

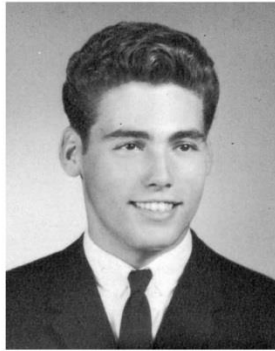
Incident Summary Page for the 100 Fires Project

Incident Name: Camp Pendleton Brush Fire	Incident Date & Time: 11/01/1966 @ 17:15
Incident Location: Camp Pendleton, California	Incident Size: 4,500 acres
Types of resources involved: U.S. Marines working as firefighters	# of Fatalities/injuries: 5 fatalities
Reason this fire was selected for the 100 Fires list: ➤ 3 or more firefighter fatalities by entrapment This fire is <u>not</u> documented in the NWCG Historical Wildland Firefighter Fatalities publication (NFES 1849/PMS 822)	
Conditions leading up to the event:	
This fire was one of many Santa Ana wind driven fires which burned across a 100 mile swath of Southern California in late October and early November of 1966.	
Brief description of the event:	
On November 1, about 300 Marines and 21 civilian firemen fought five different brush fires on the Camp Pendleton military installation. The fires blackened 5,000 acres before being brought under control. The main blaze, which charred about 4,500 acres, started from unknown causes at 09:40 in an uninhabited area about 3 miles east of Interstate 5 between San Clemente and Oceanside. It was reported the Marines were on high ground overlooking a canyon known as Piedra de Lumbre (Rock of Fire) when they became trapped from a sudden gust of wind that pushed a wall of flame back over their location at about 17:15. Four Marines died at the scene and another was severely burned. Survivor Pfc. Henry S. Terrazas was airlifted to the base hospital. He suffered burns over 90% of his body and later died. These Marines were part of a staging battalion awaiting transfer to Vietnam: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Lance Corporal Roger L. Zarbok, 19, St. Paul, Minnesota ➤ Private First Class Leslie W. Hendrix, 20, Keyes, California ➤ Private First Class Cecil J. Henshaw, 20, Bellevue, Washington ➤ Private Lewis W. Connor, 20, Kenova, West Virginia ➤ Private First Class Henry S. Terrazas, 20, Austin, Texas No other information was available from old military records.	
Fire behavior factors that were present during the event:	
Late season low fuel moisture content in chaparral brush Santa Ana wind event	
Operational lessons available for learning from this incident:	
The rugged bisected terrain adjacent to the coast along Camp Pendleton's western side is notorious for abrupt wind shifts during diminishing Santa Ana events.	
Notable impact or historical significance for the wildland fire service from this incident:	
Not applicable	
Links to more information on this incident:	
https://wlfalwaysremember.net/1966/11/01/camp-pendleton/ https://www.usdeadlyevents.com/1966-nov-1-4-wildfires-angeles-nat-forest-12-camp-pendleton-5-oroville-1-ca-18/	
This summary page was proudly provided by: Ken Kremensky, Chief, Barona Fire Department and former Chief for the Lakeside Fire Department	November 2024

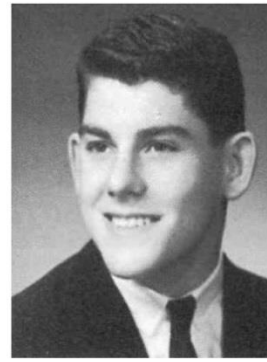
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Roger L Zarbok



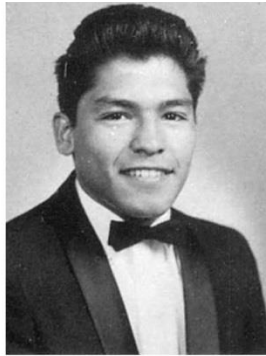
Leslie W Hendrix



Cecil J Hanshew



Lewis W Connor



Henry S Terrazas



Sarasota Journal, Nov 2, 1966

Fire Kills Four Marines

LOS ANGELES (AP) — As a veteran firefighter — sobbing in recollection and grimacing in pain — described how 10 of his men were killed, disaster struck again.

Four young Marines perished Wednesday fighting one of many brush fires kindled in low humidity and driven by seasonal searing desert winds. The blazes were scattered across a 100-mile swath of Southern California.

Tuesday, 10 U.S. Forest Service men—specialists in attacking the most vicious fires—died in another inferno.

An unexpected gust of wind caused both disasters.

The Marines were on high ground overlooking a canyon called Piedra de Lumbre—Rock of Fire—at Camp Pendleton 80 miles south of Los Angeles.

A sudden wall of flame killed

them and left another, Pfc. Henry C. Terrazas of Austin, Tex., in critical condition.

Three hundred men controlled the fire, one of several which scorched 5,000 acres of harsh, brown land on the base.

Twenty-five miles northwest of Los Angeles, near Sylmar and Pacoima, the 2,100-acre blaze that killed the Forest Service crew was contained. In Ventura County, and in the nearby Santa Susana Mountains, fire fighters had the upper hand over smaller fires.

For two days temperatures had been near or above 100 degrees—the hottest in the nation and a local record for November.

From his hospital bed the leader of the Forest Service group, George King, 32, described through blistered lips the loss of 10 of his men near

Pacoima Reservoir. Fifteen others from the El Calros Hot Shots were burned, 12 seriously.

"We called ourselves the Green Berets because we liked to think we were a little better than any other hot shots," said King.

"We were making headway. Then the wind suddenly stopped. Twenty seconds of stillness.

"Then it became a hill of hell. It happened so fast. The fire was on top of us. I saw it coming.

"I yelled 'Move out! Move out!'" The rest of the crew saw it too. Everybody knew where to go—to a safety zone we picked out.

"Some made it. Some didn't."