Incident Name: Loop Fire, Angeles National Forest
Date: 11/1/66
Personnel: 12 lives lost
Age:
Agency/Organization: US Forest Service
Position: El Cariso Hotshots

Summary:

Kenneth Barnhill, 19
Raymond Chee, 23
Frederick Danner, 18 (died sometime after 11/24)
John P Figlo, 18
Joel A Hill, 19
Daniel J Moore, 21
James A Moreland, 22
Carl J Shilcutt, 26 (died 11/6)
John D Verdugo, 19
William J Waller, 21
On November 1, 1966, the El Cariso Hotshots, a U.S. Forest Service Interregional Wildland Firefighting Crew, was trapped by flames as they worked on a steep hillside in Pacioma Canyon on the Angeles National Forest. An unanticipated upslope wind came up in afternoon and a spot fire was fanned and funneled up the steep canyon. The crew was cutting handline downhill and part of the crew was unable to reach safety in the few seconds they had. Ten members of the crew died on the Loop Fire that day. Another two members died from burn injuries in the following days. Most of the 19 El Cariso crew members who survived were critically burned and remained hospitalized for some time. The Downhill Indirect Checklist, improved firefighting equipment and better fire behavior training resulted, in part, from lives lost on this fire.

(Four US Marines were also killed on a nearby Camp Pendleton fire on the same day.)

El Cariso Hotshot Crews 1 and 2 in October, 1966; crew photos with identification compliments of the El Cariso Hotshot crew website.

Crew 1, October 1966
Left to Right, Back: Joel Hill, Steve White, Jay Shilcutt, Steve Bowman, John Verdugo, Bob Chounard
Middle: Dan Moore, Rodney Seewald, Bill Waller, Andy Silkwood, Jim Reichard, Jim Mooreland
Front: Ed Cosgrove, Jim Brown, John Moore
From Crew 1: Joel Hill, Steve White, John Verdugo, Dan Moore, Bill Waller and Jim Mooreland all died from burns they received on the Loop Fire of November 1, 1966.
Crew 2, October, 1966, photo compliments of Rodney Seewald.
Left to right, Back: Glen Spady, Pat Chase, Pete Achberger, Fred Danner, John Figlo, Joe Smalls, Mike White
Middle: Jerry Smith, Joe Beaty, Ken Barnhill, Frank Keesling, Tom Rother
Front: Richard Leak, Raymond Chee
From Crew 2: John Figlo, Mike White, Ken Barnhill, and Raymond Chee, died from burns received on the Loop Fire of November 1, 1966. Carl Shilcutt and Fred Danner died in the hospital at a later time.
Accident Location

{mosmap lat='34.331477'|lon='-118.402541'|marker='0'|text='Accident Location'}

Map of final control line from the Accident Report

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Reports, Documentation, Lessons Learned

- Forest Service: Loop Fire Investigation Report (7224 K pdf)
- Photo of mountainside with handline location (from report):
Loop Fire Fatality Location

High Risk Tactic on topography that is in full alignment

Stop direct line construction
Wait until after dark or let the fire run and then go direct in cool fuel

Go Trigger pt.
Stop Trigger pt.

Wind

Figure 3
Dear Bill,

I thought only 1 like to know what exactly happened the day of the fire.

It was to the Angeles Forest in the mountains, we were first line drivers.

"It was almost straight up and down, we were on the line the other

morning and got to the area and started cutting a line down the

ridge. Seven times, we would get back because the fire would

throw over the ridge. A lot of it at 11 AM." The wind was too high, too

rolling like all the time. At one point, we lost a man in rank. We were all

strong and then we started through a small section that was dangerous

and down in a pocket near some avoid blocking roads on either side. We got

avoiding the rest of the line through some more open areas. We were trying

to place the fire down positioning that far. There was an area (300

hectares) that we had to do that make it from the fire, as the spot burning there

any deep smoke or 30 miles to near the canyons and all of a sudden it just stopped. It looked to me like the fire was coming 90

miles at 80 mph and I really couldn't get away from it. I died on the ground

and didn't even get up. I died on the ground and didn't even get up. I died on

the ground.

I wanted to help and I also had to help. I wanted to help and I also had to help. I wanted to help and I also had to help. I wanted to help and I also had to help. I wanted to help and I also had to help. I wanted to help and I also had to help. I wanted to help and I also had to help. I wanted to help and I also had to help. I wanted to help and I also had to help. I wanted to help and I also had to help. I wanted to help and I also had to help. I wanted to help and I also had to help.

I wanted to help and I also had to help.
House of Representatives

A TRIBUTE TO THE EL CARISO HOTSHOTS

HON. JERRY LEWIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 17, 1997

Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring to my attention the outstanding efforts of the Firefighter crew of the El Cariso Hotshots. Over 40 years ago, a crew was given the task of fighting a particularly dangerous wildfire in a remote area. After overcoming many hardships and challenges, they were hailed as heroes and their efforts were celebrated in the Congressional Record.

On November 1, 1996—the 30th anniversary of the fire—the surviving members of the El Cariso Hotshots were honored and their names read into the Congressional Record. This was a fitting tribute to the brave men who risked their lives to save others. The fire was only one of many major wildfires that have ravaged our country. The lives of the El Cariso Hotshots are a testament to the courage and determination of those who fight these fires.

Many of the members of the El Cariso Hotshots have passed away, but their legacy lives on. Their sacrifice and dedication continue to inspire us today. We honor their memory and the memory of all those who have served as firefighters.

Mr. Speaker, let us not forget the sacrifices made by the El Cariso Hotshots. Let us remember their bravery and their commitment to protecting our country. We owe them a debt of gratitude that can never be fully repaid.

[End of speech]

Website with many photos and personal recollections: [El Cariso Hotshots 1966]

[Note: The text continues on the next page.]

main Website: [El Cariso Hotshots 1966]
Creation of a Park: El Cariso Community Regional Park

45th anniversary:
Hotlist Thread 11/1/11

Contributors to this article:
Gordon King who presented at a hotshot meeting in the mid-2000s, Doug Campbell, David S. Westley and Scott Gorman for the memorial marker photos. Rod Seewald sent the crew photos to the webmaster of the El Cariso Hotshot site in the fall of 1966. It's unknown if he is the photographer. Firefighters who organized and produced the Staff Ride after Gordon's Hotshot talk did a great job. There were others who shared stories, too many to name here. If you'd like to be added to this list, please let me know via the Planning Contact. Mellie

Please support the Wildland Firefighter Foundation