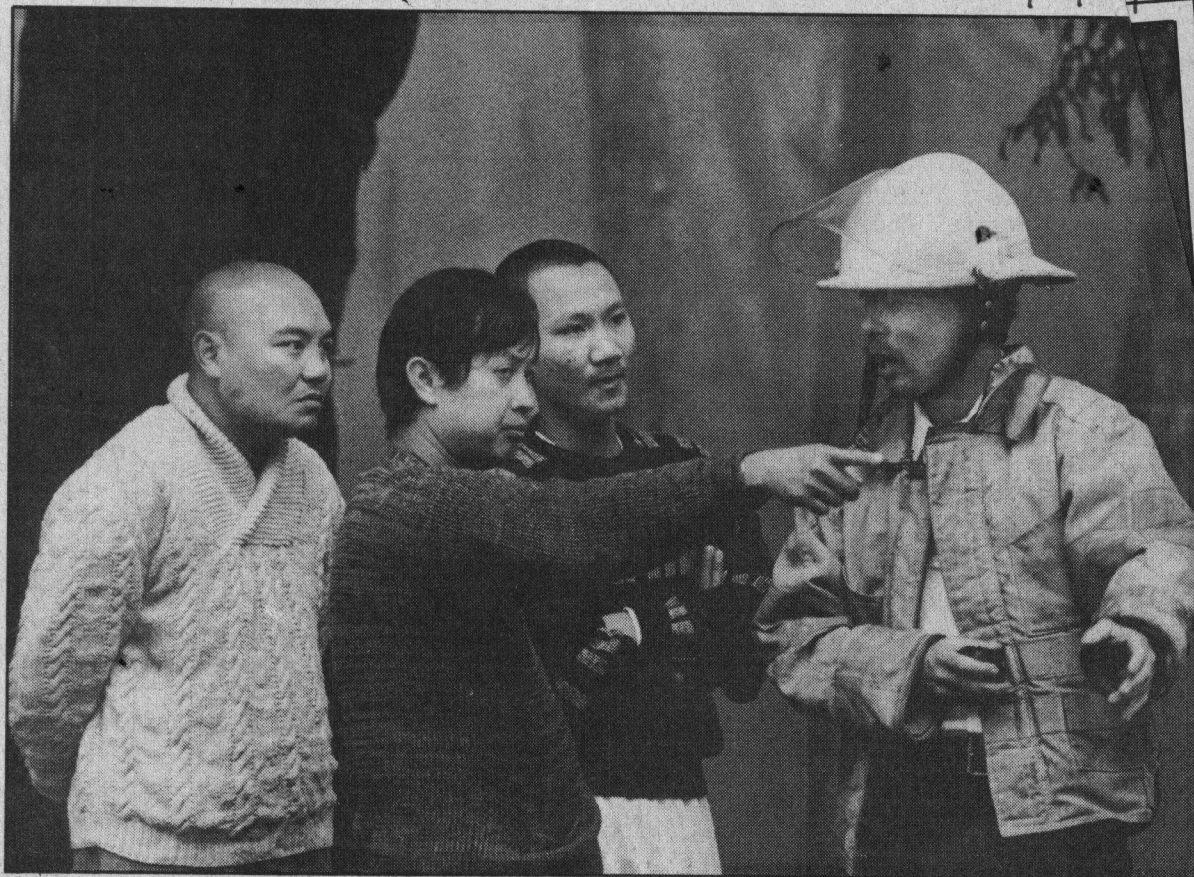


Local

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Kurt Ellison

Salsipuedes Fire Chief Ron Hart, right, discusses the fire with three monks at the monastery.

Precious books lost when fire hits Mt. Madonna monastery

By EMILIO ALVARADO
STAFF WRITER

A fire at a Mt. Madonna Buddhist monastery yesterday destroyed two buildings, one containing a library of irreplaceable Vietnamese books that were 350 years old.

The fire occurred at the Kim Son monastery on Summit Road at about 11:30 a.m. When firefighters arrived on the scene, they found three buildings on fire, said Salsipuedes Fire Department Chief Ron Hart. A two-story building and another next to it where three people lived were completely engulfed in flames. The fire also spread to a third building but damage to it was reported as minor.

The two-story wooden build-

ing, containing a library and computer equipment, burned to the ground and the building next to it was gutted, Hart said. There were no injuries and fire officials are investigating the cause of the fire, which caused an estimated \$330,000 damage. A car parked next to one of the buildings was also destroyed.

Hart said the fire in the main building, where the blaze started, was accelerated when small bottles of propane and several five-gallon cans of gasoline exploded. The explosions occurred before firefighters arrived.

Residents tried to put out the fire in the main building with extinguishers, but were forced out by the rapidly advancing

flames. Because the only phone at the monastery was in the main building, residents had to go to a neighbor's house to report the fire.

About 45 firefighters from Corralitos, Freedom, Santa Clara County and the California Department of Forestry were at the scene. It took them about an hour to bring the fire under control.

A small patch of surrounding brush caught fire but was quickly put out. Hart said water from the monastery's 40,000-gallon storage tank was used to fight the fire. A CDF helicopter was called to the scene but had to turn back because of the dense fog that covered the mountain.