

MY EXPERIENCE IN THE HIGH PARK FIRE OF 2012

We'd been having smoke in the air for days, an eerie light in the daytime mocked the real sunlight. It had a golden, reddish tinge that looked surreal and the smell of fire lingered in our nostrils. We could see the glow at night on the horizon of the worst fire ever in recorded history to plague this area of northern Colorado.

The barricade at Red Feather Lakes Road and CR 37, our road, attested to the seriousness of this devouring disaster. Young men posted menacingly yet innocently in our neighborhood manned their watch day and night to warn the curious traveler of the seriousness of the spreading fire.

Then it came. The pre-evacuation notice. It was Saturday. A day of errands into town, of household chores all cancelled for a more pressing need. How do you put your life and the lives of your children captured in physical things into a box? I scrambled to gather valuables together, irreplaceable papers - birth certificates, wedding license, tax records, not to mention memories captured in family albums more valuable than all the others put together.

You look at your home differently then, life becomes condensed to the absolute minimum. In a way, life becomes simpler. One's beloved surroundings, where you spend the majority of your time every day is boiled down to the essentials and that is - your physical safety and that of your animals. In any country, in any culture, in any part of the world we are united in this one common thing - the value and sustainability of human and animal life above all else.

As the pre-evacuation warning was lifted, I look back and see myself as almost a stranger. I became a single-minded organism during that time. What to take, what to leave from a lifetime of accumulation of physical things that hold the vibrations of our days. Things we think are important in day to day life.

If there is anything I wish to take from the pre-evacuation of the High Park Fire is the expansion of my consciousness. For a little while I could understand what it feels like to have the possibility of having to abandon your home. I think of all the refugees throughout the history of the human experience who have had to leave their homes behind them and take 'to the road' in circumstances and times much harsher than our own. For that I am grateful and for the 'wake-up call' of what is really important in this human experience and that is the safety and well-being of you and your loved ones, bottom line.

**Shirley Wiechert
1401 N. CR37
Livermore**