

the nation

Residential areas threatened by fast-moving brush fires

United Press International
VENTURA, Calif. — More than 500 homes were endangered Wednesday by a fast-moving, 18,000-acre brush fire that swung down mountain slopes into the Ventura city limits.

The major front is burning toward the city of Ventura and is within two miles of the city itself, said County Fire Battalion Chief Dale Miller.

He said "it is already within the city limits," although flames had not reached the downtown area.

The City of Ventura could be in grave danger when the air warms and begins circulating, Miller said. "That is our most critical area and it doesn't look good at this point."

In other areas of the state, mostly in Southern California, thousands of firefighters from 28 states struggled against at least 10 separate blazes, some threatening homes.

The blaze in Ventura County, about 60 miles up the coast from Los Angeles, began Tuesday on Sulphur

Mountain near the community of Ojai and was burning out of control on all fronts.

Many residents of Mira Monte and Oak View fled as the flames edged closer to scattered houses. At Oak View, the "entire end of Main Street is a mass of flames," one observer said.

Further up the coast in Santa Barbara County, the mercury was up to 103 degrees Tuesday when two fires broke out on the brush-covered coastal mountain slopes.

The largest, the 4,000-acre Eagle Canyon blaze, jumped the Pacific Coast Highway and burned to the beach. Part of that fire was burning in the Los Padres National Forest. Fire officials said scattered ranches and homes in the canyon did not appear to be in danger.

California's coastal highway artery, U.S. 101, was closed, snarling traffic more than 10 miles in either direction. A special water-spraying train was sent down the tracks alongside the highway to extinguish

burning railroad ties. Flames roared toward three residential areas, forcing residents to evacuate hastily.

A 175-member strike force made a series of stands at an ARCO petroleum storage area and managed to save the facility and several houses. Thirty-eight head of cattle roasted in the flames.

In the Lake Cachuma area, flames pushed by gusty 30-mph winds spread through 200 acres of brush, forcing closure of California 154 and causing another traffic tieup.

Dense smoke and high winds grounded water-bombing aircraft. Winds foiled efforts by 1,700 firefighters to quell an 8,200-acre blaze that gobbled up timber and brush in the Mother Lode country near Placerville. Steep terrain and thick brush and timber also hindered efforts to control the fire.

The inferno forced evacuation of 300 residents of the community of Swansboro, but fire officials said the fire appeared to be heading toward uninhabited Slate Mountain.

Survey says judges like white club

United Press International
WASHINGTON — Three out of five special judges in the South and probably a majority in the nation belong to segregated social clubs, a civil rights organization said Wednesday.

In a survey of social clubs and federal judges in 11 southern states and four cities outside the South, the Southern Regional Council of Atlanta, a non-profit organization, found that of 127 southern federal district judges, 58 percent belonged to a social club or association that has never had a black or other minority as a member. Sixty-one percent of

the circuit judges in the South belong to all-white clubs.

"A crisis of conscience exists in the country's federal judiciary," said Steve Suits, executive director of the council. "The prevalence of memberships in segregated clubs and associations among federal judges endangers the appearance of impartiality and fairness of the third branch of government."

The report said 51 percent of the federal circuit and district court judges in four nonsouthern cities — Los Angeles, St. Louis, Chicago and Baltimore — belong to all-white clubs.

The survey did not identify the judges that belonged to all-white clubs.

"There is no attempt here to embarrass any individual," Suits said. "The issue is whether any judge can properly belong to such clubs, and the problem is that segregated clubs are the preference of most federal judges."

He said the report is based on information collected from public sources, civil rights organizations, lawyers and club members, as of Jan. 1, 1979. No judges appointed since that time were included in the study.

Split couple 'battle for possessions'

Father tries to kidnap kids

United Press International
MONROE, Wash. — Doug and Ardis Whipple guard their children night and day, in constant fear that their wealthy former husband will forcibly take the three youngsters and spirit them back to an armed fortress in Mexico.

The Whipples are so certain and so worried about the potential of paid kidnapers that the children no longer go to school and the family seldom leaves home.

It could be days or months or years, but eventually, says Mrs. Whipple, people on her husband's payroll will come to steal Manuel, 12, Enrique, 10, and Cristina, 7.

Manuel and Enrique have already been through a kidnap of sorts and a counter-kidnap in the battle for possession.

When Mrs. Whipple was divorced from Manuel Sautto, a Mexican citizen and father of the children, the divorce decree granted her custody but allowed occasional visits with the father in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico.

The boys went on a six-week visit in the summer of 1975, but the father never allowed them to return. A four-year struggle ensued,

and it cost the Whipples more than \$20,000 to retrieve the boys.

"We borrowed every cent we could," said Mrs. Whipple. The money was spent on fees for attorneys, phone calls, plane tickets and, finally, on private investigator Jay J. Armes of El Paso, Texas.

In July, Armes engineered a meeting between the mother and children in a bungalow on the outskirts of San Miguel de Allende. The building was guarded by 15 armed men, but Armes reportedly overcame them and broke the mother and children free from the "fortress."

They rushed to Mexico City, flew to Juarez and drove over the border in an official car.

But now the Whipples believe Sautto or his friends are preparing to get the children back.

Edward Lange, attorney for the Whipples, described the Sautto family as wealthy and highly influential in the town of San Miguel de Allende.

"They will eventually get the kids," said Mrs. Whipple, "because he and his family can keep going well with all the money they have."

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