

Sept. 8, 2020 was a day like no other, my partner and son and I plus a friend were at home I had woken to the sound of the wind going across our manufactured home aka a trailer. We were located at 812 s Pacific Hwy #24 in Talent Oregon.

I woke my partner up and asked him to move a branch that fell against the side of the home. We had gone back inside and were talking about the wind and how strong it was. I had the tv on listening to news and just going about the day like normal.

I went outside at about 11:30am and notice smoke and my partner joined me and we watched the smoke come slowly towards Talent thinking it was nothing. Our friend told us he saw on Fb people talking about a fire IN Ashland and we figured that was it. At about noon our power flickered off then came back on we thought again the wind was playing havoc with the lines. My partner heard a loud explosion and thought the power transformer had blown due to the wind. At this time I had gone out again and made a video of the smoke to let my family in Ontario Oregon know we are safe.

At 1pm our friend went outside with me and we took pictures and video of all the smoke at this time we saw helicopters and planes flying over headed towards Ashland Oregon. Still no word on evacuation. We returned to the trailer and I went about the things I needed to get done coming from Eastern Oregon if there is something major near it comes across the TV and nothing had come across yet so I figured we were far away from the fire boy was I wrong.

At around 2pm my partner and I and my son walked down the end of the drive at this point the fire was right across Pacific Hwy. My partner yelled at my son and I to go back and leave he was going to stay with our animals I told him we all go together or not at all. My partner knew the people who live in a house across from us and as the fire was engulfing their home my partner was on the phone trying to get help down towards that area of Talent. We went back to the house as the fire was getting to hot to be near the house across as we were walking back the wind picked up and the fire jumped to the trees in our trailer park we all rushed back to our home and started grabbing what we could.

As I was outside placing items in the car a Sherriff came up and told me "you need to get the fuck out of here" I told him we are going now and heading to Phoenix Oregon he said no it is on fire as well and to head to the Expo. This was at roughly 2:30pm. We grabbed what little we could pictures a few important documents medications our Basset Hound and sadly only one of our cats. We left doors open and hoped the other cats got out but they did not.

As we were leaving Talent going towards Phoenix the fire was now consuming both sides of the road we were trapped just outside of Phoenix my 18yr old son was scared I was trying to drive we ended up being turned around and sent to Ashland as we followed a sheriff off the offramp of Talent towards Ashland were we could see all the burnt trees and buildings. With the radio on listening for anything we could about the fire still no evacuation on Talent which seemed odd to me but I could not dwell on it due to driving through semis that had left their loads on the freeway it looked like a war zone something more out of a Stephen King movie then real life.

We made it to the far side of Ashland where we called our families and let them know we were safe at this point. We spent 2 hours in Ashland just waiting to see if we could make it to the expo where we were supposed to go, finally we could.

We drove yet again through semis left on the road through burning trees and fields smoldering ash falling around us to get to the expo where we were told to go. We finally made it but to the gas station near there tired and emotionally drained we sat there in awe of the situation listening to a live feed of the fire on Facebook then we were ordered to evacuate a fire was just off of the gas station.

So we left heading to the only place I knew we would be safe Grants Pass, we drove there and made it to Winco before being so tired we slept in the car. When we woke we went to the fairgrounds there like we had heard but when we got there they sent us to Edgewater Christian Fellowship. Where we were one of the first to be there, they were not even set up to have evacuees there.

I was on Facebook checking to see if my home was still standing and thanks to people of Facebook saw a video where my home no longer stood.

My partner contacted Access which we had already been working with due to COVID-19 helped us get to the KOA in Gold Hill for a couple of weeks because we were affected by COVID-19 to now fire victims. Tracy got us with the KOA and we had a cabin for a couple of weeks to get us out of the smoke that was still engulfing the valley.

We went to the expo like so many others and registered with Red Cross and FEMA we were approved by FEMA. And we went back to see what was left of our home with was nothing.

My partner lost his parents' ashes his dad's military medals and we lost our beloved cats. Our home had been where his parents had passed and we took over the rental yes it was a rental but it was our home.

Access then got us into the Red Roof Inn in Medford where we stayed for four months 3 people a dog and a cat in one room for four months. Tracy from Access helped my partner who is an Army Vet get in contact with the V.A. where they helped us get into an apartment.

Now we are starting to rebuild our lives. The part that bothers us the most is the fact there was NO EVACUATION NOTICE given. Had there been maybe my son would have been able to grab his identification maybe we could have rescued more than one cat maybe I would have grabbed my great grandfather's picture of his grave marker from WWII maybe my partner would have been able to get his parents' ashes.

I am enclosing pictures of that day so you can get an idea of what it was like as well as what was left of our home.

Nicole Tarbart,







































