

## SORROW AND SURVIVAL IN WILDFIRE-RAVAGED STATE

**SAN FRANCISCO:** An air tanker cut across the sky as Paula Chaves and Eve Meland loaded a pickup truck with supplies to survive wicked wildfires yet to be vanquished. Chaves and her neighbor stocked up at Hardester's market on the main strip of the fire-ravaged community of Middletown.

The market never closed during a firestorm that whipped through the area, turning homes, ranches and more to ashes. It was the fourth time in a month that Chaves had been evacuated from her home on the border of Middletown and Lower Lake because of wildfires in Northern California. She escaped last weekend with half of her horses, then braved the fire danger to go back for more horses, a pig and chickens.

On Tuesday, she was among those who managed to get back into the area. She found her home still standing. Her packed pickup bed held fuel for generators to power well pumps to get water for livestock and themselves. There was also disinfectant, ice, groceries, dog

food, cat food, ice and beer. "It is every day survival right now, and being very watchful and cautious of what could possibly sneak up on us," Chaves told AFP outside Hardester's. "There is no sleeping."

She and her neighbors have a pact that if anyone spots flames heading toward their property, they lay on the horns of their trucks or cars as they race to escape in order to warn others. "It isn't the best system, but it is what we've got," Chaves said. "There is no cell phone service out there."

### Little more than ash

As grim as the situation was for Chaves, brothers Andy and Mark Snell were hit with despair elsewhere in this small town. The brothers made their way past road blocks to find rubble and ashes where their home once stood. It was there that they had spent much of their lives, had children and celebrated holidays. "Every year, we would have Christmas here," Mark Snell said, his eyes

watering with tears as he scanned the debris. "It was the family meeting place, now we've got nothing." Andy Snell found a knee-high ceramic Santa Claus in the ashes and set it upright in the ashed facing the street, in a small vengeance against the flames and the failure of efforts to save his mother-in-law's home.

### Flames slow but dangerous

Blackened wreckage, some of it still smoldering, lined roads leading away from Middletown's main street. Chainsaws roared and sawdust mixed with smoke as emergency crews took down charred trees they feared could fall. Overhead, helicopters and air tankers ferried water and flame-smothering gels to dump on flames that slowly expanded the perimeter of the wildfire.

The flames had stopped running, but were not to be trusted since wind could send them sprinting. Officials declared the blaze 15 percent contained by midday. CalFire spokesman Fernando

Herrera expected it to be weeks before the fire was under control, with more weeks of "mopping up" in store to stomp out embers that could reignite and completely restore utilities and services for residents.

The area still is not officially open for evacuees to return. Shifting winds could turn the wildfire into a deadly beast and drive it back toward homes that were spared the first time. "Some people sneak in; some stayed, and some know back ways in; you can't control that," Herrera said. "There are those who are accustomed to camping out and living like that, but there are others who need that air conditioner, need that power, need that water and it is better for them to stay out." Those whose homes are destroyed have nothing to come back for, he added sadly, hoping they would not risk returning.

### Grateful even for grapes

Hardester's market used generators for electricity and remained open as the

wildfire flanked the business strip, devouring homes, cars and more. The market carries nearly everything from paint, power tools and lumber to groceries, wine and local cheeses.

"Everyone in here could tell you a horror story you wouldn't believe," said market manager Ashley Mayhew, who ran the shop through it all. "I know a woman whose house was gone but she was elated because she found a cat. 'One lady was happy because she saved some grapes. They don't have shoes, clothes...anything but they are happy just to find a cat or some grapes.'"

Those who returned, whether to find homes intact or destroyed, set out in search of pets or livestock that may have managed to stay alive. "There were horses all over Spruceville Road; cows out, dogs running free," Chaves said of the scene as she fled the area on Saturday. "It was so sad thinking these animals have no food and water. It is like a maze out there with all the barbed wire and fire trucks. It's unbelievable." — APF



**MISSISSIPPI:** Students express their emotions on the Delta State University campus, Tuesday night, Sept 15, 2015, during a candlelight memorial to pay tribute to history professor Ethan Schmidt who was killed in his office Monday morning by another instructor. Police say Shannon Lamb, an instructor at the same school, killed Schmidt. Lamb later died in Greenville of an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound. — AP

## MOTIVE ELUSIVE IN DOUBLE SHOOTING

**GAUTIER, Mississippi:** Shannon Lamb's motive for fatally shooting his girlfriend and a university colleague remains largely a mystery: The university instructor had no criminal record, he was a well-liked teacher, and police said there was no history of domestic violence between him and Amy Prentiss.

And yet there were some signs of trouble: Cleveland Police Chief Charles "Buster" Bingham said Tuesday that authorities had some indication Lamb and the second shooting victim, Delta State University professor Ethan Schmidt, did not get along.

A student who praised Lamb, Brandon Beavers, said the professor also seemed agitated and jittery, "like there was something wrong with him." And another student, Mikel Sykes, said Lamb told him he was dealing with stress at the end of the 2014-15 academic year. Lamb also had asked the university for a medical leave of absence, saying he had a health issue of some sort, university President William LaForge has said. This year, he was only teaching two online classes, and recent changes in the university's hiring policies meant the doctorate Lamb had worked so hard to earn would not guarantee

him an automatic tenure track. Nonetheless, authorities have not been able to identify any one major factor that would have driven Lamb to shoot two people and then kill himself.

### Highly dedicated

In a 911 call Monday, Lamb told police he had shot Prentiss and that officers needed to get over to their house. Lamb made a point to say his "sweet dog" was there alive and probably upset, and said the dead woman's family contacts could be found on her phone.

Inside the home, officers found Prentiss' body and a handwritten note in which Lamb described her as "the only woman who ever loved me" and wrote "I wish I could take it back." News of the shootings of Prentiss in Gautier, Mississippi, and of Schmidt at Delta State, 300 miles away, shocked many. "We're talking about a guy who was highly dedicated to his children and to his students," a former student of Lamb's, Hannah Rapetti, said of him. She said Lamb spoke lovingly of Prentiss, was a dedicated father to his two children, and a devoted teacher who helped her find a scholarship so she could stay in school.

## FROM JABS TO WOMEN, HOT TOPICS OF THE GOP DEBATE

**WASHINGTON:** Eleven top-tier Republican presidential hopefuls face off in their second prime-time debate of the 2016 campaign yesterday, in a clash between outsiders and establishment candidates under a cathedral of political conservatism.

Set in the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley, California, the debate is expected to turn on a rapid-fire series of questions and answers on foreign and domestic policy and politics, according to sponsor CNN. More broadly, the question is about the viability of untested candidates challenged by experienced public policymakers, in a wide-open contest that counts as its front-runner a billionaire developer expected by many to have self-destructed by now.

Donald Trump will again be center-stage in the broadcast that begins at 8 pm EDT. He'll be flanked by retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson and former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush. The other candidates will be arrayed outward, with Kentucky Sen Rand Paul and New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie on either end. Here are some things to look for.

### Trump slayers

Against most expectations, Trump's candidacy hasn't self-immolated, and rivals have no choice but to take him seriously. "Now they're saying, oh, how do we stop this guy?" Trump said this week. "I haven't heard the word 'clown' in a while." Look for some Republicans - but not all - to try to work within short windows of speaking time to try to take him down, either explicitly or by comparison with themselves.

Before the debate, some candidates tested their approaches. Bush, who at the first debate called Trump's rhetoric divisive, told a crowd in Spanish that Trump doesn't think the former governor can speak the language. "Pobrecito" (poor guy), Bush said.

Former executive Carly Fiorina has dismissed Trump as "an entertainer running for president." Paul told The Associated Press on Tuesday that he wants to expose Trump as a fake conservative. And Christie, who has little trouble being heard, complained Monday

that Trump and his feuding partners are getting so much attention.

"We have to do the job to make sure that people hear our voices," Christie said of himself and his fellow candidates on Fox News' "The Kelly File." Trump seems ready to take what comes. "I hear they're all going after me," he said. "Whatever."

### Stakes for Bush

The stakes are particularly high for Bush. In this debate, though, there's no presumption that Trump's candidacy will collapse. Bush must distinguish himself from Trump as an able policymaker in his own right. Judging from his recent comments, Bush will have his pick of examples from the past of Trump taking Democratic positions and saying nice things about Hillary Rodham Clinton, now the Democratic front-runner. He may try to call out Trump for his comments about immigrants, too. To hone his approach, Bush trained for the debate with Peter Flaherty, a top aide to 2012 GOP nominee Mitt Romney.

### Appeals to women

Fiorina, the only woman in the Republican nomination fight, has crafted the first heavy-weight response to a Trump insult. The super PAC supporting her campaign released a video this week, "Faces," in response to Trump's remark in a Rolling Stone interview in which he says of her, "Look at that face!" and "Would anyone vote for that?"

Says Fiorina in the video, "Ladies, look at this face, and look at all of your faces - the face of leadership." She goes on to say that hers "is the face of a 61-year-old woman. I am proud of every year and every wrinkle." It's a clear poke at Trump's repeated insults of women, including his spat with Fox's Megyn Kelly that began with her asking him at the first debate about calling women names. Trump then launched a series of insults at the TV anchor.

Paul is wading into the matter, too. He said Tuesday, "If Trump keeps up his sophomoric insults, particularly of women ... and I think if he does that directly to a woman on stage, I think it'll be the beginning of the end." — AP

## TRUMP, REPUBLICANS READY FOR INTENSE DEBATE BATTLE

THERE ARE LIKELY TO BE FIREWORKS

**LOS ANGELES:** America's Republican presidential hopefuls were finalizing their battle plans Tuesday for the hotly-anticipated debate, with all eyes on anti-establishment frontrunner Donald Trump and the rivals wishing to check his rise. Eleven candidates will crowd onto the stage at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley, California, a more intimate and symbolic setting than the first debate, in August.

While Trump will aim to preserve his substantial lead in the polls, his many rivals will be under tremendous pressure to deliver a breakout performance that sends them into top-contender status and helps separate them from the large pack of candidates. A solid showing would spell more "earned media" invites to appear on television news shows and a substantial fundraising boost. Trump shrugged at the prospect of entering a lion's den with opponents eager to take swipes at the man they say is not a true conservative. "We're doing something special," Trump told a crowd Tuesday night from the deck of a World War II-era battleship, the USS Iowa, in Los Angeles. "This is a movement."

### Gloves coming off

There are likely to be fireworks between Trump, who has exceeded his brash reputation and leveled verbal assaults at many challengers, and those seeking to rein in the controversial real estate mogul. Jeb Bush, perhaps the campaign's ultimate establishment Republican, has seen his political fortunes tumble in the months since Trump entered the race.

In an effort to raise his campaign's profile, a pro-Bush "super PAC" group that has raised huge funds launched a series of ads-reportedly a \$24 million buy in early-voting states Iowa, New Hampshire and South Carolina that tout the former Florida governor's conservative credentials. It remained unclear whether Bush will come out swinging against Trump when candidates take the stage. But rivals such as Senator Rand Paul, who leveled tough accusations against Trump in the first debate, only to see his poll numbers sink in the intervening month, insisted the gloves will come off.

"I think I was a little easy on him, so I think he deserves every bit he gets," Paul told CNN, which is hosting the event. "I will make sure that everybody in this country knows that he is a fake conservative." The hot-tempered attacks may come



**CLEVELAND:** In this Aug 6, 2015, file photo Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump speaks as Jeb Bush watches during a Republican presidential debate. — AP

despite the debate's location, one that honors Reagan, seen by many Republicans as the quintessential modern-day conservative president.

As candidates seek to carry the Reagan torch, violation of his so-called 11th commandment—"thou shalt not speak ill of any fellow Republican"—is likely to go by the wayside.

### Rise of anti-establishment

As more conventional candidates like Ohio Governor John Kasich and Senator Marco Rubio struggle to gain air time with the US media, which is spending vast time and resources on covering Trump, another outsider, retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson, is quietly gaining ground. The latest CBS News poll found Trump still ahead, at 27 percent support, but the soft-spoken Carson, whose style is essentially the anti-Trump, swelled to 23 percent, though within the poll's margin of error.

While it is unclear whether Carson poses an immediate threat to Trump's dominance, the rise of the doctor, who like Trump has never held public office, is more evidence of an anti-establishment wave washing over the 2016 nomination race. Another outsider, former Hewlett-

Packard chief executive Carly Fiorina, has also risen in the ranks, being the only candidate to jump from the previous undercard event to the main debate.

Fiorina, the only woman in the Republican field, will be watched closely to see whether she launches broadsides against Trump, who recently made disparaging comments about Fiorina's looks. Trump's antics and his surprising durability have started to gain him the attention of the White House. Vice President Joe Biden on Tuesday described Trump's comments on immigration as "sick."

"That one guy absolutely denigrated an entire group of people, appealing to the baser side of human nature," Biden told a group of Hispanic Americans. "This message has been tried on America many times before. We always, always, always, always overcome," he said. The White House, however, said that President Barack Obama would not be watching to see what Trump will. "He is at least a keenly interested observer to that process," said White House spokesman Josh Earnest. "But I would not anticipate that the president will watch the debate." "I guess because he feels like he's got better things to do." — APF

## RECORD SOUTH CALIFORNIA RAIN SWAMPS ROADS, SWELLS RIVERS

**LOS ANGELES:** A record-breaking storm slammed parched Southern California on Tuesday, cutting off power to thousands, jamming traffic during the morning commute and stranding some people in surging waterways. Downtown Los Angeles saw a staggering 2.39 inches, breaking a record for rainfall for the date and marking the second-wettest 24-hour period on record for September, National Weather Service meteorologist Robbie Munroe said.

Swift-water rescue crews plucked three people and a dog from tree branches as the Los Angeles River quickly swelled from its usual trickle to a raging torrent. "Me and my dog, we got caught by the rising waters. We had to climb up a tree to wait it out," said David Quinones, a homeless man who lives in an encampment along the riverbank just north of downtown. "We were just kind of clinging on for dear life."

Quinones told KABC-TV that he and his dog were doing OK, and he was going back to the river to check on his camp. In northeastern Los Angeles County, two people were rescued from a swollen creek near Azusa. In nearby San Gabriel, two homes were red-tagged after their foundations eroded when a concrete retaining wall collapsed along a wash near a construction site. No injuries were reported.

The storm grew after a low-pressure system from the northwest part of the state combined with the remnants of former Hurricane Linda, which formed Sept. 6 in the Pacific Ocean off Mexico and later dissipated off Baja California. In neighboring Arizona, the monsoon brought punishing wind and driving rain to the Phoenix area Monday night. Trees and utility poles fell, knocking out power to 18,000 customers, and the Veterans Affairs hospital was damaged.

### Gutters overflowed

The main pulse of the Southern California storm hit overnight, then tapered off at midmorning. Traffic backed up following spinouts and fender

benders on several slick freeways. Flooding shut down Interstate 710 southeast of downtown, and an overturned big rig blocked much of Interstate 210 in Pasadena for hours, California Highway Patrol Officer Monica Posada said. Nobody was hurt.

Gutters overflowed and floodwaters rushed down residential streets throughout greater Los Angeles, stalling cars in intersections. At least 130 elderly people were evacuated after water came through the roof of a three-story assisted-living apartment building in West Hollywood, according to county fire officials. Widespread power outages were reported. A total of 9,300 customers remained without electricity in the region according to its two major utilities, Southern California Edison and The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power.

The wet weather was not expected to relieve the state's record drought but could be a harbinger of El Nino, the ocean-warming phenomenon that may bring heavy rain to Southern California this winter, Munroe said. "El Nino increases your odds for getting more energetic storms, but you can't really attribute it to any specific storm," he said. "But a rainfall like this means we're heading in the right direction." The storm stretched east into inland desert regions and south to Orange and San Diego counties. In San Bernardino County, one spot, Yucaipa Ridge, received 5.4 inches of rain. The moisture offered a brief respite from hot and dry conditions, as temperatures dropped into the 70s in some areas. Temperatures were expected to spike again, and humidity will drop, forecasters said. — AP



**HESPERIA:** Traffic is slowed from the rain at the Cajon Pass and the Interstate 15. — AP