Caterers-turned-camp-cooks keep firefighters full

They cook at fire scenes, 'but never one this size'

> By Nancy McCarthy Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY started out of the back of a pick-up truck with a tent and a camp stove.

Now, Bill and Janet Robertson make almost 700 meals a day and pack 1,100 lunches to feed the firefighters fighting the Canyon Creek Complex fire.

The former owners of the Outpost restaurant usually cater events with 150 to 300 guests. The hours are pretty normal.

But during fire season and the past 20 years of fire seasons — that "normal" life comes to a halt. 'We get up at 2 or 3 a.m.,

and we're working until 11 or 12 at night," said Janet. "Some days, we don't get any sleep at all."

They have cooked at plenty of fire scenes, she said.

"But never one this size." They're getting help from local businesses. Chester's Thriftway makes donuts every morning. The Outpost helps out with some of the



Eagle photos/Nancy McCarthy

About 1,100 bagged lunches are prepared for firefighters battling the Canyon Creek Complex fire. Ten percent of the lunches are vegetarian.

cooking. It's a way to keep money in the community, Janet said.

Most of the food, however, comes from Sysco. A truck delivers products every day.

Then comes the preparation: Provide breakfast from 5 to 9 a.m. Pack lunches (10 percent are vegetarian) before noon. Serve dinner from 5 to 11 p.m.

And feed the firefighters they do. Breakfasts consist of bacon and eggs, hashbrowns, biscuits and gravy.

For dinner, they offer bar-

bequed steak, pot roast, fried chicken, pork chops, a full salad bar and a full dessert bar.

The firefighters deserve good meals, Janet said.

"They work very hard and long hours. They're in danger working to save our properties."

The work is a family affair, said Bill, who pointed to his granddaughter, grandson and daughter, all working on various chores at the east end of the Pavilion, where the Robertsons have

"We just came off two



All lined up and ready to go, these lunch bags are prepared by Bill Janet Robertson and their assistants for firefighters assigned to the Canyon Creek Complex fire.

other fires — Murderers Creek for five days and a 24-hour contract all night at Beulah Reservoir."

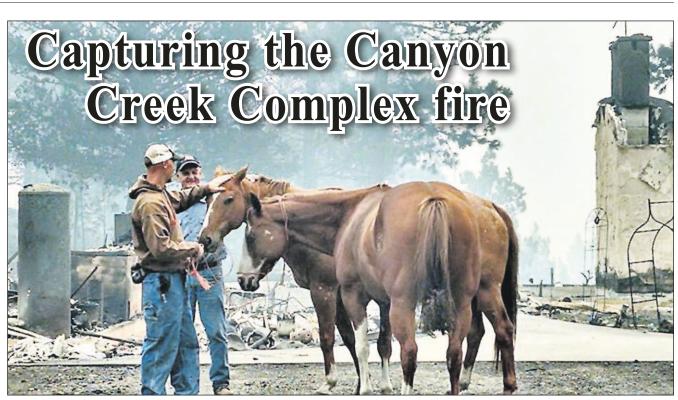
The Robertsons get to know some of the firefighters, who come from all over the United States. Sometimes they see them another year on another fire.

Despite the long hours and encounters with rattlesnakes and cougars in some camps, Bill said he enjoys the experience.

"We love it," he said. "We try to make it fun. It's all about the firefighters. They're away from home. We try to make it comfortable for them."







wark and brenda bagell lost their nome to the devastating Canyon Creek Complex Fire. They were labe to save their dogs and few personal belonging before fleeing the mountain. They opened the gates for the horses and hoped for the best. The horses, Cricket and Penny, survived and were rescued after the fire burned through, but their house was a total loss. Mark's father, Bob Bagett, right, and their son-in-law, Josh Walker, left, helped catch the horses when they were able to return to their property.



_Date taken: _

Weight & Length



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Deadline for submissions: Sep. 21, 2015 for the grand prize.

For more info, call the Eagle, 541-575-0710 – and happy fishing!

Fisherman's Name:_

Fish Species:_

Where the fish was caught:___

Contact phone number:

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- Baked goods
- Lotions & soaps
- Fresh cut flowers Jewelry & other handcrafted items



Smoke from the Canyon Creek Complex billows high into the sky above emergency vehicles on Highway 395, in this photo by Koby Essex.



From David Kilpatrick, outside the Canyon City post office, as smoke from the Canyon Creek Complex billows over Canyon Mountain.