

## Incident Summary Page for the 100 Fires Project

<b>Incident Name:</b> Stable Fire Sometimes referred to as the Cheyenne Mountain Fire	<b>Incident Date &amp; Time:</b> 01/17/1950
<b>Incident Location:</b> Fort Carson near Colorado Springs, Colorado	<b>Incident Size:</b> 28,800 acres
<b>Types of resources involved:</b> US Army soldiers and volunteers	<b># of Fatalities/injuries:</b> 9 fatalities / 150 injuries
<b>Reasons this fire was selected for the 100 Fires list:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 3 or more firefighter fatalities</li> </ul> This fire is <u>not</u> documented in the NWCG <i>Historical Wildland Firefighter Fatalities</i> publication (NFES 1849/PMS 822)	
<b>Conditions leading up to the event:</b>	
In 1950, southeastern Colorado was experiencing a significant drought year and the period of November 1949 to January 1950 was the driest early winter period recorded in the area. The vegetation in the area around Colorado Springs was open conifer stands mixed with tall grass prairie, and without the normal snows for that time of year, it was a readily available fuel bed.	
<b>Brief description of the event:</b>	
A little after midnight on January 17, a city utility crew working on power lines, reported a fire near the historic Broadmoor Resort on the southern outskirts of Colorado Springs. Some accounts attribute the source to a smoldering pile of brush and debris from a new golf course being constructed at the resort. At first the fire threatened the resort, but soon the wind shifted and the fire began running south toward Cheyenne Mountain. By daybreak, fierce winds out of the northwest had pushed the smoldering fire into a flaming front threatening Camp Carson, a military installation to the southeast (now called Fort Carson).	
Families on Camp Carson were evacuated and all the soldiers were mobilized to become firefighters in order to defend the camp from the fire. City leaders also called for volunteers to help fight the fire. The firefighting efforts were chaotic, with the strong winds and spot fires creating confusion, trapping and injuring many firefighters. Some firefighters were given hoses and shovels, but many were just given wet burlap bags to swat flames...and the wet bags were freezing in the cold January temperatures. At one point, thousands of soldiers and volunteers were engaged in the firefight.	
The fire destroyed several ranches, summer cabins, and 92 buildings on Camp Carson. The human toll was devastating with over 150 injuries and nine fatalities. One of the fatalities was a 14 year old junior high student who answered the call for volunteers. He was caught along with eight soldiers trying to defend the front gate facility at Camp Carson. The eight soldiers perished and the young man lived for 45 days before succumbing to his burn injuries. The Army cited the youth for valor "equal to a soldier in military tradition" and honored him along with the eight soldiers by renaming streets at Camp Carson after them.	
<b>Fire behavior factors that were present during the event:</b>	
Winter drought conditions. Expansive fine fuel bed. Strong frontal winds estimated at 50-70 mph.	
<b>Operational lessons available for learning from this incident:</b>	
"Sending soldiers and volunteers out to attack a fire running through dry grasses head-on is a risk that would never be taken today." said Glen Silloway, retired Fort Carson Fire chief who collected documents on the fire.	
<b>Notable impact or historical significance for the wildland fire service from this incident:</b>	
The Stable Fire was not historically significant nor did it have a notable impact on the wildland fire service. However, it is one of the many multi-fatality fires during this Historical Era that have been forgotten to history. If this fire had occurred today, it would have been considered a major tragedy prompting an extensive investigation process and most likely a number of directed safety action items.	
<b>Links to more information on this incident:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <a href="https://gazette.com/cos-150/colorado-springs-at-150-years-citys-deadliest-wildfire-killed-9-charred-50-square-miles/article_b62a70ac-eb7-11eb-a27a-8f49244473b3.html">https://gazette.com/cos-150/colorado-springs-at-150-years-citys-deadliest-wildfire-killed-9-charred-50-square-miles/article_b62a70ac-eb7-11eb-a27a-8f49244473b3.html</a></li> <li>➤ <a href="https://gazette.com/news/painful-memories-firefighters-soldiers-other-survivors-recall-horror-of-swirling-smoke-darkness-in-countys-disastrous/article_2df4a66c-0c25-5a2d-8717-d1564742be1b.html">https://gazette.com/news/painful-memories-firefighters-soldiers-other-survivors-recall-horror-of-swirling-smoke-darkness-in-countys-disastrous/article_2df4a66c-0c25-5a2d-8717-d1564742be1b.html</a></li> <li>➤ <a href="https://gazette.com/cheyenneedition/local-poets-work-recalls-1950-fires-devastation-of-cheyenne-mountain-fort-carson-communities/article_c2929498-448d-11eb-b37b-4bfc570fec08.html">https://gazette.com/cheyenneedition/local-poets-work-recalls-1950-fires-devastation-of-cheyenne-mountain-fort-carson-communities/article_c2929498-448d-11eb-b37b-4bfc570fec08.html</a></li> <li>➤ <a href="http://www.hpc-educ.org/CMHS/FireMemories1950.html">http://www.hpc-educ.org/CMHS/FireMemories1950.html</a></li> </ul>	

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The Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center offers an excellent site which provides information on many wildland incidents:  
[Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center's Incident Review Database \(IRDB\) \(wildfire.gov\)](https://www.wildfire.gov/wildfire-lessons-learned-center/incident-review-database)

This summary page was proudly provided by:  
Jim Cook & Kurt La Rue

October 2023

#### The following individuals lost their lives as a result of the Stable Fire in January 1950:

Warrant Officer William Tripp  
Cpl. Kenneth Watson  
Pvt. Marvin Tevis  
Pvt. Lawrence Elwell  
Cpl. Bobby Coleman  
Pvt. William Rau  
Pvt. Robert Moore  
Pvt. Joseph Weston  
Harley McCullough, age 14

