

Firefighters recall horror of inferno

Written by Tony Rayl, The Yuma Pioneer
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Struckmeyers overrun by flames of Heartstrong Fire

It has been a busy year for Jennifer Struckmeyer.

“It’s crazy that it’s been that long,” she said.

In fact, the past year probably seemed like it went by quicker than the 60-90 seconds she spent being overrun by the towering flames during the Heartstrong Fire, which occurred one year ago March 18.

“To me, it seemed like a lifetime,” Struckmeyer said. “I know I had time to say several prayers.”

Jennifer Struckmeyer, along with her husband Del, their son Austin, brother- and sister-in-law Damon and Pam Struckmeyer, and mother Dorothy Marie Lattimer-Hixson were recently interviewed by 9News at the site where Jennifer, Damon, Pam and their nephew Darren Stewart got stuck in the sandhills in the Wages Volunteer Fire Department truck they had been using to attack the huge fire.

It was early afternoon on March 18, 2012, when winds gusting up to 60 m.p.h. downed a power line on Yuma County Road 26, about 12 miles south of Highway 34 and County Road M.

The winds and extremely dry conditions quickly fueled the fire into a towering inferno. It had traveled in a matter of minutes three miles north to Road 26, where it destroyed the long-time home of Dwaine and Lucy Eastin and continued northward, also spreading to the east and west, destroying the long-time home of Florence Pletcher, while moving rapidly northward.

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