

# Newsletter



## Southern California Association of Foresters & Fire Wardens

### OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

2010-2011

#### OFFICERS

President Chris Childers—SBC  
First Vice President Troy Whitman—SCE  
Second Vice Pres. Robert Michael—RRU  
Secretary Gordon Martin—CNF  
Treasurer David Leininger—LAC retired

#### DIRECTORS

Dan Snow—BDF  
Vacant—ANF  
Tom Plymale—LPF  
Steve Griffin—SQF  
David Allen—MVU  
Don Forsyth—ORC  
Mike Heffner—KRN  
Rod Megli—VNC  
Frank Vidales—LAC  
Tim Ernst—LFD  
Doug Lannon—BDU  
Abigail Srader—CSR—Membership  
Steve Reeder—SLU  
Ed Shabro—Vendor Representative  
Jim Neumann—Publicity  
Paul H. Rippens—Newsletter Editor

*We, the members of the Southern California Association of Foresters and Fire Wardens, do band together for the purpose of strengthening inter-agency cooperation, fire safety coordination, and fellowship.*



VLAT's The DC-10's pg 8



Photo by Ken Morris

**An Association dedicated to the  
Training and Safety of Southern  
California Wildland Firefighters for  
over 80 years.**

Minutes of the Board of Directors of the Southern California  
Association of Foresters and Fire Wardens

April 8, 2011 - Shell Beach, California

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# FIRE WHIRLS

## A Message from President Christian Childers - SBC

We are less than a month away from our Southern California Association of Foresters and Fire Wardens (FFW) Annual Training and Safety Conference, and “have we got a great show” planned for you. Before I preview the program, let me explain to you why I’ve felt so proud to be your President this year.

One of the co-founders of the FFW, and the first President, was Santa Barbara County’s first Forester Frank Dunne. One of the main reason he (and Los Angeles County Forester Spence Turner) started this organization was the need for better “inter-agency cooperation and fire safety coordination” he experienced on several large fires during the 1920’s. So, I found myself reminiscing about our fire history.



SCAFFWs 1st President SBC Forester Frank Dunne (left) and 2010/11 President Battalion Chief Christian Childers (right)

Santa Barbara County (SBC) has had a long history of catastrophic wildland fires. Several of these fires resulted in fatalities and many more had “near misses.” Forester Dunne’s SBC fire history peaked in 1932, when the Matilija Fire burned some 220,000 acres in VNC and SBC and was the largest recorded fire in the State during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

SBC’s fire history could be said to have culminated in the 2007-09 fire seasons, when we had five major fires: the 2007 240,207 acre Zaca Fire became the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest in the State’s history (2003’s 280,278 acre Cedar Fire in San Diego

County is 1<sup>st</sup>); 2008 included the “near miss” Gap and Tea Fires; and 2009 saw the Jesusita “near miss” fire and the La Brea Fire, which would have been a lot worse, if we hadn’t had some recent Los Padres N.F. (LPF) prescribed burns to anchor our backfires from. Fortunately, due in part to a “fire-service-wide” concentration on safety and inter-agency cooperation (efforts the FFW has been involved with since it’s inception), no fatalities occurred on these latest incidents.

This year’s program includes presentations by many of our current fire service leaders and fire season predictions. The program also includes a historical overview of the 1966 Loop Fire, which claimed the lives of 13 El Carriso Hot Shots and seriously injured and/or affected many more of their crewmembers.

I have often worked with “El Carriso” locally and on assignments throughout the United States. The El Carriso Hot Shots have a long and distinguished history. In fact, one of El Carriso’s last assignments before the Loop Fire Tragedy, was their helping control the 1966 Wellman Fire on the LPF. Sadly, tragedies bring painful lessons to remember and learn from. This year’s Loop Fire presentation, by three of the 1966 El Carriso Hot Shots, should provide many more “lessons learned.”



El Carriso Hot Shots Ed Cosgrove (left) and Rich Leak (right) before the 1966 Loop Fire. Photos by David S. Westley

Over the years we have proudly served in our own and each other’s “fire communities.” We welcome each other’s support at our incidents and we have this awesome gathering each year to remember, learn, and prepare for the upcoming fire season. This, I believe, is the type of program Foresters Dunne and Turner had in mind when they founded the FFW, and why I’m so proud to be this year’s President.

**SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA  
ASSOCIATION OF FORESTERS  
and FIRE WARDENS  
ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT**



**WEDNESDAY, May 4, 2011**

**7:15 A.M. - CHECK - IN**

**8:00 A.M. - SHOTGUN START**

**Location:** Yucaipa Valley Golf Club  
33725 Chapman Heights Rd.  
Yucaipa, CA 790-6522

**Price:** **\$65.00 per person.**  
Includes Green Fees, 1/2 cart,  
Prizes, and 2011 SCAFFW  
Membership



**RESERVATIONS REQUIRED BY  
APRIL 29TH**

**Contact Dan Snow at 951-313-5463 or  
check our web site for further information**

**[www.scaffw.org](http://www.scaffw.org)**

**PRE-REGISTRATION FOR THE  
2011 ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE  
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION  
OF FORESTERS AND FIRE WARDENS**

Work is almost completed for the 81st Annual Wildland Fire Training and Safety Conference that will be held on May 5 & 6 at Camp Pilgrim Pines in Oak Glen, California. You may now download the pre-registration sheet from our web site and send in your registration fees. Meanwhile, if you have any suggestions regarding our annual conference, please E-mail them to [SCAFFW@aol.com](mailto:SCAFFW@aol.com).



**Cover Photo:** ANF crews arrive on scene at the Morris Fire, 2009. Photo by Ken Morris.

**SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION  
OF FORESTERS AND FIRE WARDENS  
81ST ANNUAL TRAINING AND SAFETY  
CONFERENCE.**

**May 5 & 6, 2011**

**CAMP PILGRIM PINES**

**Check our web site for further  
information [www.scaffw.org](http://www.scaffw.org)**

**SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION of  
FORESTERS & FIRE WARDENS**  
**BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**  
**April 8, 2011**

The meeting of the Southern California Association of Foresters and Fire Wardens was called to order by President Chris Childers at 0910 hours at The Spyglass Inn, Shell Beach, CA.

**Officers and Directors Present:**

Chris Childers - Santa Barbara County Fire Dept.  
Robert Michael - CAL FIRE - Riverside County  
Gordon Martin – Cleveland National Forest  
David Leininger – Los Angeles Co. Fire Dept.  
Dave Allen - CAL FIRE - San Diego County  
Rod Megli – Ventura County Fire Dept.  
Doug Lannon – CAL FIRE – San Bernardino Co.  
Tim Ernst – Los Angeles Fire Dept.  
Frank Vidales – Los Angeles County Fire Dept.  
Abigail Srader – CAL FIRE – Southern Region  
Don Forsyth – Orange County Fire Authority  
Steve Reeder – CAL FIRE – San Luis Obispo Co.  
Tom Plymale - Los Padres National Forest  
Dan Snow – San Bernardino National Forest

**Officers and Directors Absent:**

Troy Whitman - Southern California Edison  
Jim Neumann - Publicity  
Mike Heffner – Kern County Fire Dept.  
Steve Griffin – Sequoia National Forest  
Paul H. Rippens – Newsletter Editor  
Ed Shabro - Vendor Representative

**Guests:**

Herb McElwee - Past President & Life Member  
Terry Raley - Past President & Life Member  
Tony Caezza - Past President & Life Member  
Preston Fouts - CAL FIRE - San Diego. Co.

**Welcome:** Rob Lewin, Acting Unit Chief, CAL FIRE, San Luis Obispo Unit, welcomed the association to Shell Beach and thanked the board for all of their work. He also stressed the importance of the organization and the interagency cooperation that we foster.

**Minutes:** Motion by Treasurer Leininger, second by Director Allen to approve the minutes of the February 4, 2011 meeting. The Motion was approved.

**Treasurers Report:** Treasurer Leininger presented his report covering the period from February 4, 2011 to April 8, 2011.

Balance as of 2-4-11	\$20,820.60
Receipts:	
Membership Dues	\$0.00
Disbursements:	
Total disbursements	\$1,630.65
Balance on hand	\$19,189.95
Last year at this time	\$15,88203

Motion by Director Forsyth, seconded by Director Megli to accept the Treasurers report as presented. The motion was approved.

**Committee Reports:**

**Arrangements:** Chairman Lannon stated that Camp Pilgrim Pines is still there and doing good although they received 3” of snow the other day. The Camp Director was invited to the Director’s dinner Wednesday night and was very appreciative to be included. Treasurer Leininger and Chairman Lannon met with the camp and have finalized the menu. The food will be served cafeteria style. There will be vegetarian selections at every meal. Director Forsyth reported that Orange County will provide a crew of eleven to assist. Ventura County will have 2 vans available. Riverside County will have its radio cache available again this year. Treasurer Leininger reported that any Directors that stay Wednesday night need to pay the \$30 night use fee plus the fee for which ever room they used. Treasurer Leininger will assemble a list of what rooms were actually used for presentation at the May 6 meeting to help plan for next year.

**Programs:** First Vice President Whitman was unable to attend the meeting but sent a copy of the agenda. President Childers led a discussion on the proposed programs during which some changes were made. The programs, speakers and tentative times are:

**Thursday May 5, 2011**

- 1000 Opening of the 81<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference  
President Chris Childers, Santa Barbara County Fire Department  
Honor Guard - Kern County Fire Department  
Invocation - Rev. June Boutwell  
Pledge of Allegiance - Tony Caezza, Ventura County Fire Protection District, Retired  
Introduction of Program Chair - First Vice President Troy Whitman, So. Cal Edison Co.  
Introduction of Master of Ceremonies - Bob Tinker  
Introduction of Vendors and Exhibitors
- 1025 Introduction of "The Raffle" & First Raffle Drawings - Tim Ernst, Los Angeles Fire Department
- 1030 Keynote Address - Ken Pimlott, CAL FIRE, Director (Acting)
- 1100 Hawkins "Live" (Decade in Review) – John Hawkins, CAL FIRE
- 1130 The Art of Campbell Prediction System meets BEHAVE – Bruce Schubert/Doug Campbell
- 1200 *Lunch*
- 1300 Camp 16 Burnover – John Tripp, Los Angeles County Fire Department
- 1400 The Use of RAWs in the Fire Service – Doug Forrest, CAL FIRE, Retired
- 1430 *Break*
- 1445 Next Generation ICS – Ret. Colonel Jack Thorpe/Bill Clayton, CAL FIRE
- 1545 Fireline Factors – Brad Mayhew
- 1800 Dinner

**Friday May 6, 2011**

- 0700 Breakfast
- 0800 Fuels and Weather Update – Tom Rolinski, USFS South Ops. Predictive Services
- 0830 Social Media and the Fire Service – Daniel Berlant, CAL FIRE PIO
- 0915 Cal Poly, SLO's Forestry & Natural Resources Management Dept. - Dr. Doug Piirto
- 0930 Break
- 0945 Survivors of the Loop Fire – Ed Cosgrove, Rich Leak, and Jerry Smith
- 1145 Presentation to Outgoing President – First Vice President Troy Whitman, So. Cal. Edison
- 1200 End of Conference
- 1215 Lunch

Secretary Martin will produce the speakers certificates. Directors were reminded to provide the speaker sheets to First Vice-President Whitman.

**Exhibits & Demonstrations:** Second Vice President Michael reported he has been in contact with Vendor Representative Shabro and he had made a number of contacts but had not gotten very many commitments beyond the usual suspects. Director Forsyth reported that the Sim Table group did want to set up a display but that they would need the upstairs room. Director Martin reported that the Wildland Firefighter Memorial group would like to set up a display. Director Vidales will need the final draft of the vendor acknowledgement list by April 15.

**Registration and Membership:** Director Srader reported that there have been 20 on-line registrations so far and that Newsletter Editor Rippens will be send out a new e-mail soon. Director Srader will put together a special rate from for the directors with the rates for Wednesday night and the Director's dinner and send it out so that the directors can preregister for the rooms that they will use. She requested an electronic version of Presidents Childers signature to put on the membership cards.

**Entertainment & Raffle:** Director Ernst stated that he would be sending out a donation letter to the Directors so that they could solicit donations. Times are tough and he has not received any of the letters back with prizes. He reminded the Directors to be thinking about their \$75 raffle prize. President Childers reported that the band from his department has a conflict and would not be available. Director Snow reported that the group the Ramblin' Rangers is available to play however, they have a limited repertoire. It was decided that we would go with the Ramblin' Rangers and back them with Chairman Neumann's crash cart.

**Publicity:** Chairman Neumann was unable to attend the meeting but sent an e-mail that said an ad was sent to Wildland Firefighter. Did not place ad with CSFA as instructed. The Board agreed that we were not getting the bang for our buck with paid advertising and decided that the advertising in department newsletters and word of mouth was a better deal.

**Historian:** No Report.

**Safety:** Director Forsyth reported that he had contacted CHP and the same officer from last year plans to be there. He also reported that he has the bear horns and reminded everyone about the use of the meal bell to alert people to emergencies and that if we see people using the bell for other purposes we should stop them.

**Golf:** Director Snow reported that the golf tournament is good to go for this year and that he has 12 people registered so far. Director Forsyth reminded the County Directors that they were responsible to get the conference and golf flyers out to all the departments in their county and not just to the department that they represent.

**Newsletters:** President Childers reminded everyone that Editor Rippens needs any articles and/or photos that anyone can find or create.

**Old Business:** Second Vice President Michael passed out the challenge coin to the directors. The Association purchased 400 coins with one for each person registered for the conference, one for each speaker at the conference and 3 for each Director. Coins not given away would be available for purchase by the Directors or general membership for \$5.00 each. New Director's name tags have been made in both pin on and lanyard versions.

Second Vice President Michael reported that he had priced t-shirts as a publicity give away for the conference and that it was \$2,200 for 250, 6-color printed t-shirts. Treasurer Leininger pointed out that \$1,500 was removed from the publicity budget with the idea that it could be used for the shirts. A lively discussion followed with various ideas as to the design and colors. Director Allen moved that we have a one color screen standard association logo, large on the back of the shirt and small on the front, and that we purchase 200-250- t-shirts as long as the price is less than \$1.500. Director Ernst seconded the motion and the motion passed. If the cost exceeds the \$1,500 the project will be postponed

until next year. Director Snow presented the Director's wear that he had made including shirts, jackets and a golf shirt.

Director Snow presented the Director's wear that he had made including shirts, jackets and a golf shirt. He will send out an e-mail for any final orders now that we have seen the final product.

**Life Membership Recommendations:** There were no Life Membership recommendations.

**New Business:** Chairman Lannon reported that his second plan for a replacement for himself as the BDU Director had fallen through but that he would continue to serve as the conduit to the BDU until a replacement could be found.

**Next Meeting:** The next meeting of the Board of Directors of the Southern California Association of Foresters and Fire Wardens will be held at 1600 hours, May 4, 2011 at Camp Pilgrim Pines.

President Childers thanked Director Reeder for hosting the meeting and adjourned at 1153 hours.

Respectfully Submitted, Gordon P. Martin,  
Association Secretary

**~ CORRECTION ~**

In the February 2011 newsletter, a mistake was made in the Matilija Fire article. The 2009 Station Fire burned 160,577 acres. The total acreage burned in California in 2009 was 336,026.

***Did you or are you thinking of changing your E-mail address? Please remember to contact the SCAFFW at SCAFFW@aol.com and let us know so we can send you your newsletters and other important information***



## ATTENDING THE CONFERENCE

*By Paul H. Rippens - Life Member*

In just a few short weeks, I'll be packing up my truck and heading for Oak Glen and the 81<sup>st</sup> Annual Wildland Fire Training and Safety Conference of the Southern California Association of Foresters and Fire Wardens. You might ask yourself why would a person drive for four hours to attend such an event. For me, the reason is simple. The "Foresters & Fire Wardens" is simply the best forestry and fire related organization I have ever belonged to.

I spent over 37 years as a forester for the County of Los Angeles Fire Department and although I knew of the organization since my father had been a member for many years, I had never attended a conference until I took a piece of equipment to the event in Oak Glen as part of the equipment display and demonstrations. That was in 1976.

In 1978, I was asked to become part of the team that runs the organization by serving as the Membership Chairman. That soon led to the position of Secretary (1982-1989), Second Vice President, First Vice President and President in 1993. I remained as the Director from LAC until I retired in 1995 at which time I was asked to remain on the Board as Secretary (1995-2008). I reluctantly gave up that position in 2008 when my wife and I moved to Nevada and it would have been impossible to fulfill the position from that distance. Fortunately, I have been able to stay involved with the Association by keeping up their website and by serving as the newsletter editor.

During my career, there were many times when I would run into people I knew from Foresters and Fire Wardens both at meetings and major incidents. To me, it was always reassuring to know that this person shared the same values that I did and that we knew each other well enough to be able to work along side one another without any reservations. When you think of it, that is a very important part of belonging to such an

organization.

The Foresters and Fire Wardens Annual Conference is about another vitally important thing – the training and safety of Southern California Wildland Firefighters. We all know how important training can be and even with all the training we receive, accidents happen and lives are lost. If this organization can save just one life, we have done our job. And so I ask you this. Is it worth your time and the cost to attend the 81<sup>st</sup> Annual Wildland Fire Training and Safety Conference? You bet it is! And I hope to see you there.

Oh, and by the way, this will be my thirty-third consecutive conference – and I can't wait to get there.



### THOMAS EDWARD MYALL

March 18, 1941 – March 13, 2011

Thomas Edward Myall, 69, of Goleta, CA, passed away peacefully at home on the evening of March 13, 2011. Thom graduated from the Dearborn High School class of 1959 and Michigan State University in 1963 with a BS in Forestry.

Thom worked for the USDA-Forest Service in Fire Management for 39 years before retiring in 2000. Thom helped develop and was on a National Type One Incident Management Team and National Area Command Team for 20 years. He volunteered as Pack Master and Scout Master for the Boy Scouts for 10 years. His hobbies were backpacking, hunting, fishing and wood-working.

Thom was active in many local organizations, most notably the De La Guerra y Pacheco chapter of E Clampus Vitus, Elks Lodge No.613, the Scottish Society of Santa Barbara, Goleta Valley Beautiful, and Sons of the American Revolution.

## VLAT's: The DC-10s, Today's Supertankers

*By Douglas J. Lannon*

After five California Fire Seasons, the two DC-10 Very Large Air Tankers (VLATs) based out of the Southern California Logistics Airport are proving their worth. Since flying the first wildland firefighting mission in July of 2006, Tanker 910 and Tanker 911 have flown more than 350 firefighting missions within the States of California, Washington, and Montana in the United States, and the Province of Victoria in Australia.



Tanker 910 and Tanker 911 are owned and operated by 10 Tanker Air Carrier LLC in Victorville, California. Both aircraft are McDonnell Douglas DC-10 converted cargo airliners, formerly owned by Omni Air International of Tulsa, Oklahoma. Tanker 910 is a DC-10-10 aircraft and Tanker 911 is a DC-10-30 aircraft. The DC-10 air tankers obtained their Supplemental Type Certificates from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and they both hold standard category certificates of airworthiness, unlike other aircraft in the fire service. This means that both Tanker 910 and Tanker 911 meet the same stringent maintenance standards as a FAA certificated passenger airliner with enhancements tailored specifically for firefighting missions.

The idea originated in May of 2002 when the principals of Omni Air International and Cargo Conversions LLC, a freighter conversion company

based out of San Carlos, California, developed the concept of a DC-10 firefighting aircraft. Ironically in mid-summer of 2002, two separate air tanker crashes occurred which received wide media attention and distribution because they were both caught on camera. On June 17, 2002, a Lockheed C-130A Hercules air tanker was being videotaped while making a drop on the Cannon Fire near Walker, California, when a structural weakness caused a failure of the main wing assembly and the aircraft crashed in the middle of town, killing the three crew members onboard. The crash caused an additional fire and prompted the evacuation of the town of Walker. On July 18, 2002 while fighting the Big Elk Fire near Estes Park, Colorado, another air tanker, a P4Y-2G (a modified Navy PB4Y-2 Privateer), crashed killing both crew members onboard and starting a large fire at the crash site. Again in a similar manner, a structural failure had occurred in the main wing assembly. The videotape of the C-130-A crash and the still photos taken of the P4Y-2 crash, clearly show the main wing assemblies on both aircraft literally snapping off while the tankers were in flight.

The air tanker crashes in 2002 along with other firefighting aircraft incidents and crashes prior to, had raised concerns bringing attention to the age and safety of the older transport aircraft being used as air tankers, since the majority had predominantly been World War II and Korean War era aircraft. This prompted the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (USFS) and the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to jointly create a Blue Ribbon Panel to review and examine the Federal Government's Fire and Aviation Program regarding their firefighting aircraft. The Blue Ribbon panel encouraged the private air tanker industry to consider the development and testing of different airframes in an effort to come up with some new generation air tankers.

Testing began to see if the DC-10 airframe could fly firefighting missions by using a flight



simulator and a DC-10 freighter. The next step was to find a suitable tank delivery system for the airframe. The National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) located in Boise, Idaho suggested that a large deep “gravity feed” tank would be the most effective tank for the large aircraft, because it allows for a constant flow discharge of water or retardant, providing optimal product coverage at the drop site. The patented tank system in use on the Erickson Air Crane S-64 firefighting helicopters is just such a system. Victorville Aerospace LLC completed the tank modifications on the DC-10 airframes, mounting three main inline tanks externally to the belly of the aircraft with two smaller fairing tanks supplementing the middle tank. Baffles were fitted inside the tanks in order to prevent load transfer, weight shifting, and sloshing of the water or retardant load in the tanks during in-flight operations.



Both DC-10 air tankers can carry a payload of up to 12,000 US Gallons or 45,600 Liters of fire retardant, gel, foam, or just plain water; depending on what has been requested by the Incident Commander. To put this into perspective, you would need ten S2-T air tankers at 1,200 gallons each, six P2V Neptune air tankers at 2,000 gallons each, or four P3 Orion air tankers at 3,000 gallons each, to deliver the same amount of product as just one of the DC-10 air tankers. The fire retardant delivery systems on the DC-10s allow for variable coverage levels from Coverage Level 1 to Coverage Level 8 and are manually selected and controlled from inside the cockpit of the aircraft. The complete payload can be delivered using a

salvo drop or the load can be split into multiple drops, depending on the specific need. The aircrafts are each powered by three General Electric CF6 engines and they can travel about 3,000 nautical miles with a full load of fuel. The DC-10s have an operational range of 500 nautical miles at 310 knots, fully loaded with product. Typical drop speeds are between 140 and 150 knots at a height of 200 feet above ground level to 500 feet above ground level, with the optimum drop height being 300 feet above ground level. The time it takes to refill the retardant tanks for the DC-10 air tankers is between 8 to 12 minutes when using all three reloading ports. The length of refill time just depends on the type and amount of the product being loaded.

The DC-10 air tankers are operated by a crew of three; a Pilot, a Co-pilot, and a Flight Engineer. With a full load of retardant, the aircrafts fly unpressurized to a fire at an altitude of between 10,000 and 12,000 feet, although higher altitudes are possible if the crew wears oxygen masks. However, pressurizing with a full external load lowers the margin of structural adequacy if severe gusts are encountered. After the retardant load has been dropped, the aircraft pressurizes and climbs to a normal cruising altitude for the return trip back to base. During a drop, the aircraft's center of gravity (CG) remains within the normal CG envelope, shifting from the forward edge of the envelope to the aft edge of the envelope, which requires some forward nose down trim in order to hold drop altitude until the drop is completed. However, this maneuver is not abrupt and does not subject the aircraft to loads any greater than normal airline service. The DC-10 Tanker Pilots are trained in a DC-10 simulator at the Aerospace Aviation Center in Miami, Florida on these and other unusual flight conditions.

The DC-10 air tankers are based out of the Victorville Air Tanker Base, located at the Southern California Logistics Airport in Victorville, California, which is the old retired George Air Force Base. The air tanker base facility is leased

and operated by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire), assigned to the San Bernardino Unit (BDU) and is an ideal facility for a Supertanker (VLAT) Air Attack Base and is also often used as a reload base or staging area for other fixed wing and rotary wing aircraft assigned to fires and other emergencies in the surrounding area. The air tanker base is staffed seasonally by Cal Fire personnel with: 1 Battalion Chief, Air Tactical Group Supervisor; 2 Fire Captains, Air Tanker Base Managers; 2 Fire Apparatus Engineers, Assistant Air Tanker Base Managers; and 7 Firefighter-1s, who act as Base Radio Operators, Ramp Managers, Loaders, Wing Walkers, and Parking Tenders. Other personnel working out of the VLAT Base are civilian employees of 10 Tanker Air Carrier; Dyna-Corp Corporation; and ICL Performance Products LP, which include: the Pilots and Flight Crew for the DC-10 VLATS; the Pilot for the Lead Plane, a L-90 King Air who can also be used as a Relief Air Tactical Group Supervisor platform on incidents, as needed; and the Mix Masters who operate the water and retardant pumps, mix the retardant, and who store the mixed retardant in the storage tanks located at the tanker base loading pits. The combined available capacity of the storage tanks is more than 50,000 gallons of product. An additional Cal Fire VLAT Reload Base is available at the McClellan Air Force Base near Sacramento, California. This base gets activated when fire activity in northern California requires the need or when fires around the state require the need for multiple VLATs giving the VLATs an additional facility to work from. The McClellan Reload Base is administered by Cal Fire, Amador El Dorado Unit (AEU) and can be staffed within a matter of hours by AEU personnel trained to work with the Supertankers (VLATs).

Tanker 910 was first carded (certified) by Cal Fire to fly as a Very Large Air Tanker within California in July of 2006. Qualified as a Call When Needed (CWN) resource, it was made available to Incident Commanders on major incidents during the remainder of the 2006 Fire

Season. There were several significant incidents that season where the DC-10 was asked to fly several fire missions on major fires in California including the Sawtooth Fire in the Yucca Valley-Pioneertown area of the High Desert region in San Bernardino County, the Rico Fire in the southern region of Monterey County, and the tragic Esperanza Fire located in the Banning-Idyllwild area of Riverside County.



In 2007, a three-year “exclusive use” contract was signed between 10 Tanker Air Carrier and Cal Fire making Tanker 910 the first firefighting supertanker exclusively available to the taxpayers and the Wildland Firefighting agencies in the State of California for the 2007, 2008, and 2009 Fire Seasons. Fire Season 2007 proved to be a very active Fire Season for Tanker 910 which flew major firefighting missions around the State in the Counties of Plumas, San Bernardino, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, Ventura, and San Diego.

In the spring of 2008, 10 Tanker Air Carrier had successfully carded their second VLAT, Tanker 911. This gave the wildland firefighting agencies another “big gun” for their arsenal. This allowed Tanker 911 to be available as an additional CWN VLAT and gave Cal Fire a relief VLAT to cover their “exclusive use” contract when Tanker 910 went out of service or was undergoing routine maintenance. California saw heavy major fire activity during the 2008 Fire Season. In June 2008, a series of lightning storms caused by an earlier than normal influx of

monsoonal moisture from the Gulf Regions ignited approximately 2,014 fires in central and northern California in just two days time. These fires would eventually burn more than 750,000 acres and last almost two months. Many of the lightning fires burned together creating major fire complexes. Both the Victorville Air Tanker Base and the McClellan Reload Base facilities were activated during the 2008 Fire Siege and both Tanker 910 and Tanker 911 flew multiple missions, often at the same time, but on different fires. These missions included fires in the Counties of Monterey, Butte, Shasta, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, Santa Clara, and Orange.

negotiated, the DC-10s were again available on a Call When Needed (CWN) basis. During this time period they flew on the Crown Fire in Los Angeles County and on the Bowl Fire and the Post Fire in Kern County. At the same time, Cal Fire was beginning to use the Victorville Air Tanker Base as a reload base for Cal Fire's S2-T Tracker air tankers on a fairly regular basis. Late in the Fire Season, 10 Tanker Air Carrier won the bid for another three year "exclusive use" contract with Cal Fire. The 2010 Fire Season proved to be a fairly quiet season for California, but California had a record rainfall this winter, and it will be interesting to see how the 2011 Fire Season will play out.

Photo by Bill Peters - CAL FIRE



Photo by Troy Whitman - SCE



Fire Season 2009 would turn out to be an unusual year for the VLATs. In California, the fire activity was fairly active. The VLATs flew several firefighting missions including: the Gloria Fire in Monterey County; the tragic Station Fire in Los Angeles County; the Oak Glen Fire, the Pendleton Fire, and the Sheep Fire in San Bernardino County; the Guiberson Fire in Ventura County; and the Vandenberg Fire on the Vandenberg Air Force Base in Santa Barbara County. However, the winter would prove most interesting for Tanker 911 and the L-90 King Air Lead Plane, because they were both activated to fly to the Province of Victoria, Australia for a trial period during their Fire Season. Tanker 911 flew some active firefighting missions during their time spent in Australia.

*Douglas J. Lannon retired as an Assistant Chief in December 2010 from the Cal Fire San Bernardino Unit (BDU) where he was last assigned to oversee the operations of the BDU Mountain and Desert Divisions, including the Very Large Air Tanker (VLAT) Base in Victorville, California. Chief Doug Lannon had nearly 38 years of firefighting experience when he retired from CDF and Cal Fire. He is currently an active Member of the Board of Directors of the Southern California Association of Foresters and Fire Wardens.*

Excerpts for this story were taken from Airliner's Magazine, March/April 2008, Issue 110 and from CAL FIRE reports.

In 2010, the "exclusive use" contract between 10 Tanker Air Carrier and Cal Fire was up for bid and until the bidding process was



## The Shaker At Sylmar

With the recent tragic earthquake in Japan, it might be time to reflect on a major quake that occurred in Los Angeles County 40 years ago. This edited story is from *"Ride The Devil Wind"* by Los Angeles County Fire Department Historian Dave Boucher.

At 6:30 a.m., February 9, 1971, a temblor rated at 6.6 of the Richter Scale violently awakened the residents of the entire San Fernando Valley, as well as surrounding communities. Centered just south of Bear Divide, it became known as the "Sylmar" or San Fernando" quake. It caused the ground north of Foothill Boulevard to rise three feet in a split second. Shock waves, arriving at Fire Station 74 in Kagel Canyon, four miles from the epicenter, tore the station from its foundations. The violent shaking threw Captain Scott Franklin and his crew out of their beds. They ducked for cover as various pieces of furniture hurtled past them. The right rear tires of Engine 74's Crown pumper left black rubber marks on the walls of the old apparatus barn three feet above the floor level.

Seven miles to the west, Fire Station 46, at Olive View Sanitarium, was also affected. Constructed in 1926, it simply shook itself to pieces. The engine was jammed against the apparatus door, trapping the equipment inside until Captain Bert Buck and his crew could pry the door open.

The Los Angeles City Fire Department handled the bulk of the earthquake-caused responses facing fire agencies in the area. It protects approximately 95 percent of the San Fernando Valley south of the San Gabriel Mountains. A large county hospital within the City of Los Angeles, the previously-mentioned Olive View Sanitarium, had only recently been completed and occupied. It lost its first floor, as the four floors above "pancaked" onto it in one piece. Separately constructed staircase and smoke towers fell away to one side completely intact.

Three miles to the east, the earthquake caused nearly complete destruction of the Veterans' Administration Hospital, causing 47 of the total 58 earthquake-related fatalities.



Other hospital buildings, also constructed prior to strict codes, fell into numerous pieces, killing or trapping patients and staff in the concrete, masonry and tile rubble.

Los Angeles County and City fire crews, along with Construction Division personnel, used cranes and tractors throughout the next 48 hours to break concrete, drilling and probing for victims and removing bodies as they went. Survivors were given medical aid at the scene and were then transferred to other area hospitals via ambulances and by city and county fire department helicopters.

Since the Veterans' Hospital was in county territory, the large force of L.A. City firefighters was gradually withdrawn and replaced by County crews. The L.A. City crews were sorely needed in their own areas to fight fires and work in conjunction with other agencies to restore the water supply. The quake had, in several neighborhoods south and west of the epicenter, broken the water mains, which subsequently drained local reservoirs.

The damage from the earthquake would total slightly over \$500 million.

Seventeen years would pass before the Los Angeles County Fire Department would be involved in a similar earthquake disaster operation.

