

We cannot stop all fires—nor should we, because fire is a natural part of many forested ecosystems. But we can work together to reduce the risks to lives and property. We need to look beyond jurisdictional boundaries and help encourage all techniques—such as defensible space—that will make homes, communities and watersheds more resistant to the more catastrophic and damaging effects from fire when it inevitably does come.

[From the Daily Camera, Nov. 4, 2003]

FIRE PRECAUTIONS SAVE HOMES

FIRE-RESISTANT MATERIALS, THINNED TREES
CREDITED

(By Mary Butler)

All his neighbors told David Mitchell that they thought his house had burned in last week's Overland Fire outside of Jamestown. "But when I drove up to the place the next morning," he said, "about a 2-foot ring around the house wasn't burnt."

The 2,800-square-foot home on County Road 87, where several other homes burned to the ground, was unscathed.

Mitchell credits efforts made to create "defensible space," such as thinning trees, how his home was positioned and his driveway's alignment, for helping to spare the house from the fast-moving fire's path Wednesday.

Even if flames came close enough to lick the home's exterior, he said, fire-resistant materials such as Rastra concrete, Styrofoam blocks and steel roofing used to build the house would have delayed its ignition.

"The fire was so hot, if we had made the building from wood, it would have caught fire anyway," he said.

Since the early 1990s, Boulder County has required new homes and large additions to homes in unincorporated mountain communities to be built with wildfires in mind.

"When you build a new house, you're required to have a fire mitigation plan," said Eric Philips, county wildfire mitigation coordinator.

For instance, cedar shake shingles are banned from use on mountain homes. In some areas, "noncombustible" materials such as stucco, stone and cement siding are required. Tree thinning is also a must.

A site-by-site evaluation is made to determine what mitigation efforts ought to be made, Philips said.

Taking such precautions is thought to have saved at least one neighborhood in Southern California, where wildfires ravaged thousands of homes in recent weeks.

The New York Times on Sunday dedicated a front-page story to the Stevenson Ranch neighborhood. The story described the neighborhood's streets as wide, the homes' roofs as fire retardant, the landscaping as moist and the surrounding hillsides as irrigated and cleared of brush.

Some of the homes' features include double-glazed window panes that resist heat and breakage, stucco-sealed eaves to keep sparks from getting into attics and oversized address numbers for easy identification. Even some of the swimming pools are equipped with valves that allow firefighters to draw the water, the article said.

Whether homeowners' fire-prevention measures made a difference in the Overland Fire, Philips said, has yet to be assessed.

But many Lefthand Canyon-area homeowners, including Mitchell, say they did.

"Thinning trees gives us a fighting chance," said Nolan Farmer, whose Overland Road home was within 40 yards of the 3,500-acre blaze.

He credits tree thinning a team of Boulder County inmates did on his property seven

years ago for saving his property. The work was well worth the \$50 he paid then, Farmer said.

Farmer also built his house with a metal roof, sealed redwood siding and without decks in the event that flames might come up against his home of 12 years.

John and Susan Bernart's Overland Road home, which overlooks the hillside blackened in the blaze, wasn't directly threatened by the fire.

But John Bernart says he had peace of mind knowing that its straw-bale and stucco construction could hold its own against wildfire. Besides being energy efficient, the insulating materials are also extremely fire resistant.

"There are straw-bale houses that are 500 years old in Europe," Bernart said. Still, he said, "We're hopeful we won't have to face this kind of threat again. Our strike of lightning has come and gone."

PAYING TRIBUTE TO BILL PORTER

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 5, 2003

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor to rise and pay tribute to a remarkable man from my district. Recently, the Colorado Trappers Association recognized Bill Porter as "Trapper of the Year." Not only is Bill a talented and dedicated trapper, he is also an outstanding steward of wildlife, and I believe that it is important to pay tribute to his contributions here today.

Bill began trapping at the age of eleven in order to supplement his family's income. Over the last 25 years, he has refined his skills to become one of the best trappers in Colorado. Bill approaches trapping with the importance of preserving wildlife in mind. He focuses exclusively on capturing destructive and threatening animals.

Bill is good-natured and has a great sense of humor. He often uses these positive character traits when teaching students and young trappers the importance of legal and ethical trapping. Aside from technical knowledge and ethics, Bill also stresses the importance of working closely with the Division of Wildlife in a combined effort to assure the conservation of animals and their habitats.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to call to the attention of this body of Congress and this nation the accomplishments of Bill Porter. Bill is a man who has spent his life in harmony with nature. His dedication to his trade, and willingness to pass along his knowledge and morals to the next generation, is truly admirable. Congratulations, Bill.

CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS IN BURMA

HON. LANE EVANS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 5, 2003

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to address the current state of affairs in Burma. For years, Burma's military rulers have retained control through the use of rape, murder, torture, and imprisonment. Many of my

colleagues and I co-sponsored the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003, H.R. 2330, in an effort to sanction this regime for its egregious human rights violations and to shed light on the atrocities being committed.

Another action taken to help bring about change in Burma was the assignment of a United Nations envoy to this chaotic region. Unfortunately, many of my colleagues and I now feel that the United Nations process put in place to help bring about change in Burma is seriously flawed. The UN envoy to Burma has done more to diffuse international pressure on the junta than he has to improve human rights conditions there.

Conditions are not improving, they are worsening. Aung San Suu Kyi, 1991 Nobel Peace Prize winner and leader of the country's true government, remains under house arrest while the people of Burma are being slaughtered. Just a few days ago, members of Burma's military regime shot at a crowd of demonstrating monks, killing at least one and injuring many more.

In addition, Thailand, Burma's neighbor, has become increasingly friendly with the SPDC, the regime responsible for this bloodshed. Thai authorities deport Burmese migrant workers and other refugees with little concern for their welfare, turning a blind eye to the oppression that awaits them and in violation of international law. The UN has done little to change the relationship between these two nations.

As we approach the next meeting of the United Nations General Assembly, we must be cognizant that the process has failed. We need to strengthen the authority of the UN envoy and replace him with someone capable of rallying international support for change. The present system is not working—let's fix it.

IN RECOGNITION OF ROBERT EUGENE RUARK'S RETIREMENT FROM SOLANO COUNTY HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT, SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS BUREAU

HON. ELLEN O. TAUSCHER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 5, 2003

Mrs. TAUSCHER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Robert Ruark, whose retirement from his position as Chief Criminal Investigator of the Solano County Health and Social Services, Special Investigations Bureau will commence on Thursday, November 6, 2003. During his fourteen year career with the county, Chief Ruark has established himself as an extraordinary leader in law enforcement. At his retirement, his many accomplishments and hard work will be recognized within the community of his colleagues and friends.

Robert Eugene Ruark was born in Turlock, California on November 4, 1946. After graduating from Turlock High School in 1964, Robert went on to attend Modesto Community College where he earned an Associate of Arts degree in Criminal Justice. He then attended Chapman University in 1968 where he obtained a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Social Sciences. Desiring to put his education to work, Mr. Ruark entered the U.S. Army as a Military Policeman and then served in the Republic of Vietnam as a Military Police Investigator. In 1969, Mr. Ruark graduated from the