

# OUT OF CONTROL

Blaze grows to 2,800 acres as crews struggle to gain containment

Cal Fire had deemed area county's most dangerous fire hazard

No structures lost yet as uncontained fire spreads across two fronts

Fire & Fire Protection - 2000

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Firefighters are dwarfed by back-burn flames as they defend a fire line along Molino Creek Farm Road in the face of the advancing Lockheed Fire on Thursday northeast of Davenport.

DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

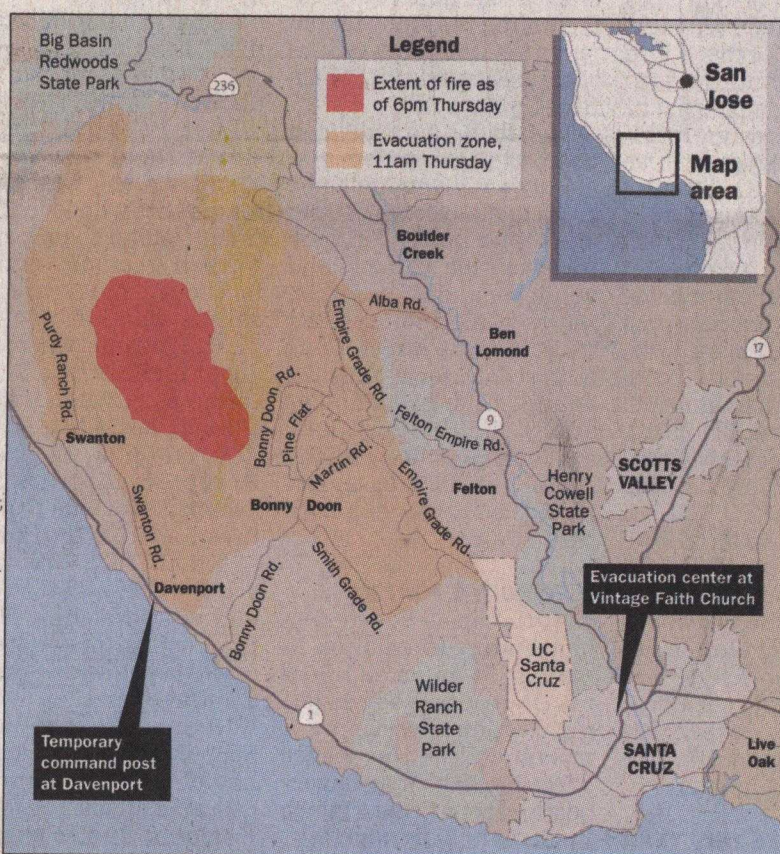
Fire that started near Lehi Camp leads to evacuation of 2,000 in Bonny Doon, Swanton

By KURTIS ALEXANDER, DONNA JONES, JENNIFER SQUIRES, CATHY KELLY, RAMONA TURNER AND J.M. BROWN  
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**BONNY DOON** — The Lockheed Fire consumed 2,800 acres in the remote forest between Swanton and Bonny Doon on Thursday as quick-moving flames fueled by thick underbrush raged out of control for a second day, leading authorities to order the evacuation of up to 2,400 residents.

Bolstered by 120 engines and 20 aircraft, more than 2,000 firefighters serving in ground crews employed bulldozers, axes and bare hands to set backfires, lay hose lines and dig breaks in an attempt to contain the blaze, which raged in a parched expanse of tinder-dry brush and timber that hasn't burned for more than six decades.

Cal Fire said the blaze started near the Lehi Camp, a small, remote



MAXWELL HENDERSON/SENTINEL GRAPHIC



SHMUEL THALER/SENTINEL

Branciforte Fire Capt. Dan Lipkowitz uses firefighter Thomas Cooper's radio to call in an air support as a tree explodes on Lud and Barbara McCrary's property on Swanton View Road on Thursday.

## Longtime Swanton couple fights for their home on edge of fire line

By KURTIS ALEXANDER

"We're not leaving," McCrary

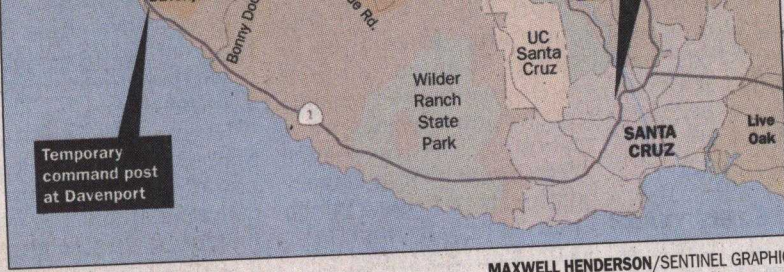


tion of up to 2,400 residents. Bolstered by 120 engines and 20 aircraft, more than 2,000 firefighters serving in ground crews employed bulldozers, axes and bare hands to set backfires, lay hose lines and dig breaks in an attempt to contain the blaze, which raged in a parched expanse of tinder-dry brush and timber that hasn't burned for more than six decades.

Cal Fire said the blaze started near the Lehi Camp, a Mormon retreat at the top of Empire Grade, and the Lockheed Martin facility. The cause is unknown.

Just five years ago, Cal Fire identified the largely inaccessible woodlands surrounding the two sites as the county's worst wildfire hazard. The last major blaze in that area, the 19,000-acre Pine Mountain Fire of 1948, which burned for a month, is still the county's largest wildfire on record.

Fire crews from as far away as



MAXWELL HENDERSON/SENTINEL GRAPHIC

Lake Tahoe and Orange County arrived Thursday to help regional firefighters battle the Lockheed Fire. Competition for aid was stiff as thousands of firefighters fanned out across the state to combat other large blazes, including the 48,500-acre La Brea Fire in Santa Barbara County.

As of 10 p.m., Cal Fire reported that no homes have been destroyed by the Lockheed Fire but more than 1,000 structures

SEE **FIRE** ON **A2**

## MORE INSIDE

- For Bonny Doon residents, blaze recalls last year's Martin Fire, **B1**
- Fire the first for area since 1948, **A10**
- Residents coping with evacuation, **A11**
- Fire crews battling blaze one house at a time, **A11**
- **EDITORIAL:** Three years of little rain has created a tinderbox, **A15**

Branciforte Fire Capt. Dan Lippman call in an air support as a tree explodes on Lud and Barbara McCrary's property on Swanton View Road on Thursday.

# Longtime Swanton couple fights for their home on edge of fire line

By **KURTIS ALEXANDER**

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SWANTON — Barbara McCrary wasn't about to let the fire get the best of her.

The 76-year-old and her husband Lud, 80, have lived on their Swanton View Road property nearly six decades, and though flames crept dangerously close to the couple's ranch house Thursday, their homespun memories bound in photographs, diaries and a family Bible wouldn't be left behind.

"We're not leaving," McCrary said.

With that, began the battle to save their home, an effort joined by dozens of firefighters, at least four helicopters and a sound strategy for warding off a wall of fire. Nearly 24 hours later, the McCrarys appeared to be in control of the fight. But with this week's dramatic wind and weather, nothing was certain.

The sun went down Wednesday night over Swanton with the

SEE **COUPLE** ON **A10**





DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

Cal Fire command post sets up in the Davenport Fire Station Thursday.

## FIRE

Continued from A1

dotting the picturesque landscape remain threatened. Sheriff Phil Wowak said two structures were damaged, but it was unclear where the buildings were located or what type of structures they were.

As the fire burned out of control Thursday, Felton-based Battalion Chief Michael Borelli was reluctant to say when crews might win even partial containment. Crews are trying to keep the fire east of Last Chance Road, south of Lockheed Road and west of Empire Grade, though flames whipped by the wind create new outlines by the hour.

"It's going OK; we're short on resources," Borelli said. "And a fire hasn't burned there in 61 years, so there is a lot of fuel."

Officials said ground crews would continue to combat flames overnight, though air tankers and helicopters are unable to fly after dark due to safety concerns. At first light, planes and helicopters will return to the air to map the fire and determine how best to deploy ground forces.

"We try to work hard at night and take advantage of the conditions; it's cooler and there is more humidity and the fire is not as intense," Borelli said. "You are able to work harder without expending as much energy."

First reported at 7:15 p.m. Wednesday, the initially 85-acre blaze multiplied in size by more than 10 times within a couple of hours as firefighters struggled at dusk to find dirt roads and other access points for reaching the flames.

The fire, which grew from 1,900 acres early Thursday and held at 2,800 acres throughout the day, is called the Lockheed Fire because it began so close to the company's 3,800-acre property. The testing facility for aerospace science was used as an initial staging ground and vista point for fire crews stumped about how to reach the flames.

The rugged mountainside is thick with knobcone pine and Santa Cruz manzanita, two plants that evolved with fire and require flames to reproduce, said Eric Huff, assistant officer to the board of California Forestry and Fire Protection.

"You look around and think, 'We're so close to the coast, the weather's so nice, we've got these redwoods

spok esman Michael Mohler said crews were concerned about another increase in acreage overnight if wind picked up. Hand crews remained on fire lines deep into the woods, lighting backfires and doing their best to collapse the columns of flames.

By 9 p.m. Thursday, northwesterly winds were blowing about 7 mph with gusts to 19 mph, but today's forecast does not look promising for firefighters. Forecaster Steve Anderson from the National Weather Service center in Monterey said winds of 10 mph with gusts up to 15 mph will come from the northwest today, pushing the fire in the direction of Bonny Doon once again.

"The best thing Mother Nature could do is make it rain or cover the entire coast with a marine layer into San Jose or change wind direction onto itself," Anderson said. "But that's not likely."

Firefighters would prefer a southwest wind that has come across the bay because northwinds are similar to an offshore flow and bring warmer, drier conditions, Chief Borelli said.

By 9 p.m. Thursday temperatures had cooled to 66 degrees in Ben Lomond, the closest National Weather Service monitoring point. Overnight lows are expected to dip into the mid-50s after reaching highs into the 90s throughout the San Lorenzo Valley on Thursday. Highs today are expected to reach the mid-80s.

The Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District issued an air quality advisory due to smoke Thursday. The plume from the fire extended more than 50 miles to the southwest over the Monterey Bay to Marina and the Monterey Peninsula. Although the plume mostly remained aloft, smoke and ash were reported in Monterey County, dulling the shine on the premier car show, Concours d'Elegance, in Pebble Beach.

The air district advised people to stay indoors or move away from impacted areas. It also recommended protecting indoor air quality by closing all doors and windows and, if possible, setting ventilation systems to recirculate air. Anyone with respiratory ailments, young children and older adults should limit their exposure to smoky air by staying indoors, or temporarily seeking areas with cleaner air.

### FLEEING THE FOREST

Authorities began rec-

were leaving, but hundreds of resilient holdouts refused to go, many saying they would wait until the fire grew closer.

Some were evacuating for the second time in 14 months as memories of the Martin Fire linger. Those who stayed were asked to sign a waiver of responsibility, saying they would not hold authorities responsible for fire losses.

Harold Poehler, who lives at 90 Carter Road in Bonny Doon, said, "I'm a trained firefighter, I can run a hose, and I'll help out if they need me."

I'm going to wait until it gets over that hill, then I'll run like hell, but I don't think we have anything to worry about."

But Lisa Palm, president of Bonny Doon School board, who lives on Empire Grade Road five miles south of the Lockheed Martin campus, left around noon with husband Michael Fairman and their daughters Sage, 11, and Amber, 8, to a friend's house in Scotts Valley. The family took with them two 6-week-old kittens, six dwarf hamsters and enough clothes for three days, as well as family picture albums, jewelry and musical instruments.

Mindful of the Martin Fire, Palm said of the evacuation order: "We don't question it after last year."

At the popular Beauregard Vineyards on Pine Flat Road, owner and winemaker Ryan Beauregard sipped a glass of pinot noir nervously.

"I'm hoping it's not the last one I have here," he said.

Beauregard was doubting his fortunes after remembering he had acquired his Bonny Doon property on the day the Martin Fire started. Ironically, on Wednesday, just hours before the Lockheed Fire began, his family had just moved onto the new property.

"What are the chances of that," he said.

### CLOSEST TO THE FIRE

Lehi Park on Empire Grade Road is closed to campers but host Jim Kloepfer and his wife were planning to stand their ground until it becomes mandatory for them to leave. The couple watches over the 1,200-acre camp, where only about eight campers were in the park when the fire started, they said.

As of 3 p.m. Thursday, Kloepfer said his fear dropped as winds took the fire away from the camp.

"I don't feel threatened anymore," he said. "Right now we're watching planes

## LOCKHEED FIRE TIMELINE

**7:15 P.M. WEDNESDAY:** Fire reported above the Scott Creek drainage near Jamison Creek.

**8:30 P.M. WEDNESDAY:** Fire at 85 acres.

**10:15 P.M. WEDNESDAY:** Mandatory evacuations issued for Last Chance Road, Swanton Road, Warrella Truck Trail and Rancho del Oso.

**11 P.M. WEDNESDAY:** Fire leaps to 1,000 acres.

**12:50 A.M. THURSDAY:** Swanton Road closed at Highway 1.

**8 A.M. THURSDAY:** Fire reported at 2,000 acres.

**11 A.M. THURSDAY:** Mandatory Bonny Doon evacuations.

**NOON THURSDAY:** Fire hits 2,800 acres.

**2 P.M. THURSDAY:** Fire shifted directions, no longer pushing toward Swanton Road and instead moving south.

**EVENING:** Fire officials say the fire is burning is burning within itself and hope wind changes don't kick up the fire.

## BY THE NUMBERS

**ACRES BURNING:** 2,800

**STARTED:** 7:15 p.m.

Wednesday

**CONTAINMENT:** None

**LOCATION:** The Bonny Doon area in the Smith drainage

**EVACUATIONS:** Mandatory evacuations for Bonny Doon and Swanton affecting 2,200 to 2,400 people. Other roads affected include Swanton Road, Swanton View Road, Mill Creek Road, Last Chance Road, Warnella Truck Trail, Rancho Del Oso and Penstock.

**CAUSE:** Under investigation.

**ROAD CLOSURES:** There were hard road closures Thursday at Bonny Doon and Smith Grade roads; Empire Grade and Alba roads; and Felton Empire and Empire Grade roads. Roads at least partially closed Thursday included Empire Grade, Swanton Road, Bonny Doon Road, Pine Flat Road, Ice Cream Grade and Smith Grade.

**STRUCTURES THREATENED:** 1,000. No reports of buildings destroyed.

**FIRE CREWS:** 2,000 firefighters; 120 engines; 20 aircraft

**SOURCE:** Cal Fire

## EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

### COMMUNITY GATHERING

**POINT:** Pacific School in Davenport, at 50 Ocean St.

### RED CROSS EVACUATION

**CENTER:** Vintage Church, Mission and Chestnut streets, Santa Cruz

### TO VOLUNTEER:

Call Volunteer Centers of Santa Cruz County at 427-5070.

**ANIMAL SERVICES:** Santa Cruz Animal Services is helping with large animal evacuations. For information, call 454-7303. Household pets can be placed under the care of Santa Cruz SPCA, which can be contacted at 465-5000.

### MAIL DELIVERY CURTAILED:

Mail delivery to 353 addresses in the 95060 zip code has been curtailed.



assistant officer to the board of California Forestry and Fire Protection.

"You look around and think, 'We're so close to the coast, the weather's so nice, we've got these redwoods

and firs,'" said Huff, a former forester with Big Creek Lumber in Davenport. "You don't think about the knobcone and manzanita. It is built to burn," he said.

### BIGGEST BLAZE THIS YEAR

The Lockheed Fire is the largest and most formidable blaze since the May 2008 Summit Fire burned 4,270 acres in similarly rugged territory in South County, displacing thousands of residents and destroying 63 homes. Three weeks later, the 530-acre Martin Fire broke out near the Bonny Doon Ecological Reserve, destroying three homes in the area covered by the current evacuation zone.

The Lockheed Fire was burning in two directions Thursday, and Cal Fire officials said the fronts were markedly different blazes. South toward Bonny Doon, the fire was affected by the weather, especially wind shifts. But toward the Swanton area, the flames charged northwest, closing in on themselves. Cal Fire

exposure to smoky air by staying indoors, or temporarily seeking areas with cleaner air.

### FLEEING THE FOREST

Authorities began rec-

ommending evacuation in parts of Swanton and Bonny Doon on Wednesday night, sending residents to a makeshift Red Cross shelter at Pacific School in Davenport and later to the Vintage Faith Church in Santa Cruz. As the blaze magnified overnight, authorities ordered a full evacuation of Bonny Doon on Thursday morning, sending automated warning calls to residences.

Up to 1,000 homes in the Bonny Doon area and 300 people in the Swanton area are included in the evacuation order. Evacuated or closed roads included sections of Empire Grade, Swanton Road, Bonny Doon Road, Pine Flat Road, Ice Cream Grade and Smith Grade.

Many residents complied with the evacuation orders as winds of 10 to 15 mph pushed the fire south and southeast from the fire's initial northwesterly direction Wednesday night. Sheriff's deputies fanned out door to door to ensure residents

fly, dropping (fire retardant) down there toward Swanton and Davenport."

Nearby Bosch Baha'i School on Comstock Lane has closed its doors and canceled all classes for the weekend due to the fire threat. All of the guests, volunteers and staff have left, according to the school's Web site. The Ben Lomond prison camp, located on Empire Grade three miles southeast of Lockheed Martin, was not evacuated, and some of the facility's 110 inmates helped fight the blaze.

Lynn Fisher, a spokeswoman for Lockheed Martin Space Systems Co., said the testing facility was open for normal operations Thursday and flames have not threatened the company's 30 office and manufacturing buildings or 70 support structures. However, the fire did reach the northwest perimeter of the property before turning away, causing what Fisher described as "limited" damage.

which can be contacted at 465-5000.

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Affected residents with proper identification can pick up their mail at the Santa Cruz post office on 850 Front St. Customers can call 426-0144 for delivery updates.

Lockheed Martin has done "extensive thinning" around buildings and "established large fire breaks," she said. The campus stores tanks of diesel, gasoline and propane on site, but the amount is less than what's stored at an average gas station, Fisher said. The campus does not have its own fire department or environmental safety division.

At UC Santa Cruz, some 18 miles south, spokesman Jim Burns said a campus fire crew and engine were sent to battle the blaze while emergency personnel closely monitored the fire's growth. As the blaze remained 10 miles to the north of campus, Burns said an evacuation was not planned.

# COUPLE

Continued from A1

red glow of flame in the sky. The uncontrolled wildfire running through the Santa Cruz Mountains had just been dubbed the Lockheed Fire by firefighters, and by midnight, hundreds of acres were said to be burning above the small coastal community. That number would rise to 2,800 by Thursday evening.

Swanton was quick to become the first front of the fire fight. While residents were evacuated from homes, firefighters took to the smoky hillsides, including one crew that made its way to the rural McCrary home.

There, McCrary told firefighters they were welcome to park their equipment, but said the two of them wouldn't be leaving. She and her husband, considered longtime stewards of the mountains and known for the family's 63-year-old Big Creek Lumber business, would remain to see things through.

"So far, I would say that (the fire) has stayed far enough up on ridges that I don't think anyone is immediately threatened," McCrary said in the early hours of the morning Thursday.

But as the sun rose and the winds picked up, things would change. By afternoon, flames were visible on the hillside above their home.

McCrary began to take precautions. She packed up family photographs and a Bible and hoped a safe she said could withstand temperatures of 1,200 degrees would protect the diaries Lud has kept since 1971.

The couple's head of cattle was rounded up and their dog Bentley was accounted for. Only their cat Sneakers was missing.

"I'm afraid she may be under the house, and if the house goes, I'm afraid she could go with it," Barbara said.

Lud, meanwhile, continued to secure a fire line

around the home with help of a Big Creek bulldozer driver and machinery that began to arrive with the growing number of fire crews.

As the flames thickened near a water tank only a few hundred feet from the house, dozens of firefighters began ascending up the hill with pulaskis and other hand tools designed to stomp out the flames.

A stream of helicopters began zipping across the property, dropping water scooped from a lagoon along the nearby Pacific.

"Look out from above," warned Dan Lipkowitz, a fire captain who had led his Branciforte Fire crew up the hillside.

He and the others were intent on keeping the flames from nearing the McCrary home. It was one of the first structures to be threatened by the Lockheed Fire, which had so far swept only isolated mountain slopes.

"It's the afternoon winds. That's what's driving this," Lipkowitz said.

And while the burning trees cracked loudly and the hot fire reached for anything in its path, the wall of firefighters would not stand down.

Lud, who had helped put out during the area's infamous Pine Mountain Fire in 1948, looked on at the crews now doing the work, approvingly.

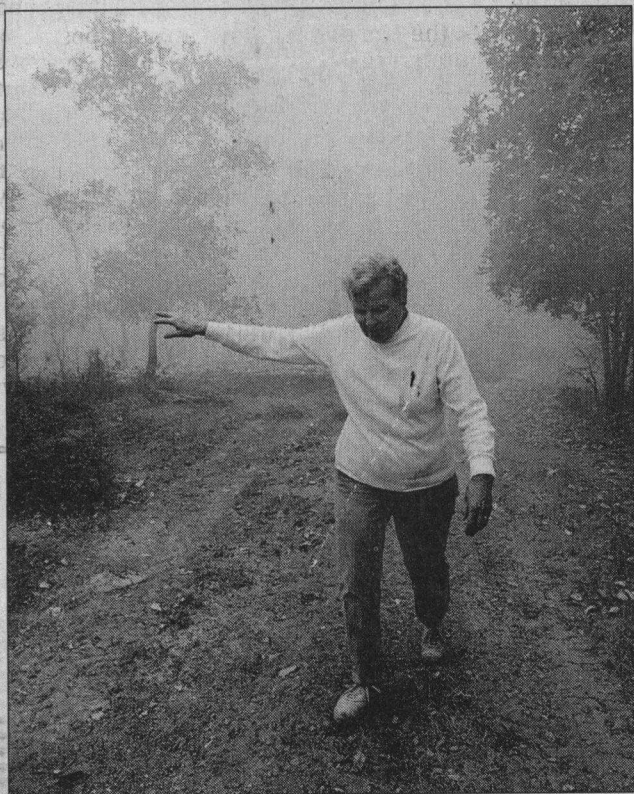
"Yeah, they're doing a good job," he said.

With the firefighting assault continuing and a little luck perhaps from the wind, the fire appeared to stay above the McCrary home, eventually spinning downward in different direction.

Barbara watched the smoke billow above. She continued to pack, knowing full well that these wouldn't be the last flames she would see. But she held out hope.

"I just have to put my trust in something else right now," she said.

Conan Knoll contributed to this report.



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

Barbara McCrary walks through a burned-out section of her 280-acre ranch on Swanton View early Thursday morning after the Lockheed Fire swept across sections of her property.