

Lesson 5

KATY'S INTERVIEW:

Following is an interview of an 8th grade Yankee Hill girl, Katy, who was in the 5th grade at the time of a devastating fire. During the fire, her family lost their home and all of their possessions.

Q= Interviewer

A=Katy's response

Q How did you learn that a wildfire was threatening your neighborhood?

A Our neighbor came over and told us we needed to "leave right now!"

Q How did you feel at that moment?

A I just thought that it couldn't happen to us. We had evacuated once before when I was younger and nothing had happened.

Q What did you take?

A I grabbed some clothes and some of my favorite jewelry. There were five of us in the little car, so we couldn't fit much in it. I wish I had taken my pictures. We couldn't find the cats.

Q Where did you go?

A We went to our friend's house in the valley. Sometimes we went to the school where the Red Cross Shelter was, to find out what was happening. After a couple of weeks we found another place to live nearer home.

Q When did you find out that your house had burned?

A Bob (*our neighbor and volunteer fireman*) told us we were burned out. That was 2 or 3 days after the fire. I still couldn't believe it.

Q What was it like when you got back to your house?

A When we finally were able to go back we found all our burned stuff. I really wasn't sad; I just felt shocked and lost. Emma was in the first grade and she was sad when she saw her burned bike. We couldn't find the cats either. Emma was upset more about that than losing her possessions. Matthew was 18 months old. He looked at the garden where he played and he cried because all the flowers were gone.

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Q How did you help during this difficult time?

A I behaved myself and watched my little brother. My Mom and grandma were so busy all the time we just felt kind of left in the dust.

Q Can you share any memories you have about the experience?

A I always painted really bright pictures with lots of colors. But, after the fire and for a long time I only used black, gray and white. I would dream about being back in my old house. I was given some clothes that I really didn't like, but then my friends gave me some better ones.

Q What would you tell other young people your age?

A I would tell them that it really can happen to them. Clear your brush and water around your house. Think about what is important because you can't take it all with you. Take pictures or videos of your house and stuff for the fire insurance company. I wish we had.

Q How are you doing now?

A All right. We have our new house and things, and we have our flower garden again. I think my Mom would listen to my opinion more now that I am older, but it was okay then. She helped me through it all, so that was good. I still help my family and I have my social life.

TEACHER:

What do you think of Katy's advice?

Was there anything that surprised you about the family's evacuation and their return home?

How do you feel about taking advice from another person your age?

What was her greatest contribution to the recovery?