

Kudos

A look at some of the letters and cards received in recognition of the work done by CAL FIRE's employees.

Hello,

My name is Greg Pero and I am writing to you with regards to the events and actions I witnessed on Saturday, Nov. 15th 2008 during the Corona-Anaheim Hills-Yorba Linda fire.

My wife Darlene and I live at 8710 E. Foxhollow Drive, Anaheim Hills. Our home sits at the end of a cul-de-sac carved into the side of a hill that overlooks the 91 freeway just west of the 241 interchange. Above our house to our immediate west is Morning Star Drive and approximately one half mile to the northwest is the Cascade Apartment complex.

Late Saturday afternoon on Nov. 15th, the fire was in full force the devastation had already occurred at the Cascade Apartment complex and houses on Morning Star Drive were under siege. My worst fears were confirmed when flames could clearly be seen headed in our direction with nothing but dry brush in between.

Initially the flames marched up to the backyard of a house on Morning Star Drive that overlooks our street. My wife happened to be out of town on a busi-

ness trip and so I was on the phone with her giving her the gut-wrenching news that one of our neighbors houses was about to go up in flames. Seconds later through the thick smoke I saw two helicopters appear just above the house's roof line and drop water directly on the fire stopping it dead in its tracks. I cannot express the raw emotion I felt as I screamed into the phone "I can't believe it ... they saved that house!".

A little while later the emotions turned as embers reignited on the hillside and now the fire was raging about 150 yards from our street headed in our direction. The only thing stopping it now were a few garden hoses as none of the fire trucks had made it to our street.

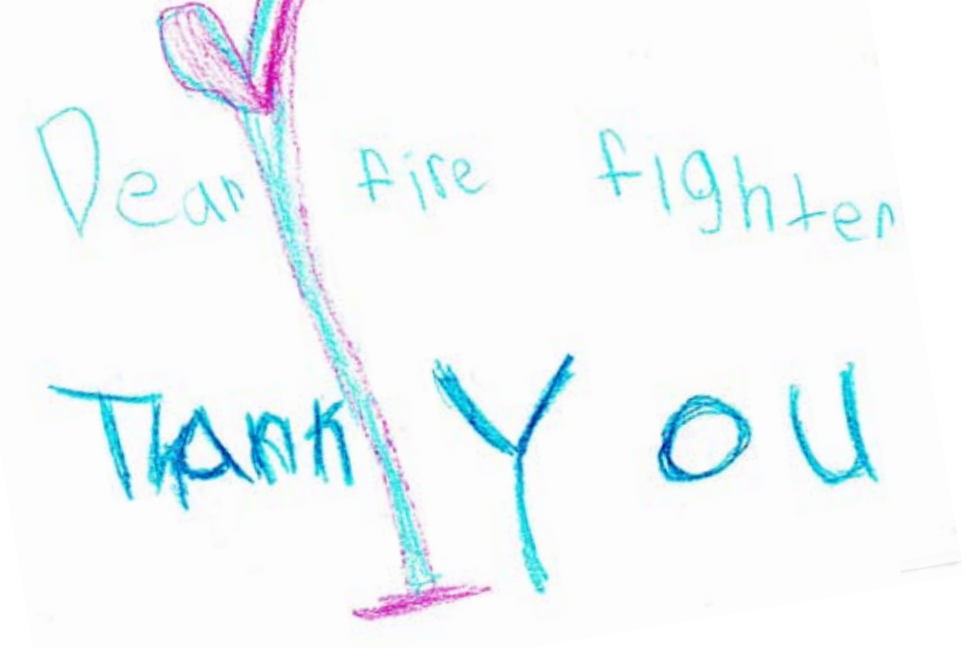
Darlene was frantically making her way to the airport to come home and making arrangements with the airport shuttle to drop her off when she called to find out where. I remember telling her I had no idea and the reality of the moment crystallized for both of us. She asked if our home was going to survive and I replied that at the moment it was 50-50.



Hi,

I just wanted to let you know that I appreciate having access to information about the recent fires. I particularly like the maps. It's nice to be able to glean information, when a fire is near family and friends. May God bless you all for the important work that you do.

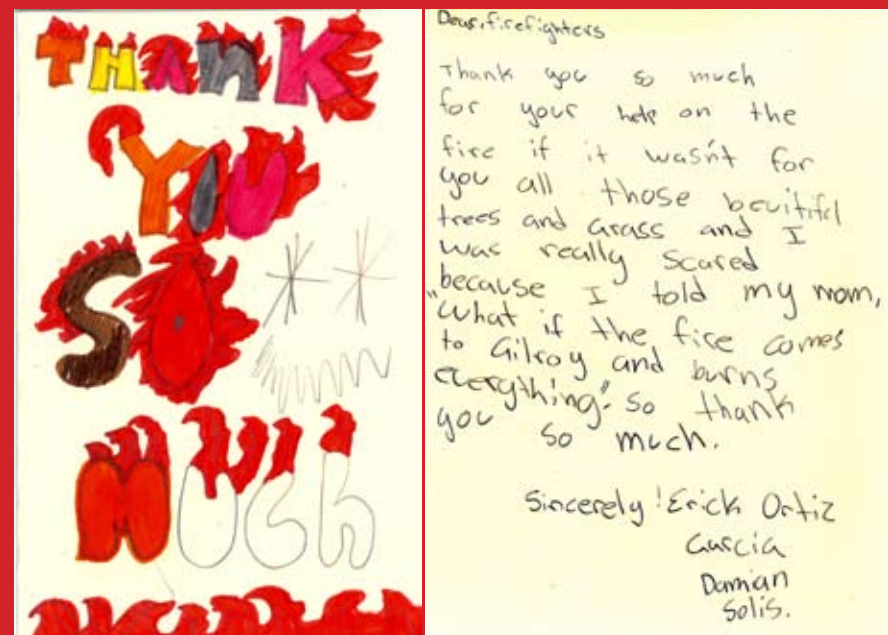
- Daryl -



By this time the Anaheim PD was ordering an evacuation, we have 5 pets (2 dogs and 3 cats) and so I had hung up with Darlene to get them into the car. By this time the hillside to our northwest was entirely in flames, after securing all 5 pets I went to take one last look when it seemed out of nowhere two teams of two helicopters came in at almost roof top level and squashed the fire. Two of them were easily identifiable as helicopters #404 and #406. The emotion of the moment got the best of me when I quickly phoned Darlene back to tell her "Honey I think they just saved our home". Within a short walking distance from our home 31 houses were destroyed and 44 damaged, in addition to, the Cascade Apartment Complex. Looking back on it a few days later, it is without doubt that had it not been for the combined efforts of these helicopter crews and their spotters, our street would have suffered a similar fate as others that were devastated, instead not one house on our street suffered damage.

In this day and age of digital media, sound bites, video clips it is easy to be desensitized to traumatic events such as Saturday Nov. 15th, however to have your home hanging in the balance and to personally witness acts of professionalism, skill and sheer courage by others to save your home is truly one of the most emotional events one can experience and one that I will never forget.

Both Darlene and I are fully aware and appreciative of the efforts that all of the



men and women from the fire, police and sheriff departments put forth in emergencies such as this. We make it a point of waving or saying "thank you" to those we see in our neighborhood, but obviously that is a little more difficult to do with the flight crews. Please share with these "Heroes" our deepest gratitude and thanks! I will never forget what I witnessed on the afternoon of Saturday, Nov. 15th 2008.

Sincerely,
Greg Pero
Anaheim Hills, CA 92808

