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Accident Investigation Report

State Forest Ranger I Louis Gonzalez

Potrero Fire - Ventura County - September 27, 1972

Gary Todd - Assistant Deputy State Forester (Co-Chairman)

Don Henney - Battalion Chief, Ventura County Fire Protection District
(Co-Chairman)

Press Kent - Fire Prevention Officer II

Cash Hooper - California Division of Forestry Safety Officer

At approximately 0800 on September 27, 1973 while engaged in fire suppression action on the Potrero Fire in Ventura County, State Forest Ranger I, Louis Gonzalez was enveloped in a small fire storm. As a result of this, Ranger Gonzalez suffered second and third degree burns to 20% of his body area. Ventura County Fire Protection District Fireman Ray Valencia suffered smoke inhalation and minor burns in this same accident.

On October 15, 1973 Ranger Gonzalez was released from the hospital after successful skin grafts on his hands and knees. He apparently has complete mobility of his fingers and hands.

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State Forest Ranger Gonzalez

Injury Report

1. Pre-Accident Facts

The Potrero Fire in Ventura County started at approximately 1250 hours on September 26, 1973. The weather forecast for the area at the time of the fire start was . . . continued red flag warning for strong, gusty NE to East Santa Ana winds 40-55 mph, and humidity below 10% . . . The fuel type in the fire area was light to moderate brush, primarily Coastal Sage.

The Potrero Fire burned hot, fast and clean and with such intensity that it jumped the Pacific Coast Highway at Point Mugu Lagoon and even burned approximately two acres of marsh grass on the ocean side. By 0800 on September 27, 18-1/2 hours after the fire started, it had consumed approximately 12,000 acres.

Ranger Gonzalez was dispatched from San Luis Obispo County as a Task Force Commander with a task force of five CDF fire trucks to Ventura County at 1305 hours on September 26, 1973. At approximately 2200 hours on September 26, Ranger Gonzalez and his task force, along with Ranger Carl Nicholson and his task force of five CDF pumpers from the San Benito-Monterey Ranger Unit were sent up Deer Creek Road and into Deals Flat to protect structures in this area. They had previously been assigned to a back firing operation in Big Sycamore Canyon.

At approximately 2100 hours on September 26, the fire plan called for back firing of Big Sycamore Canyon. Before this plan could be put into effect the fire jumped the canyon, requiring replanning. After structural protection was set up in Deer Creek Canyon (approximately 2400) a firing operation was planned. The new plan involved backfiring of Deer Creek Road. This action necessitated reconing and intelligence gathering in the Deer Creek Road area during the nighttime hours prior to beginning the actual firing operation. The firing operation began at 0400 hours September 27 under the direction of Ventura County Division Chief D. L. Ellis. (Objective and fire plan of the Deer Creek Road firing operation: The objective was to hold the fire on the west side of the paved road running mostly on the west side of the ridge from the western slope of Deer Creek Canyon. To accomplish this, Ventura County Fire Department and later, at approximately 0700, California Division of Forestry units, under the direction of Ventura County Division Chief Ellis, (at approximately 0700 Division Chief Ellist assigned operation to Chief Friddle) were to backfire from Deer Creek Road starting at Highway 1 with plans to burn up to Pacific View Road. Units were to be assigned to the firing operation while other units were assigned to pick up spots that might jump the road. Additional units were assigned to structure protection on Pacific View and Cotherin Road, and in Deals Flat.)

Firing of Deer Creek Road apparently proceeded with only minor spotting until the firing team reached the point where Deer Creek Road crosses the section line between Section 17 and 20. (Photograph 1) At this time some spotting problems developed above the road, and Ranger Nicholson, who had to be called down from structural protection to assist, stopped the CDF men from firing. Ranger Nicholson did not advise Chief Friddle of this decision as the handie talkie of his Ventura County liaison man (Fireman Morrison) would not transmit. Earlier, Chief Friddle had proceeded up the road for further recon and had not yet returned.

Shortly thereafter, (about 0715) Chief Friddle became aware of the spotting problems and requested Ranger Gonzalez with his task force to leave the structure protection area and proceed down to the backfiring area where the problems were taking place.

Shortly after his arrival at the backfiring operation, Ranger Gonzalez saw several spot fires from the main fire (Photograph 1) above the Deer Creek Road and below the dirt road that intersects with Deer Creek Road further up the ridge. After conferring with Chief Friddle and Ranger Nicolson, Ranger Gonzalez took his task force up on the dirt road to pick up the spot fires. They did this by backfiring out the dirt road on the Deer Creek Road side for approximately 500 yards, an area of about 3-1/2 acres. (Photograph 2.) Also during this time, Ranger Gonzalez' task force picked up several spot fires across the dirt road. After completing this backfiring operation, Ranger Gonzalez assigned three of his trucks to the south end of the stop-over and brought the other two trucks back up to the north end.

At a point in time prior to the accident, the fire had burned in a major drainage to the west of the accident location. The fire had progressed up the main drainage well past the accident scene, (Photograph 1) leaving a large unburned area on the east slope of the main drainage beneath the area of interest. The main drainage at this point was approximately 300 feet below Deer Creek Road.

Deer Creek Road, a paved, winding county road, ran generally north and south paralleling a ridge forming the east boundary of the drainage. At the location where the incident occurred, the roadway was located just below the ridgetop. (Photograph 3.)

The topography in the vicinity consisted of steep to very steep slopes dropping into the drainage on the west from the ridge, running generally north and south from the main divide on the north to the sea on the south.

A small spur gully ran up the east slope of the main drainage to a minor saddle immediately to the north of the accident scene.

About 200 yards north, another spur gully terminated in another saddle on the ridge.

A narrow dirt road or Jeep trail ran down the ridgetop, beginning with its connection with Deer Creek Road about 300 yards north of the accident site.

The cover type on the ridgetop consisted of scattered, low-to-medium height brush interspersed with patches of low grass.

Gonzalez had parked his pickup in the burn near the small saddle, (Photograph 4) and both he and Valencia, his Ventura County liaison man, were assisting the crews in their control activity.

At about 0750, Chief Friddle contacted Ranger Gonzalez at the scene and had a discussion with him concerning his intention to begin firing out along Deer Creek Road from the small gully northward. (Photograph 3).

At this time, Gonzalez requested that air drops be made in the vicinity. This was not possible, since the air tanker operation had not yet been activated due to problems with the air attack base mixing equipment. The first air drops were not made until 0930. Other air tankers apparently were not requested, and in any event they would not have reached the scene before the accident occurred.

Following the conference with Gonzalez, Chief Friddle placed VFD Unit 12 just south of the gully on Deer Creek Road (Photograph 3) to back up Engineer Gerhardt and Engineer McPhearsin, who were to do the firing.

The firing operation was not successful because the firing crew could not get the backfire to take properly.

II. Accident Facts

Captain Quigley, CDF, noticed a spot fire on the east side of the dirt road and moved his fire truck along the road and began work on it. The time was shortly before 0800.

Captain Dysart on the VFD Unit 12 noticed that suddenly a strong wind began blowing up the spur gully and across the road. Almost instantly, the wind became hot and he could see the fire was beginning a run up the gully.

Captain Quigley, as he worked on the spot fire, saw or heard the fire build up in the canyon and immediately drove his truck into the burn next to and on the north side of Gonzalez' pickup. (Photograph 4.) Even as he moved into position, he could see the fire running up the gully with a hot, very fast head. He had no time to get his two firefighters into the truck cab but instructed them through the open window to face the truck door and crouch down.

At this same time, Captain Hoffman noticed the fire buildup and backed his engine into the burn about 50 feet south of Gonzalez' pickup. (Photograph 4.) He and Firefighter Barbaria were inside the cab while Firefighter Brooks Thorup was on the seat in the crew compartment. Thorup was wearing a helmet, goggles, Nomex hood and Nomex shirt, and work pants and gloves. The time was approximately 0800.

Ranger Gonzalez was walking toward his pickup from Hoffman's engine and was about 25 feet from his vehicle. He apparently saw the buildup and began to run toward the vehicle.

The fire ran up the chimney, building up an intense head of fire and a very strong convection column which temporarily overcame the prevailing northeasterly wind over the ridgetop.

Captain Dysart and Engineer Tharp on Engine 12 retreated behind his vehicle to a position between it and the cutbank. He observed the flames sweeping over his engine.

The fire swept over Deer Creek Road and over the dirt road, igniting unburned fuel on the east side. (Photograph 5.) Shortly after this, a fire storm was generated on the ridgetop.

Apparently when the fuel was consumed in the gully, the convection column collapsed, allowing the prevailing northeasterly wind to drive the firestorm down onto the men and equipment on the ridgetop.

Fireman Valencia, in the immediate vicinity of the Hoffman engine, also began moving toward the pickup. He saw Gonzalez begin to run and he also ran toward the pickup but realized quickly that he was not going to make it. He saw Gonzalez get into his vehicle. He also observed an intense firestorm begin next to the vehicle at the driver's door.

Valencia began to run back to Hoffman's engine. With some difficulty, due to the presence of Captain Hoffman buckled down with a seat belt at the wheel, Valencia got into the truck cab on the driver's side. During this action, Valencia lost both his turnout coat and helmet. The coat was later discovered near Hoffman's fire truck, badly burned. (Photograph 6.) The helmet was never found.

Meanwhile, Captain Quigley saw Ranger Gonzalez slide across the seat of his pickup as if to roll up the window on the passenger side, which Quigley stated was down. Instead, Quigley saw Gonzalez open the door and get out. He remained for a few moments, then walked to the rear of the pickup and out of view. Gonzalez stated that, in looking thru his rear cab window, he saw a CDF man holding a hose but with no water. He signaled the man to come but the man did not see him. Gonzalez then went after him.

Firefighter Thorup, on the back of Hoffman's engine, saw Gonzalez in his pickup and observed him slide across the seat and come out from the back of the vehicle and move toward his location. About half way to the truck on which Thorup was sitting, Thorup saw a whirlwind overtake Gonzalez, who disappeared from his view. Within moments, the whirlwind enveloped the fire truck and Thorup. Because of the protective clothing being worn by Thorup, he felt little discomfort despite extreme heat.

After this whirlwind had passed, Thorup saw Ranger Gonzalez standing at the rear of the truck. His helmet was melted, his hair smoldering and he was holding his hands up asking for water to be put on them.

At about the time the convection column broke on the first run of fire, a second run occurred in the chimney at the saddle to the north. (Photograph 3.) The fire spotted into fuel on the east side of the dirt road (Photograph 7) and the northeast wind drove the fire again into the area occupied by the men and equipment.

Gonzalez, meanwhile, had laid face down in the crew compartment and Thorup had removed his melted helmet and was pouring water from a canteen onto Gonzalez' smoldering hair.

A second firestorm and whirlwind enveloped the two men on the back of the truck. Thorup continued to pour water on both himself and Ranger Gonzalez. At some point during this action, the wind blew the partially melted helmet out of the compartment. It was found later about twenty feet from the truck.

After the firestorm passed and the area cooled off, Captain Hoffman got out of his truck to check on Firefighter Thorup and discovered the injured man being doused with water by firefighter.

Photograph 8 - Mosaic showing Gonzalez's pickup parked in same place it was at time of accident.

Photograph 9 - Mosaic showing area looking north from accident scene up Deer Creek Road.

Photograph 10- Aerial photograph showing location of vehicles at time of accident.

Photograph 11- Photograph looking south down dirt road to the accident scene.

Photograph 12- Photograph showing clump of brush in area where firestorm originated.

III. Post-Accident Facts

After the firestorms subsided, Gonzalez treated his burned hands with topical anesthetic out of an aerosol spray vial which did not prove effectual in relieving pain. His hands were placed in a "cool-can" filled with icewater. Ranger Gonzalez stated this treatment did stop the pain and prevented severe shock.

Fireman Valencia informed Chief Friddle of the injury via radio. Chief Friddle then informed the fire base, who diverted a Los Angeles County helicopter that was in the air over the fire to the scene. It was necessary for the helicopter to first unload passengers at the heliport about 600 yards from the accident scene before proceeding to the scene. The helicopter picked up Gonzalez near Hoffman's truck. The total lapsed time from report of injury to the fire base until Gonzalez was admitted to the Alisa Ann Ruch Burn Center of the Sherman Oaks Medical Center in Van Nuys was 35 minutes.

It is interesting to note that all his clothing was wetted with water. Also, his hands were kept in icewater all the way to the Center. Dr. Grossman, the attending physician, commented that Gonzalez' first aid treatment prior to arrival at the burn center was excellent.

According to Dr. Grossman, on September 29, 1973, attending physician, Gonzalez suffered the following burns to 20% of his body area:

- 1.) Both hands on either side were burned severely, so much so that all skin was removed from the fingers.
- 2.) Facial burns were less severe and occurred to the ears, head and frontal sections of the face.
- 3.) Both knees and lower portions of the legs.
- 4.) The degree of lung damage was unascertainable at this time, as it will take at least five days for loss of lung elasticity to be manifested. This is the most serious aspect of his injuries.

Dr. Grossman made observations relating to emergency first aid burn treatment and clothing. He thought the first aid treatment given Gonzalez at the scene was very good. He claims the best aid to be given burns is to wet a blanket or other cloth material and keep the burned areas covered and wet all the way to the hospital.

Some remark was made about how badly melted Gonzalez' hard hat was. Dr. Grossman intimated that even so, the hat provided him with protection from more serious burns to the head.

Photograph 13 - Location of Ranger Gonzalez's sun glasses where they were found at accident scene.

Photograph 14 - Skin from Ranger Gonzalez's fingers. Found at the accident scene.

Photograph 15 - Skin from Ranger Gonzalez's fingers shown on white background.

Accident Investigation Report
State Forest Ranger I Louis Gonzalez

Potrero Fire - Ventura County
September 27, 1973

APPENDIX

Background Information

Ranger Louis J. Gonzalez

Ranger Gonzalez is an 18-year veteran with the California Division of Forestry. His time in service is as follows:

- Firefighter 10 months, 1951 & 1952
- Forest Fire Truck Driver 6 months, 1953 & 1954
- Forest Fire Foreman 7 years, 1 month - 1955, 1957-1964
- Forestry Field Trainee 1 year, 1964
- Junior Forester, 1 year, 4 months - 1965 & 1966
- State Forest Ranger 16 years, 11 months - 1966 to present

Ranger Gonzalez served two years in the U. S. Army, from October 1955 to October 1957.

Ranger Gonzalez is 40 years old, is 5 feet 10 inches tall, weight 161 pounds and is apparently in good physical condition. On September 8, 1973, he passed all the physical performance tests required under our physical fitness program. He is married and has two children.

Ranger Gonzalez is well liked by his subordinates, peers and supervisors. His supervisors consider him competent and capable. His fireline classification shows: Fire Boss, Plans Boss and Service Boss, all three for both District and State.

Copies of his training records are attached.

INDIVIDUAL TRAINING RECORD

F.F.F.

Category Number	Basic	Advanced	Unit Giving Course	Hours	Date	Remarks
CONSTITUTION	Camp Program	CDC	CDC	8	3-9	George
DEFENSIVE	DRIVING	CDC	CDC	8	3-20	
FIRST AID			CDC	4	3-11	
B.L.M.			B.L.M.	4	3-11	
FIRST AID			CDC	4	3-12	
FAIRBANKS HISTORY			LEWIS M. HILL	4	3-12	
FIRST AID			CDC	4	3-13	
FISH GAME			STATE PARKS	4	3-13	
SARGAR DEVELOPMENT			CDA	4	3-16	
HEALTH & SANITATION			CDA	4	3-16	
HEALTH & SANITATION				4	3-20	
HEALTH & SANITATION				4	3-20	

SONZALIZ, Louis J.
NAME

CALIFORNIA DIVISION OF FORESTRY
INDIVIDUAL TRAINING RECORD

Course Title	Unit Giving Course	Hours	Date	Remarks
Review Handbook 5560	SLD	5	3-71	
Fire Control Station Maint.	DV	7	3-71	
Fire Control Station Maint.	Div Hdq	7	3-71	
Maps & Area Estimation	DV	7	3-71	
Problems in Automotive Maint.	SLD	3	3-71	
Ecological Monitoring	Office Emergenc Services	2h.	3-71	
Standard First Aid	Camp San Luis	10	2/72	
Emergency Info. officer training	CDF DV	12	3/72	Jensen
Public Relations Policies	CDF	8	1/72	
Identifying Forests (Note Policies)	CDF	7	1/72	
Site - Safety Policies				
Fire Protection Regs	CDF	8	1/72	
Fire Teaching	CDF	3	4/72	
Map Recognition	San County Sheriff's Office	6	1/73	
although I can find no records here I believe I've attended Plans Room, Fire mgmt I + possibly Fire mgmt II				

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 08-28-2001 BY 60322

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE

FORECAST NUMBER ONE LAX MOBILE UNIT NUMBER ONE

OXNARD FIRE VENTURA COUNTY
1130 PDT THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 27 1973

THIS AFTERNOON:

WEATHER: CLEAR.

WIND: NORTHEASTERLY 20-35 MPH ACROSS HIGHER SLOPES WITH WIND SHIFTING TO SOUTHWESTERLY ALONG LOWER EDGE OF FIRE SHORTLY AFTERNOON AND INCREASING TO 10-15 MPH BY 1400 PDT. WEST TO SOUTHWEST WIND THEN SPREADING OVER OTHER PORTIONS OF THE FIRE BY 1500 PDT AND CONTINUING TIL 2000 PDT.

TEMP: MAX TEMP NEAR 95.

HUMIDITY: GENERALLY NEAR 10 PERCENT INCREASING SOME ALONG SOUTHERN EDGE WITH SOUTH EASTERLY WIND BUT GENERALLY REMAINING BELOW 30 PERCENT THAT AREA.

OUTLOOK FOR TONIGHT: (1800-0600)

WEATHER: CONTINUED CLEAR.

WIND: WEST TO SOUTHWEST 12-17 MPH ~~XXX~~ TIL 2000 PDT THEN BECOMING LIGHT AND VARIABLE LOWER PORTIONS OF THE FIRE. WINDS SHIFTING TO NORTHEASTERLY HIGHER SLOPES AGAIN NEAR MIDNIGHT AND CONTINUING 15-30 MPH TIL MORNING.

TEMPERATURE: COOLER TONIGHT LOWER PORTION OF FIRE WITH LOW NEAR 65 but CONTINUED WARM UPPER LEVELS WITH LOW NEAR 75.

HUMIDITY: HIGHER THAN LAST NIGHT WITH MAX HUMIDITY NEAR 50 PERCENT LOWER PORTIONS OF FIRE BUT REMAINING BELOW 20 PERCENT HIGHER SLOPES.

WILLIAM G. SULLIVAN
FIRE WEATHER FORECASTER

0	77	10	30	4	645	0	92	10	NE	10	3
0	78	4	30	4	645	0	99	8	NE	8	3
0	76	15	30	6	660	0	93	10	NE	18	3
0	75	4	30	3	665	0	88	8	E	34	5
0	75	10	30	4	670	0	84	15	NE	19	3
0	92	20	30	6	673	0	96	10	W	8	3
0	94	12	30	5	695	0	83	8	NE	14	3
0	77	7	E	W	3						

Los Angeles Rating Area Forecast for SEP 26-27

LOS ANGELES PINE WEAVER FORECAST 1400PST WEDNESDAY SEPT 26 1973
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA...

.....CONTINUE RED FLAG WARNING FOR STRONG GUSTY NORTHEAST TO EAST SANTA ANA WINDS AND LOW HUMIDITIES.....

SITUATION...SURFACE HIGH PRESSURE CELL OVER PLATEAU WITH STRONG UPPER LEVEL WINDS AND UPPER LEVEL FLOW BECOMING NORTHEASTERLY AS PINE WEAVER ISLANDS OVER PACIFIC NORTWEST TO MAINTAIN STRONG SANTA ANA WINDS THROUGH THURSDAY NIGHT DECREASING SLIGHTLY FRIDAY AS PINE WEAVER RIDGE ALONG COAST WEAKENING STEADY GRADIENT. CONTINUED EXTREMELY WARM AND DRY AIR MASS OVER AREA.

TONIGHT...STRONG GUSTY NORTHEAST TO EAST WINDS 40 TO 55 MPH HIGHER SLOPES AND PASSES WITH 20 TO 40 MPH WINDS LOWER EXPOSED LEVELS EXCEPT SANTA BARBARA AND SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTIES EAST TO SOUTHEAST WINDS 20 TO 30 MPH VALLEY AREAS. CONTINUED EXTREMELY WARM AND DRY WITH LOWEST HUMIDITIES BELOW 10 PERCENT.

THURSDAY...CONTINUED STRONG GUSTY NORTHEAST TO EAST WINDS 25 TO 50 MPH HIGHER SLOPES AND PASSES WITH 10 TO 25 MPH WINDS LOWER EXPOSED LEVELS DECREASING SLOWLY IN AFTERNOON EXCEPT SANTA BARBARA AND SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTIES EAST TO SOUTHEAST WINDS 10 TO 20 MPH SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA 5 TO 10 MPH COASTAL AREAS IN AFTERNOON. CONTINUED EXTREMELY WARM AND DRY WITH LOWEST HUMIDITIES BELOW 10 PERCENT.

AVERAGE TREND...TEMP UP 3 RN DOWN 5 PW DOWN WIND NORTHEAST TO EAST/SLIGHTLY WEAKER

FORECAST FRIDAY...GUSTY NORTHEAST TO EAST WINDS 20 TO 40 MPH HIGHER SLOPES AND PASSES WITH 10 TO 20 MPH WINDS LOWER EXPOSED LEVELS. WINDS INCREASE IN AFTERNOON WITH SOUTHWEST TO EAST WINDS 10 TO 15 MPH COASTAL AREAS IN AFTERNOON. CLOUDS WITH INCREASING HUMIDITIES COULD BE. CONTINUED HOT AND EXTREMELY DRY WEATHER AND ISLAND AREAS...PINE

POTRERO FIRE

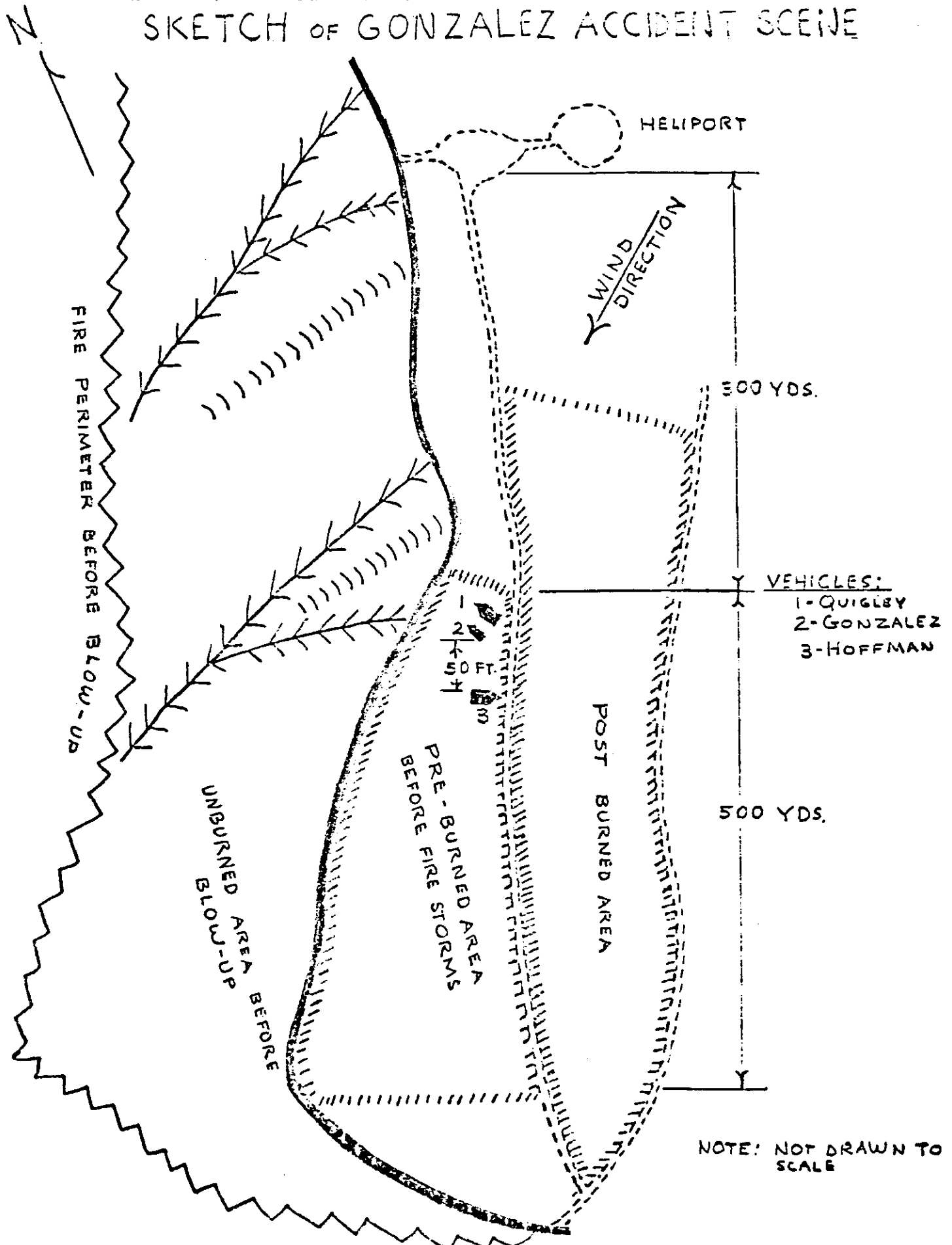
Start: 9/26/73 1250 hours

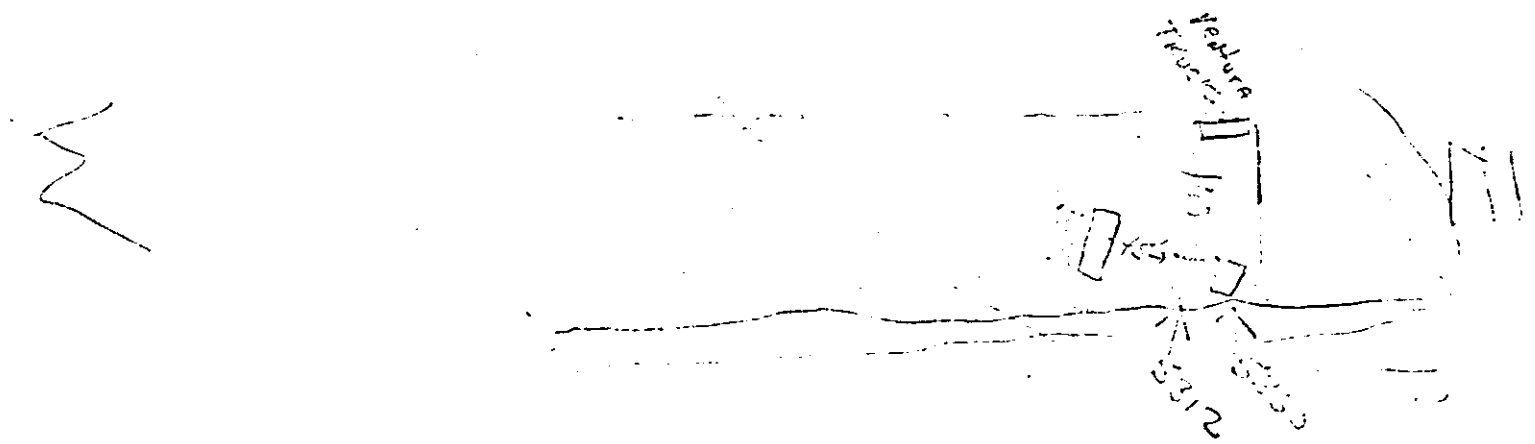
Contained: 9/27/73 1230 hours

Control: 9/29/73 0600 hours

Acreage: 12,000 +

VENTURA COUNTY POTRERO FIRE - 9-27-73
SKETCH OF GONZALEZ ACCIDENT SCENE

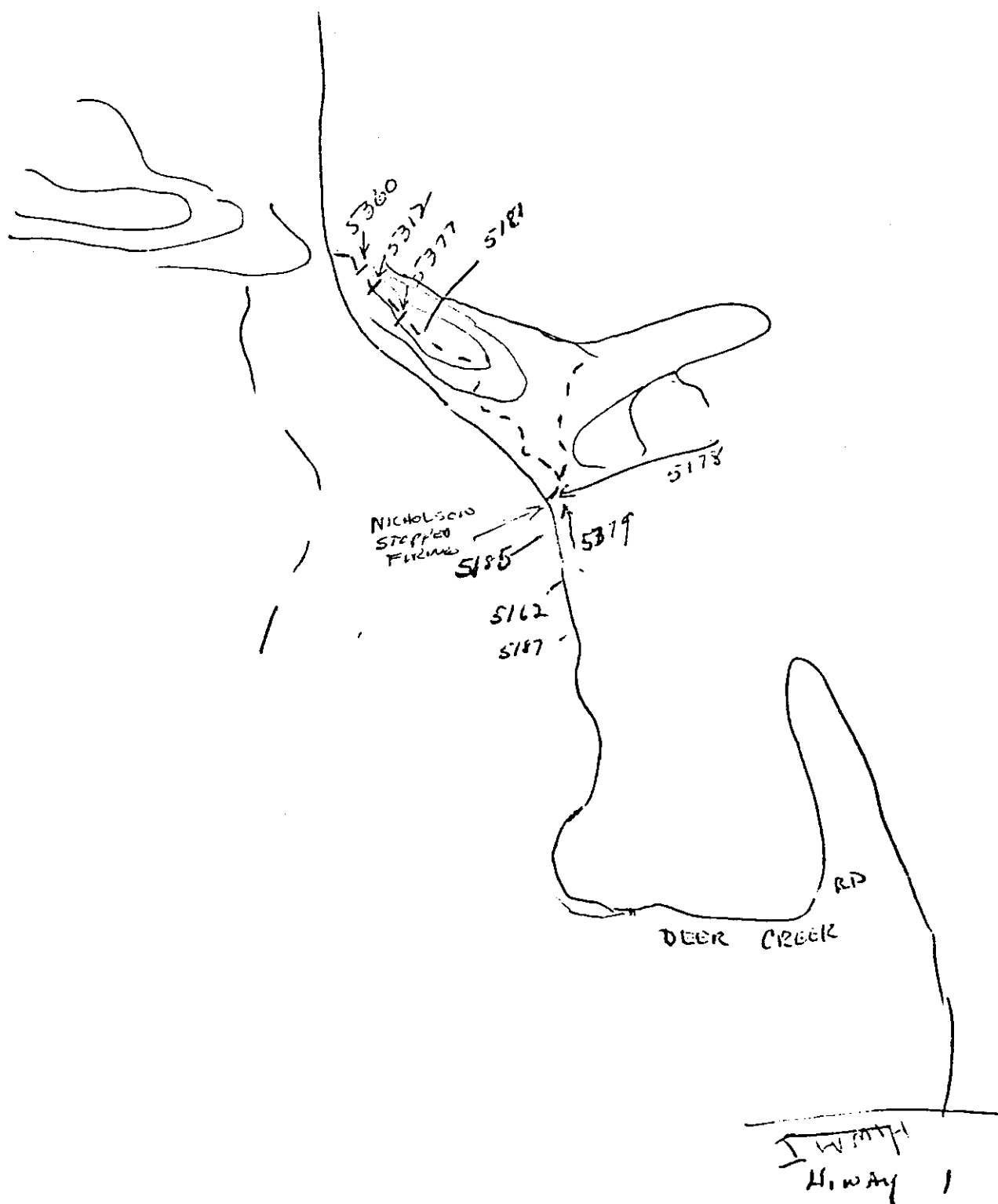




7-27-73

Buddie Quigley

Q.



By Carl Nicolson
Sept 27 1923



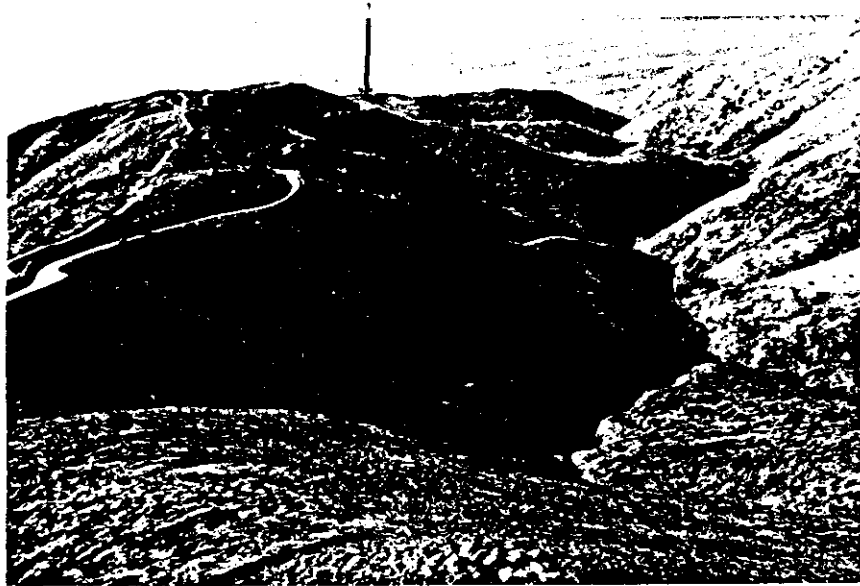


PHOTO #1 View down ridge forming east side of major drainage, looking south.
 Red arrow is point at which Ranner Nicolson stopped backfiring.
 Red line is location of main fire at time Panger Gonzalez arrived on ridgetop. Unburned fuel located to left of line.

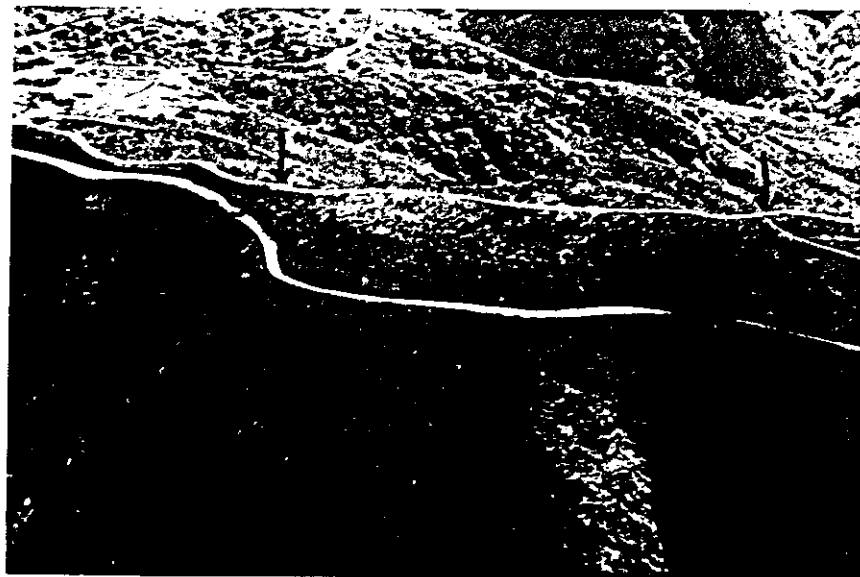


PHOTO #2 Ridgetop on which accident occurred. Looking east.
 Red arrows indicate boundary of area fired out by Gonzales' task force.

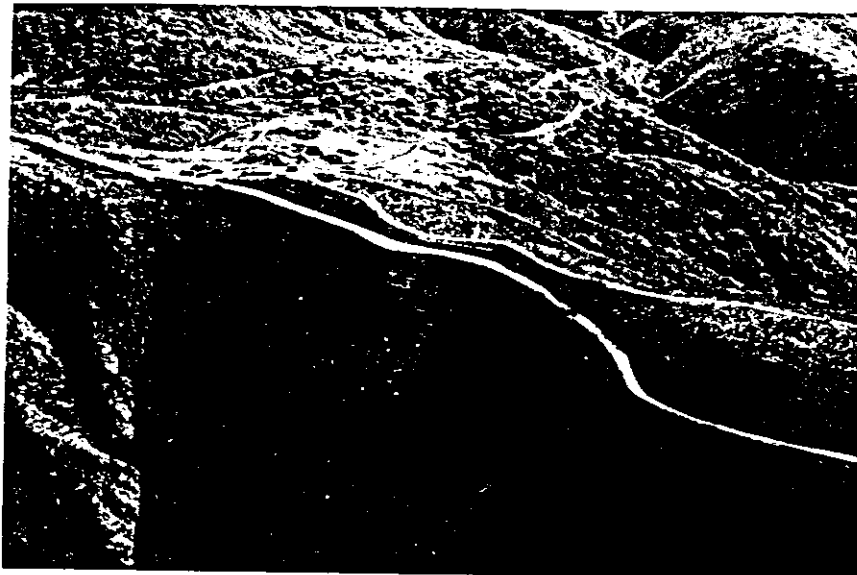


PHOTO #3 View of ridgetop looking south showing relationship of Deer Creek Road to dirt road.
 Red line shows the proposed backfiring operations along Deer Creek Road.
 Red arrow shows location of Ventura County Unit 12 at time of incident.
 Wiggly arrows mark the two gulleys or "chimneys."

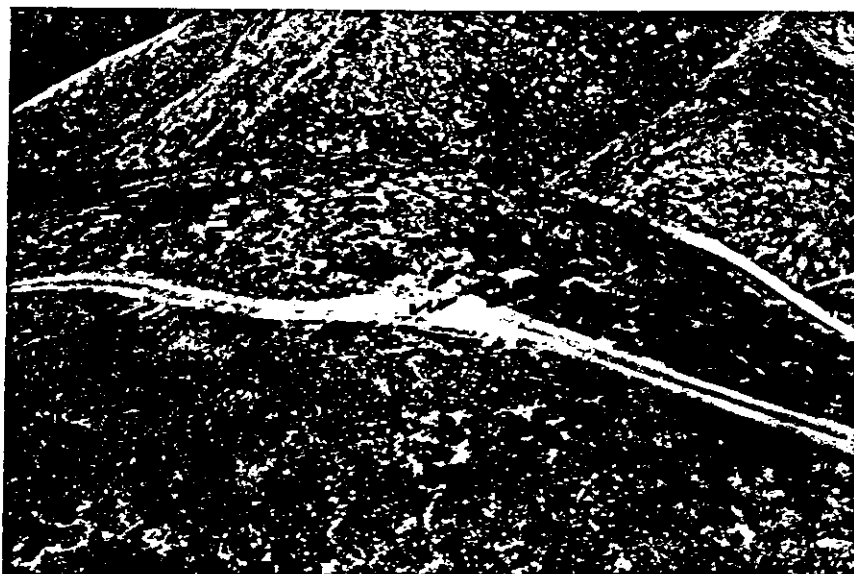


PHOTO #4 Showing immediate area of accident. Vehicles are parked in locations occupied by vehicles involved in the accident to recreate the scene.
 Vehicle #1 - Hoffman's firetruck
 Vehicle #2 - Gonzalez' pickup
 Vehicle #3 - Quinley's firetruck

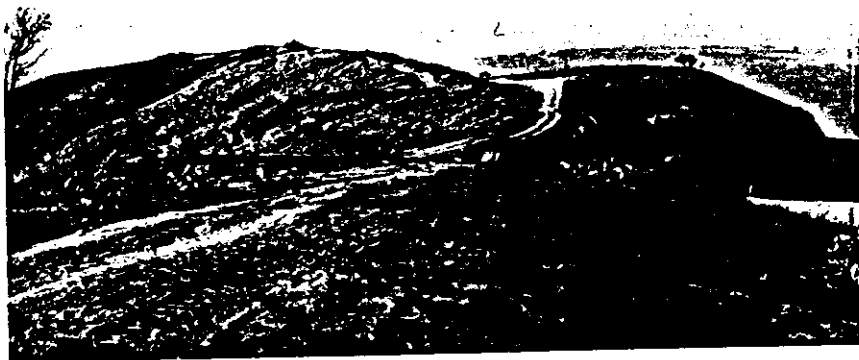


PHOTO #5 View along ridgetop looking south. Red X marks approximate location where fire running up the gulley spotted over the dirt road.



PHOTO #6 Remains of Fireman Valencia's turnout coat.



PHOTO #7 View along ridgetop looking north. Red X shows
approximate location of spot fire across dirt
road at second gulley.



PHOTO #8 Mosaic showing Gonzalez' pickup parked in the same location as it was at time of the accident.



PHOTO #9 Mosaic showing ridgetop looking north.



PHOTO #10 Aerial photo of accident scene looking north-west. Vehicles are a re-enactment with vehicles in same place as those involved in accident.

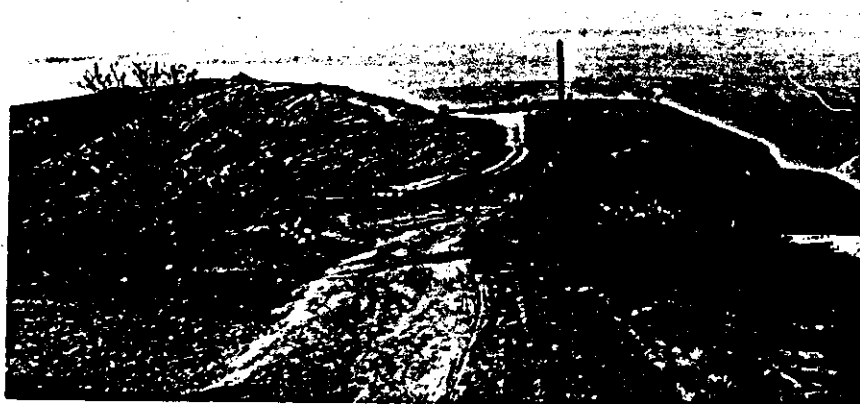


PHOTO #11 Looking south along ridgetop. Red arrow is at area of accident.



PHOTO #12 view showing height of an isolated clump of brush near where the accident occurred. Most brush on the area was quite low in height.

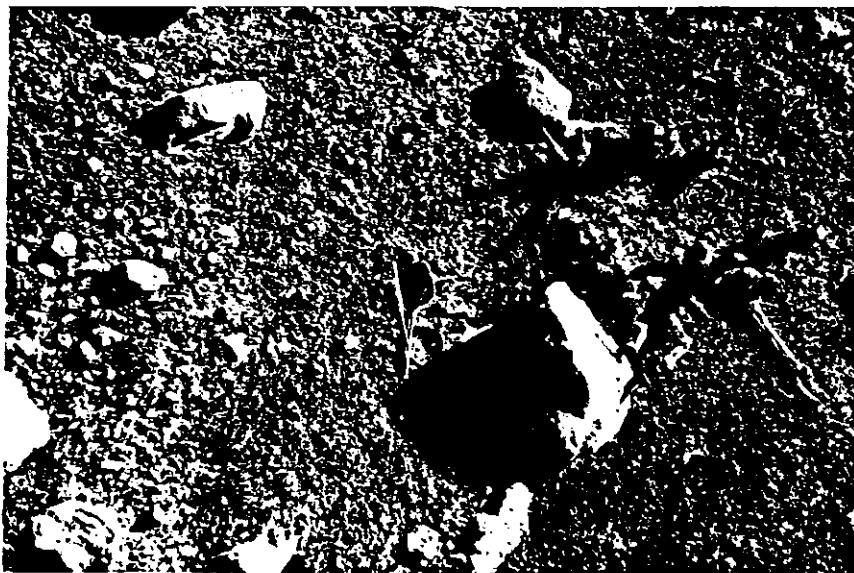


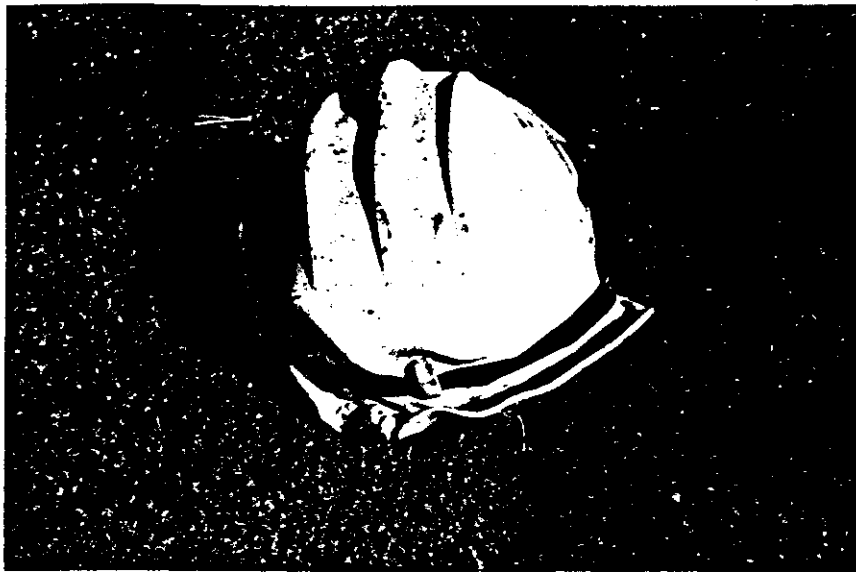
PHOTO #13 Showing where Gonzalez' sunglasses were located after accident. Sunglasses were not lost during incident, but discarded by a crew member following injury.



PHOTO #14 Red arrow points to the skin sheaths from the fingers of Ranger Gonzales found at the point where Firefighter Thorup poured water on Gonzalez' hands. These objects were the complete skin covering from two fingers to approximately the second knuckle and still retained the fingerprints.



PHOTO #15 View of finger skin sheaths two days following accident.



PHOTOS 16 thru 20 -- Views of remains of helmet worn by Gonzalez. Significant factors in photos are as follows:



PHOTO #17 Red arrow points to small rock about 2"x1-1/2" which is stuck to helmet, indicating the plastic state of the material when it contacted rock.



PHOTO #18 Shows the extreme melting of goggles to the extent that they are fused into remains of helmet bill.



PHOTO #19 Top view showing melted goggles.

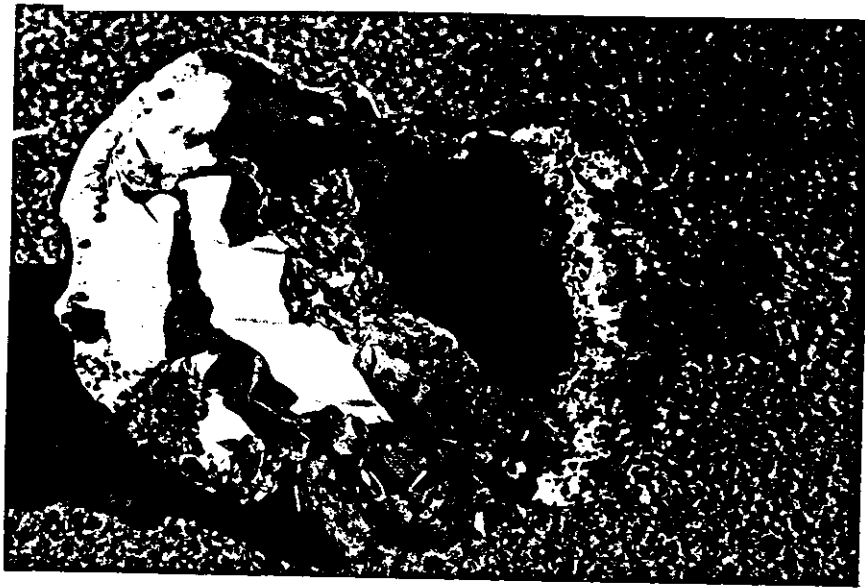
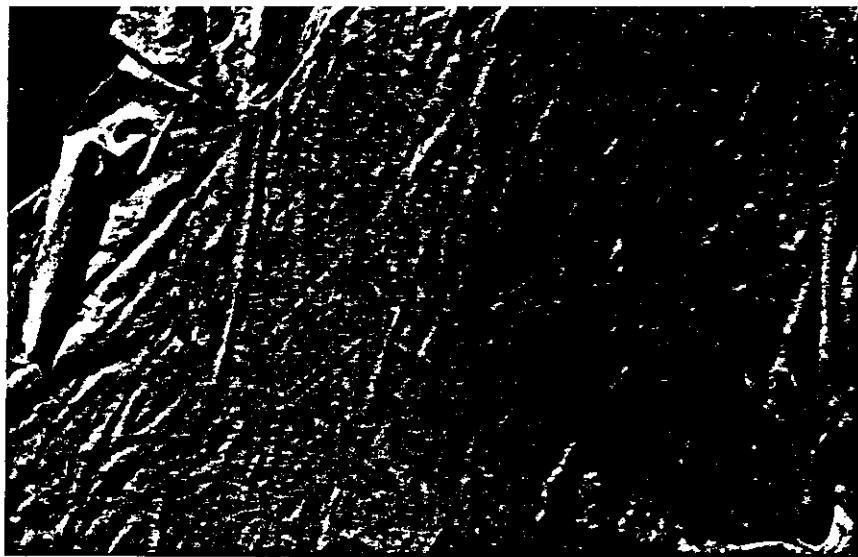
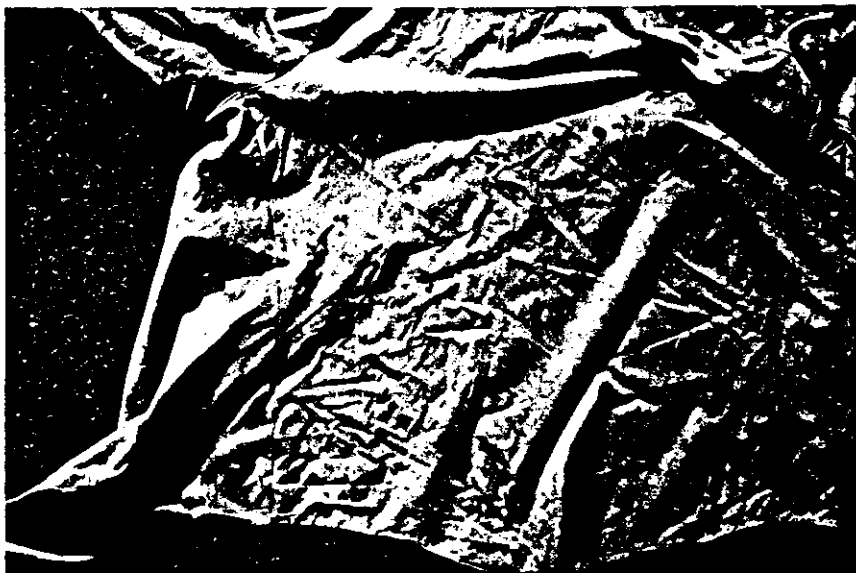
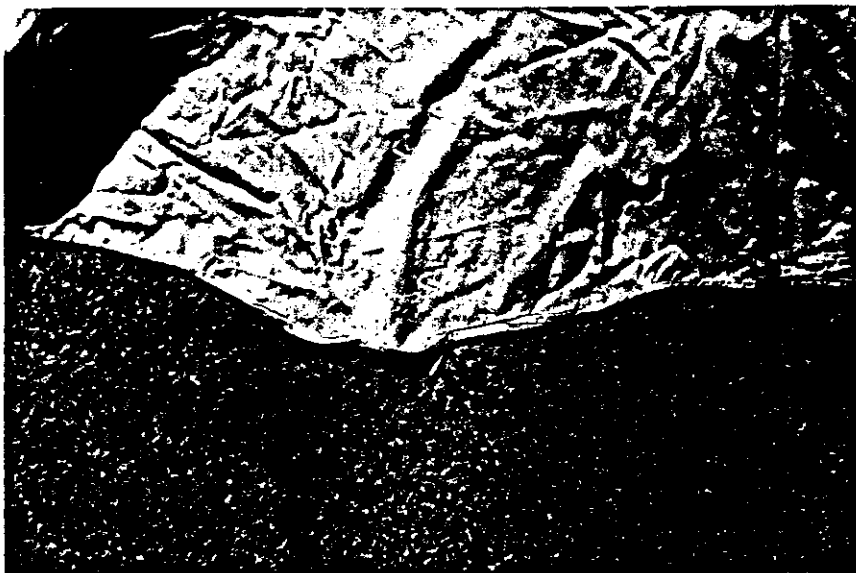


PHOTO #20 View showing almost complete destruction of the helmet liner, as well as another view of the rocks fused into the melted helmet material.

PHOTOS 21 thru 25 -- Views of uniform shirt worn by Gonzalez.

The damage to the shirt was due to flame and embers blowing up under the Nomex shirt worn over the uniform shirt. The Nomex shirt was not tucked into the pants and was not provided with a drawstring or other closing device.





PHOTOS 26 and 27 -- Views of the Nomex shirt showing burn damage.
Areas circled in red on photo #26 are pin-hole size burns. The damage other than the single burn on photo #27 was caused by cutting of the shirt at the hospital.



Ranger Gonzalez made the following statements while being interviewed at the hospital on September 29, 1973:

- 1) He did not remember entering his pickup during the sequence of events immediately preceeding the accident.
- 2) He was knocked down by the force of the fire storm and associated winds several times.
- 3) The experience was horrible and he thought he and the others were going to die.
- 4) His crews would be instructed in the future to keep their yellow fire shirts tucked into their trousers to prevent fire from sweeping up underneath. (His uniform shirt as well as his tee shirt were burned through in several spots while his protective shirt was not spotted as badly.)

Appendix

Pre-Fire Description of Articles of Clothing Worn by Lou Gonzalez (Ranger Gonzalez was not utilizing gloves, goggles or Nomex hood at time of accident; however, the goggles were on his hard hat.)

Helmet

A utilyte 2000. Manufactured by E. D. Bullard Company of Sausalito, California. The helmet is white, with a California Division of Forestry circular decal over the front bill.

Inside the crown is a head and sweat band and shock straps attached to the helmet by means of slots and plastic pins designed to fit in the slots. The helmet is made of a plastic.

The shock straps are of a nylon material.

The head band consists of two parts.

- 1.) A plastic portion expending entirely around the band that allows for adjusting to head size; and
- 2.) In the front, an 8-inch long by 2-1/2 inch wide soft sponge-like material to absorb sweat.

Goggles

American Optical Corporation Shur-Guard Safety Goggles

Shirt Uniform - Long Sleeve

50% blue "C" polyester and 50% combed cotton. Permanent press.
Brand name: Elbeco's Dura-Cloth. Color: Tan.

Shirt, Inner (Tee Shirt)

75% cotton, 25% polyester
Brand name: Hanes Pro's Choice
Color: White

Shorts

50% pima cotton, 50% polyester
Brand name: J. C. Penney Towncraft
Color: White
Type: Jockey

Protective Shirt

Fire resistant polyamide
Serial number: GS - 085 - 30254
U.S.D.A.F.S. Int. Spec: 5100-0091
Workware Corporation
This is a standard yellow Nomex coat issued to firefighters in the California Division of Forestry.

Shoes

Not identified.

Socks

Not identified.

Pants

50% cotton, 50% polyester
Brand: J. C. Penney
Color: Green

Post-fire description of articles of clothing worn by Louis Gonzalez.

Helmet

The plastic helmet is deformed and is collapsed two inches lower than a new helmet. The bill is wrinkled on the edges and bubbled up on the top. The brim is in a similar condition. The sweat band and head band are burned and melted, but still recognizable. (Photographs 16 thru 20.)

Goggles

The goggles are melted to the brim of the helmet. The strap is still around the crown. (Photograph 18.)

NOTE: The investigation team feels that part of the damage to the helmet and goggles occurred after the helmet and goggles were taken off Ranger Gonzalez by Firefighter Brooks Thorup. The helmet was found approximately 20 feet from the point where it was removed.

Shirt, Uniform (Long Sleeve)

There are 12 holes burned through the shirt. Ten of them smaller than 1/4 inch, with two being nearly 1/2 inch in diameter. All holes are in the back of the shirt. (Photograph 21 thru 25.)

Shirt, Inner (Tee Shirt)

There are three holes burnt in the tee shirt. Two of the holes line up with the two larger holes burned in the outer long sleeve shirt.

Shorts

Nothing remarkable.

Protective Shirt

Evidence of some spot charring, as well as pin sized holes. (Photograph 26 and 27.)

Shoes

Nothing remarkable.

Socks

Nothing remarkable.

Pants

Nothing remarkable, except Ranger Gonzalez received burns on both knees and legs with no significant damage to the pants.

EVIDENCE

- 1) Dark plastic sunglasses worn by Gonzalez.
- 2) QC topical anesthetic spray used on Gonzalez' hands
- 3) Gonzalez' finger skin
- 4) Polyamide yellow brush jacket worn by Gonzalez
- 5) Tee shirt worn by Gonzalez
- 6) Jockey shorts worn by Gonzalez
- 7) Tan long sleeved shirt worn by Gonzalez
- 8) Green Penney's pants worn by Gonzalez
- 9) Socks worn by Gonzalez
- 10) Vibram soled high-top boots worn by Gonzalez
- 11) Blue shirt worn by Valencia
- 12) Blue trousers worn by Valencia
- 13) Blue jacket worn by Valencia
- 14) Blue socks worn by Valencia
- 15) Brown belt worn by Gonzalez
- 16) Leather lacing
- 17) Yellow turnout coat worn by Valencia
- 18) Helmet and Goggles worn by Gonzalez