

SPECIAL

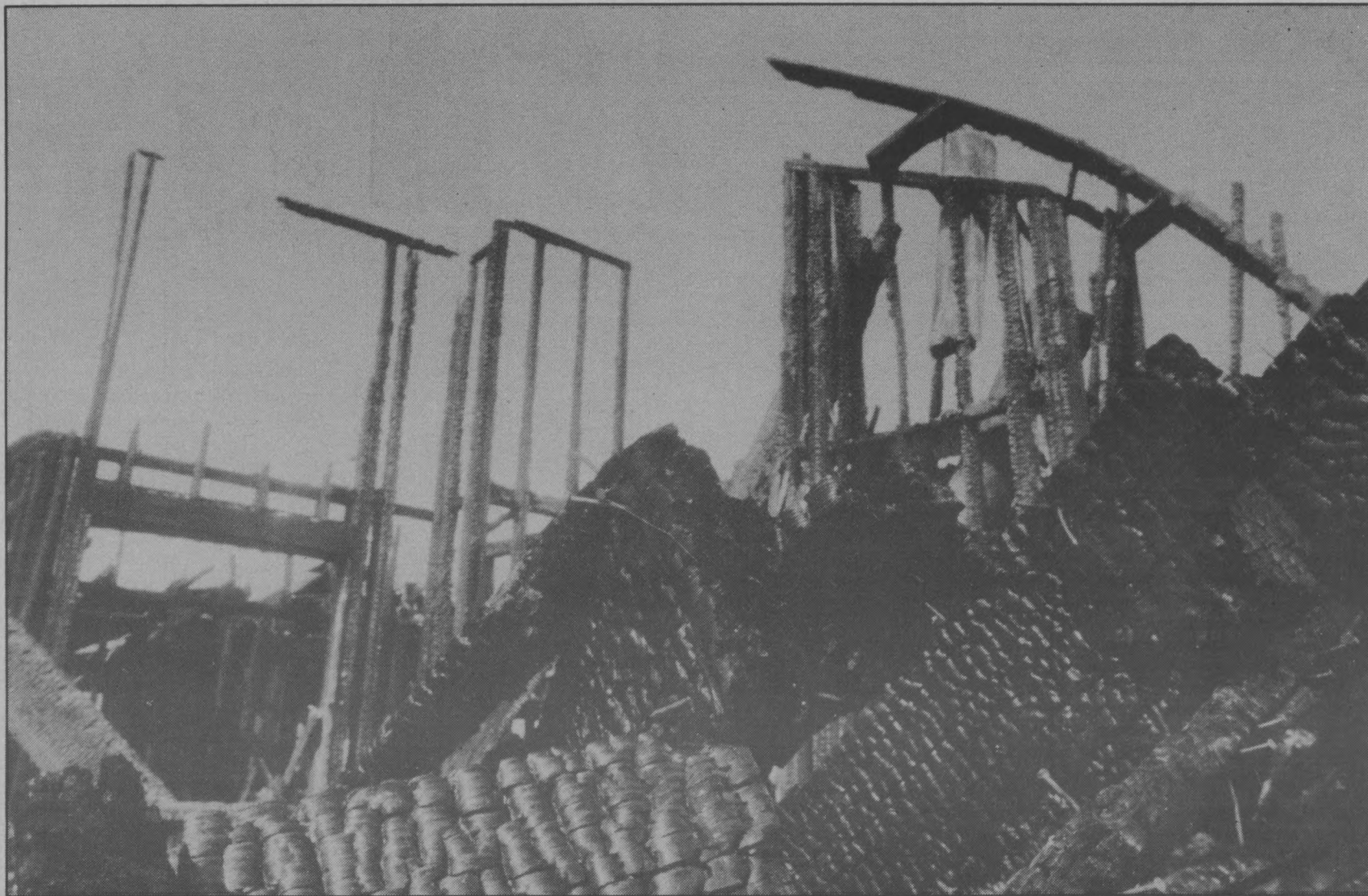
Daily Nexus



REPORT

July 3, 1990

# WHEN THE SMOKE CLEARS



Cover Photos  
By Mutsuya  
Takenaga and  
David Rosen



## War Zone

The disastrous "Painted Cave Fire" left only the charred skeleton (above) of this home. Clifford Bean (left) surveys the levelled site where his home had stood for 24 years.

Car bodies and scraps of metal (right) were the only remains left after the blaze swept through this junkyard.



## Inferno Scars Land, Homes & Hearts

Thousands of acres of eco-paradise, nothing but blackened earth now, scorched trees poking up like ribs from the soil; last week this land was choked with water-starved vegetation — brush that had been waiting four years for a drop of rain or spark of fire.

In the end it was fire, the transforming element, consuming everything that would burn, creating the huge billowing eye-stinging pall of smoke that blanketed the city. Not all that burned was vegetation, though. Some of the fuel was formed by the hands, and the hearts, of humankind.

*An unstoppable juggernaut, the fire travelled nearly four miles from its source, burning 4,900 acres & destroying 430 homes.*

Some built their homes — filled with possessions, memories, and dreams — others built businesses fueled on hope. Years of work that passed from one generation to the next, some one-of-a-kind gifts of history, gone in a moment.

Nor did the flames hold life sacred. Only one death, but one is as tragic as a thousand to friends and family. It is enough to turn arson into murder.

How many acres burned? How many houses destroyed? How many people homeless? What's the

reward for catching the arsonist? All good questions for a journalist. But none of the answers take the reader inside the event.

Pictures help, but they too raise questions.

A picture of an exhausted firefighter — how many times has he been up against these flames? Did he have to run for his life when the fire switched directions and shot down the side of a canyon? Does he know that six firefighters died in Arizona last week? How much smoke has he inhaled?

A picture of an old man, searching through some rubble — is he looking for his college yearbook? Trying to find scraps of his old army uniform? Hoping to find just one record from his old 78 r.p.m. jazz collection?

A picture showing a formerly wealthy couple, searching through other people's discarded clothing at the Red Cross center.

Even the best pictures show only one moment though, a brief flickering instant, laden with emotion and change, but one which is even now past — like the fire itself.

*The "Painted Cave Fire" left almost 500 families homeless and inflicted \$240 million worth of structural damage.*





*"It's like when you are three hours into a road trip and realize that you forgot something. You know, that strange, disturbing feeling. Well, this feels the same way, only you know you will never get it back."*

**Anonymous Fire Victim**

A plane (left) drops fire retardant on the Santa Ynez mountains in an effort to quell the uncontrolled blaze.

MUTSUYA TAKENAGA Daily Nexus

## Victims Confront Tragic Loss While Piecing Lives Together

By Morgan Freeman  
Staff Writer

As last Wednesday's devastating fire slowly dies out and most Goleta and Santa Barbara residents go back to business as usual, nearly 500 shock-stricken families are beginning a long and painful road to recovery.

The first stop for many of the fire victims is the Red Cross Disaster Service Center, where victims are supplied with the basic necessities of food, water, shelter and counseling. However, each family must also answer a series of questions pertaining to the painful reality of their priceless losses.

### The Red Cross Disaster Center: The Silvey Story

Every family taking refuge at the Red Cross Disaster Center has a story to tell.

Jude and Jeff Silvey and their three children lost everything to the blaze and sought guidance at the disaster center. "You never think it's going to happen to you.... It happens to people on the news, but not to you," Jude said.

The Silveys had about 10 minutes to decide what they wanted to save before evacuating their home. "My husband got his tools and windsurfing equipment and I went in my house and stared, thinking that this is the last time I would see my house or possessions. I grabbed some pictures and my children's dirty clothes because I figured those are the ones they wear the most, and left," Jude recalled.

"The fire was about 20 yards from my house."

At the Red Cross, Jude and one of her daughters began their long process of recovery at one of the 14 tables. A Red Cross case worker began with the formalities — name, address, social security numbers, etc. — and then asked a series of questions about the fire.

Q: "How many people are in your family?"

*"I was driving home from work, but all I did when I got home was get out of my car and then right back in. I could tell that the fire was close."*

**Lou Topaz  
Fire Victim**

A: "Five."

Q: "Anyone unemployed because of the fire?"

A: "No."

Q: "Did you own your home?"

A: "No, we rented."

Q: "Did you have renters' insurance?"

A: "Thank God, yes."

Q: "Did you lose everything?"

A: "Yes."

Q: "How are you doing emotionally?"

A: "I'm still in shock, I'm still numb. Thursday is my day to fall apart, until then we have to just keep the family together and do things."

Finally, Jude was asked to

do the most painful thing of all: "Visually picture your house. Now, in your mind, walk through every room and tell me what you lost." For the next forty minutes, Jude visualized her house and recounted all that was lost.

### Red Cross Relief

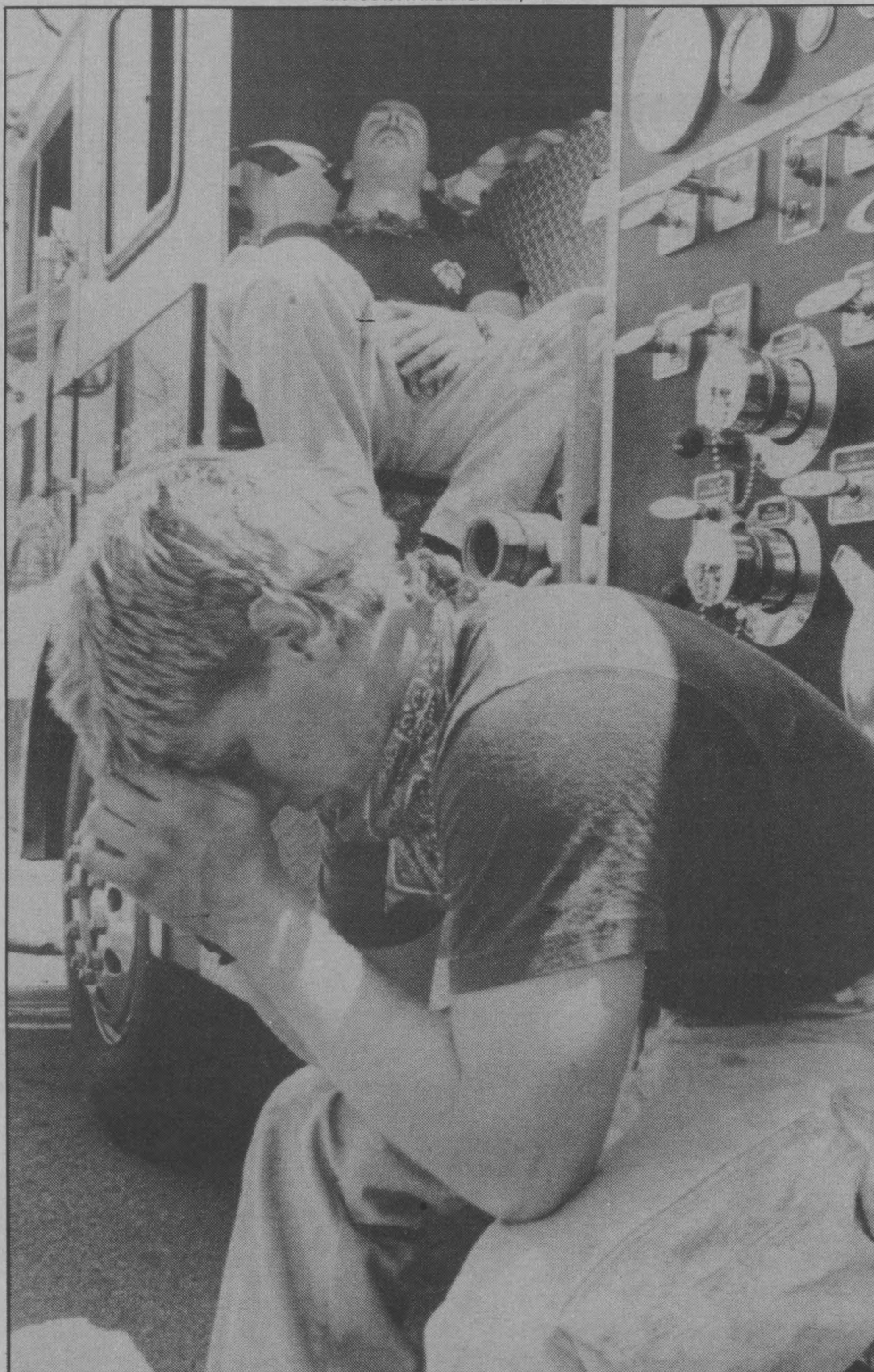
After the questioning, the Red Cross provides assistance through vouchers that work like cash at local stores. "This allows them to make their own selection. They can go to the store of their choice and buy the things they want in the colors they want," American National Red Cross Public Affairs Officer Elizabeth Quirk said. "We will supply anything they need — prescription drugs, eyeglasses, dentures, wheelchairs, anything," she said.

"All the Red Cross disaster services are free. It's a gift from the American people, because that's where the money comes from," Quirk said.

Local businesses have offered much aid to fire victims. One of the more generous donors, Robinson's, donated \$500,000 to victims, who receive gift certificates worth \$100 each. Robinson's gave another \$25,000 for direct relief.

By 6 p.m. Sunday, the Red Cross had helped out 232 families and expects about the same number Monday, Quirk said. "We are urging any victim with a need to come, even if it is only to talk — sometimes

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DAVID ROSEN Daily Nexus

Exhausted firefighters rest on their engine after nearly 72 straight hours in the field. The gruelling regimen took its toll on many who fought the blaze.





# Local Residents Work to Rebuild Lives in Fire's Aftermath

By Larry Speer  
Staff Writer

Firefighters across the state may have heaved a collective sigh of relief Monday after stopping the massive fire that ripped through Santa Barbara County, but local officials have anything but clear sailing in front of them.

The scope of destruction is already pushing government resources and the media to grab for quick fixes to repair the ragged Santa Barbara community — and forcing them to face the long-term implications of a major disaster.

There are homes to rebuild, businesses to start over. For some, day-to-day life may already seem like a never-ending struggle to regain some sense of normalcy. The challenge facing these people is a daunting one: making some sense of the disaster and moving forward.

State Assemblyman Jack O'Connell (D-Santa Barbara) has said the primary objective of everyone involved in the relief effort is to "help folks get back to their nor-

mal routines as soon as possible." "It is important," O'Connell said, "to make the transition period as smooth as possible for anyone seeking to rebuild their homes," and as much assistance should be provided as is possible, he added.

While it is easy to say that helping people is the key to this relief effort, almost everyone was taken by surprise when the fire hit. Santa Barbara — long famous around

## NEWS ANALYSIS

the world as the picturesque setting for a soap opera about an ideal, beachside paradise — may for some time be but a vestige of its former self.

When Governor George Deukmejian toured the fire-ravaged areas of the state last week, he may have marveled that he was not here on vacation, one of the few reasons a Sacramento politician is likely to find himself or herself in the area. When the Governor subsequently declared a state of emergency for the area, the

nation learned of Santa Barbara's woes, and the once-chaired city with the small-town feel had become an official state disaster site.

Deukmejian's declaration of a state of emergency led him to request that President George Bush declare Santa Barbara a federal disaster area. Bush obliged, paving the way for the local area to receive emergency loans and other assistance. The loans will no doubt be used for everything from rebuilding homes to replacing the county-owned infrastructure destroyed in the blaze.

The tallying has hardly been started, however, and damages already hover near \$300 million, leading some to believe the process of estimating the disaster's toll is far, far from over.

Local politicians sought to bring aid to the area almost immediately. Deukmejian was accompanied on his quick tour by numerous local luminaries, including Mayor Sheila Lodge, Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors Chair Tom Rogers, Third District Supervi-

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## REBUILD

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that's the best thing," she said.

Case worker Margo Hawkins added that the Red Cross will not stop "until the needs of everyone have been met."

### The Fire Recovery Information Center: Confronting the Future

Once a family has taken care of its immediate health, food and shelter needs, the second step is the Fire Recovery Information Center — a volunteer community project aimed at organizing fire victims' future plans.

Here, under one roof, a family can talk to volunteer representatives of insurance firms, county tax assessors and utility management officials and get advice on choosing an architect and contractor to begin rebuilding their homes. "People can take care of all the icky business stuff that usually would take six days in about an hour here," said Judy Egenolf, a "victim greeter" at the center.

"People come in here scared and forlorn, but when they leave they are pleasantly amazed at how much they took care of in so little time under only one roof," she said.

Stanley Darrow, account executive for the Smith, Falck, Ceasar & Seider Insurance firm, manned an insurance information booth Monday. "We contact the victim's insurance companies and fax them a loss notice. Checks around \$5,000 came back on Friday to those whose loss notices were faxed Thursday," Darrow said. "This gives them some cash to live on during the lengthy insurance procedures," he added.

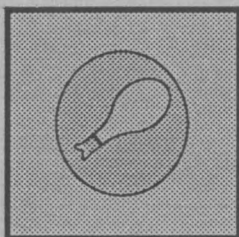
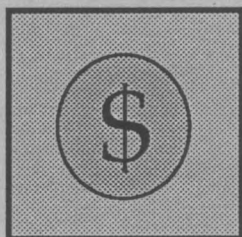
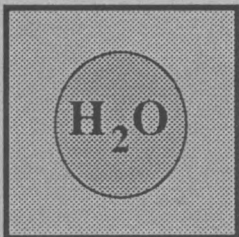
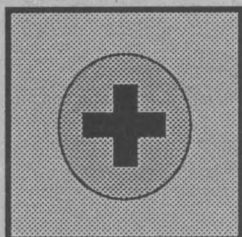
Darrow doesn't see the future as too bleak for the fire victims. "This whole thing is going to work out a lot better than people think," Darrow said.

However, it is a different story for uninsured victims, Darrow said. "They have to rely on grants from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Red Cross," Darrow said. FEMA is a governmental agency that assists victims with rebuilding and loan procedures. FEMA representatives will be at the Red Cross Disaster Service Center today from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Nancy George, a representative from the D.L.

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### Short-Term Aid: Red Cross Service Center, 4410 Cathedral Oaks Drive

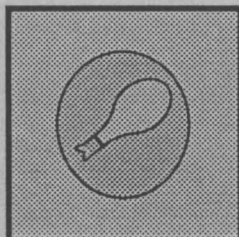
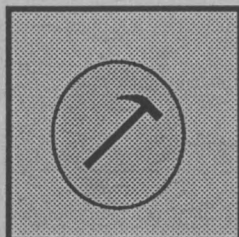
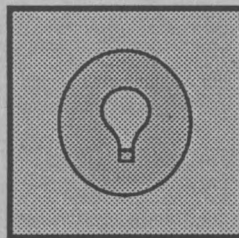


The Red Cross Disaster Service Center, located at the Santa Barbara County Schools Administration Building Auditorium, is designed to provide immediate assistance to families in need.

At the disaster's peak, the Red Cross fed 1000 people and operated six shelters.

Crisis intervention counselors are on hand to help victims cope with emotional stress.

### Long-Term Aid: Fire Recovery Information Center, 4540 Hollister



This center, an all-volunteer effort, was set up to help families with long-term disaster effects: rebuilding, finances, insurance, banking and so forth.

The center is open Monday through Friday, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., and weekends 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Architects, county officials, attorneys, bankers, insurance agents, and utility companies will be on hand to assist.

JEFFREY P. MCMANUS/Daily Nexus



DAVID ROSEN Daily Nexus

A father and son sift through charred remains Thursday in search of some items they could salvage from their home after fire levelled it Wednesday night.

## UCSB: University Helps

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where valuables were normally kept.

The heat from the fire varied from house to house, Bettison said, explaining the reason some people found jewelry and silverware while others found nothing. Bettison described the process as "therapeutic" for the residents. "People were so excited about the small things they found."

Sorting through the ashes of homes was more difficult than typical archeological work because the "debris is all different sizes," Jochim, a practicing archeologist, said. The "psychological stress" created by the disaster is not a typical element of archeology, Jochim added.

Although the students' work was largely successful, it does not appear possible for them to repeat their efforts in other damaged neighborhoods due to the lack of screens and the time commitment necessary for this type of search, Kaufman said.

The department is still offering its services to anyone interested, Bettison said, adding that her number at the UCSB Archeological Information Center is 961-2474.

The fire was contained over the weekend, and people's thoughts are now beginning to turn toward its long-term effects. The UCSB Associated Students government and campus radio station KCSB 91.9 FM are organizing a joint relief drive to collect food and clothing for those suffering from the fire, with drop-off points located in Isla Vista at Cafe Espresso Roma and Woodstock's.

Goleta locations will include the Captain Video store on Fairview, and Jerry's Pollo Fino restaurant in the K-Mart Center. KCSB will also pick up large items such as furniture if contacted, station programmers said.

A.S. is also planning a benefit concert featuring local bands sometime in the next few weeks, A.S. President Michael Chester said. Chester is currently attempting to muster support from I.V. landlords for a plan that would rent apartments to displaced community members at discounted rates.

Red Cross volunteer and Environmental Health and Safety staff member Ellen Radovic added that the Salvation Army and the First Methodist Church are also accepting donations.

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## ANALYSIS: After the Fire, the Time Has Come to Learn from Disaster

Continued from p.7A  
 sor Bill Wallace, State Senator Gary Hart (D-Santa Barbara) and others.

All have contributed in a number of ways since the disaster hit, from Hart's work in the Senate to secure state funding for firefighting needs to O'Connell's volunteer efforts at a local shelter and promised appearance on a KEYT telethon for disaster relief.

Hart is set to bring before the Senate Thursday a bill which would provide \$5,977,000 from the state's special budgetary reserves to the Dept. of Forestry and Fire Protection.

According to Hart's chief administrative assistant, Joe Caves, money allocated by Assembly Bill No. 1811 would pay for firefighting costs in Santa Barbara

County, as well as provide excess funding for what could be a "very severe" fire season.

Hart spoke on the Senate floor Monday, Caves said, reminding his fellow senators of the way Californians united last October after the devastating Northern California earthquake. The state sales tax was raised one quarter of one percent to cover earthquake relief costs, and while no one imagines that this sort of massive increase will be necessary, Hart hoped the same spirit could prevail in aiding the victims of the Santa Barbara fire, Caves added.

While the fire has been analyzed and reported on by everyone from Forest Sawyer on ABC's Nightline program to major American

newspapers like *The New York Times*, many are still unsure what the long-term impact will be on the area.

It has been suggested that the fire could spark new countywide or even statewide laws mandating fireproof building supplies. O'Connell said that during his airborne tour of the area with the Governor "it was apparent that the houses with tile roofs seemed to have a much better chance of surviving" than those with wooden shingles.

No one sees fireproof building materials as the cure-all, however, because in this case nature superseded any manmade cure-alls, and its impact has served to underline mankind's tenuous hold on the land we live on.

If heavy rains come in the

fall, something residents had almost prayed for just a few days ago, the now-barren hillsides could turn to mud and crumble out from under any of the homes lucky enough to have survived the fire. A cruel irony of nature, to be sure.

And it is man's disregard for nature that may very well be the problem now, according to a Los Angeles-based Sierra Club Conservation chair. "It is a matter of balancing out some sort of theory combining the more economic areas, like urban planning, with the areas more connected to the environment, like landscaping."

Stricter weed-control laws, new strategies and theories of development, and "smart" landscaping

that takes environmental realities into account may be necessary to ensure residents' safety on land they once felt they had an inalienable "right" to live on as they pleased.

It is easy to over-exaggerate any disaster, even one as grim as this. Through it all, downtown Santa Barbara was never in danger of burning, the beaches are still packed, and tourists will continue to flock here like so many pilgrims on their way to a vacation mecca.

Said O'Connell administrative assistant Carla Friske: This has been "a disaster, like any other disaster. You feel the wounds, and then you go on, but ... it's (not) going to change the

way anyone looks at Santa Barbara."

The 1990 Santa Barbara fire will eventually become history, like the 1977 Sycamore Canyon fire and the Coyote Canyon fire of 1964 which preceded it. Perhaps the only thing which may differentiate this year's fire from the others is that while the cleanup goes on, so too does the search for the arsonist believed to have set the blaze.

Most people express rage at an act so diabolical and demented; that a single match might have started the blaze that leveled their homes is, for many, almost too much to live with. It is a sad reality for the victims of the fire, and yet another burden they take with them into their new beginnings.

## REBUILD

Continued from p.7A  
 George Construction Company, helped victims at the center's rebuilding booth Monday, providing information on how to go about hiring the right contractor or architect. "Many of the victims were older and were not planning to have to hire a contractor. They are absolutely blank about it. We help them start from scratch," she said.

Some of the people need a little counseling and support as well, George added. "We tell them, 'You can do it. You can make it.'"

Many victims have also been giving one another emotional support. "People are running into neighborhood friends that they never got to know, doctors or their children's teachers. They can come together with common problems and

help each other," George said.

### Fire Victims Speak Out

The stories continued.  
 One man at the information center who asked to be called Dan explained the pain of losing everything as he was looking through a stack of used blue jeans. "It's real humiliating. I just lost everything in a fire and (volunteers at the center are) asking me for my credit card number. It takes a lot of effort," he said.

Dan was thankful for the community's Fire Recovery Information Center. "This place is fantastic. There are a lot of people who are being very helpful," he said.

Lou Topaz, another fire victim, was also impressed with the information center's efforts to help. "All this stuff is so great. It takes a lot of the pressures off," he said.



DAVID ROSEN Daily Nexus

Smoke covers the Valley while the Santa Ynez Mountains are shrouded with flames during last week's devastating brush fire.

Topaz told his traumatic story: "I was driving home from work, but all I did when I got home was get out of my car and then right back in. I could tell that the

fire was close.

"Luckily we kept all our important papers in one box and we were able to get that," he said. "The depression sets in when you start to

remember all those things you could have grabbed—a picture, a videotape of your kid."

Another victim who asked to remain anonymous

tried to relate the feeling. "It's like when you are three hours into a road trip and realize that you forgot something. You know, that strange, disturbing feeling. Well, this feels the same way, only you know you will never get it back."

### Center Locations and Hours

The Red Cross Disaster Services Center is located at the Santa Barbara County School Administration Building Auditorium at 4410 Cathedral Oaks Drive and is open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. this week. The phone number is 879-5173.

The Fire Recovery Information Center is located at the Goleta Youth Sports Complex at 4540 Hollister Avenue. It is open Saturday and Sunday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Monday through Friday 1 p.m. to 8 p.m. The phone numbers are 967-3058 and 683-0639.

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