

# MOST FIND HOPE AS SMOKY SKIES CLEAR

Fire crews have blaze 80 percent contained, expect to finish tonight



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Cal Fire Capt. Paul Spratt says this Dove Lane home withstood the fire while neighboring homes burned to the ground because of clearance around the house, composite shingles ... and a lot of luck.

*Fire & Fire Prevention - 2800*

By **ISAIAH GUZMAN**

Sentinel correspondent

CORRALITOS — There were far fewer looks of concern — in fact, far fewer people — at the center of Corralitos on Monday as hundreds of Summit Fire evacuees were allowed to return to their homes.

For the first time since the wildfire began early Thursday, smoky air gave way to clear, blue skies, and a sense that the worst had passed appeared to settle in around the information post across the street from Corralitos Market & Sausage Co.

“There’s still a lot of active stuff going on up there,” said Cal Fire Information Officer Es Berliner. “But everything’s looking real good.”

Fire officials reported that the 4,270-acre blaze, which started in an empty lot near Summit Road, was 80 percent contained and had destroyed 36 residences and 18 out-buildings. Full containment is expected by



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Fire swept down the ridge and burned the underbrush in the line of trees at right which border Kathleen Diccico’s Redwood Road property, but her home was saved.

*5-27-08*

## Clearing spares Redwood Road house

By **ISAIAH GUZMAN**

SENTINEL CORRESPONDENT

CORRALITOS — Kathleen Diccico didn’t much care that she had no water.

Fire crews had sucked her spring boxes and fire tank dry, but her house on Redwood Road off Browns Valley was still standing. Just down the driveway, about 300 feet away, was the edge of the more than 4,000 acres of blackened forest claimed by the Summit Fire.

“We were very lucky,” she





Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Cal Fire crews still manned positions near homes in the hills above Corralitos on Monday.

**Fire information**

- ACRES BURNED:** 3,970.
- CONTAINED:** 80 percent.
- STRUCTURES DESTROYED:** 36 residences; 18 outbuildings.
- THREATENED:** 100 residential buildings.
- COUNTIES:** Santa Cruz/Santa Clara.
- LOCATION:** Summit Road and Maymen Flats, south of the town of Loma Prieta.
- COST TO FIGHT FIRE:** \$9.25 million.
- INJURIES:** 6 minor sprains and strains to firefighters.
- FIREFIGHTERS:** 2,631 in 91 crews.
- EQUIPMENT:** 171 engines, 3 air tankers, 7 helicopters, 24 bulldozers and 39 water tenders.
- FIRE STARTED:** In an empty lot in the woods along Summit Road, shortly before Maymen's Flat, at mile marker 7.53. The cause is under investigation.

**RE-ENTRY AREA:** As of 3 p.m. Monday, the following roads in the Corralitos and Croy Road areas were opened. Residents will be allowed to re-enter with proof of residency as a security measure.

- Eureka Canyon Road and Rider Road to Ormsby Road.
- Hazel Dell Road
- Buzzard Lagoon Road
- Browns Valley Road
- Croy Road
- CLOSED:** *Fire + Fire Prevention 2800*
- Mount Madonna Park
- Loma Prieta Road/Summit Road

**MANDATORY EVACUATIONS:** 400 residences were evacuated at Lower Highland, Buzzard Lagoon, Vaca del Sol, Upper Browns Valley and Avocado, Hazel Dell, Redwood Road/Browns Valley Road and the Santa Clara County community of Sveadal and McPhee Road. All evacuations remain in effect.

**ROAD CLOSURES:** Road closures remain in effect in the area of Eureka Canyon Road and Rider Road, Hazel Dell Road and Browns Valley Road and the Summit Road area.

**VOLUNTEERS:** The Volunteer Centers of Santa Cruz County are pre-registering individuals who are interested in providing support in response to the fire. Call 427-5070 or go to [www.scvolunteercenter.org](http://www.scvolunteercenter.org) to help.

**DONATIONS:** The Santa Cruz County Chapter of the Red Cross has provided \$110,000 in services to fire victims. To donate to the Santa Cruz County Disaster Relief Fund, call 462-2881 or visit [www.sccredcross.org](http://www.sccredcross.org) and click the Donate Now button. The United Way of Santa Cruz County has set up a Summit Fire Recovery Fund. To donate, call 479-5466 or send a check payable to United Way to 1220 41st Ave., Capitola, CA 95010 and include 'Summit Fire Recovery Fund' on the memo line.

**Clearing**

Continued from Page A1

said. While 36 Corralitos area residents could not say the same about their houses, Diccico's story was a reminder that for every lost home, more than a few were saved. And Diccico's water was used to help fight the fire and save some of those structures.

Thanks to her driveway and plenty of clear, flat space surrounding her home, Diccico's property was virtually unscathed. Just up the road, however, a neighbor lost two barns.

Diccico and her mother, June Otjen, who owned the property

supposed to be there," said Otjen. "She called and said she had to help somebody. She got to me and her face was bright red."

Diccico has been home since Saturday, even though officials didn't allow evacuees from her area back in until Monday. Helicopters performing fire-retardant drops nearby were a reminder of how close she and other residents still are to the blaze. Two fire engines were still posted at the end of the driveway, prepared to pump water from a nearby stream if need be.

The property has a half-dozen outbuildings, a guest house and grape orchard. Diccico has more than the 100 feet of defensible space recommended by Cal Fire on each side of her home,

**Fire**

Continued from Page A1

this evening. The cause of the fire remains under investigation.

Browns Valley resident Herb Decker looked down mostly empty Browns Valley Road toward Corralitos Community Church and recalled the line of cars clamoring to get out Thursday.

"I saw the neighbors, especially certain ones, and they were very on edge and nervous," he said. "So it seems things are starting to come back to normal."

Residents of Eureka Canyon, Rider, Hazel Dell, Buzzard Lagoon, Browns Valley and Croy roads were officially allowed to return home Monday with proof of residency, although several residents said they had been home since Friday and Saturday. Summit and Loma Prieta roads and Mount Madonna Park remained closed.

Jean Grabost was starting to unpack the things she grabbed before she and her husband, Dave, fled their Browns Valley home. She laughed about what she'd brought: pictures, paints and craft supplies.

The fire had come to a stop across a creek no more than 200 feet away. Alongside the creek, somebody had set up a table of coffee and snacks for firefighters.

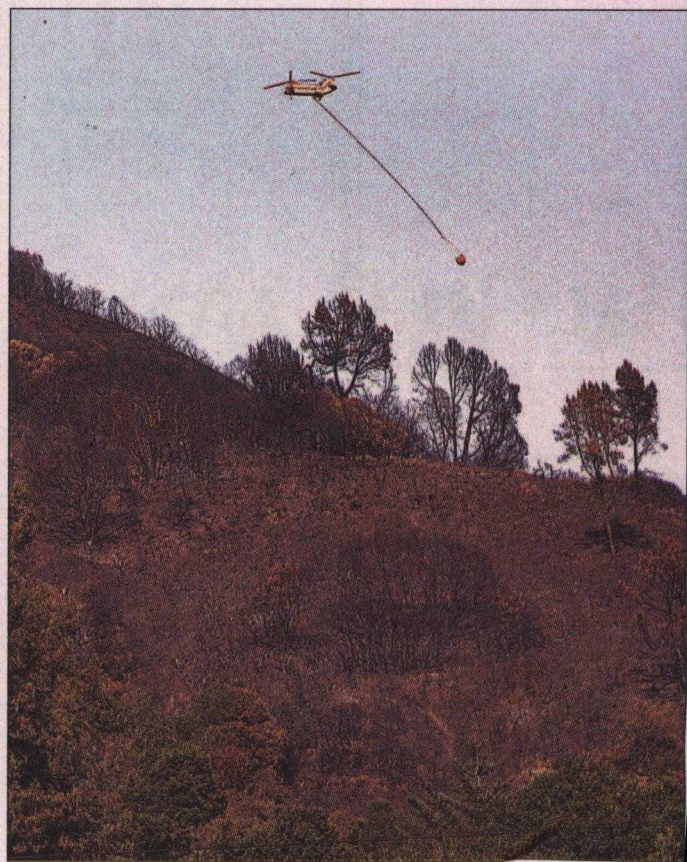
"It's absolutely amazing to me how things come together and how people get their jobs done," said Grabost.

Through the stories of residents like Decker and Grabost, an idea about this quaint orchard-covered, redwood-shaded community began to emerge: Corralitos residents help each other.

There was the story of Dave Grabost grabbing his chain saw to cut away a tree that had fallen and blocked a neighbor's driveway during evacuation. And Decker, who had been home since Friday, was trying to find some woodworking tools for his neighbor, who was the victim of one of two reported looting cases.

Decker's house was all but lost in the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, so Decker was relieved, to say the least, that he made it through this disaster unscathed.

"We got wiped out in the quake, so I told my wife if this ever happens again and we're



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Fire-fighting helicopters were still dropping water on hot spots near the Summit on Monday.



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

A Browns Valley Road resident painted an appreciative sign for all the firefighters who took part in the Summit Fire.

not affected, we're going to go out there and help people," he said.

Fire crews remain posted along the re-opened roads, performing mop-up procedures and keeping an eye out for flare-ups. Inmate crews also were clearing fallen trees. But Berliner said some of the almost 3,000 personnel called in were starting to be sent home.

Cal Fire said the acreage of the fire increased because of the fire's slow upslope spread and short hooking runs toward Summit Road as the fire transitioned into brush. An increase in activity in the interior of the fire is due to the change in the weather pattern, though conditions remain good for fire fighting.

On Dove Lane, a tiny, steep road off Eureka Canyon, a one-story house stood right next door to where only ash and the foundation of a neighbor's home once stood. A white Toyota pickup was parked

front of the surviving house, although nobody appeared to be home.

Capt. Paul Spratt with Cal Fire said the home may have been saved by its composite roof shingles and about 50 feet of defensible space — although Cal Fire recommends at least 100 feet in areas of tall, dense vegetation.

"They were very fortunate," he said.

Contact Isaiah Guzman at [isaiahguzman@hotmail.com](mailto:isaiahguzman@hotmail.com).



unscathed. Just as  
however, a neighbor lost two  
barns.

Dicicco and her mother, June Otjen, who owned the property before her daughter, were out by 3 p.m. Thursday. Dicicco dropped her kids off at school then came home and started packing.

They were in the evacuation zone, but "nobody forced us out," said Dicicco, "we just decided to go."

On the way out, Dicicco and her brother stopped to help a news crew who had blown a tire on their road.

"The smoke was horrible," said Dicicco. "It was just ash, smoke, everything."

Otjen was already in town, waiting for her daughter impatiently.

"I was worried when we got down to Corralitos. She was

and grape orchard. Dicicco has more than the 100 feet of defensible space recommended by Cal Fire on each side of her home, but with people as far away as Watsonville reporting large ashes falling in their yards, there was always the chance of an ember catching her roof.

"I just sat on the deck all Friday watching for embers," said tenant Ed Mumm. "It was close."

Like Dicicco, Mumm had no problem with the fire crews using all the water they needed. He praised their work as well as that of local law enforcement.

"You hear all these horror stories when you have these disasters, but they've been on top of it," he said.

---

Contact Isaiah Guzman at  
isaiahguzman@hotmail.com.

quake, so I told my wife if this  
ever happens again and we're