

# Staff Ride

## Resources



Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program

## Loop Fire – Audio Transcript

### Interview With Gordon King, Stand #3

[Interviewer] These are excerpts from a December 2003 interview with Gordon King, who was the El Cariso Hotshot Superintendent at the time of the loop fire.

[Gordon] Well we're finding out over there early afternoon, real early afternoon and we rode up on top of the mountain there and tied in with the division boss, my boss.

[Interviewer] So you tied into both those folks right there, at Contract Point?

[Gordon] Yeah, in fact there was quite a few of them sitting up there. I guess they had been waiting for us to show up because their, tanker cruise were up there, they were working northwest of us. Going back to point of origin.

[Interviewer] Going back up what's now [fire] Camp Nine.

[Gordon] Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[Interviewer] So, at that time when you pulled in, so you were talking to the line boss and the division boss and so, I know it's been a long time, but do you recall anything? And just what they...

[Gordon] Well basically, they, division boss said he'd just come up from down there and the fires laid down in the area and what they want is us to cold trail. And there's an LA country crew on the other side of the ravine with a CAT working towards us, working towards the bottom... They want us to go on down and tie in. Up where we were, we parked the trucks then talked about what, how we were gonna tool up from what we're gonna do and it was all cold trail.

[Interviewer] Yeah.

[Gordon] Just get yourself on down to the bottom. We'll move the trucks around for you and pick you up at the bottom.

[Interviewer] Which is no different than these days.

[Gordon] No kidding. So we decided not to take the fire shelters it was just gonna be, one shot down and that was it. So a cold trail. After we got everybody tooled up I talked to Warren Burchett who was my assistant and I told him, "Let's keep the new guys back "And you take care of them, "And get to a point where you can watch us." So we can go across and you can watch-- Let the new guys see what we're doing. Usually they assign Del Rosa and El Cariso together. And the other Hotshot crews do something else. And they would assign division

bosses within. I'm serious when I say that. They usually left us alone. And after '61 '62 that's pretty much what they did. They assigned us an area, they told us what they wanted done with it. And then, go out and see if you can execute that plan. And if you can't, you did what you had to do to stop the fire.

From where I was at I could see off to the west, on the other side of the fire. Some smoke over there wasn't really bad. Santa Ana winds had pretty much calmed down. It was like a influence of a Santa Ana. Not windy, just gently blowing through the area and the smoke the LA county crew was working on, they were on the other side of the canyon, weren't coming up as high as we were. It was just barely coming up then it would go over the ridge and head on out. It wasn't really intensive smoke. They were putting it out pretty good. Doing a pretty good job. And, looking straight down I could see a road down below us out there. I could see a county crew I assume they were inmates. But they were over on the road down further from where the tanker crew was at. The tanker crew was actually up on top ridge working down. And I could hear them. We weren't that far away. I could hear 'em talking, you know? And as I walked over the point and looked over I could see where the fire had burned down below and it burned up to a fairly steep rocky area and quick, no brush. That's when I told Raymond Chi, who was my head hook, and he was, you know "my gosh", Chi wait a minute, you stay right here. I'm gonna go take a look at this slide area and when I got over to it and walked down to look at the fire it was stopped on the other side of the slide area. But up above, it had burned up right up to the very crown of the slide area and burned all the brush up. But there was, that had been put out. There was no fire up there at all. But I could see rocks coming down. And they weren't coming down all the time. One or two would come down. Some would kick loose, grab you, pull you down like that. And I pulled Ray down, and I said, "You know we're gonna have to cross this thing to get over to the other side, right over there cause that's where we're gonna have to start picking up along that ridge line." Looks like we would go right on down that ridge line to the bottom. And I said, "Okay, I'm gonna go across, you stay right here. I'm gonna go across. If you see anything coming, you let me know." I had my shovel and I started across and nothing came down and I told Ray, "You send two guys across. You stay on that side and you send two guys across. You be the lookout," and so, we did. And nothing happened. There was no rocks flying down or anything like that. It worked out pretty good. And we got about 14 or 15 guys across then I decided okay, I got Ray across and we're gonna go on down we're gonna start digging into a small brush patch down on the ridge line which is, fire was burned out probably still on my right side. It was going down the line. And by that time, I could see the road and the tanker crew over by, where I was at would be like one o'clock over there and they were much lower than we were but I could hear them talking. And I said, "Well, we'll just kind of go down this way here and we'll go down through that little gully right there and then go right on out." That's what it looked like. So I got ahead of Ray by about oh 10 or 15 yards. And I pulled him on down and said, "Okay, come on now, first two or three hooks come on down." And they would come in and start passing brush back up. It wasn't really that much brush. It was fairly sparse, real steep and I said, "You guys just take your time, we've got all day, don't worry about it. Just take your time." So that's what we did and we took our time and fire it out.