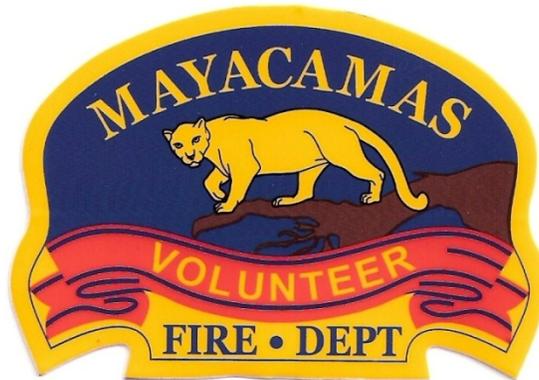


**MVFD Asst. Chief Michael Jablonowski**

*Interviewed by Rina Faletti*

**April 4, 2018**



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## Michael Jablonowski

[Start of Michael Jablonowski 1]

*\*\*\* NOTE: This interview was conducted in a restaurant. It was a noisy environment and led to a difficult to transcribe audio file. The names and places noted have not been corrected because of the difficulty to do so.*

Interviewer: I know, but I'm going to say that again because what I just said is that our event at Trinity Cavedale is central to the whole thing, and you said it's an epicenter. So when you're done chewing, I'll ask you about that.

Michael Jablonowski: Okay.

Interviewer: Because I want to know what your thoughts are about that from your point of view. I have my own thoughts about it, but you have a completely different way of looking at it. It's really good that the CEO of the California Historical Society wants to take our project under her wing. I think it's great.

Jablonowski: It give's you a lot of support.

Interviewer: It gives me support, that's for sure. But it also, I think --

Jablonowski: Wow, these are really great [unintelligible].

Interviewer: They look good. I might have that later. So that's a good development. What else? We're starting our interviews which is great. I wish we could have started earlier.

Jablonowski: It would have helped because people forget.

Interviewer: I know they do, but here we are.

Jablonowski: Better late than never.

Interviewer: I still don't think it's too late anyway. Do you?

Jablonowski: Well.

Interviewer: Tell me why you said that while I look for my real questions?

Jablonowski: Well, because I think during that whole episode everything was disjointed. I had no idea what other people were doing. People didn't know what I was doing. [Unintelligible], and then obviously Scott and I were working together [unintelligible] fire [unintelligible]. I had no idea where people were. We were doing -- responding to different shit that came up.

Interviewer: Right, in every second.

Jablonowski: And it was a different -- it was a very, very fluid situation [unintelligible] --

Interviewer: Right.

Jablonowski: -- moment [unintelligible].

Interviewer: Right. All right. Let me see if this internet thing is going to work. I have internet but -- thank you for being flexible. Where is it? All right. Here it is.

Jablonowski: I'd like to finish that thought.

Interviewer: Yes, and make sure you direct yourself this way.

Jablonowski: The longer it goes, in a way, I think the first couple of weeks we were still mostly having flashbacks than we're having now. I'm thinking, "Well, did that happen?" Or, "What was the chronology?" It's getting hazy over time.

Interviewer: It's getting hazy over time?

Jablonowski: Yes. But that doesn't mean that it's not valuable, and it doesn't mean that it doesn't segue with other people scenarios.

Interviewer: Right.

Jablonowski: That was the point for me when was -- when I mentioned that to Allison, it was, "Hey, we all have a story here that is -- and we don't know what the other person's story is."

Interviewer: Right.

Jablonowski: And I think that to me, coupled with the fact that it is really a once in the lifetime event. There's no question about that.

Interviewer: Right. Yes, that was the most surprising thing you told me was that you guys know what each other were doing during -- can you talk -- let me explain what we're doing. I'm supposed to conduct this in the same way with every person. So with you, it's so easy to talk that we can get off on tangents, but you already know about the project, and you know that I'm interviewing firefighters. And also Donnie is starting to interview the residents, but she's only going to do two.

And then, like you said, everybody's stories are going to -- we'll compare and contrast. And we can always go back to -- and I'll keep this help up so I can hear you better -- so it will record you better. The way I've organized the questions -- and we can go this way, or we don't have to. Is to do a before -- I have some before the fire questions just about you. And then during is the -- what you're starting to talk about already. And then some comments about what now after, and so maybe we can or don't have to go in that order but --

Jablonowski: That's fine with me, whatever is easier.

Interviewer: Should I try it?

Jablonowski: Yes, whatever easier.

Interviewer: Let's try going in order and see. For me, it's easiest just to have the conversation, but I think that -- let's just do how we planned and then we'll go from there.

Jablonowski: Right. It seems to me that this is really kind of a test case for you.

Interviewer: It is in a way. Besides, if I hear you say things, I'll come back and ask you more anyhow. So we have organized it before, during, and after. So the first thing I want to know is how you became a volunteer firefighter, and tell me the history of that?

Jablonowski: Okay. Down at 5155, [unintelligible] was a lady named Ruth Hinson. Ruth was a friend of mine for years and years. She was the first person on the hill to see my daughter [unintelligible] came up in 1968. And Ruth was always really good to me back [unintelligible] the property that I have now. And it must have been probably early 70s [unintelligible], and Ruth decided she was going to stay on the hill.

As she got older, she had emphysema, and she had other health problems. She was getting to be a frequent flyer for Mayacamas [unintelligible], and so she'd call [unintelligible], and she'd call me at the same time. Well, I was a lot closer than anybody else, so I usually got -- and obviously, I wasn't in the fire department then, but I'm on scene before they did. After about six or seven times, we got to know each other pretty well, and that continued until Ruth passed away.

And I was trustee for her estate, and I said to John [unintelligible], I said, "I really want to [unintelligible]." I forget who it was. "I really want to make a contribution from her estate to the fire department because you responded so many times." And they said, "Well, the best the thing you could do is if you joined the department." So, that's what I did, and that was in 1997.

Interviewer: Nineteen when?

Jablonowski: Ninety-seven.

Interviewer: Ninety-seven. What did you say about 1968?

Jablonowski: That's when -- I'm not sure what I said about 68.

Interviewer: Oh, I thought you said 1968.

Jablonowski: I probably did. That's --

Interviewer: What was happening then?

Jablonowski: Oh, '68 was the -- I had just moved up there, and that was the year that my daughter was born. And Ruth -- the point was that Ruth was the first person to see my daughter after she came home.

Interviewer: So if you came here in 1968.

Jablonowski: I came in '67.

Interviewer: Sixty-seven. That was three years after the Nuns Fire from before.

Jablonowski: That's right.

Interviewer: So tell me about your memory of that? What was -- did this landscape show that?

Jablonowski: Now that's a really good question because I was living in San Francisco, and my major transportation was my motorcycle. I was going to San Francisco State. I had moved out here in '64 -- no, '63 from the Midwest. I'm riding my motorcycle to San Francisco State where we lived [unintelligible], and there's ash falling out of the sky. I thought, "What? Is this Vesuvius or what?" And I figured out it was the fire. So I thought the next weekend I rode my motorcycle up Trinity Road to see the fire, and it was still smoldering away. So it was kind of neat in a way to have seen the devastation of '64, and then to see it 50 years later how it came back, and then got wasted again.

Interviewer: We're people talking about it? When you moved on Cavedale, it was three years after that. So was it still -- or had it --

Jablonowski: Not really.

Interviewer: No?

Jablonowski: First of all, I didn't know many people.

Interviewer: Oh, I see.

Jablonowski: So that would be the big thing. The major account that I have was Ed and Ruth Hinson, and they had talked about -- they didn't have to leave. They weren't evacuated. And Ralph, who owned the place where I live now was up here. They were fine. It didn't -- it was unusual because that '64 fire didn't affect a lot of the older places, but this fire did, and it took out a lot of old -- the [Mackey] place that was a homestead, several of them. Why that is? For me, it's just the nature of the fire. It's weird. There you go.

Interviewer: So you joined in 1990 -- what did you say?

Jablonowski: Ninety-seven. And I went through the fire academy with guys that I still see in Glen Ellen, which is kind of cool.

Interviewer: The fire academy is operated by the Glen Ellen Cal Fire?

Jablonowski: It's operated -- there are two agencies that operate it. One is Sonoma County through the Junior College, and the other one is through [unintelligible], so three. And the last one was through the Junior College, and they're just about to start it again in April through the [unintelligible].

Interviewer: And they have people who are going to do it?

Jablonowski: We have two at least. Yes.

Interviewer: Oh, that's great. So what have you found the most rewarding about being a firefighter over all these years? What does it mean to you?

Jablonowski: Wow. I think what it was, "Hey look, here's a chance to do something for the community that doesn't involve shooting people." I wasn't going to be [unintelligible]. I wasn't going to do it. My whole family on both sides [unintelligible]. I was ready to go to [unintelligible] have to do it, and [unintelligible] I was already married [unintelligible].

I think that giving something to the community which is important [unintelligible]. And the other thing was that I realized that it's really serious, and I tend to be pretty flip about most things. Yes, I can take it. It's a joke. You know, a lot of it's a joke. It's either bullshit or a joke, right? This isn't. It's pretty serious. You're dealing with people's tragedies.

Interviewer: Right.

Jablonowski: Really, really traumatic events. And what makes it harder in a way is that most of the fire agencies are dealing with people -- they don't know the people. We're dealing with our friends and neighbors, and

that makes it very different; it really does. And I think that in the long run, we do good.

Interviewer: In the long run you do what?

Jablonowski: We do good.

Interviewer: Yes, you do good. And do you feel like that good is more connected to knowing the people and the place in your own neighborhood?

Jablonowski: No, not really. I don't think so because -- I mean, we have so many B&Bs and what have you. So we get -- and they're a lot of our really. They come up for the weekend and get really drunk and do something stupid. Yes, a lot of the calls. Not so much now because there aren't any B&Bs.

Interviewer: Huh? I see. Well, I'm assuming that it's been rewarding because you've stuck at it?

Jablonowski: Yes, it is rewarding. I mean in a sense I guess it's rewarding. I never thought of it so much in terms of being rewarding, it's just something -- and there is a certain adrenaline rush that happens when you [unintelligible]. You don't know what you're getting into. The call comes in, and you think it's one thing, and by the time you get there, it could well be something else. It's like it's raining and it's the middle of the night, you've just woken up, and your heart is pounding. I think that adrenaline rush is kind of addictive. At the

same time it could be a real drag, it's 3:00 morning and you don't want to get up. I think the biggest commitment for me in a way, is I have to drag my turnout gear with me wherever I go.

Interviewer: You have to drag your what?

Jablonowski: My turnout gear. My helmet and my --

Interviewer: Oh, all your gear. Oh, right.

Jablonowski: -- all my gear, which is a 50-pound bag basically.

Interviewer: Oh, wow.

Jablonowski: Because I don't know what station I'm going to. Right? So if you think [unintelligible] women that have these really big purses [unintelligible], and this is nothing like it. And in the summertime, then I have two great big bags. I have the structure gear and the wildland gear. So I think in some ways that's the hardest part of the job is just carrying. And I have three or four different cars, so it's not always in the same car. And then you got to take the radio and make sure you've got the garage door opening, etcetera.

Interviewer: So you're a Chief now.

Jablonowski: I'm a Chief now.

Interviewer: How does that work in the latter of things? Does it have to do with experience? You must have been -- you were the --

Jablonowski: Yes. I think what it really means now is I'm the guys that's directing the scene.

Interviewer: Right.

Jablonowski: So I'm not the one that's going into the building. I'm the one that's just making sure that -- you know, it's overall -- it's no longer hands-on attack. It's more making sure that everything is safe. That's the first thing, obviously, that all the firefighters are safe, and that the scene is safe. And that things are being done that need to be done, that's pretty much what I'm doing.

The best case would be an example of last week. It's a medical call on Cavedale, and we were all going down to -- so everybody was there including people from Glen Ellen. And my job was basically parking, and just make sure we got the ambulances here, that these engines are not going to be in the way. So that's kind of what it comes down to.

Interviewer: So you had said though during the fires that you guys were -- well, what I remember you telling me, was that you were in your truck with your partner, and that after the time that you guys all were at the firehouse, number one, making sure that it didn't burn down which was -- was that Monday or Tuesday?

Jablonowski: It must have been Tuesday.

Interviewer: That was Tuesday -- Tuesday late morning, probably around noonish maybe.

Jablonowski: And I was somewhere else. I didn't see any of them.

Interviewer: Wow.

Jablonowski: And I don't know where I was, but I -- to back up a little bit. I got the call on Sunday night. I was in bed already.

Interviewer: The first call?

Jablonowski: First call. Chief Horne said, "You better go get the tender and come to Napa."

Interviewer: And come to --

Jablonowski: To station 16 down in Dry Creek.

Interviewer: Right.

Jablonowski: I said, "Okay." And so by the time I got to the station, "No. Don't go to Napa, go down to Sonoma Valley, down to Beltane Ranch. So I was down there.

Interviewer: And who called you?

Jablonowski: Oh, that was Will. Will called, the Chief called.

Interviewer: Okay.

Jablonowski: On the phone. And I didn't have any radio contact with anybody at that time. I went down to Beltane Ranch. There's a guy, a firefighter directing engines in there. And I think one of the most amazing things to me about that was as we're going down -- as I'm going down in the tender, the wind is blowing extremely strong. And as I go towards Santa Rosa, you know, towards Beltane, and Trinity is about a mile maybe, and there are a number of houses on the west side of Highway 12.

Interviewer: Yes.

Jablonowski: I was Beltane probably no more than 45 minutes, and not one of those houses was on fire. Every one of them was totally involved by the time I came [unintelligible]. So at that point, we were -- I was assisting Glen Ellen with the tender giving them water.

And it was like a war zone. I mean, you could hear the propane tanks, sort of like a cannon going off, and the ammunition in people's garages going, "Pop. Pop. Pop." It was like a war zone

except the bullets weren't really coming at us. We were doing defensive as much as possible.

I went to this place and pulled out of there because obviously it was gone. By that time, I had to go get water, and I went down, and I was told to go down Henna Road and got stuck on Henna Road, and I couldn't get through -- trees down, you know, where they wanted me to go. I turned around and went back. And I forget what the next assignment was, but --

Interviewer: When you talk about assignments, who is giving them to you?

Jablonowski: Mostly it's just whom I'm seeing. At this point, there was so little communication -- for us anyway. So I'd see Glen Ellen and say, "Hey, what do you need?" They'd say, "Do this."

Interviewer: So you're out in the firefighting -- right here where we're sitting.

Jablonowski: Well, not only that but remember there are five fires going on all over the place. And they're bringing in mutual aid which I thought was kind of ironic to bring in mutual aid from Marin County. They're coming up Highway 37, and the fields are on fire on Highway 37, so they stop and put that out. "Well, wait a minute, we've got houses up here." You know what I mean? It's a natural reaction, you see a fire, and you're a firefighter, you stop, and you put it out. That was kind of ironic that they didn't get to where we needed -- where we really needed them.

But you know it takes a while -- especially in something like that. It was unprepared. I don't care who you try and blame for it, you know, emergency services or [unintelligible]. It's just unprecedented. Nobody has ever seen anything like this. And what they're calling it now, this is the new normal, and I think that's probably true.

Interviewer: So that was -- what you're talking about was like in the middle of the night on Sunday?

Jablonowski: Yes. So all through that night, we were doing this defensive stuff. I was trying to get water at one point, and I was trying to find a hydrant. We did that until -- let's see, so that was all through Monday, and now it gets kind of hazy.

The same thing Monday. And then Monday during the day I went to Robertson Road on Glen Ellen. Glen Ellen is burning pretty good, and it's been about 16 -- oh, maybe not that long, but through almost midnight that night on Robertson just putting out spot fires and making sure the structures -- the structures weren't really threatened except by the spot fires. But if the spot fires got away into the brush, there would have been a problem.

So I was there until about -- it was getting pretty late. I don't remember exactly, it must have been about midnight, and I said, "Hey, I really need to be relieved." Jake was with me for about six

hours that afternoon, and then he hurt -- his back had already been hurt, and he was -- he couldn't do anything. He was in a lot of pain. So I was alone from that point on.

So I called -- I got relief that evening, and it was the San Francisco Engine Company that relieved me. I went over to the Glen Ellen station and found a cot and slept for about four hours, and in the morning I got up. There is Ted Meyer in the engine behind me, and he had slept in the engine, so we both went back up the hill.

Interviewer: This was not at the Cal Fire Station?

Jablonowski: No, the one in Glen Ellen.

Interviewer: Where? I don't know which one that is.

Jablonowski: Arnold Drive. In town.

Interviewer: Oh, yes, I know where that's at. Wow.

Jablonowski: And from then on it was -- basically what we would hear is, "Oh, there's a fire over here." Or, "There's something here." We couldn't even get to it. So the first thing that really happened the first few hours after I was on the hill, again, we were clearing the road.

Interviewer: On the hill means Trinity and Cavedale? Or where were you then?

Jablonowski: On basically Cavedale. Trinity was -- it was open, but it was spotty. There were wires down, and you had to get around stuff. Cavedale was totally closed.

Interviewer: So this is Tuesday?

Jablonowski: This is -- yes, this is Tuesday.

Interviewer: And so now tell me what the fire did during that time? So it was in -  
- our fire started in Nuns Canyon somewhere.

Jablonowski: Right.

Interviewer: And then it came down this way. We're in Kenwood right now.

Jablonowski: Right.

Interviewer: So it came down this way.

Jablonowski: I don't think that was the Nuns fire. I think that was a different fire.  
And you know what --

Interviewer: Oh.

Jablonowski: -- I have no idea. No idea. I didn't know what fire --

Interviewer: Anything?

Jablonowski: -- was what until weeks later.

Interviewer: Oh, my gosh.

Jablonowski: I'm going to hit the restroom, and I'll be back.

Interviewer: Okay.

Jablonowski: Tuesday morning.

Interviewer: Tuesday morning when you woke up at the Glen Ellen Fire Station?  
After having been up essentially 24 --

Jablonowski: A little bit more than that.

Interviewer: -- plus hours.

Jablonowski: Yes. And went up the hill, and as I said, Trinity Road was basically  
blocked with trees.

Interviewer: Had the fire already gone up there?

Jablonowski: Oh, yes.

Interviewer: Or it was going up?

Jablonowski: No, it had already -- this was already burned.

Interviewer: So you never saw that?

Jablonowski: I never saw that at all.

Interviewer: You never saw that. And it was happening at the same time you were down here.

Jablonowski: Exactly.

Interviewer: And do you think that you were fighting structure fires down here, or a combination of that and spot fires and open fires or --

Jablonowski: In Glen Ellen?

Interviewer: Yes.

Jablonowski: It was spot fires doing structure protection.

Interviewer: I see. Were you part of evacuation also? Or were people gone already?

Jablonowski: Everybody was gone except one kid in that neighborhood, and he had a garden hose.

Interviewer: By the time you got down there, everyone was out?

Jablonowski: There was -- it was a ghost town.

Interviewer: Wow.

Jablonowski: And completely filled with smoke. It was so eerie.

Interviewer: You guys have masks that you wear?

Jablonowski: No. You know, we spent -- that really worries me because we spent basically two -- well, three days breathing heavy smoke. I don't see any ill effects from it, but I can't -- luckily it's wood smoke, we're not breathing a lot of carcinogens, but it ain't good for you, there are no questions about that. No question about that.

Interviewer: So you were fighting without --

Jablonowski: Well, you don't --

Interviewer: -- breathing protecting?

Jablonowski: No. The only time you use a breathing apparatus is if you're going into a structure. You don't use it in the wildland at all.

Interviewer: Okay.

Jablonowski: So we're trying to clear the road, and I mean there are so many trees, we can't cut them. We have to put a chain on the water tender which is really heavy, 45,000 to 50,000 pounds, and we're dragging the trees off the road so we can get through.

Interviewer: Okay. Wait. So now the fire has already crossed Cavedale.

Jablonowski: The fire has already gone through there.

Interviewer: Okay.

Jablonowski: And that was the most amazing thing about it. It was such a fast fire. It went through -- roaring though. If you go up there today, you can see the stuff that didn't burn [unintelligible]. Where were we?

Interviewer: [Unintelligible] with cables.

Jablonowski: You know what, my chronology is not right. I know it's not right. Because at some point I was on upper Trinity with Scott, and we had a report of a spot fire there. We went to put out the spot fire, and you could hear the fire down below as it's coming up the mountain. It was far away at that point. There was nothing more we could do. I went back to the station. That's when we started clearing the road. And at some point, it must have been the same fire that I'd heard on Trinity. We went up to see how [Trisha] Ward was doing. There was fire all around her place, but it had already pretty much burned through. Do you know her place at all?

Interviewer: No. Whose is it?

Jablonowski: Trisha Ward. She's sort of opposite --

Interviewer: Oh, Trisha Ward's place. And that's on Trinity?

Jablonowski: It's on Cavedale.

Interviewer: On Cavedale. Okay. No, I don't know her.

Jablonowski: Anyway, it's a fairly open area and a lot of the grass had burned, some of the trees had burned, and there are some outbuildings on fire, and she was worried about another outbuilding. So we put one out and left the other outbuilding burn because it had chemicals in it, so we weren't going to go near there.

And as we're there, I can hear this fire is coming, and it sounds like a freight train is coming as it's coming up the canyon. So, I said, "All right. This is what we're going to do if it comes. Basically, we wet down everything on the exposure side. We're going to go around the back of the house. If it gets really bad, we'll go in the house."

Below Trisha's is the canyon comes up and then it -- excuse me. It turns to the right. The fire follows the canyon up and missed her

place by maybe a hundred yards or so. She was okay at that point.  
So we left and --

Interviewer: Was she there?

Jablonowski: Oh, yes, she stayed there through the entire fire. And that was a real problem for us. We'd go up a couple of times a day to make sure she was okay. She was a real concern. I had people going up there. And also people that were concerned about her, you know, in the valley that wanted to know what was going on. A lot of people wanted to go up. We couldn't bring people up, obviously. Where were we? Go back up Cavedale, again, clearing the road; more shit is coming down and --

Female Voice: Whenever you're ready.

Jablonowski: Thanks. I go by my place at 5155, and I can see the fire is sort of snaking around the house. So we go down there and put all that out. I think I've got it. I'm walking up the driveway and turn around, and there's black smoke coming out of the corner of [unintelligible] --

Interviewer: And what does that tell you?

Jablonowski: That it was gone, and it did. So we went up the road and continued doing -- and we had some more stuff to do up there. One of the concerns I had was that tower that's up by Jennifer and Ed's that has a lot of -- it's a radio tower, and it has a lot of chemicals and bad

things in it. So I wanted to make sure that nobody from other agencies went up there and got exposed to this stuff. So we were up there for quite a while.

Then the word came that Will Horne's house had burnt to the ground, and Anthony wanted to get his trailer out of there. So we went down there again with trees falling, trying to keep Wall Road open. We got Anthony's trailer out of there. And that must have been Tuesday, late Tuesday.

Wednesday. I don't really remember too much during the day, although I know that by Wednesday noon they were talking about high winds coming up Wednesday night.

Interviewer: They were talking about what?

Jablonowski: High winds coming up.

Interviewer: Oh, coming back up again.

Jablonowski: It's the second burst. And at this point, Jesse, myself, and I'm not sure who, we're all sleeping at the firehouse. We're not going anywhere. And --

Interviewer: This was number one or number two?

Jablonowski: Station, you mean? Station number one. Nobody stayed at two; there's nothing there. There's no --

Interviewer: It's too small, right?

Jablonowski: Yes. There's no water.

Interviewer: I've never been inside there.

Jablonowski: No, it's a garage. So the station is sort of a [unintelligible]. Where were we? It's Wednesday, and we know that the winds are coming up again. There's little stuff going on, but not much. About 2:00 in the morning -- Scott wasn't staying [unintelligible], and he came in and said, "Come on." He said, "We got a good fire going, and structures threatened."

It was on Trinity, but I don't remember the number. But the wind is blowing, and there are embers coming up. They're getting into the house. It's blowing stuff off the side of -- siding off the side of the house. We finally get that out and then there were a couple of more spot fires, vegetation fires, nothing much. I don't remember much after that except we probably went back to the station and slept for a while. I really don't remember.

And then after that, the winds were not as intense as Sunday night, and the duration was not as long, so it wasn't as bad. So what we were having then for the next two weeks were spot fires. And it

would be somebody -- we were really encouraging people to sort of tell us about it rather than get the call at 3:00 in the morning. People were pretty good about that. We had people coming by and telling us there a fire down there. [Unintelligible].

Interviewer: How many people were on Cavedale? How many people stayed?

Jablonowski: On Cavedale?

Interviewer: Yes.

Jablonowski: I think Trisha Ward, and the guy with the -- the guy that was the fatality at [unintelligible]. Who else stayed? I'm not sure. I did. And I think it must have been Friday night was the first time I went back to my property. It was like, "God, the place is still standing."

Interviewer: Because you didn't know.

Jablonowski: I had no idea. So I stayed there that night, and it was the most eerie thing because I knew that there was nobody around for miles and miles. It was like back in the 19th Century. And I went to sleep that night. I had [unintelligible] bottle of water. I had no electricity. I was with nothing except kerosene lamps. So about 4:00 o'clock in the morning I woke up and there's this glow in the sky. I thought, "Oh, my God, here it comes." And what it was that all the vegetation that had burned that I could see, "Oh, it's the glow from [unintelligible]." And you know Donnie said the same thing. She

thought it was the fire coming and it was that we had never seen that before because the vegetation [unintelligible].

Interviewer: And it was glowing?

Jablonowski: It was the lights of the --

Interviewer: Oh.

Jablonowski: -- community.

Interviewer: Oh, because you had never seen them because there was so much trees in the way?

Jablonowski: Exactly.

Interviewer: Oh. Wow.

Jablonowski: The only good thing about the trees not being in the way anymore is that the cell phone reception got a lot better. But having talking about cell phones, one of the things that was really hard for us was because where we live we have radio problems anyway. The repeaters were down for the first few days, and there was no radio. I mean we could talk maybe car to car, but you can't if you're down around the corner. So our main way of communicating with each other, as I said, we were off doing different things. Our main way of

communicating was texting each other. We had no voice because again --

Interviewer: And that worked?

Jablonowski: It worked fine.

Interviewer: Wow,

Jablonowski: And not only did it work fine -- and this is probably now well into the sixth -- maybe day seven, day eight, and they had the roadblocks. And Highway Patrol, we got to know them, we stood there for 12 hours. Highway Patrol is at Cavedale and Trinity, and another one on the Oakville grade. And one guy is letting traffic through, and the other guy isn't.

Interviewer: Right.

Jablonowski: I said, "What's going on?" And he said, "Well, I can't communicate -- I have no radio." I said, "Text him." And so they were doing the same thing, and that kind of solved it. So that's basically the story. We kept on going for --

Interviewer: When you say that you aren't remembering what you remembered before, what do you mean by that?

Jablonowski: No, I'm sorry. [Unintelligible].

Interviewer: But that it's fading or --

Jablonowski: I'm remembering incidents, some of them which I haven't thought of before.

Interviewer: Right.

Jablonowski: But it's the chronology that's tough.

Interviewer: Oh, I see. Could you remember the chronology before? I guess -- because some people say they remembered what happens in this -- I mean, it must have been -- I'm guessing, that it was an intense constant -- well, you talked about adrenaline before. But you constantly -- I mean, I don't -- a lot of time to reflect or go like what time is it? Do you know what I mean?

Jablonowski: Yes. No, I do.

Interviewer: So how did you --

Jablonowski: The only thing I can kind of compare it to is reading military history. And people that are in combat that are really in a -- in any situation like that. You're in a very small area with two or three people, and you have no idea what's going on until you get together and you talk about it, and at that point, it's already happened.

Interviewer: Yes, I think that the public -- I think we all have this idea that firefighters are always like together and strategizing, and figuring out -- like that's what the movies have. They don't have firefighters alone, but you paint --

Jablonowski: You know what? We're alone all the time. We go -- it's not unusual for us to be one person on a call. Having said that, we still had the nucleus at the fire station, and we were still talking to each other a lot. It's not like, "Oh well, I don't know where Scott is." I know where he is. He's over where Jerry is because we've told each other. I don't know what they're doing, but if I'm concerned I'll say, "Hey, what's the situation report." And they'll say, "Da, da, da, da, and we're coming back to the station."

Interviewer: So that's under normal circumstances, but in --

Jablonowski: [Unintelligible].

Interviewer: But even in the fire, you knew where people were basically?

Jablonowski: Basically, yes. It's not like I didn't know where they were. We may not be able to communicate very well, but at that point Will was gone. Will resigned after his house burned down.

Interviewer: Which was what day? Like the second day?

Jablonowski: And so I basically took over as Chief at that point. My major concern is, "Where are my people." So even if I couldn't talk to them, I knew, "So and so is here or there," if we weren't in touch. And it was pretty scary, I mean, the trees were coming down. I don't know if you heard about the Forest Service truck that got hit by a huge --

Interviewer: [Unintelligible] about that.

Jablonowski: Yes. They were really lucky. They were sitting in the cab, and a tree came down and crushed the front of the cab -- right in front of the engine.

Interviewer: Like a big Doug Fir?

Jablonowski: Yes, like a big Doug Fir. [Unintelligible].

Interviewer: Where did you get water? How much does your truck hold, and where do you get water?

Jablonowski: I was getting water right at Station 1. We have 40,000 gallons. Everybody was getting water there, the Hotshot Crews, OEFs. And we on the second or third day had a generator so we could operate the pump and keep the tanks full. We ran that generator for almost three weeks.

Interviewer: And that's what allowed the water to pump up? It's connected to a well then?

Jablonowski: Yes. The pump is in the well, and then it fills the tank.

Interviewer: Is that the only water tank you have up there?

Jablonowski: No. We have four at Station 1, two at Station 2, one down on the 2000 block of Cavedale. And there's a lot of other water sources like swimming pools, the lake at [unintelligible].

Interviewer: And you use those?

Jablonowski: No, we didn't. In fact, even the two tanks at two tanks at Station 2 weren't used.

Interviewer: What happens if you're in -- were you ever in a situation where you were fighting a fire, and you didn't have water? Or you ran out of water?

Jablonowski: No, I haven't [unintelligible]. And the basic rule is that you leave a quarter of the tank in the engine. You don't pump it dry for just that reason.

Interviewer: So if there's too much to be able to fight, you don't put yourself at risk to [unintelligible]?

Jablonowski: Exactly.

Interviewer: You talked a little bit about this, but what would you say, aside from some of the things -- or repeating some of the things you've said, were the most challenging things during that fire that you feel like you faced? The most difficult or challenging?

Jablonowski: Well, I think challenging in the sense that I just assumed the role of Chief, and trying to keep everything going, you know, and paramount being people's safety. If it's our firefighters, or Trisha Ward, or people that have left their car in the parking lot because they had a flat. It was one thing after another. And it was kind of -- you just go from one to the next. You didn't even really think about it. "Okay. Now we're going to this. Okay. Now we do that." I don't feel there was a real sense of tension or emergency; we were doing our job. It was the same thing we had done over and over again.

Interviewer: Well, that's an interesting comment. So you're just doing your job. There wasn't a sense of stress or urgency. Were you ever in a moment where you were afraid?

Jablonowski: No.

Interviewer: Like of the fire or the situation?

Jablonowski: I don't think until afterward, and then it was like after, "Oh, my God." No, wait a minute. I'm sorry. That's not true. There was

probably the most frightening moment in my life was in Beltane Ranch. I'm going down the hill in the water tender -- and the water tender weighs almost 50,000 pounds, and it's being blown by the wind which is coming sideways. I've never seen wind like that. And it wasn't -- an interesting thing was -- and that has happened before, the wind was down in the valley, it wasn't so much up in the hills.

So I go [unintelligible] -- I told you, I went into Beltane and it's just a cluster fuck. I mean, nobody knows what's going on. So I follow one engine in, and I think I'm following this engine and then all of a sudden the smoke and the flames -- I can't see the engine anymore and I realize that I'm in the middle of the damn forest with trees blocking the road. And I think, "Well, what am I going to do? I've got high flames up to the cab."

And then the next thing that -- "Okay, I'm going to have to go over this log." It's about like this. "I think I can probably do that." The next thing that happens is these electrical wires are coming down on the cab, "Oh, shit." I grabbed the steering wheel and floored it. The wires -- and you know, all the stuff that melted on it is still on it. There's still melted stuff on the engine.

Interviewer: On the engine that you were in?

Jablonowski: Yes. And so finally I got out of there. Obviously, I'm lost. I better just re-track the way I came in. And I got back out, and things were

just -- there was fire everywhere in Beltane. They said, "You need to go to Glen Ellen with the tender." And I told you the story there.

Interviewer: But did Beltane burn?

Jablonowski: A lot --

Interviewer: I heard that it didn't.

Jablonowski: No. The house and the barn didn't, but there was fire all over -- one of the guys that works there had a tracker with a disk, and he's roaring around the place disking, and it was like -- and you know cars are on fire. It was insane.

Interviewer: So this issue of the wind, you know, I talked to Donnie, and I asked her, "This is of interest to me." I said, "Which way was the wind coming?" She said it was coming up strong, and she remembers it coming -- she doesn't have a big memory of everything.

Jablonowski: [Unintelligible] getting out of there.

Interviewer: She shocked that she doesn't remember hardly anything. It's wiped out from her memory, but she said -- remembered clearly when she went on her deck and realized she needed to get out because the fire was right there, and she felt the wind coming this way.

Jablonowski: I think that's true. What she was seeing -- this is just my guess, but the Nuns Canyon fire was down in the canyon. Right? The wind is blowing [unintelligible]. It's blowing basically out of the north, but it's also coming from the north and up -- and now coming up the slope.

Interviewer: Because of the topography? Or was it also --

Jablonowski: I think so. I don't know why.

Interviewer: Right.

Jablonowski: But I know that just down from her, and this was probably an hour before she left, the wind was coming sideways -- excuse me. There was just debris and all sorts of -- it was a very strong wind. And once we were in Beltane, it was howling. And [Grizzly] Peak -- this is -- I just read that in the paper. Grizzly Peak which is sort of up the road a bit, they had a gust of 108.

Interviewer: Hundred and eight?

Jablonowski: Miles an hour, yes. So what do you do --

Interviewer: Take your pick.

Jablonowski: Take your pick. Right.

Interviewer: So any other moments that you remember? Like that you'll remember for the rest of your life like that one; the Beltane clearly is.

Jablonowski: Clearly. I think the other one that's probably a little better was we were going into Stone Edge Farms quite often because they had a chip pile that was near the house that was burning. The chip pile --

Interviewer: That's why you told me about [unintelligible].

Jablonowski: So we would go in there and put it out, and it would come back again. We probably put 5,000 gallons of water on it, and usually, 200 will do it. So we [unintelligible], and I realized that they've got animals there, and they've been gone for [unintelligible]. The ducks are a little stressed, so we gave water to the ducks. I was a little bit worried because they're about to get burned up by this chip pile if things go bad. And we're in there pretty often, so I'm making sure that they're okay. And then we're going in -- oh, no. So a trailer and two women show up, and they're there to feed horses at Stone Edge.

Interviewer: And where is that located?

Jablonowski: That's 5500 Cavedale. I said, "Listen." I said, "There are some ducks in there, and the firefighters have been talking about eating them." And I asked, "Would you get those ducks out of there?" So they did. They got the ducks out of there and took them to the

fairgrounds, and the kids got them back in a couple of weeks.  
[Unintelligible]. So that was --

Interviewer: A lot of memorable moments.

Jablonowski: Yes, that was a pretty memorable moment. I think in the overall was seeing how well we worked together as a team. You don't really think about at the time, but afterward, I realized we were communicating with limitations obviously. We were communicating really well. We were taking care of each other. And it was a war zone the first couple of days. There was no communication with anybody.

I'd rather you didn't publish this, but my feeling was nobody from Sonoma County came up to see how we were doing, called or any -- I know they had their hands full, but who came up? There was some people from Glen Ellen and Sonoma that -- Chris [Lander], and probably [unintelligible], "Hey, how you guys doing? What do you need?"

Interviewer: From the Glen Ellen Fire Department?

Jablonowski: Yes. Or Sonoma Valley.

Interviewer: Sonoma Valley. Yes, I don't know all those --

Jablonowski: Yes. Sonoma Valley is Sonoma. And now Sonoma Valley is Glen Ellen -- and it will be Sonoma Valley as well. We're going to incorporate [unintelligible].

Interviewer: We will be?

Jablonowski: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you collaborate with Dry Creek and Lokoya?

Jablonowski: We have mutual aid with them. Mutual aid means that they need to call us. And usually, they do because they don't have many people there and sometimes the closest person is 10 to 15 miles away.

Interviewer: So Chief's house is on Wall Road. Wall Road is there territory, right?

Jablonowski: Yes.

Interviewer: But it's higher up. Did you have better access to that? Or did no one -- can you tell me about his experience or the experience on Wall Road at all? Or you just know by hearsay?

Jablonowski: No. Just by getting Anthony's trailer out of there and seeing the devastation that's going on. But outside of that one afternoon, I don't think we spent -- I didn't spend much time there.

Interviewer: This is a question. To what degree did firefighters think about this fire in advance or plan for a big fire in advance? Either connected to 1964, or on its own? And the second half of that question is, was there any plan?

Jablonowski: Yes.

Interviewer: What happens to a plan in this type of situation?

Jablonowski: Now that's a good question. Because, obviously, I have thought about a fire up here through all the 50 years I've lived here. In terms of the department, we spent many, many hours talking about, "Is this space defensible? What are we going to do? How to evacuate? What would happen here? What would happen there?" Scenario after scenario. Not one of them had a thing to do with this fire; not one of them, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't plan. I don't think that -- and it was interesting because places that we thought, "Oh, this is not a defensible place, this is going to go up." Nothing happened to it. Places that I thought for sure would be fine burnt to the ground.

Interviewer: Yes, there's no rhyme or reason there.

Jablonowski: [Unintelligible].

Interviewer: I know, it's really busy. So what else do you want to talk about your firefighting experience during that fire? What else are you remember, or you have left out, or you're thinking about?

Jablonowski: Not much really. It was just one incident after another. I can't think of anything really that stands out.

Interviewer: When we go to after the fire then -- so you're Chief now, so you're in a different position now. And you've talked about how that was challenging because you got that position right at the beginning pretty much -- of the fire.

Jablonowski: Right.

Interviewer: So you had to make that transition during the fire, and that was a challenge. So now that this fire is over, where is everybody -- where is the firefighting community now? The volunteer -- our own volunteer firefighting community. What are the priorities? What are you thinking? What do you talk about?

Jablonowski: Well, actually it's been pretty quiet. There's not a lot of people up there. We've had a couple of calls, but not many. I don't think we've spent really much time talking about it, except antidotally perhaps, but not in terms of a real [unintelligible]. We're still having issues obviously with the traffic and with the roads.

Interviewer: Trees.

Jablonowski: Trees. But the call volume is way down. I think a lot of it is because we don't have as many tourists, and the B and B's aren't functioning. A lot of our calls, the medical calls, were at the B and B's. Right now what I'm trying to do is just sort of get things back into a pre-fire condition with our apparatus. We have apparatus that needs work on. We're still serviceable, but there's stuff -- the war wounds or battle scars, whatever you want to call them, and just the transition. I think that my approach to it is very different than Will's.

Interviewer: How so?

Jablonowski: Well, I think I'm very much in favor -- I better be careful here. Will has been a firefighter and the Chief for 58 years, and he had his way of doing things. And I think that he was not really in favor, or didn't see the advantage perhaps of consolidating with Valley of the Moon. And I've always felt that that was a really high priority of mine, just because you get better service for the community.

A case in point is since the County has kind of backed off a bit, but they have asked for RFPs, Request for Proposals, from companies to consolidate volunteer departments. A big one is like Shell Vista, [Lakeville], all those are now going to be one. And so when they put in the RFP for Sonoma Valley to incorporate Mayacamas, which they've already done with Glen Ellen. Glen Ellen is now a part of Sonoma Valley. Well, one of the advantages we got

immediately was instead of having mutual aid with Sonoma Valley, we now have automatic aid which --

Interviewer: And what does that mean?

Jablonowski: That means that any call that we get they dispatch an engine. And what does that mean? It means -- think about it? That you have 24/7 coverage in Agua Caliente at Station 3, and you have 24/7 coverage in Glen Ellen. So anything that's in the lower reaches of our district, they're going to get there before we will. So is that good? You bet you it is.

Interviewer: So did you initiate that? How did that get initiated?

Jablonowski: Well, it was initiated by the County

Interviewer: That was a note to myself. What do you feel like your losses were in this fire?

Jablonowski: Material losses?

Interviewer: Yes. Well, I mean, you're a firefighter, but you're also a resident. No, I mean material or otherwise. In the general sense of loss, what do you feel like the loss to you, to the community, to yourself, whatever?

Jablonowski: Well, let's start with material losses. Probably close to -- between personal property and real property, probably close to half a million dollars worth of uninsured loss. That's a pretty good start right there. I don't know. I'm trying to look at it positively. I got rid of a lot of junk that I'm glad to get rid of. It's really cleaned up things. Has it changed my life? It changed my life forever, for sure.

Interviewer:: And talk about that.

Jablonowski: Well, I think in the sense of loss, also in the sense of how the community has changed, how the community has come together, how the environment has changed. I don't necessarily see that as a bad thing. I think, to me, just as avocational botanist watching the post-fire regeneration of the plants; it's brilliant. And plants that we haven't seen that are really fire endemic, that only come up only after fires. It's like anything else. I think the nice thing is that I'm still on the hill, and most of the people are still on the hill. We'll see the change from this fire go on for the rest of our lives.

Interviewer: Yes.

Jablonowski: And maybe in a sense it's good. I think it's certainly cleansing.

Interviewer: What do you mean by cleansing?

Jablonowski: Well, it cleaned the land. I think of the earth as having had a vermin-infested [unintelligible] coated coat of six or eight inches

for 70 years, and all that's burnt and it's gone. The land -- maybe that's just [unintelligible], it's cleaner than it was before. You've seen it. The vistas now, we're seeing things we've never saw before. And especially as an archeologist, my God, the things that I never knew were there. And I think I told you about that --

Interviewer: No, tell me.

Jablonowski: Well, the quarry in the 2000 block is basalt quarry, that probably covers an area, I'm thinking something like maybe a quarter of a mile square. And it is just tailing piles after tailing piles with not only differences in tailing piles, you can get the crude sort of -- and then the finished product of the tailing piles closer to the road.

The roads that we're servicing that -- there's a dry laid -- a rock dry laid well hand dug across the road that still has water in it. And some of the -- oh, the other thing I was going to say about that. I think I don't know enough about this quarry, but I think that the type of work that was going on you may be able to give it some sort -- what's the word I'm looking for? Denote ethnicity to the type of work. I've seen mining in Oroville, and in the Sierra Nevada, you can really tell the difference when it's Chinese mining as opposed to Anglo mining.

And I'm not sure what -- these were blocks. I'm pretty sure that they were basalt cobble blocks, cobbles for San Francisco or wherever. And it had to be very, very early on, and I'm thinking that it was

probably 1860s -- anyway 19th century, not 20th century. So that's totally cool. And then some of the foundations were just -- Cavedale pines which is 3870, was really a little resort, as was Top of the World, and they had a post office there and a gas station, and cabins all around. Well, the cabins were long gone, but now you can see the foundations -- the rock wall foundations of the cabins.

Interviewer: Oh, that's cool.

Jablonowski: It's totally cool.

Interviewer: So what's exposed is interesting. It's historic. I mean it is archeology. It's fire as an archeologist or something.

Jablonowski: Right. It's definitely archeology. I think that the thing that's interesting to me is that all this earth -- these remains sort of point out is that in the 19th century when the homestead act came in, and there were more people up here in the late 19th century than there were in 1960. It's not true anymore. And there were stage routes that went through [unintelligible] place and Bill [Holly's] over to Napa.

Interviewer: Oh, I would love to learn about all that.

Jablonowski: My big joke is -- you know the cave on Cavedale Road?

Interviewer: Yes, but I've never been there.

Jablonowski: Well, anyways it's just a little adit that goes in the side.

Interviewer: The one right off the road?

Jablonowski: Yes. And everybody always says -- and it was evidentially dug by a guy named Mike who was Italian, and he got a dollar a day and a jug of wine. And I said, "Really, it's not Cavedale, his name was Cavedale."

Interviewer: That works.

Jablonowski: So that's about all I know.

Interviewer: Is there anything that knowing what you know now that you would want to -- knowing what you know now, is there anything you would tell people like civic leaders, to the local community, to the firefighter communities?

Jablonowski: Well.

Interviewer: About what to do, what to pay attention to?

Jablonowski: Well, I think, to me, it's like if you're going to chip, get it out of there, don't leave it there. And the second thing is to burn. I mean, I've always burned -- hazard reduction burns. Did it save my cabin and the little trailer? I think it probably did. And it's a nice thing to

do. It's also -- not only do you clear the land and the carbon goes back into the soil.

To me, it would be, "Hazard reduction burning." And if you don't know how -- if fact, I don't know if you saw the latest newsletter that just came out. But in that, I said, "I think that's the best way to deal with brush," and especially all the stuff that's now half burnt. So if you do that through the summer, make your piles, cut it up and put it in a pile, and I'll be glad, or one of us would be glad to come down and show you. If you haven't ever burnt a pile before, or what you should do? What are the parameters of that? I would really like to encourage people to do that.

Interviewer: Do you think that's a new trend in firefighting in California now maybe?

Jablonowski: Yes. Absolutely. Look at the controlled burn that went down at [unintelligible] this last summer. It didn't help them with the structures, but the area that that burnt in June didn't burn in October. I think that we're going to see more and more of that kind of activity. The problem with that is, is that historically Cal Fire used to do control burns, and almost invariably it'd escape, and it's going to be a 200-acre control burn is now suddenly 20,000 acres. So they were a little leery about doing it.

It will be interesting to see what comes up, but I think that that's certainly going to be something that people are going to have to

realize if they live on this urban-wildland interface, you're going to have to have a good clear space. But having said that, in this last fire would it have made any difference? Probably not. When you have a fire jumping six lanes of the freeway. What's that going to do?

Interviewer: Right.

Jablonowski: I think it's pretty much awareness. Probably chimney fires are -- now we have all this wood and people don't think much about cleaning their chimneys. That was always a good one for us in the wintertime's, was chimney fires. But having said that, if you have a chimney fire, and you have a wood stove say the chimney is on fire. What you do is you take a glass of water like this, fill it with water, open the door to the stove really quickly, throw the water in, and it turns it all to steam and puts the fire out. It's a good tip.

Interviewer: That's a very good tip. Anything else you've mused on during all these months, the last six months?

Jablonowski: No, not really. I think just the fact to see the community -- I thought it was always a very interesting community because -- at least for me. I was never particularly social, and we didn't go to parties and stuff like that. The community always came together in times when you needed it. And I think it's certainly true now, and I think that seeing this sort of -- I think this community is much closer perhaps after this fire than it was before. That's a really good thing.

Interviewer: At the very beginning you said -- before we started recording this. You said that our community -- Trinity, Cavedale, or Mayacamas is in a way the epicenter of, I guess, what? What were you saying?

Jablonowski: What I meant by that was in terms of the fire. We had 9,000 acres in our service area, and 98 percent of it burnt. So, is that the epicenter? It may be not exactly, but it's pretty damn close. And 47 houses out of 130 is still a pretty high percentage of loss. So in that sense -- I mean, I'm not saying that we're worse off than Mountain, or worse off than Glen Ellen, or Fountain Grove, but for us that was the epicenter of Nuns Canyon. Certainly, I would say Fountain Grove would think that they were the epicenter, and rightly so.

Interviewer: Well, from a domestic structure point of view, that might be true. How many houses burned down there?

Jablonowski: Thousands.

Interviewer: It was thousands, yes, but they also don't have the woodland destruction that we have.

Jablonowski: Exactly.

Interviewer: You said 9,000 acres and 98 percent of it has burned?

Jablonowski: Yes. That was the statistic I heard from Cal Fire. But what's scary to me is if you look at it, "Yes, it burnt." But look at all the unburnt fuel that's still there, and it's now dead and standing. I guess the moral of the story is, "We ain't out of the woods yet." No pun intended. And I don't think we ever will be.

One of the things -- you asked me earlier about the why or how I sort of got involved in the fire department. When I first moved up in '67, I was living at 3870, which is [Macky's] place. And we're having a long discussion about whether we should kill the rooster because it was attacking my daughter who was about two at the time.

This guy walked -- ran up the driveway and said, "There's been a terrible accident. A terrible accident." And so we went down the road -- just that curve right by -- ironically that Allison calls Dead Man's Curve, not knowing anything about it. There was a rollover, and kids from New York in a Volkswagen convertible, and it just crushed him and killed him.

And we didn't know what to do. We tried to give them CPR. We blew his belly up instead. We took him to the hospital, and he was long since dead. And I realized that if you were up here in 1967 and you have a problem, there ain't nobody here to help you. There is nobody.

So kind of from there we decided, "Well, it would be good if we could --," we're all at the Top of the World, and we thought, "Well if we had a fire engine it would be good." The Valley of the Moon gave us this old water tender, and so we had that up there. We took a couple of fire science classes with my buddies.

But to go back to that story about the fatality. Allison and Mark are collecting trash alongside the road, and he said, "We were down at Dead Man's Curve, and we found these little glasses and [unintelligible]." Those were [unintelligible] glasses. That kind of struck me. And still -- it's like I'm much better now, but I was having a hard time talking about that. I was kind of worried about talking to you, because I'd start tearing up. And copious amounts of alcohol helped.

Interviewer: Yes. No, I understand that. It's hard when you said -- you said it's a life -- a once in a lifetime experience, and that's going to affect you.

Jablonowski: I think it affects you negatively and positively, but a lot goes on. What's remarkable to me is that coming here after the fire, and other places, everybody -- almost everybody has a story about this fire. That some are just tragic, and some are just comical, some are -- it's pretty amazing.

Interviewer: For me that brings -- because we span both sides of the mountain, right? We have this side, but our life really started in Napa, so we have our Napa life. And the ways that people in Sonoma have come

together around the fire, and the ways that people in Napa have come together around the fire are separate.

Jablonowski: Are different.

Interviewer: Different and separate.

Jablonowski: Oh, yes, separate.

Interviewer: It's a separate experience, and it's also a different type of experience. I mean, Sonoma Valley is a very different type of community than Napa Valley.

Jablonowski: Yes, it is. And I've always thought that -- and you sort of hit on it. Napa Valley has really drawn from the East Bay more than -- and historically. The people that came up here during the 30s, the 40s, the 50s, were often people -- Navy people, Mayor Island people, Oakland folks, and that over time has sort of changed. Now we're seeing much more [unintelligible].

Interviewer: Well, sure, now that you bring it up and talking about history. Because the Napa River was a navigable river for industry and transportation, and mercantile activities, right?

Jablonowski: [Unintelligible] the time of Napa, yes.

Interviewer: Yes.

Jablonowski: That's the same as the Petaluma River.

Interviewer: Right. Huh? That's interesting. Well, that's another topic. What else? Are we done now? Oh, for the record, what's your address?

Jablonowski: 4645 Cavedale.

Interviewer: I think that's all I'm supposed to ask you? Oh, and how long have you lived up here? Since what year?

Jablonowski: Sixty-seven.

Interviewer: And you've lived in two different places?

Jablonowski: Yes, 3870, and for a while, I lived at 5155, but mostly at 4645.

Interviewer: Where you are.

Jablonowski: My partner and I came up in '67, and we bought that in '73.

Interviewer: Thank you for all your years of service.

Jablonowski: Well, it's -- you know what? I've really been lucky living up here. I really am. I've never regretted being up here, even when you forget the milk and [unintelligible].

Interviewer: Cool.

[End of Michael Jablonowski 1]

[Start of Michael Jablonowski 2]

Interviewer: All right. Start with the ash part again.

Jablonowski: Okay. So immediately after the fire everything was white, and it looked like it had snowed, and there was just ash everywhere. It rained a few days after that and washed the ash away, and everything was black. Then all the needles fell off the Fur tree, and everything was brown. I mean, literally, the roads -- everything. It was just like a blanket covering it.

And then probably Thursday or Friday, which would have been day five or day six after the fire, we're outside, and it's daylight, and there are butterflies -- like every species of butterfly that we have on the hill, and usually come in progression, right? It starts with the Mourning Cloaks, the first ones, and the California Skippers, and then you get the Swallowtails, they were all out. They were out for a couple of days and then there weren't anymore.

The only thing that I can come up with is the larvae are in the soil around plants, and there must have been enough heat -- it didn't kill them, but they -- it was amazing. It was bloody amazing. I mean,

every species of butterfly we have on the hill was out flitting about  
in the smoke.

[End of Michael Jablonowski 2]