

LEMON FIRE, #959
Incident 13699, 8/23/78

SYNOPSIS

On 8-23-78, five (5) Firefighters were burned during control action on the Lemon Fire (Riverside #13699). Of the injuries, one was serious, one of moderate extent, and three were minor.

The injuries occurred during an attempt to contain the fire to the south of Railroad Canyon Road. The injured were part of a ten (10) engine task force being moved into position along the road. Extreme burning conditions were existant on the fire with erratic winds, severe spotting, and extreme rates of spread.

The main fire, following several spot fires across the road, blew up on the south side of the road generating a small fire storm in the immediate vicinity of the engine on which the injured men were riding. Radiant heat was very intense, causing the burns.

Following the injuries, the men were evacuated from the fire area and transported to local hospitals. One injured fireman was admitted to the Sherman Oaks Burn Center with one other being examined by that facility and released. At a later time, an additional fireman was treated at the Center on an out patient basis.

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THE INVESTIGATION

During fire control operations on the Lemon Fire (Riverside #13699) on 8/23/78, five (5) Firefighters were burned, one seriously. An investigation team was assigned to establish the facts and determine the sequence of events which lead to the injuries. The team consisted of Pressley O. Kent, SFR II, John Lavell, FC Specialist, and Brian Richtmeyer, FC Specialist. The investigation began the evening of 8/23/78. The facts are as follows:

The actions pertinent to this investigation took place on the north side of the fire in Section 10, Township 6S, Range 4W, San Bernardino Base and Meridian in an area known as Railroad Canyon. The terrain in the canyon is steep to very steep, and rocky. The cover was light to medium brush with some areas of grass in the more level areas adjacent to and alongside the road. (See Exhibit 1)

The weather was hot, dry and with erratic winds over the ridgetops and in Railroad Canyon. The behavior of the fire was erratic with severe spotting and a rapid to very rapid rate of spread. Fire storms were observed in Railroad Canyon and elsewhere on the fire.

The injured Firemen were part of a ten (10) engine task force being moved from West to East through the canyon to provide structural protection and support for a backfiring operation to take place along the roadway. The time was approximately 1700 hours.

The task force assembled in a staging area established at Grape St. and Highway 71, some distance from Railroad Canyon. Engine 6163 was made a part of the force with Captain Bill Jones in charge and Engineer Olga Vogt driving. Firefighters Samuel Sanchez, Manuel Villalovas, Gregory Cameron, and Charles Mayberry were riding in the crew compartment. Prior to leaving the staging area, Engineer Vogt started the auxilliary pump and a length of 1½ inch line was coiled on top of the Engine for crew protection. (See Statement #3)

Engine 2 was also a part of the group and was the second engine behind 6163 in line. Volunteer Firefighters Kevin Powell and Norman Clark were riding on the tailboard.

As the task force entered the west end of Railroad Canyon, the fire was on the south ridge of the canyon which runs generally east and west with a northeasterly bend on the east end of the canyon below the Railroad Canyon Reservoir. (See Exhibit 1)

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At the point in time when the front of the task force and its leader, Battalion Chief, Robert Linn (see statements #1 & #2), was entering the fire area, the main fire was located on the north facing slope of the south ridge of the canyon. The fire was from 300 to 400 yards above the road at this time. There appeared to be no danger in moving the task force through the area. The winds in the canyon at that time were light.

Battalion Chief Linn, leading the task force, proceeded eastward on Railroad Canyon Road to a point approximately 1.7 miles from the junction of Railroad Canyon Road and Highway 71 (see point 1 on Exhibit II) where there was a large cleared area and where the fire had crossed the road. At this point, Linn began a hose lay with the first engine in line to try to stop the fire on the north side of the road. His task force was strung out behind him along the road for approximately .3 to .4 miles.

At a point approximately 1.4 miles from the intersection of Highway 71 and Railroad Canyon Road, engines in the convoy arrived at a place where a number of spot fires were burning on the north side of the road ahead of the main front of fire. (See red arrow, Exhibit II)

The engines of the convoy stopped to take control action on these spot fires. Engine 6163, with Captain Jones in charge and driven by Engineer Vogt, (see statements #3 & #4) stopped at a point directly opposite a small arroyo which ran from a point just below the southern ridgetop, to and across the road. (See Exhibit III) When the engine stopped, the Firefighters on the unit (see statements #5, #6, #7 and #8) observed fire on both sides of the road. The main fire was on the right or south side of the vehicle with one or more spot fires on the left or north side of the roadway.

Captain Jones states (statement #3) that upon stopping, he got out of the engine and observed the main fire still near the ridgetop on the south side of the canyon and that a spot fire was located on the north side of the road. He ordered Engineer Vogt to put the mid-ship pump into gear with the intention of attacking the spot fire with 1½ inch line. Almost immediately, he noticed that the main fire had begun moving rapidly downhill toward his position with a fire storm developing. At the same time, the spot fire flared up and began moving toward the engine. Captain Jones then reentered the cab and instructed Engineer Vogt to move the engine out of the area.

When the unit stopped at the spot fires, Firefighter Sanchez attempted to use the 1½ inch protection line to get water on the spot fire. Sanchez had the nozzle and was on top of the truck with Cameron handling the line for him. When the nozzle was opened, no water could be obtained. At this point, Firefighter Sanchez jumped off the engine on the left or driver's side. At the same time, the remaining Firefighters attempted to utilize the fire protection blanket by removing it from its container on the left side of the crew compartment. The blanket jammed in the container and could not be rolled out for use.

When the engine began to move, Firefighter Sanchez got into the crew compartment, where he found that he had to pile in on top of those already there. This placed him on top of everyone else and therefore more exposed to radiant heat than the others.

Almost immediately, as the truck began to move, the cab warning buzzer was accidentally activated by the press of bodies in the crew compartment, resulting in a stop and momentary delay in escape. At the same time, Engine 2 from the Sunnymead Station was also stopped, the second engine in line behind Engine 6163. Engineer Taylor was driving and in charge. (See statement #10) On the tailboard were Volunteer Firemen Kevin Powell and Norman Clark. Powell was on the right or fire side of the unit with Clark on the left. (See statements #10 & #11)

As the main fire approached the engine, Powell began to feel intense heat. He made some attempt to use the truck protection line but found it not charged. Firefighter Clark was able because of his location on the left side of the tailboard, to swing around the end of the truck, placing the metal body work between himself and the fire. Powell, on the other hand, was exposed directly to the radiant heat.

As he began to back his engine to escape the firestorm, Engineer Taylor noticed that the engine in front of him (Engine 12) was afire. About the time the engine began to back up, Firefighter Powell unbuckled his harness, jumped off the truck and began running west on the road. A short time later he got back on the engine, which eventually reached a place free from fire and heat.

The total elapsed time from the point in time when the engines stopped at the spot fires until the units retreated, was no more than 2 or 3 minutes. When the fire spotted over the roadway, a very rapid downslope movement of fire occurred on the south slope above the road. As the fire gained in intensity, a fire storm was generated in the gully adjacent to Engine 6163. (See Exhibit III)

As soon as the engines escaped the area of intense heat, it became apparent to Captain Jones and Engineer Taylor that personnel under their supervision had sustained burns. Engine 6163 had moved eastward along Railroad Canyon Road arriving at the large cleared area shown as point 1 in Exhibit II, where Division Chief Donal Russell (Statement #2) and Battalion Chief Linn were located. First aid was administered by pouring water on the burned areas of all injured and placing water soaked cloths on Firefighter Sanchez' arms.

The injured men from Engine 6163 were transported by Chief Flake and Division Chief Russell in units 6100 and 6102 to a rendezvous with the Sun City

Ambulance Service at Goetz Rd. and Newport Rd. Arrangements had been made by dispatch with the Community Hospital of the Valleys to receive burn victims.

Division Chief Russell instructed ECC dispatch by radio to advise the hospital that the injured were not to be admitted as patients. The hospital was to evaluate the extent of their burns and stabilize their condition. If any personnel required further treatment for burns the Department would arrange transportation to the Sherman Oaks Burn Center.

Meanwhile, Engine 2 proceeded west on Railroad Canyon Road arriving at the intersection of Highway 71. An ambulance had been dispatched to that location and transported Volunteer Fireman Kevin Powell to the Riverside General Hospital in Riverside where he was treated and released to his parents who had travelled to the hospital on receiving word of his injury. His parents transported him to the Edgemont Station where he obtained his car and he then travelled to the Sunnymead Station where he made contact with Fire Captain Dale Brusewitz. After examining Firefighter Powell, Captain Brusewitz felt that a further examination at the burn center might be in order.

Captain Brusewitz contacted ECC dispatch and advised them of his intention to seek further examination of Powell. After contact with the parents, it was decided that they would provide transportation to Sherman Oaks. ECC dispatch notified the burn center of the ETA of Powell. He was examined and released.

Following examination and treatment at the Community Hospital of the Valleys, Firefighter Sanchez was found to have burns requiring further treatment. Arrangements were made to transport him to the Burn Center at Sherman Oaks via the Medi-Vac helicopter from Loma Linda Hospital. He was found to have second degree burns on both arms and back. At the conclusion of this investigation, he remained in the Center.

An examination of the fire blanket and cannister installed on Engine 6163 was made by Captain Richtmeyer and Fire Crew Supervisor Meidell (See statement #14) on August 23, 1978. Meidell stated that the blankets used are manufactured in his camp of assignment. It was determined that the blanket in the cannister was one designed to be installed on a dozer unit. The size of this type of blanket is approximately 80" X 90". A blanket designed for use in an engine cannister is approximately 60" X 120 and is designed to attach to the shaft inside the cannister. A loop is provided to act as a handle for fast removal from the cannister which the dozer blanket does not have.

Meidell stated that in the past there has been a problem with the cotter pins used to attach the roller shaft to the end collars in the cannisters.

If the pin ends are not carefully bent over and taped they will grab the blanket material and jam the unit.

An examination of Engine 6163 was made on August 24, 1978 at the San Jacinto Fire Station by Captain Richtmeyer and Ranger Kent. Close inspection of the protective blanket cannister showed that a cotter pin at the crank end of the shaft was not bent over but protruded approximately 1 1/4" past the outside diameter of the shaft. It appeared that the blanket was not an engine blanket (See Exhibit IV) but one intended for installation on a dozer. Exhibit V consists of photocopies of Fix and Fax #65 and #99 concerning the installation of the blankets and cannisters. It was also noted that Engine 6163 has only one cannister and blanket installed. (See Exhibit VI) The location normally reserved for the right blanket installation had been used to mount a ladder.

Examination of the cab warning buzzer button revealed it to be mounted about 4" from the rear of the vertical portion of the left crew seat base. (See Exhibit VII) The button is not protected in any way from accidental activation. On test, the button and warning buzzer were found to be fully operative.

Upon questioning Captain William Jones concerning the blanket, he stated (See supplemental statement 3A) that it was installed on 6163 during the non fire mission period January, 1978, through May, 1978. He further stated that the blanket came installed in the cannister.

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OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The following opinions and conclusions were reached by the investigative team. In arriving at the conclusions, careful review of all statements and facts was made as well as consideration given to personal observations.

1. The action taken in moving the ten engine task force into Railroad Canyon was prudent and reasonable for conditions which existed at the time the operation began.
2. Considering the fire behavior existent on the fire and the observed wind and fire behavior during the period just before, during, and just after the injuries occurred, it is reasonable to conclude that within a minute or so following the spot fires across the road, an extremely rapid spread of fire downslope occurred on the hill south of the task force. It is also probable that a fire storm was generated in the gully immediately adjacent to the location of Engine 6163 and near Engine 2.
3. It is probable that the location of Engine 6163 immediately adjacent to the mouth of the gully placed the unit and it's personnel in an area of greater fire intensity than those in other locations in the vicinity. Engine 2 received some of the effects also.
4. It is noteworthy that only personnel outside the cabs of units in the area were injured. Captain Jones received minor burns on one hand and the Firefighters on 6163 and Engine 2 who were exposed were also burned. The crew of Engine 12, although it's air cleaner caught fire, received no injuries.
5. The malfunction of the fire blanket may have resulted in the injuries on 6163. It is reasonable to suppose that with the blanket properly deployed and all personnel beneath it, injuries would have been reduced in severity.
6. The matter of the failure to install the standard two cannisters on 6163 must also be considered. The second blanket, properly installed, would have acted as a "fail safe" on malfunction of the first unit.
7. The fact that Captain Jones elected to attack the spot fire by utilizing the 1½" line charged with the midship pump may have increased the difficulties of the crew members in the crew compartment. When the fire swept in upon the engine, in order to move the truck, the midship pump had to be disengaged, thus leaving the crew with no water pressure in the truck protection line. At the same time, since the auxiliary pump engine was running at idle, it provided no pressure either.

In considering these factors, it must be remembered that the time frame for the entire sequence of events was exceedingly short. Probably no more than two to three minutes elapsed between action start at the spot fires,

to escape.

Based on earlier action on the fire where the use of $1\frac{1}{2}$ " lines was necessary to effect control, and the conditions observed by Jones on his arrival at the spot fires, his decision to use the $1\frac{1}{2}$ " line and midship pumping configuration was reasonable. Given the extremely short time spans, it is probable that Engineer Vogt no more than completed the manipulations placing the midship pump into operation when she received orders from Captain Jones to move the truck out of the area.

8. The greater severity of Firefighter Sanchez' burns as compared to the other personnel on 6163, are attributable to two factors:

- A. In leaving the engine, Sanchez had no place to crouch into when he returned to the crew compartment, all space being taken up by those already there. He therefore was lying on top of the others more fully exposed to the radiant heat, especially his back and arms.
- B. When the cab warning buzzer was accidentally sounded, the Engineer stopped to ascertain the cause. Even though the pause in escape was momentary, with the amount of radiant heat present it is probable that Sanchez' injuries were more severe than if the stop had not occurred.

9. Firefighter Powell's injuries are probably the result of two factors: First, his exposed location on the tailboard and on the right or fire side of the engine. Secondly, since his burns are on the left side of his face, the consequences of his leaving the truck and running down the road must be considered. In leaving the engine, he was then facing west on the road and opposite to the direction he faced while on the unit. This then placed the left side of his body toward the main fire. Not only was he now on the ground and on foot, he had lost whatever protection the metalwork of the engine might have afforded. Although Powell faced the fire directly momentarily while he attempted to use the engine protection line, it is most probable that his injuries occurred after he left the unit. It is the conclusion of the team that his injuries were aggravated by his action in leaving the unit.

10. From the testimony and evidence at hand, actions taken and decisions made by all responsible personnel appear reasonable and proper.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

1. All fire blanket cannisters in service should have the cotter pin or pins removed and an allen set screw or properly fitted flush steel pin, or other fastening device which will eliminate all protruding metal installed.
2. All blankets installed in cannisters should be inspected to assure that the proper blanket is installed.
3. All blankets should be stencilled at time of manufacture with the words "Engine Protective Blanket" or "Dozer Protective Blanket" as the case may be, to prevent future faulty installations.
4. A formalized requirement for the periodic checking at the station of assignment, to be made on all cannister and blanket installations to assure a proper functioning and installation.
5. A formalized requirement for a minimum basic instruction and training to be provided to each new crew member on the purpose and proper use of the fire protective blanket and system.
6. Cab warning buzzer switches on all engines should be covered with a spring loaded protective device to prevent accidental activation. It is of interest to note that this is not the first accident occurring as a direct result of accidental sounding of the warning device. (See Exhibit VIII)

Respectfully Submitted,


PRESSLEY O. KENT, SFR II


JOHN LAVELL, EC


BRIAN RICHTMEYER, EC

R O U G H D R A F T

Statement by Dale K. Brusewitz
August 24, 1978

Covering Sunnymeade, 8/23/78, at about 2015 Kevin Powell, Volunteer Fireman from Sunnymeade VFD, arrived at the station in his personal pickup truck.

He informed Brusewitz he had been at the Riverside General Hospital emergency room where he had been treated for burns suffered while engaged in control action on the Lemon Fire. He stated he was released by the emergency room staff.

He stated that he was transported to the hospital by ambulance.

Brusewitz does not know how he obtained his truck.

Upon questioning Powell, Brusewitz was informed that the treatment received at Riverside General consisted of application of Zinc Oxide ointment to the facial burn. Additionally, the Riverside General emergency room personnel asked Powell what kind of insurance he had. Upon his reply that he had Kaiser, he stated they advised him to go to Kaiser Hospital early the following morning (8/24/78) and that they would probably admit him for treatment.

Brusewitz then asked Powell if he wished to go to the Sherman Oaks Burn Center to which Powell indicated he did and that his father would take him.

Brusewitz called the dispatch office at Perris contacting Captain Ostrander. It was agreed that Powell should be sent to Sherman Oaks if transport could be arranged.

Dale Brusewitz

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Brusewitz then sent Powell home with a volunteer fireman to see if the family would provide transportation.

In about ten minutes, Kevin returned with his parents. The father entered the station with Kevin to obtain directions to the Burn Center.

Brusewitz stated to Mr. Powell that CDF could and would arrange for transport to the Center if he preferred. Mr. Powell indicated he wanted to take his son to the Center.

Mr. Powell asked if the Center knew they were coming. Brusewitz assured him that the Center would be notified. Contact was made with dispatch and an ETA given. The Center was notified.

Brusewitz stated Powell had bandages covering the burned area on the face with the exception of the left ear which was without bandages and coated with Zinc Oxide salve.

August 24, 1978

The following statement is by Robert R. Martines, Emergency Command Center Chief, Perris Headquarters, concerning the sequence of events that occurred in the Perris Command Center on August 24, 1978, after notification of four burn victims off Unit 6163 and one burn victim off Engine 2. The incident was recorded on Form FC-9 (Incident Card) at 1719 hours.

Eugene Ostrander and Ray Snodgrass, Captain Dispatchers and Tom Tisdale, Clerk Dispatcher had some part in processing this incident.

At 1719 hours, 6102 Chief Russell advised the ECC that he had two burn victims and 6100 Chief Flake also had two burn victims and they wanted an ambulance. Captain Ostrander advised 6102 that the ambulance to respond would be from Sun City Ambulance. It would meet them at Goetz Road and Newport Road. Ostrander then called Sun City Ambulance and requested two ambulances.

At 1729 hours, 6111 (Chief Linn) advised there was one burned victim off of Engine 2. We requested John's Ambulance to respond. They were advised that John's Ambulance would meet them at the lower roadblock and Railroad Canyon Road. Captain Ostrander called John's Ambulance and requested one ambulance to respond.

Captain Ostrander did not receive any other communications from John's Ambulance.

Captain Snodgrass advised Community Hospital of the Valleys that five burn victims were enroute to the emergency room. Our instructions to the hospital were to have the victim checked but not admitted. If anyone needed to be admitted, we would send them to the Sherman Oaks Burn Facility via helicopter.

At approximately 1845 hours, the hospital advised that one victim, Samuel Sanchez, would have to be hospitalized.

Captain Snodgrass contacted the Loma Linda University Hospital and made arrangements for the medi-vac helicopter to pick up the victim from Perris and fly him to Sherman Oaks. They advised us the ETA of the helicopter would be 30 minutes. It actually arrived approximately one hour and 35 minutes after request. Snodgrass also contacted the Sherman Oak Burn Facility and advised them of the transfer.

At approximately 2010 hours, Captain Dale Brusewitz, calling from Station 2, advised Captain Ostrander that the victim, Kevin Powell, had been taken to Riverside General Hospital and released by the doctor. In Captain Brusewitz's opinion, he should be taken to Sherman Oaks for further treatment. While arranging for ambulance transportation, Brusewitz called back and advised the victim's father would transport to Sherman Oaks.


ROBERT R. MARTINES

Chief, Emergency Command Center

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Interview conducted by Captain John B. Lavell, California Department of Forestry, Orange County. The date was 8/23/78 at 2310 hours, Perris Headquarters. Present is Bob Linn, Ranger I.

Q. Bob, would you state your full name and position?

A. Robert Ralston Linn, Ranger I, Perris District Ranger, Riverside Ranger Unit.

Q. Bob, were you a task force commander on this particular fire?

A. Yes, I was.

Q. In the Elsinore area?

A. Yes.

Q. What were your duties at that particular time? As task force commander?

A. My assignment was to pick up engines that were available at out of the tanker pool on Highway 71 that 6208 had. I picked up at that time ten engines and proceeded west on 71 to Railroad Canyon.

Q. Was 6163 one of the units in your task force?

A. Yes, it was.

Q. Do you recall approximately what position they had in the task force? Where they were located?

A. 6163 was about the fourth unit back.

Q. Now, you were proceeding northeast on Railroad Canyon Road?

A. That's right.

Q. And you had occasion to stop? For what reason to halt your task force?

A. I did not stop.

Q. You didn't halt your task force?

A. No. I stopped when I reached where the fire had crossed the road where we had the turnout. I pulled in there and had the units start pulling in there because that's where the fire was hitting the road real hard and had crossed the road. The first unit that was in there was a State unit and I asked him to start a hose lay off to the left and try to grab it, to jump on it and try to hold it, and it was fruitless.

- Q. Was the rest of the task force continuing to move or did they slow down or stop behind you.
- A. They stopped behind those units that were coming in. But they were strung out quite aways. The fire was quite aways away from the road when I came through. I'd say three to four hundred yards in most of the area along the road.
- Q. Was there any backfire going on?
- A. I didn't see any backfire at all going on.
- Q. What was your topography as far as brush, grass, overgrowth, etc.
- A. Steep, real steep, we were in the bottom of the canyon. The brush was probably three to four foot stuff with a lot of grass in it. A lot of grass, wild oats.
- Q. Did it come up to the side of the road?
- A. It jumped the road.
- Q. I mean as far as the brush and . . .
- A. Yes, it did. The road was probably 30 feet wide, blacktop.
- Q. Did you feel there was any danger in proceeding up through this particular area? Any apparent threat at that time?
- A. No apparent threat at that time. With that many engines, there was . . . When I was coming and looked at it, it didn't appear to have any heavy winds on it. The fire didn't appear to be that close to the road and I felt that we could go right on in to the fire from the road with no problem at all.
- Q. In other words, it was a routine attack?
- A. Routine with no problems.
- Q. Did you observe the incident that involved 6163?
- A. I can't say I observed them getting burned, no.
- Q. When did you first become aware of it?
- A. When they came on and said that they had been burned. That was after I had stopped. They said that it had hit the road hard behind and that they had people burned.
- Q. Then you weren't conscious of where they had stopped as far as the road itself is concerned.
- A. No, I was not.
- Q. Did they say anything to you after the incident--the blow up?

- A. I talked to them a little bit. That was after the firefighters that had been burned had been hauled away. I went back . . . After I got the engines through and we realized that we had a fire storm working us over, we pulled all the engines we possible could on through and I went back through the burn and had the engines that were in the fire area where he was hit to move on through as fast as they could under fire blankets to get in a safe area, and the ones that couldn't, I had them back out and completely clear the area.
- Q. Did you happen to observe whether the fire blanket on 6163 was operational?
- A. That was
It was not. /One of the questions I asked them. They told me it was hung up and they were not able to get it out.
- Q. Did you check it?
- A. No, I have not checked it as yet. But they did work on it and they said they had frayed it.
- Q. All right, you made a statement to the fact that you became involved in a fire storm. Now was this prior to the arrival of 6163 or was it while they were parked further down the road?
- A. Well, it hit the road as a fire storm and then we had numerous ones, fire storms and heavy whirlwinds hitting the road at the same time. This is the reason that I pulled the engines out that I was able to make contact with immediately and the rest of them, I turned around and went back through the fire myself to make contact the ones that were farther down the road and to hurry them up to get them out of there or to back them out, whichever seemed to be the safest.
- Q. Was it after you started moving these units out that you became aware that 6163 had had some injuries on it?
- A. That's right. Also Engine 2 had an injury on it at that time. I was advised at that time.
- Q. Okay, Engine 2 was located where, was that behind 6163 or in front of it. Do you know?
- A. In the area of 6163. The task force was made up, when I pulled into the tanker pool, they said take these ten engines, and when we pulled out they just got in the line.
- Q. Can you think of anything else that might be of benefit as far as this investigation is concerned?
- A. We did fire the road after the thing. . . We backed the units out and split the task force. Part of them went in to the safety island towards Canyon Lake and part of them I had turn around and move back out to the vicinity of 71 and Railroad Canyon. In doing this, the fire was hitting them so fast and so hard that we burned up two air cleaners in the 1250's. The fire was hitting them that hard. Once we got into the clear area in the thing and let it settle down and got the crew settled down, we came back in and spread

everybody out and started backfiring operation from the Railroad Canyon Road where it hadn't blow _____ across the road. In doing so we had virtually no wind at all. Either way the canyon area was almost completely dead still with a real slight breeze, and it was up canyon to carry the fire away from us.

- Q. Okay, that was the first/backfiring operation that took place in this area to your knowledge?
- A. To my knowledge, yes.
- Q. And that was after you had the fire storm?
- A. That's right.
- Q. Is there anything else that you can think of?
- A. During this backfiring operation, just about the time that we were able to finish it, we had probably a hundred yards to go after firing about two miles of road, then numerous fire storms would develop. The wind would jump from two to three miles an hour and completely change up to 30 and 35 miles an hour blowing it across the road.
- Q. You say you were aware that the fire blanket was non functional on 6163?'
- A. Right. Now that was. . . I was informed by the captain on the engine that they had repaired it; that they were able to get it out after that.
- Q. Did they give you any information as to what might have been the cause of it hanging up?
- A. They felt that it was probably that the stops on it that kept it from coming out by itself. Possibly the _____ stops on it.
- Q. Was there any statement made to you with reference to not getting water to the safety line or the protection line to the unit?
- A. No statements whatsoever.

Interview concluded

Memorandum

Date : August 24, 1978

Those Concerned

From : Donal L. Russell, Fire Boss
Department of Forestry

Subject: 8200 GROUND ATTACK
8200 General
Lemon Fire Number 959, Incident 61-13699
Burn Incident of Five Fire Fighters
Four CDF Fire Fighters/Seasonal and One Sunnymead Volunteer
Donal L. Russell, Fire Boss

In the late afternoon of Wednesday, August 23, I do not remember the time, the head of the fire was approaching the ridge, south of Railroad Canyon. The Line Boss, Ranger Castleman, and I were removing engines on to Railroad Canyon Road to start a firing out operation in an effort to keep the fire south of Railroad Canyon Road. Since the beginning of the fire there had been extremely severe spotting conditions and very rapid rates of burning. Burning conditions were similar to those during medium Santana conditions. Humidity was extremely low as evidenced by the spotting and rapid rate of spread.

My first knowledge of the incident was something over the radio about somebody burned. Very shortly thereafter, a matter of minutes, Captain Jones of the San Jacinto crew, pulled up behind me and started unloading the burned fire fighters. I took them into my vehicle, requested an ambulance to meet me enroute, and deliver them to the Sun City Paramedic Unit.

I did not have first hand observation of the incident in which these personnel were burned; however, I will try to describe the conditions. I was near the eastern portion of the situation I am going to describe; the burned people were immediately west of me.

The fire was on the ridge top, south of Railroad Canyon, running in a northerly direction on no less than a mile front and threatening to cross the canyon. There were literally dozens of very large spots from one to 500 feet up above the road on the south side of the canyon. These large spots were throwing small spots which were really uncountable and this condition persisted down to and across Railroad Canyon Road. We were literally inundated in just a matter of minutes with mass area ignitions.

8200 GROUND ATTACK
8200 General
Lemon Fire Number 959, Incident 61-13699
Burn Incident of Five Fire Fighters

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On the morning of August 24, 1978 I discussed the situation with Captain Jones. He indicated one part of the problem was in removing the fire blanket from its can (container) it hung up on something and he feels it might have been the cotter pins that were in the mechanism. I asked him to investigate this at an early date and give me a brief written memo so that in the event it was a contributing factor, we can pass the information to other stations in our unit and forward it to Region Office for state-wide dissemination.

Donal L. Russell
mcg

Donal L. Russell, Fire Boss
Lemon Fire Number 959

mcg

LEMON FIRE, #959
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Interview conducted by Captain John B. Lavell, California Department of Forestry, Orange County. The date is 8/24/78 at 0025 hours, scene of Lake Elsinore Fire. Present is Captain Bill Jones.

Q. Would you state your full name"

A. William H. Jones.

Q. Date of birth?

A. April 18, 1929.

Q. Home address?

A. 24770 Lake Street, Sp. 63, Hemet, California.

Q. Your title?

A. Fire captain.

Q. How long have you been employed by the Division of Forestry?

A. Fifteen and a half to sixteen years.

Q. And how long have you been a fire captain?

A. Approximately five or six years.

Q. When did you come on duty?

A. I came on at 8 o'clock this morning.

Q. 8 o'clock this morning, the 23rd. Okay, when were you dispatched to the fire.

A. Without looking at the sheet, probably we were enroute to cover Elsinore around 1630.

Q. You were sent to cover San Jacinto originally?

A. Right.

Q. And then were you dispatched enroute to the fire proper?

A. Yes, we were dispatched to the staging area of the task force.

Q. What unit were you assigned to?

A. Unit 6163.

Q. And that's out of . . .?

- A. San Jacinto Station.
- Q. What was your position on the unit?
- A. I was riding in the cab next to the engineer.
- Q. Who was operating the vehicle?
- A. Olga Voit, just picked up here two weeks ago.
- Q. Do you recall who else was on the vehicle?
- A. My four firefighters were on the rear.
- Q. Their names?
- A. Sam Sanchez, Manuel Villalovos, Charles Maberry and Greg Cameron.
- Q. You state you were a portion of a task force. Who was the task force commander?
- A. 6111, Bobby Linn.
- Q. Can you tell me your direction of travel as far as being a member of that task force is concerned?
- A. I would say we were heading in a westerly direction.
- Q. What road were you on?
- A. We were on Railroad Canyon Road.
- Q. Where did you depart from?
- A. We departed from Grape and Highway 71. That was the staging area for the task force.
- Q. You would be traveling in a northeasterly direction possibly.
- A. Right.
- Q. Would you tell me what occurred as you proceeded up Railroad Canyon Road.
- A. We proceeded up Railroad Road. We come upon a fire on top of the ridge and spotting across the road. In the area where I was there was approximately three spots, one behind me, one in front of me and one alongside me. I had units in front and the rear of me.
- Q. What was the approximate position of your unit in the column?
- A. Probably about fourth or third unit.
- Q. And you say you had fire on the side of the road and spotting?

- A. It was spotting from the top of the hill across the road which would be on the north side of the road.
- Q. The hill was on which side of the vehicle, your right or your left?
- A. It would be on my right.
- Q. It would be on approximately the southwest side of the road.
- A. Right.
- Q. It was spotting across.
- A. On the north side of the road.
- Q. What was the terrain like as far as brush and the rest was concerned?
- A. It was medium, what I would classify as medium brush, and steep terrain in the location we were at.
- Q. Was it flash fuel type, light or heavy.
- A. It was heavy and grassy on the north side, rolling slopes. The south side was very steep terrain with medium to heavy brush on it.
- Q. So you proceeded up Railroad Canyon Road and then what?
- A. Well, we came to this one area where it was spotting across the road. The units in front and behind each had a spot. I got out of the unit . . .
- Q. You stopped?
- A. We stopped at one spot. It would be in the center.
- Q. Were you ordered to stop.
- A. No. We were just up there for spotting and trying to stop it on the road.
- Q. Did you stop of your own accord?
- A. Yes.
- Q. The other units were proceeding on or what?
- A. They were stopped too. One was in front of me and one was at the rear of me. I got out of the unit and looked at the top of the hill. The fire was still on top of the hill. It had one spot across on the north side. At that time I thought I could pick it up. By the time I got around to the driver's side of the truck and told the engineer to put it in the mid-~~ship~~ pumping gear, I was going to take the inch and a half to catch the spot, before I could do that I looked back up the hill and saw the fire storm coming down. At the same time the spot flared up and came back toward the truck and we couldn't do anything

so I got back on the other side and started to get out of there.
And that's when the fire storm hit us.

Q. Okay. You put it in gear?

A. Put it in gear and started down the road.

Q. Can you operate that pump when the vehicle is in gear?

A. No. Not for the mid-shift.

Q. And how did your auxiliary operate?

A. It operates on a separate engine.

Q. But you have to operate that . . . Can you start that from the cab of the vehicle?

A. No. We have to . . . It was already running and it was on the outside and it was running.

Q. The auxiliary was running?

A. Right. The firefighters told me that water pressure.

Q. I'm sorry, I couldn't hear you.

A. The firefighters told me when we got out of the fire storm that there wasn't any water pressure which was because it was only idling.

Q. I see. In other words, it was operative and running, but it was only an idle.

A. Right.

Q. That would account for the fact that you weren't getting pressure in the protective line?

A. Right.

Q. So then you proceeded forward.

A. We proceeded forward to get out of the area. Upon arrival out of the area to a location off the side of the road where other units were parked, I went to the back of the truck and Sam Sanchez was the only one that was burnt and immediately we took him and one other firefighter and loaded them in a sedan which was 6102, that would be Don Russell's unit. The other firefighters told me also they were burnt. We checked them over and they were minor burns. We also loaded them in a sedan and sent them to a hospital. After this we got up on the truck, the engineer and I, and we found out that the fire blanket was inoperative. It had jammed.

Q. Now, why did it jam?

- A. That I can't determine unless it was rolled in there improperly. Also, I showed Steve Huntington, the fire captain from Beaumont, the same thing. He helped unroll it.
- Q. Had these people been trained on how to use that fire blanket.
- A. Apparently they had tried to unroll it because it was partly pulled out and that's where it was jammed. I assume whoever rolled it in didn't roll it in properly. When it came out, it jammed.
- Q. When you got back in the truck, was that the time the fire storm hit you?
- A. Yeah, it was starting to hit us.
- Q. Had any of your people gotten up to take the unit protective line at that point?
- A. When I was off the side of the truck I was asking for the protection line. They started to hand it to me and that's when I stopped because I could see the whole thing had flared up and I went back and got in the truck. We were going to leave. I assumed they would pull that fire blanket out for protection because we were going to go down the road and get out of there.
- Q. Who was on top of the truck handing you the protection line?
- A. I can't remember off hand.
- Q. Was he still on top of the truck when you started to move forward?
- A. I can't say because I was on the inside of the truck. I assume he got back down in position when he saw me leave.
- Q. Did you tell him to get back in position?
- A. No, I didn't have time, it was move out fast.
- Q. You were getting out of there as fast as you could. And that's just about the time that the fire storm hit the unit?
- A. Yeah, it was pretty close in there because I had the window rolled up and we were getting out of there. When I walked around in back of the truck this hand got burned just from the heat itself.
- Q. You say your engineer is Voit?
- A. V O G T
- Q. And how long has she been operating as an engineer?
- A. Well, this is her first day after being out of the 80 hour engineer training course.

- Q. As it stands now, the auxiliary was in idle and was not pumping sufficiently to get water to the safety line. The truck was in gear and hence your main pump wouldn't operate.
- A. Well, we never completed . . .
- Q. You never did get it into pump?
- A. No, because I told her let's get out of here.
- Q. Bill, when was the last time that blanket had been checked--to your knowledge?
- A. I can't say for sure.
- Q. Do you have any set procedure when you come on duty you check that equipment or not?
- A. Well, we haven't been and I can see the results of it now. Of course, if we check it every morning, it doesn't mean to say it's going to work right at that time.
- Q. Personnel had been trained in the proper use of the blanket?
- A. Right.
- Q. Had they been trained on the proper use of the auxiliary pump?
- A. Not all of them, no.
- Q. Had Sanchez been trained?
- A. Yes.
- Q. He could have handled it?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Can you think of anything else that might help me as far as this investigation is concerned?
- A. Not really off hand. The thing did occur quite fast. Very rapidly, in fact.
- Q. Let me ask you a question in this sense. You've had quite a bit of time with the Department. Did you have any qualms about the fire situation as you came up Railroad Canyon Road?
- A. Not at that time because the fire was still on top of the ridges and coming down the ridges, but nothing like the fire's going to hit us.
- Q. In other words, to you it was just a routine attack.
- A. Yeah. It felt fairly safe when we first came through here, but then like I say, when I first started to pick up one spot, I thought I

had more than enough time to pick up that one spot before the fire hit the road and we could make a pretty good stand here. But when it came off, I saw a fire storm coming off the top of the hill and by the time I walked around the truck, told her to put it in mid-~~shift~~ ^{Shift} and get the inch and a half off to get the spot, I looked up the hill and there was a fire storm coming down.

Q. The location that you stopped in, were you in a cut, more or less, so that the fire went over you rather than hit you?

A. Not a cut, no, the fire was a very . . . On the south side of the road a very steep bank or slope. It came down . . . It had just sort of a rolling slope to my left.

Q. In other words, away from the dropoff or up?

A. Well, more or less a short rise.

Q. In other words, you were in kind of a V?

A. More or less, yes.

Q. So you stopped at that particular point to knock down a hot spot?

A. It wasn't very big at the time when I first pulled in there.

Q. And then it just all picked up at once?

A. Just BAM it hit. The fire storm came off the top of the ridge. It even pulled the hot spot up. It was drawn into the fire coming off the ridge. That's when I decided to move out of there.

Q. Can you think of anything else?

A. Not off hand. I do remember that when we started out of the fire, apparently the guys in the back were trying to get away from the fire and they hit the horn button. So I told her to stop. We thought there was something wrong. Maybe one of the guys fell off or they wanted us to stop. I turned around and looked through the back window and I told her to proceed on.

Q. Okay, at that time where were all the personnel?

A. They were on the back of the truck. They were crouched down. I could see part of their bodies.

Q. All four of them?

A. No, -I couldn't see all four of them.

Q. In other words, you started moving forward and you stopped again?

A. Right. Because she heard the horn. Apparently they hit the button when they were crouching down in the well of the rear cab to try

to get away from the fire.

Q. Do you have anything else to add?

A. I can't think of anything else right now. Of course, when we got up to there we found out they were burnt. We sent them to the hospital right away. I remember saying we didn't have any pressure.

Q. Do you recall which unit was behind you?

A. It was a County unit, I can't remember.

Q. 2, Engine 2?

A. Possibly.

Interview terminated at 0040 hours, 8/24/78.

LEMON FIRE, #959
Incident 13699, 8/23/78

Continuation of interview conducted with Captain Bill Jones, 8/24/78, at the scene of the fire that occurred in the Lake Elsinore area on 8/23/78. Interview conducted by Captain John B. Lavell, California Department of Forestry, Orange County.

0135 hours

Q. Bill, with reference to the personnel assigned to your unit, what equipment were they wearing?

A. They were wearing full safety equipment. Nomex pants, jackets, helmets, hoods, goggles, gloves.

Q. They all had this on at the time of the fire.

Interview concluded at 0135 hours, 8/24/78

LEMON FIRE, 8/24/78
Statement 3A

Supplemental Statement of William Jones, Fire Captain

On 8/24/78 Ranger Kent and Captain Richtmeyer examined the cannister and fire blanket installed on Engine 6163. Upon questioning, Captain Jones stated that the cannister and blanket was installed during the non fire mission period between January 1978 and May 1978. He further stated that the blanket was installed in the cannister unit when the engine was activated at the San Jacinto Station for the 1978 fire season.

LEMON FIRE, #959
Incident 13699, 8/23/78

Interview conducted by Captain John B. Lavell, California Department of Forestry, Orange County. The date is 8/24/78 at 0045 hours, at the scene of a fire that occurred in the Lake Elsinore area on 8/23/78. Present is Olga M. G. Vogt.

Q. Would you state your full name, please?

A. Olga M. G. Vogt.

Q. And your date of birth?

A. 10/18/57.

Q. And your home address?

A. 7409 Potomac Street, Riverside, California.

Q. And what is your job title?

A. Fire Apparatus Engineer.

Q. How long have you worked for the Department of Forestry?

A. This is my fourth season with the Department of Forestry.

Q. And how long have you worked as a Fire Apparatus Engineer?

A. Today was my first official day on the job.

Q. Have you driven fire trucks before?

A. In training out of Corona CDF Station, in general training, no Code 3 driving or anything else.

Q. When did you come on duty?

A. This morning.

Q. What time?

A. 0800

Q. And what unit were you assigned to?

A. 6163.

Q. That's out of . . .

A. San Jacinto.

Q. What time were you dispatched to the fire? Approximately.

- A. Approximately 3 o'clock as far as I can guess.
- Q. Were you the operator of the vehicle?
- A. Yes, I was.
- Q. Mind if I call you Pixie?
- A. No. Please do.
- Q. Now, Pixie, can you tell me who the crew members were? Besides Jones, on your unit.
- A. There was in the crew cab Sam, Manuel, Greg and Charlie.
- Q. That was Sam Sanchez, Manuel Villalovos, Greg Cameron and Charles Maberry?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Okay, what were you assigned to.
- A. Which unit?
- Q. No. Let me go back and rephrase this. You were dispatched to the fire at what time?
- A. Approximately . . . We were on the way to/^{cover}Elsinore and they dispatched us enroute . . .
- Q. To do what?
- A. A Code 3 task force to the staging area.
- Q. Do you recall who the task force commander was?
- A. When we left the staging area with our unit it was 6111, Bob Linn.
- Q. Do you recall how many units there were in the task force?
- A. I heard 6111 say that he thought he had ten engines behind him.
- Q. Do you recall what your position was in the task force?
- A. Third.
- Q. You were third in the task force. What direction were you proceeding in? Tell me where you started from.
- A. Okay, we started from Grape and 71 and were heading towards Railroad Canyon Road.
- Q. In other words, you were heading up Railroad Canyon Road?
- A. We turned off at 71 on towards Railroad Canyon Road.

- Q. You were headed in a northeasterly direction?
- A. Yes.
- Q. In other words, headed towards Sun City?
- A. Yeah, in that direction.
- Q. Can you tell me what happened enroute?
- A. We were coming toward Railroad Canyon Road and Jones told me to pull over to . . .
- Q. That's Captain Jones?
- A. Captain Jones told me to pull over to the right hand side of the road. We were going to hit a spot, catch a spot there. We were engaged in mid-~~shift~~ **slip**
- Q. In other words, you stopped the vehicle?
- A. I stopped the vehicle. He told me to engage in mid-~~shift~~ **slip**, and he started to grab a line.
- Q. Where was he at that time?
- A. He was on the ground on the left-hand side of the engine.
- Q. The driver's side?
- A. Yeah, on the driver's side. He was going to hit this spot that was on my side. The driver's side of the road. And then I was sitting there and I had the pump in gear and I had the door open ready to get out, and he said "pull out" or something to the effect that we were going to move out. I disengaged the pump and he came around and said "let's go" and the horn in the back buzzed, and I stopped and he said "no, just go".
- Q. Were you proceeding at that time? Had you started moving forward?
- A. Yes. Then the horn buzzed and I stopped and he said "go". And we went through and we went down the road.
- Q. Can you operate the auxiliary pump from the cab?
- A. Yes.
- Q. You can operate . . .
- A. No, no. To raise the pressure?
- Q. Yeah.
- A. No.

- Q. You have no pressure control in the cab?
- A. No.
- Q. Was the auxiliary pump operating at that time?
- A. Yes. I had turned it on at Grape and 71 and we had set a 50 foot length of hose on top of the engine for the crew's protection. As far as I know, it was on when we went down the road. I don't know what happened when I was engaging the pump, the mid-shift pump.
- Q. So you actually had it in pump? And Jones told you to disengage and to move forward? Then what did you do?
- A. We pulled out. Oh, do you want from the staging area?
- Q. No, no from the time that he told you to proceed forward.
- A. Okay, I started to proceed forward and what had happened was when he had the firefighters get off the truck. I saw one of them in my mirror with the hose. And then he came round and said pull up and what happened, in my mind, was I heard the buzzer and I thought someone was still off the truck and I stopped, and he said, "no, everyone's on, go."
- Q. So you did see someone on the ground? Besides Jones?
- A. Yes, I swear it was Charlie. I could be wrong, but I saw someone in my mirror holding the nozzle. And when the buzzer sounded all I thought was I'd left some guy and I started and he was dragging behind. And Jonesy said "No, everyone's on." And I went down the road to the next area.
- Q. The pull-out.
- A. Yeah.
- Q. Then what happened?
- A. We crawled out. The guys were saying they were burned. We poured some water on all of them, and Sam and Manuel, I think, . . . Sam Sanchez and another guy, maybe it was Charlie in 102's car and then the other two, I know it was Greg, it could have been Manuel I think, we wrapped them with gauze and put water over the burns on their elbows and made them take their shirts off to see exactly how bad their burns were. And then someone took them . . .
- Q. Can you think of anything else that might help me as far as this investigation is concerned?
- A. I can't say, really. There were a lot of things that were done that I wouldn't myself had I been in charge.
- Q. Such as?

A. I wouldn't ~~have~~^{skip} engaged my mid-shift pump. No way would I have taken the risk in that situation. I would have had an SOS or or _____ nozzle or _____ for that protection line. I don't know why those guys didn't use any water. That's what I can't quite figure out. I wanted to take it out of the protection box, but I was told that the tip they had would be fine. And those are the two things that really have me bugged right now. Those are the two things I would have changed. I would have never put my pump in mid-shift and . . .

Q. When you came up Railroad Canyon Road did you have any qualms about it?

A. I didn't have any qualms about it because I've been in that type of situation, but when we stopped to hit that spot, I looked out ahead and I saw at least two or three more and it seemed to me almost fruitless to make that attempt at that point. If you couldn't hit it with the auxiliary, I felt it was pretty weird to be there anyway.

Q. But up until the time you had the flare up, it was more or less a routine attack?

A. Yeah, and even the flare up itself, that wasn't anything that bothered me and it seemed un-routine because I've been there on the backend before. Through situations like that. You know, a few times, dozens of times. And that wasn't that unusual to me. Some of the tactics used were strange to me.

Q. Have you ever worked with Captain Jones before?

A. No, never.

Q. How long have you worked with him this go-around?

A. Today.

Q. This was the first time you've ever worked . . . ?

A. This was the first time I'd ever worked with him. This is the first time I'd ever worked in the San Jacinto Battalion. I've never worked this engine.

Q. Have you got anything else you'd like to add?

A. I don't think so.

Interview terminated at 0100 hours, 8/24/78

August 25, 1978

Brian My name is Brian Richtmyer, and I'm here to interview Sam Sanchez regarding an incident that occurred on a fire in Riverside County on August 23, 1978, in the Railroad Canyon area near Canyon Lake in Riverside County.

Sam, can you tell me in your own words what occurred, say from the start when you left the staging area. I believe that was where you were, down on Highway 71.

Sam Yeah, we were on 71, and we headed back towards Canyon Lake, I don't know the name of the road but it was back towards Canyon Lake, and the fire was coming down the side of the mountain, and the Ranger stopped all the trucks by the road and there was a spot that had jumped the road and we were going to pick it up.

Brian Which side of the road was the spot on?

Sam The fire was coming down towards the right from the trucks and the spot was on the left.

Brian And you were headed probably, east on that road at that time?

Sam I think, yeah, east.

Brian The steep terrain was on the south, or the right side of your truck?

Sam Yeah. Then I jumped up on top where we had a protection line there and I grabbed the nozzle and the engineer jumped out of the cab, turned on the pump. By that time, the spot got bigger and it came back towards us. Then the fire came off the mountain and hit us all at once and I didn't have any water, just a little trickle came out. I guess she didn't turn it on. I jumped off the truck and came around to the back, and she tried to take off, I guess she tried to take off. Then she stalled the truck or it stopped, so I jumped in back with the other firefighters. I pushed two on the ground and me and this Charlie Mayberry were trying to pull out the fire blanket, but it wouldn't come out.

Brian It jammed up?

Sam It jammed, it just wouldn't pull. Everybody was in back screaming and stuff, so we just...I had my arms around Manuel, and it just passed over.

Brian Was the truck moving at that point?

Sam It had stopped. I guess she had tried to start it but.....

Brian She, you mean the engineer?

Sam The engineer.

Brian And what was the engineer's name?

Sam Pixie.....her last name starts with a "V". I don't know how to pronounce it. I think it's V-O-G-T.

Brian Okay, now was there some point in time where the horn button was hit, on the truck. Do you recall?

Sam I don't recall any time.

Brian Do you think it's possible somebody could accidentally hit the horn button back there while you guys were trying to crouch down?

Sam It's very possible they could have hit it.

Brian Now, if you hit that button, can you hear the horn at all?

Sam Yes, you can hear it, but I didn't hear it.

Brian You don't recall hearing the horn?

Sam No, I don't recall hearing it.

Brian You were part of a strike team, is that it?

Sam Yeah. I guess we were supposed to stop the fires that came down to the road, supposed to stop it at the road, but it just hit us hard.

Brian When you got in that area, then there was already a spot fire going?

Sam There was three or four spot fires on the north side, on the other side.

Brian What did it look like to you when it started burning so rapidly? Would you call it a fire storm, or I've heard terms like (unclear)

Sam I think it was a fire storm to me.

Brian Was there just fire everyplace you looked?

Sam It was all around the truck, everywhere you looked. What happened -- the wind changed and it blew the spot up on us and then kinda twisted a little bit and there was fire going around the truck every which way.

Brian You had all you safety gear on?

Sam Yeah, had all my safety gear on.

Brian Nomex. Did you have gloves on?

Sam Yeah, had gloves on.

Brian Goggles?

Sam Goggles. Had my hood down.

Brian And you still got it on the arms?

Sam Still got it on the arms and here on the back.

Brian You think this was kind of radiated heat, through the Nomex?

Sam Yeah, it was radiated.

Brian You didn't actually get flame impingement on your skin?

Sam No.

Brian How bad are your burns? Have they told you?

Sam Well, they're second degree, they're almost at the point where they're third.

Brian Is there anything in your own mind where you can see any mistakes that maybe were made by the engineer, or any of the other trucks or anything that might have contributed to it at all?

Sam I don't know why the trucks in front of us stopped, I thought we were just going to keep on going through because it was coming down real fast. I guess they wanted to wait it out, and that was our engineer's first day on duty and her very first fire and she was real scared as it was just going through a fire.

Brian Now, were you riding in the cab with her?

Sam I was riding in the back.

Brian You were riding in the back. Who was in the cab with her?

Sam Captain Bill Jones.

Brian Who were the other firefighters with you on the back?

Sam Greg Cameron, Charlie Mayberry, and Manuel Villalovos.

Brian You say that when you first stopped you got ahold of the hose or something. Was this a truck protection hose?

Sam It was coiled on the hose bed, and Bill said to get the spot, so the engineer came out and fired up the pump, then I cranked it on and just a little trickle came out.

Brian Do you know what pump you had on?

Sam The auxiliary pump.

Brian At any point did he try to change to the midship pump, or did he mention it?

Sam The last time I saw Bill was when he said "Pick up this spot". That's the last I saw of him. And I saw Pixie jump into the cab.

Brian Now was it already getting pretty hot at that time?

- Sam It was already getting pretty hot at that time. I jumped off the truck on the left side and I got burned from the spot. Towards the top of my arm. I came around to the back and she tried to take off when I was kinda hanging on, getting on. Then she stopped. The truck kinda jerked and then stopped and I jumped on, pushed the two down, and me and Charlie tried to pull the blanket out. It wouldn't come.
- Brian How much time do you think passed from that point until you started moving again down the road? A few seconds or.....
- Sam Yeah, a few seconds. Happened so fast.
- Brian After they got a little ways, was it not so hot then again or just that one spot?
- Sam Well, it was....they moved I'd say about five feet, the truck. Then we stopped. Then, like it hit us and then after it hit us, then they pulled up the road to where I guess, there was rocks on both sides, to where there wasn't very much heat or fire around us anymore. Then Bill and Pixie jumped out and asked if we were all right and then what was going on. I could see I was burned down by where my gloves were, but I didn't know I was burned up here or on my back or anything.
- Brian You weren't feeling it at that time?
- Sam No. Until I got in Don Russell's car. Then I could really feel it when I sat back.
- Brian Now, how did you, how were you transported? Did Don Russell take you to.....
- Sam He took us to Gates (?) road in Newport, and the ambulance came and got us there.
- Brian Then the ambulance took you to where?
- Sam Perris. I guess it's Perris Valley Community Hospital. There they put towels on us and cold water trying to take some of the heat out of the burns.
- Brian Now when you say us, this is the crew on your truck?
- Sam Yeah, the crew. Us four, or the firefighters I was with on the back.
- Brian Okay, when did Mr. Powell become involved in this? He was on another unit was he?
- Sam Mr. Powell.....?
- Brian He was a PCF I believe. He was down here I think. Didn't he come down the same day you did or something, and was treated and released late that night?
- Sam Did he have blond hair?
- Brian I'm not sure. I haven't met him, but I know he was burned too.
- Sam Was he the one who was burned on the face?

Brian Yeah, burned on the face.

Sam Yeah, he came down that night.

Brian He was on one of the other units?

Sam He was on one of the other units.

Brian Were you the last truck in line, or.....

Sam I think we were the third to the last, or might have been second to the last.

Brian Was there five units?

Sam There must have been five.

Brian But you were in the middle someplace, you weren't on either end?

Sam Yeah, we were in the middle.

Brian And how were you transported to the burn center here?

Sam By helicopter.

Brian Well, is there anything else you can add as far as what-----when you went in there, let me ask you this, did it appear safe to you or did it appear unsafe when you were driving in there?

Sam Well, when we were driving in there it appeared unsafe to me 'cause I knew something was going to happen, so I pulled down my hood, my goggles, and I put my bandana over my nose and mouth.

Brian As far as you were concerned, something was developing then?

Sam Yes. I could see something was going to happen.

Brian Was it just the trucks or was there an administrative unit ahead of the trucks?

Sam There was a Ranger, I think it was 6111, ahead of all the trucks.

Brian So all the trucks were following him through the canyon area?

Sam Yeah, they were following him through the canyon.

Brian Do you remember who the lead truck was? What number?

Sam What number?

Brian Yeah, do you remember who it was?

Sam No, I don't.

Brian You were with Jones? That was 6163?

Sam Yes, 6163. I think we were the only State unit in that task force. There

were county engines.

Brian Okay, one other question. Have you ever in your training, been trained how to use the blanket or how to pull it out or ever ran through it before, or had anybody describe or explain to you how it works?

Sam Okay, we have never used the one you pull out of the spindle there, but we have used the other ones where you just pull it out of the hose bed and put it over us.

Brian That's the kind you just unfold or something?

Sam Yeah, you just unfold it. But we never used that spindle one before.

Brian Has anybody ever told you, you know, how you would use it?

Sam No, nobody ever has.

Brian Never had any training, huh?

Sam What I've seen is all other State trucks I have seen have two on the trucks. One in back of each seat. We've only got one in our truck.

Brian Well, is there anything else you can think of? I don't want to take too much of your time, I know they gave you some medication.....you've got to go get some therapy or something.....

Sam Yeah, they're going to take off the dead skin in like a whirlpool.

Brian Does that hurt?

Sam Well....no not really, just when the water hits it (confusion here) I just hope I don't get burned again. I have my doubts about staying in the forestry.

Brian It could have been a lot worse.

Sam Yeah, I'm glad it wasn't. I'm glad nobody else got burned bad.

Brian Is there anything else you might want to add, anything else you can think of?

Sam No, not really.

End of interview.

* * *

LEMON FIRE, #959
Incident 13699, 8/23/78

Interview conducted by Captain John Lavell, California Department of Forestry, Orange County. The date was 8/23/78 at 2125 hours, Perris Headquarters.

Q. Manny, would you state your full name?

A. Manuel George Villalobos.

Q. Your date of birth?

A. November 6, 1959.

Q. And your home address?

A. 239 Erland Drive, Crestline, California.

Q. Manny, what time did you come on duty?

A. I came on duty at 6:30 last night.

Q. That would be the 22nd?

A. Yes.

Q. And how long have you been on duty? That is, were you on duty continually up until the time of the accident or have you been relieved?

A. From 6:30 last night I was on continually.

Q. On shift continually?

A. Yes.

Q. At the time of the accident, were you riding on the vehicle?

A. Yes.

Q. What was your position?

A. Riding on the back . . .

Q. On the cable or the seat?

A. On the seat.

Q. What unit were you assigned to?

A. 6163

Q. Who else was on that unit with you?

- A. Dave Cameron, Johnny Maberry, Sam Sanchez, Bill Jones and Pixie Voit.
- Q. Who was the officer in charge?
- A. Bill Jones.
- Q. What's his rank?
- A. Captain.
- Q. What sector were you working in the fire?
- A. It was directly on Canyon Road.
- Q. Canyon Road?
- A. It was up on Canyon Road.
- Q. Who was driving the vehicle?
- A. Pixie and the engineer.
- Q. Pixie Voit?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Who was in the cab with her?
- A. Captain Jones.
- Q. Captain Jones was in the cab and you, Cameron, Maberry and Sanchez were riding the rear end? Where were you sitting in the vehicle with reference to the location from the back. Figuring from the driver's side as compared to the passenger's side of the cab?
- A. I was on the passenger's side.
- Q. Were you closest to the cab or closest to the rear of the truck?
- A. Closest to the rear.
- Q. Who was sitting next to you on your immediate right?
- A. Cameron.
- Q. Who was sitting directly across from you?
- A. Sanchez.
- Q. And then Maberry occupied the other seat? At the time of the accident, in what direction were you traveling? Do you recall?
- A. We were traveling east.

Q. East?

A. Yeah, I think it was east or northeast. I'm not really sure.

Q. Were you moving forward? Were you laying hose? Or what?

A. When it happened?

Q. Yes.

A. We were stopped.

Q. Why were you stopped?

A. We were in a task force and the trucks in front of us, they stopped. We were trying to stop the fire at that road there and where it had jumped over the road, we were trying to pick up some spots.

Q. Do you recall which road it was?

A. Yeah, all I remember is it was something Canyon Road.

Q. Who was your task force commander, do you recall?

A. No.

Q. Do you recall what other units were in the task force with you?

A. Lots of them, I don't recall all of them.

Q. Do you recall what location you were in in the line of vehicles?

A. Yeah, there were a couple of engines in front of us. We were near the front.

Q. Okay, so you had actually stopped when the incident took place?

A. Yeah.

Q. Do you want to tell me what happened?

A. Okay. We were driving along and trying to pick up the spots that had jumped over the road and our protection line we had on the top, we tried to turn that on and there was no pressure.

Q. You tried to turn this on when, just when you stopped?

A. Yeah, when we stopped. It was getting hot.

Q. You hadn't had any flame by this time. It hadn't flared up on you or anything like that?

A. Yeah, there was fire on both sides of the road. Sanchez jumped off,

he tried to get the pressure on outside of the truck. By this time it was so hot we tried to get the fire blanket out and and it wouldn't come out. We all got down as far as we could on the bottom of the truck and Sanchez came running back and jumped in.

Q. You had a protection line. What was it, one of the hard lines?

A. No, it was an inch and a half.

Q. And you got no pressure out of that?

A. I don't know. I didn't try to do it, but they tried to get it going and they said it wouldn't go. I don't know whether it was the pressure or . . .

Q. Now Sanchez tried to pull a hard line then when . . .?

A. No, he went around and tried to pull another inch and a half off the

Q. And why couldn't he pull that?

A. I don't know, I think it got too hot or something.

Q. You didn't have the fire blanket out at this time?

A. No, when he jumped off, we tried to get the fire blanket out, but it wouldn't come out and we heard it rip.

Q. Okay, when you stopped initially, how much fire did you have around you?

A. There was fire on our right side. It was all flames. On the left side was just a couple of spots and they got big real quick.

Q. You hadn't tried the protection line at all prior to that time?

A. When we first put it on, we had tried it and it worked. I don't know what went wrong with it. I just know we couldn't get it working for some reason.

Q. When you discovered you didn't have any water pressure and you couldn't pull your fire blanket, you all got on the bed of the truck down on the floor.

A. Yeah

Q. And where was Sanchez at this time?

A. He was trying to get the hose out on the inside. I guess it got too hot and he jumped down in there with us.

Q. Okay, was he on top of all of you or was there enough room for all four to be on the floor?

- A. Cameron was on the bottom and Charlie was kind of on the bottom too. Me and Sanchez were kind of overlapping. He was on top of me a little bit, you know. This part of my body I got burned on . . .
- Q. You mean your left side of the body? That was the part you got burned on.
- A. Yes.
- Q. Then what happened?
- A. We just sat there. It was just getting hotter. Finally the truck took off and got out of the fire. We hopped in the car and they took us to the hospital.
- Q. When you say you hopped in the car, you pulled out of that particular area and stopped someplace else?
- A. Yeah, we went down the road aways and got out and jumped in some Ranger's car.
- Q. Who was the first one on the scene, do you have any idea? Other than Voit or Jones.
- A. On the scene?
- Q. When you stopped.
- A. They both jumped out of the cab and came . . .
- Q. They came back. And who else appeared? Do you recall?
- A. Just the ranger who took us.
- Q. Do you know what the status was of the vehicle behind you?
- A. The fire truck behind us?
- Q. Yeah.
- A. No, I heard one of the guys in back got burned too.
- Q. But they were not caught in the same flare up?
- A. Yeah. We were the only truck that had green on both sides.
- Q. The rest was in burn?
- A. Yeah, the rest was pretty burned out. We were on the hottest spot, I guess. I thought for sure that other people would be burned, but I guess we were in the hottest spot.
- Q. What do you think might have been responsible for the accident?

- A. Well, we got there kind of late, I think.
- Q. Do you think if you had had water pressure you wouldn't have any problem?
- A. No, I think we still would have got burned because we got there too late . There were three big spots we were trying to stop right there on the road. It had already jumped the road by the time we got there.
- Q. In other words, when you pulled up into the area you had fire that you were in a sense driving through?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. Fire on both sides of the road?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. How high was the brush? Two feet, three feet, six feet?
- A. No, it wasn't really that high. It was just grass and a little bit of brush. Mostly just tall, dry grass.
- Q. Did you worry about it when you drove up there in the first place? Did you think there was any danger?
- A. Yeah, I thought there was some.
- Q. At that time or did you think about it afterwards?
- A. At that time I really wasn't that worried because it was up on the hill and just came down all of a sudden.
- Q. So when you started into the area the threat wasn't there. It was about the time you got there that the threat appeared. Is that what you're saying?
- A. Yeah. But there was already spots on the other side of the road. So I figured we were too late.
- Q. Can you think of anything else that might help me as far as this interview is concerned?
- A. [No answer]
- Q. Who was responsible for getting water pressure to the line?
- A. Either the engineer or the captain. They turn the pump on.
- Q. It works off the panel?
- A. Yeah, you can turn it on in there and outside on the pump too.
- Q. Was the pump running when you came on to the fire?

A. I don't know.

Q. You don't know whether there was any pump or not?

A. No, I don't know. It all happened so fast.

Q. You didn't hear the pump running at all--the motor?

A. I don't remember because with all those engines around us, I couldn't tell even if it was.

Q. Manny, do you have anything else you want to add?

A. No. That's all there is.

Interview with Manuel Villalovos ended at 2140 hours.

LEMON FIRE, #959
Incident 13699, 8/23/78

Interview conducted by Captain John B. Lavell, California Department of Forestry, Orange County. The date was 8/23/78 at 2220 hours, Perris Headquarters. Present is Charles Maberry.

Q. Would you state your full name?

A. Charles De___ Maberry.

Q. Your date of birth?

A. 6/25/54

Q. And your home address?

A. 43 524 Main Street, Indio, California.

Q. Okay, Charles, what time did you come on duty?

A. I came on duty this morning at 8 o'clock.

Q. 8 o'clock, that's on the 23rd. What time were you dispatched to the fire?

A. About 4:30.

Q. And what happened then?

A. We went to the scene of the fire.

Q. Did you have an assignment?

A. First we went to a place called the Melody. That's where they were joining the task force. Then they sent us back up Railroad Canyon Road.

Q. Do you remember which direction you were heading on Railroad Canyon Road?

A. Back towards Sun City.

Q. Okay, that would be more or less in a northeasterly direction.

A. Yeah, back towards San Jac.

Q. What unit were you assigned to at that time?

A. 6163, San Jacinto.

Q. Where were you seated on the vehicle?

A. I was on the driver's side in the front of the passenger compartment.

- A. We stopped and started getting . . . We knew we were in trouble. Sanchez got off to get the protection line . . .
- Q. When you say he got off, did he get off the truck or did he pull the protection line?
- A. We handed him the protection line.
- Q. It was up on the bed?
- A. Yes. We were when Sanchez got off.
- Q. Sanchez first of all got up to pull the protection line. Is that right?
- A. Yes.
- Q. You weren't getting any water pressure?
- A. No water pressure. He got off the truck to check the pump to get
The fire blanket, it jammed.
- Q. Who tried to pull the primer?
- A. I did.

After that everybody just kind of piled into the compartment, and everybody started yelling And Sanchez got on top

- Q. Then what happened?
- A. They took us off the truck and put water on us.
- Q. When you stopped, what was the terrain like around your vehicle? Were you in the burn?
- A. No, we were. . . it was burning down the hill towards us.
- Q. No, I mean were you in burned area or brush area?
- A. We were in brush.
- Q. Brush, grass or whatever?
- A. Yes. We were on a paved road.
- Q. How about the other vehicles? Where were they?

I was on the left front seat of the passenger compartment.

Q. Who was up in the cab?

A. Captain Bill Jones and Engineer Pixie, I'm not sure what her last name was.

Q. Where was Jones seated?

A. He was in the passenger seat.

Q. And the engineer was driving the vehicle?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you recall where the other people were seated in the rear of the vehicle?

A. Cameron was across from me. He was on the right front. Sanchez was next to me on the same seat, and Villalovos was across from Sanchez.

Q. So Villalovos and Cameron were on the passenger side of the vehicle?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you happen to know who was in charge of the task force that you were assigned to? Now you were a portion of the task force?

A. Yes.

Q. And you were sent up Railroad Canyon Road?

A. I believe it was Railroad Canyon Road.

Q. Do you remember which direction you were traveling at the time?

A. Toward Sun City.

Q. That is away from San Jac, in other words . . .

A. We went from San Jacinto down to 15 . . . (end of tape)

Q. You say the fire was coming down from the right or the left?

A. From the right.

Q. Coming down from the right?

A. Yes.

Q. And it crossed the road?

They were in a burned area?

A. The burn came down closer to the road

LEMON FIRE, #959
Incident 13699, 8/23/78

Interview conducted by Captain John B. Lavell, California Department of Forestry, Orange County. The date was 8/23/78 at 2145 hours, Perris Headquarters. Present is Greg Cameron.

Q. Greg, would you give me your full name?

A. Gregory Lee Cameron

Q. Your date of birth?

A. March 31, 1957.

Q. And your home address?

A. 41755 El Camino, Hemet.

Q. Greg, when did you come on duty?

A. This morning.

Q. That was at the station?

A. Yes.

Q. When were you assigned to the fire?

A. We left, I would say, at 4:30.

Q. Today?

A. Today. This afternoon.

Q. Okay, you were dispatched at 4:30 to the fire.
Do you recall about what time you arrived at the fire?

A. It must have been about 30 or 35 minutes later.

Q. What vehicle or unit were you assigned to?

A. 6163 out of San Jacinto.

Q. Greg, what was your position on the vehicle?

A. I was No. 3 man behind backup.

Q. Where were you seated?

A. In the crew compartment.

Q. What position, figuring the driver's and passenger side of the cab itself.

- A. I was on the driver's side towards the cab.
- Q. Had you actually been committed to the fire? Had you done any work on the fire at this time?
- A. We responded to the south end of the fire for structure protection and we stayed there for about ten to fifteen minutes and then they dispatched us back on Railroad Canyon Road.
- Q. Do you remember which direction you were traveling on Railroad Canyon Road?
- A. We were traveling east.
- Q. Were you traveling alone?
- A. We were in a task force of probably about six engines.
- Q. Do you know who the task force commander was?
- A. No.
- Q. Who was the officer in charge of your unit?
- A. Captain Bill Jones.
- Q. And where was he seated?
- A. He was seated on the passenger's side in the cab.
- Q. Who was the engineer?
- A. The engineer was Pixie, I'm not sure she came on this morning.
- Q. Voit?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Can you tell me where the other personnel were seated on the rear of the crew section?
- A. Sanchez was the farthest back sitting on the other side. Maberry was on the same side Sanchez was, and Manuel Villalovos and myself were on the driver's side.
- Q. Manuel was sitting next to you?
- A. Yes.
- Q. You say you were proceeding up Railroad Canyon Road?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Heading in approximately a northeasterly direction. How fast were

- you traveling?
- A. We were Code 3. I imagine we were going 40 to 45 miles per hour.
- Q. That was on the road?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Did you stop at any time?
- A. Not until we got there.
- Q. Did you stop when you got burned or did you stop before you got burned?
- A. We stopped and maybe fifteen seconds later the flames hit us.
- Q. Did the whole column stop or just your unit?
- A. We saw trucks in front of us stop and I just caught a momentary glimpse of that, we saw them stop, I looked around real quick and we started trying to get a line on the fire that was heading towards us.
- Q. And the engines behind stopped also?
- A. Yes, we were in the middle of the convoy.
- Q. Tell me exactly what happened from the time you stopped?
- A. We stopped, I don't know who, the captain or the engineer told us to start getting some water on the spot that was across the road to our north. At that time Sam jumped up on top to try to grab . . .
- Q. Sam?
- A. Sam Sanchez. . . to grab the protection line off the top, and at that time we had the nozzle in our hands and we turned it on . . .
- Q. You say "we". Who actually had the nozzle?
- A. Sanchez had the nozzle and I was backing him up. He opened the nozzle and nothing came out. No water. At that time the flames on the south side were making rapid progress and were right beside the truck. I went back into the crew compartment and tried to pull out the protection blanket. Sam jumped off the driver's side of the truck down to the ground.
- Q. Now let me hold up a minute. Sam at this time, Sam Sanchez, was on top of the vehicle?
- A. He was on top of the vehicle trying to get a spot that was across from us.
- Q. Now you say that Captain Jones told you to pull the line?
- A. He didn't tell us anything. All we heard was "Pull the line."

- Q. You don't know who said it?
- A. We don't even know if it was from the truck behind us.
- Q. I'm sorry, go ahead now.
- A. So the three of us, myself, Manuel Villalovos and Charles Maberry were crouching down in the crew compartment trying to pull the protection blanket. At that time I assumed that Sam was alongside the truck trying to . . .
- Q. You don't know where he was?
- A. I don't know.
- Q. He went off the side of the truck?
- A. He went off the side of the truck. And we tried to pull the protection blanket and it jammed, maybe there was something we did pulling it out, it jammed and didn't come out more than six inches. So all of us just . . . it was almost by that time panic situation. We were just crouching down, and Chuck just really not knowing what to do. At that time Sam Sanchez came on back to the truck and just started screaming "Let me on, let me on," and he jumped on top of us. He was trying to pull the protection blanket on all three of us and it didn't work.
- Q. You mean after he got on you still didn't get the blanket out?
- A. After he got on we still had our hands up trying to pull the blanket out but it still wouldn't come. He was spread-eagled over the top of the three of us. Consequently he caught most of the radiated heat. In my opinion, if we had had that blanket out it would have covered us all. In my opinion, I don't think we would have got burned.
- Q. Have you any idea why you didn't get any pressure? Water pressure.
- A. Well, on our primary pump, the pump must be out of gear to engage the transfer case, and by that time, when we saw the flames coming, the engineer was still in the cab, and the way the engine sounded to me was that they took it out of gear and tried to put it back into driving gear because it won't drive while the pump motor's engaged. So the auxiliary pump was not running.
- Q. It wasn't running?
- A. It wasn't running because you have to start that from the outside.
- Q. You can't start it from the cab?
- A. No. And by that . . . so I assume . . . it was running, I heard it engage, I thought I heard it engage when we first got there. When we . . . tried to move us out, you have to engage an empty gear

consequently no pressure,
which takes the pump out of gear so there is/no pump action.

- Q. Can you mobile pump/^{up}that unit.
- A. You can mobile pump if you start the auxiliary pump.
- Q. You can't mobile off the main?
- A. No, it makes
- Q. And the auxiliary has to be started from the exterior of the vehicle?
- A. From the exterior.
- Q. You say you . . . have you tried that pump at any time prior to the fire?
- A. Which one?
- Q. Either one of them, both or either.
- A. When we got to the structure protection when we first arrived, we charged the protection line with the auxiliary pump. Then after we had the line charged, it was coiled up on top of the truck. We shut that pump off and fell into the task force. So . . . it was checked out during morning check out. Both pumps were working.
- Q. So in reality you had no pump in operation at the time you stopped on Railroad Canyon Road?
- A. As far as I know we didn't. Because if it was on, we would have had a charged line.
- Q. When you stopped, was there fire on both sides of the road?
- A. The main fire was coming down off the hill and had spotted on to the other side.
- Q. Come off the hill. Now, would that be on the south side?
- A. The south side.
- Q. That would be on your right.
- A. There was a very large fire storm with flames probably 15 - 20 feet. It was coming down and on the other side of the road, maybe 10 - 15 yards, it had already started spotting. It was moving back towards the road. Both flames were moving back towards the road.
- Q. Now, in your opinion, think about this, at the time you pulled up on the road, on Railroad Canyon Road and stopped, did you really think you were in any danger.

- A. I thought we were definitely in danger because from what I saw of the other trucks, they were parked with burn on both sides, and from what I saw we had green on both sides.
- Q. The trucks in front of you?
- A. The trucks in back of me. Those were the only trucks I could see clearly. They had burn, from what I could tell with a quick glimpse, they had burn on both sides. When we saw the flames coming both ways, we realized that we didn't have any chance of catching it either way. That's when we decided to take protective measures.
- Q. So you had green on both sides of your vehicle. Okay, Greg, after you couldn't get your blanket out, the fire swept over you?
- A. On the north side of the truck there was a bluff ten to fifteen feet high. The flames came over that and arced over the truck and on to the green on the other side.
- Q. Did the flames actually get into the truck or was it just radiant heat?
- A. It was radiant heat.
- Q. Then what happened?
- A. All I know was that we started moving. All I could hear--I don't know if this was panic or what--all I could hear was screams from our crew and we started moving maybe probably 30 seconds later. We moved down the road I don't know how far. We were trying to pour water on Sanchez.
- Q. Where did you get the water?
- A. Canteens.
- Q. Then what happened?
- A. We got Sam off the truck as quick as we could down to the ground and had him standing up, somebody holding him up, and just pouring water on him to keep him cool.
- Q. Can you remember who was the first one on the scene other than Voit and Jones?
- A. I saw, I don't know if he was an engineer or captain, 6177. There was familiar faces all around. I really can't place names right now.
- Q. 6177, was that one of the units right behind you?
- A. There was a road--there was a turnout and he was positioned there.
- Q. This was beyond the area . . . ?
- A. This was where we stopped.
- Q. . . . after you had come through your burn area.

A. We were burned here and came up the road and this unit was sitting there. Chief Flake was the one that took Charlie Maberry and me down to the ambulance. So I imagine he was one of the first ones.

Q. Can you think of anything else that might help me on this?

A. Nothing, it's just that during our 40 hours and all the safety instruction at the station, is that fire blankets are your protection, and you can depend on it to save your life as it has in many instances. I've never seen terror go through four normally stable people as was when we couldn't get that fire blanket out.

Q. Did you check that fire blanket at any time?

A. The last time I remember is like we had it out a little ways and rolled it back up.

Q. You never had it out--to your knowledge, you've never had it out or seen it all the way out?

A. No.

Q. Okay, Greg, thanks.

Interview with Greg Cameron 8/23/78 at 2205 hours.

LEMON FIRE, #959
Incident 13699, 823/78

Interview conducted by Captain John B. Lavell, California Department of Forestry, Orange County. The date is 8/24/78, 0110 hours, at the scene of a fire that occurred in the Lake Elsinore area on 8/23/78. Present is James A. Taylor.

Q. Jim, would you give me your full name?

A. James Aubrey Taylor.

Q. Date of birth?

A. 5/10/48

Q. Home address?

A. 12141 Deerwood Lane, Sunnymead.

Q. Your title?

A. Fire Apparatus Engineer, CDF.

Q. How long have you been with the CDF?

A. Six years.

Q. How long have you been a FAE.

A. Six years.

Q. Six years an a FAE.

A. Right.

Q. What station do you operate out of?

A. Station 2, Sunnymead, Riverside, California.

Q. What time did you come on duty today?

A. 0800.

Q. What time were you dispatched to the fire?

A. At approximately 1530 hours.

Q. Who was on the unit with you?

A. I had Volunteer Gil Barrier, Volunteer Kevin Powell and Volunteer Norm ~~Gartney~~ *Clark*,

Q. Can you tell me where they were located with reference to the engine?
Where they were riding?

- A. Volunteer Gil Barrier was in the cab, Volunteer Norm Clark would have been on the left-hand side. . . .
- Q. Left-hand side of what?
- A. Of the tailboard.
- Q. That would be the driver's side?
- A. The driver's side, and Kevin Powell was on the tailboard passenger side.
- Q. Okay, you were dispatched to the fire at Elsinore. Were you dispatched to the fire at Elsinore. Were you dispatched to a specific assignment or were you set up as a portion of a task force?
- A. I was sent just generally to the fire on the first initial dispatch.
- Q. Then what happened?
- A. I was sent with a task force with 6111 and approximately 9 engines.
- Q. What was your position in the column?
- A. I'd say third from the rear.
- Q. Do you recall which unit was directly in front of you?
- A. Engine 12.
- Q. Engine 12? Do you know. . . Then you wouldn't know where the State engine was?
- A. I'd say he was about two engines ahead of me.
- Q. Now as a member of this task force you proceeded from where to where?
- A. I proceeded from, I think it was Vine Ave and Grape, Railroad Canyon, Highway 71, heading toward Canyon Lake, I believe it would be an easterly direction.
- Q. In a northeasterly direction. Can you tell me what happened enroute?
- A. Upon entering the canyon I noticed that it became very smoky and dark. I looked to my right and noticed a fire storm sliding off a very steep hill and to my left there was a . . . to my right was the fire storm and to my left would be a spot, approximately an acre or something.
- Q. Did you stop or did you continue forward?
- A. I tried to continue forward, but Engine 12 at that time had stopped. I was within about 15 foot of his rear bumper at that time. He seen me with the backup and he was also on fire at the time.

- Q. Engine which was on fire?
- A. Engine 12.
- Q. How do you mean he was on fire?
- A. Smoke was coming out of his right side of the engine compartment. The air cleaner was on fire at that time.
- Q. The air cleaner was on fire?
- A. I believe so. The smoke was coming from the engine and underneath like the exhaust or something.
- Q. Then what happened?
- A. He signaled me to back up at which time I backed up. Engine 16 was directly behind me probably within 50 feet. I signaled to him with my hand to back up. At that time the fire storm slid off the hill and the spot fire became larger. At this time I noticed Norm Clark who had been on my left hand side swing over to the side of the engine with his belt still on, and at that time I noticed Kevin Powell had jumped off the tailboard of the fire engine.
- Q. When you say Clark swayed to the side of the engine, do you mean to the left side, the right side or what.
- A. To the left side--to the driver's side.
- Q. Was he still on the tailboard at that time?
- A. He was hooked on to the belt. He jumped off and swung to the side and was literally hanging on. He was still strapped in.
- Q. Okay, how about Powell. Was he still strapped in?
- A. Powell was strapped in at the time I noticed he had jumped off the engine and proceeded in a westerly direction running as fast as he could.
- Q. Westerly, in other words, away from the engine?
- A. Right. I was backing up and he was running away from me towards Engine 16.
- Q. He wasn't strapped in at that time.
- A. No, he was already off running on the ground.
- Q. Was he on fire or anything like that?
- A. No.
- Q. Okay, what happened after that.?

- A. I kept on backing. I noticed him--at that time . . .
- Q. Who's him?
- A. Kevin Powell. I noticed him still on the ground. I stopped to yell at him. At that time I kept on backing up to save the rest of them or get out of the way, and at that time he ran back toward the engine and jumped back on while I was backing up--probably at approximately 12 miles an hour.
- Q. What was the fire doing at this time?
- A. It still surrounded me completely.
- Q. You were in the fire?
- A. Oh, yes sir. In front of me was fire and behind me was fire. Approximately, probably, about 75 yards of fire.
- Q. Were your windows up or down?
- A. My windows were up.
- Q. When did you realize that Powell had been injured?
- A. At that time Gil Barrier noticed him when he got back on the engine that he was holding his face. At that time I realized he must have been hurt.
- Q. What did you do then?
- A. I immediately backed up as far as I could until I was completely cleared. I stopped the engine in a turn-around and went back to see how he was. At that time I took a handkerchief and poured it on him and put him in the cab.
- Q. Where was he burned?
- A. He was burned on the . . . let's see, on his ear, I can't remember which ear, across his nose, around his mouth and lower chin.
- Q. Were they in turnouts?
- A. He was in Nomax with regular blue jeans on. He did have goggles and brush helmet on.
- Q. He had all his safety gear on?
- A. As much as could have been supplied at this time.
- Q. Do you have fire blankets on that unit?

A. No, sir.

Q. At any time did you pull a line?

A. No.

Q. So, in other words, you proceeded up Railroad Canyon Road and you ran into fire and you proceeded back down Railroad Canyon Road. So you weren't involved in any firefighting activity at all.

A. No, I was trying to get out of it. I knew I had probably within I'd say a hundred yards, 300 feet to get out of there.

Q. Was Clark hurt at all?

A. No. He proceeded just to hang on the side and when the flames continued to go around him, he got back on the tailboard.

He was still strapped in, but all he did was . . . when you're hanging on you can swing right around with those straps on. He came to the driver's side which was the coolest part as far as I was concerned.

Q. Well, in that case, the fire was primarily to the right of the vehicle?

A. Right. Because it had come off the hill. The fire storm was on the right-hand side. The spot fire was not my biggest problem at the time.

Q. Can you think of anything else that can be added to this?

A. Not really.

Q. So you had a lack of visibility and a sudden fire eruption?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay, when you came up Railroad Canyon Road prior to the time you actually observed the fire storm, did you have any second thoughts about it or did it just appear to be a routine operation?

A. I actually had second thoughts about it because I did stop the engine and I did slide a little forward to bump up against Engine 12 at that time. There were at least three spot fires I noticed at that time. The last spot fire, the last one that took off was directly next to me and then I knew I was in trouble so I put it in reverse and . . .

Q. Well, now you say you had second thoughts, what were your second . . . what were you dubious about?

A. Dubious because I've worked this area and I know this canyon and I was very dubious about coming in there that late in the stage of the game, to tell you the truth.

- A. Being the last couple of engines in line, nobody noticed what happened to a few of them ahead of me.
- Q. Was there a fire storm ahead of you at that time?
- A. Right.
- Q. So in a sense, by the time you were enveloped with fire or hit with fire, a fire storm had taken place further up the road.
- A. Right.
- Q. But up until that time, what I mean is up until the time you actually observed the fire storm, were you that worried about driving up there?
- A. Actually after I passed, well after I saw the first -- there were three spot fires and the one I saw and the one I was next to wasn't that great, but the wind had shifted and the wind had picked up in great intensity I now had my second thoughts about going in there. It only lasted probably ten seconds, because I did back up quite quickly and I was out of it probably in ten to twenty seconds.
- Q. Okay, can you think of anything else to add?
- A. No.

Interview terminated at 0120 hours 8/24/78.

LEMON FIRE, #959
Incident 13699, 8/23/78

Interview conducted by Captain John B. Lavell, California Department of Forestry, Orange County. The date is 8/24/78, 0125 hours, at the scene of a fire that occurred in the Lake Elsinore area on 8/23/78. Present is Norm Clark.

Q. Mr. Clark, would you give me your full name?

A. Norman Wesley Clark.

Q. Your date of birth?

A. July 14, 1952.

Q. Home address?

A. 12260 Indian Street, Sunnymead.

Q. And your title?

A. Emergency firefighter.

Q. How long have you worked in this capacity?

A. Approximately three and a half to four years.

Q. You respond on a call-back basis, is that correct?

A. We have our radios, our Plectrons, and when they're set off we respond to the station.

Q. At what time did you respond yesterday?

A. Approximately 3:30 I think.

Q. What unit are you assigned to?

A. Station 2, Engine 2.

Q. And that's out of Sunnymead?

A. Right.

Q. Who was the engineer on that unit?

A. James Taylor.

Q. And who else was on, do you recall?

A. Gill Barrier and once we got to the staging area down on Grape and 71, Firefighter Kevin Powell joined us.

- Q. Is Kevin Powell a volunteer fireman?
- A. Yes, he's out of Station 2. He apparently came up on Engine 6 or 6A, and he was dropped off because we only had two firefighters.
- Q. So that gave you four on the unit?
- A. Right.
- Q. Okay, what were your positions on that vehicle?
- A. Kevin Powell and myself were on the tail gate and Gil Barrier was shotgun or passenger and Engineer Taylor was driving.
- Q. Okay, where were you standing on the tailboard?
- A. I was on the driver's side and Kevin was on the passenger side.
- Q. What kind of equipment did you have on?
- A. Regular CDF brush fire turnout gear, brush helmet, goggles, we both had bandanas around our lower faces, Nomaxes.
- Q. Complete Nomax or just jackets?
- A. Just jackets. That's all we were given. I'm not sure. Kevin may have a jump suit and I don't know whether he had it on today. Gloves, lace up boots, I had jeans on. I'm not sure what Kevin had on. Gil had a full jump suit. I think Kevin had pants.
- Q. Okay, now, I've got some of this information. You were a portion of a task force which was dispatched from the Elsinore area.
- A. Right. From Grape and 71 to Railroad Canyon.
- Q. Up Railroad Canyon Road?
- A. Right.
- Q. Okay, can you tell me what happened enroute up Railroad Canyon Road? Up to the time that Mr. Powell got injured?
- A. Engine 2 was the next to the last engine in the task force. It must have been about 6 or 8 engines. We were just proceeding east on Railroad Canyon Road. We stopped down just this side of the gas station and got all in a line and everything and we were coming up Railroad Canyon Road and got into a rather narrow area where there was hills, heavy brush cover, both sides. When we started up the fire was up kind of high, probably two or three hundred feet. The closest it was was two or three hundred feet.
- Q. Did you have any fear when you came up the road or any qualms?
- A. Not really. I thought we were far enough back that if anything happened, it would happen before we got there. And then it started fire storming and dust devils like except that it was in the fire.

And then it jumped down that distance in just a matter of seconds. I ducked around the side of the engine. My safety belt held me and I was fairly well protected.

- Q. When you say it jumped down, did the fire get right down to the engine?
- A. Yes. It was virtually around the engine.
- Q. What was the engine doing at that time? Was it stopped? Was it proceeding forward?
- A. The task force kind of ground to a halt and it just hesitated, and near that time Engineer Taylor started reversing as fast as he could.
- Q. And where was Powell at this time?
- A. He was on the back of 2. I lost sight of him when I went around to the edge of the engine.
- Q. In other words, you didn't see anything happen to Powell?
- A. I saw the flames blow around both of us. I went around the edge of the engine and I hollered to him to come around. You can hang on your strap around the side and I guess he didn't hear me. The next thing I saw he was off the back of the truck running.
- Q. Which way was he running?
- A. He was running--we were backing up in a westward direction. He was running west.
- Q. Was he apparently injured at that time?
- A. I couldn't tell.
- Q. Okay, then again I understand that Powell came back to the engine,
- A. Right. We turned to stop and he got back on the engine.
- Q. At that time what did you observe?
- A. I believe it was the right side of his face was red and inflamed, especially his ear. I tried to put some water on it and . . .
- Q. Did he still have his helmet on at that time?
- A. He had his helmet on.
- Q. Did he have goggles?
- A. Yes. Maybe that's what saved his eyes.

Q. Can you think of anything that might have been done to prevent this from occurring?

A. Well, specifically to Kevin Powell, if he had had the CDF face flaps, that probably would have protected his ears much better although Nomax transmits heat pretty well. The way it came down off the hill so fast, I doubt if there was much that could have been done. Perhaps if there was some place we could have gone or had a fire blanket like some of the State trucks or something, that might have helped, but once we were in that little area there was no way we could get out without going through some fire. That's how he got burnt.

Q. Can you think of anything else that might help?

A. Not really.

Interview terminated at 0133 hours, 8/24/78.

LEMON FIRE, #959
Incident 13699, 8/23/78

Interview conducted by Captain John B. Lavell, California Department of Forestry, Orange County. The date is 8/24/78, 1434 hours, at Station 2, Sunnymead, Riverside Ranger Unit. Present is Kevin Duane Powell.

- Q. Kevin, would you state your full name, date of birth and home address.
- A. My full name is Kevin Duane Powell, I live at 23660 Gary Court, Sunnymead, 92388, my present age is 20, date of birth 8/6/58.
- Q. All right, Kevin, would you give me your title?
- A. Fire Control Assistant, Riverside County Fire Department.
- Q. How long have you been operating in that capacity?
- A. Approximately two and a half years.
- Q. Did you have occasion to respond to a fire in the vicinity of Lake Elsinore on 8/23/78?
- A. Yes, I did.
- Q. Would you tell me the circumstances?
- A. I heard the fire go down on my Plectron while I was at home. I was too late to make it with our engine out of here so I was sitting up here at the station and they toned out Station 6, which is Edgemont, their second roll engine. I called the station and asked if they needed any people to go with them and the engineer said yes. So I drove to the station in my private vehicle and we went 10 08 with full crew, two in the front and three on the back. We got to the staging area which was at 71 and Lemon or Olive, I don't recall which, and I saw our engine pull up so I asked the engineer on 6-A if I could switch to my home unit and he said to go ahead. I went over and told the engineer on 2 that I was going to be moving on to my unit out of my station, and two or three minutes after that we were put into a five engine task force with a ranger I leading us to go to Railroad Canyon for structure protection, I believe, in the Canyon Lake area.
- Q. Do you recall who the Ranger I was in charge of the unit?
- A. I believe it was Ranger Linn.
- Q. Okay, who was the engineer on your unit?
- A. Engineer Taylor.

- Q. Is he a paid-call fireman or is he full-time?
- A. He's a full-time CDF employee.
- Q. And who else was on the unit with you?
- A. In the cab with him was Fireman Gil Barrier and on the tailboard with me was Fireman Norm Clark.
- Q. Taylor was operating the engine?
- A. Yes.
- Q. And what was your position on the tailboard?
- A. Okay, I was on the right side of the tailboard and Norm was on the left side. We did have our safety straps on.
- Q. How about turnout gear, Nomex and the rest? Safety gear.
- A. I had on my helmet, goggles, Nomex shirt, a bandana over my nose, I had gloves on, my green forestry pants and lace up boots.
- Q. Did Clark have the same type of equipment? As far as you can determine?
- A. Yeah, his equipment was all the same except he had levi pants on instead of the green forestry pants, I think.
- Q. Okay, when you went up you proceeded up Railroad Canyon Road in what direction?
- A. It was sort of a northeasterly direction.
- Q. And what was the fire situation at that time in the area--the immediate area of the . . .
- A. When we entered the canyon, you could feel the heat from the fire. It was a very active fire line. The brush was moderate to heavy and it was thick brush, and as we'd gone about approximately a mile to two miles into the canyon, for some reason the front engine stopped, apparently to pick up a spot fire, and so the rest of the engines were forced to stop also.
- Q. Before you get that far ahead, what was the fire situation then? Was the fire close to the road or not?
- A. The fire was not that close to the road, although it had spotted over it. There was fire on both sides. The main fire was probably a hundred yards still up the hill.
- Q. So there wasn't any immediate threat to the traffic on the road?
- A. Not that I could see.

- Q. Now, you say 6163 stopped to pick up a spot fire?
- A. Yeah, I believe that was the engine number.
- Q. Or an engine in front of you if you are not sure of the number?
- A. Right.
- Q. Stopped to pick up a spot fire.
- A. Right, it was a State truck, though.
- Q. And what occurred at this time?
- A. Okay, that engine stopped and then Engine 12 which is in front of us stopped, and our engine stopped and the engine behind us, it stopped a ways back. It wasn't quite as close up as we were, and me and Norm were on the back and we observed the fire storm up the hill and to our right.
- Q. About how far would you say that was from your unit at that particular time?
- A. I'd say the fire storm occurred approximately 50 to 75 yards away from us and it was almost directly across from where I was standing.
- Q. Was it a fire storm or just a sudden flare up?
- A. I'd call it a fire storm. It was like a tornado only it was with fire.
- Q. Erratic winds?
- A. Yeah, the winds were switching. I think they were blowing to the west, and then all of a sudden they started blowing back towards the east more.
- Q. Okay, then what did you do at that particular time?
- A. We observed the firestorm and then a few seconds later there was like the whole area pre-heated, and there was like this sudden ignition of the whole area around us and the flame was really intense. There was hardly any smoke. I turned to kind of block my face from the heat, but . . .
- Q. In other words, you turned to your left or your right?
- A. I turned to my left, and it didn't feel like it was really relieving it any so I reached for the truck protection line to try and cool off the area, but it wasn't charged. So then I thought it would be best if I departed the engine so I unstrapped my safety belt and jumped off the engine as we were backing up and I got away from the heat and it seemed to be a lot better.
- Q. Now did you . . . Was you're . . . I notice you've got some burns on your face. Now, was that actually from heat contact, fire contact, or was that from radiant heat?

- A. I think it was radiant heat.
- Q. In other words, the fire did not actually flare back and hit you in the face?
- A. I don't believe so, but . . .
- Q. Now, that's on the left-hand side of your face.
- A. Right.
- Q. Do you have any burn on the right side of your face?
- A. Right on the top of my right ear is the only other place. It's blistered a little bit.
- Q. How do you feel that you got the burn on the left side of your face if most of the heat was coming from the right?
- A. When I turned to grab the truck protection line, I went to open the nozzle in the direction of the heat and no water came out so I suppose it was when I turned towards there. It was only for a few seconds.
- Q. In other words, you faced the fire at the time you cracked the nozzle?
- A. Right.
- Q. Then you dropped off the tailboard and did what?
- A. I ran down the road approximately 50 to 75 yards.
- Q. Away from the fire?
- A. Away from the fire.
- Q. And what was the engine doing at this time?
- A. It was backing up.
- Q. And where was Clark?
- A. Okay, he swung around the corner--the left corner--and was away from all the heat apparently. And he stayed on the tailboard, but there really was no place for me to go.
- Q. So after the truck backed up, did you rejoin your unit?
- A. Yes, I jumped back on the truck.
- Q. Did you know at that time you'd been burned?
- A. I thought that I might have, but I didn't really think it was that bad until a few minutes later when it started to blister.

- Q. Did you have a bandana on?
- A. Yeah, I had a blue bandana.
- Q. Where was that? Around your face or what?
- A. Yeah. It covered from the tip of my nose, around my cheeks and was tied in the back.
- Q. And you had goggles?
- A. Yes.
- Q. All right, after you got back on the unit, did it continue moving in a northeasterly direction?
- A. No, we switched. The cab man got on the tailboard and I got in the cab, and we turned around and headed back out of the canyon along with the other engines.
- Q. Now, where were you picked up? In other words, you were transported later on.
- A. I was picked up at Highway 71 and Railroad Canyon by John's Ambulance.
- Q. In other words, you proceeded all the way back to the general area of the original staging area?
- A. Yeah, the staging area was about a mile south on 71, but they picked me up at the entrance to the canyon.
- Q. You were picked up at the entrance to the canyon by which unit?
- A. By John's Ambulance out of Elsinore.
- Q. And you were transported to where?
- A. To Riverside General Hospital.
- Q. Who was present when you were put in the ambulance? Do you recall?
- A. Fireman Barrier was there, and Engineer Taylor, and Fireman Clark. Of course, there were some other firemen from other companies, but I don't recall their names.
- Q. Any rangers or officers in the area that you recall?
- A. Yes, Ranger Linn came over and looked at me.
- Q. He was there at that time?
- A. Yes.
- Q. And he knew that you were proceeding to . . . Which hospital was it?

- A. Riverside General.
- Q. Okay, you were transported by ambulance to Riverside General Hospital. What happened after you got to the hospital?
- A. They got to General. They unloaded me and I went into the Emergency Room. . .
- Q. Were you ambulatory at this time?
- A. Yes, I walked in myself. And the nurse cleaned me up a little bit and the doctor came in and looked at me and they treated me and advised me that I should see my regular doctor which is over at Kaiser in Fontana, and I said that I would the next day. He put some cream on it and put a dressing around my face, and that night I dropped by the fire station and . . .
- Q. Wait a minute, what did the doctor tell you. Did he tell you that you could work, could not work, should go home, or what? Or just say see your own doctor.
- A. Okay, he told me that I shouldn't work . . .
- Q. Should not?
- A. Should not work until someone from the fire department had cleared me to work.
- Q. Then you were at the hospital and you went back to your station, was that what you said?
- A. Yes, my parents came down and picked me up and went over to Edgemont and picked up my private vehicle.
- Q. Your vehicle was where?
- A. Over at the Edgemont Fire Station.
- Q. Edgemont Fire Station? And who did you contact there?
- A. At the Edgemont Station? Well, no one was there that I noticed so I just got in my car and I was going home and I came by the station . . .
- Q. Which station"
- A. My station, 2, Sunnymead Station, to see if I could get a little information on the fire. Captain Brusewitz, who was covering, suggested that I should probably go to burn specialist so he called Dispatch and they advised me to go down to Sherman Oaks Burn Center in Sherman Oaks.
- Q. What did you say his name was, Captain B . . .?
- A. Captain Brusewitz.

Q. He contacted Dispatch?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you recall what he said when he talked to Dispatch?

A. No, I don't.

Q. All right, then Dispatch . . . How did you get from Station 2 to the burn center at Sherman Oaks?

A. At first I went home and I got a few things because I was advised I might be staying a couple of days and my parents drove me down to the burn center.

Q. You didn't go by ambulance. You went by private vehicle.

A. Right.

Q. And what happened after you got down to the burn center?

A. They took off the dressing that they'd put on at Riverside General, and one of the nurses cleaned off all the cream, and then they had a burn specialist come in and look at me. He just wrote this prescription for another type of cream and for a Tylenol and codeine for the pain, and he advised me that I should take a shower at least once a day and put the cream on twice a day.

Q. How long were you at the hospital, the burn center?

A. I'd say not more than 45 minutes.

Q. And then your parents transported you home again?

A. Right.

Q. All right, when Brusewitz looked at you, did he . . . What was his comment? Do you recall? I mean you told me that you were bandaged.

A. Right. He couldn't see the burns really, and there's another guy there at the station who works in physical therapy at March Air Force Base hospital, and they both advised that it would be a good idea to go down to a burn center to prevent scarring.

Q. Do you happen to know who this physical therapist is? What his name is?

A. His name is Bob Ditch, he's a volunteer out here at Sunnymead.

Q. How do you feel now?

A. I feel fine. I don't have any pain at all, really.

- Q. Kevin, can you give me any additional information which might help in this investigation?
- A. Like what happened at the scene or . . . ?
- Q. Something that might be considered . . . that this is a hazard of the business.
- A. Yeah, it could be because there was no way. . . I don't think it was anybody's fault really because there was no way you could have predicted the winds were going to switch and there was going to be a fire storm that I could see, but I think a lot of people feel that the front engine shouldn't have stopped to pick up a spot fire and we should have just proceeded through the canyon to an area relatively safe.
- Q. However, at the time the front engine stopped the fire storm had not generated. It was after they had come to a halt that it started to pick up. And the winds were erratic in the area?
- A. Yeah, they kept switching.

Interviewed concluded at 1505, 8/24/78.

LEMON FIRE, #959
Incident 13699, 8/23/78

Statement made by Charles Meidell, Fire Crew Supervisor, to Brian Richtmeyer, Fire Captain, on 8/24/78 regarding safety blanket on unit 6163.

The crew attempted to use the blanket when overrun by fire on 8/23/78. The blanket malfunctioned, that is "hung up" and would not pull out of the cannister. Upon examination of the cannister and blanket by Mr. Meidell, it was determined that the blanket in the engine was a dozer blanket and not designed for use in an engine cannister. The dozer blanket dimensions are 80" X 90" and is of somewhat different design than the engine blanket which is 60" by 120" and is specifically designed to attach to the inside of the cannister and has loops for removing it from the cannister which the dozer blanket does not have.

Also the engine had only one blanket cannister, and it is required to have two cannisters, one on each side of the crew seats. Also there is apparently a problem with cotter pins that secure the roller to the end shafts inside the cannister. These cotter pins, if not taped or otherwise protected, catch on the safety blanket when removal is attempted, and thereby "hangs up" the blanket making speedy removal impossible. It appears to us that this mechanical defect, coupled with having the wrong blanket in the cannister, made blanket removal impossible when it was needed on the fire.

There should be a definite procedure for 1) assuring that the right blanket gets installed, and 2) that periodic tests be made, on a regular basis to be sure that the devise will work when needed.

"Fix N Fax" #99 - No. 9, Engine Safety Balnket Specifications, and #65 - Nos. 1, 5, 4, Engine Specifications.

Mr. Meidell is a Fire Crew Supervisor assigned to Pilot Rock Conservation Camp where all safety blankets are manufactured and is quite familiar with blanket design, and which blanket should be installed on which specific equipment. Blankets should be clearly marked as to what units they are to be installed on.



EXHIBIT I

Picture #1 Aerial view Railroad Canyon looking east.
Fire moved right to left.

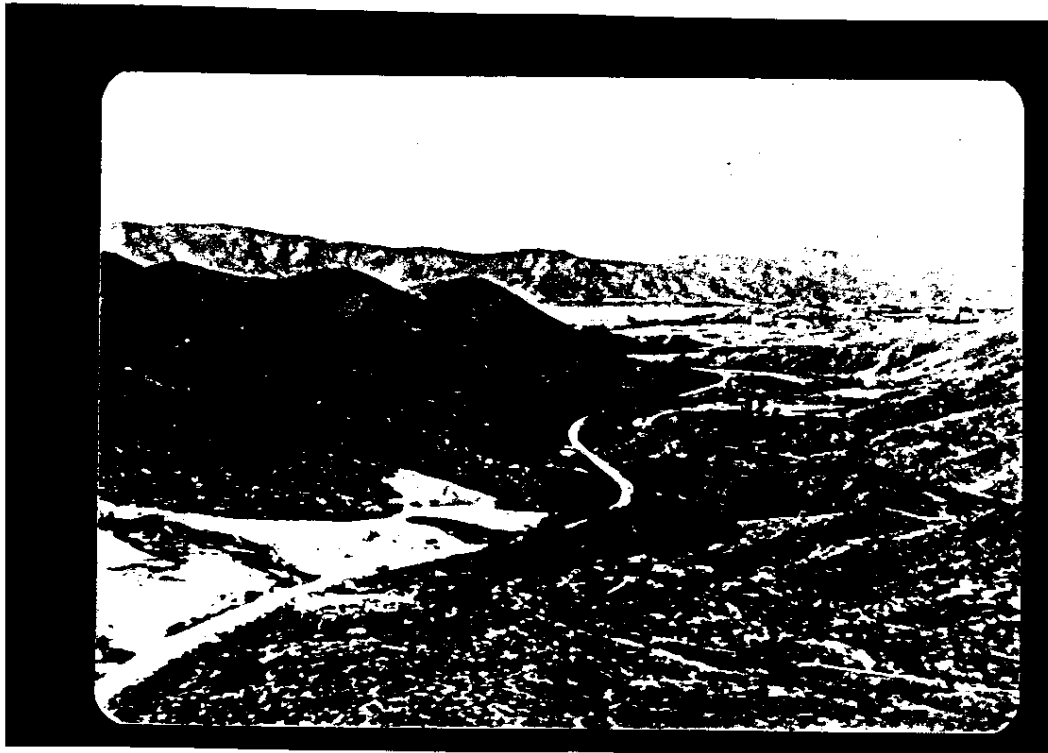


EXHIBIT I

Picture #2 Aerial view Railroad Canyon looking west.
Fire moved left to right. Lake Elsinore in center
background.

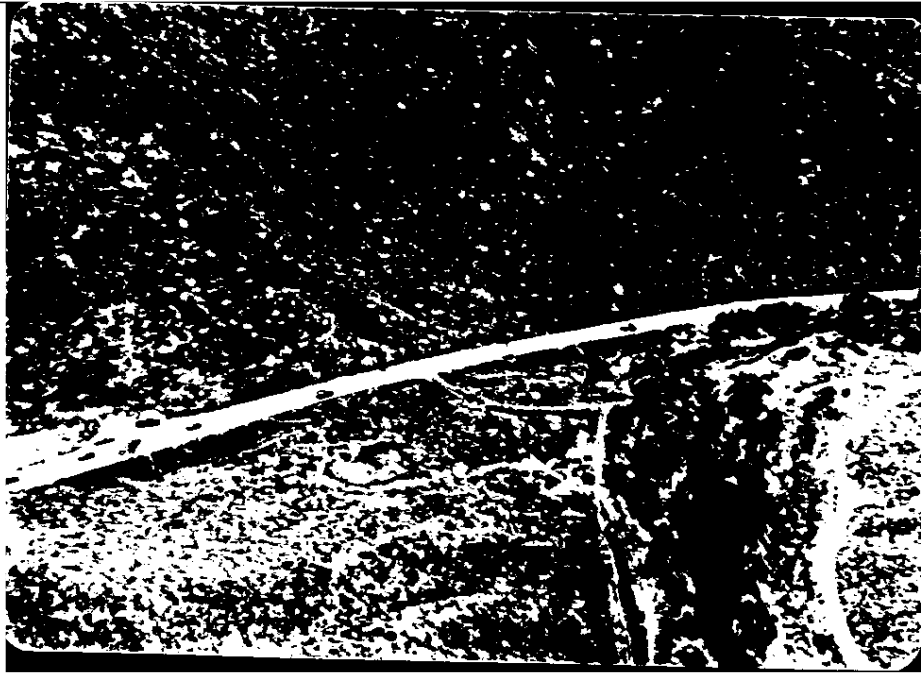


EXHIBIT II

Aerial view Railroad Canyon at location of injuries. Red arrow shows approximate location of 6163 at time injuries occurred. Dotted line indicated path of intense fire storm in gully. Point #1 is location of turnout.



EXHIBIT III

Montage of terrain in area where injuries occurred. Gully in left portion of photo was immediately adjacent to Engine 6163. Fire storm moved down gully from back to front in photo. View looking south. Road on which both Engine 6163 and Engine 2 were parked is this side of fence posts in photo.



EXHIBIT IV

View of blanket installed in cannister on 6163. Blanket has been unrolled. Note that blanket is folded or wrinkled across face near cannister. This is caused by it's excess width.

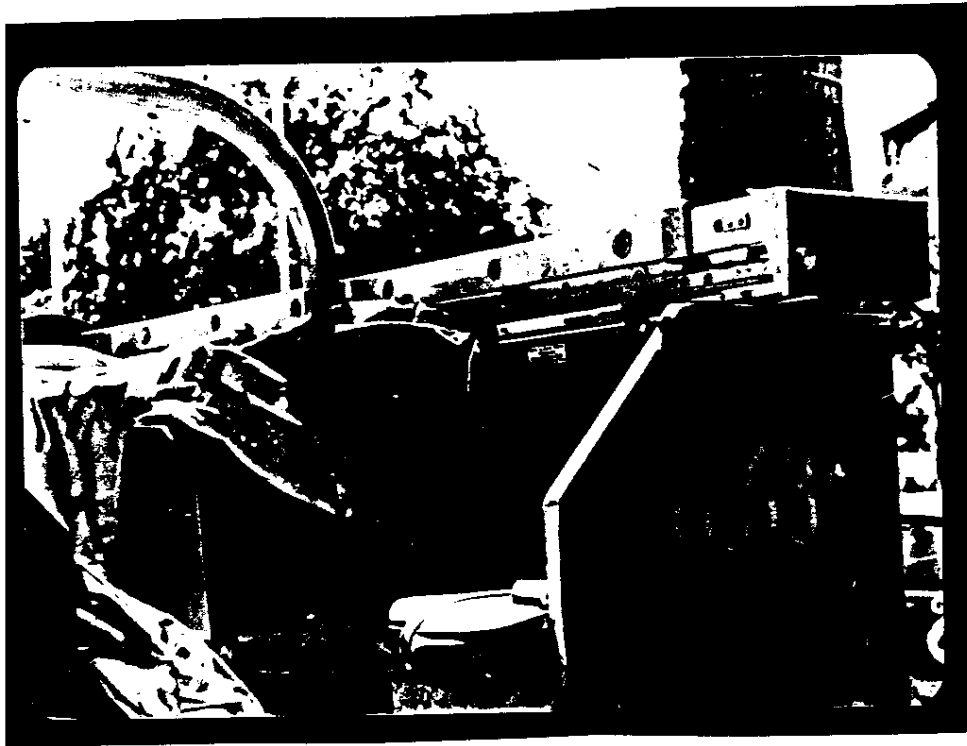
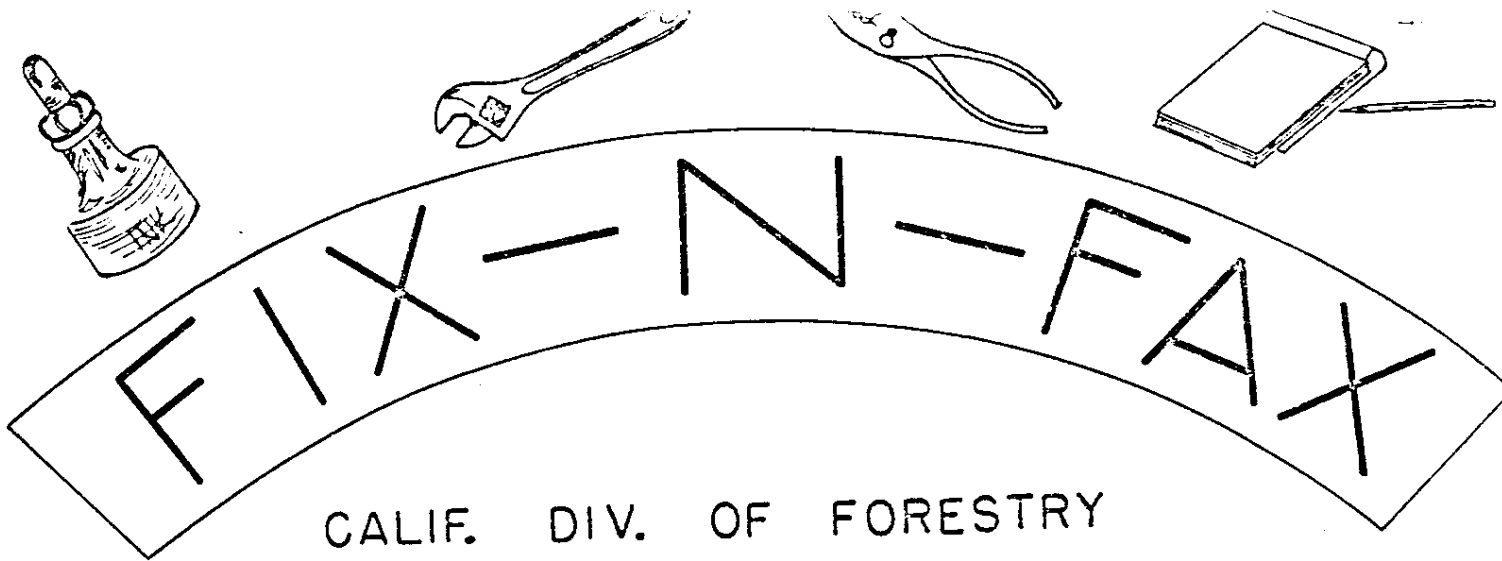


EXHIBIT VI

View of right side of crew compartment Engine 6163. Note that instead of a blanket cannister being installed, a ladder is mounted in it's place.



CALIF. DIV. OF FORESTRY

NUMBER 65

MERIT AWARD SUGGESTION #50866

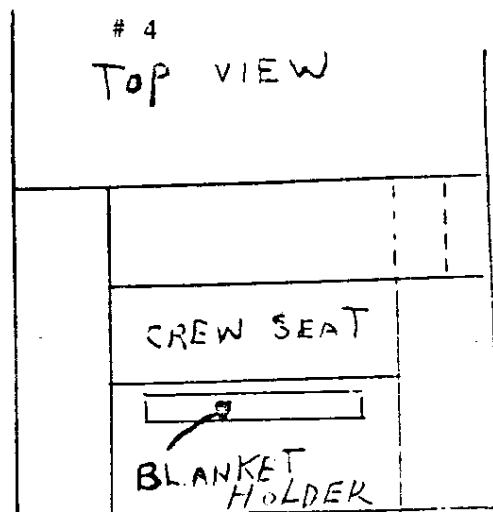
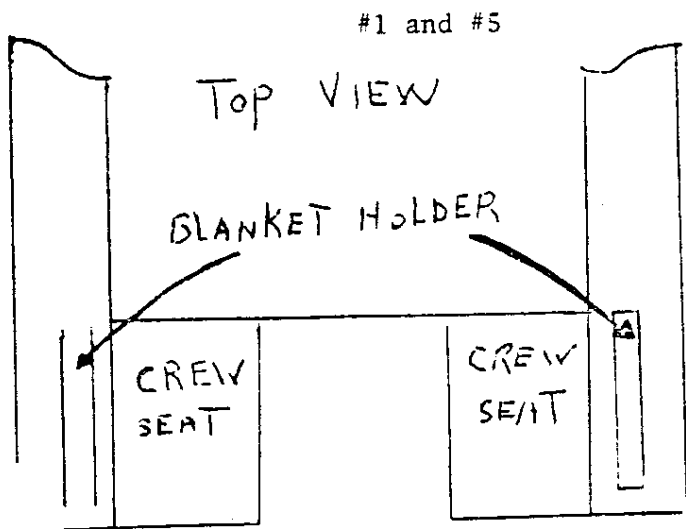
DATE 4/5/71

Merit Award Suggestion #50866 suggested fabrication and installation of fire resistant blankets on Division-owned firetrucks. We have adopted this suggestion.

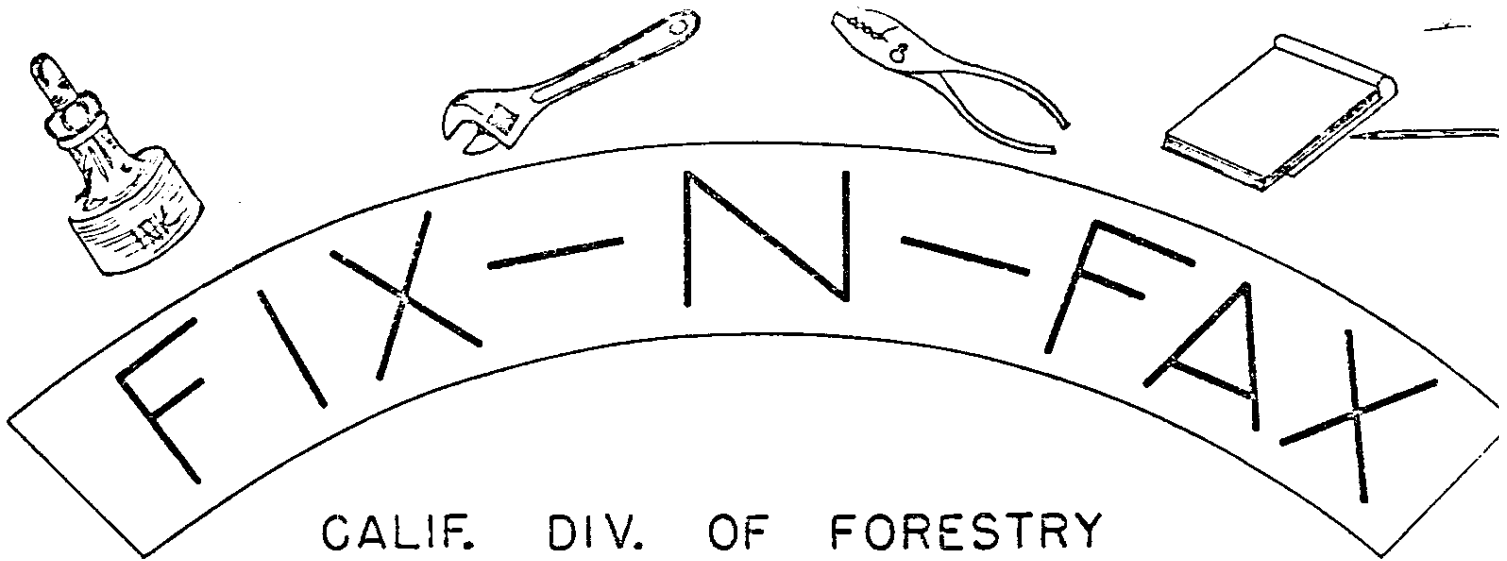
The Equipment Development Advisory Committee has recommended and we have approved a final design of both the blanket and blanket holder. Blankets and holders will cost approximately \$50 each. Pilot Models #1 and #5 firetrucks will require two blankets each. Pilot Model #4 will require one each.

These fire resistant blankets are manufactured of Gentex #1001, which is a reflective fire resistant material. The blankets are approximately 102" x 60" are folded into thirds, and rolled up and stored in a cylindrical metal container 5" in diameter and 34" long.

As funds are available, we recommend that blankets be installed on all #1, #5, and #4 firetrucks. Send requisitions for blankets and blanket holders through normal channels. Sacramento will forward requests to the appropriate Conservation Camp for fabrication. Blanket holders should be installed on firetrucks as per the following sketches.



PREVENT PAIRS



NUMBER 99

DATE 12/3/75

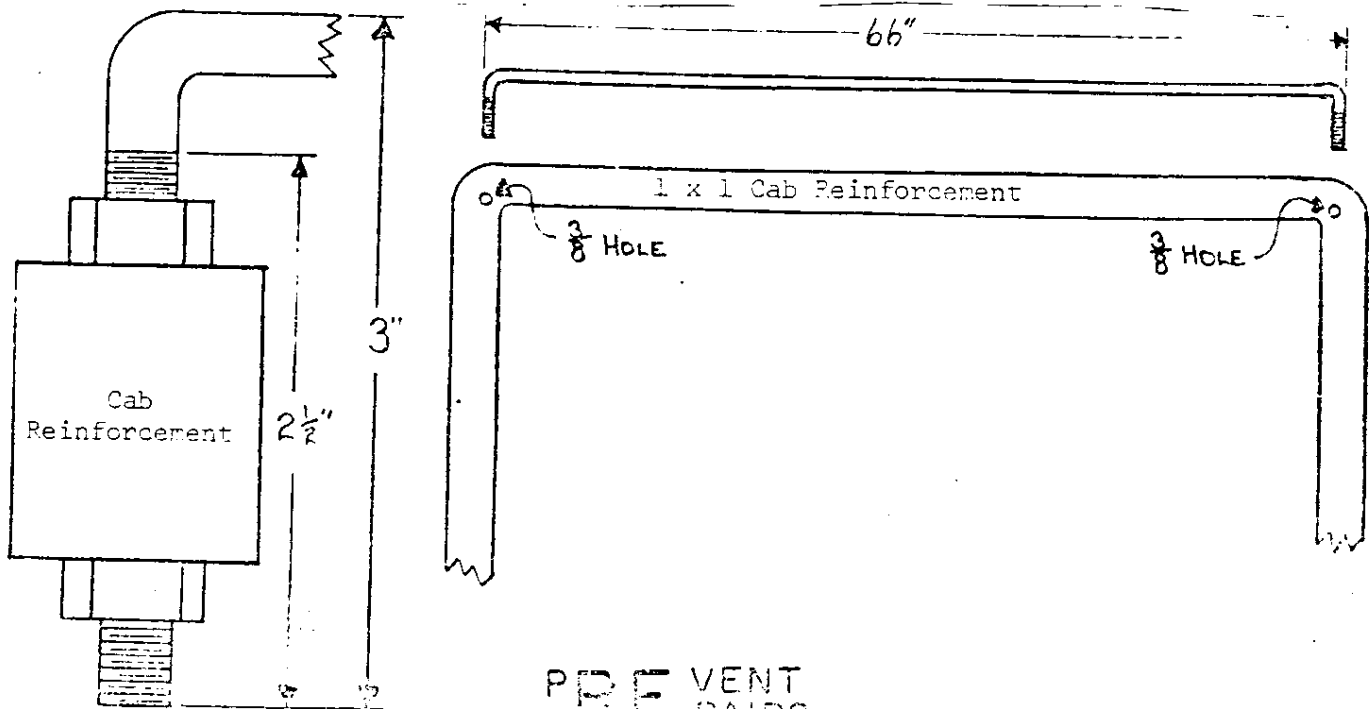
#9 FIRE BLANKETS

Fire blankets for the #9 firetruck crew compartment are available from Pilot Rock Conservation Camp. Installation of the 60" x 108" Gentex 1016 blanket is optional depending on local funds, but should receive a high priority because of the obvious safety factor.

Hung on a rod across the top of the crew cab extension the blanket can be pulled completely across the opening to shield the crew.

To install curtain rod:

1. Thread a 3/8" x 72" stainless steel rod back 2-1/2" on each end.
2. Bend rod 3" from each end to form 90° angles, and leaving rod approximately 66" long overall.
3. Drill 2 horizontal 3/8" holes in the 1" x 1" cab extension reinforcement approximately 66" apart.
4. Attach rod to cab extension using a nut on each side of the 1" reinforcement.



PREVENT
PAIRS



EXHIBIT VII

View of cab warning button. Note exposed location and absence of any device to prevent accidental activation.

LEMON FIRE, 8/24/78

Roster of Injured Personnel

Samuel Sanchez - Firefighter Seasonal

Telephone: 845-4954

Address: 810 E. 13th St., Beaumont, CA 92223

Gregory Lee Cameron - Firefighter Seasonal

Telephone: 654-7700

Address: 41755 El Camino Dr., Hemet, CA 92343

Charles Devere Maberry - Firefighter Seasonal

Telephone: 347-0064

Address: 43-524 Main St., Indio, CA 92201

Manuel Villalovas - Firefighter Seasonal

Telephone: 338-4017

Address: 239 Erlach, Crestline, CA 92325

Kevin Powell - Volunteer Fireman

Telephone: 653-2878

Address: 23660 Gary Court, Sunnymead, CA 92388