. In Woodfords, firefighters were second-guessed, confronted with obscene gestures, and humiliated by citizen complaints on the evening news.

A man lost his perspective, along with his house, in the Acorn fire. At a public meeting in August, he said that firefighters should have died trying to protect houses. As if any house is worth a human life. As if a human sacrifice would satiate the flames. Perhaps I could forgive his lunacy and hope it is temporary, but what of the crowd that rose to its feet in standing ovation? It doesn't make sense to me. What is going on here?

The Forest Service was criticized for calling Woodfords volunteers off the fire. The three volunteers in question arrived on the scene first and waited. They had not tried to climb the mountain to reach the fire because they wore heavy rubber and fire jackets, and were not trained for the situation. Ten minutes later, Forest Service crews arrived. Volunteers and Forest Service crews alike thought the fire would pose no problem. The assistant fire chief of the volunteers participated in deciding that the volunteers would return to the fire house. The decision made sense.

Why was this turned into an issue?

Two months later the controversy still smolders. New fires have replaced old but there is no shortage of critics. A woman complains that firefighters sit under a tree playing cards instead of fighting the fire. Someone suggests that perhaps they have spent the last 18 hours fighting the fire and are trying to relax enough to sleep before returning for another grueling shift. "Oh," she replies, "I hadn't thought of that."

Can this type of thoughtless attitude create the backlash that happened after Acorn? Or is there more to it?

When I toured Alpine Village immediately after the homes burned, I saw people telling news crews about their losses. This is normal fare following disaster. But later I saw a man shuttling reporters around to distraught people who said the Forest Service should have done something differently. It started slowly at first. I watched him bait a news crew from Portland, but they weren't buying it. I saw him two more times the following day, herding reporters to the same few interviews. Other crews eventually picked up the story, as evidenced by the huge drama that unfolded.

Imagine my surprise when I found out that this man has filed a large claim with the Forest Service for damages he suffered from the fire. For his house? No, he didn't lose it. I still don't know exactly why he organized the criticism. But it occurs to me that he may have taken advantage of his distressed neighbors and the news media for his own gain.

Two more months pass and the controversy has died considerably. An independent review concludes that the Forest Service responded appropriately. New homes have taken shape in Alpine Village. Alpine County officials are working with the Forest Service to build a better response system. Almost everyone is making progress. Except for a few lone coyotes who continue to howl at the moon.

MARK HUMMEL
Sparks
Nov. 11

The Record Courier 11/19/87



Honored

Douglas County sheriff's dispatchers were honored by the FBI recently for their help last May in capturing a suspect at Lake Tahoe who allegedly kidnapped two Reno

teens and murdered their chaperones. From left are Liz Hertz, Roxanne Crawford and Cyndi Rymer. R-C photo

Morris, Lynn entertain for love as former partner hits big time

by TREVA ZELLER
Staff writer

The comedy act began as "Martin and Walker." Steve played the straight man; Morris, the wild and crazy guy.

Today, Morris Walker is still having fun but with a different partner — his wife, Lynn.

Although he and his childhood chum Steve Martin went their separate ways, Morris will tell you they both got what they wanted: Steve landed fame; Morris found his personal "paradise."

"When Steve and I were kids, we both wanted to be entertainers," said Morris, who is now advertising director for Nevada Magazine. "But I wanted to find a beautiful woman who I could live with and love and who I could perform with. We both got what we wanted."

Twenty years ago, Morris met Lynn Wallace. Since then, the couple has built a life around travel, song, laughter, love

and family.

They have done comedy and sung their way into churches, prisons, community theaters, hospitals and even wartime Vietnam, performing in more than 5,000 shows around the world.

On the road for eight years, the couple

“

We use music as an excuse to get on stage to do comedy.

”

lived out of a homemade van, also entertaining at campgrounds and for the National School Assembly organization.

They performed more for the love of

entertaining than fortune or fame.

"We use music as an excuse to get on stage to do comedy," said Lynn, who sings with Morris. He plays the guitar.

Their show featured banter about local attractions, ecology and health, but the main purpose was to entertain.

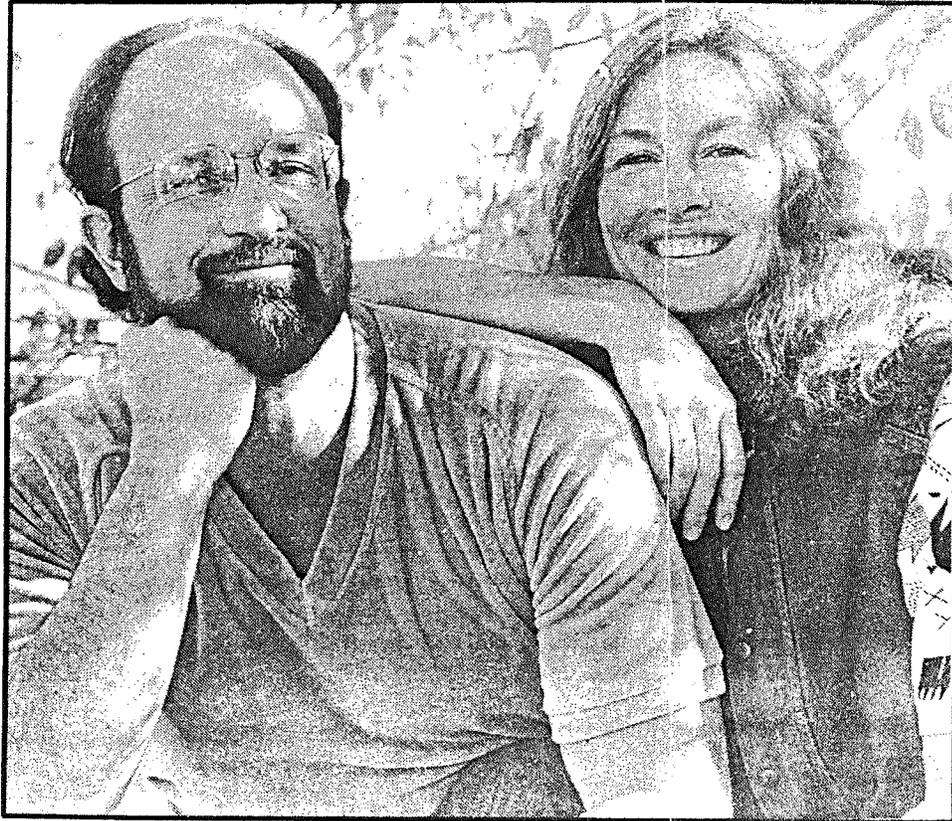
"It was really fulfilling to have people leap to a standing ovation when they don't even know you," Morris said. "We got paid for it, not a lot, but enough to keep us on the road."

The Walkers still entertain, but they left behind their gypsy lifestyle to raise their two children. Before coming to Nevada, they lived in California in Big Bear and Chico.

Their permanent home for more than a year now has been Carson Valley. They plan to stay, and they wouldn't cash in their life for the price of fame.

"All my friends who are famous lead very sheltered lives," said Lynn, who

Continued to page 11



ENTERTAINING COUPLE. Morris and Lynn Walker have performed together for 20 years, singing and doing comedy from wartime Vietnam to Canada. They've traveled the

world and kept in touch with famous friends in Hollywood, but the active couple have chosen Carson Valley as their permanent home. R-C photo by Treva Zeller

has remained friends with television talk show host Joan Lunden since their college days.

"That could be a good excuse for not being famous ourselves, but they are afraid to walk down the street. I don't want to live like that, and I don't want my kids to live like that.

"I wouldn't trade lives with them. I've met more friends here in one year than I have anywhere else. I feel like I have it all."

Lynn, an advocate for children and health programs, also seems to have endless energy. She and Morris host a 5 p.m. Sunday radio show on KGVM, called "Human Nature." They describe it as spontaneous and very real, "about real people."

They've also hosted award-winning cable television shows and hope to start a new program about Nevada in a TV-magazine format.

"He is a jack of all trades," Lynn said about Morris. "My one talent is working with people; whatever the job is, because I love people."

Among the couple's more memorable experiences was during the Vietnam War, when they were hired by United States Overseas to perform for

“

When Steve and I were kids, we both wanted to be entertainers, but I wanted to find a beautiful woman who I could live with and love and who I could perform with. We both got what we wanted.

”

American troops. A few times, that took them into the jungle near gunfire and bombing.

Lynn, who came from Pennsylvania

to California to attend college, already was a world traveler by the time she and Morris met in 1968 at Chapman College.

Before then, she had attended and worked for World Campus Afloat, an accredited university on a tour ship. And as a former cheerleader, she once trained up to 1,000 girls a week for the American Cheerleaders Association.

There she picked up an interest in encouraging young people. She now works for a program called "Up With Kids" in Markleeville, which includes recreation and art sessions for local youths.

"I respect kids a lot and I think they are extremely intelligent," Lynn said. "The future doesn't look good. Drugs are rampant. It takes a strong kid to say 'no.' I think if there were more programs and more to challenge their minds, they'd get bored with (drugs)."

While Lynn has developed interests in health and making health videos, Morris dabbles in art and poetry and has performed as a folk singer. And in the year he has worked at Nevada Magazine, revenues and sales have doubled.

"The magazine is doing better than it ever has," he said. "Staff members are all the very best in their field, and I really enjoy what I do."



WARTIME VIETNAM. Morris and Lynn performed before American troops during the Vietnam War, traveling with United States

Overseas. Those performances in 1971 took them from North Vietnam to deep into the jungle where they

were even fired on in the middle of the night. Photo courtesy of Lynn and Morris Walker

He has written a book about growing up with Steve Martin, which he hopes to get published.

In December, Morris will appear on a "60 Minutes" segment about Steve Martin. It was the comedian who suggested that interviewer Diane Sawyer talk to Morris.

In earlier days, Morris said he and Steve lived only for comedy. They entertained each other and anyone else who would listen. Together they appeared in coffee shops and school stages in vaudeville-type acts with music, Steve's magic and jokes.

"They grew up in Disneyland," Lynn said, because the two had jobs at the amusement park and spent so much time there. Steve was a guidebook salesman and worked in a magic shop. Morris was a balloon salesman.

The two actually grew up in Orange County, Calif., where they were friends from 6th grade on, both graduating from Garden Grove High School. They were even cheerleaders together.

A school newspaper article described



MORRIS AND STEVE. Morris and his childhood friend, comedian Steve Martin, were inseparable from the sixth grade on. The two spent all their time making people laugh and planned to form a comedy team, until circumstances sent them in different directions. Photo courtesy of Lynn and Morris Walker.

“

I respect kids a lot and I think they are extremely intelligent. The future doesn't look good. Drugs are rampant. It takes a strong kid to say 'no.' I think if there were more programs and more to challenge their minds, they'd get bored with (drugs).

”

them as a "fun-loving duo," always doing comedy and practical stunts in and out of school. They planned to perform as a comedy team after college.

"He practically lived at our house," Morris said. "We were only concerned with comedy and making people laugh."

But a few years after high school graduation, circumstance split the inseparable pair. Morris was drafted and Steve landed a job writing comedy for the Smothers Brothers.

Since Steve Martin hit it big with his stand-up comedy in the late 1970s, Morris sometimes has been asked the "what if" question: What if it had been the

other way around?

"In some ways, I wish I had never known Steve," Morris said. "To be so close to someone who is doing what you've always loved to do and who has such a historical success, that's hard on the ego."

"If I hadn't known Steve, I would never have any reason to compare myself to him. But I don't resent him."

"I wonder what it would have been like for both of us if we hadn't known each other and spent all that time doing comedy together, but that's mere conjecture. The truth is he's an old and dear friend, and I love him."

To Morris, what's important in life is what he already has in abundance — humor and love.

Morris, 42, and Lynn, 39, spend a great deal of time with their son, 9-year-old Skye, and daughter, 7-year-old Amye, who attend Jacks Valley School. The family has even performed on stage together.

"There's never been a better friend or a brighter light in my life than Lynn," Morris said. "She's an never-ending source of energy and encouragement."

"And the kids are the ultimate wealth."

November 19, 1987 • The Record-Courier • Gardnerville, Nevada

November 19, 1987

Morris and Lynn: They left gypsy life for Carson Valley

Continued from page 1

The Record Courier 11/26/87

Bingo in Markleeville. The Native Sons of the Golden West will sponsor a Bingo party Dec. 12 at Turtle Rock State Park between Woodfords and Markleeville. The evening's events will get underway at 6:30 p.m. with a Mexican Enchilada Dinner. Bingo will follow the meal, and dancing to the Alpine Trio will begin after the games. No-host cocktails will be available. Dinner is \$6, and the public is invited.

More embers from Acorn

RC
11-26-87

Editor:

In his letter to the editor regarding the Acorn fire, Mr. Hummel makes numerous statements to which I would like to respond. I never—at the August meeting or any other time—heard ANYone state or imply that anyone should have given their life to save a home. Let alone would

Letters to the editor

there have been a “crowd that rose to its feet in standing ovation” for such a sentiment. I have heard over and over again, from every segment of the community, expression of relief that no one was injured. There has also been widespread awe and gratitude expressed toward the numerous firefighters—ALL of them—who fought to save structures in the midst of that holocaust.

Fires burn houses, not agencies. Correct. No person nor agency set about to burn anything. But the local perception was that the agency responsible for suppressing the fire—the Forest Service—was not aggressive enough during the first two hours and so, by act of omission rather than commission, was responsible for the fact that 26 homes were lost and 6,600 acres burned.

Mr. Hummel states that “An independent review concludes that the Forest Service responded appropriately.” That independent review also stated that “unexpected strong winds contributed significantly to the escape of the fire.” That statement, made repeatedly by the Forest Service, just doesn’t wash locally. Anyone who has lived here for very long knows that afternoon down-canyon winds in the summertime are standard fare. The Forest Service’s own weather reports forecast afternoon winds of 15-25 mph for that day.

This independent review team was formed in response to our request to Congressman Shumway for an independent (of the Forest Service) investigation into the fire, especially the first two hours (the initial attack phase). It should be pointed out that this “independent” review team was selected by Regional Forester J.S. Tixier of the Intermountain Region of the USFS.

The team also stated that “Specific criticisms were not generally addressed by the Review Team. In listening to the various individuals who made presentations it became apparent that many did not have first-hand knowledge regarding specific issues and it was therefore difficult to clearly determine the actual events that took place.”

“Determining specific events that took place” is what we thought this investigation was all about.

In contrast, the Alpine County Board of Supervisors hired Robert Bjornsen, an independent investigator, to look into the Acorn fire. He stated, “Any fire ignited on the lower, south facing slope of the West Carson River Canyon, on a hot July day would be destined to be difficult to suppress, and should require full resource commitment, including hard hitting initial attack.”

And he concluded that the [Forest Service] incident commander made bad judgment calls by not actually being on the fire line, by underestimating the potential for the fire to escape, and by calling off additional resources (two hand crews and four out of seven engines) which might well have made a difference. He points out that there were radio communication problems and problems getting water to the fire site, losing the prime, etc., resulting in 30 plus critical minutes without water.

Those conclusions support what the locals believed all along. Unfortunately, Mr. Bjornsen backed off from making any recommendations in regard to those conclusions. He stated that the Forest Service will conduct their own investigation and “deal with operating deficiencies as they see fit.” They have conducted two or three investigations, and each time they blame the fire on “unexpected afternoon winds” and find that their actions were “appropriate for the conditions observed.” They will not deal with operating deficiencies if they don’t admit to any.

We have experienced three devastating fires in eastern Alpine County in four years, and the Acorn was indisputably the worst disaster ever to hit this county. Our perception is that Forest Service management, their fire suppression strategies and policies are in critical need of a general overhaul. The young men and women on the fire line have not been and are not the focus of our anger or criticism—they work very hard and do the best they can under very difficult circumstances. The firefighters on the initial attack worked hard—but they were undermanned and under-quipped.

We have much work to do as a community to become more fire safe. We also must work with the Forest Service to try to get them to change management policies, and a study is being set up which will hopefully include that.

Many recommendations were made in both the independent team report and the Bjornsen report as to what we as a community should do, and I have no argument with most of those recommendations. But it should also be pointed out that if those recommendations had been in place at the time of the Acorn Fire, it would not have made one bit of difference in that fire escaping the initial attack.

NANCY C. THORNBURG
Markleeville
Nov. 20

Obituaries

Glenn Kyle

Glenn Royal Kyle, 76, died Nov. 11 in Modesto, Calif.

He was born in Gardnerville on Jan. 22, 1911 a descendant of the pioneer Carson Valley families of Kyle and Park.

He moved to Modesto in 1940 and worked as a machinist for the Valley Tractor and Implements Co. for 36 years until his retirement.

According to a family member, he was an avid outdoorsman and loved to camp, fish and hunt.

Survivors include his wife, Bess Simmons Kyle of Modesto, Calif.; daughters, Glenda Fagundes of Chowchilla, Calif., and Susan Genasci of Modesto; son, Vern Kyle of Modesto; sisters, Wanda Hall of Gardnerville and Vernita Testi of Erie, PA.; brother, Donald R. Kyle of Gardnerville; seven grandchildren and numerous nephews and nieces.

Remembrances may be sent to the Church of the Cross, 3936 Dale Road, Modesto, Calif. 95356.

Margaret Black

Margaret Gladys Black, 85, died Nov. 22 at Carson-Tahoe Hospital. She had been a resident for the past 10 years, coming from Santa Paula, Calif.

She was born in Reno on April 11, 1902.

Mrs. Black was a homemaker.

She was preceded in death by her husband Alexander in 1986, her son Harry in 1983, and her daughter Helen Allen in 1964.

She is survived by her grand-

son, Harry Griffith of Redwood City, Calif.

No funeral service will be held. Burial was at the Eternal Valley Memorial Park, Newhall, Calif.

FitzHenry's funeral home was in charge of the local arrangements.

Barrett, Clifford

Barrett Clifford, 82, died Nov. 23 at a Carson hospital. He has been a resident of Gardnerville since 1962, coming from Markleeville, where he had resided since birth on March 6, 1904.

Mr. Clifford was educated at Markleeville schools. He had been a retired employee of the Gardnerville division of the highway department.

He was a member of the Carson Valley Masonic Lodge No. 33 and the F&AM O.E.S. Royal Arch Mason's of Reno. He had been an adviser of Rainbow in Gardnerville.

Survivors include his son, Chuck Barrett of Gardnerville; brother, Horace B. Vernon of Markleeville; sister, Genevieve Allerman of Minden; three grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.

Visitation was Nov. 24 and services were Nov. 25 at Walton's Chapel of the Valley. Pastor Pete Nelson and the Carson Valley Masonic Lodge No. 33 officiated.

A private inurnment is scheduled to be held at a later date in the family plot in Fredricksburg Cemetery.

A memorial has been

established with the Shriners Hospital for Crippled Children, 1701 19th Ave., San Francisco, Calif., 94122.

George Coelho

George E. Coelho, 84, died Nov. 19 in Gardnerville. He had been a resident there for 11 years, coming from Salinas, Calif.

He was born in Watsonville, Calif., on May 27, 1903.

He had been a real estate developer and a member of the Carson City Elks Lodge.

He is survived by his wife, Marguerite of Gardnerville; son, George Stephen Coelho of Salinas; daughter, Carol Longshore of Carson City; brother, Carl Coelho of Watsonville, Calif.; and three grandchildren.

A private cremation was held at the Sierra Crematory in Reno. The family will have a private memorial in Salinas, Calif., at a later date.

Walton's Funeral Home and Crematory was in charge of the arrangements.

Record Courier 11/3/87

Bingo in Markleeville. The Native Sons of the Golden West will sponsor a Bingo party Dec. 12 at Turtle Rock State Park between Woodfords and Markleeville. The evening's events will get underway at 6:30 p.m. with a Mexican Enchilada Dinner. Bingo will follow the meal, and dancing to the Alpine Trio will begin after the games. No-host cocktails will be available. Dinner is \$6, and the pubic is invited.

Tahoe Daily Tribune 12/3/87



Tribune photo by Gregory Harbert

Tree trimmer

MIKE WARREN of the South Lake Tahoe Fire Department gets a lift to trim lights on top of the community Christmas tree in front of the city Chamber of Com-

merce building. The official lighting ceremony for the tree is Saturday at 4:30 p.m.

Counties told to get tough on wildland development

by TREVA ZELLER
Staff writer

Local government needs to be more forceful in requiring developers to install fire safety improvements as subdivisions in wildland areas proliferate, local officials were told Tuesday.

Public officials also can no longer view wildland fire protection separately from structure protection, because the two intermix in increasing numbers, according to retired U.S. Forest Service member Bob Irwin. He is now a planning commissioner in California.

Irwin spoke to a joint meeting of the Douglas County commissioners and Alpine County super-

visors on "Local Planning Considerations for the Wildland-Structural Intermix in the year 2000."

He has studied seven counties in Northern and Central California where forest fires raged out of control this summer.

According to Irwin, millions of acres were allowed to burn because firefighters had to spend too much time spread out protecting structures instead of hitting the fire line.

"And the cost for the defense of the structures is never figured separately from the wildland suppression effort," Irwin added.

He said there is three million acres of potentially developable

land in the study area, much like other wildland areas where intense building pressure is expected in the next decade. A jump as high as 90 percent increase in population already has occurred in the seven counties since 1970.

"Both local governments and fire services have concentrated on wildland interface — either wildland fires or structure fires, separately," he said. "We don't have that clear distinction anymore."

More businesses, industry and homes are introduced to heavily vegetated and sometimes inaccessible wildland areas each year, Irwin said.

During the meeting, East

Fork Fire Chief Bill Driscoll made a comparison to the Foothill area, which has built out significantly in recent years.

The area is considered to be highly susceptible to wildland fires because of a mixture of heavy brush. The area also lacks an adequate water system for fighting fires.

With that, there is a subdivision "that we're not going to be able to protect," if a major fire comes sweeping through, Driscoll said.

He added that developers often argue that water systems and other mitigating standards are too expensive to make a project feasible.

But public boards that ap-

prove these subdivisions have more power than they think in seeking higher standards from developers who make million-dollar profits, according to Irwin. He said the boards also have to consider "public safety."

In addition, governments can actually save thousands of taxpayer dollars with better planning, he said.

"Local government never gets the bill for structural protection," because wildland areas are usually protected by federal or state agencies, Irwin said.

"Yet they (boards) go on making decisions allowing development."

But federal and state fire agencies also should become involved in the county planning process from the beginning and not the usual "bottom end" of a development, he argued.

"I believe it's up to the fire services to tell public boards the problems that exist," he said. "They need to be more forceful."

"The developer, not necessarily the fire services, can be required to maintain fire safety improvements."

Local governments and fire services can take other steps, including re-evaluating fire disaster plans and response strategies. A response time of 15

Continued on page 6

Fire: Tougher controls needed

Continued from page 1
minutes and one engine to a remote area no longer works if there are now 200 homes, Irwin added.

They also can seek the creation of protective areas with less vegetation, such as a meadow, golf course, school yards — at strategic locations.

But Irwin admitted an "Achilles' Heel" in the whole planning process: parcel map subdivisions. Local boards have

less control over parcel map land divisions than other subdivisions.

Irwin outlined five weaknesses in how public boards handle wildland subdivisions, describing the oversights as "benign neglect":

- Not relating the real story to the public about the problems that exist when there is a wildland-structural intermix.

- Viewing projects with a

case-by-case perception without looking at the dangers from the environment as a whole.

- A failure to use scientific and professional data in reaching decisions.

- An intermix paradox in planning, such as spreading out structures because fire services can't protect all homes. With that, firefighters are spread out protecting homes instead of surrounding the fire.

Record Courier
12-4-87

12-10-87 Record Courier

Bingo in Markleeville. The Native Sons of the Golden West will sponsor a Bingo party Dec. 12 at Turtle Rock State Park between Woodfords and Markleeville. The evening's events will get underway at 6:30 p.m. with a Mexican Enchilada Dinner. Bingo will follow the meal, and dancing to the Alpine Trio will begin after the games. No-host cocktails will be available. Dinner is \$6, and the pubic is invited.

Ski sign-ups. The Douglas County Ski Club will hold sign-ups at Douglas High School Saturday, Dec. 12, 9 a.m.-noon. Parents must sign registration forms. The program is open to Douglas County students, Saturday program, ages 10 through high school; Sunday program, ages 8 through high school. Cost is \$160 for program with four two-hour lessons, and \$130 for no lessons. The club will ski at Heavenly Valley Ski Resort. There will be a \$20 late fee charged after Dec. 12. Information, Frances Pedroarena, 782-5117, days.

Benefit Dinner. A benefit dinner for

R-C 12-10-87

'This is a really solid school' Dec
Douglas High School participates
in state improvement program

by JOYCE HOLLISTER
Staff writer

A School Improvement Assessment Team composed of six teachers at Douglas High is focusing attention on three areas at school they feel could use improvement.

It is all part of a state School Improvement Program, and Douglas is one of the few high schools in Northern Nevada to participate in it.

In fact, according to Principal Hal Butler, DHS is the largest Northern Nevada high school willing to involve itself in the program — a program in which students and teachers take a good look at what's going on at school, decide where improvements can be made, and then make them.

It will go on all year and involves a lot of paperwork, meetings, goal settings and project development and implementation.

First, this fall, students and teachers filled out surveys designed to find out the school's strengths and weaknesses.

They were asked to rate certain aspects of the school, including its learning climate, instructional leadership, expectations of students and staff, purposes and goals, methods of monitoring progress, home-school involvement and public image.

Specifics in these categories ranged from statements on student behavior to teachers' willingness to try new ideas, from commitment to goals to respect for others on the part of both students and teachers.

The teachers rated 100 statements and students, 50. Many of the same statements were rated by both.

According to Butler, from the survey the team determined that most of the teachers and most of the students feel that "all students can learn, not just those who are really smart," at Douglas High School.

"I feel that this is significant," he said. "If you're (a student) in

a situation where you're feeling put down, it's easy to believe that the teacher feels you can't make it."

Butler said the No. 1 criterion for excellence in a school is the belief that students, and teachers, do well.

The School Improvement Assessment Team, composed of Butler as chairman and teachers Jeanne Turnbeaugh, Burr Otto, Sunny Murphy, Glenda Smith, Jim Chatfield and Lynda Hardie, took the results of the survey and "brainstormed" ideas for specific improvement goals.

Out of many, they chose three: to develop an assessment program to increase student achievement; to develop a registration and scheduling procedure that will insure proper placement of students with minimal changes; and to develop a partnership among the school, family and community.

Turnbeaugh and Otto are co-chairmen of the first committee. Assessment of student achievement is the testing of their skills and determining at what level of learning they are at a given time.

Turnbeaugh will concentrate on the development of criterion-referenced testing, or testing for the curriculum that is taught at the school. Otto will concentrate on standardized testing — tests that are given nationwide.

The problem is, according to Otto, that it is difficult to measure the learning that is taking place at DHS when there is no method of measuring it. Students in elementary and middle school take standardized tests at regular intervals.

The state 9th grade proficiency test, which must be taken by all freshman students, is a very basic test, requiring skills usually learned in elementary school.

Juniors repeat the proficiency test (a state requirement), and seniors take college-entrance exams. But in between there is room for tests that can determine how much students are learning and in what areas.

Turnbeaugh will be looking at

developing Douglas High School tests that will measure what students are learning at DHS, based on what they are being taught.

Burr is charged with finding standard tests that could be used. The difficulty here, he said, is how much they will cost. Tests can be expensive.

When teachers know what and how well students are learning, scheduling them for the next year's classes could be easier.

Co-chairmen of the registration and scheduling committee, Chatfield and Hardie, therefore will reap the benefits of Turnbeaugh's and Otto's efforts.

Chatfield said that there are so many changes of classes at the beginning of the school year because students don't really know where they should be or what they want, that the first couple of weeks of school are disrupted. Learning suffers as a result.

He and Hardie hope to develop a new registration and scheduling program by this spring so that students will be better suited to their classes and be registered in them before school starts in the fall.

Teachers at DHS will be more involved in the process to make sure that students are placed in the right classes.

Murphy and Smith are working on the third goal, that of not only developing a partnership among the school, family and community, but also to improve student responsibility for learning, working and getting along with others.

As relationships and self-esteem improve, it is hoped that student academic achievement will improve as well.

The first activity the committee has set is the school slogan contest, which began Dec. 7 and will end next week.

Students and teachers may enter their slogans to win a "night on the town" package that includes a dinner for two at the Inn Cognito in Genoa, hot tubs at Walley's Hot Springs,



TEAM. The School Improvement Team at Douglas High School gets together in the DHS library. From left are Sunny Murphy, Principal Hal Butler, Lynda Hardie, Jeanne Turnbeaugh, Jim Chatfield and Burr Otto. Not pictured, Glenda Smith. R-C photo

followed by a movie.

Murphy and Smith made a couple of suggestions for slogans that stress academic excellence, give entrants an idea of what they are looking for:

"Excellence is Expected," was one, and the other was "Where Minds Matter Most." The slogan will be used on the school letterhead as well as in promotions at school.

Next to come are programs that involve parents and students, and the school and the community. Murphy and Smith plan to ask students and com-

munity members to help with their activities.

"We've got good response from the community," Murphy said. "People have volunteered to join."

The teachers want to get out to the public what kids are doing at DHS.

"This is a really solid school. There are some good academics here," Otto said, adding that he feels the community isn't aware of the good things going on at Douglas.

Butler praised the work of the six teachers and the many

others who will be working on the School Improvement Program this year.

"They've put in a lot of time," he said.

Butler also said that even though the program is only a year-long effort, it would be difficult to stop with just three goals.

Next year the school may continue a similar program on its own.

Gardnerville Elementary School also is taking part in the state program this year.

Minden: Rate increase considered

Continued from page 3

from Rotary Club members, who said no one was using the facilities anymore because of costs.

Users pay a \$300 refundable cleaning charge and a \$15-an-hour rental fee. Other board members said the fees are reasonable compared to other rental halls and money is needed

for the care of the buildings, cleaning and repairs.

- Approved a request for a special use permit for photographer Jay Aldrich to convert an existing garage into a photo studio at 1641 Esmeralda.

Board members said they wanted to see low-key businesses such as the studio in

this area that would not detract from its residential character. The home is in an area designated for residential offices.

- Reviewed plans for a second building being constructed by Clark Properties at U.S. 395 and 10th Street. Retail shops will go in the building.

1887: Winter is beautiful

100 YEARS AGO
Friday, Dec. 23, 1887
Genoa Weekly Courier

THE FINEST. This is about the finest Winter that ever slid down the silent stairway of the stars, to roost on the land of the free and the home of the brave. Nevada, world-famous for her delightful climate, is apparently trying to surpass herself in beautiful days and starry nights.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. Mrs. Langtry has

Remember when?

telegraphed for 40 acres of Nevada land for a Christmas present to a friend. Her ideas are certainly sound on both land and Christmas presents. The Carson Appeal says, "She has traveled all over the United States and is considered as a first class land sharp. After carefully studying the land and climate of a score of States she selects 40 acres of Nevada land as a Christmas gift to a friend."

The Record Courier

50 YEARS AGO
Dec. 24, 1937

12/24/37

The Record-Courier

CHRISTMAS TREES. With the forest department tightening rules for cutting trees on public domain, many local people who have previously enjoyed the fun of going into the hills and cutting their own Christmas tree, passed the annual trip into the mountains this year and were content to buy a tree from local dealers, paying about 75 cents to \$1 for the ones of average size.

BAD DAYS. With the flood necessitating closing of school two days last week and the need for carrying the study period over to Tuesday of this week, which should have been part of the Christmas vacation, pupils and teachers alike are agreed that two of the toughest days of the term were those of Monday and Tuesday.

BRIDGE REPLACED. The bridge at Woodfords, washed away by high water last week, closing down the main traveled highway to Markleeville, has been replaced by a temporary structure.

DOUGLAS LOSES. Tuesday night in a listless and ragged game the Reno Delts basketball team handed the Douglas high school Tigers a 35-9 defeat on the local court. The Reno Delt team is composed of former high school players and took a lead over the Tigers in the opening minutes of the game. In a second game, somewhat of a thrilling contest, the Carson Valley Twenty-Thirtians nosed out the First National bank squad by a score of 22-20.