

Area Fire Blackens Hills



FLAMES SPEED THROUGH BRUSH—Tinder-dry brush and grass were principal factors in the rapid spread of the blaze Saturday and Sunday. This close-up view shows how hotly it flamed.



GRAY GHOSTS OF TREES—These trees, including oaks, madrone, pine and fir, show how they were stripped of all foliage by the fire. All burned as badly as these were killed. A few with undamaged foliage near the top may survive.

Woods Silent After Flames Pass Through

By ERIC WENTWORTH
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A hot, dry winter has settled on the hills above Ashland.

The ground is smothered in a grey, cheerless snow—the ashes of trees, brush and cremated wild creatures.

Unlike snow, the ashes tell no forest secrets. No tracks of deer or rabbits criss-cross the grim surface.

The woods are silent. No flutter of leaves greets the wind. The only leaves are an autumn orange-fingers of fire that still linger on charred snags.

The flames that surged up the steep slopes, in plain sight of anxious residents and fire-fighters were thorough. For acre upon acre, not a sign of green can be seen.

A graveyard of black skeletons flicked with white ash, the silent grey blanket over the earth—one could photograph these, under the sky still glazed with smoke, with either black-and-white or colored film—only the flames would look different.

Smoke Cloud

But the vast pillars that thrust like an atomic cloud thousand of feet into the air Saturday evening was a sight no words or photographs either, can really describe. Its flames were a brilliant pink nearly to the top, where a crown of pure white glistened in the sun. It was visible in Grants Pass, and down in California.

Rogue valley residents watched in awe as it towered above them ever-higher.

When night fell, flames in long lines of skirmish mounting the ridges could be seen for many miles. Their glow was visible as far south as Montague, Calif.

The large audience in Ashland's new Shakespeare festival theater were distracted time and again as the conflagration flared and roared along the ridge on their left. Those in the audience as well as those on stage were illuminated-in an eerie glow.

"I am fire and air; my other elements I give to baser life," the dying Cleopatra cried as the tragedy neared its end.

Sparks and Embers

Elsewhere in Ashland, residents played hoses on their roofs and prayed the wind would not bring cloudbursts of sparks and embers down upon them.

Fighting desperately to save the city's watershed as well as beautiful Lithia park and the homes above it, forestry crews literally "fought fire with fire." They set numerous back-fires, which leaped up the side of the Ashland creek canyon to intercept the main blaze.

These, in the early hours of Sunday, were at times as dramatic as the major holocaust itself.

When the sun rose, the hills seen from Medford were shrouded in thick smoke. It was hot Sunday, but the very lack of a breeze to ventilate backyards on the valley floor proved a deciding factor in the battle against the fire.

Fire Confined

The flames stopped over ridges here and there, and trudged slowly up the hill-sides above Ashland. The explosive force that spurred them across thousands of acres in a matter of hours Saturday night appeared spent. Much of the burning was within the confines of fire lines.

Crews began mopping up in some spots, playing hoses on the smouldering remains. Men who had fought on the firelines all night paused to ask for food.

Today again layers of vagrant smoke hung above the holocaust scene. The air was nearly still.

The hopes of weepy men rose as the flames subsided. Barring new winds, the fire appeared licked.

But the scorched hills remain, a grim, wintry scene. Spring for this Siberia may come in the autumn, if re-seeding can get under way that soon. Kr wing foresters fear that unless it does, erosion from rains late in the year may further scar the hillsides.

It may be years, in any case, before these hills are green again.

The Passion Play has been performed in the small village of Oberammergau, Germany, once every 10 years for 370 years.



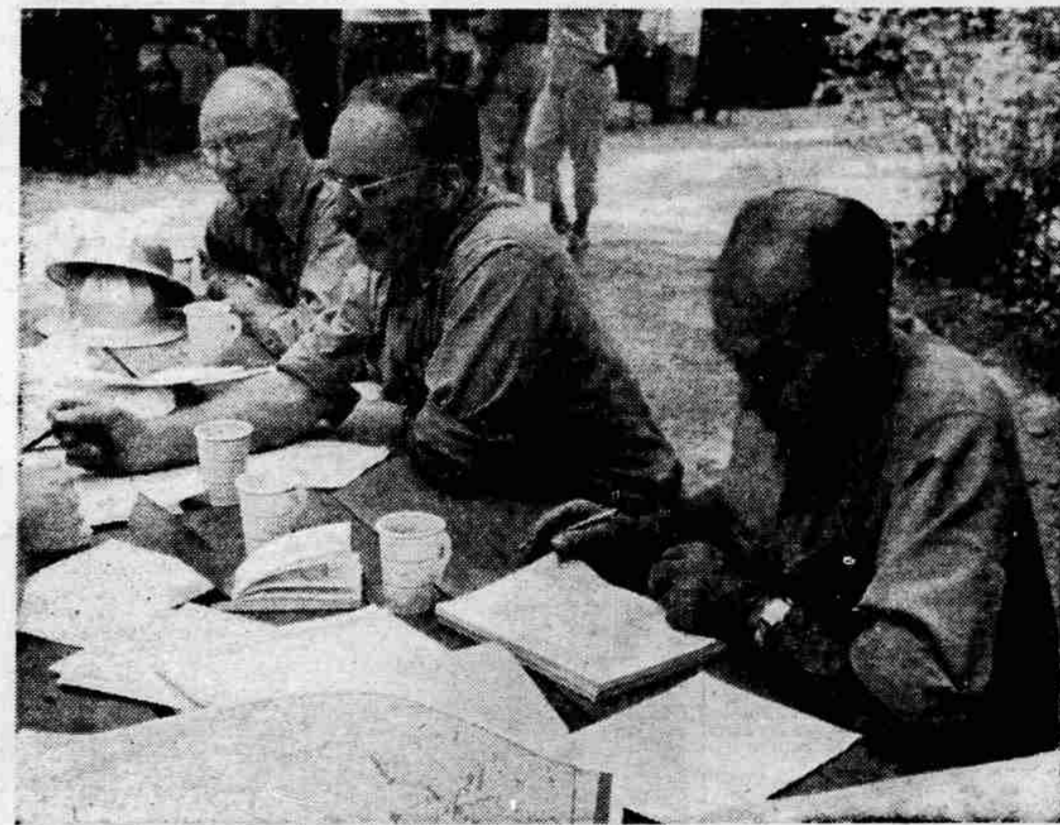
BARN DESTROYED—Neighborhood children look at the site of a barn destroyed by fire Saturday as the blaze spread toward Ashland from the Jackson Hot Springs area. The barn was located west of the highway at Billings hill.



BLACK AND GRAY NOTHINGNESS—A hot fire leaves ashes and charred stumps—and nothing else. This view was taken looking down over the area where the fire started, above Jackson Hot Springs, showing the utter desolation left by the fire.

HIGH COMMAND

In charge of fighting the fire for the U.S. forest service was Carroll Brown (center) supervisor of the Rogue River national forest. At right is Howard Hopkins, timber management officer for the forest who was in charge of many of the operations, and at right is J. Herbert Stone, Portland, regional forester for the U.S. forest service. Stone was here for an inspection trip into the wilderness areas of the Butte Fall district, but the trip was called off because of the fire. Also on the job were officials of the state department of forestry, headed by District Warden Curtis Nesheim.



ABOVE ASHLAND

The city of Ashland's downtown area can be seen through the tracery of burned-out trees on the hills above, after the fire passed on to the south.

Money Reported Taken From Ice House Here

A total of \$52.50 was taken from a coin machine in the ice house of Valley Fuel company, 26 West Main st., Friday night or early Saturday morning, Medford police were informed Saturday. Harper Ken Hamilton, 114 Highland dr., told police the burglar had crawled in and out of the house, where the money was obtained in a coin box, through ice chutes.

A new automatic copra dryer has been placed in operation at Taveuni, Fiji.



Water Supply Not Threatened by Watershed Fire

Damage to the Ashland watershed from the week end fire does not threaten the water supplies of the city of Ashland, according to Carroll Brown, supervisor of the Rogue River National forest.

The fire which burned in the watershed was below the city's reservoir, he reported, and thus constitutes no hazard to the supply of water as such.

However, the area below the reservoir was badly burned over, and because of this may cause a hazard of flooding and heavy run-off water during bad storm conditions.

Brown has contacted the regional forest service office, to make arrangements for the immediate seeding of this area to grass "as soon as it cools down." With luck, a good crop of grass cover can have sprouted by the time the fall rains begin, Brown said.

Grass is less effective than trees in containing run-off, he said, but it far better than bare earth. Grass will hold some of the moisture, and will prevent serious soil erosion.

About seven per cent of U. S. men eligible for military service are rejected for some form of eye defects.

About one-half of the weight of a broiler chicken is lost between the farm and the dining room table.



SMOKE ABOVE THE PLAZA—Smoke hung heavy over Ashland all day Sunday, as the fire moved around and above the town. This scene, from the Plaza, gives an idea of how close the fire came to the city, and to Lithia park in the background.