

*Keep
Permanently*

W. O. FIRE CONTROL FILES

REPORT ON CASUALTIES AND INJURIES

OF

U. S. MARINE CORPS MEN

ON

HADSER CREEK FIRE

CLEVELAND NATIONAL FOREST

October 2, 1943

Board of Review

W. O. FIRE CONTROL FILES

*Consolidated with
10/25/43 letter
from (R-5)*

W. O. FIRE CONTROL FILES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- - - -

Schematic Map of Hauser Creek Fire by periods,
indicating points of tragedies in relation to
general physical conditions. Section I

Chronology of Fire from detection 10:00 A.M.
October 2 to 5:30 P.M. October 3, 1943 Section II

Manner of Investigation. Section III

Conclusion of Board of Inquiry concerning
death of U. S. Marines Section IV

Detail Map and Photographs showing location
of tragedy. Section V

Narrative Report of Accident Section VI

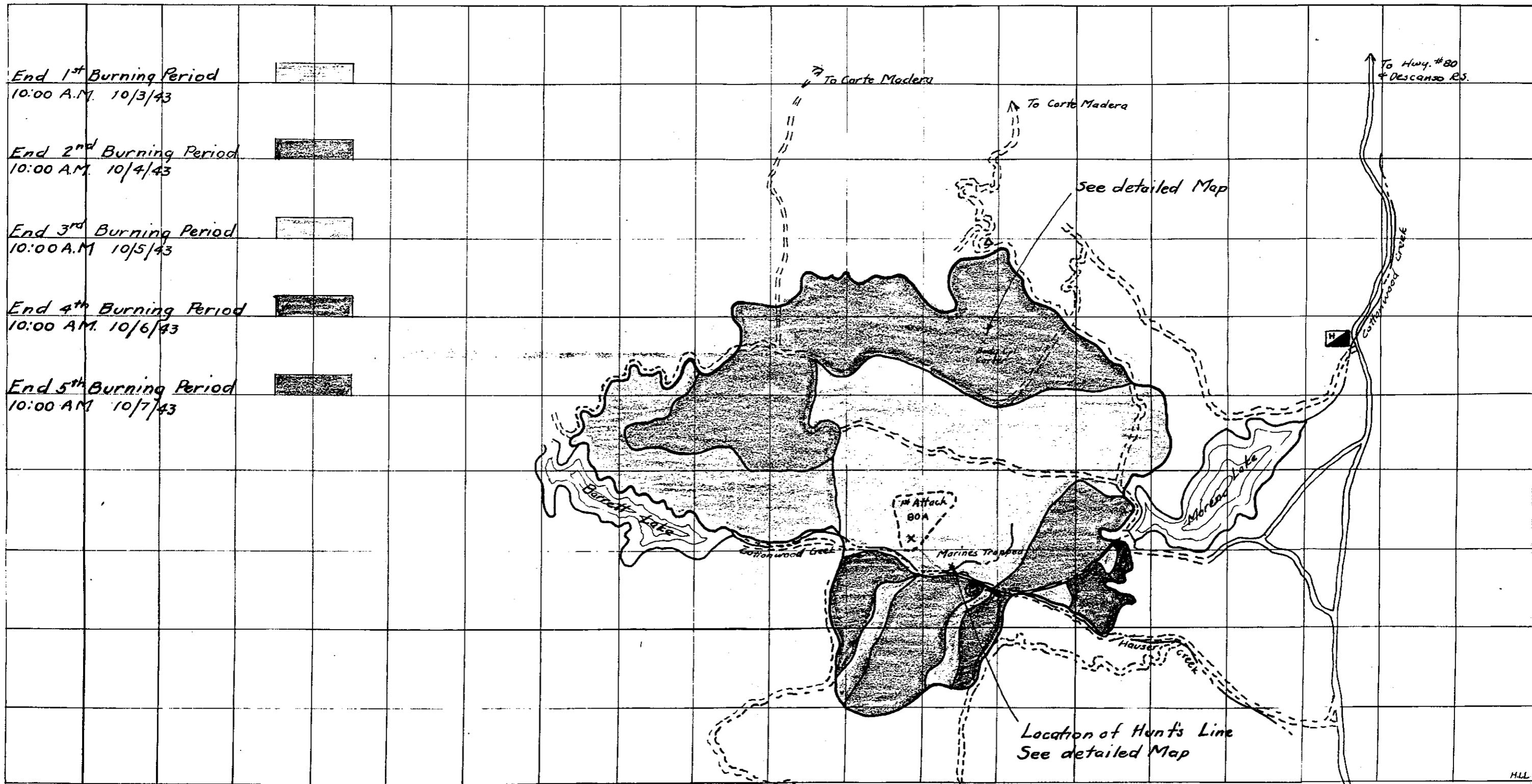
List of Casualties Section VII

Testimony of Witnesses Section VIII

SECTION I

MAP RECORD

Hauser Creek Name of Fire 10-2-43 Date J. NEwing Fire Chief



End 1st Burning Period
10:00 A.M. 10/3/43

End 2nd Burning Period
10:00 A.M. 10/4/43

End 3rd Burning Period
10:00 A.M. 10/5/43

End 4th Burning Period
10:00 A.M. 10/6/43

End 5th Burning Period
10:00 A.M. 10/7/43

Scale-?

H.L.L.

SECTION II

HAUSER CREEK FIRE

10-2-43-10-7-43

10-2-43

10:00 a m Los Pinos reported white smoke. 200
10:00 " Lyons Peak reports heavy smoke. 97
10:09 " Descanso rolled crew.
10:09 " Cuyamaca reported smoke. 178
10:13 " Doc. Davis was called at Camp Ole.
10:14 " Christensen and Camp Ole crew (18 men) rolled.
10:15 " Cameron crew left.
10:18 " Pulled Alpine crew into Descanso
10:25 " Buxton alerted 100 Lockett men.
10:34 " Herndon sent with message to Pine Valley Camp to prepare marines to roll.
10:35 " Farrell, Ewing, Landweer, Munhall, Jermo, Droege left Camp Ole for fire.
10:35 " Fischer, Stewart, Hunt and Couche left Camp Ole for Descanso.
10:52 " Fire reported to Descanso - at Baron Long Indian Reservation.
10:53 " Alpine Tanker rolled from Descanso to Indian Reservation.
10:57 " Descanso ordered 100 Lockett men from Buxton. Fischer and Couche at Descanso.
11:01 " Herndon reported marines ready to roll.
11:05 " Buxton ordered 100 Lockett men.
11:14 " Marines told to roll. Said wanted 45 mins. for lunch. O.K.
11:15 " ✓ Davis, Droege, Ewing, Munhall arrived at fire.
11:15 " Fischer, Couche left for Hauser Creek to fire.
Hunt ordered to pick up marines at Pine Valley and take them into Hauser Creek with radios.

10-2-43 continued - 2

11:22 am Jermo phoned from Morena Lodge ordering cat. from Oak Grove and transportation from Descanso.

11:22 " ✓ Farrell, Landweer arrived at fire.

11:20 " ✓ Descanso crew arrived at fire.

11:25 " Ordered Oak Grove cat. Buxton said already rolled.

11:25 " La Mesa started to pick up our cat.

11:26 " ✓ Ole crew arrived at fire.

11:50 " Alpine tanker reported back at Descanso - Grass fire.

11:49 " Report from fire. Need 2 stakesides and 100 men with overhead for tonight.

12:15 pm ✓ Fischer and Couche on fire then out to set up organization, get camp started.

12:20 " State truck at Descanso to pick up cat.

12:29 " Hunt and Herndon left Pine Valley with 100 marines.

12:58 " Al Jennings out with communication equipment.

1:00 " ✓ Gameron crew on fire.

1:00 " ✓ Fischer, Couche left to set up fire camp. Passed 100 marines and 100 Lockett on Hauser Creek T.T. on way to fire. Told them to report to Davis.

1:02 " Hinshaw in at Descanso on standby.

1:20 " ✓ Marines arrive at fire with Hunt and Herndon.

1:25 " 100 Lockett arrive at Hauser Creek Campground.

1:30 " Report by radio from Hauser Creek - 100 marines going in on fire with Hunt and Herndon.

2:04 " Call to Descanso from Fischer. Need overhead for 500 men; food for 200, Want 200 men at 5 p.m. Fire Headquarters being set up at Cottonwood bridge. Corral Canyon Road probably axis of movement.

2:16 " Descanso ordered from Buxton 200 men to be at Morena Lodge as soon as possible.

10-2-43 continued - 3

2:18 pm Austin, Hinshaw, Colley at Descanso.

2:18 " Vickers sent to fire camp from Descanso.

2:23 " Buxton ordered 200 men - received acknowledgement Lockett.

2:30 " Fire Headquarters set up at Cottonwood Bridge. Communication installed. Fischer talked with Buxton.

2:30 " Russell, from San Diego, sent to fire camp.

3:26 " Reported to Fischer at fire camp and Descanso that 50 marines trapped with Hunt and Herndon. 5 ambulances ordered from Lockett to evacuate marines.

3:29 " Fischer ordered Guayule, C.I.M. and State crews; also 400 Lockett alerted for 7 pm.

3:30 " Fischer left for Hauser Creek to see about trapped marines.

3:50 " Oak Grove crew left for fire camp.

3:50 " Buxton ordered 400 troops from Lockett for 7 pm.

3:50 " Fischer with marines injured in Hauser Creek. Ambulances begin to arrive.

3:51 " Beckley, cooks and Camp Ole men at fire camp.

4:15 " Campo tanker with 4 men in fire camp.

4:30 " Joe Platz, Knopp, Turner left Trabuco.

4:52 " Camp kitchen left Corona, 100 man outfit.

5:00 " Ryman, Ramon Charlie, Rockwell and 3 State men in. Left for fire immediately.

5:25 " Willingham and Whitney at Descanso.

5:35 " 1,500 acres burned. Need 200 troops tonight and 300 tomorrow with overhead. Buxton's order of 3:50 pm for 400 men changed to 200

5:40 " Fischer back from hospital after assisting evacuation. Reported 3 marines dead, 70 injured, Hunt and Herndon injured. All evacuated to Lockett base hospital by ambulance.

5:42 " Whitney sent to La Mesa for flashlights.

10-2-45 - continued - 4

- 5:57 p.m. Higgins at Pine Valley with Oak Grove cat. Sent on to fire camp.
- 6:00 " 20 men from Palomar brought in to fire camp by 4 Trabuco men. (Myrick, Williams, Rafferty, Braurman.)
- 6:18 " Hayward from Oak Grove in at Descanso with Wormser, Knott, Cook, Grammer, McIntosh, Anderson, Willits.
- 6:31 " Buxton reported following men ready to leave for fire:
Whitcomb, Masonheimer from Los Padres. Mason, Fox - Guayule.
Schupp, Hiser, Tyson, Miller, Rodman, Tiper, Webster, McCann - Angeles. Davidson, Griffin - Los Padres. Calvert, Kitchen from Guayule with crew. Left Guayule 6 p.m.
- 6:32 " Orders for night: Droege, Fire Boss.
Division I - Hauser Creek to Stokes Valley Road - Davis.
Cold trail east and west lines north from Hauser Creek to meet crews coming down from Stokes Valley Road. Patrol and cold trail line up Hauser Creek. 100 Lockett troops.
Division II - Stokes Valley road to Corral Canyon Road - Hayward.
Fire out to Corral Canyon Road from West line to cat line near head of canyon. Fire cat line to road between Forks and Stokes Valley road. Cold trail slop-over east of road. 100 Lockett troops, 5 tankers, 2 cats.
- 6:45 " Mel Brister (radio man) at fire camp from Angeles.
- 7:10 " Marines past fire camp on way to Pine Valley.
- 7:15 " 150 28th Lockett men in camp, 50 more left for Hauser Creek (Division I.)
- 7:15 " Hayward and crew at fire camp.
- 8:00 " Willits, Wormser, Wyler out to fire.
- 8:03 " Guayule men checked in at San Diego.
- 8:15 " Rodgers, Cook to fire.
- 8:16 " Buxton reports 66 overhead ordered. Farrell requested 300 Lockett to report at fire camp at 5 a.m.
- 8:30 " Harvey, Keyes to fire.
- 8:50 " Buxton ordered 300 men for 5 a.m. - Lockett.
- 8:52 " Sulle ordered tanker unit from Arcadia (San Clemente.)
- 8:53 " Camp wants tools for 400 men.
- 9:10 " Myrick, Harvey, Whitney to fire.

10-2-43 continued - 5

- 9:16 p.m. Fox, Mason from San Clemente at Descanso. Sent to fire camp. Ewing, with E. K. Smith, A. F. Smith, Kelley and Hayward to Division II.
- 9:30 " Kincorte, mechanic from Arcadia at Descanso. Sent to fire camp.
- 9:30 " 33 men from Guayule in at Descanso, under Capt. Wickerson and foreman Liljigren.
- 10:10 " Farrell phoned Mendenhall, Glandale.
- 10:10 " Angeles men - Hughes, Miller, McCann, Webster, Rodman, Piper at Descanso. Sent on to fire camp.
- 11:00 " Cook with Dulzura tanker in. Left for fire.
- 11:18 " Shafer and George from Angeles at Descanso. Sent on to fire camp.
- 11:45 " Euler, Schupp, Rutherford from Angeles at Descanso. Sent on to camp.
- 11:50 " Farrell to Dyke, "300 army, 50 overhead and 50 Guayule needed."

10-3-43

- 12:01 a.m. Farrell, Fischer started on morning organization.
- 1:30 " Ewing back from fire.
- 1:45 " Taylor, Reed, Tisor, Heyser in from L. A.; Petersen from Arcadia.
- 1:45 " Orders for day shift to go on shift at 6:00 a.m.
- 1:45 " Ewing, Fire Boss. Division I, Division Boss - Rutherford. Sector Bosses Euler and Fox with 50 Lockett and 33 Guayule men to cold trail E. & W. lines North out of Hauser to tie with crews coming down from top division boundaries approx. top of ridge.
- Division II, Division Boss - Shaffer. Sector Bosses Birch and George with 50 Lockett to work north from Morena Skye Valley Road. Cold trail and cut line to meet 50 Lockett coming South from road running south from Corral Can. Road. 50 Lockett to work south from Morena Skye Valley Road to top of ridge. 2 crews of 25 Lockett men to patrol cat line and Stokes Valley road forming north line of fire.
- 2:30 " Ballou and gasoline truck in from Arcadia.
- 2:35 " Fischer out to fire lines vicinity Corral Can. and Stokes Valley road with Major Moore of 28th.
- 3:00 " Lein, Carpenter in from San Clemente.

10-3-43 continued - 6

- 3:25 a.m. Jennings called to check telephone lines. All are in order as far as he knows.
- 3:45 " McLain in at fire camp.
- 4:25 " Fischer and Major Moore return. Moved Green Hornet Tanker from Stokes Valley road to Hayward on Corral Canyon road at end of cat line.
- 4:30 " Holt from Arcadia in with fire tools.
- 5:00 " Bill Collie arrived at fire camp.
- 5:10 " Army arrives at camp being dispatched to sectors.
- 5:13 " Ewing back at fire line.
- 5:30 " Radio check made by Brister. All OK.
- 6:50 " H. E. Altman, with mobile weather unit, from L.A. at fire camp.
- 6:55 " Farrell back to fire camp. Report from fire. Looks pretty bad Best chance to hold it these next 3 hours. Has gone north and west and east. Is across the lower road to Skye Valley from Morena Dam and they are going to try to hold it at the upper road.
- 6:55 " Have a cat trail nearby completed. Doing some backfiring. Teague and Graves and one other will be in to go on standby.
- 7:00 " Farrell, Fischer, Droege, Stewart left for Descanso. Coming back out.
- 7:05 " Ewing gave Buxton complete radio report of fire.
- 7:14 " Laguna tanker ordered to fire camp immediately.
- 7:16 " Remaining 4 men at Ole ordered to fire camp.
- 8:00 " Masonheimer, Whitcomb, Davis, Griffin reported at fire camp from Los Padres..
- 8:00 " Second camp set up at Hauser Creek campground. Willingham from Imperial as Camp Boss.
- 8:30 " Weather report. Slowly lowering temperature. S.W. wind. Stratus inland.
- 8:47 " Message from Rockwell, "fire jumped road going towards Skye Valley 1/4 mile from Skye Valley on Corral Canyon Road."
- 9:00 " Droege, Farrell, Fischer back at camp and straight on to fire.

10-3-43 continued - 7

- 9:07 a.m. Doc Davic, Jermo, Teague left for Descanso.
- 9:22 " Al Jennings report by radio saying fire has jumped road S.W. of Los Pinos toward Skye Valley.
- 9:30 " Report one man missing from Corral Canyon road sector - may be on tanker.
- 9:30 " Stewart back at camp with little tanker.
- 9:40 " Droege, Farrell and Fischer at Los Pinos. Will have to back-fire road from Los Pinos to slop-over near Morena Lake. Tie to Corte Madera burn.
- 9:45 " Weather report: Ridges; Wind S.E. 15 to 20 with occasional gusts up to 25 miles per hour veering to S.W. about 3:00 p.m. and becoming gentle westerly about 7:00 p.m. tonight. Canyons: upslope winds 10 to 14 mph becoming calm or very light down-slope after 7 p.m. Fire area: Max. temp. today - 69. Minimum humidity today - 25. Maximum humidity tonight - 60. Future outlook: Somewhat cooler and drier Monday with moderate south-westerly winds across ridges.
- 9:46 " Droege reported situation changed. Fire has jumped across Corral Canyon Road. Has gone towards Los Pinos. Also going N.W. More fire than yesterday. Headed towards old burn. Want tanker and back pumps sent to Los Pinos to protect house. Come through Corte Madera. Fischer and Farrell with them.
- 10:00 " Slip-on unit left for Los Pinos.
- 10:33 " Los Pinos evacuated. Off air.
- 10:35 " Dyke reported to Buxton: Need 400 men. More overhead all the way through; tools, equipment and tanker operators. Fly them here. Hurry. Bad wind 20-30 mph headed for Skye Valley. Trying to turn to old burn at Corte Madera and tie in.
- 11:10 " Dyke reported from Camp 2. Fire has jumped Hauser Creek Canyon. Tanker #1041 broken down. No water. Entire new front on S. side of canyon out of control. Loss of fire here due to breakdown of #1041 tanker.
- 11:33 " Weather report: W. and top of westside 20% higher velocity - S.W. wind and East. E. side materially same as yesterday. Some cumulus clouds. No thunderstorms predicted for today. Maybe tomorrow. Humidity and temperature both higher than yesterday.
- 11:35 " Droege and Fischer firing Los Pinos - Cottonwood Road with Palomar crew. Fire going up side of Los Pinos Peak with old burn.

10-3-43 continued 8

- 11:40 a.m. Williams on Los Pinos. Fire coming up on S. side of mountain
This is backfire going into old burn.
- 11:47 " Cuyamaca smoke 158. Fire Green Valley Falls.
- 11:48 " Cuyamaca rolled to State fire.
- 12:04 p.m. Willingham wants 50 men at once at Camp 2.
- 12:05 " Dyke ordered 500 men for tonight from Buxton.
- 12:30 " Rutherford, Euler, Schupe, Shaffer, George in from Angeles.
- 12:50 " Buxton reports trucks from Arcadia left at 12 noon.
- 12:50 " Buxton phoned to say that beginning at 2 p.m. all men order-
ed from Army must be ordered through Army liaison officer at
fire camp, by order from Major Goodman.
- 1:30 " Los Pinos - Morena Road fired out and holding - two tankers
and Palomar crew patrolling are mopping up.
- 1:30 " Ewing, Fischer on backfire going to size up head at Skye
Valley and make plans. Farrell and Droege going to Hauser
Creek to size up and make plans.
- 1:30 " 25 Lockett men under Lt. Crawford left for fire.
- 1:41 " Called Buxton to check on 70 men to come from Lockett for
Camp 2. Buxton ordered these men at 1:09 p.m.
- 1:50 " 25 Lockett men under Lt. Tuttle left with Shaffer, George
Miller and Piper.
- 2:02 " Radio reports that fire is closing in on Camp 2. They will
backfire at once.
- 2:10 " Mendenhall and Grant from Angeles arrived at fire camp.
- 2:30 " Droege in from fire.
- 2:40 " 75 Lockett men arrived at camp 2. Need overhead.
- 3:04 " Fire Camp 1 reported to La Mesa. Fire is now swinging
into Potrero burn about at center of crest now. 1 State
tanker there now. Gene going in too. On N. side fire is
on old burn Corte Madera. Will carry it on to lake and burn
it out.

10-3-43 continued - 9

- 3:15 p.m. Fischer and Ewing in. Plan to fire Skye Valley road to lake. Send crews, tankers and cat at once. Rockwell and Jim Stephenson there now with one tanker making Schnell Ranch improvements safe.
- 3:25 " Buxton wants station wagon for 5 men arriving by plane from Fresno. Left at 4 p.m. from Fresno.
- 3:40 " Droege out to fire.
- 3:40 " Shipley and crew out to Skye Valley with Indians.
- 3:46 " Brister left fire camp 1 for Descanso to fix radio.
- 3:48 " Buxton called Farrell. Col. James and Marine Corps wants statement from Hunt on what happened at fire. Shall Hunt give statement? Farrell and Fischer are to discuss action and call Buxton back.
- 4:00 " Munhall out for Skye Valley.
- 4:00 " Farrell, Fischer, Mendenhall to Camp Lockett re; marine interviews.
- 4:17 " Willingham at Camp 2 needs tools, headlights and canteens bedrolls, blankets etc.
- 4:30 " Weather Report: Wind southeasterly 5-10 mph across ridges tonight. Canyon winds calm or light downslope after 7 p.m. Winds Monday southerly in afternoon. Canyon winds upslope 8-12 all day after 6 a.m. Maximum temperature Monday - 85 about 3 p.m. minimum humidity 33%.
- 5:06 " N.E. side of fire fairly good. S.W. side of fire has been at Schnell Ranch for 3 hours but is running toward Barrett Dam. Fire going out in Corte Madera burn. Crews are backfiring Skye Valley road to lake. Hauser Creek Sector has burned south to Potrero burn.
- 5:10 " Selle left fire Camp 1 for Descanso.
- 5:20 " Norton, Howard left with 50 Lockett men.
- 5:30 " Shaffer brought in Lockett 10th Cavalry man burned. Sector D - Division 2.

SECTION III

MANNER OF INVESTIGATION

Upon receipt of information that there had been fatalities and injuries in connection with the suppression of the Hauser Creek Fire, the Regional Forester instructed Zone Coordinator W. V. Mendenhall, Regional Administrative Officers Frank Price and W. S. Williams to proceed to the fire immediately for the purpose of securing and preserving preliminary information that might have bearing on the cause or responsibility of accidents.

This subcommittee secured the names of all possible witnesses; had detailed maps prepared and photographs taken; invited the Army and Navy officials concerned to accompany them at all times, and arranged the time and place for taking of testimony.

Upon arrival of D. P. Godwin, Assistant Chief of Fire Control, U. S. Forest Service, Washington, D. C., S. B. Show, Regional Forester, San Francisco, and R. L. Deering, Assistant Regional Forester, Mr. Show appointed a Board of Inquiry consisting of the following members: S. B. Show, R. L. Deering, G. A. Gowen, Chief of Fire Control, San Francisco, W. V. Mendenhall, Frank Price and W. S. Williams, with W. V. Mendenhall as Chairman.

In order that full understanding might be established between the Forest Service and the Military and Naval Commands concerning the conduct of the investigation in to the circumstances of the Hauser Creek Fire and its resulting fatalities, it was decided that Regional Forester S. B. Show, Forest Supervisor Norman J. Farrell and David P. Godwin, Assistant Chief of Fire Control, who had arrived from Washington to represent the Chief, should call upon the authorities having jurisdiction.

At 10:00 a.m. on October 7, 1943, these three Forest Officers met with Rear Admiral David W. Bagley, Commandant of the 11th Naval District at Naval District Headquarters in San Diego. Admiral Bagley called in Major Luce, Legal Officer, and Captain Stanton, of the Marine Corps. Admiral Bagley's attitude was most courteous and cooperative. He offered any facilities and personnel which might be helpful in the conduct of our investigation and readily agreed to furnish any Marine Corps witnesses whose testimony we considered essential. However, he thought it unwise to combine his inquiry with ours since his is already in progress. He assigned, at our request, Major Luce to act with the Forest Service investigators in the capacity of liaison officer and report at Descanso at 8:00 a.m. October 8, 1943.

At 3:00 p.m., the same Forest Officers met with Brigadier General T. K. Brown, Commanding Officer of Camp Lockett, at his office at Brigade Headquarters, (cavalry units including the 10th and 28th Regiments). Troops from this military post served in suppression action on the fire.

General Brown was very friendly and spoke with complete frankness on the various circumstances of the fire. He stated that forest fire fighting is particularly helpful training for troops since such activity simulates combat

Manner of Investigation - continued - 2

conditions involving the elements of danger and presenting problems of field organization and mobile operation. He recognized that in such hazardous work, accidents may be expected.

General Brown discussed the circumstances of the gunnery practice admitted to be the cause of the fire and said that he would furnish to Regional Forester Show a copy of his report and decision.

Concerning the death on October 3, 1943, of Corporal Leroy Carter, 10th Cavalry, General Brown expressed the conviction (which concurred with that of the testimony of Junior Officers in charge of the detachment) that the fatality resulted from the trooper's own disobedience of orders given to him by superior officers.

Godwin, Show and Farrell then proceeded to Pine Valley Marine Camp at 4:30 p.m. and met with the Commanding Officer, 1st Lieutenant Leonard Ludtke. A detachment of 113 marines from this camp, while serving on the fire, sustained casualties of seven killed and seventy-five injured. Lt. Ludtke discussed, with great regret, the loss of men under his command but stated that such work and hazards were in line of duty and added that he was prepared to continue cooperation to the extent of his remaining manpower and facilities. This was a reiteration of the previous offer of the day following the tragedy for use of the remaining twenty-five men who escaped injury the day before. He further stated that any witnesses from his camp whose testimony might be of value to the investigating board would be made available at any time.

Official observers at taking of testimony were: D. P. Godwin, representing the U. S. Forest Service; Major Luce, U. S. M. C. R., Legal Department, representing the 11th Naval District; Major J. E. Jardine, Jr., and Captain Robert C. Roth, Headquarters Southern California Sector Western Defense Command, representing the Army.

Testimony regarding the Marine Corps disaster of October 2, 1943, was taken at the scene of the accident and at the Pine Valley Marine Corps Training Center Camp on October 8, 1943, Testimony was taken down verbatim by Forest Service stenographers Maxine Dower and Julyan Couche and an army stenographer.

A detail map of the scene of the tragedy had been prepared and use made of it by having witnesses indicate the different reference points as the testimony was being given.

SECTION IV

CONCLUSIONS

After Fire Control Training Officer Hunt had been designated in charge of the East line at about noon on October 2, 1943, and had taken over from Gunner Wright the 111 marines available for fire line duty, the first key point is Hunt's decision to use the gulch as the east line of attack. His decision was based on a continuing uphill diagonal spread of the fire, with no spotting in evidence.

The Review Board regards this decision as probably supportable, under the existing set of facts, but it did leave at the best a probably very tight fit in time to build and backfire the projected line before the fire, spreading in its then existing direction, speed and manner, should reach the gulch. The members individually doubt that they would have attempted so tight a race.

There is serious question whether the detailed location of the line was sound and took the route easiest to build and hold.

The pattern of behavior of the early phases of the fire was routine, normal and according to expectation for the time, place, weather and topography. An upstream wind, diagonal pull uphill out of the main canyon, steady but not unusually rapid spread on a steady advance without spotting from the fire flanks all are commonly encountered in this type of fire.

The second key point is the continuation by Hunt of attempts on the gulch line after the set of facts had changed substantially, specifically, after the fire had begun to spread downhill, had established itself solidly on the low flat point near the mouth of the gulch and to the west up which the line was being built. This sharp change in fire behavior was evident on the ground.

The Review Board regards the avoidable delay to act on this change of facts as imprudent on the part of Hunt. The evidence shows that some minutes might have been saved before the call to retreat was passed up the line to the men. The threat of immediately impending loss of the mouth of the line gulch and consequent flanking of the entire projected line was evident before the gulch was actually spotted across by the fire.

The change in fire behavior which resulted in crossing the mouth of the gulch was, while not unique, decidedly unusual. The sudden shift in axis of spread, the rapid downhill spread, the shift of the fire front to a flank, and the consequent development of spotting represent, in the aggregate, a change in the type of fire problem which many fire leaders of substantial experience have never encountered in practice.

After the call to retreat was sent up the line, confusion resulted from the fact that the mouth of the gulch was soon closed, and that men from the lower end of the gulch were going up, while men from higher up were going down. Three leaders, Stewart, of the Marine Corps, Hunt and Herndon, of the Forest Service, individually collected and held together groups of men. These groups were in the gulch among large boulders and at the base of a small cliff. This

Conclusions - continued - 2

leadership and the discipline of the men were admirable, and, without doubt, in the view of the Board, saved the lives of leaders and many men. Heat and smoke were severe and opportunities for panic were surely present.

Some men, for reasons not clear, elected to attempt to outrun the fire uphill. At least two of the immediate fatalities, and at least one subsequent fatality, appear to have resulted from this individual action. Stewart in his testimony, states that he was following four men making such a run, reported as successful, when he wrenched his knee, and was compelled to return to the gulch. The Board accordingly concludes that individual action, contrary to orders, after retreat was ordered, was probably responsible for some deaths. It lacks convincing evidence as to whether all deaths, both immediate and subsequent, were due to such action. There is presumptive evidence that this is so, since the four men who died in hospital reached the road under their own power, were not in the organized groups which held in the gulch, and are not accounted for by any witness from the time of the blow up until they reached the road.

The Board was unable to obtain clear evidence as to the position of the four men who died in hospital. There is some undecisive evidence they were in the gulch, but, if so, they apparently were not in the Stewart, Hunt or Herndon groups.

The reasons for Hunt's selection as leader on the East line were:

1. His eleven seasons of practical fire fighting experience on comparable brush fires on the Angeles and Cleveland National Forests, during which time his record was sound and creditable.
2. Close contact of his superior officers, Farrell, Fischer and Ewing, with his work on recent fires and confidence in his judgment and abilities.
3. He was regarded as the best man immediately available.

The Board concludes that Hunt's superior officers over-appraised his abilities and qualities of judgment, due, so far as the record goes, to the accident that he had not previously encountered a situation representing such a sudden and major shift in fire behavior.

The Board recognizes that an immediate and large job of organizing for a major fire had to be undertaken by the higher officers. But it is at least a question whether one of them might not have been spared for a time long enough to check the location of the line selected for initial attack, to check fire behavior for a longer period than that done by Ewing before Hunt's assignment to the East line, and to appraise the early results of the attack on that flank.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The central point is the degree of prudence, i.e., judgment, used by Hunt as officer directly in charge of the east line. Radiating from that point are the qualities of judgment used by his immediate superior officers on the Cleveland National Forest in placing him in charge; and of the Regional officers, including the Regional Forester, in assigning him where leadership on going fires was an expected duty.

The taking of chances of varying degree is inseparable from an aggressive fire suppression policy. To minimize the consequences of this necessary and routine practice, both training and experience must be acquired by junior officers. Few of the seasoned senior officers of unquestioned fire fighting ability have reached their present status without narrow escapes of themselves and their men, comparable in everything but tragic consequences, with Hunt's situation on this fire. The necessary seasoning of experience involves the hard process of taking calculated risks.

Similarly, superior officers must give juniors full chance to accept responsibility, make decisions and face the consequences, with such safeguards in the process as it is practicable to employ. The training of fully dependable high caliber leadership demands this rather rugged and at times brutal process. At various stages, many individuals have eliminated themselves or set limited ceilings through demonstrated lacks in the faculty of judgment. This, too, is an inevitable aspect of the seasoning process. ✓

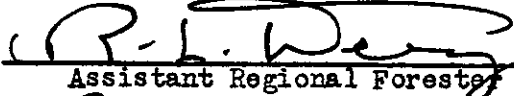
Disciplinary action directed at Hunt or his immediate superior would be, in effect, a denial that the proved process of producing qualified fire control leadership is essentially correct and necessary. The Board recommends that no formal disciplinary action be taken.

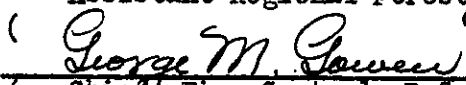
A separate question, to be handled by normal Regional processes, is the future placing of Hunt, taking into account his demonstrated lack of critical judgment in this difficult fire control job. This is not a question for the Board to pass upon.

The Board proposes to make its full report available to Rear Admiral Bagley and to Major General Parker. It recommends that the Chief of the Forest Service take similar action with higher officers if, in his judgment, such action is desirable.

Members of Board
of Inquiry.

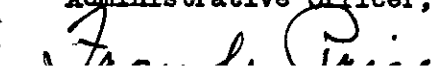

Regional Forester


Assistant Regional Forester

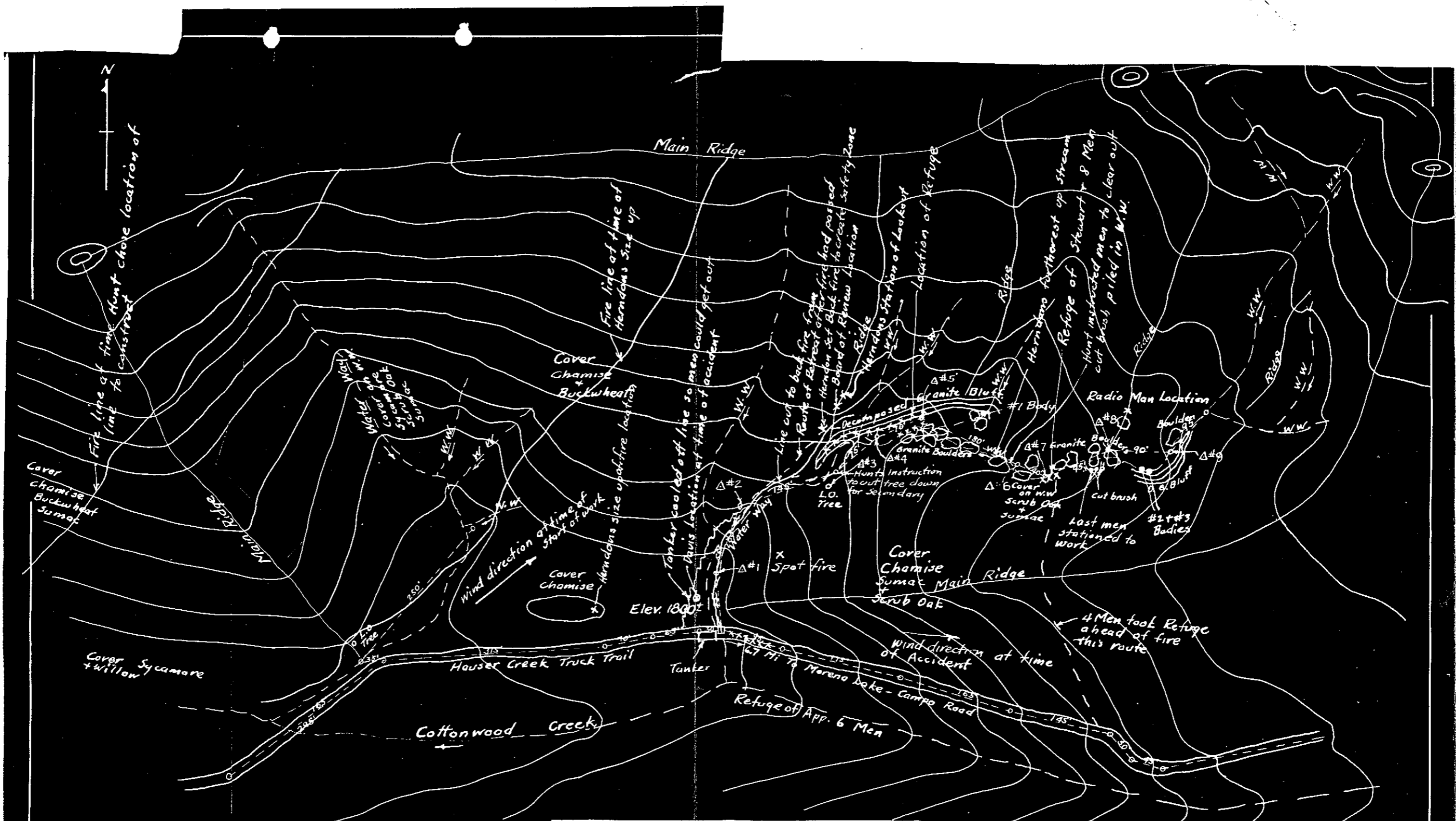

Chief, Fire Control, R-5


(Forest Supervisor, Angeles Nat'l. Forest


Administrative Officer, R-5



SECTION V



**HAUSER CREEK FIRE
 ACCIDENT REPORT**
 10-2-43 Scale 1" = 100' 1:43 P.M.
 Cover Estimated
 Contour Interval 25' Estimated

SECTION VI

NARRATIVE OF MARINE CORPS CASUALTIES ON HAUSER CREEK FIRE.

On October 2, at 10:00 A.M., Los Pinos Lookout reported a fire on Hauser Creek, reading 200°.

This was confirmed by an immediate report from Lyons Peak and within ten minutes the suppression crew from Descanso Ranger Station was en route to the fire. All other available Forest Service suppression crews were on their way to the fire within fifteen minutes.

Further reports from the lookouts, together with the determination of the approximate location of the smoke, indicated that the fire had every chance of becoming large. Lieutenant Ludtke, Commander Marine Corps Training Camp at Pine Valley, was asked for one hundred men. Forest Guard Herndon was sent to accompany them to the fire. Camp Lockett was also asked for one hundred men.

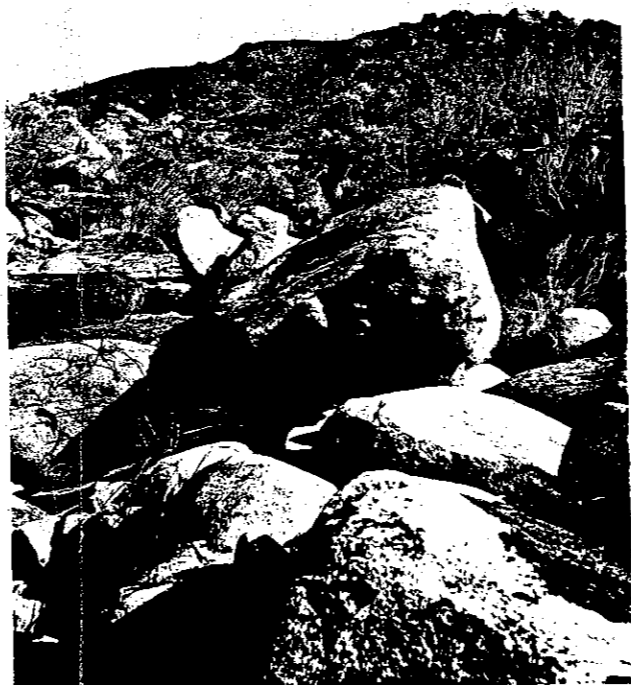
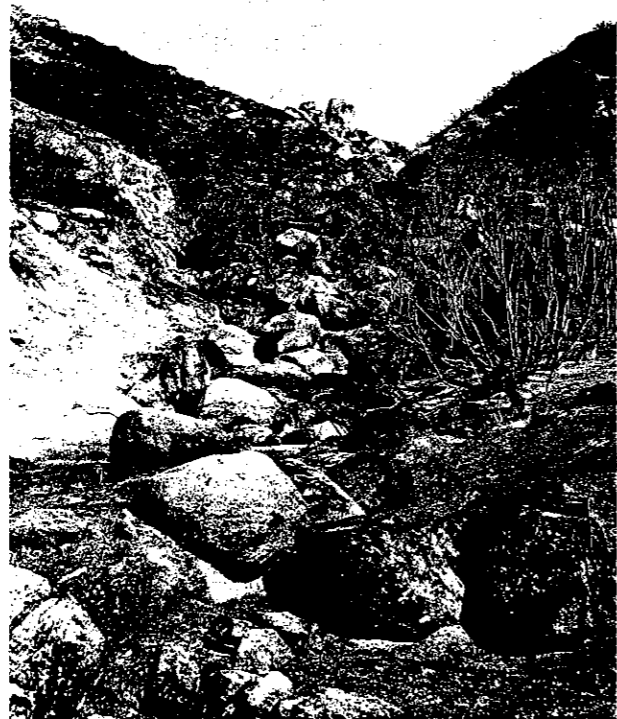
Both crews arrived at the fire at approximately 1:20 P.M. Fire Boss Ewing placed Fire Control Training Officer Hunt in charge of the one hundred and thirteen marines, with Guard Herndon as assistant, and instructed him to select the location and start construction of a line from the road to flank the east side of the fire.

The Camp Lockett crew was placed in charge of Ranger Munhall, who was instructed to build a line from the road northward along the west side of the fire.

Hunt selected a gulch about one hundred and seventy-five yards east of the fire as his line location and started about ninety men to clearing a fairly wide strip from which they could later start a back-fire. About fifteen or twenty men were detailed to patrol along the road to the west as a guard against the fire crossing this and Hauser Creek.

Hunt and his men progressed approximately 650 to 700 feet up the gulch when a sudden change in wind direction to the east caused the fire to race across the low, flat ridge near the mouth of the gulch, jump the gulch and ignite the brush and grass on the opposite side. This closed the avenue of escape down the gulch for any of the men working above. With the brush aflame on both sides of the constructed line, and burning rapidly up the slope, their best chance of survival was to take shelter among large boulders in the bottom of the gulch. This most of them did, under the instructions of Forest Officers Hunt and Herndon. A few men escaped over the ridge through the fire to the road, but were badly burned in doing so.

After the fire had passed and the area had slightly cooled, an investigation determined that three men had perished and approximately seventy others, including Hunt and Herndon, were burned, some seriously. Ambulances were immediately called and the casualties were removed to the Army hospital at Camp Lockett.



#8A

From Δ #5 Bear. 531°E
A typical refuge among
Granite Boulders

#4A

From Δ #2 Along Tangent
#3 looking up stream
Showing Live Oak Tree Hunt
ordered cut down to build
secondary line

#12A

From Δ #8 $5440\text{W}-30$
thence $N 63^\circ\text{W}$ Looking
down stream.

#9A

From Δ #5 along Tangent
#6 looking up stream

#6A

From Δ #4 Along Tangent
#5 looking up Stream
Toward Decomposed Granite
Bluffs where men took
refuge



B

m Location Board of
view looking up stream
az. 569°E .

B

m Intersection of 1st
l. to left with main
er Way looking up Main
lge Bear. 580°E

SECTION VII

MOTOR TRANSPORT SCHOOL, SERVICE BATTALION
MCB., SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

12 October, 1943

LIST OF CASUALTIES

1. Below are listed the casualties of the forest fire in the vicinity of Cottonwood and Hauser Creeks, approximately 16 miles south of Camp Pine Valley, with the names and addresses of next of kin.

SHOOK, Norman L. Jr. Pvt. (840963) USMCR. - died 2 October, 1943.

Sophia SHOOK (Mother)
RR #18, Box 335 "N"
Indianapolis, Indiana.

WESSON, Ishmael W. PFC. (847915) USMC. - died 2 October, 1943.

Ora Berton WESSON (Mother)
Route 1, Milan, Tenn.

PETERS, Ralph C. Pvt. (870507) USMCR. - died 2 October, 1943.

True Wilma PETERS (Wife)
1107 S. Rockford Street
Tulsa, Oklahoma.

WINKELMAN, Elmer C. Corp. (368194) USMCR. - died 3 October, 1943.

Maxine WINKELMAN (Wife)
Route #3, Red Bluff, California.

KIRKPATRICK, Roger D. Pvt. (819769) USMCR. - died 3 October, 1943.

Newton J. KIRKPATRICK (Father)
6045 - 48th Avenue Southwest
Seattle, Washington.

WHITSEL, Lowell R. PFC. (840862) USMCR. - died 3 October, 1943.

Frances WHITSEL (Wife)
214 W. 4th Street
Anderson, Indiana.

ROSSEN, Wilbur V. Pvt. (824338) USMCR. - died 3 October, 1943.

Mrs. Maude ROSSEN,
Route 1, So. St. Paul, Minnesota.

CRITICALLY INJURED

CARLSON, Charles T. PFC. (830466) USMCR.
Tillie Helen CARLSON (Mother)
R.F.D. #4, Box 38, Troy, Idaho.

LANGFORD, Richard E. PFC. (854510) USMCR.
Lucille LANGFORD (Mother)
Box 45, Trident, Montana.

KOZUMPLIK, Frank F. PFC. (877316) USMC.
Joseph KOZUMPLIK (Father)
R.F.D. #1, Sweitzer Rd.
Carleton, Michigan.

SMITH, Paul F. PFC. (199385) USMC.
Margaret L. SMITH (Wife)
222 Hyde Street
San Francisco, California.

PATRICK, "W" "A" PFC. (842928) USMCR.
Gladys Lavella PATRICK (Wife)
1308 Coleman
Dallas, Texas.

WADE, Jack O. Pvt. (840017) USMC.
Dorothy M. WADE (Wife)
1523 "E" Street,
National City, California.

INJURED

WRIGHT, Willard W. MarGun.

ret to duty

BECKWITH, Eldon B. PFC. (816050) USMC.
Arline E. BECKWITH (Wife)
1724 Second Avenue North
Fort Dodge, Iowa.

SIMPSON, Leslie J. Pvt. (867250) USMCR.
Evelyn Peterson SIMPSON (Mother)
31 West 6th South
Salt Lake City, Utah.

CONAWAY, James G. PFC. (830743) USMCR.
Velma Olene CONAWAY (Mother)
Box 171
Paducah, Texas

ret to d 50ct43

DAVIS, Garnett H. Pvt. (835210) USMC.
Charolotte V. DAVIS (Wife)
977 Juniper Street
Atlanta, Georgia.

DOWELL, Charles W. PFC. (841948) USMC.
Benjamin W. & Ona D. DOWELL (Parents)
Route #10, Springfield, Missouri.

HOPKINS, Roy B. PFC. (841665) USMCR.
Clara Estelle GOODALL (Mother)
General Delivery, Junction, Texas.

LEE, James A. PFC. (817146) USMC.
Lola Duft LEE (Mother)
437 South 4th Street
Pocatello, Idaho.

MC GUIRK, Bert PFC. (842200) USMC.
Inez F. MC GUIRK (Wife)
1008 Paseo Blvd.
Kansas City, Missouri.

MINOR, Theron Le Roy PFC. (247285) USMCR.
Jeanette I. MINOR (Wife)
610 South Coronado Street
Los Angeles, California

PETITT, Fred PFC. (853544) USMCR.
Betty PETITT (Wife)
13017 Triskett Road
Cleveland, Ohio.

INJURED (USCRA)

PFANKUCH, Elmer A. PFC (839318) USMCR.
Harriette M. PFANKUCH (Wife)
3544 Linda Vista Terrace
Los Angeles, California.

SHIFLETT, Robert I. PFC. (830224) USMCR.
Evelyn Louise SHIFLETT (Wife)
P.O. Box 162, Los Banos, California.

STEVENSON, William G. PFC. (850855) USMCR.
Louise STEVENSON (Mother)
14471 Saratoga Avenue
Detroit, Michigan.

STRILCZUK, Julian D. Pvt. (819654) USMCR.
Pearl STRILCZUK (Mother)
2206 - 13th Avenue N. W.
Puyallup, Washington.

TIETSORT, Jack W. PFC (851100) USMCR.
Ruth Stamp TIETSORT (Wife)
Vandalia, Michigan.

COVELL, Frank E. PFC (833291) USMCR.
Melba Hassler COVELL (Wife)
Tower, Michigan.

OLIPHANT, Francis W. PFC (842191) USMCR.
Martha Ellen OLIPHANT (Wife)
7919 Mercier Street
Kansas City, Missouri.

HERNDON, James W. Pvt. (819653) USMCR.
Faith S. HERNDON (Wife)
Route #1, Box 365
Puyallup, Washington.

BARNES, Roy W. PFC. (861214) USMCR.
Nellie Mae BARNES (Wife)
General Delivery
Osceola, Missouri.

LEHMAN, George F. Pvt. (859166) USMCR.
Eunice Barbara LEHMAN (Mother)
3800 E. Florida Avenue
Denver, Colorado.

MOZRAK, Thomas M. Pvt. (270522) USMCR.
Bessie MOZRAK (Mother)
4037 - 21st Avenue West
Seattle, Washington.

INJURED (Cont'd)

ROUSSEL, Morgan J. Pvt. (873820) USMCR.
Garman Ayme ROUSSEL (Mother)
Box 191, Lutcher, Louisiana.

WINN, Elbert B. Pvt. (866957) USMCR.
Eula WINN (Mother)
General Delivery
Marquez, Texas.

O'NEAL, John I. Corp. (298771) USMC.
Annie Laura O'NEAL (Mother)
Rebecca, Georgia.

ret to d 50ct43.

PATTERSON, Raymond LeRoy Pvt. (850732) USMCR
Margariet C. PATTERSON (Wife)
R.R. #5, Decatur, Illinois.

ret to d 120ct43.

EKERN, Alvin Junior PFC (860948) USMCR
Alvin B. EKERN (Father)
Galesville, Wisconsin.

ret to d 50ct43.

KNIGHT, Myron L. (867283) PFC. USMCR.
Clara Swensen Knight (Wife)
156 East 5th North Street,
Provo, Utah.

LAURENCELL, Harold V. PFC. (850698) USMCR.
Mrs. Kay LAURENCELL (Mother)
Waukegan Road,
Northbrook, Ill.

OTTO, Henry A. PFC. (877323) USMCR.
Mary Needham OTTO (Wife)
1102 Hancock St.
Saginaw, Michigan.

PENROD, John E. PFC. (851774) USMCR.
Mary Ward PENROD (Wife)
Eldorado, Ill.

ROYER, Joseph S. PFC. (864724) USMCR.
Frank ROYER Sr. (Father)
Aurora, Minnesota.

TUCKER, Lowell K. PFC. (859323) USMCR.
Mrs. Edrice TUCKER (Wife)
428 Broad St.
Falmouth, Ky.

JARVIS, Melbourne E. Pvt. (850072) USMCR.
Myrtle JARVIS (Mother)
2913 West Walnut St.
Chicago, Ill.

INJURED (Cont'd)

LA RUE, Elmer E. Jr. Pvt. (866804) USMC.
Mrs. Mary Ethel LA RUE (Mother)
2347 Wyoming Street,
San Antonio, Texas

MARKER, Melvin S. Pvt. (860839) USMC.
Sophie MARKER (Wife)
907 South 35th St.
Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

MAY, Benjamin L. Sr. Pvt. (867003) USMCR.
Mrs. Helen Maria MAY (Wife)
3704 Watson St.
Houston, Texas.

MILNES, John R. Pvt. (868660) USMCR.
Helen Milnes (Wife)
R.R. #2
Edinburg, Indiana.

ROGERS, Frank C. Pvt. (839964) USMCR.
Mary Elizabeth ROGERS (Wife)
4216 Sunnyside Ave.
Venice, California.

SAPPER, Charles L. Pvt. (837790) USMCR.
Mrs. Geneva SAPPER (Wife)
1219 11th St.
Des Moines, Iowa.

SUMMERS, Sydney C. Pvt. (864440) USMCR.
Carly Louise SUMMERS (Wife)
General Delivery
Lucerne, Missouri.

HUSTON, Joseph H. PFC. (866889) USMCR.
Mrs. Sarah Louise Huston (Mother)
Box 301, Robstown, Texas

WILEY, Francis E. Pvt. (874163) USMCR.
Mrs. Doris Hazel WILEY (Wife)
706 Oakdale St.
Longview, Texas.

BRITTON, Charles C. PFC. (859553) USMCR.
Mrs. Maxine C. BRITTON (Wife)
Oneida, Ky.

COKER, Hollis T. PFC. (870792) USMCR.
Mrs. Vivian COKER (Wife)
Box 1390, Fairbanks, Alaska.

INJURED (Cont'd)

DOYLE, Edward F. PFC. (850575) USMCR.
Mrs. Helen Marie DOYLE (Wife)
6834 Wrightwood St.
Chicago, Ill.

FELIX, Emelio, PFC (857529) USMCR.
Salvador FELIX (Father)
21 Bismark St.
Daly City, Calif.

PENFOLD, James L. Jr. PFC. (859067) USMCR.
Mrs. Dorothy Erickson PENFOLD (Mother)
Box 218, Fort Lupton, Colo.

RUSSELL, Charles O. PFC. (875517) USMCR.
Mrs. Martha S. RUSSELL (Wife)
2108 Ave. B,
Scottsbluff, Nebraska.

ALBEE, Matthew W. Pvt. (857327) USMCR.
Juanita S. ALBEE (Wife)
1370 Palon Ave.
San Francisco, Calif.

ERICKSON, Jerome, Pvt. (860961) USMCR.
Ardelle Frances ERICKSON (Wife)
R. #1, La Crosse, Wis.

HATCH, Ray M. Pvt. (867123) USMCR.
John Irvin HATCH (Father)
R. #2, Rupert, Idaho.

MANNERS, Arthur C. PFC. (819757) USMCR.
Carl V. MANNERS (Father)
390 Taylor Avenue
Astoria, Oregon.

ret to d 50ct43.

JENNETTE, Richard G. Pvt. (851459) USMCR.
Marion Lisk JENNETTE (Wife)
12205 Cheyenne Ave.
Detroit, Michigan.

SIRMANS, Newt T. PFC. (492753) USMCR.
Euna E. SIRMANS (Mother)
R.F.D. #3, Nashville, Georgia.

ret to d 50ct43.

ARBISO, Lawrence J. Pvt. (839826) USMCR.
Iris M. ARBISO (Wife)
P.O. Box 238, Cypress, California.

ret to d 120ct43.

BARNES, Raymond C. Pvt. (866483) USMCR.
Edith Margaret BARNES (Wife)
2925 Jay Avenue,
Cleveland, Ohio.

ret to d 50ct43.

INJURED (Cont'd)

BURLINGAME, Edward C. III, PFC. (396513) USMCR
Edward C. BURLINGAME, Jr. (Father)
Touchet, Washington.

CROCKER, Keith L. Pvt. (871723) USMCR. ret to d 50Oct43.
Jean CROCKER
General Delivery
Patton, California.

EPPERSON, Herbert W. Pvt. (814853) USMCR.
Rose EPPERSON (Mother)
R.F.D. #2
Dyersburg, Tennessee.

HENNINGER, Thomas L. Pvt. (831417) USMCR. ret to d 50Oct43.
Verna Gertrude HENNINGER (Wife)
106 St. Joe
Rapid City, South Dakota.

SITTON, Claude M. Jr. PFC. (839948) USMCR.
Mildred Emma SITTON (Wife)
4223 Berenice Avenue
Los Angeles, California.

SODIKOFF, Harry A. PFC. (850491) USMCR. ret to d 50Oct43.
Shirley SODIKOFF (Wife)
1139 North Spaulding Avenue,
Chicago, Illinois.

BIASTOCK, Robert L. Pvt. (877460) USMCR. ret to d 50Oct43.
Louis BIASTOCK (Father)
R.F.D. #1
Eau Clair, Michigan.

BUCKLEY, Robert R. Pvt. (830447) USMCR. ret to d 120Oct43.
Magdaline BUCKLEY (Wife)
Apt. #9, Moyer Apts., Depot Street
LaGrande, Oregon.

COOK, Raymond E. Pvt. (850762) USMCR. ret to d 120Oct43.
Tina COOK (Wife)
R.R. #3, Peoria, Illinois.

EDWARDS, James C. Pvt. (264204) USMCR. ret to d 50Oct43.
Lavera EDWARDS (Wife)
1116 Chestnut, Burbank, California.

HUDSON, Bert L. Pvt. (864395) USMCR. ret to d 50Oct43.
Ruth Pearl WAGENBLAST (Mother)
R. R. #1, Box #90
Smith Center, Kansas.

KOLLER, George J. Pvt. (861079) USMC.
Clover Katherine KOLLER (Wife)
Park Falls, Wisconsin.

/s/ Harry J. Goodwin,
HARRY J. GOODWIN,
Captain, U. S. Marine Corps Reserve,
Commanding.