

Shelter Deployment
NAPI Point Fire
August 26, 1984

The enclosed statements are from transcribed taped interviews of Blackfeet crew members who deployed fire shelters on the Napi Point Fire, and from Pat Nooney who was associated with the incident.

These are excellant accounts of an extremely serious situation. We are truely appreciative and thankful to those who gave their best on the fire and in their statements.


JERRY L. MONESMITH
Safety and Training Officer

<u>Name</u>	<u>Fire Position</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Experience</u>	<u>Miscellaneous</u>
<u>Pat Noonev</u>	Line Boss	35	16 Seasons	Smoke jumper, Didn't use shelter
<u>Steve Straley</u>	Sector Boss, Canton 3	34	12 seasons	Smoke jumper, Didn't use Shelter, Sector Boss Qualified
<u>Alvin Still Smoking</u>	Crew Boss, Blackfeet #12	43	Since 18 years old	Didn't use Shelter
<u>Ernie Heavy Runner</u>	Squad Boss, Blackfeet #12	47	Since 18 years old (25 seasons?)	Used Shelter in standard position
<u>David Champine</u>	Firefighter, First Squad, Blackfeet #12	27	9 seasons	Used shelter in standard position MIFF (Mountain Indian Fire Fighter's) Training
<u>Kenneth Gopher</u>	Firefighter, First Squad, Blackfeet #12	20	First Fire	Used shelter in standard position.
<u>Wally Clark</u>	Firefighter, First Squad, Blackfeet #12	21	First fire	Used shelter in standard positio
<u>Leon Vielle</u>	Crew Boss, Blackfeet # 5	25	Since 18 years old (7 seasons?)	Didn't use shelter. Fire Guard Training. Crew Boss School. MIFF Training

Date: September 4, 1984

Time: 2300 hrs.

STATEMENT OF PAT NOONEY, CONCERNING DEPLOYMENT OF FIRE SHELTER ON
NAPI POINT FIRE, AUGUST 26, 1984.

This will be my statement regarding the events surrounding the deployment of fire shelters by Ernie Heavy Runner's squad, on the Napi point fire.

The date of these events was August 26, 1984.

First, I will give a brief description of myself. I am a smokejumper, based in Missoula Montana; a veteran of sixteen years in fire. I have been involved in excess of fifty class I and class II fires plus nearly 200 others of varying sizes. I personally have not deployed a fire shelter in actual fire conditions.

My position on the Napi point fire was mop-up boss, with the duty of directing ground action in four sectors. The resources available included four Blackfoot crews, seven Helitack crewmen, two jumpers, two engines and three sector bosses. The Helitack, jumpers and engines were assigned to Sectors A&D; four helitack and the two jumpers pulled night line on the previous shift. One person served as a lookout, and two patrolled the road along Sector A and lower Sector D. Two crews were assigned each to Sector B and Sector C, with a sector boss. One sector moved further into the fire than planned, ending up near Sector D. This left two crews along Sector B&C. I had begun to reorient the misplaced crews to Sector B when the spot near the east end began, approximately 1140 hrs. About ten minutes later a spot was discovered on the west end.

Simultaneously with this last discovery the first spot climbed into the crowns. I ordered the crews (under Sector Boss Genné) to head for the eastern line. Within five minutes the eastern spot crossed the eastern

line (one quarter mile from origination). I began to cross the ^{fire} ~~line~~ from H-5 to H-6.

Straley (Sector Boss C) began to move his crews into action, pulling hose up the line (from the east) to the western spot. His resources included one crew under Vielle and one squad under Heavy Runner. Realizing there was little they could do, he ordered Vielle's crew into the black to rest. Heavy Runner's crew continued to pull hose. Approximately 1250-1300 hours, the line on C was clearly lost, and a short time later began to roll.

When the western spot climbed into the crowns, Straley ordered his crews into the fire. He told Heavy Runner's crew to take the hose they had into the burned area. He emphasized moving well into the burn. Both he and I repeated the importance of getting where the crowns were clearly burned, as well as ground fuel. Shortly after, I heard Heavy Runner tell Straley they were getting disoriented by the dust, ash and smoke. Both Straley and Vielle talked Ernie's crew into their shelters, while the heat built up; Straley emphasized getting safe while Vielle emphasized procedures (wetting handkerchiefs, staying down, etc.). They maintained radio contact with Ernie, who apparently kept talking with his people.

About an hour later, Straley and Vielle went down to find Heavy Runner's squad, once the front passed. They found the squad and moved then up further into the burn with the others. Once there I radioed all of the crews for a head count which verified everyone was safe. I repeated this several times over the following hours.

During all of this, Still Smoking's crew (less Ernie's squad) pulled up by H-8 and sat in the safe zone there. All crews on the east end pulled into the burn to the north of H-6. Communication was regularly maintained throughout these events and on through the night. We constantly

monitored the physical and mental state of the people.

Six factors must be clearly underscored. First, there was an early recognition of a blow-up occurrence. Secondly, the crew recognized that they were becoming disoriented and radioed the fact to the Sector Boss. A third factor was Suraiya's emphasis to be in a safe area (echoed by my concern that no crowds were present). The crew's unhesitant adherence to instructions is the fourth factor. Fifth, the crew remained in place until the Sector Boss said otherwise. Finally, clear, uncluttered and concise communication was maintained throughout.

There was no bashness in using the shelters. The decision to use them was absolutely correct under the circumstances. I stand fully behind the decision of the Sector Boss and Crew Boss.

Patrick J. Nooney
PATRICK NOONEY
Line Boss

Statement of Ernie Heavy Runner, concerning Fire Shelter deployment,
August 26, 1984, Napi Point Fire, Blackfeet Indian Reservation, St. Mary,
Montana.

Transcribed from audio cassette tape, recorded September 4, 1984.

"My name's Ernie Heavy Runner, First Squad Leader on Crew 12 (Blackfeet 12). My Crew Boss is Alvi [Alvin] Still Smoking. On this day that the fire blew up, we were told to bring hoses on up the line to Leon Vielle's crew (who was further west in Sector B). On this day each squad was issued a radio, which I thought was very good for this particular time, because it probably saved a lot of lives (including mine).

"We were goin' up the trail with the hoses and I was to bring my Squad (part of my squad) up to assist Leon's Crew [Blackfeet 12], which was west of us about five or six hundred yards, [from] where we were at, or maybe even further. It's pretty hard to judge distance. At the time we were unfamiliar with the terrain in this area. I'd never been in Sector B. It was my fourth or fifth day on the fire. [I'd] never been in this particular area. I had four men in my Squad who seemed to be fairly good men — and I've found out, now, that they were.

"I started up the fireline with the hoses, with Wally Clark, who's in my squad, Kenneth Gopher, and David Champine. We stopped several times to rest because the packs were pretty heavy, that we were carrying. I stopped along the trail and I could hear Leon talking on the radio, and I could also hear my Crew Boss, Alvi, tellin' [asking] us where we were at. I gave a location at this time. The fire was — we didn't know the danger we were in and I called my Crew Boss and told him about where I thought I was at. I could hear Leon talking up there — talking about the slopover, that they were — needed this hose. So, we stopped to rest, and we waited for two more members of my Squad to catch up with us. We was, a, I believe it was Wally Clark. After they all came and contacted us we were started up the trail, or the fireline.

"From where I was sitting I could see the smoke first, then I saw a red glare

in the west and I heard Leon say that the fire was blowing up — to, 'Get the hell off of the fireline and move into a burnt area'. Then at this time, this Crew Boss, my Crew Boss, (it was Alvin Still Smoking) radioed me and told me to stay put, after I got in the burnt area.

"We climbed a steep embankment. My pack was caught on a log there, and I had Kenneth Gopher assist me in taking it off, and we left it there and went on up over the hill. The fire, we could see it now coming fairly close to us. We had time to get in the burnt area and we stood there for awhile, and then I saw that it was headed right for us. Not too far from where we were at, there was snags and below us was a lot of fuel, so I kinda had an idea that we were in a place that we might be able to survive it. So, David assisted the other two members of the Squad. I had trouble breaking my shelter out. I don't remember exactly who pulled my shelter out, but we got it out. We all got down underneath the shelter^[3], because then I could see the fire moving right up the hill.

"I was keeping, pretty much, radio contact with other members — with Leon and Steve Straley, who was the Sector Boss in that sector. We were confused for awhile because we really didn't know what was "coming down" on us. Then we could feel the heat of the fire and we knew we were in trouble. So we got underneath our shelter, and I could hear the — I peeked out and I could see a red glow right inside of my shelter. I could just see it coming through my shelter. It wasn't the fire, it was just probably the heat (the fire reflecting off of the aluminum) but it had a weird look.

"Now here is a — I lost radio contact, and I put my hand out [with the radio] and I could feel the heat on my hand, and I got in contact with Leon. He said to stay put and my Crew Boss says, 'Stay put', so, I brought my radio back inside and lost contact — just a complete static. I could hear roaring outside of the shelter. I could feel the shelter puff up. I held it down with the cords, or the ropes, that were holding the shelter down. I put my feet on them.

"Momentarily, I lost contact with myself for, I'd say, five or six minutes. It

was pretty confusing then, but I could see a light rain (ashes coming down, red cinders with little ^[what-yes] call-'em coming down). I knew the fire was burning close.

"I put my head out and couldn't breath nothin'. When I felt that, I knew th we're in trouble. The only air we could breath, I think, was what was inside of our shelter. It was probably bringing the air into the bottom of '

"It's pretty hard to really express, or say, what actually happened. You almost have to experience it to understand what I'm talking about. How long we stayed under them I really don't know. I had no way of a — I never thought about timing or anything.

"Here is where the Squad that I had — they remained calm. As you probably can hear [from the tape], David's been on a few fires and he helped out quite a bit, because he went through a little of this training. I've been on few fires but I've never experienced anything like this. Your first reaction is to run, and radio contact kept us from doing that, by Leon and Alvin Still Smoking talking to me [and] Steve Straley [also].

"Knowing that I had to keep calm in order for the men to keep calm [helped me] David, who is a member of the Squad, is pretty helpful and Wally, who had the strong firm personality, kinda helped me to. — Well, in fact all the Squad, helped me to remain calm. My only concern was to survive this fire in the best way I knew how and to keep in radio contact. I knew the only communications we had was through our radio.

"What I said on the radio, I don't remember, but I tried to give the best location I could. When your in a situation like that the only thing you can think about is to survive, and to survive the best way to know. I knew that the only way we were going to keep from getting burnt was to stay under the shelter. For me to tell you what it's like is just something you can't do. You have to experience it to know. It's like, a — it's just there and all the sudden it's gone. (You) wake up and (you're) glad it's over.

"Well, after I could feel the heat leaving us, I knew that it burnt on by us,

so I peeked my head out. I could see the smoke and I got back in radio contact.

"Before I got under the shelter I tried to remember exactly where we climbed up the hill, but it was like a blizzard storm in there (snow storm). There's ashes blowing and the winds were shifting. There was really no way to tell, but I could hear Leon asking me if I could see the sun, and there was just a red glare. There was so much smoke and so much ashes blowing around.

"Reassuring ourselves under a shelter helped out a lot. Like David said, he talked to the other two members.

"I got out before any of them moved, because I tried to find an escape route to get away from the smoke. I probably walked in circles, I don't know, but, I could hear snags falling and I came back to the shelter and got back under it.

"I tried to move the Squad into an area where the — but, there was really no way you could tell where we were at. I could hear the snags falling. The wind was blowing, I would say, 40 or 60 miles an hour, now that this fire had moved by. The smoke was burning my eyes and I couldn't get away from it. I think I fell down a couple of times, looking for an escape route. Then I came back to the shelter. I could see the men were still under it [when], so I crawled back under.

"At this time I had left my shelter, the smoke had already got under it, so I was coughing under there and I tried to get back on the radio and lost complete contact with everybody.

"About this time, I got next to the back where we'd come up and I could feel fresh air (cold air) coming. I got a few — I could breathe a little of that and I came back to the men again and tried the radio and finally got in contact with Leon. I called my Crew Boss and told him that I thought we was pretty safe but the smoke was very thick and it was hard for us to breathe. I probably got a little more smoke, because I was out a little earlier, (and) the last one in, but the heat drove all of us into our shelters.

"The shelter helped us, I would say, a hundred percent. We could, a — I could see little ashes coming through the holes in the shelter. That's how close the fire was to us. The heat was extremely hot. I had no way of telling how hot it was. We were pretty confused at this point because of the smoke. We had no sense of direction because of the wind and the ashes blowing around me[us],

"So, I got back on the radio and I could hear Leon telling us to stay calm and that they were coming in to get us out. I told them that I could now see the sun. He told me to try to head directly west but we were pretty exhausted and walking at this time would've probably done no good so we stayed put. My Crew Boss told me to stay put. Then I heard Steve Straley come on the radio and told me that he was working his way down and would try to give a location.

"I looked around and called Leon and told him about where I went up the trail and where he thought I might be. At this time there was several people on the radio. I don't know who I was talking [to] part of the time. I was telling them to get us out as quick as they can, because breathing was becoming difficult.

"He told us to start hollering, so we started hollering and he said he could hear us. We could hear him just vaguely, but we couldn't tell which direction his voice was coming from. Then the smoke cleared here, for a few minutes, and we could see. Then Wally, another member of the Squad, started whistling and, I don't know if it was Leon or Steve, [they] said they could hear us hollering and whistling. So we started hollering and now we could hear him fairly good. He said to head west, and we just started going west and one of the members of the Squad (I think it was Kenneth Gopher) spotted him [St] coming from the west end of where we were at.

"He came down and told us in what direction we were going. We started out across the burn. We could feel the hot ashes on the bottom of our shoes, walking through the burn. I became very exhausted here and had to rest several times. The smoke was causing a chest pain in my chest and my throat

felt pretty raw and I became thirsty.

"We hit the rock pile and we could see Leon up above on the rocks waving at us. [We] could see his men all up in the rocks. So we started up.

"I want to say here again that being issued these radios to each Squad Boss, I think, is what saved our — saved a few lives here, because I'm pretty sure a life would have been lost if it hadn't been for our radios and the men that were in contact with us, assuring us that we were going to be saved.

"The first thing you do, when you're in a fire situation like this, is you get a feeling of panic, and if anybody tells you they're not scared, they're a damned liar because I know, I've been on fires, like I said, but this is the first time I've ever been in this situation, and I hope that I never have to ever go through this again, because the second time around I don't think I'd been as calm and cool as they thought I was. Having them on the radio, talking to me at all times, made it a lot easier. Hearing Leon and my Crew Boss talking to me, it means a lot because if you know that somebody's out there trying for you, that makes you try a lot harder.

"I don't think you could ever tell anybody what you really experienced, because I know I sure can't. There's only one thought in my mind when all of this was going on and that was just to survive, to make it the best way you know how.

"Following instructions — reading these [instructions] how to prepare for a fire shelter — I think every Crew Boss that takes a crew out should give a talk on this, because I've never been instructed in this before, but I've read the instructions. I looked at them a few times, and I never, ever, thought I'd have to use them.

"I was glad I survived in that fire and I have a lot of respect for the Crew Bosses. I have a lot of respect for firefighters, because I know what they go through, and I just thank God I survived this one. Like I said, everybody kinda said a little prayer about this time. I hope I never have

to go through it again. That's about all I have to say."

Questions by Lee Skabelund, Information Officer and statement facilitator:

"I wanted to ask Ernie about his radio. He made some comments earlier about being able to transmit. I wanted you to tell us, could you transmit from under the shelter and could you transmit when the fire was full-blown?"

Ernie Heavy Runner in response: "No. I lost complete radio contact. When I was under the shelter, like I said, I had to put my radio out with my face out. During the fire all I could hear was a roar and a static on the radio and I knew then that I lost contact with everybody. So the only thing I did was just wait it out until I could come back in radio contact. At this time I knew the fire was fairly close because I could feel the heat. I tried to hold the radio on too, a —[so] if anybody else was listening [they] could hear the fire (how close it was to us). That was my one purpose, to let 'em know just how bad of a situation I was in. Even without me being able to transmit out (I wasn't receiving anybody at this time). I think maybe it had to do with the fire burning, that I lost radio contact. Now, I really don't know if I could have ^{transmitted} I tried while I was inside the shelter. I could vaguely hear voices, but I know they couldn't hear me because I was talking to them. I could [hear] a static and a break in the static. I could hear a voice and then it would break and ^{static would break} static again. So I just quit. I quit right then and there to try to transmit out. Then, after the fire passed, I waited a few minutes and then came out and then I got back in radio contact. That's when I started radioing my location (or thought I was radioing my location) the best I knew how, from what I could see around me. Snags were falling then. I was worried about the men getting hit with snags, cause we were in that area where there was a lot of snags, and the wind was blowing fairly hard.

Now, whether the fire had something to do with the loss of radio contact, I don't know. It probably did. [I] stuck my hand out and grabbed the aluminum part of the shelter. You could just feel the heat on that sucker. So I would say that it was very hot out there. It was hot inside of the shelter and sweat was just pouring off of me."

Skabelund questioned: "All of you sweated then?"

Response, Heavy Runner: "Right."

Response, Squad Member: "The shelters were scorched-like, it was so hot. "

Inquiry, Larry Mahaffey, I. R. Interpreter: "On the inside?"

Response, Squad Member: "My lunch sack just melted right through the crack."

Inquiry, Skabelund: "In the shelter?"

Response, Squad Member: "It might have happened outside the shelter. I had no way of knowing."

Inquiring, Skabelund: "Did any of you have anything else on you scorched?"

Response, Squad Member: "My lunch was scorched."

Reinforced by another: "His lunch was scorched up."

Another Squad Member's response was too quiet to be distinguished on the tape so Skabelund, clarified: "So your fire shelter pack was outside and it was smoldering?"

Response: "Smoldering. That's how hot it was."

Statement of Kenneth Gopher concerning Fire Shelter deployment, August 26, 1984, Napi Point Fire, Blackfeet Indian Reservation, St. Mary, Montana.

Transcribed from audio casset tape, recorded September 4, 1984:

"My name is Kenneth Gopher and I'm on Crew 12. It started on Sunday, about 1:00 in the afternoon. About 12:00 we was all spread along that line from Sector B on up to Heliport 5. We were patrolling areas. We were each patrolling an area about 100 feet away from each other. Our Crew Boss had us spread out. I was patrolling this one area, where it wasn't too far from Heliport 5.

"The Crew Boss came along and told me to help Clemet haul hoses up to Leon, cause he said he needed some hoses up there. So I went along with him and we asked David and Wally to come with us. We went back to haul [the hoses]. We started unhooking those hoses (me and Wally). Ernie and David beaded up already, so we went down and picked up the rest of the hoses and we followed them up. We met 'em just on a hill going up to where it blew up at. We sat down to take a rest from climbing that great big hill.

"When we reached the top we were sitting there resting and I think it was just about 100 feet behind us where it started blowing up. We heard everybody on the radio. We heard Sector Bosses on the radio telling them to get their men out of there, so David and Ernie told us to jump up and take off. There was a burned spot just up above us (not too far up above us). So we jumped up and started heading up. We had to go up a pretty big hill to get to that burned spot. Ernie got struck in that one place where there was a great big old log. David and Wally were already into the burned spot. Me and Ernie were — I was trying to help him get that pack off his back. I

took that pack off his back and we just took off up to that burned spot.

"I think it should be mainly Ernie and David — I think that they should get some credit out of this — because they [kept] pretty straight mind out of everything. Everyone was telling us what to do. That was my first time on a fire. I really didn't experience anything like that. I tried to keep a level head and listen to them, I tried not to panic. I was asking questions so I'd know what to do.

"When we got into the burned spot, we were all standing there. That smoke started getting really thick in there. David and Ernie started telling us to jump in our fire shelters. I didn't know how to go about 'em, but I just took mine out anyway. We started stretching them out. Smoke was getting pretty thick in there.

"Ernie was on the radio trying to find us a way out. He was talking to Leon and Steve Straley on the radio. They were telling him where he was located. The smoke was getting pretty thick. We were all in our fire shelters and it started really getting hot, so Ernie came down and got in his. Ernie was getting — the smoke was already starting to get to him, but he was still on the radio trying to get us out of there.

"It started getting pretty hot in those fire shelters. It was pretty hot in there. Once we got into them, the smoke — it was smoky in there for a while until they started getting hot on the outside and they just kinda blew up into like a balloon like. All the smoke went out. Just the air that was trapped inside those fire shelters was the air we had to breathe. But it got pretty hot in there. There was quite a bit of smoke around us.

"I was really scared. I was laying in that fire shelter and I was praying. David told me to keep wetting my shirt, and put it over my mouth. He gave me his canteen. I was wetting my shirt. I was putting it over my mouth. That fire started really getting bad, and it was really getting close. I don't know, I kinda felt like I wanted to just jump up and start running, but I thought I better keep a level head and listen to what Ernie and David said, cause they knew what they was doing. I listened to them, and I was asking 'em questions on what to do and they were helping me along, as it went on.

"After the fire was all gone, well it was pretty smoky there. Ernie was on (got on) the radio and he started radioing for Steve Straley. He was talking to Steve on the radio. Steve was telling [asking] him what our location was, so we were hollering and Wally was whistling at him, and he was hollering back at us. We didn't know which direction he was coming from because it was pretty smoky, and all's we could hear was his voice. We were just all standing around we's just all lost, it seemed like. Leon called (radioed) down to Ernie and tole him that Steve was on his way down, so we just sat. We just stood there, just still trying to keep "level", and it started burning again (where we were standing). The fire started to get pretty bad wher. Steve Straley came into the burned spot, [He] came over and got us'.

"We had to get out of there right away. We didn't have time to grab our packs or anything, cause the fire was already coming into the burned spot. We started up the hill. We were all pretty tired when we were going out, cause I knew we all had alot of smoke in our lungs. It was quite a climb going up the hill, but we made it okay. We met Leon half-way. I was walking with Ernie. Ernie was walking with Steve. Wally and David were already on top of the hill.

When we

reached the top we — we's pretty burned-out so we's just laying there.

[We] had a hard time catching our breath cause we had a lot of smoke in our lungs. I think that what helped us a lot was that we all kept level heads, and we didn't panic or we didn't try to run. I think our Squad Boss and David should get a ^[we] — should show some kind of appreciation to them because if it wasn't for them we would have probably just took off running."

Comment by Lee Skabelund, Information Officer and statement facilitator:

"We want to make a note here that Kenneth said it was his first time out, and that before this incident they had read the instructions to their fire shelters (when they were in fire camp before they had went out). Let me ask him if it was easy for him to follow those instructions, even though he had read them and opened it up for the first time. How about that, Kenneth?"

Kenneth Gopher: "Ya, it was pretty easy. I think we'd already read those instructions at the camp, cause that Safety Officer (before we went out) he told us that we should take our fire shelters and read the instructions inside. So we read them."

Statement of Wally Clark concerning Fire shelter deployment, August 26, 1984,
Napi Point Fire, Blackfeet Indian Reservation, St. Mary, Montana. Transcribed
from audio cassette tape. recorded September 4, 1984.

"My name is Wally Clark. I'm on Blackfeet Crew 12, on Ernie Heavy Runner's squad. This is on the Sunday Fire. We's up on Sector B. Alvi was spreading his crew out on up to the sector (100 feet [to] 150 feet apart); So with me, Ernie and the squads were going up the line and kept dropping crew members off all the way up. Okay, then there came me and Ernie at heliport five [the] last two members on the crew [on] that last part. So we got to heliport five and [had] the radio on, and over the radio Leon was asking for [if] we could bring up some hose. Oh, he was asking Alvi if he could send his squad up with some hose. So Alvi says, 'Alright.'

"He took Squad One, Ernie's squad, and we started up. Oh, Dick and Clement and Alvi and Kenneth was with 'em when they came up to heliport five and they were already carrying hose then. They decided they needed another hose and me and Kenneth went over (about 50 feet [to] a hundred feet from [the] heliport) and took a hose off of there, stuck it in the bag on the back pack, and loaded it on my shoulders.

"We started up the trail (Ernie and them have already started up the trail). So we got about three hundred feet on the other side of heliport five (on up toward Leon's crew) delivering 'em hose. When we got 250 feet into it, we lost track. We come into two trails. We didn't know which one to take [tape not understood for several words]. So we start hollering out for Ernie, and they hollered out about 100 feet up above us. So we went up another hundred feet and there they were. So we met-up there, and we sat down for a couple minutes.

"Then we got up and we started for — (We was waiting for Clemet. He went down after the Y's. He's on Leon's crew. We thought he'd catch up) So we got up and started heading up the line.

"We got about 500 feet (500 yards) up into there. Then we took another little — I know, we's just taking a breather. Next thing, we looked around and there was fire shooting over these trees, and we wasn't really paying much attention to it, but we did hear Leon calling [^{tape}not understandable] to keep his squads by the radio.

"The next thing — then when we seen the flames shooting over the trees, just crowning, [and] the smoke start getting thick-like, Ernie and Davey said, 'Let's head up this hill over into the burnt area.' We started heading up the hill. He and Davey started heading up the hill first, and Ernie — I don't know he must — he got stuck or something with that bag on his back [tape not understandable for several words]. So we ran up the hill and they were behind us. We got to the top and we looked around and it was coming pretty fast, anyway. So then we ran about another 50 yards (Ya, about 50 yards further into the burned area) and then we stood there and looked around for snags, and there were snags falling all over then. The wind was pretty strong.

"Then Ernie called Alvi and (I don't know) I wasn't paying much attention to what they were saying. They said to stay in the burned area, to stay close and get our shelters ready to get into 'em. By that time the flame was already by us, ~~already~~ so we just flopped 'em out and got into the shelters.

[I]
First thing, we heard this roaring and everything coming by us and I knew it was the fire. I don't know, something from the fire, or something, just made those shelters

kind of lift a little bit there, to suck them out from underneath us or something. Anyway what saved that, was laying on the straps. It was pretty smokey [and] pretty hot in there. Then ashes started flying around and everything. [It was] pretty hot. [You] could feel the heat coming from the fire into the shelter. There was little holes in the shelter, I think ^[was] making smoke pass through or something.

"Earlier Davey (David) said to wet our "whatchamacallits" and put 'em over our face, so we did that. That sure helped out with the smoke.

"Ernie was still on the radio trying to get help into getting us out or something. The next thing he called up to Leon; and Leon was encouraging us to ^[tape] ^[not] understandable] panic and stuff and everything, [and] to stay where we are and that they were coming after us. So, we all kept pretty level heads and everything."

Question from Larry Mahaffey, I. R. Interpreter, not understandable on tape at this point.

Wally Clark answers: "Ya."

Wally continues: "Then over the radio, Leon called down and told us that they were on their way and that Straley was coming through. They were hollering around so that we could hear 'em. We was hollering back and whistling to 'em, and everything. The next thing Straley was coming through. We heard Leon and them, but they were hollering way up above the rocks. It was his crew members. Leon was farther on down, I guess, about [the] time Straley got to us.

"He led us ---- the smoke was getting worse and worse about (the) time Straley got to us, it was pretty bad, but he got us through (and) lead us out to where it was kinda fire-burnt area. It was still pretty heavily smoked. When we got

a little further out there, ~~and~~ then I saw Leon. Leon was directing us
which way to go (up to where his crew was, or his first Squad Boss, or
that area).¹⁴