

**Laguna Beach  
Historical Society**  
Murphy-Smith Bungalow  
278 Ocean Avenue  
Laguna Beach CA 92651  
949-497-6834



# Laguna Life

The Laguna Beach Historical Society Newsletter: Oct 2013

**Please attend Historical Society Program to be held at  
Laguna Beach City Hall Council Chambers, 505 Forest Avenue  
Tuesday, October 22nd – from 7:30 to 9:30 P.M.**

**“20th Year Anniversary of Oct 27, 1993 Laguna Wildfire” by Gene Felder**



**Where were you on October 27, 1993?** Now twenty years ago, most every Lagunan knows exactly what they were doing during the Laguna wildfire. The terrible Laguna Beach wildfire is still an unsolved crime and was quite an event touching the lives of most all Lagunans.

Note: presented at the program will be the same PowerPoint® presented ten years ago.

The program includes photos from that day and information from the Orange County Fire Authority Chief Larry Holms report.

The summary:

- Started by an arsonist
- Destroyed or severely damaged 441 homes
- Burned 14,337 acres
- \$528,000,000 in damage

Photos from Orange County Register “Inferno” special magazine. At left a Leonard Ortiz Photo

Fighting the fire that day we received Mutual Aid from many other fire departments. It totaled 345 fire engines, 17 dozers, 11 hand crews, 30 aircraft, and 1,968 fire personnel.

The air tankers, delayed by priorities from the other numerous fires burning in Southern California at the time, would not arrive until approximately 1:40 p.m., 1 hour and 32 minutes from the initial request by the incident commander.

**“Open Air & Light: Art in Laguna Beach 1906-1941” exhibit at the UCI Libraries. Opening reception is Wednesday, October 23, 5:30 PM and features a talk by James Irvine Swinden, President of The Irvine Museum. Make reservations: <http://lib.uci.edu/laguna> or 949.824-4651. Free and open to the public, but seating is limited**

# October 27, 1993 Laguna Wildfire

The weather that day was not that hot, but typical Santa Ana conditions. The temperature was a high of 78 degrees, but windy at 40 mph and gusts up to 92 mph. It was dry with the relative humidity 6 – 7 % with the hillside plants having fuel moisture of 4 %.

Law enforcement used both north and southbound lanes of Coast Highway to channel bumper-to-bumper evacuation traffic out of the city: residents evacuated southward, while firefighters and their vehicles funneled in from the north. Not a single life was lost.

South Coast Highway  
Looking North From  
St. Ann's Drive –  
Photograph  
by Lucia D'Angelo.



## Timeline:

11:50 AM - 911 calls  
2 PM – Emerald Bay  
2 PM – Boat Canyon  
3:30 PM - Canyon Acres  
4 PM – Skyline /Mystic  
Hills  
5 PM - El Morro &  
Temple Hills  
Midnight - fire declared  
contained



CHRIS ASSAF—COSTA MESA DAILY PILOT-SABA  
*A Laguna Beach mobile-home resident reacts as a propane tank explodes*

El Morro Trailer Park  
Propane tanks explode  
44 mobile homes destroyed  
“Inferno” photograph by Chris Assaf

“OCFD's Laguna incident command staff believed immediate air support could have made the Laguna fire manageable during the first quarter hour of its spread. Helicopters could have made water drops on the head of the fire.”

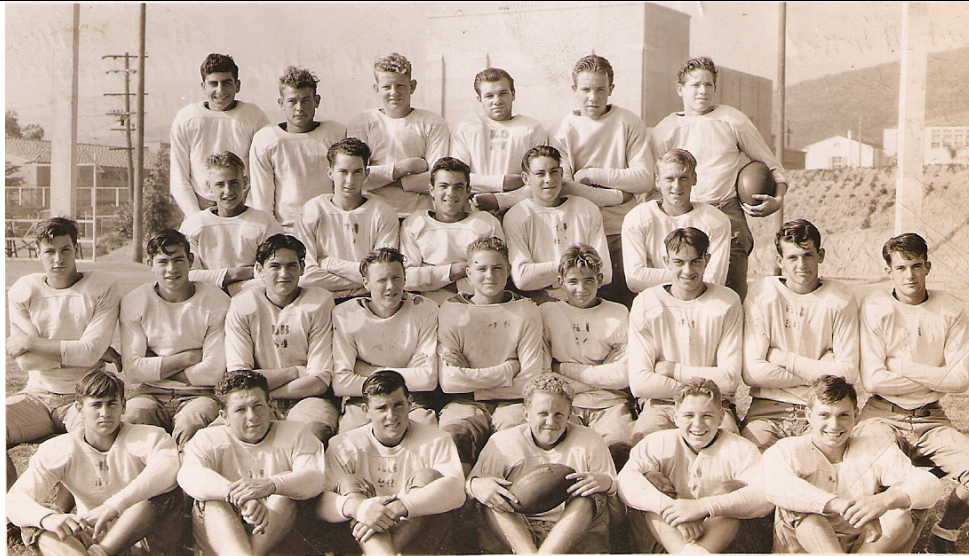
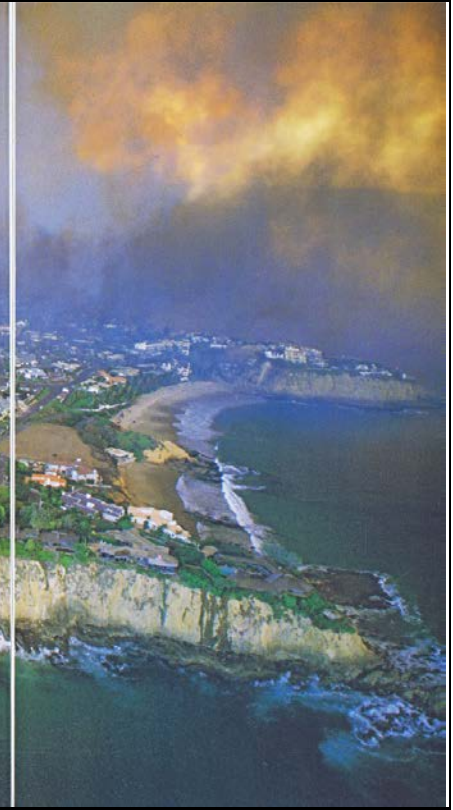
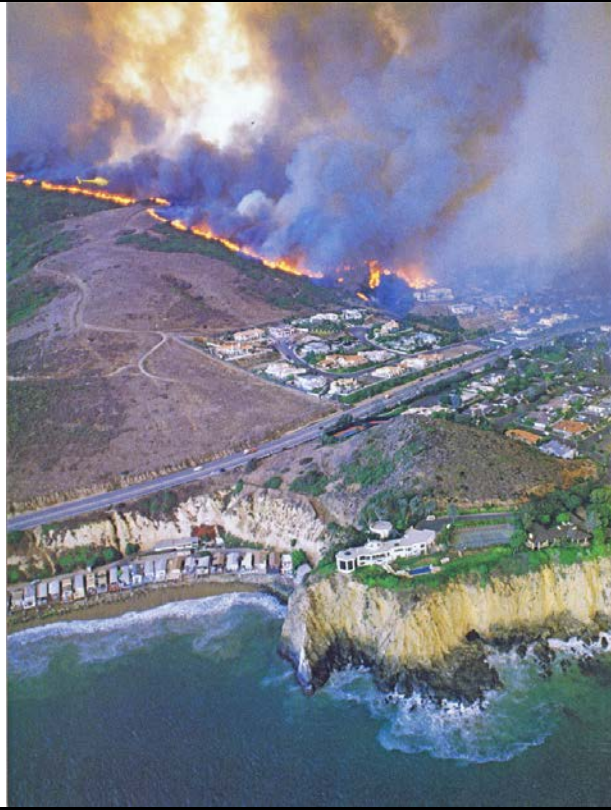
OCFA put into service two county firefighting helicopters. At least one helicopter is to be staffed each day, with a crew of two, from the Fullerton Airport during daylight hours. A partial list of other improvements include building two large water reservoirs at high elevations, installation of 800 megahertz communication system, substantial widening of fuel modification zone around city, the Greater Laguna Coast Fire Safe Council's Red Flag Program and installing fire condition signs.

The web site of City of Laguna Beach has a two-minute video of the fire that is quite powerful. See <http://lagunabeachcity.net/about/vid.asp>



## Rate of Fire Phenomenal

- Top half of Emerald Canyon burned at rate of 100 acres per minute
- Flashed across LCR in 6 places, leap up 2/3's slope; 200 foot flame heights
- Fire burned 1 ¼ miles of brush in 17 minutes to Canyon Acres
- Overran Command Post at Thurston School
- Jumped Park Ave; Temple Hills Dr. 27 homes lost
- 10 PM winds shifted
- Midnight OCFD declared Laguna fire contained



## Laguna Beach High School 1936 Football Team

Apologies to Art Sherman who provided this photograph for misstating the information. The year is 1936 when Laguna Beach High School first won the league's football title.

Le Roy "Doc" Blacketer is at the left side 2nd row from top. At the top row at the very right is Art Sherman LBHS class of 1937.

View Laguna Photos at [www.Laguna-Historical-Society.smugmug.com](http://www.Laguna-Historical-Society.smugmug.com)

## Laguna Beach Historical Society Board of Directors

Karen Smith – President

Gregg De Nicola – Vice President	Sandra Desmond	Anne Frank
Gene Felder - Treasurer	John Hoover	Jane Janz
Eric Jessen	Ronald Kaufman	Carol Lloyd
Glenna Matthews	Francie Holder Pemper	Laurie Sanders
Nelda Stone - Secretary	Ed Storke	Kimberly Stuart

**Consider Contributing to Historical Society Maintenance Fund**

## Historical Society Business / Organization Members

**Wells Fargo Bank      City of Laguna Beach**  
**Caduceus Medical      H.J Baker & Bro., Inc.**

Andy Alison Bungalow Hunters    Ann Christoph Landscape Architect FASLA    Borthwick Guy Bettenhausen  
Brooks Street Books    Butler Box    Charles' Wig Chateau    Chicago Title    Emerald Bay Community Association  
Indiana James Limited Partnership    Dr. Korey Jorgensen    Ken's Jewelry Store  
Laguna Beach Visitors & Conference Bureau    Laguna Broadcasting Network    Realtor Gayle Waite    Reynolds Carpet  
Sawdust Festival    Stewarts Landscaping    Teller Architects    The Stand Natural Foods Restaurant

### Remember the Laguna Beach Historical Society in Your Planned Giving

## President's Message from Karen Smith

**"20th Year Anniversary of Oct 27, 1993 Laguna Wildfire" by Gene Felder**  
**Tuesday, October 22nd from 7:30 to 9:30 P.M.**

Please attend the Laguna Beach Historical Society program. Note: the program is on October 22<sup>nd</sup>. It is of course free, and will be held at the Laguna Beach City Hall Council Chambers, 505 Forest Avenue. The program will be videotaped and is to be televised on the local Cox Cable channel 30.

There will be a celebration of "Doc" Blacketer's life Saturday, October 19th, starting at 12:00 noon at the Sawdust Festival Healy House. It will be a "pot luck" event and his family will attend. We are encouraged to bring our stories about "Doc". Sande St. John (633 9429) is looking for help.

We are pleased to welcome a new addition to the Board of Directors Sandra Desmond.

We certainly thank all for the donations earmarked for the Maintenance Fund toward the Murphy-Smith Bungalow improvements. From these resources, we will continue to make needed repairs required by the Wells Fargo Bank.

Board Member John Hoover manages the maintenance of the Murphy-Smith Bungalow. John reports that we have finished painting the outside and inside of the building, the electrical wiring has been updated, two window panes have been replaced, new window caulk was applied. We have some new rain gutters. A section of the back walkway was replaced.

The remaining useful life of the roof is not too long, but three roof inspectors have said the roof is sound and not leaking. So the Board is still calling for Maintenance Fund contributions and for in lieu contributions.

We thank retired Orange County Harbors Beaches and Parks ranger Tom Maloney for donating his park ranger uniform which is now on display on a mannequin in the front bedroom at the Murphy-Smith Bungalow.

Step back into 1920s Laguna by visiting the Laguna Beach Historical Society Murphy-Smith Bungalow, located at 278 Ocean Avenue, which is open to the public at no-charge every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Those interested in supporting the Laguna Beach Historical Society should send \$15 per individual, \$25 per household or \$50 per business/organization to 278 Ocean Avenue, Laguna Beach CA 92651. The Laguna Beach Historical Society is a section 501(c) (3) non-profit organization. Tax ID #33-0519882.

**If your Dues are due (check your mailing label) Send \$15 per person, \$25 per household or \$50 per business or organization to Laguna Beach Historical Society, 278 Ocean Avenue, Laguna Beach CA 92651**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

FAX: \_\_\_\_\_ email: \_\_\_\_\_