

Firefighters try to save homes CALIFORNIA FIRES

MALIBU, Calif. — With a tamer wind at their backs, thousands of firefighters challenged walls of flame with water and fire retardant Wednesday, thwarting an onslaught that has destroyed 200 canyon ranches and seaside mansions.

"Our belief is the worst is over, that we're going to stop virtually on this line here," Los Angeles Fire Chief Donald Manning said as the still out-of-control Malibu-area blaze crept eastward toward the Los Angeles city limit.

The fire injured 120 firefighters and three civilians. Two men were critically burned, including Hollywood screenwriter and director Duncan Gibbins, 41, who was hurt trying to save a cat.

Wednesday was Southern California's eighth day of wildfires. Twice in the past week, firestorms have gutted whole neighborhoods. The week's toll rose to more than 215,000 acres of land scorched and 1,000 homes destroyed.

At daybreak, flames were still leaping 150 feet into the air, climbing canyons and incinerating buildings.

A force of nearly 5,000 firefighters started their attack after dawn, as the ferocious winds that drove the fire unchecked for 20 hours subsided.

"The bottom line is it depends on

the wind," said county fire inspector Jack Pritchard. "We can talk about what we're going to do, but if the winds are blowing, Mother Nature is going to get what she wants."

Manning said six C-130 cargo planes were "painting" Topanga Canyon on the fire's east side with thousands of gallons of fire retardant to stop its creep toward hundreds of homes in the Pacific Palisades area of Los Angeles.

Besides the Malibu fire, which covered 35,000 acres, fires were reported to the east and south in Riverside County, San Bernardino County and San Diego County.

Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt said officials will need to examine laws on building in canyons, perhaps requiring better brush clearance and different zoning.

"I think once this is all over we are going to have to do some soul-searching about the process of building into these deep canyons with all the brush," Babbitt said. He said damage in the latest fire could reach \$500 million.

The fire at Malibu — a mile-wide city of 15,000 that winds along 27 beachfront miles — erupted Tuesday as hot, dry Santa Ana winds gusting at up to 53 mph returned to Southern California. The cause of the fire remained under investigation.

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— Pritchard L.A. County fire inspector

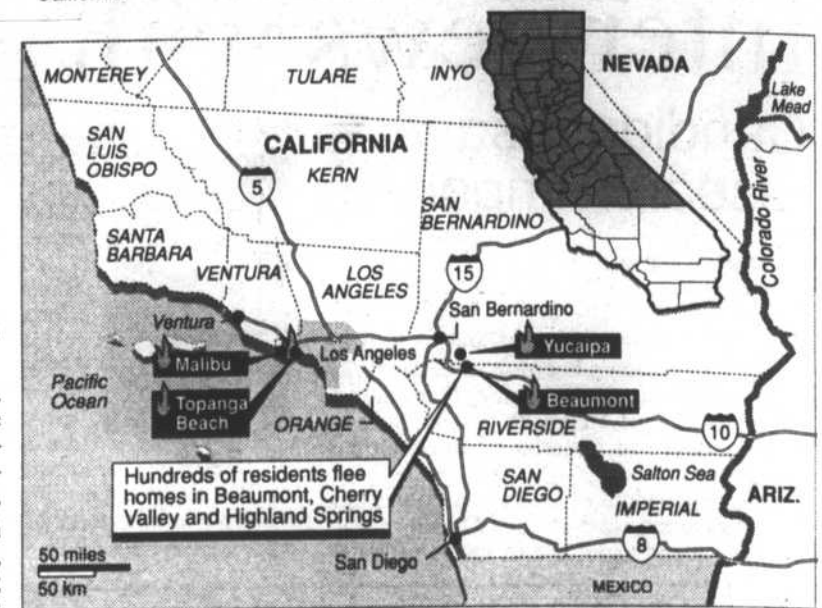
"It just came thundering down. By the time I left, it looked like 'Apocalypse Now,'" said writer Richard Christian Matheson, who believes his house burned after he fled.

Deborah Carpentier, barefoot, in shorts, her face streaked with soot, stood at the water's edge clutching her 18-month-old son as the hillside above her blazed a bright crimson in the night.

"I had him wrapped up in a wet towel. He was screaming," she said. "We stood on the beach and watched our house burn."

The Malibu Colony, the wealthy gated enclave of movie stars and millionaires that is the heart of the city,

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was spared. "At this time it's safe," said county Fire Inspector Dan Ertel. "But due to the erratic wind conditions you can never have any guarantee anymore." Chaos also reigned at roadblocks along scenic Pacific Coast Highway.

People trying to get out vied for road space with drivers scrambling home after learning of the fire. Frantic, some abandoned their cars, trapping firetrucks in massive traffic jams. In a few cases, Highway Patrol officers drew their weapons on motorists who tried to cross fire lines.

Clinton evaluates Republican sweep

WASHINGTON — President Clinton asserted Wednesday that a Republican sweep in three major elections does not amount to a repudiation of him or his policies, but reflects a desire among voters for change.

"Voters are extremely discriminating," Clinton told reporters. "They make their own judgments for their own reasons."

Senate Republican Leader Bob Dole emerged from a morning meeting with Clinton to declare: "It's a big, big defeat for the White House."

"What a difference a year makes," Dole, R-Kan., said in an earlier speech on the Senate floor. "We can officially proclaim 1993 to be the year of Republicans."

House Republican Leader Bob Michel of Illinois said Clinton "was a drag rather than a help to the ticket."

In New Jersey, Republican Christie Whitman narrowly defeated Gov. Jim Florio for the state's top office. In New York City, Republican Rudolph Giuliani took a razor-thin victory in his rematch with Mayor David Dinkins and in

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Virginia, Republican George Allen easily beat Democrat Mary Sue Terry for governor.

Clinton campaigned for Dinkins and Florio, and was a side issue in Allen's campaign in Virginia.

Clinton noted that he had been elected five times in Arkansas, including carrying the state by a wide margin in 1984 — the year of Ronald Reagan's landslide re-election. He said he did better in the state than Reagan did.

"I don't think you can draw too much conclusion from this," Clinton said, noting that many Democratic mayors had been re-elected.

Clinton followed a White House line that the elections reflect the clamor for change that put Clinton in office a year ago.

Baker

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But, he said, advancing research should not be done at the expense of the humanities and undergraduate teaching.

"The humanities are essential if you're going to produce good citizens and critical thinkers," Baker said.

He said most, if not all, faculty should be involved in undergraduate teaching.

"I think the rub occurs when you reach a situation where faculty are no longer interested in undergraduate students," Baker said.

Baker said Polytechnic State University promoted a hands-on approach to undergraduate education. Undergraduates there often have access to equipment usually reserved only for graduates, he said.

If chosen president, Baker said his administrative style would be that of a consensus builder. Without consensus among its leaders, the university loses credibility, he said.

Regent Charles Wilson of Lincoln said the NU president represented the university in the Nebraska Legislature. He asked Baker if he had experience in that area.

Baker said he had extensive experience and had built strong relationships with key members of California's legislature.

He said it was often effective to invite legislators to campus to give them a sense of contact with the university.

"It's important not to just visit with them when you want something," he said.

Regents asked Baker what a university should do when faced with budget cuts.

At Polytechnic, Baker said, administrators faced budget cuts and ended up cutting programs.

"It's better perhaps to do fewer things than cut across the board and weaken all programs," he said.

Any program cuts should be viewed as temporary, and efforts should be made to control budgets by finding ways to increase the productivity of a university's personnel, he said.

Baker said he was interested in Nebraska because the university was an important element to the state.

The regents will interview on Thursday the other two candidates: Constantine Curris, president of the University of Northern Iowa, and Gregory O'Brien, chancellor of the University of New Orleans.

Smith

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The university system, anticipating hard times and acting as soon as minimal cuts were required in 1989, began broad-based cuts, Smith said. The cuts made by the university were larger than those dictated by the California Legislature, creating excess funds to be put toward future cuts, he said.

By saving the extra money, Smith said, and creating academic and non-academic task forces to identify inefficiencies within the university, the California system now has enough extra money to give the system a two-year reprieve.

"Higher education is never again going to have the resources it had two decades ago," Smith said.

Universities also will have to make changes to deal with advancing technology, he said.

Teaching with computers and interactive television can allow universities to improve their geographic access, Smith said.

"We should take advantage of information technology," he said.

The university, Smith said, will have to adapt in order to take advantage of future technological advances.

"The problem is we function in universities as we did 100 years ago," Smith said.

Smith also said he preferred smaller classes and direct interaction with research professors to large, impersonal lecture classes.

With a strong science-oriented background, a doctorate in experimental embryology and post-doctoral work at the Argonne National Laboratory, Smith has a particular interest in the research-oriented education provided by UNL.

"I think the emphasis in the Lincoln campus with research and teaching is excellent," Smith said.

Without research, Smith said, an institution could still provide a good education, but research and teaching "go hand-in-hand to provide a unique educational experience."

Smith also spoke briefly about admission standards in education.

"At some point you have to set standards," Smith said. "It doesn't do anyone any good to admit everyone and flunk out half of the freshman class."

Smith, at this point in his interviewing process, was unaware of Nebraska's admission standards.

Russia says nuclear weapons still an option

MOSCOW — Russia for the first time is declaring a willingness to use nuclear weapons if it or its allies are attacked with conventional weapons, a high-ranking official said Wednesday.

That is a reversal of the policy announced by then Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev at the United Nations in June 1982, when he made a unilateral commitment not to use nuclear weapons first — scoring propaganda points because of a U.S. refusal to make a similar pledge.

The new nuclear policy was part of Russia's new military doctrine that was adopted by President Boris Yeltsin.

"Russia reserves the right to use all means at its disposal to repulse aggression and crush the aggressors," said Valery Manilov, deputy secretary of the country's top policy-making Security Council.

Russia's new military doctrine allows use of nuclear weapons "against states, nuclear or non-nuclear, which have undertaken aggression against Russia or supported such aggression,"

he said. He said Russia regards nuclear weapons as a deterrent, necessary to "prevent the escalation of local conflicts into a full-blown war."

Manilov said only Yeltsin and a few members of the 13-member Security Council had seen the 23-page text of the doctrine. He said full details of the doctrine would not be made public.

The doctrine declares Russia's goal is to eliminate nuclear weapons in the long run, but says it will continue to possess them "at the minimum expedient level," Manilov said.

The doctrine also reflects Russia's awareness of itself as a great power, "with interests in many parts of the world, which it intends to defend primarily by political, peaceful means," he said.

Although the new doctrine views no single country as a potential adversary, it warns of threats from states that make territorial claims on Russia or have unreliable regimes possessing nuclear capability and delivery systems, he added.

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