

Scores flee as brush fires grow

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"The winds shifted at a very high speed at 4:30 this morning and by 5 a.m. we had a fire storm blowing right through De Luz Canyon," she said. "The entire northern end of the canyon has been destroyed and, because of the smoke, I can't even see the road in front of my house 100 yards away."

Diane Guy, a neighbor of Mrs. Garnsey, said the two occupied houses destroyed by the fire were on the Arteberry Ranch here, located on the Plette Truck Trail.

The Division of Forestry said all 800 acres of the ranch, also known as the A.C.W. Ranch, were burned and that a 1,000-gallon diesel fuel tank on the grounds exploded.

Tom Woolsey, who operates Rancho Robledo, an Arabian horse ranch on De Luz Rd., said the fire burned much of his back land and jumped around his house and horses. His home, situated on a hill, was untouched but the grounds around it were blackened.

Donald Day, who lives eight miles northwest of Fallbrook on De Luz Rd., said the fire burned down De Luz Valley last night to the intersection of Murietta Rd. and De Luz Rd.

"I'm loading all my belongings in a van and preparing to evacuate," he said. "Quite a few people have evacuated and the rest are getting ready to."

He said the fire looked worse than the 1969 fire that periled this remote community.

"In 1969, the fire didn't reach the valley," he said.

Garnsey said fire crews were called away from the area last night and that the fire moved towards the community while the crews were elsewhere.

Garnsey organized residents in the area, who set backfires and watered the area down.

"We would have lost our homes if we hadn't," Garnsey said. "We would have all been burned out if we hadn't been on the ball."

A Division of Forestry spokesman said the crews were called away at the time to fight another hot spot.

Mrs. Garnsey said the fire destroyed the Derling Nursery here and a home owned by Mrs. Lucienne McDowel. Some residents evacuated to De Luz Elementary School, a 50-year-old building used for nature studies by the Fallbrook School District.

The fire came within a quarter mile of the school, where fire crews were cutting fire breaks.

"There hasn't been a fire up here in a number of years and some of the brush was 8 to 10 ft. high," Mrs. Garnsey said. "When the brush went up, it was like a wall of fire."

The Community was without power for several hours.

The De Luz community, an area of citrus and avocado groves and scattered rural residences about 10 miles northeast of Fallbrook, was surrounded by flames during a major fire in August of 1969 which razed six homes and charred 50,000 acres in the county.

Fifty-eight fire trucks, 18 bulldozers, 14 air tankers and three helicopters are being used to fight the fire. One bulldozer overturned last night but the operator was uninjured. A second bulldozer operator was treated for third-degree burns on his arm, a Division of Forestry spokesman said.

The fire, which started Monday, was caused by a cigarette, officials said.

The San Paqual fire, which started Monday in Clevenger Canyon, was contained yesterday afternoon after burning 4,000 acres.

No injuries were reported to the fire which destroyed

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