

Memorandum

: F. H. Raymond, State Forester

Date: August 23, 1968

Ref: IAA-8-23

From : C. W. Fairbank, Deputy State Forester

Subject: SAFETY
Accident - Little Fire #178
James Weakley, Firefighter
Napa Ranger Unit
District I

Attached is a copy of the investigation made of the accident where Firefighter James Weakley was burned, on August 7, 1968. At this time we have been unable to receive permission to talk to Firefighter Weakley; however, we understand from his parents that he has no recollection of what occurred. He apparently, however, backed up into a ditch and fell down just at the precise time the fire came into the ditch. We investigated the clothing he was wearing and, to the best of our knowledge, his burns were not affected by the type of clothing. He did have his sleeves rolled up which is against our stated policy and instructions while fighting fire. The work he was doing on the fire, however, was taken on by him at his own volition, without orders and, in fact, against the stated orders and policy of the Unit. He apparently was over-eager and jumped in to assist without direction. The accident is apparently one of those unfortunate situations that could occur to anyone involved in fighting a fire.

We do not see any further action needed in this case, nor are we able to make recommendations for preventing such accidents except through our continual training process.

C. W. FAIRBANK
Deputy State Forester

by 
L. E. RICHEY
Assistant Deputy

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Att.

Memorandum

: C. W. Fairbank,
Deputy State Forester

Date: August 20, 1968

From : W. G. Todd,
State Forest Ranger

Subject: ADMINISTRATION-Personnel
James Weakley, F. Firefighter (S)
Accident - Little Fire #178
District I - Napa Ranger Unit

| | | |
|--|-------|--|
| 1968 AUG 21 AM 11:35 DIVISION OF FORESTRY RECEIVED DIST. I | DEP. | |
| | FIRE | |
| | BUS. | |
| | EMGT. | |
| | LEV. | |
| | C.C. | |
| | FILE | |

Attached is a summary of all available facts leading up to the accident involving Firefighter Weakley on the Little Fire, Napa Fire #178, that occurred on August 7, 1968. Enclosed are statements from witnesses, a small map, and photos of the area. We have not been able to interview Firefighter Weakley as yet; however, if he adds pertinent information at a later date, we will forward a supplement to this report.

W. G. TODD,

W. G. Todd

State Forest Ranger

SUMMARY

James D. Weakley Accident

August 7, 1968

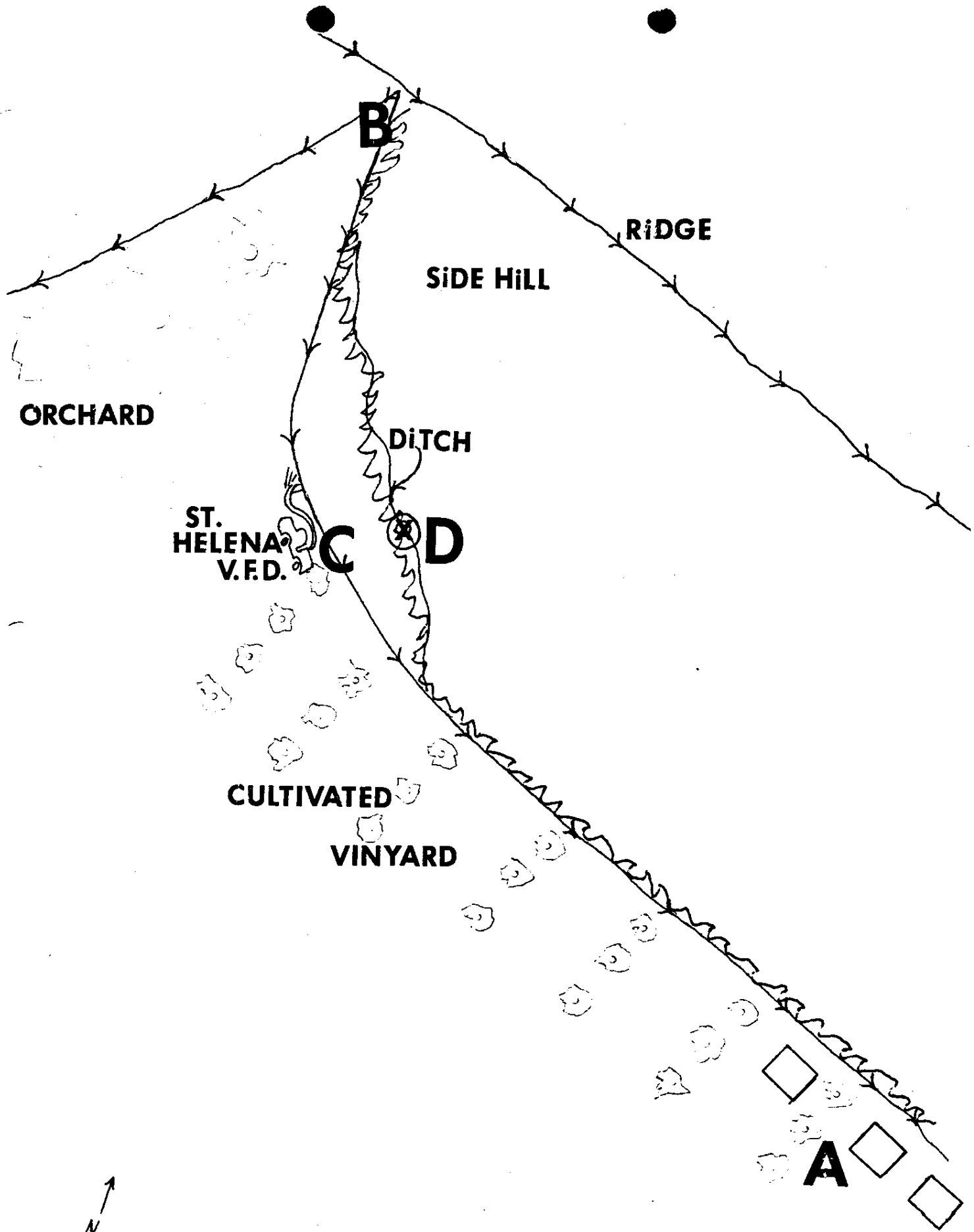
Fire Truck Driver Paul Blythe responded to the Little Fire in 1575 with two firefighters. Firefighter Jim Weakley and Firefighter George Christofilis were both on the crew compartment of the truck. On arrival at the fire Blythe pulled into the area of the buildings (A), told his crew to run the live reel out, and started the pump. Before they had pumped any water, Assistant Ranger Martinelli called on the radio and told them to proceed to the head of the fire (B). They rolled up the hose, left the pump idling, and with both firefighters on the back of the truck they moved toward area B. It appears that Firefighter Christofilis was on the seat in the crew compartment while Firefighter Weakley was on the tailboard; however, this has not been definitely established.

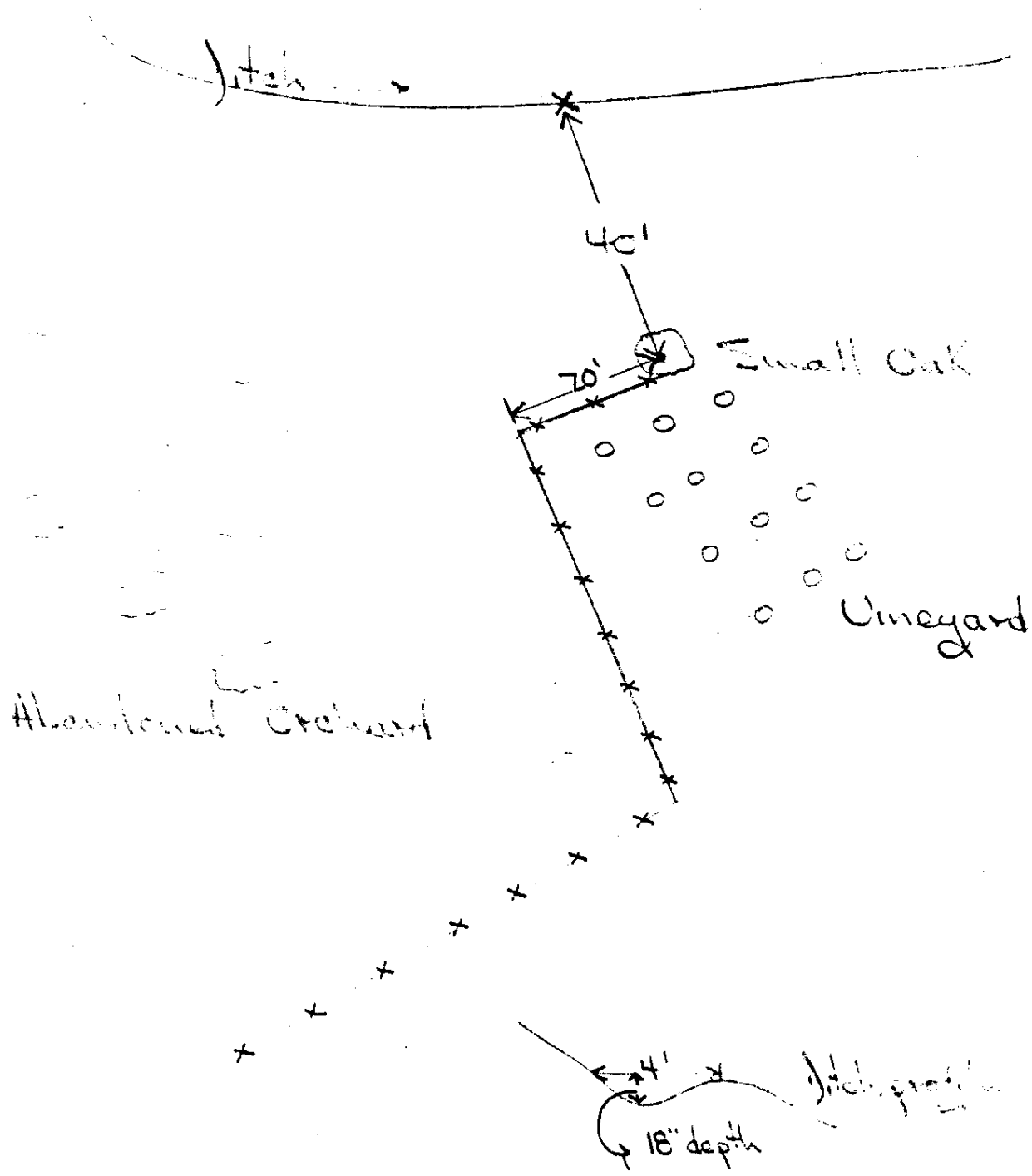
In the area marked C Driver Blythe tried to go by the St. Helena VFD truck, got part way up the hill, and had to back down. As Blythe stopped and shifted into reverse Firefighter Weakley jumped off the truck, grabbed a backpack, and ran into the area marked D. His reason for doing this is not known; however, the St. Helena truck had a line out and had knocked the fire down from the area marked D up to the area marked B. The stretch from D to the edge of the vineyard was open and burning in wild oats approximately 18 inches high. The St. Helena VFD hose laid in unburned grass in this area, and he might have been trying to protect the hose or he might have been just trying to pick up the open line. In any event he did not speak to anyone. He crossed a small ditch (4 feet wide by 18 inches in depth) on the sidehill and started pumping water on the fire about four feet from the ditch. Apparently the wind fanned the fire and the heat caused him to back up. It seems he backed up to the ditch, stumbled and fell backwards into it just as the fire moved into it. The ditch was overgrown with the wild oats. The backpack apparently held him down long enough to be severely burned, causing him to scream a number of times. The St. Helena Volunteers, working up the hill from D with a hose line, heard the scream and came down the hill. The nozzle-man put water on Firefighter Weakley while one of their men ran into the fire and brought him out. Foreman Trood had just arrived at the fire in the Scout

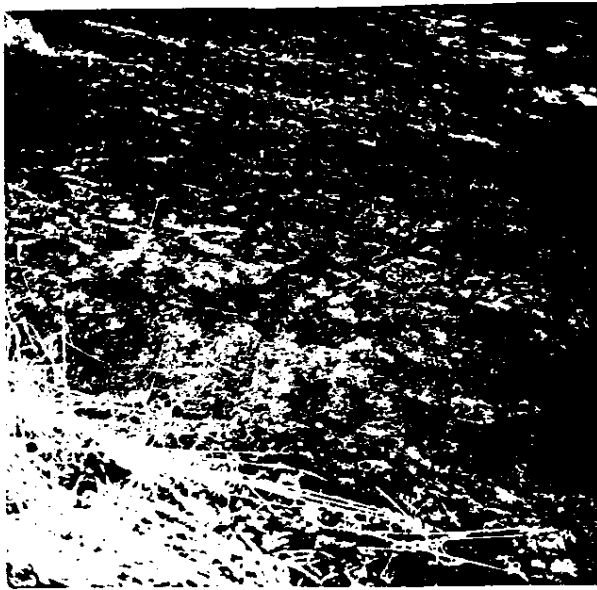
and he drove Firefighter Weakley to the hospital. FFTD Blythe was not aware that Firefighter Weakley was even off the truck until he saw them carrying him to the Scout.

Firefighter Weakley was burned on both hands, both forearms, both knees, the right buttocks and on the face. There is nothing to indicate at this time that his clothing in any way contributed to his burns. He did have both sleeves of his shirt rolled up.

The primary cause of the accident was Firefighter Weakley's backing into the ditch and falling; however, if he had waited for instructions from his Driver it is doubtful that this accident would even have happened, as it was Driver Blythe's intention to make another run at the hill, and then attack the head of the fire with the live reel. Firefighter Weakley has been employed by us since June 20, 1968, and has received training to the effect that he was not to get off the truck until instructed to do so by the man in charge. Questioning of his foremen and drivers indicates that this is the first time he has done so.

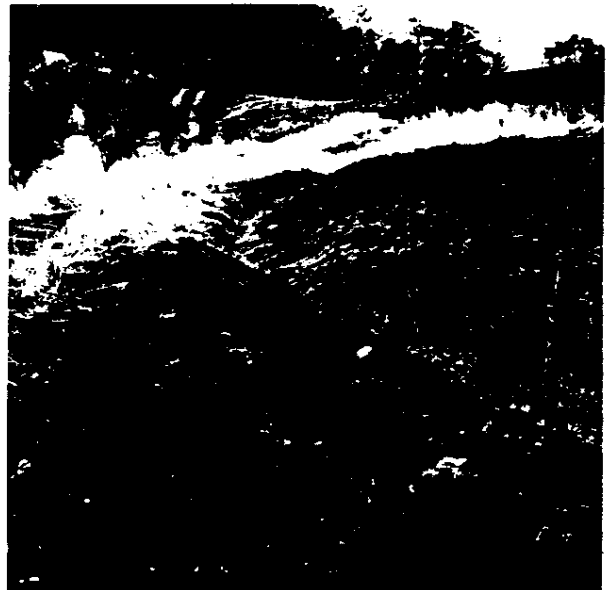






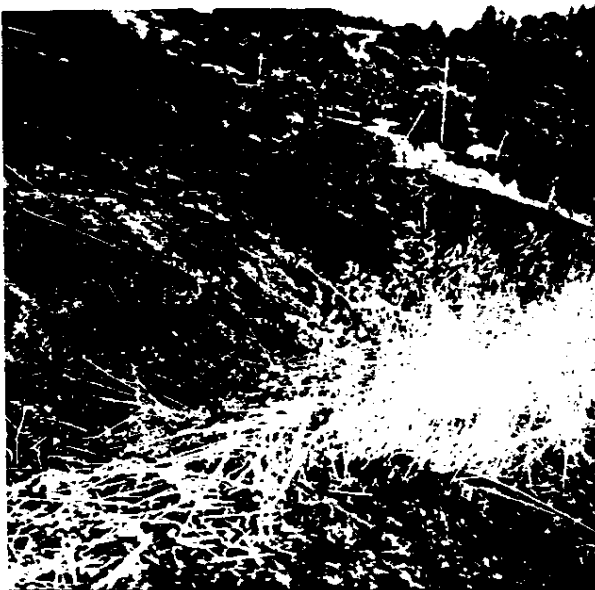
Ditch showing scuff marks where
fire fighter Weakley fell & was buried

Napa Fire #178 8/7/68 ↑
E



Ditch, grass, & marks where
FF Weakley was burned

↑
N



Ditch, grass & marks where FF Weakley
fell. ↑
S



Hill + ditch that R.F. Weakley backed
into.

↑
SW



Hill + ditch where R.F. Weakley was
buried.

↑
SW



Ditch looking towards area
where R.F. Weakley fell.

↑
S

JAMES D. WEAKLEY

Accident

This is Ranger GARY TODD of the Napa Ranger Unit. The date is August 7, 1968, at 1607. I am talking to witnesses who witnessed the accident involving Firefighter JIM WEAKLEY which occurred approximately 1400 this date.

My name is GEORGE CHRISTOFILIS. I live at 136 Rae Court, Vallejo, California. We were coming in on this dirt road and PAUL first told us to take the hose off the truck down here near the house and then I guess GARY ^(Gary said) put it back on and go up the dirt road. PAUL got on the wrong road and was backing up and WEAKLEY got off the truck and grabbed the backpump and started running into the ditch and the fire, and I turned around and ^{he} was gone, and I ran over and asked this one guy to hit me with water so I could go get him and he was frozen, and this other guy came downhill and hit me and hit WEAKLEY with water and two of the guys went in and got him.

Todd: Who froze?

Christofilis: This one guy was holding the fire hose and I asked him to hit me with water. I guess he was from St. Helena Fire Dept. Volunteers. I asked him to hit me with water and he just stood there.

T: Did he have a hose off the truck or a small water line?

C: He had the big hose off the truck.

T: Did PAUL tell WEAKLEY to get off the truck?

C: No, he didn't.

T: Had the truck stopped when WEAKLEY got off?

C: It was backing up when WEAKLEY got off, ran around the truck, grabbed the backpump; the truck was still moving backing up.

T: PAUL hadn't told him anything? Did you see WEAKLEY fall?

C: Last I know I turned around and WEAKLEY was down. He was yelling for me, and I told Him I was on my way, and that was it.

T: At this time was he already involved in the fire or had the fire reached him yet?

C: He was squirting water on it and he turned around; I guess he tripped and by then the backpump was off, his helmet was off and he was yelling.

T: And the fire was on him at that time?

C: The fire was on him.

T: Now, just before he was yelling for you was he wquirting water?

C: He was squirting water.

T: Which side of the ditch was he on, the uphill side?

C: The uphill side.

T: The fire hadn't reached the ditch yet?

C: The fire was around the ditch and I guess he went into the fire on the uphill dune. I turned around - like that.

T: Did you actually see him fall?

C: No I didn't see him fall.

T: When you heard him holler for you was he down?

C: He was down then, and I didn't see him fall, but I did see him run and start sprinkling and I turned around and he was down.

T: You did see him pumping water?

C: I did see him pumping water.

T: Was he having any effect on the fire at all?

C: Yep. I thought he was.

T: How high were the flames?

C: I really couldn't tell you.

T: You don't have any idea?

C: No.

T: OK, now, first you asked the fellow to springle water on you or to squirt you with the hose and he froze and didn't squirt water on you, and the fellow that was uphill from you came down.

C: He was coming down with the hose and he was squirting into the fire and on WEAKLEY.

T: He was aware then that WEAKLEY had been burned at that time. Now, the other two fellows that went in and got him, how did they get in there--did they go right in through the fire?

C: This other guy came up and started sprinkling them and the two went in and carried him out.

T: They went in with water--in other words, were being wet down with water and went in and got him out?

C: Yes.

T: Did he say anything to you?

C: No, he didn't say anything at all.

T: What was he hollering when he was down--was he hollering "help" or what?

C: He was hollering "George, George" and I says I was on my way.

T: OK, George. Thank you. One other question. Have you gone on fires with JIM before?

C: Yes, I have.

T: Has he done this before? Has he jumped off the truck before the Foreman told him to?

C: Not that I know of.

T: He hasn't done this before - always before he has waited until he has instruction?

C: He has waited, that's right.

T: Who usually puts the chock block under the tire?

C: Usually PAUL tells me or somebody to put it under. He hadn't even said to put it under yet.

T: He hadn't gotten that far. To your knowledge you have never seen JIM do this before, jump off the truck?

C: No, I haven't.

T: OK. Thank you, George.

My name is PAUL BLYTHE, 1837 Spring Mountain Court, St. Helena, California.

Todd: OK, why don't you start from when you first came into the gate.

Blythe: Well, as we were driving up the scene of the fire we first pulled in and the fire head was down by some sheds, and Assistant Ranger DON MARTINELLI hollered at me to come to the head of the fire. At that time we rolled up the hose and proceeded up to the head of the fire. The St. Helena truck was parked on the side hill and we went around and started around the truck and we couldn't make it and I started backing down because the hose was in the way and I was trying to find a better way to get up the hill. At the time I hadn't said for anybody to get off the truck. That I can remember. That is about all I saw because I was in the cab of the truck by myself and was busy trying to maneuver the truck.

T: As you went around the St. Helena truck did you ever see JIM get off the truck?

B: No, I didn't, and when I started backing down then I saw fireman pick him up. I then backed the truck down where it was fairly down the hill, and by that time they had had him taken out. I went down where MARTINELLI was and asked him how bad he was burned.

T: The first time you saw JIM then was when?

B: When they were picking him up from being burned.

T: Did you see them pick him up off the ground?

B: Yes.

T: So actually you saw it at about the same time that they got there?

B: No, no, --no, not exactly.

T: Was he lying on the ground?

B: They were carrying him down the hill, two guys having him in their arms.

T: Were they out of the fire area already?

B: Yeah, they were out of the fire area.

T: OK, now, had you stopped the truck completely like you were going to take any action?

B: Not at the time because I couldn't get up close to the fire where I could get working at it and I started backing down the hill and then from there I actually don't know what happened.

T: You didn't see the St. Helena Volunteers squirting water on him before they went in there?

B: No.

T: Did you ask anybody to set the chock block on the truck before this time?

B: No.

T: In effect, you hadn't really stopped?

B: No, I hadn't stopped yet.

T: And you did not tell JIM to get off the truck and take any action?

B: No because I would use the hard line before I would the back pump.

T: Had you worked with JIM before on any fires?

B: Yes.

T: Has he ever done this before?

B: No. He has been a pretty good boy.

T: Has he always waited previous to this for you to tell him what to do before he got off the truck?

B: Yes.

T: What is your normal procedure for when you arrive at a fire, Paul; what do you do?

B: First I decide and see where I am going to put my attack or put my lines or anything in, and on a moving grass fire then I use my hard line and my pump.

T: What I was thinking about was when you stop the truck, the first thing . . .

B: Set the chock blocks.

T: And how do you do this?

B: Have one of the firefighters set the chock blocks.

T: Do you have one designated for this?

B: No.

T: When you holler, do you tell which one to do it?

B: Yeah, George or whoever is back there--tell them to set the chock blocks. Other than that I can't tell you too much, Gary.

T: When you first arrived at the fire you said you pulled in by a couple of buildings, and you had your hose lay out. Were you pumping any water at that time?

B: No. I had just gotten the pump started and then ^{is} when DON told us to come to the head of the fire.

T: And at that time neither of the two firefighters had a backpump on?

B: No.

T: You were working with the line, is that it?

B: Yes. JIM was standing by the pump.

T: Now the last question right at the moment, how high would you say the flames were at the time you arrived at this upper end where he was burned?

B: They were at least head high--about 5½ feet.

My name is RON STICE, 1673 Adams Street, St. Helena. When we first got here we stopped by the house down here, then the guy told us to let that go; he said the house belonged to him and he didn't seem to care. Said get up to the head of the fire up there. So we got up there and were fighting the fire and heard somebody scream. I looked down the hill and this man was lying down through the smoke, and I went down there with the hose and put the fog on him and he was standing up in the fire back in where the fire had burned already, and he was standing up and I put the fog on him, and another one of our men went in and pulled him out of the fire, and then I went on with the hose and another couple of men brought him down the hill.

Todd: Who were the other two men that went in and got him, do you know?

Stice: Roy Winters was one that went in and grabbed him and pulled him out and I kept the water on both of them. Then Emmett Dowling came by and came on up the hill and helped get him down to the truck.

T: Now, did you see him get off the truck?

S: No - no.

T: Did you see him at all before he screamed?

S: No, not as I remember. I was up about 50 feet, following him up the hill further.

T: Who was down below with your other nozzleman where the other firemen were?

S: That was the only hose we had out.

T: There was no nozzleman down below with another hose?

S: No. There was a small garden hose down there.

T: Did you see anybody using that?

S: Yes, somebody from the ranch but I don't know who it was.

T: When he screamed and you looked, he was down at that time?

S: He was lying down there in the process of getting up. By the time I got down there he was standing up with his arms out standing there screaming. He was back in where the fire had burned already, five or six feet. The back pump was off lying on the ground about six feet away from him.

T: Now when he screamed and you looked down there were you able to see him, was the fire all around him or had it gone by him?

S: No, it had gone by him already. He was lying in the ashes.

T: Was he in the ditch, on the edge of the ditch, or what?

S: He was on the edge of the ditch, yeah, on the side that was already burned. He climbed up out of the ditch--maybe that was where he fell, I didn't see him fall.

T: Did you notice our truck when it came, the one he got off of; did it stop at all like they were going to do some firefighting?

S: I wasn't paying any attention. I couldn't tell you. That is about it for I went up the hill then.

T: Then the only other two or three fellows that might have some information were the fellows from the ranch house with the garden hose, or WINTERS?

S: Yes, WINTERS would because he went in and grabbed him and had water on both of them. I didn't want to put the water on him for a lot of times you can hurt them and do more harm than good. He was standing there screaming and I figured the fog wouldn't hurt him too bad. He went in and grabbed him. I had water on both of them, and then I went back up on the hill and EMMETT came up like I said.

DONALD MARTINELLI, Unit 1575, Driver PAUL BLYTHE. When they arrived at the fire I directed them to proceed past the St. Helena unit which was working on the fire at the head of the fire. The first I knew of any injury was when one of the St. Helena firemen came down to the truck and told me one of the boys had gotten burned. At this time Foreman TROOD was arriving in the Scout.

Todd: Then who radioed St. Helena and told them to advise the Sanitarium?

Martinelli: Right. I had him in the unit with AL and they called me in and asked me to make arrangements with the San.

T: When did you pick up the backpump?

M: The backpump was picked up by unit St. Helena fireman. He brought it down and gave it to me quite a bit later, about 15 minutes after we took him to the hospital.

T: How much water was still in the backpump?

M: There was about a gallon yet in it. It apparently had been lying upside down and it is hard to say. There was still water in it anyway and the trombone still operates.

T: How about his hard hat?

M: The hard had was picked up by Driver BLYTHE, I believe, the hard hat and some other item.

T: Anything else pertinent to the injury?

M: No, I don't think of anything. I didn't see the thing happen, really.

This is Ranger TODD. I made contact with the owner and his two sons. They were both in the area of the accident but none of the three saw anything prior to the time that JIM screamed. They had nothing additional to add. In the course of the conversation with the owner Mr. he stated to me that it was an ironic thing that the fire had started from a piece of wood on the battery case of the tractor, that they were working on the road trying to clear the roads so they would be open in case fire equipment had to get in and he felt it was ironic that this would cause the fire.

This is Ranger TODD. August 8, 10:25 A.M. Just finished interviewing EMMETT DOWLING of the St. Helena Fire Department. He was the second man that helped bring JIM WEAKLEY out of the fire. He didn't have anything to add to the accident itself. He didn't see JIM until he screamed. The only other comment he made that was pertinent was the fact that JIM's left shirt sleeve was rolled up above the elbow and the right shirt sleeve was rolled up just about to the elbow.

ROY WINTERS, 1312 Mitchell Drive, St. Helena; St. Helena Volunteer Fire Department.

The man got off one of your rigs that had pulled up and stopped. They were running out the hard line. He had a backpump and went to the fire line. I was above him. He either slipped and fell into the ditch that he didn't see -- nobody knew there was one

there even -- or he tried to jump across the fire line to get in front of it. They tried putting water on him but they couldn't see him and finally we opened up a hole in the fire and by turning water into the fire we managed to get to him and get him out.

Todd: I have a question, Roy. You indicated that they were pulling out the hard line. Who was doing it, do you know?

Winters: This was some of your men, I would say, the Forestry, and had one of our men on the nozzle and it had very little water. It was a one-inch hard line, black, so it had to be one of yours.

T: Now, is there any possibility that this could have been after the accident that you saw this, because EMMETT was working with our hard line after he took the man down off the truck, but our other firefighter was still on the truck, and indications are that the truck hadn't completely stopped yet.

W: No, because TEDDY MINCH had your nozzle and we couldn't get enough water to him. There was another one of your men that was below St. Helena rig and kept telling TED to ^{spray} supply him but TED couldn't see him and it was your Forestry line.

T: The other ^{Man} TED was telling TEDDY to ^{spray} supply him and TEDDY couldn't see him in the smoke?

W: Right.

T: But he had a rake with him?

W: Right.

T: Now is there any possibility that TEDDY had a backpack on rather than a hard line?

W: No, I am sure TEDDY had a hard line. This was before he put a backpack on. The kid had a backpack on.

T: At the time you are speaking of now it couldn't have been a backpack, it had to be a hard line? I haven't been able to talk to the kid yet. Haven't been able to run him down.

W: No, it had this funny looking deal on the nozzle. It was a hard line.

T: Did you see the kid get off the truck?

W: I wouldn't swear to that, but I think I did.

T: And was the truck stopped, or was it still moving?

W: Well, it just jerked to a halt and everybody was piling off. I think there were two guys on the back and two guys on the front. Afterwards one of the other trucks came around him and I think he went up on the hill. Two up on the hill, two or three trucks on the hill, one came in from the other way, there was a fence in the middle.

T: Now to the business of your recollection of the fellow that was in the driver's seat of the truck, did he get out or did the firefighter go around and talk to him?

W: I am sure he got out. The truck was stopped and he got out.

T: Did you see the firefighter put the backpack on?

W: No.

T: Did you see the firefighter then from that time until you actually saw him in the fire?

W: I saw somebody walking with a backpack on. I wouldn't say it was the same one, but it must be him.

T: Then did you see him working on the fire at all?

W: No, I didn't. I just heard him scream and turned around and he was in it.

T: But you didn't see him again until he screamed and then you looked?

W: Yes.

T: OK, now, what were you doing at this time?

W: I was pulling a hose from our truck, City truck. I was on the nozzle, heard the kid scream and turned around and ran down and I saw him and I couldn't see the fire-- tried twice. I got the nozzle down there and got some water in and got two hoses going and went in and got him.

T: Was he down when you got there or was he up already?

W: He was on his feet, screaming and waving his arms and thrashing.

T: And he was out of the backpack at that time?

W: Yes. But he couldn't see. I guess it must have burnt his eyes, or got smoke in them, but he was burnt pretty bad.

T: Do you recall whether or not his shirt sleeves were rolled up?

W: No I couldn't saw they were rolled up, but he had stuff hanging off the bottoms so they must have been rolled up or burnt off.

T: Were his clothes on fire when you saw him?

W: I don't know. They were hitting us both with water.

T: And so you got to him and helped him out of the fire.

W: Yes.

T: And did you take him on down to the Scout?

W: Right.

T: Is there anything else you can think of to add here?

W: No.

T: You say TEDDY was having trouble getting water out of the nozzle. What was causing this?

W: Well, he didn't have any pressure. Either they had disengaged the pump or hadn't run it up yet. But he did have water but not very much.

T: Is there a probability that as the truck stopped TEDDY ran over and got the live reel and the nozzle and went to the edge of the fire with it?

W: Possibly.

T: I know the pump was running. They had stopped earlier down at the building and the pump was idling as they pulled up. This could be then that he got out there with the nozzle while the pump was still idling and hadn't given any pressure yet.

W: Yes, because I know all of a sudden we got water. They hit it in front when the fire was probably four or five feet wide there at that point.

T: OK. Do you think of anything else?

W: No.

T: Very good. Thank you.

TED MENSCH, 1171 Edwards, St. Helena.

Todd: Why don't you tell me when you first saw the truck arrive.

Mensch: I was probably aware of it pulling in but really couldn't tell you exactly when it was. We had hose in that little draw there and we had a hose and the guys said connect it to go. So he disconnected the hose I was using and saw DON MARTINELLI down there and went down and asked him if I could use the backpump to protect our hose. As I was walking down I saw a truck coming down. I think it was PAUL BLYTHE. MARTINELLI said, "Sure, help yourself," so I put the backpump on my back. So I got just past our trucks and said I didn't have anything in mine except to protect our hose. Then all of a sudden I heard a scream for help and I believe he was calling somebody's name. I looked around and didn't see anyone but I started in the direction of the noise. There was another firefighter there. He said, "Put some water on him. Put some water on him." It took me a second or two to move and the first thing I thought was, "Where is he?" because I couldn't see him. With the pump I put as much water on him as we could. He jumped up out of there and ran back up the hill into the burned area. I knocked down the fire between me and him and tried to talk him back through. In the meantime, one of our boys, I think it was ROY WINTERS, came down the hill and ran in and got him. I tell you how I think it happened. That grass in the wind would go then slow down. Actually what happened in my opinion anyway, he was on the uphill side of the ditch. The wind came along, the grass flared up and he started to back down the hill and backed into the ditch and slipped and fell. But I didn't see it. If I had seen him fall maybe I could

have gotten there and helped him out of the ditch or tried to stop the fire.

T: This is the first time I have heard this thought. Previously we thought he tried to jump the ditch.

M: My reason is that I understand he had one of those back pumps on too. In the confusion there--seeing the fire all around him, arms and legs flying and screaming, I think he was trying to get out of the back pump. I pumped it as hard as I could. I was not aware he had his back pump on. I thought he was trying to get out. The fire was moving toward the ditch. The thing was so shallow there and actually when the fire hit it I think he backed into it. He fell backwards and before he could get up the fire was upon him.

T: The other theory is that he got up there, the ditch hadn't burned yet, the fire flared up, he saw the burned over area on the other side of the ditch and jumped, trying to get over there and fell in the ditch face down.

M: He can probably tell you, but from the way he was lying there, well, when I saw him he was on his back. I am sure he fell backwards. What I think he was doing was trying to protect his face and still get out of that d--- pump.

T: I understood he was on his face.

M: No, I don't think so. I am sure he was on his back. There was fire all around us and I know that neither I nor the other firefighter could have gotten in there without getting burned as bad as he did.

T: ROY has a little different opinion. I think he is mixed up. He thought that you had the live reel hose off of PAUL's truck. Is there any chance that we did have or is he thinking about when you had the other hose before you connected the two together?

M: I didn't have the hose off BLYTHE's truck. I had a backpump off MARTINELLI's pickup. I believe that as I was walking down to MARTINELLI's pickup to get the backpump PAUL BLYTHE's truck was just going by. And what happened in between then and the time this fellow came in I really couldn't tell you because of the confusion and I wasn't paying much attention to what was going on around me. I don't think any of us, at least I wasn't, were too concerned with the fire backing down there because it had no place to go. The only problem was it might burn up our hose.

T: But you had the backpump, you didn't have any hose at all at the time of the accident.

M: All I had was the backpump.

T: Did you ever actually see the firefighter get off of our truck?

M: No. Until he screamed I wasn't even aware that he was around. It took two or three screams before I realized somebody was in trouble. When I looked he had to be between me and the fire or in the fire.

T: Was the reason you couldn't see him because of the smoke?

M: No, mostly because of the flames or the fire.

T: Did you happen to notice when they brought him out whether or not his sleeves were rolled up?

M: No, I didn't notice.

T: Were his clothes on fire?

M: No, I don't believe they were. I was squirting him with water but I don't believe his clothes were on fire.

T: How high do you think the flames were?

M: At that particular moment I would say the flames were four feet high or so.

Doctor Harold James, telephone conversation, 8-14-68.

By the time I saw JIM WEAKLEY his clothing had been largely removed, had on simply underclothing. I am unaware of the other things. In fact, they were attempting to find those clothes when I discharged him because his family were wanting to take some of them home. Apparently they had been discarded because they had been partially destroyed. Cotton undershirt and cotton shorts, and he did have a pair of boots, which of course gave him complete protection.

Wondering why you question dacron or synthetics. Dacron or synthetics don't burn, but melt. We use a great deal of synthetics in our work in surgery. For instance we have a dacron screen that we use for repair of hernias. It melts. We don't cut them, we take a hot iron and melt them across so they won't ravel out when we put them in the body.

We forbid the wearing of synthetics in the operating room not because of fire hazard but because they produce a static electrical current and danger of sparks in the atmosphere. Forbid the wearing of them in the O.R.

Of course you might be interested in the fact that the fabric might melt on the skin. You might know about nylon rope--when the end is melted to keep it from raveling it stays hot a long time.

Will ask the supervisor about the boy's clothing and call you back.

The supervisor told me he did have on a pair of jeans, apparently cotton, regular khaki shirt, evidently also cotton. She turned these articles of clothing plus his boots to the Forestry man who brought him in, in a bag.