

**"Precious in the sight
of the Lord is the
death of His saints."**

--Psalms 116:15



Allan Boddy



Sergio Colles



Benjamin Dinnel



Paul Gifford



Harold Griffis



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Howard Rowe



Raymond Sherman



Daniel Short



Stanley Vote



Stanton Whitehouse

Chico, California
July 22, 1953

Dear friend in Christ:

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (Ps. 116:15). These words of comfort came to us as we heard for the first time that 14 men from our boot camp at Fouts Springs, Calif., had gone to be with the Lord. God has shown His grace in comforting those who lost loved ones and also the rest of us in the Mission who were deeply affected.

A forest fire about 25 miles north of the boot camp—set by an unemployed man who wished to make some money fighting it, as was later proved—was reported Thursday afternoon, July 9. Thirty men from camp responded to two alarms and volunteered to go with the U. S. Forest Service trucks when they rolled into camp. About 10 o'clock that night 14 of them were ushered into the Lord's presence. Our first notice at Chico of the fire was a telephone call from one of the San Francisco papers asking for information; and then began a quick succession of radio reports and calls from newspapers, in person and by phone, all seeking more information. Macon Hare flew in from boot camp with the report also, although it was about 1 p.m. Friday before we received an official list from the Forest Service of those who had been trapped by the flames.

There was a large number of conflicting reports given out, so we want to share with you the happenings so far as we have been able to determine them.

The main fire had been surrounded and was thought to be under control. Down in Grindstone Canyon a spot fire had started, presumably from flying sparks. Twenty-three of our men and one Forest Service ranger were sent down into the canyon to put out the small spot fire. This was done, and the men sat down to return thanks for the Lord's help in putting out the fire, for the lunch which the Forest Service provided, and then to eat. About that time, the wind changed and the original fire jumped the fire break and started down the canyon, in

which the men were resting after a strenuous afternoon and evening of heavy work fighting the two fires. Another ranger ran to shout down to the men that they should get out quickly.

Earlier the men had talked over the situation and had agreed that if the fire should come down the valley they would run down the canyon to a road and safety. However, some of the men misunderstood the call from the ranger up on the rim and thought he was calling for help, so they ran up to help him. The nine men who escaped the fire got out this way, and we are certainly thankful.

Some of the men who escaped later testified that they were exhausted, at the end of their own strength; but when they called on the Lord, He met their need and they were able to continue on to safety. The other 14 men from camp and the ranger ran in various directions, but mostly down the canyon as they had planned. The wind was stronger than they anticipated, the fire burned faster and the brush was thick, so they were unable to reach safety and were overtaken by the flames. Since this all took place at night, it was really wonderful that *any* were able to escape, and we are thankful for the Lord's help.

The human mind cries out, "Why? Why did it have to happen?" These men had previously given their lives to the Lord in order to take the unsearchable riches of Christ to those who live in darkened corners of the earth. We do know that the Lord permitted this, and, while we will miss the men a great deal, we know that they have entered into God's presence, and their battles on earth are over.

The Lord has been very real to the widows and children and other close friends of those who have passed on, so that His consoling power has been manifested. We need to continue in prayer for each one. There are nine widows and 26 children left, so we need to remember them in prayer frequently these coming days and months.

Quite a few folks have asked what provision would be made for the widows and children. The Forest Service has promised that they will receive a pension, although

the officials have not worked out all details yet. We are grateful for the large number of friends who have written to tell us they have been praying during this trying time. A number have sent in gifts to cover the extra expenses and also to care for the families, so their needs will be taken care of until the Government makes arrangements for the pensions. We are thankful for each one who has helped through gifts and prayers.

The Lord has made many portions of the Word very precious to us in the past week, but we were just recently impressed with Isaiah 57:1—"The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come." Yes, each one of these 14 men who went to be with the Lord has been taken away from the evil to come—that which comes to all who dwell upon the earth. The righteous Lot was vexed with the sinfulness of Sodom, and we, too, are vexed as we see evil wax worse and worse upon the earth as men reject the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour and the Prince of Peace.

While the earth is poorer as these have gone on, Heaven is richer, and they are rejoicing in the Lord's presence even as you read these lines. "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (I Cor. 13:12). "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (I John 3:2).

Some of these candidates had been with us only a few days and had barely become acquainted with the camp; others had been with us for a year or two and were making plans to move on soon to the harvest fields of the world. Paul Gifford was secretary of the New Tribes Mission in Canada and was spending some time with us here in California, getting more familiar with the work. Stanton Whitehouse had been assistant director of the California boot camp but was planning to leave soon and make preparations to go to Venezuela. However,

they had all given their lives unreservedly into the Lord's hands and wanted God to be glorified by their lives.

Most of the reporters involved in securing information on the fire have been witnessed to at least once. Christians, too, have been stirred, and a few have already written in to give their lives to the Lord for pioneer missionary work. We trust that you will continue much in prayer these coming days for all of us as we press on to take the Good News of salvation to those in heathen darkness beyond the present reach of Gospel effort.

Life at its longest is brief. The Bible compares it to a flower of the field which soon vanishes away (I Pet. 1:24), or like the vapor which is dissipated when the hot sun strikes it (Jas. 4:14). May the Lord find us faithful to Him when He calls us into His presence.

*"Only one life, 'twill soon be passed;
Only what's done for Christ will last."*

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:1, 2).

As many pray and are concerned about us, we trust that the Lord will be able to speak to many Christians and place a burden on their hearts to reach with the Gospel the countless millions who are dropping off to a Christless eternity in the everlasting lake of fire, condemned because no one ever cared enough for their souls to go to them with the Good News of salvation. May the compassion of Christ for lost multitudes grip our hearts as never before to give our lives as living sacrifices to make Him known to the ends of the earth.

Your co-laborers in Christ,

NEW TRIBES MISSION

J. B. KNUTSON, *Gen. Sec.*