

The horror of September 8, 2020 haunts me every waking hour. My husband called telling me I should leave the house...to look outside.. after just returning home from a week on the road taking my brother back to Arizona because he was unable to drive at the time due to his stroke. My suitcase lay in the hallway with my clothes still packed, I looked at the things I thought I should take but I thought there's not going to be any reason to pack this.. Dennis was just overreacting to the wind.. then he called a second time you need to go outside, you need to leave, there is a fire & it's moving north. I guess I should have taken him more seriously the fact that he is a retired forecaster from the Medford weather office. I went outside the second time. I saw the smoke, my neighbors were outside & we had decided to leave. I packed as much as I could in the Volkswagen that my father had just bought for me. A classic convertible model, so much for that dream. As I tried to leave, the Volkswagen would not start.. Thank God..I pushed the Volkswagen in front of the house. My older neighbor saw me and he helped me move the car. After just closing my Aunt's estate -- 3 weeks prior her 2019 brand new Jeep Cherokee arrived by transport. I wasn't thinking I should have been taking the Jeep, but that Volkswagen was in back of it.. I took everything out of the Volkswagen and threw it in the Jeep. I looked across the street at my neighbor Jean, not even thinking she would need help, she was 87 years old!! You cannot think in that situation you do not know what to do first you don't really believe that it's real that you won't be coming back to your home and enjoying the 5:00 news. You don't realize you'll be part of the 5:00 news. You think things are going to be the same as they always are. So after I told neighbors John and Terry we need to leave..we went to Debby's Diner..having Chocolate Shakes....totally unaware, we were totally unaware ! Of the madness going on just south of where we sat..Most of the people were.. not enough manpower to have everyone notified. Everything happened in a blink of an eye. Trying to get out anywhere was a disaster, traffic bumper to bumper on valley View road, bumper to bumper, highway 99 going north. Chaos everywhere, smoke billowing.. then loud explosions.. was it a gas station or was it propane tanks? The air tanker overhead, dropping the bright, billowing flame retardant...What is going on we know nothing..!!!! Robbie & I separate, she to a friend's.. my husband was at my father's in Ashland - I was on my own. I'm trying to get a hotel anywhere but none were available.. I drove to my dear friends in Merlin. I walked in the door and dropped to the floor and sobbed uncontrollably.. It can't be, it can't be, it can't be.. we had just recently got everything the way we wanted in our new downsized home.. feeling so safe I didn't even lock my front door in the summer. After living in Rogue River for 25 years backing up to acres & acres of BLM land, worrying every year of a fire, every year.. and moving to Talent only to have got our little retirement cottage perfect and then.. the devastation, everything charred burnt, everything nothing left. The fifth wheel, the truck to pull it. My 1951 classic Chevy truck my Dad and brothers had restored my "April Love" for my 39th birthday. At 70 it was my treasure. My mother's High School graduation ring, my father's gold watch, my grandfather's pocket watch that were my brother's..my Grandmother's 100-year-old quilt, my aunt Mothers 100-year-old quilt.. my grandmother's dishes. My husband's father's ring, my husband's father's flag from the service. There's no reason for me to continue to tell you what was lost because it would go on and on and on. Just like it does every time I walk into an antique store. Everytime I am asked, " How are you doing"..? It's like that person is my new counselor and everything overflows.. my pain just starts spewing out of my mouth uncontrollably.. I know people don't want to hear the negative. I tried to feel blessed and happy and blessed and happy but I don't. It helps to help other people but then I come back to this apartment that I'm supposed to feel happy and blessed about and I don't. Go on Facebook to your group of fire victims who inspire each other to go on another day, to give tips on where you can find housing who needs this, do you need that, I have this.. my brand new dogwood tree in the backyard. The paintings I recently painted in my painting class, all of my new art supplies. My mother's jewelry that I had kept since she passed. Ok. The fire is out. You can go back. Go back...go BACK TO WHAT???? ASHES, Neighbor's WANDERING THROUGH THE ASHES CRYING, MEN CRYING, stunned Zombies looking at what one was their safe haven from the world.. safe...that was the best feeling. No safe place

now..Each asking what should we do, what & where are you going?? Jean!!! Where is Jean.?? Jean, who had beginning Dementia..had not driven in 2 years.. drove herself to her son's home in the midst of the mass chaos of this. Only God & her Faith in God got her there. We stayed at my Dad's after. A bit cozy, however we were blessed..then that became a bit too cozy with my tramatic frame of mind..then hotels, then Dad's, then an RV ..then hotels . finally we rented a small apartment thanks to a friend's referral....it is now February. Jean passed away 3 months ago. The fire took the last of her strength. As did 2 others that lived in our little community. Al's Dementia became so bad he resides in the Memory home. Shock. Disbelief. Sorrow. Emptiness. Anger. Anger. Sad, sad sadness. It will not leave. No one can tell me it will. Death..the Death of our home. The death of a wonderful community of retired folks, some living on a little month to month SS check....the lives this has distroyed & still is destroying...kids in motels!!! No housing...2800 homes - GONE--- No school, no home! WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE LITTLE ONES--?We grieve & will for a very long time..

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