

MVFD Fire History Project

Adie Flinn, Cavedale Resident

Interviewed by Jennifer O'Mahony

September 8, 2018



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Adie-Flinn

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Interviewer: Yeah. Now it's going.

If you want to say your name and your address?

Adie Flinn: Okay. My name is Adriane Flinn. My nickname is Adie. I live at 6767 Cavedale Road.

Interviewer: So what we're doing here is recording your experiences and memories of the fires in October 2017. We'll start with -- before this fire ever happened, had you thought about the possibility and had made any plans, your state of mind, the evening before when things started to happen?

Adie Flinn: I thought there was a possibility of a fire. I know there had been a fire in the area before because I've seen the trees and everything, not that I had ever really talked about it with anyone that knew much about it or anything about it.

It was so lush here too. It's so green.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Maybe you can just describe where exactly your house is relative to the roads?

Adie Flinn: When you come up Trinity, you turn onto Cavedale at the Mayacamas Fire Department. It's the first driveway on your right after that. It says "Arcadia" over the gate from the old owners, which means "living in harmony with the land." And then I have a mile- or a mile-and-a-half-long driveway. I've heard, but I haven't really measured it myself yet.

It's a gravel driveway that comes up to my little house. It looks like a little treehouse, very eccentric. The first original owner, his last name was Tirpak, Kazuko & David Tirpak. The bedroom is an octagon. This living room is a dome, and then there's a hall with a kitchen. And then there's another dome.

When the last owner's, Dave Cole and David Brinkley, renovated it, they wanted to keep it the way it was but make it more contemporary. So it still has its original frame. Tirpak's wife was Japanese so that's why you'll see a Japanese oven in the back and then a Japanese flair to the garage. It's very interesting.

He was a survivalist so he had stashes of weapons all over the place. Anytime you'd come in, there was a gun under the table.

Interviewer: I remember David when they came to look at it the first time too. I found it a little unsettling.

Adie Flinn: Yeah. I like to tell the story of one of their guests who went out for a jog.

Oh, sorry. I think it was actually Claude and Betty Ganaye's guest at Above the Clouds 3250 Cavedale.

And by mistake, he thought he would go out for a jog and came onto this property. I guess Tirpak just gave him a little warning shot over the head, which if you're a gun owner, you'd say, "Well, it's just a little warning shot over the head. No big deal." But if you're a runner and you think you're getting shot at, it's another story.

[Laughter]

Interviewer: It sounds like it.

Adie Flinn: So anyway, that's one of the funny or good stories from the property.

Interviewer: But the property, it's tucked in, away from the road.

Adie Flinn: It is.

Interviewer: It's very much surrounded by nature as you said.

Adie Flinn: It is. Even the mountain, there is really only one way off of it, road-wise. Otherwise, you're on foot.

So I'll go into that night. It was extremely windy. It was very strange. It was like hurricane winds really so that was unsettling in itself. I went to sleep. But it was quite warm out so I had all my windows open.

The phone rang. It seemed like a loud ring so I sort of sat bolt-upright. Because in my sleep, in my dream, I was saying, "What is that smell?" I couldn't figure it out because I was asleep. So I sat up in my room, and it was quite smoky. It was filled with smoke.

Interviewer: Wow.

Adie Flinn: Yeah. So I was like, "Okay. Something is immediately wrong." I went to the phone, and it was my neighbor Grant Loban (5800 Cavedale), who's my guardian angel, my savior. He said, "There's a fire. Pack a bag. You don't have to leave yet." I knew right away that I was going to leave because -- it's a mile-and-a-half-long gravel driveway -- if a tree fell, we'd be trapped. I was definitely relying on Grant.

After hearing other stories, I mean there was no question of leaving. So my friend, Jenna, stays with me quite often. She was in the guest room, and then I've got my two little dogs. So I called the Fairmont Sonoma Mission Inn --

Interviewer: What time was this?

Adie Flinn: I think it was a little before 1:00 AM.

Interviewer: Okay.

Adie Flinn: Yeah. I just went and knocked on her door. I was like, "Jenna?" -- like trying to be calm. But she knew right away too. So I was trying to be calm. I was like, "We'll just pack a few things, clothes, whatever is important." We were just trying to get ready.

I called The Fairmont, and I said, "Do you have any rooms for my dogs and my friend?" They said, "We have one left." I said, "I'll take it. I'm on my way."

So Grant had said on the phone, "There's a fire in Calistoga. There's a fire in Windsor. There's a fire in Napa." So I'm thinking, "Where are we going to go?" We, obviously, can't go down Trinity because he said that's where the Nun's fire started. So I just said, "Let's go Cavedale, and we'll try to get to the Sonoma Mission Inn."

I didn't know how long I was going to be gone. I thought I would be back in a day or two. So I didn't really think to get all of their medication. My dogs are really old and have all these medical issues. They eat like five times a day. So I didn't think to get much for them.

We got in the car. It was more like a phone, a computer, a few clothes, my dogs, and their beds. We went down Cavedale. We

made it out of the driveway fine. Everything was okay. It was good that I shut all my windows and locked up before I left.

Did I lock the door? Oh no. I left the doors open because I heard you're supposed to leave them open for the firemen.

And then we were going down Cavedale, and I think someone was behind us.

Interviewer: What time was this?

Adie Flinn: I think we were in the car around 1:00 AM. But I was going very slowly and trying to be really calm and zen.

Interviewer: And, of course, it was pitch-dark.

Adie Flinn: Yeah. Jenna was a little bit freaking out. So yeah, it was pitch-black and very smoky-smelling. As we came down Cavedale, I think someone was behind us at some point. It was just sort of eerie. We stopped and talked for a second. They said, "We're leaving too." I think they may have been going back up to get something. I can't remember.

But as we were going down, we came over some part of Cavedale. We looked to our right, and the whole sky is red; the whole horizon is red. And then on the left, there were open flames.

Jenna started to really panic. She was like, "Oh my god. I don't think we're going to make it down." So then I'm like, "It's okay. We're going to make it. I'm sure it's going to be all right."

It was scary. Why is there a fire on the left side? I think it was the other fire -- the Nuns? (Editors note: it was the Norrbom fire they saw)

Interviewer: Why is there a fire on the left side? I think it was the other fire -- the Nuns? Well, Nuns is north of Trinity.

Adie Flinn: No, then it was the Norrbom fire... there were two fires that merged, right?

Interviewer: Yeah, they merged.

Adie Flinn: What was the other one?

Interviewer: There was the Partrick Fire, which came over I think later in the week.

Adie Flinn: Maybe they never even gave it a name. But, "Why were there so many fires starting at the same time?"

Interviewer: How far down Cavedale were you when you saw that Norrbom fire?

Adie Flinn: I would probably have to drive Cavedale to figure that out.
[Laughter]

Interviewer: Because we went down at 6:00 AM, and there was no fire on Cavedale then.

Adie Flinn: Really?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Adie Flinn: Huh. Maybe I was seeing something kind of later.

Interviewer: Probably. Yeah. But who knows? Maybe there was one that was out by that point or something. Who knows?

Adie Flinn: I don't know. That was strange.

Then we went down, and we got to the hotel. At that point, it was 1:40 AM or something. It took a while to get down because we were going so slow or I had my times wrong. Anyway, it was just after 1:30 AM because she said, "Oh sorry. At 1:30 our computer rolls over into a new day, and so we gave your room away."

I was like, "Are you kidding me? I just called and I said, 'I'm on my way. I'll take it. I have no place to go. I have my friend and my dogs. You gave my room away?'" So I said, "Can I talk to those

people out there? Can I talk to the manager." She went back, and she was like, "They don't want to talk to you."

I was blown away. She was like, "Here are some other numbers of hotels." No other hotel would even pick up the phone because I think they were getting hammered and sold out. It was so smoky anyway. We are both really sensitive; we're weak. I live here to grow my own organic food.

So then we left, and we just started going south. We're like, "Let's just go south. This is, obviously, bad. I don't know when we're going to be able to come back." So we ended up in Mill Valley. We were on the phone the whole time trying to find some place to stay.

We pulled in to get gas after we left the Sonoma Mission Inn. There was one other car there. And then as we pulled out, it was full, and there was a line-up already behind us. People were entering, driving through Sonoma so slowly. Everyone was driving like maybe five miles per hour. The streets were filled with smoke. It was very eerie.

Then we went down the highway, and we made it to Mill Valley to this hotel/motel, I don't know.

Interviewer: You live here full-time?

Adie Flinn: Yeah.

Interviewer: So this was your home?

Adie Flinn: Yeah. So we had no place to go.

In the morning, there was ash covering the car. We both had sore throats and coughing and everything else. We spent the day going around Mill Valley. We went to a vet who was so nice. He was a Mill Valley veterinarian. He couldn't have been nicer, and he didn't charge me. He helped get the medication and food for the dogs.

So that was that day. Then we realized we weren't going home anytime soon. We just wanted to get away from this air because it was making us sick.

Interviewer: What information or news did you have from up here at that point?

Adie Flinn: At that point, the next morning, we talked to Grant. He said that he was working with the firefighters. I think around 6:00 a.m. the next day they were evacuating -- or was it a whole day later?

Interviewer: I think it was later that morning. I know we left at 6:00 AM. And when we were maybe halfway down Cavedale, we passed a fire personnel, going up, asking if we've been asked to evacuate. We said, "No." So maybe they were going up at that point. It wasn't one of the local Mayacamas people. It was some other fire department. Maybe they were going up.

I know some of our neighbors didn't leave until around midday.

Adie Flinn: Okay, yeah. It did take a while I guess for him to leave. But he just said, "Well, we're still up here. We're on notice." I was like, "We're not going to go back up like that."

Interviewer: And just to clarify, Grant lives on the other side of Trinity pretty close to here -- or on Cavedale, I mean?

Adie Flinn: He lives on Cavedale just past me at 5800 Cavedale. I think it goes me, Tish Ward 6450 Cavedale, and then him. Those are on the left (east) side of Cavedale.

Interviewer: It's pretty easy as well, just a few houses.

So then you're down in Mill Valley hearing --

Adie Flinn: There's just ash still and sore throats. And then we're hearing that they're on evacuation notice, ready to leave at any time, and they think they're going to have to leave.

I think it was still windy and just not good conditions, right?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Adie Flinn: We saw some pictures on the TV also that was not very comforting and hearing about all the different fires. We're just like, "Okay. Let's get out of here." So we went south. I was thinking of Half Moon Bay. Again, we were on the phone the whole time trying to find a place to stay. It was totally sold out there.

Interviewer: Half Moon Bay is what -- 20 miles south, maybe 15 south of San Francisco probably?

Adie Flinn: Yeah. My parents said, "Go to Carmel." So I said, "You know what? Let's just go to Carmel. We've got to keep going. Where are we going to go?"

So we went to Carmel and found a hotel that allows dogs. We spent one night. Each night, though, it was spending the next day trying to figure out, "What was going on? What should we do?" It was a stressful four days until we realized we were not going back anytime soon and that I wouldn't know if my house was there or not for quite a long time.

So I got a rental for a month. We went and stayed in that rental.

Interviewer: Where was this?

Adie Flinn: In Carmel by the sea.

Interviewer: Okay. With fresh air?

Adie Flinn: Yeah. It was pretty good. It's actually a little city. You try to go for a walk and it's all cars. Someone said, "You should move there." I said, "I just want to go home. I love where I live." But there were worse places to have to retreat to.

All the houses around there and the one I was in were being renovated. So we sort of felt "it's been this long I-can't-catch-a-break feeling." Then there was a fire down there, and then there was smoke in there.

Do you want me to be more focused?

Interviewer: No, that's fine. I was just looking at this to make sure it was actually registering and time was going.

Adie Flinn: Okay. And then there was a fire down there. There was ash in the air and all the renovations.

So I went to visit my mom in Florida, and there was a wildfire there. Across from her house, there's a channel. My room was filling with smoke. I just thought, "All right. I have some weird karma going on."

Interviewer: How long was it before you knew what had happened in the immediate area around your part of Cavedale and your house?

Adie Flinn: I think it was like two or three weeks. Grant, we would talk to him occasionally. I think he, at one point, was devastated. He was very concerned. He thought he had lost his house; I don't know if he built the whole thing, but he probably did. So he was just devastated.

They didn't know where I think Claude or Betty Ganaye were so people were like, "Has anyone seen them?"

Interviewer: Like at their neighbors?

Adie Flinn: Yeah. There's the app, NextDoor.com. We were getting a lot of updates from them, Marc and Allison (Schwager & Ash 3200 Cavedale). They, of course, were incredible as always. That was extremely helpful getting all kinds of updates and just watching the progress of the fire on that calwildfires.gov or whatever it is.

So realizing it was going to be a while before we could go home, I got the rental house for a month.

As far as, to answer your question, I'm not positive of the timeline on that of when I knew my house was okay. But at one point, Christian went -- he wasn't supposed to drive up Trinity. No one could.

Interviewer: Christian is one of your neighbors?

Adie Flinn: He's a neighbor, yeah. Christian Borchert (12890 Maple Glen). He took an oxygen tank, an ax, a chainsaw, and hiked up the mountainside because he wasn't allowed to drive up.

Interviewer: Oh my gosh. He's far up.

Adie Flinn: He's above me. He's over on the other side up here.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. So that's hiking up probably 2,000 feet over a few miles.

Adie Flinn: Yeah. He said he was coughing up blood. He found his house completely gone.

He didn't come all the way here, but I think he saw maybe my doghouse. Maybe he did come here. I'm trying to remember. Was it him or was it some fireman?

I know some firemen eventually came in, and they were putting out all these trees that were still burning. They had to cut through about 12 trees to get into my driveway. They said it was still here. So that was exciting.

The previous owners, Dave and David, had a manufactured home in this little clearing up above, which was decorated really nicely. I never used it, but it was burned to the ground. So that was too bad. It had a nice deck and everything.

I lost some of the fencing and 11 water storage tanks.

Interviewer: Eleven?

Adie Flinn: Eleven water storage tanks because we have all these springs. The overflow was just running into the woods because rats somehow ate through the PVC pipes. All the PVC pipes burned. So we were trying to catch the overflow that was going out to nowhere. So I had to put in all new tanks, all new metal pipes.

But everyone who comes here is like, "It is literally a miracle that your house is still standing." No one could believe it because literally there's a ring around my house, the orchard, the garden, and the citrus grove. And everything, even the trees, even the landscaping in the front, it's all just fine. Outside of it, on all sides, it was burned.

I attribute it to -- I studied Peruvian Shamanism for a long time. I have a lot of heavy-hitters, shaman, and people calling in angels and everything else. That's what I attribute it to.

Interviewer: That's amazing.

Adie Flinn: It is. It really is.

Interviewer: Because if you look out of any of your windows here, it's just trees close by and very heavy foliage. So it's quite amazing.

Adie Flinn: It really is. And everything has come back nicely too. And nothing -
- what was I'm going to say? I forgot.

Interviewer: You look at it now, and in the immediate surroundings, it doesn't
look like there has been a fire, which is different from when you're
driving up the driveway because that definitely shows signs of fire.

Adie Flinn: Yeah. This whole side, I feel like it isn't as bad as once you go
down Cavedale further. Then it's so burnt. It's slower to come back.

Interviewer: Yeah. So tell me a little bit about when you found out you could
come back and what that first experience was like?

Adie Flinn: After a month, the rental ended. So we came back up here and spent
the night. In the morning, Jenna was waiting in the car because she
was so sick. We were standing by the air purifier. I had an air
purifier in every room. They had ozoned it; they did all of that.

So it wasn't happening. We were all sick. The dogs were sick. It
was so toxic. We got back in the car, went back to Carmel, and got
the rental for another two months. And then we came back again
after that and still, everything smelled quite burnt. The house,
everything felt coated.

I had everything tested, and they said we needed to scrub our walls.
The garden had high levels of arsenic, mercury, lead, and something

else; I can't remember. And I had just put in new dirt so we had to dig all the dirt out, remove it, and put in all new dirt again.

And from the fires, we're getting all the toxicity from that. That's why we still have all the air filters, and the windows are shut right now. It's been pretty bad the past couple of days.

So it was nice because I was in Long Island for a month. I was like, "I can breathe again," because I had to have an inhaler. I never used it, to be honest. I use colloidal silver because I couldn't bring myself to use steroids. But I would go to bed at night like, "[Wheezing sound]."

Interviewer: Oh my goodness.

Adie Flinn: I didn't know if I was going to wake up. I couldn't breathe. I basically developed asthma. It was toxic for us. I'm definitely on the sensitive side. But I know people who moved away from the area. One person I heard was because her dog was so sick and another one was because she just couldn't take it. So it was interesting. Some people seem okay and others not so much.

So now we do this thing: we brew a compost tea and then put it everywhere on the garden once a week right now. All the micro bio organisms eat the heavy metals.

Interviewer: Wow.

Adie Flinn: Yeah. It's a lot of work.

Interviewer: Yeah. But, obviously, it's worth it.

Adie Flinn: Yeah. To be honest, if it wasn't for my dogs, I wouldn't be here. I would probably be at my parent's house or something. But they need all their doctors and the acupuncturist.

Interviewer: They look pretty happy despite what's happened.

Adie Flinn: Yeah.

Interviewer: So you lost your water tanks and you had to redo your garden?

Adie Flinn: Mm-hmm. Two bridges too.

Interviewer: Okay.

Adie Flinn: The garden, all the pipes to the water tanks -- two bridges; that was probably the most expensive part.

Interviewer: Is that the one coming back in?

Adie Flinn: If you go down a turn and then you would go to the left, like your second left, that's to the --

Interviewer: So that's beyond your house?

Adie Flinn: It's down -- beyond my house?

Interviewer: I mean, you could come in from the road to your house without going over that bridge?

Adie Flinn: Yeah. But the other one, you could go over it still, but it needed to be redone. We didn't realize it at first. And then my landscaper guy was looking underneath it, and he was like, "Did you know that all these logs burned? It's probably really dangerous."

So that was a huge project. They brought in all these metal I-beams and did posts, scoping down, and everything. So that all had to be done.

So I was excited at first. I was like, "This is really working out well for me." All the owners had all this firewood in the quarry. This chipper was brand new. It was so expensive. My landscaper was like, "We need this chipper." And then he never used it.

The trailer and everything that was over there we got money for. They give you money for trees that burned even though it's all wild. So I was very excited because I thought I got a lot of money from all of that, and I didn't feel like I had a lot of loss except for the water tanks and pipes.

But it didn't work out so well. It's been really expensive. I was putting way more back into it to get it fixed than I did before.

Interviewer: To get it healthy again?

Adie Flinn: Yeah.

Interviewer: So have you made some changes or adaptations? What are you doing? Do you think there will be another fire?

Adie Flinn: I do. I mean, a few studies, one of them being Harvard environmental -- or whatever that group is -- says it's just going to keep getting worse because of climate change. That's what I heard on the radio.

I'd hate to take any of these trees out. I have all these beautiful oaks around my house. They're probably way to close. But they're beautiful, and I don't want too much sun. So I'm going to leave them and go with praying I guess.

Interviewer: Well that seemed to have worked well.

Adie Flinn: Apparently.

Someone told me this dome -- unfortunately, the bedroom is all wood, but it's all old wood from the pier. It probably has a lot of protection on it. Maybe it's oil so it'll torch up. But this dome

actually has fireproof shingles on it. We never had to test it out or it didn't get tested out. So that was good.

But we have a lot of fire breaks. I have some hiking trails that my landscaper made. He thinks those helped a lot as fire breaks. But we try to keep things clear and weed wacked. Probably in the fall, when I have the tree guys come, if I can get someone to come this year, I might take more down.

My friend is keeping a bag packed I think. She's very nervous. She has more PTSD. It was stressful for her. She has nightmares at night and things like that. The other night, she thought I was at her door again. And then she woke up the next night thinking it was windy. She was going to come and join us, but then she didn't want to relive it. She's been struggling with it.

Interviewer: Yeah. It's a mixed emotion, talking about it again and just remembering the details. It's not easy sometimes.

Adie Flinn: Yeah. Do you know Isa Jacoby (2775 Cavedale)?

Interviewer: Isa, yeah.

Adie Flinn: Have you talked to her? She lost her home.

Interviewer: Yeah. I talked to her back a few months ago.

Adie Flinn: That's good.

Interviewer: We didn't get back to our house until July because of repairs and things needed. But yeah, I talked to her a few times and some of our other neighbors who had property but lost their home that was bordering hers.

So just to wrap up this interview, any questions you have or any other comments or thoughts you have about the neighborhood and the experience? Any additions?

Adie Flinn: This is kind of funny. We were looking at a lot of these videos and things on YouTube where people think that it was weapons testing. Have you heard this from anyone else?

Interviewer: No. I haven't followed the conspiracy theory?

Adie Flinn: I know a lot of people who really genuinely believe it, a lot of MDs, doctors. My MD believes it. He graduated from Columbia Medical School. He's very famous.

A lot of people actually were doing weather manipulation. I haven't heard too many people mention that, but it was something.

It was so windy, and then there were fires everywhere that all started at the same time. It was a little bit strange. If you look at pictures of Santa Rosa, there is one building, and then one's just

gone. There's nothing, and then it's fine across the street. It does kind of look like someone took a laser and torched it.

So there was that whole thing going on with us too that made it almost worse -- like, "Were we under attack? Are they doing testing with EMF microwave lasers on us?" So that was just our other thing. But, of course, we also believe in chemtrails. Marc and Allison are like, "You guys are crazy." [Laughter]

Interviewer: I woke up and looked out. We're higher up so we have about a 270-degree view. I could see fire in Santa Rosa, and I could see fire down below I thought in Sugarloaf. But I guess it was up in the Fountain Grove area of Santa Rosa, which is kind of beyond there but blocked by the peak of Sugarloaf Park.

What I also saw though were dozens of little fires as if everybody had a little blaze going in their backyard or something. So that just told me no fire department is going to be able to handle this. This is beyond the scope of any local crews to deal with the magnitude of what's happening.

Adie Flinn: Why do you think so many fires started all at the same time?

Interviewer: We've had our property almost 18 years now, and we've lived up here full-time for 13 of those. I've never experienced it as windy as that night. I mean, I went out and I could barely walk across our

property to get suitcases and things we had in storage in another building.

Adie Flinn: Yeah. They said things were burning extremely hot, like higher temperatures than normal wildfires.

Interviewer: Yeah. It had been hot the days before as well.

Adie Flinn: Yeah. It's crazy.

Interviewer: It's unusual, definitely.

Adie Flinn: Yeah.

Interviewer: So if that's everything you have to share about your experience --

Adie Flinn: Yeah.

Interviewer: -- and if there's anything else --

Adie Flinn: I hope there's no more.

Interviewer: Me too. I'll just stop this.

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Adie Flinn: I know I'm going to forget this.

Interviewer: We're on an addendum. Adie is going to talk about her drive from Sonoma down towards Highway 101 along Highway 37.

Adie Flinn: Yeah. As we were going down, we looked to the left, and there were more open flames out in the field over there, on Wildcat mountain, where the raceway is. It did feel very apocalyptic and, "What's going on?" It was crazy.

Interviewer: Sonoma was completely smoked in.

Adie Flinn: Yes, very smoky.

Interviewer: Yeah. Later that night, I guess they closed Hwy 37. I have some in-laws who were in Napa. They were evacuating, and they couldn't go down 37.

Adie Flinn: That's crazy because you couldn't get out. So what do you do?

Interviewer: Yeah. We left at 6:00 AM and went to some friends in Sonoma. And then around I think eight or nine, I wanted to go down to my sister-in-law in the city. We knew we couldn't go on 37. So we drove over to Petaluma and went down 101, which was ridiculously crowded at 10:00 AM in the morning or whatever it was.

It just looked like an evacuation route because everybody could only go about 20 miles an hour. And every car looked as if people had some of their possessions in it and were just fleeing, which is a very unsettling experience.

Adie Flinn: Mm-hmm. We heard that right after we got to Mill Valley when we got off the highway. We heard it was completely backed up. And then we heard they closed it down to 37. So we just got through in time. We were lucky.

I keep forgetting the other thing I wanted to say.

Interviewer: Well, I'll stop it for a moment.

Adie Flinn: Okay, for a second. Maybe it will come back to me.

[End of Adie-Flinn-2-by-JO-090818.mp3]

[End of recorded material]