

**THE ARNOLD FAMILY
STORY**

**AS TOLD TO
FAMILY AND FRIENDS
THROUGH AN E-MAIL**

The following e-mail is what we sent to our family and friends after the power resumed. We live in the new REI development off of Victoria Drive. Our home is on the ridge overlooking Peutz Valley.

Staci Arnold

Hello to our amazing family and friends!

We can't thank you enough for your phone calls and e-mails during the past week. It was wonderful to feel the love and support coming from those who care about us. We are pleased to report that we are all fine! We had a pretty big scare with the blaze coming much too close for comfort...but miraculously, our home is still standing!

Wayne noticed a glow in the sky around 10 p.m. on Saturday the 25th. We were up most of the night watching the ridge to see if it was moving closer...



At this point, we figured we were safe since the winds were moving from East to West. We were South of the fire... Being the freak that I am, I started gathering up photos, files and (don't laugh) Christmas presents around 10 a.m. Wayne adamantly refused to pack anything until he actually SAW flames. By noon, we looked out the window and saw the following:



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The wind had changed and we were scrambling to pack pictures, animals, clothes, etc. into cars. From there, everything happened so fast! We tried to put all the sprinklers on, but the wind was so strong that the spray was flying back at the house.



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The fire swept through the canyon below us and was soon surrounding the house. There were a dozen police cars with lights flashing and a helicopter flying overhead screaming for everyone to evacuate immediately. It felt like a scene from a movie!



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I looked around and the whole neighborhood was scrambling.



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At this point, I looked through the kitchen window and saw the flames in the back of the house. I figured there was no hope. I turned to look up the hill and there were NO fire trucks or firefighters anywhere! They had all been called over to Scripps Ranch and Ramona, not knowing that their own backyards were ablaze. There was nothing we could do except leave the sprinklers on, hope and pray, pack the final bits and pieces and go...



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Needless to say, it is an act of God that we had a house to come home to on Sunday night. Although we were advised to stay away, we heard that people were looting evacuated houses and we wanted to be there in case anyone tried (which they did to a few houses in our neighborhood!). Wayne ran around the neighborhood with a few other neighbors putting out hot spots for several hours. We slept at home that night although the air was very thick and smoky.



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We were without power for six days and told Evan that we were camping at home. He had his own lantern and thought that was pretty cool. We bbq'ed most of what had thawed in our freezer and had to toss the rest. We aren't complaining though! We fared so much better than many families in this disaster! We heard this morning that six families from our church lost everything. This fire was so devastating!



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From here, we are picking up the pieces and cleaning up the aftermath.



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We just wanted to take this opportunity (now that we have power and are once again connected to the rest of the world...) to thank you for your phone calls, your concerns, your offers to open your homes to us, and most of all, your prayers! We have been so moved by the tremendous amount of support we have received. We are so thankful to have the most wonderful friends and family!!!

We love you!!! Wayne, Staci and Evan



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(no, we don't normally have a black-bottom pool...)



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