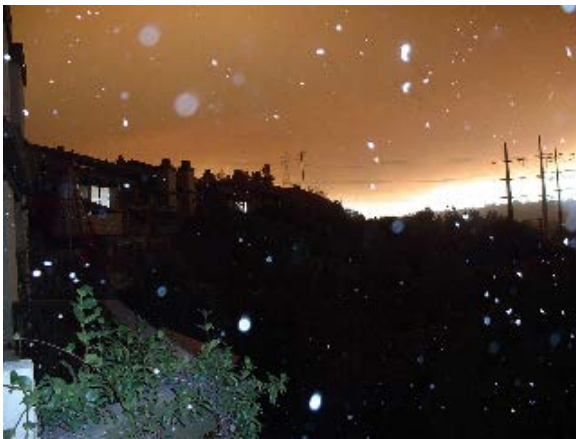


Wildfires sweep through San Diego area

Some family homes endangered, but no damage done to anyone

Sunday morning, October 26, when Grandpa went outside to pick up the morning paper, he noticed an unmistakable odor of burning leaves and wood. After walking to the dining room, he noticed a heavy layer of smoke blackening the entire sky. It was obvious that the source was more than a back yard canyon fire. A quick check on TV revealed the full extent of the problem. Fires were burning out of control in the area east of I-15 and north of Clairmont Mesa Boulevard. We watched in horror as homes in the Scripps Ranch



area were consumed in flames. A steady rain of fine ashes drifted down Mission Valley, gradually settling to the ground. Our first thought, of course, was the safety of the various family members. The following map shows the full extent of the burned area on Monday evening. The locations of the



homes of families closest to the burn area are indicated by red dots. The numbers identify each family, as follows. 1. Grandpa and Grandma 2. Richard and Liz 3. Francie and Lyle 4. Francie's salon 5. Robert's work office 6. Listy's school 7. Carol and Jeff 8. Listy and Bob 9. Birdy and Bruce Note – Robert's home in Alpine is not shown on this map. The scale is about 1/4 inch/mile.



Each of the above family members was impacted by the fire. Richard and Liz were at Lake Tahoe, celebrating their 25th anniversary. They had planned to fly home Sunday evening, but the San Diego airport was closed, so they rented a car and drove home overnight. They arrived safely, and picked up JJ, who was staying with friends.

Francie and Lyle both were out of town on separate business trips, so Bryce and Lyle, Jr. were at home. Alan picked up both and they stayed in Pacific Beach until things settled down.

Robert's office was very close to a burning canyon, and we understand that a building just across the street was destroyed. However, the company facilities were unharmed. In Alpine, Robert and Family had to vacate their home, so they drove the motor home east on I-8, (I-8 west was closed) to an Indian Casino, where they spent the night. There were lots of TV reports of burned homes in Alpine, so we were very concerned. However, good news came the next morning. They were back at home, and there was no damage. However, they had no phone and no electricity. Fortunately, the motor home came to the rescue again. Robert hooked up the generator to the house current, and got things working again. (Later on we learned that over 50 homes were destroyed in Alpine, so there was a real reason to worry about Roberts home.)

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Carol and Jeff also were ordered to leave their home, and they took off for the Hartman home on Sunday evening. They too were able to get back the following morning, and found that there was no damage to any of the homes in their area. Finally, Bob and Listy were alerted to get ready to leave Sunday evening, but the order later on was rescinded, and they never had to actually leave.

All in all, it was a scary week-end, and we all were relieved to see the fire gradually tamed enough that the various alerts could be cancelled, and no homes were damaged.

On Wednesday we got the following e-mail plus pictures from Listy.

Dear Dad,
Here are some pictures taken from the PE fields at my school...man that was close...but we lucked out in terms of the school.
Listy



Thanks, Lisly, for these dramatic shots. You were lucky indeed that your school was not damaged or lost.

We also have the following account of how Richard and Liz were able to make it back from Lake Tahoe during the night of Sunday/Monday, one of the worst nights of the entire firestorm.

October 27, 2003

Classmates and friends,

I just got back with my bride Liz of 25 years from our anniversary honeymoon. It started last Tuesday when I rented a Limo, and took her to what I will always remember as a romantic dinner at the Del Coronado. Later I took her to a surprise anniversary party, where I read her a poem I wrote for her, and sang to her "Unforgettable."

The next day we flew to South Lake Tahoe where we honeymooned 25 years ago. We went horseback riding, rented a powerboat and cruised the Lake. Everyday was one of activities and fun. Friday night I arranged for a booth next to the stage at Caesar's Tahoe for the evening performance by the Temptations. While only Otis Williams is still alive from the original group, the music was really fine. We Visited old friends in Tahoe and had a wonderful time.

It was Sunday at about 5:30 when we arrived at the airport in Reno to return our rented car and board the plane that we became aware of the disaster in San Diego. The skycap told me that they were not accepting luggage from anyone who was flying into Southern California. He told me that the fire had forced the evacuation of air tower personnel in Mira Mesa and the smoke had closed LA, San Diego and Burbank airports. When I called Southwest it was busy! Finally, after about fifteen minutes on hold I got through and was told that it would probably be days before I could fly back to San Diego. They kindly offered me a refund, which they have assured me, should show up on my credit card in a couple of weeks.

I thought about taking a train or a bus, but from what I had heard no one was sure if they were running or if the freeways were open. I decided the best chance to get home to my son, who we had left with friends, was to rent a car and take a chance. At 8 pm we had returned our rental car to Enterprise and enquired if we could drive one of their cars to San Diego. Enterprise staff advised us that they could only rent round trip cars but referred us to Budget and Avis assuring us that they had cars that could be driven one way. I immediately went to Budget and rented a Pontiac GrandAm and started driving for home.

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I had two choices to drive back. I could go on 395 south a little shorter drive (580 miles) but right through the heart of the fire in San Bernardino and San Diego. Or I could go back up to Tahoe go over the summit and catch I-5 in Sacramento south into San Diego (640 miles). As I drove out of Reno, I called one of my friends to get on the computer and tell me what was going on both ways. At 8pm when I called both routes were closed by fire. But it was clear that the better chance for me getting home that night was down I-5. The only problem would be the fire in the Cajon pass just before Los Angeles in the San Gabriel Mountains.

We hit the pass which was open at about 4AM we could see a line of fire from the freeway about 5 miles away and about a mile in length. It was almost a straight line of fire parallel to the freeway. Under other circumstances it would have been hypnotic to see a mile of fire moving slowly and evenly towards you. Liz and I were under no illusions about the fire; we wanted to get home to our son. Once we were past the fire I knew we would make San Diego. It took us ten hours to travel 640 miles. Traffic was light and we traveled at between 75 and 85 most of the way. We only stopped for gas and to change drivers, sleeping while the other drove. We listened to radio reports about road closures and as it turned out we probably would have made it driving the shorter route as the fireman did a magnificent job of fighting the fire and opening traffic routes. As we drove down we passed two convoys of fire vehicles with at least 10 trucks and special purpose cars in each. They were doing about 70 all of them maintaining their distance between each other at that speed in the right lane. The highway patrol was noticeably absent during the entire time we drove.

We returned home about 6AM as the sun was rising. The Sun did not light up the horizon. The sky was dull with smoke and the sun was an orange glow against a backdrop of gray. The air was acrid with smoke and pallor hung over the City like a mantle of clay. There was no wind blowing and the usual birds were nowhere to be seen or heard. At 6AM usually the freeways are crowded with the early morning rush to work. We drove along with maybe 5 or 10 other cars all going at high rate of speed. The silence interrupted only by other cars was depressing.

Some of you may remember when the Super Bowl was held here I told you I live right above Qualcomm Stadium. The Stadium was being used as one of several evacuation centers for the thousands of San Diegians who had been displaced by the fire. When I arrived home after picking up my son we were shocked by the appearance of our neighborhood. Our whole block was gray with a fine ash that covered everything like a first fallen light snow. Usually in the fall the morning temperatures are about 50, today it was about 70. The air was dry and you could sense more than feel the ash in the atmosphere. I was lucky the fire came within 3 miles of where I lived but we suffered no property loss. Right now as far as I know none of my family or immediate friends have suffered any loss of property or life.

Liz works in childcare for City Schools, City Schools did not open nor did any other San Diego schools public or private open. She was called by the City to come in to provide supervision for childcare for fire and police children. She was too tired to do it. We both came home ate and slept.

You can hear and see the news reports. They do not adequately begin to explain the enormity of the disaster that has hit our city. I am proud of the way the citizens of this City have responded to the crisis. Many have volunteered, more have pledged money, but all of us are complying with the request to limit the use of water, power and to travel only if necessary.

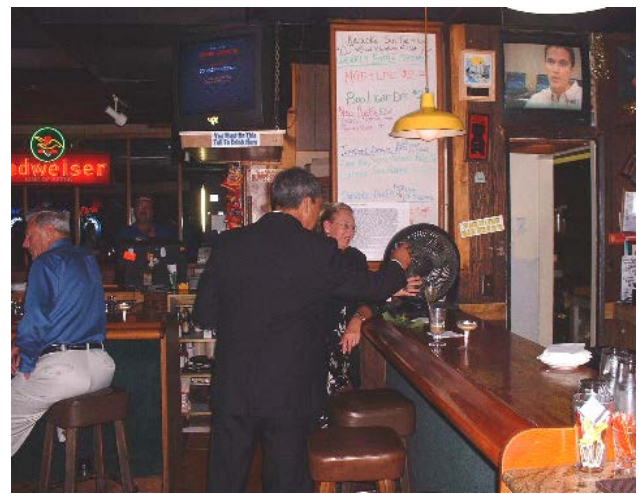
I just finished reading my e-mail. I have called John and his wife Debbie Featherstone. The number I have for his home has been busy for the last two hours while I wrote this. His home is located in Poway, where the largest concentration of the fire was. I have left a message at his work number and will advise all of you if I hear anything.

I have been blessed with family, friends and classmates, tonight I sleep better understanding how frail life is and rich our relationships make it. Thank you God, says richinspirit

Thanks, Richard, for this report on what must have been a scary overnight drive. We are thankful that you and Liz made it home safely. Richard mentions in his report the



surprise anniversary party. Actually, it took place at the Camels Breath Bar and Grill, where Richard works three nights each week. We were not there, but Ed was present, and he took some pictures, as shown.



We all wish Rich and Liz many more happy years together!

In the last RFNL we announced the death of Grandma Sorem. Bryce sent us the following article to print in the October RFNL.

Dear Grandpa,

For the family members that don't know, my grandma Evelyn Sorem passed away on Monday September 22, 2003. She always took care of Brett and me with lots of love. Here's a story about my Grandma that I remember most. It wasn't too long ago when my friend Mike and I went to my Dad's house really quick before we went surfing. Naturally, when we came in Grandma ask if we were hungry. Since Mike hadn't tried her English muffins yet she started to prepare them for us. After about two English muffins Mike and I said that we were full, but Grandma kept making English muffins, she was on a roll. We must've ate 5 of em' before we were done. That's one memory that sticks out in my head. I'll miss her a lot.

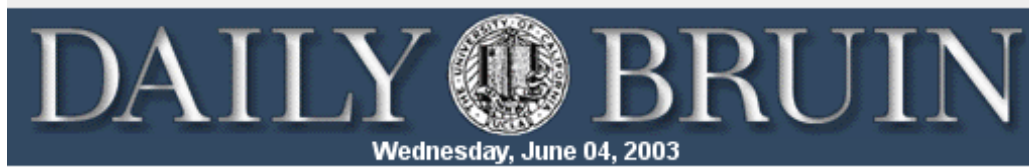
Love, Bryce

The Riel Family Newsletter

Catch the News

November, 2003

Michael stars in soccer game at UCLA



Favored team falls short in finals

Mehan proves unstoppable, leads FC Westwood to IM soccer victory over Argentina 10 Justin Catalan

DAILY BRUIN CONTRIBUTOR
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The men's intramural soccer season concluded in dramatic fashion Tuesday night as the 4-1 FC Westwood team defeated the previously undefeated Argentina 10 team 2-1 in double overtime.

FC Westwood was led by senior **Mike Mehan**, who scored both of the club's goals, including a spectacular shot from midfield early in the second half.

The game was scoreless until early in the second half when Argentina 10 struck first on a goal by Freyman Recinos. But FC Westwood quickly retaliated on the next possession, as Mehan took advantage of an empty Argentina 10 goal and launched a midfield shot that sailed into the back of the net.

Mehan's midfield goal was facilitated by Argentina's aggressive offensive strategy: They played without a goalie for all of regulation, giving them an extra man on offense. But their aggressiveness proved fruitless as FC

CATHERINE JAYIN JUN/Daily Bruin Senior Staff

A member of the intramural team Argentina 10 leaps for the ball during the championship game against FC Westwoods in Drake Stadium Tuesday night.

Westwood's defense held them scoreless the rest of the way. "We just had to concentrate on playing defense," said FC Westwood's Aaron Bernstein. "We had to play defense and let them make the errors," he added. Argentina employed a goalie when the game went into sudden death overtime tied 1-1. But the adjustment proved to be futile, as Mehan scored again late in the second overtime to ensure the 2-1 victory and the IM championship title.

Argentina 10 was previously unbeaten and favored to win the tournament, according to IM soccer supervisor, second-year Brian Yim. However, the extra overtime periods may have favored FC Westwood, as the team had won two out of its four victories by way of overtime penalty kicks.

Some more fire news!

We received the following e-mail and pictures a few days ago from Carol.



Here are pictures of the fire right before the police came and made us evacuate. They said the fire was a mile away and we had to leave! They waited until we got the last of our things, turned off the gas and electricity, and got in our cars. We had dinner and spent the night with Birdy and Bruce. They were very good to us!
Carol



Annual thanksgiving party!!

Yes, it's almost time to be thinking about Thanksgiving Day, and once again Margaret and Bud are hosting the family. The date is November 27, and as usual the party will start around 11:30, with food to follow later on. Check with Margaret on what to bring. See you there!!