

### Incident Summary Page for the Hotshot Crew Line of Duty Death

<b>Name of Hotshots LODD:</b> Ronald F. Scott William J. Wales Steven Grammer	<b>Incident Name:</b> Fork Fire
	<b>Incident Date &amp; Time:</b> 09/23/1970
<b>Hotshot Crew:</b> Redding	<b>Incident Location:</b> Angeles National Forest. California
<b>Personal Information</b>	
<p>Ronald Scott, age 29, was a veteran of the US Army 82nd Airborne Division and the son of a long time Forest Service employee. He was survived by his wife and 15 month old son.</p> <p>William Wales, a Forestry graduate of Lassen College, was engaged to be married and had celebrated his 23rd birthday three weeks prior.</p> <p>Steven Grammer, age 19, was a first-year Redding Smokejumper detailed to the Hotshots. The son of the Calaveras County undersheriff, he started his fire service in 1968 with California Department of Forestry before working for the Stanislaus National Forest. A Forestry student he attended Delta College and American River College.</p>	
<b>Brief description</b>	
<p>The Redding Hotshot crew members were three of five men who died in a helicopter crash at the Fork Fire on the Angeles National Forest in California. The five-place Alouette helicopter was attempting to establish a second helispot for the 4,000 acre fire located in San Gabriel Canyon.</p> <p>Also killed in the accident were George Lopez, Helitack Foreman Angeles National Forest and the pilot Ed Henderson.</p>	
<b>Links to more information on this incident:</b>	
<a href="https://wlfalwaysremember.net/1970/09/28/fork-fire-helicopter/">https://wlfalwaysremember.net/1970/09/28/fork-fire-helicopter/</a>	

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### REDDING INTERREGIONAL HOTSHOT CREW - 1970

**Back Row:** (L to R) Charlie Caldwell-Supt., Chuck Mook-Captain, Ed McChesney, Clark Willis, Randy Harden, Bill Wales, Fred Ryness, Bill Johnson, Jess Asbury, Joe Frates, Douglas Priddy-Captain

**Front Row:** (L to R) Bob Totten, Ron Knowles, Randy Jackson, John Ereaux, Ron Scott, Bob Sullens, Clyde Washoe Not Pictured: Rano McCombs



**Steven Grammer**

## *Copter Plunges Into Angeles Forest*

# 5 Fire Fighters Die in Crash

LOS ANGELES (AP)— Five fire fighters died in a helicopter crash last night near here while the largest brush fire in the state's history raged unchecked near San Diego 120 miles to the south.

As the death toll from Southern California's four-day fire siege rose to eight, firemen began to gain an upper hand on most of the numerous fires crackling outside San Diego County.

A U.S. Forest Service spokesman said the five-man helicopter crashed in a burned over section of San Gabriel Canyon, about 30 miles east of Los Angeles, while ferrying the men to a fire in the Angeles National Forest. He said the copter approached a ridge, veered away and crashed.

He said the victims' names would not be released until today.

The copter was owned by Western Helicopters of Rialto, and was leased to the Forest Service.

Three other persons died earlier in the blazes that devastated the state's southern half.

Encouraging weather forecasts called for lower temperatures, decreasing winds, clouds and perhaps even light rain over most of Southern California, although continued 100-degree temperatures were forecast for inland parts of fire-ravaged southern San Diego County.

A new blaze broke out 40 miles northeast of San Diego yesterday afternoon and quickly burned 32,000 acres in the timber-lush area near Cuyamaca Rancho State Park.

It was reported moving twice as fast as the mammoth brush fire to the south.

Gov. Ronald Reagan said state surveys show that since Friday 56 major Southern California fires have charred some 400,000 acres, causing \$165 million in damage—\$154 million of it to private property—and destroyed more than 400 homes.

More than 10,000 men, including 2,500 from out of state, have manned fire lines, Reagan told a news conference.

The federal Small Business Administration estimated the loss at \$175 million, with 1,500 homes, businesses or other buildings damaged.

It declared California a disaster area. This makes victims eligible for 3 per cent loans.

With waning winds the threat eased from the Newhall-Malibu blaze that burned 107,000 acres in hills around the west end of the San Fernando Valley, consuming an estimated 161 homes. Hot spots remained in the Malibu-Topanga areas.

Main remaining threat was a 160,000-acre blaze, largest in the state history, that seared more than 40 miles in Cleveland National Forest, burning to the edge of suburbs in San Diego. Officials

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Tuesday, Sept. 29, 1970 ★

THE SUN—A-3

# 5 Fire Fighters Die in Copter Crash

(Continued From A-1)

said the largest previous blaze was in 1928 in the Matillija area of Los Angeles-Kern counties.

A State Division of Forestry spokesman estimated that at least 250 homes and 50 other structures were destroyed as hot desert winds pushed flames through mountain hamlets and recreation areas.

"There's no way to estimate when we'll be able to contain it," the spokesman said.

The fire broke out Friday on 5,975-foot Mt. Laguna and 60 mph winds sent it racing through summer-dried brush and timber. A fallen power pole was blamed. An estimated 50,000 persons fled its path over the weekend, but most had returned by yesterday.

New blazes kept popping up and it virtually joined another multi-thousand-acre fire on the Mexican border near Tecate.

Hot spots yesterday were near the town of Descanso on U.S. Highway 80, 30

miles east of San Diego. Other tongues of flames licked to within 15 miles of San Diego.

"The winds suddenly raced down off the hill, snapping the branches from surrounding trees," said Glenn Napierskie of Mt. Helix. "Suddenly there was fire everywhere. We leaped into our cars, some of us still in night clothes. We raced through smoke and flames and at times I thought we were caught."

Los Angeles County Sheriff Peter J. Pitchess, speaking at Reagan's news conference, said there have been four arrests for investigation of arson and five for investigation of looting in his jurisdiction.

"We suspect several of these fires were incendiary in nature," he said. He gave no details. Aides said the arrests were made Saturday and Sunday in the Malibu area. The major fires broke out Friday. Aides declined to give details of the arrests, but earlier deputies had said that some of those arrested were seen at several small fires not long after they broke out.

John McCoy, director of the California

Disaster Office, told the Reagan news conference that \$154 million in damage was done to privately owned property and another \$11 million to publicly owned areas.

Residents of fire areas told of tragedies.

Rancher Dennis Stonecypher said racing flames killed 90 per cent of livestock at his Newhall ranch within minutes Friday night.

"We had the women and kids in the cars with the motor running when the fire came in," he said. "It took 20 minutes from the time we first tried to save things, but we didn't have enough hoses, pipeline, men."

"The fire hit the hog shed— 600 feet long and 30 feet wide— and there was one terrible din as they screamed, 200 of them, all at once. At least it was fast. It was all gone in five minutes."

"The lambs ran between two sheds and about half of them got killed. Some ran through the flames with their wool on fire. We found them dead all across the range. Or what used to be range. It's black as far as you can see, and won't be decent range again for six months."

"We lost the house, all the outbuildings and my brother's in the hospital with burns. All we saved was the house trailer and a couple of cows and some corrals."

"Some of the sheep lost all their wool, and they'll get well, and grow new wool. Some of them are blind. It's awful hard on the kids to see their animals die, and get hurt. But at least all of us are still alive. God was really good to us all."

People from the little town of Alpine gathered in a service station parking lot to watch flames lick at homes. Postal clerk Richard Place, 49, described it: "The fire was coming through the grass and oaks when we pulled out. The houses around me were exploding. It must have been the butane tanks." But when he

went back with others yesterday, Place said, they were surprised to find only six homes destroyed.

Bill Magen, who fled his El Cajon home and expected to find it gone, said the only problem when he returned was that it was full of soot.

Others told of lack of electricity due to snapped power lines and a shortage of water, which could not be pumped from reservoirs. Some expressed concern about enough water for livestock.

The Newhall-Malibu fire, a combination of several blazes that swept 30 miles through mountains to the sea in less than 24 hours starting Friday, burned quietly most of yesterday with occasional flareups. Residents were allowed to return to areas in which flames had been contained.

Along virtually the length of California new fires flared and old ones died. The blazes ranged southward from Humboldt County near the Oregon border. But the only really big ones were in the south.

Ventura County, north of Los Angeles, tallied nearly 70,000 acres burned, with 29 homes and a church destroyed. Some of its fires linked with the Newhall-Malibu fire in Los Angeles County.

Orange County, to the south, listed 3,268 acres and several homes destroyed.

Riverside County's almost 60 blazes since Friday were mostly out, including a 5,000-acre one in the San Timoteo Canon that for a time threatened South Redlands in San Bernardino County.

A 10,000-acre fire in the Sequoia area of the High Sierra neared control. A 30,000-acre blaze in the Walker Basin area of the mountains continued on.

A 24,000-acre blaze to the east near Saugus was checked.

South of the border, three brush fires threatened the Mexican community of Ensenada from different sides. Two hundred soldiers and volunteers were marshaled to protect buildings.

## S. Power

"era of negotiations."

Earlier, Nixon helicoptered to a secluded government villa for two hours of talks with Premier Emilio Colombo and leaders of the center-left government that is America's main ally in the Mediterranean.

Colombo told Nixon that Italy had full faith in America's actions for peace, especially in the Mediterranean.

His last official act in Rome was an 80-minute meeting with Pope Paul VI in the Vatican. A communique said the two discussed efforts for world peace, particularly in the Middle East. A joint communique said the Mideast situation "runs the risk of disappointing the hopes raised by the cease-fire and the prospect of a possible negotiation."

### Ben Wicks



"How does Saint Richard grab you?"