

Friday Night Fire Near the Vaugeois'

ByCarolynn Johnson

Friday night at 7:00 p.m. (4/5/2002), after a brief thunder and lightening episode, the Fisher's Peak Fire Protection District received a call about a lightening strike on the Ranch. The great observation skills of the Albert family spotted a lightening strike and fire moving up the mountain off Fisher's Peak Parkway toward the guesthouse on the Vaugeois property. The Albert family called the Vaugeois family and a call to 911 was placed. Rick and I heard the call come in and we were asked to spot the fire. We have an ancient brush truck in our garage and Rick left to pick up Will Potter. I followed in our own vehicle. From the top of Owen Baldwin Parkway we could see a tall pine tree fully engaged in fire along with a small area around the "torch tree". Will, Rick and I met Mike Friedrich at the base of the mountain on Fisher's Peak Parkway and after dressing in our nomex clothing we proceeded up the mountain toward the fire with rakes and shovels. Darkness was rapidly encroaching. We marked our trail up with red tape so we would be able to find the way out. By the time we arrived half way up the mountain we could no longer see the fire. By this time Chief Buddie Curro, Captain Rich Babnick and fire fighters Frances Purswell-Montoya, Paul Montoya and Gene Downs had arrived at the staging area on Fisher's Peak Parkway. Unable to see and directed by our sense of smell and help from the staging area we finally found the fire. Sure enough, a large pine had been hit and ignited. Will, Mike, Rick and I began to dig a ring around the fire to prevent it from spreading further up or down the mountain. We determined that only water would insure stabilizing the embers. Captain Rich, Paul and Gene each brought up five gallon backpack's (about 45 pounds each). They followed the red flagging and made it to our location after about 15 minutes. Frances and the Chief stayed at the staging area and provided direction and Incident Command.



Burn area surrounded by dense, dry "fuel"!

We dug and scraped for a while longer and sparingly used our precious water supply until we finally determined that the fire was no longer a threat to the Vaugeois guesthouse. Again following the red flags, we proceeded down the mountain only to find out that it was 10:30 p.m.

We would like to commend the Albert family for their excellent spotting skills and the Vaugeois

family for their quick call to 911. It should remind us all that with the lightening season upon us and with the extremely dry conditions, we need to pay attention to what's happening around us and to take quick action when we see a fire.

Rick and I arrived home about 11:00 p.m. to what would have been our delicious dinner, still on the plates. Instead we had a fried egg sandwich and hit the sack! We had our annual fire fighting pack test at 7:30 a.m. the next morning.